

सुरभि

कला साहित्य पत्रिका

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका

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

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(December 2018)



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Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology
वलियमला, तिरुवनंतपुरम Valiamala, Thiruvananthapuram

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From the Editor's Desk

P. Radhakrishnan

Dear friends,

This is SURABHI here wishing you a Happy New Year!

SURABHI is **five years old** ! This wouldn't have been possible if it weren't for the generous support from all in ISRO/DOS.

There is a lot of good news – ISRO has been shooting off launch vehicles almost every month, some of the missions carrying as many as over 100 satellites ! Particularly significant is the successful flight of GSLV Mk III which clears the way for **Chandrayaan-2** and **Gaganyaan** (Human Spaceflight, HSP) missions. Government of India has sanctioned a sum of Rs. 10,000 crores for a manned spaceflight by 2022.

DOS has received the Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar for the third consecutive year.

To be sure, ISRO/DOS is on a roll !

Nearer home, Prof. A. Chandrasekhar, Dean/Academics and Outstanding Professor in the department of Earth and Space Sciences, who has been holding additional charge of Registrar/IIST has now turned his full attention to academic activities. SURABHI is grateful to Prof. Chandrasekhar not only for his literary contributions but for his organizational support, too.

Prof. YVN. Krishna Murthy, Senior Professor and former Director/NRSC has taken charge as the new Registrar/IIST. SURABHI heartily welcomes him and wishes him all success in his assignment.

As always, with the usual fare and best wishes,

SURABHI

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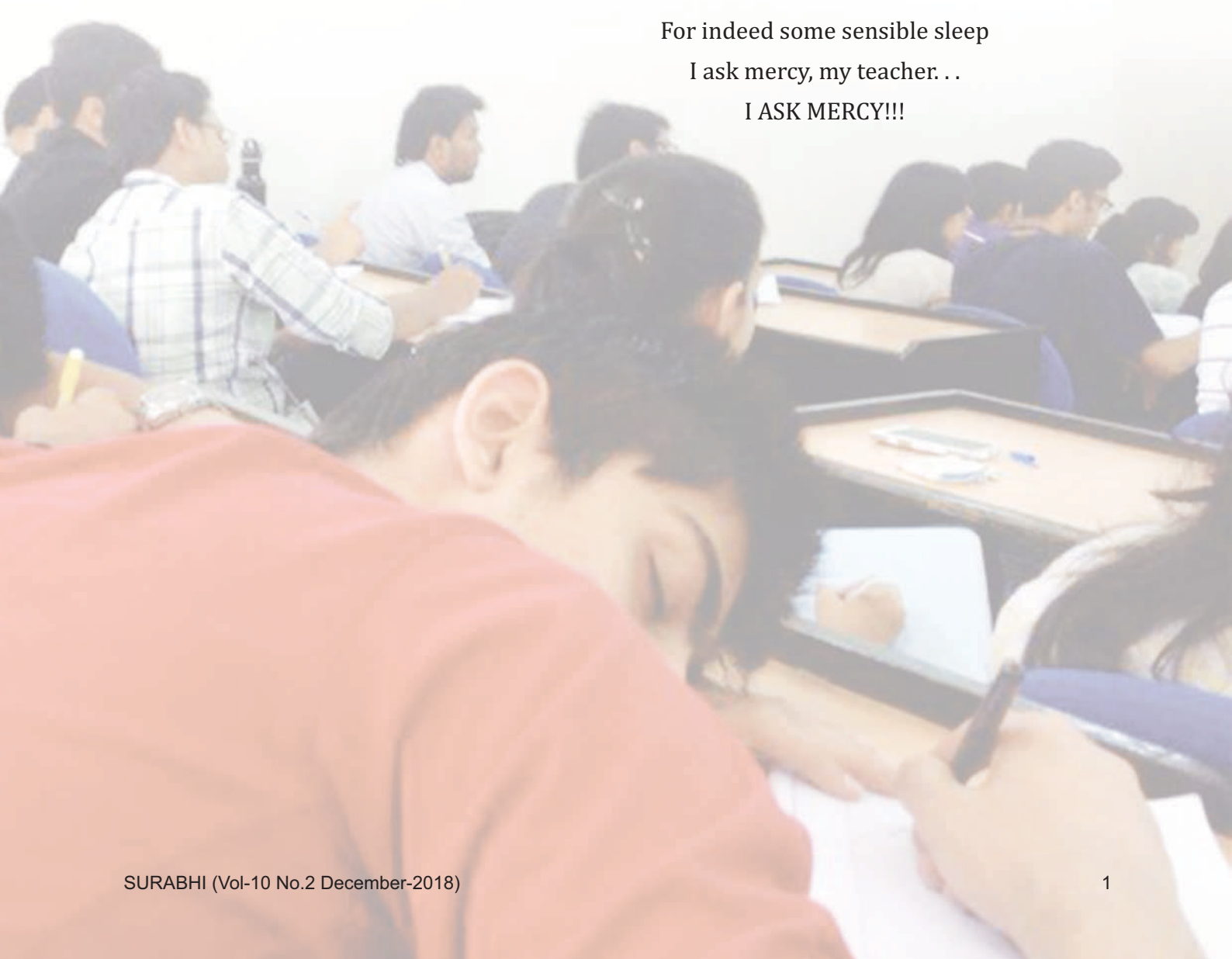
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HELPLESSNESS OF A BACKBENCHER

The silence to be disturbed
by the action of a priest
is the worst feel of a backbencher
To come in front row cursing,
To guard the mischief inside,
For the grade but importantly respect.
In the row of bookworms,
of the silent doubters
What is the point of sitting
in the desire to go back?
In the cry to work nonsense
to make out a new sense.
For indeed some sensible sleep
I ask mercy, my teacher. . .
I ASK MERCY!!!





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THE DIVORCED YOUNG LADY DOCTOR

The incident I am narrating happened a few years ago, while I was present as a member of a committee to select a medical doctor for a well-known organization. I happened to be a junior member of the selection committee which had adequate representation of women, for the organization did believe in gender equality. The post was duly advertised and a very large number of people had applied across different states. The position was contractual in nature with flexible salary depending on the professional experience they bring to the table. Due to the above nature of the advertised position, the upper age limit was kept at 55. The short-listing committee of which I was not a member, had shortlisted fifteen candidates to be called for the selection interview. It was felt that three to five candidates would not turn up for the interview and hence about ten to twelve people need to be interviewed. Needless to say, the interview panel consisted of four experts from the medical fraternity including two lady doctors. With

greater emphasis on specialization among medical doctors in recent times, it was felt that at least four different doctors with expertise in four major medical areas need to serve as peer experts in the selection panel. The non-experts in the selection committee excluding me were two-the chairperson and another senior member being women. One would naturally expect such a committee to be sympathetic and understanding to concerns and travails of women, in general.

It turned out that on the day of the selection, all the fifteen candidates showed up. After a brief discussion among the members of the committee, it was decided to call the candidates as per their medical area in a sequential manner. It was also decided that the expert in each area would delve deep into the specialized area after the other three experts were themselves fully satisfied with the candidate's general medical knowledge. The advantage of such an approach is that if a candidate is unable to satisfy the three medical generalists, there was no real need to

prolong and extend the interview to the expert in the concerned medical area. This way, it was thought it would be possible to complete the interview process of all the fifteen candidates in the forenoon session itself as the medical experts had other commitments and engagements for the afternoon.

As it turned out, four candidates, one each in a specialized area did well in the preliminary rounds. Not only did they answer confidently to the general medical questions but also had the specific approval of the experts in their respective specialization. Among these four, were two men and two women. While the two men and one of the women were in their early fifties, the second woman was in her early thirties. While the three older candidates had moderately successful medical practice and were earning reasonably well, the young woman in her early thirties, despite her impressive academic credentials, was working with an unknown hospital and was also poorly paid. It was no wonder that the young woman was keen on changing her job as she knew that she actually deserved much better pay.

When one of the experts asked the young woman why she was so poorly paid, her answer stunned all the committee members. The young woman told the committee that she was divorced three years back and was living alone with her eight-year old daughter. Her former husband belonged to an influential family of doctors and was himself a well-known doctor. He was enraged when his young wife sought and won her divorce suit as well as custody of their daughter. All her troubles began after the divorce, the woman confided as her former husband was using his enormous influence to

deny her a decent job and a livelihood. Finally she could secure her present job in the not so well-known hospital since she had agreed to a lower pay and for the more important reason that the owner of the hospital was distantly related to her. For someone distantly related to her and fully aware of her predicament, the hospital owner should not have exploited her plight by denying the young doctor the wages she deserved. The hospital owner expected the woman to be thankful to him for standing up to her former husband's machinations and providing her a job.

What I found remarkable with the young woman was the total absence of any sense of self-pity. She told the committee that even her parents did not stand by her in her hour of need and she has managed to bring up her daughter all by herself during last three years. Naturally as a proud woman, she did not divulge the reasons for her taking the decision to divorce her husband. Her eyes glowed with love and affection as she talked proudly of how mature her eight year old daughter was and how well her daughter had adjusted to the changed situation at home.

With the interviews of all the candidates duly completed, it was left to the committee to decide on who needs to be selected for the job. The detailed deliberations that followed naturally got confined to all the four candidates mentioned above with the experts giving their final individual choice. What emerged from the above opinion of the experts was truly extraordinary. While both the male experts supported the young divorcee even though her expertise did not fit in with their own, the two women experts clearly favoured one of the

senior applicants who happened to be a man. With the two non-medical members being women, I was certain that the young woman would get the job hands down. However, I was in for a big surprise. The two non- medical women members including the Chairperson of the committee sided with the women medical experts and approved the job for the senior man. I was too junior a person in the committee for the Chairperson to seek my opinion as I was neither a medical expert nor I, an important senior functionary of the organization. I am still clueless to this day as to the reasons for the

women members including the Chairperson and the women medical experts for their decision in denying the job to the young woman. I can only surmise that successful career women in our society are themselves petrified with those women who don't care a damn about what society thinks of them and who have wilfully not accepted and successfully challenged and defied our accepted social mores. Needless to say, most women are themselves unwilling to laud and eulogize one of their own kind who has the courage to question and challenge the accepted ways of our society.





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"IT'S THE BEGINNING"

I've heard something
Maybe the sound of silence.

I've seen something
Maybe that treacherous violence.

Silence of what?? post war. . .
Left no impact, Only scars
Violence they did; from both sides
They ended with. . . nothing left aside.

Corpses & deadies all around,
Chattering & screaming the same sound
Metal to metal, chipper 'n' chapper
Clashing of swords, without any matter.

Deep beneath. . . some anger, a little greed
Killed humanity, not only races and breed
I asked, "Oh God! When will this all be over??"
He smiled and said, " Its only the beginning shower. . . "





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Tengchi*



She smelled fresh and lovely even on a sodden monsoon morning. Monsoon downpours were never new to me, but in the Garo Hills they took an unfamiliar, a rather strange form. The monsoons in Kerala, I boasted to know very well, uncannily started with a downpour almost always on the first of June. It was always our first day in our new class after the school reopening. I insisted on wearing the newly stitched uniforms. The moment we were out of our house, the rains would come lashing down. We had our rain coats and umbrellas like extensions of our hands, but they could not really save us from dampness. Showers would come down as sheets accompanied by a naughty, chilling wind, pinpricking our skin, spraying our uniforms and licking us with a distasteful dampness. We would run to our classes, stand our umbrellas to dry in a corner and sit uncomfortably encircled by a small pool of water reflecting the roof. Our soggy shoes did not dry so easy. They squelched as we shuffled our feet and our white socks took ages to dry. We sat through the monsoons with the discomfort of a dampness seeping into our skin.

In the hills, I watched the rain with new eyes growing all over my body. I saw the rain clouds gather in the horizon, impregnating the virgin sky with water, till they dropped down with their weight. They virtually burst like a balloon over the rolling hills and valleys. Any pat of summery burnt sienna would turn into sap green initially, and then, transform into swathes of deepest green. A wind hissed throughout the night. All night it rattled restlessly on the window panes, trampled on the tin roof and danced in many forms; from a stiletto waltz to a *thandava* shocking the sleepy willows and boughs. It also made way for the rain drops to pierce through the cervices of the tin roof and seep inside the house. Mildew conquered every corner, first it spread on the surface peeling away paint, then it invaded the concrete marrow. It seeped into the crevices and cracked them open with deceptive finger tips.

When it rained, it rained for many days without any break. While you are at home, all you had to do is to watch the rain from the balcony. Tengchi came to help me out in the

mornings smelling fresh of Ponds Dream-flower talc. She would come at 6 in the morning, even when the rains poured down mercilessly. I would groggily open the door and snuggle back to my *razai*, and there would be silence. No clatter of pans or the swoosh of water running into the sink, no splashes on the floor, no cutlery falling down, no flicker of fire, and I would dream away in my second sleep, dreaming of home and my love. After an hour, Tengchi would quietly come to my room and wake me up with a cup of black tea, and sometimes some seasonal fruits diced and arranged neatly on a steel plate. During summers it would be peeled litchis, jack fruits, mangoes and musk melons. In the monsoon time, there would be some leftover seasonal fruits, quite tasteless and swollen up in a rain-induced oedema. From pre-winter to winter, there would be a charade of usual and exotic fruits like Soh Shang, cane fruit, wild mulberries, citrus fruits, rose apples, peaches and various kinds of plums. Tengchi made it a point to bring the choicest fruits from the local markets and feed me. This trimester was different from my first pregnancy. When I was pregnant with my first child, I used to retch at almost any unfamiliar and distasteful smell or sight. I yearned for Kerala food. The first trimester was hell, and I used to puke at the sight of my Head of the Department's car parked outside the university. This time was quite different. I was lonely and not pampered in the hills. Moreover, I was hungry all the time and willing to eat anything, especially Garo food. Tengchi fed me with all kinds of fruits in the morning, and boiled half a litre of cow's milk for evening. I used to eat out in the evenings,

so she always made *rotis* and daal spiced with garlic and cilantro for my breakfast. On rainy days, I would sit in my balcony watching and listening to the rain. Rain spoke many languages, at times it was the lyrical staccato of my own mother tongue, sometimes it was the musical timbre of Garo words, sometimes it was the stiff drum roll of Khasi sounds, sometimes it was the pleasant lilt of a Tamil song. Once I heard Rehman's *Chikku Bukku Rayile* drumming on my tin-roof, and when the clouds grew cantankerously dark, it was Rumi that rained on me. I watched the clouds and listened to the rain. I looked at the leaves writhe at the joy of the first drop of the rain and slowly concentrated on every drop that fell, splashed, somersaulted and at times trickled down like an overfed leech. I slowly closed my eyes and remembered home. The rains at home were never such a spectacle for me, though it rained much the same. Often, when home memories invaded me, I felt cold enough for a shawl. Once, when I was searching for one, Tengchi came and pulled out a Shimla shawl from the pile of my unused clothes. She cleaned, dusted, repaired and mentored everything at home. Moreover, I did not have a wardrobe, but some cubicles made out of concrete and painted white. As it was quite damp, Tengchi spread rexin sheets and lined newspapers on top of it. There she folded and arranged my fresh clothes which were washed and starched with maida. They smelt good, all of them, till the rainy season took over them with its mildewed dampness. Tengchi took them out and aired the clothes very often. When she disentangled my shawl from the pile, I saw her slim silhouette, and obviously

there was a bump bound and hidden tightly with a *dakmanda*. I looked again and felt my own bump which was prominent and pointed.

Tengchi was as thin and delicate as a bamboo reed. She wore swim-suit flesh which clung snugly and hugged her tender bones tightly. Usually she wore a traditional *dakmanda* at work, it was wrapped tightly on her waist and her abdomen curved inside, hardly giving away the truth that she was already a twenty-year-old single mother of a four-year-old child. When she came to my home for the first time, offering her services as a part-time maid, I asked her where her husband was.

She held on to her daughter, who looked teary and distracted, and answered peevishly, "*Burra dongja*, I don't have a husband."

I didn't leave the matter there. I sent the child out to play. I played up the role of an unscrupulous and fastidious mistress of the house and probed her further with an urgency to know all the details of my future maid's private life. I must have sounded like my grandmother when I asked her without any scruples:

"If you don't have a husband, how is it possible to have a child at a very young age?" She winced at the words which stripped her and she hung her head down in shame.

"It happened like that, *abi*. He was the master of my house and he said he would marry me."

As I stood there unable to judge, she walked into my kitchen and took charge. She emptied my bin stuffed with garbage. Dumped all the unwashed vessels in the sink and scrubbed them till they shone. She wiped the gas stove and polished it, sorted out vegetables and put them away in a wicker winnow, washed kitchen tiles and cleaned the corner with an old tooth brush, put some water for boiling and went ahead to wash, sort and fold my clothes. In an hour, my house was sparkling and I was greedily munching on some hot, fluffy rotis and daal spiced with garlic, green chillies and herbs. Her daughter, Sinat, sat near the kitchen window all the time, watching a couple of cows graze in the neighbouring compound. I decided that Tengchi should stay with me at any cost.

It was still raining and she just handed me the shawl. I called out to her. "Tengchi, *ibabo*" (Come here, Tengchi).

She came.

I asked her in my broken Garo, "*Augo bisadongama?*" (Are you pregnant?)

She hung her head and nodded. I asked her nothing further. I didn't want to know either. A sudden chill descended. I sat in my balcony, wrapped up in a shawl and not listening to the rain any longer. I looked at her moving stealthily, and mending my house with all the dexterity of a wonderful housekeeper. I never knew anything about her private life, except for the fact that she was a single mother. I checked on her kneading the dough carefully with an almost imperceptible bump on her body. She looked frail and vulnerable, at twenty one she had already

been cheated by two men, or maybe, many more. Suddenly, I was furious with her. Why did she have to persistently fall into those traps? I have seen her as a traditional Garo maid in my house, but I have seen her heavily made up donning western attire in the city mall. Did she have two faces? An absolute libertine facade hidden under the false mask of modesty and reticence she wore in front of me? I knew that I was being judgemental, but I was angry, nevertheless. She brought me a cup of tea, she almost tiptoed to my side. "Will this guy marry you?" I asked without looking at her.

She shook her head and said,

"He is already married *abi*, he won't. I have been cheated twice."

I had an urge to slap the victim and drag her out of her present mess to make her realise how stupid she had been. I swallowed my anger and asked her how many months to go, she said she had already completed seven months. I was shocked. My own eight months of pregnancy had been jutting out like an overripe melon, soliciting all kinds of speculation about the sex of the child from my neighbours and colleagues. Unlike the first pregnancy, I was hungry and healthy. As a single woman in the hills, I hardly made any trip to the doctor to collect my dose of iron and folic acid. The second bump never had to undergo an ultrasound or a blood test. As I was alone and quite happy husbandless, I loathed to queue up at the hospital, waiting for an appointment with the gynaecologist. As long as I was hungry and healthy, hospitals were dispensable.

I was feeling heavy increasingly. I was not walking anymore, but waddling heavily and scrambling through the hills and valleys. Auto-rickshaw drives made me uneasy, and my bladder was full all the time. Meanwhile, my equations with Tengchi changed. I started checking on her eating habits, before she used to hide in the kitchen and munch on rotis. I halved my share of fruits for her and started buying an extra packet of milk that she took home after work. I used to invite Sinat home, gifted her books and chocolates. By the middle of my eighth month of pregnancy, I could no longer survive alone in the Garo Hills. I booked a flight from Guwahati and applied for a six-month maternity leave. I was driven down the hills in my office car and it was raining very heavily. I didn't enjoy the rains which were beating down the Tata Sumo. Tengchi had come to see me off, with her small bump, Sinat clung to her *dakmanda*. I pressed some money on her. She was crying along with the rain and when I turned back at her, when the Sumo gathered speed, she looked sodden and heavily pregnant all of a sudden.

** *****

I returned to the hills after six months and I had left behind my baby with my husband and my mother. It was a difficult decision, but I could not imagine bringing up the child in the hills, all by myself. I weaned him when he was four months, gave him a wet, slobbery kiss, tore myself into bits and returned to my university in the hills. On my return, except for the heaviness on my breasts, I was rather

relieved that I didn't bring the baby with me. My grandmother's wisdom of tying jasmine strings on my breasts stopped the overflow of my breast milk. But I was heavy with milk, and a vague, clinging sadness which turned to relief the moment I came to the hills. I unloaded my luggage, took a shower and went in search of Tengchi. It was the first time that I was visiting her house. It was a dark shack, built on bamboo stilts and tiled with bamboo mat. The roof, made of asbestos sheet, was fast corroding. Her mother was very happy to see me and I asked for the child the moment I saw her.

"*Bisabachi?*" (Where is the child?) I asked eagerly.

"*Dongja*" (Not here), she answered with a touch of sadness.

I thought Tengchi and the newborn had gone out for something. The baby must be three months old, and in the Hills it was not unusual for the mother to swaddle her child and go out a couple of months after the delivery. Pre-natal care, oil massages and nursing back to obesity were sedentary habits of the people from the plains. I have seen some village women in the hills go into their huts and give birth with some help and come out an hour later with a tender child, swaddled on to them like a fruit bat. I was not surprised at all.

I placed a packet of Johnson's baby care products and some diapers on their worn out sofa, smoothed the dirty cushions and sat. I asked: "*Nonoya jojong?*" (Girl or boy?)

"*Jojong*" (Boy), she said without any mirth. It was also understandable. As the Garos were

a matrilineal tribe, they preferred girls to boys. Girls inherited property and stayed with their parents. After marriage, the groom joined her and lived with her parents.

"What have you named him?"

"*Massija*" (I don't know) came the reply.

I looked at her mother, from whose eyes, tears started raining down.

She cried: "We sold the child, madam."

"What? You sold the child?"

"Yes madam, he was a boy and was of no use to my daughter. More than that, she had no money to bring up the child. The money you had given was fast over after her delivery. She was starving and she didn't want to starve the child."

I was angry. Or may be an inexplicable wave of indignation, sadness, sympathy and probably, guilt overwhelmed me.

"You sold the child for money?"

"For food, madam. We tried to contact you, but could not get through to you. There was no money to call again and again. *Tanka dongjachim.*"

"So you sold the child?"

Probably, I did almost the same. Though I didn't sell my baby, I left him back home, weaned from his mother's breasts, just because of my selfish intention of not willing to take his responsibility alone. I left him back with my parents and husband thinking that as a family there would be more people taking care of him. I was more or less deserting my own duties and responsibilities as a mother in my eagerness to get back to work, and carry on with my profession. My PhD and teaching career waited for me in the hills. I had deserted my son.

"*Mai dakken*, what to do madam? A childless Hajong couple adopted the child. As they are a Hindu tribe, they will bring him up like a rajkumar," Tengchi's mother sighed. Tears streaked her cheek and in the darkness, I could see them shining like precious stones. "Are you sure, Tengchi ma? Do you visit their house to see the baby?"

"We do not know where they live. They are from Dawki, along the Indo-Bangladesh border. When they bought the baby, we made a deal that we would never go searching for him."

"A deal?"

"The elders of both the tribes got together and decided that the baby once adopted, will break all the ties with his mother. They paid her 2,000 rupees for this deal."

Something broke inside me. She sold her baby for a meagre two thousand rupees whereas I abandoned my baby for a monthly salary of twenty thousand! I could still go back to my child whenever I wanted to meet him, mollycoddle him, and carry him in my arms, bathe him, clothe him, and baby talk with him. Tengchi had to give up her child to feed a few starving mouths, including her daughter, mother and sister. I stood up. It started raining and Tengchi's mother insisted that I stay. She made some black tea, and a pungent smell of *nakham* (dried fish) lingered in room where I sat. I could see Tengchi's room, with a grey lump of mattress falling apart from her wicker bed. The sheets were stained with dirt and dust, and her clothes hung from the hinges like desolate summer clouds. Sinat sat inside, motionless, like a dirty doll.

"Where is Tengchi?" I asked her mother. The rain was pouring now, it was very dark, and the gentle pummelling of raindrops turned to desperate pounding. A lightning cracked in the distant horizon and a few moments later, a deafening thunder shook the entire house. It rained heavier. I could see ropes and ropes of water whirling down from the sky.

"*Tengchi pagli onjok*, she has become mad. She roams around from morning to evening in search of her son."

She continued with a sob, "She used to search for him in the maternity wards and clinics before. Now she wanders all over the city and sometimes ventures to faraway villages searching for *jojong*." I panicked. "Where is she now?"

"She is probably roaming around in the mall calling out for *jojong* and peering into children's faces. If acquaintances meet her, some of them take her home and give her some food, before bringing her home. Otherwise, she returns on her own, mad and desolate."

From the entrance, I saw a thin form of human life emerge from the heavy curtain of rain. It was Tengchi, huddling on her skeletal frame, and drenched in the rain. She was slowly walking towards home, and now she started climbing the slippery steps. Her hair fell all over her face, she hunched near the steps and sat down, covering her face with her palm.

A small palm grabbed my heart. Her mother kept talking about how bright a student Tengchi was and how she became a mother when she was fifteen. She used to stay with her relatives, helping them out with the

household work while they sponsored her studies. The man of the house, old enough to be her father, had an affair with her and impregnated her. The moment his wife came to know, she was slapped and thrown out of her house. Tengchi returned home and gave birth to Sinat. The second time, it was an auto driver who did this to her. They found out that he too was married. By the time, it was too late. Tengchi's mother beat her breasts and sobbed.

I walked out of the door. The raindrops pricked my face first and then slapped me repeatedly. I cried, and walked into the merciless palms of the rain. Lightning snapped on a distant horizon, and a tree came crashing down somewhere far away. Thunder rolled its incessant, deafening drum in the horizon.

I walked down the slippery steps, lurched a bit, lost balance and skid on the wet and slippery ground. I didn't feel the pain, but I felt the sharp edge of a granite step cut into my ankle. Rain washed away drops of blood from the gash, it didn't hurt at all. I walked towards Tengchi, crouching like a stone, under the pine needles of the rain. I slid near her, on the puddle, on the granite steps. I put my arms around her. She didn't look up or move. There was no music, no romance, no greenery, but just grey sheets of water. Both of us sat under the pouring grey shades of motherhood.

We didn't move, but let the rain tell its tale and then, sob on and on.

* First published in **The Punch Magazine**. <http://thepunchmagazine.com/the-byword/fiction/tengchi>



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Are You Superstitious?

“Fear is the main source of superstition, and one of the main sources of cruelty. To conquer fear is the beginning of wisdom.”
— Bertrand Russell

Whatever be the advances in science and technology, it doesn't make any difference to people who are superstitious. Though there is an unmatched adoption of technology in our daily life, superstitious and irrational beliefs are prevailing from metro cities to remote villages. Irrational belief varies from the fear of number thirteen to evil eye effect. However it is worrying to note that irrespective of educational qualifications superstitious beliefs are flourishing in our planet.

Negative effects of superstitions were plenty in our society. At one point in India the sight of widows was considered as bad luck. They were not allowed to attend auspicious functions. Recently in some newspapers the news of witch-hunting were reported and tragically it extended to

claiming some lives too. Even now if a black cat crosses our path, a bolt of lightning will pass through our spine. Even Man's best friend, dogs are not spared from this. Howling of dogs are interpreted by some as arrival of death. We are not progressive enough to understand the communication pattern of our canine friends.

How do superstitions creep in to human mind? Superstitions arise from the fear of the unknown. We cannot deny the role of myths, imaginative stories and lack of scientific awareness. The stories ingrained in our childhood will not leave us in our lifetime. Despite its irrational quality the thoughts are wrapped in our cultural DNA. We can see many athletes and players who prefer jerseys and boots they wore in a particular winning day presuming that it

would bring luck to them. However, we cannot deny the fact that these silly superstitions are helping them to reduce anxiety to a good level.

Psychologists states that human beings have a proclivity towards establishing links between their thoughts and actions. It can be termed as post-hoc fallacy. It is the belief that one thing or event causes another to happen as in cause and effect but there is no proof of that claim. Human beings also have a tendency to fill in the gaps. In other words, if we cannot explain something in our life with reason, an escape route will be established through superstition. Whenever life goes out of control, we find resort in an external influence. For example if our kid got ill, we might say, "this happened because of the evil eye of the neighbor". Blaming external factors for our own misdeeds and covering our shortcomings are a common practice. Once superstitions get planted in our mind we would be busy collecting evidence to reinforce the belief and try our best to keep ourself blameless. Imagine we read a book about "suicide" and shortly afterwards we hear a sad news of a suicide in our neighborhood we may connect the incident with the book which we read. That could mean reading a book about bad things attracts bad events in our life; but there is no rationale behind the argument. This can be called as pattern seeking which is an innate habit of human brain. That is why we are all trying to find a link with a thing familiar to us. It is funny that we may find some patterns of shapes that don't exist; like shape of a cross in clouds or a heart symbol

in a cup of coffee ... etc. Sometimes the habit of establishing a link becomes a beneficial behavior. For example, prehistoric men associated the rustling of wildgrass to the arrival of enemies and which led to hide themselves in caves. At times it turned out to be a blessing when it was really a pack of wolves or man-eating animals. This behaviour is noted in animals also. Idiosyncratic action of pigeons when food arrived of hoping to get more are example for that. Researchers identified that fruit eating animals can distinguish a poisonous fruit from an edible one this way. This pattern recognition ability ease and save their lives. In the same manner the young animals also imitate the patterns of the parents.

Once we become influenced by superstitious beliefs, our thought process becomes constrained and our action unreasonable. For example, if we wear a 'lucky' shirt for an examination which is unsuitable for the climate it would ofcourse harm us. We, human beings have a gifted brain and we should consciously take efforts to make our thoughts rational. Even while we realize the illogical nature of superstitions our emotional mind may not be ready to accept the fact like the rational brain. If you are afraid of the number 13, courageously board bus number 13, confidently ask for room no. 13 in a hotel. If we can harness our thoughts, nothing wrong will happen. In a gradual manner we will become a strong willed person. One way to overcome superstition is to learn the origin of the superstition. Some superstitions may be specific to a country. Find the origin of the

superstition and it might well be ridiculous. Read autobiographies of people who struggled and succeeded in their life. Just imagine, if they were superstitious, what they would have achieved in their life. Introspect on the superstition which is haunting us and causing inconvenience. The focus should be on the one which disturb us most. Consciously take pains to overcome the fear. I still remember an abandoned house in our village where our grandmother warned us not to go and play because it was haunted by ghost. But the actual reason was that my grandma wanted to prevent us kids from eating a poisonous fruit in the compound of the abandoned house. But later in my teens I realized the fact. In short, we should cover the scraps of unverifiable facts if the continued belief in them could damage our well being.

It is our mind that believes superstitions; so the change also should come from our mind. We all have the ability to analysis a problem rationally and scientifically. If somebody wants to get past superstitions they have to fill the mind with a scientific temperament.

Challenge the superstition and get exposed to it. Keeping a scientific temperament can help us understand things in a rational way. It is a fact that rejection of superstitions from our life is the result of the effect of our reasoning skills. It generally comes as a result of maturity than education. Anyway it is time we stopped falling prey to superstitions in the age of science. As per the Indian constitution, fundamental duty of Indian citizens is to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry. Youth should understand this and come forward to keep the momentum of social progress. However if your superstitious beliefs are gradually slipping out of your hand, check out with a clinical psychologist to assure that it not an indication of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. If you realize that your life is totally controlled by a series of rituals and it is beyond your control, and without that you are in panic, then it is an indication of the need for professional help. Don't be ashamed to accept that.





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AMAZING EGYPT VISIT

While holidaying in Egypt you will not find huge shopping malls, of limousines or high tech electronic gadgets. On the other hand, you will be excited to see ancient monuments, temples, pyramids and, above all, the mighty Nile River, the lifeline of Egypt.

Our flight from Bangalore had a stopover at Kuwait and the next flight to Cairo, the capital of Egypt, took off at about 11.00AM. I could see through the window the vast expanse of golden sand all along. There was no trace of water or greenery anywhere around. Of course no habitation also. I really kept wondering about this extreme geographical change.

On reaching Cairo, we checked in at a hotel that had a splendid view of a small branch of the Nile. Many of our co-travellers wondered if that is all the Nile is the longest river in the world.

On the second day of our trip we left for Alexandria, a town on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It separates Africa from Europe. There are number of ancient structures in Alexandria. There was cold

breeze and the weather was pleasant all through the day. While returning from Alexandria, it started raining and continued till we reached Cairo. But again, all along journey except for a few acacia bushes you don't find any greenery.

The next day we saw mummies in an Egyptian museum near our hotel. Ancient Egyptians had the technology and knowhow to preserve human bodies for a long time without noticeable change. We also visited the only market called Khan El Khalili bazaar famous for carpets, bags, bangles, etc.

Many things have fascinated me in this life. But if you ask me what I think is the most fascinating, then I would mention two things. One is train. My mother used to tell me that I refused to get down from a train in my childhood when I was taken to Nanjangud, a small temple town near Mysore to perform a ritual at the temple. My parents had to force me to get down from the train. This love for the trains is still there in me even now, after travelling to so many places in India in all class and types of trains, be it AC-First, AC-Two Tier, to general class and Shatabdi express, Rajdhani, Duronto, etc.

My other fascination is with rivers. The flowing water and the banks that define the river space, the meanderings, trees and greenery across the banks are a feast to the eyes. In my view, a river represents a jubilant life. The fresh water flowing sometimes over a rocky terrain, and then the clear view of sand below the shallow water, ever lively fishes moving in schools and all these will make you sit on the banks for long, oblivion of how time passed. The most important reason to visit Egypt was to see the Nile, the longest River on the planet earth. When I really saw the river at close quarters during our cruise from Aswan to Luxor, it was simply overwhelming and my joy knew no bounds. Though I have seen a number of rivers in India and in other countries like Russia, Thailand, Malaysia, etc, the Nile is simply captivating.



The magnificent Nile River view from our cruise deck

There is lot of information available on internet about Nile and it is all worthy reading. Just to keep the continuity I would like to mention a few things. Nile takes birth in Lake Victoria and has two tributaries the White Nile and Blue Nile joining together in Sudan. The Nile traverses 11 countries and the Aswan dam forms a major lake called. Just to say how big Lake Nasser is it is more

than the distance between Bangalore to Chennai. The Lake is simply massive.

On the day of our visit to Abu Simbel, an ancient temple we started off early at about 3.00 am and the road was just straight. On both sides of the road I could see only sand for as far as earth meets the sky and nothing else. This is something quite memorable. After travelling for about 250 km we reached Abu Simbel. This huge temple was submerged in Nasser Lake and had been reclaimed from the water. The contrast of Blue water and golden sand is mesmerizing.



The Abu Simbel near Lake Nasser

Apart from this, we had a horse ride in the early morning to Kom Ombo temple and Edfu temple. All these temples have a great history and there is so much to know about the ancient culture of Egyptians.

Aswan is a small town mainly known for the two dams, the Aswan Lake and Aswan high dam. The weather was very pleasant in the month of February and if we think Egypt is very warm, it is not true. In February there was cool breeze over the River Nile on the sun deck of our boat as we cruised from Aswan to Luxor.



Cultivation on the west bank of Nile River near Luxor

Luxor is another town on the banks of the Nile. We stayed in one of the posh hotels called Steigenberger Nile Palace, a five star hotel, overlooking the east bank of the Nile. The River Nile, truly the life line of Egypt, is well maintained by the people as they understand her importance to their very existence. All through our Journey during the cruise we saw clear water without any plastic or garbage in the water.



Interior of cruise Princess Sarah

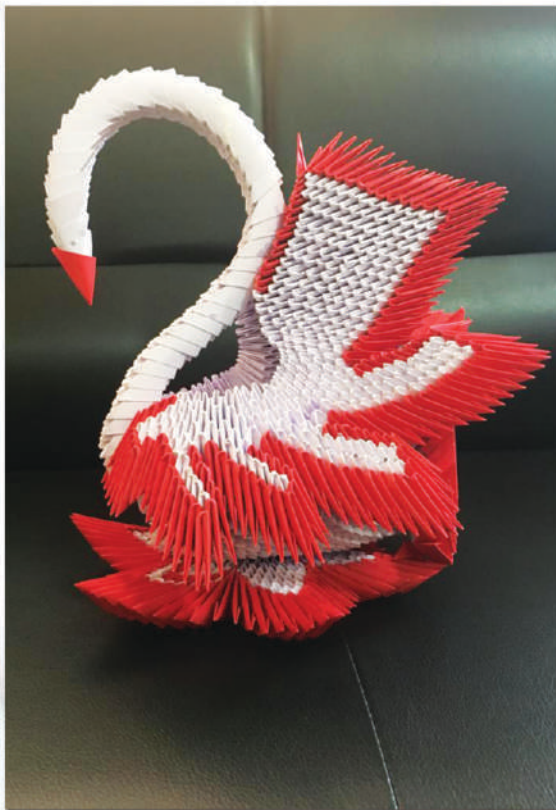
Food was not at all a problem as Egyptians understand the concept of vegetarian. In Ramses Hilton hotel in Cairo a separate counter of Indian food was available specially made for us. There was also an Indian restaurant at Luxor with Rice, Rotis and Indian curry for lunch.

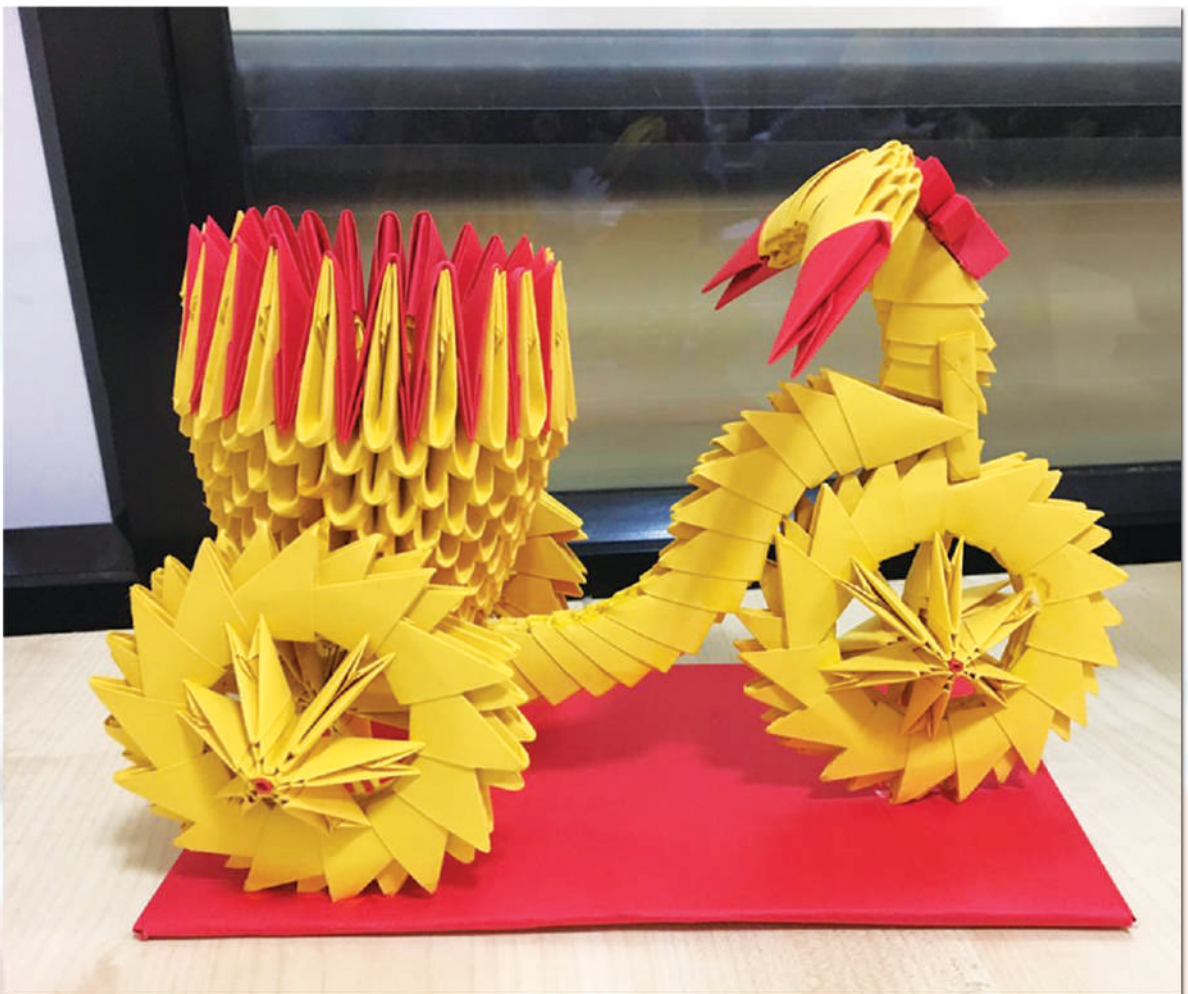
While winding up our Egyptian tour, we started detour from Luxor in the early morning to board a flight to Cairo. It was early morning, 5.00 am, when we were sitting in a coach heading to airport. The tour manager told us "Egypt is quite safe for tourists as you must have seen and please make one more visit and inform your friends." I really liked the way he invited us for a second visit. This gesture reminded me of visiting any of our relatives and the customary invitation for a next visit.



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Origami and Craft Work







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A Trip to SHAR

A team of 49 students and 8 teachers visited SDSC SHAR on 3-11-18. We started our journey on 2-11-18 at around 3PM, from IIST in a sleeper bus and a mini bus. Though it took almost twenty hours for us to reach Sriharikota, the journey was really awesome. At SHAR we were received by a team headed by Sri. Apurba Kanjilal, Smt. Sujata Mohan, and Sri. Gopi. We quickly checked in to our respective rooms, and then we took a sumptuous lunch. After lunch two large buses were arranged for the students and teachers, and a team of SDSC SHAR scientists escorted us to the site.



Models of MOM and EDUSAT

The visit was arranged as part of the B. Tech Aerospace Course, Integrated Space Vehicle Design taught by our honorable chancellor Dr. B N Suresh. We witnessed the Integration site and were amazed by the towering glory of GSLV Mark 3. Senior Scientist Sri. Rajasekharan and IIST alumnus Deepanshu Tiwari took us to the extreme top and explained integration step by step with utmost patience. Later we visited the two launch pads, and also the integration facility arranged for the proposed HSP Mission, and the nuances were explained by Sri. Kanjilal. Then we moved to the Radar facility, and again another alumnus Mr. Pinaki Ranjan, who is doing his project on Radar explained at length about skin mode and transponder mode radars. From there we moved to the Mission Control Room where the launches are controlled and witnessed. The last place we visited was the grand SHAR Space Museum. We received an excellent space awareness kit after our visit.



Poster in the Space Museum



Mini models at SDSC SHAR, Space Museum

Later we had tea and snacks from the mess and we concluded the day's programme with a grand dinner. During the course of our stay in SHAR we met a lot of IIST Alumni and were really amazed by the knowledge and skill they have gathered. We were excited realising that they are enjoying their job to the very core. The next day we started our trip back to Valiamala from SHAR at 4:00 am after taking tea.

We are extremely thankful to the SHAR Centre and those helpful people, who, inspite of their busy schedule, and without considering the fact that Saturday is a holiday, patiently spared the entire day for us, explaining everything about launch vehicles and missions.

It was a perfect blend of academics and application. We, the students and teachers felt really humbled and honoured after the visit. How we long to contribute our best to our nation's space endeavours.



Photo Courtesy: Sagnik Dutta



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नवांकुर

नव अंकुर उठ मृदा से,
नव आशा नव गीत लाया।
जल की चंचलता से आनंदित,
मृदु जीवन था मृदा से पाया।।
नव ध्वनि नव धारा की,
जग में नव ऋतु ले आया।
नव आनंद से नव प्रफुल्लित,
नव जीवन था उसने पाया।।



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അമ്മ

പിറവി നീ തന്നെ
നൽകിയെന്നാകിലും...
നിനക്കു നൽകുവാൻ,
എനിക്കില്ലയൊന്നുമേ...
പകർന്നു നൽകിയ,
പാലിനും പ്രാണനും...
പകരമേകുവാൻ,
ശൂന്യനാണിന്നു ഞാൻ...

പിടയ്ക്കും നെഞ്ചിന്റെ,
നോവുകളൊക്കെയും...
പകുത്തു നൽകിയാൽ,
നീയേൽക്കുമെങ്കിലും...
എനിക്കുവേണ്ടി നീ,
വാർക്കുന്ന കണ്ണീരാൽ...
തിളക്കുകയാണെന്റെ,
ദേഹവും ദേഹിയും...
ക്ഷമിക്ക വേണ്ടിനി,
തെല്ലുമേയെന്നോട്...
ദുഷിച്ച പുത്രനെ,
ദൂരത്തകറ്റുക...

ജനിച്ചുപോയി ഞാൻ,
ഈ മണ്ണിലെങ്കിലും...
കൊതിച്ചതില്ലിങ്ങു,
വാഴുവാൻ തെല്ലുമേ...
നമിക്കുന്നു ഞാൻ അമ്മേ,
പിഴച്ചുപോയാരീ മകൻ...
നിനക്കൊരിക്കലും,
പുത്രനായിട്ടില്ല ഞാൻ...





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IIST/IP/58/DEC/2018

कला साहित्य पत्रिका

भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान की अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका

सुरभि: कला साहित्य पत्रिका भारतीय अंतरिक्ष विज्ञान एवं प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान द्वारा प्रकाशित अर्धवार्षिक पत्रिका है जिसमें कलाकृतियों एवं सर्गात्मक रचनाओं का प्रकाशन किया जाता है जैसे – कहानियाँ, कविताएँ, अनुस्मरण, फिल्मों एवं पुस्तकों की समीक्षाएँ, यात्रा विवरण, भेंट वार्ताएँ, रिपोर्ट, आरेख, छाया चित्र, वैज्ञानिक साहित्य, पेन्सिल ड्रॉइंग, चित्ररचनाएं आदि । अंतरिक्ष विभाग के विविध केंद्रों के लोगों की सर्गात्मक प्रतिभा को प्रोत्साहन देने में यह पत्रिका विशेष रुचि रखती है। इस पत्रिका में अंग्रेजी, हिंदी एवं भारत की किसी भाषा की रचनाएँ शामिल की जाती हैं। पत्रिका में प्रकाशन के लिए उपर्युक्त प्रकार की रचनाएं आमंत्रित की जाती हैं।

Surabhi: Journal of Arts and Literature is a bi-annual art and creative journal published by Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology. It publishes creative and critical literary pieces like short stories, poems, memoirs, film/book reviews, travelogues, interviews, reports, sketches, photography, science fiction, pencil drawings and paintings. It has special interest in boosting the creative talents of people from various Centres of DOS. It intends to publish articles in English, Hindi, and in any Indian regional language. The Journal invites submissions in the above category for publication.

आप अपनी रचनाओं की सॉफ्ट कॉपी सह संपादक को निम्नलिखित ई मेल पते पर भेज दें। /
You may please send soft copies of your submissions to the Associate Editor to the following e-mail ID:

gigyjalex@gmail.com / gigy@iist.ac.in

SURABHI

Journal of Arts and Literature

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