

Intimacies

An anthology of stories

Dr. Amrutha Latha

Translated by
Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar

PREFACE

THE AUTHOR HAS THE RARE ACUMEN OF ANALYSIS



Prof. S. Laxmana Murthy

Dr. Amrutha Latha is associated with a number of educational institutions. She is deeply concerned with the future of younger generation. She has been striving hard to provide meaningful education to the young men and women at her educational institutions introducing a set of life- affirming values.

Outside the schools and colleges, we find a large number of women being exploited in a number of ways. Dr. Amrutha Latha reflected deeply on the predicament of woman at home and outside the confines of home. When a woman has to bear the brunt of too many restrictions and different forms of violence stifling all her many gifts of heart and mind, she cannot enjoy the privilege of being human. The social discrimination dehumanizes her in one way or the other. This inescapable fact of woman's

existence has engaged the attention of Dr. Amrutha Latha. She has used all her creative gifts as a writer to portray a woman in all vicissitudes of life through her numerous stories.

The author has the rare acumen of analysis. She has chosen the medium of short story to present her incisive criticism and insights into the human predicament. The society has made a gilded cage for the woman over the ages and conditioned the thinking of men and women.

Dr. Amrutha Latha has examined this paradox of woman's existence in many of her stories. She has brought out woman's aspirations and frustrations, longings and disappointments manifest in a variety of ways. The writer has evolved over the years in her portrayal of characters, in taming the content to suit the technique. That is inevitable for every talented writer.

Dr. Amrutha Latha has continuously honed her skills as a writer. She has been contributing stories for close to fifty years starting as a student. It is surprising that she has nursed her creative gifts in spite of multifarious activities as a leading educationist and institution builder.

One may have to single out for convenience a couple of stories to highlight her achievement. But the whole corpus bears witness to her relentless experimentation and achievement. She is still active as a writer. She will surely scale greater heights in the years to come.

The author has brought out a collection of her stories in English translation. This will facilitate a wider reach. Non-Telugu readers and writers will have an opportunity to learn of Telugu ambience and orientation

Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar has done a commendable job as a translator. He had studied the art and craft of translation as a researcher and obtained a doctorate for his work. He knows all too well the highs and lows of a translator's vocation. He deserves credit for the difficult assignment which he has successfully completed. I have enjoyed reading the stories in Telugu and English.

My best wishes to the writer and the translator.

HEART TOUCHING STORIES



Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar

Dr. Amrutha Latha draws reader's attention even to the small events and decisions that can both disrupt and significantly alter the lives of other characters in the present collection of nineteen stories.

She maintains a delicate poetic tone throughout her stories. Her language is known for its conciseness, graciousness, brevity, decency and grace. She can be compared to O. Henry for her 'punch lines'.

The stories can remain as magnificent memories in the hearts of the readers as they cover a wide verity of themes including human weaknesses, gender bias, economic and social inequality, duplicity in human nature.

She started her writing career in 1969 and continuing till now for more than four decades, which shows her perseverance, love for literature and creativity.

As a translator I have tried to render the stylistic features of Dr. Amrutha Latha, which were portrayed powerfully in her Telugu stories.

She magnificently expressed the inner strife and anguish of the characters through her stories. I tried to be original in my translation without taking a free hand, as it may distort the impression of characters and themes.

She has the powerful rendering of presenting the scene through Telugu movie songs, which of course very difficult for me to translate into English.

I have really enjoyed in translating her work. The work provided me with much satisfaction as a translator. It's a great privilege and honour for me to be the translator for the collection of stories.

I am very much thankful to Dr. Amrutha Latha for giving me the opportunity for translation. I extend my token of gratitude to Smt. N. Rama Devi, Senior Manager, Andhra Bank for introducing me to Dr. Amrutha Latha.

-Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



Dr. Amrutha Latha

I stand taller as a woman and for women with Prof. Laxmana Murthy's review of my book. I hope it empowers women and helps them see themselves in new light. Many of us have been putting ourselves last in an effort to raise families and the stresses associated with work. This book will reach its meridian, if and when it helps at least one woman realize that she is stronger than she thinks. I am honored to see a genteel man like Prof. Laxmana Murthy endorse this book.

Many wonderful translations do not hold a candle to the original work. Proving that wrong and doing justice to my words and translating them with love and care, for always being kind, for holding high standards, I am thankful to Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar.

This book reached its acme with K. Babu's cover page and illustrations of Bali, Subani, Trigun, Dhar, Babu, Kavitha and Uma. Thank you.

In my attempt to run Vijay group of institutions, my own literary journey was on the back burner for over

20 years, for being ardent admirers of my literary work, for rekindling the love of writing in me, for fighting with me at times to make this book come to fruition, I am thankful to A. Shankar.

The most tedious task in publishing a book is the proof-reading. The mistakes and errors in a book often stand in the way of the pleasure it brings. To sift them with care and gently tossing them out requires enormous amount of patience, I am grateful to my dear friends Nellutla Rama Devi, Kiran Bala, Thurlapati Lakshmi and K. Vijaya Laxmi. Their help is invaluable.

Days and nights merge into one for our DTP operators Krishna and Madan. The time that they spent on this venture is unforgettable.

I am grateful to Andhra Jyothi, Andhra Bhoomi, Swati, Mayuri, Bhoomika and other magazines for publishing these stories. I am especially thankful to the many readers that wrote back with their thoughts, reviews and comments when the stories were published.

For many more that worked behind the scenes, you know who you are, thank you from the bottom of my heart.

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ALWAYS ... BE HAPPY...



2016



Ajanta express just halted on the platform.

"Train will stop here. Wait here!" The porter, who promised us to be present on the arrival of the train, could not be traced much to our vexation! We got into the train helping ourselves with the luggage!

Placing the luggage on the berth, my husband disappeared leaving everything to my custody and said - "I'll come just in a minute! Take care of the luggage!"

The entire compartment was abuzz with passengers - looking like a fish market. Ten minutes passed. "Where did he go? Leaving the luggage helter-skelter! He might have rushed to Higginbotham's, being mad of books!" I concluded myself looking for him through the window.

"Madam, Will you please take your luggage from the seats, so that I can just adjust there?"

I looked back when I heard a polite voice.

There was a sparkling lady with a smiling face!

"I know that you were looking out for someone, and I can keep standing here for some time, but I don't want to cause inconvenience to the fellow passengers by blocking the way!" she explained in the tone of conciliation.

"I'm sorry" I apologized, and she extended her helping hand for my placing the luggage under the berth, and finally relaxed on the window seat, which was facing our berth.

During the conversation, I came to know that she was allotted with the lower berth, much to my displeasure!

Lower berth is allotted to a woman of twenty!

Women at sixty five had to languish in middle berth, and, more surprisingly, the upper berth was earmarked for my husband at the age seventy!

'Cha! What kind of people are these! How do they allot berths without considering the age of the passengers?' I cursed the railway authorities.

He didn't turn up. I was waiting for my husband anxiously.

The two seats beside the sparkling lady before our seat... two side berths ... one seat next to the window in our row... totally five seats are vacant!

"It's Okay - all the five seats are vacant' I was happy with the current situation!

No sooner had I been happy that the remaining five seats were free from occupation than came a shawukaar, businessman accompanied by his wife Janaki. "Janaki, our seats are here!" he expressed his happiness and occupied his seat. Janaki also settled herself between the sparkling lady and the shawukaar.

The couple's gigantic deportment dispelled my hopes of comfortable journey! How can they get on to the upper berth with their heavy weight! I'm far better than them!

Meanwhile...

"Amma! The seat next to the window in your row is mine!" said the man wearing a striped shirt.

I let him sit there by moving aside.

Now, only side berths were unoccupied!

'I prayed God to allot these side berths to the college students!'

At once, two boys, one with a porcupine's hair style and the other with a T shirt entered the compartment: "Look here ... these are our seats!" They claimed the side berths and settled themselves there.

'The lower berth might have been reserved for the two boys, who could be persuaded very easily to sacrifice the lower berth to me, and settle in the upper berth. If it is that much necessary, the striped shirt could be approached for the same favour by my husband', I hoped for a better future.

The train moved a little causing tension for me as my husband had not turned up still!

"Shanthi! Here is your favorite 'Bhakthi' magazine!" There came my husband gasping and gave me a devotional book and sat beside me with a set of books that he brought with care as if it were a small child.

"Oh! God!" I heaved a sigh of relief at his return.

"Dawdling on the platform - buying books till the last moment - rushing into the moving train just like a youth - is it necessary? If any leg or hand is broken ..." I was angry with him.

The train gained momentum.

Janaki started an informal chat with the sparkling lady: "We are going to Shirdi! Where are you going?"

'Nizamabad aunty! ', she answered with a smile.

My husband had been habituated to buying books - distributing them to everyone around - became his hobby! Not only in trains - but also in home! Our neighbours woke up with his books only!

Inexplicably enough, people spend lavishly at hotels on weekends while turning miserly towards books.

I can't bear with the people with no slightest concern for books that give us pleasure, delight and knowledge.

Thus - I never blame his buying books. I ardently like book lovers. I'm thinking ...

"Amma, here are your books!" my husband extended some of the books to the sparkling lady.

I liked the lady's polite behavior and deportment, but was displeased with the way she accepted these books just like others.

As if realizing my feelings, my husband explained me privately: "Shanthi! When I was buying books at Higginbotham's ... she came there! She could not buy any books in the rush. Apart from that she

was being pestered by striped shirt man as: "Which books do you want madam?" I came to know that she was also travelling in our compartment, so I said, "Amma, I'll get the books for you - you can go?"

The girl was totally engrossed in reading the book! I was silently observing all, as I could not read the books in the moving train.

The two young chaps were glazing at the sparkling lady.

She was so rapturously beautiful. Even women would be jealous of her beauty! Poor men! That too - young men! Only glazing at her! "Let them enjoy... what's wrong?" I smiled for a while.

"Will you please give me your book? I'll see and return it immediately?" The young man in striped shirt beside me requested the lady.

No one in the compartment had a book in their hands.

My husband responded readily in order to give him a suitable book.

But ... it is not my husband that was asked the book - but the lady, who seems to be thinking with the closed book in her hands and looking through the window.

It struck me from the young man's strange behavior that he deliberately wanted to initiate informal chat with her!

She gave the book to him under duress.

He spent five minutes on the book and commented:

"Really, you are great!" the striped shirt started his informal chat with the sparkling lady...

That lady had an angry frown on her forehead.

"Wow! How many books did you buy!?! The bookworms like you feed the book sellers. Our tribe might be interested in free books, borrowed from others, but never in our own!"

The sparkling lady did not show any interest in the conversation, but unable to avoid the futile chat with striped shirt.

"The readers like you should be felicitated by the heads of the magazines and publishers to increase the readership - What do you say uncle?" the striped shirt wished my husband. My husband smiled at the remark and kept quiet.

"May I know your name at least madam?" said the boy obstinately like Vikramarka who is known for his perseverance and tried to continue the conversation.

T-Shirt and the porcupine-haired students are lending their ears to listen to the conversation from the side berth.

"Bookworm!" the sparkling lady replied instantly.

"It's all right! She is not a frightened animal! Very intelligent! All women should be like her. I admired the girl innately for her befitting reply.

"At last, she could open her mouth", the T shirt clad boy, who sat on the side berth laughed for a while.

"Yes!" porcupine-haired student approved it.

"Brothers, some girls are too reserved to talk! They strongly believe that if they talk to anyone, they will be polluted! They are too rigid to talk to anyone!" said the striped shirt.

"Miss, Is Nizamabad your native place?"

The boy faced her embarrassing looks when he asked about her native place.

"I mean - I've seen you in one of my relative's house" he tried to mumble.

She did not say anything!

"I will get off at Nizamabad, where our car comes to pick me up. The other young man said that since the train was late by one hour, by the time they got there, it would be ten at least! I will drop you in my car, if you tell the name of your street", continued the striped shirt.

I lost my patience and concluded that he was exceeding his limits. So I was determined to save her from him at any cost.

"You need not take such pains babu! That girl is none other than ... my distant relative. Her father is going to come to the station to receive her." I intervened in the matter!

He glared at me for a moment and smiled secretly.

But ... hiding her with a book not to be seen by the striped shirt, the sparkling lady thanked me with the slight moments of her lips like Savitri, a legendary actor of Telugu film industry and walked to the rest room.

"Let's make a move", said the T-Shirt who was followed by the porcupine-haired fellow.

By looking at the sparkling lady from top to bottom:

"She is dazzlingly beautiful, and I wish she would be the suitable girl for our elder son", Janaki expressed her opinion to her husband and asked me, "You have said, she is your distant relative ... What is she studying?"

She again started without waiting for my answer.

"Is it that much easy to get a bride both with beauty and education? Our son keeps avoiding many proposals on one or other pretexts! He has already crossed thirty, and I am not sure whether he can be married while I'm alive! " Janaki said anxiously.

As he has some work to do, the striped shirt expressed his readiness to mediate: "Can I convince her to marry your son, aunty?"

Janaki's anxiety fled, and now she was anxious about the girl's caste. "But... what is her caste?"

I was startled!

'I was shocked and doubted - will she ask me about my caste?'

"Who considers the caste here ... the girl is beautiful! My son will hopefully not say "No"! You try to persuade her. If she agrees for the alliance, that is enough for us!", asked Janaki with a lot of hopes.

"It's all right!" by taking the cell phone out of his pocket -

He dialed to someone - "They said that our train is late by one and a half hour! Don't wait for us - you finish off your dinner and take rest, amma!" by saying this - he walked towards the way where the sparkling lady, porcupine hair and T-shirt guy have moved.

I thought the girl might be harassed by these people and prompted my husband to follow them in order to save her.

And I heaved an immediate sigh of relief on seeing the lady coming back before my husband swung into action.

After that the striped shirt came and sat in his usual place -

"Madam, I would like to ask one thing, If you don't mind!" he asked the lady.

She did not give any reply.

"Nothing important ... the aunty who sat next to you liked you very much ... her son ..."

The sparkling lady looked at him with sparkles.

"He was studying medicine . . . they don't take any dowry, they are well off!"

I was infuriated with his proposal.

The sparkling lady was very cool. I didn't like the way she behaved.

"Moreover they are ready to provide a ten kilogram of gold!"

"Mister, Mind your own business!" the sparkling lady gave a serious warning to him.

My heart is now very peaceful!

The train was stopped at Nizamabad. The sparkling lady took the luggage which she placed under the seat and ready to get down from the train. She turned towards me and said, "Aunty - bye!"

The striped shirt said to the sparkling lady, "Madam! Don't forget! If your aunty's car didn't come - I have my car in the parking outside the station. I'll

drop you!" and followed her.

"This is my cell number. If you need any help, please call me" I said and put a slip in her hand.

"Thank you, aunty! See you - bye!" she said and got down from the train.

'If nobody got into the compartment - I will get the chance to sleep on the lower berth happily' I thought.

But ... the seat vacated by the striped shirt ... was occupied by the black goggles guy, the seat vacated by the sparkling lady was occupied by a young woman - may be black goggles guy's wife ... they both settled there!

"Rey, Look there!" said porcupine hair to T-shirt towards the platform.

"What is that?" I too looked at the platform.

The striped shirt was saying something in the ears of the sparkling lady, whose waist was surrounded by the hands of the striped shirt. She was laughing for his words and both were walking together.

"Cha! See there! How he trapped that young lady?" I said to my husband by showing the scene with anguish.

"She was not trapped ... madam! Instead you only were trapped!" said the black goggles guy.

I looked at him with confusion.

"It seems you are much worried about the couple who had got down from the train a few minutes ago! He's my friend! He is always like this! He is completely naughty! Whenever he comes out! He'll try to tease one or the other. He tries to be creative much against to routine teasing! He wanted to add 'fun' in his teasing!"

By creating obstacles to his speech-

"Can I tell you one thing aunty - they are husband and wife! They are my neighbors only! They are equal in teasing others! Today is their marriage day! They went to Hyderabad in the morning - and returning now along with you!" said the black goggles guy's wife..

I was shocked.

"Oho . . .!" my husband was filled with bewilderment!

"Cha! I don't like this!" I said it to be audible to my husband.

"What?" my husband looked at me with astonishment.

"She joined her hands with her husband only for fun! Luckily their friend told us everything about them that they are 'husband and wife' - if it is not known to us . . . can't we misunderstand the lady for going with a stranger all of a sudden?" I said with a bit of grief.

"Shanthee, Don't think sensitively! I like that guy very much! He is utilizing every opportunity which he encounters in his life with for fun and innovatively - he is behaving as if he is starting his life afresh. He is designing his life as he wished. If all the men in the world are like this gentleman - the husband and wife will both enjoy their life like anything! I admire his style of entertaining his wife!" said my husband.

"Is it? What about you? Whenever I see ... like a silent rishi - without talking to anyone ... as if you were in a strange world!" I said in order to mock at him.

"What are you doing ... if I am doing spiritual meditation like sage Vishwamitra - why are you staring at me? ... why can't you disturb my meditation like Menaka!" he tried to provoke me.

I looked at my husband's bald head.

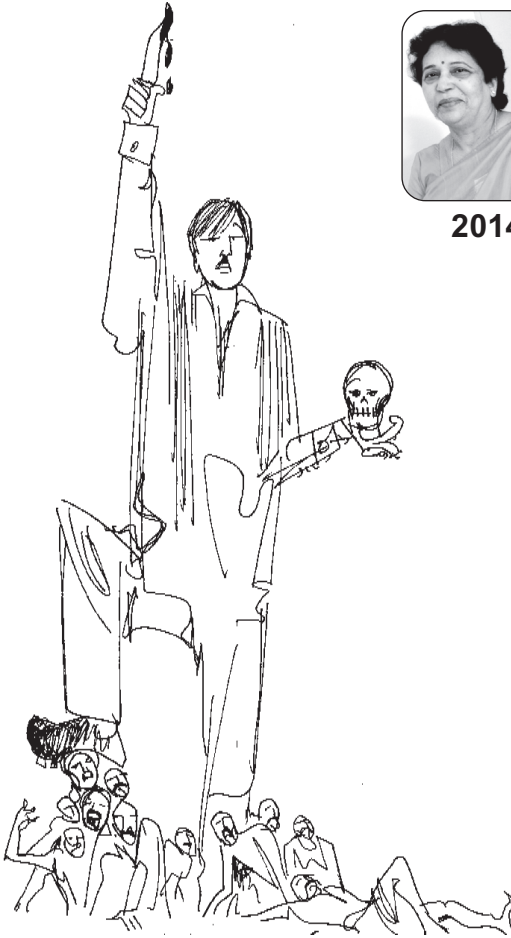
'Though he lost his hair like an old man, he is still young in his desires ...' I smiled thinking about it!

*(Hamesha ... Majaaga ...
Andhrabhoomi Weekly, 17.11.2016)*

I WILL CREATE THE HISTORY!



2014



'I will create the history!' said Naresh proudly by keeping his legs crossed.

'Dirty fellow, you have failed in S.S.C. for three times . . . how can you create history?' criticized Ravi.

'I expect that he will create the history by getting failures for ten more times in tenth standard,' laughed Gopal.

All the friends laughed heartily.

'Please, don't laugh like that! I'm telling you very seriously! I may not be equivalent to you in studies but am I not efficient in other fields? One idea can change the entire life! Why are you making fun of me?' Naresh is infuriated at the behaviour of his friends.

'It's Okay - poor fellow! Why do you make fun of him? There are many great people in the world who have created history in their respective fields! They are all not intelligent! Some of them . . . not even completed their studies with minimum marks. Some of them did not complete even primary education! Do you think they are not great!? Let us encourage him!' Anand supported Naresh with sympathy.

'It's Okay - don't bother about our comments - now tell us - how can you create history?' asked Ravi with enthusiasm.

'Why do you want to have the taste of the dish before eating it? You can experience on your own very soon!' said Naresh by creating tension among his friends.

'It's all right - at least tell us the time for that auspicious occasion!' asked Gopal by controlling his laughter.

'Tomorrow exactly at this point of time!'

'Where should we come to witness your historical event?'

'Don't come to anywhere! I'll come to your houses!'

'Will you come to our houses?'

'Yes . . . I'll come to your houses and show you everything!'

'How can you come to everyone's house at the same time, nonsense?' Gopal mocked at him as it is a silly issue.

'That's suspense! You are all underestimating me! You will come to know my capacity and energy tomorrow by this point of time!'

'Stop your boasting!'

'It's true! If you want you can bet with me! If I lose in my bet . . . I'll give you thousand rupees to each one of you! But . . . I'll definitely win . . . you all wait in order to felicitate me tomorrow with garlands at the entrance of your houses!'

The next day . . . his friends were waiting at their entrances with garlands at the appointed time for Naresh in order to felicitate . . . they all strongly believed that Naresh was not competent enough to create history at any cost . . . they were eagerly waiting to receive thousand rupees as part of the

betting!

At that moment . . . there was a confused sound from every house hold!

The parents were calling their sons, who were waiting for Naresh -

'Oh! Come and watch the TV set! Your friend Naresh . . .' the parents were calling their sons with a loud voice.

All the friends had to rush into their TV hall.

The girl whom Naresh liked did not love him . . . so he raped her, then poured petrol on her body and burnt her alive - he held a petrol can in one hand, the dead body of the girl in another hand . . . dragging the dead body all through the way to police station - threatening everyone on the way -

'See . . . this girl doesn't like me! She considered me as a useless fellow! Am I not able to burn her alive with petrol? How much dare should I have to do this? Oh! Are you belonging to electronic media? Come! Come! I'm waiting for you only! My friends have done many good things in their life . . . they were not shown any time in the TVs? Look at me . . . I did only one wrong thing . . . that's all . . . without spending a single paisa ... I'm getting much publicity, I'm creating history also!? Rey friends, I won the game as I had said . . . please come with the garlands to felicitate me! Rey police . . . don't come

near me . . . If you come near me, I'll pour the petrol on you! Will you punish me? How can you do that? See here . . . I'm pouring petrol on me . . . o its flames are burning ... o flames' Naresh was burning in the flames.

The garlands from the hands of his friends were slipped from their hands. They had closed their eyes without watching the ghastly incident.

'Is Naresh, with whom we have made friendship, a psycho? Do the psychos plan in this perfect way well in advance?' The friends were astonished to see the developments.

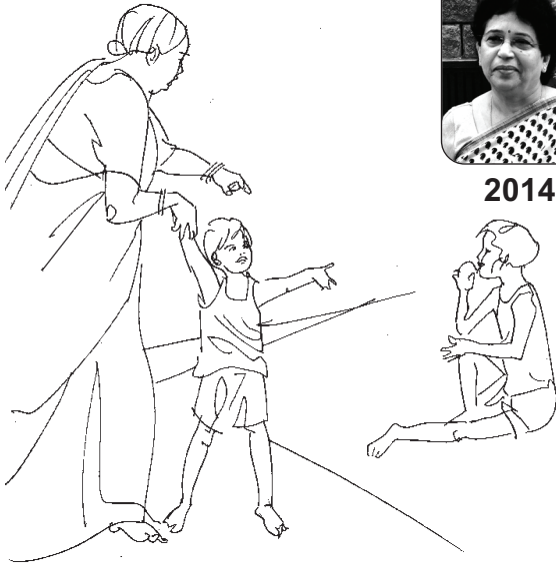
'Girls . . . beware of psychos, please have an eye on them!' the TV news readers are announcing all through the day.

'Every channel covered the same news from morning till evening! How will you watch the news . . . those scenes? By watching such scenes the psychos are getting inspiration. With the effect of this the other psychos will also resort to the same kind of action! Switch off the TVs! The parents scolded the sons.

(On the eve of International women's day)

(*Charithra Srushtistha -
'Dhikkara' a collection of stories, 2014*)

INTIMACIES



'Hey Ravi, won't you give me a guava?'

"Sorry.... Gopi! I have this one only with me!"
said Ravi while he was biting the guava.

"Do you eat it all alone? Don't I need it?" said
Gopi and grabbed the guava from the hands of Ravi
and ran away.

"Hey! What's that speed? Give his guava to
him!" said the grandmother by holding Gopi's arm.

"I don't give, grandma!"

"Will you give it or not?" Grandmother said
angrily.

"I don't give"

"Rey, I'm telling you! Give it to him."

"Never"

"Gopi! Listen to me; give him his fruit."

"Leave it, grandma! He is younger to me! He would also like to eat it - let him eat!" said Ravi.

"You stop talking, Ravi!" Grandmother rebuked Ravi; turned towards Gopi and said, "How many times did I tell you...it's not good to eat defiled food ...' grandmother said angrily.

"Then, the other day Ravi had grabbed my ice cream, which I was eating! Wasn't it the defiled food? Why didn't say you anything to him for eating my defiled food?"

"He is different. You are different Gopi. How can you compare with him?"

"Yes Do I have a comparison with him? He is anyway your son's son I am your daughter's son. He is greater than me, isn't it, grandma?"

Grandmother felt as if she was whipped.

"It's not dear ... eating children's defiled food by elders is not a wrong, but children should not eat the elders' defiled food!"

"It's a lie! You made him eat your curd rice while you were eating! You are elder than him, aren't you? Then why did you make him eat your defiled food?"

"That's not the issue ..."

"Grandma, whatever you say - the way you behave with me is different from that of Ravi! You don't treat us in the same way. Moreover, you love him very much... You make him eat with a lot of affection.... But you never allow me to share his food. You will look at me angrily if I ask for his food. Have you ever made me eat affectionately? Moreover, you say that I must eat myself! Anyhow, you have partiality, Grandma!"

The grandmother was shocked ...

It's not dear, actually.....

'I know grandmother, my mummy doesn't live here....she lives in America ... that's why you neglect me ... I don't stay here! I go to America! I will call my mummy now itself. I ask her to take me to America...!' Grandmother stopped Gopi who is trying to rush to phone -

"Look Gopi ! Your mummy herself told me over phone in the recent past that one should have one's own glasses and plates. One must not eat in other's plates. So..." she took care that the guiltiness of saying lie is not to be seen in her face.

'No ... my mummy would not have said so.....! In the name of my mummy, you don't allow me to mingle with Ravi! There are no other children in the house except Ravi. With whom should I play? Our neighbours' children don't come to our house! You never allow us to go others' houses. Why are you

behaving like this grandma? I am angry with you!"

"You don't know, dear... our neighbours are rich! We are the poor... I want them not to treat you as their inferiors." Grandmother mumbled by saying.

"It's a lie! Nani, our neighbour waves his hand to me saying 'hai' from their terrace when he sees me! They are not such kind of people", said Gopi.

'You are right dear.... Nani is a kid he is equal to God! However, you don't know how his mother patrols him with hawk's eyes not to come to our house.... You are just a kid?' grandmother's mind was filled with grief; she didn't say anything to Gopi.

"In this house... who is there to play with me except Ravi? But, you don't allow me to mingle with him! Am I suffering from any disease, grandmother... why are you doing like this?" Gopi started crying.

"You don't have any disease, my dear! You're gold!" grandmother tried to console him.

"All my friends go to movies and picnics with their younger and elder brothers and mummies! My mother is not here.... Don't you at least allow me to play with Ravi, Grandma?" Gopi's eyes are filled with tears.

Grandmother couldn't bear the situation.

'I'm getting bored at home ... I can't stay here! I'll go to America! I'll call my mum right now...' he ran

straight away to the phone and dialed the numbers.

No response from other side! He tried again and again and disgusted. Gopi hit the receiver against the wall in vain and fled into this bedroom with anger.

'Mummy, Gopi called me last night when you were all asleep... He complained that you were not allowing him to sleep with Ravi in the same room. You didn't allow him to play with..... and some more issues like this...' he narrated his agony.

She received a call from her daughter.

"Look dear ... as a result of his stray wanderings I lost my grown up son. Because of him, I lost my daughter-in-law also. Ravi is the only descendant in the family! The dreadful disease transmitted to him from his mother when he was born! Resultantly, he is counting the days for his death. You have left your son here in India, as it was not possible for you to take him along with you to America. I have been leading my life every minute in worry that anything would happen to Gopi as he mingles with Ravi!

'Mummy, please don't say anything? We both know that Ravi is at fourth stage of HIV! No one should treat him differently! I wished him to be happy as long as he lives... But your discrimination'

'But dear...'

'I don't wish to listen anything from you, Mummy!

I thought you would insist me to take Gopi along with me, if you know the condition of Ravi! I have been saying lies to you that I had got a big job in America. I want Ravi, who was born by sharing the blood of my brother, not to be bullied I left Gopi with you in India as I thought he would accompany Ravi, but.... What have you done ...?'

'That's not dear... Ravi's condition is not so good that he may die at any moment. He will no longer be with us! But I'm worried that the disease may be transmitted to Gopi. My ultimate aim is at least to save your son ... dear. I must be careful that I don't let Ravi know what disease he is suffering from and I must be careful to save Gopi from transmitting Ravi's disease. I am in disgusting situation ...!'

'Mummy!' her daughter screamed.

'Gopi is my son! Why do you worry, as a mother, I'm least bothered about him? It's not a communicable disease... It doesn't spread through the acts of eating meals together, eating defiled food and by shaking hands ...!'

'Look dear ... Gopi is the only son to you... if anything happened to him....!'

'Nothing will happen to him mummy! You should not be anxious in that respect. You are supposed to reveal about Ravi's disease to Gopi. He is a small kid Without understanding the real

problem, he developed false notions about you. So ... I told Gopi the truth last night. I also told him that, Ravi would not live many more days.'

Her mother was relieved from the tension!

'He cried terribly... I don't know when he slept last night! At least... from today onwards... provide the environment to Gopi to mingle with Ravi! I know your anxiety ... but Ravi should get an intimate touch ... affectionate greetings! Of course...you are providing them abundantly... I don't deny it ...'

Mother took the breath peacefully.

'But.... Mummy... That's not enough for Ravi! He needs the shake hands of his peer group. He needs to play and have fun with them too! They will ignite the hope for living in him... extends his life span! Don't worry that something would be happened to Gopi! Nothing will happen to him... Let him play with Ravi. Ravi needs Gopi's company at this time. I'm coming to India in a week ... you also need my company at this age ... is it Okay? Bye...'

her daughter cradled the phone.

Her mother has immense strength with the phone call!

*(Aathmiya Sparsha,
Aashadeepam, a story collection, March, 2014)*

TEMPTATION



2013



"Rangi! Shut the door - take care of the house! We are going to our maternal home! Having locked the house, don't go hither and thither! The days are not fine. After shattering the locks they are taking away whatever their hands happen to fall on" handing over to housemaid, Vijaya whisked and reposed in the jeep.

"How can one break the inspector's house? Damn insult!" Ravikanth took his seat beside Vijaya with a smile.

Rangi kept the suitcase in the jeep. The jeep moved and in the next five minutes it took up its speed on the ragged road!

"Oh! What a damned road dear! The corporation officials should intentionally be honored at the places like these!" said Vijaya jolting in the jeep.

"Ssh! In this colony speech should be avoided in the jeep!" said Ravikanth mischievously.

Knuckling on the head of aghast and quizzical eyed Vijaya -

"Dunce...! If conversed in these jolts...tongues will be no more in our mouths! They fall down after being cut...This is what for!" said with a smile.

Vijaya laughed.

Vijaya remembered the game of 'Kho...kho' as she observed all the vehicles with great alert and deft escaping the confronting vehicles in the situation of the death's invasion in an unknown form and from unsaid direction on the busy road.

In the bus stand-as the driver was debarking -a constable being emerged from unknown quarters.

"Sir, Sir! DSP saheb said, you should not go to the village today! It's said that there is Home Minister's programme at Charminar at six o' clock tomorrow morning! Instructed for making deployment!" informed and relaxed.

There is no fortune for a happy tour with wife for a day or two! These ministers have got nothing to do. Each of these Ministers inclined to mortify us every day!' disgusting inwardly...

"Alright you can go" said and send the constable away -

"What can we do now Vijji - Your absence won't taste me even for a moment to stay in the house! It won't even favour me to get sleep at night! Don't you feel anything!" he asked with desperate eyes.

'Only it matters for a couple of days - I would certainly return on day after tomorrow -would it ever amuse me to depart you? I'm going on account that my brother will feel disappointed on his birthday for my absence.

"Okay, Okay... but..."

The Vijayawada bus arrived on the platform before his dialogues were finished!

He came near to window after having her got into the bus -

"Alright but very soon when you reach the village...should make hourly phone calls, if not, I can't bear it" said Ravikanth.

"What - for these very two days? Better happened! Not demanded a call either for a minute or for a moment!" Vijaya derided.

As she was speaking, the bus moved!

Ravikanth took his way home in his jeep.

He saw the time; it was ten in the night!

'It has been three months when we got married! This is the first time for Vijaya going to her maternal home leaving me all alone! How could she manage to travel alone in the night?'

In fact I reserved the seats for both of us with a view to go Vijayawada together by night bus.

But - I happened to stay back without any forethought!

Having descended in Vijayawada at so late in the night, however much trouble she would have to face! If desired to tell her to go on the next morning - it is said that her brother wouldn't put on new clothes unless Vijaya gives him a head bath. Therefore it is obliged to send her off during night time!

Ravikanth has been reflecting over! After going for a distance - the jeep came to a sudden stop - Driver got down and started wrestling with it. Ten minutes lapsed! Ravikanth got vexed.

"I will go by an auto!" Ravikanth said in Hindhi and saw either side of the road for autos to come, after getting down from the jeep.

No auto came to his view! He waited for five

minutes with an idea if any auto may come! But none has come! In front there appeared a bar shop.

Unwittingly he licked his lips!

'Oh! How long it has been, since having enjoyed a peg of whisky?'

There was a strong desire to lean at the luxurious feet of my wife, drinking and receiving wine from her hands, as if I were an Omar Khayyam since college days.

But, it's of no use - during the nuptial days... in that enthusiasm - one day I brought home some whisky, by looking at it Vijaya assaulted on me like anything!

She said that such things would not suit and fit in her home. She raised a storm in the tea cup. She warned me that she would get hanged if ever such things get repeated!

However much more desire I had for drink, I never hazarded to bring home except having it secretly in one or the other camps!

Soon after getting the thought of whisky...know not where the desperation disappeared that he had an half an hour ago. Now he has the relaxing luxury of wafting in the breeze. In a rush he intruded the bar, got a whisky bottle and fried chicken packed, and told the address after getting into the auto that was coming from the opposite direction.

'Yes...Wives...what a freedom we get if they go to their mothers' home...what a pleasure!' Auto stopped in front of his house interrupting his stream of thoughts.

Whistling a happy tune, having ascending stairs, he pressed the calling buzzer standing in front of the door.

Inside ...

"How cozy it is to lean on this spongy bed? It is merely for view to watch Siranjeevi* reposing in films...we are not aware of luxury of soft bed even once in life! How cool and pleasant is the air inside the room - the feeling is like as if sitting on the tank bund - somewhere. In the AC room, listening to melodious songs on the tape-recorder - If rolled on these spongy bed with a beautiful woman like you, would anything more than this one desire in the life? What a rubbish of this tape-recorder, it plays no songs whatever button is pressed!" Sambu is continuing his ecstatically speech.

"Someone is knocking at the door!" Rangi tried to stand.

"Ehe! Who tend to come this hour? Sleep" Sambu bladed, weltering toxically on the spongy bed in order to hug Rangi.

Ravikanth moved to the bedroom window with a suspicion and ogled inside through the crevice of

the door!

In that dim light...on his foam bed -where Vijaya and he sleep everyday -There was Rangi in cozy hug of Sambu.

He saw with his widened eyes.

Beyond suspicion! The very couple! With all disregards he went and pressed calling buzzer again.

"Yehe...leave me! You didn't deny tempt of this place! The inspector baabu might have retreated here having his mind changed - Oh God what can I do now? To what it will turn, if they see you here at this time! It turns to resin in the fire! Your desire to lie on the spongy bed brought to my death!" Rangi could not move her limbs anymore.

Ravikanth has been giving a long press on the calling buzz without removing his finger from it!

Sambu felt antidote.

"What - You are right!? Really inspector baabu could have been here?" he sat on the bed in embarrassment.

"How would you manage to escape from here? There is no other exit in this room!" Rangi effused with perspiration.

"Eh! What do you think would happen? Let's open the door usually! Why should we afraid of

anything? Anyway you are my wife and I am your hubby!" said Sambu trying to bring courage temporarily!

"You mad fellow... 'Today madam and sir kept me on sentry duty here and went away to their village. 'Tonight I won't come home, you go away', I said to you like a parrot. But you didn't listen to me and came after me in order to sleep here! Madam knows the fact that you are a drunkard! On the pretext that I allowed you in, she may remove me from my job. Madam has strong detestation towards the drunkards. What should I do now, Oh God! Rangi adopted a thinly screaming tune!

"Yehe! Fool! Am not your husband, though a drunkard? I escape stealthy from the eyes of *ayyagaru*. Don't raise your noise with your cries." Taking Rangi's hand he reached the door.

At that very moment there was power cut.

At the next moment Sambu opened the door and disappeared in the dark.

"What are you doing Rangi for a long time? I have been ringing the bell for the past ten minutes!" Ravikanth said and entered the room.

The bulbs blazoned with power as soon as Sambu escaped from the scene.

Ravikanth closed the doors and checked every room. Sambu was not traced anywhere! He

perceived that Sambu could have escaped during the power cut.

"Where is madam, inspector Babu?" Rangi asked wiping the sweat on her face.

"She went to Vijayawada. I did not go having some urgent work to do!" He said and entered the bedroom - placed the whisky bottle on the tea-poy.

"Babu, will you take dinner? I serve the food for you and leave for my home then!" asked Rangi.

Ravikanth observed the time.

It was eleven o' clock! Feeling this time is unfit for dinner, he nodded his head in denial.

At the very time, "Rangi, Rangi" the shouts of Sambu reached them from outside. Ravikanth opened the doors.

"As that you have come! I came to take Rangi with me!" Sambu said joining his hands in front of Ravikanth.

"See, Sambu! I have to go to Charminer on special duty at two o' clock in the night. You know well that madam does not like the house to be kept locked. Now what hazard has come over there? Rangi will come tomorrow morning! You go now" said Ravikanth.

Sambu was submerged in thoughts.

"It is said that the inspector babu will leave again

at two o'clock at night! So it is better to return after watching any cinema of the second show. Again on those beds ...with my golden doll like Rangji...oh! How much more pleasure!

"As it is decided *dora* *!" Sambu said joining his hands and went away wafting in the sweet dreams.

Ravikanth entered in after closing the doors.

Sitting in the chair in the living room- He drew the tea-poy near to him which was lying on one side.

He opened the lid of the whisky bottle! He also opened the pack of the fried chicken. He called Rangji and asked her to bring glass tumbler from almirah and cool water from the fridge.

"Once in a long course... What is wrong in taking some wine in a party Rangji!? Do you know how your madam raises a storm of words without ignoring it? Pch! It became totally a freedom-less life!

She might have not seen him in such a condition. She supplied his needs being surprised all along. Pouring the whisky into the glass - he saw into her face with his slightly raised head. Her face was as clear as a crystal.

"Rangji! I am extremely desirous of drinking whisky being served with the hands of your madam. But - that does not seem to be fulfilled in this life!" said Ravikanth.

Those dialogues reminded of Sambu to Rangi.

"He too has the same taste, Babu! He always makes me oblige to pour the toddy into the glass and to make him drink. The distinction is merely in the clothing and talking but the habits of you - the rich and of us - the poor are one and the same" Rangi said with wide open mouth.

There was some guiltiness in the mind of Ravikanth that making him reminds of Vijaya!

★ ★ ★

One night after dinner - he switched on T.V. set, knowing Vijaya's desire for old songs!

In one of the movies - 'yours are these eyes - yours are these curls -each and every atom of my body is yours - let this life dwell as your slave!' It is perhaps to change the drunkard husband -Savitri is living an artistic life having turned to drunkenness!

Vijaya has a craze for Savitri.

He aimed a slanting glance to see her reaction at that scene.

'Chha! What a brazen arrogance! She tends to serve this drunken wretch as a bounder mistress! What the hell is this lyric!?' Vijaya frowned.

"I am afraid there were no feminists of your kind at that time! The poor lyricist frenzied accordingly" he said to provoke Vijaya.

As a response to it-

"Abbo! How happy are you! Let's not bother about the lyricist - taking advantage of the scene you may be frenzied accordingly!" Vijaya made fun of me on the contrary.

He knows the weakness of Vijaya.

Exposure of Savitri's still is enough... However angry and petulant -Vijaya will be pleased and smiled by looking at her photograph.

"Vijaya loves Savitri more than me" he would say and many a time undergoes envious introspection.

Now for him having grabbed an opportunity...

"It's Okay Viji, whenever I wanted to take a peg of wine for pleasure, you raise so many clamors! Then what about your Savitri? It is heard that she was a heavy drunkard of alcohol. How come you, the hater of drunkards, love Savitri?" he tried to excite her.

Vijaya did not respond.

"Still, I am unwittingly asking you... 'As is the God, the dweller of shrine... so is the wife to the world, a light divine" Savitri, who with this melody and astonishing action would please the spectators, did not have thought at the drinking hour that her attitude is going contrary to her performance?"

"This is applicable to the cupid husband. Who

knows if she was devoid of love and afflicted by solitary life?" said Vijaya.

"The grief of the same kind, you know, made Devadas a drunkard. Why then you detest the character of Devadas? However you have bias for woman, Vijji."

"I don't detest the people Ravi, but the weaknesses of their minds! To this there is no exception for Savitri, Devadas and eventually you or the rest! One more thing...If I were to be beside Savitri...I would inculcate optimism, courage in her. I would not have connived at such a great actress for imposing punishment on her own! That may be the reason why my mind gets distraught at the thought of Savitri", Vijaya's eyes became wet.

"Poor woman! Finding no way to forget the grief, she might have become a slave to drink!" expressed his sympathy compassionately.

"But...distresses are part of everyone's life!" That may be the love failure...financial troubles...or any of the kind...just because of distresses, should we all become drunkards!?"

I was dumb found!

"A poet made the drunkard Devadasa to sing...distress should be treated as delight and that very awareness is the stable pleasure ...the blissful treasure!" When Devadas realized the secret of distresseness should be happy with it ... why did

he take shelter at the shade of alcohol! It's completely absurd!", said Vijaya.

"You are mistaken Vijji!" That was the truth emerged from despondency -That is what it ... in fact not from forgetting the distress!" he advocated.

"Abbo! You seem to be well versed in *Vedas* and *Nirvedas*!" mocked Vijaya.

"And yet Vijji - I wanted to ask you out of my ignorance! 'People's private lives are completely their own. If they come to public life, we can comment on them like anything' said Sri Sri*. People like Savitri are public figures. Can they drink like that?" he provoked her.

"That quotation is very much applicable to Sri Sri! Then why did he addict to drink! In my view... even if Savitri drinks, Sri Sri smokes, Diana continues to love...they are their private affairs. Public has nothing to do with them. There are so many things that they need! Yet...speaking things like these, shooting them with cameras, and accusing them of sins are as equal crimes as to watch secretly when someone is taking bath, in my view ..."

"But...If people like me take them as role models and continue drinking to fuddle, could you support it!" He asked with a wishful thought and a load of enthusiasm.

"Savitri, who drinks in the surrounded walls and brings risks upon her own health is thousand times better than you, who extravagant their excess money for pleasure in the name of enjoyment and drag the youth towards 'pub culture' and effeminate the nation in the name of revelries. What is compassion between you and her?" peevishly said Vijaya.

'If Vijaya make out me in this condition, will there be anything left? ...' Ravikanth thought coming back to his own consciousness. The enthusiasm that was there, suddenly evaporated.

"Rangi - do your husband drink?" he asked

"Yes Babu!"

"Your madam dislikes me, if I drink like this! Then what about your husband? How do you feel, if he drinks?"

"Why don't I feel? I should batter the same palm wine bottle on his head and kill him but..."

"Um - but..."

"If anybody is denied of his likings, he will try to get them secretly! I do not incline to make them do another mistake to wean the first one!" Rangi said.

"Abba! How good Rangi is, how well she understands the men?"

Ravikanth blurted the same dialogue loudly.

"Being so -it is not that I disregard the first mistake! Drink if you will! But drink it in my presence only. Don't try to deceive me by drinking secretly outside, being afraid of me" I said. Rangi gave vent to her mind.

Ravikanth was shocked ...

"At the beginning he used to drink five bottles a day! There after four - three - two - now he is adjusting himself with one. Today or tomorrow he will completely abstain from it! I have hopes on him."

Ravikanth felt like being slapped.

How deep Vijaya too has hopes on me! But did I do now!?

"Rangi! One thing is beyond my understanding! Will it not be enough for all the women to have control over their husbands as you do? Instead of pasting pickets in the streets for banning the arrack!' he alerted his itchy ears for Rangi's response.

Rangi laughed.

"There should be restraint in everyone's mind like that of my husband! It is enough to sniff the whiffs of arrack...will hollow cheeked beggarly wretches can abstain themselves, if they look at the wine shop in front of them?"

He felt as if flogged with a whip. The whisky he was about to sip ... poured into the sink.

After a week days-

"When did you come from Vijayawada, madam?"
Rangi stepped into the house by asking her.

"I came yesterday night, Rangi! How do you do?" asked Vijaya.

"I am fine - what is that madam?there is a lorry in front of the house. Have you got transferred...all your quilts and bed embarking the lorry?" Rangi asked desperately.

"No Rangi! We are sending these to your home" said Vijaya.

Rangi struck with aghast.

Sambu seemed to have pressed the recording button while listening to tape-recorder. Both of your dialogues were recorded in it" said Vijaya.

Rangi's face turned pale!

"I know ...how much you repudiated. I don't find fault with you in this!"

"But ...madam..."

"I dislike the bed which was bought only for us! I strongly believe that it should not be used by others for any purpose! Besides this, Sambu has much liking for it. Okay...you don't get disappointed! We'll purchase other one..."

Rangi was dumb found ...

"Ravikanth Babu told me all that happened. The way of your soft accents pleased not only Ravikanth Babu but me too!" Vijaya tapped on the shoulder, praising Rangi.

Rangi's face bloomed with happiness!

*(Temptation -
Andhrabhoomi weekly, 07.11.2013)*

*Siranjeevi : (Chiranjeevi) a popular actor in
Telugu film industry*

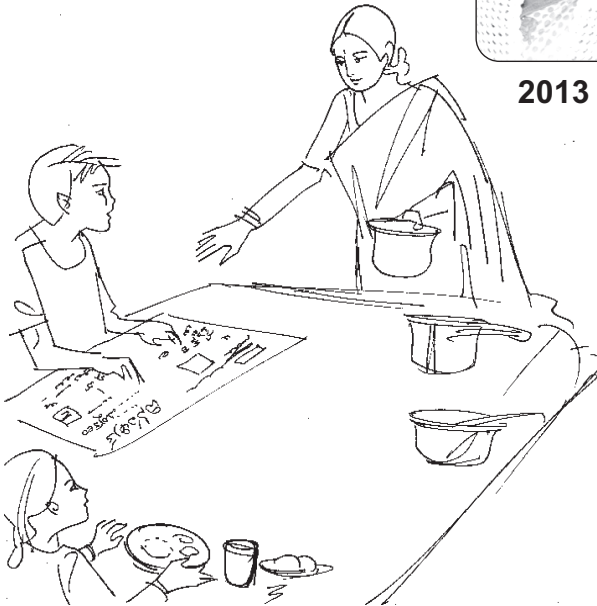
Dora : An old term for master

*Sri Sri : Srirangam Srinivas Rao, a popular
poet in Telugu Literature.*

MADE FOR EACH OTHER ...



2013



In the womb of a mother... cozily... without anxiety ...a tiny shape was acquiring its form.

"Damn! A girl child again! Don't need!" she was startled at the father's heartless words!

She quivered like a new born leaf, thinking of her tiny body that was going to be poked with full of holes. The 'uterine grave' was inescapable for her! She looked around searching for a way out.

Suddenly, there were some strange words. She picked up her ears.

"Even if it is a girl child, I wanted to have it!" mother pleaded.

"I'll see how you can give birth to her!" father threatened.

The quack's medicine didn't work!

"Thank God!" she was relieved from the tension; the little form was dropped on to the earth.

Thus, the mother won, the father lost.

But the satisfaction didn't last long!

"A hearth, on my heart unnecessary burden - I don't want it!" By avoiding mother's notice, the father flung her in a drain and beetled off.

That form - perhaps still left with its numbered days on the earth - with scanty breath - was found to a childless couple!

The step-mother gave the name 'Sathyabhama', her favourite character from mythology to the female baby, who was found in the drainage. She was brought up with love and care!

After a few years, a 'son' was born to the couple. Deeming it as another gift from God - they named the son 'Varaprasad'!

The children were just shedding off dependence. One day their mother called them and divided

household chores between them.

Clearing the plates off the dining table and cleaning it was her son Prasad's duty. Washing the plates was her daughter Satya's duty... or vice versa.

The son thought one day.....

"I won't do these effeminate chores! I'm a man, the royal one! Go! You do them yourself!" saying so, the son sneaked out.

At the dinner on the same night-

His mother spread a news paper before her son in place of a plate on the dining table-

"The plate that you ate in was dried up as it was not cleaned by you - and it was lying in the sink over there! It's good if you wash and bring your plate! If not - I'll serve rice on this newspaper - you can eat up! - And this - doesn't need washing - when you've eaten - you can conveniently throw it in the garbage bin!" said the mother.

That's all - the son went and brought the washed plate without a word.

His mother felt that the lesson was enough for the day.

Next day, she called on her son as soon as she woke up.

"Rey! What did you say to your sister yesterday?"

Come on, repeat it!" she asked.

"Just 'these effeminate chores I won't do - I'm a man, the royal one' I said" - told the son fearfully.

"Do you know the meaning of 'effeminate'?"

He nodded sideways, indicating that he didn't know the meaning.

"Can you use such words without knowing the meaning of them? You won't be called 'effeminate' for sharing the domestic chores and cooking! Rather, if you shy or walk in a way atypical to your gender" the mother went on.

"Mom, I have a doubt" the son asked by interrupting her.

The mother cast a questioning look.

"My elder sister doesn't feel shyness at any time! How is then shyness a female trait?", the son expressed his doubt.

"You see, - though crying and shying are female characteristic instincts, which are inherited from their birth - crying at trivial things and expressing shyness unnecessarily are other qualities of a feeble mentality! One has to shun such qualities - be it girls or boys. Again, you should be ashamed of doing shameful things... not for doing chores! Moreover, there's nothing like female chores and boyish chores! Every work has to be shared by the both!" explained the mother.

"Mom - I don't understand one thing..... Why does our uncle, next door stay at home always? Except watching TV the whole day -he doesn't do any work outside! He has a scooter - but never goes out to bring provisions! Even to the chicken shop, he sends aunty! Poor aunty, I pity her! Well, what exactly, is his disease?" asked the daughter.

"Oh, is that!? That is a characteristic of the 'royal men'" said the mother with a smile.

"Oops! Is this what 'royal man' means? Ugh! I thought that it's a great word and I quarreled with my elder sister arrogantly. I'll never utter such a nasty word in the future! I was wrong! I slap myself" said the son, and did a couple of squats and slipped from home.

Satya and Varaprasad joined college.

One day.....

"Brother, don't you know my friend Madhavi? - She committed suicide today!" said Satya painfully.

"Alas! What has happened to her actually?" asked Varaprasad.

"Recently, a naughty fellow unexpectedly ran to her in the college corridor and kissed on her cheek - and by the time she composed herself, he got that scene captured on his friend's cell phone - As if that wasn't enough, he got some dirty pictures, replaced the faces with hers by morphing them on

the computer - and the same was sent through MMS to his friends. That little heart could hardly bear it" told Satya.

"Ugh! Being lenient in this matter isn't good, Satya! Girls like you should arrange TV and Press Meets and protest demanding ban on camera cell phones on the educational campus" advised Varaprasad.

"Oh my crazy brother, when the TV channels themselves are indirectly resorting to eve - teasing by airing the bathroom scenes of girls publicly, how can you tell us to report to them?" hissed Satya, who was enraged with indignation and anguish.

The very next moment, there moved a thought on mother's mind...

Minting money on the weaknesses of people - in the guise of 'scourging the wrong-doers - there moved the foxes wearing sacerdotal thread' in her mind.

Just as Sudarshan Chakra appeared to the desperately struggling Gajendra who was lamenting that 'Not an iota of strength remained; courage has dissipated' - so appeared now before her eyes- the 'Goddess of Justice' who, like a helping hand. She would strip these foxes off the sacred thread in order to do justice.

"Not bad! When all paths are closed - the courts are opened for girls! They shouldn't resort to

suicides!" she mused.

The same thing she told her daughter.

★ ★ ★

Sathya and Varaprasad have attained marriageable age after completing their education!

Parents having girls came forward by offering lakhs of rupees as dowry to the son.

The father tilted in favor of it.

"The alms that the parents of girls 'shake off' under compulsive conditions are something that the parents of boys 'beg' as dowry! I don't like it, my dear son" said the mother.

"Now, tell me dad... shall I go with a begging sack?" asked the son.

"Fantastic!" thought the mother.

"All our organs are in good condition, aren't they? Do you doubt that can't we earn by ourselves?" the son continued.

The father's face flushed.

"Don't you think that it is beneath our dignity to covet someone's hard earnings for free, dad?"

The mother was elated at son's words. The father felt ashamed.

That's all! They neither take dowry for their son - nor did they give for their daughter!



"Gopal, do you know this? My friend Lalitha puts all her monthly earnings in her husband's hands - and then, keeps begging him even to buy *bindees*!" said Satya.

"Employed women are the golden egg-laying ducks to such people. All the time, their only concern is how to eat up those eggs greedily - but they don't have the common sense that even those ducks get hungry and need food!" said Gopal with agony.

"Moreover, he is a demon of suspicion. His wife has to do the job-but she shouldn't talk with any men! As if that's not enough, he gave her a cell phone just to know her whereabouts! He phones her during the lunch time! If she doesn't answer to his call promptly, 'Who are you talking to? Why are you not picking my call!' he would say. If she picks the call- You picked the call so quickly! Who did you think it was from? He would say" told Satya.

Gopal listened in astonishment.

"Shall I tell you something strange? The moment she comes from office he grabs her phone and checks the 'received calls' and 'dialed calls'-to see who she made calls to, and who she had calls from! Some naughty people who know the peculiar nature of her husband-just to tease him-give a ring to her cell from public booths and leave 'missed calls'! Seeing them, he would flare up and vex her

enquiring whose numbers they were!" said Satya with pain.

"Why can't that demon of suspicion stop her doing job?-instead of harassing her like this?" said Gopal.

"No. No! How can they ask to stop doing the job? Such people want the wife as well as the money she earns-but they wouldn't have anything to do with wife's heart and personality" told Satya.

"Your friend is educated-doing a job! Even girls without any education or job are rebelling! Why was your friend enduring him instead of saying 'Good Bye!'?" asked Gopal.

"Once she left her maternal home out of vexation. But her father, frightful of public opinion, chided her and promptly sent her back. Taking advantage of it, her husband became even worse. 'Assured because of your job, you may be thinking of divorcing -I will kill you rather, but at any cost I will not give divorce, beware!' he threatened and tormented her!"

"Is it necessary that he should give the divorce? Ask your friend to send him a divorce notice herself! If she reports to police that there is a threat to her life from him, he will get back! Some dogs are like that! If you get scared, they do frighten! You should oppose such intimidating dogs-but shouldn't sit back in fear! And you all - don't drug her with

cowardice! Boost up her courage and teach her to resist!' counseled Gopal.

"Aruna! What happened, darling? Why are you sitting so worried?" Varaprasad asked his wife.

Tears welled up in her eyes at her husband's words!

"Did anybody-in our home-say anything?"

"No, No! Not that.... Looking at mother-in-law's goodness, I remember my elder sister and I get tears!" Aruna said by wiping her eyes.

"Tell me, Aruna, what's been with her!" asked Varaprasad comfortingly.

"Your parents didn't take dowry for my marriage! But-my father borrowed, gave dowry and got my sister married! Despite all that-she is not spared of trials at the in-Law's home....That's what is paining me."

"Trials...!/? What do you mean?"

Even in such agony, Aruna couldn't help laughing at her husband's innocence.

"Have you ever heard of 'domestic violence'?"

He had heard of violence to creatures.... Violence to animals... but what could be this domestic violence? he couldn't make out anything.

If he asked Aruna, perhaps, she would make fun saying "Don't you know even this?" - Varaprasad

was reflecting.

As if she has sensed his thoughts, Aruna told "You See.... I enjoy much freedom here! Whereas my sister's mother-in-law doesn't allow her to call our home! Instead, if we want to phone, they are curious to listen to what my sister might talk to us. Her mother-in-law would stand by her side as long as my sister is talking to us! The worst of all-They would ask my sister to call us and insist her to inform that her mother-in-law is not at home so that they could listen to what we say about her in her absence. On the response of our conversation the in-laws of my sister start harassing her."

"They appear to be sheer sadists!" pitied Varaprasad.

"Or, if we think of brining her to maternal home as she would be happy and cheerful in our midst for a few days-they seldom send, except once in a year! What's more, before they send her, they make her swear on her husband that she wouldn't tell anything about the in-laws' home to us! And my sister would never cross the line they drew!" said Aruna.

"Because your sister is such a fool who would abide by her oath, they are making her puppet, Aruna!" said Varaprasad.

"Whenever there are visitors in their home, it is my sister who has to serve them coffee, Tiffin etc!

But she is not supposed to laugh with them or talk to them! Moreover she has to stand all the time until the guests leave the house! To say briefly-she is a servant sans wages-in her in-law's home -that's all!"

"Your brother-in-law might be a man without individuality! It's better for such 'mom-wards' not to marry at all!" said Varaprasad's mother who came that way.

"Why do you say so mom? Being a mother-you are denouncing sons as 'mom-wards' and supporting daughters-in-law? What do you do if you have disputes with your daughter-in-law?" Varaprasad asked his mother, winking at Aruna without his mother's notice.

"Then-I'll ask you to hold daughter-in-law's sari-end! Other than that, I don't like you to be a 'mom-ward' even after having been married! In case my daughter-in-law and I can't get along with each other-you'll stay in one house and I in another-That's all!" said my mother with a smile.

"Ah...I know, mom! With that pretext you and dad-like the love birds-just you both-want to stay together. It's a ploy!" said the son,

"Perhaps, that ploy is yours! Don't try to have such hopes! Will I give you such a chance?" said Aruna, teasing Varaprasad.

"See! How I've got a daughter-in-law who can

foil the ploys of us" mother-in-law said to the son, looking at her daughter-in-law with delight.

★ ★ ★

"That you are a match for me-that I am a match for you-I have known it a long ago"..... Humming the song softly Gopal stepped inside the house.

"Why, revered husband is so energetic today! Seems, you've been singing some song too, Now, will you sing it again!" asked Satya.

Gopal picked up the song for a second time as Satya asked for it.

"Well, I may be a match for you, but how is that you are a match for me? Isn't it odd?" Satya pretend surprise.

"Why? Tell me in what way I'm not a match for you!" said Gopal with a boiling heart.

"I'll answer your question in a while-but will you answer me if I ask you something?" asked Satya.

"Ask" Gopal said quite confidently.

"Who is stronger between you and me?" asked Satya.

"What kind of a question is this, Satya! Undoubtedly myself" replied Gopal with enthusiasm.

"Shall I ask you one more question?"

What happened to Satya today? - She is asking all weird questions - thinking so, Gopal said "why

not, sure!"

"Tell me, who is delicate between us?"

Gopal's enthusiasm was evaporated.

"Why, Satya? Why do you get this doubt? And is this a question? A dummy question!" he said and began recollecting if, by mistake, had he ever commented that she was crude!

"Why don't you answer?" insisted Satya.

"You are delicate, obviously. Don't I know this little?" replied Gopal

"Your two answers are wrong!" said Satya.

"How is that?" Gopal blanched.

"How can I be delicate, who manage both the outside work and household work singlehandedly? How can you, who never touch any work except outside work, be the 'mighty one'-is it not mere vain boast?" smiled Satya.

Gopal scratched his head because he was unable to understand anything.

"Tell me now... Are you really a suitable match for me? Moreover, have you known it a long ago?" provoked Satya.

"You are correct dear! This he-man, who can easily lift up half a quintal of weight, delicate to wash a coffee cup in kitchen, how can he be a suitable

match for you? Whatever it is, you yourself are a suitable match for you" said the father-in-law.

Gopal seems to have understood something.

When the next day, Satya who returned home from office and set to clean up the dishes- "Alas! Your delicate hands may turn coarse - Why this menace? Don't you need my help? Shall I extend my helping hand?" Gopal handed over a cup of hot coffee.

Looking at Gopal, Satya started singing a song- "You are made for me - I am made for you - just now I discovered that we are made for each other!"

Her mother-in-law chuckled at shrewd boldness of her daughter-in-law.

*(Naa Sari Neevani ... Nee Sari Neenani ...
Bhumika monthly, January, 2013)*

THAT IS OUR ARBOUR!



2005

That was a beautiful building! (That was India in olden days!) In that building there were a number of beautiful rooms! (Princely states before independence) Every room had its specialty - every room was known for its special charm!

It was built with much difficulty, so the children selected the rooms according to their will and wish! The children were so happy and they sang the song with their mother: 'this is neither an ordinary building nor the simple nest but it was the arbour, built with love and affection' - the children were jumping, hopping and singing this melodious song!

The children in neighbouring houses (the foreigners in neighbouring countries) could hear these outbursts of laughter! 'They were all happy! What was the reason for their happiness?' they had

peeped through their window to know the reason out of curiosity! They had seen the opposite house very beautiful - with much 'greenery'!

"Oh! How beautiful the house was!" they thought themselves.

'How long shall we stay in the old house? Let's live sometime in the neighbouring house!' the children in the neighbouring house thought.

Immediately as soon as they got the idea they started for the neighbouring house! They knocked at the doors!

The children asked 'Who is there?' and opened the doors... the neighbouring house children entered the house without waiting for the permission! The children were shocked with this unexpected development in their house!

They were afraid of looking at the muscles of the neighbouring house children.

We were all little children!

The others were very strong!

By the time the children with some strength tried to resist some of the neighbouring children! The weak children . . . became dumb found and stared at the unexpected guests!

Mother observed all of them!

She might have thought - her children are very

little - the neighbouring children may certainly leave the house after sometime - 'after all they were all neighbouring children! Mother invited and served food for them also!

They might not have forgotten the hospitality of the mother - they might have liked our harbour - the neighbouring house children were not interested to go back to their home - they have even requested the mother - 'Mom, we would like to stay back here with your children!' they said.

Mother was so generous!

Mother said, "Okay, you can stay with us! I'll consider all of you as my 'adopted sons!'"

All the children adjusted themselves comfortably in that big and beautiful building!

The children from different houses mingled with one another like the members of a 'single family'!

Time passed . . .

'Balloons...! Balloons! Colourful balloons! Attractive balloons! Will anybody buy these balloons?' the white children (the Britishers) are selling the balloons.

The children were very happy to see and buy the colourful balloons!

Mother thought to buy the balloons as her children were very much interested! She invited the children who were selling the balloons inside the

house and bought the balloons from the white children and distributed among all the children including her original and adopted sons without any discrepancy!

The next day they bought 'the mill clothes'! Till that time the children used only cotton clothes and now they were interested to buy the mill clothes! Mother bought them also.

The white children started showing new things day after day! One day salt - the other day sugar - another day bangles.

Mother liked bangles very much!

She welcomed them and offered mat to them in order to have a glance of bangles!

The white children, who sat on the mat till now, peeped into mother's room - they tried to utilize mother's goodness and innocence. They used the situation conveniently for their selfish purposes.

One day when mother was sleeping by locking all the rooms - the white children took away the bunch of keys which my mother always keeps in her waist - the white children entered the house in large number!

Mother didn't know anything . . . she was sleeping with peace and serenity!

The white children opened every room. The doors were creaked! The children of that house woke up from deep sleep suddenly and startled!

Before the children came to their senses... the white children had taken out their pistols with a lightning speed. They even threatened the innocent children! They killed those who had opposed them! They convinced who were in confusion! They got control on all the rooms, all the remaining children were also surrendered to them at last...!

Time passed. The white children started their disorderliness. The native children came to know what they had lost, when the white children passed an order to follow their footsteps in every situation!

Gradually... the opposition was augmented against the white children! The native children thought that why the outsiders have authority on them in their own house!? There was consciousness in the Bengali children who were living in the east room! They even wrote articles in order to create awareness!

The white children smelt this! They decided to oppress this kind of revolution in the beginning itself! They even prepared some plans to suppress the revolutionary flames and also how to start the disputes in the beautiful house!

The white children made an enquiry - in which room there were native children - in which room there were adopted children! They have even planned to weaken the power of the native children - they thought to demolish the walls between the rooms - they wanted to separate the rooms by

constructing walls to weaken the children - they wanted to throw the children into minority!

They thought to implement their plans from the 'east room'!

Immediately... they wanted to build a wall in the 'east room'! The white children declared their plan.

'No' said all the children!

Though the white children did not listen to them, they passed an order to divide the east room!

That's all... all the native children were united to protest the illegal decisions of the white children!

They remembered their 'mother'! They even remembered the tune of Vandemataram, which was written about thirty years ago by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee! They have started to protest the decisions of the white children! The native children all came together and gave slogans - we don't need foreign goods - we use only native goods - they brought all the goods the white children had given them - they were all burnt before every one!

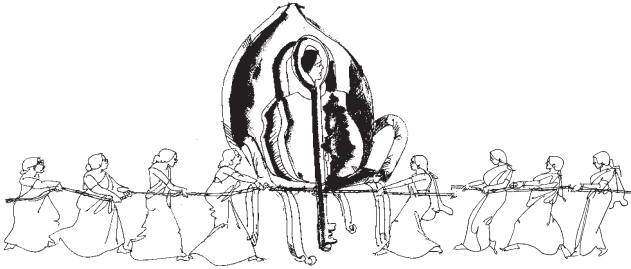
In that way the entire nation has become one! Vandemataram movement has paved the way to National Independence Movement.

(The speech given on 29.08.2005 in Nizamabad as part of Vandemataram Centenary Celebrations)

KEY



2004



'There was a garden - in that garden there was a temple of love . . . there was a handsome man in that temple!' - A beautiful woman from a distant country fell in love with this handsome young man - at last - she married him - entered the new country with a bundle of hopes, desires and wishes!

Her mother-in-law welcomed her grandly. But the co-sisters were not happy as the new bride didn't belong to their caste - an outsider!" they were dissatisfied with her presence.

'Though she may be an outsider, she is an expert in doing house hold chores! She is good at performing many domestic activities!' Sisters-in-

law, husband's sisters, expressed their opinion with happiness on the new bride!

She was friendly with everyone - she won the heart of her mother-in-law and Sisters-in-law! She became the mother of two children in the meantime!

Time passed...

Her mother-in-law lost her life in the hands of her own servants as she was not alert! All the Sisters-in-law have handed over the house 'key' to the son, though the new bride had resisted taking it!

Their domestic life went on peaceful for a certain period - then an unexpected tragedy happened in their life! The son lost his life in an accident like his mother!

Then the aadapaduchulu for not bearing the continuous tragedies in their family decided this time to handover the 'key' to the new daughter-in-law!

Then started the controversy in the family!

The co-sisters of the new bride started their argument that, "you are from a 'different family', we belong to the 'same family' . . . how can we believe you - how can the 'key' be handed over to an outsider?

'She is the daughter-in-law of this house according to the law - she gave birth to both of us -

she has been living in this house for the past thirty years! - Still how can you consider her as an outsider? It's absurd!' her children expressed their bewilderment.

'That's all! She may go to her maternal house in the near future!? If we hand over the key of our house - she may take away the money and jewelry that we have in the chest of drawers with her permanently?' co-sisters expressed their doubt openly.

'What is this? - What a gross injustice!? - What is the position of our mother in this house - Do you consider her as the child bearing machine? Doesn't she have individuality? Is she a person to do all house hold chores like a 'slave'? Doesn't she have any right to administer the house? The minds of the children were burning furiously.

'We told everything to your father not to have this strange alliance, as if we were telling to a parrot! He didn't listen to us! He married an outsider in the name of love! If he had married an insider from maternal side - did you get this type of problems now?' the aunts of the children tried to express their sympathy on them.

'These people are devils with doubts - if they pass a rule not to marry women from foreign countries - they would have encouraged only maternal alliances - there would be no problem -

why do they harass the lady from a distance place?' the neighbours who were observing all this episode criticized the developments.

'No, it is not possible to hand over the key to your mother! She would transport the secrets of this house to her maternal relatives! If they come here for a fighting - what is our position! We will be in a grave danger!' the co-sisters wept like anything!

'Ugh! Why should I work here - when there is no confidence on me?' she laughed without life in it by listening to all these words which are piercing like spears.

Adapaduchulu became dumb found by observing all these developments! There were tears rolled in their eyes. The perseverance developed in them. They finally decided to hand over the key to her at any cost.

'We have already decided to do it - you have come a long way in your mission - if we drop at this crucial juncture - is it not an impediment to the self respect?' the consciousness of adapaduchulu questioned them.

"Our 'family's dignity' is more important than our 'personal dignity'" the co-sisters declared the legacy of their family.

The fists of the children were tightened!

'After all . . . who is much bothered about that 'key'? My mother doesn't need either administration or authority! She wanted to live peacefully in this house with us and with the memories of our father! We don't want to have any authorities' the children have tried to drag the key from their aunts and wanted to throw it away. When they raised their hands!

She stopped her children - she took the key and touched it to her eyes as a sign of respect- in the presence of every one - she herself handed over the same to her younger brother-in-law - she did it with a dignity - she left the field much against to the expectations of all the members of the family.

Till then - the characters who were betting on the issue that 'she will not give away the key to anyone' - were disappointed - some of them wanted to create a confusing situation - some of them are ready to inflict pain on them - but their expectations went wrong and they were all disappointed with this unexpected development!

Some people always wanted to inflict either physical or mental pain on others - that is their hobby and habit! The human beings have different mentality - if others are suffering from pain - they will laugh at them - this is a kind of demonic behaviour of human beings!

That is why - they are ready with new weapons!

'Oho! She had handed over the key publicly - but wanted to continue authority privately - she will be driving force behind the younger brother-in-law. She was very clever - she was greedy - how intelligent she was!' the people around her tried to prick her!

'What an intelligent she was . . . in the guise of sacrifice' said the people and tried to poke at her.

They all started commenting in that fashion - they even tried to pick the hair on the egg - which was almost impossible!

Yes . . . we were very much aware of . . . violence - torture . . . domestic violence.

Then -

This is the response to a foreign woman - who left her own country - married the person whom she liked - entered into the foreign country with only clothes on her body -

Though she got the citizenship in this country - 'still she is a foreigner - not a native' - this is a kind of discrimination . . .

Native harassment - on foreign daughters-in-law!

What kind of violence is this? Who will define it? Who will be punished for it? Who will save the

victims? Nobody gave a serious thought to this problem - it's strange!

The entire world has become a global village in these days . . . in the family of universe - doubting a women for her foreign origin.... insulting and mocking her without any reason - it is a gross injustice on the part of everyone to be 'silent' on the issue! It is a symbol for our 'indifference' to the problem!

(2004 May)

I TOO CAN...



1992

That was Sunday! There was no school! Mummy went to 'Lioness Club' meeting! Dad had a seminar! So he went to college! I had nothing to do and getting bored. I was watching the passersby through the window.

A song of a *lambada** was coming from a distance. I had paid more attention to listen to it.

I had developed a kind of craze towards *lambada* dresses and songs when I had performed the *lambada* dance for school day programme. The song was coming close and closer. They are coming on a bullock cart - singing the song.

If a wait for a moment - they may pass out of my sight!

I don't want to miss them!

I left the window at once - rushed through the room and stood before the gate of my house.

Thank God! The lambadas had stopped their bullock carts before my house only. I was very happy as I could feel their presence for some more time. They were drawing the utensils and cutlery for cooking out of the cart. A lady immediately brought three big stones from the vicinity and made a hearth! Another woman was coming towards my home with a brass pot for water! The gate keeper was not allowing her to enter into the house! It seems they needed some water ...!? If we don't provide them water, they may move to some other house hold!?

"Saleem! Provide them water!" I requested him.

"If they are allowed inside, they may spoil the entire lawn", Saleem still resisting their entry.

"Otherwise! Get the water with our brass pot and pour it in her brass pot! Saleem, please Saleem."

Saleem was very much afraid of my mother! He brought the water at last with sighing and muttering!

That lambada woman started cooking with the water! I don't know what type of flour it was! It was in mustard colour! She was making chapattis with it! The man brought twigs for the hearth. He might be her husband!

Another woman was grinding the red chilli in their

mortar, which they brought in their cart. Another old woman was preparing the brinjal curry by cutting them nicely.

Little children got down from the cart one after the other. I don't know where were they all through the time?

Among the children, the elder one may be of my age!? It seems - she had a younger brother and a sister! The younger sister was now started crawling! Ugh! What is this? She was eating the mud! Why nobody is taking care of her!?

My science teacher always says - if we eat mud - the worms will be developed in our intestines. I don't know the exact name of the worms!

I don't know how many worms are there in the intestines of the little baby!

How fair is the elder girl!? Poor fellow - her dress was very dirty! Yes - thinking about dresses, I could recollect about those frocks which are not suitable to me because of their lower size. My mother had kept all those lower-sized frocks in the almirah. The almirah was filled with full of them. If I give all those to these little kids, it will be fine!

Yes, my Telugu teacher always teaches us the moral that - we should give some of the goods or money to the needy. I had only frocks as my property! They became old by the name, but they

appear to be very new as I had used them once or twice!

That lambada girl would be more beautiful than me in that dress!

I rushed inside the house! I went near the key board - took the key and opened the old almirah! I tried to reach the upper shelves by using the stool - searched for my favourite frock - after certain efforts I could get it! I locked the almirah - entered the veranda!

Lambada family prepared their meals! All the children - gathered around their mothers with the plates in their hands - it seems they were very hungry!

Really they were very lucky!?! They can eat in different places and villages as in a picnic!

The cool breeze was coming from a distance! The smell of the mud! My mother likes this smell very much! She used to say, "It's raining in the vicinity! We too get the rain very soon!"

Oh! . . . It's raining! Ayyo... the lambada children are going from here and there to protect themselves from the rain. They were crying for help!

It's pity! The rain had started when they wanted to eat their chapattis. It's a bad rain. Should it appear at this time only? How can they eat their *chapatees* now?

Poor fellows, - the intensity of rain was increasing heavily. How can they escape from the rain? - the lambada old woman skipped under the cart and took shelter there with the little children.

I felt cold and immediately rushed into the house and had my sweater.

Oh! - Ice pieces were dropped from the sky! My mother used to describe about the hail storm! It seems to be the same. The lambada mother was keeping the utensils on the heads of her children in order to protect them from the ice-pieces. The utensils couldn't protect them from the ice-pieces and they were hurt in one way or the other!

What will happen if the ice-pieces touch me? I wanted to experience it. Immediately I ran to the open place! Oh, God! I can't bear the pain of those ice-pieces. I don't know how those poor lambada children were bearing the pain!

If I invite them to my home till the rain stops...!?

Oh! Will Saleem accept my proposal? Let me try once! What's wrong in it?

"Saleem, Please allow them inside the house! They sit in the sit-out, until the rain stops and they go out after it", I cried from the veranda in order to be audible to Saleem.

"No baby, they will spoil the floor and the walls with their muddy feet! Mother will abuse me and

get angry if allow them?"

Saleem is also correct! My mother always keeps her eye on me and my friends, who ever come for me. She always instructs us not to stand by bending the feet against the wall - not to touch the sofas and walls with the hands by eating sweets and hot - we should clean our hands with only napkin after eating anything - she repeats the instructions on and off to be vigilant on these issues! She wants the house to be clean and shine like a mirror!

"My friends always say that they are afraid to come to my home because of these strict instructions towards cleanliness and tidiness! It's highly impossible to think of inviting this lambada family inside the house with their dirty feet!

It's raining cats and dogs! The strong wind is supporting it! The trees were falling down. Their utensils were swept in the rain water! The oxen which were tied to the cart were trying to free themselves in the heavy rain. The lambada family requested Saleem to give permission for them to enter the house! They were touching his feet and requesting without a measure! But Saleem was not accepting their request!

"Saleem, allow them inside!"

"No, it's not possible! I have to lose my job!"

"Saleem, if you don't allow them inside - I will go into the rain and stand at the gate? I'll blubber like

anything! If I get cold or fever, you are only responsible for it! I will complain against you to my mother!"

Saleem had nothing to do except allowing them inside the gate!

I gave the frocks which had taken out of the almirah to the little children - the eyes of the mother were shine like anything. She put on the frocks to her children by removing those wet and dirty clothes. Now the mother and the children were very happy.

The floors in the sit-out became dirty. The man, may be the father of the children started smoking chutta*! There was stench coming out of his smoking, which I didn't like!

"Hello - what's your name - don't smoke here . . .!" I was surprised myself for giving the orders like my mother.

The lambada boy pulled the stool which was kept at a corner! If I was late by a second, the flower pot on it might have fallen and broken into pieces! The plant costs a hundred rupees! Thank God! I could save the flower pot from breaking it! The lambada woman dragged the baby immediately into her lap.

At that moment ... there was a car horn before the gate!

Saleem and I were shocked to hear the sound! Saleem rushed and opened the gate!

Oh, God! My mother looked at me - at the lambadas - at the dirt on the floor - repeatedly!

"Mummy, it was raining heavily! They don't have a house! Look at this small girl! She was drenched in the rain and shivering - I invited them myself! Poor fellows! Their chapattis were also soaked in the water! If you order, I'll clean the floor! Please, don't say anything against them!" I tried to deliver my dialogue with difficulty by cleaning the sweat on my forehead.

My mother didn't say anything - I don't know the reason! It might be the calmness before the cyclone? - My teacher uses this expression very regularly! Is it the same situation!?

"Saleem - there are biscuits and fruits in the car! Bring them and distribute to these children - show them our out house!", my mother passed the orders.

My eyes were opened wide in astonishment!

"Mummy, when my classmate Kiran entered our home with mud feet the other day..."

I didn't even complete my words!

"You... little innocent! People like you - like Kiran - are the children of highly civilized parents! Still sometimes you have uncivilized and barbaric habits . . . just I wanted to remind you of your status! If the wall and floor is dirty, we can make them clean! But if the time is lost, can we help these people? Is it

the sign of civilized people to leave them alone in heavy rain?"

I couldn't understand what civilization is! My history teacher taught me Sindhu Civilization and Mesopotamia Civilization - he taught me about the utensils and the life style of the people in those days.

I couldn't understand about the civilization my history teacher taught me. But now I could understand the civilization my mother explained!

"I have offered a piece of wood to the world of fire as well... "...a song is heard from far away.

The song was written by Sri Sri.

Tomorrow, I wanted to ask my Telugu teacher about the meaning of the song!

(Nenu Saitham, Andhra Bhoomi, 03.12.1992)

**Lambada* : A kind of tribes in Southern part of India.

**Chutta* : A kind of country made cigar.

**Sri Sri* : Initials of Srirangam Srinivas Rao a popular revolutionary poet of Telugu literature.

UNREST



1989

"Attendance... Please!"

The classroom turned into pin drop silence suddenly from hullabaloo situation.

"Madam, Principal instructed you to make a list of B.C., S.T. and S.C. students in your class", the office subordinate handed over the list.

The students in the classroom again started murmuring and whispering!

"Silence please! Social Welfare Department would like to provide some scholarships to the

eligible students! They need your details! I am a new teacher to your class and I don't know your details! Please tell me how many of you belong to S.C. and how many of you belong to other castes?" asked Aruna.

Some of the students stood up in the class! Aruna was writing their names! She prepared the separate lists for S.T., S.C. and B.C. She completed the task and closed the ball pen and put it in the bag!

"Madam, Kiran is a B.C. But she was not declaring it!" Vimala passed the information.

"What Kiran? Is the information furnished by Vimala true?" asked Aruna by crossing the embarrassing situation.

"Yes madam! But I don't like to receive the scholarships on the basis of caste! I don't like it! That is why I didn't tell about my caste!" Kiran expressed her feelings openly.

O.C women students looked at Kiran with divine ecstasy.

"Oh! A great idealist! Came from the sky to the earth!" some B.C. women students tried to mock at Kiran.

Aruna was dumb found for a moment!

"You see Kiran, You will have a great future, if you declare your caste! It seems you are trying to

lose a golden opportunity! You may repent for the same in the future! Come to a decision after thinking meticulously on the issue!" Hima tried to teach Kiran a lesson.

Kiran simply laughed and kept quiet!

Aruna stood up and prepared to start her lesson.

"Madam, I have a doubt" Kiran asked.

"Okay, you can ask!"

"Lecturers like you always teach that human beings are equal... all castes and all communities are equal... then why do you make us to remember about our caste?" Aruna was surprised to get such a question from Kiran.

"It is taught us that all human beings are equal! We should inculcate national spirit ... there are a number of speeches in TVs, radios, lectures, newspapers - What are you doing now? When you are asking for our caste ... how we can forget about them ... how we can get the feeling that we are all equal, madam!"

"You are absolutely correct Kiran! Reservations are provided on the basis of castes. So we should ask and write the details of all the students whether we like it or not. This is a part and parcel of our duty!" explained Aruna.

"But... if you ask about our castes publicly before everyone - this is not fair on your part!"

Ganga Bhavani commented nervously.

"You will get reservation on basis of caste... is it a wrong to ask about your caste in the classroom?" asked Vineela with a wonder in her tone.

"Who needs these reservations which are creating caste based battles among many people? Madam, for how many years we will be divided on the lines of castes!?" one O.C. girl stood and asked the strait question.

"You see... in the early days when India attained freedom... there were people in the backward castes who were socially and economically underdeveloped! For them... for their upliftment on on par with the upper caste people... reservations were introduced for a limited period! But the politicians for the sake of votes, for their selfish ends are extending this deadline continuously!"

"What do you mean by socially backwardness, madam?"

"The upper caste people - not treating the other caste people as their equals... moreover treat them as untouchables!"

"I don't know whether the condition was prevailed during the early days of India's independence - now wherever I go - to any meeting or a marriage... the upper caste people were treating me as their equal! I was not treated as outcaste anywhere! In that

case... if we say we are socially backward, will it not come under self-deception, madam?," asked Kiran.

"The reason for giving reservations to the backward sections of the society is... they are not only socially backward in the society... but also economically backward!" explained Aruna.

"Madam... my classmate Rama is penniless! But... she belongs to the upper caste! Another classmate Sujatha's father has three factories! She belongs to the backwards caste! In that case how economically backwardness is directly linked to caste? There are economically backward people in every caste!"

Aruna is trying to grope for the answer of the question posed by Kiran!

"Madam! We have been listening to the lecture of Kiran for the past half an hour! We don't have any patience to listen to any more - please listen to our point also! For a long time upper caste people have been trying to oppress the backward caste people! They manipulated the toil of these people and build great buildings! Won't the backward caste people kept quite all these days? Now why the upper caste people are crying over the reservations?" asked Usha in a frustration.

"That is not correct madam! May be our grandparents or great grandparents might have

oppressed these people, but why should our generation mete out the punishment? Aren't O.C. people working in the factories established by B.C. people? The society is talking about social and political equality on one hand - on the other hand why this kind of disparity against upper caste people?" said Manjula angrily.

"Madam! Please look at this paper! Reservations will be provided on the ratio of population of B.C., S.C. and S.T.s! If they increase the percentage of reservation according to their population - the castes who are going to be benefitted out of these reservations will try to increase their population first! There will be unhealthy competition among different castes because of these population and caste based reservations. If the upper caste people also compete with other caste people in population - what is the condition of India?" asked Girija.

"If I'm asked there is only one solution for this problem - that is encouraging inter-caste marriages", Thara gave the answer in a relaxed mood.

"I don't believe in inter-caste marriages - my brother is B.C. - my sister-in-law is O.C. - they loved each other and got married! My sister-in-law got the job very recently! My brother mocks at his wife and says, "You know pretty well that your caste is

not going to give you anything - that is why you have married me! You have got this job because of my caste only! Whatever it may be - you and your children are getting livelihood out of my caste! Be happy with it!" Vasudha narrated her experience.

"There was O.C.s domination in the past - now, there is B.C.s domination! Great . . . we don't get any problem, if there is no domination from any quarter!" laughed Sunanda.

"Madam, let me tell you what had happened recently! My neighbour Mr. Rama Rao was blessed with a son after two daughters! My brother went to his house to congratulate him expecting that Mr. Rama Rao will be in a good mood - but on the contrary he was so sad! When my brother asked for the reason - Mr. Rama Rao said, "What should I tell you? My two daughters will get jobs when they change their caste after marriage! I wanted to make alliance for my daughters with B.C. grooms! But what will happen to my son? You know I'm an average student in studies! I have a little bit of intelligence and how can I expect more intelligence from my son? How can I get him a job - he has no intelligence - no money - no caste . . . he is fit for nothing! He is an unlucky fellow! I strongly believe that it is always better to be a tree in the forest than getting birth in an O.C. family without intelligence and money!" narrated Vijaya the plights of the

people in O.C. community!

"Oh! At last . . . I'm very happy to listen to the story of man who feels 'girls are better than the boys'! Sunanda expressed her opinion.

The entire students laughed heartily.

"Madam, it is very interesting to listen to the parables - ask all the O.C. people to relinquish their property - we are ready to give up our reservations!" Gita opened her mouth and expressed her opinion. Till now she has been silent.

"That is not correct madam . . . this argument makes it clear that - all the O.C. people have properties - all the B.C.s have no properties - this is a clear indication of dogmatism! It is not correct to say that upper caste people are rich and lower caste people are poor! In that case if they are not ready to give up their reservations, until the upper caste people relinquish their property? What is the situation of upper caste poor people?" asked Kiran.

"Whatever Kiran said is correct madam! There are poor people both in O.C.s and B.C.s! These reservations should be implemented not on the basis of the caste but on the economic condition of the people! Everyone in the society will be benefitted out of this new policy!" Suguna expressed her opinion.

"It is better - there should not be any private

property - all the wealth of the people should be nationalized - there will be no disputes in the society! What do you say madam", Sunanda advised the entire class.

"Nationalization of property is possible only in socialist countries but it is not possible in India in the near future," answered Aruna.

"Madam, ours is also a kind of socialist country! That was made clear in our preamble of Indian Constitution!" Sunanda expressed her doubt.

Aruna smiled at the class and said, "You see, there are two kinds of socialist countries! China is a complete socialist country! Ours is democratic socialist country!"

"Madam, what is the difference between these two types of countries!"

"In an absolute socialist country the private property of the people will be nationalized at once - they may get economic equality in the country in a single day! But in the democratic socialist country that has to be taken place by the support of the different sections of the society! The government has to convince all the stake holders of the society to nationalize the private property - it has to make legislation! If the people don't like this legislation, they may approach court for justice! If the court verdict is in favour of the government, it can go further in its action. If the court judgement is against

to the legislation, it has to change or amend it! Amidst the protest of opposition parties - the government has been trying to amend the Indian Constitution gradually and slowly - It is moving very slowly towards economical equality in the country", explained Aruna.

"It may take many years to create economically equal country, if everybody's consent is taken into consideration! Madam, till then - Where is socialism in our democratic socialist country?"

"You have imagined it correctly! If our constitutional makers have opted for an absolute socialism as in China . . . our country must have flourished with economical equality in the country! But they have opted for democratic socialism!"

"Madam, China has got its democracy after one year of India's independence. They have more population than our country - it is progressing by choosing the absolute socialism and got economic equality in the country! Why did we choose democratic socialism?" asked Sunanda.

"Those who like freedom and independence - those who believe in democratic theories - like democratic socialism! Those who did not like freedom and independence - wanted to establish economic equality by removing certain sections of the society like absolute socialism!"

"Yes madam, I just now recollected when you say

classless society! What is the role of naxalites in our country? Whatever the newspaper you may read - it reports they have killed certain landlords! They have chopped off hands and legs of landlords! What are they expecting?" asked Kiran.

"I expect - they demand for economic liberalism as in China!? I believe they are killing landlords whom they consider as enemies!"

"But madam, in a democratic socialist country the government has to nationalize the property of the people by legislation only! But naxalites . . . without changing the democratic socialist system, why do they think of economic equality which is possible only through absolute socialism? They are trying to bully certain sections of the people!"

"I expect - they believe that economic equality cannot be attained through democratic socialism! They may be disappointed with the present developments - they wanted to reach their objectives, so they are trying to resort to violent activities!?" explained Aruna.

"If naxalites can bring an absolute socialism in one day through out country, all the people may come forward and handover their properties voluntarily on the same day itself! Without attempting for such activities - killing certain sections of the people - burning the buses and banks - hiding themselves in the forests... how long will they

continue like this?" asked Kiran.

"Perhaps they want to spread their activities across the nation after getting a hold in some areas. They believe that the people will not listen to their theories and ideas, so they resort to some type of violent activities like killing of landlords - they believe that the rich should run away by leaving their property to the poor - so that economic equality will be established in the country - I believe this might be their opinion!"

"Madam, that is not correct! You have every possibility to earn property in this present system of economy - everyone wanted to earn something! Some people earn money out of their physical energy! If the naxalites wanted to have the system where there is no scope for gaining property and economic equality in the system - they should come out from their underground activities and mingle with the people directly! They should propagate their ideas and theories! They should announce a political party with their own ideology! They should declare their manifesto - should convince the voters -should take part in the direct elections - should win the elections and establish the absolute socialism! They have a royal road - why do they resort to this difficult and thorny path ... I don't understand this!"

"I believe - they may feel that it is not easy to attract different sections of the society in general

elections - they may further believe that it is not so easy to convince them - they may still have the opinion that it may be delayed to bring the economic equality in the society?" said Aruna.

"I don't agree with it madam! When majority of the voters are the poor in our country - is it impossible for the naxalites to convince these deprived sections of the society!? If the voters have rigid opinions on the elections and governments - why do they reject Congress and vote for Janatha - why do they reject Janatha and vote for Congress - why do they reject Congress and vote for Telugu Desham - Rejecting Telugu Desham why do they vote for Congress? Though the majority people are illiterates, they know the value of their vote! By using vote as a weapon they smash the government which they don't like at all!"

"Yes, madam I recollect one thing when you said about voting! Some of the naxalites - asking the people to boycott the entire voting process - they even threaten the voters to chop off the hands of these who vote to any political party through pamphlets! Don't the citizens have the right to vote in this democratic socialist system? Do the voting stop if some people are away from the process because of threats from certain sections of people? Naxalites not even try to change the system - how can they threaten the voters to be away from the

process of electioneering? Is it correct madam?" asked Kiran.

"Not only that Kiran! These naxalites always profess to have the society which has discrimination between the rich and the poor! If that is the matter - why an innocent and poor police was killed in the process of escaping the naxalite leader Kondapally Seetharamaiah, founder of naxalism in Andhra Pradesh from the hospital? Do you support this killing?"

"You see madam! You are trying to escape from answering the questions posed by Kiran and Sunanda and moreover you are supporting their statements! How dare they are to criticize the naxalites!? Kondapally Seetharamaiah is a great person who believed in the society where there are no disparities of any means - he believed in his idealism and spent his entire life underground for the sake of the oppressed people! His followers who strongly believed his idealism tried to help him in escaping from the hospital to realize his dreams for the society! When their idealism is going to help the majority of the people, it may cause minor damage to a small number of people! We should not worry about such minor things!" said Kavitha.

"I don't agree to this statement madam! The naxalites who have digested the extremist ideology may suffer in attaining their objectives - but it is gross

injustice if an innocent is suffered in the process who are not aware of any such ideology! If Seetharamaiah's ideology is to help the oppressed sections of the society he should not have killed that innocent police. Instead he could escape by tying his limbs!" said Kiran.

"Though . . . socialism ... which encouraged laziness - which discouraged the labour force - was rejected in socialist countries like Russia because of the stagnation in the development - they are bidding goodbye to such socialism which they feel of no use to their countries - they are heading towards the democracy - our naxalite brothers are trying to offer ambrosia to the deceased person - are they not greedy?" asked Sunanda.

"Moreover if the unrest is created in the country - no government will take it as easy and try to take appropriate action against it! They will send the police to protect the lives of the people! The police who work for their livelihood are the scapegoats and the encounters between them and the naxalites! Who will be the losers? Naxalites in their mission to achieve their goals! The police in attending to their duties! The system of exploitation will continue in its own way!" said Vimala.

"I take pity in the matter of police as they lose their lives in the matters of naxalites, caste and community violence! If we ask the snake to catch

the frog, frog will be angry. If we request the snake to spare the frog, the snake may be angry - the police are at the crossroads - if they don't catch the naxalites, they will get punishment from the government. If they try to catch the naxalites, they have to lose their hopes on their lives. The condition of the police is very pity. If there is any disturbance in the law and order situation, they are supposed to restore it with immediate effect. Otherwise they get criticism from both the government and the opposition parties! If they are succeeded in their mission, they will be targeted by the naxalites! At the outset they are criticized from every corner of the society! At this crucial juncture it is very difficult to perform their duty." said Sunanda.

"Sunanda, why are you supporting police very much? Are you not reading the newspaper articles on the lockup deaths and rapes committed by the police?"

"Poor fellow, she has no habit of reading daily newspapers I think?" Elizabeth tried to mock at her.

"There may be some bad natured police in the department, why do you blame everyone for a few? If a girl is raped in a college, do you think that all colleges are bad enough? Rape in a police station is like a joke - I don't believe in them - they try to increase the prejudiced feelings towards them - that's all!" said Sunanda.

"Ok, it's a funny thing about the civil rights forum! If police kill the naxalites, they will make their presence immediately on the spot. But if the naxalites kill the police, they will not open their mouth and they did not make any comment in the matter!"

"Oh! In their view - naxalites are only the citizens - the police are not!"

"It is ridiculous on the part of civil rights forums, who will save the naxalites who don't give any value to the primary rights! It's hypocrisy in their attitude!"

"You have forgotten one more thing! The pitiable condition of the innocent people who have been suffering between the police and the naxalites!? Their condition is very horrible at the country side!" Sunananda tried to recollect the condition of the people.

"Yes madam! The duty of the police to find out the whereabouts of the naxalites - they will threaten those whom they doubt as naxalites - they even torment the people in order to know the details of naxalites! Some ordinary people may give the details of naxalites, unable to bear the torture of the police! If they reveal the details of naxalites, they will be killed by the naxalites in the name of informers! The strange issue is that - the papers write sympathetic news about the condition of the ordinary people who are suffering between the police and the naxalites! They try to irritate the

Governments instead. Why don't these papers talk sincerely on this issue, though they always talk about the liberty of press?" asked Kiran.

"Their liberty is confined to criticize the Government, politicians, officers, banks or colleges - I believe," said Sunanda.

"That is absolutely correct! Otherwise - who killed whom - how they have been killed - they describe every minute detail in the form of news - they try to threaten the people - but they don't try to provide a solution to this problem - they don't even bother about the opinion of the people - Why don't they educate the people about the loss incurred to the ordinary people for burning banks, buses and offices?" said Vijaya.

"Okay,Okay! Why should we talk about the journalists and the press people at this point of time!? We have one more doubt madam! People get food, clothes and job and the economically equal society in complete socialist nations! Then why our constitution makers chose for democratic socialism?" asked Kiran.

"People get food and shelter in absolute socialist countries but they don't get freedom to express disagreement about the government! Almost two hundred years we have criticized the British government - when we got freedom from them - how can we foreget the liberty to criticize the leaders

whom we have elected!" said Aruna.

The entire class laughed at once.

"It means - we have liked the freedom without economic equality rather than the economic inequality without freedom! In that case - the economic equality cannot be expected in India forever!" Deepthi wore an unhappy expression on her face.

"Look here, economic equality is a beautiful building! China people have chosen absolute socialism and built the building in a single day - but we have developed only the blue print of the building by choosing the democratic socialism in the past forty years! The construction was started just a few days ago! To complete this building we have to lay the casteless and community less foundation! Giving up the property by the people is 'the roof'! Is it correct to talk about the roof without laying proper foundation for the building? The country is suffering from caste, community, language and regional disparities on one hand - there is gender bias across the nation - it is useless to expect and talk about economic equality amidst all these problems!" explained Aruna.

"That means - you are against to reservations! It seems you are extending your support to Nava Sangarshana Samithi! Please don't involve yourself in our movements!" Arundhati uttered her dialogue

with a bit of irritation.

"We are asking our doubts as students! She is giving her answers! That's all! Here there is no scope to threaten anybody!" Kiran became angry.

"If that is the case madam, on behalf of the Sama Sangrama Parishad, we would like to ask you a question? Some of these O.C. students, who have no merit, getting seats with donations! That is not wrong in their opinion! Is it wrong to get seats through reservations for non-merit B.C. students? Please answer my question?" asked Kamala.

"You see Kamala! Both are wrong! The non-merit students who get seats through donations are equally wrong when compared to getting seats through reservations for non-merit students! We should not support one wrong by taking another wrong as an example! The intelligent people should condemn it! This is also wrong! Merit should be given priority! Then only the youth will try to improve their intelligence! The country will simultaneously develop!" said Aruna.

"Madam . . . they think that all the upper caste people are intelligent - yesterday Ragini criticized my elder brother as "reservations doctor - reservations doctor"! Is it not wrong?" Kamala started arguing.

"Yes, now you are on the correct path! Madam,

Kamala's elder brother as if he were got seat in merit criticized my elder sister as "donations doctor" - so I criticized her brother as "reservations doctor". What is wrong in it?" Ragini started a raga.

"You see! Our government abrogated the donations recently! Nobody fought against this decision! Why? It cannot be supported ethically in any way! All the student organizations should understand the fact that it is not correct to get seats on the basis of caste-based reservations! When abrogation of donations is correct, why abrogation of reservations is wrong? Why should we think more about the stone to remove our teeth! One will get eligibility with money! The other with caste! That's all! So, reservations should be abrogated like the abrogation of donations! This is my fixed opinion," said Aruna.

"Yes! Yes! That should be done! When some castes have been given a chance to get seats - why people should be denied to get seats for money? According to our constitution all the citizens must be provided with equal opportunities!" mocked Kamala.

The bell rang! The period was completed! Aruna arranged her books on the table!

"Madam, We would like to ask you the last question! It is criticized that our country was not developed in any section - comparing to the nation

before independence! You have experienced those days - you have also witnessed these days! What is your opinion on this type of criticism?"

Aruna laughed and said, "In those days! Electricity was available only in cities and towns! Now every village has been provided with electricity! There were one or two vehicles on the roads! Those who have motor cycles are considered as heroes! Phones were used in movies not by anyone in the outside real world! Except railway every means of transportation was developed drastically! The barren land of Karimnagar was turned as agricultural land because of Pochampahad and Nagarjuna Sagar projects! High schools were located only in old Taluqa head quarters! Now every major village has a high school! The standards of living of middle class people have increased considerably! Many of them have bought T.V.s, refrigerators, scooters, cars. They have even constructed their own home with loans! Who said there is no development - there is a great change in every walk of life! The problem is - the uncontrollable population is controlling the development!"

"What do you mean? Do you think that there are no problems in our country?"

"I said the country has developed - did I say there are no problems in the country? We have the same type of problems before and after the

independence! Since ages we have been suffering from the problems which are like wild fire - communal riots! The latest problems include terrorism, separatism and caste based conflicts!"

"Madam, do you feel that they will continue forever?"

"You see - after independence - if we observe the history of our country in the past forty years - it appears very clear that the parliamentary form of government is not suitable at all! We have to either invite the presidential form of government as in America or let's make some changes in the constitution according to the latest situations! Before that there should be a situation where a person should not be identified by his/her caste! The youth should come forward and take appropriate steps to change the situation! The time is up! The history lecturer is waiting outside! The women students in the previous colleges where I had worked were always interested to discuss about saris - jewellery - movies - serial novels - fashions and I haven't heard that they discussed about the politics! I am very much impressed and happy to see your political knowledge! Though your class is new to me.. . I'm very much inspired and I've got new energy by discussing all these contemporary issues with you!" Aruna shared her experiences and left the classroom.

Aruna received five letters continuously within the week of her class!

"Why action should not be taken against you for teaching unnecessary issues against the government rules" - the government officers have issued a memo.

"Aruna is propagating the concept of naxalism among the women students - so complete investigation should be taken against her and the issue!" - G.B.V.P. allegation.

"Do your duty - don't give lectures to the students against reservations - if you open your mouth against this issue, there will be no tongue in your mouth" - warning from B.C.s.

"Already donations have been cancelled in our state! The neighbouring states may also cancel the donation if they listen to your lectures! Be in your senses!" - Caution from the rich O.C.s.

"You teach within the four walls of the classroom - you haven't experienced the world outside - we are struggling very hard for the oppressed in sun and shower - you discuss about us with the students in the class - how dare you to encourage the student leader Kiran to comment against us - let's see what happens to you?" - warning from the naxalites.

Aruna smiled!

The next day . . .

There was sensational news in the news paper - Aruna, Political Science lecturer of the Women's College was murdered - the police were investigating the case - tension prevailed in the city!

Every student in every group looked at other with a doubt!

In the condolence meeting -

Some are mechanically...

Some with devotion...

Some with fear...

Aruna was praised by the speakers in their speeches!

But - some students, who were very much inspired by the lecture of Aruna on the current political situation of the country, were highly disturbed. They didn't speak anything in the meeting! They gave a serious thought to the situation!

"Yes - the other day Aruna madam said "democratic socialism" means "freedom without equality". But she was murdered just because she expressed her opinions freely. It means . . . we don't have "freedom without equality" . . . we don't have freedom . . . we don't have equality. . We have only lawlessness! We have anarchy born out of freedom! People cannot enjoy the freedom or equality as long as the anarchy exists!

They gave a very serious thought to the problem!
They came to a decision after a few hours! The next
moment . . . G.B.V.P. - K.D.S.U. -Doodicals - Nava
Sangarshana Samithi - Nava Samgrama Parishath
- G.S.U.I. - Telugu Youth - some other student
organizations . . . tendered resignation to their
primary memberships.

They have recollected the advice of Aruna
madam before leaving the classroom - in order to
reach the goal set by madam - they have all formed
into a united force - as token of gratitude!

*(Unrest- Andhrabhoomi
Monthly, 19.10.1989)*

THIS IS ALSO A KIND OF ALMS!



1987



"I can learn any language in just twenty four hours!"

I was travelling in a bus - I overheard the conversation which was coming from the front seat.

"I can fluently speak, read and write six languages!?"

"Is it!?"

"My name is Subash! I have a wine shop! I'm an excise contractor!"

"Oh!"

The listener is giving his response without much interest!

"He is capable of learning a language per day! If we count twenty years out of his thirty years of age - he would have learned at least seven thousand languages by this time! Is it a credit to know only six languages! I consider it as a shame!?" a college girl student next to me commented with her friend.

"You see, I know Yaddanapudi Sulochana Rani, Dasharadhi Ranga Charya, Yandamuri Veerendranath, Malladi* and many more . . . I know all the leading writers in Telugu! I have established many literary organizations. I'm a president to one of the Lion's clubs here! If I wanted to describe about myself . . . I'm a freelance journalist. I'm the secretary to temple committee in my village. Oh, I've forgotten to tell you . . .! I'm the founder of NRK Public School! All together you can consider me as the ring leader . . .! Hello! Are you listening to me?"

By the time the listener has already turned his face aside.

"Hello, look here - this is my photograph with Rajiv Gandhi, Sonia Gandhi. Very recently I had been to Delhi. Whenever I go to Delhi, I'll give a ring to Sonia Gandhi... immediately she sends me

a car... She will invite me to her house and she is very interested to discuss the political issues with me. Of course, I'm a journalist! They give more preference to me! Even Vajpaye and Upendra* also! I can't tell you how much preference they give to me.

I don't know the reason but I strongly intended to see the face of his listener!

Poor fellow... the listener was trying to press his temples to relieve himself from the headache.

The bus was stopped at a particular bus stand! A beggar entered the bus by pushing the passengers aside. He started begging each and every one in the bus . . . he came and caught the feet of Subash.

"Ayya, I've not taken food for the past twenty four hours! I'm feeling hungry! Getting giddiness out of fatigue! Please give me at least twenty five paisa. You will get merit in heaven."

He is requesting Subash continuously without leaving his feet...

Subash wore an awkward expression and started saying to his listener. "I don't like these beggars. I simply hate them! Look at him; he is like a he-buffalo! Does he have any deformity in limbs or eyes... ? He can earn his living by engaging himself in any work! No, he doesn't show any

interest to work - he is lazy! I am writing an article on banning of this begging profession. That is going to be published in the next Eenadu* Sunday magazine. You should read the article and write your reflection to me on it. . . Hello, are you listening to me?"

The listener without talking anything started yawning. . .

"I can make anyone suspend in just twenty four hours. Tell me, if you have any problem! I know our Chief Minister N.T. Rama Rao well. His son-in-law Mr. Chandra Babu Naidu was my classmate - I can help you to finish off your work in just a few minutes!"

"Why do you take this much risk?" the listener try to mock at Subash.

"What is risk here... we have been given this body to help others, we should help others as long as we live... I wanted to help the people at any cost and that is my main motive in life! This is my address! Just write a post card to this address, if you have any problem!"

At the moment the bus was stopped. The person by name Subash got down from the bus... by carrying a bag full of papers.

As soon as Subash got down the bus... the listener who has been listening to him patiently adjusted himself in the seat: "Oh, God! There is a

great relief from the cyclone. I had to bear this boredom because of my complaisance...There has been this torture for the past two hours! Will he make anybody transfer within twenty four hours? transfer! It was my bad luck!, otherwise how can he get a seat next to me? He was like a gadfly creating a lot of disturbance!" the listener is explaining his plight to the next passenger.

I laughed myself and looked through the window of the bus.

Subash is standing near the window . . . talking to someone else very seriously.

"My name is Subash! I can learn any language in just twenty four hours..."

The cyclone was started again! This time very harsh to the ears.... it was like an overused gramophone record.

Immediately I have downed the window panes.

The same beggar... might have got down from our bus.... after begging everyone in the vicinity... landed himself next to the listener with whom Subash had been speaking to for the past few minutes.

"Ayya, I've not taken food for the past twenty four hours! I'm feeling hungry! Getting giddiness out of fatigue! Please give me at least twenty five paisa. You will get merit in heaven." Repeating the same

dialogues; without considering the people's refusals and words... begging for money!"

I don't know the reason... but I have seen the beggar and Subash repeatedly...

In the view of Subash begging is another form of laziness!

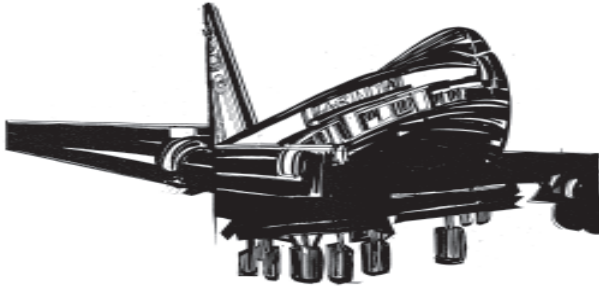
Without considering his merits...boasting himself without bearing in mind his strengths ... Subash is begging for an 'identity' from others...

His begging... May be a kind of alms!?

*("Ido Rakam Mushti! Published in
Kekalu, Weekly, November, 1987)*

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- ★ *Yaddanapudi Sulochana Rani, Dasharadhi Ranga Charya, Yandamuri Veerendranath, Malladi - they are all popular Telugu writers*
 - ★ *Vajpaye - Atal Bihari Vajpaye, the former Prime Minister of India*
 - ★ *Upendra - Former Union Minister from Andhra Pradesh in Congress government*
 - ★ *Eenadu - a popular Telugu daily.*

Sensibilities



1985

"Aunty... my mother says she doesn't go with you for shopping! My uncle from Rajampet has come just now, so asked me to inform you."

The lovely words of Chinni, the little girl... were so interesting to Madhavi that she liked both the girl and her language.

The little girl's cheeks are like apples.... very little hands... a small mouth.... she has a white complexion... thick hair on head!

"Oh, little darling - please come here!" She took Chinni into her lap and pressed to her heart with love and affection.... kisses were planted heavily on her cheeks... she couldn't resist herself without biting her cheek inadvertently!

Chinni cried aloud!

"What is this? Why did you leave your spittle on her cheek? What kind of a person are you!?" her grandmother scolded her for her naughty action.

"Why should her cheeks be... like balloons... in round shape... like apples?" laughed Madhavi heartily.

Ravi unknowingly touched his cheeks.

"It's Okay...! Do my cheeks also look like the apples... like the cheeks of Chinni? - may be very attractive and eye-catching to girls!" Ravi laughed himself for his idea.

"Dear grandma! Aruna madam informed that she may not come with us for shopping! How can I get a sari tomorrow for my birthday? I don't know how to select a suitable sari. I felt very happy and expected that I could select a sari with her help... but unfortunately... someone... may be Chinni's uncle has suddenly arrived as if he had nothing to do."

"Shhhh! They may listen to your words! Please speak slowly!" Grandmother warned.

"Now, you go to college. I will try to convince her...try to get you a sari with her selection... Is it Okay for you?" grandmother tried to convince her.

"Oho! It seems this woman likes the selection of my *vadinaa**! Poor fellow, she didn't know that I would select the saris for my *vadinaa*! My sister-in-law always says that her neighbor Madhavi is a good girl . . . but I haven't seen her anytime! "Ravi thinking about Madhavi and this time he wanted to see her at any cost.

How can she be? Will she be tall and slim? - like Bapu's* character? Otherwise will she be heavy and chubby like Vaddadi Papaiah's* character?

Ravi was thinking about Madhavi's physical features!

"Grandma . . . I'm going to college! Please close the door!" She came out of her house and wished her classmate in the opposite house as "Hai, Nimmi!".

Ravi came out of the house to see Madhavi.... he couldn't turn his eyes out of Madhavi!

"She is like a beautiful woman who was not even drawn by the great painter like Raja Ravi Verma*" Ravi was astonished to see Madhavi.

In his heart.... something was going on.... without his permission.... without his intention.... some kind of affliction.... some sweet sorrow....

spread all his nerves.

Aruna invited Ravi to accompany her as a regular practice for the selection of the sari in the afternoon.... grandmother might have requested Aruna for the selection of the sari for her granddaughter!

Ravi selected navy blue Gadwal* sari with copper sulphate border for Madhavi. That evening Aruna gave the sari to Madhavi who felt very happy to receive it. Ravi in turn felt contented with all these developments.

The next day is Madhavi's birthday - He wanted to convey his best wishes to her - on whatever the situation it might be - how to convey - what to say - his words should exactly convey his inner feelings towards her!?"

He took out his letter pad from his brief case!... he prepared the garland of words with pearl like letters of the alphabets on the blue coloured papers.

The next day - expecting that Madhavi would definitely wear the sari - requested Chinni to handover the blue cover to Madhavi.

Thinking that one of her friends might have sent the birth day greetings - she opened and her heart felt a shock.

My.... to you,

You may keep yourself away from me.... you may

even tickle me.... I have sent you the sari which I have kept for a whole day on my chest . . . today it is very close to your body on your birthday . . . the sari is giving you an intimate touch . . . giving you tickling . . . my dear . . . what will you do? How can you escape from my memories?

Best wishes on your happy birthday...

Hope to become 'yours'... 'Me'

Madhavi looked around and confirmed that no one in the vicinity - enquired with Chinni - who wrote the letter?

Time passed... the angry which she got on opening of the letter... slowly depleting!

Again... and again... she recollected the sentences of the letter - she was choked with emotion without her knowledge . . . she was filled with unexpressed feelings!

She read the letter a number of times. How sweet his feelings! How beautifully he expressed his desires... wishes in his letter!?! Really she didn't know how he looks like!

At least, she didn't see his face - she knew a few details about him - his name was Ravi, elder brother-in-law of Aruna - a good person by nature!

'But... when I came to know that he is liking me... why there is this much agitation in me... he is creating tremors in me without showing his face...

how sweet may be his company!?

I get many love letters in the college! But...they are all awkward; by reading them I developed a kind of aversion towards them!

Why am I getting this type of temptation by reading the letter? Why am I getting this much interest to see him?

He lives next door... a single wall separated two houses - on the next side of the same wall - he might have sat on the chair leaning to this wall' - the idea itself thrilled her, she started patting the wall out of affection!

Ravi lost his courage after writing the letter to Madhavi!

Madhavi may tell 'that issue' to her grandma and create a mess . . . she may tell the 'the same issue' to my *vadina* who in turn may scold me...

He is thinking very seriously... after a few hours... the fear, inhibition and tension came down gradually... but anxiety was developed in him!

If nothing happened as per my expectations... the curiosity developed in him to know the response of Madhavi.

He wished to see her - by going outside - or by coming inside - he gathered courage and ventured out to see her any way!

Madhavi who sat near the window listened very attentively to the creaking sound of doors of Ravi!

She dragged the window panes closely - through the gap between the panes she looked with wide open eyes - she took all measures that no one should observe her.

While going into the bazaar Ravi looked at Madhavi's house in order to see her beauty.

But he was disappointed as the doors were closed.

It means that she got annoyed by looking at my letter! There occupied... some dark clouds in his mind.

Yellow coloured skin... fully muscled body... wrinkled hair, clean shaved beard - looking smart - his face looks like 'a rose amidst green leaves'... 'he has a lovely face like a beautiful girl' Madhavi thought by looking at Ravi.

Ravi roamed aimlessly for an hour in the bazaar - he left for the house for not doing anything - Madhavi's house doors were closed as usual as they were an hour ago!

He saw Chinni at the doorstep of his house! He started pretending as if he were playing with Chinni - looking at the closed-doors repeatedly!

This world looked beautiful and interesting when he saw her! But now everything looked dull and

deadly as he received no response from her... time is moving very slowly now for Ravi.

After fifteen minutes - Madhavi and her friend Nirmala came out of the doors by laughing heartily - as if he was bestowed with a boon.

"Good night Madhu!" said Nirmala and in turn Madhavi said 'good night' - ready to close the doors - at that time she could see 'him' who is looking at her with his wide open eyes!

She felt shy, confused and embarrassed to see him face to face - it removed his dull and deadly feelings and he could realize the inner feelings of Madhavi immediately!

She was ready to close the doors - she looked at him once again - she could hear a melodious song from behind - "my looks are like fish in the pond of your eyes - if I use my lovely net the fish will fly and enter into the net involuntarily! You are the symbol of beauty! You are the abode of happiness" - Ravi's song haunted her like anything!

★ ★ ★

A week passed...

"Ravi, you are very lucky... you have a wife whom you liked very much! Madhavi will always listen to your words! I'm jealous of you" said Srinivas looking at Ravi who is about to start his scooter.

"What is this brother!? You are talking strangely! What is less to my *vadina*? You both were married

with mutual consensus - moreover my vadina was regarded as 'college beauty!'" Ravi was astonished to deliver this dialogue.

"That beauty deceived me! What is the use of that beauty? If I put my hand on her, she gets annoyed! She gets infuriated! I have not enjoyed with her in the past five years of married life! Every time there are different kinds of thoughts. She lives in a different world of imaginations!"

Ravi did not like to listen to the remaining words...

"It seems this routine life might have brought you boredom. Now, I'm going to airport to book tickets to Bangalore for me and Madhavi! I will book the tickets for both of you also! Let's go for a jolly trip to Bangalore, Mysore and Ooty! There would be a change in life with such trips! Let's leave Chinni with the grandma! Convey the matter to *vadina*." Ravi started his scooter without waiting for the answer of Srinivas.

That night - they started at eight o'clock flight and got down in Bangalore at 9:10 p.m. They lodged at Bangalore International Hotel! They booked the rooms side by side.

★ ★ ★

In that room...

"I must say thanks" said Madhavi by keeping her head on the chest of Ravi by listening to his heart

beat.

"Why?"

"Do you know how much I was afraid of honey moon? I was frightened of travelling in buses and trains! I thought it is better to enjoy in the four walls of our room rather than travelling for a long distance and getting exhausted! But I came to know that to enjoy honey moon it is essential to travel by flight!"

"Of course, we don't have enough money to travel in flight... at least 'once in a blue moon' I wanted to taste the warm hug of my darling in the cool Ooty..." the lips of Ravi which are delivering words were closed by the lips of Madhavi.

In the next room-

"What is this journey? Thousand rupees for both of us from Hyderabad to Bangalore! Shit . . . if we travelled by train, it may cost only a hundred rupees! We wasted the money!" Srinivas expressed his dissatisfaction to Aruna who was taking rest by keeping her head on the chest of Srinivas.

He was very much worried about the money which was wasted for flight journey, and he was so worried about the horse races he had missed because of this journey.

Aruna placed her hand on the waist of Srinivas!

'Oh . . . Mary - she informed me that she would come to tank bund today! But all of a sudden I had

to come to Bangalore! She might be suffering in waiting for me all these hours!' Srinivas was thinking about Mary.

He filled Mary in his eyes and in his heart completely - but with absentmindedness he turned Aruna towards him and placed his head on her breast: 'if Mary is here in the place of Aruna, I'll be very lucky!' Srinivas thought himself.

His hands were working on her mechanically!

Srinivas, who was inspired with the thoughts of Mary, satisfied his thrust. He could not feel the presence of Aruna who was hugging him like a creeper.

He disturbed the sweet memories of Aruna and her feelings abruptly - set her aside - got up and entered into balcony - lit the cigarette.

The next day they had hired a taxi and visited all the important places in Bengalore.

'How planned city is Bangalore! Houses were arranged meticulously . . . there was an open place between the houses which allows free flow of lighting and ventilation! Green trees before every house hold! Every street looks same with neat and tidy roads! Really it is a marvellous city!' Aruna was thinking.

The next day they had hired a taxi and left for Mysore. They paid a visit to all important places

like Mysore Maharaja Palace, Brindavan Gardens
- they took rest in Mysore for that night!

★ ★ ★

In room number nine-

Madhavi got exhausted for continuous travelling all through the day. She landed on the bed immediately soon after entering the room.

'Oh, what is the difference in Madhavi when compared to today and yesterday!? Yesterday she was fresh like a flower - but in just one day - that too - just for a little sun stroke - how feeble she became!? These ladies are very sensitive!' Ravi thought for a while and called her "Madhu".

"Yes!"

"Turn this side"

"Please . . . leave me today! I'm sleepy" said and turned the opposite side and went into sleep.

He turned across the bed, took her feet into his hands placed them on his chest and fondled gently with his palms "is it your body... or a sandal wood... is it your word ... or a drop of ambrosia! You have tired because the flowers have touched your body!" he kissed her feet which were shining in the dim light after completing the song.

Madhavi's exhaustion went away in seconds... she smiled and opened her eyes "you naughty... like this... with these songs... you made me mad,

and you took me into your possession!" she expressed her love, stretched her hands and took him towards her heart.

In room number ten-

"Abba, my feet are aching... walking all the way in Maharaja Palace - Brindavan Gardens - though we travelled in a taxi! Aruna... how much time do you spend in the bathroom? Come here and press my feet!" Srinivas ordered Aruna.

Aruna came out of bathroom in a white sari and she was looking like a jasmine - she took his feet, which were filled with full of mud into her lap.

After fifteen minutes. There was light snoring coming out of him.

"Srinu... are you sleeping?" asked Aruna keeping her head on his chest.

"Oho! Go and sleep Aruna!" he expressed his vexation from his deep sleep. She removed his legs from her lap and placed on the bed. She turned the other side and closed the eyes with a disturbance.

Srinivas in the wee hours as if someone were chasing him woke up Aruna and dragged her into him.

She got to her senses with a sudden jerk and opened her eyes. ...she went into deep sleep a few minutes ago only!

Srinivas with a mountain of lust! Aruna without

any desire!

Srinivas became angry.

"You, come close to me!"

"I don't have patience now"

"Haven't you taken the rest the whole night - why don't you have patience now?" he made her turn to his side with his brutal physical strength.

'He needs a wife, who should come to the bed - whenever he calls! But . . . Aruna was not such a woman! She was some fixed opinions . . . tastes... moods! He lost his mood, when he tried to bring the mood for her!' Srinivas for a few minutes . . . slipped into his previous memories.

First night:

When she was suffering from the unbearable pain... he felt happy and thought 'she has no previous experience.'

Second night:

She tried to cooperate with him without any pain. He enjoyed with her like anything on the second night. When he shared his feelings, she didn't express anything in response.

But there is dissatisfaction on her face.

"What... don't you like it?"

"No"

"Why?" he repeated.

"You have disturbed my feelings on the 'very moment'..." she expressed her feelings plainly.

It was a huge blow to his ego... 'he flirted with many beautiful women who were after him. They all expressed their happiness for being with me and getting enjoyment through his association! Why there is dissatisfaction in the eyes of Aruna?'

'Why should I create stimulation for this woman, when there are a number of women who are ready to satisfy my physical thirst with their motivation?'

'It's a waste of time - I don't have that much patience! If that is necessary she herself will take the initiation! I too need that type of experience! My lust must be fulfilled without taking much labour,' Srinivas is in deep thoughts.

Third night:

Aruna took the initiation and satisfied my physical thirst as I expected! On a particular moment without resisting my happiness I thought, "Oh Aruna! The heaven is here in your copulation only!"

After completing 'that moment', I said out of passion to know her inner feelings, "ugh! What kind of a person are you? Why don't you like sex? You have to be shown to a psychiatrist."

Aruna was discouraged!

"Yes - I wanted to discourage her by saying such

similar words regularly! Aruna would shut her mouth by thinking that this is 'true'! She didn't object my flirting anymore! Yes, this is a wonderful idea! He started implementing the idea on the same day itself!

"Srinu... please leave me at least today!"

Srinivas came out of his thoughts! Aruna is looking at him helplessly! There is weariness and sleeplessness in her eyes!

'I don't know the reason but when she is weak; my desire will be stronger than before! Why should I kill my desire for her situation?'

He played with her body as a toy!

The next day - they started for Ooty from Mysore in a taxi. It was a six hour journey from Mysore. Ravi and Madhavi sat on the back seat of the taxi.

Srinivas occupied the front seat beside the driver and said, 'It is a six hour journey to Ooty . . . oho, my legs may be fatigued in the taxi journey! Yesterday I was tired like anything. I need relaxation today!' he adjusted near the window in a relaxed mood.

Aruna doesn't know where to sit, so she kept herself outside of the car.

Madhavi got angry with the behaviour of Srinivas, she wanted to say something . . . in the mean time Ravi intervened and requested, "*Vadina!* Please come and sit by Madhavi on this

back seat."

Affection, shyness, apprehension, sad... all mixed together... Aruna's face was blushed.

She adjusted herself on the back seat without talking anything. Taxi was started.

She felt embarrassed to sit by the newly wedded couple. Aruna felt delicately for her presence which might be inconvenient to them.

Aruna was very much interested to enjoy the scenic beauty of Ooty for a long time - but the new couple might be embarrassed if she looked through the window like a child. So she pretended that she was asleep throughout the journey.

The weather became very cold when they reached the vicinity of Ooty. The weather was even colder... when the taxi entered the hill-pass roads. She tried to grope for the basket which she had placed at the feet in order to take out the shawl. But she could not feel it, so she opened her eyes and looked around.

Madhavi and Ravi... there was not even a half inch gap between them. They were adjusted in each other's arms. They embraced each other and there was a great satisfaction on their faces! Immediately she turned her looks and looked at Srinivas. He was snoring loudly which was very much audible amidst the sound of the taxi.

It was two in the afternoon when they reached Ooty. They dined in the hotel and visited all the important places. They reached the highest point in Ooty by the evening.

They were shivering heavily because of coldness. There were low clouds all around them. Some of them are in white colour and some in black! Aruna could not distract her attention from that wonderful scenery! She felt bad for not enjoying the scenic beauty on their way to Ooty!

"Wow, there are a number of clouds, oh... I could even catch them! They are coming into my hands" Madhavi was very happy and she was enjoying the beauty! She was trying to catch hold of the clouds in her fist!

"Okay, tie them to the end of your sari... that cloud will be with you like me forever!" Ravi laughed.

There was coldness which was biting the bones - they can't stand for more than ten minutes there.

They were coming back from Ooty: "Oh! We were in the highest point! If our car gets accident, what will be our position?" Srinivas was very much frightened of thinking the danger.

There are valleys around! There are deadly hair pin bends! Eucalyptus trees! Tea gardens on the bends of the hills! There are some clouds which were struck between the two hills!

'Srinivas and me - running in the valley - climbing on the hills - taking rest under the eucalyptus trees - like the fawn - running -running - get tired - somewhere taking rest on his masculine chest - I adjust myself like a small dove' . . . Aruna imagining herself.

On that night Ravi without any pre-planned idea asked Srinivas. "Brother, how is the trip?"

"No way, there is no change in her behaviour! She is just an inanimate object!" said Srinivas and entered his room.

★ ★ ★

"How did you feel by looking at my letter, Madhu!" asked Ravi by taking her face into his hands.

Madhavi smiled.

"Please, tell me?"

"I was angry - how can you write such a letter without knowing my feelings! Then . . ."

"Okay, Then..."

"My - to you" I have traced your letters of the alphabet for a number of times! Can you tell me why did I do so?" she asked by writing with her fingers on his chest.

"Why?"

"You stupid - you might have written those letters by moulding your hands into different directions - if

I touch those letters in the same way, I may get the feeling as if I have touched you..."

There was a kind of emotional feeling raised in Ravi which he could not control!

His lips were touching her lips, her forehead, her eye-lids, her cheeks! They were being wet with his action! She was feeling his breath which was warm and sharp... she was so excited.

She was trembling for his manly force.

"Oh! Ravi... Please!"

He turned her face into his hands and kissed her ears with much love.

"Madhu! Madhu my darling!" he spoke these words in her eyes with a lot of affection! He placed his head on her breast which are rising like the tides of the sea - he placed his hands on her waist and fondled her back with his tip of the nails.

"You may be a great singer . . . but how can you play saregama* on the every part of my body . . . how could it be Ravi?" Madhavi was expressing her love with divine ecstasy.

There was a beautiful picture on the wall! Aruna went near to it! That was the translation of Dhasharathi* to the songs of Galib*.

"Why there were pains on the feet of this wonderful lady - She might have gone to the dream

land of some one?" Oho! How excellent the concept!

"The painter was extraordinary - he painted the picture beautifully which is suitable to the marvellous idea. Romanticism in Urdu - words in Telugu - Hotel in Karnataka - wow! Hats off to the hotel owner for his extraordinary taste! She thought herself.

Aruna changed her looks from the picture as she was filled with some other romantic feelings.

Srinivas was sleeping.

'He is even handsome in his sleep... his lips are really wonderful'... she looked at them which tempted her very much. She showered kisses on his lips. Srinivas was awakened.

"Didn't you sleep Aruna!" he dragged her towards him.

"Tomorrow is our return journey! I forgot to tell you one thing! My officer asked me the other day to bring a sari with your selection! If we take a sari from Ooty it would be grand enough - tomorrow, remind me of the sari" said this and started his 'work' as a duty mechanically.

Aruna dissatisfied again!

Still - she could keep his head in his breast.

Srinivas is still in the same mood: "we spent four thousand rupees in our journey. We should spend

at least two more thousands when we reach home."

Aruna was fuming inside by listening to him.

Still - she was playing with his wrinkling hair.

There was no change in the behaviour of Srinivas.

"Was it three days, when we came here? What is about Chinni! How was she?"

Aruna startled as if a pot of cold water poured on her head!

She got from the bed immediately.

"What happened to you Aruna? Why did you get up suddenly?"

"Nothing! I had Just headache!"

"That will be always with you . . .! When did you cooperate with me? Come here!"

She was infuriated and fumes are coming out of Aruna's face and cheeks!

"Shut up" Aruna warned Srinivas. Took the pillow, left the room, locked the doors from outside and slept in the balcony.

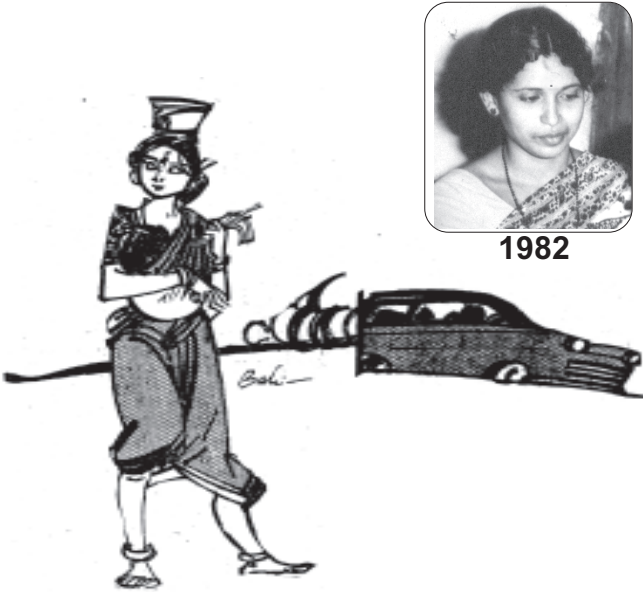
"Wherever I see, I could see your laughing face! Don't try to burn me with your enchantment - let sparkles appear your eyes...!" Ravi was singing a melodious song which was coming from the next room!

Aruna could try to stop the tears which are ready to come of the eyes.

(Spandana, Mayuri Weekly, 25-10-1985)

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- **Bapu* : *A popular painter and cartoonist in Telugu*
- **Vaddadi Papaiah* : *A popular painter*
- **Raja Ravi Verma* : *World famous painter from India*
- **Gadwal* : *Town famous for saris in Telangana*
- **Vadina* : *Elder sister-in-law*
- **Saregama* : *The first four swaras of the Great Indian Classical Music*
- **Dhasharathi* : *Popular poet in Telugu literature*
- **Galib* : *Pre-eminent Urdu and Persian poet during the Mughal Empire*

THE UNBURNT RAFT



Saliva was released in the mouth of Rajesh. . . two drops of it were dropped on his trousers . . . his car was slowed down unexpectedly!

Lachi was coming from the opposite direction without any feelings - there was a rolled mat, made of wild date tree, on her head - her son was tied to her waist - there was a breast in the mouth of the small baby - she was knitting a mat with wild date tree artistically with a great speed.

She had a sexy fair complexion - her wrinkled hair was very attractive though they did not taste the oil. Oh! Will there be such beautiful people even among beggars? . . . Rajesh was thinking with

astonishment.

He remembered - the blue films he had seen, - the albums of beautiful women in nude postures, which he had bought from foreign countries - if he waits for a minute the beautiful scene may disappear from his sight. He wanted to see her beauty completely.. .

The car was stopped with a jerk!

"What happened?" his wife Vimala who was taking rest by keeping her head on his shoulders asked by opening her eyes.

"The car developed a problem!"

"Then what should we do now?" she asked with dissatisfaction in her tone.

"I told you to give the car to servicing before our journey. Did you listen to me? Moreover this is an interior route! There is not even a single tree in the vicinity to take rest under it - how can I sit in the car in this suffocating situation?"

"What can I do now Vimala? That idiot driver told me that the car was in good condition. Why do you get tension unnecessarily? There may not be a major problem! Let's see that the car may start if somebody pushes it from behind!"

The child who was sleeping in Vimala's lap started crying as he could not get sufficient air! She provided the milk feeder to the mouth of her son.

"Oye, come here" Rajesh called Lachi who was crossing his car.

"What ayya!" Lachi came back to the car.

"Your name...?"

She said her name.

"You see Lachi, my car had developed a problem. It's not moving. Will you please push it from behind . . .?"

His mouth is talking to her... his eyes are touching and inspecting her interior organs!

"Yes, I'll push it ayyaa!" she came forward to help him. She took her son into her hands who was sucking up the milk.

That's all!

His eyes were glared to look at her uncovered beauty. His entire body is filled with a sweet shock. His nerves felt tingling sensation. Rajesh looked at her beauty with his wide open eyes. Vimala turned her eyes with an angry expression. Lachi who could not read their expressions tightened the knot of her blouse without considering anybody's presence.

Rajesh came to his senses: "Vimala please get down from the car, help her in pushing it! How can she alone push the car?" Rajesh ordered. If Vimala is in the car, Rajesh could not see Lachi's beauty from the rear view mirror of the car!

Vimala got down from the car with ill-temper!

"Where should my son sleep ayya? There is not even a single tree in the vicinity to keep my son - the temperature is very high as the sun is very hot - can I keep my child in the car as soon as it gets repaired!" Lachi asked for the permission.

For a second, Vimala looked at her son who was sleeping in the front seat by drinking milk from the milk feeder - she also looked at Lachi's son repeatedly. There was scabies on the body parts of Lachi's son. Vimala got irritated with the presence of Lachi and her son. If we don't allow Lachi's son into the car, she might leave us without pushing the car.

Vimala thought for two minutes and said 'yes'. She took out the 'wiping cloth' from the dickey, spread on the back seat and ordered Lachi to keep her son on the cloth with a sign.

As her son was allowed into the car - Lachi felt very happy - 'today my son slept in the car like a *maharaja* - I should tell it to my husband' - Lachi was overjoyed!

"O, Lachi! What are you doing there? - come quickly!" Vimala called from behind the car.

Lachi went to the back side of the car to push it! She tightened her sari - made a clout! Her white thighs were exposed out. Vimala was so infuriated with her condition.

Vimala asked Lachi to come close to her. She said in a low voice so that her words should not be audible to Rajesh. She said, "What is that clout? Am I not pushing the car without a clout? How can you feed your son on the road and moreover how can you roam without wearing a blouse? Are you not ashamed of it? Can't you sit for a while and feed your son?"

'Can't I feed my son by walking along the road? Is there anything wrong in it? Why should I feed my son secretly, is it a crime? If I sit and feed my son at a particular point! Who will do my duty? How can I beg from house to house? It is very strange - the life of all these great people..." Lachi thought herself.

"Look here - It's all right that you have tightened your blouse - why do you wound your end of the sari around your waist? What is its real purpose? Take it out and cover your body like me!"

Lachi laughed!

"Why are you laughing?" Vimala asked Lachi with a frown.

"What is this *amma!* - my husband gets me one sari per year - that will be cut into two equal pieces - I'll take one and my husband's sister will take the other piece . . ." she was telling the story by laughing continuously.

"It's Okay! Are there some more people like you,

with you!? It's horrible!" Vimala murmured.

"I'm trying to follow your instructions, just for you amma!" Lachi said and took out the end of the sari from her waist and try to cover her breast with much difficulty!

The end of the sari was too small to cover up her breasts; it could not envelop any of the beauty of Lachi!

She had nothing to do with the end of the sari, so she slipped it into her waist again and said, "Please excuse me amma! This sari's end is not enough! I will decorate myself as you said, if you provide me with your old sari!" asked Lachi with a lot of hopes!

"You have at last dragged me into this critical position!" thinking like this, "I'm going to a marriage. I'm carrying all the costly silk saris with me... where can I get you the old saris?" said Vimala with a grumbling tone.

If I continue my conversation with her... she might ask me something. Thinking in this way she asked her husband, "Hello, Shall we push the car?"

"Yes", said Rajesh inattentively.

Both Vimala and Lachi pushed the car from behind. The car moved two yards further and again stopped.

When Lachi was bending herself to push the car,

her beauty which was coming out of her blouse made Rajesh mad.

He strongly believed that his life would be waste, if he didn't enjoy this rare country beauty! He scolded himself silently for bringing Vimala with him to the marriage.

'I should enjoy this beauty at least once in my life. How could it be possible? - What should I do? I should do something! Whatever it might be - how difficult it might be? Today I should enjoy with Lachi'... Rajesh was thinking very seriously!

He got a lightening thought. 'Leaving Vimala at the marriage, I should come back here all alone in the same car. Let me try for her... yes... this is a wonderful idea.'

His face was lit up with this idea!

That's all! The car was started though no one pushed it!

"Vimala! Come on, quick! The car was repaired! Get into the car quickly, let's move - we are getting late to the marriage." Rajesh hurried Vimala.

Vimala was shocked with the sudden change in the behaviour of Rajesh. She thought that Rajesh would waste much of their time by watching Lachi and without repairing the car.

She was very happy as her husband became sincere suddenly.

Immediately she got on to the car - sat on the front seat and took her son into her lap.

Lachi went to the back seat - took her son and pressed him towards her breast. She folded her hands in a *namaskaram* position and said, "thank you babu!"

Rajesh without giving any response lit the cigarette for his pleasure.

"Amma, go carefully! The road ahead is not convenient!" said Lachi.

Vimala is not interested to speak to Lachi anymore, "Why are you making it late! We are already late to the marriage!" she hurried Rajesh.

Rajesh drove the car towards his destination... Vimala threw away from the 'wiping cloth' in which Lachi's son slept by holding it with a piece of paper!

It flew in the air and kissed Lachi's face!

Gradually Lachi's face was vanished from the scene! Vimala's mind was pacified! She placed her head on the shoulder of Rajesh slowly!

Rajesh was not giving any importance to the latest developments! His thoughts were rotating around Lachi. His heart was in a hurry to meet Lachi again in the absence of Vimala. He wanted to drop Vimala at the marriage pandal and come back without informing her. He was so excited!

He looked at the milestone on the road side. It

showed that there were ten more kilometres to reach his destination. He could reach in ten minutes... he'd to spend ten minutes there... it would take ten minutes to come to the same place... total amounting thirty minutes... if not forty minutes to meet Lachi... his soul was flying in the air. He increased the speed of the car.

Vimala could not forget Lachi.

She stopped giving breast feeding to her son only at the first month on the insistence of her husband. He insisted that she may lose her beauty by giving breast feeding to the child - she had been taking vitaminized foods! Still she was looking like a sick person and there was no change with those artificial food supplements!

Lachi has been giving breast feeding to her son continuously more than a year , but her beauty is not lost not even by an inch, she lives on begging and she eats only rice and chilli - how healthy she is!? Vimala couldn't understand the secret behind it!

The car was stopped before the house of the marriage party by giving a break to her thoughts! Vimala was left at the marriage and Rajesh went back in search of Lachi - he wasted his three litres of petrol but could not find her anywhere!

Rajesh and his wife started their return journey on the next day morning. When they were coming

back Rajesh could recollect yesterday's incidents!
Vimala was also in the same position!

'I should come across Lachi again!' - thought Rajesh.

'Lachi should not come across on our way!' - thought Vimala.

They both are in their opposite thoughts.

Rajesh started leisurely with his wife allowing the marriage party's cars and scooters to go with the hope of meeting Lachi on their way back.

It was mid day - the sun was so hot - the hot winds were like whips on the body of the people. They couldn't see any tree in the vicinity! They have been travelling for the past half an hour. It might take two more hours to reach their village.

Rajesh was driving by smearing his lips which were becoming dry in the hot weather. There was a change in the sound of the engine. The car was stopped after going for a furlong. Rajesh thought that this was the result of his yesterday's rash driving on the rough gravel road in order to meet Lachi.

"I thought of it in the morning itself! This type of things may happen" said Vimala by moving her mouth in three angles.

"Shut up! Am I doing these entire things on my own?" Rajesh became angry.

He opened the bonnet of the car. Turned this - Turned that. Whatever he do, there is no change in the condition of the car.

"I should sell off this useless car! Why do you sit like a queen in the car? - Why don't you get down and handover that spanner to me? Is it a crime?" his annoyance is increasing gradually.

She got a laugh in the midst of the angry.

"Are you laughing!?" her laugh infuriated him like anything.

"I don't mean that... yesterday and today, the car gave us the trouble in the same way - yesterday you were with peace and patience... where were they today? I'm getting a laugh, while thinking about them! Is it wrong?" she laughed again.

"You didn't give any serious thought to any problem! You will do whatever you like! You know that yesterday the car gave us a problem! Why don't you start a bit early? The marriage party left for their destination well before us! There is no chance of any vehicle in this route! There are no buses in this route! How can we go now?" Vimala was very much depressed.

Rajesh's body became wet as while repairing the car for the past two hours. His mouth became dry - apart from that their son started crying!

"This fellow, in the middle, we are not getting any

idea in this difficult situation! This fellow is weeping unnecessarily! Why are you keeping mum when the child is crying? Shall I tell you to feed the baby with milk?" Rajesh said with a loud voice.

Vimala stood up - poured Amul milk powder into the glass - opened the lid of the flask for luke warm water. While pouring the luke warm water into the glass, she could hear a different sound. When she observed, there were pieces of glass in the flask!

"Oh! The flask was broken! What shall we do now?" She threw the water immediately from the glass.

The boy could not stop weeping and his throat became harsh with continuous weeping. Vimala was afraid that something wrong might happen to her son because of continuous weeping and with the dry throat.

Rajesh searched for water all around but could not find even a single drop.

The boy did not stop his weeping though they played many tricks. If they wanted to sit in the car, there was much suffocation in it. If they wanted to come out of the car, there was scorching heat outside! Then they had realized the importance of road side trees.

When he was very much hungry, he was licking his lips. - He stopped weeping as he could not weep any further.

The baby was only six months - if a baby is crying for milk in the presence of his mother... if the mother is helpless and looking all around for the help... that would be more dreadful than any situation to a mother. Tears rolled in the eyes of Vimala. She felt guilty for the first time because of not giving breast feeding on the insistence of her husband.

At that moment... Lachi appeared on the scene like a Goddess. Rajesh's face turned peaceful with her presence - the vexation was vanished suddenly from his face.

Lachi recognized Vimala and stopped at the car, "Who is that? Oh! Are you the one I saw you yesterday? Is there a problem to your car again? Why are you keeping quiet when your son is weeping - why don't you feed him...?" she asked Vimala with astonishment.

Vimala bent her head down!

"There are no men here! Why are you ashamed of? You are alone!"

"That is not the issue Lachi", explained Vimala all the details.

"In that case, you need water to feed your son with milk - but you won't get water even if you go for four miles! What shall we do now?" there was a gloomy feeling in the tone of Lachi.

In the meantime Lachi's son woke up and started

crying along with Vimala's son!

"Orey, orey... it was not even one hour that you drank milk! You are hungry again! This little fellow always interested in milk!" after saying this she sat near the car, loosened the knot of the blouse and dragged her son near to her.

She took out the small mud pot out of her begging sack and drank the porridge with the combination of pickle! - "as we are unable to bear this summer hot, it is horrible to think of small children" Lachi was explaining...

Vimala's heart ached when Lachi's son was sucking milk from his mother. The child was enjoying the company of his mother like anything!

At that moment she got a lightening idea "Lachi!" she went near her with her son in the hands.

"Ayyo, Let something bad may happen to my memory! I didn't ask you for it! Shall I give milk to your son?" asked Lachi with a miserable tone.

Vimala said yes by nodding her head! Immediately Vimala's son was placed in the place of Lachi's son without waiting for a moment.

Till then the hands which fondled the hands with scabies, the dirty clothes of Lachi, the mucus comes out of the nose, that was affixed to Lachi's breast - the house flies around her breast... they were not considered by Vimala now. Her son - his throat is

getting wet! He is getting a rebirth! She was considering only that issue.

But Vimala's happiness did not stay for a long time - her son started weeping by turning his face aside.

Lachi suddenly - remembered one thing - she pressed her breast and confirmed: "Oho! Not even a single drop of milk is coming - I suppose my son might have drunk the entire milk just now - your son is not getting milk. What should I do? tell me amma? Today not even a good woman gave me grains of cooked rice! How can the milk come, if I didn't eat anything?" she said.

Vimala was not in a position to listen to the words of Lachi. 'My son... who was born after many years of married life... my lovely son... if I lost him...' she was trembling with fear with the very idea!

Lachi observed the condition of Vimala and asked with a doubt in her tone, "Amma - if you don't mind - there is a little bit of porridge in this pot which I begged from the households! Will you feed your son on it?"

Vimala looked at the porridge. There were one to two dead house flies in it!

'Lachi left a little bit of porridge in the pot after drinking it ... that too was collected through begging - I'm the owner of almost thirty lakh property - should I beg from a beggar?'

Ego - necessity... there was a conflict between the two for ten minutes! The necessity wins over the ego.

She poured the porridge from the pot to the lid of the flask; fed her son with the help of a spoon.

Vimala's son drank till the last drop for ten minutes - he was exhausted in drinking it - went into a deep sleep.

"I can't repay your debt Lachi!" there were tears in the eyes of Vimala.

"Aa! What did I do amma? I just helped!" Lachi took it easily.

Rajesh was seriously repairing the car on the other side!

The car might have been repaired... if Lachi didn't disturb Rajesh repeatedly!

"I'll go now amma! It's getting dark" Lachi is ready to leave them.

"Please Lachi stay with us till the car gets repaired! I don't know when will it be repaired - I don't know whether it will be repaired or not! If you leave us now - if my son weeps again for milk" - she could not continue her dialogue anymore - her voice was stopped. Two tears rolled from her eyes.

Lachi's heart melted like butter. "It's all right amma! I'll stay with you!" she settled down near the

car. Vimala's heart was pacified.

The car was repaired at seven o'clock in the night!

"I can't forget your help Lachi - take these ten rupees!" Vimala opened her purse.

"What is the necessity of money amma? I don't want! If you like, give me your old sari! I wanted to cover myself up with its end as you said!" Lachi expressed her feelings with little bit hesitation and shy.

"Sari . . .?" Vimala remembered the cost of her saris in the suitcase! Every sari is not less than five hundred rupees! She is not interested to give her at least one from her saris!

"Lachi, I don't have any sari to give you! If I come this way anytime I'll bring one of my old saris for you - Is it Okay for you?" she dropped the ten rupees in the purse and closed the jip.

"Vimala, get into the car! Let's move" said Rajesh.

This is the time for Rajesh to take alcohol.

Vimala got into the car "Lachi we'll start now - now you can go! Rajesh, let's move" she closed the door of the car.

Lachi rushed to the car in a state of confusion and tension: "What is this amma? How can you go

now? It's late for me just because of you; drop me at my husband in Sirirampuram village which is about four miles from here. If I don't reach him before the dusk, he may get tension. He loves our son very much! He doesn't allow us anywhere during the night" she was going on narrating her personal issues.

Vimala was shocked. "Are we supposed to go back again? She was very intelligent - she had a strong desire to travel in the car!" thought herself but said:

"If your house is only four miles, it means very near! Moreover this is not a new experience for you to walk this distance! If we go back in order to drop you, I'm afraid the car may be damaged again, that's all" Vimala murmured.

Rajesh was thinking in his own way!

Yes . . . what is the benefit to me in dropping Lachi at her house? I can't flirt with Lachi as long as Vimala is with me. I don't get anything out of this situation, only mere waste of time and petrol.

Sirirampuram! It means Sri Rampur! Oh! I've got her address!

This time let me come alone in the car. Then I . . .

Rajesh was filled with the idea of intoxication.

"Ayya, please tell her! If you don't drop me at my house - don't leave me alone ayya!" Lachi

requested him like anything.

"Then what should we do now?" Rajesh wore a face with full of frown.

"Why are you getting angry, ayya? It is believed that the wild wolfs, pigs will come from those hills during the night time! I haven't travelled alone during night time in my life! Let's take rest in the car for the whole night together and move to our house tomorrow early in the morning... please don't say no ayya!"

Lachi eyes are like the eyes of a trembling deer with fear in the focus of car head lights.

Rajesh was thinking.

If I listen to Lachi - If I stay here for the night and move to my place tomorrow - No, after watching the beauty of Lachi till now - I became mad - keeping Lachi and Vimala with me the whole night - without enjoying either of them - can I sleep tonight? It's impossible!

I badly need the alcohol right now - I need a woman to enjoy - I should reach the home before the heat of my desire becomes cool. Thinking about Lachi who was very near to me but I could not enjoy her beauty - by thinking about the beauty of Lachi which I can enjoy in the near future . . . I wanted to enjoy with any woman available - if no one is available - at least I wanted to enjoy with my wife Vimala tonight.

Rajesh fist was tightened. Vimala's hand was crumbled in it!

"Sorry Lachi! Don't think otherwise! I have an urgent work now! But there is no need to afraid of anything - you said your husband loves you very much - he might have started in search of you. Take it!" he put a ten rupee note in Lachi's hand and 'pressed' the hand and started the car.

The car moved - during the night time, in a lonely place leaving the poor lady and a small kid without any sympathy.

Lachi was shocked. She groped for something on the ground.

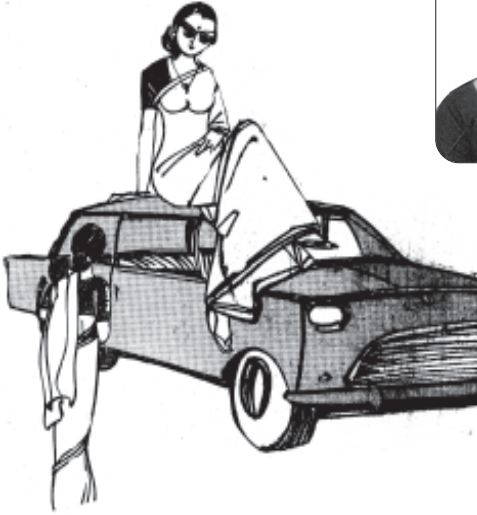
The next moment the back window panes of the car were broken into pieces.

Steering had lost its control and the car went into the road side pit after making the creaking sound.

Lachi walked towards Sri Rampur with courage with quick and long steps in the darkness without looking back.

*(Kaalani Theppa,
Andhra Jyothi, weekly 12.02.1982)*

SWEET NONSENSE



1979

Fiat car was moving smoothly on the national high way. I was watching modhuga* flowers which are abundant on the two sides of the road.... I like those flowers from my childhood. The flowers covered the entire leaves of the tree - bringing a new kind of beauty to it!

I changed my view when the car became slow. There was a woman on the road with a baby in her arms and she was moving her right hand to stop the car. Driver looked at me with a doubt. I gave a signal with my eyes to him to stop the car.

The car was stopped. Driver got down from the

car and opened the back door.

She put her air bag in the car. She lifted her son and finally settled in the car and said, "Thanks".

Car moved again.

"Where are you going?" I asked her.

"To Hyderabad - you" she asked me.

"To Hyderabad only"

"You have saved me! I have been waiting here since morning! Not even a single bus was stopped here. If I wanted to cancel my journey, I have an interview today. I have to be in Hyderabad by five o'clock. It became highly impossible to get a call letter for an interview these days . . . how can I miss the chance? I don't have the confidence that I would get another call letter in my life.

I looked at her with observance. She was an ordinary woman. Her sari was neat though it was an ordinary cotton one. Empty neck, hands without bangles and forehead without *bindi* - they all were trying to declare her position!

"What kind of interview?" I asked.

"For the post of a junior lecturer in 'Vanitha Maha Vidyalaya'"

"Are you a post graduate?"

I felt ashamed of asking such a question which was sounded with surprise.

"Yes... I have passed my M.Sc. Chemistry - with a first class."

"I see . . . why didn't you try for the job these days?" I started the conversation in English so that the driver should not understand our words.

"I didn't feel the necessity of a job at that time! I lost my husband with a heart attack who got heavy loss in the business. Now the job became very essential for me. When I started searching for the job... there are no vacancies! I have been struggling to get a job in the past five years. I searched for the job in many places! I was shown no vacancy boards wherever I go. I don't have the confidence to get the job this time also. I wanted to try for this job as there should not be any fault from my side . . . that too I'm going to cross thirty five years of age by this year... after that I may not be eligible for the lecturer post also." She gave the answer in English.

She has a good pronunciation! That voice, accent, articulation reminds me of my memories!

Yes! Exactly the same... the same voice! Same style... I was dumb found listening to the stylish English with astonishment. If that is the case... is she not Kunthi, who encouraged my perseverance, taught me civilization that helped me to improve my personality during my childhood.

I observed her face closely in order to confirm.

Curly hair! In between eye brows... no doubt. She is Kunthi only!

"Your name is Kunthi, isn't it?" asked by suppressing my happiness!

"Yes! How do you know?" she asked with bewilderment.

At that moment she put her face as if she were recollecting something, "You . . ." stopped by saying this.

"I'm Seetha! My father worked as a clerk at your father's office in Morthad" I explained her so that she could recognize me.

"Yes! Now I could recollect! Oh!, we have met after a long time! We have met about twenty five years ago! Seetha, you have changed completely! You have put on some weight! Where are you living now?" She posed a number of questions with intimacy.

"In Adilabad" I replied.

"Are you working any where?" she asked.

"Yes,"

"What are you?"

"I am District Collector!" I replied with a smile.

Kunthi was shocked.

The next moment...

"Is it? Seetha, I'm very happy that my childhood friend has become a collector!" she said happily.

"How is your mother and father? Where are they?" she asked.

"My father is fine! Mother passed away about fifteen years ago. At present my father is living with me in Adilabad. Today I'm going to Hyderabad on an official duty. If my father is with me, he could have met you." I said.

By the time we reached Ramayampet.

"Driver, stop the car! Let's buy some cool water bottles!" I said. Driver stopped the car and brought some water bottles for us! Kunthi took the water bottle with hesitation. I asked driver to bring bread and bananas for Kunthi's son.

"Do you have only one son?" I asked.

She nodded her head as a sign 'yes'. The car moved. The boy started eating bread as if he were very hungry. My imagination went to my old memories.

I saw bread for the first time in the hands of Kunthi, she used to eat the bread with butter. At that time there was saliva in my mouth! I was very much interested to taste it! The same case is with bananas - we didn't get them in my village! I didn't see them anywhere during my childhood except at the hands of Kunthi!

They were unusual not only to me but also to all the children of my age in my village! We used to eat the banana or orange which Kunthi gave us and treated them as very precious. We were not interested to throw even the skin of banana and orange!

Kunthi's father was a very rich person. He established a beedi* factory in the village. He appointed my father as his clerk. My father's duties were to give beedi leaves and tobacco to the workers and collect the beedies from them. Kunthi's father used to live in Hyderabad come to the factory to check the accounts once or twice. That was Kunthi's paternal grandmother's village. Kunthi used to come to the village during summer holidays. She was the only daughter to her parents so she was looked after with much love and care.

She had many play things and many toys including train and aeroplane which run with the key!

She had many toys - one was even in the size of a small baby! I liked the toy very much among all her other toys!

The toy used to close her eyes when we kept it flat, it used to open its eyes when it was kept in the sitting position.

Now we can see such toys everywhere! But in those days they were not available except in a few

places like Kunthi's house!

Once I wept for two days continuously to get the same kind of toy for me.

But . . . my father was not capable of getting it. His salary was only twenty five rupees per month! He had to run the entire family with that money - he had to fulfil all my desires! That is why he used to tell me different deceptive words in order to pacify me!

Kunthi's house was very big! We used to live on the last two rooms of their house! As we lived in the same house Kunthi used to come into our portion regularly! She used to ask the details of food items my mother prepared which included *jowari** roti, *ambali** which was made of jowar flour, *gatka**, which was made of corn granular flour! My mother used to answer her every questions with patience!

"Won't you give me?" she used to ask those food items with a hope of getting them!

"Ammo! Will your mother spare us, if she knows that you have eaten all these food items? Moreover she will be angry when we give them to you?" my mother used to tell her.

But Kunthi is not in a position to listen to my mother! She was so stubborn that she could not move an inch if we don't give them to her! She used to praise ambali! She used to say that if gatka is

eaten either with milk or curd, it would be more delicious. She used to say that no eatable in the world be as delicious as gatka! She used to like the combination of jowar roti and brinjal curry! She used to bring us their left over fried curries and fruits from the city.

I was shocked to see Kunthi who likes eating ambali and jowar roti, which I didn't like because my mother gives me daily.

Though it was a remote village, there was an elementary school in it. I took my fourth standard exams that year. Kunthi came to the village as usual during the summer vacation. She told me that she took the seventh class exams that year. She used to speak with her father in English only, as she studied in an English medium convent in Hyderabad. She used to speak to me in English as a part of her habit. I used to wear an innocent face as I couldn't understand her English. I used to get a doubt that can I speak fluently like Kunthi in my life?

Kunthi's father arranged a tuition master in the village during summer vacation fearing that she may forget her studies while immersed in the games. I used to go and sit with the tuition master in order to escape from my boredom.

I didn't know what the master thinks about me. But he used to teach me those things which I don't

know. Kunthi used to be first in English and Science - I used to get first mark in Mathematics and other subjects.

The tuition master used to encourage me that, 'you are genius! If you learn English, you will become either a doctor or a collector in the future!'

Kunthi used to feel jealous of me by listening to such comments.

"Nonsense! How can Seetha become a collector without learning English? She doesn't know even a little bit of English!" she used to mock at me. That inspired me like anything and boosted my morale.

Whatever it may be - I wanted to join in English medium and learn English and I should speak more fluently than Kunthi! I took a strong decision in this matter and the desire to speak in English was strong in my mind.

Once, Kunthi came during Dasara holidays; instead of summer vacation.

Kunthi's birthday was celebrated during that Dasara holidays. Kunthi's father brought me new dress along with Kunthi, I don't know the reason!

We both wore the new dresses. The birthday party was fabulous with - cake cutting, candles, songs . . . games! Kunthi asked me to stand by her while she was cutting the cake. She gave me the first piece of the cake and the second one was given

to her father. I observed that the entire children of the village looked at me curiously and jealously.

One or two among those children said when the elderly people are not in the vicinity, "really speaking Seetha is more beautiful than Kunthi in new dress! Kunthi has much wealth but her face is not beautiful - it's like a monkey's face." The children instigated Kunthi.

That's all - Kunthi's ego was injured . . . somehow she completed the party. Directly she went into her room, locked from inside and slept by covering herself with a blanket. She did not take her meal that night though many requested her like anything. I felt guilty for all those developments, though I was not responsible for them!

I removed the new clothes which were given by Kunthi's father, kept them on Kunthi's bed silently and came back to my room.

By then there was a lot of change in the behaviour of Kunthi. She used to treat me differently from that incident. She did not invite me for anything.

She used to say, "Am I as beautiful as you?" or "Can I study like you?". She used to mock at me.

Many of her relatives attended to Kunthi's birthday party. There were about five or six children of our age among them. As long as they were in our village, Kunthi played with them and neglected

me deliberately.

Kunthi's father used to bring his car to the village now and then. That car used to be neat and tidy. There was not even a dust particle on the car! The driver used to clean it on and off. I used to look at myself in the front glasses of the car, which used to glitter with shining. I had a strong desire to sit on the soft seats of the car and I wanted to travel in it!

Kunthi knew it pretty well that I wanted to travel in the car or at least I wanted to get into it once! But after that incident she didn't want to be close to me, so I didn't have the hopes that my desire will be fulfilled in the near future.

But what did she feel about me, and in what mood she might be in, one day Kunthi came to me and asked, "Seetha! The children of my relatives and me are going to the picnic in my car! Will you come with us?"

I was very much elated to listen to the news about car!

But . . . on the next moment I remembered Kunthi's negligence towards me for the past many days. My happiness did not stay for much time when I recollected the past events.

But I have been eagerly waiting for this chance for a long time! I didn't want to lose this opportunity for such a false prejudice - so immediately I nodded

my head as a token of my acceptance.

"First you go and wait for us at the Guravayya's grocery shop! Take this fifty paisa and buy the peppermints with it! We all come in the car and pick you up there!" she said.

I accepted for it. I informed the matter to my mother and rushed towards Guravayya's grocery shop. I could hear the car horn after an hour. I got down the steps of the shop and waiting for the car!

Car came close to me!

Kunthi put her head out through the window panes of the car:

"Oh! How greedy are you to get into the car? Tit for tat! You need this kind of punishment!" she said.

The remaining children mocked at me from the windows of the car by putting their tongues out of their mouths, they have clapped and mocked, "Down! Down!" The car went away without stopping for me, there was full of dust in my eyes.

One can't expect my pathetic condition! My face was contrasted to a one paisa coin with humiliation!

After that incident I never tried to talk to Kunthi! When her relatives' children went to their native place, Kunthi made one or two attempts to talk to me, but my silent kept her away from me!

After a few days - her father sold their house,

lands and settled permanently in Hyderabad - after that Kunthi never visited the village.

When Kunthi's father had left his business in the village, my father lost his job!

I fought with my father to go and settle in Hyderabad. My parents accepted to my resistance and finally we were settled in Hyderabad and my father could get the job as a clerk in a cloth stores. I completed my matriculation by eating half a day and not eating for half a day! With the merit in matriculation I was given a scholarship, with the scholarship I completed my B.A. and appeared for I.A.S. exams and finally I could reach my goal!

I became the district collector not only because of my hard work but also because of my father's hard work and humiliation inflicted by Kunthi!

My thoughts were stopped because of the crying of the small boy! Kunthi was trying to pacify him! It seems, the boy was asking for something!

"Why is he crying?" I asked.

"Nothing, he wanted to sit in the front seat! I said 'no' as he might slip!" said Kunthi with shy.

"Yes, you may fall from the seat if there are jerks! You can sit on the front seat when you become young!" I tried to pacify him.

When we reached the city outskirts it was three o'clock in the evening. I have a half an hour work in

the secretariat. I don't have any other work in Hyderabad and I have to go back to my work place.

"Kunthi, will you come back today? Or will you stay here in Hyderabad?" I asked her.

"No, I too wanted to go back. If I wanted to stay in the city, I have to struggle for the accommodation!" she said.

"What is that? Don't you have a house here?" I asked.

"Where is the house, Seetha? My father wanted to fix my matrimonial alliance to the wealthy family - so he sold all his properties. My father and my husband died of heart attack as my husband got a heavy loss in the business! I didn't have any property either in maternal house or in-law's house! It became difficult to make both ends meet."

"Then, your mother . . .?"

"My mother was living with me in Biknoor. I'm working there in a private school for the salary of two hundred rupees per month. They were not sufficient to run the family!

How Kunthi was in olden days? Now how she is? There was some sort of affliction. . . Some kind of suffering . . .

I tried to change the conversation in order to bring her to normal situation!

"I think your interview will be finished by six p.m.! If you don't go anywhere and wanted to come back, I'll come and pick you up! Today I am going back to Adilabad - What do you say?" I asked her.

Kunthi said yes. They reached Vanitha Maha Vidyalaya. Kunthi got down from the car.

"You have helped me to reach my destination in time. How can I extend my token of gratitude to you?" said Kunthi.

Tears were rolling in her eyes. Perhaps she might have recollected the childhood car incident!

I didn't give much importance to Kunthi's words, got into the car and said, "I'll make a move! Stay here till I return."

The car moved.

At about six thirty in the evening I entered Vanitha Maha Vidyalaya.

I had a doubt if Kunthi was not there at that place thinking that I may not return. She may feel that I may take this chance to take revenge for the humiliation of my childhood.

But Kunthi didn't go anywhere! She was waiting for me by keeping her son in her arms! I felt very happy because of Kunthi's confidence on me!

I picked up Kunthi and returned to Adilabad. On our way back we ordered to pack fruits, biryani for

my father and bread. I took sweets from Pulla Reddy's sweet shop.

"How was the interview?" I asked.

"I gave answers to all the questions they asked me. If they give priority to the merit, I'll get the job" said Kunthi. It was night eight o'clock when we reached Biknoor.

There were some children who were watching our car with interest. They were excited to know to which house the car was going! But in olden days the children used to watch the cars with a surprise in their eyes!

Kunthi's son was calling his friends from the car by their names, "Ore, Ramu! Are, Gopi!" His intention is that he was travelling in a car!

Kunthi and I looked at each other with a smile.

"Stop here," Kunthi ordered the driver before a house.

The neighbours were looking with a surprise at Kunthi when she was getting down from the car.

I and her son got down from the car after Kunthi!

Kunthi knocked at the door. After a few minutes they were opened.

I conveyed namaskar to Kunthi's mother but she didn't recognize me!

When we entered the inner part of the house,

Kunthi introduced me to her mother. She was very much happy to see me as if she were meeting a close relative after many days!

My car driver brought basket of fruits, sweet packets etc., inside the house.

"Mummy, Seetha will take her dinner here with us! Prepare anything special for us immediately!" said Kunthi.

"What we have brought is enough! Why do we need specials? You can give me a treat when you get a good job! Let's eat whatever we have now! If mother is ready to prepare anything for us, it takes at least one hour to complete. It takes one hour more to eat it! My journey will take five more hours from here - total amounting seven hours! If I count like this, I'll reach Adilabad at two or three in the night. My father may be worried about me. Let's eat whatever we have!" I hurried up all of them.

I gave some amount to the driver and ordered him to have his dinner in a nearby hotel.

Kunthi's mother had to agree with me for my proposal on the dinner. She tried to spread *vistharlu** with dissatisfaction as she was not able to cook with her hands.

Kunthi's mother asked me, Kunthi and her son to dine first and she wanted to eat later. It may be because the food is not sufficient for all of us!

"Let's all eat together whatever we have! If there is a scarcity for any item, we have sweets with us!" when I proposed like this Kunthi's mother was also ready to take dinner with us.

She offered rice to me and to Kunthi's son; she served corn gatka for her and to Kunthi.

My spirits rose when I looked at gatka. I've seen it after many days. May be after fifteen years! I did not take gatka, ambali and roti after my mother has passed away. I didn't know how to prepare them and there was no one to prepare for me!

I was vexed to eat fruits, biscuits, rice, pulihora* daily. During my childhood I had a fancy for all of them, but now I don't want to have any kind of taste in them. It was so delicious to eat gatka with milk . . . perhaps Kunthi may not like them very much!?

"Please Kunthi! Give me gatka from your visthari! I'm vexed to eat this rice daily." I passed my visthari to Kunthi and took her visthari without any hesitation!

"Seetha, are you eating gatka?" Kunthi's mother was repented.

"Amma, what do you know the taste of it? You ask Kunthi . . . she will tell you! During her childhood days she used to give many troubles to my mother for it!" I said with a smile.

She looked at her daughter with bewilderment,

"She always says why you give me gatka and ambali regularly - please cook some rice for me?" she said.

"Is it ...?" I looked at Kunthi!

Kunthi smiled and kept quite!

I could understand her smile, I ordered the driver to bring the biryani pocket from the car into the house.

Kunthi and her mother were eating biryani . . . I was eating their gatka and roti with much appetite - my car driver looked at all of us with a puzzle.

*(Sweet Nonsense,
Andhra Jyothi weekly Date: 13.04.1979)*

**Modhuga : Flame of the forest (A tree)*

**Beedi : Tobacco rapped in a leaf for smoking*

**Jowari : The great millet*

**Gatka : Pudding made of corn*

**Ambali : Porridge made of rice*

**Vistharlu : Plates made of leaves for serving
food*

**Pulihora : Food rice to which spices, turmeric
and tamarind or lime juice are added.*



UNKNOWN INTENTIONS



1975

"Aunty, when are you going to Warangal?"

Bobby, who is my neighbour, asked me this question while returning the pen that he had taken in the morning for his work.

"Why are you so much interested? Do you want to come?" I asked him with a smile.

"No, no aunty, simply asking, that's all!" went away from my sight trying to hold his shorts up that is slipping down.

My annayya bothers whenever Bobby, who is studying in a convent, speaks fluent English.

He always bothers that he couldn't have this problem with English, if he were joined in a convent like Bobby. He completed his HSC in Telugu

medium so he couldn't speak in English. He didn't realize the importance of English, until he joined PUC. He completed his B.A. like his friends by copying the answers from other's answer sheets. He could not understand what the lecturer was teaching in English. He used to say to others as he was only a matriculate instead of telling them that he was a graduate because of timidity. At last he was afraid of using his B.A. degree in getting a job, so he adjusted himself as a clerk with the HSC certificate.

Though our father was elected as MLA for the second time, he didn't use his influence to help my annayya in getting a job.

Whenever my mother wanted to bring the issue to the notice of my father, he used to convince my mother by saying, "the job is suitable for his standard". My annayya always agrees with my father in this issue.

When I was thinking about my annayya, he said - "Are, Still are you not ready? It's time for the train to come, get ready - quick?" Listening to annayya's words I ran towards the water tap.

My annayya's bosom friend, Saradhi's marriage is on that night - marriage is in Warangal.

"I said I don't come" - but he is not in a position to listen to me.

"How can you deny Hema? Do you know how much he treated you as a sister with love and affection from the days you used to wear frocks? He wrote me that he would not allow me to enter his house, if I didn't bring you with me. You are responsible for the sin, if I didn't attend to the marriage of my close friend! Then you do whatever you like!" he threatened - he was afraid and finally requested in order to get the acceptance from me and I had to say "O.K." at last.

"I don't know anyone there! How can I feel free among all your male friends! I'm very much afraid of the situation, I don't want to come! You go on your own!" I used the last weapon to escape from the danger.

"Don't have such fears Hema! I told you many a times about Manohar, my close friend. He was coming with his wife to the marriage; I came to know that his wife was very jovial. I'll introduce her to you. You can have her company at the marriage," he said and started to get his luggage ready.

I didn't get any pretence to escape, so I informed my mother that we were leaving for Warangal and got on to the rickshaw and started for railway station. We were saved as the train arrived on time. My annayya was blabbering till we reached Bhuvanagiri station. It was all about his close friend

Manohar. It seems Manohar passed his M.Sc. in first class. He was very intelligent as he had command on English literature! He was a good natured and civilized - What not!? - I was yawning otherwise my annayya might have given a lengthy lecture till we reached Warangal!

It's getting dark when we reached Warangal. Both the bride and groom belong to the same place! We had to go directly to the bride's house, as the time for the marriage was fast approaching! The groom, Saradhi's eyes were shining by looking at me.

"I am happy you come at last sister. I was feeling that you may not come as the time for marriage is fast approaching! Whatever it may be, you have come at last! That's enough for me" he felt very happy for my presence at his marriage.

Saradhi may be mad! His love knew no bounds! Really speaking - there is no relation between me and him. Still, why does he have such an immeasurable love for me? It seems I had grown in his arms. I used to tease when he didn't give me chocolates! I used to weep like anything if he didn't come to my home and I used to sleep by weeping continuously.

Though I didn't remember any of them right now, they seem to be fun for me when my mother and

other members of the family were narrating them.

Saradhi was passing some remarks humorously at the bride in the marriage pandal. She was smiling with shy for them. The couple looked as if they were made for each other!

When I passed the same information about the couple to my brother, he said, "I'm going to marry a girl who will be more beautiful than this bride." He swore a very strong oath on the spot.

"All my college girls were in the queue in front of our house for such a personality with muscles like you. In that swyamvaram* . . . you will get a universal beauty . . . don't swear such a strong oath for this silly issue", I mocked at my annayya who is very lean that he may be swept away for the strong blow of wind.

"You will get a lean fellow, a stick of a broom personality like me as your husband!" he gave me a curse without showing any sympathy on me as his sister, "Hellow Manohar" he went away by wishing a couple who are at a distance.

I observed them that they were coming towards me by talking and laughing together. There was a woman with them; perhaps she might be the better half of Manohar, who was walking slowly.

"She is my wife Aruna!" introduced Manohar his wife to me.

"Namasthe" I wished her with a smile...

Her appearance was very ordinary. He was in bell bottom pant and a shirt with dark flowers. He was trying to show off his style and he was using as much English as possible in his conversation.

His pronunciation is so sweet; his personality is suitable to his name. He is handsome that any girl who looks at him will definitely try to see him again. There is no exaggeration in the words of my annayya.

He has a job in a certain factory with a salary of rupees five hundred per month. Aruna was very lucky to get a husband like Manohar who has all the eligibilities as a husband.

Aruna and I mingled with each other within no time.

We cracked jokes on the women who wear silk saris in extreme hot conditions and suffer due to suffocation, the gentlemen who come to the marriage but spend their whole time in playing cards forgetting the marriage, the little children who were crying for their mothers, the old people who stepped on the feet of small children due to their poor eyesight and come to their senses when they cry - the college guys who lost their shoes and searching for them by narrating their features - we didn't sleep that night!

On the next day, Manohar invited me and my annayya to their house. "Jagan, the yesterday night your sister did not sleep well. Today the bride will go to Saradhi's house. Today there will be lunch and dinner at the bride's house... so both of you come to my house and take rest there. Saradhi also told me to arrange accommodation to both of you in my house only," he took me and my annayya to their house.

The house was ultra modern to look at. But the family member's behaviour was not good enough. Manohar has four younger brother s. They have their separate rooms; they don't have sisters so when any women go to their house they have to face some problems.

I felt embarrassed to look at Manohar's younger brothers who didn't have even a commonsense to speak to the guests. I didn't understand how people live under one roof without talking to one another. We were getting bored so we planned to go to a movie at matinee show.

Saradhi called my annayya to his house on an urgent work, so he went away. I, Aruna, Manohar and his annayya went to the movie.

Aruna sat beside Manohar, I sat by Aruna. Manohar's younger brother was left with a seat which is next to me. He was hesitating to sit next to

me.

"It's all right you can sit here!" I said to him as I don't give any preference to such matters.

He sat beside me. The movie was started. It was just an ordinary love story; hero and heroine both were singing a duet at their first sight only.

Manohar's younger brother was beating rhythmically with his legs to the tune of the duet. His leg touched my feet once or twice while he was beating rhythmically. I thought that it was done by a mistake and I continued to watch the picture.

As he didn't get any response from me, he thought that I was ready for his silly actions. This time he tried to touch my shoulders by allowing his left hand from behind my chair.

"He is an educated brute! Ugh!" I scolded him in a low voice which could be audible only to him; I sat moving to the front part of the seat.

Manohar might have understood the mischievous actions of his younger brother and also my condition, "It seems that the seat is not convenient to you, you can come and sit here Hema", he offered his seat to me and adjusted in my seat.

I felt that there is a lot of difference between the two brothers.

I was shocked for the behaviour of such people

who behave wildly without considering the opinions of others and without any hesitation.

When we came out of the cinema hall Manohar's younger brother rushed towards a girl as "Hellow Mohini", as she was talking to someone.

"He is always like this only Hema! He flirts with cheap women and considers every woman as cheap, so he'll be after them - sometimes he was punished even with chappals! I feel sorry for my younger brother's mistake! He was studying in a famous college but he was with no morals! Everyone in the college has some qualities like him! As they were studying in English medium institutions, they were fluent in English but they don't have any subject knowledge! Moreover in those famous colleges the management will leak out the question papers before the day of the examination in order to bring good results to the institution. The issue will not be leaked out because of the unity among the students."

I was shocked to listen to all those things which I didn't know. It was dark when we reached home.

That night while Aruna was preparing dinner for us - I was getting bore, so I wrote a letter to my friend who was also living in the same town and asked Manohar to post it.

Manohar observed the address on the envelope,

"By looking at your handwriting, I believe that it was written by an immature person!," he said with a smile.

"My husband is always proud of expecting the characteristics of a person by observing their hand writing! He always teases me that I'm stubborn by looking at my hand writing," Aruna said by wiping her hands to the napkin who just completed the dinner for us.

We started gossiping by sitting in the balcony after the dinner. My annayya joined us at about eight o'clock. My eye lids were dropping without my intention as I had no sufficient sleep the previous night. I was struggling to control my drowsiness.

Manohar observed my condition and said, "Hema is getting sleep Aruna! Will both of you sleep here - or in our bed room?"

There is no separate room for the guests in the house so this couple had to adjust in providing accommodation to the guests. I took pity on them.

"Let's all sleep in this balcony by keeping the mattresses. Who will sleep in that bed room, where it was very hot?" said Aruna.

That couple brought three mattresses and adjusted in the balcony.

My annayya is on one mattress - Manohar is on

the second mattress - on the third mattress I and Aruna adjusted.

Manohar was explaining about the English novels without taking a break! By the time my annayya and Aruna were in a deep sleep!

I was vexed with the talkativeness of Manohar - I didn't know when I went to deep sleep but I woke up suddenly when Aruna's leg fell on me.

Aruna turned towards me completely. Aruna was in her deep sleep. I thought she might have habituated to put her legs on Manohar. She did it now, might be thinking that I was Manohar. I laughed myself for my thought!

After that I didn't know when I slipped into the sleep but this time I woke up when Aruna's hand is fondling my lips and face - it irritated me, so I hold her hand and put it on my neck.

This time Aruna tried to take her hand back from my grip and touched my cheek and neck. I came to my senses from my drowsiness!

I put the hand aside and I wanted to say, "Aruna, I'm Hema, I'm not your Manohar!" and got up to tell her the secret.

I was shocked! The hand which was fondling me was not of Aruna! That was Manohar's hand that was lying next to Aruna!

My body was shuddered when I got the idea that he was trying to touch me by extending his hand over the body of his wife. It was more irritated me for my idea that I myself put his hand on my neck! Is it real or dream? What is this, I was shocked!

Ugh! Manohar might not be that kind of mean person! Perhaps in his sleepiness he might have touched me thinking me as Aruna - I have tried to go to sleep again.

In the mean time Aruna turned towards Manohar! Manohar took her into his arms and hugged! I didn't see such scenes in my life directly, I saw them only in movies and read in the stories - I was ashamed of looking at them.

I slept by closing my both eyes with a force! I didn't get sleep for a long time; the same scene was appearing in my mind repeatedly!

If they could not leave each other not even for a single day, they should have slept in that bed room only. Why should they sleep and play mischievous games publicly . . . it is a nuisance to others.

Manohar's hand fell on me again when I was thinking about the couple! When Aruna turned towards me . . . previously, I thought that his hand fell on me accidentally - but when Aruna turned towards him, again his hand fell on me - it seems

that he was trying to do some mischievous things intentionally, my mind was upset and leaving the mattress aside I moved away from them and tried to sleep.

Manohar who felt sorry for the behaviour of his younger brother . . . looking like a gentleman . . . is it his real nature? I felt that, keeping wife on his bed and trying to touch another woman secretly, these types of fellows are even worse than the whores!

I couldn't sleep that night because of many reasons. My annayya was in a deep sleep who didn't know any of these things.

"Poor fellow! My annayya was innocent and how can he live in this society?" I felt pity for him.

The next day I woke before all and took bath and argued with my annayya to go to Hyderabad immediately.

"Abba! What is the urgency! Let's stay today here and we can go tomorrow. Let's see Ramappa and Paakala*" he said without removing the blanket.

"No Ramappa, Geemappa, if you want to see all of them, stay back here and come to Hyderabad leisurely! But send me from here please!" I said and pulled the blanket from my annayya's body.

"No, how can I send you alone? What will happen to me? Mother will kill me! O.K. let's move if you

wish! Let me take a cup of coffee at least!" he got up from the bed uninterestingly.

Both my annayya and I prepared, took a cup of coffee, then I said to Aruna slowly, "we'll go now."

She was shocked and said, "What! What is this all of a sudden?"

It made me laugh! If she knows that Manohar tried to touch me the previous night - she might not have told me this dialogue at any cost.

"What is this? There are a number of visiting places here. How can you go without visiting them? It's too bad. You can go after two days, what was the urgency?" said Manohar.

'Oho, would you like to make more mischievous attempts again tonight?'... I said to myself but said to them: "No, it is not possible to stay today! Tomorrow there is my cousin's marriage... I've to go certainly! I'll come again next time!"

My annayya told me when we got into the rickshaw: "Hema! I've listened to you regarding our return journey! Now let me take the chance! So, now I'll tell you, you have to listen to me! What do you say?"

"What am I going to listen... you silly fellow!" I said with irritation - I was afraid to listen to him because he may bring another problem!

"Nothing is important! Saradhi asked you to meet him once before you leave for Hyderabad - will it be fine going back without meeting him, when we came for his marriage! Will it be manners not to meet him?" he used a lethal weapon on me.

"It's OK - as you wish! Let's go!" I said.

The rickshaw was stopped before Saradhi's house after ten minutes! There were not many relatives as I had expected in his house because most of them are local!

When my annayya and I were going on the steps of the upper portion we could hear the voice a few who were talking aloud.

"Orey, Saradhi! Don't you listen to me? Why do you want to be stubborn all the time? Is she your own sister? Why did you get that much costly sari to Hema? Why do you spend this much of amount unnecessarily though we were not in a good economic position!" said by an old woman who may be Saradhi's mother.

"Ssshhh! speak slowly! Why do you think from a single perspective and why don't you think from the other side? I bought these clothes not because of excessive affection I had for Hema! Do you know who her father is? He is the minister! If we satisfy this girl . . . tomorrow she will recommend me for a job! You have settled my marriage much against to

my wish. Now how can I take care of my wife without a good job? I'll tell you all these details later - please be happy among all our friends and relatives - please do me this favour!" requested Saradhi.

My annayya and I looked at each other; we got down the steps without informing to anyone and started towards our home.

We didn't talk to each other in the train till we reach Hyderabad - there was a lot of difference in my annayya's behaviour when compared to today and day before yesterday.

My annayya was going on describing about the greatness of his friends continuously the other day - just because of one incident my annayya became dull.

If I tell my annayya about the second incident - ammo! He will have a bad opinion on all his friends!

Someone entered the compartment in a certain station.

He wished the boy who sat in front of us with a smile and asked: "Anand! Where are you going?"

"Where can I go except to Hyderabad?"

"Why are you going? Is it to attend an interview?"

"Yes! But how do you know?"

"The certificates in your hands explaining all the

matter - I have to appreciate you for your patience brother. You have been commuting from here to Hyderabad in search of a job - you are like Vikramarka* who did not get disgusted in efforts."

"What can I do? There were five members who depended on me. I had to live for them because they have taken efforts to provide education to me. I'm earning a meagre amount by pulling the rickshaw during night time. It's not sufficient to run the family with that meagre amount. Wherever I go for the job there were asking not for merit but for the bribe. I should attend to the interview with bribe or with recommendation! If I wanted to have both the things and I wanted to get the second thing with the first one - bribe! How can I get those two when I was struggling to make both ends meet?"

"Is it? Are the people giving recommendations through bribe? I can't believe it?"

"Yes! I too didn't believe at the beginning. But ... do you know Mr. Jagannadham our Social Welfare minister... The candidates have come to know recently that this minister was practicing it for the past two years."

I was shocked! My mind was blocked! The minister whose name was mentioned in their conversation was no one but . . . my father!

My father who seems to be very honesty; who

does not show any disparity between the family members and the voters; who helped my annayya in getting only clerk post . . . this much unknown intentions are hidden in his mind!?

My mind is running faster than the train in which I was travelling. My mind was fuming with fury. Quickly I should go home! I should strait away question my father about this gross injustice!

Saradhi appeared suddenly into my thoughts! I didn't know the reason but I reached at the stage where I can forgive him!

When I was submerged into these thoughts, I was stopped by one important issue. 'Yes, my annayya is not my own brother... he was not the own son to my father, he was his brother's son, it seems my father had been taking revenge which he had on his brother - if my father's brother were alive will my father do this kind of injustice to my annayya only to get the popularity that he was impartial!?'

My heart was boiling in the fumes of my fury to think about all these issues around me.

"Poor Hema, the world you have seen is very small. To have a better understanding of all these injustice, deceit, wickedness, you have to come and mingle with the people around you!" my annayya told me as if he understood my feelings.

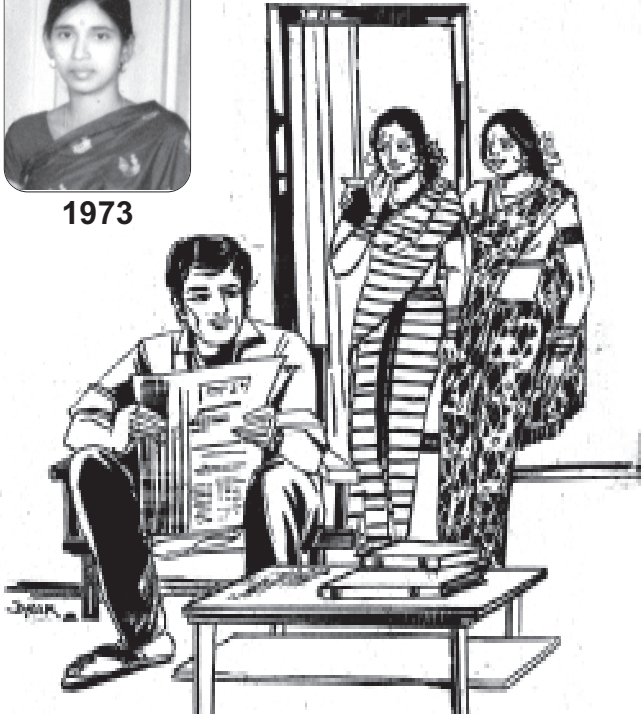
Then I came to know . . . there was only one thing in this world which was not easy to understand - that was 'unknown intentions' of human beings - it was filled completely with love, selfishness, infatuation, lust - it can't be expected that how they will be developed and revealed on different people - in different situations!

*(Anthupattani Aantharyalu,
Andhrajiyothi Weekly, 07.03.1975)*

- **Swayamvaram* : *The process of selecting husband by a maiden at an assembly among suitors*
- **Annayya* : *Elder brother*
- **Ramappa and Paakala* : *Historical visiting places in Warangal, Telangana*
- **Vikramarka* : *A mythological character who is known for his perseverance.*



1973



HER SMILE

"My Sujji has come!"

I told Basanth as soon as he entered home by shaking his shoulders by controlling my ecstasy.

"Sujji - who is she?" When he expressed his doubt, I was very much annoyed by looking at his confused face.

I threw him away and said, "Really - you are a sinner! Every day I mention the name of my bosom friend Sujji? How can you forget her... what kind of a person are you?" I turned my face in the opposite direction with irritation.

He pulled my tuft in order to be close to me, "You silly fellow! That's why I always say that you can't balance your emotions! I just posed a question mark face to irritate you on a lighter vein, but ... didn't I know Sujatha? It's Okay but you have forgotten about me in the pleasant company of your friend! At least will you permit to have the luck of getting a kiss... otherwise..." he stopped talking abruptly when he got the idea that Sujatha, who was in the next room may listen to his words.

I smiled lightly, "It's all right she is in the bath room!" I have tried to console him.

The next moment he embraced, pulled me towards him and said, "It seems tonight I have to sleep all alone in the moon light of the full moon night! Ugh! Your friend has arrived by adjusting herself on the full moon day." Basanth was feeling like anything!

I rushed into the kitchen by mocking at him by putting my tongue out of my mouth. Basanth followed me into the kitchen after changing his dress! He sat on the low level wooden plank, and

took the vegetables from my hand and got ready to cut them.

"Oh, what is this? My friend Sujji knows pretty well that you love me like anything, you just sit there by watching me! If you help me when no one is around us, it will be good! If Sujji sees you in this position, will it be fine?" I complained against him by beating my head.

"What would she say? Nirmala is lucky - her husband even cooks food for her!"

"It's all right, please leave the kitchen! I tried to control my laugh and threatened him with atla kaada, flat frying spoon with a long handle.

"Unfortunate! I'm not even lucky enough to look at and chat with you! What can I do?" - By looking back repeatedly, he left the kitchen.

Sujji came to the kitchen after completing her bath.

"When does your husband come from the office? It seems he didn't come till now!" she started cutting the vegetables by taking the knife from my hands.

"He has come just now! He's reading the paper in the drawing room! Let me prepare the curry first and then I'll introduce him to you." I involved myself in the preparation of the curry.

Sujji and I were neighbours for fifteen years. We

were classmates from class I to P.U.C.

We didn't meet each other when she was married and went to her in-law's house in Vijayawada. We shared our pains and pleasures through letters these days. After completing my B.A., I was at home for two years - I got married and due to the job of my husband I shifted my family from Warangal to Hyderabad. Sujji did not attend to my marriage because her husband's sister marriage was also on the same day of my marriage.

She wrote me by congratulating when I was with fifth month of pregnancy: - 'Women will look more beautiful during pregnancy. I'm very much interested to see how you look and walk during this stage,' she wrote in one of her letters.

I saw her about seven years ago. I was sick of not looking at her during this gap. I requested her in all most all half a dozen letters to come and see me in Hyderabad - as a result at last she came here out of her love on me.

"She is Sujatha - my close friend!" I have introduced Sujji to Basanth and vice verse.

We three had a chat on various issues for more than half an hour - We both took much time in conversation except Sujji, who did not talk much - so I asked her "What is this Sujji! How can you keep quiet as you used to blabber all the time

previously?" I tried to encourage her to involve in our conversation. But she didn't involve in our conversation instead posed a strange smile on her lips.

We discussed about childhood experiences and movies for some time after the dinner! Looking at the yawning of Basanth... "He is sleepy! Let's go and sleep!" I stepped into the guest room with Sujji!

Sujatha looked at me with a strange expression "What is this... are you here? Is it a plan to make your husband scold me? Go... go - sleep there" said Sujji and covered her entire body with a blanket.

"If I come to your house, you can go to your husband's room. But don't ask me to go now!" I laughed and pulled her blanket. She also laughed with me.

How beautiful was Sujji when she smiles! I know pretty well how the college students are very much excited to see her smiling face during the college days.

But this smile was not like the smile she used to pose during the college days! That smile used to tickle the heart but this smile tries to squeeze the heart. If there is anyone in her place, they might have died because of the troubles.

She was stubborn - that was possible only to her

- By thinking about her I entered into her blanket.

"You didn't tell me about the health of Shiva Rao! Do you have any hopes on him?" I asked her this question which I was waiting for the chance to ask!

She smiled! The same smile! Smile which squeezes one's heart.

"Tell me?" I asked her with a force.

She nodded her head from side to side as she is not interested to tell the details.

"Is your youth should go waste?"

"What can I do?"

"Give divorce to him! You can get divorce very easily on this ground!"

"What can I do if I give divorce to him?"

"Go for re-marriage!"

"Who will come forward to marry me?"

"Don't say like that! What is less in you? Many men will be in the queue to marry you for your beauty!"

"Do you have the confidence that the suitor will not ask me about my past?"

"What is there to ask about your past? Your suitor would come forward - when he knows that your husband is impotent and still you are a virgin!"

"Can I answer the suitor for his silly questions, Nimmi?" If he asks 'Didn't your husband touch you? Didn't he even kiss you as you lived with your husband for six years in the same house?' Poor Nimmi... if one's husband is jovial with other woman, can the wife sustain for the humiliation? In that case what to think of men in such situations?"

"If that is the case, don't you have a solution for your problem?"

Again Sujatha nodded her head sideways as sign of saying 'no'.

"Are your in-laws not asking you about child bearing after so many years?"

"Why don't?" they asked me. I went to the hospital for them and told them that I was told by the doctor that . . . my husband has no problem . . . the problem is with me only . . . I told them that I have no chance of getting children. In fact I didn't consult any doctor!

"Didn't they say anything by listening to all these issues?"

"They were ready to arrange the second marriage to their son!"

I couldn't resist myself without laughing! Sujatha joined me in laughing though she was not in a good mood.

"Let them arrange the second marriage for him! That second wife will certainly reveal the secret to everyone. By the time only he will be taught a good lesson" I said with hatred.

"Will he talk to you sympathetically by thinking about his condition?"

"He thinks that he will become more inferior if he does so... that is why he will not give any preference to this issue! Eating, roaming and sleeping - his routine duties!" said Sujatha.

"How dare is he to marry you? What is the reason for his dare?"

Sujatha didn't say anything!

"Keep this issue aside! What is about you? Don't you get any desires - by looking at moon light, moon light nights, jasmine, couple who are moving closely with each other on the roads?"

Sujji smiled.

"Can I tell you one word? You are already a married woman in the view of the society - why don't you fulfil your desires secretly by having illicit relation..." I couldn't continue further as I felt very bad in suggesting it.

Sujji laughed without talking anything.

"Please Sujji - don't laugh like that! I couldn't bear your laugh anymore! I know that you like children

very much from your childhood. You used to play with the toy and treated it as your daughter. I couldn't forget them, though you forget! The other thoughts will not reach you, if a son is born to you! But... How can it be possible? The important person in the matter is impotent... how can your minimum desire be fulfilled?" I said irrelevantly out of my depression.

"I don't have any other desire except leading the peaceful life, Nimmi! I couldn't understand why you are feeling so much! Poor fellow, go to sleep - good night!" she told me and closed her eyes.

I couldn't get sleep though I tried very much. I went in to deep thoughts of past memories by moving on the bed aimlessly!

That Shiva Rao may be a criminal otherwise how can he destroy the life of the beautiful life of Sujji.

When Sujji entered the room on the first night, her husband was sleeping with a loud snoring.

When he woke up late in the night, he looked at his wife who was sleeping on the floor.

He woke her up and told - "I'm helpless in that 'issue'! I got this defect during a cycle accident last year. If this issue is known to everyone, I can't bear the sympathetic words of the people around me. So I married you. If you tell this secret to anyone, I'll kill you," He threatened on the first night itself.

My heart weakened to think about the situation of a bride. How Sujji could have faced the situation on the very first night!

Her parents had to face many problems to arrange this alliance to Sujji. Can they think of making arrangements for her remarriage? Though they know the secret, they couldn't do anything but weeping silently!

Without considering his physical weakness, he was with many doubts about the character of Sujji. He tortured her like anything! 'Why did you look at our neighbour Ramesh? Why did you talk for a long time with the milk boy? Why did you take this much time while giving clothes to the washer man?'

He always sleeps with his wife in a separate room, though there are relatives in the house. They sleep in a separate room not to give any scope for others to get a doubt, even though there is a function in their house.

I looked at Sujji's face while thinking about her.

Her face was peaceful in the bed room light.

I couldn't understand how peacefulness occupied her face. How beautiful was her face! If any man looks at her in this position, will he leave this chance

...

I got an idea when I was thinking about her.

Immediately I woke her up and said, "Sujji spend this night with Basanth! If you become pregnant, we can teach a good lesson to that fellow Shiva Rao. That is the punishment we can award to him!" without waiting for her answer I entered my room where Basanth was sleeping.

Basanth woke up when he experienced the touch of my lips and smiled lightly and said, "Down! Down! Madam could not sustain the sweet separation! Thanks!" he pulled me towards him.

I revealed my entire plan to him. He said that it is not possible for him. I requested him with tears. After much force he agreed to my proposal.

I locked from outside when Basanth entered Sujji's room without their notice.

I couldn't listen to the sound whether Basanth locked the door from inside the room or not!

I could hear the sound that was produced when Basanth sat on the bed. I stood near the door, though I know that listening to the sounds from the room is not manners. But I could not resist myself without listening to them.

Basanth has a muscular body - whenever he moves on the bed it creates sound. I know this pretty well.

By this time Sujji might have been enjoying the

cosy hug of Basanth. She might have adjusted like a dove in the broad chest of Basanth. Basanth might have pressed Sujji's lips with his lips . . . after that she could not continue her thoughts! I was suffering from an unknown pain . . . the jealousy which had never experienced sprouted in me; it was grown up into a huge tree and stood before me!

Has Basanth this much only love on me! How dare is he to enjoy with another woman in my presence? Doesn't he think for a while before going into the room? How can he accept this proposal? Will Basanth accept if I wanted to share my bed with another man? All the men will behave like this, if they get this type of chance? Ugh! What kind of people are these men? They are all traitors!

Basant is male and it may be all right for him . . . but what happened to Sujji? Why not she comes out of the room by opening the doors?

No, no, how can she come now? Ugh! Ugh! Doesn't she have the common sense that after all he is her friend's husband...?

I was shaking with anger!

I could not stand there even for a minute! It was about one hour ago Basanth entered the guest room. My patience was evaporated! I could not resist myself; I opened the doors of the guest room with force and switched on the light.

It was shocking! Sujji was not in the room! Basanth was snoring! I couldn't understand whether it is dream or real. I have rubbed my eyes and looked for her in the room! It was not wrong.

What happened to Sujji? I turned around to look for Sujji. Sujji smiled at me while coming from the kitchen.

That smile . . .

That smile did not prickle my heart as it did previously. But it insulted me and my personality and also it made me to introspect myself. I didn't have enough dare to talk to her. So, I went into the room where Basanth had slept and wept like anything.

I woke up in the morning with the loud call of the milk maid. I came at the entrance with the bowl to get milk.

"Did you forget to close the doors from inside yesterday night, they were opened when I pushed them" asked the milk maid.

Immediately I was struck with a doubt. Leaving the milk bowl at the entrance I rushed into the balcony. There was a slip fluttering in the wind appeared to me instead of Sujji.

Poor Nimmi,

When you told me like that last night and when

you approached Basanth. I followed you to your room and overheard your conversation. I was shocked and my expectations went wrong. I was helpless. There was no moment in my limbs.

Immediately I took two bed sheets and rushed into the kitchen. I have been closely observing your actions and conflict of thoughts! I could save me from the danger, as you have told me beforehand. At the same time I could also protect my feelings for you! Otherwise I couldn't think of the danger!

"It's all right - you have been posing a number of questions thorough out the night - I didn't get a chance and I have no mood to share why and how did I come to you? I have tried to get a Visa without the knowledge of Shiva Rao. I got the Visa. I came here to see you as you are the only close friend to me before leaving for America!

Previously I tried many a times to meet you, but I was failed. So Shiva Rao may come here in search of me! I don't want to enter into that hell again! I didn't want to give any trouble to you as you have been feeling guilty! I was leaving without informing you as I came here without intimating you.

- Your Sujji.

I smiled like a mad person by reading the letter - I didn't know the reason but my smile is just like the smile of Sujji. Now I could understand the meaning

of her smile. This time there was a lifeless smile again appeared on my lips.

I was shocked and turned around - when I experienced a heavy breath behind me!

Basanth! There were tears in his eyes.

"I was thinking that both of you were playing a drama to test my character! I wanted to cheat both of you! Tit for tat - I entered the room, but I never thought that you will do such a foolish thing Nirmala - you have felicitated your friend in a befitting manner who have never come before!" he gave a lifeless smile.

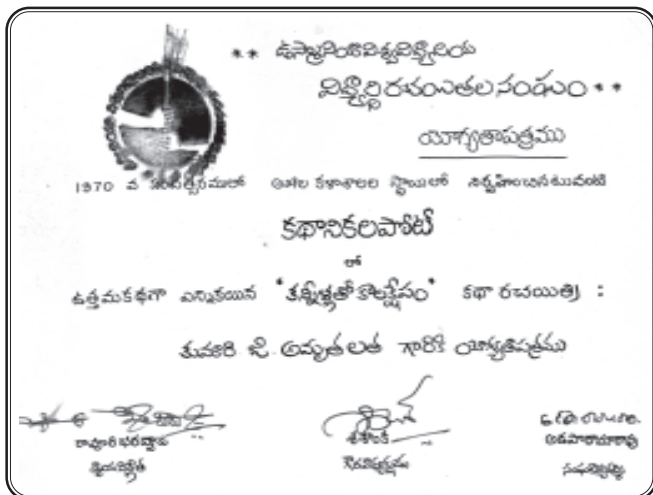
I was feeling repentance, which was burning my entire body, and the words of Basanth are like kerosene. I could not sustain this injury and they are adding insult to injury; by calling Basanth aloud I embraced him and wept for a long time.

*(Aame Navvu ...
Andhrajiyothi Weekly, 20.07.1973)*

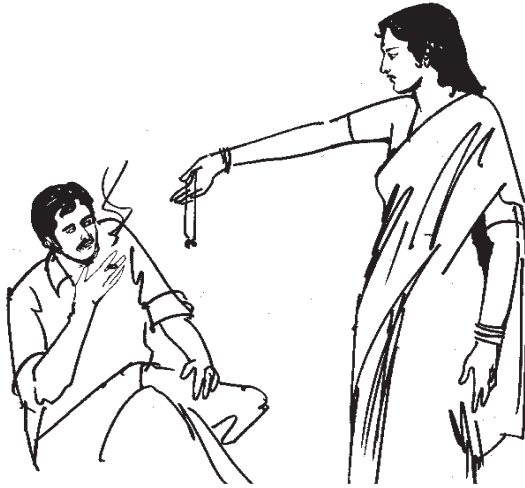
WHILING AWAY OF TIME WITH TEARS...



1971



WHILING AWAY OF TIME WITH TEARS...



I hurled the books on the table soon after coming from college to home with debility and observed the silence reigning there. I was surprised for the scene in the home on one hand and switched on the radio Ceylon* on the other hand.

"Usha! Do you know this issue?" asked her brother by folding the newspaper which he had been reading till then.

"What is the matter, annayya?" I asked.

"Did you remember about three years ago, we all went to attend your sister-in-laws's younger brother's marriage? You said about a girl by name Vajramaala whom you had met . . ."

"Oh! That girl... it was said that she was blessed

with a baby boy?" I replied enthusiastically.

"Yes, yes... But..."

"She was so beautiful, wasn't she? I liked her very much! She was very nice!"

"Usha, you consider everyone as good? All the girls of your age seem to be good for you!"

"What is your opinion? Do you think that she is not good?"

"No ... No! What is this? You are behaving like a little child? ? It is not that what I wanted to tell you, Usha!"

"At any cost and under any circumstance, she is a good girl!" Saying this, paying no attention to my brother's words, I went into the bathroom in order to wash my face. I thought that I would later pick up a quarrel with my brother afterwards leisurely!"

In the next moment, the memories of Maala had overwhelmed me...

'A great boon for an insignificant fellow', I was reminded of this adage when I looked at this couple.

She was so beautiful with golden gleams. She looked radiant with wonderfully carved structure made of marble stone! But beside her there was a man with a body like a black babul tree without any shining at any corner of his face.

They were in their B.Sc. Second Year! Though

she was not interested in marrying anyone at that age, her father who was not well-off to give dowry and gifts on a big scale convinced her apparently and performed her marriage with a dowry of ten thousand rupees with this black stout man!

His mother, by lending money collects high rates of interest from the people; she flourished like a queen in her village. These are a few things I came to know about her unasked!

I came across that girl in the marriage of my elder sister-in-law's brother's marriage.

We both mingled with each other very soon because we were the only highly educated among others! We talked about films, college and many other things! I could understand her extraordinary intelligence during that fifteen minutes' conversation.

I was not interested to attend to any marriages since my childhood days. That's why I couldn't attend even my close friends' marriages. But there being no alternative I had to attend that marriage as my sister-in-law forced me a lot.

Certainly, she will be counted in the list of beautiful women! But while looking at her husband I felt disgusted.

There were some people with dark complexion but they radiate with a particular kind of shine. But her husband was not even attractive! Terrible eyes,

coarse hands! I felt like crawling of scorpions and snakes all over my body if I imagine the scene, in which he took her face into his hands! How could she bear his presence?

I overheard that he was not even up to the mark in his studies! He failed thrice in the first year of B.Sc.! And his characteristics were not known to me at that time! As their marriage took place on the condition that the bride can be allowed to complete her degree course. So both of them were continuing their studies! Her name was Vajramaala and his name was Sudhakar.

"Thank God, at least his name was good,' I said to myself.

On observing his persistent following behind her wherever she goes, "she might feel disgusting, when he was after her every time!" vadina* commented.

"Didn't he feel like? Is it that much necessary to exhibit his love in public all the time?" I said as I did not like his behaviour.

However, she did not say anything against him, as she was busy in doing house hold chores on her own! Bride was being her husband's sister; she was busy in preparing and serving tea, coffee, juice etc., we found no time even to talk to each other. If she got the chance, that would be utilized by Sudhakar himself!

"You're lucky, even after marriage you're continuing your studies!" I said to her in order to continue my conversation.

"You are right! It is very difficult to continue my studies! I am going to discontinue my studies next year", she said.

"Why!?" saying that I looked into her face in order to search for her internal feelings.

"Aa! Nothing special! I'm not interested", by saying she went away as she was busy. I couldn't resist myself without appreciating her at that moment for her affectionate expression.

She had a burning desire to study further. She got through in her subjects, while her husband failed! She might consider it as shame for her husband; hence she decided to give up her studies. I strongly believe that it might not be the reason for her to discontinue her studies! Then what might be the reason?

"Something is there!", I did not think about the matter any further!

I had developed an aversion towards marriage and men when I came to know that Sudhakar demanded his relatives for the arrangement of a special bed for him and his wife on the night of my elder sister-in-law's brother's marriage.

I never met her again after that marriage. Never

had she and I happened to meet again. I came to know after eight-months that Maala gave birth to a male child who was exactly like her husband and also she stopped her studies!

When vadina told me that Maala was leading her marital life reluctantly ? It did not surprise me but I could not resist myself without asking the reason for her reluctance.

★ ★ ★

"Maala! Please lend me ten rupees? I'll return in a week."

"How can I possess them? You can ask attayya*"

"If I ask her all day long she may hiss at me in anger. Maala can't you give?"

"You took twenty rupees from me last week! I gave you whatever I had."

"All the women in this world will tell in the same way. I'm asking as I am badly in need of it, Maala!"

"Instead of suffering for money every time why don't you do a job?"

"Why should I go for a job? Am I suffering from any insufficiency to do those wretched jobs?"

"If you are not interested to do a job, let me do it for you! Then there won't be any need for us to depend on attayya for every time."

"Why do you need a job? Do you think that I'm

dead? Would you like to roam about the offices after my death? It seems you are wishing for my death! You wanted to decorate yourself as a butterfly and wanted to go to the offices, after my death!?"

"Hu! If I wanted to do the job, I don't care anyone! It is not an obstacle for me to do the job even if you are alive! But I wanted to solve the problem amicably and I wanted to do the job with your permission only! I don't want to argue with anyone and publicize the issue!"

"Abbo! The dog which was taught how to speak will repeat the words of his master without hunting, when it was taken for hunting! This is the problem with the wife who is studying B.Sc! It might be the characteristic feature of an educated woman to oppose and resist for everything!" said Sudhakar sarcastically.

"It might be the practice of the men to criticize women. If we speak logically, you consider that we are opposing you!" said Maala without lowering her stature.

"Shut up your mouth," said Sudhakar furiously and gave some hard slaps on Maala's two cheeks and battered her head against the wall violently by holding her hair against the wall!

"Ammal!" cried Maala and hung her head as a stalk of spinach and fell heavily on the ground suddenly. Looking at Maala, Sudhakar agitated a

little and strode away in the next moment recklessly.



After twelve o'clock in the midnight, Sudhakar entered the house staggering and found Maala in deep sleep with her son in the bedroom.

"Maala!" he called out.

Maala did not open her eyes.

"Maala ? calling you only!"

Maala did not wake up even then.

Sudhakar went near her and pulled her from the bed by the arm.

The boy woke up and started crying. On hearing the crying of her son, Maala woke up and looked at Sudhakar, who was staggering with red blood shot eyes.

She stood up from the bed and trembling with fear.

"What is this? Do you have any idea that your husband may come? Are you taking rest by eating without waiting for me? Didn't you have a common sense that your husband may come home with empty stomach! Do you think that it is enough to sleep like a *Mahaa Raani!* However, you have filled your belly, then why do you worry about others! I told you several times that you should not eat before I take food! Did you listen to me? I told you I don't tolerate such nasty tricks?" by saying this he slapped

on her cheek very hardly.

Maala, could control herself from falling on the ground, wiped her tears which were rolling continuously from her cheek.

"Go and serve food for me!"

Without saying anything Maala walked into the kitchen and served food to Sudhakar. He gave two blows to the crying boy.

"Dirty noise! Continuous crying as if thunder bolts were coming from the blue when I enter the house." Showing the sign of annoyance he made his way towards the kitchen.

On seeing the substantial meal, which was not even hot, again Sudhakar was excited.

"How many times did I tell you to keep hot meal ready for me by the time I get home?"

"If you come after midnight how you can get hot meal?"

"That's all unnecessary for me! You should keep hot meal ready for me whenever I return home. I don't tolerate if you eat a meal or sleep before my arrival!"

"I haven't taken any meal till now. Why do you flare up against me?"

"Stop! Do you lie in addition to your B.Sc study? What kind of women are these, who were born to kill the men! Ugh! Ugh! There is no peace in this

house." Sudhakar after completing his meal in a great hurry got into the bed.

The boy was continuously weeping with convulsions. Sudhakar's sleep was disturbed with it hence he became very angry.

"If you've given him milk properly he would not have wept at this odd hour! You're not performing your responsibilities in this house!" he said angrily.

"Is there any milk in me to give, it was not sufficient for him. Then have you brought Amul spray when I asked you to bring?"

"Oho! If you say that you don't have sufficient milk, then you will be permitted to feed the boy on she-buffalo's milk! What a trick it is! You're always afraid of losing your beauty if you provide breast-feeding to the boy. You don't bother to bring up the child."

"Don't worry! I don't have such fears! I don't have any interest in my beauty. I really tell you the truth of insufficient milk in me."

"Just that ? I am asking you why the milk is insufficient!" asked more or less in a roaring tone.

"There are no vitamins in my food to provide milk to the baby", Maala said impatiently.

"What do you mean? Is the food we are providing you like grass?"

"You See, I can't tell you anything if you take double meanings for every expression. You come

home very late at midnight. Until then I shouldn't take my meal. You will get angry if I eat. If I don't take meal properly at right time the boy will get no milk. Instead of knowing this little thing it has become very common to you to make so much fuss over it." Maala explained the reason by controlling her emotions.

"To understand all those things like you, did I pass my B.Sc first year for the first time itself? I'm rather a block-head! You're a B.Sc and you've all that knowledge! Always you wanted to show your superiority on me but you don't behave like a woman!" saying this he slipped into deep sleep covering himself in a blanket.

"Superiority, I'm exhibiting my superiority", having smiled feebly Maala said, 'I'm lucky because he did not manhandle me today!'

That day was her son's birthday...

Maala's friends from Hyderabad and Warangal came in large number. Maala's friend Vanaja brought one hundred and fifty rupees with her. Fifty rupees were missing from her money. Maala got a doubt and asked her husband: "Fifty rupees from Vanaja's suitcase were missing?"

"Really! Who has taken? All our servants were trustworthy people. May be she might have brought only one hundred rupees I think! Otherwise, who will take that forty rupees?" he said.

"Why did he say 'forty' when I said 'fifty'?" Mala thought. With a doubt, she went to Vanaja and asked her to count the money again.

'Maala, only forty rupees were missing!' said Vanaja after counting the remaining amount.

Maala thought, 'the thief was caught.'

When I said fifty, he said the missing money was only forty. That mistake itself caught him red-handed!

Maala had developed hatred all over her body. What kind of fellow he is! Is he such a man who picks the purse of his wife's friend? Maala took out forty rupees from her hundred rupees which she has been saving for many days and gave them to Vanaja. Maala said: 'Vanaja, our maidservant has taken that amount. She told the truth when I intimidated her.'

"Ugh! What is this life?" Unable to decide what to do and what not to do! Maala used the name of the servant in order to save her husband. At the same time she gave her own money, not to make her friend suffer the loss. Maala abused herself.

★ ★ ★

'I kept all the golden rings presented to our son on his baarasaala * function. They were now missing!' asked Maala.

"By the way, I forgot to tell you!. I sold them out in

dire need the other day. Maala, don't think otherwise."

Maala looked at Sudhakar who telling the truth carelessly but she satisfied that at last he was telling the truth!



"Attayya, the silver glass presented by my elder sister on the occasion of my marriage is now missing?"

"Sudhakar took that glass when he was going to his friend's marriage. Hasn't he told you?" said Ramanamma.

"Aa! Yes, yes! He told me and I forgot it." saying that she went to her bedroom, reclining on bed Maala sobbed convulsively.

Akkayya undergone several troubles to get the glass made. With great love she presented it to me on the occasion of my marriage. But he took it away and presented to his friend.

"Is Sudhakar so cultureless wretch! Have I been all these days sharing my marital life with such a dirty chap? If it comes to that, attayya is also just like her husband in her characteristics! If we make any puddings she eats secretly. Attayya didn't give up that habit of eating secretly although my husband's younger sister had admonished her several times. She can eat before me without offering them to me, can't she? How greatly it is

abhorrent to do those clandestine practices. My husband's sister Saroja was only in the house to support me. God helped me by providing her in the house!" Maala said to herself.

★ ★ ★

I felt ashamed of looking at my face in the bath room which was with full of foam, that I did not clean with the water as I was submerged in my thoughts!

Coming out after washing my face I heard some hiccups as if someone was weeping. When I looked into the kitchen, to my surprise, my vadina was weeping.

"What vadina ? What happened to you?" I asked with excitement.

"Usha , Maala consumed Endrin* and lost her life" vadina said while weeping.

"What, vadina? Is it true that what you told?"

"Real Usha!" vadina told me by covering her face in her hands.

"Then is it that thing annayya wanted to tell me a short while ago?"

"Bhagavaan!" I never uttered the name of God any time in my life but for the very first time I yelled out his name and collapsed on the sofa holding my forehead with two hands.

For fifteen days after this incident I was not with me! Maala was a distant relative to my Vadina, we

are not even friends. Today I am worrying very much about her because she developed in me a great impression with that acquaintance of two days.

If she hadn't developed deep impression on me, I wouldn't have felt worried this much today!

She was beautiful, educated and very intellegent, but... what is the use of having all those virtues when there is no recognition!

I asked, "Vadina, do you know why did she resort to that deadly attempt?"

"Yes" with a sigh she started narrating the incident.

★ ★ ★

"Maala, somehow or other you should bring me money!"

"There is no money with me now!"

"Your father gave me ten thousand rupees and left you here and your father wanted to get rid of you with it. Those tricks do not deceive me anymore. If I had married someone-other than you, I would have got at-least twenty thousand rupees! You see, because my mother being a foolish woman accepted you for ten thousand."

"What can I do now? It was the thing of the past?"

"I don't know what you'll do! Come what may, you should not step inside into my house until you bring that money."

"The dowry that was due was given a long ago. If you ask me repeatedly like this, there is nothing with me! Long time ago you took and sold all the jewellery you got made for me! There is no other ornament on my body except the mangala soothram* you tied around my neck."

"Yes. I want that mangala soothram only! There is no chance for that sacred mangala soothram in the neck of an arrogant woman like you. Give me back my mangala soothram which I tied in your neck!

You should not step inside our door way till you bring another five thousand rupees. You, give it to me! If I get angry I may not be a human being! Either money or maangalyam whatever it is ? enough if you give me any one! Otherwise, you don't know what I can do!" said Sudhakar reeling like a lunatic.

Maala, who quivered had stared into Sudhakar's face, what might she have thought, all at once burst into laughter.

"Well said, Sudhakar garu! You haven't brought any sweet memories as a husband for me! You have made your presence a hell and tortured in many ways. Never had any desires above my capacity when I was young. I expected that wife and husband should be affectionate with each other throughout their life. But I haven't attained any love and affection from you! After such a long time I realised the naked

truth that mangala soothram tied in my neck with your hands has nothing to do with me. Let it be! In my opinion my husband was dead mentally a long ago! Now, the remained thing ? you . . . merely . . . merely . . ."

"Maala?" Sudhakar looked at her by showering sparks.

"Shut up! You have no eligibility to call me like that. Fearing to the society, I maintained marital life with you for all these days! Hereafter there should not be any relation between you and me. If you put your hand on me you will get no respect."

"What! . . . What can you do?" asked Sudhakar lighting a cigarette.

"I can do anything!."

"Will you give me divorce?" asked Sudhakar puffing smoke leisurely.

"I can do that much, if I needed! Giving divorce is thousand times better than married life sans understanding. If self-esteem comes as an obstacle, there is the best way, suicide!"

"Oyabbo! The woman who threatens: 'I will die, I will die' will never commit suicide! But, I will see who'll come to your rescue now! If I place my hand on you, you said that I won't get any respect. Let me see first how much value you have in this house?" saying he was coming very close to her.

"Sudhakar!" Maala shouted.

Ramanamma and Saroja woke up for the noise and they all reached the spot.

"Take your sacred mangala soothram you tied in my neck!"

"Maala! What a thing you have done? You . . . are you really a woman?" Sudhakar grew excited and reeling towards Maala in agitation.

"Stop there! I don't know what I can do if you come near."

"What can you do rascal?" said Sudhakar. Maala gave a hard slap on his cheek and at once she rushed towards the niche where she kept endrine and had consumed rapidly.

Maala's body was sweating profusely and turned into black colour. Maala made a loud cry and collapsed.

Sudhakar, getting his emotions satisfied, noticed the reality, became insensible.

' Maala is dead!! Is it real or a dream' said rubbing his eyes and looked at the body. It's real!

"Maala" Sudhakar yelled out and wept by keeping his arms around his mother.

"Vadina" Saroja leaned on the dead body and wept bitterly!

Vadina told me that Sudhakar had sobbed

convulsively and rolled in the ashes after the cremation of Maala's body .

★★★

Vadina stopped telling.

"That rascal polluted the ashes!" I said emotionally.

Maala! If that rascal had not tortured you in this manner, you would not have resorted to this disastrous attempt denying the two-year old infant and eight months pregnancy?

What we know about you and your distress is very little; and what you had hidden without disclosing to others is very great. The wealth of your self-esteem that you have saved in that great sorrow moved me like anything.

You've made an inerasable impression on me only with little bit of acquaintance! You are agitating my heart wherever I see and whatever I do, you are alone coming to my mind?

Sudhakar who shared three years of marital life with you did not get any memory, strange! It is clear that nothing is permanent in this impermanent world.

I was shocked when I came to know that Sudhakar was ready for the second marriage!

What Sudhakar shared with you is not the marital life but 'whiling away of time with your tears'! If your life becomes a sudden realisation to men like

Sudhakar, in order to while away their time with tears of their wives'... yes... it becomes... there is a chance for the realization of your 'minim dreams'! But this country is a holy-land. It may be a 'day-dream' in this country!?

*(Kannellatho Kaalakshepam,
Swathi monthly May 1971)*

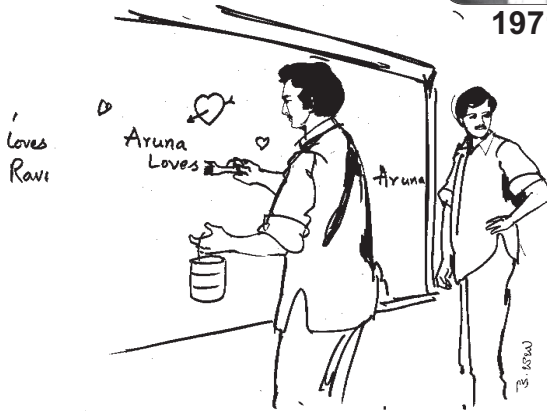
-
- *Ceylon : *The oldest radio station in Asia which broadcasts the programmes from Sri Lanka*
- *Vadina : *Elder sister-in-law*
- *Attayya : *Mother-in-law*
- *barasaala : *Naming ceremony of a new born child on the twenty first day of the birth*
- *mangala soothram : *Sacred thread tied by groom in the neck of the bride in the marriage*
- *Endrin : *It is an organ chloride used as an insecticide and pesticide.*

THE PEOPLE WITHOUT GROWN UP MIND

Won second prize in the story competition conducted by 'Swathi Monthly' and Osmania University Students Association in May 1971.



1971



I thought to rush into the house as soon as I gave money to the rickshawala when it stops before the house - I wanted to embrace Aruna and wanted to converse with her without giving a gap - I was with many desires before entering the house - I was shocked to see the scene in the house when I entered.

Her heart was flaring up like the tides of the sea. Her eyes used to be like moving circles and symbols for naughty things, but now they are filled with full of tears - I did not see any such tears in her eyes till

now - I did not come to know why she was weeping
- I couldn't understand what to do and how to console her.

I was shocked when there is no one at the bus stand to receive me though I sent a telegram that I'm coming in the morning... I pacified myself that she might be busy in her preparation.

But . . . what is this? The utensils in the house were scattered. They were not in their proper places. At one corner it seems to be Anil, who covered himself completely in a blanket, was in a deep sleep.

"Aroo" I called her.

She looked at me with a startle and immediately wiped her tears from the eyes.

I put my suit case on the stool and stopped Aruna who wanted to get up. I went near her bed.

"Have you forgotten your path... Vijji?" she tried to ask me with a smile... she could not speak clearly amidst the grief which was trying to erupt.

Her behaviour explains me that she didn't receive my telegram.

"What happened to you Arroo? Why are you weeping like that?" I asked her without controlling my excitement.

Her grief knew no bounds which have been

controlled by her till now!

"Are! What is this Aroo... why are you so distressed - what happened now?" I took her near to me.

Though I asked for the reason, I know that she does not tell me anything. Her grief will be increased if I ask for the reason...! So I kept quiet and fondled her head without talking anything.

The thoughts in me are endless and criss-crossed.

Aruna is elder to me! Aruna and I are twins. We were born with a gap of one hour. Our mother passed away on the next day when we were born. All our relatives scolded us that we only have killed our mother but our father did not say anything and brought both of us with love and care.

Aruna and I - are twins biologically speaking in the view of the society! But a delightful relation exists between us rather than sisters.

Our father thought that we will not concentrate on studies, if we were together. So Aruna stayed with our father in Warangal and I was kept in a hostel in Hyderabad.

We could not spend more than a month without meeting or talking. Our hearts would struggle violently if we don't talk to each other for a longer period. We suffered very much with separation...

we eagerly waited for the holidays to meet each other.

If our separation was more than one and a half month, I used to start crying. So our father would bring Aruna to me and showed her face to me.

I used to be over whelmed... if vacation was approaching! I used to arrange my clothes well in advance before taking the exams and holidays.

We used to be very happy during the vacation... but when we recollect the school - it looked like a prison - the teachers were like servants of Yama, the Lord of the Death - we used to get afraid of the school.

We could complete our school final with a lot of difficulty!

Both of us got first class. There were many physical changes in the shape of Aruna and I too as the time passed.

Though her colour was black, she has big round eyes which are very attractive. Aruna was very slim. She is sensitive like her physical structure.

Aruna seems to be afraid of the society but really she doesn't care it.

Though I looked like that I did not care the society, really I was more afraid of it.

Aruna speaks to everyone freely without any bias between men and women - but I was timid towards

boys. She used to say: "Why should we afraid of anyone - when we don't commit any mistake Viji?"

"This so called society will try to accuse us for doing nothing! When you have the feeling of 'don't care' - will the society bear your existence? It will always watch your every step move forward in the society Aroo!" I used to say to her.

"Viji, don't look at everything through the magnifying lenses? Who will try to blame us when we don't do any wrong? How can the smoke come when there is no fire? If anyone is saying anything about anybody there will be some truth in it" Aruna used to say to me.

"Your words are true Aroo...! But ... if you talk to men, the society will frown at you and try to blame you without any valid reason! Though you are different at outside ... you should afraid of the society, you should act according to its customs." I used to tell her.

"It's strange! This society will not stop criticizing us though we are pure! Is it not enough that our purity or impurity should be known to the Almighty! Viji, what can we achieve when we sit and cry like this for the comments of useless fellows."

"I'm not afraid of their comments, but we should not give them a scope to comment on us Aroo!"

"It's Okay ... if there is no fault in our behaviour,

who will comment on us, we are just crazy on this issue!" Aruna stopped the conversation with this statement.

In this way we were different to each other in our perception and understanding. On the other side we had indefinable attachment towards each other!

I have expected that Aruna, who did not take this society into consideration, will do adventurous activities in her life - proving my expectation in a right way - she loved and married Anil.

Anil was a primary school teacher whose school is next to my house. He used to take tuitions on Mathematics to Aruna as part of her school final exams.

The acquaintance between them grew into love, which resulted in their marriage.

Our father was very angry by listening to the decision of Aruna. He scolded and asked to get out of the house. He threatened that not even a single pie will be given to her from his property. He promised to bring a more handsome groom than Anil in alliance. But Aruna did not listen to him and did not change her decision. She went straight to her father and touched his feet to her eyes... left the house without a second decision.

The same day they settled in Khammam, next day the 'Will' was prepared on my name - the very next day my father's funerals... like this life took

three turns in three days.

I wrote a letter to Aruna to come to me after the sudden demise of the father, I conveyed that the property will be shared and enjoyed by both of us.

But Aruna did not accept to my proposal! She wrote that she would like to live with contentment with whatever they had.

She used to write letters in which she had asked about my well being and also the naughty actions of Anil and many more interesting stories.

Only after five months of their marriage, Anil met with a car accident in which his right hand was broken and two eyes were crushed! Aruna was neither depressed, nor nervous.

'Though he may be blind, he will sit like a king! Am I not here to support Anil?' She was provided with a job there itself.

She has to face many problems in the first year of her married life itself. I visited Aruna's house for two times after this fatal accident. This is the third time I'm visiting her! She did not bother much about her condition during my previous visits about Anil but now why is she so much worried about - why is she weeping like this and what problem is she facing?

"Aroo! What is this? What happened to you Aroo? Tell me your problem?" I asked her by

suppressing my agony which has been increasing minute to minute.

"It's true Vijji - true! Whatever you said is true!" she wept inconsolably.

I could not understand her words. She said whatever I said was true! What was that truth? What I said, I could not recollect!

There was a creaking sound from the bed of Anil. Anil woke up, he removed the blanket and called, "Aroo, Please give me a glass of water!"

Aruna stood up and wiped off her tears. She went to the window, poured water from the water pot into the tumbler and gave it to Anil.

While drinking water he asked, "Who is that! It seems to be the tone of a girl!"

"Bava, (brother-in-law), this is Vijji! I've come just now."

"O, are you? Aroo did not tell me that you are coming today!"

Whenever I come Anil's face used to shine like a bulb but this time there was dullness in his face. I was bewildered and said, "it seems that the telegram which I've sent did not reach you!"

It was strange that listening to my response, he said nothing except giving a sigh and turned other side and covered his entire body with the blanket.

"Sister...!" I turned round by listening to that strange call in the house.

A young boy of twenty years stood at the entrance with a smiling face. He was searching for the person whom he wanted to meet!

I got up from the bed and said, "Aroo, Someone has come . . .!" by walking towards the kitchen.

Aroo who was coming from inside with tea tray was startled and the tea cups were trembled and made the noise!

"Ravi, come inside! Why are you standing there?" there was debility and inability expressed in Aroo's invitation.

"What happened sister - why are you like that? Is there anything wrong with your health?" the boy asked her with tension in his tone.

"No! Nothing is there - I'm all right - come and sit there ... o, yes.. . I have forgotten to introduce to each other!" by saying this she introduced me to him and he was introduced to me.

He didn't show any kind of disparity between the known and unknown people. He talked very closely and went away. He seemed to be kind hearted and sociable.

"How was he introduced to you?" I asked Aruna.

Anil met with the accident because of him - the

speedy lorry from one side - on the other side Ravi's car, which was coming speedily - Anil couldn't escape from the danger. Ravi used to repent every day because a family was ruined because of him. That's why he comes to their house to know the information about them.

Ravi used to make them laugh with his chatting and gossip in order to forget their troubles! Ravi with the recommendation of his father provided a job to Aruna! Aruna told me all the details about Ravi while cooking lunch for us - I listened to her carefully.

We three finished our lunch together after many days. I was not satisfied in their company as Aroo was thinking about something very seriously. I observed that she was absentminded in her behaviour.

That night I asked her by taking her face into my hands: "Aroo - Why were you weeping when I entered your house? Tell me please what happened!"

"See this" she handed over a letter to me. In that letter it was written very badly about the relationship between Aruna and Ravi. It was threatened in the letter that they should break their illicit relationship otherwise the topic will be publicized.

"So what? Are you afraid of such threatening? Why should we care them, when we do nothing

wrong? Aroo, it's non-sense on the part of the cuckoo to stop singing for the criticism of crows!" I know that this time I'm using the words which Aruna used in our conversation during our olden days.

But . . . Aruna who knows everything and did not care the society - is now suffering as somebody said something!?

"The rumour was created by a group of naughty students in order to take revenge on Ravi, who was their opposite contender in the college elections. Also they have hostility with me as I insulted a student who tried to behave mischievously with me in the public on the street.

These incidents happened two months ago and by keeping these issues in the mind they spread this rumour which went like a wild fire within no time in the town.

The young people used to whistle when they see me on the road - some claps and try to misbehave with me - all the walls were filled with the wall writings on the illicit relationship of Ravi and me.

The people used to say, "Oye, chaste woman!, I would like to come your house tonight, ask Ravi not to come!" they inflicted pain on me in several ways!

You have seen Ravi! He is after me like a child calling 'sister!' How can they create such an illicit relationship between us! If the rumour comes to my

mind when I was talking to Ravi, I get the feeling that somebody is pressing my heart with their hands and also someone pressing me deep into the earth!" said Aruna.

"The students with their personal grudges have made you as the scapegoat! Though they are pursuing higher studies, their intellect was not developed! Okay, leave it Aroo..! The stray dogs bark at the elephant when it was going on the streets. Their minds were not developed, though they were grown up. Why should we suffer for their comments? If you feel like this all alone, your health will be deteriorated," I tried to console and to provide some courage to her.

"But ... I cannot come to my normal senses though I tried very much Vijji! They say that I was enjoying with Ravi before Anil as he could not see anything! This dialogue was penetrating me all the time - though I was eating, sleeping or sitting? What vulgarity the society has seen in me! Who should be blamed for this?"

Aruna was attending to her office duties with the lifeless eyes and pale cheeks.

But. . ., even if she was made to laugh, there was no life in her and she did her duties mechanically.

A week passed but I couldn't bring out any change in her behaviour during my stay in

Khammam.

The next day by keeping her face in the pillow she said, "Now, will you please leave this place Vijji! How long will you stay here? If you are not interested to leave me all along in this critical condition - tomorrow this society will create another story of illicit relationship between you and Ravi. That's why - please you go back to your place! Otherwise your life will be ruined like mine," said Aruna.

"What is this Aroo? Do you think that I'm innocent to leave you alone and go back to my place for the fear of rumours! How can you say it to me, to leave you in this critical condition? The society may talk about both of us! I feel happy if we were both involved together in the rumour." I tried to console her.

Aruna regularly comes home at four o'clock but today she didn't turn up. I was waiting for her at the entrance of the house! My mind is experiencing unrest and feeling turmoil!

I thought that Anil called me, so I went near him and asked "Did you call me bava?"

"Yes! Sit there Vijji! I would like to tell you some important things to you!" said Anil.

I said, "Yes, tell me Baava!" by holding my thoughts. I prayed God that what Anil would try to tell me should not be the same what I was thinking in this situation!

"How to say ... I could not understand how to start it Vijji. But I couldn't resist myself without telling you all about. About a week ago, before your arrival, my neighbour came to me and said that everyone in the town is talking about the illicit relationship between Aruna and Ravi. He advised me to keep Aruna under my control otherwise she may skip from my control - he said all nonsense. I scolded him like anything! When I was thinking about the issue I too feel that there were certain evidences for this rumour!" said Anil.

"Baava?"

"If you were in my position, you would understand my problem!" If Ravi has no mal intention in him, why will he come regularly here? No one who has some sense will believe that - he is coming only to help the family which was ruined by him. Moreover how Aruna is developing hopes on the family by looking at my inefficiency? Behind the curtain and by calling him as brother she could satisfy all her needs - can you say that Aruna has no such chances? Moreover when I recollect that my wife was named as a slut, how can I live? Try to understand my position for the torture I have been facing all these days. Try to understand me Vijji!"

It was expected by me that Anil also suspected the character of Aruna - but his every word was piercing my heart, which I could not bear!

"I don't expect that a person like you will speak in this way! Don't you know that she is living only for you thinking you are everything to her and bearing the blame from this so-called society?"

"Whatever you think, you may consider me as a man without heart! But if I think from different angles - I strongly believe that my suspicion was correct! If anyone saying anything about anybody, definitely there will be some truth in it! How does the smoke come without the fire Vijji."

"Ugh! Ugh!" I could not see his face out of ugliness - I got up from there and shocked to see Aruna who was sobbing silently in her bed room.

It means ... Aruna overheard the entire conversation! Aruna listened to the words which she was not supposed to listen to.

I did not have enough dare to console her, I did not go to her room throughout the night thinking that, 'let her weep, till her agony melts and comes out of her in the form of tears.'

The next day - Aruna was very much happy; she laughed and made me laugh and made the environment very jovial. I could not understand the reason for the sudden change in her behaviour - whatever it might be she was now happy by forgetting everything - I was satisfied with the latest developments and I went to deep sleep that night with contentment.

"Aroo, get up! The maid has brought milk! Go and prepare tea!" I tried to get her up as she did not get up even at eight o'clock. As there was no response from her, I touched her hand and I was cried aloud with a shock.

When I came to my senses, Ravi was weeping like a kid on the feet of Aruna ... Anil was standing like a statue at a distance.

I could see the bottle of sleeping pills and the light pink paper which was fluttering in the wind by the side of Aruna's dead body.

I opened the paper with the trembling hands.

Vijji,

Though my colourful life became dull, though my opinions went wrong to much of my expectations, I could stand fast and suffer long as before the people who try to defeat me.

I never cared anybody and I thought that it was enough for me if my Anil understands me in a correct way. But was Anil above the human beings? After all he was also a part of the society! Everyone has his own weaknesses! It was not correct to blame anyone!

There were certain sex books with the stories of illicit relations between house owner - servant; uncle and his brother's daughters; mother-in-law and so-in-law; elder sister-in-law and younger brother-in-

law; married woman who was not satisfied with her husband whose illicit relationship with neighbouring unmarried young man!

The youth who are reading such pulp literature will come to a conclusion that: they have inferior feelings towards every girl - they create illicit relationships between the men and women, if they talk to each other. They further feel that if they wink at the girls, they will surrender to them very easily!

The hearts of young people were polluted by such useless and baseless stories in sex books. The growth of the youth was curtailed with such pulp literature.

The relation between men and women in the so-called society was confined to only physical relation and there was no scope of any relation other than this.

There is no salvation to the women folk in this society until it is changed!

If Ravi was born as our cousin and if there was the illicit relationship between us - there will be no doubt to anybody in the society - I wanted to pay my homage to such a broad-minded society! This may be a harsh comment on the nature of the society - I believe that this comment is not harsher than the blame and accusation I had bore these days.

It is my bad luck to born as a girl child in our country - if I have another birth, I will pray God not to

make me as a girl child - the people search for the smoke, though there was no fire - I was not afraid of this society - but I hate it - I am withdrawing myself voluntarily.

-Aruna.

Thank God! I was satisfied with the feeling that Aruna was transported to the farthest place where she is out of these crooked comments!

Ahaha -ahaha! O, human beings! Why are you looking at me with wide open eyes? Do you want to play with my character?

Yes, No one will give any importance to me in these matters because I'm mad! There - after cheating the girl, why are you looking in such a way? Are you feeling repentance for your mistakes? I don't think so! I hope you don't know the meaning of that expression!

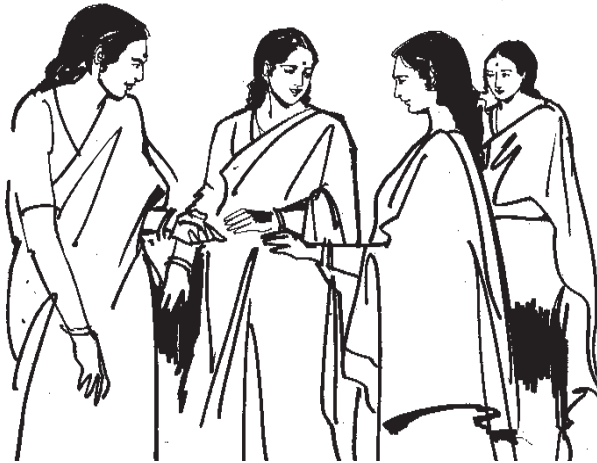
What is this! What did I say? Why are you pelting stones at me? Are my words sounding harsh to you? I was hurt - please, stop throwing stones on me? Arey Stop! Do you think that I don't know how to throw stones at you!? See here - one - two - three! All are running away . . . cowards! Hi - hi -hi!

*(Manasu Edhagani Manushulu,
Swathi Monthly, May 1971)*

GOALS-IDEALS



1970



"You're looking beautiful in this sari"

I looked back when I received this comment on my way to library during the leisure period.

There was Vineela with a smiling face.

"Thank you" I replied with a smile.

I don't know anything about Vineela, except that she was joined in our class yesterday.

"You see Manjula, I heard that you are residing in the hostel. Tomorrow I would like to join the hostel. I should know further details..." she stopped at the partial expression.

"The booklet which explains about the rules and regulations will be available at the office. It provides all the details which you require" I said.

"Is it!? Many thanks" she said and rushed from there.

"Any how she is friendly with everyone!" I thought.

In that way we were introduced to each other.

Vineela came to the hostel. Especially she became my roommate. Days are passing happily. We became very close to each other without maintaining any differences. Our friendship created jealousy among many friends.

We used to go to college together. On that day I had some urgent work in the college because I was the president of the college student's union - I asked Vineela to go to hostel alone and I reached the hostel very late in the evening.

"Neelu ... what happened? Why your eyes are red in colour?" I asked Vineela by looking at her as soon as I reached the hostel.

Vineela did not say anything as if she did not notice my presence.

"Tell me Neelu - what happened?"

"Nothing had happened Manju" Vineela said and tried to smile.

"If you are not interested, don't tell me. But don't give me false information by holding the truth which can damage our understanding" I said to her and went to bed immediately.

"Are you angry with me Manju?" Vineela came to me and sat on my bed.

"No...you are looking lovely as if I wanted to give you a kiss!"

"Is it ... abba, what a lucky? I am ready! Give it to me!"

"You always talk like this ... naughty words and mischievous jokes."

"It seems that you are really angry this time. I thought that you are not so serious! - If you are really serious, I'll tell you the reason certainly! It's true Manju - I swear!"

I could not resist myself without laughing by listening to her. I turned my face towards the wall in order not to come down in my pride.

"You were defeated Manju...you were laughing inside and covering outside...!"

I didn't talk anything then.

"You see Manju . . .my heart is so sensitive that I couldn't bear even small issues. One incident happened in our class today ..." she stopped for a moment and started telling the remaining incident.

"As you know it well, Sheela and I were in the psychology group, this time Sheela got very less marks in Psychology test. She did not take her exams well because of her ill-health. Madam spoke to her differently. She said that Sheela was coming to college only for fashions! I felt very bad, I can't think of Sheela in that position. 'Sheela, this should not be repeated!' if the madam cautioned softly like this she would have felt ashamed of her and would study well and take the exams in a better way. If she was insulted, she might felt sorry for it. There will be no use with such serious admonishment."

"If she remembers this insult, she will take every exam seriously with perseverance! What's wrong in it Neelu!"

"Manju, imagine yourself in the place of Sheela - every girl needs encouragement. If you don't encourage, at least you should not discourage anyone! All the students will not be intelligent in the class. She will always feel that she is inferior among her classmates. This feeling reminds her every moment, which brings failures all the time!"

Everybody's problems are felt by Vineela only?

She always thinks about everyone. She spends her entire time with the thoughts of all her friends. But her thoughts are not useless and baseless like other girls. Her feelings and thoughts reflect her broad mindedness, great tastes and great qualities. That is why I like Vineela very much.

★ ★ ★

We are ready to celebrate our college day. Women students are moving here and there in the corridors and college ground in colourful saris.

Telugu drama was performed. When Vineela was commenting on the drama Sheela and I laughed like anything.

The girl who was next to me was asking her next student:

"Aruna - this sari is beautiful! Where did you buy? What is its cost? Abba, you'll get good saris all the time!"

"I bought it in Prakash Cloth Emporium!" she answered with a great pride.

"These rings are good - are they yours - or your sister's? - What is this - they are something different? Are they golden or made of rold gold?"

"They are my rings only - what is the necessity for me to wear rold gold ornaments?" She said by feeling a little bit discouraged.

Vineela and I looked at each other and we wanted to laugh loudly but we thought that it was not nice, so we had tried to smile slowly.

We came back to hostel after attending to cultural programmes.

"How educated are they! ... How intelligent are they! ... women do not change their perspective in some particular areas Manju"

"You don't get sleep, unless you scold someone - Okay tell me" I said with a smile.

"That is not the issue Manju - Don't these women get any point to discuss except about saris and jewellery? One issue seems to be very strange Manju - how can these women ask strangers many questions about saris without any hesitation?" said Vineela.

"But on that day you said that I was beautiful in that particular sari - what about you?" I asked her.

"Making comments is different from this, Manju! What is wrong in appreciating the beauty of a person? What did I say? Did I say you are beautiful in this sari - or did I ask you where did you buy this sari? Did I ask you what the cost of your sari is?"

"So what do you want to say?"

"What is there to say Manju - we should give up such silly habits in our life. We deliver the lectures

on the progress of country - but our discussions will not cross the domain of saris. Sari is a life and jewellery is breath of life to our women folk.

There was a girl in my village. If her sister comes after many days from her in-law's house, this girl will not ask her about well beings of her and her family but she asks, 'Abba, how nice this sari! What kind of sari is this? Who bought this sari to you?'- Just think about the mental status of her sister! 'This fellow has rather more interest on my sari than me' she may feel bad."

There was truth in Vineela's words. If her younger sister has a little bit of patience, she can get all the details about the sari unasked including - the name of the sari, the cost of it, and the name of the shop where they bought it, who bought the sari. I thought that she explains everything in a detailed fashion.

"Some women are ready to exchange their sari, when they were introduced to each other just a few moments ago - they try to pick a quarrel very seriously when there was a misunderstanding on a trivial issue. They also discuss about the saris and jewellery used by a certain heroine in a particular movie. They also go for a hot discussion about the cost of it and where would it be found - they even talk about the partiality of the lecturer if she awards less marks in any examination - if a Telugu medium women student gets the first rank, they would

conclude it that she might have copied in the examination otherwise how can she get the first rank - these are our gossips" Vineela stopped narrating about girls and women.

I felt that: "if there are twenty out of hundred girls in the society like Vineela, the college students will definitely come up in their life without any doubt!"

★ ★ ★

'Our behaviour should please the people around us as far as possible. But it should not inflict pain on them. Our presence should be cool as moon to others but it should not be like the charcoals in the hearth. Our words and actions should make others feel happy and they should help them to forget their troubles and tribulations - for that we should laugh and make others laugh - we should behave in such a way that the happiness is nowhere in the world except with us' these are opinions of Vineela.

How many people will be like Vineela with such opinions in college or somewhere else? Some don't open their mouth as if they speak the pearls come out of their mouths - some others talk by considering the position of others in the areas like saris, jewellery etc., - some other speak aimlessly by criticizing others.

★ ★ ★

That was Sunday; visitors are coming to meet

the hostellers. Vineela had no brothers and sisters except her mother and father. But they too didn't come any time to the hostel to meet her. Vineela will be gloomy only in the evenings of Sundays...

She watches the visitors through the window of our room with a different emotion. I was very much moved with that scene. That is why I introduced my brother to her. If my brother comes to the hostel on Sunday evening we three sit together and have a chat. Our chatting is not an ordinary matter but the arguments will be focused on special problems.

This time my brother arrived without late as he did usually! After completing the general conversation our discussion turned towards marriages, dowry and other related issues.

'Do you know Manju, Sheela was married recently?' Said Vineela suddenly looking at me!

"Is it?" I asked her with astonishment.

'I too didn't know but she herself told me yesterday, I was also surprised to listen to the news! As you know pretty well that Sheela was from a poor family. Her husband harassed her as her father did not give the dowry which he had promised before the marriage - he also demanded for the scooter as everyone in his circle had one. Finally he blamed the character of Sheela and sent to her maternal house! There were five more unmarried girls in her

family. Her father was a clerk! If her father provides a scooter to his son-in-law his doubt on his wife's character will evaporate with immediate effect, the next moment Sheela will become a chaste woman! Abba, what a species are these men!' she looked at my brother with sidelong glances.

My brother was making snaps with his left hand fingers on his right hand fingers and looking through the window.

'Can I tell you one more thing Manju - Sheela took divorce from her husband! Her younger sister's husband also sent his wife to the maternal house as his in-laws did not give him the money for his further studies. Just imagine about the personality of this fellow who depends on his wife for his studies! If he studies with perseverance - he might have got a good job - Sheela was continuing her studies in our college by taking tuitions during zero hours whereas her sister who was uneducated could solve her problem with 'suicide'!

My brother was startled. I saw the tears rolling in my brother's eyes, as he was very sensitive to such situations.

'You are right! As you have said, this outdated custom - the dowry system had been devouring many lives of the innocent people!', he expressed his opinion.

"Sympathy is not needed! There should be a change among the men! Highly educated men also tying the sacred knot in the neck of a girl who ever offers high amount in this auction of dowry! Abba, It seems ugly to think about men and dowry ... not only that ..."

My brother looked at Vineela and said:

"Keeping the justice and injustice aside, you will be a successful lawyer in the future with your power of argumentation skills."

Hostel clock struck six o'clock which was an indication that the visitors should leave the hostel immediately.

"Okay. I'll make a move" said my brother and we both looked at him while he was passing the gate.

After five minutes - So far I was a silence spectator in the conversation of my brother and Vineela and then I asked a question, "Do you marry a gentleman who never takes the dowry, Neelu?"

"Exactly ..."

"If no men come forward for your proposal ..."

"I'll remain as it is!"

'Neelu, you are forgetting about the country where you are living? Is this society will honour a girl who lives alone without getting married?'

'Manju, if our youth wanted to change the face of the society the bramble will be made into bed of flowers! If all the brides did not offer dowry, if all the grooms consider taking the dowry is sign of dishonour ... how much time will it take to lay foundation stones for the construction of new societal building where there are no taboos!? What is the society? We are the society - society is nothing but us! Are we not changing our fashions according to the time? We are supposed to create the society according to our needs! Someone should come forward in this matter - 'if everyone feels that what change will take place with me - or - how can I bring change all alone myself - if you think like this there will be no change in this society even after thousand years! Are we not ashamed of having outdated ideas like dowry, presentations during marriages, as we always feel that we have achieved much development in all the fields?'

"Why don't we have? - But - change should come from the two sides" - I thought.

★ ★ ★

Dear Manju...

I'm writing this letter because you may be confused if you don't find me in the hostel when you return from college. You may be thinking that what made me to go to my village urgently!

I couldn't share some issues with you so far in

my life though you are my bosom friend.

Yesterday you went to college as you had a special class though it was Sunday. By the time your brother came to the hostel. He told me that he liked my goals and ideals - moreover there was no objection from your parents to accept me as their daughter-in-law.

He asked me "Do you like me?"

Let me tell you about myself. I loved my brother-in-law Prasad when I was a child. I liked him very much because he was not only handsome but also very sensitive. He was only a matriculate and that was the only defect he has - I too don't have any objection about his education! But unfortunately he was attacked by T.B. which was not detected by anyone till it was converted into a chronic one!

My parents did not like that alliance, so they objected for our marriage by showing this reason! I thought of a plan and joined him in a sanatorium and got treatment there by sending the money for his medicines from the money which was sent by my parents for my education! Doctor said that he will be cured of the disease in a few months.

I told the entire story to your brother - I requested him to marry Sheela ... so that he can give life to the dry wood. He thought for a while and accepted for my proposal. He said 'yes' and went away. Really,

he was kind hearted. His kindness can't be explained in these papers.

You see Manju! It's very easy to get an alliance for a beautiful and rich girl like me but it is highly impossible for an unlucky fellow like Sheela! If I work to bring happiness for such lives, that is enough for me! I don't want to hide the fact there be selfishness on my part in marrying my baava Prasad in this proposal! Don't get nervousness that I may not come again! I'll stay in my home for two days and come back! I'm saluting to the civility of your brother whole heartedly....

**Your
Vineela**

*(*Aashayaalu - Aadarshalu, Women's College Magazine, Nizamabad in association with All India Radio, 13.09.1970)*

TIME THAT MOCKED AT ME!



There was a slap on his cheek.

Ravi was startled with the incident and tried to soothe his cheek!

"Idiot, don't you have manners?" I shouted with a loud voice. But Ravi did not give any reply.

"Why did you write this love letter?"

He lifted his head and said in a low voice: "When you said that it was a love letter, the answer was hidden for which you were asking."

"Shut up ... you are such a person never had not seen a 'shoe' in your life ... the face with twenty two inches bell bottom, wearing loose pants like a grandfather - why should I love you?" I said by mocking at him.

"What is the relation between the love and the external beauty? Love needs only internal beauty."

I laughed with a loud noise.

Ravi looked in all directions without understanding what to do!

"Do you know what name I have in the college?" I asked him directly by looking into his eyes.

"I know!"

"Tell me?"

"Miss. College"

"If you wanted to have internal beauty in your love - then why did you choose the external beauty?"

"Why are you thinking like that? I have seen your internal beauty - not your external beauty!"

"Good... Very good! But - how can you trace out my internal beauty? Go! Don't repeat it in the future and be careful." I gave a warning to him.

Ravi went away by bowing his head in humiliation.

How dare was he to write a love letter to me on the pretext of giving the notes! How can he come

directly to my home to propose his love!? He is very lean and his personality is like Ramana Reddy, a comedy actor in Telugu Film Industry. How dare he is to write a love letter to me?

Poor fellow! As a result he tasted the slap which was as like a hot chilli! He won't play such dramas in the future!

Moreover why should I love him? What was his speciality?

I resorted to uncontrollable laugh when I recollect the way he went away by bowing his head with pity!

"Vijji, what is that? Why are you laughing in a chuckling manner?" I was startled when someone said and placed the hands on my shoulders.

Rajitha!

I smiled at her naughtily. She tightened her mouth with my expression.

I didn't go to college on that day. She was angry because I skipped college without informing her.

I resorted to conversation in order to pacify her angry!

"What Raajee, don't you speak to me?"

She was looking in all the directions by moving her legs. Her mouth was round and she made it more round and beautiful with a naughty knot - without answering my question.

"What can I do Raajee, I tried very hard to inform you by coming to your house, but it became impossible for me, what can I do?"

"Yes, how can it be possible? When you are in love with Ravindra - how can you get the time?" Rajitha posed the questions with angry.

"That fellow looks like a grandfather. Have you ever seen his dress style? He appears as if he is a person belongs to the period of B.C. How can I love such type of fellow - Raajee?"

"Love is blind. Love did not look for fashion. Then what happened to Ravi? He was fair and handsome also!"

"Yes, ofcourse he is fair but walks like bamboo stick. He always feels shy like a woman. He cries if you tease him. Was he not Fine - in such a way he was very fine." I said something nonsense with full of emotion.

"It looks as you are ready for Swayamvaram*!" said Rajitha by laughing.

"If situation demands I'll go for that also - If I wanted to marry definitely, I will marry the groom with the personality of hero Dharmendra and character should be like Rajashekaram, a character in Secretary* novel!"

"Why do you have that much confidence, Vijji! What will you do if you don't find such a person?"

"May be I remain unmarried!?"

"Well ... well!" Rajitha clapped.

She came very close to me, looked into my face and said: "Those ideas are very dangerous Viji. The dreams of an unmarried girl will be broken into pieces like tides of the sea always! The character like your dream hero will not be seen anywhere in the real world. When there is beauty, there will not be character and when there is good character, there will be no beauty. It is highly impossible to get both in the same person."

"Why do you think about it unnecessarily? Think about your neighbour Prakash? What happened to him? He was handsome - with good character - he can make us forget the character of Rajashekaram" I said with a fancy.

"Prakash!?" Rajitha was startled and within no time she adjusted herself and asked "Did he accept for the proposal?"

"He will accept for the proposal definitely, I'm confident enough! Do I have any deformity? Moreover my father and his father were good friends! They considered both of us as husband and wife from our childhood! Prakash ... can't say 'no' to his father's proposal. I have the confidence!"

"O.K. See you again! I have relatives in my house!" She rushed to her house immediately!

I was looking in the direction where Rajitha had moved - whenever she comes she chats with me for hours together but this time she left me abruptly as if the house was on fire!

The next day Rajitha's father was transferred to Vishakapatnam and the family was moved. After three weeks of time - I was married to Prakash without any obstacles!

Rajitha wrote a letter with full of apologies for not attending to my marriage.

★ ★ ★

"Prakash ...!"

"Yes"

"Why are you looking differently?"

"How?" said Prakash who was looking into void.

"Yes very differently!?"

"Who said that? What happened to me? I'm all right!?"

"Yes. You are all right. I'm suffering between the two issues - I couldn't understand your internal feelings - I couldn't control my emotions. It was three months ago we were married. Did you take me to any a picture during these days? At least did you chat with me happily?"

"Sorry Vijaya! I'm not in a good mood! Don't irritate me. Please let me live like this!"

"If I ask you, your response will be like this! Am I killing like a demoness by not allowing you to live?"

"If you do that it would be better for me. You are eating me by frying my body. You need my beauty - my wealth - my personality. But it's not me that you want."

"Prakash ..."

"Yes, to fulfil your dreams you have ruined my life."

"Prakash ... what is this? Didn't you marry me out of your interest?"

Prakash posed a lifeless smile and said:

"My beloved went away without considering my interest! She was living by deceiving herself."

"Who is she? Can't you forget her?"

"Forgetting? It's highly impossible in this life!"

"Is she more beautiful than me?" I could sense the feeling of jealousy in my question.

"No, she is dark in complexion when compared to you! It's not possible to look for the glittering what you have in your complexion and gleams as in your eyes!"

"Then, what is there in her!" every part of my body was infuriated with jealousy - fumes coming out of my body!

"If I know the secret, why do I feel like this?" I would have adjusted myself by looking at the same in you!"

"Bhagavan!" I said to myself by beating my forehead and walked into the next room.

I spent the whole night thinking about it. My head became hot with the thoughts. I couldn't find a solution for it.

It was getting dawn. I was looking through the window at the street aimlessly.

The milk maid was bringing the milk. She was accompanied by her husband in order to give company and help to her.

He was as dark as a he-buffalow. She was with a golden complexion!

Though they were different in their complexion, they were very happy. How can it be possible? Her eyes were shining and there were lines of happiness as if she were getting the entire happiness in the world in his presence!

But ... but ... I was an unlucky fellow! Prakash was very handsome ... but I couldn't reach him as he became the moon in the farthest sky! What was my defect? My beauty was competing with his beauty! What wrong did I commit!!!!

"Post!" I rushed by listening to the loud call of the postman. The letter was from Raaji. I opened the letter started reading it out of anxiety.

Vijji,

Ravi who was rejected by you much against to his expectations roamed like a mad fellow from place to place aimlessly. He lost his life in a lorry accident in this village. I felt very bad for his pitiful condition.

How is your family? Why were you not writing any letters? It seems you became lazy in the cozy hug of Prakash?

Expecting your letter at the earliest,

Your
Raajee.

Tears rolled and dropped from my eyes continuously.

Ravi! Abba ... I couldn't think about him any further! As a response to it I wrote a letter to Rajitha to visit her house and stay with her for a week.

She replied me that it was not possible for her to visit my house and she also declared that she was not interested.

I wrote another letter in which I threatened her that I won't speak to her and even I don't write a letter in the future. Rajitha arrived after two days as a response to my letter. I embraced her out of ecstasy. I met Rajitha after three years. I couldn't understand how we can spend three years without looking at each other as we were unable to live three hours without talking to each other.

Rajitha was roaming around the house, asking about my family details in a meticulous fashion.

How can I say? What can I say?

That night while sleeping with her, I told everything after switching off the bed light because I couldn't tell her about my pitiful condition by looking at her face in the light.

She fondled me for a lot time after pulling me into her lap. At that moment I experienced the comfort of cool lap for the very first time.

The heart which was like a dim light that was about to put off in the strong wind; started to shine splendidly.

I didn't know when I went into deep sleep but when I woke up the crows were cawing.

I turned aside. Rajitha was not there.

I waited for fifteen minutes thinking where she might have gone. She did not return. I awoke from the bed and looked at the mattresses.

Light pink coloured papers were fluttering in the wind. I took them into my hands with palpitating of heart.

Vijji,

You got a husband who was like Rajashekaram in Secretary novel! He was handsome like an actor Dharmendra! What did a woman need more than this? I thought that your life became a nandanavanam* and you were enjoying by marrying Prakash - but I never thought that your life will be like a hell !

The reason for Prakash's indifference, unconcerned behaviour was just because of that demon! That demon is no one but your Rajitha - can you believe me Vijjee?

I know Vijjee that you don't believe! But this is true! Prakash and I loved each other from the bottom of our hearts. But nobody knows about it! When we were ready to marry, I came to know that you had liked Prakash. I don't want to kill your hope of love ... I requested Prakash in different ways!

Prakash did not listen to me - I threatened him that I'll commit suicide, if he didn't listen to me! Thinking that there was no hope in arguing with me and I'll never change my opinion, he accepted to marry you!

But here also I had to taste the retaliation. Prakash couldn't forget me and he couldn't share his happiness with you - moreover he couldn't enjoy his life! Prakash was disturbed completely, as he could neither adjust with you nor he could forget me.

If it is continued for some more time ... I can't imagine! Prakash will become mad like Ravi ... no, Bhagavan no ... my death will certainly make your life a heaven ... after listening to the news of my death Prakash will head to your last desire - he would become a normal human being - he would live with you happily . With this belief I am withdrawing myself from this world permanently. Wherever I was, I am interested in your well being.

Yours
Raajee.

I was startled to know the truth, the world did not stop but my heart became numb.

Oh Raajee ... where did you go? What did you achieve?

Had I known the truth a few hours before this incident - I would have united you and escaped myself from your path!

Prakash entered the house with reddened eyes.

"My Raajee was no more Vijjee! She committed suicide beside railway track. She went without me. Raaji will be no more without me. I'll be no more without Raaji. I'm going Vijaya!... going to share happiness in the lap of Raaji. You have expected more from me. I was unable to share anything with you. I became a useless fellow who could satisfy neither Raajee, whom I loved - nor Vijjee, whom I married." He left without waiting for the answer.

No power in the world could stop Prakash. I was dumb found and has no dare to stop him.

I separated two lovers without my knowledge - but the fate was going to unite them!

Lovers! Love! Loving! Being loved ... what a lucky!

What fortune did I expect by rejecting the love of Ravi which resulted in his downfall! I was responsible for the loss of three valuable lives! I sprinkled drops of poison in their heart of ambrosia. I'm! I'm a great sinner! I don't have exploitation for my sin!

Rajitha who was born for pleasure, who tried to give happiness to me - failed and sacrificed her life for me!

Ravi who wanted to get pleasure with me, who wanted to provide happiness was rejected by me much against to his expectation left this world permanently.

Prakash who never tried to give pleasure to me, who did not try for my happiness - unable to compromise with life withdrew himself from this world.

But, me?

I developed wild fire in the hearts of three persons, the flame of wild fire was burning in me from top to bottom ... the world looked empty, I was dragging my life mechanically ... the time was not stopped for me but it mocked at me!

*(Women's College Magazine,
Nizamabad, 1969)*

**Swayamvaram* : *selection of a husband by a maiden in public during olden days*

**Secretary* : *A popular Telugu novel written by Yaddanapudi Sulochana Rani*

**Nandanavanam* : *a garden of Indra in Heaven*

About the Translator



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Dr. Palakurthy Dinakar is an Asst. Professor of English, Government Degree & PG College, KORATLA.

He received Gold Medal in MA English and first rank in MPhil and did his Ph.D. from Kakatiya University. He did his PGCTE, P.G.D.T.E. from EFLU, Hyderabad. He stood first among the south Indian participants in Teacher Development programme at Regional Institute of English, Bangalore.

He authored A Text Book on Communicative English, Yoga and Self Development, Life Skills Education, Proficiency in English, Communicative English, Teaching English through Discourse Oriented Pedagogy.

He presented papers in 4 International and 29 National Seminars and published 42 research articles in reputed, peer reviewed and scholarly journals and edited anthologies. He translated more than 72 poems and twenty nine short stories and three booklets from Telugu to English out of which several were published.