

শারদীয়া লিপিিকা



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সম্পাদকীয়

আবার দেখছি বনে বনে রং লেগেছে, সোনালী আলোর কিরণ-ছটা গাছের মাথায় আদরের স্পর্শ বুলিয়ে দিচ্ছে। হংসবলাকা আকাশের গলায় মালা দুলিয়ে, মেঘবালিকাদের সাথে নিয়ে শাঁখ বাজিয়ে চলেছে। অটোয়াতে শরৎ কালের নির্ভুল আগমন বার্তা বয়ে আনে এই সব দৃশ্য। আমাদের শারদীয়া দুর্গা পূজার আয়োজন চলেছে পুরোমাত্রায়। তার সাথে আমাদের "লিপিকা" আবার প্রকাশিত হতে চলেছে। এবারকার প্রকাশনার উদ্যোগ এসেছে লেখক-লেখিকাদের পক্ষ থেকে, রণক্লাস্ত সম্পাদিকা অথবা "লিপিকা"র স্রষ্টার দিক থেকে নয়। সেটা আনন্দের বিষয়। এর সাথে যদি পাঠক-পাঠিকাদের কাছ থেকেও ভাল লাগার আর একটু প্রমাণ পাই, তাহলে আমাদের উৎসাহ অনেক বাড়বে। এখানকার ব্যস্ততার জীবন সত্ত্বেও কারো কারো কাছে বাংলা ভাষা ও বাঙালী সংস্কৃতির সাথে এই সামান্য যোগাযোগটুকু মূল্যবান। তাই তাঁরা সময় করে নেন। নানা ধরণের লেখা, আঁকা এবং আলোকচিত্র এবারেও সমৃদ্ধ করেছে "লিপিকা"কে। শুভায়ণ এবারেও তার অনেক ব্যস্ততার মাঝে প্রচ্ছদ তৈরী করেছে। আমাদের আশা যে এবারেও "লিপিকা" সবার মনোরঞ্জন করবে।

সবাইকে জানাই শারদীয় উৎসবের শুভকামনা: "মা দশভূজা সব রকমের অমঙ্গল থেকে সবাইকে রক্ষা করুন ও তাঁর কল্যাণময় দৃষ্টি দিয়ে সবাইকে ঘিরে রাখুন।

বর্ণা চ্যাটার্জী
সম্পাদিকা, "লিপিকা"

Editorial

The colourful changes in the landscape and the honking of Canada geese herald the awakening and arrival of Ma Durga once more to Bengali homes and mandaps in Ottawa, as she leaves behind her Himalayan abode for a few days. We are happy to bring to you another edition of "Lipika" on the eve of our much-looked for Autumn Festivities. It's nice to note that this time the initiative came from the contributors themselves. It would be even more encouraging for the creator and editor of Lipika to find more evidence of enthusiasm from the readership. It's not easy to find time, but those who are eager to keep in touch with our mother tongue and the Bengali culture, somehow make time. This edition too, like all previous ones, is enriched with a variety of submissions - literary, artistic and photographic. Shubhayan, once more, true to our tradition, has made time for creating the cover page. We sincerely hope the current edition of "Lipika" would be just as enjoyable to you as before.

My best wishes to you for Durga Puja: May Devi Sarva-Mangala protect you from all distress and danger, and bestow her auspicious glances on all of you.

Jharna Chatterjee
Editor, Lipika

Avatar

Biswajit Aikat



Vaishnava dharma has the concept of Avatar. The idea is that the cosmic being or Purusha manifests itself from time to time in the form of life on earth and provides a vision for the future of mankind.

There is a similar concept followed not far from the Ganges valley, in the Middle East, near the Jordan river valley to be precise. The idea in Jordan valley is of a prophet or a messiah who comes to earth to provide new vision to mankind.

But is there is an origin of this idea? Earlier on in history there was a philosopher born near the present Iran-Turkmenistan border. His name was Zarathustra or Zoroaster. He spoke in a very complex manner. He originally came up with the idea of Man and Superman. The idea in simple language is that once in a while a person is born who tries to find the cosmic being or the creator. This person is relentless in his or her search. But finally he or she ends up molding herself in the image of this creator that he or she has holds in her mind. Thus is born a Superman – from the search for truth behind life on earth.

According to history such a man was born in the Ganges valley, some two thousand five hundred years ago. His name was Gautama Siddhartha. He looked for the truth, everywhere – debating Pandits in Varanasi and in Gaya, but could not find it. Finally he sat under a tree, all hot and frustrated. He sat there for two days and concluded that life is full of suffering. And the source of all suffering is our attachment.

At this time India was a colonial power * with sway over millions of people from Gandhara (present day Kandahar) to the islands of Indonesia and everything in between. All the people who practiced Sanatana dharma in this region, concluded that the Buddha was a manifestation of Vishnu. Many temples of Vishnu were eventually converted to the image of Gautama Buddha such as Angkor Wat in Kampuchia or present day Cambodia. Eventually his ideas were accepted in Tibet, China, Mongolia, Japan and Korea. He was indeed a giant or superman according to the definition of Zoroaster.

But such men have been born later or before. Gandhi is considered as one such person, a giant or a superman. Moses may have been another one.

But during our lifetime the only person who seems to meet this definition is Mother Theresa. She also left her church in search of the truth one morning in Kolkata. Eventually from this search emerged a giant or a superwoman who was saluted by Kings, Prime Ministers and ordinary men alike. There is no question that she molded herself in the image of that Purusha who she was looking for – someone who cares for life on earth. But she ended up taking care of all life herself.

In some ways, we may all have that capacity in ourselves. Some Vaishnavas think that all life is sacred or a manifestation of the Purusha.

Carl Segan the great American Astronomer seems to have thought so. He said: “we are all made of stardust. We harvest starlight in the light of a star.” I hope someday you also find that stardust within you or the spirit of the Purusha – the cosmic being.

Namaste

***Editor's note: India was never a colonial power in the ordinary sense – it never established an empire by war. India's influence in South-East Asia was cultural, without shedding a single drop of blood.**

বালটিক সাগরের তীরে কয়েকটি দিন ডক্টর ঝর্ণা চ্যাটার্জী



প্রিয় লিপিকার পাঠক-পাঠিকা,

”বিপুলা এ পৃথিবীর কতটুকু জানি!”

ছোটবেলা থেকে দূর-সুদূরে বেড়াতে যাবার ইচ্ছেটা প্রবল থাকলেও সে স্বপ্ন পূর্ণ হবার সম্ভাবনা যে খুব বেশি নেই সেটাও কেমন করে যেন জানতাম। তা সত্ত্বেও আজ যখন ভাবি একমাত্র আফ্রিকা আর এ্যানটার্কটিকা ছাড়া অন্য সবগুলো মহাদেশে একটু খানি হলেও পা ফেলবার সুযোগ হয়েছে তখন নিজের ভাগ্যকে ধন্যবাদ না দিয়ে পারি না। আজ সেই সদূর পিয়াসার প্রাপ্তিফল কিছু অমৃত এই পাত্রে বা পাত্রে তুলে রাখছি। তোমাদেরই উদ্দেশে।

দেখার সৌভাগ্য হয়েছে অস্ট্রেলিয়া, ইন্দোনেশিয়া, ইয়োরোপের অনেকগুলো দেশ, ব্রাজিল, মধ্যপ্রাচ্যের কোন কোন দেশ, আমেরিকার খানিকটা, মাতৃভূমি ভারতের উত্তর, দক্ষিণ আর পূবে অনেকখানি এবং নিজের দ্বিতীয় বা adopted দেশ ক্যানাডার এ প্রান্ত থেকে ও প্রান্ত তো আছেই। কোথায় শুরু করব তাই ভাবছি।

হয়তো শেষ থেকে শুরু করাটাই সুবুদ্ধির কাজ হবে। সেটাও সংক্ষেপে লিখব - তোমাদের ধৈর্যচ্যুতি ঘটাতে ঘোর অনিচ্ছা ছাড়াও নিজের সময়ভাবও একটি কারণ। তাই লেখা হবে না বিচিত্র ইতিহাসের সব খুঁটিনাটি। লেখা হবে না জাহাজের মধ্যে কত রকমের মজার অভিজ্ঞতার গল্প। শুধু রাত্রে বিছানায় শুয়ে বা ব্যালকনীতে বসে বাংলায় আড্ডা দেবার আনন্দের কথা উল্লেখ না করলে খুবই অসম্পূর্ণ হবে।

গত মে মাসে দুজন পুরোনো এবং প্রিয় বান্ধবীর সাথে বেড়াতে গিয়েছিলাম বালটিকের আশে-পাশে, জাহাজে। আকাশপথে গেলাম কোপেনহেগেনে, সেখান থেকে শুরু হোলো জলযাত্রা। 'ছোট্ট জলপরী'র করুণ রূপকাহিনী তো সবারই জানা। এক রাজপুত্রের প্রেমে পড়ে তার নিজের শরীরের অর্ধাংশের বদলে মানুষের মত দুখানা পা পাবার জন্য সে নিজের অপূর্ব কণ্ঠস্বর বিসর্জন দিয়েছিল - বৃথাই। কোপেনহেগেনে সেই জলপরীর একটি ছোট্ট মূর্তি সমুদ্রের ধারে পাথরের উপরে আছে। মুখখানা মলিন, হতাশ নতনেত্রে যুগ যুগ ধরে যে স্বপ্ন তার আয়ত্তের বাইরে, সেই স্বপ্ন আর চিরবিরহ বুকে নিয়ে বসে আছে বেচারী।

কোপেনহেগেনে একটা বিস্ময়কর ব্যাপার চোখে পড়ল; রাস্তার ধারে ধারে, আর অন্ততঃ একটা পার্কিং লটের একটা ফ্লোর জুড়ে অজস্র বাইক সট্যান্ড, আর রাস্তায় তেমনি অসংখ্য বাইক-চালক-চালিকা। আর কিছু বিল্ডিং দেখলাম যেগুলো অন্য পাঁচটা বিল্ডিংএর চেয়ে অনেক অন্যরকম দেখতে (নিচে ছবি)।



আবার সারা রাত্রি ধরে জাহাজ চলল আমাদের কোলে নিয়ে। পরদিন ভোরবেলা পৌঁছলাম জার্মান শহর ওয়ানমুন্ডে। ছোট একটি শহর, আগে ছিল পূর্ব জার্মানীর অন্তর্গত। পুরোনো অনেক বাড়ি আছে, মাথায় তারিখ লেখা, বাগান ও নিচু দেয়াল দিয়ে ঘেরা - খুব একটা চমকপ্রদ কিছু নেই। সারা দিনের পরে আবার জলযাত্রা। পরদিন গেলাম ট্যালিনে, এসটোনিয়াতে। খুব ভাল লাগল এই শহর - দুটো লেভেলে তৈরী। ১৯৯৭ খৃষ্টাব্দে ইউনেসকো এর ঐতিহাসিক বিশেষত্ব স্বীকৃতি দেয়। রাশিয়ান রাজত্বে ছিল এরা অনেকদিন, তার প্রভাবে তৈরী চমৎকার এক রাশিয়ান অরথোডক্স ক্যাথিড্রাল থেকে শহর পরিক্রমা শুরু হোলো পায়ে হেঁটে। সব রাস্তা কবল্ সটোনে তৈরী, হাঁটবার সময়ে সাবধান না হলে পা মচকানোর সম্ভাবনা প্রচুর। বহু পুরোনো দিনে এর পুরোনো শহর ছিল প্রাচীর ঘেরা; সেই প্রাচীরের অংশ এখানে ওখানে দেখা যায় আজও। একটা ঢালু পথ দিয়ে নীচের লেভেলে নামবার সময় দেখলাম পুরোনো প্রাচীরের মাথায় নতুন বাড়িঘর। ইন্টারেসটিং।

ট্যালিনের বিচিত্র, যুদ্ধবিধ্বস্ত রাজনৈতিক ইতিহাস সম্বন্ধে সংক্ষেপে একটু না লিখে পারছি না। স্ক্যান্ডিনেভিয়া ও রাশিয়ার বানিজ্যপথের মাঝে থাকায় ট্যালিনকে যুগ যুগ ধরে অনেক বিদেশী শক্তির লোভ ও অধিকারের শিকার হতে হয়েছে। ১২১৯ খৃষ্টাব্দে ট্যালিন অধিকার করে ডেনমার্ক, তারা বিক্রী করে দেয় টিউটনিক নাইটদের কাছে ১৩৪৬-এ। ১৫৬১ তে ট্যালিন সুইডেনের অন্তর্ভুক্ত হয়। তার পরে রাশিয়া (১৯৪০) এবং জার্মানী একে অধিকার করে (১৯৪১-১৯৪৪), তার পর আবার রাশিয়া (১৯৪৪)। ১৯৯১ খৃষ্টাব্দে এসটোনিয়া স্বাধীন হয় এবং ট্যালিন হয় তার রাজধানী। এত অত্যাচারের ও দ্বিতীয় মহাযুদ্ধের সময়ে জার্মানীর অবিরাম বোমা-বর্ষণের পরেও ট্যালিনের পাথর-বসানো সৰু রাস্তায় ভরা পুরোনো শহর বড়ই মনোরম। পুরোনো বাজারের স্মৃতি বহন করে আজও ছোট ছোট দোকানে হাতে-বোনা পশমের আর সূতোর জামা-কাপড় ইত্যাদি বিক্রী হয়। আমার বন্ধু আর আমি একটা করে লিনেনের টুপি কিনলাম রোদ থেকে বাঁচবার জন্য।



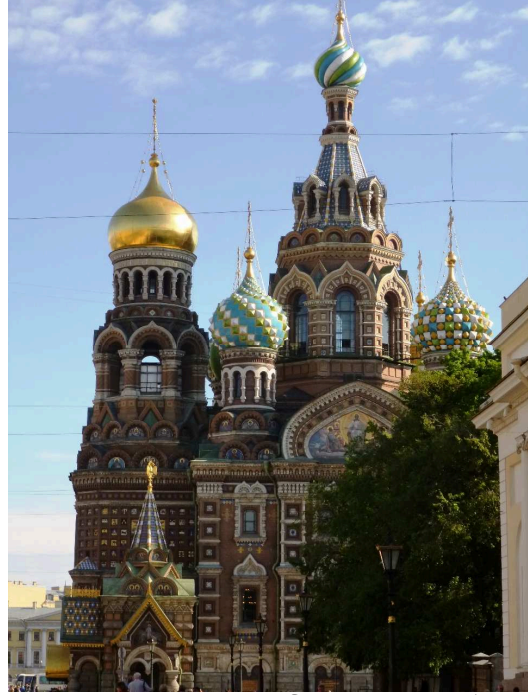
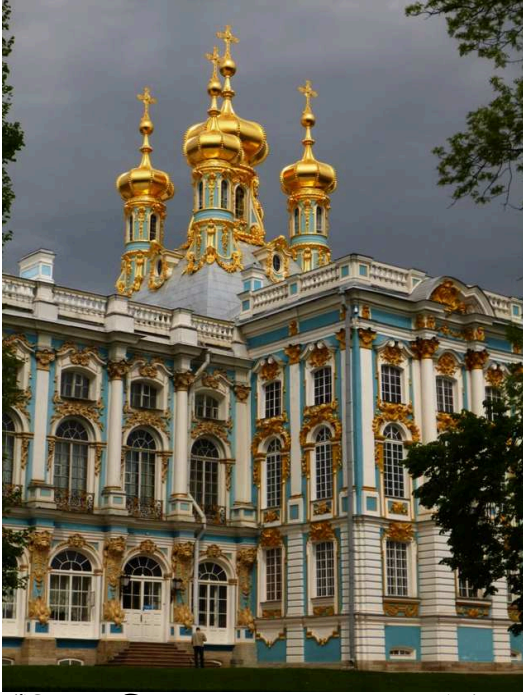
ট্যালিনে পুরোনো প্রাচীরের মাথায় নতুন বাড়িঘর

ট্যালিনের পর আমাদের পরবর্তী বন্দর ছিল সেন্ট পিটার্সবার্গ, রাশিয়া। অপূর্ব! রাশিয়া সম্বন্ধে মনে একটা ভয়-ভয় ভাব চিরদিনই ছিল, হয়তো শীতল-সমরকালীন অনেক মুভীর কল্যাণে। সত্যি-মিথ্যা বিচার করার মত অবকাশ পাই নি, কারণ অল্প সময় কাটিয়েছি, মাত্র দুটি দিন, তা-ও সর্বক্ষণ গাইডের সাথে। তবে এই শহর ছাড়া অন্য কোথাও আমাদের ভিসা লাগে নি, গাইডের সাথে ছাড়া এক মুহূর্তও থাকতে পারব না বা ঘুরতে পারব না এমন কথা শুনতে হয় নি। কাজেই এটা একটু অন্য ধরনের অভিজ্ঞতা নিঃসন্দেহে। যাই হোক, মুগ্ধ হয়ে উপভোগ করেছি সেন্ট পিটার্সবার্গ সেটা কিন্তু সত্যি। যুদ্ধের সময়ে যা কিছু ধ্বংস হয়েছিল সেই সব বাড়িঘর ও প্রাসাদ এমন করে সারানো হয়েছে যে না বললে বোঝা যায় না। রাজবংশ ও বিপ্লবের দীর্ঘ ইতিহাস ও সংস্কৃতির পরম সমন্বয় এই শহরটিতে।

সেন্ট পিটার্সবার্গকে অনেকে বলে উত্তরের ভেনিস। সারা শহর নেভা ও মইকা নদী ও অসংখ্য খালের জাল দিয়ে যুক্ত। অতি সুন্দর কয়েকটি প্রাসাদ দেখলাম, তার মধ্যে প্রথমটি রাশিয়ান রাজবংশের শীতের প্রাসাদ (১৭৩২-১৯১৭)। শীতের প্রাসাদের মধ্যে আছে পৃথিবী-বিখ্যাত হারমিটা্জ চিত্রশালা।



উপরে: শীতের প্রাসাদ; নিচে: রাণী ক্যাথরীনের প্রাসাদ (১৭১৭-১৭৯৬), নেভা নদীর বুকে নৌকো থেকে তোলা ছবি।



বাঁদিকে: শীতের প্রাসাদের ব্যারোক সটাইলে অলংকৃত প্রবেশপথ; ডান দিকে: ১৮৮১ খৃষ্টাব্দে জার দ্বিতীয় আলেকজান্ডারকে এখানে বিপ্লবীরা হত্যা করেছিল তাই এর নাম "রক্তঝরা চার্চ"।



দ্বিতীয় প্রাসাদ (আসলে তিনটি প্রাসাদ) পিটারহফের ভিতরে যাই নি, কিন্তু তার বাগানে অসংখ্য ফোয়ারার সৌন্দর্য উপভোগ করেছি। গ্রীক উপকথার নানা চরিত্রের মূর্তি এই বাগানে, স্যামসন, পারসিডাস থেকে শুরু করে ট্রাইটন পর্যন্ত। এই প্রাসাদ-সমষ্টিকে রাশিয়ান ভার্সাই-ও বলা হয়।

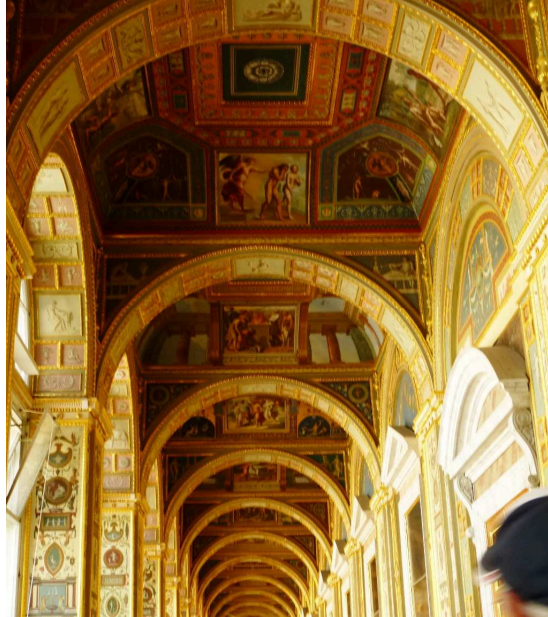


রাণি ক্যাথরীনের প্রাসাদে এ্যাম্বারের তৈরী ঘর; এখানে ছবি তোলা নিষেধ। শুধু এই ছবিটি ইন্টারনেট থেকে নেওয়া, অন্য সব ছবি লেখিকার তোলা। নাৎসিরা নাকি সব এ্যাম্বার লুণ্ঠন করেছিল। এই ঘর নতুন করে তৈরী করা হয়েছে আগের মত জমকালো করে।



অনেকগুলো অতি মনোরম রাশিয়ান লোকনৃত্যের মধ্যে একটি। আমরা প্রথমদিন সন্ধ্যায় দেখেছি।

প্রথম দিনে মধ্যাহ্নভোজের আয়োজন ছিল গ্রীস্মের প্রাসাদে, বিশাল বাকঝাকে খাবার ঘর, চমৎকার খাবার। দ্বিতীয় দিনে আমরা নৌকো করে নেভা আর মইকা নদী আর খাল পথে ঘুরে সমস্ত শহরের নতুন এক রূপ দেখলাম। পাখির চোখের উল্টো, বলা যায় মাছের চোখের ভিউ।



বাঁদিকে: গ্রীস্মপ্রাসাদে অভ্যর্থনা; ডানদিকে: হারমিটাজের একটি হলের মাথায় ছবির সমারোহ।



হেলসিংকি: বিখ্যাত মিউজিসিয়ান সিবেলিয়াসের স্মৃতিতে তৈরী স্থাপত্য; ডানদিকে শহরের মধ্যমণি ক্যাথিড্রাল। সেন্ট পিটারসবার্গের পরে হেলসিংকি তেমন আকর্ষণীয় মনে হয়নি। তাছাড়া গাইডের ইংরেজী ভাষার ওপর দখলের অভাবও একটা কারণ হতে পারে। আমাদের পরবর্তী গন্তব্য বন্দর ছিল সটকহোম।



সটকহোমে নোবেল মিউজিয়াম। এখানে ১৯০১ থেকে যাঁরা নোবেল পুরস্কার পেয়েছেন তাঁদের ও আলফ্রেড নোবেলের (১৮৩৩-১৮৯৬) বিষয়ে অনেক তথ্য ও এঁদের ব্যবহৃত জিনিষের সংগ্রহ আছে। নোবেলের বাড়ি ও কারখানাও দেখেছি, যেখানে রাসায়নিক পরীক্ষা করতে গিয়ে এক বিস্ফোরণ ঘটে (১৮৬৪), আর তাতে নোবেলের ভাই এমিলের মৃত্যু হয়। সটকহোম শহর অত্যন্ত কঠিন গ্রানিটের উপরে। নোবেলের আবিষ্কারের ফলে এখানে রাস্তা, সুড়ঙ্গ ও বাড়িঘর তৈরী এবং শহরের উন্নতি সম্ভব হয়। ডাইনামাইটের আবিষ্কার (১৮৬৭) তাঁকে খ্যাতি এবং সমৃদ্ধি এনে দেয়। তাঁর মৃত্যুর পরে উইলে দেখা যায় যে তিনি লক্ষ লক্ষ টাকা রেখে গেছেন পদার্থবিদ্যায়, রসায়নশাস্ত্রে, চিকিৎসাবিদ্যায়, সাহিত্যে ও শান্তির জন্য অসাধারণ অবদানের পুরস্কারের উদ্দেশ্যে।



সটকহোম থেকে ফেরার পথে, আমাদের ব্যালকনী থেকে তোলা ছবি। সটকহোমে ১৪টি প্রধান দ্বীপ অন্তরীপের সাথে যুক্ত, তা ছাড়াও অসংখ্য দ্বীপ এর অন্তর্গত। শহরের মাঝে বিরাট বড় পার্ক ও বেলাভূমি। সটকহোম থেকে জাহাজ যখন বেরিয়ে যায় তখনকার দৃশ্য অবর্ণনীয় রকমের সুন্দর। অনেক দ্বীপ এক একটি ছোট গ্রামের মত, স্বয়ংসম্পূর্ণ। আবার কিছু ছোট ছোট দ্বীপে একটি-দুটি বাড়ি, ঘাটে নৌকো বাঁধা আছে, সেটাই যাতায়াতের একমাত্র উপায়। উপসাগরের তীরে কোথাও ঘন সবুজ গাছপালা, কোথাও ছোট ছোট বেলাভূমি। আমার ক্যানাডার সহস্র দ্বীপ এলাকার কথা মনে হচ্ছিল।



বাল্টিক সাগরে সূর্যাস্ত, জাহাজ থেকে তোলা। এবারকার মত এখানেই শেষ করছি। তোমাদের ভাল লাগলে হয়তো পরে কখনও আরও বেশি করে লিখব। জাহাজে বেড়ানোর বিশেষ আনন্দ ও সুবিধার গল্পও আর একদিনের জন্য তোলা রইল। সব শেষে তোমাদের সবাইকে অনুরোধ, cruise নিলে আমাকে একটু জানাবে - তোমাদের আপত্তি না থাকলে আমি হয়তো সঙ্গ নেব।

In the land of Gods Orissa calls again

Dr. Subhash C. Biswas



It's a wonderful sunny, bright day in Kolkata in late January. Although it's the winter season, the intensity of cold in Kolkata at this time of the year is usually mild. But this year is an exception. The vibrant city is unusually subdued by intense cold, as may be perceived from the people in the streets. They are clad all over with warm clothes and are walking faster than their usual pace. A subtle charm has overridden the usual noisiness of Kolkata. For the vacationers coming from cold countries, this weather is lovely, more so when it's bright and sunny like today. Godadhar is comfortably settled on his chair in the wide balcony of his sixth floor flat facing the famous lake of Kolkata. Totally entranced by the extravagant beauty of the lake and its surroundings, he is suddenly shaken up by the loud rings of telephone.

"I'll get it," says Kamalika from inside the flat.

Godadhar smiles; he knows how telephone calls ring a happy note in Kamalika's mind and how pleased she is to answer them.

Kamalika comes out to the balcony. Her face, brightened up with a smile, speaks of some good news.

"It's Anna from Cuttack. She is inviting us to spend a few days with them and do the sightseeing that we missed in our last visit."

Anna (Annapurna) doesn't easily forget things. Yes, Godadhar promised to come back to Orissa for a third visit. But it seems too hectic for him; they have just come back from their second tour of South India. Although Godadhar has a fascination for Orissa, another visit at this time doesn't seem like a good idea. But again, knowing Anna as they do, it's hard to decline her invitation. Moreover, she gladly makes all the planning and arrangements for the visit. And not only that, she is a great host; her hospitality is unparalleled.

"Anna goes too far to make us comfortable," Kamalika says.

"Yes, I almost feel guilty," says Godadhar. "Everyone in the family comes forward to make us happy. It's overwhelming."

So the decision is made to go to Cuttack and the suitcases get packed.

Cuttack is roughly seven hours train ride from Kolkata. There are a good number of trains with spread out departure times giving ample choices to the passengers. Godadhar and Kamalika arrive at the Cuttack railway station after 8 PM in the night,

slightly delayed. Anna, along with one of her brothers and her driver, has been waiting in the station to receive them. Anna's house is only 15 minutes drive from the railway station. Anna's house is a beautiful sight in the neighborhood. The extraordinary joy of reception with traditional rituals is, needless to say, followed by a fabulous dinner.

Next morning during breakfast, Anna reveals the day's program. Her note pad shows a line up of attractive destinations that include Udaygiri and Khandagiri caves, a few temples and some more. After the breakfast, everyone gets settled in the car. Driver Kumar is well aware of the schedule and practically doesn't need any instruction. The first stop is at the Udaygiri and Khandagiri hill caves, which is about an hour's drive from Cuttack and 5 km west of Bhubaneswar. These two hills are separated by the National Highway 5 that runs in close proximity of them. There are a total of 33 caves on both hills with sculptural art of the 2nd century BCE, which are reminiscent of the influence of Jainism and Buddhism in Orissa.

Udayagiri caves

Udayagiri, initially known as Kumarigiri, is situated in the right side of the road facing west. Anna chooses to stay behind at the base as she has seen these caves many times.

"It's a steep hill," Anna warns. "Although there are stairs, be careful and climb with caution."



Udayagiri caves

Godadhar and Kamalika proceed to the hill. Udayagiri, meaning Sunrise hill, has 18 caves. Yes, the hill appears quite steep; may be more than they expected. It's a continuous slope with hand railing on both sides. Reaching near the top, Kamalika feels very tired and has some breathing difficulties. She somehow manages to get to the top. Kamalika is usually full of energy and has no problem climbing this kind of small hills.

"I can't believe I felt this tired for this little challenge."

"Don't worry dear; it might be a freak aberration from your normal energetic well being." Godadhar tries to console her.

While they are relaxing on a bench, a guide approaches them. His gentle manner is impressive. Godadhar hires his service.

The caves are excavated all around the top of the hill. They are rock-cut dwelling retreats for the ancient Jain monks. Most of them were excavated during the reign of King Kharavela of Kalinga (193 – 170 BCE) and that of his successors. The 18 caves of Udayagiri have all been numbered by the archeologists. Interestingly enough, each one of them also has a name to itself, a name that has historical and religious significance. Scholars as well as tourists find these naming and nomenclature very convenient for study and viewing. The guide recommends visiting the caves starting from the top, as they are already on the top. He also utters a word of caution. The walkways through the mountain is narrow, uneven, rocky and often with steep slopes. So they are not very safe; one must be extremely cautious and be careful enough to mind every step.

The caves are very simple in design. They consist of a single cell or multiple cells in line, all directly opening into a veranda or an open space in the front ground. But the walls are adorned with inscriptions and the facades are artistically encrusted with sculptures. Especially, both sides of the doorway of cells are sculpted with animal figures and the arch over it adorned with flowers, creepers and animal motifs. The guide says, the artistic creation of these caves have striking resemblance with that of Sanchi in Madhya Pradesh.

Kamalika suggests, "Let us see the important caves in detail and the remaining ones in brief from outside only."

"Given the rough climb up and down, it sure is a good idea." Godadhar agrees.

The guide leads them to **Vyaghra Gumpha** or Tiger Cave (cave 12). It's a very interesting but unusual cave. It appears like a gigantic open-mouth tiger head with its enormous upper jaw forming the roof of the veranda. The entrance door is erected in the place of gullet.

"This cave has awesome wild beauty and charm," Godadhar remarks.

Ganesha Gumpha (cave 10) is named after Lord Ganesha. It has two dwelling cells with a veranda. On the rear wall of the right cell, there is a carved relief of Ganesha. Two sculpted elephants on both sides of the arch of a doorway beautify the facade. The guide points out the carvings that tell the story of the elopement of *Basavadatta* by Udayana, King of Ujjayini, in the company of his entourage. *Basavadatta* was the Princess of Avanti and daughter of King Mahasena.

Swargapuri – Manchpuri Gumpha (cave 9) is one of the few double-storeyed caves and probably the second largest in size. The floors are supported by columns.

Hathi Gumpha or Elephant Cave (cave 14) is architecturally simple but historically most significant cave. The famous 17 line inscription in Brahmi script of this cave records the history of King Kharavela and his expeditions, especially his victory over Magadha and retrieval of auspicious Jaina image that was taken away by King Nanda long before. The probable date of this inscription is 150 BCE.

“I have seen a plaster cast of this inscription preserved in the National Museum in Kolkata,” Godadhar says.

“Yes, there’s one there,” says the guide.

“If I remember well,” Kamalika says, “it was historian Bhagawan Lal Indraji who first deciphered the inscription and presented it in an international conference in 1885.”

This cave has four entrance doors with a common veranda. The roof of the veranda is supported on three columns (probably there was a fourth one). The foreground is adorned with two marvelous statues of elephants. The guide points towards south-east where there are Rock-cut Edicts of Ashoka at Dhoulia about 10 km from Udayagiri. The location of this cave is significant as it faces straight in this direction.



Rani Gumpha on Udayagiri

Rani Gumpha or Queen’s Cave (cave 1) is the architectural marvel of Udayagiri. It’s a double storeyed cave and is the largest one in the entire complex. The lower floor has

seven entrance doors and the upper one has nine columns. There is a Sun temple in the right hand corner with the image of *Surya* (Sun God) riding a chariot. The guide says this cave has exceptional acoustic characteristics and makes an amusing demonstration. This quality and the spacious front yard indicate that this cave was used for religious gatherings and theatrical performances.

Khandagiri

Kamalika and Godadhar come down to the base and find Anna. They head toward the Khandagiri caves. It's only a walk of about 15 m where they find a flight of wide stairs on the left leading to about half way to the summit of Khandagiri. Many visitors, some going up and some coming down, make the stairs look pretty crowded. Some local vendors have made arrangements on one side of the stairs to sell their wares, while the other side is mostly occupied by monkeys. Apparently, there is no problem with the monkeys; they are quite habituated with the crowd. But they do expect some food from the visitors. After the stairs, it's a narrow rocky climb crowded with visitors. It's forbiddingly steep and looks scary.

"This is a tough climb and totally unsafe," Godadhar grumbles.

"They should introduce ticket system to collect money and make the tracks easier and safer for the visitors," Kamalika suggests.

"You're right," says Anna, "but amazingly, no accident has yet been reported."



Jain Temple on Khandagiri peak

There are 15 caves in Khandagiri, of which quite a few are noteworthy. **Tatowa Gumpha** or Parrot Caves (caves 1 & 2) are two caves, so named because of carvings of parrots above the arch of entrance door. Both caves are well decorated with many

carvings. **Ananta Gumph**a or Snake Cave (cave 3) is one of the most important caves in Khandagiri. It has carvings of snakes on door arches and many exquisite sculptures depicting boys chasing animals. Apart from the caves, there is a beautiful Jaina Temple standing on the crest of Khandagiri.

Rajarani Temple

The Sun is showering abundantly its intensely hot kindness that is making everyone sweat profusely and look for anything thirst-quenching. It's a boon that green coconuts are available in every street corner and in abundant quantity. Oh it's so refreshing to drink one standing in a cool shady place. After this short break for green coconuts, Kumar drives towards the next sight.

Rajarani temple is located in the City of Bhubaneshwar. Just after entering through the gate, the temple comes to sight in full view. It stands majestically like a gem set amidst a beautiful garden. This 11th century temple is an amazingly beautiful landmark of the capital city of Orissa. Its wonderful architecture and graceful sculptures are especially remarkable.



Rajarani Temple

“The name Rajarani intrigues me,” Kamalika remarks.

“Actually, this name is used in common parlance,” says Anna. “The temple is made of rich red and gold sandstone, which is locally called rajarani and that’s what gives the temple its name.”

“According to legend,” Kamalika says, “the King of Orissa who built the temple had died before the construction was complete. So the usual ceremony to install the principal deity was never held. The temple has remained godless ever since.”

“As you may notice,” Says Godadhar, “name of all temples dedicated to Lord Shiva in Bhubaneshwar ends in the suffix ...*eshwar*. In some old Sanskrit texts, this shrine is referred to as Indreshwar Shiva Temple. So this temple was originally meant to worship Shiva.”



Carvings on Rajarani Temple

The temple consists of a *deul* (tower) with a height of 17.98 m and a *jagmohana* (porch). The *jagmohana* is unexpectedly simple in design having carvings that merit no mentioning. The tower on the other hand is lavishly carved with excellent sculptures and clusters of miniature turrets (*angasikhara*) surrounding it. The tower is crowned with a beautifully carved disc shaped structure called *amalaka*, which has a vase (*kalasa*) at its top as the finial. The majority of the sculpted figures are female images (*Nayikas*). The celestial nymphs – *devata*, *apsara* or *yaksini* – have been sculpted in lively dancing poses standing on lotus flowers and framed by lush creepers and foliage. They are quite playful in various ways. Some are cradling children or playing with pet birds, some are adjusting ornaments and looking at themselves in mirrors, while some others are amusingly engaged in amorous dalliance.

“Was Tagore inspired by these luscious figures,” Godadhar ponders, “when he wrote his famous lines?” He recites:

*“Naho mata, naho kannya, naho badhu, sundari rupashee
hay nandanabasinee urbasee!”*

*(Not mother, not daughter, not anybody’s wife,
O beautiful Urbasee of Paradise!)*

“Very appropriate,” responds Kamalika. “Our Robi shines everywhere. According to some scholars, this tower resembles somewhat the *Kandariya Mahadeva Temple* of Khajuraho.”

“That may be true,” Godadhar says. “But do you see the striking resemblance with the temples of Cambodia we visited last year– *Angkor Wat, Preah Khan, the Bayon, Ta Som* and a few more? It’s so interesting! Some scholars have written in detail about this subject. According to them, Rajarani temple is an architectural predecessor of Cambodian monuments.”

In addition to these heavenly beauties that are scattered all over the *deul* (tower), the temple features on its lower register the famous *Dikpalas* – guardians of the eight Directions. The eight *Dikpalas* - carved on the eight cardinal points - are protecting the temple as well as radiating its spiritual power. The guardian **Indra** is in the east, **Agni** (god of fire) in the southeast, **Yama** (god of death) in the south, **Nirriti** (goddess of asuras), also known as **Kali**, in the southwest, **Varuna** (god of water) in the west, **Vayu** (god of air) in the northwest, **Kubera** (god of wealth), shown with a wish fulfilling tree, in the north and **Ishana** (Shiva) in the northeast.

“It’s well protected on all sides, ” Godadhar comments. “but vulnerable at the top, no *dikpala* there.”

Leaving aside the attraction of the temple, the beauty of the garden surrounding it with lush greenery and colourful flowers is sure to charm any visitor. But surprisingly there are no visitors around; it’s unexpectedly quiet. This quietness becomes cheerful with sweet singing of birds. Godadhar says,

“I wonder why there aren’t visitors here save us.”

“Normally there are many visitors,” says Anna. “But this unusual absence could be just accidental and momentary. Interestingly, there’s always a normal flow of visitors of a different kind. Come with me.”

Anna points to the part of the garden in a lower ground behind the temple. A few young couples have settled themselves in cozy corners and are enjoying some intimate moments. Behind the safety of a temple in a blissful environment, they have found their hedonistic venue away from the watchful eyes of the society.

“No wonder, this temple is adorably called by some Temple of Love,” Godadhar quips.

“Look at the entrance gate,” Anna says, “a bus load of foreign tourists entering. It will not be quiet any more.”

Kedareswar Temple

Kedareswar temple, devoted to Lord Shiva (Kedareswar) and Goddess Gouri (consort of Shiva), is one of the ancient temples of Bhubaneswar. The temple with a height of 13.7 m (45 ft) is white with golden finials and features exquisite architecture. It appears bright and beautiful. The main attractions of the temple are the 8-foot statue of Hanuman and Goddess Gouri standing on a lion. There is a legend associated with this temple.

Once Lord Shiva, while residing at Varanasi, asked Narada to look for a tranquil place for Him, because He foresaw Varanasi getting noisier and crowded. Narada discovered this place which was then a forest called *Ekamrakanan*. Shiva liked the place and constructed this temple and started residing in it. Devi Parvati (Gouri) insisted to be with Lord Shiva; so she joined Him after some time. The temple thus came to be known as Kedar-Gouri temple.



Kedareswar (Kedargouri) Temple

Anna says, there is another legend which is quite interesting and more popular among the local people. Long time ago, there lived a boy named Kedar and a girl named Gouri who loved each other. But their love was condemned by the society and their union was never permitted. So they fled from the society and took shelter in this place, then a forest. One day, Kedar went out in search of food, but unfortunately got killed by a tiger. Later when Gouri came to know about this ill fate of Kedar, she committed suicide jumping into the nearby pond. The legend goes that the then king of Utkal (Orissa), Lalatendu Keshari, felt very sad hearing this tragic episode of love. He constructed a temple to commemorate their love. So the temple is justly named Kedar-Gouri.

“How interesting!” exclaims Godadhar. “This is a unique example of love of an ordinary couple immortalized by a King. It should have been named Gourimahal.”

Anna shows two ponds near the temple – *Khirakunda* and *Marichikunda*. Water of these ponds is considered sacred having special power. This temple is also famous for an annual festival that celebrates the procession of Lord Shiva from the Lingaraj Temple – situated close by - to Kedar-Gouri Temple and commemorates the marriage of Shiva and Parvati.

Muhteshwar and Siddheshwar Temples

Just across the road and at a few meters walking distance, there are two more spectacular temples – Mukteshwar and Siddheshwar. Mukteshwar is assignable to the middle of 9th century AD. Dedicated to Lord Shiva, it proudly stands as a bright example of the glorious architecture of Orissa.. It rises up to a height of 11m (35ft) with an abundance of marvelous sandstone carvings all over the surface, depicting tales from Panchatantra and portraying figures of ascetics in meditation. Intricately carved images of Hindu gods and goddesses fill up the niches of its walls. Influence of Buddhism and Jainism is apparent in some of the images that testify to the special efforts made to harmonize religions The sculptures also include elephants, lions, monkeys and other animals.



Mukteshwar Temple

Siddheshwar temple is situated in the same precinct northwest of Mukteshwar. Datable to 10th century AD, this temple is renowned for the attractive standing statue of Lord Ganesha. The architecture is based on *Pancharatha* (five chariots) style. Its walls are decorated in ornamental motifs. The tower has rows of miniature turrets and is surmounted by four rampant lions.

The day's program comes to an end. Kumar drives by the famous Lingaraj Temple and asks if anyone is interested to visit it once again. Godadhar says, "It has been more than enough for the day; let's go back."

Kapilas Hill

Next day morning, everyone is ready for the trip. Anna's brother, Pankaj, has come to join with the team. Pankaj has good experience about the tourist places of Orissa. Driver Kumar maintains the car meticulously; it's as good as new. The car starts rolling towards Kapilas hills via Dhenkanol town which is 50 km from Cuttack.



Chandrashekhara Temple on Kapilas hill

Kapilas is about 25 km from Dhenkanol. The loftiest peak of the hill – a height of 457 m (1485 ft) – enshrines the temple of Lord Chandrashekhara (Shiva). Arriving at the foothill of Kapilas, Pankaj says,

“There are two interesting places here to see – Deer Park and Science Park. Should we go for them before going up the hill?”

“I’m not interested in lowly things,” says Godadhar. “Let’s look up and ascend to the gods.”

“For climbing to the top, there are two options. It’s possible to go on foot by stairs, a flight of 1352 steps. It’s an ascend of about 2 km. The other option is by car, a zigzag route of about 5 km long.”

Everyone is in favour of the second option.

The road to the hill top is winding as expected, but too narrow. Pankaj says there are 12 sharp hairpin bends going to the peak. These sharp turns are really scary and more so when another car approaches from the opposite direction. The road being not wide enough for two cars, the situation may turn into a tragic end. It’s not for the faint heart. Fortunately, there is practically no traffic for today.

“Is today’s lack of traffic a rare phenomenon happening by chance?” Godadhar asks.

“No, it’s like this everyday because most visitors climb by the stairs,” Pankaj says. “But it’s a different situation on the days of festival.”

“That will be dangerous I guess,” Godadhar says. “Hat’s off to the Indian people; they have the special capacity of squeezing to any extent for adjustment.”

“We should have taken the first option of climbing on foot,” Kamalika has a change of mind. “I’m sure we would have the chance of witnessing the extraordinary beauty of the Kapilas hills. Moreover, we could have gained some health by losing some pounds.”

“Yes, it’s incredible,” Pankaj, an enthusiast of mountain climbing, is excited. “The view on both sides of the stairs is extraordinary no doubt. There is a stream going down the hill alongside the stairs making a sweet melody in the calm wilderness. The monkeys also entertain you by giving their wild but funny company.”

Arriving at the top, Kumar parks the car. Godadhar looks around and gets astounded.

“O what a calm serene beauty!” Godadhar exclaims. “The panoramic view is outstanding; it’s so heavenly. It’s almost like a spiritual awakening. I understand why in India, they build temples on hill tops.”

“Look at the tall trees all over,” Kamalika says. “Mango, Jack fruit and many other trees have made this place so cool. Temple or no temple, the trip itself is a memorable experience.”

“Those who come here once,” Anna says, “want to come back again and again.”

There are not too many tourists. The crowd consists mostly of local devotees. The main temple is the Chandrashekhara Temple. It was built in 1246 CE by King Narasinghadeva, the same King who built the famous Sun Temple at Konark. The architecture is simple and plain based on the typical Orissan style. The carvings and sculptures are also very simple. Pankaj says,

“This temple is a favourite destination of devotees and is especially famous for some festivals.”

Climbing further up, there are two more temples – Shiva Temple and Mataji’s Temple. At the topmost point, there is a small library. Climbing is not difficult; there are good wide stairs all along. Pankaj talks about some spiritual highlights of this place. It’s said that Sage Kapila meditated on this hill top; so this place came to be known as Kapilas. The famous 10th *Shankaracharya* of Puri, Sridhara Swamy, wrote a few of his classics such as *Vishnu Purana*, a treatise on *Srimad Bhagavat Geeta* and *Sripadyabali* during his stay in Kapilas. And also, there is mentioning in *Chaitanya Charitamrita* that Lord Chaitanya too visited this abode of Lord Chandrashekhara.

“A highly spiritual place indeed,” Godadhar comments.

Mahimagadi

On the way back from Kapilas, Pankaj leads the team to a renowned village called Joranda. After driving through a dirt uneven road for some distance, the car enters into a vast open land with many trees. On one side – the right side after entering – there is a huge complex of temples surrounded by high walls with entrance gates. The gates are beautifully decorated with ornamental motifs and sculptures. Pankaj says, this is the Mahimagadi Temple Complex.

Joranda is the birthplace of *Mahima Dharma* which was founded by Sant Bhima Bhoi. Sant Bhima was blind and was a literary person. The local people used to call him *andha kabi* (blind poet). Later on he took the name Alekha Baba.

Joranda is the holiest place for the followers of *Mahima Dharma*, a cult popular in Orissa. Anna says,

“Every year, a festival, called *Magha Mela*, is organized, which attracts followers and devotees from far and wide. Last year over 600 000 people gathered here. Most of them were ascetics in maroon coloured clothing giving the *Mela* a colourful appearance.”



Mahimagadi Temple complex

It's a huge temple complex. Inside the complex, a beautiful garden with flowers and trees make the atmosphere calm and peaceful. Godadhar curiously asks one ascetic about the characteristics of *Mahima Dharma* that distinguish it from other religions. He says, *Mahima Dharma* followers worship The *Sunya* or The Great Emptiness. The *Sunya* represents The Formless, The Absolute or – as normally uttered by the followers - *Alekha Purusha*. The main message is: believe in redeeming the whole world rather than redeeming yourself and do not discriminate on the basis of religion, cast or colour. Godadhar ponders for a while and says, it's the same message preached by Swamy Vivekananda. Great men do think alike.

The main temple is called *Sunya Mandir*. Inside the sanctum of the temple, it's not empty as should be expected. Instead, there are images of a big snake hood, a tiger, an elephant, plants and many other things. The young ascetic standing nearby cannot give a satisfactory explanation of the apparent discrepancy. Godadhar thinks, it represents the whole Nature. In another temple, *Akhand Dhuni Temple*, a lamp remains perpetually lit. This lamp (*Diya*) has never been extinguished during the last 150 years.

On the way back to Cuttack, Kumar stops the car in front of the Dhenkanol Palace. Although the Palace needs immediate maintenance, the visit is worthwhile. The present King, Kamaksha Prasad Singhdeo, still lives in this Palace. Dhenkanol has some historical importance.

Hot Springs and Hatakeswar Temple

The next day is meant for rest and socialization. For the fourth day, Anna has arranged for another visiting program, a relatively short one. The first spot is the famous hot sulphur springs of Atri, located at a distance of 42 km from Bhubaneswar. One of the most popular destinations for sulphur springs, Atri is situated in the cradle of paddy fields in a beautiful natural setting. The water of these hot water springs maintains a steady temperature of 55 degree Celsius throughout the day and is known to have medicinal values with curative power. Orissa tourism Development Corporation has developed the area to make it a favourite tourist spot. There is one well for collecting water and three rectangular ponds with cemented borders for bathing. The local people use (or abuse) these facilities in full liberty without any regulation or control, as they have been doing for ages. This area has wonderful natural beauty. There is a cemented walkway all around the complex.

About 2 km down the road to Bhubaneswar, the beautiful temple Hatakeswar comes to view. It's a favourite destination for Shiva worshippers. This temple is famous mainly for two festivals – *Shivaratri* and *Makar Sankranti*. *Makar Sankranti* festival lasts for about a fortnight.

Barunei Hills

The next spot is the last one of the day, says Anna. Last but not the least, adds Pankaj. It's the Barunei Hills, roughly 20 km from here towards Bhubaneswar. Barunei, another wonderful travel site of Orissa, attracts thousands of visitors all the year round. The scenic panorama of the Barunei hills with huge trees, mainly mango groves, provides cool shades for the visitors looking for a retreat from the hustles of busy city life. A long flight of stairs leads up to a small temple situated at a height of 46 m (150 ft). A beautiful spring running by the side of the shrine down the hill adds to the natural splendours of the place. In the sanctum of the temple, there are stone images of the goddesses *Barunei* and *Karunei* that are worshipped as forms of Goddess *Durga* by the local people. Although small, this temple is quite popular, especially for its 4-day annual festival during *Rajah Sankranti* in the month of June. Visitors and devotees gather in large numbers during these four days. This place has some historical significance too. There are ruins of a fort in the vicinity.

Bye Bye Orissa

After a day's rest gratified with generous hospitality of Anna, it's time to say good-bye. Anna as usual requests Godadhar and Kamalika to make sure to come back for more visits. Godadhar says,
"I know there is no dearth of enchanting places to visit in Orissa; but if I do come back, it will be for the little temple of your house. Let me call it Temple of Devotion".

“Economics” and “Select to life Transformation”

Malati Banerjee



genuine success

... measuring that which makes life worthwhile...

***genuine:* to be true to one's values**

***wealth:* the conditions of well-being (*Old English*)**

Introduction

"pernicious effects of sin" in the economy"

In economics we have reduced humanity to a collection of individual, independent, utility maximizing creatures. Success is defined by the accumulation of material and financial wealth over a lifetime. We are born into this free market ideology without questioning its morality or ethical foundations. So watermarked is this spirit of economics and capitalism on our lives that even though our hearts cry out for a more meaningful and genuine existence, we are sucked back into the squirrel cage of capitalism, running faster and faster to "keep up with the Jones," lamenting as we imagine a simpler, more meaningful, more genuine life.

Questions arise: Do we Know Our Virtues?

Who amongst us can remember the four virtues that Plato identified: wisdom, moderation (temperance), justice and courage? Or the 3 holy virtues: hope, charity and unselfish love. Did you know that Benjamin Franklin lived his entire life according to 13 virtues he used to assess his life and progress towards genuine happiness? What about us in relation to “Cosmic World”?

Such is our existence. As a human being, we want to find out about our relation with the external World. I am talking about how we are related to the Time & Space – with our Causal Body in a positive way,

be-fitting with the feeling & Intelligence of our Magnetized Mind. We want to find out the Processes go along with that. We also want to find out the Choices we make during our Life’s Journey or “Life Long Journey”

In another word: we want to find out the Bigger Picture of our surroundings & how we fit-in. And also we want to know, “Why we are here.”” What about the life of all the great people (trace back to the History Of Civilization) ? All the great prophets, saints, and seers of the world – what did they do? In one span of life, they lived the whole life of Humanity!

Traversed the whole length of time that it takes ordinary humanity to come to perfection. In one life they perfected themselves; they have no thought for anything else, never lived a moment for any other Idea, and thus the way was shortened for them. This is what is meant by concentration, intensifying the power of assimilation, thus shortening the time. It leads us to search for the **Recipe of a “life – worth living”**

Let's find out all about the Life in this World (As seen by authorities of Life)

“Select to life Transformation”



Whatever you can do or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it. Begin it now." ~ Goethe

“Some men see things as they are and say 'why'? Others dream things that never were and say 'why not'?" ~ George Bernard Shaw

Tagore said: “I slept and dreamt life is Joy and then I awoke and realized life is Duty. . And then I went to work and Lo and Behold, I discovered that Duty can be JOY. My Destiny is to serve, and do what I meant to do. Performing the work that I have been placed on the Planet to do. And that’s sheer Joy, and absolute Bliss for me. ~ Rabindranath Tagore

Selected Teachings of Swami Vivekananda

My ideal, indeed, can be put into a few words, and that is: to preach unto mankind their divinity, and how to make it

☑ Manifest in every movement of life.

☑ Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.

☑ We want that education by which character is formed, strength of mind is increased, the intellect is expanded, and by which one can stand on one's own feet.

☑ So long as the millions live in hunger and ignorance, I hold every man a traitor who, having been educated at their expense, pays not the least heed to them.

- ☑ Whatever you think, that you will be. If you think yourselves weak, weak you will be; if you think yourselves strong, strong you will be.
- ☑ If you have faith in all the three hundred and thirty millions of your mythological gods, ... and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you. Have faith in yourselves, and stand up on that faith and be strong; that is what we need.
- ☑ Strength, strength it is that we want so much in this life, for what we call sin and sorrow have all one cause, and that is our weakness. With weakness comes ignorance, and with ignorance comes misery.
- ☑ The older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new Gospel.
- ☑ Purity, patience, and perseverance are the three essentials to success, and above all, love.
- ☑ Religion is realization; not talk, not doctrine, nor theories, however beautiful they may be. It is being and becoming, not hearing or acknowledging; it is the whole soul becoming changed into what it believes.
- ☑ Religion is the manifestation of the Divinity already in man.
- ☑ Teach yourselves, teach everyone his real nature, call upon the sleeping soul and see how it awakes. Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity.
- ☑ They alone live who live for others, the rest are more dead than alive.
- ☑ This is the gist of all worship – to be pure and to do good to others.

☑ It is love and love alone that I preach, and I base my teaching on the great Vedantic truth of the sameness and omnipresence of the Soul of the Universe.

Also - find out the Life-Processes (develop glimpses of a rare connectedness)

(1) We are here to be present and belong to the moment (thus become a product of time and space: consequently part of the whole humanity) .Also we want to belong, the best way possible with generous and gracious Heart. This fact reveals the truth that we have accepted our surrounding gracefully. Thus we have made a choice to be happy; instead of waiting for the desired condition to come to make us happy. Thus creating moments of sparks which belong to Life. It is the constant harmony of chance and determination which makes it eternally new and living. Whatever we do or live for has its causality; it is good, however, that we cannot see through to it

[Albert Einstein](#) said : “living, is all about making good choices. He also said: “Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it”.

I think Albert Einstein expresses the enlightened view of God, as follows:

[Albert Einstein](#) writes: 'I believe in Spinoza's God who reveals himself in the orderly harmony of what exists, not in a God who concerns himself with the fates and actions of human beings.' This harmony arises from a Wave Structure of Matter in Space (we are all interconnected in this space that we all commonly experience). This unity of reality (God, Brahman, Tao, Spirit,

Energy, Light, Vibration) is central to all major world religions, thus their common moral foundation of

'Do unto others as to thyself' as the other is part of the self. ‘

(2)- This process helps us to find the Power of the present Moment. The Power of Present Moment Awareness will show you how to open yourself to the lasting sense of peace and deep sense of gratitude for life that the present moment offers. It does this by helping you to see for yourself the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that stand in your way. This empowering understanding is the key to your freedom.

(3)- It teaches us to find the most important person in our life. It is the person we are with, at that very moment. This is also calls for Making Choice. We don't have to wait for the Pre-meditated condition to arrive “ To make us happy”. This means we are only Oblized “To enjoy more, thus returning joy more & more, for ever and ever.

Dalai Lama said:

Each individual has a universal responsibility to shape institutions to serve human NEEDS. The development of our minds and our destination in future lives is in our hands. No one else can help us. It is very important that we each - take responsibility for ourselves. Sustain mindfulness twenty-four hours a day.

(4)- This leads us to find the Purpose for being here, in this World. In Simple word we are here to glorify God and enjoy him for ever and ever.

Life:

(5) It's like a River with two Banks. On one bank we will find Happiness. And on the other we will find sorrow. As we move along the River, we will inevitably brush up against both Banks.

The Real trick is not to stay stuck on either side too long.

Golden Key to have a beautiful life: Balance heaven and Earth, by practising “continual balance of surrender and discipline”.

Human do his part and then life or nature or Infinite Intelligence or God – whatever Label we want to put on the “Higher Power” that controls - does the rest. And whatever comes, it has a reason. An example is given through a Smart story- telling.

Author [Yann Martel](#) -

Conclusion

The Native American Indians believe that “Life is lived in a Circle”. A Circle speaks of wholeness and integrity. The Purpose of life which is making things happen & Letting things happen - is all about making a Journey to Home to Wholeness, back to a place of integrity. To make a journey to our Authentic Self – that's fearless, all knowing and of Boundless Love.

The purpose of life is to close the “Integrity Gap”..

Integrity Gap closes, when “the gap between the public person you present to the world and authentic & pure you” closes.

Within your heart all answers lie. Walk toward your fears and then you learn to fly. Thus you will remove the layer of mud from Golden Buddha you “are”. More and more gold will begin to shine and ultimately “the social mask you have put on out of fear will disappear”. The cult personality you have adapted, living in lie vanishes.

Legends Say:

The hummingbirds float free of time, carrying our hopes for love, joy and celebration. The humming bird's delicate grace reminds us that life is rich, beauty is everywhere, every personal connection has meaning and that laughter is life's sweetest creation.

মানবপ্রেমী সন্যাসী স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ

ডঃ সুভাষ চন্দ্র বিশ্বাস, অটোয়া, কানাডা



ভারতবর্ষের দক্ষিণতম শহর কন্যাকুমারী, কুমারী আন্মান মন্দিরের জন্য বিখ্যাত। এই শহরের দক্ষিণে তিন বৃহৎ জলাশয়ের সমন্বয়ে গড়ে উঠেছে এক অসামান্য বিস্ময়। বঙ্গোপসাগর, আরব সাগর আর ভারত মহাসাগরের মিলিত তরঙ্গমালা কন্যাকুমারীর বেলাভূমিকে সিঞ্চন করেছে। বাঙ্গালার সন্তান পরিব্রাজক সন্যাসী শ্রীনরেন্দ্রনাথ দত্ত ভারত ভ্রমণ করতে করতে এসে পৌঁছলেন এই কন্যাকুমারী শহরে। সেদিন ছিল ২৪শে ডিসেম্বর ১৮৯২ সাল। তখন তাঁর সন্যাস নাম ছিল বিবিদিশানন্দ, কখন কখন সচ্চিদানন্দ নামও ব্যবহার করতেন। ১৮৯৩ সালে শিকাগো যাত্রার আগে তার নাম হয়েছিল স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ। কন্যাকুমারীর দক্ষিণে প্রায় ৫০০ মিটার দূরে সাগরের মধ্যে অবস্থিত ভারতের শেষ স্থলবিন্দু একটি শিলাখন্ড যাকে একটি ছোট্ট দ্বীপ আখ্যা দেয়া যায়। ঐদিন অর্থাৎ ২৪শে ডিসেম্বর ১৮৯২ সাল রাতের অন্ধকারে তিন-সাগরের-মেলামেশায় উদ্দাম অশান্ত জলে সাঁতার দিয়ে বিবেকানন্দ পার হ'য়ে উঠলেন ওই শিলাদ্বীপে। জনমনুষ্যহীন এই দ্বীপ একটা ছোট্ট পাহাড়ের মত। ধ্যানপাগল সন্যাসীর জন্য ধ্যানের উপযুক্ত স্থান আর কি হতে পারে? চতুর্দিকে সাগর জলে বেষ্টিত পাহাড়ের চূড়ার উপর বসে ধ্যানমগ্ন হলেন সন্যাসী। সামনে ভারতমাতা, পশ্চাতে ভারত মহাসাগর আর ডাইনে বাঁয়ে আরও দুই সাগর - এ যেন সমগ্র বিশ্বের ভার মাথায় নিয়ে ধ্যানস্থ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ। পর পর তিন দিন ভারতের শেষ শিলাখন্ডের উপর একটানা ধ্যানে সমাধিস্থ ছিলেন তিনি।

এই শিলাদ্বীপটি এখন বিবেকানন্দ রক মেমোরিয়াল নামে পরিচিত এবং একটি বিশেষ দ্রষ্টব্য স্থান হিসাবে প্রখ্যাত। কন্যাকুমারীর নাম করলে প্রথমাই মনে আসে বিবেকানন্দ রকের কথা। দক্ষ স্থপতি শ্রী এস কে আচারী ছিলেন এই মেমোরিয়ালের পরিকল্পক। এখানে বিবেকানন্দের বিশাল মূর্তি তো আছেই, তাছাড়া আছে ছয়টি ধ্যানকক্ষ আর একটি সভাকক্ষ। বিবেকানন্দ রক মেমোরিয়ালের স্থাপনার পিছনে যার সর্বপ্রধান অবদান আছে তিনি হলেন স্বনামধন্য স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামী শ্রীএকনাথজী রামকৃষ্ণ রানাড়ে। রাজনৈতিক জটিলতাই ছিল প্রধান অন্তরায়, তারপর ছিল অর্থ সংগ্রহ ও আরও নানাবিধ বাধাবিঘ্ন। সুদীর্ঘ সময়ব্যাপী অদম্য প্রচেষ্টার ফলে শ্রীএকনাথজী সক্ষম হয়েছিলেন তার পরিকল্পনাকে সফল করতে। ১৯৭০ সালে রামকৃষ্ণ মিশনের তদানীন্তন সভাপতি শ্রীমৎ স্বামী বিরেশ্বরানন্দ মহারাজ এই মেমোরিয়ালের পবিত্র উৎসর্গ সুসম্পন্ন করেন এবং ভারতের তদানীন্তন রাষ্ট্রপতি শ্রী ভি ভি গিরি এর উদ্বোধন করেন। আজ এই বিবেকানন্দ রক মেমোরিয়াল এতই প্রসিদ্ধ ও আকর্ষণীয় যে প্রতিবছর দেশ বিদেশের লক্ষ লক্ষ ভ্রমণার্থী কন্যাকুমারীতে আসেন এবং ভারতের নবজাগরণের অধিনায়ক ও আত্মচেতনার উদ্বোধক এই মহাপুরুষের স্মৃতির প্রতি শ্রদ্ধার্থ্য অর্পণ করেন। এই রক মেমোরিয়াল ভারতবর্ষের একটি জাতীয় স্মৃতিসৌধ ও গৌরব।

কন্যাকুমারীতে শ্রীএকনাথজীর প্রতিষ্ঠিত বিবেকানন্দ কেন্দ্রের মূলমন্ত্র হল স্বামীজীর এক অমরবাণী:

‘A hundred thousand men and women, fired with the zeal of holiness, fortified with eternal faith in the Lord, and nerved to lion's courage by their sympathy for the poor and the fallen and the downtrodden, will go over the length and breadth of the land, preaching the gospel of salvation, the gospel of help, the gospel of social raising up, the gospel of equality.’

মানবমুক্তির সাধক ও সেবাবর্ধের প্রচারক জাতি ধর্ম ধন দৌলতের উর্ধ্বে এই পরমপুরুষ ছিলেন ভারতের স্বাধীনতা ও প্রগতির প্রধান পথ প্রদর্শক। সাদর্শতবর্ষ পরেও বিবেকানন্দের আদর্শ ও শিক্ষা ভারত তথা বিশ্বের সব দেশের জন্যই অনুসরণীয়।

শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ একদা নরেন্দ্রনাথকে তিরস্কারছিলে বলেছিলেন, ‘..... আমি ভেবেছিলাম তুই একটা বড় মহীরুহ হবি আর তার তলায় শ্রান্ত পথিকেরা এসে আশ্রয় পাবে, শান্তি ও বিশ্রাম লাভ করবে, তা না হয়ে তুইও নিজের মুক্তির কামনা করছিস?’ এই তিরস্কারের তাৎপর্য নরেন্দ্রনাথ উপলব্ধি করেন অনেক পরে যখন তিনি পরিব্রাজক সন্যাসী হয়ে ভারতবর্ষের প্রকৃত রূপ প্রত্যক্ষ করলেন। শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের তিরোধানের পর এক সময় মা সারদামণির আশীর্বাদ নিয়ে ভারত ভ্রমণে বেরিয়ে পড়েন এবং বহু জায়গা পর্যটন করেন যথা: বোধগয়া, বারানসী, বৃন্দাবন, আগ্রা, নৈনিতাল, দিল্লী, জয়পুর, খেতড়ি, লিমড়ি, পোরবন্দর, মুম্বই, মহাবালেশ্বর, বেলগাঁও, গোয়া, মহীশূর, কোচি, থিরুবানন্তপুরম, কন্যাকুমারী, রামেশ্বরম ও চেন্নাই। এই ভ্রমণের ফলে তাঁর অধ্যাত্মপিপাসু মন সম্পূর্ণ বদলে যায়। সম্যক অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে তিনি উপলব্ধি করলেন দুঃখ হতে মুক্তি আর দরিদ্র, নিপীড়িত, লাঞ্চিত মানুষের আত্মচেতনার জাগরণ এবং নারীজাতিকে তার স্বমহিমায় সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত করাই হবে তাঁর প্রধান উদ্দেশ্য। ১৮৯২ সালের ডিসেম্বর মাসে ভারতবর্ষের শেষ পাথরের টুকরোর উপর বসে ধ্যানের পরে এক চিঠিতে লিখেছিলেন, ‘--- আমাদের জাতটা নিজের বিশেষত্ব হারিয়ে ফেলেছে, তাই এত দুঃখকষ্ট। সেই জাতীয় বিশেষত্বের বিকাশ যাতে হয়, তাই করতে হবে। নীচ জাতিকে উপরে তুলতে হবে।’ তাঁর চিন্তাধারায় নূতন আলোকসম্পাত হল, পেলেন তাঁর নিজস্ব দর্শন।

জীবন দর্শনের উদ্দেশ্যে ভারত ভ্রমণে বেরিয়ে পেলেন জাতি ধর্ম অতিক্রমী এক নূতন চেতনাবোধ যা তাঁকে জাতীয়তার গন্ডি পেরিয়ে পৌঁছে দিল অখণ্ড মানবতায়। আর আমরা পেলাম দেশপ্রেমিক, সমাজ সংস্কারক ও জগৎ কল্যাণের পথ প্রদর্শক এক মহামানবকে। তাঁর অকল্পনীয় ধীশক্তি, অফুরন্ত প্রাণশক্তি, দৃঢ় মনোবল, অসামান্য মানবপ্রেম আর সেবাবর্ধের প্রতি ঐকান্তিক নিষ্ঠা আমাদের আজও মুগ্ধ করে। গুরু শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণের আদর্শকে বাস্তব রূপ দিতে তিনি প্রতিষ্ঠা করলেন রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন যার মূল মন্ত্র হল ‘আত্মনো মোক্ষার্থং জগদ্ধিতায় চ’ অর্থাৎ আত্মার মুক্তি ও জগতের কল্যাণ। তাঁর এই মহান সেবাবর্ধ ভারতে নবযুগের সূচনা করল। রামকৃষ্ণ বলতেন, ‘--- যত্র জীব তত্র শিবা।’ ঈশ্বরের যেমন পূজা হয় তেমন মানুষের মধ্যে যে ঈশ্বর তারও পূজা হওয়া উচিত। স্বামীজীর হল এক অভিনব উপলব্ধি - জীবত্বের মধ্যে শিবত্বের আরাধনা। তিনি লিখলেন,

‘ব্রহ্ম হ’তে কীট-পরমানু সর্বভূতে সেই প্রেমময়,
মন প্রাণ শরীর অর্পণ কর সবে, এ সবার পায়।
বহুরূপে সম্মুখে তোমার, ছাড়ি কোথা ঋঞ্জিছ ঈশ্বর?
জীবে প্রেম করে যেই জন, সেই জন সেবিছে ঈশ্বর।’

স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ ভারতের তথা সম্ভবতঃ বিশ্বের প্রথম ধর্মগুরু যিনি জনকল্যাণের জন্য এবং দেশের উন্নতি ও প্রগতির জন্য ত্যাগ স্বীকার করতে বলেছেন। জাতি ধর্ম নির্বিশেষে নিঃস্বার্থ কর্ম ও জ্ঞানের উপযুক্ত প্রয়োগে দুঃখ দুর্দশা দূর ক’রে প্রকৃত মানুষ তৈরীর কথা বলেছেন। নিজের আধ্যাত্মিক মুক্তির জন্য ঈশ্বরের পূজায় সময় ব্যয়

না ক'রে জনসেবা ও দেশসেবার মধ্যদিয়ে মানুষের সর্বাঙ্গিক মুক্তির জন্য জীবন উৎসর্গ করতে বলেছেন। জীবিত হতে শিবত্বে উত্তরণের এই হল সুবর্ণ সোপান।

খ্রীষ্টীয় অষ্টম শতাব্দীর গুরু শংকরাচার্য বলেছিলেন ব্রহ্ম সত্য জগৎ মিথ্যা। মহাবিশ্বের যাবতীয় জীব ও বস্তু সবই ব্রহ্মের প্রকাশ। কিন্তু তাঁর এই দর্শনে বাস্তব জগতের দুঃখ কষ্ট বা জাতিভেদ ও ধর্মভেদজনিত সমস্যার সমাধানের কোন পথনির্দেশ ছিল না। হিন্দু ধর্মে এটাই ছিল এক গভীর শূন্যতা যা হিন্দু সমাজকে ক্রমাগত বিপথে টানছিল এবং সমাজের নিম্নস্তরের অগনিত জনসাধারণের দুর্দশার কারণ হ'য়ে দাঁড়িয়েছিল। স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ এই সব লাঞ্ছিত শোষিত জনসাধারণের সঙ্গে একাত্ম বোধ করলেন। এই যথার্থ কারণেই বিখ্যাত ঐতিহাসিক ও রাজনীতিজ্ঞ শ্রী কে এম পাণিকর স্বামী বিবেকানন্দকে নূতন যুগের শংকরাচার্য আখ্যা দিয়েছিলেন। এই বিশেষ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অবদানটি ছাড়াও বিবেকানন্দ হিন্দু ধর্মকে অনেক দিক দিয়ে সমৃদ্ধ করেছেন। তিনি বেদ বেদান্ত উপনিষদের সারমর্ম সহজবোধ্য ভাষায় দেশ বিদেশের সর্বসাধারণের কাছে পৌঁছে দিয়েছেন। শুধু তাই নয়, তাঁর দিব্যদৃষ্টি ও আধ্যাত্মিক সাধনাপ্রসূত বহু মৌলিক অবদান রেখে গেছেন যা হিন্দু শাস্ত্রে ও দর্শনে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ সংবৃদ্ধি হিসাবে গণ্য করা হয়।

বিবেকানন্দ যে সাধনার কথা বলেছেন তা হল সর্বতোমুখী সাধনা যথা জ্ঞানের সাধনা, কর্মের সাধনা, ভক্তির সাধনা আর রাজযোগের সাধনা। তিনি যেমন ছিলেন উচ্চমার্গের সাধক, তেমনই ছিলেন অক্লান্ত কর্মী ও সেবক। ভারতবর্ষকে তিনি নিজের জননীর মত ভালবাসতেন। বেদবেদান্তের জন্মভূমি ভারতবর্ষই ছিল তাঁর সব, সকল দেব দেবীর উর্দ্ধে। গরিয়সী ভারতবর্ষ ছিল তাঁর ধর্মভূমি ও কর্মভূমি। তাঁর এই আরাধ্য ভূমিকে নূতন ক'রে গড়ে তোলা এবং পরাধীনতা থেকে মুক্ত করা ছিল তাঁর স্বপ্ন। জনসেবার মধ্য দিয়ে, বিম্বিয়ে পড়া যুবশক্তিকে জাগিয়ে তুলে ও সর্বধর্মের সমন্বয়ে এই স্বপ্নকে বাস্তব রূপ দেবার জন্য বদ্ধপরিকর ছিলেন তিনি। পণ্ডিত জওয়াহরলাল নেহেরু তার বিখ্যাত গ্রন্থ *Discovery of India*-তে বিবেকানন্দ সম্বন্ধে লিখেছেন, "He was a fine figure of a man, imposing, full of poise and dignity, sure of himself and his mission, and at the same time dynamic and fiery energy and a passion to push India forward. He came as a tonic to the depressed and demoralized Hindu mind and gave it self-reliance and some roots in the past."

স্বদেশের জনগণ তাদের এক মহামানবের জয়গান করবে এতে আশ্চর্য্য হবার বিশেষ কোন কারণ নেই। কিন্তু মহা আশ্চর্য্যের ঘটনা ঘটল ১৮৯৩ সালের ১১ই সেপ্টেম্বর শিকাগোর ধর্মমহাসভায়। সেদিন সারা বিশ্বে সে কি আলোড়ন। ভগিনী নিবেদিতা বলেছেন, "--- when he began to speak it was of the religious ideas of the Hindus, but when he ended, Hinduism had been created." তখনকার বহু খ্যাতনামা মনীষীরা বিবেকানন্দের ভূয়সী প্রশংসা করেছিলেন। হার্ভার্ড ইউনিভার্সিটির দর্শনশাস্ত্রের তৎকালীন অধ্যাপক William James ভারতবর্ষের এই ৩১ বছর বয়সের যুবক সন্যাসীর কথায় এতই মুগ্ধ হয়েছিলেন যে তিনি বহুবার বিবেকানন্দের নানাবিধ উক্তি উদ্ধৃত করেছিলেন। শুধু তাই নয়, তিনি বিবেকানন্দকে "an honour to humanity" বলে এক অভিনব সম্মানে ভূষিত করেছিলেন। পরবর্তী কালেও বহু মনীষীরা স্বামীজীর আদর্শে যে কত প্রভাবিত হয়েছিলেন তা তাদের লেখা পড়লে জানা যায়। বিখ্যাত ফরাসী লেখক Romain Rolland তার লিখিত বিবেকানন্দের জীবনীতে বলেছেন, "Vivekananda's words are great music, phrases in the style of Beethoven, stirring rhythms like the march of Handel choruses. I cannot touch these

sayings of his, scattered as they are through the pages of thirty years distance, without receiving a thrill through my body like an electric shock, and what shocks, what transports must have been produced when in burning words they issued from the lips of the hero." আমেরিকান ঔপন্যাসিক Henry Miller বলেছেন, "Swami Vivekananda remains for me one of the greatest influences in my life,"

ঋষি অরবিন্দ স্বামী বিবেকানন্দকে নিজের গুরু মেনেছিলেন এবং বলেছিলেন এই বিরাট শক্তিশ্বর পুরুষ গোটা জগৎটাকে দু'হাতে ধরে পাল্টে দিতে সমর্থ ছিলেন। স্বামী বিবেকানন্দ সম্বন্ধে নেতাজী সুভাষ চন্দ্র বোসের অভিবাদন ছিল "the spiritual father of India's national movement." তিনি স্বামীজীর শিক্ষায় ও আদর্শে উদ্বুদ্ধ হয়েছিলেন এবং লিখেছিলেন, "Our countrymen have gained unprecedented self-respect, self-reliance and self-assertion from his teachings."

ভারত আজ রাষ্ট্রীয় স্বাধীনতার গর্বে গর্বিত হতে পারে। কিন্তু বিদেশী শাসন থেকে মুক্তি পাওয়া স্বাধীনতার প্রথম পদক্ষেপ মাত্র। পূর্ণ স্বাধীনতা আসবে তখনই যখন আমরা আমাদের দাসত্বসুলভ মনোভাব থেকে মুক্তি পাব, যখন আমাদের নারীজাতি তার স্বমহিমায় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হবে, যখন আমরা দরিদ্রতা, সাম্প্রদায়িকতা আর জাতিধর্মের ভেদাভেদ থেকে মুক্তিলাভ করব। আজকের ভারত অসংখ্য দুর্নীতি, মানুষের নৈতিক অবনতি আর কুটিল রাজনৈতিক আবর্তের মধ্যে পড়ে ঘোর দুর্দশায় ভুগছে। আমরা কি স্বামী বিবেকানন্দের আদর্শ হতে বিচ্যুত হয়েছি? আজ তাঁর সাদর্শতাবর্ষের প্রাক্কালে তাঁকে স্মরণ ক'রে ভারত তাঁর শিক্ষার আলোর পথে এগিয়ে চলুক। এই দিব্যদ্রষ্টা মহামানবের শাস্ত্র বাণী সকলেই বারবার উচ্চারণ করুক, 'হে ভারত, ---- ভুলিও না - নীচজাতি, মুর্খ, দরিদ্র, অজ্ঞ, মুচি, মেথর, তোমার রক্ত, তোমার ভাই। বল - মুর্খ ভারতবাসী, দরিদ্র ভারতবাসী, ব্রাহ্মণ ভারতবাসী, চণ্ডাল ভারতবাসী আমার ভাই, ভারতবাসী আমার প্রাণ, ভারতের দেবদেবী আমার ঈশ্বর, ভারতের সমাজ আমার শিশুশয্যা, আমার যৌবনের উপবন, আমার বার্ষিক্যের বারাগসী, বল ভাই - ভারতের মুক্তিকা আমার স্বর্গ, ভারতের কল্যাণ আমার কল্যাণ; ---'।

On Kashmiri Saivism

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Introduction: Saivism in general, and Kashmiri kind in particular, incorporates and unites both the Tāntrika and Vedic practices and philosophies. It synthesizes and builds on systems preceeding and following them. Saivism though ancient continued to develop through centuries. Somananda Dev says that Sage Durvāsā learnt 'Trika vād' directly from Srikantha (Siva's incarnation) at Mt. Kailas. This doctrine sees: i. Siva as absolute consciousness, ii. His holy power 'Sakti' as manifested universe and iii. human being as one integrated reality. He taught Saiva Monism to his student Tryambaka. Two others, Amardāka and Srināth, became respectively the proponents of Saiva Dualism and 'Non-duality in Dualism'.

Sri Kantha's commentary and Sripati's 'Srikantha Bhasya' are classical works on both Saiva and Upanisadic 'Advaita Vād'/non-difference between human essence and Divinity. Vasugupta was another seer (9th cent) who, under Lord Siva's direct guidance, recovered 'Siva Sutras' (80 aphorisms) from Mt. Mahendra in the Himalayas, different from Panini's fourteen 'Siva Sutras' in 'Astādhyayi'. Vasugupta expanded SivaSutras in 'Siva Sutra Vritti', 'Spanda Karika' and many other writings. A succession (Parampara) of Vasugupta's students followed over centuries. They include Somananda (900-950, author of 'Siva Dristi'), Utpaladeva (wrote 'Isvar Pratyaya Abhijnan Karika', 'Siva Sutravali'), Lakshmanacharu, and most famously Abhinavagupta (925-1025) author of 'Tantrāloka', 'Tantrasār', 'Vivriti', 'Vimarsini', 'Kramānyaya Dipikā', 'Tantra Sār etc. and Ksemraja (student of Abhinavagupta as well as of Jayartha) wrote 'Spanda Samdohah', 'Spanda Nirnaya', 'Spanda Pradipikā', and a commentary on 'Vimarsini' and many more on 'Kundalini Vimarsini'. Ksemraja said Vasugupta wrote 'Spanda Karika' but others say his student Kallabhat wrote it. This is possibly the most single authoritative work on Kashmiri Saivism.

These teachings helped grow different schools of Saivism like 'Prataya Abhijnan' (realization by experience), Spanda (vibration), Krama (sequence), Trika (discussed earlier), Kaula (kula=family, Total, Bank or shore of a river) etc. Shakism is a sister doctrine of Kashmiri Saivism and is discussed in another article. We may note that Siva as 'Mahakāl' or 'Niskāla' is the Substratum of time. Kali is the flow of time (out from Siva); Krama is a sequence of events in 'spacetime' (Kāla-kala, Desh-kal). These female names are different designations of Sakti-the dynamic aspect of consciousness that inheres in Siva, Divinity as pure Consciousness. Together they are space out of spacelessness, time out of timelessness, sound out of silence, agitation out of equilibrium and so on. Hinduism believes that transcendent "gunas" of three kinds(sattava,rajah,tamah) generated by Sakti are constituent units of both matter and mind. Also by sat karya vad or doctrine of energy of existence any being is an effect of its previous causal units. Regressing back, the universe must have been caused by and from Divinity. Saivism says potentially dynamic Consciousness as Sakti condenses and forms Bindu (cf. singular Point) where 36 basic ingredients(tattvas) of universe of space, time and beings thrive. Then fireworks of Time/kalagni (cf. Big Bang) release energy of the manifested universe. Evolutionary transformations made diverse beings but the Divine essence remains unchanged. Samkaracharya's 'Advaitavād' sees the 'reality' as one indivisible Brahma. The 'jivatma' and 'Brahma' are identically the same (Tattvamasi). The varieties are due to 'Maya'(an aspect of Sakti), an illusion without substance. He interprets 'Mā' as 'Not', 'Ay' or 'Ayam' as the object. If holographic theory proves to be correct, then our fundamental world may be a shadow on the boundary of a five-dimensional space-time. (Page 44, Grand Design, by Hawkin and Mlodinow). A 'Jnani' or knower knows that the reality is 'Ekamevadvaitam'- the one without the second. Saivism interprets 'Mā' as 'to measure' a real object. Our perceptions (eyes, nose, etc.) fail to apprehend its internality. The theologians as well as philosophers/scientists like Lambert (18th cent) say perceptions cannot unfold 'the thing in itself', ("Ding-an-sich"- Kant). The object has its 'self showing innateness' ('pha' – the revealed visibility of phenomena), which we miss because of archetypal nascienc. Hinduism agrees that sense data miss the essential unity of beings and cause feelings of Dvaita/duality between the subject and the object because of ignorance accumulated over past lives' activities. The spiritual development sees the 'one truth' in the diversity.

At a superficial level our senses grasp the object as a reduced, inverted, image on the retina. Our brain as an imperfect tool of consciousness converts it as an external object without seeing its internal truth. Yogis see 'Sakti' as the manifested universe. The human being has the potential to become 'Pramata', the knower of truth (Prāma). His externality as contracted consciousness becomes an object (Prameya'- to be known). The perceptions are to be replaced by true discourse between the subject and the object by self-development. Initially the abstract non-qualifiable Siva as consciousness may be conceived as visible Siva, with five faces: Tatpura, Isān, Sadyajāta, Vāmdeva and Aghore emanating respectively Ānanda, Chit, Iccha, Jnan and Kriyā Saktis. He has 18 arms representing Ego, Intellect, Brain/Mind, 5 vāyus (Pulsations), 5 sense and 5 motor organs. The Saiva Agamas progressively teach how to be a yogi. There are 10 Saiva Agamas talking about theistic dualism, 18 Rudra Agamas teaching 'Dualism as non-duality' and 64 Bhairava Tantras about non-duality. Kashmiri Saivism favours the last. The following summarizes their teachings.

A. A human is of divine essence but fettered (Paas) by malas/impurities. Three kind of mals on paas/rope or string bind human beings (cf. DNA strands on chromosomes). They are Mayaja-kind of archtypical, karmaja - due to work of previous births and Anava-basic individual failings. These cause the eight empirical perceptions (Ego, intellect and mind/brains along with sense organs) hinder us. These 'pura Astak' can be overcome by 'Samkalpa' or determined efforts to rise above the constructs of mind (Vikālpā) and body to regain the ground Bhumā of Being, the unblemished (Niranjan) Self (Nijam Bhava). The spanda masters have suggested four means (Upāya) for Salvation that is, to rehabilitate the divinity within. 'Netra' and 'MaliniVijay' Tantras describe these means which Abhinavagupta and Ksemraja elaborated on. We must overcome 'Krama'/succession of events in 'space time' by rising above the apparent perceptions and discover one's 'centre' 'Bindu'. The 'Yogi' can reabsorb the whole universe within himself by reversing of the process "I think, therefore I am. I am, therefore the world is". This is 'Laya Yoga'. One must die to the mundane world and be reborn into the 'spirit', which he is. We have to awaken the Divine Spanda (Kundalini). The creatrix is now awakened to play the role of Vāmesvari (the Samharini or Visgara/ withdrawl Sakti). By symbolically destroying the lower 'Tattvas' the yogi enters the 'Pramatri' state. This is not easy. The Upāyas/means are for the "Prabuddha" (spiritually awakened) who understand and try hard. Fourfold effort Jnan Chatu-stay is needed: Guru scriptures, Reason (Upapatti) and intuitive insight (Upalabdhi). We need Sādhanā (practice) and dedicated effort, Sam (giving up anger, jealousy etc.), Dam (foregoing materialism, as well as, self restraint) and patience (Titiksā).

B. Guru and Diksā: A devotee's understanding of Siva Sakti is required but his faith and sincerity are enough for the Guru to raise him to the highest truth. Here Guru is Lord Siva himself as revealed in the scriptures who repels the dark malas. However, a 'Siva Prapta' (siva-realized) person can do the same. Guru assigns a load of practices of Kriyā, Jnan and Iccha, which are to be gone through by the disciple. He penetrates (Bendhā) the disciple's 'Sivatva' by his own. He knows which particular 'mantra' will work for the student. He awakens the Drik (knowledge as an instrument) by Diksā. It is a process, which imparts 'Siva Jnan' and destroys the fetters of life ("Diyate Jnan Sadbhāva, Ksiyate Pasubhāva"). Diksa involves Sādhanā, that is, pursuit for the goal by sam, dam and the right choices. Rituals, prayers, mudrā's, bendhas, scriptures and reasoning will lead to the goal. Diksā is consecration to be reborn into the spiritual world. Kriyā removes Karmaja mala, mantras remove Māyāja mala. God willing finally the Ānava mala will be gone and the disciple becomes a 'pramata' (knower of truth). He graduates from Vidyasvar to Mantresvar Sada Siva, Sakti and finally to the highest 'siva'hood. Jeevan Mukti (Unmilan Mukti) or salvation in present life is the realization of oneness with Siva.

C. The Upāyas/ Means: (i) The first upāya is the Ānovopāya (individual way) or Kriyopāya (way of work-out). This starts with repeating Siva's name (Jap) and eight-limbed yoga. The masters suggest the postures of Padmasan or Siddhāsan. Ksemraja says Prānayām (Breath stretching and control) removes the barrier between the subject and object. The upper breath (Prān) should meet Apān (lower limbed transmissions). An imagination helps. One should think that the combined breath is going up as Udān through the spine. Breathing through right nostril, then through left may be practiced a few times. Attention should be focused on breathing, the process should be rhythmic. Breath should be directed to the throat, heart, navel and the heels. Then the same should be directed upward. Meditation by inaudible mantras like Aham, Sohan, Om (Aum) helps. Think of 'laya' or merging in precreative state of the universe. The practitioner may reach the top but is likely to fall back. Mundane activity is reduced and progress is made.

(ii) The second Upāya is called Sāktopāya (empowered means) or Jnaopaya (Knowledge based). One empowers himself by Mantras and their uplifting effects. The guru initiates the pupil by the process called

'Mahāyag'. Ritual bath, japa, puja (worshipping), oblations and other external rituals are encouraged. Mātrika Sakti leads to Jnan. The disciple thinks himself ready to go to the intermediate level from Aparā to Parā. He uses Siva's trident to cut asunder Icchā, Jnan, Kriyā and imagines 'Dāhachinta' in 'Kalagni', that is he is melting in the radiational fires which engulf the universe at dissolution (or the transition between creation and destruction of the universe). He goes back to 'Kha' or the void, which is 'Bindu'. Here all "Varna Rasis" from first letter A to the last Ha are dormant in Bindu. A is the 'Lingasthal' or Siva's shelter, the unprecedented (Apurva) and without succeeding (Anuttar). A to Ha or the whole set of alphabets are the effect of 'Sabda Prapancha' (auxiliary sound waves causing the manifested universe). Siva's deliberative Vimarsini Sakti generates all mantras and Bindu is the repository. Siva as A and Sakti as 'A to ha' are called visarga (two vertical dots). They merge as 'Aham' in Anusvar (one dot M of Aham) or Bindu, from which human being emerges. Aham represents the surge of siva's consciousness as power. Reversal of the process represented by 'Ma ha a' is the imagined dissolution of the universe, which really signifies destruction of the fetters of body and mind. This leads to illumination. (a) Aham mantra is the vehicle to cross the gulf between the mundane and the divine worlds. (b) Ksemraja says 'Sauha' mantra does the same thing. 'Sa' or 'Idam' is the world of diverse objects. It is the root of 'Asti' ('which is'). Au contains A (the first vowel) and Au the last. These vowels support all the consonants. Au is called 'Abhyupāgama' (act of thriving). It is a passive assent (so be it) like the 'Aum' mantra. The assent is accepting Siva, one with the universe and the human essence. Also 'Sauha' accepts the human dissolution in the Bindu (Siva Sakti together). Knowing thus, believing and uttering 'Sauha' mantra will lead to 'Sivatva'.

(iii) The third upaya is Sāmbhava (divine) way. This is called 'hathapāk' or sudden injection (digestion) of the lower Tattvas. The 'spanda uday' or 'becoming of the universe' is suddenly and fully tossed inside the Bindu-the real being. All the mental and consequently physical aspects transcend into 'Nirvikalpa' (free) state of 'Niranjanatva' or unblemishness (without stain of impurity). The empirical world is replaced by divine world of spacelessness and timelessness. The individual vibration (visesa spanda) merges in cosmic spanda, leading to 'Siva Sakti'.

(iv) The fourth upaya is Anupaya or effortless Ānandaupaya. Total bliss engulfs the devotee by siva's grace. The lucky and deserving one penetrates into 'Sivatva' without any effort. It should be noted that all these upayas are inter related. Kundalini yoga (see author's previous articles) combines all these. Anyone or any combination of upayas will enlighten the devotee.

Om Namah Sivaya

In the Land of Gods: Thiruvananthapuram to Madurai

(Continued from the previous issue)

Dr. Subhash C. Biswas



It's 11 O'clock in the morning and everybody is aboard. Joseph turns the ignition key on. The car rolls for Rameshwaram, the renowned temple city and one of the most desired destinations for the Hindu pilgrims. Dwijobar feels extremely happy that he could finally see the Vivekananda Memorial Rock, his most cherished spot in this trip. He doesn't conceal his excitement.

"I could not believe we would ever make it. Such a long queue and such a dense crowd – absolutely incredible."

"So the lesson is never say never however adverse the situation may be." Godadhar sounds philosophic.

"Where was your lesson when you both were backtracking seeing the long queue?" Kamalika doesn't let go the chance to strike a blow.

"We have a long way to Rameshwaram; so relax folks," Godadhar says while leaning back on his seat.

"Look outside Godai," Dwijobar exclaims. "There is a vast jungle of windmills out there. It's a huge number of spinning fans on long poles all around us as far as the eye can reach. It looks like the nature is too hot and needs to be cooled down."

"Oh ya! Tamil Nadu is harnessing wind energy desperately."

The car moves on. On the left, there's the vast greenery gradually fading into mountains and on the right, the greenish blue waves of the Bay of Bengal are dazzling in the bright sun. Everybody has been silent for a long while. A monotonous sound of the moving car has brought over quietness on the tired body in the comfort of air conditioning. Godadhar breaks the silence.

"Day before yesterday," he continues, "I met an interesting German couple in the breakfast hall. They came for a second visit to Thiruvananthapuram for a strange reason."

"And what's that?" Shubhra asks.

"Well," Godadhar goes on, "one day during their last visit in Thiruvananthapuram, they were taking a stroll in the beach. Suddenly, a high wave engulfed them and while being dragged by the receding wave, they discovered a small statue. They were utterly surprised by this event. The statue - they suspected - was of some deity they didn't know, obviously. Taken aback, they were wondering what to do with the statue. In the mean time, a local old man – who was passing by – came forward. He said the statue

was that of the consort of Lord Padmanabhaswamy and advised the couple to keep it in their home with respect. It will bring them good luck. So they did and, needless to say, got miraculous benefits. They now feel some spiritual connection has brought them back to Thiruvananthapuram.”

“Did they tell you how they were benefited?” Kamalika asks.

“No and I couldn’t ask. The conversation got interrupted because of you guys – the noisy folks – coming over.”

“Now,” Dwijobar says, “you can write a new mythological story for the posterity on globalization of Padmanabhaswamy. It’s amusing to see how the human mind builds miracles and spirituality on sheer absurdity.”

“You be quiet,” Shubhra retorts. “You always try to be a skeptical sage and boast of your wisdom in Physics.”

Rameshwaram

Rameshwaram is a little over 300 km from Kanyakumari. Rameshwaram Temple is situated in an island called Pamban Island. This island is connected with the mainland by a bridge called Annai Indira Gandhi Bridge, also known as Pamban Bridge. It takes a good 5 hours to arrive at the bridge from Kanyakumari. This bridge, built on the Palk Strait, is the first sea bridge of India. There is a railway bridge running parallel and close to the road bridge which is at a higher level. The span of the bridge is 2.3 km which makes it the second longest sea bridge after the Bandra – Worli Sea Link (5.6 km) in Mumbai. This bridge itself is a wonderful sight to see. The scenic splendours of the distant sea and the string of islands that can be viewed from the bridge make every passer by stop to admire and enjoy.

The designated hotel is only about 15 minutes drive from the bridge. It’s a fairly good hotel for the holy city of Rameshwaram. One should not expect even three-star facilities in the hotels of this city. There is a restaurant that serves only vegetarian food. The lobby area is small, simple and modestly decorated. The spectacular scene of sculptures that comes to sight soon after entering is one from the Ramayana. It makes one assume that the hotels in this tiny island are designed to serve basically the pilgrims and so are decorated to create an appropriate religious atmosphere.

Dwijobar and Shubhra come down rushing to the reception desk with an unhappy look. It doesn’t take long to understand that something is not right with their room. Moreover, it’s expected of them as they are meticulous about hotel rooms and as what has been happening with them so long. This time, the problem is the air conditioning system that is not functioning alright. The manager insists that the hotel is full and there’s no room available. But Dwijobar always succeeds in getting what he wants. The manager finds a room for him.

There’s still enough daylight left for the day; so some partial visit to the temple may be possible. Joseph comes forward and proposes he can take them for a drive around the temple. Rameshwaram temple is one of the 12 *Jyotirlingams* (symbol of Shiva with halo) of India and is the southernmost one. This *Jyotirlingam* distinguishes itself by its

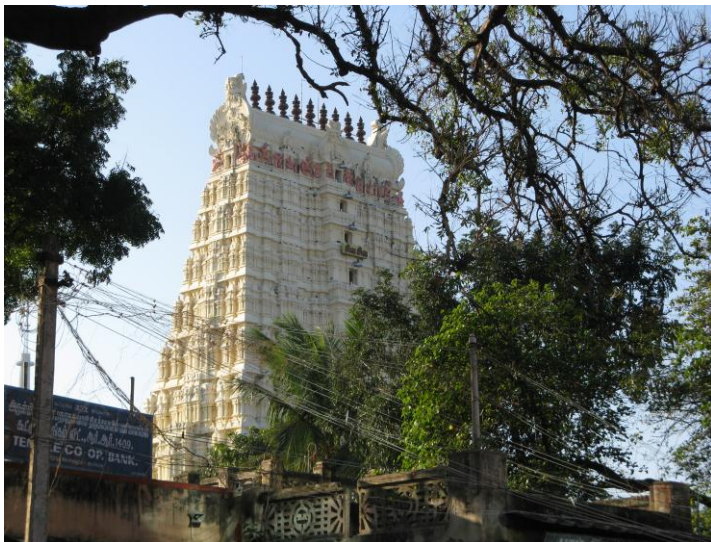
close association with the Ramayana, especially the victorious return of Rama from Lanka. The shrine of the temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva - revered here as Ramanathaswamy - and the temple is known as Sri Ramanathaswamy Temple. It's one of India's most venerated and most visited temples. It's hailed so high in holiness that the devotees consider every bit of soil of Rameshwaram as very sacred.

"There's a traditional belief," Kamalika says, "that a pilgrimage to Benares will be complete only after a pilgrimage to Rameshwaram."

"Yes," Godadhar agrees. "That's why Rameshwaram is also regarded as Benares of the South."

"I heard," Shubhra adds, "that Rameshwaram is one of the four holiest shrines of India."

"That's right," Kamalika says. "The other three holiest shrines are Badrinath, Dwarka and Jagannatha in Puri. These four shrines are called *Char Dham* which - for the Hindus - must be visited in one's life time."



Ramanathaswamy Temple

Joseph drives around the huge temple complex which is spread over an area of 15 acres with high massive walls on all four sides and gates with lofty towers. He stops in front of the eastern Rajagopuram (east gate tower) that has a height of 126 ft (38.4m).

"The tower is absolutely marvelous," Dwijobar says.

"Right," Godadhar adds. "It's another masterpiece of South Indian architecture and sculpture."

"Look," Kamalika exclaims, "the gate is open and we can go inside; it's quite unexpected, what a surprise!"

"It's all God's will." Shubhra says in a tone heavy with devotion. "God wants us to visit the shrines; so the gates are open and we're here beating all odds."

Kamalika and Shubhra waste no time; they rush ahead without waiting for the other two. For them, it seems like a desire fulfilled. Soon after entering inside, one has to take off shoes. Dwijobar and Godadhar are, as always, annoyed by this practice. Dwijobar grumbles, there are no proper facilities for taking off shoes and safe-keeping them. Godadhar hates walking barefoot, especially on dirty wet pathways. But in temples of

India, devotees don't seem to mind this petty nuisance; they rather consider every bit of thing in a temple as sacred. So the authorities don't feel the need to invest on matters of cleanliness and convenience and also ignore maintenance and upkeep. Fame and popularity of the temple thrive despite the apparent ugliness.

The principal shrine – the sanctum sanctorum - is that of Sri Ramanathaswamy. A shrine for Lord Vishnu is located behind this shrine. Lord Vishnu is called Sethumadhava here. The temple comprises quite a few shrines dedicated to other deities. A shrine here goes by the name *Mandapam*. The *Nandi Mandapam* is a spectacular one. It has a colossal image of *Nandi* that captures attention. Although too many visitors and worshipers are not expected at this time, the shrines seem to be crowded enough. All on a sudden, a big group of devotees enter into the temple chanting mantras in Sanskrit. They are all scantily dressed and wet all over.

"I guess," Kamalika says, "they are the pilgrims who have completed the ritual of bathing in all the 22 *Teertham* of Rameshwaram."

"Do you have to visit all these *Teerthams* to take bath?" Shubhra asks.

"You don't have to if you don't want to," Dwijobar points to a corner place inside the temple. "You can get the total bath in 22 different waters here itself."

"You can pay some cash and save the 22 different trips," Godadhar quips. "The temple will close soon; so let's get out."

"Tomorrow," Joseph says, "first thing in the morning will be our visit to the temple through the western *Rajagopuram*."

Historically, the Rameshwaram temple was built by several kings over a period of years starting from the 12th century. Before the start of this construction, the ancient shrine, it's believed, was housed in a thatched hut and was falling apart. The contribution of the rulers of the Setupathy dynasty of Ramanathapuram was considerable. The temple also received royal patronage from many other kingdoms such as Travancore and Pudukottai. King Krishna III of the Rastrakuta Empire (10th century) and King Vishnuvardhana of the Hoysala Empire (12th century) erected their victory columns in Rameshwaram commemorating their pilgrimage.

"Mythologically," Dwijobar says, "it must be Lord Rama who established the shrine first."

"Yes," Kamalika says, "after vanquishing Ravana and conquering Lanka, Rama was advised by the Rishis to build a shrine and consecrate it to Lord Shiva in order to wash off the *Brahmahatya dosha* (sin of killing a Brahmin). Rama entrusted Hanumana to fetch a *Lingam* from the mount Kailasha, abode of Lord Shiva. But Hanumana could not come back soon enough before the auspicious moment of installation of the *Lingam*. So Sita made a *Lingam* out of sand and Rama worshiped it as Shivalinga. This *Lingam* is consecrated as *Ramalingam*. Meanwhile, Hanumana returned with a *Lingam* from Kailasha and was disappointed discovering that everything had been done and his whole effort had been in vain. Rama pacified him and installed the *Lingam* brought by Hanumana and consecrated it as *Vishwalingam*. He ordered that all worships be first performed for *Vishwalingam* before other *Lingams*. This *Lingam* is also known as *Kashilingam* or *Hanumanalingam*. According to some pundits, Hanumana brought this *Lingam* from Kashi (Benares)."



A corridor inside Ramanathaswamy Temple

Dwijobar and Shubhra, finicky as they are for hotel rooms, seem to have problems with their rooms more often than they would like. They have to change their room once again because of a leaky faucet and flooding of the bathroom floor. This time at least it's not because of their choosiness. But it remains to see how they pass the night in the new room they accepted with some reservation. The morning sun rises shining on Rameshwaram with its usual charm and glory; but the couple – Dwijobar and Shubhra - comes down with faces that tell only of total devastation. Godadhar hesitates, but asks anyway,

“What’s the matter Dwijo, you both look so pathetic?”

Dwijobar is not known for ability to control anger and temperament. But this time it's different; may be he is too exhausted to raise his voice.

“You know Godai, I feel like bombing this hotel down. We couldn't sleep the whole night.”

“But why?”

“A group of young residents in our neighbouring room were too loud and busy in merry making. And they did it continuously throughout the night.”

“Too bad, you could neither love your neighbours as yourself, nor could join them to have some fun.”

Joseph is ready with the car. Today is a whole day program that is to begin with the Rameshwaram temple at the other gate – the western *Rajagopuram*. Another amazing tower adorns this *Gopuram*. This tower is 79 ft (24m) tall, much smaller than the eastern tower. The paved way through this gate is lined with small shops on both sides selling souvenirs and jewellery. It leads to a cross section of two wide corridors. The one going straight ahead toward west is the famous third corridor. This temple boasts of long corridors; the total length – about 4000 ft – is probably the longest in the world. The corridors are adorned with thousands of pillars with marvelous sculptures carved on them. Each pillar is erected on a base that is over a meter in height. Two rows of such pillars on both sides of the corridor progressively converging at a distance, along with an intricately painted roof, create a glamorous sight. The much-revered *Kodi Theertham*

is located in the first corridor. Rama performed Abhisheka (holy bath) in this spot. The pilgrims take the last of their 22 dips in this *Theertham*.

Dhanushkodi

Dhanushkodi is a small township at the tip of Rameshwaram Island where Bay of Bengal merges with Indian Ocean. It's situated at a distance of roughly 18 km from Rameshwaram temple. The confluence of the two seas is such that it appears like a bow and the strip of land like an arrow poised to be released. This may be the reason behind the name of this place, as Dhanush in Sanskrit means Bow. But for the Hindus, the name originates in Ramayana. In Tamil, Kodi means End; so Dhanushkodi means Bow's End. Rama used one end of his Bow to mark this spot for constructing the Sethu (bridge). Hanuman leaped from this spot to reach Lanka. A chain of boulders and islets can be seen even today along a line from this spot to the nearest land of Lanka – about 29 km - giving the impression of a bridge. This is believed to be the remnant of the ancient Sethu built by Rama. Mughal and Dutch cartographers mentioned this bridge in their maps. Marco Polo too talked about this bridge in his book. This bridge is called Rama's Bridge or Adam's Bridge, the latter being introduced by a British cartographer in 1804.

"I know that this place was washed away by the 1964 cyclone and everything was ravaged," Dwijobar says. "So is it worth visiting this place?"

"Yes Dwijo," Godadhar replies, "the view of the confluence is amazing, I heard. There's a memorial stone for the victims of Dhanushkodi. A train load of 200 passengers was swept away by giant tidal waves triggered by that cyclone."

"One of our ex-presidents comes from the village of Dhanushkodi," Shubhra says. "That too makes us curious to visit this place."

The drive is less smooth than in other roads of Rameshwaram; but it's possible to negotiate through this rough road by car. One may expect slushy and sandy patches along the road. The two sides of the narrow road are covered with growing trees and pastures. The scenic beauty is enjoyable; but it's more so when the road suddenly opens up in a vast space with the blue sky and the ocean in front. This is the land's end – Dhanushkodi.



Dhanushkodi

“It’s really a marvelous sight,” Godadhar says. “There are many boats far and near on the sea.”

“It looks like a fisherman’s village,” Dwijobar says. “There are fishermen with their fresh catch. And interestingly enough, they have very simple but crude arrangement to dry fish in bulk.”

There is a little market place not too far from the beach. Shubhra and Kamalika seem to be somewhat interested in doing some shopping. The memorial stone doesn’t seem to get much attention. It needs some maintenance and clean up. The locals say, much of the land is still under water. There was a Ganesh temple here, now submerged. Its tower can still be seen sometimes at about 1 km from the shore.

“According to Ramayana,” Godadhar says, “Rama installed *Shivalingam* here - on the advice of the wise bear *Jambhuvana* - in order to calm down the sea before constructing the Sethu.”

Kamalika is about to say something, but is interrupted by Joseph who suddenly shows up. It’s time to go back if we have to complete our visits.

Kothandaramaswamy Temple

“You were about to say something, Kamalika,” Shubhra reminds.

“Yes,” Kamalika goes on, “according to some pundits, Rama installed *Shivalingam* in Dhanushkodi to stop Ravana’s army from breaking down the day’s construction of the Sethu during the night. As Ravana also was a devotee of Shiva, he couldn’t go against the Lord.”

Kothandaramaswamy temple is not too far from Dhanushkodi. The sun is shining bright shattering all the memories of winter whatever is left in the mind. Joseph stops the car in front of the temple. As they come out of the car, the uncomfortable heat makes everyone cry out for something cold to drink.

“Green coconut!” Kamalika cries out. “Is there a stall of green coconut nearby?”

Joseph points out to such a stall a few steps away. The stall is crowded with thirsty people, all curiously watching the coconut boy chopping off the nuts with a skill hand in far less time than expected. They are impatiently waiting for their turn to get one in hand and sip through the straw to get the juice of life. The stall owner seems to be thankful to the generous sun for radiating such good luck on him.

“The temple is too small and too simple looking,” Dwijobar comments in his characteristic way without any attempt to hide his lack of impression about the temple.

“Small, simple but very elegant,” Godadhar says with no hesitation to point out why tourists favour this temple. “You know Dwijo, this little temple has a very important mythological history. This is the place where Vibhishana – Ravana’s younger brother - surrendered to Lord Rama and joined hands with him for the war. He was crowned by Rama as the King of Lanka and the ceremony of coronation was held here.”

This temple does not have the traditional South Indian glamour such as a huge *Gopuram* with awe inspiring sculptures. But it has a very impressive front and beautiful interior. There are images of Lord Rama with the *Kothandam* (his bow), Sita,

Lakshmana, Hanuman and Vibhishana. The walls are adorned with many wonderful paintings portraying the story of Ramayana. In the foreground, there is a tree named Athi Maram. People say, this tree is as old as the temple itself. This temple has survived the most violent storms and cyclones of this area. The severe cyclone of 1964 ravaged much of Rameshwaram, but Kothandaramaswamy temple remained practically undamaged.

Gandhamadana Parvatham

“I can see Joseph coming toward us,” Godadhar announces. “So it’s time to go for the next site.”

Joseph is an excellent driver with pleasant personality. He is patient, cooperative and very knowledgeable about tours in South India. The next place to visit is the Gandhamadana Parvatham which is approximately 3 km from the Ramanathaswamy temple. The access road to the temple is relatively narrow and lined with local sellers laying out their ware on the road side. It’s a common street market scene that one can see anywhere in India. Bargaining is the shopping mantra that leads to a good profit for the seller and a good deal for the buyer.



Ramarpadam Temple

The temple is on a hillock which is the highest point in the island of Rameshwaram. “Gandhamadana Parvatham” means a highly fragrant hill. The temple is a building of three storeys. From the top floor, one can get a breathtaking view of the island, the sea and the littoral scenery. Inside the shrine, there is the imprint of Lord Rama’s feet on a *Chakra* (wheel). That’s why this temple is also known as Ramarpadam temple, *padam* meaning feet. It’s believed that Hanuman surveyed the area from this hill top before taking the leap.

Lakshmana Theertham

Lakshmana Theertham is very close to the temple of Ramanathaswamy. Stepping out of the car, the very first impression of Dwijobar is “Oh, it’s just a pond!”

“Not just a pond,” Godadhar jumps in, “it’s a beautiful pond, a holy pond – one of the 22 *Theerthams*. Pilgrims take holy baths here and pay homage to Lord Lakshmana. And look on your left, there is a temple dedicated to Lord Lakshmana.”

Inside the temple, there are several sculptures of Lakshmana carved on marble. And as expected, statues of Lord Rama and Goddess Sita are also there. This is expected because Lakshmana never separated himself from his elder brother Rama and his wife Sita and remained truthful and loyal to them.



Lakshmana Theertham

Agnitheertham

It doesn’t take long to arrive at this Theertham. Joseph parks the car on the road side and the *Theertham* is across the road. Agnitheertham is actually a bathing place on the shore of the Bay of Bengal. This is supposedly the first of the 22 *Theerthams*. Pilgrims ritualistically salute the sun and then take a dip in the water of the Bay of Bengal. There are priests, many worshippers and the holy cow. Worshipping seems to be going on continuously. After the worship, devotees go for the dip. Hordes of pilgrims having their first dip in the Agnitheertham, rush toward the temple barefoot in wet clothes bringing with them a trail of sandy soil and water.

“It’s an amazing sight,” Shubhra says. “People taking bath in this sea reminds me of the Ganges in Benaras. It’s so beautiful and clean.”

“The sea is incredibly calm here,” Kamalika says. “The waves are low and gentle just like in a river.”

Dwijobar’s critical mind drives him always to make contrary comments.

“I wonder,” he says, “what makes people believe they can wash their sins committed through misdeeds by simply taking a dip in certain water. It’s age old superstition”

“I guess,” Godadhar replies, “while taking a dip, you ask for forgiveness and promise not to commit a sin again. This may be the meaning of washing a sin.”

It’s time now to go back to the hotel. Everyone seems to be jolly and excited talking about going back, except Dwijobar. He has suddenly become serious and is looking outside.

“What’s wrong, Dwijo?” Godadhar asks hesitatingly. “I understand, the past night was kind of a nightmare.”

“That nightmare has totally spoiled my day; I’m going through a daymare.” Dwijobar’s anger seems to be making his inside boil. He’s like an enraged snake with its hood raised and ready to strike the target. It’s anybody’s guess what Dwijobar has in mind for the hotel manager.

The manager has been waiting at the entrance door for his guests. With folded hands and extremely polite gesture, he addresses Dwijobar.

“Sir, due to a bad twist of fate, things have happened in an unintentional way. And I understand it has been unnerving for you. I sincerely apologize. For tonight, you’ll get the room adjacent to your friend’s. There’ll be no further problem, I guaranty.”

The snake’s hood rolls back on the ground with a smile of acceptance. Tomorrow morning will prove it, he says.

The next morning is a beautiful one in all respects. Especially, Shubhra and Dwijobar look happier than ever. The manager comes in the breakfast hall to check with Dwijobar if everything went well during the last night. Dwijobar only says, yes but I’ll think twice before coming back to your hotel. Noticing many foreign tourists in the hall, Godadhar asks the manager,

“Rameshwaram being a truly religious place, I really didn’t expect so many foreigners – apparently Christians - here. Is Rameshwaram a favourite destination for foreign tourists?”

“Rameshwaram is gaining popularity day by day. So we see tourists of all kinds all the year round,” the manager says.

To Madurai

Time to say good bye to Rameshwaram arrives. Joseph is ready as usual, as punctual as ever. It’s a beautiful sunny day with a moderate temperature. As the car enters into the mainland, the temperature starts to rise mainly because of the receding cooling effect of the sea. Ramanathapuram, a major city on the way about 50 km from Rameshwaram, is celebrating some important event.

“Oh! Today is 23rd January,” Godadhar exclaims. “Look at the images of Netaji Subhash Bose. They’re celebrating his birth anniversary.”

“Very surprising,” Dwijobar says, “Netaji is so popular here.”

“There is an interesting site to see in this city,” Joseph says. “Do you like to go?”

“I guess it’s the Ramanathapuram Palace,” Godadhar says. “It’s probably the only site to see here.”

“Yes, the descendants of the Sethupathy kings still live in the Palace.”

Nobody shows much interest. Joseph proposes another site.

“There’s a famous temple not too far from here. The Nababashanam temple in Devipattinam is only 15 km north of this city. It’s a beautiful coastal village where many tourists come throughout the year.”

Nababashanam temple is also known as Thilakeshwara temple. This temple is dedicated to Lord Shiva and Parvati popularly known as Thilakeshwara and Soundaryanaki.

“Oh yes,” Kamalika suddenly recollects, “I have read about this temple. Devipattinam must be Devipur. There’s a beautiful image of Durga with eight hands each armed with a weapon.”

While on exile, Rama worshipped the Navagraha (nine planets) here - before embarking on his mission to Lanka - in order to receive their grace for rescuing Sita. He installed nine symbolic stones representing the nine planets. These stones can still be seen partially submerged in water and are worshipped by devotees.

“Your prayer in this temple will be granted, that’s what the devotees say.” Joseph tries to arouse interest.

Dwijobar is quick to declare his opinion.

“We have visited many temples and all my prayers have been submitted. No more.”

“You should go on submitting prayers like playing lottery. Some day will be your day.” Godadhar quips with a chuckle.

Shubhra has fallen asleep. Kamalika usually goes ahead first and incites others to follow suit; but she too doesn’t show much enthusiasm. The car moves on.

Madurai is shining bright under the midday sun. A blast of hot air welcomes the guests, but the scenery of the hotel charms the eye with a splash of soothing green. For the best hotel in the city of Madurai, it may be expected that the rooms and facilities will match its fame and reputation. Godadhar looks at the face of Dwijobar. It’s a face full of suspicion and mistrust. It hasn’t brightened up with the brightness of Madurai or the charm of the hotel.

“Cheer up, Dwijo,” Godadhar tries to encourage, “I don’t think you will have problems with this hotel.”

“You know, Godai,” Dwijobar says, “I have discovered a law that may be called law of likeliness. According to this law, whatever has been happening in your immediate past is likely to happen in your immediate future. It has been true for me as well as for you.”

“I hope this hotel disproves the law.”

After some rest, everyone gathers in the lobby to go for the half-day program. Dwijobar comes down with a wide smile. His law has been proved true. They had to change room because of some problem in the bathroom. But this time he is happy as they have got a luxurious room.

Pazhamudircholai Temple

According to Joseph, this temple is worth visiting. But Dwijobar is skeptical, as always. He says we shouldn't waste time visiting small, unknown temples. Godadhar says, "It's not as unknown as you think. This temple is one of the six holy abodes of Lord Murugan."

"Murugan, who is he?"

"Murugan is Kartikeya, Dwijo; he is also known as Lord Subrahmanya in South India."



Pazhamudircholai Temple

Situated on the top of a hill amidst a quiet and beautiful landscape, the temple is about 20 km North of Madurai. The scenery is so beautiful that the beauty itself is worth the trip. There is a waterfall called Noopura Ganga near by and there are many fruit trees and flowers. The temple is small but elegant, crowded with devotees. Monkeys are playing around all over the area. In spite of its smallness, this temple has the popularity to be one of the six most important temples of Lord Murugan in Tamil Nadu where there are hundreds of them. The great Tamil poet and saint Avvaiyar was a famous devotee of Lord Murugan. Once when she was tired of traveling and was resting under a fruit tree in this place, the Lord appeared before her.

Joseph says, "We have come here at the right time. There'll be *Abhishekam* (holy bath) of the God in a few minutes; you can watch it."

Kamalika and Shubhra waste no time to go in the front line to get a convenient place to sit and watch. Dwijobar and Godadhar stand in the back row. Lord Murugan is flanked by his two consorts, Sundara Valli and Devayanai, who are daughters of Lord Vishnu and are known here as Sreevalli and Devasena. The bath ceremony is a very elaborate one and took a while to complete. The procedure is long but is followed in a systematic way. It has been a wonderful experience for everyone.

On the way back, Joseph stops at two more temples. In Tamil Nadu, there are thousands of temples. The first of these two is the Thirupal Balaji's temple. It's another huge temple. Although under renovation, it's no problem to visit the temple. There's a shoe removing place, but one has to walk barefoot about 150 m on a not-so-clean road to go inside the temple. The architectural splendour and intricate sculptures of the two towering *Gopurams* hold the banner of South Indian temple tradition. The other temple with huge colourful images belongs to a private house.

Meenakshi Temple revisited

Next day's program starts with the famous Meenakshi Amman temple. This temple is the life center of the city of Madurai and an important symbol of Tamil Nadu. Industries and corporations flourish and fade, but Meenakshi temple remains to be the permanent landmark of this city. Godadhar and Kamalika have seen this temple before, but this great temple is worth visiting again and again. For Dwijobar and Shubhra, it's the first time; so they're very eager for the visit.



Meenakshi Temple north tower

Lot of change is waiting to be revealed to those tourists who came here before. Cars cannot go near the entrance gate anymore. Visitors have to get off their car at a walking distance from the gate. From there a wide clean road goes straight to the main entrance gate.

"It's incredible," Godadhar speaks out, "I have been expecting the old narrow dirty road with shops on both sides crowded with scores of shoppers. Instead it's a clean wide road and nobody to disturb."

There's a well organized place in a building where one can remove shoes. So there shouldn't be any hesitation at all to move around barefoot in the whole area of the

temple complex. And also, the dress restriction has been lifted from this temple a few years ago.

“Finally,” Dwijobar says, “We’re visiting a modernized temple in South India.”

The temple is always crowded with visitors and devotees. Devotees stand in a long queue in order to have a vision of the deity in the sanctum sanctorum. The queue is very long, but the devotees wait patiently and joyously showing no annoyance on their face. Devotion to the Goddess Meenakshi is overwhelming; it’s a fine obsession.



Inside Meenakshi Temple complex (Golden Lotus Pond)

There are a few legends about the origin of this temple. According to the most popular one, it was Indra who first installed a shrine for *Shivalingam* at this spot. After committing a despicable sin in the *Ashram* of sage *Gautama*, Indra was desperately moving from place to place in order to expiate his sin. He came to this place – a forest then – and got peace of mind and some relief from the suffering he was going through. A member of his retinue discovered a *Shivalingam* in the forest and believed that it was the source of peace and relief for Indra. Being convinced, Indra built a shrine at the spot where the *Lingam* was found and worshipped. People still believe the *Shivalingam* in the Meenakshi temple is the same one installed by Indra.

Indra’s shrine remained hidden inside the forest until a merchant named Dhananjaya came there looking for a shelter and found it. He took refuge in the shrine for the night and in the morning discovered to his surprise fresh flowers on the *Lingam*, indicating that someone had worshipped the *Lingam* during the night. Believing it to be a miracle, he reported it to the Pandya king Kulashekhar. The king built a temple and a city grew around it. One of his successors, Malayadhwaja Pandya, worshipped Lord Shiva praying for a child. Being pleased, Shiva fulfilled his wish and a child was born out of the

ritual fire. It was a beautiful girl with three nipples and fish-like eyes. She was named Meenakshi (one having fish-like eyes). The worried king was appeased by the Lord assuring that the third nipple would vanish when she would meet her future husband. This girl was raised as a prince and became a successful warrior. On her father's demise, she ascended the throne and set out on a victory march. When she arrived in mount Kailash and encountered Kailashanatha (Shiva), her third nipple disappeared. Thus she met her husband and later got married. Lord Shiva ruled Madurai in the name of Sundareshwara for sometime and then the divine couple left for heaven. Meenakshi is the reincarnation of Parvati, sister of Lord Vishnu. Inside the temple in *Ashta shakti mandapam*, there are several sculptures depicting Lord Vishnu giving away the bride (Parvati) to the groom (Shiva).

It's easy to get lost inside the complex and difficult to find the desired way out without help. A guide is advisable, but, as Godadhar remarks, the authority may think of installing direction sign boards at all important points. It's a long walk going around all the shrines and *mandapams*; but walking inside the temple feels so delightful despite the dense crowd. After coming out of the temple they fall in the grip of the heat of Madurai. The sun seems to be too generous in showering intense heat and brightness. It suddenly feels too hot to walk up to the shoe place, especially after walking for over an hour. Kamalika is looking for a green coconut stall as everyone is extremely thirsty. The wide clean road has no shops in the vicinity. The old traditional dirty road with shops – where everything was available on the wayside - is now flushing in the mind ridiculing the poor heat-stricken travelers who wanted the modernization so earnestly. Are they missing something - the sellers of fruits, flowers, clothes, garments and above all green coconuts? The old narrow street, crowded with busy shoppers, used to be a source of *joie de vivre* in Madurai. A gentleman comes forward suggesting he can help them find a cold drink stall as well as other big stores if they would like to shop. Dwijobar – who has lost his temper being too long in the sun – flares up screaming, “No, no, don't listen to him. They are all fraud. I don't trust anybody. They will mix something in the drink and rob you”

It takes a while to calm him and take him to the nearest coconut stall and convince him that its water couldn't have been adulterated. After some shopping, lunch in a comfortable restaurant brings about a welcome break. Everyone is reenergized and ready for the next part of the day's program.

Thirupparamkunram Murugan Temple

This is the most famous Murugan temple in Madurai and very popular among the Hindus. Carved out of a hill and situated at a distance of 8 km south of Madurai, this temple is the fourth principal abode of Lord Murugan. The beauty of the temple amidst the mystic charm of the hill is so great that it has been mentioned in various Tamil texts as the “Southern Himalayas” where the gods assemble. Many Tamil poets and saints have written poems and songs on Lord Murugan and the glory of this shrine. The marriage of Lord Subrahmanya (Murugan) with Devayanai was held in this temple. One of the most visited pilgrimage center in South India, this temple is revered by the Tamil people for many centuries as an auspicious place to solemnize their marriage.



Murugan Temple

Standing across the road in front of the temple, Godadhar looks at its huge entrance gate with awe. The *Gopuram* is another great tower with marvelous sculptures. A wonderful piece of human creation is standing with pride and glory indifferent to what's going around in the rest of the world. Hundreds of stores with thousands of shoppers, visitors, devotees, cars and other transports, all have congested the area, not to mention the dirt and litters that one normally see around most temples in India. It's incredible that the beautiful and the not-so-beautiful are coexisting for centuries with practically no intervention for improvement. That's India – godly gorgeousness in ungodly surroundings.

“Move on Godai,” Dwijobar gives a sudden push to Godadhar. “You look like petrified with deep thoughts.”

One good point here is that there's no dress restriction. But one has to remove shoes before entering and that one has to cross the road in front of the temple barefoot. Godadhar hesitates.

“Look, Godai,” Dwijobar points out, “a group of foreign visitors, apparently Europeans, crossing the dusty road barefoot and entering into the temple. They have no problem.”

But that's not a concern for Godadhar at all. He makes an effort to know what has attracted them to such a place. The group has come from France. When asked, one of them gives a quick reply in French, “*Demandez-en à vous-même. Monsieur.*” (Ask yourself, Sir). They seem to be in great rush and vanish into the temple in no time. Both Godadhar and Dwijobar stand speechless.

At the entrance of the temple, there are 48 pillars with artistic carvings. Although it's a temple of Lord Subrahmanya (Murugan), it houses many other deities. There are

numerous *Mandapams* situated at different levels of this rock-cut temple. Murugan is depicted in sitting posture with Devayanai. To the right of Devayanai is Narada and above these images are Ganapathy, Brahma, Indra, Surya and Chandra. One interesting feature of this temple is the shrine of Lord Vishnu facing that of Lord Shiva. Vishnu is flanked by his consorts, Sridevi and Bhudevi, and Shiva is represented by a *Lingam*. This is an attempt to attract both Shaivaites (devotees of Shiva) and Vaishnavites (devotees of Vishnu). Apart from these main deities, there're many more statues of other deities and magnificent works of art all over. Surprisingly enough, there's a shrine of Kashi Vishwanatha at the top of the hill.

Shubhra and Kamalika look happy as never before. A beatific smile spreads over their bright faces as they come out of the temple having experienced the rarest vision they ever desired in life.

"Isn't Devayanai daughter of Indra?" Shubhra asks.

"Actually," Kamalika says, "Lord Vishnu had two daughters, Amrita Valli and Sundara Valli. Amrita Valli was brought up by Indra in his abode Mount Meru where his elephant Airavat took care of her. So she was named Devayanai, *yanai* means elephant in Tamil."

"Now," Joseph proposes, "there's enough time to see one more temple. Thiru Perumal temple is most famous among all Perumal temples of Madurai."

"What's Perumal?" Dwijobar asks.

"Lord Vishnu."

"I must visit this temple."

But others don't show much interest; they're too tired to do more temple visiting. Shubhra and Kamalika want to save some energy for shopping in Madurai. Dwijobar has to see the Perumal temple. He is given 15 minutes for his visit while others decide to rest in the car. But Dwijobar comes back after one hour.

"You guys, you have really missed something great. There are many extraordinary sculptures that you have to see to believe."

He doesn't want to confess he lost his way inside the temple. Joseph supports Dwijobar saying the sculptures are really exceptional, a must see. This is the end of the tour program. Kamalika and Shubhra are in high glee after plentiful shopping to their satisfaction in a glamorous shopping center of Madurai.

Next day morning is the moment of bidding goodbye to Madurai. The airport is about 12 km from the hotel. Joseph helps with the luggage. Godadhar and Dwijobar both shake hands with Joseph saying they have never got a chauffeur like him. Joseph says with teary eyes,

"It has been my privilege, Sirs, to serve you. You have been very nice and kind to me. It's my regular duty to say goodbye to the tourists at the end of the program. But today is an exception and you're exceptional. I'm going back with joyful memories."

Joseph bows to the ladies and proceeds to his car.


দাড়ির আমি দাড়ির তুমি

বেণু নন্দী



আমার স্বামী স্বর্গীয় বিশ্বনাথ নন্দীর collection গুলো নাড়াচাড়া করতে করতে হঠাৎ একটা ছোট কাগজের টুকরো আমার দৃষ্টি আকর্ষণ করে। পড়ে বেশ মজাও লাগলো - ঐ কাগজের টুকরোটাই আজ আমি শারদীয়া লিপিকার সম্পাদকের হাতে তুলে দিচ্ছি। আপনারাও একটু হাসুন পড়ে।

All about beards



Last year, Albania lifted its ban on beards; foreigners who visit no longer have to undergo a state shave for three leks (60 cents). Some history on the controversial fashion:

- Some reasons for growing a beard: nature intended it; it avoids skin problems; women like it.
- For not growing a beard: it is dirty; it can be a sign of conceit or eccentricity; women hate it.
- The average Caucasian sprouts eight metres of beard during his lifetime.
- Norwegian American Hans Langseth is credited with the record, a 5.33-metre beard.
- The longest deadly beard may have been the 2.7-metre growth of Hans Steinger. In 1567, the Austrian burgo-meister tripped over it, fell downstairs and died.
- The all-round deadliest beard may have been worn by Louis VII of France in the 12th century. By one account, when he shaved it off his wife Eleanor thought he looked ridiculous and divorced him, marrying England's Henry II. The subsequent centuries of conflict with England cost the French three million dead.
- In classical times, civilized Romans were clean-shaven, barbarians were bearded.
- An 11th-century bishop denied communion to beard wearers. In the 16th

century, French priests were forbidden to wear beards, but some were able to retain their hairiness because the verb *porter* means both "to wear" and "to carry;" they had servants walk beside them, carrying their beards.

- In Britain, 16th-century Puritans were disgusted by the vanity of beard-wearers. A period of general clean-shavenness began at the end of the 17th century and lasted until the Crimean War.
- In the 1920s, loyal Irishmen wore beards whether or not they were IRA members, to make it harder for the police to identify people. In Egypt, after the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat, young men shaved their beards to avoid looking like Islamic fundamentalists and having painful interviews with the police.
- Voltaire wrote that "ideas are like beards — women and children never have them." But the Roman historian Ammianus wrote that "a beard creates lice, not brains."
- Shaving costs a man as much as 60 hours a year. A five-year-old George Bernard Shaw reportedly asked his father why he shaved. The elder Shaw thought for a full minute and then threw his razor out the window, saying, "Why the hell do I?"

Sources: News services, *The Guinness Book of Beards and Moustaches*.

পা পিছলে আলুর দম

আদিত্য পদ চক্রবর্তী



আই কম, বাই কম, তাড়াতুড়ি

যত্ন মাষ্টার শ্বশুরবাড়ি

রেন কম ঝামাঝম

পা পিছলে আলুর দম।।

আপনারা অনেকেই জানেন এই ছড়া - নাকি কবিতাই বলব! ছোটবেলা থেকেই শুনে আসছি আই কম, বাই কম ইত্যাদি ইত্যাদি। সত্যি বলতে কি এই একটি মাত্র কবিতাই আমার প্রায় আগাগোড়া কণ্ঠস্থ। ছোটবেলাতে বড়রা কবিতা শোনাতে বললেই আমি গড়গড় করে এটি শোনাতাম এবং বেশ মনে পড়ে কেউ শুনতে না চাইলে বেশ দুঃখই হত। আর চারজন বাঙালী একত্র হলেই শুরু হয় তাবড় তাবড় কথার আলোচনা। রবীন্দ্রনাথ, শরৎবাবু, প্রফুল্ল চাকী থেকে শুরু করে ঘনাদা, গোষ্ঠ পাল কেউই বাদ যান না। গানের আসর, কবিতার আবৃত্তি, বাদ্যযন্ত্র - কিছুই বাদ যায়না। মানে যার যা কেরামতি সবই প্রকাশ পায় একে একে। আমার সময় যখন আসে, কাষ্ঠহাসি দিয়ে বলতে হয় - না ভাই, আমার কোন এলেমই নেই - আমি কেবল রেডিও এবং দূরদর্শন যন্ত্রই চালাতে পারি - তার বেশী কিছু নয়। বন্ধুবান্ধবরা হেঁহে করে উঠে - তা কি করে হয় - গুণবিহীন বাঙালী যে কখনই দেখা যায়না! সত্যি বলতো ভাই, তুমি কি কিছুই জাননা! অগত্যা আমাকে শুরু করতে হয় - আই কম বাই কম তাড়াতুড়ি...।

আমি যে এছাড়া আর কোন কবিতাই জানিনা! কিন্তু একটা জিনিষ আমি লক্ষ্য করেছি যে যখনই আমি আমার একমাত্র নিধি আই কম বাই কম তাড়াতুড়ি শুরু করি , গুণীজনেরা কোরাস সঙ্গীতের মতই ঠোঁট নেড়ে বিড় বিড় করে আমাকে সঙ্গ দেন। এতই যখন জনপ্রিয় এই ছড়া অথবা কবিতা, তখন তাকে কি আমি মহাকাব্যের মর্যাদা দিতে পারিনা? গণতান্ত্রিক সমাজে

নিশ্চয়ই তা করার অধিকার আমার আছে। উপরন্তু আমি হলফ করে বলতে পারি আমাদের বঙ্গসমাজে খুব কম জ্ঞানীগুণী পাবেন যাঁরা এই মহাকাব্য জানেন না বা শোনেননি। এতদূর যখন এসেছে, তাহলে না হয় ধরেই নিলাম এটি একটি মহাকাব্য। আপনারা ভাবছেন মীমাংসা যখন হয়েই গেল তো ল্যাটা চুকে গেল - বাঁচা গেল! এর পর আর কি থাকতে পারে? এই ভুলটা করবেন না কিন্তু!

আমরা বাঙালী, সব কিছুকেই তলিয়ে দেখা আমাদের ধর্ম, কস্ম এবং জীবন। তার জন্য আমরা খুব গর্বিত এবং যারা তা করেনা তাদের প্রতি একটু কি বলে ইয়ে মানে অনুকম্পা বোধ করি। অতএব ‘আই কম বাই কম’ যখন মহাকাব্য বলেই আমরা ধরে নিচ্ছি - তাহলে এর মূল চরিত্র কে? রামায়ণে রাম, মহাভারতে ভীম (নাকি অর্জুন?), আই কম বাই কমে কে? বলতে পারলেন না তো? এই তত্ত্বের মীমাংসা করার জন্যই তো আমার এই প্রবন্ধ।

আপনারা অনেকেই হয়তো মুখ বেঁকিয়ে আমাকে বলবেন এ আর এমন কি কঠিন ব্যাপার। এই মহাকাব্যের দ্বিতীয় লাইনেই তো লেখা রয়েছে যদু মাষ্টার, - তিনিই তো এই কাব্যের প্রধান চরিত্র। তাই তো হয়ে এসেছে বরাবর। হয়তো তাই, হয়তো নয়। পুরো ব্যাপারটার তদন্ত না করে কি করে বলি বলুন? আমি অভিধান, নোটবই ঘেঁটেছি, প্যাটন কাকুকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছি কিন্তু কোন জবাব পাইনি।

তবে কিনা উপরোক্ত ব্যাপারের মীমাংসা হওয়ার আগেও একটা খটকা থেকে যাচ্ছে। কিন্তু - পরন্তু - তথাপি - যদাপি জাতীয় ব্যাপার আর কি। যদু মাষ্টার যদি মাষ্টারমশাই হন তাহলে তাঁর তো স্কুল অর্থাৎ বিদ্যালয়ে যাওয়াই উচিত তাড়াতাড়ি। শ্বশুরবাড়ি যাবেন কেন?- এবং শ্বশুরবাড়ি তো সাধারণতঃ লোকে সেজেগুজে ধীরেসুস্থে যায় বলেই জানি। অবশ্য কাবুলীওয়ালারহমৎ খাঁ শ্বশুরবাড়ি বলতে জেলখানাই বোঝাতে চেয়েছিল মিনিকে। জেলখানা হলে অবশ্য পুলিশের গুঁতোয় বেশ তাড়াতাড়িই যেতে হবে। তা আর বলতে।

শ্বশুরবাড়ি যদি জেলখানাই হয় - তাহলে বুঝতে পারছেন তো - যদু মাষ্টারকে মহাকাব্যের মূল চরিত্রে ফেলতে আমার একটু আবার কিন্তু কিন্তু লাগছে। সুতরাং যত সোজা মনে হয়েছিল ব্যাপারটা তা ঠিক নয়। ‘যদু মাষ্টার শ্বশুরবাড়ি’ - বেশ ঘোরালো হয়ে উঠছে সব কিছু।

এটা কি হল? - রম্য রচনা লিখতে গিয়ে ধারাবাহিক ডিটেকটিভ গল্পে জড়িয়ে পড়লাম নাকি আমি? এর থেকে উদ্ধার পাই কেমন করে? এতো খুব একটা সুবিধার ব্যাপার লাগছে না! লেখা তো যে ভাবেই হোক শেষ করতে হবে।

মনে হচ্ছে একটা আলোর ইঙ্গিত যেন পেয়েছি গোপাল ভাঁড়ের এক গল্পের মধ্যে। গভীর রাত - গোপালের ঘুম ভেঙে গেল এবং জানতে ইচ্ছে করল আকাশে ভোরের কোন সম্ভাবনা দেখা যাচ্ছে কিনা। গিন্ণীকে ঠালা দিয়ে বলল - যাও না দেখে এস ভোর হল কিনা। গিন্ণী বাইরে এসে অন্ধকারে কিছু ঠাওর করতে পারল না। গোপাল বলল - কেরোসিনের কুপিটা জ্বালাও তা হলেই বুঝবে ভোর হল কিনা।

যদু মাষ্টার মূল চরিত্র কিনা সে তো দেখি এই মহাকাব্যের শেষ লাইনেই আছে। প্রধান চরিত্র তো বীরের মত লড়াই করে - রামায়ণে রাম, মহাভারতে ভীম কিংবা অর্জুন। এখানে তো দেখা যাচ্ছে যদু মাষ্টার পা পিছলে আলুর দম হয়েছেন। বীরের পতন হতে পারে তাই বলে আলুর দম! কভি নহী! যদু মাষ্টার কখনই মূল চরিত্র নন - নেহাৎই ছা-পোষা মাষ্টারমশাই।

বাবুয়া

সুপর্ণা মজুমদার



দুই হাতে দুই ছোট গাড়ী, দুপদুপিয়ে যায় -
বাবুয়া বলে ডাকলে পরে এদিক ওদিক চায়।
চাঁদের আলোয় মাখন দিয়ে, হাত পা গুলো গড়া -
প্রথম দেখেই নতুন করে আবার প্রেমে পড়া।
তোমার চলা ছুটে চলা- আমার বসে থাকা;
আমার ওড়া শ্রান্ত এখন, তোমার নবীন পাখা।
তোমার মুখর কলগীতি - কোন অসীমের দান -
ফিরিয়ে আনে আমার প্রাণে হারিয়ে যাওয়া গান ॥
ধূসর জীবন অন্তহীন -আঁধার ছিল ঘিরে-
তোমার সোনার কাঠির ছোঁয়ায় আলোয় এলো ফিরে।

প্রবাসে পুজোর ঘন্টা
ডঃ ময়ূরিকা চক্রবর্তী



পুজো মানে নীল আকাশে
সাদা মেঘের ভেলা।
পুজো মানে ছুটির ঘন্টা
সারাদিন খেলা।
পুজো মানে নতুন জামা
ঠাকুর দেখার ধুম।
পুজো মানে আড্ডা গল্প
নেই কোঁ চোখে ঘুম।
কষ্টে শিষ্টে কাটে বছর,
আসবে পুজো কবে?
আসবে পুজো, ভাসবে সবাই
আনন্দ উৎসবে।
এমন কত পুজোর স্থানে।
ভিড় করে আজ মনে।

আজও যেন পূজোর মায়া
পিছন পানে টানে।
সেই কাশবন, শিউলি ফুল।
হয়ত অনেক দূরে।
কিন্তু আজও আকুল করে
শারদীয়ার সুর।
দূর যেন আর দূর নয় আজ
মায়ের আরাধনায়।
পূজোর আমোদ, পূজোর মজা
দূরে থেকেও হয়।
ওই যে শুনি পূজোর ঘন্টা
বাজায় প্রবাসী।
সবাই মাতে পূজোর তালে,
মায়ের মুখেও হাসি।

প্রথম তুষার

অমর কুমার



শীতল, হিমশীতল ছিল সেই বিজন রাত
নিদারুণ অভিশপ্ত ছিল কি সেদিনের প্রভাত
আরটিকের বুকে উঠেছিল ভীষণ রণ-তুফান
অস্থির হাওয়া দিক বিদিক, উন্মাদ শন্ শন্
উখাল তরঙ্গে অশান্ত অতলান্তিক মহাসাগর
আশংকায় থর্ থর্ এই অটোয়া শহর ।

আকাশ, মেঘলা আকাশে ছিল না কোন তারা
অসীম সাহসী, বাহিরে কেউ ছিল না রাত্রি-হারা
জীর্ণ মেপেল, শীর্ণ পাইনের বুক দুর্ন দুর্ন -
অশুভ বারতা, হৃদকম্পন হয়েছিল তাই শুরু
'জল, ছিল না জল' সেদিন রিডোর ক্যানালে
সময়ের গতি বাঁধা ছিল শুধু পার্লামেন্টের হিলে ।

স্বপ্ন, দুঃস্বপনের রজনী হ'ল গত -
উষার নতুন আলো বিস্ময়ে অভিভূত
শ্যামলতা মুছে গেছে, নেই পাখীদের কলরব
স্তম্ভিত জনমানুষ, নব আনন্দ চেতনায় নীরব
শুচি শুভ্র বসনে সেজেছেন অপরাধী প্রকৃতি
চরাচর জুড়ে বিরাজে অদ্ভুত প্রগাঢ় প্রশান্তি ।

দীর্ঘ, অতি দীর্ঘ ছিল ডিসেম্বরের সেই রাত
অটোয়ার বুকে দেখেছিলাম প্রথম তুষারপাত ॥

Time

Dr. Jharna Chatterjee



Time is like a centipede.
Its legs are million 'nows'.
Moments later, 'nows' grow old.
Turn to 'thens'- somehow.
Sometimes it can run as well:
"Time is running out."
Sometimes it can even fly,
When friends have fun about.
If time is hard, it's heavy too.
It can be good or bad.
It also has the gift, you know,
To be happy ☺ or so sad ☹.
Time can grow like a rubber band.
For friends "long time no see".
Time gets shorter every day,
When you're a busy bee.
If you're out of luck and then
In wrong time and place,
You could be in big trouble,
Or end up losing face.
Thanks to Einstein we all now know
Time is relative;
Close or distant who cares?
If they all behave.

তুমিই আকাশ

অমর কুমার



আকাশ জুড়ে ঘনায় যখন অপরাহিতা নীল
সোনালি স্বপনে বিচরণ করো তুমি,
নীল মুছে যায়, থাকে স্বচ্ছ সুন্দর নীলাভ
স্মৃতির জোনাকি হয়ে জ্বলো নেভো তুমি ।

আকাশ ভরে ছড়ায় যখন অমলকান্তি রোদ
অস্থির ভাবনায় ভাসমান থাকো তুমি,
রোদ ঢেকে দেয় ক্লান্ত দিনের অপরাহু বেলা
চেতনার গভীরে দেখি সেই তুমি ।

আকাশ সেজে থাকে যখন নিশুত রাতে তারার রূপাঞ্জলি
প্রেমের সাগরে বিলীন হয়ে যাও তুমি
তারা ঢেকে দেয় নতুন দিনের উষার নরম আলো
ভালবাসার নদী হয়ে বয়ে যাও তুমি ।

আকাশ ছেয়ে যায় যখন সজল কালো গুরুগম্ভীর মেঘ
কল্পনার রাজ্যে বিরাজমান একমাত্র তুমি,
মেঘ ঢেলে দেয় শ্রাবণ সন্ধ্যায় বৃষ্টি অঝোর ধারা
কবিতার ছন্দে লালিত্যে হারিয়ে যাও তুমি ॥

Hidden Treasures

Tanima Majumdar



Hidden Treasures

Tanima Majumdar
chobhi.blogspot.com



Fishermen of Puri

Yogadhish Das



Last year I spent a week at a beach in Puri - a city on the east coast of India. Every morning I watched these intrepid fishermen set out to sea. It was inspiring to see them fight the waves, armed only with their humble little wooden boats, prayers to Lord Jagannath and a lot of courage.









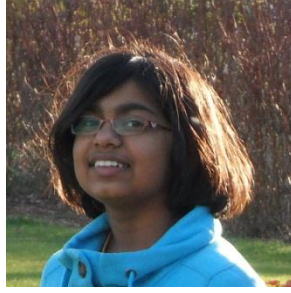
The Autumn Forest

Tanima Majumdar



আমার ক্লাস (Gr 6) নিয়ে কিছু কথা

ঐশী ঘোষ



বাংলা স্কুলে শর্মিলা মাসি আমাদের লিপিকার জন্য লিখতে বলল। আর কিছু ভাবতে না পেরে আমার স্কুল (Berrigan Elementary School) নিয়েই লিখছি। আমি এখন Gr-6-এ পড়ি। স্কুলে এ বছর অনেক জিনিস খুব অন্য রকম। কারণ আমাদের এবার অনেক বেশী দায়িত্ব রয়েছে আর বাড়ির কাজ ও বেড়ে গেছে। আমরা কেউ bus monitor, কেউ lunch monitor, আবার কেউ বা sign holder হয়েছি। আমি Gr-3-র lunch monitor আর kindergarten-এর bus monitor হয়েছি।

আমাদের class UNICEF এর fundraising ambassador হয়েছে। এর জন্য আমরা প্রায় পঞ্চাশটা mural paint করেছি। Murals গুলোতে আমরা দেখিয়েছি UNICEF-এ দেওয়া donation কিভাবে developing এবং যুদ্ধরত country র উন্নতিতে সাহায্য করে। আমি বানিয়েছি school-in-a-box mural। এই box-এ থাকে একটা বড় tent, পেন, পেনসিল, খাতা, বোর্ড আরও অনেক স্কুলের জিনিষপত্র।

আমরা পুরো স্কুলের জন্য একটা UNICEF assembly করব। এখানে আমরা একটা video দেখাবো। এর নাম “I was here”, এই গানটা singer Beyoncé Knowles গেয়েছে এ বছর world humanitarian day-তে। এই performance করে সে যা টাকা পেয়েছিল সবই UNICEF কে donate করে। আশাকরি এই videoটা student-দের খুব encourage করবে এবং আমরা অনেক fund raise করতে পারব। আমার ভাবতে ভাল লাগছে যে আমরা আফ্রিকা, সিরিয়া, আফগানিস্তান এবং আরও অনেক দেশে আমাদের অসহায় বন্ধুদের জন্য কিছু করতে পারছি।



গরমের ছুটিতে টরন্টো

ঋত ঘোষ



আমি এই গরমের ছুটিতে টরন্টো গেছিলাম। আমি বাবা, মা আর দিদির সঙ্গে গেছিলাম। আমাদের যেতে পাঁচ ঘন্টা লেগেছিল। পথে আমি African Lion Safari গেছিলাম। এখানে এসে মনে হচ্ছিল আমি যেন খাঁচাবন্দী আর জন্তুরা আমাদের দেখছে।

বেবুন, জিরাফ, গন্ডার, সিংহ, হরিণ, হাঁস, রাজহাঁস আরও কত animals যে দেখলাম! হঠাৎ একটা বেবুন আমাদের গাড়ির উপর এসে বসল। ভয় পাইনি কারণ গাড়ির জানলা বন্ধ ছিল। ট্রাকে বসে অন্য বেবুনটা খুব ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছিল। আমরা এখানে ferry আর train ride নিয়েছিলাম।

আমরা Westin Harbour Castle-এ ছিলাম। আমি দিদির সাথে pool-এ খুব swim করেছি আর খুব মজা করেছি। পরের দিন আমরা Central Island গেছিলাম। এখানে অনেক rides নিয়েছিলাম। রাতে Gerrard India Bazar-এ খাবার খেয়েছিলাম। আমাদের টরন্টো trip খুব ভালো

হয়েছিল। আমরা অনেক ছবি তুলেছি। তোমাদের জন্য কয়েকটা ছবি দিলাম।



