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**Aama Aaina OSA NY/NJ...**

Authored by Sribatsa Das

8.5" x 11.0" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)  
Color on White paper  
62 pages

ISBN-13: 9781979436830  
ISBN-10: 1979436835

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*Our Reflections*



**THE JOURNAL OF THE ODISHA  
SOCIETY OF AMERICAS  
NY, NJ, PA - 2017**

## The Editor's View

The annual journal reflects our passion, talent and the diversity that is available within the community and how we can come together to produce a fine publication.

This journal is a space for expression for everyone. The editorial team carefully avoided calling this a creative writing exercise and instead called it a passion writing exercise. We would like to say that we were successful in our endeavor since we received articles about Fast Food, Strength Training and the English Language.

Our motto now is 'ABCW' – Anybody can write! So pick up your pen or device – and start writing about your passion. OSA NYNJPA will create publishing opportunities for you.

Editorial Team,

Nagesh Rajanala, Sudhendu Das, Ranjita Misra, and Sribatsa Das

Acknowledgements:

Preeti Rath: Illustrations,

Bishnu Maharana, Sushmita Pradhan: Photographs

Aradhya & Aaryana Rajanala: Photoshop

Journal Name Credit: Lal Mohanty

Journal Front Cover Credit: Niladri Roy – Painting of young maidens dancing on Kumar Purnima with Fall background with Ganga Siuli [*Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* (Night-flowering Jasmine)] flowers on the ground.

Journal Inside Cover Credit: Preeti Rath – Cover inspiration statement below:

*Peacock feather is often considered as a symbolism of immortality, openness, guidance, protection, rejuvenation, compassion, sanctity and vision. Likewise OSA thrives all positive aspects of the great ODISHA, at the same time ensures cultural globalization. Its **Immortality** keeping the culture alive for generations, Its **Openness** allows to embrace all irrespective of age/ caste/ religion/ race. A perfect **Guide** and a friend in need for all, far away from native land missing home, by bringing them back home away from home. Protective as a mother that cares for its child it **protects** and **rejuvenates** the rich values, culture of Odisha. It radiates and infuses the **compassion, sanctity** into our hearts. And above all, as lord Jagannath it is always **vigilant** keeping eyes wide open in all circumstances. Kudos, way to go OSA!*



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**Message from President, OSANY-NJ Chapter**

Welcome to 2017 OSA NY-NJ Kumar Purnima – The Odia Annual Day - A day of Cultural Extravaganza to show case Our Culture, Our Pride and Our Heritage! It is a social family gathering to have just fun. My best wishes to “Aama Aaina” – The Annual Souvenir of OSA NY-NJ, on its 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

Almost 50 years ago this society was born for camaraderie. Over the years it has grown from a fledgling group to a society today where a member looks for friendship, a golden age member receives passionate welcome and helping hand, a new comer from Odisha looks for support in case of need. Despite being a platform for many aspects, it is in a crossroad now where its self-esteemed members are looking for, and rightly so, to

Odia identity proportional to the size of Indian diaspora in Americas. OSA NY-NJ needs to make that leap forward. It needs to stay vibrant, relevant to its members and execute its events in a larger scale in collaboration with Indian diaspora, in an efficient and professional manner. Over the past two years, our team goal has been just this. We have experimented with many things such as OSANYNJ’s social media presence at Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, web-based feedback; Annual Magazine – Aama Aaina, monthly volunteering program at Food Pantry, SAMPARK initiative to connect with golden age members, Mentorship program for Kids, Odia Radio Program by our kids, working together with Indian diaspora on many events. Streamlining our events, pre-payment options for each event and restoring the Annual General Body Meeting of OSANY-NJ are aimed at same direction. I am hopeful this will continue un-interrupted by successive Executive teams.

I take this opportunity to thank all our sponsors for their passion to contribute to society. We wish them success and flourishing in our community and let our community bonding be stronger.

Finally, I thank the Executive Team, the Management Team and each volunteer. They are the real gems and this society is being carried forward on their shoulder. Our society is in such a respected place today because of our volunteers’ selfless work, dedication and team work.

Long live OSA NY-NJ!!!

Sridhar Rana  
President, OSA New York – New Jersey Chapter

OSA New York – New Jersey Chapter Team – 2016-2017



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**ରଥଯାତ୍ରା**

*Subhasish Panda  
Renu Mobapatra*

ରଥର ବସିଛି କାଳିଆ ଧନ, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀକୁ ସାଂଗରେ ନଲେନ  
ରଥ ଗଡୁଅଛି ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡରରେ, ହାରିବେ । ଲୁଲୁହୁଳି ଶବ୍ଦରେ  
ଘଣ୍ଟ ଘାଣ୍ଟି ଆଉ ଶଂଖର ନାଦ, ମନୁ ଦୁର କରେ ଦୁଖ ବିଷାଦ  
ସିଂହ ଦୁଆରରୁ ଗୁଣ୍ଡିତା ଘର, ସବର ଲଳିତା ଯେ । ତି ଅଛନ୍ତି କର  
ଧରମକୁ ଆଖି ଆଗରେ ରଖି, ପରଥମେ ଛାଡ଼ିଛି ବଡ଼ ଭାଇକି  
ଭଉଣୀକୁ ରଖି ଅଛି ମଝିରେ, ପଛରେ ରହିଛି ଲଳିତାକି  
ସଭିକୁ କହୁଛି ମଠାରେ ସୀମା, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀକୁ ସାଂଗରେ ରଖ  
ରତନ ସିଂହାସନରେ ବସିଛି ମୁହିଁ, ସାଂଗେ ଧରି ଭଉଣୀ ଭାଇ  
ବାଟେ ଯଗାଛି ମଠା । ମାଉସୀ ମା, ପଠେ ପିଠା କରି ଡାକୁଛି ଆଆ  
କହି ଅଛି ମତେ ବହୁତ କରି, ଯିବା ଆସିବା ବଳେ ତେ । ହରି  
ମଠା । ଦୁଆର ଚିକିଏ ହେ । ଲବୁ ଠିଆ, ଜାଣିଛୁ ତୁ ମୁଁ ରହୁଛି ଏକାକିଆ  
ଭକ୍ତ ମାନଙ୍କର କେତେ ଗୁହାରି, ଡାକୁଛନ୍ତି କେତେ ପରକାର କରି  
ପିତା ମାତା ପୁତ୍ର ଭକ୍ତ ଭାବରେ, ଭଜନ କରନ୍ତି ମଠା । ଆଗରେ  
ଦାସ ଭାବ ଧରି କିଏ ଡାକୁଛି, ଉଦଧାର କରିଦେ ମତେ ଡାକୁଛି  
ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡ କହେ ଦୁଃଖ ନାଶନ, ତତେ କେ । ଲରେ ଧରି ଆଜି ମୁଁ ଧନ୍ୟ  
ମନେ ମନେ ହସି ରଂଗ ଅଧରେ, ବସି ଅଛୁ ତୁହି ରଥ ଉପରେ  
ତେ । ନେତ୍ରରେ ଧନ ପଲକ ନାହିଁ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ମତେ ଦଖେଇ  
ସୁନ୍ଦର ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ତେ । ନେତ୍ରରୁ ବାହାର, ଶ୍ରିତରଣେ ତେ । କେ । ଚି କୁହାର  
ସତରେ ଧନ ତୁ ଉଦାର ମନ, ସଭିକୁ ଦେଇ ଅଛୁ ଆସ୍ବାସନ  
ଶୁରଧା ନାମ ତେ । ଦୟା ସାଗର, ତେ । ପାଖେ ନାହିଁ ପାତର ଅନ୍ତର  
ପୁରାଣ ଶାଶ୍ଵତରେ ପଢ଼ିଛି ମୁହିଁ, ରଥେ ତେ । ତେ ଯେ ଦରଶନ କରଇ  
ପୁନର୍ ଜନମ କେବେ ହୁଏନା ତାର, ପରାପତ ହୁଏ ତାକୁ ବଢ଼ିନିଅ ଘର  
ଏ କଥାରେ ମଠା । ଅଛି ବିସ୍ଵାସ, କରିବୁନି ମତେ ନିରାସ  
ସବୁ ବଡ଼ ତେ । ବଡ଼ ଠାକୁର, ବଡ଼ ଆସା ତୁହି ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖୀର  
ସବର ସୁଖେ ଯାଇ ଗଣ୍ଡିତା ଘର, ବୁଲି ପଂରେ ଆସ ଖୁସି ମନରେ  
ତେ । ବିହୁଡ଼ା ଯାତ୍ରା ଦଖେଇ ପାଇଁ, ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡେ ଯିବେ ଭକ୍ତ ଅନେଇ  
ଜାଣୁଛୁ ତୁହି ତେ । ଶୁଭିଶୀଷ ଆଉ ରଣେଇ ମନ, ଶରୀ ତରଣେ ତେ । କେ । ଚି ପରଶାମ

**Poem**

*Aastha Das*

Sky was brilliantly blue  
Sunlight glittering white on the ground  
Blinding.  
A Whole world  
Transformed by snow.  
Looking in vain for familiar landmarks  
Treetops that had been gold all autumn were twisted  
As if they would never have any life in them  
Ever again.  
Few cedars, so dull before,  
Now stood out a strong, dusky green.  
The wind had the burning taste of fresh snow  
The cold stung, and delighted one.  
Earth got back little color under the dazzling light  
The palest gold in the sun and snow stood.  
Snow was crusted in shallow terraces,  
Tracings like ripple-marks at the edges  
Curly waves were the impression of the stinging lash in the wind.  
Girls shivering beneath sweaters  
Hugging each other for warmth.  
The great open, after the stupefying warmth indoors,  
Made them behave like wild things.  
They laughed and shouted.  
Never wanting to go home again

## The Jockey Jackal

*Pratyay Mohapatra*

Once upon a time there lived a jackal. He toiled as a farmer just to put food on his family's plates. His son Jack loved to play soccer. So, to fulfil his son's dream, the Jackal started doing a crop sale every day to get money to register him on their local soccer team. He also managed to buy shin-guards and cleats for Jack. So, on his first practice, he walked up to his teammates, who were all prey. His coach wrote something down on his clipboard and said, "Welcome to the team! What's your name?" Jack happily said, "Jack." The other players snickered at him, but Jack didn't seem to notice.

Afterwards, the coach gave a series of genuine compliments to Jack for his soccer skills. He thanked the coach and walked off to his house in total darkness. He told his parents about the first day, but his father knew that all his teammates were being fishy for one reason. Because his son was a jackal.

The next day, at school, Jack got a soccer ball at recess and started to practice some footwork. His teammates started planning to pass with him, but then "accidentally" kick the ball away and tell him to get it. But when they started to approach him, Joey the giraffe spoke up. He said, "Why should we do this? I mean, Jack is a nice guy, even if he's a jackal. Plus, he is our teammate, why should we treat him differently?" Harry the hare, the leader of the group said, "Because back in prehistoric times, jackals used to eat us! Now, we need to pay them back by disrespecting them." Joey shook his head and told his teammate he couldn't support Harry's plan. Harry ignored him and began to activate his plan, but the recess whistle blew and they had to go inside.

In class, show and tell was going on and Jack showed a gourd that he had picked with his father from his farm. Harry and some of his friends began stifling laughs until Joey and Timmy the turtle silenced them by saying, "I can't hear him with your laughs", but actually they tried to tell them that it was not nice to laugh at someone. When it was Joey's turn he brought a soccer ball and explained that his dad, the coach of his soccer team, told him that at show and tell he would tell Jack he was the best player on the team, right in front of Harry and his friends.

Their teacher, Mrs. Antler and all Joey's other friends and teammates went over to Joey and Jack to give them hugs. Harry was the only one who didn't. All of Jack and Joey's teammates apologized for bullying him. Right when they finished, the final bell rang and Joey told Harry his dad would tell him to control his behavior or he would be benched on the first and last game. Harry finally learned his lesson and went over to Jack and said, "I'm sorry." Then afterwards, the coach saw that Harry was well-behaved and put him with Jack on the forward position. And they played together happily ever after.

## "MAA"

*Sangita Bindhani*

Dayananda Babu was sitting on a rocking chair on the balcony of his bedroom. After retirement, he had nothing to do in the morning, just sit and read his newspaper, since his wife was busy with household work and he had no one else to talk to. All his children were away at their work place, but sometimes he talks with Ramu. Ramu had been with them from 10 years, and had been considered a family member in the household. Dayananda Babu had found him on the street when he was begging for food, and he had asked him, "Do you want to come with me to our house?" The boy was very happy and nodded, "Yes!" and immediately asked, "Are you going to give me food?" Dayananda Babu felt very sad when he came to know that the boy had not eaten for two days. He immediately took him to the nearest restaurant and gave him some food, then brought him to his house. There, he told his wife Mita, "See, I found another son for you!" At first, Mita got shocked and asked him, "Who is that boy? And how can we keep a street boy in our house?" Dayananda Babu said "I talked with him, his parents had died in an accident and he has nowhere to go- and don't worry- I talked with him, he seemed to be a nice boy." Dayananda Babu added, "As all our children are grown up now, they will leave us at any time and start their own life. We need someone to stay with us." And that's how Ramu was added to their family and became their youngest son.

While sitting on the balcony, he saw some kids standing in front of their house, looking around here and there and plucking guavas from their tree, as they thought no one was watching them. Dayananda Babu was enjoying watching their antics.

While watching them, one memory of him from 60 years ago reappeared. Once, when he was 5 or 6 years old, he had plucked some mangoes from his neighbor's house. Seeing him plucking the mangoes, his neighbor got angry and shouted at him, "I will tell your mother that you are stealing mangoes from our garden!" and snatched the mangoes from him. Little Dayananda got scared and came home crying, and told the story to his mother. Dayananda's mother knew he was only taking them due to a childish nature. However, she did not say anything bad about the neighbor. Instead, she said, "We have some ripe mangoes in our garden. Let's go pick them." After picking those mangoes, she kept some for their house and the rest she told Daya (Dayananda Babu's nickname) to take and give to Kasi Uncle (neighbor). Daya did exactly as his mother asked him to do. After few minutes the neighbor came to apologize for shouting at Daya. He said "I am sorry, Bhabi. Today I behaved badly with Daya." Then Daya's mom replied, "This is not about mangoes, Kasi, it is about the child's mind. I don't want him to get mad at you or think bad about you, I want him to grow up as a real man with love and compassion for all. I would be very happy if you hug him and have some mangoes together." While hugging Daya, tears came out from Kasi's eyes. Dayananda Babu thought if all the mothers were like his mother then there would be peace everywhere. He remembered another incident... Once, he was busy playing with his friends, and his mom asked him to go get oil from the store. He went unwillingly, and mistakenly got the oil without paying for it. His mother saw he did not give the money to the shopkeeper, got mad and asked him to immediately go back to the store and give the shopkeeper money. He never saw a beggar go empty handed from their house, and many times he saw his mother give her food to beggars saying, "They are hungrier than me." She always told Daya, "Do you know why God has given us more food than we need? So that we can share our food with everyone." She said, "Never beg from anyone but give to everyone who begs you."

There are a number of incidences where Dayananda Babu learnt his life's lessons from his mother. But he has had a little sadness somewhere in his heart that his Mother died when he was only 10 years old. He always wished if his mother would have lived little longer, he could have learnt a lot from her. Even now he always follows what his mother taught him in his childhood. He thought to himself "Yes! It is well said that a mother is a child's first teacher."

Dayananda Babu came to his senses when he heard Ramu shouting at the kids for plucking guavas. Dayananda Babu stopped Ramu from shouting and said, "Who will eat those fruits if the kids won't eat

them? Look at their faces! How happy they are, do you think if your Maa or I will eat those guavas, we will be that happy? He came out of the house and started plucking the ripe guavas, giving them to the kids. While he was doing this, an unknown happiness was flowing through his veins...

## **My Dog Cookie**

*Mallika Panda*

Yes! I yelled. "We are getting a dog?" "Wahoo" my sister yelled as we were walking to the pet store. I was overwhelmed with lots and lots of joy. When we walked in I looked around. There were so many dogs.

"We are getting a big dog." My dad said. "How long have you been planning this?" I asked. "A few months" answered my Mom. Weird. "A FEW MONTHS" I said loudly and also I told you "we will get a dog Misha" I bragged. We are going to get a golden doodle.

The small dogs were barking soo loudly. A lady led us to a small place with lots of golden doodles. There it was. The perfect one....or at least that's what we thought. "Are we going to take it home or what" my sister said. "We have to play with it, to see if we like the dog" my mom said with her smart voice. She took us inside a gate where we could play with a dog. I could tell this would be fun. We took her inside. "Can I hold her" I asked "sure" the lady said. I held her. So was so fluffy. I was beaned with joy. We played and played with her. Right when we were about to leave with her....My sister said "WAIT". "I like this one" she yelled. We looked over.

I felt like beautiful music was playing. She was the real one. We asked to play with her. She was much better than the other dog. She looked like a cookie. She was supper playful. We loved her. We took her. When we walked out of the pet shop I got to holder her half of the way and then my sister held her. "I want to name her" I said. "Okay" my family said. "I'll name her....COOKIE" I yelled. "Because she looks like a cookie" I said. "Yay! That's good name for her" my sister said. And we drove away.

## **The Mirithmus Asylum**

*Yogesh Mohapatra*

I hadn't ever dreamed of being a robber. Or, being a 35 year old man living on the streets. But sometimes life doesn't always give you lemons to make lemonade. Today, would be nothing special. I robbed the grocery store all the time. It was the only store that I could easily sneak into and steal food. I had thought that today wouldn't be anything different. I snuck in some meat today just to add some taste to my dull life. I walked in, looked, and picked what I would get. I exited happily, envisioning what I could add to today's meal. That's when everything went wrong.

Right when I stepped out, a siren went off, so deafening that I thought I was going to lose my ability to hear. I stumbled outside, my face white with shock, holding onto my ears but it wouldn't do a thing. I thought of only one thing. 'Cops!' I thought. I recovered from my shock, and sprinted down the alleyway, and just as I rounded the curb, my eyes almost fell out of there sockets. There they were. The cops, waiting with a smug smile. Then a man with black hair and piercing gray eyes looked up. He announced. "Hands up!". Since many guns were pointed at me, I couldn't do anything but to follow his orders. The police immediately surrounded me, tense, as if believing I possessed a weapon. Which, as a homeless person, I didn't have. After what seemed like hours, they finally proceeded to handcuffing me, and while the metal slowly dug into my skin, a man shoved me into a police car, locking the door. As we began to drive, I noticed the man who was in shotgun was the same man who had told me to put my hands up. He was speaking into his walkie talkie, reporting news to probably his chief. "Chief Bob, we finally caught him." The man spoke. More crackling. Probably a response. "Really?" the policeman questioned. "There?" More static. "Okay all right." He responded, tucking his phone into his pocket. The car was silent. I was thinking about how lucky I

was, because some people I knew had the scariest stories of how they got captured. As I thought about it, I shivered. I had heard a kind of new security system they had developed, that was created a year ago, in 2028. It was being tested currently in the Mirithmus Asylum, and one of my best friends had gone in there, just to explore, and when he came back, he was somebody completely different. He had been driven insane, and kept ranting about how all the security guards were created from your deepest fears, and that you stayed in a hall all by yourself. If you did one thing wrong, they would stir and wake, frightening you to an extent that you couldn't think anymore. He barely explained with his mind, but he was never the same. He just hid in his sleeping bag, and barely ate, getting horror-stricken whenever there was a loud sound. I believed I was very lucky. I just probably had to stay in a local jail for 5 days, and then come back. But, a few minutes later, news came to me that would probably change me forever`

It felt like hours on the trip there. The shades were completely closed, so I couldn't see anything. Finally, the door opened, and I got shoved out of the car. The dim light of the sun blinded me. After a few seconds, I finally looked up. The sun was setting. It was the evening, and the sun flashed and the sky had turned red, as a beautiful splash of colors lit the sky. "Where am I?" I thought to myself. "How is it already sunset? I turned around slowly. My eyes rested on a huge sign. As I read it, my heart rate instantly went up, my eyes practically jumping out of their sockets, and fear seeping into my body. The sign had read, "The Mirithmus Asylum".

I turned around sprinting and breathing hard, thinking about how I had gotten myself into this mess. I started running breathlessly, knowing that this was a bad dream. Suddenly I felt a tug on my leg. I looked down right before I fell, seeing a rope tied around my leg, as the ground rushed to meet my face. Pain seared through my face, though I was really just hurt on the inside 'Why am I even here? What did I do?' I thought as I looked up, groaning, right at the sky. The police laughed, and two of them lifted me up, hauling me into the asylum against my own will. After an hour of processing, a man led me into the jail rooms, and while we were walking I tried to understand my surroundings. I first recognized the people. They were all sitting in a corner, their eyes filled with fear. They were probably scarred for life, facing their deepest fears over and over again. I practically felt sorry for them, but then I remembered that the only reason they were there was because they must have done something terrible. But that contradicted the fact about why I was there. All I did was steal from a grocery store. What did I do to deserve... this?

A man shoved me inside my cell, telling me that I would be released in 5 days. The room was absolutely disgusting. There was a slab of stone which was a lame excuse for a bed, a toilet, and dirty walls surrounding the cell. But I personally didn't want to stay for more than a few seconds. That's what I planned in doing. After a few minutes making sure that the coast was clear, I got set to working. The security guard, a clown, of course it had to be a clown, hadn't noticed when I had swiftly taken the keys from him. I put the key through the lock and tried to locate anything that I could use to escape. As I carefully observed the room I finally noticed something. Right next to an empty leather sack was a sewer hole. I ran to it, looking slowly, to see if there were any cameras watching me. I sprinted to the sewer hole safe at last. But right before I reached it, the leather sack moved. I froze, what was it? Then paying attention a little bit more, I realized that it was alive. It was one of the guards, forged from my fears. The Nerosaur had been awoken.

The creature turned around, and then I realized it was the same monster that I have had nightmares about. It had a bullish figure, but with a body of a muscular human one. Its scarlet eyes focused on me. It had two double-blade axes, shaped like the greek letter of delta. It was shaped like a triangle, making it look a little lopsided. Two rings hung from its nose, and its body was covered with shiny gold armor. Its face was changing constantly, first a clown, then a ghoul, and then the faces of my dead children, and then my dead wife. The more time I looked at its face, the more times it changed into something that chilled me to the bone. I shivered with fright. Sweat beaded down my neck. I was frozen with fear. Fear and panic took over my mind. The Nerosaur lifted up its axe and swung. I finally shook out of my daze, ducking at the very last instant and sprinting away. The monster roared, pulling its axe out of the rubble and then roared. I ran into my cell and locked the door. The monster desperately threw an axe, landing it right where I was about a moment ago. I faltered, not being able to think properly anymore. I ran to a corner, thinking I was safe,



because the Nerosaur had successfully completed its job. But Nerosaur had other ideas. It smashed into the door repeatedly, trying to break into the cell. Cracks were appearing at the door. If the Nerosaur had broken in, I was doomed. I looked around, seeing if I could do anything to stop it. The axe... The toilet... the sewage pipes... I had an idea!

I ran over to the axe trying to take it out of the wall. With a final strain of effort, I ripped it out of the wall, and positioned myself right where I was supposed to be. But right before I could get ready, the cell exploded with debris. I tumbled to the ground, and stayed there. My legs turned to lead, and I felt like I was inhaling coal. The monster rose up and brought up his axe. At that moment, I screamed and smashed the sewage pipe with the monster's other axe. But nothing happened. I had failed. I would perish as a desperate homeless person that stole food to feed his own mouth. The monster raised his axe coming in for the kill. I closed my eyes waiting to die. But then suddenly, water engulfed the monster.

The water instantly gushed out of the pipes, practically drowning the Nerosaur with water. I instantly sprinted out of the cell and jumped down to the sewer hole. I ran as fast as I could, because I knew that if I stopped, the Nerosaur could get me. Hastily and anxiously, I hunted for an exit. Once I found it, I ran out of the sewer, finally bursting into the fresh air. Finally, there was sunlight to look at, and not worrying about dying. I suddenly turned. The sign said, 15th Avenue. I was on the same street as where the Mirithmus Asylum is. I looked around. No police chasing me. Infact as I looked around, I couldn't find the Mirithmus Asylum. In its place was barren land. That struck me weird. I couldn't believe it! Where did the asylum go?

A few months after the incident, life became very strange. I started to get money by working at the gas station, because I was never going to go to jail again. I started asking people if they knew anything about the Mirithmus Asylum, and they didn't know if it existed or not. Even my friend that had been scarred from there didn't remember anything about it, being his usual jovial self. When I visited the police department, they never even had a record of me ever going to jail. Weird. I was starting to think it had just been a scary nightmare, but deep down in my gut, I knew that wasn't the truth. If I were you, I would never try to think doing something against the law anymore. You will never know what will happen to you. If the Mirithmus Asylum is still out there, then you should definitely heed my advice. If you don't, then be prepared to be facing your worst fears. And facing the truth like that will scar you for your life. If you have still have yours after it.

## Visiting Ashrams in India

*Haripriya Mahapatra*



There are some places around the world that give you a feeling of peace. These places make you feel very relaxed and afterwards just hearing those names makes you feel peaceful. Since I have had such an experience, I would like to share it with you. In the summer of 2015, I travelled to India and I had the rare opportunity to visit three ashrams in south India with my Dad and grandparents. These ashrams are located in Amritapuri in Kerala, and Pondicherry and Tiruvannamalai (Arunachala) in Tamil Nadu. Let me describe how I felt about these places.

**Amritapuri:** Amritapuri is named after a living saint known as Amma, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, a world renowned humanitarian and spiritual leader. She is also recognized as hugging saint because when someone comes to see her, she embraces as a mother hugs a child. To reach her ashram, we took a plane to Trivandrum. It was 10 o'clock in the night when we got off the plane. The night was cold. When we got out from the airport I saw a car waiting for us. My Dad previously requested the ashram to send a car to pick us. After a 3 hour drive, we were at the destination. I noticed that the ashram is on an island that has Arabian Sea on one side and a canal like waterbody called backwaters the other side. When I got there, I got amazed because even though it was 1:00 AM in the night, all around the ashram there were people doing things like sweeping the ground and arranging things for the next day Ashram activities. I got to know from my Dad that over years, Amma has inspired many people to help people and serve the needy and poor with a compassionate heart. Many of those people have decided to permanently stay in Amritapuri. Amritapuri has 5,000 permanent residents and receives about 10,000 visitors on any day when Amma is in the ashram. The next morning, my dad woke me up early to take me around the ashram. It was really very early morning and when I came outside I saw people doing work even when it was still dark. My dad took me to the beach next to the ashram.

I got to know Amma often goes and meditates on the beach. People in the ashram also accompany her and meditate with her. I recalled then that once when I



I was visiting the ashram a few years ago, I had a chance to go with her to the beach and it felt really good. And I realized that Amma can make the atmosphere very peaceful. After the nice walk on the beach, we went for some breakfast and then went to see Amma in a big hall called darshan hall. Amma came and guided all for some meditation then gave a small talk in her native language called Malayalam. One devotee was translating her talk to others. I heard that Amma was talking about ego. Ego means the

person in us who desires to do or get something. After the speech, Amma personally distributed lunch (Prasad) to many people (maybe more than 2000 people) who were there that time. Prasad is a food that is first offered to God before one eats it. I saw something astonishing about Amma. After handing out the Prasad, Amma started eating hers among the huge crowd. I was surprised to see that although a lot of people were talking and there was a lot of distraction around, Amma was quietly eating without talking to anyone. It wasn't like she was in a quiet place, I thought she was just respecting the food by giving full attention to it. I got to know that according to Hindu religion while eating one should not talk and feel grateful to God for the food. After the lunch, I went to our room and took some rest. In the evening, we got ready to go to darshan hall again where Amma comes and sings bhajans. Bhajans are songs for God. While Amma was doing bhajans we had a chance to sit very close to Amma. In the middle of the bhajans I started to feel cold. A

person who knew my Dad was helping us (who I call Rupa aunty) took me out of the hall and brought a chocolate for me and then took me to Amma's room. Amma's room was a simple one with a few photos of various Hindu Gods, a small sofa for rest and a mat on the floor. I felt really lucky to be there because never imagined that I will be in the room of such a famous person. The next day, I went to have a darshan of Amma. During darshan, Amma gives hugs and also some Prasad which is usually a fruit, a candy or a piece of sweetmeat. There was always a big crowd around Amma. Lot of noise, cries, laughter etc.; Amma was so lovingly talking to everyone. She was not tired at all. After giving the darshan, Amma asked us to sit next to her for some time. The time we spent with her after the darshan was so nice that in just a little time I felt so calm and happy. After sitting there for a while we came back to our room to get ready for our next trip, the following morning. Amritapuri was a nice place indeed.

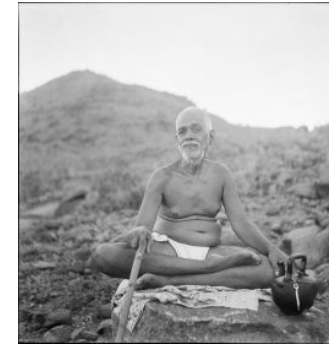
**Pondicherry:** Our next trip was to Pondicherry, to visit the Ashram of Shri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and The Mother (1878-1971), who is also known as Shree Maa in Odiya language. Shree Maa was the spiritual companion of Shri Aurobindo. After a 2 hour trip on the plane from Trivandrum, Kerala we got to Chennai, Tamil Nadu. From the airport, we went to meet one of my Dad's friend and his family who were living in Chennai. There we had lunch and then we headed to Pondicherry which is about three hours drive. We reached there at night. After we got there, we got a room in a hotel and then went out to get something to eat. The next day we went to see Shri Aurobindo's ashram. I heard that Shri Aurobindo was a fighter of India's freedom from British rule during his early years but then became a saint. He founded the ashram, lived there for about 39 years and when he died he was buried in the ashram. His burial place is called Samadhi. I got to know even The Mother (Shree Maa) was buried at the same place. After reaching the Ashram, we first went to see the memorial (i.e., Samadhi), the place where their bodies were laid.

After getting there and sitting next to the memorial of Shri Aurobindo for some time, something very rare happened. My Dad and I had an urge to enter the building where Shri Aurobindo lived. After entering the building we looked around for a while, went upstairs and in fact got into his room, where he lived for 24 years continuously. There was a watchman at the door but he did not stop us. Later we got to know, it is a rare privilege to go to Aurobindo's room and mediate. To maintain the sanctity of the place, Shree Maa had advised that one can go to Shri Aurobindo's room only on his/her birthday. The policy is strictly followed even today. In the room, I was given some flowers to offer near the bed of Shri Aurobindo. I had also a chance to sit quietly for some time. It really felt very peaceful, something similar to what I felt while being with Amma. I felt very lucky to be there because it was neither my birthday nor my Dad's and I never know if there would be a day when I can be there on my birthday.



Unfortunately we couldn't go inside because we did not have tickets that we should have brought from another building earlier in the day. The next day we left for our new destination, Shri Ramana Maharshi's Ashram.

**Tiruvannamalai:** After the nice trip and peaceful stay at Pondicherry, we left for Tiruvannamalai, a temple town in Tamil Nadu in south India. In Tiruvannamalai, there is Arunachal Shiva temple and an ashram which is known as Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's Ashram. Bhagavan Ramana (1879-1950) was a saint who is also viewed by many as an incarnation of Lord Shiva. Shiva is one of the most auspicious Gods in Hindu religion.



After reaching Ramana's ashram, we went to the ashram office to get a room to stay. Afterwards, when we were on our way to the ashram, something really funny happened. I was holding a water bottle and was looking around; there were lot of monkeys in the ashram premises. I think, one monkey was very thirsty. So what it did was, it came over to me, snatched the water bottle out of my hand, opened the water bottle, drank like a human would, then closed the cap and jumped away with my bottle. I was a bit scared but was amazed to see that. Afterwards, we went inside Ramana's temple to participate in arati (a traditional way to offer prayer by waving a lamp in front of the deity). The place was really very cool and peaceful – maybe the most peaceful one for me among the three ashrams, I visited.

The next day, I and my dad went to hike on the Arunachala hill that is also known as the hill of auspicious fire. Raman said and many believe that the hill is Lord Shiva Himself. There we went to Skandaashram a cave on the hill, where Ramana stayed for seven years when he was young. We meditated there for some time and it felt as if Ramana was in front of us and had just left the place. On my way back, I heard the life and teachings of Raman were being read in a room. I went in, sat for some time and enjoyed the reading.

Subsequently, I and my dad went to look around the room where Ramana spent his last days. His dishes were arranged in a shelf. My dad told me there was something to learn from them. Well you might be thinking, "what would I be learning from plates, dishes etc.?" Trust me, I thought the same thing. When I keenly observed the plates and cups, I realized one can really learn something about Ramana from those dishes. Even if those dishes were very old they were shining like gold! It shows how sincere Ramana was in maintain those! It was truly fascinating. The next day we went to the Arunachala Shiva temple, which was a massive temple. Then we also took time to drive around the Arunachala hill in the late afternoon. The taxi driver pointed to us many people who were walking around the hill which is about 8 miles – he explained that people consider walking around the hill is same as circling around the Shiva. It is very auspicious. The next day morning we left for Bhaubaneswar, where my grandparents live.

**What I learnt:** Throughout the whole trip, I learnt something from each place. In Amma's ashram I learnt how to do work with love and fun. In Shri Aurobindo's ashram, I learnt how to stay focused in one's own work and thoughts. And in Ramana's ashram, I learnt how to remain simple, sincere and yet peaceful. My entire trips to the three ashrams lasted only seven days; this may not be long but the memory of it will stay with me forever. I really think, these are the places that one can visit when one is very lucky. I am glad that I am one of those lucky ones.

## Missing the Chip

*Ananya Pradban*



Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: Yeah, I'm so glad it's the weekend.

Amber: Same. The whole week I was just waiting for it.

You: Like I said I can't wait. Oh, you're still going to get your chip checked with me, tomorrow right?

Amber: Yeah, there's been some connection problems on my chip so I definitely need a maintenance check.

You: K

Incoming Message from Parker Young:

Parker: Kaylee, lunch's ready!

You: I'm coming.

Would You Like to Return to Your Conversation with Amber Hart?

[Yes](#) [No](#)

Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: Sorry Amber, I got to go. Parker's calling me for dinner and I'm starving. I'll call you when I'm about to leave for your house, k?

Amber: Sure Kaylee. I have some homework to finish anyway that my mom's chatting to me about right now. Since I've been getting some headaches from my chip she's been telling me to stop using it so much, but it's so boring without my chip.

You: You've been getting headaches? Amber, why didn't you tell me? I don't want you to feel sick.

Amber: Don't worry about it, they're minor headaches. Plus, we're going for the chip check so Dr. Miller will fix it.

You: Okay, you sure?

Amber: Positive.

Incoming Message from Parker Young:

Parker: Kaylee you better hurry. Mom says that the food's getting cold.

You: Okay, I'm coming. I just need to finish up this convo with Amber.

Parker: Okay.

Would You Like to Return to Your Conversation with Amber Hart?

[Yes](#) [No](#)

Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: I have to leave Amber, so I'll see you later.

Amber: Yep.

You: K, ttyl!

Amber: Bye!

I bolted out of my room and rushed down the stairs, quickly sliding into my seat next to Parker. I grabbed my fork and took a small piece of pasta and swallowed it. I looked through the photos of my friends with my TC social media account. I chuckled at my friends as we looked hilarious in the photo we took together at the park with silly faces. I looked down to take another bite of pasta when I noticed Parker, my younger brother, on his chip too. He looked really concentrated on his chip so I suspected him playing video games again. Mom and dad were also on their chips, both probably finishing their work. Dad especially was very concentrated on something. I scrolled through my TC account, looking for new posts from my friends.

Incoming Message from Dad:

Dad: Kaylee, don't go on your chip after I tell you this.

You: What, why?

Dad: I just received an email from TechFeed and they said there was a malfunction with the TechFeed software in our chips. Everyone must get off their chip until the software has been fixed to prevent harm to anyone. Shut down your chip now.

You: Okay, I will.

I clicked the shutdown icon on my chip as I looked around the table. Mom, dad, and Parker were all staring at me.

"Kaylee, you are off... your chip, right?" Dad asked in broken fragments. I opened my mouth to start respond "yeah," but my mouth felt so weird using it this way. I decided to just nod. I looked around at Parker, who was still eating his lunch, but in the messiest way ever. He had sauce all over his face. Mom opened her mouth to tell him to use a napkin, but for some reason decided to leave it. I watched her open her mouth and roll her tongue, maybe to make a letter sound. I don't even remember the last time anyone in this family used their mouth to speak.

Silence filled the air as everyone stared awkwardly at each other. I wished that there had been no malfunction in the first place. I wanted to chat with my friends! I was so bored! I sighed in frustration internally. Finally, mom broke the silence by saying, "Let us go... outside on... a walk." She spoke in broken fragments just like dad. Parker and I stood up, showing that we wanted to go outside too. Everyone had finished their pasta.

"I need...to go... change." I spoke slowly, having trouble saying the word change I think. I walked upstairs to my room and opened my closet. I picked my favorite cashmere sweater to wear and combed my brown, curly hair until it felt soft and smooth. I rushed downstairs where the rest of my family was already ready. I wore and zipped up my black boots and followed my mom and Parker outside, my dad behind me. The air felt cold, but it was okay because of my sweater. We all walked on the sidewalk with Parker in front of me and mom and dad behind me; no one said a word. I looked around and noticed it was just outside; everyone else was probably inside on their chips.

After a long while of silence, Parker finally spoke.

"Kaylee... do you... want... to hear a... story?" Parker asked, in the same way of speaking as the rest of us.



“Okay,”

“This was... a story that... I... wrote for...class,”

“Go on.”

Parker explained a story where the whole family were superheroes. One day there was an attack on their neighborhood and it was up to our family to save everyone. Parker had the ability to fly and shoot grenades, I had the ability to shoot heat blasts and create forcefields, mom had invisibility and super vision, and dad had could shoot lightning out of his fingers and super speed. I laughed so hard that I almost fell on the ground while we were walking. Eventually, mom and dad listened in to our conversation and started laughing along with Parker and I as well. The story Parker wrote had some funny and cool moments.

“Wow Parker, that... is a cool.... story, but... why... did you not... tell this... to everyone... before?” I asked curiously as I controlled my laughter.

“Everyone... was busy on... their chips. I... was too. No one... had time to... listen,” Parker responded. Mom and dad became quiet all of a sudden and so did I. The realization that I had spent my entire life so far circling around the chip dawned on me. I think it dawned on mom and dad too. Suddenly, I didn't care about the malfunction our chips.

“Parker... tell me... another story.”



**Painting of Blue Jay by Pooja Das**

Exhibited at the NJ State House in 2017

## AWAKENING

*Anu Mishra*

She stands on the oceanfront, looking at the horizon  
Where the earth and sky blissfully meet  
The pounding waves rush forth,  
The rippling waters kiss her feet.  
She gazes and gazes and quietly contemplates  
Upon life and its mysteries, standing alone she reflects.  
Like an ascetic plunged in meditation  
She isolates herself from the mercenary world,  
Solitary she stands on the sandy beach  
Haunted by her bottomless thoughts.  
The setting sun's red glow grows dimmer  
The image of an approaching boat looms larger  
Intimidated by the approaching dusk  
Abruptly she turns to look behind her.  
In the half-light, she beholds the sand  
None else but the sand, empty and vast.  
They had all taken the long road home  
Leaving her lonesome, castaway on the shore.  
Unknowingly her cheeks become wet  
If only a vision of her lost ones she could get  
Her forlornness would vanish, her world would change  
Her life would repossess meaning once again.  
Conflicting thoughts, memories of yesteryears  
And volumes of unspoken words,  
Gathering these priceless treasures of hers  
Silently she retreats across the sands.

## An Apparition by the River

Aaryana Rajanala

It was about to rain. He could feel it. The air was suffocating thick, threatening to collapse in a mass of all-encompassing clouds. It clung to his skin, pressing its way through his entire being, forcing the warm humidity into him. He sighed, tilting his head downwards as he stared at the water, shimmering in the street lights, rippling beneath the footsteps of the ghosts that danced on the river. This had been her favorite weather, the calm before the storm, the stillness that made them ache with the wish that things could always be so peaceful. He rested his elbows on the railing, feeling the icy metal burning his arms. If only she could see how beautiful it was tonight...

"Excuse me," a small voice said from beside him. He turned reluctantly away from the water and looked downwards to see...a little boy, enveloped by a periwinkle raincoat with the sleeves hanging off his arms, his face barely visible beneath his bright yellow hat, an orange umbrella held over his head, shadowing him from the light. The boy peered up at him with small, curious brown eyes. "Can you please tell me your name?"

He stared at the boy for a while, perplexed by his peculiarity, then nodded, smiling sadly. "My name is Khed," he said softly.

*Be careful, my love, that name is a sweet, dangerous thing.*

The boy continued to look up at him, frowning ever so slightly. "Your name means regret?"

Khed nodded and turned back towards the river, placing his arms back on the railing, focusing on the ghosts' dance, their every step, every turn, every flourish with which they skated on top of the water. "Yes. I think it ended up being kind of fitting. What's your name?"

"Fitting?" the boy asked, ignoring his question. "Why?"

Khed raised an eyebrow, his interest in this strange child barely overcoming the grief that made it too painful to speak. "Why do you want to know?"

The boy shrugged. "I like stories."

"You probably like adventure stories, though," Khed sighed, looking wistfully at the water. "Stories with action and happy endings. Mine is a sad story."

*You can't say what kind of story it is until you finish it!*

"Sad stories can still have happy endings," the boy said, joining him by the railing. He gripped the thin metal bars with small, gloved hands.

Khed didn't say anything, looking down briefly at the boy before turning his gaze back to the water, watching it shift and shimmer in the moonlight...

"This was her favorite place," he mumbled absentmindedly to himself.

"Whose favorite?" the boy asked suddenly.

Khed had nearly forgotten he was there. "A friend of mine," he replied simply.

"Did she have a name?"

*Subani.*

"I don't think it would make any difference to you."

He stared up at Khed. "Maybe I know her."

He shook his head, locks of black hair falling over his eyes, obscuring his vision, hiding the ghosts.

"No. There's no chance you could have met her, not the way fate carries on. It would be too fortunate for me to meet someone who knows her."

*Fate is a strange, twisted thing. Every now and then, it comes to our aid. How do you think we met, my love?*

The boy stared up at him, watching him carefully, searching for answers Khed could never reveal.

"Who was she?"

*My sweet, sweet Subani...* "She was a woman who meant a lot to me."

Awe entered his gaze and he said his next words with reverence. "Were you...in love with her?"

Khed nodded. "Yes, that's right. I loved her so much that I never wanted to let her go."

*Please, Khed, please, please don't ever let go...*

"Are you still in love with her?"

"More than you could ever imagine."

The boy glanced in all directions, searching for something. He turned back to Khed. "Where is she, then?"

The clouds collapsed, the downpour hitting them fast and hard, the sound thick in their ears. The wind sighed, refusing to provide solace as it drifted past him. Khed shivered, immediately drenched, clothes clinging to his skin, hair dripping, chilled by the wind.

"I don't know," he whispered, his voice trembling, the tears mixing with the raindrops on his cheeks.

*I love the sound of the rain, how it drowns out all the other noises. It makes it easier to focus on you.*

The boy reached over with his umbrella. "Here," he offered.

Khed shook his head. "Your mother would be very upset if you got wet."

"That's okay," the boy insisted, adjusting his hat to keep out the rain.

Khed smiled at the boy, the expression as melancholy as ever. "Thank you," he said, taking the bright orange umbrella.

"But why don't you know where she is? You said you never wanted to let her go."

"I didn't have much of a choice."

*I'm sorry, Khed, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry...*

The boy didn't move for a second, watching the river ripple beneath the torrents of rain, distorting the reflections of the light in the water. "Why does she like it here?" he asked, shuffling closer to Khed in an attempt to share the umbrella. The raindrops pounded on his cap, demanding entry, the sound deafening as it filled his ears.

Khed smiled downwards at the boy, moving sideways so that the umbrella sheltered them both. "She loved the water," he breathed, "the way it never stopped moving and changing to adapt and accommodate...and yet, it remains unyielding to even the most powerful of forces. And she loved the way it sparkled in any kind of light, how reflective it was, how it could show you worlds in a single wave."

*It breathes, Khed, just like us, the ebb and flow, the eternal energy, the perpetual pulse...can you feel it?*

"Wow," the boy gasped, staring at the river, eyes widening with a newfound appreciation.

Khed's eyes gleamed, shining with a dim reminiscence. "And she used to stand here and watch the ghosts dance on the water, and then she'd try to teach me to follow the steps. Sometimes I could see the edges of translucent dresses, hands in hands, the water rippling to a song I could never quite make out. I saw flower petals floating on the river and eternal laughter ringing through the air. But I could never hear the music."

*It's a waltz, Khed, you have to feel the beat, the rhythm, match the tempo. See, it's not so hard! Keep listening, keep listening!*

The boy watched the water carefully, as if trying to find the ghosts himself, trying desperately to catch sight of the flowers, the hands, just a glimpse of the apparitions on the water. "I can't see it," he said, wilting a little. "How did she see them?"

"She had a special kind of magic," Khed smiled at the river, watching the ghosts drift elegantly through the rainbows in the mist created by the rain. Maybe he'd be able to join them someday.

"But why isn't she here right now?" the boy said suddenly, shaking him out of his thoughts. "Why aren't you two together if you were really in love?"

*Khed? Khed, what's wrong?*

"We had a fight," Khed said simply, his head beginning to pound at the thought of it.

*S-Subani, I...it's nothing.*

"About what?" the boy pressed.

*No, Khed, that's not true. I know you better than that. Don't lie to me.*

"I can't even remember," he gasped, gripping the railing. The umbrella almost slipped out of his trembling hand. "It was so long ago and such a short argument and so trivial that I don't know why it ever happened..." The ghosts slowed down as the rain intensified, as if the storm made it harder for them to continue, like it had overpowered the music.

*Please, Subani, it's nothing--*

"Then why didn't you just make up with each other? Couldn't you have said sorry?"

*Of course it isn't nothing! You aren't feeling good, Khed, and I need to know why, so please just be honest and tell me!*

Khed shook his head. "No, I couldn't have."

*Listen, I'm sorry, but I just...I'm not...*

"Why?"

*You're not what? Khed, this isn't the first time you've done this. Why is it that you always feel like you can't talk to me? I need you to talk to me, we can't keep doing this!*

Khed could barely move, overcome by leaden sorrow weighing him down, the rain refusing to wash away the remnants of remorse burning inside him. The ghosts mocked him as they twirled past. "It was too late for me."

*Subani, please just let me...let me explain what's going on. I promise, I'll talk now, just please don't go!*

The boy's hat covered his frown almost entirely, but the expression was audible when he spoke. "But why?" he asked again, the confusion only serving to amplify his curiosity.

*I...I can't do this right now. I'm sorry, Khed, but I've heard too many apologies. Please, just figure out how to trust me and come back.*

Khed forced himself to take a deep breath, struggling to see straight, his focus shifting between the gentle rhythm of the waves, the specters skating across the water's surface, and the rain as it fell, drop by drop by drop, like crystals in the air, shimmering for eternities before falling, so fragile that they shattered at even the slightest touch. "I didn't want her to worry," he whispered at last, each word making him ache.

The boy was about to ask another question, but he stopped himself. "You didn't tell her something," he mumbled in realization, looking back towards the water. "You lied to her. Then...is she gone?"

"No," he replied, wiping the tears from his cheeks. "No, she's out there somewhere. She told me to come back, but I never did. I never could."

"But you loved her!" the boy exclaimed suddenly in objection, staring up at Khed with wide eyes.

Khed returned his gaze, unflinching beneath the underlying accusation. "I know," he said, the words barely audible against the torrents of rain. The ghosts had all stopped, turning towards him, watching him with critical, all-knowing eyes. The rain had slowed to a soft drizzle. He didn't give the boy a chance to say another word before continuing, "Sometimes we do that. Sometimes we care about each other so much that we do our best to protect each other...but that ends up causing us the most pain. Sometimes we love each other so much that we can't see when we're hurting them."

The ghosts smiled at him, nodding in approval. The music began again and they continued, step by step, turning and spinning, swaying in time to the song.

The boy opened his mouth to say something, but he was cut off by the voice of a woman, calling frantically, "Sonu! Sonu, where are you?"

"Amma," the boy muttered in response, turning away from the water.

The woman walked up to him at a brisk pace, splashing through the puddles on the ground as she hurriedly held her own umbrella over his head. "Why aren't you holding your umbrella?" she demanded, frowning at him with more concern than anger.

"I was sharing it," he responded, turning back. "With him. It started raining and--" He stopped mid-sentence, freezing as he saw the space beside him, occupied by only the orange umbrella on the ground.

The woman raised an eyebrow, taking the boy by the hand. "Please, stay with me right now, alright? I just need to put this down and we can leave."

The boy stared at the single white dahlia in the woman's hands as she clutched it to her chest, protecting it from the rain. Moving to pick up his umbrella, he nodded and watched as she bent down to place the flower by the edge of the railing, smiling warmly at it. He couldn't see her expression as she knelt there. He watched her breathe in deeply and whisper to him, "Sonu, please listen. Promise you won't ever keep secrets from me, alright?"

The boy looked up, startled, hesitating before answering. "Okay, Amma," he said at last. "I promise. But why?"

She stood, wiping tears from her cheeks and turning back towards him. He felt his heart melt as he saw the fear in her eyes, hidden beneath the layers of remorse. "Because I once lost someone whom I loved very, very much to a secret."

She took his hand and he stared up at her. "Who?" he asked, the question formed purely by his innocent curiosity.

He heard her breathe in again, her voice trembling when she spoke. "His name was Khed." The boy didn't have time to react as they turned to leave, the woman's steps quick, as if desperate to escape the sorrow that blew in the breeze by the river.

But just as they began to walk away, the boy heard music playing behind him, a silvery waltz, the melody lyrical and remorseful and so bittersweet it made his heart ache. He stopped and turned around to see...ghosts on the water, swaying to the gentle, lilting rhythm. They all stared at him for just a moment before turning their attention back to each other, dresses like clouds hovering gracefully over the river, flower petals appearing where they lifted their feet.

And then his gaze shifted back to the flower the woman had left on the ground. Khed was standing there, smiling at him. "My sweet, sweet Suhani," he sighed, picking up the dahlia. He held it close to himself, breathing in its scent gingerly, afraid it would vanish all too soon.

*I'm waiting for you, Subani. But take as much time as you need. When you come, we'll have eternities to ourselves. And we can dance longer than any of the others.*

The boy didn't look away until the woman tugged gently on his hand. "What are you looking at?" she asked, peering down at him.

He hesitated, then shook his head. "It's nothing, Amma. I was just wondering...can you teach me how to dance like the ghosts?"

The woman didn't respond for a moment, unsure of what to say. "The...ghosts," she murmured. A sad smile emerged from beneath the grief in her eyes. "Of course I can. But why this question all of a sudden?"

He glanced back at Khed, who was still staring at the water. "There's someone I have to teach," he answered. "And then he'll be able to practice for you."

The woman's smile broadened and she sighed contentedly as they kept walking, the music fading behind them. And as they walked, an apparition stood by the river, watching as the love of his life walked away, preparing to continue to await her return.

*My sweet, sweet Subani...*



**Art: Sushrita Maharana**



## The Crystal Ball

*Amrit Pradban*



Once upon a time, there were two brothers Dan and Ryan and they both considered each other best friends. They lived in house 236 on Crambary Street, Oakville city. One day, they were playing catch with a tennis ball when a ball that looked like a crystal came flying into their yard.

“What kind of ball is that?” Dan asked.

“It seems to be a crystal ball!” Ryan exclaimed. Then, the two brothers investigated the ball when they saw a hidden inside. They investigated a little more until they decided to track down where it came from.

“Let’s knock on our neighbors’ doors to see if they know anything about the ball.” Ryan suggested.

“That’s a good idea!” Dan exclaimed. Then, they asked everyone in their street and nobody knew where it came from. Finally, they asked their friend Matthew who lived across the street and he replied saying, “I think my grandfather has a map of where it came from.”

Next, the three boys went to Dan and Ryan’s yard to investigate. “The map ends at a field near a lake?” Dan asked.

“Yeah, this map was passed down from my grandfather to my dad to me.” Matthew replied.

“Hey, that lake looks familiar.” Ryan said looking closely at the drawing of the lake on the map.

“We should go to the lake and explore!” Dan said.

After they packed water and other tools, they met in Matthew’s yard.

“I found out that the lake is the one we went during the summer?” Ryan said.

“Isn’t that Lake Hudson?” Dan asked.

“My grandfather, told me it’s buried on the moist shore of lake.” Matthew explained.

“Let’s explore then.” Matthew exclaimed.

So, they all adventured to the lake until they saw their other friend Zack. When they saw him, Ryan asked, “What are you doing here?”

“Didn’t I give you guys the crystal ball?” Zack asked.

“No, when?” Dan and Ryan asked.

“Well, I figured since Dan and Ryan liked collecting rare items they would like this crystalized ball.” Zack replied.

“Well I guess we would, but we have to put it back where it belongs.” Ryan said.

“We should put it in the moist shore.” Matthew suggested.

So, the four of them dug a hole and put the crystalized ball inside.

“Well let’s go home Dan. This adventure was fun!” Ryan exclaimed.

“Okay bye Zack and Matthew!” Dan yelled.

“Okay bye Dan, bye Ryan!” Zack and Matthew both called over their shoulder and they all went home. Suddenly, I heard a voice.

“Wake Up!”



*Aw man, it was only a dream!*

Cover Art: Sushrita Maharana

## Kiddo Craving

*Jigyansa Mobanty*

The other day my seven-year-old son wanted a specific chicken pizza. Kids psychology (something I am yet to master fully), he wanted to have it from the best shop in the vicinity along with French fries and a glass of coke. It was quiet baffling as the store is pretty far from our place and to venture out in the odd hours didn't seem to be a good option. Relishing on pizza is fine with me but doing so in odd hours is a strict no. Kids and their unending craving for food...!

As a mom I always feel that Indian cuisine and its versatility is unmatched for. From north to south and from east to west it has so much to boast for. But still my son's temptations for the western delicacies has no cure. When beta dearest wants it can Dad say no.....? Nay....not at all. Food hunting at odd hours seemed to be a challenge for my hubby which he wanted to accomplish at any cost. As a mom I have always pioneered healthy and timely eating for my kids, but still I fail at times as it happened today. As kids me and my sis had spent a considerable amount of time at our granny's place and hence have been greatly influenced by her. She was a strict disciplinarian with no room for any nonsense. Health always came first on her list and that was what she prioritized on. I wonder some of her traits have been passed on to me.

Together we started, taking the younger one in my arms and Aryav dragging Sanjib. It seemed as if Sanjib had realized by then that it was not wise on his part to have said yes...but again he can't break his promise especially a pinky one. We all took our respective seats in our car and finally drove off. By then my little one was fast asleep, his head sliding to the right and he comfortably tied up in his car seat. So after Rio slept Aryav was left alone in the backseat of the car while I and Sanjib were in the front. As a mom I could sense that Aryav was not happy that Rio (his partner in crime) has already gone into deep slumber. Tied up in his booster he was pressing the tab time and again though aware that due to insufficient charge it was getting turned off. Being his mom I could sense that he had lost interest and now if I ask him to go home he will give an immediate nod. Again I know that today he may abide but tomorrow he will again come up with same demand. So I kept mum and was enjoying the drive.

Finally, after twenty minutes we reached our destination. Sanjib parked our car opposite to the shop and went inside. As my younger one was sleeping I waited inside the car. Aryav by then had lost all interest but still was not ready to let it go. With sleepy eyes he was asking "mummy wats the time?" I said "Don't worry my dear, Dad will be back and then we will start off". "Hmmm" came the answer. To keep him occupied I suggested that we play some riddle. I started off with the one which we use to recite in our school days (half circle full circle half circle a; half circle full circle right angle a) suddenly my boy said COCACOLA and there was a feel of joy on his face. Some more riddles and puzzles followed till I realized that its twenty minutes and Sanjib was still inside. Finally, he came out. The Red mug was enough for me to make out that he had grabbed the coke but what about the pizza. Pat came the reply "it will take another 10 to 15 minutes as the store person is all alone and there are a few orders to be met before ours.

Let's go Dad ....my boy said. Sanjib was eagerly opening the car door when I interrupted ...."No we are not going" why mom? The question came. So what shall you have when we are home? Anything will do...and you only pioneer healthy eating na mamma, pizza aur kissi din kha lenge. I know that...but don't you think you realized the same pretty late, I replied. "Hmmm" came as a soft murmur from my darling.

That day I realized one thing that our kids are self-learners and analyzers. They are the most innocent as well as the most adamant and after a certain age they have the ability to do the SWOT analysis themselves. To make them understand we really need to be like one of them. The only thing that goes is a lot of patience, to listen and to make them understand their way. Motherhood indeed is such a lovely journey where you live every minute with sheer pleasure. There will be hard times but amid the challenges there will be shining moments of joy and satisfaction.



Art: Susbrita Haripriya

Cover Art: Sourabh Mukherjee





## The Sign

Anshika Misbra

“Jessica! Jessica! Jessica! Jessica! Jessica!”

Jessica’s three-year-old sister Tess’s voice pounded in her ears. “Will she please stop doing that?!” Jessica thought in frustration. Jessica Pennykettle was deeply focused in her gymnastics practice until Tess came bothering Jessica- again. This was normal in Jessica’s everyday life, yet Jessica had always politely asked, “Will you please stop Tess?”

But this was the last straw, Jessica tried to contain her anger and tried not to yell or tattle, but this time she had to. This twelve year older sister was in her shiny as a clean trophy and pretty as a princess pink room with posters of Gabby Douglas. Pink was her favorite color and Gabby Douglas was her idol. However, Jessica’s thoughts only reflected her irritation with her sister.

Pew, pew. That was a familiar sound. It stopped Jessica in her tracks when she was in the middle of her running round off rebound. She flipped around to see who was playing on her phone, but she saw no one. Jessica switched her brain back to practicing her gymnastics.

Crinkle, crinkle. That sound was coming from the corner of Jessica’s room where her desk was. Jessica strolled over to her desk to see what crinkling on her desk. Turned out to be Jessica’s homework that Jessica worked so hard on! She was sooo mad, that Jessica’s face turned as red as a tomato! She twisted and turned her head to see who had done that to Jessica’s homework. Yet again, she saw no one.

Disappointed, she turned her mind back to practicing. Thump, thump, thump, thump. That thumping sound was as loud as someone cutting vegetables. It definitely was not Jessica’s heart. This time, the sound was coming from outside the room. Jessica strolled out of her room to see who was irritating her. Then, right there, in front of her very own eyes, Jessica saw Tess playing on her iPhone, crinkling Jessica’s homework, and running around the living room!

“Mom!” Jessica shrieked. “Mom!” she repeated as she tore from room to room to find her mom.  
“Yes, honey? What’s wrong?” Jessica’s mom calmly asked.

“What’s wrong?! What’s wrong?! Oh, I’ll tell you what’s wrong. Tess is running around the living room, playing on my iPhone, and ruining my homework! On top of that, she keeps distracting me from my gymnastics practice!” Jessica complained angrily. *Is she even listening to me?!* an enraged Jessica thought.

“Look, I understand, honey. You still need to calm down, though. Maybe there’s a different way to get the message to her,” explained Jessica’s mom in her soothing voice.

“Okay. I’ll calm down.” Jessica agreed. *I need to find a way to prevent Tess from bothering me!* Jessica thought. That night, before dinner, Jessica walked in figure eights trying to figure out what to do. She was so frustrated that she had to be called to dinner, although she usually comes without being called.

“Jessica, honey, it’s time for dinner.” Jessica’s mom called. “Coming!” Jessica replied. As Jessica strolled down the hallway, *ROAR!* If that was Jessica’s stomach, then she was REALLY hungry! That night, the Pennykettle family ate spaghetti, rice, and chicken noodle soup. “Yummy!” Jessica remarked out loud. *How did mom make this? Whatever, because this is flavorful!* Jessica happily thought as she wolfed down her dinner.

After supper, Jess departed back to her room to think of ideas halt Tess from troubling Jessica. After a lot of unsatisfying and disappointing thinking, Jessica thought sadly, *nothing would work. I can’t discover a tip-top scheme to*

*avoid Tess from disturbing me all the time. Let me get a pleasant sleep. In the morning, maybe I’ll have some intelligent procedures to prevent Tess from minding me.* As Jessica changed her clothes, an idea came to her mind. It was the most foremost scheme Jess could consider! *Yes! This plan is the best scheme of all!* Jessica thought merrily.

*Snip! Snip! Bang! Bang!* The strategy was as sharp-witted as a sly fox. The plan was that Jessica would make a brown, cardboard sign saying in mammoth letters, “DO NOT DISTURB!!!” After making the sign, Jessica put the sign up on the outside of her door, locked the door and practiced her gymnastics.

“This is so relaxing! Why didn’t I think of this before? I guess there’s a better alternative to everything!” Jessica chorused chirped as she prepared to do a back walkover in her room. From now on, Jessica will put up a sign so she won’t get troubled!



Cover Art: Shourabh Mukherjee



## “MOMMY”

### *Sangita Bindhani*

Snigdha had a very busy morning, even she could not get to sit for a minute. After Abhinash left for work, she made a cup of tea for herself and found the newspaper. While she was reading her newspaper the postman came and delivered an envelope to her, Snigdha was so surprised and curious too. She was wondering whom it was from. As soon as the postman left she opened the envelope and could not stop her tears... She was telling herself...*marriage... he is getting married... is he that big now?*

Snigdha went running to her closet and looked for her old albums, after going through 5 albums she at last found his picture. She kissed his picture for several time and cried for a long time holding her picture.

She was so busy in her life that she completely forgot about him but her love for him never died. His photo reminded her of her life 20 years back when they used to live in Kolkata. Back then, the city was new for her, the community she was living in was full of Bengali people, and they were so busy with themselves that they forgot to notice her or they don't have need to make a new friend as they have so many. After Abhinash and kids left for office and school, she felt so bad and lonely. She had always wished to have a friend in her neighborhood. One day while coming home from her usual shopping, she saw a moving truck near by her house. That house had been empty from a while, and she would always muse over the idea of whether anyone would ever move into it. She was feeling hopeful that she would become friends with her new neighbors. *They do not look like Bengali people, they more look like South Indians*, Snigdha thought to herself. Every day, she would watch the son and the daughter of her neighbors play outside, but one day she worked up the resolve to greet them herself.

They started to say hello to each other, and Snigdha got to know that they were from Hyderabad and they too are new to Kolkata. When Snigdha asked for the neighbor's name she said "My name is Snigdha". Snigdha was very surprised and started laughing to herself. *What a coincidence*, she thought to herself.

Snigdha always watched the little boy from her window, and for some reason could not stop doing so. One day while watching him from her window, she even did not notice that Abhinash came back from office and walked into the room. Abhinash held her from behind and asked, "What are you watching?" Snigdha finally turned to look at him. "I don't know, whenever I see that boy I can't stop myself from watching him. There is something in his eyes that calls me towards him!" She replied.

Abhinash laughed. "That's because you love kids..."

*Yes, that is true, I love kids but there is something special in that kid which I cannot explain to you*, she had said to herself.

Slowly Snigdha started going to their neighbors' house and became friends with them. Her neighbor worked in an office, and she did not know anyone in Kolkata as her family was new to that place. One day she came to Snigdha's house and reluctantly asked her, "Can I drop my son at your place when I go for work?" Snigdha's happiness knew no bounds! "Yes!" she replied enthusiastically.

*Now I don't have to watch him from the window*, Snigdha thought, as he would be there with her for the whole day...

Snigdha also had a daughter and a son. Slowly, Snigdha had felt that she was more energetic, she was busier in the morning as she had to get Abhi and the kids get ready for office and school. Once everyone was gone she would wait at the door when her neighbor would drop her kid. In the beginning the little boy, Akash, used to cry a little bit when his mother went to work, but Snigdha used to manage him. One day while playing with Akash, Snigdha heard him calling her as "Mommy". Tears came out from Snigdha's eyes and she hugged him tightly and asked him to call her "Mommy" again and again.

Slowly Akash started calling Snigdha as "Mommy" and started calling Abhinash as "Daddy". Even Snigdha's son and daughter started loving him. They even considered him as a part of their family. Sometimes even Akash didn't let Snigdha's son go near her. Akash would say, "This is my Mommy!" Snigdha used to enjoy their sweet fight! As the time had passed by Snigdha, and her neighbor had become close friends like a family.

Days turned into years, and Snigdha could not stay without seeing Akash for a single day. But as they say "There is always an end to everything". One day Akash's mom came to Snigdha's house and started crying and hugged her tightly. Snigdha was puzzled. What was going on? As Snigdha comforted her, she said they got a transfer order from their company, and they had to move to Hyderabad by the end of the month. Snigdha felt dizzy, like someone pulled the ground from beneath her feet. She didn't know how to react.

When Abhi had come back from office that evening, he found out that something was wrong with Snigdha. She was not smiling and her face looked pale. When he asked, "What's the matter?" Snigdha burst into tears, and told him about their neighbor. Abhinash held Snigdha tightly. He understood how Snigdha was attached to Akash and he could feel her pain. That night Snigdha could not sleep, her pillow was filled with tears.

Suddenly the phone rang, and Snigdha came to her senses. Although it had been twenty years ago, she still felt sad every time she remembered Akash. She went to pick the phone, and on the other end was her daughter, who was a doctor in America now. Instead of asking about her wellbeing Snigdha started asking her, "Do you remember Akash? He is getting married!" Her daughter felt very happy for her mother, as she knew how much her mom loved Akash. Her daughter asked, "Are you going to attend his marriage?" Snigdha remained silent for a while and asked her daughter, "Do you think Akash remembers me? Will he be able to recognize me?"

Snigdha was eagerly waiting for Abhinash that evening. She wanted to surprise him with the invitation to the wedding. As soon as Abhi entered into their home, Snigdha showed him the invitation, and asked him, "Guess whom it is from!" Abhinash could not guess, but by seeing Snigdha's face he could tell it was from someone very close to Snigdha. When Snigdha reveled the secret, Abhi initially could not recall, but then suddenly a ray of happiness burst through his eyes. He said to Snigdha, "I have to book the flight first thing in the morning. Maybe after the wedding, I will take you to the Tirupati temple as you always wish to visit there".

Even though Snigdha was happy, something was stuck in her mind. Snigdha usually fell asleep as soon as she went to bed, but that night Abhinash noticed her tossing and turning for a long time. Seeing her restless, Abhinash asked her, "What's the matter?"

"Do you think Akash still remembers me?" She replied hesitantly.

Finally, the day came that they would go to the wedding. After getting down from the airport, Snigdha and Abhinash were looking for their name tags, they knew someone from Akash's family was going to pick them from the airport, but they didn't know who was coming to the airport. From the distance Snigdha saw a very fair, lean and handsome boy. She saw the same sparkle in his eyes that she used to find in Akash's eye, and she could not stop looking at him. She found some magnet in his eyes that was pulling her towards him. In her subconscious mind, she was wondering whether that was Akash. *It cannot be*, she told herself. *It's his marriage day and he must be busy. He doesn't have time to pick us from the airport and... he might have forgotten me by now.*

She was so deep in her thought that she did not notice when the fair, lean and handsome boy touched her feet and said, "How was your flight, mommy?" Realizing who was, Snigdha burst into tears and hugged Akash tightly. She never wanted to part from him again!

## Meet Dr. Sri Angara, DDS (NYU) – A Top Dentists of America (2012) by Consumer Research Council of America

Dr. Srilakshmi Angara is pleased to offer her dental services in Pennington, Hopewell, Lawrenceville, Princeton and surrounding communities in New Jersey.

She earned her BDS (Bachelors of Dental Surgery) from SCB Medical School, College of Dentistry from India. She subsequently attended New York University (NYU), College of Dentistry, and received her D.D.S degree. Upon graduation, Dr. Angara was the recipient of numerous awards and recognitions. Following that she completed her General Practice Residency from Tampa, Florida.

Dr. Angara is committed to lifelong training as a way of offering her patients the best dental care possible. In order to provide high standard of care Dr. Angara actively participates in local seminars and completes continuing education courses. She is an active member of ADA, NJDA and Mercer County Dental Society. She is also the member of Academy of General Dentistry (AGD).

Dr. Angara also enjoys working in the Community Health Center in Trenton, providing dental treatment to the patients in need of dental care, as well as volunteering to provide dental work in the local community.



Tel: (813) 843-4596  
E-Mail: sriangara8@gmail.com

Dr. Srilakshmi and Ravindra Angara wish Happy Kumar Purnima!

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## Tributaries

*Sushrita Haripriya*

My gaze brushes upon your cheek

a moth, I suppose, landing on an ember of mistaken hope

but I will find no solace in the rivers that slice down the valleys of your cheeks

one leads to dreams shattered, the other follows, a crooked path of disbelief

and as broken legs do not walk, we cannot run to homage

here we lay, two shattered skies filled with impending thunderstorms

waiting for someone to rain on

the endless hourglass of Time drains

a downpour of

*worry*

*anguish*

*tiredness*

*frustration*



Photo: Bishnu Baharana

wearing us down to the bone  
eroding away our fitful,  
fragmented souls  
leading us down to a delta of  
midnight sand  
where we drown in the depths of  
definite despair  
we seek salvation and enter this  
cursed world again

## Red

*Aaryana Rajanala*

King sighed and looked down at his analog watch once more, staring at it until he figured out what it said. About twelve forty seven. Well, it wasn't completely unlike his brother to be late. It seemed to be a sort of family trait for them.

He had been standing outside his house for seventeen minutes now, impatiently anticipating the arrival of his brother, Niles. He and his wife, Amaryllis, had invited King over for their anniversary, though he couldn't imagine why. Most likely just an excuse to get King out of his house. He was holding a glittery purple gift bag by his side, in which was a picture frame with a picture from just before their wedding, and a little stuffed animal dog for their six year old daughter Azalea.

At last a dark blue car rolled up beside his house—he couldn't name the type, knowing nothing about cars—and the door popped open. "Uncle King!" a voice called out excitedly, a small hand reaching out of the door. "Uncle King, Uncle King, come sit next to me!"

Chuckling softly, King went into the car and sat next to Azalea, upon which she bombarded him with a torrent of questions. "Uncle King, do you remember me? What have been doing all this time? Why didn't you visit sooner? Did you know I turned six two months ago? Why didn't you come to my birthday party? And—"

"Hey Azalea," his brother laughed, "do you think that maybe I could ask my brother a question, too?" Azalea glanced at her father's warm brown eyes, sparkling with amusement, in the rearview mirror. "Fine," she huffed, clearly annoyed that her father's authority trumped her own.

"So King," he said, "how've you been?"

He shrugged in response. "Alright, I guess. Not a lot has been going on. I'm still trying to write another story for the collection so I can get the next one published—"

"What about the novel?"

King brushed his unkempt black hair out of his bright green eyes. "I'm still working on it, but it's coming along kind of slowly. I keep getting to these parts I haven't planned out properly and it gets hard to write, almost like a kind of writer's block. It's annoying, but I know I'll get this sequel done soon. Anyways, what about you? How's life with Amaryllis, and, of course, this little one right here?"

Niles started driving, slowly at first, accelerating as they made their way onto the main road. "Fabulous, actually. Work hasn't been piling up too bad, Azalea is an exceptionally smart little girl and never seems to need help with school, and Amaryllis is still as gorgeous and wise as ever. Do you remember what you said the first time you saw us together?"

King laughed at the memory. "I probably do, but let's spare Azalea's ears. I think it's about time I answered her questions, wouldn't you say?" He turned back to Azalea, who was pouting immensely. But she looked *adorable*. Her black hair was long and braided, draped over her left shoulder, and she was wearing a pink miniskirt and a yellow top with a sunflower on it reading "I'm the kind of star that lives on the ground". She was small, still sitting in a booster seat, her legs dangling above the floor of the car.

Slowly, she looked over at King. "You're going to answer my questions now?" she asked furtively. Smiling, King nodded. "Yay! Now come on, answer them!"

He raised an eyebrow. "What? But...um, Azalea, what exactly is it that you asked me again?"

She rolled her eyes in exasperation and King wondered briefly where she had picked up that expression. She opened her mouth to ask the questions again, then stopped. "I don't remember either," she mumbled in defeat. "Oh well! I'll just ask you a different question." She caught sight of the purple bag he had laid down by his feet, staring at it in awe. "Do you have anything for me?"

"Azalea!" objected Niles. "That is a very impolite thing to ask!"

King grinned and pushed his pair of silver glasses higher up on his nose. "That's alright," he said, laughing as he reached into the bag. "As a matter of fact, my dear, I do. Here you are."

He handed her the stuffed animal dog and she squealed in delight. It was light blue with dark blue polkadots and a pair of floppy cerulean ears and droopy eyes. "Thank you!" she exclaimed excitedly. "I love it! I'm going to name him Blueberry! How did you know blue is my favorite color?"

"Lucky guess."

"What's *your* favorite color?"

King thought for a moment, then said decisively, "Red."

"How come?"

He paused. "Azalea, in all my years, I think that is the single most interesting question anyone has ever asked me. It's probably because of...my family."

"Why is that?"

"It's a long, long story. You probably don't want to hear it."

"We've got a half hour before we get home, I think. I'm listening."

A look of surprise appeared on his face for a moment, giving way to more laughter. "Alright," he muttered, "where to begin? So once upon a time, there were two brothers. The younger one was named Niles. He was kind and sweet, gregarious and sociable—"

"What does that mean?" she interrupted him.

Right. She was six. "It means he liked being around people. However, the older brother, King, was very shy and reclusive. He had a tendency to stay away from people. He liked being alone. Niles was about twenty five years old at this point, and King was about twenty eight."

"That's old," she remarked, trying to figure out exactly how old that was. "I'll be that old in another nineteen years!"

King nodded. She really was smart. "That's right. Niles and his brother both shared an apartment together. They both had jobs, too. King liked to write a lot, so he usually stayed home, working on a book or the occasional short story. Niles had an office job of some sort. So one day, he came home, but this time, there was a girl with him. Her name was Amaryllis." He stopped for a moment, waiting to see if she had recognized her parents' names being used in the story, but she didn't react. It was possible she didn't know their names. "Amaryllis was a beautiful woman," he continued, "and she spent a little time at the apartment. King came out of my room and they all talked for a little bit. She was nice, too, and smart. She continued coming over when Niles came home from work, to the point where it was like she was living with them. Niles seemed to very strongly like her—"

"Was she his—" she said the word with awe and reverence— "girlfriend?"

"Indeed," answered King. "She was. One day, it was King's birthday. The three of them, having become very good friends now, celebrated together. Amaryllis suggested that we—er, they—go out for dinner to a new restaurant that had just opened downtown. King wasn't sure at first. It was a new restaurant without many reviews or opinions, so they didn't know how good it would be or if it was worth trying. But Amaryllis was adamant in her decision and refused to be swayed, so they all went and ate at the new restaurant.

"When they sat down, Niles got up to go to the bathroom. When he left, Amaryllis asked King what his favorite color was. 'Blue,' he said. 'It's been blue as long as I can remember.' She asked him why. 'Because,' he replied. Honestly, he was totally stuck for an answer. So she answered it for him.

"You like blue because you like blue and you know you like blue," she'd giggled. "Wow, King, that's awfully boring. You're so scared of trying out new things, like this restaurant. If no one tries out a new place to eat, how will you ever know if it's good or not? There aren't any reviews to read yet. Sometimes it's best to take a chance. It's always more fun when you don't know what you're going to get, right?"

"And King decided that she *was* right. It took him a while to understand exactly what she meant. The restaurant itself was trash, very mediocre food for the prices, but someone had to try it to say that. And then, for his birthday the next year, she got King a red shirt. He didn't like it all that much—he wasn't big on red—so he never really wore it. One day Niles and King went to go visit Amaryllis and Niles insisted that King should wear the red shirt, out of politeness if nothing else. Grudgingly, he agreed, but over time, due to Niles's insistence, he got to wearing that red shirt more and more. People liked it. *He* liked it. And he liked liking red, so later, King decided that instead of blue, his favorite color would be red."

King stopped talking and Azalea frowned. "Is that the end?" she asked.



He tilted his head in contemplation of the idea. "No, not really," he responded after a moment. "There's still more to the story. But you know what comes after that."

She gasped. "I do?" Without waiting for King to answer, she inquired, "Uncle King, why didn't you tell me what Amaryllis and Niles looked like?"

"Well," he sighed, "I just happen to have a picture with me." He reached down into the gift bag, making sure Niles wasn't looking, and pulled out a picture frame, showing it to Azalea.

She gasped again. "That's Mommy and Daddy! So those are their names. I didn't know that before. They're the ones who changed your favorite color?"

He nodded. "That's right. I've actually tried out liking a lot of colors. For a while it was purple, then I went back to blue for a bit, and I tried a bunch of different shades of greens and yellows, and eventually decided that I liked liking red the best. It wasn't just the color, though. I did it with a lot of different things, doing things I would never have dreamt of before, trying things that, sometimes, I'd never even heard of. That's actually a big part of my writing now. Instead of just sitting at home and writing, I decided to travel the world to see new things, for inspiration and experiences to use."

"Is that why I never see you?"

He nodded. "It's just no fun always being in one place, always anticipating what will come next. It's so much more exciting to go from place to place and see what's new in the world."

Azalea's eyebrows had creased into a confused frown. "What if you miss a place?" she asked. "Do you ever go back to places? Doesn't it ever feel like you don't have a home? Don't you ever want to visit again and relive everything there?"

"Reminisce, my dear, and keep moving."

Her frown deepened. "What does reminisce mean?"

"It means to remember."

Her eyebrows lifted in understanding. "Wow," Azalea breathed, nodding slowly as they pulled up in the driveway, the magnitude of what he'd said seeming to have reached her with the definition of that single word. The three of them got down and stretched, then went inside through the garage.

A pair of footsteps came running down the hall, and Amaryllis launched herself into King's arms. He stumbled back, surprised at her suddenness. "King!" she exclaimed, "it's so good to see you again! Why didn't you visit sooner? What have you been doing all this time? Oh, and how's that novel coming along? Come on, come on! I might have made a little too much food, so you're going to have to eat a lot." So that was where Azalea got it from.

She let go of him and grabbed his hand, pushing him down onto the couch and giving him a glass of water.

"We'll eat in a minute. Oh, we've got a lot of catching up to do!"

"Wait!" King called out before she could run off again. "Amaryllis, slow down, would you?" He stood and walked over to her, handing her the gift bag. "Happy anniversary."

"You didn't have to get us anything!" she exclaimed disapprovingly, but she opened it immediately. Tears appeared in her eyes. "I remember this," she sighed wistfully. "Niles, sweetie, put this on the fireplace mantle. We should all be able to see it. Now come on, let's eat! Just so you know, a couple dishes may seem a bit weird, but I've tasted them all, and they're delicious!"

Azalea was running after her mother and uncle. "That's okay, Mommy!" she exclaimed. "Me and Uncle King both want to try them all!"

"Wow," Amaryllis mumbled. "Azalea, never in my life have I seen you so enthusiastic about trying out something new I made. Why the sudden change?"

"It was Uncle King!" she chirped, sitting down. "He told me that, unless I try the food, how will I know whether or not I like it?"

## King Titor And the Etis Clan: The Stolen Staff

*Yogesh Mishra*

"You what!" I screamed, my eyes blazing in anger.

"It's... It's not our fault sir, someone from our own castle stole it," The captain of the guards stammered, his face covered with sweat.

"Who was it?" I shrieked, to probably at a level where people would laugh and think that it was hysterical if I hadn't been their king.

"We are still trying to find out, Sir," The captain replied.

"Find the horses before they get too far," I ordered. Then I sat down on my throne. I looked around my throne room, which was now empty besides me. The throne room was huge, and spotless, unlike our neighbors the giants, who had the dirtiest throne room that it made a porta potty look like a mansion. The Etis clan which I belong to and rule over is an advanced version of humans. The insignia of our race was carved on my throne, my ring and my crown. The throne room was decorated beautifully, with chandeliers and chairs made from the softest cushion and the frames made from solid gold, and the most intricate part was my staff... Where was my staff?! Suddenly, a huge explosion sent me with the throne flying backwards, causing a dent on the wall that would take more than a million gold coins to fix. Standing in the middle was a figure that was covered in smoke, and it was only a moment when I realized he was a... giant.

"King Titor, your days will come to an end very soon. That little staff you have is now ours. Now we will rule the world without anything standing in our way," the giant said.

"Giant, my general and I will get our staff back and put you in your rightful place... in a dead body," I sneered.

"Oh such bold words for a goner. By the way, your general is rotting in our prison, and all your kinsmen outside of your castle have perished." With a cackle, the giant flew away on his sphinx, leaving me alone and miserable. What was I supposed to do now?

I hurtled across the room as fast as my legs could take me, which was pretty fast. The advantage of being an Etis was that an average sprint would take at the speed of a cheetah, also known as 75 miles per hour. I had to get outside to see if the masked assassin had been right. When I stepped outside, I stopped in my tracks. A scream built at my throat, tears welling up my eyes. Nobody was alive. The impact was probably from a blast, and that blast had probably taken each one of their lives. Right at that moment, I heard a groan. I turned around and found the person who had groaned. The captain of my guard...my younger brother! Right when I looked at him, I knew he wasn't going to make it in time. 'No... No... This couldn't be happening,' I thought desperately. I rushed over to him kneeling, taking of my crown.

"My--my king," he stammered, wheezing with pain. "I give you per--permission, as--as part of the Etis Clan, to take my soul become a part of you, to-- to take revenge on the person who did this to me and all our fellow guard members. He showed us his face be--before the blast. He is one of--of your trusted friends. He is the -----." Silence.

"No, No not now not ever! Please!" Tears blurred my vision.

"NO!!" I screamed. I howled the distress cry of the Etis, were the entire kingdom would come together, either for help, or when someone passed on. The Etis came, running and some tripping on rocks as they were coming there, then they realized. The younger prince of the Etis Clan had passed away. Everybody dropped to their knees, as tears silently slowly dripped out of my eyes, and as the tears blurred my eyes, a smell of sulfur filled the dark sky. That smell was the smell of my brother's power. For a second I was delighted. Maybe he was still alive! But then I remembered, what his last words had been. That he would give his power to me. Voices whispered in my ears, asking for permission to merge with mine. It had been brother's last wish, and against my will, I accepted. Every aspect of his physical features and character merged into mine. I suddenly became a foot taller (Go ahead laugh at the fact that my younger was a foot taller than me. I won't judge), and got every aspect of his character, his loyalty towards me, his kind personality, and everything that made him who he was. Whoever had taken my brother's life would have to pay with theirs. But first would be the day of mourning.

The next day was to mourn for the death, and a day for me to plot revenge. He had taken my brother from me, and he had taken my general's rightful pace as a leader and made him a prisoner. He would die very slowly, all while I would be laughing. He had taken many lives, and for that he had to pay. Revenge would unfold...

### **Stone Heart**

*Sumedha Jena*

No sound beating in my chest.  
I put my hand over my heart  
I don't feel anything, except  
A rock-solid stone

No emotions within me,  
no feelings at all.  
All that's in my life is  
sadness and despair

When will I see a ray of hope  
shining brightly in my eyes?  
To transform my stone heart  
into an emotion

I don't think I am alive anymore  
Because all I have is a stone heart

I can't breathe, my heart's dead  
I dread the day when heart sank and my emotions washed out  
Day by day, I repented my mistake,  
because, not a day goes without me wailing inside

I await for the day, for someone to come  
If they do, my heart will lighter and I feel better  
For now, all I have is a stone heart

### **A Ban on Fast Food**

*Priyanka Choudhury*

Your eyes can only perceive the succulent hamburger patty, the irresistible, bright yellow french fries and the massive 18-ounce cup of bubbly soda. Behind this enticing and mouth-watering appearance, there lies a repulsive truth that huge fast food industries mask up from their consumers. The second a person takes a huge bite of a Big Mac, the brain will begin to function poorly having a negative impact on concentration abilities. A typical human brain highly depends on glucose that is obtained from healthy fats and antioxidants, which fast food fails to provide. Just a single bite of an ordinary burger can significantly reduce cognitive abilities in kids, teens, and even fit adults.

Fast food shouldn't even be considered as food since it's not even a proper fuel for the body. All those oily and greasy foods are simply high in calories that are extremely processed, contain added sugar, salt, and unhealthy fats that don't retain any nutritional value at all. Eating hamburgers, pizzas, and constantly drinking large quantities of carbonated drinks on a daily basis will periodically lead to poor health and an immediate weight gain.

Based on ABC news, Americans have put in \$110 billion on hamburgers in the outset of the 20th century as to \$6 billion in 1970. A large fraction of this money could have been contributed towards world hunger, but instead we all utilized the cash towards our personal satisfaction. In fact, we gave our body a huge favor by putting our health under the huge burden of obesity. Since the 1980's, the percentage of adult obesity has nearly doubled from 15 to 30 percent as childhood obesity has more than tripled. Fatty foods rapidly lower an individual's potential from a physically fit body. After eating a Big Mac, large fries plus a large Coke requires a non-stop walk for straight six hours to get rid of the calories you just acquired. Is this a challenge you wish to take on? Obesity is detrimental to our well-being, a threat to humanity and brings peril towards the economy.

From the point of becoming obese, the state of the body only gets worse developing mood problems and causing shortness of breath. According to a current study reported in the journal Thorax, it states, "Thorax suggests that children who eat fast food at least three times a week are at increased risk of asthma and rhinitis, which involves having a congested, drippy nose." This particular illness is putting so many young lives in potential danger of death. Also, in order for your brain to produce positive feelings like serotonin, essential nutrients and vitamins is a major necessity. Munching on chocolate and fried food that's crammed in carbohydrates and calories promote depressive moods and often perplex your normal sleep cycle.

While people still continue to skimp on processed meat and other fatty foods, the thriving capability of the fast food industries has grown to an extent that no farmer has any power over the meat or the farm. Farmers don't have the ability to regulate how the meat is distributed across America and restricted from revealing how they handle the meat. However, in the movie "Food, Inc" Carole agreed to expose how the chickens are grown in crowded, filthy, and unsanitary conditions. The chickens don't even have access to sunlight and are chemically designed to have larger breasts in half the time they actually grow for the purpose of efficiency.

In addition, a child named Kevin died in 2001 who was diagnosed with hemorrhagic E.Coli 12 days after eating a hamburger. Even after this heartbreaking incident of a young child, the company refused to shut down its production when their meat had been infected with bacteria and pathogens. Within time, industries have gotten exceedingly unethical and immoral not having any concerns for the welfare of the society, but their profit in sales.

Others might argue that choosing a conventional meal from a fast food restaurant is fairly cheap and quick. But in reality, the real cost of fast food rapidly empties your wallet. Frequently chewing down on a hamburger will intrude your digestive, cardiovascular, nervous and respiratory systems which will ultimately

pile up huge costs of medical expenses for the long term. So, now would you put your cash in expensive but fresh vegetables and meat or an inexpensive hamburger from McDonald's?

Therefore, outlawing the consumption of fast food will be an instantaneous solution to the growing numbers of children, teens and adults in America suffering from coronary heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, food poisoning and most importantly, obesity.



Photo Credit: Sushmita Pradhan

## ଓସା ପିକ୍‌ନିକ୍ ୨୦୧୬

ହମେନ୍ଦ୍ର କୁମାର ପରିଧାନ

ଶନିବାର କୁନ୍ଦ ଏଗାର ତାରିଖ, ପରିନ୍ଦ୍ରବନ୍ କଲବ୍ ପଡ଼ିଆ,  
ବହୁ ପରତାକ୍ଷୀତ ଓସା ପିକ୍‌ନିକ୍, ଖରା ଯେ ଉଦୁଭବିଆ ।

ମକା ତରଭୁଜ ଗୁପ୍ତ ଚୁପ୍ ସଂଗେ ସିଂଗତା ଓ ଦହିବରା,  
ଚିକେନ୍ ପନିର୍ ପରିବା ବାର୍ବିକ୍‌ୟୁ, ସୁଆଦ ବଡ଼ ନିଆରା ।

ଦୁଲୁକିଲା ଭୂମି "ରଂଗବତୀ" ତାନେ, ଅନନ୍ୟ ବଳିଭଡ଼ ନମ୍ବର,  
ଚାଟୁକାର ବାକ୍‌ୟ ଭାଷନ୍ତି ନ୍‌ୟେପଥୁୟୁ, ଡିଜେ ଦବେନୀ, ଅମର ।

ଖଳେ ପଡ଼ିଆରେ ଯୁବ ଖଳୋଳିକ, ଭଲିବଲ୍ ମାଡ଼ ଦଖି,  
ଚକିତରେ ଚାହିଁ ଦରଶକ ପରବର ଚକ୍ଷମା ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଚକେ ।

କ୍ରିକେଟ୍ ବ୍‌ୟାର୍ ରୁ ଉଡୁଥିଲା ଖାଲି, ଚଉକା ଆଉ ଛକ୍କା,  
ସତକେ ଯମେତି ସଚିନ୍ ଆଉ ଧନୀ, ଦଖି ହେ ଲବେ ତାଚକା ।

ଭାତ ପୁରୀ ଆଉ ମାଉଁସ ପନିର୍, ଘାଂଟ ଯେ ଆଳୁ ପେଟକ,  
ରଜ ପେଟ ପିଠା ମାଛ ଭଜା ସଂଗେ ସୁସ୍ୱାଦୁ ଦହି ପଖାଳ ।

ମଧୁସାହନ ଭେଜନ ପରାନ୍ତେ ଆଇସ୍ କ୍ରିମ୍, ତାପରେ ଚାହା ସବେନ,  
ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଖାଇବା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୁଏକି ନଖାଇଲେ ଭଲ ପାନ ?

କୁନି କୁନି ପିଲା ମୁଁହରେ ଆକିଲେ, ଚିତ୍ତର ଯେ ଭଲିକି ଭଳି,  
ସଜ ବାଜ ହୋଇ ଝିଅ ପିଲା ମାନେ, ଖଲୁଥିଲେ ରଜବୋଲି ।

ଅଖା ଦଣ୍ଡି ଆଉ ତିନି ଗଣେତ ଦଣ୍ଡି, ତା ସାଂଗକୁ ନାଚ ଠାଣି,  
ପିର୍ କାରୀ ଧରି ପାଣି ଖଲୁଥିଲେ, ଆବାଳ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ରମଣୀ ।

ସକାଳରୁ ସଞ୍ଜ ସାଂଗ ସାଥୀ ମଳେ, କଟିଫୁକ ଭାରି ବଢ଼ିଆ,  
ଖାଇ ଖୁଆଇ ଯେ ମଉଜ କରିବା, ଏଇତ ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ।



## A Piece of Cloth

*Sumedha Jena*

I was sewn together, thread by thread,  
until a finger decides to pull me apart.  
I was separated from what I made up of.  
Later, I find myself falling onto the floor.

Days passed, and so did weeks,  
nobody came to put me back together

I was becoming weary and old  
And figured I was to no use

I look up and see a shadow hovering over me.  
She picks me up and starts to sew  
until I become something completely different

I was happy and assured, that  
I was going to stay like this forever

Two hands suddenly pick me up  
and started to tug and pull.  
My hope was shattered and disappeared for good  
They pulled and pulled until I started to rip

Next thing, I know is that  
I find myself in two pieces and thrown in the trash  
I had nothing to lose, so I awaited...  
...I waited for a kind soul to repair me once again

## The OSA NY/NJ kids are helping their community!

Since 2014, OSA has been volunteering at the Hillside Community Food Bank once a month. At this food bank kids ages 13 and above, do acts of service for the disenfranchised. Most days we pack food for the destitute.

We at OSA NY/NJ pride ourselves in being a change in the community and providing supplies to help those in lesser situations. Hillside Community Food Bank is located in Hillside,

New Jersey along Route 22 and is a trusted site for respectable volunteering. If needed, teenagers can obtain volunteer hours for their hard work. The main goal is to help out the community.



## Is it True that Weight Lifting Stunts Growth?

*Roban Dash*

NO!!! I have heard this phrase from countless aunties and uncles, including my parents, “Don’t lift weights, you won’t grow anymore!” Not to quote Donald Trump but, “WRONG!!!” Strength training is any sort of muscular training involving the usage of free weights, isolated machine exercise or body workouts (push-ups, dips). This can help anyone, from an athlete seeking a way to improve athletic abilities to an average person trying to put on some muscle. However, strength training is an awfully safe thing, with an average fail rate of 0.0035% mishaps with kids, it can be do the opposite of what the myths say it’s capable of.

The only time an adolescent will stop growing in relation to weight lifting is either due to poor form or lifting more than they can handle, and I’m not saying this isn’t a problem because lifting with poor form over long periods of time with more than they can handle can lead to other problems, including and not limited to muscle tears, sprains, broken bones, broken growth plates, herniated disks and Patellar tendonitis (probably the worst because it is untreatable unless the part of the bone is removed and replaced with fake bone). A very common type of injury due to poor form is bending your back, this is very dangerous because overtime if you keep on bending your back can lead to a spinal injury which can sometimes have very risky consequences. That doesn’t mean that if you can handle heavy weights you should dive into it immediately but it also doesn’t mean that if you can handle heavy weights that you can’t use them. If you go on Youtube you’ll find hundreds of little kids deadlifting and benching over 500 lbs, this is only because of their exceptional form, however, if these kids aren’t using good form they’re gonna hurt themselves badly and this is irreparable.

However, don’t get me wrong there are hundreds of ways to prevent an injury during a workout. Such as get a trainer, unless you hire some novice whose number you got off a library billboard. If you look into it beforehand you’ll probably find someone who knows what they’re talking about. Personally I get help and advice from friendly faces at the gym who I see 3 or so times a week. There are also ways to work by yourself, when I go by myself I bench without a spotter, this is dangerous because if you drop the bar on yourself you can crack a rib or if you drop it on your neck, both of which are fatal. However, I don’t usually bench more than 3/4 of my total weight (me:130, max weight: 105) but in some cases even this gets to be too much to handle, so just always be aware. My final way of staying safe is wearing a spine belt, this isn’t a normal belt that you wear to prevent sagging. This is a belt that sits on your stomach and the bottom half of your spine, it mainly prevents your back from bending in an unnatural way that can cause damage.

So in the end what I’m saying is strength training at a young age isn’t dangerous and it doesn’t usually cause growth stunting. Always remember to watch your form as well as the amount you’re lifting. If it feels like too much maybe drop 10 lbs and vice versa if it feels too light add 10 lbs, but be cautious. Overall, strength training can be vital to student athletes, from improving athletic abilities to stamina strength training should be implemented into all athletes’ lives. So just remember if you watch what you’re doing and work your smartest it’ll all help you.

## OSA Impact Idea – Mentorship Program

*Reported By Somna Pati*

OSA’s New York/New Jersey chapter introduced its successful mentorship program in 2014 which has been exponentially growing since its inception with a current total of over 55 participants. The program works to bring the chapter’s youth together in a mentoring relationship and bond through similar experiences of growing up in the US.

We have created a two tiered approach where high school students mentor middle school students and young professionals/college students focus on mentoring high school students. A leadership board consisting of the society’s young adult members and adult sponsors exists to serve as an objective party on issues that may be needed to be escalated such as mentor/mentee relationships, mentor concerns, and overall logistics. This approach allows for our youth to bond and offer insights into their experiences, shed light on various topics from a firsthand perspective, and serve as a sounding board for their mentees.



In order to foster the mentor/mentee relationship, the leadership board hosts events for the participants at least once a year. The events range from speed networking events to making toys and blankets for a children’s hospital. The activities help not only build a stronger relationship between the mentors and mentees but create a strong bond with the community as well.

The OSA New York/New Jersey chapter has been a successful initiative and has received great feedback. OSA National is now encouraging other chapter’s to join NY/NJ in creating an environment where the youth feel empowered to help each other and work towards a better and cohesive future. 2016-17 Youth Mentorship Event is planned during upcoming winter break. Please stay tuned to hear from OSA Youth Coordinators about the upcoming winter event soon.



## I love my brother

*Aryaan Jena*

At 2:40, the school bell rings.  
At 2:45, I'm out of there in a zing.  
At 3:00, I come home from a tiring day of school.  
Ready to take a rest and keep cool.  
It is then that my brother charges in.  
He exclaims with glee, and has a big grin.  
I try to relax and read for a while  
But it soon becomes impossible with him pestering me with a big, fat smile  
Until I finally give in  
And agree to play with him  
I start running around the house, playing tag  
And then he starts behind to drag  
It's lots of fun playing with him, I must admit  
But you don't realize that until you're completely in it.  
Every day, I look forward to those short minutes that I play with my brother  
I feel there is no substitute, there is no other  
With my little brother, I have some of my most cherished moments  
That's always been easy for me to notice  
Twenty years from now I'll look back and say  
I miss my baby brother, those were the days  
I will not have these moments forever  
So, I best use these days to enjoy my pleasures  
As brothers, we are always there for each other  
We guard each other no matter what, one after the other  
But having a little baby brother has changed me as a person too  
I now have to take responsibility and change dirty diapers. Ew!  
I have to care for him when he cries or gets hurt  
Whether he trips, has a cut, or a face full of dirt  
I'm really thankful now because I have him  
I remember the days I prayed to God with my impossible whims  
I would just sit there and pray and pray and pray  
That I could have a brother with whom I could play  
And one with whom my sorrows I could convey  
When I first found out I was going to be a big brother  
I was elated  
Here it was, after the many years I had waited  
When I first saw my brother, it was a magical time  
For here was the person I could count on for the rest of my lifetime  
My brother is the most important person in the world to me  
With him, my happiness has been set free.

*Aaryan is 12 and currently a 7th grade student at Chatham Middle School. He has several interests including Maths, Reading/ writing, Martial arts, Trivia etc., but among the few things he is passionate about is his brother. He dedicates this poem to his younger brother, Anbik.*

## Fog

*Anuradha P Mishra*

I love the fog, shrouding all in mysterious white;  
Making everything obscure, yet awakening hidden senses  
As I try and look through and beyond.  
My child in brilliant blue  
She walks right through  
My heart misses a beat as I lose sight of her.  
Then comes the familiar wave, I see it all too clear,  
Despite the white blanket hugging her shoulders.  
Relieved, I wave back, as she boards the yellow bus,  
To distant times my mind wanders.  
I remember myself as a child, fearing the unknown,  
Scared, ghosts would leap from beyond the fog.  
Childhood is long gone, and the fog I fear no more  
I gather life itself is a fog, for we know not what lurks beyond,  
Our todays, our next hour and our now.  
The fog beckons me to lose myself in it,  
And willingly, I step right in.  
It engulfs my entire being, I feel the rapture  
The veil is lifted, the mystery revealed  
There is no more suspense, nothing is obscure  
I wrap myself with the fog and contemplate  
-Heaven dwells forever within me.

*Photo Credit: Bishnu Maharana*





## Ame Odiya Kahibu

*Reported by Niki Senapati*

{The Odiya kids program on OSANYNJ weekly Odiya regional Program “UTKALA PRABHA” on NYNJ Radio channel EBC Radio.}

Odisha, The holy place of Lord Jagannath which is the motherland of my parents. Odiya, the regional language of Eastern India is the mother tongue of my parents. My parents always speak in Odia with each other and as a child I always had an interest to learn this language. The journey of me speaking odiya started from my childhood and I am proud I could continue and now I am able to encourage my younger sister and other kids in our community to learn and speak this sweet language. Odiya is my second language but it feels so great when me and my grandparents understand each other in this wonderful language. Hence my odiya speaking skills.

Last year while discussing with my dad about me doing some kind of community service for my high school volunteering hours he inspired me to help and encourage other kids of our community to learn and speak Odiya. To show the world even though living in America, I can keep my parents culture alive. Already being a child host in UTKALA PRABHA @ EBC Radio program I thought why not do some kind of group radio show with our kids in Odiya. Hence the kids program “Amme Odiya Kahiba” started with the help of my dad and EBC program volunteers. This show consisted of me being the host and having 4-5 younger children with me and we would talk on Utkala Prabha on EBC radio. I would gather around with these young children and we would talk about different Odiya topics. I am trying to inspire every child to speak odia. They may not have to be perfect at it but it doesn't hurt to try. The dignity and the achievement of going on a radio talk show and talking about their culture brings a smile to their grandparents face. What better gift can a child receive but to see their grandparents smile knowing they were the reason because of them brining out their culture in a foreign country. I hope I can inspire everyone to bring out their culture and leave the audience speechless and with smiles.

## କାର୍ତ୍ତିକ ନା ଆଶ୍ୱିନ (Kartika or Ashwin)

*Padmanava Pradhan*

“What are the most popular festivals in Odisha?” asked a commuter friend during one 40-minute trip to New York City. I said, “*Ratha Yatra* and *Durga Puja* followed by *Kumar Purnima* and *Raja Parba*.” I emphasized that the last two are unique because they are not celebrated in the same way elsewhere as they are celebrated in Odisha. These days are extra specials for the boys and girls, or the *kumara* and *kumari*.

“When is *Kumar Purnima*?” he asked. I explained that it is on the last day of *Ashwin*, and that this year it was on October 15th. The following day is *Kartika Pratipada*, the first day of Kartika, when many people in Odisha observe a month long vegetarian diet, abstaining from eating fish and meat till *Kartika purnima*.

“That's not the first day of *Kartika*, that's the 16th day of *Ashwin*,” objected my friend, as a south Indian friend nodded nearby in agreement.

“The first day of *Kartika* is our new year,” he continued. He explained, “It is the day after *Deepawali Amavasya* on *sudi pratipat* (*Shukla pratipada* in Odia) and the first day of a new *Vikram Samvat* Era.” That is the reason the people in his state wish “Happy New Year” to each other on that day. He stated that the beginning of *Vikram Samvat* was on October 31 this year.

This made me curious. I asked to verify, “What is the month in your state when Lord Krishna was born?” I also mentioned that in Odisha and most of the North India, *Krishna Janmasthami* falls in the month of *Bhadrapada* (*Bhadrab*), on the eighth day of the *Krishna paksha* (black fortnight). He objected, and confidently said, “*Krishna Janmasthami* is not in *Bhadrapada* month, but in *Shravan*. Only Ganesh puja falls in *Bhadrapada*.” He then downloaded a *panchanga* (*Panjika* in Odia) in his language from the web and proved his point.

Many of us get confused when we get different answers from fellow Indians about the beginning of the Hindu New Year. Is it *Gudi Padwa* or *Yugadi* or *Vishu* or *Pana Sankranti* or *Singham* or *Baisakhi* or the day after *Deepawali*?

Among several different eras used, the most popular ones are *Kali*, *Vikram Shaka*, *Salivahana Shaka* and *Kollam*. *Kali* era, which started on 3102 BC (Gregorian calendar) is available in famous text *Aryabhatiyam* composed by Aryabhatt I (476 AD). The Indian national calendar is based on the historical era. *Salivahana Shaka* era started on 78AD of Gregorian (Julian) calendar with *Chaitra* as its first month. *Vikram Shaka era* is also used which started on 58 BC of the Gregorian calendar but only after *Deepawali*.

Indian calendars mostly follow either solar or luni-solar depending on their origins for religious observations. In India, sidereal solar year, that is the time taken by Sun to complete a revolution with reference to a fixed star, is followed. The Gregorian calendar follows tropical solar year where equinoxes and solstices come on particular dates. In luni-solar calendars, the days and months are calculated based on the motions of the Moon and the Sun. Where as in solar calendar, based on the motion of the Sun. Most of the calendars are derived from *Gupta Era* astronomy, developed by *Aryabhatta*, *Barahamihira* or *Brahmagupta*. *Vedanga Jyotisha*, which in an earlier period, had been standardized in a number of works known as *Surya Siddhanta*. The name of the twelve months is the same all over India, except in Kerala, where the months are named according to the solar zodiac signs and start with *Singham*.

The Luni-solar calendar has two main variations, *Amanta* and *Purnimanta* depending on whether the first day of the month starts after *Amavasya* or after *Purnima*.

### ***Purnimanta calendar***

The *Purnimanta* calendar is followed in most of North India, i.e., in the states of Bihar, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and Rajasthan; Odisha is included for religious

observations. It also includes Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, and Delhi, but they are off-shots of bigger states and follow the same calendar. It differs from the *Amanta* calendar in that the months are reckoned from full Moon to full Moon. Therefore, the *Purnimanta* calendar starts two weeks before the *Amanta* calendar does; that is, it starts with the lunar day after the last full Moon before the *Mesha Sankranti*, after *Chaitra Purnima*.

### **Amanta Calendar**

*Amanta* calendar is followed in South and West India. Like the Chinese calendar, the month is calculated from new Moon to new Moon. It differs from the Chinese calendar in that the day of the new Moon is considered the last day of the previous month instead of the first day of the new month. In the Chinese calendar, the year is divided into 12 solar months by 12 principal solar terms or zhongqis.

*Amanta* calendar has two variations, the southern Indian and the western Indian versions. The southern *Amanta* luni-solar calendar is followed in the South and Southwest Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra. The southern *Amanta* calendar differs from the western *Amanta* calendar in its treatment of *kshaya masas*, the New Year Day and the era followed. The southern *Amanta* calendar follows the southern school for treating *kshaya masas*. It follows the *Salivahana* Saka Era starting with Chaitra Shukla Pratipada [1], the lunar day after the last new Moon before the *Mesha Sankranti*.

In West India, specifically, in the state of Gujarat, the *Amanta* calendar is of two forms, one that starts with *Aashaadha* (followed in the Kathiawar region) and one that starts with *Kartika* (followed all throughout Gujarat). Both calendars follow the *Vikrama* Era and both also probably follow the northwestern school for *kshaya* months.

### **Solar calendars**

#### **Malayali (Kerala) calendar**

There are four regional variations of Indian solar calendars that differ in the way the start of the month is related to the *Sankranti*. The *Sankranti* is the moment when the Sun enters an Indian zodiac sign or *rasi*. The Malayali calendar is followed in the South Indian state of Kerala. It is a solar calendar so the months are defined according to the *rasis*. The year starts with the *Simha Sankranti* and follows the *Kollam* Era. The month begins on the same day as the *Sankranti* if it occurs before *pirunha*, i.e., three-fifths of a day. Otherwise, it begins on the next day.

#### **Tamil calendar**

The Tamil calendar is followed in Tamil Nadu. This calendar is also solar; the month begins on the same day as the *Sankranti* if it occurs before sunset. The *Kali* Era is followed along with the southern *Jovian* cycle. One peculiarity about the Tamil calendar is that its month names start with *Chittirai* (*Chaitra*). The Bengali calendar is followed in West Bengal, Assam and Tripura. The Era is the *Bengali San*. The rule for the beginning of the month is again different; the month begins on the day after the *Sankranti*, if it occurs before midnight. Otherwise, it begins on the third day.

In Odisha, we follow both sidereal solar (*saayana sauryavarsa*) and the luni-solar calendar. Based on the solar calendar, we consider *Panaa Sankranti* or Mahabishuba Sankranti or *Mesha Sankranti* as the first day of the year. At the same time, *Baisakha* which begins of the first day of the black fortnight after *Chaitra purnima*, is considered the first month following the *Purnimanta* luni-solar calendar. We use lunar calendars for calculation of *brata* (Sudasha, Sabitri, bhai Jiantia, puo jiantia etc.), *osha* (Khudurukuni, Maanabasa etc.) and *yatra* (Ratha Yatra, Bahuda Yatra, Chandana Yatra etc.).

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## **My Hero: Gabby Douglas**

### *Mallika Panda*



Gabby Douglas was born on December 31st, 1995. She started the Olympics in 2012. It's her 2nd year! She started gymnastics around the age 5-6. She was the first african-american to be on the US team. She is one of the all-around champions to win more than one gold medal in the Olympics. At the age 8, in Virginia, she won the level 4 all around gymnast at the state championships. At age 14 she moved to Iowa to train with Coach Liang Chow. She did gymnastics in school and kids gave her and her brother money, but then their mom found it in the laundry and made them give it back. Her family was really poor. She grew up with her mom and her siblings. She is my inspiration.

## **The Seashell Design**

### *Ananya Pradhan*

Reader's Note: *I look up at the water and stare at the horizon, where Skylar's ship is now. Maybe even past that and on land. I remember touching her soft hands and our pictures. Skylar was amazing. Reader, I'm pretty sure you are wondering who is Skylar? You are going to find out right now.*

*Me*

The sunshine sparkled over the water as I splashed my tail from left to right. I leaped and grab a fish through my beak and swallowed it down whole.

"Mmmm! Delicious!" I exclaimed, smacking my lips the whole time. I saw the rest of the pod swimming up and grabbing fish effortlessly as they chattered away with each other. I also saw mom and dad catching a meal while my older sister, Kim caught I think one fish and dived back down, following her friends to rejoin their own discussion. Even Eva, one of Kim's friends caught enough fish for lunch. If Kim wants to starve though, after all, it is her decision. I leaped and dived back into the cool, crystal clear water. Every part of the water I swam in I saw different types and colors of fish that darted away from my path. I felt like I was the queen, walking with no one in my way. Suddenly, I saw a flash of black and white from behind a rock. I narrowed my eyes, guessing what it was.

“Eliza and Mira.”

Eliza and Mira were the bullies of the pod. They were twin sisters and orcas. They were very pretty with their beautiful black tails that shimmered in the sunlight. They were the best swimmers of their kind and according to the orca body “are dreams”. I would have no problem with them if they hadn’t started bragging about their beauty and talents. They were always teasing younger children about how they would never be as pretty as them and would laugh at anyone that couldn’t leap as beautifully as they could and according to them, was no one.

“Oh, look who it is, Blair. What a surprise! What are you doing tonight, oh wait, what could you possibly be doing on a Saturday night, as today’s party night. What party would you have gotten invited too?” Eliza started with a disgusted look at me. Mira giggled and Eliza burst out laughing. The twins high-finned as they swished their tails in glee.

“Whatever,” I mumble, rolling my eyes at their terrible comeback. I pushed through them and twisted beautifully as I leaped over the water and dived back with an amazing turn. I’ve been practicing this trick for weeks just to get them annoyed. I smiled as I saw them frown. Without even saying a word they silently swam away. I swam to the surface and saw that everyone had finished their meals and had went back to the water.

Beep! Beep!

I turned around and saw a white cruise ship in the distance. It had many people on the deck is what I can tell so far. I noticed the funnel puffing out thick, gray smoke that slowly disappeared as it floated into the air. I sighed, a bit saddened and a bit angry at the same time. Sometimes humans, I think is what they’re called dump all sorts of chemicals or release smoke into the ocean. That has killed many things. They’ve killed coral reefs and turn their beautiful multi-colored polyps into a plain white color that shows no existence of life. They’ve killed many animals such as our food we eat and even our predators. I know I should’ve sounded happy, but the way they die saddened me. I sometimes felt alone though because no one thinks like me. I felt different from the rest of my pod. I felt invisible almost. I sank back under the surface and swished my tail hard, swimming fast to the rest of my pod.

Skylar

The next day, the sun was still outside like yesterday. I had just finished my lunch and it was a little after noon. I was practicing a cool trick when I saw a big flash of white light in my face. My eyes started to see random colors. *What just happened?* After my eyes were back to normal I saw a huge group of people on a deck with their cameras out snapping pictures and pointing in my direction. *Are they snapping pictures of me?* I turned around and saw no one near me. I gasped and suddenly sank under water.

“Wait! Don’t go!”

I peeked my eyes on the surface and saw a girl as she pushed her way through a crowd. I couldn’t tell her age, but she wasn’t young like a nine-year-old, but wasn’t as old as like a twelve-year-old. She had shiny, long black hair that was tied into a perfect braid. She wore a black jacket with gray tight pants and short black boots. She had a small maroon bag around her shoulder and wore something on her ears that were shaped like circles and were the color gold I think.

“Wait, please don’t go. I want to meet you.” The girl called again as she took out a small rectangular-shaped item. The front was completely black and the back was plain blue with some white small items that sparkled. She touched a round-shaped thing on the bottom of the item on the front and the screen suddenly lit up showing a picture of the girl smiling I think and some words written on the picture. It said *1:09 PM, Monday, July 12, 2016, Touch ID or Passcode*. She started to push buttons and there was a new screen with smaller, colorful squares inside. She touched a gray square with a black rectangular with a white circle picture. Underneath it spells ca-me-ra. Suddenly, another screen pops up with me inside. I splash my tail and it

splashes back on the screen. *Wait a second. It must be a reflection like water.* The girl stretches her hand out to me, as if she actually understood me.

“Hello there. My name is Skylar,” She greets cheerfully. I backed away a few splashes, about to rapidly swim away.

“Don’t worry. I’m not going to hurt you. Your tricks seemed so beautiful and I just had to see how you did it,” She assured me as she still stretched her hand. I splash forward again and stretch my fin. I touch her soft hands and immediately pull away. Her hands were completely dry! Skylar seemed shocked too that I had actually touched her hand. I look at the water and see a faint orangish-pink color. I look to my right and see the sky as a combination of orange, red, and pink with a faint light blue. The clouds were light purple and the Sun was setting on the horizon.

“It seems as if you have to go now. I hope to see you again tomorrow!” Skylar said as she smiled.

“Skylar!” I hear.

“Coming mom! See you soon!” She replied standing up and waves as she walked away. I smiled and waved my fin. She smiled back and went inside the ship. I dived into the water, my eye on the lookout for dinner.

Skylar and Me

I splashed my way to the surface of the water, bubbles all over my face. I saw a shadow of an oddly shaped figure. *This must be it.* I leaped out of the water, noticing Skylar looking out over the water. As soon as she spotted me she smiled. She takes out the item called I think a fone? She snapped a picture of the two of us.

“Oh dolphin, soon my ship will be moving from here. Tomorrow, I believe. This may be the last day I shall see you. Before I go though, I wanted to talk to you about how you helped me with my problems. I used to have a fear of marine animals, but now I see how friendly and kind they are from you,” She confessed, but confident.

*Wait until you meet Eliza and Mira,* I thought. I smiled instead though. If only I could talk to her. *Skylar doesn’t know how much she has helped me with not judging a seashell by its design. Even the most unattractive design of a seashell can be the most antique seashell in the ocean. Skylar was the seashell design with me. The most amazing seashell design I had ever found. A very special one.*

“Bye! I hope I see you again in my life,” She whispered as she hugged me. I hugged her as tightly as can be. She turned around on her heels and walked until she opened the door. She turned around, to see me still there. She waved her hands in a tiny way and closed the door behind her. I dived backwards, lying on the surface. *Humans aren’t so bad. I guess it’s all about perspective. I hope I see Skylar soon, I’m going to miss her.*





Illustration: Preeti Rath

## Sisters

*Mitisha Panda*



June 6th, 2009. The day it all started. She was born. It wasn't as great as I thought it would be the first year. Too young to talk, walk, or do anything fun. I remember dreaming about being able to play house, or restaurant with her, and was disappointed when I realized she didn't understand what those games were. By the time she grew old enough to play, I had gotten over the idea of playing house, or restaurant, games that seemed childish to me. She was innocent. Sure, she would do naughty things that all babies do but her heart was full of good intentions. There were good days, where we used to build forts and knock them over, then do it all again. There were bad days ending in tears and mom having to get involved. I miss them both.

Time passed, and we grew taller and smarter, and soon she was the age that I was when she was born, the age of hoping to find someone to play house or restaurant with. Too bad I was 7 years older. She would beg me to play over and over again, but all I said was no. I didn't realize what saying no was doing. She looked up to me. All she wanted was to be like me, someone my parents compared her to all the time. I regret it every day. We don't realize, that we have to cherish the moments we have before they are gone. She would insist on having "sleepovers". I hated them. Maybe I shouldn't have. "After all, isn't it flattering".... My mom says. Your time with someone is not unlimited. Remember that.

High school, then college. Less and less time spent with her every year. I didn't call. Neither did she. Not even a text. My excuse? I didn't have one. I didn't realize how life was without her. Before college, I would come home every day, say my 'hi's' and hello's and 'leave me alone's' and retire to whatever I was doing without a second thought. It was my mistake. She was persistent though. I would lock her out of my room but that wouldn't stop her from sitting outside the door. Why didn't I realize she was doing that for a reason? Sometimes I wonder why she didn't text, or call me. Maybe she wondered why I didn't. I follow her social media and always see her, out living her life. I just wasn't a part of it.

I knew she loved me. She did a good job of showing it. I loved her too. Did she know it? I wouldn't know. I did a pretty bad job of showing it. I like thinking back to the era of our lives where they were one. The age of spending rainy Saturday afternoon baking cookies with her, then watching a movie while playing cards. I always used to beat her.

She used to complain that I enjoyed spending time with my friends more than I enjoyed spending time with her. At the time, it was true. I didn't make an effort to do anything fun with her. That was my fault. What I thought was important really meant nothing. Nothing is more important than family. I am happy now, I have close friends, and I do talk to my mom on the phone a lot. I could be happier. I realize that I shouldn't have been pushing her away. Childhoods are meant for family and friends not just one or the other. Instead of spending that time showing her my hatred, I should have been showing her my love. It's not too late now right?

I wanted to tell her that I love her, that I loved spending those moments with her, because after all, she is my sister. I will one day. And then we will build forts together and take them down on rainy Saturdays while the cookies are baking in the oven. I should have kept my door open.

## English Words of Indian Origin

*Sbrutika Padhy*



English language is a melting pot of many languages. There are many words from Hindi and Sanskrit languages that made into English dictionary. The borrowing of such words happened when there were major cultural contacts. I find the following English words in the dictionary a sort of music to my ears:

**Juggernaut:** came from the Lord Jagannath

**Maharajah:** came from Maharaj

**Bungalow:** In the 17th century, it was used to refer to a type of Bengali cottage built for European settlers.

**Guru:** came from guru

**Cheetah:** is derived from the Hindi word चीता (*chita*), which in turn comes from the Sanskrit word चित्रकायः (*chitrakāyaḥ*) meaning "bright"

**Typhoon:** Toofaan (Hindi)

**Jodhpurs:** Came from Jodhpur, Rajasthan

**Karma:** Sanskrit "kara" means doing

**Shampoo:** derived from Hindi *champo*, which was also derived from Sanskrit root *capayati* (चपयति, which means to press, knead, soothe).

**Satyagraha:** derived from Sanskrit *satyāgraha* — loosely translated as "insistence on truth"

(*satya* "truth"; *agraba* "insistence")

**Nirvana:** came from Sanskrit. In Indian religions, *nirvana* is synonymous with *moksba* and *mukti*

**Mahatma:** came from Sanskrit meaning "Great Soul"

**Sannyasi:** came from Hindi *sannyāsi*, from Sanskrit *sannyāsin*

## Sorry: The Bothersome Word

*Archiit Rajanala*

Most of the time, people ask if you're a vegetarian or not, but no one asks about allergies. I have food allergies – I cannot eat food that has dairy, eggs or nuts. Most people who have allergies have the problem that they can't eat a dessert at a party, or they can't have their favorite food.

Well, me, I complain that people keep coming up and saying, "Sorry I couldn't get you anything to eat." They do this for so long that I can't even enjoy the party! See, when people say that kind of thing, it makes me feel bad for making them feel like they have to say it even though I'm fine.

How often do I feel bad about not being able to eat the dessert? Never. Okay, maybe once in a while. Here is the main reason I don't feel bad about not being able to eat desserts: even if I could eat the desserts, I don't like chocolate. If I have a choice, I won't pick the dessert. I can always find some kind of fruit around that I can eat. When the party is somewhere like a restaurant, I deliberately fill myself up before the dessert comes so I don't feel bad about not being able to eat it.

After I fill myself up, I play on my devices or with someone. This helps distract me from the fact everyone in the room is eating cake, and I am not. The smell helps, too. I don't like the smell of chocolate, so I don't look, but I smell.

Some people like the attention from all the apologies, but I don't; it just reminds me that I can't eat these foods. Sensitivity can go both ways.

## We have a dream

*Sribatsa Das*



While growing up in my village Balibaruan in Keonjhar district on the bank of Baitarani river, I had heard copious tales of merchants venturing out to Java, Borneo and Sumatra and returning through river Mahanadi with riches in the old days. After 30 years of leaving my village, I have wondered how the Odiya merchants would compare to the western explorers. The comparison is difficult to quantity. But, it became increasingly apparent to me that these brave men dreamed big, worked hard and achieved a lot. During the British era, many brave Odiays made the ultimate sacrifice to free India from the British. We hail from rich culture, heritage, history and bravery.

However, we cannot bask in the glory of the past. We cannot take comfort in maintaining status quo. We must carefully observe our peers and learn the best they are able to achieve. Late Intel Chairman Andrew Grove said, "*only the paranoids survive*". To break away from status quo is not easy. It requires embracing *disruptive change and innovation* to leap frog to our full potential. It requires adopting the best from both the country we left behind and the one we call home. We must dream big, work hard and achieve a lot. That is the path forward to build a vibrant society strengthening the foundation the society is built upon.

Let's start with simplification. We cannot fight inflation. Let Fed Chairwoman tackle inflation. We can make our processes more efficient to match our demand and the supply closely to reduce unpredictability and minimize waste to control cost. We can start and finish our programs on schedule. If we can follow the schedule at office, why stick to Indian Standard Time at our events. We can change RSVP if we are unable to attend a program. Even the doctor's office charges a fee for "no show". We can leverage technology to facilitate event management and pre-payment more effectively compared to Evite. E-Mail campaign tools offer better measurement. Why deal with carrying check book or cash? Let PayPal take care of payment from the comfort of our homes. Pre-registration is a small step, but would benefit us positively. Pre-registration started this Kumar Purnima. Let pre-registration become the way to register for the event except for those seniors that are computer challenged. We can increase awareness of our programs to increase attendance. Increased attendance will reduce fixed cost per attendee. With increased attendance, we can attract more sponsors. With more sponsors, we can improve our current programs, expand our programs and fund new programs.

Sponsors look for return on their investment. Sponsors look for quality. Improving quality of our programs using professional audio/visual, videography, photography, live streaming and marketing material above all quality performances serves our memory as well as sponsors. There is good deal of competition to secure sponsors. We must create a *massive marketing machine* to create marketing proposal, publish a rate card and seek sponsors early. We need to reciprocate to the sponsors to make the sponsorship "win-win". Magazine is a great source to fetch sponsorship. Let's encourage the children to write articles. We can start soliciting material for the magazine 4-6 months in advance. Magazine can be printed at Create Space cost effectively. We can keep our delivery cost low by printing the magazine 3-4 weeks in advance. Books and magazines are judged by their cover. Let the cover be created by artists to match the occasion. Let's create



the best cover we can. Magazine can earn perpetual royalty for the chapter. That in turn can fund chapter activities.

Sponsors and speakers look for information about our society. A well curated website can assist in soliciting speakers and sponsors. Let the website be supported by banner ads from local businesses as well as from Amazon Affiliate Ad or something similar. Similarly, let our Twitter Feed and YouTube Channel earn money for us. We need to monetize social media and website a lot. The earning can support the website hosting.

Social media a double-edged sword. We need to publish the terms of posting periodically on Facebook, WhatsApp and E-Mail Groups. Sometimes, the members need to be reminded. The terms will promote posting relevant posts. That way, healthy discussions can be promoted.

Odiya language program is a great avenue to teach language and culture. That program can be expanded using video conferencing and state of the art leaning management systems. Funds can be sought to strengthen that program. Similar, technology knowledge sharing program can be expanded. Ultimately, jobs are necessary. Majority of the members are techies. Perhaps, the technology knowledge sharing program can be expanded. Professional networking to advance career would unlock great potential for the members. Why not unlevel the playing field and keep our fellow Odiyas in mind for positions if they are qualified!

Our society needs to work with the community. Volunteering at Food Bank is a great initiative. We should strengthen that program and expand similar programs. Odiya Radio Program is an example of improving our brand. That program can be expanded and continued.

At times, need arises for financial support. Crowd funding is a well proven method to arrange money for the needy. GoFundMe account can be considered when the next need arises. We need to establish strict checks and balances as well as verify recipients' circumstances thoroughly for GoFundMe activities to avoid funding wrong causes that could lead to potential money laundering.

In the end, we need to work hard and pay for the programs to make them better. We can adopt the best from the country live. Determination and dedication would be necessary to achieve our dreams. *Let's dream big, work hard and achieve a lot.* Let's work together to unlock the great potential ahead of us.

### In Gratitude to our Sponsors



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