# TRANSLATION OF SURENDRA MOHANTY'S EIGHT ORIYA SHORT- STORIES. 

(FROM THE ANTHOLOGY OF RUTI O' CHANDRA)

Dissertation Submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of<br>MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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## CERTIFICATE

Certified that this dissertation entitled "Translation of Surendra Mohanty's eight Oriya Short- Stories (From the Anthology of Ruti o' Chandra)" submitted by Babul Naik, centre for Linguistics and English, SL, J.N.U, New Delhi, for the partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is an original work and has not been submitted so far, in part or full, for any other degree or diploma of any university. This may be placed before the examiners for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

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Prof. R. S. Gupta
(Supervisor)

## 70 <br> MUMMY \& PAPA

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## INTRODUCTION

No literary product is either produced or received in a vacuum. To make any reading meaningful, the text has to be located in a definite socio-cultural context and seen from a particular ideological position. This chapter attempts to describe cultural context that generated the stories and to build up a theoretical framework which would facilitate a detailed discussion of the eight Oriya short-stories that have been translated into English for this dissertation. Before coming to the subject I would like to briefly discuss literasy translation, the essence of translation and why I chose translation of some Oriya short stories for my M.Phil. dissertation.

Translation is a form of the message and translators take particular delight in being able to reproduce stylistic specialities, e.g., rhythms, rhymes, play on wards, chiasmus, parallelism, and usual grammatical structures. The new focus however, has shifted from the form of message to the response of the receptor. Therefore, what one must determine is the response of the receptor to the translated message. This response must then be compared with the way in which the original receptors presumably reacted to the message when it was given in its original setting. Translation is, of course, a rewriting of an original text. All rewriting, whatever their intention, reflect a certain ideology and a poetics and as such manipulate literature to function in a given society in a given way. Rewriting is manipulation, undertaken in the service of power, and its positive aspect can also help in the evolution of a literature in a society. Rewriting can
introduce new concepts, new genres, new devices, and the history of translation is the history also of literacy innovations and of the shaping power of one culture on another. But rewriting can also repress innovation, distort and contain, and in an age of ever increasing manipulation of all kinds, the study of the manipulative process of literature as explified by translation can help us toward a greater awareness of the world which we live.

Translation is the transfer of meaning of a text (which may be a book or a word) from one language to another for a new readership. No definition would appear to be more obvious or straightforward than the one which is regrettable but understandable for several reasons. Firstly, meaning can be synonymized only by 'sense' or 'significance' or 'purport'. As soon as it is defined (the purpose intended by a written or spoken statement), it splits up into qualifications and reservations. Is the meaning the full content or the (elocutionary) message to the reader? Are we talking about denotative meaning or connotative meaning or both? Or elocutionary or pragmatic meaning? ('Game or Match')? or sound as meaning ('the murmuring of innumerable bees')? Or the meaning is nonsense? Secondly, nothing can take place in a social vacuum: what is the 'context of situation', when is the text being translated, and for whom? Thirdly, the act of translation is strictly (completely, precisely, perfectly, correctly) not possible, however, necessary it may be. So perhaps 'as accurately as possible' should be added with keeping approximately the same length, to reproduce the impact'. Fourthly, the definition of translation, including the sense of the term 'meaning', is merely academic if the text is defective, untrue, illogical, badly written, harmful, factually, or
linguistically inadequate-in which case the translation may or may not become a correction of the original.

Translation is a 'complex use' of the 'complex phenomena' - language. By practicing better than preaching Nida concludes: "It is obvious that insights from linguistic theory have provided important help for those interested in the scientific analysis of translation. It would seem equally evident that the scientific analysis of translation can provide important insights and correctives, for various theories of linguistics". In fact the relevance of the study of translation can not be better described than this.

The concept of translation has provided excitement for both philosophers and linguists. Their observations are mainly focused on issues around the possibility and determinacy of translation, translatability and expressibility. Although our concept of translation has considerably been influenced by a number of researchers in the field. For the purpose of correlation to the main theme of the paper, references are made only to a few of them.

No reader can either master all the languages or have experiences, sensitivities and language command similar and equal to a creative writer. It is indeed a pity that the human beings can not communicate with each other for lack of a common language. It is impossible for any one person to know the various national and international languages. Therefore, for intellectual pursuits, political unification and religious harmony, translations were constantly needed. They established our links and contacts with our past and put us in contact with many familiar and unfamiliar cultures of today. Hence translations meant not only changing the languages but introducing new cultures also. The ease or
difficulty in these translations depended on the closeness or aloofness the concerned cultures and languages.

A language is not merely a collection of words but it represents a total development and history of the linguistic and cultural gaps or lacunae between two countries. Actually what the translators have attempted, is to explore the possible ways of filing the lacunae to the best of their ability and sincerity. Of course, this depends on how wide or narrow those lacunae are and any attempt to make literal or casual renderings by not curing for these gaps did not produce worthwhile translations.

Basically the problem in translation arise because of the relationships between the two concerned languages. Before undertaking any translation work, it is imperative to know how two languages stand vis-a-vis each other and what are the degrees and areas of their intimacy or non-intimacy distance.

Two languages are considered to be closely related when their grammatical structures, idioms and vocabularies are common to a great extent. For example, Hindi and Urdu are said to be sisters and are closely related. Malalayam and Telugu are distantly related and Oriya and Bengali are closely related and English and other European languages are non-related languages vis-a-vis Hindi and other Indian languages. Translation from one Indian languages into another, has no doubt its problems but they are never so outstanding and glaring as when translating from one European language into an Indian language or vice versa. Their cultures, grammars, idioms and sources are poles apart. We may have lived together for centuries and borrowed innumerable words and habits from each other but still our languages remain
unrelated. There were movements when first Persian and English civilizations and literatures almost electrified us and our sanskrit works and Indian way of thinking and arguing dazzled them. Still there were difficulties in transformation not because of the outer problem of word substitution but because of the differences in our psyches, the inner world of thoughts and the differences in grammatical structures.

Translations do much, but they can never substitute the originals. It is far easier to mis-understand an original if its translation is not faithful and intelligible. Those who translate know how difficult it is to do justice to certain touches of genius which only a creative writer is able to give. The greater the excellence of the writer, greater is the translator's confusion because the original becomes beyond his reach. A literacy masterpiece can remain intact only in its original language and environment.

The art and technique of translation has provided a lot of excitement to writers and linguists alike. The above mentioned examples are given mainly to indicate the degrees of possibilities of expressibility and non-expressibility between related and non-related subjects. Study of translation as a subject is still a young discipline and a quasi-virgin territory in India. The readers of translate belong not only to different language groups but also to different cultural groups. In most cases, the reader does not know the original language. He reads the translation because he is not familiar with the other cultures and wants to know about it. Therefore, if the translations of various un-familiar elements of that culture provide him with a complex, inaccurate and confusing information, his purpose is defeated. He wants to know and understand what the other are
thinking and how and where they are living. If the translator does not make the translation real and alive to his readers, all his toils and endeavor can go waste. He is obliged to approach his author with a loving spirit and inspire faith in-his readers. The readers do not care if the two languages are related or non-related. It is the translator who burns his midnight oil but the reader has the choice to enjoy it be it midday or midnight.

Sorting out the theoretical and practical problems while translating from Oriya was a challenge by itself. The final section dwells on these problems enumerating several cultural, lexical and syntactic units that posed practical difficulty. Also, an attempt has been made to articulate the ideological issues involved in the act of translation, and explain the ways in which these have been negotiated by the present translator.

In the late forties, short-story came into its own in Oriya Literature. Prominent writers like Gopinath Mohanty, Surendranath Dwivedi and Surendra Mohanty contributed a lot to the field of Oriya literature. Being inspired by World War II and Marxism, Surendra Mohanty interpreted everything ideologically. Basically, Surendra Mohanty's short stories are the ideological differences between the upper class people and the lower middle-class people, the most neglected sections of the society. Marxism has changed the dimension of the Oriya literature. - Being inspired by the October Revolution and World War II, the Oriya short story writers introduced a new trend in literature. Lofty ideas and noble thoughts of the Oriya intellegesia promised to bring a change in the society. That conveyed their messages to form a classless society through the short stories. Marxism has changed the dimension of the typical Oriya society.

Surendra Mohanty, a journalist, novelist, critic, and short story writer incorporates his ideas and thoughts in his writing. Being inspired by Marxism, he always raises his voice against the opportunistic classes of the society and wants to bring an equilibrium in the society. He always fights for the rights of the deprived sections of the society. In his short story Ghaniara Ganesh Chaturthi, he clearly reflects his ideas and urge for a classless and casteless society. In this story, Ghania, an untouchable fifteen years boy, works as a daily labourer. He left schooling at an early age because of the premature demise of his father. Poverty, hunger forced the parentless child to work as a bonded labour. Once, on the day of Ganapati Puja, he was interested to go to his old school to celebrate the puja. But the school teacher did not allow him to go inside because he was an untouchable. This kind of discriminations is reflected clearly in the short stories of Surendra Mohanty. In his story Mahanagarira Ratri, Chandra, a prostitute of forty years decorates herself to satisfy her clients. Chandra does not choose this career to fulfill her incestuous desires but poverty and hunger have compelled her to choose this profession. She adopts this most hazardous profession to earn her livelihood and she wants to survive by means of this most hated job. Surendra Mohanty presents a live picture of the sufferings, worries, anxiety and ordeals of the poor Oriya's people and wants to bring about a change in the society. He had an inspirational and towering personality through his writings.

I have chosen eight Oriya short stories to translate from the anthology of Ruti $0^{\prime}$ Chandra of Surendera Mohanty for my dissertation. These eight short stories are: Ruti O' Chandra, Underground, Sanghrilla, Bali, Nitya Vartamana

Kala, Balloon, Swapnare Mandodari, and Dinosaurara Atma, In this section I would like to give a brief description about all the short stories as well as difficulties which I have faced during translation from the Oriya language in to the English language.

Surendra Mohanty was unique in his indigenous literary style. Some stories are simple and rustic, free from rhetorical donation and artificial splendor. We find the union of emotion and wit. Intellect and ideologies in his stories. Life is the main hymen of his stories. Often the stories have political overtones. In the changing trends of short stories Surendra Mohanty is unique. He depicts his tragic and miserable experiences in the stories. Almost all his stories are based the social, political, and economic conditions of the contemporary Oriya society. The task of translating the eight short stories from the Oriya text is undertaken in order to transmit the narratives to a readership resumed to be unfamiliar with the source language and which does not belong to the Oriya cultural domain. Distinct socio-cultural indices that occur in the text are transported into the domain of the target language by adopting various methods discussed later in this sections. Certain cultural phenomena of the Oriya society, even though absent in the English cultural environment and therefore, difficult to translate may still be widely prevalent and commonly shared in various parts of India, and thus be recognizable to the Indian reader who may not otherwise belong to the Oriya milieu. This brings into focus the question of target readership.

The readers of the translation should possess satisfactory competence over the English language and be familiar with the Indian cultural traditions,
especially the commonly shared customs and values in our country. But this does not necessarily preclude a global readership provided the non-Indian reader has endeavoured to acquaint herself with the socio-cultural history and literary traditions in India and particularly in Orissa. Thus, the translation demands of the reader a translation of herself into the socio-historical ethos of Oriya. The text, through translation, has not been domesticated into a pan-Indian or 'Universalist' mode; rather, effort has been made to preserve their regional grain.

Cultural inclusively attains a crucial dimension in the given situation of English as the target language. If the original text was to be translated into any other Indian language, discovering parallel cultural indices in the target language would not have been difficult all the time because different regions and languages in India recognize some affinities in social practices and modes of linguistic expression. In translating into English, however, the search is imperative due to the exclusivity of the spheres of cultural experiences between the source language and target language.

The backdrop of the title Ruti O' Chandra has significance of its own in the first short story. Generally the word 'Ruti' stands for 'bread' and the word 'Chandra' stands for 'moon' in English. Here, in this short story, Lalita, the protagonist claims that the materialistic man lives to eat. He desires to earn more and more bread for his livelihood. The use of the word 'Ruti' in Oriya is also quite familiar to the other Indian languages. Even if in 'Hindi' and 'Urdu' people says 'Roti' but it has a separate identify in English. Even though the use of 'Chandra' in Oriya is quite familiar in other Indian languages. Generally
'Chandra' stands for love. In the Story, Lalita asks Binod, What did Marx says about the Moon? The moon in that night already emerges the sense of love in Lalita's mind. Binod did not respond towards it and Lalita said, "What the hell! the materialistic society made the man to search 'bread and butter' and not love". Money and wealth is the aim of their life and they do not feel the essence of love. Love and livelihood is the main theme of the story. So, I have decided to title the story as 'love and livelihood' instead of 'the bread and the moon'. Here, bread is more important for the human being than moon.

Words like 'Chaitanyankora tilak' and 'Navin Natabara besha' have been retained in order to preserve the cultural specificity instead of giving neat and sanitized English versions of the term. Here the literal meaning of 'Chaitanyankara tilak' is the sectarian mark on the forehead of Chaitanya of Nadia. In medieval India, the Sri Chaitanya cult had a significant role in the religious movement. The Vaishnavite movement is very well known, in the Indian society. Sri Chaitanya is famous everywhere in India. The followers of Sri Chaitanya cult are known for the sectarian mark i.e. 'tilak' on their forehead. Here, they can be sometimes referred to as 'saints'. In the story 'Ruti $\mathrm{O}^{\prime}$ Chandra', once comrade Binod was in love with a girl. The girl was from a very rich family. Her father was a pure bourgeois and did not like the comrades at all. He opposed their love affairs. He said, he may choose a follower of Sri Chaitanya of Nadia or a saint as his son-in-law but not a comrade. So, in place of 'the follower of Sri Chaitanya of Nadia', I have used the word 'saint'. But my objective is to preserve the cultural specificity of Orissa.

Another word 'Navin Natabara' in the same story, generally refers to Lord Krishna. Natabara is the nickname of Lord Krishna. Lalita, in a full moon night was composing a song. She interprets the moon as the symbol of love. She informs the moon, the distance between you and me came to an end and the lord of my heart you knocked at my door in the guise of Lord Sri Krishna. You came to embrace me and to love me in this moon lit night.

Though the second story, The Underground is modelled on Marxian thoughts and ideologies, but Surendra Mohanty has derived some words form the Indian mythology. Words like, 'Dadhichira Asthi', 'Bajra', 'Brahma Rakshyasa'and 'Samudra Manthonobhutta Laxmi.' Generally, 'Dhadhichira Asthi' stands for the 'Skeleton of Dadhichi' and it has a mythological significance. 'Bajra' stands for the thunderbolt. Demon Vritta was a great threat for the earth. His exploitations and oppressions were totally unbearable. Then all the gods requested sage Dadhichi to donate his bones so that they could make a strong weapon, the great thunderbolt, to kill demon Vritta. In this story, Shyamal wants to be martyr like sage Dadhichi. He wants to sacrifice his life, like sage Dadhichi, for the upliftment of the downtrodden. He wants to promote others happiness by promoting his unhappiness. He does not mind be will a martyr. Surendra Mohanty interprets another mythological word 'Samudra Manthanabhutta Laxmi' to depict the Oriya cultural identity in a different shape. Goddess Laxmi emerged from the sea after the cosmic churning. She emerged from the sea with poison in one hand and nectar in the other. Laxmi gave nectar to the gods and poison to the demons. Like that, Lalita, the main character of the story came with two cups of tea in her two hands. On the one hand, her
husband Binod was there and in other hand her lover Shyamal was there. Shyamal seeks the poison and wants be a martyr. Surendra Mohanty used another word 'Brahma Raksyasa' which means the ultimate ghost. The Underground, the sanctum sanctorum of the revolutions was the building of an ultimate ghost. The underground was situated in the jungle, abandoned, crumbling bungalow, a ghost bungalow in which resides the ultimate ghost. Even the cattle grazing boys are scared of entering the area, even during the day. Surendra Mohanty, in The Underground, has used some local dialectal forms like 'Jhupu Jhupukia Jangal', 'Barsha Bhusuda Kantha'. Phuta Chala, 'Chhana Olara Chala', 'Kalia Kiti Kiti Langala dhulidhusara Chhua', 'Bhau Bhau Kukura', and 'Hau Hau Kajia' which means the straggling jungle, broken walls, walls that had crumbled in the rain, blasted cottages .... jet black, dirt-covered, stark naked children ... violently barking dogs.... Shields of quarrels ...... beneath him lay the dusty road. Surendra Mohanty has also used words like 'Kandudabanala' .... 'Asli Chausathiguna Tela' and 'Inquilab Zindabad'. The world 'Kandudabanala' means the oil for itching and burning with the genuine sixty-four qualities. He frequently uses the phrase 'Inquilab Zindabad', 'Muliaraj Zindabad' and 'Number one government Murdabad'. I made no translation of Inquilab Zindabad which is widely used all over India. But 'Mulias' are generally refers to the daily labourers. I have translated 'Muliaraj Zindabad' as 'Victory to the rule of the labourers' and 'Number one government murdabad' as 'Ruling party down, down'. Here 'Number one government' does not make any sense except the ruling party and I have despited the same word to make the translation more accurate and realistic.

The third story, Sand, is based on the rustic pictures and presents the miserable condition of a rural old man. Here, Surendra Mohanty uses some local dialectal forms which make the story more realistic and interesting. He uses the word 'Naria i' which means 'Nari Brother' or 'Brother Nari'. Actually 'Naria i' is the combination of two words, i.e. 'Naria and Bhai'. Basically this type of kinship terminology is used largely in the rural areas. Dama Dalei, a friend of Nari Pradhan, calls him Nariai. Here this relationship is full of love and respect. But the English translation of this word, 'Nari Brother' does not evoke any sentiment and looks artificial. The English translation does not bring intimacy to that relationship. That's why I have preserved that word to make the story more realistic.

Food items like 'pakhala', 'torani' and 'saga' indicate the cultural, as well as, the economic context in which the stories have been constructed. Pakhala is prepared by soaking cooked rice in water which gets fermented by the next day and can be taken without pulses. Torani, the fermented water of the pakhala is rich in carbohydrate and is consumed to gain energy. Pakhala with saga (fried greens) is a staple diet among the lower middle class and lower class people of Orissa. Since it is not possible to opt for variety, beginning the day with a bowl of Pakhala and having the same meal in the evening is a usual thing affair. Nari Pradhan's economic condition could not be conveyed by inadequate English substitutes such as fermented rice, rice water or fried greens which do not evoke the sense of poverty by any stretch of one's imagination. 'Gammucha' again with its host of economic and cultural associations remains 'gamuchha' even in the target text. An indegenous variety of the towel, it is handwoven out of
cotton threads. Apart from cleansing and wiping, it serves many other purposes. In this story, Nari Pradhan wipes his sweats with the gamuchha during work.

A network of familial relationship is an essential feature of Indian society. This is indicated by a number of kinship terms that exist in our vocabulary, Nisha, daughter of Nari Pradhan comes out after the storm ends to search for her father. Here Surendra Mohanty used the word 'Bapa' in place of 'father'. Even in other Indian languages father usually known as 'Bapu', 'Baba' and 'Babuji'. Nisha yells out at the top of her voice while searching for her father as Bapa Hey ..... Bapa. I have kept the same word in the target language also to give more ethnic touches to the relationship.

In the fourth story, The Eternal Truth, Surendra Mohanty has focussed on the royal family and luxurious items. He frequently uses the flower plants like muchukund, Nageswar, Pargola, creaper- rose, sevati, Junia, Sthala Padma and Henna. I have kept these words same in the target text. In the Eternal Truth, 'Singhdwara', 'Bagha o' Chheli' and 'Baghua Nisha' signify the relevance of the royal family. The singhadwara generally refers to the lion-gate of the palace. Every palace, generally, has two lion statues infront of the maingate. It symbolises the status and aristocracy of the families. Chandrachur Ray Churamani, the dethroned king and the protagonist of the story, lost his kingdom after the independence of India. But when he was in power, every one was scared of him. In the fear of punishment, even the tiger and the goat used to drink water from one ghat. That's why Surendra Mòhanty used the most popular proverb in Oriya, 'Sashanadanda bhayare Churamani Estatere Bagh, Bakri Eka ghatare pani piu thile'. The use of 'Bagha Nisha' means 'tiger like mustaches' which represents the smartness, courage and bravery of the kings.

The story is derived form well educated society, royal dynasty and characters were drawn from the upper class family. They frequently use some English words and Hindi words even in the original Oriya story. Using English and Hindi in the typical Oriya society symbolises status and aristocracy. In spite of that, in this story, the princes is always referred to 'Sanajema' which means the younger daughter or the younger princess. King Chandrachur Ray Bahadur Churamani always advises the princess to study 'the Upanished' for self satisfaction and mental peace. 'The Upanishad' is the sacred texts in Hinduism to study or understand the vedas., Upanishad is familiar and popular in every house hold of India. I think 'Upanishad' does not have any translation in English language so I have kept it as Upanishad in the target language also.

The fifth story, Balloon, is a love story and both husband wife love to . each other very much. Both of them are committed to each other. Here, the writer refers to Kalayani, his wife as 'Sati Laxmi". Sati is the most sacred term for the Indian women. Every woman tries to maintain her chastity and tries to be pure in her heart and mind to her husband and the society. Sri Laxmi is the most chaste woman. Generally the good natured women are referred to as Sati Laxmi. Here, Kalyani is referred to as Sati Laxmi by her husband. Sati system, especially in North India has a different phenomena. The wife, generally shows loyality towards the husband throughout her life. If her husband dies first, then the Hindu woman does not want to live alone. Then she sacrifices her life in the funeral fire of her husband and finally she attains the 'Sati'. But this is a very horrible customs and it represents the miserable plight of the woman. But here Sati Laxmi means the most chaste and most sacred woman who is very loyal to
her husband and family. So, I have decided not to translate the word Sati Laxmi in to the target language and preserved it for its own significance.

The sixth story, Sanghrilla, opens with the rhymes of the music 'Aa aaaa ... Sainya teri tirchhi nazrein,' which means 'Darling, your sidelong glances'. I have kept the original as it is understood by every Indian reader. Sanghriall is basically the second home of Amitabh, Ashok, Surjeet and Sukant who are unemployed educated youths. Amitabh describes the other inmates as Gobara Ganesh' which means 'useless morons' who were irreponsible and non serious persons. Onomatopoeic words like hein hein, phein phein, khil, khil, tho, tho, and khun khun, have been replaced by their nearest English equivalents. It is interesting to note that all the three words except khun khun, express different kinds of 'laughter'. 'Hein, hein, phein, phein is a derogatory use to indicate laughter. Khil khil refers to the innocent laughter in a sarcastic vein. In the English text, the different shades of laughter have been replaced in the first case by 'frolics' , in the second case, as 'delighted laughter and 'tho, tho' as laughed scornfully. 'Khun, Khun Kashiba' has been rendered as 'dog cough'. In conversion, redundancies such as 'Ma', 'Mala', 'Arre', 'Chhi, Chhi' Badipasa, Gatua, have been ignored and represented by conversational norms available in the target language.

The sixth story, Mondodari in Dream, is based on imagination and artificial situations which makes the story very unrealistic. Here Surendra Mohanty uses the word 'Pithou Pani'. Like Torani, pithou Pani has its own significance. Torani is the fermented water of Pakhala consumed to gain energy. Pithou Pani is not the fermented one but this is the grrinding rice water.

With the help of grrinding rice water one can make cakes. This is more nutritious than the torani. Torani may be harmful for health but 'Pithou Pani' is useful for health. By mixing some herbal tablets with the Pithou Pani people make 'Handia' also which used as toddy like drinks. This type of drinks are popular in the tribal areas and among the lower class people of Orissa.

Surendra Mohanty uses in this story two most popular mythological phrase, Jay Maa Shyama, Narmunda Malini' generally refers to the Goddess Kali and people chant mothers name when in trouble problems. Some people also chant gods or goddess names during the happy moments. so chanting or remembering the names of the god and goddess people generally strengthen their will powers and it acts as a source of inspiration. The other sentence 'Yatha Mandodarisya Swaha' is generally the sacred mantra chanted during the marriage time. This sacred line is used among Hindus and is very familiar. So, I have retained them as they are.

The last story, The soul of Dinasour, reflects the pictures of a royal family. Maharaj Raj Brajeswar Ray was a dictator, oppressor and wreaked atrocities on the people. He got ten years banishment by the British authority. By the meantime India achieved her Independence and the princely states were annexed to the Indian territory, the King had lost his kingdom and remained as a mere pensioner. He returned to Rajkanchangarh after ten years punishment and people welcomed him by saying... Jay Maharaj Raj Brajeswar Raj... ki Jay'. The literal meaning of this sentence is 'long live Maharaj Ray Brajeswar Ray... long live. But the English translation does not sounds good and this type of slogans are familiar in the princely states. Generally this is the only medium
where by the subjects shows their love, respect and affection to their ruler. The same system is popular now a days. When a popular leader visit his own constituency, generally people greets him or her by this slogan. Rajeswar uses some derogatory words like 'Saale', which is the literal meaning of brother-in-law. This is a common abuse in oriya and Brajeswara use the same word for the public. Brajeswar, known for his misbehavior, abuses the people same who come to meet him with love and respect.

Translation is an incomplete enterprise because the scope for modifications to fulfill the objectives of fidelity and freedom is never exhausted. Thus, no translation is final or the best. The translations selected for this dissertation out of a number of drafts of each short story, are, according to me, the best (that I could manage) representatives of the stories in the original.

## LOVE AND LIVELIHOOD

The strike has been on in the spinning mill of the capitalists since last month.

Despite the deception of the opposing union, the threats of the mill-owners and the pressures of government machinery, the strike has gone on with renewed vigour and momentum. One can not but praise the initiative and leadership of the local Communist Union.

Comrade Binod was exhausted after days of work, convincing and encouraging the workers, collecting donations, and demonstrating with the workers in the whole city with the slogan - 'Red Flag, March on.' After coming back he lay down in the party office which was full of pamphlets and newspapers. He fell asleep as soon as he touched the bed.

Comrade Lalita entered the room after some time. Comrade Lalita, a good writer, slim, young and attractive usually talked little. Her responsibility was analysing all the English circulars and books of the party. She was also editing the party's weekly newspaper. Her new responsibility due to the strike was writing bulletins.

This is comrade Lalita's office-room. She switched on the light. One table was there on the western side near the open window. Heaps of newspapers, plain paper and books were lying on the small table near the open window. Three framed photographs of the same size were hanging on the wall. Marx was in the middle. Stalin was on his left and Lenin was on his right side. An old call-bell was there inside the heaps of the paper. Lalita pressed the bell thrice with her thumb.

Ramu, the office boy came in. He is also a comrade, son of a worker. "Coffee", Lalita said.

Ramu went off.
Outside it was beautiful by the moonlight. Towards the end of the factory area is the party office. The zig-zag road passes beside the window. Some times a bullock cart or a person or two pass through the road. A huge stony barren ground lay on the other side of the road.

The fragrance of some flowers from somewhere made the night more exciting and romantic. Lalita switched off the light with exhaustion, disappointment and, dissatisfaction. A beam of moonlight from outside reflected on the lap of Lalita-sensuously. A sense of self-satisfaction and contentment ran through Lalita. Lalita realised that the history of the mankind has witnessed many failed struggles, lost through many contradictions and disputes, yes there is no end to this beautiful moon-lit evening, no end to the joy it gives.

Again she switched on the light. This is escapist counter revolutionary-bourgeois pastime.

The snoring of comrade Binod became deeper. She had not seen him yet. Surprised by the sound of snoring, her attention was drawn towards him. He was dressed in dirty trousers and a half-shirt, a half torn Khabuli Sandal on his feet. The badge of 'Sickle and Hammer' was placed on the left shoulder of his shirt.

Ramu came with the coffee. She asked Ramu for another cup of coffee. Lalita respects Binod for his strong leadership and mastery over Marxism. He
can quote from Marx fluently on every occasion. Once he fell in love with a girl. That girl also responded equally. They were about to solemnise their marriage of love. But her father was a bourgeois. He warned both of them that he would not have any qualms in choosing a good-for-nothing follower of Sri Chaitanya of Nadia as his son-in-law rather than a comrade. He can not stand the symbol of sickle and hammer.

Binod was disappointed. He was not frustrated due to the failed love affair. If a girl like Lila could have joined the partly it would have contributed to the growth of Communism. Still he never fails to send party bulletins to Lila. Once some of his friends teased Binod for his lost love, he retorted according to Marx, "Nothing is being, everything is becoming". It means, "Nothing is stable, motionless. Love also has its dynamics. Dialectically, if the motion of my love is negative, then there is nothing to worry about".

Ramu brought another cup of coffee. Lalita pinched sleeping Binod's forehead with a childish playfulness. Binod got up rubbing his eyes and sat on the heap of newspapers. Lalita asked, "You mind having a cup of coffee comrade?". Binod, was happy with an inexpressible joy. He said, "Thank you, comrade." Both of them sat down near the table. Lalita touched the cup with her lips. Both of them took their coffee silently.

Outside the bright moon on the full-moon night was glowing. On the other side of the road lay the same stony barren ground. From there came the sound of somebody playing a flute, the tune of which was intoxicating.

Binod asked, "Have you sent tomorrow's bulletins to the press, comrade
Lalita?" Lalita was thinking of a poem - Oh! moon, the distance of a thousand DIS. $0,1591,3, N 20^{\prime \prime} \times: g(p ; 795)$

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miles between you and me has ended. You came like Lord Krishna to love me. Oh gracious, my lord, embrace me, love me.

Binod said, "Tomorrow evening, we are going to arrange a meeting. All the mill workers from the nearby mills are also joining in our strike. Your bulletin should be as sharp as a bullet. If you can compose a revolutionary song then that will be used for a chorus at the begining of the meeting.
"What type of song"? asked Lalita curiously. Binod said, "It will do if it goes like this :
" We harvested
the golden crops in the barren land! only golden crops ".

Lalita laughed at him.
Binod asked in a shocked voice, "Laughing?".
"No". Lalita replied briefly.
Binod took out a cigarette and lighted it. Tired and sad Lalita looked at the portrait of Marx. "Oh! Marx, your economic interpretation of history turns man into a pig, whose life is only a question of bread. You have made filling up the stomach as the aim of human being. You have made bread more tempting for the human being than this moon. Plenty is the only aim of life. But you have not informed them about the greater goal that lies beyond plenty.

Binod said in a heavy voice, after throwing the half burnt cigarette outside, " I have noticed in the last few days that, you are turning into an escapist comrade! Freud says, this is a death-instinct, the "Abhiddhama" in Buddhist philosophy. This instinct of losing existence in a void, is a mental
weakness. Erric Fromme says, "this is a bourgeois entertainment and spiritual frigidity 'terror of freedom'."

Lalita felt irritated. She could never stand bookworms whose selves were not free. What does Marx say, what are Freud's views, what did Fromme says-as if this is the ultimate and absolute meaning of life. What ever lies outside is absurd, weakness and bourgeois pastime. Lalita said, "I have heard all these things a lot, comrade! Want to go for a walk? What a beautiful moon outside." If it was some other day, then he would have convinced Lalita that her proposal was 'Counter Revolutionary' or bourgeois pastime or would have explained to her the intricacies of insurrection tactics of Lenin. But today, after a whole day's work and exhaustion, he too also wanted some peace and the coolness of the beautiful moon light.
"Let's go", said Binod.
Both of them walked a long distance. The locality was far behind. Everywhere, you could only see the hugeness of the stony ground and the moody fickleness of the moon. They sat down on a slope. At times Binod was telling to Lalita about the letters of Marx's to Engels.

Lalita asked jokingly, "Has not Marx ever said anything about the moon-lit night ?".

Binod was thinking of the answer. At that time a beautiful sound from some one's flute could be heard from far, very far. As if the sound of flute merged with that stony barren land, with the tranquility of the night and the restless fickleness of the moon. Spell bound both Lalita and Binod listened to the sound of the flute.

After some time two strange shadows sat down at a distance from them. The flute recital was un ending. As if the river of the life wanted to transcend the bank and unite with the ocean of moon light.

Both Lalita and Binod grew curious to see them. They got up. The sound of flute gradually stopped when both Lalita and Binod came closer to the shadows. They could easily recognise them - Nayana and Kajri. Both of them were working in the mill which is on strike. They hailed from Chhotangpur area.

The salaries have been stopped due to the strike. They might spend the night on an empty stomach. But they are rich with the wealth of life.
"You play the flute beautifully! Nayana," said Lalita.
"Yes didi", Nayana replied in the Chhatisgarhi language. "In our land we go for a walk in the hills and jungles whenever the moon rises." "The night advanced. Both Lalita and Vinod returned the office.

Lalita was thinking, this is the incompleteness of the Marxism. Life is not for only production and distrubtion. A full wage and a full stomach may be the necessity of life but not the motto of life. Then for whom is this pleasure of the moon-light, the eternal perfection of the nature meant? Life is more beautiful than existence. Marxism has forgotten the essence of life through the noises and struggles for existence.

Lalita said, "Both of them are enjoying themselves".
Binod looked at Lalita with surprise. As if someone had knocked lightly but firmly on some closed door of her heart. Nayana again played the flute. The fragrance of Henna that touched the waist of Kajri mingled with pleasant breeze.

Binod looked towards Lalita.
The fresh moonlight-bathed body of Lalita was enchanted with unmatched beauty. The next moment Binod realised that this is nothing but bourgeois sentimentalism.

Both of them returned through that stony zigzag road.
The party office is visible now. After going back she has to write the bulletins. Lalita's body and mind became exhausted with tiredness and anger.

The flute recital of Nayana was audible partially through that deserted, stony and barren ground.

Lalita felt that, this pure and pristine life is a great challenge to the incompleteness of Marxism and the struggles and gloominess of existence.

## THE UNDERGROUND

Shyamal, while walking on the road, irritated, said, 'Nonsense' and took the Kabuli sandal off his left foot and picking up a lime stone from the roadside, hammered a protruding nail a few times... the nail had eaten up a few layers of skin of his heel... Nonsense... Shyamal violently hit the nail a few more times and chucked the stone to the road side.

A dusk in December. Like the agitating dozing eye-lids of a youthful lass in embrace... Nonsense...Again the same bloody nail... sharpened.

This was the dusty road at the end of the town... a slum area... separate from each other, the coolies' colony, sweeper's colony, so many colonies. And in the distances between them was the straggling jungle, broken walls, walls that had crumbled in the rains, blasted cottages... jet black, dirt covered, stark naked children... violently barking dogs... shields of quarrels... beneath it lay the dusty road, rubbish, unhygienic colony above him, a dusk in the gentle sky of December like the agitating dozing eye-lids of a youthful lass entwined in excited hands... that nail again... that pointed nail inside his shoe... if only he could somehow, limp to the tea stall up ahead, that would be restful... a broken house ahead... a long demolished wall that has found a no use-poster, cinema posters, political posters, medicine posters, football match posters-posters under which the wall has disappeared "The celebrated political leader is arriving ". 'The second-in-command political leader celebrate his fiftieth birthday'. The queen of the heart in this movie... a cricket match in the ground... oil for itching and burning... of genuine sixty-four qualities... Inquilab Zindabad."
"Victory to the rule of the labourers." "Ruling party down, down..." Shyamal quivered with excitement, all pain forgotten. "Ruling party down, down..." Beautifully rounded letters, written in deep red ink... Lalita's signature... round smooth and like wide open-eyes in a beautiful evening $\therefore$. eyes like those of an opium-eater... like moon-lit sky.

The municipality's lamp-lighter passed him carrying a ladder on his shoulder. Behind him, a few street lamps flickered hesitantly. Here's the colony's tea stall. A woolen monkey-cap on his head, a tattered button-up coat, and a striped Lungi- this is the shop owner, Bismillah. His assistant, his orphaned nephew Inayatullah, is washing dirty cups in a bucket of water. He has a beedi on his lips, and a cinema song upon them," Mera bulbul so raha hai'" Salaam babu, Bismillah greeted shyamal. "One cup of tea", says Shyamal. Still cleaning the smoky glass of the lantern, Bismillah orders, "One cup tea... special tea."

A Sweeper seems to be returning to his colony after finishing his job. Khaki coat, tattered pyjamas, turbaned head, a beedi between his lips, and the trademark broom under his arm-pit ... he is also a comrade. "One cup of tea..., strong tea." Bismillah yells angrily, "hey Inayatallah|" Inayatullah starts making the special tea. Comrade reached under the thatched roof of the tea stall and takes out a cigarette tin... into which Inayatallah poured the tea. The municipality's lamp lighter stands on his ladder outside the shop and lights the street lamp there. Tomorrow is the November Day... 'Martyrs day'. One day he will also become a martyr! Like the mythological sage Dadhichi, his bones will be used to fashion the terrible thunderbolt of the God of the people.

Shyamal felt a wave of grandeur within himself. Like the lamp lighter, he too will be a God of the people and the 'people' will climb the ladder to reach the top. And then he will place his foot upon the heads of the "masses" to bless them... and push them down, that will break the ladder. And then another god will emerge, god of the people, bearing on his shoulder, the broken ladder of the masses.

Since time immemorial there have been two sections: the rich, and the poor. And in between, the middle class. The middle class aspires to riches. And the poor dream of a world of the poor. The middle class uses the poor to uproot the rich and establish itself as the new rich, and the old middle class is replaced by a new middle class, which in its turn, uses the same old tools of exploitation - all logical conclusions of the dialectic of revolution. But our revolution will overthrow that dialectic, we shall forge a new world... but who are we? Mere stone breaking labourers in making the Konark of revolutions! Nonsense!

The western sky is like the funeral pyre of the day, a red funeral pyre. Shyamal paid for the tea and got up. Just a little more way to go, and then a bushy jungle. And in the jungle, an abandoned, crumbling bungalow, a ghost bungalow in which resides the ultimate ghost. The cattle grazing boys are scared of entering its area, even during the day time... underground which is the labour room of revolution.

Lalita is like the evening's twilight. Her eyes are the wine of dreams, her waist is the laziness of the light... 'Lalita! And the thought of her, pinches his heart like the nail in his sandal. But why does Lalita look so beautiful?

Beauty is a surplus value. Beauty should exhaust itself, in the daily grind of living. Then why is Lalita still so beautiful, despite having lived for close to thirty years? Binod, comrade Binod, if he could murder him! So what if he was a leader ? Tomorrow is 'Martyr's Day,' November Day... he too will be a martyr one day. But when, on what lazy dusk and in what manner will Lalita place a wreath ?

## II

In the dim light of a candle, comrade Binod is reading Shakespeare's Othello. And outside the window the darkness of the evening descending slowly, even as the voice of a few jackals pierces the night. The leader of the underground, comrade Binod was literally addicted to analysing Shakespeare's tragedies within a Marxist frame work. The left side of his face is burnt, the result of an accidental explosion while making a bomb, a few years ago. Three of the front-teeth are also broken. Actually they have been deliberately broken to camouflage his identity which he constantly changes for the purpose of travelling. Lalita is his wife. Binod was reading at the top of his voice...
"Well do it and be brief, I will Walk by
I would not kill thy unrepented spirit"
a soliloquy just before the murder of Desdemona.
Lalita was entering the room with a cup of steaming tea in her hand. Startled by Binod's excited high pitched voice the cup slipped from her hand and shattered into pieces upon the floor, evoking a loud guffaw from him. A demonic laughter from the half-burnt face of Binod.

Lalita said, "How many times should I tell you not to read 'Othello', atleast not when I'm around. It gives me the shivers." Binod replied, "Shakespeare remains the world's most memorable playwright for the character of Othello. Every intellectual should be cold-blooded and determined like Othello. Only then can our dream be fulfilled. You praised Hamlet-so much. Hamlet is no more than a hateful symbol of the cultured decadence of the bourgeoisie... To be or not to be... But personally, I love the darkness of the night or the burning heat of the noon. But detest neither the bright nor the darkness of the western horizon."

Binod started reading again -
"No heaven forfend! I would not kill thy soul,
I would not kill thy unrepented spirit."
Lalita went inside to get another cup of tea. Shyamal came inside. Binod looked up from the book and said,... "Are you ready for tomorrow? Possibly you have to face a blood-bath tomorrow. Are the others ready for that?"

Shyamal replied briefly, "All are ready, attempts are on to lead a huge demonstration through the main streets of the city. But the police still has not given the permission for it." "Excellent", said Binod. "The police may order a lathicharge, may be even firing. How can you build the new until and unless the breakdown of the old?

Binod ordered Lalita at the top of his voice to get two cups of tea.
Lalita came in, after sometime with two cups of tea. Like goddess Laxmi emerging from the sea, after the cosmic churning-with poison in one hand and nectar in the other. No, no, give me the poison. Shyamal became active.

With half-hidden smile Lalita asked, "So, comrade, tomorrow will be day of the test for you".

Shyamal took the cup of tea with trembling hands and to took a sip from it.
"Why do you laugh like that, Lalita? Laughter pressed between your thin lips! The Darjeeling tea had a good taste. You are a capitalist, Lalita-the infinite surplus value deposited in your coveted charmed body. Flower like fingers, red lips, curly bun, and your curved eye-brows are highly attractive. If I could murder you, like the lover of Brownning's poem, during embrace, then your conch like bright neck will be red by the pressing of my fingers.

Some of the tea poured on to his body. Lalita asked him to follow her. With that heart burning smile Lalita left that place. Shyamal finished his tea. "You go" said Binod. "Comrade Lalita will give some hints to you", Shyamal went inside. Tomorrow, in the history of revolution, his name will be written in fierly letters. Lalita will welcome Shyamal with a wreath after his victory... with a garland of "Aparajita". He will be the most memorable, adorable martyr. Some bats were eating some fruits by winching under the old banyan tree, behind the demolished and abandoned building. The platform under the tree is partially visible in the patches of moon-light. Shyamal sat down near Lalita. The fragrance of an unknown flower was coming through the wind. Shyamal was thinking of a poem... like the patches of the moon light on the earth and like the mixtures of salt and pepper on the fried egg. 'Oh my heart! Oh my love! love me and embrace me.

Lalita took out two bombs from her saree and said, "Keep them carefully. They may help you tomorrow." Shyamal hid them with a trembling hand.
"Do not be late, comrade", said Lalita. Otherwise, police might arrest you.

Lalita left that place.

## III

Illegal demonstration - Lathicharge of the police - explosion of two bombs - then firing - then Shyamal does not remember anything. His body was full of bandage with 105 degree fever - the smell of chloroform is coming out. Oh! pretty tough to breathe - "Ah"! Shyamal yelled out. A sister rushed to Shyamal's bed. "Ah!" he twisted a few times like an injured reptile, "I shall be a martyr -adorable and memorable". But where is Lalita? Shyamal had died in the hospital, having been hit by the bullets. May be acting, but he could bring some tears in the blue-lotus eyes of Lalita. "Ah"! the whole hospital was shaking in Shyamal's yells. A sister rushed again.

Then she pulled-across a white shett over the pale and gray face of Shyamal.

## SAND

A morning in the month of June. Patches of clouds covered the sky making sunshine less scorching. These clouds will move after sometime. The sunshine would be so hot that one can get puffed rice after throwing a handful of grain on sands of the river front.

Nari Pradhan stopped at the river bank. Ahead, up to three miles lay a dried up river, like a dead snake. The huge buildings of that side's city were visible through the morning mist. Crowds of people were walking on the river towards the city. They will return to their own villages on this side after the day's labour. Like this, everyday they go early in the morning and return in the evening. Nari Pradhan is one of them.

The day is not clear due to the cloudy sky. Even then it is quite late. It would be late in the morning by the time one reaches the other side of the river. The smoke of the glass factory is coming out in a sinuous way.

Nari Pradhan hurriedly came down to the river bed. He is more than fifty years old. His body has lost strength. Nowadays he feels giddly after doing a litte work. Still he has to work hard from morning to evening. Otherwise, It would be very difficult to manage his livelihood. He has a widowed daughter at home. A twenty two year old son who could have taken care of him, died of snake bite, about two years back. He does not have any land otherwise he could have managed his livelihood by cultivating it. That is why he goes to the city to earn his livelihood and he has to continue with it. He is pretty old, but he can do so many things. He does not mind working on road
construction, building and even as a porter. He has accepted the cruel conditions of his life without any hesitation. He struggles every moment of life to earn his livelihood and he has to continue it all till the end of his life. Sometimes the cold blood within his blue veins gets stirred as if agitating for a revolt. He does not know against whom he has to revolt. Still he revolts within himself. He asks himself, why should he work hard in his old age? At this age he should be able to relieve all of his worries and tiredness resting at home. But why this world does not give him a moment's rest? But do all those fifty year olds living in those buildings in this city under whose shadow he rests, do the same bone-crushing labour? There are so many people in this world who don't even touch a straw, but spend their lives in leisure. Why is this injustice being done to him? Now he can't go on any more. Every thing has become hazy to his eyes. His hands and legs have become weak. While working his hands are shaking. But why is this world so cruel to him? Nari Pradhan looked up towards the sky. The darkness of the evening became deeper. Neither the sky nor the darkness could hear his complaints and allegations. The sky has simply closed its eyes like an opium addict... it is so insensitive to the sorrows and happiness of mankind.
"Naria Bhai, Hey! Naria Bhai!" somebody called from behind. Nari Pradhan looked back. It was Dama Dalei from his village. He has come up to the city with a basketful of mangoes. Dama Dalei's condition is not as bad as Nari Pradhan's, still he too works hard to earn his livelihood. Both his sons are also earning, but they have a big family. He does not like to get his share from his sons income. He does not want to be dependant on his sons so long
as he is able to work. Still it is time he should take rest. Now he should be relieved from all the worries and anxieties of last fifty or sixty years. That much he deserves to get as his right from the world-which he enriched by giving it every moment of his past. The world has ditched him by depriving his dues. Still he accepts this injustice as the order of the Almighty. He has never revolted.

Dalei joined Nari Pradhan. Nari Pradhan asked", Now a days you are doing this mango business. Well you are older than me. How long will you continue this hard work?".

Dalei replied after taking a deep breath, "Yes, we've been born in a poor family, we've to work hard. One should not be scared of that".

Both Nari Pradhan and Dama Dalei walked together on the sands and that mingle with the horizon like two black-spots. They were surrounded by sand... as if it touched the sky.

Nari Pradhan said after wiping his seats with a 'gamuchha' from his shoulder, "These are not God given things but man made".

But Nari Pradhan could never explain to himself the reasons for this revolt. He does not have any logic to convince others. But he knows, only man is responsible for his distressed life. The hugeness of this world is more than that of sand. Still one does not get his space due to other's narrow-mindedness. One can not get even a handful of food for two meals in a day for others' greediness. This world is big enough for meeting one's hunger. He never got a moment's rest in these past fifty years.

A train was crossing the bridge over the river. Both of them stopped a while to watch the passing train. They were used to staring at the trains since their child-hood with curiosity and surprise. The train has disappeared leaving behind clouds of black smoke. Then they moved ahead. Both of them were silent. The burden of their sorrow weighing on both, neither had a word on their lips. They had the huge expanse of sand in front to march on.

Some men and women with bundles of fire-wood on their heads overtook them. Hailing from the villages, they were also up to the city to sell their fire-wood. Hunger has also turned their life into a joke by some invisible power. They have scarified all the joys and happiness to earn their livelihood. Life, for them is pretty tough and vast like these sand dunes. They do not have any rest in their life. But why? Why are they spending their cursed lives like dumb and deaf? Has the earth become a desert? Why does not the earth produce more and more crops to eradicate this poverty?

They don't have time to answer. They are pushing ahead as if life is an unbearable burden to them. As soon as they throw the burden off they would be free.

Yet within the tranquility of sky, the green woods at a distance, the range of mountains within this bounty of nature, one feels ashamed to think how in this beautiful world, man has turned life into an ugly and infected pimple.

Still life and its struggle are the eternal truths and one can not avoid them. The sand bar has come to an end.

## II

It was 8 P.M. by the wall clock of the nearby police out-post. Still the sand bar was warm. The air passing over it was hot as it touched the body. Through heavy dust, the moon looked dim. The wind had stopped blowing. Not a single leaf on the tree was moving.

Nari Pradhan came across the sand bar. Under the dim moonlight the sand bar seemed huge and directionless. Those who came to the town in the morning had returned before evening. Generally, he was not so late. He got late buying rice from the government store. Some one had trod on his left foot which hurt a lot. Most probably, he would not be able to come to the city tomorrow! Sand... sand... unending sand in all directions wherever one looks. As if one great soul, under the darkness of the evening, had become distressed and mute with pain and agony. The sky over head has calm as if fed up with the earth below. Both the sky and the earth were speechless and motionless. But under this tranquility, beyond the notice of men, somewhere a great turbulence is being born like the glowing morning springs from the womb of the dark night.

Nari Pradhan peered at the sky over his head. The sky was speechless, silent and serious. As if the sky was embarrassed by the exploitations and oppressions of the people. The earth was also silent. As if all the signs of life had gone out of its body.

Wherever the eyes go, there is only sand, huge amount of sand. The trees on the other side seem like lines in the darkness of the night. The river bank of that side is still pretty far.

Nari Pradhan's body trembled with an inexpressible fear. He had returned to his village so many times along this route. But he had never seen such conspiracy of the sky and the earth against mankind.

All of a sudden a million lights spread over the sky. As if the sky, had broke down tumultuously. Nari Pradhan walked fast uttering God's name. He was unable to move forward due to hunger and tiredness. Lightning followed lightning and the tumultuous uproar of the clouds made the whole atmosphere terrible. Again he looked up at the sky. But there was no sign of rain. The moon become pale and hazy among the dark patches of thick clouds. As if an ugly beast was tearing inside his belly with its long teeth. Acute pain and hunger had made his body weak. If one could eat the sand, then...

The western wind pushed him a little. He got another shove from the opposite side, while trying to control himself. The tumultous sky hid the moon. Every where there was the uproarious sound of the storm!

Nari Pradhan started running towards a hut like an injured deer escaping from the clutches of a hunter. The hut was used as a ferry-ghat during the rainy season. The roof of the hut was half-broken. The bent wooden pillars of the hut stood like ghosts. Near by a broken boat lay on its face like a crocodile. Only the mast of the boat was visible and the planks were buried under the sand.

Nari Pradhan could not move forward. He lay on the ground to save himself from the dust storm with a towel over his body. Still the dust pierced his body like needles. Again he started running like an injured animal.

The storm increased its ferocity as if the waves of sand were coming. out from the ocean. Nari Pradhan could not move forward. Tired, he fell down.

Instantly his body was covered with dust and sand. The exhausted body of Nari Pradhan got its final burial under that mound of sand. Still the velocity of the storm had not receded. Every where was the tumultous uproar of the storm.

In this world, where man deprives others of the tastes of life, in a world where several lives seemed like curses due to someone's greed, it looked as if the sky was agitated with a stormy turbulence against that world.

Heaps and heaps of sand covered the grave of Nari Pradhan.
The same night. Long, since the evening has passed.
Nari Pradhan has not returned yet.
The Night is moving gradually. Everybody in the village has gone to sleep after a hard day's work . The storm has stopped a long time back. Nishamani, the widowed daughter of Nari Pradhan shut the door and came out. The pale and dusty moon was there outside. The whole atmosphere was calm and quiet.

Nishamani walked towards the river. There is no rice, no pulses at home to cook. Nishamani had set fire in the oven but it had been extinguished long back. She was waiting for her father. She was also dog-tired. Anyhow, she managed to drag her self to reach the river embankment.

All around it was calm and quite. Under, the dim light of the moon lay the unending sand dune in front of the river. The night train crossed the river. The silence of the night aroused by the sound of the engine, turned on its sides and went back to sleep again.

Nishamani yelled out at the top of her voice looking for her father. A gust of wind spread the coarse hair on the forehead of her failed youth. Her
ruffled hair was unconscious of the fickleness of the wind. Her eyes were moist with some unknown fear. Again she rearranged her ruffled hair and yelled out,
" Bapa... Hey... Bapa."
But her yelling would not reach Nari Pradhan's ears. He has attained the long-sought rest from his tired life, freedom from the curse of living, under mounds of sand. What he could not get during his life time, death has bestowed it on him.

Nisha shouted for the last time at the top of her voice, "Hey... Bapa!"
The sand ahead is silent. The sky is silent. The dimmed night all around is also silent.

Patches of wind tried to spread the bunches of hair on her face.

## THE ETERNAL PRESENT

The new building is being built on the ruins of the old foundation. Through the window in the first floor of the palace, Chandrachur Rai Churamani is silently watching. Whether new generations are being built there?

Chandrachur dusted the pipe which had died and lit it again. A huge building of the owner of the cement factory is being built near by the palace. The iron frames of the cement factory were standing there as a skeleton which looked as if it was laughing at Chandrachur's palace of the twenty generations. He smoothly smoked the pipe. Circles of smoke were spreading in the light morning wind.

Muchukund has already bloomed, and champak will jut come within a few more days. Spring will come once again into Churamani's bushy and thorny garden.

Long ago, the owner of this cement factory had come to Chandramani, not once but many times, to take the estate on contract which he had got as a part of his huge property. He came bare-foot, his hat off and with folded hands.

The morning sun is shining on the nearby tennis court of the government Circit House. The palace of Chudamani is completely silent and has a desolate look, whereas once upon a time the palace was crowded with the people from morning till night. It struck nine on the entrance-hall clock. Chudamani took out his gold strapped watch and looked of the time which it was ten to nine. Five years back if the entrance- hall clock had been late, it would have created a turbulence in the palace. But now, as if time has no value for Chandrachur.

Whether the clock is running fast or late by ten minutes, it hardly matters to him any more.

There was a time, when his life was systematic like the clock. From his waking up at four o'clock at down, each and every activity of the day, not only his own personal life but also of the family members and the surroundings, was performed on in time. But nowadays, he does not have any relationship with his sorroundings. Even today he is so particular about his time that he cannot tolerate if there is a lapse of even a minute.

The creeper - roses have been dying in Porogala. The cemented - road has become dusty with the mush and grass. Diwan Rout Ray Saheb, as a matter of habit, wearing a dhoti and a coat, with a stick in his hand, is coming. He has grown old working in this household. Once upon a time, when he was in power, everyone was scared of this Churamani estate. But now he has only the status, no power. After the collapse of the Churamani supremacy, Rout Ray said once, "Set me free. What can I do here now ?"

Chandrachur said, "Where would you go, Ray Saheb ? Only The estate has been lost. We still have lots of things in the palace to live on. The endowment, the land properties, who's going to look after them ?"

But Rout Ray knows very well it is very difficult to incur the day-to-day expenditure of the palace with whatever is left in it now. He has been not paid for months. It is equally difficult for Rout Ray to go somewhere else at this age forgetting the bonhomie of years.

The old gardener is cleaning a part of the garden uprooting the old plants. This has been a routine job. He cleans up the garbage everyday. And he
wonders yet why there is a mess everyday. This is the struggle of life against the future! A subtle smile appeared in Chandrachur's wrinkleless, anxietyless calm quite face for a moment and immediately vanished.

Seeing Rout Ray Saheb, the old gardner saluted with a bow and looked as if be wanted to request him for something. Rout Ray said something. The gardner before going to cut the grass leaned against a sandalwood tree to take some rest. His salary for many months are due. But why are these wretches stuck here ? There are many more of this kind in the palace. There would be some relief if these people could be driven away. But they have been serving here since long. The gardner's job was to look after the queen's favorite - the big - yellow rose plants. The queen has passed away. The yellow roses no longer bloom in those plants. It's two to nine. Chandrachur moves towards the dinning hall for breakfast.

The dining room is on the ground-floor. The dining table is made of teak wood and designed in the Victorian style. The table cloth is getting dirty. The flowerpot has been decked with fresh sevati and valley-liley. Hanging on the wall are some paintings by some unknown western artists-snow-covered mountains underneath the village road shadowed by Deodar tree ends at the entrance of a hidden - hut. Some mythological paintings by some Indian artists too are adorning the walls. Chandrachur comes for breakfast exactly at nine.... there has been no irregularity in the past fifty - eight years.

The chef, as usual, drew the chair for Chandrachur. He looked at the empty chairs around the table and sitting in his own chair thoughtfully started examining the knives and forks. Then the steward brought some corn flakes in a
saucer and some milk in glass and placed on the table. After he had mixed milk and four spoons of sugar with the corn flakes, the young princess Rupa Kumari entered. She is the youngest child of Chandrachur but has crossed twenty-three. Many proposals for her marriage have been received, her horoscope has been considered in many households, but Chandrachur is not satisfied by any of the groom's demands. Whenever he has liked the groom's eligibility, it has been a difficult task on his part to proceed due to the heavy amount of dowry demanded. RupaKumari is the only friend of Chandrachur in this desolate palace of Churamani. Chandrachur looked towards RupaKumari.

Rupakumari looked unusually tired and helpless. The black lines under her beautiful eyes looked like the blurred, disappointed and grave sky of the evening. She was wearing a red georgette saree and matching blouse. She were few bangles in both hands and a diamond - studded ring on the index finger of the left hand. Rupakumari picked up an apple and started cutting it with a Knife. Chandrachur wiping his face with a hankey said, "I am noticing something unusual with you, princess."

Without replying Rupakumari silently kept on cutting the apple. Chandrachur said, "Today you are late for breakfast by five minutes. And it seems that your are not getting sound sleep, and are tormented by some loaded thoughts."

The steward placed some breads, butter, jam and fried-eggs in front of Chandrachur, and drew the salt and pepper pots near him.

Chandrachur crudely ran the knife through the slice and said, " Rupa, I notice that you are losing your self- confidence day - by -day. One loses self-confidence if he or she loses faith in God."

Rupa Kumari slowly biting a piece of apple said, "These days I am not keeping well, papa. May be it is because of sudden change in the weather."

Chandrachur said, "I can't help laughing listening to you, princess. Look at me at the age of fifty - eight, I go for a ten mile ride on horse every morning. I don't even have the slightest experience of dyspepsia or rheumatism. Do you know, princess, why ? self - confidence, and will-power is the only secret of my mental and physical health. Self - confidence can not be achieved without - faith in spiritualism. It is self - confidence which determines one's existence in time and space. Lack of it will lead to existential indiscipline and pancutality will have no value. Time would appear useless." Chandrachur started eating a piece of bread with yolk and said, "as a baby breaks a thing not understanding its relivance, if one thinks that life is senseless one's going to be either a saint or a revolutionary. It was same kind of situation which gone truth to both Buddha and Hitler. Many didn't have self- confidence..... Have you finished reading the Upanishad, princess?"

Hearing about the Upanishad, RupaKumari fearfully looked at Chandrachur and then looked downwards.

Old Rout Roy came in side the dinning room. He carried a telegram in his hand. Wiping his face with a handkerchief Chandrachur asked, "What kind of telegram is this, Rout Roy?"

Rout Roy said, " It says Lal Mitrabhanu Dev of Birganj is going to visit you today." Rupakumari was pouring coffee in a cup. She spilled some coffee on the table cloth. Looking towards her he asked, "Mitrabhanu? Why ?"
"For bird - hunting", said Rout Ray.

Slowly clinking the steaming coffee cup Chandrachur said, "send the car to the station, and arrange a room in the guest house. You may inform the steward too if he is arriving here by lunch."
"He is arriving straight here in his car", said Rout Ray.
Chandrachur said, "Your responsibility has been proportionately lessened then. Anything else !"

Rout Ray went off.
Chandrachur asked, "Princess, how did you spill this coffee?
RupaKumari vexedly said, "An accident. So it has no cause."
Chandrachur said, "Even an accident is an action. So it certainly has some causes." Somebody was careless by whistling downstairs. Taking a sip from the coffee cup Chandrachur asked, "The prince, am I right, princess?" Chandrachur looked fiercely at RupaKumari While getting up he said, "As soon as the prince comes, send him to me, princess. "

After Chandrachur left the princes breathed with great relief. "So, Mitrabhanu is coming today. No ! No, a final decision has to be taken. One should not sacrifice one's own values to respect another's. A decision has to be taken this time." While picking up the coffee cup, she once again spilled some coffee.

Prince Narendra Ray Churamani entered. He is just seven years older than RupaKumari still he looks even older by five year more. He is wearing a Khaki pyjama and a bushcoat. His hair is ruffled.

The index and middle fingers of the right hand have turned yellowish due to the nicotine of cigarettes. Holding a cigarette in his hand enthusiastically he said, "Hello baby!"

Narendra had been wandering since last week, he is returning today. Taking princess's coffee Narendra said, "So, the King is angry with me, right ?"

Rupakumari said, "You do not have any qualms scoffing at my father like that?"

Taking a few sips from the cup Narendra said, "Who is scoffing at whom ? He himself is a joke in this ever- changing world. A man should keep up with the time. As you know princes, Dinosaur was incomparable in its size and strength but it has vanished from the earth just because it could not keep pace with the changing time."

While pouring coffee for herself in another cup RupaKumari said, "It's not fair to impose your bias on others. "

Narendra said, " I cannot take your father's bias like you without any argument."

Terrified, RupaKumari said, "Father is waiting for you in his library. He will be sad if he hears you say so."

Narendra, holding his cup, went to meet him.
The study chamber of Chandrachur is like a long hall. Inmemorable hard-bound books are there in the glass almirahs all around the house. The names of the books and the authors written in golden letters are quite illegible. In the middle of the hall, a fig China pot is fixed and decorated with table rose. Tattered in certain parts an expensive carpet is spread on the floor. There is a table near the window in a corner. Around the table are three chairs. In the past Chandrachur used to sit here from 10 o"clock in the morning to 2 PM in the afternoon and work for the Estate. There is almost no work of the Estate. But
still there is no irregularity in Chandrachur's daily work. He even now sits here form 10 am in the morning to two in the afternoon reading newspapers or writing letters sometimes. He was reading a newspaper when Narendra came inside silently and stood near Chandrachur's table. Through the window could be seen the mountains intricately spread that looked as if the sportive creepers had encircled the rocks. While Narendra was looking through the window, Chandrachur without raising his head said, "Take a seat."

Narendra dissatisfiedly sat down in a chair. He waited while Chandrachur went on reading the newspaper; five minutes passed. Meanwhile Narendra went on drawing with pencil some triangles, circles, rectangles and human faces etc on a newspaper.

Chandrachur folded the newspaper and put it down and said, "Narendra, can you tell me what is the basic difference between a human being and the other animals is ?"

Narendra said, " Man is the only social animal. And that is the difference." What are the qualities and nature of that social animal ?" asked Chandrachur.

Narendra was thinking of the answer and Chandrachur said, "A brain is full of strange ideas, the only differentiative quality of human being. He can not sit quiet even for a moment. Every moment he needs to be engaged in some work - whether good or bad. If he doesn't find anything he would start doing strange things. And there you have reflected the strangeness of your mind. Can you tell me what those pictures mean ?"

Narendra kept quiet. Iritation was writ large on his face. Lighting his pipe Chandrachur said, "Well! you have persuaded the people in the oil \& turmeric yeilding area not to part with their crop, right?"

Narendra said in a provocative voice, "They are not prepared to give you a single grain." Chandrachur calmly asked, " Why not?"

Replied Narendra, "What demand! What right do you have to collect a share of their crop? Why should they give you a part of their crop when they have put in so much of hard labour and capital of their own to harvest that?

Chandrachur said, "Mere hard labour does not give you any crop, Narendra. You need land too. And that land is mine. So I must have a share.

Narendra said, "But land is the collective property of the society. Therefore, nobody has individual rights over it or its share". Puffing out some smoke Chandrachur said, "Then labour should also be a social property. No Individual should have personal right on the earnings of the labour. You must be prepared to announce labour as the social property or mass property, are you?"

Narendra said, "You can't ward off the real problem by this revolutionary feudalistic argument. "

Chandrachur said, "I know Narendra, it is easy to realise one's lust for power by instigating people but why do you have to stoop to begging just for power? I know one day you will exploit and harass the same people who are going to empower you. But my suggestion is if you want to realise power do whatever your ancestors have done. Fight against the powerful with a sword and rule them. There is no acting, no deception."

Replied Narendra, " I am shocked that one can have such nature, such intentions too."

Chandrachur said, "Narendra, think about it. Once upon a time, not only oil and turmeric - yielding area but Ray - Chudamani Estate was also non-existent. The day Churamani, the slayer of the enemies, set his fort in this land, it was desolate, it was full of jungles of Sal and mountains. Then Raygarh was built after cutting the mountains and clearing the jungles. Before, prehistoric socialism of the ancient man used to be the order of the time. Can anybody tell me, Narendra, how the origin of the king, the state, and empire was possible in that ancient socialism. How Raygarh came into existence replacing the jungles? The beginning of the history of the civilization, individual and individual's, life history personal property and rights on which the foundation of society and civilization is based. Narendra you can not avert the truth by the help of these hollow slogans. "
" You can not argue with such prejudice", said Narendra and left.
Chandrachur started strolling inside the hall placing his hands on the back of his waist. He could hear Rout Ray coughing which was his perennial forerunner. Counting his steps with his eyes towards the floor Chandrachur said, " Come in Rout Ray".

Coming as close to Chandrachur as possible Rout Ray said, " An amount of ten lakh is being granted for the oil and turmeric yielding area. It might go up by one more lakh, your honour, if you agree, everything would be settled."

Throwing a puff of smoke Chandrachur said, " No, that is not necessary, Rout Roy". Rout Roy asked in a vexed voice, " Then how are we going to manage the princess' dowry?"

Chandrachur said, " You don't have to worry about the dowry, Rout Ray. Has Mitrabhanu come here ?

Rout Ray replied, " Yes, it's about fifteen minutes since he came. Shall I inform him ?"

Puffing out some smoke and slowly looking at Rout Ray said Chandrachur, " No !" Rout Ray left.

Chandrachur looked at the portraits of his ancestors. Ananga Ray Churamani, the fifth Churamani dressed in golden laced Sherwani and shoes, and a sword in a golden sheath hanging at the waist. He was wearing a golden turban. Ananga was a man of high potential and immeasurable strength. On his huge face a high mustache twisted upwards looking like the whisker's of a tiger. Chandrachur cowled his own mustache round his fingers a few times. Both Mukund Ray Churamani and Gangeswar Ray Churamani were the sixth and seventh descendants of the Churamani dynasty. The eighth descendants, Pratap Ray Churamani was Chandrachur's grand father. It was during his reign that Rayagarh was, by the British rulers, made a part of this estate. Pratap Ray Churamani's strength and potentiality can be seen on the canvass of the painting. He first raised his voice against the British in this area. Pratap Ray is sitting on the back of a black horse with his hand on the sword.

All of a sudden Chandrachur's quiet and grave eyes illuminated with joy. He doesn't want anything now. If it was possible at the cost of everything he has, to get such a fast and energetic horse and a well-sharpened sword. It appeared that these portraits were the only reality for Chandrachur. And this palace, Rout Ray, Narendra, the princess, th old garden and everything were
just an illusion, deceptive, false and transitory. At least, Chandrachur doesn't have any link with them. But at the very next moment he felt as if he was himself an illusion and transitory like the light between the setting sun and night. It was eight in the evening.

Chandrachur, Rupakumari and the guest Mitrabhanu were sitting at the dinner table. The princess and Mitrabhanu were intimate since they were classmates. But it did not proceed much further. There was a marriage proposal for the princess from Mitrabhanu. Since that did not match Chandrachur's taste, the proposal was turned down.

In Chandrachur's aristocratic estimation, the status of the royal family of Birganj was quite low. Mitrabhanu, brought up in the culture and environment of Kalimpong and the convent schools of Dheradun, is very fond of hunting and sports. He has lived in America and Europe for a long time. He seems to have been strongly influenced by cowboy culture of America. And so he wears his cloth - a pair of black trousers and heavily printed, chintz yellow Hawai'an shirt. Mitrabhanu was talking myriads of things about various countries "... "the last time in Carlifornia... have you heard of Zanjibar, Sir ? ... a strange place, Sir... where the police department and Income Tax departments were regulated by both America and England simultaneously".

Chandrachur kept on listening to him without saying anything. Who knows whether he was listening to all these things or not? But the princess was listening very anxiously. Sometimes she enquried, "and then ?" Today she relinquished the taste of the food. Chandrachur was watching how the princess was eating. Today she is unusually fearless, unhesitant like a sub-merging flood.

Dinner was over. After the coffee Chandrachur lit his pipe and said ...." I have to discuss something with Mitrabhanu, princess. Could you please leave us alone?

Rupakumari left.
Mitrabhanu lighting a cigarette smoked as if he was trying to hide himself in the rings of smoke.

Chandrachur asked in a leisurely way," Hope you did not have any problems on the way ?"

Mitrabhanu replied, " No sir, the road was fine. Moreover the new Placart is running well too."

Chandrachur asked, "What speed did you drive per hour?" "Just about 60-70 Km..per hour", replied Mitrabhanu.

Chandrachur said, " Oh ! that's not bad. But the cause of fast driving is 'desire'. Then can you tell me Mitrabhanu, " What is it that you covet here that you came driving fast?"

Mitrabhanu replied behind the rings of smoke, " Do you want to hear it from me what you already know?"

Chandrachur said, " I know Mitrabhanu, you are keen to marry Rupakumari. But you know it too that I don't approve of it."

Mitrabhanu said, "But in this matter the decision of the princess is more important than your's."

Chandrachur said, "You are my guest. What else can I say, Mitrabhanu?"

Chandrachur got up from the chair. It was nine o'clock at night.

The next day.... It was quarter to nine. As usual before the breakfast when Chandrachur came to the dressing table he found a letter written by the princess under the perfume bottle.

Chandrachur opened the letter and read it.
The princess had written she was leaving home with Mitrabhanu. For when the two hearts have united, the familial impediments have to be broken. When Chandrachur could not adapt himself to the changing time, how would he involve himself with the unchanging traditions?

Placing the letter in the right place Chandrachur looked at the portrait of the queen on the dressing table. And then slowly walked out towards the dinning room. He could hear himself walking down the stairs. Slow, unhurried and heavy foot-steps....... Like the other directions.

The clock at the entrance-gate struck nine.

## BALLOON

Date : 5/5/1939.
Evening has just fallen.
I haven't made any entry in my diary for a long time now. Today, I felt like writing in my diary. It is my only affliction. Sometimes I feel like writing in my diary. But no matter how much I write, I always feel like there is a lot more still to write that I have not written. And after that, there is a long interval. The diary remains buried under a pile of books. I dig it out and write.

It revives the memories of youth, of the times as it arises like the lotus from the bottom of deep water. It reminds me of the enchanting eyes of that lady... if that is so, how do you describe that charmed consciousness ? Love ? Two hearts beating as one? Two lives existing as one?

If that is so, I love Kalyani.
Yes, I love Kalyani.
Date : 5/5/1940
The moment is what matters. An infinity of such moments are the coral beads that bind the wreath of life together. But somewhere in that string of moments comes along a moment after which everything else seems futile, and living on after that such an inexorable waste !

Today, I experienced one such moment. Perhaps. It was still sometime off till morning. The ashen veil still hadn't lifted form the face of the newly wed dawn.

I was holding Kalyani's clenched fists in my hands. When the Vagrant fragrance wrapped itself around the remainder of the surplus night.

Date. 5/5/1944.
Have you ever inflated a baloon?
Big, still bigger, still more beautiful .... and then, pop ! the colourful ballon is no more than a piece of rubber.

A human child learns, by blowing a balloon, a cruel reality of life.
Today, a six-year-old morning returns. The sky is the same deep shade of blue, as lustrous, as beautiful, But why don't Kalyani's blue eyes remind me of that morning's blue sky?

Possibly, such futility is inevitable when we try to transfer a phenomenon of mind on to physical possession.

Have you ever noticed a peculiarity of creation? That which is seemingly desirable forever, to acquire which one strives infinitely, suddenly loses all its attractiveness, suddenly appears utterly incomplete. Once you acquire it, the only thing that retains any meaning is the striving; the achievement itself no longer has any reality.

Perhaps that is why a child mercilessly tears the petals from a colourful flower and scatters them to the wind.

Kalyani is approaching. I need to hide the diary. I rarely write in my diary nowadays for fear of her.

Date 5/5/1967.
Shyamal, my eldest son... today I am as of thirty-seven years ago... as if I have been re-born in Shyamal's body and mind.

Shyamal is in love with a classmate, someone by the name of Saroja. I have secretly read his diary. Shyamal writes exactly the way I used to do once upon a time. I have once secretly read a letter of Saroja.

So what is love, anyway?
Have you heard of a psychologist called Pavlov? He has propounded a new theory - 'Conditioned Reflex' - if you are in the habit of taking bath at seven o'clock every morning, then at seven every morning, you will feel the desire to take a bath. You have the habit of smoking a cigarette after a meal. When you do not do so, you are bound to feel uneasy, uncomfortable.

In the same way, love is a 'Conditioned Reflex'. When you come into contact with a pretty, desirable woman in your youth, you name the resultant reaction in your bosom 'love'. That 'reaction' is inevitable. But in the course of things, when it gets inured, it fail to produce the same reaction. In the infinite incidents of life, that 'love' also seems to be just another incident nothing more. In the language of psychologists it is called 'inhibition'.

You enjoy looking at the moon. And at midnight, the fragrance of the Henna bush under your window charms your entire being. But if you leave your bed to sit in the Henna bush, it is most likely that you will feel disgusted with the experience. And your throat will be dry with thirst if you decide to take a rocket to the moon in order to pursue happiness. And on the waterless surface of the moon, the moist earth down below will suddenly seem extremely desirable.

Shyamal is heading for the moon. Let him...
Date : 5/5/1977.

This is probably my last entry. Kalyani has left her sick-bed to come and sit by my head. Her slow, sick, cool hand feels like the cold hand of Death on my burning forehead.

Nevertheless, there is such pleasure, such peace in that touch. How I wish I could die before her ! If she dies first, it will be as if some one has stolen all the assets of my life which I've gathered and stored carefully in my entire lifetime.

As if the world that we have built together over the years has been suddenly razed to the ground by an earth quake. As if that which had made me complete, Shielded me, had suddenly become an emptiness itself. The road where we walked together will suddenly become very deserted, very lonely. I am very much scared of walking there alone.
"No Kalyani ! I shall die first. You are Sati Lakshmi. My heaven is to die in your lap!"

Kalyani replied in a broken voice : "What inauspicious things you say ! I want to die while I still have vermilion on my fore head, bangles on my wrists, in your presence!"

If Kalayani of my dream is thirst, then the real Kalyani is water. Pavlov's theory of 'Conditioned Reflex' falls around me like a house of cards.

## SHANGHRILLA

'Aa--aa--a--- Sainya teri tirchhi nazrein' (Darling, your sidelong glances), Ashoka is practicing his music, stretched out upon the bed, the long drawn out alaap of the Khayal mode. Nonesense! Amitabh is sitting upon the sill of the half-open window, staring out. The slanted rays of the rising sun are gradually encompassing the town's street. The street is still asleep, like last night's inebriate drunkard. Sunlight upon his face and the flies buzzing all around. Amitabh fished out a half-smoked cigarette from his pocket and lit it.

Surjeet is killing mosquitoes inside the mosquito net. Sukant lies on his bed, lecturing... "That damn Plato's 'Theory of ideas' is a big fraud. The royalty of the cowardly and weak Athens was reeling under the attack of Sparta. It was in that decaying society of Athens that Plato's Philosophy developed. The only solace is the past. Only the past is the Truth, God and Beauty. And the present? Decaying, cracking, meaningless. "Got it, Surjeet? Philosophy is no more than a self-deluding strategy to logically justify one's own weakness. Now for Schopenhauser."
"Damn! The mosquito has got away. Hey Sukant, shut up with that lecture, will you? Even the mosquitoes are running away."

Amitabh's forehead wrinkled in boredom. "All the useless morons are assembled here. The stretched out alaap of the Khayal can be heard, philosophy is being discussed, the mosquito menace is on. And still a year's house rent to be paid. All the tea shop, cigarette stall, rice shop, Kinu Sahu's Shop.... still so much to pay. In a short while, all of them will arrive for the mass attack."

Amitabh was ready with a scout whistle to inform the inmates about their arrival.

Nevertheless, everybody is quite composed. As if each of them is the grand child of the Nawab Ali Shah. Poor souls. Suddenly they all fall silent. Perhaps they are all getting ready to go back to sleep. Surjeet is ringing his bicycle bell... as a call bell. His lordship doesn't wake up until bed tea's served. "One cup of tea... Radha! Hey! Radha" Amitabh shouted.

Radha replied drowsily from inside, "Why do you call me by ringing the bi-cycle bell so early?"

Radha was the servant, cook and well-wisher of the Sanghrilla respectively. Once upon a time, he was acting in the village theatre as the queen. He was very much familiar with that. But the theatre collapsed due to the internal conflicts of the producer and the director. He waxed his curly hairs into a lock. He keeps the towel like a saree on his body. A girldle on his waist. "Make a cup of tea, Radha"... the sound of Surjeet's bicycle bell is not heard. Must have something wrong with it. Again he is dozing. What would be the future of Sanghrilla? Uncertain and never-ending pitch darkness. Sanghrilla, the moss covered single storey building. A banyan tree is growing in the wall and the roots of the pipal tree have covered the building. They still have a year's rent to pay. The owner of the Sanghrilla was a retired philosophy Professor. He perceives everything Philosophically. He always uses a pair of old fashioned shoes with broken heels and tattered laces. He used to hold a black oil polished stick in his hand and an umbrella, which he used throughout the year. If he could be more liberal regarding the house-rent...

Radha gave a cup of black tea to Amitabh. He took a deep breath after smelling its aroma. Shanghrilla consists of Amitabh, Ashoka, Surjeet, Sukant and Radha. This is the living monument of our mediocre art, culture and intellectuality.

The very familiar white spike atop the black umbrella is seen at the end of the street. Amir Bhai's old cock runs with cock-a-doodle-doo. The street is deserted. Amitabh whistled. The signal for unending assault... they are all trained by now to jump under the beds on hearing the siren.

The first chance is to go to the philosophy teacher. After him comes Khairati Khan, the owner of the tea stall in the upper side of the town. Nazir Mian, the cigarette-shop owner flung around his arm upon Khairati's shoulder. And behind them all is Kinu Sahu, a mark on his forehead and a wet towel upon his shoulder. It's entirely possible that some others might turn up - they are all out to launch a combined offensive.

The Professor knocked the door.
Shanghrilla was silent.
Again he knocked.
Shanghrilla was speechless.
He knocks even harder breathing deeply for it. Somebody had written "Sanghrilla" on the door by help of a chalk. The two ends of the teacher's moustache quivered angrily. A year's rent to pay and that for 'Sanghrilla'!

He knocked at the door again.
Radha opened the door and shouted : "who's that? why are you gathered here, To drive the monkeys out?

The Professor came down one step from the staircase when he saw the furious image of Radha and asked : "Where are the Baboo's? Radha cleared his throat and replied... "How do I know? They are males, might have gone to earn their livelihood from early morning. What is the use of sitting inside the room?

Nazir asked Radha in a jovial mood; "Radhika aunt, why do you turn your face if someone asks you?

Then Radha shouted at the top of his voice :
"See ! the temper of the hero ! get lost."
Everybody started moving after seeing the face of Radha. Nazir mocked him and sang : "Where were you in the broad day-light? It is still sweating on your face..."

Radha shut the door with a half-smile. Amitabh came out from under the bed and whistled... All clear. Then he thanked Radha by saying, "Long live Radha."

But how long will he help us?
Again he whistled. It might have been the signal of an emergency meeting. $\begin{array}{llllllllllll}\mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x} & \mathbf{x}\end{array}$ The tea-stall in the upper end of the town. Written on the smoke blackwall. "No credit". The crowd in the morning is very small. A drop of milk lying on the table, some flies were buzzing around it. The hotel boy, with black half-pants smoked comfortably, resting his body on the bench. An aged and pale faced gentleman was taking his tea. Anewspaper lay there. He is reading it in details and buzzing himself. He said in Bengali, "give me another half-cup of tea."

The owner ordered a single cup of tea. The dozing hotel-boy became active and poured half cup of tea to that gentleman.

Again he was reading the newspaper. A cigarette was burning in between the two fingers.

Ashoka, Amitabh, Surjeet and Sukant occupied a seat in the tea-stall. The owner ordered tea for them.

Again that gentleman screamed in Bengali and said, "Oh! Mr, there is no sugar in the tea. This is horrible. Get me one spoon of sugar. The gentleman would take an hour to finish that much of tea. Sometimes he will add some sugar, some liquors and then some milk in it. Still he read the newspaper.

Amitabh took one page of the newspaper from the gentleman and gave a serious look.

Surjeet lit his half-smoked cigarette. Ashoka was about to fall down from the bench but Sukant somehow managed to control him and said, "stupid! totally useless."

Ashoka spontaneously starts singing the rhymes of a Hindi Ghazal.
The gentleman of the nearby table said after throwing the newspaper, "Oh Mr! I know, If China won the war, then the value of American dollar will be decreased'. Yeah, get another half-cup of tea." Take one cigarette and have it. The camel brand cigarette, is totally new brand, pretty good and keeps your mind cold - It cost four paise only." Perhaps he is the agent of a cigarette company.

Surjeet lit a cigarette and thought, instead of being rejected by the publishers for writing the modern poems, If I could have joined in the cigarette company, at least I would have earned my pocket money.'

Sukant lit a cigarette and thought, 'now the government shoud increase the excise duty on cigarette, as much as they can.'

Amitabh was going through the advertisement columns thoroughly 'wanted'. 'Wonderful treatment of Dr. Dhanvantari (U.S.A.), fruitful medicine for the sixty - four diseases, sacred talisman of mother goddess 'Kali'- useful in examinations, in the court, lotteries and in love", invited alliance from handsome, educated, and a working guy with a minimum salary of five hundred bucks.' Amitabh was harassed. Suddenly he shouted, Eureka! Eureka! "Our son- in-law has been missing since last two days. He is slim with long hair which touches his forehead. He is dressed in a 'dhoti' and 'punjabi'. Finder will receive a prize money of one thousand bucks". Below the advertisement, there was an unrecognizable photograph of the son - in - law and then a letter of three lines : "Dear shyamal, your mother - in -law is on fast since you left. Lalita has decided to commit suicide. " Then address "- 10, Kapadawala Lane, lovingly your's, Lalita."

We have to find out the missing son- in -law. At least for the sake of Lalita, not for the prize money. Sweet Lalita is crying ! She must be a quarrelsome lady. Other wise, there is no point of leaving her. "Hey.... four cups of tea for us."

Amitabh cut that portion of the advertisement and kept it inside his pocket.

The main road of the city - crowded with over - population. People are moving like a flood and the missing son- in -law of 10, Kapadawala lane is floating forward like a splinter of wood. Amitabh ordered them to stop in the
scout style. He is a disciplinarian. "Look, who's that person? He is watching the cinema poster," A Night with Her' at 'Chhayalok'. The Hollywood actress dressed with a triangular shape black panty, the rest of her body is clearly visible. They sorrounded him in a half - circle. Don't let him go. Surjeet said " $\mathrm{Hi}^{\prime}$ to that person. He left that place after seeing them. No, this is not the person we are searching. "Lets move", said Amitabh.

The main road of the city was full of vehicles with Escort, Ford, Austin, Cheverlet, Ply-carts, Rickshaw, bi- cycle, moter cycle etc., the city road is lying like the tentacles of an octopus. In the middle of the one - way traffic, the iron fenced lawns are looking like an island. One palm - tree was there on the island. Some people were taking rest under it's shade. But who's that? He is facing towards the moving people on the road rested his body against the palm -tree. No, he is not the person for whom we are searching.

It is two o'clock by the clock of the nearby post -office. It is the afternoon time.

A deserted end of the park. It is $12 o^{\prime}$ clock at night. They gave up all the hopes of finding out the missing son - in -law of 10 , Kapadawala Lane. But some one is sitting under the Eucalyptus like a statue. He is partially visible in the street light and looking like the missing son - in - law of 10, Kapadawala Lane. He must have left his home, otherwise, What is he doing here? Amitabh became more enthusiastic and said, "Eureka!"

Amitabh, Ashok, Surjeet and Sukant sat there sorrounding him. Ashoka gave the camel brand' cigarette to all and lit his own cigarette. Everybody were disgusted by the smoke of the cigarette and all of them started coughing.

Perhaps, his concentration would break due to their coughing. The echo of their coughing spreads to other corners of the park. Amitabh suddenly said, "once we've found you it means we are not going to leave you."

He said in a Napoleanic style, "Oh! you people have come. I know it. Have you come leaving your secular minds and decisive souls ?" Ashok asked him, "But what are you doing here ?"

He said, " I'm preparing the plot for the forthcoming revolution! As, you people have come, listen : All the revolutions of the world, from the French Revolution up to Gandhian Satyagrah, have failed. Because man does not know how to revolt against the 'self'! I'm arranging the plots here to revolt against the 'selves'. Will you join me ?"

Amitabh, Ashok, Surjeet and Sukant looked at each other in the darkness. Who's this great personality ? Is he the missing son - in - law of 10 , Kapadawala Lane ?

Then he said in a lecturer-style... "His revolution is appreciable and brighter. He does not want to live more or does not have anything for his selfprotection. His revolution is worthwhile, fruitful and sacred !"

Then he laughed at the top of his voice as if it was the redicule of the cyclone toward the nest of a bird. Then he said in a heavy voice - " The motto of the French Revolution was promoting liberty, fraternity and equality, but in spite of that why did Napoleon emerge? The notion of autocracy and dictatorship was practised there. The October Revolution was meant for the upliftment of the poor but as a result of the revolution the gorgeous Kremlin tower emerged. Because mankind knows how to fight against the exploitations but not against the self, comrades, lets fight for the 'self'."

The police blew the whistls from outside the park. Some policemen sorrounded the park. They discovered them by the beams of some torch -lights.

One police sergent came forward with a revolver in hand. Some armed police follow him. Ashoka started the futile attempt of hiding himself behind Amitabh.

The sergent searched them by torch -light and ordered their arrest. "Arrest ! But why ?" asked Amitabh. The sergent replied, "You all are terrorists."

A narrow cell of the prison. the police locked them all from the outside. Two freshly arrested drunkards slept in the other corner of the cell.

Srikant said, "Not bad."
Surjeet said, "No , what is bad ?"
"They have vomitted there", said Ashok.
That person said, "Do not hate them as drunkards. They are the real revolutionaries. They've freed themselves from their self - consciousness.

The constable shouted from the outside, "Do not shout there!"
"Sanghrilla", Amitabh wrote an the iron - door with the help of a chalk.
Tomorrow, the upper portion of the Umbrella of the retired professor will be visible at the street end. Nazir, Amir and Kinu Sahu will be accompanying him for a mass attack on "Sanghrilla". Let them come with a large number.

At least they are not going to wake up before 9 'o clock in this 'Sanghrilla'.

Ashok breathed with satisfaction and sang, "Kaun Karta teri Minti pahrába..."

The constable who was dozing outside shouted at the top of his voice... "Don't shout!" (1952).

## MANDODARI IN DREAM

No... the old formulae has become outdated. That was O.K. If you have $50 \%$ love, $30 \%$ tragedy, $17.5 \%$ marriage and two and half percentage of the criticism against the systems of the society, that was story for a novel. That was good.

Shyamacharan looked miserably towards his seven foot book-shelf after caressing his bald head. He has written a total of twenty-seven novels. Each novel has a common theme, common colors but with different brands. No! No! he can not die so soon having written only twenty seven novels. He has to write more... near about another sixty-three novels. He would finish one hundred novels and be the Balzac of the twentieth century.

Shyamacharan took out a notebook from the drawer: It was full of brand new ideas. No, No this style won't help much. Shyamacharan strolled inside the room with his head bent and hands folded at the back. One can easily locate through the open window Shyamacharan's main contender Ramacharan's new building. The new building was mocking at the old building of Shyamacharan. Bogus, bunch! they always keep the window open howsoever much one restrains them. Shyamacharan shut the window in anger and sat down.

Ramacharan is a novelist! Yet he has built a double-storey building. Fie-people are like him, whom does he complain? Seventy percent revolver, twenty percent murder and cent-percent nonsense in his novels. Scribbling this, Ramacharan boasts of himself as a novelist as if Asvasthama, the son of Dronacharya dances with the strength of hundred lions after drinking the
grindding rice-water. Well! this time I'll see. This time I'll cite $80 \%$ Freudian psychoanalysis in my next novel. No, No, I've to save $5 \%$ out of the rest twenty-percent from the popular literature. Oh! Mother Kali, save me," and he started banging the table with joy.

As soon as he started writing a new novel in a note book, his face became lined with some thoughts. Some hassles about the naming of the hero and heroine. Shyamacharan took out two thick bound note books from the drawer, on one is written ' $M$ ' and on the other ' $F$ '. He took out the one with ' $M$ ' and looked for names of heroes. But he could not make-up his mind. Manoj, Pankaj, Shyamal, Tushar, Vijay, Sanjay, these old names won't help to write a modern novel. He wants a classical name with four letters. Oh! that useless fellow is coming again! He must be coming for a cup of tea. He closed his eyes pretending to be lost in serious thought after seeing Srikant through the open window, as if inspirations were coming from heaven and piercing his head. If he even moves a bit the inspirations would slip and fall down.

Srikant entered the room silently, pulled up a chair and sat down. He was looking distressed with his ruffled hair, eyes lost in deep sockets. With a dirty shirt, one note book under the arm, manuscript of some modern poems - it must have been rejected by the publishers.

Shyamacharan opened his eyes slowly and said, "Oh! Who? Is it Srikant? O.K. sit down! I was just gathering some inspiration to write my new novel. You know very well, like you, we are not pre-war or post-war writers nor do I shuffle so many books to write a new novel. I'm a devotee of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. When I do not get the inspiration from the things of
beauty, signal from the truth and blessing from the almighty God, my pen doesn't work". Srikant asked in a modest but surprised voice, "You are writing a new novel again?"
"Twenty-eighth one", said Shyamacharan with a smile. Srikant said, "Why don't you keep a sign-board outside the door ? - 'Shyamacharan Novel Manufacturing Company Limited!' This is really mass production". Shyamacharan took the last remark as a complement and said, "Just see! I'll have to contribute one hundred novels to the storehouse of the goddess of knowledge before my death".

Srikant added some fuel to the fire, because he had not ordered the tea yet. He said with a bit of flattery, "Only one hundred? You should write one hundred and one novels".

Shyamacharan became mere enthusiastic and said, "That's right, that's right! I've to write one hundred and one novels" Then he called his youngest son at the top of his voice, "Hey Baguli, tell your mummy to get two cups of tea".

Then Srikant said in a relaxed mood. "That's very good! Critics won't find a particle of pearl even if they drown breathless in your ocean-like knowledge.

Shyamacharan pointed out his two thumbs and said, "I'm not Ramacharan. Who can beat me?"

Bagala, the youngest son of Shyamacharan came with two cups of tea. The handles of the cups were broken. The cups were imported one was red and the other yellow in colour.

Srikant sipped the tea and said, "Sir, what is the name of your new novel?"
"Mandodari - my dream girl", said Shyamacharan. Srikant took another sip and asked, "What will she do?"
"She will love", said Shyamacharan. "What else would she do? "But this is a new type of love purely 'platonic'."

Srikant took out a crumpled cigarette from his pocket and lit it and asked, "What is that?"
"That is modern love", said Shyamacharan. "It means, she is just like the wind. It will touch you but you can not catch it. This is totally based on Freudian psychoanalysis, 'burning without flame'."

Srikant got up to make a move. If he would listen the latter part of the story tomorrow, he would get another cup of tea. But Shyamacharan was not ready to let him go.

He continued, "Many will come to get hold of Mandodari but this is impossible! Mandodari will come to every one's life but no one can hold her. Savyasachi, the hero of the novel, will stay at a distance but steal glances".
"Then what?" asked Srikant.
"Marriage", said Shyamacharan. "But not for the sake of a son".
Srikant went off.
A sultry night in the month of June. The moon light made the night more attractive. Heavily sweating Shyamacharan was busy writing the novel. But there are some hassles with Mandodari. Shyamacharan faced the problems after describing Mandodari from her childhood to youth, like the old poets describing the significance of the six-seasons of a year.

Mandodari was not ready to put on sarees like the typical Oriya women. She asked Shyamacharan after wearing a britch with a overall, "How do I look?"

Shyamacharan replied helplessly, "No, No! Mandodari you are becoming disobedient and indiscrete. These are the uncivilized clothes. Whatever you wear, either you hold a lotus or hold one of my novels in one hand. You are the first dream of the young poet. One can feel your touch, but can not catch you. But the sign of self-surrender and defeat are clearly visible in your eyes".

Mandodari said after throwing Shyamacharan's manuscripts, "You are stupid! first, I'm a female and then the heroine of your novel. I've some desires and drives, may be I hide my instincts and call it love. But these are minor things in one's life. Why are you making it complex? The question of victory and defeat does not arise here. Who's fighting against whom?"

Shyamacharan asked, "Then how do I write my novel? Have you ever seen the new building of Ramacharan?"

Mandodari said, "Better engage yourself in some shady-business. That is more profitable than your novel industry."

Shyamacharan said in a chocked voice, "Can you say truly in this moon-lit night that love is nothing but a facade? Is it just an instinct? Is it libido? One strives for another's embrace especially in the moon-lit night..."

Mandodari said, "Modern science has adversely affected your livelihood. Is it the same moon that your beloved was thinking about. Man is now planning the proper utilisation of the moon. If they could cultivate crops there, the food problems of the world would be solved partially. How do you create love in that desert, Shyamacharan?"

At that time a young man entered the room. He looked like the second incarnation of the god of storm and thunder.

Mandodari asked, "Oh! Savyasachi, You too are here?"
Savyasachi sat down on Shyamacharan's table and said, "Oh! Are you Shyamacharan? Well, Mr. Shyamacharan, Do you think that our love is a whole time job? After getting up early in the morning one feels the scarcity of sugar in the tea, rice with small stones and tattered clothes. You read of war when you open the newspaper. War of words during the peace-agreement! War, war, everywhere there are wars and problems. Here, we don't have time to be full time lovers".

## Speechless, Shyamacharan looked at Savyasachi.

Savyasachi was continuing with his speech, "Listen, love is a basic need. Love is necessary like a cup of tea or a cigarette in the morning. Life is nothing but a laboratory. We have to put to test all the traditions, customs and beliefs through the test-tube of experience in that laboratory. Forget the concept of love and say something new".

Mandodari said, "Savyasachi, this stupid fellow wants to see me as a bride at the affair at the Kalyan Mandap this old age and wants to complete our marriage chanting the sacred verse, Yatha Ravanasya Mandodarisya Swaha... Savyasachi, please don't mind. If ever I marry it would be for some need. But thanks to you that necessity has not arisen yet.

Shyamacharan was listening to all this silently. But he could not stand all this any more and shouted, "Mandodari you have to marry Savyasachi, otherwise I'll give him pottasium cyanide. If you won't marry him, then how do I give emotions to my novel?"

Mandodari said vexedly, "Sentiments! In these days! You a father of how many children, Shyamacharan? He wakes up from the slumber. His wife is shouting. All the eight children are fighting among themselves. Non-sense! The novel still has a long way to go. Hey! Listen! A cup of tea... please. (1952).

## THE SOUL OF DINOSAUR

## The train is crossing the Rupa Bridge. Perhaps.

Maharaj Ray Brajeswar Ray opens the window, looks out. Gradually the eastern sky turns ashen with the arrival of dawn, like a woman whose eyes are moist with tears.

He has a hangover from last night's whisky. Perhaps he drank more than he should have.

Yeah... Rupa bridge. Under which the Zigzag stream lies, after having made love all night on a silver bed of sand. Madhavi? Mohini? Srimati? Anuradha?

Brajeswar re-lit his pipe, which had gone out. Nothing has changed in the last ten years-Rupa bridge, the familiar landscapes on the bank of Rupa... the next station is Rajkanchangarh. Nothing has changed.

Ten years is nothing. Brajeswar unties the woolen sleeping gown and throws it on the berth.

The very thought of returning to Rajkanchangarh, after ten years, makes Brajeswar's mind alert and active despite the hangover. The train slows down as it enters the Rajkanchangarh station. Some people were shouting on the platform... a slogan of rejoicing. Brajeswar listenes silently... it is for him 'Jay Maharaja Ray Brajeswar Ray Ki Jay.' Brajeswar's impassive, iron face wrinkles slightly in a smile.

The train came to a halt. Brajeswar looked at the platform through the window. After ten years of exile, Brajeswar was returning to Kanchangarh.

The platform was over crowded to welcome him. Ofcourse, so many things had changed during these days. The Kingdom of Kanchangarh had collapsed, monarchy had gone, the iron body of Brajeswar had become stagnated... he opened the door of the compartment. Three servants got inside carefully. One dressed Brajeswar, the second one came with water and towel to wash the master's face and the third one fetched the morning tea. The people shouted slogans outside the compartment. The train was already late by three minutes. Still Brajeswar did not leave his seat. Servants unloaded luggage from the other compartment. Besides luggage there were large numbers of guns, several trunks, cameras etc. Brajeswar slowly got down from the train. The slogans distrubed the tranquility of the morning. Brajeswar's face was invisible behind the wetted garlands of marrigold.

Throwing a puff of smoke, he asked someone close to him- "How are you, Mohapatra"? Are they all from Kanchangarh?

Nilambar Mohapatra said honestly - "Your majesty! after learning of your arrival, they have been waiting here since last night."

The memory of a night before ten years was reliving in the mind of Brajeswar. It was a dark night of Sept, 1942. The political agent Mr.Michael ordered him in the drunken state, to leave Kanchangarh. It was an expulsion order for five years.

The agitated people demonstrated outside the Kanchangarh Palace, with country made guns and dynamite bombs. But Mohapatra skillfully saved him and took him to Rajkanchangarh Railway station. Nilambar Mohapatra is the epitome of all kinds of brutalities and cruelties. He has already been jailed for three years for unethical deeds.

Mohapatra shouted at the crowd to clear the road.
A red colored Rolls Royce managed to come inside and stopped near the station gate. Brajeswar sat inside. Mohapatra occupied the drivers seat and started the engine.

Though a lot had changed in Brajeswars face, yet the thin body, the ruffled hair over his pale forehead and the sharp look in his bright eyes were the same as before.
"Drive fast"-said Brajeswar. "I have to reach there within one hour and fifteen minutes". The distance between the palace and the station was 70 K.M. But the speed was 10 miles per hour. Mohapatra just increased the speed and said-oh! It is pretty tough to drive in the crowd.

Oh! somebody just escaped an accident. He was coming to garland the bonnet of the car.
"Fools" - said Brajeswar. "Drive fast. Just tell them blocking the road is a serious offense".

Mohapatra argued - "But sir, they have come from far away to welcome you".

Get lost! "Once they gathered for my blood" - said Brajeswars after throwing a puff of smoke. "I'm least bothered about their friendship or enmity. I can't act in front of them with folded hands. Mahapatra, Drive fast."

The car blew horn constantly and gradually disappeared round a turning throwing a cloud of dusts.

Brajeswar was strolling in the palace garden with a gun in hand. Flocks of birds flew in the blue sky. They looked like garlands of jasmine. Brajeswar shot down some of the birds. Brajeswars cruel face wrinkled with self satisfaction. A gardener rushed there looking for the dead and injured birds.

Another flock of birds came twittering.
Their desire for the bliss in life has not been satiated in the Caspean sea and Mansorabar. That's why, in winter they fly to the warmer places near the equator. They find great challenge in their wings to fly away. Their throats are ready to sing the song of life. Brajeswar again fired. Some ducks fell down. Their colored feathers turned red in blood.

Brajeswar took one bird in his hand. It seemed the death had captured the bird in its claws. Brajeswar threw it down.

Nowadays, he does not want to misuse his power. He does not find excitement in hunting. Brajeswar returned to the palace slowly.

The white marbled palace was reflected in the clean water of the swimming pool in the garden. The sound of a bird which was coming from Cyprus plant drew his attention.

The palace was deserted and silent. He was leading a life of despair, loneliness and worthlessness. Adeathly silence engulfed the whole palace. Brajeswar walked towards the palace slowly bending his head down.

Some people waited in the portico to meet Brajeswar. When people came to know of his presence in the palace after long years, they came to the palace to meet him. He did not have a kingdom and the monarchy had collapsed, still
people came here to meet this autocrat with love and regard. They lay prostrated in front of Brajeswar, but he was least concerned about that. He went inside giving the rifle to one of his attendants.

Inside, he asked Mohapatra - "Why have they gathered here? What do they want? Drive them out." Mohapatra said with humility, sir - At the pace with which things are changing, it will be better to have their loyalty. So we can manipulate them. As they have come, will it be fair to drive them out?"

Brajeswar said in an imperious voice- "It is obvious that everything changes. But I do not. Even if I do not have any tendency to change, also." Mohapatra went off."

Emotions are being scoffed at everywhere. Lifeless coldness of wealth is widespread.... One can see the wonderful rose garden through the window. It appears that devoid of it is spirit, life is like a beautiful marble statue of an enamourning woman. One can see her beauty but can not enjoy it; one can observe it but can never get satisfaction. There is no dust, dirt, or furustration. Everything is bright and clear, here. It has insatiable desire and unfathomable power to satisfy.

Brajeswar shouted - "who is there?"
Somebody came in and waited for his command. Brajeswar said - "Get some whisky and soda."

Whisky and soda were immediately fetched in. Brajeswar took a sip and put the glass on the table.

Mahapatra came inside and said "Excuse me, Your Honour. Damodar Rajaguru wants to meet you"
"Who is he?" asked Brajeswar.
"Your Excellency, do'nt you remembered him? He is from Rani Dahar village. He lead the Quit India Movement and raided our palace. Anyway, I am going to refuse him permission to meet you," - said Mohapatra.
"No, Mohapatra. Let him come inside" - said Brajeswar. After sometime Rajaguru came inside. Quite old. He had suffered a lot during the freedom movement. He had been jailed several times. Damodar showed his respect to Brajeswar by bending down his head.
"Is there any complaint against me?" - asked Brajeswar. "I have already fulfilled all of your demands."

Rajaguru smiled and said - "Complaints? What kind of demands? I do not want to get out of the frying pan and get in to the fire".
"This is obvious" - said Brajeswar. "If you do not have any problems, then you must have misfortunes. Both are supplementary to each other. God has written in your fate to face the worries, anxieties, and ordeals of life".
"What do you mean" ? asked Rajaguru.
Brajeswar re-lit the pipe and said - "It is very simple, oppression is the birth right of the human being. The state has been created to save from the clutches of the tyrannical ruler. But the state is more atrocious than the tyrannical ruler. No body will believe it though".
"Then why did we destroy the monarchy?" asked Rajaguru.
"Something had been wrong with the monarchy" - he said after throwing a puff of smoke. "I had oppressed people against their will. But the state has been harassing the people with their own consent. Suppose, in monarchy I did
not take your permission to punish you, but democracy takes your permission before punishing you."

Brajeswar was making fun of him.
"Now a days I'm also a believer in absolutism" - said Rajaguru. Because man does not believe in anything except timidity. "The society, civilization, culture, knowledge, science and religion are all based on timidity. At least, one can stay safe in the society, if there is fear of oppression, why should the human beings entangle themselves into the relationship of the society, if they are not scared of oppression".

Brajeswar left the place and went inside. He did not have time for all this non-sense.

## III

## Evening

Brajeswar observes the moon-lit garden from the dance hall. The moon rises from the background of eucalyptus and casurina trees. The moon arrives like the dream of a legendary prince in the eyes of an intoxicated princess. The whisky was finished from his glass. Then he came back from the window side and sat down on the sofa. Some huge and dreadful heads of tigers were hanging on the wall, which appeared like salivating mouth of a hungry giant. They still looked alive. Deathly silence engulfed the whole palace. The electric bulbs were alight silently. Brajeswar switched on the electric call bell. After some time Nilambar Mahapatra came inside. Brajaeswar lit the pipe and said "What a wonderful evening."
"Sir" - said Mohapatra.
"But Mohapatra One can not enjoy the beauty alone," said Brajeswar after throwing a puff of smoke. "Have you arranged anything or not? any fresh sweet and spicy..."

Mahapatra said like an accused - "Now-a-days it is not that easy. There was a time, when whatever we wanted, we had it. But now-a-days there are so many problems".
"What problems?" asked Brajeswar. "I had the capacity to capture everything by power. The people were scared of monarchy. But now I can have them by using the money power. I do not think there is anything impossible by if you have money power."
"But you can't have everything with money" - said Mohapatra.
Brajeswar poured some whisky into his glass and sipped it silently. He said after examining the half-finished glass - "But Mahapatra, I've heard that you have a precious gem in your home. For that you may not to search outside."

Nilambar's eyes became fiery in anger. His face turned red. He said - "I am very much obliged to you. It does not mean that I have surrendered my self-dignity." How dare you talk of such ugly things to a father about his daughter?"

Nilambar prepared to leave. "Listen Mohapatra," - Brajeswar said.
Mohapatra stopped to hear out Brajeswar's next command. Brajeswar strolled in side for a while; finally he said in a heavy voice - "Mohapatra, you know very well, loyalty to the monarch and one's self-respect rarely go hand in hand. Earlier, you compelled a number of fathers for their daughters' favours. Do you remember those times?"
"Excuse me, sir" - said Nilambar.
Brajeswar threw a bunch of keys towards him and ordered him to open the iron-safe.

Mechanically he opened the iron-safe. At the sight of the expensive ornaments kept inside, greed glinted in Nilambar's eyes.

Brajeswar said - "My mother has kept all these things for her future daughter -in-law. You know Mohapatra, I do believe more in the power of force rather than wait for voluntary submission. Because a voluntary participation is no more than a gift from someone. That's why none of the ladies of the palace used all these ornaments. If you wish it, your daughter can have it".

Nilambar stared at Brajeswar as if hypnotized. Brajeswar said - "But I will decorate your daughter according to my wish as my bride". Nilambar sat down on the sofa, helplessly. Brajeswar said : "I am waiting here, come soon".

## IV

The night turned dark.
The moon is on its way out. The liquid darkness gradually swallows up the palace garden.

Brajeswar drank the last few pegs of whisky and said - "Sundari! What a wonderful name. There is no acting, no decoration simply innocence, nevertheless, you are truly beautiful."
"Sundari" - the only daughter of Nilambar Mohapatra. Brajeswar saw, what he had so far only heard to be true. Sundari - the beautiful one.

Sundari stood silently like on ensnared deer helplessly near the hunter. She did not have the courage to look towards the drunken face of Brajeswar.

Brajeswar said - "Come here, Sundari. Why do you stand there?"
She came towards Brajeswar with frightened steps and stood facing him.
Brajeswar touched her cheeks slowly, moving down to her chin. She had a mole on her chin. Brajeswar said - "Beautiful, this mole is as beautiful as the secret rendezvous of two lovers."

Brajeswar disrobed her.
She was at once both helpless and bashful like the moon night.
He uncovered both of her breasts.
Her thighs dazzled like the careful marble sculpture wrought by skilled hands.
"Wonderful symmetry", Brajeswar said.
Sundari covered her face with shame as Brajeswar embraced her.
And she raised her hand in voluntary self-defence, a black streak spread itself on her chin.

Sundari had painted the mole on chin, using her kajol, to make her more beautiful.

Said Brajeswar :"What was the need to paint an already perfect rose ?"
Sundari covered her face in shame once more and sat down on the sofa, motionless, like a painter's model.

Brajeswar folded his arms upon his chest and started pacing about. Facing Sundari, he asked "Tell me, which is more beautiful, a man's intoxicated eyes or a woman's nude body?"

Sundari stared silently at him.

Brajeswar unlocked the iron-safe and said "All this is yours. Take whatever you want, as much as you like, what ever your price may be. I am leaving, you may shut the door from inside. "

Brajeswar went inside to take rest in the inner chamber. An undressed Sundari stared in his direction, speechless. The foot-steps of Brajeswar disappears into the rhythm of the darkness.

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