

**THE VOICE OF THE OPPRESSED: TRANSLATION OF SAMEER
RANJAN'S *UIHUNKA PALATI JAUTHIBA MANISHAMANE*
(A COLLECTION OF ORIYA SHORT STORIES INTO ENGLISH)**

*Dissertation Submitted to the
Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirement of
the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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2001**

Dedicated to

My beloved Parents . . .

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This Dissertation entitled, *The Voice of the Oppressed: Translation of Sameer Ranjan's "Uihunka Palati Jauthiba Manishamane,"* (A Collection of Oriya Short Stories into English), submitted by me to the Center of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university.



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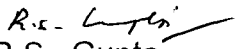


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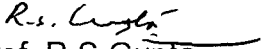
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CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled *Voice of the Oppressed: Translation of Sameer Ranjan's "Uihunka Palati Jauthiba Manishamane,"* (A Collection of Oriya Short Stories into English), submitted by Mr. Provakar Palaka, Centre of Linguistics and English, School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university. This may, therefore, be placed before the Examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**.


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Provakar Palaka

INTRODUCTION:

India has celebrated her fifty years of independence. And now Dr. K.R. Narayanan, being a Dalit himself holds the highest office of the country. We may feel that our nation has progressed tremendously in the eradication of untouchability. But considering the mass killings of the voiceless Dalits whether it is in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat or elsewhere, the Dalits do not have much to celebrate the New –Millenium and the golden – jubilee of India's independence. Their present is nebulous and their future is uncertain. "The term 'Dalit' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'dal' which means burst, split, broken or torn assunder, downtrodden, scathed, crushed, destroyed."¹ In other words, it means depressed and oppressed section of the people. 'Dalit' is a new term that is now used in place of the old word 'untouchables'. Over the years there have been several terms used to describe the untouchables, such as 'Sudra', 'Ati-Sudra', 'Panchama', 'Antyaja', 'Harijan', 'Scheduled Caste' etc. "The untouchables feel that these terms were coined by high caste people which were abusive in nature and synonymous with derogation, domination and paternalism. Though the new word 'Dalit' is an improved one (because it is coined by the Dalits themselves), it is not free from all those associations mentioned above."²

¹ Massey, James., *Downtrodden*, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1997), p.1.

² Kumar, Raj. , "Oriya Dalit Literature: A Historical Perspective", in *The Fourth World : Journal of the Marginalized People*, No.2, (Bhubaneswar: NISWASS, October 1995), p.93.

Almost every fourth Indian is a Dalit, easily identified. He may be a beggar near a temple or a church, a permanent squatter, a prematurely old person in his forties, a child worker in factory, a pauper in a village, a child domestic help, a porter like Satyabati at a Railway station, a rickshawpuller in a city, a bonded labourer, migrant slum-dweller as in the case of Ansuman and other fishermen in the story *A Ray of Hope*. A Dalit woman ill-clad as Nini in *Man Turns to an Ant hill*; a bag of bones often with a malnourished child in her arms as of Manikama in *A Ray of Hope* a temple Devadasi as Meera in *The Anklet*. A Dalit is every where in the country but is unseen by the society's rich and powerful scholars of the upper caste Hindus for ages since untouchability and unseeability are the hallmarks of his identification.³

The emergence of Dalit literature is a recent phenomenon. Dalit literature in its true sense of the term is a protest literature. This has emerged basically from many of the dalit protest movements in Maharashtra, TamilNadu and Andhra Pradesh.

Gangadhar Pantewane, a Professor in Marathi and editor of *Asmita Dash*, a major platform for Dalit writers founded in 1967 writes:

There is a specificity to the Dalit consciousness. Dalit writers are part of Indian counter-culture and its core is made of protest against exploitation and oppression. Dalit consciousness denies all institutions of exploitation and is innately connected with the universal consciousness up against exploitation. Dalit writers do

³ Nayak, Radhakant., "Dalit Identity in India's Caste-Clawed Society : A Voice From Within", in *The Fourth World : Journal of the Marginalized People*, (No. 11, NISWASS : Bhubaneswar , April 2000), p. 1.

not believe in fate, holy books, rebirth and discord an enmity in human being. They have faith in universal humanism. They stand for change, an ultimate revolution.⁴

Therefore, Dalit literature signifies an emergence of a new group of writers who have forced their way into an area of life previously dominated by high caste Hindus. Their writing is a struggle against brahminical hegemony over the black history of the fact which did not give an access to these Dalits to have readership in literature; nor did they have any accessibility to touch the untouchable language 'Sanskrit'. Dalit literature of any kind tries to deconstruct the Hindu caste hierarchical society and if not invert the societal structure in the process of reconstruction, it does speak of the creation of an alternative egalitarian society which these so called civilized citizens have deliberately parried until now. "Dalit literature or protest literature has been an effective way for dalit writers to express their dalit consciousness and show their inner feelings. Over the years writings about the Dalits by others, especially of course their opponents have generally portrayed them as objects."⁵ Hence the need to talk about the writings on Dalits by non-Dalits and writing on Dalits by Dalits themselves. A critical analysis of untouchable character in different Indian novels can substantiate our argument. Mulkraj Anand's 'Untouchable' is an attempt to give visibility to the silent and oppressed community who maintain cleanness and health of the upper caste people.

⁴ Chitre, Dilip., *Bombay in Dalit Literature*, other informations not available.

⁵ Massey, James, *Downtrodden*, (Geneva : WCC Publications, 1997), p.43.

Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, who pretended to have raised a voice for the oppressed people has not even a single character in his fiction who comes from outside the caste Hindu society. Similarly Rabindranath Tagore in his essay on 'Nationalism' highlights the unjust social order of the Indian society and seeks justice for the lower caste. Although Tagore raises the issue of untouchability in his play 'Chandalika' and his great novel 'Gora' he only deals marginally with the caste injustice, Not even a single major character in any of his novels belonging to a low caste of untouchable status. This makes Mulkraj Anand say that "Most Indian Writers of the modern period like Bankim Chandra Chaterjee, Ratan Nath Sarshar and Rabindranath Tagore had not accepted in their novels that even the so called lowest dregs of humanity, living in utmost poverty, squalor and degradation could become heroes of fiction."⁶

Till recently, the Dalits did not have a literature of their own. The reason may be that the untouchables and women were barred access to the learning of Sanskrit language and this restriction was carefully codified in the Vedas, Smritis and Puranas. The French philosopher Michael Foucault says that knowledge and power are closely linked. This is very true in the case of Hindu society too. The knowledge and power concentrated in the hand of the

⁶ Mulk Raj Anand, quoted in K.S. Duggal's *writer in Freedom Struggle*, ed.(Chanidargh : 21st century Indian Society, 1988), p.3.

upper caste Hindus. They created an out-group, the untouchables, whose sole purpose of existence was to serve the interest of upper caste people.⁷

The Dalits, for centuries were deprived of formal education, therefore till the beginning of the second half of the 20th century there was no systematically organised protest against the monopoly of the established literature.

Dalit literature first emerged in the homeland of B.R. Ambedkar and subsequently spread to the neighbouring states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and other states. The Dalits have started using the traditionally denied weapon of literacy to fight against the hegemony of upper caste Hindus.

Dalit literature in states like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh primarily follow the socio-political movements. However, this point of view is not true in the context of Oriya Dalit literature which has a unique history of its own, but does not display any corroborative socio-political movement. The dalits of Orissa do not have a revolutionary tradition like the Dalits of other states. Living in an environment where insecurity reigns, the Oriya Dalits have always struggled to lead a life of compromise, without dissent or protest. Perhaps this is the reason why the Dalits of Orissa have not contributed substantially to the growth of literature as compared to other states. It is only around the seventies and eighties of this century that the

⁷ Kumar, Raj., "People at the Bottom : A Study of Untouchables in Indian Novels", in *The Fourth World : Journal of the Marginalised People*, (No. 8, NISWASS: Bhubaneswar, October 1998), p. 28.

Dalits of Orissa began asserting themselves, if not in an organised way, then at least at the individual level. The writers of this new literature are very few in number.

However, the history of Oriya Dalit literature can be divided into three distinct phases. The first phase is exemplified by the social protest movement in medieval Orissa (1400-1550 A.D). They were primarily poets, who, through their poetry, protested against the social structure, caste, untouchability, low status of Sudras and women and their deprivation of knowledge. They also opposed the intellectual hegemony of Sanskrit language and opted for vernacular language as the medium of writing. Thus their fight was for self-respect and dignity for the lower strata of society.⁸ For example, Sudramuni Sarala Das (fifteenth century) was known for his three major works namely, the *Oriya Mahabhrat*, the *Bilanka Ramayana* and *Chandi Purana*. He wrote in the language of the common people. Thus it was a protest against the poets and writers of the court whose medium of writing was Sanskrit, the language of dominance and power.

The successors of Sarala Das, popularly known as Panchasakha (five-fellow saint poets) dominated Oriya literature for a century (1450-1550). These poets, Balaram Das, Jagannath Das, Achyutananda Das, Jasabanta Das and Ananta Das, rejected the dominance of Sanskrit language in literature and espoused the vernacular as the medium of expression. They made all the

⁸ Kumar, Raj, "Oriya Dalit Literature: A Historical Perspective", in *The Fourth World : Journal of the Marginalised people*, (No. 11, NISWASS : Bhubaneswar ,October 1995), P.97.

sacred books of Hindu religion available to the common people, giving them access to them which had been denied to them for centuries. Balaram Dasa's *Jagmohan Ramayan and Laxmi Purana*, Jagannath Dasa's *Oriya Bhagbata*, Achyutananda Dasa's *Harivamsa*, Jasabanta Dasa's *Prembhakti Brahmagita* and Ananta Dasa's *Hetudya Bhagayata* are the foremost example in this direction. These poets through their writings vehemently protested against the rigidities of life in temples and monasteries.

After the Panchaskaha, the tradition of protest literature came to an abrupt end till the blind poet Bhima Bhoi (19th century) came to write a kind of protest literature to retrieve it from the realm of purely religious dominance. Born into a Kondh family, Bhima Bhoi attacked orthodox rituals and customs of Oriya society. His literary works sought to redefine and redesign societal norms, manners and behaviour, promising the poor and the downtrodden a better world. The most widely known works of Bhima Bhoi are *The Stuti Chintamani*, *The Srutinisedha Gita* and *The Nirbeda Sadhana*. He also attacked any form of worship.

However, Bhoi's voice of protest was oppressed and suppressed under the wheel of Brahminical tradition. His message could not reach the people due to the existential situation of Dalits in Orissa of the time. Even under the colonial rule, Dalits in Orissa could not take advantage of the benefits of elementary education as compared to those in other provinces. It was only during the first decade of this century that a sizeable number of Dalits made a belated entry into civil society through literacy and education. However

education also could not spread among them sufficiently because of structural inequalities, economic imbalance and political chicanery. Unlike other places, the missionary support to Dalit education came to Orissa very late.

The socio-cultural handicaps prevented the Ambedkar phenomenon to have any deeper impact on Dalits in Orissa. Although it evoked some political response, it failed to provoke literary articulation among Dalits in Orissa. However, during the same period we find some amount of writing on dalit life situation by upper caste writers mainly within the over-arching ideology of nationalism. In most of these writing, the Dalits have been portrayed as lazy, quarrelsome, alcoholics, thieves, cheats, etc., some of the anthropological epithets and characteristics used to condemn the Dalit even today. For example, Gopinath Mohanty who wrote just after India's independence, deals in his novels with untouchables who stay in dirty hovels in derelict parts of the town. The untouchables are contrasted with the upper caste rich who exploit them and, finally, drive them out of the limits of the town. In the novel *Puni*, an untouchable girl, is seduced by Aghor, son of a rich contractor who occupies the land of untouchables. Mohanty takes an uncritical view of the molestation. Instead of reacting to the act negatively Mohanty writes that it was a sheer chance for an untouchable girl like Puni to surrender her body to rich upper caste man. It is almost as if Puni is favoured by this act of Aghor. Refusing to look at it as exploitation, Mohanty invests the act with naturalness and spontaneity. Puni thinks of the spontaneous union among birds, animals and insects and he tries to give not too much importance to whatever

happened to her. This is certainly a biased view by an upper caste-Hindu, male writer. Broadly speaking, Mohanty is not alone in propagating such views in this field. Indian literature is full of such descriptions where the body of the lower caste and the tribal woman has been romanticised, perceived as possessing a primal energy, vitality and spontaneity.

Sameer Ranjan is disgusted with the existing form of Oriya literature, especially of the short story as a literary genre, which is full of fables, imaginations, kings and queens and fairies. He writes in his Foreword to his book, *Man Turns to an Ant hill*, "Because Oriya literature gives more importance to these themes the real life story of common man is neglected."⁹ He says these themes have 'paralysed the society.' He believes that the prime function of short story should be to teach and entertainment should be only a secondary function. He calls it Universal Literature, which portrays the life story of every strata of the society. According to him 'reality' is one of the most important elements of a short story. Sameer Ranjan is an Oriya Dalit short story writer. The problems and issues discussed below can clearly reveal his new approach to the Dalits. He does not look at them like the non-dalit writers. His characters are full of fighting spirit. They never surrender before any type of exploitation. The present book *Man Turns to an Anthill* follows a first person narrative style. The author has

⁹ Ranjan, Sameer, Foreword, in *Man Turns to be an Anthill*, Cuttak : Gramasevak Sambabya Prakashan Ltd. 1999.

identified himself with the characters. About his characters he writes on his Foreword- "I have loved each of my characters; I know everyone of them closely. In each character I have seen my beloved father, mother, brothers and sisters and sons and daughters and my own self." ¹⁰The first person narrative reveals the authenticity of the author's experience.

Man Turns to Ant hill : Issues and problems:

The central theme of *Man Turns to an Ant hill* the title story is all about Baba's antagonistic feeling against the 'Vamans'. Baba in the story represents the Dalit community as well as the voice of the oppressed. The story also shows the grim situation of untouchability and caste atrocities. When we evaluate the socio-cultural situation of caste Hindu society, the characters seem to be representative of different castes. James M. Freeman studies the untouchability in Kapilswar village, a part of Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa. In an interview with Muli, an untouchable narrator, Freeman notes:

The villagers never forgot, nor did they let us forget that we were untouchables. High caste children sat inside the school; the Bauri children about twenty of us, sat outside on the verandah and listened. The two teachers, a Brahmin outsider and a temple servant refused to touch us, even with a stick. To beat us, they

¹⁰ Ibid.,

threw bamboo canes. The higher caste children threw mud at us. Fearing severe beatings, we dared not fight back.¹¹

Similarly, the Acharya of the school, who represents the Brahmin ideology says, "This is vaman school. -----'Oh! Scavenger remove, remove your Baaijee Handi-----Hey ! Bring Ganga water and sprinkle." The very break up of sentence exposes Brahminic hegemonic dictates of a representative Brahmin. The story reveals the declaration of Dalit fight against the Brahminism. And Baba's aspiration of making his son a first class officer is quite representative of the out-castes. The problem does not lie with an individual Brahmin but on the perverted form of the doctrine of Varna system propagated in the Hindu scriptures.

While propagating Dalit ideology, the author also comes down heavily on the so-called dalits or pseudo - dalits. This is crystal clear in his story *Enlightened Darkness*, where he criticizes a dalit who playing with the emotional sentiments of the dalits becomes an M.L.A and shares the ministerial berth. But soon he forgets his commitment to his people; instead he comes out with heinous proposal of establishing a Hotel on the sea-shore, which would affect the livelihood of the fishermen.

Raj Kumar, in his article *Oriya Dalit Literature: A Historical Perspective*, says that the principal philosophy of Dalit literature is to bring total revolution

¹¹ Quoted in a report titled, "A study on the problems of Untouchability with Emphasis on the incidents of the Atrocities on Harijans in Orissa", Prepared by (NISWASS : Bhubaneswar, 1984), p. 111.

in society. Dalit literature does not believe in any religion. The reason may be that it is the religion which has justified and perpetuated the evils of caste system. Therefore Man is central force in the philosophy of Dalit literature. Man is supreme. He is above all Gods and sacred books and science.¹² In the story *The Blindman Who Sold Mirrors*, we see how two brothers experience the farce of Christianity in the health camp organised at Badapad “so that the blind will see and the dumb will speak and the lame will walk.” After the prayer was over, nothing happened to anybody, no change.

The two brothers’ main intention was to see how one of them would walk properly; for the same purpose even if they had to pray to Jesus they wouldn’t mind. So here healing was more important than God. And again the gentleman in *The Inheritor* really criticises faith in God and the blind belief in survival of gotra, pindadana, satiation of dead souls which really produced to such inheritors who had no love for their aged father. So the gentleman feels happy that his wife is dead or else her faith in Gods and Goddesses would dash against her hopes for heirs. In *Chakrabyuha* the mad woman scolds God, “You can see everything so continue to look. Take pleasure in it.” Her anger is not only against the landlord who has taken away her plot of land

¹² Kandekar, Tarachand., “Literature of Revolt and Resurgence” in Bojja, Tharakam, ed. *The First All India Dalit Writers Conference: A Commemorative Volume*, (Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Trust:Hyderabad, 1994), p.6.

and built a mansion on it, she is also angry with God because He is only helping the rich and not the poor.

The *Chakrabyuha* is a powerful story which also deals with women's issue in general and Dalit women in particular. Here characters, Bansi Grandpa and Chemi stand at two extreme poles. Bansi Grandpa represents the servile mentality of dalits, who under fatalism surrender themselves to the exploitation they face from the upper caste Hindus. There is not a sign of protest. His dialogues in the story express his cowardly nature. He says – "Although I protested against this, but I couldn't do anything. " Again he says "What else could these helpless minnows have done. Everyone is in the hand of land lord." He only expresses his helplessness and surrenders at the mighty hand of the upper caste exploitation. But Chemi is entirely different. She has been waiting in front of the mansion for a chance to take revenge against the land lord, who has looted her everything. She rebukes Bansi Grandpa, the school teacher for his cowardice. "Stop it Babu . Stop your helplessness. You don't have inner power to create a new man in you, Babu. Instead you have the power of tortoise which tolerates everything remaining inside the shell. But I have given them up Babu. For long days I hid myself inside the shell. But now I have sharpened myself to fight against the injustice until I regain my homeland. I will count the blood and tears of twenty years." This dialogue really is representational in character. This is really the manifest voice of all the oppressed Dalits. The voice of helplessness against the Brahminic structure is spoken by the school teacher, but the self conviction

and the determination to change the plate up side down and bring a total revolution, a metanoya among the dalit brethren.

The story *The Anklet* and *The Other side of the Decaying Horizon* really come down heavily on Hindu religion, and more particularly on the Jagannath culture which believed in Devdasi system. Meera, a Devadasi in the Jagannath temple, who once dedicated her whole life dancing for him, is now "sitting at Dhabaleswar temple with aluminum bowl in her hand." She has become a leper. When she saw white spots on her body she offered lots of prayers to Lord Jagannath but in vain. Today Meera is useless for the Lord Jagannath and lord Jagannath is also merely a wooden statue for Meera. While dying she said "This anklet sucked all my blood. What did I get by tying this anklet? For the one I tied this anklet is nothing but a toy in the hands of Pandas. Nothing is good for her if it is not useful for her welfare. The anklets which used to be the secret of her being Meera, the Apsara, has now become useless so much so that she threw it in the fathomless ocean once and for all. And for her nothing is beautiful which is not useful for the beautification of mankind. The Lord Jaggannath, who is the Lord of whole universe is today useless or a mere two hands chopped off wooden statue for her because he couldn't listen to the plea of her Devadasi who had dedicated her whole life.

Sameer Ranjan sympathises with the Dalit women more because they are doubly exploited –firstly by their own patriarchal male counterpart and secondly, by upper caste Hindu men. The author therefore has very carefully portrayed the violence perpetuated on Dalit women's chastity. In all the

thirteen stories translated, we can find the sexual exploitation perpetuated against the women and Dalit women more particularly. The author has described how the patriarchal Hindu society has perceived women as a mere commodity. While analyzing we see most of the sexual harassment committed against Dalit women are either from upper caste Hindu men or by state machinery. The state machinery, especially the police force, which is supposed to protect the people, turns against them more particularly against lower castes among them against their women. Therefore it can be said that Sameer Ranjan's *Man Turns to an Ant hill* strongly conveys the message that Dalits' fights are not only against the caste Hindus but also against the government machinery. Therefore, the Dalits have to fight against the caste – power nexus in the society.

The writer makes a clear distinction between Dalit women and upper caste women in their economic life. Unlike the upper caste women, who remain confined within the four walls of their homes, the Dalit women do participate in the economic activities and accompany their men to the place of work. To prove that the Dalit society is an egalitarian society which believes in women's emancipation, we can clearly see the self reliance and independence of Dalit women. It also shows that the Dalit women possess an indomitable spirit, bold and enterprising, fearless and undaunted. The Dalit female characters in the stories like *Satyabati's Vessel*, *Man Turns to an Ant hill*, represent the liberated ones. Satyabati is the one who advises her husband to take up vessel- rowing as their occupation, and not only that after

husband's death, single handedly she carries on this occupation. Moreover, she fights against the motorboat which had arrived at the village recently. Pinki, in the story *Man Turn to an Ant hill*, similarly sits in the shop most of the time. She helps her father in earning their living. Again, when Baba lost his job, it was his wife who maintained the family for several months.

In *Rajalaxmi's Kurukhestra*, although the character is not a Dalit woman, we see a woman from the conservative Brahmin family challenging the Brahminic concepts of marriage and the atrocities committed against a widow. She leaves her in-laws' and parents' houses and looks for an independent living. Unspeakable is her mental trauma she undergoes. When her husband dies, she faces harassment in in-law's house; when she comes to her parents' house, her father says –“ What did you do, bastard child? You put my head down. You defamed my name. I would have been happier if you had died there only.” Her father holds the law of the society above everything. Taking the advantage of her helpless circumstance, the owner of Pink Nursing Home, Dr. Parija exploits her physically and mentally. The wild beast in him is so wild that he even removes the uterus from her womb so that he doesn't have to abort again and again.

Circus revolves round two main characters- Nalu and his monkey. Nalu's love and concern towards his monkey Suna and Suna's faithfulness to his master is the central theme of the story. Through this the author actually intends to expose the subhuman quality of Nalu's master, the owner of Raman Circus, who used Nalu as long as he could work and threw him out

when he could no longer perform. The owner forgot that it was just because of this Dalit Nalu that the circus had become very popular. The significance of this story is revealed when both the owner and the monkey are juxtaposed. The bond of relationship was so strong that he was determined to join his master. Moreover, the revenge that Nalu should have taken was taken by the monkey when he bit the owner who died after few days.

The story, *The Other side of the Decaying Horizon* is entirely an intellectual debate between Prof. Malay and Sribascha on the re-introduction of Devadasi system in Orissa. The former debates against it and the latter speaks for it. Prof. Malay exposes the scandalous history of Devadasi culture. A Devadasi from Sialdar's Krishna temple became pregnant. Obviously the servants in the temple keep Devadasis in the name of Lord Jagannath and enjoy themselves. He asks "In spite of the strict rules of scriptures, hasn't Devadasi ever gone astray in the history of Devadasi?" Thus he raises many questions "Can you tell me, who made the temple a living place of prostitutes, who made the delicate stalks worm-eaten? Who? Who forced these beautiful virgins to lead a stinking and hellish life? Who plucked them from the garden of the world and dumped them in the beautiful mirage of the scripture. We see Sribascha surrendering to Prof. Malay at the end of the debate. He accepts that Devadasi culture is not a Jagannath culture but a venal culture. Here, in this story we can see the theory part of Devadasi culture and the practical experience of Devadasi culture is shown in the story *The Anklet*.

Unlike other stories through *A Ray of Hope*, the writer really shows the unity of the Dalit communities. All people from the nearby villages of Gopal Pur get united in their fierce fight against the State's plan to establish hatcheries at the cost of the poor people's livelihood. They stand united and say " We will die but will not hand over our sea and its seashore to these capitalists." This fight continued even though some old men with their fatalistic attitude wanted to lead a compromising life. The story reveals the Dalit consciousness to fight for their own rights. As in *Enlightened Darkness* the authority bows down before the agitating villagers, the villagers of Gopalpur and other local areas under the leadership of many Anshumans and Manikamas, agitation go on till the authority surrenders to them. This symbolizes the ongoing Dalit movement all over the country and the world over to fight for their rights and against Brahminic hegemony. The author, through his writings envisions that the Dalits will one day have their way to establish an egalitarian society. They will have much to teach to the society laden with caste, class, race and gender discrimination.

Problems of Translation :

It would be fallacious to assume that, since all human beings have some type of language to communicate their thoughts, and all talk about the same world of reality, translating from one language into another is not a difficult task and therefore easy to be carried out. The fact is that translators, in translating the texts are always engulfed by a number of problems which are to be tackled consciously, consistently and accurately.

Some of the controversial issues concerning literal versus free, exact versus natural, and beautiful versus faithful translation really throw up challenges to the translators. Many translators at different times have emphasized different aspects of translation. Some like John Keibel argued in favour of the author; others like Tytler argued in favour of the readers; and yet some thought the target language was the model; whereas others favoured the source language.¹³ Hence the problem of translation. The problems of translation are numerous and varied. They also differ from language to language, text to text and translator to translator, depending on the method of translation.

To Tytler "A good translation is not only the one which observes the fidelity, that of course being a major key, but also the one which is conducted in such a way that the public acceptability is achieved. In other words fidelity is not just formal matching of words and expressions in the two languages involved, but it is the transferring of function in the source language to the one in the target language."¹⁴ In the process of translation the loss of authenticity of meaning of the source language is inevitable, but ultimately it is the degree of originality that matters.

¹³ Seyyed, Ali Miremadi., *Theories of Translation*,(Tehran : SAMT, 1995), p.94.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.29.

The translator has selected Sameer Ranjan's *Man Turns to an Ant hill* for translation in order to introduce the narratives to a readership unfamiliar with the source language, a readership which does not belong to the Oriya cultural domain. Now question may arise why it should be translated into English language and not into any other regional languages. English is the only language that would help this subaltern short stories to get introduced to the mainstream literature. In a multilingual country like India any other language would again confine its readership. Compared to other Indian regional languages, English acts as lingua franca and it would serve better as the medium for a larger readership. Moreover, English is the language of empowerment and globalization and is thus the most suitable medium for Dalit writing. Prof. R.S. Gupta, in the context of choice of the text to be translated, the degree and kind of equivalences aimed at, the readership aimed at and the function of a target language, says -- "It is important to study who translates, what for whom, where and why."¹⁵ Most important of all, the translator's motive is to reach the voice of the voiceless -- the Dalits to the educated mass, that they may realise the sufferings, the mental trauma of another section of human beings. Thus, the translation of these short stories into English would attract and widen the audience. One of the most important problems is comprehending the original text with all its complexities. A good translation

¹⁵ Gupta R.S., "Translation : A Sociolinguistic Perspective" in Translation and Multilingualism : Post Colonial Contexts, by Ramakrishna, Shantha, (Delhi : Pencraft International, 1997), p. 186.

demands the translator to have a complete understanding of the text with all its complexities of the semantic, syntactic, morphological, phonological elements and the lexicon of the source language as well as the target language. Hence the problem of translatability. This problem arises when the target language doesn't have equivalent words. He has to look for near equivalent or approximate words but at the same time the cultural milieu of the source language also has to be taken care of. In this context of 'equivalence,' Nida distinguishes between two types of equivalence which he terms 'formal equivalence' and 'dynamic equivalence'. The former refers to the mechanical reproduction of a source language into the target language whereas the latter refers to a translation in which the message of the source language becomes more important. Therefore care should be taken to convey the right message.¹⁶

The decision to retain certain words from the original was taken due to the absence of equivalent cultural settings in the target language; i.e. English. When the original terms are used for the first time, they are given in italics and thereafter they are treated like any other words. To avoid ambiguity, the meaning of these words are footnoted in the target language in the Glossary.

DISS O, 1591, 3, N5, SAM'x PI

¹⁶ Nida, Eugene A.R., Taber, Charles R., The Theory and Paractice of Translation, Brill : Leiden, 1974.

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Terms and Degrees of Respect :

Another curious problem of translation is the honorific pronouns. Unlike the target language, the source language has different honorific terms for different pronouns. In the case of second person, there are two grades of honour, one, in case of informal relation or equals and another, in case of formal relations or elders where terminology giving respects are used. In case of informal relation the word *Tu* and *Tume* (Singular) are used to mean 'you', (singular), where as '*Tumbhemane*' is used to mean 'you' (plural). But in case of formal relation '*Apana*' is used in place of 'you' (singular) and '*Apanamane*' is used to mean 'you' (plural). Another very interesting thing one can find in the case of the third person pronoun. Although only the word 'se' is used in case of He/She both for formal as well as informal relation they are distinguished through the verbs they take.

For example:

He/She went. _____ Informal relations
 Se gala. _____

He /She went _____ formal relation
 Tanke/Se gale _____

They went _____ formal relation
Semane gale _____

'Semane gale', here the verb used is marked with respect. But these gradations are not existent in the target language, English. Therefore loss was inevitable while translating either the speaker's attitude to and social relationship with the person addressed. However, effort has been made to show the social relationship in some other way.

Since it is a Dalit text, the form of address the upper caste Hindu and the Dalits use for each other is not merely a term of address but power relationship, exploiter- exploited relationship, is quite implicit. The terms like 'Re' [to address male) and 'lo' (female) can be used differently depending on the speaker's attitude towards the person addressed. It is used primarily to seek the attention of the listener. 'Re' is in vogue among friends. It is also used by the elders to address the young affectionately. These were really quite problematic in translating. These type of words are not available in the stock of words of the target language. Nor could these words be retained since they have to be used numerous times in the text. Therefore, taking the 'readability and acceptability'¹⁷ point into account, the meaning and purpose of it was given more importance, and the word like 'Hey!' has been chosen as the substitute for both 'Re' and 'lo' (masculine and feminine).

However, in *Chakrabyuha*, the clerk of the landlord speaks " Keere Panchua! Aren't you there at your home?. Hence 'Hey' would not suffice. It is not just a case of address but involves power relationship too.

¹⁷ Gupata, R.S., "Translation : A Sociolinguistic Perspective" in *Translation and Multilingualism : Post Colonial Contexts*, by Ramakrishna, Shantha., (Delhi : Pencraft International, 1997), p. 187.

All the above terminology are culturally bound. Similarly most of the kinship terminology for example *Satyabati's Vessel and A Ray of Hope* are full of kinship terminology. They all are created from the village social relationship and not from blood-relations. The form of address expresses the close familial bonding existing among them. The children call Sati as Sati Aunty; people of her age address her as Sati Nuau (Sati –new bride). I could have translated it to Sati- new bride, but I have retained Sati Nuau especially from the phonological point of view. While addressing the utterance of the word Sati- new bride does not sound rhythmic phonologically. The terms Bansi Grandpa in *Chakrabyuho* and Sati Bhai again in *Satyabati's Vessel*, are also taken from social relationship.

For example 'sala' is a word, whose equivalent in the literary meaning in English would be 'Brother-in-law.' But this word in Oriya language has different connotations depending on in what context one uses it. Among friends it connotes friendship although originally used to mean one's wife's brother or husband's brother or sister's husband's brother. The word 'sala' is also used as one of the abusive words. Therefore, the literal translation would have spoilt the intention of the author. So the translator, while rendering the text into English has retained the word as it is in different circumstances so as to evoke the contextual meaning. In the first story *Man Turns to an Ant hill* Baba, the central character uses the term 'saala' simply to express his anger and not to any particular person. The word 'saala' here, more than the anger, it expresses the community's anger towards the system, towards the

Brahminical hegemony in the society and the perverse dalit exploitation. Therefore the translator has retained the word 'saala'. The translator had the option to substitute the word with 'Bloody' to express the feeling of anger, but contextually it meant more than 'bloody'. However, the occurrence of the same word time and again would not impress the reader therefore, whenever the word 'sala' has been used by the upper caste Hindu this has been translated to 'bloody,' especially in case of expression of anger. But the retention of the word has been sought when the speaker is a Dalit also to express their illiteracy, their depth of hatred towards the upper caste Hindus and moreover, to express their common use of abusive words in their speech.

Cultural terms:

Language never operates in a detached manner, it is largely determined by social configurations. Even in the use of particular linguistic code various registers such as social, economic, political and ideological predilections are adapted to match the context. In other words a language reflects the life of the society at large. Therefore each word carries in it some cultural elements. It becomes highly complex and problematic when rendering a source text into a target text. This throws up a challenge to the translator. However, a few words are so culture specific that they cannot be translated into the target language.

Of thirteen stories translated, two stories *The Blind Man who sold Mirrors* and *A Ray of Hope* are situated in the undivided Ganjam district of

Orissa. The former story is located in Badapada village and the latter in Gopal Pur. The rest eleven stories are situated in the coastal part of Orissa. Sameer Ranjan, through his book, propagating Dalit ideology, has taken a variety of themes, various societal Brahminic system to fight against. For example - *Man Turns to an Ant hill* deals with the plight of the slum-dwellers and mine workers of coastal belt and their fight against Brahminism; *Enlightened Darkness* portrays corrupt politician and pseudo-dalit Sadananda Babu and the Dalit slum dwellers of Puri. *The Blind Man who sold the Mirros* criticises Christianity by locating the story in Badapada village. *The Anklet* criticises Jagannath culture and Devadasi system so Puri chosen as the location. *Chakrabyuha* is located in a feudal set up, of somewhere in the coastal belt, their exploitation of Dalit men and women. *Inheritor* concentrates on two elite families, one of them has everything but lacks peace, and so takes recourse to an orphanage, the inmates of which become very close to him rather than his own sons. The story is situated in Cuttack. *Rajalaxmi's Kurukshetra* is the story of a conservative Brahmin family in Cuttack, where the daughter protests the tradition which condemns her. *Satyabati's Vessel* is the story of a Dalit woman who participates in the economic activities of men, that too rowing a vessel which is considered to be the work of men only. The next story *Another Harischandra* reveals the unemployment problem which compels Sambith, an upper caste man to embrace the occupation of burning corpse, considered to be the occupation of the dalit. Sambith is very happy today because he is able to support his family members; it doesn't matter

how he gets the money. The story is located in the southern and western part of Orissa. The story *Circus* since it describes the story of Nalu, a Dalit man from Sundargarh district who was a famous joker in the Roman Circus. When he was old he was just thrown out of it and was reduced to the status of a beggar. The next story *Absconding Jiva* which intends to criticise the corrupt bureaucratic system is also located somewhere in the western part of Orissa. The whole story of *A Ray of Hope* is situated in Gopal Pur in Ganjam district of Orissa, which describes the struggle of the fishermen of Gopal Pur against the government's proposal to establish hatcheries, the modern technique to catch fish which would severely affect these fishermen's livelihood. The last story, *The Other side of the Decaying Horizon* is an intellectual debate on the revival of Devadasi system.

Although the aspect of the 'acceptability and the readability' are an important part of any translation, certain culture specific terms and certain other cultural artifact have been retained in the intention of not distorting the original situation of the text. In several stories, the term *Badadanda* occurs reiterately. The literal translation of it would be 'Big--street'. But in the word *Badadanda* more than just a street, there is so much of religiosity implicit in it. The street or road in front of the Lord Jagannath temple only is called as *Badadanda* and not any other road or street. Therefore, the English translation 'Big street' would not delineate the same meaning as 'Badadanda' would express. Therefore I have retained the term Another related word to *Badadanda* is *Badapanda*. The literal translation of it into the target language

would be 'Elder priest'. However, this doesn't suffice in providing an equivalent meaning. The term 'Badapanda,' a title, given to the priests in Lord Jagannath temple of Puri and not to any other priest of age or of any other temple. Therefore, it was thought better to retain the term as it is in the titled story *Man Turns to an Anthill*. *Baajee Handi*, another term occurring in the same story, if were translated, it would lose its original meaning. Its equivalent would be 'cooking pot'. But more than mere a cooking pot, Bajee Handi here also refers to some impurity and pollution implicit in it. The word 'cooking pot' would not express in any way the full meaning. So I have retained the word thinking that the same would delineate the meaning more than the translation of it.

There are certain terms used as the curse, which are region and culture specific. These words are primarily used by the females. For example 'Jogini Khia' in *The Anklet*. It literally means 'witchcraft eater' but the actual meaning is just the opposite which means "Let the witchcraft eat you". The reasons why it was retained as it is are many; first of all 'let the witchcraft eat you', would be mere a paraphrase rather than a translation. Secondly it would be too much removed from the cultural situation of the original text. Therefore, not only this all the words of curse in the text like *Badipasha* and *Raizala* in the same story, *Badipada* in *Man Turns to an Anthill* all have been retained in the target language.

Some of the religious ceremonies and festivals are specific to the culture of Orissa. For example, Rajadoli festival in *Rajalaxmi's Kurukshetra* is

not only a religious festival of mother earth but it is so much deeply rooted in the culture of the people of Orissa. This is the occasion where "Boys and girls can freely come together and take to swing and sing the typical Raja songs in the form of duet. Singing, merry making, feasting and gymnastic feats and playing games become most important for these three days."¹⁸ There is no word which could be an equivalent in the target language. English culture is altogether different from the source culture, therefore to refrain from distorting the seriousness of the meaning in the word, not only Rajadoli but several other words like *Kumar Purnima*, *Bada Osha* etc. have been retained in the stories while rendering them into the target language.

The activities like eating, drinking, clothing are a unique feature of each culture. They reveal in their own way the features of a culture. Through the menu, the region and the people to which it belongs can also be easily traced. Food items like Santhula, Aludam are very specific to the Oriya culture. 'Poi' is a type of green which in my knowledge is quite specific to the Oriya culture. The very utterance of these words can speak of Oriya culture. Therefore it has also gone into the sentiment of the people. So these words have been retained as they are in the source language.

¹⁸ Das, K.B, and Mahapatra, L.K., *Folklore of Orissa*,(New Delhi : NBT, 1999), p. 103.

MAN TURNS TO AN ANT HILL

There is not a single place in India where people of our caste are not to be found. From one side to another we can be seen. As we lay oppressed under the curse of the feudal rulers, we are still lying-dead, biting the dust, in our democratic society also. We haven't changed. If we change, won't they become obsolete? Baba says our ancestors were not sweepers. They were also zamindars and belonged to the respectable clan of Kshatriyas. After being defeated by Muhammad Ghori, we were under pressure to accept another religion. But we didn't agree. Therefore, to humiliate the defeated, the conquerors forced us to remove the excrements. As the successors, we remained untouchables in the subsequent periods. From that day onwards harassment has been going on unceasingly. Drums beating, cleaning the sauchalayas, sweeping the roads, addiction to swallowing meat and liquor, has created a single community.

The very name of Vamans and Karanas annoys Baba. Sometimes, gulping down the country liquor upto the neck, Baba prattles – "Saa....la world--- has become brahminical. Saa...la.... No one to liberate us. Only on pen and paper.... Going on Harijans..... Harijans. Which.... Saala.....Harijan's what and where..... overturned..... who knows of us..... sweepers.... The same is the burden of filth.... as before. Pellet doesn't strike in their mouths; they say something.... and do something.

Always Harijans.... Harijans.. Harijans... if rise... saala. And you.... Saala.... Never listen to my words. I'm ... saying ...educate the children...don't make them illiterate. If they.... Become men... they will save us... from this hell. Otherwise this caste will be suffocating inside the filth and dying... forever.”

But Baba is not cleaning excretions. He works as a labourer in the mine. Besides work, sitting on the *chhaupadhi* under the big Banyan tree, a little distance from the slum, he plays cards with a few. He smokes *bidi*. When *bidi* is over, he orders me to run and get *bidies* from Ramu Mian's shop. If a crow, eating the Banyan fruits, excretes, when they are engrossed in the game, he gets wild and drives them away. If a Banyan fruit happens to fall, he gets irritated and scolds the wind.

On the top of the bald mountain is the broken Basulai temple. By cutting down the mountains, steps have been created for going and coming to the temple. From the temple's compound wall, our slum can be seen with its starvation – stricken eyes. The slum dwellers respect Baba very much. The day, on which Baba was promoted from coolie to a higher position, he gave a grand party. Everybody said only Naru should be called a man; saala has got a heart like an ocean. Baba was very happy and said “Hey! It's nothing, you'll eat in my Muna's marriage. Saala, I'll bring my son a Brahmin girl, as my daughter-in-law. You'll see! I will make this lad completely *Bombyiah*.... Saala. He'll surpass even Amitabh Bachhan. You've heard the name of S.P. Prashanna Mishra; if this lad

reads well, he'll go one up on Mishra. He won't take a single penny from anybody. And if he becomes an I.A.S. he won't become like our Managing Director Sachi Pattanaik. He won't call anybody for explanation without fault.

But Baba's dreams stopped there. Computer was brought to the mine. Together with others, Baba's job was gone. Baba instigated others and got himself excited for a few days. He became a leader. He would agitate, close down the mine; he threatened. But his outcry was rendered futile by the conspiracy of the Administration. Those few, who were behind Baba, kept themselves busy in their own work, after receiving bundles of money. Baba's agitation disappeared in the *Badadanda* of the *Badapandas*. Baba became lonely.

At this time, another incident happened, which hurt Baba very much. My name was removed from the Mining Company's School. The managing director said – "Let's see, how will this scavenger educate his son here? Bloody, by becoming a leader, he will make his son an officer." The order was issued. Except those scavengers, who are working as sweepers, no other scavengers' children can read in this school.

I was out from the school. Near it there was a Gurukula Ashram. Mother took me and arrived there. Is it prohibited for a man to see dreams? My mother still saw dreams. Everybody in our slum called my mother 'clever', but mother's cleverness did not work that day. "This is

Vaman School!” Mr. Acharya of the Ashram shouted looking at my certificates. With eyes reddened and wide open, he said – “Oh! Scavenger, remove, remove your *Baaijee Handi*. Bloody polluted my body. Hey! Bring Ganga water and sprinkle.” The incident of Baba’s becoming a leader was not unknown to him. Mr. Acharya said to mother mockingly – “Hey, Madam! Your husband is a leader, is there scarcity of school for your son too? After listening to such scolding from the mouth of Acharya of the Gurukula Ashram, I also lost my interest to study there.

Mother also was not a person to leave. She shouted – “I am telling you, don’t tell like that. Dacoits, bandits, robbers, thieves, also become leaders. And have the Scavengers pieced in the water or what? *Badipada*, showing Vaman, Hey! Like you sandal paste smearing pundits, bloody, run after many untouchable women on the sly like dogs. After the heat of your body cools down, you pull your moustache to show your upper caste by saying --get lost, get lost, don’t you see; and you chase them away. Only to cover up those sins you commit, you take the names of gods and deities, religion and duty; and you pretend to recite the rosary. What type of good men are you?”

Baba was very friendly with many. So we could pull on for about a fortnight. Difficulties stood in front of us like a mountain. When we don’t have bread for stomach, who cares for clothes. It so happened, mother could not even take bath with a piece of cloth. Everyday, she had to bathe in the Municipality Sauchhalaya. One day, mother was hiding

herself inside the bathroom, after drying her sari, when Guru Bachhan Singh, the Punjabee driver saw her. From that day onwards, mother became Punjabee driver's wife. How many days could Baba remain starving? He stole little things from the Railway-yard. He also asked me to do the same. But I refused. Mother also came two or three times to Baba and explained – “No my dear! You shouldn't steal. I'll take care of you.” Baba said, “Tell me what shall I do when my stomach is burning and I don't get any work.”

“Don't you know Muna?” Baba said to me that evening, “Your mother is not a bad woman. She still loves us – may be, she is fooling the Punjabee to feed us with a fist of grains.”

Sometimes, she brings mutton curry, fried-rice, etc. and slips twenty-twenty five rupees into Baba's hand. Then, Baba, embracing mother, rolls down tears from his sunken eyes. Mother consoles Baba and says, “I only give my body to the Punjabee but my heart is with you. I'll build Muna's life.”

“How will my life be built?” It seems, the Punjabee understood her crookedness, took mother and went to Delhi.

I started doing small jobs. Afterwards, I played the flute for an orchestra team. Sometimes I went to Raghu brother's shop to see the lame wild boar. I drank tea and smoked bidi. His daughter Pinki sat in the shop. Raghu brother asked her to sit and went for some work. Pinki was

big blue eyed and fair-skinned. She made eyes at me, smiled at; if, by chance, my hand touched her, while giving tea, her hairs stood on the ends. I knew that I had fallen in love with Pinki. One day, when she saw me smoking bidi, she said –

“Hey! Why are you smoking these many bidies? You know your lever will be burnt”. “What’s to you if my liver is burnt?”

“No man! Bidies are not good. Mouth stinks. I don’t like those who smoke bidies. My uncle smokes bidies and coughs badly. Promise me; henceforth you won’t smoke this stinking bidi. I looked at her face. She blushed and her fair face turned pink. I knew Pinki was in love with me. Now, when I go to her shop, she feeds me with special things. In her father’s absence, she doesn’t take a paisa from me. She says--

“Isn’t your money, my money? Keep it with care, it’ll come in handy. We’ll have a small home. In it, there will be a small kitchen, a small bed-room and a courtyard, full of colourful flowers and sweet fragrance.” I answered, “And you and me inside it. And in that small household and small world is your big heart.” A fountain of smile springs from Pinki’s face. Pinki says – “Don’t flatter me too much, someone will cast eye on me.”

Sometimes, when I don’t go there, she hangs her face down. She pretends for an hour. Then she breaks into laughter like a forest fountain. She says I can’t live a single day without seeing you.

One day, suddenly she came to me at twelve noon. She was literally trembling. She said – “Muna, I have left everything and have come here. Come, let’s go somewhere.”

I explained to her “If we go somewhere, how will we manage? Besides this, my job. Stay here, I shall do whatever is to be done.” A friend of mine in the orchestra arranged everything for the marriage with Pinki that very night. I was tied in the marriage bond. The following day police reached at my door. They took us to the police station, kept us in the custody for three days and I was nicely bashed up all over my body. Police was not ready to listen to what I was explaining. I didn’t have the means to bribe the police to accept our marriage. But Pinki was already nineteen. Whatever photos had been taken by my friends during the marriage were brought and shown. Still police was very obstinate. At last Pinki used her mind and said to the *Thanna Babu* - “I’ve read up to third standard in the Municipal Primary School; if you think I am a minor, let my certificate be asked for.” Police saw there was no other resort. *Thanna Babu* said, “Okey! Let’s see.” Eyes of the *Sana Babu* of the police station fell on Pinki. He was telling the *Bada Babu* – “Do you understand sir, this is a very nice *maal*. With lots of labour the poor creator has created her. It’s *rasogolla* sir! Should we arrange tonight!” I couldn’t hear their conversation after that.

Evening came and then started the cruel treatment with Pinki. *Thanna Babu* was shouting – “Bloody you are pretending. Hey! When you

were in the hands of the scavenger, you didn't feel ashamed. Oh! Come, we'll remove your veil of shame."

Pinki roared – "Mind your language Babu. Don't we have honour?"

"Nonsense! Shut your mouth. Bloody prostitute scavenger also has honour???" In anger Pinki's face became red like the cobra. She stroked – "Am I a prostitute, what about you, is pure blood flowing in the nerves of upper caste people? Are you all the progeny of holy Druma? Have you kept a record of your daughters and in-laws of how many children they have aborted after indulging in illicit relationship?"

"Shut up bloody." Pinki received a thunder like kick from the shoe and she screamed – "Oh my mother! I'm dead." Everyone, starting from the peon to officer was enjoying the farce. Taking the advantage of this, I broke the railing of the custody and came out. Broken railing in my hand. I gave a severe blow on Bada Babu's head. No one had even imagined an unexpected incident of this sort. Everybody started howling..."Hey! Catch him, catch him." At their uproar, Pinki became quite normal. I saw in her face a smile of contentment. I just extended both my hands. Roaring of the Ambulance was heard, also Pinki's screaming – "Saala upper caste, saala change their castes fifty times a day. They pounce on the beautiful daughters and in-laws of the out-caste; they pretend to call them sisters and create a situation of husband in the place of brother and wife in the place of sister. And that's your upper caste."

I saw Pinki was no more trembling with pain; on her lips there was the laughter of triumph. And in her look there was a lot of vision and hope.

ENLIGHTENED DARKNESS

A large crowd was waiting in front of the visitors Hall of Urban Development Minister Mr. Sadananda Babu. He is the MLA of Puri town. When Sadananda Babu was a student in the college, a Sadhu had foretold that Sadananda will have a good fortune. One day surely he will get a seat in the Legislative Assembly. He is basically from a slum area in Puri. Elders say that Sadananda's father and his great-grandfather once lived in a slum. He was born and brought up in it for twelve or thirteen years. But he doesn't accept the reality; he covers up. He laughs at the reality that because of the slum he could become a minister. In his political career he has changed many political parties. Somehow he has managed to win the election. He has made many promises to the slum dwellers – the Municipality daily tax on the labourers on the seashore will be withdrawn and they will be given licenses. Besides all other facilities, rice will be provided at one rupee a kilo. The hungry and the half-naked labourers of the seashore could not distinguish between reality and illusion. They were only too happy that they had got a leader who spoke for them. Whatever may be, Sadananda is our brother, our son; our son has come back home. If we want our development, we must support him. He must be sent to the Assembly.

Sadananda Babu became an MLA and a minister too. Within one month of his getting ministerial berth, everything began to change. The wild beast of exploitation within him started roaring. Harassment of the workers, by the Municipality and the local goons, gradually increased. Nothing satiated the gluttonous stomach of the goons.

How much can the poor tolerate? They all got united. Gave a call for agitation. But the agitation was foiled by using the government mercenaries. People were searching the seashore for a means to live on through hard toil.

Under the portico of Sadananda Babu's chamber, there was a great rush of two-wheelers and four-wheelers. He was bidding them off one by one by fulfilling their desires. Mr. Sen and Mr. Jajadiya were class-I contractors of the town. Seeing Sen Babu, Sadananda said – "Oh! Sen Babu, come, come, why did you take so much trouble? I have already done your work. Won't the chief-engineer listen to us? I have superseded him and got the thing done. You may come. Within three days your payment will be made." After Sen Babu left, Jajadiya Babu came in. "Oh! Welcome Mr. Jajadiya. I have taken your case to the Chief Minister. You will get the contract of Lunna Karandia Bridge. Before you send the tender, do meet my secretary." Like this, Sadananda Babu with his sweet words to each bid the visitors off one by one.

The crowd gradually became smaller. What is there even if the daily wagers, the workers and the labourers are ignorant of Sadananda's culpability, when the greedy capitalist businessmen, corrupt officers and the contractors are well aware of him? Five years are going to pass. Although the promises made during election time remain unfulfilled, his own stomach is full and his bank account and the locker. He has eaten more than enough and has also fed his own gluttonous followers, well wishers. Devil in their hearts.

From a distance, sloganeering, together with agitated abuse of a procession was heard. Sadananda Babu said to Chandra Mohan Babu – “Chandra Mohan, look there, what is that crowd?” Chandra Mohan Babu heard the slogans. Gradually the procession was nearing. The words of the slogans were clearly audible – “Sarakara tuma belabhume Hotel Prakaalpa chaliba nahin... Chaliba nahin (Government, your seashore Hotel proposal won't work... won't work). Jadi chaliba... Niyan jaliba (If it works... There will be fire) Nagara Unnayana Mantri.... Tumara isthapha.. amara daabi.... (Urban Development Minister... your resignation... our demand). Shreekshetra ku.... Shreeheena Kariba chaliba nahin.... Chaliba nahin (Shreekshetra's profanity... won't work.... won't work); srama jeebi ekta zindaabad (Labour's unity Longlive); someone was shouting..... “Bloody calling himself minister, bring him here.” Somebody else was shouting, “... before the strength of morality... the police force won't work.”

Chandra Mohan Babu said – “Sir! These are the agitators against the Seashore Hotel proposal.” “No, no. Chandra Mohan Babu, let’s call them anti-nationals instead of agitators.”

Anti-nationals!

“Yes, yes, aren’t they anti-nationals? Those who hamper the development of the country, aren’t they anti-nationals? Hey! Ask for what you want, don’t bite one for the other. Poor fellows. God help them.” Chandra Mohan Babu said eagerly – “Sir, why don’t you call one of their fellows and offer a chair to him. Make him president of either Co-operative society or Khadi Board?”

“No, No! Chandra Mohan Babu, we have power in our hand. We have confidence in our police force. If you want to make them happy, just show them... And then, rule as you can and as you wish. The so-called agitation and revolution will come to nothing. Don’t you know a simple thing - Barking dogs never bites.”

But sir, do you think that environment ministry will permit this hotel proposal?

Why not, we are trying our best. We have our people to lobby there.

But sir, their demand is genuine. Hasn’t your government thought anything about its consequence for the environment.

“Why will they think? For what will they think? We have spent crores to occupy our seats; if we think of these things, won’t our families perish? Can you say, has this Tanko Pani Babu, who is talking much on environment, any sincerity? It’s nothing but to capitalise this issue to prepare ground for the next election.”

A few hours have passed. After the last man bid farewell from the minister, Chandra Mohan also left the place. The peon closed the chamber.

It was already eleven p.m., when Sadananda Babu’s car reached his quarters. As soon as he entered the drawing room, his wife said, “You are so late! You said that you would reach before ten. I had prepared all the items of your choice; they have all become cold. Will you get the same taste when they re-heated?” The nature of the foreign liquor, to reveal the truth, had started in him, he answered, “Do you understand my darling! You’ve spoken the right thing, can an old woman equal a young girl even if she wears jewelry, uses cosmetics and wears *pato saris*...”

She had never expected that her eagerness to serve him will be dashed with bomb-like words. It is not that she was never young, today she has her grown-up children. It’s only six months since her eldest son got married and brought the daughter-in-law. Youth is not a thing to be preserved. How could she have done it so? Her heart burst asunder with

anger. That means he has taken some body's chastity even at this age. So he didn't eat anything and went to sleep.

Sadananda Babu was lying on the bed and thinking -- will his dream be actualised. Won't his seashore Hotel project be released from the file of the Environment Ministry! Won't a high amount of percentage be deposited in his bank account! Won't his treasury and locker be full! While thinking all these, he never paid any heed to the extent of the damage this would cost. He was weighing light and darkness in the same balance. He called those who opposed the hotel proposal anti-nationals. It is nothing but the so-called issue for the power-hungry leaders, a platform for their election war. He didn't know when he fell asleep in the lap of the goddess of sleep. He was dreaming in his sleep...

Shreekshetra has lost its prosperity. Hotel Teertha, one of his well wishers, is gaining ground there. Not even an inch of land is visible on the seashore. Hotels, both national and multi-national, have grown like mushrooms. Number of vehicles has also increased. Not even a little space to put step on *Badadanda*. There is a great rush of young men and women, old men and women, from India and abroad. Sadananda Babu has already visited some of the hotels. That day the owner of Hong Kong Hotel, Mr. Lee Peng rang up -- "Pattnaik Sir! You have completely forgotten us. Will you visit us today. Sir! You will be happy, sir! Will you take the trouble to come?"

“Yes, yes, I must go.” He kept the receiver; began to dye the gray hair standing in front of the dressing table. He wore new suits and sprayed new perfume all over his body. After sometime, his foreign-brand car started off towards the Hong Kong Hotel. On entering the *panshop* of the Hotel, he was stunned to see something. His new daughter-in-law was in the arms of a stranger. Scantly dressed; almost naked. Cloth was so transparent that her body was clearly visible. Every young man and woman was engrossed in dancing to the rhythm of the Western music. Sadananda Babu could not stand that scene any longer. He closed his eyes. He was coming out quickly. A red coloured Maruti van stopped at the gate of the hotel. Mr. Lee Peng came out of it and saw minister Saheb going out, Lee Peng blocked his way and said, “What happened sir, you are going back?”

“No, No! Mr. Lee Peng. No mood.”

“Very sad, very sad. Oh! No mood? What happened sir? Mood will be created. We have brought such a thing, automatically you’ll get into the mood, Let’s go sir, someone is waiting for you in room no. 40.”

His heart was ignited. But to satisfy his bodily desire he couldn’t refuse Mr. Lee’s offer. He immediately ordered the waiter to prepare pegs for him, Sadananda Babu went on drinking one peg after another. At last Mr. Lee requested him – “This is too much sir, please stop here.”

- “What did you say Mr. Lee; should I stop. Are you afraid?”

- “No sir! We are not afraid! Just think about her... Who’s waiting for you, If you sleep here, who will celebrate honeymoon there?”

“Yes, yes! You are right Mr. Lee.” Mr. Lee Peng said – “Do you know sir, this is not an ordinary *maal*. This is only for VIPs.” “Oh I see! Let’s enjoy.” Mr. Lee escorted him. They knocked at the door and the door was opened. Sadananda Babu went inside the room with Mr. Lee. In dim light of the zero watt bulb, he couldn’t see the face of the fairy. He said – “Switch on the light Mr.Lee, let me see my night queen.” Her back was shining in the tube light. Sadananda Babu could not believe instantly. Before he embraced this young girl, he came to his senses. He shouted – “Rosy you??? His beloved daughter Rosilin was standing in front of him scantily dressed. Rosy was also surprised – “Papa you???” He slapped her. He screamed – “Mr. Lee, I will kill you. I will kill you. I’ll kill you.”

Hearing this shouting, his wife Naleeni Prabha switched on the light. She just shook him and said – “Whom will you kill, did you see a dream? Why areyou muttering? Wake up, wake up.”

His whole body was trembling in fear and anger. He got up and sat down. Went to the basin and washed his face. And he said – “Do you know Nini, I had a nightmare. Oh! What a terrible dream!”

“What’s that dream”, asked Naliniprabha. Sadananda narrated the whole story to his wife and cried loudly. Nalini prabha, moving her fingers

on Sadananda Babu's head, said, "I have been telling you for long to stop this madness. If your hotel industry comes up on the seashore, tomorrow, do you think, the daughters and in-laws from those slums will go to the hotel and not ours? Today girls consider bodily pleasure a fashion. If a man of your age is not free from lustful desires, why should we blame the younger generation? Who will benefit from this hotel proposal? The industrialists and ministers and leaders. What will happen of the labourers in search of their livelihood, toiling on the sea, risking their lives? What will happen to the poor families, who are boiling in heat and rain, sell *Sankhamali* (Garland made of shells), tender coconut, puffed rice and mixture, vegetables, stationery goods, winnowing fans, *Baisia Sarbat*, etc. on the sea shore? As a representative of the people, have you ever thought of this simple matter? Would you get a place to sit on the sand and see the view of the evening sea. Do you know, it is not going to benefit this soil. But epidemic will spread! Epidemic! Art and architecture will be banished from this land. And drugs will be imported in black and gradually the fear of AIDS will engulf us all. Time has come, look into yourself."

"Oh! Stop Nini stop. I can't listen anymore. I will repent for this. My eyes are opened. Like Bhasmasura, I was dead and now I am alive, Nini."

"Alright, you will do it in the morning. Go and sleep now. After long time you have been enlightened. This is to my luck."

- Don't mock at me Nini.
- Okey! You go to sleep.

The fateful night has passed. The sun, conquering the darkness, has risen in the horizon of the east. Today Sadananda Babu seemed very energetic. No feeling of reserve on his face. Smile on his lips. That smile is the smile of triumph. He has called an emergency meeting at his office in the Secretariat. Press persons have also been called. Close door meeting is going on. All are anxiously waiting outside to know the outcome.

He ended all waiting by an announcement on radio and television in their regional and national networks – “The Orissa Government has withdrawn its Hotel proposal on the seashore and the Urban Development Minister has resigned.” The intellectuals and conscious citizens of the city were stunned. In the evening, this news came on the front page of the newspapers.

Sadananda Babu reached home at 9 p.m. His wife said –“Your secretary phoned and said, Sir left for home soon after the meeting got over at 2 p.m. where were you? The driver came alone. And I never imagined, you would venture to do such a thing.”

Sadananda said – “I went to Puri for a while. The charms of *Saradhabali* attracted me. Sitting on the seashore, I was recollecting the

past. That's why I am late. The sadness of the sea, how could I measure? However, I have saved her sand-bed. I'm a tiny and ordinary creature. What have I done? I couldn't do anything!... couldn't do anything!" He bewailed and said, "I will make a new and auspicious beginning from tomorrow!"

THE BLINDMAN WHO SOLD MIRRORS

Not just in Gajapati district, the colourful posters, banners and writings on walls in all the major towns and markets and trade centers reflected the arrangement of a grand and expensive Health camp at Badapada village. They had beautifully named it as “Healing Festival.” This unknown Badapada village was not far from Ramgiri and Udayagiri villages of Gajapati district. Neither on the map nor in any documents its name was to be found.

I was suspicious. Doubtful too. Such grand “Healing Festival” in an unheard and unknown village like Badapada. I couldn’t understand how the American friends have thought of arranging a programme in a place, which doesn’t even have any transportation facility. Had this been arranged in a big town, surely many people would have benefited. However, I consoled myself. No! Never ever the doctors of a country which has reached its zenith in science and technology can make such a wrong decision.

My elder brother became a polio patient four years back. Nothing has been left untried for his treatment. So many orthopedists have treated him but no relief. And my elder brother has lost all hope now. In the hands of a healthy young man, cruel time has put a cross. After hearing so much publicity of “Healing Festival,” I thought it was a good chance for us. If we are able to afford the boarding and lodging together with the cost

of travel, it would be like one's star in the ascendancy. Come on; Badapada is not in England but in the undivided district of Ganjam, can't we find it out; we'll be lost! If the American doctors heal his leg, then his glorious past will come back. His inferiority complex, due to his physical infirmity, will disappear.

With lots of struggle and pain I reached Badapada with my brother. On reaching there, we came to know that Art. 144 has been imposed in that area and the chief priest of healing festival, Dr. Paul has gone back to America. Still near about two to three hundred people were gathered there. Some were saying, somehow 'Healing Festival' will be held. Please don't be worried. This is one and the only thing spoken by the father of the Baptist Church, Badapada. With him were ten foreign nationals – Michael Joseph, Todson Doglas, Frederic, R.B. John Magalson, the head of the Maturity. Sometimes later, it was announced on the loudspeaker 'Let us worship our Lord with our whole body, mind and soul. The blind will see, the dumb will speak and the lame will walk.'

What is this I'm hearing! Is this the meaning of "Healing Festival"? Is it just for this, I came all the way carrying my lame brother.

The band tied on my eyes was opened. I remembered a friend of mine. He said – "The "Healing Festival" you are talking about is not the same, it's entirely different. Another friend, while explaining the true meaning of Healing Festival, narrated an incident which had occurred in

the past – “At Siligudi in the district of Darjeeling, eleven priests including six Americans announced in the name of healing festival, that they will preach in the name of Jesus Christ and heal the blind, the dumb and the lame. The American priests preached in English language. A Bengali priest interpreted him in Bengali for the faithful. The festival was over but nobody’s wish was fulfilled. Stones were pelted at them, sons of Jesus Christ ran to save their own lives, in bloodied condition they had to go to jail.”

Whatever my friend had told was repeated one by one in the case of Healing Festival at Badapada too. For my brother and me, we didn’t mind calling Jesus. For remaining within the bond of religion, we didn’t like to be infidels. If by praying my brother’s lame leg is healed, what’s the harm in praying. By then it had crossed the limit of surprise. I had come here with high expectations, the healing festival or health camp would be organised by the American doctors; but it was not the reality, when I came to know this I started boiling with hatred and anger. If the definition of healing festival is not the health camp, then what is it, I asked to myself. There was no sign of health camp, doctors, nor are there any scissors, knives, operation tables, bandages and medicines. There were only a few American preachers.

Prayers started. With much devotion and thankfulness all the sick and their attendants raised their souls unto Jesus and prayed. At the end of prayer the blind men shouted we are not able to see anything. The

Church was replete with the indistinct words of the dumb, as if they wanted to say, "No! We aren't able to speak." The lames looked carefully at their handicapped legs and were saying, "Why our legs are not straight?"

I observed, it wouldn't be late for the entire crowd's anger to explode. "Let's go, I'm very sorry," I told my brother. Brother became very furious. "What sorry?" He asked, "No! No! Tell me what sorry? For these rascals 'sorry' is as bad as their work. Did you see their conspiracy. Hey! It seems *Hukum* medicine is being challaned in black abroad. Is there any other medicine except *Hukum* in a poor state like Orissa. Here almost sixty percent of the population uses this medicine. And these cheats have come all the way from America spending lakhs and lakhs of rupees on the pretext of Healing Festival and making fool of us. I never thought, a well-educated guy like you would believe in these things and come here.

I protested. "You misunderstand me," I said. "Don't you know that I don't believe in *hukum* medicine and sorcery. Really I never knew what the definition of Healing Festival would be. So you can scold me as much as you like. I shall tolerate it."

Again brother said – "Even after forty-eight years of independence, the naked tribal do live in the land of Orissa. Today the entire universe is under the realm of the widespread wings of science. But it has little or no influences whatsoever between the Dalit and tribal populated areas of

Orissa. Still they are sleeping choked inside the Pandora's Box. Taking advantage of this, big ministers, officers and businessmen sell the naked photos of these innocent tribal girls, in and outside the country and make money. The Americans, who have reached their zenith in the field of science and technology are befooling the tribal and other lower castes in the whole world, by promising to give back their foot, eye, ear, etc. through the words of Jesus Christ. Can you tell me what's their main aim? To shift the place of religious war, going on in their countries to Orissa and India at large."

Brother was becoming emotional, 'I am surprised to hear of a country, to which the cream of the educated mass from round the world rush, in that country, Hukum medicine is prevalent just like Orissa. If not that, these wise sons from that part of the globe, wouldn't come and say that they can cure the incurable diseases.'

Within no time, people were shook with anger. People threw at the foreign priests and organisers, stones, bricks, chairs, benches, whatever one could lay one's hands on. Well-decorated temporary auditorium and the gates all collapsed. In an attempt to pacify the agitated crowd, ten policemen and hundred or above people were injured. When the police went to arrest the priests, they protested by throwing stones at them. Ultimately the priests were arrested. They were sent to Berhampur circuit jail. Reaction in far off America was more than in Orissa. 'His excellence American government' ordered the subservient Indian government to

release our priests without delay. Indian government was undone. Fortunately it was their government in Orissa too. Respecting the order of the union government, Orissa government hastily sent its delegates and rang up the in charge of Gajapati district and the D.I.G. of the Southern zone to release the foreign priests immediately.

There was one and only one voice all over Orissa, one question in every body's mind. Where is justice, the priests, even after befooling the people, pelting stones at the police and leaving them bloodstained, are still allowed to go scot free? When they have been accused of violating the law of right to religion of 1928 and the cases of Indian Penal Code Art. 138, 147, 149, 151, 153, 332, 307, etc. have been registered against them, is it right to leave them unleashed as if they are innocent lambs?

At Badapada village Christians are in majority and Hindus are in minority. Because of grim starvation, abject poverty and unemployment, the minority Hindus are also leaving their religions. However, these are just enticements, they are never satiated. Just for this little stomach, they sacrifice their religion and embrace Christianity; still they are hungry and half-naked. Some have realized this fact and have come back to their own religion. But still these people haven't woken up from sleep. They show so many allurements – we'll give you land, we'll give you houses, beautiful girls, we'll give you employment too, thus they are busy in tempting the common folk towards their religion.

I was then away in the capital to protest against the imperialistic GATT conference. The words of the comrades against the magic of the colonial powers were echoing in my ears.

I was turning page after page the history of the past. Hundreds of years have passed since these whites have established their foundation of dominance. It is not that their real aim is to convert common men to their religion. Their mission is to fulfill the desires of their colonial masters. It is essential to penetrate to the foundation of various spheres of the society in order to continue their imperial dominance and exploitation. To establish foundation stone in the name of religion and charity is one of the tactics of colonial rule.

“What are you pondering like a philosopher?” brother put a full stop to my thoughts when he asked disgustedly.

Yes, this land of Orissa has seen many a war in the past. We should wake up from today to fight against the imperial power.

THE ANKLET

Like every day that day too there was a long queue in front of the temple. But today's line looked very unique. The queue extended almost half a kilometer from the entrance of the temple to the edge of the river. From the edge of the river has started a very vast sand- bed.

Mother's long standing desire was to visit Dhabaleswar on the occasion of *Bada Osha*. So she has rushed to me, travelling ninety kilometers. Because of her insistence I had to accompany her. I was at the front, mother, behind me. Mother's sudden screaming startled me.

"Oh my mother! What an ugly and disfigured beggar! What a horrible!"

I turned back. I saw mother, who has come in the intention of performing Osha, get sanctified and reserve a seat in heaven, is walking on her toes pressing her mouth and nose. Her muscles shrank in detestation. Mother is trembling with fear. She is afraid as if the fatal gems crawling all over her body might drop and enter her nose and mouth. It seems by the time we cross them she would faint.

"Mother please give something."

With much reluctance my mother's hand reached the money purse. Wow! It seems she got a ten paise. Disdainfully mother threw it on the begging bowl. It hit the begging bowl and fell down near the tattered cloth of a young beggar, spread near it. The young beggar tried to pick the coin up.

"Hey! Hey! Don't take it. Mother has given to me, leave it for the better."

"Go! Go! Mother has given to me."

“No, she has given to me.”

“Yes! Yes! Whom else will she give if not to you? Because of your beautiful face many do give you, am I denying it”

“You are laughing at me you “*Joginikhia*” Hey! If I wasn’t beautiful was it your mother? Wait and see *raijala!* You are mocking at me because I am disfigured a bit today, Take it, let me see how you take. Let me see if your tongue has bones. Telling lies, you *Badipasha*. You will die with full of worms in your body.”

“Like me you will melt and be disfigured.”

The young beggar trembled with an unknown fear. His face was still shining, it had not completely lost its splendour. Fingers on his legs and hands were still intact. It seems the young man had newly stepped into that life. In the fear of the curse by the detestable and disfigured beggar, the extended hands of the young man withdrew slowly.

I asked my mother to visit the temple and I waited under the shadow of a *mahula* tree. I stared at the beggar. I felt her face familiar a bit. Somewhere I have seen this woman. For a moment I did the hotchpotch of the torn papers of the past and I relaxed. It was a matter of ten years back. I had gone to the temple along with my father. Father had taken an interview with her for the Delhi Door -Darshan. It was there that I saw her.

Her name was Meera. She once hoisted the flag of Lord Jagannath on the seashore, stayed in the great temple, ate great *bhoga*, exhausted herself serving His great servants and remained a Devadasi of the so-called great God Jagannath. When she came to know about herself, whose daughter, name of her village, she found herself within the four walls of the temple. Devadasis are not allowed to lead a married life. Jagannath is everything for them. They set apart their life at his feet.

Devadasis' world is centered on him. During *pohado*, Meera Devadasi tied anklets on her feet, decorated herself with tamaric, sandal wood paste, collirium, vermilion, flower, etc., and offered offerings to Lord Jagannath. Everybody says that there was heavenly pleasure in her dance. No Devadasi was like Meera. Her voice was just like the melodious voice of Urbashee. In Meera's body was there Meneka's skill of rhythmical action. Her anklets produced tinkling sound like that of fairies. Meera was extraordinary. Meera wreathed flowers for Jagannath. She arranged everything for worship. She used to sit down amidst devotees of Jagannath and narrate Jagannath tales.

But, Meera has thrown her anklet off in to the unfathomable water and is sitting at Dhabaleswar temple with an Aluminum bowl in her hand, Why? At the bite of her anklets, have the fingers been cut off? By arranging the worship implements, has the fingers of her hand been deformed? Now she is sitting on a tattered piece of cloth in despair and hopelessness.

From village to village, doors to doors and from temples to temples she has taken recourse to. Who will give me this history?

"Oh! Babu! Give me a coin!"

I was startled; I saw an old diseased woman looking towards me extending her hands. I was bewildered. Torrent of thoughts started whirling in an unknown whirlpool. It seems the beggar woman felt guilty and was withdrawing her hands. Immediately I took out one rupee coin and gave it to her. The beggar woman stared at me surprisingly and said -

"This is one rupee Babu!" May be, no one had given one rupee coin to her in her life. "Okey! Take it." I said and returned back to Meera.

Suddenly I thought in my mind – "Will this beggar woman be knowing something about Meera?"

“ Will you listen to one thing? ” I said, looking at the beggar woman. She looked back and asked, “What happened Babu! Did you give me a rupee coin by mistake?”

“No, no, that’s not the matter. Tell me, do you know that woman, who is sitting on a piece of tattered cloth?” I asked her pointing my fingers towards Meera.

“She stays with me, Babu!”

“Meera, the one who was in the Jagannath temple?”

“How do you know Meera, Babu?”

“Yes! How did she come here?”

The beggar woman sat down there. Just like the thread being spinned out from the stomach of a spider, much arranged tales of long days began to spill out from her mouth.

One day, when Meera was making up herself for dance, she saw a copper coloured leucosis around her cheeks. Then she enquired two to four similar leucosis on her body. After a few days, she lost sensation from those spots. She kept it a secret. She was afraid that secret might be leaked out, so she didn’t even dare to consult doctor. Meera, who had firm faith in her “Baliala” from her childhood onwards, believed that he would set everything right. For several days she fasted. Sometimes she hit her head against the door and wept bitterly. But all went in vain. God did not come down from his golden throne to give her a healing touch. The fingers of her feet and hands became bent. People began to doubt. As a result, the temple door was closed for her. She was let down from the steps of the temple steps; the colour of youth was in her. She fell a prey in the hands of sword like lusts of many men and thus grief-stricken Meera’s well protected womanhood was broken into pieces. Her earnest

screaming for help dashed against the wooden god and returned back. That day Meera could realise fully to this invalid and motionless god.

Wounds appeared on her hands and feet. Hairs from her eyebrows dropped. Her ears, nose and face were swollen and finally nose became flat. The melting wounds handicapped and disfigured her whole body. How could she escape the blood-sucking bacteria? One day she went to the Leprosy Ashram in Badadanda and stood in front of it, where the officials loot away money from the government in the pretext of helping the lepers. There, Meera, like disfigured and scathing young-woman would be neglected, is a reality.

After being chased away from the holy temple, Meera didn't feel like begging in the Badadanda. Those who have listened to the hypnotizing rhythm of her anklet, what will they say? Meera came to Bhubaneswar. Here there is no lack of temples. But Meera thought to herself that labour is far better than begging, so she had approached many houses. Because of the fear and disdain of the civilized society, she couldn't even get the chore of washing the dishes in someone's house. This is Meera's lot after that.

That means Meera couldn't find a work? I can't think of it. Where did this last decade bring her? No one, not even her house, temple, society came to her rescue!

"Hey! Why are you sitting near this beggar woman?"

At her call, I came to reality.

"You are a good boy! You have come all the way, will you go away without paying visit? Does anyone come to God's place and return without visiting?" I said to mother –"You have visited. Won't it work if you give an ounce of the blessings you have received. Let's go it is getting dark."

I just turned back. They were also returning. I was stunned to see an impossible scene. Few drops of tears rolled down from my eyes. That young beggar pushed the trolley on and on where Meera was sitting.

Seven months have passed. I had gone on a friend's feast. Near the gate I saw this young beggar along with other beggars. I asked him – "Meera is not with you?" The young beggar looked at me glaringly. "Do you know Meera?" The beggar kept on staring at me unwinkingly. "I know her since very long" – I answered him anxiously. Seeing his eyes trying to conceal the tears, I began to tremble with fear.

"She is no more Babu! It's three months since she has left for another world. While dying she held a pair of anklet and said, "This anklet sucked all my blood. What did I get by tying this anklet? For the one I tied this anklet is nothing but a toy in the hands of Pandas. Finally being crippled, a begging bowl in my hands, I wandered from house to house."

CHAKKRABYUHA

A magnificent and ornate mansion stands at the corner of the village. In front of it there is a garden full of colourful flowers. A gravel road in front of the gate divides the village into two parts. To another side of the gate, there stands a big Champak tree bending downwards because, it is overweighed with flowers. Its sweet fragrance spread all over the boundary. An old woman is sitting under the big Champak tree and is staring at the mansion unwinkingly. Now and then she heaps dust with her hand as if she is offering to God and is saying –“You can see everything; so continue to look. Take pleasure in it. He took me! He took away my world.” Every half an hour she said only this and mumbled. The passers by pitied this mad woman. At about fifteen to sixteen yards from the Champak tree there is a tea stall. We two are the only customers in it. Besides me, there is another old man whose hair and beard looked as white as snow. As fair as fairies. The shopkeeper asked – “Do you know one thing Bansi grandpa, it is two days now since this mad woman from somewhere comes here and sits.”

Bansi grandpa said, “Aren’t you talking about that old woman who sits under the Champak tree?”

- ‘Oh yes, that’s the one.’
- ‘What have you observed that you can call her mad?’

- 'She is a mentally retarded woman, what's wrong in calling her mad? Do you know what she says? She says – he has plundered me, plundered my world, shattered my dreams.'
- 'Oh! Because of this you are calling her mad. Whatever she is saying is right. Some one has taken away all these things from her.'
- "Do you know her, grandpa?"
- "Yes! Tell me who is she?"

That is a long story. At that time a new school had just opened in this village. This is a matter of a few months after I was transferred to this village. Twenty years back, that day was one of the rainy season's most exhausting afternoons... Small pieces of black clouds were floating in the sky. You can't trust this cloud. Sometimes when it rains, it rains heavily. Does it know that if it does so, some families with their children have to starve? Even after continuous heavy pour for five days, still one could see clouds in the sky. Sometimes it might burst with anger."

"Not much time left to get dark, Panchua has gone to another village. Till now he isn't back. *Keere* Panchua, aren't you there at your home? Bastards, you play all the tricks while borrowing money. But while repaying, bloody, they are very

reluctant. Bloody big cheats. It struck as a sudden storm at his house. Bhujabala Mahanty, the clerk of the landlord kicked at the bamboo door and was entered the house, shouting -- "Panchua, Panchua."

Chemi tried to cover her head and body with the old sari but failed, so, she stood at the door half opened and answered, "Please be seated my lord. How come at this time? He is not here. He has gone to that village to fetch oil." 'What did you say; for oil?' The clerk, like the wide -- jawed monkey, stared at her and uttered some harsh words in rage. The hunter turned his eyes on Chemi's body and said, "Inform your husband, the lord has sent a notice. If he fails to repay the debt within seven days his house will be auctioned. Who can tolerate this much for your sake? Yah! Listen, if you visit our home in the evening, then, I will earnestly request my lord to extend the time. Whatever may be, Panchua is my own. Will you come?" Once more like the wild cat he looked at Chemi's naked body and said "*Aalo!* Your *Dahlia* like face seems exhausted. Is there something at home or not? How tempting you are! How much can you tolerate this hunger? Come. Okey! You come. I will take care of your problem."

Rice has overboiled and is now falling from the pot on the hearth. Chemi hasn't noticed this. What will she do? How can she help her husband? Nothing would be polluted even if she went to the clerk if the debt had been completely removed. Sai's brother-in-law, Sukuta, just returned from Calcutta was saying-- daughters and daughters-in-law of

upper caste families also leave their own men and enjoy with other men – thus a conflict started in her mind and heart.

There was a prick of conscience. No! No! She can't do this. Honour is everything for the wife of a poor man. Is there anything for them except this? Their pride lies only there. There was full stop to her thoughts when the broken door was opened. She became normal. No fire in the hearth for two days. After working for one full day Panchua has brought half a kilogram rice with him. He handed over the bottle of oil to Chemi and sat down at the hearth, noticed some changes in Chemi's face. So he asked, "What is the matter Chemi? Why are you looking so low? Will God keep us in starvation every day? Surely, our day will come. Before he completed his speech, she answered, "No, my dear, have I died because of last two days of hunger. Today our landlord's clerk came and do you know what he said? He told us to repay the debt within seven days otherwise he would confiscate our house plot. And he has asked me to go to his house. If I go to his house in the evening he will extend the date he said."

"What did you say? Fucker has the guts! How dare that idiot come here and call you to his home. Why didn't you give him one with the broom. Saala! Should have come in my way, then he would have seen. My father borrowed once some sixty rupees, I have been working for him for six years. My blood has turned water. That money is still not repaid that he has sent me notice, let him do whatever he can. I won't give him a

single pie. Come, let's go away from this village can't we manage to get shelter somewhere? Here they will suck our blood."

Not even seven days were given to them. Because Chemi did not go to the clerk, on the fourth day itself, a constable, a peon, the landlord and his clerk were at Panchua's doorstep. What is there of Panchua? Some clothes and two small packets. At the command of the constable the clerk threw everything one by one. Poor Panchua fell at his feet and pleaded, "Sir! Have mercy on this poor, Babu you are the father and mother of the poor. Everyone will praise your name and your property will multiply." But all his humble pleas got shattered just like the specks in the flooding river. The constable raised his lathi and said, "Shut up saala! Shouting much, listen – Can you give some pocket money? If you can't give that then we are fond of eating raw flesh; send your wife to the police station in the evening. You see to our problem, we'll see to your problem."

With Panchua's screaming all heaven collapsed "Saala dog! You are preventing crime. Don't you have mother, sister, wife and children? Shit- Saala licking land lord's boots."

Severe blows of lathis began to rain down on him. The whole environment of the village began lamenting his screaming. Besides the constable's lathi- charge the landlord kicked and boxed with his iron like fist and knocked Panchua down on the ground. He never got up after that.

Chemi did not care for her half-nakedness. She fell at the lord's feet. "Please leave him my lord, I'll obey whatever you say. I'll go to the police station in the evening, will go to your house too." She shook Panchua like a mad woman. "Hey! Get up please! get up. What happened to you?" Panchua was no more there. He had closed his eyes forever. Chemi's whole body was numbed. As a lamp before being blown off becomes more illuminated, the flame of Chemi's heart lit. She started gunning them with the filthiest chiding possible.

"Stop it!" The constable gave a thunder like slap and Chemi almost lost her consciousness. She fell down at a distance. The constable roared like a wild beast – "You guys! Take her to the lord's house. Bloody, I'll remove her poisonous fangs, let me see how much poison the bloody hag has. You take her soon."

Two of lord's servants fastened a rope on his legs, dragged him and threw him on a treeless hill nearby.

Although I protested against this, but I could not do anything. Bansi's grand father stopped suddenly – He was about to cry.

The tea stall shopkeeper asked how could the villagers tolerate such an injustice?

What else could these helpless minnows have done? Every one in the hand of landlord. There is a saying "What God wills no frost can

kill.” Station in-charge and others in his hands. Grandpa, that means she is that same Chemi??? Oh! No doubt whatsoever. But there was no trace of Chemi at that time everybody took it for granted, Chemi was dead. After this all forgot them. The landlord took advantage of this and erected a palace on their land. I am really surprised to see Chemi after twenty years. But she hasn't forgotten any of these things.

“No, she isn't mad.”

During this conversation a terrible screaming was heard. We all ran towards the point from where the noise came. We saw that the same old mad woman in front of lord's palace has bitten his cheek off. Sitting down on his chest, she is trying to pull out a mouthful of flesh from the other cheek. The grand daughter of the landlord is shouting. “Hey! Leave him, I'm telling you, leave him.” Within little or no time people crowded there. Somehow people rescued him from Chemi. Chemi was saying “Restore my honour, give me back, give back my world, return my dream. Leave me Babu, I'll finish him off who has taken my everything. I'll crush his neck and suck his blood. For twenty years I have been just waiting for this opportunity, Chemi was hissing with anger. Bansi grandpa went to the front and said, “Have patience sister, can you recognize me? Tell me who am I?”

“You, you are our master Babu, you are a good man Babu, But where were you, when we were exploited?”

Bansi grandpa answered, "I heard everything *lo*. Protested too. I have been searching for you but could not find you. It's not that easy dear to root out the root of the exploitation, which has penetrated deep into the society through lakhs of years. There is no account of people like Chemi and Panchua who are crying for help being bulldozered by their exploitation. Man can do everything with his money power. The Chakkrobyuha of the brokers of power and the blood suckers who, building mountain of money, has remained unpenetrable. One cannot come out of the battle array once he enters into it. The voice of the people like you cannot penetrate the array and be heard by other people. Man, because of his wealth, power, youth, supremacy and unconscientiousness turns to be beastly and makes the whole world an unpenetrable battle array."

Before he completed, Chemi shouted—"Stop it Babu. Stop your tale of helplessness, you don't have inner power to create a new man in you, Babu. Instead, you have the power of tortoise, which tolerates everything remaining inside the shell. But I have given them up Babu. For long days I hid myself inside the shell. But now I have sharpened myself to fight against injustice until I regain my homeland. I'll count the blood and tears of twenty years." Bansi grandpa was listening to Chemi's words quietly. I was slowly bowing my head towards that old woman realising her self-confidence. "Sir", I said. "Did you notice the self-conviction in her.

Certainly theirs is victory. Their endeavour is fruitful. My heart says, success will one day kiss their feet.”

THE INHERITOR

After dropping my dad at the Link road Treasury, I was standing on the verandah. At this time a gentle old man came out of treasury. Feeble body, sunken eyes, black marks round the eyelids could be seen through the gaps of the thick glass. Completely gray hair. He was in Punjabi salwar . The gentle man stopped near me. He said, "Babu can you just go through this? I feel there is some mistake in calculation of my pension?" I took the pension book from him and went through and found no mistake. I answered, "This is perfectly all right sir. No mistakes at all." By then my dad had already reached there. He spoke up as if he knew the gentle man – 'Is calculation going on sir?' He was astonished and stared at my dad . I didn't know how to take my father's interference. He only asked my father, 'May I know you?' – "Myself Sitakant Singh, I am also a pension holder just like you. My home is at Patkura in the district of Kendrapara. Right now I am putting up at Mahanadi Vihar in Cuttack. And you? What is your good name sir?"

"Myself Aditya Mishra, ex-deputy secretary of Orissa finance department."

"Nice to meet you, anyway henceforth we will be meeting every month so our friendship will improve. What do you say? Will you make friendship or not?" Papa spoke shamelessly.

'Sure, Sure, why not?'

'Let's go, have a cup of coffee in the nearby coffee bar. We'll also get to know more about each other.'

The gentleman became very emotional and said, "What more can I say about me. Still I can't discourage your interest."

Three of us entered the coffee bar. Papa ordered three cups of coffee. Coffee was brought. No sooner has he sipped coffee, his throat began to quiver. His sufferings slipped away in the form of tears. He asked, "What can I say about me. Better you speak about yourself."

Papa answered – "Oh, that's it then, you want to know about me. Then listen." I have two daughters and a son. Two years ago I gave my eldest daughter in marriage. Youngest daughter has been betrothed. Four days back this son of mine has come from Delhi after completing his journalism course. My wife expired five years back. Three years back I was the Director in the Directorate of Mining. After retirement I am living in my home at Mahanadi Vihar. A boy from neighboring village is there to cook at home. Some how we are pulling on. This is all about me in brief. Papa went on telling breathlessly. Then he asked the gentleman to start about himself. However this type of friendship is very rare. Everything you can get in this town, but getting a real friend is very difficult.

The gentleman started – "I have two sons, no daughters. Two years ago my wife passed away. Eldest son is a government advocate in Orissa High Court; youngest son has got through I.A.S. and is under

probation in Delhi. My home is at Sutahato. But I am residing in a rented house in Badambadi.”

“What did you say sir – staying in a rented house?”

“What shall I say, I am very ashamed of it, I am ashamed of saying this. You can say this as a hog plum in a mango tree or my misfortune. But I am not sorry. I have hardened my heart.”

“I am sorry my friend, If I have hurt you by asking about you, then.....”

“No, no why do you think like that? You have addressed me as a friend. There is no secret between friends. My eldest son was born after seven years of our marriage and that too through cesarean operation. My wife was too spiritual. She had fasted and undertaken many pilgrimages numberless times. I have never hurt her desperate desire for a son. For this she was ready to give any sacrifice. She also helped me to undertake whatever we could do through medical science. My father-in-law had two daughters. My wife was the most loved one. He celebrated her birthday grandly till my eldest son got married. He spent half of his property for this.”

“My son got married! Daughter-in law came. Our chests swelled with pride. We two became father in-law and mother-in-law. Like others we too had a daughter-in-law, so our feet did not touch the ground. She

was not our daughter-in-law but daughter. We did not have a daughter, so she filled the vacuum. But alas! All our dreams were shattered after one year. The tree we had expected to produce nectar produced all poisonous fruits. There was control on everything, on food, clothing, etc. Servants were removed. All work was loaded on my wife. My son saw all this but pretended not to; I have never seen or heard him protesting against this. Finally, one day she left me alone being relieved from this suffering forever.”

“I got retired; to satiate my daughter-in-law, I handed over all gratuity to her. Somehow two or three months passed. I used to give her two thousand from the pension money in the fear that whatever little I got everyday was not stopped. One day I heard my daughter-in-law saying to my son: “Look; the old man takes tea five times a day, smokes cigarettes and snack has to be served when his friends visit him. I cannot do this any more. Expenditure of the house also has increased; is he aware of this? He gets three thousand rupees as pension but while giving he gives only two thousand. Is he reserving the rest for his last rites? You tell him, he should give all the pension money.” My son said, “You do whatever you want, don’t involve me in it.” The very next day when I returned from the morning walk, tea didn’t reach. I called my grandson and said to him, “Go, tell your mother to give me tea. Your mother has forgotten to give me tea or what?” My grandson returned crying and said, ‘Mama beat me.’ ‘Why?’ I asked, ‘What did you say?’ He replied mama refused to give tea,

she said go and tell him, from today onwards no one will take tea in this house.' I said – 'you take tea as soon as you get up from the bed, you give papa too. After the breakfast again you served tea to papa, why won't you give to grandpa? Just because of this she beat me.' She said – 'Go, go, don't be so fond of your grand father.'

I asked him to be quite and summoned my daughter-in-law. I asked her why did you beat the child? Really, you won't give tea to this old man? She flatly refused to do so. No, no, from today onwards it'll be impossible to serve you tea. Only I know how I manage the house in this expensive age. From then I never get tea or coffee. For several days it went on like this. Just a few days back I had typhoid and had recovered. I was feeling too weak to go outside the house. One day I heard daughter-in-law saying to my son, "Hey! Why don't you ask that old man for another thousand rupees? What will he do by keeping them?" My son answered – "He too needs some pocket-money for his personal expenditure. Have you ever given him? Why will he give you and ask you again? This much money is not enough for you? Why are you so greedy? He is an old man. Don't tell me these things."

I was really so sad to hear him. It means my son has kindness towards his old father. Instead of commanding her, he is requesting her to show kindness. This is his duty as a son. What shall I say to him? They are not illiterate. If they were illiterate they would realize if taught. But these are worse than illiterate even after being literate. Thinking that

someone might think otherwise, I kept quiet. But how many days could it go on? One day it was 10 p.m. by the time I returned. I was changing my dress in my room, when my grandson came with food tray. Mama has sent this for you. Okey! I answered, but why did you bring it here, take it to the dining table. My grandson answered – ‘No mama has instructed that henceforth you will have your food in your room. But grandpa, Are you not all right?’”

“No, nothing like that, why, what happened?”

“No, we ate *paratta* and mutton. When mama gave this rotti and *santhula* I asked her about paratta and mutton. She answered, these things are not good for him.”

I didn't like to hurt my grandson's soft heart by saying the grand truth. I just nodded my head – and said – “I am unwell.”

“A cup of tea from Nidhi Sahu's shop in the morning refrigerated rice at noon, watery dal or a little *Aludam* and in the evening one or two hard burnt rotti and little sonthula. Days and months passed like this. My advocate son never bothered to ask me about my conditions. Never tried to understand how I was managing. He was so henpecked that old father was unwanted for him. He knew everything but he remained silent as if his manhood has been paralised.”

One day, daughter-in-law straight away demanded, "Father, what are you doing with another thousand rupees? Henceforth if you don't give all the pension money, I can't manage you. You can arrange for yourself." I asked, "Is this Sunakara's wish too?" She answered, "My wish is his wish." I asked, "At this old age where shall I go, and to whom shall I go? Are my son's salary and my pension not enough to manage this house? Besides this, I have never asked you for rent for my house."

Ask, you can ask for it, who is denying that"- she walked away furiously. I thought, "It is impossible to stay there any longer, something has to be done. There is no possibility that I can stay happily even if I give the whole amount. That's why giving money is not the solution. There is also no guarantee that tomorrow they are not going to ask for more money. I can expel them from the house, but I'll lose my mental peace."

That evening I said a permanent good bye. I searched and found out a house at Badambadi. One room, a small kitchen and toilet and bathroom attached. Four hundred rupees per month. The following day, I called a rickshaw and loaded my mattress and a suitcase. As soon as the rickshaw crossed the gate my daughter-in-law sprinkled a pot of cow-dung water from the portico to gate saying "Praise God, old man is dead, praise God, old man is dead." Tears rolled down from somewhere, no one knows, from those dry and sunken eyes. The rickshaw too moved further and further. Her words "old man is dead" were echoing in the air. But a tornado has started in my heart, never to be subdued by anything. I

reached my residence in Badambadi and the tears on my face dried but there was no indication of whirl-wind calming down. I thought to summon my younger son but I didn't want him to get entangled in my mental agony. I didn't let the whirlwind in my heart to take the form of cyclone. One day I received a registered letter which was redirected from Sutahato address. The letter read like this—

Dad,

My greetings. Don't worry about me, I have married here. My wife Anima Chaturbedi, the daughter of Makhanlal Chaturbedi, the Chief Secretary of Prime Minister's secretariat. We were batchmates in the probation. I want to settle down here. I don't have any liking either for the dirty town or for the landed property. I hope brother and sister-in-laws are not neglecting their duty to look after you. Besides this, all the landed properties at the village and the town are in your name. You get pension too. So there won't be any problem. Don't misunderstand me please.

Yours,

Rupakar

Now I remembered my wife. After two years of our marriage, she couldn't stay for any longer. She could not know how her youth passed

by performing pooja to all the gods and goddesses to get a child. A woman, who was desperately in want of an inheritor, will she be able to live after seeing such inheritors. Belief in survival of *gotra*, *Pindadana*, satiation of the dead souls of ancestors is all superstition.

These are nothing but the imaginary creations and utter lies inflicted by Brahminical vedantists and traditionalists. Establishing a blind belief in religion and other superstitions among the people is nothing but an easy means to livelihood without any work. If my wife had realized this, she would not have died at that stage. Man, who was breaking his knees to get a son would not suffer the consequences of getting a son.”

“Did you understand my friend? But I am not broken. What if I lose my two sons? Why should I feel sad, when I am getting more love and affection and respect from two hundred sons.”

- Two hundred sons:”what does that mean?” Papa asked him.

Yes, here there is an orphan home, the branch of which is in my village, Balikunda. I have willed all my moveable and immovable property in the name of that orphanage. After me the property will go to them. Now I am very happy. But I become sorrowful when I remember my life. Have I made a wrong decision?”

Papa exclaimed, “Bravo! Bravo! my friend. You are right, yes you are right.” He said, it was a very good decision and he embraced that

gentleman. I saw a few drops of tears on his face. So I asked, "Uncle! You are crying?"

"No, no these are not tears, gems of happiness. Who will impede this? Who was successful? I think I have bored you by my gossip. I beg your pardon. 'Take this card,' he took out a visiting card from his diary, gave to my father and said, "Please visit our orphan home whenever you get time."

'Sure, Sure'

"Okey!. I must make a move. Namaskar" – the gentleman said and hired a rickshaw. My father too gave Namaskar in reply and said on our way back,"There we have a good example for our social analysis. What do you say?"

RAJALAXMI'S KURUKSHETRA

At the entrance of the State Consumer's court, I saw a woman beating her breast and shouting at the top of her voice – "Give me justice Sir, give me justice. I have no one to help me. Neither refuge at my in-law's house nor a shade at my father's house, nor is there my husband's strong arm with which I would move forward. Only you are my saviour. If you want, you can give me justice. If I don't get justice, I will set fire to this court. Both mother and child will immolate here."

Seeing this astonishing incident, my feet did not move any further. My conscience didn't allow me to neglect her. I went near that lady and asked her to take courage and said to her – "You said a little while ago you would sacrifice yourself. If you sacrifice, will it solve your problem? Has this cruel society feared anyone? Like you lakhs and lakhs of daughters and in-laws commit suicide just to overcome their sufferings; has this society kept an account of it, or has it brought about any change? If you want to walk with your head high in this society then open your mouth. Learn to fight for your right as long as you are alive. Then only you can get justice. You will be victorious."

The lady glared at me unwinkingly. She said – "What justice shall I get, sir? When can I see the face of justice? I am tortured under severe criticism by the oppressive society. Whom shall I tell my sorrowful tale?"

- "What's your problem, mother? If you don't mind please let me know."
- "Why should I mind? What's there in me? My story is like an open book."

I requested her to sit down on a chair at the reception and I sat on the other. Her age was not much. May be thirty or thirty-one. Very fair. Under the wheel of chariot of time she has been crushed and has now turned pale. Scars of sufferings are still fresh on her face and they seem to mock at her.

Her name is Rajalaxmi. Her home is in the headquarter of Keonjhar district. She was born in a conservative family of a lower middle class. When she completed fourteen and entered fifteen, her father Bipra Mishra began to search for a bridegroom. He asked his friends and relatives to search for a bridegroom. If someone asked him –“Why are you marrying her at this tender age? Let her study something”, Bipra Mishra answered proudly – “What's the need of so much study for a female child? It's enough if she can manage to read the Geeta. Bhagvata and other puranas. Female child is just like a pot, once it gets blackened, it's gone. Therefore it is better to be cautious early.”

There was a full stop to Rajalaxmi's studies. In the funeral pyre of Brahminism, her ambition to study more, her request not to marry at this young age, her hide and seek games with her friends, *Kumara punei*

Puchi, Rajadoli, all these were charred and destroyed. Her friends were left behind in the village. Girl, who did not have any knowledge of the world, came to Banamali Acharya's house as the daughter-in-law, in the village of Tirtol in Jagatisinghpur. After one year Rajalaxmi was forcibly made a mother. First a female child was born to her and in the next year she gave birth to a male child. Because of dowry, she had to tolerate ill treatment from her mother-in-law, father-in-law and sisters-in-law. Tyranny became intolerable when her family-world increased. She was helpless; she stuck to in-law's house because she didn't want to let down her father's name even if she had to die.

One day, a heart breaking incident occurred. In a road accident Rajalaxmi's husband closed his eyes forever. After that, exploitation grew from bad to worse. She was not allowed to enter the kitchen because she had become unauspicious Laxmi. When she had to wear some mended clothes, who talks of food. Her suffering was unending. There was no end to her days of sorrow. One day, when she returned from bath she found her five months old child dead. She had bathed the child, breast-fed her and made her sleep and then gone to bathe herself. Nothing was out there. Child was very playful. It was laughing happily. When she returned from bath, it was dead. Elder daughter sat beside it and was saying – "Get up, get up. Mama has come." Child's death is quite unnatural. Rajalaxmi beat her head and cried. She knew her child has been

murdered. She should escape the snare when her daughter and she will also be killed.

On the pretext of going to hospital, she came to Anandpur along with her daughter to her father's house. Seeing her helplessness, instead of consoling her, with his conservative mentality of holding the law of the society above everything, he chided her and said –“What did you do, bastard child? You put my head down; you defamed my name. I would have been happier, if you had died there only.” What could Rajalaxmi now do? There was no other way except accepting everything humbly.

Friends and other contemporaries of Bipra Mishra suggested to him Rajalaxmi's marriage. “How old is she? Not more than seventeen or eighteen. So you should remarry her. If you say so, we will arrange for one.” But father, who lives by maintaining his pride of Brahminism, bites his tongue and says – ‘Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna!! What are you saying, remarriage of a widow!!! You want me to go to hell or what? We are Brahmins of the ruler clan.’ He gets irritated at the very sight of Rajalaxmi and simply scolds her.” Why didn't you die? You are bringing shame upon my head.”

Rajalaxmi hardens her heart and bears all this. She can't die either. A child with her; the attractive blue eyes don't let Rajalaxmi die. But how long can she tolerate the bone-piercing scolds of her father and her brother. Every father thinks he is relieved of a great burden once the

daughter is given in marriage. Similarly, brothers think as long as she is there, is a nail on them. Some how chain her to a man, she will be in her world, they, in theirs.

One day Rajalaxmi left her home. She stood in the heart of Cuttack. There is no lack of occupations. You just need to succumb to them. She hadn't also studied much. What else can she do? The business of health clinic in the city is really a profitable business. Nursing homes in the city have grown like mushrooms. At last she came to Dr. Sitesh Parija's chamber in the Pinki Nursing Home, situated in Nayachowk. She requested for the job of an attendant. Young doctor Parija took pity on her. How old is she? Not more than eighteen or nineteen. She has to stay in the nursing home for twenty-four hours just for three hundred rupees per month. Like a drowning man clinging even to the smallest straw on the water, Rajalaxmi agreed to the doctor's proposal. Let her suffer but not her daughter. At least she can feed her something to keep her alive.

Rajalaxmi lost herself completely within the four walls of the Pinki Nursing Home. She had to carry out the orders of doctors, nurses and compounders as if she was only a child and had to obey.

Parija's lustful eyes fell on Rajalaxmi's youth. She protested in the beginning. But she couldn't escape from the snare of the hunter Dr. Parija. The only property of womanhood she had, was also snatched

away. Rajalaxmi cried bitterly. But who will heed to her cry? Who will listen to her sorrowful words? If she had to follow this way then she could enter a brothel. What is the difference between a brothel and a nursing home? How many times she has become pregnant and aborted at his will. She is also threatened, "If you reveal this secret to anybody, you should forget your desire to live." Two years passed like this.

Once Rajalaxmi's uterus started bleeding. This could have been cured by mere medicine, but it was a golden chance for Dr. Sitesh Parija. A plan came to his satanic mind – "Neither will there be uterus nor the fear of abortion." Doctor babu said – "Your uterus is weak. Therefore only way to stop bleeding is to remove your uterus." What will this poor Rajalaxmi understand? She lost her uterus at the age of twenty, being a victim of doctor's conspiracy. Doctor consoled her saying – "You won't have any problem. I'll take up all your responsibility. As long as this nursing home is here, you will continue to work."

After a few months the matter did not remain hidden any longer. She thought, doctor Babu removed her womb just for this trifle body. Medical science says after forty years only there is possibility of a woman getting disease in her womb. In some cases, if the disease is not cured by medicine the last resort only is removal of the uterus. Is it justifiable to remove the uterus of a twenty years old girl? If someone were ready to marry her in the future, she would get some shade. But is it possible

now? Will anybody take a womb-less woman? She wept bitterly she blamed her destiny.

One day, she came to know that her daughter was ill, so she took eight days to leave and went to the village. She saw she was seriously ill. But the time the child got recovered it took almost fifteen days. She took her daughter along with her and reached at the Pinky Nursing Home. Seeing a child with her, the doctor looked at her in a questioning eye; as if he wanted to ask "A bone in the kabbab", who is this child? She could read his eyes and answered – "This is my daughter Niru". Doctor Babu said – "Don't feel bad about it Rajalaxmi! I have made a decision to replace the entire old staff with a new one. Besides this, within a few days or so our nursing home is going to be shifted to Badambadi new building. You may make your own arrangements."

For sometime she felt as if someone strangling her, glow-worm came out from her eyes. Will she have to die at the words of this womanizer doctor? She held her daughter's hand and stood. Blood circulation in the veins got expedited. She tied the skirt of her sari tight on her waist and went near to doctor Babu. She wanted to strangle him to death. But at the single blow of the doctor she fell back a few feet distance. What else could she do? Her condition was just like a lamb in front of a tiger. But still she was fearless. She shouted at the top of her voice – "You are not a man but a monster, a monster. You once said you would take my whole responsibility. You forgot everything. Why won't you

forget? You have sucked my everything. Why won't you throw it away after filtering home from the home-comb?"

Doctor Babu began to roar – “How dare you! You know whom are you talking to ? If I want I can send you to police custody.”

Rajalaxmi gave a mocking laughter. She said -“You will give me to police custody. Give! Who is scared of your police? She spat on doctor's face and took the child and climbed down the steps.

Still now Rajalaxmi runs to the nursing home. She is fighting to keep two lives alive. She is not defeated nor broken. She knocks at the door of the Consumer Court to get compensation for the loss of her uterus. She is looking for a godly man in the life's battle field, who can be a friend and charioteer.

Rajalaxmi's life story is heart touching. Without my knowledge a few drops of tears rolled down my eyes in sympathy. I said, “You will win, you will surely win. Can a person, with so strong determination be defeated?

Rajalaxmi started at him in her broad eyes with some expectation. And her daughter held her mother tight and was looking at me like an innocent lamb. The eyes of all the people present on the verandah of the Consumers' Court stuck on us both!!!

SATYABATI'S VESSEL

The sun gets tired running from one mountain to another from dawn to dusk and hides its body under the shadow of night; the birds are exhausted in their effort of searching food for the whole day and return to their nests in the evening. All, starting from animals to human beings, return home with their exhausted bodies; all need rest.

In her life there is neither tiredness nor rest. She is unfamiliar with these words. No one has ever seen her in this state. She only knows her bamboo on the seashore and her hut, thatched with det leaves. No one has ever seen her resting for an hour or blaming her luck and scolding herself. The temple-routines might stop. The wheel of time might stop as well. But Satyabati's rowing never stops. Satayabati is the history and time of this river-belt. Her smiling faces is seen playing hide and seeks on the waves. Only her eyes can measure the depth of unfathomable water, which is as transparent as glass. The natives of this village always see her amidst the mass of water, sand-bed, fish and tortoise, frog and crane and amidst each animate and inanimate thing in the water.

Santanu is not the husband of this Satyabati; but Satiya. This fishergirl Satyabati is not the daughter of Dasha king. Even her husband Satiya does not know whose daughter she is. People say that Satiya, while going to Calcutta found this Satyabati, alias Sati, at Cuttack railway station. Sati was wandering at the platform looking for a morsel of food.

When she was crying and requesting others for a fistful of rice, Satiya could not tolerate it. He took her to the station canteen and fed her stomach full. Sati, while narrating her misery and misfortune said to Satiya – “I left my home and ditched my parents and came with raw flesh eater, Jackal; if I don’t suffer the consequence who else will do, Babu? He took me to the Chandi temple and smeared a lump of vermilion and that *raizala* said- ‘Sati I am all yours, only yours. I promise in front of Chandi, I’ll not desert you’. Babu, you tell me, if these people do not have faith and devotion, then why do they promise in the name of gods and goddesses? Why do they buy *prasad*, candles and incense, and flowers and sandal wood, spending lots of money???”

Satiya, like a foolish man stared at her face unwinkingly. Sati was searching for an answer---- Whatever this girl is saying, she is not pretending. It is very difficult to say whom to believe and whom not to believe. Young boys and girls think that temple is the safest place for them to meet in the pretext of worshipping gods and goddesses.

Being intoxicated by her words Satiya brought this innocent Stalk – broken bud with him. He asked her to have courage and made her understand that he would become the father of her would-be child, Sati understood. The child she was carrying through that hungry monster’s tyranny was born dead after a few days. Satiya brought her to his village Godanpur to help her overcome sorrow due to the dead child. From the

day Sati came to this house, it filled with laughter. Really how wonderful is this Sati!

She has in her hand the magic of Alladin. She always bears a smiling face like fresh water lily. When she walks, jewels and gems rain on her lips. Words are like honey. The cart of this little family Sati-Satiya moved on with the passage of time. One day a registered letter reached and shocked them. The director of the company where Satiya worked had sent this letter. "These days our company is running at a loss, therefore it is going to be shut down. So you are requested to come here within fifteen days and collect the money the company owes you." A thunder fell down on Satiya's head. Two stomachs. How will they live? Even if the whole provident fund and other allowances are at hand, they will, with much difficulty, pull on two-three months. After that...Sati is not a woman to be defeated. She kept her hand on Satiya's shoulder and consoled him – "Why are you broken so much my dear? Is it a matter of worrying at all? Sati is not dead that you will break down like this. Oh! Yes, one day you said that your father and forefathers took rowing vessel as their profession. One can leave his hereditary occupation provided he has better means to feed his stomach. Work for stomach is not a sin. It is not a worthless occupation. Many adopt many types of occupation just for this little stomach. Some even indulges in bad activities for it. Some steal, some rob and some others murder people. Worse still, some sell their

bodies. We are not doing any of these. Don't sour your heart. Everything will be alright."

Really Sati took care of everything. She took out from her home an oar, a sailing rope and a flat bucket to remove the water. The vessel was shone with alcatrao. On the first day when Sati and Satiya inaugurated this, it looked like a new black beautiful daughter-in-law. It looked like their daughter, born of their flesh and blood, which they were sending off as a queen to a far off island. Their joy knew no bounds.

They never got any off time after that. Their life seemed to have merged with the water and the sand of the river. Satiya had learnt the act of rowing vessel from his father. So it was not a problem for Sati to learn. "Where there is will there is a way." Sati's perseverance made her an expert vessel rower. Initially Satiya was indignant towards this work. What will the people say if a woman oars a vessel? In our society a woman is not supposed to row. This is considered to be the work of a man. But Satiya was defeated by her argument. Sati's argument was, "Do people give us something to eat? Hell with what people say, you too have your own body and mind. If you fall sick, no one will give you even a little stale-rice-water. People can never see well in you, they can only observe your bad qualities. And wishes do not feel the bag. It is quite impossible even to get a piece of burnt rotti and a handful of rice. I knew them through and through when I carried another life inside me and groped from morning to evening, from house to house. I realized, when they showed the

temptation of false worldly things and left in the middle of life and death. In the ancient time, women of our country had taken swords and shields and fought against enemies. And why can't I do this small work of rowing the vessel?"

Both row the vessel together. When Satiya rows, Sati collects money from the passengers; some give and some do not. But none has ever heard a quarrel between Sati and passengers for it. Among the passengers who are going to the local markets, some one gives a brinjal, some one arum, a bitter gourd a potato, or someone else throws a bit of *poi* into the vessel instead of giving money. They leave their bed early in the morning and return at midnight night. Sometimes they hear the call even after twelve.... This all Strikes into their ears penetrating the four walls.... Satiyai.... Bring the vessel.... Sati Nau... bring the vessel.... Landlord woman..... Suffering too much..... I will take her to the hospital... Child is suffering from diarrhea.... Eyes and ears... Almost sunken... I will take him to the doctor.... My brother bitten by snake.... I will take him to a conjurer... New bride.... Sitting at the ghat.... Bring the vessel.... Marriage time.... Passing... like these many requests are heard by them. The humanness in them tickles them to wake up from sleep. Sati carries a lantern and goes at the front and Satiya holding a big club in his hand follows her to the ghat. They listen to everybody's complaints and rowing vessel from shore to shore they do not even know that it is already dawn. The shell's *phuon-phuon* sound from mother's temple from

nearby village indicates the dawning of a new day. Neither do they have rest nor have they time to regret it.

This salty river is really a curse. Its fission sometimes causes botheration among people. While it destroys some houses it also eats away some farmland. To some it strangles to death, to others it tickles for a while and returns them to the shore. One who is fortunate enough only escapes from her hand.

Satiya and Sati know through and through to this pretentious river. No one knows how the sun had risen that day. Now a days even the village boys are acting like town goons. It's ten o'clock morning. Four to five guys jumped into Sati's vessel like monkeys. A boy who was going to school was already in the vessel. Sati reproached them and asked them to get in carefully. 'Don't you see the vessel is shaking? Okey, give money; the vessel is on.'

"Let's go, let's go, we are giving." Satiya pushed the vessel in. This is Shravan – the water cutting two sides of the shore. Among the goons one spoke up-"Sati! You want to take money, take." He began to shake the vessel. People inside the vessel got scared. Satiya and Sati are falling at his feet; but is he listening to them? Oh.....? That small boy fell in to the river. Then a strange scene vibrated everybody's heart. In spite of everybody's telling Satiya jumped into the middle of the river. Then every thing was over.... He disappeared somewhere in the dreadful

whirlpool of the salty river. Neither did he bring the child nor did he come back.

All the village goons have returned from the jail. The muddy water has now turned black and is taking great slumber. The overflowing river has shrunk to great extent. But only Satiya isn't back. Tears on Sati's face never dies. Alas! Poor fellow is gone... He is now enjoying in the other world. What a fool was he! Couldn't trust. We will die together; he promised but finally went alone. Many a time Sati has rowed the vessel from one shore to the other, but she never felt alone. But after Satiya is gone something is twisting and turning inside her heart, no one knows. Something is tearing her heart apart.

For a few days no one even consoles her. No one too praises the virtues of poor Satiya. None is there to ask whether she has eaten something or not. For how many days will she lie at home like this? There is a relief from all pains except that of stomach. Just for the sake of stomach people take up different types of occupations no matter how low they are. Man decorates himself in different colours to suit himself to this colourful world just for this little stomach. Who else is there for Sati? Neither Satiya nor anybody. Satiya would certainly pour water if hunger burns Sati's stomach. Now she herself has to extinguish the fire in her belly. She doesn't know in what condition her small vessel is. She prepared herself to go to ghat. She saw... within a few months her black beautiful vessel has been turned to a miserable condition by the

oppression of the people. Just like the condition of a garden in the absence of the gardener, the state of Sati's vessel is exactly like that in her absence.

Sati consoled herself and hardened her heart. Again she mended her vessel. She was completely lost again. She lost herself once again from this shore to that shore and from that shore to this, amidst that familiar calls-

Sati Aunti..... Bring the vessel!

Sati Nuau..... Bring the vessel!

Sati bring the vessel!

Sati was lost. She merged herself with that familiar words "Bring the vessel." She never searched for herself.

Once suddenly she found herself. Her meditation was broken. The river is eating away both the sides. Something is rushing towards the ghat making its way through the water with its phut-phut sound. Two young men got down from the vessel. She knows one of them. He is Padu, son of Nidhi Sahu from the neighboring village. Sati asked Padu – "What is this Padu brother?"

- What did you ask Sati? This is..... This is Motor Boat.

- What is it for Padu brother?
- Are you stupid? Don't you know this? Okey! What do you do with your vessel?
- This crosses people from one shore to another.
- And this will also carry people from this shore to that shore, did you get it.

She felt as if all the blood cells of her body were clotted. The whole heaven fell upon her. A painful voice slipped from her mouth vibrating her heart – will this also cross people Padu-brother!

Like *Rahoo* devouring the moon the Octopus like motor boat seized Sati with its hands and started swallowing. Sati coated her vessel with new bamboo plates. Put a new oar. She shone it with new colours. She worshipped *Mangala Maa* and *Ganga Maa* and promised them *bhoga*; but not even a single passenger came to her vessel. Nobody came to her vessel even though she was ready to accept any price they offered. On the other hand Padu Sahu's motor launch attracted huge crowds. He made lots of money.

For four days there has been no fire in Sati's hearth. For four days she hasn't been able to sleep. Pain in the stomach and pain in the head too. A volley of questions in the mind. That means these people are so treacherous? They have forgotten their midnight call: Sati aunty..... Sati

nuau.... Sati? They completely forgot Sati and Satiya's tireless rowing whole night.....? For them only Satiya jumped forever in to the fathomless rainy season's river. How could they forget these things so soon? How could they have instantly fallen to the magic? No.....!!! Before she dies out of painful hunger, she will burn and destroy these treacherous people to ashes. Sati looked at herself she was trembling like a mad woman.

Dark night. What is this? Is she Sati Satyabati or *ranachandi*- the destroyer? A blazing flame of fire in her hand. What is she going to do? Sati gave a stern look towards the village. Dead silence everywhere. For centuries together these houses have been thatched with reeds and straws. Yes, today she will burn and destroy all these houses and together with them these treacherous people including their children will be burnt. Oh.... Children? The call like "Sati aunty...." will be gone forever. The blazing torch suddenly slipped from Sati's hand. She heard as if someone is calling, "Sati aunty.... Sati Nuau..... Sati....."

She sat down in the middle of the road. She began to ponder, inclining her head on the knees..... No... What's the use of blaming these people? It's the motor boat, which has become her enemy. Sati got a new idea. No... Before the sunrise she will set fire to the motor boat and sink it in the water.

Like the witchcraft of the dark night, Sati ran towards the shore. The motorboat was dancing with the rhythm of the waves. She tiptoed inside the boat. She stood at the edge of the boat and looked at the infinite river, which flowed with a rhythmical sound. She felt as if the salty river is welcoming her and saying – “Sati! You must go ahead with your idea.”

Sati had a loud laughter in her mind. She will teach Padu Sahu a lesson. When Padu Sahu comes early in the morning, he will find only Sati's vessel dancing victoriously in that widespread water. She took a matchbox and went near the engine. Match box in her left hand and a stick in her right hand. Once more she looked at the pretentious river. With the river as a witness, she wants to accomplish her work.

Again a question arose in her mind. How long will people depend on her oar alone? Can't Jadu Sahu bring another boat after Padu Sahu? Time and again these questions whirled in her mind. Disgustedly she threw away the matchbox and matchstick deep into the water. Shit! She can do nothing. Her dam of stubborn arguments is impeding her flow of lofty thoughts. She doesn't know which way it should flow. Sati, with her unplaited hair, was wandering inside the motorboat like a mad woman. The whole world seemed to be revolving round her -- the sky, the wide valley, the river and its shore.

“Who is that? Who is inside my motorboat? Who is it? Tell me quickly;” Padu Sahu trembled with anger and fear.

Sati stood inside the boat and cast a stern look towards Padu Shau “You Sati! Why have you come to my boat? What do you want? Get out from here, I am telling you”. Padu Sahu shouted angrily.

“I haven’t come here to go away Padu Sahu”- Sati bit her teeth and said-

- Why have you come here?
- Have your forefather rowed a boat?
- No! So what the great deal about it?
- You can’t row this boat. I shall do it.
- This is the occupation of my husband’s forefathers.
- But I have bought this boat. What is your right over it?
- Padu Sahu! You can only buy things with money, not the occupation of the labourers. Only I have the right over the boat and not you, regardless of shapes it takes.

- What did you say? Such big words in the mouth of a widow. Get out from here. I am telling you. Padu Sahu tried to pull her out from the boat.

When both of them wrestled, the boat was shaking violently. In the east it was getting brighter gradually. Passengers were gathering on the shore. All were silently looking at the wrestling. Both of them were equally stubborn!!!

The pretentious river, flowing with a beautiful rhythm, was looking towards Sati's relentless fight. The reddened rays of early morning were greeting and congratulating Sati –

“Blessed are you – Satyabati”.

ANOTHER HARISCHANDRA

No sooner had Sambhu lit the pyre and rested under an Ashok tree, he saw a car entering inside the crematorium, a young pretty girl came out of the car after stopping it at a distance. She had a basket in her hand.

- Hey! Come here.
- Oh! Please speak Madam.
- Can you burn this?
- Why are you mocking at me Madam, burning corpse is my occupation.
- Really, can you do it? Surely. You can see it..... Okey! Is the corpse inside the car?
- No.
- Then
- Inside the basket.
- Oh... oh. Oh...!!! A corpse in the basket!

What are you saying, Madam? Are you in your senses? Don't you have anybody else? You alone....

- What will you gain from this? Take this and finish your work. I am ready to pay whatever you ask for. The young lady pushed the basket towards Sambhu.

Sambhu inspected the young lady's body to see what the truth was. She was in jeans, uncombed hair on her head which people call 'Bob Hair' in the fashion world; two well developed and rounded fleshy breasts; really exciting. It seemed as if for the first time she had felt the sweetness of motherhood. Well-constructed body. She was restless with her oozing youthfulness. Nothing was required to understand her name. Spinster has surely become a mother. And her newborn baby is in the basket. Blindfolding the eyes of the whole world, she will claim that she is still a virgin. She will show it to the society, piercing with her fingers its eyes, that she is still proud of her virginity, in spite of being an object of many hungry eyes; she has much to enjoy...

The commanding voice of that lady ceased. Words of request slipped from her mouth – "In side the basket, there is more than worth your labour. Release me as early as possible. If you want more, take this." She removed her gold-necklace and threw it at Sambhu feet. Sambhu couldn't believe how she so hurriedly entered the car and immediately disappeared. The car was speeding away on the dusty road. Sambhu prepared the pyre. When he opened the basket, he saw two blue eyes winking at him. A bundle of ten rupee notes was in the basket. Sambhu spoke up – "Oh! What a dangerous woman!" Can even an

enemy think of burning a living child? It seems some doctor or nurse has cheated her. Although they promised her to kill the child, their conscience hadn't allowed.

Sambhu swelled in anger. He ran with the child. He requested Acharya and kept the child in the orphanage.

Time and tide wait for none. Three years passed. One day Sambhu happened to see that young lady with a handsome young man. The young man was saying –“Do you understand Bella! Can you see a mound there, that's the tomb of our Tommy (dog).” He moved towards the mound. But the young woman stayed where she stood. Sambhu rightly guessed she was afraid that he would reveal her true colour.

Sambhu felt he saw a familiar face, yes, he remembered. They were classmates in B.Sc. His name was Nisith. Nisith too recognized Sambhu and asked him “Aren't you Sambhu? You are here! You aren't able to recognize me! Come on *Yaar* – I am your Nisith.”

- “Sorry sir! I am not Sambhu nor do I know you.”

“Don't I know you Sambhu? Don't fool me. Tell me my dear brother, how come you are here? What has happened to you?”

“No, no, Babu! I am merely a guard at the crematorium. Besides this I don't have any other identity.”

“Hey Sambith! You are like my brother. Can’t I recognize my friend. Sambith Chhotray? Are you in your senses?” the ocean of friendship began to spring up. Tears welled up in his eyes. He sat down and hugged Sambhu. He demanded from Sambhu why he is another Harischandra today. Sambhu was compelled to open his *Pandora Box* that day.

Once his father was bed-ridden. When he had wandered the whole day for medicine and reached home hopelessly, people had surrounded his father and were waiting for him. The questioning eyes of the people seemed to be asking him –“Today also you couldn’t manage medicine? The same question was in his father’s sunken eyes. Madho uncle from his neighbourhood said – “Sambith! Brother’s mouth is locked. Go and pour a little water in his mouth. Not much time is left...”

As he heard Madho uncle, he felt as if a monstrous beast had bitten his heart and torn it into pieces. He began to tremble in fear. After some time his father’s helping hand will be no more. One cannot count how many pair of straws have been broken by running after jobs, which runs faster than horse. Due to the impression of the chapals, the hole in the heart was getting deeper than the hole on his chapals.

Sambhu’s sudden heart-breaking cry made him understand that his father was no more in this world. Gradually his mother’s screaming crossed the four walls of their house and merged with the air. However,

no body was worried, nor anybody came to speak anything. He remembers still how his mother spoke up sarcastically suppressing all her sorrow – “Nonsense! Just for you my marriage has crumbled. Was it to see this day that I had to feed you instead of feeding my other children? Just for a pinch of medicine, he is gone.”

Sambith was dumb. Blood began to gush from his eyes in the form of tears. He felt his mother was right. For, his father, save himself, sold out all movable and immovable property for his studies. Was he responsible for the misery of his family? It was useless even if he had passed M.Sc in the first class first from Berhampur University. Now a days job is a precious thing. One who has money, job is running after him. But one who has no money, his merit, marks, degree, diploma are of no use. No one feels the need of these things. They face the recommendations of the authorities for their sons, daughters, nephews or nieces or the candidates who can slop big bundles under the table. He couldn't reply anything to his mother; he remained silent.

Father's lifeless body was lying there. None knows for how many days it would have lain there. He went into the room like a storm and brought his gold medal, his only property, from the rusted box. He handed it over to Madho uncle. Sambith said – “Uncle, take this. I need money only my father knew the value of it. Only an educated man knows how to value it. Uncle, for me it is worthless! Father wished that I would never sell it even in adverse situation. But the medal, which couldn't help my

father when he was alive, let it, at least, help him at his death. As long as I am alive, I won't let my father's dead body lie like this."

His mother was looking at him with a repentant eyes. She repented for the lava, which erupted, from her volcanic heart. That day he burnt all his diplomas and degrees in his father's funeral pyre; all were surprised at this act. But he looked quite satisfied. He performed other rituals for the dead and left his home forever.

Then he was introduced to this Bedavyasa crematorium on the bank of river Sankha Koilee. After coming here, he hasn't run after job anymore. Meanwhile he has learnt to prepare funeral pyre and the skill to burn the corpse and char them. He inherited this occupation from Ramadu grandfather. How he came here was also accidental. Knowing the fact that the Punjabee driver wouldn't receive anything from him, he, instead of taking Sambith to Rourkela, pushed him here. He said –"Get out, get out. Doesn't have money! I don't understand where these people come from." That day he sat at the crematorium from morning to evening. In front of him, Ramadu grandfather burnt around five corpses. He came to Sambith and asked – "What happened my son? Why are you sitting here? Where are you from?" He replied that he had no home nor had he anybody in this world!

- Oh! You don't have your parents. Alas!..... Poor boy
Destitute.

- You must be hungry, my son.
- Yes.
- Will you eat food from a crematorium?
- Yes.

When the stomach is burning with hunger what is the harm in extinguishing it even by eating something from a crematorium? So both of them had their food together. Sambhu foolishly asked a question to Ramadu grandfather—"Do the corpses eat?" Like a child Ramadu grandfather laughed and said – "All these are utter lies my dear son." He again asked – "Do you think the relatives of these people give them enough food during their lifetime? If not, why do they feed them after they die? Great is the blind society, great are her rules and regulations." Ramadu grandfather too joined him with a protesting voice and spoke up –

"All these are farce my dear Son."

From that day onwards Sambith came to be known as Sambhu and became the unquestioned emperor of this crematorium. He feels lonely after Ramadu grandfather has left for the other world. "Do you see there a mound under that *Arakha* tree? He is sleeping there. Here only my rules work. Without my permission no dead body can be burnt. Today there is no problem. Back at my home, everyone is happy seeing bundles

of money; my mother would be thinking, my son is in a good job. Brothers and sisters will be thinking – our brother is a big officer in Rourkela. In my neighbourhood Madho uncle and others might be jealous. They must be telling – Saala's luck has smiled. Now, you tell me Nisith, have I done anything wrong? Had I not run after jobs and instead had I been a hotel boy, or a rickshaw puller, or a coolie, then my father would not have met with an untimely death. What more could have I done even after I had got the job? If I were a lecturer, I would create some more educated unemployed like me; if I were appointed in the Research Center, I would be making equations and still if I were an administrative officer, I would encourage mal-administration. Our educational system itself is at fault, Nisith. It teaches the students false vanity, it doesn't teach them dignity. Although I am happy with my work, but still I haven't escaped from the snare of this false vanity. Otherwise why only to you, I could have confessed before the entire society what I am doing." Sambith narrated the whole story breathlessly.

Nisith was silently observing his friend Sambith's expressive face. This side Bella couldn't understand what Nisith was talking with an untouchable of the crematorium. Bella, who was bearing the mask of false chastity, could foresee a danger. Under the infinite sky, the tombs of Ramadu grandfather and Tommy on the chest of the widespread crematory ground were silent witnesses to it and were looking towards Sombith, Nisith and Bella.

CIRCUS

The town is very active and mobile. In every chowk, every lane and slum of the town, big posters and banners have been pasted and tied. Vehicles, with their machine sound are moving round the town for advertisement. Loud speakers are roaring – “Watch the Great Roman Circus; it has landed in your town with its wonderful animals and colourful programmes. Daily three shows. Noon show at 2 p.m., evening show at 5 p.m. and night show at 8 p.m.”

Everywhere the only gossip, starting from national highways to the markets, the gossip of the world famous circus – the Great Roman Circus. Their long awaited circus has at last come to the town.

The audience can't find this type of decoration and varieties of games in any other circus. Starting from the shopkeepers to common people, all are excited. Townish Babus will watch the circus with their children. Those people, who have migrated to the town, will invite their family members and other relatives. Besides this, the desire to watch the circus among the villagers is more than the people in the towns. When a circus comes to the town, the village folks become happier. People, from the bathing ghat to hearth, from rice basin to ploughing fields, all talk about the circus – who will go and how they will go to the town to watch the circus.

Then buses and motors run from villages to that infinite looking town carrying children, people and their bag and baggage. The shopkeepers in the town gain back their youthfulness in the greed of accumulating more money. This is the time for them to invite Laxmi – goddess of wealth. Business is business. Like bed bugs they suck the blood of these rural folks. For a thing worth five paise they charge fifteen, with their sweet talk.

Killa Maidan is situated in the suburb of the town. It is the most famous stadium in Orissa. No one knows why it has been named Killa Maidan. Now here there is only a stadium and no pole. Perhaps there was a pole here before. That's why some king or minister has named it as Killa Maidan. Man on this land is not proud of his own work. He is proud of what his father, his grandfather and his great-grand father has done. Putting the stamp of his father and grandfather he identifies and introduces himself to others. To use the name of the forefathers as capital has become a habit of the modern man. One who does not have his forefathers to capitalise on; he blames his ancestors through out his life. He feels himself inferior. This is what is happening in modern civilized tradition. If you want to do something, you need to produce proof about your forefathers who were doing this work. It is not a problem even if the son of the poet on the pretext of composing a modern poem writes the story of a dog, because he is the son of this great poet. It is not a problem even if a doctor new to the medical profession kills as many as patients

he can, because he is the son of that great doctor. Edit a newspaper or whatever you do, you need the identification of your forefathers – otherwise, you will be rotten in that miry pond; your hair may turn gray, but still you will not rise.

Nalu, however is an exception. Neither his father nor his grandfather was the ringmaster in a circus, but Nalu was popular in the Great Roman Circus. To watch Nalu's performance was the main attraction for the audience in the circus. One who hasn't seen joker Nalu cannot claim to have seen a circus in his life. While all the announcements are aired in English and Hindi, Nalu's announcement in Oriya language cheers and surprises the Oriya viewers. Everybody curiously awaits to see that sweet voiced – Nalu.

The Great Roman Circus has spread its tent on Killa Maidan as if a wing has spread on the town. The circus ground is becoming crowded. With lots of beautiful electrified illuminations, the ground looks like a newly married woman. Sweet music of the stereo can be heard from a distance.

Circus is going on. Gallery is crammed with audience. Instantly, music of Hindi song stopped and it was replaced by a sweet melodious voice purely in Smbalpuri language – “Hae kalia mui tote aasiche juhar kari.... “ (Oh! Kalia, I have come to seek your blessings).

Suddenly the tent shook with explosion of clapping. The audience was electrified. The audience shouted – “Nalu ... Nalu, welcome to Nalu” soon after the song, Nalu was on the stage in his colourful dress. The young men left their seats and jumped on to the stage and shook hands with Nalu. Some, in their childish zest, shouted – “Nalu Bhai Ki-Zindabad (Nalu Brother... Zindabad). Three cheers for Nalu Bhai.” The whole audience was coloured with the colour of Nalu. All became Naluish.

Nalu displays his act. By applying colours on his face, he looks like a different man. He puts an artificial nose and expands it. When Nalu carries the fattest woman in the circus on a cycle and after riding the cycle round the stage several times, he acts as if he is dead tired. After some time cycle gets disjointed and the fat woman falls down, she slowly gets up, scolds Nalu for a while then moves towards the exit. Waves of laughter break out on the face of the audience. Sometimes Nalu comes as a magician and announces that if someone touches his magic monkey, his hand will be stuck to the monkey. Some of the girls from the circus come and touch the monkey. Like that many young girls and women act as if they have been stuck to the monkey after touching it. The whole audience laughs and laughs. Nalu's monkey sometimes kisses Nalu and at other time it acts like a doctor and gives him injection. It jumps here and there and disturbs other performers and sometimes it mounts on other animals and takes a ride on them. While displaying the swing game, Nalu's all garment come out one by one save his

underwear. The viewers become exhausted by laughing. Like this Nalu performs a variety of games. In most of his games his monkey Suna becomes his associate actor. Sometimes many women rise onto the stage to congratulate him and they kiss him. Without Nalu, the circus is quite dry. The day the audience comes to know that Nalu is sick the sale of tickets that day goes down. Till the crowd has seen Nalu's game on the stage, it shouts and demands Nalu. If they know this small Roman Circus they know it by the name of Great Nalu and his monkey.

After performing in and outside the country, when Nalu comes to the soil of Orissa, he feels as if his energy is doubled. His age is reduced. Laziness and feebleness in him has completely disappeared. He is intoxicated by his youthfulness. He rolls on the ground for a while in happiness. Like a madman he kisses the ground. Throughout his life he has performed on the stage in and outside the country but the soil of Orissa has some special attraction. The smell of this soil makes him emotional. He speaks the same thing when he briefs the conference. The distant Paris City is insignificant for him. Listening to Nalu's testimonial words, an Oriya, who has migrated, determines to retreat. Nalu says – "Amassing much money is not life. The land where I have spent my life from my birth to till now is more valuable than any land. In alien land you won't find father's blessing, mother's sympathy, sister's loving words, thing you can find in this land. One can buy anything with money but not a heart and intimacy. You cannot buy love and affection." Today's

students may argue that money is everything. One can buy love and affection, even with money. But is their stubborn argument right? This type of love is limited to as long as one has money in his pocket.

The world is growing in years. It hasn't also forgotten to increase the age of Nalu – yesterday's young man. The plump face of yesterday is sunken today. Wrinkles on his face are quite clear. Hair on his head has turned gray. His whole body looks very scraggy. Sometimes his head reels because of weakness. His coughs unceasingly and gets exhausted.

Circus is going on. Nalu is trying his best to display variety of games. But his strength is getting sapped day by day. The ringmaster compels him to perform games even with his fevered body. The ringmaster's sympathetic feeling towards Nalu, who has made the circus world famous is dead and buried long back. Because of Nalu, the circus company has grown beyond expectation. The income has increased three fold. But does the company understand Nalu's needs today? It counts him as a burden for the company. The millionaire ringmaster doesn't spend a single rupee for Nalu's treatment; instead, he deducts from his salary when Nalu complains of his inability to perform on the stage. Once, however, one or two circus men objected to it. Then the ringmaster rebuked them and threatened to expel them from the company. From that day onwards everybody's mouth is shut. Sometimes his colleagues are very much sympathetic with him. But no one is willing to spend a rupee for Nalu's treatment. When it is evening Nalu starts

coughing unceasingly. Now cough has become worse. There is no way this man-killer cough can be treated. There was a time when Nalu was spending his whole salary to entertain the company people. Who else was there for Nalu? His father and mother had already gone to the other world. No brothers and sisters. He asked one of his country cousins to look after his plot of land and came to this circus together with his monkey.

One day Nalu fainted during his performance. His whole body was quite feverish. After all he was a human being and not a piece of log or stone that he won't fall sick. How much could his old age tolerate?

What an inauspicious day it was! No one knows; Nalu's name was removed from the company forever. He was sent off after giving his dues. His beloved monkey was separated from him. But the monkey broke the chain and followed Nalu. Four collies chased the monkey, put the net and caught it. All this was happening in front of Nalu, but he couldn't do anything for his monkey. The company owner is very covetous of this monkey. For some more days he will be able to make money. Nalu couldn't understand how the company owner has possessed his monkey. When he felt a few drops of water falling at his feet, Nalu understood that his friend was weeping. Nalu immediately recollected the lost past. One day when Nalu was collecting '*Mahula*', he saw a monkey kid lonely and brought to his home. Then this little kid was just ten to eleven days old. Lovingly he called it '*Suna*'. From that day onwards they ate and slept

together. When Nalu falls sick, Suna, with its small hands pats and massages him. When Suna is ill, Nalu gives some pocket money to the company veterinarian and requests him to treat Suna well.

The grief of parting with Suna was greater than the grief at leaving the circus. Nalu wiped with his towel the tears from the face of Suna and said – “Be happy..... be happy... I am going. Don't misunderstand me; please forgive me. Take care.”

Human civilization is perverted with anger, pride and deceitfulness. There is no place for love, affection and kindness. However, the animal world is above all these. In response to the little love and affection they receive from their masters, they lick their masters' boots till they die. The responsibility of Suna was given to the one who replaced Nalu. Suna doesn't obey him, he gets angry and goes to bite him. He doesn't take food properly. He is becoming weaker and weaker. Everybody says, the monkey is longing for Nalu.

Ranchi is a big city in Bihar. Circus has gained popularity in the city. One day the monkey jumped from the stage, bit the ringmaster's neck, broke the tent and escaped. Everybody began to say, monkey has finally become mad. After that Suna never came back to the circus.

From time immemorial man has been fighting for his stomach. While the grate people are living to eat, the daily wager class are eating to live. What else has he got in his world? The world famous Roman

Circus has finally gifted Nalu a begging bowl. Sometimes he eats and sometimes he doesn't. There was time when his whole body was covered with medals. But today people close the doors and catch them just for a fistful of rice.

Skeletonized Nalu is living in a broken thatched hut at Telipali village in the district of Sundargarh. A neighbouring girl named Sumi, gave Nalu a little milk to drink and said – “ Do you know uncle, what is the news today?” Sumi read the paper – ‘The owner of the world famous Roman circus, Sujan Singh is dead after being bitten by a monkey.’The sunken eyes of old man Nalu were filled with tears. An animal could avenge where man was defeated. It must surely be his beloved monkey Suna and none else.

One day, the villagers saw an old feeble monkey sitting on Nalu Majhi's verandah. It didn't move from there. They called Nalu. He dragged himself out of his room. When the monkey saw Nalu in front of him, he lay prostrate before him. Nalu hugged Suna emotionally. When the monkey touched and felt all over Nalu's body, tears flooded from his eyes. Non one knows what he actually saw. And Nalu was kissing all over the animal's body. The villagers were observing very closely and learning something from them. Two lives got merged in one. Both the bodies suddenly fell down from the verandah. The villagers saw the circus of their lives completed. Now just two lifeless bodies were lying

there. Villagers who attended Nalu and Suna's funeral pyre shed tears remembering them.

Now, two big tombs stand in the village at the initiative of the youth. One is of Nalu Majhi and the other is of his beloved monkey, Suna. It seems as if they are awaiting and expecting the dawn of a new day.

ABSCONDING *JIVA*

There were ebbs and tides in the office of Dharmraj . Then the eyes of worried and tensed Dharmraj were inflamed with anger. He had been allotting seats in heaven and hell on the basis their deeds. This was his great experience from ages together. But today there's going to be a stain on his reputation.

Chitrugupta, the P.A. of Dharmaraj, was wiping his glasses time and again, turning the pages of the register and scrutinizing the statistics. To err is human ... but the mistake could not be rectified. The angry Chirtrugupta banged the register in such a way that a mosquito got pressed inside and died. He got up and said irritably, "Ah! What a nonsense, while one *jiva* is found missing for ten days another is killed. While scrapping the mosquito out, he intended to say to Dharmraj, "Maharaj! According to the record everything is all right. Mangulia's *jiva* left his body ten days back and our messenger have started their journey carrying his *jiva*, towards the court. But they haven't reached yet."

Dhamaraj asked, "Where are your messengers then?"

"Marajaj! They are uncertain."

At that moment, when a disfigured and famished looking animal was entering the court, Chitrugupta shouted, "Hey! Who is this?" Others

thought that an animal had entered the court. It was not really an animal, but the messenger of Yama. It had wandered here and there without water and food for ten days and was looking scraggy. Shabby clothes. Oh! Horrible figure! Because of fear and mental tension it looked more terrible than ever. Recognising the messenger, Chitrugupta's anger rose to fifth gear. He said "Hey! Where were you for so many days? And where is Mangulia's Jiva?"

The messenger of Yama replied with his folded hands – "Until now I have never been deceived, but for the first time Mangulia's *jiva* has deceived me and has escaped somewhere. Ten days back, when Mangulia's *Jiva* departed his body, I started my journey carrying it towards Summonpuri. When I crossed the city and entered the atmosphere together with him, he suddenly escaped from my fist and disappeared. I haven't found him since then. For the last ten days, I am tired of searching the whole universe but I haven't traced him out."

"Dharmdev roared with anger and said – "Idiot! Then how come this old feeble man's *jiva* could deceive you and abscond."

The messenger prostrated before him and said—"Great experience! I have never been careless in bringing a *jiva*. My hands have seen souls of many a hard and difficult advocates. But never ever has any soul escaped my hands. This time it happened as a miracle..."

'Yes sir,' interrupted Chitragupta and said, "Sir! Don't you understand sir! This type of incident is not uncommon in the world. Look, to facilitate students in the primary schools the government has allotted funds for mid-day meals. But the teachers have stolen rice, dal, salt and oil and have opened up shops. Medicines that come for the patients fly to the medical stores and to other pharmacists. If a few bundles of clothes come from Bombay to Cuttack, Railway officers loot them; all of their family members use them and the rest of it they sell to some business men and make much profit. The political leaders (of the incumbent government) have kidnapped some of the opposition leaders and have hidden them. I doubt if Mangulia's opposition party has not kidnapped his *jiva*."

Dharmraj said sulkily "Chitragupta! Your retirement time has come. If you don't like to work, then take voluntary retirement and rest at your home. How sad! How can there be an enemy of this poor destitute?"

Maharshee Naarad was strolling somewhere and reached the court. Seeing his despair, Naarad asked. "What has happened Dharmraj? Why are you looking so disappointed? What is the problem? Aren't you able to decide whether you will allot someone hell or not?"

Dharmdev answered "No! Mr.Naarad, that has been solved long since. For last some years a few famous 'artists' have come. Among them there are a few contractors, who have amassed so much money

and have constructed buildings with waste materials. A few famous engineers too have come, who, along with the contractors, have eaten up the whole amount of money of five-year plans. There are a few overseers who have taken money by giving false attendance to labourers. We have taken every step that should have been taken to keep them in hell. But a *Phakada Ram Giridhari* named Mangulia died ten days back. Our messenger was bringing his *Jiva* to our office when he deceived him and escaped. The messenger says that he has searched the whole universe but is not able to trace him. If it were like this then what would be the difference between good and evil? Why shall we sit here then? Who will obey us?"

Naarad questioned curiously "Wasn't there any income tax due on him? May be the department of income tax hasn't given him clearance."

Chitragupta said – "No, no, nothing like that. There will be headache only if there is a head."

"What are you trying to say?"

"Sir, there is income tax arises only when there is income. He died of starvation." Naarad said "Okey! Please, give me his bio-data, let me go to the earth and try."

Chitragupta opened the register and saw his bio-data – name – Manguli Bhai, Father – Gadei Bhai, village and P.S. Rajanagar. He lived

with his family in a small broken hut. This is his family, his wife, a son and four daughters. Sixty-two years old, a government servant. He got retired five years back. Hadn't got pension. In hunger, he lost all his strength. Ten days since he died – it may be very difficult for you.

Naarad, the great Rishi said, “When I have taken up the responsibility willingly, you know I am ready for all adversities. It is my responsibility to trace him .”

Naarad, the great Rishi, after taking up the responsibility, *immediately arrived* at Rajnagar village. Mourning and bewailing was heard from a hut in the corner of the village. A woman and her four daughters were crying in one rhythm. Her son was inclining on to the wall and was looking up in the vacuum. Naarad stood in front of the door called up – “Narayana... Narayana...” Young man, who was sitting on the verandah said disgustedly and irritatedly – “Look there! Saala, came from somewhere so early in the morning. Eating and drinking and keeping a plump body and still begging.”

Naarad became normal; the young man has taken him to be a beggar because of his habituated call ‘Narayana’. Naarad said, – “Baba I am not a beggar. I want some information about Mangulia. Please call your mother.”

- “Why should I? Who are you? Are you from some Insurance company or Chief Minister’s relief office or from some

newspaper agencies? Go away, where were you when my father couldn't get his pension and died of hunger?"

Mangulia's wife, hearing her son's voice came out to the door suppressing all her sorrows. Naarad, the great Rishi said, "Mother! Was Mangulia suffering from any disease?"

"Don't speak about that disease Baba! Very fatal disease. He suffered from the disease of hunger. Five years passed waiting for the pension. He starved and starved and ultimately he had to close his eyes. But still he couldn't get his pension. He must have written around five hundred applications in the last five years. However, he didn't get any response. Even if he got, in them there was nothing other than a few words of assurance. In these five years we sold all my ornaments, utensils, land, etc. in the market to feed this little stomach and so we are alive. Now only I am left to be sold. He died due to despair and starvation."

Naarad wanted to sympathise with her and said – "Can anybody change the fate of somebody which have already been predestined?"

"No, no, Babu please don't speak like that. Can you say what to do to this death? You call it death when some one was forced into the ditch of starvation and died. This is murder Babu, murder. Had he got his pension money he would have managed to live for some more days."

Where was time for Naarad to listen to the sorrowful tales of Mangulia's wife. To come to the main topic, he asked, "Mother! Was he in love with some one?"

Mangulia's wife answered, "He loved his children very much."

"No, mother, I am not speaking about children. Outside... somewhere Means what I wanted to ask in with love woman."

Magulia's wife screamed-- "Apparently you look like a saint but in your heart you are a traitor and cheat. If I don't know my husband do you know him better? He has never looked at a woman throughout his life."

Naarad smiled and said – "Whatever you said – mother – it's the quality of a good wife. Okey mother! I must make a move now!"

Magulia's wife replied, "Baba! Now a days Babas are doing wonders. Leaders, starting from center to state level, ministers and bureaucrats, all seek the blessings of Babas to keep their seats unshaken. If you want, we can get our pension. I could feed something to my children."

Naarad, the great Rishi answered – "Neither *math* nor my house is here, mother. Besides that nor do I know wonders like these Babas. Still let me go to Mangulia's office and see what can be done."

After taking farewell from Mangulia's wife, Naarad searched arduously and finally reached Mangulia's office. As soon as he entered he asked the first Babu about Mangulia's case. Baba keenly inspected him and asked --"Who are you? Are you Mangulia's father-in-law or younger father-in-law? Yes, who ever you may be, if you want to know about Mangulia, listen; no doubt, Mangulia has written the applications. But he hasn't kept the some weight over the applications. That's why his applications are flying all over the office room."

Naarad was surprised and said "Applications flying? What a strange thing! There are so many paperweights here. Why don't you keep one of them on the applications?"

Babu smiled and said, – "Application is not pressed under paper weight. You seem to be a Sanyasi. That's why all these things won't penetrate your head. Leave it, go to that Babu." Naard went to him. That Babu sent to another babu, another babu to another, another Babu sent to some other Babu. By that time Naarad Rishi had covered around thirty Babus and finally came to the Big Babu's cabin and was wiping his sweat when he saw the peon drowsing. The peon's eyes suddenly fell on Naarad - "What's the matter, Babu? You are a Babaji why are you breaking your head on this problem? Even if you keep coming till your hair is gray, your work won't be done. You go directly to Big Babu. If you are able to satiate him then your work can be easily done."

Narad Rishi entered the cabin of Big Babu. Big Babu stared at him from toe to head to know who this stranger could be, who had entered the office without any visiting card. He said irritably— Hey Babaji, are you mad. Do you think this is a *math*? Get out, get out; if you cross half a kilometer, you will see a temple. Hey! Babu! Any way you came in, why didn't you send a slip? Are there no rules and regulations in offices?"

Narad Rishi answered – "How could I send Sir! Your peon was also sleeping."

- What is the work? Babu asked in annoyance.

-About Mangulia's pension Sir, Narad answered.

-Big Babu said – "You are a Babaji. You don't know the rules and regulations of functioning of in an office. It is indeed the mistake of Mangulia. You say to me, is this also a temple or not? *Prasad* and *Dakshina* have to be offered. Perhaps you are a relative of Mangulia. Mangulia's applications are flying. Keep weight over it, weight..."

Naarad, the great Rishi was hopeless. Here too the problem of weight. Babu again said, – "Hey Babu! This is a government business, pension case. The files will have to move from twenty to twenty-five offices. The same notice has to be written around twenty to twenty-five times in twenty to twenty-five different places. So it is sure to get delayed.

The servicing changes of the office will be as equal to the amount of pension money. But we can also expedite the work too. But..." Babu stopped there.

Naarad, the great Rishi asked, " Why 'but' sir? Big Babu gave a hypocritical laughter and said –" But, weight is necessary. You aren't able to understand this simple thing. Your precious sitar can also be kept as a weight over Mangulia's applications. My daughter is learning music. So this will be of her great use. True Saraswati will be present in the sitar of sadhu and saints. Isn't it Babaji? Now a days if a girl was to be given in marriage, she should be talented in every field. But my daughter is expert in everything except in the field of music. If she learns this, there won't be any problem for her marriage won't be a problem."

Narrad Rishi was worried a bit, if in really dangerous for his sitar to be separated from him. Later, he controlled himself, took the sitar and kept it on the table and said, – "Take it, but please send the pension order of mangulia soon."

Big Babu pressed the bell and the peon attended. He ordered the peon to get the pension file of Mangulia from the head clerk.

After some time the peon brought Mangulia you to five hundred application sheet filled in five files and kept them on the table. Big babu once more asked Babaji the name of the applicant to confirm.

Naaard thought that Babu's hearing power is less, so he replied loudly - " Manguli Brother."

A voice, suddenly was heard from inside the file – "Who is calling me? Is it postman or special manager? Why... Has my pension order reached?"

Big Babu shuddered and was about to fall from the chair when Naarad caught him. Naarad the great Rishi too was startled. But later he realised everything and said "Are you the *Jiva* of Mangulia?"

A voice was heard – "Yes!"

Naarad, the great Rishi introduced himself and said, – "I am Naarad. I have come to take you. Let's go they are very much worried because you are not there in heaven. Because you are not to be found in heaven."

The voice spoke up – "What is to me if someone is worried? I am hiding insider the pension file. My heart is here. Leaving these applications I can't go anywhere!!! There is no question of leaving the place until my pension is sanctioned please don't irritate me."

A RAY OF HOPE

Gopal Pur is only fifteen kilometers away from Berhampur City. The mountain like waves, caused by the roaring of the Bay of Bengal, seem to be striking their heads against the wide seashore. At a little distance from the sea shore there is a forest of Casuarina trees. Amidst the water, the fishermen children of the king of ocean are playing hide and seek. Hundreds of small vessels are floating in the ocean. Everyday, these fishermen dream for themselves and for their successors. They peep through their nets into the fathomless sea and at the shining silvery water; they search for their golden fish, the only source of their living.

But suddenly everything was dashed against the frantic and ecstatic dance of a giant. The shells slipped from the child's hand, who used to play with them on the heart of the seashore. A small girl, who was catching the dragonflies amidst the bushes was stunned when she saw large number of motor vehicles ran on the road with their machine-sounds. Within no time the Casuarina forest was destroyed. All sand mountains were destroyed. Modern equipments to catch fish skillfully and to construct buildings arrived at near the fishermen's slums. Construction of gigantic and beautiful mansions commenced. The government has given *patta* to these capitalists to construct seventeen hatcheries. In these hatcheries, they will start the business, the business

of prawn, fish, etc., most profitably. The properties of the sea will be exported abroad. Our country's economic problems will be solved forever. The news spread to all the coastal villages like wildfire. The very geography of these villages will be changed. People will also change. A type newness will be felt everywhere. The miserable condition of these labourers and daily wagers will come to an end once for all. They will no longer wash their hands with water. They will eat ghee and wash their hands with milk. They won't even have enough time to count the money.

But the villagers experienced everything contrary to their expectations. The fishermen from the villages guessed; forget about the seventeen hatcheries, even if a single hatchery comes up, it will be a danger to them. Discussions and reviews are going on among the environmentalists, NGO workers and the intellectuals. On the one hand there is the question of the lives of fishermen and their livelihood and on the other there is the devilish desire of businessmen to make much black money. On one side, there is people's vehement protest and to another the pure water is reddened by the bloody attack of the black-business and to another side still there are the slums of their poor fishermen. The salty water of the sea became saltier with tears. The family bonding that had existed between village and village, street and street and among the people was completely lost. The hatchery owner purchased some naughty youngsters from the coastal belt with money, liquor and meat, who joined hands with the goons of hatchery owner and frightened the

local people with their gun point, swords and succeeded in snatching away land from these poor people. Now the slums are steeped with terror. When the voice of protest bursts out, there is also the fear of losing life. The native fishermen are crying out for help. They are tied under the clutches of nefarious politics. The fishermen from the coastal village like Haripur, Bandar, Golabandha, Dishpur and Gopal Pur are mainly from *Kandara and Nolia* community. They used to get merged with the sea. At dawn they are found amidst the salty water of the sea with their nets and vessels and at dusk they are back on the seashore. The sea is their mother and father, relative and bread giver. Let us see! Which uncivilized man can snatch away their occupations of ages? And how can they tolerate it silently?

Ansuman is the son of Radhu Malik from Gopal Pur. He has completed his Master's Degree in journalism. His aim is to write for his fishermen brethren. He will show them the path of survival. He will fight for his brethren's rights with the point of his pen. How can he be silent! The blood of a fisherman father is in him. If he doesn't tighten his wrist at this hour, what is the value of his education?

Ansuman, without any delay, ran to the environmentalists to seek their opinions about the hatchery. Many stated that if hatchery is established the environment at the cost will be completely ruined. There will be imbalances caused in the ecology and it can erode even the sands on the seashore.

The news together with photos and reports of the environmentalists was flashed in many of the newspapers. But the government is silent. Fisherman Revolution Samity was formed taking the natives; and starting from young men and women to old men and women joined hands with Ansuman. Fishermen, leaving aside their vessels and nets, came down to the high ways, demanding their lives and their rights. Many meetings and discussions were convened. Memorandum was submitted; but how can the *Kumbhakarna* slumber of the corrupt administration – Business group nexus be over so soon? The hatchery owner has fed enough to the local MLA and has brought him into his fists, the one, who could have recommended on behalf of the people to the administration. The business groups have promised the MLA both money and muscle powers to ensure his win in the election. Both the administration and the business groups are trying harder to suppress the movement. But the movement, instead of being suppressed is building up its momentum. Meanwhile, the fishermen from Revekbhiru, New Golabandha, Venketrupura, New Baxipalli and Old Baxipalli have joined the movement.

In spite of the capitalists' and the police's severe resistance the meetings are continuing. Many new young men and women like Rajan, Surameya, Chandreya, Lilabati and Bhagya Laxmi have joined with Anshuman and giving leadership to the movement. They all have sworn

to fight till the last drop of blood to dispel this hatchery from the soil of Gopal Pur.

The police arrested around fifty old skeletal looking men and kept them behind bars. Once these old people are kept below the bar, the young ones will also slowly surrender.

The capitalist is to win. But it was futile. Police, instead of keeping them in the jail twenty-four hours, they violated their own rule and kept them for a hundred and twenty hours and released them at the end out of frustration. At the peaceful and calm coast, there began a storm of peacelessness.

The wounded businessmen sought a plan to remove the leaders of the Fishermen Revolution Samiti from their way.

It is fourteen days since the revolution started. For how many days can Ansuman keep his fishermen brethren agitated and excited? Food and mental readiness are at the root of everything. How much Anshuman has to struggle to create mental readiness among them? How many ordeals he has to bear? He has quenched his thirst and hunger merely by drinking water from the Municipality pipes. How much he has run for this, he alone knows...

Whatever little they had stored was disappearing because of leaving work and joining in the movement. What will they do now? How will their children survive? How will their happy days return once again?

The old people have given up. The police have arrested Lilabati, Rajan Chandreya and Bhagya Laxmi. Anshuman is hiding somewhere! No news of Surameya's whereabouts. Yesterday morning Mangula took Suremeya with him. He said, "The owner of the hatchery has called you to negotiate with him. I am not getting anybody else, so you come along with me." Surameya indiscriminate as he is, he is too credulous at heart.

As they were searching to Surameya, one day a police jeep arrived and stopped in front of Surameya's house. Four constables brought down a stretcher, a man sleeping on it, and kept it on the Surameya verandah. While going they said, this is Surameya's body. Police have found him in the bush of screw pine plants. He was caught red-handed while violating a woman's womanhood and poor man had to leave the world forever.

Police van has already left. Hearing the news, people are gathering there. Suramanya's wife, Manikama was bewailing her husband's death. Three of her scraggy children joined her in crying. Manikama's mother-in-law was beating her breast and mourning. Suranmeya's head was separated from his body. The slum of Nulias was full of commotion. There was one single question in the tearful eyes of all, in the pretext of negotiation, the owner of the hatchery had called Surameya to kill him. And his dogs, the police forces have covered up the story. Shit! How barbaric is this! Anshuman stalked in there. Forgetting the fact the police are hunting for him, he came to pay last visit to

surmeya. Manikama and her mother-in-law cried still louder when they saw Anshuman. The fishermen from the neighboring villages are gathering slowly. Seeing Anshuman, most of them were filled with indignation and were ablazed with the fire of anger. Some young men shouted, "Go back, killer! You have no place here. You are wholly responsible for the murder of Surameya!!!"

Anshuman was smoldering within himself. He felt as if someone in his effort to extinguish the fire had poured water on the burning logs. He is producing so much smoke that he is becoming breathless. Still Anshuman did not become breathless. Asking them to hold courage, he said, "This is not the time to accuse each other. If you feel I am responsible for it then I am ready to bear any type of punishment that you give me. Do you think that Surameya is not my brother? All of you are broken at his death. We have to avenge it. Surameya's sacrifice won't go in vain."

An old man came out of the crowd and spoke up – "Whatever has happened has happened! When you have come here make some arrangement for his last rites. Not even a broken pie is there in his house. What will his family and children do now? Have you any answer for this?"

Anshuman was looking at Manikama's face. How will the crowd know, how he has pulled the wool over the police's eyes and has stalked

in here to pay a last visit to his friend Surameya. How he is wanted more than Surameya by the law! Not a single penal code is spared on him.

Anshuman said, "I don't have much time, I have to do a lot, and police is after me." An old man shouted – "What would you do? Hey! What will you do? You can't do anything." Anshuman was helpless and stared at the old man in distress. He said – "Do you want that I be arrested by the police? And let these business groups establish hatcheries over the bones of our beloved Surameya. And I see, in my way back from the jail the unchanging tradition where my fishermen won't be getting their livelihood. And gigantic mansion of the capitalists is raised on the heaps of carcass of these fishermen and the fishermen wandering from door to door, slum to slum with begging bowls."

The old man shouted, "As long as our own people conspire against us just for the sake of some money we can't do anything. Only the history will be repeated."

Anshuman couldn't make out anything. This old man, on the verge of turning to a fossil in the chest of history, was fastening Anshuman with a cobra knot of the past and making the path bloody and slippery in order to impede Anshuman's way. Anshuman questioned, "What do you mean?" "Meaning is very easy, means death! Do you know, my son too was so much excited in protesting when the naval wing was established in Gopalpur. One day, two boys of our street called my son and took him to

the tent. They said “the officer is calling”. My son went but did not return his dead body at last reached. I couldn’t even get back my house plot and little land. I fled to Venketraipur. Today Surameya died. Tomorrow you will die. What do you have except your old father! But others have their families and children.”

Mainkama came forward like a thunder. A grave and resilient voice came up – “The funeral ceremony of my husband is my responsibility. Why are you blaming Anshuman Babu for this? Whatever he is doing is for our well-being. Do you feel that after Surameya’s sacrifice we will stop our revolution? Instead we should carry further the revolution initiated by Surrmeya. Surameya used to say,” No pain, no gain.” Surrmeya is dead but Manikama is still alive.”

Anshuman saw in the heart of Manikama the terrible future of a storm of fire and an inextinguishable flame. Manikana’s blustering decision filled warmth in the motionless manhood of Anshuman.

The whole crowd stared at Manikama; they all with our voice shouted, “We will take Surameya’s corpse in a procession through the whole town. It is better to fight for our rights and our motherland and die a brave man’s death than rack in starvation in the coming days and die a coward’s death.” Some others responded, “Yes! Yes! We will die but will not hand over our sea and its seashore to these capitalists.”

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Meanwhile the *Kokei* was ready. An old man extended the *Boria* to Anshuman and said, "Take it my son, hold this *boria* fire, and burn this whole civilization, which, in the name of civilising, snatches away man's birth-rights and reduces the labourers to a deplorable state. Set fire to the fearful complex in us and to the heinous desire to live a life of compromise regardless of a hellish state of life."

The procession entered the town after crossing from one slum to the other. Slogans were raised "Fisherman Unity Long live. Martyr Surameya live forever-forever; Government your hatchery establishment won't work – won't work; if it works – there will be fire."

Thousands of fishermen were walking in the procession demanding their rights to live. Anshuman at the forefront. The symphony of the people reverberated in the sky and the air. Suddenly Anshuman was flatted down by the police bullet. Manikama ran and held Anshuman. She tore her sari and pressed the wounded portion of his body. She saw the bullet had penetrated across his chest. He extended the *Boria* fire into the hands of the old man and said struggling, "Don't worry for me. Please go ahead, I am not dying, I will come back, I am not dying, I you; you and I, all, I can't die, can revolution ever die? Go ahead! Inqalaab zindabad."

The procession was moving forward. Thousands of fishermen raising their demand for livelihood out bursting their throat. Manikama

was at the back. The flag, reddened with Anshuman's blood was flying in Mannikama's hand!!!

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DECAYING HORIZON

It was Sunday, time was around eight a.m. Professor Malay Ranjan Chawdhary slept that day for more than the usual time. Bell rang up. His wife Sulaxyana opened the door. Entering the house Sribascha Babu greeted her and asked "Sister in-law, is Malay there?"

- Yes, yes, he is very much there! Please have a seat I shall call him.
- Hasn't Babu got up yet?
- Not yet. He came back from Delhi yesterday only, so he is very much exhausted. But will he sleep when you are here?
- Then let it be there sister-in-law, I shall meet him some other time.
- "No, no! What are you saying?" Saying that she would call him Sulaxyana went inside. After five minutes, Malay Babu came to the drawing room wiping his face and hands with a towel. "Good morning!" He greeted Sribascha and shook his hands with him. Malay Babu is very talkative. Even though he is a professor of History, his friends jeeringly call him as professor of Psychology. Malay smilingly asked him – "What man? Have

you forgotten the way to my house? No where to be seen. Okey, forget about it; how are you? How is your health? Are you alright?"

- Why will there be any problem with my health?
- That means something else has happened.
- Don't you know anything?
- What is there to know? I guess you had some misunderstanding with sister-in-law?
- No man nothing like that.
- Official matter!
- "Quite astonishing! What serious official matter that you are so depressed. Mind it, leave the official matter in the office. What is the necessity of bringing it back home?"
- "You are right, but... this is not one of those official matters. This is not a matter to be left in the office. This is so serious that not only in Orissa but has stirred whole India. All the newspapers of the country, big or small, are colouring it exaggeratedly. I, as an administrative officer, am held responsible for this "
- Hey! Tell me the incident frankly.

- Don't you know this? The revival of Devadasi system in Shreetemple (Jagannath temple).

"Okey! Is this the matter? Why are you people after the revival of rotten culture, let me know? I had read it in the newspapers that you had come to take interview on it. It was also heard that your administrative staff had hot arguments with the news correspondents who come to you seeking for an explanation of your statements."

- These all are their tricks.
- Tell me whether there were interviews or not.
- No!
- "I heard some of them want to serve as part time Devadasi. They want to finish their service during daytime and return home. What you can guess from this."
- What else can be apprehended from this? Part time is part time.
- "But what I guess is that they too have some doubts on this Devadasi culture. Fear too. They are well aware of the scandalous history of Devadasi culture. Still they want to pretend that they are the wives of God himself, so they put on this beautiful mask of Devadasi."

- “How can you say to the glorious culture of Devadasi system scandalous.”
- “Yes, I must say this. I will say thousand times. The servants in the temple keep Devadasis in the name of Lord Jaggannath and enjoy themselves. If this is not a scandal what else is it? You are not illiterate. If you people encourage this, knowing the reality very well, what can one do? Do you know the matter of this last August? A Devadasi from Sialdar’s Krishna temple in West Bengal became pregnant. Throughout the country Newspapers printed this news on the front page – “Shrikrishna became a father.” In reality, is Srikrishna the father of the child in the womb of that Devadasi? If the answer is no, it means one of these authorities or the servants of the temple must be the culprit. What is going on in the temples in the name of Devadasi.”
- Oh! She is the servant of God. Devadasi, she is the servant, and she is the priestess. Each of them is like a fragrant garland round God’s neck. God’s house is their world in this life. That is their heaven, earth and hell. They are fastened with the strings of religion.
- “Shut up Sribascha! Don’t try to gloss over the truth. How far it is justified to bind a young girl around the neck of a mere rock,

a girl, who doesn't know the definition of God. She is created so beautifully. She has a lot of dreams, wishes and hopes. Is it right for these touts of religion, not understanding the language of her heart, to leave her in the temple to smoulder throughout her life? She can't look at any man except God. She is not to dream, not to love. Their boundary is far from motherhood. Now, you tell me – in spite of the strict rules of the scriptures, hasn't Devadasi ever gone astray in the history of Devadasi?"

- May be. But Devadasi system is a unique system in the Jagannath culture. And this Jagannath culture is a great culture.

Malay laughed. Can you tell me which portion of the scripture permits this Devadasi system? There was a day when this same question was raised by Madan Mohan Malaviya. In your language Devadasi is symbol of light. But under that light of holiness, sin's thick palpable darkness has accumulated for centuries together. And Devadasi is thrown midst that palpable darkness. She has forgotten everything. Her inner heart has become prickly by her scandalous way of life and her deplorable tales. How pitifully she hits her head against the wooden statue and beats her breast and bewails! But who is there to heed her unexpressed words of the helplessness her inner heart. Still she has been dancing for ages and her jingling sound of her anklets draws on the floor the tearful kisses of discontent. For centuries the smouldering voice

of agitation has been modulated. Who has kept an account of it? And you! You want to resurrect the venal culture from the tomb of the past. Suddenly, Malay Ranjan became quite emotional. He went and opened up a page of history of recent past....

In 1702, Hobson Jonson, a European, seeing Devadasis, commented- these are "Bayadere" dancing girls. A record of Hundreds of years of a civilized culture, the mute witness of the old tradition of thousand of years has been shattered in the eyes of a blue-eyed European. Ms. Meyo, another foreigner was never hesitant to pass stern criticism on the holiness of Devadasi and its tradition, in her book "Mother India." In 1870, another renowned Dance Philosopher Dr. Shot, opined that because of severe poverty this was a means perverted way to sell their bodies. Once the Portuguese visitor Dominigo pious who came to Vijayanagar kingdom during the region of king Budhadev Ray, commented on his Travelogue (1520-22) that Devadasis look like fairies. But they are characterless.

How this Devadasi tradition took the epicurean form of a commodity; terrible is its history! In 1290 while Marcopolo was travelling in South India, he saw Devadasi in various temples and narrated in its absolute reality their deplorable condition – these Devadasis are a naked Urbashree.

Devadasi chapter is not over there. Dubeya lived in Madras in 1792. After living there for seven years he shifted to Mysore and he commented that he saw lakhs and lakhs of Devadasi living in these two states. These Devadasis were very beautiful and were expert in the field of singing and dancing. Automatically man's eyes were attracted towards them. During that time venal culture of Devadasi system was swollen to burst a day as sewerage in Madras. This is very fresh in our memories. In 1928, in other words just sixty-seven years back, it was observed that there were around two lakh Devadasis. At the hint of Sribascha, Malay became normal and again started speaking unceasingly "..... You will be surprised to learn Mr. Sribascha; this Devadasi culture was hereditary among the Baikalaha (Weavers) community of coiambatore. Atleast one female child of their family was forced to go to those four walls of the temple to become a Devadasi. With all the garden of her body, before spring touched her life, she had to embrace most painful and austere life. The youth in her hit against the walls in distress. Devadasi smeared vermilion on her forehead, applied collyrium on eyes lashes, lac-dye on feet, a garland around the neck, turmeric on her body and sandal paste on her body considering this statue as her husband. When the tide came in the seashore of her age, cold overshadowed her life. She was useless for the statue. She had to forsake her wooden husband whenever she got a chance. Then she turned an untouchable who was the beloved of yesterday.

“Do you know Sribascha! How pitiful is this Devadasi’s life song? Dubeya had witnessed with his own eyes a bristling sight. In course of time a Devadasi of Tirupati temple grew old. Her deer like eyes had lost all its charm now. Her eyeballs projected in pitiful appeal. She was standing just like cow. The priest came in front of her. He would extend a farewell greeting to her. Poor woman, forgetting her own self, she lost spring of her youth. Because of her sincerity in the past, the Badapanda would give her a valediction on this occasion. What would be the form of this farewell? The tears turned ice rolling down from this aged woman who had hardened her heart like a stone. The Badapanda was searing a hot reddened iron on her thighs and her chest. No, no, who told this is a searing, it is a seal of Lord Tirupati’s love for her. This is a proof that once she was a Devadasi. In the shellac of pain, I feel agitated, her sorrowful past is a fable today. Her grayish sigh is history today.”

“Can you tell me? Who made the temple a living place of prostitutes? Who made these delicate stalks worm-eaten? Who? Who forced these beautiful virgins to lead a stinking hellish life? Who plucked them from the garden of the world and dumped them in the beautiful mirage of the scripture?”

- “Who else? Their religious faith!” Sribascha answered. By then Malay had become too much sentimental. Tears were flowing from his eyes. Still he did not stop – “No, no this is not due to their religion faith nor is it a miracle done by their gods. This

flesh and blood carrying man is solely responsible. His craze for religion and greed for a son. He desired a son and left his daughter within those four stone walls and returned. Even after the pleasure of getting a son he never took the pain to keep in touch with his daughter, whom he had left inside the solitude of religiosity -- what his innocent daughter is doing, about her health. Like this, lakhs and lakhs of fathers have sacrificed precious lives of their daughters in the last thousands of years. They have become servants at the altar of religion. They have turned dancing girls in the temples. They have become Devadasi in the temple. Not only this, a Chinese visitor Choi Ju koya has described the story of Gujarat in the 13th century. During that time a tradition was set up centering around four thousand Buddhist temples. A beautiful culture of singing and dancing. Around twenty thousand of Devadasis kept this practice alive.

She sang and danced for centuries after centuries. She engrossed herself in the activities of the temple. She offered her youthful life to some unknown God. She is that Devadasi who couldn't have a dream remaining inside the stony cage. Her hopes were dashed against the ground. For ages she has forgotten the happiness of the world, and love of her family. She has completely forgotten her own self. Has she herself

illingly arrived here on this great stony Puri, sacrificing all her desires for worldly pleasures? Now you tell me, is it not a disgraceful tradition?"

- "Yes, you might be right, but can anybody ever willingly....."
- Before he could complete, Malay Ranjan shouted "You still feel that lakhs and lakhs of people had the willingness to be like that ! Very few might have come willingly. They were called as married ones. Many innocent destitutes were sold as Devadasis. They were called as defeated. They were sacrificed in the desire of male child. They were the lord's servants. They were known as slaves. Those who, sacrificing their illusions of worldly pleasure, were choosing a life of detachment and indifference in the valley of religion; they were teased as devotees. Those young pretty girls, who were stolen and forced to become Devadasi are now themselves well known as thieves. Another group of Devadasis was called as Shiva's prostitutes. These prostitutes danced for gods, sang for gods; they sang for it and were paid too. And those were left out were well educated famous singers and good professional dancers. They were the kingly offerings in the temples. They were trained by the king and were gifted to gods and goddesses. There were called ornaments."

After listening to Malay's protracted arguments, Sribascha asked, "Then you show me the way? Whatever may be, people's religious sentiments cannot be hurt."

"Why will they be hurt? You want to receive a venal culture, full of superstition, which once had polluted the society, whose stains are still irreparable. There was a day when Devadasi tradition used to be swollen like a pregnant river. It flowed from the temple to palace from a destroyed village to the city. Man's selfish interest is exposed in the name of God. Grayish fraudulence is created on the pretext of religion. In the course of time this Devadasi tradition was polluted."

Patting on Malay's back, Sribascha said, "I have had enough of scolding. Tell sister-in-law to prepare lunch here. Will we be getting something to eat or not, sister in law?"

- Sulaxyana answered, "I have already thought of it. After a long gap you have visited our home, how can I let you go like that."

Malaya asked Sulaxyana for two cups of tea. He said to Sribascha, "You are taking it as scolding. This is not a matter between you and me alone. This is the problem of entire Orissa and India. A question is raised why the revival of such heinous culture? I will strongly oppose this, even if I am to be hanged."

- "Oh! Brother, you all are learned people. It's our duty to respect your ideology but, there are some "so called learned" who in the name of religion, are creating illusion among the common people and inciting them. Now, every body, starting from the administration to temple servants, even God himself want to revive the Devadasi tradition. Can you tell me, what is the solution?"

Like the drowning person clinging even to the smallest straw, imperialism is desperately searching for a place of refuge. The Persian revolution had buried these despicable tradition which we ourselves are trying to revive; We are trying hard to turn our history in the imitation of the west. The wave of this reaction is stirring in every nook and corner of India. The language of these waves, hitting their heads against the shore in the demolition of Babri Masjeed, the revival of Sati system in the north India and the revival of Devadasi system in Orissa today.....

"Solution! Only one solution!" saying this Prof. Malay Ranjan went towards the corner holding his fist tight, where the world map was hanging. He looked as if with a punch, he was going to burry the imperialism on the map itself...

Sribascha and Sulaxyana were staring at Malay's two raised tight fists. The Smiling rays of the rising sun of the morning was falling on the floor of the drawing room crossing through the panes of the windows.

GLOSSARY

Aludam : A type of curry made of parched potato.

Baba : Popular form of address for father in Orissa.

Bada Babu : Police officer of the rank of inspector in-charge of police station.

Bada Osha : Bada Osha is essentially a major occasion of fasting, but in coastal Orissa thousands of people gather at Dabaleswar Temple of Lord Mahadeva in rocky islands in the midst of the river Mahandi near Cuttack for fulfillment of wishes. It is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the bright fortnight of the lunar month of Kartika (September - October).

Badadanda : The sacred road in front of Lord Jagannath temple in Puri.

Badapanda : High priest of Jagannath temple in Puri

Badipada : A person who sits idle at home and is considered worthless.

Badipashā : Person who interferes in others' family affairs and causes quarrels.

Baijeehandi : Those cooking pots which are thrown at the time of woman's menstruation period because these are considered as polluted.

Bhasmasura : One who causes his own destruction. Bhasmasura, a devil in Hindu Epics had got a boon from God that anybody he puts his hand on will turn to ashes, caused his own destruction by putting his hand on his own head under the influence of Vishnu disguised as the beautiful dancing lady.

Bhoga : Offering to God by the devotees.

Bombayah : To make something completely in the style of Bombay.

Boria : A plait of straw twisted to preserve fire.

Chakrabyuha : A kind of battle formation which symbolises conspiracy and intrigue, which defies the rules of the battle. For example what the Kauravas did to kill Abhimanyu, son of Arjun in the Mahabharata.

Chhupadhi : A cemented concrete place built around a tree situated in any corner of a street or village. This is used for chit-chat, gossip, recreation, also to discuss politics, problems of the village, etc.

Ganga Maa : Mother Ganga Goodess. She is primarily worshipped to purge away all the sins.

Gotra : An equivalent of lineage system.

Hukum medicine : Belief in the cure of diseases with the help of magical objects and recitation of magical spells.

Jiva : Soul.

Jogini Khia : 'Let the witchcraft devour you'- a curse given particularly by females in Orissa to scold someone .

Kandara : A scheduled caste community whose occupation is fishing.

Karanas : [writers community]Name of a caste in Orissa which comes after Brahmins in the hierarchical order.

Kokei : A ladder like contrivance made of pieces of six bamboo to carry a corpse.

Kumar Purnima : The full moon day of the lunar month of Ashwina brings untold pleasures to the unmarried boys and girls, in whose interest and for whose wellbeing worship of the Moon God is held at home. Truly, like the human maternal uncle, 'Janha Mamu' (Moon, the Maternal uncle) brings them not only various delicacies but also new clothes.

Kumbhakarna : Brother of Ravana in the Ramayana who was known for his peculiar character of sleeping continuously for six months. No noise could wake him up when he was asleep. This word is metaphorically used to indicate the heedlessness of the bureaucrats.

Maal : A colloquial word to describe the beauty of girl.

Mahula Tree : A kind of tree, the flower of which is used to prepare country liquor [Mahuli]

Mangala Maa : Mother Mangala in the name of a village deity in Orisa who is worshipped primarily to protect the villagers from every natural calamity, epidemics. She is also worshipped for the well-being of the village.

Nolia : A scheduled caste community whose occupation is fishing.

Patta : A govt. document concerning the ownership of land.

Phakand Rama Giridhari : A pauper.

Pindadana : A ritual performed by the offspring for the deceased ancestors father for their salvation.

Pohada : The period when Lord Jaganath rests.

Poi : A type of green stem and leaf used as vegetables

Puchi : A type of game played particularly by girls.

Raizala : A curse used particularly by females in Orissa to scold menfolk. Raizala literally means "let you be burnt in the funeral fire."

Rajadoli : One of the most popular festivals of Orissa. The first day of the Raja festival always falls on the last day of the solar month of Jaishtha. It continues for three days. It is believed, the Earth Goddess had started to menstruate on the first day of the Raja; after the third day she is to take a ritual bath and return to normalcy. During the period of menstruation the earth is to be avoided like a woman during her periods. During these days people refrain from walking barefoot, digging, ploughing and even cooking on

earthen hearths. Practically for three days there is complete stoppage of work and especially boys and girls take to the swing and sing the typical Raja songs in the form of duets. Singing, merry making, feasting and display of gymnastic feats and playing games becomes most important preoccupation for these three days. Instead of rice they take rice cake or other food before the evening sets in.

Sana Babu : Police officer of the rank of Sub-Inspector.

Santula : A kind of curry with mixed vegetables without any spice.

Saradhabali : Sacred sand of Puri.

Thanna Babu : Police officer, in charge of police station, of the rank of Inspector.

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