

Brigita and Other Stories

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Dr. Varanasi Ramabrahmam



AUTHOR'S PRESS

Worldwide Circulation through Authorspress Global Network

First Published in 2019

by

Authorspress

Q-2A Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110 016 (India)

Phone: (0) 9818049852

E-mail: authorspressgroup@gmail.com

Website: www.authorspressbooks.com

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ISBN 978-93-5207-*-***

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Printed in India at Krishna Offset, Shahdara

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PREFACE

Fiction is the favorite of most of the readers. Fiction is the reflection of the societal living and lives of human beings as observed by the writer. The writer also will have individual experiences, ideas, likes, dislikes, philosophy which influence and mold his writings. Fiction is famous as short-fiction and novel. Though fictitious, and also because fictitious, fiction takes possession of minds and hearts of readers more than any other literary genre. Their imaginations sore and they get engrossed in the reading of fiction. Fiction is very good in engaging and passes time to the readers. The scholarship, study, reading, worldly knowledge and observation will make one a good fiction writer. The influence of earlier famous fiction writers will mold the writing of author. I am influenced by stories from the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, *Panchatantra*, *Hitopadesa*, *Jataka Tales*, Somerset Maugham, O. Henry, P.G. Wodehouse, Boris Pasternak, Sir Conon Doyle, *Saratchanda Chatterjee*, *Sripada Subrahmanya Sastry*, *Satyam Sankarmanchi*, mostly and many foreign and Indian fiction-writers. My style of writing is mostly in first person-the *aatmaasraya* narration.

Dr. Varanasi Ramabrahmam

THE WRITER

The writer is the conscience keeper of the society. The writer can be a poet, a fiction writer, a novelist, an essayist, an originator of philosophical thought, a spiritual quest and the like. The commentators on all these are also called writers. The commentators may agree with, differ, like, dislike, modify, extend or regulate the expressions of the original writers. The commentators are also called critics, some for and some against the writer and his creation.

The writers of natural scientific and social scientific articles; writers writing articles on social and cultural events, cinema, music, drama and the like fine arts and many such avocations are not covered by the term writer. The term writer is generally equated with individuals creating poetry, fiction, novels; thus relating to literature mostly and we can say alone. Translators are considered though not as writers themselves, but are commended as helpers and propagators of writers.

Writing is a sublime art and natural trait. It is an urge. It is the result of the sensitive and sensible nature of the individual. Writer automatically creates; initiated, driven, guided, counseled, regulated, edited, by inner sensitivities. It is in-tuition which makes a writer get sensitized and react in response to happenings within and around the individual. No one asks or invites a writer to write something. It is his inner consciousness and conscience which stirs, makes him/her moved and a flow of thoughts and feelings are generated within, which take the form of the sentences and are

expressed through writing on a paper or nowadays through key board.

The sensitized mind or touched heart of the writer will not allow one to rest until he/she gives the thoughts or feelings language form and put on paper or computer screen. Such being the story of creation by a writer, the writers will be possessed by their inner pleasantness, turmoil or the like emotions and intellectual reflections. All civilizations have been having writers; encouraged them, adored and admired them; and the aesthetic readers and critics play an important role in making a writer popular, famous, earn name, fame and money and immortality.

But all the writers cannot make a profession out of their writing. Most of them do some other job for their livelihood and also create. Very lucky few only can make a profession out of their writings. Whether they are able to make money out of their writings or not, all writers make impressions on society through their creations.

The eternal debate whether a writer must write for himself; and society indirectly gets benefitted or otherwise because of it; or writer must cage himself and be restricted to an ideology, ism or such things goes on. Both types of writers exist in all civilizations and societies. Thus the writer will and shall decide for oneself what to write about and the society and critics always have the choice to accept or reject the writer and his writings.

The tradition that a writer must print his work and then all recognize him/her as a writer is still strong. Even though thousands of websites devoted to literature are available globally, writer becoming famous, earn name, fame and money only by contributing to websites is yet to pick up. The views of the professional critics rate a writer based mostly on his printed matter; and merely readers who enjoy the creations of a writer on websites do not and cannot make a writer a writer. This adherence to print-recognition can give place to web-recognition by readers too; in making a writer a writer.

Most of the websites invariably are eager to get the “printed writers” to their sites rather than the sites themselves initiating efforts to make their “web-writers” also rise to the fame of being called a writer. This will definitely happen. Must be happening elsewhere already.

Many writers are dedicated to writing because of their nature and not expecting money, name or fame; and money, name and fame will not adorn all writers equally. Whatever might be the financial, popular and the like position of a writer, a writer invariably continues writing till his/her last breath.

This collection of short-fiction of mine consists of various issues and is a spectrum of observations, inner churning, my ideas as against popular sentiment, and is a reflection of my reflections on various social, philosophical and spirituality related subjects and issues.

CREATIVE WRITING

“Writing” will be viewed in an objective way through Indian civilization and culture. The nature of the literary figure-writer, poet, fiction-writer, novelist, essay-writer, translator etc., – and their creations will be defined. The urge and compulsions for such restrictive selection of topics for literary creation will be delineated. The pros and cons of such limited horizon for creativity and patronage will be discussed. The writings by marginalized and about the marginalized will be differentiated and distinguished. The psychological, aesthetic and social reasons for such tendencies and the impact of such aspects on overall literary write-ups and readership will be critically analyzed. The necessity of writings by the marginalized about all issues and not confined to marginalization; will be highlighted and use of such creations for national integration and contribution to overall Indian and world literature will be emphasized.

The Sanskrit expressions “*naanrushihi kurutekaavyam*”, “*viswasreyaskaavyaparamaartham*”, “*rasaatmakamvaakyamkaavyam*” and “*ramaneeyarthapratipaadkasabdahakaavyaha*” will be explained and stressed in this regard. The social, philosophical, spiritual, rational and aesthetic tendencies and implications of restricted and liberal creativity will be stressed. The need for a comprehensive and cohesive view about literary creation will be shared.

It has been rampant in all societies and civilizations that certain sections of people and citizens are marginalized, intentionally or unintentionally. The marginalization happens based on financial status, community, caste, religion, region, language,

culture, ideology, gender, and many such divisions. In India particularly caste and gender are now considered as marginalizing aspects right from the beginning. Brahmanism is blamed solely for the division into castes and exploitation. Buddhism, Jainism which do not have caste distinctions or divisions tried to balance the situation. But in literature of every language, region and religion of India there have been contributions from the so called marginalized sections. All the Bhakti movements, Buddhism, Jainism, *Chaarvakism*, *Vedanta*, reformation movements, now communism, socialism, dalitism, feminism and the like isms have been striving to undo the damage done through generations. We have literature divided in these lines as communist literature, rationalist literature, *dalit* literature, feminist literature and the like.

But it must be mentioned that Upanishads and the spirituality professed by their contents are most objective works of the world. The following *sloka* stress that aspect.

Creative Hymns from the Upanishads:

“Who knows the secret?
 Who proclaims it here?
 Whence, whence
 This manifest creation sprang?

The Gods themselves
 Came later into being;
 Who knows whence
 This great creation sprang?

These verses clearly inform the objective nature of the *Upanishadic* expressions. They are most secular and full of rationalism and unbiased in unraveling and exposing Truth and Reality. This spirit of the Upanishads pervaded throughout the expressions of the *Upanishadic* seers. Later Brahmanism has evolved and the other isms – commenting, substantiating and challenging the *Upanishadic* expressions. *Upanishadic* spirit transcends all divisions and leads humanity towards peace, bliss and harmony.

The Buddhism, Jainism, *Veera Vaishnavism*, *Veerasaivism* and the Bhakti movements have played tremendous role uplifting and expressing for the “marginalized” sections. Many *Alwars* (Vishnu devotees) and *Nayanamaars* (Siva devotees) from the south are from marginalized groups. They are universal in themes and compositions. The *Narayanaguru* movement in Kerala, *Periyar* movement in *Tamilnadu* and *Ramamanohar Lohia* in the north and communism, radical humanism of *M. N. Roy* all contributed to uplift and aid the marginalized sections and influenced creative and fiction-writing immensely.

But unfortunately, the movements became more militant and reason and compassion missed in some of them. Some of them developed hatred towards all for which Brahmanism stood and benefitted the society. And these movements have further divided themselves based on ideology is irony of the movements.

They developed a vested interest in denigrating Brahmanism. The demerits anywhere can be removed and merits can be used. But the supporters of the marginalized sections instead of working for harmony among all sections; calculatedly, systematically and gradually alienated one section from the other and we now have separate poets and literary figures in addition to political figures, for all non-privileged classes, castes and communities and are not allowing even these marginalized sections to come under one leadership and philosophy. The leaders, political, intellectual and literature-connected dominating the divisions and the movements are fragmented. So is the case with gender discrimination.

Many literary figures have attained name, fame, money and eminence by writing about marginalized sections. These individuals almost belong to the marginalized sections. They pronounce that only individuals from these sections can write well and authentically about their conditions, feelings, reactions, experiences and the like.

But it must also to be noted that many other have written with passion and love and affection on these marginalized sections though they do not belong to these sections throughout India

through all religions, regions, cultures and the like. Marginalization is of many kinds. Before coming to marginalization let us discuss about creative writing.

Creative writer is a contemplating seer-like scholar and such learned persons alone can compose great literary work (*nanrushihhi kurute kaavyam*).

A creative writer or poet is also a human being. He possesses thirst and hunger. He will have family responsibilities. He/she will have his or her social obligations. One has to take care of all these and then in the midst of these has to fine tune time to compose poetry. Money is essential to quench his thirst and hunger and discharge family responsibilities. These are not the times when one can make poetry-writing a livelihood. One has to do some other job and then write poetry. Living and being engaged in literary creation are different. Ninety nine percent of poets do not have the luxury of earning money by taking poetry-writing as a profession. And thus they cannot meet the obligations of taking care of themselves, their family and also discharge other social responsibilities.

A poet can spare and spend time in poetry-writing only after providing a comfortable life to his near and dear. Under present circumstances it is not possible to have a full-fledged life of poetry writing. One has to write poetry and take care of his family simultaneously. Many famous and popular poets of today do other jobs for their livelihood and then also write poetry. Now-a-days there are no poets who continue writing great poetry despite they and their family members suffering from poverty and hunger. There are almost no people who made poetry-writing their livelihood.

There have been many poets from all societies and civilizations who wrote poetry despite being poor and suffered from lack of minimum amenities. The great Tamil poet, *Subrahmanya Bharati* is a shining example, wrote poetry as an *Upasana*, and was many times not able to make his family members free from hunger and deprivation. But Rabindranath Tagore is a rich person and never knew the pangs of hunger. *Sri Gurajada Apparao*, the famous

Telugu dramatist and poet though was serving a royal family, created literary master-pieces.

What all needed to be a poet or a fiction writer is to have a touchy, responsive and compassionate heart. And one must be able to feel for the happenings around and become one with them and express. *Poverty or richness or serving others for livelihood or marginalization will not and should not come in the way of composing everlasting poetry and literature with universal themes.* And compose literary creations for all; irrespective of denomination which they profess to represent or fight for. Then only the poet, writer becomes universal.

Thus how far the poets who do other jobs for livelihood and are part-time poets can commit themselves to their ideologies and influence the society with their poetry is a big question mark. We have many poets who lead cozy lives but still “feel” and write about *dalits*, women’s liberation, socialism, communism (though these two are now not so popular isms) and proclaim to belong to a narrow section rather than to belong to all humanity. Writings from the margins need not necessarily deal only with the problems, experiences, aspirations, struggles, exploitation etc., of the marginalized sections. Creative writers from marginalized sections can also write on universal themes and need not be confined to their sworn ideology or ism.

Creative writing must be aimed at every one and cover all sections of society and the nature around together with cosmos.

“*Viswa sreyaaha eva kaavyaparamaartham* – the poetic work must profess the welfare of all humanity and creation”. Such works are becoming rare. “*Ramaneeyaartha prapadikaha sabdaha kaavyah* – Even a single word pregnant with aesthetic and bliss-giving meanings is also defined as poetry and poetic work. A poet has to present both aspects in one’s own poetry for the welfare and joy of all and also for self-satisfaction.

The mental state of the girl who has matured and attained her puberty just then and the mental state of a budding poet will be the

same. They will be enthusiastic to show the transformations and the changes within to aesthetic persons and desire to share their *rasa sthithi* – mental mood with such proficient and efficient *rasajnas* – aesthetic persons for their appreciation and praise.

What we need to compose poetry is a heart which can feel and which has compassion. An ability to imagine beautifully and romantically helps. One must have a good observation power, command over language in which the composition is being made, an idea of words and synonyms, an insight of their usage, their aptness and relevance coupled with necessary experience of and by “object” or “subject” of creation. This will make one to be a good poet. Study of literature and poetry in various languages and an open mind enhance the merits of the verses composed.

“*Kavayo nirankusaha*” is a meaningful and indicating Sanskrit saying. A poet is dictator unto himself. A poet is a flying bird with liberty; joyously jumping and falling water-fall; the wishfully, willfully and eagerly flowing river; the blissfully rising and falling sea-wave; the personification and the part and parcel of nature.

The poet or poetess whose nature is their independence and freedom and who are masters of themselves cannot be confined and imprisoned in the boundaries of any ideology or philosophy or culture or cult. They are not parrots to be limited to these cages. All poets need not be followers or propagandists of a particular culture, cult, ideology or philosophy. And many poets are not and will not be confined to a particular school of thought. They compose as they feel and are impressed or influenced or made to melt or made blissful, joyful or sorrowful or hurt or pained.

Poetry must share love and affection; must improve understanding and peace; it must make the readers feel aesthetically and make their hearts full of warmth and compassion for all not necessarily to their caste, community, clan or gender specifications.

Many feel that poetry need give a message or side and propagate a cause, ideology, ism, and the like. They dictate that each verse need reflect the situation in the society and the

observation and response of the poet about the societal happenings. This need not be the guiding principle for every poem or poet and is not the universal rule of composing poetry and cannot bind each poet.

A poem can be a creation just reflecting the within of a poet and need not contain any message or relation to happenings in the society. The verse can be a mere exposure of the poet's ecstasy or deep sorrow or hurt or pain or just being. It can be expression of love to one's beloved or devotion to one's favorite deity.

Match-box, soap-piece, kitten or anything can be the object for creation and the subject of poetry or fiction. It is the prerogative of the poet to decide the object or subject of creation. The critic has liberty to appreciate or otherwise of the creation and assess its relevance, beauty, meaning, use and aesthetic quality. A critic must not transgress his limits and decide on which the poet must write poetry and for what the poet must feel. The critic can suggest on the style of narration, use of apt words or the imageries. That is all the duty of the critic. The poet may or may not follow the critic's suggestions. He will do according to his convenience and wish.

The outpour, having its origin in the inner recesses of the poet and is expressed for one's own contentment and fulfillment, may or may not fit into the confines and boundaries defined by others. Such an outpour can be devoid of any message or reflection of societal happenings and be a mere flow of poet's inner experiences. Just because no one is aware of such a flow or such a flow is not 'useful' does not diminish its importance or essence. There are many mountain-streams whose existence is not known to any and which are not useful to any. Just because they are not seen by any or not used by any they do not cease to be streams. So also the streams of feelings of poet can and will exist.

"ramaneeyaartha prapadikaha sabdaha kaavyaha" – even a word which gives an aesthetic meaning and experience is poetic-work by itself. There are many things existing in the nature whose existence is not known to any. They just exist unknown and unconcerned.

They do not require anybody's permission to exist. They can and will exist despite the ignorance or innocence or non-information to or non-awareness of any others. Absence of knowledge about their presence by others does not prevent them from existing and blooming.

The within of poet is composed of waves of poetry. These waves may or may not touch all. They may not even reach any. No poetry is acclaimed by one and all. Every poet will not be liked by and be a favorite of one and all. All the artistes create according to their nature and for personal satisfaction. Such a creation which is the form of worship of one's own Self may or may not please and be pleasant to all. Some may be just excited by it. In some it may not create any feeling at all.

In reality, the verse or fiction is not composed by the individual. The heart which has experienced the feeling composes the verse. During that period the poet's normal personality will be forgotten or is transcended or his identity is merged and absorbed in the object or subject of composition and his Self becomes one with his creation. And in that state his heart makes him filled and full in such absorption and creation takes place. All individuals who can compose verses are not recognized and become popular as poets. There are various reasons for this.

Even a meritorious composition does not get the appreciation of contemporaries and is not easily recognized and applauded. Under such circumstances it is highly difficult for a normal poet to get recognition and appreciation. This is because like certain poets, certain critics are also the fans of certain ideology or culture or tradition or cult or philosophy. Such critics cannot appreciate any poetry which does not reflect their favorite ideology. The critics who can transcend their likes or dislikes or affiliations and appreciate a work are becoming a rare species. Their number is dwindling day by day.

Some like traditional way of writing; some like socialism; some like communism; some like *dalit* literature; some like feminism; some like '*anubhootivaada*' (giving prominence to one's

experience or mood); some like ambiguity (*aspashtatha*) to adorn the poetry and fiction.

Thus we have so many tribes of critics. They spend most of their time, energy and scholarship in futile and acrimonious arguments. Such fights do not help in the appreciation of the aesthetic contents of the poetry. These quarrels lead us nowhere and constructive criticism will be missing. They divide poetry into various denominations basis for which is not always harmonious.

When poets and literary critics are thus divided into various groups, any poetry devoid of any “ism” will not get the attention and recognition of such groups. One also cannot expect such a thing to happen. Also there is a mushroom growth of poets and poetesses. In this background, the poetry composed without touching any “isms” but only as the one that touched a single person’s heart and as one felt must also be recognized or appreciated. Such heart-beats or disturbances of within or movements of within or songs of heart or murmurs or volcanoes or storms or whirlpools or pleasant sounds or harmonious phases of heart in the form of verses may not be heard and any may not be aware of them. So writings from the margins can also be universal in content and appeal and the composers will be received by all sections of the society.

The writer is the conscience keeper of the society too; to whatever section or denomination he belongs to in the society. The writer can be a poet, a fiction writer, a novelist, an essayist, an originator of philosophical thought, a spiritual quest and the like. The commentators on all these are also called writers. The commentators may agree with, differ, like, dislike, modify, extend or regulate the expressions of the original writers. The commentators are also called critics, some for and some against the writer.

Writing is a sublime art and natural trait. It is an urge. It is the result of the sensitive and sensible nature of the individual. Writer automatically creates initiated, driven, guided, counseled, regulated, edited, by inner sensitivities. It is in-tuition which makes a writer in response to happenings within and around the individual. No one

asks or invites a writer to write something. It is his inner consciousness and conscience which stirs, makes him/her moved and a flow of thoughts and feelings are generated within which take the form of the sentences and are expressed through writing on a paper or now a days through key board. Such sublime creativity need not necessarily be confined to one only section and related points. Writings from the margins must also cover all themes as done by the famous Telugu poet *Gurram Jaashuvaa*, who composed poetry on all themes and never confined to “*dalitism*”. Despite his “marginalization” by contemporaries he “fought” back through his poetry and became equally eminent and famous. His piece on *Smasaanam* (burial ground) is a master piece.

The sensitized mind or touched heart of the writer will not allow one to rest until he/she gives the thoughts or feelings language form and put on paper or computer screen. Such being the story of creation by a writer, the writers will be possessed by their inner pleasantness, turmoil or the like emotions and intellectual reflections. All civilizations have writers from all sections, encouraged them, adored and admired them; and the aesthetic readers and critics play an important role in making a writer popular, famous, earn name, fame and money and immortality. The writings from the margins can also aim at such grandness in addition to outpouring their respective experiences, actions, reactions and the like.

But all the writers cannot make a profession out of their writing. Most of them do some other job for their livelihood and also create. Very lucky few only can make a profession out of their writings. Whether they are able to make money out of their writings or not all writers make impressions on society through their creations.

So confining oneself to a particular ism, ideology or a cause may not make him dear or famous or appreciated outside one’s realm of writing. A work of poetry or literature must enthuse all. It should be useful to all in aesthetic enjoyment and guiding to face life in all vicissitudes.

It would be of more satisfaction to the poet if his poetry is read and appreciated by all sections of readers. Thus writings from marginalization need not necessarily concern marginalization alone. The “marginalized” sections can also write universal poetry useful to all in addition to their individualized commitments. And writers outside the “margins” also have been, are and will be writing about marginalized sections with equal passion and concern.

The literary figures from marginalized sections, when write about all topics in addition to their chosen field of championship will pave harmonious path and very good and variety of literature will be created.

THE TRAVAILS OF WRITERS

The writers and poets all over the world are suffering from unwritten censorship implemented by terrorists, zealots of – religion, region, caste, community, gender, – like historical and natural divisions.

These self-appointed individuals and champions, who are fanatic to the core, are policing the writers and poets through the globe and are restricting the choices of the creativity and freedom and right of expression of the writers and literary creations.

And when men / women writers write anything criticizing these champions, these perpetrators of divisions for personal and selfish interests; and who have vested interest in these divisions; are reacting wildly, violently and inhumanly against the writers, the civilized counselors.

And when pictured by the authors, the responsible citizens, even genuinely exercising writer's democratic right of expressing cultured, civilized opinions; on how these vested interests are playing havoc with the lives of the citizens, by the dastardly nature of the utterances and actions in the name of this division or that division, (by these fundamentalists of not only religion, but of region, caste, community, language, sub-nationality), they are becoming ferocious and are attacking the writers and are even physically eliminating them.

All most all democratic governments have become hand in glove with these anti-social, anti-national and anti-human criminals and are consciously or otherwise are allowing them to destroy the

fabrics of culture and civilization of the society and nation woven by writers.

Very sad state of affairs is prevailing in the society an threatening the wise writers!!

1

AN EXPERIENCE IN KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

That night I read articles in a magazine about human deaths throughout the globe in terrorist explosions and the hazards of pollution and global warming that are affecting us. I had a disturbed sleep. The same disturbance is carried and I did not feel fresh when I woke up next morning.

I went for a morning walk with a heavy heart. I was walking through a beautiful garden. The trees, the leaves, the creepers, the flowers, the fruits and the greenery greeted me with affection. I made enquiries with the blossoming flowers and have observed the nature around.

Just then the spring has set in. The cuckoos are singing hiding here and there after eating the tender mango leaves. The birds made pleasing and harmonious sounds. The cool morning breeze has touched me gently and made me feel better. The sun is rising in the east. When I am experiencing pleasantness and am joyful, I saw a figure under a mango tree appear before me.

'*Kasturi tilaka*' is on His forehead. He has worn '*Pitaambara*'. A garland made of "*mandaara*" flowers is gracing His neck. Peacock feather is gleaming on His head. The tender bamboo stick touched by His rosy lips is playing melodiously the '*Bhoopala raaga*'. Adorned like this appeared before me the sky-blue complexioned God; the Lord who takes care of you and me; the venerated spouse of Goddess *Lakshmi*... He became the vision that filled my eyes.

I ran towards Him like a released arrow with excitement, eagerness and joy. I reached Him and fell at his feet like a flower. My hands touched His lotus-feet. Raising my head, I looked at *Mukunda*. My eyes became tearful. Tears rolled down my cheeks. With tears of joy I washed the feet of the Lord. My excitement subsided. I became cheerful.

Looks expressing devotion as leaves, affectionate salute with folded hands as sweet fruits, the chant of *Narayana astaakshari* as water and heart filled with love for Him as flowers, I offered the Lord and worshipped Him.

He smeared my body with His hands, wiped out my tears and comforted me like my beloved and caressed me like mother. I closed my eyes in delight and enjoyed the hug of the Lord like a child. With the touch of *Narayana*, I experienced inexplicable bliss.

Then I spoke to the Lord:

You make us speak; you make us learn the alphabet, the language, the sciences, the arts and skills, and the *tatva*; you make us compose poetic works; you feast us all with the delights of our chanting your name. In which sequence of words shall I sing your glory my Lord, so that I am happy and you are delighted?

You create all the tunes and fill the universe with melodious sounds. Nature overflows with joy by listening to your musical notes. How shall I sing your praise, in what *raaga*, except with *anuraaga*!

I do not observe any austerities. I do not know what meditation is. *Mantra* and *tantra*, I never heard about. Though my mind is always counseling to chant your name always, I am neglecting because of my laziness. Due to lack of discrimination I am unable to distinguish between the right and the wrong. In such a state of mind, I am unable to retain your form in my mind. Take care of me, Oh! Savior of *Gajendra*!

What is this, my Lord?! Man kills man in the name of religion, region, language, ideology, culture and caste! What is this,

my Teacher! Man is making himself and his surroundings vulnerable by destroying nature and is polluting himself and environment! Is the end of this *Yuga* approaching? Or is it that *Lord Siva* has opened his third eye? Tell me creator and sustainer of all worlds. Tell me Protector of us.

Then Lord Krishna spoke enchantingly:

I am you and you are I. There is no difference between us. Can you differentiate between water and water? In quality and essence you and I are same.

Religions are not insane. Human-beings in charge and control of religions, regions, languages, ideologies, cultures and castes are insane. Religions and all such institutions are in wrong hands. Do not blame institutions for the failure of human-beings in charge and control of them. Human-being by nature possesses three characteristics-beastly, human and humane, in proportion. One behaves like, a beast, human or humane person as the nature then prevails.

You have left institutions to beasts and are observing the indiscriminate destruction without proper concern. You lost the knack of easing the burdens. Advancement, neglecting human feelings, needs and human existence has no meaning. It is mere empty progress.

We created rivers with crystal pure and sweet water for you. You are making them streams and pools of chemicals. We created fresh air for your breathing. You are replacing it with poisonous gases. We created trees for your benefit. You are converting forests into deserts. If few human-beings are polluted we can punish them. If the whole humanity is polluted, whom to punish?

You are beyond our control. We too became spectators like the sun and the moon and are painfully observing your foolish and self-annihilating deeds and advancement. We devised a plan to keep you here on earth and let you enjoy the beauty and treasures of this beautiful planet for millions of generations. You are only looting, plundering and damaging it unwisely.

Awaken before the damage is done beyond repair. We are no longer your custodians. We, the Lords of all religions have decided to live in the hearts of the compassionate humane human-beings and help you through them only.

Neither conventional religions nor any other ideology has to prevail, no more or longer one over the rest. Only Humanism, the essence of all religions and ideologies shall prevail. It's time for the union of hearts ignoring all divisions and fight foolish persons among you for the welfare of all, the living and the non-living on this planet. It is between you humans of two kinds: the foolish and the wise; the cruel and the kind-hearted; the selfish and the compassionate.

If foolishness prevails over wisdom, you will perish. If wisdom prevails over foolishness you will survive and flourish together with the living and the non-living, which is essential for your existence and enjoyment of nature and its beauties.

It is completely in your hands. Wise people of the world should unite and save yourselves and the earth. You only are your custodians and saviors. Heed to this advice. If you follow fools your extinction from this planet is imminent. Choice is yours. Flourish or perish.

Thus speaking, the full-moon of sage *Vyasa's* heart, the personification of the devotion, love and compassion of *Alwars*, the activity of all religions and ideologies, the radiance of compassion in humane hearts, the beloved consort of *Radha*, the form of *Mahavishnu*, filled in my heart and pervaded throughout me.



2

ANASUYA'S DOWNFALL (OLGA'S IRE)

Anasuya and Olga are bosom friends. They did primary and secondary schooling together. *Anasuya* chose to become an engineer and Olga has taken to literature, which is her fascination and passion. Their friendship has survived this separation and are all always in touch with each other. Presently Olga has come to visit *Anasuya* and advise her on the decision taken by *Anasuya* recently and is implementing.

Olga is an active woman's liberation movement activist. She, like her father *Kapardi*, is an admirer of communism, rationalism, feminism and the like isms. Actually the love of her father for communism and Soviet Russia has made him name her as Olga. Olga cannot stand men. She despises them as a selfish and arrogant tribe. She is convinced that for all the difficulties of the women folk and the problems they are facing, men are responsible. She always likes to refer to men as male chauvinist pigs. She has mere contempt for men and nothing else. Love for them she never possessed and does not like to hear about it.

She is horrified when *Anasuya* has decided to resign her job and spend the rest of her life serving her beloved cousin *Anand*. *Anand* and *Anasuya* are not only closely related but are also love interests of each other. They have fallen in love and have also risen in love.

They have mutual devotion, admiration, appreciation and love for each other.

Anasuya has finished her engineering and got a job as a software engineer in a reputed multi-national company. She has been sent to the UK on overseas assignment.

Anand is elder to her by five years. He finished his M.Sc. and doctorate and is currently looking for employment. Just then tragedy has struck him. He has met with an accident and his body has become insensitive below hips. He is bed ridden and one has attend to him for all his daily scores and for everything to take place in his daily routine. *Anand* is only child to his rich parents and everyone is crestfallen because of the tragedy and such unkindness of fate.

Now *Anasuya* has decided to resign her job, marry and serve *Anand* for life.

The conveyance of this decision of *Anasuya* has made Olga to rush to *Anasuya*. Olga is teaching Telugu Literature in Osmania University in Hyderabad. *Anand's* and *Anasuya's* parent's place is also Hyderabad. *Anasuya* has returned from her UK assignment a week back and is shortly going to resign her job to attend to *Anand*.

“You have become mad, *Anasuya*? How is it that you want to resign from such a promising career and waste your life like this?”

“I can understand your concern for me and the “quality” of life I am going to have. This is not a decision taken in a hurry or sympathy is not the reason. I genuinely love *Anand*. Had *Anand* not met with this accident, we are going to marry next month. The only additional thing is I am quitting working and am ceasing to be a career woman.”

“This decision of yours is insane. Now only women have got an opportunity to prove that they are equal to men in all aspects and they no longer depend on men for anything. And you decided to lose such wonderful opportunity of living independently without any male chauvinist domination and suppression. You have really stabbed the liberation of women in the back.”

“It is strange that you have become so emotional, Olga. It is uncommon of you. You are always like a stone and never exhibited any emotions. I am glad you love me and the woman’s liberation movement so much. I too with equal intensity love *Anand*. There will be hundreds of software engineers to take care of the industry. But my not being the companion of *Anand* affects me and there will be no one to take care of my beloved when fate has struck him so cruelly’

“Economic independence is true liberation for women. You are squandering that opportunity. Even under normal circumstances the drudgery of kitchen work, house-maintenance, conceiving, delivering, taking care of the kids and so called husband are all chains to women. Now you are taking additional responsibility of nursing a cripple for life also. Any way I am not able to accept your decision, *Anasuya*. A brilliant person like you must not confine to kitchen and house. You have better role to play than just be a house wife that too to a handicapped person.”

“Mind your tongue, dear friend, Olga. *Anand* is not handicapped as long as I am alive”

“Do not be emotional, *Anasuya*, you are ruining your bright future. Why do you want to remain dependent and also lead slavish life and waste your life in subjugation? I do not see any wisdom in your decision except that you have pity and mercy to *Anand*.”

“You mean to say Mother Theresa has no wisdom and wasted her life by taking care of destitute children of Calcutta streets and has been a slave to them.”

“No, Mother Theresa is an angel’

“Then how I fail to be an angel when I am taking care of and nursing my *Anand*? You mean to say and recommend that people must first become destitute and then people like Mother Theresa must take care of them and we must not mind for our near and dear and we must neglect them so that they become destitute.

Where you have picked up this logic dear friend Olga? The dialectic materialism of which you are a master, I hope is not

guiding you. You must know that I am an adult and can take care of myself and I also have the wisdom to decide about my life.

External hegemony by intellectuals or women liberation movement activists like you or NGOs and their uncalled for interference in the personal lives of the individuals is the bane of our times. They very childishly think that their course of thought is correct and others are not capable of thinking at all.

Just because you are my friend I have allowed you to talk like this; especially about my beloved *Anand*. Emotional fulfillment is essential for human lives. Intellectual debates must not decide the course of lives. One must learn to respect the line of thinking of others also. Dismissing others and their thinking as backward or immature is itself an illness of mind.”

“No *Anasuya*, do not be excited. I am completely disturbed that a brilliant life is just ending as another subservient way.”

“Do not be bothered, Olga. You did your duty as a friend by warning me as you have understood and want life to be. You must know that taking care of and showering love and affection to near and dear and be their beloved is also a noble profession as teaching physics and writing essays on Telugu literature. People get Nobel Prize for peace and also for taking care of and doing good for fellow human beings, just as inventing photo-electric effect or discovering X-rays. All professions are essential for human well-being and welfare. There is no superior profession over others.”

“O.K. *Anasuya*, though I am not convinced about the wisdom of your decision, I wish you all the best.”

Olga left the place in complete dejection. She is angry, unhappy and agitated. Olga’s displeasure and ire for *Anasuya*’s voluntary down fall is immense.



3

BRIGITA

Life is very odd. Strangers meet accidentally. They become very intimate. They get separated due to unexpected happenings. Such separations devastate the weak-minded. I and *Brigita* do not belong to that category. Destiny has brought together and separated in an incomprehensible way.

One day I got a letter.

“I am coming to Bangalore to participate in a conference on climate change. Please come there and meet me.”

It is from *Brigita*. How can I not meet her? It would be a blissful reunion.



Brigita is my German friend. We became friends under surprising circumstances.

Then I was doing research in a central university after completing M.Sc. in physics. My research field was Molecular Biophysics (now called Bioinformatics) and the thesis “Theoretical Studies on Protein Folding”.

This field covers the understanding the relation between the attainment of three dimensional structure by a proteins and their function. During time I was learning German at CIEFL (now called

EFL-English and Foreign Languages University) in the evening part time course.

When I was doing my master's degree in physics, I was very much fascinated by the research works of Einstein, Planck, Schrödinger, Heisenberg and many such modern physicists. Then I was longing to go through the works of Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, in the original, in German language So I started learning German at CIEFL near Osmania University.

Learning a foreign language is a thrilling, engaging and beautiful experience. It is an inexplicable joy.

I underwent such a rewarding experience while learning German language. I have tried to learn the grammar by comparing English and Telugu language grammars. We had very efficient teachers who are very friendly and accommodating our mistakes graciously. I am introduced to the culture, civilization of Germans and literary history of German. We were taught the drama of Goethe, poetry and plays of Bertolt Brecht and many stalwarts' creations. I became a fan of Brecht and had gone through some of his works. As I am busy with my research work and not having time, I resolved to go through all works of Brecht and of some others after completing my Ph. D.

I informed my German professor this idea of mine. He gave me a brilliant suggestion. He advised me to do pen-friendship with a German literature student. This has appealed to me so much. He himself has given some addresses. I wrote to all of them.

Brigita is the first one to respond enthusiastically and cheerfully. Her letter has generated pleasant and joyful feelings. She wrote:

My dear friend,

I received your letter. I experienced pleasure by going through your communication. When I was thinking of making friendship with an Indian, I received your request for pen-friendship.

I will introduce to you the German poets, fiction-writers, novelists past and current. You have learnt German so nicely. Your language is, proficient, sweet and elegant. You also introduce me to the Indian philosophy and spirituality. I am learning Sanskrit but not yet proficient.

I am of the opinion that Indian spirituality is to be introduced by an Indian. Maxwell and others have done some attempts but their works are not objective. The depths of Upanishads and other philosophical and spiritual texts have to be understood together with the culture and civilization and not merely the texts. This coupling of culture and texts enhances the ability to comprehend and insight created thus would be better.

I am also research scholar like you but in literature. I am comparing the dramatic elements and dramatization in the plays of Goethe and Brecht.

Awaiting your letter eagerly,
Yours lovingly
Brigita

I became very blissful by going through *Brigita's* letter. Our tastes and interests matched and thus we became very good friends in a very short time.

I have introduced *Brigita* to *Panchatantra* stories, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the *Bhagavata* and the Upanishads. I also briefly told about *Jataka* tales and other *Buddhist*, Jain and *Charvaka* thoughts. I informed her the essence of the *Bhadvadgita*, the dispassionate action without getting concerned about the outcome of our efforts and the focus must be on the performance of the work.

The human relationships professed in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata together with the wisdom and conduct of worldly affairs and importance of common sense and intuition are also emphasized by me in communications to *Brigita*.

She in turn introduced to German literature in particular emphasis to Goethe and Brecht. Like this some months have passed. She also discussed Kant. *Brigita* has sent her photo with one of her letters. She is a beautiful girl. I am attracted to her physical beauty too. I too sent my photo to *Brigita* on her insistence.

Our dearness to each other has grown into love between us from the stage of seed to, sapling to creeper to flowering. We started using “*du*”, the intimate and dear addressing in second person single number in German.

Both of us penned many love poems on our love and exchanged. We wrote many verses together. Which line she wrote, which I composed is now not known.

Then some more months have passed. I finished writing my thesis and presented to the University. The viva voce is also conducted. And I am awarded Ph. D. degree in Life Sciences in the field of Bioinformatics. I loved it because it fulfilled my graduate dreams that I must contribute to knowledge in an interdisciplinary way making use of mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology and computation. I am also dreaming to contribute to diverse fields from science, literature, to philosophy, as was done by Greek philosophers after I settle in life.

During the composition of my thesis I probed the possibilities of doing post-doctoral research in Germany. And I am given a fellowship by Prof. Eigen at Max Planck Institute, Stuttgart where *Brigita* is undergoing her doctoral course. I have to work with him on pre-biotic and biotic evolution. By that time *Brigita* also finished her work and obtained doctorate. She joined as a lecturer in Stuttgart itself in a college.

That I will do my post-doctoral fellowship at Stuttgart itself where *Brigita* is also employed made me blissful. I left by *Luftansa* airlines to Stuttgart and *Brigita* is there to receive me at the airport.

By seeing each other we forgot the outside world for some time. The time has frozen for us during that period. Getting senses first *Brigita* asked me how was the journey. It was well I replied.

Brigita told me that she has arranged an apartment for me and said that I would like it. We went there. The apartment and its surroundings are to my taste and *Brigita* has decorated it tastefully knowing my preferences. We cooked talking and she left after our dinner.

Professor Eigen is a simple and elegant professor. He is highly efficient in the field of pre-biotic and biotic evolution. We will work on the assumption of 3D structure of pre-biotic and biotic amino acids, proteins and their function. Just as the research is progressing intimacy with *Brigita* has progressed. We were meeting week-ends and were deeply and elaborately discussing on many topics and exchanging views.

One day when we were dining in a restaurant, *Brigita* asked me:

“*Ramam*, what should be humans’ aim of life?”

I am reminded of *Maitreyi* questing Sage *Yajnavalkya*; I answered her:

“According to Indian perspective, we must take care of our parents in their old age; we should bring up our offspring responsibly with love and care.”

“Then...”

“We are the happy dwellers of this planet; which is making us joyous with her treasures. We must preserve its pristine beauty, treasures and shape for future generations. They must also enjoy and use the nature as we are doing. So we must not destroy the basic structure of nature on this planet earth. Just as children enjoy the earnings of their parents, so must our offspring enjoy the nature. Unfortunately now-a-days lot of destruction of nature is going on. And some are even making efforts to live in space and on other planets.”

“I too am dreaming to live in space” said *Brigita*.

“But I am not *Brigita*. I desire to lose myself in the beauty of nature present on this planet earth. The trees, the rivers, mountains, valleys, streams, flora and fauna and must get drenched in the bliss of seeing and making use of its varied scenes and sights and fellow humans. Many of us on this planet are starving; many do not have clean water to drink, fresh air to breathe. Under these circumstances spending billions of dollars on research to live in space or to explore other planets for our materialistic wellbeing does appeal to me. I am for humans first and then for scientific research to make us live in space.”

“Then you want to say scientific research of outer planets, space and probing cosmos are unnecessary? Is it not ignoring human intellect and inventing and discovering talents? Can we not wish for progress of science and technology?”, *Brigita* objected.

“Progress and advancement in science and technology are desirable. But the search, research or efforts of scholars and scientists and technologists must also be aware that the money they are getting as funds for their research are from taxes paid by normal citizens from all the over the globe. If ordinary citizens do not have primary requirements, what use and greatness cosmic research and living have?”

Brigita did not say anything and was silent for a long time. I sensed that she is thinking deeply.

We were having such exchanges many times during our stay together in Stuttgart. In a few months my post-doctoral fellowship and research have neared completion. My research on presence of obligatory amino acids during biotic evolution as attracted the attention and acclaim of scientific community. My return to India has been initiated.

By then I and *Brigita* have fallen and risen in love together to our mutual bliss, fulfillment and enlightenment. We decided to marry each other. I returned to India immediately with the understanding that she would join me in India after finishing some assignments in her professional and personal life. Then we will

enter into wedlock in India once she joins me in India. Eyes with full of tears *Brigita* gave farewell to me.

After returning to India I had to face many disappointments. I could not get a proper employment in any university or major research institution. Either the established people there are not interested in my work or they have their own favorites. Thus after struggling I decided to quit research and joined as a teacher in *J. Krishnamurty* school in outskirts of Bangalore. I was awaiting the arrival of *Brigita*.

I was engaged in the comparison of Indian spiritual thought and modern scientific theories, quantum mechanics and sepi theory of relativity. I also worked on the *Mahabharata* and the *Mahabhagavata* for spiritual elements present in them. All this work absorbed me and made me bear the separation from Brigita. Just then this letter from *Brigita* arrived.

“Dear friend,

During this period of our separation my outlook of life has undergone revolution and a sea of change has occurred. I desired and decided to help the society directly by working for the equality of human beings. So I have become a social scientist and human activist. I joined Green’s peace movement.

My activities concern protection of earth’s atmosphere, fighting against pollution, taking care of underprivileged, and work for global peace free from strife of all kinds, between humans and nations.

I have done considerable work in this regard and am leading a contented.

I am coming to Bangalore to participate and present a paper in an international conference on climate change. I always remember you, who ignited the spirit of concern for fellow human beings and environment during our

conversations and exchange of ideas during your stay in Stuttgart. You are my teacher in this regard.

As you are aware, human life is transient and is highly temporary like the soap bubble. We must use it for the welfare of our fellow humans and our personal life is secondary. Thus I do not want to bind myself in any bonds like marriage. I want to dedicate my life to these works of mine. Hope you would understand and excuse me for this unilateral decision.

Please meet me at Bangalore and let us spend time discussing and exchanging.

Waiting eagerly for you>

Yours friendly

Brigita”

Definitely I was shocked and disappointed by tis decision of *Brigita* and the harsh play of fate. But I recovered fast and the true sign of love is to respect our partner and the decisions taken.

Despite this unexpected development of *Brigita* deciding not to marry at all, I decided to meet Brigita and enliven our intellectual togetherness.



DEVAMANOHARI
(SWAMI RATYANANDA)

Devamanohari is in search of genuine happiness. Who is she we will know during the course of this narration. She is advised to meet *Swami Ratyaananda*. *Swami Ratyaananda* is from the school of Osho. He preaches nirvana through the medium of sexual intercourse to his devotees. He currently runs an Ashram in the outskirts of Bangalore. He is a good orator and has command over our scriptures and is proficient in English, Sanskrit, and all the four important south Indian languages in addition to Hindi. He many times owes himself his success to his ability to converse in so many tongues. His clientele includes all sections of the society – from ordinary citizens to prominent politicians and the elite.

Swami Ratyaananda mixes Vedanta with sex so delightfully that all his devotees become delirious by mere mention of his name. Like many current commercial spiritual gurus he is adept in managing his finances. He is running a grand spiritual, no, financial empire. He is confident of himself and is ruling his life as he desires. He is not interested in visiting or settling abroad. The bitter experience of his guru *Osho* made him wise and realize, that of all the countries in the world India is safest for people like him.

Osho made enemies through his unrestrained preaching of sex as the instrument for nirvana. He angered the majority religious heads of the USA with his undiplomatic behavior there. *Swami Ratyaanada* is aware of this. He does not want to beget the miserable

state of his mentor of suffering jail terms, being kicked out of the country of his adoption, name, fame and money, and being refused asylum by all countries.

Osho had to return to India, which country he criticized or even despised, and thanks to the unnecessary graciousness shown by politicians of that day got reprieve in India and of course died not as a spiritual guru but as one battered by destiny. It is interesting how such a powerful guru who mesmerized everybody was never able to really comprehend the essence and greatness of Indian spirituality and succumbed to cheapness, carnal pleasures, in their preaching and spread. It seems all this made *Swami Ratyaananda* more matured and he is very careful and selective in his amorous adventures. Though many beautiful women like to be his companions, he is cautious in such dealings.

This story describes his (mis-) adventures with a beautiful actress. That is our *Devamanohari*. *Devamanohari* is a successful cine actress. She is now twenty seven years old. She is very beautiful with proportionate body with all curves, elevations and depressions in their place. *Swami Ratyaananda* is enamored of her. *Devamanohari* is also a professional like the Swami. So Swami's encounter with her has not been so smooth and easy.

Like all other persons of her tribe, *Devamanohari* has everything but an intimate person to love and be loved. All her relationships are guided and dictated by her profession where calculation but not passion is the chief thing. All human-beings crave for affectionate words, conversations and deeds from loving hearts. When it is missing, they with false hopes, turn to drugs, drinking, companionships or commercial spiritual gurus for happiness, peace and solace. Here also they do not like to shed their egos and the clever spiritual gurus cater to their egoistic mind intelligently. Of course, this is the professional secret of all the commercial spiritual gurus.

But *Devamanohari* is made of different stuff. She is in search of real happiness and is shrewd. Through the pomp, show and intelligent preaching of the Swami, she could, like Divine Swan,

separate water from milk. The Swami is also not young. *Kanya varayate roopam*, which means girls crave for handsomeness in men. That is missing in our Swami. His strength is his oratory powers and discourse abilities on intercourse. *Devamanohari* wants aesthetic enjoyment and not mere mechanical movements.

Actually a young song writer in the film industry has appealed to her but he is too low in status. Her popularity is so high and her earnings so huge that she could not settle for him. Her heroes are booze lovers and do not have the aesthetic temperament and give pleasure she is looking for. Sweet conversations delivered through loving hearts are her requirement. She is also adept in music and dance and adores poetry. Our *Ratyaananda* is a big zero in these aspects. But he is struck with flower arrows by Cupid.

Devamanohari is obedient but not obliging. Her acquaintance with the Swami is six months old. During this period she understood all aspects of the Ashram and the Swami. Her interest with the Swami is dwindling. But she is cleverly managing so that the Swami does not know her within.

One day the Swami has become desperate. When both of them are alone, he revealed himself. *Devamanohari* has the blood of courtesans in her. She is capable of alluring and avoiding her clients. Then she started preaching the Swami the real spirituality and the need for control and shedding of carnal desires. *Ratyaananda* became mad with desire for her and the preaching and her unconcern for him annoyed him immensely. When he decided to rape her, *Devamanohari* made friends with him by promising a beautiful moonlit night experience and escaped present attempt.

Men exhibit naivety in dealings with women. Especially for sexual favors, they will be in a state of beggars and sheepishly and slavishly believe women. Women know this and use this mantra when they do not like the man and experience with him. This is the bane of nature to men and boon to women. *Devamanohari* intuitively is aware of this and utilized the nature's gift to her.

Devamanohari is disappointed that she is not able to get the happiness she is craving for and *Swami Ratyaananda* is miserable in not being able to enjoy carnal pleasure with *Devamanohari*. Swami all these days has been a modern Krishna but *Devamanohari* has turned out to be the elusive *Radha*. Despite his popularity, wealth, name and fame and knowledge of the *sadhana* – spiritual exercise he is preaching, Swami has not been able to seduce *Devamanohari* successfully.

Any attempt to be joyful without commitment and responsibility will ultimately lead to sorrow and misery. We being famous, rich or beautiful have nothing to do with this. Only our sincere cultivation of love and relationship gives us the required happiness and fulfillment. Merely craving for intercourse without the merger of the hearts is not the path of salvation. Heart plays a major role in these matters. Emotions are fulfilled in the exchange of sweet and pure hearts. In the cultivation of a harmonious and beautiful psychological relationship lies the secret of happiness, peace and bliss.

Both *Swami Ratyaananda* and *Devamanohari* are leading their lives in dejection despite richness and attractions. This is the wonder of fate and destiny.



LETTER FROM THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

I should have actually titled this piece as “Letter from the aspiring daughter-in-law”. But I am so impressed, touched and carried away by the beauty and elegance of the communication from that young girl that I gave it the present title.

I am reproducing below the letter written by *Lalitha* verbatim.

“Respected Uncle,

Namaste!

I have the permission of my parents to write this letter to you. I introduce myself as Lalitha. I am presently studying B.A. III year in a college near our village in Konaseema. Godavari River adorns our region and its waters sustain us. We are ever grateful to Sir Arthur Cotton for his wonderful help to us. I retained Sir before his name not because it signifies colonial mental set up but because I do not meddle with history though I have my own reservations about it.

You might be wondering why I am writing this communication to you. I know you through Muse India. Though we live in a village we have internet connection. I am a student of literature. I admire your poetry, fiction and other write-ups. I just read them. I never posted my impressions even though I like your literary creations immensely.

I also know that you are adept in other fields including science and *tatvam*.

I am a student of Telugu Literature. I know by heart the *padyams* (stanzas) of all our classical poets. In addition, I have been learning carnatic music. I am an accomplished singer. I can sing your favorite *Tyagaraja keertana*, “*Endaro mahaanubhavulu...*” very pleasantly and devotionally. You will love the rendering and will be blissful and will bless me in your state of ecstasy.

I also came to know about you and your family through an aunt of ours who knows you intimately. Through her I came to know also you are about to perform marriage of your elder son.

Even though we girls are expected to keep our feelings to ourselves, I admire *Rukmini*, the incarnation of *Mahalakshmi*, for her courage in sending the message through a scholar to *Srikrishna* expressing her love for him and the desire to marry him and also inviting him to kidnap, sorry, to take her. The hesitation and through the artificial way one desists from expressing one’s longing, which is the fashion of the day, is not my cup of tea. I am from village and may appear as raw or unsophisticated to the urban and civilized people, not to you as I know you love to be called a village boy and you too love river Godavari as I love, I am expressing myself and my self to you who is like my father.

I must here inform that I like the old fashioned role assigned to girls confining to kitchen and bedroom. I have pride to be a house-wife. I know through my brought up and my intuition and commonsense that the profession of house-wife is as dignified and useful as being an employee. I do not believe in economic independence giving completeness to women or any one, because men are economically independent but are they capable of doing everything without cooperation and help from women folk as their mothers, sisters, wives, daughters. So also women

need men as fathers, brothers, husbands, sons and fathers-in-law. I am equally cultured and civilized as any other city girl. I know to love my near and dear and take care of them properly. I can see myself in the progress of my offspring. I want to be a dear mother to them and dearest person to my husband. They will be my assets. With them I will be richer and wealthier than any city-bred, independent minded and employed girl. I know my being a housewife is beneficial to the nation and society. I want to be proud through my family where I will be the queen. I can also see that our great culture is passed on to next generation. I cook very tastefully and can manage all house-hold activities well..I am well-versed in current affairs too. I have my own opinions about all national and international events and also read classical and modern literature in Telugu and English. One more thing which must endear me to you; I am proficient in Sanskrit also. Like you, I like *Bhaasa* who is *haasa* (smile) to Goddess *Saarada*. The meaning of the word *Bhaasa* as illumination and shine and brilliance is very dear to me. Do not wonder how I know about you and your tastes. Everything about you and your family is learnt through my aunt who knows you very well, which I already told you in the beginning of this communication. Who she is, I will reveal in the end.

I aspire to be your daughter-in-law. I know your elder son is a software engineer. I want to be a member of your family and bear grandchildren to you and aunt. I am confident that I will be a worthy daughter-in-law to your illustrious family. Our family matches your family in all aspects. My father also has the necessary sound financial status and background. I know that equal status is necessary in marriage and war. I am gold-complexioned and people say that I am also beautiful and pretty both physically and psychologically. I am personification of nature. I am one among river Godavari, paddy fields, plantain and coconut groves, flowers, canals and other greenery around here.

I will bring up your grandchildren worthy of you and your son. I also know the tastes of your son and his demeanor. You can gladly recommend me to your son to be his wife.

Because I am sure that you will not mind my sending this communication to you like this I courageously took liberty to put forward my candidature. I am impressed with your family when my aunt talked about your family. Both our families will be beneficiaries of this alliance. Herewith I am giving the address and contact numbers of my father. He will shortly come to meet you and propose. I will be glad to be the daughter-in-law of your family.

Bhanu aunti, your class-mate in school and your best friend has given information about you all.

With Best Regards and *Namaskaarams*,

I remain

Yours affectionately

Lalitha”

Bhanu is my boyhood friend and a well-wisher of mine. And I am so overwhelmed by the personality of *Lalitha* that I did not see any reason not to consider this proposal. But as I have to consult my son, I have shown him the letter and informed him of my impressions.

My son has gone through that letter. He did not move his head approvingly. He obediently informed me that he prefers to marry a fellow soft-ware engineer and wants his life that way. I always treat my children as friends and they also treat me so. So I respected my son’s decision and nodded and consented to his preference.

Bur I am crestfallen. I did not have the heart and courage to convey this to *Lalitha*. Somehow I managed to convey this decision of my son to *Lalitha*’s father. I know I missed my wonderful daughter-in-law.



6

MANDAKINI

Mandakini is my friend. She is very beautiful. Her face resembles the full moon of the autumn. Her psychological beauty is equally, and more as her physical beauty. She is a very sensitive person. She composes aesthetic verses. She is delighting poetry and is wave of poesy.

She is a sub-editor to a women's magazine. She looks after the literary section of that magazine. Thus she would be daily in touch with literature and poetry. She has also written many articles on social issues. *Mandakini* is very dear to me. She is my fiancée also.

I am a lover of literature. I love to go through poetry and other literary sections and articles. I am proficient in Telugu, English, Hindi, Sanskrit, French and German languages. I will read the literature published in these languages too and critically view them.

I and *Mandakini* would discuss all genre of literature and also many topics. We will share the ideas on the moods and influence of their lives and philosophies on the respective literary creations of poets and authors. This type of togetherness has enhanced our friendship. And this led to our becoming near and dear and deciding to get married.

That day I am going to *Mandakini's* residence. That day is full moon night. The full moon is delighting with his light and is making the hearts and earth full of aesthetic surroundings. The moon light has made my heart rejoice in its coolness and light. And

I am psychologically tuned to spend a joyous meeting and spending time with my beloved *Mandakini*. I increased the pace of my walk.

I am surprised to see *Mandakini* cheerless. Her demeanour is dull and body language appeared, tired. I intuitively felt that she is disturbed for something. Every time she used to greet me with smile and welcome me cheerfully. Today she pointed out the chair to me to sit with listlessness. I am very much pained to see my dear *Mandakini* so dull and cheerless. I looked at her pleasingly and talked with her in friendly and comforting voice.

Why are you disturbed *Manakini*? Please let me know the reason!

Wiping out her stream of tears, *Mandakini* started replying me.

I asked:

“Why are you so dull, *Mandakini*?”

She tried to stop the tears and is wiping them told me,

“Today I interviewed the famous and popular and eminent poet *Sriharsha* for our magazine. The interview went on very well. He answered my questions with ease, cheerfully and aplomb. I put the last question and his answer to that question devastated me.”

“What is that question?”

“I will tell in detail, listen.”



I asked in the interview the following questions.

“Mr. *Sriharsha*, you have become an efficient and popular poet in your young age and very early stage of your life. Your poetry is pleasant and aesthetic. They also relax the mind and enliven the heart and moods. Very few can compose verses as you do. You top such a list. Please comment on this.

“Your kind and friendly words have rejoiced me. I compose verse only when my heart is full in tune with the experience created by the object of creation.

Otherwise I do not compose at all. The heart responds and intuitively gets insight of purport of experience. That is why aesthetic people like you get tuned easily and my experienced to you. The proper mood and aesthetics experienced by the reader makes the poet contented. And the poet is successful in his composition.

I have put some more questions and finally asked:

I am thinking of asking you one pertinent question many times. You composed verses on all subjects and objects but never on the love of the mother for its offspring. How you missed to compose on this essential emotion and life-giving affection of mother?

Mother bears us for nine months in her womb, then delivers, immediate to our birth will take care of us so lovingly and affectionately serving us in all our needs and shares her loving disposition to us.

She teaches us to speak and how to behave.

Mother does a lot for her offspring. She never expects return to her service. She lives her whole life for us only. She never neglects us or stops showing attention to us.

I always wonder how an eminent poet like you missed composing on mother and the universal motherly sentiment, love and care associated with mother.

Why so?

I found that *Sriharsha's* face has paled by listening to my inquiry. The pleasantness in his face has vanished. An indifferent expression appeared on his face.

“Your observation capacity and knowledge about my creations is just superb. Yes, I did not compose any verse on mother or motherly love. Rather as I could not write as I am not in receipt

of motherly care, love, affection as natural to any offspring from one's mother. I have never been made aware of such an affection.

I was brought up as an orphan despite having a mother. My mother could not spare her time for me and my brought up. I did not even drink my mother's milk.

She is from an affluent family. And she is a high-society lady. She was not having time for me in her rich life. A baby-sitter brought me up. I am aware of only the care from a baby-sitter. I never experienced my mother's nearness or love as other infants and kids.

I lived my infancy sans mother's care. I used to spend my boyhood sorrowfully. I am molded by Sakuntala Teacher. She sculpted me in to a beautiful sculpture.

I never experienced the affection, love, tenderness and sensitivity of mother. They are like mirages to me. My heart never experienced the compassion of my mother. My heart has not experienced the dearness of mother. How can I express the feelings which I have never experienced?

How can rivers of Godavari of compassion and nearness
Flow in an arid heart and space of deserted sensibilities?
Because of lack of showering of mother's love
I did not sense any mother's care
How then arise poetry in me in such a situation?
When Sun declares that he stops shining
And the moon says that he will not spread pleasant
moonlight
And the rivers refuse to carry sweet and clean waters
And the trees will not have a mood to give us sweet fruits
Who can stop calamities produced by
Nature when nature behaves unnaturally
And the mothers refuse to take care of their offspring
And say their priorities are different
If nature is devoid of its useful qualities
Whom we have to turn for succor

Thus if in the sun and moon and rest of nature if original qualities are missing who can calm the storm resulting out of such abdicating of responsibilities and genuine and natural duties. No mother should abandon her offspring as my mother has done to me; then no infant will suffer as I for lack of motherly care and responsibility and love. Such a calamity should not fall upon any kid.

Your magazine is read by many literate women. My prayer to all of them:

Great mothers, if you feel your offspring is hurdle to your progress as you dream or envision, and are sure you will not have to look after your own offspring, please do not give birth to offspring. Never abandon them to your servant maids. Let them not suffer such misfortune.

“Thank you *Sriharsha ji* for your frank and sensitive replies. I can easily sense the suffering that is scorching you even now. Thank you for the beautiful interview too. See you sir.”

“OK, Ms. *Mandakini*, we meet.”



“This is how the interview went on. I am unable to bear the stark reality that a famous poet and citizen has an forgettable childhood. And that he is not taken care of by his mother and abandoned him to their maid; and he has not experienced mother’s love and affection and dearness. My mind is totally disturbed.” Said *Mandakini*.

I saw her beautiful face like full moon becoming dim and is like the new moon on an eclipse day.

The women are concentrating on fulfilling their ambitions, live a life in accordance to their dreams and imaginations and are neglecting their offspring. They fulfilling their ambitions is give utmost priority and is significant to them.

They are neither sharing love and affection nor receiving the same from their offspring by making them ineligible in not taking care of their offspring. I am not able to bear even the through that

infants are neglected by their mothers and are like orphans. If every human being thinks only one's self and life and dreams, we miss showing love and affection to our offspring even and the lack of affection and bonds of nearness will have a calamitous and mutual relationships and severely effect on our lives negatively.

Such lives will degenerate into human living sans togetherness and dearness. Such live will not fruitful. I am so astonished and am grieving that the society has transformed so much that it is not able to provide care for its infant members.

As i earlier said, that night is full-moon night. The pleasant moonlight has lit the night. My beloved is beside me only. But the heart is dull. The pensive mood and disturbed state of mind of my beloved has disturbed me also. Her ache and pain have made me full of compassion for her. After being silent for a while, I started speaking to *Mandakini*.

“Dear *Mandakini*, in these days of mechanical living we started living contrary to our natures and instincts; and are living forgetting what roles nature has assigned to us, to the men and women. Mother, father, son, daughter like relationships and bonds have lost their meaning. People are not maintaining even these chief bonds and are not entwining them with affection and care. Doing like that seems to many as not modern style.

Motherhood is sweetest – like sentences are confining themselves to books. People are not living for each other and one another. The number of infants missing mother's care are million-fold increasing. Infants missing mother's care and their cries are becoming crying in the wilderness. It is unfortunate we evolved into this kind of sad situation.”

Thus I spoke and engaged *Mandakini* and calmed her mind and changed her mood. Then I started for my home and by the time I reached home it is past midnight. My mother is still waiting for me to dine. We started dining. My mother observed my mood intuitively and talked to me in such a way that I am relieved of my disturbance.



MR. JOHNSON

I am a journalist by profession. I am also interested in literature. I am a part-time writer. I have been dabbling in writing poetry and fiction. I have read fiction in my mother tongue, Sanskrit, English, French and German. I have my own favorite writers. I am having the fear that my fiction – writing would be influenced by some or all of them. But who can escape the influence of one's own study and learning?

We are influenced not only in literary writing but also in our daily lives. We are either the west or follow the Indian tradition in our life-styles. We respectively feel, we are only civilized, and others are languishing in before Christ thoughts or ultra-modernism.

We not only congratulate us for our preference and choice but also feel blissful in such living and at times preach others about it.

Such a preaching happens everywhere, every time and by everyone. Here in this story I narrate the preaching of Mr. Johnson and Mr. *Viswanatham*.

I am a popular TV telecaster on a popular English channel. I am based in Bangalore.

Mr. Johnson is the CEO of a big American Multi National Company. They do business in many countries and sell American stuff. Their IT solutions firm is centered in Bangalore.

I am there in the chambers of Mr. Johnson. Mr. Johnson just finished attending to a phone call and told me that my interview starts in five minutes when he finishes talking to a visitor.

Meanwhile a fairly old senior citizen has entered Mr. Johnson's chambers. Immediately after seeing him Mr. Johnson said "You should be very brief Mr. *Viswanatham*. You have five minutes." Mr. *Viswanatham* nodded and started talking.

'In your administrative office was working *Subrahmanyam*, and he is my grandson. But Mr. Johnson, you are not happy that *Subrahmanyam* is employed in your organization. I am here to tell you about our family situation and employment situation in India. All this I have to inform to you and I will do that in the five minutes you have kindly granted me in your valuable and busy schedule. I also know that this gentleman has to interview you after my leaving your room. Ai am also well-educated and has retired as a school teacher and am adept in all knowledge including current affairs.'

'You also listen Mr.'. I told him my name as Vijay. 'Yes Mr. Vijay" *Viswanatham* sir told me and continued

"Mr. Johnson your objection for *Subrahmanyam*'s employment is that *Subrahmanyam* is just fifteen years old. And your company does not do business on products manufactured by child-labor or employ children in your offices.

Your fellow Americans and Europeans recently cancelled the order they placed with a Delhi manufacturer of ready-made wear because the manufacturer has employed child-labor from Bihar and UP for the work.

We all know that you are very strict in these matters and are fighting in WTO to eradicate the evil of child-labor prevalent in Asian countries.

You took charge only a few days back and found *Subrahmanyam* employed as an office-boy to serve tea etc., to the staff. You came to know that *Subrahmanyam* is a teenager from his looks and summoned him into your room. In the presence of your

deputy you readied his dismissal order and served it on *Subrahmanyam*.

‘yes we are very particular that children must go to school and get educated. They must not be employed and their childhood should not be wasted in labor.’ Said Mr. Johnson.

‘Mr. Johnson, I know that you are so upset with the child labor reality in our country.

Mr Johnson this is just a policy matter for you. But this is a life and death matter for us.

You must know that my only son and his wife, who happen to be the parents of *Subrahmanyam* have expired in a road accident six months back. I do not have any other child. I had to take the responsibility of my grandson. Even when my son was alive our family was experiencing hand to mouth existence and my son was having difficulty in making both ends meet for us. My meager pension has been of not much use in these days of steep inflation.

We could not join my grandson in any good school because we cannot afford it and also we are dependent on his earnings also, to sustain ourselves. He was studying in a corporation school and in the evenings working to help his father in maintaining our family.

We belong to a forward community. We neither have a social justice plank nor money to rob merit of its due and, fight for our merit, which is presently despised by every politician and also by majority citizens in our country. The profession undertaken by the grandparents and earlier generations of the individual is considered as qualification to give a seat in the educational institutions run by our government and also for a government job too same criterion is followed. The individual’s talents and academic traits and performances do not figure at all in such selections. And our community is not a vote bank. So politicians never care for any of our needs, even bare minimum like food, shelter and clothing.

We never understand how the deeds of earlier generations should be an excuse to rid us of our genuine rights as the citizens of

our country. To make you understand better, I must tell you that our community is persecuted as the Jews were in Germany during Hitler's regime. We are discriminated against by present day politicians who are grabbing power, making money, amassing wealth and introducing their kith and kin to perpetuate their hold on government and people, spreading hatred against us. They always show us as the villains for all the evils of our society and thus enjoy power and limelight. Whenever they are in trouble for their misdeeds, they remember us and start abusing us to divert the attention of the people from their failures, corruption, misdeeds and miss-utterances.

Why I have to tell you all this is my grandson's job with you is life line for us. We have to starve otherwise. I am seventy five years old and can no longer work and earn to sustain myself and my grandson.

"But Mr. *Viswanatham* How I am responsible for all this?!" exclaimed, Mr. Johnson.

Mr. *Viswanatham* continued:

"Yes, Mr. Johnson I will clarify. You want to interfere in every sphere of life of our country. You do not want anti-conversion laws to be enacted in our country. But your clergy got alarmed for the teachings and following by large numbers of Americans of *Osho* and hounded him out of your country after jailing him and humiliating him thoroughly.

You the champions of democracy have pampered and helped the most number of dreaded dictators of the world since second-world war. You made Saddam, Taliban and you are waging a war for their elimination. You are not definitely moral or military police of the globe. Just selfish citizens interested in your own welfare and your oil supplies.

You have come here to do business. Do it understanding the realities of our country. I am a retired teacher adept in all our ancient knowledge and now can lecture you on many aspects of life and its management. I am proficient in my mother tongue, Sanskrit

and English. But I am past my age. And in our country there is no need and use of citizens like me. I am poor but not in knowledge or common sense. Do not try to impose your biased values on us. Starvation knows no rules or obeys any.

You have your own western way of administration and you are completely ignorant of the ground realities associated with employment and education facilities situation in India. Unfortunately your ignorance has given place to exhibition of unnecessary arrogance, highly moral stature and preaching about Indian situations and needs to us. You must also know that your country and many European countries did not exist when civilization was flourishing in all its aspects and hues in our country.

And, before that, prevent your boys from playing with matches and cause devastating fires. Prevent your pistol and gun wielding school students from killing fellow students and teachers. Prevent your Presidents from starting international wars just for oil for you and cause genocide and fuel terrorist activities.

By the by Mr. Johnson, how many times you have divorced?'

"Three times", Mr. Johnson replied involuntarily.

'Prevent yourself and your fellow citizens from ruining their marriages frequently and take divorces and get remarried many times in a life-time. Also ask them to take care of infants, kids and aged people of the families. Have a proper social system. Do not preach others about values. And my five minutes are over Mr. Johnson."

Mr. Johnson is visibly upset by this tirade against him and his country by a poor retired school teacher. His face has reddened. But he understood the pathetic situation of Mr. *Viswanatham*. But their policy cannot be changed for this case's sake. He, though summarily dismissed Mr. *Viswanatham* informing him that his grandson cannot be taken into employment again, offered financial help for *Subrahmanyam's* studies.

Mr. *Viswnatham* has politely rejected the offer saying “Even if my grandson completes his degree or so by your partial financial assistance, which will not be and cannot be given for the full phase of his studies, the problem of employment still stares on our faces. We are not sure that he gets a job after studies in the current contaminated job atmosphere and we have to starve all these years and my health is not sound. I do not know how long I shall live. Under these circumstances we will try at some other place for his employment. Thank you Mr. Johnson for your kind audience and offer for financial help. Good bye”

Mr. Johnson has recovered from this and he gave me a very good interview.

I got subject-matter for a short-fiction in the conversation of Mr. Johnson and Mr. *Viswanatham*.



THE ASSURANCE

Indulged in useless thinking, I was sipping coffee in that hotel. My attention was drawn towards the counter. Some exchange of words is taking place there. The owner at the counter is laughing and waving his hand. A woman stood in front of him. She held a glass in her hands. She is talking with a loud and confident tone.

It took some time for me to understand what actually is happening there.

The woman who stood there wants coffee. But she will pay the money later. She is of fair complexion. Her forehead is wrinkled. Her face and dress are revealing her poverty. She might be forty years old. She is asking for coffee with an authoritative tone. Of course, request is also mixed with it.

“Why are you so much hesitating to give me a cup of coffee? I will give the money in the evening. I won’t run away. I will keep my word. My child is suffering from fever. The doctor suggested to take the tablet with the coffee. Please give me a cup of coffee” she requested.

The hotel owner is irritated. He said with a stern voice “We do not know who you are. How can we give you coffee when you do not pay money? This is not a charity-home. Bring money. You will get coffee. We cannot run the hotel if we give like this to everyone”.

She did not move despite his stern refusal. Her appeal has intensified. She started addressing everyone coming to pay the bill and is asking them to recommend. Some listened silently. Some did

not bother to listen to her. Some laughed at her. A few minutes passed like this. I and others there understood the situation. The woman is not having any money. But coffee is needed for her sick child. She is trying to hide her helplessness behind her loud talk. I was moved by her pitiable state. I felt like giving the money and help her to have a cup of coffee. It took two minutes to convert my thought into action. Meanwhile a young man of twenty – five years, who is also observing all this gave money to the owner asking him to arrange coffee for the woman, paid his bill and left. I observed gratitude in her eyes. The hotel owner is talking gently now and made arrangements for the coffee.

The hoteliers cannot oblige all such requests for charity, else their business suffers. Also we cannot find fault with the poor woman. She set her self-respect aside and pleaded like this. Both the owner and the woman behaved according to their necessities. People like me though can help are either lazy or indifferent to the sufferings and needs of fellow human beings.

I am very much impressed with the young man's action and his readiness and promptness in helping the needy without expecting any return. It touched me. My heart filled with admiration for him.

The daily speeches and promises of our politicians, the capabilities of computers and robots and the news of space travel never cheered me as the compassionate action of this youth did. The advancement of technology mostly helps us to boast ourselves of our achievements and does pretty little to alleviate poverty from our planet. Our politicians enjoy power and become rich exploiting our sufferings. Our concern for fellow beings is the only comforting assurance to us and with the help of such concern alone we can face life with hope and courage. Our mutual love and help is the only cheering medicine for our heart-aches. Let compassion be our prime possession.

I paid my bill and came out assured and feeling calmness in me, silently revering the young man.



THE COUPLE

I consider myself blessed to be able to live in Pondicherry. It is the place of stay of my favorite poet *Subrahmanya Bharati*; and also of stay of Sri *Aurobindo*. Both *Bharati* and *Sri Aurobindo* were contemporaries between 1910 and 1920. One was the former revolutionary (*Sri Aurobindo*) and the other (*Bharati*) the current revolutionary of the times.

I many times visited the places where *Bharati* has composed his various poems; like the Chidanandaswamy Koil (Temple), *Subbayya Thoppu* (gardens) etc., I also many times visited the house where *Bharati* has lived and which is now a government museum. And I daily pass through the *Aurobindo* Ashram which is near the beach. Another pastime I joyfully indulge in is to sit in the beach and watch the sea waves, their rise and fall. I will daily spend evenings for one hour watching the sea. During that period my mind fully relaxes and gets recharged.

During one of such pleasant moments when I was engrossed in watching the sea and its rhythmic waves, I heard a sweet voice speaking in Telugu, of course with Tamil incursions and accent. When I looked beside me, a couple has settled a yard from me which was not there when I first sat there. The girl is conversing through her cell phone. The boy with her is just observing. It is dusk and not yet became dark. The girl is so vivaciously enjoying her conversation that she almost ignored her boy-friend. Here I must

confess that I do not know whether they are just friends or husband and wife. Possibilities for both are equally probable I thought.

But I am attracted to the joyful way the girl, of around 22 years, is conversing oblivious of her companion. She is giggling and full of fun and joy. With whom she is talking I could not guess immediately. The way she is talking it should be a male on the other side. Meanwhile the boy's cell phone rang. He started talking equally joyfully. Both of them are sitting side by side but are not aware of each other's presence. I am very curiously observing them. As they are speaking in Tamil, I could not make out anything. The girl is intermixing Telugu in her beautiful voice now and then.

I am really perplexed. Are they just friends or husband and wife? I just observed the girl for any signs of marriage on her body. But I failed. Her leg fingers are not having the silver wear normally the married women wear. It seemed both of them are software engineers by their appearance and demeanor. He wearing shorts and T-shirt and she left her hair completely loose and is wearing jeans and sleeveless shirt.

Their simultaneous conversations went on for 15 minutes. Then their cell phones fell silent. They did not talk with each other much, later. They spent time just watching sea. They got up and started leaving. Then I observed the silver wear on her toes. Earlier I could not see because my spectacles got wet with humid sea breeze as I sat very near the sea and sometimes the waves have sprinkled water on me.

They might be software engineers, just engineers or no engineers at all. But the oblivious way they talked with their respective friends has interested me. My mind started imagining and jumping to conclusions. Somehow I could rein in my mind. Because they might have talked with dearest friends. I tried to gauge the relationships and married lives of modern youngsters who are earning much money and who are enamored by the western way of living. Of course all this is none of my business. I am in my middle age and my life and brought up are traditional and not heterodox. My imagination should not tar others. My imaginations are just

thoughts or just thoughts I do not know. And how much I am capable of thinking justly, unbiased or non-prejudiced?

I stopped thinking about that couple and by that time I reached *Manakula Vinayakar* Temple and had *darshan* of the deity as usual and sought his blessings for the welfare of all of us and also prayed God not allow me to be tempted to poke my nose into other's lives as I mentally did a few moments back.

That couple might have reached their place of stay.



10

THE FAREWELL

We do not definitely know whether death is a punctuation mark or a full stop.

The Indian scripture *The Bhagavadgita* informs us that *Atman* is present in us and at the time of death it leaves the dying body and enters another new body just as we shed our worn out clothes and wear new ones. They use the technical term *upadhi* to describe the trans-migration of *Atman*. This description and other beliefs point out to rebirth after death. But I do not want to enter into argument in this matter. Because this is an irresolvable dispute every one arguing based on one's belief and faith only.

I am the only child to my parents. Both of them showered love and affection on me and brought me up. Despite such overwhelmingly loving care I did not become a pampered child. I am good in studies and am settled in a comfortable job. I am also pursuing my habits and interests, my wife taking care of our household matters efficiently and affectionately. She is like *sruti* to my life which is going on as a music concert.

My father has been a teacher, a philosopher, a guide and a friend to me. He is a great character and is a compassionate personality. I have learnt a lot about life through him and from him. He retired as a high-school head-master. I owe my proficiency in English to my father.

My father is presently seriously ill. I have been observing how this human body becomes weak, slowly deteriorates and becomes a

waste through old age affected by disease or by mere ageing. I am painfully noticing this degenerating process taking place in my father's body. How flesh, muscles and fat give way to skeletal appearance! The doctor, who is my classmate only, has informed me that my father lives for days only. It has been shattering to be aware of the imminent separation.

I fondly remember how as a kid, teenager, young man and a middle-aged man I have been evolving under the affectionate observation of my father. Any amount of my love for my father cannot prevent the inevitable. The reality is so glaring. Nature does its duty for the body to die. Our weeping or any other similar thing cannot do anything to redress or recourse the process. But still we are overwhelmed by grief.

That day my father's colleague for forty years and acquaintance for sixty years *Sastri garu* came to visit my father. His and my father's lives have taken roughly the same course, except for his having two sons and a daughter. Like my mother, his wife also has expired ten years back. Both he and my father are in their eighties.

Their present talk appeared to me as a farewell. He is aware that my father's days are numbered. They talked about *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*, *Bhagavata* and the dialogue between *Sri Krishna* and *Uddhava* and its philosophical intonations. They have been together all these days and are both from the traditional families. They are both traditional and modern. Both were going to movies together. Both were going to *Tyagaraja Aradhana* music festivals. They were going to temple festivals and celebrations on *Ganapathi* and *Devi navarathriutsavams*. And in January were going to *Ammavari utsavam* programs.

What all happens to this friendship and intimacy once my father expires? May be *Sastrigar* takes things in his stride and moves on with life.

I am always intrigued by the fights we have about our superiority or inferiority or exploitation of one sex of the other, the

importance we give to wealth, show, pomp and the like and the ignorance and innocence that rule us in our estimations or actions or interactions or relationships despite the fact that our existence here being transitory and transient.

The poet, the ordinary person, the philosopher, the ruler, the religious or caste leader, the scientist, the rationalist, everyone has only limited period of existence here. We are born means we have to die (*jaatasya maranam dhruvam*). Our destination today or tomorrow is burial ground. If this realization dawns in the hearts of the various persons and leaders who are causing immense havoc in our lives and are making our life insecure, tension-ridden and worthless, they may be a bit mellowed and their atrocious actions against humanity may decrease. The greatest leveler of all, the Death levels everything; every ego; every triumph or defeat. Still we scheme for the downfall of people whom we do not like or have enmity with. One must become sober while talking or contemplating about death.

We the dearest and the nearest may never meet at all after our one or other of us die. This painful reality is always and to everyone is not tolerable. When our near and dear die, we become sad and feel miserable and do not show any feeling when a stranger dies. Our sorrow is the result of our attachment and relationship with the dying person and not of the death.

This *Vedanta* everyone is aware of. But bidding farewell to such a dear and near one is not easy. We are told that sleep is temporary death and death is permanent sleep from which we never wake up.

All the theories in the scriptures are developed to console the grieving heart and equip it with necessary detachment to face the reality and inevitability with a more composed state of mind. We have to and will come to terms with the natural process.

Philosophically bent minds are aware of the transient nature of human existence and cultivate a sense of indifference and ignore

triumphs or defeats, successes or failures with equanimity and perform their duties with an efficient and compassionate mind.

I have been believing intuitively; since my childhood in the absence of the cycle of births, deaths and rebirths; so I am readying myself to bid farewell to my father.

We may not meet again. But we lived together with mutual affection, love and care. We both performed our duties to our hearts' content. Is it not the purpose and goal of our lives?

After a few days the last minutes of my father have set in. My father smeared whole of my body affectionately. With looks full of love he said rather whispered: "Now I shall sleep". And he fell silent and went into coma. After a few hours he expired.

I inconsolably wept. The separation is complete. Might be his physical frame has become inert. But he is alive in my memory.

Now also I do not know whether death is a punctuation mark or a full stop.



THE FEMININE TOUCH

I am a budding fiction-writer. I also write poetry. Some verses are published and many are not published and are with me as unmarried daughters staying with their father. Like all poets I worship beauty. Needless to say I adore and admire beauty.

That day I am traveling in the general compartment of an express train. I am going to spend a few days with my childhood friend.

I normally try to occupy the window seat and observe the fields and canals that form the surroundings to railway track. The writer in me also observes the fellow passengers. And here I should reveal that Venus together with his friends Mercury and Saturn is positioned in the first house of my horoscope. Venus positioned in the first house makes the individual romantic in disposition. The company of fair sex is sought and relished to maximum extent by such individuals. I am no exception. Venus in the first house also makes the individual interested in fine arts; if not proficient in any of them he will at least be able to appreciate and enjoy the aesthetic contents of one or other of fine-arts. Naturally during journeys I try to get acquaintance with fellow women travelers and enjoy their company. They may be married women also.

The weather has not been pleasant. It is summer-afternoon and the heat is causing sweat and associated inconveniences. In an intermediate station a youthful woman has got into our compartment with her kid. I am attracted to her and started

observing her as she sat near me. She possessed the delighting qualities of a beautiful woman. She has an expressive face with wide eyes. Pleasant looks and bewitching smile coupled with vanity of being beautiful have adorned her. She has a revealing and proportionate body with suiting assets. Creative people are romantic folks. Society gives them concession even if they transgress the rules of the morality. It is a known fact that creativity takes place in a romantic heart unhindered by conditions and restrictions. Artistes get inspiration from a variety of sources and experiences and all of them need not be and will not be legitimate.

It seemed that she is used to this type of catching men's attention and the consequent inconvenience caused by them with their gazing at her and trying to talk and the like. She sat silently but clearly showing her displeasure for the unwanted attention I am paying her.

I became amorous. In my mood of bliss I touched her passionately on a pretext. That touch has caused in me ecstasy. I felt thrilled. My heart missed some beats. I observed that she also momentarily enjoyed the touch. Her being suddenly alert and her demeanor has revealed her inner joy.

Suddenly I felt thirsty by urge in both the senses. The train is moving at its own speed. I took my water bottle to drink water. It is empty. After sometime the train has stopped at a small station. I got down to fetch water and had to walk considerable distance to go near the tap. As I am filling the bottle the train has started moving. I had to stop filling the bottle and run towards our compartment. I could manage getting into our compartment.

My beautiful friend is seen by me with full of anxiety in her face. And that anxiety has vanished the moment she has seen me. Her face has become bright and reflected the relief she got. I could make out that she became very anxious that I may miss the train and how the relief of seeing me not missing the train has made her face radiate as full moon just out of clouds. The pleasantness filled in her eyes made her appear thousand-fold more beautiful. I have seen in her the embodiment of care, love and affection of a mother,

wife, sister or daughter. The concern she has shown about me, a complete stranger to her has mellowed me. Her natural selfless feminine affection drenched me with pure love.

This feminine touch has caused million-fold pleasantness in me and made me peacefully blissful. I felt humbled for the grace shown. I have not felt humiliated for my earlier amorous feelings and action and humility has filled in my heart.

I became aware how this caring, soothing and correcting feminine touch is missing in our lives. Especially its effects are seen in urban homes. Mothers, wives, sisters and daughters are no longer available. Instead we have employees.

The outside social responsibilities of women have diminished their role in homes. Women have been torch bearers of serenity in our homes since the beginning of civilizations. They have been serving the society as keepers of family maintaining calmness and peace in our hearts. They have been worth thousands of spiritual masters. In the absence of their love, affection and care human race cannot be prevented from becoming insane. Any number of meditation techniques or self-proclaimed commercial spiritual gurus or any amount of *vedanta* cannot compensate for the missing feminine touch.

And the institution of family is essential to women as much as to men and to the society as a whole. It is women's trait to shower love and affection on their near and dear. And women need near and dear to shower their love and affection. Just as the woman who just gave birth to her infant must breast-feed it in her own interest also to prevent herself from getting breast cancer in addition to sustaining the life of the infant so also women may have to be natural in their living. In the absence of near and dear to be shown affection and love to, women may have psychological problems. All this must be reflecting in our attitudes and living today. Every human being, man or woman, craves for love and affection; to show and to be shown. In the absence of proper psychological bond and care all our technological achievements come to naught and we will be a confused lot unable to show enough efficiency in our

personal and professional lives..I am of the firm opinion that women have been consulted and played equal part in the initiation, building, nurture, evolution and sustenance of the institution of family to rescue ourselves from the inconveniences of living in the jungles. And the associated bifurcation of responsibilities and duties and division of labor between man and woman in accordance with their nature, ability, capability and disposition must have followed. We are animals first and any vocation or avocation we take must be suiting our instincts and nature. Feminine touch in the form of love, affection and care is a must to the society. I have many times spent much time with the idea of conducting a survey of how this generation of women who took outside social responsibilities in addition to their family responsibilities feel about their lives and given a choice what they prefer; the 9 to 6 routine in doing the jobs and simultaneously caring families too or no family and only job or only family and no job. Only job and late or no family seem to be the preference of many modern youthful women. But getting married and running a home is a full time job in itself which has its own advantages to the society in the form of taking proper care of the off-spring.

A writer has to be a fearless person. Writers are conscious-keepers of society. They have been, are and will be bringing to the notice of society the realities as they see. They are not afraid to bell cats for the welfare of the society and unhesitatingly side causes which are unpopular even facing the wrath of progressive elements. For expressing my within like this and saying women to review their role in society I may be dubbed as a male chauvinist pig by the enlightened women's liberation activists. I may be dismissed to trying to confine women again to kitchen and bedroom with my retrograde thoughts. But in a democratic society all angles of an issue must be allowed to be presented. How to achieve harmony in our homes and lives is for us to sit and discuss. But whom I have to appeal in this regard? Who will listen to me without misunderstanding and dismissing me as male chauvinist? I do not know.

My friend talked with me in a friendly way with her sweet voice throughout the rest of our journey. She told me about her family, husband, his business etc. She has been smiling in my heart since then and will be smiling forever. The feminine touch she gave made me peaceful and I thankfully bid farewell to my new friend and got down at my designated station.



12

THE FRAILTY

I make it a point to see river Godavari to my heart's content whenever the train crosses the Godavari-bridge. I am born on the banks of Godavari and consider myself the child of that mighty and benevolent river. I will forget my Self as long as I am looking at Godavari. I am a lover of nature. The green fields, the rivers, the mountains, the greenery, the water falls, the beautiful and young women fascinate me. I am enamored of them.

I am an admirer of beauty. I experience that a thing of beauty is a joy forever.

I am also a poet. But I am not popular in the society as a poet. I am known only in my social circle as who writes some lines. I write about all subjects. I am a specialist in writing love poetry. My friend who inspired me to become a poet, many times tells me that I make a pleasant company to fair sex and always encourages me to have as many women friends as possible. She flatters me saying that my poetry and conversation with me are both delighting and enlightening and she always looks forward for them.

Thus and otherwise, just as artists have models to paint or sculpt I too have beautiful women as models for my love poetry. As informed earlier all my poetry is such experiences with my fair sex friends. Many times I do not encounter any problems by befriending even married women. But once in my zeal to have models for my poetry-writing I have become a victim of frailty of two women friends and am branded immoral fellow by my immediate circle of

friends and relatives. How the women were enthusiastic to be my models and enjoyed my proximity by being near to me emotionally, enjoyed my poetry but suddenly ditched me and the emotional tie-up to proclaim their faith to their husbands and be known as chaste wives.

I befriended these two beautiful women not long time back. One is my cousin and another is my friend's wife. Both are pretty and have aesthetic sense. They smile beautifully. They have wide eyes, mirror-like cheeks and rose lips. Their body structures are also proportionate and have assets of beauty set very well in their youthful bodies. They are not only physically attractive but also have loving hearts.

I met my cousin later in life after five years of our marriages. In view of my vulnerable disposition I got attracted to my cousin. She too has obviously liked my company and enjoyed the two or three stanzas I composed instantaneously on her beauty and physical charm. We departed from that enchanting togetherness promising each other to be in touch. She agreed to my proposal of reading my poetry whenever I send it to her. We live in two different cities.

She enthusiastically participated in our loving and cheering conversations later whenever I called her and both of us obviously are enjoying each other's nearness. A beautiful emotional bond has been formed between us. She was informing how much she liked my phrases in the poetry composed in her admiration. She wanted more and more of it and I supplied her with it.

When later I once called her she said I should no longer call her. She told me that her husband has seen my poetry and has become livid and is very angry with her and me.

So for the sake of peace and harmony in her marital life she told me not to any longer call her or send her any poetry. I was unhappy for this sudden turn-around of hers and simply felt lost and wretched. Still I took things in my stride and stopped all

communication to her. But I am cherishing the closeness both of us enjoyed and am not able to forger her.

Meanwhile we met twice in functions after this and she avoided me completely.

Still my amorous feelings for her are alive and after a year I have called her on her birth day and wished her best. Obviously she is happy and received my greetings joyfully and immediately after a minute's conversation suddenly disconnected. I felt hell.

My sweet feelings for her have again become very active and I have composed a beautiful and amorous poem depicting the intimate moments of two lovers and sent her.

We later met in another function. She is like a rock without any expression when she saw me and completely avoided me. I felt bad. But what can I do?

A week later my wife has got a call from her another cousin informing about my escapades with my model cousin and how it affected my model cousin's marital life and I must be restrained from any more writing or communicating to my model cousin. She also informed my wife that the depression I had five years back is responsible to show interest on others' wives and I must be taken to the doctor immediately and get checked for remnants of my depression. My wife is very much disturbed and poured her anger and scorn on me. She felt very unhappy about my immoral behavior. She wondered how she is inferior to the model cousin in beauty or in having love for me. And asked me whether I would sanction any other man to write like that to her? I could not reply anything. Meekly heard my wife lecturing me how one should not get interested in married women and threatened to commit suicide if she ever again comes to know of my loose behavior. I was dumb-founded and speechless. Pain and ache pervaded throughout my body and heart. I first time felt how easily men are discarded by women once they find we are a threat to their survival though they are fully awake in starting, sustaining and enjoying the affair. All my learning, social status and abilities have come to naught. I had

to suffer ridicule and ignominy and became a despicable person in our close circle. Though my enthusiasm to have models for my poetry-writing has not diminished, my spirit got dented. I felt miserable.

Similar or same experience was imposed on me by my friend's wife. Like my model cousin she also got attracted to my sweetness and poetry and when one day I suggested that we are intimate emotionally and are lovers she suddenly disconnected. And she never responded whenever I called her though she enjoyed conversing with me in quite intimacy for six months and heartily enjoyed my creations about her beauty and her. She not only complained to my friend that I am calling her in his absence but also am talking all unwanted things. My friend of twenty years severed all connections with me. We are now not friends. Not only that, my friend's circle came to know about this and all are making fun of me and decried my action of soliciting my friend's wife.

I am really at loss to explain my predicament. Definitely we should not woo married women. But they also should be stern and should not allow us to woo them. But enjoying the nearness and intimacy with another person other than their husband for some time and just ditch him when things become hotter or do not go according to their whims and fancies is really hurting. By this experience I realized that some women love to play with men; some women playfully love men; some women play love with men. But who listens to an immoral person like me. It may be unworthy of to sympathize with me. I have read many times how deep a woman's heart is and how at times they behave fickle mindedly. And women have fleeting interests. They fancy men as children fancy dolls, play as long as their fancy lasts, then the doll is thrown away and forgotten about and new fancy engages them. If the doll is made of glass, it breaks. Some women seem to care least for such things. The men, like children again are entangled with women and experience joy or sorrow or pain or ache accordingly and unwisely lament the loss of their love once the woman departs from the tie-up. Strange are the ways of women and men and their inter-personal relationships! Many times women seem not to know what they

actually want. They have beautiful fancies, loving hearts and delighting dispositions. But they initiate or allow initiation, encourage and suddenly change their affiliations suiting their convenience. Might be I am an outsider and their marital life is important than flirting with me. I should have known this. May be now a lesson is taught to me and I should become wiser. May be also they do not deserve my affectionate attention. They just fancied me. I am no more than a playing doll to them.

But I know myself. I cannot restrain myself when I see pretty and youthful women.

God only can save me.

□□□.

THE GENDER VIOLENCE

Today I am going to present you the experience of one of my intimate friends verbatim as fiction. This is rather fictionalized reality. My friend, like me also is a writer, poet, teacher and researcher. The following is written in first person as narrated by my friend to me.



My literary traits and pursuits with no income and occupation as a mere teacher could not impress my in-laws. My wife's parents are not at all happy for getting a son-in-law like me. They never hesitated to express their displeasure to my wife about me and when they were not satisfied that such an expression is not yielding the desired result, started hinting and many times insensitively and hurting tell me directly that they are not approving my inability to earn more money and own properties, which is making them feel inferior in the circle of their relatives. In the beginning I was uncomfortable to listen to such unsolicited advice informing me of proper priorities of life. But I have learnt to bear such insults for my wife's sake.

My wife is a gem of a woman. She served my parents in their old age like a dear person and made the evenings of their lives blissful. Both of them died peacefully at the designated moments naturally. I am always grateful to my wife as well as love her for her unselfish and loving care showered on my parents. She has been

and is so sweet and cooperative in my life. It is because of her only I am able to concentrate on my academic interests so peacefully. She nursed my parents whole-heartedly even though I vetoed her desire of doing a job. That aspect she sometimes broaches and says that I had been a dictator and selfish. But I had to behave accordingly having our family's interests in mind. Any way we are mutually understanding and compromising. Even though my wife feels, rightfully, that it is she who has been and is compromising all the time.

The only unpleasant thing in our life is the displeasure expressed by my in-laws for my inability to earn more money and buy plots and flats. Every time a phone call comes from my in-laws I feel uncomfortable. The first question my mother-in-law asks my wife is how much gold we have bought by then; and, whether I have given advance to buy a plot or a flat; and has our bank balance become fat or not? My wife apologetically replies in the negative for all these queries rather demands. Every time we meet our in-laws, they give us a progress report of their appreciation of us. I always get fail marks in that.

I objected to my father when he was talking about dowry during the phase of getting my marriage proposals. Then he told me: "See, my son, marriage is essentially an economic transaction. What little or more money father has earned, he will give a portion of it to his daughter during her marriage. This is the right of the daughter to get a share of her father's earnings. Even though fathers should give equal share to daughters by morality, equal responsibility and by law, no one is adhering to this. And what little money we get we are spending on the bride only and are bearing our marriage expenses from our money. The poor and rich divide is there always. Let the poor not aspire to get into well-to-do families through marriage. Then dowry will not be a problem at all. But one wants economic security and so selects an employed boy and then offers the daughter in marriage. Any time have you seen any one offering their daughter in marriage to an unemployed or poor boy though he is a good boy with impeccable character? It will not happen, essentially because marriage is an economic transaction

first and last and to think otherwise is naïve and marriage into a relatively well-to-do family is performed to provide economic security to the girl.

Even the law enforcing authorities or advocates who deal with anti-dowry cases also give and take dowry. All this is happening despite enactment of “stringent” laws because it is the right of the girl to get a share of her father’s earnings how meager those earnings are. Dowry is a problem only when people from poor or not well-to-do families want their girls married to a well-settled boy or a groom who inherits property.

The same or similar way, once my mother-in-law told my wife: “Why we give dowry and buy grooms, you know? So that you are financially comfortable and never even think about us helping you in your financial difficulties. All the money and properties earned by your father will be given only to your brother. We expected your husband to earn much money and buy properties, car and the like. But he seems to be a *sanyasi*. We have really faltered in choosing this match.” And this she said after twenty years of our marriage. By that time she knows me personally to be a good and pleasant person. But my inability to earn more could not be compensated by this and never endeared me to my in-laws. They always felt bad and expressed without any hesitation so. In their view, conviction and culture, a son-in-law is a money earning machine. Anything less is not tolerated by them and they are happy only when the son-in-law mints money somehow and becomes rich. And about this they want to talk proudly in their relatives’ circle.

My father-in-law started his career as a supervisor, later did AMIE and retired as a high-ranking government official. He is basically from a poor family. My mother-in-law’s father is a landlord of about 40 acres, which he brought down to 2 acres currently. But she has that aristocracy in her blood. My father-in-law has been and is a life-long victim of that arrogance of her. This aspect of her, he, whenever we meet, narrates me and poses as if he is the president of All World Victimized by Wives Husbands’

Association. Sometimes in his frustration, like any other husband, he declared he prefers to divorce his wife.

When I, a bit proudly, told my mother-in-law that my poetry and other literary creations and research papers are appreciated through India and abroad, she put me the question “How much you are earning by all this?” When I told her, nothing, she very straight forwardly said that I am wasting my time and energy. She also gave me a wise counsel. She asked me to join a private residential college and earn in lakhs as some of her cousins and in-laws are doing as my subject also is in demand.

In one of her such spirits, she recently told in reply to why my brother-in-law does not visit us frequently (actually he has visited us only six or seven times after our marriage, for which my wife feels) she bluntly told me that her son will visit only those people whose salary is Rs. 2 lakhs or more or who have earned properties worth crores or possess minimum 40 acres of cultivable land as the sons-in-law of her sisters. Apparently my mother-in-law could no longer stand my inability to earn much money and make her boast about me in her relatives’ circle. Incidentally my mother-in-law is a school dropout failing in V class. I always wonder even if I am awarded Nobel prize, she will not be amused or enthused and enquires whether I have given advance to buy a plot or a flat.

But I am really astounded, shocked and hurt for her such audacity; discourteous, insensitive, uncultured and uncivilized and callously materialistic behavior even though I am used to her talks, behavior and insults. I could not make out whether it is her innocence or foolishness. Only I once again saw my rich mother-in-law in her elements. My father-in-law even though is there, remained silent as if supporting his wife. Actually it is he who has been declaring me a fit for nothing fellow for my inability to make them proud by being wealthy materialistically.

For the first time I saw my wife fuming, after hearing my mother-in-law’s insensitive answer why her son is not visiting us. My wife told them to mind their tongue and also shut up. She said that she and I both are bearing them and their uncultured talks and

behavior only because they happen to be her parents. “We had enough of you and you better realize what type of person your son-in-law is. You cannot measure anything in any other way except in terms of money and properties. My husband is not a worthless fellow as you have been projecting but is a worthy person liked, appreciated, admired and loved by many aesthetic persons from everywhere. I will never like to hear from you disapproving my husband’s other abilities and inabilities in earning more money. We are very comfortable as we are and what we have. We can never impress you with our earnings. You are blind to the wealth he possesses. You can never know his eminence. Thank you for showing so much concern for us and our financial health and economic status. We never asked you even a single pie any time. Why you are pestering us with your materialistic outlook and are hurting us always. We never cared or no longer care for your estimation of us. Keep quiet”. This she said so forcefully because she has been suffering all these years between me and them for the difference of opinion between our families and the childish behavior and obsession of my in-laws with materialistic wealth. And this has been causing unpleasantness and strife between her and me over their insulting talks and behavior, the only time we any time we quarrel with each other.

This is the story of my rich mother-in-law, rich in insensitivity, ignorance, arrogance and discourtesy blindly in love for materialistic prosperity, matching her husband, who also is possessed with love and craze for money, and associated assets and value in society it brings.

Destiny plays like this with us. It brings together people of mutually unfriendly tastes, likes and aspirations and teasingly watches the drama we play by our natures and behaviors. Though I know that Goddess *Saraswathi* and Goddess Lakshmi are, as daughter-in-law and mother-in-law to each other, cannot and will not stay together, I do not know how to convey this to my in-laws and escape from their constant scrutiny.

From then onwards my wife and I have been more harmoniously and blissfully living because the irritating factor in our relations and lives is put to rest permanently as we decided to ignore her parents and their childish comments about us completely through the remaining part of our life for our peace of mind.



This is the narration of the experience of my friend with his in-laws. The gender violence here is evident, his in-laws a “violent” couple and my friend the victim, a male. The violence here is psychological in nature. A human being who is a man is maltreated and humiliated just because he is not able to earn money in measures expected by his in-laws. This is happening to many men.

I am always intrigued when bridegroom’s side is ferociously attacked when one talks of dowry. But no one questions when the bride’s party chooses a boy of financial soundness and then only their daughter is offered and society never talks of boys who are gems with good qualities, traits and manners, but without employment, to be offered girls in marriage. We all feel and endorse that bride’s party can be condoned when they aim, choose and decide and offer daughters based only on economic matters and employment with financial soundness of the boy and the same is vehemently criticized when bridegroom’s party talks about financial matters during marriage proposals with girl’s parents. This attitude is a mere wish and whim of girl’s side and is against reality. That is why the law enforcing authorities, the persons who have to judge and decide the fate of dowry cases, and the persons who have to arrest us if we are convicted under anti-dowry act themselves also give and take dowry when their daughters and sons are married. It must be noticed that the dowry is given to the salary, property and economic soundness of the bridegroom and not to the bridegroom and his qualities. This, many times confirms my understanding that marriage is essentially an economic transaction and naturally money and property belonging to both sides play a role in offering and accepting marriage proposals and performance of marriages.

Hundred one laws against the nature of human beings will not succeed and cannot deliver the desired results just like elimination of prostitution or drinking habit by legal banishment or government orders. But this reality is very difficult to be digested and appreciated. But truth never cares for our likes or dislikes or conceptions or laws or orders. It takes its own course.

Recent melt down in global economy has made many sons-in-law paper currency for their in-laws and unpopular by devaluing them when they lost their jobs. Also many are now not ready to give their daughters in marriage to any potential software engineer because of low probability of getting a job. This caused and is causing heart burns to many men. But who cares?

Whatever and whichever are our likes or dislikes, or preaching or sermons, the world is ruled only by money and financial matters alone determine human relationships. The experience of my friend is silent gender violence against men and would be bridegrooms and it goes on as long as “civilization” thrives.



THE LOVE-LIFE OF MY BELOVED

Love happens naturally. Love happens as south breeze touches; as flowers bloom; as moon-light cools; as sunshine warms; as affectionate and dear touch soothes; as rivers flow; as currents swirl; as waves drench; as rains pour; as bliss fills; as peace descends and as Divinity obliges and illumines. Loving is a delightful human trait. The one who is not drenched by rain and who has not fallen in love does not exist.

I love my beloved deeply. She has been my sweet heart-mate since she attained puberty. I am older to her by around nine years. In her sweet teenage she stirred in me many amorous feelings and has attained a body full of treasures in the form of lovely shapes and curves. And interestingly, surprisingly and curiously has a matured mind in her tender and beautiful body. Unconscious to her, she started inspiring me to compose poetry in the praise of her beauty and loving heart. Once I began showing the verses I composed on her, rather she composed them by being my being she loved them and me more and more. Our nearness became intimacy. But she never allowed us to cross the limits. She did not even allow me to kiss her. But she has been conversing with me pouring her love and affection for me in her every word and move. I am blessed by the Divinity for such a delightful experience becoming my own through her sweet heart and the union of our loving hearts. Both of us shared many traits. We love and appreciate poetry and music. The common trait which blended us is our sensuousness. We supplement and complement each other perfectly.

Fate willed differently. We could not become husband and wife. We are separated by destiny. But we continued our communications. Just before her marriage she has written me a very loving and intimate letter in response to my recently composed poetry sent to her. That letter is a marvel in the history of love. The sweetness of the union of our hearts is still fresh and of course we could not so explicitly express it from then on.

My beloved and I lost touch of each other for a period of four years. No communication was exchanged between us during that period. Due to various ups and downs in my life during that period I became very disturbed and got depression. Just before I got depression we were reunited and our communication channel has been restored and the poetry I wrote in the intervening period is being sent to her by mutual understanding and with a promise to send any new poetry weaved afresh. I did not tell her about my disturbances till then and also the depression I am experiencing. I just hinted about my inconveniences. She too became busy and I could not communicate with her frequently. I took medicines and my depression has come under control. But around the same time my depression has relapsed. I, in a state of desperation requested my beloved to write letters to me in the tone she wrote to me just before her marriage to soothe me to come out of my disturbance. It should be informed here that our communications consist of only I writing to her or calling her. She has been responding sweetly. But she flatly rejected to write to me despite my earnest request. I was taken aback and was deeply hurt for her outright refusal. The self-esteem she exhibited appeared as insensitivity to me. But I kept quiet and continued to have nice feelings for her.

Two years later I met her personally and we conversed for a long time to our hearts' content. Then she gave me her recently acquired number and suggested we should converse very frequently. Also she specifically requested me to start composing poetry again for her and on her. Of course, the communication as usual is my calling her and she responding affectionately and sweetly in view of the social limitations around her and me.

I have composed poetry afresh for her making her the subject of my compositions. And we resumed our earlier nearness and intimacy. She started conversing amorously with me about my poetry of which she is the reigning queen. I was so inspired by her sweet conversations that I have written a very amorous letter to her.

A week later after this I received a letter by courier with a hand-writing not familiar to me.

After opening eagerly the packet I am shocked to find the amorous letter I wrote to her torn into pieces, of course aesthetically producing delightful regular geometric strips. I am deeply hurt by this action of her. First she made someone else to write my address on the envelope and my letter is torn into pieces. I am dumbfounded and became motionless. I have also not liked a third person entering our domain. It took some days for me to become normal, strangely, with the help of my beloved only. She told me that she herself made the other person write the address in a state of desperation. Then I protested to her that why she allowed a third person come in between us. She in her sweet way changed the topic and talked so sweetly and affectionately that it became a balm to my hurt and I whole-heartedly forgave her. And the strong reason being, I love her very deeply. And from then on our conversations became more amorous and intimate. Both of us experienced the union of hearts very blissfully and gifted mutually the joy and exhilaration a man and woman can unselfishly and lovingly provide and share. The frequency of our conversations has grown by leaps and bounds.

During these conversations it became clear to me that she much needed my company to get over her personal problem which she has not revealed to me. I got an inkling of it and has been doing my duty as her friend and loved one. During that period my mind has been reminding me how she with insensitivity flatly refused to write to me in my days of relapse of my depression. I could overcome this protest of my within by my love and affection to her and her love and affection to me which she has been showering on

me whole-heartedly and concern and love for me. After a year of this exchange, I met her personally.

She was insistent then to tell one thing to me. The matter is that she has used me all this time to overcome her feeling of slighted by and aloofness from her near and dear and their non-concern for her feelings. Also her husband has asked her to discontinue communicating with her usual male friends and instructed her no longer to maintain friendly relations with some of them. I told her that I guessed some such thing is happening and there is no necessity to say that to me. She said she wanted to see my reaction and assess my feelings by observing my facial expressions when she is revealing to me how she used me. She also told me that she felt unwanted in her home and now things have improved. Then I asked is it over? She has great sense of humor. She said "It is not at all over. I may need you again!" I too smilingly told her that she participated in our conversations whole-heartedly and her involvement in our intimacy is without inhibitions and is complete. She said it is true and after all she is also human. Then I told her that might be she has some more friends like me who expressed their love to her. And she could have used any of them to tide over her domestic inconvenience. Smilingly she informed me that till then she has no man in her life except her husband even though many have been and are trying to cross her finger, meaning she never allowed any one to cross the limits even though she did not discourage rather consciously or so encouraged the advances of some loving, talented and handsome men who are attracted to her attractive personality and demeanor and took interest in her and allowed them to be near. She has chosen me to tide over her inconvenience because I am most dear to her, am a trusted friend too and am physically far.

And she also told me that she has opened up further for me and ordered rather in her sweet persuading way desired that I should continue communicating with her and also regularly compose poetry on her when I protesting and teasingly told her that I may stop communicating with her. Just then I became amorous and asked for union. She calmly avoided my desire-filled advances

to her and deftly handled the situation and asked me to give her some time to leisurely make an assessment of our affair. She encouragingly told me that when the milky-ocean is churned though first poison is produced, later nectar, moon and Sri have been produced and asked me to remain optimistic and enthusiastic. She said that the exuberance for our union is present in abundance; only she needed some time. I willingly and gladly gave her the time she wanted.

For two years we have been engaged in pleasant conversations and communicating like this in our usual style. Yes, I calling her or sending her poetry and she responding sweetly and lovingly. This pleasantness has made both mutually enamored. We are finding our intimacy divine and are always longing for more of it. Meanwhile I met her more than once personally but the promise she gave she is not able to keep. Yes by one pretext or other she is not allowing our physical union. She teasing says to me “Is it what we are enjoying not sufficient? You are hard to please”.

Then I replied “you are hardly pleasing me”.

Around this time during one of our usual conversations she said that a tragedy has taken place. I asked what it is. She said one of her neighbor has expired the day before. I became envious to sense a sense of loss in her tone. I told her calmly that the physical proximity, nearness and intimacy might be the reason. She said may be. Later I have sent her a communication saying that I am sharing her grief in losing a good friend and will be glad to help her to get rid of that depressive mood. Both of us are sensitive, sensible and mutually caring.

Next when I spoke a few days later to her she wondered at my sensing her loss and she is grateful to me for my sensitive and sensible offer of helping her to soothe her. She also said that the deceased person has been a good singer and she is a fan of him. She also told me that he has nice feelings for her and she reciprocated them. At this moment I became completely jealous. I protested that

she should have told me that she is having such a good company and my intimacy is not necessary. Then she told me we are intimate since her attaining puberty and I am very near and dear to her and the singer friend is just a fascination as she is fond of music. And I am special to her; rather her breath. All her joy is concentrated in me and my company and our intimacy. She also told me that no one else is equal in dearness to her in comparison with me. She sincerely and with full of love for me assured me that I am unique to her. Her love for me never withers or fades and our intimacy is life-sustaining for her. She always expresses through flowers and I have been able to delineate her intimate feelings for me.

I took her fascination for her singer friend in my stride and continued loving her. Of course, I cannot be otherwise. I many times wonder whether I so deeply love her that even not minding her unintentional slights of me and apparent indifference in her reciprocation to my longings.

But my heart told me with conviction that she is also as deeply in love with me as I am with her. And her loving, willing, plain and affectionate assurances are keeping our intimacy blissful and alive. After all we love each other so dearly and deeply. She tells me that we belong to each other and in such a belonging longing is in-built. Then I said that though we are not wedded to each other we are welded to each other. She whole-heartedly agreed with me. Both of us are perfectly supplementary and complementary to each other in all the required aspects which we recognized in the early days of our intimacy.

This is the love-life of my beloved sustaining me and my literary creation and my life. We shall continue to love each other in this life and for all the lives to come. We must be *Radha* and *Madhava* or as intimate as them in our earlier lives too. Love is invigorating, sublime, blissful, beautiful and everlasting delightful nature of us. Love is panacea for human psychological wellness and health and we give that to each other in each of our moves. Both of

us not only have fallen in love with each other but also have been rising in love since we both have fascinated each other. Our love is unalloyed mutual devotion, admiration, appreciation and togetherness of our Selves. A single Self is dwelling in us. Love is Divine. Loving is Divinity.



THE PARASITES

I live in Hyderabad. There is a tree in our housing colony. It's a dead one. Under that tree I daily observe a beggar-woman. She is very old. Her clothes are worn out. She should be eating only once a day; sometimes once in many days. Thus she leads her life – begging, starving.

One day, as I was passing by, I saw a man speaking to her. He was very excited and was gesturing a lot. His conversation was melodious, like a verse in tune. I overheard it.

My agony, my search
My intellect, my suffering
My poetry, my life
All dedicated to you only..
To awaken this
Uncivilized society
And present before it
The exploitation
And misery
You are experiencing
Is my life's ambition?

I could not make out how much the old woman understood. But the 'poet' wrote his 'poem' on a red paper, threw it into her bowl and walked away briskly. As usual I gave one rupee to the old woman.

After some days a man in a suit was with the old woman. An assistant was recording the details about her daily routine. Then they left in a green *Maruthi*. As usual I silently put one rupee coin in the old woman's bowl.

Another day I saw the beggar woman in an ambassador car with a man in a *khadi silk* shirt. Immediately I remembered that polling was taking place that day. After exercising her franchise the old woman resumed her profession – begging.

A few months later, I had to accompany a friend to *Ravindra Bharathi* for a function. Three eminent citizens – a poet, a film director and a minister – were being felicitated. I glanced at the three persons on the dais and felt that I have seen them earlier. Oh, yes, the three were the 'poet' the man-in-suit and the man in the *khadi silk* shirt, whom I had seen with the beggar-woman. The felicitation was a grand success..I am silently greeting the old woman with my one rupee coin daily. She is lying there, like a lifeless chisel, converting the stony lives of some individuals into beautiful sculptures; unaware of how her miserable state is used by some parasites.



THE TRIAL

I am a writer; a poet, fiction-writer and essayist who writes in English language. I have been writing for the last 30 years. None of my works are published. I am not an established or famous author. I am not counted as a contributor to Indian Writing in English.

The advent of literary websites has given me an opportunity to express myself frequently and made me a much-read writer. I have got bouquets and brick bats for my creations. Now-a-days I am feeling a bit tired of all this experience and also am feeling I have expressed much and there is not much worthwhile more to share with my learned and aesthetic readers. My readers are all competent in their own fields and are well-versed and well-read. I have been enjoying their responses to my creations which many times inspired and encouraged me for some more creations. I have made a few friends also during this period whose company I always cherish and relish.

Recently I have decided to take a break from literary activity of writing and relax completely amounting to slowly receding to the background and forget that I am a writer and become a devotee to Lord Krishna and lead a spiritual life. And I stopped writing, composing poems and posting them in the websites temporarily.



Then a peculiar thing has happened. A public interest petition was filed against me in a subordinate court in my town. The litigation is I must not stop writing. I was really amused by the incident. I was arrested and presented before the Honorable Judge for the trial.

I am completely confounded by the turn of events. Living in the jail, daily going to court and coming back have made me irritable and impatient.

I argued my case myself. I did not engage any lawyer. I pleaded with the honorable judge about my constitutional right of doing what I want and abstaining from doing what I do not want to do.

The lawyer for the petitioner is a rationalist and an atheist. He is pleading his case well. He says that as a writer I have an obligation to the society and I do not have any right to abdicate that responsibility suddenly. The Honorable Judge concurred with the petitioner's lawyer on many points and that made me speechless in wonder.

I argued that I have many opinions which are unpopular and if I express them I will be pounced, hounded and hunted by the interested people and leaders. I told the judge that I have strong views on social, political, gender, religious and the like issues and if I express those I will be torn into pieces by persons who have contradicting views; whose very existence is thriving based on these divisions. They will blame me and call me names. So I told honorable judge that I decided to stop writing.

Then the honorable judge said, suddenly I cannot take such a decision and I must reform myself to suit the majority of the citizens and write for them.

I have written enormous stuff on pollution, climate change and the hazards of smoking, drinking etc., still the situation remains the same as before I started expressing myself. My write-ups have got the attention of some discerned readers and that is all. Under these circumstances, I told the judge that I do not have much left to be expressed.

When I said that I am not for corruption, all isms, suppression of merit, and the like the learned judge ruled that I must conform to the societal expectations and express accordingly. Peculiarly he dismissed my argument for my civil rights, saying a writer has no freedom or individual life. He is a public person and must shun personal preferences and must be objective.

When I told the judge that none of my works were published and I am not a writer in the real sense of the term, he ruled that the moment I decided to write I cease to be an individual with individuality; all my resources are at society's disposal. I must continue using them for society's welfare and wellbeing.

I protested to the learned judge saying the moment I decided to stop writing I cease to be a writer and none of these laws bind me. But the honorable judge did not concur. He said it is better to light a tiny lamp than blaming the darkness around.

I pleaded with the judge saying that I am really tired of expressing myself in this vicious atmosphere and my opinions have no takers. And many individuals who are intolerant are using filthy language and even threatening to eliminate physically their opponents. I do not want to be a target to such uncultured and uncivilized persons who are barbarous and I am not ready to risk my peace of mind or life for my expressions.

I informed the judge that I am now 55 years old and want to turn my attention towards God and want to spend the rest of my life in singing His Glory and strive to attain salvation and completely immerse myself in spirituality.

At this stage the lawyer for the petitioner has intervened saying there is no God and I am like a person who has taken opium and I must continue writing for the exploited and must follow atheism. He also argued that people like me are dangerous to society and must not be allowed to sing the glory of the God. He also said that service to humanity is service to God. Moksha or salvation, are words used by certain people to indulge in vain pursuits and mislead the rest of the communities.

I am completely taken aback by this argument of the petitioner's lawyer.

I told the honorable judge to leave me to myself and do not dictate to do what I do not want to do. I informed My Lord that one must read the constitution thoroughly where each citizen's freedom and independence are guaranteed and I can practice what I want without harming any one. I also informed the court that writing is an aesthetic activity which goes on voluntarily as the cuckoo sings, peacock dances, rivers flow, flowers bloom, men and women fall in love, children smile and elderly profess wisdom. A person cannot be compelled to do anything against his will much less to write. Nature dwells in the writer and poets as intuition and instinct and makes one to respond, compose, express and revel in one's own creations. I lived and passed all these moments and I just want to live my life peacefully in the company of Lord Krishna.

I also told the honorable judge that I know Sanskrit, German and French languages and will do translations of classics among these languages and also into my mother tongue Telugu and thus will be in touch in literature as well; and also that I am only a part-time writer and my real interest lies in doing scientific research and by profession I am a researcher. And pleaded with the judge not to curb my freedom of speech and that I want to remain unheard as I am not in a mood and do not want to create anything from my study, knowledge, views, opinions, understanding, insight and scholarship. And there are many equally learned and talented persons who are flooding the literary street with their goods and my non-writing does not actually affect the output; just as a drop of water removed from the ocean does not make any difference to the amount of water present.

But My Lord sentenced me to simple imprisonment for five years where I must be supervised by the jail warden that I write daily and post. I became dumb by hearing the judgment. I am dragged to the jail.



Suddenly I woke up. I was profusely sweating. My bewilderment is still fresh and I am still in daze of the judgment. It took five minutes to realize that all that happened has been a mere dream. I am completely relieved. And I decided once again to take complete break from writing. But I liked the observations of the learned judge that it is better to light a tiny lamp than blaming the darkness around. I am a bit softened by the truth and duty embedded in the words of the learned judge and will start writing occasionally when I strongly feel for the cause or any incident or person that impresses me. And of course I dedicate major part of my life to Lord Krishna.



THE UN-SMELT STILL SMELT FLOWER

All cannot be professional writers and earn their livelihood through literary writing. Many are just amateurs. I am one such amateur writer. Some of my short-stories and verses have been published in various popular magazines. Thus I consider myself a literary figure. Writers like me desire to participate in literary competitions so that we can get both fame and money in a short time.

A popular national magazine has recently announced a short-story competition. I decided to write a quality short-story for the competition. I started to write one also. Normally I write a short-story like this: first I will contemplate on the beginning of the story. Then I struggle mentally for some days to further the story line. Gradually the story takes a definite shape in the mind. Then I complete writing the story and at the end give title to the story. But now I decided in the beginning itself the title of the story as "*The First Love-making*" because I am very sure and clear of the story line.



Visal is highly disturbed. He is experiencing hopelessness and helplessness. His mind is blank. He is not able to decide what to do and is grief-stricken. *Visal* is a modern youth. To live happily is his motto of life. But he is thinking that destiny is unkind to him for some reason. That is why such a depressing incident has taken place in his life is what he believes. What is that incident.....? What are the consequences.....?

Visal is a soft-ware engineer. He is working for a prestigious computer company and is receiving fat salary and perks. Like the youth of his age he is romantically dreaming about his married life. He is eager to get married as soon as possible. His parents are also on the lookout for a suitable bride.

Visal's mother met *Vinamra* in one function. *Visal's* mother is very much impressed by the tender body, bright lotus-like face, proportionately formed limbs and organs and attractive figure of *Vinamra* and decided that *Vinamra* should become her daughter-in-law. She arranged through a mediator to contact *Vinamra's* parents with the proposal and *Vinamra's* parents gladly accepted the proposal. The marriage of *Visal* and *Vinamra* took place on an auspicious day.

That is the night of nuptials for *Visal* and *Vinamra*. The nuptials are much eagerly and passionately waited night for the youth and the most exhilarating. *Visal* sat on the flower-decked bed in the decorated room and is waiting for *Vinamra*. The room is fully filled with stimulating fragrance from the incense sticks. After some time *Vinamra* slowly entered the room. In the nuptial-bride's dress *Vinamra* is very beautiful and inviting. Both looked at each other. *Visal* is bitten with desire. But *Vinamra* immediately avoided looking. No feeling is revealed in her face. *Visal* approached her slowly. He gently attempted to affectionately embrace her. But she prevented him with her looks. She immediately went away from him and sat in a chair. Surprised, *Visal* also went near her and sat in another chair.

Pleasant moonlight is spread all over. *Visal's* thoughts are full of aesthetic feelings. He again attempted to embrace her. At that moment avoiding his touch she started saying:

“Please do not touch me”

“But, why?”

“This marriage has not taken place according to my wishes. I am in deep love with another person”

These words of her pierced through his heart like arrows and he became immobile. He has fallen into a valley of ache and pain from the peak of aesthetic desire. *Vinamra* continued talking:

“I and my cousin loved each other very deeply”

“Then, how is it that our marriage took place?”

“I did not want to wound the feelings of my father. So

Visal is not at all ready to hear such utterances on his nuptials night. When he is dreaming to hear pleasant sounds this disharmony has started.

“Then, why you have married me?” asked *Visal* with aching heart.

“It is my father’s wish”

“With this immature and childish behavior you have spoiled my life” said *Visal* accusingly. His voice resembled the sounds made by a strings-broken *veena*.



I wrote the story up to this point. I unsuccessfully tried to continue writing. My mind suddenly became blank. All the story-line which is thought over earlier has completely disappeared. My mind is filled with vacuum. The half-written story is teasing me daily. Some days passed like this.

One day I started re-reading the half-written text. What a surprise..!! The story is written further with a different hand-writing from the spot where I stopped. Astonished, I started reading eagerly.



“I love my father so much. He is impressed with your alliance. I could not disobey him after knowing his mind” said *Vinamra*.

“Why are you now telling *me* all this?” questioned *Visal*.

“Because there is no meaning in the union of the bodies when there is no union of hearts...”

She paused for some moments and continued:

“You are free to scold me. You can even beat me. I will bear everything. But I do not change my mind. You are educated and are aware that it is cultureless to make love to a woman against her will and wish”

“But you have behaved in a highly cultured way!?!” angrily said *Visal*.

“Yes. I have behaved in cultured way. That is why I told everything. I hid nothing”

“You should have shown this much culture *earlier* to our marriage. Then this marriage might not have taken place at all”

“My father is very adamant. He refused to marry me to my cousin. If I remain unmarried, my father will become unwell. His health is very delicate. Contemplating all this, I agreed to get married to you”

“You have thought very well..!?” saying this *Visal* sighed deeply.

The soft bed and the flowers spread on it sympathized with *Visal*. Then *Vinamra* said:

“I do not want to become burdensome to you. I will do some job and take care of myself. I understand your distress and pain, but I am truthful; we both are pawns in the hands of Destiny...”

Visal did not appreciate her philosophical expression. He said:

“I do not touch you even though you are my wife, when you do not love and desire me. But I respect the institution of marriage. So we must be husband and wife for others”

“Certainly! I am your wife in all respects and obey you except for sharing sexual life. I will do the duties of housewife without blemish or fail”

“You can do a job as you desired”

“Thanks a lot”



I finished reading. But who has written this....? The hand-writing is familiar to me...?!

“Have you finished reading the story....? “ Hearing this question I turned my face. My wife *Chitra* is standing there smiling. Ja! Now I am reminded. It is *Chitra*'s hand-writing.

“Yes” I replied..“Giving divorce is not the solution of the problem. Divorce is not acceptable. Mere union of bodies does not constitute marriage. Enjoying sex is just a part of married life. Two people can be husband and wife by being intimate and friendly to each other sans sex and can lead a happy married life. Such a life is also a wedded life.”

I am completely taken by surprise. After hearing *Chirta*'s utterance I am reminded of the incident that happened two months back.

That was our nuptials night. Smothering my chest with her fingers affectionately, *Chitra* has told me with a sweet voice:

“I desire to continue my studies in the university. If I get pregnant immediately, It will be awkward to go to university in that state. I do not have faith in family planning methods. So I pray to you that we observe celibacy for some time.... !?”

Whether the sweet and affectionate talk of the new bride hypnotized me or whether I did not like to reject the first wish of my brand new wife or because I believed that I will see for some

time and do the needful later, I do not know but I agreed to her wish.

Has *Chitra* through completing my story has given me some message..? How much opaque is woman's thinking..? Who can grasp the inner recesses of a woman's mind? Great and matured minds themselves fail in this task. How can I, a normal person can grasp?

I became utterly disturbed. Anxiousness has generated many stressful thoughts. Before going into the kitchen, *Chitra* has asked me:

“I have changed the title of the story. Have you observed that..?”

Then I saw the title. The title is changed to:

“*THE UNSMELT STILL SMELT FLOWER*”.



UNDER THE BANYAN TREE

Tarumoolavasinaha is the name I have given to the saintly person who lives under the banyan tree near our village. He might be sixty years old. I am around forty years old. I have been seeing him there since my childhood. He just wears lion-cloth and subsists himself on alms. He uses his hands to eat food. He is always joyful dwelling in the meanings of *Vedanta* expressions. During rainy season he lives in a cave near that place. An unofficial Ashram is around him.

It seems he was silent for most part of his life and started talking in replying to the questions put by an ardent spiritual seeker.

I am a teacher and a simple person. I live with my parents and am married with two sons. My wife has been a friend, philosopher and guide to me. My life is going on smoothly.

I must confess that I am not a spiritually adept person. I just pray in the mornings and go to temples on festival days. That is all my religious or spiritual life. But I am an educated and am capable of contemplating on issues. I also spend time in the august presence of *Tarumoolavasinaha* and listen to his expositions.

I am not enthused by the mushrooming growth of commercial spiritual gurus. I am of the opinion that such commercial gurus might have lost what little spiritual attainment they achieved by its commercialization and are lost in the self-aggrandizement they practice. The commercial empires they maintain make one wonder whether we are wrong in believing in simple living and high thinking. And how is it that this herd of individuals are

misrepresenting and misinterpreting the great Indian spiritual tradition. In their limited grasp of the Vedanta they may be impressive in the expositions with their oratory skills but are like the wooden spoon in the paramaannam which is always in it but does neither know nor enjoy its sweetness. Because a true spiritual person the moment he realizes and experiences the Self is humble, full of humility, simple, blissful and we become blissful in their presence. Such enlightened souls are most of the times silent steeped in the experiencing of Divinity.

I feel that many *babas* or *ammam*s cater to the ego-centric individuals and replace the individual's ego with theirs. The devotees or followers of such swamis are ignorant and also innocent. They are under the illusion that their guru is the sole authority on spirituality and they do not and cannot show same reverence also to other genuine spiritual masters. Also the freedom of thought which is an essential trait for spirituality misses in them. They waste their lives in subjugation to these self-centered gurus. The true bliss of being spiritual eludes them.

Tarumoolavasinaha once said that being religious and being spiritual differ slightly but profoundly. One can be spiritual without being religious. Religion is the dress and ornaments we wear. Spirituality is our essence. Shedding ego is essential for progress in spirituality.

Knowledge is always compared with light and illumination. Possessing right knowledge is getting illumined. The knowledge which gives us peace of mind and which prevents us from losing this peace of mind during the vicissitudes of life is the right knowledge. Thus the right knowledge dispels our already acquired knowledge not able to give us peace of mind, which elders compare with darkness (*tamas*). Elders warn us that such acquiring and possession of right knowledge can make one arrogant. Actually one must be very careful and should not fall in more darkness by using it for self-aggrandizement (*andham tamam pravisanti*).

Once I put a question on birth, death and rebirth to *Tarumoolavasinaha*. He replied:

Rise of ego when we wake up from sleep is birth. Absorption of ego in Atman in deep sleep is death. Again rise of ego when we wake up is rebirth. That is all. There is no transmigration of Atman as many believe.

I one day during our spiritual exchanges asked *Tarumoolavasinaha* about God.

Tarumoolavasinah said: “*Atmabudhi prakasam eva divyatvam va daivam cha*”.

He explained: God is the glow of our mind. He is the reservoir of compassion in us as our inner grace and love. God or Divinity is the invisible force in us and is being experienced without our being conscious about it and we will be able to experience it consciously too. All our mental activities are Divine guided by Divinity. God is present in us always as Divinity and whenever we are ego-free or transcended our ego that Divinity glows in us as serenity, peace and bliss. In reality and essence He is We.

Illumined thus I have been living peacefully and blissfully from then on.

Tarumoolavasinaha is glowing under the banyan tree as *Dakshanmoorthy*.

Tarumoolavasinah; the one who lives under the tree

