

REFLECTIONS



EVENTS & EXPERIENCES
2015-16

A PUBLICATION FROM



IAS OFFICERS' WIVES ASSOCIATION, ASSAM

ACHIEVING INSTITUTIONAL EXCELLENCE



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REFLECTIONS







Message

I am very glad to know that Prerana, the IAS Officers' Wives Association of Assam, is bringing out its Souvenir *Reflections* as part of its fund raising activities for charity.

Prerana is one of the well-known NGOs in the State doing commendable work for the under-privileged and for the larger community. It is my belief that Prerana will continue to be a source of support, strength as well as an inspiration for other such organizations that serve society.

I am sure that this Souvenir *Reflections*, will also contribute towards captivating its readers with beautiful articles, poems, paintings etc and will at the same time cement the bonding between all the members of Prerana.



BANWARILAL PUROHIT
Governor of Assam







GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM

Message

It is a matter of great pleasure that Prerana, the IAS Officers' Wives Association, is bringing out a Souvenir to carry forward its mission and vision to help the under-privileged sections.

As the name implies, Prerana should impart inspiration to the lives of the under-privileged and bring them to enlightenment. It is indeed heartwarming to note that over the years, Prerana has been providing a platform for hundreds of under-privileged children, women and others and has been a social, cultural and intellectual refuge in times of crisis.

I convey my best wishes to all the members and other stakeholders of Prerana for all their future endeavours.

SARBANANDA SONOWAL
Chief Minister







Message

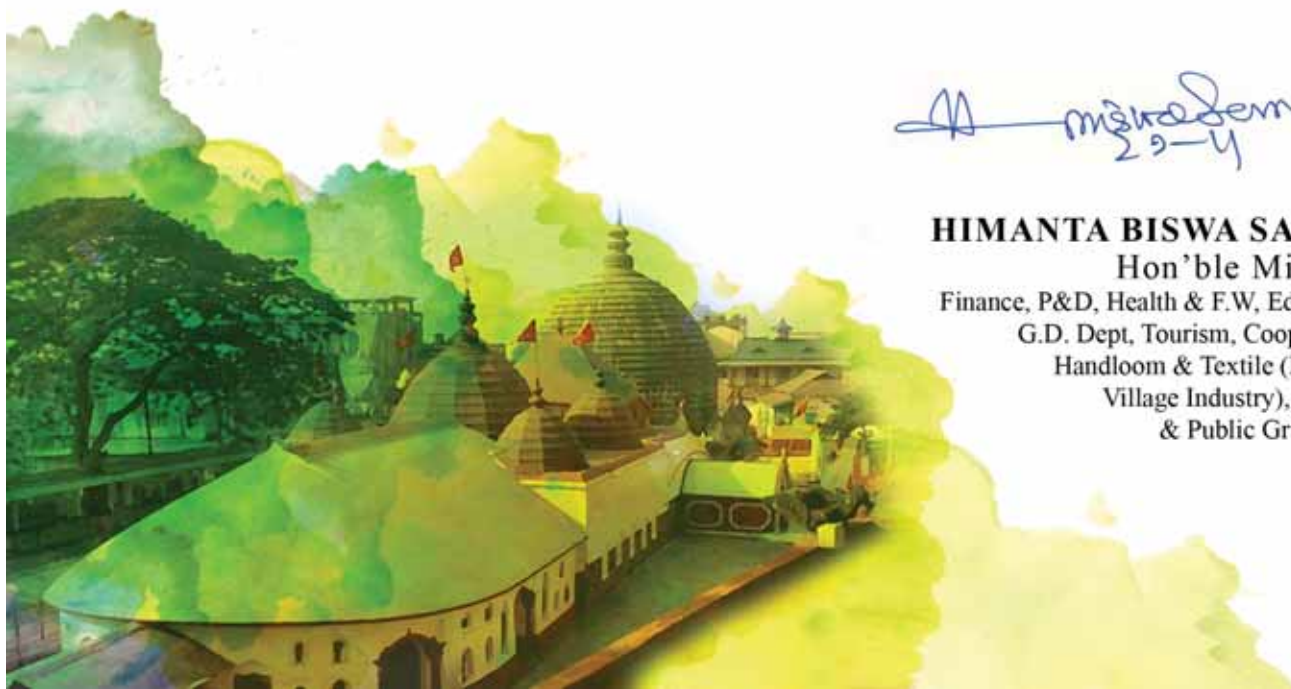
It gives me immense pleasure to learn that Prerana, the IAS Officers' Wives Association of Assam, is bringing out a Souvenir to raise funds for many of their charitable works. Apart from providing a forum for meaningful interaction within the community, organizations such as Prerana play an important role in our society as they always strive to reach out to the under-privileged sections in every possible way through their philanthropic activities. Projects such as Mission Shraavan which have made a difference to lives of so many hearing-impaired children, Quizitive that brings together all the city schools and helps to spread both general knowledge and awareness, are some of the ways in which Prerana has always endeavoured to reach out.

It is hoped that in the coming years Prerana will continue to be a beacon of inspiration and will always remain a ray of hope among the under-privileged sections of society.

I would like to convey my heartiest best wishes to the Association as well as for the august publication.

29-4

HIMANTA BISWA SARMA
Hon'ble Minister
Finance, P&D, Health & F.W, Education,
G.D. Dept, Tourism, Cooperation,
Handloom & Textile (Khadi &
Village Industry), Pension
& Public Grievances





Message from the Chief Secretary

I am delighted to know that Prerana is going to publish a Souvenir showcasing its activities and achievements.

Prerana is a group of inspiring women who support the IAS fraternity in a variety of ways. The most visible and valuable support comes in the form of various social events which bring all IAS officers together promoting vertical and horizontal interaction. This has helped create an atmosphere of camaraderie and bonhomie which is envied by other cadres. But the real contribution of Prerana is its commitment to improve the lot of the disabled and the downtrodden. Month after month, the members of Prerana reach out to some organization or the other to express their solidarity and to partner with like-minded socially committed people.

I hope that Prerana will continue to grow from strength to strength and be able to accomplish its mission.

VINOD KUMAR PIPERSENIA
Chief Secretary



EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2015-16

From L to R: Rashmi Narzary, Shaguphta Hussain, Priya Vinod, Suchitra Pyarelal, Jonali Bora, Suman Pipersenia, Anamika Tewari, Elsa Eapen, Anjana Jain

Absent members: Monika Jindal, Shakuntala Mewara



Message from the President

I am extremely happy that Prerana is publishing its Souvenir, chronicling the activities undertaken by the members during the last one year.

I have had the privilege of being associated with Prerana ever since its birth. This organization, which made a humble beginning with very few members in 1989, has today become a representative organization of the families of all IAS officers. Apart from providing the opportunity for social interaction to the members and their families, particularly the IAS officers, Prerana has also provided an outlet for the benevolent part of their personalities by enabling them to contribute to various social causes, both physically and financially. These activities have helped create a strong bonding in all members and their families, which is cherished by each and every one of us. I feel proud to say that Prerana has been largely responsible for creating a family-like atmosphere among all IAS officers.

I am grateful to all members for their immense contribution and commitment to make every event undertaken by Prerana, a resounding success. Be it our flagship event Quizitive or Mission Shraavan or monthly meetings, each event has been immensely memorable, thanks to the efforts and willing participation of each member. I wish to thank each member of Prerana for sparing their valuable time and energy for the work of Prerana. It is because of their efforts that Prerana is today considered a leading NGO in the State.

I thank my dear friend Elsa Eapen and the whole editorial team who have worked extremely hard to make this Souvenir a true work of art. Without their tireless efforts, it would have been impossible to bring out the Souvenir in its present form. I thank all the sponsors who have contributed generously to help us accomplish Prerana's mission. I also thank everyone who has been contributing from behind the scenes to help Prerana in its various activities, particularly all those who have taken pains to write articles for this Souvenir.

SUMAN PIPERSENIA
President, PRERANA



Message from the Secretary

We would be justified in thinking that bringing out a Souvenir is just a simple exercise for fund raising, and every organization does it... But for us at Prerana, it's different. We try to do things away from the mundane, striking and straight from the heart! This magazine titled *Reflections*, speaks the story of love, bonding and compassion for and of its members, their families, the sponsors, the contributors and all who are involved with it. Prerana has over the decades been a story of caring and sharing...caring for all who need a helping hand in society and sharing both good and bad times of all the members!

My association with Prerana started with my marriage, but the way it has impacted me is unimaginable. It has transformed my ordinary days of juggling a demanding job and a house full of naughty kids and demanding elders, into a beautiful and exciting journey of improvement, self-satisfaction, freedom and friendship.

Prerana has a very beautiful history. Its founder members had a purpose – to give a sense of direction and meaning to the lives of the young lonely brides of the always busy bureaucrats of the State coming from across the country. They have nourished it with so much love, energy and enthusiasm that now Prerana is capable of giving the same back. All the members of Prerana are bound by a mission of spreading smiles to one and all.

Reflections is an endeavor to treasure time. I sincerely thank each person who knowingly or unknowingly has been a contributor in the making of it. Our dynamic President, Suman Pipersenia, our Editor, Elsa Eapen and the editorial team, have seen this project through from concept to completion. Many Prerana members contributed their time and efforts for this endeavour. My special thanks to our sponsors, who have made it all possible. I have gained so much from this effort and hope that you will all enjoy going through *Reflections*.

ANAMIKA TEWARI
Secretary, PRERANA

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Letter from the Editor



It has been a long journey, from the day we had our first meeting at Suman's house several months ago, when we discussed and shared ideas about what shape and form the Souvenir would take, to the various roles that each of us in the editorial team would play, to the day when we finally saw the first copy of *Reflections* in print.

Like all journeys, this one too has had its share of ups and downs, though in retrospect I would say that they were mainly ups. Each member of the team applied themselves to their assigned tasks with enthusiasm and commitment. It didn't matter that some of the roles and tasks were big and some were small. As we all know, no task can be achieved, no project can see completion, without both small and big things coming together and operating in tandem.

Indu, Anjana, Mona and many other members approached advertisers and made sure they supported our cause. Priya and Leena collated and listed and made Excel sheets that kept us on track. Vandana and Priya made countless phone calls to make sure that

as many members as possible (and their families) contributed. Rashmi helped with the first set of edits. Anamika juggled a hundred requests, answered every phone call and every e-mail and never lost her cool or her smile. Suman, the primary motivator for all of Prerana's endeavours, provided steady support and encouragement, answering phone calls and mails and assisting in whatever way she could, in spite of the fact that she was unwell for most of the gestation period of *Reflections*.

In the end, we are gratified to see the result of our efforts. *Reflections* is not just a record of what Prerana achieved in 2015-16, from regular monthly meetings and social events to collaborative workshops and a variety of important social causes. As you will see from the photographs and articles, it is a testament to the diversity of talent and experience that all members of Prerana bring to the table – we have teachers, doctors and writers, as well as homemakers, activists, civil servants and engineers in our midst. *Reflections* also showcases the many talents of our children and other family members, both through words and pictures.

We thank Exclusive Advertising Pvt. Ltd., Guwahati, for their help with the big task of producing the magazine. Special thanks to DracoDesigns and Metropolis Asia for the cover and layout.

We hope you will enjoy going through these pages and continue to support Prerana.

ELSA EAPEN
Editor, *Reflections*

**EDITORIAL
TEAM
2015-16**



MONTHLY MEETS







SMILING FACES ARE A TESTAMENT TO FUN-FILLED TIMES AND GREAT MEMORIES





Getting together

Lush green lawns, a garden swing decorated with green awnings and orange marigolds made a perfect setting for the beautiful Saawan evening and the first of the get-togethers for the year at the residence of Mrs Suman Pipersenia. Ladies dressed in various shades of green getting their hands decorated in lovely mehendi patterns, melodious music in the background and decorations in white and green, all created a lovely ambience.

New members were warmly welcomed into the family of Prerana. As the evening progressed, the newly elected Executive Committee members were introduced by the President. Some of the important items that were taken up for discussion included the renewal of registration of the society, an annual action plan, social activities, workshops and seminars for the year etc. A calendar for the monthly meets was drawn up, and all the members divided into groups of three. It was decided that a different group would host each monthly meet and also undertake a small philanthropic project of their choice.

Throughout the year, the monthly meetings have gone ahead on schedule, each time at CSOI, with each group enthusiastically carrying out their commitments. Depending on the time of year, a theme is chosen for the evening and the hosts plan games and other entertainment, with plenty of prizes on offer as well. This is an occasion for everyone to meet once a month and keep the spirit of Prerana alive.



Monthly Get-togethers





SOCIAL CAUSES





- MISSION SHRAVAN
- FLOOD RELIEF
- HELPING HANDS

Many of us would remember the movie *Koshish*, in which a young Sanjeev Kumar and Jaya Bhaduri beautifully played the deaf-mute couple Haricharan and Aarti. Their struggles and difficulties in a society which is largely indifferent to the plight of the differently-abled, touched all our hearts and rings true even today, more than three decades after the movie was first released.

Those of us who are blessed with all our senses cannot even imagine what it is like not to have, or to lose, one or more of them. We may find it hard to understand what it is like to live in a silent world. One in which there are no sounds of music or laughter. What it is like to never hear a loved one's voice, the melodious song of a bird, or the sound of rain. According to the 2011 Census, over one lakh people in Assam are suffering from some sort of hearing impairment. There may be many more cases which are unreported.

So in line with its other charitable work, Prerana under the leadership of Mrs Suman Pipersenia, took up an ambitious project – Mission Shravan – for the hearing-impaired children of Assam in association with National Health Mission, Assam and Ideal Charity, Manchester, U.K. We at Prerana are happy beyond words that this initiative has now developed into something much bigger than we ever thought, and is benefitting many children. Much more needs to be done, but it is a great beginning.



Prerana members took up the task of finding sponsors and due to their efforts, tremendous response was received





The background

In Assam, 4.80 lakh people (Census 2011) are suffering from some sort of disability. This is equivalent to 1.54% of the total population. Among the total disabled in the State, 2.57 lakh are males and 2.22 lakh are females. In Assam, a total of 1,01,577 disabled persons with hearing disability was reported in Census 2011, out of which 5,092 are between 0-4 years. Similarly, 28,744 persons in the 0-19 age group are reported to be hearing impaired in the State. It is evident that a lot of work is needed in this area. With great enthusiasm, and under the leadership of Mrs Suman Pipersenia, Prerana members committed themselves to bring the project to the young children 0-8 years. They also took up the task of finding sponsors for this project and due to their efforts, tremendous response was received.



The challenges

Detection and management of hearing impaired children is a long process and the beneficiaries needed to visit the health facility several times to complete the treatment. Candidates for cochlear implantation require a medical evaluation by an otolaryngologist, which includes history, physical examination etc. and those children also required long term observation and continuous support.

A cochlear implant can be decided upon only after the child goes through a trial period with hearing aid amplification. Many children were also found to be suffering from hearing problems due to ear infections. Transportation and logistics arrangements for the children and parents for these multiple visits to the hospitals was required and had to be arranged.

The implementation

Around 160 hearing-impaired small children belonging to poor families in the Districts of Kamrup (R), Kamrup (M), Nagaon and Nalbari were identified with the help of the Social Welfare Department in the pilot phase. National Health Mission, Assam organized special camps for children. In this regard the Health Department especially NHM has rendered great contribution by facilitating and bringing the children to Guwahati for conducting all the medical tests in MMC Hospital and GMC. These tests were required to prepare special moulds which would then be used for making the hearing –aids for each child.



Members' participation

Prerana members made it a point to be on site to be part of the mission to help these children. Various groups of members, in twos and threes made the trip to MMC and GMC not once but several times to meet the children and their parents, gave them food packets and assured them that this project would try its best to help the children.

The project gains momentum

The Block-level officials of NHM along with a few Anganwadi and Asha workers also contributed to this project by motivating and dealing with the children and their parents/ guardians. They played a crucial role in spreading awareness about this project in the interior areas and convincing the people to attend the health camps arranged at Guwahati. Ideal Charity, Manchester, UK also came forward to donate the hearing aids for the needy children. Ideal Charity aims to advance the education of deaf persons in less developed countries by facilitating their education, training, equipment and funding. All their present work is in India and they concentrate on hearing impairment in young children. Dr Narveshwar Sinha MBBS, MS, DLO, MRCP, PhD (Cambridge) is a doctor, originally qualified in India but now settled in UK. He has over three decades of ENT experience and has worked extensively with the hearing-impaired.

A total of 160 children participated in the camp out of which 93 children were identified and found fit for providing hearing aids. In the first phase, 63 hearing

aids were provided on 14th February 2016 in a grand launch programme inaugurated by the then Hon'ble Chief Minister, Assam, Sri Tarun Gogoi.

Many dignitaries and distinguished guests including Shri V.K Pipersenia , Chief Secretary of Assam, Shri MGVK Bhanu, Additional Chief Secretary, Health & Family Welfare, Dr Ashok Babu, Mission Director, NHM, Smt Dolly Gogoi and Dr Narveshwar Sinha were present. At this function, Dr Narveshwar Sinha gave hearing aids to 63 children. Prerana plans to help the children get speech therapy in the next stage of this project.

Future issues

At present, comprehensive service delivery and rehabilitation for the hearing impaired does not exist. There is need for a Centre/Institute which could provide these services. After receiving hearing aids, the children would also need speech therapy to help them get back into the mainstream. There is an acute scarcity of trained speech therapists in Assam. However, steps are being initiated to remedy this situation.







FLOOD RELIEF AT BARPETA

Prerana has over the years reached out to the flood-affected people of Assam and helped in whatever way possible. This year too, Assam suffered from devastating floods. The Executive Committee members of Prerana discussed this issue and all agreed that something should be done to help the people.

Barpeta, a neighbouring district of Kamrup (M) was badly affected. The DC Varnali Deka was contacted and she ensured that all arrangements were made for the visit by Prerana members.

Prerana decided to distribute 12 sewing machines to young women (BPL category) of flood affected areas of Barpeta district in order to make them self-reliant.

Prerana also distributed 100 food packets for infants and very small children of the flood affected areas. The selection of deserving beneficiaries was made by the district administration.

On 2nd October 2015, around seven senior members of Prerana, President Mrs. Suman Pipersenia, Mrs Monika Jindal, Mrs Suchitra Pyarelal, Mrs Shakuntala Mewara, Mrs Anjana Jain, Mrs Anamika Tewari and Mrs Shaguphta Hussain travelled to Barpeta from Guwahati. The DC had arranged for the official distribution of the sewing machines and food packets at DRDA auditorium hall in Barpeta town. The hall was filled with beneficiaries, young children, media persons and officials.



HELPING HANDS

Prerana members joined together in groups to give time and effort to various social causes, reaching out to organizations in Guwahati working for the poor, handicapped, elderly, orphans and destitute



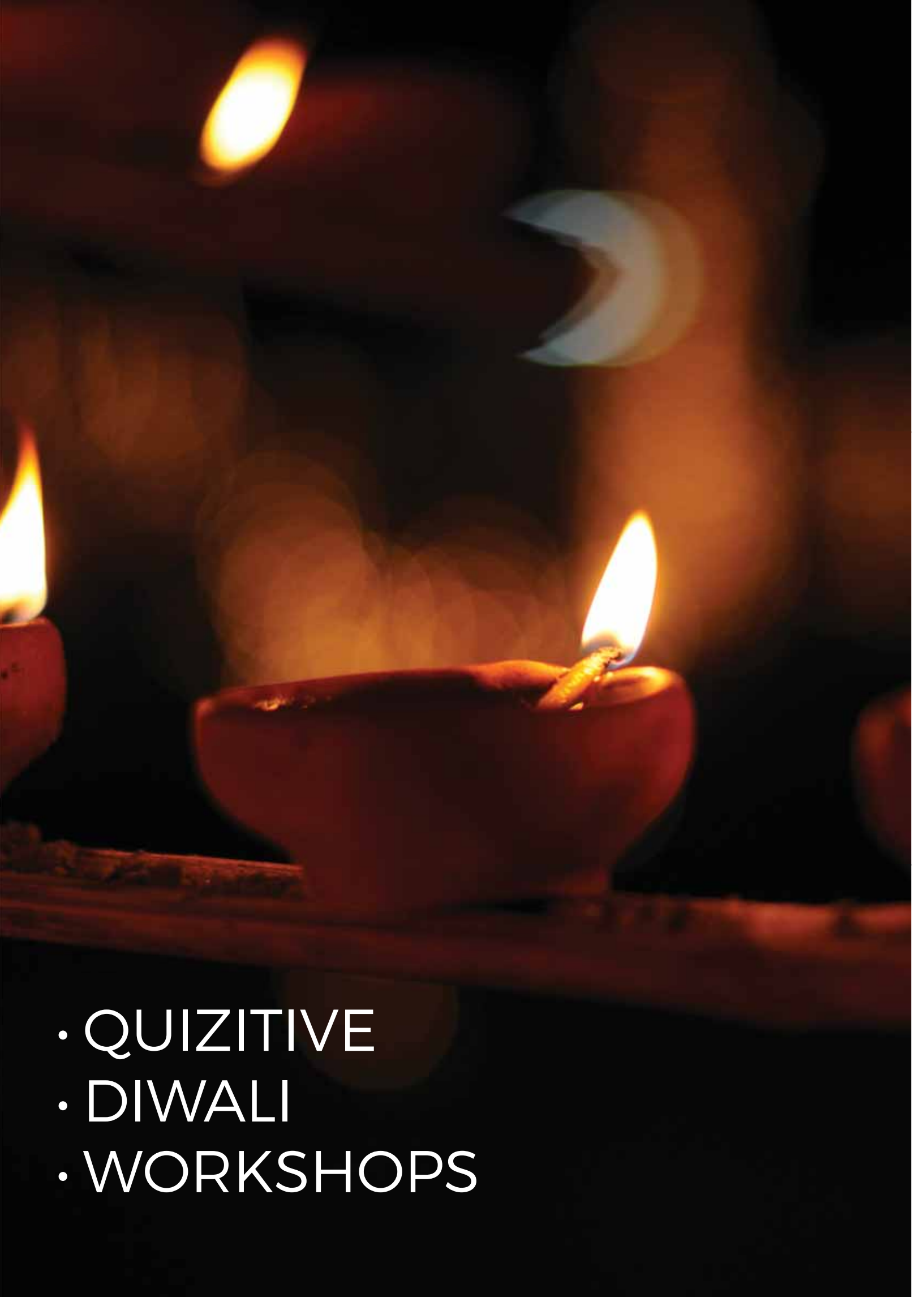


Each group spent time with a different organization in the city



EVENTS





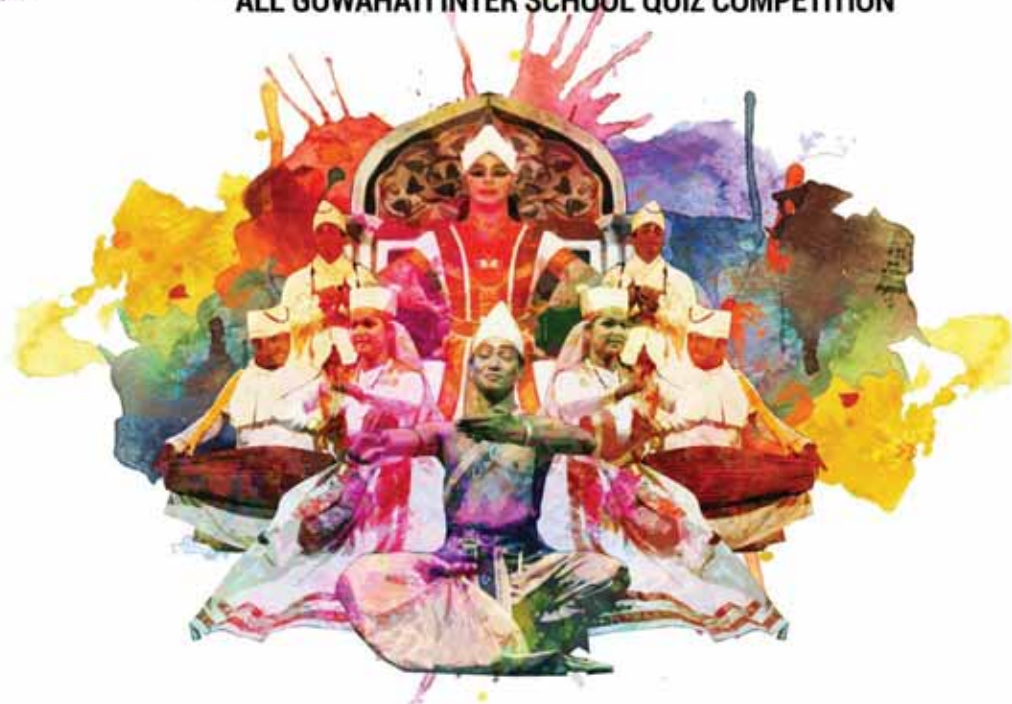
- QUIZITIVE
- DIWALI
- WORKSHOPS



PRERANA-IAS OFFICER'S WIVES ASSOCIATION, ASSAM
PRESENTS

QUIZITIVE 2016

ALL GUWAHATI INTER SCHOOL QUIZ COMPETITION



AND THE WINNER IS...

It was a cold winter morning and normally one would not expect the premises of Rabindra Bhawan in Guwahati to be bustling with activity by around 9 am. But January 29th 2016 was not just any other Friday and Rabindra Bhawan was hosting not just another event. Students from about 50 leading schools in the city, both English and Assamese medium, along with teachers and parents, had enthusiastically turned up in large numbers to participate in Quizitive 2016, the annual inter-school quiz competition organized and hosted by Prerana, the IAS Officers' Wives Association.

We were pleasantly surprised and also exhilarated to see the large turnout. Preparations for the event had all been streamlined and we were able to complete the registration and other formalities without a hitch, in spite of the large number of students. There were many who had registered earlier, many who turned up that morning, and almost all were accommodated. In fact the gates had

to be shut at 11 am as we simply could not accommodate any more students. The final number for the preliminary rounds stood at 125 teams and around 250 students.

Prerana President Smt Suman Pipersenia welcomed the gathering and then quiz master Jayanta Barua started the proceedings. The topic was "Exploring the rich culture and heritage of Assam", a subject dear to the hearts of students and audience alike. Within a short while, the preliminary rounds were over and a team of teachers and Prerana members quickly checked the answer scripts and made a list of the top 6 teams who had made it to the final.

In the meantime, all the participants and escorts were given food coupons and after a quick but filling lunch and a cup of hot tea, they all assembled back in the hall to hear the results. The 6 teams with two members each who made it to the final were then welcomed onto the



stage to take their places and the main programme started at around 2 pm.

Very soon it was clear that some teams were pulling ahead, while some remained low scorers. It was a joy to see how eagerly the children participated, and how they were able to give smart and quick answers. The quiz master too kept up the tempo by conducting the quiz in a professional manner, easily switching from English to Assamese to put all the children at ease.

The 1st prize was bagged by Assam Jatiya Vidyalaya, while Maharishi Vidyamandir School, Barsajai came second and Modern English School third. They received cash awards of Rs 21,000/-, 15,000/- and 10,000/- respectively. The teams in 4th 5th and 6th place did not

go home empty handed – they received cash prizes of Rs 4000/- each.

Chief Secretary Sri V.K Pipersenia along with other dignitaries and representatives of sponsor companies spoke a few words of encouragement and gave away the prizes. It was clear from the beaming faces of the students, as they posed for photographs with the dignitaries, that they had a good (as well as profitable!) time. The event was sponsored by Assam Gas Company Limited, Assam Gramin Vikas Bank, Educomp and DPS Khanapara. Prerana Secretary Anamika Tewari proposed a vote of thanks.

Enthusiatic participation from many schools in the city makes this annual event very successful

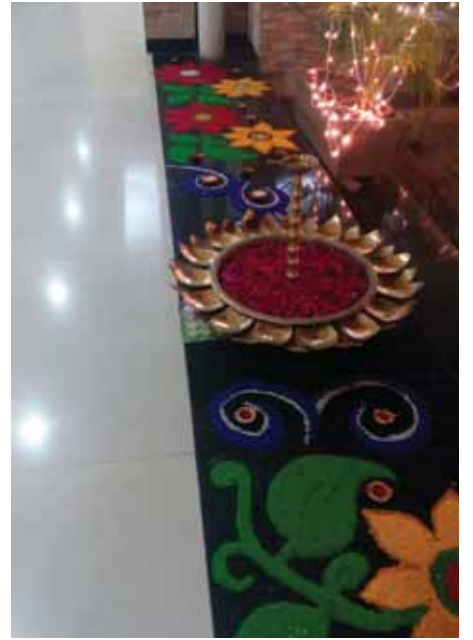


DIWALI 2015-16

The festival of lights







WORKSHOPS

COLOURS OF LIFE

Art Workshop, August 16th 2015



The normally quiet environs of the multi-utility hall in CSOI took on a new life on the day of the workshop. Over two hours, several youngsters in the age group 8-18 created varied and beautiful images on paper, under the watchful eyes of Vyjayanti Nair, daughter of Suchitra and VB Pyarelal, a graduate in Studio Art from Cornell College, Iowa, USA.

The workshop, conducted under the auspices of Prerana, started with a presentation by Vyjayanti. During the course of the workshop, Vyjayanti moved around interacting with the young artists. Some of the older children experimented with vibrant colours, some of the youngsters were more playful, but it was an enjoyable

experience for everyone who was present. At the end of two hours, the paintings were collected and displayed in the open verandah. Light snacks and fruit juice was provided for the children.

Chief Secretary Sri V K Pipersenia gave away certificates of recognition to all the children who had participated. Thanking Prerana and Vyjayanti for the successful organization and execution of the event, he hoped that more such interesting and creative interactions would take place in future. Such events are not just an opportunity for the youngsters to express their talents, but also a means to bring the community together.



LOOKING THROUGH THE LENS Photography Workshop, October 4th 2015

Beauty, it is said, lies in the eyes of the beholder. As a series of beautiful photographs capturing Mother Nature in all her varying moods lit up the large screen in the CSOI auditorium on a bright October morning, the truth of this statement became evident. The photographer, or the beholder, in this case was Dr K K Dwivedi, a 1996 batch IAS officer, for whom photography is obviously more than a hobby – it is a passion which speaks through his photographs.

The beholders were also the audience, Prerana members, their families and friends. The event was a photography workshop under the auspices of Prerana, conducted by Dr Dwivedi, whose interest in photography is self-taught. He has authored a couple of books, and is working on one about the wildlife of Assam.

The presentation started with a slide show of Dr Dwivedi's own photographs. The beautiful images were

mostly on wildlife and Nature, shot in diverse locations such as Kaziranga, Pabitora, Meghalaya, Rajasthan, etc. The images frozen in time and captured for ever stood out for their perspective, angles, play of light and shade and composition.

The next part of the presentation focussed on types of cameras and lenses, and then moved on to the technical aspects of photography such as resolution, types of digital files, manipulating the white balance and using it creatively especially when taking shots of landscapes, exposure, metering and so on. Dr Dwivedi ended his presentation with a series of tips for taking better photos, based on his own learning and experiences. He kept the audience engaged throughout the presentation, which was interactive with many in the audience asking questions and at the end everyone was asked to go out with their cameras or cell phones and take pictures, which could then be shown to the team for advice and suggestions.



WORKSHOPS

STEP BY STEP

Dance Workshop, 19th Sept - 19th Oct 2015

Dance is one of the most creative forms of expression. To help to hone the artistic capabilities of members, Prerana organized a dance workshop from 19th September to 19th October 2015. Mr. Ajay Roy, an accomplished professional dancer, was specially commissioned to guide the members and help give expression to their talent.

The workshop was a grand success with 20 members taking part. The participants were trained to the beats of a specific Bollywood song. They also learned the Garbha dance. The main emphasis was on contemporary dance and to end the workshop, follow up practice sessions were also organized.

The mood during the workshop was relaxed, and the atmosphere was full of fun and frolic. The members started cautiously to begin with but opened up as the workshop progressed. By the end of the workshop most of the members were doing well and as a whole the synergy was high which was especially visible in the group dance.

The members benefited from the workshop in not only getting technical inputs but also in building up group camaraderie, and in discovering their own capabilities during the course of the workshop.



MOTIVATIONAL MANTRAS

Meditation and Mind Power Workshop, 7th Dec 2015

The beneficial effects of meditation to help us cope with all forms of stress in the rush and tumble of modern life has been well documented. Prerana and CSOI jointly organized a Meditation and Mind Power workshop in association with CSOI on 7th December 2015 from 7 am to 9 am. The Science of Meditation session was conducted by renowned

meditation guru Brahmarishi Patriji and the Mind Power session was conducted by widely acclaimed life skills master Shri Vishal Avtaar.

A meditation session of 40 minutes under the guidance of Brahmarishi Patriji was also held during the workshop in which he captivated the participants by



his melodious flute playing. A demonstration displaying the unlimited powers of the mind was also carried out by Shri Vishal Avtaar in which a participant was raised two feet above his chair by four participants who merely used their thumbs and fingers to lift him up. The audience

was spellbound by these amazing feats performed by the masters. The workshop was highly appreciated by the participants who found themselves motivated and inspired.

A SENSE OF WELLBEING

Pranic Healing Workshop, 23rd July 2016

Ankita Sharma is a motivational speaker and a Pranic healing instructor who shares practical teachings for happiness and joyous living, promoting shifts in awareness to lead a more fulfilled life. She is an active trainer with the World Pranic Healing Organization and this is her life's mission.

the members of the Pranic Healing Centre in Guwahati were present, and they conducted the workshop under the guidance of Ankita Sharma. They taught the meditation techniques developed and taught by grandmaster Choa Kok Sui. The special interactive session gave emphasis on physical, mental and spiritual aspects of health and wellbeing and was much appreciated by all present, including senior officers and their families.

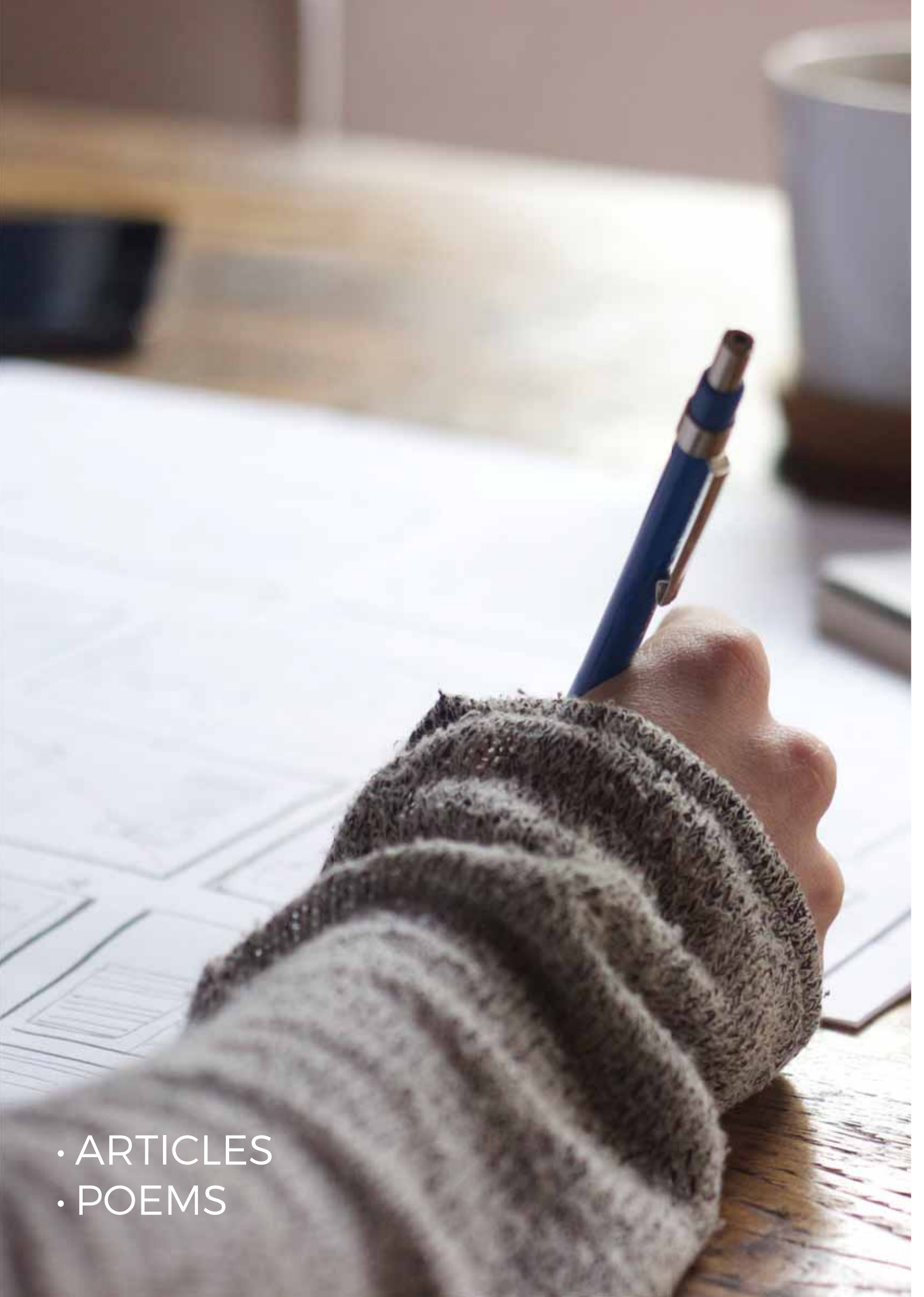
The workshop was held on 23rd July, 2016. Some of

A total of five workshops were held on different themes



EXPRESSIONS





• ARTICLES
• POEMS

My Second Tryst

Reflecting on life's simple pleasures can be an enriching experience

BY Suchitra Pyarelal

The present. I am sitting in the bamboo-thatched hut in my garden doing nothing. Simply looking out at the vast expanse of the grounds of the Assam Administrative Staff College, filled with overgrown shrubs, trees and wilderness. My gaze returns to my garden, and I look closely to see if the fish have surfaced in the small pond. They try so hard to hide from me. A mere glimpse of the orange colour surfacing slowly brings me so much excitement, in anticipation of seeing one of them. It seems that they know my longing, but continue to play hide and seek. My glance then goes to my Buddha sitting blissfully under the bamboo bush accompanied by papyrus and ferns.

Two birds perch upon a tree, oblivious to the fact that the tree is no longer alive but is instead a dead piece of wood placed where the original tree was cut. Dead wood made seemingly alive with creepers clinging on to sap it of whatever life is left in it. I am filled with gratitude to the universe.....to the power above .. for conspiring to give me back what I needed most but did not dare ask for.

My thoughts go to the past...to nearly two years ago...to Delhi, where I was rushing about, in a world that revolved around my work, that foolishly became my passion... I had no time to stop or stare, or to sit with family and friends –the only occasions to clear my head

were occasional walks and watching thrillers on the 'Fox Crime' channel...admonishments from my near and dear ones, falling onto my deaf ears.

Well here I am back in Assam after spending 16 years in Delhi. I love every moment of my life. I wait for the mornings to open my windows to see the mountains ... and a feeling of disappointment comes if I am not able to come home from work before dark ...

Mornings with birds chirping and butterflies dancing and green parrots trying to balance on the fragile branches. I do not mind my birdie friends snatching the ripe papaya or the kordoi right under my eyes ... the glorious purple and red hibiscus, vibrant hues of cosmos, balsams trying to show its might and lilies standing dignified .

Nights that settle with the beautiful smell of jasmine and fireflies shimmering ..a sight that reminds me of my childhood in Kerala ...

I look above and bow my head ... in silent gratitude for my second tryst with serene Assam...

Suchitra Pyarelal is Senior Technical Director, National Informatics Centre and wife of V B Pyarelal



Photo by: Suchitra Pyarelal

Happily Ever After

No relationship is all sunshine, but two people can share one umbrella and survive the storm together

BY Smita Richhariya



Marriage is a decision to love, share, care, understand and forgive each other. It is a marvellous concept when it functions as intended but therein lies the problem. We have fallen into certain behavioural patterns that weaken the marital bond and interfere with long term relationships. A marital relationship is very fragile, a small mistake and it comes crashing down. In the present day scenario when divorce rates are at an all-time high and break ups are the order of the day, if you are worried about the future of your marriage, you are right and you have plenty of company. There is no denying that this is a trying time for couples as even good marriages are failing and people who are considered as perfect couples are falling apart, take for example Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie.

The truth is that it takes a lot of hard work, good intentions and practice to not just have, but also maintain a healthy marriage. Even after building a healthy marriage you need to nurture your marriage to keep it healthy. In this article I will be adopting a very objective and dispassionate approach towards marriage and divorce, what causes divorce, techniques helpful in preventing separation and simple advice on how to have a healthy marriage. Divorce or separation can be avoided or

nullified if we are aware of the reasons behind it and make an effort to resolve the issue. Some of the very important and most common reasons are:

- **Third Party Intervention:** This can range from an extramarital affair to the undesirable influence of a family member. This is one of the leading causes of divorce and one which is very difficult to tackle as it leads to breach of trust between the partners.
- **Lack of Communication and Understanding:** Very often we see that couples don't interact as much as they should and in this age of social media it has become even less, and this leads to misunderstandings between them. One of the very important reasons for marriages running into problems is a lack of understanding which leads to strained relationship. This situation will seldom happen if communication lines between the partners is open.
- **Compatibility:** This simply means capability to exist together. For a marriage to be successful, compatibility is the special ingredient. It includes similarities in likes and dislikes, interests, value system etc. so if two people of compatible personalities enter into matrimony, chances of

its success are more because chances of conflicts are less. This does not mean that those less compatible can't have a successful marriage, it simply shows the probability.

- **Financial Upsets and Work Pressure:** This is a relatively new but very important reason for divorce and separation. Life has become very harsh and often families are faced with financial crises. Also generally both the partners are working and reeling under job stress, on top of it they also have the responsibility of running a household and keeping their relationship alive. This causes mental distress and discord among them and may result in a break up.

- **Absence of Intimacy:** Unrealistic expectation from each other, lack of love and intimacy between the partners, feelings of dissatisfaction and boredom are also major culprits in breaking up a marriage. There can be umpteen number of reasons for a breakup as every individual is unique with an individualized set of problems but can something be done to prevent this?

A reasonable sequitur from the above discussion will lead us to its solution. Consulting a marriage counsellor would be of help if the relationship has already hit rock bottom but if the situation is still manageable some self-help techniques can be tried. Theories of couple counselling suggest some techniques that can be used to break the ice and strengthen the relationship. A few are mentioned here.

1. **Communication Skill Training:** The emphasis is on encouraging the partners to be active listeners for example the couple chooses a time during the week when each partner spends 20 minutes as either the speaker or the listener. The speaker can talk about anything (nothing abusive) and the listener has to actively listen and not do anything else. The expectation is that with practice the couples will learn to listen to each other and misunderstandings due to lack of communication will be overruled.

2. **Gottman Method:** This is a detailed therapy but in

short can be expressed as a method that allows the couple to state their needs. It stresses on conflict management rather than conflict resolution. Partners learn to speak honestly about their aspirations and convictions. Trust and commitment to lifelong relationship are reinforced.

3. **Dealing with Anger:** Anger is inevitably destructive to a relationship. Angry fights between the partners are very common therefore the alternate way of resolving differences should be adopted. Expression of anger can be modified by changing the way you converse. Instead of using a commanding tone and raised voice, use a polite voice and requesting or questioning tone.

Anger reducing technique of "Time Out" can also be used in which both the partners have the power to end the conversation or fight by saying, "I need a time out to cool off. We can talk about this later." When anger is reduced, conversation can be resumed.

4. **Empathy:** One of the very important factors in a marriage is empathy. Empathy has to be cultivated. It simply means understanding and sharing your partner's experiences and emotions, being sensitive to his/her needs. Empathy is very helpful in the sustained growth of a husband-wife relationship so it should be promoted and ego clashes avoided.

A lot had been said about marriage and divorce, reasons discussed and solutions given, but it all depends on you. Do you have what it takes to save your marriage?

Maybe you just need to have faith and trust that you can survive this together. Maybe you just need to hold on tight. And no matter what, don't let go.

Smita Richhariya is a Counselling Psychologist and wife of Krishna Kant Dwivedi

SOME WORDS OF WISDOM FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE

- Compliment and show appreciation to each other.
- Learn to fight fair and forgive each other.
- Show your love for each other in front of the kids. This lets them know mom and dad love each other, letting them feel secure while showing them what to expect from their future spouse.
- See the best in each other and be supportive of each other's goals, ideas, careers etc. while also giving healthy critiques.
- Be willing to compromise and learn how to communicate with each other.
- Exercise together even if it's just a weekly walk down the road.
- Solve your problems together.
- Never threaten to leave your mate during angry arguments.
- Don't allow yourself to consider even the possibility of divorce. Calling it quits should not be an option.
- Finally have fun together!

Land of the Midnight Sun

You can visit Norway to enjoy its unique natural beauty, see the Northern Lights or for a taste of outdoor adventure

BY Krishna Barua



Photos by: Krishna Barua

The mention of Norway invariably conjures up images of snow-capped mountains, glaciers, fjords, and pine-covered slopes. It is the country's spectacular natural beauty that attracts visitors to Norway. And they are not disappointed as there are few places in the world that are as breathtakingly beautiful. Indeed, what they see and experience, often exceed their expectations.

However, there are many other facets to Norway which make it so interesting and fascinating -its history and culture, the love of its people for adventure, their ideas and social consciousness. All these together have combined to create the nation into the entity it is today.

Geography, too, has played a part since because of its location in the far north of Europe, extending beyond the Arctic Circle and comparatively underdeveloped inland communications, the people of Norway had less opportunity of coming into contact with other peoples. Consequently they preserved their local customs and

fiercely valued their independence. There were periods in the past when they were ruled by the Danes and later by the Swedes. But it is, perhaps, precisely because of this that they cherish their freedom so much.

Even today, Norwegians are perhaps wary of aligning with other countries, fearing, possibly, a diminishing of their autonomy. Norway's refusal to join the European Union, despite being closely connected with it may be an expression of this very apprehension. Norwegians are also protective about their identity and there is an ambivalence in their attitude towards foreigners. At one time, along with Sweden, Norway took in a lot of refugees from countries such as Somalia and Sri Lanka. However, the migration was orderly and within the control of Norway and they did not allow unregulated immigration. There is also a sizeable community of people from Pakistan in Norway.

As Norway has a vast coastline, with fjords everywhere,

Norwegians are skilled sea-farers. Everybody knows about the Vikings of the past, those fierce sea-men who struck terror into the hearts of their enemies. The Vikings sailed to various neighbouring and distant islands, Scotland, England, Ireland and other parts of Europe such as Germany and Spain. While they were known for their looting and plundering wherever they landed, it must be said that they were experts in navigation and seamanship. Although initially invaders, Vikings settled down peacefully in many places like Orkney and Shetland islands. But in Ireland, Wales and England it was only after confrontations that they assimilated with the local people and settled down. The name Normandy in France came into being from “Northmen”, the Vikings who settled down there. Many Vikings sailed to Iceland and Greenland as well to establish settlements there. It is noteworthy that some enterprising sea-farers crossed the Atlantic led by Leifur Eriksson and reached America in 1000 A.D. And so, 500 years before Columbus, Erikson explored the northern coast of America.

This spirit of adventure is seen even today in the Norwegian passion for sailing, climbing, hiking, skiing, cycling and many other outdoor activities. A year back on a visit to Norway with my husband, we noticed that on holidays and whenever the weather was fine, people would set out with their cycles, boats or kayaks piled on top of their cars and head for the countryside or sea or the fjords which were never very far from their homes.

And the exploits of modern day explorers such as Roald Amundsen, the first man to reach the South Pole, and Thor Heyerdahl who crossed the Pacific ocean on a boat made of Balsa wood, and later the Atlantic ocean on a boat made of Papyrus, reflect the same urge for adventure.

Culturally advanced, Norway had prominent personalities like the dramatist Henrik Ibsen who along with the artist Edvard Munch and musician Edvard Grieg led a cultural revival in the 19th century. Down the ages up to modern times there have been many famous writers and artists and several Nobel Prize winners. Norwegian culture continues to flourish till today.

A very interesting artist is the sculptor Gustav Vigeland whose works are found in the Vigeland Park in Oslo. I was fascinated by the unique collection of over 200 granite and bronze statues, placed very artistically in the Park. The statues depict human figures in various stages of life from infancy to old age and portray emotions and relationships. Interestingly all the statues are completely in the nude. But such is the artistry of the sculptor that one hardly notices this fact and is attracted only by the beauty of the creations. And dominating everything else in the Park is a huge and magnificent monolith of entwined human figures – a truly beautiful and remarkable creation.

Not surprisingly, Norwegians are nature lovers. So close are their bonds with nature that they often



seek solutions to their problems by going out to the mountains and introspecting. Even the long and harsh winters do not keep them indoors. The summers though brief are warm and sunny with flowers of all descriptions and hues blooming everywhere. Taking advantage of the long daylight hours, people spend as much time outside as possible and it is not unusual to see people returning home on weekends at one or two o'clock in the morning.

During our visit we were based in Bergen which is in central Norway and so did not actually see the midnight sun, which can be observed only in the northern parts of the country. But we did see many splendid late sunsets, especially from mid-June to July when they occurred around 10 or 10.30 p.m. After that there would be light almost up to 1.30 a.m. and it never really became dark at all. This was a novel experience for us. Another interesting phenomenon we missed was the Aurora Borealis or northern lights which are vibrating sheets, streaks, haloes, or pillars of light of different colours such as green, light pink and even yellow and crimson. They occur in the north of Norway and are visible from August to March.

Norwegians are great skiers and hikers. Skiing is something which everybody including children are adept at because in winter many roads are snowbound and skiing is the only means of getting about. On the side of a mountain near Oslo, called Holmenkollen there is the Olympic ski jump. There is a statue of one of the earlier kings of Norway there, wearing a pair of skis. We were amused to see that the statue of the king's dog was sporting a pair of skis too!

In a world which is still not a safe place for women, Norway is perhaps the best place for a woman to be in as security of women is not an issue. The gender gap too, is possibly, the least in Norway and women enjoy many benefits. At the same time, women are expected to do almost everything men do, like driving delivery trucks and unloading them, although with the help of mechanical gadgets. Yet, regrettably, complete parity in incomes of men and women is still to be achieved.

While initially, Norway was not a wealthy country its fortunes were dramatically changed in the 1960's by the discovery of oil in the North Sea. From being one of the poorest countries in Europe, Norway was transformed into one of the richest in the world. However, their wealth was used judiciously by the government which developed a very comprehensive welfare system not found anywhere else in the world.

Another characteristic we noticed was the understated and non-aggressive nature of the people and society. Despite being an affluent country the Norwegians do not flaunt their wealth. Rather than invest in material objects they prefer to protect the environment and nature, spend on social welfare schemes and for the future generations. In an increasingly consumerist world, Norway appears to be refreshingly free from consumerism. While the needs of the people are certainly met, the market is not flooded with an excess of goods. For these reasons and as frugality is practised by everyone, including the government,



Norway was hardly affected by the economic downturn of a few years back.

Moreover, as the country emphasizes areas which impact human well-being and gives importance to the social welfare sector, Norway has come first in the U.N. Human Development Index for many years. And most importantly, not only does Norway focus on its own domestic welfare, but is also concerned about the welfare of developing countries, and gives the highest percentage of its GDP as overseas aid among all donors.

Interestingly, we noticed that modern Norwegians appeared to be mild and non-threatening unlike their fierce and war-like ancestors. What happened to the Vikings of the past, we wondered? Perhaps some of the Viking qualities were channelised into demanding sports and outdoor activities, providing an outlet for excess energy. But if we still persist seriously in our quest for the legendary Viking, we might possibly find him concealed in the heart of every Norwegian.

In the end, of course, it is the majestic natural beauty of Norway that remains etched in our minds. When I saw the Hardanger Fjord from the tiny town of Norheimsund, a vast swathe of shimmering blue with a glacier in the distance and pine-covered mountains on both sides, dotted with chalets and cottages, I was captivated. And at night, when a full moon cast its spell, turning the landscape into a magical world, I thought if ever there was a paradise on earth, this is where it is.

Krishna Barua, wife of Bhaskar Barua, is a social activist, homemaker and a former college teacher. She holds a PhD in English literature, is a feminist and a proud grandmother of three

The Constant Companion

Trying to match one's specs with different outfits can prove to be a challenge

BY Bhavna Makwana

I know I am beautiful. I like going to the beauty parlor because it adds zing to my beauty. I am however very upset about one particular aspect of my appearance about which the parlor is helpless. That is, my spectacles.

I recently got progressive lenses but as time progresses I realize that it doesn't match with my dress. I spend hours to match my dress with my jewelry. But what will I do with this plastic jewel which I cannot do without?

Last Sunday, I went to a marriage party for which I had planned for a week. What I would wear, its color, jewelry, make up, sandals etc. Everything was planned perfectly and executed perfectly. But just before leaving the dressing table mirror I put on the dreaded thing. It was black and my saree was green. I could not change its color to green. Even if I changed its color, it would look bulky. It killed my beauty in a second. The time was flying past and I had to leave for the marriage. I thought I would solve the problem after thinking for a bit in the car. But I found no solution, no way out, and this was not the first time I had failed.

I believe in embellishing beauty by matching clothes and accessories. But I am losing a long battle to match my spectacles with my jewelry and sarees. It never matches glitter with its staid presence. Rather, it has a great

magnetic capacity to absorb and nullify all the shining of gold.

Adding to my woes, people say I look ten years younger than my age, but this plastic on my face adds ten years to my age. It changes my profession too. I look more like a serious teacher in it than the glamorous doll I wish to be. I have tried contact lenses, they are a pain I cannot describe.

I wanted to finish this matter. I ventured one day to a party without my specs. It started with a headache and ended with humiliation when I asked the server whether it was paneer or chicken. He said in a whisper, Madam we don't serve red paneer! Not just this, I missed the most important part, people watching me and me assessing their attire, jewelry and all.

I understand and have come to terms with it now. It shall stay with me. I need to put up with it. I understand that I need to put the bindi a bit higher on my forehead even if I don't like it, otherwise the plastic hides it. Adjustments are a must in life. Life goes on.

Bhavna Makwana is an officer in the Indian Railway Accounts Service and wife of Ashok Babu



Without A Condition

Self-interest or self-promotion should not be the guiding force behind our actions

BY Jayanti Das



Rinku said to Tinku “I will give you my pencil box, you give me your chocolate.” Give and take. That is how human relationships, trade and business, growth and development run the life show. The Barter System--- the exchanging of objects of mutual needs catered to the requirements of individuals in the remote past, before money took its birth. In the Junbeel Mela of Assam the tribal communities are still carrying out the age-old custom.

‘Give and Take’ is not confined to the objects of essentiality and luxury alone. It is seen during a marriage—where a groom vows to protect and provide for his bride in return for loyalty, faithfulness, servitude and off spring. It is seen between two friends who seek loyalty, help and support in exchange for fun, laughter, companionship and secrets. Children too are expected to care for their parents in their old age for the love, care and the sacrifices made by them. One goes to a place of worship with fruits, sweets and incense sticks and asks God to cure a disease, shower their children with success or to save them from some disaster.

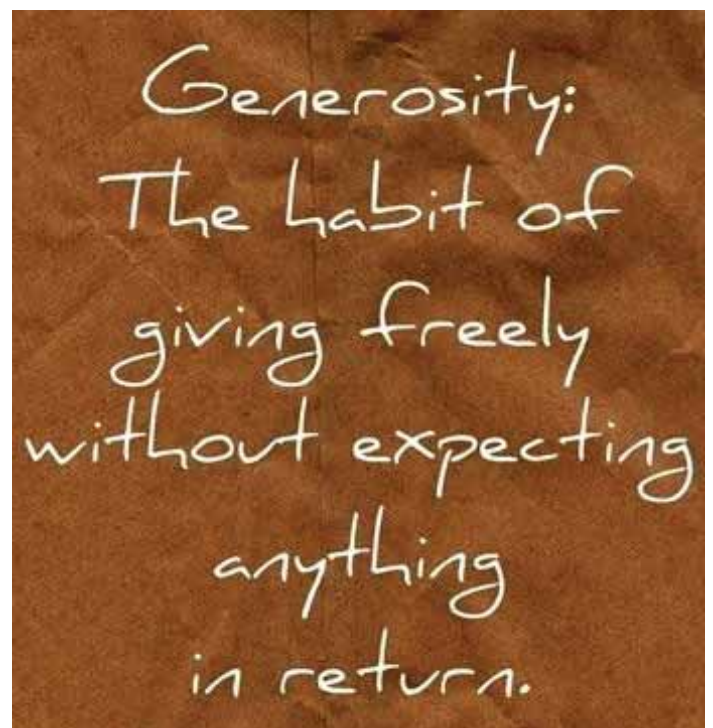
When something, usually money is given in exchange for a favour or an influence or as an inducement to dishonesty, it takes the form of a bribe. That is sinful—that is breaking laws and is done clandestinely. All people are not law breakers. God-fearing goodly people come in a wide array---kind people, compassionate people, philanthropists, social crusaders, environmental activists, animal activists, spiritual gurus, life coaches et al.

The good work of such people benefit the downtrodden, the oppressed and the marginalised. They raise their voice against the evils of society; they raise funds to help the victims of natural calamities and of communal riots; they donate generously to shelter homes and orphanages. The affluent ones keep aside a huge chunk of their income to help the needy. The world moves on, smiles are spread and contentment prevails.

But most often it is seen that acts of philanthropy or a gesture of kindness has a purpose. This purpose can range from a photograph in the local newspaper or a certificate to attain a job or simply to please God and absolve oneself from all earthly sins. The cleanliness drives undertaken by various organisations, educational institutions and NGOs, to obey the clarion call of the Swachh Bharat Mission only exhibit a lackadaisical attitude of its participants. Very important people were seen with brooms in hands sweeping the litter of the streets only to be captured by the camera. Good work is therefore being done with a motive in mind. When a condition is attached to a helping gesture or a community service, altruism is kept at bay and egoism sets in. When self-interest becomes the pivotal point of philanthropy the sheer joy of giving together with the liberating sense of compassion for others cannot be attained.

It is through unconditional love, compassion and devotion towards humanity alone that saints like Mother Teresa could attain the hallowed precincts of divinity. We humans are here on this Earth school not simply to live out a life, but to evolve through our thoughts, experiences, knowledge and actions or rather through our karma. The primary step towards this process of evolution is to observe ourselves and introspect with the question “Are most of my actions motivated by self-interest?”

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Let Them Walk Alone

Trusting our children to make their own decisions and life choices is not easy. But if we are able to do it, it can set not only them but also us, free...

BY Elsa Eapen

Once read an article in the newspaper, by a young Indian girl studying in the US. She talked about the changed environment, how she was learning to cope with it, what she appreciated about both home and abroad. The biggest learning she has had there, she said, is how to be accountable to herself.

Being accountable to oneself is not something we in India are too familiar with. While we are growing up we have our parents making most, if not all, the decisions. Then we get married, role play sets in, and we make decisions for our children. While this is fine when they are minors, it continues into their later years, even when they are adults, on issues relating to their education, their careers, even their life partners. We tell ourselves that it's because we love them, because we want the best for them. But could it also be (and let's not be afraid to say this) because we want to exercise control? Not many of us will admit to this. But it is probably closer to the truth than we like to acknowledge.

The truth is that this reasoning defies logic. How can one person possibly know what's best for another? Even if that someone happens to be your child? In fact, whatever the relationship, freedom is of the essence. To be sure, one can and should advice, guide, share, communicate. But then one has to stand back and let the other walk alone. It's not easy. In fact, it's as hard as hard can be. Especially when you are convinced that the other person is proceeding in the 'wrong' direction.

With parenting, as in other relationships, the ability to let go, to make someone accountable to themselves, is to my mind inextricably linked with trust. Trust involves learning to love unconditionally. It is trying to understand the other person for what he or she really is. It is realizing that people are different. It is being able to love them in spite of that difference, which may confound, bewilder or even anger us.

As a parent, I have struggled with these realisations many times. I do not say I have mastered any of them. The primary urge is to control, to instruct, to give advice not to offer it. But in trying to understand our children, we also come to understand ourselves. We learn that we have to trust, if we want them to be responsible, or accountable, in the end not to us parents, but to themselves. We have to respect what they think and accept what they do. Love them for it, not in spite of it.

The most beautiful poem I have read on this experience

of "letting go", which is the hardest thing for all parents, yet something we all must somehow learn to do, is given below. Written by the English poet Cecil Day Lewis, the poem is dedicated to his son Sean, and recalls a day when the father was watching his little son go in to school. It is all about childhood and growing up, the magic and the heartbreak of these unique yet universal emotions that all children and all parents experience at some time or another.



WALKING AWAY by Cecil Day Lewis

It is eighteen years ago, almost to the day –
A sunny day with leaves just turning,
The touch-lines new-ruled – since I watched you play
Your first game of football, then, like a satellite
Wrenched from its orbit, go drifting away

Behind a scatter of boys. I can see
You walking away from me towards the school
With the pathos of a half-fledged thing set free
Into a wilderness, the gait of one
Who finds no path where the path should be.

That hesitant figure, eddying away
Like a winged seed loosened from its parent stem,
Has something I never quite grasp to convey
About nature's give-and-take – the small, the scorching
Ordeals which fire one's irresolute clay.

I have had worse partings, but none that so
Gnaws at my mind still. Perhaps it is roughly
Saying what God alone could perfectly show –
How selfhood begins with a walking away,
And love is proved in the letting go.

Elsa Eapen is a journalist and editor and wife of K V Eapen

The Birthday Gift

Sometimes the best gifts in life are the ones we give, not the ones we get

BY Zohra Ahmad



It was a routine morning in the Angiography suite where I was posted as a resident doctor. The first patient scheduled was a young married lady who had an acquired deformity in her right hand with an amputated thumb and two fingers. The poor hand seemed as though it would be of very little, if any, use to her.

The angiography revealed an occlusion in her subclavian artery for which we planned an angioplasty at a later date. Later on, while compressing her puncture site, I came to know that she was a seamstress by profession who had accidentally driven the sewing machine needle into her right hand following which she hadn't taken tetanus shots. What followed was a terrible infection which led to the amputation and deformity thereby depriving her of her bread-and-butter which was a big financial loss to their family. She had three school going kids and her husband didn't earn much as a driver. They were on the verge of a financial breakdown because of her health expenses.

I observed her puncture site which showed no signs of bleeding so I instructed her husband to take her to the ward for further observation when she called out to me, "Dr Saab, will my hand ever become alright?" I noticed a slight tinge of red in her eyes. I told her very objectively (as most of us doctors do), "The hand will not become better, however you have a blocked artery in your arm which we can treat to prevent it from getting worse".

Work went on as usual in the angiography room and we took up an angioplasty for a fifty year old man who had already lost his other limb to ischemia. The one-legged man came to us carried on the shoulders of his young son. One look at him and I realized how lucky I was to have four functioning limbs.

Next we did sclerotherapy for a 25 year old girl with a large deforming arterio-venous malformation on her face which made her look like an alien. Multiple surgeries had left her with a terribly scarred and asymmetrical face, still she managed to give us a grotesque smile and thank

us profusely for the last resort sclerotherapy we had done to give her some respite. Her mother came to me quietly when I was writing her notes. "Beti, can you do something for her face? No one is marrying her because of it." I was speechless as I knew there was not much improvement possible.

There are so many ailments which people have, for which there is no known cure and doctors can't do much to ameliorate them. Despite that, many brave ones manage to smile and fight their inadequacies happily. There are countless situations in which we privileged and healthy people crib every day about that exam we couldn't clear, those pimples on our face, that expensive dress we couldn't buy, the job we couldn't qualify for and the like.

It is an irony that the most well-to-do and lucky people are the most thankless of all and the most lowly and unlucky ones somehow accept their fate and live life like a gift.

It was my birthday the next day and I was wondering what to buy for myself but after my experiences of the day, the lights of the malls I wandered into appeared very dull. A long lonely walk later it suddenly struck me. I knew what I needed for my birthday gift.

The next day the young seamstress came for her report when I handed her husband another paper along with the report. He looked at it and then at me with puzzled eyes. "Its a voucher from a shop which makes foot pedal sewing machines," I told him. "She'll have some trouble initially using it, but with practice she'll be able to do it."

To this date I remember the gratitude in his eyes. Little does he know that I had just had a most memorable birthday.

Dr Zohra Ahmad, wife of Adil Khan, is a radiologist currently working in GMCH

Walk the Talk

The simple pleasure of a morning walk is ruined by the condition of our roads and surroundings. Will change ever come?

BY Anamika Tewari



A lazy person like me was advised by the personal physician to take a regular morning walk. Health becomes a priority once you are thirty five. Considering the age, this is essential to keep the impending lifestyle diseases at bay. It took a great deal of effort and enormous courage to ignite the will power to be able to do some justice to the sincere advice of a well-meaning doctor. A new pair of jogging shoes and tracksuit had also made a dent on the pocket. With my alarm set for five-thirty in the morning and a bundle of positive energy, I started the morning walk on the streets of Guwahati. To my horror it soon turned out to be the most nightmarish experience that I ever imagined.

I had chosen a safe route towards Guwahati Medical College hill campus past the gate of GMCH. It was expected in Hindi-cinema style that the crisp breeze would soothe and rejuvenate the senses. Instead it was the stench emanating from the garbage heaps that filled the nostrils. The garbage bin had been overflowing and the mountainous heaps had crossed all limits. The bins had not been able to invite the attention of the municipal cleaner, but it had certainly attracted the street dogs in huge numbers, plastic eating cows, vultures and crows from the skies and of course the ubiquitous beggars in search of leftovers. The dogs and cows had scattered the smelly rubbish all across the street. I had to retrace my steps for some time as these stray dogs were fighting ferociously over the packets of litter. I was gripped by the fear of being bitten by a stray dog but did not want to reveal my anxiety to the few lazy people gazing at me

taking pleasure at my plight with their tooth brushes in their mouth. To express their amusement, they spat out foam as I passed by. The wall of GMCH smelt foul and on the road was dog litter and human excreta. It was a chaotic smelly scene in front of a premier institution of our State.

The people of Assam often take pride in their self professed sense of cleanliness and general civic sense in comparison to their counterparts from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. As such it is almost impossible to imagine such filth and squalor that surrounded me that day. I have been travelling through the same road in my air conditioned car greatly oblivious to the horrific red tobacco stains and nasal discharge all over the place. And this is the situation right in the neighbourhood of Guwahati Medical College. Hard to fathom whether we as a community are totally hypocritical or have we forgotten all the values possessed by our ancestors and refuse to enthuse any civic sense in ourselves as citizens. Is it not the duty of every person to keep his surroundings clean? The typical Assamese movie isn't complete without the ideal woman sweeping her compound spic and span. Instead, now as I strolled ahead I realized that we keep our compounds clean but throw the garbage in front of the neighbour's house or shop. As I passed by a few residential houses, I observed an elderly gentleman coming out quickly from his house and pouring out a bucket of his night urine into the drain just in front of his gate. Another man flung a packet of left-over food aiming accurately at the drain on the other side. It appears that if you feel

outraged by the stinking smell or ghastly sight of dirt just follow what the other joggers do as they pass, spit and move on; as if you have cleansed yourself by this ritual, let the surroundings not bother you.

The vegetable vendors, shop-keepers and street food vendors have been really consistent in their behaviour of regularly putting up their stalls no matter rain or heat and also in carrying out their regular duty of littering the garbage on the streets and in the city drains. I feel it is not only an isolated incident in this area but one can find this kind of scene all over the city. Not one offender seems to be conscientious enough to acknowledge their own violations. These people, completely unaware of what they are doing, have been sitting happily on the heaps of garbage and running their petty businesses daily. How much does this cost them in terms of their health and productivity, is something to be calculated and analyzed. The attendants of GMC patients were blissfully having their morning tea and breakfast in the tea stalls set up in the filthiest of surroundings.

Anna Hazare is urging people of India to battle against corruption. But what about corruption of the mind? Isn't it time that we wake up to our responsibilities-to make this place fit for healthy living. How long will we keep our eyes shut and our senses numb? Can't we take responsibility for our actions? Who will bell the cat? Simply by ignoring our duties we won't get anywhere. Let's say No to whatever we have done in the past. Let's start afresh. Let's promise not to litter our surroundings anymore and also let's stop others too from doing it. It would take the sincerest of individual efforts to accept our faults and educate ourselves to avoid such a social calamity.

We have been hearing a great deal, politicians clamouring about the huge amount of funds being invested in our beloved city under mammoth government scheme like JNNURM etc to convert it to a beautiful metropolitan city. Enormous amounts of time, energy and

planning are supposed to have gone into it. But as far as collecting garbage and maintaining basic cleanliness and hygiene is concerned, I think we have gone wrong somewhere. It needs basic understanding of the problem and the solution lies in simplicity and not complexity.

Where are the municipal workforce, have they not seen the dirt on the streets and clogged drains? I moved a little ahead from the GMC gate towards the hill road hoping that things will be better on that side. But to my dismay, I saw the plastic packets of chips, plastic cups and plates used and thrown by roadside food stalls, all on the street and deposited permanently on the roadside slope of the hill. The gruesome sight forces us to visualize our future and the kind of environment we are going to hand over to the next generation.

All of us, the municipal authorities, the cleaners and workers, the people, the community, the school students, in fact all the stakeholders need to get their act together. Though it is a challenge to keep our environs clean, I hope we will all agree that it is not so difficult if we take responsible and concerted actions and play our due roles as responsible citizens.

My morning walk was about to be cut short but thanks to my humble little handkerchief which came to my rescue with its wonderful property of sealing off the nostrils. It became a daily fight of motivation with the unsavoury elements occupying the street to complete the ritual of the morning walk. Instead of a pleasurable exercise, it started becoming an abominable act to pursue a simple piece of healthy advice. When I discussed my problem with my trusted friends, they advised, albeit well meaning, buy a jogging machine and complete the morning walk inside the safe environs of my house. This foolproof method may hopefully keep me in good stead, but I am surely going to miss the fresh air!

Anamika Tewari is an ACS officer and wife of Ajay Tewari



The Durga Temple of Nartiang

The 500 year old Durga Temple in the Jaintia Hills is well worth a visit

BY Ruprekha Mushahary



Photos by: Ruprekha Mushahary

March is a lovely time to be in the hills of Meghalaya, when the climate is at its best. The weather was enticing and the scenery, picturesque. On one such pleasant morning, I decided to take a trip to the Jaintia Hills District. It was lovely driving through the hills, stopping occasionally to take in the tranquil surroundings. My destination was the Durga Temple of Nartiang.

We drove east from Shillong along the Jowai Road as the soft glow of the morning sun bathed the lush green hills. Heavy traffic slowed us down to just 10 to 15 kilometres per hour at the beginning but we gathered speed gradually as we proceeded after crossing the city limits. Driving past villages and pine covered hills was gratifying.

Nartiang is around 65 kilometres from Shillong. This small village was the summer capital of the Jaintia kings. My first stop here was the Durga Temple. The original structure of the temple was similar to a typical Khasi house, with a thatched roof over a central wooden pillar. Later the thatch was replaced by a corrugated tin roof. It had been further modified and reconstructed by the Ramakrishna Mission of Cherrapunjee in the year 1987

to preserve, protect and encourage the tradition, faith and culture of the people.

The temple stands today, nondescript, to tell the tale of the Hindu heritage of the Jaintia kingdom which dates back to around 1446 A.D. This 500 year old Durga temple is one of the “Shakti Peethas” of Hindu Mythology. Although Shakti Peethas are well known all over, this particular one is an exception.

Shakti Peetha : Legend has it that King Daksha never liked his son-in-law Lord Shiva who is dressed in leopard skin, with snakes entwining his neck, body smeared with ash and with matted hair who went around begging for alms. But he had to bow down to his daughter Sati’s wish to be Shiva’s wife. Soon after the marriage King Daksha went to pay his daughter and son-in-law a visit. It was at noon while Lord Shiva was taking a siesta. His attendants had refused to wake Shiva up. Daksha felt utterly humiliated thinking Shiva did it on purpose. Daksha disliked Shiva more now and waited for his opportunity to take revenge.

Daksha’s opportunity to settle scores came soon. He arranged for an elaborate performance of holy sacrificial

ritual (Yajna). All important people were invited to the holy ceremony. All, except Lord Shiva. Even though Shiva has forbidden her, Sati went to attend the holy ceremony. After all, Sati thought, she did not need an invitation to attend a function at her own father's home.

Daksha ridiculed Sati and belittled Lord Shiva in front of the guests as soon as Sati arrived. Unable to withstand the insult, Sati jumped into the sacrificial fire before the very eyes of the entire gathering who stood watching in utter disbelief. Shiva was mad with rage when the news reached him. He held Sati's body up and started the "Tandava Nritya". Carrying the body of Sati he travelled from place to place, crossing hills, valleys and rivers. The world shook under Lord Shiva's fury. Frightened, the Gods went to Lord Vishnu for help. Vishnu released his "Sudarshana Chakra" which sliced parts of Sati's body. Gradually Shiva calmed down. The places where parts of Sati's body fell are known as "Shakti Peetha". Temples are built on these spots and worshiped with great devotion.

Sati's left thigh had fallen on Nartiang, Jaintia Hills. Durga is known here as Jainteshwari. The other two Shakti Peethas of North East are Kamakhya at Guwahati, Assam and Tripura Sundari at Udaipur, Tripura. The temple, which was a part of the fort of erstwhile Jaintia kingdom, was built by Jaintia King Dhan Manik. Goddess Durga appeared in his dream and narrated the significance of the place. The Goddess also asked him to build a temple on that particular spot. Following his dream the king built this temple. King Jaso Manik had married Lakshmi Narayana, the daughter of Nara Narayana the Hindu King of Koch clan. It is believed that Lakshmi's influence was instrumental in Jaintia Royalties embracing Hinduism.

Rituals of this Durga temple are a blend of Hindu and ancient Jaintia traditions. There are some 500 odd Hindu families who live around Nartiang and who come

to worship in this temple. The chief patron is the Jaintia chieftain locally known as the Syiem.

The temple holds the same altar, idols and swords that were used for human sacrifice centuries ago before the idol of Goddess Durga. This practice was banned during the British rule. However, following local traditions, the custom of sacrifice still exists even today despite the ban.

On the 8th day of Durga Puja, Mahashtami, a goat dressed in a dhoti and human mask is sacrificed. The goat symbolizes a man, thus keeping the custom of human sacrifice. The heads of the sacrificials were disposed through an opening on the floor of the temple. This hole is linked to an underground tunnel which joins the river Mintdu. The same method is followed in the procedure of sacrifice and disposing the heads in the river even today.

A banana plant is dressed as Goddess Durga and worshiped during the ten days of Durga Puja and ceremoniously immersed in the river Mintdu with a gun fire salutation.

A family of priests from Ujjain looks after and performs the religious rituals of the temple. During my visit, I met the present priest Uttam Deshmukh. He could not recollect much of the history. Though he did say that, he is the 29th generation of priests from his family.

A central Puja committee of the Hindu community in the state of Meghalaya takes care of the temple, including the maintenance. Devotees visit this temple from far and wide during the Durga Puja season.

Ruprekha Mushabary is a social activist and wife of Bhaskar Mushabary



What Are You Afraid Of?

Phobias are anxiety disorders characterised by an irrational fear of people, places, activities and things

BY Shobha Sarmah



Like other emotions present in human beings, fear is also a normal human emotion. But if what you fear is not very dangerous but causes emotional and physical distress, you may be suffering from anxiety disorder which is called a phobia, defined by a persistent fear of an object or a situation. Phobias may affect people of all ages and can include the fear of people, places, activities and things. The affected person will typically go to great lengths to avoid the situation or the object to a greater degree than actual danger posed. If the feared object or situation cannot be avoided, the affected person may suffer from significant physical harm and mental distress characterized by rapid and irregular heartbeat, difficulty in breathing, an overwhelming desire to get away and in extreme cases fainting and loss of consciousness. It is important to note that many people may be affected by an anxiety disorder or depression either concurrently or at some point in their lives.

Criteria for specific phobias:

1. Marked or persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable triggered by the presence or anticipation of a specific object or situation.

2. Exposure to the phobic situation almost invariably provokes our immediate anxiety response or panic attack.
3. The person recognizes that the fear is excessive or unreasonable.
4. Phobic situation avoided or endured with intense anxiety or distress.
5. Symptoms interfere significantly with the normal functioning of the person.
6. Duration of at least 6 months.

Some common phobias

Agoraphobia: Fear of leaving home

Fear of being alone outside your home, where escape and assistance might be difficult, is called agoraphobia. This phobia may involve fear of being on a bridge, a busy street, or in a crowded mall or elevator. People with agoraphobia may only be able to leave home with friends or a family member. In severe cases, they may not be able to leave home at all, feeling that it is the only safe place to be. This phobia usually starts around age 30 with severe panic attacks.

Social phobia: Fear of people

Fear of being embarrassed in front of other people is called social phobia. In mild cases it may be experienced as the common fear of public speaking, but for some people this fear may extend to something as simple as writing a cheque in front of another person or eating in public. Social phobias are also called social anxiety disorders.

Arachnophobia: Fear of Spiders

It is not abnormal for a child to have a severe fear of certain animals such as snakes or spiders. These may be the object of childhood nightmares. But when an extreme fear of an animal persists into adulthood, it rarely goes away without treatment. Fear of animals is the most common type of specific phobia.

Acrophobia: Fear of Heights

This is another type of specific phobia in which a certain situation causes unreasonable fear or panic. Specific phobias, like acrophobia, are twice as common in women. These phobias tend to start in childhood, but persist into adulthood. Many people use the term vertigo to describe fear of heights

Claustrophobia: Fear of Closed Spaces

Another common specific phobia is fear of closed-in spaces, or claustrophobia. Like other specific phobias, claustrophobia is more common in women.

Mysophobia: Fear of Germs

The excessive fear of germs is a common anxiety disorder in America. The medical term for this phobia is mysophobia. Mysophobia may be related to obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and hypochondria. Symptoms include obsessive washing and fear of public spaces.

Some uncommon phobias**Alliumphobia:** Fear of garlic

Alliumphobia is an intense fear of garlic. People with alliumphobia avoid consuming garlic at all costs and shudder even at the sight or smell of it. Other than humans, vampires and mosquitoes are reported to have alliumphobia.

Didaskaleinophobia: Fear of going to school

Didaskaleinophobia is characterized by an aversion to school. The root cause may be traced back to learning disabilities (like dyslexia), an inability to cope with academic pressure or traumatic events (such as being bullied, oppressed or marginalized), or being confronted in school. Teachers should be trained to nurture and counsel students and give them special time and attention.

Soceraphobia: Fear of in-laws

Soceraphobia is characterized by constant apprehension, anxiety or fear at the thought of interacting with one's in-laws. Pentheraphobia is the fear of one's mother-in-law. The root cause of this fear lies in the often exaggerated imagination of the in-law's similarity to one's own, which

often proves unrealistic. A surprisingly large number of newlywed men and women are seeking therapy to overcome this phobia.

Pogonophobia: Fear of beards

Pogonophobia is derived from the Greek word "pogono" meaning "pertaining to beard" and "phobia" meaning "fear." Some people attach negative attributes of being disheveled, unhygienic and/or barbaric to men with beards and are repulsed by them (of course, elegantly coiffed beards in agreement with women's tastes are a different topic altogether). Some women have turned down eligible bachelors due to this phobia and even consider men with facial hair to have a "suspicious streak of individuality and defiance."

Euphobia: Fear of hearing good news

We know that everyone loves to hear good news and dreads the bad, but here's a shocking revelation – people suffering from euphobia shun good news of any kind! A person suffering from euphobia surrounds himself with negative or pessimistic perceptions intentionally. Behavioral therapy may help them to develop confidence and optimism.

Hippopotomonstrosesquipedaliophobia/ Sesquipedalophobia: Fear of long words

The name itself contains a frightful 35 letters and derives its origin from the root-word "sesquipedalian", meaning "long word." The words "hippopotamus" and "monsters" are simply added to it to intensify its terror. Fearful experiences with vocabulary or spelling contests during childhood and difficulty to memorize or mentally process multisyllabic words are some of the causes of this phobia. In today's techno dependent society, many people who have given up the habit of reading can partially develop this phobia.

Calignephobia/ Venustraphobia: Fear of beautiful women

Some people may suffer from a ceaseless fear, anxiety, uneasiness and even depression when coming in contact with beautiful women. This may stem from a traumatic incident in the past of confronting a beautiful female, low self-esteem and/or self-image, or an inferiority complex.

Hexakosioihexekontahexaphobia: Fear of the number 666

The number 666 or "six hundred threescore and six" is mentioned as the "number of the beast" in the Bible, people associated with this number were left to face dire consequences. In literature, fiction and music, the evil of the number 666 has left an indelible mark. Many gothic, supernatural and sinister thrillers have endorsed this idea. The superstitious fear of "the devil's number" has caused many people discomfort when encountered with it.

Vestiophobia: Fear of wearing clothes

Vestiophobia is an aversion to the feeling of clothes on one's body. People with this phobia prefer to dress in extremely loose garments or sometimes no garment

at all. Traumatic incidents of being bitten by insects (like spiders and wasps) hidden in the folds of the clothes are linked with vestiophobia. Sometimes wearing heavy clothes for a prolonged time may trigger such a phobia. The symptoms range between a sense of suffocation and strangulation, to nausea, trembling and panic.

Pneumatiphobia: Fear of spirits

Pneumatiphobia is a fear of the supernatural which many of us have to some extent. This phobia may be sub-categorized into Spectrophobia (fear of specters), Phasmophobia (fear of ghosts), Demonophobia (fear of demons), Bogyphobia (fear of bogeyman), Satanophobia (fear of Satan), Stygiophobia or Hadeophobia (fear of hell) and Wiccaphobia (fear of witches). The symptoms include paranoia, panic attacks, nausea, sweating, mental breakdown and a feeling of being chased or persecuted by spirits. Stories of ghosts, demons and other apparitions popularized by literature, mythology and television may aggravate this phobia.

Paruresis: Shy-Bladder Phobia

A phobia that many people have never heard of is paruresis. This phobia has also been called shy-bladder syndrome and is considered one of the social anxiety disorders. People with this phobia are afraid of urinating in public bathrooms. The fear may be so great that it interferes with their ability to go to school, to work, or to travel, and can result in dangerous retention of urine. The fear may start with a traumatic event in childhood.

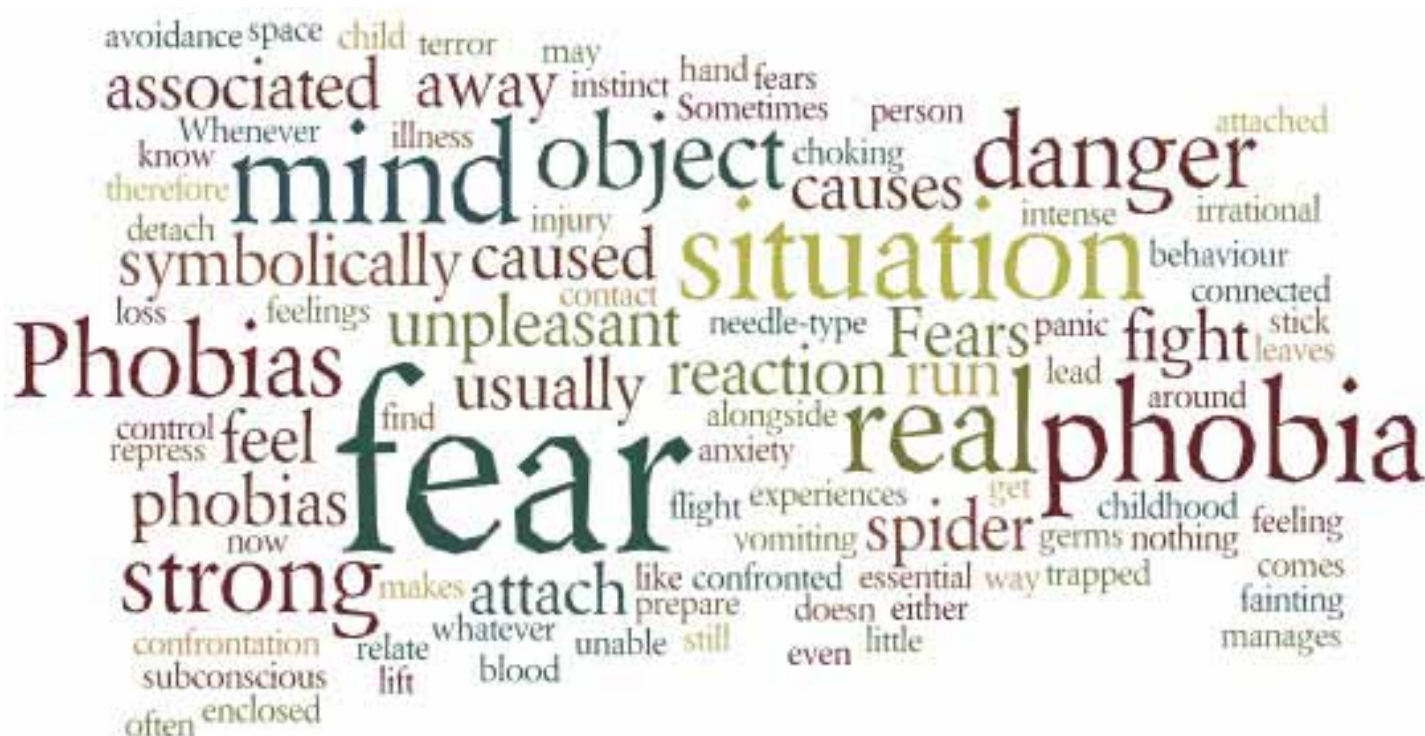
Necrophobia: Fear of Death

Death is the great unknown and a fear that most people share. But some people have an abnormal fear of death or of dead things, a condition known as necrophobia. Fear of death may be at the root of many other phobias such as acrophobia or claustrophobia.

Overcoming phobias

People who suffer from phobias usually know that their fears are somewhat irrational, but they feel that they cannot help themselves. When approaching a phobic situation, they are overwhelmed with fear and anxiety which may vary from mild feelings of apprehension and distress to full fledged activation of flight or fight responses. Regardless of how they begin, phobic behaviors tend to be reinforced because everytime the person with a phobia avoids a feared situation, his or her anxiety decreases. In addition, the benefits derived from being disabled, such as increased attention and sympathy received from others help the affected person to regulate his behavior and thereby achieve control over the phobia. Visiting a counselor, clinical psychologist or a psychiatrist can help people to treat their phobias.

Shobha Sarma is associate professor in the Department of Education and in-charge, Department of Psychology, Handique Girls' College. She is the wife of Utpalananda Sarma



A Letter to Every Housewife

Housework is often regarded as not real work and housewives rarely given the importance they deserve. This is a tribute to every homemaker

BY Shaguphta Parveen Hussain and Nasreen

Hello there!

Hoping that you are alive, kicking and working hard all day! Managing the house and all the household chores is no joke. Often, people in our society or anywhere in the world for that matter overlook the efforts made by housewives. Actually, I would rather call you home maker than housewife.

All the members in your family sleep in peace because they need not worry about what they would have for breakfast the next morning, only and only because you exist! You make everyone's life way easier. I hope you realize that.

There's only one thing that I have always noticed and it is that people always overlook the time a home maker invests in all the household chores for all her family members. They never appreciate what you do and only find faults in everything. People at home don't even consider your work as 'work'.

Going to some corporate place and working there from morning to evening is not the only 'job'. Men call their jobs tedious and monotonous, trust me, yours is more. The same every day after getting up from sleep.

All housewives work 24x7 - except for the time you sleep, you are always working. Yes! People don't see that, maybe even you don't. You don't even consider your taxing household chores. Just because people think that home makers don't work, does not mean you don't work. You work more than any other human being.

You are a person who takes care of your children, buys, prepares and stores food and provisions for your family. Merriam Webster describes a housewife as a married woman who is in charge of her household. The British Chamber's Twentieth Dictionary (1990) defined a housewife as "the mistress of a household, a female domestic manager". Your occupation at home is running or managing her family's home and looking after everyone's needs in daily life. Sheila Hardy writes ' Books, magazines, films and television programmes tried hard to reinforce the idyllic picture of the perfect stay-at-home housewife who took care of her home, raised her children, worked nutritious meals and provided a haven of calm for her hardworking husband when he returned at the end of his working day'. I know running a house is a great, tiring and difficult job. I think, all housewives should aim at making healthy meals to keep whole family feeling their best, healthy and strong. A good meal can be an expression of love and a warm welcome for the household. Further



having a clean house can reduce everybody's stress and make things run much smoother. Do your best to make sure that everyone's spiritual and emotional needs are met, to make your home the best. All housewives must discuss realistic expectations, and how to meet them as best as you can.

It seems pretty basic right? But housewives can often get so busy that they forget to make time for their friends and maintain social relationships. Being a good housewife is about doing the best you can for the welfare of the entire household, so make it work for you, your partner and everyone else in the family.

You are awesome! Keep being awesome and show the world that you can shine brighter than others. Never forget to respect your work!

With love,
Someone who is awestruck by you!

Shaguphta Parveen Hussain is a homemaker and wife of Ahmed Hussain. Nasreen is an MBA student and a close friend of the Hussains

The Wonder Fabric of Assam

The familiar white and red gamocha has come to be a symbol of Assam and part of the identity of the State

BY Indu Singh

Traditionally woven on hand looms, made of cotton yarns in different sizes and colour combinations, and used in different ways, gamochas (pronounced gamosa) are used to felicitate, to honour, and as gifts. It is truly multi-functional.

It has evolved from merely being a piece of fabric used to cover the body (Angavastra) to an all-purpose fabric. Although the term defines specific application: 'ga' means 'body' and 'mocha' means 'wipe' in Assamese; in reality it means a whole lot more in our culture.

The gamocha is a symbolic representation of Assamese culture; one of the staples across all classes of Assamese society. It is part of the State's identity and is one of the most indispensable and humble pieces of fabric that would remain integral to the people of this region besides being a symbol of love and regard. There is historical evidence of its usage since the 15th century.



From the business perspective, irrespective of size, in view of its varied usage, the estimated consumption of the gamocha would be more than 2,00,00,000 pieces (2 crores) annually. Given its standard size - 1.5 m x 0.70 m, weighing about 100 gm – cotton yarn consumption would be around 2,10,00,000 sq mts and 20,00,000 kg (2,000 mts). History books such as Edward Gaité's 'History of Assam' reveal that the price of each gamocha used to be 6 paise in 1739. Considering today's average price at Rs. 60.00 per piece, the total market value is Rs. 120 crore.

From the socio-economic point of view, more than 50% of the demand in Assam is met by gamochas manufactured outside, which means more than Rs 60 crores of revenue goes out of the State. The opportunity

of livelihood creation within the State is being lost. Considering the average productivity of two gamochas per day per weaver, there is a potential of creating about 50,000 jobs in rural Assam.

Fabric Plus is initiating a project called Gamocha Village to showcase a model for livelihood creation, to be set up initially in Chatabari, Dakhin Kamrup, Assam. The rationale for such an initiative is that there is a big market within the country and outside and the product has varied functionalities and has scope of diversification. It can also be a catalyst for livelihood creation and socio-economic development in rural Assam.

This for-profit business model is likely to benefit the community in many ways:

- Work culture development
- Better earning level
- Women empowerment (financially empowered women will have a bigger say in family and social matters)
- Preservation of tradition
- Rural migration
- Improvement in quality of life etc
-

The model is broadly based on the gaps that exist in the whole gamocha trade. The modus operandi of the project is under preparation with the following broad based elements. Villages where a large number of women weavers are available would be chosen. Hand looms with jacquard mechanisms will enhance weaving efficiency, and design flexibility. Low cost yarns would be provided and initially weavers would be trained in the use of handloom with jacquard mechanism. Market linkages would be developed. Production will be actualised by distributing yarns to the local weavers in the interior villages of Assam and then linking the products with marketing channels through standardised quality control systems. The major gap in professional approach towards the entire value chain will be addressed. Once the gamocha village model becomes sustainable, the same will be replicated all over Assam.

The model aims to popularise the indigenous production of the gamocha, develop entrepreneurship, optimisation of local resources, and yarn manufacturing. This initiative strives to make a small dent in a long-term mission of empowering our women, and keeping our heritage alive within our glorious State.

Indu Singh is a social entrepreneur and wife of Shamsber Singh

Happiness in Feathered Bundles

Watching the birds in the trees outside the house proved to be an even better medicine than what the doctors prescribed

BY Ruprekha Mushahary



All these years, I have only known about the presence of three families of birds in my premises. The first is my pet pigeons. A pair appeared one day, out of nowhere, and built their nest in the gap of a ceiling. Now they are one big family. The second is a large family of house sparrows. They are permanent residents now and have multiplied so much in due course that I have lost count. And the third is the common Myna, apart from the common crows of course.

I was too busy with work and life in general to really take the time to look around. The hectic schedule at work and a busy social life left me with very little time to discover a beautiful side of nature - lovely creatures right at home. To be with nature I would always take a trip to some resort, wildlife sanctuary or some quiet countryside, ignorant of what I had at home.

Then one day I fell ill. It gradually became worse and I had to have complete bed-rest. I was devastated. I could not move out of bed or turn even on my side without help. I went into depression. Forget reading or writing, I even stopped answering phone calls. I would lie in bed upstairs, constantly gazing at the garden through the window, watching the seasons change. The neem tree by my window stood by me as if a witness to my pain, giving me strength.

Then it was midsummer and a lovely shower had just washed the garden. I saw a dove perched cosily on the neem tree, taking shelter from the rain. I called out to my husband and asked him to hand me my camera which was just lying around gathering dust. And that is when I took the first photo of a bird. It triggered the first ray of hope in me. Then I took another, and yet another. Looking at these images made me feel better. Then I would look around for more doves, but to my surprise, along with the pair of doves I noticed a tiny black and white bird too. I was overjoyed. I had something to look forward to. What would I see tomorrow? Would the pretty little black birdie or the green one visit again? I no longer felt depressed. I wish I had realized earlier that these sweet little birds could come to mean so much to me.

I had to then leave the city for treatment. A month later, I returned home, but was once again confined to my bed for a month. Gradually, I started to walk and move a little. Now I could sit on the balcony and on the terrace for short periods. But what I saw there was beyond my imagination. My joy knew no bounds. Words fail me as I narrate what I saw. There were beautiful birds sitting on the apple blossom (Pink Shower) or the sheesham tree right next to me! They fly away to collect insects or fruits from nearby trees, but they always come back to perch themselves again on the trees by my side. Some just show up once in weeks for a few minutes. Sweetly enough, my presence didn't seem to bother them at all.

Watching them and taking their pictures became my hobby. Every morning I would sit on the corner of my terrace and wait for different species to show up. Now I no longer miss the busy life I once led. My depression slowly gave way to happiness and hope; and all this by just looking at these lovely little innocent feathered creatures go about their business.

Guwahati city is rapidly turning into a concrete jungle. Trees are being cut, hills are being destroyed to make highways or erect high-rises. Jungles and wetlands are being encroached on by humans, chasing away the fauna. We humans have become so insensitive. Till now, I was completely unaware of the fact that my neighbourhood, the heart of the city, was home to so many species of birds. Just a few flowering trees can shelter so many species of birds in our gardens and in our cities! Although my garden had quite a few fruit and flowering trees, I have planted a few more now. I hope more birds can enjoy and make these their homes.

I feel content. In the darkest of hours, hope shines like a bright ray of sunlight. It's up to you to look for it and seize it.

Ruprekha Mushahary is a social activist and wife of Bhaskar Mushahary

Flawless Skin, Naturally

The most important part of skincare is cleansing and the best products you can use are natural, everyday ingredients available in your own home

BY Nanda Jauhari

(i) Honey : Honey is a great moisturizer. Mix one teaspoon of honey, two teaspoons of milk and one tablespoon of gram flour thoroughly. Apply it over face and neck. Leave for 10 minutes and rinse off with warm water. This face-wash can be used once a week for flawless skin.

(ii) Papaya : Take a little bit of milk, add mashed papaya



and two teaspoons of oatmeal. Mix well. Scrub this over face and neck and wash off. This will help reduce dark patches and tan.

(iii) Aloe Vera : Aloe Vera moisturizes the skin and promotes skin cell growth. Apply the Aloe Vera leaf gel over your face. Leave for half an hour and rinse with lukewarm water for flawless skin.

(iv) Strawberry : As beautiful as they are, they are also good for bright skin. Mash four strawberries and rub into the skin. Leave for fifteen minutes and wash off for flawless skin.



(v) Cucumber : Cucumber repairs damaged skin cells and acts as a natural astringent. Take thick cucumber slices and rub them thoroughly over your face. Leave it overnight and rinse with lukewarm water for flawless skin.

(vi) Tomato : Rubbing cold tomato halves on the face and neck will tighten your skin and will take care of your pores too.

(vii) Turmeric : A very good skin tightening agent and antiseptic. Mix one tablespoon of turmeric powder, one tablespoon of honey, one tablespoon of gram flour and a little milk. Apply over face and neck. Wash off with lukewarm water after twenty minutes. This is a very good scrub for flawless skin.

(viii) Yoghurt : For those with oily and combination skin; yoghurt is very good. Massage two teaspoons of yoghurt daily and wash off for smooth and radiant skin.



(ix) Lemon : Vitamin C content of lemon helps reduce dark spots. It has bleaching properties as well. Mix half of freshly squeezed lemon and two tablespoons of honey. Apply it over face. Leave for twenty minutes and wash off with lukewarm water for flawless skin.



Nanda Jauhari is a homemaker and wife of Munish Jauhari

Roots

The Living Roots Bridge in Meghalaya is a reminder of the ties that hold and bind us in life, as well as a synonym for the bridge between people and cultures

BY Ambika Pipersenia



As my flight took off for Delhi I peeked out of my window to see the green landscape I was leaving behind. My father had always been a lover of capturing images and he didn't miss this one during the flight where he captured three pudding like layers of the spheres of the earth. A clear blue sky, a layer of dense cotton white clouds and the green land underneath. A masterpiece shot that made me nostalgic about my visit to North East India.

North East India!! Three vibrant words that still leave me excited and exhilarated. My thoughts whirled inside my head. How energies, forces and destinies work in symphony. How powerful is God and nature that where a man fails both these lift him up back to move on. A man being the most intelligent and strongest creation of God, and when God merges his efforts with nature nothing compares to what is created then. And God finally connects you with strings, which to you were once strangers and then the same strings become inseparable.

Credits to this unimaginable insight goes to this village about 90 kms from Shillong (Meghalaya), called Mawlynnong. With the title of 'The cleanest village of Asia' this is a traveller's pilgrimage. The locals here are as sweet as their tribe's name Khasi. I got a chance to give

vent to my adventurous spirit here at the 'Living Root Bridge' which dates back hundreds maybe even thousands of years. This is a living example of the farsighted vision of the Khasi ancestors and the present residents.

After 15 minutes of trekking I was there on one of the most breathtaking natural bridges made by twisting the roots of the gigantic rubber trees. The roots made a pathway across a stream, for villagers to commute. I stood there awestruck at this intertwined structure of roots which at first looked creepy. With the roots on your right and roots on your left, roots on top of you and roots underneath you, it's all about roots. The rocky terrain and the fresh water always on run under the bridge could make anyone crave for meditation at this peaceful destination.

It was my second visit here and this time I had come with my family. I had crossed the bridge along with my extended family scattered all over, each one of us seeking their own zones of adventure spots and picturesque backgrounds. We climbed down the rocks to get some good pictures and selfies. I could see a big network of roots from one coming from the side of the tree with the other caging it to conjoin to another. We thoroughly enjoyed. On our way back I couldn't forget the roots and their formations.

How significant is this word in our lives. Roots: a synonym for base and foundation. A layer that holds and binds the entire structure upright and strong. The way rubber roots connected themselves to bridge the two ends is exactly how we humans in life connect with each other to bridge our cultures, traditions, love, families and what not.

We meet people and keep meeting till the end of our lives. Every meeting takes place through a source or medium. Different energies work together to make two people come in contact with each other. This medium and source can be another person, an animal, an incident or a place. The medium comes in our contact through another medium and the chain continues. It is similar to this root web. Which root connects which one and where it ends is out of our reach because it's a matrix. A matrix of energies in flow. A matrix of connections in synchronisation. My nerves ache to even think where it all starts from. It's too difficult to seek the origination point of the roots.

There are unending analogies about life but lessons from them work well. I was here with my family and

friends. Each one of us had come from different parents and our parents were from different parents and different families. What mattered was that we all were connected. Connected with forces of love and admiration. This network of mediums and sources like roots had brought us together and it worked pretty well because we shared positive energies.

These simple looking Khasi ancestors must have had real Einstein brains that fashioned and wove the roots of rubber trees across the rivulets and streams. The cantilevered mesh of the strong roots strengthened my faith in the connection between God, nature and humans because ultimately we all share the same energies. We just need to calm ourselves and let it in.

Ambika is the niece of Suman and Vinod K. Pipersenia

The Lonesome Fear

BY Paban Kumar Borthakur

Away you please
do not go
With a face so sad so melancholy,
It makes me so.
Away you please
do not go
With a face so smiling bright
It makes me the contrary.
Why at all you go
Oh, dear?
Before you put the shoes on
Let this moment be frozen
The present be your present today
Let the past be buried
Future bartered.
If you must
Shed tears in my shed
If you must
Smile or laugh
Never except in this shed
In my shebeen, my shed.
Let here be the place
Till the curtain falls.

Paban Kumar Borthakur is Principal Secretary Personnel, AR&T and Education. Four books of his poems have been published

March Melody

BY Ruprekha Mushahary



Tears of gaiety from the heavens,
Merrily pouring down
Like a March melody full of bliss,
In a splitter-splatter fun.

Ecstasy surround,
My restless, untamed mind
Out pours happiness unbound,
Making the heart waltz around.

Crystal droplets of drizzle,
Slide down my window pane
Washing heaps of agony off the heart,
Like bubbles plop, melt and wane.

Lingering redolence of moist grass,
Freshens up memories of yore
When the heart thumped doing a solo,
Tapping, jiving or doing a jig all day long.

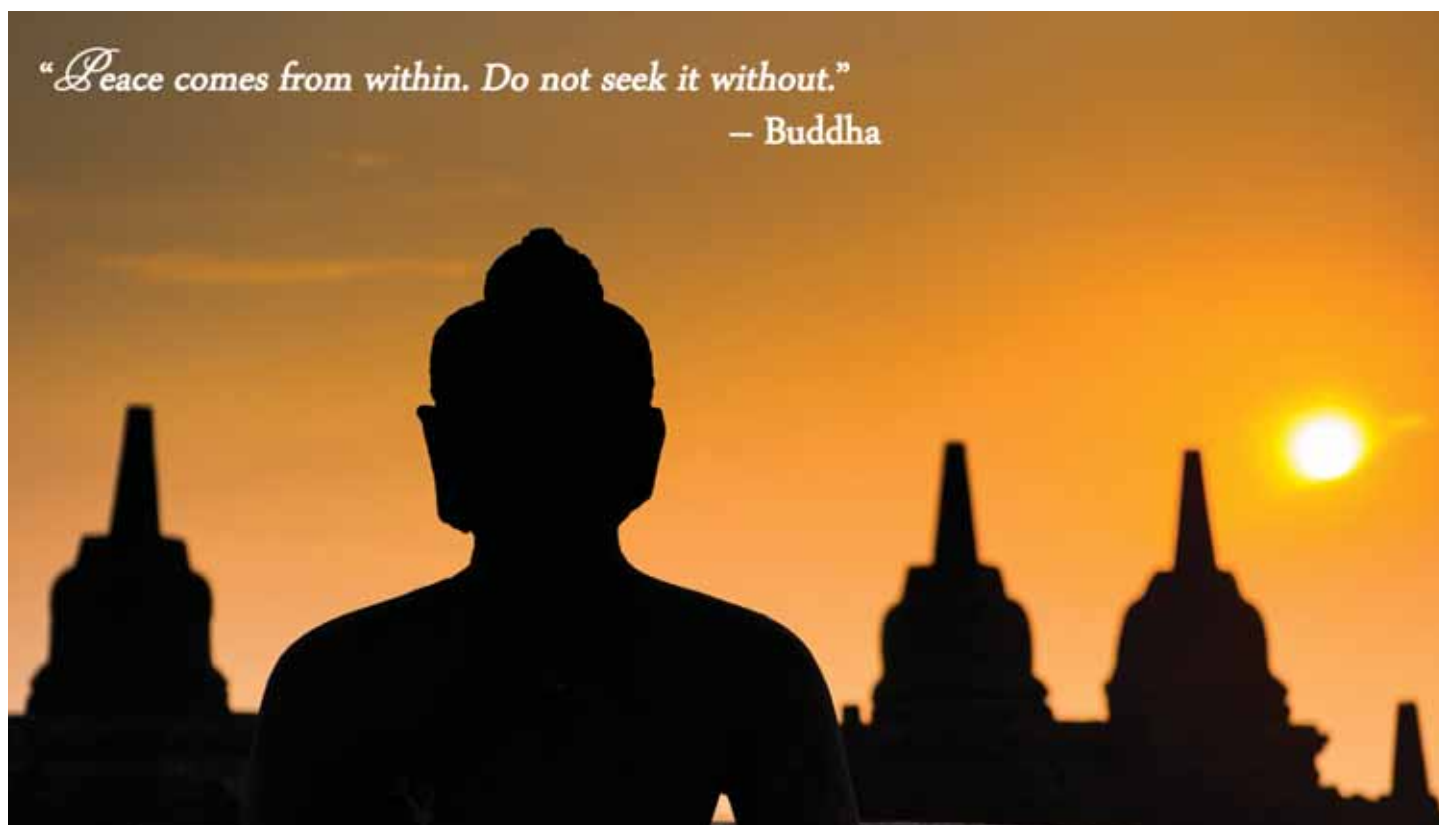
Growing wings thus flutters my mind away,
To an unknown mystique vale, where
Overpowered by colours, darkness fades away,
Ah, song of happiness, with me do always stay.

Ruprekha Mushahary is a social activist and wife of Bhaskar Mushahary

Journey into Peace and Happiness

A personal encounter with the teachings of Lord Buddha creates a life-changing experience

BY Nirupama Cairae



Life is full of mysteries and surprises. Just when we think that we have learnt all we need to know we suddenly come across an amazing new path and embark on a new journey yet again. The same happened with me a year ago. I was quite unwell and in low spirits when suddenly I joined an organization which led me to an incredible path of peace and happiness.

The organization is Bharat Soka Gakkai, the Indian branch of Soka Gakkai International (SGI). Under the guidance of President Daisaku Ikeda it has inspired millions of people to move on a path for happiness and goodness of humanity. SGI is an organization that embodies Buddha's intent and decree dedicated to World Peace.

Today we are all talking about World Peace but little do we realise that to get World Peace we have to change our own negativities first, become a better person and respect all people equally. It's tough but how can we change the society and world before changing our own self. I would like to share a beautiful story. One night when Buddha's disciple returned from some errand he found him searching for something in the ground outside the hut. He curiously asked him what he was looking for in the dark outside. Buddha replied "I have lost the needle I was stitching with please help me find it." After

a long search the pupil asked him where he had lost the needle and got the answer by the bed in the hut. The perplexed disciple asked him "if you say it was lost inside why are you looking for it here?" Gautam Buddha simply smiled at his disciple and said, "Exactly how can we find peace and happiness outside while it is pitch dark inside. Light the lamp within you and find the treasure". This is what this year long journey has taught me - a new philosophy of life.

At first being a staunch Hindu I had some reservations but little by little I realised that what I was practising, learning and experiencing had nothing to do with religion. It is a philosophy based on the aim of empowering people on a path of peace and happiness by practising the Mystic Law. The central premise being that each person has innate capacity to triumph in every circumstance in which they find themselves, only we should chant whole heartedly for the happiness and wellbeing of others to embark on a path of tranquility.

When I fell seriously ill a few years ago I was in constant pain but after becoming a member of SGI I learnt a big lesson that we can make our illness, our problems a starting point for embarking on a course to greater happiness or decline towards misery and anguish. Choice is ours. And I made my choice.

Let me tell you a little about this practice. We all our familiar with the story of Gautam Buddha and how he attained enlightenment for the benefit of mankind. The final teachings of Shakyamuni are recorded in the Lotus Sutra. Hundreds of years after his death Nichiren Daishonin a Buddhist monk in Japan crystallised the teachings of Lotus Sutra into a practical life philosophy accessible to all. Based on his study of the Lotus Sutra he established a chant known as the Mystic Law. When we chant this law we bring forth our highest ,most enlightened nature ,trasform our lives and simultaneously bring about a positive change in society. Chanting is the foundation of changing our karma. Many a times we encounter a very good person encountering many difficulties and one questions Why??and we hear its the result of actions in our past life. However the Buddhist view of Karma is not fatalistic. This practice helps us to expand our capacity for compassion for others even while facing the negative impact of Karma. Nichiren Buddhism teaches us that it is by confronting and triumphing over our negative karma that we are able to devolop our life , polish our character and ultimately manifest our enlightenment.

Daisukhu Ikeda is the third President of SGI. Through his writings and dialogues with world leaders he has made the wisdom of Buddhism acessible to more people.

SGI recognises faith, practice and study as three pillars of this philosophy. As we chant with continous faith we bring out the eternal life -state of Buddhahood. Practice involves doing Daimukhu(chanting), reciting Gongyo(parts of the Lotus Sutra). Study implies acquiring an understanding of Buddhist teachings. All three complement each other. Focussing on these three aspects

SGI members strive to construct a holistic,compassionate and courageous self.

My study has led me to a new knowledge. My association with my Lord has not lessened in fact it is stronger today. Another important thing I learnt is, to remove negativity from our own lives we have to stop seeing negativity in other people. I AM ONLY RESPONSIBLE FOR MY OWN ACTIONS. If we have to be free from internal misery we have to stop looking at others' faults only then can our life force expand. There is a famous story which you may have heard. Once a hungry cobra entered a carpenter's shop looking for food. The carpenter had closed the shop and already left. The cobra accidently brushed against an axe which was lying on the floor. He got very angry on the axe and bit it. Nothing happened to the axe but the cobra got hurt. He got more infuriated and wrapped himself around the axe trying to smother it. What do you think happened? When the carpenter walked in next day he found a dead cobra wraped around the sharp axe. Many a times we listen less, speak more and react double and in the process hurt our own selves. Our practice teaches us to especially chant for the happiness of people who hurt us intentially or unintentionally. Noble isn't it.

My journey has just begun I am an infant learning to walk. I shall falter and fall at times but get up again stronger and wiser. With full faith in this practice and oneself let's move to a more peaceful world.

Nirupama Cairae is a homemaker and wife of H. M. Cairae



Fashion Technology to the Rescue

The Sualkuchi Institute of Fashion Technology was set up to give new life and impetus to the handloom industry

BY Priya Vinod

Fashion has always been an area of interest for all. Everyone likes to dress well and look good. Some people look for innovative new designs, some have specific choices while some others are ready to try new things all the time. New designs, creative presentation, acceptance from the ever-evolving Next-Gen, cheaper rates, originality etc have always been the catch phrases that we keep looking for in the apparel market. The market demand for good designs and good designers has been growing at a fast pace. Textiles contribute a significant portion of economic activity. Many towns in the country are known for textiles and the most families in these towns have been making their livelihoods primarily from the textile business.

Sualkuchi, known as the Manchester of Assam, is popular for its large number of cottage industries, especially silk handloom, the famous muga silk in particular. The silk woven here is known for its quality, indigenous appeal and a tradition of promoting incredible originality. The gamochas and the mekhala chadors made here are famous throughout the Northeast. An estimated one lakh plus weavers (registered with the handloom department) continue to weave in Kamrup district as of today. Mahatma Gandhi too visited Sualkuchi in the year 1946 and greatly appreciated the local weavers of Sualkuchi. Handloom has been the spirit of Sualkuchi and the guiding light that once kept the town united and flowing with energy.

History apart, today Sualkuchi is suffering for many reasons like lack of sufficient weavers, making costs, old fashioned designs etc. Many of the expert weavers have shifted base to Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri while the costs of production in Sualkuchi have increased. The result, a competitive business model that can survive in the long term hasn't evolved. Even more worrying is the fact that the designs have not kept pace with changing demands and tastes and no longer appeal to the new generation. Most sales or orders are restricted to festive or religious occasions. With the handloom industry being closely associated with livelihoods of lakhs of families, power looms are out of the question. The costs of handloom cloth are linked to the labour costs and are sometimes high. The industry itself being labour intensive, struggles to keep pace with the modern apparel industry where machines have taken over. Standardised designs on design plates can print thousand of apparel pieces in no time, which the handloom industry would take months to complete. Nevertheless, the value and respect for handloom products is still very high.

It is against this worrying backdrop but with a renewed



resolute will to invigorate the silk town that SIFT was conceived and set up in 2008. Formally inaugurated on 30th August 2008, SIFT was established as an initiative of the Kamrup District Administration and Government of Assam under the project title “Integrated Pilot Project for the weavers of Sualkuchi & adjoining areas” and tasked mainly with enhancing skill, offering holistic development of weavers and entrepreneurs as well as promoting the silk industry in the new competitive market economy.

Since 2008, SIFT has been providing integrated training programmes on Fashion and Textile design. SIFT is a registered society under the registration of societies act. Initially SIFT collaborated with the North Eastern Council & National Institute of Fashion Technology, Kolkata (NIFT). A Memorandum of Understanding was signed with NIFT, Kolkata to provide advisory and technical assistance for design innovation, product diversification and to train 600 persons within a span of three years.

Since August 2015, there has, however, been a new specialist approach to the training programmes undertaken by SIFT. The old integrated training programme has been bifurcated into two specialist departments – ‘Fashion Technology’ and ‘Textile

Technology'. The institute has already trained almost 250 students since August 2015, in the fields of Fashion and Textiles, sponsored by organisations like TATA Trust, Power Grid, SIRD, North East Transmission Company etc. SIFT is now exploring tie-ups with NRLM (the livelihoods mission) and also the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship. The vision of SIFT is to emerge as a renowned centre for excellence and innovation in the field of Textile and Fashion Design.

SIFT has good infrastructure consisting of a modern building with floor space of 4500 sq ft., fully equipped lecture rooms, a seminar hall, separate furnished hostel facilities for boys and girls with capacity of 25 persons each, a textile CAD lab, dyeing and processing lab, stitching and pattern making laboratory with state of the art "Juki" lock stitch industrial machines and "Juki" overlock 5 thread machines, a handloom lab equipped with improved Jacquards as well as a quality control and testing lab equipped with modern equipment. The institute implements the following courses: (1) Three-month training programme on 'Fashion Design & Garment Construction' and (2) Three-month training programme on 'Textile Design & Development'. SIFT also gives regular technical support to various organizations involved with silk fabric making. SIFT is now planning to open some outlets which will provide a platform to its students to display and sell their products directly to consumers.

Priya Vinod has an MTech degree and is the wife of Vinod Seshan



Sualkuchi, known as the Manchester of Assam, is popular for its large number of cottage industries, especially silk handloom, the famous muga silk in particular



Creating Opportunities

The Northeast region is full of promise and opportunities waiting to be tapped

BY Anubhuti Jain Deorah



The issue of employment is particularly crucial, especially from the point of view of income generation. In this context, the concern for creating jobs in massive numbers and at rising levels of productivity have been subjects of intense public debates, especially in view of the fact that the employment situation since the 1990s or so has not been encouraging.

In Northeast India, education has always been stressed on which in turn leads to educated unemployed, mainly due to lack of awareness of self-employment opportunities, lack of motivation, failure to acquire skills, etc.

Here I want to stress on the importance of entrepreneurship, and how self-employment can be achieved by finding products and services in and around the regional environment i.e., indigenous products generating employment not just for oneself but for others too.

The Northeast is seeing a rapid and positive change – the rise of small urban centres, consumption habits of the population, growing trade with neighbours, new generation entrepreneurs, youngsters driving the usage pattern, increase in internet and Smartphone penetration even among the lower economic classes. The golden era of the Seven Sisters seems to be here. Not only is the NE rich in resources like tea, silk, vegetation, local produce, etc. but the cultural heritage is also strong like the clothing patterns, food habits, handicrafts, etc. Instead of looking at cluttered market spaces like traditional FMCG, automobiles, etc. and salaried jobs the youth needs to focus on what we have locally. This not only generates income but also brings the NE on the national and perhaps international map. Let's look at the industries

in Assam that have a strong origin effect.

Good quality tea is synonymous with Assam tea. Assam produces 51% of the tea produced in India and about 1/6th of the tea produced in the world (*Govt of Assam's official website*). There are 64597 tea gardens in Assam (*Economic Survey of Assam 2012-13*). About 17 percent of the workers of Assam are engaged in the tea industry. The Guwahati Tea Auction Centre now auctions more than 150 million kg of tea valued at more than Rs 550.00 crores annually. Korangani tea, Mangalam tea, Golaghat Tea, Mazha Gold, Upahar are some branded teas produced regionally. Today they are giving tough competition to national and global brands like Tata tea, Brooke Bond, Twinings, Dilmah etc. and have successfully created their own niche. Likewise other innovative concepts like monthly/annual subscription of tea, tea cafes along with book stores and libraries, etc are coming up. There are opportunities in new product development like fruit and herbal teas. Rural India along with export potential needs to be exploited.

Next let's explore traditional food products. Different States of the Northeast have their particular traditional food items. For eg, Assam has pitha, laddoo, bhoot jalokia etc; Meghalaya has jadoh, ki kpu, tung-rymbai, and pickled bamboo shoots, etc; Nagaland has axone, anish, tathu, etc. Why not sell packed branded form of these on a national platform. With the surge of modern lifestyle and urban development there is a need of these ready to eat products to be made available in the market. One such brand example is Bhogali which derives its name from Bhogali Bihu of Assam. Their product range includes Milky Sandah, Masur Guri, Milky Jalpan, Til Pitha, Malbhog Cheera, Sandah, Pithaguri, etc.

There are more than 100 different tribes in the northeast and they all have unique and traditional crafts. NE India is rich in natural resources like bamboo, jute, cane and water hyacinth. The place-of-origin effect is very strong with respect to bamboo, cane and jute. Fuzion crafts Pvt. Ltd. is an emerging player in the handloom and handicraft industry. The marketing channels used are national and international trade fairs, personal selling, their own website fuzioncrafts.com and tie ups with craftsvilla.com and Alibaba.com. The company also has an international counterpart called the Fusion Crafts International. Handloom and handicrafts is the second largest industry in the northeast region and employs a large number of artisans. Carpets of Arunachal Pradesh, muga silk products of Assam, lashingphee of Manipur, shawls of Nagaland and Mizoram, common handloom products such as bed sheets, chadars, scarves and jackets are found in almost all the States of the region. Silkalay from Assam is one of the most successful entrepreneurs of all times and an inspiration to all young people. Apart from regular products they have diversified into salwar suits, shirt pieces, Shawls, Assamese gamuchas (towels) etc. Today Silkalay sells Assam's finest silk yarn to both domestic and international customers. Silkalay also has its own website through which it markets its products to Unites States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and several European nations. Product innovation is where new entrepreneurs can work in the handicrafts and handloom industry, for eg, umbrellas made of muga silk are popular abroad as it is the best protector against UV rays.

The region is still in the Stage One of development in Tourism and Hospitality. Tourism creates 78 jobs for every million rupees invested in it. This is significantly higher than Agriculture or Industry which creates 45 or 18 jobs respectively for the same amount of investment.

The Northeast is a paradise unexplored with so many different attributes – natural beauty, ethnic cuisines, music, friendly people etc, and it is about time that it was exploited and put on the tourism map of India. Prominent examples are- Natural resort: IORA, Kaziranga, Eco resorts: Potasali Nameri Eco-Cam, Nameri National Park, Assam, La Maison De Ananda, Majuli Island, Assam, Homestays: The Monpa Tribe, Thembang, western Arunachal Pradesh, tree houses and tribal homestay with the Khasi Tribe, Mawlynnong, Meghalaya. But all these are not well known brand names yet. Other examples of speciality products and services (travel, restaurants and hotel ventures) are Bihu Bazaar in Delhi, Momo House in Bangalore, Paradise Hotel, Delicacy, Nagamese, Jungle Travels etc.

There are many species of ornamental fish and scope for expansion of floriculture, rubber plantations, mushroom cultivation and handloom industries. Not only that, Northeast India has a huge capacity of hydro-electricity projects which if tapped, can be used to satisfy one third of India's power requirement. Vast amounts of coal, petroleum and natural gas reserves also exist in the region. Almost all States share borders with other countries providing scope for trade through land.

It is clear that there is no dearth of scope for self-employment in the Northeast, all one needs is the risk taking ability and planned out process to establish themselves as entrepreneur and hence become an employer not an employee.

Anubhuti Jain Deorah is a Senior Research Fellow in the Business Administration Department of Gauhati University. She is the daughter of Anjana and R C Jain



A Comedy of Pairing Errors

What happens when an on-stage anchor at a school play mixes up genders? Read on to find out

BY Rashmi Narzary



Sitting and sipping cream coffee on my balcony the other day, which overlooks the street, I saw a young boy and a girl walking hand in hand, engrossed in each other, oblivious to the humidity and the strong sun, the traffic snarl, the cow on the middle of the street and the ragpicker changing his mobile phone's ringtone. My heart warmed up and my mind strolled back to an eventful evening when a play was staged for Valentine's day by our seniors in Shillong's Pine Mount School, a long time ago, when we were just fourth standard kids learning genders and their opposites. The play was set in the ball room of an English lady. And it was required that there be no single actor but that they were all in pairs. So then the play opened, with the arrival of the guests to the ball of the English lady with their consorts upon their arms and the arrival of each couple was being announced to the rest of the guests with right royal courtesy. The actors, the costumes, the set, Ms. Lyndoh's music, everything was ready down to the finest detail and just when the play

was about to start on the big day, something happened backstage which we juniors were not aware of, at least not then. And this led to the sudden disappearance of the anchor. But the curtain had already been pulled so Ms. Marbaniang, panicking, hastily propped the student, idly standing nearest to the mike, to begin the show. 'But... Ms. Marbaniang...', she stammered, surprised, 'no script...' 'Oh! Be done with the script!' Ms. Marbaniang whispered nervously, 'Just recognize the actors and say out their titles as you see them...!' Now this we heard because all this was whispered while the microphone was dutifully switched on.

Nevertheless, music rolled out and the play began.

And the stunned anchor's shaky voice began the announcement, '...welcome to Lady Twinewipple's Ball! Who should arrive first but the ...Duke! And his... er... beautiful..er...yes, Duck!' The silent auditorium

immediately filled with laughter. But the anchor continued out of fear of Ms. Marbaniang. More music and the next couple arrived. 'Here! Here!' the anchor spoke, 'And now at Lady Twinewipple's Valentine's Day Ball...', we could make out that she was buying time while working out who the next couple could possibly be, '...arrives the Vicar and his...his...lovely Vixen!' More laughter rolled through the auditorium. But the show had to go on and so had to, our anchor. Which she bravely did. 'Next at the grandiose ball of Lady Twinewipple appears His Excellency the Governor along with his...er...much kissed and loved...er...oh yeah! the Governor's Governess!' By now the audience, especially us fourth standard girls, didn't want the play to proceed beyond the arrival of the guests because we were having a different ball with genders and their opposites in a different light. 'And now at the ball,' the anchor's voice quavered, 'arrives the Viscount. At his strong arm, clings his beloved...Viking, yes!' Tears were rolling down our eyes by now. 'Lady Twinewipple's next guests,' we could hear her swallowing down a lump of spit that forms when you're crazily nervous, 'the charming Chancellor and his...his...why yes, his equally charming Charminar! Hold on, ladies and gentlemen, here arrives the next guests...the General and his...' she looked around for some kind of help by way of prompting, but we were rolling on the floor laughing to even see her pleading eyes. So she went ahead with her own intelligent knowledge on genders. '...Yes, the General and his generous Genital!' Someone came softly running to tell us that Ms. Marbaniang had fainted. But the anchor continued. 'And now appears the Baron and the Bitch,' she announced at one relieved breath because the next two couples, which were the last, were some Lord and His Lady, which she confidently announced and that we could make out from the sudden clarity in her voice. And the last couple was the King and His Queen where she definitely made no mistake. Thus the morning passed by and took with it the rest of the play.

In our next grammar class, we found a senior girl sitting in the front row of our class, embarrassedly learning genders with us. We couldn't see her face from behind but word soon trickled down from those sitting beside her in the front row that...

...she was the anchor of the Valentine's Day Play!

Rashmi Narzary is a Sabitya Akademi award winning author and columnist and wife of Hemanta Narzary

Purpose of Life

BY Armeen Shahneela
and Orlin Z. Haque



Hear you, O Busy One!
Who wakes up with the Sun,
You turmoil all day,
Giving blood and sweat the way!
Where is your 'you' time?
Give yourself a dime.
Always working for the pennies,
What will you do with all the money?
Will those go with you
When you go through?
What have you brought,
What will you take of the lot?

Stop, Stare and Introspect.
You have your intellect.

Find your purpose
Instead of all the cuss
That you put forward,
Try a smile, a healthy word.

Pause, Halt and Ponder
About things to wonder.

You will see suffering around,
Alleviate some of that ground.
You will share and care,
Then the world will seem fair.
Yours will be the key to hold,
Purpose of life will ultimately unfold!

Orlin Z. Haque is a boutique owner and wife of Imdadul Haque. Armeen Shahneela is the niece of Orlin and Imdadul Haque

निम्न और निम्न मध्यम परिवारों की त्रासदी

निम्नलिखित हृदयस्पर्शी घटनाएं

अंजना जैन



1. पति-पत्नी ने अपनी बच्ची के साथ ब्रह्मपुत्र में छलांग लगा दी, बचाए जाने की कोशिश करने पर उन्होंने मर जाने देने की अपील की कि दंपति को न बचाया जाए।
2. गरीबी से दुखी होकर पति ने पहले बच्चों को फिर अपनी पत्नी को तेज हथियार से जान से मार दिया, बाद में स्वयं फांसी लगा ली।
3. महिला ने खाने में जहर मिलाकर परिवार के सभी सदस्यों को मौत की नींद सुला दी तथा अंत में स्वयं भी जहरीला खाना खाकर मर गई।

उपरोक्त खबरें अखबार में आए दिन छपती रहती हैं, लोगों ने ब्रह्मपुत्र नद को सुसाइड-प्वाइंट बना दिया तथा आंकड़ों के अनुसार असम में लगभग 15000 आत्महत्याएं विगत वर्षों में हुई हैं, जिसमें एक बात ध्यान देने योग्य है कि प्यार व परीक्षा में असफल होकर आत्महत्या करने वालों के ही समानांतर गरीबी से तंग आकर आत्महत्या करने वालों की है। वे हैं निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार, जो न तो अपनी चादर उघाड़ सकते हैं और न ही लपेट सकते हैं।

बुभीक्षित कि न करोति पापं,
क्षीणा नराः निष्करुणा भवन्ति ॥

आय से अधिक खर्च को रोक पाना एक आम आदमी के लिए असंभव प्रतीत हो रहा है। महंगाई इसका सबसे बड़ा कारण है, चीजों के दाम आसमान छू रहे हैं, बाजार में वस्तुओं की कमी नहीं है, मगर आप खरीदने की हिमाकत तो कीजिए, लौकी जैसी सब्जी जिसे हमारे यहां

जानवरों को खिलाया जाता था, आज 25-30 रुपए किलो बिक रही है। प्याज तो ड्राइंग रूम की शोभा बढ़ाने में उपयोग होने वाले हैं। चावल-दाल, आलू, तेल सभी मूलभूत जरूरत की चीजें, जिनके बिना गुजारा नहीं हो सकता, कैसे जुगाड़ बिठाया जाए? की चिंता में रात-दिन घुलता रहता है एक आम आदमी, एक निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार।

कुछ साल पहले तक हमें कई चीजें प्रकृति द्वारा मुफ्त में मिल जाती थी, घर में लगने वाली थोड़ी-सी सब्जी, मछली पालन, मुर्गी पालन, छोटे से टुकड़े खेत में धान आदि से गुजारा हो जाता था, कोई मेहमान आता तो चिंता न थी, सभी चीजें घर में उपलब्ध थीं। अतिथि को देखकर मन प्रसन्न होता था, मगर अब मेहमान तो छोड़िए, रोजमर्रा की जरूरतों को पूरा करने के लिए भी मानसिक और आर्थिक युद्ध करना पड़ता है। जगह की कमी के कारण खेती में उपजने वाला धान, सब्जी एक सपना हो गया है। पुखरी-तालाबों की हालत जल-प्रदूषण के कारण इतनी बदतर हो गई है कि मछलियां तक सांस न ले पाने के कारण हजारों की तादाद में मर जाती हैं ऐसा आए दिन देखने व सुनने को मिलता है।

एक निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार, जो न तो भीख मांग सकता है और न ही अपनी इज्जत पर कोई आंच आने देना चाहता है। उसके लिए बच्चों का लालन-पालन, पढ़ाई-लिखाई, बूढ़े माता-पिता की दवा-दारू, घर का किराया, पत्नी के रसोई के खर्चे, बिजली का बिल, पानी का बिल आदि के खर्चे गले की फांस बन जाते हैं। जिन त्योहारों के आने से मन में प्रफुल्लता छा जाती थी अब रातों की नींद उड़ा देते हैं, घर के सदस्य कब

तक फटे-पुराने कपड़े पहनेंगे, त्योहार आने पर सभी के मन में नवीनता की आशा जगती है, सबकी कामना भरी नजर मुखिया पर टिकती है और वह बंदा पैसे की तंगी की वजह से बहुत कुछ करना चाहकर भी कुछ नहीं कर पाता आत्मग्लानि उसे आत्महत्या तक पहुंचा देती है।

आधुनिक युग में हम क्यों कर एक ही व्यक्ति या मुखिया पर निर्भर रहे। सब अपने-अपने स्तर पर मेहनत कर सकते हैं। उदाहरणस्वरूप बुजुर्ग माता-पिता के द्वारा बैठकर हस्तनिर्मित सामान जैसे-चटाई बुनना, बेंत का सामान बनाना आदि। अगर महंगाई बढ़ी है तो चीजों का दाम भी बढ़ा है। किशोर उम्र के बच्चे, गृहिणी छोटे बच्चों की ट्यूशन ले सकते हैं। अगर शैक्षणिक योग्यता न भी हो तो गृहिणी खाने-पीने का सामान बनाकर बेच सकती हैं। जैसे-मठरी, पीठा, नारियल के लड्डू, पापड़, मंगोड़ी आदि। मेहंदी, ब्यूटिशीयन (ब्यूटी पार्लर) का काम आदि की मांग बारह महीनों बनी रहती है। परिश्रम से ही हम महंगाई को जीत सकते हैं। सरकारी योजनाएं भी हमारा कई तरह से सहयोग करती हैं।

प्रथम घटना – दंपति का अपनी बच्ची के साथ ब्रह्मपुत्र में गिरकर आत्महत्या की है, बच्ची के दिल में छेद था, जिसका आपरेशन स्वास्थ्य विभाग द्वारा बीपीएल कार्ड के अंतर्गत किया जाता है, जो दंपति के पास उस श्रेणी का होने के बावजूद नहीं था। माता-पिता को पंजीयन कराने की सलाह भी दी गई थी मगर समुचित जानकारी न रखने के कारण उन्हें इसका लाभ नहीं मिल पाया। प्रत्येक सरकारी स्कूल एवं कालेज में स्नातक तक

मुफ्त शिक्षा दी जाती है, हमें इसका लाभ उठाना चाहिए। सरकार कई तरह की योजनाएं चलाती हैं, मगर समुचित प्रचार व्यवस्था न होने के कारण कहीं या आम आदमी की जागरूकता में कमी कहीं, उस तक जानकारी पहुंच नहीं पाती। अब प्रशासन की जिम्मेवारी होती है कि वह किस तरह अपने देश की जनता को सुविधाएं प्रदान करे, जो पेट काटकर हर चीज का टैक्स भरती है।

भारत का निम्न-मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार ही हमारी संस्कृति की धरोहर है, जो हर दिवाली, होली, दुर्गापूजा, बिहू, ईद आदि सभी त्योहारों को, प्रत्येक खुशी और गमगीन माहौल को, भारतीय परंपरागत तरीके से निभाता व मनाता है। न तो वह भीख मांगकर गुजारा करता है और न ही किसी पार्टी, जुआ, ताश, शराब और अय्यासी में पैसे उड़ाता है। वह तो अपने बच्चों, माता-पिता, पत्नी सभी के प्रति अपना दायित्व निर्वाह करने की कोशिश में रात-दिन लगा रहता है। अपनी इज्जत को ही अपना वजूद समझता है, ऐसे स्वावलंबी लोग जब आत्महत्या के लिए विवश होते हैं तो यह एक देश की संस्कृति की आत्महत्या है, क्योंकि लगभग दो सौ करोड़ की आबादी वाला यह देश इन्हीं स्वावलंबी लोगों के बलबूते पर आगे बढ़ता है। निम्न मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार न तो हड़ताल करते हैं, न ही किसी को धमकाकर पैसों की मांग करते हैं, न ही कोई पार्टी खोलते हैं और न ही राजनीति करते हैं। उन्हें चिंता है तो बस अपने परिवार, अपने पूर्वजों के नाम की, अपने देश को दागदार होने से बचाने की, आम आदमी तो आत्महत्या भी मौन होकर करता है।

प्रेरणा : एक सुखद अहसास

अंजना जैन

आज से करीब चार साल पहले मेरे भाग्य ने निःशब्द आहट-सी दी और मुझे प्रेरणा में आने का सुअवसर मिला। मन तो मेरा भी सामाजिक क्रिया-कलाप में लगने का और सबमें रचने-बसने का बहुत था, मगर एक अनजाने, सुसंस्कृत वातावरण में मुझ जैसी साधारण महिला का आगमन। पता नहीं मन में एक सुगबुगाहट-सी पैदा हो रही थी फिर भी मैंने हिम्मत करके अपना सहमता-सा कदम कांपती, सहमति नन्हीं-सी चिंता की भांति प्रेरणा रूपी घोंसले में रखा। तीन-चार मीटिंग तो सबको समझने में ही चली गई, शनैः शनैः पता ही नहीं चला कि मैं कब प्रेरणा के रंग में रंगकर प्रेरणामयी बन गई।

अनुभवी, स्नेहमयी, दूरदर्शी सीनियर सदस्याओं की प्यार भरी सलाह, समवय सदस्याओं की चुहल तथा जूनियर सदस्याओं की आदर भरी दृष्टि ने मुझे व्यावहारिक ज्ञान दिया, मेरी जिंदगी को एक नया आयाम दिया।

अब तो हर महीने इंतजार रहता है सबसे मिलने का तथा नए-नए प्रोजेक्ट पर विचार-विमर्श करने का तथा सुनने का। प्रेरणा के इन अनुपम नन्हें-नन्हें पलों ने मुझे जागृत कर दिया। समाज के प्रति, परिवार के प्रति, फैशन के प्रति और अपने प्रति।

विभिन्न प्रकार की वर्कशाप (कार्यशाला) जैसे-फोटोग्राफी, योगा, डांस क्लास (नृत्य) आदि ने मेरी झिझक को कब दरकिनार किया मुझे महसूस तक न हो पाया। हमारी सदस्याओं की जिंदगी से भरपूर खिलखिलाती हंसी तथा जुझारूपन ने मुझमें आत्मविश्वास भर दिया। अब तो लगता है कि मैं प्रेरणा के बिना अधूरी हूं। ईश्वर से यही दुआ करती हूं कि हमारे क्लब में कभी नकारात्मक सोच न आने पाए तथा हम सभी सुख-दुख में एक-दूसरे के साथ रहें अवकाश प्राप्ति के पहले भी..... अवकाश प्राप्ति के बाद भी। मन में आशादीप जलाएं।

अंजना जैन एक सुदक्ष गृहिणी होने के अलावा खाली समय में लिखने में भी गहरी रुचि रखती हैं। वे रमेश चन्द्र जैन की सुपत्नी हैं।

क्षण भर

अजय तिवारी

जीवन कुछ जाता संवर!
समेट लिया होता नभ को
जो आँखों में
क्षण भर।

हरी घास तो लगी हुई
निर्मल चादर-सी बिछी हुई,
स्पर्श है कोमल किसने जाना
बस भाग-दौड़ा ही मची हुई।

सहला लिया होता मृण्मय
जो तृणों को
क्षण भर।

चेहरे पर चेहरे चढ़े हुए
हर ओर मुखौटे मढ़े हुए,
कौन असल और कौन नकल
प्रश्न चिन्ह हैं लगे हुए।

देख लिया होता खुद को
जो दर्पण में
क्षण भर।

पत्थर-पत्थर हैं पुजे हुए
घट पापों के भरे हुए,
इनको धोने की होड़ लगी
गंगा में डुबकी लिए हुए।

डूब लिया होता दिल की
जो तहों तक
क्षण भर।

जीवन कुछ जाता संवर!

हंसमुख रहना बड़ी बात है

मोनिका जिंदल

असफलता पर रोना-धोना
केवल समय कीमती खोना
काँटों में भी खिलने वाले
फूलों जैसे हमको होना
संकट सहना बड़ी बात है।

जो उमंग में कमी न रखता
उसका चेहरा आप चमकता
बड़ों-बड़ों का भी है कहना
धन से बढ़कर है प्रसन्नता
हंसकर कहना बड़ी बात है।

सदा-बहार वही कहलाए
जो स्वभाव से हँसे हँसाए
जिसके चहरे पर मनहूसी
उसके पास न कोई आए
यश को गहना बड़ी बात है।

मोनिका जिंदल कुशल गृहिणी तथा रामतीर्थ जिंदल की सुपत्नी
हैं। उन्हें लेखन का भी शौक है।

अजय तिवारी भारतीय प्रशासनिक सेवा के अधिकारी हैं।
राष्ट्रीय कवि संगम द्वारा इन्हें 2014 में हिंदी कविता की
समृद्धि के लिए 'विशिष्ट साहित्य सम्मान' से नवाज़ा गया है।

चूहे व तिलचटा से स्नेह

शकुंतला मेवाड़ा

पहले मैं उन गणपतायः को सलाम करती हूँ। यहा बताना श्रेय्यकर है कि इन दिनों चुहे महाराज वे काफी टाइम से मेरे घर नहीं पधारे। वैसे मुझे उनके दर्शन तो करने ही हैं। इसलिए मैं दर्शन करने राजधानी सूर्य नगरी मंदोर एक्सप्रेस ट्रेन से सफर करने जाती हूँ। वहा मुझे एक ही स्थान पर चुहे महाराज, काँकरोच भाई व जूएँ दीदी सब एक ही छत के नीचे मिल जाती हैं। वहां मुझे पूरे जूएँ का आनंद या अति आनंद प्राप्ति होती हैं। कारण कि मेरे पति उच्च अधिकारी हैं। बेटी-दामाद फैशन डिजाइनर है तो बेटा फिल्म डायरेक्टर। इसलिए मुझे भारत में सब जगह ट्रेन से ट्रेवलिंग करने का सौभाग्य प्राप्त हैं। चलो, एक बेटी मेरी अमरीका में है वर्ना इतनी लम्बी वलिंग में मुझे भगवान शिव के वाहन नाग देवता के भी दर्शन हो सकते थे। लेकिन वहा ट्रेन नहीं जाती, जूएँ दीदी मुझे दिखी टो कभी नहीं, लेकिन प्यार के साथ जब मुझको छोड़ते हुवे काटती हैं तो उनका मीठा मीठा काटना मुझे रातभर जगाता रहता हैं। एसे में मेरे सामान सुरक्षित रहते हैं। हां, उन चूहों के लिए मैं हमेशा एकस्ट्रा खाना ले जाना नहीं भूलती। उनके लिए विशेषकर चौधरी के मिर्ची और बड़ी-बड़ी काचौड़ी ले जाना नहीं भूलती। कारण कि वे उन्हे बेहद पसंद हैं। साथ ही मेरे हाथ के बने पराठे और आलू की सब्जी तो बस देखते ही उनकी अठखेलियां बढ़ जाती हैं। वहज कि ये उनको बेहद पसंद हैं। ये जि जिस्म कालरा हों या संजीव कपूर सभी को फेल कर देते हैं। वजह साफ है कि वो मेरे लिए कुछ भी नहीं छोड़ते। तब मुझे बड़ी खुशी होती हैं कि मैं कितनी बड़ी कूक हूँ। पहले तो मेरी सहेली रचना ही कहती थी कि तेरे हाथ का खाना बहुत अच्छा लगता हैं। लेकिन जब चुहें ट्रेन मे मेरे हाथ के खाने का भोग लेने लगे तब मुझे भी अपने आप पर बहुत गर्व महसूस हुआ उसके बाद तो मैं आपको कया बताऊं इतनी सुंदर बैड शीट्स बिना धूली देखकर तो मेरा मन करता है कि बार बार खुशबु लू जिसमें कोबरा परफ्यूम की खुशबू-सी लगती हैं। कोबरा परफ्यूम मुझे पसंद है तो मेरा अनुभव आगे और सुनिए। आप और मैं 26 फरवरी 2013 को हुवाहाटी से लखनऊ राजधानी एकप्रेस से यात्रा कर रही थीं तो मैंने टीसी जी को बोला कि ट्रेन में चूहै व काँकरोच हैं और मेरे ऊपर कबड्डी खेल रहे हैं तो टीसी जी ने मुझे देखकर धीमी सुस्कराहट दी और चल दिए। उनकी कया गलती थी जब मैंने उनके काले जैकेट के ऊपर तो काँकरोच पहले से ही अठखेलियां कर रहे थे। उन महाशय की आंखो में मेरी लिए कोई दुख की वजह नहीं दिखी। कारण कि उनको तो रोज साथ रहना हैं। काँकरोच से दोस्ती मेरे लिए वो कैसे तोड़ सकते हैं।

शकुंतला मेवाड़ा गृहिणी होने के साथ साथ लेखन में भी आनंद लेती हैं। वे श्याम लाल मेवाड़ा की सुपत्नी हैं।

তস্মৈ শ্ৰীগুৰুৰে নমঃ

তুমি চেতন্য,
তুমি চেতনা;
চিন্তা তুমি।
অমানিশা যামিনীৰ
জোনাকী পৰৱা।

দ্বিধা আৰু সংশয়ৰ
মুঢ়তাৰ মোহ;
মায়াৰ সাগৰ
নাই পাৰাপাৰ, মূৰিয়লি।
তুমিয়ে সাৰথি।

অনাহুত শব্দৰ
অবিৰত ধ্বনি।
সার্থকতা ক'ত?
কোন মই যাও কেনি?
ভাগৰৱা ভাও খেলি খেলি।

মানুহ; প্রকৃতি; জীৱ।
কৰ্তব্য কি?
দিবানে আকৌ এবাৰ
সাঁফৰ দাঙি
সাঁথৰ ভাঙি?

চক্ষুৰক্ষ্মীলিতং যেন
তস্মৈ শ্ৰীগুৰুৰে নমঃ।

প্ৰগল্ভ চিন্তা

তই
কাৰ বিৰহত চাদৰখনি দিলি আঁতৰাই?
চুলি মেলি মেলি চিঞৰি চিঞৰি ক'লে য়াৰ উপলিয়াই?

ঢ়াহি মুহি মুহি
লে য়াৰ কাক মহতিয়াই?
নহয় শান্ত সুস্থিৰ এয়া কৈলাশ শিখৰ ধৱলগিৰি।
নিঃস্ব জনতাৰ মুখত এয়া সুৰ বিলাপৰ
তোৰেই নেকি?

পৰশু বিধৌত।
বেউলাৰ চকুৰ পানী।
বীৰ লাচিতৰ হুংকাৰ ধ্বনি।

সোৱনশিৰিৰ সোণেৰে সজোৱা তিস্তাজনী
ভাটিয়ালিৰ গীতৰ সুৰ
যমুনাও নহয় দূৰ
অপেক্ষাৰত মুক্তি সেনানী।

নহ'বা প্ৰগল্ভ চিন্তা নহ'বা নিষ্ঠুৰ
ক্ষান্ত হোৱা আজি
লুইত তুমি।

লুইত জানো ৰয় থমকি?

পবন কুমাৰ বৰঠাকুৰ

ভাৰতীয় প্ৰশাসনীয় সেৱা বিষয়া পবন কুমাৰ বৰঠাকুৰ, বৰ্তমান প্ৰধান সচিব হিচাবে
কৰ্মৰত হৈ আছে। ইতিমধ্যে তেওঁৰ ৪খন কবিতা পুথি প্ৰকাশিত হৈছে

সেউজীয়া সাকোঁ

সৌ তাহানিখন তোমাৰ আৰু মোৰ মাজত
এডাল সাকোঁ আছিল,
সেউজীয়া সাকোঁ।
কেতিয়াবা আহিনৰ শেৰালী সৰা
কোমল ৰাতিপুৰাবোৰত,
কেতিয়াবা ভাদৰ তপ্ত স্তব্ধ
নিজান দুপৰীয়াবোৰত,
কেতিয়াবা শাওনৰ পাৰ ভঙা বৰষুণে ধোৱা
সিন্ত সন্ধিয়াবোৰত,
আৰু কেতিয়াবা পুহৰ ঠেটুৱা লগা
দীঘল নিজম ৰাতিবোৰত,
তুমি আহিছিলি,
নিৰৱে, নিভূতে, আলফুলে,
পাৰহৈ সেউজীয়া সাকোঁ।
বহু দিন হ'ল
তুমি অহা নাই।
সেউজীয়া সাকোঁডালো মৰহি ক'তনো লুকাল,
গম ল'বলৈ আজি মোৰোষে
আহৰিয়ে নাই।
বহুৰ বাগৰি গৈ,
বসন্ত শেষ হৈ,
গ্ৰীষ্ম, বৰ্ষা, শৰত
আৰু হেমন্তও পাৰ হৈ,
আজি শীত আহি সমাগত
জীৱনৰ দুৱাৰদলিত।
মোৰ উকা দিনবোৰ
আৰু উৰুঙা ৰাতিবোৰত
আজিও মাজে মাজে দেখো,
কুঁৱলী ফালি দূৰত জিলিকি আছে,
এডাল সেউজীয়া সাকোঁ।

সেমেকা সময়

সেমেকা সময়খিনি
পুৱাৰ পোহৰ সানি
সোণোৱালী হ'ল,
তাৰ উমান পাই
শুই থকা সপোনবোৰ
এঙামুৰি দি থিয় হ'ল,
পাখি লগা সময়ত উৰি
আজি শিকলি ছিগা হ'ল মন,
দুবাছ মেলি এতিয়া আকাশ ছোৱাৰ প্ৰণ।

লিপিকা দাস

সাহিত্যৰ ছাত্ৰী আৰু অনুৰাগী লিপিকা দাস, অৱসৰপ্ৰাপ্ত মুখ্যসচিব নব কুমাৰ দাসৰ পত্নী

“অ’ মোৰ সুৰীয়া মাত অসমৰ সুৰদি মাত”

নিজৰ প্ৰতি কেইটামান প্ৰশ্ন

লিপিকা দাস

আধুনিক অসমীয়া সাহিত্যৰ জনক স্বৰূপ সাহিত্যৰথী লক্ষ্মীনাথ বেজবৰুৱাই যেতিয়া তেওঁৰ অসম সৃষ্টি অসমৰ জাতীয় সংগীত ‘অ’ মোৰ আপোনাৰ দেশ” গীতটিত অসমৰ সুৰদি মাতৰ কথা উল্লেখ কৰিছিল, তেতিয়া নিশ্চয় তাৰ মাজত আমাৰ ভাষাটোৰ সুমধুৰ, শুৱলা, সুশ্ৰাব্য শব্দবোৰৰ কথাও সন্নিবিষ্ট হৈছিল। কাৰণ শব্দবোৰেই হ’ল কোনো এটা ভাষাৰ আধাৰ স্বৰূপ। এই শব্দবোৰেই একো একোটা ভাষাক একো একোটা সুকীয়া মাধুৰ্য আৰু বৈশিষ্ট্য প্ৰদান কৰে। কিন্তু দুখৰ কথা, ব্যৱহাৰৰ অভাৱত আজি আমাৰ বহুতো ধুনীয়া, সুৰদি শব্দ লাহে লাহে পাহৰণীৰ বুকুত হেৰাই যাবলৈ লৈছে। ই আমাৰ বাবে এক চিন্তাৰ বিষয় হোৱা উচিত। আজিৰ এই চুটি লেখাটোত এই চিন্তনীয় বিষয়টোৰ ওপৰত চমুকৈ আলোকপাত কৰিবলৈ চেষ্টা কৰিছো।

আমি বসবাস কৰা ঠাইডোখৰ চহৰৰ মাজ মজিয়াৰ পৰা অলপ নিলগত উপকণ্ঠ এলেকাত। ইয়াত এতিয়াও গছ-গছনিৰে ভৰা অলপ সেউজৰ পৰশ আছে। প্ৰাতঃভ্ৰমণত ওলাই গলে, ইয়াত এতিয়াও বহুত চৰাই দেখিবলৈ পোৱা যায়। প্ৰায় গোটেই বছৰ জুৰি ঠাইডোখৰ বিভিন্ন চৰাইৰ কলৰবেৰে মুখৰিত হৈ থাকে। মই নিজেই এতিয়ালৈকে বিশ/পাঁচিশ বিধ মান বিভিন্ন চৰাই দেখিবলৈ পাইছো। তাৰে কিছুমান সচৰাচৰ দেখা চিনাকি চৰাই আৰু কিছুমান সাধাৰণতে নেদেখা চৰাই। নিজকে সুধি চাইছো ইয়াৰে কিমান বিধ চৰাইৰ অসমীয়া নামবোৰ বাৰু মই জানো। যিহেতু ইয়াত দেখিবলৈ পোৱা প্ৰায় আটাইবোৰেই স্থানীয় চৰাই, এই আটাইবোৰৰে নিশ্চয় একো একোটা থলুৱা নামো আছে। বাৰু কাউৰীৰ পৰাই আমাৰ চৰাইৰ নামৰ তালিকাখন আৰম্ভ কৰা যাওক। এইবিধ চৰাই অন্তত আমি আটাইয়ে চিনি পাও। সুখৰ কথা আমাৰ এই এলেকাটোত কাউৰীতকৈ কুলিৰ সংখ্যাহে বেছি। কাউৰী, কুলি, কপৌ, পাৰ, ঘৰচিৰিকা, শালিকা, ভাটৌ, মৌপিয়া, বাটৌটোকা, নানা ধৰণৰ উজ্জ্বল বাবেবৰণীয়া মাছৰোকা। মই ইয়াত ধনেশ পক্ষীৰ জাকো কেইবাবাৰো দেখিছো। একেলগে পোন্ধৰ-বিশটা ধনেশ পক্ষীৰ জাক, সেইয়া এক দুৰ্লভ দৃশ্য। দুডালমান বিশেষ গছত বছৰটোৰ এটা বিশেষ সময়ত এজাক সেউজীয়া চৰাই আহি পৰেহি। সেউজীয়া চৰাইজাক একেলগে ইমান বেছি সংখ্যাত আহে যে প্ৰায় গোটেই গছজোপাই ছানি ধৰে। বিচাৰ কৰি গম পালো সেইয়া হেনো Green pigeon যাৰ অসমীয়া নাম হ’ল হাইঠা। ইমান দিনে ফকৰা যোজনাতহে শুনিছিলো, “হাইঠা মাটিত নপৰে”, দেখা হ’লে নাছিলো ইয়াৰ বাহিৰেও দেখিছো ফেঁচা আৰু ৰাতি মাজে সময়ে এটা দুটা বাদুলি। আগতে ভাবিছিলো, দিনত জানো ফেঁচা দেখা যায়। পিচে

হয়, ইয়াত মই ৰাতিপুৱাতে ফেঁচাও দেখিছো, আমি আগতে থকা ঘৰটোত, আমাৰ শোৱনি কোঠাৰ সন্মুখত কেইজোপামান কৃষ্ণচূড়া গছ আছিল। তাত কৰবাৰ পৰা কেইবাটাও ফেঁচা আহি থাকিবলৈ লৈছিল। তাৰে এহাল ফেঁচা প্ৰায় এবছৰ ধৰি তাত আছিল আৰু সেই গোটেই সময়খিনি মই ৰাতিপুৱা সাৰ পাই খিড়িকি খুলি প্ৰথমেই সিহঁতহালক চাই মোৰ দিনটোৰ আৰম্ভণি কৰিছিলো। মোৰ লাগিছিল সিহঁতহালে যে মোক সুপ্ৰভাত জনাবলৈকে তেনেদৰে তাত বৈ আছে।

মই চিনিপোৱা অসমীয়া নামৰ চৰাইৰ তালিকাখন ইমানতে শেষ, তেনেই চুটি। কিন্তু ইয়াৰ বাহিৰেও আমাৰ ভাষাত কিমান যে ধুনীয়া-ধুনীয়া চৰাইৰ নাম আছে। সখিয়তি, দহিকতৰা বালিমাহী, কেতেকী, মনিয়ৰি, ফেঁচুলুকা, ফেঁচু, টুনি, টোকোৰা, তেলিয়াসাৰেং, বৰটোকোলা, বগলী, হাড়গিলা, শামুকভঙা, পানী কাউৰী, কনামুচৰী আৰু যে ক’ত কি। সিমানেই নহয়, এই মৰম লগা নামবোৰৰ লগত জড়িত হৈ আছে সিমানেই মৰম লগা একো একোটা সাধুকথা। এটা দুটা সাধু মনত আছে কিন্তু বেছি ভাগেই পাহৰিছো। মই ইয়াত দেখা চৰাইবোৰৰ মাজত বাৰু কোনটো সখিয়তি বা দহিকতৰা? বালিমাহীয়ে বা কোনটো?

এতিয়া আহো গছ-গছনি আৰু ফুল পাতৰ কথা। ইয়াত থকা গছৰ বেছি ভাগেই হ’ল নীম আৰু আম গছ, যথেষ্ট সংখ্যক কৃষ্ণচূড়া, ৰাধাচূড়া আৰু সোণাৰু গছো ইয়াত আছে। বহাগৰ শেষত, গ্ৰীষ্মৰ আৰম্ভণীতে যেতিয়া এই গছবোৰত ডালভৰি ফুল ফুলে, এনেহে লাগে যেন কোনোবা শিল্পীয়ে আকাশৰ চিত্ৰপাটত এখন নানাৰঙী ছবিহে আঁকিছে। কৃষ্ণচূড়াৰ ৰঙা, ৰাধাচূড়াৰ গোলপীয়া আৰু সোণাৰুৰ হালধীয়াৰ লগত এজাৰৰ বেগুনীয়া আৰু শিমলুৰ তেজ ৰঙা ৰংবোৰ মিলি চৌদিশ ৰঙিন কৰি পেলায়। মোমাইতামুলী গছৰ শাৰিও ইয়াত ঠায়ে ঠায়ে আছে। আমাৰ ঘৰৰ আগৰ আলিটোৰ দুয়োকাষে কেইবাজোপাও নুনী গছ আছে। তাৰ গুটি খাবলৈ জাকে জাকে চৰাই তালৈ আহে। বাটৰ দুয়োকাষে আৰু আছে মধুৰীআম, কদম, আটলচ আৰু কঠালৰ শাৰি। মই থলুৱা নামেৰে সৈতে চিনি পোৱা আৰু গছ গছনি ফুল পাতৰ ভিতৰত আছে বকুল, শেৱালী, নাইৰ তগৰ, চম্পা, গোলাপ, ইন্দ্ৰমালতী, সূৰ্য্যমুখী, নয়নতৰা, খৰিকাজাই, কঠনা, অপৰাজিতা, কামিনীকাঞ্চন, কৰবী, মাইধেলতা, মালতী। ইমান যে শুৱলা, সুৰীয়া নামবোৰ! মনত পেলাই নিজৰে ভাল লাগিছে। আৰু ইয়াৰ বাহিৰেও যে আৰু কিমান গছ গছনি, ফুল পাত আছে, যাৰ থলুৱা নামবোৰ মই নাজানো। কিন্তু যিখিনি জানো, ব্যৱহাৰৰ অভাৱত

তাৰো কিছুমান প্ৰায় পাহৰিবলৈ লৈছো। তেনে হোৱাৰ আগতে, আমি জনাখিনিকে অন্তত আমাৰ ল'ৰা ছোৱালীবোৰক শিকাই থৈ যোৱাটো জানো আমাৰ কৰ্তব্য নহ'ব?

ভাষা স্থবিৰ নহয়, ভাষা গতিশীল। ভাষা একোটা একোটা স্থানতে বৈ নাথাকে। সময়ৰ লগে লগে একো একোটা ভাষাৰ স্বৰূপ আৰু প্ৰয়োগ সলনি হয়। সময়ৰ লগত খোজ মিলাই, ব্যৱহাৰিক প্ৰয়োজনীয়তাৰ ওপৰত নিৰ্ভৰ কৰি একো একোটা ভাষাত নতুন নতুন শব্দৰ সংযোজন হয় আৰু একে সময়তে ব্যৱহাৰৰ অভাৱত বহুতো শব্দ চিৰদিনৰ বাবে হেৰাইয়ো যায়। আৰু আমাৰ ভাষাটোৰ ক্ষেত্ৰটো ইয়াৰ ব্যতিক্ৰম হোৱা নাই। বিশেষকৈ আজিৰ এই দ্ৰুত পৰিৱৰ্তনশীল সময়ত, য'ত নিত্য নতুন প্ৰয়োজন, নিত্য নতুন আৱিষ্কাৰ আৰু উদ্ভাৱন, নিত্য নতুন পৰিৱেশ, পৰিস্থিতি আৰু জীৱন শৈলী আমাৰ জীৱন আৰু সমাজৰ অংগ হৈ পৰিছে, তাত নিতৌ নতুন শব্দৰ প্ৰয়োজন আৰু আমাৰ ভাষাত তাৰ সংযোজন হোৱাটো অৱশ্যস্তাবী। আৰু ইয়াৰ পৰা আমাৰ ভাষা নিশ্চয় সমৃদ্ধ হৈছে। কিন্তু সেইবুলিয়ে জানো আমি আমাৰ আপোন শব্দবোৰক হেৰাই যাবলৈ দিব পাৰো? নতুনক আকোৱালী লোৱাটো

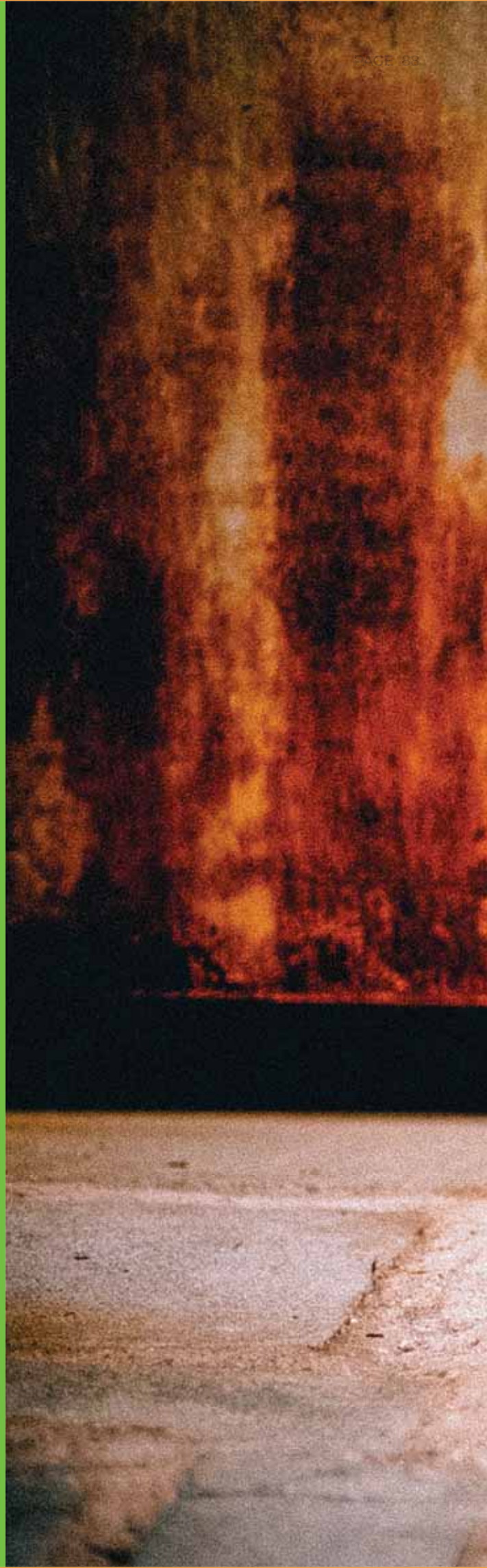
শুভ লক্ষণ। নতুন নতুন জ্ঞান আহৰণ কৰা, নতুন নতুন জীৱনশৈলী অনুসৰণ কৰা, নতুন নতুন ভাষা শিকা, এই সকলোবোৰৰ পৰাই আমি নিশ্চয় লাভৱান হও। কিন্তু তাৰ মাজতো পুৰণিক পাহৰি নোযোৱাটো, মূল শিপাডালক সাৰ পানী দি জীপাল কৰি ৰখাটোও জানো আমাৰ কৰ্তব্য নহয়? আজি যদি মই নিজেই ব্যৱহাৰৰ অভাৱত এই আপোন শব্দবোৰ পাহৰিবলৈ লৈছো, তেন্তে মই কি দৰে মোৰ ল'ৰা ছোৱালী বা সিহঁতৰ ল'ৰা ছোৱালীহঁতক এই শব্দ সম্ভাৰ বোৰ দি থৈ যাব পাৰিম। আৰু যদি তেনে হয়, আমাৰ ভাষাটোৰ প্ৰতি আৰু লগতে নতুন আৰু অনাগত প্ৰজন্মৰ প্ৰতি মোৰ অন্যান্য নহ'বনে?

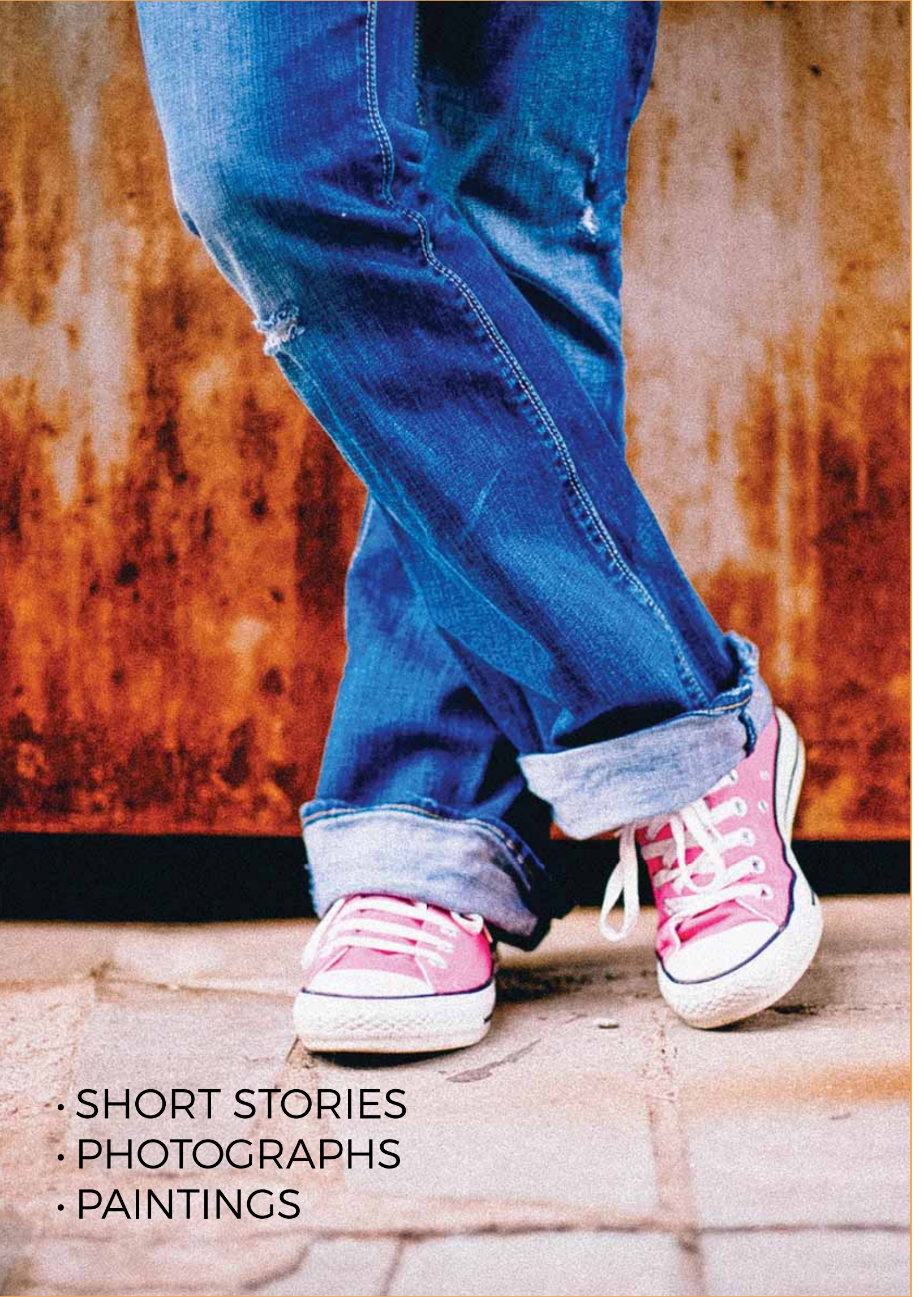
ভাবিছো, এইবাৰ মোৰ চাৰি বছৰীয়া ভতিজা নাতিনীজনী আৰু ছবছৰীয়া ভাগিন নাতিটো ঘৰলৈ আহিলে সিহঁতৰ লগত চৰাইৰ নাম আৰু ফুলৰ নামৰ খেল খেলিম আৰু সিহঁতক বুঢ়ীআইৰ সাধু শুভাম। নাতিনীজনীক ক'ম “শোৱনি কোঠালৈ গৈ, পালেংখনত দীঘল দি অলপ জিৰোৱাগৈ।” নাতিটোক ক'ম “চোতালৰ চুকত ওলোৱা চুক ভেকুলীটো চাই আহাগৈ যোৱা,” সিহঁতে হয়তো বুজি নাপাব। মই বুজাই দিম।

সাহিত্যৰ ছাত্ৰী আৰু অনুৰাগী লিপিকা দাস, অৱসৰপ্ৰাপ্ত মূখ্যসচিব নব কুমাৰ দাসৰ পত্নী



YOUNG WORLD





- SHORT STORIES
- PHOTOGRAPHS
- PAINTINGS

Amar, Ali and War

Two young boys meet in a disturbed area. Through their friendship, we see the futility of war and the beauty of human relationships

BY Aryaman Tewari



KASHMIR VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL. Amar was so proud of his father, his papa, Major Rahul Singh when he turned up in his dark green Indian Army uniform to take him home for his summer holidays. Major Rahul Singh was short but looked smart in his uniform. Amar gave him a salute – he loved giving salutes – and his father returned the salutation and followed it up with a hug and a kiss on the forehead.

Major Rahul was posted in the Line Of Control border area high up in the Kargil Tiger hills. His wife, Kumari resided at the foothills of the Tiger hills in an army cantonment. His son, Amar, used to attend a boarding school in Srinagar.

BASE CANTONMENT, KARGIL. “I am going back to the army camp tomorrow and I want to take Amar with me,” said the Major to his wife. “But the border is too dangerous,” replied his wife. “Kumari, we are given 24-hour protection up there. Amar is going to be absolutely safe. And moreover when Amar was a kid, I saw him grow up only in pictures you sent me and now, I feel I have lost

out on so much. He has grown so big. I really want to spend some time with him”, said the Major.

And so, Amar travelled with his father to the border in a convoy. “Papa, why are there so many armed soldiers with us?”, asked Amar. “This area is full of militants and so, these armed guards are for our protection,” replied the Major. “Who are militants, Papa? The ones who kill other people?”, asked Amar innocently. “I really don’t know, replied his father, carefully avoiding eye contact with his son. Amar saw his father looking at the distant mountains lost in deep thought. He nudged him. No movement. Again the nudging. Still no movement. What was his father thinking about?

The next day at the camp, Major Rahul and Amar went out to fish. “I had a really good time, Papa”, said Amar genuinely. His father smiled. Amar smiled back too. Fishing early morning with his father whom he saw so rarely was something Amar only dreamt about.

Back in the camp, they went to the mess for breakfast.

As they and other junior officers were eating, there was a call for the Major. "Yes sirno problem sir...shall be done...Jai Hind", said he over the phone. As soon as breakfast was over, he barked out a sharp order- "To the operations room. Immediately." "Yes sir!" replied the junior officers in chorus.

"Something's up," thought Amar. And he was right. "Amar, I have to go. There's trouble at the LoC side", the major said shortly afterwards. "But papa, you said we would go mountain climbing," said Amar. "Please understand, Amar. As soon as I get back. I promise," replied his father. "No, no, Papa, you go catch the enemy. I'll be alright," said Amar trying to sound normal. "That's my boy!" and saying so, his father left in a waiting army vehicle.

When his father left, Amar fiercely wiped his tears. "Mummy never cries when papa is away. I won't cry either," thought Amar. The truth was that his mother cried on most nights but never in front of her son and so Amar never knew. Amar then wrote a letter to his mother. He described the fishing adventure, life of the soldiers in the camp, and also about Papa's sudden call to duty. Then he went to a soldier guarding the camp and asked him to post the letter and also asked if he, Amar, could go and sit by the stream. "Okay, as long as you don't leave the camp," replied the handsome soldier.

The stream was clear blue, and Amar started tossing stones into the river. "What are you doing?" came a voice. Amar turned his head to the direction of the voice and saw a skinny boy of roughly his age in Kashmiri overalls. "Throwing stones, can't you see?", replied Amar with a hint of condescension. "Let's have a competition as to who can throw farther," replied the skinny boy. Amar was game. But he lost fair and square. "By the way, I am Ali," said the boy. "Amar. But what are you doing here in the camp?" questioned Amar. "We have permission to graze here. I am also collecting wood as I like making wooden figures," replied Ali. Then they talked for some time and as dusk fell, they parted with a promise to meet the next day.

Amar's father was gone for 4 days. By then, Ali and Amar had become fast friends. For Amar, it was nice to have a friend. He always found himself wanting to meet Ali. They talked about life, sports etc. Both of them liked Zinedine Zidane, though Amar had some doubts about whether Ali really knew who Zidane was. Because when Amar asked Ali, "Who is your favourite footballer?" Ali had replied, "Who's yours?". Amar said, "Zinedine Zidane". Then Ali had said, "Oh really? He is my favourite too."

"When do your school holidays end?" asked Amar to Ali one day. "I don't go to school anymore. I have to work and look after my three siblings," replied Ali averting his gaze. "Oh...but why do you work? Doesn't your father work?" asked Amar who didn't know better. "Abba... Abba, he's, he's dead. He was killed by the Army. At first, when I was 5, my father was taken away by men with guns. They promised to give us a good life.....but they

destroyed everything. Everything, including peace. After they took him away, he also became one of them. My life is now nothing," revealed Ali. Pools of tears formed in his eyes. His father must have been a civilian who must have turned into a militant, and then got killed by the army, thought Amar.

Later that night, Major Rahul returned. "You'll have to leave tomorrow, son, there's big trouble at the border. I am sorry," said the Major with tears in his eyes. "It's okay,Papa, I understand," said Amar. Tomorrow in the morning I will say goodbye to Ali,thought Amar. Amar also intended to give his Zidane shirt to Ali as a parting gift. He knew he probably would never see Ali again in his life and this thought made him sad. But he knew Ali would always be a part of his life.

The next morning Amar got up early and went to meet Ali. The two boys met outside Ali's house and Amar told Ali about his having to leave that day. Ali didn't say anything and went inside his house. He came out with a wooden statue in his hands which he had beautifully carved himself and said, "Thanks for being my friend. After my father had left me I had never felt happy," said Ali, handing Amar the statue. Amar didn't say anything and handed Ali the Zidane shirt. The boys hugged and bid goodbye to each other.

During packing, Major Rahul noticed the wooden statue in Amar's bag- a wooden log carved into two hands folded into one another. It was crude yet perfect. "Amar how on earth did you get such a beautiful thing?" his father asked. Amar told his father everything about Ali and the tragic story of how he lost his father at such a young age. Major Rahul Singh sat silent for some time and gave a deep sigh. "Why did Papa sigh?" thought Amar.

Infact as Amar told his father about Ali, Major Rahul could recall that Ali was the son of the Muslim man who had been mistakenly tortured and killed by his troops as a militant.

Did the Major think that war and fighting were meaningless for both sides? If only there was a way to stop war? If only people from different religious groups, communities, and ethnicity could come to know each other in a meaningful way, like Ali and Amar had, how could there ever be war again?

Aryaman Tewari is a student of Class XII and the son of Anamika and Ajay Tewari

Nectar of Heaven

The nectar of heaven,
via clouds,
Comes to our globe
Symbolizing different for different.

For children,
A day to fly
A time to make boats,
And see them dance in ponds.
A way to jump on puddles,
And splash water on others
Symbolizing different for different.

For lovers,
A day to smile.
A time to hold each other tight.
A way to spend time with each other
And look into the eyes with passion
Symbolizing different for different.

For man,
A day to be fresh
A time for tension to be refreshed.
A way to take leave,
And spend some time with family.
Symbolizing different for different.

For old
A day to have pleasure
A time to leave, of life, the tension.
A way to get a comfy space,
And remember the memory before that phase.
Symbolizing different for different.

The nectar of heaven,
via clouds,
Comes to our globe.

Path of Forest, His Future

In the midst of the forest
He drifts alone.
Looking here and there
For a way to go.

For right is his love and passion.
For left is decision of others.
In grave tension and shortage of time,
To choose one he must.
Because, for him, he can never upturn.

Leaving his future to luck,
Chooses the path he loves.
Cause the others may not be there always,
But the love will never betray.

In the midst of the forest
He drifts alone.
Walking towards right,
The path he chose..

BY Shreya Sahu

Shreya Sahu is a student of class X and the daughter of Pallavi and Mukesh Sahu

I am

A frank confession from a young Gen-Next who is confused, precocious, open, vulnerable – all at the same time

BY Ruchi Singh Vasudev



I am your worst nightmare. I am detached. I am inattentive. I am disinterested. I am the 21st-Century child. I am Gen X or Y or whatever axis or alphabet you assign me, because it will not take away from the fact that I am miles away from your ideal. I am insensitive, one would even say desensitized. I am dangerously used to seeing trauma being inflicted on this planet because I have known no other reality. I am frighteningly adept at conjuring up a sympathetic yet politically correct response every time something - for the lack of a better word - bad happens. I know what to say, and I know what to post on my numerous social media accounts so that the sea of faceless combinations of ones and zeroes “following” me know - they know - that I, too, care. I, however, will not think about that particular event for more than a stipulated time slot. I will think about everything for short breaks of time, because I have lost all ability to concentrate on one thing for an extended period. I cannot bring myself to do that anymore. I was not taught its importance. I was taught that getting ahead, no matter what the price, is the most important thing there is. I, sadly, did not listen to that well enough, either, because I was not paying enough attention. I was paying attention on how everyone else perceives me, though. I pay a lot of attention to that; one could even argue that it is too much. I pay attention to what I wear, what I say, what I look like, what I eat, and what I do. I saw that fitting in would not work anymore because on social media i.e. where it matters most, fitting in meant obscurity. I could not afford that. I try hard to be slightly different than my peers. I try to be “slightly

different” because, again, being too radical will not bring me the right kind of attention. I am, ergo, trying not to fit in by trying to stand out. I want to be just there. I do not know where “there” is yet. I do not know where “here” is yet, because I am restless. I want to be everywhere, and nowhere at the same time. I don’t care how. I string words together with space-fillers. I might just, it looks like, forget to talk to someone else soon. I am more comfortable staring at harsh blue lights than another human’s face. I am the most awkward around people I know. I am the most sociable around strangers that I have never met. I cannot read a book anymore, because my mind cannot keep up with the patterns on the page and I get lost. I am the epitome of “TL;DR”. I will happily live ignorant because something might have been too long to read. I don’t care about knowledge as much as the previous generations did because I know I can have anything I want whenever I want. I care more about people I have never met and will probably never meet. I like to believe I know all, even though the reality creeps into me more often than not. I can’t handle the disparity between what I think I am and what I am not.

I just want to be normal. I just want to be my version of normal. I just want to be noticed. I am the 21st-Century Child. I am my worst nightmare.

Ruchi Singh Vasudev is pursuing a Bachelors in Mass Media (Journalism) and is the daughter of Indu and Shamsheer Singh

A Trip To Sikkim

A family holiday in Pelling makes for some very happy memories

BY Yajat Khade



My family along with my two grandmothers went to Sikkim during the Bihu holidays. We took an Indigo flight to Bagdogra from Guwahati. From Bagdogra we took a taxi for west Sikkim. The name of the place where we were to stay in a lovely hotel, was Pelling. It took 6 hrs to reach Pelling. When we reached there it was night. The hotel staff gave us a warm welcome by giving us traditional scarves. Then we got our rooms. We watched TV in our room, then went for dinner. For dinner we had Chinese food. They gave me chowmein which I didn't like but my grandmother liked it. After dinner we went to our room and slept.

Next morning we went to see the Kanchenjunga water fall. Then we went to see the natural lake Khecheopalri which is surrounded by mountains. From there we went to see Asia's second largest bridge. It was so amazing and scary to stand on the bridge which was so high. Then we returned to our hotel. My two grandmothers wanted to go to the spa so they went for a session. When they came back we all had our dinner then we went to bed.

Early the next morning, it was bright and clear. We saw the view of the Kanchenjunga in front of us in between

many snow-capped mountains. That day we went to Kalimpong but there was a big traffic jam so we returned but while returning we went for river rafting. I was doing it for the first time. It was a great experience. After that we returned to our hotel.

On 4th day we went to Namchi where we saw the beautiful Timi tea garden which was on the slope of the mountain. We also went to see Char Dham temple which is very big. We spent the full day there. Then we returned to our hotel.

The next day we had our return flight from Bagdogra so we started our journey from the hotel very early in the morning.

The Sikkim trip was full of fun and excitement and I enjoyed it a lot.

Yajat Khare is a student of Class II and the son of Leena and Nitin Khare

Pick a Pickle

An adventure in which a little boy tries to get his hands on a bottle of pickles has a surprising end

BY Ashmika Dwivedi

What is it like to be three and a half foot tall and not be able to reach the top shelf where your mother has hidden the box of pickles ???

There he sat all day long, his piggy little eyes fixed insolently on the top shelf of the kitchen. When his mother finally realized that she could not get her son to get rid of this mad desire she placed the pickles on the top shelf of the kitchen where he would never be able to reach it, try as he might. All his attempts to get to the pickle box had turned out futile. He sighed deeply as he gazed at the pickles waiting on the shelf to be eaten by somebody.

But it was sitting in that corner for five days, neglected by everybody. He sat there drumming his pudgy little fingers on the smooth marble floor, deep in thought. How could he possibly reach the top? Hmm..... if only I could get something to stand on...he thought. He got up, dusted his shorts and then strode into his mother's room searching for something tall. He found a small wooden stool in the corner and carried it to the kitchen. He stood on it. But it was still not high enough. He raised his hand hopefully but it could hardly graze the lower shelf. He bit his lip in displeasure. Suddenly he had an idea, jumping down from the stool he ran hurriedly towards the little storeroom. There he discovered an old ladder, several of whose hinges had fallen off, stacked against the wall. He somehow pushed it out of the room removing several objects that obstructed its path and dragged it into the kitchen. Positioning it against the wall of the kitchen he climbed on it carefully avoiding the broken steps. Then he raised his little toes and stretched his hand as far as he could to see if he could at least touch the bottom of the shelf, but no! The pickle box was simply out of reach!

He was furious. Stomping down the ladder he kicked the stool in anger. It was pushed to the far end of the kitchen and collided with the lower shelf, propping open the little door. His eyes nearly fell out of his head! Inside the lower shelf were several jars of - Pickles! The whole shelf was filled with the green glass bottles. He crawled up to them hardly daring to believe what he was seeing. He picked up one of the bottles stacked neatly in the shelf and twirled it in his hand. Then what was that on the top shelf? he wondered. He went into the garden picked up a small black pebble and came back into the kitchen. He hesitated. What if it really was the pickle bottle? Taking a deep breath he made up his mind. Shutting his eye he aimed the stone at the bottle and flung it with all the force he could muster. There was a small flump as the bottle collapsed on the floor. He did a winning gesture with his little fist and let out a whoop of joy. There was no bottle on the shelf, it was just a picture to distract him. The



real treasure was buried deep inside the room. Nobody would search anywhere else because the picture was on the front. Just as his mouth started to water with hunger his mother's voice rang in the air. Quick as a flash he was on his feet, forcing the old ladder inside the storeroom. It swayed for a second in mid-air and then bounced back towards his face. He quickly slammed the door shut before the ladder could hit him. There was a loud CRASH from inside that indicated that the ladder had crashed against the door. Maybe a few more of its hinges had fallen off. Grinning in a satisfied sort of a way he sat on the table deciding that he would eat the pickle at night or else he was most likely to be caught red handed.

As darkness fell he swallowed his dinner went straight to his bed and pretended to go to sleep. At around midnight his alarm clock went off whirring in a muffled kind of a way as it had been secretly hid under the pillow. He bolted out of bed immediately and shut off the timer. All was quiet. He slipped his toes into fluffy slippers and sneaked out of the room. The lights had been turned off and it was pitch black. He groped his way to the kitchen. He crept to the kitchen on tippy-toes. He took the spoon and turned. And dropped it in surprise.

A bent figure was sitting in the darkness near the lower shelf. The spoon clanked as it fell and the person turned. His jaw dropped, if possible lower than it already had. Mom! He cried surprised. What are you doing in the middle of the night? She looked as surprised as he was. He moved closer and another wave of shock hit him. The shelf door stood ajar and a jar of pickle was on the floor with its lid open.

They stared at each other for a moment. And burst out laughing.

Ashmika Dwivedi is a student of Class VIII and the daughter of Smita and Krishna Kant Dwivedi

Let's Save Forests

BY Sanjwala Mukund

There was a woodland worth its weight in gold,
Its leaves murmured in the mesmerising moonlight.
Frolicsome fauna and fabulous flora did we behold,
In the downpours or in the scintillating sunlight.

But the priceless foliage has now been reduced
To a frivolous frondescence due to the
Deforestation that has been induced.

Between human beings and forests

There used to be harmony

But then came the market

As there came money

Soon timber was taken away to make
Railway sleepers and a huge colonial city

Oh! What a pity...

As the forests suffered human wrath,
Elephants and humans started crossing path.

So symbiotic used to be the relation,

Alas! We now see alienation...

There are now landslides, floods, soil erosion,

The forest dwellers' exploitation,

Climate change, global warming, food shortage-

This calls for sustainability and conservation.

Let's restore the forest to its old glory

Or else we will face nature's fury.

*Sanjwala Mukund, a student of Class XI,
is the daughter of Sanjana and Sanjeeva Kumar*



About Tonight

BY Tanya Saran

Tonight is a beautiful night.

Beguilingly astir in its lilac stillness-

It glitters and quivers, unraveling

From beneath a sheath of silver.

The moonlight slips past willowy treetops

In unslaked slivers.

And the poplars so tall

Sway in voluptuous entreaty,

Serenading the night with a song as old as Time

As the wind sighs and the crickets chirp,

And the frolicking waters of a nearby brook, babble and
chime.

They cascade tonight: unfettered.

Tonight is a beautiful night-

The loveliest of crystal clear nights...

Imploring one to drink in deeply

From heady concoctions of puffy, airy delights.

Drops of dew like dancing pearls,

Wink and nestle amidst leaves unfurled

While rows and rows of white birches, glow milkily in sweet
slumber,

Dreaming gentle dreams of past twilights, midsummer.

Sprays of tiny twinklers

Burst onto inky, fathomless skies.

Shooting high and bright-

The night's cheery little beacons of light.

Tonight is a beautiful night.

Wild berries lend their clear scent

To the surrounding softness,

Richly laden with the warm, wafting flavours

Of honeysuckle and wood.

The air crackles with the sheer explosion of

Sweet savouries on its palette.

And junebells empurple the earth;

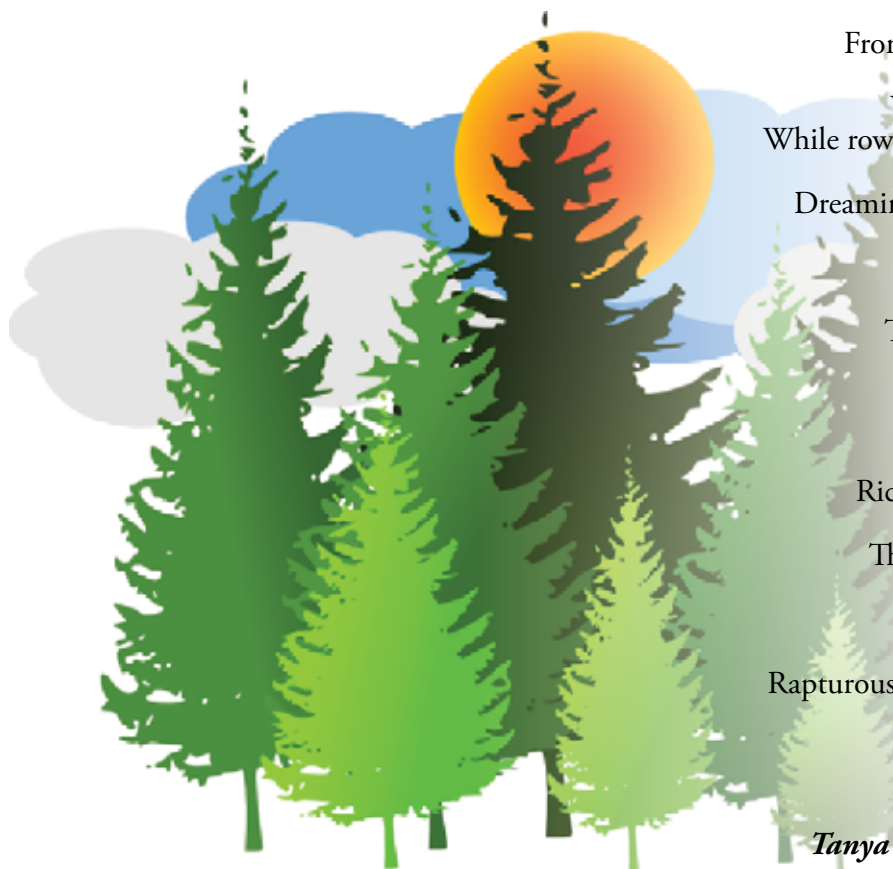
Lush and effervescent.

Rapturous- they devour the ground's more brooding, russet
tones.

The land is alive and ethereal tonight

By the hour's alabaster allure.

*Tanya Saran is a post graduate in Psychology and the
daughter of Geeta and Prem Saran*



The Stray Puppy

It was a beautiful rainy evening. I was sitting in the balcony and was enjoying aloo pakodas made by my mother. Suddenly, I saw a cute little puppy in my garden. He was so cute that I could not stop myself from lifting him. I went inside and left the puppy near the fireplace. Then I gave him some hot milk. After drinking the milk he felt sleepy and he slept near the fire. When my mother came, she asked me "From where did you get such a cute puppy". I answered her that I found it in the garden. Then I asked my mother can I keep it as a pet. She said "All right, but where will you keep him?" I replied I would keep him in a box. Then I kept the puppy in a box and gave it a blanket. I named him Shero. Slowly Shero and I became good friends and then we started playing together every evening. Now Shero and I are very good friends.



Brave Ana

Once upon a time, there lived a girl named Ana. She lived with her parents and a baby sister near a forest. One day her parents were going somewhere for their work. They said to her "Be a good girl and take care of your sister, and don't go to the forest". But Ana forgot everything and went to the forest leaving her baby sister behind in her house. Soon she felt tired and started resting under a tree. Then she saw a house nearby and went inside. It was the house of Suparna, the witch. Ana slept on Suparna's bed.

When Suparna came back from the forest, she saw Ana sleeping on her bed and became furious. She said "Wake up" in anger, "How dare you sleep on my bed". Ana woke up and on seeing the witch, dashed out of the house, but Suparna followed her. At last, Ana was able to reach home, but following her, the witch too reached Ana's house. She said "What will you give me for sleeping on my bed", "Food", Ana replied "I will give you my crops". "All right", said Suparna, "But you have to give your crops now". "Okay", Ana said and quickly planted a mango tree. Then she went to the witch, and said "You grow this tree with your magic and take all the mangoes with you". The witch did as Ana said and then with the mangoes, Suparna went back to the forest.

BY Agrima Singh

Agrima Singh is a student of Class III and the daughter of Vandana and Siddharth Singh

Magical Moments

Photos by Ritvik Raag



Ritvik Raag



Ritvik Raag, a student of Class X, is the son of Ruby and Rajesh Prasad



Painted Stories

Drawings and paintings by the youngest members of the Prerana family



Arhant Tewari



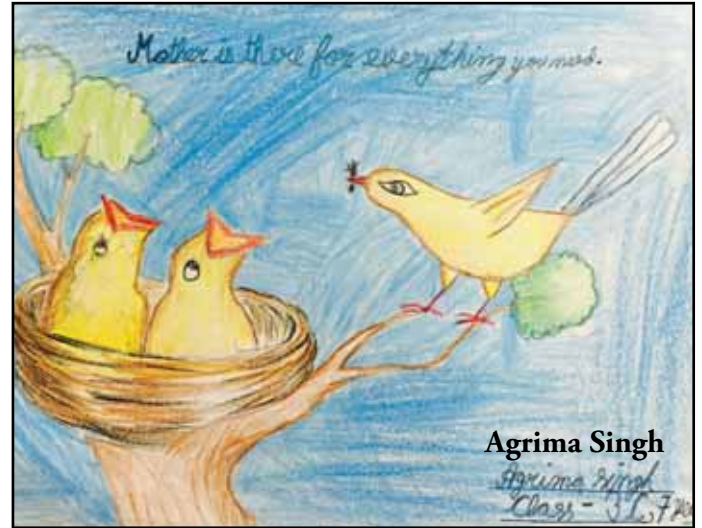
Arhant Tewari



Yajat Khare



Yajat Khare



Agrima Singh

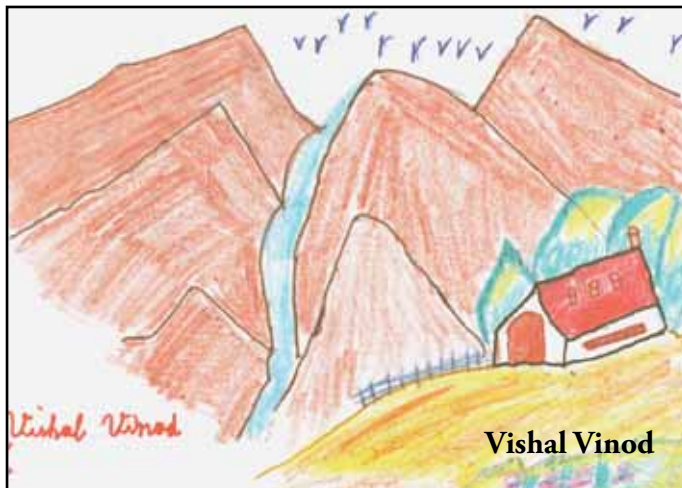
*Agrima Singh
Class - 3*



Anahita Singh



Vishal Vinod



Vishal Vinod

Arhant Tewari, Class 8, is the son of Anamika and Ajay Tewari

Yajat Khare, Class 2, is the son of Leena and Nitin Khare

Agrima Singh, Class 3, and Anahita Singh, Class KG, are the daughters of Vandana and Siddharth Singh

Vishal Vinod, Class 1, is the son of Priya and Vinod Seshan

Tiger

BY Ashmika Dwivedi

He peeped out from a tree
Who were we, he wanted to see
We in our jeep froze
As he was standing really close
It was an amusing sight
But we were almost dead with fright.
He peered from the other side
Perhaps to get an angle wide
As we watched with bated breath
Hovering between life and death
He crossed the road in a flick
And our cameras furiously clicked
He trotted down the path in pride
And soon disappeared to the other side
We were all happy and relieved
For all of us really believed
We'd be in the tiger's tummy
And he would say we were really yummy!!
But if you'd ask me
I'd rather say that
There was no need for such a fuss
Because he actually looked more scared than us!



Ashmika Dwivedi, a student of class VIII, is the daughter of Smita and Krishna Kant Dwivedi

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A photograph of a construction site at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange and grey. In the foreground, the dark silhouettes of a building's steel framework and a tall crane are visible. In the background, other buildings under construction are visible, some with scaffolding. The overall scene is industrial and dramatic.

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Public Financial Management System

- PFMS is a Central Sector Scheme of Govt. of India being implemented by O/o the CGA through a web based application.
- The scheme aims at establishing a suitable on-line MIS and DSS for the Plan Schemes.
- The system registers implementing agencies and facilitates budget allocation, sanction, bill generation, fund disbursements, accounting, reconciliation, E-payments and beneficiaries' management both at central and sub-state level.
- Allows Tracking of funds across the scheme hierarchy and On-line information of bank balances/floot.
- It helps in Minimization of float by 'just-in-time' releases.
- It Reduces borrowings by GOI/State Governments- hence, better cash management.
- PFMS can help in knowing Gross and actual utilization of funds.
- It Moves the accounting from post facto to real-time accounting and standardizes the reports.
- It Enhance transparency, accountability and auditability in public expenditure.
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ARIAS Society

The Government of Assam has created the Assam Rural Infrastructure and Agricultural Services Society (ARIASS) in November 1998, as an autonomous body, headed by the Chief Secretary, Assam, The key mandate of the Society is to function as an apex autonomous body of the Government of Assam for monitoring, coordination and/or implementation of World Bank or any other externally financed/aided Projects or other Projects of any department as may be authorized by the Government of Assam from time to time. The Society has successfully completed two World Bank aided projects and the Bank has rated the performance of these projects as Satisfactory.

- ❖ Assam Rural and Agricultural Services Project (ARIASP): 1995-2004
- ❖ Assam Agricultural Competitiveness Project (ACP) in the 2005-2011 and ACP-AF: 2012-2015

'Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project' (APART)

Its Development Objectives is to "Increase value-added and improve resilience in the production and processing of selected agriculture commodities, focusing on small farmers and agro-entrepreneurs in targeted districts.

'Assam Citizen Centric Service Delivery Project' (ACSDP)

Its Development Objectives is to improve access in the delivery of selected public services in Assam. The Project seeks to adopt an integrated approach to enable citizens to access services under the Assam Right to Public Services (RTPS) Act in a timely, efficient, and accountable manner.

আমাৰ কৃষি, আমাৰ কৃষক, আমাৰ অসম...

কম খৰচতে অধিক উৎপাদন পাবলৈ

'শ্ৰী' (SRI) বা ধানৰ প্ৰবলীকৰণ পদ্ধতিৰে ধান খেতি কৰক।

...শইচেৰে ভৰি পৰক সোনালী মাটি,
সেউজ বিপুলে আনিব অসমৰ প্ৰগতি...

'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিৰ উদ্দেশ্য :

- পৰম্পৰাগত পদ্ধতিৰ তুলনাত ২-৩ গুণ অধিক উৎপাদন।
- কম পৰিমাণৰ বীজ, বাসায়নিক সাৰ আৰু শস্যৰক্ষা ব্যৱস্থাৰ লগতে কম পানীৰ ব্যৱহাৰেৰে খেতিৰ ব্যয় কমোৱা।

'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিৰ বৈশিষ্ট্য :

- কম মাটিত বোকা নকৰাকৈ কঠীয়াতলী প্ৰস্তুত কৰা হয়।
- সাধাৰণ পদ্ধতিত প্ৰতি বিঘাৰ বাবে প্ৰয়োজন হোৱা ৫-৬ কিলোগ্ৰাম বীজৰ পৰিৱৰ্তে 'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিত প্ৰয়োজন হোৱা বীজৰ পৰিমাণ ৭০০ গ্ৰামৰ পৰা ১ কিলোগ্ৰাম।
- সাধাৰণ পদ্ধতিত প্ৰতিটো গোচাত ৩-৪ ডাল কঠীয়া বোৱাৰ সলনি 'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিত মাথো এডালহে কঠীয়া বোৱা হয়।
- সাধাৰণ পদ্ধতিত প্ৰতিটো গোচাৰ পৰা ওলোৱা ১৫-১৮ টা পোখাৰ বিপৰীতে 'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিত প্ৰতিটো গোচাৰ পৰা ওলোৱা পোখাৰ সংখ্যা ৪০-৭০ টা।
- সাধাৰণ পদ্ধতিত বোৱা ২৫-৩০ দিনীয়া কঠীয়াৰ সলনি 'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিত বোৱা কঠীয়াৰ বয়স মাথো ৮-১৫ দিন।
- বাসায়নিক সাৰৰ পৰিমাণ কমাই জৈৱিক সাৰ প্ৰয়োগৰ ওপৰত গুৰুত্ব দি উৎপাদন বৃদ্ধি কৰা।
- বাসায়নিক পদ্ধতিত ধাননি পথাৰত ৩-৭ চেণ্টিমিটাৰ পানী বৰখাৰ সলনি 'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিত পথাৰখন মাথো জীপাল কৰিহে বৰখা হয়।

'শ্ৰী' পদ্ধতিৰে ধান খেতি কৰি উৎপাদনৰ খৰচ কমাওক, ধানৰ উৎপাদন বৃদ্ধি কৰক।

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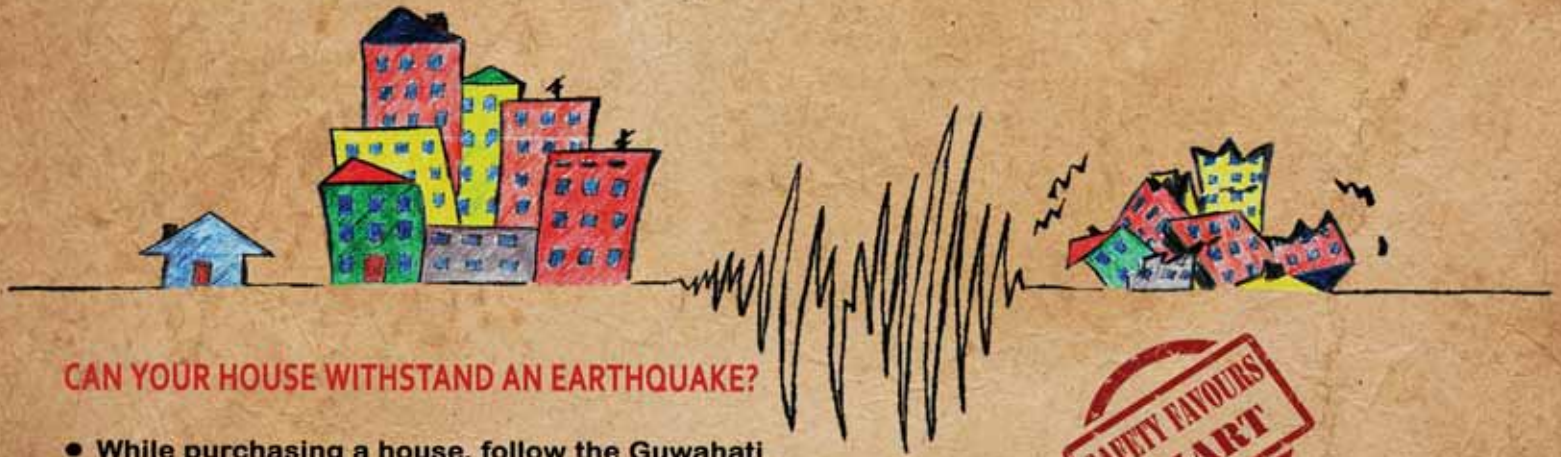
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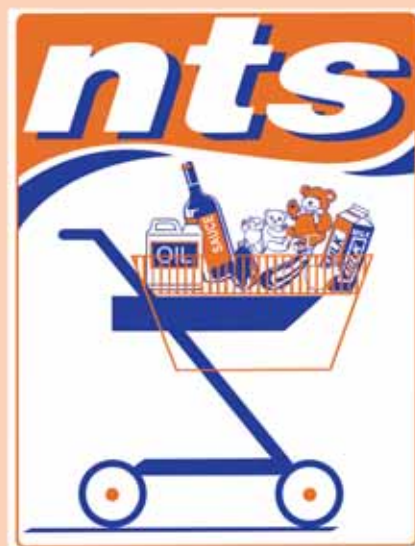
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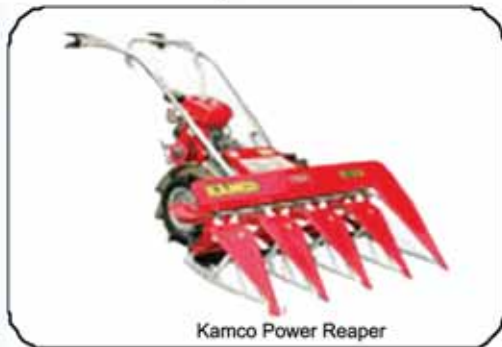
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Assam provides enormous scope for investment in the areas like agro-based products, oil and natural gas, chemical and petrochemical, power, tourism and forest based products. Assam Industrial Development Corporation Limited, the catalyst for industrial development of the state has taken steps for creating high standard industrial infrastructure in the state as follows:

Export Promotion Industrial Park, Amingaon:

At Amingaon, Guwahati

Industrial Growth Centres: At Balipara in Sonitpur District and Matia in Goalpara District

IID Centres: At Bhomoraguri / Naltoli in Nagaon District, Dalgaoon in Darrang District, Malinibeel in Cachar District, Demow in Sivasagar District, Titabor in Jorhat District, Tihu in Nalbari District and Silapathar in Dhemaji District

Border Trade Centre: At Mankachar and Golakganj in Dhubri District

Other projects: Mega Food Park, Bamboo Park, Plastic Park, Jute Park, Agri-Export Processing Zone for Ginger, Banana Park, Tea Park, Regional Food Testing

Laboratory, Air Cargo Complex, IDP Pathsala, IDP Moran are at various stages of implementation.

The combination of NEIIPP, 2007 and Assam Industrial Policy, 2014 makes Assam the most advantageous destination for setting up an industrial unit in Assam.

North East Industrial & Investment Promotion Policy (NEIIPP), 2007 offers Income Tax Holiday

for 10 years, Capital Investment Subsidy, Interest Subsidy on Working Capital loan, Excise Duty concessions, Transport Subsidy on insurance premium

Industrial Policy of Assam, 2014 offers VAT

Exemption, additional VAT exemption for units in special industrial parks, Capital investment subsidy for micro units, Entry tax exemption, Luxury Tax exemption to hotels, Subsidy on Quality Certification/Technical know-how, State capital Subsidy to educational institutions, Research facilities, hospitals, nursing homes and Public Utility facilities, Special Status for Mega projects.

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Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan, Assam

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan, Assam is committed to ensure quality secondary education in the State. Few initiatives towards this direction are

DRISTI

To assess & monitor the Secondary Schools at regular intervals for its improvement, academic inspection programme namely "Dristi" is going on in all the districts of the State.

Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS):-

To maintain electronic service record of teachers for smooth and effective administration HRMIS is being implemented.

Model Schools

5 Model Schools has been operationalised in the Educationally Backward Blocks to transform teaching learning process with the prime objective of imparting quality education, through use of modern technologies and amenities like SMART classroom.

Girls Hostel

17 nos of Girls Hostel were operationalized from January 2016 with lodging and boarding facilities in the Educationally Backward Blocks (EBB) to support the girl students of Secondary level and to provide opportunity to continue their academic journey.

Training of teachers under RMSA

All teachers of Secondary level, teaching core subjects are given training on subject content, methodology and pedagogy every year as per norms of RMSA. Apart from the same, different need specific trainings such as training on use of free and open software, life skills, adolescent issues and gender sensitization, leadership development etc are also imparted from time to time in collaboration with NCERT, SCERT, IIT, Guwahati, IT for Change, UNICEF, NUEPA etc to empower teachers with recent developments in teaching learning.

Learning Assessment and Enhancement for the students of Class IX

The programme was conducted during July, 2016 to assess the learning levels of 388186 students of Class IX in the subjects Science, mathematics and English. 79229 Students with learning gaps were given remedial teaching during summer vacation.

Life Skill Training

To support students to deal with adolescent stage and to make them responsible and good human being, training on life skills are imparted by RMSA in collaboration with UNICEF, Assam. To conduct the school level programmes, one teacher per school from all the Govt and Provincialised schools are trained with support from UNICEF and experts of this field.

Self Defence Training for Girls

356312 Girl students of Class IX and X studying in Govt and Provincialised Schools across the State are being trained on self defence and yoga.

Distribution of Aids and Appliances to the Disabled:- The 617 disabled students studying in IX and X of Govt and Provincialised schools are given required aids and appliances to empower them.



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