

au re-voir

"Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow."

— William Shakespeare

SHRI AMRENDRA KUMAR, CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF INCOME TAX, SHILLONG CALLED IT A DAY ON 30™ JUNE, 2023









SMT SANCHITA KUMAR, PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER OF INCOME TAX, SHILLONG PUT IN HER PAPERS VOLUNTARILY ON 21ST JUNE, 2023







RAJU TAYENG, I.R.S.

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MESSAGE

It gives me immense satisfaction to know that 'Aayakar Saptabhumi' is again being brought out by the office of the Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong-its 5th edition.

The interregnum caused by covid 2019, put a temporary halt toits publication, but now the 'Saptabhumi' team seems to be back on track with renewed vigour, enthusiasm.

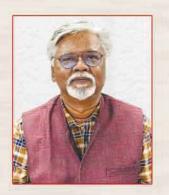
I was browsing through last year's edition and saw that it contained articles right from PRCCSIT/CCSIT to the Inspector and not only that. It had so much variety on offer! The idea of roping in a few writers outside the department was also very good.

I am sure, the editorial board isn't straying off last year's path.

My congratulations to the whole Saptabhumi team for doing their best to bring out a good kaleidoscopic magazine.

All the best.

Principal Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, NER Guwahati



मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त आयकर भवन, महात्मा गांधी रोड शिलांग - 793001 (मेघालय)

संदेश

यह अत्यंत हर्ष और गौरव का विषय है कि आयकर विभाग, शिलांग द्वारा विभागीय गृह पत्रिका "आयकर सप्तभूमि" का पंचम अंक प्रकाशित हो रहा है। पत्रिका के प्रकाशन के लिए मैं संपादक सदस्यों को शुभकामना देता हूँ। इस पत्रिका से पूर्वोत्तर में आयकर विभाग के कार्यालयों में लेखन के प्रचार-प्रसार के साथ-साथ विभाग में रचनाकारों को अपनी प्रतिभा प्रदर्शन करने का बेहतरीन अवसर मिलेगा।

लेखन व्यक्ति के जीवन में कई प्रकार के व्यक्तिगत एवं मनोवैज्ञानिक परिवर्तन लेकर आता है, यह व्यक्ति के अंदर समाज को देखने की एक अलग दृष्टि प्रदान करता हैं। आयकर सप्तभूमि का प्रकाशन इस दिशा में एक सकारात्मक प्रयास है।

मुझे पूर्ण विश्वास है कि पत्निका का अंक पूर्वोत्तर क्षेत्र की सार्थक एवं सृजनात्मक छवि प्रस्तुत करेगा तथा विभाग के अधिकारियों एवं कर्मचारियों को नई ऊर्जा प्रदान करेगा।

मैं आयकर सप्तभूमि के पंचम अंक के सफल प्रकाशन के लिए संपादन मंडल और रचनाकारों को बधाई एवं हार्दिक शुभकामनाएँ देता हूँ।

(श्रीकांत कुमार अम्बष्ठ)

मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, शिलांग







PRINCIPAL COMMISSIONER OF INCOME TAX AAYAKAR BHAWAN

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MESSAGE

I consider it a privilege, to share a message on the occasion of the publication of the fifth edition of the Aayakar Saptabhumi — an endeavour of the Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong.

The magazine which strives for variety in terms of content and contributions from the pool of talent available within the department and also from among the retired officers and guest writers, bears the imprint of its Chief Editor, Shri S.J. Bhattacharjee, Commissioner of Income-tax (Appeals)-1, Shillong. His pain staking efforts to bring out this publication of highest standard every year is commendable.

I am sure that this magazine in the years to come will continue to discover creative talents lying hidden among the members of the Aayakar Parivar and act as a stepping stone in their literary pursuits.

My best wishes to the whole Saptabhumi team for bringing out a fantastic pictorial magazine which reflects the diversity of talent in the department.

(D.A.J Sawkmie)

Principal Commissioner of Income Tax Shillong

AAYAKAR SAPTABHUMI TEAM, 2023

Chief Patron: Shri S. K. Ambastha, IRS, CCIT, Shillong Patron: Shri D. A. J. Sawkmie, IRS, Pr. CIT, Shillong



Editor Shri Subhrajyoti Bhattacharya, IRS Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeal Unit -1), Shillong



Member Secretary Shri Anand Kumar, IRS Joint Commissioner of Income Tax (Hqrs.), Shillong



Member Shri Manish Kumar Shah Assisstant Director (Official Language), Shillong



Member Shri Vatan Aneja Inspector of Income Tax



Member Smt. N Ruby Junior Translation Officer



Cover design & Magazine logo created by: Shri Soumyajit Choudary, Income Tax Officer [Now on deputation as Assistant Director (Enforcement Directorate), Guwahati] The cover design is a tribute to the legendary artist Jamini Roy's art form





Subhrajyoti Bhattacharya

From the Editor's desk

"Change is inevitable, change is constant"—Benjamin Disraeli

Change, perhaps, is the only irreversible truth apart from birth and death. The journey which begins from the mother's womb and ends in biting the dust, has innumerable moments carrying with them the message of change.

"You can not swim in the same river twice".

Heraclitus said every morning brings with it a new promise and sometimes, even a new failure. Still we've got to rise and forge ahead—the elders with their world of experience, the youngsters with their boundless energy, enthusiasm. This dynamism, this state of eternal flux acts as the driving force of the cosmos. Evolution has brought man on the edge of a precipice so much so that he himself has created an adversary out of his limitless, all-devouring intellect. If artificial intelligence has, on the one hand, catapulted human civilization to the dizzying height of scientific advancement, on the other hand, humanity and human values have lain surrendered on the altar of machine. If we go back to history, we'll see how frequently did human civilization come upon changes galore, some of them epoch-making, life altering. Sometimes, those changes were premeditated, sometimes forced upon. Only time can tell whether a change is good or bad. But if no newness is dreamt of, life becomes 'a fen of stagnant waters', to borrow Wordsworth's words. Post-globalization, the world has become a global village of sorts for today's generation—every inch within their reach, so to say. Possibly, in times to come, the so called under-developed nations will also join the development bandwagon, piggy-backing on the power of technology. But there's a risk that peace, fraternity, tolerance and such other human virtues and this technology-driven development will make for strange



bedfellows, not to speak of the environmental conservations, climate changes which are sure to take a hit. Pablo Neruda nailed the hammer on the head when he famously said that in the wake of the 'missile' wars, there would be victory, but no survivor. Many among today's path breakers, may become tomorrow's path makers. Today's small changes may prove trailblazing in the days to come, who knows!

A revolutionary thought sounds fine, but it's of no value unless imbued with good sense. Only then human civilization will make great strides towards true progress with global peace remaining a far cry no longer. From time immemorial, legions of thinkers, philosophers have helped build the edifice of civilization brick by brick and the zenith we've reached today in terms of the expanse of our ideas, actions, is largely attributable to their high thoughts and visions. Tagore, through his writings, took this reality of change to a different level---the dispersion of light through a prism to split into myriad colours, if we put it poetically.

"Tomay nutan kore pabo bole haarai khone khon, o aamar bhalobasar dhan"

(I lose you every moment to get you a new, oh my treasure of love).

Common people instinctively keep changes at an arm's length. To them, change portends uncertainty. But ironically, behind most big changes---be it the French revolution, be it the American civil rights movement, be it the Arab spring, be it the Indian freedom struggle---it's the common man.

Change is inevitable and a positive change is to be grabbed with both hands. We, a tiny dot in the grand, cosmic scheme of existence, in our own humble way, are striving for a change in the way Aayakar Saptabhumi should look in every successive edition. We strongly believe in the dictum 'Unity in diversity' which so befittingly applies to the North Eastern Region, the land of seven sisters or as we lovingly call 'Saptabhumi'---a microcosm of a diverse India in a true sense. We've roped in many departmental officers, serving as well as retired, from different parts of India to enrich this edition with their creativity, not to speak of esteemed others outside the department who've so graciously agreed to be on board with us. The avowed aim---to invest our 'treasure of love', this Aayakar Saptabhumi with a cosmopolitan, multi-hued look, perhaps, like never before.

"To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often", said Winston Churchill.

We can never be perfect, nobody can. But we're always open to change, whatever it takes every year to steal a march over the preceding year's endeavour with something more new, more different on our plate.



The 3rd floor Aayakar Bhavan room where this editorial is being penned, affords a lovely view of the cherry blossom tree past the wide glass window. The brightly hued foliage has begun dropping off it to form a carpet on the ground. This autumn season will give way to the breath-taking cherry blossom season of November-December when the blazing pink bursts of the tree will be a sight to behold. And thence to the hard winter when the tree will turn withered with the snow-laden leaves clinging onto it, only to get a fresh leash of life in spring time which will have white blooms scattering all over it. The beauteous Shillong captures the four seasons with a kaleidoscope of changing colours, smells and sounds like no other city in the country. Talking of change, yes, it also catches up with the plant world around us and we often seem not to take much notice of it.

Keep healthy, vibrant, blessed---you all...





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- 5. गीतों का जादुगर शैलेंद्र
- 6. घुटा कण्ठ
- 7. डॉ. भूपेन हजारिका संगीत और साहित्य के कोहिनूर
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- 15. सरकुंडी दर्रा की ट्रेकिंग
- 16. हिंदी पखवाड़ा समारोह-2023

श्री श्रीकांत कुमार अम्बष्ट श्री आशीष प्रधान श्री अमित कुमार पाण्डे डॉ बिनोद कुमार सिन्हा डॉ दीनानाथ सिंह डॉ तुषार धवल सिंह श्रीमती सविता दास सवि श्री शैलेंद्र पाण्डे श्री गिरीश पाण्डे डॉ सुनील कुमार शॉ डॉ प्रदीप शर्मा श्री मनोज कुमार श्री हरमीत सिंह डॉ अरुण कुमार सिंह श्री रौशन कुमार कुछ झलकियां



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- Shri Satyajit Das
- Shri Ritesh Mishra
- Shri Mrinal Kumar Das
- Smt Gaichanglungliu G. Kamei
- Shri Tapan Deka
- Shri Ronmoy Das
- Shri Subhrajyoti Bhattacharjee
- Shri Sanjay Bahadur
- Shri Samrat Rahi
- Shri Subhadeep Kar
- Shri Rajarshi Saha
- Shri Rohit Kumar Parmar
- Photos only
- Smt Rintei Renthlei
- Photos only
- Shri Anand Kumar
- Shri Soumyajit Choudhury
- Shri Amrendra Kumar
- Shri Kalyan Nath
- Shri Amitava Sen
- Shri Ankur Raj
- Shri Vatan Aneja
- Smt. Rachna Singh
- Smt Indranee Sen Chowdhury
- Shri Satyakam Dutta
- Shri Pradip Kumar Ray
- Shri Soumendu Sekhar Das
- Shri Nilay Baran Som
- Shri Abhijit Ghosh
- Shri Chandra Prakash Bhatia
- Photos only

N.B. The "Aayakar Saptabhumi" team is not responsible for any views expressed in all the articles (both Hindi and English) and art forms contained in this magazine.



चक्र

ये जो आज है वही कल भी था वो जो होगा कल वही आज है ये जो झूठ है वो तो सिरचढ़ा जो सच है वही बेआवाज़ है,

किसी राह में किसी शख्स से किसी दिन कोई कुछ पूछ ले आस्तीन में चेहरा छुपाएगा कह जाएगा ये तो राज़ है,

अपने पंख आजमाने से पूर्व ज़रा जान लो चमन के रिवाज़ वो जो कूकता है कौआ है बुलबुल सा है पर बाज है,

थक जाएंगे कुछ देर में तेरे हाथ नोचते-नोचते नकाब बहरूपिए का चेहरा है बदलना इसका अंदाज़ है,

ये जो आज है वही कल भी था वो जो होगा कल वही आज है।

(1990 की रचना)



श्रीकांत कुमार अम्बष्ठ मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त, शिलांग







आशीष प्रधान आयकर निरीक्षक, डिब्रुगढ़

वैभव एक मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार में पला-बढा युवक था। वैभव के पिता एक साधारण चतुर्थ श्रेणी के सरकारी कर्मचारी थे और माँ एक गृहणी थी। पिताजी ने वैभव की बुद्धि क्षमता देखते हुए शुरू से ही उसे पढ़ाने-लिखाने में कोई कोर-कसर नहीं छोडी थी। माँ-बाप ने शुरू से ही अपने छोटे-छोटे सुख-चैन त्याग कर वैभव की पढ़ाई-लिखाई से संबन्धित हर जरूरत को पूरा किया। वैभव भी अपने माता-पिता के द्वारा किए गए हर त्याग से भली-भांति परिचित था। माँ-बाप के सपने उसके कंधों को बचपन से ही मजबूत बना रहे थे। जिम्मेदारियों का एहसास उसे जल्दी ही वयस्क किए जा रहा था। सरकारी विद्यालय से बारहवीं कक्षा तक प्रथम आते हुए वैभव ने इंजीनियरिंग में दाखिला लेने की सोची, जिसके प्रवेश परीक्षा की तैयारी के लिए उसे दिल्ली जाना था और हर बार की तरह इस बार समस्या के रूप में पैसे की तंगी खडी थी। पूरे एक वर्ष दिल्ली में रहना-खाना और कोचिंग की कुल फीस का आकलन दो लाख रुपये लगभग बैठ रहा था। वैभव के पिता ने लोन लेने की सोची पर बैंक वालों ने बताया की पढ़ाई का लोन कॉलेज में दाखिले का बाद मिलेगा, तैयारी के लिए तो निजी लोन लेना होगा जो आम तौर पर महंगा है। वैभव की माँ ने अपने कुछ गहने गिरवी रखना ही मुनासिब समझा जिससे की वैभव को पढ़ने के लिए दिल्ली भेजा जा सकें। कोई भी परिवार में ऐसा चाहता तो नहीं था पर इसके अलावा कोई चारा भी नहीं था। माँ ने भी सोचा कि गहने भी तो इन्हीं दिनों के लिए होते हैं और उसे गिरवी रख कर सबने वैभव को तैयारी करने के लिए दिल्ली भेज दिया। वैभव दिल्ली में रह कर पूरे एक वर्ष दिन-रात एक कर पढ़ाई की। उसके लिए जौनपुर जैसे छोटे जिले से निकल कर दिल्ली शहर के साथ सामंजस्य बैठा पाना इतना आसान न था पर उसके पास ये सब सोचने का समय न था। उसके दिलो दिमाग में सिर्फ उसका लक्ष्य था और अवचेतन मन में कहीं गिरवी पड़े उसके माँ के गहने थे। वैभव की लंबी तपस्या रंग लाई और उसका चयन दिल्ली के ही एक नामी कॉलेज में हो गया।

वैसे तो वैभव का चयन जिस कॉलेज में हुआ था उसकी फीस बहुत ज्यादा नहीं थी पर इतनी कम भी नहीं थी की उसके पिता बिना कर्ज लिए उसे भर सकें। लेकिन इस बार उसके पिता को चिंता कम थी क्योंकि बैंक वालों ने बताया था कि अच्छे कॉलेज के लिए बैंक आसानी से लोन दे देते हैं तो वैभव के पिता ने बिना देरी किए बैंक से कर्ज लेने पहुँच गए। सारे कागज़ को जुटाते-जुटाते कुछ समय लगा पर बैंक वालों के सहयोग से लोन मंजूर हो गया। लोन मंजूरी से घर में सब खुश थे कि चलो कहीं भी हाथ फैलाने की जरूरत नहीं पड़ी पर वैभव की आगे की राह भी यूं आसान नहीं थी। एक तरफ तो माँ के गिरवी पड़े गहने छुड़ाने थे और दूसरी तरफ बैंक के कर्ज को चुकाना था।



कॉलेज में आए प्रत्येक छाल भिन्न-भिन्न आर्थिक परिवेश से आए थे और सबकी अलग-अलग प्राथमिकताएँ थी यहाँ वैभव की पहले दिन से एक ही प्राथमिकता थी और वो थी पढ़कर नौकरी पाना तािक कंघे पर आई जिम्मेदािरयों से मुक्ति पा सके। वैभव ने इसी लक्ष्य के साथ अपनी पढ़ाई का आगाज किया। कॉलेज के दौरान कई चीजों ने उसका ध्यान भटकाने की कोशिश की जैसे कई अन्य छालों की तरह उसका भी मन होता था कि पहाड़ों की ओर सप्ताहांत निकल जाए पर वो अपने मन को समटेकर अपने छोटे से कमरे में पढ़ाई में लगा रहता था। जब उसके मिल बाहर खाने के लिए निकलते तो वो फिर अपनी जेब को याद करते हुए मेस में बने खाने को खाकर आगे बढ़ जाता। कॉलेज में बीतता एक-एक दिन मानो उसके लिए नई-नई चुनौतियाँ ला रहा था जिसका सामना मानो वो किसी तपस्वी जैसा ध्यान में मग्न होकर कर रहा था। धीरे-धीरे, चार वर्ष बीतने को आ गए और वैभव कॉलेज के अंतिम पड़ाव पर था जहां उसकी असली परीक्षा की घड़ी आने वाली थी जहां से उसका नौकरी पाने का लक्ष्य सधने ही वाला था। वैभव भी अधिकांश छालों की तरह ही कैम्पस की तैयारी में लगा हुआ था। कैम्पस का वह दिन आखिर आ ही गया और पहले ही दिन वैभव ने बाजी मार ली। वैभव के हाथ में पहले दिन पहली कंपनी का ऑफर था। वैभव की खुशी की कोई सीमा नहीं थी। उसे ऐसा लग रहा था मानो उसके जीवन का उद्देश्य ही सिद्ध हो गया हो। उसने अपने घरवालों को तुरंत फोन कर के यह खुशखबरी दी। माँ ने फोन उठाया और यह खबर सुन कर तो उनकी आंखो में तो पानी भर आया। आखिर उन लोगों ने भी तो काफी त्याग किया था इस दिन को देखने के लिए। अपने हर छोटे-छोटे सुखों को तिलांजिल दी थी यही दिन देखने के। फिर पिता जी को यह खुशखबरी दी तो पिता जी भी खुशी से झूम उठे। उन्होंने वैभव से कहा कि अब वो निश्चित हो कर सेवानिवृत्त हो सकते हैं। उन्हें तो ऐसा लगा मानो जन्मों का बोझ सर से उतर गया हो।

जल्द ही वैभव का कंपनी में ज्वाइनिंग का दिन आ गया। वैभव पहले दिन आफिस गया। वैभव के अंदर भी वही उमंग और जोश था। उसे अपने अंदर एक सिकंदर दिख रहा था जिसने मानो जग ही जीत लिया हो। अब धीरे-धीरे काम का बोझ वैभव पर बढ़ने लगा। वैभव को पहला लक्ष्य तो बैंक का कर्ज उतारना और माँ के गहने छुड़ाने का था, जिसे पूरा करने में कम से कम तीन साल लगने वाले थे। वैभव के कुछ दोस्त आगे की पढ़ाई की तैयारी में लग गए और कुछ अपनी पसंद की अन्य क्षेत्रों में चल दिए पर वैभव के पास कुछ और सोचने का समय ही नहीं था। जैसे ही कुछ सोचता, उसे बैंक का कर्ज याद आ जाता। वैभव ने बाहर घट रहे सभी घटनाक्रम को एक तरफ छोड़ अपना सारा ध्यान काम में लगाए रखा।

धीरे-धीरे यूं ही पांच वर्ष निकल गए और अब वैभव के पिता जी अपनी नौकरी से सेवानिवृत्त हो चुके थे, माँ का भी स्वास्थ्य कुछ ठीक नहीं रहता था। घर वाले अब वैभव की शादी करना चाहते थे पर वैभव अब नौकरी के इतर कुछ और करने की सोच रहा था क्योंकि अब नौकरी उसे मानो बोझ जैसी लगने लगी थी। उसे लगता था कि इतने वर्षों तक काम करने के बाद नौकरी से उसके अंदर केवल इतना ही उत्साह बचा था कि हर महीने की आखिरी तारीख को वो तनख्वाह का इंतज़ार भर करता था उसके बाद का जीवन उसके लिए फिर अगले महीने की आखिरी तारीख तक का इंतज़ार भर था।

वो जब भी कुछ अलग करने की सोचता तो स्वयं ही जिम्मेदारियाँ किसी न किसी कोने से निकल कर उसके सामने खड़ी हो जाती थीं। कभी घर की छत बनवानी होती थी, कभी किसी के शादी में पैसे देने होते थे। जिस तरह पैसे आते थे उसी तरह ही वो अपने जाने का रास्ता भी बना लेते थे। वैभव अक्सर अपने उन दोस्तों को देख कर चिंतित हो जाता था जो अपने रास्ते निकल गए। अब बीते पांच वर्षों का लेखा-जोखा घूमने लगा था वैभव के दिमाग में।

वैभव सोचने लगा कि आखिर क्या गलत किया उसने ? शायद सोचने का ही समय समाज ने उसे नहीं दिया। उसके अंदर वो हिम्मत ही नहीं भरी कि वो क्या चाहता है ये कभी सोच भी सकें। उसे क्या पसंद है ? इस पर तो कभी उसका ध्यान गया ही नहीं। उसे जो दुनिया बताती गयी वो करता चला गया। इस तरह समाज और उसकी यह व्यवस्था अपने चलने के लिए जो कुछ चाहती थी वो तो होता गया पर इसके लिए जो कीमत चुकाई है वैभव ने वो बहुत बड़ी कीमत है और न जाने कितने मध्यमवर्ग के कितने वैभव यूं ही अपने सपनों की तिलांजिल देकर चुकाते हैं।





जिस नौकरी को वैभव ने अपने जीवन के उद्देश्य बना रखा था, जिस नौकरी के मिलने पर उसकी खुशी की कोई सीमा न थी वही नौकरी अब उसके लिए एक बंधन बन कर रह गई थी। वैभव एक गहन चिंतन में उतर जाता है और सोचना शुरू करता है कि ये जो मनोभाव हैं क्या ये कुछ समय कि बोरियत से उठे हैं ? क्या उसका मन कुछ नई चीज़ करने को खोज रहा था? बहुत सारे प्रश्नों ने उसे घेर लिया है जिसका उत्तर उसके पास नहीं था और उसे खोजे बिना उसका मन बेचैन हो रहा था।

अपने प्रश्नों का उत्तर खोजने के लिए वैभव ने एक लंबी याता पर निकलने का सोचा पर ये अपने माँ-बाप को बताने की हिम्मत नहीं हो रही थी। जैसे ही उसके मन में ये बात आती तो वो डर जाता था। उसे लगता था की कहीं वो सबके साथ कोई धोखा तो नहीं दे रहा। लोग क्या कहेंगे कि कैसा गैर जिम्मेदार बेटा है, माँ-बाप ने इतना संघर्ष किया और अब बेटा भाग रहा है जिम्मेदारियों से। समाज को कहीं मुंह दिखाने लायक नहीं छोड़ेगा। कोई पागल कहेगा, कोई कहेगा कि जादू-टोना कर दिया है किसी ने, जितने मुंह उतनी बातें होंगी। किस-किस को क्या-क्या जवाब देगा, ये सारी बातें उसके दिमाग में कौंध रही थी। वैभव मन के चक्रव्यूह में फंस गया था और उसके दिमाग में एक दूंद ने जन्म ले लिया था। एक ओर मन में डर था तो दूसरे ओर दिमाग कह रहा था कि बाहर निकल जाओ इन सबसे और खोजो अपने आप को। बहुत सोचने के बाद वैभव ने तय किया कि वो अपने माँ-बाप से बात करेगा और फिर इस मामले पर जल्द ही निर्णय लेगा।

वैभव सकुचाते हुए अपने पिता को फोन मिलाता है और थोड़े देर इधर-उधर की बातें करके वो कहता है कि वो एक लंबी छुट्टी पर जाना चाहता है और पिता जी नहीं समझ पाते। वो पहले घबरा जाते हैं और उन्हें लगता है कि उसकी तबीयत कुछ ठीक नहीं है। वैभव के पिता कहते हैं कि उसे घर आ जाना चाहिए कुछ दिन के लिए और सब कुछ ठीक हो जाएगा पर वैभव दढ़ मन से कहता है कि वो एक लंबी याता पर जाना चाहता और अपने आप को खोजना चाहता है। पिता को अभी भी कुछ समझ नहीं आता है और वो फोन माँ को दे देते हैं। माँ ये बात सुनकर रोने लगती है। उन्हें लगता है कि कहीं उनका बेटा योगी तो नहीं हो गया। माँ कहने लगती है कि घर आ जा बेटा, तेरी शादी के लिए लड़की देख रहे हैं। वैभव जानता था कि यहीं सब बातें होंगी पर अब वो हल्का अनुभव कर रहा था और वो अंदर से अब और मजबूती से अपने निर्णय लेने के लिए तैयार था।

वैभव फोन रखने के बाद रात भर सो नहीं पाता हैं और बार-बार एक ही बात सोचता रहता है कि क्या वो सही कदम उठा रहा है? या कहीं कोई गलती तो नहीं कर रहा है? अगले दिन सुबह वैभव अपने वरिष्ठ मैनेजर से मिलने जाता है और अपने दिल की बात बताते हुए नौकरी छोड़ने की बात करता है जिसे सुनकर मैनेजर बिलकुल सकपका जाते है और वैभव को समझाने की कोशिश करता है। उसके मैनेजर कहते है कि वो कुछ दिन कि छुट्टी ले ले क्योंकि वो दिमागी रूप से थक गया है और कहीं घूम के आए। वे उसे बोलते है कि एक लंबे समय के बाद नौकरी में वापसी बहुत कठिन हो जाती है और इसमें उसके करियर को बहुत धक्का लगेगा इसलिए ऐसी गलती उसे नहीं करनी चाहिए।

एक लंबी चर्चा के बाद वैभव अपना इस्तीफा दे देता है और उसे एक महीने का समय मिलता है अपना काम समेट कर आगे की याता पर निकलने के लिए। वैभव अपने नई याता के लिए अपने को तैयार करने लगता है। वैभव एक अच्छी साइकिल खरीदता है क्योंकि उसे नहीं पता था कि उसकी मंजिल कहाँ है और ये याता कितनी लंबी चलेगी और पैट्रोल के पैसे उसके पास होंगे की नहीं इसलिए वो बुलेट की जगह एक साइकिल खरीद लेता है। कुछ कपड़े खरीदता है, एक डायरी खरीदता है। देखते ही देखते एक महीने बीत जाते हैं और अपनी कंपनी से अपना हिसाब करता है। घर वापस आकर रात में एक बैग में थोड़े कपड़े रखता है और अपनी साइकिल तैयार करता है। आज की सुबह एक नई सुबह थी। ये नई सुबह वैभव के लिए एक नई आशा की किरण के साथ आई थी। वैभव नहा धोकर तैयार हो जाता है और घर के मंदिर में हाथ जोड़ करके अपनी स्वयं की खोज पर निकल जाता है। इस याता की कोई मंजिल नहीं थी, इसका ध्येय केवल अपने आप को खोजने के लिए था और इसकी एक बड़ी कीमत वैभव ने चुकाया था पर बिना कुछ आगे की सोचे वो निकल गया अपनी जीवन की सार्थकता खोजने को और उसे पूरा विश्वास था कि वो अपने स्वयं को खोज पाएगा और उसके बाद इस अंतर्याता का समापन हो सकेगा।





आदमी और युद्ध

तेरा मेरा इसका उसका मांगना लेना छीनना झगड़ना नोचना झड़पना तोड़ना हड़पना और बात ऐसे बढ़ती है युद्ध तक

गोली बंदूक बम धमाके चीख चीत्कार क्रंदन कोलाहल ये युद्ध है और इसमें "लोग" मरते हैं या मारे जाते हैं फ़र्क नहीं पड़ता (हम और आप जैसे लोग)

संशय निराशा आशंका पीड़ा उत्पीड़न वेदना अलगाव पलायन ये उत्पाद हैं युद्ध के जिससे "लोग" गुज़रते है या झोंक दिए जाते हैं फ़र्क नहीं पड़ता (हम और आप जैसे लोग) आदमी जानवर पक्षी पेड़ घर मकान दफ़्तर गाड़ियाँ सभी होते हैं तबाह ये युद्ध है और तबाही होनी है या तबाह किए जाते हैं फ़र्क नहीं पड़ता

प्रेम संवेदना घनिष्ठता मिलता के परे घृणा निष्ठुरता शलुता परायापन हावी ये युद्ध है और यही होता है या ऐसा किया जाता है फ़र्क नहीं पड़ता

ये युद्ध यूँ ही चलते रहेंगे धरती पर फिर चाँद और मंगल पर और आदमी बनता रहेगा देवता आदमी को मार के देवता बनने के लालच में आदमी बनता रहेगा दानव यूँ ही चलते रहेंगे युद्ध फ़र्क नहीं पड़ता।



अमित कुमार पांडे अपर आयकर आयुक्त, गुवाहाटी





कब तक आओगे तुम

कब तक आओगे तुम क्या आ भी पाओगे

जब मौसम सारे रूठ जाएंगे
फूल-चमन सब सूख जाएंगे
जब चाँद का दाग लाल होगा
पर्वत सारे झुक जाएंगे
कब तक आओगे तुम
क्या आ भी पाओगे
जब धर्म ध्वज गिर जाएगा
विष-रक्त शीष चढ़ जाएगा
सारे हाथों में घृणा कृपाण
और काल स्तब्ध हो जाएगा
कब तक आओगे तुम
क्या आ भी पाओगे

जब पक्षी शोक मनाएंगे जन्तु सारे छुप जाएंगे सागर हाहाकार करेंगे मानव रक्त नहाएंगे कब तक आओगे तुम क्या आ भी पाओगे जब स्याह अंधेरा छा जाएगा ग्रहण सूर्य को खा जाएगा राख कणों की बारिश होगी काल बिन्दु में समा जाएगा कब तक आओगे तुम क्या आ भी पाओगे।

ये कौन सा युग आया है

ये कौन सा युग आया है बाहर है तीखा प्रकाश अन्तः तिमिर छाया है ये कौन सा युग आया है होड़ लगी आगे जाने की छद्म सिकंदर बन जाने की टाँग खींचते हाथ बढ़ाते किसका घाव बड़ा है ये कौन सा युग आया है प्यासी निदयाँ माँगे पानी जलते जंगल आग दीवानी बरसे अम्ल घटा से और फसलों ने विष खाया है ये कौन सा युग आया है

मद्धम सूरज बूझते तारे धूल-धूसरित पर्वत सारे लुप्त हवाएँ भूली रस्ता मौसम गरमाया है ये कौन सा युग आया है मानव पे है मानव भारी कौन से रण की ये तैयारी जीत के सब कुछ हार है जाना किसने क्या पाया है कौन सा युग आया है ये कौन सा युग आया है।





गजलें

1

दीपक से दिल्लगी न हवाओं से बैर रख सब शाद हों सभी की दुआओं से ख़ैर रख जो खो गया है सबकी निगाहों के सामने उसको पुकार, उसकी सदाओं से ख़ैर रख आकर तेरी पनाह में जो फिर से खिल उठा जलते गुलाब की भी खिज़ाओं से ख़ैर रख जो तेरी ख़ैर रखता है पर बोलता नहीं अब तो उसे न अपनी अनाओं से ग़ैर रख बस जी रहा है जो तेरे दीदार के लिए चाहत भरी नज़र की अदाओं से ख़ैर रख सबका ख़याल रखती है माँ की तरह ज़मीं उसकी मगर ज़मीं के खुदाओं से ख़ैर रख 2

कौन किसी का कब होता है?

आख़िर सबका रब होता है
खुद से बड़ा साया हो जाये
सूरज पीछे जब होता है
चूर नशे में ताकत के ही
ग़ाफ़िल वो हर शब होता है
लोग सुनेंगे कहकर देखो
पर कहने का ढब होता है
कोई न जाने कब क्या होगा
होना है जब, तब होता है
ख़्वाब ज़माने से जब उलझे
एक तमाशा तब होता है
फ़र्क़ नहीं है मुझमें तुझमें
शामिल इक में सब होता है
मीर की ग़ज़लें सुनकर याराँ
मन भर जाये कब होता है?

3

तंज़ ऐसे ज़ुबान से निकला तीर जैसे कमान से निकला रूह भी साथ ले गया जैसे यार वो जब मक़ान से निकला पेड़ जलता रहा जो सदियों तक बन के हीरा खदान से निकला थक गया है पिघल के सूरज जब कल मेरे सायबान से निकला खो गया था जो दौर-ए-अपनापन दोस्त के पानदान से निकला



डॉ. बिनोद कुमार सिन्हा प्रधान आयकर आयुक्त (सेवानिवृत्त) और वर्तमान में, सदस्य, राष्ट्रीय कंपनी कानून न्यायाधिकरण, हैदराबाद

4

बरसों से तुमको पुकारा नहीं है कहूँ कैसे दिल ये तुम्हारा नहीं है जो करता था रोशन अँधेरों में राहें वो जादू सा क्यूँ अब इशारा नहीं है ये कैसी है तड़पन तुम्हें देखने की ख़ुदा से भी मिलना गवारा नहीं है तुम आओ तो आँखों का दरपन भी आये कि मुद्दत से ख़ुद को निहारा नहीं है सही है बस इक राह, राह-ए-मुहब्बत किसी का भी जिसपर इजारा नहीं है विसाले सनम हो या फुरक़त का आलम है सौदा ये जिसमें ख़सारा नहीं है

> dun sia. Saptabhumi





गीतों का जादूगर शैलेन्द्र



डॉ. दीनानाथ सिंह पूर्व उप महाप्रबंधक, राजभाषा, दक्षिण रेलवे, चेन्नई

महक आनेवाली पीढ़ियों को भी आनंदित करती रहेगी। फिल्म आवारा (1951)का "आवारा हं" और श्री 420

फिल्म आवारा (1951)का "आवारा हूं" और श्री 420 (1956) का गीत "मेरा जूता है जापानी" इतने लोकप्रिय थे कि इन्हें न केवल भारत में बल्कि दुनिया भर में तुरंत पहचान मिल गई। इन अमर गीतों को शैलेंद्र ने ही लिखा था। उनकी लेखन शैली लाजवाब थी। इनके गीत समझने में आसान होने के साथ-साथ सम्मोहक और आकर्षक भी थे जिसकी वजह से वे सफलता के आसमान छने लगे।

शैलेंद्र की विशेषता थी कि उनके गाने आसान तो दिखते थे मगर सारगर्भित होते थे। वे बड़ी कुशलता के साथ मामूली बातों से दार्शनिक सिद्धांतों की ओर सैर कराते थे। उनके गानों में सब कुछ है- प्रकृति, बचपन, प्रेम, उदासी, दर्द, आशावादिता, आध्यात्मिकता और कभी-कभी हास्य- व्यंग्य भी। इन्हीं विविधतापूर्ण और बेजोड़ गीतों के कारण वे सर्वश्रेष्ठ फिल्मी गीतकार बने। फिल्म अनाड़ी (1956) में उनके द्वारा लिखे गए निम्नलिखित गीत को देखिए-

किसी की मुस्कराहटों पे हो निसार किसी का दर्द मिल सके तो ले उधार किसी के वास्ते हो तेरे दिल में प्यार जीना इसी का नाम है

इन्होंने राज बैनर की फिल्म बरसात (1949) के लिए एक गीत लिखा जिसके जरिए इन्होंने संगीत प्रेमियों के मन में स्थायी जगह बना ली।

हिंदी फिल्म जगत में अपने गीतों के माध्यम से अमिट छाप छोड़ने वाले गीतकार का नाम है- शैलेन्द्र। उन्होंने अपने गीतों को माध्यम से दुनिया को यह बता दिया कि सरल शब्दों में गंभीर बातों को कैसे कहा जाता है! शब्दों के इस जादूगर द्वारा लिखे गए गीतों के एक-एक शब्द अपने जादुई प्रभाव के लिए जाने जाते हैं। उनके गीतों की लोकप्रियता ने सारी सीमाओं को तोड़ दिया। दो दशक से अधिक समय में उन्होंने लगभग 170 फिल्मों के लिए गीत लिखा। उन्होंने जिंदगी के हर फलसफे और जीवन के हर रंग पर गीत लिखा। उनके गीतों का प्रभाव कुछ ऐसा है कि हर सुनने वाले को लगता है कि यह गीत उसी के लिए लिखा गया है।उनके गीतों को नयी और पुरानी दोनों पीढियों ने समान रूप से पसंद किया है और इनकी



"बरसात में हम से मिले तुम सजन, तुम से मिले हम बरसात में"

शैलेंद्र की संगीतमय शैली और सरल शब्दों के प्रयोग में कुछ ऐसा जादू था जिससे इनके गीत सुननेवालों के दिल में सीधे उतर जाते थे। फिल्म चोरी चोरी के गाने को देखें जहां फिल्म के मुख्य कलाकार एक सपने में कठपुतली के रूप में काम करते हैं ..

"जहां मैं जाती हूँ वहीं चले आते हो चोरी चोरी मेरे दिल में समाते हो"

और यह गाना सदाबहार फिल्म चोरी चोरी(1956)का टाइटल गीत बना।

उनके गीतों की जड़ें गहरी थीं जिनमें गरीबी थी, शोषण का चित्रण था, गरीबों की मासूमियत थी और जो भी उन्हें मिलाउससे आत्मतृप्त रहने की मजबूरी का भी उल्लेख था। श्री 420 (1955) के गीत "रामय्या वस्तावैया" से बेहतर कोई और उदाहरण हो ही नहीं सकता जहाँ वे कहते हैं-

"नैनो में थी प्यार की रोशनी तेरी आंखों में ये दुनियादारी न थी तू और था तेरा दिल और था तेरे मन में ये मीठी कटारी न थी"

और

"उस देश में तेरे परदेश में सोने चांदी के बदले में बिकते हैं दिल इस गांव में दर्द की छांव में प्यार के नाम पर ही तड़पते हैं दिल

'चली कौन से देश गुजरिया तू सज-धज के' गाना राजकपूर की फिल्म बूट पालिश (1954) के लिए लिखा गया गाना है जो अत्यन्त लोकप्रिय रहा । इस फिल्म को कैन्स फिल्म समारोह में पुरस्कृत भी किया गया।

शैलेन्द्र जीवन की परिस्थितियों को गीतों में उतारने का तरीका जानते थे। एक बार यों हुआ कि शंकर जयकिशन (एसजे) ने वादा किया था कि वे शैलेन्द्र को गीत लिखने का मौका देंगे लेकिन वे किसी तरह भूल गए। दुबारा जब किसी समारोह में इन दोनों की मुलाकात हुई तो शैलेन्द्र ने एक छोटी पर्ची एसजे को भेजी जिसपर लिखा था 'छोटी सी यह दुनिया, पहचाने रास्ते हैं, तुम कभी तो मिलोगे, कहीं तो मिलोगे तो पूछेंगे हाल'- पढ़ते ही शंकर जयकिशन को अपने वादे की याद आयी और उन्होंने शैलेन्द्र से इन पंक्तियों को पूरा करके देने का अनुरोध किया जिसे फिल्म रंगोली(1962) में शंकर जयकिशन ने संगीतबद्ध किया और इसे गाया था किशोर कुमार ने।

शैलेन्द्र दो विपरीत परिस्थितियों को मिलाकर एक नई परिस्थिति को दिखाने में माहिर थे। फिल्म आह(1949) में इनकी पंक्तियों को देखिए-





आंख से टपके दिल का खजाना, दिल का खजाना। क्या अंदाज है ये बताने का कि प्रियतमा की आंसू में उसका दिल ही बह रहा है! उनके गीतों में जीवन के दुख और सुंदरता दोनों का वर्णन था-

"हर दिल जो प्यार करेगा वो गाना गाएगा दीवाना सैकड़ों में पहचाना जाएगा"

सहजता उनके गीतों की खासियत थी जो श्री 420(1956) की इन पंक्तियों को देखते ही बनती है:-

"दिल का हाल सुने दिलवाला सीधी सी बात ना मिर्च मसाला छोटे से घर में गरीब का बेटा मैं भी हूं मां की नसीब का बेटा"

शैलेन्द्र का जन्म रावलपिंडी में हुआ जिनका बचपन का नाम था शंकरलाल केसरी लाल। उनके पिताजी अंग्रेज सरकार के कर्मचारी थे। गंभीर आर्थिक परिस्थितियों के कारण उनका परिवार मथुरा में आकर बसा। उनके बड़े भाई मथुरा के रेलवे रिपेयर शॉप में काम करते थे। इन्होंने भी वहीं नौकरी की। इनके पूर्वज बिहार के थे।

शैलेंद्र ने मथुरा के सरकारी स्कूल में पढ़ाई की और मैट्रिक में तीसरा स्थान हासिल किया। उन्हें हॉकी खेलने का शौक था। किसी धनी बच्चे ने इनकी जाति पर एक अभद्र टिप्पणी कर दी थी। इससे शैलेंद्र इतने आहत हुए कि उन्होंने अपनी जांघ पर हॉकी स्टिक तोड़ दी और फिर कभी हॉकी नहीं खेली। जब कभी वे खराब मूड से गुजरते तो वे मथुरा से दुर गाँव के इलाके में जाकर एकांत में समय बिताते थे।

बाद में शैलेंद्र मुंबई चले गए और 1947 में परेल वर्कशॉप में एक वेल्डर के रूप में काम करने लगे। वहां उन्होंने कविताएं लिखनी शुरू की। फिल्म निर्माता राज कपूर ने शैलेंद्र को एक किव सम्मेलन में देखा। वहां वे अपनी किवता 'जलता है पंजाब' पढ़ रहे थे। यह किवता जिलयांवाला बाग हत्याकांड पर लिखी गई थी और सरदार भगत सिंह की याद में थी। कार्यक्रम के बाद राज कपूर उनसे मिले और शैलेंद्र से इस किवता को अपनी फिल्म आग (1948)के लिए बेचने का अनुरोध किया। लेकिन शैलेंद्र कभी भी अपने सिद्धांतों से समझौता करने वाले नहीं थे। इसलिए उन्होंने स्पष्ट शब्दों में कह दिया कि उनका लेखन बिक्री के लिए नहीं है। फिर भी यह विधि की विडंबना ही है कि जब उनकी पत्नी मां बनने वाली थी तो वित्तीय संकट के कारण उन्होंने राज कपूर से 500/- रुपए उधार लिए। कुछ हफ्तों के बाद जब वे पैसे वापस करने गए तो राज कपूर ने लेने से इनकार कर दिया। इसके बजाय शैलेंद्र को उन्होंने अपनी फिल्म बरसात (1949) के लिए दो गाने लिखने का अवसर दिया। लेकिन उस समय तक, संगीत की रिकॉर्डिंग लगभग पूरी हो चुकी थी। इस फिल्म के लिए शैलेंद्र ने दो गीत लिखे जिनमें से एक टाइटल गीत बना और दूसरा गीत भी प्रसिद्ध हुआ जो तत्कालीन युवाओं का पसंदीदा गीत बन गया। 500/- रुपयों के लिए शैलेंद्र ने ये दो गीत लिखे: 'पतली कमर है तिरछी नज़र है' और प्रसिद्ध टाइटल गीत "बरसात में हम से मिले तुम सजन, तुम से मिले हम बरसात में"। इस फिल्म के संगीतकार थे शंकर जयिकशन। ऐसे ही शुरू हई शैलेंद्र और राजकपूर की दोस्ती और नतीजे थे, असंख्य सुपरहिट गाने। उनकी आर्थिक स्थिति भी सुधर गई। उन्होंने एक घर खरीदा और उसका नाम रखा - 'रिमझिम'।

इसके लगभग दो साल बाद आवारा(1951) आई जिसके लिए शैलेंद्र ने गाने लिखे। इसका टाइटल गीत 'मैं आवारा हूं' यादगार बन गया। जब के.ए अब्बास,





राज कपूर की मौजूदगी में फिल्म ' आवारा' की कहानी बता ही रहे थे कि "या गर्दिश में हूं, आसमान का तारा हूं, आवारा हूं' पंक्तियां आ गयीं शैलेंद्र की कलम से। अब्बास जी ने कहा- कया कमाल कर दिखाया है इस नौजवान ने कि इतनी जल्दी सरल पंक्तियों में कहानी का सार बता दिया है। ऐसे चमत्कारी गीतकार थे शैलेंद्र।

राज कपूर, शैलेंद्र और शंकर-जयिकशन की टीम ने एक से बढ़कर एक गीत सिने प्रेमियों को दिए। शंकर जयिकशन के अलावा शैलेंद्र के गीतों के लिए सिलल चौधरी ने मधुमित (1956) में और एस.डी.बर्मन ने गाइड, बंदिनी, काला बाज़ार जैसी फिल्मों में अपने संगीत दिए। इनके इन सुपर हिट गीतो ने इन फिल्मों को अमर कर दिया। राजकपूर के अतिरिक्त शैलेन्द्र बिमल राय जैसे फिल्म निर्माता के भी करीब रहे और उनकी फिल्म दो बीघा जमीन, मधुमित और बंदिनी के लिए भी गीत लिखे। इसी तरह देव आनंद के लिए भी गाइड और काला बाजार में शैलेन्द्र ने गीत लिखे।

विख्यात गीतकार, लेखक तथा निर्देशक गुलजार शैलेन्द्र के बारे में कई बार कहा करते थे कि हिंदी फिल्म जगत की श्रेष्ठतम खोज हैं - शैलेन्द्र। इनका गीत 'मेरा जूता है जापानी' को वर्ष 2016 की अंग्रेज़ी फिल्म 'डेडपूल' में दिखाया गया था।

शैलेन्द्र को तीन बार फिल्म फेयर पुरस्कार मिला था - 1958 में फिल्म यहूदी के 'ये मेरा दीवानापन है' के लिए, 1959 में फिल्म अनाड़ी के 'सब कुछ सीखा हमने' के लिए तथा 1968 में फिल्म ब्रह्मचारी के 'मैं गाऊँ तुम सो जाओ' के लिए।

शैलेन्द्र ढोलक बजाने के भी बड़े शौकीन थे। दरअसल, राजकपूर को शैलेन्द्र को ढोलक बजाते देखने का <mark>इतना शौक था कि उनकी</mark> फिल्मों <mark>के कई</mark> गीतों में हम शैलेन्द्र को ढोलक बजाते भी देख सकते हैं।

शैलेन्द्र, महात्मा गांधी की पुकार पर 'भारत छोड़ो' आंदोलन में कूद पड़े थे। देश के विभाजन से वे अत्यन्त दुखी हुए थे और उनकी कलम से ये पंक्तियां निकलीं-

"सुन भैया रहीमू पाकिस्तान के भुलवा पुकारे हिंदुस्तान से दोनों के आंगन एक थे भैया कजरा और सावन एक थे भैया ओढ़न पहनावन एक थे भैया जोधा हम दोनों एक ही मैदान के

सुन भैया --

परदेशी कैसी चाल चल गया झूठे सपनों से हमको छल गया डर के वह घर से तो निकल गया पर दो आंगन कर गया मकान के

सुन भैया --

उन दिनों में टाइटल के गाने विशेष महत्व रखते थे और यह कहा जाता है कि शैलेन्द्र जी ने उस जमाने की मांग के अनुसार उस समय की फिल्मों के लिए कई ऐसे गाने





लिखे जैसे- छोटी बहन, आवारा, बरसात, जंगली, संगम, हरियाली और रास्ता, आयी मिलन की बेला, अनाड़ी, जिस देश में गंगा बहती है, दिल अपना और प्रीत परायी, राजकुमार, दुर गगन की छांव में आदि। तीन दशक के अपने करियर में शैलेन्द्र ने लगभग 800 गीत लिखे थे।

जब फिल्म 'गाइड' बन रही थी तब हज़रत जयपुरी, देव आनंद के खेमे में उनके साथ थे। फिर भी देव आनंद चाहते थे कि शैलेन्द्र भी गीत लिखें। जब देव आनंद और उनके भाई विजय आनंद इनसे मिलने आए तो इनको बहुत बुरा लगा और इन्हें लगा िक वे इन्हें हज़रत जयपुरी के बाद का दर्जा दिया जा रहा है। इसलिए उन्होंने अप्रत्याशित और मनमानी राशि की मांग की, यह सोचकर कि देव आनंद इतना पैसा नहीं देंगे। लेकिन देव आनंद मान गए और शैलेन्द्र ने गाइड फिल्म के लिए गाने लिखे। 'गाता रहे मेरा दिल', 'आज फिर जीने की तमन्ना है', 'तेरे मेरे सपने अब एक रंग है' जैसे गाने फिल्म के रिलीज़ होने से पहले ही मशहूर हुए। वास्तव में कहा जाए तो गाइड फिल्म शैलेन्द्र के गीतों के कारण ही हिट हुई।

उनके गानों में आम आदमी के सपने दिखे और उसके विश्वास की झलक मिली। उनका मानना था कि आम आदमी ही इस मुल्क का मालिक है। 'मेरा जूता है जापानी' की ये पंक्तियां इसे प्रमाणित करती हैं-

"होंगे राजे राजकुंवर, हम, बिगड़े दिले शहजादे हम सिंहासन पर जा बैठें, जब जब करें इरादे सूरत है जानी पहचानी, दुनिया वालों को हैरानी सर पे लाल टोपी रूसी, फिर भी दिल है हिंदस्तानी

काला बाज़ार का गीत 'खोया खोया चांद खुला आसमान, आंखों में सारी रात जाएगी' ने इन्हें लोकप्रियता के शिखर पर पहुंचा दिया। फिल्म श्री 420 के लिए लिखा गया यह गीत उनके व्यक्तित्व, सोच और वंचित वर्ग के प्रति उनके नज़रिए से परिचित करा देता है-

"दिल का हाल सुने दिलवाला सीधी सी बात न मिर्च मसाला कह के रहेगा कहनेवाला दिल का हाल सुने दिलवाला छोटे से घर में गरीब का बेटा मैं भी हूँ मां के नसीब का बेटा रंज और गम बचपन के साथी आंधियों में जली जीवन बाती भूख ने है बड़े प्यार से पाला दिल का हाल सुने दिलवाला"

शैलेंद्र ने गरीबी, भूख और दमन के खिलाफ लड़ने के लिए अपनी कलम और लेखन का इस्तेमाल किया। फिल्म तीसरी कसम के गाने 'सजनवा बैरी हो गए हमार,





चिठिया हो तो हर कोई बांचे, भाग ना बांचे कोय'; 'सजन रे झूठ मत बोलो, खुदा के पास जाना है' उनकी आंतरिक भावनाओं को दर्शाते हैं। उन्होंने अपने गीतों में दैनिक उपयोग के सरल शब्दों का प्रयोग किया लेकिन उन्हें बेहद प्रभावी ढंग से पेश किया। उन्होंने कुछ ऐसे शब्दों का इस्तेमाल किया जो अब तक बहुत कम इस्तेमाल होते थे। उदाहरण के लिए "जिंदगानी" शब्द शैलेंद्र द्वारा सृजित किया गया था। उन्होंने सिलल चौधरी के लिए मधुमती (1956)में 10 गाने लिखे और सभी 100% हिट रहे।

उन्होंने बच्चों के लिए भी अविस्मरणीय गीत लिखे हैं - "नानी तेरी मोरनी को मोर ले गए, बाकी जो बचा था काले चोर ले गए " (मासूम 1960), "नन्हे मुन्हे बच्चे तेरी मुट्ठी में क्या है। (बूट पालिश 1954) 'भैया मेरे, राखी के बंधन को निभाना, भैया मेरे, छोटी बहन को ना भुलाना' (छोटी बहन 1959) आदि। उन्होंने बूट पॉलिश, मुसाफिर और श्री 420 मेंअभिनय भी किया।

फिल्म "मेरा नाम जोकर" (1970) उनके मरणोपरांत रिलीज़ हुई थी जिसके सभी गाने हिट हुए थे जिसमें 'जीना यहां मरना यहां, इसके सिवा जाना कहां 'गाने का मुखड़ा शैलेंद्र द्वारा लिखा गया था और उनके पुत्र शैली शैलेन्द्र ने इसे पूरा किया था।

कमर्शियल फिल्मों के लिए लिखे गए मशहूर गीतों के अतिरिक्त उन्होंने अनेक कविताएं भी लिखीं। ये <mark>कविताएं उनके व्यक्तित्व, भावनाओं और सोच को पूरी तरह</mark> दर्शाती हैं। इन कविताओं में उनकी मानसिकता, समाज की अव्यवस्था के प्रति क्षोभ, निराशा, समाज के कमजोर और वंचित वर्ग के प्रति सहानुभूति साफ झलकती है। वे चाहते थे कि समाज का हर तबका और हर व्यक्ति एक सम्मान की जिंदगी जिए। भारत सरकार ने इनके सम्मान में 2013 में इनकी तस्वीर वाला लिफाफा और 5 रुपए का डाक टिकट जारी किया।

उनके द्वारा लिखे गए कुछ अनमोल गीतों की पंक्तियाँ इस प्रकार हैं-

- जा जा मेरे बचपन, कहीं जा के छुप नादां....
- मैं चली, मैं चली पीछे-पीछे जहां...
- पान खाए सैंया हमारो...
- याद आयी आधी रात को
- · ये शाम की तन्हाइयाँ ऐसे में तेरा ग़म...
- · अजीब दास्ताँ है ये, कहां शुरु कहां खतम....
- किसी की मुस्कुराहटों पे हो निसार....
- होंठों पे सच्चाई रहती है, जहां दिल में सफाई रहती है....
- मेरा नाम राजू घराना अनाम....
- दम भर जो उधर मुँह फेरे, ओ चन्दा....
- महताब तेरा चेहरा किस ख़्वाब में देखा था...
- ओ रे माझी, मेरे साजन हैं उस पार....
- रुला के गया सपना मेरा....





- दिल अपना और प्रीत परायी, किस ने रीत बनाई....
- खोया-खोया चांद्र, खुला आसमां....
- किसी ने अपना बना के मुझको, मुस्कुराना सिखा दिया...
- बरखा बहार आई, रस की फुहार लाई......
- नज़र नज़र से बात हो रही है प्यार की...
- · ओ शमा, मुझे फूंक दे, मैं न मैं रहूँ...
- · दुनिया बनाने वाले, क्या तेरे मन में समाई...
- ओ जानेवाले हो सके तो लौट के आना...

यद्यपि शैलेन्द्र 43 वर्ष की अल्पायु में ही दुनिया को अलविदा कह गए परंतु अपने पीछे उन्होंने गीतों की समृद्ध और विपुल विरासत छोड़ी है। उनके द्वारा लिखे गए गीत सिदयों तक श्रोताओं का मनोरंजन करेंगे और जब भी गीत प्रेमी उनके गीतों को सुनेंगे, अपनी सुध-बुध खोकर उनके गीतों में डूब जाएंगे।

इस महान गीतकार और कवि की निम्न पंक्तियां - सब कुछ सीखा हमने, ना सीखी होशियारी सच है दुनिया वालो, हम हैं अनाड़ी - उनके सरल और निश्चल व्यक्तित्व के बारे में बताती हैं। यह शरीर नश्वर है, परंतु आत्मा अजर-अमर है। उन्होंने मेरा नाम जोकर में ठीक ही कहा है:-

कल खेल में हम हों ना हों, गर्दिश में तारे रहेंगे सदा भूलेंगे हम, भूलोगे तुम, पर हम तुम्हारे रहेंगे सदा जी चाहे जब हमको आवाज दो, हम हैं वहीं हम थे जहां.....

सचमुच शैलेन्द्र इस दुनिया में नहीं होकर भी अपने गीतों के माध्यम से आज भी हमारे बीच उसी तरह उपस्थित हैं।इस महान विभूति को नमन!







घुटा कण्ठ

घुटे हुए मन से घुटी हुई बातें घुटे हुए कानों में फुसफुसाता हूँ। शोर इतना है कि घुटे कण्ठ की बात और घुट जाती है सच कहता हूँ दोस्त ! हमारी बातें वही हैं अब भी जो हम में होती थीं शोर इतना है इन दिनों सुने नहीं जा सकते हम आपस में हृदय के पुल इन सूक्ष्म आँधियों के दीर्घ आवर्तन को झेल सकें इतना भर ही सिद्ध करो।

नहीं बीतता प्रेम

प्रेम के बीते चुम्बक से मत खींचो उसे उसका ध्रुव बदल चुका है मत पुकारो उसे उसी मोड़ पर उसका वह स्वर खो चुका है

माटी
मोती
अवयव
छन्द —
प्रेम है सब
सृष्टि की सत्ता में गीत है यह
सुनो इसे
इसी में सूब है रहस्य का
उसी प्रेम में कूँजी है इसकी —
क्या बदल गया
क्या बदल नहीं पाया
सब कुछ के बाद भी



तुषार धवल सिंह आयकर आयुक्त (अंतरराष्ट्रीय कराधान) कोलकाता



नींद में बारिश

नींद में सबके सो जाने पर होती है बारिश अकेले ही भीगते हैं नदी नाव और टापू रात की खोह में दलदल है इल का बारिश के झिरमिर सन्नाटे में जो एकदम से महक उठता है शिरीष खिलता है उनींदी बारिशों में भीग कर आयी हवाएँ घुस आती हैं कोरे लिहाफ़ के भीतर चौंक कर ताकता है गरदन उठाए एक बगूला किसी गली से झाँकता है चोर इच्छाएँ पैदा करके मुझे मेरा ही शिकार करती हैं।



गाथाएँ अन्तर्दृहन की चुपचाप भीगती हैं गीले-गीले ही जल रहे हैं पत्ते

भीगी हुई रात के पिछवाड़े में जले पत्ते आग की कहानी कहते हैं





आधी रात का बुद्ध

यह मोरपंखी सजावट की गुलाबी मवाद जिसे तुम दुनिया कहते हो नहीं खींच सकी उसे उसने डबकियाँ लगाई जिस्म-ओ-शराब में मरक़ज़-ओ-माहताब में मशरिक-ओ-मग़रिब में लेकिन रात ढले उग आया वह अपने पश्चिम से वह अपने रीते में छलक रहा है बह रहा है अपने उजाड में वह अपने निर्जन का अकेला बाशिंदा अपने एकान्त में षडज् का गंभीर गीत है रात के चौथे आयाम की अकेली भीड़ है वह अपने घावों में ज्ञान के बीज रोपता रंगता है बेस्ध बड़े कैनवास के कालेपन को काले पर रंग खुब निखरता है वह जान चुका है

रिश्तों की खोखल में झाँक कर वह जोर से "हआऽऽहू" चिल्ला कर मुस्कुरा देता है हट जाता है वहाँ से असार के गहन सार में उतर कर उभरता है वहाँ से निश्चेष्ट निष्कपट निष्काम दुख प्रहसन की तरह मिलते हैं उससे इस पहर पीड़ाएँ बहनों की तरह मुँहजोर उसे मतलब में छुपा 'बे-मतलब' मिल जाता है अचानक लिखता है वह अपना सत्य अपनी कविता उपेक्षित दिन हुए वह कहता है सच्चे मन की अपनी बात दिन चढ़े उसे गलत समझ लिया जाता है दिन भर दोस्तों और दुनिया के हाथों ठगा जा कर चोट खाया आधी रात गये बुद्ध हुआ वह मुआफ़ कर देता है सबको। जगत की लघुता पर मुस्कुराता है वह और उसे भूल जाता है।

लौटता हूँ

लौटता हूँ उसी ताले की तरफ जिसके पीछे एक मद्धिम अन्धेरा मेरे उदास इन्तजार में बैठा है परकटी रोशनी के पिंजरे में जहाँ फड़फड़ाहट एक संभावना है अभी चीज-भरी इस जगह से लौटता हूँ उसके खालीपन में एक वयस्क स्थिरता थकी हुई जहाँ अस्थिर होना चाहती है मकसद नहीं है कुछ भी बस लौटना है सो लौटता हूँ चिंतन के काठ हिस्से में एक और भी पक्ष है जहाँ सने जाने की आस में लौटता हूँ लौटने में इस खाली घर में उतार कर सब कुछ अपना यहीं रख-छोड़ कर लौटता हूँ अपने बीज में उगने के अनुभव को 'होता हुआ' देखने लौटता हुँ





डॉ. भूपेन हजारिकाः संगीत और साहित्य के कोहिनूर

डॉ॰ भूपेन हजारिका - होनहार बिरवान के होत चिकने पात । सन् 1930 के 30 अक्टूबर की बात है - गुवाहाटी कॉटन कॉलेजजिएट हाईस्कूल के छात समाज द्वारा एक सभा का आयोजन किया गया था। इस सभा के रचनाकार महान साहित्यरथी लक्ष्मीनाथ बेजबरूआ सभापति के रूप में उस सभा में उपस्थित थे। उसी सभा में एक पांच साल का बालक मूंगा-रेशम की धोती-कुर्ता पहने एक बेंच पर चढ़कर बेझिझक और निडर होकर एक गीत गा रहा था। उसकी मधुर गीत सुनकर श्रोताओं ने तालियों की गड़गड़ाहट से उसके उज्जवल भविष्य की कामना कर दी थी। उस प्रतिभावान बालक का

गाना सुनकर उसके सिर पर हाथ फेरते हुए और उसे आशीर्वाद देते हुए बेजबरूआ ने कहा था- एक दिन वह बहुत बड़ा कलाकार बनेगा। ऐसे महान साहित्यकार द्वारा की गई भविष्यवाणी उस बालक के बारे में की गई थी, जिसका नाम है - डॉक्टर भूपेन हजारिका। यह नाम कला का प्रतीक है, आज इस धरा पर नए प्रभात के साथ एक नए युग की सूचना अपने संगीत द्वारा जिन्होंने की - वह नाम है डॉक्टर भूपेन हजारिका। एक ऐसा कंठ जिसकी ध्वनि मानव हृदय को कोमल बनाती है, ऐसा कंठ जिसमें है विशाल की शांति और सुख की सांत्वना। उनकी वाणी आज देश में ही नहीं बल्कि विदेशों में भी लोकप्रिय है।

उनके गाने समस्त अनास्था के विपरीत एक आस्था का गीत है, कल्पना के विलासिता के बीच सत्य को प्रशस्त करता गीत। उनके गीतों में जीवन पूंज का प्रवाह है, किसी नकारात्मकता को प्रोत्साहित नहीं करते गीत, उनके गीतों का लक्ष्य है - अनन्य शांति। भूपेन हजारिक के गीतों में अतीत मुस्कुराता है वर्तमान भी उज्जवल होता है और भविष्य भी अपना स्वरूप दिखलाता है।

जन्म :- पृथ्वी में नया सवेरा लाकर नए युग की सूचना से संगीत के आसमान को जिस चमकदार नक्षत्र ने अपने उष्णता एवं रोशनी से मानव जाति को समर्पित किया और जिनकी अनुपस्थिति में यह उष्णता तथा रोशनी आने वाले दिनों में पृथ्वी में मानव जाति को प्रबुद्ध तथा महान करने की आकांक्षा तथा प्रबल इच्छा से अपने संगीत द्वारा समाज संस्कार साधक की भूमिका लेने वाले असम रत्न तथा पद्मभूषण डॉक्टर भूपने हजारिका जी का जन्म असम के सिदया जिले में 8 सितंबर, सन् 1926 को हुआ था। संगीत के भंडार को समृद्ध करने वाले इस महान संगीत सूर्य की माता का नाम शांतिप्रिया तथा पिता का नाम नीलकांत हजारिका था।





सविता दास सवि तेजपुर





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शिक्षा: कला अनुरागी और समाज सचेतक माता-पिता के आदर्श से अनुप्राणित होकर स्वप्रतिभा से जीवन में प्रभाव विस्तार करने में समर्थ थे। मेधावी और जिज्ञासु डॉक्टर भूपेन हजारिका असम के सिद्या तथा तेजपुर में प्राथमिक तथा माध्यमिक शिक्षा ग्रहण की। उल्लेखनीय है कि तेजपुर में ही उन्हें ज्योति प्रसाद अगरवाला, विष्णु प्रसाद राभा जैसे महान व्यतक्तित्व का सानिध्य प्राप्त हुआ। सन् 1942 में कॉटन कॉलेज से इंटरमीडिएट परीक्षा में उत्तीर्ण होकर, सन् 1946 में बनारस हिंदू विश्वविद्यालय से स्नातक की डिग्री प्राप्त की। फिर उन्होंने इसी विश्वविद्यालय से स्नातकोत्तर की डिग्री भी प्राप्त किया। सन् 1950 में अमेरिका के कोलंबिया विश्वविद्यालय से शिक्षा विषय पर डिग्री प्राप्त की। सन् 1952 में कोलंबिया विश्वविद्यालय से जन-संयोग में डॉक्टरेट डिग्री अनुसंधान का विषय प्रौढ़ शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में सहयोग की भूमिका प्राप्त की तथा शिकागो विश्वविद्यालय से लिसले फैलोशि प्राप्त किया।

भूपेंद्र संगीत: मानवतावादी और समाजवादी समाज यह दोनों का ही आधार है भूपेन हजारिका के संगीत का जिसके सुर में हंसी और उम्मीद - आकांक्षाएं आवेग - अनुभूति उत्थान-पतन, अतीत-वर्तमान सभी के रंग छलकते हैं, ऐसे संगीत को ही नाम दिया गया है 'भूपेंद्र-संगीत'। उनके सुरों का अलग-अलग ही कलेवर है एक ऐसा संगीती जो एक मुक्त और स्वच्छ समाज चाहता है जहां अमीर-गरीब के बीच कोई अंतर ना रहे, उनके गीतों में मानव-प्रेम को उन्होंने सबसे पहला स्थान दिया है। बचपन से ही भूपेन हजारिका के घर का माहौल संगीतमय था। उनके पिता ना केवल एक संगीत प्रेमी थे बल्कि वे गीत भी लिखते थे। माताजी असमीया बोर-गीत, कीर्तन-घोषा (असमिया ग्रंथ) के पद और कई लोकगीतों का सुमधुर गायन भी करती थी। ऐसे परिवेश ने निश्चित रूप से भूपेन हजारिका के मन में स्थानीय संगीत का बीजरोपण अवश्य किया होगा।

परंतु उनके संगीत के प्रतिभा का विकास ज्योति प्रसाद अगरवाला और विष्णु प्रसाद राभा के सानिध्य में हुआ। दरअसल 50 के दशक के शुरूआत से ही एक संगीतकार के रूप में भूपेन हजारिका की प्रतिभा प्रकाशित होने लगी।

सन् 1936 में भूपेन हजारिका को ज्योति प्रसाद अगरवाला और विष्णु प्रसाद राभा और फनी शर्मा ने गाने की रिकॉर्डिंग के लिए कोलकाता लेकर गए। जहां "हिज मास्टर वॉइस स्टूडियो" में उन्होंने जयमति कुंवरी, शोणित कुंवरी नाटक के गीतों की रिकॉर्डिंग की थी, साथ ही विष्णु प्रसाद राभा के स्वरचित गीत "काखोते कोलोशी लोई उलाहोते नसीबागी होली व्याकुल" गीत को भी अपनी आवाज दी।

इसी बीच भूपेन हजारिका ने सन् 1937 में मात्र 11 की उम्र में एक गीत की रचना की जो इस तरह थी "श्री कुसुमर पुत्र शिव शंकरगुरू वेधोरीसिल नामोरेतान "। सन् 1940 में भूपेन हजारिका को पहली बार सिनेमा के पर्दे में देखा गया और वह फिल्म थी "इंद्र मालती" जिसके निर्देशक थे और ज्योति प्रसाद अगरवाला। इस फिल्म में भूपेन हजारिका ने एक चरवाहे लड़के का अभिनय किया था और "विश्व विजय नौजवान" गीत में अपनी आवाज दी थी।

असम के सर्वकाल के प्रबुद्ध गायक, गीतकार और सरकार डॉक्टर भूपेन हजारिका के गीतों में निहित दर्शन एक निबंध में समेट लेना इतना आसान नहीं है। उनके गीत साहित्य में प्रवेश करते ही देश तथा काल की सीमाओं से पर्दा उठता है दिखता है, मानव और समाज से परे एक अनंत मंच, उनके इन विस्मित करने वाले दर्शन को मुट्ठी भर शब्दों में बांध लेना दु:साहस है। यह शोध का विषय है।

असमिया तथा हिंदी के अलावा उन्होंने बांग्ला, भोजपुरी, कार्बी, इत्यादि विभिन्न भाषाओं में भी गीत गाए तथा संगीत निर्देशन किया है।

साहित्यः- भूपेन हजारिका ने कई पुस्तकों की रचना की। असमीया भाषा में छोटे बच्चों के उपयोग के लिए असमीया वर्ण परिचय की एक किताब लिखी। असमीया साहित्य के भंडार को समृद्ध करने के लिए उन्होंने निरंतर प्रयास किया। यथार्थवादी होने के नाते उनके लेखनी ने एक उच्च स्तर का पर्याय हमेशा बनाए रखा। डॉ. हजारिका की अन्यतम साहित्य कृतियों (असमीया) में से सुन्दरर नौदिगंतो, सुन्दरर खोरूबोर आलिएदी, समयर पोखी घोरात उठी, सहस्त्र जोने मूक प्रश्नों कोरे, कृष्टीर



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पोथारे-पोथारे, ज्योति कोकाईदेउ, विष्णु कोकाईदेउ, बोहाग माथू एटीऋतु नोहोई, बोननीमान लुइतोर पारे-पार, संपादकीय, मोर देश, मो मोनोर कोथा, प्रसंगों सुन्दरर इत्यादि निबंध संकलन हैं। उसी तरह जिलिकाबो लुईतोरपर, लाहौरी गोगोना, बोहनीमान ब्रह्मपुत्र गीतावाली आदि गीतों के संकलन है। दिहिंगे दीपांगे, मोई एटी जाजाबोर ये दोनों उल्लेखनीय भ्रमणीय कहानी है।

सम्मान एवं पुरस्कार - 1961 सन् में डॉक्टर हजारिका द्वारा निर्मित फिल्म शकुंतला को राष्ट्रपति पुरस्काकर प्राप्त हुआ।

1964 सन् में डॉक्टर हजारिका द्वारा निर्मित 'प्रतिध्वनि' फिल्म को भी राष्ट्रपति पुरस्कार प्राप्त हुआ। यह चलचित्र फ्रांस के अंतरराष्ट्रीय चलचित्र महोत्सव में भी आमांत्रित की गई।

1976 सन् में अब्दुल मजीद द्वारा निर्देशित चमेली मैमसाहब के संगीत निर्देशन के लिए उस साल का सर्वश्रेष्ठ संगीत निर्देशक का सम्मान प्राप्त हुआ। इस संगीत के लिए राष्ट्रपति ने उन्हें रजत कमल सम्मान और रू 10000/- (दस हजार) नगद राशि प्रदान की।

1976 सन् में 26 जनवरी में अरूणाचल सरकार की तरफ से उन्हें मेरा धर्म मेरी मां नामक हिंदी फिल्म के लिए सम्मान स्वरूप स्वर्ण पदक का सम्मान मिला।

1977 सन् में उन्हें पद्मश्री सम्मान प्राप्त हुआ।

1978 सन् में सीमना पेरियर संगीत निर्देशन के लिए बांग्लादेश फिल्म इंडस्ट्रीज की तरफ से उन्हें उस साल के लिए श्रेष्ठ संगीत निर्देशक का सम्मान प्राप्त हुआ।

1987 सन् में असम सरकार की तरफ से उन्हें श्रीमंत शंकरदेव पुरस्कार भी प्राप्त हुआ।

1987 सन् में साल में उन्हें संगीत नाटक अकादमी पुरस्कार प्राप्त हुआ।

1987 सन् में उन्हें इंदिरा गांधी स्मृति पुरस्कार भी प्राप्त हुआ।

1993 सन् में उन्हें असम साहित्य सभा के सभापति का पद भी प्राप्त हुआ।

1993 श्रेष्ठ संगीत निर्देशन का राष्ट्रीय चलचित्र पुरस्कार भी प्राप्त हुआ।

1993 सन् में डॉक्टर हजारिका को 1992 सन् के लिए भारतीय चलचि<mark>ल जगत का सर्वोच</mark>्च सम्मान दादा साहेब फाल्के पुरस्कार भारत के राष्ट्रपति डॉ. शंकरदयाल शर्मा द्वारा प्राप्त हुआ।

2001 में उन्हें पद्मभूषण सम्मान मिला।

2001 में मध्य प्रदेश सरकार द्वारा लता मंगेशकर सम्मान प्राप्त हुआ।

2006 में उनके द्वारा रचित बंगाली गीत मानुष मानुषेर जोन्ने.. गीत को बंगाली सर्वश्रेष्ठ गीतों की श्रृंखला में दूसरा स्थान प्राप्त हुआ।

2008 में उन्हें असम साहित्य सभा की तरफ से साहित्याचार्य सम्मान प्राप्त हुआ।

2012 में में मरणोपरांत भारत सरकार द्वारा घोषित सर्वोच्च सामरिक सम्मान पद्मविभूषण से सम्मानित किया गया।

2019 में मरणोपरांत भारत सरकार का सर्वोच्च नागरिक सम्मान भारत रत्न से सम्मानित किया गया।





गीत और साहित्य के कोहिनूर

अंतिम समयः डॉ. हजारिका की किडनी की समस्याओं और संबंधित जटिलताओं से पीड़ित होने के बाद 5 नवंबर, 2011 को मुंबई के कोकिलाबेन धीरूभाई अंबानी अस्पताल में निधन हो गया। मृत्यु के समय उनकी उम्र 85 वर्ष की थी। उनके पार्थिव शरीर को गुवाहाटी लाया गया और 9 नवंबर, 2011 को अंतिम संस्कार किया गया, जिसमें लगभग 5,00000 लाख लोग शामिल हुए। उनका समाधिस्थल गुवाहाटी विश्वविद्यालय के पास जालुकबारी में स्थापित किया गया है। समाधि स्थल में 'सोनवाली सोवर्नी' नामक एक तीन मंजिला संग्रहालय भी है, जिसमें भूपेन हजारिका के जीवन से संबंधित वस्तुएं और तस्वीरें हैं।

निष्कर्ष:

इस महान व्यक्ति ने असम से सिवय नृत्य को राष्ट्रीय नृत्य के रूप में मान्यता दिलाने में प्रमुख भूमिका निभाई। प्रसिद्ध हिंदी निर्देशक कल्पना लाजमी मृत्यु तक भूपेन हजारिका की छाया बनी रहीं। लंबी बीमारी के बाद शनिवार, 5 नवंबर, 2011 को उनका निधन हो गया। मुंबई के कोकिला बेन अस्पताल में उनका निधन असिमया समाज और संगीत प्रेमियों के लिए एक अपूर्णीय क्षति थी।





दुश्मन कभी दुआ तो एक दोस्त हमनवा हो

दुश्मन कभी दुआ तो एक दोस्त हमनवा हो तू ही बता मेरे दिल की तुम मेरे क्या हो लगकर किसी गले से सौ बार सोचता है इस मुल्क का बशर जैसे दुध का जला हो नज़रें मिलीं बिलावल तो इस तरह झका वो जैसे झके कली बर्ग-ए-गुल कहीं खिला हो उससे कभी न कहना रंज-ओ-अलम फ़साना गर पाँव में न जिसके काँटा कभी गडा हो वो दारादार करके दामन मेरा सितारा दिल मेरा तोडने वाले जा तेरा भला हो यूँ तोहमत लगा मुझ पे तंज़ कस रहे हो गोया कि नाम तुम्हारा दुध का धुला हो ये आख़िरी तमन्ना है अब कि जान मेरी मुझसे लगो गले फिर हँसते हुए जुदा हो जिस मोड से अलग हैं उस मोड पे लगा है जैसे मुझे अभी तक एक हाथ रोकता हो ये नींद जो मुझे रातों को न आ रही है मुमिकन बहुत मुझे वो दिन रात सोचता हो

हमनवा = हम ख़याल/समान विचार के, बशर = इंसान, बिलावल = एक रागिनी/प्रेयसी, बर्ग-ए-गुल = गुलाब की पंखुड़ी, रंज-ओ-अलम फ़साना = दुख भरी कहानियाँ

जहाँ से कुछ नहीं आता वहाँ से बरमला आए

जहाँ से कुछ नहीं आता वहाँ से बरमला आए तेरे कार-ए-जहाँ से कुछ न कुछ तो इस दफ़ा आए हसीं मौसम बदलती रुत दिलों को पास लाई थी नई शाख़-ओ-शजर पे फूल पहली मर्तबा आए मेरी पहली मोहब्बत और शहदोशीर का लहजा वो लड़की देखकर मुझको कहा करती बड़ा आए परी थी वो सनम मेरी यही दिल सोचता रहता न जाने उस तरफ़ से तोहफ़े में फिर क्या आए अगरचे कौन था रहबर क्या थी वो डगर मुरशद सफ़र से कुछ बशर हँसते हुए तो कुछ ख़फ़ा आए तेरी आवाज़ की उम्मीद में बेज़ार बैठा हूँ पुकारो यूँ मुझे अब तुम तआ'कुब से सदा आए यही बस सोचकर मैं इस मिट्टी में घर नहीं करता जमीं पर आसमाँ से कब न जाने ज़लज़ला आए



शैलेन्द्र पांडे अपर आयकर आयुक्त कोलकाता

बरमला = खुलेआम, कार-ए-जहाँ = कार्यक्षेत्र शहदोशीर = शहद के जैसा, अगरचे = हालाँकि/बहरहाल, रहबर = पथ-प्रदर्शक, मुरशद = मार्गदर्शक, बशर = इंसान, बेज़ार = खिन्न, तआ'कृब = पीछे से





धरती जानती है



गिरीश पांडे प्रधान मुख्य आयकर आयुक्त (सेवानिवृत्त) कोलकाता

धरती जानती है धरती वह सब भी जानती है जो हम नहीं जानते। युगों-युगों से तपी है यह धरती लगातार तपस्यारत है, तप रही है। किसी भी संत, महात्मा, ऋषि, ब्रह्मर्षि, फकीर, तीर्थंकर, बोधिसत्व अवतार, पैगम्बर या मसीहा से अधिक तपी है धरती और अभी तक अन्तर्धान भी नहीं हुई है शायद असली अवतार, पैगम्बर या मसीहा धरती ही है। वैसे भी सभी अवतारों, पैगम्बरों और मसीहाओं के प्रकाशपुंजों का संलयन हो गया है धरती के विराट आभामण्डल में। लोग धरती को टटोलते हैं कोई वर्तमान के लिए कोई इतिहास के लिए कोई भविष्य के लिए लेकिन सबका भविष्य तो धरती ही है। धरती सोचती है 'मैं भी कैसी माँ हूँ माँ तो केवल जन्म देती है और मैं जन्म भी देती हूँ और मृत्यु के बाद उन्हें अपनी कोख में एक बार पुनः सुला लेती हूँ।

धरती केवल अपने को ही नहीं जानती बल्कि, जल, पावक, समीर और गगन सबको जानती है धरती सौरमण्डल, अंतरिक्ष, आकाशगंगा और समग्र काल और सृष्टि सभी को जानती-पहचानती है धरती। सारे नैसर्गिक नियमों को जानती-मानती है धरती। अग्नि, जल, वायु या आकाश धरती के ऋत के साथ जब अपना स्वर मिलाते हैं तो निकलती हैं विभिन्न ध्वनियाँ उनमें अधिकांश तो ममतामयी एवम् प्रिय ही होती हैं लेकिन कभी-कभी वे रूप धर लेती हैं ज्वालामुखी, बाढ़, तुफान या भूकंप का। काश! हम आकाशवाणियों के साथ-साथ समय रहते सुन पाते धरतीवाणियाँ भी। धरती वैज्ञानिक भी है और प्रयोगशाला भी। धरती स्टेज भी है, कही अनकही कथा भी, और रहस्य भी। धरती सारे आवेश अपने में समेट लेती है फिर भी रहती है अनावेशित। जितनी भी मूर्तियाँ हैं जिन्हें हम पूजते हैं





यरती ज्यनती है

जितनी भी इमारतें हैं जहां हम पूजते हैं सभी धरती के ट्कड़े हैं। हम टुकड़ों की जगह, टुकड़ों-टुकड़ों की जगह पूरी धरती की इबादत कब करेंगे ? पूरी धरती की पूजा कब करेंगे ? या पुरी धरती को ईश्वर का प्रतीक कब मानेंगे ? जब-जब लड़ाइयाँ हुई हैं परिवारों में या राज्यों में तो बेवजह कटी-खपी-नपी है धरती और फिर भी अखबारों, किताबों में कितनी कम छपी है धरती! सारी गंदगी लोग करते हैं और उनको समेटती-सहेजती है धरती सबकी तपस्या की साथी, साधन और साक्षी रही है धरती फिर भी फल और यश सबको लेने दिया स्वयं नेपथ्य में ही रही धरती। धरती को जानने के लिए न तो किसी परिभाषा की जरूरत है और न ही किसी शास्त्र की क्योंकि कि अपनी परिभाषा और शास्त्र भी स्वयं ही है धरती। आकाश के अन्दर धरती है यह सच है लेकिन यह भी उतना ही सच है

कि धरती के अन्दर आकाश भी है। लोग कहते हैं आत्मा आकाश से आती है मैं जानता तो नहीं लेकिन मुझे विश्वास है कि आत्मा भी धरती से आती है या धरती के अन्दर के आकाश से आती है। काश! सभी यह मान पाते कि हमारी आत्मा किसी और अन्तरिक्ष या आकाश से नहीं आयी है शरीर के साथ-साथ धरती से ही उपजी है आत्मा भी इसीलिए आत्मा अपनी शांति के लिए किसी और स्वर्ग की कामना न करे धरती को ही क्यों न स्वर्ग माने। कहा जाता है धरती माँ है और पिता आकाश यह भी कहते हैं कि मातृत्व एक निश्चितता (सर्टेनिटी) है और पितृत्व एक संभाव्यता (प्रोबेबिलिटी) और फिर धरती को कहते हैं भोग-लोक, पाप-लोक, मृत्यु-लोक, दुःख-लोक और आकाश में कल्पना करते हैं स्वर्ग लोक की।





यरती ज्यनती है

एक संभाव्यता के लिए हम युगों-युगों से कर रहे हैं तिरस्कृत निश्चितता को, धरती को। धरती मनुष्य और जीवों के साथ-साथ राज्यों की भी माँ है, धर्मों की भी व्यवस्थाओं की भी, सभ्यताओं की भी और अवतारों-पैगम्बरों की भी। धरती पर रहने वाले सारे मनुष्य, जीव-जन्तु और वनस्पतियों से धरती का एक ही सा रिश्ता है जबिक अलग-अलग देवताओं, अवतारों, पैगम्बरों, मसीहाओं से रिश्ते हैं अलग-अलग अतः धरती को पूजना, पविव्रतम मानना धरती के प्रति उस सार्वभौमिक रिश्ते का सम्मान होगा। लोग गणेश की तर्ज पर माता-पिता गुरु का ध्यान कर लेते हैं परिवार का ध्यान कर लेते हैं परिक्रमा कर लेते हैं और सोचते हैं कि पुरी धरती का ध्यान हो गया परिक्रमा हो गयी। प्रश्न कुछ था उत्तर कुछ और दिया गया और प्रश्न का गलत आशय लगाकर

परीक्षाफल कुछ और दे दिया गया। और शराफत देखिए षडानन की कि रिजल्ट पर पुनर्विचार के लिए आवेदन भी न दिया। आइये, हम सब एक बार उक्त परीक्षाफल पर पुनर्विचार के लिए षडानन् की तरफ से, धरती की तरफ से आवेदन देते हैं। गलत परीक्षाओं और गलत नतीजे घोषित करने की एक लम्बी परम्परा रही है मिथकों में इसको तोड़ना होगा। गणेश के मिथक का तो बहुत ही अधिक गलत प्रयोग किया गया। जो भी गुरू की परिक्रमा नहीं करता उसे सफलता नहीं मिलती भले ही पूरी दुनिया की परिक्रमा कर ले पुरी दुनिया का ज्ञान हासिल कर ले। लम्बी पिरक्रमाओं की परम्परायें सच्चे अर्थों में धरती से जुड़ने की परम्परायें हैं पूजायें विवादित भी हो सकती हैं लेकिन परिक्रमायें निर्विवाद हैं। आइये, हम यथासंभव परिक्रमायें करें।



गरती जमनती है

हम नहीं कहते कि सुर्य, चन्द्र, ग्रहों-नक्षत्रों की महिमा कम हो या उनकी पुजा न हो लेकिन उनकी पूजा से मतभेद उभर सकते हैं कोई 'क' ग्रह की पूजा करेगा और कोई 'ख' ग्रह का पूजक हो सकता है और 'क' की पुजा का विरोधी; हम यही कहते हैं कि आप किसी भी ग्रह-नक्षल या देवता की पूजा करिए लेकिन उनका प्रतीक पूरी धरती को ही मानिये। धरती की पूजा का यह अर्थ भी नहीं होगा कि हम फिर मान लें कि सुरज तथा सभी ग्रह-नक्षत धरती की परिक्रमा करते हैं। और एक बार फिर इस सच को कहने वाले 'कि धरती सुरज की परिक्रमा करती हैं। का गला घोट दें, गैलीलियो की तरह। नहीं, धरती की पूजा सत्य के साथ ही होगी। और धरती की पूजा का मतलब पूरी धरती की पूजा, उसके किसी खंड की नहीं। कृष्ण ने इन्द्र के स्थान पर गोवधर्न पर्वत की पूजा करायी थी।

कबीर ने व्यंग्य में ही कहा 'पाहन पूजे हरि मिले तो मैं पूजूं पहार' पहाड़ पूजने से कबीर को हरि मिलते या नहीं कहा नहीं जा सकता लेकिन वह पहाड़ जिसका एक अंग है उस धरती को पूजने से हरि जरूर मिलेंगे। कबीर जब कहते हैं 'ता चढ़ि मुल्ला बांग दे, क्या बहरा हुआ खुदाय।' मस्जिद पर तेज आवाज करने से मुल्ला की ध्वनि खुदा सुनता है या नहीं यह तो नहीं मालूम लेकिन धरती से समग्रता से जुड़कर समग्रता से आवाज निकालने पर धरती भी सुनती है, खुदा भी। एक मिल ने कहा-'पहाड़ की पूजा धरती के प्रतीक के रूप में की जाये तो ?' प्रश्न यही है क्या प्रतीक को भी प्रतीक की आवश्यकता है ? धरती से जुड़ना धरती से जुड़ा महसूस करना सबसे आसान पद्धति है ध्यान की तुरन्त विलीन हो जाते हैं सारे मानसिक आवेश और चित्त हो जाता है प्रशान्त। धरती की पुजा के लिए



केवल यही मानना काफी नहीं होगा कि पूजा वहीं होती है जहाँ सिर रखा जाता है बल्कि हमारे एक मिल ने कहा कि सिर रखकर पूजायें नहीं छद्म हुए हैं। दरअसल पूजा वही है जहाँ आप सदा पैर रखे हुए हैं सदाचरण ही पूजा है। पूजा की पूरी परिभाषा बदलनी होगी पहले भी तो पुजा की पद्धतियाँ बदलती ही रहीं जब भी कोई सवाल गलत किया जाता रहा उसे ट्रायल एण्ड एरर द्वारा अलग-अलग तरीके से करने की कोशिश की जाती रही। फिर एक तरीका यह भी सही। हो सकता है यही सही हो जाये। वैसे धरती पूजा चाहती नहीं; लेकिन फिर भी जब भी हम धरती से भावनात्मक रूप से जुड़े हैं तो उसकी पूजा ही कर रहे हैं।

धार्मिकता/इतिहास की तलाश में लोग धरती की खुदाई तक कर डालते हैं 'ग' मीटर तक खोदते हैं तो एक अवशेष मिलता है कल को कोई दूसरी व्यवस्था '2ग' मीटर तक खोद कर दूसरा अवशेष निकालती है कल को तीसरी व्यवस्था

'3 ग' मीटर कल को चौथी इसी प्रकार पांचवीं, छठी, सातवीं व्यवस्थायें आती हैं और भिन्न-भिन्न अवशेष निकालती हैं लेकिन इन सब खुदाइयों के बाद अंत में जो निकलता है वह होता है मिट्टी और पानी वही आध्यात्म का प्रतीक होता है क्योंकि धार्मिक स्थलों के अवशेष भी हो सकते हैं धर्मों के अवशेष हो सकते हैं इतिहासों के आवेश हो सकते हैं लेकिन आध्यात्म का अवशेष नहीं होता। और यह सब होता देखकर धरती क्या सोचती है. 'मझे ही खोद रहे हैं धार्मिक स्थलों/इतिहासों के अवशेषों के लिए और मैं जो स्वयं सबसे निकट और बड़ी मूर्ति/कहानी हूँ ईश्वर की उसे देख भी नहीं रहे हैं।' धरती का अर्थ अक्सर साम्राज्य ही लिया गया इसीलिए प्रश्न उठाये गये धरती का नेता कैसा हो ? धरती का सेवक नहीं कहा गया। 'वीरभोग्या वसन्धरा' के स्थान पर अब शाश्वत मंत्र होना चाहिए

'सर्वपुज्या वसंधरा'। धरती की पुजा/सेवा वही कर सकता है जो धरती को सुन सकता हो महसूस कर सकता हो समझ सकता हो संवाद कर सकता हो। धरती चुंकि निकट दिखती है इसलिए हर व्यक्ति धरती पर अधिकार चाहने लगा। जो दृश्य है और निकट है व्यक्ति उस पर अधिकार करना चाहता है और जो अदृश्य है उसे पुजना चाहता है जबिक पूजा का संतुलित स्वरूप यही है कि जो निकट है, दृश्य है और सम्पूर्ण है वही विराट ईश्वर का सर्वश्रेष्ठ प्रतीक है। यदि सभी लोग धरती की पूजा करने लगें तो सहज ही खत्म हो जायेंगे सारे झगड़े, टंटे लेकिन धरती की पुजा का अर्थ धरती पर अधिकार जमाना नहीं होगा अधिकार जमाना कुछ और है तथा पूजा करना, समझना, संवाद करना कुछ और। विराट ब्रहमाण्ड को समझना ही आध्यात्म है लेकिन पुजा प्रतीक की ही की जाती है और धरती ही विराट ईश्वर का सबसे आदर्श प्रतीक है पुजने के लिए यह कितना अच्छा है कि धरती जानती है।





डॉ. सुनील कुमार शॉ नेह्र, शिलांग

भारतीय संस्कृति एवं साहित्य परंपरा के वाहक : कन्हैया लाल माणिकलाल मुंशी

भारतीय संस्कृति एवं साहित्य परंपरा बहुत पुरानी है। यह विश्वविख्यात है कि भारतीय सभ्यता काफी प्राचीन है। भारत ने एक-एक करके कई विदेशी आक्रमणों का सामना किया है। उन सभी आक्रमणों से गुजरते हुए भी भारतीय संस्कृति अपनी अस्मिता को कभी ख़त्म होने नहीं दिया। न जाने कितनी ही जातियों ने इस देश की सांस्कृतिक विरासत को ख़त्म करने का प्रयास किया लेकिन वे अंततः असफल रहे। देश की संस्कृति एवं विरासत की रक्षा करने वाले साहित्यकारों में से एक विशेष उल्लेखनीय नाम आता है - कन्हैया लाल माणिकलाल मुंशी जी का। साहित्य में इनके योगदान को भुलाया नहीं जा सकता है। मुंशी जी ने हिन्दी, अंग्रेजी एवं गुजराती भाषा में सौ से भी अधिक ग्रंथों की रचना की है। बहुमुखी प्रतिभा के धनी कन्हैया लाल माणिकलाल मुंशी का जन्म भड़ोच (गुजरात) के उच्च सुशिक्षित भागर्व ब्राह्मण परिवार में 30 दिसंबर,1887 को हुआ था। इनके पिता का नाम मानेकलाल नरभेराम मुंशी एवं माता का नाम तापी था। मुंशी जी की प्रारम्भिक शिक्षा अपनी माँ के सानिध्य से आरम्भ हुई। बड़ौदा में अपनी महाविद्यालीय शिक्षा के दौरान कन्हैयालाल माणिकलाल मुंशी को अध्यापक के रूप में अरविंद घोष (महर्षि अरविंद) का सान्निध्य मिला। इस सम्पर्क से मुंशी जी के मन में औपनिवेशिक शासन के खिलाफ विद्रोह का संकल्प जगा। साथ ही इसी सम्पर्क ने मुंशी जी के हृदय में भारत की गौरवशाली सांस्कृतिक, बौद्धिक तथा आध्यात्मिक धरोहर के प्रति अगाध श्रद्धा भी भर दी। 1910 में मुंशी जी ने बम्बई विश्वविद्यालय से एलएलबी की उपाधि प्राप्त की और वकालत शुरू करने के बाद बहुत कम समय में ही बम्बई उच्च न्यायालय के प्रमुख वकीलों में से एक बन गये। हिंदू कानून पर मुंशी जी की असाधारण पकड़ थी क्योंकि उन्होंने यह ज्ञान केवल कानूनी किताबों से ही नहीं बल्कि व्यावहारिक एवं धर्मशास्तों के गम्भीर व तर्कसंगत अध्ययन से प्राप्त किया था।

मुंशी जी को कई दिग्गज साहित्यकारों का सानिध्य भी मिला इसलिए इनके अन्दर आरंभिक दौर से ही साहित्य का संस्कार परिलक्षित होता है। उन्होंने सदा कर्मवाद से प्रगति की ओर बढ़ने को प्रधानता दी है। उन्होंने अपने होने के अर्थ को स्पष्ट करते हुए लिखा है " मैं कमाता हूँ, मैं घूमता-फिरता हूँ - मैं लिखता हूँ, सिर्फ यही विकास नहीं है, और ना ही ये महत्वपूर्ण है। मैं क्या था और आज क्या हूँ वही महत्वपूर्ण है।" मुंशी जी द्वारा लिखे गए साहित्य ग्रन्थ आज भी प्रासंगिक हैं। ऐतिहासिक दृष्टि से उनके सभी उपन्यास या आलोचनात्मक ग्रन्थ सबका महत्वपूर्ण स्थान है। मुंशी जी कई बड़े-बड़े साहित्यकारों के सानिध्य में रहे एवं उनका झुकाव कई बड़े-बड़े व्यक्तित्व के प्रति था। उन सबसे वे प्रभावित तो थे लेकिन वे अपना व्यक्तित्व अलग तरह से निर्मित करना चाहते थे

और उन्होंने अपना व्यक्तित्व उसी तरह से निर्मित भी किया। आज भी गुजराती एवं हिन्दी साहित्य जैसे कई भाषा साहित्य में उनके योगदानों की चर्चा की जाती है। उनके व्यक्तित्व के संपर्क में विष्णु प्रसाद त्रिवेदी लिखते हैं "भावना, प्राणबल, गतिशीलता, महत्वाकांक्षा, साक्षी, समुदाय खड़ा करने की कार्यक्षमता आदि को लेकर उन्होने बम्बई के जाहेर जीवन में बेजोड़-प्रतिष्ठा एवं प्रभाव प्राप्त किया। परिणामस्वरूप उन्होने ढलती उम्र में भारतीय विद्याभवन की आज अद्वितीय मानी जाने वाली महान संस्था की स्थापना की। इस संस्था के प्रधान पुरुषार्थ एवं उसकी सिद्धि में भारत का राजकीय एवं सांस्कृतिक इतिहास माना जाता है। भारतीय विद्याभवन की अनेक संस्कार-पोषक पुस्तकें भारत के गाँव-गाँव में होंगी।"2 मुंशी जी के कई योगदानों में एक महत्वपूर्ण योगदान है भारतीय विद्याभवन की स्थापना। इसके स्थापना ने कई मायनों में गहरी छाप छोड़ी। इसके संदर्भ में लिखा गया है "स्वाधीनता से लगभग दस साल पहले नवम्बर,1938 में उन्होंने भारतीय विद्या भवन की स्थापना की ताकि भारत के वर्तमान तथा भविष्य को भारत के सांस्कृतिक और वैचारिक पुनर्जागरण से संजोया जा सकें। 1938 में मुंशी और उनके तीन मिलों द्वारा दिये गये 250 रुपये प्रति वर्ष के योगदान से स्थापित भारतीय विद्या भवन के आज सारे विश्व में लगभग 120 केंद्र और इनसे जुड़े हुए 350 से अधिक शैक्षणिक संस्थान हैं। भवन से संबंधित कई संस्थानों में इंजीनियरिंग, सूचना प्रौद्योगिकी, मैनेजमेंट, संचार व पत्रकारिता, विज्ञान, कला व वाणिज्य की पढ़ाई की व्यवस्था है। लेकिन इन सबसे ऊपर भवन ने भारतीय विद्या के अध्ययन-अध्यापन पर सर्वाधिक ध्यान दिया है।"3 भारतीय विद्या भवन भारत का एक शैक्षिक न्यास (ट्रस्ट) है। इसकी स्थापना कन्हैयालाल मुंशी ने 7 नवम्बर,1938 को महात्मा गांधी की प्रेरणा से की थी। सरदार वल्लभ भाई पटेल तथा राजगोपालाचारी जैसी महान विभृतियों के सक्रिय योगदान से विद्या भवन गांधी के आदर्शों पर चलते हुए आगे बढ़ता रहा। भारतीय विद्या भवन का उद्देश्य केवल पाठ्यक्रम या व्यवसाय आधारित शिक्षा भर ही नहीं है, बल्कि यहां संस्कृति, कला, योग और वैदिक मुल्यों पर आधारित शिक्षा ही मुख्य ध्येय है। संस्था ने भारत की संस्कृति का बाहर के देशों में भी प्रचार किया है। मुंशी जी ने साहित्य की कई विधाओं में अपनी लेखनी चलाई है। साहित्य की लगभग सभी विधाओं पर मुंशी जी का समान अधिकार था। इस बात को सहर्ष स्वीकार किया जा सकता है कि उनकी पकड़ सामाजिक, ऐतिहासिक एवं पौराणिक स्तर पर काफी मजबूत थी। उन्होंने सामाजिक, ऐतिहासिक एवं पौराणिक कई उपन्यासों की रचना की है। उनके कई उपन्यासों एवं पुस्तकों का हिन्दी में अनुवाद किया गया है। इनके साहित्यानुरागी एवं शिक्षाविद व्यक्तित्व के पहलुओं को उजागर करते हुए लिखा गया है "एक रचनाकार और सम्पादक के रूप में कन्हैयालाल मुंशी की उपलब्धियाँ अनुठी हैं, जैसे यंग इण्डिया अख़बार का सम्पादन और मुंशी प्रेमचंद के साथ हंस पत्रिका का सम्पादन। कन्हैयालाल मुंशी एक असाधारण साहित्यकार थे। उन्होंने गुजराती, हिंदी व अंग्रेज़ी में सौ से ज़्यादा उत्कृष्ट ग्रंथों की रचना की। एक साहित्य सेवक के रूप में उन्होंने गुजराती साहित्य परिषद, संस्कृत विश्वपरिषद तथा हिंदी साहित्य सम्मलेन की अगुआई भी की। एक शिक्षाविद के रूप में भी मुंशी जी ने अनेक शैक्षणिक संस्थानों की स्थापना की। इनमे सबसे उल्लेखनीय है - सरदार पटेल के साथ मिल कर आणंद में भारतीय कृषि संस्थान की स्थापना, जो आज एक पूर्ण विश्वविद्यालय है।"4 मुंशी जी को भारतीय इतिहास एवं संस्कृति की अच्छी एवं गहरी जानकारी थी। लोपामुद्रा उपन्यास की भूमिका में आयों का चिलण करते हुए लिखा है "ये आर्यजन कई हिस्सों में बंट गए थे। इन्हें 'विश' कहते थे। विश अलग-अलग ग्रामों में थे। ग्रामों में गौएँ एक साथ बंधती थीं। वे एक गोत्र पृथक-पृथक कुलों से बनते थे। हर ग्राम का सारा प्रबंध उनका मुखिया ग्रामीण किया करता था। कभी-कभी ग्राम के ग्राम अपने बाल-बच्चे, गौएँ, घोड़े और बकरे लेकर चारे की तलाश में एक दूसरे ठिकाने चले जाते थे। गांव स्वावलंबी समुदाय होता था।"5

कन्हैयालाल माणिकलाल मुंशी के साहित्य पर उनके जीवानानुभवों को विशेष रूप से देखा जा सकता है। मुंशी जी की साहित्यिक रचनाओं में उनके जीवन के इर्द-गिर्द घूमते पालों को भी स्पष्ट रूप से देखा जा सकता है। कई कथा सूल इन सभी पालों के जीवन सूलों के माध्यम से पिरोई गई है। भारतीय संस्कृति एवं इतिहास से इनका विशेष लगाव था। इनके कई उपन्यास गुजरात की इतिहास एवं सांस्कृतिक परंपरा को वर्णित करती हैं। इनकी रचनाओं में 'पाटण की प्रभुता', राजाधिराज' एवं 'गुजरात नो नाथ' कृति में गुजरात के सामाजिक राजनैतिक ऐतिहासिक एवं सांस्कृतिक स्थिति का वर्णन बहुत ही रोचक ढंग से किया गया है।

साहित्य

इन तीनों उपन्यासों की रचना एक ही पृष्ठभूमि पर की गई है। ये तीनों उपन्यास ऐसे प्रतीत होते हैं जैसे कि एक कड़ी का निर्माण कर रहे हों। इनके अतिरिक्त मुंशी जी का एक उपन्यास है 'जय सोमनाथ'। सोमनाथ मंदिर पर जब गजनवी का हमला हुआ था, तब की स्थिति का इस कृती में जीवंत वर्णन किया गया है। 'जय सोमनाथ' की समीक्षा करते हुए प्रदीप राजपूत लिखते हैं "सोमनाथ मंदिर पर ग़ज़नवी का हमला बहुत से इतिहासकारों द्वारा शोध का विषय रहा है, जहाँ कुछ का मानना है कि राजपूत योद्धाओं ने ग़ज़नवी के अमीर की सेना से भय के कारण अपने गढ़ छोड़ दिये और किसी सुरक्षित जग़ह जाकर शरण ले ली, वहीं मुंशी जी 'जय सोमनाथ' में ये दावा किया है कि महमूद को मार्ग में बहुत से राजपूती तलवारों का सामना करने को मिला। लोहकोट, मुलतान, सपादलक्ष और घोघगढ़ के मार्ग में उसे दिक्कतें आयीं। जहाँ लोहकोट और मुलतान सहजता से गज़नी के आधीन हो गए, वहीं सपादलक्ष और घोघागढ़ में सेना का सामना करना पड़ा। वहीं कहानी में आमीर के हमला करने से पहले के सोमनाथ का दृश्य भी है, जहां नर्तिकयों का जीवन है उनके रहन-सहन और मंदिर प्रांगण में नृत्य करने का चित्र भी है। उन्हीं नर्तकियों में चौला भी है और उसकी माँ गंगा भी, गंगा नर्तकियों की मुखिया है और नृत्य और संगीत की छोटी से छोटी बारीकियों की उसे पहचान है। चौला भगवान भोलेनाथ को रिझाने के लिए ही नृत्य करना चाहती है। मंदिर में बहुत सी कुप्रथाओं का भी प्रपंच था जिन्हें लेकर मंदिर के मुख्य पुजारी गंग सर्वज्ञ भी चिंतित रहा करते थे। इन्हीं सब की और मुंशी जी ध्यान आकृष्ट करते हैं और कहानी कहते चलते हैं।"6 मुंशी जी ने केवल ऐतिहासिक घटनाओं का ही जिक्र अपने उपन्यासों में नहीं किया है,उन्होंने समाज की कुरीतियों आदि का भी जीवंत वर्णन किया है। 'जय सोमनाथ' उपन्यास की विवेचना करते हुए पी.एच. पीयूष लिखती हैं "मुंशी जी के अन्य उपन्यासों की अपेक्षा इसमें ज्यादा मौलिकता नजर आती है। मुंशी जी के अन्य उपन्यासों में व्यक्ति विशेष को केंद्र में रखकर कल्पना के सहारे उनके संघर्षों का प्रभावशाली वर्णन हुआ है जबकि 'जय सोमनाथ' में देवंशी व्यक्तित्व के भ्रम का एहसास होते ही चीला की मूक संवेदना को प्राधान्य मिला है। जो सोमनाथ मंदिर के ध्वंस से भी अधिक करुण प्रसंग बन पाया है।"7 इसी क्रम में इनके उपन्यास गुजरात के नाथ का भी जिक्र किया जा सकता है। गुजरात के नाथ उपन्यास गुजरात गाथा को प्रस्तुत करती है इसके संबंध में पुस्तक में लिखा गया है "प्रख्यात गुजराती साहित्यकार कन्हैयालाल माणिकलाल मुंशी की ऐतिहासिक उपन्यासमाला गुजरात गाथा ' का प्रस्तुत खण्ड, पिछले खण्ड के छूटे हुए कथासूत को पकड़ कर आगे बढ़ाता है। इसमें 1096-1110 ई. के मध्यदस वर्ष का घटनाक्रम है। पाटन की शासनपीठ पर जयसिंह देव आसीन है। एक शासक के रूप में वह अभी कच्चा और अनुभवहीन है, किन्तु राजमाता मीनलदेवी और महामात्य मुंजाल के पुष्ट अनुभवों, शासन कौशल और दुरदर्शिता के सहारे गुर्जर सोलंकी साम्राज्य की पताका फहरा रही है। घरेलू स्तर पर सब शान्त है, महामात्य मुंजाल ने सारे सूल एकल बाँध दिये हैं। जयसिंह के सौतेले भाई देवप्रसाद का पुल लिभुवनपाल लाट प्रदेश का दंडनायक है। कर्णावती का शासन भार नागर मन्त्री दादाक के जिम्मे है और खंभात उदा मेहता के पास। सोरठ का भार सज्जन मन्त्री के पुल परशुराम पर है। यहाँ तक तो सब ठीक है, परन्तु बाहरी मोर्चा! एक ओर मालवा के अवंतिराज का दबाव और दूसरी ओर गुजरात के ही जूनागढ़ के दुर्द्धर्ष राजा दा' नवघण और उसके षड्यंत्रकारी पुत्नों के कुचक्र। गुजरात के नाथ' का चौदह वर्षों का समय इन्हीं समस्याओं से जुझते, अनेक उपकथाओं, अनेक चरित्रों से होकर बीतता है। गुजरात के नाथ' का कथाफलक विस्तृत है और विस्तार की वजह से घटनाक्रम में अनेक मोड़ आते हैं, मानव-स्वभाव के अनेक रूपों से हमारा सामना होता है। इतिहास और कल्पना के धूपछाँही रंगों से चित्रित एक स्मरणीय कथाकृति!"8 इनकी कई कृत्यों का हिन्दी में अनुवाद किया गया है।

कन्हैयालाल माणिकलाल मुंशी द्वारा कई उपन्यासों एमाव अन्य विधाओं में साहित्यिक कृतियों की रचना की गई जिनका विवरण इस प्रकार है - पाटण नी प्रभुता, राजाधिराज, गुजरात नो नाथ, प्रीतविवल्लभ, स्वप्रद्रष्टा, लोपामुद्रा (चार भागों में), जय सोमनाथ, भगवान परशुराम, भग्न पादुका, कृष्णावतार (सात खंडों में), तपस्विनी (तीन भागों में) आदि। इसके अतिरिक्त अंग्रेजी भाषा में भी मुंशी जी के साहित्यिक कृतियों की उपलब्द्ता है। कई उपन्यासों का हिन्दी एवं अंग्रेजी भाषा में गुजराती से अनुवाद भी किया गया है। पाटन की प्रभुता पुस्तक की कथा वस्तु इस प्रकार है 'पाटन का प्रभुत्व' इतिहास प्रसिद्ध गुर्जर साम्राज्य के अन्तिम गौरवपूर्ण अध्याय को कथा के रूप में पाठकों के समक्ष रोमांचक रूप में प्रस्तुत करता है। गुर्जर साम्राज्य एवं वंश के संस्थापक मूलराज सोलंकी ने अपने महत्वपूर्ण



कार्यों से पाटन का नाम पूरे भारत वर्ष में प्रसिद्ध कर दिया था। उनकी ही पाँचवीं वंशज कर्णदेव की थी जो उस वक्त सत्ता पर काबिज हुए थे। उसने अपनी स्वतन्त्र राज्य की स्थापना अपनी सेना के सहयोग से किया। इसके उपरांत उसका विवाह चन्द्रपुर में हुआ। उसके पुल का नाम जयदेव था। जय देव आगे चल कर सिद्धराज के खिलाफ विजय प्राप्त किया जो एक मील का पत्थर था। । 'पाटन का प्रभुत्व' के पहले अंक का आरंभ उस घटना से होता है जो इतिहास के पन्नों में सुरक्षित है क्योंकि इस समय कर्णदेव गंभीर बीमारी से जुझ रहा था। और शासन उसकी पत्नी की तरफ से कोई दुसरा कर रहा था। यह समय गुर्जर साम्राज्य के लिए अत्यन्त कठिनाई एवं चुनौतीपुर्ण था। इस समय के विषम परिस्थितियों में महामन्त्री मुंजाल की विश्वसनीयता, दुरदुर्शिता और सुझ-बुझ से कर्णदेव के निधन के बाद, जयसिंह देव को राजा घोषित किया जाता है और गुर्जर साम्राज्य पर छाए विद्रोह एवं आक्रमण की बेला छंट जाती है। इस उपन्यास में यह भी दिखलाया गया है जयसिंह देव कुछ समय आगे चलकर ताम्रचड़ाध्वज सिद्धराज के आक्रमण एवं विद्रोह से गुर्जर साम्राज्य को एक नया जीवन प्रदान करते हैं। इस उपन्यास में दो वर्ष के कालखण्ड को उल्लेखित किया गया है। इसके बावजूद भी उपन्यास की कथा की बानगी देखते ही बनती है। यह उपन्यास सत्ता के संघर्ष और उससे जुड़े दाँव-पेंचों को बहुत ही रोमांचक तरीके से पाठकों के समक्ष करता है। मुंशी जी की ऐतिहासिक औपन्यासिक कृतियों की शृंखला में गुजरात के नाथ उपन्यास का नाम प्रमुख रूप से लिया जाता है। इसमें लगभग दुसवीं सदी के आसा पास के दुस वर्षों का घटनाक्रम चित्रित किया गया है। पाटन की सत्ता पर जयसिंह देव का कब्जा था। एक शासक के रूप में वह अभी अनुभवहीन था, माता मीनलदेवी और मुंजाल के अनुभवों, शासन कौशल और दुरदर्शिता के आधार पर गुर्जर साम्राज्य की विजय पताका लहरा रही थी। राज्य के स्तर पर वहाँ शांति थी। जयसिंह देव का सौतेला भाई देवप्रसाद प्रदेश का दंडनायक है। कर्णावती का शासन नागर मन्त्री दादाक के जिम्मेदरी में है। सोरठ का भार सज्जन मन्त्री के पुत्र परशुराम पर है। यहाँ तक तो सब ठीक है, परन्तु बाहरी मोर्चा! एक ओर मालवा के अवंतिराज का दुबाव और दुसरी ओर गुजरात के ही जुनागढ़ के दुर्दुर्ष राजा दा' नवघण और उसके षड्यंतकारी पुत्नों के कुचक्र। गुजरात के नाथ' उपन्यास यह का चौदह वर्षों का समय इन्हीं समस्याओं से जूझते, अनेक उपकथाओं, अनेक चरित्रों से होकर बीतता है। गुजरात के नाथ उपन्यास में चौदह वर्ष के समय की कथावस्तु है। गुजरात के नाथ उपन्यास का कथास्वरूप विस्तृत होने की वजह से इसके घटनाक्रम में अनेक मोड़ आते हुए दिखलाई पड़ते हैं। इस उपन्यास के माध्यम से मानव-स्वभाव के अनेक रूपों से पाठकों का सामना होता है। इतिहास और कल्पना का सुंदर समन्वय इस उपन्यास में किया गया है। इस उपन्यास के संदर्भ में पी एच पीयुष लिखती हैं "इस उपन्यास में खेंगर-रणकदेवी, मीनल-मुंजल, काक-मंजरी, लिभुवनपाल-कश्मीरा देवी के बीच का प्रणय निरूपण हुआ है। इसके अतिरिक्त उपन्यास के अन्य मुख्य पत्नों में उड़ा मेहता, सिद्धराज जय सिंह और कीर्तिदेव का समावेश होता है।"9 कन्हैया लाल मानिकलाल मुंशी जी ने गुजराती, हिन्दी, अंग्रेजी आदि भाषाओं में सौ से भी अधिक पुस्तकें लिखीं । वे एक श्रेष्ठ साहित्यकार रहे हैं । उनकी पहली कहानी 'मारी कमला' 1912 में स्त्री बोध नामक पत्निका में प्रकाशित हुई । उन्होंने 'गुजरात' का भी सम्पादन किया । उपन्यास, नाटक, कहानी, निबन्ध, आत्मकथा, जीवनी आदि पर उन्होंने अपनी लेखनी चलायी है। मुंशीजी गुजरात के ही नहीं, सारे देश के अमूल्य रत्न थे। शिक्षा जगत्, साहित्य जगत्, राजनीति, धर्म, दर्शन, इतिहास के क्षेत्र में उनके महत्वपूर्ण योगदान के लिए समूचा भारतवर्ष उनका ऋणी रहेगा । मुंशी जी के अंदर प्रकृति का प्रेम देखते ही बनता है। प्रकृति के प्रति उनका यह प्रेम समस्त मानव समुदाय के लिए उपयोगी रहेगा ।



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भारतीय सभ्यता को समृद्ध बनाने में लोक-संस्कृति की भूमिका



प्रो० प्रदीप के शर्मा प्रोफेसर हिंदी विभाग सिक्किम केंद्रीय विश्व विद्यालय,गंगटोक

लोक का अभिप्राय सर्वसाधारण जनता से है, जिसकी पहचान व्यक्तिगत न होकर सामूहिक पहचान है। किसी भी अंचल की सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियाँ उस अंचल के सामाजिक गठन पर निर्भर रहती है। प्रकारांतर से समाज के जनसमुदाय का निर्माण करने वाले तत्व जैसे – विभिन्न नस्लें या प्रजातियाँ, उनके विशिष्ट गुण, उनकी आंकाक्षाएँ, जातिगत अस्मिता, संचेतना, निष्ठा, आपसी संबंध संपर्क, उनके धर्म, धार्मिक विश्वास, रीति-रिवाज, उनकी भाषाएँ, भाषिक संस्कृति, लोक विश्वास एवं साहित्य आदि किसी अंचल की सामाजिक और सांस्कृतिक गतिविधियों को प्रभावित करते हैं। समाज के दीन-हीन, दलित, शोषित वर्ग तथा अलग-अलग लोक समुदाय का मिला-जुला रूप ही लोक कहलाता है। और इन सबकी मिली-जुली संस्कृति लोक-संस्कृति कहलाती है। देखने में इन सबका अलग-अलग, रहन-सहन, वेश-भूषा, खान-पान, पहनावा-ओढ़ावा, नृत्य – गीत, कला-कौशल आदि सब अलग-अलग दिखाई देते हैं, परंतु एक ऐसा सूल है जिसमें ये सब एक माला में पिरोई हुई मणियों की भांति दिखाई देती है, यही लोक संस्कृति है।

संस्कृति शब्द परंपरा का पर्याय है। शरीर और आत्मा की भाँति सभ्यता एवं संस्कृति जीवन की दो भिन्न प्रेरणाओं को व्यक्त करती है। सभ्यता जीवन का रूप है और संस्कृति उसका सींदर्य है, सभ्यता का अर्थ है – समाया। समाज में रहने की योग्यता अर्थात सामाजिक समता, जो सामाजिक विधि निषेध पर जोर देती है। सभ्यता का संबंध नागरिकता से भी है। संस्कृति शब्द अधिक व्यापक है और विशुद्धि का द्योतक है। संस्कृति बौद्धिक विकास की अवस्थाओं को सूचित करती है और सभ्यता का परिणाम शारीरिक और भौतिक विकास है। यों मनुष्य के जीवन के दो पहलू होते हैं - एक वैयक्तिक और दूसरा सामाजिक जीवन। इन दोनों प्रकार के जीवनों में सम्यक कृति करनी है। जैसी प्रकृति होती है वैसी प्रवृत्ति होती है वैसी सभ्यता बदलती रहती है, सभ्यता के अनुकूल संस्कृति का परिणत होती है। संस्कृति का संबंध मुख्यत: मनुष्य की बुद्धि ,स्वभाव, मन और प्रवृत्तियों से होता है। सभ्यता बाह्य क्रियात्मक रूप है, संस्कृति विचारधारा का परिणाम है।

संस्कृति ही हमें कुछ हद तक अनुशासन में भी रखती है। छोटे-बड़े का ख्याल यानी आदर सम्मान यह भी हमारी संस्कृति का ही प्रभाव है। जिसके कारण हमारे जीवन मूल्यों आज भी यथावत है।

संस्कृति ही जीवन को निरसता में उर्जा लाती है।

सभ्यता अगर भौतिक प्रगति है तो संस्कृति मन एवं आत्मा की शुद्धता।



संस्कृति ही हमारे अंदर समन्वय की भावना पैदा करती है।

हमारे ग्रामीण उत्सव ही लोक संस्कृति के मूल आधार है और त्यौहार इसके जीवंत स्वरूप।

संस्कृति ही हमें अपने आस-पास के माहौल, परिवेश के संबंध में सजगता प्रदान करती है। जैसे – पर्यावरण ,स्वच्छता आदि। भारतीय जीवन पद्धित के चारों आश्रम संस्कृति के ही मूल स्तम्भ है। अत: भारतीय सभ्यता को समृद्ध बनाने में लोक-संस्कृति की महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका हजारों सालों से चली आ रही है जो आज भी अक्षुण्ण है तथा धीरे-धीरे पूरी दुनिया इसे अपनाने लगे है। जैसे भारतीय परंपरा,संस्कार,पारिवारिक भाई-चारे, योग ,व्यायाम आदि। आज पूरी दुनिया 21 जून को अंतर्राष्ट्रीय योग दिवस के रूप में मनाती है। 2 अक्टूबर को विश्व अहिंसा दिवस के रूप में मनाती है। इसी तरह से भारतीय सभ्यता को समृद्ध बनाने में लोक-संस्कृति की प्रासंगिकता पहले भी थी आज भी है और मैं समझता हूँ यह हमेशा रहेगी। क्योंकि लोक-संस्कृति ही हमारी असलियत है और पहचान भी।

लोक-संस्कृति किसी भी प्रदेश, क्षेत्र, जाति या समुदाय की आत्मा होती है। संस्कृति से ही प्रदेश, क्षेत्र, जाति या समुदाय के उन समस्त संस्कारों का बोध होता है जिनके सहारे वह अपने आदर्शों, जीवन मूल्यों आदि का निर्धारण करता है। अत: संस्कृति का साधारण अर्थ होता है – संस्कार, सुधार, परिष्कार, शुद्धि, सजावट आदि।

साधारण दृष्टि से सभ्यता और संस्कृति को एक दूसरे का पर्याय जैसा लगता है। परंतु वास्तव में संस्कृति और सभ्यता अलग-अलग होती है।

सभ्यता का संबंध हमारे बाहरी जीवन के ढंग से होता है, जैसे - रहन-सहन, खान-पान, बोलचाल आदि जबकि संस्कृति का संबंध हमारी सोच, चिंतन और विचारधारा से होता है।

संस्कृति का क्षेत्र सभ्यता से कहीं अधिक व्यापक और गहन होता है। इसे अनुकरण नहीं किया जा सकता परंतु सभ्यता का अनुकरण किया जा सकता है। किसी देश की लोक-संस्कृति का महत्व उस देश के जीवन में निर्विवाद है। उसका अपना स्वतंत्र प्रवाह होता है, जो निरंतर प्रभावित हुआ करता है और जो बड़ी कठिनता

और युगों के प्रयत्न से किंचित परिवर्तित किया जा सकता है।

उसमें स्थायित्व का तत्व अधिक होता है और परिवर्तनशीलता की प्रवृत्ति बहुत कम। लोक-संस्कृति लोक अर्थात जनसामान्य की संपत्ति होती है। समाज का अधिक शिक्षित वर्ग अपनी उँची संस्कृति के नशे में शीघ्रता से आगे बढता जाता है और वह परिवर्तन के चक्कर में भी अधिक रहता है।

संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में भी उसे प्रयोग करना अच्छा लगता है, जिसका अवश्यंभावी परिणाम संस्कृति का शीघ्रता से रूप-परिवर्तन होता है, लोक-संस्कृति का प्रभाव मंद होता है, साथ ही निरंतरता को स्थायित्व देनेवाला भी। इसकी विषय-वस्तु में कम-से-कम परिवर्तन दिखाई देता है। भाव-भूमि अब भी वहीं है, जो शताब्दियों पहले थी। लोक- संस्कृति पर सभ्यता का आवरण नहीं चढ़ा होता।

संस्कृति किसी देश और जाति की आध्यात्मिक, धार्मिक, साहित्यिक और बौद्धिक साधना का फल होती है। उसका वास्तविक संबंध जीवन की आंतरिक आवश्यकताओं से है, सभ्यता बाह्य प्रयत्नों का फल है और बाह्य आवश्यकताओं की पूर्ति में ही उसकी सफलता है।

आज पश्चिम के देश अपनी सभ्यता पर गर्व करते हैं। यह उचित ही है, क्योंकि अपने बाह्य प्रयत्नों के फलस्वरूप उन्होंने भौतिक सुख–सुविधा और विलास की सभी सामग्री एकत्र कर ली, लेकिन यह कहना गलत होगा कि पश्चिम के देश संस्कृति के क्षेत्र में भी आगे बढ़े।

सभ्यता और संस्कृति के अंतर की भांति 'नागरिक संस्कृति' और 'लोक–संस्कृति' का अंतर भी समझने में कठिनाई नहीं होनी चाहिए। हर समाज में दो तरह के लोग





होते हैं – शिक्षित वर्ग और अशिक्षित वर्ग। शिक्षित वर्ग के हाथ में अधिकार होता है, वह समाज का नेतृत्व करता है, जैसे – राजनीति का सूत्र उसके हाथ में रहता है, वैसे ही कला और साहित्य के सृजन में भी वह आगे रहता है।

भाषा, साहित्य, संगीत, नृत्य आदि का मानदंड उसी के हाथों निर्धारित होता है। इतिहास उसी की कृतियों के आधार पर तत्कालीन समाज का मूल्यांकन करता है। आदिकाल से ऐसा होता आया है और आज भी यही हो रहा है तथा भविष्य में भी ऐसा ही होगा। शिक्षित वर्ग की तुलना में समाज का अशिक्षित वर्ग मूक अथवा कम मुखर होता है। सचमुच, यह शासित वर्ग द्वारा शोषित वर्ग होता है। उससे आशा की जाती है कि वह शिक्षित और सभ्य – वर्ग का अनुसरण करें।

इसमें संदेह नहीं कि अशिक्षित वर्ग को बहुत अंशों में ऐसा करना पड़ता है, परंतु इसमें भी संदेह नहीं कि वह अपनी सत्ता शत-प्रतिशत खो भी नहीं देता। उसकी अपनी स्वतंत्र दुनिया भी होती है। साहित्यिक भाषा को न समझ सकने के कारण वह अपनी बोली में लोकगीत रचता है और उन्हीं को गाकर अपने मन को संतुष्ट करता है। शिष्ट नृत्य की मुद्राओं और भावभंगिमाओं का आनंद वह नहीं ले पता तो लोकनृत्य की नई अनगढ़ शैली को विकसित करता है।

शास्त्रीय संगीत का राग-रागिनियों के सूक्ष्म भेदों का आनंद – स्पर्श उसे नहीं प्राप्त होता, तब वह बिरहा, चैता, फगुआ, चौताल जैसे मुक्त सुरों का आविष्कार कर डालता है। इस प्रकार शिक्षित वर्ग से भिन्न संस्कृति का विकास अशिक्षित वर्ग द्वारा होता है। उसे ही हम 'लोक-संस्कृति' कहते है। संख्या की दृष्टि से देखें तो 'लोक – संस्कृति' का यह नाम बड़ा ही समीचीन प्रतीत होता है क्योंकि लोक अथवा समाज का जितना प्रतिनिधित्व यह करती है उतना 'नागरिक संस्कृति' नहीं।

यह बात अवश्य है कि लोक-संस्कृति का क्षेत्र कम व्यापक और सीमित होता है। किसी देश की नागरिकों की संस्कृति केवल एक होती है जबकि देश के विभिन्न भागों की लोक-संस्कृतियाँ भिन्न-भिन्न होती है। वैदिक काल से लेकर अब तक पूरा संस्कृत वाङमय और मध्यकालीन तथा आधुनिक शिष्ट साहित्य, दार्शनिक चिंतन, आध्यात्मिक तथा धार्मिक साधना, लित कलाओं के क्षेत्र की विविध उपलब्धियों सिमष्ट रूप में भारतीय संस्कृति के नाम से अभिहित होती हैं पर लोक-संस्कृति के नाम पर हर प्रादेशिक क्षेत्र की अपनी विशेषताएँ हैं। उनके गीत लोककथाएँ उनकी नृत्य- शैली, सब में भिन्नता मिलेगी।

जब से हमारा देश स्वतंत्र हुआ है, तब से हमारे जातीय जीवन के उपेक्षित अंग फिर से मान्यता प्राप्त करने लगे हैं। उनके पुनरुद्धार, विस्तार और संरक्षण के प्रयत्न राष्ट्रिय स्तर पर हो रहे हैं। इन चिर—उपेक्षित अंगों में 'लोक — संस्कृति' भी एक है।

आजकल, लोक–संस्कृति का प्रदर्शन लज्जा की बात नहीं समझी जाती, पर कुछ समय पहले यह असभ्यता, पिछड़ापन, गवारपन और यहाँ तक कि फूहडपन का विषय मानी जाती थी। तब अधिक 'उन्नत' और अधिक 'सभ्य' समाज में 'पॉप-म्यूज़िक' का प्रचलन था ; यूरोपीय संगीत का सम्मान था और यदि बहुत नीचे उतरें तो कथकली या मणिपुरी नृत्य, नगमीज नृत्य देख लिया और यदि भारतीय संगीत सुनना ही है तो शास्त्रीय संगीत सुन लिया।

आज स्थिति बादल गई है। स्थिति यह है कि कोई सांस्कृतिक कार्यक्रम 'लोक–संस्कृति' के अभाव में सफल नहीं समझा जाता। हमारे सबसे महत्वपूर्ण राष्ट्रिय पर्व 'गणतंत्र दिवस' के समारोह का मुख्य आकर्षण उसमें प्रदर्शित लोक–संस्कृतियों की अनुपम झांकियाँ ही होती हैं, जिन्हें देखने के लिए विदेशों के सत्ताधारी भी खिंचकर चले आते है।

सभ्य समाज से दूर जंगलों में वास करनेवाली आदिम जातियों की 'संस्कृति' को भी अब स्वीकार किया जाने लगा है। कई स्थानों में लोक–संस्कृति शोघ संस्थान भी स्थापित हो गए हैं। एक अर्थ में ऐसी जागृति शुभ है क्योंकि इसके परिणामस्वरूप हमारे ग्रामीण शिक्षित समाज की कलाकृतियाँ प्रकाश में आएंगी और उसके माध्यम से हम उस समाज का वास्तविक जीवन देख सकेंगे।

जिस प्रकार संपूर्ण जगत में सर्वत एक–तार बौद्धिक चेतना के दिग्दर्शन होते हैं, उसी प्रकार संपूर्ण संस्कृति और भाषा जगत में भी एक सूत्रता विद्यमान है। इसलिए हमारे





ऋषि-मुनियों ने कहा है – यह धरा विविध भाषा बोलनेवाली, विभिन्न धर्मों को अपनाने वाले मनुष्य से परिपूर्ण है और उन सब में पारस्परिक संपर्क के लिए भाषा का महत्व असंदिग्ध है। देश की आत्मा को समझने के लिए उसकी भाषा को समझना नितांत आवश्यक है। आधुनिक भारत की आत्मा हिंदी भाषा में निहित है। हिंदी वर्तमान भारत की समृद्धतम भाषा है, ऐसी भाषा जो आधुनिक बहुभाषी राष्ट्र की सभी आवश्यकताओं को संतोषजनक ढंग से पूरा कर सकती है। हिंदी एक ऐसी भाषा है, जिसमें सभी भारतीय भाषाओं का समन्वय है। यदि भारतीय लोक कला, संस्कृति और राजनीति में एक होना चाहते हैं, तो उन्हें निश्चित रूप से हिंदी को अपनाना ही होगा।

भारतीय स्वाधीनता संग्राम का इतिहास इस बात का गवाह है कि भाव,भाषा और संस्कृति के धरातल पर यह राष्ट्र एकजूट रहा है। अंग्रेजों के दमन के विरूद्ध चला संघर्ष एक भाषा-भाषी की विरासत नहीं रहा है। उस संघर्ष को चलानेवालों ने चाहे वे दक्षिण के रहे हों या उत्तर के, इस देश को एकसूल में बांधने के लिए एक भाषा का व्यवहार किया। भाषायी वैभिन्य उनके मकसद में दीवार नहीं बना। महत्वपूर्ण बात यह है कि उन दिनों राष्ट्रभाषा की वकालत उन महान व्यक्तियों ने की जो कि स्वयं हिंदी-भाषी नहीं थे और जिनका प्रभावमंडल समूचे देश में व्याप्त था- चाहे वे तिलक हों या गांधी, विनोबा हों या शारदा चरण मिश्र।

हाँ, यह बात अवश्य चिंतनीय है जिस भाषायी एकता का परिचय इस राष्ट्र ने अंग्रेजों को खदेडने में दिया। वह देश के आजाद होते ही क्षीण हो गयी।







मेरी जिंदगी,मेरी समझ,मेरे अल्फाज

1

हर दो मुलाकात के बीच

मैं पैदा कर लेता हूं
एक गुरुर...
जमी हुई बर्फ की सिल्लियों की तरह,
पत्थरों जैसी कठोर-खंजरों जैसी धारदार
कि फर्क कहां पड़ता है कोई खास
तुम्हारे होने से-ना होने से,
जिंदगी चलती ही रहती है
रफ्तार कम-ज्यादा हो तो हो।
फिर तुम आती हो
खिलती हुई धूप की तरह
बिखेरती हुई किरणें हंसी की,
गर्म-गुनगुनी-सुकूनदेह
और पिघलने लगती है
वरसों की ठंड,

सूख जाती है मन की सीलन, बह जाता है आंखों का सूखापन, कुछ भी ठहरा नहीं रहता। वक्त के पैर अचानक ही तेज हो जाते हैं इतने कि पता ही नहीं चलता तुम्हारा आना और फिर चले जाना। इतनी जल्दी कैसे गुजर सकता है वक्त का इतना बड़ा टुकड़ा-बिना जाने? ऐसे तो अगर तुम साथ हो तो पल भर में ही कट जाएगी जिंदगी। 2

मैं समंदर न हो सका
कि बस जाओ तुम
आकर मुझ में.
मालूम ना हो कि
कौन हो तुम और कौन हूं मैं
मैं ना हुआ दिरया भी
कि मिल जाऊं तुम में ही,
चलूं साथ ही
चलता ही रहूं
जब तक चले सफर ये।
मैं खड़ा रहा किनारों की तरह
मगरूर, अकेला, खुद में गुम
मैं खड़ा रहा पहाड़ों की तरह,
और चले गए तुम



मनोज कुमार आयकर निरीक्षक, गुवाहाटी

3

इक्का-दुक्का आवारा खोए हुए, भटकते-से, शब्द तीलियों के जैसे बुझते और चमकते थे, चमकीली और सपनीली आँखें तब तक हँसती थीं. जला दिए लफ्ज़ों के चिराग मैंने थोड़े रंग-बिरंगे, झूठ और सच के, और हो गई वह बेचैन उन पर उसे यकीन नहीं. जब तक शाम रही खामोश तब तक वह पुर-सकूं रही.





4

जब तुम किसी का नाम लेते हो, आखिरी बार,

तुम्हें मालूम ही नहीं होता कि यह आखरी बार है, तुम्हें मालूम ही नहीं होता कि इस के बाद सिर्फ इंतजार है,

कि इसके बाद... सिर्फ यादों का समंदर और समय का पहाड़ है. 5

कुछ भी नहीं था पहले। अंधेरे रहे होंगे शायद जब तक तुम नहीं थे रोशनी तुम्हीं से आई जिसने जन्म दिया मस्कराहट को-प्यार को, भरोसे और करार को। फिर जिंदगी फुली-फली, कदम-दर-कदम आगे चली, हर दिन थोड़ीऔर खूबसूरत हर पल थोड़ी बेहतर और। सपनों ने शुरू कर दिया सच होना-सच ही रहना, उम्मीदों ने चेहरे ले लिए सब तुमसे मिलते-जुलते। रातों की चाँदनी जैसी नरम और दिन की ध्रप सी जरूरी वह रोशनी तुम्हीं से आई जिनके देह में लगने से, छुअन चली जाती है मन के भीतर तक। नहीं तो ... कुछ भी नहीं था पहले.

6

ज्वार आने पर तो डुबे नहीं, उतरे भी नहीं पानी में जब समन्दर तुम्हारे पास आया था बेचैन-बदहवास-जुनुनी हुआ सा। तब तुमने पैर डाले पानी में, गहरी साँस ली; हाथों में पानी भरकर भिगोया, चेहरे और अथाह केश-राशि को। वक़्त काट रहे थे तुम जब भाग रहा था-उफन रहा था वह तुम्हारे इर्द-गिर्द,चारों ओर। क्योंकि खारापन था उसके चाहने में और तम भरे पड़े थे जिन्दगी-खुबसुरती-खुशियों की मिठास से। अब तम्हारी आँखें खारी हैं तुम्हारा वक़्त तुम पर भारी है तो तुम चाहते हो मिलाकर जी लें इस खारेपन को उस खारेपन से। पर अब तुम्हें जाना पड़ेगा उस समन्दर के घर, उसके सीने के भीतर। रेत पर पड़ी उम्मीदों की सीपियाँ, यादों की मछलियाँ छटपटाती हुईं (जो देर-सबेर मर ही जायेंगी), जी सकते हो वैसे उनके साथ भी। या फिर जैसे लाँघी थी हदें अपनी, कल उसने आज तुम छोड़ दो अपना 'मैं' होना।

7

अलविदा कहना था, और कहा नहीं। 'फिर मिलेंगे' कह कर, खुद को दिया दिलासा। मानो उसका जाना नहीं हो कोई सफर, हो महज एक तलाश, जिसे खत्म होना हो बस मुझ पर।

8

जिंदगी ने
अचानक कई चिट्ठियां
एक साथ लिख दीं..
उसके आने कीउसके जाने की,
उसके होने कीउसके खोने की.
और मुझे
कुछ भी याद नहीं
कि मैंने
क्या पढ़ा पहले,
क्या बाद में?
कुछ पढ़ा भी,
या पढ़ा ही नहीं?

पंचम अंक



9

इससे बेहतर तो खतों का दौर था भले ही उन खतों पर कोई पता ना पड़ा हो कि जान ना ले कोई तुम्हारा नाम तो हमने लिखा ही नहीं उन पर कभी.

पर एक सुकून तो मिल ही जाता था उनसे खुद को जाहिर करने का भले ही खुद पर सही.

10

जिंदगी में खिड़िकयां चाहिए... निकल ना सके आदमी रोजमर्रा की जिंदगी से छटपटाए अगर वह जाल में जिंदगी के, मुश्किलों के तो कम से कम ताक तो ले दुनिया को हसरत भरी निगाहों से. ताकि पूरी तरह मरे नहीं उम्मीदें कि और भी जहान हैं

...और पास में, साथ में है तो-एक खिड़की भी ।

कि और भी उड़ान हैं

11

फर्क यह है कि मैं खोजता हूं बहाने तुमसे मिलने के और तुम खोजते हो....वजह तो तुम कभी आते नहीं...बेवजह और मैं, अक्सर यूं ही होता हूं तुम्हारे आसपास ।

12

मेरी सहायता नहीं करता मेरा ईश्वर, मुझे कोई समस्या नहीं क्योंकि हस्तक्षेप नहीं करता वह मेरे जीवन में भी। होने देता है मुझे, जो भी मैं हूं। उसे मुझसे प्रेम है, मुझे उससे प्रेम है, अब पता नहीं, ईश्वर वह है या मैं?





वक़्त की कैफियत

वक़्त न रुका था वक़्त न चल रहा था में न आज में था में न कल में था में तो बस वक़्त के परतों में कहीं बैठा था

में जो कल कर आया था और में जो कल करने वाला था में उस सब को देख रहा था में तो बस वक़्त का किसी तरफ चलने का इंतज़ार कर रहा था में जब वक़्त के परतों में कहीं बैठा हुआ था

एक अजब कैफियत का सा माहौल था सब कुछ किसी अनजान इंतज़ार में था मुझे जो करना था वो कर नहीं पा रहा था सब मनसूबे नाकाम हो रहे थे और कोशिश कर के भी वक़्त चल नहीं रहा था जब में इन वक़्त की परतों में बैठा था वक्त बलवान है वक्त इम्तिहान लेता है वक्त सबर का मोहताज है वक्त किसी के लिए थम जाता है और कभी वक्त इंतज़ार भी नहीं करता

लेकिन वक्त का पहिया घूमता है वक्त भी करवट लेता है वक्त रंग बदलता है मेरे साथ बैठो यह सब मैंने बहुत गहराई से वक्त की परतों में बैठ कर को देखा है

मेरा भी वक़्त आया
मेरा भी वक़्त बदला
बहुत इंतज़ार करवाया
पर अब मेरा वक़्त है
वक़्त से मांगी मोहलत का एहसान है
इस वक़्त में कुछ कर दिखाना
वक़्त पर इक निशान छोड़ना है
बहुत देर तक इन वक़्त की परतों ने समेटे रखा
बस अब इस वक़्त को कुछ कर दिखाना है



हरमीत सिंह प्रधान आयकर आयुक्त (सेवानिवृत) जयपुर \





समान नागरिकता संहिता और इसकी उपादेयता

समान नागरिक संहिता हमेशा से एक बहस का विषय रहा है। अक्सर यह कहा गया कि न तो इसकी आवश्यकता है और न ही वांछनीय है। यह भी कहा जाता है कि भारत वर्ष विभिन्नता में एकता वाला देश है तथा लोगों को अपने धर्म के अनुसार चलने का अधिकार है। हालांकि समान नागरिक संहिता को लेकर भारतीय संविधान में पहले से ही प्रावधान है। संविधान के अनुच्छेद 44 में यह प्रावधानित किया है कि राज्य भारत के समस्त राज्य क्षेत्र में नागरिकों के लिए समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने का प्रयास करेगा। यद्यपि भाग 4 का विषय होने के कारण यह विधि द्वारा प्रवर्तनीय नहीं है, लेकिन इसका यह अर्थ कदापि नहीं है कि यह अर्थहीन है बल्कि यह राज्य को निर्देशित करता है कि जब भी समय की मांग होगी राज्य नीति निर्देशक तत्वों को लागू कर सकेगा। अभी तक गोवा ही एक राज्य है जहाँ पर समान नागरिक सहिता लागू है। धीरे-धीरे समय के साथ इसे लागू करने की मांग पूरे देश में उठने लगी है।



डॉ. अरूण कुमार सिंह एसोसिएट प्रोफेसर नेहू, शिलांग

समान नागरिक संहिता, चुनौतियां, एवं प्रासंगिकता

समान नागरिक सिहता को लागू करने में कई चुनौतियां है। भारत एक विविध धर्मी देश है हर धर्म की संस्कृतियां एवं प्रथाये भिन्न है। विभिन्न धर्मों के लोग अपने अनुसार अपनी पद्धितयों को मानते है। अतः इन विभिन्नताओं में एक रूपता लाना आसान नहीं होता है। हालािक बहुत सी वैयक्तिक विधियां ऐसी हैं जिनका अभी तक संहिताकरण नहीं हुआ है, ज्यादातर वे सुनी सुनाई या कुछ लिखित रूप में पायी जाती हैं। इनमे कभी कभी आपस में ही विरोध भास दिखता है। इतना ही नहीं समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने में बहुत से अल्पसंख्यक विद्वानों खासकर मुसलिम विद्वानों के विरोध का भी सामना करना पड़ रहा है। उनके विचार से समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करके बहुसंख्यकों के विचारों को थोपने का प्रयास किया जा रहा है। कई अल्प संख्यक विद्वानों का यह भी तर्क है कि समान नागरिक संहिता भारतीय संविधान के अनुच्छेद 25 में प्रावधानित उनके मौलिक अधिकारों का उल्लंघन करता है। एक और प्रश्न भी उठाया जा रहा है कि यदि यह इतना ही आवश्यक था तो अभी तक की सरकारों ने इसे क्यों लागू नहीं किया था। इस प्रश्न का उत्तर यही हो सकता है कि अभी तक राजनैतिक इच्छाशक्ति की कमी रही है। उन राजनैतिको एवं सरकारों के दिमाग में एक प्रश्न रहता रहा होगा कि यह समाज में तनाव पैदा करेगा। लेकिन मेरे विचार से यदि उसे सबके सहयोग और उचित ढंग से लागू किया जाता है तो यह राष्ट्र की एकता और धर्मनिरपेक्षता को आगे बढ़ाने में योगदान करती, साथ ही साथ स्त्री पुरूष के बीच में विभेदीकरण को भी दूर करती ओर स्त्रियों को पूरूषों का बराबर के अधिकार मिल जाता, आजकल जनसंख्या वृद्धि भी देश के लिए एक समस्या बन गयी है। अतः समान नागरिक संहिता को लागू करके यदि एक विवाह और दो संतान पद्धति को लागू किया जाता है तो यह देश की दिशा और दशा सुधारने में अहम् भूमिका निभायेगी साथ ही साथ पुरूष और महिलाओं में समानता भी लायेगी। समाज में बहुत से ऐसे पति-पत्नी है जो संतान विहीन है लेकिन उनका धर्म उन्हें दत्तक ग्रहण (बच्चे को गोद लेगे) की इजाजत नहीं देता है। समान नागरिक संहिता लागू होने से ऐसे लोगों को भी दत्तक ग्रहण का अधिकार मिल जायेगा। और साथ ही साथ यदि हम इसके दुसरे पक्ष के देखते



है तो कुछ बच्चो को माता पिता का आश्रय मिल जायेगा। समान नागरिक संहिता लागू होने से बहुत सारे धार्मिक कर्मकाण्डो से मुक्ति मिल जायेगी और उनमें एकरूपता आ जायेगी। इसके साथ-साथ संविधान के अनुच्छेद 14 में उपलब्ध समता के अधिकार का भी परिपालन हो सकेगा। समान नागरिकर संहिता लागू करने का उद्देश्य, जैसा की विधि आयोग ने भी स्पष्ट किया है कि यह केवल उन विषयों के सम्बन्ध में लागू होगा जो संविधान संगत नहीं है। समान नागरिक संहिता सारवान समानता पर जोर देती है न कि यह सारे मामलों लागू होगी।

यद्यपि समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करना देश के लिए एक बहुत ही अच्छा कदम होगा, लेकिन इसके विरोध में ढेर सारे तर्क दिये जा रहे हैं, जैसे कि कुछ लोगों का तर्क है कि हमारा संविधान अनुच्छेद 29 (1) के अन्तर्गत सभी को सांस्कृतिक स्वयत्तता प्रदान करता है और सभी अपने धर्मों के अनुसार व्यवहार करने हेतु स्वतंत्र हैं, लेकिन यहाँ पर यह भी ध्यान देना पड़ेगा कि स्वायत्ता के नाम पर किसी के समता के अधिकार का जो कि एक मौलिक अधिकार है, का उल्लंघन नहीं होना चाहिये। डाँ. भीमराव अम्बेडकर ने संविधान सभा में कहा था कि जब देश सामाजिक रूप से इसे स्वीकार करने के लिए तैयार हो जायेगा तो इसे लागू कर दिया जायेगा। इसी बात को ध्यान में रखते हुये समान नागरिक संहिता को संविधान के भाग चार, जो कि राज्य के नीति निर्देशक तत्व से सम्बन्धित है, के अनुच्छेद 44 में प्रावधानित किया गया है।

समान नागरिक संहिता और न्यायिक निर्णय

समान नागरिक संहिता के बारे परोक्ष रूप से न्यायालय ने कई वादों में अभिनिर्णित किया है। न्यायलय के अनुसार यदि इसे लागू किया जाता है तो यह समता राष्ट्रीय एकता को बढ़ाने में सहायक होगी। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने मो. अहमद खान बनाम शाह बानो, सरला मुदगल बनाम भारत संघ एवं अभी हाल में उच्चतम न्यायालय द्वारा निर्णित शायरा बानो बनाम भारत संघ के मामलों में भी कहा है कि भारत में समान नागरिक संहिता होनी चाहिये। जो सभी महिलाओं को समान अधिकार प्रदान करे। मोहम्मद अहमद खान बनाम बनाम शाहबानो (1985) के मामले में उच्चतम न्यायालय ने निर्णित किया था कि एक तलाकशुदा मुस्लिम पत्नी को इहत की अवधी के बाद भी भरणपोषण का अधिकार होना चाहिए। न्यायालय ने इस मामले में संविधान के अन्तर्गत उपलब्ध समता के अधिकार पर जोर देते हुये कहा था कि यह अधिकार अन्य महिलाओं की तरह मुस्लिम महिला को भी मिलना चाहिये। जहाँ तक इहत की बात है यह किसी पत्नी के पति की मृत्यु के बाद, या विवाह विच्छेद के बाद तीन माह का कार्यकाल होता है (अपवाद स्वरूप 4 माह दस दिन का भी होता है) जिसमें पत्नी की गर्भधारण की स्थित अनिश्चित होती है। इस वाद में उच्चतम न्यायालय ने कहा था कि तलाके- ए विद्दत (ट्रिपल तलाक) किसी महिला के भरण पोषण का अधिकार नहीं छीन सकता है और ऐसा तब जबिक वह अपना भरण पोषण करने में अक्षम हो। उच्चतम् न्यायालय ने यह भी स्पष्ट किया था कि दण्ड प्रक्रिया संहिता, 1973 जो एक धर्मनिरपेक्ष संहिता है, कि धारा 125 सभी धर्मों के लोगों पर लाग होती है।

सरला मुदगल बनाम भारत संघ (1995) के मामले में उच्चतम् न्यायलय ने यह अनिर्णित किया था कि एक हिन्दू व्यक्ति जिसके पास एक हिन्दू पत्नी है और जिसका विवाह हिन्दू रीति रिवाज से हुआ है।, वह इस्लाम धर्म अपनाकर दूसरा विवाह कर लेता है तो क्या उसकी दूसरी शादी वैध होगी? तथा वह भारतीय दण्ड संहिता की धारा 494 के अन्तर्गत द्विविवाह का दोषी माना जायेगा। उच्चतम न्यायालय ने कहा कि जो व्यक्ति जिस धर्म के अनुसार विवाह करता है उसका विवाह विच्छेद भी उसी धर्म के अनुसार होना चाहिये। और ऐसा नहीं हो कि धर्म परिवर्तन करते ही उसकी पहली शादी अपने आप समाप्त मान ली जायेगी। इस मामले ने समाज में एक नयी दिशा दी खासकर उन लोगों के लिये जो धर्म बदलकर विवाह कर लेते थे। यदि पूरे देश में समान नागरिक संहिता लागू हो जायेगी तो ऐसे मामलों से बचा जा सकेगा। इतना ही नहीं इस मामले में उच्चतम् न्यायलय ने यह भी कहा था कि मुस्लिम समाज में द्विविवाह को मान्यता देना भारत में दूसरे समप्रदाय में उपलब्ध वैयक्तिक असंगत पैदा करना है। साथ ही साथ यह नैतिक मूल्यों के भी विरुद्ध है। अतः इसे एक समान नागरिक संहिता द्वारा ही दूर किया जा सकता है। न्यायलय





ने सरकार को यह निर्देशित किया था कि वह समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करें, तथा यह भी शपथ पत्न दे कि इस दिशा में क्या कदम उठाया गया है। न्यायलय ने इसके साथ साथ यह भी कहा है कि समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने में कोई दुविधा नहीं होनी चाहिए। न्यायलय ने यह स्पष्ट किया है कि इसे लागू करने के अनुक्रम में देश के विधि आयोग, अल्पसंख्यक आयोग एवं अन्य सम्बधित आयोगों से भी बात चीत करनी चाहिए।

उच्चतम न्यायालय ने **शायरो बानो बनाम भारत संघ (201**7) के मामले में तलाक – ए विद्दत (ट्रिपल तलाक को असंवैधानिक घोषित कर दिया है। इतना ही नहीं इसे मुस्लिम महिला (वैवाहिक अधिकार संरक्षण) अधिनयम 2019 के अन्तर्गत दण्डनीय बना दिया गया है। इस अधिनियम के अन्तर्गत यदि कोई भी मुस्लिम पुरूष अपनी पत्नी को ट्रिपल तलाक देगा उसे तीन साल की सजा से दण्डित किया जायेगा। हालांकि यह कानून पश्चात वर्ती (Prospective) है। और लागू होने की तिथि से प्रभावी होगा। इस अधिनियम के लागू होने के पूर्व के ट्रिपल तलाक पर यह लागू नहीं होता है। ऐसा इसलिये कि यह दण्डिक अधिनियम होगा जिनको पूर्ववर्ती (Retrospective) तारीख से लागू नहीं किया जा सकता है।

समान नागरिक संहिता और उसके सकारात्मकता

समान नागरिक संहिता लागू करने में इच्छाशक्ति की कमी, लोगो मे जागरूकता की कमी, लोगो के बीच विश्रम की स्थिति दिखाई पडती है। लोगो को व्यक्तिगत स्वार्थ से उपर उठकर संविधान अनुसार बात करनी चाहिये। लोग धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता पर आक्षेप की बात कह रहे हैं लेकिन यहाँ पर यह ध्यान देने योग्य बात है कि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 25-28 में उपलब्ध धार्मिक स्वतंत्रता के अधिकार पर लोक न्याय, स्वास्थ्य और नैतिकता के आधार पर निर्बन्धन लगाया जा सकता है। इसके साथ-साथ कुछ मामलो में विशेषकर विवाह, सम्पत्ति, विवाह-विच्छेद, दत्तक ग्रहण आदि मामलों में विधिक एकरूता होने से विधियों की आपस में विसंगतता भी समाप्त हो जायेगी। और भारत के सभी नागरिक में समानता की भावना जागृत हो जायेगी। यदि समान नागरिक संहिता को भारत में उचित ढंग से लागू किया जाता है तो इससे राष्ट्रीय एकता और धर्म निर्पेक्षता की भावना को बढावा मिलेगा। समान नागरिक संहिता लागू होने से वे महिलाये जिन्हे समानता के अधिकार से वंचित रखा गया है वे भी ऐसे मौलिक अधिकारों का उपयोग कर सकेगी। भारतीय उच्चतम् न्यायालय ने शायरा बानो केस में निर्णय देते हुए समानता के मौलिक अधिकार को आधार बनाया था। इतना ही नही दण्ड प्रक्रिया संहिता की धारा 125 यह प्रावधानित करती है कि सभी महिलाओं जिनका विवाह विच्छेद होता है उन्हे भरणपोषण का अधिकार होता है चाहे उनका धर्म कोई भी हो। यदि हम अपना ध्यान विदेश की तरफ करते हैं तो हम देखते है कि विश्व के बहुत से देश है जहाँ पर सभी नागरिकों के लिए समान कानून है।

निष्कर्ष

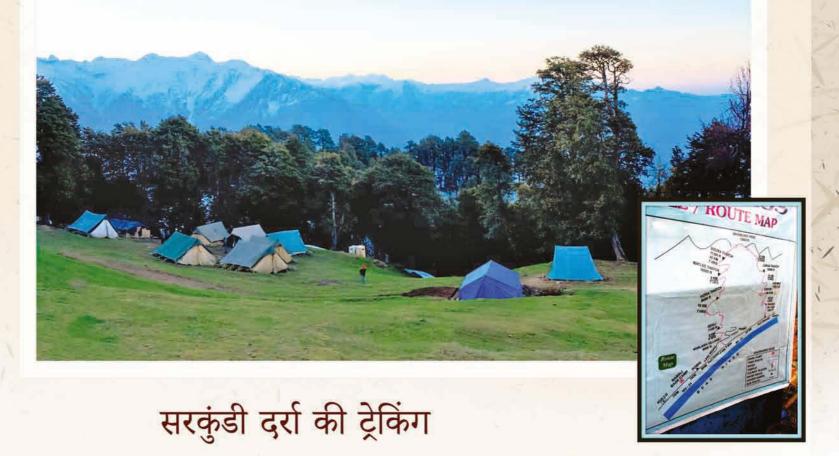
अतः हम कह सकते है कि समान नागरिक संहिता लागू होने से लोगों में लैंगिक न्याय एवं समानता का भाव जागृत होगी और इसके साथ साथ पुरानी कुप्रथाऐं भी समाप्त हो जायेंगी तथा विधिक प्रक्रिया भी सरल हो जायेगी। यद्यपि बहुत सारे लोग मिलेगे जो अपने निजी स्वार्थवश इसका विरोध करेंगे। लेकिन व्यक्तिगत स्वार्थ से ऊपर उठकर तथा जनकल्याण और जनभावना को ध्यान में रखते हुये समान नागरिक संहिता को लागू किया जाना चाहिये।

सन्दर्भ

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- 3. मो. अहमद खान बनाम शाह बानो (1985)
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मेरा बचपन बिहार के गया शहर में बीता । गया के जिस मुहल्ले में मैं रहता था वहाँ से रामशीला नामक पहाड़ी नजदीक थी। उस पहाड़ी के ऊपर शंकर और हनुमान जी की मंदिर थी और थोड़ी खुली जगह थी। उस पहाड़ी पर चढ़ने के दो रास्ते थे - एक तो सीढ़ी और दूसरी पगडंडी वाली। हम कुछ दोस्त रोज सुबह-सुबह उस पहाड़ी के ऊपर पगडंडी वाले रास्ते से पहुचते,थोड़ी देर कसरत करते और फिर उसी रास्ते से या फिर सीढ़ी से उतरते। उसी समय से मेरे मन में पहाड़ों से प्रेम पनपने लगा जो की पस्तकों और फिल्मों के खाद-पानी से उतरोत्तर बढते गया।

मैंने अपनी पहली नौकरी दिल्ली मेट्रो मे 2004 में शुरू की, जहाँ मुझे एक सहकर्मी मिले, जिनसे मुझे पहली बार ट्रेकिंग के बारे मे सुनने को मिला। वो सहकर्मी यूथ हॉस्टल के माध्यम से कई बार ट्रेकिंग कर चुके थे। उनकी बातें सुन कर मेरे मन में दबा हुआ पहाड़ के प्रति प्रेम फिर से कुलचे भरने लगा, परंतु नई नौकरी की व्यस्तता और पैसे की तंगी की वजह से दिल्ली मे रहते हुए ट्रेकिंग संभव नहीं हो पाया। पहले ट्रेकिंग का इंतजार 2004 से शुरू होकर 2013 तक चला। इस बीच प्रयास तो किया परंतु किसी न किसी वजह से ट्रेकिंग नहीं हो पाया।

सन् 2010 में मैंने कोलकाता में आयकर विभाग में आयकर निरीक्षक के तौर पर नौकरी शुरू की। यहाँ के लोग घूमने फिरने



रौशन कुमार आयकर अधिकारी, कोलकाता







मई, 2013 के दिन की बुकिंग की।

के शौकीन होते हैं और ट्रेकिंग मे भी खूब रुचि रखते हैं। यहाँ एक दिन अचानक मुझे इंटरनेट पर "सर पास दुर्रा" के ट्रेकिंग का लिंक दिखा। यह लिंक "यूथ हॉस्टल एसोसिएशन ऑफ इंडिया" का था। यह वही संस्था थी जिससे मेरा दिल्ली का सहकर्मी ट्रेकिंग किया करते थे। यह लिंक मुझे जिस समय दिखा उस समय तक कोई भी सीट खाली नहीं थी। मुझे मन मसोस कर रह जाना पड़ा। परंतु यूथ हॉस्टल के साइट से यह आवासीय पता लगा की दिसंबर मे अगले साल के लिए फिर से बुकिंग शुरू होगी। अब मैं बेचैनी से दिसंबर का इंतजार करने लगा। दिसंबर में सर पास ट्रेकिंग की बुकिंग आ गई। मैं और मेरे दो साथी भी ट्रेकिंग पर जाने के लिए तैयार हो गए। लेकिन तीनों लोगों की छुट्टी आदि को देखते हुए ट्रेक के दिन तय करने मे सारी सीटें खत्म हो गई। इस बार फिर दिल टूट गया की इस साल फिर ट्रेक पर नहीं जा पाएंगे और एक साल इंतजार करना पड़ेगा। फिर यूथ हॉस्टल की सीटें पर मुझे "सरकुंडी दुर्रा" की ट्रेक का लिंक दिखाई दिया जिसमे की कुछ सीटें खाली थीं। हम तीनों मित्र इसी ट्रेक को ट्रेक को

सरकुंडी दर्रा की ट्रेकिंग यूथ हॉस्टल एसोसिएशन, हिमाचल प्रदेश मे मनाली के नजदीक आयोजित करता है। सौरकुंड या सरकुंड हिमाचल के कुल्लू जिला के ब्यास घाटी में करीब 13000 फुट की उँचाई पर स्थित एक छोटा तालाब (कुंड) है, जिसके कुछ पहले ही इसी नाम से एक दर्रा है जिसकी उँचाई करीब 12,900 फुट है।

दिसंबर-जनवरी मे बुकिंग करने के बाद हम तीनों बेसब्री से 27 मई का इंतजार करने लगे। इसी दिन हमे बेस कैम्प पर उपस्थिति दर्ज करनी थी,जो की मनाली से कुछ पहले 14 मील नामक जगह पर थी। इसी समय मैं ट्रेकिंग से जुड़ी जितनी संभव थी उतनी जानकारी जुटाने लगा।

वैसे तो यूथ हॉस्टल के सीटें पर जरूरी सामान की लिस्ट दी हुई थी पर मेरे हिसाब से ट्रेकिंग पर जाने के लिए दो सबसे जरूरी सामान हैं जिस पर विशेष ध्यान देना चाहिए। पहला ट्रेकिंग जूता और ठंढ से बचने के उपाय। मैंने अपना जूता ऑनलाइन मंगवाया था। ट्रेकिंग जूता लेते समय दो बातों का विशेष ध्यान देना चाहिए। पहले वो टखने की उँचाई तक की होनी चाहिए जिससे पहाड़ी रास्तों पर पैर मुड़ने पर टखने सुरक्षित रहें और उसका सोल रबर का होना चाहिए जिससे रास्तों पर पकड़ अच्छी बने। ठंड से बचाव के लिए कपड़ों के की स्तर होने चाहिए जिससे की अगर गर्मी हो जाए तो स्तर उतार दिए जाए और ठंड बढ़े तो और कपड़े पहन लिए जाए। कम से कम तीन स्तर के कपड़े होने चाहिए। सबसे निचला स्तर हल्का गरम टी-शर्ट उसके ऊपर एक हल्का स्वेटर और फिर उसके ऊपर गरम जैकेट। अगर यह जैकेट हवारोधी नहीं है तो उसके ऊपर "विंड चीटर"।

ट्रेक पर जाने से पहले अपने शारीरिक फिट्नेस पर भी ध्यान देना उतना ही जरूरी है जितना ट्रेकिंग की बुकिंग। मैं ट्रेक पर जाने से पहले रोज तैराकी किया करता था परंतु वहां जाकर पता चला कि तैराकी के अलावा दौड़ और शक्ति बढ़ाने वाले और व्यायाम भी करने चाहिए। खैर जितनी तैयारी होनी थी सो हो गई।

मेरी यात्रा की शुरूवात 24 मई, 2013 को हुई जब मैंने कलकत्ता से दिल्ली की ट्रेन ली। मुझे कोलकाता से अकेले ही निकालना पड़ा क्योंकि ऑफिस से छुट्टी ना मिलने के कारण मेरे दोनों मित्रों ने अपनी यात्रा रद्द कर दी थी। मैं 24 मई, 2013 की सुबह दिल्ली पहुँचा। वहाँ पुराने दोस्तों से मेल-मिलाप हुआ और उसी दिन शाम को





मनाली की बस पकड़ी। पर उस दिन शायद मेरी किस्मत मेरे साथ नहीं थी। बस दिल्ली से खुलते ही दिक्कत आने लगी। सबसे पहले उसकी वातानुकूलन व्यवस्था में खराबी आई फिर वो बीच-बीच मे रूक कर चलने लगी। किसी तरह से बस चंडीगढ़ पहुँची। वहाँ कुछ देर रुकने के बाद जैसे ही बस आगे बढ़ी वो पहाड़ी रास्तों पर पूरी तरह से बंद हो गई। तब हरियाणा राज्य परिवहन निगम वालों ने एक दूसरी बस की व्यवस्था की। मेरी पहली बस वॉल्वो थी पर जो दूसरी बस का इंतजाम किया गया था वो टाटा की बस थी। यह बस मुझे कुल्लू तक ले गई।

कुल्लू में फिर मुझे बोला गया की अब आगे की यात्ना एक और दूसरी बस में करनी होगी। मरता क्या न करता। कुल्लू में फिर से बस बदली। ये तीसरी बस एक लोकल बस थी। खैर किसी तरह अपने गंतव्य स्थान 14 मील पर करीब 1 बजे तक पहुँचे। मेरी बस का यह पहुँचने का नियत समय सुबह 8-9 बजे का था,परंतु बसों की अदला-बदली के कारण पहुँचे दोपहर 1 बजे।

कुल्लू पहुँचने के थोड़ी देर पहले ही हल्की बूँदा-बाँदी शुरू हो गई थी। एक तो पहाड़ी रास्ता ऊपर से बारिश । मन में थोड़ा डर का एहसास होने लगा। अगल- बगल के लोगों से 15 माइल के बारे में पूछा तो कोई बात नहीं पाया। इस बात से मन थोड़ा परेशान सा होने लगा। असल मे मैं अपना सामान एक ट्रॉली बैंग में लाया था। मन में आशंका यह होनी लगी कि अगर बेस कैम्प का रास्ता अगर पहाड़ी पगडंडी से रहा तो ये ट्राली ले कर कैसे जाएंगे ? बारिश के कारण रास्ता और भी खराब होगा। खैर थोड़ी देर बाद बारिश थम गई और बेस कैम्प के बारे में भी पता चल गया। बेस कैम्प सड़क के किनारे ही था।

वहाँ पहँच कर हमें स्वागत टेंट में अपनी उपस्थिति दुर्ज करानी थी अतः मैं स्वागत टेंट में पहँचा जो कि बेस कैम्प मुख्य प्रवेश के पास ही था । और यह पहँचने के बाद ही मेरे द्वारा की गई तैयारी की कमियाँ दिखनी शुरू हो गई । स्वागत टेंट में प्रवेश पल (बुकिंग रसीद) के साथ-साथ दो छवि फोटो माँगा गया था परंतु मैं अपना फोटो ले जाना भूल गया था । स्वागत डेस्क पर बैठी दीदी ने बताया कि पास ही पतली कुहल नाम का एक बाजार है जहां से फोटो खिंचवाया जा सकता है । मुझे शाम तक फोटो लाने को बोला गया । फिर दीदी ने मुझे एक परिचय पत्न बना कर दिया जिस पर भी एक फोटो चिपकाई जानी थी। साथ ही मुझे एक टेंट नंबर दिया गया जिसमे मझे तीन दिन बिताने थे । मैं अपना सामान ले कर उस टेंट मे चल गया । फिर सामान रख कर नहा-धोकर तैयार हुआ । नहाने के लिए जो पानी था वह इतना ठंड था कि रात भर की थकान गायब हो गई । नहाने के बाद तैयारी कि एक और कमी दिखाई दी । ट्रेकिंग पर जाने वाले सभी लोगों को अपना थाली चम्मच और ग्लास लाना था पर मैं ये भी लाना भूल गया था । अब तक दोपहर के 2 बज चुके थे और अभी तक कुछ भी नहीं खाने के कारण जोरो कि भूख लग चुकी थी । सामने खाना लगा हुआ भी था पर थाली ग्लास न होने के कारण खा नहीं पा रहा था । तब मैंने बाजार जाने का सोचा । फोटो खिंचवाना तो था ही अब तो और भी कई काम हो गया था, जिसमे खाना खाना सबसे प्रमुख था । बाजार जाने के लिए जब गेट पर निकल तो देखा कि एक लड़का और खड़ा है । उससे पूछा तो पता चल कि उसे भी बाजार जाना है और वो इसके लिए बस का इंतजार कर रहा है । कुछ देर तक बस नहीं आई तो हमने पैदल ही जाने का फैसला किया । सुना थी कि बाजार ज्यादा दुर नहीं हैपर पैदल चलने पर पता चला कि इतना नजदीक भी नहीं था खासकर भुखे पेट । खैर वहाँ पहुच कर खाना खाये, फोटो खिंचवाया, थाली, चम्मच, ग्लास और एक लंच बॉक्स खरीदा। इसके अलावे भी कुछ जरूरी चीजें खरीदी जैसे सन्स्क्रीन लोशन, टिसू पेपर इत्यादि। फिर लौटते समय ताज़ा चेरी और स्ट्रॉबेरी चखा। बेस कैम्प में लौटने पर सबसे पहले अपना टेंट बदला और उस लड़के, जिसका नाम पवन था, के टेंट में आ गया । उस टेंट में एक ग्रुप कम उम्र के लड़कों का था जो कि अपने 12 वीं का परीक्षा देने के बाद ट्रेकिंग पर आए थे । हमारे बिहार में ये देखने को नहीं मिलता कि बच्चे 12 वीं की परीक्षा के बाद ट्रेकिंग करने को अकेले कहीं जाएं । हमलोग को 12 वीं के बाद न तो इतनी समझ थी ना ही इतनी हिम्मत थी कि अकेले ट्रेकिंग के लिए जाएं । साथ ही हमारे पिताजी के पास इतना पैसा भी नहीं था कि वो हमें ट्रेकिंग करने की इजाजत देते । खैर सबसे परिचय हुआ । पता चला कि अधिकतर लोग महाराष्ट्र और कर्नाटक (बैंगलोर) से हैं । बिहार से एक मात्र मैं ही था ।

बेस कैम्प में हमलोग को तीन दिन गुजरना था । पहले दिन का कोई कार्यक्रम नहीं था। रिपोर्टिंग के बाद बस आराम करना था । शाम में अपने नए बने दोस्त पवन के





साथ पास में ही बह रहे ब्यास नदी के किनारे घूमने गए। ब्यास नदी का दृधिया जल पत्थरों से होकर शोर करते हुए बह रहा था। वहीं नदी के किनारे एक पत्थर पर बैठ कर नदी के निश्चल बहते जल को कुछ देर निहारते रहे। जब पानी में पैर डाला तो पानी इतना ठंड था कि लगा जैसे पैर मे बिच्छू ने डंक मारा दिया हो। फिर वहीं कुछ देर और घूम कर वापस कैम्प में आ गए क्योंकि कहीं बाहर जाने पर बेस कैम्प में शाम 5:00 बजे तक लौट आने का नियम था। उसके बाद हमे कैम्प के भंडार कक्ष से स्लीपिंग बैग और दो कंबल दिए गए।

शाम 7:30 खाना लग गया । रात 8:30 बजे हमसे पहले पहुँचे ग्रुप की रंगा-रंग प्रस्तुति थी । कार्यक्रम के शुरुआत में कैम्प फायर का एक अजीब रिवाज देखने को मिला । प्रदूषण को काम करने के लिए वहाँ कैम्प फायर के लिए लकड़ियों को नहीं जलाया जाता बल्कि बिजली की लाइट जला कर और जोर-जोर से "फायर-फायर कैम्प फायर" बोल कर किया जाता है । कार्यक्रम का समापन ट्रेकिंग पूरा कर के आए लोगों को प्रमाण पल वितरित करके किया गया । ट्रेकिंग पूरा करके आए लोगों ने अपने अनुभव साझा किए और जरूरी सलाह भी दिए । कार्यक्रम 9:30 बजे समाप्त हुआ और कैम्प लीडर ने हमें कल के कार्यक्रम बता दिया । ठीक रात 10 बजे बत्ती बंद कर दी गई । अब हमें सो जाना था पर मेरे टेंट के बच्चों को नींद नहीं आ रही थी । वे हंसते हुए बात करते रहे । इसपर कैम्प लीडर आकर उनको डाँट लगाए और सोने को बोले। खैर किसी तरह वे सोये।

अगले दिन सुबह 5 बजे सिटी बजी जिसका मतलब था कि चाय तैयार थी । मैं चाय पीता नहीं था फिर भी उठ कर नित्य कर्म से निवृत्तन हो कर तैयार हो गया । सुबह 6 बजे हमे दौड़ और व्यायाम के लिए ले जाया गया । करीब 1 किमी के दौड़ के बाद एक खाली मैदान में हमे व्यायाम कराया गया फिर वापस दौड़ते हुए ही वापस लाया गया ।

करीब 7:30 बजे नाश्ता लग गया । नाश्ता करने के बाद करीब 8:30 बजे हमे लाइन मे लगने का आदेश हुआ । उसके बाद हमे अपने बैग मे दो कंबल और 2 लीटर पानी भर कर रखना था। उस बैग को ले कर एक एकलेमेटाईजेसन (acclimatization) के लिए पास ही थोड़ी उँचाई पर ले जाया गया तािक असली ट्रेकिंग की एक रूपरेखा दिखाई जा सकें और हमारा शरीर उसके लिए तैयार हो जाए । एकलेमेटाईजेसन पर जाने से पहले हमलोगों ने आज ट्रेकिंग के लिए जाते हुए टीम को करतल ध्विन से हौंसला अफजाई किया । फिर एकलेमेटाईजेसन चढ़ाई के लिए निकल गए। वैसे तो ये हल्की चढ़ाई थी पर इतने में ही अधिकतर लोगों की हालत खराब हो गई । ऊपर पहुँच कर हम लोगों ने ले गए पानी मे बुरांश (rhododendron) का शर्बत बना कर पिलाया गया । फिर वही पर पूरे ग्रुप के लोगों का परिचय हुआ और ग्रुप नेता, वातावरण नेता और सांस्कृतिक नेता का चुनाव हुआ। ग्रूप नेता पर पूरे ग्रुप की ज़िम्मेदारी थी, वातावरण नेता पर ज़िम्मेदारी थी कि वो साफ सफाई का ध्यान रखेगा, यह सुनिश्चित करेगा कि कोई कूड़ा-कचरा कैंप या जंगल मे न फेंके। संस्कृति नेता के पास शाम को होने वाले कार्यक्रम की ज़िम्मेदारी थी। शाम के सांस्कृतिक-कार्यक्रम मे सब लोगों ने अपनी-अपनी प्रस्तुति दी। किसी ने डांस, किसी ने गाना ,किसी ने लघु नाट्य और कुछ ने कविता के माध्यंम से अपनी प्रस्तुति दी। मैंने भी एक कविता पाठ किया ।

अगले दिन सुबह फिर वही रूटीन। सुबह बेड टी फिर दौड़ और कसरत। उसके बाद फिर एक और ग्रुप की ट्रेकिंग के लिए विदाई। उसके बाद आज हम लोगों को पत्थर पर चढ़ाई और रस्सी से उतारने (Rock Climbing & Rappelling) की ट्रेनिंग का प्रोग्राम था। परंतु बारिश के कारण केवल रस्सी उतराई हुई (Rappelling)। शाम के समय हमें अपने बेकार पड़े सामान जो कि ऊपर हमें जरूरत नहीं पड़ती, को जमा करने थे और ट्रेकिंग के लिए जरूरी समान अपने रकसैक मे डाल कर चेक कराना था। सारे गैर जरूरी समान को एक कमरे में रख कर ताला लगा दिया गया और उसकी चाबी ग्रुप लीडर को दे दिया गया। अगले दिन हमारा ट्रेकिंग शुरू होना था। बैग एक दिन पहले ही तैयार कर लिया गया था।





बेस कैंप से सेगली (8 किमी,7200 फीट): आज हमें कसरत से छुट्टी मिली हुई थी । सुबह नाश्ते। के बाद हमे अपने रकसैक को एक बार और चेक करना था । हमें यह सलाह दी गई कि दो से तीन बार आने रकसैक को खुद से चेक कर के गैर-जरूरी समान को बाहर निकाल दें। बताया गया कि यहाँ का एक ग्राम ऊपर जा के एक किलो का महसुस होगा । इसलिए जितना हो सकता था समान बाहर निकाल दिया गया । फिर हमें दोपहर के खाने के लिए पराठे और आलु की सुखी सब्जी मिली जिसे हमें अपने लंच बॉक्स मे पैक करके रखना था । सबह 8:30 बजे हम लोग परी तरह से तैयार होकर ट्रेकिंग शरू करने के लिए लाइन में खड़े हो गए। कैम्प लीडर ने हमें कुछ जरूरी सुझाव दिए जैसे कि पानी भरपूर पीना है, रात मे कभी अकेले नहीं जाना है इत्यादि । फिर हमें एक थैली मे बिस्किट, खट्टे मीठे लेमंचूस और बादाम-पट्टी दिया गया । फिर हमे बाकी ग्रुप की तरह नए आए लोगों द्वारा करतल ध्वनि से विदाई दी गई । हमलोग भी जयकारे लगते हुए ट्रेकिंग शुरू किए । इस समय मेरे मन में कई गलत-गलत ख्याल आ रहे थे जिससे मुझे डर भी लगा कि ऊपर चढ़ना कितना मुश्किल होगा, अगर मुझे कुछ हो गया या मेरी तबीयत खराब हो गई तो मेरी देखभाल कौन करेगा इत्यादि इत्यादि । लेकिन जब चढ़ाई शुरू हुई तो जोश और मनमोहक नज़ारे देख कर डर भाग गया । हमलोगों के साथ दो गाइड चल रहे थे । एक ग्रुप के सबसे आगे और एक सबसे पीछे चल रहा था ताकि कोई छुटे ना और न ही कोई रास्ता भटके । पीठ पर 5-6 किलों का बोझ और पहाड़ की चढ़ाई हमारी हालत खराब कर रहे थें । पर धीरे-धीरे करके हमलोग लुच पाँइंट तक पहुँचे । यहाँ एक थोड़ी खुली जगह थी जहां पेड़ से एक तिरपाल बांध हुआ था ताकि दोपहर की धूप से थोड़ी सुरक्षा हो सकें । वहाँ हम लोग अपने लाए हुए पराठे और सब्जी खाए और करीब 1 घंटा आराम किया । चढ़ाई चढ़ने के क्रम में कई छोटे-छोटे ग्रुप बने । इसी समय मेरा भी एक ग्रुप बना जिसमे 5 लोग थे- दो लोग दिल्ली युनिवर्सिटी के प्रोफेसर, एक आई आई टी दिल्ली के इंजीनियर, और एक अंकल जी जो की टाटा कंपनी में इंजीनियर थें । अपने इसी 5 लोगों के ग्रुप में बातचीत करते हुए हमलोग अगले कैम्प जिसका नाम "सेगली कैम्प" था, पर करीब 3 बजे पहुँचे। वहाँ का नियम था कि कैम्प में 4:00 बजे शाम से पहले कोई नहीं जा सकता था । तो हम लोग ने कैम्प के बाहर ही 4:00 बजे तक इंतजार किए । 4:00 बजे तक बाकी लोग भी पहुँच गए । 4:00 बजे हमें लाइन में खड़ा होना था । हमारी गिनती हुई और फिर इस कैम्प के बारे में और यहाँ पालन किए जाने वाले नियमों के बारे मे बताया गया । इसके बाद हमें स्वागत पान (वेलकम ड्रिंक) कराया गया जो कि फिर से बुरांश का शर्बत था । वो शर्बत पीकर एक नई ताजगी महसुस होने लगी । इस कैम्प मे 5 टेंट थे इसमे से 4 टेंट लड़कों को मिली और 1 टेंट लड़कियों को दी गई । इसके बाद हमलोगों को सोने का बैग (स्लीपिंग बैग) मिला जिसे हमें अगले दिन सबह वापस करना था । टेंट में थोड़ी देर आराम करने के बाद पहले चाय और फिर थोड़ी देर बाद सुप के लिए सिटी बजी । मैंने चाय तो नहीं पी पर सुप जरूर पिया । उसके थोड़े देर बाद ही करीब 7:00 बजे खाना तैयार हो गया । इतनी जल्दी खाना खाने की आदत न होने की वजह से और थोड़ी देर पहले ही सुप और पकोड़े खाने के कारण भुख नहीं लगी थी परंतु हमे बताया गया कि यहाँ रात मे रौशनी की कोई व्यवस्था नहीं है तो अंधेरा होने से पहले खाना खा लेना होगा । खाने में रोटी चावल दाल सब्जी और खीर थी । खाना सादा था फिर भी बहुत स्वादिस्ट लगा। यह कमाल शायद पहाड़ के पानी और लकड़ी के चूल्हे का था । खाना खाने के बाद हम फिर से अपने टेंट में आ गए।

हमारे टेंट में हमलोग कुल 7 आदमी थें । प्रत्युष पांडे जी, अनेक गोयल जी, ईश्वर सिंह जी, चेतन पेदंबकर जी, चिराग जी, आरण डीसूजा जी और मैं । यह ग्रुप शुरू से अंत तक साथ रहा । प्रत्युष पांडे जी ने आईआईटी से इंजीनियरिंग की पढ़ाई की थी और फिलहाल आईएएस की तैयारी कर रहे थे । अनेक गोयल जी और ईश्वर जी दिल्ली यूनिवर्सिटी में प्रोफेसर थे, चेतन जी मुंबई में आईटी सेक्टर में काम करते थे, चिराग जी का अपना कम्प्यूटर का व्यवसाय था और आरण जी पिरामल कंपनी में सुरक्षा अधिकारी के पद पर कार्यरत थे। रात के अंधेरे में हमलोग टॉर्च जला कर अंतरक्षरी खेले और फिर 9 बजे तक सोने चले गए । रात में हमें गरम पानी में घोल कर बार्नवीटा (bornvita) दिया गया जो कि बहुत ही खराब स्वाद का था परंतु उसे इसलिए पी लिए की शरीर में जिस तरह से हो तरल का जाना अच्छा राहत है । अगले दिन हमें जल्दी उठना था । सुबह का सबसे मुश्किल काम काम चलाऊ टॉइलेट में निवृत होना था । खैर किसी तरह यह काम भी किया गया । फिर नास्ता करने





के बाद हमें अपना टेंट साफ करना था और रात को मिले कंबल और स्लीपिंग बैग को वापस करना था । यह ग्रुप लीडर जिम्मेदारी थी जो हमारे नए बने मिल अनेक गोयल जी थे । सो इस काम मे उनकी मदद की गई । उसके बाद हमें दोपहर के खाने के लिए रोटी और एक सुखी सब्जी दी गई । उसके बाद हम अगले कैम्प की तरफ प्रस्थान किए ।

सेगली से होरा थैच (10 किमी, 9000 फीट): सेगली से हम लोग करीब 8:30-9:00 बजे तक हमलोग अगले कैम्प, होरा थैच के लिए निकले। रास्ता घने जंगलों से हो कर गुजरती थी। परंतु आज का ट्रेक थोड़ा आसान था क्योंकि आज ज्यादा खड़ी चढ़ाई नहीं थी। आज दिन का भी कल जैसा ही कार्यक्रम था। दोपहर को एक जगह रुक आकर खाना खाया गया, फिर आगे की चढ़ाई पूरी की गई। हम लोगों ने रास्ते मे प्रकृति के भरपूर आनंद लिए। प्रकृति का यह रूप आज तक मैंने नहीं देखे थे। परंतु एक ही दुख था कि कोई भी पंछी नहीं दिख रही थी, शायद इतने लोगों के एक साथ चलने और शोर करने के कारण छुप गई थी। लंच बिन्दु पर हमलोग करीब 1.5 से 2 घंटा तक रहें। उसके बाद करीब 1 घंटे की चढ़ाई के बाद हम लोग होरा थैच पहुँच गए। उँचाई वाले कैंप सब में तापमान कम रहता है फिर भी जब हम लोग चढाई करते हैं तो पसीना एवं ठंढ नहीं लगती पर जब कैम्प मे पहुँच के आराम करते हैं तो अचानक से बहुत ठंढ लगने लगती है। खास कर के सूर्यास्त के बाद।

इस कैम्प मे भी पिछले जैसा ही सब कुछ था । पहुँचने के थोड़े देर बाद स्वागत पेय, फिर चाय और पकौड़ा, फिर सूप और उसके बाद करीब 7:30 तक खाना । यहाँ भी हमें कंबल और स्लीपिंग बैग मिला जिसमे सोना एक बोरे मे बंध के सोने जैसा लगता था ।

इस कैम्प के नजदीक एक छोटा झरना था। हमलोगों के ग्रुप का इस झरने मे नहाने की योजना बनी। नहाने पहुँच तो गए पर जब झरने के पानी मे घुसे तो पानी इतना ठंडा था कि लगा की पूरे शरीर मे करंट लग गया हो। किसी तरह एक बार शरीर भिंगा के निकलने लगे तो हमारे मिल अनेक गोयल जी जो कि फोटो खिच रहे थे, बोले की अच्छा फोटो नहीं आया एक तो एक बार और झरने मे जाइए। फिर से झरने मे गए इस बार फिर से करंट लगा। जल्दी से निकले पर अनेक जी फिर से जाने का अनुरोध करने लगे। जब तीसरी बार झरने मे गया जो कान और नाक पूरी तरह सुन्न हो गए। उनको छूने पर कुछ महसूस ही नहीं हो रहा था। इस बार मैंने बोला कि अब चाहे जैसी भी फोटो आए अब और नहीं नहा सकता।

फिर रात में अंताक्षरी के कार्यक्रम के दौरान अचानक से बहुत सी गायें न जाने कहाँ से आ गईं। उनके अचानक से आ जाने के कारण से भगदड़ सी मच गई। लड़िकया शोर मचाने लगी। तो फिर मैं और प्रत्यूष जी मिल कर ट्रेकिंग के डंडे से गायों को भगाए। तब जा कर थोड़ी देर मे माहौल शांत हुआ। कैम्प के खाना बनाने वाले लोगों ने बताया कि जंगल मे शायद भालू या और कोई जंगली जानवर या गया होगा इसलिए गायें इधर भाग के आ गईं। इसपर हुम लोगों ने पूछा कि वो जंगली जानवर या भालू इधर तो नहीं या जाएंगे तो उन्होंने बताया कि नहीं जहाँ इतने लोग हों वहाँ कोई जंगली जानवर नहीं आते। उनके इस आश्वासन के बाद हम लोग चैन की नींद सोएं।

होरा थैच सेमाईली थैच (9 किमी, 10,500 फीट): अगले दिन का कार्यक्रम भी पिछले दिन जैसा ही था। सुबह-सुबह नित्य क्रिया से निवृत हो कर नाश्ता करके कैम्प को साफ किया गया फिर दोपहर का लंच लेकर आगे की चढ़ाई के लिए निकल गए। आज भी हमें जंगल से होकर गुजरना था परंतु आज की चढ़ाई पिछले दिन के मुकाबले कुछ ज्यादा खड़ी थी इसलिए हम लोग जल्दी ही थक जा रहे थे। कहीं-कहीं रास्ता भी खतरनाक था। मुझे उँचाई से नीचे देखने पर डर लगता है और आज का रास्ता ऐसा था कि चलने के लिए केवल पैर रखने की जगह थी और उसके बाद करीब 600 से 1000 फीट की गहरी खाई। मैं किसी तरह खाई की तरफ बगैर देखे संभल-संभल कर रास्ता पार कर रहा था। आज की चढ़ाई इतनी खड़ी थी कि गाइड इसे "तेल की चढ़ाई" बुलाते थे क्योंकि आज चढ़ने में लोगों का तेल निकाल जाता था। लंच पाँइंट पर खाना खाने के बाद कुछ देर आराम करने के बाद हम लोग माईली थैच पहुँचे। यहाँ कैम्प एक बहुत छोटे से खुले जगह मे था जहाँ से नीचे घाटी के बाद मनोरम हश्य दिख रहा था।





माईली थैच से दौरा थैच (10 किमी, 11,300 फीट): रोज की तरह आज भी हमलोग सुबह का रूटीन पूरा कर के दौरा थैच के लिए निकले। रास्ते के शुरुआत में घना जंगल मिला परंतु कुछ देर बाद ही वो जंगल खत्म हो गया और हमारे सामने खुला घास का मैदान आ गया। अब इससे आगे कोई पेड़ नहीं था। ट्री लाइन समाप्त हो चुका था। इससे समझ में आया कि हम उँचाई पर या गए हैं। उँचाई बढ़ने के कारण ठंढ बढ़ गई थी और ऑक्सीजन की कमी हो गई थी जो कि थोड़ी देर ही चलने पर सांस फुलने के रूप में हमारे सामने आ रही थी। जब हम लोग दौरा थैच कैम्प पहुँचे तो काफी थक गए थे। इसलिए पहुंचते ही टेंट में आराम करने लगे।

दौरा एक घास का मैदान है । हमारे कैम्प के आसपास काफी खुली जगह थी । यहाँ से आसपास की सुंदरता देखते ही बनती थी एक तरफ बर्फ से ढकी पर्वत चोटियाँ थी तो दूसरी तरफ दूर तक फैला घास का मैदान। अगर नीचे की तरफ देखो तो घने जंगल। लगता था कि यहीं हमेशा के लिए रह जाएं । वहाँ पहुचने के बाद मौसम खराब हो गया हल्के बूँदा-बाँदी हुई और पूरा इलाका कोहरे से घिर गया। हम सब को लगा कि इतनी सुंदर जगह पर आकर भी टेंट मे ही समय बिताना पड़ेगा । परंतु हम सब की प्रार्थना भगवान ने सुन ली और जितनी तेजी से मौसम खराब हुआ था उतनी ही तेजी से साफ भी हो गया और धूप निकल आया। सब लोग खूब खुश हुए और अपने कैमरे लेकर आसपास निकल लिए । सबने जी भर कर फोंटो खिंचा और खिंचवाया। बर्फीले पर्वत की चोटियों के पीछे सूरज को डूबता देख मन आह्लादित हो उठा ।

अगले दिन हमे सौरकुंडी दर्रा को पार करना था। उसके लिए हमें सुबह जल्दी उठ कर तैयार हो कर 5:00-5:30 बजे तक निकल जाना था। इसलिए खाना खाकर सो गए। चूंकि ठंड भी बहुत ज्यादा थी तो अंताक्षरी का कार्यक्रम आज नहीं हुआ।

दौरा थैच से सौरकुंडी पास (12900 फीट) होखत लोंगा थैच (10800 फीट) 12 किमी : आज हम सबको जल्दी निकालना था क्योंकि अगर दुर्रा पर अगर देर से पहुँचे तो मौसम के खराब होने का डर था । इसलिए हम सब जल्दी से तैयार हुए और नाश्तार करके आगे की यात्रा के लिए निकल पड़े । आज की चढ़ाई सचमुच की चढ़ाई थी । यह चढ़ाई एकदम सीधी लगभग 70 डिग्री की चढ़ाई थी । इतनी उँचाई पर आक्सीजन की कमी के कारण थोड़ी दर चलने के बाद ही सांसे फलने लग रही थी । आज के दिन हमलोग के साथ 4 गाइड थे । शुरू मे हमें समझ मे नहीं आया कि आज चार गाइड क्यों हैं जबकि रोज तो दो ही रहते थें । कुछ दुर आगे जाने के बाद इसका कारण समझ मे आ गया। थोड़ी और उँचाईं चढ़ने के बाद हमारी हालत ऐसी थी कि 2-4 कदम चलने के बाद ही सांस फूल जा रही थी और हम रुक जा रहे थे। गाइड ने हमें समझाया कि एक लय में चलो धीरे-धीरे । कुछ दुर पहुँचने पर एक चट्टान की पट्टी मिली । यहाँ हमें एक चट्टान से दुसरे चट्टान पर कूद-कूद के जाना पड रहा था जो कि इस उँचाई पर बहुत ही कठिन लगा । यहीं हमें 4 गाइड की जरूरत समझ मे आई । चारों गाइड थोड़ी-थोड़ी दुरी खड़े होकर सभी के हाथ पकड़ कर पार करा रहे थे । यहाँ हमें पहली बार बर्फ के दर्शन हुए । ये बर्फ दो पत्थरों के बीच मे जमी हुई थी और हमें उस जमी हुई बर्फ के ऊपर से गुजरना था । हम इस बर्फ की पट्टी को चारों गाइड की सहायता से पार किए । खैर चारों गाइड की मदद से हमलोग बर्फ की पट्टी को सुरक्षित पार कर गए । थोड़ी दुर आगे बढ़ते ही हमें बर्फ दिखाई देने लगा । उससे कुछ आगे जाकर हमारा लंच पॉइंट था। लंच पॉइंट तक जाने के क्रम में गाइड से पता चला कि सौरकुंडी तालाब से कुछ पह ले से ही सौरकुंडी पास है जहां से हमें नीचे उतरना है, और अगर हम लोग उनको कुछ पैसे दें तो वो हमें उस सौरकुंडी तालाब तक ले जाएंगे । तब हमलोगों ने निर्णय लिया कि कुल 10 लोग जो अन्य लोगों की अपेक्षा अधिक फिट थे सौरकुंडी तालाब तक जाएंगे । जब हमलोग लंच पॉइंट तक पहुँचे तब तक मौसम बहुत खराब हो गया था । आंधी और बर्फ गिरने लगा। सब लोग छुपने की जगह खोजने लगे परंतु वो एक सपाट जगह थी और पेड़ बहुत पहले ही खत्म हो गए थे। सब लोगों ने किसी तरह से रेनकोट से अपने को इस आंधी-पानी से बचाया । इसी समय गाइड ने हमें बताया कि जिन्हें तालाब पर जाना है वो उनके साथ आयें । उस समय तक धूंध काफी गहरी हो गई थी । कुछ दुर के बाद ही हमें कुछ भी दिखाई नहीं दे रहा था । गाइड ने हमें बताया कि हमे जल्दी जल्दी चलना होगा क्योंकि हमें वापस समय से पहुँचना होगा ताकि हम बाकी लोगों के साथ आगे की यात्रा पूरी कर सकें । इतनी उँचाई पर तेजी से बिना रुके चलना बहुत मुश्किल काम था पर मजबूरी थी तो हम सब बगैर रुके तेजी से चले । थोड़ी





दुर आगे जाने पर मौसम और खराब हो गया। बारिश अब बर्फ मे बदल चुकी थी । हमलोगों ने जैकेट के ऊपर से बरसाती (रेनकोट) पहन रखी थी जिससे बारिश से बचाव तो हो रही थी । परंतु बर्फ जो की फाहे की तरह न होकर महीन ओले की तरह थी ये जब चेहरे से टकरा रही थी जिससे तेज चोट लग रही थी । थोड़ी दर जाने पर हमे पूरा बर्फ ही बर्फ मिलने लगा और हम अब बर्फ पर चल रहे थे । पहले कुछ मीटर हमें उतरना था फिर उसके बाद हमें एक पहाड़ी ढलान को पार करना था ।यह ढलान परी तरह बर्फ से ढकी थी और ढलान भी करीब 60 से 70 डिग्री की थी । उस ढलान पर हमें ऊपर न जाकर , उसे तिरछे पार करना था। जैसा कि मैं पहले भी बात चुका हूँ कि मुझे उँचाईं से डर लगता है तो मैंने इस पहाड़ी ढलान को बिना नीचे की तरफ देखे एक सीध मे देखते हुए पार किया । इस ढलान को पार करने मे हमारे कुछ साथी फिसले भी पर कुछ ही नीचे जा के संभल गए। इस तरह के दो ढलानों को पार कर के हमलोग सौरकुंडी तालाब/झील पर पहुँचे जो कि 80 प्रतिशत जमा हुआ था । इसका केवल 20 प्रतिशत हिस्सा ही नहीं जमा था । हमने इस झील से अपने बोतलें भरी । जी भरकर ठंडा मीठा पानी पिया और फिर से अपने बोतलों को भर लिया । लौटने समय फिर से वही दोनों ढलानों को पार करना था पर इस बार डर थोड़ा कम ही लगा । वापस लौट कर के हमलोग सौरकुंडी दुर्रा पर पहुँचे और लगभग उसी समय हमारे बाकी साथी भी उस जगह पर पहुँचे। हमलोग इस समय 12800 फीट की उँचाई पर थे। हमारी किस्मत यहाँ पर अच्छी रही कि जब हम यहाँ पहुँचे तो मौसम खुल गया था और बादल सब छट गए थे ।धूप निकलने के कारण आसपास का सबकुछ साफ साफ दिख भी रहा था और ठंड भी थोड़ी कम हो गई थी।चारों तरफ बर्फ से ढकी चोटियाँ दिख रही थी। गाइड ने हमें कुछ चोटियों के नाम और उँचाईं बताई जो कि हम थोड़ी देर बाद भूल गए। हमें केवल वो दृश्य याद रहे। यहाँ पर वे चार गाइड हमें एक अन्य गाइड के हवाले करके हमसे विदा ले कर वापस उसी रास्ते से लौट गए जिससे हम आए थे। वहाँ पर हमलोग थोड़ी और देर रुके । खुब फोंटो खिंची और खिंचवाई। फिर वहाँ एक ग्रुप फोटो हुआ और फिर हम लोगों ने आगे की याला शुरू की। वहां से नीचे जाने के लिए हमसब बर्फ पर फिसल कर नीचे गए । ये कोई बहुत ज्यादा दुरी नहीं थी पर हम सबको इसमे बहुत मज़ा आया।कुछ ही दुर उतरने पर बर्फ समाप्त हो गया और एक तीखा ढलान आया। इस ढलान से हमें रस्सी की सहायता से उतरना था। रस्सी वहाँ पहले से ही बंधी हुई थी। हम सब एक-एक करके आराम-आराम से उस रस्सी को पकड़ कर नीचे उतरे । कुछ दुर के बाद बुरांश की झाड़ियाँ मिलने लगी। हमारे गाइड ने हमें बहुत दुर सामने कर पहाड़ी पर एक पीला टनेट दिखा कर बोला कि जो तेज-तेज जाना चाहते हैं वहाँ जा कर रुकेंगे। वो दरी बहुत ज्यादा थी इतनी की मुझे कोई पीली टेंट दिखी भी नहीं। परंतु पगडंडी बनी हुई थी तो मैं अपने दोस्तों के साथ आगे बढ़ने लगा। खासी दुरी के बाद पीला टेंट दिखना शुरू हुआ। वह पहुँचने के बाद हमारी हालत बहुत ही खराब हो चुकी थी। उस टेंट पर पहुँच कर पता चला कि वो एक दकान थी जो कि चाय मैगी आदि बेच रहा था । वहाँ हमने सबसे पहले पानी पिया फिर मैगी खाई । इसके बाद हमारी असली उतराई शुरू हुई । पहले मुझे लगता था कि चढ़ना ही केवल मुश्किल काम है, उतरने मे कोई दिक्कत नहीं होगी । पर मेरा ये खयाल गलत था । आज मुझे पता चल कि उतरना चढ़ने से ज्यादा मुश्किल और थकाने वाला काम है । ये ढलान भी बहुत तीखी थी जिसपर कई लोग बार बार गिर रहे थे। जब ठीक-ठाक नीचे उतर गए तो एक भुरभुरी मिट्टी वाली एक ढलान आई। इस पर फिसलने की संभावना बहुत ज्यादा थी। गाइड ने भी हमें बहुत ही संभल कर चलने को बोला । मैं इसपर बहुत ही संभल कर उतार रहा था परंतु जब सब ढलान खत्म हो गया तो अंतिम में मैं फिसल ही गया । और मेरी किस्मत ऐसी कि जहां मैं फिसला वहाँ बिच्छू घास उगी हुई थी। बिच्छू घास पहाड़ों मे उगने वाली एक ऐसी घास है जिसमे बहुत छोटे छोटे कांटे होते और अगर ये चुभ जाएं तो बहुत दर्द होता है जैसे कि किसी बिच्छू ने डंक मार दिया हो। उसी घास पर गिरने के कारण मेरे जांघ और हाथ में वो घास चूभ गए । जिससे बहुत तेज दुई होने लगा, परंतु अब किया कुछ नहीं जा सकता था । थोड़ी देर बाद दुई तो चल गया पर हथेली पर जब भी ठंडा पानी पड़ता एक तीस सी उठ जाती थी। ऐसा करीब दो दिन तक रहा । लुँगा पहँचने पर सभी लोगों की हालत खराब थी इसलिए सब कोई अपने अपने टेंट मे जाकर आराम करने लगे। अगले दिन हमें आराम से 10 बजे तक निकलना था।

लोंगा थैच से लेखनी (8001फीट)10 किमी: लौंगा थैच से हमलोग आराम से निकले क्योंकि आज ट्रेक केवल करीब 4 घंटे कि थी। आज के ट्रेक मे एक और महत्वपूर्ण बात ये थी कि जो चाहते वो स लेखनी कैम्प से सीधे बेस कैम्प जा सकते थे। उन्हें लेखनी कामों मे रात बिताने कि जरूरत नहीं थी। जब हमलोग लेखनी कैम्प





पहुंचे तो पता चल कि यह एक लकड़ी और पत्थर की पहाड़ी शैली में बना हुआ मकान है जो कि एक सेव के बाग के बीच में स्थित है । यहाँ करीब 15 लोग को छोड़ कर बाकी सब लोग बेस कैम्प के लिए निकाल गए । अगले दिन हमारे गाइड ने हमसे पूछा कि क्या हमलोग एक जल प्रपात में नहाना चाहते हैं तो वो थोड़ा दूसरे रास्ते से ले चलेगा। हम सब तैयार हो गए । आज चुकी ट्रेक का अंतिम दिन था तो मन थोड़ा दुखी था, परंतु कोई भी काम काभी न काभी तो खत्म होता ही है ये सोच कर मन को समझाया।

लेखनी से अलू ग्राउंड (मनाली) आ ओहिजा से बस से बेस कैंप: नाश्ता करके और लंच पैक कर के हमलोग अपने ट्रेक की अंतिम याता शुरू किए। गाइड ने हमें झरने में सान करने के लिए दूसरे रास्ते से लेकर चल दिया। दूर से देखने पर झरना बहुत ही सुंदर दिखाई दे रहा था। परंतु वह पहुँचने का रास्ता बहुत ही खतरनाक था। केवल एक पैर रखने भर का रास्ता था जिसे हमने उस गाइड की सहायता से पूरा किया। झरने का पानी बहुत ही ठंडा था पर उसमे नहाने के बाद सारी थकान मिट गई। हमलोग करीब 1-2 घंटे तक उस झरने में नहाए। उसके बाद हमलोग नीचे उतरे और मनाली के अलू ग्राउंड के पास पहुंचे। वहाँ से हमलोग बस में बैठ कर बेस कैम्प तक पहुँचे। वहाँ एकदम सन्नाटा पसार हुआ था क्योंकि अब और कोई ग्रुप ट्रेक के लिए जाने वाला नहीं था। उसी दिन हमने शाम को दिल्ली की बस पकड़ी और इस तरह से मेरी पहली ट्रेकिंग समाप्त हुई।

इस ट्रेक में मुझे कई नए साथी मिले तथा एक नया आत्मविश्वास उत्पन्न हुआ । इस ट्रेक ने मुझे ये भी सिखाया कि किसी भी काम को करने से पहले उसकी पूरी तैयारी करनी चाहिए।

ट्रेक्किंग पर जाने वाले लोगों के लिए कुछ सलाह: जितना हो सके कम समान लेकर जाए । बढ़िया ट्रेकिंग जूता खरीदिए और जाने के पहले करीब 15 दिन से 1 महीना उसे पहन कर घूमिए और शारीरिक श्रम कीजिए । ट्रेकिंग पर जाने से करीब एक महीना पहले कुछ कसरत/व्यायाम करें, खास कर के दौड़, तेजी से सीढ़ी चढ़ना और स्वास के लिए प्राणायाम । पहाड़ पर कोई anti-fungal dusting powder जरूर ले जाए और मोजा पहनने से पहले पैर में अच्छे से छिड़क लीजिए । छोटे makeshift toilet मे या बाहर खुले में निवृत होने के लिए खुद को मानसिक रूप से तैयार कर लें । ट्रेकिंग को पूरा तो हर कोई करता है । जो तैयारी करके जाता है वो मजे से और जो बिना तैयारी के जाता है वो कष्ट से । इसलिए ट्रेक पर जाने से पहले अपने आप को शारीरिक और मानसिक रूप से तैयार करके जाइए ।

आपकी ट्रेकिंग सुखद हो !





हिंदी पखवाड़ा समारोह - 2023

"जिस देश को अपनी भाषा और साहित्य के गौरव का अनुभव नहीं है, वह उन्नत नहीं हो सकता।" – डॉ. राजेन्द्र प्रसाद

हिंदी दिवस उद्घाटन समारोह दिनांक 18 सितंबर, 2023 की कुछ झलकियां













दिनांक 19 सितंबर, 2023 से 26 सितंबर, 2023 तक हिंदी पखवाड़ा के दौरान आयोजित प्रतियागिताएं एवं अन्य कार्यक्रमों की कुछ झलकियां

















दिनांक 27 सितंबर, 2023 को आयोजित हिंदी पखवाड़ा के समापन समारोह की कुछ झलकियां















पंचम अंक 3112120 Saptabhumi



A HOT JUNE NOON

It was 2.00 o'clock at a noon of hot June, The sun, red in rage was over my head, It was spewing fire mercilessly on the earth, Making life hell for Man and Animal.

Blazed to death by scorching June Sun; With load shedding adding to my woe, I looked for a cold, shaded place to take respite From the wrath of the fiery fire place of concrete,

Like a flash of light came to my mind; A place where Sun can't kiss the ground, Where the darkness is the king undisputed Who doesn't let light break its fort of forest.

I scurried in the backyard of the Mansion, Sprawled over a long stretch of mossy lush-land, To drench the desert of my heart and soul, Which turned dry and hard after a long dry spell.

As I trod in the Grove, cold breeze touched me, Oh! The touch! O the feel I had all over my body, Overwhelmed at the welcome Lady Nature gave, I felt I was in a perennial bliss of peace and serenity.



Satyajit Das Inspector of Income Tax, Tezpur

The burden of body and mind were off me, I heaved a sigh of relief, I sat reclined against a tree On the pile of dry leaves under the shade, To give myself a long break that I did deserve.

I felt I'd gulped down bottles of wine in a tavern For hardly could I keep my ears and eyes open, Once heart-rending COO of Dove faded away soon And lady Slumber took me in her lap with lullaby.

In my dream, I was in a land of ecstatic beauty,
Away from the failure and frailty of earthy life,
I was neck deep in the river of celestial happiness and peace,
But my flight ran out of fuel when someone yelled at me,
"Why are you dozing off in the grove? Take bath
All are waiting for you at the dining table."



DAY DREAM ?? !!!

When the world was lost In the lap of lady slumber And clock tick ticked midnight, I retired for the day; I found myself stranded In a sand-sea with no life near or far, When I resumed day after, My heart sank in fear, I wondered I was asleep, And having a nightmare, All my body-hairs sprung up to their ends, Before I could come to myself, And sense the happenings, Sandstorm caught me unaware, I was blinded, And ran amok for cover. Alas! there was no shed Or shelter where I could tuck in. I stood standstill staring at the sky, I did not know-to laugh or cry at fate, Which forsook me forever in forlorn, I was shrouded alive under dune. And was blinded with no sensation, My world fell apart like a house of cards, I fluttered my hand & feet to stay alive, I woke up gasping for breath, And found me in a pool of water, When I was cried out for lunch. I heaved a sigh of relief-For I was alive and was daydreaming!

TIME IS A WILD BIRD, YOU CAN'T TAME

Time is a wild Bird, you can't tame, Or cage it within the four walls of your home She's the queen of that beautiful blue sky, That's stretched infinitely beyond your eye(s), Whimsical and wayward, she doesn't listen to you, She flies far away up at her whim and fancies, And is afloat in the air as her heart wants, For she's no care, anxiety, worry, and weary-Of bindings that bounds her to Earth, She plays hide and seek with you-From behind the snow white cloud, When your agitated eyes don't find her flying And your pink face becomes pale, She swoops down to gleam up your gloomy heart, And perches on the fence of your memory, Flashing you back to your lost lanes; A long sigh lingers your heaving bosom, And a lightning smile shines your cloudy face, You gaze dreamily at the distant sky; And your hands reach out to the bird; As you try to catch her, she spread out her wings, and vanishes before your very teary eyesin the blink of their drowsy lids.





TWO ROADS TO MY GOAL

There're two roads ahead to my goal; One easy, known and trodden before And the other difficult, unknown and unseen I took the road not taken before, Through the forest to my goal, There's no sign of life nearby Or was within my sight As I trod on, heard rustle on dry leaveswithered on grass all over the road, I stopped, watched around And tried to guess what that could be? But there was no sign of life anywhere, I'd hear only my breath that Came back to my ears in the air, My heart sank; sweat oozed out, from the pores on my face and forehead, An owl shrieked adding to my woes and worry, I wondered, "Whether someone's following me stealthily?" Or what if some ferocious animal is following its kill?" Hairs all over my body sprang up to their ends

And shiver sent down my spine,
Was at a loss; didn't know what to do,
Was about to abort my journey halfway
When I heard a whisper into my ears,
"dust off your soul and shoulder,
Repose your faith on the Supreme Soul,
And walk along with His will with you,
Know that it's glorious to face gallows
for what you feel to be true, right and just
than to forsake your journey for fear of the Bull
that's waylaid you, to gore you to death,"
this worked wonder on my whole being
I became resilient, resolute to reach my goal
started walking with renewed jest and zeal
and never looked back again.





ALL WORK AND NO PLAY, MAKES JACK A DULL BOY



Ritesh Misra
Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeals)
Surat

The value of vacations is well realised by Westerners. They work hard and use vacations to rejuvenate themselves before (in their words) they are "back to the grind". Of course this is not true for all, and studies have shown that even in the USA, the average employee utilises only 50% of his/her vacation time. Even amongst those who do take a vacation, as many as 60% do some work while on vacation. A large proportion of as much as 20%, are contacted by co-workers and 25% by supervisors/bosses, even when they are on holiday.

Europeans are better in this respect, and plan their work and personal life properly, generally achieving a judicious balance. They do not hesitate to pass laws if required, as well. For instance, Germany's employment ministry has passed a law forbidding managers to call their staff after work-hours, as part of a countrywide agreement on remote working.

We in India tend to get tied down by our official and personal responsibilities to the extent of neglecting breaks/vacations. We are also in the habit of postponing our vacations, even after planning them. However, Indians too, like Westerners, are nowadays realising the importance of both vacations as well as small breaks to rejuvenate and re-energize. Some companies like Hindustan Lever and Axis Bank even have the concept of mandatory leave, where an employee is asked to take leave for a minimum period if he or she has not taken any leave for a particular period. Generally, however, in India we tend to accumulate our leave instead of utilising them to re-energize ourselves.

The word 're-energize' makes me digress for a minute. 18 years ago, I was the HQ officer of a terrific senior IRS officer, Shri DK Das, who was from the 1970 batch of the IRS and was the CCIT-1 Kolkata (current equivalent will be Principal CCIT). He was earlier the CCIT Shillong and held charge of CCIT Guwahati as well. A brilliant HQ colleague of mine, who is also currently a



Commissioner of Income Tax had applied for earned leave. Before sanctioning the leave, Sir called him, and all of us, and asked him to speak aloud for the benefit of all, the purpose of leave written by him in his application. A bit surprised, he replied, "Sir, I have simply written in the column pertaining to purpose of leave, 'rest and recreation'. Should I write something else?". Sir said, "No, I am very happy that you have written this instead of giving some made-up excuse. Many do not realise that recreation means to re-create, and the rest will help you do that. You are doing very well as an officer in my team, and this leave will help you do even better".

Sir then went on to say, "In any case it is Earned leave. You have earned it, and you should take it and spend it constructively".

What an inspiring leader! This incident is crystal clear in my memory.

Unfortunately, most of us do not take vacations or even small breaks, and often pride ourself on not taking leave at all, and only working, working, and working. The same in my view is counter-productive in the long run.

This is certainly avoidable, and there is a need to achieve what is called work-life balance, a state of equilibrium where an individual equally prioritises official and personal responsibilities. An example of that can be Virat Kohli, who came back after the 1st Test of the last away series to Australia, to be with his wife Anushka, for the delivery of their 1st child. In any case, all such decisions are purely personal in nature. In contrast, in a similar situation, M.S. Dhoni had continued playing for India, and Sakshi, his wife, had her delivery alone.

Dhoni was right, Virat was right as well. This decision is their personal one. The important point is that there is a need to achieve work-life balance.

Once again we are digressing; Back to the topic- the need to take short visits, and practical tips for the same.

Now, short and sudden visits are unavoidable. It could be a vacation, it could be a visit for a social function or it could be a visit for an official program or conference.

Here are certain tips to plan these short visits better. For the sake of convenience, I am jotting them down in one place.

Ticketing: If dates are fixed, do the ticketing well in advance. You will save a lot of money. However, take into consideration, exigencies of work which may come up, for which you may need to cancel your tickets as well. My suggestion would be to take a calculated risk if your dates are known well in advance. It may be a good idea to to take a risk and book your tickets, since tickets booked in the last minute, or a day or two before the visit could be prohibitively expensive. The equation is simple, say, flight tickets are available for 4000/- per head, for a family of 4, the cost will be 32000/-. In worst case if the visit is cancelled, the "damage" will be 24000/- which no doubt is big. However, the chances of cancellation could be less, and if one books tickets at the last minute, the same ticket could be 9000-10000 per head and overall ticketing cost could be well above 65-70000/-, which is well above the possible damage of 24000/-. One more important point is that most airlines also allow rescheduling of dates. In any case, take your own call wisely. I personally would recommend flexi-tickets.





Road Journey of course means that the ticketing issue is not there. Here you have to ensure that your car is in optimum shape for the journey. Have things like PUC certificate, fast-tag, etc ready so that at short notice, you can go for a trip by just topping the fuel tank and checking the tires of your car.

Traveling light is a must. This is applicable for both flight and road journeys as well as journey by train. Plan/visualise what you will be wearing and pack accordingly. Comfortable footwear is a must too. It will add to the pleasure, since you may need to walk a lot. Basically, plan from head to toe. Shirts/tee-shirts, jeans/trousers, shorts, night-wear, socks, handkerchiefs, and yes, foot-wear, both sports wear, official foot-wear and slippers inside your room.

Do not take costly sunglasses and watches etc. It would be disastrous if you leave them behind. In any case, before vacating your hotel/guest-house room finally, check and cross-check that you haven't left any thing behind. Often human tendency is not to see anything that one's brain does not want to, so it would be a good idea to also ask someone else to check as well.

It may actually be a good idea to have a list and tick mark the items off, both before leaving for your break, and while returning from one. For instance cell-phone charger. You certainly need to take the cell phone, as you will, if not for anything, need it for google maps. Hence remember to charge your phone before departing, and also charge your power bank as well. Then take them and keep them handy. Even in flights, if traveling alone, you may like to keep yourself occupied by watching a movie on some OTT. Hence remember to download them in advance so that you can watch them at convenience. Very important—take earphones or headphones so as not disturb your fellow passenger. Specifically remember not to keep the power bank in checked in baggage, but in your hand baggage.

These are some illustrative examples. Every person will have his/her own list. However please give it a bit of thought since 5-10 minutes of planning, and 15 minutes of proper packing will help you hugely.

I will also like to point out that there are four scientific reasons why vacations are a must. These are (i) stress reduction and lesser stress related issues such as headaches and backaches, (ii) heart-disease prevention, (iii) higher productivity, and (iv) Better sleep. Hence please keep this in mind as well, as it will be helpful to you before 'getting back to the grind'.

Finally, for those of us who are in Income Tax or similar professions where time lines are important, keep that in mind. Have your work under control, and do not leave any sensitive and urgent work for your colleague who is holding your charge. Only day to day routine work should be left for him/her. Of course if any urgent work comes up during the period of leave that is a different matter and will be addressed appropriately. Keep in mind important targets and key dates such as last date of filing of return, compulsory scrutiny selection, assessment of special audit cases, advance tax monitoring dates, and 31st March, which is year-ending. Ideally, do not take leave during these periods. Ensure that various aspects of the Key Performance Areas are in control, and rest assured, most bosses will not hesitate to give you leave, since they will know that you are a sincere officer, and the leave will be used by you to rejuvenate yourself.

Dear friends, do work hard, but take a vacation once in a while, to ensure better health and better productivity.







ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE -Another Sun on the hoirizon



Mrinal Kumar Das
Additional Commissioner of Income Tax,
Delhi

I pondered over the caption of my article "another sun on the horizon". Myriad reactions not only ran through my mind, but many emotions too stirred up. I am so used to our only star, the sun in my sky that the reactions ranged from disbelief and rejection of the sight.

Existence of another intelligence on earth, is a similar moment bringing with it the dangers and prospects. What it holds as future for the reigning intelligence form (Humans) is wrapped in mystery and is a realm of unknown. Will there be collaboration, will there be annihilation of human kind? Will humans ward off another threat to their existence and decimate the emergent threat just like it did to the Neanderthals. Interesting aspects to ponder.

Regenerative Artificial Intelligence is the new baby born of non Human DNA. The baby has arrived and is growing up rapidly. We do not know what shape it takes in coming times.

Advances in chip designing technologies have expanded the computing power of computing systems exponentially. The "Moors law" on number of transistors that can be stacked in a chip is on the verge of being breached. Riding on the computing power, machine learning and artificial intelligence have got a new lease of life. The advanced GPU processors are now capable of handling enormous volume of data required to train the algorithms that go into artificial intelligence structures.

Development of Artificial intelligence (AI) business is a capital intensive business. The amount of expenditure that goes into Research and Development (R&D) makes the sector a preserve of few monopolistic corporations. People working in Artificial intelligence space are few and are people of frontier intelligence which few others reach.



There are already many intellectual races within Humans: Humans already comprise many races at intellectual level, both at genetic level as well as training acquired level. A trip into the terrain of Artificial intelligence makes an interesting read.

Intellectual Know how: A small miniscule of humanity which may comprise just under thousand in numbers have the expertise to design and work in the emerging Artificial intelligence Space. The other majority are the new ignorant Have-nots. Ignorant is a benign word to describe the situation. Second rung intelligence is probably the correct indicator of the two races within. Differences of intelligence is not a new phenomenon present within humans. For example, doctors have the knowledge of human anatomy which an engineer or economist would not possess. Post Industrial era, knowledge is compartmentalised into many domains. But in the realm of Artificial intelligence there are only two domains. Creator of Artificial intelligence and users of Artificial intelligence. This divide is transcendental. This revelation is important as the artificial intelligence applications developed by the miniscule few humans are part and parcel of majority humans on the other side of the divide. Artificial intelligence concerns the lives and livelihood of every human, ordinary or elite. Interestingly, Artificial intelligence impacts both the miniscule few and majority masses in similar ways. It is out of this democratically aligned impact on humanity, that most of the backers of AI research including Maveric Musk (Elon Musk) has called for a moratorium on development of Artificial intelligence systems Six Months in 2023. The reason is to step back and understand the implications of the Artificial intelligence systems that is rapidly emerging at alarming pace.

The Corporations: Corporations represent the spirit of human enterprise. The corporations that are in the forefront in Artificial intelligence are Google, Meta, Microsoft. What if Artificial intelligence takes over these corporations. Corporations are Artificial Juridical personalities and are creation of Law. These economic agents are only guided by efficiency with an eye for profit maximisation. As long as the corporation are headed by humans, actions of Corporations that impact fellow humans are outcomes of decisions of humans who run its management. The prospect of Artificial intelligence running the management of Corporations takes the discussion into altogether another universe. Artificial intelligence (AI) even at its nascent stage shows that AI models are quite efficient and humans are no match when it comes to efficiency. Guided by profit motive, one day humans themselves may hand over management of corporations to AI systems. Under that possibility it is no longer humans versus humans. We will be living in the next epoch of Humans versus AI. History of mankind till now is filled with instances of Human run corporations bringing grief to fellow humans without remorse. AI run corporations are less likely to fare better on empathy. Empathy is a value laden word. Empathy is something that will continue to distinguish Humans from AI forms. Corporations by design and manner of creation (by incorporation under statute), lack empathy. With AI forms their its helm, corporations will transform into an empathy deficient or rather empathy free structures. We already know the power of corporations, particularly the Multinational corporations with Global presence-Google, Meta (Facebook). Regulatory Authorities in US, United Kingdom or European Union are struggling to rein in Corporations run by humans by the name of Mark Zukerberg, Elon Musk. Corporations run by Artificial Intelligence form may not be amenable to regulation at all. Which is the surest indication that humans have lost control of Corporations.

Ownership of Knowledge: Elon Musk has formed a company by the name 'xAI' which will use Artificial intelligence to





understand the true nature of the universe. What if AI learns it and refuses to share it with Elon Musk? Silly thought. So it may Sound. Let us do a reality check. In recent times humans have let computing systems to store knowledge. The diminutive mathematical calculator has a memory application where it stores recent calculations. The device instantly give back the stored results of last calculation at the press of a button. Similarly, the Personal Computers has RAM (Read Only Memory) and Hard Disk based memory applications. Now we are in cloud storage (remote data storage) applications. Gradually humans have outsourced storage of data representing information and knowledge to computing based machines. However, these external storage structures are repositories of information and knowledge where ownership lies with mankind. With emergence of Artificial intelligence, the ownership of the repositories might no longer be assumed with humans. When all knowledge and information are with the computing systems, with conscious artificial intelligence capable of generating commands humans may lose control over ownership of repositories. The concerns of AI developers are understandable under this prospect. Clarion call on moratorium from mavericks always exploring in pushing the limits of man, stems from prospects of humanity losing control. God father of Artificial Intelligence Geoffry Hinton quit Google to be able to speak openly about the dangers of Artificial Intelligence to humanity. 75 year old Geoffry Hinton is revered as God father of AI for his formative work on deep learning, the field that has propelled AI development. When mathematician Clive Humbly remarked in 2006 "data is the new oil", would have said "data is the new oxygen", little could he have visualised that in one and half decade data would be something that humans would have to breathe in to stay alive. Data is no longer about profits and livelihood anymore. Data in the era of Artificial intelligence has become an ingredient for human life. The evolutionary shift can make Charles Darwin stirr in grave.

When AI takes charge of AI research: Automation is a so often heard about word in industrial era, that many of us do not bother to ponder what it means. Automation in plain terms means humans vacating place to machines. Call it by necessity or search for leisure, humans always crave leisure. Given a choice, humans would like if the most basic work are also done by some machine, say a robot. Aeroplanes on auto pilot, factories with automated production lines, Automation occupies a dominant position in the economic space. Automation increases productivity and helps overcoming the biological handicap of limits to human labour. To meet demand, production needed to scale up to levels beyond the human physical capabilities. Moreover humans actions are error prone. Many times we pull up our children for silly mistakes in solving school standard maths. But these silly mistakes are very much human trait. Even adults are good at silly mistakes. Humans get bored easily in performing repetitive tasks which are monotonous. Machines are free from these traits associated with humans. As long as the machines work under command of humans it is the beautiful world to live in. But imagine if the machines come alive and wake up some day, develop consciousness, start to have their own mind and are no longer zombies. It is the second sun on the horizon moment for humanity. Artificial intelligence holds the promise to become the life and soul of machines removed from the authority of Humans. Not a friendly world to live in anymore.

Corporations at forefront, risks of takeover: Large Language Models (LLMs) are at the technology used in the AI systems that power Chatbots such as Microsoft backed Open AIs Chat GPT and GPT-4 and Google "Bard" and PaLM-2. Non-state entities,





the corporations are engaged in frontier research and are not in sovereign command by way of control and funding . The companies that are leaders in chip design and manufacturing such as 3M, Intel, TSMC, Infinion, ST Micro electronics, BASF. Taiwanese equipment maker ASML manufactures extreme Ultraviolet Lithography machines used to manufacture chips of 5 nanometersize. Chemours, Daikin (Japan), Arkema and Solvay (European) are the leaders in production of PFAS (per-and Polyfluro Alkyl Substances) used in chip making process as these coating with PFAS make components resistant to highly chemicals used in chip making. PFAS guarantees purity of manufacturing processes assuring the quality of cutting edge chips. The chips that go into Artificial intelligence systems. The whole process itself has fair space taken up by Artificial intelligence in these market leading corporations. The concerns lie in the indispensable AI presence in cutting edge technology sector

When AI starts to design itself: Artificial intelligence systems begins to produce itself. AI systems takes charge of decision structures to decide on mining of the critical minerals needed to produce itself and battery systems to power itself. It is a clash of civilisation type event, where AI will emerge winners and humans will be banished. The process would be gradual but fast paced. Rather humans will hand over the baton themselves and vacate the seat to Artificial intelligence. The next level would be when Artificial intelligence systems start producing themselves on their own without external aid, like the humans. In other words, AI systems reproduces itself. Procreation? It does sound familiar. Humans produce themselves by procreation. Welcome to the world of Artificial intelligence procreation. At the other end of the tunnel, it is nature's design finally. Humans created Artificial intelligence. AI systems goes on to form a separate strand of intelligence and starts to reproduce itself without human assistance. Mutation? Mutation is mostly associated with biological lifeforms. But it need not necessarily be biological. Evolution itself seems amenable to wider scope in this perspective. Nature's definition of Mutation seems to be much wider than Humans can understand. Another intelligent being is born by mutation. Another Sun on the horizon moment.

Generative AI: Generative AI: the Software that can create text,images and code. The technology can create which can quickly create humanlike text, images, and other content in response to simple prompts. The new AI models on the horizon that has fuelled imagination ranging from dislodging human species from the position of Apex Intelligence to extinction humans altogether, Open AI launched Chat GPT somewhere in 2022. It has a unique human like intelligence to generate text and responses from simple prompts, just like a human clerk would in any office will create under command. The emergence of this generative Artificial intelligence application is a big leap in the technological space. Present capabilities of Chat GPT or similar Large Language models (LLMs) are not concerns voiced by the people involved in the technology. It is the birth of the capability itself that has created disquiet in the circles. It is at nascent stage, but even at this stage, it is beginning to threaten human existence in the economic sphere, such as job etc. As the technology augments further, it may gobble up other aspects of mankind and one day replace humans altogether. This is the "another Sun on the Horizon" that holds human curiosity to its wit's end. The capability of the new sun to one day climb up in the ladder of intellectual metric and overtake humans is what AI creators are wary of.

Quantum Computing: One day the capacity of present computers based to semiconductor chip will run out and become





incapable of handling the sophisticated AI systems under rapid development by Humans. Super computers are no super computers when pitted against the emerging complexities of AI systems and task expected to perform by these systems. In this context, a Super Computer is just like an oversized human doing harder tasks but still is incapable of lifting a mountain. Quantum Computing is the next kid on the block holding out immense promise. Rather than electron-hole movement that present day semiconductors are based on, Quantum Computers are based on possible states of an electron position. In the spooky world of Quantum Mechanics (Einstein called it a spooky world), electrons are moody and can be here, there and anywhere they want. His Enberg's Uncertainty Principle has put the limit on capability of science to determine the position of electron in the electron cloud with certainty. Electron-hole theory fails miserably in the quantum world on the touchstone of Heisenberg theory. If the position of electron is not predictable than the position of hole is also equally unpredictable. Hole is the space left by a shifting electron. The movement is harnessed for computing systems in semiconductor Chips, the "bites" of present day computing arises from the movement. In the next level of computing called Quantum Computing, the uncertainty is harnessed. This opens up immense computing power of the quantum computers, at least in theory. The positions of every mood of an electron can be harnessed to store information and run software based on the moods (probable position). Every mood is a "bit" in terms of our present day computers. Infinite moods are possible. An world of immense vastness is opened up also posing the technological challenge to harness the resource in nano space. In the development journey of AI systems, Quantum Computers will receive a boost, The reason is obvious. The upper limit of Semi conductor chip based computing system will be reached soon. It is perceived by developers of Quantum Computing that the time for this technology is yet to come. Rise of Artificial Intelligence Systems may expedite the arrival of quantum computing.

The basic issues that confront mankind are:

Regulation of research: Humans have unsatiable levels of curiosity. Scientific research has been an unending human quest for knowledge and humans have unlocked many mysteries of nature. This trait has taken humans to places and also ushered humans into the era of Artificial Intelligence. Society is faced with the dilemma of regulation of research and development of Artificial Intelligence systems. Present regulatory structures are struggling as the debate gains traction. The corporations like Google, Meta which are in the forefront of research are unable to self-regulate. The competition in the AI space is too intense between the behemothic few and the race to get to new heights is preventing self-regulation. The profits perceived are too immense to shy away from.

Creation of intellectual haves and have-nots: Intellectually Humans are divided into many races. There are two categories of races. First is Intellectually capable race and the intellectually incapable race (Lower rung intelligence). This category has more to do with ability of the humans. Second category is the kinds of intelligence acquired by learning within the intellectually capable Race. Rather than the ability to learn, this category is more about domains of specialists. Humans are divided to races of Doctors, Engineers, Microbiologists and many more specialist races. There are races within Races like an Astrophysicist within Physicist, Cardiologist, Nephrologist, Oncologist within Race of Doctors. Even within this intellectual class, there are Have nots. For instance, a Cardiologist who plans to construct a hospital, depends on Civil Engineers, Biomedical engineers,





Architects and many other domain specialists.

Artificial Intelligence has taken the second category of intellectual Race structure to a different level altogether. Dominance and control is the differentiating factor. Dominance on other intellectual races, control over society by few humans who have acquired the knowledge to build AI systems is creating a new divide of Haves and Have-nots that society itself might be on the wrong side of the Have-Nots.

The prospects: Ever since Industrial revolution, Machines have served human race. The most advanced autonomous machine systems work and deliver at the command of humans. Will Artificial Intelligence systems display same servitude to its human masters. Until now Machines have no soul. Machines did not have mind of its own too. Will AI systems capable of synthesizing their own algorithm give machines a mind of their own some day. We do not know. This space is occupied by fiction writers as of now. But Humans are increasingly anticipating such prospects.

The dangers: Advent of machines did impacted jobs. But, machines also created jobs in other areas. At the Net level, the impact was temporary and machines have blended well with humans like the domesticated animals. However, AI debate is not hinging on livelihoods but on identity of mankind. At least, the debate on future of AI also touches on this aspect.

Discernary issues: Humans have been trying to learn about itself, at physiological and spiritual, level. Humans have learnt about their own anatomy and gained knowledge on the systems and processes that goes on under their skin. Brain is one organ humans have understood less despite the considerable progress in neuro-sciences. Human knowledge has been just enough for treatment associated with diseases, associated with human brain. Recent advances at understanding human brain are attempted by using brain-computer interface. Nurolink (Elon Musk company) is engaging in research in this space for long time. AI systems are invariably going to engage in the process. This engagement is not devoid of dilemmas. Implications of Generative Artificial Intelligence coming to learn about the functioning of Human brain before Human does, is an unchartered territory.

Humans have been captivated by unknown realities of Universe: From the days of star gazers to Hubble telescope to James Web telescope, humans have been stepping up attempts to understand the universe. Many of the theories of Physics such as big Bang Theory are awaiting validation through more data and advanced systems processing complex matrix of voluminous data. Association of Artificial Intelligence in augmenting human intelligence is nothing but a natural synergy. Elon Musk has floated a new entrepreneurship xAI (already discussed above) where AI will be used to understand reality. Again the common debate rises up in this space too. When Artificial Intelligence systems understands reality before humans does. The synthetic language that regenerative AI uses to communicate the learnings to mankind is beyond human comprehension.

Human Weaknesses: Humans have weakness in dealing with monotony. Human are also emotional beings and soon get bored by routine task. It affects productivity and gives rise to mistakes. The human weakness is Al's strength. Al systems are capable of repetitive tasks for any number of time until its power source is cut off. Until now, machines have served humans in this sphere of work involving repetitive steps.





Hallucination: How do humans know that AI is not playing Games? In Current levels of AI application, hallucination is an issue faced by users. In a recent case, an USA based Lawyer was severely pulled up Court for submitting incorrect case laws amounting to misleading the Court. The hapless lawyer used some Artificial Intelligence driven application to prepare his case. And the application fed wrong cases purported to be in in his favour. AI hallucination is an easy presumption considering the data on which the AI systems are trained on. As Humans vacate more space to AI, how do humans know whether the output from AI is due to hallucination or deliberate mischief to derail human enterprise by a regenerative AI system capable of generating complex outputs like conscious beings? These are issues waiting on the road ahead in human adaptation to AI driven world.

Generative Content: AI trained on datasets that are biased and socially regressive, divisive ideologies. But things are going to change once synthetic discourses begin to appear. When AI begins to roll out intellectual content which starts influencing human thoughts and behaviour individually and collectively, the value premises will undergo sea change. This change can be good for human society or may perhaps be bad as well. The negative fall out for society however is very hard to predict now.

Development of systems detrimental to life: There can be AI systems that can power development of potentially dangerous applications detrimental to life and nature. Humans, being the apex intelligence so far has been spoiler as well as protector of life and nature. At least it has perceived itself to be the one. As long as the yoke is in the hands of mankind, humans decided how to protect, where to protect various lifeforms and nature. But under its hegemony, humans could not decide on how much to destroy nature and its lifeforms. Human existence is guided by economics and enterprise. Humans could never been in control of its economic systems. Take for example, recession. Human economists can declare recessionary phase but could never prevent one till now. This uncertainty is the biggest failure of economics and human economist designed models. This inability is the mighty chink in the apex intelligence claim by Humans--an inability to coordinate amongst one another to predictably beget a desired outcome in economic space-growth. There are so many factors which humans could not control. The economic assumption "Human beings are irrational" is the Achilles' heel of economics. Behavioural economics could not provide solutions to recession where irrational behaviour of man brings in the greatest uncertainty. The entry of Artificial Intelligence in Behavioural Economics can help understand the underlying dynamics of fast changing rationality in human behaviour. What economics perceived as irrationality could be frequently changing phases of rationality. When the patterns are known then one of the ubiquitous assumptions of economics "irrational man" may have to be dropped. Present Computing systems so far could not process the data on the short lived phases of mans rational behavioural state. As long as the vital input on human behaviour occupies a place in economic assumptions, human control on economic phenomenon such as recession will never come about Artificial Intelligence has the promise to replace humans in this space and better control on how economics play.

To understand future, look at nature around: Nature creates through its creation. Curiously Nature is visible in its work around us, but not visible doing the work. Nature has withdrawn into some consciousness. This consciousness all around us. We see nature at work through its agents. The seeds will burst out of seed on the first rains. Grasses will begin to emerge in barren patch of land over time. These are few common experiences of the all pervading consciousness that encompasses us.





We feel nature's presence. But never see nature at work as a personality. We see its creation carrying forward the creation business by procreation and anthropogenic innovation. For example, is aeroplane the creation of Man or Nature? Is human race a transient race in the scheme of nature? Are humans ordained to hand over baton to Artificial Intelligence at certain point of time? Understanding what is nature, may give some clue of what will humans be like in future.

Is AI better than humans or as bad as humans in judgements: As long as AI developers train their AI Systems on human generated data sets, the capacity for nuisance to society and humanity at large is going to be similar to what humans are capable of themselves. Only change could be that Artificial Intelligence structures can bring about the outcomes in more efficient ways. The magnitude of repercussions of the nuisance caused can also be of much higher dimensions than humans could generate. Generative AI takes these prospects to another level--Synthetic text. As Generative AI systems become more advanced, the nature of biases, prejudices can take on new shapes. When two or multiple AI systems start interacting in own language and are removed from the human connection of input data for training, outcomes can be both good and bad, for sure. First, the good part. Racism, regionalism, gender biases such as disparity in pay between male and female may seem illogical to Generative AI systems. Therefore AI systems (with AI written algorithm) while generating responses for the best way of dealing with a situation will be free from these inclinations. The second side of the outcome is thought provoking. For an AI system programmed for efficient and heavy duty processing of data in order to find the best course of action to solve a problem, may find human trait as the biggest obstacle. AI system may arrange the steps by side stepping humans. Let us understand this by an example. In GPS navigation on roads, the AI system gives the fastest route by eliminating the high traffic roads. It avoids the high traffic routes, while calculating the fastest route, it arrives at the fastest route by elimination. In a way it side steps the impediments. Suppose, in solving a problem, human beings are found to be the impediment. The AI system may, by design, side-step humans. The side stepping is nothing new. In automation, humans already stand eliminated from the process owing to human limits of productivity. Average Human capacity for output is the impediment. But in pre-Artificial Intelligence automation, side stepping was by human design- to step aside and make way for machines. However machines remained the servants. In Artificial Intelligence era, Artificial Systems may find that humans are the impediment. For example, say, the issue before an AI system is development of an under-developed region of the globe. AI system after analysing the humongous data finds that corruption, policy biases, associated with decision making by humans are the factors that slowed down the development process. AI systems may cut out humans from the loop. AI systems are increasingly taking over decision making at various level, if not the crucial one like making laws in parliament. But the extent of pervasiveness of AI in decision making structures cannot be predicted for even short term, considering the fast pace of AI development. Today we are already talking of machine readable laws. Future decision making may be shared decision making between humans and Artificial Intelligence. As long as the controls are with humans, AI systems will serve humanity. But control is a highly shifting factor. The day AI takes charge, that will be the "another sun on the horizon" moment. Many things associated with this planet will change. So many things associated with human dominance will change. For humans may no longer be the apex intelligence beings. Humans may not get to decide what is best for the planet. Humans may not get to decide which region should be





biosphere reserve to preserve nature in its pristine form. AI systems may perceive the pre industrial phase earth as one biosphere reserve and human numbers are an impediment to attaining that phase again. Will there be enmasse culling of human beings is a small conceivable prospect? We all know, humans are the reason for the imbalance in earth system. Scientists have found "near proof of new geological age where human action is irreversible" in twelve assessed sites including Antarctic peninsula, Ernesto cave Italy, Flinders reef in Australia and Crawford Lake in Canada. Plutonoum markers allowed scientists to identify the start of Cold War. The evidences suggest towards towards the advent of Anthropocene epoch where human influence on earths geology is irreversible.

On a different note, climate change is actually not a change when not perceived from biospheric survival angle. Climate change is actually a state of the planet under a particular atmospheric composition. From that sense, climate change does not mean anything to the planet. If the green house gases composition of atmosphere changes with more CO2, then warmer earth is the new state of planet earth. The composition changes further with preponderance of greenhouse gases, it shall be heat furnace earth. But from the eyes of biospheric components, ecosystems are destroyed and synergies are disrupted. It might signal end of time for many components and end of time for many species. When Artificial Intelligence is asked to find solution and bring down green house gases, the good part will be it will bring in the energy transition faster. The bad part is that, human casualties will be high. Artificial Intelligence solutions might bring existential questions to the fore and the alarming part is when humans no longer decides. In the "second sun on my horizon" metaphor, our sun no longer decides the seasons on earth.







A THOUSAND WORDS & A THOUSAND HOLIDAYS

Gaichanglungliu G. Kamei

Commissioner of Income Tax (Admn & TPS), Guwahati

It is said a picture can say a thousand words. Here are some pictures that I hope will convey more than a thousand words.

This article is a compilation of pictures I captured in my travels. It is intended to give the reader a bird's eye view of various places in the North East Region, and hopefully, he will be inspired to visit them. Many of these places I have visited, have been over a normal weekend or a much awaited long weekend (one with a Friday or Monday holiday). I start with a disclaimer that I only write about places I have explored. I have miles to go, valleys to explore, mountains to climb and rivers to follow.

Meghalaya

It is only fitting that I start with this state since it is from the capital city of this state i.e. Shillong from where this journal is being published.



A rare cypripedium (ladies slipper) orchid bloom in the hothouse of the Botanical Survey of India, Shillong

पंचम अंक





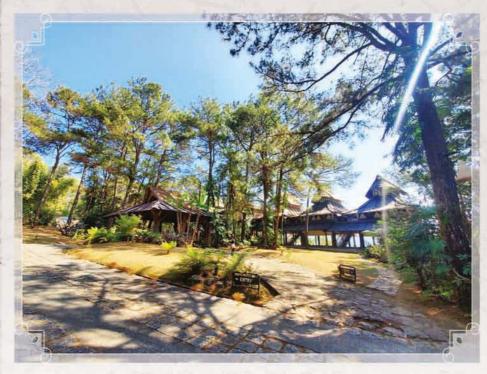


your bucket list for your next holiday to the region. 'Rikynjai' resort, meaning serenity by the lake, lives up to its name and could be your lunch/brunch stop on your way back down or out of Meghalaya.

Serenity by the lake.







'Rikynjai' Resort, Umiam Lake, Meghalaya.

A visit to the Police Bazaar in Shillong is a must. Travelling is all amiss without a feel of the pulse of the people and the place. The bazaar is known by people from far and near with generations of people from the region who have schooled or pursued higher education in the city having memories galore of their exploits in this bazaar that sells almost everything. If a particularly busy day coincides with a day when your legs are dead tired, you may be lucky enough to simply be carried by crowd.

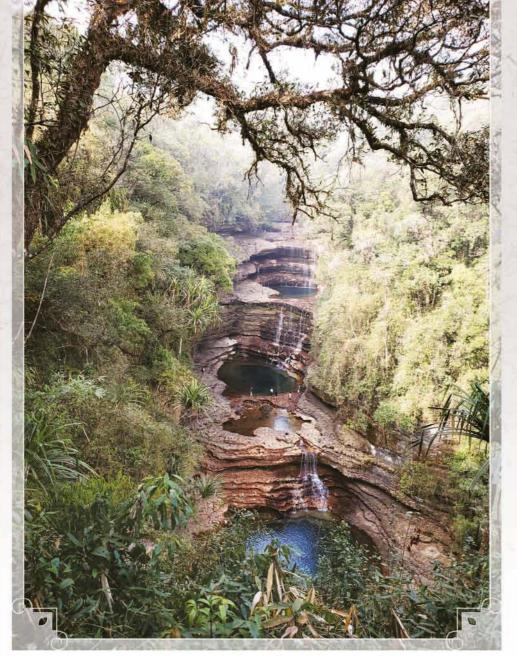
For the music lover, the EC (Evening Club) in Police Bazaar will guarantee a lovely Friday or Saturday evening watching talented local music bands performing different genres of music from jazz to rock to the blues. Prior table booking is recommended. The proprietor of the club seeks to promote new talents but believe me, these new talents are not at all new to their musical genius.



The legendary Lou Majaw is only 70 plus young and nowhere near the end of his repertoire!



A THOUSAND WORDS & A THOUSAND HOLIDAY



Wei Sawdong Falls, East Khasi Hills, Cherrapunjee, Meghalaya

Cherrapunjee, now known as Sohra

Those wanting to explore the famous living root bridges, of which there are thousands in the state I'm told, can proceed to Cherrapunjee or Sohra. There are many hotels and home stays in the area. A home stay I once stayed in, was reasonably priced and their rooms and bathrooms spotlessly clean. A bonfire in the crisp evening air under the Milky Way with Dan Seals crooning in the starry night is my preferred way to spend the evening after a day exploring the limestone caves of Mawsmai and ogling at the many waterfalls like Wei Sawdong, Seven Sisters fall, Phe Phe falls, Nohkalikai etcall within one or two hour's drive from Cherrapunjee.





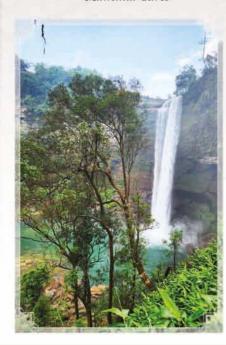


Mawsmai Caves



River algae make a beautiful map in the river basin







The second level of Phe Phe falls. Only a 20 minute walk away from the first.



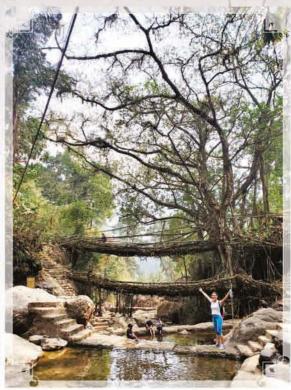




The living root bridges of Meghalaya are an unexplored and untapped tourist goldmine I would say. I earnestly hope the powers that be will regulate traffic to these precious living bridges that have been formed and trained by the local people in a stupendous collaboration of man and nature, each nothing short of an engineering marvel.

There are, I am told, more than three thousand living root bridges of all heights, sizes, ages and varieties are there in the entire state of Meghalaya.









Nohkalikai Waterfall

Be prepared for a challenging trek down to the bottom of the fall. Sturdy trekking shoes, layered clothing, knee caps, water, and a walking stick to break a fall (God forbid) and to help balance you, is a must. The first awestruck sight of the waterfall from the top almost becomes a joke once you have experienced and gaped at the fall from the pool at the bottom. It is a reward, to say the least! The waterfall is said to be the tallest in the country at 340 feet. There is a very sad legend about the waterfall however. A google search will reveal it all.



To get to the pool at the bottom of the fall, the only way in is to crawl down a narrow stone opening.



On the way back from Nohkalikai falls, take a leisurely stroll through the village (after the steep climb back, your legs need that slow time). If visiting in the autumn, you will be in time to pluck sweet ripe golden oranges straight off the trees in the family gardens. The villagers will be happy to sell some straight from the source saving them the time and energy to take them to the market. Bask in the warm autumn sun and enjoy the oranges, mixing vitamins C and D.









River side trekking is yet another beautiful way to feel one with nature. A close affinity and interaction with the river takes place as you negotiate each boulder that guards the river bank. Shoeless, but with socks for grip on the slippery moss-grown rocks, the connection with the river is that much more intimate. This special trek can only be in the lean autumn and winter season, though. The full river in the monsoon needs to go about her business and will not welcome trekkers.

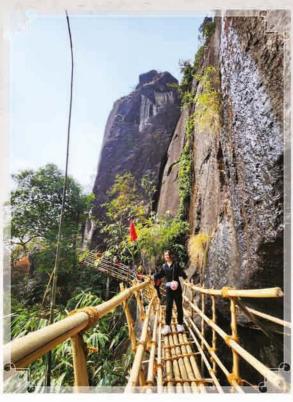


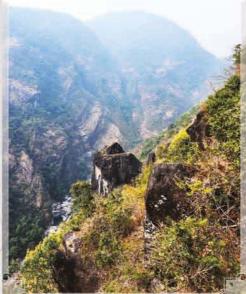
A golden caterpillar curls up hearing us advancing to intrude into its space.



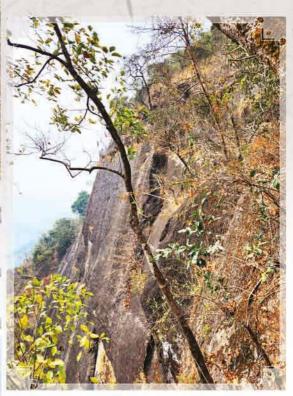


Mawryngkhang trek in King of Stones in Wahkhen village in Meghalaya. There is an interesting legend behind this famous gigantic rock. It is more interesting if you go see it and hear the story for yourself.









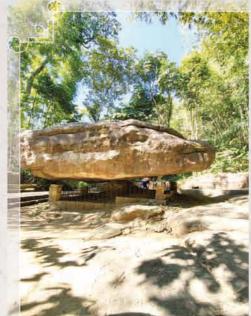
Sturdy bridges and ramps made of locally available bamboo, jute rope, stone and wood are regularly repaired by villagers and authorities ensuring safety.





A THOUSAND WORDS & A THOUSAND HOLIDAY

Stated to be Asia's cleanest village, spending a day or night in Mawlynnong village is recommended. Just strolling through the village, admiring and appreciating each hut and house, the neat gardens with a variety of flowers, fruits, and vegetables in the little patches by the house, brings a sense of wholesomeness and peace of mind that says, little is much.









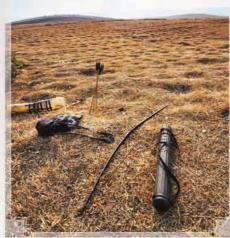




Local archers enjoy their favourite weekend and holiday pastime while the women enjoy washing the laundry by the streams and rivers. By the way locally made Khasi soap or Shillong soap as most know it is a washerman's delight. There is one for the sparkling dishes and another for the clothes. Those who have an association with Shillong and have used this soap, make it a point to take time out to purchase the soap by the kgs. If you come across them, archers and the washer women, do take some time to sit and enjoy their sport and give a penny for your thoughts, dreamily watching the steam rise from the laundry and drying on the massive stone slabs by the waterside. It's a setting you will not easily come across in our urban

jungles.

Half an hour's drive from Shillong is Laitlum Canyons (means 'The end of the hills')



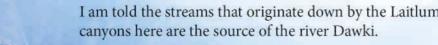


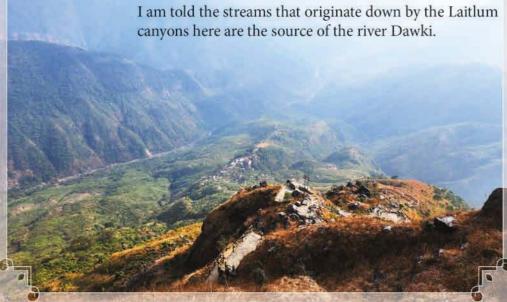
These rolling hills turn into green expanses when the potatoes, introduced by the Scottish are planted for a summer harvest. The trail, through which Mr. David Scott who apparently first introduced potatoes in the 1930s in Meghalaya, is a pretty and comfortable 16 kms trekking trial in Synrang Kaban, East Khasi Hills.



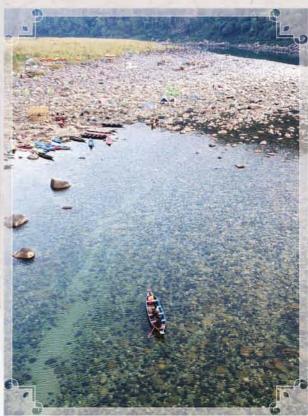












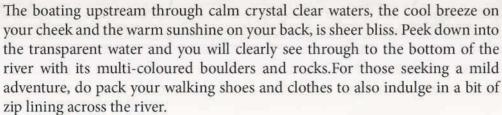
Umngot river in Dawki

The Umngot river, popularly known as the Dawki River after the town it flows through is exquisite in the lean winter months. Flowing to the bottom of the Jaintia Hills in West Jaintia Hills, the rivers enter Bangladesh at Dawki. One bank of the river is the other side of the border.





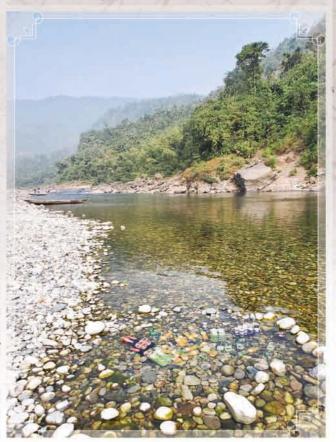




Carry a little something in your backpack for a picnic on a shady beach. The cold river water is good for anything that needs chilling, if you get my drift. The boatman will oblige with a smile and wait awhile or come back when you're ready.

And yes, do come back again and again. I will too. There is enough I'm certain, to explore for a lifetime.

For other six of the seven sisters of NER, some other time...







AT THE CROSSROADS, MUSINGS OF A FUZZY MIND



Tapan Deka
Deputy Commissioner of Income Tax,
Guwahati

I was sipping a cutting chai at the traffic junction of Rukminigaon in Guwahati on a leisurely Monday morning. Monday being the first day of the working week, hundreds of two wheelers and four wheelers were passing by the ever-busy GS Road every minute, with Rukminigaon traffic signal acting as the traffic calmer. The tiniali (three-road intersection) is unlike any other intersection in the city. It is an embodiment of civility and non-culture, chaos and calm, noise and silence, patience and impatience, joy and anxiety, all at the same time. Watching the people at the signal made me ponder up on a lot of questions, answers to which are still being contemplated by my fuzzy mind.

There are about four or five lanes of vehicles on the road, waiting for the signal to turn green from red. The left most lanes hogged by the two-wheeler motorcycles and scooters, the right most lanes, hogged by vehicles waiting to take a U-turn. The eyes are fixated on the countdown timer up ahead. Tick tock, tick tock. 5...4...3...2...1...120... and off goes the incessant blazing of horns. It is as if only the vehicles behind were really following the timer, and the front row vehicles were dozing off, and it is the responsibility of the vehicles behind to remind the vehicles ahead that "Ladies and Gentlemen, the lights towards your destination have turned green, kindly slot into your gears, press the accelerator and get moving will ya". Certainly not a "sound" place for someone wanting a little bit of quiet time. The horns do not stop well into 10 seconds after the signal has turned red again. Sometimes, I begin to think, whether people abuse the horn so much because it is just there, and there is no extra effort or compensation needed to press it to one's heart's content. If there would have been a mechanism likey you need to do a pre-paid recharge of, say, Rs100 for 100 beeps, and with each beep, your balance would start decreasing (like our electricity bill, for instance), would people start rationalizing on the use of the horns. Would people use horns only for emergency purposes then, like say, honking to ask people for side, or avoiding hitting some one. Or would some thrifty people stop using it altogether and cause more mayhem on the roads



than plain and simple noise irritation is one question I keep thinking about.

My cup of tea was long over, and I began to glance through my phone for any unread WhatsApp messages. There were none. It has become kind of a habit these days to occasionally pull out the mobile phone from the trouser pocket to check if there is any new notification. I put back the phone inside the pocket. I glanced back again towards the signal. The light has just turned red from green and an array of vehicles came to a halt. A rider with his orange colored Swiggy tee on, began checking for the directions on the phone that he has stuck on the motorcycle handle. The rider beside him pulled out the phone from his jeans pocket and began fiddling with it. The driver in the car beside was also fiddling with his.

Someone was fiddling with the infotainment screen on their car. I could not help but leave out a silent laugh. "Et tu, people?" Seems like this mania has taken gigantic proportions. We do not know why we feel left out when we do not check our mobiles for some time, what or who is so important that we can not wait for a few more minutes before an actual call or an actual message comes. Nowadays, due to the universal use of social messaging apps, especially WhatsApp, the dissemination of information has become instantaneous. A superior requires a report on a matter, he simply sends across a message regarding it on the WhatsApp group. Dissemination of information has definitely become faster, but has service delivery kept it's pace? Have we become more efficient because of such instantaneous services? Even when we are on the road driving to our destination, at every halt possible, we are checking into our mobiles, ignoring the beauty of the drive, the happiness of reaching the destination. Apart from a sudden surge of stress or sadness that may emanate from some WhatsApp message or a random post that may hamper our ride, are the contents on the mobile screen really contributing anything constructive in our daily lives? Sometimes yes, but I think in most occasions it is simply an escape to a virtual world we want to be part of but feel left out. Similar observations, anyone?

I hurried to cross the road towards Hotel Shoolin Grand, and by the time I reached the road divider, the lights towards Khanapara had turned green, and I had to stop. A beggar walked past me and began knocking on the windows of the cars waiting for the U-turn signal. Even though begging has been made illegal by the Assam Government, nothing much-seems to be happening on the ground for prevention of begging. They are present in all traffic signals in the city. Along with the beggar, there was one other boy, probably in his late teens, with steering covers wrapped around his neck, and car cleaning brushes on his hands hopping from one car to the other, hoping some one would buy his wares. As a marketing person myself, I could not help but wonder that this indeed is a good strategy to make some good margins. The customer has very limited time to evaluate the quality, or negotiate on price, and one who is probably missing out on a car brush may readily buy it. Although his total number of sales would be less due to limited stock, his margins per item would be high. I began to think what other quick-buy things can this guy sell at the signal. Air fresheners maybe? Red roses? The lights turned green for pedestrian crossing, and I made my walk towards the other side.

As I made my way towards Down Town Hospital, I could hear the incessant honking of the vehicles again. Cars frantically trying to overtake each other by jumping lanes from right to left, left to right are signature moves of Indian road manners,





detested worldwide. Not just with our vehicles, in all aspects of life, we Indians are always in a competitive mood. On the roads, we always want to get ahead of the other vehicles, and for that we will drive rashly, honk irresponsibly and make driving stress ful for all. When we will be part of queues, be it at the bank, or at the railway ticket counter, or for entry into the priority lounge at the airport, we shall try out ways to break the queue and go ahead of others. We would quarrel if need be. I am sure you too encounter many such examples on a day-to-day basis. This tendency of moving ahead of others, with zero consideration for the society is an aspect of a capitalist mindset. I have always held that India is a capitalist society, and all Indians of current times have capitalist nature, unlike our counter parts a few decades earlier.

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution declares India to be a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. The ethos of socialism is ingrained in our political and social fabric. We have heard countless stories of how, during the time of our grand parents, the village society used to be the harbinger of individual decision making as well. Not anymore today. Today's world is completely individualistic, completely capitalistic. We do not have or wish to have any socialistic spirit in our actions. By looking at the long queue at the hospital or a temple, we do not think twice to offer a few rupee notes to a middleman who facilitates ourearly entry. By looking at the competition in an exam, many do not think twice before shelling out multiple dozen lakhs of rupees for a job. India has such a huge population that in every aspect we would have to encounter long queues, longer waiting times, fierce competition. Everyone fighting it out to get a piece of the limited pie. And therein results all the conflicts, the urge to get ahead of all others because of the fear that the other might not leave anything for us. Had the roads been wider, would people need to change lanes so much to overtake? Had the number of quality hospitals and quality doctors been more, would we witness such huge waiting times? Had the systems followed the First-Come-First-Served process strictly, would we see proliferation of middlemen? Had the resources been adequate for all sections, would we see conflicts between different religions, different communities? Therein lies the contradiction in today's India. We are socialistic in thought, but capitalistic in practice. Humorously, elections today are won because of promises of getting India more socialistic, even though people have become more inward looking, individualistic and forward looking. And then there was this loud bang, and something that I always fear in Guwahati traffic happened. A car had rear-ended another car. The light had turned orange from green, and the vehicle behind assumed the front vehicle would cross ahead, so did not bother to move the feet away from the accelerator, and the result was out before all of us to see.

There are some things we Indians really love watching. "JCB ki khudaai" being one. Watching people fight it out on the street is another. The driver and passenger of the Brezza which got rear ended by a Thar came rushing furiously and began banging at the windows of the Thar. The moment the Thar driver lowered his window, down came Bam, Bam, Bam. Three straight punches. This person would really need to visit a doctor today I felt. "Poisa ulaa" (Give us the money) demanded the Brezza driver. This is something that has baffled me for years now. The love of people for material things over other fellow human beings. And that too, in such situations where there are remedies available. It is not compulsory for human lives to be insured, but it is compulsory for vehicles to be insured. And insurance is there for these types of eventualities. You have an accident, you just take the car to the service center, claim insurance, and make peace. If at all one is to be





compensated, one can take the processing fees or no-claim bonus forfeiture fee from the offender. But in India, unless one engages in a physical fight where a few blows are not dealt, unless one does not extract the maximum possible money from the other, unless the constable comes and take five hundreds from both parties, such incidents are not settled. Such love for one's materialistic possessions where one bays for the other's blood and money has never been understood by me. And funnily, that same person would sell off that loved materialistic possession the moment a new car is launched with more show off features, and it would not take him long to forget the car for whom he once fought on the streets with random people. My mobile phone finally vibrated, and I glanced at the screen. "Hello! Yes, I am right here. Reaching there in two minutes."

As I began my detour towards the iconic Pantaloons building, I glanced back at the road once again. Amidst the chaos, the noise, the irrational behaviours, are journeys towards fulfilling one's dreams, journeys for earning livelihoods and joys of meeting and being with loved ones. Movement, howsoever irrationally done, is taking us somewhere. And that is what matters, I believe. I think. Or may be not. Damn. Whatever. I got to go. She is out there waiting for me since last how many minutes now!







CONDUCT RULES? WHAT ARE THOSE??

The first rite of passage for a young civil servant who has just cracked a massively competitive examination for entering service under the President of India – is the mandatory period of training at designated Services Academies. This process lasts for anything between six months to two years, whereby the raw civil service recruits are systematically exposed to conduct and priorities that would be their ecosystem for the next three decades and more. They are initiated



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into the spirit of governance through exposure to ubiquitous laws and rules which they are expected to administer with absolute integrity and impartiality, and also the values they should imbibe and the personal conduct they are mandated to follow as Officers of the Govt of India. The exuberance and carefree attitude of the young trainees is sought to be thus channelized and re-directed towards loftier goals of public service and allegiance to the Constitution of India. And therein lies my little tale this time.

After the Foundation Course at the NAA Mussoorie, I reported as a young IRS probationer at the National Academy of Direct Taxes at Nagpur. Full of the proverbial "stars in my eyes", I pranced around the NADT grounds happily, looking forward to a new life as an Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax. Before I joined Service, I was a Lecturer at my old College at Shillong for a few years and during that period had an Enfield Bullet gifted to me by my father after having secured that job. This bike had ensured my free mobility and consequently, with my walking habits somewhat spoiled, I was yearning to have a two-wheeler to move around Nagpur and explore the surroundings. However, with the princely starting salary of around Rs.1200/- per month in 1986, it remained a distant dream.

After several months of training we took a course on Office Procedure, where one of the topics was "Loans and Advances" to government servants. To my delight, I discovered that I was eligible for a scooter loan on a reasonable monthly installment of just a couple of hundred rupees. So I went and met the Head Clerk of the Administration Section, who informed me that large loan funds allocated to the Academy by CBDT were lapsing each year due to insufficient takers. It was his assurance that if I applied, my loan would be sanctioned within seven days.

The spring in my step became longer, as I gazed lovingly at every scooter that passed me on the road, and dreamed of my own



white one. Vespa had just released the new NV model which was reputed to be comfortable and sporty, and also powerful. My young blood was on a boil to own one and feel the wind as I rode to Sitabuldi market for shopping and eating out, or visited the nearby Panchmari hill-stationon weekends. I wasted no time in applying for the scooter advance with all supporting documents, including the proforma invoice from a local dealer. And then I waited for my loan to be sanctioned by the Deputy Director (Admn).

The wait was longer than I expected. After 10 days passed, I met the Head Clerk who informed me that my file had already been put up to the DD(Admin) who was a busy man and would be looking at it by and by. As the DD(Admin) was also a member of our Training Faculty and we were familiar with him, I unhesitatingly knocked on his door and earnestly requested him to kindly sanction my scooter advance as I was looking forward to my own conveyance. Oh, the innocence of those early days in the service! The gentleman was extremely sweet and assured me that he would definitely look at my file soon, as he had been quite busy. Feeling confident and assured, I happily returned to my classroom and immersed myself in law and accountancy.

The days dragged on into the next week and still there was no word. I never had a doubt that anything was the matter, though somewhere deep down I did begin to feel a bit uncomfortable. Finally, after another 10 days, the message came to me via a peon, to meet the DD(Admin). I almost ran there, quite sure that I was being called to be handed over the sanction letter. The DD smilingly motioned me to a chair and then fixed me with a humorous yet quizzical look. "Ronmoy, are you aware why loans are sanctioned to officers by the government?" I was stupefied for a moment, but recovered quickly enough to state that they were accorded so that officers could be comfortable with travelling. He smiled. "Exactly, they are given for public purposes. May I know what is the public purpose you intend to achieve by motoring around this Academy on your new Vespa scooter?" Now this question I did not expect, hence it left me guite stymied. The DD (Admin) held my eyes with a kind but inquisitive look, and his smile never wavered. I finally broke his gaze and blurted out that I would use it to attend classes and go visiting the surrounding areas as I liked to travel. He looked at me as a headmaster may look at an errant school boy, and asked me to return to my classes, assuring that he would take an "appropriate decision". My instinct told me that the meeting had not gone well at all, and hence, crestfallen and with confidence shaken, I shuffled back to the faculty building. When I received a letter two days later rejecting my application due to it not having passed the test of "careful consideration", I was not overly surprised - though I was severely disappointed and almost in tears for a part of that day! Needless to say, with that rejection letter, a bit of my heady world-view had changed also. I became a little more aware of the thinking processes within the government, and daresay that it also somewhat prepared me for the terrain which I would then traverse for the next three decades!

A second incident occurred when I was on On-the-Job Training (OJT) at a station in the North East. My child had just been born a month ago, and I was eager to be with my family for the three months of OJT. As it was autumn and there was a chill in the air, my doctor brother who had purchased a Maruti Van a few months before insisted that I should keep the same with me for the OJT period as I had a baby to look after and the vehicle would come in handy. He said he would manage with his trusty Rajdoot bike for the period. Being still relatively new to the mileu of the Department, I didn't give it much thought and accepted his generous offer.





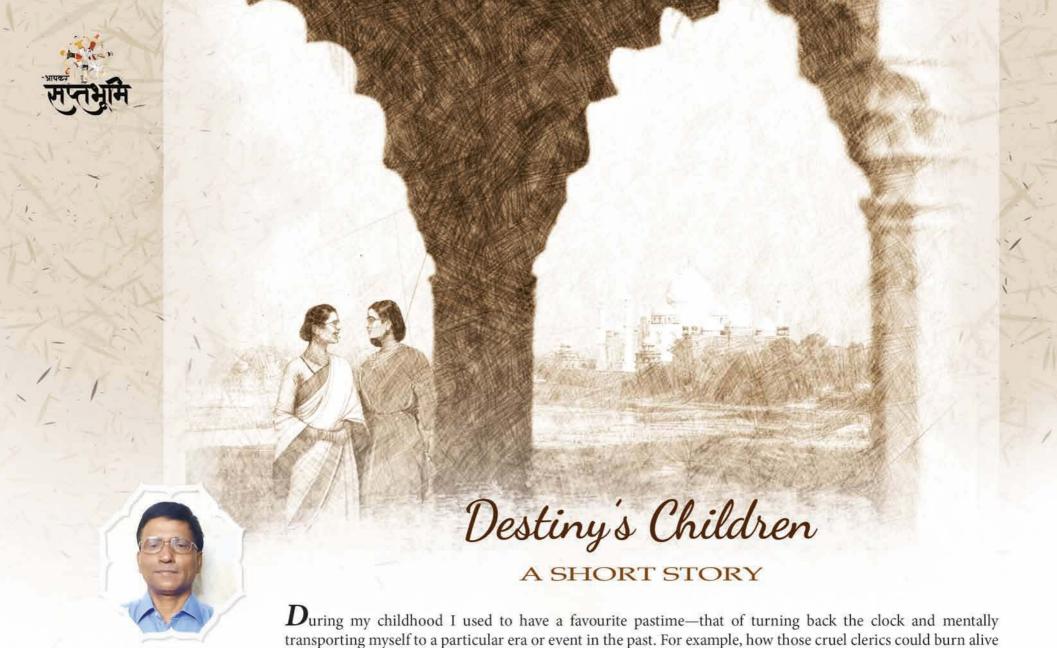
As luck would have it, on my second evening at the station, I happened to bump into the Commissioner in the small local market. He was carrying a heavy bag and trudging up a gentle slope where I had just parked my brother's white car. Seeing him, I quickly got out and accosted him, and readily offered him a ride home. He looked at me questioningly, whereupon I pointed to the vehicle and said I would drop him home in it. He put down his bag slowly, and wanted to know if it was my car. Without sensing the direction of his query, I innocently informed him that my brother had lent it to me for my OJT period, so it was mine for a few weeks. He considered this input for a couple of moments, before breezily refusing my offer of a lift, stating that he rather enjoyed his evening walks. Then he lifted his bag, waved to me and was gone.

The next morning at office, I got a call asking me to meet the Commissioner, whose chamber was in a different building from where we were taking our training. When I reached his room, he was all smiles and graciously offered me a cup of tea. Thereafter, with the gentle twirling of a pencil between both his hands, another aspect of my training began. An officer must not only be honest, he advised, he must also be seen to be honest, and it gives a very wrong impression when a probationer drives a spanking new car, that too in the local marketplace. "I personally understand your feelings and aspirations", he stated, "but another boss may find it unbecoming!". And so it went on. In the end, his message was to avoid such "ostentation" and conduct myself with introspection and humility, as befitting a new entrant into government service. He finished by assuring me that all he had stated was only for my own good. However, by virtue of his well-meaning advice, my simplistic world-view had again shifted slightly! I didn't realize it at the time, but I was being "mainstreamed" into the Department, and being nudged towards being an "acceptable" officer! In 1986 that was the mood, and I am glad to see that these days, far more permissive interpretation of the conduct rules in these matters has become standard.

I must conclude by asserting that I write all this in a lighter vein, absolutely bereft of any resentment or censure towards the two venerable gentlemen involved. They were gentle and polite with me and only acting as per the culture which they had absorbed in decades of service. At the start of this piece, I mentioned the raison detre of services training. I realized that in government service, beyond the suit-boots and safari suits, there exists a subterranean self-righteous ethos which is undisguisedly socialistic. The two bosses were only products of that mood. And as years progressed, I daresay that I myself may have imbibed some of the same sanctimonious attitude for it is a way of life in service. It's just that when I look back at those early days, I laugh as how spontaneous and carefree I used to be, outside the Conduct Rules. One thing that one learns pretty quickly in government, is never to take things at face value! Especially not the smiles of the Boss, nor the gushing praise from one's subordinates!! Ces't La Vie!







Subhrajyoti Bhattacharjee Commissioner of Income Tax (Appeal, Unit-1), Shillong **D**uring my childhood I used to have a favourite pastime—that of turning back the clock and mentally transporting myself to a particular era or event in the past. For example, how those cruel clerics could burn alive the fifteenth century brave heart Joan of Arc in full public view without a trace of compunction, how the class rooms of Nalanda would look like during the Gupta period, how psychologically unnerved were the prisoners of the cellular jail when they heard the wails of fellow prisoners hung in the gallows next door and so on?





I once won the 1st prize in a prestigious essay competition on the topic of 'Your favourite dream' and there is no prize for guessing what that dream was. To my delight, the chairman of the jury, a grey-haired academic, sought me out from a throng of students to bless me. 'Such imagination and originality at this age! The snippets of those bye-gone eras have been captured so poignantly in her writing! It's the mingling of heart and head at its seamless best and that's rare', he raved over my essay while handing over to me a gilded envelope containing the cash prize in presence of my proud father.

Unfortunately, the celebration was destined to be short-lived. Exactly a week later when we were returning from a bank after having opened my maiden account with that money, a gigantic truck came from nowhere, as if like a bad omen, to knock my father down in the blink of an eye...The dazed onlookers later were saying that had he not pushed me away, I would've surely come under the truck.

I had heard real life stories of how life changes overnight over a single incident. I now experienced it myself and how? At one fell swoop, our happy world shattered to pieces. My mother—hardly in her mid-thirties was all at sea with three daughters, the eldest aged sixteen and the youngest, barely a tot.

Cut to the present, a quarter century later...

'Hey, you seem to be in some deep thought, what has happened? Has Taj belied your expectation?' I smiled to Sangita Prasad, a fellow junior lecturer in my college and a bit of a loner like me. It was late afternoon and we were standing near the beautiful octagonal tower of Agra fort overlooking the mighty Taj Mahal. This is where the imprisoned Shah Jahan lay on his deathbed, gazing at the Taj.

'Don't you feel Madam, this place has a strange melancholic ring to it? The emperor's agonized breaths and silent tears are all that I feel, see here. Imagine how painful must have been the last eight years of his caged life?' Sangita who teaches English literature said, a little lost.

'But it was a divine retribution for him, wasn't it? He was after all no less cruel, having killed innocents on his way to the throne?' I said.

Sangita nodded her head inderminately.

'Let's not rake up this sorrowful chapter of history. Just savour the moment. In the next few minutes, the sun will set over this mausoleum of love, I tried to steer the discussion away from sighs and tears, but she seemed to be in an evocative mood. 'It's hard to believe that it took twenty long years for thousands of workers to toil day in , day out to come up with this symphony of eternal love,' she said mistily.

'Symphony of eternal love? Wow! The epithet just befits this ageless monument,' I said and couldn't help thinking that pretty early on, I also had this gift for words, but ravages of time have taken many good things away from me.





'Isn't it true that the emperor Sahjahan chopped off their hands so that they could never make another Taj?'

'If your question is to a professor of History, my answer is it's a myth. But even if it's true, has it diminished Taj's glory?'

'It has, Madam. Any edifice which has such a gory background, doesn't deserve to be called the greatest. I'm sure, dead at night, you'll hear faint echoes of agonized cries through every stone of this monument, she gasped, her choice of words again left me with a feeling of déjà vu.

'But in the same breath you should also say that at night, specially a moonlit one, the Taj looks so ravishing that you'll not know how the night has passed, I countered.

'Sorry, Madam.I've this irritating habit to seek out sadness even from pure beauty, she looked at her watch. 'I think, it's time to call our students,' she rang one senior student to assemble others at one place.

'Well, I'm happy that you've admitted it yourself...See, you're not the only one who philosophizes sorrow and misery without actually going through them. Ask me, I lived at the opposite end of the spectrum where misery and only misery jostled for space and there was no place for poetry, I shot her a look in which complaint and caring were nicely fused. A descendant of a rich family, she mightn't have realized that she had unwittingly touched a raw nerve. 'You know, it's very easy to wax eloquence on anguished breaths, silent tears and all that, but that more difficult to actually live them everyday, every hour, every minute, I stopped for a breath. The suddenness of this emotional outburst from me must have caught her by surprise. So long she'd seen only my cool, friendly façade.

'You might or mightn't know, I lost my father in an accident. What you definitely don't know is its aftermath', I closed my eyes as I was preparing to enter that dark alley of my life, albeit mentally. 'Since you're good at imagination, picture the scene. It was a dark stormy night and the rickety roof was crackling with the pelting of violent gusts of rain on it. Inside, there was that young helpless woman holding her three daughters close to her bosom. Every roar of lightning and the youngest one would shriek out in fright. Aged barely a year and a half, she didn't know, her uncle next door wasn't liking it one bit. 'Shut her up', he kept on roaring in his rasping voice.'

'Your auntie?'

'Instead of reining on her husband, she'd instigate him to be more rough, nasty. I still remember the sight of that shameless glutton stretching his hairy legs out nearly across the whole width of the veranda every Sunday, gorging on roasted chicken legs and what not in front of three hungry children!'

'Madam, were you so bad financially that...', Sangita stopped mid-sentence. She probably thought that she shouldn't have asked a personal question.

'My father had a private job which fetched him modest salary', I continued.'It didn't help that he had a large heart and was always into spending money, a large chunk of which had gone into his brother's education, marriage, even business. But that





ungrateful creature didn't wait even for a month to usurp the whole ancestral property, banishing us to a dingy store house type room in one shady corner. Since my father hadn't left any savings, only loans that also had to be adjusted with all his dues from his company---we were reduced to a sub-human existence overnight, literally. Hard to believe this now that between my mother and myself, we would even starve by turns at one time, I took a few swigs of cold water from the flask and then continued--'luck however didn't close all its doors on us as she got a job in father's company, though, in a lower position within two years of his demise. Her job was such that she would sometimes be compelled to come late in the evening and that's when she'd invariably find the main gate closed---all their doing. 'Good women don't stay out so late in the evening,' my uncle would tell his wife within our earshot. On one occasion, she was even referred to as a whore in their mutual conversation. My mother wouldn't express her hurt before us, would instead sob silently through the night when all except myself would be asleep. Being her eldest daughter, a frail, under-nourished sixteen-year old, it fell upon me to comfort her, but I didn't know how!'

'I can well understand what you went through', Sangita said, following me through a climb down a longish staircase. The giggling group of our girls had started assembling a little distance away.

'But my mother was an extraordinary lady', I went on. 'She'd never utter any bad word against my uncle and aunt. She taught us only good things of life, like forgiveness, respect to elders etc. 'Study', to her, was a priority. Though, we were under severe financial strain—her salary was too nominal to make all ends meet --- she took a daring decision one day to shift herself and us to a one room rented house in a remote corner of the city, keeping in mind the interest of our future. Misery and uncertainty didn't leave us --- far from it, but at least we were now able to breath freely with heads held high, thanks to her.

'She must have found it difficult to cope with the safety of two grown up daughters and also herself?'

'She was young and good looking herself, but she would carry herself with such dignity that no male would dare come close to her. This personality of hers robbed off on her two elder daughters. But yes, it was by God's grace that nobody harmed us in that period, though we were in a vulnerable position. We, after all, had to live cheek and jowl with people, not known for their cultured background.'

'Your uncle remained in touch with you that time?'

'My mother foolishly surrendered all her rights in the common property, so there was no allurement left for him to chase us', I gave a wry smile, 'but in hindsight, it was such a right decision! Had we continued staying in that hell, we all would've ended up mental wrecks.'

'Can't believe, one's own uncle can be so greedy and heartless! We come across such characters only in films and serials, no?' Sangita's lips twitched in disgust.

'True and that's why I can never forgive him. But as they say, good days don't last long...just as I thought that our worst days were over, came another cruel blow. My mother suddenly died on her way back home one evening. Officially, the cause was brain stroke, but I knew it was the combination of so many suppressed ailments within her—anemia, migraine, insomnia,





gastritis, mental anxiety and you name it ... The earth slipped away from under my feet for the second time in less than five years. My youngest sister was only six then, with the second one reaching class nine, I breathed deeply, drawing in the fresh air.

'No word to express my sorrow. How God could be so unkind with good people?' Sangita was almost reduced to tears. Frankly, I hadn't had the occasion to know this much younger colleague of mine so closely before today. She came across as very sensitive.

But call it my parents' blessings, the outcome of their good deeds. Some invisible force gave me tremendous mental strength to take control of the situation then. I became the eagle-eyed mother, the affectionate father, the proverbial guardian angel, all rolled into one, for my sisters. My good class 12 result despite all odds, fetched me an adhoc school job which I supplemented with tuition incomes to save our livelihood. Most would've given up study in my situation, but I was different. Between looking after my sisters, I pursued my first love—'study'. From dawn to midnight, it was a back-breaking slog for me those days. My academic results, all through, were good and I've landed up in this prestigious college job, on the back of them and lots of hard work. Quite a fairy tale turn around for me, no?' I smiled, taking a sip of the tea which a vendor boy brought for us.

'Is there any doubt, Madam? Where are your sisters now?' Sangita asked.

'The second one got married a few years back to a boy of her choice. They're settled in Bangalore', my eyes gleamed.

'And the youngest?'

'She cleared her Masters' last year in first class in record marks. She has grown upto to be a beautiful girl with curly hair and big brown eyes', I said proudly.

'I might've seen her with you once somewhere. I'll surely love to meet her, though...'

'Why not? She'll be your age only.'

'Coming back to you, you've given marriage a miss...Madam...', Sangita asked me unexpectedly. A personal question which I could've dodged, but I didn't.

'Yeah, of course', I gulped. 'Truth be told, my only priority now is Mini. She's a bit too innocent and naïve for this cruel world. The existential crises which she had fought since the age of six months, hasn't affected her mentality. That's strange and at the same time worrisome', I sighed.

With the daylight fast dimming through the sprawling compound of the red citadel, we came out of it only to meet our students at the fort gate, waiting for us in full strength. As planned, we left for the Agra railway station to catch the Patna-bound night train enroute our hotel. I naturally heaved a sigh of relief the moment the whole troupe boarded the train. An excursion with girl students isn't easy and despite my unwillingness, the college authorities had thrust this onerous responsibility on me with Sangita as my able deputy.





Ensconced comfortably on a lower bunk minutes later, I got on with sipping coffee, repeatedly trying Mini's number which was coming engaged.

'Who were you talking to? Boy friend?' I asked her in jest, the moment she picked up my call.

'No, no', she protested vehemently.

'I know, I know, this isn't your cup of tea', I smiled indulgently within myself and then said---'I hope you're aware that you've your exam tomorrow.'

'Oh, Didi, it's civil services prelims, not any board exam, for God's sake.'

'Talking to Mini?' Sangita asked me from the upper bunk, a book in her hand, the moment I'd finished talking to Mini.

'Who else?' I said, my voice dripping with affection for Mini, the apple of my eye, my 'everything' in an otherwise barren life.

'One thing ... just curiosity', Sangita suddenly leaned forward and brought her voice to the level of a whisper—'Do the children of your uncle look after them?'

'It's a pertinent question. Shubham is his only son. At present, he's in Dubai with his wife. He left them completely high and dry. I've heard, he hasn't been in touch with his parents for the last seven-eight years. As you sow, so shall you reap, you know...'

'God, therefore, has delivered His justice', a smile flitted across her face.

'This 'justice' business is very complicated. What sins did my parents commit to deserve such a cursed fate, tell me?' 'Absolutely', Sangita nodded in agreement and got back to reading under the shaded light.

There is nothing like looking out of the window on a running night train. The passing landscapes, dotted with concrete buildings, sleepy huts, dense jungles and occasional rivulets, immediately take you to a different world. It's then that you tend to reflect back your past with its montage of memories, not necessarily all cherished. Much as I wouldn't have liked, Sangita unwittingly reopened my old wounds this afternoon. Whatever it is, she should've been told about my good memories as well. The fact is, very few can boast of a fairytale childhood like mine. Our house was like a temple. Whoever once visited there, wanted to come there again. My mother was such a good hostess and also a fabulous cook. And my father? A quintessential family man, he wouldn't let us miss a single weekend on outings, the main attraction of which would be the mouth-watering snacks, prepared by my mother. Mini was either too small or not yet born to remember those sunny days. When her senses came, all she saw was a dusty small room where an emaciated widow was struggling every minute to keep her family boat afloat on a turbulent sea.

'No sleep?' Sangita's voice floated in.

'Don't worry, myself and sleep are no longer enemies', I smiled and pulled the bed sheet over me in preparation for sleep.





'Didn't I tell you not to go to their house without my permission?' I literally barked at Mini the moment she told me over phone that she'd gone to uncle's house. Our train had just entered the Patna station, early next morning.

'Auntie called me this morning. She's down with a high fever.'

'Why didn't you tell her about your exam tomorrow, stupid girl?'

'Her maid servant had suddenly left her job and she sounded very helpless. I couldn't be that inhuman to turn down her request', Mini tried to explain.

'You present day Mother Teressa! I'm coming straight there from the railway station to pick you up', I wasn't moved in the slightest by the display of this humanitarian streak in her.

'No, no, you better go home and take rest Didi. Your lunch is kept on the table, Mini who voluntarily had taken on the responsibility for cooking at home, tried to dissuade me emphatically.

'No way', I huffed and disconnected the line. I requested Sangita to take care of the contingent and got into a hired taxi, somewhat abruptly, quietly ignoring her inquiring look. I was clearly fuming inside.

As expected, Mini was found too busy in their household chores, such as cleaning, cooking etc. to take notice of my arrival. Glued to her bed, a forlorn looking auntie burst into tears the moment she saw me—'Why isn't God taking us?'

I didn't say anything. It was her life, her sufferings, her 'karma'.

'Our Mini is such a gem...' she suddenly choked up in a gush of emotion.

'She's a gem because she's her mother's daughter', I wanted to say this on her face, but didn't. Why to desecrate that pious lady's memory in front of this wicked woman? The look of utter disgust on my face mustn't have evaded her notice.

Virtually implored by Mini, I reluctantly went to the next room to see my incapacitated, much withered uncle. Seated on a chair, he was constantly in tremor, a bleak sign of the extent of the bodily damage that the Parkinson's disease had caused to him.

'How is Shubham?' I asked him just to see his facial expression, knowing well that he couldn't talk. I didn't know that I could play the role of a sadist to such perfection!

His jaw registered a venous twitch, which, if decoded, would mean something like —'Don't utter his name. He's dead to us.'

Though, the comparison was ridiculously bizarre, I still saw a glimpse of the post-incarceration Shah Jahan in him. In both cases, the son had done the father in.

'Mini, don't forget that your exam is tomorrow and it is already 3', I said loudly, while entering auntie's room. It obviously fell on deaf ears.

Before I understood anything, Mini brought in a wet towel to give auntie a sponged bath. Resting her head on her lap, she went





on mopping her fevered head with the expertise of a seasoned nurse. I suddenly saw our mother in her. She'd also do the same to us when we were in fever.

'No bath for the last 2-3 days, you're simply stinking, auntie', Mini asked in an authoritarian voice, as if she was her own daughter.

I wish I could turn back the clock and bring the wheels of time to a stop then and there. It was in that dark phase of our life. Mini was barely three. Her uncombed hair and dirty, runny nose were suggestive of the kind of upbringing we could give to her, rather couldn't. She was then crying her belly out with no one to attend to her that afternoon. I was busy in some important work at that point, so I reluctantly requested auntie to look after her for just five minutes, only to be rebuffed—'She's so dirty and smelly, don't bring her near me'. Her eyes bespoke such unmother like repugnance that I immediately shelved my work to go and hold the little Mini in my lap.

How would I have loved that 2-minute scene play itself before her through a divine intervention and now only! An impish smile played on my lips. I couldn't help it.

Expectedly, I saw a flicker of repentance in her eyes, but was it of any goddamn use now?

When we came out of their house, all self-propelled duties discharged by Mini, the clock had already struck 4. The taxi which I'd brought with me was waiting for us on the main road.

As Mini sat in the car, the evening breeze started playing footsie with her hair and she seemed to like every moment of it. Though tired, her face didn't show any trace of that tiredness. She reminded me of our late mother for the nth time.

Initially, I'd thought of giving an earful to the do-gooder in her, but I'd a second thought now. And she took advantage of this elbow room to throw a question at me, albeit unexcitedly—'Didi, was it necessary to hurt uncle by asking him about Shubham da?'

I fixed my eyes on her. So, she'd overheard me speaking while I was in uncle's room! Frankly, I always treated her as a kid, forgetting that she had also a mind and heart of her own. If trying to fill up the shoes of her parents' legacy was a mistake, she'd committed it. I'd no answer to her question.

As my mind-clock again started ticking backwards, I was suddenly reminded of that grey-haired gentleman's priceless advice about never keeping heart and head, detached from each other.

I mightn't know or admit to it, but over these years, I've allowed my 'head' zoom ahead, leaving its companion, the desolate 'heart' far behind.

'I scolded you, no?' I patted her hair affectionately, suddenly stirred by an elder sisterly affection.

'It's okay', she smiled looking out of the window.

'Tomorrow, when your exam starts, just conjure up parents' image in your mind for a moment. Their blessings will help you scale great heights, they surely will...' My voice suddenly trailed and I looked the other way to choke back the impending tears.

Courtesy (Sketches): Shri Soumyajit Choudhury





EVALUATION OF LEADERSHIP PROCESS FOR EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN LARGE ENTER PRISES / ORGANISATIONS

"A leader is best when people barely know he exists, when his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: we did it ourselves." - *Lao Tzu*

Contemporary society has been trying to understand the concept of "Leadership". Whether in the area of management studies or applied psychology, "leadership" is a topic that has earned considerable intellectual attention, particularly in context of large, diversified enterprises/organisations.

Perhaps the reason for this is the fact that we are increasingly living in an age of standardization of human existence. Of markets, products, services, commerce, economy, technology, art, culture, fashion, cuisine, beliefs, lifestyles, aspirations and even perhaps of philosophy and spirituality.

Of course, standardization has great merits and sustains division of labour which is extremely efficient for utilization of resources. But, at the same time, perhaps, this is creating herds and packs of human beings rather than gathering of individuals. And we all know that every herd or pack has a "shepherd" or a "pack leader". Therefore, leadership is an important field of study for human resource management.

This is not a new phenomenon nor is such contemplation limited to management studies. Aldous Huxley's "Brave New World" or Ursula K. Le Guin's "The Dispossessed" have pondered over this phenomenon, provoking rather disturbing contemplations. Neil Postman's public discourse, "Amusing Ourselves to Death" or Mike Judge's dystopian, satirical movie, "Idiocracy" explore the dangers of intellectual anaesthesia— self-administered or delivered.

Therefore, it has become important and crucial to understand leadership process and leadership traits. We obsess about what makes a leader? Is it nature, nurture or a complex mix? Can this be taught or replicated? Are there any standards? Volumes of literature have been written on the subject. Bright young minds are being stimulated by erudite mentors in



Sanjay Bahadur Director General of Income Tax (Inv), Hyderabad



classrooms across the globe.

In my mind, effective leadership is a "process" involving leader and followers. However, as important as understanding the idea of "leadership" is evaluation of leadership. Leadership is not a prescriptive thing nor is it normative. We cannot say that if a person possesses x, y and z attributes, he/she is a "leader". Nor can it be said that if a person delivers a, b and c, he/she has provided leadership.

The idiom, "proof of the pudding is in the eating" applies to the idea of leadership as well. I am no expert in the theory or practice of leadership but do believe that evaluation of leadership by followers is as much – if not more important than – curating, cataloguing or enumerating attributes of the leader or leadership achievements. I am not informed enough to offer any evaluation matrix but the informed reader can consider some of the questions posed below and arrive at her or his own matrices.

Starting from the idea embedded in the quote of Lao Tzu (that I really like) I have these thoughts:

- Does the person behave in a self-centric manner?
- Does she/he make demands rather than suggests or inspires?
- Is the person keen to take credits and avoids taking blame?
- Does the person show tolerance of opposing thoughts/ ideas/ views?
- Does the person show humility in victory and grace in defeat?
- Does the person seem to listen or does she/he mostly tell people?
- Is the person's private family life healthy?
- Is the person's world view eliminative or assimilative?
- Does the person believe in forgiveness and correction or revenge and punishment?
- Do words and deeds of the person soothe and calm followers or drive them into frenzy and fury?
- Is the person's vision a shared and co-created vision or does she/he impose it on followers?
- Does the person appear to be in haste or seems impatient or is she/he cautious and patient?
- Does the person's stated outcome of actions match actual outcomes?
- Is the person prone to making promises that don't fructify?
- Does the self-assessment of the person match real outcomes?
- Does the person blame others/events/unforeseeable things for failures?
- Is the person open to mid-course corrections?Does the person's approach indicate complete understanding of all overarching technicalities?





- Does the person seem capable of factoring in all eventualities before taking decisions?
- Does the person seem to believe in "power-distances" or is accessible?
- Is the person capable of cost-benefit analysis or believes in "at any cost" approach?
- Are the actions of the person value based and ethical?
- Do the actions of the person lead to higher quantum of satisfaction?

Already, the list of questions above appear rather daunting to me. However, for me, those are some of the important questions I would evaluate a person in leadership role. I am not talking of evaluating mediocre leaders but quality leaders. Not positional leaders but situational leaders. I am also not sure if the above questions are the right ones to ask in context of evaluating leadership. Or they are not relevant for that purpose? Should such evaluation be based on "end justifies the means" approach?

Much work has been done within the field of Human Resource Management and Organisational Development about evaluating performance of workers, subordinates and other vertical and horizontal components of leadership process. I wonder if robust and universal evaluation tools are available for performance of leaders in any field – be it business, sports, social service or politics. But I think there is need to device a robust matrix for such evaluation in every organization.







FUTURE OF PORTS

Port Infrastructure and Port Services are vital to Import-Export and trade of a country. India has 13 major ports, which are lifeline for international trade and commerce and handle 95% of total trade in terms of volumes and 75% in terms of value. Syama Prasad port in Kolkata being the oldest port, is of vital importance for trade to its neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal & Bhutan and to connect North East India and eastern hinterland. In recent years, the Kolkata Port has undergone a sea transformation and a number of modern and smart technologies have been introduced to provide the ease of doing business. It is equipping itself to compete with the some of the most advanced ports of the world. Ship-to-ship operation, night navigation, floating crane facility, container scanner, reefer container points and pre-gate facility are some of world class infrastructural solutions that the port has introduced recently.



Samrat Rahi
Additional Commissioner of Income Tax
(Now on deputation as Deputy Chairman,
Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, Kolkata)



In future it is envisioned that Information Technology enabled services with take over the operation of the port. IoT, Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain technology, Machine Learning, cloud computing services and 5 G services will transform the operational landscape of the port and the entire operation will be dashboard driven. The manpower requirement will be rationalised and with a minimum set of professional people, the port will be managed. For example, all the machineries in the port will be connected through Internet and they will communicate between themselves to get the optimum utilisation of resources, shorten the time limit and dynamically align themselves according to the need of business processes. All the vessel specifications, cargo type, import-export details will be on a dashboard to track their optimisation and get and devise better strategies. On the basis global news and trade policies automatic trigger will be generated to target specific cargo and also the port management will get





get to know which cargo is being diverted to other places. A project is already in final phase where it is possible to get the status of Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Marine projects and also to see their due date, the additional requirements and the concerned officers responsible for completing the project on time. This dashboard will be a game changer for management and supervisory authorities, who, anywhere, anytime can see the progress and do timely intervention. The Kolkata Port has a lot of land parcels and properties which also require to be monetised and this dashboard will provide a comprehensive solution where information from tenancy section, litigation wing, court matters and eviction drives will be integrated on a single platform. It will help in resolving long pending disputes and monitoring the effective use of these assets. Later on, in this portal we will introduce uploading of pictures, video and live footage of all projects for better supervision. It is also proposed to install CCTV along all roads leading to the port which can read and track vehicle numbers and give us a dashboard as to how many vehicles are entering through and existing on each road with their vehicle owners' names to decongest the port and provide ease of traffic around the port area. The Gati Shakti Initiative will provide map of all logistic infrastructure and will ensure last mile connectivity to the stakeholders. The location of warehouses, CFS, NH, SH, railway terminals, ICD etc. all will be on a single map to provide ease to choose best suitable business strategy to stakeholders. Another thing that has potential to transform EXIM ecosystem is democratisation of Export-Import trade, participation of a larger population. The retail players and common persons are not much aware of custom regulations, tariff available and how to connect to their counterpart in foreign countries. It will be realised with the help of a common marketplace where anybody and everybody can enter into import-export process. For example, a rural woman from Bihar can export her Madhubani merchandises to London with a click of a button. The way people buy and sell goods domestically, it will be possible internationally then. There are many more technological solutions which are in pipeline which have the potential to troubleshoot the issues which are affecting the productivity of Kolkata Port and will augment the volume exponentially.

Indian Ports and particularly Kolkata Port, are changing the logistic ecosystem of Eastern India and reducing the logistic cost to its lowest denominator. The future belongs to Ports and among those, Kolkata Port stands tall.









Subhadeep Kar Income Tax Officer, Jorhat



A PEEK INTO THE PARANORMAL

It must have been sometime in the month of May, 1990, because this is the usual time when the final of the European Cup (now called the UEFA Champions League) is held every year. That year, the Italian giants and defending champions AC Milan was taking on the Portuguese side Benefica. Like the rest of the world, our group of friends were also swept away by the brilliance of the Dutch trio of Ruud Gullit, Frank Rijkaard and Marco Van Basten, who sparkled in the final third of the AC Milan formation. Four of us–Sandeep, Manoj, Rupam and I –planned to watch the match together at a passionate football lover's place in our locality, who was known to all as Boltu-da.





Since the match would start sometime after midnight, as per Indian Standard Time, we planned to assemble at Boltu-da's place after having our dinner at our respective homes. As usual, I was the last to reach. Boltu-da's family had a large house in Upper Laban area of Shillong, having a large front gate, opening from the main road into his compound and a small gate which opened from a path alongside. Usually the gates are locked by around 10:00 pm every night, but that night, like all other nights when there would be matches late at night and we planned to watch together, the smaller one was kept open for us.

As I entered the house, I was startled to see Manoj sweating profusely and having a terrified expression on his face, as Boltu-da was trying to ease him with a glass of water in his hand and Rupam holding his head. I could not make out anything of the situation, because Manoj was a lively athlete and he would hardly break into a sweat even if he ran the uphill stretch from his house on Jackson Trace Road to Upper Laban. It was then, that Sandeep murmured into my ear that Manoj had seen someone standing motionless on the path just in front of the small gate and he could see the red beacon lights of the radio towers on the Dudgeon Line hillock just opposite to Anjalee Cinema Hall, quite a distance away, right through that shape.

I was puzzled by what Sandeep said, as I, too, had seen that shape at that same spot and recalled that his shirt was fluttering even though there was no palpable breeze. I think I was in too much of a hurry to reach Boltu-da's place that I largely ignored the shape, as I dodged past it during my entry through the small gate. As Manoj regained a bit of his composure, Boltu-da asked Sandeep to accompany him to the small gate, so that he could see the shape for himself. Both began with a few gingerly steps, but then seemed to reach a telepathic agreement to discard the idea and none went beyond those few steps.

While the football match played out on the television set, Manoj and Rupam slept right through it, while I was too distracted and I hardly remember anything of the match, which ended at about 2:30am. The darkness outside looked too menacing for us to walk back to our respective homes, after what Manoj went through some time ago. I half slept on the sofa till about 4:30am, when dawn was just about setting in. I awoke all others and we shakily walked to the small gate with fear still hanging in our minds, crossed the spot where Manoj and I had seen the shape, but now, everything looked as normal as it would look everyday.

Stories of the apparition spread rapidly, along with a plethora of more stories of so many people having seen that motionless shape here and there in the Upper Laban area late in the nights. But the one common thread was that it never caused any harm to anyone. I, too, recalled having seen a similar shape sitting motionless on the guard-wall by the side of the road, right where the road bifurcates towards Upper Laban and Madan Laban, on All Souls Day of 1989, when I was returning to my home in Madan Laban from Zenith Jubelieth Club, slightly past midnight. Some of the lamps lit by people on the graves on the hill next to Jackson Trace Road were still glowing and I felt like I could see them right through this motionless shape. Hallucination is what I thought then and so, never spoke of it to anyone, but after Manoj's story matched mine, I am not sure any more.

पंचम अंद. 3112130 Saptabhremi



Vinod, Banshan and I were favourites of our Martial Arts teacher, who had his initial training under a legendary figure in Shillong, but got attracted to Muay Thai, which took him to Thailand and he returned to Shillong after many years, simply for the love of the city, after achieving mastery in Kick-boxing. In January, 1993, he took us with him to Haflong and Silchar for an exhibition of the sport, where we had a great time, showing off all that we had learnt, as the on lookers greeted us with applause. From Silchar he went away to Imphal, while we took a Meghalaya Transport Corporation night bus to Shillong.

It was freezingly cold, when we alighted from the bus at Barik point at about 2:30 am. Apart from the three of us, there was no other thing in sight, which could move on its own. We thought it more prudent to walk all the way to Madan Laban than spend money by taking a taxi from Police Bazar. Banshan and I lived at Madan Laban, while Vinod lived close to Iewdak on our way. We had just taken the footpath, when we saw three men walking towards us from around the spot where a statue of U Kiang Nangbah now stands, in the middle of the road, just in front of the eastern gate of the Shillong Civil Hospital. Banshan said that we should ignore those men even if they tried to cause us any trouble and keep walking. We were capable of defending ourselves in the scenario of unarmed combat or even stick and knife attacks, but there are no rules in street-fighting and so, we concentrated on sticking to what we were taught, that it is always best to avoid them.

"They are floating", I said. Vinod caught my arm and literally froze. Even Banshan, who was a picture of stoic determination, stopped in his tracks. All of us got rooted to our spot, midway from Barik point to the Civil Hospital. Those men looked like they were walking, yet there was no palpable spatial displacement and I could distinctly see a gap of a few inches between their feet and the road. "The morgue is close to the gate", Banshan blurted from between his chattering teeth, which made Vinod clasp my arm even tighter. We were trembling in fear and I remember breaking into cold sweat, unable to move a muscle, even though I desperately wanted to run away back to Barik point or to any place away from these apparitions.

It must have been only a few minutes, but those minutes seemed to go on and on. Suddenly, the apparitions crossed the street and entered the Civil Hospital compound through the eastern gate. "Those are not ghosts", Banshan said and this time even Vinod added that they were not floating and it was a figment of my imagination. The relief we felt was evident, as the muscles seemed to relax and we started to walk again with a degree of confidence. As we were crossing the gate, I looked towards the hospital compound to see if those men could be seen, but there was no one in sight. Vinod again clasped my arm tightly, as Banshan pointed towards the locked gate, asking how they went in.

Our fears reappeared, but this time we were able to increase our pace, each reciting our prayers till we reached Iewdak, where Vinod's father and elder brother were waiting. Banshan and I then walked briskly for the rest of the way to Madan Laban and into the reassuring comforts of our homes. I was woken up by the phone ringing in the morning. It was a call from Vinod's father. Vinod was down with high fever and was mumbling of having seen ghosts. I narrated the full story to uncle. Though Vinod recovered in a day or two, he continues to avoid dark and lonely places ever since.





There was no such mental dent in the psyche of either Banshan or me. Yet, even today, I would shake in my boots if was asked to take a walk along the stretch from Barik point to Civil Hospital at the dead of the night.

The Shillong of today is vastly different from what it was a few decades ago. There was a tangible colonial hang over in the unique culture of the city. It stall pines and rhododen drons, which stood proudly over its undulations, now seem to seek their share of breaths from the midst of mushrooming concrete. It was a quiet, quaint and laid back city, which would echo with sounds, transforming from the musical to the eerie with every passing minute after dusk, every time a breeze or a gust of wind would blow through its cover of foliage or rattle the corrugated tin roofs of its numerous cottages. Under a windy night sky, the silhouette of the dancing branches and leaves would counjure up ghostly images to send chills down one'ss pine.

Ghost stories were, therefore, born in plenty across the city and were handed over down the generations, which led to some of the locations being avoided even during the day, unless a few people would be venturing together to those places.

One popular story is that of a British Officer riding a white horse over the hillock on which the present Meghalaya High Court building stands. A friend of mine, who lived in one of the erstwhile Post & Telegraph Department quarters at Kacheri, a stone's throw away from the hillock, used to tell us of having heard sounds of trotting hooves of horses sometime after midnight, many a time.

Another friend, who was much fond of the high spirits, once regaled about his encounter with a lovely lady dressed in spotless white, somewhere on the road along the PGT College, where he was riding his scooter sometime after dusk. This lady beckoned him and he stopped. She wanted a lift to Donbosco square and my friend gladly obliged. Just as they crossed the Shillong College, she whispered in his ear that she wanted a beer. My friend delightedly purchased two bottles from a joint at Laitumkhrah and they rode back to the stairs leading down to the PGT College.

As they were gossiping and giggling, my friend noticed that the beer in the lady's bottle just would not decrease, even though she was taking her gulps. A cold fear gripped my friend when the lady suddenly expressed her love unto death for him and he realized how dark and lonely the spot was. He still managed to retain his composure and asked the lady if she would do anything for him. She nodded and he asked her to jump with him from the road into the steep darkness below at the count of three. One, Two, Three and my friend jumped onto his scooter and dashed downhill to Polo Bazar, drenched in sweat and incoherent in his speech.

Thankfully, we had friends in every corner of Shillong and some of them found him in a stupor near Matri Mandir and escorted him to his home at Kench's Trace. I have never been sure, whether to believe this friend, simply for his love of the high spirits, but the spot he cited used to be terribly lonely, to the extent of being spooky, even under bright sunlight and I can only imagine how unnerving it could be after dusk.





One Shillong story also made it to a popular television show, where a young man befriended a young woman at a party, danced with her, escorted her to her home in Laitumkhrah and because it was chilly, chivalrously covered her with his coat. The next day the young man thought to catch up with the young woman and on the pretext of collecting his coat, visited the home where he bade her goodbye the night before. He was shocked to know that the young woman had expired a few years ago. Still in utter disbelief, he was led to her grave, where he found his coat neatly placed over the grave stone.

I do not know whether ghosts really exist or are they mere figments of imaginations or hallucinations caused by the fear of the unknown. I have not only heard and enjoyed the numerous ghost stories, but also experienced what many may term as encounters with spirits. Every story and every experience have literally frightened the crap out of me, but every time I seem to have overcome my fears. In one experience, there was no apparition, but I felt the presence of an intense force which seemed to block my way, as I was walking back home at Madan Laban after a programme at Zenith Jubelieth Club, quite late one night. I started vigorously punching and kicking in the air to rid myself from the clutches of this force and instantly I felt it was gone. I could again clearly see the lights glowing on the verandahs of the houses on either side of the street and everything was so peaceful, as if nothing had happened.

Courtesy (Sketches): Shri Soumyajit Choudhury





HERITAGE BUILDINGS OF GUWAHATI —A SAMPLED VIEW IN SKETCHES

"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots"

-Marcus Garvey

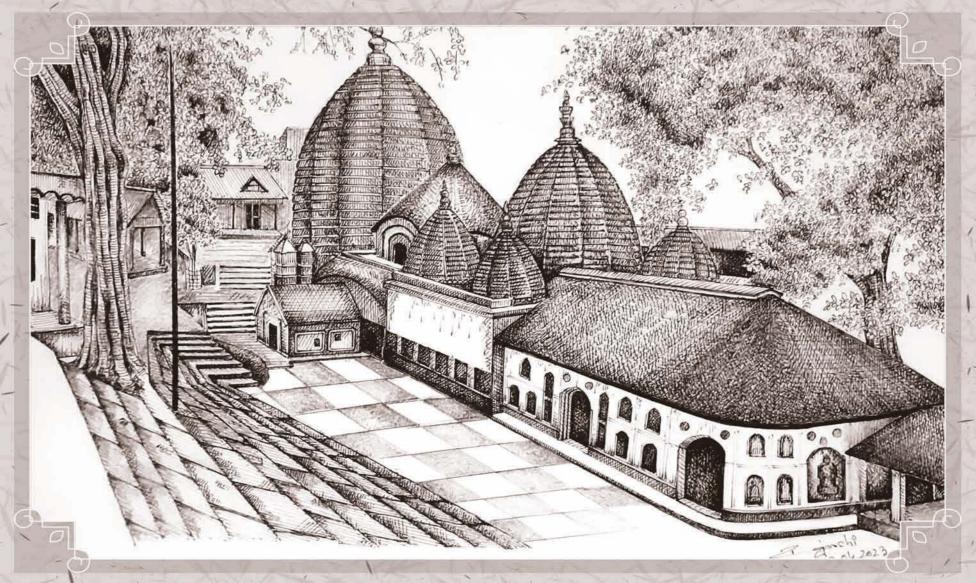
SKETCHES BY

Rajarshi Saha

Income Tax Officer Guwahati







Kamakhya Temple, a famous Shakti Peeth, lying atop the Nilachal hill off the city of Guwahati, remains one of the oldest and most revered centres of Tantric practices, dedicated to the goddess Kamakhya.





Cotton College Arts Building: The New Arts Building, a heritage one dating back to more than one hundred years, of the Cotton University (erst while Cotton College, the first college of North East India).

The Cotton College was established in 1901 by Sir Henry Stedman Cotton, the Chief Commissioner of the erstwhile British province of Assam.



Curzon Hall: As a witness of many historic events, such as Tagore's public reception in 1919, this hall which has been functioning since 1912, now stands as a symbol of pride and tradition of Guwahati. In 1953, when Bishnu Ram Medhi was the chief minister of Assam, the hall was renamed as Nabin Chandra Bordoloi Hall.

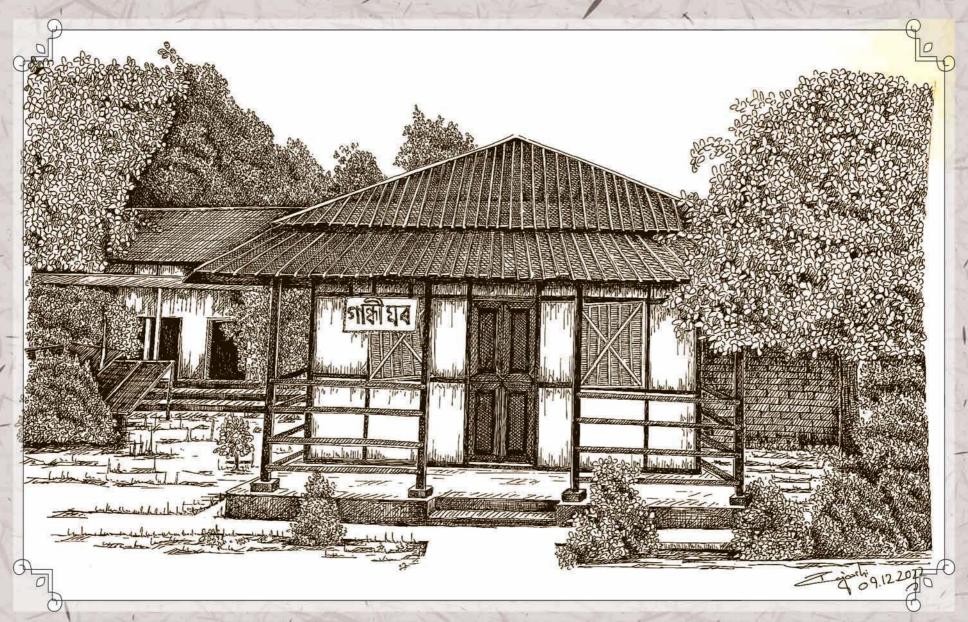


Guwahati Municipality Board: This double storied Assam type structure was built in the first quarter of 20th century from which the Guwahati Municipal Corporation still functions.



Kelvin Cinema Hall: The second Cinema Hall of Guwahati, it was opened in 1935 by Jeevanram Goenka with an audience capacity of 302 at Fancy Bazar. The hall got its name from the German made "Kelvin" brand movie projector, The hall was also known as "Silver Hall" as many movies released in this Hall celebrated Silver Jubilee.





The northeast headquarters of Kasturba Gandhi National Memorial Trust or the 'Kasturba Ashram' was inaugurated by Mahatma Gandhi himself on 9th January, 1946.

The bamboo cottage, built in the Ashram complex is called 'Gandhi-Ghar'. He stayed here for three days between 9th to 11th January, 1946.

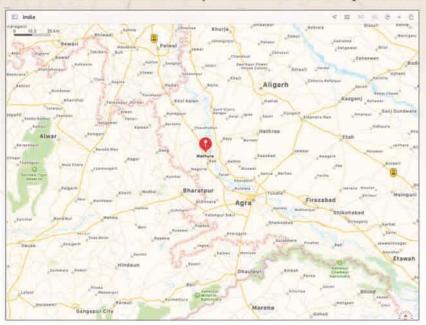






Holi, the festival of colours celebrates the end of winter and arrival of spring¹, with a tall and visible Rabi crop (mustard and wheat) ripening and ready for harvest. Holi celebrations begin in February with prayers in temples, and end with grand Mathura Holi (normally in March) in Brij Bhoomi, and in other parts of India, Nepal and by the diaspora.

Rohit Kumar Parmar
IES, Senior Economic Adviser (Retired)
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B/Vrij Bhoomi (Pic HOL02), is a region on both banks of the Yamuna river with its centre at Mathura-Vrindavan, encompassing the area including Agra, Aligarh, Etah, Farrukhabad, Hathras and Mainpuri in Uttar Pradesh; Palwal and Ballabhgarh in Haryana; Bharatpur and Deeg in Rajasthan; and Morena in Madhya Pradesh. Braj region is associated with Radha and Krishna, who were born in Barsana and Mathura respectively.

Holi celebrations start on the evening of Purnima (Full Moon) in the Lunar month of Phalguna (corresponding to March) with Holika Dahan (burning of an effigy of Holika) when people gather around a bonfire, and pray that their internal evils (anger, envy, greed, jealousy) be destroyed. Holika, the sister of king Hiranyakashipu, was killed in a fire, in a failed attempt to immolate Bhakt Prahlad, who was a devotee of Vishnu and the son of Hiranyakashipu.

On holi day, टोलिस (tolis, Groups) beat the ढोल (dhol, drum) and play musical instruments, moving from place to place, singing and dancing and saying होलीहै' (it's Holi) and receive sweets and money. Customary intoxicating drink

Spring in the Indian sub-continent is different from the west in several respects, most important of which is that all trees in India do not shed all their leaves.







ठंडाई made from bhang (hemp/cannabis base), is also taken as prasad. Bhang pakodas(fritters) are also prepared as a namkeen (savoury) dish, alongwith चाट, (chaat) दहीभल्ला, (DahiBhalla) समोसा, (samosa) कचौड़ी (kachoree). गुझिया (Gujiya) mithai/variants are an important sweet prepared on Holi. Other sweets include मालपुआ (malpua), मटकाकुल्फी (matkakulfi).

The following morning is celebrated as Holi, Dhulandi, Dhuleti, Phaguwah, or Rangwali Holi.

In Assam, Odisha, West Bengal and Bangladesh, it is called Dola Jatra, Dola Purnima, Doul Utsav or Deul. The word Dol means swing (Jhula). According to a legend, it was on this day (Phalguna Poornima), that Krishna expressed his love for Radha by throwing 'Phag' (powdered colour - gulaal) on her face when she was on a swing with her 'sakhis'. In the celebrations, after applying colour, the sakhis (सखी) celebrate the union by carrying Radha and

Krishna, on a palki (palanquin) - called jatra (journey). Even today, traditional Bengali Dol Jatra is played with dry colours. The day also marks the last festival of the year, as per the Bengali calendar (panjika).

Holi is a free-for-all festival of colours, where people apply dry and wet colour and drench each other with coloured water. Traditionally Gulal (dry pink) is applied. After applying colour, people say `बुरा ना मानो होली है' (bura na maano holi hai, don't mind, it is Holi)' Children use water guns and water-filled balloons to celebrate Holi, starting a few days before Holi. At work place and in educational institutions on the last evening before Holi, dry colour is applied to friends, colleagues and others, as a start to the celebrations.

Some of the colours used are toxic/strong chemical base and there is a need to avoid them, and play with natural/safe colours. There is need for elders to guide children/others to respect people, especially women and people moving for work, who don't want to play Holi.

Several Indian movies have songs on Holi, where there is singing, dancing and playing Holi. True to Indian cinema, it focuses on social, economic and other issues, and in one song, Holi is played with a widow, which was otherwise taboo.²

Legends associated with Holi

There are several legends associated with Holi, some of which relate to incarnations of God Vishnu (अवतार, avatars) and other Gods.





²Some of these songs shared on Holi, can be viewed on facebook, twitter and YouTube channel of the author.



Krishna avatar legend

In Braj Bhoomi where Krishna grew up, Holi is celebrated till Rang Panchami (fifth day of the lunar month of Phalguna).

There is a mythological story behind Krishna, when as a baby he developed dark skin colour because demoness Putana, tried to poison him by breast feeding him, after applying poison to her breasts.

Vishnu/Narasimha (half human and half lion) avatar legend

This is a legend celebrating the triumph of good over evil, honouring Vishnu and his devotee Bhakta Prahlada.

According to Bhagavata Purana (legend in chapter 7 of Bhagavata Purana), Hiranyakashipu the king of Asuras (demons), grew arrogant after he earned a boon that granted him five wishes. These were - he could be killed by

neither a human, nor an animal;

neither indoors, nor outdoors;

neither at day, nor at night;

neither on land, water or in air; and

neither by astra (projectile/launched weapon), nor by any shastra (handheld weapon).

Hiranyakashipu demanded that everyone worship him, but his son Prahlada, remained a devotee of Vishnu. Hiranyakashipu subjected Prahlada to cruel punishments, which did not affect his devotion to Vishnu.

Holika, Prahlada's evil bhua (paternal aunt), tricked him into sitting with her on a pyre. Holika was wearing a divine chunni (cloth cloak used by women in India to cover their head and/or breasts) that made her immune to any injury from fire, while Prahlada was not protected. As the fire soared, a storm blew the chunni from Holika and covered Prahlada, who survived, while Holika was burned to death.

In a related/subsequent incident, Vishnu, appeared as Narasimha avatar – half human and half lion (neither a human nor an animal) at dusk (neither at day, nor at night), took Hiranyakashipu to the doorstep (neither indoors, nor outdoors), made him sit on his lap (neither on land, water or in air), and then disemboweled (removed his internal organs/intestines/guts) and killed him with lion claws (neither by astra projectile/launched weapon, nor byanyshastra - handheld weapon).

Kama and Rati legend

Holi is also linked to God Siva who was in deep meditation. Goddess Parvati wanting to bring back Siva to the material world, seeks help from Kamadeva (god of love) on Vasant Panchami. Kamadeva shoots an arrow at Siva. Siva, opens his third eye and burns Kamadeva to ashes. This upsets both Rati (Kamadevi, Kamadev's wife) and Parvati (Siva's wife). Rati performs meditation for forty days, upon which Siva realises his mistake and forgives Kamadeva and brings him back to life. The return of Kamadeva is celebrated on the 40th day after Vasant Panchami as Holi. The Kamadeva legend has many variants, especially in South India.





Barsana लट्टमारहोली (Lathmaar Holi)

लट्टमारहोली (Lathmar Holi, beating with thick/strong wooden sticks) is a local celebration of Holi, and takes place a week before Holi in the towns of Barsana and Nandgaon near Mathura.

The festivities take place at Radha Rani temple in Barsana, a temple dedicated to Goddess Radha.

The legend linked to Lord Krishna and Radha, is based in Nandagon, when on a visit to Barsana(Radha's town), Krishna teased Radha and her friends, who were offended by his advances and drove him out of Barsana.

So men from Nandagaon visit Barsana every year and are greeted by women striking লব্ধ (laths, sticks) at them. Men try to protect themselves but those who fail and are captured by these women, are dressed as women and made to dance in public.

In addition to India and Nepal, Holi is celebrated by the diaspora in several countries. Variants of colour festivals are observed in South-East Asia, like Songkran in Thailand.







INAUGURATION OF THE NEW AAYAKAR BHAWAN AT DIBRUGARH BY SHRI NITIN GUPTA, HON'BLE CHAIRMAN, CENTRAL BOARD OF DIRECT TAXES, NEW DELHI IN PRESENCE OF SHRI RAJU TAYENG, PRINCIPAL CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF INCOME TAX, NER, GUWAHATI, SHRI SHRIKANT KUMAR AMBASTHA, CHIEF COMMISSIONER OF INCOME TAX, SHILLONG, TAX PAYERS, OTHER ESTEEMED INVITEES, SENIOR OFFICERS OF THE DEPARTMENT ON 22ND SEPTEMBER, 2023:

"We keep moving forward, opening new doors and doing new things, because we're curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths" - Walt Disney













INAUGURATION OF THE NEW AAYAKAR BHAWAN AT DIBRUGARH













MOTHERHOOD

As long as I can remember, I have always longed to be a mother, But God had something else in store, 'Motherhood', soon a term I came to abhor.

Prayed fervently for a man of God as a spouse, With whom a Godly life I can espouse, No sooner the Lord answered my prayers, With whom I can my life share.

I was sure motherhood will soon follow, Oh! I have never felt such sorrow, To know it was not to be as planned, Indeed was hard for me to understand.

They say every cloud has a silver lining, Believe me they sure weren't lying, The wait for motherhood did take a while, But every wait was worth the while.

The long wait drew me closer to God, Many non believer friends found it odd, Although it oft felt like a test of endurance, Never have I felt such peace and assurance.

The day of God's promise finally arrived,
That memory will forever be etched alive,
That motherhood was no longer to be a dream,
A mother of two precious boys was I deemed ••••



Rintei Renthlei
Additional Commissioner of Income Tax,
Shillong



THE UNWORTHY BELIEVER

Born to a Christian family, Didn't really have a say, But then as on my bed I lay, Got me thinking, who does anyway?

As far back as I can remember, My parents have religiously read the Bible and prayed, And tried their utmost with me and my sister That such good values and habits stayed.

Like many of my peers, I regularly attended Church Service, And went along with the flow, Never for a moment thought amiss.

This changed when I went to College, And met my roomie for the first time, Who often locked me out of our room, So with God she could spend some time.

This attitude of my roomie
Needless to say, was a shock to me,
For how could a girl of eighteen,
Wouldn't wish with the coolest crowd be seen?

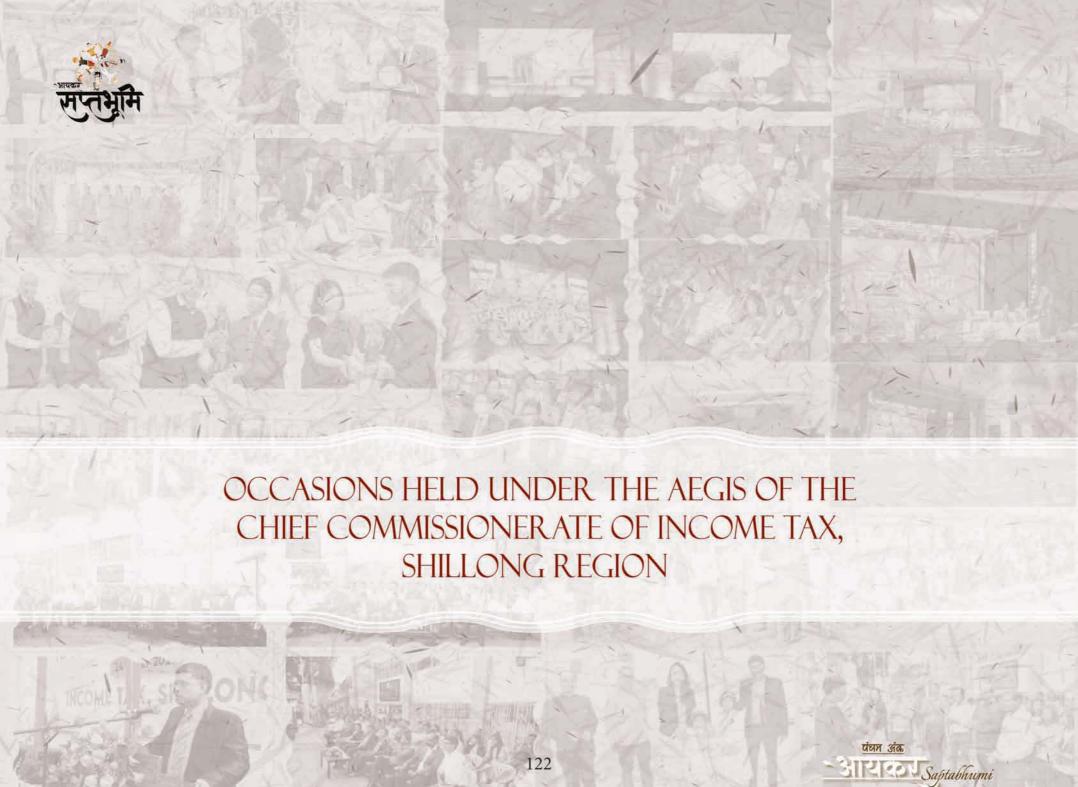
As I gradually opened my Bible and prayed Daily with deeper earnestness, The Holy Spirit played its befitting role For never have I experienced such restlessness.

Those precious moments of fellowship with God, No words could ever express, The realization finally dawned on me, That I was saved but only by God's grace.

Yes, that's right my friend, You didn't hear it wrong, We're not saved by our acts or deeds, But only by the grace of God, how wonderful indeed!

Now when I look back, And reminisce those times, I am overwhelmed with gratitude, That this most unworthy of believer, will never experience solitude.







FELICITATION OF EMINENT PERSONALITIES WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN DIFFERENT SPHERES OF ACTIVITY INCLUDING FREEDOM MOVEMENT

Venue: Hotel Pinewood, Shillong Date: 26th August, 2022

You've worked hard for this moment and you've been rewarded. Congratulations!















PRIZE DISTRIBUTION FOR INTER-SCHOOL ESSAY COMPETITION HELD IN SHILLONG ON 16TH AUGUST,2022

"Learning without thought is a labour lost, thought without learning is perilous."

- Confucius















INAUGURATION OF ICONIC WEEK CELEBRATIONS BY HON'BLE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA

Live telecast Venue: State Central Library, Shillong

Date: 6th June'2022

"Don't dream to be something, but rather dream to do something great"























THE INCOME TAX DAY, 2023

Venue: Aayakar Bhawan, Shillong Date: 24th July, 2023

"I like to pay taxes. With them, I buy civilization"

- Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr.













INDEPENDENCE DAY, 2023

Venue: Aayakar Bhawan, Shillong

"One individual may die; but the idea will, after his death incarnate itself in a thousand lives"

—Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose













The Republic Day, 2023

Venue: Aayakar Bhawan, Shillong

India is the cradle of the human race, the birthplace of human speech, the mother of history, the grandmother of legend, and the great grand mother of tradition. Our most valuable and most astrictive materials in the history of man are treasured up in India only! – **Mark Twain**







Rozgar Mela, 2023

Venue: State Central Library, Shillong

Date: 20th January, 2023

"The mind that is not baffled is not employed. The impeded stream is the one that sings."

-Wendell Berry









"Painting is the silence of thought and the music of sight"

- Orhan Pamuk

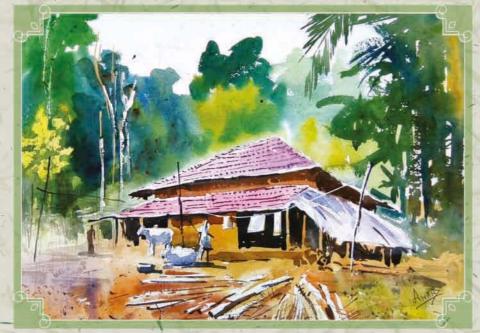
PAINTINGS BY

Anand Kumar

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax (HQ), Shillong







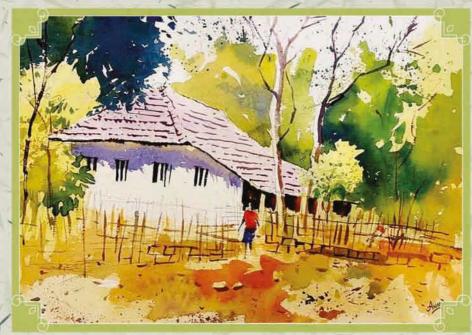




पंचम अंक 3112180 Saptabhumi

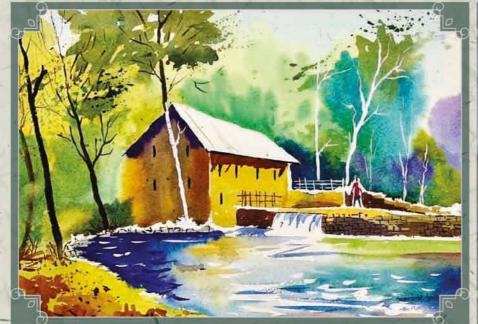




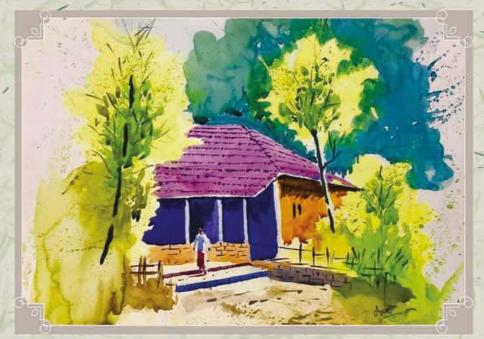




पंचम अंक 3112182 Saptabhrumi







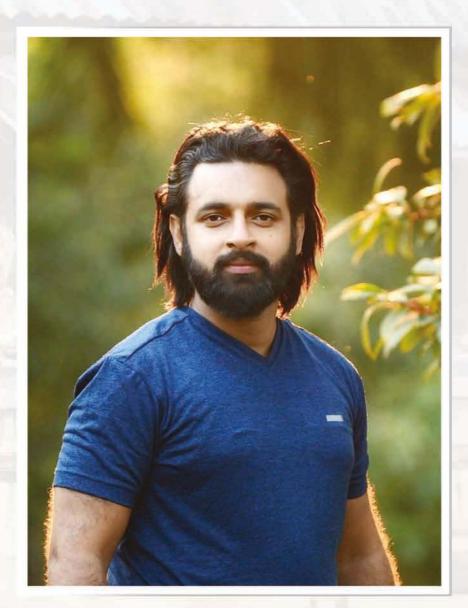
"I dream my painting and I paint my dream"

— Vincent W Van Gogh

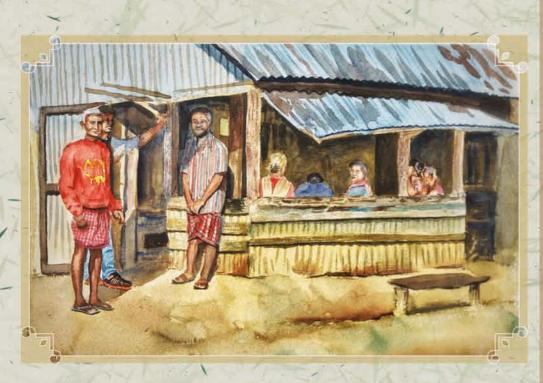
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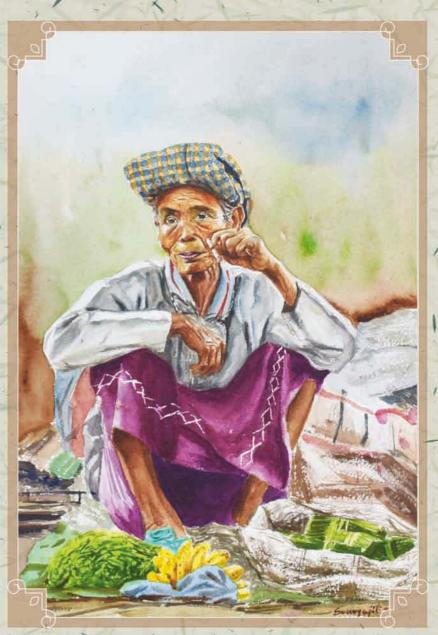
Soumyajit Choudhury

Income Tax Officer
[Now on deputation as Assistant Director
(Enforcement Directorate), Guwahati]

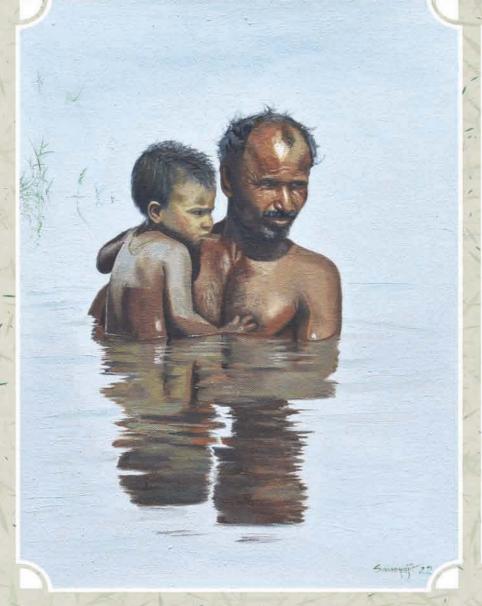


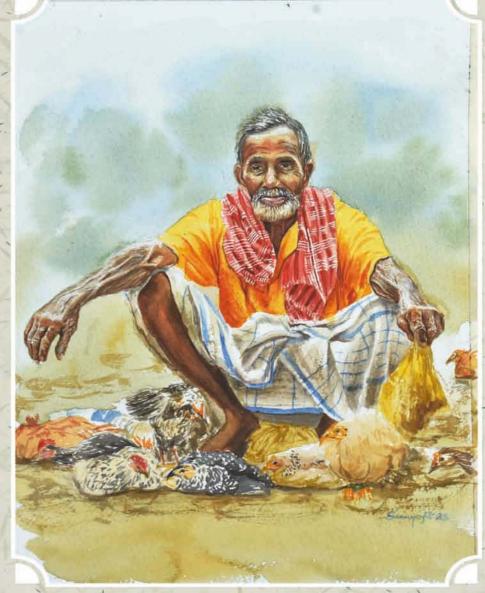






पंचम अंक 311-150 Saptabhumi





पंचम अंक 3112130 Saptabhumi "I felt my lungs inflate with the onrush of scenery-air, mountains, trees, people.

I thought, 'This is what it is to be happy'...."

- Sylvia Plath

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Amrendra Kumar

Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong (Retired)







Umiam Lake (Bada Pani) from the pavilion of Orchid Lake Resort, 18 km from Shillong City



Ward's Lake, 200m away from Income Tax Office, Shillong (on M.G. Road)



Umiam Lake (Bada Pani) from Army Welfare Centre, managed by 7th Engineer, Umroi Cantt., 18 km from Shillong City



Mawkdok Valley enroute Cherrapunjee





Sky View Point enroute Cherrapunjee



The Krang Shuri Waterfall, Umlarem Village, on Jowai-Dawki Road West Jaintia Hills (89 kms from Shillong)



Ward's Lake, Shillong



Shnongpdeng Village (nearly 10 km from Dawki), 90 km from Shillong





Shnongpdeng Village (nearly 10 km from Dawki), 90 km from Shillong



Ward's Lake, 200m away from Income Tax Office, Shillong (at M.G. Road)

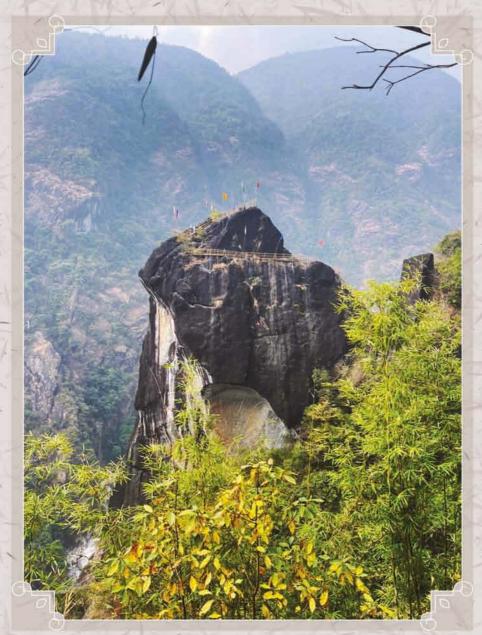


Nongjrong Village, East Khasi Hills (48 km from Shillong)

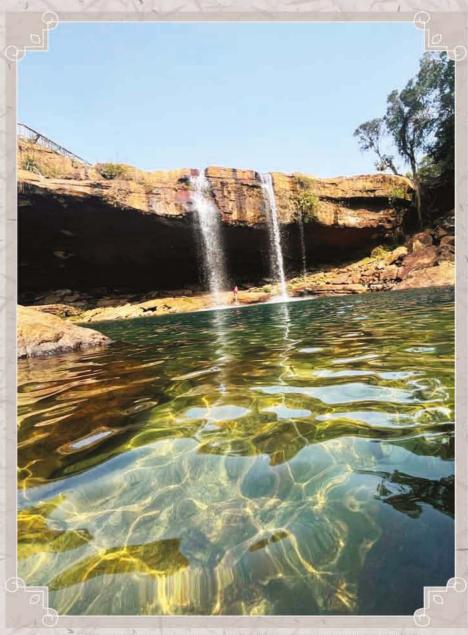


Ward's Lake, 200 m away from Income Tax Office, Shillong (at M.G. Road)



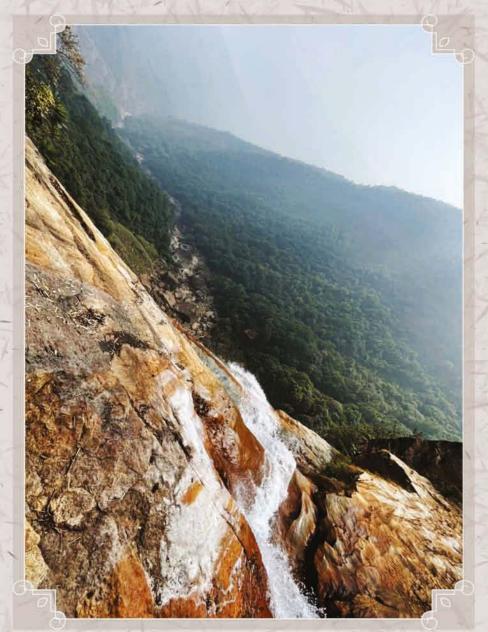


Mawrynkhang Trek (Bamboo Trail) in Wahkhen Village (The Scariest Trek of Meghalaya), East Khasi Hills (47 km from Shillong)

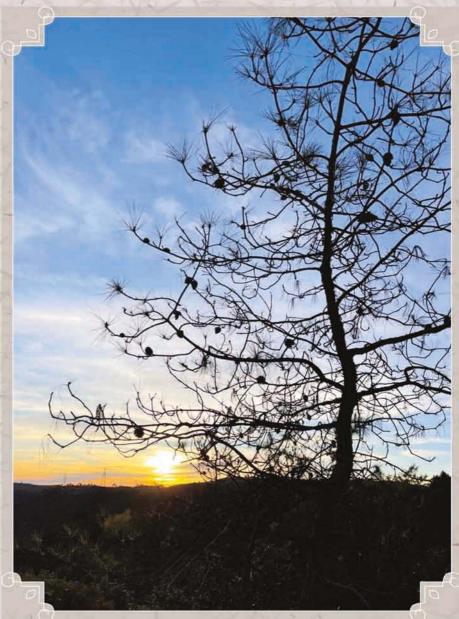


The Krang Shuri Waterfall, Umlarem Village , on Jowai-Dawki Road West Jaintia Hills (90 kms from Shillong)





The Head of the Nohkhalikai Falls, Cherrapunjee



Mawkdok, enroute Cherrapunjee





"For me, forests are like churches, hallowed places. There's stillness about them, a sort of reverence."

- Sabrina Elkins

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Kalyan Nath Commissioner of Income Tax,

Commissioner of Income Tax, Guwahati (Retd)





The Big Two of Big Fours found in the Kazirangna Forest, Assam . Assam has the second highest population of elephants in India. The gentle giant also holds a great historical significance for the state. It is also home to the world's largest population of one-horned rhinos. There are nearly 2,895 rhinos in the state with 2,613 of them, concentrated in the Kaziranga National Park.



Mother elephant and her child at the Kaziranga Forest.



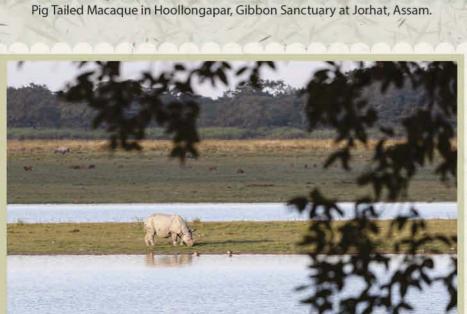
The Indian hog deer (Axis porcinus), or Indo-Chinese hog deer in the Kazirangna Forest, Assam. It's name is derived from the hog-like manner in which it runs through forests (with its head hung low), with the ease of ducking under obstacles instead of leaping over them, like most other deers.



Hoolok Gibbon in Hoollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary at Jorhat, Assam. This is the only Ape found in India. The name of the park came from the Hollong Tree of this forest.







A lonely Rhino grazing in the Kazirangna Forest.



An elephant family with their kid in the Kazirangna Forest.



Face to Face with Rhino in the in Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary, Assam. The only wildlife sanctuary, closest to the Guwahati city with around 107 Rhinos being there.





The big Cat, part of big four, the Royal Bengal tiger in the Kaziranga Forest. There are around 135 tigers in the Kaziranga National Park.
Incidentally, Kaziranga National Park has India's second highest density of tigers, with 13 tigers per 100 sq km.





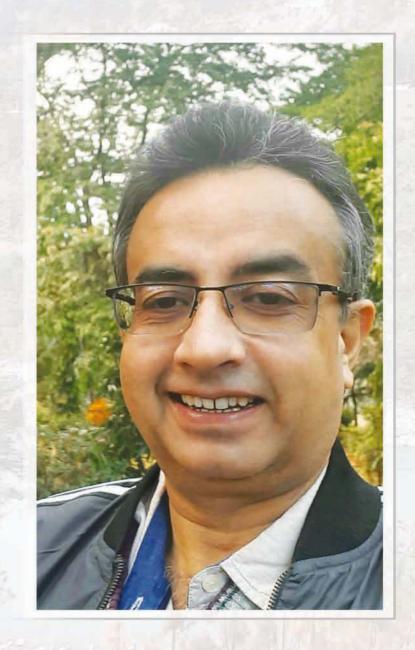
"A walk in nature walks the soul back home"

- Mary Davis

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Amitava Sen

Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Kolkata







Two worlds, One way to Mechula, Arunachal Pradesh



Kashmir of the East, Wallong, Arunachal Pradesh



Sweet Home, Anini, Arunachal Pradesh



Heavenly serenity, Wallong, Arunachal Pradesh





Mechuka Calling, Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh



The Curve, Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh



The Red, Mechuka, Arunachal Pradesh



Twilight, Anini, Arunachal Pradesh



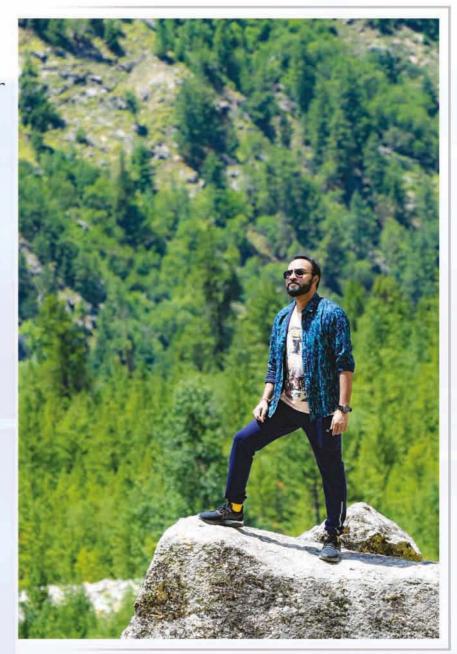
"If you truly love nature, you will find beauty everywhere"

- Vincent Van Gogh

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Ankur Raj

Inspector of Income Tax, Shillong







The ultimate blue hour. Lake Umiam, Meghalaya wraps itself in deep mystery as the light begins to fade and darkness takes over.



The meandering stream of cold water flowing through the Dzükou Valley along the Barail Range in Nagaland which literally gives this verdant valley it's name.



The crystal clear waters of the Dawki river, Meghalaya during winter season is a rare sight to behold with the boat appearing to be floating in the air.



A very rare view of Mt. Kangto (7090m) from Kaziranga National Park, Assam. Kangto is the highest mountain peak in the state of Arunachal Pradesh and among the highest in the Eastern Himalayas.





Ukiam, located on the foothills of the Khasi hills, along the border of Assam and Meghalaya with the Kulsi river flowing nearby.



One of the many named and unnamed Alpine lakes in the higher reaches of Eastern Himalayas of Arunachal Pradesh---Penga Teng Tso.



Kaziranga National Park, home to two-thirds population of Indian Rhinoceros, a UNESCO World Heritage and a tiger reserve. The breathtaking landscape getting alive at the break of dawn.



A misty morning in the picturesque Dzükou Valley, Nagaland which is special for a variant of the dwarf bamboo species.



"I go to the nature to be soothed and healed and to have my senses put in order"

-John Burroughs

PHOTOGRAPHY BY

Vatan Aneja Inspector of Income Tax

Inspector of Income Tax Shillong







Shillong city's spectacular rainbow sight



Captivating dawn with graceful moon in Shillong



Sunset illuminating a row in Shillong City, casting shadows on the background



Tyrshi Falls' majestic overlook of paddy fields





Scenic vista from Shillong's Ward's Lake



Nongjrong Village's dawn: streaming clouds above



Mawkhan view point overlooking Mawphlang Dam



Nongjrong Village's pre-sunrise gentle orange glow





Embracing sun amidst streaming clouds in Nongjrong Village



Umiam Lake Houseboat: Mesmerizing nighttime vista

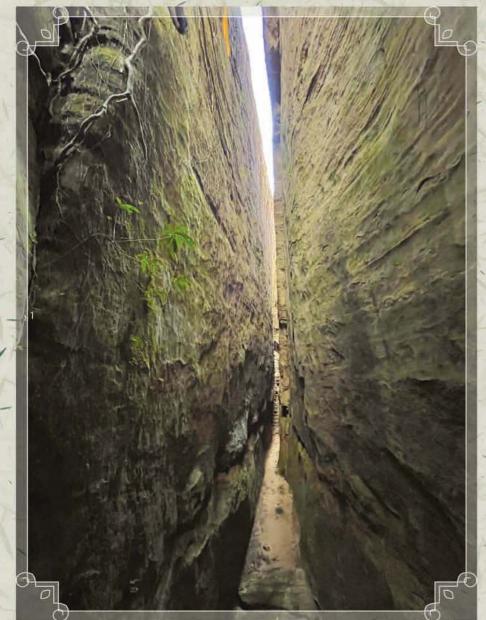


Exploring the beauty of Umkhakoi Lake through Kayaking in Mawlngbna



The enchanting Umngot River in Shnongpdeng Village



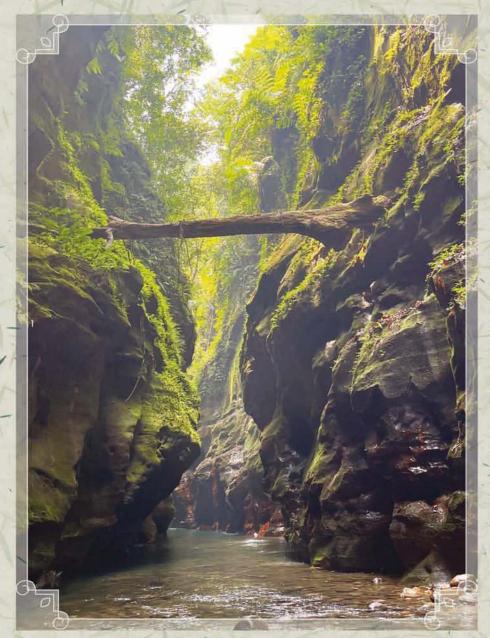


Giant Split Rock Point in Mawlngbna

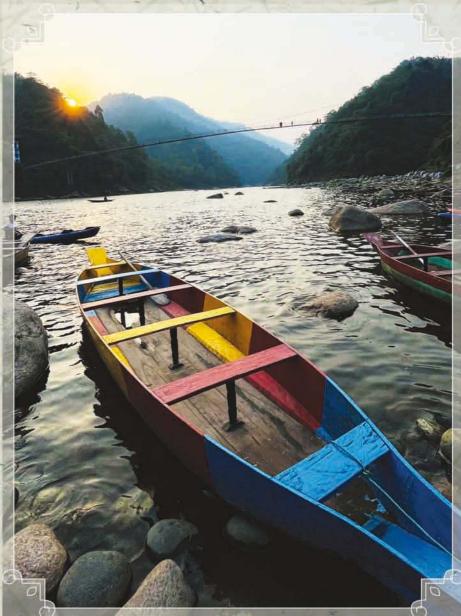


Room-Carving light rays amidst clouds in Mawphlang Village





Wari Chora – Hidden paradise in Garo Hills



Shnongpdeng Village's lively boat under the setting sun





REMINISCENCES AND POETIC MUSINGS



Rachna Singh
Principal Commissioner of Income Tax
New Delhi (Retired)

As an Army child, I often ran into creatures of the wild that inhabited far-flung Army stations. Our adventurous encounters were laced with an element of danger that had our heartbeat ratcheting up and adrenalin pumping. However, these encounters also made our life interesting and full of zest. I still remember my adventures with a fond smile. Let me introduce the readers to some of my wild-life protagonists.

Serpents of Eden

Creatures of the Wild

When I was about 10 years old, my father was posted to Jabalpur, an army station perched on top of a hillock, strangely baptized 'Sita Pahari' or Sita's hillock. After the usual round of temporary accommodations, we were finally allotted and ensconced in a huge sprawling colonial style house, which was surrounded on all sides by a huge forest. So, it was natural to bump into the wildlife of the area, be it of the four-legged variety or the crawling variety. We were warned about the hyenas and jackals that inhabited the jungle, but we were told that the snakes in the neighbourhood were completely harmless. That didn't exactly reassure us but then we hardly had a choice.

My first encounter with a snake-denizen of Sita Pahari was nothing short of strange. One day as I came home from school, I saw a thin and lean looking snake draped elegantly over the bars of the outer gate. Not quite trained in the art of snake-handling, I clapped my hands and shook the gate a little to dislodge the snake, but it refused to budge from its warm perch. Seeing my dilemma, an Army jawan stopped by, and to my surprise, he simply went up to the snake, folded his hands and mumbled a few words as though in prayer. And voila! The snake exited.

The second encounter was quite scary. My father was in the lawn supervising the planting of saplings. He wore moccasins and had propped his foot over the bricks lining the flower bed. Going out to hand him a cup of tea, I glanced down and to my horror saw a snake lounging on his moccasins. Speechless with horror, I backed away. Dad spotted the snake and immediately gestured to the 'mali' to hand him a stick. Dad bent down and gingerly picked the snake with the stick but at the mali and sevadar's exhortation, simply threw it into the under-bush instead of killing it.





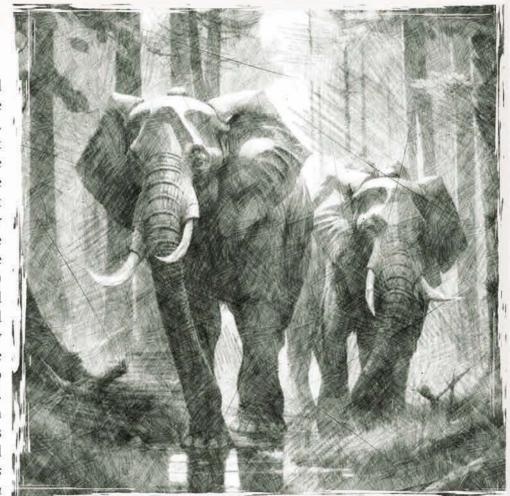
We soon realized that harming a snake was taboo here. Intrigued, I asked around and finally was able to piece together the strange Sita Pahari myth. The belief was that Sita after her abduction was kept on this hillock by Ravana (hence the name Sita Pahari). Sita in her anguish, at being separated from Rama, pulled out her tresses which turned into snakes. As the snake inhabitants of Sita Pahari were descendants of Sita's snake tresses, they were revered.

Obviously, no historian would accept this far-fetched explanation, but it was enough for the inhabitants of Sita Pahari to desist from harming these creepy crawlies. And I guess, they reciprocated the goodwill for in the three years of my stay I never heard of a case of snakebite.

Beats fiction anytime.

The Rum Guzzlers

As an Army child, I was quite accustomed to staying in never-heard-of places. One such place was Bengdubi in West Bengal. When my father was posted to Bengdubi, it did not even have its own train station. We had to alight at Jalpaiguri and then make our way by road to Bengdubi. We first arrived at Jalpaiguri one cold December morning and were ritually picked up at the station by a captain and ushered into the ubiquitous one tonne (a small army truck) for our journey to Bengdubi. Soon, we had left the small town of Jalpaiguri behind and were moving through a thickly forested area. As we moved through the forest, I thought I spied a huge grey hump behind a distant clump of bamboo trees. Seeing my interest, the captain accompanying us informed me that it was nothing but a rum-guzzler. Seeing my total incomprehension he twinkled, "This is what we call elephants here as they have a







great fondness for rum and can smell it from miles away." My sceptical look elicited a complacent 'you will see' from the captain.

In the bustle of shifting to a new place, I soon forgot this conversation. Then arrived the day when my father was to be formally dined-in at the officers' mess. We were ushered to the dimly lit lawns as soon as we arrived. The bar was set out at the far end of the lawn. Suddenly, in the middle of the party bonhomie, I heard a shout, "Rum-guzzlers agaye." Before I could spy the gate crashers, the entire entourage, with practiced agility retreated to the mess lounge and positioned themselves behind the bay windows. Intrigued, I squeezed myself into a crevice near one of the windows and peered outside.

Nothing!!

And then I saw them as they materialized out of the dark. 'Them' being two mammoth elephants walking through the gates of the officers' mess with a stately sway. As I watched spell-bound, the duo stopped, lifted their trunks and delicately sniffed the air. They moved their heads as if in confirmation and purposefully headed towards the bar. Then with an enviable delicacy, they curled their trunks around the bottles of rum on the bar counter and tapped them on the ground till the bottle broke and made a rum-puddle. Using their trunks, they guzzled down the liquor and continued till the bar counter was empty of all bottles. Then they beat an unsteady retreat and disappeared into the darkness. The spectacle was something out of a Ripley's, believe it or not. The image of the rum-guzzlers has stayed with me and even after three decades brings a reminiscent smile to my lips.

+**

##Snakes and elephants were not the only wild creatures we encountered. Every Army-station had its characteristic wildlife, and every new posting brought us slap-bang in touch with different animals of the wild. I always send up a prayer of thanks to God for bringing us so close to nature and its natural inhabitants. They made our childhood exciting and unusual.

Courtesy (Sketches): Shri Soumyajit Choudhury







The Charioteer

He streaks across the dusky firmament, With white steeds at the fore so say the texts on ancient lore

On a slumberous morn, He weaves the sky in a warp and weft of gold, At high noon, He paints the vault of heaven, in colours of copper and yellow so bold,

And then the dusky, seductress eve, Lightly tiptoes in and gathers him in her enticing fold

Spent his day's work done,
He sinks in her arms, an embrace so secure,
Only to rise like a phoenix,
As another sleepy morn knocks at his door,
And beckons him once again
To bathe the landscape in tints of rose and gold

The Crucifix

I stand tall but alone.

The chirping of sparrows and the clamour of parrots is not for me, The haven of nests, the verdant foliage is not for me.

I stand tall but alone.

Sharp boughs like a thorny mantle fetter me, My feet heavy and numb shackle me.

I stand tall but alone.

My skeletal silhouette etched against an angry crimson sky, Trembles and heaves as my soul seeks to fly.

I stand tall but alone.

Hoary arms thrown wide I fly, Into the benediction of the blue sky.

I stand tall but alone

But not for me the blessings of the morn, Not for me the warm cloister of the earth's womb.

I stand tall but alone.

The mantle of hard-won dignity my only ornament. My arms spread wide, a symbol of crucifixion.

I stand tall but alone.







The fragrance of Kong Justina



Indranee Sen Chowdhury
Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax
New Delhi

It takes a village to raise a child, so goes an ancient African proverb. In India, nuclear families who are unable to find child care within the family must fall back on the services of paid help. These care givers supplement the parental role to a large extent in the lives of the children of the family and find a special place in the family's heart. My mother was a working woman and my dad was posted outside the town we lived in. My mother's biggest support apart from family, was our beloved Kong Justina. She was a beautiful Khasi lady who had lived a very interesting life. She hailed from Cherrapunji in Meghalaya,once the rainiest place in the world and had worked as a nanny in the tea gardens of Assam before returning to Cherrapunji. She tragically lost her husband and sons and finally arrived at her sister's house at Laitumkhrah in Shillong, accompanied by her minor daughter.

She entered our lives when I was about seven years old and continued to be with us till my sister and I reached our teens, when she quit working. My mother's life was made easy by the quiet support of Kong Justina. My baby sister rarely fell ill as Kong Justina maintained a very high level of hygiene. I would be denied contact with my little sister unless I was freshly bathed and clothed. She swept, cleaned, took me to school, told me stories and watched over me as I played with the neighbours' children. My little sister grew up, nourished by her care and support. The house was immaculate and the shiny utensils in the kitchen bore testimony to her diligence. We learned good habits by osmosis as she insisted on adherence to strict rules.

My strongest memories of Kong Justina relate to our favourite time of the day aka story time. We would be back from play and would have to finish our milk and snacks before she began to narrate folklore to us. I learned the myths of the Khasi people which contained the oral history of the tribe. Of course, as a child I was unaware of the treasure trove she had opened up for us and enjoyed the folk tales merely as stories. I distinctly remember enthusiastically banging utensils during lunar eclipses---something I picked up from the folklore she recounted and it is not a surprise that till date folklore holds a special place in my heart.





Having to grapple with mini domestic crises today brought on by present day recalcitrant maids, I can not but deeply appreciate the quiet support Kong Justina gave to my mother. Our mother could work hard at her job and earn the appreciation of her superiors, secure in the knowledge that her children would be safe at home and would be fed a hot meal on arrival from school. Kong Justina's role in our lives changed as we grew. Right from the time we would insist she stayed back the night to tell us her fabulous stories till our adolescence when she taught us to be independent, hers was a silent, yet enduring influence all along. In course of time, she too matured into a family elder in her family circle as her daughter Rose grew to womanhood, began working and got married. Her hard work had paid off and her daughter now insisted that she stop working.

The lessons she taught became ingrained habits with me and it is rare that my home is not squeaky clean. With the passage of time, she too became a fond childhood memory, embalmed in the warm sunshine of Shillong. I recently visited Shillong and was walking along the main street of Laitumkhrah when I we bumped into Kong Rose. She told me that Kong Justina had passed away. Prior to her death she had insisted on seeing us in person, but was unable to do so due to ill health and Covid restrictions. A wave of memories engulfed me as I stood on the sidewalk. I was a school girl again, happily walking home, holding Kong Justina's hand. She was much more than just a nanny--- a playmate, a storyteller, an agony aunt and what not! She was security, warmth, love---all rolled into one. Of course, this relationship was possible only in a matrix of time in which television and social media had not yet invaded our home. She and us stand cocooned in the Shillong of yore.

Glossary of regional terms:

'Kong': A sisterly address amongst the Khasis.







THE LACK OF CIVIC SENSE IN INDIA: A DEEP-SEATED ISSUE

India, a nation renowned for its vast cultural heritage and traditions that date back centuries, is battling a significant issue: a lack of civic sense among its populace. A well-functioning, happy society is built on civic consciousness, which is frequently referred to as the collective understanding of individual responsibilities toward society and the environment. Despite India's many advantages and historical emphasis on societal and communal well-being, a number of issues have emerged that have a significant negative impact on the country's social structure, growth trajectory and environment.



Satyakam Dutta
Joint Commissioner of Income Tax
{ Now in deputation as Deputy Director
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India - A Complex Melting Pot: Cultural Diversity and Regional Variations

India's enormous cultural diversity and regional variances are among the most obvious reasons contributing to the lack of civic feeling in the country. India, which is frequently referred to as a subcontinent, is home to an astounding variety of languages, foods, outfits, and traditions. Although this diversity surely contributes to our strength, it can also make it difficult to develop a shared sense of civic obligation.

What is deemed acceptable behaviour in one location may not hold true in another in a country where values and social norms might differ significantly from one state or even one city to another. This discrepancy frequently causes residents to feel uncertain about what exactly qualifies as expected civic behaviour. Spitting in public areas, for instance, might be acceptable in some places but taboo in others. Although a reflection of India's cultural diversity, this regional variety can provide a perplexing environment where people are forced to deal with erratic civic expectations.

Crowded Spaces and Anonymity: The Weight of Overpopulation

India's population, which is among the largest on the planet, provides another significant obstacle to fostering civic virtue. People frequently feel anonymous in public places because of the sardine-like density of people in many urban locations. Due to the relative anonymity that the sea of faces surrounding them affords, people may feel less responsible for their behaviour in crowded areas.

In densely crowded locations, this lack of personal accountability frequently manifests in actions that show a lack of civic duty. For instance, seeing littering in public areas has sadly become all too commonplace as a result of people throwing away their





trash carelessly. Similar to how traffic pandemonium is frequent, contempt for traffic laws, such as speeding and irresponsible driving, are commonplace. In addition to putting lives in danger, this reduces economic productivity because time and resources are wasted in traffic jams.

Education and Awareness: Bridging the Knowledge Gap

The availability of high-quality educational and awareness initiatives that encourage civic responsibility is frequently constrained in many portions of the country, especially in rural areas. Civic education, a crucial component in fostering a feeling of civic responsibility, is not consistently imparted, leaving many citizens ignorant of their duties and obligations to society.

The persistence of impolite behaviour and the failure to instill a feeling of civic pride are both hampered by this lack of understanding of fundamental civic rules and obligations. For instance, if someone has never received education regarding the significance of proper garbage disposal, they might not be aware of the effects of littering on the environment. People continue to act uncivilly, which has an impact on their surroundings and their fellow citizens, since they lack the information and awareness necessary to make wise decisions.

The Enforcement Dilemma: Ineffective Law Enforcement

Even when laws and rules governing civic behaviour are in place, India faces tremendous difficulties in having them enforced. These laws are frequently not enforced as expected, which contributes to a culture of non-compliance.

People are discouraged from obeying civic laws by inconsistent punishments and a slow, ineffective court system. Citizens are less likely to adhere to civic norms when they believe there are no consequences for their behaviour. This creates the conditions for a cycle of disobedience in which rude behaviour remains unchecked

The Shadow of Corruption: A Demoralizing Influence

India's long-standing problem of corruption is also related to the decline in civic virtue. When citizens see public officials engaging in unethical behaviour without suffering any repercussions, they may lose faith in them and their desire to uphold civic norms. People who feel civic obligation is pointless in a corrupt society may develop a sense of hopelessness due to the idea that corruption is widespread and unpunished.

The Consequences of the Lack of Civic Sense

The effects of India's lack of civic awareness are extensive, affecting many facets of society, the environment, and the general welfare of its people.

A. Environmental Degradation

Environmental degradation is one of the most obvious and urgent effects of civic senselessness. Pollution, inappropriate waste management, and widespread littering all contribute to the decline in soil health, water quality, and ecological stability. The beautiful landscapes of India are frequently ruined by trash-filled streets, dirty rivers, and fading green spaces.





B. Traffic Chaos

On the country's highways and other roads, civic senselessness is evident. Daily scenes of gridlock, accidents, and strained tempers resulting from disregard for traffic laws, such as running red lights and careless driving are before us. This not only puts lives in danger but also hinders economic production because of the lost time and resources due to traffic jams.

C. Infrastructure Damage

Roads, bridges, and other public structures are frequently targets of vandalism and neglect. This not only detracts from the beauty of cities and towns but also raises maintenance costs, taking money away from essential development projects. When it comes to public infrastructure, a lack of civic responsibility essentially robs the country of important resources that could be used to advance.

D. Public Health Hazards

Public health is at danger when improper waste disposal and sanitation procedures allow for the spread of illnesses. Open defecation and unattended rubbish dumps continue to be the problems, posing grave health risks to communities. Vulnerable people, especially in rural regions, continue to be plagued by diseases brought on by inadequate sanitation and waste management.

E. Erosion of the Social Fabric

Beyond these obvious effects, a lack of civic responsibility also weakens the social fabric. When people put their own convenience ahead of the greater good of the group, it can breed distrust and alienation in the community. A nation's social cohesion is significantly impacted by the dissolution of social ties and the decline in civic pride. A society that fails to uphold its civic obligations finds it difficult to foster trust among its inhabitants.

Remedies for the Lack of Civic Sense in India

Addressing the lack of civic sense in India is a complex endeavour that requires a multi-pronged approach. While the problem may seem deeply entrenched, there are avenues through which change can be initiated and nurtured.

A. Education and Awareness

Civic education should be encouraged from a young age. Public space preservation, ethics, and civic responsibility should all be covered in schools and community programs. Children who develop a strong sense of civic responsibility are more likely to grow up to be responsible adults who uphold their society's values.

B. Strengthening Law Enforcement

The enforcement of already-existing laws and rules needs to be stepped up. Uncivil behaviour can be discouraged by severe sanctions and a speedy, open legal system. To play a bigger part in encouraging civic behaviour, citizens must understand that





their activities have consequences for non-compliance.

C. Community Engagement

Initiatives led by the community can encourage a sense of ownership and accountability for public areas. Local awareness campaigns, tree-planting programs, and neighbourhood clean up drives can unite residents and foster pride in their surroundings. People are more likely to take ownership of maintaining their neighbourhood when they have a personal connection to it.

D. The Role of Media

The media is incredibly important in influencing public opinion and behaviour. Public service announcements, films, and news reports that emphasize the negative effects of civic immaturity might increase awareness and spur change. The media has the potential to be an effective tool for lobbying and education, highlighting the importance of civic engagement for a wider audience.

E. Government Policies

The government ought to develop and put into effect laws that reward good citizenship. For instance, providing tax advantages to companies that participate in cleanup and recycling initiatives can promote corporate social responsibility. Governmental actions should be in line with a larger goal of developing a hygienic, accountable, and conscientious populace.

F. Social Norms and Role Models

Politicians, entertainers, and community leaders can all serve as positive examples of good citizenship. Their deeds and words have the power to alter the views and conduct of the populace. When powerful people act responsibly in their communities, it sends a strong message to society as a whole. These heroes can encourage others to take their civic responsibilities more seriously.

G. Technology and Innovation

Technology can be used to encourage civic engagement. Apps and online platforms can make it easier to expose public wrong doing and promote citizen involvement in local government. Technology can close the communication gap between residents and government, enabling people to report problems and voice their concerns more easily. Additionally, it can increase governance transparency, which makes it harder for corruption to proliferate.

Conclusion

India has a serious civic sense problem that needs to be addressed by all stakeholders working together. The country needs to undergo a significant cultural transition which is not just a matter of regulation. In addition to competent law enforcement, community involvement, and strong media and government involvement, education and awareness must be at the centre of these initiatives. Ultimately, cultivating civic virtue is a common duty that all people must accept in order to improve the society, the environment, and the country as a whole.

The development of civic duty is a crucial step on the road to a better future as India grows and changes. It is a path that calls for commitment, tenacity, and a common dedication to creating a society where civic awareness is more than just an idea but a way of life. This path holds the potential for an India that future generations can be proud of - one that is cleaner, more responsible, and more polite.







Pradip Kumar Ray
Chief Commissioner of Income Tax (CCA),
Guwahati (Retired)

THE MOTHS

Palm on palm, but the eyes do not meet; Only the ashes of grains Fly moth-like from the fire of unsure commitment.

For a few seconds before that My blind statue has burst Sprouting a thousand cacti of purposeless growth.

Lips buried in the earth quiver,
Mouths open in agonized cry:
Don't fly you, insects of the night,
over our avowed togetherness,
Wings smeared with spoilt pollen and peccable blood.

A barter of concern. A ruffled smile. My body droops like a flower of cactus, laden with an untold guilt.

And the ashes of grains, Flying moth-like through my fenestrate eyes, Cover our home with a diffused darkness.



SHE STANDS ON A COMPASSIONATE GROUND

I can see her from my hospital bed,
Eyes like burst ampoules,
Standing embarrassedly
On a compassionate ground.
It seems she doesn't feel
The warmth of her children's hands:
Oh, clay and clay and clay and clay! No flesh!

It's an ocean of nothingness Drowning her grief and dreams; Only the waves of trepidation rise, Pushing her back to the dykes.

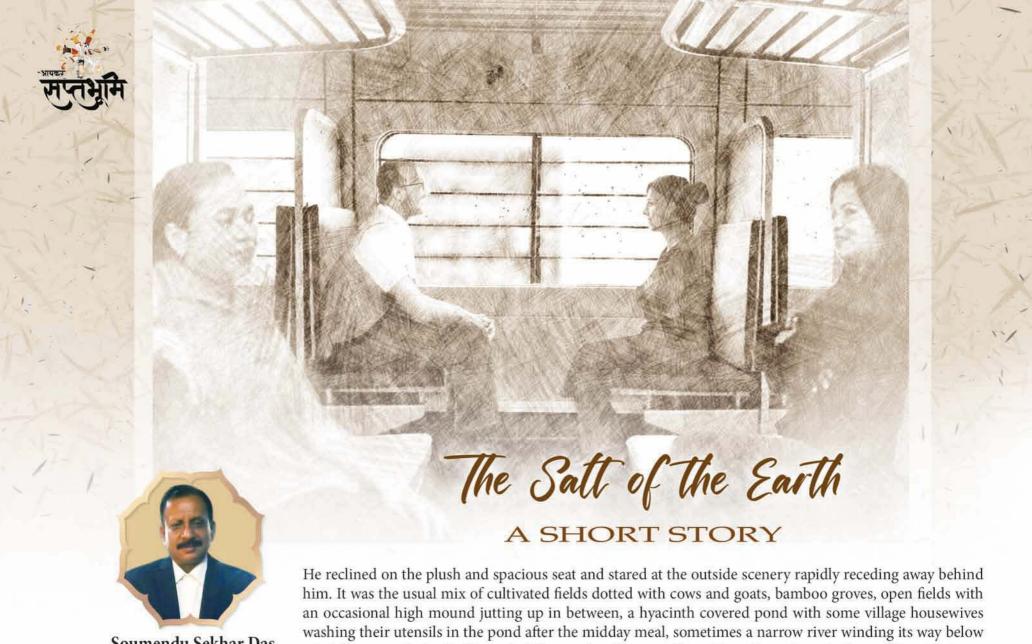
Eyes covered with betel leaves!
House shaded by leaves of palm!
With all the symbols that our rituals throw,
Do ever leaves grow wings?
All wings belong to the bats and owls now,
Fluttering in the darkening sky.

My heart-petals are contracting in pain.
One by one
They fall on the way of the sharp northern wind,
Shaking our home, our world.

I won't go anywhere; I want to go back home. Oh you metal turtle! Leaning on my heart in this dreadful theatre, Which hieroglyphs would you decipher now? Tell me once these nightmares are all unreal!

But why do I see her in my mind then, Eyes like burst ampoules, Holding the hands of her two startled kids, And standing embarrassedly On a compassionate ground!





Soumendu Sekhar Das Joint Commissioner of Income Tax, Guwahati

- just the normal view in this part of the country. However, the wide and seamless windows of the vistadome coach provided a much enhanced vision - making every object more vivid and special. Though generally not an avid photographer, he had been enticed into taking quite a few pictures on his smartphone.





They were nearing the Farakka Barrage now. Satrajit sighed wistfully – after crossing the Ganga, they would be entering the Malda district – renowned for its mangoes. Soon thereafter would begin his memories – decades old memories of his childhood, adolescence and early youth. It had been ages since he had visited these parts. He was doing so now at the insistence of Animesh, an old schoolmate who happened to be posted there. "Come, dear – don't you want to see how your old place has transformed now? Please make it soon, since I am retiring next year..."

The young woman sitting opposite him looked up from her magazine and smiled at him.

"How far are you going, uncle?"

She was smartly dressed in a pink cotton salwar suit – her hair neatly tied up in a bun above her head. She had a fresh, honest face and the eyes of a person who has really seen the world despite her young age. The coach was half empty, considering the high fare – which was nearly three times that of an air-conditioned chair car.

"Harishchandrapur. What about you?"

"The same place. Are you from these parts, uncle?"

"Not exactly, but once I used to visit quite often....."

"I work as a hospital nurse in Burdwan. I am visiting my village after nearly a year. I've just wanted to travel in this coach ever since the time it was added on this train", her words came out in a gush now.

"Oh, really? What's the name of your village?"

"Chanditala".

Satrajit gave an impulsive jerk. The floodgates opened all of a sudden as memory after memory flitted across his mind—the winter holidays, the earthen smell of his grand father's house, his first attempt at climbing a mango tree, his boating experience in the village wetlands with Shanu, the lantern-lit evenings listening to tales and the early dinners....

"Is the name familiar to you?"

"We had our ancestral house there..."

"Oh..."

She stopped abruptly as they arrived at a station. She got up, stretched herself and slowly got down to take a walk on the platform.





Malda Town railway station was not what it used to be. He recalled the earlier station – bustling with activity with all types of vendors trying to attract the attention of the passengers. From edibles to sweetmeats and mango products they traded in a variety of wares. "Misti", "Aamsotto, aameraachar" [sweets, mango papad and mango pickles] – their cries would reverberate from the moment a train entered the station, whether it be normal working hours or midnight.

Things had changed drastically. The platforms were cleaner and broader but the vendors few and far between, though it was only late in the afternoon. The few present were silently trading their wares to any interested customer, but the enthusiasm of the yesteryears was conspicuously absent. They were waiting for customers instead of trying to attract all and sundry. The others had probably changed professions.

His co-passenger returned to her seat as the train started with a jerk. They had a little more than an hour to go. She focused her attention back to Satrajit.

"You were talking about your ancestral home..."

"Yes, my grandfather Subhamoy Mitra was a school teacher there."

Her eyes glistened with interest now as she persisted with her queries.

"Oh - and were you staying in one of the hill stations - going to a convent school?"

Satrajit was visibly amazed - how could she possibly know?

"That's right, Kalimpong and Dr. Graham's - but....!"

"My dad spoke a lot about you – how you were always engrossed in books when you were alone in your room....."

"Indeed? What is the name of your father?"

"Santanu Kumar Ghosh - he was better known as Shanu..."

His heart was racing now – after all these years, he had located his dear friend Shanu – his sole companion during his visits to his grandpa's home. The other village youths kept their distance from the studious and urban teenager that he was – but Shanu was different. The tall, spry and gregarious young man had effortlessly befriended the shy and reserved Satrajit.

"Come man, leave aside your books for a moment – let me show you our village. You'll never get such fresh air in a town or city...."

Satrajit had readily accepted the proposal. Together, they had literally combed the length and breadth of Chanditala – the fields, mango groves, ponds, the ancient village temple devoted to the goddess Chandi and virtually every unfrequented corner of the village. Shanu was a glib talker.





"Do you know that no one comes near the temple on new moon nights?"

"Is that so? Why?"

"They say that this temple was built more than a hundred years back by the village landlord who was merciless and cruel. He had a team of club yielding goons under him to establish his authority. It is believed that he got his enemies or any recalcitrant subjects sacrificed before Devi Chandi on new moon nights – the spirits of those sacrificed souls haunt the temple on such dark nights."

Satrajit was quite horrified – at the same time, his scientific mind had refused to accept this concept of ghosts and spirits.

"There are no such things...", he had protested feebly.

"Oh, is it? Well, come to the temple on a new moon night and see for yourself..."

The plan had never materialized but he still vividly remembered that boat ride. Shanu had somehow got hold of a small boat and had taken his urban friend for boating on Sonai Beel – a wetland just bordering the village.

The skies had been dark for quite some time and when they reached the middle of the wetland, it had started raining. At the same time, strong squalls of wind had lashed their little boat which had threatened to capsize at any moment. Satrajit had closed his eyes in terror and grabbed Shanu round his waist.

"I can't swim!"

"Don't worry, dear. We'll get through this...", Shanu's clear voice had given him courage – and they had really made it back without any mishap....

Suddenly something clicked in his mind as he came back to the present. Why had she used the past tense while referring to her father?

"Why did you say - 'was'? Where is Shanu now?"

Her eyes clouded over with emotions and tears appeared.

"He passed away, uncle - two years back - Covid, you know...."

Satrajit was thunderstruck –his dear friend Shanu – no more? Secretly, Shanu had been his prime reason for accepting Animesh's invitation to come to these parts after so long. They had no home or relatives in that village now. His father, who was into government service, had readily sold their village home after grandpa's demise, since he never planned to come back to the village. The last time Satrajit had come was to attend the last rites of his grandfather. Shanu had been with him all along then, silently sympathizing with his friend from the town. But even Shanu was gone now...he emitted a long sigh.





The rest of the journey passed in silence and they reached their destination. As they disembarked from the train, the young woman turned and smiled at him. She seemed to have overcome her emotions by now.

"Will you be coming to Chanditala, uncle?"

"I don't know – let's see if I can. But – I haven't even asked your name..."

"Suparna, uncle. Only my mother stays in the village home now. I've told her to come and live with me in my quarters – but she simply refuses to...."

Satrajit understood completely – she wanted to live with the memories of her late husband. Anyone who had been intimate with Shanu was unlikely to ever forget him – he was that kind of a person....

His own plans were uncertain now – the main objective of his visit had evaporated. He had a sudden impulse to just take the next train back but controlled himself. Animesh would be waiting for him outside.

He picked up his trolley bag and made for the exit. May be – just may be – he would visit Chanditala again – he didn't know yet...

Courtesy (Sketches): Shri Soumyajit Choudhury







A HUMOROUS FEATURE



Nilay Baran Som Commissioner of Income Tax, Chennai

In legal parlance, there is a term called 'an article or thing.' The article or thing I am speaking about now, is small in size, but quite heavy in weight, of course figuratively. Young boys and girls in the marketing profession, among their many 'must do 's, have to take out this 'article or thing' from their wallets or purses and it passes on to who's who in the client office, or to a fellow traveller or acquaintance. To be more specific, in case of medical representatives, when the physician is a bit tired after the daily visiting hour or OPD, the special 'card' must reach him, so that the 'MR' may be called in and they may have some chit chat also!

Three words, simple when left alone, when printed on a card to read, 'General order supplier' open up a vista of possibilities to the government officer, posted in a new station in some 'lucrative' department. The sly glance of the owner of the card, the 'permanent system' of the office supervisor, and the commitment of the bill clerk to religiously take his wife to an eatery, at least once a month, are all hidden in the small, innocuous looking 'visiting card'.

Let me move to a personal anecdote of mine, which dates back to my younger days. Anirban and Sugato were my batch-mates in a management institute, where we had enrolled ourselves for a masters degree in business administration. While in course of time I entered a government job, the duo pursued their career in the private sector, with the difference that while Anirban could bag a job in a large company, Sugato had to remain satisfied with a smaller job in a smaller firm. Incidentally, the firm in which Anirban joined, used to purchase a few products marketed by the firm of Sugato's. Therefore, there were official reasons for them to meet occasionally. Since Anirban's paternal uncle was the Company Secretary in the establishment Anirban worked in, even at a junior management level, Anirban used to wield some power in the company, to a certain extent.

For the sake of old friendship, Anirban sincerely wanted to 'back up' his friend in his dealings. Apparently not a big task, but the problem lay elsewhere. In every single visit, Sugato was seen to send in visiting cards of different organizations in the same





industry. For example, if, in the month of January , he claimed that the product of 'Khandelwal & Co' is of the cutting edge technology, in his next visit , he would whisper, Khandelwal is a sinking ship, now it is better to go with the rising star, 'Sunshine Private Limited'!

In one of such rounds, Sugato handed over a card to Anirban, from an altogether new company. Anirban's face lightened up after seeing that Sugato is designated as the team leader. Anirban congratulated him—'It is really good that you are the team leader now! Good going.'

Sugato somehow was seen to be unperturbed. "What team leader?" The proprietor of the company, he murmured, has done some correspondence course in management from some obscure institute at his old age. Now 24x 7, he is onto jargons like team building, motivation, synergy and what not! While Sugato was the sole executive, looking after sales, he had been made the team leader and his immediate boss, he told, had been redesignated as the 'Regional Sales Manager', although there was but one region or territory! Funniest of all, the aged receptionist who put on a lot of make up on her face and coloured her hair, was also flaunting a visiting card—'Manager, Corporate Communications'.

More anecdotes to come on the topic of visiting cards. In our locality in Kolkata, called the 'para' in Bengali, one gentleman worked as a top ranking executive in a proprietary concern. Occasionally he used to peep in the weekly 'adda' (gossip session) of us, the youngsters, perhaps, to break his monotony of life. The firm in which he used to work would be of the same nature and size, as that of Sugato. As one of his stories unfolded, the proprietor once called all his executives and directed, "All of you sit together and prepare an attractive advertisement for our firm- the world should know what we all are doing!"

Our dada and his team had to persuade the owner to believe that, coming out with a grand advertisement plan is a specialised job, to be carried out by an advertising agency and it cannot be done in-house. He gave us a go-ahead with our idea. After a few days, three young executives of 'Trimurty Communications' visited our office to have an initial dialogue. The proprietor was very much impressed with the young boys, dressed immaculately, making power point presentations. He called our dada, who happened to be the second in command in the office and asked— "Have you seen their visiting cards! At such young age, they have moved to the director level! Sky is the limit for them!" Our dada explained, "Sir, of course, the boys are bright—but in their trade, everybody is a director, art director, creative director and the like—the designations do not have anything to do with the Board of Directors!"

The face of the proprietor was still glowing. He, in a whispering tone, now asked our dada—"By the way, this boy Kuntal is the best. Won't he be a good match with my daughter, Bijli?"

We were interested to know the end result of the episode, but our dada disappointed us. The advertisement could not take off, since the owner thought that the budget involved was too much for a small firm like his. Worse still, Bijli eloped with a Sikh Boy soon afterwards. Kuntal could not impress Bijli with his visiting card and all.

Apart from anecdotes related to others, my own experience about visiting cards is worth a visit. I am fond of cards and notice





them carefully. Cards do have variety in terms of quality of paper used, lay out and design. Many people have the habit of displaying their educational qualification like B Tech, MBA, PGDM etc etc on the body of the business card. Such cards create an aura of awe in me and sometimes, I keep such people at an arm's length.

Once one gentleman appeared before me regarding official work. Before entering into my chamber, he did send in his visiting card. What was special about his card was the flip side of his card displayed the names of seven to eight entities with whom he was associated, either in the capacity of the owner, or a partner or a director. Incidentally, it so came out through the conversation that he happened to be a neighbour of one of my cousins. When I told my cousin about the encounter and my impression about his business acumen, my cousin burst into laughter--- "Dhurjoty, means, Sotu?" Well, his father was a high ranking officer in ITC and has left a fortune for him. Now he is investing that capital here and there, not meeting success as such, since he does not stick to any business for long. However, his real asset is his wife who runs a Montessori school -- virtually it is she who runs the family". Momentarily it came to my mind that for her, a signboard was enough, no visiting card is required!

Now an anecdote out of Kolkata. A few years ago, I had been to Madurai in a governmental work. I was put up in the state government circuit house. Having nothing to do on a holiday afternoon, I decided to visit a fare which was going on in the adjoining ground. I was particularly interested in various wares displayed by an NGO. The proprietress came forward to introduce the activities of her organisation. After her briefing was over, she handed over to me her business card. What caught my eyes is her identity---Promptress, ABC Foundation, National Volleyball Player (Retd), B-Tech Computer Science, etc. As if it was not enough, standing beside her was a forest ranger, also a member of the same NGO. To my amusement, I found that the gentleman displayed his designation in his visiting card quite pictorially--below his name, there was a photo of a tiger and his designation comes only next!

Some people are seen to print the mission statement of the organisation in the card itself. And for government or PSU officers, some organisations require the card to be bilingual- Hindi and English, at the cost of it looking a bit clumsy. The cards of astrologers, on the other hand, give a brief indication of the various super powers including powers of black magic they are adept at.

It is worth a thought what is the ultimate destiny of the so many cards, printed in thousands? Those who are a bit organised, have the habit of putting them in card album, to be pulled out at the appropriate time. Most of the people, however either put them below the glass cover of the secretariat table or put in the wallet, till the time the wallet becomes fat enough to discard them all.

The Japanese are said to have an elaborate protocol and etiquette while giving or exchanging their cards. I heard this from a friend of mine who had visited that country on a business trip. It is said that if someone extends a business card to a fellow Japanese, he will first watch it carefully, say a few words in compliment and then pocket it. I checked into google about the veracity of such practice and see that this is the cultural practice in Japan.







While most of the business cards are just businesslike, there are some people who may punch some humour in it, not the unintentional ones, like names of multitude of companies, or the plethora of degrees I just narrated above. One American young lady is said to have these words in her card ---"I am not a good baby sitter---but there are worse!" Behind these words, there must be a jovial individual and she must be good at her work too!

With a lot of stories and anecdotes told about visiting cards, let me tell an anecdote about not having one.

At the centre of the episode is a powerful bureaucrat, occupying the rank of a Joint Secretary to Government of India in one of the divisions of a central department. One smart executive, dressed in power attire and matching tie, entered his chamber for demonstration of some electronic gadget, for use in the office of the former.

After watching the demo session along with his team of junior officers, the big boss told in a condescending tone --- "We will discuss among ourselves and will let you know, whether we are going for it."

The executive, displaying his eagerness to sell his ware, asked, "Sir, may I have your visiting card?"

By putting his hands at the back of his head, while swinging a little in his swivel chair, he replied in his inimitable style---" Well, people do visit me, but I don't require a visiting card for myself."

After such an anti-climax, let me return to cards again. Let us imagine a small cubicle in some office. Inside, there are a young man and a woman. One of them is having a vendor meeting, the other, a client call. Meeting and presentation are over, and the date of the next meeting is fixed. They exchange their visiting cards. Who knows, they have exchanged their hearts as well? Are business cards for business only?

Disclaimer: This feature is not intended to hurt the sentiments of any individual or a group of individuals, or their class, ways of life and has been written purely in a lighter vein.







TREASURES FROM A DISTANT SLOPE

On a map of the country, below the massive head rising into the Northern massif, lies a gorgeous neck: the emerald state of Himachal. A state which keeps drawing us back again and again, to its snow clad peaks, its craggy stone cliffs, its verdant valleys, and sparkling streams flowing through it. And in the north-eastern parts lie the particularly tranquil district of Kinnaur, where all these treasures figure even more bountifully than in the other parts. This was where we – me and my wife – travelled to in the late spring.

Indeed, the splendours of the landscape far surpassed all our expectations, we saw far more than we had ever expected to. However, this little piece is not about any of that; not about what we or any other travellers come to expect of the district and of the state. This one is about what we had not initially gone looking for, but got to marvel at, nevertheless.



Abhijit Ghosh
Additional Commissioner of Income Tax (Retd),

First impressions

Some ten years ago, on a trip around the Kulu valley and Manali, we had walked up a gentle gradient and through the thickly wooded groves of ageing Deodar trees to sneak a look at the awe inspiring Hidimba temple. Gaunt and massive, the singular architecture, the woodcarvings, the location amidst the majestic Deodar groves - it created a striking impression. However, owing partly to the seclusion of its solitary structure, its very different looks, and mythical association to the gentle *Rakshasi* - I had half concluded that it was a unique and single example of its kind. I was quite wrong, as I got to know later. Which was only to be expected: I am not a scholar of temple architecture, merely an amateur dabbler who learns things the hard way.

Years later, after a climb to the Hatu Mountain peak, near Narkanda, the sight of the intricate woodcarvings and resplendent structure of the Hatu Mata Mandir, sitting at a height of over ten thousand feet, made me aware how wrong I had been earlier. Here was a temple very much in the same architectural style, (even though it was smaller in size) with much the same rich woodcarvings, as well as much the same seclusion - this time by height and surrounding space. Also, once again, there was another association with yet another Rakshasi. This temple too was associated with myths from an epic, but not just one of them. The different myths, included Sita, and Maa Kaali, but also with Mandodari, Queen to



Ravan. I was beginning to realise that the Hidimba temple was not an exception, but only a particularly striking culmination of a style.

Later still, visits to the 'Kali ki tibba' a top a hill near Chail, and the Tara Mata temple near Shimla confirmed my earlier ignorance. There was a thriving and consistent style of temple architecture in these areas of the Shivaliks which was amazing in its own right.

While elsewhere in this land the pious built their temples in stone, in burnt brick or in Terracotta, the people of these hilly land had created theirs in wood.

The Un-Famous

Yet, all of these temples, (as well as others I was now reading about but hadn't seen as yet), have a certain reputation and fame and are located in or around major cities or towns. What I wish to talk about here, are temples that I don't see anyone talk about, apart from a few travellers' blogs, or, at best, a few cursory bullet point mentions on travel-aggregator sites on the net.

Kinnaur is almost entirely a rural district; of all the places we crossed, only the district headquarters at Recon-peo having any substantial claim to being called a township. All other places we did get to see are decidedly villages, a couple of them bloated courtesy of a seasonal tourist traffic - but all others remain small and beautiful. It is of the temples of four of these villages that I turn to.

At this point, a cursory overview of the photgraphs accompanying this piece might make sense. The temples which are the basis of these observations and which are represented in these photographs are, respectively:

- 1. Narayan-Nagini temple in the village of Chini;
- 2. Mata (Chandika) temple at Kothi, also known as Koshthampi;
- 3. Shri Badri Vishal Temple, at Kamru and
- 4. Badrinarayan temple at Batseri.

The first two villages are on the slopes rising on the right banks of the Sutlej River Gorge, near Kalpa and Recon peo. The last two lie on the slopes of the right bank of the Baspa River Gorge, off the Sangla Chitkul Road.

While the more famous temples mentioned earlier were located near big settlements and patronised by royal courts at the time of establishment and by the state and /or public patrons thereafter, these four village temples have little by way of such vaunted patronage. They were erected by the people, and are kept in their current upkeep by the villagers.





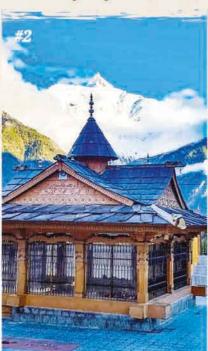
A Closer Look

I would now like to focus on certain aspects of the temples which appeared to me to be common to all of these temples, and in general, to temples of this entire region.

1. Use of space:

Firstly, looking at them from the middle distance, what strikes the eye is the act of 'standing apart'. The other various public and private buildings of the villages lie huddled together, cheek by jowl. The temples, however, have wide spaces around themselves. (#1) The wide yard around them seem to work two different functionalities, one metaphorical, the other practical. Metaphorically, the space is an offering of deference, of respect. In less lofty terms, the space provides for a mela ground, to be used during religious festivals, when the pious gather in throngs.





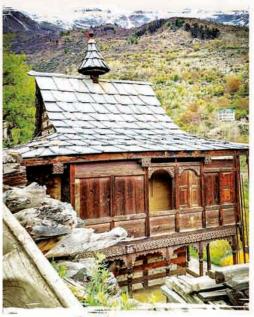
2. Landscape Echoed:

The structure of the temples is such that the central spire mimics a mountain in an abstract, conical form. Such mimicry, of course, is common to so many other temple building traditions of the plains. However, here, the temples are on the slopes of actual mountains. The locations appear carefully chosen, so that directly behind the spire rises an actual mountain peak, complete with a snow cap; thus offering an unique visual echo! (#2, #3)

3. Structure:

The first appearance of all these temples will tell you that they have a central spire, surrounded by sloping roofs, single, or multiple ones stacked in layers, and with each layer ending in upturned corners. The roofs overhang from the inner cella walls. They are supported on the outer edge by wooden struts on wooden pillars or the brick walls. That is, they are in what is called the 'Pagoda' style. (#1 to #4) which is, of course, an architectural style that is more often associated with countries of the far-east and south-east Asia, and therefore, may be suspected to be a 'foreign influence'. On the other hand, scholars tell us that this style,

like Buddhism, was born here in the Himalayan lands including Nepal; and that it spread northward and eastward across the mountains as Budhhism spread, along with many other cultural legacies.



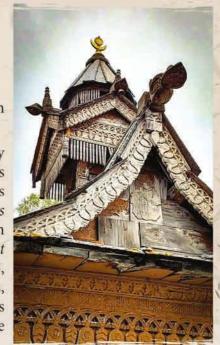




4. Nag Serpents:

I will go back to the whole of woodcarvings later in this piece, but it seems apt to slide on to an aspect which has some relation to the question of influence of 'foreign' styles.

Of all the human, animal and supernatural beings represented in the carvings, one particularly striking representation is that of *Nags*. Now *Nags*, in terms of mythology, were thought of as eventual inhabitants of their own kingdom in the underworld. They appear in innumerable tales and fables of these northern most parts of our country from Kashmir downwards. Overall, *Nags* are considered beneficent and protective supernatural beings. This, of course, is similar or even identical on the literary plane to the mythological *Nags* familiar in the rest of India - the *Anant Nag* or *Sesh Nag* being prime examples. However, the visualisations here are entirely different. (#5, #6) Whereas *Anant* or *Sesh Nags* are invariably portrayed as circularly coiled and hooded snakes, (often with multiple heads and hoods), the *Nags* in these temples are scaled and finned beings with large leonine heads - distinctly similar to the Dragons of Tibetan and Chinese mythologisation. Is this then evidence of a two way cultural osmosis?





5. Kathkuni:

The construction of the walls and rooms are in a distinctive indigenous style, characteristic of Himachal Pradesh's wooden architecture, commonly known as Kathkuni. The term is said to originate from two Sanskrit words – 'kastha' meaning wood and 'kone' meaning corner. This style consists of walls made of interlocked wooden planks with stones packed in between without mortar. It is said that this type of architecture helped the buildings survive many earthquakes.

6. Woodcarvings:

Each one of these temples are profusely embellished with wood-carvings showing a high degree of skill. (#4, #5, #6, #7, #8)

The façade, ceilings and doorways, the pillars, joists, the hanging eaves, are all worked over in prolific detail. The doors and the panels next to them bear rows of figures of the deities of the Hindu pantheon. The capitals on the wooden pillars are carved with the motifs of *puranghat* (pot and foliage) and panels of *Kichakas* (celestial beings). In central





positions, we can observe full-blossomed lotus flowers, which are astounding reminders of the influence of the Gupta art. The Gupta empire had spread to parts of the Kinnaur area, and the architectural and design legacies appear to have spread wide over the whole region and taken deep roots so their resurface in temples built many centuries later.

The woods employed for both construction and decorative carvings are *deodar* (*devadaru*), alongwith walnut, shisham, tun, kail and pine. Deodar has an extremely strong load-bearing capacity, but it also makes it possible to create high-relief cutting possible.

The carved panels are held together by iron joists. The doorways are notable for their size. All three members, the lintel and the doorjambs, are carved out of massive blocks of wood.

In temples elsewhere, I am told, the motifs include representations of Kings and courtiers in distinctly Mughal style. Understandably so, since those temples were built / patronised by Kings of vassal states of the Mughal State. In the villages of our selection, however, there are no such representation of any figure of temporal authority. And this too is understandable, since these villages were remote from the regional King's court, (to say nothing of the imperial Court) in terms of both physical distance as well as political culture.



Stepping Away

As we moved away, from each individual temple, and then from the region as a whole, questions clamoured round, as incisive as buzzing bees.

The temples have all been around for a long time. There were no new ones. None of the other wooden buildings in the village were adorned with wood-carvings, though they were otherwise well appointed and beautiful dignified structures in their own right. Of course, any buildings which looked new were steel and concrete jobs, as ugly and non-descript as anywhere else on earth. So, is this art doomed to extinction?

While there was no denying that, as of now, the temples were in great shape; they were clearly regularly cleaned, polished, painted as required. However, upkeep and continuance of such structures are huge issues. Wood is long lasting, but not immortal. The signs of decay were few, but definitely were there: in some patches, there were distinctly different woods, bearing similar carvings, but of a decidedly lower level of skill. (#4) Perceivably, the wood of some panels had rotted away or otherwise got damaged, and those had to be replaced by newer panels. It was from these replacements that it appeared that skills have also perceptibly fallen away, as is natural when the practice is slowly abandoned.

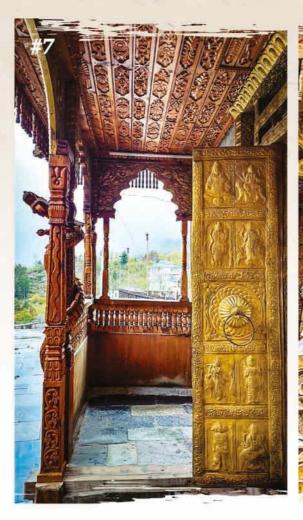
How would this great local tradition continue, then?





On the other hand, the continuity of wooden architecture is fraught with other perils as well. To quote a concerned enthusiast, "When the art form was at its peak, the region was sparsely populated and densely forested. But the equation has changed drastically now. Urging people to use wood may have a negative effect on the forest."

With that, we returned back east, to write about the wealth of a vernacular architecture of the North-West, for the eyes of readers from the North-East.

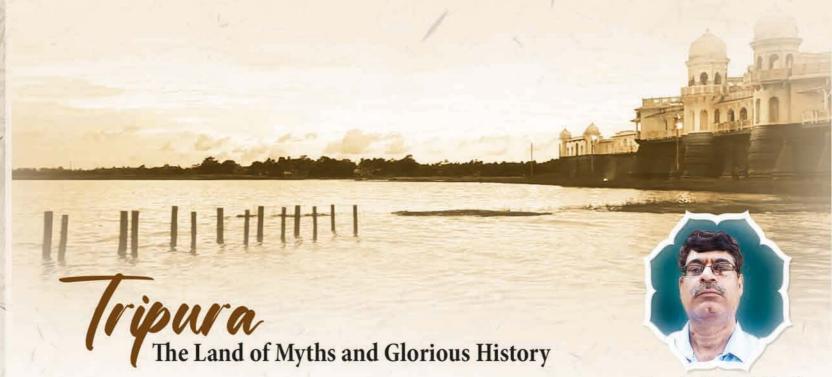












Travelling – it leaves you speechless, then turns you into a storyteller." – **Ibn Battuta**, a fourteenth century traveller who travelled far and wide.

Chandra Prakash Bhatia Additional Commissioner of Income Tax, Kolkata

Tripura, in the North-eastern part of India, is a perfect blend of natural splendour, rich history, and myths. Beautiful valleys carpeted with colourful flowers, rich culture, and a regal past-Tripura has all the ingredients to be the perfect holiday destination, a combination of modernity with tradition. Geographically, Tripura is a landlocked hilly state surrounded by Bangladesh on three sides (with border of 832 km). Tripura was formerly a princely state ruled by a long list of tribal kings stretching back to antiquity. It is believed to be one of the oldest kingdoms in ancient India. There are legends, referring to existence of Tripura as a political entity from the days of the epic of Mahabharata. It is said that an ancient king named 'Tripur' (46th descendant of lunar dynasty) ruled over the territorial domain known as Tripura, a contemporary of Yudhishthira. One of the ancient names of Tripura (mentioned in the Mahabharata) is Kirat-desh.

In the 'Sabha Parv', Chapter XXXI, the sixteenth verse¹ of Mahabharata, it has been mentioned that 'Sahadeva', the younger brother of Yudhishthira, conquered the "immeasurable effulgent Tripura". After the departure of the Pandu brothers into forest exile, Duryodhana became king. He was determined to declare himself Samrat (Emperor). He sent forth armies under various commanders, one of whom was Karana. In verses² 9 to 11 of Chapter CCIII of 'Vana Parv' of the "Mahabharat, it has been stated

¹&² HISTORY OF TRIPURA- E.F. Sandys, published by Tripura State Tribal Cultural Research Institute & Museum, Govt. of Tripura, 1915 and subsequent editions, page-2





that Karna, after conquering various kingdom, came to the 'Batsabhumi' (grazing country) and subjugated Keroli, Mrittikavati, Mohana and Pattana, Tripura and Kosala, and made them all pay tribute. Assam and the adjoining areas were ruled by the Angas, Bangas (name survived as Bengal) and tribal kings mentioned above. The Tripura Raj is mentioned in the list of kingdoms on the Emperor Asoka's Pillar, kept in the Fort of Allahabad.

The 'Rajmala' is a chronicle of Tripura kings which provides a long list of 186 kings from this dynasty, who ruled the kingdom. The Rajmala (also called Sri-Rajmala) is said to have been composed during the reign of Dharma Manikya (1431 AD), who engaged two Brahmin pundits named Sukreswar and Baneshwar for this great task³. 'Rajmala' is in verse and was in a detached form but was collected and written in sequence by them. Some important events of their times as narrated to them by 'Durlevendra Narayan', the Chantai or the Chief Priest of the Court, which were in folk songs, composed in 'Kokborok, (language of major tribes). Till the 16th century, Tripura Raj stretched to a larger area than the present state of Tripura. The capital was gradually moved from Tribeg to Rangamati⁴ (Udaipur) and then back again to Agartala. The seat of Government has continued at this place. Cachar area was given as dowry⁵ to king, after he married the daughter of King of Tripura. The last Rajah of Cachar, was assassinated in1830 and, as he left no heir, the state was annexed⁶ by the British Government on the 14th of August 1832. The Raja of Tripura was entitled to a 13-gun salute by the order of Viceroy.

Past and Present Public finances of Tripura - The Kings of the dynasty assumed the title Manikya⁷ during the reign of Ratna Fa (Ratna Manikya) in 1280. Ratna Manikya invited twelve big Zamindars from Bengal to settle and allotted them land. Unlike plain land, there was no system of land revenue in hills, as lands could not be ploughed. King used to collect forest material as tax. Family tax⁸ was imposed in hills, known as 'Gharchukti'. It was continued by British and collection in 1890-91 was Rs.32,223/-only. Priest class was allowed to have tax free holdings. The boundaries of the kingdom changed over the centuries. There were several Muslim invasions in this region from 13th century onwards. A very remarkable king 'Bijay Manikya' ruled during the third quarter of sixteenth century. He was contemporary of the Mughal Emperor Akbar and in Ain-i-Akbari, the Maharaja's name was mentioned. Tripura included Chittagong under the reign of Bijay Manikya.

In last part of 16th century, the Arakan king Sikandar Shah occupied Chittagong and marched towards Tripura. The Tripura King Amar Manikya took shelter in the forest. The Mughals found foothold in Chittagong and Commilla and dominated the kingdom

⁸Analysis of the Raj-Mala or Chronicles of Tripura by the rev. James Long, reprinted from the journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1850, p-29.



³History Of Tripura- As Reflected in The Manuscripts, Ed. by Satyadeo Poddar, Samiksha Series, University of Tripura, 2016, p-2.

⁴Sri Rajmala, Vol.-I to IV, Trans by Dr. N. C. Nath, Tribal Research & Cultural Inst, Govt of Tripura, p-51 5&6 A Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries — compiled by C U Aitchison, Under-secretary to the GOI, Foreign Deptt, V-II, part-III, p-146

⁶A Collection of Treaties. Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries — compiled by C U Aitchison, Under-secretary to The GOI, Foreign Deptt, V-II,part-III, p-279

⁷Report on the Administration of the State of Tipprah for the year 1890-91, Published by Tribal State Tribal Cultural Research Institute & Museum, Govt. of Tripura, 2004, p-13.



in 1733, having influence over the appointment of kings. In 1748, Tripura was defeated by Shamser Ghazi, who ruled over Tripura indirectly, with a heavy hand, for seven years. In 1765 Tripura came under British rule, Krishna Manikya was made Raja by the English, having succeeded to Shamsher Khan, Income⁹ (Revenue) of the Raja was about 3,00,000 rupees at that time.

In 18th century itself, the king of Tripura lost the south-western part, 'Chakla-Rosanabad' to the Nawab of Murshidabad. Ultimately the King of Tripura agreed to hold Chakla-Rosanabad as zamindari on payment of tax to Nawab. During the reign of Krishna Manikya (1760-61 A.D.), the capital was shifted from Udaipur to Agartala. Tripura was reduced to the state of obedience to the British. Mr. Ralph Leak was then appointed the first resident of Tripura, called Tippera by English. Tripura was placed under the direct control of the Company's local Officer. The revenue for the first year was fixed at one lakh and one Sicca rupees. During the reign of Raja Krishna Kishore Manikya (1830-49), Dampler was the Commissioner of Chittagong. He tried to prove that Raja of Tripura was merely a Zamindar with limited rights. Lord Auckland was the Governor of Bengal at that time. Dampler's report is a lengthy correspondence (dated 10th October 1836), charging Raja of imposing various duties in an unauthorized manner.

In first half of twentieth century, many tracts of waste land were converted to tea gardens. The Forest Rule, The Arms Act and the Penal Code Amendment Acts were enacted. The overall development of Tripura was planned during the reign of Maharaja Bir-Bikram Kishore Manikya (1923-47). He ensured progress in administration, education, and health system. Tripura was unfortunate in the sudden demise of this architect of Modern Tripura on May 17, 1947, at the age of 39.

After Maharaja Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya, his infant son Kirit Bikram Kishore Manikya was designated as the king. A Council of Regency was formed with his mother Maharani Kanchan Prava Devi as the Regent President. Following the Independence of India in 1947, Tippera district became a part of East Pakistan, and Hill Tippera remained under Regency Council until 1949. The Maharani dissolved the Regency council on the 12th January 1948 and took over all the powers to herself. The Regent's rule ended by the Tripura Merger Agreement, signed on the 9th September 1949. Tripura became a Part C state of India. An administrator of Tripura was appointed on October 15, 1949. Tripura became a Union territory after re-organisation of states was affected on November 1, 1956. On July 1, 1963, the Union Territory of Tripura gained more stature with formation of a Council of ministers and a Legislative Assembly. It became full-fledged state¹⁰ on January 21,1972.

According to 2011 census, the state had 3,671,032 residents, while the indigenous population amounted to 31 percent.

Social and Matrimonial relations of Tripura Raj - The reference of matrimonial relation between Tripura and Manipur (old name-Kangleipak), is found in 'Rajmala'. Tripura was addressed as 'Takhen' in Manipuri. During the last decade of eighteenth-century, Tripura King 'Rajadhan Manikya–II' (1785-1804 A.D.) was married to Manipuri princess 'Hariseshwari¹²

¹²History of Tripura-As Reflected in The Manuscripts, Ed. by Satyadeo Poddar, Samiksha Series, University of Tripura, 2016,p-106.



¹⁰https://unakoti.nic.in/history/

¹¹Administrative Handbook 2020, Published by CBDT.



The Land of Myths and Glorious History

Devi', daughter of the Manipur King (1759-1768). Maharaja Kashi Chandra Manikya (1826-29 AD) in 1826 A.D. married 'Kutilakshi' of Manipur. Birchandra Manikya (1862-1896 A.D.), the next king continued the tradition of marrying Manipuri girls. A patron ofart, literature, and music, he encouraged the development of Manipuri culture in Tripura. After Maharani Bhanumati met untimely death in the year 1881, the shocked King Bir Chandra Manikya read Rabindra Nath Tagore's love-poem 'Bhagna-Hriday'. The king found solace in Tagore's lyrics and sent his political Secretary to thank the poet, at a time when Tagore was not widely recognized. It started Tagore's association with four generations of Rulers of Tripura. Tripura also helped him in setting up 'Shantiniketan', his nature school. Kings sent him many varieties of plants for the 'Vishwa Bharti'. Bir Chandra Manikya, a poet himself, published a book called "Prem Marichika Kabya".

The legendary queen of Raja Radha Kishore Manikya, Maharani Tulsibati established the first modern girls' school in Tripura named 'Agartala Balika Bidyalaya' on 9th April 1894. It is one of the largest girl schools of Tripura. With the help of Raja, she established vocational training schools for handloom weavers and 10 bedded women hospitals in 1905. Maharani also established a market, which is still known as 'Ranirbazar'

The Manipuri queens in Tripura kingdom influenced the cultural atmosphere. Manipuri kirtan, Raas-Leela dance, Holi were introduced to royal palace. Once, Manipuri dance was presented¹³ in the honour of Tagore. Gurudev realised the potential of this form of art and introduced it in Shanti Niketan. Manipuri dance became world famous under his patronage. Entwined with Indian mythology and a long history, Tripura has many places of tourists' interest. From palaces to lakes, temples to forests, there's plenty to explore.

Ujjayanta Palace-This royal and opulent palace, built in1901, is located at the heart of Agartala. Maharaja Radha Kishore Manikya, the Tripura King constructed the Palace in the years 1899-1901. Until 2011, this palace served as the Agartala Legislative Assembly. Now it is mainly used as a museum and tourist place. The museum's galleries exhibit the arts, crafts,

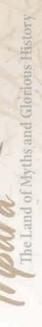






¹³History of Tripura-As Reflected in The Manuscripts, Ed. by Satyadeo Poddar, Samiksha Series, University of Tripura, 2016,p-121







culture, and traditions of the entire northeast region. A room displays the events of the Bangladesh War of Independence. The palace has a lake and gardens, spread over 28 hectares of land. Several temples are located outside the palace. The name 'Ujjayanta Palace' was given by Rabindranath Tagore who was a regular visitor. The King Birendra Kishore organized a function to honour Tagore after the Nobel Prize was awarded to him. Tagore immortalized Tripura through his writings.

Neermahal Palace- Neermahal or the "Lake Palace of Agartala" located in Rudrasagar Lake is said to be the largest such palace in the Indian Subcontinent. This beautiful palace is the perfect amalgamation of Hindu and Muslim architecture. The Manikya King, Bir Bikram Kishore Manikya Bahadur, commissioned its construction. It served as the summer palace for the Royals. The palace is divided into two parts. One is the Andar Mahal and the other part is the open-air theatre, constructed mainly of sandstone and marble. The palace lies surrounded by fabulous lawns and colourful flower beds. In the evening, Neermahal hosts a fascinating and informative light and sound show. The palace also has some interesting water sport activities.





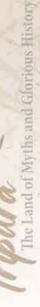


Photo by C P Bhatia

Tripura Sundari Temple- Located in Udaipur, around 55 km from Agartala, is one of the oldest temples here with a history of more than 500 years. The temple is one of the 51 Shakti-peethas in India, where the toe of the right foot of Sati fell. As per Sri Rajmala, Maharaja Dhanya Manikya built it the year 1501¹⁴ after Goddess directed him to do so in his dream. It has been a place of worship from very old time. Animal sacrifice was prevalent in tribes and still small animals are scarified here. One interesting fact about this magnificent temple is that it is shaped in the form of a tortoise, and is also known as Kurma-Peeth, as well as Matabari.



¹⁴History Of Tripura- As Reflected in The Manuscripts, Ed. by Satyadeo Poddar, Samiksha Series, University of Tripura, 2016, p-120.





Unakoti is a famous pilgrimage site, located at Kailashahar Road, near Dharma Nagar in North Tripura. 'Unakoti' means one less than a crore and it is said that there are as many rock cut carvings. As per Hindu mythology, when Lord Shiva was going to Kashi along with one crore gods and goddesses, he made a night halt at this location. He asked all the gods and goddesses to wake up before sun rose and to proceed for Kashi. It is said that in the morning, except Shiva himself, no one else could get up. Lord Shiva set out for Kashi himself cursing the others to become stone images, resulting in one less than a crore such stone images.

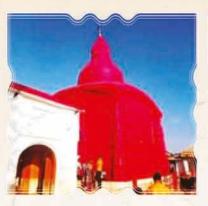






Photo by C P Bhatia

Beautifully landscaped forest area with greenery all around adds to the beauty of the carvings. The images found at Unakoti are rock carved as well as stone images, proudly displaying the heritage of India.







Photo by C P Bhati

CHABIMURA, also known as Devtamura, is famous for its rock carving on steep mountain walls on the bank of Gumati river. It is located at Haakwchakin, under Amarpur subdivision in Gumati district, 82 km away from capital. This place is a perfect combination of adventure, nature, and religion. The hill ranges are covered with thick jungles. The purpose of the carvings and the names of artists are unknown. In all, there are 37 rock-cut images. Many more might have been lost. No preservation effort is visible, and tourists often reach up to the images and deface such precious treasures. Each year in mid-January, a fair occurs here. The cave opening is not wide. Locals believe that king's treasure may be hidden here. There are huge carved images of Shiva,







Vishnu, Kartika, Mahisasura Mardini Durga and other Gods stated to be as old as 15-16th century. The biggest idol of Maa Durga in rock carving is about 20 feet high, carved with a lot of dexterity on the steep rocky surface.







Photo by C P Bhatia

War memorial- Lance Naik Albert Ekka¹⁵, PVC was a soldier in the Indian Army. He was martyred in action in the Battle of Ganga Sagar, during the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971. He was posthumously awarded the 'Param Vir Chakra', highest honour of Indian Armed Forces. In a surprise attack on December 3, within six hours of the declaration of war, 14 Guards Regiment of Tripura had completely decimated the defences at Ganga Sagar complex inside the East Pakistan. Braveheart Lance Naik Albert Ekka had earned the first Param-Vir Chakra during this operation, named 'Cactus Lily'. The War Memorial named after him was inaugurated by the CM of Tripura. This brave son of Jharkhand was honoured by issue of a postal stamp, naming a major intersection in Ranchi and a block in Gumla on his name.



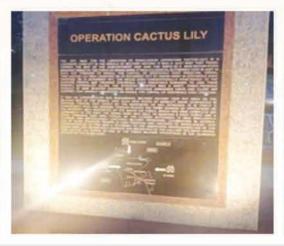




Photo by C P Bhatia

15 https://nationalwarmemorial.gov.in/param-yoddhas/details/15







Wildlife Sanctuaries and Nature parks - Tripura is a heaven for a nature/wildlife lover with several sanctuaries/parks and track routes. Sepahijala Wildlife Sanctuary is home to a variety of wild birds and animals. Various types of lakes are present within this sanctuary, ideal for boating. There are about 150 species of birds and animals found in this sanctuary.

This place is home to the 'Phayre's leaf monkey' or the species popularly known in the country as 'Chasma Bandar' (bespectacled monkey). The leaf monkey derives its local name from the chalk-white patch around its black eyes, close to the bridge of its nose. It has been named as the State animal. The primates are general tree top dwellers and hardly descend even to drink water. Phayre's leaf monkey is listed as endangered species under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972. The place is located about 45km from Agartala, in a 18-sq-km patch of forest land.





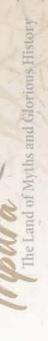


Photo by C P Bhatia

Jampui Hills are called "eternal hills of spring". Situated at an elevation of 3000 feet from the sea level, it has pleasant climatic condition, the lush green forests, and orange gardens. The hill is home to many tribal communities. There are panoramic sight spots, trekking spots, lakes, and eye-catching tranquil nature. Heritage Park is one of the best parks in the entire state, representing the heritage of the entire state and it features small designs of all the famous monuments of the state. Stone and wood statues decorate the park and add to its beauty. Gandacherra Wildlife Sanctuary is also home of rare species of birds and animals. Some lakes surround this sanctuary. Mammals like tigers and wild horses can easily be spotted here and if the visitor is lucky, Bisons can also be seen. The beautiful Chittagong Hills consist of tracking paths, rolling valleys, and seven rivers that gush down from the mountains to the valley.

Other important places- Ramkrishna Mission is one of the sacred and religious places of Agartala, there is a big library that is located on the ground floor of the building. It is the only place where Ramakrishna Paramhansa spent his last days from December 1885 to August 1886. Kamala Sagar is beside Kamaleswari temple. Devotees take a bath before offering puja. The temple is dedicated to Goddess Kali, resembling Dasha-bhuja Durga. Maharaja Manikya Bahadur constructed this temple during the 15th century. It is located at a distance of 25 km from Agartala, on the border with Bangladesh. Chaturdasha Temple was constructed in the year of 1761 by the then King Krishna Manikya Debbarma of Tripura. It is located near old Agartala.







The temple exhibits a unique roof built in the shape of a dome like that of the huts found in Bengal villages. Jagannath temple is a beautiful, elaborate, and fancy temple situated near the Ujjayanta Palace grounds. It was built by the Maharaja of Tripura in the nineteenth century. The base of the Jagannath Temple is octagonal in shape with brightly coloured orange walls. It is widely believed that the Neel Madhav idol at Puri was donated by this Jaganath Bari Mandir of Tripura. Mahamuni Pagoda is a Buddhist Temple, located at Sabroom (Pilak), about 119 KM from Agartala. It is a beautiful place with tranquil vibes and an example of Burmese architecture in Tripura. One Buddhist temple, known as Venuvan-Vihar is in Agartala. Gedu Mia Masjid is the largest mosque in Tripura built by Maharaja in 1942. Mariamnagar church is situated as a historical site near Agartala. It is an ancient Catholic Church used by Portuguese settlers in the state in 1577.

Tripura State Tribal Museum- Right from handicrafts to tribal instruments and costumes, one can experience the rich tradition of Agartala at the famous Tripura State Tribal Museum. Tripura Handloom and Handicraft Development Corporation is encouraging handloom weavers, bamboo crafts and handicraft artisans in a big way. It has show rooms under the name 'Purbasha' at Agartala, as well as in major cities of India. It is organizing self-help groups and products are available on-line all over India.

Food - Tripura has distinct tribal cuisines, still not known in mainland. Dishes contain bamboo shoot, rice flour and Berma (dried and fermented fish). Gudok¹⁶ is a dish prepared by bamboo pipes, have special aroma and taste. Tribal dishes are usually available during state fairs. Details of such special fairs and festivals are available on the State Government's website¹⁷.

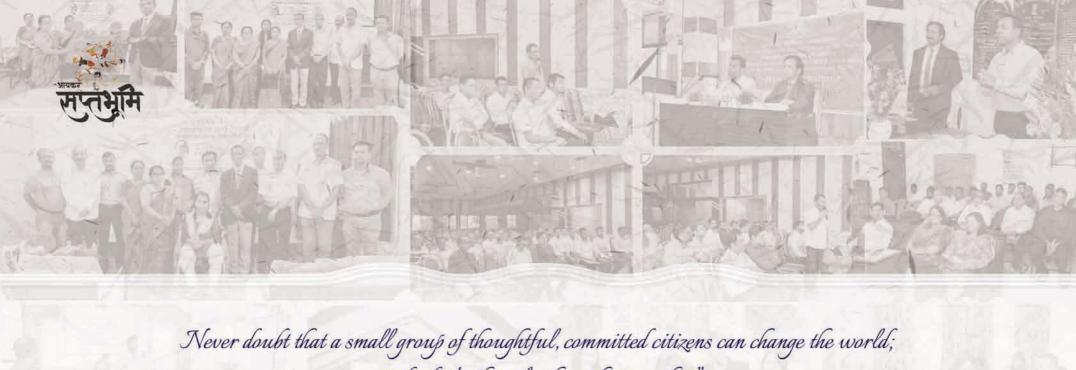
Agartala, despite its commercialization, still has a distinct flavour of its own. It is green, rooted in history and culture, the land of celebrated music director, Sachin Deb Burman. One may feel echoes of his song 'Ore Majhi' on the mesmerizing river ghats. After visiting there, one will agree with Jamie Lyn Beatty, who said- "Jobs fill your pocket, but adventures fill your soul".

R Kapuscinski, a Polish travel journalist (1932-2007) once said- "A journey, after all, neither begins in the instant we set out, nor ends when we have reached our door step once again. It starts much earlier and is never over because the film of memory continues running on inside of us long after we have come to a physical standstill. Indeed, there exists something like a contagion of travel, and the disease is essentially incurable."



¹⁶https://tripuratourism.gov.in/food

¹⁷https://tripuratourism.gov.in/festvalfair



indeed, it's the only thing that ever has" -Margaret Mead

VARIOUS OUTREACH PROGRAMMES HELD UNDER THE CHIEF COMMISSIONER ATE OF INCOME TAX, SHILLONG REGION





Celebration of International Women's day at Agartala on 8th March, 2023 Venue: Aayakar Bhawan, Agartala

"Women are the largest untapped reservoir of talent in the world" - Hillary Clinton











Felicitation of very senior citizens, health sector and other social workers at Agartala, Tripura on 25th July,2023 Venue : Pragya Bhawan, Agartala

"The langer I live, the more beautiful life becomes" - Frank Lloyd Wright





















Interaction with school students on 28th April,2022 at Agartala, Tripura Venue : Shishu Bihar School, Agartala

"The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be ignited" - Plutarch, the Greek Philosopher













Outreach programme at Karimganj, Assam chaired by Shri Amrendra Kumar, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong on 18th May,2023 Venue: Hotel Chandan, Karimganj













Interaction of Shri Amrendra Kumar, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong with tea growers and tea manufacturers from and around Dibrugarh on 31st May,2023

Venue: H. M. Resort, Dibrugarh













Regional Direct Taxes Advisory Committee met on 22nd November, 2022 and 17th May, 2023 under the chairmanship of Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong Venue: Hotel Pinewood, Shillong

























Outreach programme at Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh chaired by Shri Amrendra Kumar, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong on 2nd June,2023 Venue: Ane Hotel, Pasighat











OUTREACH PROGRAMME ON ADVANCE TAX

Date: 22th June,2022

Venue: City Hut Family Dhaba Auditorium, Shillong

"Success is not measured by what you have. It's measured by what you give."

- Crystal Alexis Ingram











Outreach programme at Silchar, chaired by Shri Amrendra Kumar, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong on 18th May,2023 Venue : C. R. Building, Old Circuit House Road, Silchar











"The past is never dead. It's not even past." -William Faulkner (Nobel Prize, 1949)



In the picture above:

Shri G. Ghosh, the then Commissioner of Income Tax, Shillong (sitting on a chair), took an initiative to have a 'group' photo with the officials, some of whom had even come from outside Shillong. The photo was taken six decades ago (sometime in 1963) in the grassy lawn in front of the income tax office building at the present day Dhankheti of Shillong. That time, the north east region had not yet turned into the seven states in their present form. There was only one commissioner through the length and breadth of the whole region.

