

Essence
of the
Brahmaputra

Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi



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ESSENCE OF THE BRAHMAPUTRA

SELECTED SHORT STORIES

OF

Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi



BRAHMAPUTRA PRAKASHAN

Haragovinda Sarma Byelane

Kamakshya Temple Road, Guwahati - 9

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Presented this book

In respect of

My Favourite

Principal

Sjt. Probodh Chandra Goswami

(Former Principal of Mangaldoi college)

Preface

The year before last (2005), while attending the International Writer's Camp (Kurukshetra University), I thought of publishing a collection of selected short stories in English. Atleast, this is an earnest attempt to enter these short stories in the mind of other learned brains breaking the bar of language.

This year, the International Writer's Camp is going to be held at Agra on 29th and 30th September, 2007. There, it will be my pleasure to offer a book of short stories to my fellow companions present there. This is the story behind the birth of this collection.

All the short stories are dear to me like my own children. Still then, efforts have been made to pick them up and forward as a composition to the esteemed readers as 'Essence of the Brahmaputra'.

However, I thank my senior co-writer Shri Pramod Kakati, without whose dedicated translation works of these short stories would not have been possible. Many thanks to Swapnali for being co-operative for rendering financial support. My heart felt thanks to Dr. Parag Kumar Bhattacharjya and Shri Dulen Bora for his ornamental works.

Hope, respected readers will appreciate this collection.

Paramananda Rajbongshi
25th September, 2007

Appreciation

Since the time of Sahityarathi Lakshminath Bezbarua, the soldiers of prose is striving for enriching the Assamese literature. A number of them have been awarded in State and National level for the dignified creation of novel and short stories to their credit. Some of them works have already been translated into English and other regional languages through out India and gained popularity.

Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi is an established litterateur. He has already published five novels and four collections of short stories besides a number of other literary compositions which are widely appreciated. Dr. Rajbongshi has also written a series of drama for transmission in All India Radio, besides, directing them in stages. He has earned his name as a film maker and director of serials in Television.

The source of Dr. Rajbongshi's literary works are the lovely native land and its people. He is genius in assembling folk-lore in his various fictions and also in non fictions (Drama-Serials-Films). Dr. Rajbongshi has a progressive mind, dynamic attitude and great enthusiasm for bringing a new trend through his creation.

Dr. Rajbongshi has choosen nine short stories for this collection and entrusted me for converting them into English in a short target. As cited above, all these short stories are depicted on village lives. The melodious tune of folk-lore of various communities of Assam are incorporated in all of them. The oppression of rich on the poor, the legal

and illicit relation of sex, the National and State level issues for existence and upliftment, the love of youth, the characterisation of the society and individuals etc. are the themes deeply analysed in those short stories. Dr. Rajbongshi no doubt, has succeeded in his technique and style, suspense and enthusiasm and art of display with words of his lovely language. The entrance of more characters and narration of folk items etc. also distinctly noticed in stories which have made his prose larger.

The translation of this compilation has been made hurriedly. There is scope for improvement on editing. Still, efforts have been made to communicate the thoughts and feelings of Dr. Rajbongshi's finest works. Daughter Hitashi assisted me in my works. Now it is hoped that the esteemed readers speaking besides Assamese will also find valued taste out of it.

Pramod Kakati
25th September, 2007

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LOVELY BALLAD

ONE

Farmud *goriya*, the short statured man lived in the locality of Kanaichuba. It was said so, because Kanai, who was a Gosain converted to Islam and hence the name. The village was situated close to the western side of Mohanpur the capital kingdom of Darrang. The king of Darrang during the battle of Pandughat made good way Mughals his captives. He helped Lachit Borphukan and brought them to his kingdom. A good number of the Mughol soldiers were sold to the local people as slaves, popularly called the *Mughal besa*. Some of them were made to settle down close to the palace of Mohanpur at Kanaichuba. In this particular place lived a poor old lady Hurmoti with her only support, Farmud *goriya*.

Farmud *goriya* was a bearded man, who performed *dhek*, a special custom of the wedding ceremony, where one party tried to win over the other through the means of a distinctive and characteristic act of singing. This is the main source of Hurmoti's anxiety. This unfortunate boy is totally deprived of his parents' love when the latter on their way to Puwamecca perished in the midst of the river and never returned back. Hurmoti was grief-stricken and her tears never seemed to cease.

That simple fellow from *Ghour* in the pretext of fighting a battle, ultimately settled in the locality of Kanaichuba. He even promised to stand by her through the thick and thin and with

this assurance, Qadir even married her and consequently Fatema was born. The baby was gradually springing up but Qadir was nowhere on the scene. This tiny little flower matured into an adult and was also married and turned me a grandmother, but Qadir *goriya* did not return even today.

That unfaithful man may surely be enjoying the warmth of the bosom of his mistress in his own country. May be he was already married while coming to this country on his mission. He cheated me with his sweet words thus making my body...

The family of Hurmoti totally turned a deaf ear to her after the latter got married to a Muslim. The only thing that inspired Hurmoti to go on with her life and provided her with respite was her lone grandson Farmud who was the apple of her eye.

Unlike his father and grandfather, Farmud will never betray me and would definitely look after me. All of you must keep this in mind and just watch.

Hurmoti's firm belief made her heave a sigh of great relief. A pair of dove sitting over the roof of the big room flew away on the slightest noise made by the old lady.

Hurmoti was awake even till the midnight. She made it a habit to wait till the arrival of Farmud, who generally arrived late at night after performing at the wedding ceremony.

TWO

Farmud *goriya* had brought honour to his village by his expertise in executing the *dhek*. Whether Farmud played in favour of the bride or the bridegroom party, the defeat of his opponent was inevitable. Hurmoti swells in pride like a frying *jalebi* and reiterated that Farmud would be able to please the rain God one day through his music.

Some day he would be able to make the clouds play on music and would be choreographed by lightening, to his tune at midnight.

This poor lady bursts out, often accused by her family of committing the grievous crime by marrying a man from a different community. Looking towards paternal home she raised her voice and shrieked.

"One day my grandson would bring rain to this earth and make lightening dance with it".

Hurmoti did never reveal her internal feelings, fearing that people would laugh at her back. She deliberately suppressed her grief and stopped the teardrops from rolling down. In her distress Hurmoti's family fully ignored her. No one had come to her rescue when her husband had left; her daughter and son-in-law drowned.

Farmud is your grandson, but you didn't seem to acknowledge it also. You are the people who brought Kadir *goriya* to construct the house. Owing to financial trouble and the scars left behind by pox prevent anyone from marrying me. I was already over thirty and not a dunce approached me. Even my body is made of flesh and blood. If Kadir *goriya* had not touched my body, I would have remained a virgin throughout my life. Furthermore I am not living with a beast. Is not Kadir *goriya* a man like us with all human emotions and passions?

In what name you call me; you glutton

In whichever name you call me.

Sitting under the tent

A leopard.

Suddenly the cracking sound of Hurmoti's bed ceased.

Yes this is the voice of my Farmud. Now the groom has reached the house of the headman Mozammil, whose daughter is to be married. That means Farmud is playing on behalf of the groom's side. I did not understand why he had to utter the word leopard.

One day Hurmoti happened to hear a part of a conversation of the village folk. She was in a state of trance when Hurmoti overheard people discussing the body of Poji, her son-in-law was lying by the riverside. Some of the men could even see his dead body being taken away by a leopard. After the boat capsized Fatema was washed away by water while the leopard.... Poji's body. Strong and powerful Poji happened to kill the cub of a leopard one day, that had entered their village. From the midnight of that eventful incident, the villagers of Kanaichuba could often hear the roaring of the tigers from the *Gadheni jungle* situated nearby. People talked that the voices were that of the parents whose offspring Poji had killed. So Poji was by the leopards!

Hurmoti at once rose from her bed, arranging her *pateni* properly. The kerosene lamp blazing over her head was burning in a pallid manner, which she lifted up on her left hand and took hold of a *machet*, which was stuck in on the mud wall and *marched*, ahead towards the site of marriage. She wanted to escort Farmud. On the way she would take assurance from him never to utter the sound leopard.

THREE

Farmud goriya
Lone hope of Hurmoti
Delivers dhek at wedding night
But could not captivate anyone.

This was the way companions like Mazid, Tarun, Tomzid etc. usually taunted him. Except Farmud *goriya* each and every one has a companion. Farmud in this regard made no comment but simply laughed privately. It was not that easy to captivate the hearts of the fair sex. After all she had to be liked by him. In other words she must succumb to his charms.

All of a sudden, Farmud slipped away from his pre-conceived notion. While giving performance in the wedding ceremony of daughter of the Farid, the village schoolmaster of Rangamati, he happened to come under the spell of an amazing beauty. He was accompanied by his group. Which included Mazid, Motlib, Tomzid and others. She had long hairs and her slim and slender waistline had been enhanced through the beautifully raised bosom wrapped in the *chadar-mekhela*. Throughout the marriage, she was next to the bride just as the moon and the stars.

○ the moon of the sky
Stars always follow you
○ my love here is a banana yard
○ my love there is a banana yard
In between passes the Japanese lane
Beautiful Modina
○ my love through the Japanese lane
My love motor rides
Inside the motors
Beautiful Modina

The young lady was at her best in singing the marriage song and made Farmud realise that he was the main person whom she was addressing. Farmud's mind got agitated and he could not understand the reason behind his substandard performance. He was hopelessly under the magic spell of the dame who had captured his soul.

After the marriage ceremony was over, Farmud on his way home and was followed by his companions; when he suddenly noticed that the girl was following them along with a little boy. Farmud nearly died of shame seeing her. His friends marked the developments and they stopped in a quiet place. Standing face to face was the bright moon that had come down to this earth to seize permanently sleep from poor Farmud's eyes. In a hurry

Tomzid asked— Who are you? Where are you going? The girl without much hesitation told him that she had come to meet them. Furthermore she said that she was the only daughter of Gohin Kalita of Bezpara. The boy with her was her brother. She had actually come to attend the marriage ceremony of her best friend; who was the daughter of the village schoolmaster Farid and now she was heading towards home. She eloquently went on saying that her name was Pomila. She further added that a long cherished dream of her had been accomplished, when she witnessed Farmud *goriya* performing live last night. Farmud regained his senses when the little girl suddenly vanished into the thick mist.

Farmud's friends denounced him for winning the heart of a charming Hindu girl. Her figure was as emollient as that of a fish and as soft as that of cream. Her flock of hair resembled that of the fanlike tail of a peacock. Really she was not less than Noorjahan, the queen of Shahjahan.

The beautiful thoughts of the girl called Pomila popped into his mind all the time and finally he realised that he was badly in love with her. The image of her in his dreams often became a source of embarrassment to him when she eluded him leaving him in distress.

Farmud along with his friend Tomzid once visited Bezpara with the sole motive of having a glimpse of his sweetheart. They passed through her house many times but the mission failed and they had to return just visiting household of Horeswar who was in good terms with him. They did not seem to give up and Tomzid very tactfully asked Horeswar regarding the personality of Pomila. Farmud was in cloud mine when he came to know about her integrity. Horeswar was entrusted with the duty of letting them know about the feelings of Pomila towards Farmud. Farmud was heartbroken when he could not see her for a long time.

Days were passing and there was no news from Horeswar. He had to spend sleepless nights and her thoughts often haunted him day and night. Finally Horeswar came resulting in the alteration of his heartbeat.

— Can I bear the pain if the reply was not in my favour." What will happen to all my desires that I have been harbouring in my heart?

Just like the soft cotton wool that resided inside the bosom of the *simolu* flower similarly, Pomila's soul was occupied with love and affection. She wanted to fly far away with Farmud *goriya*. After listening to the good news Farmud was in the seventh heaven and just like the cotton wool, his soul was trying hard to get itself free to enable him to reach his destination in no time. Gradually his love was becoming the talk of the day in the locality.

FOUR

Sky is your abode
Where you sing and dance
Descending to this earth
Carrying a child
O Goddess Sitalee
Worshipping to appease you
By burning lamp and incense
Slowly you enter into
The human world
O Goddess Sitalee

The daughter of Barqat was afflicted with *Aayae* and Hurmoti was busy offering prayers to the Goddess responsible for causing it. The Goddess was served with nine different kinds of offerings placed over banana leaves, along with nine *cassandra* flowers. Sonafuli came close to her and whispered in her ear and

the words penetrated her eardrum, as if she was stuck with a sharp stick.

— Farmud is continuing his love affair with a Hindu girl and soon he is going to marry her.

Everybody was in a state of shock when Hurmoti suddenly left the scene of prayer. The only individual that did not seem to react was Sonafuli.

Hurmoti was in a state of restlessness; entered her room and first opened the locker. A familiar odour rushed to her nose and caused her disturbance. In her life, Hurmoti could not manage to wear an elegant dress. But with great effort she could manage one for her daughter Fatema who never returned once she abandoned her mother's home to go with the bridegroom. She treasured a traditional dress along with a *topi* for her grandson Farmud and kept it locked in her locker. She gathered these items with hard labour by offering prayers to Goddess Aayae in different households, by working in different places and also by selling the valuable fruits from her farm. Also protected in the box a set of silk attire, which Hurmoti had brought to offer to her, would be daughter-in-law as a gift.

Hurmoti wished to seek a charming bride for her only grandson Farmud by herself. who would have expertise in spinning, catching fish, ought to have a thick, long, black lock of hair. She also wanted to sing to her fullest marriage songs—

The lamp is lying in front of the groom
Box in front of the bride
The Mullah of the groom side has arrived
Happa the killer of birds.

Farmud dressed himself as a groom, to bring his bride home. Gradually the visibility of Hurmoti started to fade when she realised that both her eyes were filled with teardrops. She came out of her room weeping both her eyes with one end of her *chadar*.

Let him come. I would tell him that a Hindu would marry his daughter to him. If you elope with her, it would lead to another *Kurukshetra*. Son does not repeat the mistake that I had committed in the past. I would get a girl as that of the full moon and you can live a happy life.

Hurmoti prepared the food with extra care kept the door open for the arrival of Farmud. But on that day Farmud *goriya* did not return home.

FIVE

O my dearest friend
Tell me your secrets
What you prefer
A Brahman
Or a Maulavi
Forehead painted with vermillion

The forest of Gadheni was reverberating with the voices and laughter of the youths. Both Pomila and Farmud took shelter in the midst of this forest fully supported by their friends. Tomzid and his group carried the mattress and foodstuff for them.

— Both of you enjoy this night and tomorrow your marriage ceremony will be solemnised.

Sonafuli and other friends warned Pomila not to surrender herself fully to Farmud *goriya*. Only after the completion of the marriage ceremony, he should be allowed to love her fully. Sonafuli was quick and energetic and felt no hesitation to speak frankly. She even asked Pomila— Tell me which one you prefer, a *Brahman* with a vermillion or a *Maulavi* with a beard. Pomila got nervous which even reflected on her face.

SIX

Suddenly the clear sky was shrouded with dark clouds when the stout middle-aged man rebuked her. Hurmoti stood still as if lightning had struck her.

The old lady was getting ready to meet Tomzid, to know about the whereabouts of her only grandson Farmud. — Why is he behaving like this? He never used to stay away from home at night. She could not blink her eyes even for once as she was suffering from tension. Above all these, she could not understand clearly what the man from Bezpara was talking. Could Farmud really marry a Hindu girl?

The man who identified himself as the uncle of the eloped girl kept on shouting continuously — These Muslims are ruining our reputation. They are trying to dishonour the image of our religion.

Haridhan Kalita uttered unpleasant words of Farmud and further said — He cannot escape for long with our girl. Once I get him he will be killed. This time he will witness the evil side of me.

Gradually the man started accumulating in Hurmoti's compound.

— Oh my destiny, my own Farmud has betrayed me.

Out of desperation, old Hurmoti screamed aloud. People tried to console her with different explanation.

— Farmud is a young boy and he loves Pomila. He does not involve force in the whole development episode. They both love each other. Their religion is the main obstacle and they have no other option but to run away secretly and to marry. Farmud now cannot live in this village.

Hurmoti stopped crying and carefully looked at the face of the man who uttered these words. He was Mullah Khabiruddin, the man with bushy hair and beard.

— Why can't he get a Muslim girl for him? He will not be allowed to enter this village if he marries that Hindu girl.

The enagement of the Mullah had been communicated via the movements or attributes of the body. Both his eyes were filled with fire of anger and it was directed towards Hurmoti.

The headman of the Kanaichuba, Hazimuddin Ahmed stepped into the conversation.

— Hey Mullah what rubbish you are talking. Do you think that our forefathers had brought their wives with them when they first come to this place? No. They married the local Hindu girls. Even your grandmother was a Hindu. A few years back we did not have a Maszid not only in our locality, but also in the whole district of Darrang. We used to sing *Zahilee* in the *Mandirs* and *Naamghars* of the Hindu. Only after the construction of the *Maszid* at *Baliazhar*, we have started praying *Namaz*. Our Farmud has to elope with the girl whom he loves, because there is no other option left for him. Now we must arrange for his marriage. Most of the people present there supported his view, which made the Mullah furious, and at once exit from the scene.

Aamey!

Hurmoti could identify the voice very well and she turned around. She hurriedly ran towards Tomzid rubbing both her eyes with the end of her *chadar* and asked — Son please tell me where is my Farmud now?

— You need not have to worry Aamey, both Farmud and Pomila are safe in the forest of Gadheni.

After listening Tomzid, Hurmoti seemed to charge up.

What did you say, Gadheni forest? Why did he go to that forest? Why did not he immediately bring the girl straight home?

His father had killed the offspring of a leopard of that forest. Yes, yes I remember it is Gadheni forest.

Hurmoti without any further delay took to her heels towards the Gadheni forest. Tomzid, Hafizuddin and many others followed her.

SEVEN

Before night fall in a state of diffused or dim illumination both Farmud and Pomila satisfied their hunger with the food brought by their friends. They placed their mat in a plain area surrounded on all sides by *german* grass. During the full moon night of the *Aghon* month mosquitoes were sent to the dense forest of Gadheni through a ritual. One or two mosquitoes of this group flew close to them and started singing marriage songs. The angelic beauty was lying asleep close to him. The moonlight from the distant sky was shining over her pretty face. Farmud immediately looked up at the sky to find that it was Pomila who was smiling at him from the top. Today he was going to pour out all the love all at a time, which he had been suppressing all these years. He wanted to possess her completely without further delay. He gazed at her with fixed eyes without the slightest movement of the body.

Her beautifully curved nose like the sesame flowers, freshy and red cheeks as that of the ripe fruits, her slimy body resembled *that of pava fish*, and her raised bosom was tantalisingly indicating him, to hold her tight.

Very carefully he wished to get down on his knees to lay his body over the delicate and doughy structure of Pomila. Then a roar could be heard.

Farmud leapt out from his position. Out of the blue a huge leopard was standing to their left. In an act of nervousness, Farmud wanted to hug Pomila with great force. But before he could act the leopard seized Pomila at her neck and snatched her away. Pomila's indistinct cry out of pain prompted Farmud to act madly and he grabbed both her legs to save her. The leopard released Pomila from its jaw and jumped at Farmud.

EIGHT

The Gadheni forest was crowded with the local people. The forest was resounding with the cacophonic sound of these assembled people. In spite of this, the howling cry of old poor Hurmoti even surpassed human frontiers and caused the nature to be a compatriot in her grief.

Farmud my dear you too
Like your father
Injured my heart
With the deadly weapon
O please tell me
What has left in my life?
To go on living
Farmud the soul of my heart
O my dear Farmud goriya.

The cries of Pomila's companions were marked by a distinct sorrowfulness echoes in the Gadheni forest even today-

Pomila finds a heretic
Pomila wins an outcast
Pomila you give your sweet honey
Pomila to a misbeliever
Pomila you never look back
Pomila at your home
Pomila along with Farmud
Pomila left your village
Pomila in the Gadheni forest
Pomila along with Farmud
Pomila moved into the intestine of a leopard.

NINE

The howling utterance made by *Mullah khabiruddin* of
Kanaichuba had turned itself into a Ballad and exists even today,-

Farmud the atheist

Farmud the saboteur

Why did you choose Pomila

Lost your family

And your wife too

Ultimately to get into the intestine of leopard. □

MISFORTUNE

The trees and shrubs seemed like children with face filled with dust. The huge leaves of teak were left scattered here and there like ears of elephant. The Peepul tree stood blank as if sister Chandika with balded head has just returned from Kashi and Puri.

The wind blows whispering. What happen to my body!
No tendency to eat and sleep.

Even though, I think to go out, I can't. I don't even wish to reside in the magnificent room. There is lot to be right. The outside wind may soothe my body and mind. Thinking so, Bhagyawati came out of her room and stepped on the floor of grassy garden in the backyard. The garden's grass have faded and turned into golden yellow due to dryness. Besides that the dry leaves with dust are scattered here and there. Yes, wind is blowing outside. As if group of kids covered with dust crossed Bhagyawati at a rapid pace. Then and there Bhagyawati ran inside the house. It was not soothing air but was dusty loo.

Bhagyawati closed the backside door and moved towards her bed when she suddenly stopped. Oh, before sleeping on the huge bed, she had to refit the sheet filled with dust. But she could not afford that much of strength.

She came and stood near the window.

She peeped through the window to see a glimpse of the gateway. The wide campus comes to an end in this narrow gateway. This may be the starting point or the end. This may be the terminal where she stands. Bothside the gateway is lined

beautifully by Palm trees. One day Bhagyawati stepped down from a bullock cart under a long veil on the same gateway carrying a ocean of sorrow in heart. The huge iron gate was kept open on that day. Seeing the gateway as to how huge would be her proprietor husband's compound. Well! From that day onwards she couldn't come outside. She was confined in trap which was given a very compassionate word marriage, from which it was impossible for her to be free. It was something like the moor-hen trapped in cage made of thin bamboo sticks bound by smooth thread.

Through the same gateway, today another woman came out from an Ambassador car, followed by the bridegroom proprietor wearing a colourful headgear. The rough and dusty earth felt to be free in the morning. Thinking so, Bhagyawati woke up in the morning and was about to go out for a walk in the balcony, when she stopped suddenly. The sound of the stoppage of the car almost destroyed her soothing atmosphere. She felt as if a caterpillar has stung her whole body. She felt restless. Instead of opening the door. Bhagyawati looked at the gateway from the window where she saw newly wedded bride and the proprietor husband in the form of bridegroom.

Slowly the thin darkness disappeared from the sky and hid beneath the trees and nook and corner of the houses. In the mean time Kanchanmati arrived and informed her that the newly wed was very beautiful ; but tender aged. She looked as the age of the grand daughter of the proprietor. She belonged to a poor family. This girl has been married by offering wine, money, meat etc. to her father. Kanchanmati insisted Bhagyawati to have her food, but she refused. In her distress she laid on the dusty bed thinking-why do people have food? To live only! Why do people need to survive? To keep sweet dreams and wishes alive in the heart. If the dreams and the wishes shatter then? Then does the existence of human is of any value? She sighed

and turned to the other side of the bed.

Suddenly, Bhagyawati sat aback. Though Bhagyawati tried to get a plunge for so long ; she couldn't subjugate sleep. She simply, closed her eyes and turned from one side to another on her bed. But the scream for which she sat aback did not scare her. Sitting on the bed, she peeped outside. After a while she heard blurred sounds made by some body.

May be some people must have rushed to the newly wed's room. But what's the use of going there? There will be an exhibition of brutality where a wild animal attacks upon an innocent one. The way a chameleon is unprovokative in the jungle, in the similar way within human civilisation also the people tend to take the taste of raw blood in the name of marriage. Where lies the difference between proprietor like him and the wild animals. Though young, the newly wed is legal wife of the proprietor, now, she is the source of enjoyment of the proprietor. When the proposal for marriage of this young girl came from such a person, it should have been straight way rejected by her parents or by other members of the family. Then the villagers or the society should have refuse it. But what happened? When the proprietor came to marry this young girl with full on celebration Nobody protested him. Why that not happen? If I would have gone forward to oppose him, then he would have insulted me stating it as co-wife's jeal. As a result of which I would turn to be a laughing storck.

Bhagyawati got up from her bed and drank water with all her heart from a jug placed in the corner of the room. That soothe her body for a while. She helplessly looked at her bed. Yes, yes, that was the same bed on which she spend her first wedding night with her husband, the proprietor, seven years ago. She knew about the first wedding night from her friends after attaining puberty. Oh, how sensational it would be! The meeting of the first wedding night with a handsome youth of

similar mind and soul ...? Thinking, how pleasant was that feeling. Very often, Bhagyawati used to tingle herself to admit the fact that the middle aged person was actually her husband. That robust man, mouth filled with betel nut and teeth turned black due to consumption of tobacco, with whom she spend her first wedded night. Was it the first wedded night? She got scared when this person smiled and approached Bhagyawati. He justified saying - I am your legal husband. So Bhagyawati was not supposed to create any sort of noise. It was actually a forceful execution. It won't go wrong, if one considered it to be as a rape instead of first wedded night's intercourse. The torture on the newly wed was nothing but suffering experienced by Bhagyawati. Bhagyawati screamed that night alone and nobody came forward to save her. Instead the following, day the women smiled at her and explained that the first night's meeting with husband was supposed to be a bit torturous.

Bhagyawati once again sat on her bed.

She felt as if a huge python was swallowing her from her legs. She heard a story of Purana through the group song of *Ojapali*. During her childhood, she remember how the *Kalinag* stinged *Lakhinddar* and how its venom spreaded form the feet to the entire body of *Lakhinddar*. This pathetic experience was narrated through songs sung by the *Mare* group of singers. It was as inexplicable as to why these songs came to her mind repeatedly on the day of her wedding night, when she was forcefully made to face the first intercourse. When one spend a night with a person with same kind of mind, it can never termed as rape, but it will surely be a forceful torture or rape if one night is spent with one's husband against her will i.e. body, mind and soul.

Here is an example of pure love. For many days she spent some time with *Pobitra* beneath the *Bhaluka* bamboos or in the *Birina* jungle besides river *Gangadhar*. She used to share her

feelings and emotions with him by laying her head on his lap. But he never tried to take advantage over her and never tried to enter in a woman's secret zone. He loved Bhagyawati the way she wanted to. Well! How was ethical the limit of love. But after marriage, even middle aged man can cross every limit unwantedly. What kind of inhuman at was that.

With great anguish Bhagyawati once again got up from her bed and opened the backyard door. A shrivelling wind comes, touches her body and goes away. Under the milky light of the moon she looks to the stunted earth.

Wake up, Wake up the Hudum to night
People worships you with incense sticks
Earthen lamps lighten
You are worshiped up in heaven
Also down the hell
Here the dark clouds with darkness
Humble prayer from all
Come and bless us.

Once the elderly ladies like mother or aunt were singing and dancing nakedly in the *Hudum Puja*. Taking the chance, Bhagyawati was returning home hurriedly along with *Tilottama* and *Kadami*. In that moment *Pobitra* and *Haren* have scared them hiding behind the *Dillenis indica* trees (*Au Tenga*). The three ladies Bhagyawati, *Tilottama* and *Kadami* were aware of the superstition that the ghosts reside in *Dillenis indica* trees and so these three girls were already scared. They tied with each other's hand and moved ahead when *Pobitra* along with *Haren* scared them acting as ghosts. Their lives almost ran down their spine. When they came to know that they were not ghosts. They got back their lives. *Pobitra* held one of Bhagyawati's hand and whispered it in her ear. Listening to it her body and soul became warm. She felt a weird sensation in her entire body.

After that she could not sleep the rest of the night. The naked songs sung by the old ladies came to her mind which disturbed her all the night.

'I love you Bhagya'. Wow! Such a touching sentence!

Seven days before the *Hudum Puja*, when Bhagyawati was a minor, she used to collect water from seven houses with water vase and bamboo scoop along with Padumi and other friends. They were made to be cow. Aunts scattered a portion of land already ploughed. The reserved water was then scattered in the land.

They dug a pit and collected owl's nest, male crow's head, soil of elephant's teeth, water collected after washing *Dheki*, pollens, a bunch of banana, raw sugar and sugar, flower, curd, water vase, betel nut, betel-leaf, incense stick-powder and pulses of twelve kinds for the worship of Lord Hudum. Aunt planted a banana post and the other ladies made a thrilling sound by repeated *Uruli*. In May-June when there is no rain, the married women decide to dance in obsense way in discrimination. Entry of men and young girls are prohibited. The women accomplish the task of a priest. Only one man playing drum is allowed to enter in this Puja. His eyes are tied by a piece of cloth. Bhagyawati remembered every bit of that event. A banana plant is planted there. The Puja continued for three days. It continues even up to seven days if there be no rain, It is believed that worship of Hudum God (the *Barun*) brings rain. No life survives if there be no rain, There will be no scope for farming. The natural earth would turn to desert. Thinking of these dangerous consequences, this *Puja* is performed. Bhagyawati's aunt explained everything to her when she was a minor.

Even after Bhagyawati matured, she was prohibited to attend the Puja. She used to go there secretly along with Padumi and Tilottama without knowledge of her aunt and enjoyed singing Hudum Puja.

The Puja was held in an isolated place and all the young ladies observed it with great interest. Bhagyawati and other young girls were rebuked and insulted, which was a pleasure for everyone present there. Then the ladies sang and danced holding the Hudums banana post considering them to be their spouse.

Of seven brothers of Hudum
None is having water
Oh cloud, be generous then play
Bless us water for needs
For we offer for you
Let Hudum be wetted
Welcome water as plenty

It was believed that *Hudum* male and female interaction brought rain. But before that a wild horned owl was captured and then it was worshipped. Later on, when the owl was not easily found to be captured, a Banana tree was used as a substitution for the hounted owl and it was worshipped. But on that full moon night, the chief priest who was Bhagyawati's aunt fell ill. She had been trembling with high fever. Even after covering her with heavy quilts, she was not feeling well. Bhagyawati's uncle then called a *Bej* (local doctor) but it was of no use. So, she was taken to the Dhubri Government hospital on the bullock-cart. But, on the way to the hospital only she went abode. Bhagyawati felt helpless. After losing her parents in the childhood, she considered her uncle and aunt only to be her parents. When her aunt was brought back to her house covered by white cloth, Bhagyawati cried her heart out, looking at the dead body. Her cousines - Manoj and Yashoda also joined her. Manoj sat near the body of his mother and slept.

Their neighbours then collected twelve types of pulses, bamboo, sand vase, oil, turmeric, myrobalam, shells of small snails, coins, mustard seed, ghee etc. and carried the body on the

bamboo platform to the cemetery. By that time Bhagyawati became senseless and when she regained her sense she came to know that her aunt was dressed beautifully by making her wear bangles, *sindoor* etc. and then she was cremated. The rest of the rituals were performed by her uncle by lending money from here and there.

Suddenly, Bhagyawati felt something wet on her cheeks. It was tear. The thought of her aunt brought tears in her eyes. She came out of her house wiping her tears with the border of her saree. She stood beneath the Litchi tree and looked at the *Kardoi* tree which was not that too far.

Bhagyawati's aunt's death brought misfortune to her life. She could never imagine that a proprietor of her father's age would ever place a proposal of marriage to her uncle.

The proprietor Mahendra Narayan came to know about Bhagyawati's beauty from somebody. So, he placed the proposal to her uncle in exchange of the loan taken earlier.

Her uncle firstly denied the proposal stating all the objections placed by Bhagyawati. But then, when he was threatened to displace him as peasant from that area, then he was in a perplexed condition. Pobitra was prepared to flee Bhagyawati away. But she thought her uncle would fall into great trouble. Again the lives of her cousin Manoj and Yoshoda also would be in danger. Bhagyawati was aware of the fact that her uncle and aunt have taken the responsibilities after death of her parents. In this juncture, the proprietor promised shamelessly that he would look after their house and its households on having Bhagyawati as his wife. They were still uncertain about what to do when the proprietor called for Pobitra. There the incident took a different turn. The following day after returning from the proprietor's house, Pobitra packed all his stuffs and went away from the village. He didn't even feel the need of meeting Bhagyawati. According to the members of

his family the proprietor shifted him to Goalpara for a job. But how could he sacrifice Bhagyawati for a mere job? Then why Bhagyawati cannot sacrifice Pobitra for her uncle and her cousins? With heavy heart she got ready for the unwanted marriage. She wanted to know about Pobitra even after her marriage. Accordingly she enquired and came to know only that he went to do some job. Since then, he has not turn up to his home.

The members of family knew nothing about him. From that time, very often she got disturbed thinking about Pobitra. Did the proprietor send some murderer to Goalpara to kill Pobitra? He might have put some other conditions to scare Pobitra and kept him away from Bhagyawati?

Surut, Surut, Surut?

These strange shrieking voice created goosebumps on Bhagyawati's body. Suddenly the voice disappeared. She looked here and there. Ah! it was a silly cat! Why? Even though she knew that nothing was going to change or nobody was going to come, yet some sort of feeling persisted which created restlessness or inquisition in her mind. This provided a hope of somebody's arrival.

Alas, she is Bhagyawati.

This is quite unknown why Bhagyawati's parents named her Bhagyawati!

The baby that take birth
In the first Bhada month
Moves but the birth of second
Faces rainy days and cares
Though the third Bhada brings
The golden days beginning to end
This is what a folk-belief
And the luck goes that way.

Bhagyawati was born on mid of August. Probably, because of that she was passing through bad days. Her parents should have given her name as Bhadei instead of Bhagyawati. When she was seven years old, her parent died due to some sickness. Everyone in the village than disclaimed her as a curse to her parents and because of her only, people said that her parents died due to her misfortune. She felt on her aunt's death also. Fortune stood as misfortune in front of Bhagyawati. She could never thought of hope of any sort of luck in her life.

Only luck favoured her by giving her the support of her uncle and aunt after her parent's death.

The magnificent mansion of the proprietor seemed as a jail to Bhagyawati. It has been fifteen years since she had entered this jail which meant she could have been the mother of many kids by then. For aspiration to attain motherhood she accepted this elderly man as her husband. By that her biological desire was fulfilled. In her subconscious state she could visualise Pobitra sitting on a huge tool. Whenever the proprietor tortured her, she used to think about Pobitra. As if that was the venom of the huge snake spread in the whole body as described in the Mare songs of Padmapurana, as thought by Bhagyawati. It was a wonderful touch feeling of Pobitra in dream. It was somewhat like a cool river flowing in a desert. Exactly a sweet oach.

Very often the proprietor used to enter her room to fulfil his sexual desire. But when she refused it, she was kicked, slapped and did various physical tortures before leaving the room. It was something like hail storm passed through Bhagyawati. As if wind, rain have smased her golden world of dream. However, Bhagyawati consoled herself and kept silent.

One day a person came to console her. He was none but Arun. He came as comet. Not comet, he actually came as a rising sun in the sky of Bhagyawati. He seemed to be a life saving medicine (Makrdhwaj) for Bhagyawati. Arun was the cousin of

the proprietor. He was the proprietor's aunt's son. The wierd figure visited house of the proprietor very often. He used to call Bhagyawati as 'Boudi' and this affectionate words were great source of inspiration and carried a good faith on him. His eyes were really secretive. He came from Bijni for some purpose. He used to often go with his cousin for hunting in Manas. One day both of them after hunting stayed there. In that night when the proprietor purposely harassed her, Bhagyawati opened the door of the backyard and made a depressing look to the surrounding. Once for a while she thought of committing suicide to get rid of the regular harrasment faced by her. Without her knowledge she came underneath the Kardoi tree. There she experienced an unwanted touch which shocked Bhagyawati. Who?

Me Boudi! Arun! Arun replied softly. How did you come here?

It sounded almost like a scolding. But what a peculiar nature he carried!

An woman suffering from despair, destress and depression would always like to share her emotion with a person whom she felt would understand and probably Bhagyawati did the same. She lost her control and wept embracing Arun with all her heart. Arun then made her sit on a piece of wood (kundi). Then by consoling her, provided her divine feeling of love.

You are very beautiful Boudi!

How many springs were left undone in Bhagyawati's life. Arun was a blessing of her life to hear such an affectionate sentence. That was the strength in her life. She fulfilled it. Being deprived for so long time for attaining that happiness. She got awakened by her anxiety. Arun then went away saying that he would meet her on the following full moon night.

Today is that very day. Slowly, many anxious hours from that thirty days have already passed away. Kanchanmati told

Bhagyawati that proprietor was planning to marry once again, stating Bhagyawati to be sterile or having incapability to attain motherhood. She remained still for a while on hearing that shocking news.

The complain against her was quite obvious. She carried no hard feelings for that. In a male sovereignistic society, this way a woman is treated as a subject matter for sexual pleasure. However men donot suffer the same. They are free from this kind of blame. This society donot admit the fact that men should be equally competent as women for giving birth to a child.

The reason behind the committing suicide of first wife of the proprietor Mahendra Narayan was known to all; but every one remained silent. Whenever a girl gets married, she surrenders all her hopes and aspirations to her husband, inspite of that she **does not get proper justice to it and gets treated as a mere substance found in market.** If one does not work, he will buy another. What kind of thing was that? Bhagyawati had a belief that a person cannot succeed in life who lives on sympathy of others. So Bhagyawati carried a self confidence for finding her own fortune to lead her life. So she decided to act on self opinion.

Bhagyawati realised that she was underneath the Kordoi tree unknowingly. She sat down on the huge wooden tool (Kundi) there. She felt a wonderful sensation while touching the empty space in the tool.

You are very beautiful Boudi! Oh! What a wonderfully sweet saying. It is such a source of inspiration that light rays of are spreaded here and there. They are playing hide and seek with darkness. Alas! There is no Surut Surut voice. Only the dry leaves of the trees are whispering and talking to each other.

Even the large compound was awaken up if a person comes silently also. But there is no such change in the balcony today. That meant Arun has not come. He may suddenly come at night. He is a weird man. Today, on his arrival, she would clearly say

him to take her away the way wind carries dry leaves. However, the sun seems to be faded in the west. So also the blossoming flowers have faded away. Bhagyawati's restlessness kept on increasing in absence of Arun.

There is no rain since two months. Probably to the earth seem to crack. The trees seem to be naked losing all their leaves and looked almost dead. River, pond, estuaries etc. seem to dry out. There arouse a great problem for water among the general people. Farmers are having problems with their farms. Due to shortage of water, not only men but animals are also suffering. The day before yesterday two women came. It is a rare case to enter the proprietor's campus by women of the neighbourhood. The women came to invite Bhagyawati for *Hudum Puja*. At this proposal, firstly Bhagyawati kept silent for some time. Oh, *Hudum Puja* was a sweet memorable festival in her life. That sweet has turned into a bitter suffering in her present life.

Listening to the logic of the ladies Bhagyawati remained silent. She knows that *Hudum Puja* brings rain. The dry dusty and rough earth due to scorching sun, is in great need of rain. Because the natural process would be a disaster in nature, if there be no rain.

But sitting in the wooden tool, Bhagyawati is having the feeling of dry and roughness. She is suffering from irritation in her mind and soul due to dust in the nearby areas. She looked at the sky with great hope and waited for the shower to fall. May be the nature is also feelling the same.

What is this?

Will the rain won't shower?

With depressed mind Bhagyawati stood up from the wooden tool.

Surut, Surut, Surut!!!

Yes! Yes! that is Bhagyawati's most expected words. These words would make mild echo in her entire body.

These striking words will surely bring calmness in her as the earth may feel calm and pleasant from the severe heat and dryness.

Surut, Surut, Surut!!!

These words came close and stopped. Bhagyawati sits down. She knew that those words would come close to her. The same loving moment will once again please her entire body.

Dangar Aaidau? (elder sister)

What was that? That seems to be a known noice.

But not the expected one.

Are you elder sister, Kanchanmati;

She stands up from the tool and puts question.

Kanchanmati then simply shook her head.

Pale light covered the entire body of Kanchanmati. She looked like a ghost in the faded light falling across the Kardoi tree. What happened Kanchanmati? Why don't you say

anything? Embrassing Kanchanmati's body, asked Bhagyawati.

Kanchanmati said -

It was late while I was returning home Aaidau. Suddenly, I saw some boys coming from Bijni.

-- Boys from Bijni! Who were they! Was there Arun also! Bhagyawati asked impatiently. Kanchanmati suddenly started weeping. She then said weepingly the boys surrounded the jeep in which Bijni's boy was comming. They killed him brutally. Killed means? Bhagyawati asked seriously. Kanchanmati pathetically replied --Yes, they murdered him.

Bhagyawati remained still for a while. Suddenly breaking the silence Bhagyawati sat on the huge wooden tool and started crying.

Oh, a heart touching cry.....□

DARKNESS

Jamfai Odini Chayaram Mondar Bibar. There is a Modar flower tree. Firstly, a crow shouted from a branch of the tree. Another crow soon joined him-ka-ka-ka-ka.

What happened to this couple. Even there is no mirror to despatch them. Whether they are quarrelling! What is the problem. Did the cuckoo has eaten up their eggs.

Heh Suh....Hei Suh Hur.....Re.....

Rahila strucks the pottery with hand. No, the crows were Shameless. They did not move. After walking a few step by the bank of the stream, it is the river Kulashi. It looks like that somebody have spreaded the reddish colour throughout the branches of the Modar tree. The frogs were jumping here and there on the water of the stream. They are surprising the small fishes like *Darikana*.

Rohila wondered on hearing the sound of the bus returning from town in the afternoon. He is suppose to come in this bus. His arrival means the *Baisagu* and the *Baisagu* means the exhibition of chayaram Modar flower. There is a sweet bunch of Assamese orchid hanging from the small whole of Peepal tree. Also a sweet smell of the spring. Such a mind blowing attraction coming from the young Azar tree.

Well, he will drop from the bus with a lovely smile just like *Kushanda* flower. He will be covered by the dust behind the bus. It is something like the moon above the light and milky smokes running in the sky. Yes, he would come out of the dust as the moon becomes clear out of smokes.

Gurini Chayaram Mondar Bibar
Both he and Rohila will talk happily under the Chayaram
Modar flower besides the stream.

Hangma thabaya, hangma thabai ada.
Jamfai odini Chayaram Mondar Bibar
Ada Chayaram Mondar Bibar.

Oh brother, I have heartfelt love to the Chayaram Modar
flower of the bank of the stream.

Now, the boy has returned to his home. He spent many
sleepless nights with strangers of unknown villages. It was a
wild life for many days. Some of them did not return. They
remained in jungles. Because, the treaty made on their issue
was nothing but a blank baloon. This baloon may burst at any
moment. It is their thoughts and views. However, he has been
tempted for many more. Some result would come by this time.
The wasps will not have their nest in the branch at the top of
the tree. The ants will not come up to the floor of house. Even
the white ants would not fly. The youths shall not have to go
after job. The condition of roads and houses will be improved.
The paddy field will produce plenty of rice. In the field, besides
the river, where they performed Bagrumba dance will have the
gesture of Kahuya grass. People would not have to die like cats
and dogs, without medical aid. The pupils of Primary school
need not have to run away, even if there be heavy rain.

Ou wani khanjang barai khan khau

The time will come where people will use small bamboo
sticks for combing. There will be abundant of fried meat and
pond of wine -- Bedarani aklai jouni fakhria. Because, their leaders
are in charge of administration. So, he is very happy and joyous
on these days. That's why, very frequently he travels from village
to town and back. Rahila got the chance. She used to meet him
under the Chayaram Modar tree at times.

You go to the town very often. Why don't you do
something?

Of course - he replied. But she was at a loss on his reply.
Actually what was the text of the reply. Did he want to make
her a fool? She just thought so.

Will, something has to be done. Angni Injao, firstly, I am
in search of a girl for me. I got one. But I failed to get her heart.
Do you know- how she looks like? Migkhangjao naibila tharai lai
agai. Her face is like a leaf of wild cardamom. Gasthang jao naibila
don baorai, Hair is like bush, Hathayao nailila akhai niji, Nose is
smooth and lovely. Agou arou agoni fangdang. The breast is wide
and golden.

Oh, she may hail from town. That is why you are going to
town to meet that queen. Is it so?

Rahila's face turns as if the cloudy sky of Baisagu. Suddenly
she was about to depart that place out of rage. He stopped her
holding in hand and said smiling—

Do you know who she is? The one, whom I am holding
the hand. Yes, you are really beautiful, Rahila!

The shame - doubt-satisfaction of mind grasped Rahila
just like humming of flock of Honey-Bees. How the pleasant
moment was that? She became emotional on hearing the most
expected heart rendering words. She ran home and reached bed
room. She stood in front of the mirror hanging on the wall made
of sliced bamboo. She was shy to look at her face and other parts
of the body. Is her face really like a wild cardamom! Is it true
that her breast is so wide goldy. Did she hide in shyness for the
above description?

Right, the man is Ok. He may stay at forest or he may
spend nights in different houses. Still then, he has kept the true
love for her carefully, as the jackfruit tree bears fruit including
small juicy inner part. Yes, this is the wealth for Rahila, Oh, the
core of the heart. But she observes, very frequently hused to be
depressed. It does not look nice, if there be dark clouds in the
winter sky. Whenever asked-he gets a shock and becomes alert.

As if a flock of egret fly away getting shock, who were busy in fishing in big pond.

: Did I Commit a mistake, Rahila?
Rohila looks at his depressed face-

What mistake is that?

: Because I left the forest like other, all in a sudden.

She moves, when the scenery of strange forest life appears before her eyes. It may be right or wrong, nobody will go to forest under ones will. The circumstances or the ideology compels one to select danger and tedious shelter. Why the jobless youths are leading the wild-lives? Why we are unable to bring them back from forest still today?

Rahila is younger than him by three years. She was just admitted in High school when he was actively involved with public meetings, Satyagrahs and Picketings. She didn't understand what were public meetings, Picketing etc. The people in groups went to meetings. Sometimes, she also accompanied her parents to listion meeting. People listened attentively the lectures of the two youths. One was short with dark complexion. The other one was of long with fair complexion. He is Gagen. She used to listen lectures carefully and clapped in time. The short one was a real leader. Gradually, Rahila understood what was that. So, she also joined the movement as volenteer. By that time Gagen was considered as students leader of the locality. One day, a meeting was held in their village, in support of the agitation. It was arranged by Gagen, Rahila and others. The leaders of the state and the distrits were late in attending the meeting. So, the people present in the meeting became impatient. Then, Gagen was given the responsibility to deliver speech. He had to deliver a long lecture. Rahila was impressed on him. Gagen outlined about growth and development of the Bodo Community. He also sang a Bodo folk song-

Foi oi rabo fichafour nouchire fai-aho
So also addressed to the Boro Brother-

Daoha mangnou thandini

Dahal thungri lalanoi kija fardan nanoi

Dosman norkhao houchou dini.

Ada bachiram jouhoulao

Nounge garaya dowe langdou,

Akhra bundao nanoi nonou hochou langdou

Nohor howoi mohor nusmon frale

Hailado huilado foile gaou.

Nangla nanglo nalegon hajou gofeyao

Thoya thaile gon dusmona debaha

Leg on jong Boro foura.

Dagi ada bachiram joholao dagi vnovou,

Joholaoni fica, berani fica nongle ushrir hagon.

Ada dao haram joholao nongbi daoga.

Langdou,

Nongri lamayao keehou haodou.

Oh Bodo brothers, please come to the battle field.

Take the weapons and be couragious

For despatching the enemies

Go ahead riding the horses.

Look at, powerful enemies advancing

If there be war even at cave

Let the opponent die.

Triump is inevident to Bodo.

Brother Haodaram! go ahead, weapons in hand

And riding the elephant

Attack and smash the enemies.

It was an exciting lecture. There were claps from every corner. The people whispered - Our Gagen will be a great leader one day. By this time, the senior leaders arrived in the spot. Gagen addressed them before the public. The meeting begun

formally. The leaders left the stage after delivering their lectures. So also the audiences did. Then, Rahila left her parents and came to the stage to help Gajen for rest of the works to be done.

Really I am impressed listening you lecture. Said Rahila looking at his eyes. Reluctantly responded Gojen - Thank you.

That was the first exchange of words. After that, Rahila met Gojen in streets, meetings and in other programmes of the agitation. She had to take charge of the Assistant Secretaryship because of her dedicated involvement in various activities of the agitation under the guidance of Gojen. As a result of which, she came closer to him. It did not mean physically close. It was closeness of mind. Gradually, he came to the notice of Police as a leader and was arrested frequently. This way, the Administration tried to suppress the movement. So, Gajen and other youths lost faith on the democratic system. The cause of an armed revolution is the oppression of the Government. They had to flee away from the hands of Police. So, Without the knowledge of the village people, Gajen went to the forest. Rahila was unaware of this fact.

It was the day, when the sun was playing behind the Bhaluka bamboo bushes just before setting. Rahila, after cleaning the courtyard, was in cow shed. Her mother was busy in lighting lamps. A nice smelling spreaded the gate way. Upen came at that moment. He gave the news to Rahila secretly. At once, she rushed to the near by Bot tree besides the dead pond. Usually one never goes there out of fear of evil spirits. But all these fears could not prevent her. That Mannai Mara (Danger - man), he was standing under the Bat tree. She could change her air only after meeting him.

Where were you for long time; Why did you not meet me; Are you Ok?

He smiled on the repeated questions of Rahila.

The healthy man looked pale. Long hair disordered. The

dress put on was dirty and turned here and there. She saw it in a faded light.

I have come to bid you farewell.

Rahila wondered, what did he mean by farewell: What will be the meaning of farewell at this period! Earlier, he used to meet her after interval of one or two months. This time also he has come to her after two months. Why then there was a question of farewell?

I have decided to join the organisation. As if somebody has struck her heart by an axe. The man who used to talk of peaceful movement earlier, would join organisation now! That means the path of militants?

None of State or Central Government is sympathetic to our demand. They think, our peaceful agitation has some weak points. Our simple and easy going race is treated as coward's race according to them. They will understand this time as to how much we can be hard and ferocious, for the sake of our motherland. That's why I have come to you for bidding farewell.

She was surprised. She had no words. Her eyes were kept open. She was gazed at him painfully. She asked, can't you avoid this path? Why others can't go? The path chosen by you is not secure. I wonder, my heart goes for you. I will die, certainly. But she could not express it in word. Tears drop down her cheek like a snake. The musical sound of cricket and dove seemed to stop at her loud cry.

Gajen embraced her and tried to console, saying -- you are my courage, hope and aspiration. What will happen to me if you get nervous?

Rahila tried to be calm, but in vain. She wept and wept. She broke the silence of the night.

You keep in touch with my father. You tell my father to think over sister Gita's marriage on finding any eligible person's proposal. I shall try to meet you occasionally in this particular

spot. I shall inform you ahead.

He kissed her and bade farewell. She was looking at him as her eyes go, through darkness. She came to life on Upen's voice and came back to her home, silently.

After that Rahila had to spend number of sleepless nights and anxious moments. She did not tell anyone that Gajen joined extremist group. However, as the days passed on, members of his family and villages came to know the peace loving Gajen has turned to be leader of the extremists.

As directed by Gajen, Rahila used to enquire about welfare of Gajen's father and sister Gita's marriage was over. But Gajen could not attend the marriage ceremony of Gita. The Police and military were patrolling in that area in civil dress. Rahila conveyed all these information and did the job of a middleman in all respect.

Gita supported the relation between Rahila and Gajen. She thus addressed Rahila as (Nabou/Bajou) sister-in-law. Gita requested Rahila to arrange a meeting with her elder brother Gajen, as she wished to see his face before her marriage.

In fact, Rahila also tried her level best for arranging a meeting. On the other hand, Gajen who was in charge of a district level organisation, tried utmost to pay a visit and see his only sister. But, due to tight vigilance of the police and the military that was not possible.

Gita wept loudly when Rahila advised her as to how she would lead the couple life. *Athing gajyob lathai anjil*. Rahila understood that Gita did not weep thinking on that matter. Her sorrow was that she missed to see the face of her elder brother on the very moment of her departure. Rahila also joined her. Taking this chance both of them discharged the accumulated cares and anxieties of mind.

They were advancing by the bank of Kulashi river holding

gun in their hands. They reached the particular place. They took their guns on the shoulder, came in a raw and surrendered before the Deputy Commissioner and the Superintendent of Police one by one. They took their respective seat after offering salute of honour. Slowly, in a low tune, Gajen explained the causes of surrender. But this lecture was not the same powerful and spirited when he used to deliver before the public, while he was leading the movement. Rahila also thought that his lecture should have been elaborated to the points and precious one, as she heard during the time of movement. But on, Gajen, this time looks weak, pale and depressed. The only point of happiness is that, she will get him nearby. Yes, her eyes are wetted by tears.

Now, nobody of the village would be able to take her other wise or could ill-behave. Her father, very often used to receive complains from the villagers and he had to caution her -- You should give up the idea that he would come back leaving wild life and marry you some day. I cannot wait for you for uncertain period of time. You have to think over your younger sister. I cannot think of her marriage ahead of you. Her father used to say like that. Yes, her father is justified. But Rahila would prefer death rather than to marry other. Indirectly she requested her father to arrange marriage of her younger sister many a time. But her father is unmoved. He would not go for the younger without disposing the elder one. She tried through her mother too. But her father is adamant.

Rahila looked at Kadami. Yes, she has also grown up and become similar to her standard. Kadami appeared matriculation examination twice; but failed to pass. That has been the problem with the family. Rahila used to pass her time by going to college at near by town. She is also at a stage, for not crossing the degree examination. Actually, for spending times in various works of the agitation, it hampered in her study. The only youngest brother is still at High school level. Some youths from village or

from college side have already tried to get her mind. However, every one gives up their idea whenever Rahila talks of Gajen. Well, Sadhiram was an exception. In his view point, it is not that he cannot love Rahila, even if some one has already in touch with her. He says everybody has the right to love the Moon or a flower. Will you allow your body to get finished if Gajen dies tomorrow! Rahila raged in anger at this and slapped at Sadhiram. She also threatened Sadhiram that she will tell all these before Gajen.

But how strange is the chap of Sadhiram. He ignored it, even if he was threatened and slapped. In a relaxed state, he said— I have expressed freely and frankly, whatever I felt right and proper. I don't think that I have committed a crime. I would not mind at all, if Gajen fire at me for this.

Sadhiram is an peculiar youth who used to compose poems and short stories. Rahila took him to her house and made acquaintance with Kadami. Then he started visiting kadami's place every now and then. Rahila noticed that, an intimacy has been developed between Kadami and Sadhiam. So, she thought of an wonderful plan. Odini Sayaram Mondarr Bibar. The Modar flower besides the stream. She asked him to come to that place. He went there. There Rahila asked him to flee Kadami away. Initially, Sadhiram did not agree to do it. However, when Rahila requested him that she had planned that in order to stop rumours and ill-feelings of the people. Finally, Sadhiram was convinced and briefed the fact before Kadami. Kadami did not disagree to it, as she knew that her elder sister had already made up her mind. This way, under the initiative of Rahila, Sadhiram and Kadami flew away. Their father was raged in anger and had to cut the banana trees of his farm out of anxiety. Later on he became calm and normal. One day, on getting opportunity, Rahila invited Sadhiram and Kadami to their house. At once they reached home and bowed in front of their father and prayed

for forgiving them. On the advice of a few neighbours, Rahila's father arranged the formal marriage of Kadami and Sadhiram in grand way.

This youth of the nearby village, Sadhiram is an educated chap. He is the only son of his parents. They have the shed filled with cows, store filled with paddy, Pig-stall. A well to do family.

So, Rahila made her father understand that although Kadami had committed a mistake by fleeing away, ultimately she has choosen an able youth of an ideal family. As such, we should not be displeased. Other wise her married life would not be peaceful and happy.

May bakhi nunno

Mouchou gali nunno

Ang khou bilai haba afa gasai

Angkhrou bilai haba afa gasai

Oh dear father Marry me to the one

May be Healthy, wealthy and wise.

Ganesh's family do not have shed for cow or store for paddy. That's why her father rebukes her whenever he gets chance. *Daokha habnay nakhaolay, bila habnay nayaobay.* You have invited troubles, to go your marriage way to a family which has been made untouchable, where crows and kites have entered. If you form relationship with a family, who do not have the capacity to offer a pot of wine or a pig, I will be the last person to support it.

Now Gajen will surrender. He will lead the normal life. The Administration committed that necessary steps will be taken for appointment of all of them. He would get a better job. He would marry Rahila and then her father will not insult Gajen's family with such neglected words. Rather, he would not disapprove their marriage. She wiped her tears through the veil of her *Dakhana* and attended the meeting arranged for surrender

of the militants including Gajen. She met Gajen after the function and glanced at each others eyes.

Rahila, I have not made a mistake -- did I ?
Perhaps he lost believe on himself. That's why he sought opinion from his beloved Rahila, immediately after the surrendering formalities were. Over Weeping Rahila nodded her head and silently expressed -- No, not at all. You are correct. Perhaps she was blind that moment-due to personal love and affection towards Gajen. In that moment, he had the only consolation that the man playing with fire is with her, with no doubt and fear. Now she can handle Gajen as she likes. Well, she can love him. Certainly she can marry him.

See Rahila, now I feel myself as a defeated Soldier. He was really depressed. The following day he sat looking the flying honey bees out of the *Chayaram Modar* tree besides the stream. Brother Bachiram surrendered after defeating Tibetans. But what about Gajen. She compared one with the other. Rahila could not satisfy herself on this act. Everybody in this world wants her beloved to be exceptional and unique. She could not accept Gajen and others surrendering so easily. The surrender is compromise. This is a defeat. So, how she could accept defeat! Average people do not judge what is right or what is wrong. They just lead a normal and easy going life. These people accept the path choosen by the majority of the agitators. This is absolutely a blind support - as the common sheeps follow their group leader at the top.

It is a fact that this national issue was handled by the Government in the State and the Centre for mere political gain of the ruling party. The Government thus succeeded in dividing the leaders of the movement. As a result of which the common Bodo community, sub-leaders and leaders like Gojen were in a state of dilemma. Ultimately they kept aside their genuine demand and surrendered for their narrow gain.

The depression grasped Rahila. The authority who

committed for employment of the surrenders, were about to lose their ground.

*Dagabachyoi, Ayo! Dagabachyoi Dagabachyoi,
Okha girida Boro Khurmani,
Ficha hingowa malayani.*

Oh dearest mother dont cry

This is a process

Big pigs are for neighbour

Or may get the relatives

Grown up girls go for others

Rahila Was delighted to imagine herself a bride on the day of Kadami's marriage. She gave away her sweet dream of happiness, cares and anxieties on the day when Gita was married. Be it happiness or sorrow, cares or anxieties, all these were carried way just like the flowing rivers and brought her various dirty things.

Perhaps, I shall not get you as my wedded wife. Oh, there were heart sending words, who said that, who? Has Gajen said these serious words! Gajen was starring at the water flowing through the stream. He was very depressed. Yes, the undesired words might have uttered by him only. There was none near them to utter such words.

Yes, Rahila, I have said these. I am compelled to say so, Even if you do not belief it. For how long I will witness the hardship of my family. Every time I go to the town in search of a job. I come empty handed. Now, I am fedup. My father will die if I don't admit him in the hospital for immediate treatment. Gajen wept helplessly.

What is the problem with him - asked Rahila.

Oh it is cancer, throat cancer.

Rahila was surprised to hear the word cancer. She made a wonderful sound. The frogs on the bank of the stream jumped and went under water.

Uncle Jiuram Kacheri / Pierree eel

Long eel go away / When they see him.

This Jiuram used to pierce eel in *Polapukhuri* during the conflict of Boro and non Boro. Small boys and girls used to provoked get looking at long moving eel and used to run away. One day when Jiuram was busy in fishing then he saw Maniya and Harendra trying to rape Pratima. Then he hit them by his fishing axe. Harendra some how managed to escape, but Maniya became handicapped for rest of his life. Jiuram said -- You are fighting for seperate state that's ok. But you can't rape one innocent girl.

That healthy, simple but brave Jiuram, the father of Gajen was fighting against a deadly disease. Rahila felt sad. She did not go to Gajen's house for a long time. Now Gajen has come. She felt shy to go there. During Gajen's absence, Rahila used to meet his father and he loved her as his daughter. Whenever she wanted to serve him, he used to interence. She has to cross a tough situation for rendering her service due to this my dear man. But what has happen to him, today.

Uncle Jiuram said once -- Hei, I have not understand what that pig (Gajen) would do by using gun. On the other hand, in the name of building country, our nephew (Maniya) is involved with rape case. And you Rahila! You are waiting for that chap. I don't understand about these things. I am a simple man. So my thinking is like this. There will be no harm if one serves the country as doctor, than to take gun in hand for reformation of the society.

Uncle Jiuram used to tell her valuable words whenever he kept himself busy with thatch works. His advice were very simple but carried heavy meaning. He had high hope on Gajen. Rahila still remembers one incident. Gajen passed the matriculation Examination that day. Patiram gave this good news to Jiuram who was busy in fishing (eel) at *Barpukhuri*. Jiuram reacted by

asking Patiram - Has the pig passed to be eligible to study medical science?

Patiram anxiously replied -- Yes Adou.

Jiuram was excited at this good news. He stopped fishing. He distributed the fishes whoever he met on the way home. He was delighted and said loudly - Oh! my village people, listen. Gajen has passed the matric examination with flying colours. I will make him a doctor. I commit to you. Surely, he will be a doctor one day.

Jiuram arranged a party with pork and wine to the well wishers. How Joyous was that moment!

On the contrary, Gajen was entangled with the activities of the agitation instead of study. This ignorant man had a doubt and so he ask him -- Hey, when are you going to become a doctor!

One day, Jiuram realised that his son could never become a doctor, because he had stopped studying due to heavy duty of agitation entrusted on him. He never had certainty in routine eating and sleeping.

Gajen continued to lead his wild life. Then Jiuram expressed his dissatisfaction before Rahila -- This pig has become a real pig. He could not fulfil my desire. How will he satisfy you my dear daughter, Rahila!

Rahila sat under the *Chayaram Modar* tree near the stream and remembered the sayings of his father, Jiuram. She wept and wept. Helpless Gajen could not console her.

What will happen! Keeping his father's desire aside Gajen, the brilliant student sacrificed his study for the sake of their race. However, political conspiracy had smashed his dream. It has become a big zero after discharging immense hard works. The united society broke into different branches of ideology and attitude. The revolutionary power divided into small groups. The cyclone of the internal conflicts, doubts and lack of belief have affected worsely.

Gajen gave up all these evil motives. Today, he is a defeated soldier, as he does not have wealth for survival of his dilapidated family. Alas, his father, Jiuram had the aspiration to make him a doctor to serve the down-trodden society. The pure dream of the innocent man is left to fight with luck and serious illness. As if he ultimately prepared to count his last day, for want of proper treatment for his ailing father.

So many questions appeared before them. But there was no solution. Both of them were undecided. Where is the future? Gajen thought – should. I go to forest again! He looked at Rahila. She was stunned. He then questioned himself – will they accept me as before.



The bus has crossed Rahila. However, there was no sign of *Mannai mara*. She kept the pot under the *Modar* tree and awaited for a while. Sundari came from the opposite direction. Did the bus come from town! Rahila asked Sunandi.

No, answered Sunandi

O.K. Rahila felt a bit relieved.

That one was military truck. They dropped some one and picked up the militaries. Well, I could guess your anxiousness, sister Rahila.

Sunandi is younger to Rahila. She belongs to her colony. This year, she appeared the matriculation examination. She is studious. Rahila asked Sunandi – Do you know, why?

Yes, you are waiting for Gajen brother-in-law.

Is not it, elder sister!

Rahila showed a sign of anger

You, wicked–

Sunandi left the place quickly.

The stream is flowing by the western side of the large

pond—Barpukhuri. The Primary school is situated on the eastern side. It is the road crossing after some yards. That is the bus stop. All the up and down buses stop there. All the women and girls, who used to collect water from the pond, used to have a look and laugh at Rahila, who used to wait for Gajen under the *Modar* tree. Some of them even used to irritate her. Elderly woman used to suggest her – Why do you are sitting idle? Arrange your marriage. We shall have a party with meat and fish. These type of comments come even in front of Gajen also. Gajen had nothing to say on such remarks. He simply looks at the sky helplessly. He feels himself lonely and more depressed. He forgets that Rahila was sitting near him. That poor chap! He started looking delighted immediately after his surrender. Besides family affairs, he used to do public works such as repair of roads and houses etc.

Rahila observed that, Gajen used to be involved in *Baisagu* (spring festival) whole heartedly. On the day of cow festival (*Garu Bihu*), he collected ashes of cooking pot and mixed it with Mustard oil. He painted the castor tree with it and stamped on the body of cows. He then put mustered oil and *Sindur* on feet of cows. He took the cows to the river and bathed them. He made the garland with the pieces of brinjal and gourd and hung them in the neck of the cows. He beat the cows with the branches of *deglati* tree saying—

Lao ja tatho ja

Bachor Bochor a haja haja

Bimani bither, fikani bither

Nongchoutyou jagon hatua gidir

Hello cow! have brinjal and gourd

Grow up yearly

And number be increased

Let you be able oxes

Further he said singing
Dighiliti mouchoudani muli
Dudali jagoun gai khukhili.
Dighiliti Laothc Kprikpri ganthi
Jyungni Mouchoa jagon balad fathi
Janai Nongya gaire hefra
Matha jagon falouni beha.
 Dighlati is medicine
 For you dear row
 Ah you be more milky
 Dighlotis have more join
 You ox, be healthy and stout
 For tighting like hero.

He performed all the traditional rituals sincerely. He tied cows with new rope made by his father. He also offer them rice kept for this purpose. On the next day, it was the *Bihu* festival. The day is to welcome the new year. Gajen cleaned their Kitchen, living house and the portico. Rahila asked, whether she should come to help him. He replied — Let me do alone on this *Bihu* day. After completing his works, he took bath and worshipped *Bathou* God. They ate fried *Khunkhu*, a bitter vegetable with chicken and baded farewell to the previous year. They also enjoyed the day with rise, mutton, wine etc. according to their custom.

There Rahila came with a *Gamocha* — a towel in her hand. She bowed before Jiuram and offered the self made *Garmocha* to him. Ah, the healthy man has become pale and weak. He wished Rahila. His eys were filled with tears. Both Rahila and Gajen felt for his pain.

At the time of offering *Gamocha* Gajen questioned Rahila. Have you made it? She nodded her head and said—Is there any doubt?

Gajen reluctantly said — I fear. If I get the *hangma hachani* torned and get a handkerchief of your last desire.

What? Rahila had a strange book at him. Did these words come out from your month on the very festive day of *Bihu*? Gajen had a deaf ear.

Rahila cried loudly and left the place. *Odini Chayaram Monder bibar*. She reached the spot below the *Chayaram Modar* tree near the stream. She cried as she could, covering her face by the *dakhana*. Gajen ran fast and stood besides her.

I just joked Rahila, be calm. He tried to console her. She questioned weeping — You know what type of inauspicious words were those? That too on the day of *Bihu*!

I know Rahila. One will offer the handkerchief of last desire when divorce is inevitable.

She attacted him — Why then....

What is that! Once I spent my valuable days for agitation and leading wild life. The long attachment and understanding between each other has begin now only. The question of divorce will not arise before my death — O.K. !

Rahila placed her right hand on his mouth and complained — Still you are uttering inauspicious words!

Oh sorry, I promise, I shall never utter such words in future. Are you happy now!

She embrressed him saying— You are really a wicked and strange fellow.

Ah, what a heavenly union. There is no sin at all. Gajen kissed and kissed at the beautiful chock of Rahila.

Next day, people from all walk of life got united and performed *Bihu* dance and song by bitting drum, flute and other folk instruments.

Baisagu aiyei e-Baisagu

Baisagu Baisagu

Bouthour gou dana foilaibai

Baisaga uihei e-baisagu.
 Bouthour goudani bar mounanoi,
 Dovicha dolikhuwa Boung fang Laifangna
 Daoma daoachaya
 Banja khanthe honai
 Faidou denoi faidou boirou
 Bourai buroui chengra chikhula,
 Gotho gothe rongja dini
 Baisagu aiyoi e-baisagu
 Baisagu aiyoi e-baisagu
 By by, year be gone

And well come you the new year

Be gone the dry wind, the dust

New wind of sweet spring

The rivers and trees

The animals and birds

Oh how cheerful

Aud dancing singing

Marry making everywhere

Oh welcome elders, youths and tender aged. Be happy
 and joyous in the spring festival.

The western end of the sky has been covered with dark
 clouds. So also the spring wind - *Bardoichilla* started her action.
 The nature seen lovely by the sweet touch of the spring. Kapahi
 of the same village avoiled the chance. She sang indicating Rahila

Hajarakhi choulihai lougou

Jat hinjao fra lai milhikha bai.

Dokchi khouchi hadourchi hudourbi hai lougou

Jingachinai Khelai grab gardou.

Roungjade mouchoude dounoule

Dear friend, could I know

That you have sorrow and cares

Forget your all depression

Be by gone forever.

Also ill - thoughts in heart

Let you be free

Oh, the happy day of new year

welcome the frolic of joy

Sing and dance of spring

We are her for you

Let share love and joy.

At that time Rahila avoided Gajen. Otherwise her wicked
 friends would attack them and sing naughty songs.

As if Rahila dreamt a dream. She came to life on hearing
 the blow of the horn. The bus has just reached coming from
 town. She was dreaming of Gajen for long time under the *Mcjar*
 flower tree. She even forgot that she was waiting for the bus.

Rahila took out the handkerchief from her waist. Gajen
 made her weep on the first day of *Bihu*. Well, today she will
 make him to weep-

Hangma khabai, Hangma khabai ada?

Jamfai odini Chayaram Mondar Bibar

Ada. Chayaram Monder bibar!

Thirsty, I am really

Oh flower of Chayaram Mondar

I am thirsty and thirsty.

She will forward this handkerchief to Gajen singing a song.
 She made up her mind so. Surely, Gajen would be surprised.
 Then she will say, that her father will not let her to go a family
 where even crow and kite never inter. Then she will act to
 weep.

What will happen to him then! His eyes will full up with
 tears. Then she, without his knowledge will offer a kiss to surprise
 him.

The dusts left by the moving bus will go up and kiss the

betel and bamboo leaves.

Rahila saw that some people have dropped from the coming buses and left away crossing her. However, that chap *Mannai mara* has not yet turned up.

It has become a tragedy for Rahila.

The shining sun of the day has become pale and yellow dusk in the western sky. The darkness has appeared above the trees and plants. It means, she waited there for long time for Gajen. Perhaps, he would not come back from town. Now she will have to face ill-treatment of her parents. What type of man is he. *May he has come.* May be he is talking with his friends unnecessarily. *He might have forgot* that some one is anxiously waiting for him. Strange.

Rahila took the pot of water and was about to move. Then she saw that somebody is approaching towards her. Yes, he is the *Mannai mara*. Rahila became delighted. At once she made a rehearsal - like how she will handover the handkerchief and act like weeping!

But the man wearing white shirt and blue pant does never walk like a cat. His steps are like that of an elephant. An elephant never loses his majestic steps on mere barking of the dogs. So also the foot steps, characteristics and majestic nature of Gajen seeing which Kapahi and other girls used to joke with Rahila like this.

You Rahila, you have got your man like an elephant.

It means like the legs and body of an elephant ! Rahila also joined in the same manner.

No sister, he has majestic nature like an elephant. This time all of them smiled. Yes, Rahila was really pleased at their compliments. Actually, Gajen is like the national hero Basiram.

Well, that was only a drama. Thinking on the scene, Rahila laughed at. However, she kept her handkerchief carefully.

The man is gradually approaching. Rahila hold up her

handkerchief. Gajen slowed down his foot steps noticing at Rahila's attitude.

Hur hur hur.... hur....

Suddenly, they heard a sound of the Motor Bike coming towards them. It slowed near them. Both of them were surprised at. As if the heavy thunder shower passed through them.

The youth sitting at back of the rider of the Motor Bike locked his stand-gun and then they went away speedily.

Rahila could not understand as to what had happened. The smoke of the Motor-Bike and dust were there. However, after minute observation she saw that Gajen has fell down and moving restlessly. Rahila made a terrible shout and fell down on Gajen. But alas, it was bloodshed everywhere. Blood was flowing out from Gajen's body. All these were not the *Modar* flower. Blood and only blood. Blood that was coming out from heart of Gajen.

Rahila, with great trouble Gajen said - They have taken revenge on me. They treated me as traitor. They have given me punishment. I deserved that. Ah, you wanted to offer that handkerchief no! Please give that one to me. This is the proper time.

Rahila started cry horriably. With heart touching cry, she said-- No, my beloved, Actually, I brought it to joke with you. It is so tragic. You cant go keeping me alone.

Gajen, with great trouble, hold her with his right hand full of blood and told in a low trembling voice-- You torn your *hangma hachani* and sing the very song--

Rahila was not prepared. She was crying loudly. Still than, she couldn't deprieve the last desire of bullet shot Gajen. She sang in the weeping state.

Degray baisaguyao hangma hangchani
Fali gangchekhounou langfoi shradou
Ada. Bei jounoumao mouna wabou

Boui jounoumao mounmoui thoung chai
Ada, jamfai odini chayaram mondar bibar,
Ada, chayaram mondar bibar
 The handkerchief of last desire
 On the day of spring festival (Bohag Bihu)
 Oh dearest one
 Have this handkerchief
 The token of love of the beloved
 If not in the present
 Sure to have in life to come
 Oh the begrief state.
 Let us have last meet
 under the Chayaram Modar flower
 Beside the stream.

With broken heart, Rahila looked at sleeping Gajen. He
 is sleeping on the bed of raw blood. His right hand snatched the
 handkerchief on his heart. She touched his hand. It has become
 cold. Ah, Gajen slept forever

Jampoui odini chayaram mondar flower
 Now, there is no flower blossoming
 Only shedded flowers are scattered
 On the earth. □

WALKING STICK

Jetukibai stood still. Once again, she looked up to
 Jayanta with fear.

The walking stick looked as black as the sugarcane from
 Tezpur. Jetukibai gave a pale look at the stick. This
 unexpected and indispensable stick made Jetukibai's body
 and soul to tremble.

Baby stand up - baby stand up

Our Rinku get up - please get up

Jetukibai gave a look to the gateway underneath the
 huge Mesua ferrea (nahar) tree. Babita was teaching Rinku
 how to stand. They were accompanied by one or two from
 the neighbourhood. On the west side of the house, the sun
 was giving a colourful presentation which was slightly
 covered by leaves of betel-nut tree. Grand daughter, Rinku
 had been trying her level best to stand on her legs. Her elder
 sister was encouraging her to stand by showing an orange in
 front of her. There was a Minus opselengi tree a little away
 beneath which small kids were playing, singing and having
 their own time.

Ring a ring a roses

Pocket full of florence

A high so a high so

we all fall down.

No body in this world must have realised how one
 learnt to stand on his own feet. She remembered only her

playful times when she played hand games with tuber of arum (*Kachuguti*) or pebbles under the shade of Indian fig (*Botgas*) situated on the southern side of the *Bar-Namghar*. The parrot's playing hide and seek with the cover of bushy branches of *Kordai* tree. The *Raja -Dal* play happening along with collecting *Minus opselengi* fruit from its trees. These were something which Jetukibai could not forget even then.

Aeito kar Dol ? Rajar Dol. Somabaloi diye ne nidiye?
Nidiye bhangiboloi? Nidiye. Koli aus aus, Bogi
aus aus, hekes!

That morning every one was excited to collect the *Minus opselengi*. Along with her was Ghatbar from Barua Colony. He was two years older to her. Such a weird boy he was. He would always mess with her while collecting flowers. Why did you picked up those flowers? I thought, I would do

One day for what reasons may be, Jetukibai's lower abdomen started paining. The lower region had a tickling sensation. She straight away returned to her house and informed it to her mom. Her mom took her to the main house, checked her lower abdomen carefully and ordered her a tough decision not to step outside. She was matured (Attained Puberty). These days she was not allowed to see land and male persons, not even her father. She had to live on fruits and after the tough rituals were over a ceremony for Toloni marriage was done, accepting a Banana tree as her husband. A week later, when she went to the Bar pukhuri (huge pond) to fetch water, she saw Ghakbar and seeing him, she stood still keeping mouth wide open.

Why are you looking like a fool Grandma? You have to take your walking stick today!

Within moments Jetukibai went back to her memories of autumn where she spent her childhood with Ghatbar,

beneath the *Sewali* tree.

Jetukibai once again looked at Jayanta's face. His face and eyes do not persist the childlike innocence. He had natural roughness. She spat her spittoon and wiped her red lips with the lace of her *chadar*. She tugged her waist's *gamocha* tightly and glanced at Jayanta's face making a sign. This eighty years aged Jetukibai will have to walk across her neighbourhood only with the help of her walking stick! From her childhood onwards she never thought that ever in her life, she would take the help of a walking stick. What a scene would be created when she walk with walking stick? Everyone in the village would stop to stare her. Maniki, Kanchan and Panchami would laugh at her. For these days she was in her house. That day she had to go out for a walk. Else, she would not be able to attend the meeting to be held in Maniki's courtyard.

Probably, my head was itching for the louse.

I will have to say to Kanchan or Panchami to search louse in head. Both of them are expert in it. After that if I can, I will visit Malati's place. And yes! After that if I can, I have to visit Numali's place to fetch three reels for winding threads.

It seems somebody on day before yesterday knocked Kanchan's door in the midnight. Who could do such a surprise? Someone may have a habit of knocking door every day. Kanchan lived alone as she lost her husband untimely. The day before yesterday her nephew was there in her house. For few days since Jetukibai had been disliking behaviours of Kanchan. Whenever she would get a chance, she would repeatedly ask her questions - if she joined the agitation for India's independence, inspite of her husband being a traitor? Why should Baikuntha go for a fight with the military? It seems Panbari's brother committed suicide because of you?

These questions made least impact on Jetukibai as she used to listen from one ear and let go the other. What's the use of answering to such unreasonable questions? Every day who spend all their time in household maintenance, would gather by this time. With one's own excitement all would share each one's every little happenings. There used to speak our irrelevant topics. Why should she answer to such unnecessary queries of Kanchan?

What happen Grandma? you didn't reply? Even though she didn't want to see the walking stick that Jayanta was holding, she made a glance on it and thought for a while. As if she refused to take it. He might not have allowed her to go for the evening walk. If he didn't find a way to stop her, than ~~he would have simply closed the gate.~~ Jetukibai once again looked at the three-feet tall stick which was smooth, bended at one edge and made dark in colour, as it was warmed over stove; which was looked like the sugarcane from Tezpur. Jetukibai remembered the day when that stick came to their house. It was about four 'O clock in the evening. She was dusting paddy and few ladies from the neighborhood were cutting betel - nut in the veranda, when Jayanta entered with that three feet tall stick.

What is that grandson? Why did you bring that? Jetukibai asked.

Ah! You don't even know why I got that? Won't grandma need it when she would be very old to stand straight? Jayanta answered as a wise man which made grandma smile. But her smile didn't last for long. These words actually made her aware of the awaiting future which scared her.

For after nine months later, Jetukibai was seriously ill, (Tejgrahini). The defect which she got during her early age probably resulted that. Her son Anil hired a car and brought her hospital. There she was kept under observation by a reputed

doctor. Though she regained back her life, her health was not the same. According to Jetukibari, due to consumption of adulterated items available then, caused her that damage. twenty years later, Ghatbar went to fetch water from Bar-Pukhuri here he slipped and hurt himself very badly. He felt unconscious in pain and Babita thought it was a consequence of the water God's (Jal Devata) anger. So, to satisfy water God, she lit an earthen lamp and offered Kachanda flower. Though Ghatbar became fit due to the massage provided by daughter-in-law and Babita, Jetukibai considered it to be a favors of the water God.

Truly, man's health is momentary. The person who used to roam about following her, should he commit suicide just because she could not marry him?

It would be better that if he would have died in commotion created in the Gahpur Police station when they went to unfold the national flag. But he didn't. He fled away from the spot as soon as he heard bullet fired. If he had a shot there, he would have been popular as Kanaka. What was her age then to understand the need of an independent nation with no differences among caste, creed, religion etc., for sacrificing her life her that? Kanaka was one and half years elder to him. A few days later when Ghatbar was stunned by the matured look of Jetukibai in Mekela-chadar. There was chaos created. According to Fakir Gandhi Maharajs order, there was groups of turmoil's created from small region like Bengal to throw Englishmen out of our nation. Everyone including to whom she was newly wed Padeshwar, Ghatbar and even people over the age of sixty joined the agitation. Sumana Mangalti who used spend all her time checking one or other's goodness also joined it. Everyone came out to the Rajpath. Before reaching Gahpur, the long race of people stopped like a train stopping in a junction. Jetuki was amidst everyone. All of a sudden they heard a blasting sound which was similar to the sound created by bursting of Meji ghar in Bhogali Bihu. Everyone tried to flee away from the

spot. A stampede was created where Jetukibai also fell down and became a victim of it. Padeshwar knowing it carried her away.

Jetuki was shocked on that day, when her family and society disapproved the marriage proposal of Ghatbar, just on the ground that Jetukibai being Brahmin and Ghatbar an Ahom. So, she wept in disgrace in front of Ghatbar, questioning whether the nation deserved their sacrifices for the people, giving so much importance to communalism, caste, creed, religion etc. She then exclaimed in agonies that why didn't she die the same way Kanaka died. Ghatbar was constantly looking at red Krishna chura flower blooming near the Bar pukhuri. That night itself the weird fellow committed suicide by hanging on the Jack fruit tree.

What happen grandma? Has something gone inside your eyes? You are seen to wipe. What will Jayanta understand about the pain that Jetukibai was undergoing? Her wiping eyes filled with tears, Jetukibai reluctantly said - I can go without the help of this walking stick.

The way a strict teacher would react to a student who pretend to be ill just to get rid of the punishment, he would get on not being able to solve maths problem, the same way Jayanta reacted to his grandman saying no no! This is not possible. This is papa's order, today you have to take the walking stick. We can't see you bear the pain.

This boy likes his grand father, like Baikuntha very stubborn. He got the walking stick, looked if it was ok, and handed it to Jetukibai. Jayanta, who studies in High school was her eldest grandson. Babita was his sister and Rinku was the youngest one.

So many unexpected changes happened in front of her eyes, which was even beyond her dream. To get married, attain motherhood, enjoy the companions of her grand children was like a dream to her. The course of her life changed in the same

was as there was change in the nation. After Ghatbar had committed suicide, Jetuki had decided not to marry. But she could not stay by hurting her parent's emotion and so, after about more than twenty years of age she married with Padeshwar. Even Padeshwar did not marry for long time after his first wife died of diarrhoea. One day all of a sudden, he adamantly confessed to Jetuki that, if she marries him then he once again would to in favour of family way. Looking at her bed-ridden mother, she accepted the proposal. After that Anil and Baikuntha was born to her. Both of them grew in front of her eyes.

After passing his college, Anil joined as a clerk in the electricity department. Within two-three years he completely changed the entire scenario of their house. With a simple job of a clerk, could he manage to get a Motor-bike. Making the house concrete, getting tinned roof and colouring the walls, the house seemed to be eye catching. One day he married a girl from Bihpuria. After that Jayanta was born who was followed by Babita and Rinku. But Jetuki noticed that Baikuntha was not satisfied by the developments happened at their house. At times he used to have quarrel with Anil. But Chandika, Anil's wife used to really love, pay respect and took care after Baikuntha. That was the only reason for Jetuki being happy. Atleast after her death, she would take care of Baikuntha. But that blind faith didn't kill me ahead! One day along with a group of young boys, Baikuntha came to Jetuki. They wanted her company for picketing but, Jetuki straight away rejected. Boys, leave me on this account as I have turned old. I do not have the same strength as earlier I used to have. Baikuntha then confused her by saying- did you not Join the march along with Kanaklata. And now you say such a thing? Jetuki was in a trap. She almost forgot that she was the girl of the movement of 1942. She still had the blood of courage. Jetuki accepted to go. She was accompanied many other ladies selected by Baikuntha and his teammates to the square. There were police officials standing in

front of the office in the square. No officials allowed them to enter the office. Obviously, the police of independent India should have behaved well towards the women. But it was absolutely different. Suddenly, the police started charging lathi on the women. Even Jetuki received few handings. After getting discharge from the hospital she went home and was bed ridden for many days due to pain.

From that incident, Baikuntha stopped speaking to anyone. Anil scolded and insulted him stating that he was responsible for every thing happened. But he did not say a single word in his defence. He did not go out for the boycott movement for anti-Indian elements. All of a sudden, he disappeared from the house. Jetukibai created chaos on realising the absence of Baikuntha. Through Anil, Jetukibai published messages on *Akashuani* and newspaper.

This way, many months have passed but there was no news about Baikuntha. One day one unknown person conveyed them that Baikuntha went to the jungle. Jetuki was astounded on it. She shouted slogans saying *Vande Mataram* and *Bharat Mata Ki Jai* for her son who left her and for spending life in the Jungle?

Why Jetuki did not know that her heart was pinched when she saw Jayanta took the walking stick. He had some unknown similarity with Baikuntha. Baikuntha had eyes similar to his father. He was actively involved with Kanaka in the non co-operation movement and after India's independence. What may be the reason that changed Padeshwar weirdly. Every time, be it when he eats or sleeps, sits or stands he had the same words-our independence seems to be fake. Oh! Anil's mother. Bistuda said it correctly, our independence is fake. We could throw the white Bangles but could not throw its tradition. We didn't receive real independence. One fine day the police without any reason, came and arrested him. Jetuki then went with Anil to Gahpur Police station, square, Tezpur, Guwahati just to find

out the actual matter. But no officials were ready to answer anything. Everyone would point out to their respective high officials. Lastly, by requesting one congress leader, for about three months later, she got her man in pathetic condition. He was almost made handicapped by the torture made by the police. Jetuki came to hear from here and there, that the West Bengal Government were harrasing the Naxalites. So also the Assam Government believed that Padeshwar had some genuine contact with the Naxalites. He was bed ridden from then onwards. One day he vomitted with blood and died. Due to death of Baikuntha's father and the incident in which Jetuki was hit by the police, Baikuntha might have fled to the jungle.

What are you thinking grandma? Why don't you hold it? Are you feeling shy?

Jayanta holding the walking stick asked Jetukibai. Why should I feel shy?

Reluctantly she held the stick. She felt for it as she was holding same burning charcoal. Few days back, when Jetuki went to Minaram's marriage, she slepped on the floor as it was slippery due to rain. Anil was almost fed up consulting doctors and various practitioners. Lastly he declared that Jetuki had turned old and she should not try to do things which her age donot permits. If she wants to go somewhere then she should take the company of the walking stick prepared by Jayanta. But two days ago another incident happened. Jetuki wanted to go to Janaki's place. She walked carefully as the road was slippery due to rain. Then she realised that she could no longer persist the earlier strength. She could not give stress on her waist. So she held one banana plant. Yet, she slipped from that and fell. She shouted for help and Maniya from their neighbourhood came out from Tilak's house and he carried her to her house. In house, Babita and her daughter-in-law Chandika massaged her. Jayanta repeatedly

reminded her to fetch the walking stick wherever she goes out. Today, Jetuki bai was able to walk from her bed and also could do some small works. Then only Panchami came. She then made Jetukibai's mind and soul feel warm by saying that the meeting in Maniki's place was not interesting as Jetukibai was absent. Kanchan told a lot about her. Traitor Baikuntha wanted to become the Lachit Barphukan by fighting with the militants etc. Jetuki was waiting behind the betel - nut trees in the west. But when that moment arrived, that fellow came in front of her holding the walking stick. Jayanta held the walking stick in front of Jetuki's eyes as

though he was the security guard of Jetuki.

Jetukibai looked at Jayanta's face.
Looking at Jayanta's face her heart pounded faster. About year back, Jetukibai came to know from here and there that Baikuntha was in Gohpur Police station. So Jetukibai went to the Police station. But on reaching station she found that Baikuntha was dead and his body was kept on the floor of the Police station. There was blood shed every where in his body.

Jetuki started crying embracing the body as oh! My son! Police, why did you kill him? Nobody stepped forward to answer her. The villages had to be almost force to carry her away from the scenario. Few days later, she came to know that Baikuntha was sleeping in a house and in the midnight, some militants came and ordered him to run away. When he started running, the militants shot at him as cats and dogs from the back. Jetukibai didn't cry even on her husband's death, as she cried on her son's death. The torture that Jetukibai along with other received was just for the sake of getting independence. After getting it, why youth like Baikuntha had to crave for a nation within nation. Thinking so and finding no answer to it, she cried her heart out. If

Kanaka would have remained alive then she would have also face the same problem, to be killed by the police of independent nation. That earlier one was absolutely different. It was pathetic. More pathetic than the death of dependent period.

Wiping the eyes swollen with tears, Jetuki headed few steps holding the stick. Slowly and gradually she felt that she was losing all her strength. She almost leaned to fall. Her legs did not allow to move further. Her entire body lost its strength after a while.

Jetuki slowly stopped at the edge of the route. She stood straight and tried to look forward. Her body was weak. Still she would go to Maniki's place. Today, she would not request Kanchan and Panchami to check for head louse, but she would answer each and every query that Kanchan repeatedly asks. She would firmly answer to questions like- why did she led Ghatbar to commit suicide? Why she married Padeshwar? Why did Padeshwar became a traitor? Why did Baikuntha fled away to the jungle? How militants murdered Baikuntha brutally.

Jetuki stressed her entire body weight on the walking stick and walked few steps further. Now, she felt a bit cased. If today Kanchan, Maniki and Panchami insult her for taking help of the walking stick, then I will straight away answer that after reaching seventy's mark, I took it's help. But I have seen people using it on thirty also. For how long will you survive by being mourned? Say something if your want to! She glanced at the midway. No, Jayanta was no longer behind her. She then carefully fitted her dress and headed ahead by wiping the tear which rolled down her cheeks unknowingly. □

AN AZAMIL'S DEATH

Spare the rod, spoil the child. For few days now, Bibek used to sit in a chair nearby Nalinikanta Hazarika when he used to feel lonely. His fake smile was beyond toleration. Yet, he used to ignore it and asked How are you Hazarika? *Are you Ok?* That seemed not to be a question but a powerful arrow! Powerful arrow! You know that I am not in a good condition. If you come to show sympathy over me then why do you ask such question? Few days ago or three months ahead, this Bibek didn't have the courage to question me. But after my retirement he sticks to me as stray dog. Hazarika being lonely used to discuss with him over few topic and probably because of that he is taking advantage over him. As a result of which he is like a dog.....!

Hazarika straight away started at Bibek on hearing his question. He was glancing at the strings of hill in the north from his sitting position of hill in the north from his sitting position. Every evening he used to sit in the terrace looking up to the sky, which looked like a blue umbrella. That place was surrounded by hills and trees. From the terrace the people on the road looked like tiny tots. The sun sets here faster than other region. It is quite warm in the month of September. Young kids and aged people used to come to the bylane in front of our gateway. One day Pratima and Gautam also came out.

That time was appropriate for exchanging words with the neighbourhood. Very often Ratna also comes out crossing

her gateway if no guest visit our house. Today Pratima and Gautam did not come. Even Ratna was not there. Ratna lied her ailing body on the bed with expectance of somebody's arrival. Else she would have come to an end. What illness did Ratna actually suffer from? Bibek came when he was questioning the question to himself. Bibek with his as usual question asked her - How are you? And then he asked a weird question- Aren't you feeling like shifted from ocean to land?

Nalinikanta Hazarika thought over as how to answer. Did Bibek compared his days of work with ocean? What did he mean by saying shifted to land? He was a down-to-earth person? Absolutely connected to his village. Even though he shifted to the city, he still stuck to his basics and never forgot his days in village - his playful time, with mud and dust, to plough in muddy land, to hoe ground, to graze cows. I hope Bibek did not pinpoint the change in his lifestyle. His father was the Headmaster of the local school. After passing Matric, P.U. and Degree examinations with flying colour, he firstly joined his father's school. then he passed his B.T. examination. Then he passed his M.A. After passing his M.A. exam. he was promoted and transferred to the Government Higher Secondary School. He joined there as a subject teacher. But after working for ten long years he became an officer in Education Directorate. From then onwards he did not look back. By impressing the administration, he became the Education Director, superseding many of his senior officer.

Then he bought a plot of land worth three lakh rupees in the Kharghuli region in Guwahati which was surrounded by chain of hills. It was about one and half katha land. Within a year he constructed a magnificent two storied mansion on that plot. In spite of having an ambassador he bought a Maruti Van. Sooner he got another plot of one bigha in Kahilipara on which he again constructed a house and gave it on rent.

For all these things Ratna used to encourage him. He spent half of his life for his two children Pratima and Gautam. His only brother Hareshwar politely explained him not to sell his farm land as it would be similar to sell his tummy. He promised to handover the harvest as per terms and conditions. He didn't had faith over his brother. Nalinikanta was about to sell the farmland as Ratna pressurised him by saying that Hareshwar wanted to conspirantly take the plot under him. Hareshwar cordially requested him not to sell it and so he kept it on lease. That day Hareshwar held his hand and said something? What did he actually say?

You being my elder brother, I intend to make one last request. I will never make a second one in my entire life. You promised that you would keep me with you and educate me. You didnot keep your words. Yet I have no grudge over you, because in that huge mansion you had scarcity of space for me. Actually from the day you started running after wealth restlessly, you lost all your affection towards me. I will somehow manage, but don't kill dad, brother? Don't sell the farmland. If you want put it on lease. Because only money matters for you and you will get it by that also. Please keep my last request!

With eyes filled with tear he looked at Bibek. He almost forgot that even Bibek was present there when Nalinikanta was about to go to sell his farmland. That day when Nalinikanta went with the motive to sell his village farm land stating the fake reason, that he wanted money to build a house in the city, his heart felt that he was going to murder the innoscent "Noni", the young kid who grew playing with muddy water there and also the most loved young High school's teacher. He felt so because he knew that once he would sell that piece of farm land he would never be able to return to that village. He suffered from an inexplicable pain. Bibek repeatedly reminded him to review the matter. But

looking at the cunning face of Ratna, Nalinikanta silently did everything. He didn't react as he didn't have courage in front of Ratna.

How is Ratna?

Nalinikanta bowed his head down at Bibek's question. The cunning lady on whose words Nalinikanta did all the fake action, was leading a ruthless life and would any moment surrender herself to her end. She made an unsuccessful attempt to get hold of the sky - like the betel nut tree. What he may think so? I hope this ruthless Bibek is unaware of my thoughts. Nalinikanta starred at Bibek. He too was looking at him in expectance of his most waited answer.

How can Ratna be? You know everything. She was broken thinking about Pratima and Gautam. Nalinikanta then remained silent looking at the nearby betel nut tree. A sparrow was building its nest in one of those trees. After Pratima and Gautam left their house, he turned lonely and sad. Probably, he would not be as sad and lonely as he was then, if condition of Ratna would have been better. She would have lead Nalinikanta in his corrupted works like an experienced bull does with its farm. His retirement brought him loads of misfortune. He used to spend his earlier day as, in the morning he used to wake up and have his morning tea with his newspaper, then the gets refreshed by washing his face. After that he looks after his *Basti*, then he would visit his garden where he would watch the different flowers blooming. Water them and pluck the weeds out of the tree. Then he would bath and dress himself. By that time Ratna along with Phuleshwar and Ratneswari would arrange the dinning table and Nalinikanta would have his food. Then get off to his office for his regular job. As soon as he sits on his chair in his office, his regular duty starts. To attend the visitors, check files and pass, to give dictation, to visit the capital whenever Minister calls for him were among the works of daily routines.

After that Nalinikanta doesn't even realise when the day turns evening and when the clock strikes five O'clock. When few of his officials wishes him good bye then only he comes to know that it was time to go home. Then he hurriedly gets into his car fetching some important files and other documents. Ratna waits for him. He then changes his clothes, gets refreshed and then his tiredness overpowers him. He watches T.V. for sometime viewing news or other entertaining shows and then he would get back to his table in his room and looks into the files he gets from his office. After repeated warning from Ratna he used to come to the dinning table to have his dinner. He then brushes his teeth and goes to bed. Sometimes, some visitors used to wait in front of his iron gate early in the morning. If he wishes, he used to call them inside, else he would send Phuleshwar to them to convey that they should meet him in the office as he was busy doing something. Most of the visitors come in search of jobs. Some even come with bundles of notes. So, even if he feels like ignoring the visitors coming in the morning, he becomes bound to visit them. Nalinikanta initially thought to get retirement to throw away huge load from his head. But sitting in his home, he realised that he recalled his misfortune. When a person is busy then his life is peaceful. How many daily, weekly journals can a man study? How much will he look after his garden or his *basti*. What happened to him now? The left eye which used to slightly pain in his working days, has now started to pain severely. On consulting an eye specialist, he referred the case to consult the specialist in the All India Institute of Medical Science, Delhi or Shankar Netralaya, Madras, if possible. Probably, it was something severe. Diabetes and Pressure related problems also leaded him to become bed-ridden. There was no body with whom he could share his ailments. If Pratima and Gautam would ...!

Doesn't Savita's incident disturb you when you remember Pratima?

Listening to the insulting words of Bibek. Nalinikanta was greatly annoyed. What was the reason behind bringing the topic of Savita while speaking about Pratima.

What is your motive?

Reason is clear. One day daddy told you that if you lie in mud, then the dirt in the mud will make your entire family dirty. Are you not responsible for Pratima's suicidal act? What is the difference between Pratima and Savita? At the question of Bivek, Nalinikanta looked up to the sky. Some cranes were flying in the clear blue sky. Were they going to their nest or to lead an unending journey in search of a new world hidden within this world? Even Nalinikanta wanted to go on an unending journey to an unknown nation like those cranes. Probably, then he could stay away from the worldly worries of Savita and Pratima. And then only he could get rid of the unbearable pain similar to the pain received by Bhishma who slept on the bed of arrow? Savita was a village girl. With the dreams of providing food to her widow mother and her younger brother, sister and for educating them. Savita came to Nalinikanta's house many times. Firstly, she came with the local school's Head master. From then onwards she used to come alone. The post of Assistant teacher in the local school was vacant for about seven months. Nalinikanta didnot filled that post as he was in search of a good bargain. Savita who passed matric by securing first division had all the capabilities for getting the post. What she didnot have was wealth. One day what exactly happened? Nalinikanta became attracted towards Savita's long hair, slimmed waist, broad breast, nose like tilphul and eyes like deer. He called her alone in the Circuit House stating, then and there he would give her the appointment letter on the following day. She, taking his blessings and promised to be present there

Nalinikanta's heart did not move when he brutally molested that girl that afternoon closing the doors and windows. Didn't he even realise that his very loving and dedicated wife along with his daughter of similar age of Savita, would be waiting for him in his house. After such a brutal act of his, he shamelessly gave the appointment letter to Savita, but Savita, threw it on to his face and ran away crying. Then only he realised about the danger waiting ahead. So, he conspirantly called up the police stating a girl was trying to trap him in the hope of getting employment. When Savita went to the Police station to lodge her complain she was ruthlessly scolded and sent back. Two days later, Nalinikanta read on the newspaper that she committed suicide. When the local women's organisation and youth union agitated against him, he carefully settled everything with his money power. Probably, because of Nalinikanta's mis-deeds, his daughter Pratima had to repent. One day, suddenly she left her house, her posh lifestyle. She was in love with a poor village boy. Ratna and Nalinikanta on the other hand wanted her to marry with a boy of their choice who was from a well reputed rich family. But Pratima stood still on her decision. She would marry with her choice only!

What did he have?

Ratna straight away questioned Pratima. She answered without any fear and hesitation.

What did she answer?

Though Devda is poor, he bears a clear heart. His heart is filled with everflowing love. This pure hearted man even possesses courage more than anyone.

Bibek looked at Nalinikanta and very cleverly reminded him about the past. He was having cigarette very thoughtfully looking downwards.

That day you slapped Pratima and forcefully locked her in her room. Pratima was your most loving child whom you

never scolded. That day, just because you couldn't digest her words, you behaved so rudely. That was the reason why she turned so adamant and she fled away.

Hearing Bibek's words, Nalinikanta made a shriek saying "Ah! Be silent!"

Phuleshwar came running to him.

Do you need something, Babu?

Perplexed Nalinikanta glanced at Bibek. He was simling softy. To make himself feel easy he asked Phuleshwar.

Did you ask how Aidau was? Did you give her the medicines?

I had to forcibly make her have it? She didn't want to have any of those.

I wanted to say something sir?

Nalinikanta looked at Phuleshwar.

Let us leave the topic of Pratima Aidau. Please search Gautam and bring him in front of her sir. Else Aidau.....

With his heavy voice, he wiped his eyes with his gamocha (towel) and went away.

Bibek?

Nalinikanta looked at Bibek. Bibek was looking at the colourful sky with full concentration. He brought back his sight to Nalinikanta and asked him, will you say something?

Where can Gautam go? It has been a week now since publishing his message of absence in newspaper. I was thinking, when Gautam comes back, we would sell the Kahilipara's plot of land. Then along with Ratna I would go to Madras (Chennai) for Ratna's medical check up and along with her check-up, I think to check up my left eye which was creating a lot of problems. But!

Nalinikanta's voice turned heavy, but Bibek did not respond to it.

I collected money as Ajamil and now I am repenting, Bibek! The ones for whom I entered the dirty corrupted world,

have moved away from me proving themselves innocent, free from enemy. Even Ratna is trying to move away from me cleverly by surrendering herself to her ailment.

When Nalinikanta started weeping like a young kid, Bibek broke his silence and uttered – Your son Gautam will come back soon to you. The way a thirsty man moves towards water, the same way Nalinikanta moved towards Bibek and said – See Bibek, due to lack of money, I sold both my car. I am even willing to sell my house and plot in Kahilipara. Please go and bring back my son, Bibek. Go and get my Gautam, Bibek!"

Bibek was starrng at the sky covered by mist. In that wide sky only the pole star was shinning brightly. Yes, Yes, even that day as usual he was looking at the pole star. It was then, when Ratna came restlessly saying – Do you hear something Police has arrested Gautam. Go soon to the Police station and bring him soon. Go at once!

Nalinikanta was not shocked at the words of Ratna. Gautam was in bad company since he passed his matriculation. He was involved in various misdeeds and turned inconsiderate, roudy, unsocial and drug addicted. Bibek used to warn Nalinikanta quite often – Please teach him the meaning of scarcity. Don't give him anything and everything whenever he wants. Atleast tell him to walk instead of fetching rickshaw for going college. Don't let him stay always in front of T.V. Just because he wanted a Motor Bike, Maruti Van to roam about, to go to college, you allowed so? Don't disclose about your weath purposelessly to your children, the way Aladdin was served by his lamp.

Every child carries the courage to be proud upon their parents by their character formation. So, you should have the minimum moral bindings in the family. Though Nalinikanta didn't pay much importance to Bibek's advices, yet, he couldnot ignore him. Mahatma Gandhi is no more in

India, but in heaven. So why do you speak such things. But the result of not paying interest to Bibek's words was in front of eyes. Even with scoldings and punishment to Gautam, he couldnot stop moving to red light areas, consuming drugs or other intoxicants etc. It was for Gautam that Nalinikanta had to sell both his cars. Probably now, he had committed something serious? Ratna was restless. Slowly, Nalinikanta changed his dress and boarded a rickshaw along with Bibek and moved to the Police station. This was an incident just a week following his retirement. On reaching the Police station he breath a sense of relief. The O.C. in the station was one of his student. The O.C. addressed him as sir and narrated the entire circumstancial details related to Gautam's arrest. He raped an advocate's daughter and police arrested him red handed. His companions fled from the scenario. The case was a serious one and non bailable. Nalinikanta looked at the O.C in the ray of hope.

Just for once do something to save my only son. The O.C. turned his face to show his disapproval. See sir, the O.C. replied looking at him. The case is very serious. That too, the victim is a daughter of an advocate. The medical test too has proved is as a rape case done by him. So I have no way. Sorry, please go!

Unwillingly, when Nalinikanta wanted to go away from the station, the O.C. said if you want I can save your son from having the jail's food for which you have to pay me one lakh rupees.

One Lakh?

Illegibly, Nalinikanta responded – You want one lakh from me.....?

He didn't even finish, when O.C. said – Do you remember Sir, when I went to you for my brother's job of a teacher, you indirectly send me back empty handed. When I paid fifty thousand rupees to a broker then he got the job. I

think the fifty thousand rupees must have increased to one lakh in these ten years, if we consider the interest. I kept my paternal property on lease for that fifty thousand rupees. If you can collect that much amount of money, then you can come to me.

That day, Bibek gave a look of sympathy to Nalinikanta. He gave that amount by selling the jewellery prepared for Pratima's marriage. A week later Gautam was brought home in bail and that day Nalinikanta beat him right and left. If Ratna wouldn't have come in the middle, then he would have continued it till his death. He didn't get rid of his anger. That very night Gautam fled away from his house. There was no news of Gautam for two and half months now. The darkness seemed to submerge both Nalinikanta and Bibek, in which Bibek could be easily seen. He looked like a saint.

You didn't answer Bibek? Get my Gautam back, Bibek. Go and find him.

He had to wait for a while after Nalinikanta spoke his words. His words came as the smoke of cigarette. If Gautam had read the news paper's advertisement, he will surely come back. His anger is towards you and not towards Ratna. Did you do a good act by not allowing Pratima to see her mom, Ratna Bhabhi? *I can say something.* Pratima kept the morality of your name or your family's name all this time.

Bibek!

Nalinikanta made a stern look to Bibek. No, by now the darkness has almost made him invisible. Bibek, if you hear me, I have always behaved ruthlessly towards you like my brother Hareshwar. Please forgive me and bring back Pratima and Gautam to me right in this moment.

Nalinikanta started to weep like a kid.
Sir! What happened? Look who has come?
Please look!

He got up from his armchair and wore his spectacles. A group of people was in front of him. He couldn't recognize them properly. But he doubted them to be as human. Everyone came smiling filled with enjoyment.

This is Gautam Bopa! This is Pratima Aiti, and this one is Hareshwar Bopa!

Nalinikanta couldn't believe Phuleshwar's words, yet with delighted eyes pointed out and asked who's that?

She's Aidau?

It was as though Phuleshwar has gifted him something multi-colored enjoyment. Ratna, You?

Ratna came forward, held Nalinikanta and said yes, it's me! Hareshwar and Gautam have come to take us to our village house. Gautam for all these days, he was in our village house. We have just purposelessly made ourselves ill!

Our village house?

Nalinikanta pronounced illegibly.

Daddy, please return to our village house?

When Gautam came forward and held Nalinikanta's hand, he hugged Gautam.

Bright smile have almost removed the darkness. Leaving Gautam, he looked here and there. Now where's he gone?

At his reaction, Pratima asked

For whom are you looking for Daddy?

What do you mean by who I am looking for? Nalinikanta once again searched here and there like a mad man.

This Bibek, where are you Bibek?

Lu - kv - Oo - Ku!

Nalinikanta removed his chadar and started to unbutton his shirt. Bibek's voice came within Nalinikanta's voice? He was probably playing hide and seek with him?

I am not playing hide - and - seek, but from now onwards, I will stay within your heart as Kakaidev! □

POTRAY OF PEN

Prelude

The boy slept squeezing his mother. Suddenly, he woke up, hearing a terrible shout. His mother also sat up with painful shriek. Then the body fell down from the bed and became senseless. When he regained consciousness he saw his parents, grandmother, aunt - everyone sleeping silently covered under red black colours on them. Firstly, he called his mother. No! She made no response. He then embraced his mother's body. He even held his father, aunt, grandmother one by one, but found no response. No, none of them moved or said anything. Then the four year old boy started crying impatiently. Finding no way out, the crying helpless boy embraced his mother again.

It was midnight then. Both the front door of the bed room was kept open. The same was with the back door. Outside it was drizzling slightly.

The boy woke up hearing the voice of birds outside. ~~His mother~~ was still sleeping. He called his father as every morning he used to go out for walk with his father. But his parents, aunt and grand mother were still sleeping. Nobody responded to him. Nobody accompanied him for his walk. He came out alone. He stood there and looked outside. The shower at night made the streets wet. He walked down to the main street. There he saw some distinct car's tyre marks. The boy stepped those tyre marks and went ahead.

Seeing the boy, coming slowly Ghanakanta, their neighbour was shocked. Today he was not with his father! When he approached the little boy, became more astonished. The little boy's dress was scattered with full of blood.

Ghanakanta seriously felt a pinching pain in his heart. Why your father is not with you? The little body who was busy walking over the tyre's mark gave least importance to the query by the neighbour Ghanakanta, but reluctantly answered - Father died! Mother-father, grandmother, aunty all died.

Ghanakanta once again looked at the little boy. He was still busy following the tyre marks.

Ghanakanta wondered. He looked at the nearby house of the little boy. The Assam type main house was attached to the veranda. The both front doors were kept wide open. He straight away marched to the house. He stood on the Veranda and peeped inside. The entire bed room. Oh horrible! He advanced few steps and found blood shed everywhere. There were four dead bodies laid. Oh how pathetic! Ghanakanta closed his eyes. He straight away came out of the house and screamed to rest of the neighbourhood to give them the dreaded news of the massacre.

Within a moment the entire community of the village gathered in front of the house. As the people kept on gathering, the little boy came closer. Then a person among the mass carried him on his lap and started crying. He could give no reaction and within moments he started running within the mass. Meanwhile the police party came and the dead bodies were removed from the room. The gathering started to increase. How tragic! Whenever the little boy felt thirsty, he asked for water and when he felt hungry, he used to ask for food. The neighbours took him to their house and feeded him. He used to sleep whenever he wished. Once again he woke up and roamed about his house. He gazed and gazed at new thing in his house and used to investigate those stuffs.

He used to even share one or two words with the people surrounding him. The entire neighbourhood collectively performed the ritual of death ceremony for the entire family who passed away. Initially, the boy was upset when he asked to shave his head which was one of the part of the ritual performance on death of his parents. But later on the boy got accustomed to the condition and was quite happy with it as nobody could pull his hair. He simply thought so without knowing the fact. Slowly and slowly the house seemed to be isolated. Those days the gateway was packed with various cars. The boy used to touch one car and then move to the next one. He used to irritate the driver, sat on the seat and blow the horn. The neighbours also went back to their busy schedule. The people close to also started to move away one by one. He was almost isolated when he felt absence of his parent, aunt and grand mother. People tried to console him. Some said they have gone for a stroll and some said that they would never come back. Slowly, his want for his parents made him cry helplessly.

Thinking about the future security be it career or his living, his maternal uncle took him to Mangaldoi.

About a year back he was admitted in a school. Slowly, he started to adjust with the world. The imaginative power and consciousness generated in him. Thus he created intimacy with people he met and matured intellectually. One day he passed his entrance exam with flying colours. Within those fifteen years of age he created his own reason and visualisation as to how he became an orphan or how he lost his family in total.

Though the story was based upon facts, it was enlightened by imaginative elements. Like, though the boy has got his own individual name, yet it is considered to be as 'Abhimanyu' here.

There may be three powers involved in the brutal murder of the family members of the boy.

(1) The murder may be executed by the under ground activists due to some personal enmity.

(2) Some members of Abhimanyu's family might be related to the terrorists. This may be due to some idealistic contradiction for which the extremists must have killed some surrenders and to take revenge on them, the supporters of the surrenders must have killed the members of Abhimanyu's family.

(3) This murder might be done by a third party just to create an atmosphere of enmity between two extremist organisations, which created law and order in the state.

When Abhimanyu would come to know that the members of his family were killed by some ill-armed activists, obviously they would secretly have a feeling of hatred towards them. This hatred may even turn them to take revenge. The feeling of revenge may lead to counter the murder of the murderers. Abhimanyu might be moved by the brutal incident of murders of his family members. He may even be attracted to normal livelihood. A simple and easy going life. He might have a great hatred towards violence.

I am in deep trouble as in which way I should carry forward the character, Abhimanyu. In the complex situations of today, I cannot incite violence, revenge, murder etc. Of course, I was aware of these kind situation. As a writer even I have a moral responsibility to the society. I have the moral duty to carry every Abhimanyu of our society in right direction. I believe, truth is the main direction of literature.

Still, I wanted to brings out resemble Abhimanyu with various elements of character. Here I wanted to give him same sort imaginary presentation.

Imaginary addition (one)

There were lines of Mesua ferrea (Nahar) tree in front of the college. Besides the huge Mesua ferrea tree, there were rows of Radhachura trees, the branches and leaves of which have made a roof. A number of seats are arranged for taking

rest. Whenever there was no class, Abhimanyu used to sit there. There he used to stare at the beautiful red Radhachura tree. Abhimanyu won first prize in story and poetry sections. He received a second prize for recitation. He loved sitting idly. Anamika has an anxious feeling towards this healthy handsome boy, Abhimanyu on the other hand, thinks very differently about Anamika. He thinks, that Anamika comes to college just to expose rather than studying, as she has a stylish outlook with short hair and shades on. Most of the boys carries weakness or have softcorner towards girls like Anamika wearing lesser clothes. Most of the students are tender behaviour towards her. They stare at her. Even the aged and young professors cannot stop looking at her. But the boy Abhimanyu sitting beneath the Radhachura tree, did not pay much weight towards her. He used to simply sit thinking depressed. Whenever he sees Anamika he used to turn his face. On the contrary, Anamika's internal rage kept on increasing and so she made up her mind to break Abhimanyu's ignorance towards her. She wanted Abhimanyu to turn towards her like the other boys in the college. One day Anamika, through one of her friend called Abhimanyu to one of the classrooms. When Abhimanyu entered the classroom, she closed the door and pulled him aback. She then started kissing him.

This act of Anamika shocked Abhimanyu and made him stand still.

What does this girl need from him? He asked her frankly. Anamika without even getting scared, answered that she loves him. Abhimanyu then advised her to wear better and decent clothes and remove her shades. She did as he said. The whole college was spell bound by the makeover in Anamika. She came to the college wearing Mekhela Chadar and with no shades on. Abhimanyu then realised that Anamika's attraction was true. One day both of them were graduated. Abhimanyu joined law college and Anamika in

university. After passing his law examination with flying colours, he become busy with his practice in law. One day Anamika also completed her post graduation. With the permission of both the families of both of them, decided to go for official happy union. So both of their families invited their friends and relatives on the day of the marriage. Just three days ahead of marriage, Abhimanyu came to know that Anamika's dad, Paresh Hazarika was indirectly involved in his family's murder occured in his childhood. In that time a lot of criticism was published in newspaper against Paresh Hazarika, a powerful officer in the police department who also had influence in the ruling party. On knowing this Abhimanyu's family member pressurised him to go against the marriage. Abhimanyu then was put in state of two minds. On one side there was attraction for his love and on the other side was his natural instinct- for taking revenge against the murderer.

As a writer I was in perplex situation at this stage of the story. Either Abhimanyu has to compromise with the murderer's side for the sake of love or he has to bow down to the decision. If I don't show this marriage of his family then I can establish the character of Abhimanyu as an exceptional one. But can Abhimanyu remain happy after sacrificing the love of Anamika for the sake of taking revenge? Can revenge give eternal peace in disturbed mind of Abhimanyu?

Imaginative addition (Two)

When Abhimanyu gradually grew up, he came to know who killed his family members and who made him orphan in his childhood. He came to know his enemy. One day, all of a sudden he joined a baned extremist group. He had a strong determination of killing the murderers of his family including parents. However, when he was undergoing training under the extremist organisation, the Government initiated a discussion with that organisation. That discussion was effective. Accordingly the extremeist leaders were seen openly

within public. The administrative power of Assam was taken over by the extremist leaders. But then Abhimanyu came to realise that against whom he tried to take revenge and accepted gun power with the extremist group, their members have continuously mixed up with the administrative leaders of Assam. Now they were to depend on them as they were responsible for the political security. The anxieties of Abhimanyu accumulated day by day. One day it became clear that the enemies were like concentrated water of ponds and lake. Today this enemy side has turned to be similar to the devastating flood. They have spreaded everywhere.

Abhimanyu then came to my consciousness to ask clearly against whom he should use the power of gun. I did not answer him clearly and told him to come later so that I could think over it and decide for proper reply. Abhimanyu came to me repeatedly. But I was unable to give an answer to Abhimanyu. Actually, I am unable to collect strength to ask Abhimanyu to surrender. If he put gun on him? Where is the certainty?

There is a saying. One Demon after getting boon from Lord Shiva, wanted to prove it on the Shiva's head, In the same manner Abhimanyu has been following me continuously. And me? I like Lord Shiva is trying to escape from his grip.

Imaginary addition (Three)

One day, all of a sudden Abhimanyu identified the murderers who killed all the members of his family. They were altogether seven persons. One day he determined that he would kill these seven persons alone. He determined that the will take revenge even after twenty years. Tit for tat. That was his motto. Otherwise he couldn't make himself calm. Surprisingly whenever he looked at the redish sun in the western end, the red Krishnachura or sindoor in the forehead of a married Hindu Lady, he couldn't keep himself in good

mood. All these red colour looked dark as in midnight. One midnight, Abhimanyu went to the house of first murderer. He knocked the door. A middle aged woman clad in white saree opened the door and asked him for whom he wanted. He asked about the murderer in a rough tone of anger. The woman silently looked at his face. Abhimanyu asked where about of the culprit once again. The lady started weeping and slowly replied - He lost his life in some brotherly conflicts about eighteen years ago.

He returned with a heavy heart. The next night he went to second murder's house. This time the door was opened by a boy of twelve thirteen years of age. This boy then answered that his father was sucumbed by a bullet in a confrontation with extremists when he tried to capture those extremists. In that grief even his mother went ill and she expired. Thus Abhimanyu was at a loss on reaching.

The house of the third murderer was in even more pathetic condition. The family was composed of the women and her two daughters who were ill and were bed ridden. The murderer died due to cancer ten years back. They don't have any boy child and no saved property. The murderers parents kept no connection with this family, as the murderer married a girl from a different caste. The woman also belonged to a poor family. So, there was no one to look after them. Looking at the pathetic condition, Abhimanyu was moved and came back.

The next night Abhimanyu went in search of the fourth murderer but he failed. Their house was on the banks of Pagladia river. The heavy floods washed away every body. There remained no clue about the murderer. The rest three families were saved and they all lived seperately in various places with their respective relatives. Abhimanyu became disheartened.

not heard his knocking, might get scared to open *the door*. With rage Abhimanyu kicked the door. The weak door made a shriek, yet no one responded from inside. Then he banged the door with a knock by the edge of his gun and kicked by his legs. The door opened. Abhimanyu entered lighting his small torch. He got a stinking smell which almost made him vomit. Yet he walked ahead. Suddenly, the light from his torch fell on one ugly looking person with weird figure. Was he the man

Conclusion

All of a sudden, I decided to meet the innocent small kid for the last time, before winding up my story. Till now. I have meet him twice in his house. But due to the accident I could not pay much attention to him, since Abhimanyu was living in his uncle's house. I took his address one fine day and I boarded a line bus to reach his house. The house of Abhimanyu's uncle was just one and half miles from

the bus stop. So asking just one or two persons, I reached the gateway of Abhimanyu's present residence. Suddenly in front of me the accident occurred. The dog moving just before me was bit very badly by another dog coming from the other side. The wounded dog seeking opportunity pounced on the other. Many other dogs from nowhere came and joined the quarrel. I became upset by the indecent growl of unexpected dogs.

I found gateway of Abhimanyu's house. I found the essence of a person whom I knew. I searched here and there. After crossing the gateway and on the way to reach the living house, I saw a *sewali* tree. The floor beneath the tree was covered by *sewali* flowers. As the wind blew, the flowers from the tree fell once or twice. I looked towards the sky. It was cloudy. But cloud seen to be a bit different from the one seen few days back. It looked as if the cloud changed dark clothes and worn new one to see Durga puja.

The shadow of sorrow that was filled in my heart few moments ahead had cleared. Crossing the *Sewali* tree. I stepped the veranda and then a young lady came forward. She was about twenty two years of age and she headed me towards the drawing room and offered me to sit down. She modestly asked my identity and I gave her my identity. Then I conveyed my interest to young Abhimanyu. The lady smiled and answered that Abhimanyu is in the kitchen speaking to his maternal grandmother.

We don't have to call him. He would surely come up and irritate you as soon as he comes to know that guest has visited our place.

For the sake of modesty, I replied that I am used to that.

I just drank a glass of water when Abhimanyu stood before me. He straight away put a handful of *Sewali* flowers

on my lap. With his usual nature of restlessness he leaned on me and stared at my chest. I anxiously searched for what he was looking at. My left hand touched my pen. Oh! that means Abhimanyu was staring at my pen. I then felt relaxed at the fact.

Suddenly, he came as a kite and took away my pen in no time.

For a while I just looked at him and then my heart was rejoiced. I found a positive aspect at the end of the story which I observed within Abhimanyu's real attitude.

After tea, I bade them and left that place. Once again I came beneath the *Sewali* tree. I looked up. Few of the *Sewali* flowers fell on my face as the tree was shaken by the movement of the birds.

I boarded a bus to my original destination. I found a window seat from which I could have the view of the green farms.

Abhimanyu was born to Subhadra during Kurukshetra war in Mahabharata. His birth brought news of war. So, the death of Abhimanyu was a crude truth.

But, today I cannot portray Abhimanyu as the messenger of death in the midst of massacre occurring everywhere in Assam. Let us encourage our today's Abhimanyu to have the pen as the strongest weapon for spreading the sweet news of *Sewali* flower. Yes, let this sweet news be spread house to house, village after villages, cities and towns and to the country besides countries. Abhimanyu is the symbol of Bhaskar. Bhaskar meant the Sun. This Bhaskar is the light of the Sun. Oh, Abhimanyu! Let you be the real light of the Sun for delighting our turmoiled state.

Sundare je phular mantra
Ahoratri mate □

ESSENCE

Ramakanta Choudhury is very distressed with his body and mind then that of one is affected by flu or the whole body is covered by allergy or even stringed by nettle called *Bandar-Kekowa*. In fact, he is not feeling well since yesterday evening. At that time he took rest at the Kachari ghat, after walking on foot path from Belly View hotel. He gazed to the wide river Brahmaputra crossing the concrete steps from footpath. Well this may be the cause as the later evening wind came kissing the water and blew through him like a butter fly. Very frequently, he takes the touch of this wind sitting on the step. The familiar smell of the environment may also disturb him. He looked at the Umananda as if it was a ship flowing on the river Brahmaputra. The Urbashi is sinking in the midst of the water. The Saraighat Bridge by the side of the Nilachal hill is hanging on the river Brahmaputra looked like the spider net. Seeing these, some irrelevant and unfortunate thought came to him for *the reason not known*. As if the bridge has joined both banks of his life. Could he cross the *Baitarani* river through this bridge! It is not the same smell that he witnessed yesterday evening, which may have come from the other side of the Baitarani river!

Ramakanta Choudhury stopped under the tree, walking through the foot path. It is also a very dirty place. The birds of different variety may pass shits at any moment. One cant looks up. Even the foot path is also made dirty. But the vomiting like this smell is not the same smell coming from the bank of Luit where a low-class people live in peculiar cottages. Neither, it's a

bad smelling of the dirty things kept in the side of the foot path ignoring dust bin of the Municipality. So, what type of this worse smell is this! Where is its source? Ramakanta Choudhury could not sleep thinking about all these. He had the drowsiness at late night. But that could not be for the schedule of morning walk.

Every morning, Ramakanta Choudhury comes back approaching Sukreswar temple. Today, thinking something, he entered into the premises. There is no rush of visitors early in the morning. Along with the bell of the temple, he witnessel a familiar smell there. It is also not a smell of incense stick and powder. Choudhury came back. Suddenly he stopped walking on the foot path in back side of the Mahendra Mohan Chodhury hospital. Oh, it's a dead body covered by white cloth on a pull-cart. There are two sepoys. Two labours have carried this dead body to the hospital, perhaps for post-mortem. He felt a very bad smell out of it. At once, Choudhury saw that other two persons have crossed him, carrying another dilapidated dead body bound by thatch with a bomboo. What a stinking smell is this? He covered his nose by his handkerchief. The men have put incense sticks to get rid from the smell. Their noses also covered by clothes. But how can they escape from it. *The stinking smell mixed with incense stick have created a peculiar smell.* However, he is not talking of this smell also. Choudhury stepped ahead. There are the shops of flowers. Some how, Choudhury could get relief on the essence of *Narjee and Rajanigandha* flowers. But he could not be normal. This is not the smell he thought of.

Depressed Choudhury changed his way home to the opposite foot path. Suddenly he stopped this time on getting that taste of different smell. He stood still looking at another scene on the current of the river Brahmaputra. Yes, yes. The men and women keeping certain difference, were passing shits. This smell

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is of those fresh shits. Of course, this is also not the smell searched for by him. Choudhury started walking again. Several ships are standing at Sukreswar harbour. Some trained officials with their blue uniform are parading on the roof of the ships. Some of them are bringing water. One ship making a big sound started to go to the other bank. Well, the smell coming out of the mast is also not the same one. So, what may be that particular smell which has made him restless and anxious. As to when and where from are so many sources of smells through out this city. The smell of smoke of vehicles, trucks, trains street dogs, street geggars, dust bins are familiar to him. No, those are not similar to that smell, So, what is this rare smell!

Deuta, water is ready, Haricharan kept the glessing mug on the table and left. He can easily wash his face in the magnificent marbled bath room. He can easily get the water, hot or cold whatever he wants. on touching the switch. Just a matter of opening the tap on the basin. He can also see his face on the glessing glass. He can also rub his face by the towel attached to it. But he does not brush teeth in the morning. It is done after dinner at night. He likes to wash his face standing in the veranda side. He feels pleasant only after taking the red tea offered by Haricharan. Yes, just like relief. Earlier this red tea was offered by his wife Maya. He used to get an exceptional taste on drinking lemony red tea offered by his wife. He can't expect such pleasure from the tea offered by Haricharan. Of course, he also prepares lemony tea. But, there will be either more sugar or sour. It is not proportionate at all.

Oh, has the essence of the tea prepared by Maya is disturbing him since yesterday! Choudhury remembers taking the cup of tea given by Haricharan. No, No. That smell is more sweet, smooth and concentrating. Yesterday evening his younger brother. Nishikanta Choudhury left to his village home. Since

than this mysterious Devil like smell is following him. Ney, not the Devil. He is roaming in search of that very smell as Lord Shiva used to run after the magical power of God.

Haricharan!

Haricharan came at once as the mercury attracts iron - Deuta.

Returning the cup Choudhury said - You call Singh at three O'clock.

Yes, deuta. Haricharan left the place. Choudhury looked towards the garage of the car. An unexpressable pain has accumulated in his heart. He does not like to use this car. But the engine of the car will be out of order, if it is left untouched. So, Choudhury used to call driver Singh to start the car and goes out in the evening. Though the ghee coloured Ambassador was of old model, Choudhury liked it. He got maximum comfort riding on it. But she is no more in this world on who's repeated request he disposed that dearly Ambassador and purchased this Maruti car. May be, She liked this Maruti car then that of the Ambassador and Choudhury supported it. Because, Choudhury liked her more than his Ambassador. She was just like cream of his heart. So, he purchased that car just to forget the poor village boy. He also allowed her to use the car herself. There she did the extreme mistake. She betrayed him. She used to drive that car taking that beloved village boy besides her. Knowing this fact Choudhury took some excess steps. Then she took this ultimate decision.

He tried to compel Jinty forcefully to marry the young Engineer of the Jyotinagar, Guwahati, when she took the extreme decision. She took revenge on her father by committing suicide taking poison.

Occasionally Choudhury thinks of selling the car. But at that moment he feels presence of Jinty, whenever he sees or runs that car. On the day of bringing the car, Jinty was so

diligent. She looked so joyous while she sat on front or back seat of the car. Choudhury recollect all these scenes and remembers her jolly face. Her memory gives maximum troubles in the mind of Choudhury. Still then, Choudhury thinks he would like to bear all these with anxieties for the sake of Jinty's memory.

Choudhury got up from the armed chair and slowly walked towards the garage. Who knows there may be the adjust smell that the searching for. Some mosquitos came out and left away. No, there is not the smell longing for.

The colour of the car become faded. This light ghee colour was selected by Jinty. She used to change the seat covers as per her choice.

On the purchasing day of the car, Choudhury told Jinty- I shall allow you this car for whole life, if you could avoid that poor village boy. The car will be in your name.

Jinty did not react to the temptation of her father at all. Rather, she became more rigid to her decision. O.K. father, I will opposite to what you said. I left the car. I can't sacrifice love.

What type of adamant was that girl. In spite of repeated urge of Choudhury and his wife, she never used that car.

Please come father, your pressure will grow up if you keep The daily paper has come. Please

papers. Even Haricharan does not come near to him at that time. He shall have to bear rebuke, even if he at all comes there.

He smells the newspapers. The smell of the crispy newspapers is not the same one. He becomes more depressed. He does feel like reading news paper.

Jinty looked at her father. Your pressure rises due to over reading newspapers.

Haricharan interrupts. No ma, Deuta's pressure subsides on reading papers. I feel joyous seeing deuta reading newspaper attentively. I never read even my text books with such concentration. Choudhury removed his spectacles from eyes. He rubs it with the border of his Ari Chadar. The comments from his wife Maya and daughter Jinty used to make the environment more lively than the morning's red tea and news paper. Usually he used to take their comments as mere shouts of crows. But, today, Choudhury realises that these words become useful and lovely in the family life than that of sweet sound of cuckoo. Well these past sounds are striking hard in his heart, today. His broken heart filled with hard hit tragedy. Perhaps the tears coming out of lamented eyes are outcome of tragedy.

Choudhury gazed at the front.

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a rose plant from Guwahati nursery once. That has become healthy to yield lovely flowers. The sun flowers, marigolds are smiling up to the sky. Alas, had there been Jinty ma.

Everybody in this world will feel lonely if their beloved doesn't stay near. He or she will have no life, no heart, even if they remain alive. The lively world looks dull and blank. The real beauty is dried out.

What happened *deuta*? What are you thinking without reading the newspaper? Please don't think any more. Your presence would come up.

Haricharan was looking at Choudhury. Choudhury was in sub-conscious state for long time. He came to life on Haricharan's sound. At once, he tried to read the newspaper saying.

No, nothing, do you like to say anything?

Haricharan looked at Choudhury and said - your younger brother will arrive in the evening, Please think over the matter.

Oh, yes, he forgot about younger brother Nishikanta. The smell had been disturbing him since he left yesterday evening. He has not yet thought over the proposal of Nishikanta. - Its good that you have reminded me.

What do you think?

Choudhury sought opinion from Haricharan. But by this time he already left the place. Choudhury kept aside the newspaper and enquired him.

The matter is like this. Nishikanta does not like to keep his elder brother in the city alone. He will come again today to take Choudhury back to village. His loneliness will not be there amongst brother, sister-in-law, nephews and others. He would get proper nursing on any ailment. The house of the city could be given on rent. Haricharan will look after here.

Nishikanta carried true love and affection towards

Choudhury. Choudhury felt guilty on how he threw away the brotherly relations for the sake of his wife and daughter. Choudhury repented for his past deeds.

Alas, Jinty left this world unexpectedly and without showing any sign of anger to him. Maya also was greatly saddened on her death and became ill. The lady on whose encouragement he sacrificed his village and settled in this city, that Maya also betrayed him. Even she left this world.

The man who used to do farming in village, reared cows, swam in the river Barnoi became a city dweller. Oh! What an attractive, sweet and delightful moments were those. It was a busy life then, when besides performing daily home works, he used to go school regularly, read his text books sincerely as an ideal student. After passing the matriculation examination he came to the city for higher education at college. Then also he could not forget the works of the paddy field and the most dear Barnoi river. The beauty of village life lied where he could find real pleasure. Well, Ramakanta Choudhury used to keep in touch with his village mates even though lived in city for his service. This practice was continued even after his marriage with Maya also. However, the constant touch with village became irregular when he decided resign from service and started business. Accordingly, he resigned from the job of teacher from the High school and went home for the capital required for contract. He insisted Nishikanta and his mother for selling of his share of land. However, his mother convinced him to keep his portion of land on lease. Nishikanta somehow kept the land borrowing money from here and there. He thought, the paternal property should not go to others hand.

Choudhury did not know whether his father would have allowed him to spare land to be on lease. However, his heart moved, when his mother cried loudly knowing it. Has he gone

on the wrong way! But there was a decision as Maya was insisting him to do that.

Actually Chodhury resigned the job of school teacher hankering after money. He kept the portion of land on lease requesting his brother and mother before separation. The money started coming like flood. He constructed embankment unmethodically and saved huge amount of money. This embankment could not prevent rising water. The embankment broke easily and caused devastating flood. Choudhury had no time to think over the heavy lost of the general public. He involved himself with corruption and collected money. He purchased a large plot of land in the city heart and constructed a big house. He purchased one Ambassador car and led an aristocratic life with his wife Maya. After five years, Jinty was born. She was very dear to them.

One day they lost Jinty. Even Maya followed her. Now Choudhury had nobody except Haricharan, who act as a caretaker. So, Choudhury's brother Neshikanta came to meet him and looked after his welfare.

Village home! Has he got any home in village? No. He has already kept his portion of land on lease. He never enquired about his brother or other members of his family. He gave least importance to them. To plough was the only source of income of poor Nishikanta. He could have definitely support his brother and his family. But then, Choudhury was running after money restlessly. He constructed tower like building and led an aristocratic life. Once he brought his mother. But she did not stay with him for long time. She could not adjust herself with artificial city life. They were accustomed to pure village life. His mother actually came only because of attraction towards Jinty, Choudhury could hint that his mother did not like to stay there due to ill-behaviour of his wife. She never came back to his

No, today he was disturbed. He neither felt disturbed. He took the bath as per schedule. He sat in drawing room and started watching television, as if it could be the medicine for his ailing mind. There he saw songs and merrymakings with so much of advertisements. Earlier he could spend his times with Jinty and had a liking view on all these. But those days are gone. He stopped watching television and lied down on his bed. Again his mind went to some irrelevant matters. Perhaps all the aimless people become alone in their lonely family life. Once he thought his life to be successful and glorious along with Jinty and Maya. Now it has become a sand-dome. Choudhury was trying in vain to write Jinty and Maya's name on it. He was thinking just irrelevently.

He could regain his sense and come to the real life only when Haricharan called him for his meal. Generally he used to take rest after meal. But today he called driver Singh to take out the car from the garage.

Where will you go, sir?

Yes, where will he go! Thought Chodhury. Today morning he went out in search of the smell that disturbed him in night. But that search is also left undone. Where will he go now?

Let us go to Narengi via Noonmati, than to Bashistha via Geeta mandir and lastly to back home via Jalukbari. Let is start.

Driver Singh started driving car as directed by Choudhury. He asked the driver to stop the car on the over bridge near Narengi.

It is Shyam mandir to the left side (East) of the bridge. There is also the Geeta mandir to the right side which cant be

seen for greeneries and trees. There Choudhury dropped from the car. The sky is cloudy.

Is it not overcasted by the smokes of the Refinery! The sun is about to set behind the Nilachal hills. He felt a sweet touch of the wind blowing.

No, There is no smell of that kind. He entered into the car. It went crossing the girls hostel, again stopped in front of Narengi College. Choudhury had a look out side. The city has expanded. Choudhury did not witness anything other then smoke of city bus, cars and dusts flying around. Not the most expected one, the searching smell. The car then stopped near Geeta mandir. He came out of the car. He intended to move round the mandir. Strange, the young boys and girls are busy on some naked activities. Oh they just come here due to the silent atmosphere. No. there cant be the smell searching for by him. Choudhury came to Bashistha straight way. He sat on a huge stone where Sandha, Lalita and Kanta met each other. He remembered that he came here along with the villagers while he was a student of class ten. Yes, he sat in this very meeting point along with the village girl Kamana. He saved Kamana while she was about to slip down. He could get many more sensation on a mild touch of breast of Kamana, a pupil of class light. The smell of her hair and the Mimus ospelengi (Bakul) flower however, also created sensation in his mind. Both sequences inspired and encouraged him every moment to go ahead crossing struggles of life. He felt guilty as how he married Maya from city, betraying his true love of the village girl Kamana. Kamana could not get ready for marriage for many years. Lastly, on the pressure of the family, she got married with one old chap who also died after six months of their marriage.

Ramakanta Choudhury stood up and wiped the tears of his eyes. He could not find that smell. Who knows, if that smell came out of greasy hair of Kamana! Yes, her lovely hair falling

to waist which used to dance like peacock. Oh, what a heart touching smell of that fairy hair, where Ramakanta Choudhury, the lover of Kamana was engrossed.

OK sir, Singh drives the car towards home. By this time earth became dark and the city was lightened. The car reached the front yard of Choudhury campus.

Haricharan came out and welcomed him. Choudhury sat on the armed chair. Singh parked the car in the garage. Haricharan made ready the water for washing his legs and mouth. Choudhury looked at the garden and the iron gate. A familiar smell touched his nose. It means the Sewali flowers have started blooming.

Some one like an operation is heading silently through the iron gate. Choudhury was a alarmed.

: Who is that Haricharan?
: Oh he is Saru deuta just reached from village.
Yes, Choudhury, was convinced. It was the day of his arrival. So he has come. He will spend the night here. He has come to know as to whether Choudhury would go to the village or not. If possible, he will take him to village.

: Nishikanta come, sit down here.

Choudhury never asked him like this earlier. Nishikanta took the seat nearby with fear.

: Is every one OK at home?

: Haricharan, bring two cups of tea for us.

Haricharan entered the kitchen. Both of them were silent for a while. A mild wind was blowing. The sweet smell of the Sewali flower were spreaded making the environment more sweeter.

Suddenly Ramakanta Choudhury stood up from the chair. He became busy in searching something all over the veranda.

All in a sudden Choudhury could guess that the smell

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which was searching madly for so long time is flowing from the very place where Nishikanta was sitting. Ramakanta approached near Nishikanta and asked.

: Nishikanta, you just get up.

Nishikanta was observing the unnatural state of his mind. He stood up. Choudhury immediately started checking the smell from Nishikanta's head to foot.

Nishi felt uneasy at this. He questioned—

: Why you are acting so abnormally, Kakaidau!

You are looking at my feet. Nishikanta stepped backwards. Ramakanta looked restlessly—

: Well Nishikanta, you put your feet forward. Ramakanta Choudhury repeatedly requested Nishikanta. Nishikanta felt uneasy. As he went back Ramakanta advanced so. At last Nishikanta stopped in a point. He started speaking with rage, shame and recentment-- what are you doing Kakaidau. Why are you insulting me? Today I was busy with agricultural works in muddy field. Hurriedly I reached your place. May be I could not clean my legs property. There may be some mud in between fingers of my leg. Are you checking all these....

Nishikanta. Choudhury was on the lamented solicitation, Ramakanta Choudhury looked at his brother's face to legs again and again.

Oh, that is the smell longing for. The most anxiously desired smell has come out from the muds remained in the midst of fingers of legs of Nishikanta! The familiar fragrance of the soil of the paddy field. Once he was attracted to that in the paddy field.

Choudhury became delighted.

: Haricharan, has Singh left?

Haricharan came to him and said – yes, deuta, do you like to go out again?

Ramakanta Choudhury sat on the armed chair. He said

with clear voice – No. not today. I shall go with Nishikanta tomorrow early in the morning to my village. To my own home. You just pack my clothes and other belongings in the box. Listen, you don't go now. You will bring him tomorrow early in the morning. Now, I want to have Mati dail (Pulse) with chalita. Can you bring it and prepare nicely.

The sudden change in the situation made Nishikanta look like a fool. He gazed and gazed at his respected elder brother's face.

So also Haricharan's face glistened on darkness. □

WALL

The news spreads like wild fire. People from all walks of life rushed to the gate way. They are boys and girls to the aged man and women. Everybody looked at him.

Tileswar comes running fast. He was sweating. He rubbed his face by the strip of towel taking from back of waist. Prabhawati looks at him eagerly.

Dadu is coming, yes, he is Sundari Dadu - said Tileswar.

Prabhawati feels happy. Her pleasing face indicated that. She brought down her veil and reached the gate way hurriedly. She looks at the man. Yes he is the same one.

The man is gradually coming near.

He is Sunandadev Sarma. He reached the gate way and looked at the concrete wall and made a sigh. he looks at his wife Prabhawati. Touching the veil Prabhawati returns to the house happily. She had to keep ready water for washing leg, face and clothes to change.

Sunandadev Sarma comes in. Sitting on a stool at veranda he looks at the concrete wall. After a while he sees that the village elder Bhadrakanta Kalita, Haridhan Master and Kanthiram Deka were coming to his home slowly.

: Water is ready for washing hands and mouth.

Sunandadev Sarma looks at his wife Prabhawati again. He looks at her anxiously as if he has seen her after a long interval.

: Teleswar

Tileswar was observing him silently. He comes near him as called for.

: I shall not meet anybody, tell them.

One hearing that he is tired, Prabhawati enters. The bed has to be arranged. Perhaps, he could not sleep previous night for those useless chaps. It was relevant from his appearance.

After washing hands and mouth Sunandadev Sarma rubbed with the towel. He straight way came inside the house. The bed was already ready for him.

: Get me a glass of drinking water.

He opened his Punjabi shirt and kept in the hanger. He sat on his bed. His whole body was paining. His back side was burning.

: This is the glass of water.

Sunandadev Sarma received the glass and drank its water at a quench.

: What about your meal?

Before finishing the Prabhawati's sentence, he replied - Nothing. Let me sleep. Don't disturb. Sunandadev Sarma fell on his bed. Prabhawati came out to veranda and came to know that Tileswar has already sent village elder and other mates.

The darkness has already appeared under bamboo leaves belonged to Padmeswar. The black cow, variegated and white pair of bull have crossed gate to enter their shed.

: Tileswar, tie those cows.

To carry out the orders of Prabhawati, Tileswar ran to the cow shed.

Prabhawati also took bed without taking anything. Tileswar ate his food that was left out of the day's meal. She prepared the day meal lately, thinking her husband would come home for lunch. Tileswar had no objection. He also went to sleep taking his meal. Tileswar thought, today is the first day that they took bed so early.

Prabhawati could not sleep though she was with her husband. The man was facing troubles in his old age, even after establishing his growing up children.

He has constructed concrete wall round the compound as suggested by his son Diganta, who is working as Government officer at Dibrugarh. Sarma, who recently retired from the service of the High school teacher has looked after the construction works. One can reach the town after crossing this village. It is a sub-urban area. Their house is situated besides the main road of Public Works Department. So Diganta urged that the front side wall should be plastered and white washed. Dev Sarma completed the work as desired by his son.

But Dev Sarma saw that on the very next day of white washing, somebody wrote something with blue paint on the wall. It is about class struggle - Long live Worker's unity etc. slogans.

: Cheh, why these are written immediately after colouring. They could have waited for some days.

Two days after that Tileswar told - Dadu (grand father) somebody has written with red paint.

Sunandadev Sarma checked the wall hurriedly. Yes, somebody has erased the earlier writings with lime and wrote with red colour. Those were demand for withdrawal of President's rule and atrocities etc. With depressed mind he told Prabhawati that the wall was made multi coloured.

However, Sunandadev Sarma never thought that such a situation would arise at night. A group of youth came up to threaten him.

Among them, two were his ex-students.
: Sir, you are our supporter. You were imprisoned for involvement in our six years agitation. So, why have you allowed them to write such things on your wall? Are you supporting them now? One of them questioned.

Sunandadev Sarma looked at his face. As if he was not related to Sarma in any way.

Sarma replied - No, I have not allowed. Somebody did it without my consent.

: So, we will also write our slogan secretly. One of the group uttered dauntlessly. Ah, why to take permission. Come on and start it.

The group of youth left threatening him. The following day the other group of youth came. One of them asked Sarma in high tone.

: Why have you allowed others for wiping our writings? Dev Sarma was stricken on their interrogation like a lower. As if the thieves have come like police to hand-cup the owner.

Once Sunandadev Sarma joined in independence movement of India. After words he was appointed against a post of teacher in the High school. Since then, he was working for welfare of the village and the society. He has already received state award as an ideal teacher. He had to face financial hardship for imparting Higher Education to his son and daughter, depending on the teacher's job. His daughter was married to a collage teacher. The only son is also employed as Public Relation Officer in Dibrugarh. His marriage is to be arranged this year. That's why the old tinne house was repaired. The wall was also constructed as wished by Diganta. Well, up till now, none have thrown any hard words on him. Neither, he gave any scope for ill-treatment on him by any one. Because, he did not remember, if he had harmed anybody knowingly.

So, why the youths were harassing him since the previous day! Sunandadev Sarma thought - I have constructed the wall and you have written something on it without my permission, which I never wanted. The fault is yours. Unfortunately you have made me accused and interrogating me like the way lowers do. What is this?

He looked at the youths with tough words - Listen, did

you write on the wall taking my permission? Now, some others have written on your writings, did they take clearance from me? Don't bring me to all these. I say, get out.

The dissatisfied youths have left away

: The wall has created a problem

Sunandadev Sarma had no reaction on the remarks passed by Prabhawati.

Suddenly, on the way to town riding the cycle for marketing, he had a look at the wall. Last night somebody has written another slogan. It means another group will come to threaten him.

He thought, they may come by that evening. Sitting on the veranda, he looked at the front road. However, no one could be seen.

Besides that topic, Sunandadev Sarma has faced another problem. While he was about to go to town riding the cycle, he saw that a military van stopped in front of their gate. A number of military's got down. One of them asked him - Who's house is this?

Sarma replied - It is mine.

: Who has written all these rubbish on the wall?

: I don't know.

: What? They scolded him with the question - Are you supporter of these elements? Why such things are written on the wall? You tell, who wrote all these.

Sunandadev Sarma got nervous on the jumbled questions of the military. He has been harassed this way for the first time in his life. Rather it was more than those youths.

At last the military rebuked him with slang words and took him forcefully. The house boy Tileswar and his wife, Prabhawati witnessed the unwanted scene helplessly. The mixed reaction is seen in the locality.

Sunandadev Sarma came back from the hands of military today. He did not tell anything to anybody. Simply gone to the

bed. Perhaps he could not sleep properly. Thinking all these, Prabhawati tried to sleep. Next morning, Sunandadev Sarma woke up as usual. After washing his face he called Tileswar. Handing over rupees thirty, he asked Tileswar to buy lime from Jibeswar's shop.

On getting the lime he mixed it with water. He then searched out the line brush. Both Tileswar and Dev Sarma then white washed the wall. Some of their neighbours saw their works, but could not gather courage to ask why.

Deb Sarma did not go anywhere during the day. He sat on a chair and looked at the gate and the wall. He gave short answers to the questions put up by people. He did not speak much about his arrest and release by the military. Nobody, even had the courage to ask about the story in details.

Deb Sarma had his lunch without taking bath. Even he did not change his dress worn yesterday. Prabhawati got astonished at that.

Day light was faded. Darkness appeared. Deb Sarma got up from his seat. He called Tileswar and wore the punjabi shirt. Then he lightened the lamp and came out near the wall. He sat there on a stool.

That way he took his dinner replacing Tileswar. The darkness became as thick as the hair of Prabhawati. By that time the bell of twelve O'Clock rang at the factory of Himatsinaka.

Prabhawati sent Tileswar to accompany with Deb Sarma. However he sent back Tileswar. Both Tileswar and Prabhawati then waited for Sarma sitting on veranda. Tileswar gradually felt drowsy.

Khs Khs Khs

The mid night train with long and loud whistle passed through. Suddenly, Sunandadev Sarma became alerted on hearing sound of somebody's foot-steps. Some youths stood in front of him.

: What do you want? asked Deb Sarma.
: Why you have wiped out wall writings?

All the same question from one of them.

Sunandadev Sarma held on his lamp.

No, none of them is familiar to him. Another youth put up a serious question.

: Well, you have rubbed our wall writings out of fear of scolding of the military. It means, you will kill us, if they ask you to do so!

Sunandadev Sarma kept himself silent.

: We will write slogan again. No body can prevent us from displaying protest. Our trouble heated revolution is to gain a corrupt free nation for you people.

Again Sunandadev Sarma looked at the youths, if he could know them; but in vain.

: You just be off from this place. Now we will write slogan.

One of the youths unloaded the paint and brush from his beg.

Sunandadev Sarma then shown them his back folding his Punjabi shirt and said - Well, my dear sons, what ever you want, you write in my back. Please don't write on the wall.

The youths were at a toss. One youth pressed his torch light and focussed on Sarma's back. Every body among the youths became astonished and shouted looking at the back of Sunandadev Sarma.

There are member of uneven scars of beats with dried patches of blood.

: Write. You can write in my back whatever you want. But, please, donot write in the wall.

Sunandadev Sarma wiped like a small kid. □

LAMENT OF FLUTE

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

As the east wind was blowing, Madhumati's front hair danced impatiently. Wind was blowing through the cover connected to the roof of the bullock cart due to which the cover covering behind the cart was slipping. The small kids who were running created in the cloth hung by the movement of the cart. The sun rays fell on her face making it way through trees and leaves.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

Yes, yes. Even that day similarly the cows rang the bells. On reaching his place, everyone looked at her time to time. The man sitting on the elephant along with the rider came down and stood with her near the banana trees. When the ladies welcomed them by singing *Biya naam* Madhumati understood the lyrics of the song sung by her relatives when she was leaving her house. It was when Madhumati came to realised the words of song's sung by members of her family whom she bade from her house.

There are bamboos in meadow

Father has made a cage of it

You are Mynah dear bride!

Enter in it like prison like world

No need to cry oh dear one!

To begin sad life waiting.

Madhumati who looked like the Mynah bird was sent in family way looking cage. She stopped crying from the day her

marriage date was fixed. In spite of all her request and plead, when her father fixed her marriage with a man who could not even stand straight due to age, just because he was provided with huge amount of money, she stopped crying. She could never ever dream that her very loving father would fix his only daughter's marriage with such an old man just for money. Her friend Champa suggested her to flee away with Ratan. She messaged Ratan accordingly.

But when Ratan didn't reach in time Madhumati's mind was filled with suspicion. Yet she believed that he would reach at least on the day of marriage. But when Madhumati did not find Ratan while she sat on the ritual base, nor when she fetched the bullock cart, her heart seemed to be restless.

When her relatives in the village bade her singing, to a prison fixed by her father, she didn't understand anything. But when got into the bullock cart, she came to know what actually happened in her married life. Then she started crying vigorously.

Wild fire destroy forest
Family fire cooks
Fire in my mind
Ruined days ahead.

In the first night Madhumati's old husband attacked her brutally, the way a wild animal pounces upon its prey. Her mind and soul were constantly burning. Her first wedded night seemed to bring her life full of thorns. How could the women send a girl of their daughter's age to such an old man singing with such joking words? Didn't their heart ever move to send an innocent organism to such an hungry wild animal? Don't they have daughter, sister or grand daughter in their house? Just because this old man had money he married this young girl in spite of having three wedded wives, adult sons and daughters. The way deer's meat is itself's enemy, the same way Madhumati's beauty and her youth seemed to be her enemy.

One day that old man towards Gauripur, rode on his elephant and Tagar towards Golakganj through the forest. Madhumati was returning home along with them. Kripanarayan stopped water from Gadadhi and her friends saw him stopping, they greeted them by bowing. Looking at Madhumati, Kripanarayan was sexually attracted and so he headed close to the girls. He then asked water to drink and by that way, he turned more closer to her and asked her introduction. When she got same hint, she poured some water and hurriedly back home. That day he stayed in the tax-collector's house in Madhumati's village. There itself he called Madhumati's father and her drunkard father was turned to their side, because he was shown covetousness of wine and paddy. From that day onwards Madhumati's father tortured her both mentally and physically. She tried her level best to refuse the proposal through her mother, but then her father warned to kill both mother and daughter if they don't do as he wishes. Girls never have age, their character is like water. It forms the shape of its vessel. It is better to form a family here where you can have both food and money, than to form a family with a poor chap who has no certainty of providing you either of it.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

Kripanarayan dyed his hair, the grey hair turned brown which made him look very weird. When that tall, robust and dark complexioned man with teeth turning black like *kajal* headed towards her, she was shocked. He looked like a strange wild animal. When that man touched her, she felt as though caterpillars stung her. She felt as though a huge python was going to swallow her soon. She couldn't be easy with the man for a long time. He fulfilled his physical bliss by torturing her. He used to punish her through various means, as she never used to

surrender herself to him. Slaps, punches, kicks were regular dose made to Madhumati.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

It was half moon night and the moonlight was spreaded in the entire area covering trees and leaves. The moon itself looked like a small silent boy floating in the heart of the high hills. The stars seemed to share their own traditional story.

The Gadadhar river looked like white folded Dhuti. Few nocturnal insects were buzzing along with sound created by water movement of the Gadadhar river, which maintained the silence of that night. The sepoy Ananta was sleeping embracing her in hay. The essence of the raw hay was very similar to Ratan.

Yes, yes, that day was Rahila's marriage from the same colony. Marriage meant festive environment for many days. From a week ahead, Madhumati's heart and soul started dancing like an old granny. Even Ratan came taking two days of leaves from his farm. He saw Madhumati, but didn't get an opportunity to meet and speak to her. The marriage hall was silent for a short while in the evening. As the rituals were to be performed in twelve O'clock in midnight, the bride would come to the marriage hall then. So, most of relatives and neighbours moved away stating that they would visit in time. Then Madhumati went to fetch a bucket from well at the backyard of Rahila's house. On finding an opportunity, Ratan who was following her, pulled her to the nearby shed-house and forcibly made her to sit there. According to him I have not come to see Rahila's marriage. I have come here from the Char areas. I have come from areas where evil spirits reside, only to meet you. And, you seem to behave as though it was your marriage. Actually, Madhumati was very busy in doing works and so she was unable to give time to Ratan. One after another responsibility were entrusted on her and Madhumati was doing it as a keyed doll. Outside the band party were playing to the tune of Prem Janena

*Rasik Kalachandran
sange habe darshan ban
for you. Oh beloved, when
ments within hay both of them felt
That too with such great company, Mad
The warmth of hay was like the warmth of Ratan
Even Ratan as an able man could know how to love and
her. Madhumati did not know as why Ratan came to her mind
while she was with sepoy Ananta amidst hay. The essence of
hay meant Ratan or his love.*

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!
The fire was burning within her heart because of her un-
wanted marriage. Champa who came to visit Madhumati con-
veyed about Ratan. Ratan was missing. Ratan, with whom she
used to play, swim in Gadadhar river and spent her happy times
was missing. Then, there were no schools established in Sonamati
village nor in the nearby village. So farming was their only job.
Ratan being orphan at very tender age was brought up in his
uncle's house. When he grew up he was entrusted the responsi-
bility of looking after the farm house of the proprietor of Bijni.
He did that to make his living, as the condition of his uncle's
house was very bad. Madhumati who was then unaware of the
feelings of love or youth at this time when Ratan moved to Bijni,
had tears in her eyes. Even Ratan cried and went to Bijni cross-
ing the Gadadhar river. He visited his house after a period of
two or three months. One day, he found Madhumati more beau-
tiful, shy than earlier. He even noticed the change in himself.
Both of them had turn adult. Now Madhumati used to feel shy
in every meet of her childhood friend.

Madhumati's adolescence was discovered. From then on-
wards, she used to be worried thinking about Ratan staying alone
in the farm house situated in the Char region near the river. But
his Dotara (a wooden folk musical instrument) was the only

Madhumati was not as good as Ratan in that field, yet she could sing duet songs with him. Though musical meetings came to an end. Yet whenever he used to come on leave he visited Madhumati's place with Dotara in his hand. At that time his songs expressed moment of grief. It was like an arrow shot by a serpent. So Madhumati like Radha prevented Ratan from singing such songs.

Oh Kanai! don't play your flute
For I can't bind my mind
And runs after the sweet tune
Please, my dearest one!

Madhumati used to sing in low voice on the bank of Gadadhar river when Ratan was about to leave to his farm house or to his workplace

Oh dear one departing me
Will you come back ever!

Ratan whom she could never keep away from her thoughts was lost! Thinking about it brought her pain. According to Champa, Ratan visited the village two day after her marriage.

As the owner of the farmhouse didnot allow him to leave, he fled from there and came. On reaching village, when he came to know his most beloved had already left the village, he became disheartened. He didnot speak to anyone, nor did he eat anything. He simply played his Dotara and hummed to its tune on the bank of Gadadhar river. One day Champa met Ratan and described everything that happened to Madhumati and how she was expecting him, till the day of her marriage. He started weeping impatiently and then he answered in one line - I can live without my mother, I can live without my father but how can I live without my life? From that Sonamati ghat only, one day he went missing.

Many people said that he must have jumped into the never Gadadhar and died.

No, No! Ratan cannot die. Madhumati was sure that Ratan couldn't commit suicide in Gadadhar river. But he may get lost in grief of her absence. He may not be able to tolerate it. The way wild cranes used to create a chaotic situation in Barpukhuri, the same way Madhumati's heart also became restless at Ratan's act. Very often in midnight, Madhumati used play his Dotara and sing song to its tune—

If there be no moon
How the stars can shine
If woman is without husband
How the beauty goes vain.

The beauty which was praised by all friends of her village, men and women right from her childhood had no value then. Even though Madhumati had a husband, she always felt that there was no man in her life. Her mind and soul seemed to be empty, like a sky without moon. Probably every lady in her life would feel like a widow, if she had to spend her life with person with different perspective, ideology or thought. She often feels

like singing in her solitary moment —

Just prepared meal in sand
Left the cooking pot on water
To eat and marry on marriage
Oh then one becomes widow
If husband friend is lost
All will be like sand house.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

Sepoy Ananta used to come to the proprietor's house for some Government duty. Kripanarayan's house was situated near his brothers house. Madhumati used to sit on the veranda staring at the bylane expecting someone. At first look, it looked as though she was waiting for her husband. But Madhumati's mind inexplicably felt that sepoy Ananta wearing his Khadi uniform would come one or the other day. While placing his cycle, he would indirectly stare at her. Firstly, she used to feel very uncomfortable at his look. But when she realised that he sighted at her acknowledging her youth and beauty the same way as Ratan used to she felt easy. Kanchan Bai was very dear to her and advised her whenever she finds a good company. She should flee away leaving that old heartless husband in the day time when Kripanarayom be out for hunting or for any other official purpose. Why should you waste your youth in the hands of such an old man who already has three wives? Daughter! your parents are not human. They are wild animals. They left you to be a feast of a wild beast. Initially Madhumati didn't pay much attention to Kanchan's words. But gradually she realised that Kanchan was speaking her mind out. In absence of mind matched company, as she leaded a life of a widow, she started thinking of over Kanchan's words. Sepoy Ananta who tried to get close to Madhumati by acting to place his cycle, or asking for drinking water, became successful to an extend in his attempts as Kanchanbai also helped him to do so. Madhumati

was encouraged
Kanchanbai and Ananta
future and Kanchanbai gave
abortion. Gradually, Ratan's nature
Madhumati's life. Sepoy Ananta took its
Ananta was posted to Goalpara, Madhumati
conspicion and was really scared.

*Oh my dear Sepoy friend
Other's servant you are
To carry orders for works
Or you may left friend
For we are women only
Father took money
Also the uncle a lot
May be tempted for wealth.*

Building for you
My sky will be clear
Sepoy friend when you come
Both will enjoy
Eating also merry making
How long you will come.

It was not easy for Madhumati to be apart of from Ananta after everything that happened in her life. She saved her beauty and youth very carefully so that Ananta could enjoy it. Though Kripanarayans reduced torturing at her, yet his attitude did not change. On the other hand, Ananta was determined to get Madhumati, who was so beautiful and young. So, she would not let her wasted upon that ruthless old man. Sepoy Ananta planned along with Kanchanbai that he would arrange a rented house in Goalpara where he was posted.

On the other hand Madhumati would convince Kripanarayan to allow her to visit her village in Sonamati for a

few days. Rest would be done by Kanchanbai. In the mid night itself both of them will flee away from Sonamati.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

A week later, in the midnight, Ananta came on Rahimuddin's bullock cart fixed by Kanchanbai, Madhumati came to know about him on hearing the bell hung on the bull's neck. Rahimuddin would carry the raw hay on the bullock cart to Pancharatna bank. After crossing the Brahmaputra on a boat, both would reach Goalpara.

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

Secretly, Madhumati got up from her bed. Her mother was in sound sleep. *She purposely kept the front door open* while she went to the toilet a while ago. Her father slept in another room. Madhumati very silently grabbed the bundle of her clothes and came out of her house. The glow worms were buzzing at their own tune. *As soon as she crossed the balcony, she was shocked. Something crossed her.* Then she realised and felt re-

Ghutlung, Ghutlung, Ghutlung!

The cart stopped beneath the Minus opselengi (Bakul) tree. She headed towards it. Ananta lifted her and made her sit in the hay in the cart. He got up and embraced Madhumati. Soon the Ghutlung, Ghutlung! sound started and they headed towards their destination.

Life seemed to be a never ending journey of darkness and brightness. From childhood till days spend with Ratan was full of brightness. Now it seems dawn. And days, spend with the old man were days covered by dark cloud. This journey with Ananta was a sort of compromise to get rid of the old man. Ratan's memories still lasted within her. Probably it would never leave her till her death. A feeling of restlessness was created within Madhumati at the essence of the raw hay. The sound created by the bells

hanging on the bull's neck reminded the days when she was married to Kripanarayan. It sounded same Ghutlung, Ghutlung. Yet the situation was absolutely different.

The journey brought back the feeling of youthness in her. This journey was most expected by Madhumati.

Oh cartman, drive slow the cart

Let me have a look at

Leaving the village own

And also the dearest one.

Rahimuddin was singing old folk songs and bells were ringing to its tune. The howlings of fox and fowls could not beat the silence of the midnight. Madhumati stared at the sky lying on Ananta's chest. Yes, the sky looked sad with no moon or stars. She used to listen to fables and parables from her mother and Grandmother underneath the same sky when she was small. The stories in which the moon was swallowed by Demon. The trees amidst darkness looked like huge Demons of fables. There she dreamt a dream.

Kripanarayan like Demon had once swallowed Ratan like the moon. She thought that he would follow them and snatch her from Ananta by killing him. Truly, the bells stopped ringing. Rahimuddin made a huge shout and Madhumati understood the reason behind it. Kripanarayan was sitting in a jeep. In that faded light she saw his cruel smile. He got few men along with him and they pulled Rahimuddin out of the cart and then grabbed Ananta and brought him in front of Kripanarayan. Madhumati started shouting. Ananta who found no way out was hit very badly by the sticks of Kripanarayan's men. Then Madhumati was forcibly taken to Kripanarayan's jeep. The jeep started soon and in spite of their repeated request he remained unmoved and she had nothing but to cry in the entire journey.

The bell rings ghutlung ghutlung

As the bull moves his neck

So also my heart cry
Seeing the danger ahead.

The morning wind touched her face. She was in sound sleep. She closed her eyes and then she opened it and saw that stars were away from the sky. The dew spreaded everywhere. It was looked as though darkness wore the calcum powder and was ready to visit someone.

The bull rang Ghutlung Ghutlung.

Soon she got up from Ananta's chest and sat. She could once again listen the songs. Yes, the music sung along with the sound of Dotara made her awake. It was the music of Dotara and song was very own, very familiar.

Gariyakai (Cartman) please stop the cart!

The bell stopped ringing. She got down from the cart. Ananta who by then was also awake followed her. She didnot know why listening to the music, the memories burried in her soul. That made Ananta unrest and followed to the owner of the Dotara and song. The morning wind blew the veil of Madhumati's saree. Even her hair seem to be disturbed by it.

Ananta stopped there.

But Madhumati didn't. Nearby was the Gadadhar river
ing like a weak snake. □



■ Literature is for literature's sake – rejecting this tradition, with the commitment to enrich the Assamese literature, with new experimentation Dr. Paramananda Rajbongshi has flourished this new trend. Although he has established himself as a short story writer, Dr. Rajbongshi has also continuously worked as a Dramalist, Novelist and Composer, besides telecasting a series of story and musical features through Television. Dr. Rajbongshi has also gained popularity as a writer - Director of the film 'Anal', depicted on the Peasant Revolution which resulted the war of Patharughat (1894). Collecting the cream of Folk-Lore and Folk-Drama, Dr. Rajbongshi has written a number of Drama and directed stage performance. Dr. Rajbongshi is also the Writer - Director of a Serial thirteen episodes called 'Agni' for transmission through the National channel of All India Radio, New Delhi. With his credit, Dr. Rajbongshi has already published a research analysis called 'Assamese Folk Theatre and Darrangi Khulia Bhaoria', besides more than ten number of books on literature and culture.

A regular writer of leading News papers and Journals, **Dr. Rajbongshi** has already published five novels, besides a series of short stories. Presently working as Professor and Head of the Department of Assamese (both T.D.C. and P.G.) at Pragjyotish College, Guwahati, has published four books short stories such as 'Ek Natun Jehadar Janma', 'Birin Banar Suhuri', 'Ejan Ajamilar Mrityu' and 'Gondha'. Research Guide of the Gauhati University he goes deep into the soil of his land, brings the heart out tune of flute of the folk-culture and arranges his short stories in an intellectual and artistic manner in characterisation of the society. He analyses the social and individual problems in a dynamic outlook and tries to uplift the have nots.

Through this selective short story collection, the reader could acquaintance with talent and new technique of Dr. Rajbongshi. ■