

# Divine Mother

## Purpose of Devi Worship

- Ryuko Hira (Director Institute of Sathya Sai Education ISSE)

**W**orlds most biggest festival of Durga Puja is held in Bengal.

This is also known as Dussehara and Navaratri in other part of India. “Navaratri means nine nights. Darkness is associated with night. What is this darkness? It is the darkness of ignorance.”

“The Navaratri is a festival to commemorate the victory of the good over the evil. The Embodiment of Divine Power (Para-Shakti), in its various manifestations, Satwic (as Maha- Saraswati), Rajasic (as Maha-Lakshmi), Tamasic (as Mahakali) was able to overcome the forces of vice, wickedness and egoism, during the nine days’ struggle and finally, on Vijaya Dashami (Dasara, the tenth Day commemorating victory), the valedictory worship is done”. The purpose of the Navaratri celebration is to enable man to get rid of nine types of darkness, which have taken hold of him.” “The Navaratri festival is observed by contemplating on God for ten days, cleansing one’s self of all the impurities to experience the Divinity within.” “This festival (Navaratri) is intended to make man realise his true worth as the most precious object in creation. All things in the world derive their value from the labour and skill of man.” Our value and worth depends on our labour in spirituality.

The worship of God or Divinity as Mother has been a religious tradition all over the world. The Hindus worship Divinity as “The primordial Energy” (Adi Paraasakthy). The Catholics adore Virgin Mary as the Holy Mother. In Egypt Isis, in Babylon Ashtar and Cybele in Phrygia are worshipped as Mothers. To look upon God as Mother is the most natural way, most sublime and enduring. Devotees can approach Divinity with greater freedom. In Bhaarath there has been an unbroken tradition of worshipping Divinity as Mother. Sri Rama Krishna Parama Hamsa, Adisankaracharya and Aurobindo are classic examples. In recent times we have had Shirdi Sai worshipped as Dwaraka Maayi and now Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai is adored as SAI Maatha.

### THE SACRED WORD “MAATHA”

The significance of the epithet “Maatha” (mother), the manifold significance attributed to the word Maatha in Bhaarath is fascinating. “Maatha” is an epithet attributed to all that is kind, good, giving and forgiving, sacrifice and universal love.

In Bhaarath Goddess DURGA is worshipped as the The Primordial Energy (Adi Paraasakthy) with Her threefold Amsas(components), Samkalpa Sakthy or will Power adored as Parvathy; Jnaana Sakthy or wisdom adored as Saraswathy and the Kriya Sakthy or Kinetic energy enabling one to do work and earn money worshipped as Lakshmi.

Bhaaratheeyas adore five mothers – Dehamaatha, Gomaatha, Bhoomaatha, Vedamaatha, and Deshamaatha.

### DEHAMAATHA (The physical mother)

Every one should consider it his fore most duty to revere the mother as Divine and serve her. If a man cannot respect and serve the mother who has borne him for nine months, brought him forth into the world, and reared him over the years, whom else is he likely to respect? Maternal love is akin to that of the creator who projects and protects this infinite Cosmos, in count less ways.

### GOMAATHA

The cow converts its own blood into nourishing milk for man to sustain his body. The cow is another example of the Divine as mother-noted for self less love.

### BHOOMAATHA

Like the Divine, the earth bears man in it’s bosom and takes care of him in many ways and confers on him many facilities to live comfortably in the world. Hence earth is an embodiment of Divne as mother.

### VEDAMAATHA

Like the mother Divine, Vedamaatha lays down guide lines for the conduct of life of man here and here after. Vedamaatha reveals to the man the aim and purpose of life and teaches him, how to realise the goal of life.

### DESHAMAATHA

One’s native country that gives protection, care, love, rights and chances to serve and elevate one self. Our Mother land Bhaarath is worshipped as Mother, Hence we sing: Vandemaatharam. Bhaarath Maatha is hailed as Hymavathy in the North, as the Vindhyavasini in the middle region and kanyakumari in the South. “Mother and mother country have to be revered equally

according to our scriptures. You honour the mother by obeying her and fulfilling her wishes. You honour the mother country by paying heed to the age long traditions and hoary ideals that have stood the test of time.

### **Purpose of Of Devi Worship**

The Navaratri festival has been divided into 3 parts. The first 3 days are dedicated to the worship of Durga Mata – The purpose of Devi worship is to develop one's will power.

'Ichcha- Shakti' (the Will Power) arises from thoughts. This 'Ichcha-Shakti' is the source of several other potencies like intellectual power, the discriminating capacity and others. To develop this 'Ichcha-Shakti'

(Will Power), one has to worship Devi. This calls for the cultivation of renunciation or detachment. For instance, if one has a desire for various drinks, he can bring the desire under control by giving up, to begin with, the desire for some of them. Thereby the Will Power (Ichcha-Shakti) is developed, and in due course, it becomes easier to give up other desires. In Vedantic parlance, this is described as 'Vairaagya' (renouncing all attachments). Vairaagya is not abandonment of hearth and home and retiring to a forest. It means developing godly thoughts and reducing worldly feelings. It is when this balanced development takes place that one acquires control over the powers of nature (Praakrita Shakti). When these powers are got, the mental power in a person increases.

This Divine melody with uniform light  
Spreads over the whole world.

It disseminates the wisdom,  
That inspires the brave.

And with this melody,  
The pious devotees expand,  
Their field of knowledge.

- Rig Veda,

Listen to the melodious music of the divine Poet  
He plays upon the flute of love  
The notes soar to high heaven  
And reach the distant stars  
And dance on the raging waves of the sea.

The earth, the sea the sky, the stars  
Are woven together by the soft strains  
Of the Divine music.

Its vibrations echo  
Through the corridors of time  
In endless canopy of the sky.

- Sama Veda

# World Peace – Starts with YOU

- Stephen Cotton

**This is my simple religion. There is no need for temples; no need for complicated philosophy. Our own brain, our own heart is our temple; the philosophy is kindness.**

- Dalai Lama

**S**ince my childhood there have been many discussions in my family and society about world peace. But I keep asking myself - Is world peace possible?

Every day a tragic event occurs somewhere in the world – be it a natural disaster or violence perpetrated by human beings – after these tragedies people gather to pray for peace. Praying for peace is positive and a much need response to these tragic events. I believe that prayer is a powerful tool. Even with the prayers for peace, there is still violence and tragedy in the world:

“Now there are plenty of people and they pray for peace... But if praying were enough it would have come to be” – Jewel - Lyrics from the song “Life Uncommon”

I tend to agree with the lyrics of “Life Uncommon”; if praying were enough, then world peace would already be a reality today. By no means am I discounting the importance of prayer and reflection – especially after such tragic events, but the reality is tragedy or violence will happen again.

So this got me thinking - if prayer alone is not enough – then what else can we do to make world peace possible? Some people will tell you that world peace is not possible – that human beings will always have conflict and conflict will lead to violence and wars.

In my search for an answer, serendipitously I was invited by a friend to go see the Dalai Lama. At the end of his talk he opened up the forum for questions and one of the audience members ask him – is world peace possible – he immediately shot back with “No – world peace is not possible”. The audience members weren't sure if they should laugh or be in shock. This esteemed spiritual leader had just stated that world peace isn't possible.

After a short pause, with the room silent, the Dalai

Lama continued the dialoged on world peace – focusing on compassion, or as the Dalai Lama humanizes it as – warm-heartedness and kindness to all beings.

I sat and listened to what he said and that day I went away thinking about world peace and the importance of compassion. Taking the Dalai Lama's ideas on peace and compassion – I combined them with my own non-religious views/ideas and was compelled to share this with as many people as possible.

**The view I have now is – World peace, starts with you.**

Firstly I think it is important to recognize that in the current world – world peace is not possible. If we give this statement weight, then it leads us to ask why. When we ask why, then we can start to ask what; what is lacking, what is needed to make world peace a reality?

Before we can answer this, it is also important to ask ourselves what the opposite of peace is. I think if you ask 100 people then you will probably receive 100 different answers. And this is the challenge because everyone has a slightly different view of what peace is and what the opposite of peace is. This question has puzzled me for many years – but I have found a thread which I think links most ideas on peace and the reasons for the lack of peace.

At the core of every non-peaceful situation is conflict – internal and external conflict – conflict being - when two actions or two opinions do not meet in harmony – they are opposing each other and are in conflict. Where there is conflict there is the absence of peace.

So this got me thinking – can we deal with conflict – internal and external – and have a presence of peace? Is this possible?

Most conflicts in the world start with two opposing forces that fight it out for dominance. One wins and the other is defeated. This occurs even within families, villages, communities and within countries and between countries. The ultimate exemplification of conflict is war between rival military forces - one vying for dominance over the other. But as history has shown us, this never really resolves the conflict and such deep rooted conflicts can carry on for generations and sometimes centuries.

**Therefore my idea of world peace is that we focus on conflict, how we deal with conflict and it all starts with you – the individual.**

### Conflict and the self

To understand conflict we must first look to our inner feelings – so I have a few stories to help us understand:

When you see someone you don't like – what do you feel inside? Even if you are a very controlled person and can present a happy face, even exchange polite and pleasant words with the someone you don't like – is your first feeling truly happiness in your heart? Most people would answer “no”.

How about when the person you don't like, is so far away that they cannot hear or see you. Do you then let your true feelings come to the surface?

The point I want to make, is that when confronted with something we don't like - conflict occurs and the conflict started from within you. The other person – you may dislike for many reasons – all of the reasons can be true and reasonable - but is it your choice to express a negative emotion – or could you express something different – maybe even something positive?

For most people the act of questioning their emotions is not natural – we feel an emotion and then the emotion affects the mind and then puts the body in-motion.

### Emotion → Body In-motion

When the emotion is strong enough it can drive us, overwhelm us, transforming into an action complimentary to the emotion, so the emotion of anger results in a physical expression of anger.

So why is it so difficult to stop strong emotions

from driving us to act, even overwhelm us, especially the more destructive emotions like hate, jealousy and anger?

How can we gain control of this emotional cycle and transform these strong emotions into something positive; something that will help bring about peace?

I would like to propose that we can create peace, but it requires training, conscious reflection and the intent to create a positive effect in the world.

I believe that to bring about positive change in our emotional cycle we must first develop our warm-heart and kindness muscles. This is an emotional muscle and it can be developed as you would a physical muscle in the body.

I believe that our thoughts and emotions reveal our heart or soul's intent. So let's be proactive! Instead of waiting for emotions and thoughts to erupt – then struggling to control them – how about we purposefully create positive, warmhearted and kind thoughts and emotions? By doing this we can develop, exercise and strengthen our warm-heart and kindness muscles. Furthermore I believe that by doing this we can imprint on our mind, heart and soul the desire, the intent, to be warm-hearted and kind.

Then the intent of warm-heartedness and kindness will grow stronger and our ability to control and transform those strong and negative emotions becomes possible. Why? Because, even if your first emotion is negative, the warm-heart and kindness exercises you do daily will naturally come into play, just as the muscles in the body naturally work to support the body when a force is placed against it.

So what kind of exercises can help to develop your warm-heart and kindness?

The essence of any exercise must be something real – not just a thought in your head or a privately stated mantra/prayer. The goal is to develop kindness and warm-heartedness and it starts with the self, and then we move the focus to your immediate family, friends and finally out into the community.

**The best way to develop kindness and a warm-heart is to do something for someone else.** It may seem strange but we begin with ourselves – if you are feeling tired or depressed you will have no energy to do things for others – so organise with your boss at work and your family to have a day off from everything and go to a spa or go sit in nature. Once

you are recharged then think about doing little things for your children, siblings, parents and your partner.

It helps to write down each person's name and under their name, write down all the things you like about that person; then under this write down something you can do for them that would make them happy. It may take some time to compile this list – you may have to discreetly ask each person questions - to find out what makes them happy.

In the beginning – set aside one day a month to carry out these small things for each person. Over time, as your kindness and warm-heart muscles strengthen, you may find it easier, such that you can do this exercise once a week or eventually daily.

This will be the start towards world peace... created a layer at a time... World peace starts with you and vibrates outwards in waves - like a small pebble dropped in still water; the energy ripples outwards... Let your ripples be kindness and warm-heartedness.

Anger comes from temper inside and one who yields to this bout of emotion is bound to suffer

Dr. Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, had a very good servant by name Rathna who was exceptionally faithful and served him for a long time to the satisfaction of his master.

“One day he was asked to clean his room. Rajendra Prasad in one of his books had kept a pen given to him by Mahatma Gandhi. When the servant was cleaning the table the book fell down and the nib broke. He became nervous but told his master the truth begging his pardon for his mistake. On hearing this, Rajendra Prasad shouted at him in rage and asked him to get out and not to show his face again as the pen he had broken was a highly valuable gift from the Mahatma. Then the servant pleaded that he could not survive without him and sought his forgiveness. But Rajendra Prasad was in no mood to listen to him and went out bidding his servant to get out of his sight.”

During the night, Rajendra Prasad could not sleep as the instance of him driving away his servant was haunting him. When he awoke next morning he missed his usual morning coffee, which Rathna would usually serve him.

He reflected over his behavior and felt sorry for having sent off such a faithful servant for no big fault. He realized that it was his own mistake to have kept the pen carelessly in a book instead of keeping it in a safe place.

He sent word to Rathna and took him back seeking his pardon saying ‘Rathna, you are a good boy. It was my mistake to have kept the pen in the book. Please excuse me for my rash action’. He asked him to continue to serve till the end of his life.

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# Remembrance

- Sakuntala Panda, Translated by: Neha Bagchi

The final brushstroke perfectly executed, he stepped back from his easel and critically eyed his work. Often, he found it necessary to redo a particular painting until it reflected his chosen theme to perfection. Now as he surveyed the pleasant garden scene on his canvas, he found apparently nothing wrong. Yet he frowned. Surely, something must be imperfect. But no, everything seemed just right.

He sank into the nearby couch, his eyes still fixed upon the painting. Something ... something ... he racked his brain ... ah, of course! That was it!

Beaming, he dipped his brush in paint and made just a single addition to the painting. Yes ... perfect. The satisfaction on his face was unmistakable.

A gentle smile suffused his face as he laid down his brush. Inhaling deeply the fresh air, he stepped to the picture window behind the easel and looked out into the enchanting garden which his parents had so lovingly created and which he strove so diligently to maintain. His painting was an immaculate image of his garden, which he dearly loved. It was so huge, so luxuriant – but then, wasn't everything in his life like that?

Both his parents were from eminent families, which could be traced to royalty. They owned land and wealth in abundance. They were well-known social figures too. And it was from them that he had inherited everything – his wealth, this lovely house, his social status, even his personality and looks. Everything.

He wondered. Wasn't anything his own? Well, perhaps it was only his amazing talent. Although his parents were both highly accomplished in many ways, neither could claim to be adept at painting. But look at him! He became an established artist in his teens.

Yet success and wealth had not gone to his head. No, egocentricity was not a word you would associate with Samaresh Shastri. His was a strong personality, characterized by strict discipline, determination and depth.

Dedicated to any cause he undertook, he was one of the most respected persons in the city. He firmly adhered to his personal credo and believed that actions spoke louder than words. He always used to say to himself, 'I shall listen to the voice of my conscience and



I shall act accordingly.'

And looking back, he found that he had always lived up to his values.

He was a happy man. Beauty surrounded him, and that was the way he liked it. As he stood lost in his reflections, time fell away.

Another time ...

He was in the same ground floor room overlooking the garden, painting a seaside sunset. The 'sea' just completed, he was about to start on the 'sky' when from afar, he heard the faint sounds of an excited crowd. The noise grew louder; the crowd was obviously headed this

way.

Samaresh hurried over to the window and looked out. In the distance, he could make out thirty to forty people running and shouting. Ahead of them by a good ten to twelve feet was a – good God! – It was a young girl! Even as he watched, she suddenly put on a burst of speed, as if in desperation. On reaching his gate, she feverishly undid the latch, ran inside and hid among the bushes in the garden. She had chosen a large leafy shrub right under the window where Samaresh was standing. Perhaps she sensed someone watching her: she looked up.

Samaresh was startled. She was so beautiful! The afternoon sun fell onto her face and lit her doe-brown eyes, reminding Samaresh of an exquisite diamond sparkling in the light. Perhaps he would have spoken something to her, but just then he noticed that the mob was fast approaching the house. He reached his gate and hastily replaced the latch on his gate. Then he turned and pretended to be admiring his roses. He was standing at the far end of the garden when the mob reached his gate.

Pretending to be astounded and irritated, Samaresh approached the crowd at his gate. From the furious babble he could just make out cries of – ‘Here! This is where she went! Surely, she is here, hiding!’

From the centre of the mob a middle-aged lady with a gaunt face stepped forward.

‘Babu,’ she said pleadingly, ‘Babu, please ... my niece ... I brought her from my native village to show the city ... She got lost, Babu, in a busy market. How will I show my face to my sister and brother-in-law if I don’t find her?’ The woman began to moan, ‘oh Babu, please. Please help me. Where is she?’

Samaresh didn’t know what to say. Before he could even think of anything, a man vociferously jumped into the conversation telling Samaresh not to believe the lady.

‘Don’t believe her, Sir!’ the man in the gaudy shawl strode to the front. ‘She owns a brothel. She wanted to use the girl for immoral purposes. Poor innocent child!’ The man’s face softened as he sadly continued, ‘She ran away, Sir. The poor innocent child! I found her leaning against a tree and weeping.’ He shook his head as though in immeasurable grief. ‘Just then, this lady came up and the girl ran for her life. Poor girl!’

Something in the man’s story sounded odd to

Samaresh. But before he could say something, the lady with the gaunt face screeched – ‘Liar!’

Her anger and hissing words were directed at the man with the kitschy shawl. ‘Liar! You wanted to put the girl in a school? College? You wanted to educate her? Educate? Ha! I know better.’ Her eyes flashed. The tears and piteous expression had evaporated. ‘I knew. You made her work as a maid by day. By night, you exploited her! And at your age! Why, you are old enough to be her father! Wicked man! May evil haunt you forever! When she could bear it no more, she ran away. I saw her and consoled her! Tried to allay her fear! Why do you lie, you despicable wretch?’ She spat venomously at his feet. The niece angle was forgotten.

‘Don’t listen to her, Sir.’ The agitated man shouted. ‘She is a shameless woman. A shameless liar in a shameless business. She is a despicable slut.’ A string of verbal abuse followed.

‘How dare you insult me?’ The livid woman shrieked. ‘If I weren’t in this business, could your wife, sister or daughter walk on the streets? I am serving the society, you ignorant fool!’ She continued to glare as she repeated, ‘If not for my business, your womenfolk would be victims of lust and lechery! Thanks to my business, they are safe! What would happen to your society, had it not been for my profession?’ She emphasized her words by spitting again.

Samaresh was getting rather confused. The stories continued to change; the allegations becoming murkier. As he was trying to make sense out of nothing, a young man in a kurta materialized out of nowhere – a jute bag was slung over his shoulder, he had a note pad in one hand and a pen in the other. Samaresh groaned inwardly.

The man said with an eager expression on his face. ‘Sebati Mausī, you are right. Truly, you are a great woman! You really help the society. You really are ... really are a ... a Goddess.’ The man’s glib words finally pacified the livid woman. Now he turned to Samaresh.

‘Sir, now this girl in question. I really am looking for her. You see, I saw her sitting on a bench in the park by the river.’ He gestured vaguely in the general direction of the river. ‘I talked to her for a good ten minutes at length, asking her questions. But Sir, ...’ he turned his palms towards heaven in despair.

Samaresh could feel his irritation mounting.

The young man continued, ‘She sat mute, without

uttering a single word. There was a distant expression on her face that did not waver. I wonder what happened ... She would make such an interesting story for my newspaper. You see, I write a column. And I have an idea for a story on this girl. That is why I am looking for the girl. It is so important for me to find ...'

'Enough!' Samaresh exploded. 'I have had quite enough of this rubbish! You call yourself a columnist! You are nothing, but a gossipmonger, trying to fabricate stories or take advantage of helpless situations. Get the hell out of here, before I call the police. There is no girl here. I live alone.'

Already the crowd had begun to fade away and now startled by Samaresh's outburst, the remaining few people dispersed. The man in a gaudy shawl left meekly, while the journalist left in a huff. The gaunt-faced woman, however, bellowed some more before retracting her steps and letting loose a filthy string of verbal abuse.

Samaresh sighed and approached the bushes. 'Well,' he remarked casually, 'that was a nasty bit of

business. I am sorry that it took so long. You must be uncomfortable in the cramped position.' He looked into her frightened, childlike eyes. 'It is safe now. You can come out.' He held his hand out for her.

Samaresh smiled, remembering. As he looked out, he saw his wife Nisha, in the garden. She caught his eyes and waved. Samaresh waved back. Turning away from the window, he returned to the couch and settled in it.

Nisha came in just then and said with a smile, 'you look exhausted. Can I get you a cup of coffee?'

Samaresh continued to smile and focused his eyes on his painting. Nisha followed his gaze. The light pastel shades, the flowers, the grass and the bushes ...

'Oh,' Nisha exclaimed. She pointed to the painting, where a girl lay crouched among the bushes. 'You have painted me!' Her husband's smile was now reflected on her lips.

**Strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. The Upanishads are a great reservoir of strength. They call with trumpet voice upon all races, all creeds, all sects to stand on their feet and be free. Freedom, physical, mental, spiritual freedom is the watchwords of the Upanishads.**

**- Swami Vivekananda**

# Arranging the Arranged Marriage

- Sougata Mallik

**T**ravelling to India in the sultry, scorching, summer months doesn't really enliven spirits. The humid discomfort of roving, appetizing, socializing – all makes it feel *'wish I had come here at a different time.'* But if it ever gets punctuated with a diverse flavour of novelty, extravaganza, bonanza of social affair, it makes the most memorable trip ever done.

I visited India after rather a few years. So landing home would be quite exciting, that I had guessed. But never anticipated that I would be invited to a family wedding right at Netaji Subhash International Airport! Times have changed, speed has increased in people's life, and value of moment holds a different connotation now. My extended family members coming to know that I was reaching airport on a certain date and time, had calculated the distance of airport from their house, suitability of time for them when I was arriving, saving time on a further drive to where I would be staying etc. etc.... I found them waiting at the "Arrival" area with a wedding card in their hand! Meeting old folks is always a pleasure. But the marvel of such modernization, innovativeness empowered me. They had optimized time and distance, compressed social rules, saturated decorum, all at once. I accepted their invitation instantly. The thought of meeting cousins, uncles, aunts, frolicking in nostalgia and joy foresaw happiness for me. But the real fun part was yet to reveal!

Babu, my cousin and the groom to-be, was like every other young man. He tried hard and got into appropriate studies that will reap benefits in future. He held his dreams and industriously travelled hours to the coaching class at the other end of the city. Babu earned an excruciatingly tedious, expensive degree and as a result a job with attractive income per annum. He was also like many other young men who dreamt of colourful love story. He had anticipated a wonderful girl whom he would meet, follow a whirlwind path of pleasant romance, then settle in to a life of love and comfort. But fate turned him the other way and he remained single yet.

Babu in the meantime had pressed himself to the advanced age perimeter and was 27 years old. Few years since embarking on the desirable job, he has been getting the 'triumphant' witticism from members in the family, random neighbours, almost everyone that he would come across. Along with it came the constant nagging that he was yet in single status. It seemed his education, vocation would all become useless if not culminated in marriage right away. His trips abroad on

business, the car that he purchased, the nice apartment that he had booked was enough to convince everybody, that he will surpass the test in flying colours before potential alliances. Family convinced him that it was time to look for the right bride. And, so they went in his new car - to houses after houses looking for the perfect match. Arrangement was easy, but arranged marriage was not so easy. Girls after girls sought – but the right match was still at end of the tunnel. Babu didn't like some, and some didn't like him!

The family became astoundingly active. Numerous telephone calls, tea-table conferences followed. Newspaper ads multiplied, visits to prospective girls' houses increased. Almost a year passed but the net result was nought. Frowns, vexation, bewilderment became the family's signature. Needless to mention, that Babu wasn't spared of the effect. He would return home from work, either to be presented with story of a marriage alliance or to be informed that such and such person got married recently. What was Babu's fault – did he fail an exam, did he get fired from job, did he run into debt? No – none of those. He did not get married yet!

This is when Aruna pishi stepped in. She is the aunt whom we all know ever since memory can recall. A 4 ft-10 inches, round female had enough power and reach to attain everything that went on around her. Aruna pishi scheduled a visit to the Jyotishi. She convinced all about his superiority, as this retired Income Tax professional chose jyotish by his choice and devotion. He is supposedly famous, that his second profession earns him almost as much as his previous one did. So he has to be good. According to Aruna pishi, he is not only a fortune-teller, but also a fortune-fixer. So the family set out on a Sunday, towards the Jyotishi's destination 60 km away from city. Babu was dragged too. He was previously groomed and lectured on the reason of his woes being the stars and planets in the wrong place.

Jyotishi studied Babu's birth date and time and made un-understandable calculations on his page. The family sat in silence, waiting for the verdict to be given. Jyotishi nodded his head in anguish. A star's placement in the cosmic universe during the time of Babu's birth is playing havoc with his marital prospects. The remedies suggested were an intricate puja to be arranged, every Monday morning fasting for Babu, offering rice on the north-east side of temple and a preferable non-vegetarian Fridays for him. The whole family absorbed Jyotishi's predictions, remedies. Few birth charts of prospective girls were also presented to him. Jyotishi

spoke about these girls' nature, mannerisms, probable profession and their non-compatibility with Babu's chart.

Babu eyed on the photograph of a girl that lay amongst all others. He skimmed through the description mentioned. She was in IT and employed in the city. Babu craftily noted her name, name of company on his mobile phone. That very night he looked her up on LinkedIn, requested friend's status on Facebook, added her on Google chat. She accepted. While the family was chalking a new route on bride-hunt project, Babu was communicating and corresponding with this girl daily. Forgetting the Friday non-vegetarian day, they met for dinners in good restaurants.

All going well, the couple decided to announce their association. The meetings with each other's families were at ease, till the final question popped from the girl's side asking for Babu's date and time of birth. Babu falsified his birthday! Horoscopes were matched and results came back with astounding effect – it was mentioned as 'jotuk meel', in other words a very compatible union! Both families were overjoyed.

But Babu became restless. A small counterfeit of

bending birth date was getting on to him heavily. He liked the girl, didn't want to lose her, but also didn't want to start a life on lies. One cloudy Friday evening, Babu confessed about his forged birth date and how prediction was for mismatched marriage. The girl's eyes bulged with incredulity, her jaw dropped in amazement. 'What!' came out as a shock from her. She looked at him ineptly. Babu was confounded, astounded, and ashamed all at once. He was about to bid his heavy, final goodbye to her - when the girl passed the plate of chicken kebabs to him. She had calmed down and a very wry smile overhauled her face. Sipping on lassi, one of the items famous in the restaurant, she changed her wry smile into impish laughter. Babu looked at her, not knowing what to say or what to do. She as well looked at him, as though piercing into his mind. The girl admitted to rigging her birth date too!

So the marriage preparation commenced. It was a match that was indeed bound by chance, preordained by juncture! As I write this article, Babu and Priya are on their new life, happy and comfortable with each other. They are busy setting up a fresh household in their own distinctive way!

## Hindu marriage eternal bond

According to the vedas, a marriage is a union between two bodies, two minds, two hearts, and two spirits or souls that lovingly resolve to live together. As per Hindu tradition, a marriage is an irrevocable, pure and religious relationship. Through marriage, two individuals sacrifice their independent identities to form a united family where both benefit each other through their abilities and emotional support, just as two wheels carry a vehicle forward with ease. Marriage is a union of two souls. Though Physical relationship is an essential part of it, but deep emotional bond is equally important that takes the couple towards spiritual bonding.

# Aj noi gungun gunjan preme... certainly not the day for dizzy love...

- Piali Bose

**L**ove is such a beautiful feeling.. Flowers, bees, azure sky, rhythmic rains, everything seems beautiful or everything beautiful seems like love. When in love, it is about me, you, you and me. The world outside, ceases to exist as we are engrossed in discovering the world within us, individuals. It is about a happy me and the happiness that pervades thoughts.

Love is also about dejection, of heartaches, misunderstandings and small feelings of loneliness. Dejection, as the well conjured world falling apart in front of our eyes. The dreams being shattered and the blissful feeling of sublime facing the harsh reality of separation. Our intricate involvement in our small privy world of two makes wary to the thoughts of the "Others" and our sadness seems to be the ultimate.

It is then time to understand:

*"Aar noi nisfol krondon,  
shudhu nijer sarther bondhon,  
khule dao janala ashuk..  
sara bissher bedonar spandan"*

**Let no more be wasteful tears  
Let no more the bindings of selfishness  
Open up the windows wide  
Let the pain of the world subside you**

Small individual pain becomes belittled against the greater pain of the 'others' who are not the privileged few. Pain becomes a luxury for those who live with it for those for whom it is a way of life. Can we not share their way of life and think of us not as individuals for one amongst humanity?

*Ebar ami amar theke amake baad diye onek kichu jibone jog dilam*

*Choto joto apon chilo bahir kore diye, bhuban ta re apon kore nilam..*

*shobar horoshe hanshi bedone kandi,  
bandhon priyo re muktir jale bandhi,  
Shobii haraye abar shobii kichu je pelam*

**I negated the I in me and added myself a new life  
Ousting the smallness I embraced a whole wide world**

**My happiness is collective and so is my pain  
I free myself from the bindings of "me"  
I lose much to gain all**

Simple beliefs and simple choices have been professed and propagated from time immemorial.

Some have given these thoughts lofty names and ideals while some have spread these simple messages through the by lanes of history by mere practice in speech and music. Some have accepted it as their religion while some have incorporated it into their daily rituals. The ultimate truth of humanity is in its harmony. Harmony with individuals and nature in its entirety. The moment the scale tilts, the peaceful coexistence is endangered. Man is supreme creation and has supreme powers. His ability goes beyond the pettiness and lowliness of life. The ultimate goal therefore is to discover the man in oneself and realize one's potential.

*Apon hote bahir hoye baire danra buker majhe  
biswaloker pabi sara*

Your heart will resonate with the reverberation of the entire humanity once the I in you is set free.

*Prem gali ati sankari, tamein dou na samai  
Jab mein tha tab hari nahi, ab hari hai mein  
naahi*

**The path of love is very narrow, two cannot pass alongside.**

**When I is there then God isn't and when God is there I am not**

Love ,here again is love for Humankind(which is ultimate Godliness). *When one seeks true love with one's ego and selfishness (the I within) one cannot reach Him whilst when one discards the I, God appears.*

The greatest truth of life remains embedded in the simple things of life. It is not a herculean effort to think beyond the ordinary and nor does one have to aspire for enlightenment each day. One thought aside each day, can build up a passage of thoughtful ideas. One single line of a very popular song can take a lifetime to be deciphered or can become a beacon of life in an instant. It is in us to challenge ourselves to find the truth in the mundane. It is in ourselves to find the true "US" in the mundane .It is in ourselves to search for true love (divinity) in the mundane.

Lennon sang "Imagine" and in this strife stricken world of today collective imagination of togetherness of love, of kindness is more than imperative. Lennon also said, *"you may I am a dreamer, but I'm not the only one. I hope someday you will join us and the world will*

*Anjali*

*live as one*". He did not speak of a Utopian dream but a dream that could be brought to reality. In saying that "I am not the only one, he gave the clarion call to "US" to rise like a phoenix from hopelessness and pain to a new world of harmonious coexistence.

*Kar ghore prodeep joleni  
Kar bachaar onno meleni  
Kar nei ashroy Borshar  
Din kate bhaggyer bhorsae  
Tumi how ekjon tader ii Kandhe a tar bhar tule*

*noi..*

*Aj Noi gun gun gunjan preme...*

**Find an unlit home,  
Find an unfed child,  
Or a man without a shelter, with fate as his sole  
possession..**

**Let you be one of them and shoulder his pain..  
This certainly not a day for crooning love...  
Not certainly a day for dizzy love...**

*Songs..*

Aj noi gun gun gunjon preme..Salil Choudhury  
Ebar ami amar Hote make Baad diye..Salil Choudhury  
Apon Hote bahir hoye baire danra-Rabindranath Tagore  
Imagine-John Lennon

*Doha-*

**Prem gali ati sankari, tamein dou na samai-Sant Kabir**

## LESSON IN THRIFT

With the changing times, the story 'Lesson in Thrift' has become very apt to the present society. This story from Mahabharata surpasses the limits of space and time. During the ancient times, the Pandavas attained power after defeating the Kauravas in a battle. Yudhishtira was the eldest Pandava and was accordingly crowned the King.

Yudhishtira was thoughtful and worried about certain parts of his kingdom that had been affected by drought just before the war had begun. The Kauravas were probably busy plotting against their cousins and preparing for war and thus did not pay proper attention to the situation. They also neglected taking any remedial measures that were necessary at that time. Eventually, the drought resulted in a disastrous famine in some remote parts of the kingdom. The situation was grave, as thousands of people died of starvation and the death toll kept rising with every passing day.

The king planned to help his subjects to recover at least part of their wealth and soon sent relief supplies to the province. Unfortunately, there was no surplus food anywhere else in the kingdom. The drought did not spare the crops too. Yudhishtira was in a dilemma and did not know what to do to save his kingdom.

He met a hermit and requested him for advice on how to overcome the situation. After thinking over the problem, the sage replied that there was only one way to solve the problem right away. He said that Kubera or the Lord of Wealth had a secret granary hidden deep into the Himalayas. He asked the king to approach Lord Kubera and explain to him the grave situation. The Lord would definitely spare some food-grain for the needy subjects once he was convinced of the disaster. The sage told King Yudhishtira the exact location of the secret granary.

*Continued to page 49...*

# Memories

- Suparna Bose

Suchitra opened her eyes. The strains of Suchitra Mitra's "*Krishnakali, ami taarei boli*" were still wafting through the window. Her new neighbors were clearly Tagore lovers, unlike most youngsters nowadays, she thought. Even Tito and Bonny, who would turn fifty next year, did not listen to Rabindrasangeet. "*Ki je tumi oi pyan pyane gaangulo shono, Ma, bujhi na* (Ma, I don't know why you listen to those whining songs)", Bonny would say. Tito never said much, he would just grunt and go back to his heavy metal sounds, rocking the house with their thump-thump-thump, dum-dum-dum! Thank God, they never had to live in a flat. They had the huge two-storied house at Aston Row, so near Lansdowne Market and St. Lawrence School.

Not any more, though. She sighed and turned to her side. Nowadays, even turning to her side could make a shaft of pain shoot through her back. Old age was catching up with her. In a way, she was glad of the small confines of this flat. She did not have to walk up and down, up and down, cleaning each nook and cranny, going up to the *thakur-ghar* on the terrace early in the morning, cleaning every deity meticulously and changing their clothes. They were like her dolls. But then, in her childhood, she had never played with dolls...instead, she used to run around the fields with Moni, climb the nice mango tree in their spacious yard in Dhaka.... "*Didiiiiiii...ebar chhere deyyy...* (Sister, leave it now...)" and the kite used to fly high, high, up in the sky. Even, the sky looked a brighter blue there, a darker shade of grey when the thunder rumbled down and the lightning hit the coconut tree in the yard, and a pinker shade of pink, as dusk rolled into evening and they came back home, unwillingly...

She had turned to the idols, the day when Moni never came back. Her mother-in-law had glanced at her once, when she had hovered around the door, her face numb in shock and had beckoned, "*Esho ma, esho, bosho ekhane...nao, tumi aaj Gopaal ke chaan koraa* (Come in, dear, sit here...you should give Gopaal his bath today)". Not just Gopaal, she had taken them up, one by one, Lakshmi, Saraswati, Radha and Krishna, cleaning them vigorously until the brass shone like gold. She did that still, every morning... that was supposed to lessen her pain...Bonny, her elder son, the psychiatrist or was it the counselor...who said that? Every movement, up and down, round and round the arm, with the brasso, would help. Lies...all lies...why did she still feel the pain now...after years had passed...twenty years...twenty, long years without her beloved

younger brother...why?

Why, today, of all days? Then she remembered...of course, it was that song, that "Krishnakali" song...could she go and ask them not to play the song? That would be too much...she sighed. Trrrring, trrrring...oh, the phone was ringing again. "Dipu, Dipu, where are you? You are never there when the phone rings. Why does *Barda* pay you thousands of rupees, so that you can't even give me the cordless phone, so that I can talk to people when they want to talk to me", she was shouting now. "Now, *Mashima*, don't shout...your blood pressure will shoot up again, then it will be only me to take you to the hospital, like last time...*Barda to taka diyai khalash*, he just pays the money, the responsibility is all mine", Dipu countered, with a frown. "Why so cranky so early in the morning? Here, take the phone, it is your beloved younger son from Pune."

Tito was not pleased to overhear snatches of the conversation. "This is what I don't like about that young fellow, he's too full of himself and you and Dada just spoil him. Just because he knows that you are so dependent on him. Ma, I have told you so many times, don't stay there alone. Leave Kolkata and come and stay with me here. The weather is nice, not too hot, not too cold and my bungalow is big enough for us both. I have a beautiful garden, you love gardening, don't you?" "I am not alone here, Tito, Dipu is here with me all the time. Don't talk to me in that tone. Is this what your Baba and I taught you...you and Bonny..." she couldn't say any more, her voice was choking. She gulped and kept quiet. Tito knew that something was wrong. "What, Ma, what happened? Did Bonny say anything? Oh, I understand, it must be because of today." "Why today, why do you say so, Tito?" she was asking now, she could not remember why today was important to Tito, how could he know that the Krishnakali song had awakened the memories of her childhood...

"Ma, it's the day of Baba's birthday", said the voice of Tito...who was Baba...why did this name not register in her mind...of course, Baba was there...in her memories, laughing as she and Moni ran up the path leading to the door to the drawing-room, taking them up by turns and swinging them high in the air, while one squealed in delight and one in anticipation...

"Ma...are you there...talk to me...Ma, are you there?" the voice of Tito continued, impatience registering now. She turned on her other side and the handset slid on to the bed. Looking out of the window, she could see the sky and the grey clouds billowing in the horizon. Funny, how the skies, clouds and the grass

*Anjali*

never changed...

...The sky was alternately blue, smoky grey and dark grey, the clouds white as the pristine chalk she used to write on the slate at home when she was a child. The grass was green, different shades of green, green as the *kalmi* leaves that grew in the pond, green as the newly washed leaves on the first day of the monsoons, green as the new leaves that grew on the *neem* tree in their courtyard. There was grass, here, too, in the manicured lawn downstairs, in neat squares, carefully tended by the team of gardeners, watered and fed, fed and watered. She knew them each by their names, just like she knew the ones back in Rajpur. The abode of the kings, her father used to say laughingly. Poor Baba, he could never fathom the concept of Partition...enemy property...who was the enemy...he wondered and wasted away...

"See, Mashima, you just disconnected the phone! How many times did I tell you, don't just start dreaming while you are on the phone – talk to *Chhorda* – see, now I have to call him and explain everything – then I will again have to explain the phone bill to *Barda* – I'm just caught between the two brothers...hello, *Chhorda*, sorry about that! You know how Mashima just wonders off sometimes..." Deepu's petulant, scolding tone changed into a placatory one, as he walks to the verandah.

Sulata thought, that in his own way, Deepu really understood her more than Bonny and Tito, her two

successful sons, her 'jewels', as their father Prashanta used to fondly say...Prashanta...wait, where did this name come from... "He seems like a good man, Ma, comes from a good family, the only son, very good-natured," her father was saying, "He and his mother saw you at Mr. Sen's eldest daughter's wedding, they liked you very much and are coming to see you this afternoon"...she was dressed in a mustard colored silk saree...sitting demurely on the corner of the divan... the red and blue satin finish bedcover had been put on the divan once again...she was then dressed in red brocade...Moni's mischievous eyes and broad grin as she clutched at his neck and shoulder, tottering on the *piri*... the night of her marriage... the smell of the jasmine and the tuberose mingling on the sheets... Prashanta's birthday when they all went to Chung Wah... the cry of Bonny, keeping her and Prashanta awake for nights...Bonny taking his first steps, holding Prashanta's hands...three of them at Digha...Tito never cried so much at night...Tito crying when Prashanta swung him high up in the air...Moni squealing when Baba swung him up high...the figures were passing in a blur...the song was still going on... "*Krishnakali, ami taarei boli*..."

She was still lying on her side, when Deepu came back, phone in hand. The song was being played again... *...Krishnakali aami taarei boli*...

*Continued from page 47...*

On hearing the advice Yudhishtira's immediately called his brother Bhima and told him what the sage had said. He appealed to Bhima to leave for the secret granary immediately and meet Kubera. Bhima was neither convinced nor optimistic though, did not argue with his brother; and quietly set off on his mission.

The journey up the Himalayas was stressful and tiring, but Bhima finally located the secret granary. Bhima was just about to enter the granary, when he observed from behind the door an unexpected scene unfolding inside. Lord Kubera was sitting amidst countless sacks of grain-sacks and was monitoring the storage of the stocks. One of the servants pointing to a sack, informed Kubera that there was hardly any grain inside the sack and it was all sand within, and it can be discarded. Lord Kubera asked the servant to bring the sack to him and said he would show where exactly the grain was. Kubera took the sack, emptied it out on the floor, and sat down to sift out grains from the sand. The task was laborious, but slowly, a large pile of grains emerged.

Bhima felt utterly disgusted watching this scene. He thought to himself, "This man who owns more wealth than anyone else in all the three worlds is struggling to save a bagful of grains!" Bhima was assured of Kubera's greed and felt that his brother was wrong to have sent him there expecting a donation from the miser Kubera. He turned back to leave the place, when suddenly Lord Kubera called him in.

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# The Ever Expanding Conglomeration of Bollywood and Hollywood

- Shoubhik Pal

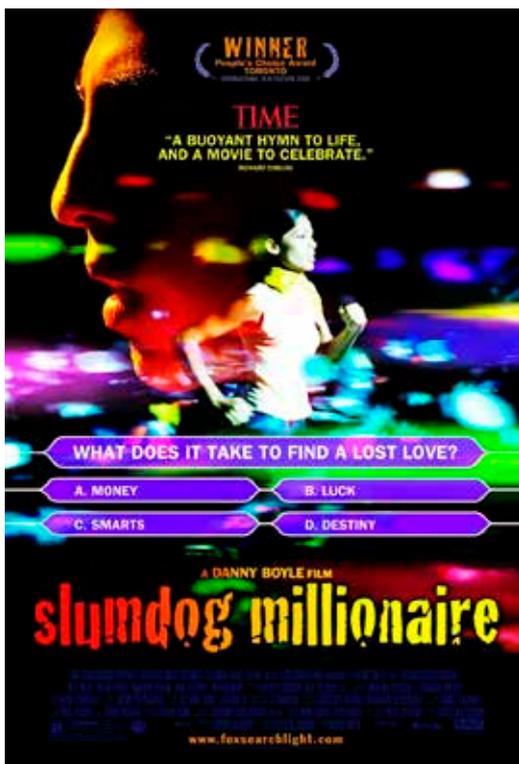
It all gathered pace through Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, who is arguably the first Bollywood actor to be a commercial and bankable figure in Hollywood. Her ethereal looks and competent acting made her the leading lady alongside people like Colin Firth, Steve Martin and Sir Ben Kingsley. It wouldn't be erroneous to state that wherever you go, you find Indians everywhere. Before Aishwarya's meteoric rise, Indian directors like Mira Nair and Gurinder Chadha staked their claim abroad with excellent Indo-centric movies like *Bend It Like Beckham* and *The Namesake*. In fact, *Bend It Like Beckham* launched the career of international superstar Keira Knightley. When Aishwarya's marriage to Abhishek Bachchan happened, she decided to limit her roles in Hollywood to spend more time with her family, and Bollywood was about to lose its influence in the Western parts. This all changed with a man named Danny Boyle and his firecracker of a movie known by all of us. *Slumdog Millionaire* did wonders for the conglomeration of the two industries.

Anil Kapoor joined the cast of the ever-popular show *24*, and was a part of the blockbuster *Mission Impossible 4: Ghost Protocol*. Frieda Pinto became a worldwide celebrity and made movies with renowned directors such as Woody Allen. A.R. Rahman won an Oscar for his virtuoso musical score for *Slumdog Millionaire* and continued the good work by

collaborating with Boyle again, this time providing a haunting, schizophrenic score for *127 Hours*, a movie about a rock climber being stuck with a boulder on top of his arm for a duration of the titular description. *Slumdog Millionaire* not only opened the door for many actors to cross the barrier, more filmmakers from the West began to choose India not only as a filming location (*The Dark Knight Rises*), but also as a theme for the script, an example being the recently released *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*. The trend looks set to continue, with an upcoming movie called *Singularity*, already showcased in this year's Cannes Film Festival. It has household names in both Hollywood and Bollywood, with an ensemble cast of Abhay Deol, Bipasha Basu, Josh Hartnett and Neve Campbell.

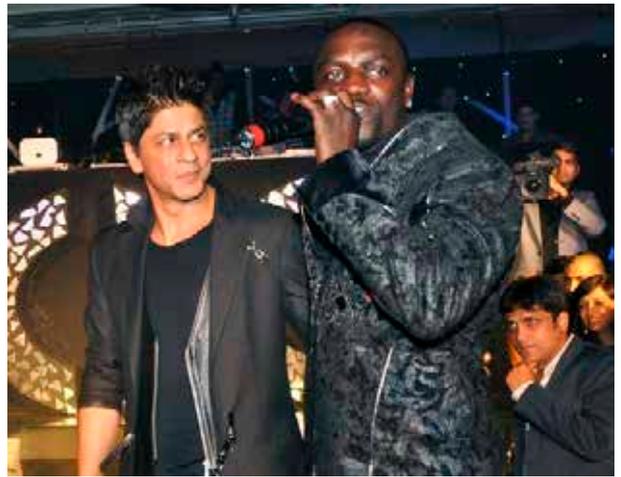
While what I have written so far may sound like a one-way street, in the sense that Indian actors are making the jump to Hollywood, there has also been an opposite effect. Actors such as Brandon Routh, who played the titular character in *Superman Returns*, and Denise Richards (*The World is Not Enough*) played substantial roles in the Bollywood movie *Kambakkht Ishq*. The aforementioned names were actors who used to be superstars but were at a crossroads in their career. This conglomeration of Bollywood and Hollywood has made it easier for these stars to get some work in their belt and their finances in order. This was earlier seen when TV actor of the popular series *Heroes* Ali Larter starred with Salman Khan in the East meets West rom-com *Marigold* (a failed attempt, as it ended up being a flop) Bollywood is now a haven for dwindling actors from the West, and this is a good thing since Bollywood is second only to Hollywood in churning out films and reaching a worldwide audience. In addition, Bollywood movies are also releasing more extensively due to the popularity of them. Shahrukh Khan's recent movie *Ra.One* released in 4000 theatres in the world, a truly gargantuan amount.

The conglomeration is occurring not only through acting, but through other mediums such as music as well. While A.R. Rahman's achievements in the West have been aforementioned, worldwide superstars such as Akon and Kylie Minogue have sung songs for Bollywood films *Ra.One* and *Blue* respectively, and these songs have become sensations in India (the songs are *Chammak Challo* and *Chiggy Wiggy* respectively) Another effect of Bollywood meets Hollywood is a lot of ideas being transferred here, with TV shows such as *American Idol*, *The Moment of Truth*, *Masterchef*, *Big Brother* and *The Bachelor/Bachelorette* finding



Indian versions here in the front of Indian Idol, Sach Ka Saamna, Masterchef India, Bigg Boss. Bollywood also released its first ever raunchy comedy last year with *Delhi Belly*, a good sign but a movie which I personally disliked due to it trying just a bit too hard. Special effects in Bollywood were appalling 10 years or so, but now, looking at special effects in the movie *Ra.One*, helmed by the same team that provided them for the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, things are looking rosy.

Overall, I believe that this conglomeration is just at its infancy, as there are so many ways in which East could meet West further when it comes to entertainment. A new century has heralded a new conglomeration, and the future prospects are salivating.



*Continued from page 49...*

Lord Kubera rushed towards the door to welcome Bhima and took him in. With no choice, Bhima followed him inside. Kubera offered him a comfortable seat within the granary itself. Kubera ordered his servants to bring refreshments for the eminent guest. The warm welcome gladdened Bhima. Yet he hesitated to tell Kubera the purpose of his visit. He felt sure that Kubera would give some excuse to deny his request.

After a small conversation, Kubera asked Bhima the purpose of his visit to his granary. Bhima replied that their kingdom had been affected by drought and there was a terrible famine in the western region. He added that the citizens were starving to death and there was no surplus grain to feed them. He requested Kubera to spare some grain for them from his present stock.

Bhima paused and looked expectantly at Kubera. Kubera neither gave excuses nor hesitated. He immediately called his assistants and ordered them to send emergency supplies to the area at once. He asked a caravan of 500 carts to be assembled and loaded with sacks of grain, and to set off to the land of Yudhishtira immediately.

After some time, Kubera's chief assistant came and informed that the road leading from there to the plains was not suitable to be traversed. At one point of the road, it was so muddy that the loaded carts could slip down; the solution was to bring sand and cover that muddy patch and proceed. Kubera immediately gave orders to throw as much grain as necessary, on that part of the road which needs to be dried and let the carts proceed, as there was no time in hand. The assistant hurried out to carry out his order.

Bhima could not believe what he just heard and stared at Kubera incredulously. Kubera asked him the cause for his astonishment. Bhima was a truthful man. He said that he had seen Kubera toil to recover a few grains that were lost in sand just before entering the granary. Bhima also confessed that he lost respect for Kubera then and thought him to be a greedy and miserly person. However when Kubera readily came forward to help Bhima, and also that he did not hesitate in the least in ordering his men to throw away few sacks of grains to make sure there is no delay in helping him, made him realize what

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# Where Hope Springs Eternal

- Ahona Gupta

(This was written to mark the 1st anniversary of the March 11 earthquake)

The last couple of days saw an outpouring of Facebook status updates and blog posts commemorating the 1st anniversary of the March 11 earthquake in Japan. Some were poignant, some were sappy, some were touching and all were written by foreigners or "Gaijins" as we are called here. The Japanese prefer to mourn in private, rather than wear their hearts on their sleeves...or should I say their Facebook walls.

I too, spent the better part of the 11th, alternating between reminiscing about that fateful day and wondering how best to put it into words. The 1st brought back memories I would not wish on my worst enemy and the 2nd left me in a state of total confusion. After all how could I...how could anyone put into words the sheer horror, the devastation, the utter tragedy that was March 11 and more importantly how could one possibly express the indomitable spirit, the courage, the silent strength and the immense will power that is present in each and every Japanese. I had watched in mute horror as a mother identified the lifeless bodies of her young children with a single nod and a bowed head. The stark image of a young woman, holding an infant, her head held high, while her house with all her worldly possessions collapsed behind her, is also one I shall never forget.

There is a famous song by Japanese singer Kyu Sakamoto, called "Ue o Muite Arukō" - which best describes the typical Japanese mind set. The loosely translated lyrics mean "I look up as I walk, so that my tears won't fall" - the song and its meaning send shivers up my spine each time I hear it and it always reinforces my awe of this wonderful race. This "never-say-die" attitude and resilience has helped the Japanese through countless rough times and this time too, it is one of the main reasons that a mere one year after the horrific tragedy, life in Japan has resumed its usual frenetic pace, albeit with a few changes .

It's a given, that life has changed for us...in big and little ways. Prior to the earthquake, we would blindly buy produce believing that the fruits and veggies available here were second to none, in terms of taste and freshness; yet we now cast furtive glances at the place of origin...any produce coming from any prefecture near

the nuclear disaster zone is hurriedly put back, lest mere contact contaminate us!!! Cooking with and drinking mineral water (at least for my 4 year old) has become a part of life. Friends have moved to other countries and we find our weekends empty of "adda" sessions, late night pizza parties but most importantly we miss the feeling of being a part of an extended family away from home. In what's becoming as natural to me as breathing, every time the earthquake alarm application on my iPhone (it is called "Yurekuru" for all those who want to download it) buzzes...I run a quick mental checklist... passports-check, money-check, various cards-check, Earthquake kit- check (as I am writing this another biggie is rocking my house...but by now I have learnt how to multitask- writing, mentally ticking my checklist, all the while assuring my little one that we won't have to run down the stairs again, is all a piece of cake for me now!!!!!!)

The aforementioned earthquake kit (given by my husband's office, but also available at various stores) is a veritable cornucopia of essentials like a solar powered torch-cum-radio, bottled water, energy bars, blankets, playing cards (to while away long hours at earthquake shelters), basic medicines and the most interesting of all a portable toilet with toilet paper...yet another insight into the eye for detail that is so typical of the Japanese. I know...I know, I am sounding like the brand ambassador of Japan but it is difficult to live in this country and not be awed by its people.

This is the country that saw me set up my first home, the country that saw me become a mother, the country that helped me develop a sense of independence and give birth to a braver me (believe me, climbing down 14 floors of a violently rocking high rise with a wailing toddler in your arms does make you dip into your inner well of courage). Sure this country has its negative traits too...the inflexibility, the blind following of certain archaic rules and regulations, an almost unhealthy obsession with punctuality, clinging to their mother-tongue as if life was a rapid and the language their only lifeboat...but at the end of the day the positives still outweigh the negatives by a large margin and I still feel proud to call this country my second home!

So here's to Japan in all its myriad glory- a country where hope springs eternal and the Sakura blooms forever.

*Anjali*

# Diamonds are Forever

- Anil Kumar Alagh

It was said that when it rained in India, it rained diamonds. God's generosity was boundless when India was concerned, and people called India the land of Golden Bird. However, diamond rain was a myth, but that diamonds were found everywhere was a fact. Researchers have recently found that in old days, when it rained in India, indeed there were diamonds sparkling everywhere. These diamonds were always there hidden under the dust and dirt and when the rains came, it just washed away the dirt and the people in India then thought that it was a gift from the God. India had been fortunate enough to have in its share most of the historically famous diamonds which are now in various museums around the world or in private hands.

"Diamonds" - the big question now a days is ...is it really an investment or just a marketing gimmick?

This is not an easy question to answer- loads of factors will determine that. For example, if you were to buy a car...will it command the same price in 3 years or even one year??? A car will give you the status for as long as the car is in fashion...but a diamond is never out of fashion. In fact even after 20-30 years, the value of the diamond will be much better than a car that will depreciate to nothing. A diamond will never be worth nothing...but whether it stands the test of time depends on a few factors-

The kind of diamond that you buy

Where from in the diamond chain do you buy- Cutter, wholesaler, retailer, or if it is possible to buy it even cheaper than from the diamond cutter.

If you were to buy it with India as the destination then the chances of the diamond appreciating in terms of Indian rupees is almost certain...as the Indian rupees has been always depreciating.

Let's study these points in detail to find what kind of diamond you should buy. Traditionally, the idea was to buy a 30 pointer and then move up the chain buy a 50 pointer or a half carat, then 1 carat and then 2 carat and upwards. Follow this simple calculation and as long as you go up this weight ladder, you are safe in your investment. Everything works out fine as long as the market is fine. What happens when the market crashes like during the Lehman Brothers debacle? When it happened...most of the diamond prices fell about 15-30% but rebounded back to more than double. Diamond was one of the rare commodities that did fall in value but more than made it up and was quoted at prices higher than pre Lehman shock.

Let's look deeper at the million- dollar question? Which diamond did not experience any fall in value but actually rose in face of the Lehman crisis? I believe this

to be the ultimate test in evaluating your decision for INVESTMENT in diamond.

*A diamond that is oblivious to the normal market condition...a diamond that sets its own path and keeps rising like the brightest star. Yes, there are such diamonds...all those diamonds mentioned as historically famous diamonds like the Kohinoor, the Hope diamond, or the Dresden diamond are examples of such diamonds. But these diamonds are all out of reach of ordinary folks. Is there an alternative? The answer is again a yes. An investment in either a pink or a blue diamond will also give the same results ... a diamond that is immune to the normal wear and tear of a market.*

In fact, blues were the only diamond to rise during the Lehman shock, pinks dipped slightly but more than doubled in value within a couple of months. All this is a simple matter of demand and supply ...the demand for these stones far outstrip the supply and as such the said phenomenon.

Now for the question, where should one buy in the diamond chain? The logical answer is, the closer to the diamond cutter the cheaper the diamonds. Let us trace the route that a diamond takes. Traditionally a diamond rough is found either in Africa, Brazil or Australia or Canada. Then this rough goes through various hands either in Antwerp or London or South Africa before landing in the hands of a diamond cutter.

The diamond cutter cuts it and passes it to the Diamond Exporter who passes it to the diamond importer who passes it to the wholesaler, on to the agent, on to the retailer or the department store. So by the time it passes on to the end user, a diamond will normally change hands about 5-10 times and each time it changes hands the value also rises. The closer you buy to the diamond cutter, the cheaper you will be buying and as such the value increase will be much more real. Now the question that arises is - can we buy diamond cheaper than from buying from say the diamond cutter or the diamond exporter?? The answer normally would be impossible. But there is a way to buy diamonds cheaper...cheaper than 90% of the sources in the world. The answer is again economics. Japan is currently reeling under recession for the past 20 years. As a result the Japanese economy has forced lots of Japanese to sell their diamonds below even the cheapest prices offered by diamond exporters. Japan is right now the cheapest place in the world to buy diamonds-PERIOD. One man's loss is another man's gain.

And that in a nutshell is what we are looking at. Diamonds are for dreaming, they are illusion, represent wealth, power and command respect. It is rightly said: people around you may betray you, but not diamond.

**Diamonds are forever...**

# National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)

- Arun Goyal

A new policy instrument for giving fillip to India's stagnant manufacturing sector  
Minister (Economic and Commercial)  
Embassy of India, Tokyo

Since Economic reforms unveiled in 1991, Indian economy has witnessed a major change and has emerged as one of the fastest growing economies of the world. There has been a major structural shift enabling the private sector to assume a much larger role in all sectors of economy. However, the growth of GDP in India has largely been enabled by a dynamic growth in the services sector. The contribution of the manufacturing sector in India has stagnated at about 15 to 16 percent of GDP since 1980s. On the other hand, other Asian countries in similar stages of development have much higher share of manufacturing at 25 to 34 %. The low share and poor productivity of the manufacturing sector, indicates that India has not been able to fully leverage the opportunities provided by the dynamics of globalization.

India has a favourable demographic profile with over 60% of population in the working age group of 15-59 years. Over the next decade, India has to create employment opportunities for a large section of its population, with varying degrees of skills and qualifications. This will entail creation of 220 million jobs by 2025 in order to reap the demographic dividend. Every job created in manufacturing also has a multiplier effect by creating two to three additional jobs in related activities. Therefore, in years to come, the manufacturing sector has to play the major role in this employment creation initiative.

In October 2011, Government of India announced the National Manufacturing Policy with the following objectives:

Increase manufacturing sector growth to 12-14% over the medium term to make it the engine of growth for the economy. The 2 to 4 % differential over the medium term growth rate of the overall economy will enable manufacturing to contribute at least 25% of the National GDP by 2022.

Increase the rate of job creation in manufacturing to create 100 million additional jobs by 2022.

Creation of appropriate skill sets among the rural migrant and urban poor to make growth inclusive.

Increase domestic value addition and technological depth in manufacturing.

Enhance global competitiveness of Indian manufacturing through appropriate policy support.

Ensure sustainability of growth, particularly with regard to the environment including energy efficiency, optimal utilization of natural resources and restoration of damaged/ degraded eco-systems.

The policy envisages establishment of National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) as major policy instrument. NIMZs will be developed as greenfield industrial townships, benchmarked with the best manufacturing hubs in the world. The National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs) will be developed as on the basis of zoning; clean and energy efficient technology; necessary social infrastructure; skill development facilities etc. to provide a productive environment for persons transitioning from the primary sector to the secondary and tertiary sectors. These will help in meeting the increasing demand for creating world class urban centres in India and absorb surplus labour by providing them gainful employment opportunities. NIMZs seek to address the infrastructural bottlenecks which are considered as major constraining factor for the growth of the manufacturing sector.

Some of the salient features of NIMZs will be:

An NIMZ would have an area of at least 5000 hectares in size. The State Government will be responsible for selection of land suitable for development of the NIMZ including land acquisition if necessary.

In NIMZ major environmental aspects will be taken care of in the beginning by having an impact study during selection of the site and subsequently by having proper zoning during Master Planning.

NIMZ shall be managed by a Special Purpose vehicles (SPVs), which would ensure master planning of the Zone and pre-clearances for setting up the industrial units to be located within the zone. In order to enable the NIMZ to function as a self governing and autonomous body, it will be declared by the State Government as an Industrial Township under Art 243 Q(c) of the Constitution.

Government of India would bear the cost of master planning, external link infrastructure and institutional infrastructure including vocational training.

Funding of internal infrastructure would be through viability gap funding (existing scheme of the Ministry of Finance), long term non-sovereign soft loans from multilateral financial institutions and External Commercial Borrowing (developer to be allowed ECBs for refinancing of rupee debts).

Relief from Capital Gains Tax on sale of plant and

machinery of a unit located in a NIMZ will be granted in case of re-investment of sale consideration within a period of three years for purchase of new plant & machinery in any other unit located in the same NIMZ or another NIMZ.

Continuation of non-viable businesses leads to locking of funds and capital assets, which can be more productively deployed for generation of higher output, incomes and employment. An expeditious exit mechanism is therefore essential for investments locked up in businesses. The NIMZs would provide for policy measures to facilitate the expeditious redeployment of assets belonging to non viable units, while giving full protection to the interests of the employees.

The firms operating in the NIMZs would insure workers through 'Job Loss Policy' against loss of employment in the event of a unit requiring to close down, or to reduce the workforce, due to financial constraints. This policy will be utilized for payment of compensation to workers at the time of closure or right sizing of the company if circumstances require them to do so. The compensation may be equivalent to twenty days' average pay for every completed year of continuous service or part thereof in excess of six months. The companies will be required to purchase the required insurance before start of operations. The premium for the insurance will be paid upfront to create a safety net for the workers in the event of job loss. The SPV will be responsible for monitoring this.

As an alternative to job loss policy, the SPV can

opt for a sinking fund mechanism to be funded by contributions as decided by the SPV. The terms and conditions for the creation and operation of the fund will be notified by the Central Government /State Governments. A certain minimum level of money commensurate with the expected liabilities will at all times be maintained in the sinking fund. The fund shall be continuously recouped in case money is drawn from the same. In case of the sinking fund route also, the worker compensation may be equivalent to twenty days average pay for every completed year of continuous service or any part thereof in excess of six months.

The SPV may opt either for a job loss policy or a sinking fund or a combination of the two for example the SPV may buy a policy out of the sinking fund. The SPV can evolve any other suitable option/arrangement also.

India's attempt to accelerate growth and raise manufacturing sector's share in GDP to 25% by 2022 is laudable. NIMZs would be large areas of developed land, with the requisite eco-system for promoting world class manufacturing activity. The key to success of NIMZs would be its implementation and the states will have to come forward to encourage manufacturing and thereby create employment. NIMZs also provide a major investment opportunity for Japanese infrastructure companies in creating world-class infrastructure.

*Continued from page 51...*

**an open handed person Kubera was.**

**Kubera then told Bhima that each grain was precious and every valuable thing should be given its due importance, no matter how small it is. Every grain counts, because every single grain goes toward making a huge heap of grain. He further explained that valuable things are treasured for further utility. Grains are meant to feed the hungry and it is useless to send people food grain after they are dead of starvation. Thus, the grain that is sent will be no better than sand, for it did not serve its purpose.**

**Kubera concluded by saying that when one is stocking up on something, he should be careful not to lose or waste any part of it. But, when one gives, he must be magnanimous.**

**Bhima felt a strong respect for Kubera and bowed to him. He gratefully thanked Lord Kubera for his generosity and for opening his eyes to a new truth that he never knew before. Bhima changed vastly after returning from his mission. ■**

# Surviving as a Senior Executive

- Sanjeev Gupta

**T**he pressures and demands of leading any big business could be very high. Life as a senior executive can be brutal and short. Some executives, perhaps, are born to fail, some undoubtedly achieve failure and some have failure thrust upon them. Over the course of the last 28 years, I have learned and developed a few tips to help me beat the odds and survive in the job. I may be stating the obvious, but nevertheless, here are five suggestions.

One, do not attempt to micro-manage your business. If you find you are working yourself to an exhausted standstill, then you are probably doing not just your job, but 50 per cent of someone else's, too. Senior executives are paid to hire the right people and then make sure that they deliver. Processes and people become far more important than individual decisions. Ensure that you have the framework, procedures and leadership team in place so that the right decisions are made.

Two, avoid the temptation to disregard your predecessor and the organization they have passed on to you. It is important to take the rest of the workforce

with you, work with the grain of the culture you inherit, and change it in incremental steps, not with one big bang.

Third, lead from the front. The senior executive sets the tone and the values of the organization he or she runs. Beware of the corporate grapevine and understand that nearly everything you say is public property.

Fourth, stay close to the front line. Your customers, staff and competitors will tell you far more about what is really going on in the business than your fellow executives.

Five, remain humble. The biggest threat to a successful senior executive is arrogance. Find people who keep you grounded and remind you that you are human and far from perfect. Overconfidence only precedes carelessness.

I believe it takes hard work and much luck as judgment to survive in a job as a senior executive.

Of course these tips do not represent a comprehensive guide, but they have been useful in providing me with a general framework.

The business people in the delta areas of East and West Godavari districts in Andhra Pradesh cross the river on boats. Once, a businessman was travelling in a boat. There was no one else in the boat except himself and the boatman. Usually, people would like to engage themselves in conversation with somebody during travel in order to forget the tedium of the journey. Therefore, he started a conversation with the boatman to while away the time. He asked the boatman, "Do you have a newspaper?" The boatman replied, "Sir! I don't have a newspaper. I cannot read and write." To this, the businessman commented, "Alas! If you cannot read and write, one quarter of your life is consigned to the waters of Ganga." The boatman felt sorry for his pitiable condition and kept quiet. After a few minutes, the businessman enquired again, "My dear! Do you know the present prices of gold and silver in the Bombay market?" The boatman replied, "Sir! I do not have any experience in gold business. Hence, I do not know the prices of gold and silver in the Bombay market." Then the businessman commented, "If you do not know about gold business, half of your life is consigned to the waters of Ganga." The conversation continued. Observing the wrist watch worn by the boatman, the businessman again enquired, "My dear! What is the time now?" Though the poor boatman had a watch on his wrist, he did not know how to read a watch. The businessman again asked, "Why then did you wear a wrist watch?" The boatman replied, "Though one does not know how to read a watch, it is a fashion nowadays to wear a wrist watch. That is why I am wearing one." Then, the businessman commented, "If you do not know even to tell the time from a wrist watch, then three-fourths of your life is consigned to the Ganga." Meanwhile, a gale started with great force raising high waves in the river. The boat started tossing up and down and became unsteady. The boatman then asked the businessman, "Sir! By the way do you know swimming?" The businessman replied, "Alas! I do not know swimming." Now it was the turn of the boatman to comment, "Then, your entire life is about to be consigned to the waters of Ganga."

- Heart to Heart, Volume 8 Issue 08, Aug 2010

# Don't you think so much

- Tanushree Dutta

Sometimes you want to laugh a loud  
in a busy crowd.  
But then halt your laughter  
thinking how people  
would remark on that matter

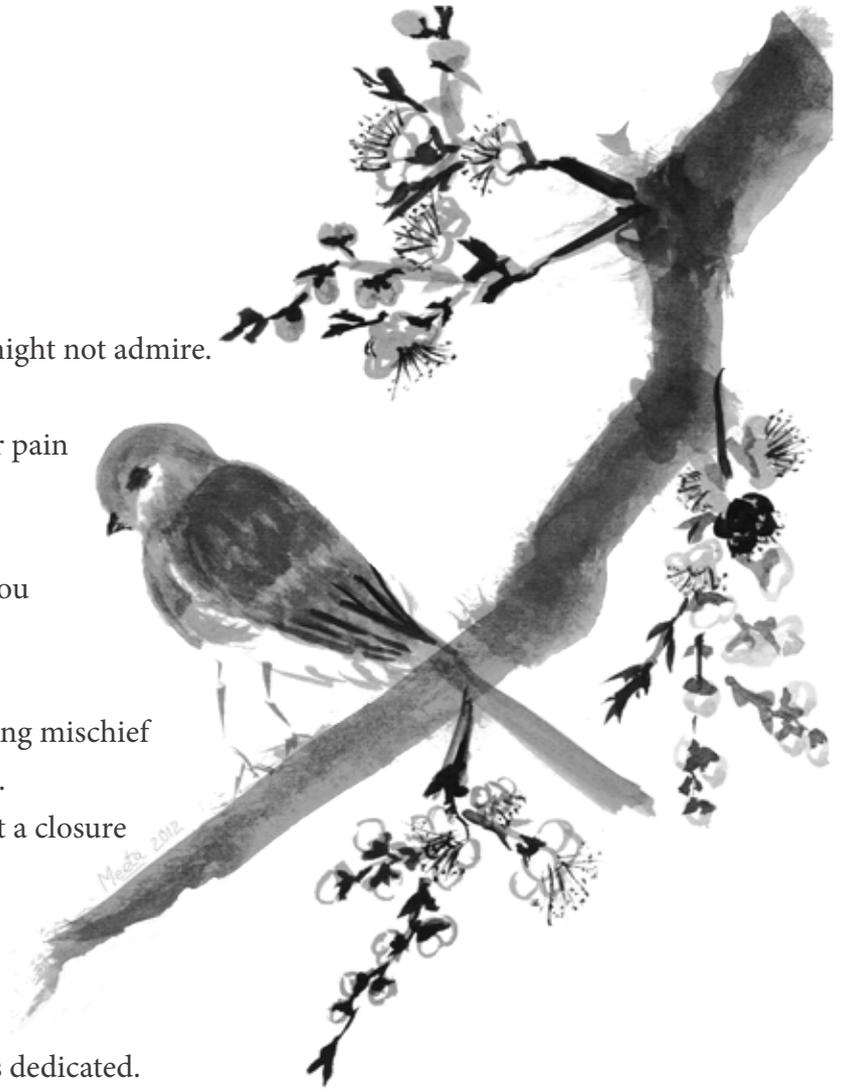
Sometimes you want to crack jokes  
with your folks.  
But put an end to your desire  
thinking this activity people might not admire.

Sometimes you want to express your pain  
and let your tears rain.  
But then don't cry  
thinking others would term you  
"A Frantic Guy"

Sometimes you are in a mood of doing mischief  
want to play pranks and tricks.  
But then to your antic, you put a closure  
thinking about the ignominy  
it may bring to you in future.

Sometimes you felt infatuated  
wrote a rhapsody, to her it was dedicated.  
But stopped your endearment  
thinking on how she would comment

Oh dear mate  
you don't cogitate  
about the outcomes.  
Enjoy life as it comes  
Then only, your life will blossom.



# A Script

- Udita Ghosh

Today I will be playing myself  
One more day when the curtains open  
As they do every day, and have been doing forever.  
But I don't know or feel Forever  
There is only Now, and today again  
I play Me in this play.  
The only audience is my Consciousness,  
I am the only one alive and alone  
Perceiving this never-ending tiresome play.

The First Act puts me in this room  
Surrounded by objects that belong to a name—  
The name given to Me that I play,  
In letters or in spirit.  
This room represents My life  
But this name is as much me  
As are these objects anyone's  
For I am an accessory to this room  
And this First Act, is the Thirtieth, the Five Hundredth for all it matters.

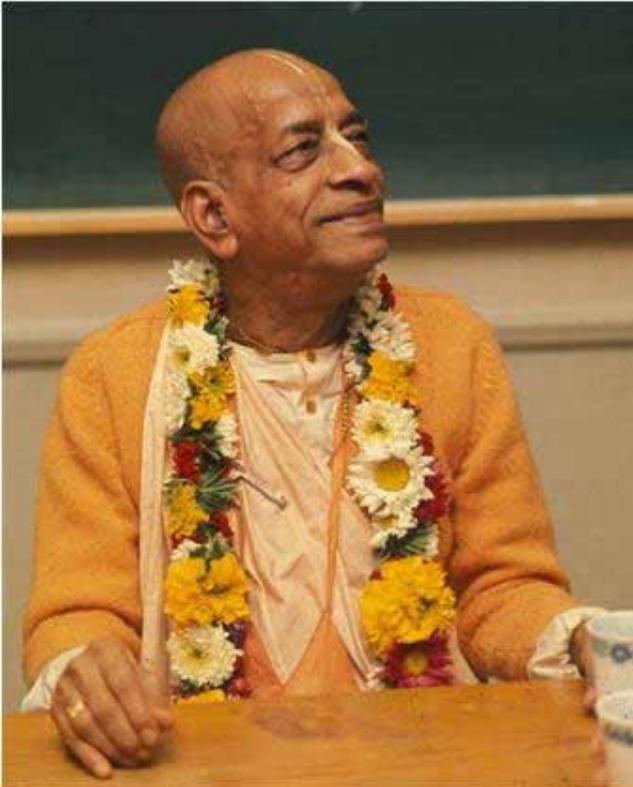
The other characters seem unperturbed  
And are playing their caricatured, meaningless lives  
With such ceaseless superficiality  
That I am dumbstruck at times.  
The script is unfolding without mercy,  
And my Consciousness is at a loss  
To the dramatic irony she can't seem to find,  
As much as is the actor playing Me,  
Who keeps going, out of fear of losing the script  
And being forced to acknowledge that I matter  
Not at all.

# श्रीला प्रभुपाद – संक्षिप्त जीवन

– रोहण अग्रवाल

**क**ृष्णकृपामूर्ती श्री श्रीमद् अभय चरणारविन्द भक्तिवेदान्त स्वामी प्रभुपाद, इण्टरनेशनल सोसायटी फॉर कृष्णा कान्शियस्नेस (कृष्ण चेतना हेतु अन्तर्राष्ट्रीय समाज) के संस्थापक, का जन्म १८९६ में कोलकाता के एक वैष्णव परिवार में हुआ। प्रभुपाद अपने महाविद्यालय के समय संस्कृत और अंग्रेजी संस्था के सदस्य भी रहे। सर्वप्रथम १९२२ में श्रीमद् प्रभुपाद (उस समय अभय चरण), अपने आध्यात्मिक गुरु श्री भक्ति सिद्धांत सरस्वती से मिले। उनकी अनोखी प्रतिभा को देखकर, आध्यात्मिक गुरु श्री भक्ति सिद्धांत सरस्वती ने इन्हें प्रेरणा दी कि तुम चैतन्य महाप्रभु की कृष्णभावनामृत को विश्व में प्रचारित करने की इच्छा को पूरी करने में सक्षम हो। श्री भक्ति सिद्धांत हमेशा से श्रीमद् प्रभुपाद के हृदय में एक गुरु की तरह वास करते रहे और सन् १९३२ में वह उनके अधिकारिक रूप से उनके अनुयायी बने।

सन् १९३६ में प्रभुपाद ने अपने गुरु को पत्र लिख पूछा कि क्या कोई ऐसी सेवा है जो श्री भक्ति सिद्धांत उन्हें प्रतिपादित करना चाहे। प्रभुपाद को जवाबी पत्र में वही आदेश मिला जो उन्हें सन् १९२२ में मिला था: “कृष्णभावनामृत को विश्व के समस्त अंग्रेजी भाषियों में प्रचारित करो”। दो सप्ताह बाद ही श्रीभक्ति सिद्धांत स्वर्ग सिंघार गए और अपना आखरी निर्देश प्रभुपाद के हृदय में उत्कीर्ण कर गए। इन निर्देशों से प्रभुपाद के जीवन का



लक्ष्य “कृष्णभावनामृत को विश्व में प्रचारित करने” के रूप में केन्द्रित हुआ।

प्रभुपाद ने गौड़ीय—मठ कि सहायता करते हुए भगवत गीता पे व्याख्यात्मक निबंध लिखा। १९४४ में द्वितीय विश्व युद्ध के दौरान, जब कागज़ की कमी और गरीबी चारों ओर फैली हुई थी तब, श्रीमद् प्रभुपाद ने “बैंक टू गोडहेड” नामक पत्रिका शुरू की। अकेले ही उन्होंने इस पत्रिका का लेखन, सम्पादन, संशोधन और खाका तो तैयार किया ही, स्वयं ही पत्रिका का प्रचार भी किया। आज भी यह पत्रिका, प्रकाशित होती है।

अध्ययन के लिये अधिक समय समर्पित करने हेतु श्रीमद् प्रभुपाद ने, १९५० में अपने घर—परिवार से सन्यास ले, वनःप्रस्थ जीवन का अधिग्रहण किया, १९५६ में उन्हें “भक्तिवेदान्त” के नाम से सम्मानित किया गया, प्रभुपाद ने वर्षों तक वृन्दावन के राधादामोदर मंदिर में रहकर भजन साधना की व धर्मशास्त्रों का अध्ययन किया।

१९५९ के दौरान जीवन के सारे भोग त्यागते हुए प्रभुपाद ने अपनी सबसे महत्वपूर्ण रचना “श्रीमद् भागवतम” का अंग्रेजी में अनुवाद और व्याख्या की। साथ ही उन्होंने “ईज़ी जर्नी टू अदर प्लानेट” भी लिखी। कुछ ही वर्षों में प्रभुपाद ने श्रीमद् भागवतम के अंग्रेजी संस्करण के तीन भाग लिखे। एक बार फिर उन्होंने स्वयं का धन एकत्रित कर कागज़ खरीदने और किताब छपवाने की व्यवस्था की। उन्होंने स्वयं किताबें बेचीं भी और दलालों के ज़रिये भारत के बड़े शहरों में भी किताबें बिकवाईं।

अब प्रभुपाद अपने गुरु के आदेशों के पालन के लिये तैयार थे। अपने गुरु के आदेश पर स्वामी प्रभुपाद ६९ वर्ष की आयु में ११ अगस्त, १९६५ को पानी के जहाज जलदूत पर सवार होकर अमेरिका निकल पड़े। उनकी समुद्र यात्रा कठिनाइयों से भरी हुई थी और उन्हें दो बार दिल का दौरा भी पड़ा। इस प्रथम विदेश प्रस्थान के समय न तो उनके पास उत्साहवर्धक व ऊर्जावान यौवन था और ना ही मित्र, ना ही अनुयायी, और तो और उनके पास समूचे पाश्चात्य जगत में भगवान श्रीकृष्ण के दर्शन का प्रचार—प्रसार करने हेतु किसी स्पष्ट योजना व अपनी जीविका के निश्चित साधन का भी अभाव था। ऐसे में भगवदधाम का संदेश लेकर विदेशी धरती पर पहुँचे अपूर्व जीवट वाले भारतीय मनीषी, तत्त्वचिंतक व भगवान श्रीकृष्ण के दर्शन में अटूट आस्था वाले इस संत को आत्मबल व दृढ़ विश्वास की पूंजी के सहारे ही अपना मार्ग खोजना था।

कष्टों से भरे छह महीनों बाद मैनहैटन में उनके अनुयायियों ने एक छोटे से आशियाने की व्यवस्था की। यहाँ प्रभुपाद ने नियमित रूप से उपदेश दिया, कीर्तन किया और प्रसाद बांटा।

हृदय के तारों को झंकृत करती उनकी वाणी, दर्शन व विचारों को अमेरिकी समाज ने गंभीरता से लिया और बड़ी संख्या में लोग उनकी पुस्तकों, उपदेशों सीधी सरल बातों, कीर्तन व सादा जीवन शैली से प्रभावित होकर उनसे जुड़ते चले गये।

प्रभुपाद के उपदेशों में आम जनता की रुचि को देखते हुए अब उनके अनुयायी नियमित रूप से कीर्तन आयोजित करने लगे। उनके उपदेश और रविवार का प्रतिभोज खासा लोकप्रिय हुआ। उनके युवा अनुयायियों ने दीक्षा ग्रहण कर, प्रतिदिन १६ चक्र पूरे करते हुए हरे-कृष्ण का जाप करने का प्रण लिया। उन्होंने “बैक टू गौडहेड” का प्रकाशन भी फिर से शुरू किया।

प्रभुपाद ने १९६६ में न्यूयार्क शहर के लोअर ईस्ट साइड के एक उपेक्षित से स्टोर फ्रंट में अंतर्राष्ट्रीय कृष्ण भवनामृत संघ (इस्कॉन) की स्थापना की थी। १९६७ में प्रभुपाद सेन फ्रान्सिसको गए और वहां भी इस्कॉन की स्थापना की। प्रभुपाद ने अपने अनुयायियों को विश्व भर में चैतन्य महाप्रभु का सन्देश फैलाने के लिए प्रेरित किया, साथ ही मोंट्रियल, बोस्टन, लन्दन, बर्लिन, भारत और यूरोप में इस्कॉन की स्थापना की। भारत में तीन आलिशान मंदिरों की योजना बनाई गई: सर्व सुविधा सम्पन्न वृन्दावन का कृष्ण बलराम मंदिर, मुंबई में मंदिर के साथ ही शैक्षिक और सांस्कृतिक केंद्र, और मायापुर में वैदिक तारामंडल के साथ एक विशाल मंदिर।

आने वाले ११ वर्षों में प्रभुपाद ने कई किताबें लिखीं। प्रभुपाद रात में बहुत कम समय के लिये विश्राम करते और रोजाना सुबह १:३० से ४:३० बजे तक लेखन कार्य करते। उन्होंने संस्कृतके मूल-ग्रंथों का शब्द दर शब्द अनुवाद कर संपूर्ण व्याख्या करते। प्रभुपाद के कहे अनुसार उनके अनुयायी ज्ञान सामग्री कि टाईपिंग और संशोधन करते।

प्रभुपाद कि किताबों में “भगवत गीता एस आई टी एस”, श्रीमद् भगवत और चैतन्य चरणामृत के कई संस्करण, आदी हैं। बारह सालों में प्रभुपाद ने न केवल १२ बार संपूर्ण विश्व भ्रमण किया बल्कि ५१ खंडों में व २८ भाषाओं में अपनी सैकड़ों पुस्तकें प्रकाशित करके वैदिक धर्म, दर्शन व संस्कृति से समूचे विश्व को जोड़ने का महती प्रयास किया और कृष्ण भावनामृत के लाखों अनुगामी बना दिए। आज विश्व में इस्कॉन के अनुयायियों की संख्या करोड़ों में है और यह संस्था दुनियाभर में ३०० से अधिक भव्य व समृद्ध मंदिरों, गुरुकुल, कृषि क्षेत्र व विशेष योजनाओं को संचालित कर रहा है। उनके द्वारा १९७२ में स्थापित भक्ति वेदांत बुक ट्रस्ट संसार में वैदिक साहित्य का सबसे बड़ा प्रकाशक है।

१४ नवंबर १९७७ को ८१ वर्ष की आयु में श्रीला प्रभुपाद का गोलोकवास हो गया। सत्स्वरूप गोस्वामी ने “श्रीला प्रभुपाद लीलामृत” में प्रभुपाद के शुरूआती दिनों से १९७७ तक के जीवन का ज्वलंत वर्णन किया है।



# ढाई आखर “प्रेम”

– चम्पा तिवारी

**म**ुख्य मूल प्रवृत्ति मानव जीवन की मधुशाला, अनन्त आनन्द के श्रोत को कौन नहीं जानता। चर, अचर, जड़, चेतन इसके तलुवे चाटते हैं। इससे सच्चा साथी मिलेगा भी कहाँ, जो निराशा को आशा में, प्यास को तृप्ति में, दुःख को आनन्द में परिणित कर देता है। तभी तो कबीर दास सच कह गये, “ढाई आखर प्रेम का पढ़े सो पंडित होय”।

इसे ‘जादू की पिटाई’ कहें या ‘गागर में सागर’ समझ नहीं पड़ता। यह नन्हा सा बोल बहुरूपिये की तरह नये नये रूप रंगों में नित्य जीवन में अनुभूत होता रहता है। जिस तरह एक सूर्य सम्पूर्ण संसार को प्रकाशित करता है उसी तरह “प्रेम” सम्पूर्ण मानस पटल को उज्ज्वलित कर देता है। अन्तःकरण निर्मल हो शान्त हो जाता है। ‘मैं’ और ‘पर’ का भेद ही मिट जाता है फिर हो जाता है ज्ञानोदय। यही है पांडित्य।

ढाई आखर के रूप अनेक है क्रियायें भिन्न है पर भाव एक है— अपनापन, अपनत्व अथवा ‘प्रेम’। अपने प्रति प्रेम को आत्मप्रेम या स्वप्रेम, छोटों व बच्चों के प्रति प्रेम वातसल्य, स्नेह, माता पिता गुरु व बुजुर्गों के प्रति प्रेम श्रद्धा, मित्र के प्रति प्रेम मित्रता, बन्धुत्व, जीवन साथी के प्रति प्रेम प्रणय, प्रेमी के प्रति प्रेम ‘रति’, दीनदुखियों के प्रति प्रेम करुणा, प्रकृति के प्रति प्रेम ‘प्रकृति प्रेम’, लगन या शौक, देश के प्रति प्रेम देश प्रेम तथा अनन्त के प्रति प्रेम भक्ति के रूप में हमारे जीवन में अनुभूत होती है।

वातसल्य प्रेम के दर्शन तब होते हैं जब छोटी सी चिड़िया अपने बच्चे के मूँह में दाना डालते देखते हैं, गाय को उसके बछड़े को चाटते देखते हैं, माँ को अपने बच्चे दुलारते, झुलाते देखते हैं। बच्चे के ठुमक ठुमक चलते देखना, नन्हे तुतलाते बोल सुन माँ बाप को जो आनन्द प्राप्त होता है वही आनन्द वातसल्य का आनन्द है। बच्चों के पालन पोषण व उन्नति के लिये जो प्रयास और कार्य करते हैं, वो इसके कर्म रूप हैं। इन कर्मों को करने में भी मधुर अनुभूति होती है। सूरदास जी श्री कृष्ण जी के वातसल्य प्रेम में इतने डूब गये कि अन्धे होते हुए भी वातसल्य का कोना कोना छान आये। इस प्रेम चेतना की आवश्यकता होती है आँख की नहीं अनुभूति की। जीवन में जो नवीन उत्साह नया आनन्द उत्पन्न कर देता है वही आत्मानन्द ज्ञान है।

आत्मप्रेम की महिमा निराली है। आत्मप्रेम व्यक्ति को लक्ष की ओर अग्रसर करता है। दीपक की लौ को जैसे जलने के लिए आकाश या स्थान की आवश्यकता होती है वैसे ही व्यक्ति को आगे अग्रसर होने के लिये लक्ष की आवश्यकता होती है। लक्ष प्राप्ति के लिये अथक परिश्रम में मीठे कड़वे अनुभव होते हैं, व्यक्ति के ज्ञान का विस्तार होता है। स्पर्धा आत्म प्रेम का साथी

है। स्पर्धा से कर्म की गति बढ़ जाती है, आलस्य व प्रमाद पीछे छूट जाते हैं, लक्ष की ओर आगे बढ़ने की इच्छा से अनेक नवीन अनुभव व ज्ञान की प्राप्ति होती है। नये नये आविष्कार होते हैं, प्रतिभा और आत्म प्रेम का संगम होने पर नये अन्वेषण होते हैं। व्यक्ति ज्ञान का भंडार बन जाता है। स्वप्रेम में ईर्ष्या की संभावना रहती है पर ज्ञानी उससे दूर रहते हैं। सबसे अलग व नया करने की इच्छा आत्मप्रेम का प्रसाद है।

गुरु, माता, पिता, बुजुर्गों के प्रति प्रेम सात्विक होता है। श्रद्धा, आदर्श और अपनत्व की उपज है इसके कर्म में आदर और सेवा निहित है। “श्रद्धावान लभते ज्ञान” श्रद्धावान को ज्ञान प्राप्त होता है। (गीता अध्याय ४ श्लोक ३९)। ‘श्रद्धा’ एक महान भाव है, इसकी गरिमा ने इसे देवी रूप दे दिया है “या देवी सर्व भूतेषु श्रद्धा रूपेण संस्थिता” (दुर्गा सप्त सती)। गुरु, माता, पिता व अनुभवी बुजुर्गों का सानिद्ध से ज्ञान वर्धन होता है। आत्मविश्वास बढ़ता है, इसके अनादार से अनेक मनोवैज्ञानिक समस्याएँ उत्पन्न हो जाती है। श्रद्धा का प्रसाद आशीर्वाद होता है जो सन्तुष्टि व शान्तिदायक है। सन्तुष्टि जहाँ होगी वहीं ज्ञान चौकड़ी जमाए बैठा रहता है।

रति, प्रणय प्रेम का यौवन रूप है। बोलचाल या आमतौर पर प्रेम का इतना ही संकुचित अर्थ समझा जाता है बस इसमें विलासिता का और समावेश कर देते हैं। नहीं, प्रणय पवित्र बंधन है यह विश्वास पर टिका रहता है। विश्वास की आधारशीला में पवित्र, शान्त, निर्मल प्रेम प्रणय है। इसका रस श्रिंगार है जिसकी अवरिल धारा संयोग और वियोग के रूप में जीवन में बहती रहती है। इन्हीं भावों से अभिभूत व्यक्ति कलाकार, चित्रकार बन जाते हैं, पंत जी तो कविता का उदय ही ‘वियोग प्रेम’ को मानते हैं, “वियोगी होगा पहला कवि आह से उपजा होगा गान”। मानस पटल की प्रणय पीड़ा में तुलसी दास जी ने ‘रामचरितमानस’ रच डाला, तो कालीदास ने मेघदूत की रचना कर दी। संसार के साहित्य में इस भाव की बहुत प्रधानता रही है। प्रणय त्याग का साथी है। त्याग सत्य की ओर उन्मुख करता है यही ‘सत्य’ ज्ञान है।

‘छोड़ दुमों की मृदुछाया बोले तेरे बालजाल पर कैसे उलझा हूँ लोचन’ है ‘प्रकृति’ प्रेम। पेड़ों की झुडमुट, झरने की झर झर, पवन की सर सर से जब भावुक मन मचल उठता है उसे कहते हैं प्रकृति प्रेम। धरती, आकाश, सूर्य, चन्द्र, नदी, समुद्र से जब प्रीति होती है तो दार्शनिकों, ज्योतिष शास्त्रज्ञों, वैज्ञानिकों का उदय होता है। भौतिक विज्ञान, समुद्र विज्ञान, नक्षत्र विज्ञान आदि सभी वैज्ञानिक क्षेत्रों का ज्ञान प्रकृति प्रेम का प्रसाद है। कलाकारी चित्रकारी सभी प्रकृति प्रेम से ही उत्पन्न होती है। पशुपक्षियों का ज्ञान, वृक्ष व वनस्पतियों का ज्ञान सब इस प्रेम की अनुभूति है। प्रकृति प्रेम के क्षेत्र का अनन्त है और ज्ञान के भण्डार इसमें भरे पड़े हैं।

आवश्यकता आविष्कार की जननी है, इसी से नित नये आविष्कार हर क्षेत्र में होते रहते हैं।

ड्रेड का द्रवित रूप है 'करुणा', "उदारता और करुणा मनुष्य के महान गुण हैं"। इसका रस 'करुण' है। सेवा भाव है, क्रिया शुभ कर्म है। मुर्दा है वो मन जिसमें करुणा नहीं है। दीन दुखियों के प्रति ड्रेड मुख्य ड्रेड है। त्याग सेवा के सानिद्ध से ये पवित्र व महान है। जहाँ ड्रेड और सेवा का संगम होता है वहाँ ज्ञान की सरस्वती स्वयं प्रकट हो जाती है।

मित्र ड्रेड या मित्रता में 'अपनेपन' का भाव रहता है। मित्र ड्रेड किसी जाति, धर्म राष्ट्र के बन्धन में नहीं रहता। मित्रता 'विश्व बन्धुत्व' 'वसुधैव कुटुम्बुकम्' की जननी है। पराये को अपना बनाना ही इसका कर्म है।

अनन्य के प्रति ड्रेड 'भक्ति' ड्रेड की पराकाष्ठा है। इसमें ड्रेड के सब रूपों के दर्शन होते हैं। भक्तों को भगवान कई रूपों में दिखते हैं। भक्ति में भगवान कभी पति है, तो कहीं ड्रेड, कहीं माता पिता तो कहीं बन्धु सखा, कहीं स्वामी तो कहीं सेवक हर रूप में दिखते हैं। कहीं करुणा रस है तो कहीं श्रृंगार रस कहीं वातसल्य तो कहीं श्रद्धा। भक्ति में आनन्द की धारा बहती है। इसका कर्म है

पूजा। पूजा 'स्व' को नियन्त्रित करने की शक्ति है। व्यक्ति मौन हो मनन की ओर उन्मुख होता है, भक्ति में सुध बुध भूल जाता है। भक्ति में रंग जाने पर उसे सब तरफ प्यार ड्रेड ही दिखाई देता है "लाली मेरे लाल की, जित देखूँ तित लाल, लाली देखन मैं गयी, मैं भी हो गई लाल"। आत्म बोध हो जाता है। भक्ति निरन्तर ईश्वर का सानिद्ध चाहती है उसी को पाने की चाह उसकी तृष्णा है। भक्त 'अपने' को भूल 'पर' में विलीन, तलीन रहता है। सत्संग, कीर्तन भजन का संगम होता है 'आनन्द' की प्राप्ति होती है। आनन्द की प्राप्ति उसे 'अनन्त' की ओर अग्रसर करती है 'अनन्त' में विलय ही भक्ति उद्देश्य और लक्ष्य होता है। भक्ति आध्यात्म की ओर ले जाती है। आध्यात्म ज्ञान की ओर जाने से तत्व ज्ञान की प्राप्ति होती है, तत्व ज्ञान कहता है आत्मा परमात्मा एक है। यही ज्ञान है बाकी सब अज्ञान, गीता में भी श्री कृष्ण ने भी यही ज्ञान अर्जुन को सुनाया था।

अन्त में यह ड्रेड ही परम बन्धु है, परम सुख है परम धन, परम गति परम तत्व है जो लोग ऐसी धारणा रखते हैं, अनुभव करते हैं उनसे अनन्त कभी दूर नहीं रहते। सच्चे ड्रेड करने वालों के साथ ज्ञान उसी तरह पीछे भागता है जैसे पूर्वकाल में भगीरथ की शंख ध्वनि से गंगा उनके पीछे दौड़ी थी।

“जिसमें ड्रेड, दया, सेवा, तप का  
लहराता सिन्धु महान,  
अक्षर हीन भले ही है वह,  
मानव है शिक्षित विद्वान”।  
यही है ढाई आखर ड्रेड का कमाल।

If you judge people, you have no time to love them.

- Mother Teresa

# कर भला तो हो भला

- शुक्ला चौधुरी

**य**ह उन दिनों की घटना है जब मेरे तीनों बच्चे छोटे छोटे थे। तीनों में एक एक साल का अंतर था। वे पहली, दूसरी और तीसरी कक्षा में पढ़ते थे। देखते देखते कितने साल बीत गये। अभी तो तीनों ही बड़े होकर अपनी अपनी गृहस्थी संभाल रहे हैं। पति वायु सेना में काम करते थे और मैं भी वहाँ सेना के अस्पताल में नौकरी करती थी। वैसे तो मुझे रोज सुबह काम पर जाना पड़ता था, और बच्चों के स्कूल से वापस आने तक मैं भी वापस आ जाती थी, पर कभी कभी जरूरत पड़ने पर शाम को भी जाना पड़ता था। जिन दिनों मुझे शाम को काम के लिए जाना पड़ता था, मैं बच्चों को खाना खिलाकर सुला देती थी। मेरे कुछ खास मित्र मुझे बहुत सहायता करते थे, वे आकर एक — आध घंटे उनके साथ बिताकर, शाम को उन्हें खेलने भेज देते थे। फिर बच्चों के खेलकर लौटने से पहले मैं घर लौट आती थी।

उन मित्रों में से एक मेरी सबसे प्रिय और बहुत करीब थी, वह थी शीला जिसे मैं आज तक नहीं भूल पाती। वह देखने में जितनी सुंदर थी, स्वभाव से भी उतनी ही कोमल थी। हम दोनों एक ही उम्र के थे और हमारी शादी भी एक ही साल में हुई थी। मगर शीला हमेशा बहुत दुःखी रहती थी क्योंकि बहुत प्रयास करने पर भी वह सन्तानहीन थी। वह मेरे साथ अपना सब दुःख और मन की व्यथा बाँटती थी। मेरे बच्चों को बहुत प्यार करती थी, उनके साथ खेलती, घुमाने ले जाती, कभी कभी अपने घर ले जाकर खाना खिला देती थी। उसने सन्तान पाने के लिये कितने ही व्रत रखे थे, कितने ही देवी देवताओं के मन्त माँगे थे, और कितने मंदिरों में जाती थी। मैं उसे हमेशा शांतवना देती की मन खराब मत करो, हमेशा समझाती थी की भगवान जरूर तुम्हारे अच्छे कर्मों का फल देगा। जैसे की एक कहावत है—

**“कर भला तो हो भला”।**

उस दिन शुक्रवार था, लेकिन रामनवमी का राष्ट्रीय अवकाश होने के कारण सब स्कूल दफ्तर बंद था। मेरे पति काम से शहर से बाहर गए थे। हम जहाँ रहते थे, यह बहुत छोटा शहर था इसलिए वहाँ बाज़ार सुबह बैठता था, पास के गाँव से सब ताज़ा सब्ज़ी, मछली लेकर आते थे और दस ग्यारह बजे तक सब खत्म हो जाता था। मुझे उस दिन बाज़ार करने जाना था, तीनों बच्चे सो रहे थे, तीनों को नींद से उठाकर ले जाने का मन नहीं कर रहा था। इसलिए उन्हें सोता छोड़ मैं बाज़ार के लिए निकल पड़ी। रास्ते में शीला मिली वह मेरे घर की ओर ही आ रही थी। वह बोली “मैंने संतोषी माता का व्रत रखा था आज सोलह शुक्रवार पूरे हो रहे हैं इसलिए मैं आज उद्यापन करूँगी, दोपहर को बच्चों को साथ में लेकर

मेरे घर खाने पर आना”। इतना कहकर वह अपने घर की ओर चली गई और मैं बाज़ार की ओर चलने लगी। पता नहीं क्यूँ उस दिन मेरा मन बहुत भारी भारी लग रहा था, कुछ दुर्घटना न घट जाये। मन में बस एक ही ख्याल आ रहा था कि अगर बच्चे नींद से जग जाएं, अगर माचिस से खेलने लग जाए। यही सोचते सोचते मैंने बाज़ार का काम खत्म किया और घर की ओर वापस आने लगी।

वापस आते आते जो दृष्य देखा, उससे मेरे हाथ पैर शिथिल हो गये। मेरे हाथ से सब सामान बिखर कर रस्ते में चारों तरफ फैल गये, पैरों के निचे से जैसे ज़मीन खिसक गई। अभी शीला से बात खत्म करके एक घन्टा भी नहीं बिता था, उसके घर से आग की लपटें चारों ओर से निकल रही थी जिधर देखो हर तरफ धुँआ ही धुँआ फैला हुआ था। बाहर ऐम्बुलेन्स खड़ा था, उधर से दमकल के लोग भाग दौड़ कर आग बुझाने में लगे हुए थे। मेरे आँखों से पानी बहते जा रहे थे, समझ में नहीं आ रहा था यह क्या हो रहा है, कैसे यह आग लगी और बस शीला का ख्याल मन में आ रहा था की वह कहाँ है? क्या कर रही है?

तभी किसी ने आकर बताया की शीला घर में ही थी वह बुरी तरह से आग में झुलस गई थी। और थोड़ा आगे बढ़ते ही देखा, सभी मिल कर उसको ढक कर एम्बुलेन्स में ले गए, उसके पति भी रोते हुए साथ में गए। जाते हुए मुझसे बोले “मैं थोड़ी देर के लिए निकला था उतने में देखो सब जल कर राख हो गया”। उन लोगों के अस्पताल जाने के बाद, तब तक सब आग बुझ गया था थोड़ा सा इधर उधर से धुँआ निकल रहा था। मैं साहस जुटा कर घर के अन्दर घुसी तो देखा सोने वाले कमरे का सब सामान जल कर राख हो गया था, रसोईघर में सब सामान फैला पड़ा था। पूजाघर में भगवान के सामने उद्यापन का सब सामान, प्रसाद तैयार पड़ा था। यह सब देखकर मेरे आँखों से झरझर पानी गिरने लगे मैं भागकर घर वापस गई और फूटफूट कर रोने लगी। बच्चे तब भी सो रहे थे। बार बार मन में एक ही ख्याल आ रहा था की भगवान उसके साथ क्यूँ इतना अन्याय कर रहा है।

उस घटना के बाद शीला को करीब तीन महिने अस्पताल में रहना पड़ा। उस दौरान कई बार उससे मिलने के लिए गई। धीरे धीरे वो पहले जैसी हो गई, सब घाव और ज़ख्म भर गए। भगवान की लीला अपरम्पार है, घर वापस आने के ठीक एक साल बाद उसकी एक फूल सी सुंदर बेटि हुई। दोनों पति पत्नी बहुत खुश हुए। मुझे उसका जीवन चक्र देखकर लगा की यह कहावत बिल्कुल सच है कि—

**“भगवान के घर देर है अंधेर नहीं है”**

# कब करोगे?

- शशी भूषण

तू लिख रही है सुर योजना,  
कब तुम गीत गाओगे,  
बिखर गई नीर उमरियाँ,  
टूट गई तेरी मटकी,  
प्यासी ही मेड़ाई,  
बात कहे क्या पनघट की।

ना जाने कितना जल पिया,  
अभी नही ये मन भरा,  
तू तृषातुर हिरणों सी,  
रेगिस्थानों में भटकी।

ये लम्बे मैदानों में,  
बालू के ढेर पड़े हैं,  
सौ योजन पर देश हैं,  
कब तुम लाँघ पाओगे ?

## समाधान

एक बूढ़ा व्यक्ति था। उसकी दो बेटियां थीं। उनमें से एक का विवाह एक कुम्हार से हुआ और दूसरी का एक किसान के साथ। एक बार पिता अपनी दोनों पुत्रियों से मिलने गया। पहली बेटी से हालचाल पूछा तो उसने कहा कि इस बार हमने बहुत परिश्रम किया है और बहुत सामान बनाया है। बस यदि वर्षा न आए तो हमारा कारोबार खूब चलेगा। बेटी ने पिता से आग्रह किया कि वो भी प्रार्थना करे कि बारिश न हो। फिर पिता दूसरी बेटी से मिला जिसका पति किसान था। उससे हालचाल पूछा तो उसने कहा कि इस बार बहुत परिश्रम किया है और बहुत फसल उगाई है परन्तु वर्षा नहीं हुई है। यदि अच्छी बरसात हो जाए तो खूब फसल होगी। उसने पिता से आग्रह किया कि वो प्रार्थना करे कि खूब बारिश हो। एक बेटी का आग्रह था कि पिता वर्षा न होने की प्रार्थना करे और दूसरी का इसके विपरीत कि बरसात न हो। पिता बड़ी उलझन में पड़ गया। एक के लिए प्रार्थना करे तो दूसरी का नुकसान। समाधान क्या हो ? पिता ने बहुत सोचा और पुनः अपनी पुत्रियों से मिला। उसने बड़ी बेटी को समझाया कि यदि इस बार वर्षा नहीं हुई तो तुम अपने लाभ का आधा हिस्सा अपनी छोटी बहन को देना। और छोटी बेटी को मिलकर समझाया कि यदि इस बार खूब वर्षा हुई तो तुम अपने लाभ का आधा हिस्सा अपनी बड़ी बहन को देना।

# दिनों का इन्द्रजाल

- सुरेश ऋतुपर्ण

दिन—दिन गिनते  
बीते कितने दिन!  
डायरी के पन्नों में  
दर्ज नहीं  
उनकी आवाजाही का ब्यौरा

पर इन दिनों में  
उन दिनों की याद है जो  
तह किए कपड़ों सी  
रखी है मेरे सिरहाने  
जो सपनों में  
इन्द्रधनुष—सी तन जाती है  
घुल जाती है  
दूध में बताशे की तरह।

दिनों की एक लम्बी  
सड़क है मेरे पास  
जिस पर चलती रहती हैं  
अनगिनत वारदातें और शरारतें  
कि जिनकी याद  
भर देती है हरातर  
शिराओं में  
और तलवों में  
कसकती है सफर की थकान।

रोज़मर्रा के कामों की फेहरिस्त में  
दाल—चावल—मसालों की तरह  
अटके हैं दिन  
कभी आँखों में  
आँसू बन डबडबाते हैं  
तो कभी  
मार खा सोई बच्ची  
के सूखे ओठों पर  
तैरती सुबकन की तरह  
उभर आते हैं दिन।

दिन, रात—दिन  
खेलते हैं  
चोर—सिपाही का खेल

आज तक पर जान नहीं पाया  
कौन है सिपाही  
और चोर है कौन?  
जानता हूँ तो बस इतना  
दोनों ने ही  
चुपके—चुपके चुराया है  
मेरा वर्तमान।

तमाम उलझनों के बीच  
कबूतरों की तरह फड़फड़ाते  
उड़ते फिरते हैं दिन  
हवाओं के समन्दर में  
लगाते हैं डुबकियाँ  
फिर वहीं लौट आते हैं  
उसी वीरान—सी छत की मुँडेर पर  
जहाँ लाल होती शाम  
बाहों में आते—आते  
अतल उदासी के सागर में डूब गई थी।

पतंग की तरह  
उड़ते रहते हैं दिन  
हाथों से जुड़े होकर भी  
दूर—दूर रहते हैं दिन  
अपनी जादुई उँगुलियों से  
हर क्षण  
रचते हैं मुझे  
रच—रचकर बिगाड़ते हैं दिन  
लिख—लिखकर मिटाते हैं दिन

कभी सींचते हैं  
तो कभी सोखते हैं  
कभी भर देते हैं लबालब  
और फिर  
पूरा का पूरा  
खाली कर जाते हैं दिन!

दिनों के इस इन्द्रजाल में  
कैद है मेरे दिनों का तिलिस्म!

# バブラの結婚式

- 吉田美紀

バブラこと従兄弟のアリジットが結婚した。夫の父方の伯母の一人息子。彼はちょっとした青年実業家で、これまで自分でいくつかビジネスを立ち上げてきた。心根も優しいなかなかの好青年である。30半ばになったアリジット。3月にお見合いをして、5月に結婚を決め、7月に式を挙げる。人生の伴侶を決めるには猛スピードに思えたが、インドでは珍しくはない。以前の職場のインド人にも、2週間の休暇を取り、インドでお見合いをして、結婚を決めて帰ってくる同僚も少なくなかった。バブラから電話で、「来てくれるよね。結婚式は7月の1週目」。「うおー、よりによって暑い最中に！」。しかし、夫の兄弟姉妹とも子供の頃から実の兄弟のように育ったバブラの結婚式では、暑かろうが寒かろうが、行かないわけにはいかない。

結婚式は3日間。招待客は600名。初日はお嫁さんの住む町ナイアハティで新婦側主催。2日目は2人が新郎の家に移動し、3日目は新郎側の主催で、彼の住むラナガットで行われる。どちらもコルカタから3時間位の場所だ。結婚式の招待状には3日目の式の招待しか書いていなかったの、「1日目も行くの？招待されていないけれど」と夫に聞くと、新郎の親族が1日目に行くのは当然のこと、とのこと。

結婚式初日の前日、夫と私はコルカタに着いた。夫の親族は、私が初めてインドの結婚式に出ると知り、どんな印象を持つか興味津々だった。式は夜なので、翌日はナイアハティとラナガットの中間にある、カンキナラの夫の家族の本拠地の家に昼過ぎから親族が集まり、3台の車で式に向かった。義姉が大きな素敵なお花を用意しており、式場に着くと、「さあ、美紀もこれを持って中に入って」と言われ、雨上がりの水たまりの間をぬって、夫の親族一同が行進するように式場に入った。おお、なんという混沌。



式場は大勢の人で、まるでラッシュアワーの東京駅。お構いなしに人を押し分けて動き回る人、人。花を抱えたまま、私は一体どこへ行ったら良いのか途方に迷っていると、義姉が来て、「お嫁さんがどこにいるかわかった。これから花を持って会いに行くから、一緒に来て」と言う。バブラのお嫁さんはどんな人かな？とワクワクしてついて行った。10畳位のその部屋には、新婦側の女性ばかり

30名程びっしり座っておられ、「どの人がお嫁さん??」。良く見ると、装飾品やメヘンディからお嫁さんがわかった。義姉と共に、「結婚おめでとう」と新婦に花を届けて挨拶をした。新婦の叔母さんらしき方が何か言っているが、ベンガル語がわからない私は、ただ精一杯ニコニコするだけ。ごめんなさい。

バブラはどこにいるのかしら。混沌とした式場を人に押されながらウロウロすると、彼は新郎の儀式の最中だった。短い儀式が続いた。日本の結婚式や披露宴では、新郎新婦に焦点があり、参列者は新郎新婦に注目し、共に式や宴が進む。しかし、ここでは招待客は、新郎新婦に注目しているというよりは、それぞれ好きなように喋ったり食べたりしていて、「ねえ、結婚のお祝にきているの？お祭りにきているの？」という感じである。儀式の最中も、カメラマンや一部の人がその写真を撮っているが、他は儀式を見るでもなく、勝手にしている。不思議な感じがした。お祝いのスピーチや新郎新婦の紹介もなく、新婦の両親や親族の挨拶もないので、私は今でもバブラのお嫁さんがどんな人なのか、一人娘でナイアハティで育ったクムクムさんという名前という事以外、知らない。私がベンガル語を解さないからわからないのかな、と思っていたら、夫の親族も同じ状態だというのがその会話からわかった。「さっきお嫁さんの傍で世話をしていた新婦のお姉さんがね・・・」「お姉さん？彼女は一人っ子だって聞いてるけど」「え？そうなの？じゃあ、あれは誰だったのかしら」「どうも従姉妹らしいよ」「ところで、新婦のご両親はどこにおられるの？」「私も見かけてない」。そんな調子だ。3日間を通じて、私は新婦の父親は見なかった。どこかにおられたらしいが。



バブラが新郎の護摩の儀式を終えて、やってきた。「おめでとう！」「日本から来てくれて、ありがとう」。間もなくその日のメインの儀式が始まるという。お嫁さんが御輿(と言っても、一枚板だが)に乗って、顔を大きな葉っぱで隠して新郎の所に来た。御輿に乗ったまま新郎の回りをぐるぐる回ると、新婦の母が登場し、榊のような枝を振って何かの儀式をし、退場した。その次は新婦が葉っぱから顔を出して、新郎と一緒にする儀式なのだが、母親は見ることを許されない儀式なのだそうだ。そういえば、バブラ

Anjali

の両親もいない。1日目の新婦側の式には、新郎の母親は参加を許されないとのこと。バブラの父親は午前中に来ていたが、式の前に帰宅した。お嫁さん側の式の日、新郎の両親は来ないのだ。



ダイニングホールのサイズの都合上、入れ替え制で出された食事も済み、夫の親族一同、帰宅の途に就くことにした。時計は11時を回っていた。バブラに「じゃあ、明後日、ラナガットでね」と言って式場を出ると、親族一同、憤慨している。「今日のこれ、どういふことよ」私の印象も気にしていた親族は、「美紀、これが普通のベンガルの結婚式だと思わないでね。本当はこんなじゃないの」と。「普通は、新郎の親族が式場に到着すると、新婦の親族が歓迎し、控えの間に案内して、そこで挨拶があり、お茶などでもてなすの。今日は、放ったらかし。お構いなし。挨拶もない。紹介もない。式もコーディネイトされてなくて、てんでんバラバラ。」そうか、この混沌はそういうことだったのね。きっと家風が異なるのね。そう思いながらやっとエアコンの入った車に乗り込み、コルカタに戻ったのは夜中の2時だった。

一日おいて、ラナガットでの新郎側主催の式に向かった。この日は新郎の家と隣の広い敷地が式場になっていた。この日も暑く、夜になっても気温は下がらない。大勢のいきれもあり、会場の温度は40度を超えていた。私は髪の毛が濡れて絞れるほど、汗ぐっしり。日本を発つ前に、1日目も3日目も式場にエアコンはないと聞いていたので、私はクールグッズを各種持参していた。文庫本サイズの箱型パーソナルファン。水で濡らして首に巻くと気化熱で涼しく感じるタオル。冷やりスプレー等々。中でも、パーソナルファンは首からぶら下げて顔に風があたるようにすることもできて、効果的だった。スプレーも一時だが涼感が得られる。

昼下がりにバブラ宅に到着した夫と私を、バブラの両親が「日本から遥々来てくれて、ありがとう」と歓迎してくれた。バブラの両親の寝室に、彼の母親を始め女性ばかりが集まっていて、ベッドには、私の義理の母を含めて3人のお婆さんが川の字になって寝ていた。さすがの暑さに、休息中のようだ。その他に、新郎新婦双方の親族女性がそこでお喋りをしていた。私もしばらくベンガル語の会話が飛び交う中にいたが、あまりの暑さに風に当たりたくなり、夫や義姉と、先祖が建てたヒンズー教のお寺に5分程歩いて行った。大理石の床に水が撒かれていて、滑らないように気をつけながら寺院をぐるぐると回ると、少し冷んやりした。バブラ宅に戻り、2階へ上がった。暑さで体

力が消耗していたらしく、風通しの良いバルコニー脇のソファに腰を下ろすと、そのまま眠ってしまった。いびきをかいて爆睡していたそうだ。「そろそろ起きたら？」と声がかかり、目を開けると、そこは女性陣の着替え場所になっていた。

女性の装束がとてもカラフルで楽しい。インドでは、色彩の豊かさが目を楽しませてくれる。式が始まる前の昼間は、ウコン色の衣服を身につけている人が多かった。ウコン色は、縁起の良い色とされていると聞く。式に出る時は、おめでたい時に身につける赤のサリーに着替える女性が多かった。インドのお嫁さんの花嫁衣装は赤。日本では披露宴に出る時、お嫁さんが身につける色である白い色のドレスは着ないものだが、インドでは花嫁衣装と同じ赤を身につける女性も多い。また、日本では結婚式に招かれた時、フォーマルカラーとされる黒のドレスや式服を着ることも多いが、インドでは結婚式で黒の衣服を身につけることは、ほぼ有り得ない。一方、男性の衣服はいたってカジュアル。ベンガルのお洒落なクルタを来ている男性もいるが、大方はポロシャツや半袖シャツにズボン、というスタイルだった。

私も着替えて階下に降りて行くと、宴が始まろうとしていた。バブラの父親が、「美紀さん、こっち、こっち。まずお茶で喉をうるおしてください。庭にはステージが組んである。もうすぐバンドの演奏や歌が始まりますよ。食事は庭のbuffetでも、このダイニングで着席のディナーでも、お好きな方で楽しんでください」と案内してくれた。広い庭には扇風機も置いてあり、その風が届くところに座り、夫の兄や姉と庭のbuffetを頂くことにした。お皿に料理を載せてもらい、スプーンかフォークを探したが、どこにもない。周りを見ると、皆、手で食べている。私はカレーを上手に手で食べられない。指の間からボロボロこぼれてしまうのだ。衛生も気になったので、スプーンはありませんか、とケータリングの人に聞くと、ない、と言われた。良く気がつく義姉が来て、「スプーンないわけないから、探してきてよ」と、ベンガル語でもう一度頼んでくれた。「じゃあ、探してきて」と言って姿を消したケータリングの人が戻ってきた。「やっぱり、ない」と言う。義姉は「そんなはずない」。でも、「ない。だから、これで食べて」と言って私に差し出したのは、バーベキューの時に肉や野菜をひっくり返す時に使う、ステンレスのトング。長さ約30cm。瞬間、一同絶句。2秒後に顔を見合わせて、大爆笑。「これで食べろって」。



その時、私は長く修行させて頂いている仏教のお寺で聞いた話を思い出した。こんな話だ。ある少年が、天国

と地獄とはどんな所か見てみたいと思った。仏教では、六界或いは十界という、地獄界・餓鬼界から天上界まで様々な界があると言われ、人間界は丁度真ん中にある。少年は、始めに地獄(餓鬼)界の食堂に案内された。丁度食事の時間で、食卓には美味しそうなご馳走が並んでいる。お腹を空かせた餓鬼がたくさん食事にやって来た。食卓には箸が置かれているが、長さが30cmもある。餓鬼はその箸でご馳走を掴んで、自分の口に入れようと試みるが、長すぎて食べ物を口に入れることができない。何とか自分の口に入れようとさんざん試みるが、とうとう一口も食べられずに食事の時間が終わり、お腹を空かせたまま食堂を去って行く。次に少年は天国の食堂に案内された。食堂は先ほどと全く同じでご馳走があり、30cmの箸が置かれている。そこでは皆、美味しいご馳走を沢山食べている。良く見ると、長い箸で食べ物を自分の口に入れようとしているのではなく、向き合った相手に「どうぞ美味しいご飯を食べてください」と、相手の口に長い箸でご馳走を運んでいるのだった。同じ状況の中で、ふたつの心。自分の利だけにとらわれてしまう心か、相手の利をまず為そうとする大乘の心か。このバーベキューのトングを通して、何か自分の心を見省きなさいという声を聞いた気がした。

この日、皆の世話やもてなしで活躍したのは、新郎の父を除けば新郎のバブラ本人だった。食事は行きわたっているか？ステージはちゃんと進んでいるか？新婦側のゲストの対応は大丈夫か？と、気がつくとう主役の新郎が汗を流して飛びまわっていた。



翌日午前の飛行機で帰国なので、早めに引き上げようと言っていたが、また時計は11時を回っていた。これから踊りが始まるから、一緒に踊って行つてと言われるが、もうそんなエネルギーは残っていない。「バブラ、末永くお幸せにね」と、私達は式場を後にした。



# 私のこだわり

－ サモント恵理菜

日常生活の中で誰でもこだわりと言う物があるかと思えます。もちろん私にもあります。そこで、今回は私のこだわりを紹介したいと思います。何気ない事ですが、案外知らない事もあったりするかもしれません。また、共感できる部分もあるかもしれません。ジャンルは関係なく「私のこだわり」をリストアップしました。ここに書いてある事がいつか役にたつ日がくるかもしれませんよ！

## クレジットカード・その他ポイントを貯める

私はポイントを貯めるのが大好きなんです！

クレジットカードのポイントやお店のポイントカードはもちろんの事、オンラインショッピングをする時にポイントサイト(広告サイトみたいな物)を経由するだけでポイントサイトのポイントももらえちゃうんです！つまりポイントサイトで紹介されているサイト(おなじみのサイトがいっぱいあります！Yahoo!ショッピングや楽天、その他いろいろ！)で買い物をすると、クレジットカードのポイント、買い物をしたサイトのポイント、さらにポイントサイトのポイントがもらえちゃうんです！ポイントサイトのポイントは全て航空会社のマイルに移行するんです！(もちろんクレジットカードのポイントもマイルにしちゃいます！)ちなみにポイントサイトのポイントは現金にも交換できるんです！

## マイルで旅行に行く

今は出張ばかりですが、これから個人で旅行に行く時は貯めたマイルで旅行に行こうかと思っています！飛行機に乗らないとマイルは貯まらないと思っている方がほとんどですが、私は①番でお話したクレジットカードのポイントやポイントサイトのポイントも全てマイルにするので結構貯まるんです！ちなみに私はANAのマイルを貯めていますが、マイルが貯まるキャンペーンをよくやっているのも活用しています！旅行に行きたいけど運賃高いな～・・・といつも思っているので、マイルで行けたらお得だな～と思い、2年位前からマイルを貯め始めました！

## 夜中のフライトは生野菜食をオーダー

インド行き、インド発のフライトはよく夜中の便を利用します。エアインディアで行く昼出発する便なら良いのですが、タイ航空に乗ると必ず夜中なんですよ～そこで困るのが食事。夜遅くに食べるのが好きではないので、単純にいらないと言えば良いのですが、食べ物が大好きな私としてはそれが言えないのです(笑)そこで、私は航空会社が提供しているスペシャルミールを活用しています。航空会社は実にさまざまなスペシャルミールを用意しています。インド人におなじみのHindu Vegetarianミールの他にもMuslim Meal, Kosher Meal, Chinese Vegetarianなどの宗教食の他にDiabetic Meal(糖尿病食)Raw Vegetable Meal(生野菜食)Bland Meal(無塩食)Low Fat Meal(低脂肪食)Low Calorie Meal(低カロリー食)Fruit Platter(フルーツプレート)など健康に気を使う方の為にも様々なミールが準備されている事を意外と知らない方が多いです。ちなみに夜中のフライトだった場合、私は生野菜食を頼んでいます！たいいていの場合、他のお客さんに食事を配る前に運んでくれるので早く食事にありつけます(笑)ただし出発日から48時間以上前にホームページ・又は航空会社に電話して予約しなければいけませんので、活用しようと思っている方はお早めに！(無料です)。

## 安い物をたくさん買うより良い物を少し買う

昔は安い物をあまり考えずにたくさん買っていました。やっぱり失敗しますね！すぐ壊れちゃったり使い勝手がすごく悪かったり・・・あと、安いと「安いからいいか！」という具合にあまり考えずに買ってしまふから失敗する率が高くなる・・・というが今まで良くあったので、ロコミなどを読んで安くても良い物を探すのはもちろん、ちょっと高くても評判が良ければそっちを選ぶ様になりました。ちょっと高いだけでも大事に扱うようになりますし・・・高い＝良い物という訳ではありませんがね！

## 車・バイクの免許はいらない！

ときどき免許があったら楽しいだろうな～・・・とか仕事上で便利だろうな～とか思うのですが、東京に住んでいると必要性があまり無いとか維持費がかかりすぎるとか言う一般的な理由以外にも、運動不足になりそうだな～・・・という理由から免許はいらないな～・・・という結論にいたりしました！いざとなったらタクシー使えばいいし！ちなみにとあるお医者さんが東京で車を保有する方が安いのか、ちょっとしたことでもタクシーを使うのが安いのか実験してみたところ、タクシーの方が安かったそうです！まあ日常的に毎日毎日タクシーで通勤とかしたら高くなるかもしれませんが、そうでなければタクシーの方がいいみたいです！

## 階段やエスカレーターの前で降りたい！

私はせっかちなので、普通の人より歩くのが早いと思っています。なので、電車から降りた時に階段やエスカレーターの前で降りてスタスタ進めるようにiPhoneで調べて電車に乗ります。よく使う路線はもちろん暗記です！まあよく使う

路線ではよくある話でしょうけど、たまにしか使わない線でもわざわざドアの前で降りようと調べて乗る人はどの位いるのでしょうか？あと、乗り換えもなるべくスムーズに行くようにいつも頑張ってせかせか歩いてます(笑)早歩きをするのは、脂肪燃焼してくれそうだから・・・という理由もあります。あ！でも走るの嫌いなんで、基本早歩きです！

### お店でに居て、商品が目の前にあってもなるべくネットで買う。

せっかくお店に買い物に来て、欲しい商品が目の前にあっても、私はなるべくネットで買い物します。値段が断然安かったり、ポイントサイトのポイントがもらえたり、送料無料だったり・・・物によってはオークションで買います！結構こだわってます！

### クレジットカードの支払いは引き落とし日まで待たない。

クレジットカードのポイントは欲しいけど、借金している気分は嫌だ・・・

なので、私はクレジットカード会社に電話して、振込み以外にも方法があれば定期的に支払ってしまいます。今、私が使っているANA VISAカードの場合はローソンでの現金払いが可能だと言われたので、定期的にコンビニで払っています！

### インドに行く時は食事に気をつける。

下痢にならないように・・・ではありませんよ！なんてたって私は9年インドで生活し、今でも年に1回はインドに行っているんで、ちょっとやそっとじゃお腹壊さないんです！(ちなみに屋台で食べてもへっちゃらです)

じゃあ何に気をつけるかと言うと・・・

太らないように気をつけることです！

家で毎日食事するならまだしも、インドの外出はリッチで美味しいものがいっぱい！しかも、日本みたいにせかせか歩いたり電車に乗ったり階段を上り下りする機会が極端に減るので、超運動不足状態！そんな状態でクライアントとディナーに行ったらさあ大変！食べ物はずっごくおいしいのはよーく分かっているんで、前に出されるとついつい食べてしまいます。出張1年目や2年目は慣れていなかった上に、懐かしのインド料理～と言う事でめいっぱい食べて、後々苦しい思いをしました(笑)食べる時間も遅いですね・・・

今は結構慣れてきましたが、油断は禁物！相当気をつけてます！

### 買いすぎに気をつける。

何を買いすぎるかって？

「あ！これ懐かしい～」という事で、インドのスーパーに行くとお菓子をじゃんじゃん買っちゃうんですよ～・・・思い出に浸るといふか・・・

それから、新製品を見ると買っちゃいますね～(笑)

でも、後から分かったのですが・・・

物によりますが、インドのお菓子はインドで食べるのが美味しいですね！特に辛いスナック菓子なんかはインドのあの空気の中で食べるのが一番おいしい！

最近はインドで食べきれる分だけ買うように努力しています。

### コーヒー・紅茶はミルク、砂糖なしで飲む。

これはこだわりと言うかなんと言うか・・・習慣ですかね？

インドに住んでいる時はミルクと砂糖がこれでもか！と言うくらい入っている「ミルクwithコーヒーor紅茶」を平気で飲んでたのに・・・(ご存知の方も多いと思いますが、コーヒーor紅茶withミルクではないです(笑)ミルクと砂糖が主役くらいの勢いです。)

今では薄めのブラックコーヒーかストレートティーしか飲みません！

どれ位薄いコーヒーかと言うと、スタバに行って一番小さいサイズのカフェアメリカノを頼み、カップだけ一つ上のサイズにしてもらい、余ったスペースにお湯を注いでもらってます！お湯ですですに薄めてあるコーヒーを更に薄くさせるのです。でも、濃いコーヒーが出てきて薄めてもらえない時にはミルクと砂糖を入れます。ミルクなし＝砂糖なし。ミルクあり＝砂糖ありってとこです！

いつもこういう飲み方なので、インドのクライアントの会社に行ってコーヒーや紅茶を砂糖とミルク要るか要らないか聞かれないうま出されると、私としては信じられない位甘い物に出くわす事が度々あります(笑)

ちなみに、インドのマサラチャイは好きです！砂糖は別にしてね！と言って、自分の好きように調整して飲んでます！

いかかでしたか？共感できる話や知らなかった～という話、ありましたか？

皆さんも毎日の生活に取り入れている役にたつこだわりや習慣を改めて考えてみて、長所としてとらえ、前向きに楽しい毎日を過ごしてみませんか？



# ブナ林の木漏れ日

— チャットパダイ 朱門

「久しぶりに家族旅行しよっか」

父の何気ない一言でそれはすぐに決まった。半年振りに私が帰省する時に、家族三人でどこかに旅をすることになった。どこか行きたいところは無いかと聞かれた私は、「どこでもいいよー」と両親に旅行の計画を丸投げし、大学四年の残りの期間を満喫しに戻った。

一週間後に再び両親と連絡した時、母が嬉しそうに私に報告してくれた。

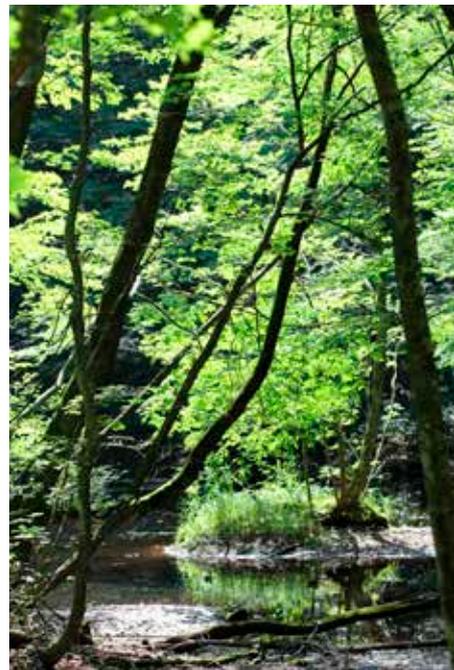
「白神山地にトレッキングに行くことにしたよー」

白神山地とは、青森県と秋田県の県境にかけて広がる、ユネスコ世界遺産に登録されている山岳地帯のことだ。そこに広がる原生的なブナ自然林は、人の影響をほとんど受けずに分布している。特に核心地帯は、遊歩道や登山道などの人工物が一切無く、熟練したガイドと同伴しなければ遭難してしまう危険性がある。



両親は、この核心地帯の周りにある緩衝地帯の、またその外側に位置する「十二湖」というところをトレッキングする旅行を計画したのだ。

「ええ、せっかくの休みに山登り？」と一瞬、私は思ってしまった。しかし、久しぶりの家族旅行。その上、世界遺産をこの目で見る事が出来る。そう自分に言い聞かせ、久しぶりに東京に帰省する日を心待ちにした。



まるでジブリの森に足を踏み入れたようだった。私のアニメ好きがバレてしまうであろう発言だが、そのときはそれしか私の頭の中には無かった。遊歩道以外は人の痕跡は全くなく、生い茂ったブナの間から垣間見える木漏れ日は神々しさを有していた。風に揺らされる木の葉の音が耳に心地よく、光に照らされた緑は私の目を癒してくれていた。今にも木の陰からシシ神が出てきてもおかしくない、と思ってしまった。

その日のガイドは、地元ガイド倶楽部会長の板谷さん。風貌も雰囲気も、まるで仙人のよう。私たち家族三人をちらっと観察し、「皆元気そうだから、もうドンドン行っちゃいましょう」と板谷さん。山登りをいやがっていた私は、逆に森の奥に行けることにわくわくしていた。舗装された道からすぐのところがこれだけ雄大なのだから、もっと人里から離れた奥地はよほど神秘的なのだろう、と勝手に思っていた。予想通りだった。

歩いていくほど緑はどんどん濃くなり、夏とは思えないほど涼しげな空気が漂っていた。歩いていた道がどんどん細くなっていき、次第に両脇から草にくすぐられるほど細くなっていた。もうそれは人が通る道ではなく、獣道であった。



板谷さんは脇道にそれると、靴の中から鉋を出し、道無き道を切り崩し始めた。「おお、コダマがそろそろ出てきそう」と、私は余計わくわくしてしまった。歩き始めてもう既に二時間ほどが過ぎていたが、足は全然疲れを感じなかった。



両親も楽しんでいるようだった。父は一眼レフを持参し、花や昆虫、時折顔を出す鳥などを次々と写していた。母は必死に道を進みながらも、物珍しい草や花を見つけては、板谷さんに名前などを訪ねていた。

「ブナの木の寿命は200年から300年ぐらいなんだよ」と、板谷さんは説明してくれた。堂々とそびえ立つブナの木を見上げながら、私は木の葉の間からこぼれる日差しに魂を洗われているような感覚に陥っていた。

ひとがブナの木のように何百年と長寿になるには、やはり大地にしっかりと根を下ろし、どっしり構えてゆっくりと人生を生きなければいけないのではないか。色々な場所に忙しく飛び回り、仕事などであくせく働いてはやはり長生きは出来ないのではないか？ブナの木のよう

に、生きるのに必要なものだけまわりから集め、焦らず、何も考えすぎず、ただじっくりまわりを見極め、ほかの植物や動物と共存しなければ長生きをしても実りある人生を送れないのではないか？

と、なぜか獣道を歩いている間に変な哲学的な考えが芽生えてしまった。しかし、五時間後、やっと十二湖を全部回りおわり、下山したときに感じた疲れは、肉体的な疲労感ではなく、精神的な爽快感と、何かを変えなければ、という漠然とした焦りだった。

自分がどんなにちっぽけな存在なのか、ということ気付かされた。あれから私は、焦らず、じっくりを新しいモットーに日々精進している。物事の心配をせず、成るようになると、ブナの木のようにどっしり構えることにした。大学を卒業し、大学院に進学し、今年の夏は何かと節目となるが多かったが、白神山地へのこの旅行は、自分の中の「何か」を変える触媒にと思う。たかが山登り、と思う人もいるだろうが、やはり白神山地には神秘的なものを私は感じる。

また行きたい、と私は思った。今度訪れたときは、どんな考えが芽生え、どんな自分に出会えるのだろうか？



そして、次回はトトロに出会えるのだろうか？と、変な創造を膨らませながら、私はまたあの森を訪れる機会を心待ちにしている。



# フラワーアクセサリとサリーイベント

- Christine Bannerjee

August 2012

2年前からフラワーアレンジレッスンを始めて、生花やアートフラワーやプリサブフラワーのアレンジを学び、とても内容の充実したレッスンをうけています。教室はフラワースタジオ・ブローディア、主宰の先生は中川雅子先生です。

<http://hana-brodiaea.dreamblog.jp/>

レッスンの間、アレンジをしながら、話したりするので、私の主人がインド人であることが先生にわかりました。先生がとてもインドの文化や民族衣装の興味を持って、サリーとお花と一緒になかできないかと考え始めて、今年6月に東京でフラワーアクセサリとサリーイベントを行いました。

フラワーアクセサリとは言え、生花をワックスコーティングして作るものです。生徒さんが自分の好きなデザインのアクセサリができるので、とても人気です。そして、アクセサリが完成してから、サリーを着付けしてもらって、撮影も行いました。

今回サリーを着付けするため、Tuli Patraさんにお手伝いいただき、撮影は腕がプロに近い中村邦男さんと友人の三浦良枝さんがお手伝いくださいました。そして、うちの主人も撮影のアシスタントとして、手伝いをしてくれ、本当に皆さんに感謝しています。



アクセサリはネックレスで、まず、先生がやり方を説明しました。形は柔らかいワイヤをワイヤパンチでネックレスの模様を作ります。その後、好きなお花を選びます。当日先生の用意したお花は赤のバラ、ピンクのバラ、オレンジのバラ、紫のスターチス、ピンクのラン、黄色のオンシジウム、緑のマトリカリア等でした。様々な色と種類のお花が並び、生徒さんは時間をかけ、好きなお花を選びました。



お花が決まったら、今度はワックスコーティングします。とても簡単そうな手順ですが、手早さにかかってます。熱いワックスなので、遅すぎると、お花が枯れてしまいます。ワックスコーティングして、しばらく置いて、乾かしてから、考えたデザインのようにワイヤの上にグルーでワックスしたお花を付けます。非常に細かい作業になり、皆さんが集中しながら、やっていました。



アクセサリが終わってから、今度は様々な色とデザインのサリーを選んで、着付けしてもらいました。自分でもサリーを何回も着ましたが、やはりTuliさんが本当に上手に着付けてくださって、関心しました。何と云っても、女性の体のラインがすごく綺麗に見せられました。

最後に、サリーを着付けて、自分が作ったアクセサリを付けて、撮影してもらいました。皆さんが本当に御姫様のような雰囲気でした。サリーの経験がない生徒さんばかりなので、皆さんにとっても喜んでもらいました。そして、中村さんと三浦さんに素敵な写真を撮っていただき、素晴らしい思い出になりました。



# サーカスを追いかけて

— サーカスアーティスト 金井圭介 —

— 辻しのぶ



## 彼

の右手がすっと上へ上へ上がると、その場の空気がほんのわずかにピリリとする。

彼の手はクラブと呼ばれるこん棒をあざやかに投げ上げ回転させているが、彼の目は冷静に客席を見渡している。流れるような身体の動きから次々と繰り広げられるパフォーマンスは、観るものの目を、意識を、釘づけにして離さない。

金井圭介の肩書はサーカスアーティストだ。

子供の頃、偶然に目にした大道芸人にあこがれた。しかし、当時彼らの代表的な芸であるジャグリングを覚えてくれるところはなく、とりあえず中学2年でタップダンスを始めた。習って数カ月で自分のタップを試めそうと、新宿の歩行者天国でタップを踏んだある日、帰り際にたった一人の観客からもらった百円玉。これが、彼をそのままこの道に進ませる大きなきっかけとなった。

学校を卒業した後は、ダンスやミュージカルの仕事をしたり、無言劇のグループに所属した。ちょうどその頃、フランスの国立サーカス大学を卒業した人たちの公演を偶然目にする。それは、シルクと呼ばれるサーカスよりもっと原始的な表現をするものであったが、子供の頃あこがれた大道芸を思い出させるものでもあった。

これをきっかけに、金井はフランスの王立サーカス大学の門を叩くことになった。

ちょうど日本でも、シルク・ド・ソレイユやジンガロといった公演が話題になったところである。

サーカス大学に入学するには通常その前に通う学校があり、その生徒たちはそれぞれ専門分野を持っている。しかし金井はむしろ、それまでのダンスや演劇などの多彩な経験をかかわれた。ようやくにして、子供の頃見たパントマイムやクラウン(ピエロ)のパフォーマンスを、そこで学ぶことができた。

卒業後は、ヨーロッパ各地やアフリカでサーカス公演に参加したり、振付家の作品に出演したり、また自身のカンパニーを設立して独自のパフォーマンスを続けている。

「パフォーマンスとは自分の技を見せるだけではなく、お客さんとコミュニケーションすることだ」と金井は言う。なるほど、だから華麗なパフォーマンスの間、彼の目はいつも観客に向かう。そして表現している時、己の身体と感情はお互いを行き来しているのだという。

タップダンスから始まり、ダンス、演劇、パントマイムと、様々な表現手段を学んでわかったことは、自分が表現したいものは、言葉では表わしにくい生命の躍動といったものであり、それには今まで学んだすべての表現方法が不可欠だったということだ。

もう彼のパフォーマンスに迷いはない。

彼のあやつるクラブはいつしか魚のように姿を変え、観客の目の前をゆったりと泳ぎだす。いきなり泳ぐスピードが早くなったかと思うとすると姿を隠し、気がつけば元のクラブの姿に戻り金井の手の中におさまった。

観客は数分間、間違いなく金井と一緒に架空の海の中を共有していた。金井の目的は、間違いなく達成されたのである。

<金井圭介(かないけいすけ)氏プロフィール>





東京生まれ。サーカスアーティスト。芸術人類学研究所特別研究員。

2002年CNACフランス国立サーカス大学を経て、フィリップ・デクフレ演出のサーカスなどに参加。自身のカンパニーOKIHAIKUDAN作品[Bougez pas Bouger]でヨーロッパ、中東、アフリカなど35カ国で公演。

ソロ作品[Gai-Kotsu]ではヨーロッパ4カ国で公演。日本では札幌芸術の森、越後妻有アトリエンナーレ、横浜バンカート、静岡CCC、松本市民芸術館などに参加。

現在も「くるくるシルクDX」「あしなが・空中散歩」など、サーカスをテーマに活動。アークスプロジェクトでは、2009年度に「arcus de circus 空中散歩」のワークショップ講師を務めている。

#### Keisuke Kanai HP:

Youtube : Keisuke Kanai Juggling

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZgbBJ5DxYfl&feature=relmfu>

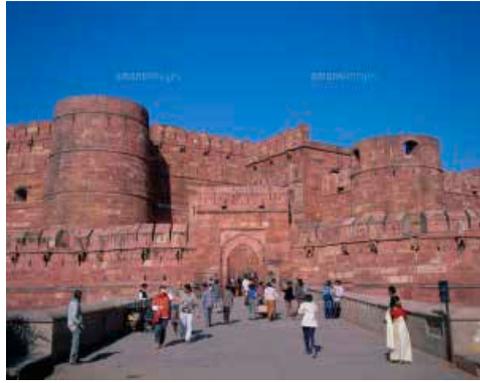


# インド旅行記

- 小宮 由次



タージ・マハール



アグラ城

悠久の風が流れる神秘の国、インド。四千年の歴史を誇る遺跡や古都と最新のIT産業の新興都市が混然と融合するこの国を一言で表すことは、難しい。

インドを訪れた8月半ばは、雨季の真っ最中。滞在した首都・デリー郊外のニュータウン“グルガオン”は、毎日どんよりした雨雲に覆われ、丁度日本の梅雨のように小雨がしとしと降り続き、時折遠くで稲光が瞬いていた。-

数あるインドの名所の中で、インドはもとより世界で最も美しい建築物といわれる世界遺産「タージ・マハール」を訪れた。

タージ・マハールがある古都・アグラは、デリーから大河・ヤムナー河沿いに200kmほど南下した所に位置する。ムガル帝国の残したイスラム文化の香りの高い地方都市で、今や世界的に有名な観光地でもある。

グルガオンからアグラまで180kmほどの距離を車で延々6時間の道のりであった。首都デリー周辺を除くとこの国のインフラは、信じられないほど整備されていない。電気・水道は言うに及ばず、道路も至る所、というよりも全線アスファルトは傷んだまま、穴ぼこだらけで危険極まりない。その上道路には、人ばかりか犬も牛も野生化した豚までもがのんびり歩いたり、寝そべっている。さらに時折急な大雨があると道路はたちまち冠水し、渋滞に巻き込まれて平均時速は30kmほどでしか走れない。

町には人と車が溢れかえっている。顔つきの異なる様々な人々が行き交う光景は、この国の多様性を象徴している。車は噂通り、スズキの現地生産車「マルチスズキ」が最も多く見られる。トヨタやホンダの中・小型車がこれに続き、ヒンデ（現代）、欧州車がたまに目につく。市民の足、タクシーは、黄色と緑のツートンに塗り分けられた三輪のオートリクシャーがレーンの描かれていない道路を縦横に走り回っている。

延々と同じような田園風景が続き、雨が止むと砂ぼこりの舞う悪路を走り続けてようやく目的のアグラの市内に辿りついた。何故か途中の道の両側には花らしい植物は、全くといって言いほど見当たらない。東南アジア諸国のようなハイビスカスやブーゲンビリアを始め南国特有の草花が咲いていないのはいささか残念な気持ちだ。これは気候だけでなく、土壌の違いからも知れない。植物ばかりか昆虫もあまり見かけない。赤トンボは飛んでい

るが、セミの鳴き声は全く聞こえない。植物にも昆虫にも厳しい自然なのだろうか？

アグラの町に入り、赤砂岩の城壁が延々と続く巨大なアグラ城(Agra Fort)が目飛び込んでくる。ムガル帝国歴代の皇帝が住んだ赤茶色の広大な城で、築450年に及ぶイスラム様式の迫力のある建物だ。タージ・マハールを建てたムガル帝国第5代皇帝シャー・ジャハーンが栄華を極めた末に、息子アウラングゼーブによって帝位を追われ、城の片隅に幽閉されて寂しくその一生を終えたことでも知られる。

このアグラ城に沿って流れるヤムナー河を回ると世界遺産のタージ・マハールの白い優雅な姿が現れる。アグラ城とタージ・マハールは、古都アグラの象徴である。

アグラ城と同様、赤砂岩の正門に囲まれたタージ(王冠)・マハール(宮殿)と呼ばれる総大理石の建物は、宮殿ではなく巨大な墓としてシャー・ジャハーンによって建てられたもの。

皇帝シャー・ジャハーンが愛する王妃ムムターズ・マハルの死を悼み、22年の歳月を費やして建てた白大理石のイスラム建築物と広大な庭園に圧倒される。この墓の地下には、王妃と並んでシャー・ジャハーン自身の棺が納められている。

このタージ・マハール建物本体は、均整のとれた美しい巨大なドームのほか幾つかの小さめのドームに覆われ、その周囲四隅にはモスクに見られるミナレット(塔)がバランス良く配置されている。これらの全ての建築物は、ムガル帝国の財力を惜しみなく注ぎ込み総大理石仕上げ、象嵌加工が施された荘厳な姿は、王妃を想い続けたシャー・ジャハーンの変わらぬ愛情のように350年経った今日でもその輝きは変わることがない。

今日のインドは、人口の8割を超えるヒンドゥー教の国だが、イスラム教、キリスト教、仏教も信仰する多宗教の国でもある。かつてのムガル王朝の時代にインドの大部分を政治的に支配したイスラム教は、文化的にも大きな影響を及ぼしてきた。インドに浸透したイスラム教は、征服により改宗を迫ったものではなく、ヒンドゥー教と融和して共存してきた歴史がある。今日、タージ・マハールがイスラム教徒のみならずあらゆる宗教、階層のインドの人々に親しまれている所以であろう。

# わっこひろば「宙」の活動

- 山田 さくら

# わ

っこひろば「宙」も2年目に入り、少しずつだが日常の保育を通して先の見通しが持てるようになってきた。子どもの人数はまだまだ少ないが、宙の保育の方向性をしっかりと築き上げていくこの時期にとつて、適った人数なのかもしれないと思っている。

\* \*

今年は、宙の近くに畑を借りて畑の収穫を楽しんだ。まわりの畑のおばあちゃん達とも仲良くなり大きな声であいさつをしたりお話をしたり、時々野菜をいただいたり、畑のお蔭でご近所の方達との交流も増え、ふだん子ども達の姿があまり見られなくなったこの地域でみなさん喜んで下さっているようだ。

夏野菜のキュウリ・トマト・なす・とうもろこし・カボチャ・じゃがいもを子ども達と一緒に植えた。野菜が収穫出来るようになると、みんな畑へ行ってトマトをその場で採って食べるのが楽しみのひとつになった。

苗から野菜達が少しずつ成長していく姿、新鮮な野菜の味、そしてせっかく大きくなった野菜の葉っぱを食べに来る害虫・などなど子ども達は宙の小さな畑からいろんなことを学んでいる。畑の土を掘ればミミズ、アマガエルは周りにたくさん跳ねていて彼らもまた子ども達の良き遊び相手。最初はなかなかミミズもカエルもつかめなかったのに、今ではすっかり平気。

収穫したキュウリを丸かじりしたり、クッキング保育の時間に採れたての野菜でカレーを作ったり、七夕の日(こちらは8月7日)の七夕まんじゅうの中身にカボチャやナスであんを作って入れたり、自分達で作る楽しさ、作ったものを食べる楽しさを十分に味わい豊かな経験を少しずつ積んでいっている。



畑での活動



おいしそうに出来上がった七夕まんじゅう

宙では、毎日神社へお参りに行き神社の境内で鬼ごっこやかくれんぼ、すもうごっこを楽しんでいる。神社は子ども達にとって恰好の遊び場だ。

神社が歩いてすぐの所にあり、宙から見える位置にあるというのは、「信仰」からほど遠くなってしまったこの国で、土着の信仰心を取り戻すにはとても良い環境と思える。

東日本大震災以来、ますます将来の見通しが不透明になってしまった日本。将来へのしっかりとした方向性を持って生きていくためにも日常の信仰心は、未来ある子ども達にとって必要不可欠なものに違いない。そういうものを普段の生活の中で無理なく身に着けていって欲しいと願っている。

宙の活動風景



☞ 6月にある方の行為で、田んぼの一隅を貸していただき、田植えをさせてもらいました。北アルプスを望みながらの田植え、9月の稲刈りも楽しみです。

田植えに飽きたら泥泳ぎ？この数分後には全身すっかり泥だらけに



☞ 外でペインティング遊び

宙の入り口に飾りました



宙では室内遊び、戸外遊びをバランス良く取り入れた保育を行っている。

毎週一回は、音楽専門の先生による音楽保育を取り入れ、リトミックや楽器遊びなどを楽しんでいる。

先日、ある方が中古だがスタンドピアノをプレゼントして下さり子ども達は大喜び。自分が今まで大切に使用していたピアノを『未来ある子ども達に託せて嬉しい』という言葉もいただき感謝の気持ちでいっぱい。

未来ある子ども達が、ピアノを始め本物に触れて育っていくということは、脳が刺激を求め急成長するこの幼児期にとって非常に大切なことなのだ。常にそれらのことを念頭に置きながら保育をしていきたいと思っている。

宙の子ども達がこれからどう成長していくのか、ますます楽しみだ。

