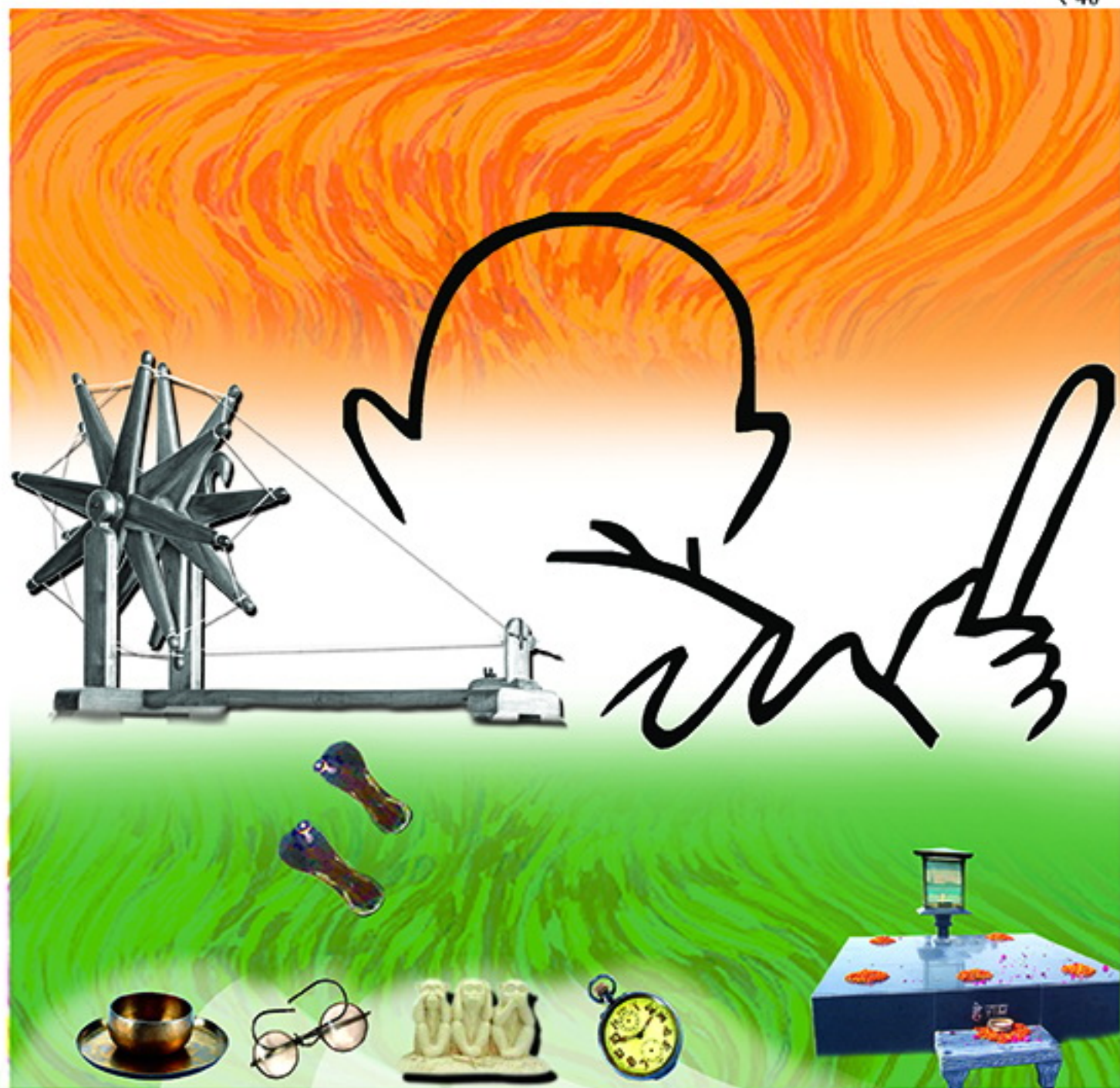


Klound 9

National Magazine for School Children

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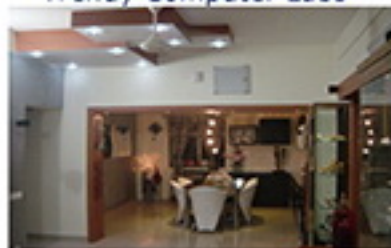
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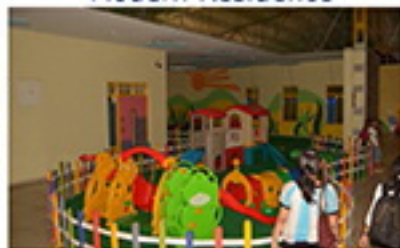
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From the Editor's Desk

There is great news! KiiT International School will organise a Literary Festival at Bhubaneswar later this year. Literary festivals are being organised in several cities these days. It is apparent that more people are drawn towards literature – more people are reading books, more authors are writing them and there are more bookshops and publishers than there used to be, say, a decade ago. You couldn't have had it better. But this litfest at Bhubaneswar is going to be different. We will have authors who write children's books, as guests, and they will interact with students. It will cater to a young readership, mostly school children. After all, that is one of the chief objectives of *Kloud 9*. I urge all booklovers not to miss the opportunity to attend the festival.

As announced, in the last issue, *Kloud 9* is organising a short story writing contest on the occasion of Children's Day. The details of this contest are elsewhere in this issue. So children, please send in your stories for the contest. I would highly appreciate if teachers and parents could encourage their children to participate in this contest.

This issue, once again, is a kaleidoscope of interesting stories and poems written by young minds, albeit, they are mostly by the same students who have contributed to the periodical before. We would like more students to try their hand at creative writing. It's not very difficult. If you are stuck for what to write about, well, you could write about an upcoming festival or event, about an interesting place you have been to, a review of a book that you've read, the transcript of an interview you have held with a dignitary who visited your school, or your childhood memories; we encourage a wide variety of topics.

Ruskin Bond

Kloud 9

(Oct-Dec 2013)

Volume II Issue II

(National Magazine for School Children)

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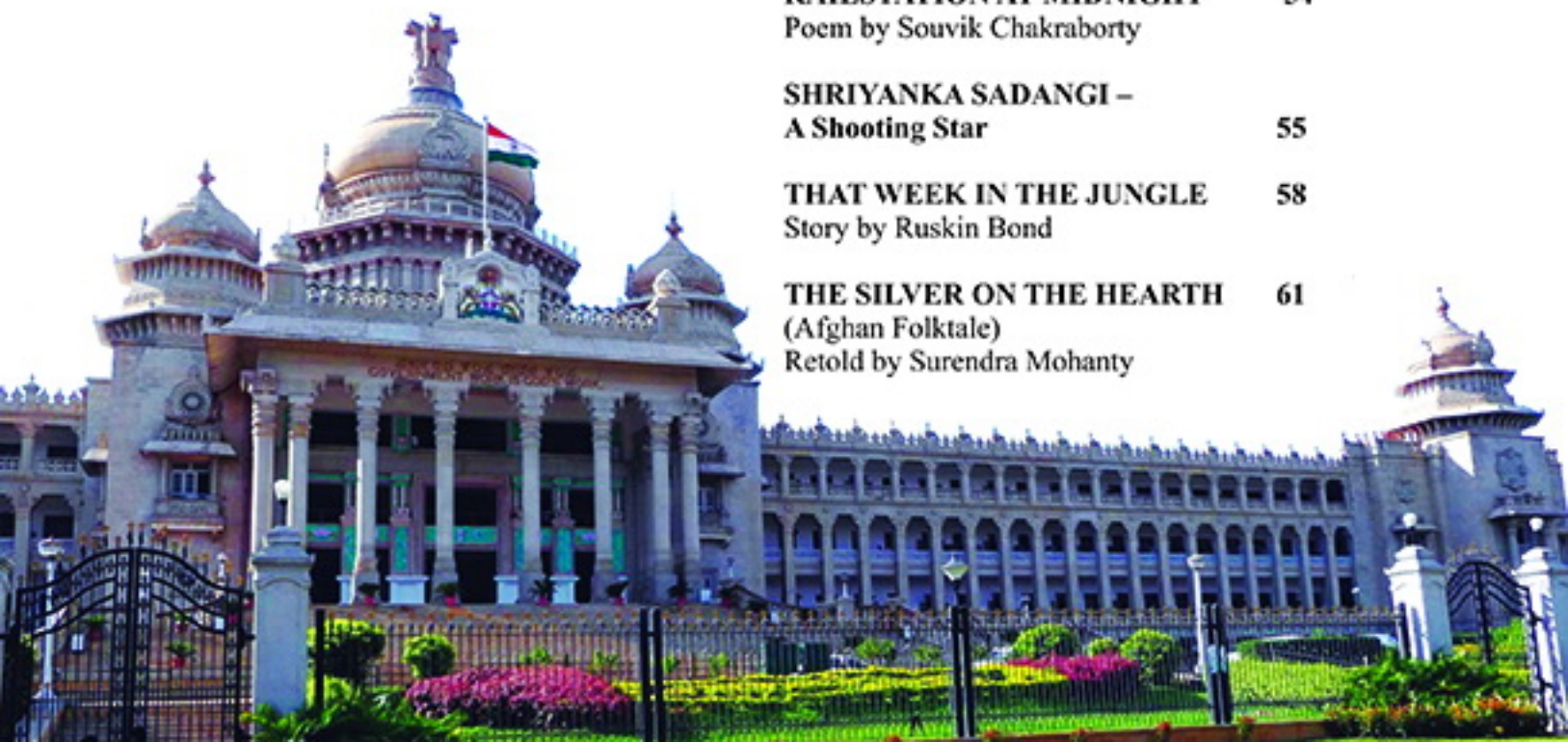
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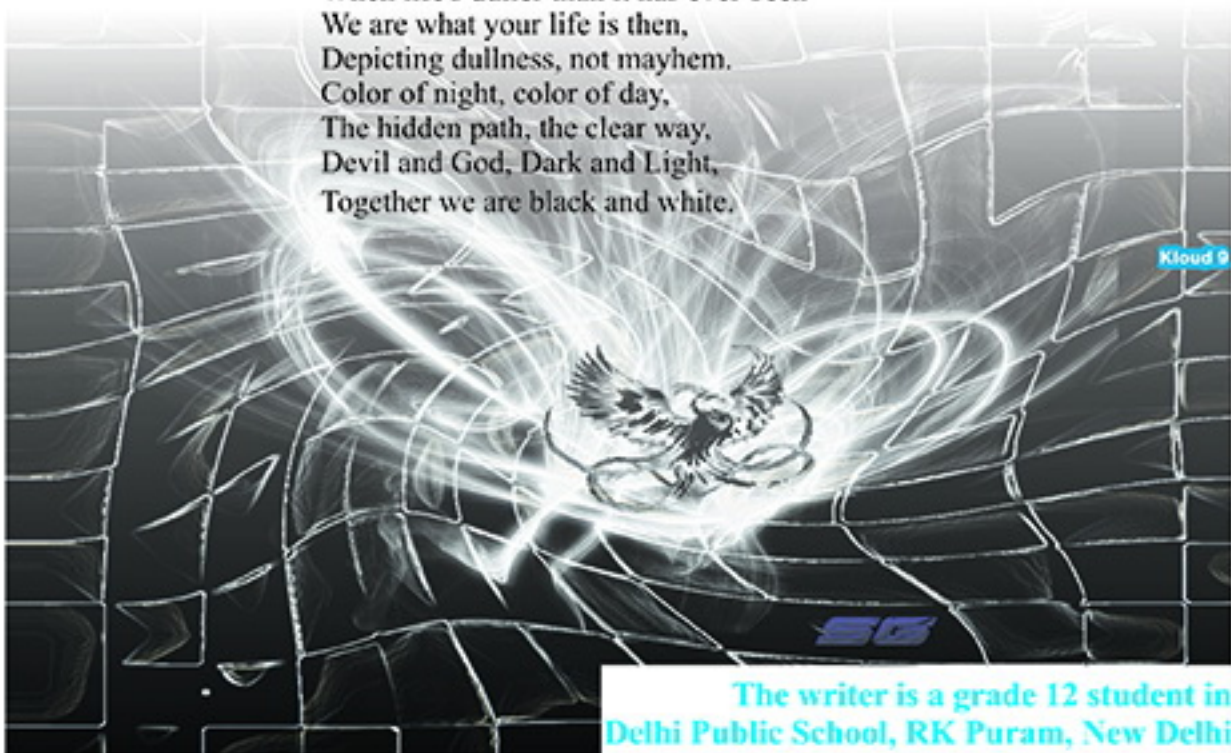


Black & White



By **SRISHTI GUPTA**

I am the dark of the night
I am the ray of morning light
I am the evil taking over your heart
I am the good playing its part
I touch your mind, negative and sad
I bring hope when times are bad
I answer the dark when night calls
I brighten up when the day falls
I depict misery, destruction and war
I am raised when peace is wished for
Together we are both evil and good
Maintaining the perfect balance that we should
When colors of life can no longer be seen
When life's duller than it has ever been
We are what your life is then,
Depicting dullness, not mayhem.
Color of night, color of day,
The hidden path, the clear way,
Devil and God, Dark and Light,
Together we are black and white.



The writer is a grade 12 student in
Delhi Public School, RK Puram, New Delhi

Reminiscences



By VARTIKA CHADDA

She stood at the crossroads, peering through the tenuous mist, trying to, yet failing to identify the street she had once known so well.

As she moved towards her sacred land she was filled with a sense of excitement that terrified her. She knew what lay ahead yet she had returned to assure herself. She had undertaken the journey alone although she had shared this house with numerous others. They had lived here together, had shared happiness and woes alike, grown, studied and played in the verandah, chased butterflies in the garden, milked cows in the yard and had eagerly awaited the coming of their first radio set. She fondly recalled the time when they used to joyfully gather in the kitchen to watch their mother mix milk and sugar, and freeze it to make ice-cream that they slurped after returning from school. Their grandmother had often reprimanded them for their habit of spending too much time playing marbles and cards under the



neem tree. She said it was the monopoly of the servants and the untouchables. However, this made them savour this pastime all the more.

As she neared her destination, she fought back tears and pulled out a picture from her bag and studied it closely. The picture had faded to sepia. It was taken at the time she was a girl of only three. She sat on her grandfather's lap, her soft brown hair tied on her head, her eyes betrayed a hint of mischief, and her smile was as captivating as ever. Her grandfather's eyes were full of happiness and contentment. He laughed as he fed his only granddaughter with milk and honey. This photograph was her past and his laughter, only a memory. She reached the place she had once called home. It had now been pulled down to make way for a multi storey structure.

The bricks lay shattered, the compound wall, half broken, had once been covered with ivy. The neem tree had disappeared. She could no longer hear the peals of laughter that had once resonated within the walls.

The house had been sold off in a hurry, right after the news of the plans of splitting India had trickled down. Two leaders in the capital had

decided the fate of the nation. What was war after all? Old men talking and young men dying. She could only watch as her possessions were carelessly packed and carted away in boxes. The furniture, carpets and vessels had been sold at throwaway prices.

Her mother's silverware, china crockery and other family heirlooms- including her father's favourite armchair and pearl embedded box, were given away. Her abode had been declared as dangerous and unsafe to reside in. This was beyond her comprehension. Why must they all have to go so suddenly? How could they run away from home? Would they ever return? Her parents seemed to have no answer and the other adults seemed too busy to be patient anymore, except grandfather. As she sat on his lap, he reassured her that they were going to a better place – a new home where they would meet new people and make new friends. He said it would be like a marvelous adventure. He, however, didn't seem too happy when his prayer room was dismantled and his idols and prayer books stowed away in a cardboard box. He loved this room. He used to spend many an hour singing praises of Lord Krishna and telling the beads of



the rosary. He had meticulously decorated this room.

The day of departure arrived sooner than expected. They hadn't planned for it, but there was a convincing rumour that Lahore was going to be bombed the following day. Everyone, except grandfather, crammed themselves into one of the numerous military

vehicles on their way to the Promised Land. Grandfather stayed back to wind up the family business. The farewell had been a tearful one. She wrapped her arms around her grandfather's humongous waist while he assured her that he would follow them soon.

He laughed off her worries and promised her that he would surely get some sweet treats for her and then they would go for one of their many adventures.

This was one promise grandfather never kept. He was killed in one of the many air raids that followed briefly after this goodbye. She saw her city being blown to bits and wondered if grandfather had caught a last glimpse of the courtyard and remembered all the glorious times they had there.

Now, she stood on the spot that had once been her grandfather's *sanctum sanctorum*, the prayer room. She peered through the nebulous mist, only to realize that it wasn't the goodbyes that hurt. It was the flashes that followed.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 11 student in Delhi Public School, R. K. Puram, New Delhi

Is Material Knowledge Enough?



By **NIKITA GUDURU**

A cursory glance at India's education system will tell us that it is like an animal race with teachers whipping students to the finish line, often pushing them far beyond their physical and mental endurance. Right from play school students are systematically dictated and their imagination and creativity are bound and destroyed with the chains and guillotines called marks and grades. As the child grows the weight of his satchel doubles and triples. Books occupy children's world with no room left for more important things such as creativity, skills of leadership and organization. Children in our schools are mostly deprived of thought provoking creative activities and waste their precious youth mugging up stuff, rather than trying to innovate and create things.

But is education all about marks and grades? Well, it isn't. Marks and grades are just eligibility indicators to clerical jobs. But jobs are just the means of sustenance, not of the living.

A cursory glance at India's education system will tell us that it is like an animal race with teachers whipping students to the finish line, often pushing them far beyond their physical and mental endurance.

Jobs earn us money but there are some values that are way more important to enable us to lead our life to the fullest.

Real education must impart values about life along with the material and practical knowledge. Because it is this value based education that eventually helps a child live in the world well and help others live well. He learns to cope with his own problems and be useful to the society in a true sense. The system ought to exploit his imagination rather than stifling it because great inventions are the results of the free play of imagination and the judicious use of material knowledge. A correct blend of life values and material knowledge can work miracles in any field.

The bottom line is that children should be perennially encouraged to exploit the immense potentials of their own brains to understand, create, innovate and invent.

Word 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Delhi Public School, Vijayawada

JUST FOR LAUGHS

A teacher is talking to a student.

Teacher: Did your father help you with your homework?

Student: No, he did it all by himself.

On a crowded bus, one man noticed that another man had his eyes closed.

"What's the matter? Are you sick?"

"No, I'm okay. It's just that I hate to see an old lady standing."

Dream Park

By YANSOUN T'SENG

A place where clouds dance,
Birds sing;
The cuckoo never loses a chance,
And pleasant are all the things.

Where you can lie on the green grass
And watch the clouds pass.
Remember it at the back of your mind,
Everything you could ever find.

Where daydreams come true;
There's not one trouble you'll fall into.
The sky is clear, magical and blue.
Every beautiful gift of nature and the dew.

The paths are clear and wide;
The leaves sway from side to side.
Where you can see what you've never seen
And be in every place you've never been.

Where you can love like a sinner,
And lose like a winner.
Never a bit of doubt.
Just fun, laughter and shouts.

Such a place where dogs don't bark;
Where the atmosphere is pure;
Where for everything there's a cure.
That is what I call a Dream Park.



Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Activity High School, Mumbai

And then Gandhi 'Struck' Me



By SONIA SAMANTARAY

"Hey there, dream girl!"

"Hi, Ananya!"

This is how Ana and I greeted each other every day. She called me a 'dream girl' not because I looked like some angel fallen from the sky (what would I not do to look like that!), but because I was gifted with this extra-ordinary ability to drift off into fantasies sitting almost anywhere and at any time!

Only just yesterday, sitting in one of the most boring teachers' lesson, and trying hard to be attentive to one of the most difficult chapters, I drifted off into my reverie where I got proposed by my crush who also gifted me a big carton full of dairy milk choc, and then we even did a typical Bollywood number in the rain, around the trees! The song was coming to an end when I felt a sharp pain in my head and I was jolted back to my S.ST class. It was a

different story when my lovely S.ST teacher asked me what I was doing and when pat came my reply that I was dancing, my classmates burst out into laughter and my infuriated teacher unceremoniously asked me to leave the classroom. That was the fifth time in a row that week I was kicked out of a lesson!. Oh hell!

Like any other healthy teenage girl, I had a lot of things on my mind. But the problem with me was that from the time I had started daydreaming, I had become supremely imaginative and had unconsciously conjured up an imaginary place in my head where I would fly whenever I felt that life was treating me unfairly in the real world. And I had made that place so beautiful that I found it quite difficult to zap back, and I had even started to lose track of whatever was actually happening in my real life! I had started to become quite... listless because a series of setbacks had made me miserable: my grades had gone down, my latest crush had crushed all my hopes, I had ended up



being just a house leader in spite of my ambition to be the school captain and, to top it all, I had fallen out with my parents and had been bickering with them over the silliest imaginable things.

And then one day, frustrated about all these, I sat down to figure out what had gone wrong in the last few months to make my life so very hellish. Right at that moment, my eyes fell on a piece of paper which had been lying on my table for two days, that I had ignored. On it was written – “Be the change you want to see in the world.” by M. K. Gandhi. How that paper appeared on my table I really had no idea, but the aphorism jolted me deep inside and gave me lots of ideas about changing myself for the better.

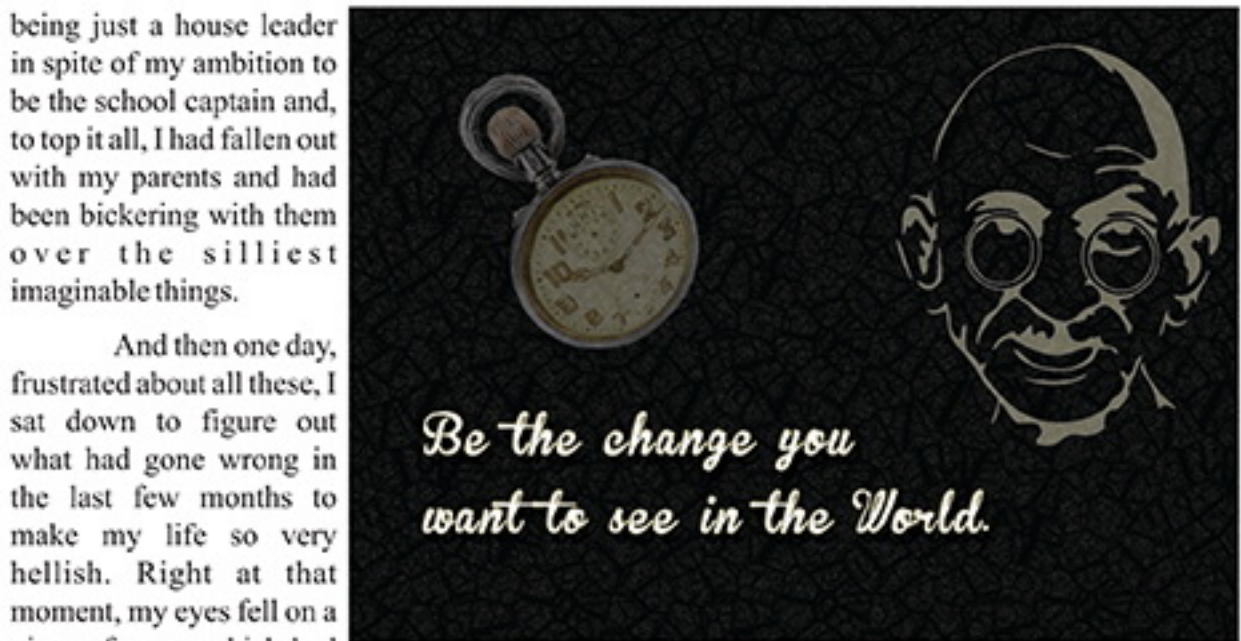
I realised that if I wanted to improve my grades, then first I had to change the way I studied. If I wanted to get over my broken heart, then first I should change myself from being vulnerable to being strong. I realised I needed to

change my mentality for me to scale great heights. And if I wanted my parents to listen to me, then first I should listen to them. I also realised that fantasizing to overcome tough times meant running away from my problems and, that meant running away from the solution. Now I learned that I had to face the problem to find a solution to it, thanks to Mr. Gandhi!

Ananya was the first person to notice the abrupt change in my attitude and rejoice in it.

Cloud

The writer is a grade 10 student



IF WE ARE TO **TEACH** REAL
PEACE IN THIS **WORLD**,
AND IF WE ARE TO **CARRY** ON A REAL
WAR AGAINST WAR,
WE SHALL HAVE TO **BEGIN**
WITH THE **CHILDREN.**

Mahatma Gandhi



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The Earth



By ABHILASH NEOG

Earth, as the name goes
Bright and beautiful,
Best and ever so thoughtful.
She rotates and rotates
Ushering in day and night,
Revolves and revolves
Bringing in the seasons of time.

Filled with wonders
Of never ending
astonishments,
Filled with mysteries,
Yet to be solved by
Modern environment.

She works hard
But only to be heard.
Works, but never gets tired
Until it goes as desired.

Like a mother, she feeds us
Without expecting any return,
But what do we give in return?
A bunch of irresponsible acts,
That hurts with all its impacts.



Not always is she calm and quiet,
But gets angry sometimes
Showing her fury and all her might.
Earthquakes, tornadoes and volcanoes
Are what she brings with her,
Devastating the trees and houses
And everything else near and far.

Actually, it is we who
Do the damage,
Polluting nature,
And causing all rage.

It is shameful for us
To cut off her trees,
And to fill her lungs
With toxic and harmful breeze.

Therefore, getting united
And saving our earth
Will be the biggest deed
From our hearts.

Klound 9

**The writer is a grade 10 student in
Carmel School, Jorhat, Assam**



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Haveli

By SAGAR KASHYAP BORDOLOI

The wolves howled. The owls hooted and a cold gust of wind caressed TJ as he stood in front of Raj Khuranas' haveli.

There had been a rumor for quite some time that the mansion was haunted. Lumps and knots on the tree trunks and overgrown weeds and bushes in the yard, and the bats flying around in the vicinity gave the mansion a deserted look. He looked behind before entering the building. A flickering street lamp shone on the quiet and deserted road, almost losing its battle against the pitch darkness. Is it gonna be okay? Is this a good idea? Is the house really haunted? Should I go back?....a number of thoughts flashed inside his head as he entered. When he pushed the front door with all his might, it budged with a creak and cold winds rushed up towards the stairs. In the spacious living room, bats flew everywhere and there were strange patterns of cobwebs all around. TJ coughed as dust on the door got unsettled and rose in the air. He closed the door, locked it and kept the keys inside his backpack. He had a torch, some neon lights, candles, and a Bible - in case if he needed it.

As the world drifted into its fantasy dreams, TJ sneaked around the haveli to have a bath in the shadows of darkness with whoever was inside the house.

He lit up the neon lights and placed them at the intersection of corridors. Then he took some candles, lit them up and stuck them on the floor in a circle. He looked around. The enormous space was empty except for a wooden stool that lay in a corner. He took out his video cam and set it on the stool at the right-end corner of the living room so that the activities within the area covered by the lens might be recorded. TJ sighed. The steady ticking of water drops from the faucet in the kitchen sink made him conscious of the dreadful silence of the house.



His blade of hope was way too blunt to cut through his pillars of fear.

TJ took out a big mirror from his backpack and placed it in the middle of the circle. He sat in front of the mirror (just inches away) and began to chant Bloody Mary. After about ten minutes, he slowly got up and took the mirror to the stairs and with his back facing the stairs, he moved up backward, holding the mirror in front of him with both hands, so that he could see the things behind him, chanting "Bloody Mary I have your child". In the midway he stopped abruptly. He felt someone whispering in his ears and rubbing his head. He was numbed! He was badly shaking. Fear turned him pale and he regretted undertaking the stupid adventure. He wanted to scream and flee. But a morbid curiosity and a strong sense of shame in having been scared by an empty space got better of him and forced him to stay and continue his exploration. He took a long breath and started moving up again. Then suddenly he saw a black hooded head with red hot eyes smiling at him in the mirror. He quickly turned around but there was no one to be seen. Instinctively he dropped the mirror and leaped down the flight of stairs, landed a few steps short of the floor and rolled down like a ball. He sprang up to his feet and bolted towards the door. He pulled the door hard but to no avail because it was locked! He looked for his bag-pack, but surprisingly it was gone!

A high-pitched laughter pierced his ears and his heart leapt out. It sounded like a duet of masculine and feminine voices, screaming, "Hahahaha.....you have my child? Hahahaha...fool!! I have no child!! Hahahaha." TJ was paralysed with fear. He couldn't guess where the voice was coming from. Then, he thought of his camcorder. If there was some paranormal activities going on at the moment, then it must have recorded it. And if not, then someone is playing a prank. However, TJ's worst fear came true. As he looked into his camcorder, he saw a black hooded figure with red hot eyes jumping and running everywhere in the house and smiling at the camera! TJ was so frightened that he blurted out, "What do you want from me?"

"Your soul", the voice howled and a pair of mysterious hands pulled TJ with such force that in split seconds he found himself in a dark room where he screamed his lungs out. TJ was gone. Simply vanished.

Sill rumours had it that a demon was haunting the haveli. A year after the mysterious disappearance of my brother TJ, I was standing in front of Raj Khuranas' Haveli at midnight to seek him out. But little did I know that I was making a big mistake.

Cloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Carmel School, Jorhat

SILLY RIDDLES

Q: What has many keys but can't open any doors?

A: A piano.

Q: Can a kangaroo jump higher than the Empire State Building?

A: Yes, because the Empire State Building can't jump!

All Alone



By ELLORA POTHAL

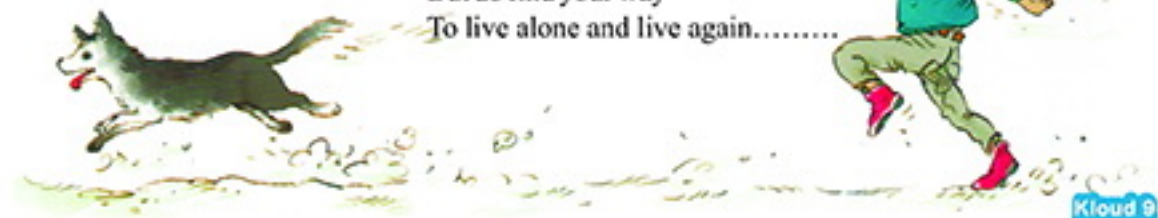
Crying is not the solution
To get released from your pain
Even laugh not the thing
To hide your budding pain.

What would be the solution
In this type of situation
When no body is there with you
And you are all alone

Friends are not everything for you
No body will be there with you
The thing you can do is
To sit alone and see the world without
Anybody with you.

Being with somebody who does not care us not the solution
And nobody with you is not the pain
Life can be cruel
Life can be friendly
But nobody knows who will gain

Laugh and my
Loss and gain
Live and die
But do find your way
To live alone and live again.....



The writer is a grade 12 student in
KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar

Homecoming



By HARSHA PATTNAIK

“Mr. Joseph Ridley, please sign these papers,” said a cop, handing me a bundle of papers. I signed them all, without even reading their content.

I got out of the gloomy jail. I greedily inhaled the fresh air. It had been 10 years since I had breathed the pure air of freedom. I thanked God and promenaded out of the tall prison walls into the liberty I had been craving for. But I didn't know where to go. Would my family accept me after what I had done? Would they hug me again like they used to before? Would I ever be loved again?

I sauntered into a park and sat down on a damp bench. I stared at the callus on my hands. Then I was attracted by the children were happily playing around and I rejoiced in their happiness for some time. But soon their happy squeals and chatter slowly started fading from my ears as I began to think of the thing I had done which landed me in jail. The biggest mistake in my life.

It was early summer, 10 years ago, when my wife was pregnant with my second child. I had lost my job and had no income to run the household. We were nearly starving. My daughter, Angela had to change schools. We were in the worst possible situation. To make matters worse, at that time, I got into bad company and I started doing drugs. Some nights

I drank till morning and soon I became a chronic alcoholic and drug addict. My wife had to work to feed the family. She worked hard without any complaint and put up with me and my reckless life. Yet, I was dissatisfied. I had become irritable and intolerable and I wanted my second child to be born in a posh hospital.

Then I did the thing that I would never have dreamt of doing under normal circumstances - I broke into my old office, stole money and nearly killed a guard.

I got lots of money but I spent it on myself. I was so addicted to drinking that I squandered all of it in a short while. Then I started taking money from my wife and stopped Angela from going to school. I wanted to steal again and my wife tried to stop me. But I threatened her and went ahead with my plans. The second time I was caught and jailed. On the second night I was in jail, my second child was born. When I was languishing in the darkness of my cell, my little pearl came into the world.

A decade later, I don't know if my second child was a girl or a boy. For the sake of my children, I had strictly instructed my wife never to visit me in the jail or contact me. Now as a free man, I was dying to see my family. But would they want to see me? I guessed not. I saw a little boy sitting beside me on the bench. He stared at me for a long time and asked me, “What is the matter?”

I sighed and said, “I did something bad, something very wrong and now, my family hates

me.” When I said that tears swelled up in my eyes and partially blinded me.

He grabbed my hand softly and smiled, “Just say sorry! They will surely forgive you; it worked for me.”

He got up and left. I thought I saw wings on his back; or were the warm tears in my eyes and the hot humid air playing pranks on me? I thought about the childish thing that little boy said to me. I laughed but then started to cry. I don't know why. I wondered if I was still sane. But I realized that the words of the little boy had struck me deep and I started walking briskly with a sense of direction.

My determination eclipsed my hesitation and I marched up to the front door of the house where I used to live with my wife and child. Nothing about the house and the vicinity had changed. I didn't dare to knock the door. Suddenly, a man walked past me and confidently rang the door bell. My heart sank. Had my wife found someone better than me? As I turned around to leave, I heard a female voice I didn't recognize. I turned around again and saw another woman who stood at the door with the man. She wasn't my dear wife. I hurried back to them and asked, “Sir, do you know anything about the family that lived here 10 years ago?”

The man said, “The family moved to Avenue Street after the woman's husband was jailed.” He scribbled an address on a piece of paper and handed it over to me, “Here's the address.”

I thanked them gratefully and went to locate the house at the address. As I stood in front of an unfamiliar house, I wondered what my next move should be. I hung around in front of the house. I was nervous, very nervous. My heart pounded irregularly and I was

perspiring. Would they even recognize me anymore? Negative thoughts tormented me. Had my wife remarried? If she had, how would I face that situation?

Finally I plucked up some courage and went up the stairs. But I couldn't knock. I just kept staring at the door.

Suddenly the door creaked and a beautiful young woman opened it. She looked familiar.

“Dad?” she screamed wide-eyed and open-mouthed, and gripped my wrist. Another face emerged from behind her. I had never seen that little boy but he looked a lot like me. He hugged me and said, “Dad's here!”

I looked at the woman closely. “Angela?” I asked. She hugged me tight and started crying. Angela whispered in my ear, “And he is my brother Matt.” I looked at them and could not control my tears, “Have you forgiven me?”



“I have never been angry with you to forgive.” Angela forced a smile on her face in an attempt to hold back her tears.

They pulled me inside and made me sit on the sofa. The house was cozy and smelled like home. There were my photos on the wall. Matt pointed at them and laughed.

“Mom!” shouted Angela, “Look who’s here!”

“I’m coming” said the voice I’d been waiting to hear for ten years. My angel, my wife.

She walked down the stairs as gracefully as she had done on our wedding day. A few strands of her hair had turned gray and there were light wrinkles on her face, but the grace and

beauty still remained intact. Suddenly I realized the true worth of what I had been missing for ten years. She saw me and stopped dead. I got up and started, “I’m really sorry.” I bowed my head down “Please forgive me”.

She walked closer and hugged me, “I love you Joseph.” Angela and Matt also joined us. I felt complete. I felt happy. Now I could die with no regrets.

My angels accepted me.

kloud 9

The writer is a grade 9 student in D.A.V Public School, CDA, Cuttack



Nuakhai Festival

Nuakhai is festival which is celebrated with pomp and gaiety in the western parts of Odisha. Odisha is a state with a very rich culture, a state where people flock to experience spirituality. It is one of the four holy 'dhams', the abode of Lord Jagannath. It said that Odisha celebrates 13 primary festivals in the twelve months of the year, but many other festivals are also celebrated here.

Nuakhai, which literary means 'new food', is the equivalent of the Baishakhi festival during the month of September. It is the celebration of harvesting of new crop of the season. Western Odisha celebrates Nuakhai on a grand and elegant way. During this occasion many cultural programs are organized in the western districts. The primary goddess of Western Odisha, Maa Samaleswari, is worshipped and new crops are given as offering to the Goddess. People come out wearing new clothes in festive mood and enjoy the day with prayers, and indulge in traditional and cultural events. Sambalpuri Dance, a traditional folk dance of western Odisha, is performed by villagers as well as professional performers. Artisans display their traditional arts and crafts, which adds a special charm to this festival. Nuakhai is now a recognized festival of India and the day is observed as a state holiday.

kloud 9

By Anirban Hritiq, O.D.M Public School, Bhubaneswar

The Power of Love

By AASHAY DHARMESH SHAH

Love is the best medicine,
It reduces the sadness of mine,
Makes us feel like a happy dove,
This is the power of love.

Love reduces our stress,
And makes us feel fresh.
It helps to tide over tension,
And lets us take proper decision.

Love makes life a bed of roses,
Although life is full of causes.
It helps us to increase friendship,
And lets us bury the hatchet.

Love keeps check on our anger,
And we can enjoy our life.
Love helps us care for others,
And not be rude to fathers and mothers.

Life without love is
Like a flower without fragrance.
This is the power of love,
This is the power of love.



Cloud 9

The writer is a grade 9 student in
Activity High School, Mumbai

The Christie Experience

Book Review By Manav Verma



By **MANAV VERMA**

Two words:
Absolutely
WOW!

That's the reaction Agatha Christie, the Queen of crime, brought into the sphere of entertainment. She is

considered to be one of the best in characterization, plotting and suspense, and the praise is not in vain! Her books, even though written more than half a century ago, continue to drag readers into their pages and plunge them into a roller coaster like experience! It's amazing how we can still relate to these stories, in the present day. Genius!

It all started with an unusual scream from upstairs, a scream which bordered between euphoria and excitement! To my utter disbelief (a jaw-dropping scenario), I saw my mother transform mentally into a little child, who had just laid her hands on the toy she wanted desperately. I peered over her shoulder to see what all the excitement was about and there, in her hands, she lovingly clutched a whole series of CDs – AGATHA CHRISTIE'S POIROT COLLECTION! There

he was in the front, the famous Belgian detective who was destined to become the most popular and loveable detective in crime fiction after Sherlock Holmes, created from sheer imagination with his egg shaped head and funny moustache, our very own egoistic Hercule Poirot smiling smugly at me.

I had been wondering how to spend my summer holidays at my Grandma's place and was rather skeptical about her movie collections kept safely under lock and key. "Manav, you



have no clue how lucky you are!" exclaimed my still hyper mom! "This stuff is what dreams are made of. How I have loved every page, every scene of her amazing books! I have created every one of these stories in my mind, and the

very fact that I am going to see them for myself, for the first time, is giving me goose pimples!" Amused at her childlike enthusiasm, which I think was rather contagious too, I settled down with her to enjoy myself!

If I had been asked to pick the best, I wouldn't have an answer. That's how good they were. ALL of them! But a few are definitely worth a mention - *The Murder On The Orient Express*, *The Murder Of Roger Ackroyd*, *Death In The Clouds*, *Death On The Nile*, *Lord Edgware Dies*, *Cat Among The Pigeons*, *Cards On The Table*, *Sad Cypress*, *Evil Under The Sun*, *Five Little Pigs*, *Hickorey Dickorey Dock*, *One Two, Buckle My Shoe* etc (I think she did have a fascination for nursery rhymes.) The stories are pretty simple, yet varied, not in the least complicated, and her inspiration seemed to be drawn from the world in which she lived in (quaint little English villages) and her acute sense of observation of the human race. Her travels with her archaeologist husband inspired many of the settings of her murders in the Middle East.

I was amazed that Mom seemed to know who had done it every time (that's how obsessed she is) and every now and then, she would turn to me and say, "Do you know who did it? Well, I do, and it's certainly not the butler!"

The unexpected twist at the end of the tale always comes as a surprise, even when you start expecting it. It's almost always impossible to pinpoint the killer before Poirot's final dramatic revelation. The movies were all done brilliantly, though some twisted slightly away from the storyline of the books they were based on, which I did not approve of. (Even though they weren't bad, I prefer the book any day over the movie!).

If any of you have a chance to see these classics, I would highly recommend you to grab the opportunity. Crime is always gruesome, but I should say that Christie's novels and movies are pretty clean and do not have the morbid nature of many of our modern crime writers.

I must admit, I was greatly inspired. Therefore, this review! I have also begun thinking up my own twisted murder mysteries, just for the fun of it (and for the satisfaction of seeing the puzzled faces that listen to them).

Sadly, we watched all the movies. So, there is none left (sigh).

However, I did hear that there was a Miss Marple series for sale somewhere!

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Bhavans Rajaji Vidyashram, Chennai

DID YOU KNOW?

Agatha Christie was investigated by the Intelligence Chiefs at MI5 on suspicion of having a spy in Britain's top-secret code breaking centre because of her wartime novel *N or M*. The MI5 was concerned that the famous crime writer had inside information about the British wartime efforts.



There's no Wealth but Life



By **JASMINE KAUR NARANG**

It was a lovely morning. The sky was clear with only specks of white clouds here and there and the sun's rays pierced through them to reach this earth.

Flowers were in full bloom, and it seemed as if each and every petal enjoyed the day to its fullest, with birds jumping from tree to tree singing the songs of happiness which no one had ever been able to comprehend. Everything placed on this earth seemed to be in perfect symmetry and in complete harmony with each other.

I was so lost in the beauty of nature that I didn't even notice the little group of slum children who had come to the park to play. The kids had no proper clothing, only torn rags wrapped around their feeble bodies, all bare feet, their hair open and running all wild. But they were least bothered about their looks, instead, they had other things to worry about such as whose turn it was on the swing or whose turn it was to climb up

the mango tree to pluck some raw mangoes. They had no worldly worries, nor were they aware of the difficulties or the struggles, which life had in store for them. Their eyes were full of unrealized dreams, their souls full of hopes and their little hearts filled with laughter. It was a pleasure to watch them enjoy life to the fullest. Though I was observing them from a distance, I could feel each and every emotion they went through. If one of them fell down the others rushed to help him, and if one of them did not get a mango the others shared with him.



And then my focus shifted to my neighbor's kids. These two kids were fighting over an expensive toy. They were practically hitting each other. All I could see in their eyes was pure hatred for each other at that moment. And then I realized that this was actually what the world was turning them into. Man's desperate struggle for fame and success is making him lose his true identity, in this futile chase. He is more worried about the materialistic things than the actual human values, which are the essence of humanity. What he does not realize is that the world is not going to remember him for all those things he possessed during his short span of life but rather by the deeds he did. We no longer enjoy life; no longer do we appreciate the gifts given to us by Nature. We no longer cherish the freedom, which was once unknown to our ancestors and which we have

taken for granted. We are no longer the people we should be. I think it's time we just looked into ourselves and pondered over the possibility of becoming better human beings, and tried to rise above our expectations and that of the others.

'The world is too much with us; late and soon, Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers: Little we see in nature that is ours. We have given our hearts away.' How truly does William Wordsworth echo the essence of today's world! Aren't we standing at the crossroads of our lives? Isn't it time for us to make our



decisions? Isn't it time to open our eyes to the real world of happiness than to struggle in the world of shadows? Isn't life a process of self discovery? The sooner we learn this truth, the happier we would be, for 'In life there are neither rewards nor punishments- there are only consequences.' So one should impose one's own terms upon life because if you do not then you will have to accept the terms of others.

Klud 9

The writer is a grade 12 student in Yadavindra Public School, Mohali

ALPHABET RIDDLES

Q: What letter of the alphabet is an insect?

A: B. (bee)

Q: What letter is a part of the head?

A: I. (eye)

Q: What letter is a vegetable?

A: P. (pea)

Q: What letter is a drink?

A: T. (tea)

Q: What letter is a body of water?

A: C. (sea)

Q: What letter is a line of people?

A: Q. (queue)

The Voice



By **DIPTI MISHRA**

He looked up from his table for a moment to consider the person marching into his office and stood up immediately. It was his boss. What was worse; he had a file in his hand.

“Rajesh,” the tone of his boss sounded softer than usual, “today my secretary couldn’t



come for personal reasons. Will you please attend to the complaint register today?”

Rajesh knew he had a load of work to do and was reluctant to take up more, but the pleading tone of the boss and his reverence for

his mature personality made him smile and take up the task gracefully. The big man smiled, left the file on the desk and walked out. As he heard the creak of the tinted glass door open and close, he sat down and leaned back in his chair. He took a deep breath to ready himself for that extra load of work and opened the file. He dialed the numbers one by one and spoke to the customers, maintaining a polite, pleasing tone all the while and recorded their complaints in detail. After all, he found a deep sense of satisfaction in his work.

But now, he was peeved when he discovered that there was one more list of names to attend to. And then, all that faulty software to be rectified! Would he be able to go home at the end of the normal working hours? He felt pity for those men who had a wife at home and for the first time, sympathized with his married friend, who would always be in a hurry to leave once the clock struck five. He never stayed back to chat with him even for a few minutes. But now he seemed to understand why...

Nevertheless, he pulled out the second list from the file. He dialed the first number and waited. As the phone went 'tring tring' he tried to have some fun. He thought, “How would this voice be? A grumpy one like that of the man who dropped his laptop down in a fit of sleep? Or a quiet female voice

like that of the sweet middle aged woman who'd complained of a faulty keyboard which had to be replaced within fifteen days of purchase?"

His reverie was broken short by a voice the sweetness of which instantly made him alert: "Hello?" - a voice melting like butter in his ears - a luscious feminine voice that shook him and quickened his heart. The voice sounded again, now in a quizzical sort of inquisitiveness, "Hello! Hello, who's there?" He felt like someone was pouring delicious chocolate into his ears, which then trickled into his heart. He pulled himself together and replied, "Good Morning Madam. I'm Rajesh from the customer care, Falcon Computers. You lodged a complaint two days ago about a faulty internet connection, according to our records. Have you recently checked if it is working?" realizing that his voice had perhaps gotten weaker.

"Oh yes. I checked it yesterday evening. It is fine now, but we can't always assure that. Maybe someone's pulling at our wire. Or it might be anything else, like, our modem might as well be damaged."

"Then it seems somebody or something's damaging your wire?"

"Well it may be. I can't say with surety."

"Is the internet working smoothly now?"

"Oh yes, for now, it is. Thank you so much," flowed the music by the sweetness of which his heart skipped a beat.

"Thank you," he said and hung up.

For some time, he leaned back in his chair, overcome by the infectious warmth of the voice. Oh, how he wished he could meet this girl with the beautiful voice. But what if she was married, and what if she had children too? He gave up the idea of meeting her. "Hey! Maybe if I'm destined for somebody, I'll meet her, right? Chill dude, get out of this infatuation!" But haven't the wise rightly observed that "The greatest battles are waged in the mind?" On an impulse, he decided to hear the voice again.

He put his hand upon his chest. His heart had, of course, slowed down, but he felt a strange sensation, which he couldn't understand. "Does this have to end like this?" he wondered, "Couldn't he know the possessor of this stupendous voice?" He picked up the phone, dialled the number very slowly again, and waited with bated breath. Again, the voice replied, "Hello?"

This time, his heart throbbed with joy as he presented an excuse he'd hunted up by this time. Trying to sound as genuine as possible, he simply asked, "Excuse me, but May I know if the modem is in good condition?"

The voice tugged at his heartstrings as she replied "Yes, it works properly. No problem with it at all."

"Then do the lights flash on and off irregularly, or are they normal?"

"Uh... I never noticed that."

"Then could you please check it now while I hold?"

"Oh alright," she said and he could hear the 'click' of the switch and a spell of silence which he felt was deafening. "Yes, the lights are on."

"Okay then. In fact, I thought the modem might have gotten damaged by lightning, but if you say the lights are on, then you shouldn't worry. It is in perfect working condition. If it ever gets damaged, then you may launch a complaint again."

"Of course I will," she replied, not realizing that he was dying to listen to her voice on the phone. She thanked him hung up.

After a few days, it so happened that he had to go to a nearby house to install a software in their PC. As he rang the doorbell and stood unsuspectingly, a woman who looked around thirty opened the door and went in. He could hear her calling her husband, and soon, he got acquainted with a medium-built, handsome man. The man also showed some interest in the new software, so Rajesh started showing him the



nuances of its working. Suddenly, someone came in, hearing whose voice, he received a jolt. Old memories flooded back- of the sleepless nights he had after listening to it for the first time, of the feelings that had risen in him and fallen to rise again. He tried to look through the corner of his eye to catch a glimpse of the woman. She continued, "Brother, will you ask him to check the modem in my room?"

"Um...Okay. Sir, once you are done with this installation, will you check the modem in my little sister's room?"

He hadn't talked until then. Neither did he have the guts to look up at her in the presence of her brother. He instantly agreed. He managed to steal a quick glance at her and thought that she was also startled for a moment to hear his voice. He finished downloading the software and looked up at her squarely for a moment. A veritable beauty. She wore a white salwar-kameez and had long, wavy, silky black hair, which contrasted with her attire. In full control of his emotions, he followed her, keeping a respectable distance. This seemed to impress her brother, a lot.

She led him up to her room and showed him her computer. He sure did look at it, but his eyes turned again towards her and stayed there. For a moment, they vacantly stared at each other.

She said, "You should be looking at my computer's modem, not at me."

He mutely considered this, looking down for a moment and looked up again. Then he set down to work on it and after a few moments of quietitude, he said, "No problem now, miss. The thing will just be really fine."

"Oh, alright and thank you so much. By the way, you did sound really excited when you phoned me the second time...was that an excuse to call me again or you really needed that information?"

He placed his hand on his chest again to slow down his fluttering heart. He wiped his forehead - where, by now, tiny beads of perspiration had appeared - with his big, white handkerchief, and stammered,

"N-no miss, I-I j-just had forgotten to ah-ask you those-those details the-the first time; so, you know I...I had to call you a second time..."



He stammered and faltered and looked down, disarmed and helpless. She stood watching him savoring his weakness with a naughty glint in her eyes and a naughty smile on her lips.

She walked a little closer and said, "You sure are a fine man...I'd sensed the goodness in your voice the first time we talked on phone. I

was just wondering if I should ask my brother to find out who you were, not knowing that chance would bring you down here..."

He was by now, kneeling on the floor by the modem. He rose to his feet slowly, saying, "And you are incredibly charming, miss...?"

"Lata," she smiled.

"Lata," he echoed as he moved right up to her, "Won't you please allow me to..." his mouth was lulled quiet by a small, fair hand coming up to his lips and then it brushed aside a soft tuft of hair off his forehead.

"And my handsome pursuer, words will simply spoil this..."

She drew her face closer to his and they kissed. The man with a good heart and his girl with a beautiful voice.

Today, they are man and wife, and for some reason, he leaves his office for home sharp at five.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Delhi Public School, Nalconagar, Angul

HAPPY IS HEALTHY



When I was a young girl of ten, I noticed many people who always looked happy and always laughed on almost all occasions. I used to think that they were senseless and stupid. Then as I grew older, without my realizing it, the smile on my face faded due to many small reasons. My mind was completely disturbed and filled with negative thoughts. Later, when I was 14, I was diagnosed with ulcers. I visited many hospitals and talked to many doctors, but at first no one was able to diagnose the disease. Finally a doctor recognized that I was suffering from ulcers, and he asked me if I was thinking too much and was always worried about each and everything. I replied, 'NO'. Then he asked me to laugh always and erase negative thoughts from my mind. I agreed to do so.

When I went back home, I understood that I had told the doctor many symptoms out of which only a few were

those of ulcers. Later my parents reminded me that I showed other symptoms such as being gloomy all the time without ever smiling. They observed that my mind was filled with negative thoughts. From that minute I decided to always wear a smile on my face, to take everything easy and not to feel stressed about anything. I also learnt that our mind has an impact on our body. When I was severely suffering, I relied on the hope that I would soon be healed, which I now feel was the real reason for my getting completely cured of the disease.


We learn many things from our experiences. What I have learnt was that our mental makeup has an impact on our health - our hope of getting healed acts positively on our health, and most importantly, 'HAPPY IS HEALTHY'.

Kloud 9

**By Neharika Devarakonda
Delhi Public School, Vijayawada**

What did I See Today?

By MALAVIKA ROY SINGH



I love my robins, who I meet every day.
They are blue and red and look very gay.
But every day when mummy asks, "What did you see today?"
I say, "I had more than robins to fill my way!"
Outside the school, right when I start,
I meet a tiny squirrel, who gives me a tart.
I then play with him, before I say good bye,
To greet a flight of birds, who hail right down from the sky!
These are all robins, dressed in red and blue,
Hovering around me, till I say 'boo hoo'!
Soon they leave me, to make way for the cat,
Who jumps and giggles, when I give her a pat.
She talks to me for a while, before meowing away,
I watch her jump, hip-hop and dance, as she goes on her way.
Then I meet a dog, looking a little astray,
He sniffs a little, before thinking of play.
After what seems like an hour of fun,
The dog says, "Come again as I am not done!"
I promise and walk down a bit,
Till I meet my old uncle, who tells me to sit.
He buys me a nice candy,
Which I slurp and slurp.
Till the candy comes off,
And all I am left with is a burp.
I bid my uncle and start again,
Only this time to meet a huge crane!
The crane stands over a puddle, along the edge of a pond,

////////////////////////////////////

Nodding at me silently, making a gesture to bond.
I said, 'I will come tomorrow as I am getting late,'
'Mummy must be worrying, standing by the gate!'
She smiled and nodded, waving me goodbye
Helping me rush home, to greet mummy 'Hi!'
So you see, I love my robins, who I meet every day.
They are blue and red and look very gay.
But when mummy asked, 'What did you see today?'
I once again told her, 'I had more than robins to fill my way!'

Kloud 9

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Mela



By **SWATI BARUAH**

Mina had come home early that day as it was a Saturday. She was full of excitement and enthusiasm as her father would be taking her to the local fair (Mela). She had also told her friends about her visit to

the fair. She was excited about which dress she would wear, what she would do and what she would eat in the fair.

The moment she opened the bamboo gate of her house, she started to scream, "Ma.....Ma.....serve me the food fast.....I've to get ready.....Ma....." Her mother came running from inside. Mina held her loads of books to her mother and ran inside. She had a quick shower. Her mother served her the lunch. She sat next to her on the mat and started fanning Mina watching her daughter eagerly eating her food.

Mina said, "Ma, when is Baba coming home? Would he be late? What time?"

Her mother replied looking at her dark glowing face, "He will be back soon.....don't be bothered about it.....finish your food fast and sleep for a while, so that you can be fresh for the fair."

Mina hurriedly finished her food and ran to the corner of the room where a mat was spread out. She lay on the mattress and thought about the exciting things she would do at the fair. It was three o'clock when the sun rays fell on her face and she woke up from her sleep. Her mother was still asleep. She got up from the mat and ran to the gate with the hope of seeing her father arrive. She stood by the gate for a long time then suddenly a thought came to her mind. She ran inside.

Mina asked, "Ma....it's so late.....when is Baba coming?" she was getting impatient. Her mother smiled at her and said that he would be



coming soon. Mina changed into the pink frock which her father gifted her last year. She looked at herself in the mirror for the umpteenth time. She put on a pink *bindi* on her forehead. She was smiling to herself thinking about the fair. After she was dressed she went out and sat on the veranda. She moved cautiously so that her frock wouldn't get crumpled. She waited for a long time until it started to get dark. Mina's mother was getting worried. Mina went back inside. She was feeling sleepy, as she was used to sleeping early.

Mina said, "Ma, please wake me up when Baba returns".

After a while there was a knock at the door. Her mother opened the door. There was a

strange face. He spoke to her politely. He hesitated at the first, but he had to reveal the truth. He said, "There was a bomb blast in evening in the town.....and your husbandhe died in that accident... sorry..."

Mina's mother was speechless. For a moment she could not hear anything. Everything seemed black.

Mina got up from her sleep and ran to the door thinking that it was her father. But seeing the stranger, she was confused. "Ma, where is Baba...?"

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in The Assam Valley School, Sonitpur

NOT JUST FACTS!



- In the British House of Commons, the government and opposition sides of the House are separated by two red lines. The distance between the lines is two sword's length.
- When goats give birth to babies, called kids, the process is called 'Kidding'.
- Where do you keep notes and papers that you want to keep handy? President Lincoln tucked important papers inside his top hat.
- In 1918, magician Harry Houdini made an elephant weighing 4535 Kilograms disappear before an audience of 5200 people at a theatre in New York.
- Ever visited Taumata-whaka-tangihanga-koauau-o-Tamatea-turi-pukaka-pikimaunga-horonuku-pokai-whenua-kitana-tahu? That's a hill in New Zealand with the longest place-name.
- There are more bacteria in your mouth than the human population of the whole world.
- A baboon called 'Jackie' became a private in the South African army in World War I.
- There are only four words in the English language which end in "dous" – tremendous, horrendous, stupendous and hazardous.

Kloud 9

**Compiled by Sangram Hota
KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar**

The 2nd Model United Nations at KiiT International School



By Manisha Srivastav & Pooja Joshi

Model United Nations (MUN) is a replica of the United Nations where different global issues are discussed and debated upon. There are different councils, the same way as there are in the United Nations. Besides, MUN sometimes creates a few other innovative councils which are not there in the United Nations, for instance, this time there was council named 'Ministry of Magic' (inspired by the Harry Potter series) where the delegates debated about the Trivisit tournament.

This Model United Nations was organized by KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar for the second time from 9th August to 11th August 2013. The event was supported by the United Nations Information Centre for India and Bhutan, and the Odisha Debating Society. The theme was "Sapere Aude!" – Dare to be wise. 350 students from 20 schools belonging to different parts of the country participated in it, which included schools from Visakhapatnam, Kolkata and Bangalore, Berhampur. In addition there were participants



from other countries such as the Netherlands and Italy. The foreigners were on a tour of KiiT from the United World College and expressed their desire to join in this three-day MUN programme.

There were six councils – UN GA DISEC, Ministry of Magic (MOM), UN Office on Drugs & Crime (UNODC), African Union, East Asian Summit, UN Furistic Committee on Population & Development (UN FCPD). All participants (325 students and 8 foreigners in all) selected the countries they would represent and participated as delegates from those countries. Thus each of the above councils had delegates from different countries debating on global issues and arriving at acceptable solutions endorsing the Credo of Jaw- Jaw is better than War- War. There were different agendas for each council on which the delegates of the countries had vigorous debate.

Each council had two Executive Board members, who were experienced in the conduct of MUN. EB Members were selected from those who have earlier participated in MUN several times as delegates, or had been executive board members earlier. The executive board members were responsible for the conduct proceedings of their respective councils. They moderated each session called caucuses, judged the performance of each participant and also trained and guided the students. Most students were first timers but were excellent on their part.

International Press which included journalists and photographers (also student representatives) were present in each council. Their job was to publish each day's report as a newsletter. The event concluded with an impressive valedictory ceremony. Prizes were given away to the best speaker in each council, journalist and photographer. Ankita Das, Sarnil Mohanty, Kamyaa Mishra , Sparsh Singh were given the best Delegates Prize.



Kloud 9

The writers are grade 11 students in KiiT International School, Bhubaneswar

Rain

By SUMAIYA FATIMA NADEEM

It's funny how a thing you love can end up harming you. Even, killing you, as in my case. But frankly speaking, I couldn't have chosen a better way of going than this. By 'this' I mean, I am on my way home from my best friend's house; in my car; listening to 'Dare you to Move' by Switchfoot on the radio and not to mention watching the delightful ripples made by the heavy downpour on the windshield. I am so engrossed in singing along with the Switchfoot singers, inhaling the typical smell of the rain that I don't notice a sharp turn ahead. The incessant rain is almost like a thick layer of fog, making it difficult to see beyond a few meters, and on top of that, I am too busy enjoying the cold drops of shower, that is coming in through the open window. I take pleasure of the feel of cold shower on my arm.

I turn the steering wheel just in time. If it had not been raining, I would probably be home by now, drinking hot coffee in my bed. But as it is raining – something that had made me jump up

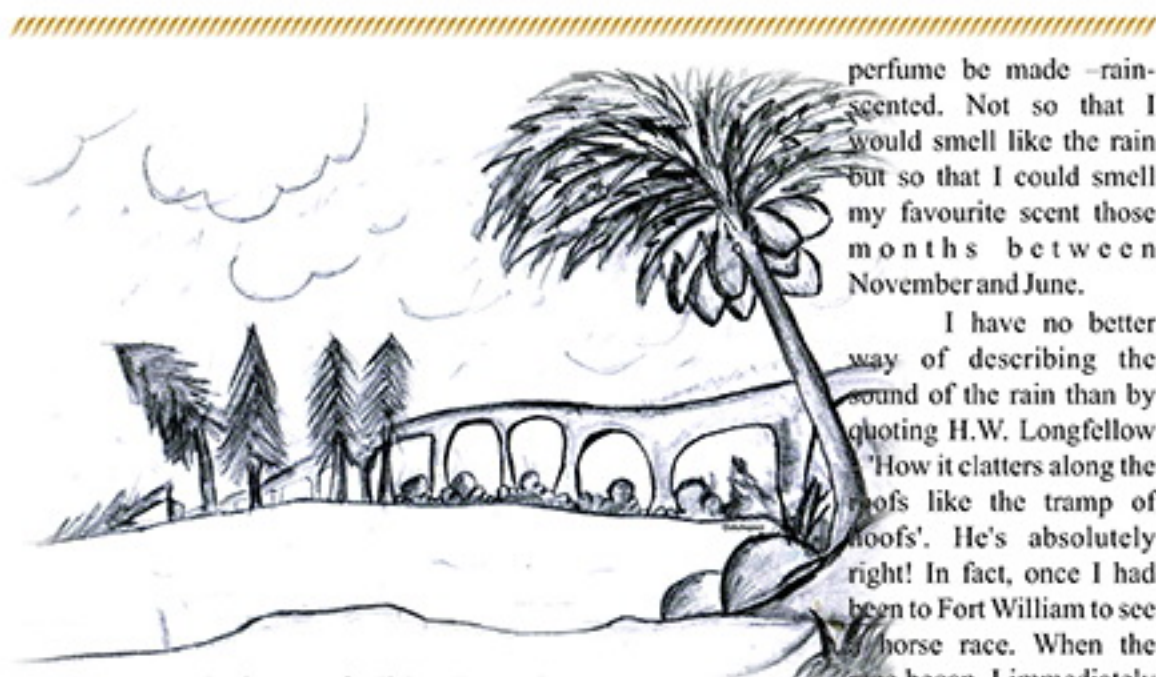
and down in glee that morning – I am not home.

Instead, I find myself sprawled upon the broken car seat, my head upon the steering wheel, the wheel covered with blood and blood dripping and staining the car seat.

I had not expected the rear wheel of my car to slip on the wet ground and hit the wall of the turning point. But I guess as they say, 'Expect the unexpected.'

I don't know when, I don't know how! But I know now that I won't be able to survive. It is just my luck, that the road ahead is deserted. I





perfume be made –rain-scented. Not so that I would smell like the rain but so that I could smell my favourite scent those months between November and June.

I have no better way of describing the sound of the rain than by quoting H.W. Longfellow 'How it clatters along the roofs like the tramp of hoofs'. He's absolutely right! In fact, once I had been to Fort William to see a horse race. When the race began, I immediately

guess everyone else is not as foolish as I am to be driving in the rain.

Ah, the rain! When I was a teenager, I had this theory of mine about the rain. I thought or rather felt that no matter how bad the conditions were, no matter who died, who lost, whatever happened, if it was raining everything was gonna be alright.

My friends mocked me, teased me, laughed at me but it wasn't something I had decided. My heart had made the decision and my brain had just known it.

My mother gave me an umbrella everyday to carry to school. But no matter how heavily it rained, the umbrella remained right there, carefully packed in my bag.

It's rather silly to admit in front of everyone but I had always secretly wished that a

looked up at the sky thinking it was raining. It was such a melody, the sound of horses' hoofs, just like mild thundershower.

And it is pure bliss listening to it as everything starts to fade away. I stop worrying about my family. They would find me eventually and just like the sky was doing right now, their eyes would do the same. But I am not gonna think about anyone now and here. It wearies me enough, just to try to stay awake and listen to the song of rain for the few last minutes. And the music in my heart I bear, long after I am there no more...

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 9 student in Our LadyQueen of The Missions School, Kolkata

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The Story of My Dream

By CHANDAMITA BORA

That dream. Very surprising. Unbelievable. I cannot believe this. How can I? No. That was not me. Someone else. But just like me? How is it possible? Now I am 68. I can forget. I have forgotten. That's the truth. She was saying, "I'll destroy this earth with my new invention. Ha Ha Ha."

She was laughing like an evil. I am not like that. Women are not like that. They are not evil. But she was. I have to find it out. About her. About her new invention.



But how? How? Who'll help me? I think I should ask Mezy. She's intelligent and brave. She'll help me. Let me call her.

"Is that Mezy darling? Ya, am Grandma

Suzzane. Are you OK, baby? I have something to tell you. Very urgent. Can you come here to England from the U.S.? No? Please try, dear, it's too important. I really need your help. Who? Nezy? No, No, baby, I am not comfortable with that girl. She's too much. No, I can't compromise. OK; you inform me later on. Bye, take care, Mezy darling."

Now, what to do? If I'll tell it to everyone, they'll spread it like forest fires. I can ask my Robbies for help.

"Hey, Cybo, please call your robo friends. I have an important meeting with you all."

Hope they'll help me to solve my confusion. Oh, they have come.

"My dear Robbies, can you all please tell me if I m an evil inventor? No? Really? But.....But I saw a dream yesterday. I was....You all know? How? Oh ya, you have the ability to read people's minds. Can you give me any solution? Yes, tell me Micy, do you wanna tell something? Wait, wait. I am just coming in five minutes."

I think its Mezy's call. Hope she replies in the positive. Otherwise I have to order her to come here. She doesn't know when one person asks for something and the reply is negative, that person is really very hurt.

“It’s Suzanne Hardy speaking. What? Robbery in the Vincent Museum? Because of my Robbies? It’s not possible. Are you joking? Let me think. I’ll call you later. And thanks for the info.” How can.....

Ohhh.....This terrible news made me unconscious. How can my Robbies help in a crime? After all, they were made for a good cause. They were made to help people in their usual chores but.....What has happened? I have to call Mezy right now.

“Mezy, when’ll you come to your gran? What? No tickets? Try, try, sweetie. Come soon. Take care.” Now what to do? Wait.Let me think. I know how it happened. Robbies have the ability to do everything, including reading people’s minds. They have individual brains; they can use it for evil deeds and can destroy the earth if they really want. It means.....I just don’t believe this.....Am really an evil inventor.....I wanted to invent something for the welfare of mankind but did totally opposite. Now it’s only a robbery. Next it can be a murder. I can’t think about the future. I have to tell something to my invention.

“Come, dear robbies. It’s my last talk with you. After my death, please spread my message to all people of this planet”-

It is my genuine request to all people living on the beautiful planet Earth. Please don’t



misuse science and invent something on which humans can totally depend. God made humans for humans. Don’t try to break this law. Forget science. It’s true that science has made human life very easy but it has also decreased the love for mankind in people. Now people love things and use humans. They should not. They should never. If you have love and peace in your hearts, you need nothing else for a happy and comfortable life. Just spread peace and love humans.....

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Kendriya Vidyalaya, Nagaon, Assam



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GOD'S BIRTHDAY

(Awakening of the great Sufi saint - 'Baba Faridji')



One night Baba Faridji dreamt that by the grace of Allah, he had reached Paradise. The whole of Paradise was beautifully decorated.

There were millions of lights and flowers everywhere. He knew a great celebration was going on and beautiful music filled the air. He inquired of a passerby, "What is going on?"

"It is God's birthday, we are celebrating it," replied the man. "You are blessed, for you

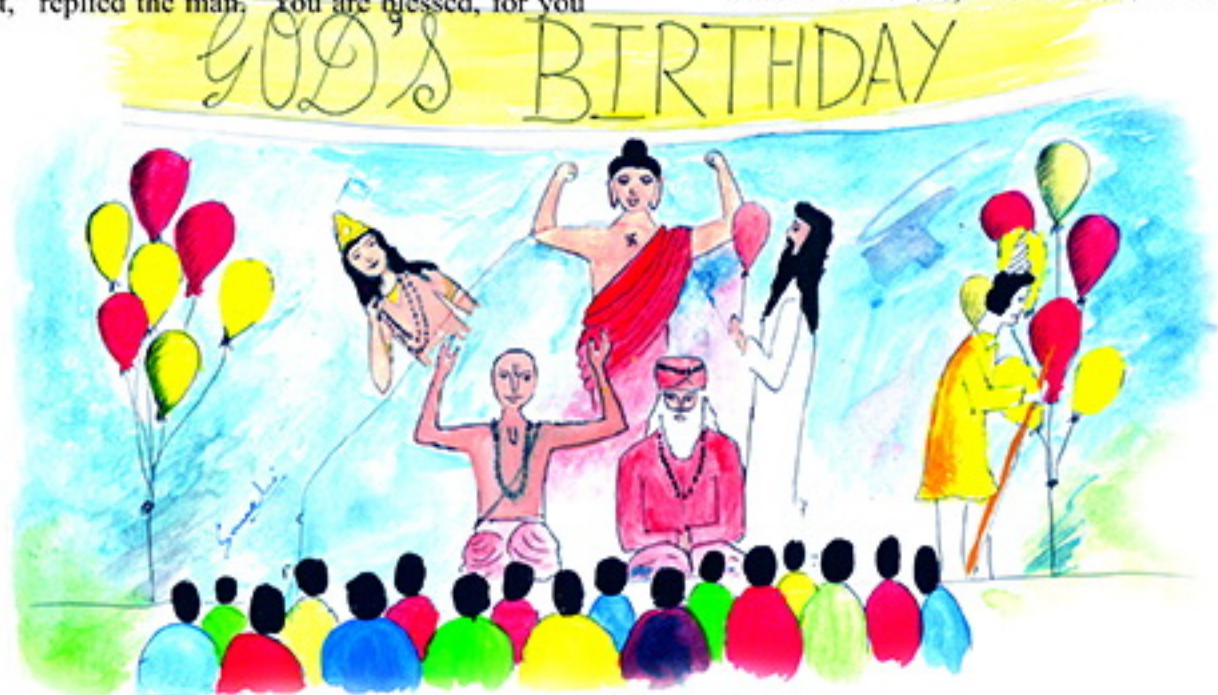
have come at the right time." So Faridji stood beneath a tree to see what was happening.

Soon he saw a great procession moving on the road. Within the pageant he noticed a man sitting on a horse and inquired, "Who is this man?"

And they said, "Don't you know him? He is Hazrat Mohammed." Millions upon millions of people walked behind the Prophet.

Faridji asked, "Who are these people?" and he was told that they were Mohammedans, the followers of Mohammed.

Then came Jesus, and millions were



following him. Soon Adi Shankaracharya appeared in a splendid chariot, and millions were following him. Then there was Guru Nanak with a huge number of followers.

After the Guru there was Gautam Buddha and countless people followed him too. On and on went the procession and Baba Faridji grew weary of the magnitude of the procession and the followers.

Finally, at the end of the parade, Babaji noticed an old man riding a donkey. He was all by himself and no one walked behind him. Faridji began to laugh looking at that man. "It's hilarious, nobody is following this man. And why should he be riding a donkey?"

Babaji could not contain himself and he asked the old man, "Who are you, sir? I have seen Mohammad, Christ, Shankaracharya, Mahavira, Buddha, but who are you? Is this some sort of joke, for nobody follows you?"

The old man with sadness in his eyes said, "I am God, and it is my birthday. People

have become Mohammedans, some Christians, others Jews, many have become Hindus, Sikhs or Buddhists, unfortunately no one is left with me. So I walk alone.

Faridji woke up from his dream with a shock.

He told his disciples the next day, "I had a revelation and I met God. From now on I no longer belong to any of the organized religions. I will follow the One and only true Master and Creator of the universe. I shall simply be myself. I would like to be with God, at least I'll be one person following him."

This awakening transformed Baba Faridji and he was able to enlighten the world with his message of love and devotion to God and the universe.

Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Ashok Academy School, Mumbai

THE FROG AND THE ENGINEER

(Fairy Tale Revisited)

An engineer was taking a walk when a frog spoke to him and said, "If you kiss me, I'll turn into a beautiful princess."

He picked up the frog and put it in his pocket.

The frog spoke again and said, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a beautiful princess, I'll become your girlfriend."

The engineer took the frog out of his pocket, smiled at it and put it back into his pocket.

The frog spoke again and said, "If you kiss me and turn me back into a princess, I'll become your wife."

The engineer took the frog out of his pocket again, smiled at it and put it back into his pocket.

Finally, the frog said, "What is the matter? I'm a beautiful princess. Why won't you kiss me?"

The engineer said, "Look, I'm a busy engineer. I don't have time for a girlfriend or a wife, but a talking frog, now that's cool."

The Six Monkeys

By NINAD MADHAB

A group of scientists placed 6 monkeys in a cage and in the middle, a ladder with bananas on the top. Every time a monkey went up the ladder, the scientists soaked all the monkeys with cold water. After a while, every time a monkey went up the ladder, the others beat him up. After some time, no monkey dared to go up the ladder regardless of the bananas. Scientists then took one monkey out and put a new one in. The first thing this new monkey did was to go up the ladder to eat the bananas. Immediately the other monkeys beat him up. After several beatings, the new member learned not to climb the ladder, even though he never knew why. A second monkey was then substituted and the same fate befell him. The first substituted monkey also participated in beating the second monkey.

The third, fourth and fifth monkeys were exchanged one after the other, and the beating of the newest arrival continued, as soon as they climbed the ladder. Finally the sixth

monkey was replaced. Now there were six new monkeys, and none of them had received a cold shower, but they continued to beat up any monkey who attempted to climb the ladder. If it was possible to ask the monkeys why they beat up all those who attempted to go up the ladder, the answer in all probability would be, "I don't know-that's how things are done here". Does this sound familiar?

Many of us live with superstitions and beliefs that have become unwritten rules. We accept them blindly and rarely question them. It is important to eliminate these self-limiting rules before we challenge the bigger ones.



Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Demonstration Multipurpose School, R.I.E., Bhubaneswar

Silver Lining

By PRANNOY MEHTA

The bright warm rays fall on me,
Giving warmth to my heart deep within,
Afraid to let the pleasant light go,
And this is nature all I know.

As the bright red star grows between the dark clouds,
Then a face separates us.
A man gazes at me trying to search for who he really is,
And I stare closely as he gazes every inch of me,
He drowns his image deep within me,
As I am his only true friend.

I could understand the grief trapped within him,
As he spotted his skinny, old, and speckled face.
Could see the tear droplets down his weary eyes,
Flowing down his cheeks which stroke my glass

He looks with trust in me,
Eager to see his face young again.
But as he gazes at me,
Misted by how he appears,
And saddened to see himself in reality.



Kloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in
Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi

The Amiable Waves

By HIMANSHI ARORA

Today, for the first time, I experienced fear of something. I think it was this fear that sent chills down my spine when, for the first time, I stepped into the water at the Marina beach. Between the blue sky and the blue ocean, I saw the people having a whale of a time. But when I looked at the dazzling waves wash the seashore, it felt different, it felt creepy. Then I realised that my biggest fear was that of water. Somehow, I did not find water very amiable. My college days were approaching. I could not afford to be scared of water, not because of the profession of marine engineering that I wished to choose, but because that was the last vacation I could spend with my family. After this vacation, my parents would be back in Delhi and I would be in Chennai. I hoped I could find a solution to this problem soon.

Adya Sen sat in despair. She hopelessly stared at the blue sky, detesting her fear of the blue waters. Her emotions were lulled, but none the less her mind was full of thoughts. She spent most of her time trying to figure out the reason behind the bizarre feelings. A few days passed. Each day she could see the beauty of the coast, but could not feel it because of the butterflies in my stomach. She resented telling her parents

about this and preferred to keep it to herself. She knew her parents would console her and help her out, but she did not want to break their heart. They wanted to see her as a marine engineer and she could not let their struggles go in vain. A week had passed. The family spent a lot of time together and the bonds of love strengthened. With the same spirit of love and adventure, they set out at sea. On the stormy waters of the sea, their motor boat leapt swiftly over the waves. But in the midst of the limitless amusement, they didn't realise that not only the sea, but also the sky above was stormy. The wind whistled as the thunder roared. The clouds turned into deeper shades of grey. Her family and the other people in the boat considered this a golden touch to their adventure ride. But just then, by an unfortunate stroke of fate, the blue waves pushed the boat to one side and it turned upside down. Then came an unearthly shriek, and a terrifying, an astonishing thing happened. The boat swung over the waves and all the passengers fell off. Panic struck, they struggled to keep their heads above the water. In spite of wearing life jackets, a few of them couldn't survive. The merciless roaring waters swallowed them.

Adya's mother, Mrs Sen, was

shouting aloud, waving her hands to catch hold of Adya. Soon her concern changed into anger.

'Adya!' she screamed, horrified.

'What are you doing? Look here, my dear. Come. Switch on the lights of your life jacket.'

But Adya did not listen. She was looking at the sea. No longer afraid of the approaching death, she again experienced the chilly feeling. She felt that she had been there before. For the first time, she felt that the storm was not an enemy.

'Mummy, stop! The sea would not harm you.'

'Adya, are you insane? What are you saying?'

'Believe me mum.'

'Enough, Adya! Now is not the time for this. Didn't you see four people drowning? Now is not the time for your senseless 'déjà vu' stuff.'

'But mummy...'

'Come here now!'

Then Mrs Sen compelled Adya to listen. The whistles they blew and the flashing lights of their life jackets were spotted by other boats and they rescued them. Drenched in water and sand, the family returned to the hotel.

'Thank goodness we are safe', said Mrs Sen heaving a sigh of relief.

'Well there is no point in fretting about an incident which has already occurred. Let's forget it.' said Mr. Sen, looking exhausted.

'We cannot. It could have cost us our lives. And what were you thinking Adya? Being an eighteen year old, you did not even think twice before considering the waves harmless?'

'We do not have to think about everything, mum. It was just a feeling about the sea.' explained Adya.

'Was it a feeling or a whim? Not even the most foolish person would do what you were doing today.'

Adya shrugged and there was a moment of silence. The family members looked at each other. After a moment, Adya gathered courage and broke the silence by saying, 'Look, I have not told you earlier. I know you want me to be a marine engineer, but I think that you now deserve to know that...'

'What my dear?' interrupted the Mrs Sen.

'That I am often scared of water. Not exactly scared, but stepping in water generates a kind of weird feeling in me. It is not a happy or sad feeling. But simply a feeling. It is the kind of feeling that you get before giving a speech in front of a huge audience.'

'Adya, at times our fears are a result of our past experiences that we may not clearly remember.' said Mr. Sen. 'We can certainly not help such feelings. They are bound to bother you, but you must go on your way, and not let these feelings distract you.'

'But dad, I have not had any unpleasant experience at sea. And I don't get this weird feeling in a swimming pool. I have just discovered that it is happening to me at sea.'

'No incident child, no incident.' said Mrs Sen and left the room in tears.

Adya's first day of college arrived and her parents left for Delhi, leaving her alone in Chennai. She boarded a bus to go to

college, where she collected her schedule from her teacher and went her class to attend the first lecture. She befriended her classmates Aisha, Aman, Mitali and Aayush. They shared a common interest in marine studies. However, the difference was that Adya still had the fear of water at the back of her mind. She tried to suppress her fear thinking that it was the result some past incidence as her dad had said. But since she could not recollect any such incident, the fear popped up from time to time.

One sunny Tuesday, Adya's class was to have a practical scuba diving lesson.

'Hey Mitali, what are you waiting for? Come on, we have to reach there in another half an hour.'

'Coming Aisha!' replied Mitali and then shouted out to Adya, 'Adya, Aisha is waiting for us. Be quick. Don't you want to have some warm up before the actual diving?'

'I do not think I can manage scuba diving. I have never done it before' said Adya.

'Oh, Come on! We've been waiting for this day for ages. Do you think all students here dive in the sea every day?'

'You know, there are some things that others do not understand. But friends understand those things even when we do not speak about them.' said Adya, hoping Mitali would understand.

'Look, we do not have time for philosophy right now.'

'Mitali, it has been three months since we have been studying at this university. We are good friends and still you cannot see that I am...'

'Hey girls!' interrupted Aisha, 'What are you up to, huh?'

'Nothing.' murmured Adya.

'It is not 'nothing'. And what is it that we cannot see? I want to know, now'

'Calm down girls', said Aisha intervening.

'Here's the thing,' said Adya, all set to reveal her secret, 'I am afraid of the sea. I know it is stupid to be scared of water and be a marine engineering student. But...'

'It is alright Adya. We all have some fear. But we need to fight that fear. If you do not enter the water today, you might never be able to overcome that fear.' explained Aisha.

'Right,' said Mitali agreeing. 'And I'm sorry.'

'No. I am. It is just that sometimes I cannot resist pouring my heart out to people.'

'So, are you coming?'

'Yes' said Adya reluctantly.

Then there was no turning back. Earlier, Adya could not let down her parents, but now she could not let down her friends as well. But more importantly, she could not let herself down. She dreamt of being a marine engineer and a sudden fear of water could not stop her from becoming one.

She sat in the boat with the other students. She enjoyed the boat ride, but the best or rather the worst part was yet to come. Angst-ridden, she jumped into the water with her teachers and fellow students. In spite of the best of safety equipment to prevent drowning, the shivers were back again. The butterflies in Adya's stomach did not let her concentrate. She could not go under the water, so she just pretended to do so by splashing her hands in the water and putting her head under the water once in a while. She was trembling, but people failed to notice her. The stress she was undergoing was so intense that she thought she was

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sweating underwater. She could not take it anymore and so she discretely climbed back into the boat.

'What are you doing up there Ms Sen?' asked one of the teachers.

'I was feeling a little feverish Mrs Paul. The water is really cold.'

'Kids these days are so sensitive' grumbled Mrs Paul as she swam away, 'Just a little hostile condition and they feel unwell. Give them a little more junk food, and they are back to normal.'

Suddenly, Adya heard the sharp voice of Mrs Paul commanding the students to get back into their boats. They all set off back to the shore.

'I am terribly hungry' said Aman.

'So am I,' panted Aayush 'I hope they have a good meal for us.'

'They better have one, because the energy I could spend on my laptop has been spent in watching little fish swimming' said Aman and chuckled.

'I am so hungry that my stomach is grumbling,' said Aisha, 'I didn't have breakfast today.'

'Can you stop talking about food for a moment,' complained Mitali, 'I think that the best topic for now would be the underwater scene.'

'Absolutely, the fish were so gorgeous. I could not stop looking at them. The marine ecosystem is so fascinating.' commented Aisha.

'Fascinating, yes. I think the best part was the little fish that rush and swim around our feet.'

'Yuk!' said Aman in disgust, 'their skin feels so slimy. I could not even get rid of them. I definitely prefer seeing them on a computer screen than within the water.'

'I was so hungry that I could eat those cute little fish for lunch,' said Aayush rubbing his stomach.

'I'm dying to be back on the dry land. These waves are making me sick' complained Aisha.

'This reminds me, where is Adya? I have not seen her for a while.'

'Yeah, where is she? I did not see her around during the diving lesson too.'

'Is she fine?'

'Stop worrying you three. She is not a kid. She must be in another boat. We'll meet her at the shore.'

And they did. She was already there when they reached. She eagerly listened to what they had to say, having seen not much herself. Mitali resented the topic of the fear of the sea and so did the others.

'Pay attention students. You have had enough for the day. Take the day off and rest, let your excitement wane,' said Mr Salvatore smiling.

And the excitement came to an end as they all crouched into their beds in their dormitories.

Adya's four best friends had got used to not talking about water. While Adya's interest was in theories and water transport designs, the others preferred practical classes. They did not dare to discuss the sea in front of her.

To Adya's fear, another underwater lesson was approaching. She decided that this time she would not let the fear come in her way.

When the day finally came, again the same procedure was followed. All students and teachers sat in the boats and headed for a deeper part of the sea. And like the last time,

Adya's entrance to the seawater was accompanied by shivers. But she pulled up her socks and dived deeper. She went deeper and deeper. She feasted her eyes upon the magnificent fish and corals. The beautiful scene blew away all the cobwebs. But on realising that she had gone really deep into the water, she felt scared. She felt as if she would drown any moment. She forgot about all safety measures. The fear of water had now turned into the bane of her life, but she did not even know if she would stay alive. Come hell or high water, she had to reach the surface of the water. Adya swam as fast as she could. Her mind all blank, she moved her limbs randomly. When she felt the sun's heat on her neck, she knew she had reached the water surface. She threw away the breathing equipment. Her eyes shut tight, she screamed for help. She felt her hands and feet go numb. She was moving downward into the water. A moment later she felt like she was in an elevator, herself trembling from head to toe.

Adya woke up in her dormitory. As her vision turned from blur to clear, she saw the worried face of her father and the moist eyes of her mother. She did not ask what happened. She doubted if she would have the courage to listen.

'Are you feeling better?' asked Mrs Sen.

Adya nodded.

'I'll get you a glass of water dear' said Mr Sen and left the room in a hurry.

'Mummy,' said Adya in a pleading voice, 'Do you think I should take up a carrier in marine studies?'

'Of course you should. What is wrong with it?'

'The fear, mummy. It keeps coming

in the way. I've been trying to break the back of the beast, but all I meet with is failure.'

'Don't feel that way. There, have some water,' said Mr Sen, helping Adya to a glass of water.

'Don't laugh, but it does feel like I share a connection with the sea. And it bothers me every time I try to overcome this strange feeling.'

'Honey,' said Mr Sen to his wife, 'I think it is time we told Adya the truth.'

'What truth?' asked Adya confused.

'Are you sure?' asked Mrs Sen from Mr Sen, ignoring Adya's question.

Mr Sen nodded and smiled.

'Listen Adya, promise us you would not be down in the dumps after hearing us.'

'I promise.'

'Eighteen years ago, your father and I went for a campfire next to a beach with our friends, the same Marina beach. We had the time of our lives. It was a beautiful night.'

Mrs Sen looked at Mr Sen for help, then she continued,

'I remember the night like it was yesterday. It had started drizzling, so we called off the camp a little earlier. But instead, we walked on the wet sand. The sky soon turned darker. The weather had turned a little stormy.'

'When a lady walked in with a basket in her hand,' interrupted Mrs Sen, 'and we wondered what she was up to. But preoccupied by our conversation, we ignored her, expecting she was washing clothes or something.'

'And then your mother had an intuition. When we saw the lady leave screaming and in tears, we knew something was wrong. When we tried to ask her, she hid her face and ran away.'

‘Ten minutes later, your father and I set out to explore what was in the basket that she had left in the sea. I am glad we did it. You know what the basket had?’

Adya shrugged, fearing what she might hear next.

‘You, my daughter. That lady left you in the seawater, maybe because she was too poor to take care of you, or unwilling to do so because you were a girl. It must not have been easy for her too,’ said Mr Sen ‘but not many people put their foot down to go against the orthodox norms of the society.’

‘Remember we told you that some of our feelings are a result of past incidents? This seems to be that incident.’

‘But this does not mean you let the fear prevail,’ said Mr Sen. He continued, ‘I assume that after knowing about this, you will overcome this fear. And what I think is that this is not fear, it is just that the waves awaken your past memories. These feelings weaken you. Don’t let them come in your way. You have worked for so many years of your life to become a marine engineer. Letting a silly fear obstruct your success is

totally irrational. You need to move on.’

‘And we love you Adya, you are our daughter. You always were. You are our little angel. Our destinies were woven together and that is why that lady left you and we found you.’

A drop of tear came out of Adya’s right eye and rolled down her cheek, a tear of happiness. She was not disappointed to know they were not her real parents. She felt proud of them, and her love for them grew manifold. Her fear vanished like a drop of water evaporates on a hot pan. Nothing could stop her from becoming a successful engineer now, she knew that water was a friend, that is why she could survive that night till Mr Sen and his wife found her. They were destined to be a family, and they lived happily ever after, more so because Adya did become a successful engineer in the following years.

Cloud 9

The writer is a grade 10 student in Apeejay School Saket

GYANA BIKASH



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Holidays



By TANVI KANDALLA

June 21st, the end of FA -2;
The summer's begun and the sky is blue;
Hyderabad, Singapore,
Bangalore, Bandipur ;
Reading about ERAGON and his adventures in Farthen Dur;
Meeting all our cousins;
Buying clothes in dozens;

The holidays have come at last;
But time flies by so fast;
One day in Singapore, enjoying Sentosa;
The next in India eating a samosa;
We saw Singapore, Clementi, Dover;
But the holidays are almost over;

Now we're at home, revising for SA 1;
The holidays are over, so are our days of fun;
It comes and it goes;
But everyone knows:
They can't last forever;
So enjoy while they last!



The writer is a grade 10 student in Doha, Qatar



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Railstation at Midnight

By SOUVIK CHAKRABORTY

Nox spreads her wings a bit too soon,
And I watch the grim night advance.
The last local train departs silently.
Life again becomes a game of chance.

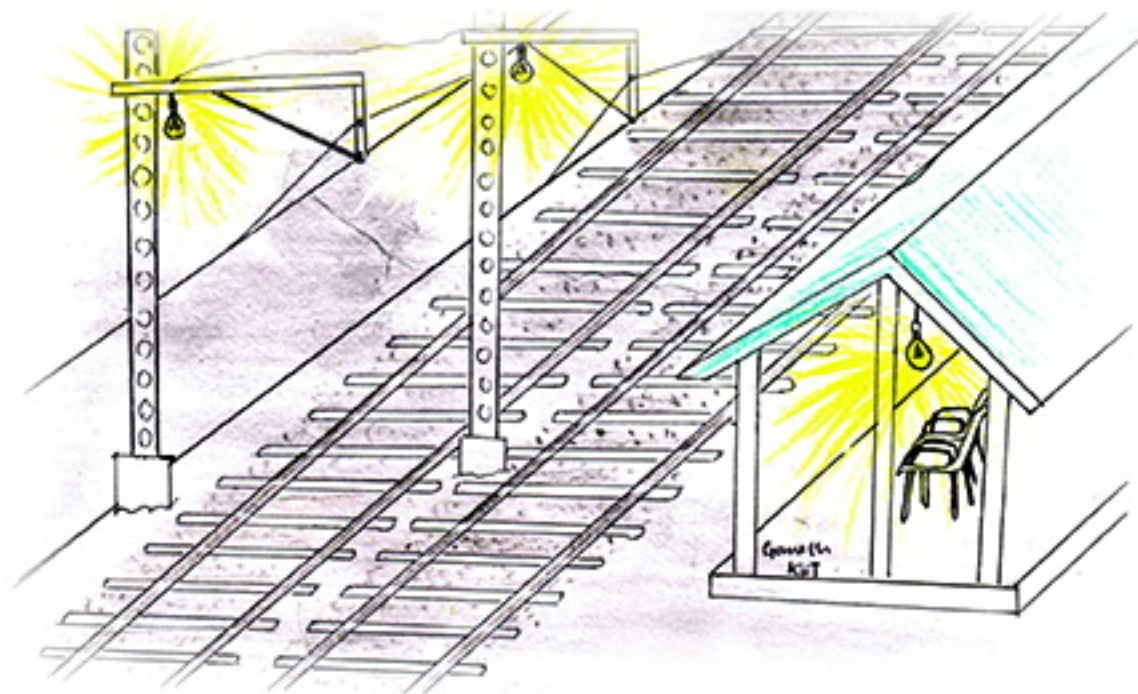
The clear sky is suddenly beclouded.
The lonely moon looks all ready to die.
The stars lose their glimmer and the
Dreams of a bright future bid goodbye.

I don't see any trains that I can board.
Hope seems to be an undelivered letter.
The rail tracks have mocking smile.
I look around but don't see anything better.

The rail station looks empty and desolate.
The sickness is numbing, so is the pain.
But there is no chance for me to back down.
So I don't give up and search for a train.

I seek for a beacon of light to illumine my path,
And I know you'll try to do everything you can
To help me fulfill my desire of reliving the past
And go back to the start, the day it all began.

Kloud 9





SHRIYANKA SADANGI - A Shooting Star

M meet Shriyanka Sadangi, a teenager, who created a sensation by winning the gold medal in the junior women's 10 M Air rifle championship organized by ISSF (International Shooting Sports Federation). She was invited by KiiT International School on 22 June 2013 to interact with students. All students were excited to meet a commendable achiever of their age-group (Shriyanka only graduated high school last year). Shriyanka who has won international acclaim. Let's see what went on between her and the students. But, before that, here is a brief introduction to Shriyanka Sadangi.

Shriyanka completed her high school from DPS Vasant Kunj, New Delhi in March 2012. She is now pursuing her higher education at St. Stephen's College, New Delhi. She won the silver medal in Asian Championships held in Doha in Feb 2012, and later bagged the gold medal in Asian Air Gun Championship held in Kuwait. Her crowning glory came last year in June, when she won the ISSF Gold in World Women's Junior Championship held in Suhl, Germany. Here is an excerpt from the interview *Kloud 9* had with the champion.

Kloud 9 : How did you take up shooting as sports?

Shriyanka : My Dad is in the Army, and so I got an opportunity to practice shooting. I started shooting at the age of 11. Now I've been at it for 7 years. Later when I decided to take this up seriously, I took training under Gagan Narang in his 'Guns for Glory' Academy. That is where I learned all the technicality of this sport.



Kloud 9 : Wasn't it difficult to practice shooting, go for championships and attend school at the same time? How did you manage your studies?

Shriyanka : I had to miss several school days for participating in the sport. So attendance

became an issue. But my teachers were very supportive. They sent me the assignments online and I submitted them online. It was a bit difficult all right, but I managed it. One has to struggle to achieve something. Shooting, as a sport, is very different from other sports. It is 80% mental

concentration and only 20% physical work. I think shooting helped me develop mental concentration which in turn helped me in my studies.

Through concentration and proper focus on my studies I was able to balance well between my studies and shooting practices. I had my board exam of grade 12 in Feb and March 2012. But from May 2011 to January 2012 I was busy practising and participating in shooting competitions. Even during the exam there was one contest in which I did participate. My school helped me a lot, my teachers provided me extra coaching.

Kloud 9 : How does it feel winning the gold medal in an international event?

Shriyanka : Only in sports one can experience the glory of having the Indian Tricolour flying and the National Anthem being played while everyone stands to honour your country. It is an amazing feeling. Words cannot describe it. It was an experience worth a whole world to me.

Kloud 9 : If your Dad wasn't in the Army, what would you be?

Shriyanka : (*Fumbling for words.*) I am not very certain. I went into the sports at a very early stage in life, thanks to my Dad.



Kloud 9 : For students like us who don't have such opportunities, what avenue is open to take up this sport?

Shriyanka : There are many shooting ranges coming up and interested people, young students included, are taking to this sport. In Bhubaneswar a shooting range has come up. I just visited it; and a new one will come up at Kalinga Stadium soon. Many young people are taking up this sport now and many schools are encouraging their students to participate in shooting.

There are national events held regularly by the National Rifle Association of India (NRAI), and more than 2000 contestants participate in these events. This sport is slightly on the expensive side though, but then there are several other sports that are equally or more expensive. And academics are also important. Through sports, like shooting, one develops focus and that helps in studies too.

Kloud 9 : Do you not feel nervous when participating in a competition like this? (This question is by a wide-eyed, awestruck little girl of grade 4.)

Shriyanka : (*Admitting candidly*) I am fully apprehensive and nervous when the contest is about to begin. My heart beats fast and even the rifle shakes. But then I steel my mind and compose myself





and tell myself that I should concentrate and the moment of anxiety passes.

Kloud 9 : Have you come across Abhinav Bindra?

Shriyanka : I've seen him a few times but haven't interacted much with him. He has written a book – *A Shot at History*, which I have read. It is very good.

Kloud 9 : What are your future plans?

Shriyanka : I want to participate in the next Olympics and I am practicing hard for it. NRAI and ISSF will short list players for the Olympics in 2014. I am preparing for the qualifying rounds in my favourite event, 10 M Air Rifle.

Kloud 9 Team wishes you the very best of luck, Shriyanka. Do our country proud!

Kloud 9



That week in the Jungle

By RUSKIN BOND

It wasn't a bookshop, or a library, or a great-aunt's horde of romantic novels that made me a reader; it was the week I spent in a forest rest-house, in what is now the Rajaji Sanctuary, between Haridwar and Dehradun.

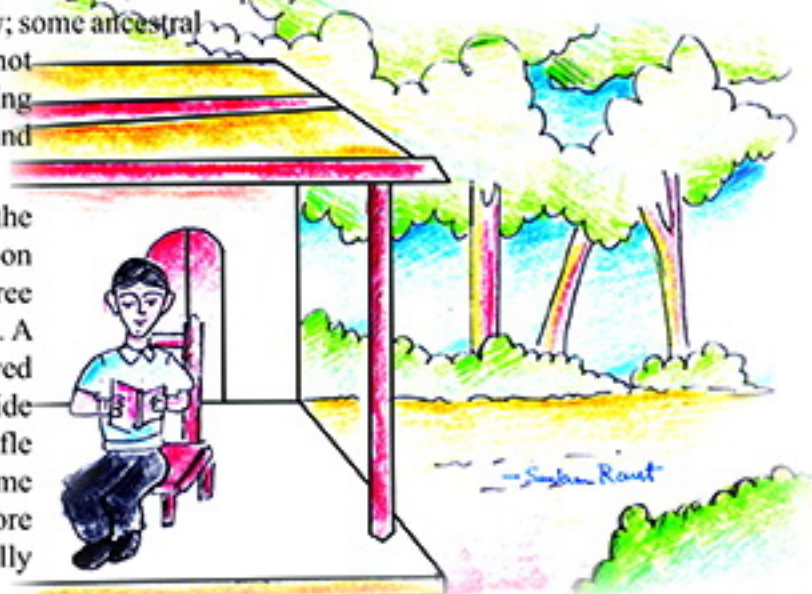
I was eight at the time, it was the winter of 1944 – 45, and it wasn't a sanctuary then. Everyone with a gun fancied himself a great shikari, and the jungles resounded to the sound of gunfire as tigers keeled over and deer of all kinds bit the dust. My stepfather was a keen shikari, and my mother had also accounted for a couple of big cats. One would think an eight-year old boy would be thrilled at the prospect of accompanying a shikar party on a safari, but I had to be forced into going. I disliked guns; I was afraid of them, I don't know why; some ancestral memory, perhaps. And I did not derive any pleasure from watching an animal twitching on the ground as it bled to death.

On that first day in the jungle I'd been persuaded to sit on an elephant – one of two or three that took us deep into the forest. A cheetal – a spotted deer – strayed into our path, and the man beside me immediately raised his rifle and fired. The cheetal took some time to die. Two or three more shots were fired before it finally

lay still. But its struggles had unnerved the elephant (elephants are sensitive creatures), and it turned and ran from the spot, crashing through small trees and shrubs. The branch of a tree caught me across the face and nearly swept me off the elephant. Fortunately the mahout got it under control, and apart from a few scratches I was none the worse for the experience.

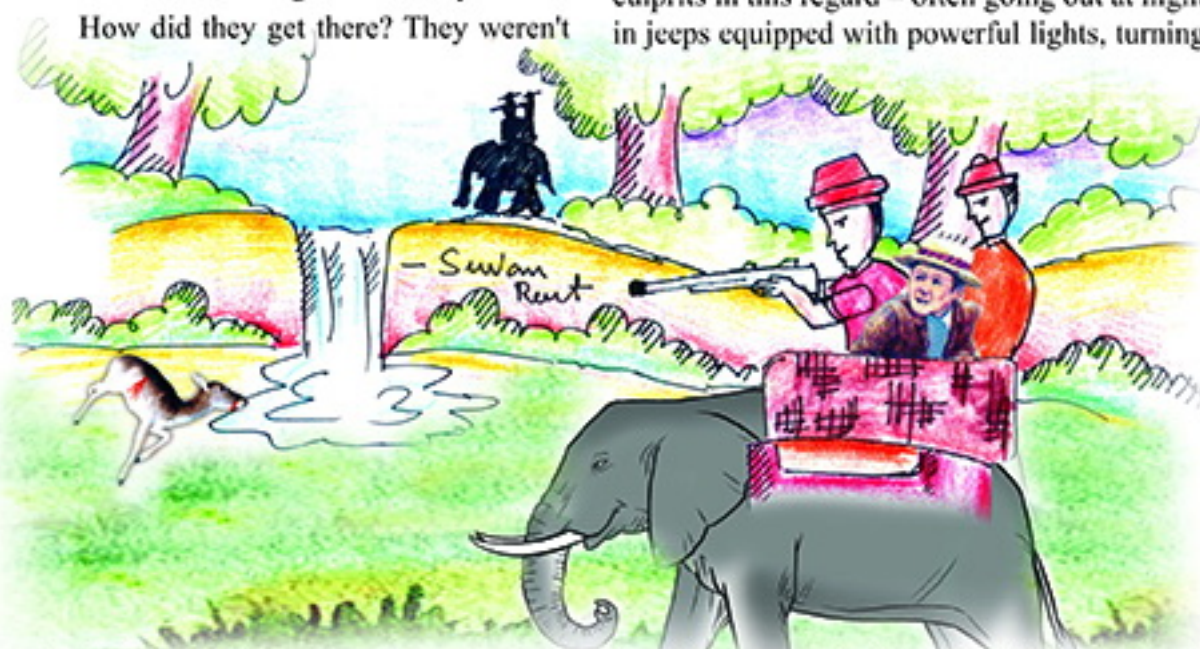
But I hadn't enjoyed it. Shooting animals for sport did not make much sense to me. For one thing, they couldn't shoot back. The man who shot the defenceless cheetal did at least deserve to have an antler up his behind.

Next day, I declined an invitation to another excursion into the jungle. I was left in charge of the khansamma while the hunting party went off in search of further victims.



I had the rest-house to myself. And while exploring it, I discovered a wall cupboard with a couple of shelves full of books. Up till then I had read just a handful of books – R.M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, a school reader; a poetry reader; Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare*, retold; abridged versions of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Gulliver's Travels*; and of course my father's stamp catalogues, which had been his favourite reading. They did at least give me a penchant for geography. But this was the first time I was discovering books for myself.

How did they get there? They weren't



new books. They'd been there for some time, according to the khansamma. Some forest officer's secret horde, perhaps. Or may be there was a time when shikari's too read books.

None of them were about shikar or even wildlife or forestry.

The first one that I took from the shelf was P.G. Wodehouse's *Love Among the Chickens*. And it had nothing to do with hunting wild fowl. It was a romantic comedy about chicken farming, and it featured the incorrigible Stanley Featherstonehaugh Ukridge, who was to become one of Wodehouse's most popular characters – an optimistic entrepreneur who never allowed any of his commercial disasters to keep him down. I think I learnt something from

Ukridge – resilience! Anyway, I read the book in a day, pausing only to partake of the khansamma's dal and rice lunch and pakoras for tea.

In the evening the shikaris returned looking tired and out-of-sorts. Apart from a couple of partridges, they hadn't shot anything. I said nothing, but inwardly I gave three cheers.

There was a lot of grumbling about poachers or villagers decimating the wildlife, quite forgetting that they were the biggest culprits in this regard – often going out at night in jeeps equipped with powerful lights, turning

the lights on confused and blinded animals, and then shooting them without any difficulty. Not many 'brave' hunters went into the jungle on foot; it was the jeep or the elephant for everyone from V.I.P. to poacher.

Off they went again the next day, and I was happy to be left behind, free to explore the bookshelf and its literary treasures.

The second of my discoveries was M.R. James's *Ghost Stories of an Antiquary*, a set of stories by a master of the supernatural. These tales were really aimed at adult readers with some sort of academic background (as most of them were set in English colleges or universities), but I had no difficulty in reading and enjoying them. They turned me into an

aficionado of the ghost story, and over the years I was to indulge in the works of Algernon Blackwood, Edgar Allan Poe, Sheridan Le Fanu, E.F. Benson and others who specialized in the genre; then going on to write ghost stories myself.

Fortunately I did not see any ghosts in the rest-house, although the old khansamma insisted that on certain days, as dusk fell, one could hear the groans of a famous shikari as he was being savaged by a man-eating tiger. 'Served him right', was my unfeeling comment, as I returned to M. R. James and the haunted corridors of an old England castle. Ghosts were really British inventions. In India we had Prets and Churels, who were not the same but probably scarier...

The shikar party continued for another three days, at the end of which several cheetal and sambar had been shot, as well as a hyaena and a jackal; but no tigers were shot or even seen.

During this time I devoured my first Agatha Christie (*Peril at End House*), Jack London's *White Fang*, Conrad's *Typhoon* (which held me enthralled), and a book on gardening – *Down the Garden Path* by Beverley Nichols. This last stimulated my interest in gardening as a hobby, and when we returned to Dehra I made an attempt at growing various decorative plants – with limited success, as I usually forgot to water them.

In the fast-fading evening light I was

sitting on the veranda, reading, when a large animal crossed the clearing in front of me. Before I could get up, it had disappeared into the forest. The old khansamma had seen it too.

'Was it a tiger?' I asked excitedly. It was very big.'

'Not a tiger, baba. A leopard. The leopard is the more silent of the two.'

When the shikari's returned, empty-handed this time, I mentioned that I had seen a leopard. They found this terribly amusing.

'The boy has imagination,' observed Major Kohli, a family friend. 'Here we are, beating the jungle for tigers and leopards, and he sees one while sitting in the verandah!'

'Not active enough,' said my stepfather. 'Should get out more often – join the party.'

In time I was to learn that it's the onlooker who sees more of the party than the party-goer; that it's the man on traffic duty who sees more of the passing show than the man behind the wheel; that the man on the hilltop sees the curvature of the earth better than the man on the plain; that the hovering vultures know who's winning the battle long before the opposing armies; and that, when all the wars are done, a butterfly will still be beautiful.

I did not know all this at the time, but I was learning.

'He reads too much,' said Uncle Harry. And of course he was right, I just couldn't get enough to read.

From *Adventures with Books*, a work in progress

Kloud 9

Just For Laughs

A: I was born in Bangalore.

B: Which part?

A: All of me.

A: Excuse me. Do you know the way to the zoo?

B: No, I'm sorry I don't.

A: Well, it's two blocks this way, then one block to the left.

The Silver on the Hearth

(Afghan Folktale)

Retold by SURENDRA MOHANTY

Once there lived a poor farmer who worked very hard but could never make both ends meet. He was a simpleton, and he struggled hard for nearly a decade to save money to be able to lead a decent life with his wife. But he could never save enough and ill luck as well as poverty seemed never to leave him.

He was so frustrated and so fed up with his plight that he came to believe that it was impossible for him to make anything very much through hard work or by any means. He somehow came to believe that the more he ran after good fortune, the more it would get away from him, and if at all he were ever to own anything, it had to appear before him just so. He began to dream and wish that one morning he would simply walk in, and there, upon his hearth he would find a heap of wealth. He believed that there was no other way he would strike a fortune. He resolved not to accept any fortune if he didn't come upon it lying on his hearth. He was quite convinced by now that the fortune meant for him should be placed upon his hearth.

With such belief, the simple farmer continued to work in his field, knowing that he could never get rich through hard work. But he kept wishing that he would stumble upon a lot of riches on his own hearth, and he checked his hearth every morning.

One day it so happened that when he was working in his field, his clothes got caught in the thorns of a bramble bush. While he tried to

disentangle himself, his clothes got torn. He decided to root out the brambles and throw them away so that this wouldn't happen to him again.



So he started to dig around the roots and pull the brambles out of the ground and out of his field. As he dug, he discovered a large earthen pot buried under the bushes. In great excitement, he dug some more and uncovered the pot to find it filled with silver coins. 'What great luck!' he said to himself. 'At last, I am rich. I have found buried treasure in my field!'

But soon his excitement faded away. 'I have wished only to find riches upon my own hearth,' said the farmer. 'These coins found in the field are surely not meant for me. Therefore I

shall not accept them, and if I do they will surely be lost. What is meant for me will appear upon my hearth, exactly as I have wished.' So saying the man left the pot of coins where he found it and walked back home.

He told his wife that he had discovered a pot full of silver coins in his field, but since it wasn't meant for him, he left the pot where he had found it. His wife was angry at his foolishness and asked him to go get the treasure, but the man insisted that it wasn't meant for him and refused to go back and fetch the pot. When the farmer went to bed and fell fast asleep, his wife went to their neighbour's house and told the neighbour about her foolish husband's discovery, and his refusal to get the riches home. 'Why don't you go to our field and fetch the earthen pot?' she told the neighbour, 'and we shall share the treasure.'

The neighbour set out at once to the field and to the spot where the bramble bush lay uprooted, and there he saw an earthen pot lying in the open. He opened the lid greedily, but what did he see? Instead of silver coins, the pot was

full of venomous vipers. 'Oh!' he exclaimed. 'That woman, and even her husband, that silly farmer, surely want me dead. She bids me to fetch a pot filled with snakes, saying it contains silver coins, so that when I put my hand in, I die of snakebite.'

I'll pay them back in their own coin, he decided and carried the pot home with him. Under cover of darkness, he scaled the farmer's fence and then got on to his roof. Then he emptied the pot down through the farmer's chimney. 'That will teach them a lesson,' he said to himself, as he quietly made his way back to his house.

Next morning, the farmer got up and went to check his hearth, as he did every day, for any riches that might be found upon it. And Lo! Upon his hearth lay a heap of silver coins. He was very happy and his heart was filled with gratitude for he knew that those riches were surely meant for him. He cried out, 'At last, I am no longer luckless. These riches are meant for me, and I can accept them, because they have appeared upon my hearth, as I wished.'



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4. Short stories and non-fictions should be under 2000 words (about 1500 words is ideal). Poems should not exceed 20 lines (may or may not be broken down to stanzas).
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7. Handwritten, typed or emailed articles must mention clearly the writer's full name, class/ grade/ standard, school name, and email address. These details must be mentioned in the body of your email text, as well as at the bottom of the last page of your attachments. It will be helpful to contact you in case your article is selected. Submissions without these data will not be considered.
8. Email attachment should be in word (doc. or docx.) format. Do not use fancy colours and fonts. Times New Roman 12 size font with auto font colour (black) is ideal. All matter should be typed/ written in double space.
9. In case your writing is short-listed, we will contact you by email for your passport size photograph and for a certificate to be signed by your school authorities. Only the selected writers will be contacted.
10. The decision of the editorial board for selection of submissions is final.
11. Scan and keep ready a recent passport size photograph of the writer (resolution 300 dpi), for sending after the selection/ shortlist.

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