

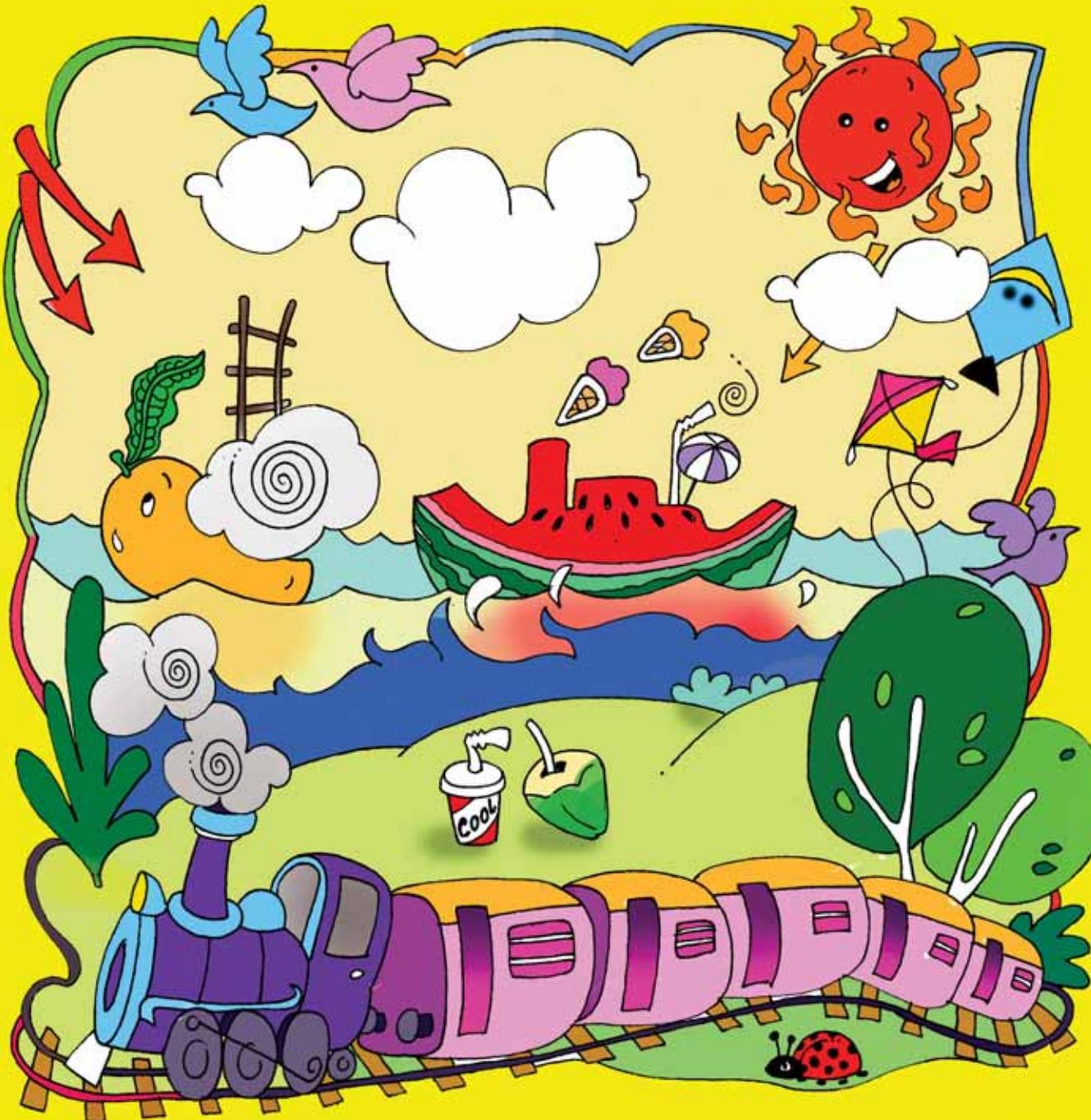


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Readers' Club Bulletin

पाठक मंच बुलेटिन

Vol. 18, No. 6, June 2013





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कृपया भुगतान नेशनल बुक ट्रस्ट, इंडिया के नाम भेजें।

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यह बुलेटिन राष्ट्रीय बाल साहित्य केंद्र से जुड़े पाठक मंचों को निःशुल्क वितरित किया जाता है।

NBT-Dastkar Summer Festival of Reading

National Book Trust, India in association with Dastkar, a society for crafts and craftspeople organised an event *Kidsstuff: Craft Carnival for Kids* at Nature Bazaar, Kisan Haat, Andheria Modh, New Delhi from 17 to 26 May 2013. The specially designed *Forest of Imagination*, a dedicated book corner for exhibition of books and holding book-related activities was the centre of attraction for visitors especially children in this Festival.

A hand-made imaginary tree with different varieties of fruits depicting fun, eternal knowledge and wisdom was the unique feature of the book corner. Small book marks were also hung up on the tree for children to draw pictures and write down their thoughts. The other important feature was the *Illustrators' Corner* where illustrations drawn by 10 eminent Indian artists were displayed.

Beneath the book tree, storytelling sessions and workshops were organised in the carnival. Everyday a renowned author-illustrator duo interacted with children. They



read out stories and inspired children to draw illustrations on the lines of the narrated story. Children of all age-groups along with their friends, parents and grand parents enthusiastically participated in the workshops.

The renowned authors and illustrators who conducted the workshops included Atanu Roy, Kshama Sharma, Suvidha Mistry, Neeta Gangopadhyay, Ratna Manucha, Taposhi Ghoshal, Deepa Agarwal, Partha Sengupta, Manjul Bajaj, Suddhasatwa Basu, Ruchi Singh, Paro Anand, Subir Roy, Priya Nagrajan, Shashi Shetye and V K Sharma.

Apart from NBT, renowned publishers including Rupa & Co., Scholastic India, Hachette India and Penguin India had put up their stalls in this carnival. The carnival was an attempt to bring children closer to the world of books and to broaden their world of imagination.

Amongst the eminent personalities those visited the carnival were Meira Kumar, Hon'ble Speaker of Lok Sabha and M A Sikandar, Director, NBT.



मोलभाव

डॉ. अमिताभ शंकर राय चौधरी

“लँगड़ा तीस! दसहरी पच्चीस!” सड़क के दोनों किनारे आमवाले हाँक लगा रहे हैं।

आसमान में शाम निराली। नीचे ठेलों पर आम की हरियाली। हरा लँगड़ा और पीला दसहरी आम।

लालता प्रसाद ने सोचा, घर के लिए दो किलो आम ले चलते हैं। सीजन की पहली सौगात। पत्नी खुश हो जाएगी। आँखों-ही-आँखों में फलवालों को लगे तौलने। कौन जरा सस्ता देगा? किससे मोलभाव किया जा सकता है? वरना आजकल उनलोगों का मिजाज इतना चढ़ा रहता है कि फट से कह देंगे-लेना है तो लो, वरना आगे बढ़ो। अरे बाप रे!

सामने ठेले के पीछे एक बाँका-सा नौजवान खड़ा था। लंबे बाल। एक कान में रिंग। शर्ट के ऊपर से लटकती सोने की चेन। मोबाइल पर किसी पर झल्ला रहा था-“अरे ढाई लाख का माल है। पड़ा-पड़ा सड़ता रहेगा? ले-देकर ट्रक को मंडी में आओ, पूछना क्या है?”

लालता के कदम ठहर गए। आवाज़ में यथाशक्ति शक्कर घोलकर उसने पूछा-“क्यों भैया, आम कैसे दे रहे हो?”

सिर्फ नजरों से आम के दोनों ढेरों को दिखलाकर उसने कहा-“तीस! पच्चीस!”

“कुछ कम-बेशी?” विनीत जिज्ञासा।

इस पर उस नौजवान ने अपनी नजर ऐसे फेर ली जैसे लड़की के बाप के दहेज कम करने का रिक्वेस्ट सुनकर लड़के का बाप अपनी आँखें फेर लेता है।

एक बार लालता प्रसाद ने फिर से निवेदन करने का प्रयास किया। मगर सिर्फ बुदबुदाकर रह गया। चलो, मन कहीं और है ठौर...

इधर-उधर दनदनाते वाहनों को देखते हुए वह सड़क पार कर गया।

लैम्पपोस्ट के नीचे जहाँ अँधेरा है, वहाँ ठेले के पास एक गंजा बुढ़ा खड़ा था। गंजी खोपड़ी अँधेरे में भी चमक रही थी। मगर मूँछें थीं कि रुस्तमे हिंद! जैसे किसी कर्नल ब्रिगेडियर की हो! उसने बुलाया-“ले जा बाबू, ऐसन आम कहीं नहीं मिलेगा।”

“कैसे दे रहे हो?”

“एक दाम। लँगड़ा तीस नहीं, अट्ठाइस। दसहरी पच्चीस नहीं चौबीस!”

निराशा के अँधकार में उम्मीद की लौ!

“कुछ कम नहीं होगा!”

“अरे बाबू, अभी तो सीजन का पहला आम है। अभैये कैसे कम हो जाएगा? कम में खाना हो तो औरो दू सप्ताह बाद आइए।”

बुढ़रु की घोषणा उसी अंदाज में जैसे जनतंत्र को बचाने के लिए राष्ट्रपति बुश को बहुत ही मजबूरी में इराक पर चढ़ाई की घोषणा करनी पड़ी थी।

इस महीने की हिंदी प्रचारिणी पत्रिका में लालता ने पढ़ा था कि मुगल बादशाह आलमगीर (औरंगजेब) अपने बगीचे के खास-खास आमों का नाम संस्कृत में रखते थे—जैसे रसनाविलास, सुधारस वगैरह। लालता ने मन-ही-मन कहा—जहाँपनाह, आइए आम खरीदिए, तब न पता चले कि आम में कितनी सुधा है और कितना करेला। आम लेना तो सचमुच विलासिता है। व्यसन!

सोचते, सकुचाते और मोलभाव करते-करते आधा घंटा बीत चुका। पानवाले की दुकान से हटकर और एक ठेला। एक दस-बारह साल का लड़का आम बेच रहा है। बगल में उसकी माँ एक पैकिंग बॉक्स पर बैठी हुई है। बगल में एक डंडा। लालता जैसे ग्राहकों के लिए नहीं, साँड़ के लिए। फिर वही मोलभाव। उस लड़के ने तर्कयुद्ध में न जाकर सीधे घोड़े की ढाई चाल चली—“ए माई, जरा इनके देख!”

“अरे बाबू, लेना है तो लो, वरना क्या मोलभाव कर रहे हो?” रणचंडी खड़ी हो गई।

“तुम लोगों का रेट भी तो जैसे कम्प्यूटर में डला हुआ है। टस-से-मस नहीं।”

“तुमही जरा कुछ कहो। का भाव का लोगे?”

फट से मुँह से निकल गया—“लँगड़ा

बीस का दोगी?” एक पल के लिए लालता को लगा, वह औरत अपने डंडे से उसके सिर पर वार कर देगी। फट्टास—

मगर जो कुछ हुआ वह उससे भी ज्यादा खतरनाक था। वह अपना सिर पीटकर चीखने लगी—“अरे बाप रे! हम गरीबों को भूखा मार डालोगे बाबू! उतने की तो खरीद भी नहीं है।”

इधर-उधर ठेलों के पास खड़े लोग इधर देखने लगे। लालता सकपका गए।

छटंकी उस्ताद भी उछलने लगा, “तब से खाली का भाव-का-भाव। लेवे के न देवे के।”

भीड़ अब इस ठेले के इर्द-गिर्द जुटने लगी।

एक ऐनक वाले सज्जन (या दुर्जन) ने टिप्पणी की—“दिल्ली हाट में महाबली खली के नाम से आम बिक रहा है। खास किसिम के आम का नाम मल्लिका शोरावत भी है। अब वो सब दस-बीस रुपये में थोड़े ही मिलेंगे।”





“तब?” आमवाली के हाथ लगाम लग गई, “बीस रुपये किलो लँगड़ा तो तुम्हारी ससुराल में भी नहीं मिलेगा।”

मारे झुंझलाहट के लालता प्रसाद को भी गुस्सा आ गया—“मेरे ससुर आम बेचते हैं? जरा होश से बात करो!”

“तब का बड़का भारी एम.पी. विधायक हैं? लेना है तो लो, वरना क्या हमारी बोहनी खराब कर रहे हो?”

दो मर्दों की लड़ाई में मजा है। मगर एक आदमी और एक औरत की तू-तू मैं-मैं में एक अलग बॉक्स ऑफिस का रस है। हंगामा देखकर एक पुलिसवाला आकर ठेले पर लाठी पटकने लगा—“एक तो सड़क पर जाम लगा रखा है। उस पर झगड़ा?” कहते हुए उसने

दो लँगड़े उठा लिए।

अब वह औरत सीधे लालता प्रसाद पर झल्लाने लगी—“सत्यानाश हो तुम्हारा! तुम्हारे ही कारण...”

“क्या बक रही हो? मैंने क्या किया? चलो, दे दो लँगड़ा दो किलो!”

लड़का फट से तौलने लगा। लालता लपककर एक-एक आम देख-सूँघकर धरने लगे। उस औरत ने उसके हाथ से आम छीन लिया—“इस तरह से बीनने लगोगे तो हम आम खूब बेच चुके!”

आखिर सौदा लिया गया। लालता ने फिर से पूछा—“कितना हुआ?”

“फिर पूछ रहे हो? छप्पन रुपये।”

लालता ने पचास का नोट थमा दिया—“इससे आज नहीं हो जाएगा?”

शूरवीरों की तरह बड़े ही नाटकीय अंदाज में उस औरत ने अपनी लाठी लल्लन के पैरों के पास रख दी। हाथ जोड़कर लगी चिल्लाने—“अब माफ करो बाबू। पुलिस दो आम ले गई। दीवान आएगा तो दो किलो ले जाएगा। तुम आम लेकर घर जाओ। चाहो तो यह पचास भी लेते जाओ। बस, हमें बख्स दो।”

और कुछ कहना लालता ने मुनासिब न समझा। आम लेकर मन ही मन मुस्कुराते हुए घर की ओर चल पड़े...। (क्रमशः)

सी-26/35-40 ए, रामकटोरा,
वाराणसी-221001 (उ.प्र.)

A Torn Quilt Tale

Amarendra Chakravarty

The two countries lie next to each other with a river meanders through both of them. We know that barbed wire fences can divide countries but not rivers. You can't even draw a line across water.

One day while fishing, fisher folk of a country entered into the water of another. Nobody was around to tell them exactly where the river of a country ends and where the other begins.

It was a day of monsoon when Judhisthir went out with his two sons to fish for Eilish. He had no idea when he had sailed beyond his own country and crossed over to the next.

Throughout the night he had watched the shoals of Eilish getting caught in his net. In the morning he said to his sons, "What luck! Wherever we are dropping net we are getting shoals and shoals of Eilish! It looks like sacks and sacks of silver coins!"

Suddenly he realised that they were on the other side of the country. A strange river-patrol boat was coming towards them. The boat drew nearer and a policeman jumped onto their boat. He took their boat towards the bank of the river.

Judhisthir and his two minor sons were kept in a lock-up the whole night under the charges of stealing fish. The next day when they were produced in the court, the Magistrate ordered one year life imprisonment for Judhisthir, and only three-month terms for his two sons keeping in view their tender age.

And the Eilish? They were stolen goods and were therefore ordered back into the river.

Judhisthir adored his two sons. Their mother had died while collecting shrimp seedlings on the bank of Bidyadhari river. A crocodile pulled her into the river biting her knees. At that time the boys were very young and were playing under the shade of *hetaal* and *garaan* trees. After that they had never seen their mother again.

Judhisthir and his sons were imprisoned separately in the jail.

The brothers used to cry a lot in the beginning, and then would sit quietly or fall asleep, exhausted. Gradually, they got used to pain.

The two brothers had once learnt rhymes for few years in a school located three villages away from their home.

Now they recited those rhymes to each other, their bodies rocking slowly. These rhymes had tigers, crocodiles, fish, honey, boats, rivers, which were the creations of village poets.

As soon as the three months ended, one day a policeman came and released the boys out of the prison and put them on a rickshaw and said to the rickshaw puller, “Take them straight to the river bank. Their boat is lying there tied to a *sirish* tree. Make sure that they aboard the boat before you report back to the police station.”

The boys burst into tears the moment they heard this. They asked, “But where’s our *Baba*?”

The policeman took a betel leaf and nut out of a container, put them into his



mouth and chewed a little, before explaining, “He’s no longer around. He wept and wept over your woes until he died.” The boys cried loudly. On seeing them into tears the policeman expressed his sympathy towards them. His eyes were looking moist as well. He spat out some betel-juice and wiped his eyes with a handkerchief.

The boys sat on to the boat and sped across water. The elder one swung the helm around in a strong grip with his hands moving fast. The younger one, putting all his strength, pulled at the two oars with his hands. Suddenly, they noticed a bird was accompanying them since the beginning of their journey. It was flying at a height unusual for the bird. Low, almost touching their heads, right in front of the boat.

The elder boy cried to his younger brother, “Ketu, this could be our father! May be *Baba* is returning home with us in the form of a bird! We haven’t ever seen a bird fly so low, except when diving for fish, have we?”

Ketu was pulling at the oars with all his might. He said, “*Dada*, the tragedy has muddled your head. How can a man transform into a bird?”

“Can’t a man’s soul fly like a bird? *Baba*’s soul must be following us in the form of a bird!” Justified the elder

brother.

Nobody knew which way the boat was heading for. Had they crossed into their own river? Or were they still on the foreign water? They had never come so far, not even with their father. This river was a complete stranger to them.

The day was about to end, They were hungry and felt queasy.

Their limbs were on the verge of collapse. It looked as if they no longer had the strength to grip the helm or pull at the oars. Not a single boat, motorboat or launch was to be seen. Had they trespassed into foreign territory again? And the river kept getting wider and wider, ready to join the sea soon.

Suddenly, dusk approached. It spread itself over the river like a hand-net flung into air. The bird disappeared from the view. Then, only a little distance away a two-tiered ship rose in that diaphanous darkness. A small rowboat started off next to the ship and sped towards them like an arrow. A man picked up a massive anchor and threw it into their boat. The boat bobbed madly and nearly capsized.

The rowboat began speeding back towards the ship, tugging their boat along. The brothers were then forced up into the ship along rope ladders.

There were about twenty to twenty-five people on board. A man sat on a

bright plastic chair with a revolver. As soon as his eyes fell upon the brothers, he asked, “Where were you heading for?”

The terrible sound of his voice reduced the elder boy to instant tears and it was younger who replied, “We were returning to our own land, and our village.”

“What’s the name of your land? And that of your village? Which way is it?”

Elder trembled as soon as he heard that voice again, but managed to say as clearly as he could, “The country is called- Our Country. The village is called Torn Quilt. But sir, we do not know which way it is.”

“Stop talking in riddles! If you lie I’ll ...”, he pointed the revolver at them, “ ... tell me now, where exactly are you coming from?”

Seeing that the elder brother was getting unduly alarmed, Ketu replied, calmly, “We had gone out to fish for Eilish but had trespassed into foreign waters unknowingly. The police there threw us into jail for three months and set us free only this morning. We are on our way home.”

The man told one of his men, “Give them something to eat. They haven’t had a bite since morning.”

Saffron-rice with meat, curries-ribs,

foot-long pieces of Eilish fish, *Kheer* and other desserts were brought to them instantly.

“Eat. You’ll be eating this food everyday now, twice a day. And getting lots of money than you have been getting from fishing for *Eilish*.”

The two were already seated in front of the food. They could not resist for a second longer. But just as the elder brother had brought a handful of saffron-rice to his mouth, younger asked the stranger suspiciously, “Why are you feeding us all this? Why do you intend to give us money?”

“All you’ll have to do is carry some stuff from this country on your boat, to the other. Twice, may be thrice a week. Not along illegal routes, you must take the legal one. There are many such routes along this river, and you won’t be forgetting those once we’ve shown you.” The man answered.

Elder stuffed the second handful into his mouth and mumbled, “Hope the load won’t be too heavy, sir?”

But before the man could reply, younger asked, “What exactly will be in the load?”

“Some light, *very* light goods. Small things like foreign watches, packets of hemp, gold biscuits! You’ll be sailing to and fro, free of all worries. Your

appearance is so innocent that nobody will become suspicious of you. Moreover, your experiences in the river are an added asset!” the man said.

“Is it eesmuggling?”

“Smuggling, if you call it so. Business, if you call it business. Don’t things get transported on trains, ships and aeroplanes? Don’t mangoes, roses or tea get exported from one country to the other? This is the same. All you have to be sure of is that not even the birds and crows get to know about it.”

Younger was yet to take the first handful of saffron-rice into his mouth, but he shot to his feet like lightning, “*Dada*, don’t eat this stuff! Don’t! This food’s not to be touched!”

The man ordered his men in a calm voice, “Put both of them in a room for now.”

In the darkness where they had been kept, the two brothers didn’t wail or whimper, nor rock and recite rhymes to each other. All they did was sit quietly and think.

Mother used to love them so much, but they wouldn’t be able to find her again. *Baba* also used to love them, but they wouldn’t be able to go to him either, not in this lifetime, and if such misery was not bad enough, they’d fallen into a trap now! And had landed



in the devil's lair!

Five days later, the brothers reached their own village-Torn Quilt, in their own boat. How exactly they had evaded the men on the ship, or crossed the strange river to locate their village, or how they managed to survive those five days, I do not have the power to explain, nor does anybody else. But everyone does keep writing about how man's powers expand in so many ways, even beyond our imagination, when they face danger. And it is true that every single person of the Torn Quilt village was addicted to water. And the two brothers were very good at swimming, for miles tugging

along a submerged boat with a piece of rope, with only their noses showing above water!

Meanwhile, as was expected, the disappearance of the three people, of whom two were quite young, had caused more than a few sighs and wails. The news had reached to the new Officer-in-Charge at the police station situated five villages afar. He came personally and ordered the villagers that the three should present themselves to him as soon as they returned.

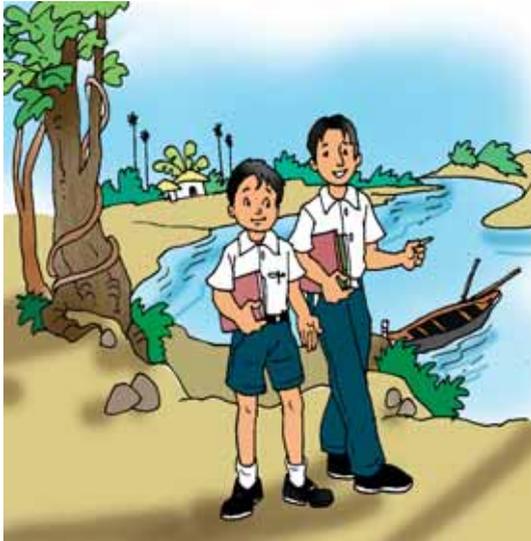
The two brothers reached home at night. They ate their fill of stale rice steeped in water, with salt and chillies

offered by the neighbours and slept in peace. The next morning, they went and stood in front of the Officer-in-Charge.

The officer went ballistic. “Why just two, where’s the third?”

But he was stunned into silence by listening their tale of woe. In the middle of which he sighed heavily, squeaked “hmmm ... ,” and said, “If only I had just ten constables who can forego saffron-rice or curries-ribs and *kebabs*, I could have turned villages like Torn Quilt, Water Lily, Binnidhanpur and other ten to twenty such villages in these parts-into the god’s own country!”

The very next day, the Officer-in-Charge accompanied the two brothers to a school situated three villages afar and had them readmitted. He declared that he would write to the Government



so that the brothers could join the same police station as soon as their studies were over to become policemen. He believed in young people joining the police force as they are always full of courage, and free of greed. Elders are exactly the opposite. With minds oozing greed and their courage measures equal to a wet box of matches!

- A Torn Quilt Tale: A tale of a village named Torn Quilt or *Chhenra Kantha*. *Kantha* are wrappers stitched together from old and torn cloth, widely used in the villages of West Bengal. Usually found worn from prolonged use, they act as a symbol of the villagers’ strained circumstances.
- Eilish: a freshwater river fish, also called Hilsa.
- *Hetaal*: A tree common to the Sunderban area.
- *Garaan*: A tree common to the Sunderban area.
- *Sirish*: A tree common to the Sunderban area.
- *Baba*: Daddy, father.
- *Dada*: Elder Brother
- *Kheer*: Reduced and sweetened milk.

(From NBT’s publication *Torn Quilt Tales*)

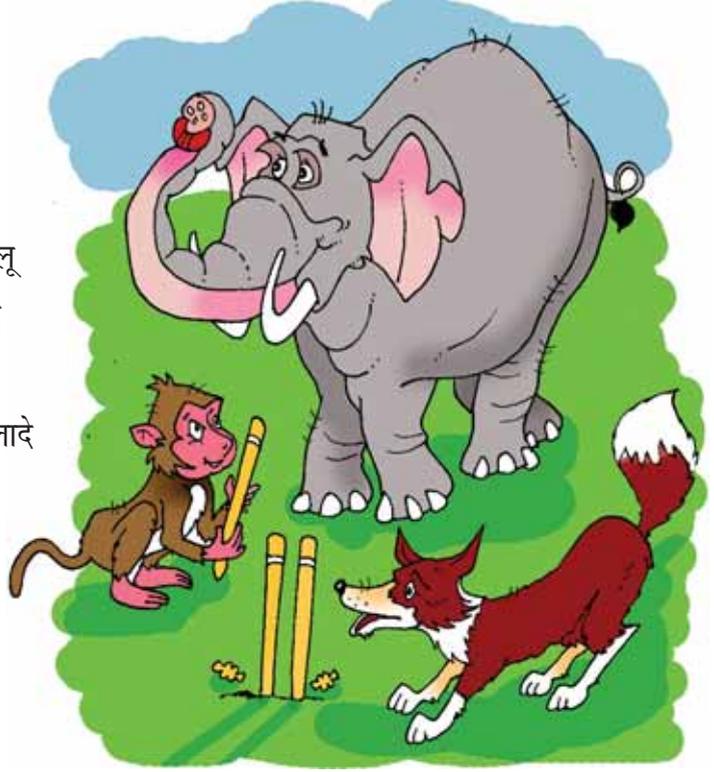
बल्ला से गिल्ला

विद्यु भूषण मंडल

क्रिकेट का मूड बनाया
बंदर खरहा भालू
गीदड़ को बुलाया
चीते को फुसलाया
साथ हो लिया हाथी कालू
झूमते हुए सब चल पड़े
खुशी से कूदते-उछलते
साज व सामान पीठ पर लादे
कालू चला आगे-आगे
मैदान बीच विकेट गड़ा

टॉस हुई
दो दल बने
अम्पायर भी हुआ खड़ा
पर, अब क्या हो?
गायब है बल्ला
ओह! हम खेलें कैसे?
मच गया भारी हल्ला

चालाक लोमड़ी, जुगत भिड़ाई
अनोखा एक प्लान बनाई
मत करो अब शोर दोस्तों
न मचाओ हल्ला-गुल्ला



आओ, सब मिल विकेट उखाड़ें
खेलें डण्डा-गिल्ला
'आहें' अब 'आहा' बन गया
मस्ती में उठे सब झूम
लटके चेहरे फिर खिल गए
मच गया खेल में भारी धूम।

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The Dinosaurs

Sudha Puri

Chitra hugged the new stuffed toy – a dinosaur. In fact, they were two of them. She named them, Bihu and Hola. The two names were based on two important festivals of India–*Bihu*, an Assamese festival and *Hola* or *Hola Mohalla*, a festival of Punjab, celebrated by the Sikhs.

Her father had brought her these toys from Germany, where he had gone for an official trip. The two of them were very funny. They were battery operated toys and when she clapped they rolled

over each other laughing loudly in the most infectious manner.

They were placed in a bright red basket. They were military green in colour and when started by clapping, seemed to be rolling over each other, unable to control their laughter.

Somehow, Chitra could sense that they were pretending to be just toys and were actually real dinosaurs. They were behaving like toys, so that children would feel free to play with them and not run away from them fearing that they will roar at them.

Chitra was not afraid of animals. In fact it was she, who held Anu's hand tightly when Aunty Shama's dog barked at them, whenever they crossed her garden to go to Sanjay's house to play. Anu was terrified of it, even though it was securely tied up in the verandah.

Chitra was not afraid of the cows, buffaloes, donkeys, horses and monkeys which she saw on a regular basis around her house on the streets or the parks nearby.

Even the white and pink painted elephant, with a big bell around its neck, which they saw occasionally in their



street, advertising some herbal hair oil, looked friendly to her. It was their eyes, which seemed to be able to 'see', that she was not afraid of them and that was what made them like her and know that she liked them too.

Chitra loved the caged parrot, Mitthu, too, hanging outside Auntie Cythia's house. She always felt sorry for it being caged like that, but it seemed to be pretty well adjusted to its captivity and kept learning new words and tricks.

The street dogs, Kalu and Goru, seemed to be perpetually running here and there and barking at one and all, at all the times. Chitra was not afraid of them as well.

Sometimes her mother told her to feed them with the left over *rotis* (Indian bread) at night. She would go out of the main gate of her house and call out with a 'tch-tch' sound made by the clicking of her tongue, in a typical way, and they seemed to emerge from the back lanes of their colony, wagging their tails swiftly and their eyes shining with anticipation of the *rotis*.

She would then break the *rotis* in smaller pieces and throw them on the ground in front of them. Sometimes they first sniffed the pieces and looked away and at other times they ate them one by one. Chitra loved to see them eating the *rotis*.

It must have been her high comfort level with the animals that Chitra could tell that the dinosaurs were actually real and were just pretending to be toys. Moreover, they were believed to be extinct many thousand years ago and did not want to attract undue attention, by starting a new controversy about their reappearing on the earth.

They were very shy. Chitra could say that, seeing the way they curled up in the basket, nudging to get under each other, laughing, as if trying to get over their embarrassment in the new surroundings.

The presence of her neighbourhood friends – Anu, Bhramjot, Meenakshi, Yithew and Raiyan – did not improve matters much.

They had all come to see Chitra's new toys. They found the new names of the dinosaurs very interesting, specially, Anu whose father was from Goa and mother from Assam.

As soon as she heard the name of one of them as *Bihu*, she could not control her excitement and told them, all that she had heard from her mother about the festival. Brahrajot, being a Sikh boy was bursting with information on *Hola Mohalla*.

In a short while, Anu's mother came to call her. There were many relatives in her house that day, as they were celebrating *Bihu* in a small way, with a

special lunch for all. Anu requested her mother to invite Chitra and other friends as well. Her mother took Chitra's mother's permission and took all the children to her house.

She made all the children sit together on a *dari* (cotton mat) on the ground in the drawing room of their house. All the relatives had already started eating and the presence of Anu's friends was making the atmosphere all the more jovial and full of fun.

Anu's *nani* (maternal grandmother) greeted them all cheerfully and helped her mother to serve the *coconut laddoo*, *til pitha*, *ghila pitha* and delicious *fish pithika* to the children.

Some of the elders started singing some traditional *Bihu* songs, gesturing the others to join in. Two of Anu's aunts started doing the *Bihu* dance in the open courtyard of their house and many of her young cousins also joined in, giggling all the time.



They danced in simple steps in a circle with their arms behind each other's waist. Later they all formed smaller groups and kept showing some new intricate steps and movements as well with their hands behind their heads or their backs.

Anu's *nani* told the children, that in Assam, *Bihu* was celebrated thrice a year, *Bohag* or *Rongali Bihu* – in the middle of April, *Maagh* or the *Bhogali Bihu* – in the middle of January and *Kaati* or *Kongali Bihu* – in the middle of October.

All the three *Bihus* are connected with agriculture i.e. the harvest, or the beginning of the agriculture season, or the preparation of the rice fields. The *Bohag Bihu* also marks the beginning of the new year for the Assamese.

Brahmjot's mother came calling for him but seeing all the festivities and him enjoying so much, just smiled and greeted Anu's parents. The sight of young boys and girls dancing reminded her of Punjab's famous group folk dance *Bhangra*.

She said excitedly, "Last month, in March just after the festival of *Holi* (the spring festival of colours of the Hindus), the Sikhs had also celebrated *Hola Mohalla*, with a lot of *Kirtan* (group religious singing), *Langar* (community vegetarian feast) and dancing (*Bhangra*) and it was the beginning of the new year

for the Sikh community.”

She wished all of them, ‘a happy new year,’ and asking Brahmjot to come home soon, she went away.

All the children finished their festive food and keeping their plates in the kitchen, went along with Chitra to her house to play with the dinosaurs again. They told many dinosaur stories to each other, which were a mixture of fact and fiction. After sometime they all left for their homes as it was getting dark.

Chitra placed the dinosaur toys on the dining table, on one side of the drawing room. She left for her room saying a warm good bye to them. They did not move at all, but she was determined to catch them unawares in their live form.

As she moved forward casually, she turned suddenly, before going to her room. She managed to see them exchanging puzzled glances with each other. They were clever enough to get back to the lifeless toy mode, when she kept standing near the curtains of her bedroom to see if there was any other movement or action by them.

“I saw you,” she called out from the distance, but they did not move and in fact were very-very still.

“They are acting out their lifelessness very well”, thought Chitra to herself.

She once again went near them and

picking them out of their basket held them like two babies in her arms. Then putting them down she tried to tickle them on their cream bellies. It was then that her grandmother called out to her to come and sleep as next day was school again.

Chitra lied down on her cot close to her grandma’s *charpai* (jute hand woven cot). She saw her mumbling a *mantra* (a prayer) under her breath, as she moved the rosary swiftly between her fingers. Soon she began to doze off, her eyes started shutting and her fingers became slower.

Chitra also started feeling sleepy but her *dadi*’s snoring kept her awake ... wide awake. She was wondering if she should go back to the dinosaurs and play with them but realized that their laughter would wake everybody up and earn her the scorn of her mother and the mocking laughter of her elder brother.

She could clearly hear the tick-tock of the clock, which looked absolutely silent during the day. But the tick-tock was unusually loud and clear and seemed to be coming nearer to her slowly and a little unsurely. She could now feel her bed shaking a little, as something very heavy was moving towards her.

“The dinosaurs,” thought Chitra, “yes they were the dinosaurs, that were exploring the house and moving towards her.”

She slipped out of her bed softly so as not to wake up her *dadi* and tiptoed towards the drawing room. ‘YES! There they were. Standing tall in the middle of the drawing room ... their heads touching the ceiling.’

“Hi!” She whispered.

They looked at her a little startled but realized that there was no point pretending that they were toys anymore. They could see the friendly look in her eyes.

They curled up their long legs and sat down adjusting with each other to fit in the drawing room. “Thank God, we are the dwarf varieties of our group ... these humans live in small rooms,” said one of the dinosaurs.

Chitra told them that she had named them, *Bihu* and *Hola*, and they both repeated their names again and again as if trying to memorize them ... ‘Bihu’, said one, ‘Hola’, said the other. Then they started laughing uncontrollably saying, “Bihu”, “Hola”, “Bihu”, “Hola” ... till Chitra put a finger on her lips and ‘shshd’, them.

“Don’t laugh like that. These are beautiful names, just like the festivals they represent”, said Chitra admonishingly.

“Festivals?” asked the dinos, looking at her in a puzzled way.

“Yes, Bihu is the harvest festival in

the North East of India. It is mainly celebrated in Assam. The people celebrate it with great joy. They perform the *Bihu* dance at the community gathering,” said Chitra.

“It is a group folk dance performed mainly by the women-folk with their arms behind them in a special style. They move in lines and circles with the gentle movements of their feet and a graceful forward and backward movement of their shoulders. They wear a special two piece saree with embroidery typical to that area,” said Chitra confidently.

Bihu gave a shy smile and looked happy while *Hola* gave him a grudging frown.

Chitra noticed this and patting it on its spiked back said, “And *Hola* or *Hola Mohalla* is celebrated in Anandpur Sahib Gurudwara of Punjab. It is like a Sikh Olympic event and sometimes marks their new year. It is famous for its processions in which the Sikh people display their martial arts.”

“They form groups and in the form of an organized dance, they put up shows like mock battles called *Gatka*, archery, daring feats on horse backs and show their skills of using various types of weapons.”

“The procession is a riot of colours as many Sikhs adorn huge decorated turbans and throw color on

the people. Later *prasad* or the *langar* in the form of fruits, *samosas*, sweets etc. is distributed to the people joining the procession”.

“This festival is celebrated a day after the Hindu spring festival of colors called *Holi*. It was started by Guru Govind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. It is a time to celebrate and dedicate oneself to community service”.

The dinosaur called *Hola* now had a joyful look and gave a broad smile to his friend.

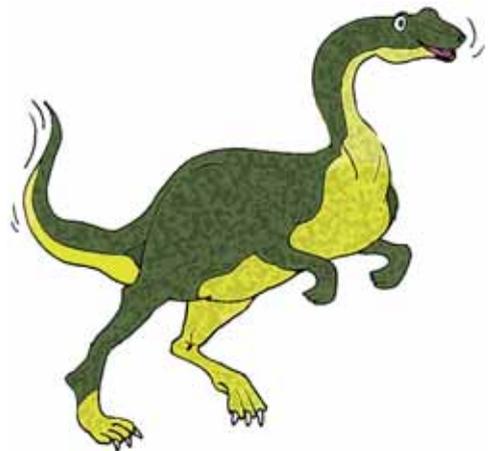
Then they both looked around as if they were searching for something, before looking at Chitra. “What is it ?” asked Chitra.

“We are hungry”, said *Hola* sheepishly.

“Oh yes ... wait, I’ll go and get something for you”. Chitra went to the fridge and took out some apples, guavas and bananas from the fridge. She took out some biscuits from the wire mesh cupboard of the kitchen.

Both the dinosaurs ate up the delicious fruits and biscuits and thanked her for them. Chitra was thankful that the dinosaurs were the vegetarian as it was the *Navratra* time and there was no meat or chicken snacks in the fridge.

Her mother and *dadi* were fasting for the nine days. These were the *Chaitra* or the *Vasant Navratras*,



which marked the beginning of the Summer months. At the end of these nine days of fasting *Ramnavami* would be celebrated. *Dadi* would invite eight of her friends-all girls and worship them and serve them delicious halwa, poori and chana *prasad*.

Navratras are celebrated during the beginning of the winter months in September- October as well. They are called the *Sharad Navratras*. These ended with the *Dussehra* festival. It was during these *Navratras*, that every night there was a *Garba* night in the neighbourhood Gujrati society. Sometimes, she and her friends would dress up in their new clothes and go there to see the ladies dance in a circle.

They usually danced with two decorative sticks in hand, beating them together and with each other in slow rhythmic motions, in the beginning. After sometime they gathered

momentum with the music, and moved fast in the circle with beating of the sticks as if in a game.

The children were allowed to form their own separate circle elsewhere or sometimes inside the bigger circle.

“This is very tasty”, said Bihu , taking a big bite from the red juicy apple. “We are used to much tougher variety of vegetarian food like the branches of the trees and their leaves. The smaller bushes are also good but their thorns are really troublesome”, said Holi enjoying the banana.

“But haven’t you all become extinct?” asked Chitra. “Ex .. Exn .. what is that?” asked Bihu in a puzzled tone.

“Oh, extinct means to be wiped out from the earth”, explained Chitra who had learnt the new term recently and was proud to use it so casually in her conversation, as if it was a part of her everyday vocabulary.

“But we are here right in front of you”, said Holi biting into the crisp biscuit.

“Oh yes ... but they say if an animal is not sighted for about fifty years or so it is considered to be extinct i.e. as if they do not exist any more .. well like the Dodo bird of the Mauritius islands ” explained Chitra imagining herself to be science teacher and the two dinosaurs, her pupils.

“Oh that! ... well yes, in that way you can call us extinct, because our huge large varieties both herbivorous and the carnivorous are no more to be seen and many of them have evolved to be various animals and birds of the present times.” replied Bihu with his mouth full of the bananas.

“But how did it all happen .. I mean I saw a film on TV, which showed, how the entire earth was covered with thick forests and many different types of dinosaurs roamed freely ...”, enquired Chitra with rising curiosity and the thrill of hearing the truth from the horses mouth or in the present case, the dinosaur’s mouth.

“That’s true but soon with the passage of time and change in the weather conditions of the earth many dinosaurs started vanishing. Then that meteorite which hit the Earth and the thunderous explosion, causing all that smoke and dust covering the Earth and blocking the sunlight... only our great-great-grandparents seemed to have survived that. ...”, said Bihu in a thoughtful voice.

“ And the earth becoming so ... so ... cold ... and all the vegetation dying because in the absence of sunlight they could not make food for themselves ...”, said Holi.”

(To be completed in the next issue)

आइसक्रीम की कहानी, उसी की जुबानी

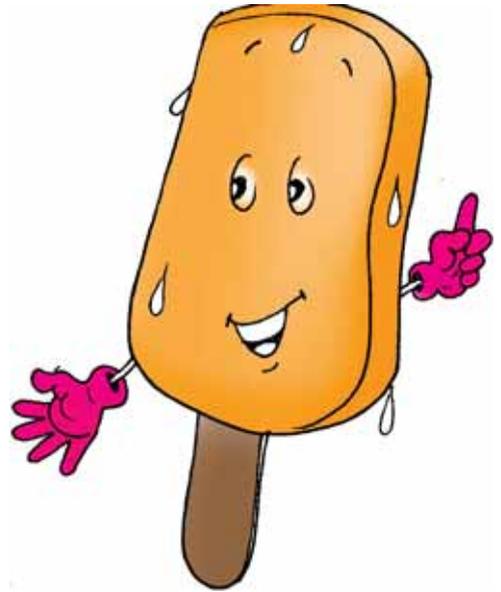
गोपाल जी गुप्त

प्रांजल को आइसक्रीम बहुत पसंद थी, एक तरह से वह उसका दीवाना था। उस दिन जब वह शादी की एक पार्टी में गया तो अलग-अलग स्वाद वाली आइसक्रीम को देख वह उसी स्टॉल पर जा पहुँचा और कई आइसक्रीम खाकर ही एक तरह से अपना पेट भरा। रात को बिस्तर पर गया तो भी उसे उन सभी का स्वाद ही याद आ रहा था। थोड़ी ही देर में वह आइसक्रीम की बात ही सोचते हुए सो गया। उस दिन उसने सपने में भी आइसक्रीम को देखा। अचानक उसे लगा कि आइसक्रीम का रूप बदलने लगा, वह इंसान के रूप में आ गया और फिर वह बोलने लगा... “प्रांजल, मैं जानता हूँ तुम्हें मुझसे काफी प्रेम है, इसी से आज मैं तुम्हें अपने विकास की कहानी सुना रहा हूँ।

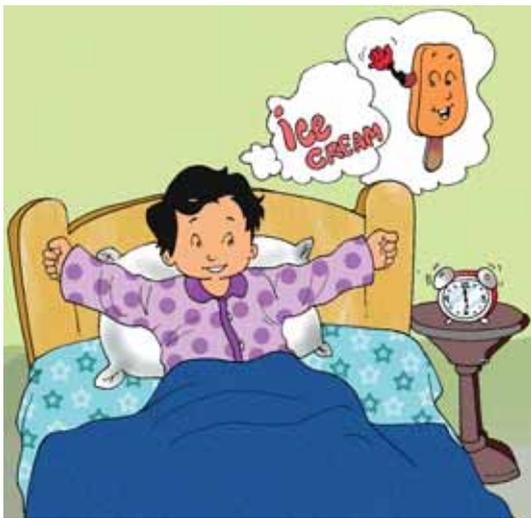
“आज तो मैं आसानी से तुम्हारे फ्रिज में भी तैयार हो जाता हूँ, पर पहले ऐसा नहीं था। मैं लोगों को आसानी से नहीं मिलता था। एक जमाना वह भी था जब लोग मंदिरों, चर्चों में जाकर प्रार्थना करते थे और कहते थे कि हे ईश्वर, तुम आइसक्रीम खाने वालों को नरक में धकेल दो। धीरे-धीरे वह जमाना भी बदला और आज मैं सभी का दुलारा हो गया... खैर...

“आज मैंने जो रूप ग्रहण किया है वह

काफी शोध तथा समय की देन है, परंतु ईसा-पूर्व चौथी-पाँचवीं शताब्दी में जब भारत के ऋषियों, मुनियों ने हिमाच्छादित हिमालय पर मेरे शीतल स्पर्श को महसूस तो वे उन्हें गर्मी की ऊष्णता को शांत करने का एक माध्यम मिल गया। प्यास लगने पर वे हिमालय से निकलती नदियों का शीतल जल पीते। ईसा-पूर्व दूसरी शताब्दी में चीनवासियों ने मेरे पूर्वज हिमखण्डों (बर्फ) के टुकड़ों पर शहद लगाकर खाना शुरू किया और कुछ लोगों ने इसी रूप में मुझे बाजारों में बेचना शुरू किया। उन्हीं लोगों द्वारा मेरा परिचय यूनानियों



से हुआ। सैकड़ों साल तक मुझे लोग ऐसे ही शहद के साथ या दूध में डालकर मुझे ग्रहण करते रहे। 12वीं शताब्दी में मेरा परिचय कुछ अन्य यूरोपीय देशों से हुआ। वहाँ के लोग मुझे बड़े चाव से खाते। एक बार एक आदमी ने मेरे कुछ हिमखण्डों को दूध में डाला और अचानक वह बाहर चला गया। कुछ देर बाद जब वह लौटा तो दूध हलका जम-सा गया था। उसने उसमें शहद डालकर जब चखा तो उसे अनोखा स्वाद लगा। फिर तो मेरा नया संस्करण तैयार होने लगा। कुछ लोगों ने एक प्रयोग किया। हिमखण्ड (बर्फ) के बीच किसी बर्तन में दूध रखकर वे रखने लगे और मेरी शीतलता से दूध जमने लगा। इस तरह जमा हुआ ठण्डा दूध शहद के साथ खाने का सिलसिला शुरू हुआ। लोग मेरे स्वाद के दीवाने होने लगे। पर कुछ लोग इसे ईश्वर के विरुद्ध कर्म मानते थे और वे चर्चों में जा वही प्रार्थना करने लगे जो मैंने ऊपर बताया



है; बावजूद इसके अधिसंख्य लोग मेरे पक्षधर थे।

“मध्य 13वीं शताब्दी में इटलीवालों ने मुझे कृत्रिम रूप से तैयार करने की कला सीखी। वहाँ के शासकों ने मेरा स्वाद चखा। मेरी बढ़ती लोकप्रियता से इटली के शाही परिवार को लगा कि इस खास चीज से जनसामान्य को दूर रखा जाए, क्योंकि यह तो शासकों के लिए ही है। अतः उस समय वहाँ एक राजाज्ञा निकली, जिसमें कहा गया था कि जो भी मेरा स्वाद लेते हुए पकड़ा जाएगा उसे जीवन भर महल में गुलामी करनी पड़ेगी।

“समय बीतता रहा। 16वीं शताब्दी में मेरा प्रवेश इंग्लैण्ड के राजघरानों में हुआ। उस समय लोग मुझे ब्रेड के साथ खाने लगे थे (काफी लोग ब्रेड पर शहद लगाकर मेरे साथ खाकर सुबह का नाश्ता करते थे)। धीरे-धीरे मैं राजघराने से निकलकर शाही परिवार तथा संभ्रांत घरानों तक पहुँचने लगा। जब मेरा परिचय अमेरिकी लोगों से हुआ तो वे भी मुझे नाश्ते के रूप में ही ग्रहण करने लगे, पर वे मुझसे डरते भी थे। उन्हें लगता था कि कहीं मेरे खाने वालों पर किसी की नज़र न लगे। इसी से वे काली टोपी पहनकर मुझे खाते थे। सम्राट चार्ल्स प्रथम (1600-1649) ने पहले तो मुझे विलासिता की वस्तु माना तथा मेरे प्रयोग पर प्रतिबंध लगा दिया। वह सोचते थे कि मेरे ऊपर फालतू पैसा खर्च होता है तथा लोग मेरा स्वाद चखने से बीमार होते हैं। इसी से वह भी मुझसे दूरी बनाए रखते थे। प्रतिबंध

के बावजूद संभ्रांत घरानों में मेरे प्रयोग तथा खाने पर छूट थी। एक बार चार्ल्स के एक मित्र ने एक समारोह में उन्हें जबरन मेरा स्वाद चखाया। फिर तो वह मेरे दीवाने हो गए तथा उन्होंने प्रतिबंध पूर्णतया हटा लिया तथा मेरे निर्माण में मेवा मिलाने का आदेश जारी किया। वह प्रत्येक सोमवार को अपने मित्रों को बुलाकर मेरे स्वाद से उनका स्वागत-सत्कार करने लगे थे। हाँ, यह बताना तो मैं भूल ही गया था कि रोमन शासक नीरो (सन् 37 से 68) ने मेरे पूर्वज हिमखण्डों (बर्फ) की सुरक्षा के लिए, विशिष्ट शीतगृह बनवाए थे तथा वहाँ की सुरक्षा के लिए सैनिक नियुक्त कर रखे थे। बर्फ की चोरी पर कड़े दण्ड देने में वह पीछे नहीं हटता था (चोर को गंजा कर उसके सिर पर बर्फ के टुकड़े रखवा देता था)।

“सम्राट हर्षवर्द्धन सर्दी के मौसम में हिमालय से प्राकृतिक बर्फ मँगाकर विशेषरूप से बने कक्ष में रखवाते थे तथा गर्मी आने पर मुझे नया रूप देकर खाते थे। मुगल सम्राट अकबर का मैं चहेता था। वह भी हिमालय की चोटियों से बर्फ मँगाकर अपने महल में ही मुझे तैयार करा (दूध में जमाकर) खाते थे। जहाँगीर तथा शाहजहाँ गढ़वाल से बर्फ मँगाते थे और वे भी अपने महल में तैयार कराकर मेरा स्वाद लेते थे। किसी अतिथि के आने पर मुझे जरूर पेश किया जाता था।

“धीरे-धीरे औद्योगिक प्रगति तथा क्रांति के चलते मेरे निर्माण की विधियाँ विकसित



होने लगी; मुझे नया रूप, नया स्वाद दिया जाने लगा और मेरी धाक पूरे संसार में फैल गई। आज तो मैं हर मौसम में मिलता हूँ। मैं सभी का चहेता बन गया हूँ। मेरे निर्माण में अब कोई परेशानी नहीं होती। यहाँ तक कि अब तो लोग मुझे अपने घर के फ्रिज में भी तैयार करने लगे हैं। हाँ, तो प्रांजल, बस यही संक्षेप में मेरी कहानी है, जो मैंने तुम्हें सुनाई। अब मैं तुमसे विदा लेता हूँ। कल तुम्हारे स्कूल के कैण्टीन में तुम्हारी मुझसे भेंट तो होगी ही, अच्छा... टाटा...!”

अचानक घड़ी का अलार्म बज उठा। सुबह हो गई थी। प्रांजल बिस्तर से उठ पड़ा और बाथरूम में घुस गया। उसने सोच लिया कि वह आइसक्रीम की कहानी आज अपने दोस्तों को भी सुनाएगा।

‘प्रेमांगन’, एम.आई.जी. 292,
कैलास विहार, आवास विकास योजना 1,
कल्याणपुर, कानपुर-208017 (उ.प्र.)

आ रे मेघा जल बरसा

राधेलाल 'नवचक्र'

कितनी तपी हुई है धरती,
आ रे मेघा जल बरसा!
पेड़-पौधे मुरझा गए हैं,
पशु-पक्षी भी हैं बेचैन!
मनुजों की तो बातें छोड़ो,
है उन्हें भी कहाँ चैन।।



कितनी तपी हुई है धरती
आ रे मेघा जल बरसा!
कहाँ छिपे हो झट आ जाओ,
सबके जीवन को हरषा।।
टिकी हुई है सभी निगाहें,
तुझे देखने को भाई।
क्यों करते हो इतनी देरी,
झट आ तू करो भलाई।।

रिमझिम-रिमझिम पानी बरसा
झमझम बूँदें तू टपका।
सबकी तपन मिटा तू झटपट
बता कहाँ है तू अटका।।
स्वागत है तेरे आने का,
छोड़ो अब अपना गुस्सा।
कितनी तपी हुई है धरती
आ रे मेघा जल बरसा।।
जैसे पुस्तक ज्ञान-वारि से,
हम मनुजों को नहलाता।
तू भी जल बरसाकर सबकी,
तपन-प्यास बुझा जाता।।

तोता साह लेन, हसनगंज, मिरजानहाट
भागलपुर-812005 (बिहार)

The Buzzing Ghost!

Hema Rao

Shikha was not able to sleep at night!

For the past few days she kept on hearing this SCARY, SPOOKY sound every night.

Zzzzzz...

There was no bumble bee or mosquito in her room.

Dadaji was not snoring. *Dadiji* was not snoring.

Ma and Papa were not snoring.

Rekha's nose was not blocked. She was not snoring. Rewa was not snoring. She was wide awake!

Shikha was sure a *bhoot* was outside her window. She crept under her bed-sheet. It was hot but she was safe. She forgot *bhoot* can pass through anything!

She told Rewa and Rekha about the snoring *bhoot*.

"Cows snore!" said Rewa.

"Lalita's dog snores," said Rekha, her sister. "Besides, ghosts are busy at night. They go to visit folks. They do not sleep!"

Shikha stayed with Rewa and Rekha that night.

It was midnight and that creepy noise started coming again.

"It is scary," muttered Rewa, hiding behind the curtain as she fearfully peered out of the window. "It seems to be coming from that *neem* tree!"

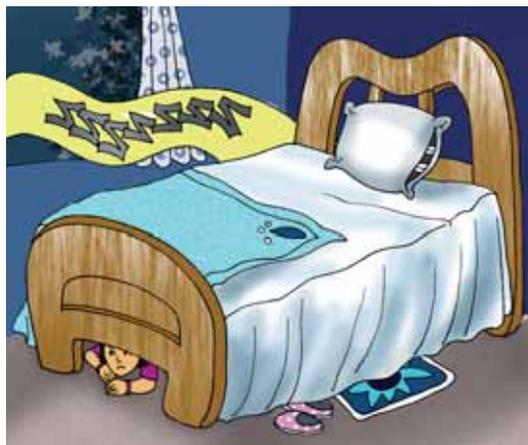
"*Didi!*" squeaked Rekha. Her fingers gripped Shikha's arm suddenly, making her squeal with fright! "May be it is a *vetal*, like the one that sat on King Vikramaditya's back!"

"Stop being a scared *choohi*. Be Rani of Jhansi!" retorted Shikha.

The girls giggled as Rewa sang – "*Bhoot, Bhoot*, here we come Hup ... 2 ... 3 ... 4!"

"If you dare come here, we will show you the door."

"There's no red carpet for you on the floor! Hup ... 2 ... 3 ... 4!"



The next night, they kept a watch on the *neem* tree. Elders in the house were told that they were looking for *Sapta Rishi* star constellation in the sky. It was their Science home-work.

The noise was coming from inside the hole in the tree. The girls were scared to peer into the tree. There could be a family of hissing snakes!

“If we do not look into it, how will we know what is in it?” asked Shikha, angrily.

Reluctant Shikha was made to climb on top of Rewa. She then put her torch-light into the hollow. Six round, black eyes were staring at her!

“Eeeeeee!” screamed Shikha. “Ouch!”

She had been dropped by her assistants. Both had fled!

“What are you doing?” asked a voice.

Shikha’s feet refused to move. She kept her eyes firmly shut as she did not want to see *bhoot*.

“Who ... who ... are you?”

“It’s me, *Dadaji*.”

He laughed when Shikha told him that there was a *bhoot* in the tree.

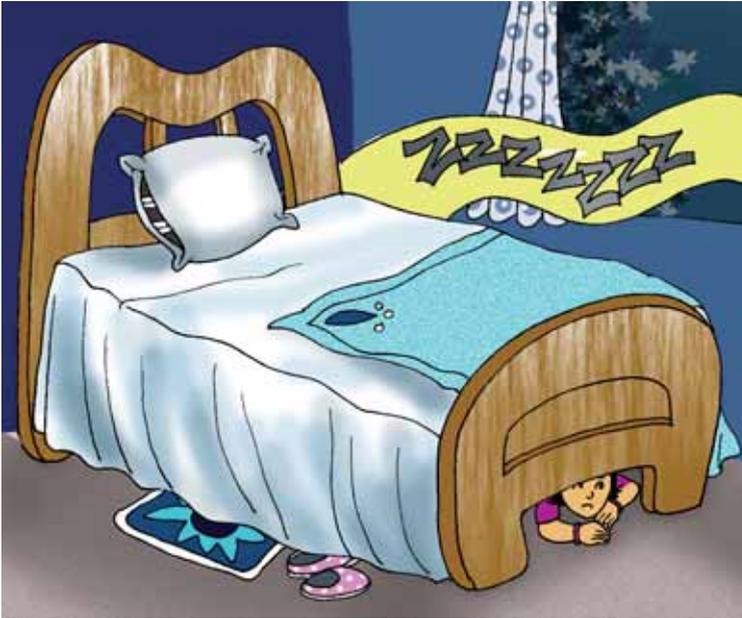
The eerie sound started coming again. Shikha screamed out of fear and clung to her grandfather.

She did not see a huge Barn Owl swoop into the hole in the tree.

“Silly girl,” he said, affectionately. “It’s only a big owl going into her nest.

She walks on our terrace every night. That’s why we never see mice. The little owlets snore just like us!”

Shikha realized she should not have looked into the hole. If Mama Owl had been at home, she would have scratched her face. When Mama owl went away, *Dadaji* got a ladder. They peered into the hollow. Six baby owls were fast asleep.





Two were awake! They were making a wheezy, hissy sound. *Dadaji* told Shikha that the little owlets were grumbling. They wanted food!

He told Shikha that Barn Owl does not make a nest. It just needs a hollow in an open field. It throws up pellets made of fur and fragmented bones.

This bird has a light colour, a heart-shaped face, long legs, long wings, black talons and a small square tail. A ridge of feathers above its beak looks like a nose.

The oversized black eyes give the Barn Owl, a mask-like face. Its scary screech and spooky face got it another name - Demon Owl or Ghost Owl!

Barn Owl eats rodents, shrews,

termites, crickets, bats, small snakes and even toads. This bird is every farmers friend.

The three girls now love their Barn Owl's family, the permanent feathered residents in the hole-apartment in the *neem* tree. They got the imprint of an owl put on their plain white T- shirts with the words "*Mujhse Dosti Karo!*" The trio also got a *mehendi-owl* tattoo put on their right arm.

They triggered off a fashion trend in school.

It is now SUPER COOL to sport an *ullu!*

*FF-2 Suraksha Comforts
19, 17th Cross Padmanabha Nagar
Bangalore-560070 (Karnataka)*

Two Poems

Neha

My Happy Day

Today is my happy day
Because
My *Nanaji* is going to Himalayas

Today is my happy day
Because
My *Nanaji* is going to London

Today is my happy day
Because
My *Nanaji* is going to meet Hanumanji

Today is my happy day
Because
In this way, my *Nanaji* makes me
happy in my dreams ...



What Makes You Hurry

What makes you hurry?
What makes you hurry?

If you wake up on time
Brush your teeth and take bath
Then what makes you hurry?

If you worship God
And take breakfast on time
Then what makes you hurry?

If you go to school on time
Then what makes you hurry?

After coming back from school
If you eat your lunch on time
And take a nap too
Then what makes you hurry?

If you wake up on time
And go to play for an hour
Then what makes you hurry?

When you return home
And study for a while
Then what makes you hurry?

If you eat your dinner
And go to sleep on time
Then what makes you hurry?

4B Street-23
Sector-5, Bhilai
Durg- 490006 (Chhattisgarh)

एक अजूबा है-अजगर

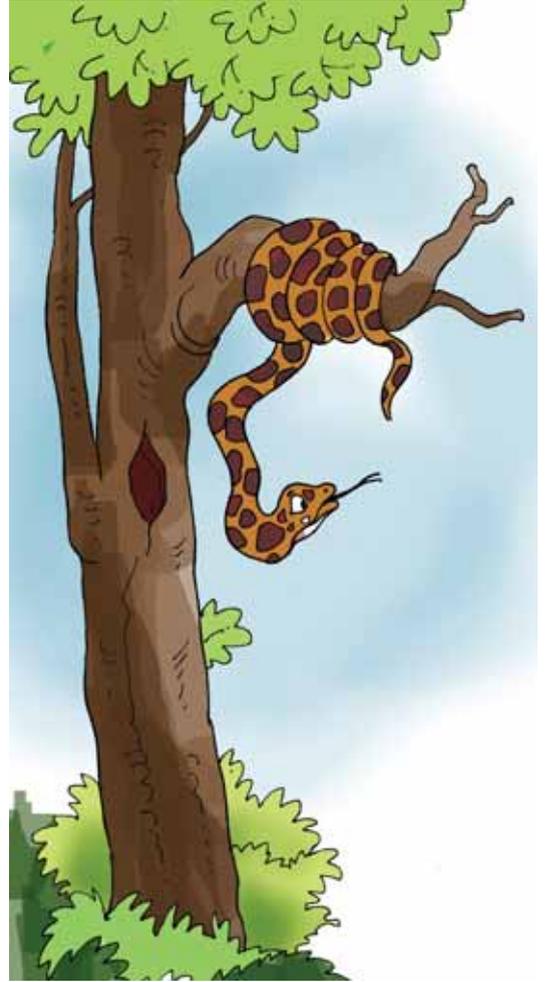
अंकुश जैन

अकर्मण्यता एवं सुस्ती का प्रतीक माना जाने वाला अजगर एक ऐसा जानवर है जो एक बार सो जाए तो कई दिनों तक जागने की कोशिश नहीं करता है। जब तक इसे भूख नहीं सताती है या इसे किसी प्रकार के आक्रमण का खतरा नहीं होता है।

भारतीय अजगर 'कृष्णपुच्छ' की लंबाई लगभग 25 फुट होती है। इसकी रीढ़ में 400 कशेरूकाएँ पाई जाती हैं। भारतीय अजगरों की एक और दूसरी जाति है-पाइथन। इसका रंग गहरी जैतूनी होता है और कुछ काले धब्बे होते हैं। इस जाति के अजगर भारत के मध्य और पश्चिमी भाग तथा दक्षिण में मद्रास में बहुतायत में पाए जाते हैं। इन अजगरों की औसत लंबाई 16 फुट तक होती है। मदारी बाजीगर एवं सपेरे इसी नस्ल के अजगरों को पालते हैं। पश्चिमी अजगर 'बोआ' लंबाई में पूर्वी अजगर 'रीगल पाइथन' से छोटा होता है। 'रीगल पाइथन' विश्व का सबसे बड़ा अजगर है, जिसकी लंबाई 32 फुट तक होती है।

अजगर भारत में तो पाया ही जाता है, इसके अतिरिक्त यह श्रीलंका के समुद्री किनारों वाले क्षेत्रों में भी काफी मात्रा में पाया जाता है। अजगर अपने निवास स्थान का चयन पानी के करीब ही करता है, यानी जहाँ

जलाशय, नदी या पानी के गड्ढे हों। ठंड वाले स्थान इन्हें विशेष रूप से पसंद होते हैं। यही कारण है कि ये पेड़ों की छाया में दिन-रात लटकते रहते हैं। लेकिन कुछ अजगर



उभयजीवी होते हैं, जिनमें 'एनाकोंडा' का नाम प्रमुख है। यह नदियों आदि के सूख जाने पर कीचड़ में घुसकर अपने बुरे दिन निकाल लेता है और सामान्य स्थिति आने पर जल में रहने लगता है।

यह एक सर्वभक्षी प्राणी है, जिसका जबड़ा बहुत ही मजबूत होता है। जब जबड़े खुलते हैं तो वे बड़े आकार के बन जाते हैं। इस विशालकाय जीव को अपने शिकार पकड़ने के लिए ज्यादा भाग-दौड़ नहीं करनी पड़ती है। यह अपने आस-पास के छोटे-छोटे पशुओं को तो साँसों के खिंचाव से पेट में डालता है। इसके अतिरिक्त अन्य स्तनपायी जंतुओं को भी अपने भोज्य-पदार्थ के रूप में प्रयोग करता है। इसका प्रिय भोजन खरगोश, भेड़, बछड़े और हिरन हैं। कभी-कभी निहत्था आदमी भी इसका शिकार बन जाता है। यह अपने शिकार को खाने से पूर्व जकड़न में लेता है। इससे शिकार की मृत्यु हो जाती है, फिर मृत शरीर को यह समूचा निगल लेता है। निगलने की शुरुआत प्रायः शिकार के सिर वाले हिस्से से ही करता है। इसके मुख से निकली ढेर सारी लसिका शिकार को चिकना और लसलसा बना देती है जिससे जीव बड़ी आसानी से पेट तक पहुँच जाता है। इसके दाँतों में विष ग्रंथि नहीं होती।

अजगर की सबसे बड़ी विशेषता है कि एक बार पेट भर जाने के बाद यह एक पखवाड़े तक निराहार रहने की क्षमता रखता है। अजगर का फेफड़ा बहुत बड़ा होता है।

इसलिए शिकार के समय यह अपने फेफड़े को फुला लेता है और शिकार पर तेज फुफकार मारता है। इसकी फुफकार से शिकार के आधे प्राण उड़ जाते हैं।

दिसंबर, जनवरी और फरवरी के महीनों में उत्तर भारत में अजगर शीत निद्रा में चले जाते हैं तथा उनके शरीर के क्रियाकलाप स्थगित हो जाते हैं। शरीर की चर्बी कम हो जाती है और पाचन क्रिया मंद पड़ जाती है। मादा मार्च, अप्रैल, मई और जून के गरम महीनों में खुले स्थान पर अंडे देती है। इन अंडों की संख्या 8 से लेकर 107 तक होती है। इन अंडों का आकार बत्तख के अंडों के बराबर होता है। इनका रंग सफेद होता है। इन अंडों से दो-तीन महीने बाद बच्चे निकल जाते हैं।

अजगर समय के साथ अपने को समायोजित करना खूब जानता है। दुनिया के तमाम जंतु अजगर से डरते हैं, वहीं कभी-कभी अजगर के जीवन में भी ऐसे मौके आते हैं जब उसे डरकर कुंडली बनाकर 'फुटबॉल' बन जाना पड़ता है। अपने सिर तथा पूँछ को वह इसी गोलाई के भीतर छिपा लेता है। इस हालत में उसे 10-12 फुट लुढ़का भी दें तो उसे कोई आपत्ति नहीं होती है। है न अजगर एक अजूबा जानवर!

जैनसन वाला स्टेशनर्स, पचपहाड़ रोड,
भवानीमण्डी-326502
(राजस्थान)

चश्मैली मारिया

भगवती प्रसाद द्विवेदी

मारिया को दादा जी का चश्मा अजूबा लगता था। चश्मे के बिना उन्हें कुछ सूझता ही नहीं था। वे बार-बार आवाज लगाते—“मारिया बेटे, मेरा चश्मा देना तो!”

कभी किताबें पढ़ने के लिए चश्मा, तो कभी बाहर जाने के लिए चश्मा। मारिया को लगता, जैसे चश्मे में ही दादा जी की जान बसी हुई हो। चश्मा ही तो आँखें थीं उनकी।

मारिया का मन होता कि जरा दादा जी का चश्मा अपनी आँखों पर चढ़ाकर देखे। मगर ज्योंही वह चश्मे को खोलकर आँखों पर रखना चाहती, दादा जी नाराज हो जाते—“ऐसा क्यों करती हो, मारिया? चश्मा टूट जाएगा। दो मुझे।” और वे झपट लेते।

एक रोज दादा जी कहीं बाहर गए हुए थे। भूल से वे चश्मा घर में ही छोड़ गए थे। देखकर मारिया की खुशी का ठिकाना न था।

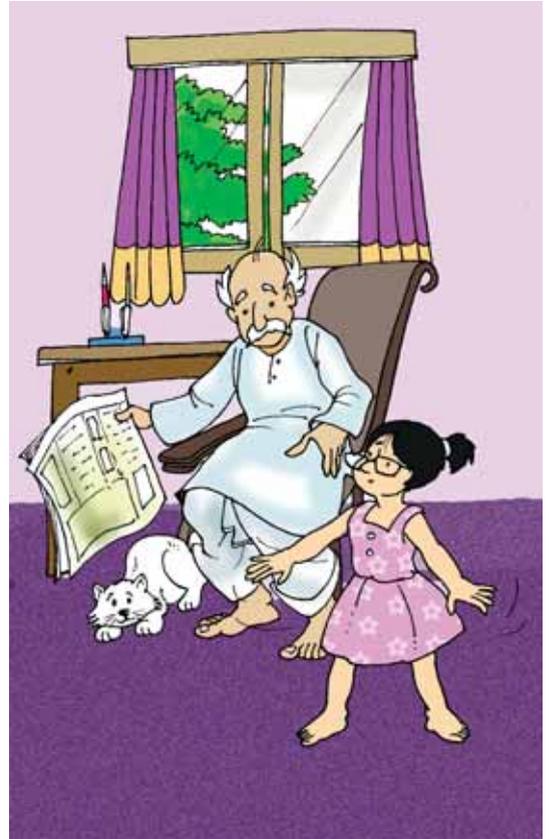
उसने चश्मे को नाक और कान पर टिकाया। फिर दादा जी की तरह ही घूरने लगी। चश्मैली मारिया! वह झटपट एक किताब उठा लाई। दादा जी की तरह ही वह किताब पढ़ने बैठ गई। मगर यह क्या! उसको अक्षर इतने बड़े-बड़े दिख रहे थे कि पढ़ पाना भी मुश्किल था। बाप रे! ये अक्षर हैं या पहाड़?

मारिया उठकर दीवार पर लगे शीशे के सामने खड़ी हो गई। उसने खुद को उसमें गौर

से देखा। फिर और खुश हो गई। वाह! पढ़ाकू मारिया!

तभी पूसी बिल्ली उसके पास आ पहुँची। फिर मारिया की गोद में बैठ गई। मारिया ने उसकी आँखों पर चश्मा चढ़ा दिया। ठठाकर बोली—“वाह री चश्मैली पूसी!”

पूसी उछलकर भाग खड़ी हुई। गनीमत थी, मारिया ने झटके से चश्मा हटा लिया था।



अब वह कभी चश्मा वाले मास्टर जी की नकल उतार रही थी, तो कभी मम्मी और पापा की।

फिर मारिया चश्मा पहनकर चलने का अभ्यास करने लगी। सारी चीजें बड़ी-बड़ी और हिलती हुईं नजर आ रही थीं। अब जाकर उसे याद आया कि दादा जी की छोटी-छोटी सिकुड़ी आँखें चश्मे में कितनी बड़ी-बड़ी दिखती हैं।

मारिया को ऐसा लगा, जैसे धरती डोल

रही हो। उसका सिर चकराने लगा। तभी अचानक उसकी नजर दादा जी पर पड़ी। वह लड़खड़ा गई और गिरने ही जा रही थी कि दादा जी ने थाम लिया।

मारिया ने कुछ डरते, कुछ शरमाते हुए चश्मा दादा जी को थमा दिया, “दादा जी, आपकी आँख!”

दादा जी ने मुसकराते हुए कहा—“शैतान कहीं की!”

204, टेलीफोन भवन, आर-ब्लॉक,
पोस्ट बॉक्स-115, पटना-800001 (बिहार)

सीख

हर्ष कुमार 'हर्ष'

लाल हरी और पीली बत्ती
हमको सीख सिखाती हैं
रुको बढ़ो चहुँ ओर देखकर
मत भागो समझाती है।

बस अड्डा का चौक पारकर
बना स्कूल हमारा है
जगबुझ करती रौशनियों का
हमको बड़ा सहारा है।

बल्बों की संकेती भाषा
गूँगे-बहरे जान गए

कब रुकना है कब चलना है
हम बच्चे पहचान गए।

जो जल्दी में आँख मूँदकर
इनको देख नहीं पाता
खड़ा सिपाही उसे पकड़कर
सारा हर्ष उड़ा जाता।

सड़क नियम का पालन करते
बाएँ हाथ चलो सारे
कभी न गली-सड़क पर खेलें
हम बच्चे प्यारे-प्यारे।

अभिवादन, 781-एस.एस.टी. नगर
पटियाला (पंजाब)

मलाई न छोड़ें

रुचि सिंह

पुराने समय की बात है। सर्दियों के दिन थे। सुबह की नरम धूप में वेगवान नदी के किनारे पर एक संत महात्मा बैठे हुए धूप सेंक रहे थे।

क्या देखते हैं कि नदी के वेग में एक बिच्छू बहता हुआ जा रहा है। कभी पानी के

वेग से उलटा हो जाता तो कभी नदी के बीच पड़ी हुई चट्टान के टुकड़ों पर चढ़ने की कोशिश करता लेकिन फिर बह जाता।

महात्मा जी से रहा नहीं गया, नदी के वेग की परवाह किए बिना महात्मा जी बिच्छू की ओर बढ़ गए। बिच्छू के पास पहुँचकर



उन्होंने अपने हाथ से बिच्छू को उठा लिया। जैसे ही महात्मा जी उसे लेकर किनारे की ओर बढ़े, बिच्छू ने डंक मार दिया। महात्मा जी दर्द से कराह उठे और बिच्छू उनके हाथ से छूट गया और फिर पानी में बहने लगा।

महात्मा जी फिर उसके पास पहुँचे और फिर बिच्छू को हाथ में उठाया। बिच्छू ने फिर डंक मारा और वो फिर हाथ से छूट गया। इस प्रकार महात्मा जी ने चार-पाँच प्रयास किए। अन्ततः महात्मा जी उसे किनारे लाने और जान बचाने में सफल रहे।

लेकिन, इन प्रयासों में बिच्छू ने महात्मा जी को चार-पाँच जगह काट लिया। दर्द से व्याकुल महात्मा जी किनारे पर आकर निढाल होकर गिर पड़े।

एक आदमी किनारे पर खड़ा महात्मा जी के कार्य को देख रहा था। वो पास आया और महात्मा जी से पूछा—“क्या ज़रूरत थी आपको इस अधर्मी की जान बचाने की? आप उसके लिए अच्छा कर रहे थे, लेकिन इस नीच ने तो बार-बार डंक मारकर अपनी नीचता दिखाई न!”

महात्मा जी ने एक गंभीर दृष्टि उस अजनबी पर डाली और प्यार से बोले—“बेटा, काटना तो बिच्छू का धर्म है। जब भी कोई व्यक्ति उसे हाथ से उठाएगा तो वो अपना

धर्म निभाएगा और उस व्यक्ति को काटेगा, और मेरा धर्म है भलाई करना। किसी की जान जा रही है तो उसे बचाना। जब नदी में बहते हुए, जान की परवाह किए बिना बिच्छू डंक मारने का अपना धर्म नहीं छोड़ रहा है तो उसके बार-बार काटने से मैं क्यों विचलित होकर अपना धर्म छोड़ दूँ?” अजनबी गद्गद हो गया और उसने महात्मा जी के चरण छू लिए।

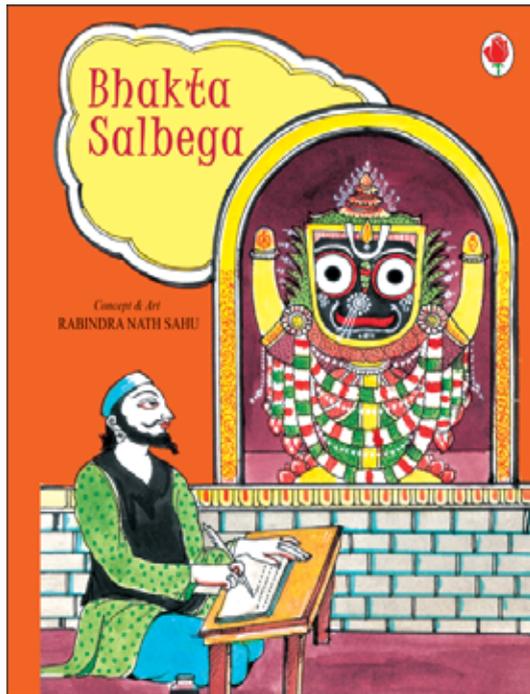
मानव का सबसे बड़ा धर्म है भलाई करना, उपकार करना और संकट में पड़े लोगों की सहायता करना। इसलिए किसी भी परिस्थिति में व्यक्ति को अपना धर्म नहीं छोड़ना चाहिए।

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Bhakta Salbega

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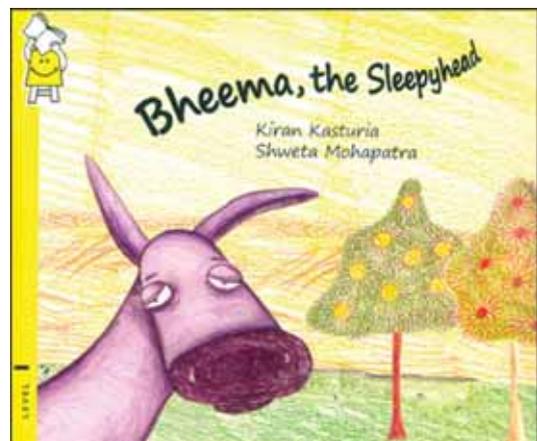
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Bheema, the Sleepyhead

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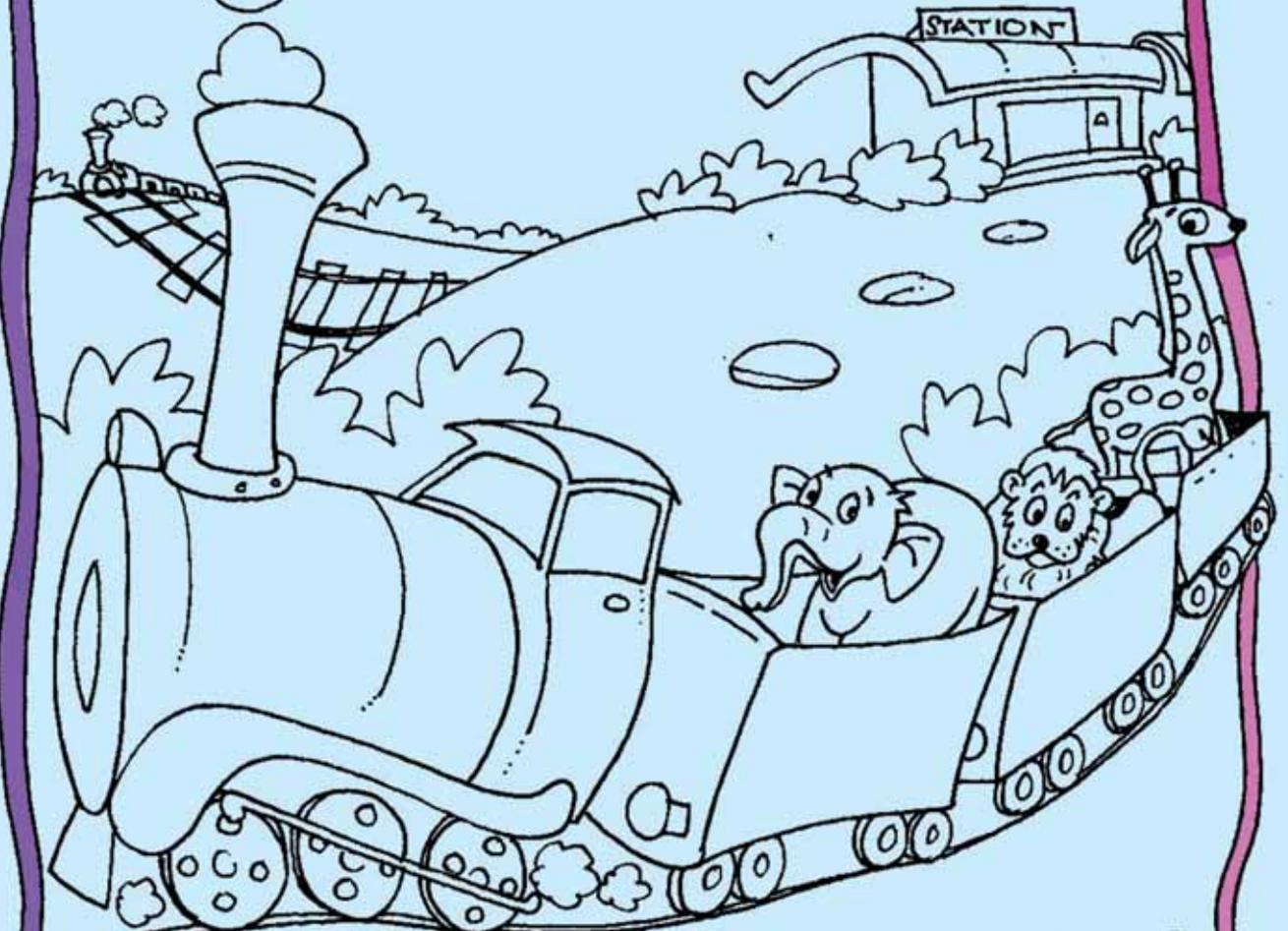
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