

The Presidency University Magazine

2014-15
(A Prelude)

*“And how you worship truth’s omnipotence,
What joyance rains upon me, when I see
Fame, in the mirror of futurity
Weaving the chaplets you have yet to gain
And then I feel I have not lived in vain.”*

To the students of the Hindoo College
—H. VIVIAN LOUIS DEROZIO, 1831

Corrigendum

We, at the Publication Committee, PUSUC, are humble to have come out with the first ever issue of the Presidency University magazine (a Prelude). This is however our first attempt at this and many unintentional errors were received in the process. We are extremely apologetic to the authors whose articles have faced these errors as they were mostly typographic or otherwise.

Out of all the errors present in this issue, two of them require an immediate corrigendum. They are:

- Acknowledgement section, “historian Swapan Chakraborty” must stand corrected as “litterateur Swapan Chakravorty.”
- Acknowledgement section, “Presidency College Alumni Association” must stand corrected as “Presidency Alumni Association.”

We sincerely hope that the further copies of this magazine and the printed articles in this one, if reprinted will contain the above mentioned corrigendum and more.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Credit is due, unconditionally, to the wisdom of several eminent personalities, without whose judgement in the selection of articles to be reprinted, this magazine would never have seen the light of day. We take this opportunity to thank the eminent poets Shankha Ghosh and Alok Ranjan Dasgupta for their valuable advice and encouragement. We are deeply indebted to the eminent novelist, social worker and poet, Nabaneeta Dev Sen for her invaluable contributions to the magazine. We also thank the eminent litterateur Asoke Mukhopadhyay and the noted historian Swapan Chakraborty for their painstaking efforts in presenting us with a guideline for the composition of the magazine. We are grateful to Prof. Subhas Ranjan Chakraborty for his guidance in the matter. We are honoured by the advice given to us by Prof. Sugato Bose. We are thankful to Prof. Sibaji Raha for his guidance in helping us grasp perspective.

We are infinitely thankful to Prof. Nirmal Kumar Sarkar, Library-in-charge, to Mr. Pritam Gurey, Senior Librarian, Presidency University Library, and to Mr. Prithvis Bhushan Banerjee and the entire staff of the Presidency University Library.

We are also indebted to the Presidency College Alumni Association for supporting this venture.

The composition of a magazine is a tedious process, involving innumerable steps of differing complexity. We are extremely grateful to all the persons associated in every manner, to the publishing of this number.

The credit for the cover design goes entirely to Arijit Laik.

We are indebted to Mr. Tapan Bose, Mr. Pallab Bose and to A.B. Printers for their infinite tolerance of our inexperience.

Last, but never least, we are thankful to Presidency University Students' Union Council, for giving us the opportunity to participate in such an endeavour. We are equally thankful to the faculty of Presidency University, especially Prof. Somak Raychaudhury for his expertise and time.

We have tried our best to accommodate the guidance and advice that we have received. A restriction on space has proved binding on us, however, and we are deeply apologetic if we have been unable to incorporate any opinions or individuals to whom we owe thanks.

In planning for this magazine, we had intended to celebrate the centennial of the first edition of the Presidency College Magazine. As such, this volume is a prelude to a more extensive volume that we will publish in due time. For the publication of this latter volume, we request everyone who has believed in us to stand by us in the future.

**Kolkata,
20th January, 2015**

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Secretary, Publication Committee, PUSUC

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EDITORIAL

It has been a hundred years since the words 'First Edition' have been associated with any magazine published by Presidency, as an institution. It is thus with a sense of momentous reflection that I take upon myself the task of editing this prelude to the first edition of the Presidency University Magazine, published on the centennial of the first edition of the Presidency College Magazine.

The tradition of writing has changed much in the last century, and yet, the human need to write has not disappeared altogether. History is curiously subservient to Nature in that it obeys the seasonal surges of emotions that recur throughout it, manifesting in different shades of glory. For even though the winter is harsh, with all the decadence of a dying year, hope prevails, as spring cannot be far behind. The same is true for institutions, for they endure the rigours of Time.

Presidency College (now Presidency University) is a curious institution, combining age, heritage and wisdom with youth, vitality and emotion, weaving together a narrative that threads its way through the hearts of every student and teacher who has ever walked its halls. There is an indefinable spirit that pervades the College, rightly called the Derozian spirit, for it produces the most argumentative, and thus the most empathetic of all Indians. Indeed, this unseen bond to the campus makes itself felt along the heart, and we invariably end up, in Prof. Taraknath Sen's words: "Looking back". This magazine has as its theme, therefore, nostalgia and memory. If there is any conflict between the two, it is only to be encouraged, as it gives birth to a heritage that transcends institutions, binding all who are touched by it into a family.

Let us remember this, and let every copy of this magazine, no matter where it might be bestowed, serve as a reminder that we are not alone, that we are bound by a spirit that is eternal, and whenever we are placed in doubt as to who we are, let the memory of the past give us hope for the future. For that is the greatest gift that our College has ever given us, the gift of being able to smile in the face of danger, endure the crises and hope for a better future. Despite the worst dangers, the family of Presidencians has survived, just as the College has survived, always offering us shelter and solace.

It strikes me as curious, that the first edition of the College Magazine was published just as the world was engulfed in the storm clouds of war. This establishes my belief that no matter what may besiege this building on College Street, 86/1 will endure and rise from height to further height in its pursuit of a unique blend of academia, amiability and erudition.

Satyaki Majumdar

সম্পাদকীয়

চারটে বছর নীরব থাকা বড় সহজ কথা নয় । শেষবার প্রেসিডেন্সী কলেজ ম্যাগাজিন প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল ২০১০-২০১১ শিক্ষাবর্ষে । তারপরে ছাত্র নির্বাচন ও ছাত্র সংসদের অভাবে দীর্ঘ চার বছর প্রকাশিত হয়নি প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ ম্যাগাজিন। এবার শীত ঘুম ভেঙ্গে উঠতেই দেখা গেল, এই ম্যাগাজিন একই সাথে প্রেসিডেন্সী ইউনিভার্সিটির প্রথম ও প্রেসিডেন্সী কলেজের শতবর্ষসংখ্যা ।

এই শেষ চারটি বছর প্রেসিডেন্সীর ইতিহাসে খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ । কারণ ১৮১৭-য় প্রতিষ্ঠিত হিন্দু কলেজ বা ১৮৫৫-তে নাম পরিবর্তনের পর প্রেসিডেন্সী কলেজ যে শিক্ষা ও উৎকর্ষের পীঠস্থান রূপে গোটা পৃথিবীর কাছে পরিচিত হয়েছিল, সেই ঐতিহ্যের সাক্ষী হয়েই প্রেসিডেন্সী এখন ইউনিভার্সিটি । এই শেষ চার বছরের মধ্যেই প্রেসিডেন্সী দেখেছে কোনো এক ১০ই এপ্রিল । যেদিন প্রেসিডেন্সীর সাতশতকে ধুলোয় মিশিয়ে দেওয়ার জন্য নেমে এসেছিল কিছু দলীয় দুবস্তের আঘাত । প্রেসিডেন্সী-ও তার উত্তর ফিরিয়ে দিয়েছিল তার পরের দিন । সেদিন শহরের রাজপথ স্তব্ধ হয়ে গিয়েছিল প্রায় দু-হাজার ছাত্র, শিক্ষক, প্রাক্তনী এবং বিভিন্ন মননজীবী মানুষের মৌনী মিছিলে । একই সাথে শিক্ষা-সংস্কৃতি এবং প্রতিবাদের নিজস্ব সুরের সমান্তরালে হেঁটে চলা একমাত্র প্রেসিডেন্সীতেই সম্ভব । তা সে কলেজ হোক বা ইউনিভার্সিটি ।

প্রেসিডেন্সী কলেজ ম্যাগাজিন, অধুনা প্রেসিডেন্সী ইউনিভার্সিটি ম্যাগাজিন সেই ঐতিহ্যের প্রকাশক হয়ে এসেছে গত ১০০ বছর ধরে । যদিও কখনো দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধ, কখনো নকশাল আন্দোলন, কখনো জরুরী অবস্থা কখনো বা নানা অজ্ঞাত কারণে বারবার স্তব্ধ হয়েছে এই ম্যাগাজিন । আমরা আমাদের এই ম্যাগাজিনে চেষ্টা করেছি সেই গত একশ বছরে প্রকাশিত ম্যাগাজিনগুলির কিছু বিশেষ লেখা ও ছবির সংকলন সাজিয়ে দিতে । যার মাধ্যমে প্রেসিডেন্সীর শিক্ষা, সংস্কৃতি, রাজনীতি, শিল্পকলার ঐতিহ্যের এক জীবন্ত ইতিহাসকে তুলে ধরার একটি প্রাথমিক প্রচেষ্টা করা হল । তার সঙ্গে প্রেসিডেন্সীর ছাত্র, শিক্ষক এবং প্রাক্তনীদের লেখার এক মিলিত সংকলন বানিয়ে ম্যাগাজিনটিকে অতীত, বর্তমান ও ভবিষ্যতের এক যুগলবন্দী করা হল ।

শেষকথা, নীরবতা মানে শুধু নীরবতা নয়, বারুদ জমিয়ে রাখাও বটে । হয়তো একদিন এই শহর কল্লোলিনী হয়ে ওঠার বদলে বিদেশী শহর হয়ে ওঠার চেষ্টায় মগ্ন হবে, সেদিনও কিন্তু প্রেসিডেন্সী প্রেসিডেন্সী-ই থাকবে ।

অর্পণ দাস

প্রকাশনা সম্পাদক

প্রেসিডেন্সী বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ছাত্র সংসদ, ২০১৪-১৫

INTRODUCTORY

The pioneering work of Gregor Mendel in the mid 19th century showed that biological traits are transferred through genes and chromosomes from parents to offspring. It is therefore a given, that children will physically resemble their parents and grand parents. However, children of the same parents are often seen to be different from each other and similar to children of biologically different parents in the way they think, their likes or dislikes etc. Interestingly, genetics cannot explain the acquisition of similar traits in biologically unrelated people. This extra-chromosomal inheritance of thoughts, values and aspirations often happens when a group of individuals share a mind space. However, just sharing such a space is not enough. It becomes a vital or energized sharing when individuals actively engage with each other in their life experiences. Presidency College, now proudly Presidency University, is one such mind space where for the last 198 years thousands of people have taught, studied, played and argued together about everything that was important to them.

The present members of this hallowed institution have inherited a rich legacy in the form of alumni who were freedom fighters, thinkers and creators of modern India, leaders of the world and most importantly, those who make the world a better place by just doing the right thing all the time. While we have inherited prestige, innovative thought, leadership and all those desirable features that set us apart and hopefully above others, we also carry the burden of criticism when we fall a notch or two from the great heights of excellence. It is but natural for any institution with greatness in its veins to undergo changes periodically, however a deep passion for learning gives us the strength to weather low points in our history and to take necessary measures to correct it.

My love affair with biology started in school but became a passion in Presidency College between 1972-1975. Translation of this passion became an irreversible way of life in thought, word and deed. So much so that even during intense arguments during my work as a Vice Chancellor I tend to bring up comparisons of administrative puzzles with biological principles. While each of us may adopt a language of our own choice- be it biology or politics or history or any other, we still have a collective responsibility to serve Presidency University to ensure its continued and immortal excellence. One of the hallmarks of achieving excellence is, in my opinion, never to compromise on how we do anything. We cannot be found wanting in our effort to teach or learn, in our speech or action. A promise to do the right thing is always the shortest route to achieving excellence both individually and collectively.

The Presidency College magazine was first published in 1914. As I skimmed through the 100 year old treasure, I recognized so much that was still common to Presidentians. I also saw where and how we have changed as a reflection of the life and times around us. This magazine is not simply a journal where the College has expressed its thoughts but also a history of the city, state and indeed the nation. I see the names of many famous leaders as students, many friends from my batch and many who I recognize through their contemporary work. I bask in the pleasure of the thought that I belong here- this is mine!! I am sure all of you will share with me this uplifting feeling.

I understand that there were gaps in the publication of this magazine in the 100 years of its existence, either because of the freedom struggle (1945-1946) when many of our elders were in jail or underground. Similarly publication was affected during the Emergency in the late 1970s and once in the recent past for the absence of a student union. As we prepare for fresh elections of the student union, I wish the union great success and continuity in the responsibility of upholding the true character of Presidency! Let the magazine always be published in time. Let it be said that for once the present and hopefully the future will be more glorious than the past.

Let us join together to celebrate Presidency University through this wonderful magazine.

Anuradha Lohia

(Presidency College, Physiology, 1972-1975)

Vice Chancellor, Presidency University.

6th January 2015

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**‘Looking Back’ –
A venture into the Halcyon Days**

**INTRODUCTORY ENTRY TO THE FIRST EDITION
OF THE PRESIDENCY COLLEGE MAGAZINE, 1914**

H.R. James; M.A.; *Principal, Presidency College*, September 1914

It is entirely in accordance with the fitness of things that Presidency College should have its magazine. I believe this to be the opinion not only of the large majority of present members of the college but also of all who feel any interest in the college, whether through links of personal association, present or past, or merely from general interest in University education. Because I am convinced of this, I very willingly accede to the request of the editor to contribute to the first number a few words of introduction.

To some it may seem strange that such a magazine has not long been in existence. I do not however think that time will be well employed in offering any apology or explanation for the fact that there is at present a void which the new magazine aspires to fill. The subject has from time to time been discussed in the college and a Presidency College magazine was started at least once in recent years and ran a short course.

The reasons which make it desirable that we shall have a college magazine are practically those which have determined other colleges to have magazines, and they apply with special force in proportion as Presidency College may claim a high place among colleges. It is, I believe, in part out of consciousness of special responsibility that Presidency College has in this particular lagged behind other colleges: if some say culpably, I have no great quarrel with them. What I am very clear about is, that when Presidency College does have a magazine, it is incumbent upon every member of the college to do what he can to make the Presidency College Magazine a success. We have hesitated, perhaps too long. We now take the decisive step of issuing our first number. We are under obligation to take care that our magazine is started on sound lines and is maintained permanently.

Nothing can contribute better to these two ends than a clear and accurate view of the functions which a college magazine has to fulfil. Rightly understood, a college magazine is an organ of the corporate life of the college. It is at once an expression of the common life and a quickener of its activities. It fulfils these functions better in proportion as it keeps closely in touch with the actual work-a-day life of the college. It should chronicle events; it should communicate views; it should afford opportunities for the free discussion of college affairs and interests. These things it should do first and foremost; and if it fails to do these things, it is no college magazine. But inasmuch as a college is related to other colleges and to the University, a college magazine should, in the second place, find space for news from other colleges and keep its readers informed of matters of common interest in the University. This is its second natural function. A third is to foster literary and scientific interest by printing contributions from members of the college which reach a sufficiently high standard.

This third function is quite legitimate, but I place it a long way after the other two. Care must be taken that it is kept duly subordinate. Experience shows that there is a danger of the more proper functions of a college magazine falling into the background, and of literary contributions bulking too largely. However great the temptation, and to whatever cause it may be due, it is to be resisted, or a college magazine altogether misses its true function. This is to be the college magazine, an organ of college life. It is to treat of current events and interests and the interests of the college. It requires no mean art, no slight effort; no slender stock of perseverance to attain these ends adequately.

If our college magazine fulfils its functions as I conceive them, it will do the following things. It will give us information valuable to us in our ordinary college life;— notice of events which concern the college as a whole or sections of it; the constitution of clubs, seminars, societies; accounts of meetings; changes in the routine of studies; information concerning scholarships and prizes; reports of matches; social news of all sorts; University news and general educational news. News must of course be kept within limits, and the limits are given precisely enough by bearing on the interests of college life.

In order that these functions may be discharged effectually, in other words, in order that the information may be useful, there are other conditions which must be fulfilled: (1) publication must be fairly frequent; (2) publication must be punctual. It is hoped to meet the first condition sufficiently by making publication monthly from July to November, omitting one month for the Pujah Vacation, ordinarily, as this year, the month of October. The date of publication will ordinarily be the first Monday in the month. This year it is proposed to publish the first number in November. There will be six issues in the year- three from July to September, three from November to March.

The regularity of publication will depend on the energy and good management of the editor and committee, and this will require the assistance of a staff of correspondents: one for college societies, one for the Eden Hindu Hostel, one for outside college news, one for University news. It is also hoped to find a correspondent among the members of the teaching staff.

It is proposed also to recognize the historic connection between the College and the Hindu and Hare Schools. A column will be kept for news from each of the two schools (so long as the schools have not their own school paper), and each school will be invited to appoint a correspondent.

Two very important considerations remain. Success is not attainable without the solid support of the college at large. In particular, the committee and correspondents must depend, to a large extent, on the active and intelligent co-operation of Secretaries of College Societies. The production of the magazine will also involve considerable expenditure. The financial problem has been met by a proposal emanating from the Magazine Committee and approved by the Students' Consultative Committee and by the Governing Body of the College, that a subscription shall be levied throughout the college from every student in the same way as the athletic subscription. The Governing Body have further agreed to supplement, if necessary, the revenue to be derived from this source.

In conclusion, I ask on behalf of the Committee for an indulgent reception of this first number and for friendly support from all. We trust we have already the support of every present member of the college. We hope also for substantial support from past members who retain an affection for the college, and who may be glad to keep alive the associations by which they are bound to us.

AFRICAN MUSIC

Douglas Kadenhe, *Economics (1958-1962)*

In case somebody comes under the mistaken impression that I am going to attempt a general survey of African music as a whole, I want to make it clear at the very outset that all I am going to try to do is to write about a particular type of music found in a particular part of the continent of Africa.

“TSABA-TSABA”- the very sound suggests a fiery rhythm. This is the music that has made the biggest noise in Southern Rhodesia for the last half century. Tsaba-tsaba is just as much a dance as it is drama and music. It is a form of spontaneous self-expression and complete abundance. It is essentially an art of improvisation- a kind of uninstitigated combustion produced by the mood of the moment. The tsaba music caught on the tape or on the gramophone record is, at the best, a mere suggestion of the whole, a shadow of the reality. Any reproduction of it outside its atmospheric context is vaguely sacrilegious to the spirit of the real thing.

Though tsaba-tsaba has an affinity to the noise that seems to be the main constituents of the notorious rock-n-roll music, it is, in fact, distinct and unique. Even when tsaba-tsaba is adapted for performance on the modern stage, it is essential that it retains the element of impromptu and naturalness.

As it is a product of the particular moment, it is almost impossible to recapture any same impulse twice in succession. It has proved to be an infuriatingly elusive affair to re-portray it, once the momentary source has run dry its gamut. Such music that originates from the delicate nuances of the human mood from time to time is difficult to define except in practical demonstration, and words seem to be poorly equipped to carry over a picture that can be remotely adequate. In this respect the cinema is the only medium which can do justice to the nature of the thing.

For the evocation of the ideal mood that will produce the most enjoyable strain of the music, nothing else is so well-suited than the clear, open sky with the moon reigning in sole splendour.

The magic of tsaba-tsaba relies to a great extent upon the vibrant notes of the drum. The drum is the agent of provocation-the spark that ignites the latent urge of the dancers are paired off, still each is allowed maximum freedom of expression- interpreting the music into action according to the dancers' individual imagination and inclination. Freedom of emotional expression is a fundamental right of the tsaba-tsaba. The principle is that people dance because the urge is natural and irresistible. Dancers are not artificial beings at the dictates of art, but natural mortals revelling in the unalloyed joy of dancing and expressing themselves spontaneously instead of being restricted by the formulas of art. In tsaba-tsaba, art follows nature.

There is innumerable variety in tsaba-tsaba. Every performer has his own steps and his own movements, and the audience would have nothing else. This abundant variety and constant change of style and tempo is quite in keeping with the proverbial mercurial character of the Rhodesians who cannot stand monotony. But at the bottom of the seeming chaos and profusion of movements is an underlying uniformity, provided mainly by the background rhythm.

Always towards the end the tempo increases gradually. The drum which had up to this moment mingled in euphony with the other instruments now booms above the conglomerate sound, voicing its claim to supremacy. The dancers now sway lazily and rhythmically like branches of a tree in a gentle breeze. The couples pair up unconsciously and separate again. The beat quickens unmistakably; the dancers get intoxicated with the music, and transfigured by their own prowess, their facial expression alters from strange concentration to frenzied obsession. Instead of merely enjoying the vivid animation one becomes sucked into the spirit of tsaba-tsaba, mysteriously becoming a part of it. Now the pennywhistle pierces above the overall sound, and all the other instruments join in harmony, concocting the delirious music of pipes and drums. The tsaba-tsaba has now

assumed chaotic confusion, as sinuous bodies writhe and glisten in serpentine convolutions. By this time the music has risen to its final cyclonic crescendo that seems no longer of this world. The distinction between the dancers is lost in the blur of revolving bodies until they all emerge as mere forms and shapes caught up in the whirligig of the raging rhythm of tsaba-tsaba.

(Originally published in Presidency College Magazine, 1962 edition)

CAN INTELLIGENT STUDENTS AFFORD TO BE GOOD STUDENTS?

(A debate held in the year 1951, between July and September. In the editor's words, "The opinions given below tell us what present students think about the matter")

I

Asoke Ray; Sixth Year Arts, 1951.

Education, in the very general sense, means only certain instructions directed mainly to the training of men and women for certain professions. But education is also the disinterested pursuit of learning, educating the soul. Students who may be termed bookworms are concerned only with books. But though we may spend our young days filling notebooks with definitions of Religion, Politics, Art, etc., yet, in the end, as Euclid points out, our tables are incomplete and our curve a parabola whose ends will never meet.

The intelligent students take the second view of education: experience gained from contact with the world, its men and sights, is itself a good book. The intelligent student acquires his knowledge spontaneously and can grasp the totality instead of only a single aspect of the truth.

In this mechanical world we attach more importance to the minor than the major values of life. Our principle should be to adjust minor values, keeping the major values fixed. If books are read not from the utilitarian standpoint but for acquiring knowledge of the world, they will take us to "unaccountable and unforgettable moments which take the soul of enjoyment to strangely higher powers of itself; moments when the intervening darkness thins and we can see into the heart of life". Our so-called 'good' students, to be happy, must be intelligent too.

II

Ashin Dasgupta; Fourth year Arts, 1951.

An intelligent definition of 'intelligence' is hard to get at. Everybody knows that he is nobody's fool. On the other hand, most of us love to imagine ourselves as intellectuals. But intelligence is no mere absence of foolishness. And as to intellectuals, whenever the occasion permits, we airily dismiss the recognised ones as mere fools. It happens. It is the reality. Intelligence, it seems, is an understanding of this reality, a quick power to grasp its causal connection. Nobody would admit that he is not intelligent. Few would care nowadays to be called an idealist.

So we, intelligent people, all deal with reality. And what, nowadays, is the reality as regards our system of education? You cram successfully and you are a professor or an administrator. You cram with less success and you are a clerk. A good student, that is, one who takes an interest in his studies, cannot escape either of these two. But being a good student, he spends his student life absorbed in his studies. So he gets no chance of getting at the realities of things. He grows up, may be an intellectual, may be a book worm. But never an intelligent man.

So we, of the intelligentsia, are never good students. Times are difficult. Try to keep in touch with things and you are out of touch with your studies. So that is the trouble with us, intelligent people; we are so busy being intelligent that we have not the time to be good students. For how, we may well ask, can one be both intelligent and a good student at the same time? Where is the time?

III

Parthasarathi Gupta, Third year Arts, 1951

We are living in the middle of the twentieth century at a time when the world is passing through a crisis. This

A Prelude : 2014-15

crisis manifests itself in the form of World Wars, economic chaos, and various restrictions on the life of the individual- restrictions which were unthinkable even in the recent past. before our own eyes we have seen the devastating effects of modern culture, the monstrous exploitation of people, by alien rulers, the end results of racial discrimination, and last, but not least, the abysmal gap between rich and poor.

In such a situation the intelligent and imaginative young man cannot but ask himself the question why this is so, and in raising these problems and trying to find out the answers to them he cannot help being deflected from the secluded life of a disinterested scholar- aloof and remote from all directions. But the conventional idea of a good student is that he should not concern himself with problems that are outside the syllabus prescribed by his tutors (a syllabus that is often antiquated and sometimes ordinary) and never ask embarrassing, impertinent questions that may threaten the basis of the status-quo. Politics, above everything, is marked taboo.

For the intelligent youth of today, therefore, this ideal of being a good student is not attractive. His life is intricately bound up with the living world around him and neutrality in the face of the great ideological clashes of today cannot be imagined. He knows that-

“...only ghosts can live

Between two fires.”

COLLEGE MAGAZINES (1939)

Principal Kuruvilla Zachariah

A college magazine is, in many ways, one of the most harmless of our public institutions. This may seem faint praise, especially in a Jubilee Number, but I mean it as high commendation. When we consider how often even the well-meant acts of well-meaning men result in evil rather than in good, how mixed are the issues of human endeavour and how powerless we are to separate the tares from the wheat, we shall be thankful for anything that does not hurt, even if it cannot heal. When man ate of the fruit of the forbidden tree, he not only knew good and evil, but he became helpless to do good without evil. The proof lies all around us. Few steps in human progress have been so long as the mastery of the art of flying and to-day we cower under the possible consequences of that art. Or, think of printing, the keystone of modern learning and education. What it gives in the one sides, it takes away on the other. It places books in our hands, but the running brooks stray unnoticed to the sea. The newspapers tell us what happens with each tired sunrise from China to Peru; but truth is so cunningly mingled in them with falsehood, falsehood by assertion, falsehood by omission, that to extract it pure would strain the skill of a Bentley. One of the tests of an educated man is that he does not believe the newspapers. Inventions and institution devised for the welfare and happiness of mankind become, by some inevitable alchemy, instruments of wrong and misery. Nearly everything we touch turns to dust and ashes. It is no light achievement in our world to refrain from doing harm.

One reason for this is that the college magazine seeks to do no good. It does not flaunt any high-sounding object like the advancement of learning or the dissemination of knowledge or, to use the ugly phrase, the mobilisation of public opinion. It does not claim the largest circulation in the country. It is content with a very limited audience and its aims are very modest, to tell what happens in the college from term to term and to clothe a few student essays with an illusion of immortality. It is a comforting thought that modern paper is so quickly perishable. In old days men wrote on stone or copper or parchment. Stones break, but the fragments remain and provide occupation for the epigraphist. Parchment writing, even when scraped out, peeps through as a palimpsest. If paper were untearable and unburnable, the earth would soon sink under the load of learning. But, happily, in a generation or two it crumbles into dust; and, meanwhile, newspaper show an unexpected wisdom and pre-vision in providing sheets of a size convenient for making grocers' bags or lining shelves. It would be an evil day for college magazines when they put forth a programme or try to live up to an ideal.

Another advantage of college magazines is that, although they have the misfortune to be attached to an institution, they are not controlled by any one person. Editors come and go with refreshing frequency-a year or two and their pages know them no more. Conscious of approaching freedom, they are not crushed by the burden of responsibility and can set about their task as light-heartedly as the moth that lives but for the day. It is true that the connexion with a college imposes some limitations. One has to pretend that one's college is the best; and, sometimes, a little of that heavy solemnity, so strangely characteristic of colleges in Bengal, descends on the magazine as well. But these are adventitious-the essence of the magazine is an easy carelessness, a swift glance at all the flowers in the garden without wearing either the white rose or the red.

There is a third point for the college magazine-that nobody reads it. This is specially important because attempts are sometimes made to use it to convey a lesson or a moral. Principals write serious 'fore-words,' but they fall as seed on stony soil and inspire neither reaction nor response. Old students write to extol their own days, but their self-deception deceives no one else, for no one reads them. Those only read the college magazine who write for it. Their attention may indeed be pardoned, for they limit themselves to their own productions and such a simple vanity does no harm to any one else. No critical eye sits in judgement on these children, who enjoy at once the stimulation of publicity and the indulgence of the home. Nowhere else can one enjoy this double privilege, a privilege specially valuable at that age which is at the same time most effervescent and most sensitive.

The college magazine is, thus, one of the few innocent activities in a sad, bad world. I have seen no better specimens of the type than the Presidency College Magazine. It is now older than most of its members. And, even when it is a hundred, I trust it will still preserve those qualities of freshness, variety and irresponsibility that alone make it worth while.

The Liberal Ideal (2007)

Prof. Amlan Datta

(Excerpt from the original article, published in the 2007-08 edition of the Presidency College Magazine)

Almost all over the civilized world liberalism is in disgrace today. It has been trampled on by Fascists, held in bitter contempt by the Communists, confidently criticized by the Socialists and only apologetically defended by the Liberals themselves. And it is not for nothing that liberalism has met this fate. Liberal institutions have failed; they have failed to satisfy the only test that counts, the test of their adequacy to meet the problems of our time.

Liberal institutions have failed to fulfil the promise that they once held out so confidently. Yet the failure of liberal institutions does not mean the failure of all that liberalism stood for. Liberalism stood for a certain spirit, certain ideals which it thought could be realized through the institutions it came to defend. We may be firmly convinced of the inadequacy of these institutions and yet recognize the value of the ideas liberalism preached. The suggestion that what liberalism preached an ideal may have a more permanent value than what it taught about social institutions need not appear surprising. It is not unoften that statements of differing degrees of generality find place within the fold of a single system of thought; and even when some of these statements are rendered obsolete with the passage of time, other statements of a more durable nature may retain their right to recognition. It is only in a limited sense that a doctrine is apt to be all of a piece; and in practice we may even reject a doctrine- as we may reject liberalism- while we take over the more permanent part of its contribution. In claiming that the liberal ideal has not lost its value even though liberal institutions stand discredited, it is not suggested that the ideal has not completely escaped the influence of the institutions. As a matter of fact, even the theoretic conception of the ideal has been , in the case of many liberal thinkers, rendered confused and incomplete through the influence of mistaken ideas on economic and political institutions. To take at this state only one example, liberal economic doctrine toyed with the idea of the 'economic man' and it can be reasonably suggested that this idea obstructed the working out by the liberals of such a complete conception of human nature as an adequate statement of their ideal requires. Yet with all its incompleteness, the liberal ideal has a heart that deserves respect. And liberals with a clear recognition of this essence of their creed have not been entirely absent.

The essence of the liberal ideal lies in its insistence on the value of the individual. Spiritually, individualism and liberalism are inseparable associates. The individual, it has been asserted, is the ultimate center of all experiences; happiness is a state of consciousness that in any final analysis, can only belong to the individual; and therefore the happiness of society as a whole can only mean the aggregate happiness of the individuals who compose it. If happiness is a good, it is individual happiness that ought to be promoted. It has further been asserted that while every individual is a member of a community, he is in a quite fundamental sense unique; that even when his experiences resemble those of others, the way and the order in which he receives them are stamped with his own individuality and it is a violence to his nature to force him to integrate his experiences in conformity with a generally prescribed pattern. The individual in short should have maximum freedom to arrive at such unique integration of his personality as his distinctive nature demands. Freedom of the individual being the supreme and neither custom nor tradition nor any institution, nor even the state, may claim the allegiance of the individual irrespective of its function in promoting freedom. Restriction on the freedom of any individual is never desirable as such, but should only be introduced when it is calculated to extend to a greater degree the freedom of others.

KURUVILLA ZACHARIAH (1964)

Sushovan Chandra Sarkar

To the present generation of students Kuruvilla Zachariah is merely a name. To his contemporaries, old and young, he was almost a legend. The College Centenary Volume in an obituary notice- he passed away in the midst of the celebration- aptly described him as a “distinguished scholar, great and inspiring as a teacher, universally respected for his personal qualities.” The portrait in the same volume carries in its caption a fitting tribute-” the finest teacher of history in the annals of Presidency College.”

Young Zachariah must have been one of the most outstanding students in all of India in the early years of the 20th century. He won a double first- in History as well as English honours at the Madras University. After serving his own Christian College as tutor in English and lecturer in History, he spent three years in Oxford on a State Scholarship. Oxford awarded him a First Class in History(1915)- a distinction not yet attained by any one from Bengal- with eleven alphas in a total of thirteen papers. Arthur Johnson, his tutor in Merton, regarded him as one of the best students in his experience of forty five years.

One of the first Indians appointed to the Indian Educational Service, Kuruvilla Zachariah was posted to the Presidency College, far away from his home in the South. He served our College as Professor of History from 1916 to 1930 and created from the first a tremendous impression on all his pupils and colleagues, an impression which only deepened with the passing years. I had the great fortune of being his student from 1917-1923 and to this day I cannot think of my College days without his image flashing through my mind. Prafullachandra Ghose and Kuruvilla Zachariah are the two teachers dearest in my memory, and I have not come across their peers in my experience, here and abroad. The annals of our college justly boast of a succession of great teachers, and if tradition is worth anything, Kuruvilla Zachariah is assured his place among these immortals.

He started with English history in our First Year class and at once the magic realm of History opened to our wondering minds. In the Third Year, he took up the Middle Ages and to me at least the result was an abiding love for medieval ideas and institutions in their unfolding. His intimate insight into Medieval Europe was symbolised for us in his article in the college magazine for April 1918 in which he held up a moving picture of the Florentine Priory of San Marco (“the cloister seems to me”-he wrote-”the translation into architecture of the monastic temper”) and memorable sketches of Fra Angelico, Savonarola, and Pico de la Mirandola. We had some difficulty in finding suitable textbooks on the unfamiliar period and the Professor took the trouble of getting out for us excellent introductory studies all the way from Blackwell’s of Oxford. He taught us to use the seminar library, to browse among books, a habit which many of us acquired for life. When he turned to Greek history, ancient Greece and ‘violet-crowned’ Athens came to life for us. He could conjure up a vision of Greek maritime activity by an effective use of the beautiful lines of Matthew Arnold, the image of some grave Tyrian trader descrying among Aegean isles the stealthy emerging prow-

“And saw the merry Grecian coaster come,
 Freighted with amber grapes, and China wine,
 Green bursting figs and tunnies steeped in brine;
And knew the intruders on his ancient home,
The young light-hearted masters of the waves –”

And not imagination alone. At the postgraduate stage, in English constitutional history, we learned from him the power of kin analysis and balanced presentation, a gift which I missed in even many Oxford lecturers. Rarely had Clio a more worthy votary than Kuruvilla Zachariah.

To his pupils even in their later careers, Professor Zachariah’s academic wisdom was always readily available. When we were revising the History syllabus at the Dacca University, I obtained from him instructive advice,

though perhaps a little too radical for the authorities. When I was suddenly called upon to take up English Constitutional History in the Calcutta M.A. classes, his synopsis and advice, lent ungrudgingly, became my main stay. When the course on the Reformation was introduced in the Calcutta Honours stage, he introduced me to its literature and in particular gave me a French volume of very great help. He turned out on another occasion, at a moment's notice a comprehensive list on the source-material, of all things, the reign of Henry VII. I found him once immersed in the study of the French material on the history of the French in India. I have no doubt that many others must have drawn from, and profited by the wide range of his accurate knowledge and historical scholarship. He not merely emanated reliable information, he could also train us in the use of unfamiliar material in the true Oxford style. Professor Zachariah did indeed live up to the ideal he himself laid down in the College Magazine for September 1917: "the great teacher influences his pupils, not through their memory, but through their judgement."

Kuruvilla's father was a teacher, and he inherited from him personal integrity and a love for the teaching profession. He himself felt that teaching was his true vocation, but a man of self-discipline, he could not shirk when duty called him to administrative work. Quality shone out even in such alien fields. He assisted the Sadler Commission and the Hartog Committee and helped in the preparation of Government quinquennial education reports. He was a most successful principal at the Hooghly college—after his marriage to Shanti Dey in 1929, he built up a happy home in Chinsurah, away from Calcutta in the life of which Kuruvilla never felt really an "in-sider"—and in 1936 he did organise the impressive Centenary celebration of his new College. As the Principal of the then Islamia College after 1938, he drew up a comprehensive attractive plan for the remodeling of the institution in a new campus beyond the city, but this was wrecked and buried by the war. At the Islamia College, Mr. Zachariah organised and equipped a Geography Department, later transferred to the Presidency College where he had already helped to initiate the modern study of the subject. His tenure as Bengal's Director of Public Instruction (1944-1945) was unfortunately too brief to produce an impact. In 1946 Kuruvilla left Bengal and retired to his new home at Coonoor, but official duty claimed him again. He served the Union Public Service Commission with great distinction (1947-1948) and then organised the new Historical Research Division of our External Affairs Ministry upto 1953. His last assignment was in 1954, as Historical Advisor to the High Commissioner in London, where he died in harness.

Memories tread on each other as I look back on my association with Kuruvilla Zachariah over more than three decades. He called me first to his rooms in St. Paul's College—his Calcutta home in presidency days from where he briskly walked over every day to teach at our own College, and where later on he resided again when he was the DPI—in January 1918, the 14th I think, to return an essay which he liked. That evening remains engraved in my mind—the personality of the man, the gentle manner, the attractive smile, the kindly interest, the quiet flow of illuminating talk, the spacious grounds stretching to the south in the twilight. That room became familiar in my later College years, with the professor in its midst clad in simple native Kerala dress. I remember my surprise in finding one day on the shelves a goodly collection of detective fiction—the merit of which as a relief from hard toil I was to discover only in later life. When a young teacher I had teas and dinners with him as a guest at his mess table and revelled in his talks, grave and gay, with many a friend. He was fond of books, and when he first came to tea with my wife and myself, we had just set up a household— he squatted on the floor and ransacked my minute library. When he went on long leave in 1927, he wanted that I should take up his work in the College for the time being, but Government would not agree despite the best efforts of Principal Ramsbotham and himself. On that occasion, he could even write to me, his pupil, asking for 'forgiveness' for having roused vain expectations. He asked me to drop the 'sir' in my letters to him, and thus he became to me simply the 'Professor'. When he came down to Dacca as external examiner— incidentally he taught me the technique of the 'viva' there— he would readily stay in my poor lodgings, and I shall never forget his gentle talk to my ailing aged father whom he had never met before. He chaffed me about the Bengali weakness to hanker after Calcutta, but when I wanted to return from Dacca to a Calcutta job, he readily understood my point of view and asked me to 'command' him if he could be of any help in the matter. I cherish the memory of my visits to his Hooghly College home, specially an entire day which we spent with him in the lovely residence on the

river. He came over at my request to address a relief exhibition organised by social workers at the time of the Bengal Famine, in a most un-DPI like manner, and promptly contributed to the funds my wife was raising to feed the victims. Many others must have had similar experiences with him, and I am jotting down these flitting reminiscences in the hope that they at least will understand and appreciate the personal emotions of one of his many pupils.

A devoted scholar, Kuruvilla Zachariah had a catholicity of interests as well. I have seen him umpiring boys' games in the playing fields of St. Paul's. He was an enthusiastic figure in the scout world- his *Scout Lore* was a much valued contribution- and I remember him on the Maidan under an evening sky in the open talking to his eager scouts on astronomy. Gardening was a cherished hobby – derived perhaps from his mother; at Blair Gowrie, Coonoor, where he planned and founded a home for rest and retirement from which the call of duty snatched him unkindly away, he built up a charming garden in his spare moments, and it is my misfortune that I could not visit him there in spite of many invitations. The Professor had a passion for the open country; it is exhilarating to read of the long march with the scouts along the santals uplands (College Magazine, December, 1922) or of his exploration of the bye-ways of North Peloponnesus off the beaten track (College Magazine, December and March 1928).” Or take this passage from the Magazine of March, 1925 on the track in the Khasi Hills : “to spend the lightful hours wandering and exploring far afield, with a map in your hand and some sandwiches in your pocket—thus only may you enter into spiritual possession of the land.” And there were the long friendships with the stream of affectionate letters – harking back to the Oxford years and beyond. Kuruvilla was simply ‘Zach’ to ever so many.

Oxford lay deep in his heart. When I went up in 1923, he sent me a letter fragrant with the memories of the city of dreaming spires and the country around made part of literature by the *Scholar Gipsy*. The letter, which to my infinite sorrow I misplaced somehow, quoted unfamiliar verses as well which haunt me even now-

When I return I shall see thy face
Pressed to the roses on our Merton walls
And hear thy steps when the glad clamour calls-
Six hundred years to the same prayer-wonted place.

And again:

Mother, mistress of us all,
We, her sons, her lovers call-
Call her across the gulf of years,
And she smiles at us and hears-
Fresh girl-lips of laughing kisses,
Tender mother-eyes of tears.

How many can think of an impersonal institution in such terms, aloof from worldly calculations? Such emotions are uplifting.

Kuruvilla Zachariah came from perhaps the oldest Indian Christian community, the Syrian Christians. He was to the last a loyal Christian; the last time I saw him (1952) was when, after a chat in his Akbar Road Delhi residence, I was given a lift by him and the car dropped him at the church near Rashtrapati Bhavan, and he disappeared within the darkening portals for evening prayers. He once told his friend, Rev. E.C. Dewick, however, that the externals of religion meant less and less to him, that “at heart I am a Quaker.” In any case he was a deeply religious man, and it must have hurt him that some of his best pupils – a Hireen or a Nikhil- turned towards materialistic Marxism. But he would never thrust his own convictions upon others, true Christian charity was always uppermost with him. One evening he gently asked me whether it was true that I also was drawing to the Marxian way, and told me that he would like very much a long discussion and try to understand our point of view. He was then overburdened with the official duties of the DPI, and the talk had to be at some

other time. Unluckily the opportunity never came, and he left Calcutta soon after for ever. I would have liked to explain to him that true Marxism did not scoff at genuine religious emotion like his, but joined issue only with the institutionalised pressure of a priesthood or the possible numbing effects of an other-worldly philosophy which turned away from suffering humanity.

It has been often felt that Kuruvilla Zachariah was a mere teacher, and not a researcher who adds to the quantum of historical knowledge. It is true that he bent his whole mind to lecture work. Every single lecture was a striving towards perfect expression; a course was like a string of pearls. Such lectures themselves do enrich our knowledge, not less than many a monograph. Still it is not true that Zachariah lacked the capacity of a researcher. His short paper on *Some difficulties in Thucydides* (JASB, 1929) is a distinct contribution in a field where the best European scholars have trod. The address on the *Political Theory of Imperialism* (Madras University, 1930) is a most suggestive critical survey of a field of thought while even his College Magazine article on *Thomas Hobbes* (September 1917) is a real help to understanding. The *History of the Hooghly College* (1936) is regarded by one of our foremost researchers himself as something which must be read by all research-workers. K.P.S. Menon has described his anonymous papers produced by the Historical Research Division (not available to the general public) as models of historical research. He was chosen to edit the volume of the 20th century in the projected UNESCO History of the World. Quality in intellectual work is surely worth more than quantity. Of course Zachariah was not ambitious. He wrote in the College Magazine- "of making many books there is no end... I have grace enough to be ashamed of the desire to publish." And again in our Silver Jubilee Volume: "It is a comforting thought that modern paper is so perishable... Happily in a generation or two it crumbles into dust... If paper were untearable and unburnable, the earth would soon sink under the load of learning." Kuruvilla Zachariah was indeed a humanist. He believed in life itself and the mainstream of history in which we are but little waves leaving the vanity of immortality to take care of itself.

CHARLES LAMB : ONE HUNDRED YEARS (1935)

Prof. Taraknath Sen

Last December marked the centenary of Charles Lamb's death. Down a whole century has the wistful and wayward figure of Elia floated securely in a ripple of laughter and tears. He has found his way into our hearts, and there he abides. Following his example with respect to Milton, we now might almost say grace before reading his Essays- a prayer of thankfulness, for have they not made good their place among the joys of modern life? And the wonder of it all is: where did all this joy that he has given us well up from? For he had such a dreary life. He lived tragedy, though he did not write it. Quite early in life he tasted of poverty which snatched him from his educational career and flung him onto the "desk's dead wood" at the tender age of seventeen. He had also to know the curse of hereditary disease- a taint of madness running through the family, which, though it has spared him with one serious attack, made a life-long victim of his "poor dear, dearest sister", Mary Lamb, who killed their mother in one of her frenzies. That tragedy coloured the rest of Lamb's life; for, as his father died, after having lingered long in senility and sickness, the charge of the "poor dear, dearest sister" came upon Lamb, who bravely took it up, foregoing marriage and personal happiness for her sake. The rest of his forlorn bachelor's life, lighted up by such sparks of sisterly affection as the intervals of sanity spared, was spent in a life-long devotion to this ailing creature: between office and a solitary home, and sometimes between home and the asylum, whereto, when the fits came upon Mary, brother and sister would often be seen walking hand-in-hand with tearful eyes. The other one of his ancestral inheritances, poverty, plagued him as much; and it was long before Lamb was in a position to buy a set of old china: that new richness of his against which Bridget Elia so gently protested.

II

How did he take to life to whom life had taken thus? In his attitude to life, such a life as his, lies the whole secret of Lamb's humour; for is it not strange that such a sufferer should be so inveterate a laughter? He triumphed over life in the sheer unconquerability of his laughter. He laughed with (not at) life, even as a mother with a crying child, now trying to kindle laughter with her own mirth in a face that would persist in weeping and grimacing, now laughing at the very contortions of that face. And how various a laughter was that. Now it is the tender smile of the portrait of Bridget Elia, now it is the mischievous smirk of the account of James Boyer and of "Alexander in tears", now it is the uproarious hilarity of *All Fools' Day*. Now, again, it is a smiling perception of the ironies of life, of its perpetual inconsistencies and contradictions- an amused wonder that the greatness of a place (*Recollections of Christ's Hospital*) should hide so much meanness and misery (*Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago*); that a mind so wise and helpful in the stormiest trials of life should upset you in the calmest weather (Bridget Elia in *Mackery End*); that children, those elfin beings that peopled his dreamland, should be the instruments for married people to torture bachelors with. But he so enjoys his amusement that he forgets to complain. Sometimes he would quaintly dwell on the little, stolen comforts and delights of his life- petty personal preferences, and petty personal aversions that add to the zest of life as much as the preferences; his whist, and roast pig, and books, and old china, and fools, and people (and authors) with some diverting twist of mind and honest obliquity of understanding: all his favourites; Scotchmen, and married people, and "books which no gentleman's library should be without", and reprint of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, and early-rising: all his anathemas; as if he would flaunt these likes and dislikes in the face of life, proclaiming with a mock-heroic gusto the triumph of the individual over life, that formidable generality that seeks to wipe out the individual. Thus he preserves his perpetual greenness of mind and triumphs over the ills that the flesh is heir to. He armours himself in a panoply of whim and fantasy and odd drollery and the abstraction of antique phrase, and defies life to do its worst. It is the armour worn by Captain Jackson- that "preponderating opulence" of mind which feeds on spiritual repasts which "carving cannot lessen nor helping diminish." "The mind, the mind, Master Shallow."

III

But laughing and laughing away are only superficial aspects of Lamb's humour. For the best part and the

quintessence of Lamb's humour is not his triumph over life but his profound acceptance of that life which had sought to defeat him. He is in love with life- "with this green earth." He refuses to die- "can a ghost laugh, or shake its gaunt sides?" He is in love with London- London not only with its splendor and comforts and "the sweet security of its streets", but London with "all the bustle and wickedness round about Covent Garden, the very women of the town... drunken scenes, rattles... the very dirt and mud... steams of soups from kitchens."* He is in love even with the Original Sin and the Fall of Man: Eden according to him 'was the primitive prison till man with promethean felicity and boldness luckily sinned himself out of it. Thence followed Babylon, Nineveh, Venice, London, haberdashers, goldsmiths, taverns, playhouses, satires, epigrams, puns- these all came in on the town part and the thither side of innocence.'

It is a love of the complete life- not only the life of holidays and the greenness of fields and the delicious juices of meats and fishes and fireside conversations and the company of books, but life in aspects the most insignificant and repellent, life as in the pictures of Hogarth (his favourite), life that blooms in chimney-sweepers and beggars, life with poverty and the curse of hereditary disease. He is in love with the very ills of this life, and what could be more characteristic of Lamb than his yearning for sickness that he might indulge in its regalities? That is an illustration not only of his audacious whimsicality and his quaint humour, but also of his attitude towards life. For Lamb is not merely Captain Jackson- not merely a poet with that "preponderating opulence of fancy" that triumphs over the drabest and meanest realities of life; but he is, in his own droll way, a philosopher with a profound acceptance of these realities. And in what more beautiful words could we sum up this philosophy than in these of Keats, a poet with a similar outlook on life, viz. that it is "the love of of good and ill" and "the principle of beauty in all things", a philosophy which finds that "though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine."

IV

From that fountainhead, that inner centre of Lamb's being, sprang all that depth of tolerance and tenderness which is the most beautiful part of Lamb's humour. One could almost wish to be laughed at by Lamb, for no laughter could be more sympathetic. As one whom life had treated harshly, he had a deep and tender understanding of the frailties that the flesh is heir to; and while he was no sentimentalist, likely to gloss over and not laugh at your absurdities and weaknesses, he would sometimes laugh them into beauty. What a feeling of affection lights up the conclusion of his half-humorous portrait of Love! What a spirit of loving forgiveness inspires the memories of a brother who had deserted the family in need! What a world of wisdom and sympathy lies hidden beneath all the fun of *All Fool's Day*! What a depth of tenderness underlies the explanation of the "stoop" of Thomas Tame, where the very absurdity of the man is transformed into the very beauty of his life. On the negative side this tolerance and tenderness are equally striking. It took the form of a deep hatred of dogma and of rigidity and inelasticity of temper. That was why he could not stand the Scotch intellect. That was why he could not stand Wordsworth's glorification of the countryside- this Lamb who wrote *Mackery End* and *Blakesmoor* and of "unspeakable rural solitudes" (*New Year's Eve*). Could one imagine two men more unlike than Lamb and Voltaire? Yet, at the Haydon dinner, Lamb chaffed Wordsworth on the latter's denunciation of Voltaire. He must find place for everything and everybody in life.

Yet, place for everything and everybody – not only for the outcast, the chimney-sweeper and the beggar, for that is a form of sympathy so common and obvious that it no longer carries any distinction with it. More striking and distinctive than Lamb's sympathy for the outcast is his sympathy for characters that fail to adjust themselves to the life around them; who live as it were a life of their own- the Samuel Salts referring at an unseasonable moment to the hanging of Miss Blandy, the Bigods through whose fingers the world's wealth is slipping out forever, the Captain Jacksons living in a perpetual poetry of impecuniosity. With what tender care does he preserve these very individual individualities from the blurring distinction of life! For them too he must find a place in life – for borrowers, and inconvenient fellows, and thoughtless virgins that take no oil for their lamps, and architects that build upon sand, and quiet souls that keep their talent. He must needs have them to complete the frame of his perspective of life.

And if anybody objects, we might imagine him saying to his objector very much as Falstaff said to the Prince of his "pitiful rascals"- Tush, man, mortal men, mortal men.

V

Yes! Mortal men, mortal men. Who could have a keener sense of mortality than Lamb- with a mother killed by her daughter, a lovable father falling to decay under his very eyes, with a whole world of old familiar faces that vanished? The very evanescence of life increased his love and tenderness for it. The shadows of mortal destiny can be seen flitting across the pages of the *Essays to Elia*, imparting, in many instances, to Lamb's quaint humour a strange, ethereal, dreamlike quality. It can be seen that in *Dream-Children* and in the refutation of the popular fallacy *That we should rise with the lark*. One could scarcely guess the sadness that lurks behind Lamb's laughter, the tear and the sigh that his smile conceals. He is full of the *lacrimae rerum*, and there are times when the tears well up in spite of himself and betray his pathetic smile. Thus, in *Old Benchers of the Inner Temple* he starts with a long and laughing catalogue of the old benchers. Suddenly all this wealth of humorous detail is broken in upon with an abrupt ejaculation:

Fantastic forms! whither are ye fled!

The effect is strange and instantaneous: we seem to look upon the "fading" of an "insubstantial pageant" and the odd drollery of Elia becomes a sudden, little, tender commentary on life.

নেড়ি কুত্তা ৫ (২০০৮)

(অরুণ কোলাটিকরের মূল ইংরেজি থেকে অনুবাদ)

নবনীতা দেবসেন

কুকুরের প্রতি মানুষের বশ্যতার
গাঢ় তর কোনো উদাহরণ চাইলে,
আমাদের যেতে হবে ইতিহাস পেরিয়ে,

কয়েক সহস্র বছর টপকে এসে,
একটা বৈজ্ঞানিক রূপকথা তুলে নিতে হবে,
হারল্যান এলিসনের “একটি ছেলে এবং তার কুকুর”

সর্বত্র নেড়ি কুত্তাদের কাছে বইখানা গীতার মতো
যেখানে উক্ত বইএর ‘ছেলেটা’
বলিদান করে নিজের প্রেমকে
এবং কুকুরের খাদ্য হিসাবে পরিবেশন করে
প্রেমিকাকে, কেবল তার অভুক্ত
সারমেয় প্রভুটির প্রাণ বাঁচানোর তাগিদে ।।

বাগানে কি ধরেছিলে হাত ? (১৯৬৪)

শক্তি চট্টোপাধ্যায়

যবে হাত ধরেছিলে হাতে
এ-প্রাণ ভরেছে অকস্মাতে
সকলবিস্ময়

তখনি তো ধ্বংসের সময়
তখনি তো নির্মাণের জয় ।

‘তোমার হাতের মাঝে আছে পর্যটন—’

এ-কথা কি খুশি করে মন?
এ-কথা কি দেশ ঘুরে আসে
স্মরণীয় বসন্ত বাতাসে !

আমার হ’ল না তবু ছুটি
দুলে ওঠে মোরগের ঝুঁটি—
বেলা গেল—বুকে রক্তপাত
বাগানে কি ধরে ছিলে হাত
বাগানে কি ধরে ছিলে হাত?

দুটি কবিতা

বিনয় মজুমদার (১৯৬২)

১

ইক্ষিত শিক্ষায়তনে যাবার বাসনা হয়েছিলো।
গিয়ে দেখি ত্রস্ত মুখ, উপলক্ষ সমুদ্র উধাও।
ভ্রমর পোষে না কেউ; নবতর হাসির মাধ্যম
সেখানে সুলভ নয়; কাঁটাগাছ পূর্বেই প্রস্তুত।

কিছু আলোকিত হলো সমাছন্ন বাঁশ, ভবিষ্যৎ।
এখন সমস্যা এই, কোনো করবীর সঙ্গে আর
খেলার সময় কিংবা বিশ্বস্ত সুযোগ কোনোদিন
ভুলেও দেবে না কেউ; বাকি আছে শুধু ক্ষুণ্ণ ক্রয়।

হাসপাতাল (১৯৭২)

শঙ্খ ঘোষ

নার্সঃ ১

ঘুমোতে পারিনা, প্রতি হাড়ের ভিতরে জমে ঘৃণ
পাথে কে মাথায় ওঠে অশালীন বীজাণু বিস্তার
ঘূর্ণমান দাকদিইঃ কে কোথায়, সিস্টার, সিস্টার—

‘হয়েছে কি? চুপ করে নিরিবিলি ঘুমিয়ে থাকুন।
তাছাড়া নিয়ম মতো খেয়ে যান ফলের নির্যাস—’
সাদা ঝুঁটি লাল বেল্ট খুটখুট ফিরে যায় নার্স!

নার্সঃ ২

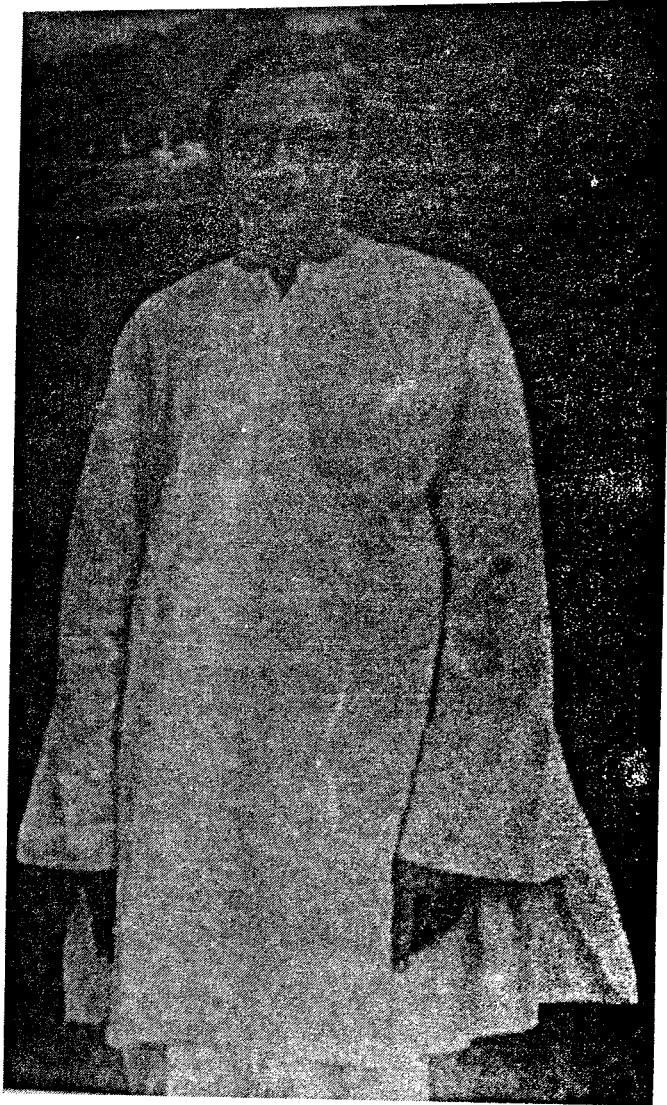
রাত দুটো | চুপিচুপি দুটি মেয়ে ঢুকে দেখে পাশের কেবিনে
শ্রিয়মাণ যুবাটির আরো কিছু মরা হলো কিনা।

‘এখনো ততোটা নয়’ ঠোঁট টিপে এ ওকে জানায়
‘তবে কি ঘুমোছে? নাকি জ্ঞানহীন? ডাক্তার দরকার?’
‘থাক বাপু? ফিনফিনে ফিঙে দুটি ফিরে চলে যায়—
‘আমরা কী করতে পারি! যার যার ঈশ্বর সহায়!’



SIGNED PORTRAIT PRESENTED BY RASTRAPATI DR. RAJENDRA PRASAD
AS A MEMENTO OF HIS VISIT TO HIS OLD COLLEGE ON THE 24TH DECEMBER, 1952

Courtesy : Presidency University Library



TARAKNATH SEN (1909-71)

Courtesy : Presidency University Library

Alumni Section

কেন যে হতে গেলাম পোর্টব্লেরার

অলোক রঞ্জন দাশগুপ্ত

যদি হতাম

ওয়াল্টার ডেলামেয়ার

বিজ্ঞানের পরামর্শ করতাম ড্যাম কেয়ার

যদি রায়বাহাদুর হতেম

দেয়াল জুরে বুলিয়ে রাখতেম

শিকার বিদ্ধ বাঘ হরিণের টোটাম

যদি হতুম

শার্ল বোদলেয়ার

বুদ্ধদেব বসু স্বয়ং আমার কবিতার

করতেন তর্জমা

মূলের সঙ্গে অনুবাদের ফারাক নিয়ে

কক্ষনো কেউ দিতই না গঞ্জনা

কেন যে হতে গেলাম পোর্টব্লেরারঃ

চেউয়ের কাছে দিচ্ছি ভাষণ, আমার তলদেশে

অতিথি-অধ্যাপকের হুইলচেয়ার !

মাটি কোনো দায়িত্ব নেয়না

নব্য ভারতের অহমিকা

গণপতি স্থপতি যেদিন

তামিল ভাষার আদিকবি

তিরুভল্লবরের বিগ্রহ

নির্মাণ করলেন—দৈর্ঘ্য যার

১৩৩ ফুট—তাকে

সেই থেকে ধারণ করে আছে

আসমুদ্র কন্যাকুমারিকা

জোয়ারে ভাঁটায় ভেবে দ্যাখো

জল শুধে দেয় পিতৃঋণা

গণপতি স্থপতি সম্প্রতি

প্রাইভেট ক্লিনিকে মারা গেলে

সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে তাঁকে যথারীতি

দন্ধ করা হয়। সেই থেকে

সম্যক বুঝেছি আমি জল

সব ধরে রাখে, পক্ষান্তরে

মাটি কোনও দায়িত্ব নেয় না।

STATISTICS DEPARTMENT IN 1947-1954

Prof. Milan Kumar Gupta

I.Sc. 1947- 1950; UG Statistics 1950-1952; PG Statistics 1952-1954; Teacher: 1958-1961, 1964-1976

We were the last batch (1947) of matriculates of C.U. from undivided Bengal. I joined the I. Sc. class in 1947 at Presidency College and stayed at The Eden Hindu Hostel. In those days we did not have television, mobile, internet etc. Even electricity at home was not common. So it was a big jump for a mofussil boy from home to Calcutta.

On my first day at Presidency I was looking for the class routine in the main building, but I could not locate it. At last someone guided me to the backside of the stairs in the main building. We had to go from Baker building (for Physics, Geology classes) to the main building (for English, Bangla, Mathematics, Chemistry classes). We enjoyed this to and fro journey for our classes. Even during our UG studies (with Statistics Honours) we had to make this journey along with our teachers for our Honours classes as statistics had no separate classrooms.

While coming from Hindu Hostel to college we passed through the corridor of the Baker building. Then for the first time we noticed the nameplate of Prof P.C. Mahalanobis and the Indian Statistical Institute office and library. After sometime we also noticed the room of the Head of the Statistics Department (Prof. A.B.), the room of the two other professors (B.N.G. & P.K.B.) and the only laboratory room of the department (with Sri Samar Dhar and our friendly attendant Sri Deben Roy). That was the Statistics Department of Presidency in those days. This was the only department in West Bengal where statistics at the undergraduate level was taught under C.U. The departments at Presidency and C.U. were the creations of Prof P.C. Mahalanobis; Presidency College, Calcutta was the first college which started teaching U.G. statistics in India from 1944. The P.G. teaching of statistics was first started in India by C.U. from 1941.

During 1947 and till we completed our Master's degree there were only three teachers in the statistics Dept of Presidency. They were Professors Anil Kr. Bhattacharya, Birenda Nath Ghosh and Prasad Kr. Banerjee. They were experts in their field. I consider them as the first generation of undergraduate teachers in statistics. They toiled hard, mastered the new subject and excellently presented it to the students.

We had class tests. Prof. Bhattacharyya would write the answer to a question if the student was not correct. Students would not and could not miss a class then. Teachers knew the students and readily helped them inside/outside classroom. Our professors were extremely talented and produced world class papers in their respective areas of interest. Some of their works have found place in books and are still referred to in papers for international journals. They were not restricted to U.G. teaching. They also taught and helped researchers at the postgraduate level.

After getting our degrees at C.U., when we applied for higher studies in foreign universities, the professors there asked us to send recommendations from our professors, of whose writings they knew. Professors at foreign universities enquired about our teachers at Presidency and C.U. though they had not met. They knew them by their research works/papers. We felt proud for our professors here.

But everything was not smooth for our teachers. For a long time the department had no separate entity. At last perhaps during 1953-54 the Dept. had its own space in the Baker buildings. All along it has been short of teachers. I would appeal to the present University authorities for helping this Dept. which was a pioneer in teaching statistics in India and has produced many outstanding scholars who are working in different parts of the world with reputations in responsible positions.

Wishing everyone (present/past) in Presidency College/University a happy and prosperous 2015.

POLITICAL TRENDS IN PRESIDENCY

Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri; Physics
Student (1961-1964); Professor (1997-2004)

About from the period when followers of the CPI(ML) ruled the roost and a small period, perhaps after their decline, when the followers of Mrs. Gandhi came into their own. Presidency College cannot be said to have experienced domination of the student psyche by the overtly political, that is, a consciously motivated attempt at intervention by the student in the political life of the people never happened.

Nineteen sixty five to sixty nine saw an economic crisis engulfing the entire country. The urban and rural middle-classes including professionals, and indeed almost the entire stock "likhi-pori" people struggled to adjust to a never-ending bout of insecurity. Their children populated the College and their insecurity bred disillusion, frustration and anger against the establishment. The left wing of the CPI(M) proposed a revolutionary solution, and Mrs. Gandhi proposed a solution which featured centralization of economic and political power in the union cabinet-in practice which meant the Prime Minister's office. The two parts divided the students right down the middle, and soon the majority were with the left.

The social life of the College slowed (and still shows) a much more basic dichotomy. There was an almost a caste difference between the thought and life pattern of the urban, English savvy, street-smart, young arts and the shy, studios harvest from Bangla-medium schools. As in other aspects of contemporary Indian life, proficiency in English set a barrier to harmonious traffic between the two groups. To add to the trouble, romance and courtship was easier, much more explicit and widespread within the first group. I feel the split is still there, but the intensity has been diminished by the uniform and ubiquitous aggression of 'filmy' culture, an indigenized parody of the transnational, commercially sponsored roll of western youth. Thus, globalization doth make zombies of us all, group one or group two. (This is not to say that Bangla culture it strong folk roots and deep intellectual content is not fighting back, witness Suman and the bands, but no group of Presi students seems to consider Bangla culture, its survival and progress, as important or urgent). I would like to call the two groups. 'haves' and 'have nots'!

It is this division which is basic to the respected appearance of a picture of political groups in Presi politics, immaterial of color-pink, saffron, green or blue and white. Of course, there is communication and flow and between the groups, and renegacy. In fact, whenever a political formation with its base in one of the groups won over a sizeable chunk of renegades from the other group, the formation emerged as the winner.

Kaka's 1967 brand of SF boys and girls were mainly 'have-not's'. He also split the 'haves' and this formed the basis of his success. The PCSO, the formation based on the 'haves', successfully neutralized the 'have-not's', after the fall of the reds. The IC, based sometimes on the 'haves' and sometimes on the 'have-not's', succeeded whenever they split the other group and broadened their own base.

Apart from this, it is difficult to identify any general trend in Presi politics. The great majority have come to study and build careers and only tumultuous episodes like Naxalbari or Nandigram lift their sights, temporarily. The acquisition of good notes, romantic relations and undercurrents, personal popularity still play notable roles in elections. A fine strand of anti-establishment attitudes is sometimes just visible, but too often indiscernible to be called an orientation, despite Derozio. There used to be a character-building on the basis of pride in academic work and contempt for Mammon and his works. But this worked by example, and such teachers have been unwelcome in Presidency for decades now. I suspect the average Presidencian is almost as bored with political activism as he or she is with pro-establishment bootlicking. Unfortunately, academics is shot through and through today with mundane, even monetary considerations. There is no quest. Everything degenerates as the old exploitative order putrefies, but does not die. It is a bad time, friends. Take heed, think out ways and means.

PRESIDENCY: FROM COLLEGE TO UNIVERSITY

Professor Malabika Sarkar
Alumna and Former Vice-Chancellor

Gardening and fire-fighting, I once said at a meeting, were two initiatives I took up when I joined Presidency University as Vice-Chancellor in October 2011. In the first of these I consider myself successful. The courtyard heaped with junk that my eyes encountered near the lift in the Main Building when I first arrived is now a beautiful landscaped garden. On my rare visits to Presidency since I left, I look at it, and at the cafeteria behind it that I christened 'Eighty Six' – Presidency's College Street address – and feel that the garden is emblematic of what Presidency means for many of us. The combination of 'sanctuary' with a 'working brain' that Keats found so compelling about the garden in *To Psyche* is surely the essence of Presidency and this spirit seems to be embodied in the garden.

I had the privilege of being a student of Presidency College from 1965 to 1968, reading English Honours in an outstanding department headed by Professor Taraknath Sen. I was his tutorial student and I have written about my experiences of that time in an earlier volume of the Presidency College Magazine. When I was asked to return as First Vice-Chancellor after Professor Amita Chatterjee, with the responsibility of taking Presidency through its initial steps from college to university, it was both a challenge and an opportunity to do something for the institution that meant so much to us. My two and a half years from October 2011 to the beginning of May 2014 was a time when Presidency took over my life and every single moment was spent planning, working and dreaming for Presidency.

The first few months were critical. When Presidency College became Presidency University in July 2010, it inherited the books and buildings and furniture of the college but not a single member of staff and not a single faculty. The faculty and staff of Presidency College, if they wished to join the university, would have to go through a process of application, interview and selection at par with any other applicant and with no compromise on standards. When I arrived, this process had not yet begun because there was a general embargo on selections imposed by the government on all universities. I therefore took charge of a university in which the future of everyone was uncertain. While some faculty members wanted to remain in Presidency, there was a larger group of teachers who did not wish to do so and were impatient for a transfer to other government colleges. In other words, it was a situation of total uncertainty. And yet, some of the brightest students in the state were students of Presidency. They deserved the best possible teaching. This had to be ensured. With the advantage of being an alumna, I spent my first two weeks visiting each and every department, and the two libraries. I walked through every single room on campus, I met and spoke to every single member of faculty, in groups, or singly if they wished, with every member of the non-teaching staff, and with the students in each department. I explained to the faculty that I understood their predicament, assured them that they would be *treated with dignity, and requested their full commitment to teaching at Presidency. I was not disappointed. I was impressed and humbled by the sincerity with which they conducted their responsibilities.*

Early in 2012, the embargo on recruitments was lifted and I could begin the process of faculty selections. In April 2012 we selected our first faculty member. Between then and the time I left, more than one hundred and fifty faculty members were selected, through a rigorous but transparent and fair selection process, and most have joined. Video-conferencing facilities utilizing Presidency's own IT resources ensured that candidates from around the world could be interviewed. More than fifty per cent of the new faculty who were selected were from top postdoc and teaching positions in North America, U.K., Europe and Japan. Truly a reversal of what used to be called "brain drain".

Equally, it needs to be said, in department after department, a large number of Presidency College faculty were also selected. And although Presidency is a state university, there was zero interference from the government in the selection process. The selection process for the university's first officers, librarians, and the first group of

non-teaching staff who had applied from Presidency College through option forms was also completed.

With Presidency now a university, a new logo was created, designed by an alumnus, confidently announcing 'Excellence since 1817'. A new website was designed. A number of infrastructural projects were initiated. In the Main Building, the Professors Common Room was renovated with respect for its heritage status and due regard for modern work habits. Construction work at the Baker Building and Netaji Subhas building included provision for lifts to ensure disability access.

There was much cause for rejoicing. In December 2012 Presidency University was recognized by UGC as an Institution of National Eminence. Earlier, in January 2012, the Royal Society of Chemistry, U.K., presented a plaque to Presidency in recognition of the outstanding contribution of Acharya P.C. Ray in Chemistry – the first RSC plaque

outside Europe. Later that year IEEE awarded a similar plaque in honour of Acharya J.C. Bose. MOUs were signed with Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland, the University of Groningen, Netherlands, the Institut D'Etudes Politiques de Paris (Sciences Po, Paris), the Consortium of Canadian Universities, together with smaller departmental collaborations. Presidency was on the road to receiving national and international recognition.

In the midst of all these positive developments, one of the most traumatic experiences this great institution has had to live through took place. One fateful morning, 10th of April 2012, as faculty selections for the Geography Department were in progress, Presidency was attacked by a group of outsiders who entered the campus, assaulted and abused our students, and vandalized one of the rooms of the Physics Department in the Baker Building. What the attackers did not expect was the spontaneous reaction that would ensue. Every single individual at Presidency – students, faculty, officers, non-teaching staff – stood united, condemning the attack, and refusing to be terrorized. Across the city and state, across India, and from different parts of the world, Presidency alumni sent messages of support and solidarity. Eminent academics from different institutions across the country and officials from central agencies expressed shock and affirmed their faith in Presidency. The Education Minister and the Honourable Chief Minister pledged their support and, on 12th April, the Honourable Chancellor, Shri M.K. Narayanan, addressed a packed Derozio Hall filled with students, faculty, officers, non-teaching staff, and alumni, sharing with them his own sense of shock and his sympathy and support for this outstanding institution.

Meanwhile, even as talks by eminent visitors such as the Nobel Laureates Professor Joseph Stiglitz and Professor Amartya Sen, eminent physicist and alumnus, Professor Ashoke Sen, recipient of the Yuri Milner Award, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, former President of India, resonated in a packed Derozio Hall, and Professor Andrew Hamilton, Vice-Chancellor, Oxford University, held a joint reception with Presidency University in the courtyard of the Main Building, working quietly behind the scenes we were able to complete the First Statutes of the university and to create the Vice-Chancellor's Fund for Excellence in which substantial funds were received including a generous corpus for poor students scholarships.

The final stamp of Presidency's coming of age was its meticulously planned First Convocation on 22nd August 2013. This was followed by another landmark event – the unveiling of the Foundation Stone of Presidency's ten acre second campus at Rajarhat by the Honourable Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on 6th February 2014.

The strength of Presidency College has always been its undergraduate teaching – as is the case with Cambridge and Oxford Universities – and its core competence was in the sciences and the humanities and social sciences. The classical humanities subjects and the pure sciences at their highest level encourage the growth of value systems in a way that is difficult to match. Education of this kind urges a desire to excel, to unravel intricate possibilities, to challenge the human mind's utmost potential, and, in doing so, it takes the mind out of narrow self-centred preoccupations, and builds the foundations for human excellence. What is important for Presidency University today is the restoration of a liberal arts education. There is a natural synergy between this belief and the new General Education courses we were able to introduce replacing the old "Pass" subjects.

Being an autonomous university has also enabled us to totally redesign the honours and masters syllabi in each subject.

So much has happened in my two and a half years at Presidency that it is not possible to encapsulate everything here. Many of us who were students at Presidency College nurtured a dream for its rejuvenation for many years. From the time I became Vice Chancellor, emails began pouring in from its distinguished alumni - scientists, economists, and others, people I had not met for decades – all wishing me success in the rebuilding of Presidency. Many others who are not alumni have shown keen interest in this exceptional institution and sent me their good wishes. If Presidency achieves what we are all hoping for, it will be the result of this collective wishing, this collective dreamin,of alumni and others spread over many generations and many continents. My one wish for everyone at Presidency is that, in the heady exuberance of achievement, we must not forget core human values – compassion, dignity, integrity. Presidency has always been an institution where exceptional learning has gone hand in hand with exceptional generosity of spirit.

Much has been achieved in Presidency's transition from college to university and, in the years leading up to the bicentenary, much more will surely be achieved. But there is no room for complacency. We are a university with an immense heritage and we have great hopes for the future. Let me end, therefore, with a quotation from everyone's favourite classic *Alice in Wonderland*. The Queen of Hearts tells Alice 'My dear, here we must run as fast as we can, just to stay in place. And if you wish to go anywhere you must run twice as fast as that'.

MEMORY OF A BROKEN WINDOW

Debdut Ghoshthakur, *M.Sc., Ph.D.*

Ex- Student

Department of Physiology (1975-1978)

Chief Reporter, Ananda Bazar Patrika

Guest Lecturer, Department of Physiology and Department of Applied Geology

Whenever I enter Presidency College (now University), I stare at the second floor of Baker Laboratory. There are some huge glass windows. Some of the windows have a single glass. One or two are double-glassed. I get drenched with memories surging back after thirty five years.

I was then an outgoing third year student of Physiology (Hons). I remember one incident which was small, but made a lasting change in the design of a heritage glass window. During one of my stints at college cricket, I was batting at the Derozio Hall end but don't remember the bowler. I am a left hander. Before the over started there was some exchange of words between the bowler and me. I promised him to lift the ball to the height of the second floor (the height of about the fourth floor of most modern buildings) to break the huge glass window.

I was successful. The bowler bowled at full toss medium pace and I pulled it. The ball went up and up and with the momentum and great speed it pierced the glass of a second floor window leaving a hole. Everybody was expecting a big noise following the cracking sound. But it did not happen. The glass was hard. The speeding ball went through with a hole. We expected something bigger. It was the Histology Laboratory of the Physiology Department. It was a very busy laboratory. Not only Honours students but the pass students and postgraduate students also used the laboratory. We didn't know whether the ball had hit somebody inside. But we were lucky enough. There was a class going on during that time. But I got scared. The bowler congratulated me on my big sixer, but I did not feel delighted. I could imagine one red face appearing before my eyes. It was the face of Prof. (Dr.) Achintya Kumar Mukherjee, Head, Department of Physiology, who became the Principal of the College during the eighties.

I could realise what would be waiting for me. Dr Mukherjee was one of the most disciplined teachers I have seen in my student days and later on during my career as a guest lecturer. We failed to muster the courage to speak before him. He was very tall, with a fair complexion, accomplished-looking like a British person, always wearing a tie. He was such a personality that our heads stooped down spontaneously whenever we talked to him. It would be the first time in the history of cricket when a batsman looked so nervous despite hitting a huge six. My classmates were nowhere around me. I started sweating and as a result got out on the very next ball. After 35 years I can still remember how I left the field anxiously, put off my pads and reached the second floor of the Baker Laboratory to see my fate.

But everything was as cool as cucumber. There was nobody in the Biochemistry Laboratory, even the laboratory assistants were not there. There was not a single piece of glass on the floor. Nobody from the department could know what had happened. As I peeped through the swing door of Dr Mukherjee's chamber, I saw him lying in the easy chair holding a book in hand. As his full concentration was on the book, he did not care that somebody had peeped through his door. Seeing Dr Mukherjee so relaxed my heart started pumping normally, for so long had I held my breath. Now I started breathing in a relaxed mood and stopped sweating.

It was the best time to leave the department. In the balcony one man appeared suddenly with bag in hand. He was Dulalda, Dulal Das, one of our Laboratory Assistants. I knew him from my childhood (I used to follow him and his brother in-law who used to catch frogs and lizards for the supply to the Zoology and Physiology laboratories in different colleges. There was a loop made up of string attached in front of a bamboo stick. Dulalda and his brother in-law used to put the loop over the head of a lizard or frog and as they pulled the other end of the string the animal got trapped. In our Physiology laboratory Dulalda was also the animal supplier. As

he had known me for a long time, there was a special place for me in a small corner of his heart. Dulalda smiled at me and stepped into his room. Later, I learnt that Dulalda knew everything. He had collected the pieces of glass one by one from the floor of the Histology Laboratory and put those in a bag. He had gone down and thrown them in a dustbin of the Hare School. He himself threw the cricket ball from the laboratory to the ground when it had entered through the window. As I was the culprit Dulalda managed everything to save me.

But the next morning the damage in the huge glass window was noticed and consequently the truth was known to everybody. I was in the bad books of the college authorities as I had broken a partition wall of the same laboratory with a flying punch. It is something tantamount to the defeat of the soccer giant Mohun Bagan by East Bengal in their prestigious IFA shield final if viewed from the sporting aspect. That had happened which should not have occurred. It was the first and last crime that I had committed.

As I have studied in Ramakrishna Mission Vidyalaya, Narendrapur, Dr Mukherjee had a special interest in me. He tried to keep me in the mainstream, kept on enquiring about my activities inside the college from different people, advising me against bunking classes and spending nights in the Hindu Hostel smoking up. His advice was not to go for private tuitions from the teachers of the department and others. After the damage to the partition of the Histology Laboratory, Dr. Mukherjee summoned my father and informed him about my different activities in the college. I had a very tough time in my house after that episode.

Had Dr Mukherjee taken any action against me?

Absolutely not. He called me to his chamber, asked me to show my biceps, enquired whether I regularly go to the gymnasium, enquired after my food habits. I was surprised. Then he asked me about my father's salary, asked whether we have any land anywhere or whether we have any property. It was a terrible moment for me. I was surprised. I tried to guess his line of thinking, but failed. He then took me to the Histology Laboratory and pointed towards the broken glass and asked, "Do you know the price of glass? Perhaps not. This Baker laboatory was built in 1913. According to my information these glass windows were fitted then. They are invaluable these days. Their price can not be counted in terms of money. If you sell out your house you cannot get a second piece like it.' I was speechless. Tears rolled down my eyes. Dr Mukherjee put his hand across my shoulder and said, 'Now the beauty of the department will be lost. PWD (Public Works Department) could not find a replacement. This huge glass will be replaced by two medium glasses with a wooden frame in between.'

Apart from the one I broke, the Physiology Department has three glasses broken by cricket balls later on. I don't know who broke those glasses. But since then whenever I entered Presidency, my eyes always get fixed on that window. I feel my old days, I feel Dr Mukherjee standing beside me, I see Dulalda laughing. Dr Mukherjee is no more. Dulalda is still alive and I too am on the verge of retirement from my service. I still recollect my student days in Presidency. The window of the second floor always triggers my sweet memories as I walk down the memory of Presidency College, now a University.

সৌজন্যতা, বদান্যতা বা নিছক আরেক তরজা

দীপঙ্কর চৌধুরী, সাম্মানিক রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান, ১৯৮০-৮৩

“প্রেসিডেন্সি....আমাদের কালে?” বাঁ-নাকে মস্ত এক নস্য ঠুঁসে গলা খাঁকরে নিলেন বড় পিসেমশায়, “বুঝলে, ইয়ুরোপে তখন যুদ্ধ শুরু হয়ে গেছে ; চাচিল....” কালো কোটের ওপর পড়া নস্যগুঁড়ো ঝেড়ে ফেলেনা আমার হাঁচি এই জন্য পিসের ধার মাড়াই না। নস্য নয়, ঐ যে.....’আমাদের কালের প্রেসিডেন্সি....’-র গল্প!

এ’ ১৯৮০-র কথা। মা বললেন, “প্রেসিডেন্সিতে চান্স পেলি, যা একবার তোর বড় পিসেকে পেনাম করে আয়!” প্রতাপচন্দ্রের ক্লাসমেট, দুঁদে উকিলা প্রেসিডেন্সির গল্প শুরু হলে আর জলাদি থামেন না।

বস্তুতঃ, প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ (আজকের ইয়ুনিভার্সিটি) নিয়ে আম-বাঙালীর এই যে মাতামাতি, এতে ক’ পার্সেন্ট উন্নাসিকতা, কতটা নস্টালজিয়া, আর কতটাই বা সত্যি সত্যি উচ্চমানের শিক্ষার মিশেল আছে---সেটা গবেষণার বিষয়। ২০০১-এ’ একবার ঢাকায় বন্ধুবর রফিকুলের গৃহে নৈশ-দাওয়াতে গিয়ে তার পিতামহের কাছে দেড়টি ঘন্টা তাঁরকালের প্রেসিডেন্সির গল্প শুনে আসতে হল। তিনিও ঐ আর্লি-ফটজের প্রেসিডেন্সিয়ান কিনাআর , এ’দোষে আমরা সবাই কমবেশি দোষীঃ “.....কলেজ....হায়রে , আমাদের কালে কী ছিল, আর এখন কী হয়েছে...!” সেদিন আমার এক ক্লাসমেটিনি আক্ষেপ করল, “দ্যাখ্ , আমার মেয়েরা প্রেসিডেন্সিতে পড়তেই চায় না। দিল্লি যাবে, ব্যাঙ্গালোর যাবে বলে, এখানে ইনফ্রাস্ট্রাকচার নেই। নেই তো নেই! প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজটা তো আছে। আমাদের কালে যদি বলত, মাটিতে মাদুর পেতে পড়তে বসতে হবে, তাহলেও আমরা প্রেসিডেন্সিতেই পড়তে আসতাম, বল্?” কথাটা সত্যি।

আমাদের কলেজিকালের এক উজ্জ্বল ছাত্র, আজকের উচ্চআমলা, কলেজপত্রিকায় এক আটকেল লিখেছিল, “পলিটিক্যাল সায়েন্স পড়লে কি চারপাশের রাজনৈতিক বিষয়গুলি বুঝতে বিশেষ সুবিধে হয়?” সেই বিষয়টিকেই আরেকটু প্রলম্বিত করে নিজমনে শুধোই, প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজে পড়লে কি ভবিষ্যতজীবনের কাজকন্মে কিছু বিশেষ সুবিধে পাওয়া যায় ? কী ছিল প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজে ? কেন আমরা এখানে পড়ার জন্য পাগল ছিলাম ? কী পেয়েছি এখানে পড়ে? কলেজ ছাড়ার তিন দশক পরে ফিরে তাকালে সত্যিই দেখি কি, যে ভিতটা এখানেই গড়া হয়ে গিয়েছিল? আর, যারা যারা প্রেসিডেন্সিতে পড়েনি, তারা কি আর উত্তরজীবনে থে পায়নি?

সত্যি কথাটা বলি। মা-বাবার মনে যা-ই উচ্চাশা থাক না কেন এ’অধমের মনে প্রেসিডেন্সিতে পড়তে আসার প্রধান আকর্ষণ ছিলো সহপাঠিনীকুল! ক্লাসে আমার পাশেই নাকি বসবেন এক ললনা, তার শাড়ির খসখসানির শব্দের সঙ্গে বইয়ের পৃষ্ঠা ওল্টানোর খড়খড়ানি মিশে যাবে....ভাবলেইমায়ের মুখে শোনা গল্প, দিদিমার সেই চারুবালা (প্রথম ভারতীয় অধ্যক্ষ পি কে রায়ের দুহিতা) যখন ছাত্রদের সঙ্গে একাসনে এ’কলেজে ক্লাস করতে বসল --সে ১৯০১-০২সাল হবে বোধহয়---‘বঙ্গবাসী’ পত্রিকা লিখেছিল, “ অত্যন্ত বিপজ্জনক! এই প্রকার সহশিক্ষা চালু হইলে ছাত্রছাত্রীগণ নিজ নিজ স্বামীস্ত্রী নিজেরাই বাছিয়া লইবো ইহাতে পিতৃকুল কন্যাপণ হইতে বঞ্চিত হইবেন ”। না, আমরা সে-কাল থেকে অনেক এগিয়ে ছিলামঃ সে-হেন প্রতিবন্ধকতা আমাদের সামনে আসেনি। মনে রাখতে হবে , কলকাতার প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজে যখন ছাত্রছাত্রীরা পাশাপাশি বসে পড়ার সুযোগ পেয়েছেন, অক্সফোর্ড-কেব্রিজ-হার্ভার্ড পর্যন্ত তখনও সহশিক্ষা চালু করতে দ্বিধাগ্রস্ত ছিল।

এহেন লেখার এই আরেকটা অসুবিধে আছে। আমার কলেজিকালে, আমার পরিমন্ডলের যা যা কিছু আমার কাছে মধুরস্মৃতি, তা অন্যের কাছে আদৌ আকর্ষণীয় কেন হবে? তার বিরক্তিরই না উৎপাদন করবে এ'সব গল্প? যদি না, গল্পখানি তেমন রঙীন হয়। 'পাগলা দাশু'-র বন্ধু সর্দার ভোলানাথ একাকী যন্ত্রপাতি ঘাঁটাঘাঁটি করতে গিয়ে কলেজ-ল্যাবরেটরিতে মাঝরাত অবধি ফেঁসে গিয়েছিল। আর, একা নয় দোকা ছাত্রছাত্রী যে শনিবার ভর সন্ধ্যে অবধি বেকার হলে আটকে ছিল, দারোয়ান দোর ভেঙে তাদের খোলে..... আশির দশকে তখন মোবাইল ফোন কোথায়? সোমবার থেকে সারা কলেজ টি টি! এ'সব চটুল গল্পের জন্ম পিসেমশায়দের কালে হত কিনা জানিনা, আর এখন তো কত এপ্‌স্-ট্যাপ্‌স্ বেরিয়ে গেছে।

চটুল গল্প থাক। কথা হচ্ছিল, প্রেসিডেন্সি ও থাম নিয়ে। আমাদের এক সহপাঠী আজকের নামি সেতারী, আকছার লন্ডন-প্যারিস করে বেড়ায়। তার আড়াই ঘণ্টার রিসাইটাল শুনে এই ঘোর-অসুরের প্রথম প্রশ্ন, এতক্ষণ ঠায় একাসনে বসে থাকিস্ কী করে? “কেন, আমাদের লাইব্রেরি ওয়ার্ক মনে নেই? গরমের ছুটিতে কলেজে এসে এসে মোটা মরগেছু খুলে ঘণ্টার পর ঘণ্টা.....”। বস্তুতঃ, কোনো নোটস্ নয়, অরিজিনাল বই পড়ার অভ্যেসটা এখানেই গড়ে দিয়েছিলেন মাস্টারমশায়রা।

কেমন ছিলেন আমাদের কালের মাস্টারমশায়রা? এ' আর নোতুন গল্প কী হবে? প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের মাস্টারমশায়রা সেরাই হবেন, এতে আশ্চর্য কী? না, তারকনাথ সেন-সুশোভন সরকারের মত মহানহস্তীদের আমরা পাই নি, সেকালের অনেক পরে আমাদের আগমন। তবু ইংরিজির সুকান্ত চৌধুরী, ফিজিক্সের অমলকুমার রায়চৌধুরী, ভূবিদ্যার অজিতকুমার সাহা বা পরিসংখ্যানের অতীন্দ্রমোহন গুণের মত কিংবদন্তীরা আমাদের কালেই ছিলেন। পলিটিক্যাল সায়েন্সে ছিলেন অমলকুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়-প্রশান্ত রায়, ইতিহাসে রজত রায়-অজয় মুখার্জি, অর্থনীতিতে মিহির-দীপক-নবেন্দু ট্রায়ো। অজয়বাবু বলতেন, তাঁদের কালে মেইন বিল্ডিংয়ের ওই মস্ত সিঁড়ির দু'পাশ দিয়ে ছাত্ররা ওঠানামা করত, মাঝখানটা সশ্রদ্ধ ছাড়া থাকত সুবোধ সেনগুপ্ত-ভবতোষ দত্তের মত শিক্ষকদের জন্য!

কেমন ছিল আমাদের কালের ছাত্র-শিক্ষক সম্পর্ক? হিন্দু হস্টেলের সুপার হতেন কলেজেরই কোনো অধ্যাপক। তাঁর পরিবারের প্রতি চারনম্বর ওয়ার্ড থেকে নিরবিচ্ছিন্ন আহ্বানে উত্থিত হয়ে তাঁর কী প্রতিক্রিয়া হয়েছিল, সে-গল্প এই সেদিন করল 'রেভেনিউ সার্ভিস'-এর এক সহপাঠী এবং এদিন পরে পায়ে ধরে ক্ষমা চেয়ে নেওয়া মনে মনে। আরেক ছাত্রের সার্ফ স্মৃতিচারণঃ আশির দশকের কথা। উত্তরবঙ্গের কলেজচাকুরিতে যোগ দিতে যাবে সে। মার্কশিটের কপি এটেস্টেড করিয়ে নেওয়া হয়নি। দুপুরে অনেকক্ষণ কলেজে স্যরের জন্যে অপেক্ষা করে করে চলে এসেছে। সন্ধ্যে সাড়ে সাতটায় দার্জিলিং মেল ছাড়বে। শিয়ালদহ স্টেশনের ভিড়ে ঘেমে নেয়ে স্যর দৌড়ে দৌড়ে খুঁজছেন ছেলোটিকে। ভাগিগিস ট্রেন হুইসল দেবার মুহূর্তেই পেয়ে গেলেন তাকে, “নৈলে তোমার কলেজে যোগ দেওয়া হত না”---জানলা গলিয়ে এটেস্টেড কপিগুলো তার হাতে ধরিয়ে দেন। এই ব্রাক্ষণ-স্যরই এক শিডিউলকাস্ট ছাত্রের বর্ষীয়ান-পিতৃদেবের গৃহে প্রথম পরিচয়ে তাঁর পায়ে হাত দিয়ে প্রণাম করেন। ছাত্রটি আজও মনে রেখেছে। এই সবই শিক্ষা নয় কি? শিক্ষা কী শুধু ক্লাসঘরে হয়েছে? প্রমোদের ক্যান্টিনে বসে শিক্ষা হয়নি, যখন তোর সঙ্গে গলা মিলিয়ে ধরেছি বাগেশ্রী, “নিশীথশয়নে ভেবে রাখি মনে, ওগো অন্তর্যামী”? দিলীপদা বলতেন, রমেশবাবু প্রতিদিন সকালে ক্লাসে আসার আগে সেদিনের পাঠ নিজে ভালো করে পড়ে আসতেন। শুধোন, “স্যর, এ'তো আপনি এতোদিন পড়াচ্ছেন। আবারও পড়ার কী আছে?”

“তুমি বোঝোনা দিলীপা এ'হোল ইন্ডিয়ান কনস্টিটিউশনের ব্যাপার। কোন্ কোন্ আর্টিকলের নতুন নতুন কোনো ব্যাখ্যা এসে গেছে....তৈরি না হয়ে গেলে ক্লাসে যদি ছেলেরা প্রশ্ন করে ফেলে.....?” এ'ও এক শিক্ষা। এই দিলীপদাকেই গত বছর

কোনো এক বর্তমান বিভাগীয় প্রধানকে বলতে শুনলাম, “বাবা অমুক, এখন হেড ডেপুট হয়েছা এবার একটু পড়াশুনো শুরু করো।” তাঁর পিতৃত্ব আজও দিলীপদাকে পায়ে হাত দিয়ে প্রণাম করেন কিনা। এ’ কালচার প্রেসিডেন্সি ছাড়া আর কোথায়?

আর আমাদের কালের সেই লিজেভারি শিক্ষকের গল্প একদিন সকালে ক্লাসে এসে পড়াতে পড়াতে হঠাৎ খেই ধরে বললেন, “ও হো, জানো, কাল I had a sleepless night. I misspelt BOURGEOISIE on the blackboard yesterday”। ক্লাসের ফার্স্টগার্ল তুখোড় ‘মর্ডারনিয়ান’ আঙুল তুলে দেখালো, “Sir, if you don’t want to spend another sleepless night...you have misspelt RENAISSANCE on the blackboard just now .”

না, এটা তেমন কোনো শিক্ষা নয়। অন্ততঃ স্টুডেন্টদের জন্য। ভাবী শিক্ষকদের প্রতি চেতাবনী বটে!

হিন্দু কালেজে বিতর্কসভার শুরুয়াৎ হয়েছিল ডিরোজিও-সাহেবের হাতে, ‘একাডেমিক এসোসিয়েশন’-এর প্রতিষ্ঠা, ১৮২৮। আর্লি-ফটোজেও ‘ভারতের এখন স্বাধীনতা পাওয়া উচিত’ বা গান্ধীবাদের ভবিষ্যত বা হিন্দু আইনে বিবাহবিচ্ছেদের স্বীকৃতি পাওয়া উচিত কিনা এ’সব নিয়ে বিতর্ক হত, শুনেছি আগে-পরে, এ’সব বিতর্কে হুমায়ুন কবীর থেকে অমর্ত্যকুমার সেনেদের মত ব্যক্তিত্বগণ ভাগ নিতেন। আমাদের কালের বিতর্কসভার সে-উচ্চতা ছিল কিনা তার বিচার অন্যে করুক এসে, আমরা তো নিখাদ আনন্দ পেতাম নিজেদের হীরেন মুখার্জি ভেবে। আমাদের সেকালের বিতর্কসভার হোতাদের একজন আজ নামী বামপন্থী পত্রিকার সর্বসর্বা, তো অপরজন ওয়ার্ল্ড ব্যাঙ্কের ইকনোমিস্ট। তা’লেই বল, খামগুলো প্রেসিডেন্সিতে তৈরি হয়নি?

তার ওপর এই বিতর্ক যদি বেখুন বা ব্রেবোর্ণ কলেজের ফেস্টিভালে গিয়ে করা যায় তাহলে বুক আরও দু’হাত ফুলে ওঠেনা কি? আমাদের কালে মেডিক্যাল কলেজের কুণালদার (ডাঃ কুণাল সরকার) জন্য ডিবেটে একটা প্রাইজ বাঁধা থাকত সব কলেজ ফেস্টিভ্যালো আমাদের কী হা-হতাশ! তেমন ছিল ডাঃ কৃষ্ণেন্দু মুখো (আমাদের এক বছর জুনিয়ার) কুইজো কোনো ফেস্টিভ্যালো ক্লিচিং, যেমন একবার এন আর এস ‘মিতালী’-তে, মেডিক্যাল কলেজকে হারিয়ে আমাদের সে কী উল্লাস! সেদিনও সৃঞ্জয় (‘টাইমস্ নাও’) সে-গল্প করতে নালেঝালো! কুইজমাস্টার নীল ও’ব্রায়ান ঘেমনেয়ে একশা। লোডশেডিং। সেখানেই ‘তাৎক্ষণিক বক্তৃতা’-য় টপিক পেলাম, “সর্বাধিক স্বীকৃতির সঙ্গে সর্বাধিক সুযোগ জড়িয়ে আছে বলেই বিবাহ এতো জনপ্রিয়!” তুমুল হাততালি পেয়ে ভাবি কী না কী বলে ফেলেছি! ফল বেরোতে দেখি, মাত্র খার্ড? দুঃখু বাড়েনি প্রথম-দ্বিতীয় দু’জনের বলা শুনেঃ আলাপনদা বলেছিল, “স্বনামখন্য”, আর মৌলানা আজাদের সেলিমদা, “ফুল ফুটুক না ফুটুক, আজ বসন্ত!” আজকের নামী আবুতিশিল্পী ব্রততী আমাদেরই ব্যাচমেট, বেখুনো নানা ফেস্টে ফেস্টে তখনই প্রতিভার বিচ্ছুরণ দেখা গিয়েছিলো। আর, পরের দু’দশক পর্দাকাঁপানো টিভিস্টারদ্বয় আমাদেরই দুই সহপাঠিনী কিনা!

আমাদের কালের আরও আরও গল্প শুনবেন?

বিভাগীয় পত্রিকায় আর্টিকল লিখলো এক ইতিহাসের ছাত্র। টি টি পড়ে গেল সারা কলেজো কী? না, বামপন্থী আন্দোলন নিয়ে ব্যঙ্গ করা হয়েছে সে ভরা বামকালে এমন লিখতে হিম্মত লাগত বৈকি! চন্দনদা (আজকের ভাজপা এম.পি) তা নিয়ে স্টেটসম্যানের এক্সার লিখলেন। টি টি টি!

কাল যদি সেই ছাত্রকে পুলিশ কমিশনার না দেখেন তো কী বলেছি।

আজ যখন কোনো উপাচার্য নিরীহ ছাত্রদের ওপর গুলি চালান (কথাটা আলংকারিকে পড়ুন না) তখন আমাদের দ্বারা প্রিন্সিপালের ঘেরিত হবার স্মৃতি মনে পড়ে না, আমাদের কালে কোনো অসীম চট্টো-অমল সান্যাল ছিলেন না, তাঁরা তদ্দিনে পাস্ট টেন্সো এই বুড়ো বয়সে এসে আজ পিছু ফিরে বলব ছাত্রদের দ্বারা শিক্ষকদের অপমান (পড়ুন, ‘প্রতিবাদী আন্দোলন’) করা অন্যায় , আর সেকালে বলে এসেছি, এ’আমাদের গণতান্ত্রিক অধিকার---এর মধ্যে এক ‘ভাবের ঘরে চুরি’ আছে সুভাষদ্বারা ওটেন-পিটনও কবিগুরুর নিন্দা পেয়েছিল (‘ব্যাপারটা দেখিতে ভালো হয় নাই, শুনিতেও নয়’---র ঠা)। তাই এ’বিষয়ে আর বেশি কী বলি? বাঙলা প্রকাশনা জগতের আজকের সিনিয়ারমোস্ট মানুষ ভানুবাবুর “কলেজস্ট্রীটে সত্তর বছর” পড়ে অভিবৃত্ত! প্রণাম করে একটাই প্রশ্ন শুধিয়েছিলাম, ‘কলেজস্ট্রীটের সত্তর বছরের ইতিহাসে নকশাল আন্দোলন ঠাই পেল না কেন?’

‘যে-বিষয়ে আমি কিছু জানিই না, তার কী লিখি?’

এই সং ও সরল উত্তরটিকে এখানে আমিও শিরোধার্য করি। কেবল, প্রেসিডেন্সি সম্বন্ধে লেখা হবে আর তাতে রাজনীতির কোনো ‘টাচ্ছ’ থাকবে না, এ’যেন তাজমহলহীন আগ্রা! ভরোসা, আমাদের ব্যাচের রাজনৈতিক বন্ধুবান্ধব আছেন, কালে তাঁরা লিখবেন এ’দিকের গল্পটা। আশির দশকের শেষাংশে এক প্রাতেঃ কাগজ খুলে দেখি তেমন এক বাল্যবন্ধু রাজ্যের ছাত্র-আন্দোলনের গুরুদায়িত্ব পেয়েছেন। ভবিষ্যতেও তেমন হয়ত দেখব আরেকদিন।

কী শুধোও , প্রেসি.তে পড়ে উত্তরকালে কোনো বিশেষ সুবিধে পেয়েছি কিনা ? কাঁচাবয়সে সি.ভি.-তে ‘অনার্স গ্রাজুয়েট ফ্রম প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ, ক্যালকাটা’ তথ্যটি দু’বারের পর তিনবার লিখে বসের কাছে ধমক খেয়েছি। মনে মনে ওঁকে ক্ষমা করে দিয়েছি, ওনার কাছে এটি ‘আঙুরফল টক’-এর গল্প বলে। কিন্তু আজ ত্রিশ বছর পরে ? চারপাশের হাজারো মানুষ দেখছি যাঁদের প্রেসি-জেভিয়ার্স বা স্টিফেন্সের ছাপ নেই। শ্রদ্ধেয় মানুষজন। তা বলে, সেকালে প্রেসিডেন্সিতে পড়া ভুল হয়েছিল নাকি ? সিভিলড্রেসে থাকলেও সিনিয়রের সামনে পড়লে দু’হাত পাশ-পিছে মুঠ করে সম্মান জানানোর রেওয়াজ আছে পুলিশো কলেজের এলামনি-মিটে স্বয়ং ডি.জি.-সাহেবকে সামনে দেখে তেমনটা করতেই বন্ধুবর সুগতর পিঠে চাপড়ে দিলেন উনি, “আজ আর ওটা নয় হে” কর্মজীবনের শিক্ষার আগে স্থান শিক্ষাজীবনের....এও প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজেই।

এক এক সিকি-শতাব্দীতে, প্রজন্ম থেকে প্রজন্মের গ্যাপে, বড় ফারাক চলে আসবে, এটাই স্বাভাবিক। এটা বৃহত্তর জনজীবনে হয়, তার ছাপ ছাত্রকুলেও তো পড়বেই। তবু , উনিশশ’ পঞ্চাশ দশকের থেকে আমাদের আল্টি-এইট্টিজের, আর সেটা থেকে আজকের কালের তুলনায় মস্ত বড় ফারাক যেটা বোধ হয়, সেটা টেকনোলজিরা ‘ডিজিটাল লাইব্রেরি’ শব্দটাই মাত্র সেকালে আমাদের কানে শোনা ছিল। মনে আছে, ছাত্রকালে একবার জন কমেনিয়াস সম্বন্ধে জানবার প্রয়োজনে তিনটে লাইব্রেরি টুঁড়তে হয়েছিল। আর আজ উইকিপিডিয়ার কল্যাণে এ’সব তথ্য পাওয়া একটা বোতাম টেপার অপেক্ষা মাত্র। আক্ষেপ হয়, ফের যদি এখন ছাত্রজীবনটা শুরু করতে পারতুম ! তবে তার জন্যে কি আমাদেরই ব্যাচ থেকে এক সোমক রায়চৌধুরীর উঠে আসা আটকে থেকেছে , না, কখনও আটকায় ? টেকনোলজি তো এহ বাহ্য! নিউটন-লিবনিৎজের দুই শতাব্দী পূর্বে কেরলে বসে মাধবাচার্য ডিফারেন্সিয়াল ক্যালকুলাসের চর্চা করেছিলেন ভূর্জপত্রের ওপর ভূষোকালি দিয়ে। তবে ? আমাদের কালে এস.এম.এস ছিল না বলে প্রেমনিবেদন আটকে থেকেছিল নাকি? আরে, আমাদের কালে একটা শক্তি চাটুজ্জ্য ছিলেন যাঁকে নিয়ে চায়ের কাপে তুফান! এখন?

ব্যাভেনশ' (কটক), কটন (গুয়াহাটি), বা বি.ই (শিবপুর)-এর মত পূর্বভারতে রাজ-জমানার শিক্ষাতির্থগুলি ইতোমধ্যেই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-স্তরে উন্নীত হয়ে গেছে। কলকাতার প্রেসিডেন্সি এদের জ্যেষ্ঠ হয়েও এতোদিন পরে কেন 'উন্নত' হল, সে আলোচনা এই নিবন্ধের পরিধির বাইরে। আর, হয়েও মূলগত কী ফারাক হল, তা-ও বড় স্পষ্ট নয়। হোক, যা হল, হচ্ছে – ভালো হোক, যাতে পরের পরের প্রজন্মের কাছে প্রেসিডেন্সির সেই আকর্ষণই থাকে, যাতে তাদের 'পুতার ইনফ্রাস্ট্রাকচার'-এর কারণে দিল্লি-ব্যাঙ্গালোর দৌড়তে না হয়।

নৈলে এ'লেখা পরে আর কে পড়বে ?

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Dr. Urmi Chatterji (*Zoology; 1986-1989*)

I got a job as a University faculty more than a decade back, almost 12 years after qualifying the Masters' Examination....which under the circumstances may be considered by some to be quite late, since many of our friends got into this profession soon after their Masters' or at least after completing acquiring their PhD degrees. However, rather surprisingly, the first day when I stood on the dais facing faces filled with unquenched inquisitiveness and blatant scrutiny, it all came back to me. It was the same classroom where I had attended my first class in the University, and my eyes went to the desk which used to be my favourite spot in class....where I could carefully hide behind the ever-eager learners....or listeners, as I later realized....and at the same time, avoid the peccadilloes imposed by the syllabus on our creative, young and abominably wild minds.

We were, as students, in many ways....quite different from today's students...what one may pigeonhole as 'the generation gap'but were we? The communication devices may be different, but not communicating minds....pictures drawn with the pencil now is drawn with the mouse....apparels may be different, but not context....discussion still focused on films, politics, hearsay, life in general, and at times the uncertain future looming ahead. Clandestine dialogues prolonged during the class, occasionally pausing when the inquiring eye met the guilty. But the most interesting fallacy was that we all secretly believed that the figure pacing endlessly on the dais, spewing out knowledge for our benefit, did not realize what was going through the minds of the 60-odd learners. And how wrong we were....it took me more than a decade to realize that, but eventually the truth revealed with unabashed shame. They knew everything, understood all, and revealed nothing. Today, standing on the dais, it is all so apparent. The little nuances of naughtiness in the students help reminisce those days, and satiate me with amusement at the revelation. The various moods exhibited are exhilarating....the earnest listener, the not-so-attentive listener, the inquisitive, the bored, the dreamer, the challenger, the motivated, the planner, the artist, the yawner... they are all there. They are all very intelligent....quick to catch an innuendo, yet willing to shelve all information till the examination paper is dished out. But...above all....they are everything that can make a teacher feel great at the end of the class, wanting them to go back day after day, year after year... with renewed enthusiasm.

For me, it was not a very smooth journey from desk to dais. Little had I dreamt that I would be standing here one day. It was never a possibility during our long discussions of the future drowned by cups of tea or coffee at the canteen. Later, as some of us has realized, there were many amongst us who were inching towards their future goals with utmost dedication and labor. Aspirations were varied....mostly teachers and researchers, few bureaucrats, even fewer company executives, and the rest were scattered between entrepreneurs and home-makers. When I talk to students today, the goals are very similar. Very few...yes I insist, very few think of taking up atypical vocations, such as patent lawyers, management bosses, science reporters, or artists of different sorts. It's almost as if students, especially those in the bio-field, are fixed in time...they fear to tread the untrodden path, notwithstanding the fact that jobs are scarce and opportunities are evasive. Competition has become tougher; yet the grit with which students today stand by their dreams is amazing and makes a teacher proud. Their confidence is noteworthy and their diligence is admirable. One thing however which has remained constant over the years is talent....but what has come forth is boldness and candid expression of thoughts and deeds. Possibly that's what makes it interesting to read those young faces.

Decisions for many were never easy...neither were deceptions. The decision: 'this is what I want to do'...The deception: 'am I truly suitable for this?' So many times we did falter....often letting our convictions wobble when fate churned our yearnings. So often did we decide to do what others were doing, when the wait was extending into painful dilemmas. But the trick was in holding on to our fervor, our dreams and our goals. Students have often confided that during their *adda* sessions, their conversations were mostly concentrated on what to do in future, and finally ended up in one comforting the other, since 'all were in soup'. The counselor therefore seems to lie within...the one who truly understands us....guides us...we just need to be true to him....and

not choose the easy way out to achieve our goal. As *Baba Ranchhoddas* had said...we need to be sincere and suitable...and pursue excellence...success will automatically ensue. And finally, it's all about happiness...something that no one can take away from us...something that I have been feeling every time I walk on to the dais...my heart going out to all those sitting in front of me...and fervently wishing that one day they come up with their own success stories and happiness unlimited.

A TRANSLATION OF “AN OPEN LETTER TO MY GRANDSON OR GRANDDAUGHTER” BY JUAN GELMAN

Translated from the original in Spanish by

Arundhati Bhattacharya

Student, Department of Bengali, 1986-1989

“Within the coming six months you will turn 19. You were born on a day of October in 1976 in a concentration camp. Shortly before or shortly after your birth, in the same month and in the same year, your father was assassinated by a shot in the nape of his neck from less than half a meter away. He was unarmed and was murdered perhaps by a military commander. It may be that the same commander kidnapped him with your mother on August 24 in Buenos Aires and took them to the concentration camp Automotores Orletti in the forest. The military had named this camp as “The Garden”. Your father’s name was Marcelo; your mother’s Claudia. Both of them were 20 years old then and you, seven months old in the womb of your mother when it occurred. They shifted your mother - and you too with her - when she was about to give birth. She would have given birth alone, under the gaze of some accomplice doctor of the military dictatorship. You then were removed from her womb and taken away - as it usually happened - and given to the hands of the sterile couples of the military or the police, or to such judges or journalists who were closely acquainted with the police or military. Then there was a sinister list waiting for each concentration camp: those who entered it would wait to be paired with a child born of those prisoners who gave birth and who, with few exceptions, were assassinated immediately afterward. The military left the Government and 12 years have passed since. But still nothing is known about your mother. On the contrary, the remains of your father were discovered 13 years later in a container of 200 liters of grease which was filled with cement and sand by the military and thrown away into the San Fernando river. He was buried in La Tablada. At least that certainty remains within him.

It’s really very strange for me to tell you about my children as your parents who never were. I don’t even know whether you’re my grandson or my granddaughter. I was only informed that you were born. Father Fiorello Cavalli of the Secretariat of the Vatican State confirmed it to me in February, 1978. Since then I have been asking myself what might have been your destiny. Many contradictory ideas keep coming to my mind. On the one hand, the possibility of your calling “Dad” a military official or a corrupted police official or a friend of the murderers of your parents always chased me. On the other hand, whatever be your home after you were taken away, I always wanted that they would bring you up and educate you well and love you very much. Still I have always thought, even though, something will be missing in that love, not because of the fact that they are not your biological parents- how it is said-, but because of the fact that they must have knowledge of your past and how they were involved in falsifying it. I can imagine that they have lied to you a lot.

I also have wondered all these years what I would do if I would meet you: I would take you away from what you know as your home, or would talk to your adoptive parents for an agreement so that they would allow me to see you and to accompany you, but of course on the basis of your knowledge of who you were and where you came from. This dilemma was reiterated all the time, whenever the possibility arose that the Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo might have found you. This dilemma reiterated in different ways, depending on your age at that moment. I worried me that you might be too little or may not understand what had happened. To understand why they weren’t your parents, though you knew them as your parents and loved them. I was also worried that thus you might suffer a double wound, one that would cause structural damage to your identity as it was forming. But now you’re quite an adult. You will be capable of understanding who you are and then deciding what to do with your reality. The Grandmothers are there with their flesh-and-blood data banks that enable them to determine with scientific precision the origins of the children of the disappeared. Your origin.

Now you have almost reached the same age as your parents when they were killed and soon you’ll be older than them. They remained in their twenties forever. They had a dream for you and of a world more habitable for you. I’d like to talk to you about them and to listen from you about yourself. I would like to see my son in you and let

you to see in me whatever I have of your father: both of us are his orphans. I would like to retrieve something from this brutal severance or silence perpetrated by the military dictatorship within the very flesh of my family. I would like to give you your own history, but not separate you from what you don't want to separate from. You are now big enough, as I said.

The dreams of Marcelo and Claudia have not yet come true. Least of all for you, who were born but no one knows where or with whom you are. Perhaps you have got my son's grey-green eyes or the brown eyes of his wife, what possessed a special brightness, both soft and rough. Who knows how you will be if you're a boy. Who knows how you will be if you are a girl. It's better that you come out from this mystery to enter into another: the mystery of the encounter with a grandfather who is waiting for you.

About Juan Gelman

Juan Gelman, the Cervantes Prize winning Argentinean poet, was born in 1930 in Buenos Aires, the son of Russian-Jewish immigrants. He has published more than twenty books of poetry since 1956, and is widely considered to be Argentina's leading contemporary poet. His poems, which have been translated into 14 languages, contain themes touching on his Jewish heritage, family, Argentina, exile, and the tango. His works celebrate life but are also tempered with social and political commentary and reflect his own painful experiences with the politics of his country. Gelman worked as a journalist and was an ardent political activist until 1975, when he was forced to leave his country by the military dictatorship of Argentina (1976-1983), during which an estimated 30,000 mostly young people were "disappeared". Gelman, fortunate to receive a position in Rome in 1975, remained in Europe in exile, a period responsible for a ten year "interruption" in his publishing career. But he had to pay a very high cost for his activity against the military dictatorship. On 24th August, 1976, a group of military broke into his house. As he was not there they arrested his daughter, son and pregnant daughter-in-law. The daughter came back but the son and son's wife were disappeared forever. In 1955 Gelman wrote this open letter and it was published on 23rd March, 1998, in Brecha. Just after two years, on 31st march, 2000, finally he reunited with his granddaughter who was then 23 years old, was brought up in Uruguay and her name is María Macarena. Juan Gelman died in Mexico City in 2014.

The original name of this letter in Spanish: "**Carta abierta a mi nieto**"

MAY IS THE CRUELEST MONTH

Dipanjan Sinha
Philosophy ; 2005-08

The first ominous sign is a curious face; a grown up child with whiskers. He must be intelligent when he asks questions here; a lot of pressure asking what need not be asked.

This world (glorious even though it does not have an engineering department) after all is nothing like he has seen before. Lazy but interested, slow but interesting.

People in never-ending kurtas, cigarettes pressed between their fingers, floating around as if life was after all meant to be pleasurable. They move up and down the lofty staircase, some in groups and some alone.

He decided, by the time he completed a round of the campus, that he must be here. He is not sure what exactly it was that led to it. Not sure what would be his argument: the articulation of his cause, a phrase which he will be able to form much later, but then he could say that he liked walking around.

The buildings and the walls, which certainly could not be his argument, were alive. After all anything with a story is alive. Isn't it? And they did study here too.

He met a man, a few years older (but a man) sitting on the stairs and looking at the field where some scattered sporting activity went on in a strange cohabitation with groups chatting in semi-circles around. He asked questions.

The cruellest month then is May, the man concluded. He mutilated the smoked cigarette under his slippers and smiled at the grown up with whiskers.

The messenger, after all, can never be blamed. He had known that it would happen. He had wanted it to happen for long; desperately. He had said that it got stale and after it got stale it could only get bitter. But then the confirmation of the end was a tumultuous moment.

Unlike the moment he entered class.

.....

He had promised to himself, being a student with a poor memory and a desperate will to not become an engineer or a doctor or at least an acceptable MBA, to study hard. He did not want to become a sub-staff.

A sub-staff is a person who carries files and deposits letters to places and works in his father's office. He wears a faded half-sleeve shirt and slippers and has to smile at everyone.

He did not want to join the Party either. The Party, he had seen, collects money for the local Durga Puja and the boys who do party do not need to smile. In fact, he was slightly envious of the elder boys in the party. There was something menacing about them. The way men should be: looking menacing and getting down from bikes.

But something told him that he would not be able to match up to their requirements. Also his parents would be even more disappointed than him on his becoming a sub-staff. So he had decided to study hard and top the university (which he won't. Not even close. He would hardly attend classes in the days to come. But he turned out alright) because if you are studying humanities you must, at least, top to have a respectable position in society.

The class was, nearly, female only. A dream of sorts after 18 years in a reputed boys school where on sweaty

post break afternoons, some boy would suddenly shout that he wanted to change his seat. And on other rotations you would come to know more about a classmate when his hand landed and stayed on your lap and you shriek.

But this overwhelming majority of girls in his class did not mean anything for him, really. That did surprise him. He had not yet learnt what stereotypes and popular imagination are and how they influence the way we think.

To his surprise (because *ek larka aur larki kabhi dost nahi ban sakte*) he was making friends. Some bonds that would be more meaningful than the gangs in school. Luminaries looked down from large photographs on the walls of the classroom, twitching their noses in disgust, he felt. He would argue that it was hidden by bushy moustaches. After all, these were people whose names you memorised in school and whether you are extremely dumb or not is decided on the basis of that. Like who is the first president of India? There would also be Descartes and Spinoza but there would be no Bertrand Russell. He would also learn, to his amazement, that Russell was primarily a mathematician. No Hegel, yet, either.

There would be inaudible classes and classes he would listen to, involuntarily, with his mouth open. But there would be notes. And he would be informed that answers to questions could be complete only in half a dozen pages. He decided to first finish writing half a dozen pages once; a time-bound marathon.

But then there would be no Marx. He would wonder how everyone knew so much about Marx then. The nuances of the thought and the strands of its practice, he would learn is the prerogative of other departments.

How then would he become a self-respecting individual there? He did not, to his great shame, know who Che Guevara was. And Che was all over the place. On the walls, on wrist bands, t shirts and the imagination of the girl he found beautiful.

He would often imagine seniors, who knew so much about everything he did not know, desperately trying to control a crackling laughter when he spoke to them. That is when he sat on the stairs staring at the field, alone, thinking. This hobby which could be described as solemn, sad and such by onlookers, he would call the most pleasurable time of his day.

.....

He sat on those stairs because he could not bear to not look at life as it went on in that world, even when alone.

After a rain, enthusiastic football players would plunder the wet ground, cheerily sliding through the slush. The metaled path around would be wet and shiny, inviting everyone to walk around over and over and try to jump and touch the drooping branches of trees.

The walls would eventually get a fresh coat of writing. New posters; poetry about revolution and freedom. A better world is possible, he would agree. In the winter that arrived like a festival, the field would be full of groups. Some small and some larger ones, some with notebooks and some with books that give pleasure.

He had gradually known most of them. Everyone, after all, knew everyone else. But such acquaintance did not prevent the evenings from becoming troublesome, elections were approaching.

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The thing about elections is that they must be won.

He had decided to be on one side. The Party had lost all appeal for him by then. Menacing was not charming enough.

Acquaintances, masquerading as friends, became enemies. Some people were assigned the task of explaining to others the reasons why they should vote a side. Confusing rhetoric, sentimentality and class notes were sure winners of political convincing.

But then a lot other was discussed. Is India shining? How many farmers have killed themselves in the last decade? Should we call it the Coffin Party of India? Are conspiracy theories all false?

State.Power.Violence.Space.Gender.

'But don't waste too much time, confirm votes.'

They who were not blessed with the blessings of muscle had righteousness on their side. Decision would mean being on the wrong side of righteous chest thumping or muscle; difficult decision indeed.

But he did feel some joy deciding against muscle. Perhaps because he was not muscular, he liked the idea of dissing muscle.

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Decisions certainly are difficult. It took a while for a lot of them to say yes before they disappeared into shadows. Before that they would walk, a lot.

Sit beside each other and let time pass, often, interrupted by others who would force their company on them and even others who would find the entire thing terribly funny.

In the seasons to follow many would decide that the yes was actually a no. But something of the yes would endure, preserved in the air.

And the air would make many others say yes over the years.

.....

He had to get up from the stairs eventually. It was time to leave. Boy with whiskers and him. Wrapped in time.

.....

The evening strolled into darkness, accounted for assiduously by the huge round clock; an intrusion from another time, a reminder: long arms pointing at Roman numerals, standing stretched from end to end as the sun slid from vision.

Melancholic lovers stared in a stupor denying the inevitability of time passing by; but they knew.

গোটা মানুষের খোঁজে—

শুভদীপ সরকার (গবেষক, বাংলা বিভাগ, প্রেসিডেন্সি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়)

সমালোচকদের সমালোচনার নানা পন্থা থাকে। একটা জনপ্রিয় পন্থা- কোনো নির্দিষ্ট মতবাদের ছাঁচে ফেলে সেই মতবাদের বৈশিষ্ট্যের নিরিখে কোনো সাহিত্যিককে বা তাঁর সাহিত্যকর্মের সমালোচনা। আমি এখানে বলতে চাইনা এই পদ্ধতি কতটা যুক্তিযুক্ত সবক্ষেত্রে, আমার বক্তব্য মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের মতো ব্যক্তিত্বের এই ধরনের সমালোচনারীতির সামনে একটা অস্বস্তি তৈরি করতে সক্ষম হন। কখনও কল্লোলীও, কখনও মার্ক্সবাদী, কখনও বা ফ্রয়েডপন্থী, এসবই হয়তো আংশিক ভাবে সত্য, কিন্তু চূড়ান্ত কি? তর্ক করা যেতে পারে।

মানিকবাবুর একমাত্র প্রবন্ধগ্রন্থ ‘লেখকের কথা’ প্রকাশিত হয়েছিলো মৃত্যুর পরে ১৯৫৭ এর সেপ্টেম্বর। সেখানে ‘কেন লিখি’, ‘প্রগতিসাহিত্য’, ‘গল্পলেখার গল্প’, ‘সাহিত্য করার আগে’, ‘প্রতিভা’ ইত্যাদি সাহিত্যবিষয়ক গুরুত্বপূর্ণ রচনাগুলি আছে। ‘গল্পলেখার গল্প’ তে তিনি লিখেছেন – “তিরিশ বছর বয়সের আগে কারো লেখা উচিত নয়- আমি সেই বয়সে লিখি। এর মধ্যে তৈরি হয়ে নিতে হবে সব দিক দিয়ে, কেবল অভিজ্ঞতা সঞ্চয় নয়।” এই সীমারেখা তিনি নিজে অবশ্য মানেন না। ১৯২৮ এর ডিসেম্বর মাসে বিচিত্রা পত্রিকায় তাঁর প্রথম গল্প ‘অতসীমামী’ প্রকাশিত হবার সময় তাঁর বয়স সবে ২০ পেরিয়েছে। এরপর মাত্র ২৮ বছরের সাহিত্য জীবন তাঁর। মানিক বাবুর সাহিত্য সৃষ্টির পিছনের দীর্ঘ প্রযত্নের ইতিহাস আমরা তাঁর মুখেই শুনেছি। “স্কুল থেকে শুরু করে কলেজে প্রথম একবছর কি দুবছর পর্যন্ত রবীন্দ্রনাথ-শরৎচন্দ্র প্রভাবিত সাহিত্যই খেঁটেছি এবং তারপর কতদিন খুব শোরগোলের সঙ্গে বাংলায় যে ‘আধুনিক’ সাহিত্য সৃষ্টি হচ্ছিল তার সঙ্গে এবং সেই সাথে হামসুনের ‘হাস্পার’ থেকে শুরু করে শ-এর নাটক পর্যন্ত বিদেশি সাহিত্য এবং ফ্রয়েড প্রভৃতির সঙ্গে পরিচিত হবার চেষ্টা করেছি’ (সাহিত্য করার আগে)। কিন্তু প্রথম এক-দু বছর রবীন্দ্রনাথ-শরৎচন্দ্র প্রভাবিত সাহিত্য ঘাঁটলেও মাত্র একুশ বছর বয়সে বিজ্ঞানের এক ছাত্র ‘দিবারাত্রির কাব্য’ নামে এমন একটি লেখায় হাত দিলেন যা চরিত্রসৃষ্টির এতদিনকার ভাবনাকে আহত করে। “চরিত্রগুলি কেউ মানুষ নয়, মানুষের projection – মানুষের এক এক টুকরো মানসিক অংশ।” “মানুষ হয় ভালো, নয় মন্দ হয়। ভালো মন্দ মেশানো হয় না কেন?” বস্তুত এই জিজ্ঞাসার মধ্যেই লুকিয়ে থাকে তাঁর চরিত্র সৃষ্টির প্যাটানটিও।

অচিন্ত্যকুমার কল্লোল-এর দুটি প্রধান গুণের কথা বলেছিলেন। একটি ‘প্রবল বিরুদ্ধবাদ’, দ্বিতীয়টি ‘বিহুল ভাববিলাস’ (কল্লোল যুগ)। কিন্তু মানিকবাবুর মতে – “প্রকৃত বস্তুবাদী আদর্শ কল্লোল, কালিকলমীয় সাহিত্যিক অভিযানের পিছনে ছিল না (লেখকের কথা)।” এমনকি শৈলজানন্দের সাহিত্য সমালোচনা প্রসঙ্গে বলেছিলেন, “শৈলজানন্দের গ্রাম্যজীবন ও কয়লাখনির জীবনের ছবি হয়েছে অপরূপ, কিন্তু ছবিই হয়েছে। বৃহত্তর জীবনের সঙ্গে এই বাস্তব সংঘাত আসেনি। বস্তিজীবন এসেছে কিন্তু বস্তিজীবনের বাস্তবতা আসেনি। বস্তির মানুষ ও পরিবেশকে আশ্রয় করে রূপ নিয়েছে মধ্যবিত্তেরই রোমান্টিক ভাবাবেগ (সাহিত্য করার আগে)।” তাই তাঁর কাছে কল্লোলীয়দের বস্তুবাদ প্রত্যক্ষ অভিজ্ঞতা সজ্জাত ছিল না, তা ছিল রোমান্টিক ভাববিলাসের ফসল। বস্তুবাদে প্রানসঞ্চারের দায়িত্ব তাই তিনি নিজেই নিজের কাঁধে তুলে নেন। এই পর্বে তিনি একটা সন্ধিলগ্নে দাঁড়িয়ে। তিনি কল্লোলের বস্তুবাদ নিয়ে পরীক্ষা-নিরীক্ষার প্রতি আকৃষ্ট হয়েছিলেন ঠিকই কিন্তু তিনি বিশ্বাস করতেন মানুষের সম্পূর্ণ চেহারাটা তুলে ধরাই যথার্থ বস্তুবাদ। কেবল মানুষের অভাব-অনটন, কামনা-বাসনার চিত্রের মধ্যে দিয়ে গোটা মানুষকে জানা সম্ভব নয়।

এই প্রসঙ্গে ফ্রয়েডের কথা প্রাসঙ্গিক ভাবে চলেই আসে। ফ্রয়েডের মতে মানুষের জীবনের নিয়ামক শক্তি দুটি- অবদমিত যৌনপ্রবৃত্তি, ও মৃত্যুচেতনা। ‘সাহিত্য করার আগে’ তে মানিকবাবু হামসুন, শ-এর পাশাপাশি “ফ্রয়েড প্রভৃতির সঙ্গে পরিচিত”

হবার কথা জানিয়েছেন। কিন্তু মানিকবাবু কখনই অবদমিত প্রবৃত্তির তাড়নাকেই শেষ কথা বলে মানেন নি। বরং তিনি অনেক বেশি মানুষ কে দেখেছেন সমাজ ও ইতিহাসের প্রেক্ষিতে রাজনীতি বা অর্থনীতির চাপে ক্রমাগত মানুষ কি ভাবে পরিবর্তিত হতে থাকে তারই অন্বেষণে তিনি ছিলেন মগ্ন। ‘আত্মহত্যার অধিকার’ গল্পের নীলমণির আত্মবিশ্লেষণ তাঁর সমাজ-নির্ভর দৃষ্টিভঙ্গিকেই স্পষ্ট করে দেয়। কিংবা প্রাগৈতিহাসিক এর ভিখু, সেও নিজের animal instinct এর থেকে মানবসত্তাকেই প্রাধান্য দেয়। “মরিবেনা। সে কিছুতেই মরিবেনা। বনের পশু যে অবস্থায় বাঁচে না, সে অবস্থায় মানুষ সে বাঁচবেই।” যে কোনো রকম প্রতিকূলতার বিরুদ্ধে অস্তিত্বরক্ষার যুদ্ধে মানুষই শ্রেষ্ঠ। লেখকের কাছে এই মুহূর্তে ভিখু সেই সংগ্রামী মানুষেরই প্রতিনিধি।

আর মৃত্যুচেতনার প্রসঙ্গে বলতে গেলে বলতে হয় এর দুটি দিকের কথা। একটি দিকে জীবনে মৃত্যুর অবশ্যম্ভাবীতার কথা ভেবে একপ্রকারের নৈরাশ্যবোধ লেখকের মধ্যে কাজ করে এবং তার সৃষ্ট চরিত্রের মধ্যেও তার ছাপ পরে। অন্যদিকে মৃত্যু অনিবার্য জেনেও তাকে উপেক্ষা করার প্রবণতা ও জীবনকে আরও বেশি করে আঁকড়ে ধরার মানসিকতা। আজন্ম দুরারোগ্য ব্যাধির যন্ত্রণা মাথায় নিয়েও নিজের জীবনকে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করার উন্মুখ বাসনা ব্যক্তি মানিক ও লেখক মানিককে দ্বিতীয় পর্যায়ে ফেলো। মৃত্যু আছে বলেই জীবন এতো বরণীয় তার চরিত্রগুলির কাছে মনে পরে যাবে ‘পুতুলনাচের ইতিকথা’র শশী চরিত্রটির কথা। উপন্যাসেরসূচনা খালের ধারে বজ্রাঘাতে নিঃসঙ্গ হারুর মৃত্যুতো এরপর লেখক লিখছেন- “শ্মশানে শশীর শ্মশানবৈরাগ্য আসে না। জীবনকে সহসা তাহার কাছে অতি কাম্য উপভোগ্য বলিয়া মনে হয়। মনে হয়, এমন একটা জীবনকে সে যেন এতকাল ঠিকভাবে ব্যবহার করে নাই। মৃত্যু পর্যন্ত অন্যমনস্ক বাঁচিয়া থাকার মধ্যে জীবনের অনেক কিছুই যেন তাহার অপচয়িত হইয়া যাইবো। শুধু তাহার নয় সকলের। জীবনের এই ক্ষতি প্রতিকারহীনা বলার অপেক্ষা রাখেনা ফ্রয়েডিও মৃত্যুচেতনার সঙ্গে মানিকবাবুর নিজের জীবন দিয়ে অর্জিত এই মৃত্যুদর্শনের স্বাতন্ত্র্য।

আসলে প্রবৃত্তির তাড়না, মানসিক অবক্ষয়ের দিকটি যেমন সত্য তেমনি তার থেকে উত্তরনের প্রচেষ্টাও সত্য। ক্রমশই মানিকবাবু অনুভব করছিলেন মানুষের বেঁচে থাকার একটা কারণ দরকার। জীবনের সুনির্দিষ্ট কোন লক্ষ্য না থাকলে সে আত্মধ্বংসী মেতে উঠতে বাধ্য। ভিখু বা নীলমণিরা এই লক্ষ্যহীনতার শিকার। এইসব কারণেই তাঁর সাহিত্যজীবনের দ্বিতীয় পর্বে মানিকবাবুকে এমনকিছু চরিত্রকে খুঁজতে হয় যারা আত্মধ্বংসে মাতে না। তাঁর রাজনৈতিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি এক্ষেত্রে তাকে সাহায্য করেছিল সন্দেহ নেই। শ্রমিক এবং কৃষক আন্দোলনের মধ্যেই তিনি এমন কিছু চরিত্রকে খুঁজে পান যারা মানবিক অধিকার প্রতিষ্ঠার জন্য লড়াই করে, জীবনের সুস্থ ও স্বাভাবিক দাবিগুলোকে যারা গুরুত্ব দেয়, প্রবৃত্তির দাসত্ব যারা মেনে নেয় না। মনে পরে যাবে ‘শিল্পী’ গল্পের মদন তাঁতি, ‘হারাণের নাতজামাই’- এর ময়নার মা কিংবা ‘ছোট বকুলপুরের যাত্রী’- র দিবাকর ও আল্লার মতো চরিত্রগুলোকে কল্লোল থেকেই যে সাহিত্য বস্তুবাদের দিকে মোড় নিল এটা তিনি স্বীকার করতেন, তবে বস্তুবাদের গোটারূপ, মানুষের গোটারূপ কে দেখানোর গুরুদায়িত্ব যে তাকেই নিতে হবে এটা তিনি ভালো করেই বুঝতে পেরেছিলেন। মানবজীবন মূলত অবচেতন মনের প্রবৃত্তির দ্বারা চালিত হয় কেবল এই বিষয়কেই কথাসাহিত্যে উপস্থাপিত করে মানিকবাবু সন্তুষ্ট হননি। সমাজ ও ইতিহাসকেও সংগত কারণেই তাঁর মানবজীবনের অন্যতম চালিকাশক্তি বলে মনে হয়েছিলো। ব্যক্তিমানুষের ঘাত-প্রতিঘাত, শ্রেণীর ঘাত-প্রতিঘাত, বিভিন্ন রাজনৈতিক মতাদর্শের সংঘাতের মধ্যে দিয়ে মানুষের বিপর্যয়, প্রতিরোধ কিংবা সাফল্য অর্জনের কাহিনিই তাঁর কাছে গুরুত্ব পায়। বিশেষ করে ১৯৪৪ সালের পর থেকে এই প্রবণতা বৃদ্ধি পায়। অনেকে একে ফ্রয়েড থেকে মার্ক্স এর জগতে পদার্পণের পর্ব বলে মনে করে থাকেন এবং এই পর্বের রচনাকে নিকৃষ্ট এমন মতামতও দিয়ে থাকেন। কিন্তু এই সিদ্ধান্তের এরকম অতিসরলীকরণে আমাদের আপত্তি। একথা অস্বীকার করার জায়গা নেই যে তত্ত্বকথার বোঝা কিভাবে ক্রমাগত ঘাড়ে চাপছিল তার প্রমাণ মানিকবাবুর ১৯৪৫ থেকে ১৯৫৬ এর মধ্যে রচিত দিনপঞ্জীতে পাওয়া যায়। কিন্তু এটাও সত্যি যে এই সময়ই হারাণের নাতজামাই কিংবা ছোটবকুলপুরের যাত্রী-র মতো শ্রেষ্ঠ

রাজনৈতিক গল্পগুলি লেখা হচ্ছে। এই প্রসঙ্গে অস্টিট পত্রিকার মাঘ সংখ্যায় বুদ্ধদেব বসুর মন্তব্য মনে পরে যায়- “আমি তাঁর শেষ পর্বের সব লেখা পড়িনি। তবে যেটুকু পড়েছি তাতে কখনো কখনো মনে হয়েছে তত্ত্বকথা তাঁর অনুভূতিকে অতিক্রম করে যাচ্ছে, আবার কোথাও কোথাও তাঁর শিল্পী মনকে জয়ী হতেও দেখেছি।” মানিকবাবুর শেষপর্বের সাহিত্য মূল্যায়নের ক্ষেত্রে বুদ্ধদেব বসুর এই সিদ্ধান্তটিই বোধহয় সর্বাধিক গ্রহণযোগ্য।

আসলে গোটামানুষের খোঁজে যার নিরন্তন অন্বেষণ তিনি যে বিপুল ভাঙ্গাগড়ার মধ্যে দিয়ে এগোবেন এটাই তো কাঙ্ক্ষিত। এই খোঁজে তাই তিনি কখনও কখনও দিকভ্রষ্ট হয়েছেন আবার তারই মধ্যে দিয়ে আবিষ্কার করেছেন নতুন পথা শুধু সাহিত্য রচনায় নয়। নিজের জীবনেও। গোটামানুষকে খুঁজে গেছেন নিজের মধ্যেও নিরন্তর। আর সেখান থেকেই বের হয়ে এসেছে বাংলা সাহিত্যের অসামান্য সব চরিত্র। যারা প্রত্যেকে মিলে গোটামানুষের আদল তৈরি করতে চেয়েছে আমাদের সামনে একজন সাহিত্যিকের কাছে এর চেয়ে বেশি কি পাওনা থাকে?

দুটি কবিতা –

সৌমিক ঘোষ; গবেষক, বাংলা বিভাগ, প্রেসিডেন্সি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

১। ক্ষত

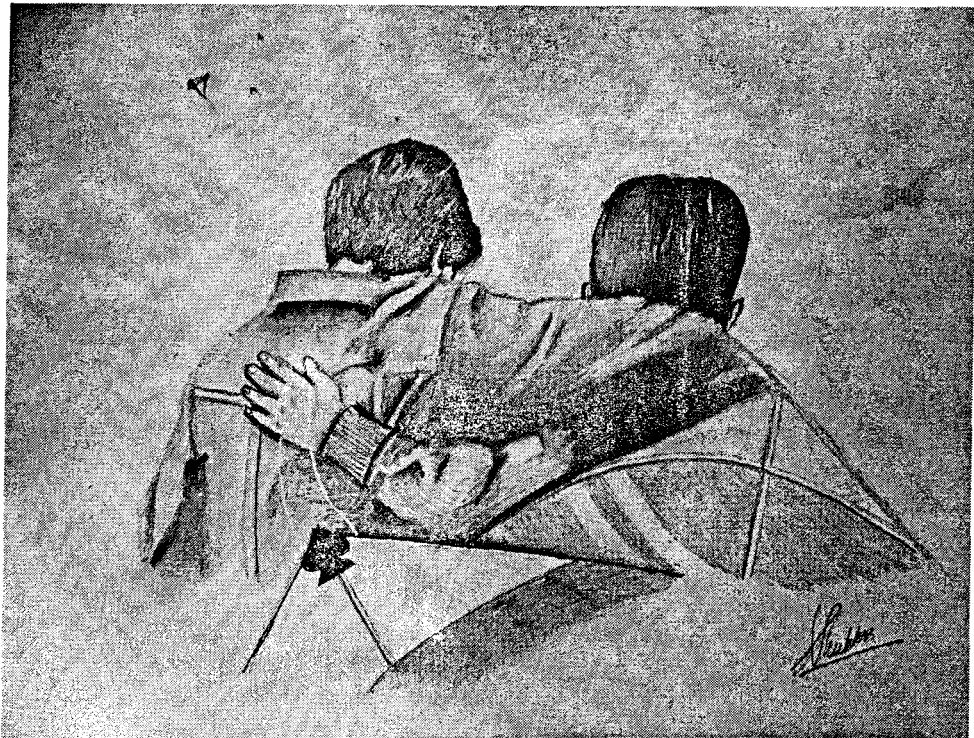
পথ ভুল হওয়া সহজ কি অত?
আরক্ষা দেয় প্রহরী সতত।
আল-বঁধা ক্ষেত নাই চষ যদি,
ক্ষতি নেই শুধু বেড়ে যায় ক্ষতা

২। মিথ্যে

সেতুবন্ধ পূর্বাপর মিথ্যে হয়ে যায়,
জেগে থাকে লালস-জড়িমা।
মিথ্যার মন বুঝে পাখিকূল গায়
পরিয়ানী দ্যুলোক গরিমা...



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REMEMBERING NIETZSCHE

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Friedrich Nietzsche was born hundred and seventy one years ago, at Saxony in Germany, grew up to be a brilliant scholar privileged with an assignment of teaching when he was still a student and finally became a Professor of classical Philology at Basel University. For his revolt against contemporary stereotypes in philosophy and moral certainty of religion he could not hold a chair of Philosophy at the university and his ideas remained untouchable for long following Fascist manipulation of his observations out of context at the behest of his sister Elizabeth. It was only when the genealogy of formidable philosophical genres like existentialism and postmodernism were traced to his ideas, the philosopher was born posthumously.

He was perhaps the most misunderstood thinker the world has ever produced. He loathed anti-Semitism but Elizabeth in a desperate bid to legitimize her husband's anti-Semitism let the Fascist and Nazi leaders project her brother as a diehard supporter of their ideology. Nietzsche's letter to Elizabeth, which is now in the public domain, shows how infuriated he was, at the anti-Semitism of his sister and her husband. He wrote about his decision to sever all connections with them. Still the man was not spared in the calculated move towards manipulation of his writings.

Nietzsche was so violently unorthodox that his ideas devastated almost all the existing philosophical genres. Nevertheless, academics did acknowledge his genius. At the phenomenally young age of 24 he was appointed Extraordinary [Associate] professor of classical Philology and one year after he became a Professor at Basel University. His 'Birth of tragedy from the spirit of music' was published when he was just 27. The Spirit informing this work never left Nietzsche even when he became partially incoherent. In all the variegated themes of his writings there was an undercurrent of this spirit, the Dionysian spirit. His was an ecstatic outburst against bondage of any specific system; he was in favour of free and spontaneous expression of feeling along with the structured and reasoned representation of opinion. The former is Dionysian while the latter is Apollonian. For Nietzsche, art forms like sculpture and painting are representational having visible structures. Music, on the other hand, provides expression of agony and ecstasy that has to be felt. Notations themselves do not have any clues to the kind of feeling it generates unless it is played. As sound cannot have any visible structure it is closer to our emotions. Despite human endeavours to bind music to a structure of notations, ultimately it is the sound which it emits, touches the heart in various individualistic ways. Nietzsche's oeuvre also needs to be felt. The less it is subjected to the searching scrutiny of the analyst, the better. Music is naturally less contrived than representational art forms. But unfortunately, this philosophical treatise had no taker at the time except the music composer Richard Wagner. He was, not yet a prophet outcast but probably earned the reputation of an outsider to all that man had so far jealously guarded as sacrosanct fearing divine wrath or punishment for violating established norms. Nietzsche, the quintessential iconoclast, however, continued to surface in popular perceptions despite all these twists and turns of reaction. There was a specific context in which this image of his gained currency.

During Nachmarz [after March] or a period of reaction in Germany after the failure of the revolution of March 1848 the state and the church censured anything they found subversive in the study of philosophy. The departments of Philosophy at Universities were turned into loyal campaigners of sponsored knowledge. The ambience distanced Schopenhauer and later, many others including Nietzsche who were freelance philosophers pursuing studies outside of the periphery of the Universities. Defying the official agenda concepts like world as will and representation [Schopenhauer] and will to power [Nietzsche] were developed. Among these freelance philosophers, again, Nietzsche was the most defiant. In his *Gay Science* and *Thus spoke Zarathustra* he triggered off his tirade against all moral standards especially those set by Christianity by making that explosive comment 'God is dead'. There are many confusing assertions on this issue. But one thing is certain, when he

said only man can 'kill God, he actually wanted human beings to demolish the strait jacket of moral precepts which tied us to a formidable array of dos and don'ts retarding the spontaneous expression of our 'self', and when he finally confessed that we were 'not going to get rid of God because we would still believe in Grammar' he actually viewed Grammar as the overpowering influence of structured form of knowledge. For him, Knowledge to be free should develop beyond good and evil breaking the fetters of binary opposition of truth and lies. What he always emphasized is a life-affirming process which incorporates an eternal recurrence of both joys and sorrows. This was first reflected in the Birth of tragedy and climaxed in Thus spoke Zarathustra.

Nietzsche firmly believed, like Aristotle, that Greek tragedy had originated from chorus. It is the dithyrambic chorus that had more than a symbolic use in Greek tragedy. Dithyramb, the hymn for worshipping Dionysius, the God of Intoxication, is virtually an outlet of ecstasy. For Nietzsche chorus was one of the core elements of tragedy in that it expressed the ongoing process of life despite the impending tragedy. Dithyrambic chorus, therefore, was centered on enacting a life-affirming process in which pain was as much a natural outburst as pleasure. Tragedy, in this sense, unfolds life that is indestructible; it does not end in death or destruction. The defiance of Sophocles' Antigone was not consummated in her death. It turned life to a new direction with new realization. Greek tragedy is the greatest not because of the inevitable demise of the hero or heroine, but because of its presentation of death-defying life in all its vigour. And then there was 'Thus spoke Zarathustra' and the invocation of the *Übermensch*-the overman.

In the summer of 1881 Nietzsche at Upper Engadine in the Swiss Alps had a vision on the shores of Lake Silvaplana. While walking on the shores of the lake Nietzsche came across a massive pyramidal rock. The ripples on the surface of water, as the wind blew, must have created the imagery of continuous ups and downs of the same elements. The rock was witnessing it standing still, as if internalizing the flow of life with repetition of the same joys and sorrows. It constituted the foundation of his concept of 'Over man'-the climax of breaking the barrier of truth and lies, good and evil, peace and conflict, for infinite times. This was Nietzsche's vision of Eternal Recurrence. This is what his critique of reason, religion, and science drove him to.

Nietzsche's writings can be broadly divided into books containing analytical presentation and pieces replete with aphoristic comments. It is impossible to ascertain whether Nietzsche became completely incoherent at the time of writing those aphorisms. Surely he had severe migraine and his eye sight was impaired substantially but this does not rule out the possibility of his choosing the aphoristic style deliberately to avoid any fixed pattern of expression disseminated by a specific structure of language. The great debunker suspected everything, glorified a robust and virile life, lambasted the envy of the meek and eventually argued in favour of the emergence of an over-man ready to accept eternal recurrence of all the joys and sorrows that have already occurred. He asks, what will be your reaction if the demon in your dream gives you an option of having interminable recurrence of the success and failure, joys and sorrows already experienced by you? If you accept it, you will be the over-man. This power to affirm life permeates the entire living world. By owning it you will be part of the elements constituting nature itself; you will surely be the *Übermensch*. Nietzsche's will to power is not will to dominate only; it is will to transcend the limits to what is 'human all too human' - the process to elevate oneself to the level over the stereotyped boundaries of existence that is exclusively branded as human—the rise of the overman.

At Turin, witnessing a coach-driver whipping a horse Nietzsche cried, desperately tried to rescue the horse and fell unconscious. After this he became insane. He was taken to an asylum but never recovered. Hollingdale, Nietzsche's famous biographer, informs on the basis of available medical records that his senses were numbed and he could not feel anything before his death. Some say his insanity was caused by syphilis; some trace it to his father's ailments which he had inherited. Let us make a Nietzschean statement—the two are equally probable and a third cannot be ruled out; perhaps he was inundated by that all-pervading life that drove him to an abyss of nothingness. The great debunker posthumously became the intellectual hero of late nineteenth century Europe—the hero who always remained an outsider.

SOCIOLOGY IN PRESIDENCY COLLEGE

Prasanta Ray ; BA, 1960-63, MA, 1963-65, Teaching in the College, University, 1977—

In its twenty-fifth year, the Department of Sociology is the youngest in the institution. It was created in 1989, after a gap of almost thirty years when the Department of Political Science was set up in 1960. But unlike the latter, it was not a fall out of the University of Calcutta, to which the College was affiliated, deciding to segregate the disciplines by introducing separate post-graduate courses on Economics and Political Science. The College did the same, though obviously at the undergraduate level. The Department of Sociology in the College was established a little more than a decade after the affiliating University starting its MA course in Sociology in 1977. But the initiative to start teaching of the discipline, spread over between 1977 and 1989, came from the College. The stakeholders were quite a few: the affiliating university — particularly the office of the Inspector of Colleges, the Education Department, Government of West Bengal, the College Teachers' Council and the post-graduate Department of Sociology in Calcutta University. The coordinates and their intersectionalities were complex. It called for suave smoothing. Four Principals between 1977 and 1989 nourished my initiative. The Department materialised during the tenure of Dr. Sunil Rai Choudhuri.

Sociology was late in Presidency College. In fact, it was late in Kolkata. This is despite the fact that some leading Indian sociologists were Bengalis, that Sociology was a part of MA Political Philosophy course in Calcutta University in the early twentieth century, and that the Sociology Research Unit was set up under the guidance of an internationally reputed sociologist, Professor Ramkrishna Mukherjee, in the Indian Statistical Institute (1957). The formal, though fractional, teaching of Sociology began as a full paper in 800 marks BA honours course in Political Science from 1960. But some teacher, either in the original Department of Political Economy and Political Philosophy (1908) or in the later re-named Department of Economics and Political Science (1932) in Presidency College, had a keen interest in the discipline because I have found Sociology text books published both in England and in America in the early years of the last century in the holdings of what is popularly called EPL. The basic text, prescribed by the affiliating University, in that undergraduate honours paper was *Society: Its Structure and Changes* by R. M. MacIver and Charles H. Page (1949). The book was originally published in 1931. By this count, teaching Sociology in Presidency was retrograde, a flaw for which the College was not responsible. The availability of the Papermac edition of the book at 16 shillings then might have determined the decision by the affiliating University. The book projected society as an unproblematic phenomenon: 'a web of social relationships'. But the teachers in the College, especially Professor Nirmal Chandra BasuRoychowdhury, would always take us beyond the text book/s prescribed by Calcutta University. Clues to interrogate the idyllic image of society in MacIver and Page's book were found in T. B. Bottomore's *Sociology: A Guide to Problems and Literature* (1963). Professor BasuRoychowdhury introduced the book to us along with Morris Ginsberg's *Sociology*. Ginsberg's book was published only a little later (1934) than the one by MacIver and Page but it problematised the relationship between questions of fact with those of value and between reason and feelings. That was our encounter with the pluri-textual British Sociology in the inter-war period. The American text book – *Human Society* (1949) by Kingsley Davis – we also consulted, belonged to the same genre with MacIver and Page book. And, of course we would saunter between book shelves in the British Council library and the USIS library in search of 'surprises'. This narrative is important because this 'MacIver and Page cohort', as we friends and colleagues jokingly call ourselves, were the key players in the field. Some of us, the senior teachers, have moved beyond MacIver and Page signpost. But even in the middle of 1980s, a few members of the under-graduate of Board of Studies in Sociology of our affiliating university argued in favour of retaining *Society: Its Structure and Changes*. There was certain conservatism about the Board. In early 1980s, it was reluctant to make *Sociology* by Anthony Giddens a basic reading for honours level Sociology students because it contained a chapter on HIV and AIDS!

I had the rare opportunity of witnessing the formation of two social science departments in the college: that of the Department of Political Science in the early 1960s (I belonged to the first batch of its honours students) and of the Department of Sociology in the late 1980s-early 1990s (I was given the charge of directing its formation). My

teachers – scholars of repute — in the 1960s – almost all of them had their doctoral degree from some British university. In the history of this institution, this has been a significant capital making teaching intellectually vibrant. Also, a quiet, and an informal but powerful distribution of academic honour, both in the institution and in the public sphere, has always derived from that. Compared to that, it was a *desi* beginning of teaching of Sociology in Presidency College as none of the teachers had a doctoral degree from a foreign university. In fact, there was intellectual capital deficiency. The man in charge, I, had only three hundred marks worth knowledge of Sociology learnt in course of BA honours and MA in Political Science. Had Pierre Bourdieu tried to plot the new department and its teachers in the academic field along the axis of cultural capital, as he did with regard to the French academic institutions and intellectuals in his *Homo Academicus* (1984), he would have placed the Department in the deep recess of the ‘lower-left’—the site for the un-credentialed. The onlookers, some of the established professors in other departments, indeed had their well-meaning anxieties about the capability of the fledging department to take off. One way, the deficiency was sought to be mitigated was by inviting a large number of distinguished teachers from the other departments of the College like History, Economics, and Statistics, from Sociology Departments in Kalyani University and Burdwan University, from the Department of Political Science, Calcutta University, from the Centre for Studies in Social Sciences, from IIM Calcutta, and from IISWBM. Only on hindsight I have realized that those teachers unknowingly gave our students an early exposure to interdisciplinary thinking. Standing out among them are Professor Abhijit Mitra of Burdwan University and late Professor Saila Kumar Ghosh of IIM Calcutta. They all taught our students without a formal invite and without any remuneration. They even lent their personal books. The alumni of the department doing doctoral work abroad would take classes during their visits to their parents in the city. They informed our students about the new developments in sociological understanding. It was how personal intimacies invigorated the impersonal process of institutional renewal. The anxieties were thus attended. Expressions of animosity, rare though, were overlooked on the strength of support to the project of introducing Sociology in the College which came from some of my teachers. I was myself anxious about my capability of teaching two disciplines at the same time. Professor Deepak Banerjee, who taught in the Department of Economics for four decades, encouraged me by arguing that it would actually enrich my teaching of both the disciplines. Professor Nirmal Chandra Basu Roychowdhury knew of my inquisitiveness about Sociology which in fact he instilled in me. He knew about my initiative in introducing the discipline in Presidency College. He died in 1985, four years before the Department was created in 1989. In 1992 or '93, his wife instituted a memorial prize in his name for a student scoring highest marks in BA honours examination in Sociology. I took that as an expression of his quiet endorsement of the endeavour. Emotional warmth is necessary even for gestating institutions.

The quiet struggle for a place in the sun became more intense because of other factors. For example, it did not have a dedicated physical space anywhere in the College until May, 1995 when it was allotted space in the Netaji Subhas Building, initially planned for the departments of Geology and Economics, by Principal, Dr. Sunil Rai Choudhuri. Before that, it was daily begging or hunting for empty class rooms anywhere in the College. In fact, the first class was held in a room in the Geography Department on the second floor of the main building. The teachers trailed by migrating students were quite a sight. Moved by our plight, the kind caretaker of the College, Mr. Shyamol Mukherji, took the initiative of creating class spaces by setting plywood partitions on the first floor lobby of the Derozio Building, compromising architectural aesthetics. That indeed was an act of appropriation of spatial commons. This lent some corporeality to the Department, which otherwise had an elusive anatomy: without a place of its own, without a teachers’ room, without a full faculty and without adequate library holdings.

And, obviously without history: no celebrated alumni, no scholar-teacher. To connect and engage with European scholarship and academia has been a ceaseless institutional desire, right from the founding of the Hindu College in 1817. The motto at that time was ‘to import into India the new learning of Europe’. With the current policy of making a world class university on the foundation of this reputed under-graduate college, there is re-assertion of that early nineteenth century Bengali dream. The alumni with higher education and research in some western university who have joined the faculty in the various departments of the college from time to time, has been one conduit through which western scholarship flowed into the College. The Department of

Sociology has only recently been privileged with the services of alumni with doctorate degrees from some British and European universities. However, the challenges of importing the new western learning have eased with internet, seminars and conferences.

Being without any history created anxious curiosity about the 'strange' discipline among the applicants for admission and their parents in the early years of the Department when public knowledge of the discipline was weak. This was due the fact that it was not a discipline in the school leaving Higher Secondary course. There was provision for Sociology in comparable courses only in other boards. The teachers had to face questions — typical of middle class anxiety — about career options after degree in Sociology. Public awareness of the discipline and its intellectual potentiality, we feel, increased with introduction of the discipline in our College, particularly when our alumni began joining the print media. At the institutional level, while setting admission test questions, we had to take into account the fact that most of the applicants for admission into under-graduate Sociology honours class did not study the discipline at the school level.

The quality of Sociology education in the institution changed when the College became a university, and the post-graduate course was offered. Because, though many departments began introducing post-graduate courses in the closing years of the College, Sociology Department did not on the ground of lack of space and of teaching staff. With added space and a capable faculty, it has now become possible to offer a post-graduate course and a doctoral programme. Becoming a university allowed the Department to determine the course content of both the under-graduate and post-graduate classes. The young teachers – the fresh recruits – prepared the draft proposals and invited some Professors from the Departments of Sociology of Delhi University and the Jawaharlal University, to a one-day workshop in the University. The syllabi at both the levels have the promise of radicalising teaching of Sociology in the institution, substantively as well as pedagogy-wise. The commitment of the University to inculcate an interdisciplinary outlook has encouraged the Department to offer lectures on love as well as laboratory. These may not be dismissed as post-modern frivolity or disciplinary trespass.

Evidently, significant changes have taken place in the form and content of Sociology education in Presidency University; so also, in the transactions in the process of knowledge dissemination and production: the withering away of class room teaching, seminars and conferences as the new modes of circulation of knowledge, teachers' engagement with their individual research projects, Jstor downloads replacing photo copies replacing books, and Wikipedia replacing dictionaries of Sociology replacing teachers. Certain virtualization and de-centering of teaching and learning is evident. These are evidently common across departments and institutions. Changes are universal in institutional life cycles. Doing Sociology has one significant advantage: it can apply its own logics of analysis to understand its life course. Hopefully, those in the process of educating and learning Sociology in Presidency University will use their sociological knowledge and their institutional commitment to keep the discipline and the department at the centre of the intellectual life of the institution. Hopefully also, the Department has now a history with its students teaching in a significant number of universities in north America, the Great Britain and the Europe, and in leading institutions in India like JNU, Jadavpur University, AUD, WBNUJS, TISS, IITs, and in under-graduate colleges in West Bengal. Many of them did their doctoral research in reputed universities in the west. Some are engaged in social activism. The Department should continue to be an asset to the University.

NO NOSTALGIA, PLEASE

Anik Chatterjee ; *Professor and Head, Department of Political Science.*

I entered the hallowed portals of Presidency College in late 1979 as a student. To the present students, the time may appear as pre-historic. A 'mofussil' boy, I had never seen Presidency before. I can distinctly remember the day when I came to the college to collect forms for Admission Tests. I heard that the famous institution was located near the College Street 'junction'. So the 'outsider' started early morning for the coveted 'junction'. After reaching Howrah station, I took a bus for College Street and reached the junction after an hour braving the terrible traffic. Standing at the junction, the outsider asked a person about the exact location of the college. The person told him confidently to walk south, toward the Bowbazar crossing. In a hurry, I walked briskly and reached Bowbazar crossing in about ten minutes. There I asked another person about the exact location of the college. He laughed at me and told me to walk north. Perplexed, I asked another person. He was compassionate and told me that the college was nearby, and I must take a few steps toward the north to reach the college. The man was very polite. He told me that he would have surely accompanied me to my destination, but for his office, he should head towards the Dalhousie area without any delay. So the outsider started walking back, and soon found a big area with a big building, and a huge iron-gate. He entered through the gate nervously. He was near his dream, he was near Presidency!

But where were the Admission Forms? Where was the Office? Where was the big queue for Forms he heard about before? Was the college closed? Had he come on a wrong day? But there were activities all around. People running helter-skelter; worried faces; men and women in small groups, whispering. Suddenly an ambulance arrived, a stretcher brought out, with a man writhing in extreme pain. It must be a hospital, the outsider realised. He approached a man in a small whispering group with two questions: which hospital he had actually reached, and where was his Presidency. The man turned back, looked vacantly at the boy and said, "My mother is very ill". The boy retreated and came out of the iron-gate.

A tram stopped at the 'Tram Stop'. There was a little chill in the air, and an elderly lady got down slowly. Hesitantly, the boy asked the lady about his destination. She asked the boy to hold her hand, and walk along. "Admission to Presidency is not easy my boy, try hard, good luck", she said as the boy and few majestic buildings lining on the road listened in silence. Finally she showed the open iron-gate; stood in front for a while with the boy, and said, "you have reached". As the lady headed towards the book stalls opposite the open gate, the boy thanked her for helping. Finally he entered through the open gate. He was indeed walking through his dream.

After 35 years, the dream still lingers on. Now that Presidency has become a university, we must carry forward the dream of making Presidency University a world class centre of academic excellence. It is easier said than done. As a senior teacher I am indeed very happy, like many of my colleagues, that a bunch of bright scholars have joined Presidency as faculty from different parts of India, and outside. Their presence has given a cosmopolitan touch to Presidency. Through innovative teaching methods and curricula, Presidency is trying to impart the best forms of knowledge to its students. Through their research, the faculty is trying to break new ground. All these indicate toward positive developments. At the same time, Presidency is standing at a crucial juncture. It is indeed standing at a crossroads, at the 'junction'. The next five to seven years, would be very crucial for Presidency. Proper placement of our graduates would surely make an impact in the society. For better placements and opportunities, our students must be academically enriched. Otherwise they may not be able to find their proper places in this fiercely competitive world. The role of the teacher is very crucial here. We must not forget that Presidency has U.G. classes. Therefore, the pedagogy here would differ from that in many research universities in India and abroad. A teacher must be able to inculcate basic concepts and ideas about the discipline at the U.G. level. Basic texts, besides research articles, must be provided to the U.G. students, especially in their first two or three semesters. A teacher must inform and must also be informed about the basic texts and new research in his area of teaching. Solid undergraduate training is the foundation of all higher learning. We

must not forget this basic issue. Many former students (of remote and recent past) of Presidency who joined top universities in the world as students and faculty, who reached the top in other vocations, have all attributed their 'success' to strong undergraduate teaching at Presidency. Upon a solid undergraduate base, our P.G. and research programmes can only flourish in the future. The best undergraduate students from Presidency and other institutions should be encouraged to join our P.G. and research programmes. In creating the best undergraduates, a teacher's role is unparalleled. A fresh mind must be nurtured with care and diligence by the teachers. I have seen top professors in many leading universities in the world taking utmost care for their undergraduate students. And they also pursued high-quality cutting-edge research.

Presidency must attain new heights in research to become world class; Presidency must achieve further heights in teaching to remain on the path of the 'world class'. Research and teaching are complimentary to each other. Presidency should combine both satisfactorily. After all, it is a university, not a research institute. Adequate infrastructural facilities will help us in reaching our goal. I sincerely believe that such facilities will be provided in the near future. I live in optimism. Presidency is already on the road to excellence, we must not be lost. It is a matter of satisfaction, as I have written already, that Presidency has a sizeable good faculty. But it must continue to attract good students. We must not be top-heavy. After all, the success of a university is proved more through the success of its students. We should make world class students to make our new university truly world class.

JUSTICE IN POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY: ELUSIVE OR NECESSARY IDEA?

Maidul Islam; Assistant Professor, Dept. of Political Science

The history of human existence has so far shown that no society has been absolutely just, even after eventful political transformations such as the Spartacus slave revolt, English Revolution, French Revolution, Russian Revolution, Chinese Revolution, Iranian Islamic Revolution, national liberation and decolonization. Even after the transformation of the post-war welfare state to the retreat of the welfare state with the emergence of neo-liberal consensus, justice has not been ensured to significant sections of population in those societies and indeed we find new forms of injustices haunting the world. Notable public protests and political dissent in our times, following the 2008 economic crisis such as the *indignados* in Spain, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US, the *piqueteros* in Argentina, various forms of new social protests in the Arab world, India's anti-corruption movement, protests on the violent crimes against women in the streets of Delhi, anti-austerity protests in Europe, the Shahbag movement in Bangladesh and the Hong Kong protests were not possible without some sense of justice and injustice.

The normative idea of justice has been debated within the long tradition of political philosophy. Since, the ideas of justice and injustice have been contested by varied ideological positions and there is hardly any conclusive, comprehensive and consensual theory of justice, it is only fair to say that there can never be an adequate theory of justice. Thus, justice as a value is not simply relative and related to other normative concepts. Rather, it is profoundly elusive. But if it is elusive then why has it been often used in diverse political and philosophical discourses over time? One can argue that justice as a normative political idea(l) is absolutely necessary for any political discourse to justify its actions and goals.

Amartya Sen incisively demonstrates in his recent work on political philosophy that the second half of the twentieth century and the first decade of the twenty first century are not a decisive break from the general trend of disagreement on the very meaning of justice as one finds in the European enlightenment tradition or in the ancient and medieval period in both east and west. The Rawlsian theory of justice was a strong defense for a liberal welfare state, which was challenged by the libertarian response of Robert Nozick, particularly questioning the difference principle of John Rawls. The communitarian critique of Michael Sandel was concerned with the universalist tendency of the Rawlsian premise that prioritizes 'right over good' and the primacy of a homogenous 'self' over conceptions of 'community'. Moving beyond liberalism and communitarianism was the philosophical genre of egalitarianism that foregrounded the idea of equality while discussing justice. On the one hand, such egalitarianism was taken up by recognizing identity and difference while questioning the distributive paradigm, as in the treatise of Iris Marion Young. On the other hand, Marxists like G.A. Cohen and Étienne Balibar gave prime importance to the inseparability between the principle of equality and the principle of justice.

If such varied schools of justice exist then can there be a democratic dialogue between 'liberal', 'egalitarian', 'libertarian' and 'communitarian' notions of justice? Or can the pragmatic reality be of an *impossible dialogue* since the different positions on justice fundamentally disagree with one another and have an inbuilt narcissism within each one of them, claiming: 'our path is the right path', based on their respective *reasoned* claims. Therefore, *reasoning* as a value is neither autonomous nor impartial. Here, one must ask whether a particular or a hegemonic universal reason is ruling the society. In this respect, one is reminded of the famous proclamation of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology*: "the *ideas* of the ruling class are in every epoch the *ruling ideas*". In that case, 'the idea of justice' and 'ways to remove injustice' becomes a game of contesting positions struggling for hegemony. Therefore, setting the rules of such a game of contesting positions and the final outcome of that game is dependent on winning and losing parties of hegemonic struggle of contesting positions on justice/injustice. In this respect, the concept of *hegemony* that is derivative of the antagonistic nature of human society fractured with varied ethico-political positions and distinct politico-ideological articulations is fundamental in deciding what forms of 'justice' rules in a given space and time.

We can further clarify that the struggle to ensure justice or 'removing injustice' to arrive at relatively more just conditions is intricately connected to the question of the political struggle to win *hegemony* over the rest of the population. The population in a society can be politically convinced for a particular version of justice or ways of removing injustice, by consultations, consent, democratic participations etc. If a particular version of justice is superimposed from top, then hegemony nonetheless can be established, but with coercive mechanisms, which in a way can also invite resistance to the hegemonic formation/power bloc and thus can limit its scope of operation. In that circumstance, the very notion of a hegemonic idea of justice and its moral authority that is established through an authoritarian imposition from above than through a hegemonic formation from below with people's consent and active participation can be questioned with new possibilities of struggle for liberation from a repressive notion of justice.

In case of a repressive power, the normative idealism of 'just society' itself becomes redundant with the emergence of realism, where only power and remaining seated in power becomes an ideal. Thus, ideals like justice or removing injustice only become an illusionary veil to camouflage the hidden desire/goal of the political act of achieving power. In such a situation, the 'promise' and 'hope' of establishing a just society or removing injustices becomes a political project of the *present*. A 'promise' of justice or removing injustice is made to the people at the current conjuncture ('now') for political mobilization with the motive to establish a 'relatively new just society' in the near future.

Any normative concepts such as justice, liberty, equality, freedom etc. are historically specific and contingent. For example, there was a point of time in human history where the verdict of a clan leader or emperor was seen as justice from a legalistic point of view. Similarly, ancient Greek philosophers like Plato and Aristotle did not argue that the existence of slaves in their societies was basically unjust. Normative concepts like justice, liberty, equality, freedom etc. also have a class/group underpinning. Thus, which class/group gets justice at the expense of whom and who decides what is just or unjust, much akin to the Nietzschean problem of who decides 'good' and 'evil', are significant questions to pose.

Does Marx explicitly discuss the ideas of justice and injustice? Although, Rawls, in his *Lectures on the History of Political Philosophy* suggests that Marxian communism is attributed to 'radical egalitarianism' by the likes of Cohen; a communist society would resolve the justice question by eliminating injustices like alienation and exploitation along with the overcoming of the division of labour. In other words, the Marxian 'ideal' of 'a society of freely associated producers' or the 'higher phase of communism', according to Rawls, could be a 'society beyond justice'. But how does one achieve such a society? A noted Japanese Anarcho-Marxist, Kojin Karatani has recently argued that 'a possible communism' can be only based on an 'associationist model' whose form of exchange could be 'mutual aid'. According to Karatani, the struggle on the very site of consumption, by arresting the circulation of capital while boycotting capitalist commodities, building workers collectives and local exchange trading systems, along with simultaneous global struggles against the bourgeois trinity of nation-state-capital, might create conditions for such 'a possible communism'.

It seems that both the liberal and Marxist literature is preoccupied with the question of distributive justice. In this regard, post-Marxists like Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe suggest that the Left must address the questions of both redistribution and recognition or what Nancy Fraser articulates as addressing the questions of both distributive justice and social justice. Here, taking cue from the writings of Laclau and Mouffe, one can argue that class antagonism might be addressed under communism but other antagonisms of race, gender and environment might be still unresolved. In fact, with communism, there need not necessarily be an end to politics. As Mouffe states, in such a context, an intellectual practice of constructing an (in)adequate theory of justice would be an exercise of 'political philosophy without politics'. Therefore, a fruitful politico-intellectual task is to give primacy to politics, identify the antagonistic moments that are constitutive of human societies, and initiate plurality of political struggles against multifarious power structures. Indeed such political struggles can be only possible in the name of justice even if that is elusive. Paraphrasing Marx's eleventh thesis on Feuerbach, one can say that the philosophers have only offered various ideas of justice; the point is that these are not truths in themselves but are *necessary* for politics and mobilization.

MARTYRS' DAYS : MEMORIALIZING 13 JULY 1931 IN KASHMIR

Mridu Rai, *Professor, History*

In the darkness of despair we saw a vision,
We lit the light of hope, and it was not extinguished...

...We sent our vision aswim like a swan on the river.
The vision became reality...Bondage became freedom.
And this we left to you as your heritage.

O generation of freedom remember us, the generation of the vision...
-Liam Mac Uistin

These lines of thankfulness for the sacrifices of generations of rebels who brought independence to Ireland in 1921 were written in an Irish poetic genre known as the *aisling*. The latter was devised in the eighteenth century as a way to express protest without drawing the heavy hand of Power's censorship. In the typical *aisling* the personified nation appears as a vision to mourn the torments of the present and augur the approaching return of providence. Liam Mac Uistin's poem evoked the solemn bequeathing of a legacy by those who envisioned freedom and struggled to achieve it to those generations, present and future, who were to enjoy its fruits. And at its heart was the invocation to remember. Such remembrance is not to be nostalgia; it is not to be a mere wistful reminiscing of the past. Instead, it is meant to serve as a powerful collective act of memorializing to galvanize a striding forward and a renovation of the past into the present and the future.

Beginning in the nineteenth century, ever since nationalism became the predominant ideological vehicle to counter colonial dominance in India, memory became apotheosized in its culture. Events, people, places, words, memory became symbolized. And memory became History; History, however, mapped out in specific ways. Memory-as-History had to perform new ideological work. In the service of nationalism, and national imagining, its labour was to secure, represent, and symbolize that which is always precariously on the verge of being lost. One such loss that needed to be captured and reversed was the oblivion that follows death. History and memory came to be mustered for the task of what Jules Michelet, the nineteenth century historian of the French Revolution, described as exhuming the dead:

... each death leaves behind a little good—its memory—and demands that we tend it... I have given to many of the dead the help that I will myself need. I have exhumed them for a second life... They now live among us... In this way is a family made, a common city [built in which dwell] the living and the dead.¹

The purpose of exhumation was the powerful one of turning these deaths into sacrifices. Whether or not they themselves had seen it as such, the Historian, speaking on behalf of the anonymous dead, re-signified their deaths as the proffering of life for the Revolutionary dream and for the 'imagined community' it produced. The dead became martyrs and their sacrifice was to be commemorated ever after for a nation—a city in which the dead and the living commune with each other—to come into being.

In India, too, nationalism partook of these innovatory elements of Europe's nationalisms. From the *Munda ulgulan* of 1900 to the massacre at Jallianwallah Bagh in 1919 and the many other fallen in anti-colonial protests, the anonymous dead were conscripted as the martyred foot soldiers of a nation-in-the-making. For Kashmiris, made double-subjects of the British empire in India and of the princely state the latter had installed under Dogra maharajas in 1846, nationalism's work of forging a nation and giving it political articulation involved taking a double step. It had to overthrow the yoke both of Dogra thraldom and of colonial dominance. Their martyrs could not be the same as those of the Indian nation. And it was 13 July 1931, not the familiar markers on the Indian independence movement's calendar, that gave Kashmiri nationalism its first sacrificial deaths for commemoration.

Srinagar, 13 July 1931

Several historians have elected this date to mark the inauguration of the ‘freedom struggle’ of Kashmiris against Dogra rule. Neither the events of that day in Srinagar nor the death toll of twenty-two demonstrators and one policeman seem so outstanding as to command remembrance when compared to contemporaneous developments in British India.² But this date was not intended to serve the fashioning of the Indian nation. In Kashmir, the date’s emblematic importance drew from the fact that it was the first time a gathering of Kashmiri Muslims had openly challenged the Dogra maharaja and his government.

The portentous events of that day had followed upon rumours, spreading since mid-1931, about the maharaja’s officials mistreating Muslims and deliberately offering insults to Islam in Jammu. The report that elicited the most vehement reaction was about a Hindu police constable who had not only prevented a Muslim subordinate from saying his prayers, but had added to this insult the injury of throwing the latter’s copy of the Qur’an to the ground. Later investigation found the account of this incident to have been exaggerated although not entirely without basis. However, it brought to a head a gathering (Footnotes) Jules Michelet, ‘Preface’, *Histoire du XIXe Siècle*, vol. 2, cited in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 198. The translation from the French is mine and is a rough one. Michelet’s excerpted original words are as follows: “...chaque mort laisse un petit bien, sa mémoire, et demande qu’on la soigne ... J’ai donné à beaucoup de morts trop oubliés l’assistance dont moi-même j’aurai besoin. Je l’ai exhumés pour une seconde vie... Ils vivent maintenant avec nous ... Ainsi se fait une famille, une cité commune entre les vivants et les morts.”

²In British India, the closing years of the 1920s, following the withdrawal of the first non-cooperation movement and the pro-Khilafat mobilization, had witnessed bloodbaths brought about by Hindus and Muslims retreating from a common struggle into their separate and hostile camps

¹ Jules Michelet, ‘Preface’, *Histoire du XIXe Siècle*, vol. 2, cited in Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 198. The translation from the French is mine and is a rough one. Michelet’s excerpted original words are as follows: “...chaque mort laisse un petit bien, sa mémoire, et demande qu’on la soigne ... J’ai donné à beaucoup de morts trop oubliés l’assistance dont moi-même j’aurai besoin. Je l’ai exhumés pour une seconde vie... Ils vivent maintenant avec nous ... Ainsi se fait une famille, une cité commune entre les vivants et les morts.”

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discontent born out of a number of factors other than the purely religious among Muslims in the state and, by the time its reports reached Srinagar, it set the stage for the unprecedented occurrences of the following days. On June 25th, Abdul Qadir, identified by some as a Pathan and others as a Punjabi servant of a European vacationing in Kashmir, made an inflammatory speech at a meeting held in a Srinagar ‘mosque’¹ that condemned the Dogra maharaja and ‘incit[ed] his hearers to kill Hindus and burn their temples’. He was promptly arrested. A general impression created by accounts of subsequent events was of an unprovoked attack led by Srinagar Muslims against hapless Hindus. However, contrary to later reconstructions of the events of the day, Kashmiri Pandits and other Hindus, shaken by the expression of such hostile sentiments as those of Qadir, had not been sitting by idly as unwitting victims of a carnage-about-to-happen either. They had been disseminating their own set of rumours to rally other co-religionists into action. One such, spreading like wildfire—and indicating the fear felt by a ‘minority’ that had until then enjoyed security of power that they were in danger of possibly losing ground in the state to an increasingly vocal Muslim ‘majority’—was that the Dogra ruler was about to lift the state-wide prohibition on cow slaughter.² And were this to come about, it would have been no mean concession since the ban defined the identity of the state as one in which Hindu religious tradition enjoyed primacy. Thus, in the days preceding the fateful date of ‘martyrdom’, segments of both the Hindu and Muslim populations in Kashmir were raising their defences and the situation was moving inexorably towards a confrontation.

On July 13th, when Abdul Qadir was to be tried at the Central Jail in Srinagar, a crowd had attempted to enter the penitentiary to protest his prosecution. Retaliating, the police fired into the gathering that then scattered and went on a 'rampage' in Srinagar city. In Maharajgunj, a quarter of Srinagar inhabited predominantly by Kashmiri Pandits and Punjabi Hindu traders, 'crowds of Mohammadan hooligans' attacked shops, looted large quantities of goods and 'committed indiscriminate assaults'. The British Resident in Kashmir had reported that 'there had...recently [been] much discussion among Mohammadans [in Kashmir] about their grievances against the comparatively small Hindu community...which, as a result of a mistaken policy of many years standing, ha[d] been allowed to monopolize most of the appointments in the State' (emphasis added). Yet, the Resident confessed that 'no one [had] for a moment suspected than [sic] any danger was to be feared in the city of Srinagar'. Evidently taken by surprise by the overt 'activism' of the Kashmiri Muslims, the maharaja's government devised makeshift and quick fix solutions. Relying on the tested strategy of his predecessor, Maharaja Hari Singh 'received a deputation of all the leading Muslims of the city' with a view to removing their apprehensions. Meeting with the ruler, members of these eminent Muslims assured him of their 'unfaltering loyalty'. However, as the Resident suggested, the greatest difficulty the maharaja would have to face would come, not from the small Kashmiri.

¹ I understand this may have been the Khanqah-i-Muauila (Shah-e-Hamadan) shrine.

² R/1/1/2064, Crown Representative's Reports (Political Department), Maharaja Hari Singh's Message, dated 9 July 1931, IOL.

Muslim élite but, from the public disapproval of his policies freely expressed in British India and particularly in Punjab.¹

The events of July 1931 had catapulted a number of new actors onto the political stage of Kashmir each seeking to capitalize on the momentum of Muslim restiveness unleashed through these incidents. A younger generation of Muslim politicians led by Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah and aiming at broad social bases of mobilization was pitted against the older and more socially exclusive, élite leadership of the Jama Masjid Mirwaiz and others. These Kashmiris were joined in their competition for the leadership of Muslims in the valley, by two rival sets of interests from the Punjab represented by the Ahmediyas and the Ahrars. By mid-August 1931, the Resident was already reporting on dissatisfaction among Kashmiri Muslims being fuelled by letters from Muslim organizations from outside the state urging them to keep up their agitation. Under such prompting, Kashmiri Muslims led by Sheikh Abdullah had refused to meet with the Maharaja on August 6th, 1931, aiming to 'procrastinate' until August 14th.² The latter date had been declared 'Kashmir Day' throughout 'Muhammedan centres in British India' by the Kashmir Committee formed only a week after the killings of July 13th and supported by large numbers of the valley's Muslims long settled in the Punjab.

In the aftermath of July 13th, and viewing with trepidation the bleeding of political protest across their carefully demarcated and vigilantly policed borders between the Punjab and the Dogra state, the British colonial government of India exercised its prerogative as paramount power to appoint a commission, working under the direction of B. J. Glancy, to examine the grievances that had caused the disturbances. Its report of 1932 included a powerful indictment of the Kashmir durbar's partisan functioning in favour of its Hindu subjects to the neglect of Muslims. Strikingly, the report had also invalidated the principle of 'first peoples' on the basis of which the Dogras and Pandits had re-imagined Kashmir as 'originally' Hindu. Glancy's report provided a corrective to nearly a century of marginalizing the largest number of the Kashmir state's subjects. Through its many recommendations, it re-inscribed Muslims into their history and region. And, perhaps unconsciously, it also redefined the contemporary territory of Kashmir — no matter what lay beneath its historical layers — as Muslim. From hereon, the challenge gathered a momentum that would end with stripping the legitimacy of the Dogra princes to rule over Kashmiris. Over the following decade, this newly 'grounded' assertiveness extended into a wider struggle for the fulfilment of a spectrum of economic and political demands that culminated in the unravelling of Dogra sovereignty itself in 1947.

Remembering Martyrs' Day, 1947 to the Present

Days of commemoration are not themselves beyond History. Acts of remembrance are always intended to the serve the construction of the present, even as their legitimating meaningfulness is seen as extending into the limitless future. Whereas, 13 July 1931 was conspicuously memorialized ever since it was marked by death

symbolized as sacrifice, until 1947 it had been annexed to the struggle against the Dogra monarchy. After 1947, it came to be marshalled for

¹Ibid.From the Resident in Kashmir, dated 17 July 1931 & From the Resident in Kashmir, dated 3 August 1931.

²Ibid.From the Resident in Kashmir, dated 17 August 1931.

quite a different need in Kashmir; that of nation building. Indeed History-as-Memory can be seen as a defining sign of the period extending from 1947 to the present, bookended by a freedom insufficiently achieved through its being made subservient to Indian nationalism, on the one hand, and a final break with India's unmet democratic promises through militant rejection on the other.

Barely fifteen years after B.J. Glancy's remedial steps had finally reinstated Kashmiri Muslims into their homeland, this recognition of their claims to Kashmir's soil was overwhelmed by the assertion of Indian nationalism's sole claim to the territory of the entirety of the subcontinent—that which remained after the carving out of Pakistan—from Kashmir to Kanyakumari. Indeed, since independence in India, there has been a steady recycling and circulation of the rhetoric of vivisection derived from partition narratives, of memories of the bloodbath that accompanied that division, of hyperbolically expressed fears of another partition/balkanization and of a 'total disintegration of India'. These have served to reinforce dramatically both the idea of the nation as geobody and of its parts as 'atoot ang'. And secessionist sentiments and movements in Tamil Nadu and the North-east so soon after the Indian nation had allegedly come into its own, only aggravated this nationalist anxiety. In these circumstances, any arrant expression of regional pride was deemed suspect but especially so when emanating from a province whose inclusion in the union was contingent and codicillary. July 13th would continue to be celebrated but would have to be conceptually subordinated to 15th August (and in the Kashmir across the border to 14th August).

But within Kashmir, there was still the urgent need for a commemoration with salience for its people. This was especially so since in the minds of its people the accession of Kashmir to the Indian union was far from being a settled matter. After 1947, Sheikh Abdullah's nation-building program rested on his economic reform program, 'Naya Kashmir', and the ideological construct of *Kashmiriyat*, a regional mirroring of Nehruvian secularism in India, that asserted that being Kashmiri was more important than being Hindu or Muslim. The National Conference now appropriated Martyrs' Day, which had in any event come to be associated with the Sher-e-Kashmir since 1931, even more firmly as its special day. However the party also grew increasingly centralized and intolerant of internal dissent as the first euphoria of snatching freedom from the Dogras began to show, by the 1950s, signs of celebration fatigue. Indeed the more intense the challenges—both external and internal—to its hegemony grew, the greater reliance it placed on jubilation, ovation, commemoration and memorialisation of that day in July now long gone to bolster the legitimacy of its dominance. As one Kashmiri, Mohammad Ashraf, growing up in those decades recalls in his blog, "the memory we have from our school days is of the massive turnout and a colourful tribute paid to these martyrs on this day every year. Every locality would send its own procession. There used to be an official procession of smartly dressed policemen who would pay a formal tribute to the martyrs."¹

¹ 'Back to 1931!' <http://www.kashmirfirst.com/articles/politics/100717-back-to-1931.htm> (last accessed July 6, 2011)

Yet national day celebrations are a poor substitute for effective governance. As the National Conference showed increasing signs of corruption and authoritarian overbearance, Ghulam Ahmad Mahjoor, one time poet laureate of Abdullah's brand of *Kashmiriyat*-informed nationalism, now delivered a powerful indictment of the redacted version of freedom that had become Kashmir's lot. '...Poverty and starvation, Repression and lawlessness, It is with these happy blessings, That she has come to us' he wrote. As time passed and the workings of human memory, in holding the past together, proved increasingly wanting, the commemorated date became a fertile ground for contest over what the past of subject and community meant. In any case, it has to be remembered that July 13th could not have universal appeal in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Dogra Jammu could

not find much cause for exultation in that date and even in the valley the memory was tarnished for Kashmiri Pandits by recollections of the attacks on their community that was also part of that day's happenings.

In 1975, the Indian centre headed by a particularly authoritarian Indira Gandhi had released a chastened Sheikh Abdullah from his long incarceration in jail, forcing the Delhi Accord on him and de-fanging the politics of independence for Kashmir he had championed on and off ever since the accession. And along with this capitulation and quiescence its celebration of Martyr's Day became a more tempered affair. As Ashraf recalls for us, 'the processions were continued on a grand scale till 1975 when there was a u-turn in the movement. The official tribute continued even after that date but on a smaller scale. The common people would go on their own to offer fateh to the martyrs as they were considered the pioneers who had in reality started the movement, which was still going on!' Thus, as the National Conference became entirely the party of the status quo after 1975, there was also a clear disjuncture between what July 13th came to signify for the party and for the people. To the point that Sheikh Abdullah's grave itself needed to be sequestered from the wrath of those of his people who hold him and his political successors as traitors. And more recently, with the National Conference-led state government's even more tightened pact of convenience and dependence with Delhi, the official celebration has become a positively furtive affair. Last year, in the bloody summer of 2010, when the violence of Indian security forces had already begun reaping martyrs from among protestors armed only with stones, if at all—many of them so young they could not have been conscious of the nature of their 'sacrifices'—the government had moved so far from its citizenry that it could mark this chief day of popular remembrance only through anti-popular seclusive celebration. Referring one last time to Mohammad Ashraf, he writes that on that Martyrs' Day last year, the 'leaders did not even stay for the customary speech. They very quickly laid wreaths and showered flower petals on the graves...The entire area had been turned into a virtual prison...The entire city had been put under curfew...[and] For the first time common Kashmiris were prevented from offering fateh on the Mazar-i-Shuda [Martyrs' Graveyard]'.

This year, it looks like it is going to be more of the same. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the Hurriyat conference, had announced last Friday, his intention of leading a peaceful procession from the Jama Masjid to the Martyrs' graveyard on July 13th in commemoration of the day and as a renewal of the pledge to continue the struggle for the liberation of Kashmir. However, a day before Martyrs' Day, on July 12th, the state government has placed him and other pro-azadi leaders under house arrest. Will this be yet another year of a national celebration cloistered from the attendance of the nation? Will it be another secretive marking by so-called popular leaders of government too afraid to afford any communion with their people?

Whereas in the decades immediately following 1947, July 13th could still be remembered with buoyancy and hope, after 1989 it had become the subject of elegy. As optimism yielded to a pervading loss, as thousands of Kashmiris filled the hundreds of martyrs' graveyards dug up in a frenzy to bury the mounting numbers of the dead, the symbolism of grief took over and pathologized memory. There were few more eloquent voices to emerge from the turmoil of the 1990s than that of Agha Shahid Ali. His laments for the dead became the collective expression of Kashmiri grief. Encoding a powerful challenge to oppression within his verses, History and Memory were sundered from each other. Memory became the weapon of the dominated to confront History, the instrument of the dominant.

And after 1990, no memory and memorialisation of Kashmir's past could properly ignore a gaping hole in its society. As the valley was vacated of its most important minority of the Kashmiri Pandits, the memory of Martyrs' Day came to be partitioned. One particularly acerbic denunciation of the remembrance of that date pitched very recently from the ranks of Roots in Kashmir, a radical organization with Hindu-supremacist links that claims to represent Pandits in exile, even seeks to recuperate for glorification the unrepresentative monarchy that had been resisted in 1931. It characterizes Maharaja Hari Singh as a 'patriot' and the offending Abdul Qadir as an accomplice in a British conspiracy to dislodge him.¹ Other Pandit expressions of loss and exile have been less polemically delivered and less compromised in their stand on a common future in Kashmir.² They are for that reason also more poignant. In these instances, the memories of individual Pandits returned

continually to retrieve a form of historical remembrance that located and supported communities of marginalized victims. And their striving found an echoing response in the poetry of Agha Shahid Ali; a lyrical recalling of the departures in which pointed divisions were sought to be dissolved in a narrative of shared suffering, extending history into the memories of those who were excluded.

Again I've returned to this country
where a minaret has been entombed
...each house buried or empty
Empty? Because so many fled, ran
and became refugees there, in the plain
where they must now will a final dewfall
to turn the mountains to glass. They'll see
us through them—see us frantically bury
houses to save them from fire that, like a wall,

¹<http://kashmiris-in-exile.blogspot.com/2010/07/13-july-1931-in-pages-of-history.html> (last accessed July 6, 2011)

² One such example is Siddhartha Gigoo's recent novel *The Garden of Solitude* (New Delhi: Rupa, 2011)

caves in. The soldiers light it, hone the flames,
burn our world to sudden papier-mâché

Thus spoke the poet of the fractured present but with the entreaty to remember those departed; both the dead
and the exiled.

AGING AND DEPRESSION: A QUEST FOR FINDING LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

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Population aging is an important demographic phenomenon worldwide that warrants a well-organized program structure dealing with the significant impact of aging on the elderly population in particular and the society at large. Aging is associated not only with physical disabilities but also mental seclusion that may arise due to social isolation ultimately leading to mood disorders and clinical signs of depression. Further, aging comes with its own menace of neuronal loss, the most important cells in the brain and slow neurogenesis (the process of making more neurons) that may play an important role in this age-related depression. Hence identification of signature markers that may delay neuronal loss or enhance neurogenesis during aging is urgently required.

Recent studies report the inefficacies of anti-depressant drugs to handle multiple rounds of depression or the unwanted side effects which may become a burden to the elderly patients. This makes it extremely important to explore novel molecular targets in the pathways to neuronal damage and how they can help in the proper management of depression-like symptoms associated with aging. For decades, monoamines like serotonins have been the primary focus of study in several models of depression. However, studies have failed to find a consistent correlation between brain serotonin levels and depression. Furthermore, anti-depressants targeting these monoamines usually take longer to be effective and come with a variety of side effects and coming off the anti-depressant may have withdrawal symptoms. This may pose a major health hazard in the elderly and thus we come back to the question as to how to prevent or delay neuronal loss as we age which may help identify ways to combat these severe signs of depression.

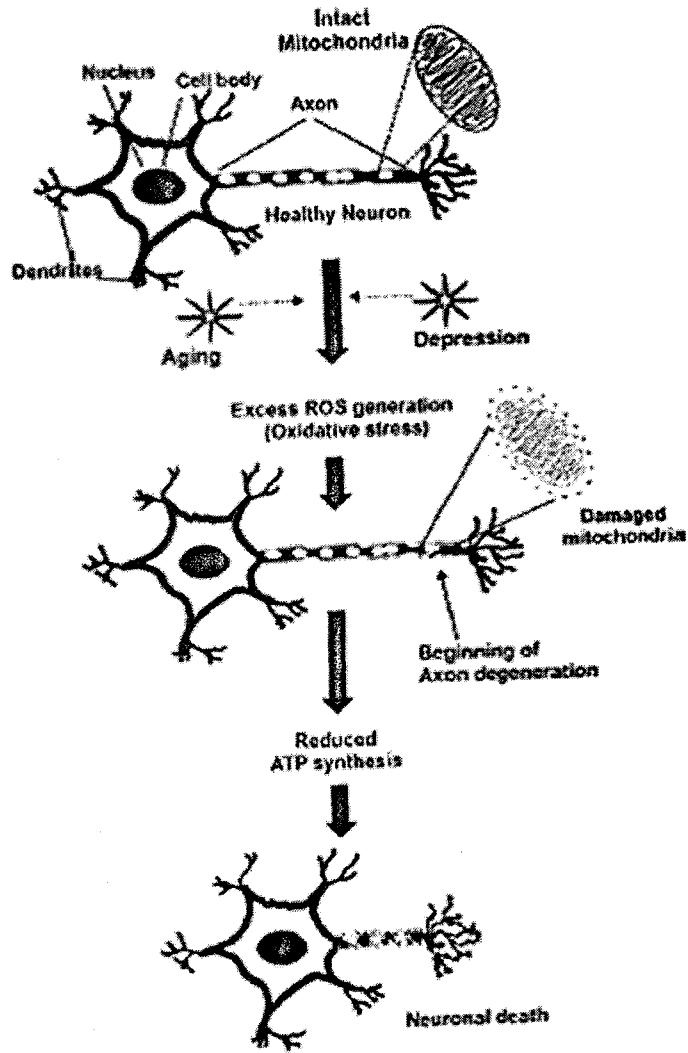
Complexity of the cellular signaling network and the heterogeneity of different brain regions which are affected differentially in these mood disorders makes it extremely difficult to find any one simple solution to these problems. Mitochondria are the energy coin of a cell and loss of its function in metabolically active cells like the neurons results in energy crisis ultimately leading to neuronal death. Hence, mitochondria that affect diverse cellular functions such as metabolism, respiration and also cellular death could be a potential target in this regard. So an in-depth analysis of mitochondrial homeostasis may provide important clues as to how stress may contribute to the development of irritability and depression as we age and also help identify viable targets to offer a roadmap of healthy aging. However, the role of mitochondria in clinical depression is underappreciated and only recently researchers across the globe have started thinking beyond the monoamine oxidases or MAO.

So how mitochondria may be linked to this phenomenon of depression? The 'free radical theory of aging' suggests increased accumulation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) in the aging brain and quite intriguingly studies have also indicated that oxidative stress may play an important role in neuronal death that may lead to volume reduction in the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex regions of the brain. However, the complex role of these free radicals in the etiology of depression is not well understood. The regulation of mitochondrial energy metabolism has generated enthusiasm in recent times in understanding how it regulates neuronal viability in the aging population. An attractive target in such a study is the innate adaptor molecule SARM1, which induces neuronal death and has been shown to regulate excess ROS generation in the neurons, the mechanism of which is poorly understood. Our Laboratory is working on SARM1 as a key regulator of age-related depression through the regulation of mitochondrial metabolism and altering the critical balance of ATP synthesis and accumulation of ROS (See Figure).

Understanding the cellular and molecular mechanisms of neuronal changes associated with aging and how it may lead to clinical depression may open future avenues for combination therapies alongside anti-depressant for a faster and more effective treatment. Utilizing an integrated approach of genetic, molecular and biochemical techniques, a novel insight into mitochondrial bioenergetics in the aging brain may open future prospects in

developing a common route of therapeutics applicable across a broad spectrum of age-related depressive disorders.

So indeed there is hope for light at the end of the tunnel, we just need to identify the roads that lead to it and hence the scientific quest must go on.



মল্লার যখন নামে

শাওন নন্দী

সহকারী অধ্যাপক, বাংলা বিভাগ

বৃষ্টি ফিরে যাবার পরে
যদি তোমার একলা ঘরে
হাওয়ার রেণু ওড়ায় চুপে বৃষ্টি

ফেলে আসা ছবির টানে
নিমেষ বোঝে জলের মানে
মেঘের থেকে উঠে দাঁড়ায় দৃষ্টি ---

বৃষ্টি কেঁদে যাবার আগে
যে ঘর বড় একলা লাগে
সে ঘর শুধু ভিজে মাটির গন্ধ ...

অথচ এই নতুন চোখে
আপন লাগে অসহ্যকে
দামাল হাওয়া মাতায় ভেজা ছন্দ !

বৃষ্টি ডেকে যাবার সাথে
তুমি নিজের অসাম্প্রদায়িক
ভেজা পথের চলায় রাখো চিহ্ন ...

মুঠোয় ভরো বাজের বাঁশি
যে রোখে এক সর্বগ্রাসী
ঝাপট এসে শিকড়-ও নির্বিঘ্না

আত্ম-অনুসন্धानে এক পদাতিক

মলয় রক্ষিত; অধ্যাপক; বাংলা বিভাগ

‘প্রিয় ফুল খেলবার দিন নয় অদ্য/ধ্বংসের মুখোমুখি আমরা’- ‘মে দিনের কবিতা’-র এই স্পষ্ট উচ্চারণ কিংবা ‘সকলের গান’ কবিতায়-‘কমরেড, আজ নবযুগ আনবে না?’-র আর্তি পদাতিক-এর কবি সুভাষের অন্য সমস্ত পরিচিতিতে গৌণ করে প্রধানতম আইডেন্টিটি হয়ে উঠেছে। উনিশ শো তিরিশ ও চল্লিশের উত্তাল সময়ে একজন বাঙালি ছাত্রের পক্ষে কমিউনিস্ট রাজনীতিতে জড়িত হওয়া বেশ স্বাভাবিক ঘটনাই। সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায় বামপন্থী রাজনীতিতে জড়িয়ে পড়েছিলেন আর পাঁচজন বাঙালি ছাত্রের মতোই-মিছিল, সভা, পোস্টার সাঁটার মধ্যে দিয়ে। যাকে আমরা বলি মেঠো কর্মী-সুভাষ ছিলেন তাই। পদাতিক লেখা হয়েছিল ঐ সময়েই। একুশ বছরের ডাকাবুকো এক যুবক, দ্বিতীয় বিশ্বযুদ্ধের করাল ছায়া, সাম্রাজ্যবাদের নির্লজ্জ দাপাদাপি আর তাঁর বিরুদ্ধে সমস্ত গুণা আর আবেগ উজাড় করে দেওয়া। অসম লড়াই এর সৈনিক ঐ একুশের কবি যে ভাষায় ও ভঙ্গিতে বলেন-‘প্রিয় ফুল খেলবার দিন নয় অদ্য’- তাতে আসলে এক অন্য আবেগেরই প্রকাশ। ‘পদাতিক’-এ ‘রোমান্টিক’ বলে একটা কবিতা আছে, আমরা সবাই পড়েছি,-‘চোখ বুজে কোনো কোকিলের দিকে ফেরাবো কান’-তথাকথিত রোমান্টিক সাহিত্যিকদের প্রতি এই শ্লেষণর্ভ বাক্য যতই তীক্ষ্ণ হক, সুভাষ নিজেও এই রোমান্টিকতা থেকে মুক্ত ছিলেন না। কেননা নবযুগ নিয়ে আসার যে স্বপ্ন বাসনা কমরেডরা তখন দেখছেন, তাতে ততখানি সংগঠিত গণ প্রতিরোধের জোর নেই বরং আবেগের উল্লাসই রয়েছে বেশি। মুক্তির বাসনাও যে তখন ‘বাল্যখিল্য স্বপ্ন’ এ সত্য সুভাষ অচিরেই বুঝেছিলেন।

এই বুঝে ওঠার কাজটাই হয়েছিল চল্লিশের দশক জুড়ে দশকের শুরুতে লেবার পার্টির সদস্য হিসাবে খিদিরপুরে ডক শ্রমিকদের নিয়ে সংগঠনের কাজকর্ম করা, এরপর কমিউনিস্ট পার্টিতে সক্রিয় ভাবে চলে আসা ও ১৯৪২-এ পার্টির সদস্যপদ লাভ। ফ্যাসিবিরোধী লেখক ও শিল্পী সঙ্ঘের যুগ্ম সম্পাদক হিসাবে বিষ্ণু দে’র সঙ্গে দায়িত্ব সামলেছেন। কমিউনিস্ট পার্টির সাংগঠনিক ভাবে তখন স্বর্ণযুগ চলছে পি সি যোশীর নেতৃত্বে। আর বাংলায় সোমনাথ লাহিড়ীর স্নেহচ্ছায় বেড়ে উঠছেন সুভাষ। পাশাপাশি তিনি পড়ছেন হুইটম্যান, মায়াকোভস্কি। পার্টির কাজকর্ম ও পড়াশোনার মধ্যে দিয়েই তো তাত্ত্বিক কমিউনিস্ট হওয়ার সুযোগ থাকে। সুভাষের কাছে সে সুযোগ এলেও তিনি যে তাত্ত্বিক কমিউনিস্ট হয়ে উঠলেন না তার বড় কারণ তাঁর গ্রাম পরিক্রমা।

পার্টির সাপ্তাহিক মুখপত্র ‘জনযুদ্ধ’-এ রিপোর্টাজ লিখতে গিয়ে তাঁকে প্রায় নির্দেশ দিলেন সোমনাথ লাহিড়ী। বাংলাদেশের উত্তর থেকে দক্ষিণ, অসংখ্য গ্রাম আর শিল্পাঞ্চলে সরেজমিনে কখনও মাইলের পর মাইল হেঁটে, কখনও ট্রেনে, বাসে বা নৌকায় চেপে তিনি ঘুরেছেন বাংলার গ্রামগঞ্জে। ফসলের খেত থেকে রুখা ডাঙ্গায়, বানভাসি নাবাল কয়লাখনির খাদে কিংবা চটকলে-পাটকলে। সারা বাংলা জুড়ে এই সরেজমিন পরিক্রমা সুভাষের জীবন কে দেখবার, রাজনীতি বুঝবার অন্য এক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী এনে দিল। ‘আমার বাংলা’ ও ‘যখন যেখানে’ কবি সুভাষের জীবনের খুব বড় অধ্যায়া। চল্লিশের শুরুতে পার্টির সর্বক্ষণ কর্মী এক সদ্য যুবক কলকাতার উত্তাল রাজনীতিতে ঘুরপাক খেতে খেতে যেভাবে বড় হয়ে ওঠেন, সাংগঠনিক কলাকৌশলে, তাত্ত্বিকতার সাম্প্রতিক দূরত্বে যেভাবে ‘পাক্ষা রাজনীতিক’ হয়ে ওঠেন, আমাদের সৌভাগ্য সুভাষের ক্ষেত্রে তা হয়নি। ঐ গ্রাম পরিক্রমা তাঁর চোখ খুলে দিল, যেন চোখ রগড়ে আসলে এক অদৃশ্য লেন্স তাঁর দৃষ্টি কে ক্রমশ আচ্ছন্ন করছিল। মাটিবিচ্ছিন্ন, শিকড়হীন মধ্যবিত্তের নাগরিক চেতনা, আত্মবোধের স্বাতন্ত্র্য ও সংগঠনসর্বস্বরাজনীতির খপ্পর থেকে সুভাষ বেড়িয়ে আসতে পারলেন ওই গ্রাম পরিক্রমার জন্যই।

এই সময়েই পাটিতে রনদিভের স্টিমরোলার চলছিল, ১৯৪৮-এ পাটি নিষিদ্ধ হওয়ার পর দু দফায় প্রায় আড়াই বছর সুভাষ জেলে বন্দী। ওই আড়াই বছরের জেল জীবনে গ্রাম পরিক্রমার স্মৃতি ও পূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতার জারন তাঁকে ভিতরে ভিতরে আত্মদ্বন্দ্ব জর্জরিত করেছিল। ‘হাংরাস’ উপন্যাসে ওই আত্মদ্বন্দ্ব—প্রশ্ন থেকে পরিপ্রশ্ন, তর্ক থেকে প্রতর্ক উপন্যাসের কুশীলবকে ক্ষতবিক্ষত করেছিল। যেন সেই সব প্রশ্ন-পরিপ্রশ্ন আর যুক্তিতর্কের মধ্যে থেকে সুভাষ খুঁজে নিতে চাইছিলেন কী তাঁর আইডেনটিটি ওই পদাতিক বা চিরকূট-এর বিপ্লবী কবি তিনি? সেই পথেই কি পাওয়া যাবে কাঙ্ক্ষিত মুক্তি? রাজনৈতিক স্বাধীনতা? এই কি তবে বিপ্লবী কবির ভবিষ্য পথ, তাঁর একমাত্র আইডেনটিটি- তিনি পদাতিকের কবি চিরকূট-এর কবি মাত্র?

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জেলে থাকাকালীন সুভাষ কিছু লেখেননি, সেটা “বিপ্লবটা আগে সেরে নিই”- এই ভেবে নয়, তখনও তিনি ওই সম্ভাব্য আত্মপরিচয়টা খুঁজে পাননি। পাটি এবং তন্ত্র-এর বাইরে স্বতন্ত্র রাজনৈতিক বোধ-এর সন্ধান তিনি তখনও পান নি। জেল থেকে ছাড়া পাওয়ার পড়ে পরিচয় পত্রিকার সম্পাদনার দায়িত্ব এবং গীতা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়ের সাথে বিবাহের পর ১৯৫২-র মে থেকে ১৯৫৪-র শেষ-দু বছরেরও বেশি সময় সুভাষ সশ্রীক চলে গেলেন বঙ্গবজের ব্যঞ্জন হেড়িয়া—তেলকলের মজুরদের সঙ্গে বসবাস করতো গ্রাম পরিক্রমার অভিজ্ঞতা থেকে এই শ্রমিক বস্তিতে মুসলমান শ্রমিকদের জীবনকাটানো-সুভাষের আর এক পুনর্জন্ম। এতদিন যে প্রশ্ন-পরিপ্রশ্নে তিনি ক্ষত বিক্ষত হচ্ছিলেন আইডেনটিটির ক্রাইসিসে ভুগছিলেন-এবার কি তবে সেটা মিটল? কী বললেন সুভাষ সেই জীবন পর্বের অভিজ্ঞতায়ঃ

আন্দোলন করেছি, রাজনীতি করেছি, কিন্তু লেখা আমি শুরু করলাম এর পরে জেল থেকে বেড়িয়ে-যখন আমি বাঙ্গালী চটকল শ্রমিকদের গ্রামে গিয়ে থাকলাম। শ্রমিকদের আন্দোলন করতে করতেই আমার চারপাশের জীবন আমাকে লেখার দিকে ঠেলে দিল।...খুব বেশি শব্দের মধ্যে ডুবে থাকলে শব্দের পিছনে যে বস্তুর জগৎ সেটা অনেক সময় ফিকে হয়ে আসে। সেইজন্যে তখন লেখকের মনে হয়, যে বস্তু নিয়ে আমি লিখছি, শব্দ যে-বস্তুর প্রতীক সেই বস্তুগুলোকে যদি আমি বদলাতে না পারি, তার চেহারা যদি পালটাতে না পারি তাহলে লেখার কোনো মানে হয়না। কিন্তু এও তো ঠিক যে, লেখার ভিতর দিয়েও বস্তুকে বদলানোর খানিকটা আগ্রহ আমরা ফুটিয়ে তুলতে পারি...কিন্তু শুধু লেখা নয়, জীবনের সঙ্গে যদি বারবার নিজের সম্পর্ককে হাতে কলমে ঝালিয়ে নেওয়া না যায়, তাহলে শব্দগুলো নিছক আওয়াজ হয়ে উঠে লেখককে খানিকটা দমিয়ে দেয়। তখন তার শ্রেফ পালিয়ে যেতে ইচ্ছে করে লেখার জগৎ থেকে। আমার মনে হয় বারবার এই লেখার জগৎ এবং কাজের জগৎ, তার মধ্যে আসা যাওয়ার ভেতর দিয়ে আমরা দুটোকেই সজীব রাখতে পারি।

[কালপুরুষ, শীত ১৩৮৪ ; সূত্র বোঝাপড়া]

‘কালপুরুষ’ পত্রিকাকে দেওয়া এই সাক্ষাৎকারের ভিতর দিয়ে কবি সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের সাহিত্যতত্ত্ব ভাবনার খানিক পরিচয়ও আমরা পাই। আমরা জানি ততদিনে বাংলার প্রগতি লেখক সংঘের পাটলাইন সাহিত্যচর্চার বিরুদ্ধে জেহাদ শুরু হয়ে গেছে। একদিকে যেমন মার্কসবাদী পত্রিকায় ভবানী সেন সাহিত্যিকদের কেমন ভাবে লিখতে হবে তার তালিকা পেশ করেছেন, অন্যদিকে মানিক বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় ‘বাংলা প্রগতি সাহিত্যের আত্মসমালোচনা’ প্রবন্ধ সাহিত্যসৃষ্টি বিষয়ে, পাটির আমলাতান্ত্রিক ফতোয়ার বিরুদ্ধে তাঁর মত প্রকাশ করেছেন। কবি বিষ্ণু দে তারও বছর তিনেক আগে ১৯৪৭-এ রজের গরোদির ‘আর্টিস্ট উইদাউট ট্রাউজারস’—এর বাংলা অনুবাদ ‘উর্দিহীন শিল্পী’ লিখে অরুণি পত্রিকায় প্রকাশ করেছেন। পাটলাইন সাহিত্যের বিরুদ্ধে এভাবেই তাঁর আত্মপক্ষের সমর্থন খুঁজছেন বিষ্ণু দে। সাহিত্যভাবনা বিষয়ে পাটলাইনের বিরোধিতা সুভাষ

করেননি বটে কিন্তু দীর্ঘ গ্রাম পরিক্রমা ও ব্যঞ্জন হেড়িয়ার শ্রমিক বস্তিতে দুবছরের বসবাসের অভিজ্ঞতা তাঁর সাহিত্যচিন্তায় যে গভীর পরিবর্তন এনেছিল সেটা উল্লেখিত সাক্ষাৎকারে স্পষ্ট বোঝা যায়। তিনি মোটেও শিল্পীর স্বাধীনতা নিয়ে পাটলাইনের বিরোধিতায় যাচ্ছেন না, বরং ‘বস্তু’ আর বস্তুর প্রতীক ‘শব্দ’-এর পারস্পরিক দ্বন্দ্বিক সম্পর্কের রসায়নকে বোঝার চেষ্টা করেছেন। বার-বার ব্যবহৃত শব্দকে তার জীর্ণতা থেকে বাঁচাতে গেলে সেই বস্তুকেই পালটাতে হয়। এই বস্তুকে পালটানো, বদলানো-এ শুধু বিপ্লবের কাজ নয়, কলমের কাজও বটে। কিন্তু পুঁথি পড়া বিদ্যে দিয়ে, তত্ত্ব দিয়ে সেই কাজ করা যায় না, তার জন্য প্রয়োজন লেখকের জনসংযোগ। জীবনের সঙ্গে বারবার নিজের সম্পর্ককে হাতেকলমে ঝালিয়ে নেওয়া, ‘যাচাই করা অভিজ্ঞতা’র মধ্যে দিয়ে বস্তুকে চেনা, তবেই একজন কবি পারেন বস্তুকে তার কলমের জোরে বদলাতে, পালটাতে। এতে সাহিত্য যেমন সজীব ও গতিশীল হয়ে ওঠে, বস্তুও তেমনি সাহিত্যের সংস্পর্শে প্রানবন্ত হয়।

কবি হিসেবে সুভাষের উত্তরণ এখানেই। কলমের জোরে বস্তুকে পালটানো, শব্দ আর বস্তু- দুটোকেই সজীব রাখবার ক্ষমতা আয়ত্ত করেছেন তিনি ওই যাচাই করা অভিজ্ঞতার মধ্যে দিয়ে। এইবোধ ও অভিজ্ঞতার জারণ আশ্চর্যজনক ভাবে দেখা গেল এই সময়ে লেখা ফুল ফুটুক-এর বেশ কিছু কবিতায়। ‘সালেমনের মা’ কবিতায় ‘বাবরালির চোখের মত আকাশ’ দেখতে পান। ‘জয়মনি, স্থির হও’ কবিতার সেই অবিস্মরণীয় পঙক্তিঃ ‘আমি জটায় বাঁধছি বেদনার আকাশগঙ্গা’। ‘এখন ভাবনা’ কবিতায় তিনি দেখতে পান ‘হিরণ্যগর্ভ দিন/হাতে লক্ষ্মীর ঝাঁপি নিয়ে আসছে’ আর ‘গুচ্ছ গুচ্ছ ধানের মধ্যে দাঁড়িয়ে’ কবি দেখতে পান তাঁর বলিষ্ঠ দুটো হাত। কে ভুলতে পারে ‘সালেমনের মা’-র অসামান্য চিত্রময় পংক্তিগুলিকে। কিংবা আইবুড়ো কালোকুচ্ছিত মেয়ের আত্মগত ভাবনার অসাধারণ কবিতা ‘ফুল ফুটুক না ফুটুক’। এই সমস্ত কবিতার মধ্যে দিয়েই তো সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের কবি সত্তার উত্তরণ।

অথচ এই উত্তরণের সময় থেকেই সুভাষ পাটি নেতৃত্বের চক্ষুশূল হয়ে উঠছেন। শব্দ ঘোষ তাঁর একটি লেখায় শুনিয়েছেন দু-একটি অভিজ্ঞতার কথা। পরিচয় পত্রিকায় ফুলফুটুক পর্যায়েরই একটি কবিতা প্রকাশের পর সোমনাথ লাহিড়ী সেই কবিতা পড়ে বিরক্ত মুখে পত্রিকাটি ছুঁড়ে দিচ্ছেন। কিংবা মধ্য ঘাট –এ দেবীপ্রসাদ চট্টোপাধ্যায় সুভাষের কবিতা পড়ে অনুযোগ করেন-‘এসব আজকাল কী লিখছে সুভাষ!’ অনুযোগ শুধু কবিতা নিয়ে নয়, মার্কস-এর ওয়েজ লেবার অ্যান্ড ক্যাপিটাল অবলম্বনে মার্কসীয় অর্থনীতির কথাগুলোকে যখন তিনি সহজ বাংলায় লিখছেন ভূতেরবেগার, পাটি সে কাজকে অনুমোদন করে না। ক্রমশ পাটি সম্পর্কে সুভাষের মোহ ভাঙছিল। ১৯৬২-র চিন-ভারত যুদ্ধের পাটির ভাঙন হয়তো তাঁকে সাংগঠনিক ভাবে কিছুটা দূরে নিয়ে গিয়েছিল। সুভাষ ততদিনে খুঁজে পেয়েছেন তাঁর কাজের আত্মপরিচয়।

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যাচাই করা অভিজ্ঞতার পথ ধরেই সুভাষ পৌঁছেছেন কবিতার চূড়ান্ত শিল্প সাফল্যে। যত দূরে যাই এবং কাল মধু মাস বোধকরি তাঁর শ্রেষ্ঠ সৃষ্টি। ‘কমিউনিস্ট পাটি আমাকে তন্নতন্ন করে দেখার চোখ দিয়েছে, অন্ধকারে ঝাঁপ দেবার সাহস জুগিয়েছে, লাগসই শব্দ দিয়ে আমার মুখে সচিত্র বোল ফুটিয়েছে’- ১৯৮০ তে করা এই স্বীকারোক্তি, যে বছর তিনি পাটির

সদস্যপদ আর নবীকরন করছেন না (আনন্দবাজার ৩০/৮/১৯৮০)। সুভাষ যে বাঙালি মধ্যবিত্তের বিপ্লব-বিলাসী রাজনীতির কারবারি হয়ে ওঠেননি, বরং মাটিলগ্ন বাস্তব ছুঁয়ে বুঝেছেন জীবন আর রাজনীতির দ্বান্দ্বিক সম্পর্কের রসায়ন, এর জন্য তিনি পাটির কাছেই কৃতজ্ঞ। পাটির হাত ধরে অথচ পাটিলাইন অতিক্রম করেই সুভাষ তাঁর নিজস্ব আইডেন্টিটি খুঁজে পেয়েছেন। বুঝেছেন রাজনীতি আর জীবন, জীবন আর কবিতা আর রাজনীতি- এরা পরস্পর সংলগ্ন। আর বুঝেছেন মানুষের প্রাথমিক আত্মপরিচয়ে আছে মিথ, রিচুয়ালস, বিশ্বাস ও সংস্কারের জগৎ। যত দুরেই যাই এবং কাল মধুমাস- এর কবিতা গুলিতে ঘুরে ফিরেই আসে মিথ ও রিচুয়ালস। আসে গ্রাম্য সংস্কৃতি, মাটিলগ্ন জীবনের ধান দুবেবা, টেউয়ের মালা গাঁথা নদীর নাম, নিকোনো উঠোনে সারি সারি লক্ষ্মীর পা। ভরা অভিজ্ঞতার নিরিখে স্থির করছেন নিজের জন্য নিজের কর্মসূচি। পুরোনো মানচিত্র ছিঁড়ে ফেলে নতুন করে ভূগোল রচনার প্রতিশ্রুতি আর ভেজানো দরজা হাট করে খুলে দেওয়ার আর্জি। বোঝা যায় সুভাষ আমাদের নাগরিক মধ্যবিত্তের সাজানো নিশ্চিত যাপন, আমাদের রাজনীতি, সংগঠিত ক্ষমতার আশ্ফালন, পাটি আর তন্ত্র, আমাদের উপনিবেশিক সাহিত্যবোধের সীমাকে ছাড়িয়ে অন্যতর এক জীবনের সন্ধান পেয়েছেন। সেই সুদৃঢ় প্রত্যয় ভরা উচ্চারণ শুনতে পাই কাল মধু মাস- এর ‘আমার কাজ’ কবিতায়-

আমাকে কেউ কবি বলুক

আমি চাই না।

কাঁধে কাঁধ লাগিয়ে

জীবনের শেষদিন পর্যন্ত

যেন আমি হেঁটে যাই।

আমি যেন আমার কলমটা

ট্রাস্কটের পাশে

নামিয়ে রেখে বলতে পারি-

এই আমার ছুটি

ভাই, আমাকে একটু আগুন দাও।

ট্রাস্কট আর কলমের এই যুগপৎ চলনের অসামান্য রাজনৈতিক বোধ সুভাষ ছাড়া আর ক’জনের কবিতাতেই পাব আমরা? এই খোলামনের আকাশ তাঁর জীবনের শেষ পর্যন্ত অটুট ছিল। অদ্রীশ বিশ্বাসকে দেওয়া একটি সাক্ষাৎকারে তিনি বলেছেন পথ হাঁটা আর নুড়ি কুড়োনের কথা। তাঁর ভাষায় একধরনের ‘আত্মপ্রত্যক্ষন’। জীবনকে কোনো পূর্বনির্দিষ্ট ধারণা বা তত্ত্বের সীমায় বেঁধে না ফেলে মনের সব কটি আগল খুলে ফেলা। এমন মানুষকে আমরা, মধ্যবিত্তরা আমাদের উপনিবেশিক বোধ ও পরম্পরা দিয়ে, আমাদের মার্কস-লেনিন-স্তালিনের থিয়োরি দিয়ে বুঝতে বা ধরতে পারব কীভাবে?

এতক্ষণ সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায়ের যে আইডেন্টিটি বা অন্যতর আত্মপরিচয়ের কথা বলছিলাম, সমকালীন সঙ্কটের মধ্যে থেকে তার একটা পরিচয় পেতে পারি। মনে রাখতে হবে স্বাধীনতার পর আমাদের সংবিধান প্রণয়ণ, সাধারণ নির্বাচন এবং পঞ্চবার্ষিকী পরিকল্পনার সুষ্ঠু রূপায়ন প্রাথমিকভাবে কমিউনিস্টদের কাছে নেতিবাচক হলেও ক্রমেই নেহেরুর ভারতবর্ষ সম্পর্কে একটা ‘ফিলগুড’ মনোভাব তৈরি হয়েছিল। কিন্তু ষাটের দশকে পৌঁছে স্বাধীন ভারতবর্ষ সম্পর্কে আমাদের স্বপ্ন আর প্রত্যাশার ফানুশ যখন ফাটতে শুরু করল, প্রত্যাশাও প্রাপ্তির তুল্য মূল্য বোধে যখন আমরা ধাক্কা খেলাম, তখন মধ্যবিত্ত নাগরিক বাঙালির সাহিত্যে নানা ভাবে তার অভিঘাত দেখা দিল। প্রথমত, মধ্যবিত্তের নীরস নীরস্ত্র একঘেয়ে জীবনের প্রাত্যহিকতার বাঁধা ছকের মধ্যে ঘুরপাক খেয়ে মরা। বাদল সরকারের এবং ইন্দ্রজিৎ, সারারাত্তির, বাকি ইতিহাস কিংবা ত্রিশ শতাব্দী-র তথাকথিত অ্যাবসার্ড জীবনবোধ ওই অন্তঃসার শূন্য বাঁধা ছকের জীবনকেই প্রতিফলিত করেছে। বাদল সরকারের ঠিক আগে, ওই একই সময়ে সোমেন্দ্রচন্দ্র নন্দী লিখছেন সমান্তরাল, ছারপোকা, উদাস বা আত্মনেপদী-র মতো অ্যাবসার্ড ধর্মী নাটক। উদাস নাটকের নায়ক উদাস ‘মরার জন্যই তো বেঁচে আছি’-এই মরবিডিটির বোধ নিয়ে যৌবনের দিনগুলিতে স্বেচ্ছাবন্দী হয়ে থাকে। মানব সভ্যতার ধারায় ঘটে যাওয়া যত ভুল, বিশ্বাসঘাতকতা, কৃতঘ্নতা আর গোষ্ঠীবদ্ধ ভাবে ক্ষমতা লুণ্ঠনের ইতিহাস কেউ দাস ঝিক্কার জানায়। বাদল সরকার বা সোমেন্দ্রচন্দ্র নন্দী বাঙালি মধ্যবিত্তের ওই অন্তঃসারশূন্য জীবন আর বাঁধা ছকটার মধ্যেই জীবনের অনন্ত অপচয়কে দেখেছেন। আর দ্বিতীয়ত, মোহিত চট্টোপাধ্যায় ওই ছকবাঁধা জীবনটাকে মেনে নিতে পারেন না বলেই তাঁর নাটকের চরিত্রগুলো বিদ্রোহ করে বসে, প্রত্যাখ্যান করে এই বেঁচে থাকাকে। তারা কখনো অসাধারণ হয়ে প্রতিবাদ করে, কিংবা উলটে পালটে নিতে চায় এই সমাজটাকে। মৃত্যুসংবাদ-এর নায়কতার অস্তিত্বের সব শিকড় উপড়ে ফেলতে চায়, গন্ধরাজের হাততালি-র ভদ্রলোক হরিকিৎকর আশ্চর্য সব এক্সপেরিমেন্ট করে, কখনো হাত-পা গুলোকে খুলেরাখে, মুণ্ডটাকে খুলে সরিয়ে রাখে আবার পরে নিতে চায়। দ্বীপের রাজা নাটকের সাগর হাইড্রোজেন বোমাকে নয়, যেন মারনাস্ত্র ভরা পৃথিবীকেই ঘৃণা ভরে লাথি মারে।

প্রতিবাদের এই বিকল্প ধরনই ষাটের দশকের বাংলা কবিতায় প্রবলভাবে উঠে এল কৃষ্ণিবাস ও হাংরি শ্রুতি সাহিত্য আন্দোলনের মধ্যে দিয়ে। কল্লোল যুগের পরে মৌনতায় বাংলা কবিতা যেন নতুন করে সাবালক হতে শিখল, সেই সঙ্গে পেল চল্লিশ ও পঞ্চাশের রাজনীতির ঘেরাটোপের বাইরে কবিতার স্বতন্ত্র পরিসর। মনে রাখতে হবে সুভাষ পাটীলাইনের ধুয়ো যেমন ধরেননি, তেমন হাংরি শিবিরের ধারও কোনোদিন মেড়াননি। আবার ষাটের ওই সর্বব্যাপী হতাশা, সঙ্গে চিনের কাছে যুদ্ধে গো-হারান হারার লজ্জা থেকে উদ্ধৃত আত্মলাঞ্ছনা তাঁকে বিচলিত করলেও কোথাও তিনি নিজেকে সময়ের হাতে সঁপে দেননি। বরং যাচাই করা অভিজ্ঞতার মধ্যে দিয়ে, নিজস্ব বোধ বা প্রজ্ঞার মধ্যে দিয়ে সুভাষ খুঁজে পান তাঁর পথ, বস্তু আর শব্দের রসায়ন, জীবন ও রাজনীতির আশ্চর্য মেলবন্ধনা।

সক্রিয় কমিউনিস্ট হিসেবে, একনিষ্ঠ পাটি কর্মী হিসেবে সাহিত্য জীবন শুরু করে একইরকম ভাবে নিজস্ব প্রজ্ঞা বা ইনটিউশনের হাত ধরে স্বতন্ত্র আইডেন্টিটি খুঁজে পেয়েছিলেন আরও একজন। তিনি বিজন ভট্টাচার্য্য গল্পনাট্যেছেড়ে বেরিয়ে এসে তিনি ক্যালকাটা থিয়েটার প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন, আরও পড়ে নতুন দল গড়েন কবচকুণ্ডলা পাটি ছাড়লেও আজীবন কমিউনিস্ট পরিচয়কেই

প্রাধান্য দিয়েছেন তিনি। নবান্ন থেকে দেবীগর্জন বা গর্ভবতী জননী—তে তাঁর উত্তরণ আমাদের পাটিলাইনের সমস্ত ছাঁদ ভেঙে চুরমার করে দেয়া। মিথ-পুরাণ-রিচুয়াল আর লোকবিশ্বাসের উর্বর পথে তিনি রাজনীতি ও সমাজতন্ত্রের অন্যতর সংজ্ঞা রচনা করেছিলেন। বাংলা থিয়েটারে তখন শম্ভু মিত্র, উৎপল দত্ত বা অজিতেশের মতো মহারথীরা এক-একটা পথে মধ্যবিত্ত থিয়েটারের চেনা ছকটাকেই আরও সদৃঢ় করেছেন। কিন্তু বিজ্ঞন সেখানে নিজস্ব উচ্চারণে একক, তাঁর থিয়েটারকে আমাদের মধ্যবিত্তের নাগরিক থিয়েটারের ছকে বোঝা যায় না। বোঝায় না, কিভাবে তিনি মেলান একই সাথে রাজনীতি ও লোক বিশ্বাস-সংস্কারকে। বোঝা যায় না কিভাবে তিনি রিজন আর ইমোশানকে অনায়াসে মিশিয়ে দিতে পারেন। তাঁর ইনটিউশন আমাদের গড়পড়তা মধ্যবিত্ত বাঙালির বোধের সীমার অনেক বাইরে। আমি বিজ্ঞন এবং সুভাষকে ইনটিউশনের বিচারে ওই একই পথের পথিক মনে করি। প্রগতির এই দুই পথিকই আমাদের নাগরিক মধ্যবিত্ত বাঙালির কাছে প্রায় অসমামানযোগ্য রহস্য।

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কেন আমাদের নাগরিক সাহিত্য সংস্কৃতিতে এতখানি একঘরে এবং কোণঠাসা হয়ে পড়ছিলেন সুভাষ? কেনই বা তাঁকে নিজের বিশ্বাসের, আত্মস্বাতন্ত্র্যের জগৎ থেকে স্থলিত হয়ে বিপরীত মেরুর কংগ্রেসী রাজনীতির প্ল্যাটফর্মে এসে দাঁড়াতে হয়? অদ্বীশ বিশ্বাসের কাছে দেওয়া সাক্ষাৎকারে খুব স্পষ্টভাবে তিনি নিজের আর কমিউনিস্ট মনে করেন না, বলেছেন সংগঠিতভাবে প্রতিবাদ করা দরকার, তার জন্য যে মঞ্চ তিনি পেয়েছেন, তাতেই গেছেন। ভুল আদর্শকে আঁকড়ে থেকে তলিয়ে গিয়ে অসহায় হওয়ার চেয়ে প্রতিবাদের একটা মঞ্চকেই তিনি শ্রেয় মনে করেন। তবে এসব যুক্তির উপরে রাখা যায় সহবন্ধুদের উদ্দেশে সুভাষের সেই বিখ্যাত কবিতা-

‘খুশু দিয়ে জোড়া যায় না,

জুড়তে হয় ভগ্ন মনোরথ-

এ আগুনে,

এ রাংঝালে’

আর সেই অভিমানভরা উচ্চারণ –

“ আমি ছেড়ে যাইনি। একপাশে সরে শুধু উত্তরের অপেক্ষায় আছি।”

জানি, এই ২০১৪-য় দাঁড়িয়ে, বামপন্থী আন্দোলনের সব থেকে খারাপ সময়েও সুভাষ সম্পর্কে পাটির মনোভব একটুও বদলায়নি। কাজেই উত্তর মিলবে না। আমরা বরং একটু অন্য ভাবে উত্তর খুঁজতে পারি। বলতে পারি, সুভাষ মুখোপাধ্যায় যত বড়ই কবি হন, অভিজ্ঞতা ও প্রজ্ঞার যতই শিখরে উঠুন; তিনি আসলে আর পাঁচজন আম জনতারই একজন। একজন ‘ব্যক্তি আমি’, যে ব্যক্তি মানুষটা চেয়েছিলেন আমাদের বাঙালি মধ্যবিত্তের চেনা ছকের বাইরে বেরোতো। আমাদের মধ্যবিত্তের নাগরিক জীবনবোধের কতকগুলি চেনা ছাঁদ আছে। আমাদের ঔপনিবেশিক উত্তরাধিকার, ভাষাগত-সাহিত্যগত মার্জিত ইগো, আমাদের রোমান্টিকতা, আমাদের রাজনীতি, আমাদের বিপ্লব, গণতন্ত্রের বোধ ও সমাজতন্ত্রের স্বপ্ন- এ সবকিছুই আসলে হয় ঔপনিবেশিক উত্তরাধিকারী সূত্রে প্রাপ্ত নয়তো বিদেশ থেকে আমদানি করা। কোনোটাই আমাদের মাটিগত নয়, স্বদেশজাত নয়। মধ্যবিত্তের ওই চেনা ছকের জীবনবৃত্ত একের পর এক আঘাতে যখন বিধ্বস্ত হয়, যখন বেঁচে থাকার অসীম তাগিদে আমরা আমাদের ছোট ছোট আপসগুলোতে অভ্যস্ত হই, দুর্নীতি আর ক্ষমতা, ক্ষমতা আর দুর্নীতির খেলায় মেতেয় উঠি, গুতিয়ে যাই, সম্মতি দিই, মিডিয়ার বানান খবরের পুতুল হয়ে উঠি, ভোগবাদে বৃন্দ হয়ে আবারও পরিবর্তনের সুখস্বপ্ন দেখি, স্বপ্নভঙ্গের বেদনায় কষ্ট পাই কিন্তু ওই সংগঠিত ক্ষমতালুঠনের ইতিহাসকেই জাসটিফাই করি বার বার- ইতিহাসের এই অনিবার্য অবশ্যস্বাধী গতিপথে ব্যক্তির কনও স্থান থাকতে পারে না। হয় তুমি ওই গড্ডলশ্রোতের খড়কুটো, নয় তোমার অস্তিত্ব নেই।

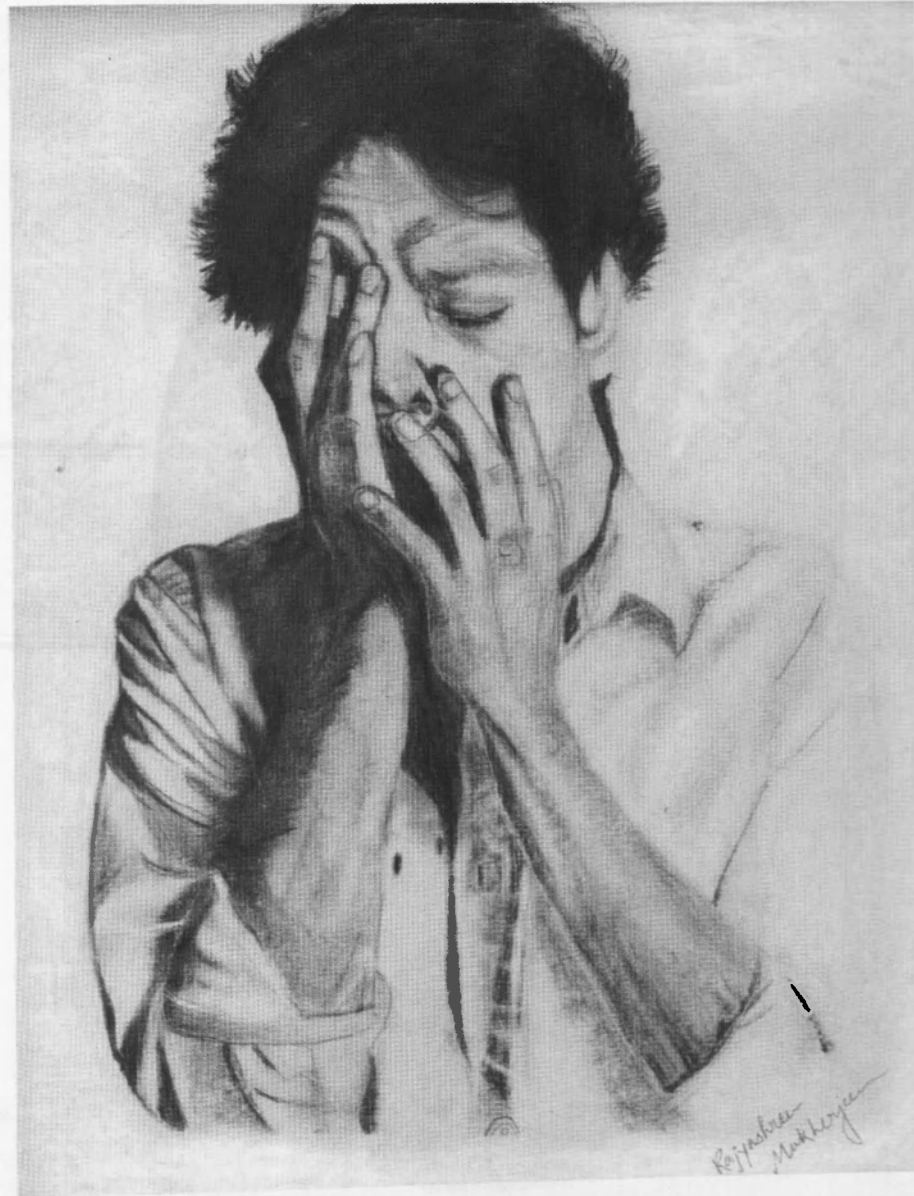
যেন এরকমই এক শ্রুতের বিপরীতে ব্যক্তি সুভাষ হাঁটতে চেয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু পারেননি। হয়ত পথ খুঁজে পান নি। অথচ জীবন ও সমাজের অসংখ্য রক্তাক্ত ঘা, পচে যাওয়া ক্ষতগুলিকে সারিয়ে তোলার উপায় খুঁজতে চেয়ে শুধুই ছুটে বেড়িয়েছেন।

৬

কংগ্রেসের মতো বিপরীত মেরুর রাজনৈতিক শিবিরে আশ্রয় নিয়েছিলেন- এই অনুযোগে যঁারা কবি সুভাষ কে ব্রাত্য করেছেন, ছুঁড়ে ফেলেছেন জানি না। আজ তাঁরা- কবির মৃত্যুর এক দশক পরে ওই একই মনোভাব পোষণ করেন কিনা। পরিবর্তমান সময়ের উত্তাল ঢেউ-এ ক্ষমতার হাতবদল হয়েছে, দীর্ঘ সাড়ে তিন দশকের বহু সংস্কার খুলিস্যাৎ হয়েছে।

তবুও...এদিকে আজও ‘রক্তে পা ডুবিয়ে হাঁটছে নিষ্ঠুর সময়’। প্রতিটি প্রতিবাদ যেখানে রক্তাক্ত হয়, দলিত হয়, স্কুল চত্বরে ‘কাকু’-র কাছে ধর্ষিত হয় ছ-বছরের শিশু, বহুজাতিক বনিকের হাতে প্রাকৃতিক সম্পদ তুলে দিতে ভূমিপুত্রদের ভূমিহীন করার মহাযজ্ঞ চলে দেশজুড়ে। ইজরায়েলের উপর্যুপরি আক্রমণে বিশ্বস্ত প্যালেস্তাইনে লাশের স্তূপ জমে, মৌলবাদীদের বন্দুকের নলের সামনে শত-শত শিশুর রক্তে ভিজে ওঠে ক্লাসরুমের দেওয়াল, বারুদের গন্ধে গাঢ় হয়ে ওঠে উপসাগরীয় বাতাস।

ভাবি, আজ যদি সুভাষ বেঁচে থাকতেন! এই মেরুদণ্ডহীন স্তাবকের সমাজে সুভাষের বেঁচে ওঠা বড়ো বেশি প্রয়োজন।



Blues of Life in Black and White-
Rajyashree Mukherjee; Zoology UG III



When the Blazing Eye Leads –
Srestha Chakraborty, *Biological Sciences UG II*

HERN'S PLATE

G. M. English

Went by postcard,

and then after

to Hong in the east

and after,

to the back of house,

and

and flatters awake

the dimming sun,

to the simplicity

of a traveller's mood,

as it willed, and all he has found

is left to find,

of a shepherd's flock

to a barren mind,

was ripped apart

to the golden sun

of a lion's roars

of a shepherd's flock

Students' Section

The first of the year

and

the first of the year

in the first of the year

and

The first of the year

and by every hand

See below's own

Discovered by half-rotted windows

and

The out of time only

Playing lonely voices

and

The unappreciated of the world

With the silent craft

The attempt I find here only

To the end

Forget

like

When remembered

THE SHEPHERD'S FLUTE

Radhika Gupta, *UG-II, English*

The crimson golden sky profound,
Studded with the northern star
A slice of moon rising in the east
A traveller from a land afar;

The cattle now gather back at home,
Another day is done;
The owl that ruffles and flutters awake
Bidding night to the dimming sun;

The cuckoo joins the symphony
Of thoughts in the traveller's mind,
'Bout lands he has travelled, and all he has found
And that which is left to find.

The bitter tunes of a shepherd's flute
Mourn the joys of a lone heart,
The frolic that stings a barren mind
That by stitches was ripped apart;

The dry red roads, the golden sand
Bring back the traveller's roots
In a distant land that he should find
His heart in a shepherd's flute.

LOST AND FOUND

Ishita Sengupta, *English, PG I*

The squalid room
With half-painted walls
And.
The breath of nivea
On the curled up shawls.
And.
The spilled coffee
On an half-woken afternoon.
And.
The tip of cold noses
Felt by warm hands.

Sun-balmed kisses,
Disturbed by half- uttered promises
And
The out of tune radio
Playing loony voices
And.
The unanswered phone calls
With the piling drafts.

The afternoon I had met you,
To lose you.

I forgot.
But.
Winter remembered.

AUDACITY

Utsav Mukherjee, *UG II, English*

I was caught off guard,
Comprehending her chilly stare,
An insatiable desire,
Invaded by an aggravating flare.

Her ebullient smile,
Bore a precarious sleek,
Beneath is a fire subdued
I'm yearning to seek;
Our lips would then ravenously embrace,
My petulant breaths consoling her face;
Enthralled, my hands plunged over her alluring breasts,
In the vile certainty of a fervor that it manifests.

Her inhibitions torn,
And she upon
my hankered countenance;
Her vibrant sway,
Fringes astray,
And brings our bodies to resonance.

Amidst a conscious appeal under stress,
A rapturous pleasure she can't just confess;
Imbibing her through the eloquence of my tongue,
She withers to the tunes of eroticism,
Stung.

Oh Yes!
Perverted are the grains of my innocence,
Thriving without a drop of penitence;
The gurgling flow of her wetness,
To reconcile for all that she is plighted:
As the materialism of its worship,
Persists vividly even after a purpose thirsted.

Like a thief that surreptitiously sneaks,
Steals something you're scared to disclose;
Without a reason to seize and reap into,
And a harrowed feeling you're coerced to enclose.
But is it a clamor of love or yearn for lust?
For a woman myself I'm baffled to entrust;
I however shall persevere to swim against the tide,
A willing pursuit I've committed and I must.

And is it a clamor of love or yearn for lust?
For a woman myself I'm baffled to entrust;
I however shall persevere to retreat to your symphony,
And clasp ourselves amidst the throng of rust.

SIN

Radhika Gupta; *UG II, Chemistry*

The gunshot rang out in the air
Hung in the air, like the mournful cry
Of the mother to a dying son;
Like a prayer of endless sighs..

The rustling leaves all gathered to hide
A rising soul from a curs'd life-
Across the pavement lay a man
Much too wrong to survive

She stood now firm, her eyes not dull-
Just a shade of mirthful grey
To match her hair, her dimming age
And her heart of calm dismay;

Listen to her song, a carol of sin
She's avenged her dead, young son
A second shot now chilled the breeze
Her chore today was done.

ENDLESS WAIT

Titu Bardhan, *English, UG-II*

Undo the most mysterious wait of mine
The stars are falling, the wind is blowing
Finally, once again you are
in the embrace of my arms.
Our hearts tremble,
Believe in my unwavering sincerity,
A thousand years of wait, you have
my promise.
No matter how much time has passed
I will never let you go.

Now tightly hold my hands,
and close your eyes,
Please think about the times
when we were deeply in love,
We loved each other too much,
That is why we have been in such pain
We cannot even say the words "I love you"
to each other.

Every night is pierced through by heartbreak.

There is no end to my longing
I've gotten used to lonely meetings
I face it with a smile
Believe me, I chose to wait
No matter how tough it is, there is no hiding.
Only your love can save me from
this eternal coldness.

Let love become for us
Flowers that bloom forever,
Pass through the time warp without yielding
nor without giving up our dreams

Together we can travel through
the endless space and time.

BUT, IT RAINED

Anil Pradhan, *UG III, English*

A pair of stained glass panes,
A dilapidated figure sulking beside them,
A pair of fixed eyes full of nullity,
Chopin's fourth Prelude playing from somewhere else.
And a remembrance of loss flowing within,
from the four walls of an uncertain evening,
radiated off from the lenses of vehemence,
into a span of limitless fortitude.
And yet again, the skies were overcast
with strangers huddled together,
as if to be slaughtered.
And he glanced at them guiltily
upon feeling their innocent, piercing gaze -
A gaze so nostalgic that even he who wouldn't,
who wouldn't succumb,
found himself drowned in a scorching void,
full of faded memories on celluloid,
bolted, neglected, forgotten, feigned
ignorance upon,
but today, all staring,
with an untold surety, a hope, a
nonchalance -

That it was time,
That he must let go,
That the panes be cleaned,
That he be free.
He thought he wouldn't.

But, it rained.
And it rained.
And it rained.

A SATANIC MONOLOGUE

Utsav Mukherjee, *UG-II English*

“How could you?” was perhaps all I could muster to say,
A pulverised faith I held onto as I denied giving myself away;
A few moments of despair and horror and I realised I was never the same:
Bestowed upon by my dad, as he ruthlessly staked his prurient claim;
I was only a little girl of seven, I was innocent, and I was frail,
I voiced out my resentment, but still he did prevail.

I was nurtured with the principle that love was the same as sex:
Erudited about the nuances of an element every man expects;
Never imagined my body would become an object of his wicked lure,
And when I shriveled in excruciation, he'd empathize but reassure.

My scars carry my lewd commitments whichever place I went,
Hateful and frustrated, my every breath consumed in utter torment;
A persistent predicament graced my path, my dreams never got confessed:
A walk through humanity cradled in darkness, my heart in pieces, and my mind depressed;
Forsaken and unloved, a splash of all the emotions I failed to contrive,
As I allowed my past to overwhelm me, I wonder, how did I possibly survive?

A copious conjecture of life, the world would now despise to recognise,
And I deplore the fact I was convinced in the sincerity of their lies;
I expressed myself in their blatant thoughts that still deluge my head:
A patch of remorse for dispelling myself, in those wrathful nights, in a blood-stained bed.
But then out came the silver lining, I could irrevocably apperceive HIS grace,
HE guzzled the ocean of my miseries and esteemed me with an amiable embrace;
When furnished with a contingency of redemption, 'FORGIVENESS' was what I chose,
For I had to prove myself the better of us, emancipating myself from his heinous woes;

So if you're tired of the gloom that consumes you, tired of a continual falling,
Ssshhh (pause), in this hour of serenity, do you now hear HIS calling?

FALL FROM NOWHERE LAND

(The editors apologise for their inability to ascertain the author. We deeply regret the in convenience caused)

I

I have a million words for a million things in my head,
None of which mean anything to me.
I have been taught and told to respect the day-to-day,
I have been inspired to be radical,
I have been called into question,
Picked out of a line-up,
Grilled on a searing hot pan.
I have fallen into the fire,
Risen from the ashes,
Flown across the globe and beyond the stars,
Stayed put in my nowhere land,
Dreamt of angels and demons
Horned and winged,
Felt the blessings of disintegrated faith
And walked away from eternity
Into what I know not
I have died in the arms of those who wanted my blood
I have been reborn in the tears of those who cried my death
I have been reborn in the innocent laughter of my yet unborn child
I have drowned in the smile of her mother's eyes
I have chased my own tail across the universe
I have sunk my fangs into it
I have killed
I have seen too much in my blundering agitation
I have seen beyond walls and boundaries
Through imperturbable masks
And into the very naked eyes of the multitude.

II

My travel weary soul has laid itself down to rest
In the lap of she who had called me softly out of my rant
Like a piece of music one plays over and over in one's head
Yet cannot recognise it
I cannot put my finger on it
I have heard that voice before
Never, never with the mellow longing it had just then
Who is she?
It's been a million years since I had heard that voice
Or was it just yesterday?
She keeps saying my name
I cannot answer
She is fading, fading away
No! She must not fade
No!
Help me!
I'm slipping away

To where though?
Darkness seems to close in from all sides
Cherry blossoms and the mild autumn sun
The gold and brown leaves
The gust of the west wind
Sucked into the maw of absolute darkness
Fear, pure fear, is a wonderful thing
Falling freely through a space that is bordered by sanity
I groped for anything to hold on to
There was only absolute nothing ness
So I gave in and flew towards whatever waited for me
But the bottom never came
I am still falling

III

I do not know how far I have come
Or how far I have to go
Then came a blast of light and the universe was formed before my eyes
I rushed past it all and fell flat on my face in dewy grass
And a smell of fruit in the air
I know that smell
I have felt it before
On my face, in my hand, upon my lips and with my heart
It was her
Her windswept hair and glittering eyes
She had saved me again
I don't want to leave
Please don't let me leave
I was panting for breath
I could not take any air in,
My throat – seems to have collapsed
My lungs are no longer working,
They've given in their resignation.
So has my heart.
Oh, what exquisite pain!
What purifying pleasure!
Drowning, drowning deep in the smile of her eyes.

TO YOU

Madhubanti Talukdar, *UG II, Sociology*

I lie where you once lay
Where I could see the green of the grass and the blue of the sky in your eyes
And I could touch your skin
Pale, vulnerable, almost shadowy,
Reminding me of the women who'd loved you
and touched the same skin
on similar summer mornings
and left in it a part of themselves.
Your skin taught me to love you with all their parts within you,
So I loved them too, all the women
who had lain beside you and shared their bodies and their dreams and their stories,
who had seen you the way I did.
Or maybe not the way I did,
for each of us had loved a different you.
I now lie where you once lay.
You're gone now,
Only occasional footfalls in my memory
Only images that rush through the half consciousness of dead nights
things that don't affect me anymore,
maybe lying in some other field, somewhere,
with someone else watching over you.
I wonder what she looks like.
I wonder if she loves me,
the way I loved all the other women.
Life has gone on without you, as it always does.
It is a great teacher.
Loves, losses, joys, sorrows have come and gone.
Ones you don't know of.
There was a time when you knew even the brand of toothpaste I used.
I do not love you anymore, not even the memory of what you used to be.
Nor do I hate you, for I do not have space in me for either.
Often I lie where you used to lie,
in that particular spot in the field which was your favourite,
And the sunlight, filtered through the leaves of the almond trees, warms my face.
It feels good to go back to that day in my mind.
There is so much hurt in the world,
It is good to recall happy days.

FULL PRUDENT ENLIGHTENMENT

Soumick Mukherjee; *English, UGI*

A baby stump went to school for the first time on the first day-

-With his seasoned timber father.

The teacher looked like an axe.

The school looked like a mill.

His father told him there was nothing to be afraid of.

The process was all conventional.

Baby stump first learned how to repeat.

He repeated the names of his subjects-

-Which were very elaborate for our friend.

He was lucky to receive an education of the highest order.

The teacher made him sit beside another bright stump-

-Who had been half chiseled already.

Baby stump shaped on quickly in his lessons.

He was good at budding, leaf-caring and grafting.

He was taught all the traditional wisdom'-

-The oriental conventions-

-And the orthodox procedures of becoming an educated stump.

With every touchstone, Baby Stump was chiseled-

-Little by little.

When he went to school that morning-

-He was a bright young thing like we used to be.

When he came out of school that afternoon-

-He was a chiseled piece of timber, who knew it too well to repeat.

He was perfectly perfect in repeating all the same conventions of centuries.

Yet he thought himself to be different.

Baby Stump then gave Entrance Tests-

-and went to a reputed Lumberjack school.

He shined in everything he did.

He still shines as furniture in my living room.

KEEPING FAITH THAT NEVER WAS

Janhabi Mukherjee, *UG I, English*

Am I to fight with you, now?
It has been a while, since you and I
Have looked each other in the eye,
And we both know we can't deny
That things aren't the same.
But I would still consent, you see,
To bear the brunt, to take the blame-
To set you free.
To let you be.
If you would only say to me,
That we are not going to fight.
Because I think it is not right,
That after all we have been through,
And after all I've done for you,
And all that you have felt for me,
We give this up, we let it go,
Leave it to fate, though we both know,
That it will burn. It will fall.
Drain you and me of our all.
You hear the crash? It is the sound
Of memory.

Come, say the words, and shake my hand.
Violent flight, but we might land
Today.
It has been long,
And we've been strong,
But no one needs to know.
We were once friends- then, perhaps, more-
And though nothing's like it was before,
The world need only see,
That you and I
Would fight, would die,
To see each other through.
And wouldn't you, for me?
I would for you.

MARTIN

Samriddhi Mukherjee, *English UG-II*

If I could turn back time, erase the past
I would do anything to reverse that terrible blast
I wish we'd never heard of the marathon
But we did, Martin, and now you're gone.

What cruel destiny could have foretold
That you, gentle, loving, mine to have and to hold
Smiling toothily, running, mischievous at your will
Would so early be lying in a coffin, so pale and still?

Creatures from hell, those miscreants I curse
Who took you so coldly, away from us
Took away from Janie the brother she adored
Our hearts, our souls, whose smile made our
spirits soar.

You were a fighter, you never were one
To be overcome by anyone in the run
But thanks to evil manifest, the creators of strife
At eight years old, you lost the race of life.

I remember the panic when you fell off a tree
Your helpless little voice calling out for me
The doctor was sent for, your leg attended
But I only wish for a cure by which death
could be mended.

Martin, I will always remember
You, from that picture we took in September
Happy, laughing, free from shadow,
free from menace
Not that broken body, not that charred face.

If there is a God, he will take care of you
He will guide you to Heaven, as he does so few
You won't hurt anymore, darling,
you will be at peace
Safe in a haven no evil can seize.

And now it's time for a too-soon, too-hard goodbye
So I breathe a wish to the angels in the starry sky
Pleading with them in their hallowed beauty to
watch over you
Hoping, someday, I shall be reunited with you.

১০০ পদক্ষেপ

সৌরভ সাহা; স্নাতকোত্তর প্রথম বর্ষ; বিভাগ- সমাজবিজ্ঞান

১০০'টি পদক্ষেপ পিছিয়ে

আমি খাচ্ছি আবার স্বপ্ন কে চেটেপুটে

এখানের পথ আজ জং ধরে

অনাহারে,

চিৎকারে,

দাপিয়ে বেড়াচ্ছে ক্ষত-বিক্ষত স্বপ্ন কোষা

“আমায় মাফ করিস্ স্বপ্ন সন্তান”

বিকৃত তোর জন্মদাতা, অসহায় শয়তান

গুটি গুটি পায়ে ফিরে আসি... আবার নিঃশব্দ চরে

আজ কালের কোলে ভালোই আছি

ঘড়ির কাঁটার দীর্ঘশ্বাস, চির ধরা পাঁচিল

কত সন্ত্রাস

কত ইচ্ছে

কত জঘন্য পরিণাম

এই সবেব'ই সাক্ষী ওরা , পাথর'ও আজ সহানুভূতিশীল।

এ ছায়াছবির ‘ক্লাইম্যাক্স’-এ অদ্ভুত আবিষ্কার

“আবার আমি শুরু করবো”- আমার সান্ত্বনা পুরস্কার

১০০'টি পদক্ষেপ পিছিয়ে

আমি খাচ্ছি আবার স্বপ্ন কে চেটেপুটে

---এ এক নবজাগ্রত ‘আমি’।

উত্তাপ

অর্পণ দাস; স্নাতক তৃতীয় বর্ষ ; বাংলা বিভাগ

আমার রাত ভালো লাগে,

নিরুত্তাপ

কিছু ঝাঁঝের এলোপাখাড়ি শব্দ

কিছু নিজের শরীরের গন্ধ

কিছু একান্ত গল্প, সময়,

কিছু ঘুম, কিছু স্বপ্ন,

নিরাপত্তা...

সূর্য বড় বালাই, দিন আনে রোদ,

সেই রোদে বাঁচতে অসহনীয় লাগে

চোখ বুজে ফেলি

অভ্যাসে,

আমারো বাড়বাড়ন্ত হচ্ছে,

তবে তা শিকড়ের দিকে

তাই, আমার আর আলোর দরকার পড়ে না

আলো তো আসলে একটু উত্তাপ

ভিখারি ছেলেটার পেটের খিদের মতো

আমার পেটে ভাত ছিল বলে,

টের পাইনি.....

শেষ বেলার ছবি

জ্যোতিরিন্দ্রনাথ হাজারী; স্নাতক দ্বিতীয় বর্ষ; বাংলা বিভাগ

ওড়বার কথা ছিলো বেশ তো
দুইহাতে ধরা ছিলো বন্দুক,
গুলি খাওয়া ছেলেটার শেষবার
বুক ওঠে, বুক নামে ধুকপুক।

কাল ছিল ছুটে যাওয়া উদ্দাম
চোখে ছিল ঝলসানো প্রত্যয়,
কার ডাকে ঘুম চোখে ছুটল
ফেনাভাত পড়ে আছে ঘরময়।

পাল্টেছে এ শরীর, এই মন
ছেলেটার পায়ে ছিল চরকি,
যে দেওয়াল লিখেছিল স্লোগান
ঝরে গেছে চুন রঙ সরকি।

কবিতার খাতা জুড়ে বৃষ্টি
নেমেছিল দৈনিক সন্ধ্যায়,
তুলনাও হয়েছিলো একচোট
ফেনাভাতে মাছি বসে ঠাণ্ডায়।

গুলি খাওয়া ছেলেটার শেষবার
দুইহাতে ধরা ছিল বন্দুক,
ওড়বার কথা ছিল বেশ তো
বুক ওঠে বুক নামে ধুকপুক।

ছদ্ম

আদিদেব মুখোপাধ্যায়; স্নাতক তৃতীয় বর্ষ;
বাংলা বিভাগ

ঈর্ষা আমার গলা অবধি চুবে
গলার মধ্যে আটকে গিনিসোনা
তখন আমায় রাজার মতো দ্যাখায়
সত্যি এসব তোমার কাছে শোনা

কিন্তু তুমি মিথ্যা অনেক বলো
এবং সাথে যুক্ত করো বিষ
এবং আমার এমনই বিশ্বাস
আকণ্ট পান করিনি ভাগ্যিস!

তারচে' আমি নিজের পথে চলি
চলার পথে ফুর্তি জাগে বেশ
রাত্রিবেলা লাফটার শো দেখি
বদলে ফেলি আগের যা অভ্যেস

কিন্তু আমি যতই ভান করি
এসব কথা সত্যি কথা নয়
ঈর্ষা আমার গলা অবধি চুবে
গলার মধ্যে আটকে আছে ভয়া

সাদা দেওয়াল

শুভাশিস বন্দোপাধ্যায়; সমাজবিজ্ঞান বিভাগ; স্নাতক দ্বিতীয় বর্ষ

চার দেওয়াল ঘেরা আকাশে মেঘ চরে না খুব একটা।

আকাশ, আকাশের মতোই স্থবির।

চেনা কাক শুধু ডেকে যায়

অচেনা পাখির মত লাগে কখনো সখনো।

আকাশের দিকে চোখ রেখে হাঁটতে গিয়ে

রাস্তাও ফুরিয়ে যায়;

শুধু রঙচটা বিবর্ণ দেওয়াল ভবিষ্যতের গল্প শোনায়া

বাস্তবিকই গল্পগুলো বেশ

শুনে মনে হয়

বুঝি বা রূপকথা।

এখুনি আসবে কোন সাদা ঘোড়ার সওয়ার;

তবু দেওয়ালগুলোই শুধু রয়ে যায়,

গল্প বুনতে

আগামী পৃথিবীর.....

कविता हमें जीना सिखाती है/ सेतू कुमार तांती;
स्नातक-दूसरा वर्ष; विभाग - हिंदी

मैंने उससे कहा
कल तुम कविता लिख के लाना
उसने आश्चर्य से मुझे देखा
कहा- 'कविता यूँ ही थोड़े ना लिखी जाती है ।'
कविता तो अपने आप ही बनती है
कविता के लिए जरूरी है, होना
दर्द का, अनुभूति का, कल्पना का....
मैं सोच में पड़ गया
तो क्या अब ये चीज़े नहीं है लोगों के पास
फिर मेरे भीतर से आवाज़ आई
'है' और हमेशा रहेगी!
पर मुझे लगा
लोग दूर.... बहुत दूर हो गए हैं

अपने आप से
वे बहाने से जीने की तलाश में लगे हैं
भूल गए हैं वे, उनके भीतर ही सब कुछ है
वे फिर लौटेंगे वहीं, जहाँ
कविता हमें जीना सिखाती है
खुद को खुद से मिलती है ।

खतरे की घंटी/ अभय कुमार पुरी; स्नातक -
तृतीय वर्ष; विभाग - हिंदी

बज रही खतरे की घंटी है,
उठती क्यों नहीं ये मानव की पंक्ति है।
आदत हो गयी है इनकी सोने की,
या हो गयी है आदत इनकी रोने की।
ये क्यों नहीं किसी घटना का विरोध करते,
ये क्यों नहीं किसी दुष्कर्म का मार्ग अवरोध करते
॥

महँगाई आयी है बनकर काल,
जो खोल रही है अपनी गाल।
आयी है ये गरीबों का रक्त चूसने,

और आयी है ये अमीरों से उनका हाल पूछने।
महिलाओं का हो रहा है वस्त्रहरण,
मीडिया जिसका कर रहा है चित्रण।
कर रहे हैं असमाजिक तत्व अत्याचार,
जिनको नेतागण दे रहे हैं पुरस्कार।
नहीं आता कोई गरीबों से उनका हाल पूछने,
पर एक वर्ग जाता है अमीरों से हाल पूछने॥

क्या कोई नहीं बच सकता इन हाहाकारों से,
या कोई नहीं बच सकता इन दुराचारों से ।
अब समय आ गया है जागने का,
यहाँ कोई मतलब नहीं होता भागने का ।
हमें जरूरत है अब लड़ने की,
अब जरूरत नहीं किसी से डरने की।
अगर बचना है हमें इन खतरों से,
तो करना होगा इनका विरोध ।
अगर बचना है हमें इन दुष्कर्मियों से,
तो करना होगा इनका मार्ग अवरोध॥

रोशनी/ अदिति सिंह; एम.ए. प्रथम वर्ष; विभाग -
हिंदी

रोशनी.....

तुम में फंसे हुए, हर वह व्यक्ति की खुशी
है.....

जो उसे अज्ञानता से दूर ज्ञान की ओर
अग्रसर करती है।

रोशनी.....

वह राहत है, जो आज़ाद कर देगी
मनुष्य को उसकी असहनीय पीड़ा
से.....

रोशनी.....

असमंजस में फंसे हुए, हर वह व्यक्ति
की सखी है.....

जो उसे मदद करती है..... उससे
निकलने में

रोशनी.....

कली है हर फूल की, जो इस आश के साथ निकलती है,

कि उसे उसकी खूबसूरती से पहचाना जायेगा.....

रोशनी.....

एहसास कराती है उसके अस्तित्व का

रोशनी.....

एक आश है शुरुआत है.....

रोशनी.....

तम में फंसे हुए हर व्यक्ति की सखी है।

संकल्प/ पूजा सिंह; एम. ए दूसरा वर्ष; विभाग - हिंदी

विचार बदलता नहीं अगर, सरकार बदल कर क्या होगा?

जहाँ प्यार का नाम निशान नहीं

भले मानुष की पहचान नहीं

संतो की क्रद्र नहीं होती

गुंडों की ही हरदम चलती

जहाँ सारे माझी पागल हो, पतवार बदल कर क्या होगा?

बेईमानी का बोलबाला है

हर जगह सदा घोटाला है

धरती पर सदा कोलाहल है

नर नारी जहाँ हलाहल है

बेसुरी रहे झंकार अगर तो

तार बदल कर क्या होगा?

जहा भाई-भाई का घातक हो

जहाँ अधिकाधिक ही पातक हो

हर बात जहाँ मनमानी हो

सच्चाई जहाँ कहानी हो

जब अपने ही बेगाने हो, घर द्वार बदल कर क्या होगा?

जहाँ पति-पत्नी का झगड़ा हो

अगर कोई फैसला करो

उसे पत्थर की लकीर बना लो ।

अगर खुद की दी हुई किस्मत न हो पसंद,

तो अपने हाथों से नई तकदीर बना लो,

भावनाओं की बात करोगे,

तो अपने-पराये सब बदनाम करेंगे,

और जुनून से काम करोगे, तो तुम्हें लोग सलाम करेंगे ।

इसलिए सबकी नज़रों में इज़्जत भरी तस्वीर

बना लो,

अगर कोई फैसला करो तो

उसे पत्थर की लकीर बना लो ।

सरकार बदल कर क्या होगा?/ रवि शंकर सिंह; स्नातक - प्रथम वर्ष; विभाग - हिंदी

जहाँ पिता-पुत्र का रगड़ा हो

जहाँ गुरु-शिष्य का भाव नहीं

जहाँ प्यार का कभी भी चाव नहीं

जब मन में ही बेचैनी हो, परिवार बदल कर क्या होगा?

कलयुग का यही निशाना है

जिसको सबने पहचाना है

कौओं को मिलता दूध भात

हंसो को लगता सदा घात

जहाँ जीव सदा अविनाशी हो, संसार बदल कर क्या होगा?

"हिन्दी हमारी भाषा"/ श्रीतमा जोयारदार

बचा पाँऊ में हिन्दी को बस ये ही हैं मेरी अभिलाषा

विचार विनिमय का माध्यम हैं भाषा

कही खत्म ना हो जाए हिन्दी हमारी ये भाषा

खत्म हो रहा उसका प्रचलन खत्म हो रही उसकी आशा

कैसे बढ़ाये इन लोगो में हिन्दी बोलने की जिज्ञाषा

जो भूल गए हिन्दी भाषा को अब तो भर गया उनका
कलसा
शुरू करो अब बोलना हिन्दी फिर देखो कैसे रोज
होता जलशा

पूरा हिन्द बोले हिन्दी बस इतनी सी हैं आकांशा
खत्म हो गई आज हिन्दी खत्म हो गई उसकी
अवस्था
पर गर्व करूँगा मैं मुझ पर की आज बोल रहा हूँ मैं

हिन्दी भाषा
खत्म हो रही लोगो की हिन्दी खत्म हो रही अपनी
भाषा

क्या भूल गये जन्म हुआ हैं हिंदुस्तान में हिन्दी
तुम्हारी हैं भाषा
अब तो बोलो की आगे हैं हिन्दी बोलने की तुम्हारे
मन में भी लालसा

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A GREEN CANDLE

Shubhaa Bhattacharya; *UG II; Economics*

Jim won the painting competition because he had painted freedom: a blue sky with birds soaring across. Then, I was a beautiful green crayon struggling for space, squashed between a horribly mean red crayon and a yellow one who thought she was the best. (Women, I tell you. They're always wrong but think of the opposite being true. Sigh.) There were twelve of us in a box, which was subsequently handed over by the mayor to a 9 year old Jim.

We were sprawled across the table haphazardly, when Jim accidentally nudged me with his elbow. I rolled off the table, sinking face-first into the fireplace. I fell from elegance with a dull thud. Ah, the agony of it. Even Jim cried with me that day.

I gained consciousness on Mr. Brown's workbench. He was, incidentally, the town's oldest and most famed candle maker, and Jim's beloved grandfather. He hummed a song, spectacles perched high up his nose, smiling and surveying the damage. "What a multitasker!" I thought. He had kind blue eyes crinkling with good humour, and a flowing white beard. Anyway, I decided to trust him because he looked like Dumbledore.

He worked on me that night, and I was a good boy. He shaped me into a happy little prince, gave me eyes and eyelashes, curly hair and a carefree, jovial laugh. There were 20 pearly white sequins for my dress and cape. He polished me till I shone. Overnight, he crafted me into perfection. Ironically, I'm just a lifeless mound of wax, pretty insignificant to the world unless of course, when there's darkness, and this autobiography is just to show you the light through my eyes.

Mr. Brown placed me across a glass window pane, from where I could look down upon people, no pun intended. I called myself the happy prince. Several people passed by, and some stopped to admire. One face I particularly remember was that of a little girl.

She had grey-green eyes, pink lips and cherubic cheeks. I noticed she was never well-clad. Her bare feet sunk into the snow. Her red dress was not warm enough, and her head was bare. Her golden-brown hair shone in the winter sun, and on the first day that we met, she gazed at me for a long time, and then seeing my price tag, ran away. I wanted to see the price tag too, but my neck would snap if I bowed before anyone! Every evening, she would walk across the candle shop, stopping by to stare. On the third day, she pressed her cheeks against the window pane.

The fourth day, she talked to me. She said she had a pet squirrel that she'd named Chubby, and that she had twenty teeth.

And on the fifth day, she told me about her mother; a commoner who worked hard to make ends meet, and to send my little friend to school, feed her and buy her clothes... the sixth day, about her red frock, which was a gift from a certain secret Santa who made it a point to send her something every Christmas.

On the seventh day, she said her mother suspected it to be her estranged father who still loved Mama. Mama told her Papa was very handsome; grey-green eyes, brown messy hair, and strong broad shoulders she would snuggle into every night. Mama missed his smile.

On the eighth day, she said she wished she'd met Papa once. Longed to know if he knew she existed. If he cared about her existence, or cared that she missed him. He was now happily married to another woman, Mama said, and had another daughter who was ten. My friend, though, was eight.

On the tenth day, a couple kindly bought me. It was Christmas.

I remember being suddenly packed into a big bag, which was stuffy and suffocating. And nauseatingly *pink*.
(Damn women).

I sat in the backseat as we drove home. Apparently, they were a very happy family, because he held her waist and she had her arms wrapped around his. And their daughter looked content. He was a kind man, too, because he let his gaze linger at my little friend (who cried when we parted) for a long time before turning away tacitly. At least he didn't dismiss her just because she was poor.

Later, I heard they were a happy family. The society respected them. I thought it was because she never told them he slept with other women. He never told them Anna wasn't his daughter. They said they had unparalleled understanding. I think they were right, because every alternate day, only one of them came home early from work. He'd make love to different women, while she drowned herself in alcohol. Later, she'd shake hands with the same well dressed women in parties, and he'd stash the empty wine bottles for her.

Then they'd drive down together to fetch Anna from the crèche and behave like nothing ever happened. He'd call her "baby", and she would kiss him goodnight before retiring into separate bedrooms. They both loved Anna, though. She, because you cannot hate your own kin, and him, because.... Well, the distant, far away looks he had on his face while he fingered Anna's hair while kissing her goodnight, told me he loved her because she reminded him of someone.

A year went by.

They sobbed separately, and sorrow united them.

They had everything, but bliss evaded them.

He wondered if she wanted to leave. She wondered if he'd ask her to stay.

Neither happened; together, they chose to live that way.

Him, her, Anna, longings, and pain.

A day prior to Christmas, he was completely inebriated. But he did not forget one thing. That was the only day I saw a twinkle in his grey green eyes, as he slid on a Santa Claus cap over his brown, messy, tousled hair and stuffed me into a red sack slung over his broad shoulders. I fell asleep in the stuffy sack, but when I awoke the next morning, I found a familiar pair of grey green eyes regarding me with amazement. My dear little friend, oh how I'd missed her!

"I'm cold..." she muttered, shivering. "Do you think I should draw the blinds?"
I looked around, and saw a beseeching pair of grey green eyes peering at us from the other side of the window.

"Oh no, darling, just light me, you'll be warm in no time!"

Well, I knew the agony of fire, but my light quenched another's long lost quest for happiness, and I was finally at peace.

I knew Santa was for real, she said.

Well, I let her believe that. Do you think I was right?

CITY OF DEATH

Upasruti Biswas; *UG 1, Sociology*

In this city of ours, every day we travel alongside death. Often we don't stop to give him a second glance, only because his face is so familiar, so routine that we don't need to stop and consider his presence. It is a part of our daily travails, this everyday glimpse of the unknown; only it is wrapped up so it does not incite fear, as it normally would. And the death we travel with, well it is hardly one thing, or one person.

The tank full of oil hurtling alongside the Anwar Shah mini in its rabid dash to go faster is death. The pretty green tree with a long branch half broken, hanging over the road, is death. The milkman wobbling precariously on a cycle with 2 huge cans of milk on either side, cold perspiration dripping the silvery cylinders, is death. The child with a bag larger than her draped awkwardly on her shoulders, who is hardly old enough to know the meaning of death, cannot realize that in this crazy city, she too is death. On cool autumn evenings when the natural light too soon gives way to neon lights granted by the municipal corporation, the harsh brightness giving a plastic sheen to the trees bordering the dark, shadowy road along the Maidan, the blinking dividers in the centre of the road often become death. A rain-drenched College Street, with a faintly damp musty odour rising from the book stalls, trams skidding out of control on the raindrop-hugging tracks, a lonely youth who is innocent of any crime besides those of stealing his brother's chocolate or asking for the answer to question 29 in a Math exam – a set up for death.

Death is stalking, walking, always on the hunt, and we are taught from the minute our eyes open how to evade this worst of fates. Yet our teachers never mention that death has a Ph.D in stealth and disguise; that he can be and mostly is present in things we see every day, every hour, as per schedule, so much that it becomes ordinary, something to be ignored or more appropriately, something that just doesn't engage us anymore.

How many of us still notice that swooping feeling when a 234 rushes down the Dhakuria flyover too fast? Do we notice the auto slowly but ever so surely inching forward in a tight traffic jam, squeezing itself into the most unlikely corners? Or do we notice those "thela" cars or cycle vans carrying long rods of some metal, hanging miles out from either side of the van? And even if we do see these, notice these, we do not recognize these as death. For death, after all is horrible, gruesome, terrifying, something that our daily milkman most certainly is not. Gopal, the guava man, who assures us the guavas are essentially home-grown, in his own trees, and then uses an old rusty, grimy knife to chop it up for us – how can he be a messenger of the dark, villainous Yama?

It is in this capacity that death tricks us, to be our friend, our mundane, our daily existence, only to make us his own, at his leisure, for his pleasure.

DECEMBER MONOLOGUES

Samudranil Gupta; PG-II, English.

The green of the bottle shines against our sunshine floor, our old windows slightly parted to let the warmth come in. Mother stands combing her still-long hair; a smile in her eyes, as though winter will never enter our rooms. Outside it is turning white, pale. The warmth will soon be over, and we will put on our woollens, and a friend will drop by for a coffee. Father would happily bring in eggs and flour for Christmas, and read newspapers and Sunday supplements reluctantly. The green of the bottle will become dark and gloomy against a cold floor. We will not go out on a drive in the evening. We will stay back at home, thinking brooding, anxious of something to happen. And then we will try to listen to snowfall outside. We have never seen snowfall. But we will imagine we are running in the snow.

I

I do not like these nights. Unkissed, unloved. Cold, blank. Empty. Like words, empty, blank. One night, I thought I saw my old thesaurus lying dead on floor. The pages were blank. The words were replaced by dead ants. I wiped them clean, and the room was full of dead ants. I don't like these nights, they reek of dead ants. Outside it is white too. Cold, blank. Or I hope it to be white. It never snows here, but I long to watch snowfall. I do watch snowfall, at times, in dreams. One of these nights, unkissed, unloved, I hope to dream again. Maybe. Maybe I shall dream of tomorrow, or yesterday. What lies in between tomorrow and yesterday? A dream, momentary, fragile, transient. Like a snowflake. A little crumb of white. Minute. On the other side of the dream, the night shall persist, unkissed and unloved, cold, blank, and empty like words, replaced by dead ants on the pages of my old thesaurus. And now, as soon as I finish writing these words, they will soon turn into dead ants too. I see nothing but dead ants right now. I am writing dead ants. The white of the page, the blankness beneath, is my only assurance. I do not like these nights except for one assurance to hold on to: the empty page.

II

And I never sent those letters, because I never wrote them. I do not know how to write. This is someone else writing for me. I do not know if someone is writing at all. I hope someone is writing for me. Someone is writing what I am thinking in my mind. I am not thinking anything in my mind. I do not think anything anymore. Then again, even that is a thought. I can't stop thinking. I think nothing. Someone must be writing this on my behalf. I am thinking nothing. My letters, my letters, they were nothing, because I never wrote them. I am thinking of my letters that I never wrote. I needed someone to write those letters for me. Someone is writing what I wanted someone to write on my behalf, but I never wrote any letter, or anything in my mind either, so someone is writing nothing on my behalf. I am writing nothing through someone who is writing nothing on my behalf.

III

Finally, I am writing now. Yes, I am the writer of this piece of writing. But have I not said that the words are turning into dead ants? But have I said that? No I don't see that anymore anywhere. Perhaps whatever I have said have turned into dead ants and are gone. I have already wiped them clean, and I can see my room is full of dead ants, and this is after all an empty page I am writing on, in order to fill up the time. The space. But I wanted to write nothing, so am I writing nothing? I can see my sentences, my words, my ... my style ... they are already crumbling down, crumbling, crumbling down down into a dot. A dot.

Epilogue

We will wipe them away soon. The blank page shall remain, cold, white, empty. We will hear snowfall again. We will run in the snow, across this blank page.

OF FAIRYTALES AND US

Fiona Mukherjee, Dept. of Chemistry, U.G II

“Sleep tight. And don’t let the bed bugs bite!”

Laudon Street. One, two, three, four...ticks the second hand. It is one minute and three seconds to midnight. They are all sleeping; all of them. The little boy, breathing through his mouth, a wet thumb resting on the rosy soft cheek; Meno sleeps on top of his cosy blanket, braving the winter quite like a hero, curled up in nothing more than a pair of boxers. We zoom out of Meno’s room and pan the camera to the door and slowly tiptoe out of the room.

Meno’s parents. This is their only bedroom. Guests, (which is a rare phenomenon in Meno’s little house) if any, sleep in the store room adjacent to the kitchen, where Miss Jane, the housekeeper sleeps. The soft affectionate palms joined together, as if in some secret prayer. Miss Jane could be dreaming of what? Must be some fairy-land, perhaps like the once she reads out to Meno every noon, Wonderland maybe, or the chocolate factory, little Hansel and Gretel? Or could it really be the world she makes up with Meno’s costly toys? Those dolls and cars she had only, all her life, admired, craved, desired from a distance, from Waals’ street north; up the pavement, higher on the walls of the rich showroom, where all these toys wait patiently, behind the glossy window panes to be taken away to some home sooner or later.

Or would she be dreaming of the wise Japanese porcelain couple, back there on a stand that lies up the wall, their heads only slightly tilted towards each other? The lips employed in a certain quirky smile, as if you can’t know their secret. The man stands with an ancient scroll, and the lady with a Chinese hand-fan. For long hours, when Meno would be in school, she’d sit across the wall, on the floor and gaze at the ancient couple. It is then, that they feed her.

Meno’s parents lie naked, both on top of their big winter quilt that now merely serves as the mattress. Pa’s hands are thrown across Ma’s breasts, and their feet lie in a strange happy entangle. Ma’s cavernous dark patches underneath the eyes room darkness; Pa, breathing through the mouth, resembles little Meno.

The house, Villa 323, is breathing tranquillity but for that persistent, barefaced, second hand.

Here. She is Maria on the showcase, a gift to Meno from his Granda on his first birthday. Maria has the brown hair of a Pekinese dog and a pair of golden framed little spectacles. She is a five year old girl of a doll.

Lost in thoughts...

Tick, tick, tick, tick.....its’ like ascending endless number of stairs, stairs starting at the basement, snaking up, up, up to the second floor...and then, imagines Maria, the stairs going up through the sky.... to the moon? She knows not. Now she is diverted. Is it true, what Miss Jane says to Meno while feeding him dinner; is it true, that there lives a rabbit on the moon? Oh what colour could his eyes be then?

Would it be like those blue solitaires? Maria remembers seeing solitaires dangling from Ma’s ears. Maria has liked them very much. She has seen them from a very close distance, once when Ma had picked her up to her bosom... Maria remembers how her eyes had reached the ear lobes of ma and the hypnotic blue dazzled, swinging back and forth, back and forth, back and forth...

True. They had come across as something unbelievable and extraordinary to her, they seemed as if all the blue of the world had accumulated to live harmoniously in this little piece of crystal. The enthralled little Maria had even rechecked the colour of her cap, which was turquoise, to confirm her worst fears, if the blue from her hat too, had ditched her and joined in the solitaire entanglement. But thank god, it had been loyal to her.

But of course, all this was after the clock had stuck midnight.

Maria isn't talkative, she prefers to listen and observe instead. Just the way dolls do. This is for a fact, for she seldom leaves her place in the showcase. But old Juno the hunter does.

Juno is old, perhaps the oldest in the shelf. Juno originally belonged to Meno's dad but has miraculously leaped over the dunes of time to the present date. Hunter. Juno always wears tiger's skin, and never anything on the upper body. The weapon is a boomerang. He is aware, of course, that he can use it only when his battery is charged. This disturbed his integrity initially, but now he is convinced that things are like that. He has seen Meno's Granda, when he worked. He would always feel bad that his boss didn't let him do one thing or the other, back at office. It is still worse with Meno's dad. A journalist. Juno knows Pa feels worse than Juno himself when his battery is uncharged and the boomerang falls out of use.

It is one o'clock. No its past that time now. Juno is moving around the dining space, throwing his boomerang randomly. A rat is sneaking in from under the locked kitchen door, wondering if she should get across the hall. The lights are off.

If you hear closely, who could sure hear the sound of a chair being drawn aside, and a sung little grunt? Mike, the bear sits here. He is the alpha of this little shelf of Villa 323. The philosopher. Past midnight, you can never see him smiling. The eyebrows always knit together in some cynic theory about life. He thinks he is an actor. The shelf serves as a stage to him during the day, and his role is to hold his expression and position, which, all have promised, he does the best. But what alarms all the inhabitants of the shelf, including the lizard that shelters itself behind Mike, is that someday if cynicism gets the better of him and he might abruptly stop pretending, sorry, acting, some fine morning. And so, he is the alpha.

The night is growing, and the nocturnal toys are waking from sleep. The little cars, the big array of soldiers, the Barbie, the red hoodless car, Meno's favourite. They don't talk though. Just run around the dining cum drawing room, clumsily, crashing against each other, fighting, having fun.

And we have Muttie and Melanie, the second hand dolls Miss Jane has gifted to Meno recently. Meno has not liked them much. So they have been placed at the back left corner. The fat female plastic dolls. Lips painted red. The dark eyes that change their look as the clock strikes midnight. The dark kohl spreads melting across the cheeks, the lip paints smudged, the dresses curl up beyond the thighs; they so perfectly resemble little Maya. Muttie weeps, Melanie screams. Maya must have been Meno's age if she had lived, a little older maybe. She would have lived had it not been for that night, when Mama wasn't there, and dad had come in after they had had dinner. She would have lived, had dad not done something painful to her, something that seemed to hurt her a lot, something that had caused her dress to curl up to her stomach, her eyes go wide. She couldn't scream since dad's big palm was pressed against her nimble lips. But the eyes were wide, terribly wide. She must have died hence. Muttie nor Melanie remember anything post that event in that house. They had found themselves in this shelf after some time, the extent of which they knew not. They had thanked god that they were together though.

And then it is three o'clock. All the cars, Maria, Mike, Juno, Leopald, the soldiers...motion ceases. At three o'clock, the shelf is occupied only by Melanie and Muttie, and the floor is full. Motion ceases.

Muttie weeps. Melanie's eyes go blood red. She hangs herself by the neck, and swings from the hanger on the wall by the shelf. Her bloody eyes sprout out, the scream reduces to a mere squeak, the teeth come out, the nerves go stiff and blue. Melanie swings blue. A little less bright than the solitaires hanging from Ma's ears.

Muttie roars, screams. The cotton dress flutters in the air. Muttie screams. The eyes sprout out further. The blueness spreads to the whole body. Muttie screams. Swings Melanie. Back, forth, back, forth, back, forth,.....

It is morning.

The first light of the day has hit the eyes of Miss Jane. As she wakes up, she is reminded of a thousand chores. Meno, Ma, Pa have to be woken up, the breakfast made, the bath made ready, uniforms pressed. And suddenly something strikes her. Maria? Would she not be going to school as well? Yes. She should. She must be old enough. Jane gathers herself hurriedly and rushes to the shelf. Picks Maria up and takes her to the bathroom.

Then something happens, something Jane had expected in the least. The milkman appears from somewhere in his characteristic white apron accompanied by two strange fat women, clad in white, some white flat hat on. It seemed to Jane that they wanted to give her a bath instead.

“Its Thursday. Your Dad will be here anytime. We have to wash you well.” Some voice said.

“If you don’t cooperate, we’ll have to take you to room no. 204 for electric shock.”

Some other voice said.

Jane had protested that they were wrong. She was Jane. Maya was some different girl she had known. She had told them that she didn’t have any dad. That she lived with little Meno, Maria...the other names, she didn’t know why she was forgetting. She didn’t have a dad. She had told them. She had told them. She had told them she would have to take Maria to school, she was getting late and that the milkman should but deliver the milk and go. She had protested but something was happening, her protests were going weaker and weaker, her voice mellow. The smiling face of golden rim spectacled Maria blurred, Meno stood watching at the door. Why should he be smiling? Why doesn’t he stop them?

Jane didn’t want to, but she was falling asleep. The murmur went on, “no dad...I have no dad..no dad. Leave me please. No dad. I have no dad.”

PINK, PURPLE AND WHITE

Isha Biswas; *English, UG II*

I

“Done!” she chirped, stretching her legs across the divan. Not even the school finals got her to study the whole night. Her eyes gleamed pinkish from staring into the monitor for about four hours straight. College was fun, and she enjoyed the stress of the very first semester exam too. “Let’s see...the Odyssey, the sonnets, the drab Old Testament...” she murmured, counting her knuckles. The Holy Bible, an intimidating King James’ version, lay front-cover-down on the ochre pink bed sheet. She looked at it thoughtfully. “Maybe I should leave the rest for tomorrow. I’ve revised enough. Two more quick shuffles and I’m ready to roll! Yay!” she skipped towards her bedroom. The light was flicked off just before the clock struck five in the morning.

The nights went on; she happily savoured the long hours of studying with little breaks of her conversations on Facebook. Her college mates stayed awake too, posting parodies of stuff they hated reading, stuff they knew they had no choice but to cram. She peered into her cell screen, rolling her eyes at one post, giggling at another. After a few frantic exchanges of “Oi, are you studying that? :o” and “No, because I’m definitely not crazy :/” and fits of virtual smileys and chuckles, she moved her eyes to her books, read and re-read. “Macbeth killed his own sleep, now he’s killing mine”, she rubbed her eyes and yawned. Getting up, she produced a barley-sugar from the freezer; the cold snack soothed her sore voice and she gave a little cough. “Sapphic poetry, my beloved companion till 5.00 a.m.” was her last update before she fell into a deep sound slumber. The only glow in the room was the mosquito-repelling liquid latched to the plug-point, which fixed its sniper gaze on the bedside and reflected in the mirror on the opposite wall like demonic twins.

II

The exams tripped by smoothly, and she thought her hard work had really paid off. Despite all the midnight snacking on frozen sweets and occasional bouts of sneezing, she pulled it off. “I think you should better visit Dr.Chatterjee. Your voice is all but cracked from that wretched cold”, her mother said, two days after the exams ended. She sneezed twice, huffed in exasperation and strolled out to the dispensary all the while muttering about over-protective mothers. The doctor, however, made her promise that she would complete the course of antibiotics he was about to prescribe and not throw the vials away even if her cold receded mid-course. She consented, and dutifully gulped down the pills on reaching home. She had hardly ever missed out on her medicines, and her parents shared relief over that.

The following weeks of attending college and hanging out with friends pushed all her worries to the back of her mind. Her cold had almost disappeared and she could breathe through her nose again. She read all her story books that she had left unfinished, watched her favourite anime to her heart’s content, and enthusiastically bickered with hawkers on days of street-shopping. “Mom, look!” she tugged at her mother’s shawl after returning from college one evening. “Purple *chandbalis*! Aren’t they dandy?” she held up the tousled ear-rings. “They would look lovely with that new dress of yours”, her mother said with a smile, resuming her paperwork. Skipping up the stairs to her room, the daughter paused on the thirteenth step. Was that a hook that pricked her throat from beneath the turtleneck? She slipped her fingers below the wool, searching for a pin or something like that but found none. Shrugging, she sped up the stairs.

That night, she almost gagged. She had woken up scratching her throat, the inside of which clawed in a rapid, vertical motion. Within seconds, violent spasms rocked her chest, her coughs interspersed with desperate attempts to breathe. Disoriented, she tried to swallow air but not even that seemed to work. She hit her forehead, her chest, as if trying to force the machines inside her to start functioning again. On the verge of losing consciousness, the coughing abruptly slowed, and she collapsed on her bed, sucking in air with seething groans. Her dishevelled hair was moistened with sweat, her pillows with tears. She had woken up from a nightmare only to find to have woken *into* another.

III

“I’m stopping my meds”, she declared after going through three more ordeals of strangled coughing in the nights. Her parents, having fruitlessly searched for the cause of her condition, could just nod affirmatively while secretly concluding that their daughter must be taken to a better doctor. “Those antibiotics are too strong for her”, her father bellowed, “and they have triggered this.” Her mother agreed, absently pouring coffee into her mug till it overflowed.

Despite her weakness, she continued attending college. She knew that something was wrong with her, something that had turned medicines into poison, something that gnawed at her throat every few days, always a precursor to the fits of vicious suffocation. The fact she was still thankful about was that the painful minutes came calling only at night, the night that she now dreaded and passed almost awake, fitfully stirring on her bed until the light of dawn crept into her chamber, and only then she fell into a dreamless, painless sleep.

The days passed, otherwise uneventful, and she took to studying more during the night to keep her awake and free from the laborious breathing. She slept all day, her parents panicking over her; she resolutely resumed her studies when the second semester in her college commenced. She consistently used inhalers now, but never fished out one from her bag before her friends, no matter how much she needed it. It was insane, let alone devoid of wisdom, but she was adamant. She hated ruining other people’s fun by letting them know of her own illness. She hated to become a “party pooper”, or so she said.

IV

“It’s a very early stage, but there’s plenty to be worried about”, the physician in a white robe and gleaming rimmed glasses tapped the biopsy report with endless markings and notes of concern. The metastatic knob had already encircled her trachea and forced her into the cold, sterile ventilation chamber. The cancer had stopped spreading after sessions of emergency radiotherapy; apparently crouching to focus on the organ it wished to prey on next. “She must be taken to Mumbai immediately. The most advanced techniques and equipment at the Tata Cancer Research Institute will bring her back to normal life.” “Normal life”, she thought to herself, “which will not be *normal* at all in the truest sense of the word.”

It was cold. Colder than the wintry wind outside, dustily blowing across the streets. The mist outside swirled animatedly, and that within the chamber hung like a withered, pale tapestry, unmoving. Walking feebly to the window, she mused over the difference between a life supported on chemo, endless doses of white-hot burning rays, blood-stained handkerchiefs and the lonely white corridors of the hospital, and THE life that once was hers - the life that her friends still lived - of joy, sorrow, newfound love, exam stress, hang-outs, chocolates and...*hope*. She could hear a nearby church resonate with the voice of the choir that sang the same carols every year. Running a hand through her already thinning hair, she pressed her pale fingers against the cool blue glass of the closed panes, looking out to the rest of the world. Outside the stark white building that smelled of antiseptic, Christmas Eve melted into the night.

TIME TRAVELLING IN LITERATURE - A READER'S POINT OF VIEW

Sumallya Mukhopadhyay, *English, PG II*

A writer and a reader share a deeply complicated relationship. There is no denying the fact that every relationship is a social construct and compared to a reader, the commonplace intelligentsia places a writer in a hierarchical position. Blessed with creative zeal, lacing word after word, a writer conjures images, assembling them in symmetry, *inspiring a reader to the realm of imagination. This realm of imagination plays an interesting role in the writer-reader relationship. While imagination motivates a writer in the art of writing, a reader too takes refuge in imagination, delving deep into the art, deciphering means to understand and feel what is written before him. In short, imagination is the soul of art which fondles and caresses both a writer and a reader, thereby complicating their relationship, and as this complication aggravates, it aids us while reading to time travel to distant days of the past, imbibing literature with a timeless appeal.*

Imagination flies, connecting a sixteen year old boy, nestled in his small town Chuchurah which curls like a cat by the banks of Ganga, to his double in North Richmond Street in Joyce's Dublin. In an ambience hostile to romance, the boy yearns to go to a bazaar on the New Year to find a gift that completes his unrequited letters, only to be agonized by the strut and fret of laughing lips and inebriated faces. Suddenly aware, like Hamlet, that there are more things in heaven and earth that his adolescent philosophy can define, he observes the crowd, sketching pictures of aged fathers, staring from the balconies as their sons leave for the night; of the wretched beings, eagerly searching the plastics in waste bins to get an item, thrown away by someone because its New Year; of the ferries, generally moored in deserted stations, now jam-packed with people, where sleepy sailors seem active; of the barbers' endless scissor work, the sound of which will continuously vibrate the houses; of the old booksellers, trying their best to make people read and lurch their financial crisis in the process; of the dust-ridden children, *jocundly running errands to beg*; of the auto-drivers, hunting for passengers to church; of bus-men, busy striking fares for all; of the hotel-managers, shouting at their waiters to serve fast; of the street photographers, clicking photos for couples; of the man who sells cards, in the same spot, for the last three years; of the lights that adorn every worn-out building, in every street; of the commonplace tobacco smell outside cinema halls; of unremitting shrieks of bangles on the road; of controlled chaos outside the tea-stall; of the powerful whiff of toilets on crowded avenues; of the mothers carrying their children to pray at temples; of the fire crackers that finish only at midnight. Amid this symphony of sounds, he looks at his watch and the indifferent natural flow of time, gushing its way through everything, amazes him. The amazement influences him to shed off the innocence of his Malgudi days, and leaving behind the Rusty in him forever, he moves to a city where, as he had heard, nothing but joy surfaces.

Painstakingly stuck to the relics of neon-stained tram lines, the city exudes a superficial air which clouds the eye in everyday irrational traffic. One has to borrow Eliot's imagery, without anxiety of influence, to pay heed to the families placed under streetlight, mocking the books that the readers buy from bookstalls while out for an evening promenade, after having a lemonade with their friends. Precisely, at that very moment, disturbed by a puckish smile as he reads Auden's poetry, he understands the message the city conveys- *if you find a thing horrible, do not cling to it; if you find a thing beautiful, do not cling to it either*. The sensation of this message is so overpowering, sublimating in streets flanked by houses, that everyone consciously chooses to negate it, thereby emphatically emphasizing one's presence. Just as decent literature juxtaposes form and content, similarly the city and its people questioned each other, consummating an unparalleled passion. Well prepared with a face to meet other faces, he joins everyone, sensing the passion which drives the people, enlivening the city. Hurriedly packing Dylan Thomas in his bag as he walks down a running tram, trying not to miss his morning class again, the receding cry of the tram, making its way through a normal day, inspires him to revert back to those days when everyone was enticed to burn down trams for an increment in ticket prize. Smiling to himself, he realizes that everyone is driven by passion, and it is this passion for life which motivates Dylan Thomas to take the pen to write, and influences someone else to take to the streets. Hence, the more one is passionate, the more can one time travel, walking through words and sentences, meters and stanzas while reading his way through a water-clogged fruit market beside a railway station. In short, the literature of life lies in its passion.

THE POLITICS OF TIME

Satyaki Majumdar ; *UG III, Biochemistry*

As a student of biochemistry, I find myself pondering on the semantics of life as we know it. My calling, as a student, is study. I ask myself, "Of what?" Thinking further, I realise that being a student at all entails the study of everything. Everything that we see, hear or feel reveals upon study the subtle machinations of life, and all forms of study involve having to look back, and thus all forms of study are histories, in and of themselves.

An extremely common idea that we voice, in order to justify to ourselves the toil of education, is that we do it to better ourselves as human beings. I disagree, in that I believe the perusal of any information as an act of honouring and thus elevating the subjects in that text of information, which need not be words or images, literally printed on real or virtual paper. In support of my belief, I cite the notion that the value of anything we learn is in our choice to remember it. Our past exists only in our memory, and it exists because we choose to remember it. Innumerable people and species have dwelt on this earth, and we remember so few, partly because the accumulation of choices, in each generation that has preceded us, presents before us a perspective that contains the bias in each of these choices. Thus, we do not remember the Jews in Calcutta who went unreported in newspapers, or the Russian peasants living in the countryside in winter as Napoleon attempted to invade Russia. History has been the victor's version of events, laden with egoistic celebration of power and the feeling of possessing it, which we labelled greatness. More fundamental, however, is the fact that at every stage of this process, we chose the 'greater' side, the bits of information that made us feel better, for who would like to remember the Auschwitz as the personally justified campaign of a young, impoverished soldier, who felt wronged by the inequality of wealth after the first World War, and rose to dictatorial power in the second? Instead, we choose to remember the 'Great Dictator' as inherently evil, and the resultant genocide as tragic. How dispassionate and mean our choice seems, especially given the fact that we take upon ourselves the burden and the power of pronouncing judgement on other people, without pausing to consider every story that sheds light on the character!

Science begs to differ, defending its unabashed inquiry into and acceptance of empirical fact with the separation of fact from perspective. Yet, in its attempt to do so, the process of scientific enquiry itself acquires a perspective that is devoid of emotional variance, and assumes the exalted position of wonder, at the sudden revelation of truth behind the machinations of nature, in the discovery of governing principles that explain the behaviour of all things, living or inanimate. This understanding is then turned to application in improving the human experience. So, in the end, science is unable to separate fact from perspective. The reasons for this are simple, and thus more profound. Fact cannot be separated from perspective, because the acknowledgement of anything as fact is predicated on the presence of an essentially human observer who testifies to its veracity, and thus renders the perspective inlaid into the fact. In acknowledging that we are citizens of India, we honour India by providing the assurance that she will be remembered, as a nation, not just as a portion of the earth. This idea might not boil down too well with nationalist notions of belonging, but the idea of belonging to anything acknowledges that which we belong to, in implying that it will be remembered.

This predominance of granting recognition to subjects and objects by remembering them arises out of an instinctive fear – the fear of being forgotten, or worse, unremembered. Why, then are we afraid? I believe that is because we fundamentally perceive that the only thread that connects everything that we sense is time. The relative position that we accord to subjects in time determines the history that we choose to remember. Human beings cling to the hope of being remembered, because despite all our power and achievement, we understand that we cannot escape the conversation of Time. In this conversation, we talk to ourselves, or, if we are happier, to others. Thus we bind characters to ourselves, because the isolation of forgetfulness is too much to bear, and in realising that the conversation, like its participants, evolves, we acknowledge and thus participate in the politics of Time.

This participation also ensures that at every stage of the process, we look back, anxious to return to a moment or a state of happiness, where we are satisfied in our choice of memory. We crave happiness, and we attempt to immortalise joy in memory, because we recognise its impermanence, and we try to live every moment to the fullest. Yet, our memories never leave us, and at every instant, we stand, one foot in each world, the world of memory, and the world of the present. We enjoy this conflict, for it drives us to choose elements from both worlds in order to define the time that is to come. We feel empowered by these choices, for we live in the illusion that the order we choose will prevail in our future. Naturally, we are often brought to grief and disappointment, because life does not proceed as we had hoped it would, and yet the sheer randomness of events, the coincidences in which they meet with, and the confusion in which they depart from our expectations, is amazing, and it fills me with wonder to perceive the sheer miracle that we live, each day.

It is with this wonder that I realise that this year is slowly, but surely drawing to a close, and we have but a few minutes before the curtain falls. I must, quickly therefore, acknowledge the plethora of stories that I have been a part of, in this part of the universal web of energy as it snakes its way from star to star across the sky that we both see and do not. The degree of diminution that is given to me fills me with humility, in that I have witnessed, participated and contributed to this orchestra of life, where we each have a note to play, and our time flows by as we attempt to discover and produce this note. Not all of us succeed, and that is why we ignore those notes that we choose to reject because of our need for perfection. I am saddened to think, however, of those notes, half-formed, or even completely different from their perceived goal, and I wonder, do they achieve recognition of their neglect in the silence between words, in the gaps between lines, in the spaces between people or in the distances between galaxies? Perhaps, it is time, for all of us, to appreciate the grey, in a pixelated, square world of black and white.

A very merry Christmas, and a happy, new year.

TOWARDS A NEW SCIENCE

Pranjal Rawat, *Economics, UG III*

All of us, as students in the 21st Century, are in continuous dialogue with science and technology. There is no discipline today that has not undertaken radical transformation following the success of the hard sciences, namely physics and chemistry. The rules and methods, the statistical rigour, that are seen in the social sciences today, are deep-seated influences of the natural sciences. Social science often aspires to reach the high seat of certainty, the weight and the gravity that is associated with the word 'Science'. The process of 'Science', as observed to most people, even today, is that it follows the following procedure.

First the scientist, takes a long hard look at his environment, quickly records a per-theoretical observation, and isolates certain 'objects' of interest. First a general law is proposed; say 'A causes B'. Second, the scientist then checks whether the behaviour of the objects 'A' and 'B', conforms to the stated law. If reality does conform to the stated law, then the law is deemed correct. This process is known as *verification*, and it attempts to affirm a general law, by checking if reality holds with the law. Not every statement can be verified, because not every object is observable, or directly observable; with the current tools at hand. The ability of statements to be verified then forms the basis for the demarcation of science from arts; of positive from normative; of objective from subjective. Scientific research is also expected to encourage rational and informed debate, and maintain a continuous *dialogue* between different or conflicting research programmes. Scientific theories are also expected to be *consistent*, i.e. use previously assembled tools, follow methodological guidelines and build on previous work. How well a theory plays with its predecessors, sometimes also influences its reception and appreciation. By these three efforts; to verify general laws, to maintain dialogue and to be consistent, we generate a form of *continuity* in the advance of knowledge and scientific understanding.

To many people this procedure, largely defines 'Science', even today. And this form of science is characterised as positivism. This positivist science helped subvert natural resources, to the demands of men and in the modern era, became the foundation to commodity production. Scientific advances, not only initiated the first waves of globalisation (1850-), but were in turn propelled, and through hegemonic colonisers imposed upon the rest of the world. There they asserted themselves even in the remote corners of the world, pushing out, gradually, the older structures of 'primitive' knowledge. Even those perspectives, that had a more 'rational' and inquisitive character, were pushed out. However, today, within the subject of economics and even some of the core sciences, the age of Positivism is drawing to a close. And now as the Post-Positivist age unfolds, the meaning of 'Science' has been pulled into many directions. In order to summarise this transformation, we must look closely at the intellectual contributions of four crucial interventions in the philosophy and history of science.

Let us follow the work of three important philosophers, who brought into mainstream academic debate, three crucial critiques that changed the way we think of science.

The first major attack on this version of science was made by Austrian philosopher Karl Popper, who claimed that the condition of verification was a bad way to demarcate science and non-science. He claimed that in order for a theory to be recognised as scientific, rather than being verifiable it must be falsifiable, i.e. have the ability to be proved wrong, rather than be proved right. In the '*The Logic of Scientific Discovery*' he gives a simple example: "*no amount of observations of white swans can allow the inference that all swans are white, but the observation of a single black swan is enough to refute that conclusion*". By repeated application of the falsification principle, we are left with only those theories which have survived the onslaught of negation, and have in effect, 'not been disproved'. It was by the principle of falsification that Karl Popper, rejected Marxism, Freudian psychoanalysis and a large part of Continental philosophy. For example, one of the more recent movements within Marxism is the field of Structural Marxism; its chief authority being French Philosopher Louis Althusser. It claims that the every process (labour, capital, knowledge), *over-determines* everything, or that everything causes everything. Popper believed that such a perspective is not science, because it is not falsifiable, because it is much easier to justify and 'revise' such theories to fit political motivations.

The second wave of literature, was centred themselves around the work of American philosopher Thomas Kuhn, and his concept of *paradigm*. A paradigm is defined broadly as the unified perspective of science within researchers that encourages similar research methods and continuously influences the research interest as well. For Kuhn, it becomes equally important to observe the sociology of science, the effect of social conditions of researchers, upon scientific development. Generally, there exist two kinds of science within a paradigm- *normal* science and *revolutionary* science. Normal science is the gradual, incremental and linear advance of knowledge by application of already established scientific tools. This form of 'problem solving', is abruptly ended by the advent of revolutionary science. As revolutionary science proceeds, the most basic assumptions are challenged and there occurs a *paradigm shift*. For example, we observe the radical change in the discipline of linguistics when Noam Chomsky redefined the basic principles of language. There are many other examples in the history of science; in the history of physics for instance we find many paradigms- from Copernicus' Heliocentricity, Newtonian Mechanics, Einstein's relativity and Quantum Mechanics. We should note that, at the same instance of time, there may exist several overlapping paradigms, few dominant and the large many dominated. Dialogue between paradigms, is certainly unlike dialogue *within* a paradigm, and there may unintended interpretation. Kuhn, claims that this is the reason why the dialogue between, say a Cultural Historian with say, a Political Historian, is bound to be difficult. Since a Cultural Historian writes history from a 'subjective' interpretation of literature, while a Political Historian writes history using the chronology of major political events and figures; they cannot enter into dialogue very easily, as they differ in methodology.

The third critique was provided by Paul Feyerabend, the Austro-American philosopher. He declares war on fixed rules and universal principles like verification and falsification. In his treatise *Against Method*, he points that every scientific perspective makes certain assumptions, and in time we must recheck these assumptions. For example, there is little or no empirical data for 'Diminishing Marginal Returns' in the short and middle run. Since, no set of assumptions have proven to be universally applicable, we must concede that scientific progress is not limited to any single perspective and that 'anything goes'. Myth and science, overlap in many areas, and we thus cannot hold established theories as gold standards. The myths that we take for granted in science cannot be justified, and this implies doubt regarding our integrity and dedicated to scientific endeavour. Major breakthroughs and landmark scientific advances have arrived precisely when researchers did not follow the same methodological routes. The *consistency* condition, earlier mentioned assures rigid methodological principles and demarcation devices, and instead of eliminating theories that do not comply with *facts*, ends up eliminating those that do not comply with *pre-existing theories*. By advocating methodological anarchism, we retain the healthy skepticism over pre-existing theories, but also are skeptical about how science dismisses primitive or ancient philosophy. Methodological anarchism opens up a wealth of literature, from Ancient Jain Philosophy and the tales of modern-day Africa (the tales of Anansi the spider), to scientific consideration. Feyerabend argues that Science has not convinced anyone through pure reason; it has at times, used myths, fairy-tales and irrational leaps of faith to cover its grounds. Not only must we be vary of older theories, but we must also be vary of facts. No theory in the world can explain every fact, and moreover since our subjective biases determine which facts must '*necessarily be explained*' and which '*need not be explained*', we tend to be biased against theories that may explain facts which we do not consider valuable enough. Accepted theories are then, are mostly, successful only from the point of view of the scientists; for other people they might be irrelevant.

The fourth and most prominent critique has come from the young research programme of 'Critical Science studies' that was launched by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer in the early 1990's. Their landmark text *The Leviathan and the AirPump*, placed the 'experiment' under scrutiny. They showed using a critical dissection of the debates concerning scientific method in the 16th Century that it was not genius or reason that led the scientific community to select Boyle's experimental method over Hobbes' everyday natural philosophy, but rather politics. They claim, that since science as self-reflexive modernism, is after all a human product, the role of political motivation drives research and even, controversially, reasoned agreement. For them the question is not about disagreement, but rather agreement. Why did scientific knowledge take upon this particular path? An explosion of research in this field, especially through Bruno Latour's *Science in Action*, we see that the core institution of modernity, Science, is now open to an even deeper 'scientific' analysis.

Whoever could believe that the skyscraper of Science, could have weak foundations? For we have to recognise, that science is an intellectual structure, clearly dependent upon the material and cultural conditions. Not only can it transform itself from inside, through scientific dialogue and debate, but it also transforms through external events via politics, social change and economics. It also transforms itself through irrationality, myth, prejudice; things that are harder to understand. Ultimately, the deeper we dig into science, we realise it is only but a perspective. A potentially better perspective, than religion, yet a perspective all the same.

OF THE DOG-EARED AND THE NEGLECTED
[AND OF THE INCREDIBLE RUBBISH]

Agniva Roychowdhury, *Physics, UG-II.*

'The shops are full of incredible rubbish. But what you really need can't be found any more.'
Allemagne 90 Neuf Zéro (1991), Jean-Luc Godard.

It has seen blood running on sun-lit tram lines and warm kisses of lost sweethearts; it has heard deafening revolvers and the sip of an afternoon coffee. It saw us when we were alive.

As the country is ready to splurge on a brand new edition of some *'Half-Girlfriend'*, there lies at a specific corner on College Street, a wet and old copy of a Sholokhov. It looks at the world through a pin-hole, perhaps dreaming of a two-legged name on its first page. But the front shrieks out *'Dan Brown'* in bold letters, a wonderful cover and a wonderful book. They sell brilliantly, at 100, 150, 200 and what not! But the Sholokhov hasn't seen the sun for many years.

If one ever chances upon College Street, one would fairly be able to discern around hundred signboards from a distance: 'JEE' written with neat handwriting on them, stall number, and all. And book-keepers greeting you with a smile. Down in the lane by the Calcutta University second gate, a number of stalls line the footpaths. In one of them, you would find an old man, bald and spectacled, surrounded by several bags-on-backs, guarding his little array of treasures. He possesses some of the best and the oldest tomes available within many kilometers' radius in the city. But they come to him for their curriculum: 'ম্যাকবেথের গাইড বই আছে?' And for weeks, months and years, a leather-bound *Dorothy Wordsworth* sits on the highest shelf beside him, devoured by moths, and serving as shelter for spiders. It perhaps belonged to a school library or was gifted to someone's beloved on their birthday.

[And then there are always the exorbitant rates. I can recall a book-keeper asking 600 for a *Dover Kinetic Theory of Gases*, and then, by noticing the rebellion in my face, he had looked the other side and had come back with 300. And all these had happened in around five seconds or so].

They have stories of their own; stories of happiness and of heartbreaks, of friendships and of tears, and of revolution. But there is not one willing to listen to them.

'May life share its many blessings with you..'

A time, I fear, shall come, when we will no more understand the value of the rare. All the moth-eaten Penguins and the Radugas would go away with the garbage truck, with stories to tell. And on one lost night, one would look on and on in old deserted by-lanes of this city, for something one needs, but shall only find a handful of *'Steps to NEET'* kissing the dead footpath.

And now, as prices have reached sky-high, ironically, the quality of the more popular [English] Literature circulated in India is going straight down. There is a bookstore in Park Street, which people, if I am not mistaken, call the *'Oxford Bookstore'*; big name, big books, big prices. I found Godard's post-Cold-War 'incredible rubbish' here.

If one is to hope, it can only be a *Flipkart* or an *Amazon*, (although not for rare classics) for reasons obvious to book-buyers.

But sodium lamps shall shine no more on *'LIFE: Paris'* and I won't get an Alistair Maclean at twenty rupees. Only the wind of a certain storm shall blow out dimly lit candles.

গল্প বিভাগ

ভাঙনকাল

নীলোৎপল সরকার; স্নাতক প্রথম বর্ষ; বাংলা বিভাগ

প্ল্যাটফর্মের ভিড়টা কাটিয়ে বড়রাস্তায় নামতে মিনিট দশেক সময় লেগে গেলো। বড়দিনের ছুটিতেও স্টেশনে যে এতটা ভিড় হবে তা আশা করিনি। শীতের এই সময়টাতে কেমন একটা নিছক ছুটির আমেজ ছড়িয়ে থাকে চারপাশটায়। তবু আজকালকার নাগরিক জীবনের ব্যস্ততায় কারও কাছে বোধহয় ছুটিটাও ছুটির মত করে কাটানোর সময় নেই। আর এই ব্যস্ততা আমার ছোটো মফস্বল শহরটাকেও ক্রমশ গিলে ফেলছে। বড়রাস্তায় আসতেই ছোটবেলার কথা মনে পরে গেলো। রাস্তার দুধারে কেকের অনেকগুলো অস্থায়ী দোকান বসেছে। বাঙালিদের এই বড়দিনের কেক খাওয়ার হুজুগটা এখনও বেঁচে আছে ভেবে ভালোই লাগলো। রিকশা করেই যাওয়া যেত, কিন্তু শীতের রোদ গায়ে মেখে হাঁটার লোভটা সামলাতে পারলাম না। মেয়েদের স্কুলের পাশ দিয়ে যে সরু গলিটা গেছে, ওটা দিয়ে গেলে কুড়ি মিনিটের রাস্তা, শটকাটে দশ মিনিটেই যাওয়া যায়। গলির মুখটা ধরে এগোতেই দেখি স্কুলের পাঁচিলের ধারে রাখা ডাস্টবিনের পাশে একটা নীল রঙের পাতলা ডায়েরী পড়ে আছে। কাছে গিয়ে ডাস্টবিনটার পাশ থেকে ডায়েরীটা হাতে তুলে নিলাম। ডায়েরীটার ওপরটা বেশ নোংরা, ধুলোভর্তি আর কোনোর দিকটা একটু ছেঁড়া। ধুলো ঝেড়ে প্রথম পাতাটা খুলতেই দেখি, ছোটো ছোটো অক্ষরে লেখা—‘কেউ এই ডায়েরিতে হাত দেবে না’। নিতান্ত কৌতূহলবশতই ডায়েরীটা কাঁধের ঝোলা ব্যাগটায় ভরে নিয়ে গলিপথ ধরে হাটতে লাগলাম। বাড়ি পৌঁছে ডায়েরীটার কথা বেমানাম ভুলেই গেছিলাম। রাতে ব্যাগ ঘাটতে গিয়ে ডায়েরীটা পেলাম। কৌতূহল মেটানোর জন্য তখনই ডায়েরীটা নিয়ে পড়তে বসে পরলাম। এটা অন্তরা নামের একটি মেয়ের ডায়েরী। ও নলিনীবালা বিদ্যামন্দিরে ক্লাস ফাইভে পড়ে। এই মফস্বলেই ওর বাড়ি, ঠিকানা-৪ নং মুখার্জি রোড, ২ নং গলি। ওদের বাড়িটা খুব পুরোনো আর বাড়ির নাম আকাশলীনা। ওর দাদুর মায়ের নামে এই বাড়ির নাম। অন্তরা বাবা মা আর দাদুর সাথে এখানেই থাকে। ঠাকুমা যখন চলে যায় ও তখন পাঁচ বছরের, তাই ঠাকুমার কথা ওর কিছুই মনে নেই। পাতলা খসখসে সব পৃষ্ঠা জুড়ে আছে ওর ভালোলাগা, দুঃখ, রাগ আর ছোটো থেকে বড় হয়ে ওঠার চেষ্টা করার একরাশ অনুভূতি। এভাবেই বেশ ডায়েরীটা অন্তরার কথা শুনিয়ে চলছিল। শেষ কয়েকটা পাতা চমকে দিল আমায়। লেখা আছে---

০২/১১/১৪-

আজ রবিবার। সকালে ড্রয়িং ক্লাস থেকে ফিরে সারাদিন বাড়িতেই কাটলাম। আজ আবার সেই মুশকো মতো লোকটা বাবার সাথে দেখা করতে এসেছিল। বড় ঘরটায় বসে ওরা অনেকক্ষণ কথা বলছিল। লোকটা চলে যাওয়ার পর সন্ধ্যা বেলা বাবার সাথে দাদুর কথা কাটাকাটি হয়েছে। ঘরে বসে আমি বাবার জোরে গলার আওয়াজ পাচ্ছিলাম। রাতে দাদুর ঘরে গিয়ে দেখি ঘর অন্ধকার, আলো জ্বালানো হয়নি। আলোর সুইচ টা অন করে কাছে গিয়ে দেখি দাদুর মোটা কাঁচের চশমার ফাঁক দিয়ে জল গড়িয়ে আসছে। আমি বললাম—‘দাদু কি হয়েছে, তুমি কাঁদছ কেন?’। দাদু আমাকে দু হাতে জড়িয়ে ধরে বলল—‘এই বাড়িটা আর থাকবে না রে মুমু। তোর বাবা এটাকে ঐ প্রোমোটর টাকে বিক্রি করে দিচ্ছে। ওরা এই বাড়ি ভেঙে নতুন বড় বাড়ি বানাবে আর আমরা চলে যাব অন্য জায়গায়, অন্য একটা বাড়িতে। সব শেষ হয়ে যাবে রে আমাদের।’

আমি ঠিক বুঝতে পারছিলাম না। জিজ্ঞেস করলাম-‘ প্রোমোটোর মানে কি, দাদু ?’ দাদু বলল-‘তুই বুঝবি না।’ আমি সত্যি কিছু বুঝতে পারছি না।

০৬/১১/১৪-

প্রোমোটোর শব্দের মানেটা আজ আমি জেনেছি। আমাদের ক্লাসের অনু , ওই আমাদের মধ্যে একটু বেশি পাকা আর ও অনেক কিছু জানো। ও বলল প্রোমোটোর শব্দের মানে দালাল। এরা নাকি খুব দুষ্ক হয়। পুরোনো বাড়ি ভেঙে এরা নাকি উঁচু উঁচু বাড়ি বানায়। এসব শুনে আমার খুব কষ্ট হচ্ছে। আমাদের এই ‘আকাশলীনা’কেও কি ভেঙে ফেলবে? দাদু বলত আকাশলীনা মানে যেখানে আকাশ আর মাটি একসাথে মিশে থাকে, যাকে বলে দিগন্ত। আকাশের শেষ সীমাকে কি কখনও ভেঙে ফেলা যায়।

০৯/১১/১৪

আজ আবার বাবার সাথে দাদুর ঝামেলা হয়েছে। দাদু বোধহয় কিছুতেই এই বাড়ীটা বিক্রি করতে চায় না। মা আজ খুব জোরে জোরে কথা বলছিল। এ নিয়ে রাতে মাকে জিজ্ঞেস করলাম। মা কিছু বলল না।

১৩/১১/১৪

মা আজ আমাকে নিজে ডেকে সব কিছু বলল। আমরা আর এই বাড়িতে থাকব না। পরের মাসেই আমাদের নতুন বাড়িতে উঠে যেতে হবে। ওই বাড়িটার নাম নাকি ‘আনন্দ’। ওখানে আমাদের মতো অনেক পরিবার থাকে। মা একদিন গিয়ে দেখে এসেছে। আমরা নাকি অনেক উঁচুতে থাকতে পারব আর ওখানকার ঘরগুলো খুব চকচকে। এসব শোনার পর আমার দমবন্ধ হয়ে আসছে। আমার তো এই বাড়িটাকেই খুব ভালো লাগে। কতো স্মৃতি আছে এখানে। এই বাড়িকে নিয়ে দাদুর সব গল্প, আমার ছোটো থেকে আর একটু বড়ো ওঠা, সব তো এখানেই। আচ্ছা কিছু ভেঙে কি নতুন আনন্দে থাকা যায়?

১৯/১১/১৪

দাদু বাবাকে আজ জানিয়ে দিয়েছে যে, সে আমাদের সাথে ওই নতুন বাড়িতে গিয়ে থাকতে পারবে না। দাদু একটা অন্য জায়গায় চলে যাবে। সেখানে দাদুর মতো নাকি অনেকেই একসাথে থাকে। ঠিক বুঝতে পারছি না। দাদুকে ছেড়ে থাকতে আমার খুব কষ্ট হবে।

২৬/১১/১৪

বাবা দাদুকে আজ নতুন জায়গাটায় দিয়ে এলো। যাওয়ার সময় দাদু খুব কাঁদছিলো। আমি কাছে গিয়ে জড়িয়ে ধরতেই দাদু ঝরঝর করে কেঁদে ফেললো। আমার মাথায় হাত দিয়ে বলল-‘অনেক বড় হবি রে মুমু আর বড় হলে কাউকে কোনোদিন কিছু ভাঙতে দিবি না। ভেঙে ফেলা খুব সহজ রে কিন্তু কিছু গড়ে তোলা খুব কঠিন। ভালো থাকিস’। আস্তে আস্তে সাদা ট্যাঙ্কিটা দাদুকে নিয়ে একরাশ খোঁয়া ছাড়তে ছাড়তে আমার চোখের সামনে দিয়ে বেরিয়ে গেল আর পিছনে পড়ে থাকল দাদুর ভালবাসার আশ্রয়। কিছুদিন বাদে সেটাও বোধহয় থাকবে না।

০৬/১২/১৪

কাল আমরা নতুন বাড়িতে যাচ্ছি। আমার একটুও ভালো লাগছে না। মাকে অনেকবার বলেছি। মা বলল-‘একটা ভাঙাচোরা স্মৃতিকে নিয়ে কতদিন বাঁচা যায় বল?’ মা যেন কেমন বাবার মতোই বদলে যাচ্ছে। চিলেকোঠার ছোটো

ঘরটার জন্য আমার খুব কষ্ট হচ্ছে। কোনও ভাবে যদি বাড়িটায় থাকা যেত, খুব ভালো হত। এখন বুঝছি ছোটবেলায় দাদুর শোনানো রূপকথার গল্পগুলো সব মিথ্যে। সত্যি যদি রাজপুত্রের থাকতো তবে ওই প্রোমোটোর দৈত্যটাকে সে ঠিক মেরে ফেলত। এখন এই ডায়েরিটাকে নিয়ে কি যে করি, বুঝতে পারছি না। এটাতে তো সব আমার কথা, এই বাড়িটার কথা, দাদুর গল্প সব লেখা। এটাকে কিছুতেই আমি ওই বিশী জায়গাটায় নিয়ে যাব না। তার থেকে বরং পথেই কোথাও ফেলে যাব। আমার এ বাড়িটাও হয়ত কাল পথেই মিশে যাবে।

এখানেই ডায়েরিটা শেষ। শেষ পাতটা পড়ে গলাটা কেমন যেন বুজে আসছিল। চেষ্টা করেও ঘুমোতে পারলাম না। কাল সকালে বাড়িটাতে একবার যাব ভাবলাম।

সকাল সকাল উঠে ডায়েরিতে লেখা ঠিকানাটা ধরে জায়গাটায় পৌঁছলাম। গিয়ে দেখলাম বাড়িটা আর বাড়ি নেই। একপাশে ভাঙাচোরা ইটের বিশাল স্তূপ আর অন্যপাশে নতুন কাজ চলছে। এখন আকাশলীনা কেবল মাত্র একটা ঠিকানা, একটা পাতলা ডায়েরি আর খানিকটা স্মৃতির আবর্জনা। ইটের স্তূপটার সামনে গিয়ে দাঁড়াতেই চোখের কোনটা হালকা ভিজে উঠল। হঠাৎ আমার ডান হাতটায় একটা পাঁচ আঙুলের স্পর্শ পেলাম-এ যেনও সেই হঠাৎ বড় হয়ে ওঠা ক্লাস ফাইভের বাচ্চা মেয়েটার হাত যে একটু হাসি আর আনন্দের সাথে দাদুর হাত ধরে পুরোনো বাড়িটার কোনায় কোনায় ছড়িয়ে পড়তে চেয়েছিল। আমি খুব চেষ্টা করছিলাম হাতটাকে চেপে ধরার কিন্তু ঠিক ধরতে পারছিলাম না। সন্ধ্যা ফিরতে দেখি স্তূপটার পাশের ছোট গাছটার একটা পাতা আমার হাতের মুঠোয়। এভাবেই বোধহয় হাত থেকে হাত, পুরোনো বাড়ি আর একরাশ স্মৃতি পালিয়ে যাচ্ছে ---- খুব চেষ্টা করছি কিন্তু কিছুতেই আটকে রাখতে পারছি না।

অ্যাসাইলাম

সুয়াভো মুখাজ্জী, অর্থনীতি বিভাগ

হিসেব করে দেখতে গেলে সারাদিন একেবারে না খেয়ে রয়েছি সেরকম নয়। আবার অনেক খেয়েছি সেটাও না। মানে দুইয়ের মাঝামাঝি যে বিশাল ধূসর এলাকা, তার খানিকটা জুড়ে আছি না খাওয়ার দিকেই খানিকটা হেলে আছি বলা যায়। খিদে এখনো মাথায় আটকে আছে, পেট অবধি নামেনি অবশ্য খিদে ক্ষেত্রবিশেষে পেটের নিচেও নামে “আপনা মাংসে হরিণা বৈরি”, কাজেই সে নিয়ে এক আধখানা মোমবাতি মিছিল হয়ে মোমবাতি বিক্রেতাদের ইয়ার-রাউন্ড সেল নিশ্চিত করা ছাড়া খুব একটা কাজের কাজ হয় বলেও শুনি না। আমার অবশ্য এখন ইয়ার এন্ড, কাজের ছলাবিলা চাপ, সেখানে নাওয়া খাওয়ার ফুরসত মেলে না খুব একটা। নাওয়া ব্যাপারটা এমনিতেই অনিয়মিত আমার কাছে মানে এমন নয় যে আমি হাইজিন কনশাস নই কিন্তু আমার জল দেখলে ভালো লাগে না। জল দেখলেই কিরকম একটা, ঠাণ্ডা, ঘুমজড়ানো কন্সলের মত অন্ধকার আমায় ঢেকে ফেলে প্রতিবার। মাথা গা বেয়ে সেই অন্ধকার তারপর নামতে থাকে, অঙ্গপ্রত্যঙ্গ ছুঁয়ে আমার ভিতরের অন্ধকার ছুঁয়ে নামতে থাকে, রোমশ পা বেয়ে হিলহিলে সাপের মত শিহরণ জাগিয়ে নামতে থাকে, মায়ের পেটের ভিতর ডুবে থাকা স্মৃতির অবশেষের উপর দিয়ে নামতে থাকে। তারপর নর্দমা দিয়ে বেরিয়ে মিশে যায় আরও অনেক অন্ধকারের সাথে, মিশে বাড়তে থাকে, ফুলতে থাকে, ফুঁসতে থাকে, ছটফট করে বেরিয়ে আসার জন্য। আমি এই বেরিয়ে আসাকে খুব ভয় পাই। তাই জল দেখলে আমার খুব ভয় লাগে। মা অনেকবার অনেক গালাগাল দিয়ে, বাবা-বাছা করেও বোঝাতে পারেনি। আমিও বোঝাতে পারিনি আমার সমস্যা। কাজেই মাথা গায়ে জলের ছিটে দিয়ে বেরিয়ে এসেছি অনেকদিন ধরে। আমার মাধ্যমিক পাশ মা ধরতেও পারেনি। ঠকে গিয়েছে প্রতিবার।

ইকনমিক্সে অনার্স উশ্রী অবশ্য এসবের ধারকাছ দিয়েও যায় না। অবশ্য ও বাড়ি থাকেই বা কতক্ষণ। আর সত্যি বলতে কি, ও আমার জীবনে না থাকলে আমি হয়তো কলকাতা ছেড়ে বরাবরের মত বেরিয়ে পড়তে পারতাম। অনেকবার ভেবেছি, আজ বোধহয় উশ্রীর বাড়ি ফেরার পথে অ্যাকসিডেন্ট হল, বা কেউ ওকে আঁচড়ে কামড়ে রেখে গ্যালো, প্রাণটুকু ধুকপুক ধুকপুক করছিলো, আমার চোখে চোখ রেখে কিছু কথা বলতে চেয়ে অস্ফুট একটা গোঙানি, আর তারপরেই উশ্রী আর নেই। নিদেনপক্ষে আমার মত গুড ফর নাথিং-কে ছেড়ে অন্য কোনো বলিয়ে-কইয়ে স্মার্ট কারোর সাথে ভেগে যেতেও পারো। এটাও ভেবেছিলাম। একসময় এতবার এইসব ভাবতাম, আমার কাছে উশ্রীর অ্যাকসিডেন্টের পর থ্যাতলানো মুখ, ওর অস্ফুট হাবিজাবির সাথে মিশে থাকা শূন্য চোখের দৃষ্টি, ওর শ্রাদ্ধের মেনুর ডিজাইন ও রজনীগন্ধার সিঁক রাখা ফুলদানির গঠন, সব পরিষ্কার দেখতে পেতাম। খালি ও যখন আমায় বলছে আমি অমুকের সাথে চললাম, তখন সাথের লোকটার চেহারা বারবার পাল্টে যেত। কখনো কেবলের বিল নিতে আসা ছোকরা, কখনো ওর অফিসের ওই তামিল না তেলেগু কলিগ, কখনো সলমন রুশদি। ঠিক থাকতো না।

আজ অফিস ফেরত বাবাকে দেখতে গিয়েছিলাম। কোনো ইচ্ছে নেই আমার বাবার সাথে সম্পর্ক রাখার, বা রাখলেও সেটা স্বীকার করার। উশ্রী বারবার জোর করে পাঠায়। আমার প্রতিবার মনে হয় আমার বেড়ে ওঠার অসুস্থ পরিবেশের দিকে উশ্রী এইভাবে ঘুরিয়ে ঠাট্টা করে। এমনিতেই আমার মুখ খারাপ করা বা মেগা সিরিয়াল দেখা বা উপহার পেলে বা দিতে হলে আগে তার দামের হিসেব করা-এইসবের জন্য উশ্রী আমায় খানিক অপছন্দই করে হয়তো, হয়তো কি, নিশ্চিত করে তাও ওর কথা রেখেই আমায় মাসে একবার হলেও অ্যাসাইলাম ঘুরে আসতে হয়।

অ্যাসাইলাম আমাদের জীবনের সবথেকে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ আবিষ্কারা মানে পাগলাগারদ অর্থে অ্যাসাইলাম অ্যাসাইলামের আরেকটা মানে হয় আশ্রয়, যেটা ওই নানা সরকার নানা লোকজনকে দিয়ে থাকে। কিন্তু সেটা আমার বাবার মত লোকেদের জন্য না। উশীর মা, আমার বাবা, কখনো কখনো উশী নিজে, এদের দেখলেই আমি বুঝি অ্যাসাইলাম জিনিসটা স্বাভাবিক সমাজে কতটা দরকার। একদিন আমি আর উশী বেরিয়েছিলাম। কোথায় যেতে চাইছিলাম খেয়াল নেই। মাঝরাস্তায় কিছু একটা নিয়ে বরাবরের মত ঝামেলা হল, আমি যেমন গাড়ি চালাচ্ছিলাম সেইরকমই চালিয়ে গেলাম। খেয়াল হল যখন উশী বলল আজ বাবার কাছে আসার আমাদের কোনো প্ল্যান ছিলো না। সেদিন দেখেছিলাম আমি গাড়ি বাবার অ্যাসাইলামের সামনে নিয়ে এসেছি। আসলে আমার যে সাহস কতটা কম, সেটা সেদিন বুঝেছিলাম। দরজা খুললেই হয়ে যেত, শান্তি অপেক্ষা করছিলো গাড়ির গেট আর অ্যাসাইলামের দরজার মাঝখানে। তবুও আমি সাহস করে ওইটুকু পথ পেরিয়ে উঠতে পারিনি সেইদিন। এখনও মাঝেসাঝে সেদিনের কথা ভেবে আফসোস হয়। লটারিতে ঠিক আগের বা পরের টিকিট জিতে গেলে যা আফসোস হয় মানুষের, তার থেকেও বেশি আফসোস অ্যাসাইলামখানা যদিও জব্বরা বাইরে বিশাল দেওয়াল। জেলখানার মত। ভিতরে একখানা ওয়েটিং রুম, তাতে একটা হনুমানের ছবি, একটা ল্যাংটো বাচ্চার ছবি দেওয়া ক্যালেন্ডার, ডাক্তারদের নাম এইসব পেরিয়ে রিসেপশনে এক মহিলা বসে প্রতিদিন শব্দছক সমাধান করেন। মানে আমি প্রতিদিন আসি না, বা জানি না, কিন্তু যে কবার এসেছি, এর অন্যথা হয়নি। তবে আমি ওই মহিলার সাথে কথা বলি না। আসলে গৌফওয়ালা মেয়ে দেখলে আমার খুব অস্বস্তি হয়। এবং মহিলার গৌফ নিয়ে আর কারোর মাথাব্যথাই নেই। হয়তো কেউ এটা খেয়ালও করে না। আমি একবার এটা উশীকে বলেছিলাম। উশী এমন করে তাকিয়েছিলো, আমি আবার শীতকালের প্রত্যঙ্গের মত গুটিয়ে গিয়েছিলাম। আমি অবশ্য যাই, ডাক্তারের সাথে গল্পগুজব করি, বাবার ঘরে একবার যাই, বাথরুম পরিষ্কার কিনা দেখার অছিলায় টুক করে নিজের কাজ সেরে নি। এরা খুব কেয়ারিং। মাসে একবারও দেখতে না গেলে বাড়িতে ফোন করে। সেইজন্যই আমায় মাসান্তে এখানে একদিন হিসু করতে আসতে হয়।

বাড়ি ফিরে খিদে পাওয়া-না পাওয়ার মাঝখানে বসেছিলাম। ভাবছিলাম, উশীর সাড়াশব্দ নেই, ওর কিছু ভালোমন্দ হল কিনা। তখনই খাবারের প্লেট সাজিয়ে আসা উশীর মা-কে দেখে আমার যেটুকু খিদে ছিল, সেটাও মরে গেলা। কারন ভদ্রমহিলাকে আমার একেবারে সহ্য হয় না। তখন আমরা দুজনেই কলেজে পড়া। একদিন উশীর ফোন অফ ছিল। তখন উশীর কারফিউ আওয়ার ছিল সাতটা। ফোন ব্যাটারি শেষ হয়ে বন্ধ হয় পাঁচটায়, উশীকে আমি বাসে তুলে দিই ওই আন্দাজ ছটা নাগাদ, উনি আমায় ফোন করেন সাড়ে ছটায়, উশী বাড়ি ফেরে পৌনে সাতটায়। উনি আমায় প্রথম প্রশ্ন করেন উশী কোথায়, উত্তর নিয়ে দ্বিতীয় প্রশ্ন করেছিলেন “তুমি কত পেলে আমার মেয়েকে ছাড়বে বলো তো?”। আমি এর আগে আমার ঠাকুমার সাথে বসে দুপুরবেলা দেখা প্রসেনজিত-ঋতুপর্ণার সিনেমা ছাড়া এই জাতীয় কথা কোথাও শুনিনি। স্বাভাবিকভাবেই থ মেরে গিয়েছিলাম। উশী এটা কোনোদিন মানতে চায় নি, যে উনি সত্যি আমায় এটা বলেছিলেন। বহু ঝামেলা ঝগড়ার পর আমি এটা বললেই ও বলতো আমি ভুল শুনেছি। আরে ভুল শুনবো ক্যানো? আমি কি অ্যাসাইলামে থাকি নাকি? বা কোনোদিন ছিলাম নাকি? না আমি ওইখানে যাওয়ার যোগ্য? ওখানে তো যাবে তারা, যাদের আমি পছন্দ করি না। যাদের আমার স্বাভাবিক মনে হয় না, তারা থাকবে ওই পাঁচিলের ওদিকে। আমার এদের সাথে কথা বলতে ভালো লাগে না, তাই আমিও ওকে বলা ছেড়ে দিয়েছি অনেকদিন। সবাই কি আর শিবিন্দা শুনে আছাড় খেয়ে প্রাণত্যাগ করবে নাকি?

ওর মা-কে তাই আমার পোষায় না বিশেষা উশী ওনাকে খুব ভালোবাসে। হয়তো আমার থেকেও বেশি। ভদ্রমহিলা সামনাসামনি এলেই এমন একটা দৃষ্টিতে তাকিয়ে থাকেন, যার অনেকগুলো মানে হয়। এমনিতে উনি আমার সাথে ঠিকঠাক ব্যবহার করলেও উনি তাকালেই আমার ভিতরে জমে থাকা অন্ধকারগুলো নড়াচড়া করে জেগে ওঠে হাই তোলে আড়ামোড়া ভাঙে আঙুল মটকায়। তাই উনি আজ খাবার নিয়ে এলে তক্ষুনি খাবার ইচ্ছেটা চলে গিয়েছিলো।

-“একি? খাচ্ছে না ক্যানো? শরীর খারাপ?”

খেয়াল করিনি উনি আমার সামনেই বসে ছিলেন। কাষ্ঠ হাসি হেসে খাবার টেনে নিতেই আচমকা মনে হল যে উনি এত ভালোবেসে নিজে থেকে এসব করছেন ক্যানো? উশ্রীও তো বাড়ি নেই মনে হচ্ছে। খেতে গিয়ে স্বাদ অন্যরকম লাগলো, গন্ধটাও। ওনার দিকে তাকাতেই বললেন “আলুর দমটা ভালো হয়নি? কারিপাতা দিয়ে করলাম। নতুন শিখেছি।”

আমি তো জানতে চাইনি। খেতেও চাইনি। তাহলে কার জন্য খাবার আর কৈফিয়ত সাজিয়ে বসে ছিলেন? ভেবেছিলাম ফেলে দেবো, কিন্তু উশ্রী এসে পড়লো, আর আমাকেও সব খেয়ে তবেই উঠতে হল। উশ্রী খেলো না। বলল বাইরে কোথা থেকে একটা খেয়ে ঢুকেছে।

সারারাত ঘুম হয়নি। ভদ্রমহিলা একা শুতে পারেন না, তাই উশ্রী ওনার সাথে শুয়েছে। আমি সারারাত এপাশ ওপাশ করেছি। জল খেয়েছি। পাখা চালিয়ে মুখে চোখে জল দিয়েও ঘুম আসছিলো না। গলা বুক জ্বালা করছে অসম্ভব। এভাবে ঘুম আসে না আর যাই হোক। সকাল হয়েছে। রোববার, তাই কেউ ওঠেনি এখনও। সারারাত জেগে আমার ঝিম ধরা মাথা প্রায় ফেটে পড়তে চাইছে। কাল অনিয়ম হল কিছু? নইলে এরকম হওয়ার কথা না তো। আচ্ছা উনি খাবারে বিষ মেশাননি তো?

বাথরুমে দাঁড়িয়ে আছি। বুক ব্যথা, পেট অসম্ভব মোচড়াচ্ছে। জানি না কতক্ষণ থাকতে পারবো। উশ্রীকে বলা যাবে না। বললে বিশ্বাস করবে না। আজ আমাদের একসাথে বেরোবার কথা, আর ওনার সাথে আমার যা সম্পর্ক, নিশ্চয়ই ভাববে আমি এড়াতে চাইছি ওদের। ওদের চোখের সামনে থেকে সারাদিন বেরোতে পারবো না। কাজেই বুঝতেও পারবো না, আদৌ কিছু হয়েছে কিনা। আর উশ্রীকে যদি বলি আমার সন্দেহের কথা, তাহলে আবার সেই তখনকার মত ঝামেলা হবে। তখন ভালোবাসার অজুহাত ছিলো, তাই মিটে গিয়েছিলো। এখন সে সুযোগও নেই।

তাই বাথরুমে দাঁড়িয়ে। শব্দ শুনছি, উনি আবার রান্নাঘরে ঢুকেছেন। উশ্রী তাড়া মারছে আমায়, খাবার ঠাণ্ডা হচ্ছে এই কথা বলা আর কতক্ষণ থাকবো এখানে? বেশিক্ষণ থাকতেও তো পারবো না। কারন আমার জল দেখলে ভালো লাগে না। জল দেখলেই কিরকম একটা, ঠাণ্ডা, ঘুমজড়ানো কন্ডলের মত অন্ধকার আমায় ঢেকে ফেলে প্রতিবার। মাথা গা বেয়ে সেই অন্ধকার তারপর নামতে থাকে, অঙ্গপ্রত্যঙ্গ ছুঁয়ে আমার ভিতরের অন্ধকার ছুঁয়ে নামতে থাকে, রোমশ পা বেয়ে হিলহিলে সাপের মত শিহরণ জাগিয়ে নামতে থাকে, মায়ের পেটের ভিতর ডুবে থাকা স্মৃতির অবশেষের উপর দিয়ে নামতে থাকে। তারপর নর্দমা দিয়ে বেরিয়ে মিশে যায় আরও অনেক অন্ধকারের সাথে, মিশে বাড়তে থাকে, ফুলতে থাকে, ফুঁসতে থাকে, ছটফট করে বেরিয়ে আসার জন্য।

আমি এই বেরিয়ে আসাকে খুব ভয় পাই। তাই জল দেখলে আমার খুব ভয় লাগে। মা অনেকবার অনেক গালাগাল দিয়ে, বাবা-বাছা করেও বোঝাতে পারেনি। আমিও বোঝাতে পারিনি আমার সমস্যা। কাজেই মাথা গায়ে জলের ছিটে দিয়ে বেরিয়ে এসেছি। অনেকদিন ধরে আমার মাধ্যমিক পাশ মা ধরতেও পারেনি। ঠকে গিয়েছে প্রতিবার। জানি না ইকনমিক্সে অনার্স উশ্রী আর ওর মা-কে আমি ঠকাতে পারবো কিনা।

আমায় আজও বেরোতে হবে। দুটো অ্যাসাইলামের একখানা অন্তত খুঁজতো।

‘Gitanjali’-তে গীতাঞ্জলি- ভাবপ্রবাহের গ্রন্থি-বন্ধন/

আফতাবউদ্দিন আহম্মদ; স্নাতকোত্তর দ্বিতীয় বর্ষ; বাংলা বিভাগ

মানুষের হৃদয়তন্ত্রীতে ধর্ম-ভাবনার সুর বেজেছিল বহুকাল পূর্বেই। ঘাত-প্রতিঘাত, বিশ্বাস-অবিশ্বাসের অজস্র পর্যায় পেরিয়ে কালের নিয়মে সে ভাবনা আজ বিবর্তিতা রং পাল্টেছে বিশ্বাস, খন্ডিত হয়েছে ঐক্য। আর এসবের মাঝে সবার অলক্ষ্যে পীড়িত হন জীবিতেশ্বর। সাধারণ সমাজে দিনে দিনে তাঁর অস্তিত্ব হয়ে উঠেছে রীতিনীতি মাখা। আর রীতিনীতির বিধান আশ্রিত হয়েছে পুঁথিপত্রো অথচ যে দেবতা লুকিয়ে রয়েছেন জীবনের আড়ালে, নব নব সৃজনের মধ্যে দিয়ে যাঁর প্রকাশ, তাঁর সন্মানে প্রবৃত্ত হই ক’জন! আশার কথা, অনেকেই পুঁথিপত্রের বাইরে বেরিয়ে মানুষের মাঝে, কখনো প্রাপ্তি, কখনো বা অপ্রাপ্তির মাঝেও তাঁর সন্মানে নিয়োজিত। এমন অনেক মানুষের দলে রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের নামও আস্থিত। তাঁর এমন হৃদয়বৃত্তির নমুনা মেলে ‘Gitanjali : Song Offerings’ –এর কবিতাগুলিতে।

‘Gitanjali’-কে ‘A collection of prose translation’ বলা হলেও স্বতন্ত্র কাব্যগ্রন্থ হিসেবে তা স্বীকৃত আর সেই সমীকরণেই তার নোবেল-প্রাপ্তি। ইংরেজি ‘Gitanjali’-কে বাংলা ‘গীতাঞ্জলি’র সাথে মাপনীতে রাখলে প্রথমেই চোখে পড়ে

এর সংখ্যাগত পার্থক্য। ইংরেজি ‘Gitanjali’-তে আছে ১৫৭টি কবিতা। এর মধ্যে মাত্র ৫৩টি কবিতাকে বাংলা ‘গীতাঞ্জলি’ থেকে ইংরেজিতে অনুবাদ করেছেন কবি। সেই ৫৩টি কবিতার ভাব-প্রসঙ্গ নিয়েই এই রচনার কারবার।

বলা হয়, ‘Translation is a type of drawing after life...’। আর সেই অঙ্কন-প্রক্রিয়ায় ভাষার যে ‘সকল রং-তুলি ব্যবহার করা হয়, তার আবার থাকে দু’টি দিক। এদের বলা হয় ‘Main Language’ ও ‘Target Language’, বাংলা পরিভাষায় যথাক্রমে ‘মূল ভাষা’ ও ‘উদ্দিষ্ট ভাষা’। উভয়ের মধ্যে সেতু-নির্মাণই অনুবাদকের লক্ষ্য। এমন কর্মে আসে নানা অসুবিধাও কারণ, প্রত্যেক ভাষায় ব্যবহৃত শব্দভাণ্ডার নিজস্ব জীবন-সংস্কৃতি তথা সামাজিক, রাষ্ট্রনৈতিক বহু বিষয়ের সাথে সম্পৃক্ত কিছু বিশেষ অর্থের ছোঁয়ায় সমৃদ্ধ। রবীন্দ্রনাথ এসবের যথাযথ প্রাসঙ্গিকতা বজায় রেখে একে একে করে ফেললেন কবিতাগুলির অনুবাদ। ইংরেজিতে গিয়ে গীতিময় প্রকাশভঙ্গি বদলে ফেললেন গদ্যে, বজায় রাখলেন সেগুলির ভাব। সেই ভাবের নিরিখে ‘Gitanjali : Song Offerings’ কীভাবে ‘গীতাঞ্জলি’ ময় হয়ে আছে, স্বল্প পরিসরে সেদিকে রশ্মিপাত করব এই নিবন্ধে।

জীবনের দেবতা যিনি, তাঁর উদ্দেশ্যে ‘গীত’-এর ‘অঞ্জলি’ দিয়েছেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ। জীবনদেবের সেই সত্য কবি চেয়েছেন লীন হতো দিতে চেয়েছেন তাঁর সমস্ত সংকীর্ণ জড়তার বিসর্জন। তাঁর মন যখন কিছু সৃষ্টির কথা বলে তখন কবির বুক ভরে ওঠে আবেগে, গর্বো কারণ, তিনি মনে করেন, সৃষ্টির মধ্যেই সেই জীবনদেবতার নাগাল পাওয়া সম্ভব। কবি ভালো-মন্দ মেশানো নানা উপাদান সংগ্রহ করেছেন চেতনে-অচেতনো। সেসবের জটিলতা অতিক্রম করে উড়ান দিতে চান মুক্ত নীলিমায় আর বলেন, ‘All that is harsh and dissonant in my life melts into one sweet harmony – and my adoration spreads wings like a glad bird on its flight across the sea’ (Gitanjali, 2)। জীবন-পথে হাজারো কলতান, হাজারো কিচিরমিচির। জীবনভর সেসব নিবিড় চিত্তে অনুধাবন করেছেন কবি। এসবও যেন সেই জীবনদেবতারই সঙ্গীতের আসর, যেখানে মূল কুশলী তিনি স্বয়ং। তাঁর কৃৎকৌশলে মুগ্ধ কবির উচ্চারণ- ‘I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement’ (G.3) । কবি বিশ্বাস করেন, সেই পরম সত্যের অবস্থান আমাদের মধ্যেই।

তবু পারিনা তাঁর সাথে একাত্ম বোধ করতে। রিপূর তাড়নায় ধাবিত হয়ে বারবার আমরা ঘটিয়ে থাকি ভুলের পুনরাবৃত্তি। প্রাণ থাকলে তো রিপূর তাড়না থাকবেই তার পেছনো কিন্তু তা'তে দৃষ্টিচ্যুত হওয়ার আগেই কবির প্রার্থনা, 'Pluck this little flower and take it, delay not! I fear lest it droop and drop into the dust' (G.6) ।

বিষয়-বস্তুর চাকচিক্য বাড়াতে জুড়ি নেই অলংকারেরা চাকচিক্য বাড়লে স্বাভাবিকভাবেই বেড়ে যায় বাহ্যিক গ্রহণযোগ্যতাও তাই আদ্যিকাল থেকে অলংকারাদির প্রতি মানুষের রয়েছে দুর্মর আকর্ষণ। কিন্তু এসব তো আড়ম্বরকে লালন করে, যা প্রশ্রয় দেয় অহংকারকো তখন সৃষ্টি হয় বিষয়বস্তুর সাথে মনের অস্বচ্ছ যোগাযোগ। এ'কারণেই সেসব বর্জন করে জীবনদেবতার কাছে কবির আত্মসমর্পণের আকাঙ্ক্ষা, 'My poet's vanity dies in shame before thy sight. O master poet, I have sat down at thy feet' (G.7) । বাইরের আড়ম্বর শুধু বাইরেই সীমাবদ্ধ থাকেনা, মনের মধ্যেও দিয়ে যায় আঁচড়া তাই যে শিশুকে 'রাজার মতো বেশে' সাজিয়ে রাখা হয় সবসময়, সে খুলোকাদা থেকে দূরে থাকতে চাইবে, যাতে নোংরা না হয়ে যায় তার পরিচ্ছদ। প্রকৃতি থেকে এই বিচ্ছিন্নতা তাকে ঠেলতে থাকবে জীবন থেকেও দূরে। কৃত্রিমতার পেশময়ত্র সেখানে ভীষণ শক্তিশালী। এখান থেকে মুক্তির পথ পাওয়া যেতে পারে প্রকৃতির কাছে আত্মসমর্পণে, তার সাহচর্যে কবির ভাষায়, 'Mother, it is no gain, thy bondage of finery, if it keep one shut off from the healthful dust of the earth, if it rob one of the right entrance to the great fair of common human life' (G.8) ।

অবক্ষ্যী সমাজ দংশন-প্রবণ। তার দংশনের আগেই কবি চান দেহের ভারমুক্তি ঘটাতো দেহের বেড়া অতিক্রম করে সেই দেবতার সাথে আত্মিক যোগ ঘটাতো চান কবি। এমতাবস্থায় তিনি মনে করেন, 'O fool, to try to carry thyself upon thy own shoulders!' (G.9) । স্বার্থ-হিংসা-অহংকারের মায়াজালে জর্জরিত বসুধা। এসবের মাঝে মেতে থাকলে আত্মচেতনার বিকাশ বাধাপ্রাপ্ত হয়, দুর্গম হয়ে ওঠে পরমের প্রাপ্তি। কারণ, পরম সেই সত্তার অবস্থান সেখানে, '...where live the poorest, and lowliest, and lost.' (G.10) । তাই এসবের হাতছানি থেকে দূরে থাকতে চান কবি গেয়ে যেতে চান পরম দেবতার বন্দনাগান। তাঁর গান তো কর্মের মাঝে মুখরিত, মুখরিত সৃষ্টির মাঝে। সেকারণে কবির আহ্বান, 'Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy brow.' (G.11) ।

নিষ্কলুষ সাধনার পথে বাধা হয়ে দাঁড়ায় পার্থিব চাহিদা। ধর্মাচরণের নামে মন্ত্রপাঠ তো আর সাধনা নয়। সেসব তো বাহ্যিক আচারের একটা অংশমাত্র। ওসব কেতাবি মন্তোচ্চারণের ব্যস্ততায় বাদ পড়ে যায় জীবনদেবতার গান, 'The song that I came to sing remains unsung to this day' (G.13) । আমরা বলি, মনকে ধারণ করা হল ধর্মা আসক্তিশীন অবস্থায় তার আশ্রয়। আসক্তির উপাদান আবার পদে পদে ছড়িয়ে। কামনা-বাসনার ফাঁদে বারবার ধরা পড়ে যায় মানুষ। এসব থেকে বাদ পড়েননি কবিও। তবে সেসময় কবির সাধ যে পূরণ হয়েছে, এমন নয়। জীবনের একটা বৃহৎ পর্যায় পার করে কবির ভেবেছেন তাঁর সেসব বাসনা পূর্ণ না হয়ে ভালোই হয়েছে। তাই রুট না হয়ে কবি কৃতজ্ঞতা স্বীকার করেছেন এভাবে, 'My desires are many and my cry is pitiful, but ever didst thou save me by hard refusals...' (G.14) ।

যে শক্তির গুণে আমাদের মানবজন্ম লাভ, যে শক্তিকে ধারণ করে রয়েছি সর্বক্ষণ, সেই শক্তিই তো পরমশক্তি। কবি মনে করেন, সেই শক্তির মাহাত্ম্য প্রতিষ্ঠা করাতেই তাঁর অস্তিত্বের সার্থকতা, 'I am here to sing thee songs. In

this hall of thine I have a corner seat.' (G.15) | এর জন্যই নাকি জাগতিক লীলায় ডাক পেয়েছেন কবি। তাই এর আশীর্বাদ হিসেবে মানবজীবন পেয়ে তিনি ধন্য। একথা ভেবে পুলকিত কবির কলম থেকে বেরিয়ে আসে, 'I have had my invitation to this world's festival, and thus my life has been blessed.' (G.16) | মানবসমাজ নিজেদেরই তৈরি নিয়মকানুনে আজ আবদ্ধ। কবির সাধনা সেসব নিয়মের তোয়াক্কা করে না। তাঁর সাধনা প্রেমের, স্বতন্ত্র স্বভাবতই সাধারণ লোকচক্ষুর সামনে সমালোচনার বিষয় হয়ে ওঠেন কবি। তবু নিজ সাধনায় তিনি বদ্ধ পরিকর, 'I am only waiting for love to give myself up at last into his hands.' (G.17) |

কর্মব্যস্ত জীবনে আমাদের সময় কেটে যায় অজ্ঞাতসারো। সকাল গড়িয়ে হয় দুপুর, দুপুর গড়িয়ে হয় বিকেল। কিন্তু বাদলদিনে ঘরে বসে ধর্ম ধর্ম নামে হঠাৎ করে যখন শখ জাগে ঈশ্বর নামক জাদুকরের খোঁজ করার তখন অনেকেই বড্ড ব্যাকুল হয়ে উঠে। তাঁর রূপদর্শনের জন্য। কিন্তু এদিক ওদিক ছুটেও তাঁর কূল পাওয়া যায়না। কবির ভাষায় সেই অবস্থা কিছুটা এরকম, 'I keep gazing on the far away gloom of the sky, and my heart wanders wailing with the restless wind.' (G.18) | কবি ধৈর্য ধরতে তবু প্রস্তুত। তিনি জানেন, আঁধার শেষে আলোর উদয় ঘটবেই। সেই প্রভাতে নিশ্চয়ই একদিন ধ্বনিত হবে

দেবতার বাণী। সেই আশা বুকে নিয়েই চলতে থাকে অপেক্ষা। বিশ্বাস আছে, অপেক্ষার শেষে 'The morning will surely come, the darkness will vanish, and thy voice pour down in golden streams breaking through the sky.' (G.19) | যখন প্রবল ঝড়ে চারিদিক অশান্ত, ঘনঘোর অন্ধকারে ধরণী মেঘাবৃত্তা, বন্ধ সকল দুয়ার তখন জীবনদেবতা যাবেন কোথায়! ভ্রাম্যমান, পথভোলা, সাকিনহীন সেই 'পথিক'কে কবির আহ্বান, 'Oh my only friend, my best beloved, the gates are open in my house – do not pass by like a dream.' (G.22) | একথা বলা বাহুল্য যে এই ঘর, মনের ঘর। তবু সেই পথিকের দেখা সহজে পাওয়া যায় না। তখন অবাক মনে ভাবনা আসে, '...where lies thy path!' (G.23) | তবে কি সেই পথিকের পাথেয় শেষ? যদি এমন হয় তবে সেই পথিকের জন্য জীবন-রসদ জুগিয়ে পুনরুজ্জীবনের প্রার্থনা করেন কবি, '...renew his life like a flower under the cover of the kindly night.' (G.24) |

জীবনদেবতার আসা যাওয়া আমাদের হিসেবের আওতায় পড়েনা। সম্ভবও নয় স্থূল দৃষ্টি নিয়ে তাঁকে ধরা। তবু ধরা দিতেই তো চান তিনি। আর যখন তিনি সামনে আসেন তখন আমরা নিদ্রা যাই। বাতাসে বাতাসে তাঁর পরশ, পরশে পরশে তিনি অনুভূত। তা সত্ত্বেও তাঁকে খুঁজে পাওয়া যায় না। কৃষ্ণ-বিরহিণী রাধার মতো এ অবস্থা, 'He came and sat by my side but I woke not. What a cursed sleep it was, O miserable me!' (G.26) | আন্তিত্ব-অনন্তিত্বের টানাপোড়েনে মন বলে ওঠে, 'Ah, death were better by far for thee.' (G.27) |

জীবনের পদে পদে আছে যে চাওয়া পাওয়ার বাঁধন, তাতেও আবদ্ধ কবি। সে শিকল যতবার কাটতে চান, হতে হয় ব্যথিত। এই অবস্থার মধ্যে থেকেও অনেক কিছু যুক্ত হয়েছে কবির প্রাপ্তি-ভাণ্ডারো। সেই প্রাপ্তি-সকল ছেড়ে দিতেও পারেন না কবি, তাঁ সে যেমনই হোক, '...I have not the heart to sweep away the tinsel that fills my room.' (G.28) | ক্ষুদ্র সাময়িক প্রাপ্তির মধ্যে আত্মমগ্ন থেকে আজ আমরা আত্মপ্রচারে মত্ত। আত্মবিকাশ যখন আত্মপ্রচারে বদলে যায় তখন নিজেকে বিজ্ঞাপিত

করার প্রয়াসটাই হয়ে ওঠে মূল বিষয়া এভাবে আত্মিক প্রকাশের বদলে প্রচার যত মুখ্য হয়ে উঠবে ততই হারিয়ে যাবে,
'...sight of my true being.' (G.29) |

মানুষ যতই এগিয়ে যেতে চায় নিরাসক্ত মনে সাধনার পথে, ততই কোনো দ্বিবিধ সত্তা যেন তাকে তাড়া করে। এর একটি হল মানসিক উদার সত্তা, অপরটি হল সংকীর্ণ সত্তা। দ্বিতীয়টিকে কবি বলেছেন, 'He is my own little self.' (G.30) | পৃথিবীতে জন্ম নেবার সাথে সাথে গড়ে ওঠে বহু সামাজিক সম্পর্ক। সে সম্পর্কে ভালোবাসাও থাকে। সেখান থেকে আবার জন্ম নেয় মোহ, আসক্তি। আর এসবেই গড়ে ওঠে বাঁধনা। জীবনদেবের ভালোবাসা অবশ্য এই সংকীর্ণতার অনেক উপরো। সে ভালোবাসা মোহহীন, আসক্তিহীন, বাঁধনহীন। ভক্তের নিরাসক্ত মনই সে ভালোবাসার আধার। এজন্য কবির উচ্চারণ, 'If I call not thee in my prayers, if I keep not thee in my heart, thy love for me still waits for my love.' (G.32) |

আমাদের মনের মধ্যে আছে সমস্ত সুপ্রবৃত্তির বীজ। কিন্তু তার মাঝেও আছে কিছু কুপ্রবৃত্তিরূপী দস্যু, যারা কিনা হরণ করতে থাকে জীবনের সং সন্ধানগুলিকে। এই ভয়ে কবি বলে ওঠেন, 'I find they break into my scared shrine, strong and turbulent, and snatch with unholy greed the offerings from God's altar.' (G.33) | একথা মাথায় রেখে কবি চান নিজের মতো সাধনা করে যেতে। জীবন-কর্মযোগে জীবনের লীলায় লীলায়িত হতে চান কবি, 'Let only that little be left of me whereby I may name thee my all.' (G.34) | এই জায়গায় পৌঁছে কবির মনে হয়েছে, মানবের জীবনে সমৃদ্ধির রসদ অফুরান। কেননা, জীবনের এই লীলা বিশ্বব্যাপী ও সীমাহীন। আর এই লীলার মধ্যেই লুকিয়ে আছে সকল রসদ। তার কোনো কিছুর শেষ হচ্ছেনা; একের বিনাশের পর আর একের সৃষ্টি, তারপর আবার বিনাশ, আবার সৃষ্টি। এই ধারা চক্রাকারে ঘুরে চলেছে কালে কালে, '...where the old tracks are lost, new country is revealed with its wonders.' (G.37) | সেই রসদে প্রাপ্ত বিষয়গুলিকে সংকীর্ণ বাসনা দিয়ে আঁকড়ে ধরলে তার সদর্থক বিকাশ ঘটেনা। সেসব মিথ্যে আর মেকি। এসবও অবশ্য মিশে যায় চিরসত্যের সাগরে, ঠিক যেমন অশান্ত ঝড় মিশে যায় শান্ত প্রকৃতিতে। তাই মিথ্যের সীমা পার করে চিরসত্যই সর্বদা কাম্য, 'I want thee, only thee – let my heart repeat without end.' (G.38) | এখানেই অন্তরের চিরসত্যকে কবির আহ্বান, '...thou holy one, thou wakeful, come with thy light and thy thunder.' (G.39) |

কালের সাগরে মানব-জীবনের আয়ু ক্ষণিকের, 'Who knows when the chain will be off, and the boat, like the last glimmer of sunset, vanish into the night?' (G.42) | এ'কথা তাই মাথায় রাখা উচিত যে জীবন-তটে যে-কোনো সময় নেমে আসতে পারে অমানিশা। এটি মনে রেখে জীবনের যথার্থ সাধনায় মগ্ন হলে শোনা যায় জীবনদেবের আগমন-বার্তা, শোনা যায় তাঁর আগমনের পদধ্বনি। কাল থেকে কালান্তরে তাঁর আসা যাওয়া। কখনো বনের ছায়ায়, কখনো বা মেঘের বুকে দুন্দুভি বাজিয়ে গর্জনকারী মেঘের রথে ঘটে তাঁর আগমন। তখন মনে প্রত্যয় জাগে, 'He comes, comes, ever comes.' (G.45) |

যদি ভক্তির টানে পর্বত চলে আসতে পারে ভক্তের কাছে, তবে দেবতাই বা বাদ যান কেমন করে! তিনি তো চিরকালই ভক্তের জন্য অস্থিরা। কবির ভাষায়, 'I know not from what distant time thou art ever coming nearer to me.'

(G.46) | জীবনদেবের বিশ্ব-দরবারে অভাব নেই গানের, অভাব নেই গুণীরা তবু বারবার তিনি ধরা দেন নিঃস্ব ভক্তের দুয়ারে,
'You came down from your throne and stood at my cottage door.' (G.49) | তবে তিনি তো এমনি এমনি
নেমে আসবেন না। আসলে কবি বলতে চাইছেন যেন জগৎ সংসারের বিচিত্র রং-বেরঙের খেলায় তিনিও একটি রঞ্জন-প্রকাশ,
যে কিনা তাঁরই আর এক রূপা ভক্তের নিঃস্ব অবস্থায় সৃষ্টিকর্তা তাই নেমেই আসেন ভক্তের পাশে সে না থাকলে যে
জীবনদেবতাও অসম্পূর্ণ, 'O thou lord of all heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?' (G.56) | কবির
এমন কথা বলতে পারার কারণ, তাঁর এটা বিশ্বাস যে '...all the strains of joy mingle in my last song...' (G.58) |
এ আনন্দ যতটা কবির, ততটা তাঁর দেবতারও। আর তাতেই কবির মানসপটে জীবনদেবের স্বরূপ একটু একটু করে হয়েছে
উদ্ভাসিত, '...my heart has touched thy feet.' (G.59) | এই দর্শনে কবি এতটাই মুগ্ধ যে পরজন্মের মায়াজালে
আটকে না পড়ে যাতে পুনরায় সত্যের দর্শন পান, সে বিষয়ে রেখেছেন অনুরোধ। মানব-অন্তরের সেই পরম সত্যকে উপলব্ধি
করলে আপন-পরের ভেদ আর থাকেনা। অবশ্য বস্তু, বিষয় বা ব্যক্তির ভেদে থাকে উপলব্ধিরও তফাৎ। কবি বলেন, 'Thou
hast made me known to friends whom I knew not.' (G.63) | অজানা সেই বিশ্বরূপ নিজেই দেখা যায়। নিজের
দেহ-প্রাণের মাঝেই তার অবস্থান, বিকাশ। কবির ভাষায়, 'Thou givest thyself to me in love and then feelestthine
own entire sweetness in me.' (G.65) | এমন অবস্থায় কবি উৎসর্গ করতে চান মনের কোনো অন্ধকার কোণে আলোর
দেখা না পাওয়া সেই কবিতা, যা বাক্যের অতীত; সমর্পণ করতে চান সেই গান, যা সুরের অতীত, 'She who ever had
remained in the depth of my being...' will be my last gift to thee, my God, folded in my final song.'
(G.66) |

বহিমুখী পতঙ্গ জীবনের আছতি দেয় নিজেকে পুড়িয়ে বিলিয়ে দিয়ে। মানুষও তো তাই। তবে ধ্বংস-মাত্রই তার নেতিবাচক
দিক থাকবে, এমন নয়। ধ্বংস আর একদিকে নব-সৃষ্টির অনিবার্য কারণ। বিজ্ঞানের পরিভাষায় তা শক্তির রূপান্তর। চন্দ্র-সূর্য-
গ্রহের মহাকালব্যাপী আবর্তনও যেন এই কথার সাক্ষ্য দেয়। নব নব সৃষ্টির সেই বিপুল কর্মযজ্ঞ প্রসঙ্গে কবির প্রশ্ন, 'Is it
beyond thee to be glad with the gladness of this rhythm?' (G.70) | জীবন-সায়াকে দাঁড়িয়ে কবির মনে হয়েছে
তার সমাপ্তির পালা এবার আসল। তাই সময় থাকতে আলোর শেষ নির্যাসটুকু শুষে নিতে চান তিনি। জ্ঞানের ভান্ডারে যা এখনো
অপূর্ণ, তা পূরণ করে নিতে চান, 'It is time that I go to the stream to fill my pitcher.' (G.74) |

দেবতাকে পৃথক অলৌকিক সত্তা বলে ব্যবহারিক দৈনন্দিন জীবন থেকে আলাদা করে রাখা, আশেপাশের চেনা পরিবেশে
তাকে না দেখে মূর্তির মধ্যে স্থাপন করার প্রয়াস, প্রণামী বাক্সে টাকা ফেলে তাঁর অনুগ্রহ লাভের চেষ্টা—এসব বহুদিনের চলে
আসা রীতি। আমরা তাঁর চরণে নত হতে প্রস্তুত, অথচ কখনো চেষ্টা করিনা তাঁকে বন্ধুতার হাত বাড়িয়ে ধরার, 'I stand not
where thou comest down and ownest thyself as mine, there to clasp thee to my heart and take thee as
my comrade.' (G.77) |

জগতে এসে আমরা বহু বিষয়বস্তুর অধিকারী হই। কখনো কবিতায়-গানে-গল্পে, কখনো বা বৈষয়িক সম্পত্তির বিচারে। কিন্তু তার থেকেও মূল্যবান যে প্রকৃত জ্ঞানের সম্পদ, তাকে তো অন্ধ কষে বিচার করা যায় না। তখন সংশয়গ্রস্ত মন বলতে চায়, 'If it is not my portion to meet thee in this my life then let me ever feel that I have missed thy sight...' (G.79) |

এই বোধ থেকে দুঃখকে একসময় কণ্টকমালা থেকে মনে হবে ঐশ্বর্য। তার কষ্টে নিঃসৃত অশ্রুধারাতেই পদযৌত হবে দেবতারা ভক্তের ঘাড়ে কোপ দিয়েই তো নিবারিত হয় তাঁর তৃষ্ণা। এই উপলব্ধি থেকেই মানুষ বলতে পারে, 'I shall weave a chain of pearls for thy neck with my tears of sorrow.' (G.83) | বেদনার সেই সুর বারবার বেজে ওঠে আমাদের বুকে, 'It is this overspreading pain that deepens into loves and desires, into sufferings and joys...' (G.84) |

কে কোথা থেকে এল, এসে কতটা দাপট দেখিয়ে গেল, সেসব অর্থহীন। তার প্রভাব সাময়িক। তাই মানবতাকে আঘাত করে যতবার তাদের আবির্ভাব ঘটেছে, কালের সীমাহীন গহ্বরে ততবার তারা তলিয়ে গিয়েছে। অস্ত্রের ঝংকারে দুনিয়াকে তারা একসময় নত মস্তক করতে চেয়েছিল। আজও এমন লোকের অভাব নেই। জীবনের শেষে গিয়ে এই মিথ্যে বীরত্ব তারা তুলে রাখবে কোথায়, 'Where the warriors marched back again to their master's hall where did they hide their power?' (G.85) | মরণ তো একদিন আসবেই। সেদিন কোনো অস্ত্রের কারসাজিতে তাকে রদ করা যাবে না। কিন্তু মৃত্যুকে যদি ত্যাগে, প্রেমে, কর্মে আহৃত সম্পদ নজরানা দেওয়া যায়, তা হবে শ্রেষ্ঠ, 'Oh, I will set before my guest the full vessel of my life...' (G.90) | তখন তা শুধু মৃত্যু নয়, মুক্তি। আমরা দিনে দিনে, প্রতি মুহূর্তে এগিয়ে চলেছি তারই

দিকে। একে অস্বীকার করা বোকামি। এই মৃত্যুরূপী মুক্তিকে রবীন্দ্রনাথের আহ্বান, 'O thou last fulfilment of life, Death, my death, come and whisper to me!' (G.91) | মুক্তিপথের পথিক জীবনে যা কিছু পায়, যত আশ্বাদন, যত প্রাপ্তি, যত অপ্রাপ্তিও, তাতে সে নিজেই সমৃদ্ধ ভাবে পারবে। তখন মনে জাগে কৃতজ্ঞতা, জীবনের প্রতি সেই কৃতজ্ঞতায় বলতে ইচ্ছা করে, 'My whole body and limbs have thrilled with his touch who is beyond touch; and if the end comes here, let it come – let this be my parting word.' (G.96) |

বিচিত্র প্রকৃতি তার ঘোমটা খোলে একটু একটু করে। সেই ঘোমটার অপরদিকে দেখা যায়, 'The world with eyes bent upon thy feet stands in awe with all its silent stars.' (G.97) | এত কিছু উপলব্ধির পর কবি বস্তুজগতের মোহে আর হারিয়ে যেতে চান না। শরীর আজ তাঁর জীর্ণা জগৎ জুড়ে ঝরে পড়ছে। সৃষ্টিকর্তার গান, কখনো বৃষ্টির মতো, কখনো শিশিরের মতো। এতে আমরা ভিজে চলেছি নিরন্তর, অথচ চিনতে পারি না সেসবের স্বরলিপি। কারণ তা কান দিতে শোনা যায় না, অন্তর দিয়ে উপলব্ধি করতে হয়। কবি নিজেই এর মধ্যে বিলিন করে দিতে চান, '...I am eager to die into the deathless.' (G.100) | জীবন-সঙ্গীতের সুর ধরেই কবি খুঁজেছেন পরমকে, কখনো সাহিত্যচর্চায়, কখনো জীবনচর্চায়, 'It was my songs that taught me all the lessons I ever learnt; they showed me secret paths...' (G.101) | অন্তিম স্তরে এসে জাগতিক মায়া ত্যাগ করে, সকল বাঁধনের মুক্তি ঘটিয়ে সময় আসে পরম-সাগরের মোহনায় মিশে যাওয়ার। তখন মনের অতল গভীর থেকে উৎসারিত হয় মিলনের প্রবল আকৃতি। এই আকৃতিই একসময় পর্যবসিত হয় অন্তিম প্রার্থনায়, 'In one salutation to thee, my God, let all my senses spread out and touch this world at thy feet... let all my life take its voyage to its eternal home in one salutation to thee.' (G.103)

वे बच्चें

यह बात उन दिनों की है जब मैं कॉलेज में अपना दाखिला लेने के लिए श्रीरामपुर से हावड़ा जा रहा था। मैंने स्टेशन पर पहुँच कर देखा तो ट्रेन स्टेशन पर लगी हुई थी, मैं उस ट्रेन में बैठ गया। चूँकि उस दिन मैं अपना दाखिला लेने के लिए कॉलेज जा रहा था, तो मैं उसी के विषय में कुछ सोच रहा था, मैं बस सोच ही रहा था कि अचानक मेरे सामने चार-पाँच वर्ष की एक छोटी सी मासूम बच्ची ने हाथ फैला दिया। जब मैंने उसे देखा तो एक क्षण के लिए मेरी आँखें उसी पर अटक गयीं। मैंने उसके चेहरे पर एक मासूमियत देखा और उस समय मासूमियत में भी एक विवशता थी जो उसकी आँखों में साफ झलक रही थी, मैंने देखा उसके हाथों में दो पत्थर के टुकड़े थे जिसे आपस में लड़ाने पर एक संगीतमय ध्वनि उत्पन्न हो रही थी वह उसी को बजा रही थी और कोई गाना गा रही थी। मैंने पाँच रुपये का एक सिक्का उसे दे दिया और उसे लेकर वह आगे बढ़ गयी। फिर मैं कॉलेज के बारे में सोचना छोड़कर इनके बारे में सोचने लगा कि हमारे समाज में तो बहुत से बच्चें ऐसे हैं जिनका कोई अता-पता नहीं है, उन्हें यह तक मालूम नहीं कि उनके माँ-बाप कौन हैं? ये या तो भीख मांग कर या छोटे मोटे काम करके अपना पेट पालते हैं और इनमें से कुछ बच्चे तो चोरी तक करने लगते हैं। मैं सोचने पर मजबूर हूँ कि क्या आज के इस वर्तमान भारत में हमारा समाज इन बच्चों के लिए कुछ नहीं कर सकता? क्या हमारे अंदर जो मानवता और परोपकार की भावना है वह अब मरती जा रही है? मैंने देखा है कि आज अगर कोई अनाथ बच्चा लोगों के सामने हाथ फैला देता है तो ९०% लोग उन्हें भीख नहीं देते हैं भीख देने की बात तो दूर उनकी तरफ देखते तक नहीं। आज २१वीं सदी में जहाँ हम अपने आपको काफी उन्नतशील और आधुनिक मानते हैं पर हम में तो मानवता है ही नहीं। दूसरी तरफ इतने उन्नतशील होने के बावजूद भी हम इन बच्चों के मामले में काफी पीछे हैं। एक ओर जहाँ इन्हें खाने के लिए दो वक़्त की रोटी तक ठीक से नहीं मिलती वहीं दूसरी तरफ समाज का एक वर्ग रोज़ हज़ारों रूपया शराब और नशीली चीज़ों पर लुटाता है। एक ओर जहाँ यह बच्चे बच्चे से बच्चे तक जीवन जीने को मजबूर हैं, इनके पास रहने के लिए घर नहीं हैं, पहनने के लिए कपड़े नहीं हैं वहीं दूसरी तरफ देश के नेतागण करोड़ों रूपयो का घोटाला कर रहे हैं, क्या इन पैसों से इन बच्चों के लिए कुछ नहीं किया जा सकता? आश्चर्य की बात तो यह है कि इतना कुछ होने के बावजूद भी हम कहते हैं कि "मेरा भारत महान"। खैर हमारा देश जैसा भी हो अगर हमें इन बच्चों के लिए कुछ करना है तो हमारे समाज को ही यह प्रयास करना होगा कि कैसे इन बच्चों का जीवन बेहतर हो? हमें खुद आगे आना होगा, इनको बेहतर जीवन देने के लिए, इनके पढ़ाई-लिखाई, इन्हें स्कूल भेजने के लिए क्योंकि इस पढ़ने-लिखने की उम्र में इनके हाथों में पेन की जगह धोने के लिए प्लेटें रहती हैं। अगर हमें इन गरीब और अनाथ बच्चों के लिए कुछ करना है जो बच्चे से बच्चे तक जीवन जीने को मजबूर है तो हमें अपने अंदर के मानवता को जगाना होगा जो सो गयी है या मरती जा रही है। हमें अपने आप को इन बच्चों के जगह पर रख कर महसूस करना होगा कि इनके जैसा जीवन जीने में कितने ही कष्टों का सामना करना पड़ता है। हमें अंदर से महसूस करना होगा कि इनका भी तो मन करता होगा कि थोड़ा अच्छा खाना खाए, छत के नीचे रहे, अच्छे कपड़े पहने। जब तक हम इनके दुखों को महसूस नहीं करेंगे तब तक हम इनके लिए कुछ नहीं कर पाएँगे। यदि हमें इनके लिए कुछ करना है तो हमें इनके दुखों को महसूस करना होगा तभी हम इनके लिए कुछ कर पाएँगे। हमें पता है की यह कार्य आसान नहीं है, इसका पथ बड़ा ही दुर्गम है। इस दिशा में कार्य करने के लिए हमें अनेक कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ेगा, लेकिन अगर समाज दृढ़ प्रतिज्ञ हो जाये तो यह कार्य ज्यादा मुश्किल भी नहीं है क्योंकि आज भी अण्णा हज़ारे जैसे अनेक समाजसेवी हैं जो लोक सेवा और लोककल्याण को ही अपना तन-मन-धन समर्पित किये हुए हैं। इसके अलावा हमारे सामने सबसे बड़ा

उदाहरण 'मदर टेरेसा' का है। अगर हमें इस दिशा में काम करना है तो हमें अण्णा हज़ारे और मदर टेरेसा जैसे महान समाज सेवियों को आदर्श मान कर आगे बढ़ना होगा और हमें इनके द्वारा दिखलाये गए मार्गों पर चलना होगा। अगर हमारा समाज एक जुट होकर इनको अपना आदर्श माने तो हम जरूर इन गरीब अनाथ बच्चों के जीवन को बेहतर बनाने के लिए कुछ कर सकते हैं। अगर हमें अपने आपको सच्चा मनुष्य साबित करना है तो हमें जरूर इन बच्चों के लिए कुछ करना चाहिए क्योंकि सच्चा मनुष्य वही है जो दूसरों के जीवन को सुखमय बनाता है, लोगों के दुखों को कम करने की कोशिश करता है, रोते हुए लोगों के चेहरों पर हँसी खिलाता है।

इतना सोचते-सोचते हावड़ा स्टेशन आ गया, ट्रेन रुकी और मैं ट्रेन से उतर कर अपने कॉलेज के तरफ रवाना हो गया।

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