

SURABHI

Journal of Arts and Literature

The Bi-annual Journal of Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

**Vol.6 No.1
(June 2016)**



Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology

Department of Space

Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

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Vol. 6 No. 1

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From the Editor's Desk

P. Radhakrishnan

Hello, everybody! Nice to be with you once again with the usual fare comprising memoirs, stories, poems, paintings... SURABHI has been able to sustain itself, thanks to the unstinted support from the ISRO/DOS fraternity.

We have every reason to rejoice. In the first place, April 4, 2016 brought the heartwarming news that our relatively young IIST has been elevated to the 8th position in the ranking system devised by the National Institutional Ranking Framework set up the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India.

This evaluation was based on a wide set of parameters such as excellence in teaching, quantity and quality of research, laboratory and library resources, faculty-to-student ratio, interface with other institutions and the industry, gender equity, and placements.

Doubtless, IIST will climb, in due course, the remaining 7 rungs to the top.

As only expected, ISRO has been performing exceedingly well in its space missions. In April 2016, the seventh satellite of the IRNSS (Indian Regional Navigation satellite System) was put in place thereby completing the full complement of the cluster in orbit. Then, in May, 2016, there was the successful flight test of RLV-TD (Reusable Launch Vehicle – Technology Demonstrator).

Congratulations to all for doing India proud!

SURABHI has no pretensions to contributing to the mainstream activities. It is merely doing its mite in fostering the creative abilities, outside the scientific and technical realms, among those in ISRO/DOS. Of course, it will always be there cheering from the wings.

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The Millennium Letter

Stuttgart University, Germany
31st December 1999, 21:30-
1st January 2000, 00:30 hrs

My dear Cheeni and Boney,

It was about three hours ago that I talked with you on the phone. Boney said they were watching the Titanic, coming on some channel. Cheeni, perhaps you were also watching the same great movie in Hyderabad. I really like it myself.

After talking with you, I shut down my PC for the day, closed my room, and left the Institute to reach my apartment. Perhaps I was the only person working there on this day. But such a thing was not unusual for me. As a scientist, it is my calling and my duty to work with devotion, and I do.

But we must enjoy life, in all its dimensions as well. That is also our calling as human beings. As I quoted in a recent letter to Amma; "What is this life is full of care; there is no time to stand and stare" (see Notes¹).

I dumped my bag in the Apartment, (the same bag!) and went down my "small walk" i.e. around the Almandring, Sports Centre and along the Nobel Strasse back to the Guest House over the bridge. It was already very dark; but by the time I was on the Nobel Strasse, I thought I should walk more, just to see how the celebrations for the New Year were going on. So I extended my journey to the "long walk" up to Vaihingen market and back. This market is very well known to Amma. I could see the crackers bursting in the sky, and I could smell the smell of Deepavali. Even now, as I write this letter at 09:30 pm, I hear the sound of new-year crackers piercing the still winter night.

At 09:30 pm on Dec. 31, 1999, I am on this side of the century. But it is already 2.00 am for you on 1st January 2000, in the new millennium. Thus, I notice that this is a unique border line from one year to another; from one century

to another and eventually from one millennium to another. And from one generation to another. When will such a moment come again?

But human beings are masters in punctuating time, which is essentially continuous and perhaps infinite in both directions. To comprehend continuity we need to discretize it. Life is an ever flowing continuity and really there is no millennium wall (To prove the continuity of the real numbers, we use in mathematics what is known as Dedekind's cut, see Notes³).

So the Shakespearian Polonius' Advice to his Son continues to be valid. And you will appreciate that Shakespeare, even at his time (but it is just recent, much after 1000 AD), said that fashions should be adopted while they are current (not after their season is over). I don't know if you ever had occasion to read this Polonius' Advice, it is the piece which contains the famous line: "Neither a borrower nor a lender be" (see Notes³).

Now, continuity requires that advice has to be passed on from generation to generation; that is the learning process, the genetic algorithm, on which I am working a lot nowadays in the course of my research project in optimization (see Notes⁴). And my advice to you both is always this; "you must do your best". We are not asking you to do the other's best, which is very unreasonable (but some parents do ask such a thing!). Doing your own best is doable, it is within your reach, and it is always a pleasure to reach it. But it requires will, concentration, and planning. Also, it is not worthwhile to do everything the best way, such a thing is indeed foolish. But in a vital thing like learning (particularly when you are

at the crucial learning phase as a student), it is very important to achieve your best. Other things will take care of themselves; they will fall into the right slots automatically.

You already know this yourself, but sometimes it is good for us to remind you of the expectations and goals you must always set for yourself. You have only one direction; to become better and better, and that can be done by doing your best; by putting the right effort at the right time. Please set aside time for socializing, relaxation and hobbies, which are also very essential.

Quality and excellence are the German mottos too, in everything they do. "German quality" is their watchword. This applies to every type of work. For example, the putzfrau, a cleaning or sweeping woman, has a quality standard, and she is proud of her work. The technician and the workman laying the roads (the famous German Roads) each of them are proud of their excellent work.

There is a caretaker in our Gastdozenten Haus, Mr Bohne (Mr Beans in English). Early in the morning, even before I get up, he would clean and clear the paths around the guest house removing the snow, which is a real physical labour. Then he would drive various types of contraptions and vehicles, to clear the garbage boxes, to spread small crushed stones in the snow paths (to make walking easy) then to keep the post in respective boxes. Then he would work on the computer and take care of the complete inventory for the guest house, he would handle the centralized telephone billing for all of us, take care of the washing machines, electric complaints, and so many other things. I admire this man, even though he is a harsh looking, rough workman type

person; he is so efficient; a proud jack-of-all-trades.

I will be returning by the end of February and naturally I will meet Cheeni first at Delhi before going to Trivandrum. So it will be great fun; because I missed you during your Christmas vacation.

I have already purchased several things for all of us. Today I took the first two pictures with the new Canon camera I purchased last week. This weekend, I will be going to Schwäbisch Hall (may be about 45 minutes by Train), the historical small town where 20 years ago I stayed two months to learn German at a Goethe Institute (see Notes⁵). Amma's very first letters to me were also to this place.

On 10th January, there is a ballet show at Ludwigsburg, a place on the other side of Stuttgart. It is the famous Schwanensee, that is, Swan Lake (see Notes⁶). I booked a ticket for the show. I also finished today the reading of the 5th and final volume of the book series on the art pieces on display at the State Arts Gallery here.

Today I got a big 1500 page catalogue of spring/summer 2000 by Quelle, covering almost everything we need. I am going to select some items from this book. I can order through a local shop at Vaihingen and the items will be ready for delivery in 24 hours.

Recently I met Prof. Algermissen, my academic mentor and the former Director of the Institute where I am working (see Notes⁷). He had invited me to his house in the Stuttgart suburb Waldenbuch. He has become somewhat old, but the same gentle and loving person. His wife had a breast cancer operation 5 years ago, her health is not excellent. Their

daughter Marion is working in Köln as graphic Designer (is it something that Boney talks about?), a new profession it looks. Son Gerhard is an Aerodynamics engineer. He will be working in Berlin. They are living in the same house that Amma and I went to 20 years ago.

Two weeks ago I saw a play in the university: "Harold and Maude" (see Notes⁸). It is a very interesting play both theatrically and spiritually. It is a stage adaptation of the famous movie produced by Colin Higgins. The very popular song: "If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out" by Cat Stevens, is from this movie/play.

Wait !!! It just turned 12.00 O'clock on the night of 31st December, lot of crackers, rockets and lights going up right at this moment; some spiraling around; some making multi-coloured floral patterns, and some on the ground like our flower pots. I can see them all from the big full-length window of my apartment as I write to you this letter. It is a big spectacle in the sky. The German fireworks technology is all around with sounds and colours and patterns heralding the new century and the new millennium. The unique moment the world is awaiting for quite some time is right here and now, being celebrated all around.

So this is my first letter in the New Year. Then as I write you this letter, my dinner is also spread by the table, which I am going to eat, or actually eating right now. After talking with you in the evening, (our evening was already night for you when you were watching the great Titanic), I went for a walk and, then bath etc. Started writing the millennium letter to you, and dinner became delayed, and I took a

little time off at 11.15 pm to cook it. So, I can say that food of the last year is eaten in the next year; of last century in the next, of the last millennium in the next millennium. I am a bit hungry since I only had breakfast, but no lunch yesterday (working in the office and the canteen, Mensa, is closed for holidays). I am sipping the German beer now, you can be sure.

So good bye, for the present.

Affectionately yours

Nanna

Notes

1: Poem "Leisure" by William Henry Davies;
[included in our High School English Text]

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.
No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.
No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.
No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.
No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.
No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.
A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

2: Dedekind Cut

Dedekind Cut is a partition of the rational numbers into two nonempty sets A and B, such that all elements of A are less than all elements of B, and A contains no greatest element. Dedekind cuts are one method of construction of the real numbers.

The first construction of the Real numbers from the Rationals is due to the German

mathematician Richard Dedekind (1831 - 1916). He developed the idea first in 1858 though he did not publish it until 1872 in his pamphlet "Continuity and Irrational Numbers" (See Authorized Translation by Prof. W W Beman, The Open Court Publishing Company, Chicago, London, Third Printing, 1924)

3: Polonius' Advice to his Son.

2016 commemorates 400 years since the death of William Shakespeare and this special anniversary year is a truly unique opportunity to pay our tributes to this great genius. In Act 1, Scene 3 of Hamlet, Laertes (Prince Hamlet) is about to embark for France to attend the university. His father Polonius gives him the following famous advice:

"Give thy thoughts no tongue,
Nor any unproportion'd thought his act.
Be thou familiar, but by no means vulgar.
Those friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatch'd, unfledged comrade.
Beware
Of entrance to a quarrel; but being in,
Bear't that the opposed may beware of thee.
Give every man thy ear, but few thy voice;
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.
Costly thy habit as thy purse can buy,
But not express'd in fancy; rich, not gaudy;
For the apparel oft proclaims the man,
And they in France of the best rank and station
Are of a most select and generous, chief in that.
Neither a borrower nor a lender be;

For loan oft loses both itself and friend,
And borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry.
This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man."

4: Genetic Algorithm

Genetic Algorithms were invented to mimic some of the processes observed in natural evolution. Genetic Algorithm (GA) is an adaptive, heuristic search algorithm based on the evolutionary ideas of natural selection and genetics. As such GA represents an intelligent exploitation of random search to solve optimization problems. The father of the original Genetic Algorithm was John Henry Holland (February 2, 1929 – August 9, 2015). In 1975, he wrote the ground-breaking book on genetic algorithms, "Adaptation in Natural and Artificial Systems". He also developed Holland's schema theorem.

5: Schwäbisch Hall

Schwäbisch Hall is a town in the German state of Baden-Württemberg. The town is located in the valley of the Kocher river. It was a Free Imperial City for five centuries until it was annexed by Württemberg in 1802. Due to the location of Goethe-Institut, Schwäbisch Hall attracts up to 2,000 students from countries around the world every year to study the German language. As a student in this Goethe-Institut, I used to live in a room in a local German household, and my Polish friend Prof. Yan Laboda used to live in another room in the same German house; it is one of the techniques used by the Institut to make us learn German fast.

6: Schwanensee/Swan Lake

Swan Lake is a ballet composed by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky in 1875–76. The première

of *Swan Lake* took place on Friday, 4 March 1877, at Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow. On 10th Jan 2000, the Swan Lake Ballet was performed at *Ludwigsburg* about 12 kilometers north of Stuttgart city centre, near the river Neckar. This famous ballet is regularly performed there, year after year. For example on 05 January 2016, there is a performance, tickets for which are fully sold out several days before the event.

7: Prof Johannes Algermissen

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Johannes Hermann Algermissen, 16.06.1928 – 20.04.2007, was a long-term colleague of Prof. Fran Bosnjakovic (1902-1993), who founded the Institute of Aerospace Thermodynamics at University of Stuttgart. Prof. Algermissen was a kind and soft-spoken man, who nurtured my Post Doctoral Research work in Germany in 1979-80, during which period my wife and I used to visit his family several times at his *Waldenbuch* Residence; and his children Marion and Gerhard used to come to our *Musberg* apartment. We both again visited him at *Waldenbuch* in 2004, during his retired life. Shortly after Prof. Algermissen's death in 2007, his son Gerhard, who used to visit us several times as a boy, also died in an accident while trekking in Nepal. Gerhard Algermissen was an Aerodynamics Engineer. Marion runs a design establishment in Germany. For an Obituary of Prof Algermissen, written by Dr Peter Gerlinger (one of the approved IIST Ph.D. Examiners), see DLR's *Deutsche Gessellschaft fuer Luft und Raumfahrt Mitteilungen* 2/2008.

8: Harold and Maude

I saw this beautiful play *Harold and Maude* at

Hochschule der Medien, Uni Stuttgart (Stuttgart Media University), in December 1999. This is a stage adaptation of the famous movie (written and produced by Colin Higgins) about a suicidal 19-year-old boy Harold, who finally learns how truly to live when he meets the spirited and delightfully eccentric octogenarian, Maude. His earlier alienation from life has caused Harold hypothetically to attempt suicide several times. His peculiar attachment to Maude, whom he meets at a funeral, is what saves him. During this January-February 2016, the play *Harold and Maude* is going to Honolulu for its premiere in Hawaii.

The very pleasant Song from *Harold and Maude* "If You Want to Sing Out, Sing Out" by Cat Stevens, typically represents the cult that this movie/play has created:

Well, if you want to sing out, sing out
And if you want to be free, be free
'Cause there's a million things to be
You know that there are

And if you want to live high, live high
And if you want to live low, live low
'Cause there's a million ways to go
You know that there are

... ..

Well if you want to say yes, say yes
And if you want to say no, say no
'Cause there's a million ways to go
You know that there are

And if you want to be me, be me
And if you want to be you, be you
'Cause there's a million things to do
You know that there are





Dr. S Rajendran

Former Chief Consultant (L&IS)
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Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. B R Ambedkar

Bharat Ratna Baba Saheb Dr. BR Ambedkar has become an immortal legend remembered with deep respect even after 125 years of his birth which would continue in the years to come. Suffering and struggling right from the early childhood, he liberated himself from the pangs of untouchability, insult, hatred and fought his way every inch to the forefront and emerged as an eminent son of India.

The social situation that prevailed in India in the early days of Dr. Ambedkar is unimaginable and unbelievable to the current generation. The touch or shadow or voice of an untouchable (who is a fellow human being) was believed to be polluting. Those who belonged to untouchables or depressed

classes were forbidden from drawing water from public wells, entering temples, going to schools, keeping animals, and wearing ornaments. They were socially degenerated; economically impoverished slaves. The barber's blade would be polluted if he cut an untouchable's hair. Shaving a buffalo was a much nobler act. In effect social segregation kept the untouchables away throughout their life.

When Dr. Ambedkar was a student his teachers never touched his books, he had to sit aside in the classroom on a gunny sack and was denied drinking water in the college canteen. His young mind was deeply wounded. On some days, he cried under a tree

shade out of hunger and insult. For Dr. Ambedkar, Columbia University in the USA, where he went for higher studies, was a heaven compared to his student life on an India campus. Columbia University opened a different model and a new world for young Ambedkar.

Dr. Ambedkar firmly believed that relentless effort is required to make the downtrodden understand the reasons for their weakness. They have to be educated to save themselves from eternal slavery, poverty and illiteracy. He firmly believed that only through education the downtrodden, insulted, impoverished can wake up from their slumber. The rights denied cannot be begged and restored; on the other hand, they can be regained only through continuous struggles. Only lambs are sacrificed and not the lions, he believed. "Education, agitation, and organization" were his three principles for uplifting the depressed.

After obtaining a doctorate from Columbia University he assumed office as the military secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda. His official life was very pitiable. His staff treated him very badly. A high caste peon, who was illiterate, used to throw files on his table from a distance fearing pollution. Dr. Ambedkar was totally isolated and discriminated against. Shelter and drinking water was denied to him. The sky above was his roof and earth below his feet the floor. With a heavy heart, he quit the job and returned to Bombay.

Dr. Ambedkar continued his research in London and returned fully equipped with deep insight and profound knowledge in economics, sociology, and law to fight the

traditional Indian socio-economic and legal systems and to expose it to progressive ideas. He got immersed in social reform movements. He formed Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha, with the objectives of spreading education, starting hostels for students belonging to depressed classes, starting libraries, community centers, and agriculture and industrial schools. The Sabha made many representations to the authorities to draw attention to the problems of the depressed classes.

Dr. Ambedkar was a unique leader who had firsthand experience in the problems of the depressed classes. He took the tribulations of the people as his own personal humiliation and suffered and struggled for their rights. He was determined to fight injustice, oppression and inequality and transform the people to citizens with self-respect. He was sure that when the huge tree of caste system remained, its shadow, untouchability cannot be eradicated.

The untouchables are isolated due to their lack of education and political power. Knowing that the progress of the oppressed hinges on the spread of education he established Depressed Classes Educational Society. Dr. Ambedkar propagated his progressive ideas through the magazine *Saraswathivilas*, an organ of Bahishkrit Hitakarini Sabha. This publication tried not only to spread education but also to dissuade people from alcoholism and gambling. Dr. Ambedkar was very keen in observing and reacting to social evils to its minute details. This is evident from the review he wrote on the struggle, *Vaikom Sathyagraha*¹, to secure the right to walk along a road close to a temple in Vaikom in Kerala in those days.

Dr. Ambedkar started a weekly called Mook Nayak in 1920 and a fortnightly, Bahishkrit Bharat in 1927 to propagate his ideas. Dr Ambedkar proclaimed that India is a country of inequalities. He observed that Hindu society is like a tower with several levels without a staircase. A person born in one level has to die in that level itself. He felt that continuous efforts were necessary to make known to the downtrodden the reasons of their weakness and educate them to protect themselves from eternal slavery, impoverishment and illiteracy.

Representing one-fifth of the Indian population, who were dumb, half-naked, poverty stricken and degraded to slavery, he attended the three Round Table Conferences. He argued for a 'government of the people by the people and for the people'. He argued for fundamental rights like equal citizenship right to the depressed classes along with others. He called for an end to any discrimination, punishment, disadvantage, ineligibilities in the existing law. In order to keep control over public services, he suggested creating Public Service Commission (PSC) empowered to select candidates for recruitment in public services and for giving proper representation to all groups. Foreign journalists adjudged his speech in the first Round Table Conference as the best speech in the conference.

Dr. Ambedkar wrote many articles in the foreign press to bring out the unbelievable hardships and intolerable insults suffered by the depressed classes of India. He stressed that it is the divine duty of mankind to put an end to the problems of the untouchables. It was made known to the whole world that the

position of untouchables in India was far worse than that of the Negroes of America. A Negro can be a servant to the white. He is not an untouchable, unlike the situation that prevailed in India. He succeeded in drawing the attention of the whole world to the denial of civil and political rights to the oppressed in India. He got the assurance from the spokesmen of British Government that right to equality would be provided in Indian Constitution.

Dr. Ambedkar was elected to the Executive Council of Viceroy and later to the Constituent Assembly. The Constituent Assembly abolished untouchability and declared it an offense. This was a landmark in the history of human freedom in India. Dr. Ambedkar was the elected Chairman of the seven-member Constitution Drafting Committee. Out of the seven members chosen by the Drafting Committee, one passed away, one resigned, one went to the USA, another was deeply involved in his state politics. Two were away from Delhi and hence could not participate in the drafting work. In effect, the entire burden of drafting the Constitution was on him. Hence, he is rightly called the Chief Architect of the Indian Constitution. When India became independent Dr. Ambedkar was appointed the Law Minister in the first Cabinet of India.

Dr. Ambedkar was a multi-faceted personality in the real sense. He left an indelible imprint as a journalist, prolific writer, scholar, politician, social reformer, trade unionist, leader, lawyer, teacher, parliamentarian, minister, lover of books, etc. The nation was severely affected by his sudden demise in 1956. Peoples' love and affection for their immortal leader were

evident from the two and a half kilometer long funeral procession which took four hours to reach the cremation ground. It was the greatest funeral procession in the history of

Bombay. Dr. Ambedkar was truly a great son of India inextricably intertwined with the building of modern India as we see it today.

Note:

1. Vaikom Satyagraha (1924 -5) agitation was aimed at securing freedom to use public roads near Vaikom Mahadeva Temple to which entry was denied to Avarna Hindus. These roads were open to Christians and Muslims, animals, including stray dogs, that could slip through safely.





Nirvana

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*From place to place,
From time to time,
I moved with my soul,
Walking, running, driving into the unknown self,
Away from the system,
I started walking,
I left behind the love,
I left behind the hate,
I left behind the trust,
And all the materialistic rust,
The voices start fading slowly,
I walked away from it,
Searching for a new drug,
Leaving the old bug,
I walked into nothingness,
I walked into nature,
Being everything it just made me none,
All the turbulence in the soul was done,
I laugh at myself trying to search for my soul in the city,
Found the infinite self in the woods lost all the pity.
It ain't the end,
It ain't the beginning,
It is somewhere in between,
Free from the clutches of time,
The flow of water, so normal,
The flow of thoughts, into Nirvana*

A TALE OF BROKEN EGGS...



Manoj T. K

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It was the year 1993. I was in my Pre-degree course (equivalent of Higher Secondary Course at that time). I used to be a day scholar to the college. The college was just 12 km from my home and I used to travel up and down by either the state-run KSRTC buses or those run by private operators like individuals or societies. In our place, KSRTC buses used to be a rarity and hence most people travelled by the private buses. The private operators named their vehicles with abbreviations like MKK, COMOS, KKMS, or after the names of the owner or their near and dear ones, like 'Sindhumul', 'Lavanya', 'Savithri' etc. It was a time when fare concession to the tune of 10 paise (one tenth of a rupee) was available to students in buses, though the minimum bus fare was in the range of 2-2.5 rupees. Now even the 25 paise coin is not in vogue! I used to travel to the college every day by 'Sindhumul' in the morning and come back home by 'Savithri'. It was good for the parents, because the money spent on their wards' conveyance (20 paise in total) was a pittance, even by the

then standard!

One fine morning I read in the newspaper that the KSRTC employees had announced a strike and there would not be any services by them on that day. In 1993 there was no internet and landline was not common. Forget the cell phones!!! The news of the strike was broadcast by The All India Radio also in their bulletins. On hearing the news, I readied myself for the worst for the day. One could expect a huge hustle and bustle in 'Sindhumul' in the morning trip. But the bus was not crowded much and I heaved a sigh of relief. With a little amount of anxiety about the return trip, I sat through the classes in the college. I rushed to the bus station immediately afterwards.

At the bus station, one could easily see the effect of KSRTC strike, with all other buses jam-packed and most of them with passengers clinging dearly to their life, on the foot board at the door. Many passengers on the foot board

simply hanging in air, outside the bus, because there was no place for their second other foot. I understood that the situation was going to be worse when more students and office goers joined the existing bandwagon! In such a scenario, getting inside the bus itself was a herculean task, forget the seats! I could see that many people got into the bus through windows (the windows did not have glass panes, and had only foldable cloth covers to protect you from rain and shine), by climbing on the big tyres and dashing themselves into the bus! An idea struck me. I also would do that to get into my bus, when it arrived, I decided. I had a few heavy breaths, I tossed my legs around, I folded and unfolded my hands and fingers, I twisted the upper part of my body both sideways along with my head. All these were warm-up exercises to get into the bus! Finally, it arrived... 'Savithri'...

Once the bus stopped there was huge rush near the doors. The persons who had been on the bus and wanted to get down from the bus, had a harrowing time, with everybody on the ground trying to board the bus together in a hurry, unmindful of those trying to alight. Observing this and quickly coming to the conclusion that my Plan A to board the bus through the door would be a failure, I immediately ventured to my Plan B. I ran towards the tyre and O boy... I faced a lot of competition in getting my foot on the tyre itself because my Plan B was the Plan A for many others !! The bus had almost got filled with passengers boarding through the doors, through the windows (either through their own Plan A/ B). Finally, I could find my foot properly on the tyre and I climbed up and forced my torso through the window. Somehow I fell flat on a seat, but alas, I fell on

somebody's lap. I recovered myself and somehow acrobatically stood on my feet and ran towards the unoccupied seats, which happened to be 3-4 rows behind the person whose lap I had used as the landing site seconds ago.

The bus started its journey immediately because it had reached the bus station quite late. Though I had managed to sit on a seat, there were many people around me, standing and pushing each other, some of them happened to be my batchmates in college. Suddenly there were a few swear words from the seat 3-4 rows ahead. The person was swearing about a young fellow who had fallen through the window onto his lap. I could see broken eggs and egg shells being thrown out by the same person through the windows. He happened to be a small time merchant who had purchased a few hundreds of eggs from a wholesale dealer and was transporting them to his small town for retail sale. I thought that I had landed on his lap, but instead, I had fallen on his flexible cover containing eggs. The cover had been there on his lap!

Some of my batch mates around me had seen me getting in through the window and they could easily guess, as to what had happened. They had mischievous smiles on their lips. In all this chaos, the merchant was trying to identify the culprit. Since he was 3-4 rows away, and there was no space to move an inch, he could not come near me and find me out. In fact, my batch mates created a wall (of themselves) around me so that I would not be visible to the him. After 7-8 kilometers of the journey, he alighted from the bus, as it had reached his place, of course with whatever available in the cover containing broken eggs.

Through the gap between the hands of two persons, I could see the merchant, still uttering swear words and still searching for the culprit. I could easily conclude that he had not seen me, but I could get a full view of his face.

Once I reached my place, I thanked my friends and left. At home, I told my parents about the incident. They had a hearty laugh, but they asked me to compensate for the losses of the merchant, by giving him money, whenever (if) I met him. My mother gave me some 50 rupees for the compensation. The evening, the strike by KSRTC employees was withdrawn, unconditionally.

Next day I went to the college comfortably, and after classes, I was waiting for 'Savithri', at the bus station. The bus arrived and stopped in its place. They had five minutes spare time. So the driver and the conductor of the bus went out of the bus for having tea.

I had almost reached 10 feet near the door. Suddenly I saw the yesterday's merchant in front of the bus's door. He was fuming red; his expression gave a chill down my spine. He was holding the door of the bus with one hand. If anybody wanted to board the bus, they had to stoop their head and walk under his stretched arm. I realized that I had been caught. There was no place to escape, I was right in front of him, just less than 5 feet. The thought of giving the compensation of 50 rupees vanished from my mind. Instead, it was filled with fear that he would beat me before I tried to reason with him, I was sure. I somehow looked straight at his face, stooped my head as I reached near his outstretched arm. Bracing myself for the worst, I boarded the bus. I turned back to see that I was indeed inside the bus. He was still there on the ground, in the same menacing manner, still fuming red, waiting for the yesterday's culprit! He had not recognized me!





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A Flower

.....Blooming to Wilt.....

When I began this story I didn't know how to end it, but as time passed the end showed itself, like a flower blooming to wilt.

--

It began like this: a faded inland letter that drained out all the confidence that I had salvaged for eighteen years. All I could feel was my blood drain out of my face as my hands reached out for the dirty, folded envelope laid out as the prima facie evidence of the insanities of my past. The envelope was folded many times over, yellowed out with avenaceous crumbs of decay spread over it. My heart sank with that feeling of how a small deed of our past can really embarrass us somewhere in the distant and complacent future.

"Ahem, well, you never get to see these type of inland letters. And who writes letters these days. I haven't touched a pen for ages except for signing. "He smiled with a twinkle. I fumbled, "mmed" for a while and opened the letter hesitantly.

My handwriting, though carefully forged to be somebody else's, gave away its slant and loops and the dots of 'i's and 'j's which were rounded off, loud and artistic. I read; "Dearest Annabel Lee", and decided that I could not read further and flushed with embarrassment.

This was a moment which took away all the good moments in your life, laurels of achievements, all the degrees you have slogged for, the seminars and conferences you have indeed braved through, etc, for a silly mistake you have committed in your life.

"Why did you call me Annabel Lee, by the way?"

"Mmm, just an imaginary character, taken from Poe. In fact, the real Annabel Lee was a girl, the poet's lover. Just took the name so that my nosy cousin wouldn't suspect me in the first place.... The poem which spoke about unrequited love....," though I wanted to sustain the academic casualty in the tone, it petered off towards the end. It even broke when I wiped the sweat drops that clung on to my brow. Well, this is over reacting. It was just a harmless letter after all.

"In fact, I didn't understand half of what you wrote," he said with a twinkle. I pushed the letter back not wanting to even find out what I had written eighteen years back.

"This was the first of a series of letters which I was about to write in the years to come" I changed the topic to make the faded inland look as if it is part of history.

"It was Krishna who told me it is your handwriting", Krishna was Bala's brother, one

of my closest pals when I was footloose on the conservative streets of Karmic Lane like a tomboy. Krishna, I and his younger brother, Satya, used to roam around the streets in our decrepit cycles all around the lane. One of the secret advantages of this camaraderie was in the name of this friendship; I could have more access to Bala's house and if possible take a peek into his room, and if very lucky catch his glimpse there. Those days a single glance mattered...

That was the time that Bala became a sensation in my life. I was in my ninth standard or so, and Bala, a great four years older than me. As a short, sallow, lanky teenager with cropped hair, I was often mistaken for a boy. That had its advantages in having a slightly more adventurous after-dusk life. But a flat chest and curly mane, with eyes popping out, were not just enough to catch Bala's attention. Not for once did I, much to my exasperation, much to my dismay. There began the tale of a teenage despair, much distracted by a few crushes and infatuations which always came along the way.

"Ahem, then what happened to your life after I left your neighbourhood?" Definitely, I liked the way he occasionally cleared his throat, but then I was not sure if wanted to talk about my past. I gave him an evasive answer about my list of academic credentials and the details of degrees taken from different places in the country. But his face showed that that was just not enough. I averted eye contact, and started brushing aside the bread crumbs on the table, with silence looming large.

"We have a boy here who can do it for you," he said smiling, indicating the kitchen door with a tight-lipped smile. "By the way, I met your husband in Delhi a couple of years back".

I pinned my startled eyes on his face, "You met Vinod?"

"Yes, at Kalkaji. He had come to a publisher there, who was a close friend of mine."

"He never told me this", I looked down

"If eyes could speak..." He said looking pointedly at me, "I don't think you were together that time"

I nodded pathetically, almost trapped, sitting on the edge of the chair, waiting to grab the bill, pay, and pace out of the hotel, and join the faceless crowds. I mumbled: "How did you know?"

"Probably I can read your mind. Can I drop you home?"

"No, Thanks, I have a bit of shopping to do"

I could see that I just could not slither away that easy and I gave into the comfort of a Sedan upholstered with polished leather. I kept my eyes away from Bala. I noticed that he still looked trim and handsome, with a few signs of aging on his face. Crowfeet slowly creeping below his eyes and his face skin hanging a bit loose across his jaw line, and a double chin that marred his majestic jaw. There was also something striking which made him look different from his earlier self, I looked closely to see his receding hairline.

"In fact, I did not expect you to be grown up so fast. I just had the face of a 14 year old in my mind. You have put on lots of weight". I smiled again tight lipped. Weight, past, looks; all were very sensitive issues after all.

* * * * *

After picking up groceries from the Supermarket, Bala took me on a long drive to Marina beach and we had dinner from one of the wayside resorts. We talked about our jobs and the missing part of our lives for eighteen years. He talked about his wife and children, so did I, swallowing the unsavory part of my married life. He dropped me home late at night at the end of an eventful, chatty evening. I said "Good Bye" leaving no loopholes of a further meeting. But Bala was not that easy to evade, he said, "Good night and meet you next Monday, same time same place".

That night I lay down on my bed wondering how the emotions of the past, once exorcised, can resurface with a vengeance. Past came jostling unto me, as I tossed sleepless on my bed. I tried to hug my son, and bury myself in his warmth and uninterrupted sleep. Sai smiled beatifically in his sleep as I snuggled closer to his dreams, but memories came back forcefully.

Unfortunately, I had this unsavory habit of wallowing in self pity whenever the Bala episode played up in my mind. Somewhere unrequited love battered my self esteem. Though an accomplished, educated me replayed the silliness bit of it again and again in my mind. Though I was considered an egregious, outgoing tom boy, capable of bossing younger boys and being bossed by older women, I was also capable of hiding my deep infatuation for Bala in an insidious fashion. Probably, the only one person who could even guess the existence of such a big crush was my cousin, Ram Manohar, who could always prod and scatter the most insalubrious corners of my inner secrets.

That day when I was gazing dejectedly at Bala's house, when his family was busy packing away stuff, getting ready for a midnight shift, Ram came close to me and startled me with a hissing whisper, "Now, it's time for you to stop dreaming and be mine". He held me in a clasp, which cannot be called an embrace, and his arms always reminded me of tentacles. He made it a point to crush my bones, tits and everything which was on its way to sprout and grow in my early teens. I always struggled, literally with tooth and nail, never to give in. I could have won the battle, I was strong and athletic enough to ward him off, but that evening, in his octopus's garden, I was too weak to struggle even. That was the day Bala ceased to be my neighbour.

Ram never wanted to replace Bala. Neither did he ever imagine that. He just wanted to trespass my dreamy spaces with a violence which was meant to mar than build up any emotions of love, affection or proximity. He just stamped his marker on me so that I do not stray far from his possessive ken. Branded by him, I just needed to be around, like one of his trophies. The moment I grazed and deflected, he took reins with an infuriating authority of ownership. I was just one among the flock and he herded well with the proprietary cock-sureness.

I resented all the way, I played along too, because I thought of incest as a delightful, self destructive game. Ram made me forget my dreams about Bala, made sure that I never

kept any contacts with his family and also started injecting subtle doses of guilt within me. I remember being very resistant, except when it was my turn to feel guilty. Guilt wafted in till I waded through it and at one time I started drowning in it even. That was also indeed very pleasurable because at one point guilt rescued me from all the responsibilities I wanted to shirk away, as well as it became a constant companion with whom I could indeed comfortably snuggle close to, wrapped up in my instincts of self pity.

That was my first experience of love, there was this boy who never knew that I even existed and there was another who crushed me with 'love', that the word in itself became either ludicrous or scary. There was no scope for normalcy in the word which was cast like a cement block that spoke of dejection, coldness and a certain amount of callousness as well.

Ram continued his violent ways with me, in fact I wanted to tell my parents about him. Sometimes the humiliation, accentuated by the bruises, was more than my masochistic mind could suffer. But I could never ever get it into my parents' imagination that Ram's relationship with me could go beyond that of siblings. They had a strange idealism and naivete in place that at times I myself did not want to disturb them with these blatant truths. So complacent were they, cocooned in duty, honour and other ideals of love and familial obligations that they were either unaware of or ignored the seamier side of these abstract feelings.

This was also a time when I started experimenting with my heaviness. I was quite ashamed of my wiriness and started stuffing my mouth whenever I got the chance. I could even dust off crumbs of left over from the dining table and lick them clandestine when no one was looking. So much was my gluttony that I would linger over the food with an unusual hunger that surprised everyone. I also slowed down my moments with a deliberation that I felt that I was perpetually shut in a glass submarine watching and enacting an underwater sea show in slow-motion. I adopted slackened gestures, developed a hump and re-drew my brows with high doses

of anxiety and self-pity. I lived in my slow motion drama, and only my mind worked sharper than ever before and to slow down my mind I buried myself in all kinds of books that came along my way.

Ram's third year in the engineering college was rather uneventful for me; he also slowed down his onslaughts on me. In fact I desperately rummaged his drawers and cupboards for all signs of infidelity from his part just to impale the final harakiri of self-pity on myself. Ram was also good at effacing evidence of his commonplace affairs and flings in which he was wallowing in, but I read a thousand tales of betrayal in his glance and his behavior towards me. From the rough brutality with which he treated me, he suddenly turned sticky-sweet, oozing all over. I was not very happy about it, either things had to turn self-destructive or else they had to boomerang towards Ram, destroy him and the whole world with it. The world of niceties and normalcy was unappealing.

Yet once in a while, that diaphanous veil of sunshine came with my memories of Bala. Somewhere I did believe that Bala would come out of the dark, with his shining armor and rescue me from Ram and the whole lot of slush I was immersed in. Though this was very romantic and hope-inspiring, though a part of my old, tomboyish me resented this kind of a male intervention even in my imagination. This was precisely the same reason that I did not search for Bala's whereabouts after he moved out of my neighborhood. I could always contact his brothers and use them as stooges to keep myself informed, but I gave up and restricted Bala in my creative and imaginative sphere where I would write poems about him in the name of Annabel Lee.

I also wrote long letters to Lee and one day I posted quite a few as well to Bala's college where he emerged as a leader, slowly sprucing up for a political career as well. Calling him Lee was an eye wash to fool Ram, who also returned the favor of intruding into my privacy deliberately with his air of authority. At times he also suspected I had lesbian impulses and started interfering with my

friendships. I was in the first year of degree then. Slow and agile and at the same time slovenly and cunning as well. I could house my paradoxes well within myself, that I remained slightly mysterious to Ram.

Maybe that was the last effort of mine to be in touch with Bala. There was also another reason for my restraint. In my second year of BA, I received his wedding card which I kept looking on for hours and hours together. It was quite stupid of me, but I found it hard to believe when a stranger's name was written along his. I slowed down a bit further and further retracted to books, I read with a vengeance and I wanted to conquer the world I had missed out through my reading.

In the bed, I could still recall very vividly the icy cold drops that touched my brows, looking at the wedding invite. I could feel even my heart beats of that time revisiting me with the same intensity, and memory had the same decimals of pain freshly etched on them. I have never unearthed a fresher memory, it was like a petal kissed by the dew drop, which I knew I couldn't touch or retrieve.

It was in the libraries I frequented that I often met Vinod. He was a year junior to me and was a quiet and intense boy, who held on to his rather inflammatory opinions that impressed and surprised me altogether. I was told that he spoke for the naxalites when a teacher tried to vilify them and at last the teacher had to agree with Vinod and later apologize in class. I liked the fieriness and daring. In our classrooms most of us were either completely or partially dumb to our teachers that we hardly cared to respond. And contradicting was again considered either stupid or an enormous waste of time or at the most daring.

I marked Vinod and sort of zeroed on him. In the library, I looked at him subtly, making him conscious of my presence as well as ignoring him completely. I noticed him as a gentle boy, with a drawl and almost perfect English. Though he could dress quite shabbily at times, he also spread the smell of the expensive perfume that he is wearing throughout the corridor occasionally. His demeanor depended on his state of mind which would

either be charged up unbelievably or bored completely. He had shifty eyes, which never focused on our face that was the kind of shyness I found rather appealing. He also had a prominent nose that marked him apart from the rest of the crowd.

Once Vinod's curiosity was kindled, I made the next move. That was again in the library. One day when he was seated right opposite to me, I looked up from my book and asked him about his readings and favorites and all. Vinod looked up and could not betray his surprise, of the air of familiarity that I adopted after ignoring him completely for days and days together was obviously astonishing for him. He was quite shy to open up with me, once he opened up, I plotted for further meetings in such a fashion that I became indispensable in his friends list. I started giving him notes and listings of the readings that I have made. I was a bit surprised to know that Kafka bored him, and Camus interested him. I could never see the point of how one classic could be boring and another interesting. I could see variations of interest, but not completely oppositional stances. And this was the basic difference in our characters which drew us together like hay and fire.

Vinod had strong likes and dislikes, whereas I always believed in relative preferences. I was wishy-washy in announcing my favorites to the world and I loved to tread on ambiguity that was my trade mark. I doubted and doubted till the world slipped past and then made me regret of the opportunities missed. Whereas Vinod looked too sure of himself, who could wax eloquently about the choices and options he is disposed with. We got attracted as opposite poles did. There was I: dark and wiry with hungry eyes, unsure of the prey next to me was actually hunting Vinod down in his most vulnerable late teens. And there he was, tall, wheat-complexioned and quite defenseless, with a disturbed childhood as that I had, looking for love, sex and a partner to share his loneliness with.

Our relationship also clicked like anything. Both of us were looked upon as a good and brainy couple in the university. We too hid our

raving passion in nerdy place like libraries and book stalls which were blatantly cerebral and in our own fashion we broke all the laws in forbidden places. It was too passionate to be contained in closed spaces, though in the open we walked like tamed cattle, cerebral, obese and unworldly. Often we sat on dark benches near Maman Dhaba and I puffed away to glory, hidden from the world. Vinod hated cigarettes, he preferred marijuana instead and sometimes the wood smoke smell was quite intoxicating enough for us to search for closed rooms again.

It was not very difficult like a normal couple like us to get a nod from our families as well. We were married off shortly after Vinod took up his first job as a lecturer in Nagaland University. We went to Kohima as a newly wedded couple with a cart load of wedding gifts freighted over trains and trucks. Vinod fell in love with Kohima, the land and the people and I was always quite nostalgic about home. Wondering about my parents and missing my friends, food, and most importantly, crowded streets and the noise. Life became quotidian in the green hills as I longed for home, and those comforts. Our child, Pranay came as a huge relief but he as a weak child I had to take turns to rush him to hospital and then back home.

It was in the hospitals that our romance probably faded. Memory can be such a deceptive swab, once used they can never be squeezed off the same blood again. Only stains remain. This was also one of the ways in which Vinod and I were trying to find reasons to be away from each other, because somewhere our differences were knotty and they projected like malign lumps all over our relationship. We were in our same islands again, and only our passion sustained us. Then Pranay, whose cheer and illnesses, kept us tied up to our incessant worries.

Chennai and Nagaland were two spaces which were apparently very very distant and we realized that soon enough. Distance and time distanced us till one day as I got a call from Vinod asking me if I could 'consent' for a divorce on mutual consent. It was hysteria

first and then a relief and then I too explored all the clauses which would be beneficial for my survival in the long run. Getting out became my priority even, that was quite surprising. We didn't postpone idea at all. A good alimony and a good job; I was willing to severe, without any melodrama. Later when rumors spread about Vinod and his Naga lover, I thought that a little bit of melodrama could have invariably helped in making things difficult for Vinod. That was the only little bit of sadistic trait I had regarding separation.

I don't know why past came calling out of the blue, pulling you into its whirlwind haze of destruction. It soothes as well as kills something within you, that feeling cannot be explained but as the disenchantment that the present assigns to the past. I didn't want to feel victimised all over again, I told myself before drifting off to sleep. It was an uneasy night, Bala- old and new- appeared, as well as snippets of my life that I had forgotten. My restlessness probably made Sai restless as well as he threw his legs over me, to wake me up. I woke up with grogginess and it was already dawn. Then after watching Swami Ramanand and some yoga, my mind was calm again.

That morning, while I rushed Sai to his school, I didn't hesitate to leave my love sloppily on his cheeks, which he rubbed away impatiently. As I watched him amble off, I went back to Bala and my obsession with him again. He made me feel a woman, for I was in that tender, confusing age where I could not really determine if I was a boy trapped in a girl's body or a girl trapped in boy's body. My first love also made me a poet, as I waited for Bala's approaching footsteps in the wind, dry leaves, and the clouds. I used to send many a "meghasandesham" as the romantic grew intolerably unsuppressed. While tangled in this skein of sweet memories, the phone rang. I had to say hello a couple of times to elicit an answer. Suddenly came, "Hi! This is Bala", and my world stopped. Something put my tongue on leash and I heard Bala talk about how sweet my voice sounded, how elegant I became and how proud he was to see me as a Professor in a University, educated and all.

"mmm" was the only answer as I acted out a Hamlet inside my soul.

Bala was loquacious, he also told me how happy he was about the reunion. So was I. I wanted to tell him that I hadn't slept and I had been dreaming in my waking hours. He said that our meeting was like that of meeting one's lost soul after so many years. I couldn't help my tears flowing down. I wanted to scream and tell him that I lost my soul in a dream long time ago, and it was ever-irretrievable. Hearing my sniff, Bala sensed danger and stopped talking. He said that he can understand my emotions and that he wants to meet me now. I dreaded this, as I wiped away my tears and talked over the phone, never have I talked so assertively in my life:

"Bala, I will not allow my past to take over me, I have been in its clasp all these years. Of course, I always dreamt of this moment when you came to rescue me as a gallant knight, but sadly dreams can never be claimed or possessed in real. At least in my life."

"What do you mean? I am not courting you. I just want to meet you and be friends with you," came Bala's voice out of his confusion and irritation.

I hesitated a bit: "Bala, I don't know if you can understand, but you have never been away from my life. You have always been there in the unreal world and I have preserved you there timeless as part of a disenchanted, yet beautiful memory that I have. And I hardly live in the real"

A sigh and silence from Bala's side

"I live in that world Bala, and I am happy there. Real friendships just take away the loneliness that is precious to me"

He mumbled a sorry.

"There is no need to be sorry about this, in fact, we should have never met again, even if we have had met, I think in future, we should never meet again", I sniffed again audibly.

Silence...

"Good luck, Bala. Bye"

"You mean this?" Bala asked unconvincingly.

"Yes I do" and I disconnected the phone. For once my dishonesty and escapism relieved me from a possible rigmarole of past events reenacting their sequence in my life, again...





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Geetopdesha (acrylic on canvas)



Indra's Pearls (computer generated artwork)





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വിതുമ്പാഴ്വരയിൽ

നിശയുടെ അന്ത്യയാമത്തിൽ
ദുഃഖങ്ങൾ തൻ സ്മൃതിമണ്ഡപത്തിൽ
ഏകയായി ഞാനുഴറുമ്പോൾ
സാന്ത്വനത്തിന്റെ കരങ്ങൾ നീട്ടിയെൻ-
ചിത്തത്തെ തൊട്ടുണർത്തുവാ-
നെന്നു ചൈതന്യമാർന്നൊരു രൂപം

കളിച്ചും ചിരിച്ചും ചിലപ്പോൾ പിണങ്ങിയും-
മൊരു കുഞ്ഞുതെന്നലായ് തത്തിക്കളിച്ചൊരൻ
ബാല്യത്തിലെ കളിത്തോഴനെപ്പോൽ
ഇന്നുമോർക്കുന്നു ആ തേജഃസ്വരൂപനെ;
അമ്മയ്ക്കു സമ്മാനമായെന്നെ നൽകിയി-
ട്ടെങ്ങോ മറഞ്ഞു പോയൊരൻ പൊന്നുതാതനെ...

‘മോളേ’യെന്നുള്ളൊരാ കാതര ശബ്ദവും
താരാട്ടിനീണമാം തേനൊലിയും
ഒന്നും മറക്കുവാനാവില്ലെന്നിരിക്കുന്നു
നിദ്രയിലുമെൻ സ്വപ്നത്തിൽപ്പോലും!

കിനാവിൽ നിന്നു ഞാൻ ഞെട്ടിയുണരുമ്പോൾ
ആലോലമാട്ടിയ പൊൻകരങ്ങൾക്കായ്
പരതുന്നെൻ നയനങ്ങൾ...
തേനും ചക്കരയുമായ്ക്കായ്
കൊതിക്കുന്നെൻ കവിശ്ത്തടങ്ങൾ...
പൊന്നോമനേ! എന്ന വിളി കേൾക്കുവാൻ
കാതോർക്കുന്നിന്നുമെൻ കാതര മാനസം...

അപ്പാ! എന്ന് വിളിക്കുവാനാശയുണ്ടെങ്കിലും
ആ വിളി കേൾക്കുവാനുണ്ടല്ലായെന്ന-
ദുഃഖത്താൽ ഇടുന്ന മാനസത്തിൽ
ആനന്ദം നൽകുന്നതൊന്നു മാത്രം
ഞാനുമീ ലോകത്തിൽ നിന്നൊരിയ്ക്കൽ...
എത്തുമെന്നപ്പന്റെ സന്നിധിയിൽ...

തൻ മണിസൗധത്തിൻ പടിവാതിൽ
തൂറുന്നെന്നെ ഓമനിയ്ക്കാൻ
കാത്തു നിൽക്കുമെൻ പൊന്നു താതൻ
ആയിരമുമ്മകൾ കൊണ്ടെന്നെ മുടുമ്പോൾ
ആകെത്തുടുത്തു ഞാൻ പൂത്തുനില്ക്കും...
സ്വർഗ്ഗത്തിൽ ഞാനൊരു പൂമരമായ്
എങ്ങും സുഗന്ധം പരത്തി നിൽക്കും...



പരമി

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അവർ പറഞ്ഞു
നിന്റെ കൂട് ഞങ്ങൾ തുറന്നു തന്നിരിക്കുന്നു
ഈ ആകാശവും
അതിന്റെ അഗാധതയും
ഒന്നും ഒളിപ്പിക്കാനാവാത്ത തെളിഞ്ഞ നീലിമയും
നിനക്ക് സ്വന്തം!

അവരെന്നിക്കൊരു തൊപ്പി സമ്മാനിച്ചു
കാലിൽ അണിയാൻ തളയും
അവർ തന്ന കരിങ്കല്ലിന്റെ തൊപ്പി വെച്ച്
ഇരുമ്പിന്റെ കാൽതള അണിഞ്ഞ്
ഞാൻ പറക്കാൻ തയ്യാറാവുന്നു
ആകാശം എനിക്കായ് കാത്തിരിക്കുന്നു

എനിക്ക് പറന്നേ പറ്റൂ
എന്റെ ചിറക് അവർ കെട്ടി വെച്ചിരിക്കുന്നു;
എന്റെ വഴിയിൽ
കഴുകന്മാർ റാകി പറക്കുന്ന ഗൃഹാമുഖങ്ങൾ ഉണ്ടാകും
വേട്ടക്കാരുടെ കൂരമ്പുകൾ എന്റെ ചുറ്റും പാഞ്ഞു വരുമായിരിക്കും;
ജലിപ്പെരുന്ന സൂര്യനും,
ആഞ്ഞ് വീശുന്ന കൊടുങ്കാറ്റും കാണും,
എങ്കിലും
എനിക്ക് പറന്നേ പറ്റൂ

അവർ വാഗ്ദാനം ചെയ്ത ആകാശത്തിന് വേണ്ടിയല്ല
അകലെ എവിടെയോ മഴവില്ലിന്റെ തുണ്ടുകണ്ടത് കൊണ്ടല്ല
ദൂരെ എന്നെ കാത്ത്
മേഘങ്ങൾ മഴ നനഞ്ഞിരിക്കുന്നില്ല,
എന്റെ കൊക്കിലെ ആഹാരം കാത്ത്
കുഞ്ഞു വയറുകൾ കരയുന്നുമില്ല,
എങ്കിലും
എനിക്ക് പറന്നേ പറ്റൂ

എന്റെ കെട്ടി വെയ്ക്കപ്പെട്ട ചിറകുകൾ ആകുവോളം വിടർത്തി
തലയിലും കാലിലും ഭാരങ്ങൾ വെച്ചായാലും
എനിക്ക് പറന്നേ പറ്റൂ.

ഞാൻ കാറ്റിന്റെ പുത്രി,
നക്ഷത്രങ്ങളുടെ കളിക്കൂട്ടുകാരി,
നിലാവിന്റെ കാമുകി!
പറക്കാൻ എനിക്കെന്തിനാണ് കാരണങ്ങൾ?
എനിക്ക് പറന്നേ പറ്റൂ.



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SURABHI

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