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Literature**

A Global Journal devoted to

Language and Literature

A Peer-Reviewed Print Journal

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Chief Editor:

Dr VIVEKANAND JHA

Associate Editor:

Dr RAJNISH MISHRA

Review Editor:

Dr CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

Assistant Editor:

Prof. SHASHANK NADKARNI



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PHENOMENAL LITERATURE

*A Global Journal Devoted to
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POETRY

1

For Going Back

AMARENDRA KHATUA

I always vacate my post and
fold my space under my unspent accounts.
the address is torn and thrown into
absences. I leave behind some
lingering Aroma not so distinct beyond
measurable time, no more mine.

The theater of existential reality
retains your faces, keeps intact all
your unpaid dues in love and losses,
in hurt and rare forgiveness. Destiny's
captive animal is this souk, all the last
songs must be eaten away by
geographyless departure and each
good bye must munch personal
history into darkness without dreams,
definitions and destination.

There are no promises to retrace
steps and pickup one's private sins
still nursing. Still memory is
the nether world surrendering to
nothingness and itching to resonance into

fragile life and losses. I hope I
remember the whistling tunes that will
import me back!



2

Cool January Morning

ANDREW SCOTT

Staring out the window,
watching light snow fall to the ground.
Sipping away at a coffee,
smiling at memories
on this cool, January morning.

Thoughts of you and I,
every morning, sharing ourselves.
with secrets that only we knew.
feeling natural
on a cool, January morning.

Heart stirs at the thoughts
of our silly laughter.
Saying the first thing
that came to mind.
on our cool, January morning.

Missing those unrehearsed moments
that were only ours
on this cool, January morning



3

The Spring

AVDHESH JHA

Being the new dreams, and fresh hopes;
You remain the undiscovered avenues, and
Being the brightest and the most beautiful;
You always remain a perspective to explore;
Being the only light and the power of day;
You remain the might to light up my days, and
Being pleasant with beauty of the spring;
Full of fragrance, you are the spring of my life.



4

Oatmeal

DOCTOR PESSIMIST

I remember so many winter days when I was growing up.
The streets and paths were covered by cold snow.
Leaving my bed covers was something I dreaded.
However, there was always a silver lining for me.
My parents would prepare for me a bowl of oatmeal.
Eating my delicious breakfast helped prepare my day.
Oatmeal helped me tolerate my dull mother and father.
Sadly, the fools at school didn't understand my fixation.
Even as an adult, I enjoy eating oatmeal on a cold day.
It's a shame Manic Minion cannot join me for a bowl.



5

Knowing When to Stop

DAVID R MORGAN

The briefing ended: *Certainties do not change.*
I found you at last by the wood. '
I thought it was you, but things change.

It was a wood – a corona on the hill.
As I climbed closer the greenness and the brown
remained – but you vanished.

It was you who wasn't there.
The wood was a miracle of light.
It remained scintillating in sparkling rays.

There was no trace of you
beneath the sun coronating that angled wood.
I wandered in amongst the weaving trees.

And it vanished and I found you there
with the shimmering mirage
drawn around you like a blanket.

I walked to you and held you close
and you were shifting bark
and fluttering leaves. Things change ...

change for the worse or for the better-
for even certainties that do not change,
cannot remain the same.



6

Metamorphic

DUANE VORHEES

My face: my soul: my gift: my fact
is nonetheless not less false than
my mask: my veil: my lifts: my act

Identity is conditioned
by place; by role: by circumstance

And yet: which we am I today?

Our sentinels: may be: rebels
and our surgeons: our assassins.

Whore: or Saint: may be in fashion,
the Hero: or The Disabled.

I will be one: or another
which my moment will discover.



7

Red Maple Renga

ELISABETH FRISCHAUF

Maple fluffs its red
Smirks unabashed vermillion
spring-summer-fall beam

Vermilion jewel
Flaunts itself among fall greens
Before it's naked

Sudden surge of wind
Leaves sashay, float, loop, carpet
Grass bold ruby-gold

My love declares he'll
Scotch tape back the flame red leaves
Whose blood spills the lawn.



8

Artificial Intelligence

GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT

Rivers overflow their banks
houses are demolished
cars swept away
by the raging waters:
man has disrupted nature.

In vain
wisdom's warning words.

Would a chip, implanted in the brain,
offer more wisdom or even more blindness
and indoctrination?



9.

What Will Remain

GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT

Everything that ever lived
is sooner or later erased by time.

What remains
is the beauty on earth
which man created before:
beautiful constructions, sculptures,
words and music.

But what will remain of us
– for those who come after us –
as a trace?

What else
but tasteless constructions,
pollution of water and air,
the greed of the present.



10

Explicit Silence

GORDON SCAPENS

Under an ill-fitting wig
mother picks at food
like a nervous sparrow.

The days I take her
to lunch at her favourite café,
she takes the same seat,
sits with the isolation
of the distant moon.

Deep in her own thoughts,
she doesn't notice
the surrounding bustle,
the smiles exchanged,
conversations seeking meaning,
the chink of dishes,
even a baby's cry.
She never talks while there.

Enough loose ends
flap around in her head
behind the closed door
of her condition
to overshadow anything
the world can conjure.

Her mouth moves slowly.
The rest of her face
is a pale mask
and only the eyes
will say she's alive
and tell of pain.



11

Green Summer Forest Fire

IRENA JOVANOVIĆ

Sun rays passing through leaves
all forest burns green light
divine grace lifted down to earth
fragrant flame of fresh chlorophyll life
so blessed is this existence
with essences and sweet love mellows
surrounded by wide sunny meadows
of happiness and opulent gifts
in green rejuvenating torch lights
under the arches of branches
in the life essence cathedral of love
in the temple of nature's jewels
green gemstone of cosmic purity
emerald in deep beauty extension
intensive love of life
in the Lord's courtyards of deepest hugs
grace descending into our sight
entering His divine heart
down the odor of His forest breath
down the green life ray line



12

Out of the Chorus

IVAN POZZONI

I can't really be a returnable void
during my occipital crisis
it's not my job to lay
a body in a horizontal line.

Yet i am horizontal, and i
look for the horizon at every moment of the day
unable to stand upright without encasing
the horizon, the West, squeezed into his sepulchre like
Farinata
the horizon of the camions carrying coffins.

Bursts of weeping, bursts of laughter, and laurel leaves
centimetres from being dead, centimetres from being golden
i look out from the balcony of Western literature
and the critics, confused, brand me with a hospitalisation Tso.

I didn't want to throw myself off the balcony
i simply wanted to make sure i wasn't alone
with a devil who lures me with a pitchfork
depression, asphyxiating as a lump of bolus,
tempting as the remedies locked in a bottle,
me ignorant, destined to sing out of the choir.



13

Hair Poem

JOHN GREY

My hair is useless.
If it's supposed to make me presentable,
then every single strand is falling down on the job.
And then there's the stuff
that pops up here and there in my chest,
creeps along my arms and legs,
adds ballast to my nether regions.
Of course, there's also the muck
that floats to the floor.
Or clogs the bathroom sink.
So my hair is not only useless,
it also sheds, clogs the pipes,
keeps the local plumber employed.
Occasionally, one little brown curly thing
shows up on some woman's shoulder.
But it's not romantic
like a poem or flowers.
It's merely one of the details of my body.
Not even spit would take such liberties.
Every morning, I look in the mirror.
I don't adjust my nose.
Or assure myself my ears are in my place.
Or my lips are back to how they were
before I slept on them.
But there's my hair,
a mop of tangled threads,

a bird's nest in another life.
Out comes the comb.
Can a scythe be far behind?



14

War Snippets**K.V. RAGHUPATHI**

Now is the time for war, you say
to release hatred to survive.
This living itself is painful, I say
yet endures ensconced in boots, bullets, and blood.

You have only an impulse of killing
while I have only an instinct
to survive in the clouds of tumult;
I balance all, while you destroy to create disorder;
the years ahead seem to breathe
a waste of breath of violence the years behind.

You watch visuals of war
I preach petals of peace;
You read messages of war
I memorize the songs of love;
You write about war
as I fear about the meaning of existence
lost in the boom of gunshots.

We are over-armed, under-educated, and semi-sensitized.
For those who scroll, watch, and grieve,
can the abstract pain they *see* make them more human?
We construct only to deconstruct in drones and detonations.
As the cries of the mothers and babies ripple across the
continents
we look on in silence as though untouched and undefiled.

You wandered and settled here and there
all over the world like gypsies
to flee from blood and hatred.
But you cannot recreate home
amidst airstrikes, fraudulent declarations, and treaties.
You must return home to make your home again.
By then, you have lost your roots in bloody wounds.

Take me to a land of no war
where gathers no dust and blood for peace,
where screams no shells, sanctions, and screens
but the stink of blood will not go away
as the clouds of fear hang with its smell.

I think of the future, the life in the world
after a hundred years from now.
I may not be alive to witness
swarms of quakes
beneath the bleeding sky
breaking the foundations of life.



15

Last Night

KEITH INMAN

I had a drink with my father last night.
He looked good since passing
and seemed okay with things.

His breathing was much better
and he could remember again.
His stories had clarity. And yet,
he was distracted, resting one hand
in the other as he looked off
beyond where the lamp threw light,
as if that place was more familiar.

So we turned on the news and watched
the flickering patterns well past anything
that seemed important.



16 The Winds

LES WICKS

My boat was an argument.
Like all arguments
it leaked when subjected to pressure,
once dragged out of shadows
was unable to endure the corrosions of the sun.

It took some tacking
a modicum of sweat
but rounding the point I could see
the tightly crammed shantytown of options.
A new life perhaps
but little beauty.

The land felt difficult, I could not blame my feet.
There were no fortifications
no customs clerks to wheedle & detain.
This was a potentiality where the greatest prize
was also the meanest.

*If you are desperate enough to find us
you belong
forever.*

Arrivals here, or anywhere
must gauge the value of their parts.
Will someone buy my arms
my voice my body?

Taking up a borrowed chisel
I began to carve by rote
the rules of this rough living.



17

The First Drop

MADHURA DONODE

The first drop kissed the barren clay,
Like words unsaid that find their way.
It stirred the soil, a breath released,
The scent of longing long deceased.
The sky bent low with tender grace,
As if to glimpse her lover's face.
Each drop, a vow the wind confessed,
A pulse awoken in the chest.
So brief the storm, so deep the mark
Like love that bloomed before the dark.
And when it passed, the silence burned,
A page once touched, forever turned.
No sun can dry what rain became
The heart, though healed, won't love the same.



18

I heard the Silence

MAITHILI NAGREKAR

Although the memories were turning fade
And images were getting worn and torn;
The body was getting old and cold,
But it was his heart, still full of warmth
That used to express itself silently;
Silently waiting for someone,
Silently waiting for something,
So much silent, that one day,
He chose to move away silently.
Silently, he passed away,
And now what I hear is that silence.



19

5 Haiku Poems

MATTHEW JAMES FRIDAY

1.

Trees silhouetting
against the evening sky -
fifty years old

2.

I see you Moon
spying through the bare trees.
No *satori* here.

3.

In a parking lot
an oily puddle reflects
the smiling moon.

4.

A frosty road
takes the garage's light
and makes stars.

5.

Such a surprise -
the hairy purple heart
of an artichoke.



20

Turnips in Southern Tennessee Still

MICHAEL LEE JOHNSON

In Tennessee, the shadows of the southern
wooden structures stalled off the narrow
highway and came to an abrupt end.
Lost in the deep eyes of forest green,
closing in on night.
From the top of a Yellow Poplar
tree scares me looking down
at the hillbilly stills. Moonshine
and moonlight illuminate the fire stills.
Moonshine murders of the past,
dead bodies hidden behind blue walls.
Mobs lie in Chicago, bullet marks
on the right side lie dormant through plaster.
This confirms my belief that Jesus
only works part-time.
Let me look at this mirage
picture photo album.
One more time –
find the turnips in the still.



21

Injured animals in the wild

MICHAEL MIROLLA

The persistent tug on a single strand
of hair. The twisting and untwisting
of a single strand of hair. The looking out
from a fortified corner. The quick retreat
into the nearest safe room. The speech
in sudden spurts as if in fear of being
silenced. The lowering of the head
to bypass eye contact. The psychic camouflage
to blend in at all costs. The allergic
reaction to the reaction of others.
The self-correction as pre-emptive measure.
The ultra-seriousness like a halo
that barely allows grimaces in response
to a joke. The use of the right-angle
to avoid thoughts of an hypotenuse.
The response to any question as if
trapped inside an unsolved Rubik's Cube.
The rising up and the lash out of claws
at the least suspicion of invaded space.
The rising up and the lash out of claws
at the least sign of a smile and reaching out.
Welcome to the club. The gift of a hacksaw
when the time comes to cut off that limb.



22

Aureate Silence

MOHIT SAINI

Not all that glisters bends to human hands,
Nor yields its weight to scales of trade and toll.
Some gold is spun in light no coin demands –
A wealth unminted, gleaming past control.

The hush between the thunder and the rain,
The pause before the lark forsakes the dew,
The way late sun will gild a windowpane
Yet ask no witness – this is gold made new.

No vault may hold it, nor assay define,
No miser's grip can clutch its fleeting flame.
It flows where beggars and where saints dine,
And stains the air with grace no king may claim.

Oh, strike no medal for such light unpriced –
The finest gold is neither mined nor kissed.



23

Death of a Butterfly

LALIT NAVANI

Against the old trunk, under a large canopy,
Of crooked branches and assorted leaves,
I take a pause and heave a sigh of relief,
On turnpike road, along the stream.

Panoply of nature kisses my feet,
Naked, deciduous expanse wraps around me,
While a furtive butterfly,
Flutters unwelcome on the scene.

Proud, lissom, a migrant,
Sporting vermillion stained frills,
On mosaic wings,
God's nepotistic offspring.

My wafture distracts it,
I curse, enjoy the sweet-scented breeze,
While the meandering beauty,
Romances with riparian trees.

Inure and innocent,
Resplendent in its overcoat,
The metaphoric caterpillar ignores,
Speeding demons of every tone.

Hums along the curvy trail,
Pays the price for reckless ways,
For the rules of man and nature,
Cannot be broken,
Least of all; an inebriated insect.

The poor soul unknowingly antagonised,
Its new habitat and azure skies,
Oh! The death of a butterfly,
Sadly, on its maiden flight.

I dig my fingers, fish out a stone,
Wallop it against the protruding tomb,
A moiety of erstwhile butterfly surfaces,
Fossilized, as I shriek in pain.



24

Stoic

NELS HANSON

The Ship of Eternity, Ark of a Million
Years, Raft of the Sun, strains at gold
tether thin as filament as many more
spirits come running to this harbor.

Now the dark tide of night is rising,
a thousand oars with rowers, those
Grateful Dead avid to depart. "Cast
Off," says Osiris, frantic hands grasp
at ebony hull, desperate prayers, all
with hearts heavier than the feather.

I tried, but scales weigh true. Some
stand weeping as a blue sail unfolds
among stars, another river. I saw one
dive to follow, an instant hope to swim
in air above the maw of the crocodile.



25

Emperors

NICK COOKE

Faster and faster they bade me run
till my heels ached and blisters plagued my soles.
It was all part of toughening me up
prior to the campaign I led
the year after (see our annals
for detail of the ensuing slaughter).

Nowadays it is I who drives
my children further than is thought human,
with a view to the planned incursions
and all the riches of their future realms.
Scourge of a million lives, I could not bear
the shame of poor coaching. Such is my stamp:

my father was thus, his father *idem*.
We were cast in bronze and lived lives of iron,
in terror of sloth, like a monster germ.
History must learn to forgive us, just as we,
in the depths of the imperial crypt,
centuries hence may start to spare ourselves.



26

Old Age

RAKESH BHARTIYA

Old age is an age quite interesting
You just go on reflecting and reflecting
On your follies, on your faults
Taking them out and then shuffling
Deep inside your memory-vaults
Years gone by, opportunities gone by
Persons gone by, relations gone by
Dance in front of your weak eyes
As if the scenes from an old film
Lost, then found and restored a film
Everything ends up in just reflecting
Knowing fully well that it is time-wasting
When you have little time left with you
You just waste time on reflecting and reflecting
Old age is an age quite interesting.



27

The Devil

RANGEET MITRA

The river has come down.
Moonlight on the street.
Cars become boats by raising their legs.
Winter comes
through the loophole in idle money.
Devil roams around.
We could identify him.



28

In the Metronome of Movement

ROGER G. SINGER

morning mist
on the face

tasting the rain

church bells
disturb the ghosts

a windmill
dreams of flying

flowers are always
about something else

word pollen
ears gathering whispers

running with water
driven by fire

preserve me
like spring jam

the math of it
all adds up



29

The Cruel World

SIMRAN SURI

To the cruel world out there,
Obviously, who am I to say this
when I myself belong to this world?

A place full of people,
so many varieties of souls.
Some are filled with the desire for laziness,
some with endless confusion.

We get lost trying to choose the best path,
and our minds, clouded with doubt,
often select the hardest road.

With heavy hearts and eyes full of tears,
we return to this cruel world,
guided by the toughest choices.



30

Skeleton of Neruda

TAPAN KUMAR PRADHAN

Why did the old man die? Or how?
That is the truth you wanted to know
Not that you really cared (Now that
the property's been bequeathed,
copyrights all handed to legal heir)
Ah, you are curious about the history part?

*Yes, the old man will never come back
But some of his history might come back*

Yes, history will be re-written all over tonight
If you find hint of an axe blow on his collar bone
Could have been the work of a childhood rival
Or maybe secret handiwork of scheming Junta
Or was it a scuffle with one of his girlfriend's paramour?

Yes, history will be re-written all over tonight
If you find a gold wrist watch buried in his coffin
It could have been heirloom of the military surgeon
Who left it absentmindedly (?) inside the abdomen
While conducting a routine (?) procedure for ulcer.

And history *is* going to be re-written tonight
For you are going to find something, *something* -
A ring, a cigarette butt, a pencil, a handkerchief
An apple seed, a toothpick, a woman's DNA
A footnote, a remark, an observation

Why the skull was tilted to one side only
And not the other; why left toe was bent
Why the coffin was made of cheap cedar wood
And not of ewe, or mahogany, or a steel casket?

Questions will be asked, questions will be answered -
For unlike the dead white sands of silent Atacama
History has never truly remained the same
It has changed its course, changed its stance
Like the inquisitive black waters of Rio Maule
Like the ever changing moods of La Llorona
It has always swayed to the tunes, pendulum like
Between a Ruling Party and an Opposition Party.

So whenever you start digging into history
History will be re-written all over again
Pages will be deleted, chapters added
Commas, hyphens will change their positions
A full stop will become a question mark
And quotes will become part of main text.

And the more you will dig
the more you will gain
and more you will lose

faith from history.



(Note: - Poet Pablo Neruda's dead body was exhumed in 2013 to ascertain the exact cause of his death 40 years ago, but the official version of cause of death kept on changing from poisoning to cancer to bacteria infection with different political parties coming to power.)

31

Under the Summit

TAYLOR GRAHAM

Thunder, lightning, splash
of lake waves to squall, the wind
having its way. And all around, rocks –
graven with eons of uplift and crush,
inner spurting fire and fusion –
sit staid as vicars waiting
for the next miracle.



32

No Room for Sulking

(Malaal is not Halaal)

UZMA HANEEF

I can hear the jingling sound of a tambourine.
I can see the sky filled with a smoke screen.

A house is illuminated with the decorative lights.
Excitement has taken all to the sleepless nights.

The father of the bride is overseeing everything,
Ensuring that guests are not short of anything.

Solely for the feast have guests attended.
Happiness on the face is to be pretended.

Judgement is delivered with their every mouthful,
Simultaneously eating and calling it wasteful.

The bridesmaids are dressing the bride properly,
For true compliments are offered to her rarely.

Under one roof has celebration gathered them all,
Cherishing every moment as 'Malaal is not Halaal'.



33

You

YUCHENG TAO

you fly away, my love,
with the pale moonlight,
the pale hue
on my face.
i am fragile after the loss.

the passing years
curl like mist
at my window, leaving
traces on my hand –
that is your past.

i try to forget
and rebuild myself,
turning my brokenness
into whole wings,
hoping to find you.
you are like a dove,
flying far away,
the pale hue
on my face
beneath the moonlight



SHORT STORY

1

Disappeared in a Cave

BISHNUPADA RAY

Perhaps in his previous life Shakti had been a caveman; in his present reincarnation he was a cave explorer. He searched for unknown caves in the mountains and hills and made videos of them for his YouTube channel called Landscape Loner. His videos gave a feel of the exotic and the out of the ordinary, and never failed to excite the viewers, and naturally they garnered a lot of views, comments, likes, shares and regularly increased the number of subscribers. It was astonishing to see how much dedicated he was in bringing out the hidden gems of places by navigating through the hidden dangers. He was not like the cheap clickbait YouTubers who put an attractive thumbnail to rouse the viewer's expectations only to frustrate them in the content, or like the urban dehatis who were always churning out trash with their reels made only for vulgar entertainment. He was able to maintain a fair balance between quality and quantity. About two hundred of his videos were available in YouTube and videos like 'On the Ridges of Taplejung' and 'Secrets of Guptadham' had received more than a million views. He believed in hard work and not in cheap gimmick which the content creators were usually susceptible to. He kept his videos short and consistently compact so that the viewers did not leave them halfway with a bad taste in mouth, and he never inserted any personal info

in them nor he solicited the viewers for subscription. He regularly replied to the comments and left no stone unturned to keep the viewers well-informed about his activities and locations, even though his tagline was 'fly, fly away'. In a sense he was a sort of gypsy always in a flight mode from civilization and who loved to reinvent himself in the loneliness of distant mountains.

Such an explorer was one day reported missing. He was last seen in the hilly regions of Dooars, exploring some dry riverbeds of winter and the adjacent hill tracks, at least that was confirmed by his last video in which he was seen talking about a riverside hill cave covered with jungle vines and at the entrance of which he said his body started vibrating like tremors whenever he attempted venturing into it, as if he bounced off some energy barrier. Puzzled by the incident he decided to venture into it later. His viewers were equally puzzled, many of them commented about some alien life signature; some referred to a similar incident in Nevada mountains in which an outdoorsman called Kenny Veach mysteriously disappeared after discovering a cave which he called the M cave; some referred to other mysterious incidents like the 'Dyatlov Pass'; some cautioned him against going inside the cave; and some called it a hoax. Shakti replied to the comments with understanding and enthusiasm and informed all that he would be trying to go into it and make a video of it very soon.

And indeed, he kept his promise and on a fixed day tried to explore the cave alone. Once there near the cave, Shakti again experienced vibrations, but this time he came equipped, he did some private research on magnetic field energy and wore an anti-magnetic and anti-radiation jacket which he ordered and bought from Amazon. First, he bounced off something again like the first time, then after a couple of efforts and pushing movements, the invisible

barrier seemed to give away, and he was sucked inside the cave like being in a vortex. The inside of the cave appeared like a dome, like the one he saw in Barabar caves. He saw flow of lights and vapour, emanating out of some rocky objects in the shape of cathode ray tube. Long twisted rocks hanging from the ceiling touched the damp floor like a mesh of wires. Blunt spiralling rocks standing on the floor appeared like big flashlight batteries. The objects together faintly looked like a physical manifestation of Dandera light, placed inside a glowing orb. A misty hypnotising motion circulated through the cave and Shakti was standing there motionless and will less, as if all his energy was sucked out. He was looking into the very eye of total renunciation. His feelings sharpened as much as his senses dulled and faded, and everything was shifting inside the egg of the cave, like the state of impermanence.

Something strange was happening to him, he was going back into time, the past he travelled from, his face contorting and taking the shape of his younger days, of his childhood, infancy, back into previous lives, his face changing into all the faces of his reincarnations, like the denouement of accumulated karma. And with his acute consciousness, he was seeing them like a movie unfolding before him. He could not ascertain how long this took, till he perceived a blackout and all light, however dim, went out of his eyes, like the final moment before death, he thought he had lost his eyesight. Then there was an implosion, and that portion of the hill caved in, with rocks crumbling and crushing him, and also destroying his camera and phone. The outside of the cave, even though looked like a landslide for a moment, finally rested like a layered structure of rocks created by a seismic movement, like the exhaustion of the flame of creation.

Needless to say, most of his followers were curious to know the new developments about the cave. The nature of

the any sensational matter like a mystery or a war lay in their ability to rouse a quick public interest and equally quick oblivion when the matter died down. Since he had already announced the date of his impending next visit to the cave, the followers were waiting for a new video, but no video was uploaded that day, nor any info shared. Two more days passed, and days became weeks, and weeks turned into a month, and the viewers became restive to know what exactly happened. They could sense that something was wrong, and took to social media to enquire about him. When they saw that no information about him was forthcoming and months rolled into a year, they started #Search for Landscape Loner campaign, and many of Landscape Loner's fellow bloggers, hikers and trekkers joined the campaign. They started scouring all the suspected locations of the sprawling Dooars for the mysterious cave. These bloggers and adventurers did their best in searching the area for possible clues of Landscape Loner's mysterious disappearance, and in the process, they discovered not only caves, grottoes, rocky hideouts, but also secret tunnels and sinkholes, the videos of which they uploaded routinely on YouTube, generating further interest and hype among the hikers and trekkers, and the area witnessed a surge in visitors and tourists, and a result, a surge in business as well. The hotspot of the mysterious cave was never found. Some foreigners, for reasons best known to them, came to Dooars secretly, and one of them, a famous rock climber was found dead on the rocky banks of river Teesta, and according to reports, he was part of a group which was trying to locate the cave. These efforts of the individuals were mostly consisted of wild guesswork and imagination.

The most organised effort of searching for the missing YouTuber was made by the police. Following a missing complaint, their special team studied the viral video of the cave and used the triangulation of mobile tower to pinpoint

Landscape Loner's last seen location. And with the help of the army personnel, they hiked along the dry Jayanti riverbed, past the Mahakal trek, and went deep inside Bhutan to reach to the spot which they believed to be the location of the mysterious cave. At least their instruments indicated that. But what they found was the layered structure of massive rocks and no sign of any life or no trace of anything that could help them as clue. They had to call off the search.

When all searches failed and time passed by, Landscape Loner's fate started to fade out of the public memory soon after. He was taken to be dead by some, or believed to be living a secret private life at some unknown location by some other. Some videos purportedly showing a person resembling him vaguely loitering along the hill tracks started to crop up in the internet, the authenticity of which many experts thought could not be independently verified.

Till date, his fate remains a mystery, although a very local one. There are bigger mysteries in the world, like the MH 370, which remains an international concern. But to tell the truth, as an armchair theoretician may rationalise, most mysteries in the world are no mysteries at all. There is no mystery, there cannot be any mystery, except that the things go out of the plain sight for a moment, and remain out of the plain sight for some time, like the missing Youtuber lying buried under the rocks, or the missing MH 370 lying buried under the oceans, they lay there, before they are discovered by a sudden un-layering of the rocks, or the un-layering of the darkness of deep waters; till then, they live the life of a caveman, a bogeyman, or a snowman, or an alien intervention, to perplex both our reason and imagination.



2

Almost There

DJ TYRER

As journeys go, the one from London to Fox Grove in Dorset was hardly to be counted as one of any real consequence, yet, for Michael Davenport-Rowndes, it looked set to be one of the more trying.

“Oh, Mikesie, it’s a gorgeous car!” exclaimed Sylvia as she climbed in. “What is it?”

“A classic E-Type Jag,” he told her, patting the bonnet. He was quite proud of the racing-green paintjob it had been given; it really looked the part. Once they got out of the congested streets, he looked forward to going full throttle.

Sylvia took out her iPhone and began surfing the web. Taking advantage of a wait at a red light, he glanced over and saw she’d found the Fox Grove website and was busy perusing photos of the stately home and its grounds.

“Why haven’t you ever taken me to see your grandparents before?” she asked, not looking up from the screen. “Fox Grove looks simply adorable – in fact, I think it would be a perfect location for our wedding.”

His lip twitched as it always did when she raised the topic of marriage and he fought the urge to leap out of the car and make a run for it. Michael wasn’t wholly resigned to the notion of marrying Sylvia; in fact, he wasn’t entirely certain how they’d come to be engaged.

"Well," he said, edging the car forward, "to be frightfully honest with you, it's a dump."

"Sorry?"

"It's a dump. Fox Grove is a dump."

"Oh, really? It *looks* lovely. What's wrong with it?"

"Well, for a start, there's no mobile signal and the broadband is slower than... than an arthritic tortoise, assuming one can connect at all as the router hasn't the range to cover the whole house, let alone the grounds. Then, there are the baths. Don't get me started on the baths..."

"Why, whatever's wrong with them?"

He sighed as if pained. "They're tiny, that's what's wrong with them. More bidets than bathtubs, if I'm being frightfully honest. One would think that one's ancestors were all midgets of one persuasion or another. It's all quite bizarre. Really, the entire place is like taking a trip back in time, only without any of the benefits of time travel."

"Such as?"

"Eh?" he grunted as he avoided an oblivious pedestrian stepping out into the road ahead of them.

"What benefits would time travel offer?"

"Uh, um, well, I can't quite think of any, but I'm sure there are some. Sorry, my brainbox is rather preoccupied with driving."

"Oh, no problem, my dear."

Sylvia fell into silence, gazing down at her screen, while he manoeuvred the Jaguar through the London streets and out through the suburbs and into the country lanes beyond.

"Aha!" exclaimed Michael. "Now to feel the wind in our hair!"

He put his foot down and there was, indeed, a good breeze whipping Sylvia's hair about; Michael's was receding and cut too short to actually join in the fun.

"Careful!" cried Sylvia, clutching her iPhone tightly as they sped around corners with a degree of violence in the steering unsuited to the badly-potholed roads. Her cheeks had grown a little green.

"Here we go!" he responded with a laugh, putting his foot down.

There was a sudden bang and the car abruptly began to slow as smoke poured out from under the bonnet.

"Crikey!" Michael exclaimed.

Sylvia screamed.

The car coasted to a halt, gliding gracefully into a ditch.

"What happened?" Sylvia demanded as soon as her panic attack had eased enough to allow her to speak.

"Uh, well, to be frightfully honest with you, it's a really rather ancient automobile, I'm afraid. It was my Pater's, you see, and a new coat of paint aside, it hasn't been touched since; costs, you know." He patted the dashboard. "I guess the poor thing finally gave up the ghost."

Sylvia gave a snort indicating she disapproved of their predicament.

Michael patted his pockets, then said, "Do you have a signal, my love? I appear to have left my phone at home. Forget my head and so forth..."

She checked. "No."

"Oh."

"You'll have to go for help."

He assisted her out of the car and over to a grassy bank, laying his jacket down for her to sit herself upon. Casting her a suspicious look as she began tapping away at the screen of her iPhone, he set off in search of a mechanic.

With no phone to provide him with directions, he wandered the lanes for what felt like hours. Given a glass of Pimms and a comfortable seat, Michael was a great admirer of nature, but he wasn't enjoying it much now. For, while the birds were singing and the hedgerows were in bloom, the sun was beating down without a hint of remorse and his calves were beginning to burn with pain.

He gave a gasp of delight when he finally arrived in a village equipped with a garage. Ignoring the garage, he headed straight for the local hostelry and ordered up a couple of G&Ts to ease his parched throat.

"Not really dressed for rambling," observed the barman, taking in his smart-casual look.

"Indeed not," said Michael, looking at him as if the man were an imbecile.

The barman waited patiently for the conversation to continue, but Michael finished his drinks and, then, headed for the door and down the road to the garage.

"We're closed," said the resident mechanic, flipping the sign on the door as Michael approached.

"Oh, come on now, it's an emergency!"

The mechanic sighed the sigh of a man who knew his protests would be overwhelmed and he'd have to sacrifice some of his precious time off on the altar of being a Good Samaritan. "Yes?"

"My car has blown a gasket, or something, and my fiancée's sitting on the roadside waiting for me."

The mechanic sighed, again, pointed at his tow truck and said, "Right, come on."

They climbed in; then he asked Michael for directions.

"Uh, well, to be frightfully honest with you, I haven't a jolly clue. I left my phone at home, you see, and I've been wandering about for a while..."

The mechanic asked him to describe where the crash had occurred, then tried going back over his journey on foot, but all Michael could remember was that the lanes all looked much alike, he'd been uncomfortably hot and his legs had been hurting.

The mechanic sighed for a third time, this time the sigh of someone who can see their afternoon off rapidly vanishing into oblivion.

"We'll have to drive around and search for her," he said.

Michael nodded, impressed. "Good idea."

They found Sylvia, five minutes later, sitting on the grassy bank and checking her Facebook account. Had Michael only taken a different fork, he might have saved himself an awful lot of walking.

The mechanic winched the Jaguar out of the ditch. The paintwork was scraped and the front rather dented. He tutted at the sight, then towed it back to his garage.

While the mechanic took a look at the engine, Michael led Sylvia over to the pub, bought himself another drink and set her up with a few G&Ts to keep her occupied. Then, he headed back over to the garage to see what the man's opinion was.

"You're in luck," the mechanic said.

"I am?" asked Michael, whose relationship with luck was frequently a fraught one; he was more used to people saying 'bad luck.'

"You are. I've got just the parts I need to fix your engine out the back in a box of junk: I had planned to get rid of it... there's not much call for such bits, these days, after all. The quality's not great and you'll have to be careful not to strain the engine – drive slowly – but, it'll get you where you're going and, then, you can have it properly overhauled; you'll probably need a new engine."

Michael didn't like the implications of cost in that sentence, but, at least, he'd get to Fox Grove. If that could be taken as a positive.

"It won't take me long," said the mechanic.

It didn't, and soon, Michael and Sylvia were sedately pootling along the country lanes towards Dorset.

"This is more like it," stated Sylvia. "I'm actually enjoying the drive." Her eyes were still fixed firmly on her iPhone as he carefully threaded their way through a mass of sheep crammed between the hedges of the lane.

Michael wasn't sure he was enjoying it, especially with the threat of a hefty bill ahead, added to the discomfort of a weekend at Fox Grove. He rather wished he'd stayed at home with his Xbox.

"Aha," he said, "there it is!"

He gestured ahead of them, down towards the stately home that had appeared at the end of a long formal drive lined with cypresses.

Sylvia glanced up from her iPhone and said, "It's lovely." She returned her gaze immediately to the screen.

They headed down the gentle slope towards where the drive met the lane, the entrance flanked by lion-topped gateposts long deprived of their gates.

Suddenly, Michael gave a squawk of confusion.

"What is it?" Sylvia asked, looking up irritated.

Before he could reply, they shot across the lane and splashed down into a pond, sending some consternated ducks flying away in a panic.

"Well," he slowly said, water sloshing about his ankles, "to be frightfully honest with you, the brakes just went." He sighed. "I suspect I may just need a new car."

At least the cool water had a soothing effect upon his pained feet.

Sylvia didn't answer, still stunned.

A duck quacked angrily from the shore.

"Well," he said with a smile, "we're almost there, darling."

Ends



3

The Wolves

JANET MASON

“The production of animal products for human consumption takes up much land that could be returned to its original wild natural state. Consider all the land and water used for cattle to graze on,” stated Casey, a student in Jamie’s basic physics class in the small, privately funded college where she had taught for nearly three decades.

“The idea,” continued Casey, “is that when everyone realizes that it is unethical to eat other non-human animals and also that we need a planet to live on, that this land will go back to its natural state. Then the animals that live in the wild, such as coyotes, foxes, and wolves, will restore ecosystems that the Earth needs to continue living. Restoring ecosystems is crucial for the planet to continue. And since humans need the Earth, it is in their best interests to defend the Earth. It was humans who reintroduced the wolves in Yellowstone National Park in the United States, roughly in the middle of the country.”

Something howled inside Jamie – and her world felt a little bigger – as she nodded her head and spoke.

“I think I heard about this.”

Jamie thought about the wooded areas that she saw between the pastures of farmland alongside the highway, on the ride to and from the College, and how she felt they could go on forever, over the rolling hills, beyond the point where

she could see. She thought about how she imagined she could feel the relief of the air circulating over the Earth beneath the trees and cooling the planet. Again, she smelled the evergreen trees and felt the coolness of the spring breezes caressing her face. She felt something shift inside of her. A sense of wildness welled up in her and took over her with such violent force that she stepped back.

Casey was speaking:

"The wolves were killed off in Yellowstone Park in the 1930s, when people thought that wolves were dangerous to them. But over the years, there has been mounting evidence that wolves are rightfully more afraid of humans than humans are of them. So, they were reintroduced seventy years later in 1995, and guess what?"

"An entire ecosystem was revived," answered Jamie.

"Exactly," said Casey.

"The wolves kept the elk population..., " said Jamie.

"in check. Wolves are natural predators of elk, and in chasing them, the wolves kept the elk from damaging the willow trees. As a result, both the elk and the willow trees thrived," answered Casey, "Without the wolves, more elk were eating the willow trees..."

"and the absence of willow trees made it harder for the beavers, who also relied on the willow trees as a food source..., " said Jamie.

"and with the reintroduction of the wolves, the willow trees became stronger, providing shade for fish. Even the streams, rivers, lakes, and the creatures who live in them came back," chimed in Casey.

“Now the willows provide refuge for songbirds,” laughed Jamie, adding, “and that’s how an ecosystem works.”

“We must have read the same article,” said Casey.

Jamie laughed.



4

Writers Group

MICHAEL J. D'ALFONSI

The amber glow from the café's Edison bulbs fell over Café Luminosa in oblique sheets, tinting the hardwood floors and glass-topped tables with the sepia of an old photograph. Evenings here thrummed at a more subdued frequency: students hunched in the vestibule, faces blue-lit by their laptops; a pair of retired teachers in the window seat, exchanging crossword clues and the occasional conspiratorial glance; the barista, baritone and absent-mindedly gorgeous, whistling what might have been Satie as he policed a slow drip from the French press.

In the corner booth – partially shielded from the main drag by a lacquered bookshelf and a ficus doomed to perpetual yellowing – the Thursday writing group convened. Nick was always first, not so much early as preemptively present, his tall frame folded into the vinyl bench, his hair a dark latticework through which the lamplight threaded with deliberate care. He had already dissected the condiment caddy, aligning the sugar packets in color-coded stacks, whites pressed against pinks, the blues and yellows forced to mingle in uneasy truce. His notebook sprawled open before him, each line a field of crossed-out phrases and muttered amendments, as if his internal editor patrolled the page with military vigilance.

Greg drifted in next, the gravity of his presence felt before seen. Even at rest, there was an athleticism to his

movements – controlled, purposeful, never quite at odds with the room but always, somehow, a beat ahead of its rhythm. His blazer (one button fastened, lapel pin glinting) was incongruous in a room of hoodies and flannel, but it suited him. He set his phone on the table – face down, screen dark – and let his gaze do the scanning, eyes briefly lighting on Nick's neat stacks with a half-smile. "You're going to start alphabetizing them, one of these days," Greg said, and when Nick looked up, there was something like fondness softening the usual diagnostic squint.

"Only if they start printing barcodes on the Splenda," Nick replied, but his tone lacked the defensive prickliness of old. He closed his notebook and smoothed the page with the flat of his hand, a gesture both final and tentative.

Harry arrived in the wake of the laughter, a woolen blur whose satchel seemed to contain several pounds' worth of unfinished manuscript. He unshouldered the bag with a grunt, fished out a fistful of napkins, and immediately began sketching circles – each the seed of a potential world, or perhaps a self-portrait disguised as an alien overlord. He offered a general nod to the table, then looked over his shoulder to see if Katie had followed him in. When he found she hadn't, he exhaled and, for a moment, allowed himself the visible pleasure of being first to claim a clean napkin.

Katie arrived last, as she nearly always did, but her entrances held a grace that rendered her delays an aesthetic choice rather than a failure of punctuality. Her coat was unbuttoned, scarf trailing, cheeks pink from either the night air or the exertion of weaving through the evening crowd. When she settled in beside Nick, she radiated a kinetic warmth, her eyes still lit with the embers of some private, triumphant thought.

"I thought you might have gotten lost in the mystery section," Harry said, watching her as he traced a line through one of his concentric sketches. "You missed Greg's pitch to alphabetize the sugar."

Katie smiled, the kind that suggested she knew more than she let on. "If the Dewey decimal system comes to Café Luminosa, I'm transferring to the bar down the street."

Greg laughed, a deep, resonant sound. "Dewey would approve of the coffee here. It's strong enough to catalog a man's entire life in one sitting." He sipped his black coffee, held it in his mouth a moment as if to confirm its potency, then set the mug down with a precise, almost respectful clink.

The pleasantries gave way to the usual ritual: each person produced evidence of their weekly progress, though "progress" was a relative term. Greg held up a single sheet, double-spaced and laser-printed, then immediately recanted. "It's mostly dialogue," he said, "I wanted to see if I could sustain tension without any exposition. It's a stupid exercise." He offered the page to Katie, who accepted it with both hands and a look that implied it was anything but.

Nick's contribution was more evasive: he gestured at his closed notebook, then said, "Still reworking the middle chapters. I think I might have solved the timeline issue, but now the protagonist is insufferable." He glanced sidelong at Greg, as if daring him to agree.

"That's the nature of all protagonists," Harry observed, his eyes still fixed on his napkin. "They only become bearable once the author has stopped hating them."

Nick considered this, then nodded once. "I'll take that as encouragement."

Harry shrugged. "You should."

They continued in this way, the back-and-forth as familiar as the grind of the espresso machine, each deflection and self-effacement a sign of mutual respect, or perhaps of shared insecurity. They traded updates on the state of their submissions – Greg's near-miss at a reputable magazine, Nick's cryptic but promising response from a contest judge, Harry's ongoing experiment with serialized fiction – and, as was the unspoken rule, no one mentioned the mounting rejection slips unless the bearer raised the subject himself.

Katie listened with the poise of a practiced interviewer, her own folder untouched in front of her. When the conversation reached its natural plateau, she cleared her throat, the sound small but distinct in the soft perimeter of the booth.

"So," she said, and the single syllable drew all attention to her. "I have news."

There was a moment – a brief, palpable suspension of the room's breath – during which each man recalibrated his expectations. Katie, who never oversold her work, whose self-deprecations were both more artful and more genuine than theirs, had never prefaced an update this way.

She opened the folder, revealing a letterhead embossed with the unmistakable teal-and-silver of Lumina Press.

"They're publishing my story," she said, and at once her voice was both incredulous and utterly certain. "It's my first real acceptance."

Nick was the first to react, though it manifested only as a tightening around his eyes, a micro-expression of something that could have been pride or envy, or both. He uncapped his pen and tapped it twice against the table, then found his words. "Congratulations, Katie. That's – " He searched, then selected – "remarkable. Truly."

Greg leaned forward, letting the full wattage of his smile wash over her. "That's incredible, Katie," he echoed, but the sincerity was unmistakable, untarnished even by his own ambitions. He pushed his coffee aside as though making space for the news, or for her.

Harry, for a fleeting second, seemed to lose all interest in his napkin. "Wow," he said, and then, "That's fantastic. We should celebrate." He looked around, as if expecting the barista to roll out a bottle of champagne on cue.

Katie's cheeks deepened in color, but her smile was luminous. "Thank you," she said, and then, almost as an afterthought, "It's just a short piece, but they want to feature it in the spring issue."

A silence fell – a good silence, full of things understood and things too complex to articulate. Outside, headlights swept across the café's window, each pass momentarily illuminating the dust motes that floated in the warm air above their table. The city continued its quiet churning, oblivious to the tectonic shifts that played out in booths like these.

Nick, after a suitable interval, resumed his alignment of the sugar packets, but this time he allowed the blues and yellows to intermingle freely, as though something had been released from the need for order.

Greg raised his mug in a gesture of solidarity. "To Katie," he said, and the others followed suit, even Harry, who drained the last of his tea and raised an empty cup with a solemnity usually reserved for the ends of novels.

The toast was brief, unceremonious, but it reverberated quietly in the space between them, as real and tangible as the wood of the table beneath their hands.

When the moment passed, the group shifted as if by collective instinct, their postures a fraction looser, their smiles edged with something like relief. They spoke, then, not of stories or slush piles, but of the city's late trains, the virtues and vices of local politics, the best places to find soup dumplings at midnight. The air inside the booth grew warmer, the lamp above them a sun around which they orbited, each with their own velocity and elliptical course.

Above the bar, the Satie had resolved into something less melancholy, more buoyant. The night's crowd thinned, then thickened again, as the city's narrative doubled back on itself, a perpetual revision in search of closure.

But for the four writers in the corner of Café Luminosa, the ending was yet unwritten, and for the first time in a long while, that felt less like a threat than a promise.

Scene 2

The afterimage of the toast – mugs lifted, laughter spooling briefly and unselfconsciously – hung in the air even as the warmth began to cool, as if the moment itself were a physical thing, slow to dissolve. For a few beats, the group rode the effervescence of Katie's triumph, conversation rippling along the surface of the ordinary, but the new gravity was unmistakable, pulling at their words and gestures with invisible hooks.

Greg's smile, so practiced and invincible, wavered as he reclaimed his mug. He gave the congratulatory phrase one last, careful polish – "You really deserve it, Katie" – but it landed softer than he intended, and in the space that followed, his glance flicked sideways to Nick, who had begun drumming a staccato rhythm on the tabletop with his pen. The sound was barely audible, but its persistence gnawed at

the boundaries of the conversation, a Morse code for thoughts unspoken.

Harry, determined to maintain the levity, raised his empty tea cup in a pantomime of further celebration. "We'll make it official this weekend. Pizza at my place. I'll even let Greg bring his mystery dip," he said, but the joke trailed off, unfinished, and Katie's smile, radiant only seconds ago, flickered as she registered the strain in his tone.

Nick's congratulations, which had begun as a genuine offering, curdled into something drier with each repetition. "It must feel good," he said, eyes locked on the spiral of steam escaping Greg's mug. "To be the first of us." There was no malice in the phrase, but it fell with a weight disproportionate to its words, flattening the buoyancy that had momentarily floated the table.

Greg cleared his throat – a small, unintentional sound that still managed to draw every gaze. "Yeah," he said, pushing the mug to the far side of the coaster, "here's hoping the royalties don't come in as a check for six dollars and a signed rejection slip." He laughed, but the laugh was self-contained, dissipating before it could invite anyone else in.

The silence that followed was not quite hostile, but it was dense, as if the air itself had taken on the viscosity of honey. Katie's hand found the edge of her folder, fingers curling around the manila like it was a lifebuoy. The light from above, which had seemed so cozy and enveloping, now cast sharp, interrogative shadows across her face, each feature carved in high relief.

For a moment, none of them looked at her directly. Harry folded his napkin into an origami triangle, creasing each edge with slow, deliberate movements. Nick gathered his pens into a small arsenal, the act meticulous, ceremonial.

Even Greg, usually so adept at steering the energy of a room, simply stared at the swirling residue at the bottom of his mug as if it contained, in the patterns of spent coffee, the answer to a question he could not quite articulate.

Katie, feeling the pressure of so many averted gazes, tried to reset the mood. "It's just a flash piece," she said, voice breezy but trembling at the edges. "Honestly, I think the editor liked my cover letter more than the story." The self-deprecation, intended as a bridge, only widened the gap; it sounded, to the others, like modesty weaponized.

Harry stood first, the movement abrupt. "Gotta get up early," he mumbled, though the clock behind the counter still read only 9:43. He gathered his things in a single, practiced sweep, pausing only to slide his napkin-art toward Katie. "For inspiration," he offered, the smile genuine if slightly forced. She accepted it with a grateful nod, but the thinness of the paper seemed a perfect metaphor for the moment: delicate, easily torn.

Greg followed, standing with the authority of a man leaving a boardroom, not a booth. "You'll have to tell us what it's like," he said, "seeing your name in print." He hesitated, then added, "Seriously, it's a huge deal." There was a tremor in the sincerity, as if the words fought their way past a centuries-old instinct to keep such feelings to oneself.

Nick lingered, tidying the battlefield of his workspace with almost obsessive care. When he spoke, his voice was so low it nearly vanished into the drone of the espresso machine. "I'm happy for you," he said, and for a split second, it was true, unadulterated. But then he capped his pen with a snap and slipped it into his pocket, a sound final as a closing argument.

Katie remained, her own hands motionless atop the folder, as the others filed out in staggered retreat. The barista dimmed the lights above the counter, signaling the slow approach of closing time. She listened to the new silence, thicker now, punctuated only by the whisper of the heating vents and the distant shudder of a bus braking at the curb outside. The celebratory energy – so potent only minutes ago – had evaporated, leaving a residue of what felt, to her, like loss.

She looked down at the napkin Harry had left: concentric circles, each smaller than the last, the smallest a dot at the very center. It reminded her, in a way that was both comforting and devastating, of the group itself – four lives orbiting a shared obsession, each drawing closer and then peeling away in their own unpredictable trajectories.

The city outside pulsed on, oblivious, and Katie felt herself recede from the room, not so much shrinking as crystallizing into a new, solitary shape. There would be another Thursday, another gathering – she knew this, believed it – but the chemistry had changed, and she would spend the intervening days recalculating how, or if, it might be restored.

She slipped the napkin into her folder, closed it gently, and prepared to leave. Above her, the bulbs glowed on, lighting the empty table with an intensity reserved for things already past.



5

Self-Analysis

RATTAN MANN

It all started with mom. Frankly speaking, nothing started with mom.

Nothing started with grand-mom, even great-grand-mom. It might have started long back. It might not have started yet. But I always say it all started with mom. I know I am lying. I am a born liar.

Normally in three days I speak more lies than another would speak in three years. And when it comes to talking to foreigners in Cannaught Place, fellows, I become a dirty bundle of all sweet lies. And I am mighty proud of that – a chap has got to be proud of what he is, can't be proud of what he is not.

I again say it all started with mom! Mom had her educated. Mom sent her to school. Mom sent her to college. And then mom asked her to look for a job so that she does not have to depend on my whims and fancies. Actually, it all started there; though I still insist it all started with mom because I am a liar. And to my utter dismay she got a job.

Of course I am referring to Geeta. Anybody can guess that. Of course she is my sister. Anybody can guess that too. But she is not my sister. But I still say she is my sister – because I am a liar. Some say she is my step-sister; but I don't believe them because they are also liars.

What started with mom? My mental sickness, of course. Anybody can guess that. See, it could not have started with mom because I was not yet born. But I still insist my mental-sickness started with mom. But, fellows, try to understand the dilemma of a mentally sick liar. If he does not tell lies how will it be known that he is mentally-sick.

Geeta got a job in a school as a typist. I at once let it be known within my circles that a night-club of questionable repute had hired her as a bar-maid. Geeta did nothing to counter these rumours. She is very gentle and docile. If you slap her on her right cheek, she would turn her left towards you. I love making use of such an opportunity. Can't help it! Fellows, try to understand a mentally-sick guy. Our age is after all an Age of Understanding.

Geeta is the only living creature I have been able to slap without retaliation.

I tried to stone a cat but she jumped on my back. I tried to whip a donkey but it kicked me so hard in the stomach that I had to be admitted in a hospital.

The day I came out of the hospital I was a bitter and angry man. So, I went up to Geeta and as she began to embrace me, I slapped her. Nothing happened. I slapped her again. Still nothing happened. I got so encouraged that from that day on I slap her every day. To make sure nothing would ever go wrong in my newly-found paradise I told her what Christ had said. Then I told her if she would suffer quietly all the blows, I showered on her she would reach heaven and enjoy frequent dances with the urchins there. She could even slap them as I slapped her and she won't be punished because there was no such thing as punishment in heaven. I don't know if she understood such deeply philosophical

things but she cried. I loved it. I love it when anybody cries in pain.

After a few days I spread the next rumour. I began to tell my friends that instead of being a simple bar-maid she is now doing striptease and having affairs with everybody coming to her night-club. One day I went so far as to say that she is having five hundred affairs every day. I even encouraged my friends to go there themselves.

Fellows, spreading false rumours is to me what water is to a fish. Not that I don't believe in them. The real fun of spreading rumours lies in believing in them. At least in my case the real kick from that kicking around started when I began to believe in those rumours. Because then things became very serious. Now the honour of our family was at stake and so I could not remain silent or passive. I could not see the name of our family being dragged into dirt.

There is a legend in my village that one day, thirty years after a very successful married life, my great-grand-mother had the courage to confess to my great-grand-father that all her married life it had been her greatest dream to go out on a walk with her husband. Surprisingly, instead of beating her up for her immorality, my great-grand-father agreed to take his wife for a walk with him. Probably he was too drunk to know what he said or did. Fellows, how can I be sure? I was not there to see.

So my great-grand-parents started a very romantic journey into the unknown, great-grand-mother clad from head to toe in a purde, trudging fifty yards behind her husband. Well, it was not her fault that she fell down under these circumstances, and her nose was uncovered for a fraction of a second. My great-grand-father rushed to her and cut her exposed nose because he was scandalised that his

wife had exposed her private parts in public even though neither the part was so private nor was there anybody around to see. And even if the road had not been so deserted as it actually was that night, it was too dark to see a nose anyway. So the legend goes.

Actually nothing of the sort ever happened. This time I am dead sure even though I was not there to see. I am always sure of things I want to be sure. My theory is that my great-grand-parents were walking happily hand-in-hand in Cannaught Place, she clads in hot-pants and he completely in a state of nature. I am positive that my theory is correct, so I don't think I would ever bother to find any evidence in support of it.

Grand-old-pa looked into the wide happy eyes of grand-old-ma and said, "If you ever look into another man's eyes, I will pull you by your nose and elope with you somewhere that rascal can never find you." And he imparted a deep kiss on her nose.

But fools distort history beyond recognition. They forbid kisses because they cannot see anybody happy. So, history says a nose was cut when actually a nose was kissed. Fellows, I say history is a bunch of lies so that liars like me can exploit it to the maximum. Legends are a bunch of lies, I say. But this particular legend, this particular bunch of lies, suited my purpose very well. I am a genius at exploiting lies for my own ends. I began by adding some spice to the story. I went so far as to say that poor grand-old-ma was actually stabbed to death for that breach of tradition instead of escaping with just a loss of nose.

See fellows, history still remains a bunch of lies. I still am very suspicious of it. But the big difference is that now I am in

command of history – now I am distorting it. But I am doing it for Geeta's sake.

"Look at the traditions of our family. Our great-grand-mother was killed just because her nose was exposed. And here you are, dancing naked and running around with every Tom, Dick, and Harry. Have you no shame?" I asked Geeta.

"Where am I dancing and with whom am I running around?" she whispered meekly.

I slapped her two three times. It was a sufficient answer.

Why do I treat Geeta like this? Why can't I leave this poor creature alone? Of course I am mentally-sick, but so are they all, those honourable men.

What else can be behind it? I don't know. Of course, I know it. But I won't tell. Of course, I will tell.

Fellows, the thing is that besides being mentally-sick, I am also sexually frustrated. Perhaps I am mentally sick because I am sexually frustrated. Perhaps I am sexually frustrated because I am mentally sick. Perhaps both! But the psychologists whom I visited for help say it is neither. They say I am a normal human being – a dynamic personality, Santa Clause to children, helpful to neighbours, and very gentle. They say if I doubt it I just have to go to other people and observe what they are. We all are the same, give psychologists a chance, they told me in the end. So, fellows, I am not mentally sick at all. But I still insist that I am mentally sick because I am a liar.

Once I went to a girl and said, "I am sexually frustrated."

She slapped me. "Just imagine everybody trying to dump his sexual frustrations on me." she said. "Can't carry the burden of five hundred million sexual frustrations upon my back!"

"Sorry, I got carried away. At 30 I am still a virgin." I said. "Better luck next time with the next girl.", she said.

That awaited luck with the next girl has not come till today even though years have passed since my first attempt to impress a girl.

It was sometimes after this misadventure that the business of stoning a rat, beating a cat, and slapping Geeta everyday started. Or was it stoning a cat and beating an ass? I have forgotten. I am so preoccupied with my obsessions that I am not capable of seeing one step back or one step ahead. But this is not at all my fault.

Guys, anthropologists say the when man, the hunter, became man, the farmer, the wisest man could see only seven years ahead. What a score! In my beloved country the wisest leader cannot see seven days ahead. May be Geeta can see seven hundred years ahead. But who cares? She is only an ordinary man, not a leader. Sorry, woman.

Let me come back to myself which is what I love the most. As soon as the business of slapping Geeta was in full swing, my mental sickness reached new heights. I began to experience nightmares. One day I dreamt that Geeta slapped me back. You can't imagine what a scare it gave me.

Next morning I bought a copy of the bible for Geeta and told her what Christ had said – if somebody slaps you on the right cheek, turn your left to him. I also bought her the complete works of Mahatma Gandhi and began to explain to her the theory of non-violence.

My theory of non-violence is very orthodox. I make it a point of honour to proceed along very classical lines so that I do not displease our great politicians and wise leaders.

I define non-violence as follows: If I slap Geeta it is non-violence. If Geeta slaps me, it is violence. As simple as that. Even miss Dimple would agree. I am a genius at making simplifications. Someday I intend to make my definition even simpler by identifying non-violence with the law of the jungle, namely, the victor is always non-violent and the vanquished is always the personification of violence. But these days I am too preoccupied with my mental sickness, sexual frustrations, nightmares, phobias, sadistic impulses etc etc to waste much time on such theoretical issues. May be some great leader of our century would make this simplification before I do. I don't care. May be some great leader has done it already. I don't care.

One day Geeta came home rather late and very tired. I slapped her and said, "What were you doing with twelve guys the whole night?"

"With what guys?" she asked through her tears.

I slapped her again. "You know what I am talking about." I said.

"Have you the slightest proof that I was with any guy either tonight or any other night?" she asked.

Proof! It had never occurred to me that a guy of my eminence and stature was ever required to give a proof of anything he said or did. I felt the first tremors of non-violence in our peaceful home. I slapped her four or five times and kicked her another four or five times till she was fully silenced and non-violence was fully restored in the house. But Geeta's question began to pinch my conscience.

Fellows, you will be surprised to know that even mentally-sick, sexually- frustrated, and politically-disoriented people like me have a conscience. This is the greatest paradox

of history. Even more surprising is the way we quench our feelings of guilt. This is history's greatest perversion.

I did not know in which night-club Geeta was working. In fact, I knew she was not working in any night-club. But I did not know in which school she was working. Even if I knew I could not have gone there. So, to satisfy my guilty conscience and find solid proof of my accusations, I went to a nearby park in search of concrete evidence about Geeta's countless affairs.

I had already made the following assumptions – I told you I am a genius at making unwarranted assumptions. If I saw any woman in the park, it would be a solid proof that she is Geeta waiting for her lovers. If I saw any man there it would be a solid proof that he is one of Geeta's lover waiting for her. And what if I saw a couple? Well, fellows, what do you say to this what?

When I entered the park, it was completely deserted but still, I clearly saw a pair of sea-gulls flying over me. I got tremendously jealous.

I wished they were me and the girl who slapped me. What love, what beauty, what romance in the sky – something that you never find upon this wretched earth. But then I remembered my mission – the reason I was in the park. So, I at once concluded that those birds were Geeta and her lover in a previous incarnation. I got even more jealous. I ran after them with a stone in my hand. I tried to stone them but they were too far away. They were flying over the pond in the park, so unable to reach them I stoned their image in the water.

In the evening when Geeta came home, I kicked her a dozen times because I was armed with the moral strength of possessing irrefutable proof of her affairs.

"I caught you red-handed today. At last, I caught you red-handed!" I kept on yelling like a man possessed by the devil.

But then something undreamt and unheard of happened. Geeta slapped me. Yes, fellows, Geeta slapped me back. As simple as that. Again, miss Dimple would fully agree. Sometimes I feel it was so simple and easy that she could have done it long back.

"I can't take it anymore! I can't tolerate your lies any more. Forgive me but I just can't", she yelled back in fury.

Then she started crying. I too started crying. I was in a state of disbelief and shock.

"Geeta, don't slap me. Please don't slap me. It hurts. What happened to all the lessons in non-violence that I gave you?" I said.

I fell at her feet.

"Please don't slap me again. I am a heart patient. I can die." I said again.

Fellows, like that cat which told the lion all her secrets of survival except one – how to climb a tree – I have not told you the greatest of my secrets. I am a born coward. Cowardice is the secret of my survival. Again, just imagine a sick, frustrated, disoriented guy like me trying to stand up to anybody. Wouldn't have been alive to tell my wretched story. So, cowardice is my main weapon of survival. Try to understand me fellows. I am a very misunderstood genius.

To ensure my survival, I promised Geeta, in name of God and non-violence, never to touch her again. And it was at this very moment I resolved to kill her – liquidate her once and for all so that she could never become a challenge to me.

One day, as Geeta was walking hand in hand with one of her numerous lovers, I stole from behind and stabbed her with a knife. She died instantly. Her lover escaped.

Well, I never said I actually stabbed her but she died instantly. That is for sure. How sure? I won't swear under oath but at least I thought she died instantly. Maybe she died long after this attack. Maybe she isn't dead yet. Maybe she is still lying in a hospital or even at home. But all this is not important at all. What is important is that I began to spread rumours that I stabbed Geeta to preserve the honour of the family and she is dead.

As usual Geeta did nothing to counter these rumours. She told me she enjoyed being a ghost.

I had killed Geeta for a very noble cause – to preserve our cultural heritage. I thought I would feel very happy and proud for it. I thought all my ancestors would descend from heaven to congratulate me. And for some time, I really did feel happy and proud for it was the first time in life I had accomplished something. But then suddenly something happened to me which I had never expected even in my wildest dreams. Guilt took possession of my soul like a devil. I became a living bundle of guilt. I could not sleep. If I slept nightmares woke me up immediately. All the time I kept on saying to myself that I deserved to die because I had taken an innocent life. I do not know how why or from where such ideas came to me but they did nonstop. I became suicidal. I ran away from home without making sure if Geeta was really dead or even if I had stabbed her at all.

I ran to the forest hoping that some wild animal would eat me so that I don't have to take another life. But there were no wild animals in the forest.

Civilised man had killed them all. So, after a few days I returned to civilisation. I had not eaten for many days because there were no fruit trees in the forest. Civilised man had cut them all. I was starving. I was in delirium. I was about to kill myself. I needed immediate help. But the question was where to get it.

Guys, you would say that I should have run to a psychologist or psychoanalyst. This was my first idea too. But then I remembered my last brush with the psychoanalysts. They were the guys who were actually responsible for my present state. Instead of curing me, they had made me more sick. To the shrinks over my dead body, I screamed and bit my finger and tore my hair in utter dismay. Anybody could see I really needed help immediately before it was too late.

Then the idea came like a flash of lightening. Going to jail would solve all my problems. I would get food, fellow prisoners would prevent me from committing suicide and some cold-blooded serial-killer would may be brain-wash me into believing that killing just one girl isn't that bad after all. Then of course all my problems would be solved in one stroke.

So, I went to a policeman and told him I killed my own sister. I expected him to arrest me immediately.

He laughed. "Congratulations," he said, "One less mouth to feed. Don't tell me, go and tell the politicians. They will be mighty pleased. The nation has saved tons of wheat and rice. Better than sterilisation or castration. Perhaps worse. Who cares!"

Disgusted by the policeman's reactions I went to a judge and confessed. I begged him to arrest me immediately.

"Why are you coming to me? Why don't you report to the police? Are you mentally sound?" he said.

"Not worse than you." I said.

"Then it is a legal murder. The law cannot do anything about it. Only illegal murders are tried here. Go home and ask God for forgiveness. Confess to a priest. Don't waste my time." He said.

"But I want punishment. I deserve punishment." I cried. "Why are you so anti-life?" he asked calmly.

"Because I have seen enough of this gutter called life." I shouted and got more agitated.

"That is why you have not seen life at all."

"I have seen enough of it. It is you who haven't seen anything." I banged on his table. I had lost my temper.

He said nothing.

"Where is punishment? Where is death?" I shouted again.

"Where was life" he said and then ordered the peon to throw me out of his office.

Fellows, it was after this that I got so fed up with everybody and everything that instead of seeking help I went for self-help and self-analysis. I returned home and started analysing myself.

Now I am feeling better. Geeta is feeling better too. But it does not mean that I have stopped beating her or that I have lost my love for spreading lies and rumours. These noble activities are part of my very existence. So if you ever hear a pretty girl screaming in pain or if you hear the most unbelievable lies and rumours, assume that I am behind it all. My name is Mann.



6

Crimson Memoir

SHUBHANKAR KULKARNI

Grotesque, grotesque.

Eric thought.

The room breathed in silence. Not the kind born of peace, but the tense, suspended stillness that lingers after the final brushstroke.

The room had come alive with what it had just witnessed. The air itself pulsed. Thump... thump... a sound not heard but felt, deep in the marrow.

He stood amazed, bathed in the glow of his creation, the silence around him amplifying each breath, slow and assuring, synchronized with the pulse... thump... thump...

Before him, a canvas sprawled. Not linen or paper or wood, but something far more delicate. More divine.

It began at the nape - a rich, blooming red, unfurling like petals in spring. Not the showy scarlet of cinema or the stale rust of dried stains, but a vibrant carmine, alive with heat and movement. It trickled; the colour drops trying to find their imminent fate around the canvas. Their movement was akin to music played on instruments in an orchestra, each drop a note falling right on key, not making much sense independently, yet harmonizing with the madness of the whole.

Eric had always hated clean things. Symmetrical, clinical, the ones that could be easily described, put to words. They lied. But this, he thought, still gazing at his latest

creation, this was honest. Chaos kissed with precision. The red had spread with such unpredictable grace, traveling down contours like rain sliding across window glass. Some strokes ran in straight, committed lines, while others hesitated, pooled, trembled on the brink before tipping over, curving, splitting, joining others like lovers meeting after a long separation.

He knelt, slowly, careful not to disturb the design. His fingers hovered above one particular trail, not touching, never touching. This was not to be spoiled by another human touch. The colours that were once packed and made to obey the rules of the tubes were set free. Free to flow wherever they want, however they deemed capable. He tried to take it all in using all his senses, all his life motivated just to absorb the unseen, unheard and unimaginable aspects of his art. The smell was copper-sweet and thick, clinging to the air, rising slowly and spreading through the room with every beat, thump.. thump.. He inhaled it like a man starved of meaning. Meaning meaningful only to him. Meaning his life taught him so well that it was not only not easy to forget but impossible to unthink, analyse, and find another.

“Father...”, he called, looking at the ceiling.

“Grotesque, grotesque”, he smiled.

He was once eight. His father’s voice was thunder, violent and soaked in liquor. Candles dimly lit the room. They painted a picture of the happenings in the room on the opposite wall. His father’s figure danced to a sinister tune. Eric had curled up behind the cupboard, watching fists rise and fall. His mother’s body crumpled under each blow, her sobs swallowed by the room’s darkness. The man was a beast, a conductor of chaos who wielded only pain.

As Eric started sobbing, his father spat “grotesque little thing”. He dragged Eric by the collar and threw him out of the door into the street. The rain poured down on him, filling him with shame. He sat by the door till his mother crawled up to take him in early in the morning.

That word. *Grotesque*. It stuck, among other things.

Eric had always tried hard to forget his past, but every now and then, happenings took him back. His past played a significant role in motivating him to pursue his art. He used knives in his artwork. He loved the colour red, every shade of it. He looked down at his knife; it was soaked in crimson red, still dripping. He looked down at the oddly shaped canvas. The jugular notch acted like a reservoir, collecting from rivulets that flowed into it. It filled to the brim and the colour thickened into dark red. For a moment, the liquid posed as half-hesitant to spill out but half-excited to free itself. As another trickle slipped into the reservoir, the reservoir overflowed. First on the left, then on the right. Leaving a trail of red dots across the neck. A necklace, Eric thought, with a kite-shaped pendant at the centre.

Grotesque, grotesque.

The motion continued as fresh trickles flowed into the reservoir, keeping it warm.

With the same knife, Eric gently picked the edge of the dress at the neck and made a slit. With minimal force, the sharp knife quickly moved downward until the end, cutting the dress through and through. He lifted one end and peeled the drenched cloth off the body. Then, the other. The neck was just the beginning, akin to the few gold coins tumbled in front of a treasure chest. Eric counted the cuts he had made

all over... twelve. The cuts presented the darkest red. The kind of maroon he had seen on his own body very frequently in his childhood, on his mother's even more often. The maroon was almost black towards the centre. Thick and glossy, like oil paint fresh from the tube. Experience taught Eric not to call it black. He tried to find the absolute contrast – the lightest red, on the canvas. His search stopped at the forehead. The forehead was different from the rest of the canvas. The forehead contained beads – transparent beads, red beads, and every shade in between. Sweat merged and formed transparent beads. The splatter of red ended up in red beads. The two converged at places and gave rise to hues of all kinds. An artist could use it as a palette. The beads at the farthest were the faintest red possible. Only Eric could distinguish them from the transparent ones. They glimmered where the outside light touched them, like fireflies flickering around their home tree.

Thump.. thump.

Trickles also found their way into other crevices - the hollow of a collarbone, the soft inside of a wrist, the front side of the elbow, each a basin catching pigment as if it had been waiting for this moment.

There were patches that fascinated him most, places where the colour had splattered. Drops leapt across the curve of a hip, the swell of each rib. They landed without choreography, yet in a way that was the only way they could land. The naturalness and simplicity of their motion charmed Eric. They landed in such precision that it made the entire picture complete. He had never known this feeling. He had long yearned for it... but never knew its power. There was rhythm in chaos. Understanding in violence. Calmness in excitement. The trickles spoke to each other in delicate whispers, leading to a cascade of actions... unending...

bringing surprises every now and then. A single drop landed near the eyelashes. It sat there like a rebellious tear refusing to be shed.

Grotesque, grotesque.

He looked at the canvas at angles, slowly, like an admirer in a museum. His head tilted. He took in the hues - not just red, but wine and rose and brick and scarlet and something almost purple where it had started to dry. Except this wasn't painted. This was.

He remembered reading somewhere that blood was never truly red once it left the body. That it turned darker, lost its gloss. But this... this proved them wrong. It shined. It moved in stillness. It was alive in its purpose, proud of the shapes it had chosen. Like it wanted to be seen. It wanted to break free from the hollow tubes. Worshipped. Worshipped the way Eric did. With utmost curiosity and longing.

It started to make much more sense to him... his life. Everything that had happened with him had brought him here. Today. In his mind, time twisted. It swayed him away from the present and into older memories. And through them poured smoke and screams.

He had asked his mother quietly.

"What's grotesque?"

She had hesitated. Eyes moist, hiding a storm.

"It means... beautiful," she had lied, running her hand through his hair. "Just like you... like me." She managed a smile.

That was the moment it crystallized. Beauty was in bruises. In blood. In broken things. The definition never changed again.

Years passed, and with them, the bruises deepened, not just on skin, but on the soul. One night, Eric, now tall enough to look his father in the eye, found him again striking his mother, the same way he always did. But something was different this time. His blood boiled for the first time. His insides started to burn. He grabbed the iron rod from the fireplace without thinking. One swing. Then another. Then another. The crack of bone echoed through the room like applause. His own nose bled, shedding every bit of the residual anger with it. And when it was over, the blood that poured – warm and red, lit something inside him. Not guilt. Not fear. But peace. A wild, terrifying peace. A silence that didn't scream. The floor glistened with it, and it was... grotesque.

That night, he didn't cry. He sat beside the body for hours, watching the blood leave in lazy rivers and puddle on the floor. The next morning, the police came and took his mother away. Never to be seen again. It began there. His search for that *peace*.

A rat was the first. Caught in a trap. Eric ended it, then opened it. The red fascinated him. How it moved. How it thickened. It looked different on fur than on flesh. Next was a toad. Then an injured dove, feathers soaked in his new favourite colour.

Each time he made a cut, his breath caught in his throat. Each time, he felt his pulse beat louder in his ears, synchronizing with the rhythm of the escaping life. The splatter patterns. The shapes. The silence after. It became all too friendly.

But the world outside didn't care about art. It demanded occupation. Sustenance. So, he did what he had to, deliveries for a local grocery store. Food for coin. Miserable, at first.

Mundane and tiring. Later, he saw hope. What his job truly gave him was *access*. Addresses. Names. Faces... Patterns.

One afternoon, a tiny dog barked at him incessantly as he delivered milk. It scratched at his ankle, growling with confidence. That night, Eric returned. Not with more groceries, but a knife. It was quick. Clean. No more barks.

But Eric felt nothing afterward. No thrill. No spark. Only noise. He realized, in time, that anger dulled the art. That true beauty came only when he wasn't driven by rage or vengeance, but by a *different* purpose. The best strokes, he imagined, were made not by hatred, but by love.

And then she appeared.

A customer. Always with her grandmother. Always composed. Her smile was subtle, uncatchable, perfect. She did not bark. She did not curse. She did not remind him of his father. She was, in every sense of the word he had ever known - *grotesque*.

He watched her. Followed her. Not to hurt her. Not at first. Only to understand. To admire. But admiration quickly moulded into obsession. And obsession demanded expression.

It took time. Precision. He stalked her rhythm, her routes, her spaces. Until one day, it all aligned - the light, the silence... her stars. And his.

And now, here she was. His greatest art piece.

Thump... thump... He crouched now, eyes level with the bedsheet, and watched how light danced across the streaks.

Some bled into the weave of the sheets, slowing in motion but not in motive. The pigments still wanted to spread. The contrast was delicious – the deep red against white, against soft cream flesh that now served as backdrop. Backdrop that had its own contours, its own geography. Every slope, every hollow, every plane added dimension to the story.

And the throat. Ah, the throat. That was where it began, and that was where he kept returning. A volcanic chamber. The opening glowed. It radiated heat, even now. The red there was a black-cherry richness, thick as syrup. He could have watched it for hours.

He stepped back, finally, tilting his head to the left. Then the right. There was balance. The left arm lay angled, palm down. The right arm lay straight, with pools formed at the elbow and in the palm. The lines of the hand painted crimson, each crease a trench filled with the aftermath of war. Even the legs had participated, long crooked lines of red racing down one thigh, dots scattered like freckles along the shin of the other. A trail led outward, into the sheet beneath, where the last of the drops had trickled and rested. A signature.

There was no audience, and that made it purer. No critics. No pretenders. Just him and the creation. He did not fear failing. Putting all his energy into successfully capturing beauty. He pursued it not to prove it to anyone. But to experience it.

And what now? There was no answer. After all, what does an artist do when the masterpiece is finished? He does not add. He does not explain. He simply steps away. Leaves it. And so, he stood a moment more, soaking it in. The red. The light. The hush. The extraordinary stillness of it all.

The room remained still, suspended in breathlessness. Eric stood above the creation, the corner of his mouth

twitching upward as his hands started to tremble. And then, it happened. Goosebumps bloomed across his flesh like winter frost patterns on windows. Tiny bumps rose from his neck, spreading down his arms and over his chest. This was not due to the cold or the silence, but from something deeper. Raw electricity awakened in his nerves. Like lightning striking inward, coursing up through his limbs, meeting at his abdomen, and from there, igniting upward, blazing through his spine into his skull. His eyes fluttered shut for a second. He stood still, trembling, as if struck by divine ecstasy. The room blurred.

After a while, the art came to a halt. It stopped flowing. It stopped radiating. There was no thump.. thump.. Eric had waited patiently. Once the last flicker of that internal lightning finally faded, he exhaled slowly. The memory had passed. The masterpiece remained, like a movie cramped up in a two-dimensional poster.

He looked down at her, at *it*, and knew - he had reached the summit. This was not anger. This was not revenge. This was creation. He had nothing to hold for or against her. That made it divine. The hues, the lines, the droplets, all of it born from *pure*. Every decision fruitful. Every cut accurate.

He smiled. The muscles in his face ached from the unfamiliarity of the motion. It was done. His life had been leading to this moment, this final ascent into crimson peace. The final pilgrimage. There was nothing more.

He stood over the canvas and looked at the knife he was holding. Half dried, but ready.

He didn't hesitate.

The blade pierced his own torso with intimacy. It was smooth. No resistance felt. He applied pressure. The tissues gave way easily, as if they had been waiting.

The warmth ran down his stomach. His crimson connected with the crimson on his canvas, keeping the canvas warm.

He collapsed beside her, body folding into a cocoon, like life absorbing life itself. A black hole of life.

The red spread from him now, meeting hers. Pigments merged.

For the first time, Eric felt complete.

Not happy. Not sad.

Just... *complete*.



7

The Beans Seller

RICHARD EDDIE

The summer of 1930 was coming to an end when Allison Rush had spent days and nights on the beach, mesmerized by the sand than the ocean, and writing in her dairy faithfully. Her heart felt blank, and she was still able to write her feelings and thoughts out. This summer in particular, was different in ways that could not describe nor understand.

An elderly couple was on the beach just as much as Allison was, selling beans from baked beans to candied beans; they claimed to have had their very own recipes. Children were mostly buying beans from the couple, and at times, the couple would not take any money, and they never accepted money from children.

In the village, it was said that the elderly couple used to own a flower shop, and they had become tired of running the flower shop and decided to sell beans instead. Of course, Allison had lived in Kingston all of her life, and it disturbed her that all of a sudden there was attention of beans being sold on the beach, and nowhere else. But why was she disturbed? These people were not a bother to her in the least, and they were at a distance.

Having to decide if she was ready to look for a job, but not for money, but regain her confidence and independence when she and her parents had caught a horrible flu while looking for a villa in Tuscany, Italy. Her mother died two weeks after contacting it, and her father had recovered, but he

died nine months later due to a broken heart by not accepting the death of his wife.

Nothing could have prepared Allison for the loss of her parents in the same year. Two weeks before her father died, her father had come out of his depression, and every day he would spend hours on the beach, staring at the sea. Allison had even found him eating candied beans; she cherished that moment when she saw that. A look of peace and freedom, the freedom to be on the beach eating candied beans without a single care in the world was remarkable. Her father also had a diary, and there was an entry that he had written about candied beans and the beach.

Allison would not allow herself to read the entry. She knew that her father kept a diary, but it astonished her when she had seen illustrations behind the entry of beans and the woman who sold the beans on the beach. What on earth is so special about beans and this woman?! An urge had overcome Allison to despise this woman who was selling beans on the beach and sold beans to her father.

When it came to the illustrations in her father's dairy, Allison had no idea that her father drew, or was able to draw in an art form. The dairy was in hardcover that could have passed for tremendous value, and this particular hardcover diary she did not recognize. As she continued to go through her father's things, she was stopped and intrigued by the dairy and the wonderful illustrations. There was a woman in the illustrations that looked just like Allison, but much older.

Feeling anger and resentment towards the bean seller, Allison closed the diary with force and fell asleep on the beach. "Good afternoon, my name is Allison Rush, and I sell beans of every kind."



8

Deluged

SUSHMA R DOSHI

She potters around in the little garden in front of the house. The little garden, her pride, her refuge, her solace ...the result of hard work over the years. Roses, marigolds and periwinkles in colorful clay pots sway in the gentle breeze. Money plants which she had bought for luck have grown in the corner climbing up the fence serving as a boundary to the garden. Her eyes rest on them lovingly. Her hair, parted in the middle with *sindoor*, a red coloured powder applied along the parting symbolizing her married status, is gray with streaks of silver and is neatly rolled up in a bun. It rests on a wrinkled peaceful face with a red *bindi* in the middle of her forehead. Her figure of five feet two inches, still upright despite the onset of an age borne disease called arthritis, is draped in a green cotton saree. She squints up at the sky, assessing the overcast sky.

“No maid today.....The looming clouds are enough excuse for her not to come,” she reflects.

She feels a few drops of rain on her head as she strolls back to the house. The house near the river. A single storied structure painted in white consisting of a large living cum dining room, kitchen and two bedrooms with attached bathrooms. A corridor at the back of the house has some space for storage and drying clothes on one side with stairs on the other leading up to a large terrace. She feels that usual tinge of melancholia overcome her as she gazes at it. She and

her husband, Gopi had originally drawn up plans for the construction of a duplex bungalow for a large family. But Mohan, their only child, had migrated to the United States. He had emphatically stated he had no intentions of returning to India except once in a while for the holidays. Gopi had changed the construction plans as he saw the futility of building a large house.

“A couple of rooms on the ground floor is all that you are going to need,” Mohan had also agreed. “No point wasting so much money over it....Besides, you are aging....how are you going to manage it?”

Shanti had felt her dream shatter. They had saved up all those years to build a dream house. But she remained stoic. It may not be their dream house. But it was their home. In the small town near the river. The beautiful river with its gentle flowing water. Mohan had called them to visit his home in the United States. They had visited him but this small Indian town remained their home.

“You have to be practical,” Mohan had told them umpteenth number of times. “One day you’ll have to settle down here. How long can you carry on with age creeping up on you?”

Gopi had accepted the wisdom of the notion. But Shanti had not been ready to move so soon.

“We’ll see,” Shanti had shrugged. “We’ll take it one day at a time...We aren’t ready to uproot ourselves now.”

Shanti climbs up the half a dozen steps leading to the house, shakes off the droplets of rain in her hair and walks through the open main door to enter the living room painted in a soft light yellow. Her husband of thirty eight years, Gopi, a

bespectacled wizened old man dressed in a white pyjama kurta, sits under the speeding fan on the easy chair next to the formal couch and reads the day's newspaper in the light of the morning sun rays. He looks up and catches her annoyed eyes.

"These maids will be the death of me... Rama won't come today....she has a mobile phone...she'll use it to chat during work but never will she call me to tell me that she won't make it for work. I might as well get down to washing the utensils," Shanti says irritably.

Gopi nods and burrows his head back into the newspaper.

"Men!" thinks Shanti. "All they want is a cup of tea and a newspaper."

"While you are at it ...do you think you could make a cup of tea?" asks Gopi.

Shanti sighs. She trudges to the kitchen, places the saucepan on the stove for the tea and starts to wash the utensils in the sink.

"I should cut her pay...she is one lazy maid," she mutters.

The sound of thunder snaps her out of her vexatious musings. She stares out of the kitchen window in surprise. The drizzle has turned into a heavy downpour.

"Close all the windows!" Gopi calls. Shanti can hear him pulling the main door of the house to shut it firmly. She closes the kitchen window and hurries to the bedrooms.

After they check and recheck every door and window, they settle down for that cup of tea. The house is normally well ventilated with sunlight streaming through the large windows. Now with each wooden window and door firmly

shut, it is dim inside with the weak light of a cloudy day making its way through the gap between the doors and the floors and the cracks between the two halves of the windows providing for some visibility. Shanti switches on the lights and heaves herself into a chair next to Gopi.

“What do you want for lunch?” asks Shanti as she finishes her cuppa.

“Anything,” replies Gopi as he does everyday.

It takes Shanti an hour and a half to cook ‘anything’ consisting of rice, *sambar*, a vegetable dish of pumpkin and a *chutney*. She places them on the dining table.

“Come up for lunch...It’s 12.30,” she calls out to Gopi.

“Yes...just a minute,” he answers as he opens one of the windows of the living room to take a peek outside.

“Oh! The roads are flooded... immersed in half a foot of water,” he exclaims.

“What?” Shanti cries. She hastens to join him to look outside. Her garden is inundated. Only a couple of her pots are left standing. The rest in pieces are lying in the water.

“My flowers....all gone,” she continues dismally. “Shall I go outside and get them inside?”

“Don’t be silly. You’ll catch a cold and fall sick,” Gopi answers firmly. “You can grow your flowers again.”

“But...,” Shanti trails off. She had nurtured those flowers and they had helped her combat her loneliness. “The marigolds seem to be calling out for help,” she says in a low tone.

Gopi doesn't reply. They both turn and make their way to the dining table. As they sit down for the meal laid out on the table, the electricity goes off.

"To be expected...", Gopi comments.

Shanti rises and extracts a small flashlight in one of the drawers in the kitchen. She switches it on and keeps it on the table.

"I told you we should've bought an inverter," she reminds him.

"Inverters won't help...they are just meant to supply a power back up for a few hours...God knows when the electricity will return," Gopi replies defensively.

Shanti snorts. They continue with their meal in silence.

Shanti clears the table and switches off the flashlight.

"I'll clear the kitchen. Fortunately, we have candles. I'll use them. But it'll be wise not to use the flashlight. The batteries will die out...we will need them at night if the electricity doesn't return."

Gopi nods. "I'll go and take a nap."

Shanti completes her chores in the kitchen and ruminates over what to do next. Normally, this was the time of the day when she would watch television and bring in the clothes drying on the line in the corridor. But the clothes are lying unwashed in the washing machine. She might as well indulge in an afternoon siesta, she decides.

She enters the bedroom to discover Gopi snuggled under a duvet and snoring with his mouth open.

"Men!" she ponders." So strangely unaffected by their surroundings."

She takes out a duvet for herself from the closet and caresses the soft material. Mohan had got it for them from the United States. They hadn't even known what the word 'duvet' meant.

"It'll keep you warm," he had told them. Shanti had laughed and mock scolded him.

"Why do you waste your money on us?" "These days there are malls here stocking fancy comforters and quilts...all this must've increased the weight of the baggage."

But she had loved the idea that their son had spared a thought for them.

She gently slips under the duvet, clutches it close to her and closes her eyes.

"Shanti! There's water inside the house."

Shanti wakes up with a start. She glances at the watch. It's past 5 pm. Pitch dark. No thin light of the day filtering through anywhere. She throws back the duvet and steps out of the bed. As her feet touch the floor, she startles at the feel of cold water. She flinches and glances down to find the bed surrounded by water. She rushes out to realize Gopi is standing ankle deep in the water in the living room with the flashlight in his hand.

"Oh God!" she cries. She quickly starts to pick the things on the floor and place them on higher ground. The shoes. The little coffee table. She picks them and puts them on the chair. Then the door mats. Totally soaked. No point in trying to save them. The little wooden rack which holds the day's newspaper. She lifts it and after wiping it with her saree to

dry it, settles it on the couch. Suddenly, she stops. The couch...resting in water...totally ruined.

"There isn't any point," Gopi tells her gently. "We'll see what can be done after the water recedes."

Shanti feels an unexpected pang of disquietude. Water in the house. This had never happened before.

"Do you think we can manage to reach the neighbor's house? They have a two storied house. We can sit on the first floor...be dry...and when it stops raining....we'll return."

Gopi shakes his head. "It's pouring and the water on the roads is above knee level. No street lights too....it'll be difficult to navigate our way...we'll fall down."

"Let me call them," says Shanti. She takes the flashlight from Gopi and goes back to the bedroom to search for her phone. Her feet splashing water. The edge of her saree wet.

"Be careful...don't slip," Gopi calls out.

Shanti spots her phone lying on the bedside table. She picks it up and stares at it in dismay.

"I forgot to charge it....what about your phone?" she asks.

Gopi averts his eyes guiltily. He could never remember to charge his phone.

Shanti makes an exasperated noise.

"What are we to do now?" she asks.

"Hmmm...just sit on the couch...wait it out," Gopi answers.

"What about food?"

"We'll manage ...there is bread in the fridge and the snacks you have stored up."

Shanti is struck by a thought.

“Oh...the fridge...water must’ve got inside...the washing machine too...all damaged,” she states helplessly.

“Nothing we can do....just keep calm,” Gopi soothes her.

Shanti doesn’t answer. She lights a candle and fixes it on the dining table and sets about to collect all the snacks and place them on the dining table.

“Shanti...there are some items in that large storage tin under the stairs,” Gopi reminds her. “I’ll get them.”

He splashes his way towards the back of the house through the living room. He opens the door leading to the stairs and stares at it aghast.

“There’s water cascading down the stairs....the drain pipes must be all flooded..so rainwater from the terrace is flowing down...”

“Just lock it ...forget it,” Shanti snaps fretfully as she completes stocking up all the available food on the dining table. “Let’s sit on the couch. Your pyjamas are half soaked.”

Gopi takes the lock and key hanging from the wall key holder on the right and after locking the door, hangs the key back in the holder.

He returns to the couch. He lifts his legs up and sits cross legged on it. Shanti joins him. The candle on the dining table continues to be the sole source of light. Its flame reveals the tight and tense faces of the old couple huddled on the couch, shoes and plastic bags floating in the water and the clock above the couch ticking away. A few more candles and a match box lie next to it. The water has suddenly reached halfway to the couch. Murky forbidding water. The only

sound is that of the rain hammering against the doors and windows.

Gopi squeezes Shanti's hand. "It'll be fine....conditions will improve I'm sure within a short time."

Two hours pass by. The water has crossed the seat of the couch. Gopi and Shanti are standing in the water. The water has reached their knees. Apprehension makes his legs tremble.

"Let's leave," says Shanti. Frantic anxiety makes her voice shrill.

Gopi wades through the water to open one of the windows and survey the situation outside. He ignores the rain lashing at his face and stares out. It's like a black hole. Zero visibility. Ominous.

"Let's go to the back...climb up the stairs and wait on the terrace. Hold my hand."

Shanti nods her acquiescence. They both slowly wade through the water to the back. Their wet clothes are dragging them down with their weight. They reach the door. Gopi reaches his hand to unhook the key from the holder. He cannot resist the involuntary tremble and the key slips through his hands into the water.

"Oh God!"

Shanti starts weeping. Gopi is on his knees trying to find the keys in the water. He is totally drenched. After a while he gets up. Shaking.

"I'm sorry...I can't find the key.. so sorry...my fault," his voice quavers.

Shanti holds him. Together they struggle to return to the dining table.

“Shall we try to go outside?” Shanti asks, tears rolling down her cheeks.

Gopi leads her towards the main door. He grapples with the door and opens it. The downpour continues to be savage and a sudden gush of water inside takes them by surprise. Shanti falls back. On her fours submerged, she cries. Gopi manages to pull her to her feet. The water is at the level of her waist.

“The water on the road will touch our shoulders. It’ll be impossible to navigate through without light.... let’s go and sit on the dining table,” he states resigned.

“How did this happen....this deluge....so much water....never seen anything like this....how?” Shanti sobs as they reach the dining table.

“They must’ve released the water from the dam...I don’t think the rain can cause so much flooding.”

Gopi pulls a chair submerged in water and attempts to hold it firmly . He helps Shanti step on the chair and climb up on the dining table. Shanti hauls herself up and Gopi follows her. They both are perched on the table sitting cross legged and holding on to the edge of the table with trepidation. Water flows under them a mere two inches from touching them. A candle shines brightly between them unaware that its end too is near.

“Shall we shout for help?” Shanti asks.

“You can try.”

“Help!” she screams. Again and again.

She shudders and falls silent at the unresponsive atmosphere. She watches the water rise and douse the

flickering candle. They hold each other tight in the dark, locked in their last embrace.

“I wish we had got Mohan married. At least I would’ve died a grandmother.”

He squeezes her tight. “Yes,” he mumbles.”

“At last....you have agreed with me on one issue.”

Those were perhaps her last words. They found the bodies. Mohan visited India for the last rites. He didn’t suppose he would ever visit the house again. The house near the river.

THE END



Terminology

- *sindoor*: also called vermilion it is a red-coloured powder applied in the middle of the parting of the hair of married Hindu women
- *sambar*: a kind of soup made by using lentils, vegetables and spices
- *chutney*: thick sweet sauce made of vegetables or fruits
- *bindi*: a decorative mark worn in the middle of the forehead by Hindu women

PLAY

1

The Art Gallery

(A One Act Play)

GARY BECK

(Fran and Will have just inherited a lot of money. They want to collect good art and they go to a posh gallery that has a haughty, condescending staff.)

Receptionist: May we help you? (looking disdainfully)

Fran: We want to look at some pictures.

Receptionist: We call them paintings. If you want to see pictures you should go to a photo gallery.

Will: (To Fran) Let's get out of here. This place isn't for us.

Fran: Just give it a chance. (to receptionist) Is it alright if we look around?

Receptionist: We are open to the public.

Will: (to Fran) I don't like her attitude. Let's go someplace where they treat you politely.

Fran: Let's look at some paintings. They might have something we like.

(A salesman comes up behind them, smug, pompous and snide)

Salesman: May I help you? (More condescending than the receptionist. Will jumps in surprise)

Will: You could let us know you're there first.

Salesman: I assumed you knew someone was there.

Will: Not when they sneak up behind us.

Salesman: I do not sneak, sir. (He walks away.)

Will: I guess we should have worn dollar signs so they'd know we were rich.

(They look at some paintings, mostly 3rd rate school of Paris, but they're impressed by some of the names. The Salesman rejoins them.)

Salesman: Well.. Do you see anything that looks familiar?

Fran: What do you mean?

Salesman: Do you know any of these artists?

Fran: I heard of Renoir.

Salesman: He's very expensive. Perhaps you should consider another gallery where the art is more affordable.

Will: What does that mean?

Salesman: Our gallery may be too expensive for you and your little woman.

Will: Don't talk about my wife like that.

Fran: Take it easy, Will.

Will: We don't have to take crap from him.

Fran: (to Salesman) We can afford to buy paintings. Tell us about this one, (pointing to a gaudy Bernard Buffet.)

Salesman: That's by a famous French artist. It costs \$60,000.

Will: She didn't ask the price.

Salesman: I thought I'd let you know the cost of the lesser paintings we have.

Fran: The Renoir is very pretty.

Salesman: It's \$175,000.

Will: It's very small.

Salesman: That doesn't matter. It's by a great artist.

Will: I've seen Renoirs in museums. They all look neat and clean. This one looks sloppy.

Salesman: It certainly does not. It's the soft, Impressionist style.

(Fran is videoing the painting with her camera.)

Will: I'm no expert, but it doesn't look right to me.

Salesman: Who are you to judge great art. I think its time for you to leave.(He takes Will's arm.)

Will: Take your hand off me! (He knocks the hand away that hits the Renoir, knocks it down and it tears.)

Salesman: Look what you've done.

Fran: You did it and I've got the video to prove it. I'm going to press charges against you for assaulting my husband. Let's go, Will. (They exit.)

(The Receptionist rushes to pick up the painting.)

Receptionist: The painting is ruined. The boss will be furious.

Salesman: It doesn't matter. He overinsures all the paintings.

Receptionist: But it's one of a kind.

Salesman: So what. It's fake junk and we'll still get paid.

(Exit salesman and receptionist.)

NON-FICTION

1

Of Obvious

DIBAKAR PAL

Abstract

To cut anything sharpness of the tool is required. It is obvious. But it may not always be correct. For example: Both knife and wheel of rail cut. The most interesting point is to note that a knife cuts by its sharpness but the wheel of rail cuts by its weight. The paradox is that knife gets weight age in spite of having not so much weight and the iron wheel of rail gets no weight age in spite of having enormous weight. Further knife is easily portable which is not possible in case of railway wheel. The obvious lesson is that value of a thing lies in uses not in weight.

Keywords: Obvious, easily perceived, easy to see, easily discovered, clear, self-evident, apparent, recognize

Introduction

Creative writing is based more on manifestation rather than on expression. It does not inform, rather it reveals. So it bears no reference. The best creative writing is critical, and the best critical writing is creative. This article is an outcome of thinking about creative writing meant for a general readership. As such, I have adopted a free style methodology so that everyone can enjoy the pleasure of reading. As you might know, Francis Bacon (1561-1626), the immortal essayist, wrote many essays namely 'Of Love', 'Of Friendship', 'Of

Ambition', 'Of Studies', and so on. The multiple-minded genius correctly pointed out that all the words of the dictionary can be used as themes for essays. But little has been done since his death to continue or finish his monumental task. Bacon's unique individual style of presentation ignited my imagination and encouraged me to write creative essays as a method of relieving a wide range of emotions through catharsis.

Article

Obvious means easily perceived or understood. It implies clear, self-evident, or apparent. For example: Unemployment has been the most obvious cost of the recession.

It is easy to see, recognize. For example: They have a small child so for obvious reasons they need money.

It is easily discovered. For example: It was obvious that things weren't working out.

Obvious is used for valid reason. It is used to proceed further. To proceed in any matter clarification is required to avoid mistake. In case of risky and costly matter it is a must. Correction of mistake is quite hazardous. But over clarification means superfluous which means too much. And too much of everything is bad which is not required at all. It wastes time. It causes annoyance.

Obvious means avoidance. It insists to jump steps. An intelligent student jumps steps to finish the sum within stipulated period of time. But he has to prove that he has sound knowledge on the concerned subject. Only then the examiner offers him higher grade upon confirmation of his thorough knowledge on that topic and he has acquired mastery in the subject matter.

In case of silly matter clarification is not required. It is quite foolish. But in thesis for the sake of documentation page after page i.e. huge pages are used. Research means the scholar has sound knowledge in the concerned subject. Similarly, the reviewers are knowledgeable persons. As such documentation is of no use at all in the volume of the thesis. It is simply wastage of pages thereby increases the volume and weight of the thesis without any weight age.

To cut anything sharpness of the tool is required. It is obvious. But it may not always be correct. For example: Both knife and wheel of rail cut. The most interesting point is to note that a knife cuts by its sharpness but the wheel of rail cuts by its weight. The paradox is that knife gets weight age in spite of having not so much weight and the iron wheel of rail gets no weight age in spite of having enormous weight. Further knife is easily portable which is not possible in case of railway wheel. The obvious lesson is that value of a thing lies in uses not always in weight.

Obvious is used both for good and evil purpose. Someone gives consent when his self-interest is fulfilled. That very person does not give consent, in the same matter, when his personal gain is not considered. He shows lame excuse stating that he cannot understand the matter. He further adds that it is not possible to agree without understanding the detail of any transaction and its future consequences. It is human nature.

An intelligent brain realizes anything easily. All are not equally intelligent. So language of public notice should be straight cut and in simple language. If the language is lucid in nature, then it is obvious that even a lay person can grasp the matter easily.

Similarly, any movie should be as per education level, taste and temperament of the target spectators of the society otherwise the producer will face loss. Likewise, the price of any food should be as per the economic capacity of the concerned population. If a food package is tasty and cheap then it is obvious that it sells well thereby becomes popular.

It is obvious that high price confirms high quality of the product. The rich accept this face value. As such they always search for higher price. They seldom enquire or investigate the quality of a high-priced product. They consider it as unnecessary. To them it is wastage of time only. They cannot think that a product having good quality may be cheap.

In contrast the poor searches for low cost. They know that better quality costs better price. But they cannot afford it. They are quite undone in this regard. They see the costly product in the show case from long distance. They are concerned more for price than quality. They cannot purchase costly product. Luxury product is merely a dream to them. To them purchase of costly product is merely wastage of hard-earned money.

In poor locality low-priced product is sold more than costly product. From the quality of any product and sell price the socio-economic status of the concerned area can be ascertained. Thus, high priced market confirms the population as rich and low-priced market confirms the status of inhabitants as down-trodden. The middle class falls in between these two extreme categories. They become rich earning more and they become poor if they earn less. It is a dynamic issue of human life. Every human being follows this dynamic scenario many times from cradle to coffin.

The paradox is that identical product sells at higher price in elite market changing simply the package. Thus container and contents are two important factors.

There are three types of customers. The first category considers container. He is good. The second category considers contents. He is better. The third category considers both. He is best. Besides these three types there is fourth category who examines the ingredients of the contents and enquires the effect of those on human hygiene. He is better than best.

Generally, the rich use costly product to serve and satisfy their ego more than emotion. This theme may not be always correct. There are some rich persons who purchase cheap product to save money. They are rich but miser. They are poor in mentality. They keep safe distance with those who are miser due to poverty. Thus, they are rich miser and others are poor miser.

In case of low sell of the costly product the rich seller does not like poor persons who cannot afford it. They are of the rich by the rich and for the rich. So their price is also rich i.e. highest.

All products are not for all. It is very relevant for costly products. The elite seller thinks for elite class. Elite class does not think for money. They need quality product whatever the price may be. The elite seller exploits the passion of the elite customers. They sell less but earn more. They do not need more customers. They hanker after higher profit. In this point they differ with the ordinary business men who sell more at lower profit. Their strategy is to increase buyer than margin of profit. They argue that more customers will bring more customers. This is a novel idea.

Thus, high sell, low price and low sell, high price are two business strategies. Both are correct. Both have markets. Both sell well.

Obvious is omnipresent. It both prizes and punishes. Not face value rather judgment is the main factor.

A person purchases a lottery ticket. He wins the lottery. From this lucky event it is not obvious that every purchaser will win the game. An intelligent person gambles with surplus money. A poor person who is poor both in talent and economic condition should not invest in gambling. Firstly, he must eat then dream.

A lover laughs. This laughter has two obvious meanings. Someone laughs for someone. Then the lover must approach. Someone laughs at someone. In such a case the lover must go far. Only an experienced soul can interpret the true meaning of this laughter seldom a novice.

A student reads attentively. He passes the examination. His present success will obviously open future openings. He knows it. He proceeds accordingly.

In contrast, an inattentive student seldom reads. He plays round the clock. He cannot guess the future consequences of this negligence of studies. Obviously, he fails in the examination. With incomplete knowledge he gets no suitable job. He mourns for his pathetic plight. The poor soul at belated period of life realizes his past wrongs thus committed at his tender period of life. Misfortune is his obvious destiny. He wants to adopt short cut avenue. This policy cut short his life. It is his inevitable destiny.

Conclusion

Obvious is a farsighted concept. It never becomes wrong. A judicious person always thinks the outcome of his present

involvements. A lay person seldom thinks for future consequences. He wants to make up all and everything in the stage. This world is obviously a stage. But stage make up is always not possible for obvious reasons.

References

They say and hearsay

2

On the Road to the Beach

PATTY SOMLO

Perhaps it was inevitable that I would one day own a beach cottage. Ask me for my earliest memories and I will tell you about a skinny young girl with fine blonde hair, learning to ride the waves off Oahu's Windward Coast. If you have more time, I might describe long walks on damp sand that began a few years later, miles from Oahu, on Long Beach Island in New Jersey. I could recall the summer before my junior year of college, when I scooped I-don't-know-how-many ice cream flavors onto waffle and sugar cones, at the Frosted Mug, a veritable institution in Beach Haven, located on what the Garden State's residents call the Jersey Shore. Or I might move forward to the thrill of living in San Francisco, a city smack on the water, with a beach named Ocean, that could be strolled for hours.

Maybe the purchase of a beach cottage was inevitable for a woman whose life could be traced by sojourns on sandy stretches of land across the country, and even in foreign places, like Canada, Mexico and Nicaragua. I have to wonder, though, whether it would have occurred, the signing and initialing of page after page containing all those legal terms, if my husband Richard and I hadn't taken a drive on a sunny April Saturday, because we were in Oregon, where the sun doesn't emerge much before the Fourth of July.

I begin in the Columbia Gorge. On an early summer morning, Richard and I headed east from Portland, Oregon,

where we'd moved the previous year, to the Gorge, dotted with trails, creeks and waterfalls, bordering the Columbia River. For our hike that day, we chose a challenging path, leading to the top of Dog Mountain.

Something happened to Richard on the trail. Not wanting to worry me, he kept the incident to himself.

Following a visit to his doctor several days later, Richard revealed that he had experienced chest pain, not only on Dog Mountain, but also while using the rowing machine at the gym. He had, he solemnly admitted, just failed a stress test, and was scheduled for a scary-sounding procedure with the four-syllable name, angiogram.

Because the angiogram subsequently showed major blockage in two of Richard's arteries, the cardiologist was afraid to let him go home. Instead, he had Richard transported by ambulance to a hospital, where he was scheduled for double bypass heart surgery early the next morning.

You are probably wondering what this could possibly have to do with our buying a beach cottage. I advise patience. Without what I'm relating, the beach cottage would likely have never come into our life.

After Richard recovered from the surgery, he and I joined a cardiac therapy program run by the local YMCA. One day, the program director asked if anyone might want to join a team to compete in the annual Hood to Coast relay. Richard and I said we might. Later, Richard agreed to be the team's captain.

Hood to Coast teams walk or run one hundred and ninety-nine miles from the top of Mount Hood, east of Portland, to the Oregon Coast. Since this is a relay, team members cover different legs. Some sections are traveled in

the middle of the night. When not running or walking, members stay, or if able sleep, in vans or motel rooms along the way.

Months before the Hood to Coast was scheduled to take place, that sunny Saturday morning arrived. Though we'd only lived in Oregon for a little over a year, we understood. A beautiful dry weekend day in Oregon was not to be wasted indoors.

I pulled out the Oregon and Washington maps. Where would we go on that Hood to Coast race, I wondered. Richard watched, as I ran my index finger west, locating the road we would follow and towns the race would pass.

When my finger edged close to the end at the Oregon Coast, I noticed a narrow spit of land to the north, reaching into the Pacific Ocean. That thread appeared on the other side of the Columbia River, in the State of Washington.

"The Long Beach Peninsula," I read out loud.

We easily came up with an excuse to take a drive. Didn't we need to see the Hood to Coast route, at least the part west of Portland?

Years have passed but I can still picture sunlight winking off the Columbia River, when we crossed the Astoria Megler Bridge from Oregon to Washington. Seagulls glided by, as if guiding us to this place we'd never been.

I didn't know at the time, but yards from the bridge was an historic site, where Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and the rest of the Corps of Discovery had camped in 1805, after making their way west in search of the Pacific. Lewis, who suffered from depression, wrote in his journal that this time on the Long Beach Peninsula was the worst winter he'd ever spent. The name of the site is Dismal Niche.

Highway One runs along the north bank of the Columbia. Several men were fishing that day, from folding chairs perched above the river.

We soon began passing through small, charming, and somewhat disheveled towns. Richard loved *the character* of the place. Many of the Victorians and bungalows needed some new paint. Faded rope and orange buoys hung over the once-white crooked fences.

Richard parked in the largest town, Long Beach. Colorful kites danced in the breeze outside shops on the lone commercial street. We headed to the beach, expecting crowds on this unseasonably dry and perfect day. Sand stretched forever before the ocean started. There wasn't another person in sight.

We walked a long way in one direction and back in the other, then decided to stay for the night. Heading toward town, we found a small inn, a block beyond the beach. Though still early, the owner handed us the key to what turned out to be a charming suite.

Early that evening, Richard and I went for a walk along the main drag, in search of dinner. Smack in the center of the sidewalk, we practically ran into a kiosk dotted with colorful photos of homes, set in front of the office for Lighthouse Realty. We had no choice but to look. And looking at large and small homes for sale on the Long Beach Peninsula, we realized a beach cottage was something we could afford.

The more we learned about the Hood to Coast race, the less appealing it became. Sometime before the August event, we gave the nurse overseeing the team our heartfelt regrets before bowing out. Instead of spending an August weekend walking legs of the Hood to Coast route, we took the two-and-a-half-hour drive to the Long Beach Peninsula, to meet

our Lighthouse Realty agent, Bill, to check out some beach cottages.

As Bill ferried us from cottage to cottage, my mood darkened. In one place, deep in a forested area, I was practically knocked over by the rank mildew smell. Another cabin was surrounded by small sad trailers, splattered with mud. The third place was carpeted in Pepto Bismal pink shag.

At the end of the tour, Bill said he had one more place he could show us that was a little above our price limit.

I looked over at Richard. He nodded and smiled.

"Let's go see it," I said.

Before we stepped out of the car, I noticed the path. I got a better look, when I was standing outside.

"Where does that path go?" I asked Bill, pointing a few yards away, where the road reached a dead end.

"To the beach," Bill answered.

Seeing how the little blue cottage sat so close to a path that would lead to what I later learned was a twenty-eight-mile-long beach, the longest in the United States, I knew this house had to be ours.

Neatly mowed, the emerald grass was surrounded by a bed of colorful flowers. Bill unlocked the front door and gestured for Richard and me to step inside.

The living room was sun-filled and open, making it appear large, even though the entire house measured only seven hundred and fifty square feet. A pellet stove sat in the corner, with a compact open kitchen next to the living room. A short hall led from the kitchen to the bathroom and two small square bedrooms. Except for the mud brown wall-to-wall carpeting, the cottage was warm, charming, and rather adorable.

There was a serene back yard that I would later see attracted deer, bordered by a forest of shore pine. A neighbor would let me know that small black bears used the path to head into the trees that started in my yard.

The asking price wasn't much higher than our limit. Bill scratched out a rough calculation and showed us the approximate monthly payment. I added that to what we were paying on our Portland house. The total came to less than what we'd been shelling out for rent in San Francisco before moving to Oregon.

The miracle of buying a beach cottage on a quiet dead-end street, yards from where the Pacific Ocean dampened the sand, was followed by another surprise. After the sale closed in early September, the weather on that often-stormy Peninsula remained mostly sunny and dry. Every Friday afternoon, we packed the car and headed west for a glorious two-day stay, starting the morning sipping dark French Roast coffee in the living room, the only sound the nearby breaking of the waves.

Bit by bit, we got to know some of the odd and interesting people who lived full-time on the Peninsula. These included artists and writers, chefs and business owners, fishermen, oyster farm workers, and retired loggers. The towns, beaches and parks that dotted this stretch of land were astonishingly uncrowded. A handful of annual events, such as the Kite Festival, attracted decent crowds. But most of the time, our beach and the quiet two-lane road that led past dreamy Willapa Bay, through the tiny hamlet of Oysterville, with its well-preserved nineteenth century homes, and out to Leadbetter State Park, a mecca for birds, including scores of Great Blue Herons, were practically empty of people and cars. We peddled our bikes to the tip of the Peninsula on days the air seemed to sparkle. Other afternoons, we hiked to the

historic black and white lighthouse at Cape Disappointment State Park (now part of Lewis and Clark National Park), taking in the wide view of the coast.

I hadn't realized until we started spending weekends at the cottage how noisy it was inside our Portland house. I loved standing at the kitchen sink, watching deer nibble some plant in the yard, and marveling that we had this dark green forest steps from the house.

Being at the cottage was like going on a trip without any downsides or disappointment. Several small towns and neighborhoods retained many turn-of-the-century houses. The absence of crowds gave the beaches and parks a wilderness feel. Unlike much of America, the Long Beach Peninsula didn't have a single chain store. As we grew more familiar with the beach, the restaurants, the parks, the people, and the bay, there remained an exciting element of discovery every weekend we were there.

So why did we sell the cottage, a handful of years after buying it? The answer is simple. What we most loved about our weekends at the cottage was about to be taken from us. I'm referring here to the silence.

I was standing in front of the kitchen sink admiring our little forest, after the long drive from Portland. Was I seeing things, I wondered. I took off my glasses, wiped the lenses with the edge of my sweatshirt, and put my glasses back on.

The view was the same. What I thought I'd seen straight ahead on the other side of the lawn was still there – a gap in the thick green wall of pine. It seemed crazy but I couldn't deny what was right in front of me. Somehow, it appeared, we were missing several of what I'd come to think of as our trees.

"Richard," I shouted.

He dashed into the kitchen, worried I had done something awful, like slicing my finger with a knife. After assuring him I was all right, I pointed to the back yard and said, "Look. Some of the trees are gone."

Richard saw immediately what I was pointing out.

"Wow. It looks like somebody cut those trees down."

Before I had a chance to respond, he said, "Let me call Anne and see what she knows."

Anne and her husband, Bill, were retired teachers, living in the large house that faced the ocean. Anne was the person Richard called to make sure our cottage had survived, after severe winter storms.

Richard explained to Anne why he was calling. He was silent for several minutes after and then hung up.

"Anne told the woman she should call us first, but she obviously didn't take that advice."

The story went like this. A woman had purchased the property behind our house. Hearing that, I realized we'd never driven down the dirt road that ran parallel to the beach and started just before our street dead ended. If we had, we might have known that the wooded plot behind our house had been for sale. This woman, it turned out, was planning to build a retirement home there. In the meantime, she would be spending weekends and vacations on the lot in her RV. She had started to take down the trees, to clear the lot for construction.

If this had been the entire story, we might not have changed anything about our relationship to the cottage. But there was more.

The woman worked for the Portland Police Department as a detective. She also was responsible for the department's

canine unit and would be bringing all eight loudly barking dogs with her to the Peninsula on weekends. Another reason for taking out the trees was that she planned to install a fence to keep the dogs from running off the property.

As you are probably aware, beach houses are often given charming, even funny, names. Those names are usually prominently displayed out front, on a well-designed sign.

From the moment we made an offer to purchase the little blue house, Richard and I batted around names for the place. He would offer a suggestion, and I would say no, then throw in my latest idea. Most of the names we came up with had some association with the color blue. This was the case, even though Richard kept saying that we ought to repaint the cottage yellow.

When we met with Todd, the owner of Lighthouse Realty, to discuss putting the cottage on the market, he asked if the house had a name. Though we'd never settled on one, Richard suddenly blurted out, "The Heron's Nest."

"The Heron's Nest," Todd repeated. "I like that."

The first day The Heron's Nest was listed, we got three offers. We took the one that was a few thousand dollars above the asking price. A few days later, those potential buyers backed out. The second offer had been for the full price, so we accepted that one next. As it turned out, these buyers planned to pay cash and had no intention of driving up from California to look at the house before it became theirs.

Months later, long after the sale had closed and the cottage no longer belonged to us, we went out to the Peninsula for the weekend, staying at a lovely Victorian bed and breakfast. The second afternoon, Richard said he wanted to drive out to Ocean Park and look at our former cottage.

As we neared the end of the street, I felt as if we were doing something illegal. Richard pulled the car over and stopped, directly across from the cottage.

“Oh, my God,” I said. “Look at that.”

Richard laughed.

“See, I was right,” he said.

The new owners had painted the cottage yellow.

When someone close dies, people often say, *You will have your memories*. And so I do.

More than cherishing memories of the nearly thirty years I shared with my husband Richard before his death from cancer two and a half years ago, I am grateful for the immense good fortune of having a partner who didn’t think twice about buying a beach cottage, on a narrow spit of land, bordered by beautiful Willapa Bay and the Pacific Ocean. My life with Richard didn’t last anywhere near as long as I would have liked. But with Richard by my side, I was able to realize so many dreams, including listening to the waves in the living room of my very own beach cottage, which even now doesn’t seem real.

Six months after Richard’s passing, I stood on another beach, miles from the Long Beach Peninsula. Days before, I had flown alone to the Island of Kauai, a place Richard and I visited often and loved, and where I had promised I would scatter some of his ashes.

I let the warm ocean wet my feet, as I opened the narrow bamboo scattering urn and released the remains of my husband’s beautiful body to the waves and wind. It was exactly how he would have chosen to go, starting on a beautiful beach, then drifting to some unknown place, where he could begin to explore.

3

Man and Machine

RAKESH BHARTIYA

The short story 'The Dancing Partner' of English author Jerome K. Jerome sends a biting shiver down the spine even when read in the 21st century. The great film director Alfred Hitchcock included this story in the collection '12 Stories They Wouldn't Let Me Do On TV' for the sheer horror it generates on the subject of man and machine. Nicholas Geibel is an 'artist' of European reputation on account of the wonderful 'mechanical toys' he makes. During a ball he overhears girls present there talking about the shortage of suitable male dancing partners. Maker of mechanical toys like rabbits emerging from the heart of a cabbage till then, Nicholas decides to take his art a step further and, a month later, in the ball at the betrothal ceremony of a wealthy merchant's niece he introduces 'Lieutenant Fritz', who is in fact a mechanical toy presented as 'an electric dancer' controlled by one of the buttons at the back of his coat. In the climax of the story 'Lieutenant Fritz' starts dancing with an enthusiastic girl, dances faster and faster, dance becomes wilder and wilder - - - - - suddenly another girl notices that the girl dancing with 'Lieutenant Fritz' had fainted. In the all-round confusion nobody succeeds in stopping 'Lieutenant Fritz', the girl dies and the 'inventor' Nicholas quietly leaves the hall.

This story raises vital questions, not only on the relation between man and machine but also about the control of man over machine made by him.

It was the industrial revolution of the 18th century which brought a life-changing 'revolution' in the life of human beings in form of presence of machines in daily life. It seemed to be a very welcome change in the beginning as, particularly, women found their household duties from washing clothes to cooking food for the family becoming much easy and much less time-consuming with the help of machines. There started a trend of inventing and marketing better and better machines for a continuously widening market for new-new kinds of machines. The technological change of a massive kind at the end of the 20th century brought all kinds of machines within the reach of even the not so well-off sections of the society and infused in these sections an unprecedented craving for more and more machines.

If we make a deep analysis, we would come to the conclusion that human body in itself is a matchless machine, capable of doing much better some functions which machines could perform. And, one must not forget that the source of invention and further modification of all machines is man only, man's brain only. It is the brain only which, in line with the kind of 'control system' it is for the human system's numerous activities, designs also a 'control system' for the machines it invents. Thus, the effective and correct 'control' of any machine, a man having 'conditioned' himself for mastering the 'control' of the machine is very vital to the man-machine relationship. It is the 'control' of the machine having gone haywire that accounted for the horrifying result of the 'dancing partner' in Jerome's story.

Creative people are always sensitive to a change of massive kind. Accordingly, the change in man's life after

Industrial Revolution also agitated the writers and artists. In his novel 'Hard Times' (1854) Charles Dickens creates the mythical place 'Coketown' which symbolizes the not-so-happy changing society on account of the Industrial Revolution, the 'unnatural red and black' colour of Coketown symbolizing the 'corruption' of life resulting from the Industrial Revolution. Great filmmaker and actor Charlie Chaplin's classic 'Modern Times' (1936) gives the same message of life having gone totally out of tune by picturing the case of factory-worker Charlie who loses his mental peace and balance in an attempt to be in tune with the fast-moving machines he operates. Now, in the 21st century, we have come much forward from the times of Dickens and Chaplin with all kinds of machines virtually controlling 'man' in a role-reversal on almost daily basis. The new generation born after the internet-revolution, particularly in big cities, can't even think of a life sans machines. In the process of inventing new-new machines for his fast-increasing 'need for a comfortable life' man has become a slave of those machines, a slave who loves and enjoys that slavery.

The 'market' for machines, better and still better machines, fast makes the earlier models redundant, households have become a scrap-house for old machines losing utility. Still worse, machines are fast making the traditional methods of learning out of use and the natural faculties of man (like small-small tasks of adding, subtracting and counting) are discarded in favour of machines which can do it by just pressing a button. Where are we heading to? Towards a much worse edition of 'Coketown' of 'Hard Times' where not only the workers on machines but almost everybody becomes a mechanical shadow of a creature once called man?

The disastrous social-cultural consequences of all kinds of machines overtaking once simple life of man is an issue becoming more and more serious with almost nothing remaining 'personal', even the 'bedroom secrets' of a man and his wife. Machines now have a capability to destroy an unaware and sensitive man financially, psychologically, culturally, etc. if they are a 'tool' in the hands of another man having evil intentions. One of the earliest literary takes on misuse of science or a scientific invention going wrong in the hands of the inventor was the novel 'Frankenstein' written by Mary Shelley in the first half of the 19th century, when modern science was still in its infancy. Now, this issue of 'ethical use' of scientific products, be it machines, be it anything, is increasingly being thrown to the dustbin under the overpowering influence of 'market forces'. Machines are the most visible, the most 'essential' scientific product in the 21st century. But a worldwide disaster of human existence-threatening kind in the form of COVID-19 was also witnessed in this very 21st century when under the lockdowns of all types all kinds of machines considered very vital from the flying machines named aeroplanes to the motoring machines named motorcars were standstill, man still managing somehow with the basic minimum needs as in the case of birds and animals who know no machines, use no machines.

The horrors of COVID-19 are gone, the machine-dependent man seeking new-new luxuries through the help of machines is back with a bang. Does man require a worldwide existence-threatening machine-made disaster of COVID-19 kind and scale to come back to his senses?

Only time will tell!

MEMOIR

1

In the Service of Knowledge: A Life in Education Philosophy on Teaching and Learning Style of a Professor

DEEPESH KUMAR THAKUR

(Memoirs on Prof. Satish Chandra Thakur, Professor and Head,
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Epilogue:

A professor's approach to teaching-learning development involves understanding different learning styles and tailoring their teaching methods to suit diverse learners. This includes considering factors like individual learning preferences, cognitive development stages, and the use of various pedagogical approaches such as differentiated instruction, technology integration, and active learning strategies.

"I find most people interesting; the dull ones are those whose lives are too orderly or those who are forever boasting of the ease with which they have succeeded in life". "Live close to nature and your spirit will not be easily broken, for you learn something of patience and resilience". Afterwards I need to put it on paper only, using the words that are effective and writing beautiful sentences. Instead of using jargons and difficult terms in your writing, explain things in a

simple way. Explain how these things will affect your readers in their daily lives. Try to find out what people are searching, what people would like to know and would be interested in discussing. It is better to write about things you feel than about the things you know about. Instead of reading expert's advice, they want to know how a layman went through it. Personal experiences are more authentic and genuine as compared to formal articles. While writing any paragraph take the reader from a familiar thing to an unfamiliar thing. It will bring a good flow. If one could put forth their emotions, feelings and thoughts without hesitation, have all the makings of a good. Recounting one's own life cannot be an easy task – memory shapes and colours one thing at the cost of another, and sometimes the mind just forgets – but a person always understand others to know the motives of style till the end of life.

In the heart of Bihar, nestled within the *Panchayat* of *Kansi* under the *Darbhanga district*, was born a boy with a quiet determination and a thirst for knowledge. That boy grew to become *Professor Satish Chandra Thakur* – a name now etched in the memory of thousands of learners, a beacon of inspiration in the world of education.

Early Life and Roots

Born and raised in the rural landscape of *Kansi*, Professor Thakur experienced the challenges of village life firsthand – limited resources, underdeveloped infrastructure, and restricted access to quality education. Despite these hurdles, his *curiosity, discipline, and resilience* set him apart from an early age. Encouraged by his family and community, he pursued education with unwavering dedication. The narrow mud lanes of his village could not confine the wide horizons of his ambition.

Academic Journey

With each academic milestone, *Professor Thakur* advanced with distinction. His journey from primary schooling in the village to earning prestigious qualifications was marked by hard work and intellectual passion. He eventually chose the noble path of teaching, believing in the transformative power of education, especially in rural India.

Teaching contributions

Over the years, Prof. Satish Chandra Thakur served as a teacher, mentor, and guide to countless students. His classrooms were not just spaces of instruction, but sanctuaries of curiosity, values, and motivation. He was known for his clear teaching style, blending academic rigor with real-life relevance. Many of his students went on to become educators, administrators, and professionals, often returning to credit his guidance. His efforts helped bridge the rural-urban educational divide, ensuring that even students from remote areas had access to quality education and inspiration. As a Professor of English, he likely plays a vital role in teaching English language and literature to undergraduate students, especially those from rural backgrounds. Being part of a rural educational setup, he contributes both academically and socially, potentially engaging in community upliftment and student mentoring. Professor Thakur believes that English is not just a subject, but a gateway to global knowledge, opportunity, and communication. Yet, he recognizes that rural students in Mithila often approach English with hesitation, viewing it as a foreign or elite language. His teaching philosophy focuses on bridging this gap by connecting English literature and language with local experiences, folk culture, and regional identity. “The beauty of English literature lies in its universality – but to make it

accessible, it must speak to the lives of our students,” he often says. “The beauty of English literature lies in its universality – but to make it accessible, it must speak to the lives of our students,” he often says. To Professor Satish Chandra Thakur, teaching English in rural Bihar is not just an academic duty – it is a mission of transformation. His methods reflect respect for the student’s background, commitment to clarity, and a deep belief in the liberating power of language and literature. Through his work, he continues to light a path for learners who dream beyond boundaries but remain proud of their roots.

A Role Model in the Region

In the Kanshi Panchayat and beyond, Prof. Thakur became a symbol of aspiration and excellence. Young learners looked up to him not only for his knowledge but also for his humility, dedication, and integrity. He actively participated in community development and awareness programs. Often invited as a speaker or resource person, he used every platform to promote literacy, critical thinking, and ethical living. He remained deeply rooted in his village, never forgetting his origins, and using his own life as an example that education can empower and uplift.

Legacy and Impact

Professor Satish Chandra Thakur’s story is not just his own. It is the story of rural India’s potential. He proved that where you come from does not limit where you can go. His legacy continues in the form of inspired students, improved educational standards, and a community that believes in learning. From the dusty fields of Kanshi to the polished corridors of classrooms, Prof. Satish Chandra Thakur walked with purpose and dignity. A teacher, a role model, and a

lifelong learner, he stands as a testament to the power of education, perseverance, and service. His life reminds us that one committed educator can change the destiny of many.

Writing style

The unmistakable romanticism of the life and work is recurrent, the self-referencing also highlights how deeply observant and open to life; non-confrontational and “not against anything really”, has built own little world, one which it is easy to relate to. “Loneliness is something you don’t look for, it’s one of life’s circumstances,” by Him; “Write about things as if looking at them for the last time and will find the words to preserve them.” Surrounded by trees, insects, birds and changing seasons in his beloved institution. The bird on the wing, the sunflower in sunshine, the fox who commands the night, all these little things are part of my writing. Words are wonderful things and we must respect the language that writes in. Don’t be lazy with grammar and composition. When words ring true, we get our greatest satisfaction as a learner. If we don’t find joy in that, give up Reading & writing.” Write about things as if we are looking at them for the last time and we will find the words to preserve them. “Reading is all important if we want to write. Start by reading the works of someone you want to emulate,” “There are different ways to read a book. Some will read analytically for style, structure, if thinking of writing something similar, others will read for pure relaxation. “Books are wonderful companions and always learning from them,” he says, lamenting the impatience some people have nowadays for books. At different periods of his lonely life, “has found it therapeutic to read & write.” He still carries the scars of a difficult statehood, something he says he shares with other like the people of this world. Perhaps every work of literary

art, whether a poem, a play or a novel, has touch as whatever is written in a wide and deep sense comes out of one's own personal experiences. Life can only be understood backwards. But it must be lived forwards. One of the most challenging aspects of creative work is, well, sitting down to actually do it. There are so many different ways to cull out one's creativity. There is no "right" way to unleash your creative potential, but we're believers in learning from the greats and creating your own artistic roadmap based on what resonates with you. As a non-native English speaker and someone who grew up in an Indian culture, English as a language appears very articulate and clear to me. And most well written English literature works, including poems, embody such almost straightforward characters, both in their wording and storytelling ... until I read. Language teaching methods are dependent on and influenced by different theories of language and language learning. The history of language teaching puts forward different kinds of methods. These methods are adopted by different people in different situations according to the need of the learners. Different methods may be appropriate to different contexts. The efficiency of a method depends upon a complex of factors which vary from place to place and situation to situation. The challenge always is to avoid dogma and rigidity through fresh consideration of priorities, and to root all new strategies in the realities of the situation. It is a matter of great pleasure for me to work on the topic but it purports to be an uphill task to express exactly all my deep feelings and sense of gratitude to the personalities who have contributed to a great extent in the completion of this style of reading and writing in English Language & Literature.

Teaching style

An English teacher plays a multifaceted role in the teaching-learning process, acting as a facilitator, instructor, and motivator. They guide students in developing language skills, fostering communication abilities, and promoting a deeper understanding of English literature and culture. Effective English teachers create a supportive and engaging learning environment where students can confidently express themselves and actively participate in the learning process. A great legacy of language used by him with the help of different languages in Indian sub-continent like as English, Hindi, Maithili, Sanskrit, Vajjika, Bhojpuri & others. Prof. S. C. Thakur has given the idea of narrative teaching style in Language & Literature of English, Maithili, Sanskrit & Hindi, which is considered as a paper in International Conference at IIT, Delhi in 2014 & IIM, Shillong in 2015. Style may be a broad term, but it still important in writing and literature. Without it, there would be no individuality or soul beyond the text. It can take years to hone or come naturally but every writer must find their own literary style in order to be successful, especially in literature. "People think that I can teach them style. What stuff it all is! Have something to say, and say it as clearly as you can. That is the only secret of style." Life can only be understood backwards. But it must be lived forwards. One of the most challenging aspects of creative work is, well, sitting down to actually do it. There are so many different ways to cull out one's creativity. Materialism is castigated for bringing about self-centred approach in life. The values – social, moral, spiritual, cultural and professional inculcated in us as unifying forces through parenting, schooling and different experiences narrow down due to selective approach to life. The widely used hallowed concept of 'vasudhaiva kutumbakam' is overlooked and other

self-pleasing narratives come into vogue, mostly national and cultural chauvinism. The timeless edifying literature is tested at those moments to remind us of all-embracing elements responsible for restoring the forgotten moral imperatives in us to come closer to universal application. There is no “right” way to unleash your creative potential, but we’re believers in learning from the greats and creating your own artistic roadmap based on what resonates with us. The forms of sentences used within the boundaries of the rules of grammar, there is still room for writers to play with word order. This helps avoid monotony and also can help indicate what era the literature is from. Writers from the Age of Enlightenment liked balanced sentences while modern writers favor a loose sentence structure. The role where he was working like as an essence, for “Service of Knowledge” philosophy in education aims to cultivate not just knowledgeable individuals, but also thoughtful, engaged, and responsible citizens who are empowered to make a positive impact on the world.

Learning style:

Learning is a formal process of acquiring or getting knowledge of subject or skill through study, experience, and instruction. Learning occurs by study, giving experience, and doing instruction. Learning involves some form of practice, perhaps reinforced practice, practice concerns with storage and retrieval of information or skills include repetition and rehearsal; the practice itself could be reinforced. Learning is not just theoretical aspects, but it is also emphasized on practical aspects. Learning is a change in behavior, learning not only concerns with the cognitive aspects, but also the affective aspects which deals with behavior and attitude. The good of learning is that the learning itself makes the learners

become good people and act nobly. To identify the extent to which university teacher's work intersects with a cognitive-constructivist and comprehensive teaching approach and explore meaningful relationships between teaching approach expressed by the teacher and socio-demographic, academic and teaching career variables. The portrayal of the teachers' character or personal views is likely to be manifested in different forms for different individuals. For some, it may come in the form of trying to look like a teacher – from clothing choice to displays of verbal and nonverbal communication. The teaching personality may also manifest itself in behaviours. This might be in the form of exuding professional competency in one's discipline, being caring and supportive of students, or managing and communicating with confidence and authority. An interesting proposition is to consider whether the teaching idea may also be revealed in distinctive personality traits. For example, one's teaching-learning style might be extraverted and conscientious, yet their genuine self might be more reserved and disordered. The current study was inspired by the latter two possibilities – behaviours and personality traits that are distinctive only to one's teaching habits and not necessarily reflective of one's everyday portrayal to the outside world. The self-concept is one of the important dimensions of personality which gives direction to one's whole life. It is because of the fact that self-concept refers to the experience of their own being. It includes how the people come to know about themselves through experience, reflection, and feedback from others. Basically, self-concept is an organized cognitive structure comprising a set of attitudes and beliefs that cut across all facets of experience and action, organizing and tying together the variety of specific habits, abilities, outlooks, ideas, and feelings that a person displays. In our opinion self-concept is

a central theme around which a large number of the major aspects of personality are organized. The role of a teacher is very important in shaping one's values and belief system. His illuminating insights about the importance of innovative teaching and research are highly demanding for the sake of integrity in higher education. English classroom is a learning process that receives the subject matter from the teacher. Students play an active role by carrying out activities that can support the learning process. The variety of teaching techniques will help learners to get higher motivation to learn English easily.

A professor's "In the Service of Knowledge" philosophy on teaching and learning centers around fostering a deep and enduring love for learning in students, emphasizing the intrinsic value of knowledge acquisition, and promoting intellectual curiosity and critical thinking. It involves creating a dynamic learning environment that encourages active participation, exploration, and the application of knowledge to real-world contexts. The professor acts as a facilitator, guiding students on their learning journey while also embodying a lifelong commitment to scholarly pursuits.

1. *Diction*: When looking at diction, it is best to examine certain features such as whether it is abstract or concrete, general or specific, literal or metaphorical, etc.
2. *Connotation*: This is important when looking at style because different audiences may look at a certain word choice differently if its definition goes beyond what the old dictionary tells us. This is where writers need to be careful at times because they can evoke the wrong message to their audience and offend or terrify them, unless that is their aim of course. This is also

where you would be looking at allusions or references to other works in literature or important figures.

3. *Punctuation*: This isn't always a factor in an author's style since the rules are pretty basic and set but sometimes it can be an essential factor of their work, especially when it comes to poetry.
4. *Clichés*: They can be a little bland or annoying for readers but they still help to develop the style of the author.

Conclusion

Professor Satish Chandra Thakur's life and philosophy embody the true spirit of education – a service to the knowledge and humanity. His teaching and learning style reflect the humility, clarity, and compassion, thus transforming classrooms into spaces of inspiration. Rooted in Mithila's soil yet reaching toward universal wisdom, he reminds us that the purpose of education is not merely to inform, but also to enlighten. Through his lifelong dedication, he has shown that the greatest teachers are those who continue to learn, and the noblest lessons are those that awaken both the mind and the heart.

ARTICLES

1

Gender and Indigenous Identity: A Cultural Reading of Easterine Kire's *Sky is My Father, A Naga Village Remembered*

KAIHRU L

Abstract

Kire's novel *SIMFANVR* (2018) revisits the 19th century Naga world during a period of sociocultural upheaval prompted by the arrival of Christian missionaries, colonial administration, and formal education. This paper interrogates gender within the novel, arguing that gender roles are neither static nor innate but performative and socially constructed. Drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's feminist theory, the study explores how both men and women in the Naga community are constrained, albeit differently, by cultural expectations. While women are often seen as tradition bearers and nurturers, the narrative illustrates their quiet strength, agency, and subversive potential. Similarly, masculine roles, grounded in warriorhood and dominance, reveal a psychological burden for men, illustrating that patriarchal systems restrict freedom for all. The paper contends that indigenous literature provides a space to challenge and reimagine these gender roles.

Keywords: Agency, gender, narratives, culture, hegemony.

Easterine's *Sky is my Father, A Naga Village Remembered* published in 2003 is considered the first novel written in English by a Naga author. It is set in the 1800s when the Naga

community witness rapid changes in the societal fabric with the arrival of Christian missionaries, establishment of educational institutions, modern medicine, and administration. Prior to the Christianity, the Nagas knowledge system was largely rooted on oral tradition. These changes had a profound impact on the community's cultural fabric, including its understanding and structuring of gender roles and spaces. The Nagas strongly valued the tradition. K. B. Veio Pou comments that "Men do not like to disturb the traditional equation because they enjoy a better status" (172). It is this tradition which describes men as 'warrior', 'provider', 'leader', etc. and women as 'domestic', 'maternal', 'nurse', etc. Reiterating the demarcated roles of gender, Avinuo Kire states that "While the womenfolk looked after domestic affairs, it was the sole responsibility of the menfolk to safeguard and protect the village" (68). This paper seeks to explore the roles of men and women in the narrative, drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's theoretical discourse on gender.

In aligning with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's critique of Western feminist discourse, this paper resists viewing Naga women through a homogenizing lens that flattens their roles into shaping simple binaries. As Mohanty writes, "The problem with analytical strategies that defines Third World women as homogenous group is that they rob these women of their historical and political agency." Kire's portrayal, by contrast, affirms the specificity of Naga women lived experience. A brief review of women characters in Kire's other novels will shed light on the different roles of women in a society. In *Spirit Nights* (2022) it was Tola, the grandmother, who comes to the rescue of the male protagonist when the former was under the spell of the evil spirits. The words of Tola "Namu! Kill the tiger! He is your greatest enemy! Kill

him now!" (126) alerted Namu in saving the whole humans. In the novella *Mari* (2010), the whole narrative is set from the perspective of a woman who experienced war and love. Her narrative gives much insight into the consciousness of a woman in World War II where the narratives are usually focussed on men. Kire's *A Terrible Matriarchy* (2013) set in the background of Kohima in the 1960s and 70s presents a traditional matriarch grandmother. She is of the opinion that "boys never did any work because they had to look after the village and engage enemy warriors in warfare" (35). K. B. Veio Pou comments "The novel does illustrate how women, unwittingly, can be the chief advocates of traditional status of male superiority over women" (Ibid 173).

The novel *SIMFANVR* begins with the observation of the women activity in the early morning through the voice of Kovi, a respectable man in the community, "Ah, the old ways are good, he thought, our women do us proud when they show themselves of eager to keep the teaching of their fathers" (1). The portrayal of women has been shown as confident, wise, and resilient, adhering to traditional gender roles with dignity. In times of war, they rely on the men to protect them. Though it is much about men bravery and honour the women are also depicted as embodying virtues such as strength and courage. One such instance occurs during wartime, when "thy continued their weaving, confident that their men would protect them" (4). This act illustrates not only the women's trust but also their emotional fortitude and the stabilizing role they play within the community. The narrative's depiction of gender aligns with Simone de Beauvoir assertion that "One is not born but becomes a woman" (330), emphasising that gender is not a biological given but a construct shaped by social expectation and cultural norms. In this light, the women in the novel are

not passive figures but individuals whose identities are moulded by the interplay of tradition, societal values, and lived experiences.

While women in the novel are largely portrayed as obedient and conforming to societal expectations, they are not entirely lacking in agency. The narrative presents them as “dignified”, and seen “wielding a dao as well as any man” (7, 10). One of women’s roles is the transmission of cultural knowledge to their children. Through *murung*, a traditional girls’ dormitory, the women are taught various skills, tradition, and folk wisdoms. In this way they can nurture their children in accordance with the norms and values of the community. This educational and moral authority is exemplified by Vipiano, a mother, who instruct her children with folk wisdom, “a household is not worthy of its name if its granaries are empty” (13), she says when one of her children is tempted to hunt instead of working in the field. Such expression of folk wisdom portrays women not only as caretaker but also as figure of moral and cultural authority. Easterine Kire on her inspiration for writing once stated that she “used the folktale as a seed and then with my creative imagination built the story” (Khatoon), emphasizing the importance of tradition and its female custodians. Her identification of women from the folklore and fiction as a crucial figure sets a new precedent, a narrative which departs from women as a subaltern. Toshimenla Jamir stated that “as long as the customary laws and traditional power structure remain unaltered, it is unlikely that there would be any substantial change for women in the fabric of Naga society” (20). Ushering of change is visible in the contemporary time and is increasingly reflected in the voices of emerging writers from the region. Thus, women in Naga society are portrayed

as individual endowed with potentials, cultural authority and capacity to influence both tradition and transformation.

De Beauvoir, in her analysis of gender binaries, asserts, “He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the other” (26). This binary not only subjugates women but also forces men into a defined role as the “Subject” or “Absolute,” which ultimately reinforces their need to dominate. This dynamic limit men’s capacity for emotional expression and more humane, flexible identities. In a patriarchal society, men are often valued primarily for their ability to wield power, which creates a psychological and emotional burden. While men benefit from patriarchal privileges, they are also confined within narrowly defined roles that discourage vulnerability and interdependence. Thus, De Beauvoir’s critique reveals that both genders are shaped and constrained by the same oppressive system, albeit in different ways.

The grooming of male children in the novel is deeply rooted in the ideal of hegemonic masculinity. Boys are raised to internalized virtues associated with strength, courage, and emotional restraint, and are socially conditioned to perform these roles to gain acceptance within the community. Through the dormitory system and social gatherings, stories of heroic ancestors are passed down, shaping young minds with clear expectations of what it means to be a man, particularly, a warrior. It is through these ideals that a man must navigate to be accepted and recognised. Levi before leaving for the raid which is part of traditional initiation into warriorhood had to refrains from informing his mother. As the novel puts it, “no self-respecting men ever revealed the talk of the *thehou* to their wives” (42), reinforcing the gendered exclusivity of male warrior culture.

Later, after he was released from the prison, he held different view of war against the British saying, “... it would

be very foolish indeed. The white man is powerful, Lato, very powerful indeed" (78). Despite this personal insight, he ultimately succumbs to communal pressure and readopts the warrior persona, "He returned to it as to a former mistress, all thoughts of family flown from him" (86). This metaphor reflects the seductive yet destructive nature of performing masculinity, which demands personal sacrifice in favour of public image. His identity remains bound to the expectations of his community.

This internal conflict is again visible when Levi reacts violently to his son Sato's conversion to Christianity, shouting with a spear in hand, "I'll not let him shame my warrior name" (125). Levi's anger is product of his embodiment of the Naga warrior ideal, one that cannot accommodate deviation without being perceived as dishonour. Sato, despite being a man in his own right, suffers social ostracism for exercising agency through religious conversion, illustrating the rigid constraint masculinity imposes on individual choices. Even Kovi, a respected elder, privately acknowledges the merits of the new religion, but refrains from accepting it, "He saw there was a lot of good in it. But he did not feel it was appropriate for a man like him, an elder and a titled member of the village, to embrace a new religion" (130). Kovi's internal hesitation reflects how deeply embedded the traditional masculine role is in maintaining social order and cultural identity. Thus, the novel reveals how hegemonic masculinity not only shapes male behaviour but also perpetuates a cycle of performance and repression that limits both emotional freedom and moral evolution.

Reiterating the critique of societal norms initiated by Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler argues in *Gender Trouble* that "gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts... that congeal over time to produce the

appearance of substance” (43). This formulation underscores the performative nature of gender – constructed not through biology but through sustained social practices. In Easterine Kire’s ethnographic narrative, the gendered organization of Khonoma village reflects this idea. Gender roles are inscribed through customs, rituals, and everyday activities, adhering to what Butler refers to as “stylization.” Men are traditionally portrayed as warriors and custodians of land and lineage, while women occupy roles associated with domestic labour, oral storytelling, and cultural preservation. However, Kire’s narration goes beyond these binaries by presenting women as vital agents of memory and resilience, subtly challenging the illusion of fixed gender identities and revealing the constructed and contestable nature of gender within indigenous society.

Understanding gender roles requires careful attention to cultural context, space, and time. A set of ideals may be appropriate in a certain time and outdated in another. Applying a universal methodology to evaluate gender across cultures often lead to reductive or misleading conclusion. Indigenous narratives offer a vital corrective by presenting knowledge from a local perspective. As Robert Young asserts, “the knowledge that you need is the knowledge you learn informally. From your own family and environment. The knowledge you learn formally is someone else’s knowledge” (14). In this light, Easterine Kire’s contributions to Naga literature provide an authentic and rooted narrative. As a woman writing from within the community, she explores the lived experience and voices of Naga women perspective. Her works are not merely fictional; they carry a strong element of realism, reflecting cultural practices, values, and internal struggles. This kind of narrative consciousness is essential for a fuller, more inclusive understanding of indigenous

societies. With writer like Kire, Naga literature is not only preserving cultural memory but also advancing critical conversations around identity, gender, and history.

Thus, it could be concluded that gender, as a conceptual category, is part of an ongoing process, both at the micro, as well as the macro structures of social design. This paper examined the constructed nexus between gender, indigenous culture, and external literary and historical influences. By placing *Sky is My Father: A Naga Village Remembered* at the centre, it illustrated, primarily through Simone De Beauvoir's theoretical framework, the culturally built, expected, and performed gender roles, showing a close interaction between women-men dichotomy and the cultural practices they undertake. This paper has aimed not only to contribute to existing discourse but also open newer modes of investigation, that could for example, take this question of gender within the Naga community across other literary forms of expression. By rooting feminist analysis in indigenous narratives forms, the paper contributes to a broader decolonial feminist project, one that takes seriously the need to theorize gender relationally, locally, and historically.

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2

Banjara-Marathi Contact: Factors Affecting Language Choice in Bilinguals

RATHOD RAMESHWAR BALCHAND

Abstract

Banjara Language is social-cultural geographical phenomenon. There is a strong relationship between culture and society. Socio-linguistic is the study of speech functions according to the speaker, their relationship and contact the context and the situation. The phenomenon of code-switching, the practice of alternating between two or more languages within a single conversation, sentence, or discourse, has played a pivotal role in the linguistic dynamics of multilingual societies. The Banjara community's widespread dispersal across different states, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan, the Banjara language has existed in constant interaction with regional languages such as Telugu, Kannada, Marathi, Hindi, and English. Code Switching in Banjara Language, this study has investigated the sociolinguistic dimensions of these interactions, focusing on the patterns, functions, and motivations underlying code switching practices among Banjara speakers. The research has adopted a mixed-method approach, integrating both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. This multi-faceted approach has ensured a comprehensive understanding of the frequency, contexts, and types of code switching whether inter-sentential, intra-sentential, or tag-switching occurring in different social settings such as home, community gatherings, educational institutions, and workplaces. The present paper try to discuss Socio-Linguistic of Banjara Language.

Keywords: Linguistic, Multilingualism, Language variation, Language Pronunciation, Bilinguals,

Introduction

Banjara is the term commonly used for the different varieties of Gor Banjara speech community throughout India. These have included age, gender, educational background, socio-economic status, and language contact with dominant regional languages. He has revealed that code-switching among the Banjara people is not merely a linguistic convenience but also a marker of identity, a means of social mobility, and a strategy for negotiating cultural boundaries. The study has also delved into the functional aspects of code-switching, identifying key motivations such as the need for lexical gaps, emphasis, contextual appropriateness, and the expression of cultural identity. It has explored the impact of code-switching on the vitality of the Banjara language. According to Grierson" *Banjara is a Rajasthani Language spoken by nomadic Banjara people across India. Banjara language is known by various other names, including Lamani, Lambadi, Lambani, Labhani, Lamalade, and Banjara, Banjari etc. The Banjara tribe primarily belong to the Gypsy tribe of South Africa. Banjara language belongs to the Indo- European, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Aryan, Rajsthani unclassified.*" In interesting among these are the contact phenomena between an Indo-Aryan language and a Dravidian language which can be seen in the Deccan plateau region. There are probabilities of an Indo-Aryan language being the host language.

The Independence of Indian 1947, these tribes slowly left their nomadic lifestyle and started to gather and form settlements named" Tanda" in the outskirts of villages. Through the generations now the community is bilingual to the point of diglossia - Marathi is used for inter-group communication has Banjara or Marathi. Their dressing pattern, language, culture, speech habits, and lifestyle are very distinctive among similar communities. The language

spoken by Banjara is also known as “Gorboli”, Banjara, language. It has offered practical recommendations for language policy and educational strategies aimed at preserving and promoting the Banjara language. The findings have underscored the importance of recognizing code switching as an integral part of the linguistic repertoire, advocating for a balanced approach that values both linguistic heritage and modern linguistic.

According to Naik (2015) *“The Banjara language has involved through centuries of interaction with other regional languages, contributing to its unique linguistic features”* The Banjara community are social bunches staying inside the specific, geographic provinces whose callings are not of indicated sorts. They are coordinated by their equivalent speech or language, dressing and food. They are additionally a kind of community represented by their clan leader who keeps a social detached from different clans and families. As, each clan contributes to its practices, beliefs, and customs.

The Banjara language is identity of Banjara community, due to settled at the side of city and villages, this community’s language, dressing pattern and life style is changed now days.

The “Ladeni” was the main source of migration along with the backpack on bullocks and cows. The Banjara people were used to travel from one place to another for livelihood.

The Gor-Boli are found in different regions, Gor-Boli is the common term refer to their language in all states of India, such as, Gor-Boli, Banjara language, Banjari, Labhani, Lambadi, Sugali, Brinjari. Grierson, (1898), *“The term established for the word Banjara interlinked with the Sanskrit term “Vanijiya” or “Baniya” out of which “BANJARA” term has been begun and expressions of both the terms sound the closeness with*

one another legitimately sequenced as 'vanity Banijiyakar Banijjaro Banjara'. Banjara community speakers communicate in the Banjara language in their native (Gor-boli) language to their standings in various areas. The particular dress, haircut, and language make the variety in culture. But in these modern times, the Banjara language and culture seem to have been greatly influenced. This effect is occurred, due to the over-contact of other languages and cultures. Rathod (2018), *"A massive migration by many reasons Gor-Boli language has very significant features though it resembles with Hindi, Urdu, Rajasthani, Gujrati and Marwadi. Apart from this Gor-boli has been influenced by other regional and Western language"*

It is in society that man acquire and uses language. Language with its different is the subject matter of sociolinguistic the varied linguistic realizations of socio-cultural meaning which in a sense are both familiar and unfamiliar and the occurrence of everyday social interaction communities, language dialects, varieties, styles. Sociolinguistic situation of India can be described as a multilingual and multicultural. As India is a multilingual and multicultural country in nature the minority languages are in a serious threat to be extinct. He describes that the word "Lambada is originated from Sanskrit word "Lavan" which means Salt.

According to Myers Scotton (1993), *"code switching serves as a valuable communicative resource, allowing bilinguals to express themselves more fully but it is often criticized for contribution to the erosion of linguistic boundaries and cultural identity"*

This sociolinguistic interaction is typically the result of various elements, like migration, transport, colonization, inter-cast marriage, social attachment, globalization, education and numerous different reasons. Bilingualism is

clarified distinctly by researchers and experts in a scale, extraordinary position, contending that a bilingual is someone who has at his scope a minimal ability in one of the four language abilities, talking, perusing, composing, and listening perception in a territorial state, public and unknown dialects.

According to Hudson, (1996), *"It is cleared literally term situational switching is the interchanging between the languages because of the situational changes". Bilinguals that code switch metaphorically may attempt to change the participants"* feelings towards the circumstance. The following order depends on the extent of exchange or the idea of the point at which language takes place. According to Holmes, (2001) *"The speaker conveys his unspecific feeling about the point which is interacting in two or more languages"* A sociolinguistic exploration focuses strong relationship between language and social identity.

According to Ferguson (1959) *"Diglossia is one type of situation in which two different variations of language are used in the same language community."* The diglossia claims that the former is a distinct product related to psycholinguistics and psychology while the latter is a social product as it carries community functions within a particular society. Trail, (1968), *"The Lamani sentence is described below as being simple, complex, or coordinate Introduction to the sentences"* In course of time as they adapt changes in their life style their languages and cultural also influence of Marathi and English language in the society. Language variations occur in bilinguals or multilingual societies in a particular region so there language deviation contains in it.

Factors affecting language choice: The psychological choice of a language for a bilingual, under the purview of having similar efficiencies in both the languages is affected by the

group he is associated with at any particular point of time. In case of Banjara even among the similar sociological society the native speakers have to sometime switch between their mother tongue and Marathi. The old generation speaking only Banjara if the children have been taught their mother tongue and it is a mixture of Banjara and Marathi if the children are only receptive bilinguals. In any multilingual situation there is always one language which would be considered as a standard one and another more vernacular more argot like equality, solidarity and like ability.

Translated words for Relationship used in Banjara and English and Marathi

Sr no.	Marathi words	Translation	Transcription	Banjara use	Actual use
1	Dongar	Mountain	Dungar	Dungar	Gatla/ Dadiya
2	Pani	Water	Pali	Pali	Pali
3	Bail	Ox	Balad	Balad	Balad
4	Zopadi	Hut	Zupadi	Zupadi	Zupadi
5	Lasun	Garlic	Lasal	Lasal	Lasal
6	Sukhi	Happy	Sukhi	Sukhi	Sakalti

This is reflected in the great proportion of Marathi, Hindi-Urdu, and lesser extent English words and sentences in the speech of the Banjara tribe. The educated Banjara people use code switching from Marathi, Hindi-Urdu as well as the English language.

1. The Banjara is a mobile social community, that migrated to different regions and many have settled down mostly in the vicinity of jungles or close to the foothills, valleys, and riverbanks.

2. Due to use of code switching, identity of Banjara language would disappear.
3. Various words, sentence structure are losing their originality.
4. New generation will deprive from their original identity as Banjara language.
5. The lost words, and sentences, structures would not regain easily.

Conclusion

Sociolinguistic situation of India can be described as a multilingual and multicultural. As India is a multilingual and multicultural country in nature, the minority languages are in a serious threat to be extinct. Multilingual phenomena have universal reproduction among experiments synchronically and diachronically. As such a case of Banjara and Marathi language contact has not shown any exemption too. In some urban areas Banjara are gradually and unknowing trying to change their language and culture in the name of modernization and development

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9. **DJ Tyrer** is the person behind *Atlantean Publishing*, was placed second in the Writing Magazine 'Mid-Story Sentence' competition, and has been widely published in anthologies and magazines around the world, such as *Apples, Shadows and Light* (Earlyworks Press), and *Marked By Scorn* (Solarwyrn Press), and issues of *Belmont Story Review*, *Phenomenal Literature*, *Thema*, and *Tigershark*, as well as having a novella available in paperback and on the Kindle, *The Yellow House* (Dunhams Manor). DJ Tyrer's website is at <https://djtyrer.blogspot.co.uk/>
10. **Duane Vorhees** is an American poet living in Thailand with his family. He previously taught a variety of courses for the University of Maryland in Korea and Japan.
11. **Elisabeth Frischauf**, born in New York City in 1947 has a long career as a neuro-psychiatrist, artist, and poet with two English/German bilingual full-length verse memoirs available from the Theodor Kramer Verlag in Vienna, Austria, with the third volume of the trilogy due in Spring 2026. Two more manuscripts are in circulation. She publishes regularly in on-line venues. A grandmother, she lives on a small plot of land north of New York City.
12. **Gary Beck** has spent most of his adult life as a theater director and worked as an art dealer when he couldn't earn a living in the theater. He has also been a tennis pro, a ditch digger and a salvage diver. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines

and his published books include 40 poetry collections, 16 novels, 4 short story collections, 2 collection of essays and 8 books of plays. Gary lives in New York City. www.garycbeck.com

13. **Germain Droogenbroodt** is an internationally appreciated poet. He wrote short stories and literary reviews, but mainly poetry, so far 17 poetry books, published in 30 countries. He is also translator, publisher, and promoter of modern international poetry and translated – he speaks six languages – more than thirty collections of German, Italian, Spanish, Latin American, English and French poetry, including anthologies of Bertolt Brecht, Mahmud Darwish, Reiner Kunze, Miguel Hernández, José Ángel Valente, Francisco Brines and also rendered Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Persian and Korean poetry into Dutch.
14. **Gordon Scapens**, widely published in various countries over many years in numerous magazines, journals, anthologies, newspapers and competitions, most recently first prize in the Brian Nisbet poetry award. His latest book is 'History Doesn't Die'.
15. **Irena Jovanović** was born in Zaječar, Serbia, in 1971, where she lives and creates as a Master of Arts and Ceramics Design with 20 solo art exhibitions, writing poetry in Serbian and English. Inner Child Press from the USA published her poetry book „Let It Be” in 2013 through a contest. With her poetry in English, she is widely represented in many world anthologies, magazines, and blogs, printed and online. She has a new poetry book in preparation. She also writes in Serbian, and has created a Poetesses Club “Blade of Grass” in her hometown and leads it. She has also founded a regional branch of the Association of Writers in the Homeland and

Diaspora in her hometown, and is Editor-in-Chief for all printed their editions. She is widely represented in many domestic and regional magazines, anthologies, and blogs with poetry in Serbian, and has several poetry books in preparation.

16. **Ivan Pozzoni**, born in Monza in 1976, is a distinguished Italian writer, philosopher, and editor who pioneered the study of Law and Literature in Italy. He has authored numerous essays on Italian philosophers and ancient ethical and legal theories, contributing to both Italian and international journals. Between 2007 and 2024, Pozzoni released several books, including *Underground*, *Riserva Indiana*, and *Patroclo non deve morire*. He founded avant-garde magazines *Il Guastatore* and *L'Arrivista*, and currently edits *Información Filosófica*. Pozzoni established the NéonN-avant-gardisme movement, endorsed by Zygmunt Bauman. His work, translated into 25 languages, includes over 150 volumes and 1000 essays.
17. **Janet Mason** is an award-winning writer, teacher, and blogger whose work has appeared in *The Huffington Post*, *Sinister Wisdom*, and *The Brooklyn Review*. Her memoir *Tea Leaves* (Bella Books, 2012) was selected for the American Library Association's 2013 Over the Rainbow List and received a Goldie Award. Her novels include *THEY: A Biblical Tale of Secret Genders* (2018), *The Unicorn*, *The Mystery* (2020), *Loving Artemis* (2022), and *Cinnamon* (2024), featured at the Frankfurt Book Fair. Nominated for a Pushcart Prize, Mason's work has been widely anthologized and explores themes of identity, love, and social justice.
18. **John Grey** is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in *New World Writing*, *River and South* and *The Alembic*. Latest books, "Bittersweet", "Subject

Matters” and “Between Two Fires” are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in Rush, White Wall Review and Flights.

19. **K.V. Raghupathi**, a former academic, poet, short story writer, novelist, critic, columnist, and book reviewer, writes in English despite speaking Telugu as his first language. Widely published and anthologized both in online and print journals in India and abroad. He has so far published fourteen collections of poetry, three novels, and two short story collections. His third collection of stories, *Summer Death* is in the pipeline. He regularly writes to the Speaking Tree columns of Indian National English dailies, *The Times of India* and *The Economic Times*. He is a recipient of several national awards for his creativity. He lives in Tirupati (India) and is actively engaged in writing. He can be reached at drkvraghupathi9@gmail.com
20. **Kaihrul** is a PhD candidate in the Department of English at the University of Delhi. He also holds an M. Phil from the Department of Modern Indian Languages and Literary Studies, University of Delhi. His research interests include Northeast Indian writings, folklore, decolonial studies, and related areas of cultural and literary inquiry.
21. **Keith Inman**’s favourite lit class was in Dublin; best reading, a Spanish cafe; coolest invite, L.A.; nicest critique, Cuba. His books can be found in over fifty libraries worldwide. Keith lives in an old limestone cottage on the Niagara Escarpment.
22. **Lalit Navani** worked for 14 years as a web developer, production controller, and documentation manager at Mr. Gurdas Maan’s media and film production house. Since

2018, he has been freelancing in web development and content writing. A Textile Technologist and Chemist with a Diploma in Web Development, Lalit writes blogs, articles, product descriptions, social media taglines, whitepapers, and press releases for digital marketing and e-commerce companies. He is also a published author and accomplished script/screenplay writer with several non-commissioned works. He resides in Andheri West, Mumbai, with his family.

23. **Les Wicks'** 15th book of poetry is *Time Taken – New & Selected* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2022 2nd ed 2024). For over 50 years Les has been active in the Australian literary community. He has been a guest at most of his nation's literary festivals alongside a substantial list of international ones. 2024 Boao International Lifetime Achievement Award, 2025 Silk Road Oceanian Poet of the Year. Publication has been seen in over 500 different newspapers, anthologies and magazines across 39 countries in 18 languages. Has conducted workshops around Australia, edited various projects over the decades, latest being *Class* (2024) & runs Meuse Press which focuses on poetry outreach projects like poetry on buses & poetry published on the surface of a river.
24. **Madhura Donode** is an aspiring poet with a deep passion for capturing emotions and reflections through her writing. Though not a professional writer, she strives to create work that resonates with readers and would be honoured to have her poetry featured in esteemed publications.
25. **Maithili Nagrekar** is a management graduate with a deep passion for literature and the arts. She has authored several poems and also works as a financial advisor.

26. **Matthew James Friday** is a British born writer and teacher. He has had many poems published in US and international journals. His first chapbook 'The Residents' was published by Finishing Line Press in summer 2024. His second chapbook 'The Be-All and the End-All' was published by Bottlecap Press in autumn 2024. He has published numerous micro-chapbooks with the Origami Poems Project. Matthew is a Pushcart Prize nominated poet. Visit his website at <http://matthewfriday.weebly.com>
27. **Michael J. D'Alfonsi** is a native of San Francisco, California. After attending the University of California at Davis he worked as a newspaper reporter for the Concord (CA) Transcript and sold magazine pieces to publications such as Dragon and Freelance Writer's Report. He is a ten-year veteran of the book business, both antiquarian and as a store manager with Barnes & Noble. He lives in Brentwood, California with his wife Teresa (an educator).
28. **Michael Lee Johnson** is a poet of high acclaim, with his work published in 46 countries or republics. He is also a song lyricist with several published poetry books. His talent has been recognized with 7 Pushcart Prize nominations and 7 Best of the Net nominations. He has over 653 published poems. His 336-plus YouTube poetry videos are a testament to his skill and dedication. His poems have been translated into several foreign languages. Awards/Contests: International Award of Excellence "Citta' Del Galateo-Antonio De Ferrariis" XI Edition 2024 Milan, Italy-Poetry. Poem, Michael Lee Johnson, *"If I Were Young Again."*
29. **Michael Mirolla** is the author of more than two dozen novels, plays, film scripts, and collections of short stories and poetry. His novella *The Last News Vendor* won the 2020 Hamilton Literary Award, and he has received three

Bressani Prizes for *Berlin*, *The House on 14th Avenue*, and *Lessons in Relationship Dyads*. His recent works include *At the End of the World* and *Becker's Universe & Other Stories* (2024). Mirolla has held several international residencies and serves as publisher and editor-in-chief of Guernica Editions. Born in Italy and raised in Montreal, he now lives near Gananoque, Ontario.

30. **Mohit Saini** is a poet, writer, and researcher, serving as an Assistant Professor at Compucom Institute of Technology & Management, Jaipur. With eight years of experience in language and linguistics, he specializes in literature, second language acquisition, psycholinguistics, multilingual education, and language policy in higher education. He holds a B.Ed., an MBA, and an M.A. in English from the University of Rajasthan. An author of published poetry, he also reviews research papers and serves as Editor for the *Journal of Advances in English, Telugu and Indian Languages* (AQIE Publication) and the *International Journal of Language, Linguistics, Literature and Culture*.
31. **Nels Hanson** grew up on a small farm in the San Joaquin Valley of California and has worked as a farmer, teacher, and writer/editor. His fiction received the James D. Phelan Award from the San Francisco Foundation and his poetry the Prospero Prize from Sharkpack Review.
32. **Nick Cooke** has had around 75 poems published or accepted, in a variety of outlets including Acumen, Agenda, Ink Sweat & Tears, the High Window Journal and Dream Catcher, along with around 35 poetry reviews and literary articles. In 2016 his poem 'Tanis' won a Wax Poetry and Art competition.

33. **Patty Somlo** is the author of *Hairway to Heaven Stories* (Cherry Castle Publishing), a Finalist for the American Fiction Awards and Best Book Awards. Her earlier books, *The First to Disappear* and *Even When Trapped Behind Clouds*, were also contest finalists. Her writing has appeared in *Guernica*, *Delmarva Review*, *Under the Sun*, *Los Angeles Review*, and more than 40 anthologies. She received Honorable Mention for Fiction from the Women's National Book Association, was a Finalist for the J.F. Powers Short Fiction Contest, had an essay listed as Notable in *Best American Essays*, and has multiple Pushcart and Best of the Net nominations.
34. **Rakesh Bhartiya**, born on 28 July 1954 in Azamgarh, Uttar Pradesh, India, is a writer and former civil servant. After graduating in Electrical Engineering, he briefly worked in the banking sector before joining the Indian Civil Services, retiring as Joint Secretary. He later served as an adviser to the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights for three years. Bhartiya is now a full-time writer with eighteen published books in English and Hindi, including short story collections, novels, poetry, travelogues, and essays on social, cultural, and spiritual topics. He also co-edited the literary quarterly *Pashyanti* for three years. He resides in New Delhi.
35. **Rangeet Mitra** is an environmentalist, sustainability practitioner, and Bengali poet working at the intersection of science, social justice, and community empowerment. With over a decade of experience in water governance, climate resilience, and nature-based solutions, he contributes widely to India's WASH and climate-development sector. A published poet since 2002, he uses literature to explore identity, memory, and resistance while advocating for equity, sustainability, and inclusive futures.

36. **Rathod Rameshwar Balchand** is a Research Guide in the Department of English at Lal Bahadur Shastri College, Satara, which is affiliated with Shivaji University, Kolhapur. He is actively engaged in guiding research scholars and contributing to the advancement of English studies through his academic mentorship and scholarly pursuits.
37. **Rattan Mann** is an Indian who has lived in Norway for 45 years. With a Masters in Physics and a Bachelor's in Electronics, he has a strong academic background. He is also an accomplished writer, having authored six short stories and two novels. In addition to writing, he made a Hindi feature film titled *The Buddhist Monk*. He combines a deep understanding of science with a creative passion for storytelling and filmmaking.
38. **Roger G. Singer**, Poet Laureate Emeritus, Connecticut Coalition of Poets Laureate.
39. **Shubhankar Kulkarni**, Ph.D. is an independent researcher in biology and medicine. Academic writing occupies a significant part of his day-to-day job, and alongside, he writes short stories in Marathi and English. His experience in the life sciences helps him combine his two interests by writing science fiction. In total, he has won six prizes, including one award for his stories.
40. **Simran Suri** is a 20-year-old writer from Mohali, India. With a keen interest in creative expression and storytelling, she brings a youthful perspective and emotional depth to her work. Her writing reflects an exploration of identity, emotion, and the subtle beauty found in everyday moments.
41. **Richard Eddie** started writing poetry back in 2002, but it was not until 2005 when she began to write her first

novel. She reads and writes for fun and in honor of her father who was a writer. Her favorite authors are Daphne Du Maurier, Kate Morton, and Victoria Christopher Murray. She lives in California.

42. **Sushma R Doshi** completed her graduation in History from Loreto College, Kolkata. She went on to acquire a PhD in International Studies from Jawaharlal Nehru, New Delhi. She dabbles in writing fiction and poetry and her work has been published in Contemporary Literary Review India, Everyday Fiction, Muse India, Literally Stories, Borderless Journal, Kitaab International and Panoplyzine amongst others. Her short story "Magic" in Syncopation Literary Journal has been nominated for the Pushcart prize.
43. **Tapan Kumar Pradhan** is an Indian poet, writer and translator from Odisha. He is best known for his poem collection "Kalahandi" which was awarded second place in Sahitya Akademi's Golden Jubilee Indian Literature Translation Prize for Poetry in 2007.
44. **Taylor Graham** is a volunteer search-and-rescue dog handler in the California Sierra Nevada and served as her county's first poet laureate (2016-2018). She's included in the anthologies *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Santa Clara University), *California Fire & Water: A Climate Crisis Anthology*, and *Villanelles* (Everyman's Library). Her latest books are *Windows of Time and Place* (Cold River Press.) and *Walking the Bones* (Hot Pepper Press).
45. **Uzma Haneef** is a writer from Kashmir with a deep interest in travelling, and photography. She is also a certified trainer, currently working as an online educator at an EdTech company. Her work has been featured in a

literary magazine and included in multiple anthologies. She is an avid reader with a love for novels, and she also has a strong interest in geopolitics and information technology.

46. **Yucheng Tao** is an international student from China, currently studying songwriting in Los Angeles. His work has been featured in Wild Court (UK), The Lake (UK), Red Ogre Review (UK), Cathexis Northwest Press, and NonBinary Review (which includes an interview). His poems have passed into the semifinalist round of the Winds of Asia Award by Kinsman Quarterly, and many poems and fiction have been published in Yellow Mama, Apocalypse Confidential, Waymark Literary Magazine, Ink Nest, The Arcanist, Synchronized Chaos, Down in the Dirt, Academy of the Heart and Mind, and others.



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