

Vol I Issue III

October - December 2012

# Klound9

*National Magazine For School Children* Rs.40

The Bullied and the Bully  
I Come from Heart  
Pollution Age  
A Secret



## Congratulations!

The editorial board congratulates Mr. Ruskin Bond on his being awarded the **Bal Sahitya Puraskar** from the Sahitya Academy for his outstanding contribution towards children literature.

This is his second award from the Sahitya Academy. Earlier, he had received another prestigious award from the Academy in 1993 for his book 'Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra'.

**Congratulations Mr. Bond!**

**The Editorial Board**

Excerpts from the letter from the Sahitya Academy is appended below.



Speed Post

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SA. 61/12/BSP/

24 August 2012

Dear Friend,

I have much pleasure in confirming that the Executive Board of the Sahitya Akademi has, at its meeting held today at Bhubaneswar, under the Chairmanship of its President, Sri Sunil Gangopadhyay selected your name for the **2012 Bal Sahitya Puraskar** towards your total contribution to children literature in English language. Please accept my heartiest congratulations once again.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
(Agrahara Krishna Murthy)

Encl: As above  
**Sri Ruskin Bond**  
Uttarakhand

## *Kloud 9*

### **Volume 1 Issue 3**

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## *From the Editor's Desk*



Once again I am delighted with the variety of stories, poems and articles that have come in from schools across the country. Equally heartening has been the response from the Middle East in our foreign section. Our newly launched magazine has already reached across our shores, and we are certain in the years to come, students from all over the world will join this literary venture.

It appears, there is an abundance of poets among our students. The number of poems received far exceeds our expectations and our requirement, though we cannot say the same about their quality. We are looking forward to greater participation in the prose category; you stand a better chance of publication here. This issue carries a selection of heart warming stories on themes such as education of the girl child, selfless service to mankind and child adoption. It is indeed very cheering to notice that the present day student thinks along such lofty lines. Then we have two articles from the personal experiences of two students – one from Assam and another from Noida. We would like to see more such stories and more non-fiction articles. Memoirs, travelogues, and occasionally topical write-ups are welcome for early publication.

In this issue we have also published an interesting dialogue between me and a young schoolboy. I hope you enjoy reading it. I would like to thank young Aryan for taking the time to plan and conduct such an elaborate discussion. The second part of the interview will appear in the next issue.

I congratulate all of you whose writings have found a place in this issue. Keep reading and writing and sending us your creative work.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to be 'Ruskin Bond'.

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## THE BULLIED AND THE BULLY

By Sreyashi Bose

Hey, Skinny! Got a new bat, eh? Suddenly, his brand new bat was wrenched away from his grip. Tears welled up in his eyes when he saw his brand new bat being hit against the old banyan tree again and again. He implored, 'Please, please, let go of my bat, please... it was gifted to me by my uncle.' 'Oooh, oooh, boo hoo, it was gifted to me by my uncle,' mimicked Danny in a shrill voice. 'Now what would Skinny here say? Mama, my new bat is broken. Cry baby, is he not, buddies? Then with sudden ferocity, Danny hit the bat against the tree causing it to split into two parts, held together only by a few splinters of wood.

As he helplessly looked on while his bat was being demolished, Neil knew that there was nothing he could ever do to stop his tormentor. As he gathered up the broken pieces after Danny and his gang



were done with it, he no longer felt hurt. Instead, he felt anger surging up in his heart. He could feel his feet walking up to the other end of the park where Danny and his gang were harassing another small kid, Santana whose bat and kitten had been taken away from her and they kept dancing out of her reach.

'Hey Danny! He cried.' How much did Jonathan pay you to keep his mummy from knowing his gambling habits?' and before Danny could retort or haul him up, he ran away.

As he walked home, his steps became slower and slower. With each step, a feeling of gloom deepened in his heart. As he dragged himself towards the door of his house, he reflected upon his life. Child of a single parent – his father had abandoned his mother and him years ago. He cherished only one impression of his father and he liked to remember him that way – his father cradling him in his arms just some moments right after his birth, the impression captured in paper. The photograph was now stashed away in his desk drawer. The rest he tried his best to forget. Though he was only seven years old, yet he'd vowed that when he grew up, he would treat his mother like a queen. However, what constituted treating someone like a queen, he did not really know. The idea had entered his head, ever since his mother had asked him whether he would take care of her when he was older. Then, she'd asked him whether he'd treat her like a queen and he had said yes.

His mother was in the kitchen, busy preparing the midday meal. She was an irritable woman in her mid-thirties, with a tendency to flare up at the slightest provocation. Standing by the kitchen door, he wondered how he would explain to her today's mishap. He began, not without some uncertainty, 'Danny broke my bat....' Before he could relate any further, his mother cut in, 'How many times have I told you not to mess up with that kid? Which idiot on earth told you to take it to the park? Moreover, you very well know that his father is my employer, so I can do nothing about he being a pest! How many times do I have to drill into your bloated head that if I don't earn, then, we'll starve to death?' As she paused for breath, Neil remembered what she had told him on an earlier occasion - 'Grin and bear it!' He did not wait to hear anymore and ran to his room,

where he sat at his desk and cried. It had become a regular part of his life. He was unhappy but what was there to do?

The only person he'd ever been fond of was his uncle who was his mother's younger brother. He lived in Delhi and whenever he visited them, he would bring something for Neil, however small it might be. Moreover, he would tell Neil about the thrills and excitements that Delhi had to offer. Neil had lived in Dehradun all his life and had never ventured anywhere beyond the sleepy city. For Neil, Delhi held as much charm as England held for the elite. Neil's entry in his diary on 20<sup>th</sup> March 1953 read as:

Dear Diary,

Today, Danny's gang came after me yet again. They tried to chuck my yearbook into the dustbin. Thankfully, it landed just a few inches away from it. Had I not quickly retrieved it, only God knows what would have become of it. Even on the last day of the school, they wouldn't leave me alone. Thankfully, this would be the last I would ever see of them as we're moving to Delhi. I get to stay with my uncle. This happy prospect makes me feel at peace. Goodnight!

He slowly took in the familiar surroundings. What a long time it had been! He breathed in deeply, the old place smelt just the same. Now, Neil was no longer the skinny chap he used to be. He was a handsome 28 year old who had secured a job as a high school German language teacher in his *alma mater*. He was now lodged in the house where he'd previously lived as a child. A lot of memories came to him as he stood under the old banyan tree, running his hand on its bark.

Suddenly, he became aware of someone crying. Looking around he saw a little girl walking towards where he stood. Apparently, the girl had not seen him because when he said 'Hey, Sweetie! Why are you crying?' she emitted a shriek.

However, she did not run away. He asked her again 'Now, now, who has made you cry?' The girl realising that he was trying to be sympathetic, burst out, 'They said I was ugly. They won't let me play with them,' and continued crying.

Placing a hand on her shoulder, he said, 'People's perception of yourself should not bother you. Bullies don't really have any reason to torment people like us. They just pick up any aspect of your being to ridicule you. Unless you are sure of yourself you can never overcome them. Let them say whatever they want. You should be able to accept yourself – warts and all. Real beauty lies in being nice from within. Once you realise this, you'll be able to emerge as a stronger and better person.'

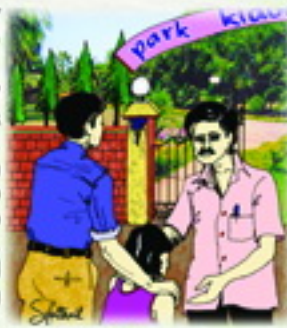
The girl considered him for a few moments and asked with some uncertainty, 'So if I'm nice, it wouldn't matter whether I'm beautiful or ugly?'

'No. It wouldn't. I was bullied too as a child and I believe that those experiences have contributed in a big way in shaping my outlook towards life. *Carpe Diem!* Cheer up and seize the day! Don't waste time wishing for what you don't have, celebrate life,' he replied and then asked, 'Would you like to play with me? But before we play, wipe your pretty little face.'

He offered her his handkerchief.

They played hide & seek for a while. As the sun started to disappear into the darkness, the girl skipped happily along with him

holding his hand. 'You must meet Papa,' she cried. 'He always picks me up on his way home from office. He is a very nice man.'



**The author is a grade 12 student in DPS RK Puram, New Delhi**

## I COME FROM HEART...

By Arpita Kanungo

Mother – you are a bit of stardust;  
Blown from the hands of God.

A bosom friend of mine,  
Sent from heaven by the Lord.

You bear your troubles bravely  
And never wince at pain –

Never you yield to sorrow and;  
To me no less than a superhuman.

You thank the almighty everyday  
For he gave me life,

But I am grateful to God every moment  
That you are a part of my life.

The happiest moments of my life  
Are the few,

Which I have passed at home  
With father and you.

Holding me always your affectionate  
Hands I have found,

And you as a mentor have showed me  
The way, whenever difficulties surround.

From this I learnt a lesson, not to expect  
Best gifts to come wrapped in a paper,

I love you the most for –  
You are my special gift, my dear mother.

I feel myself lucky, for others,  
Have come from their mommy's tummy.

But I am adopted, so I came from  
The heart of my mommy.

Come from the heart of my mommy  
From the heart of my mommy...

The poet is a grade 11 student in,  
Kendriya Vidyalay No.-3 Bhubaneswar

# AMRITA'S DAUGHTER

By Anushreya Ghosh

She knew it was cowardice, plain cowardice not to keep her promises. But as rash as she was, she knew it wasn't just any promise; it was her life and this time it was she, and she alone, who would finally have to take a decision.

Two years ago, when Amrita married Saikat, she never could imagine she would find herself in such a predicament. But now, here she was, stranded.

'I am telling you, we should do this.' Amrita could almost see Saikat at the wheel that night arguing with her - The scene she had replayed in her head so many times recently. Apparently, the proposal Saikat had come up with on a well-deserved Friday night special dinner date had not been well received.

'Just let me think, will you?' rebutted Amrita.

'What do you need to think about?'

'This is our life. What isn't there to think about?'

'I thought you wanted it.' He raised his voice involuntarily.

'Whatever made you think that, Saikat? I want my family to be my own. That's why we decided not to get any parents involved,' she blurted out.

'Don't go off-topic. You are getting out of the way.' The anger in his voice was unmistakable, that brought Amrita to her senses.

'Keep your eye on the road, Saikat.'

'If I do, will you do something about my suggestion?'

'I will think about it,' she said in a compromising tone.

'Promise?'

'Promise.'

'Amrita?' He looked at her for

further assurance.

She felt obliged to look at him.

'What?'

'Promise?'

'Saikat...' she shrieked.

She thought it was her fault it all happened. Maybe it was.

\*\*\*\*

'Amrita Murmu, can I have your attention? I am trying to say something important here.' God! Bosses could be irritating.



'Yes, sir, I am sorry.' For the last few years that she had been in this job, she had tried to learn to look attentive without being so; but she could never master that 'look'. She wanted to concentrate but it's rather difficult to concentrate when a photo peeked out at you from under the file.

Late that night back at home (Oh! Yes, she survived that meeting, if that's what you are wondering), she felt obliged to take out the picture that had been nagging her for quite a few days recently. It was her photo taken when she was seven. A rusty photo of a girl of an apparently pretty household, standing with a cricket bat. That was the beginning of a new, beautiful life. She began to learn cricket after that photo had been taken. But somewhere along the line she grew up and got rather too busy with life, and cricket became just a thing to be watched on TV. Nevertheless, that photograph was proof of the fact that at some point of time on this



very planet, another cricket-eating, cricket-sleeping and cricket-breathing girl named Amrita existed.

It was that photograph which she and Saikat would look at so many times and smile. Saikat would sometimes give her an 'I-don't-believe-such-a-'you'-ever-existed' look and they would fall in love all over again. But she didn't want to keep the promise she had made for the sake of the picture or the memories it held because it was highly improbable that Saikat would ever come back.

'Highly improbable', Saikat liked the sound of the phrase. He used it all the time. He used it when he proposed. She remembered his words, 'It's highly improbable that a girl like you...'

Yes! Saikat knew how to flatter her and they both loved it – one loved to flatter and the other loved being flattered.

But no! Saikat would never come back ever again. He was gone. And it wasn't even his fault; it wasn't his fault that the truck driver with a faulty eyesight wasn't wearing his spectacles that night. It wasn't his fault, it wasn't! Or, maybe it was her fault. Maybe she shouldn't have had that silly argument that night. Maybe then Saikat would have gotten to live.

Making a phone call to someone at one in the night was a disturbance for the person at the other end. Yet she called her Mom. She desperately needed her Mom. And the talk had exactly the calming effect she knew it would have. The world would be a lost place if it weren't for mothers, wouldn't it? After the talk, she had taken her decision and now all she waited for was morning – the morning of 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2009. She had to make it a point to remember that date from then on.

\*\*\*\*

As soon as the morning arrived, she could feel her pulse beating – she was ready, ready for a new life. A new life, like the one she started after that photo was taken. As she watched the clock tick to 09:00 a.m. Amrita felt alive again, alive after a long, long time.

Walking into the Adoption Agency, she could see Ragini's face light up. And right there, right then, she knew she had taken a correct decision for both of them. Of course, it would be difficult to raise a child on her own, Saikat wasn't there to help and he would never be there, even if he wanted to. But the concept of having a



child, sorry, having a cricket-loving girl child, to call her her own was far too tempting than all the difficulties it would pose. Plus she owed it to herself, her new child and the man who had assured her that she'd make a great Mom.

Looking out at the lanky figure of Ragini dominating the entire field full of boys older than her, Amrita sometimes liked to recall this story ('Anecdote, Mom!', Ragini would have said.). It told her the fact that she was her own individual self and no one could ever deny it.

Five years had passed since that day and with every day, Ragini improved. She was the pride of her school and her town and, of course, her mother. Though sometimes Amrita missed Saikat but it was consolation enough to know that in the next room, listening to Taylor Swift, was someone who'd come, hug and wipe her tears. That someone was her daughter, Ragini – Ragini Murmu.

**The author is a grade 12 student in  
APS Sukna, Darjeeling**

# THE LAND SO FAR AWAY...

By Ria Thimmaiahgari



Where the bluebells always blossom,  
Where the sun glows golden red,  
Where rainbows spread across the sky,  
And the pixies rest in bed.

Where the moonlight glows so brightly,  
Where the fairies tell their dreams.  
Where the spiders spin their pretty webs,  
Out of moonlight beams.

Where the nightingale sings its sweet songs,  
Where the angels dance all day.  
It's a beautiful land, it's a beautiful land,  
It's the land so far away.

**The poet is a grade 7 student in  
Indus International School, Hyderabad**



## A SECRET



By Rabail Motihar

I am a super hero and that is a fact. Strange, but true. And also it is my secret. Nobody knows that I have supernatural powers. After all, who expects a 14 year old to possess such 'magical powers'? By the way, my name is Margaret Percell. I was born and brought up in Washington D C with my younger twin sisters, Janessa and Jasmine and elder brother, Marcus. Both my parents are working. My mom, Selena Percell, is an interior designer who works for "Internal Beauty", a company who pays professionals like my mom to help people decorate their houses. My dad, Fabian Percell, is the vice - president of a company called 'Tik Tok' that manufactures and exports watches. Basically I come from a very normal family and I know no extraordinarily weird people (Except my history teacher, Mr. Brown, who knows about my powers and from time to time gives me advice on how to use them). When I turned thirteen on the 13th of July, I felt something was wrong with me. And so it was. I learned of my powers that day. I can levitate things if I concentrate very hard on them and mentally keep repeating, "Rise up". But that is not my only power. I keep discovering new ones as time passes. Nowadays I can give out small electric shocks. I can also squeeze out energy from other living objects or people and use it for my own benefit.

Once I was sitting on the couch in my room (which my mom has done up beautifully to my liking), watching television, and in the commercial break, I began browsing channels. I stopped at a news channel. The news reporter was talking into the microphone, standing

outside the White House. I increased the volume to listen to what she had to say, "President George Thatcher's seven-year old daughter, Rosella Thatcher, has been reported missing and, understandably, the president is very upset. She went missing from the school's basket ball court when there were half a dozen security personnel around to protect her. It's a mystery how she disappeared right from the midst of her body guards, coach and team mates. But the most amazing fact is that Rosella has been missing for the past two days and no ransom has been demanded yet. The FBI too cannot do much since there were no significant clues found and there are no eye witnesses. A massive search operation has been launched and hundreds of people are being interrogated. We all wish that Rosella is safe and that she will be returned to her father soon. We will keep you posted with the latest developments as they unfold. This is Penelope Martin, with camera man Steve Robinson, reporting from the White House."

I was momentarily stunned. I knew who had kidnapped Rosella Thatcher. It was Dr. Forrgett. He too, like me, was supernaturally gifted but he used his powers maliciously. He had not yet succeeded due to his amnesia that earned him his name. Now he had kidnapped Rosella so that he could use the ransom money to arrange for some things which he required to create his evil machine. Now I was sure that he had forgotten what his objective of kidnapping the girl was and now her life was in serious danger. I muttered, "Dr. Forrgett, I am coming."

As I flew over the city, I wondered, what Dr. Forrgett was thinking, and if he had some other motive for kidnapping Rosella." I flew down to his Laboratory which he had named "Dr. Forrgett's Evil Lair", which the police had assumed was some child's doing for fun and playing. I landed softly by the side door and tightened the mask which covered my face so that no one could recognize me. I whispered to the garbage dumpsters beside me, "Rise up and bang

open the door for me." After all, a Super hero needs to enter in style. A blast or a bang here and there hardly matters. The door flew open as soon as the dumpsters crashed into it. I strode in." Dr. Forrgett !! Give up Rosella Thatcher or face my wrath. Come out you cowardly turtle." "Pretty good," I thought to myself, "for a stylish entry".

As my eyes got adjusted to the dim lighting, I noticed a chair in the centre of the room and a beautiful blonde girl was sitting bound to it with her mouth gagged. Even her feet were tied. There was something wrong and I could sense it. Dr. Forrgett was nowhere to be seen. I considered walking in, freeing Rosella and walking out, but it seemed too easy. I decided to let my dumpsters float ahead of



me first. So giving them the instructions I took a step back and watched them. As soon as they neared the chair, there was a flash and they burst into flames. That was really scary. I perspired and my body shivered. Had I walked first, that would have been the end of me. An echoing laugh bounced against the paint-deprived walls and a shiver ran down my spine. It wasn't Dr. Forrgett's voice. It was a female voice. And too high pitched for my liking. "You seriously didn't think that it would be so

easy to walk in and get Rosella, did you? Or is it simply that you disrespect Dr. Forrgett's reputation?" And then an orange haired beautiful girl walked in. Her eyeballs were red and there seemed to be flames inside. It was the dreaded villain, Fire Girl. She walked in confidently. "Since you know why I am doing this kidnapping business, I want you to come forward so that I can talk freely."

I laughed without humour, "What do you think I am? A donkey? You think I will so easily walk into your trap? I have heard of you Fire Girl. I know that you are known more for your sly ways than for your destructive powers. Come out to me. Or rather stay where you are and talk to me from there. I am not hard of hearing." She sneered, "Suit yourself Margaret. You think too much of yourself. Today we shall see what you have got. I got Dr. Forrgett to kidnap Rosella, so that I can control the president of the United States of America. Tsk tsk tsk. What will poor George choose? His precious job or his even more precious daughter? I will force him to use his powers to make me the president by hook or by crook, which will be his headache, not mine. And he will have to do it. He wouldn't want his daughter dead, would he?"

I made an attempt to probe deep into her. "The way you use his first name 'George' I'd guess you know him pretty well."

She tossed her hair and said, "Smart girl! Yes, we were, what you'd say, close acquaintances. But that was a long time back. Much before he stuck his hoary little head into politics. Sad thing. But now he will be of much use to me. Now enough chit chat. I want to get all the dirty work finished as soon as possible. And I most definitely do not like small bratty interfering kids who think they can stop the great Fire Girl!"

---

Saying that she summoned a ball of fire into her open palm. I had to try very hard to keep my mouth shut and prevent it from dropping open in shock. The ball seemed to be floating in her hand without burning or scorching her skin. I swallowed my fear and thought that it was a good thing that I had attended drama classes and was good at acting or else the Fire Girl would have been able to see everything - all my fears. To act confident I tossed my hair back and asked coolly, "What is your real name, by the way?" She seemed taken aback, by both, my confidence and my question. She answered, "Adele. Adele Morton. And you child? What is your Super hero name? But that hardly matters now, doesn't it, since I'm going to have to kill you now, anyways. Any last wish you might have?"

"And you talk about over- confidence." I told her with a laugh, "I may be a novice at the game we are playing but don't make the mistake of underestimating me or my powers, Adele. As for my super hero name, I haven't yet decided on one which will define my capabilities. Unlike you, I have many powers and hence will require an appropriate name."

She snarled in anger, "Watch it kid. You don't want an extremely painful death, do you?" Saying that she threw the ball at me with a force I would never be able to replicate. I ducked just in time to avoid it. A pile of card- board boxes behind me, burst into flames. I chanced a look back at the boxes and quickly composed my face removing all signs of fear from it.

"Is that your best shot Adele?" I laughed. This was one of my usual tricks, to infuriate the opponent so that he or she does something stupid, which would help me gain the upper hand. Another volley of fireballs sailed harmlessly past me. I was getting tired of playing defensive. I felt like it was time for me to start attacking. I ducked as another pack of fireballs flew over my head. I whispered to the machines all around me, to rise and land on top of Adele, but they were too heavy for me to lift all together. I tried for one at a time. There

was a huge washing machine which I tried lifting first. It lifted with utmost ease and floated over to where Adele stood in the centre, making fire-balls and throwing them at me. She must have sensed something above her head because she suddenly looked up and ran. I fortunately had not let go of the machine so I moved it in the direction she ran and then threw it down with as much force as I could muster. She rolled and saved herself by a few inches.

She growled, "Hmm.....looks like I have a tough competition here." I shouted out, "You won't be able to defeat me Adele. Set Rosella free and I promise not to hurt you. I'll let you go back. I promise."

"You think I am a quitter, Margaret, then you have definitely not heard everything about me. I never give up. I have lost only one combat as yet. That too with the great Super Man. Only he has succeeded in defeating me. How dare you think that you, an ordinary child will be able to accomplish a feat only the great Super man has been able to achieve. I said that you were a tough competition, most definitely does not mean that you can start thinking that you can defeat me," she growled.

After this it became even tougher. I had to duck, dodge and even spin cartwheels to avoid getting burnt. In her frustration, Adele began a wild dance in which she began throwing fire balls in all directions. I suddenly noticed that one of the fireballs had only missed Rosella by a few centimetres. That could have seriously hurt her, I told myself. Half of Dr. Forrgett's Evil Lab was on fire. Something had to be done to stop her. I remembered Mr. Brown's words that in a tight and dangerous situation we must think calmly and use our heads. So I stopped and thought with a clear head. What can stop the fire? The answer which struck my head was automatic. Water! I spun around trying to find the water basin amongst the blazing fire whose flames seemed to be licking every possible object. My hair was singed at a few places and my jumpsuit was

scorched here and there but I was fine on the whole. I found the basin and summoned a stream of water out and towards Adele. It soared over her and this time she didn't notice anything since she was so busy dancing and throwing fireballs everywhere. And it fell. With a huge splash! There was a choking noise as a totally drenched Adele spluttered and spat out water. Her eyes seemed to have lost the dancing flames.

"Had enough or are you thirsty for more?" I asked, emphasizing on the word 'thirsty'. When she just shook her head, I summoned more water and extinguished the rest of the fires that were blazing around me. I walked over to Rosella, who had lost consciousness. I was worried for a



moment about what she might tell the press about how she had been rescued but then I thought, "Who'd believe a seven year old anyways?" I untied her bonds and flew out of the building with her. I dropped her off in her bed at the White House. Then I went back home. It was only ten-thirty when I reached home. As I made my way into my room through the window, my supersensitive ears sensed someone coming up the stairs to my room. It could have been Marcus, going back to his room but I couldn't take a chance. I ran into the bathroom and turned on the shower and

started singing, "I'm only gonna break, break your, break, break your heart...." I heard my mom come into the room and shout, "Maggie, have you finished your Science homework?" Oops! I hadn't. And then Mom shouted, "Your book was in your bag and I checked it. You haven't done it yet. Now you are grounded till the next weekend young lady, for not completing your work on time!" with that she walked out of my room and shut the door with a soft thud. "Whew!! That was a close one!!" I thought. I took a real shower after that and sat down to do my homework. I was dead tired. Beat to the bone. But I had to do my homework, didn't I?



And that, believe me, is the worst part of being a superhero, keeping the secret. Because no matter what, even a super hero has to do homework and that really sucks!

**The author is a grade 9 student in  
Convent of Jesus and Mary, New Delhi**

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## THE MAGICIAN OF YOUR LIFE

By Aditi Premkumar

YOU are someone special,  
A power for your life.  
YOU are the one and only one  
Who can be.  
YOU are the magic,  
To shine and show,  
Your dreams where to go.  
YOU have to believe,  
That there is no one like YOU.  
To unleash the future,  
And do something new.  
YOU do not need a magic hat  
Because YOU can do better than that.  
YOU do not need a magic wand  
Because your life is one.  
And your dreams wish can be done.  
Wake up!!!!  
There is so much to do.  
The Magician of your life is  
None other than YOU



**The poet is a grade 8 student in  
Padma Seshadri Bala Bhavan, Chennai.**

## REWARD OF BENEVOLENCE



By Dhriti Bhattacharjee

**A** long time ago, there lived a fisherman named Wang Chang Yang in the Shandong region of China. He was too poor even to dream of luxury. His poverty had so completely crushed him that he did not dare to get married and start a family. But he was content and virtuous and never complained to anyone of his miserable life.

Once for a couple of weeks Chang Yang could not catch any fish and the hearth in his little shack went cold. He had no food to cook and no fuel to keep himself warm. He was forced to beg for food to keep himself alive. There was one man in his neighborhood who rejoiced at his misery – another fisherman named Suzuki. Suzuki was a fisherman as well as a farmer and owned a huge farmland and many fishing boats. For reasons unknown to Suzuki himself, Chang Yang's tears of sorrow always brought a smile on his face.

One day Chang Yang's net caught something heavy and he thought it was a huge shoal. He sprang to action for he did not want to let go of his treasure; nor did the treasure seem to let go of him. Using more of his fishing techniques than his physical strength he managed to drag his net out of water and what he saw shocked him. It was not fish. What he had caught in his net was the prettiest creature he had ever seen – a sea nymph! From inside the net her gem-like eyes sparkled. Her long bright golden hair floated around her angelic lily-white face like a halo, a sight

that transfixed the poor fisherman.

"O fisherman, slay me not; If you set me free, I'll make you merry." The request was followed by a promise.

Without a moment's hesitation the kind-hearted Chang Yang helped the nymph out of the net and apologized to her for his mistake. "Your majesty, please forgive me. I didn't mean to trap you in my net. And I don't deserve any reward for setting you free." The nymph was



overwhelmed by the man's goodness. She instantly produced a golden net and handed it to Chang Yang. "Please accept this and remember not to use it more than three times a day." With these words she vanished.

An excited Chang Yang rowed homeward and hitting the shore carried his treasure on his shoulder, wondering how the golden net was going to change his life. When the village folks saw him they rushed towards him, greeted him excitedly, and reported that his house was no longer a shack but had turned into a huge mansion! He scampered along the sandy beach followed by a mob and was shocked to see the beautiful mansion where his little mud hut stood that morning. From then on Chang Yang went fishing with his magic net and used it only three times a day, and every day he came home with his boat full of expensive fish. He got wealthier and wealthier by every passing day and generously helped everyone who needed help.

Chang Yang's new-found prosperity and popularity gave sleepless nights to his



rival Suzuki. He spent restless days and nights thinking hard of the possible ways and means to cheat him out of his precious possession. Eventually he decided to steal the net from Chang Yang. He broke into his house in the pitch-darkness of a wintry morning, stole the net and headed straight for the sea, for he could not wait to reap the benefits of his ill-gotten possession. Only he had not heard of the nymph's warning against using it for more than thrice a day.

In the first three attempts he caught fish so heavy that he had to use all his might to haul them on board. He could not believe the amount of fish he had caught in a few minutes. They were the richest catches he had ever seen or heard of. The weight of the fish weighed his boat down and it tilted to one side. But the greedy Suzuki, instead of being content with what he had got and going home, threw the net into the water a fourth time and, lo, caught something heavier than his first three catches. He screamed in pure pleasure and tugged at the heavy net with all his might. In spite of all his toil, the heavy catch tugged him and his heavily laden boat along in a zigzag path at great speed and threw him off board.

The news of Chang Yang's missing net and the disappearance of Suzuki spread



in the village like wild fire. Chang Yang and his friends started a massive search operation in the ocean to rescue Suzuki. On the third day they found the wreckage of Suzuki's boat and Chang Yang's magic net, neatly tied to it. Tangled on to the net were long bright golden strands of hair that Chang Yang instantly identified and tears welled up in his eyes.

**The author is a grade 6 student in Loyola School, Bhubaneswar**



## GANDHI JAYANTI

Gandhi Jayanti is celebrated as the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi who was popularly known as the Father of the Nation. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, better known as 'Bapu', or Gandhiji, was born on 2nd October 1869, in Porbander, Gujarat. He was the man who played a significant role for achieving independence for India from the British Empire. He was a selfless leader and suffered many hardships for the freedom of our country. He was imprisoned several times during the freedom struggle. Gandhiji was a preacher of truth and 'ahimsa' (non-violence). He proved to the world that freedom can be achieved through the path of non-violence - a true symbol of peace and truth. To express his protests against the tax on salt, he undertook the Dandi March from Ahmedabad to Dandi covering a total distance of 388 kms. He believed in the social equality and was very much against untouchability.

Five months after independence, Gandhiji was assassinated by Nathuram Godse while on his way to his daily prayer meeting.

2<sup>nd</sup> October is celebrated as Gandhi Jayanti with reverence all over the country. On this day, President and Prime Minister, along with other great leaders, pay homage at Raj Ghat, the memorial of Mahatma Gandhi where he was cremated. Gandhi's favorite song, 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram', is invariably sung at all the meetings associated with him. His high thinking, simple living and strong willpower made him a revered leader of India.

Contributed by Usha Kiran Das

# THE MIRACLE OF RAINDROPS



By Harsha Pattnaik

They fall from the sky  
Not afraid of the wound  
That they would get  
When they hit the ground;

They're beautiful and brave  
And never afraid to dive  
Into the unknown where  
They won't survive;

I want to be like them  
Dive into the unknown  
Where nothing is determined  
And I make a path of my own;

They give us joy and help us  
Though they are the ones who get hurt  
They give everything but take none  
Yet our sorrows they avert;

I want to be just like them  
Help others even in pain  
And serve all day all night  
Until in deathbed I have lain;

Again they rise into the sky  
Even though unnoticed is their form;  
They return to spread happiness,  
Never tired or scared to reform;

I want to be exactly like them  
Changing myself for others  
Die and be born again  
Giving happiness to my sisters and brothers.

The poet is a grade 8 student in D.A.V Public School, Rajabagicha, Cuttack

# POLLUTION AGE

By Shaandili Vajpai

Pollution, pollution, pollution,  
Why do they do it?  
They always forget to check the oil tanks,  
And go spilling oil in every ocean!

Pollution, pollution, pollution,  
Why can't they stop it?  
They always show off their airplane stunts,  
People think that they're really good,  
But what about the birds?  
They cough and cough and cough,  
The poor things!  
And nobody bothers!

Pollution, pollution, pollution,  
Why don't they care about it?  
They ride in their cars, they smoke!  
Cough, cough, cough, we can hardly breathe!  
We are killing ourselves, can you believe?

Ah! finally! They've stopped polluting!  
How fresh the air is, and the area so green!  
How wonderful it is without pollution!  
Don't you agree?


**The poet is a grade 5 student in  
DPS, Bangalore North.**



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## FLAG WEAVER'S CHRONICLE

By Akshi Vidushi



On the journey to the Blue Emyrean  
The brave soldier carved in air  
The memoirs of his loyal life  
And spoke in a voice so fair.

O my people, my land ahoy!  
Today I have wings so bright  
Alas! I cannot kiss my soil  
For I attained the ebb of life.

Glum enough I can serve no more  
And make my nation feel proud  
Oh dear! I am flying alone  
In this colossal crowd.

However no less are my gaities  
I fought against hoodoos and the viles  
And forsook the woods for the ether  
After walking a million miles.

Ye all men rejoice thy freedom  
Don't let thy colourful moments fade  
Whilst I seek shelter in my motherland  
Beneath the roses laid.

**The poet is a grade 11 student in Delhi Public School, Hardwar**

## I KEEP WRITING

By Sirsha Tripathy

Why do I write?  
I write so that I can reflect.  
Because the thought is no more within me.  
Because the thought is facing me.

Why do I write?  
I write so that I don't have to speak.  
Because I fear I cannot act.  
Because I fear they won't understand.

Why do I write?  
I write so that I can preserve the little memories.  
Because the future is uncertain.  
Because they give me strength and meaning.

So, why do I write?  
I do not write for strokes of passion.  
I do not write for wild imagination.  
I do not write for fame and glory.  
Or change the world or create history.

I write because I feel.  
The strange joys of universe.  
The little surprises of nature.  
I write unafraid of being judged.  
I know there might be nothing great.  
But for me, nothing is as lovely.  
Who will see what I see.  
And that is why I keep writing.



S. Tripathy

## IS ALL WELL?



By Devapreeti Sharma

All is well for he who has a bursting bank,  
For he who has touched the limit of luxury,  
For he who can get all,  
For he who will not fall.

All is well for he who is unbeknown to harsh words,  
Against whom, there isn't one,  
He who doesn't have to see daily  
A father tested by pain and tear,  
A mother with charred hands and grey hair.

All is well for he who doesn't have a helpless friend  
He who doesn't have an ailment,  
Behind whom the world stands  
And in front of whom the future lies boundless.

But well isn't a commoner's life,  
Who toils day and night,  
Who doesn't forget his past,  
And who knows not what time unfolds ahead,  
Who goes on and on, until it ends...



The poet is a grade 10 student in St. Mary's English High School, Guwahati

# TALE OF A LONELY HEART...

By Soumya Moharana

In the deep core of my heart,  
Remains a sad story part,  
Which I wanna reveal  
But lothe to open the seal.

I do realize what exactly I feel.  
But to express that, I have no zeal.  
They pile on and on.  
And I am unable to deal.

I think, I need to heal my broken heart,  
But the scratches remain.  
I am unable to part,  
Even if I am in pain.

Heartache continues with a ray of hope.  
Tears from my eyes drop and drop...  
May you fill the empty spaces  
Making me thankful to graces.

No one will ever know,  
How much you are present in all my thoughts.  
And even to tell that I have no guts.

My heart blazes  
My soul cries  
For an unheard call that not replies.



The poet is a student in DAV Public School, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar

## A DARK WORLD



By Ipsita Shee

I watch people soundlessly pass by  
As their minds are taken over by gloom.  
I watch them as they meekly walk  
Through the twisted paths towards their doom.

Their minds filled with greed and violence  
As the darkness tears away light of decency from every room.  
The dark angels now hover the garden once harmonious  
Charring and de-flowering every peaceful bloom.

No corner of land left untouched  
By treacherous hands of evil.  
The whole world is now rocked  
By the terrorizing hands of devil.

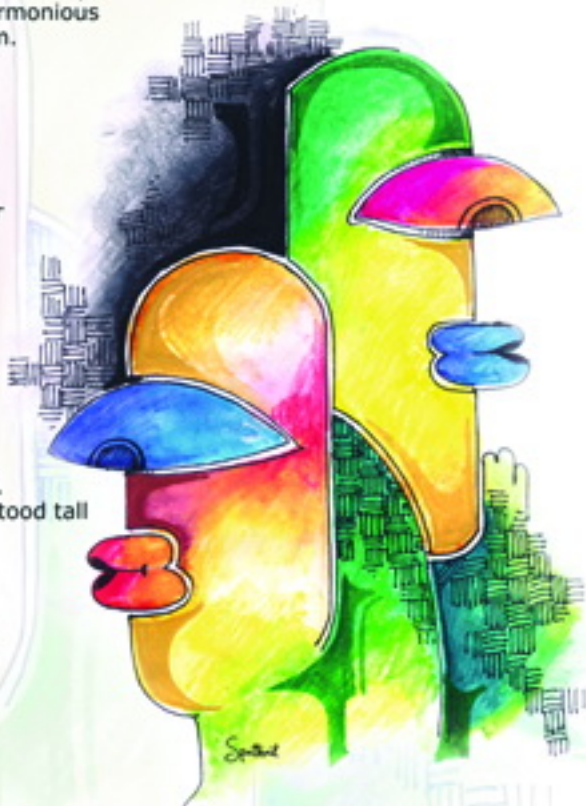
Women screech and scream soaked up in terror  
As these hands violate them.  
They cry and beg for mercy, but unaffected  
Those hands tear away all shields of shame.

A simple, fragile doll I was  
Spreading smile and brightly smiling.  
They destroyed me and smiled  
And left me cold and crying.

That doll of laughter now cries  
As the last flame of happiness in her heart dies.  
The one who with pride and exhilaration once stood tall  
Now that once happy soul meets her fall.

The bright innocence torn apart by dark lust  
Prayers of death replace hope.  
Ways to escape this treacherous territory none  
No ways to replace the harm done.

And here I have completed the picture  
The picture of a dark world.  
The picture of pain and agony  
Of which Satan is the lord.



The poet is a grade 11 student in KiiT International School, Bhubnaeswar

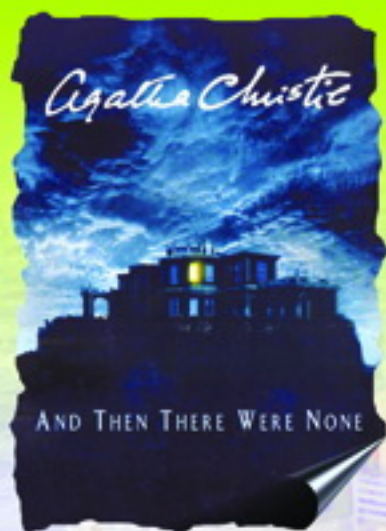


BOOK REVIEW  
**'AND THEN THERE WERE NONE'**  
by Agatha Christie

Reviewed by Sachi Ketan Shah

**A**gatha Christie, a British author of about 80 detective novels, is suitably known as the "Queen of Crime." Her masterpiece 'And Then There Were None' is a nail-biting piece of mystery. This novel contains well organized 16 chapters and an epilogue that spreads across 317 pages.

U. N. Owen (virtually 'unknown'), a millionaire, makes frequent entries in newspapers for buying a majestic mansion, a lone property, on an island situated off the coast of Devon, England. He invites ten strangers to his mansion under various pretexts of offering them jobs or reuniting with old friends. These strangers have criminal histories unknown to the world, but not to Owen. Justice Lawrence Wargrave, a retired judge, Philip Lombard, an apparently penniless Captain, Ms. Emily Brent, a sixty-five-year-old sophisticated lady, Tony Marston, an affluent man with stunning looks, Dr. Armstrong, a surgeon for the upper classes, Mr. Blore, a former policeman and an undercover detective agent, Ms. Vera Claythorne, a young teacher with some secretarial experience, General Macarthur, a retired World War I general and Mr. and Mrs. Rogers, the amiable servants, are the hand-picked invitees of Owen. Interestingly, none of them has ever met anyone else in the group before.



The plot unfolds with horror that builds in the minds of these strangers who realize that they are stranded on this mysterious island where no man can easily reach, and once there, no man can escape from! It soon becomes evident to them that their host does not want them to return to the mainland alive. The visitors are murdered randomly and the struggle for survival becomes all the more crucial as they suspect that the mysterious killer is someone amongst them.

One by one they get murdered and the suspicion and insecurity amongst the ones who survive increases. An eerie atmosphere is created when the invitees to the mansion discover that their host is not present at the first dinner when a recorded voice exposes their dirty secrets.

The novel closely follows the theme of the poem written by Frank Green in the year 1869, *Ten Little Soldier Boys*, making it the most incredible part of the storyline. The readers are introduced to this poem before the story starts. The victims are astonished to see this poem on the walls of their room, and members dying according to the sequence mentioned in the poem.

The title of the story 'And Then There Were None' is the last line of the poem, which perplexes the reader as the murderer's identity is remains incognito. Finally the mystery gets solved with a manuscript document sent to the Scotland Yard by the master of the Emma Jane Fishing trawler.

The novel is a must-read for all mystery lovers, specially the teens, as it is one of the best murder mysteries in the genre. Agatha Christie's plot constructing ability and lucid style of writing come to the fore when the well laid out murder plot

intrigues, excites and thrills the readers. The publishers have successfully managed not to let the book be heavy on the eye of the readers, be they of any age, by providing neat page layout.

'And Then There Were None' is rated the world's seventh best-selling mysteries according to the Publications International List.

**The reviewed is a grade 9 student in Bombay Scottish School, Mumbai.**

## **CHARLES ROBERT MATURIN, *The Eccentric Novelist***

Maturin was an Irish clergyman, who wrote plays and novels, notably *Melmoth the Wanderer*, a masterpiece of the gothic style. The patronage of Byron and Sir Walter Scott helped him achieve a certain literary recognition, but it did not free him of his perpetual financial difficulties, which were largely the result of an act of kindness in standing security for the bankrupt relative.

When Maturin did get a bit of money, however, he spent it flamboyantly. The ceiling of his house in Dublin was painted with clouds, and scenes from his novels were reproduced on the walls.

It was Maturin's joy to see his wife, who was a great beauty, well turned out, but he also insisted on her wearing layers of rouge and more than once ordered her back to her dressing table for a thicker application. Maturin's own dress was dictated by a desire to show off his fine figure to good effect. He favoured a huge greatcoat tossed gracefully over his shoulders and tight pantaloons to display his legs. He wore net stockings and evening clothes even when fishing.

Maturin loved music; he had a good voice and claimed to be 'the best dancer in the Established Church'. In Dublin he held quadrille parties several mornings a week. Morning, noon and night were all one to him: the sun never penetrated his perpetually closed shutters and he lived by artificial light.

Maturin liked to be surrounded by people while he was working. When he was under the influence of the muse, he would stick a wafer on his head as a signal that he should not be disturbed. At other times, conversation could go on as usual around him and he merely ensured that he should not take part by covering his mouth with a paste made of bread and water.

He was tremendously absent-minded, sometimes even in matters that he cared deeply about, such as dress. He often made social calls in his dressing gown and slippers or went out wearing one boot and one shoe. He loved parties, but was likely to turn up a day early or late. And he sent his great novel, *Melmoth*, to his publishers as a stack of several thousand out-of-order, unnumbered pages.



By Gaurvi Arora

**W**hen a mother smiles, a family smiles; when a family smiles, the whole nation smiles."- Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam.

The observation that God created mothers because He cannot be everywhere sounds very true.

I remember the day which I made special for my mother. My mother finds her happiness in the very small things one can think of. One month back my mother was cleaning her cupboard in her room. When I came back from school, I had the naughty idea of scaring her from behind. She was standing on a chair. As I suddenly let out a yell and grabbed her legs from behind, she started violently and fell off the chair. I tried to hold her hand which didn't prevent her from falling off, but lessened the impact of her fall. She got a sprain in her leg. We went to the doctor, and my mother was advised to take complete bed rest for a day.

She was in real pain, but still she was more worried about her children. She hobbled to the kitchen with great difficulty to make lunch but I caught her. I ordered her to lie in bed and wait for me. I ran to the kitchen and as I had seen her make chapattis, I tried to make some for my mother. My mother tried to come and see what I was doing but I didn't let her. I made four chapattis. They looked like some map of Africa (as they turned out to be shapeless



with dark patches here and there). I thought of preparing some Maggi. But, then my mom was getting worried about the kitchen which was in my hands. When I served her the chapattis and the vegetable stew, which she had prepared that morning, she had tears in her eyes and a faint smile on her face. My innocent look along with my first attempt at serving food to my mom added to her grin. We both sat and ate lunch. My mom liked it very much. On that day, my mother realized that now I was growing up. My mother cherishes those moments to this day. I wish all mothers have reasons to smile the way my mom has.

I love my mother very much but I am sure that she loves me more. When my mother smiles, my world brightens up. Everything seems so beautiful.

**The author is a grade 10 student in Vishwa Bharati Public School, Noida**

# SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

By Swati Baruah

Every day I wait eagerly for the 'lights out' time which is at 10 pm, when everyone in our boarding school has to go to bed.

I love sleeping and its one of my favourite hobbies. As our daily schedule is tight and tiring, we get tired and fall fast asleep as soon as we hit our beds.

Whenever I come home on vacations I treat myself with the luxury of sleeping. In my opinion, every person should rest and sleep properly. When I was a child, my dad used to go for night duties. I never realized that he used to be awake the entire night for us, because every morning when I woke up to the alarm clock, I found him up and about with a pleasant smile on his face.

One incident in our school boarding touched my heart. We are supposed to be in bed by 10 pm, and every day 'Didi' (that's what we called our female guards and janitors) comes for her night duty of guarding us. It was Didi's job to make sure that everyone is in their beds by 10 pm. She stays awake the whole night. In the morning after waking us up, she goes back home.

Every night she comes with a big flash light and a bag in her hand. She passes her time by reading magazines in the balcony. Once I met her in the corridor while she was making the rounds. I asked her, "Didi, don't you sleep at night?"

She replied, "No. I don't sleep while guarding the hostel." I was stunned by her



reply. How can a person spend a whole night without a nap?

I asked her again, "Didi, don't you feel sleepy as we do?" I saw her smiling at me in the dim light of her torch, amused by my innocence.

"I do feel sleepy. But, I can't sleep because it's my job and I am paid for it."

I went back to my room, and from the window I noticed her doing her duty with full dedication and sincerity. My respect and love for this simple lady grew more from that moment. As I went to bed, different thoughts struck me and made me realize that in this world every person has an important role to play. Then I thought that she too was someone's daughter, wife and mother. She herself had a family to look after and to earn some money for her family she spent sleepless nights. My casual interaction with the woman was an eye-opener for me. It made me realize we should have genuine respect for them because they work day in and day out just to make our lives more comfortable, and theirs a little more bearable.

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

## TELEPHONES & EMAILS LESS PERSONAL

By Ritika Roy



Dear Mummy,

This is the first letter I am writing to you after getting admitted to the hospital and this would probably be my last. This morning seems to be more beautiful than all the other mornings I have woken up to in this hospital. This morning seems to be brighter, the surroundings happier. Is it a special day, Mummy?

I don't know why, but it seems that I might not be able to live through this day. I don't want you to come to me today. This is to tell you Good Bye for the last time. Actually, I will always try to be close to you. Mummy, you have been the best mummy in the world. You have loved me like no one ever has. I always wanted to be close to you so that I could always feel you, but there were times when I had to go away from you, even if they were short spells.

But now, there is no problem. After I go away from this mortal cold world, I will always stay close to you and will never leave you. Mummy, can I send you letters from the other world? Will they reach you from that eternal world situated God-knows-where? Or maybe they won't reach you. If you don't receive any letter from me or if you don't feel me around, then please come and join me there, I don't want to live without you.

Well, I feel tired now, devoid of strength; so, I am closing my very tired eyes. Will I be

able to see this world when I open my eyes the next time? I don't know. Mummy you were my role model in my entire life. Though that life has been a short one, I have learnt a lot from you that may stay with me forever and ever.

Oh! No, mum; I have changed my mind! Please come over to see me and please hold my hand while I leave this world. You were the very first person I came in contact with when I came to this world and I want you to be the last person with me when I go away from here. Bye... but I will always try to come back to you.

With all the love my heart can give,  
Riju.

Perceive the depth of emotion in this letter! To what extent the mother, or any reader for that matter, be moved?

In contrast, what do you think the mother would feel if she receives this letter from her dying daughter through email written in chat language on a flashy screen with many other ads and other blinking icons? The first paragraph would probably like this:

Hey mum,  
Dis is da 1st letter am writin 2 u after gettin admitted 2 da hspital nd dis wud probly b ma last. Dis mornin seems 2 b mo b2ful den all da oder mornins I hav wken up 2 in dis hospital. Dis morning seems 2 b br8ter, da surrdngs happier. Is it a special day, mum?

The mother would always cherish the handwritten letter close to her heart and preserve it as her most precious possession. It will be more precious to her than her own life for she knows that it was the last thing her daughter had on her mind, the last thing her daughter had touched, held, seen and the very last thing that came straight from her heart. With the letter close to her, she will always feel that a part of her daughter is with her. She will read it again just trying to believe that her daughter had written it to her just then and she is ok now. She will run her fingers through the letters and the words on the paper, just trying to feel her touch. She will put the paper close to her nose and try to smell, hoping to get the smell of her daughter. She will always hold the letter, imagining that she is holding her daughter. Do you think an email could ever replace all that? Could it ever carry the heart vibes, the scent, touch and feel of a person? No, it would just carry dry information, and nothing else. The daughter may have said so many things in the letter that she could not have communicated electronically. Letters sent via email can never carry feelings and emotions that a handwritten letter can.

Most intense thoughts and feelings

are often communicated non-verbally. Sometimes, some beautiful feelings are just spoiled by gibberish talk. When conversations are held over the telephone, can you convey all your feelings? On telephone, you cannot cry your heart out because you may be interrupted by the other person on the line or by the loss of signal or by some disturbances on the line, and then you cannot express your feelings again with the same depth and intensity. This just spoils the feel of it. In a handwritten letter, on the other hand, you can pour your pains and feelings on to the paper with all the earnestness they deserve and no one stops or interrupts you. It is just you, the real you. Writing is the best way to express your feelings and thoughts with force. When you send someone a letter, it carries a part of you along with it: it carries you with it. Can any other method do that? A letter stays forever, if you are missing a person very much, just go and take out the letter send by him or her and read it and run your fingers through it. It will definitely make you feel better and close to that person.

A letter can never ever be replaced by any other means of communication.

**The author is a grade 11 student in Lawrence and Mayo, Kota Rajasthan**

## MATTHEWSON

In 1912, Mr. R N Matthewson of Swan Park, Alipore, Calcutta, collected his new car from the makers in Lowestoft, Sussex. The car was shaped like a swan and had a Gabriel horn with eight organ pipes and a keyboard which worked off the exhaust system. The swan's beak opened by lever. A second lever sent half a pint of hot water from the radiator into the swan's nostrils. This was forced out by compressed air, making an authentically swan-like hissing sound.

Mr. Matthewson, well pleased with his swan car, took it back with him to India, where it was as great a success as it had been on the roads of England. Unfortunately, it caused such crowds to gather that the police were forced eventually to ban the swan car from the streets of Calcutta.

## DIYA - THE LAMP OF MY HEART

By Jadeera Aboobaker

As I sit here today, in the verandah of my house with the sun warming me up, the pages of my mind turn back to a time a few years back and stop at a similar day when I was sitting in the verandah of what been a school or what had been a school some time ago. It was serving as a temporary relief camp at that time, after the great tsunami.

I had just finished my 12<sup>th</sup> grade then and was roaming about without any aim or goal. My dad suggested that I attempt the entrance exam to get into a medical college. But I didn't want to be a doctor. Not that I didn't like serving people; I just didn't like the studying and working hard part of it. The other suggestions were engineering and commerce. But I didn't want to be an engineer either. And Commerce?-I just hated it. As for other fields- well-I didn't really know of any. So

here I was, without any aim or goal in life, not knowing what to do or what I wanted to be. My dad was fed up with me. He gave me one year to decide and choose my career. One year. Before the following semester began.

Since I was sitting idle, my uncle who was a social worker suggested that I go and help him in providing aid to the tsunami victims. I was to be one among many people who had volunteered to teach,

distribute food, medicine, clothes etc to the victims. I agreed, happy to get away from home and idleness. And that's how I became a temporary social worker in a school turned into a relief camp.

I was sitting on the verandah of the school, on the first day of my work, when I felt like I was being watched. I turned to see a dark brown bundle staring at me. Suddenly the bundle came bouncing towards me. Then I understood that it was no bundle but a little girl of around three years with brown face, hands and legs, and black hair, eyes and clothes! She pointed to the diamond brooch (not real of course!) on my scarf and said something unintelligible. I didn't understand anything; nevertheless, I took it off and gave it to her. She did a little happy skip dance. I pinned it on her dress and she hopped away with it, showing off her prized possession to her friends. That was the beginning of our friendship.

My main job in the camp was to teach the children whatever I knew. I taught them English, a little Maths, Science and whatever that came to mind. It was very important not to keep them idle. We conducted quizzes, played 'find outs' and other games just to keep the kids occupied. The people in the camp would also help the



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volunteers in teaching, cooking, washing, cleaning the premises and in other chores. We went to sleep early as sometimes the nights would get very chilly and the lights would go off due to the shortage of electricity. What I liked about the camp was the complete lack of self pity. They pitied each other but not themselves. They helped one another forgetting that they too needed help. They would all gather in the evenings to play games.

The kids loved to play cricket, so the next time I went home I bought a bat, a few balls, and also brought my books and camera and some other tidbits to entertain the kids.

The little girl and I soon became friends. As no one knew her name (nor even she herself), I called her Diya because of her shining eyes. Like a contrast to her dark tanned body and the dull surroundings, her two eyes beamed like a radiant rainbow in rays of light. I came to know that she was a quiet, introvert girl, who never talked much and never played with the other kids.

Diya liked me a lot and always kept close to me. She would ask me a zillion questions, most of them drab but some very intelligent. We grew closer as the days went by. A little orphan who had no parents, no home and nothing to call hers; and a rich girl who had everything that a person wanted and much more - the contrast was stark.

Diya loved to fiddle with my cam and had me take many photos of her, posing with the cricket bat, standing near trees, sitting on the stairs and so on. I have her photos with me still, and I fondly cherish the time I spent with her.

Once I took her for a walk near the street bazaar. There was a toy horse kept in one of the shops. She looked at it and said, "I want a horse but Amma said I should grow older to get one." I felt sorry for her and I thought maybe a horse would cheer her up. So I searched the bazaars and bought a beautiful rocking horse. I took it to her and she was very happy.

That night while I was arranging the supplies, she came near me and whispered, "I think the horse is dead."

"Why?" I asked

"It is not breathing."

"Breathing? Why should it breathe?"

"Don't horses breathe?"

"Yes, real horses breathe, but not this one..."

"Oh! I wanted a real horse."

I threw back my head and laughed. I told her, "Real horses are very big and you can't ride them but you can ride small horses. Small horses do not breathe."

She asked, "Are small horses alive?"

"Yes, of course they are," I smiled at her. Poor girl, she believed me and went off to sleep.

That night it was really cold. The clothing supplies were not enough. Two or three people had to sleep under a single blanket. Everyone lay huddled with each other in groups. I shivered with cold. The head of the volunteers (a nurse) called me. After taking stock of the supplies, I pulled my coat closer and walked down the freezing stone floor of the corridor towards her room. As I walked along, I noticed a tiny lone figure sleeping far from the crowd, far from the huddling, pushing, jostling crowd.

I took off my coat, wrapped it around the cold figure, lifted it up and placed her sleeping body close to the others.

The head nurse asked me to note down the amount of food and clothing supplies that we would need during the winter months. She asked me if I had taken all my vaccinations. There was the possibility of an epidemic.

I came back and slept on the cold floor, trying to gather all the warmth I could. I woke in the morning to find my coat over me and Diya huddled close to me.

She was very warm or rather hot. I kept my hand on her forehead. It was



throbbing and hot. I took her to the nurse. She had her temperature checked. It was 102° , a pretty high value for a fever. She told me to take Diya to the nearby clinic but unfortunately the doctor was not present that day. I admitted her into the hospital and she was administered an antibiotic. I was called back to the camp. I didn't want to go but I had to – there was work to be done.

The next day I went again to the hospital. The hospital beds were all occupied. People were even lying on the floors. There was a shortage of medicines due to logistical difficulties. The head nurse had diagnosed Diya with influenza and had given her some more antibiotics. I should have known then that antibiotics would



have no effect – she had viral influenza (and antibiotics are ineffective against it). Her fever shot up during the day. I even felt that she wouldn't survive. The chances looked bleak. There was no medicine, no doctor and she was getting no better. She even started getting fever fits. The nurse called me and told me about the problems of getting proper medicines and drugs during times of disaster, about the lack of bed spaces, unavailability of doctors etc. I didn't understand what she meant then, but now I know.

We spent two days in the hospital. The doctor hadn't come yet and the antibiotics were doing no good. I was getting angry and frustrated. I sat next to Diya. She was wheezing and shivering very badly, and looked as if she would fall into a coma anytime. I touched her burning forehead and called her name; her face

flushed and lost its colour again. I sat there contemplating my past, my life and my surroundings. After some time I noticed that a sort of calmness had settled on her face and the surroundings, a calmness that mingled with a pale silence, paler than anything I had ever seen.

Something in me told me to be calm, not to get angry. But still the frustration, anger and resentment rose in me.

After sometime (or maybe a long time), the nurse came and looked at her. She then turned to me and said, "It would be good, you see...there are so many people waiting for a bed space...After all she is no one of yours, right?..."

Yes, she was right. Diya was no relative of mine but she had a special place, a place close to my heart- closer than what most of my relatives could bargain for.

Not a single tear fell down my cheek. Maybe all the sadness and death around me had hardened me or maybe because it was beyond what I could express.

I looked at her face one last time. Her shiny radiant eyes had lost their lustre and merged into the surrounding dullness. I got up and left. As I exited the room, my mind was made up. I knew what I wanted to do. I knew my goal in life.


From the corner of my eyes, I saw the nurse transfer her limp body to a stretcher and saw some men wheel it out.

Today I am a famous pediatrician. I have saved many lives and I say it not out of pride. What I am today I owe it to Diya. She created the ambition in me – to be a physician who cares, who cares for people whether they are rich or poor. When people thank me for saving their child's life or for the charity work I do, I remember Diya, her shiny eyes, that cold night and the void she left in my heart when she went away. I see in every child a 'Diya' – the lighting lamps of the future and I try to give them a chance to fulfill their dreams and to thank their parents. That is my aim, my goal in life.

**The author is a grade 12 student in Sharjah Indian School, UAE**

# MY CHILDHOOD DAYS

By Sheikh Sania Salim



When I was one or two,  
I wished to be like mom and dad too,  
To go to work during the day,  
So I could stay with them all day.  
When I was the age of four,  
I wanted to be very tall,  
So that I could play basket ball,  
With O Neil in the hall.  
When I was about five,  
I wished to live a better life,  
To be as pretty as snow white,  
And play Lego morning till night.  
When I was at the age of six,  
Poor me! I often felt tired and sick,  
It's painful to take injections,  
But joyful to have no dictations.  
When I was a seven year-old girl,  
I wanted to be a super girl,  
To appear with a swirl,  
And whack the robbers with a whirl.  
At present I am twelve years old,  
To behave well is what I am told,  
I hope to have a great buddy,  
Who'll stop me from being grumpy

**The poet is a grade 9 student in  
Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi, UAE**

## A LITTLE ANGEL OPENED MY EYES

By Mehnaz Farheen

A recent visit to my village in India enlightened me as to how fortunate I was. That was also the time when realization dawned on me as to how important education was. Being brought up in a city, without any discrimination, I had no idea of the real world out there. But a little girl showed me that every child in the world was not as lucky as I was.

Never, even in my wildest dreams, did I imagine that a pleasant walk early in the morning would result in such a touching experience. As it is, I am not a sensitive person. Even then, the fate of that little girl did really touch my heart.

I had woken up early that day. The thought of walking alone along the quiet lanes of that village early in the morning

enthralled me. The cold wind whizzed through my hair as I walked. My mind was empty of any disturbing thoughts. A smile automatically crept onto my face. I was thoroughly enjoying my holiday.

I walked for about twenty minutes, and then thoughts of going back came into my mind. I was feeling hungry. I was just about to retrace my steps when I heard a gay laughter. The laugh was so filled with joy that I desperately wanted to find out who it belonged to.

I walked a few more steps ahead. There I saw a small house on my right side. In front of the house playing the owner of the laughter. She stood about three feet tall. She looked ill fed and her clothes were mostly old and patched. But she was a cute little creature.

She saw me looking at her and a tinge of fear crept onto her face. She had not expected anybody outside the gate at this time of the day and, certainly, she had not expected someone like me. I knew I looked very out of place in that small village.

I felt like talking to her; I don't know why. But she was showing no signs of interacting with me. I smiled. Maybe it was my smile that made her change her mind, for she smiled back. The smile was



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beautiful, a smile which reached her eyes. I could see innocence reflected in her eyes.

I beckoned her, and she came forward, shyly. I asked her if she was alone at home and she gave me an affirmative nod. I knew she was no more than three or four and yet she was alone at home. I assumed that her parents had gone for work and her siblings, to school. But what I heard was something different. Her parents had gone for work – that was true. She had two siblings: a brother and a sister. Her 12 year old brother had gone to school but her 10 year old sister had gone with her parents, to work. The little girl knew no more than that.

My mind was in a daze. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I had imagined that things like that only happened in stories of my social studies text book. That was all I knew. But now, light was being shed on my ignorance. I was being shown an example of stark reality.

The boys went to school; the girls worked. That was the norm. And this family was no different. The sister worked while the brother studied. I understood that as soon as this little girl was old enough to work, she would have to go with her parents. She would meet with the same fate as her sister. She would not be granted her birthright of education. Education for girls was still a luxury and a social taboo.

It was not just the girl I met. There were millions of girls around the world who are not even given the basic literacy. It is not considered necessary. Girls are meant to work, a traditional idea that has been passed on from generation to generation.

It is easy for us to say that modernization has changed the world and old customs and practices do not exist any longer. But in countries like India the discrimination against girls is rampant in spite of our 'progressing' civilization. We can even say it has worsened. Why are girls being denied the basic rights? I have never understand.

She jerked me out of my day dream. She wanted me to fetch her ball for her. Did she know, as she played about, blissfully unaware of her bleak prospects, that she would soon have to start doing back-breaking manual labour for pittance?

Did she know that she would never be sent to a school? I couldn't understand how anybody could be so cruel. There is no discrimination between my brother and me in my home. I couldn't understand how any parent could discriminate between their own children. Then I realized that it was not the parents' fault. They were helpless; they had no choice. Through the little girl, life was teaching me a lesson that there were many children out there who were not as lucky as I was.

I had to go. The look on her face when I told her that, made me want to stay there for ever. It seemed she enjoyed my company though I didn't talk anything much to her. She held my hand as I walked back to the gate. I comforted her promising her that I would come back the next day. And I really I meant to. I said goodbye and left.

My mind was immersed in thought as I walked back home. I had been so touched by her situation that I even forgot to ask her name. Only two days back I had cursed the exams that were coming up after the vacations. Now I cursed myself for doing that. Here I was cursing an opportunity I was getting while there were girls out there who hardly got a chance to go to a school in their lives. I had been such an ungrateful idiot!

I wondered how her future would turn out to be. Would she meet with the same fate as her sister or would she be able to study? I hoped and prayed she would be able to go to a school one day. I hoped that the so-called modernization would change her parents' financial condition and their mindset. Would my hopes and wishes be fulfilled? Would she become a literate and educated person? Or would she have to spend her life toiling endlessly, always at the mercy of others? Only time would tell.

**The author is a grade 9 student in Our Own English High School, Abu Dhabi, UAE**

## ONE ON ONE

with Mr. Mohan Sivanand,  
Chief Editor, Reader's Digest India

*Eminent editor, painter, cartoonist and writer, Mr. Mohan Sivanand shares his views on linguistic skills and creativity with Kloud 9, when he visited KiiT International School on the school's Foundation Day (02 July 2012).*



**Kloud9:** Sir, you are a repository of creative talents. You are a painter, a cartoonist, a writer, a journalist and above all the Chief Editor of Reader's Digest. Is it true that if one has an analytical, research oriented and scientific bent of mind, one is likely to have less of creative talent?

**MS:** Not always true, though, let's face it, everybody cannot be equally creative. Some get the creative spark spontaneously, while others have to make some efforts to get creative. It's there within all of us, in varying degrees. Some of the best scientists have been very creative. Many inventions have come about through creative ways. Think of the computer engineers who came out with hotmail, or facebook. They were creative geniuses who added a new dimension to scientific professionalism. Newton saw an apple falling, which people had been anyway seeing everyday. But he applied his creative mind to explain the scientific cause of it.

**Kloud9:** What is your advice to the students to be more creative?

**MS:** Think and think always. Think not merely about studies or exams alone. Think about how to play around, how to help friends etc. All of us have creativity in us. The more we use our creativity the more we

can develop it. By not using our creative faculty our mind becomes dull. Just as we forget how to calculate mentally, because we depend on the calculator or we can't remember spellings as we start using the spell-check too often; we also stop being creative by not utilising our imagination and resourcefulness. On the other hand, the more we use our brains for devising ingenious and innovative ways, our body and mind remain young and healthy.

**Kloud9:** Students today are often glued to the TV and the PC. They no longer take to reading books for pleasure or entertainment. Is the habit of reading books a dying pastime?

**MS:** We can't blame the students for that. There is so much on TV and PC today. It's right, they spend more time on the telly and PC, but these gadgets are educative too. On a PC one gets to read many different material. Parents need to develop a child's reading habit, they should read out to children, and the children will develop this habit. But the fact is there are more books published today than any time before, so there are more people reading books today. And I have noticed girls read more than the boys.

**Kloud9:** How important is it to listen?

**MS:** Listening is very important. Through listening one develops a pattern in the brain. Children emulate these patterns and learn to speak well. That's how a child learns its mother tongue. It develops a pattern in its brain through listening. And he starts speaking the tongue naturally and effortlessly. Listening to English channels such as the BBC and CNN is an effective way to develop one's English speaking skills. By constantly listening to correct method of speaking you subconsciously start to emulate the correct style of speaking. To be successful one has to express oneself fluently and that comes through good listening habits.

**Kloud9:** How does the ability to write well help a student?

**MS:** Another important medium of expression is through written words. For a student it is all the more important because he has to write exams, make presentations and appear for many competitive exams. If he writes and presents his papers written in appropriate language, the teacher will read his paper with interest. That will fetch him better scores. One should use language appropriate to the purpose, audience and content with clarity and coherence.

**Kloud9:** What is truth about the One Crore Sweepstakes by Readers Digest?

**MS:** It is true that we are giving away one crore rupees as prizes. It may appear an incredibly big amount of money if one sees it as a lottery, but it is only our marketing strategy. When you compare this amount with the amount of money some companies spend on advertisement, it is not that big.

This is how we advertise ourselves to a select target group, to the people who are interested in Reader's Digest. It is a very open system. One doesn't have to buy anything from us to be eligible to win a prize. The draw is conducted in the presence of authorised auditors and anybody could win it. People have come up to me telling me that they had just entered their names with no expectations of winning anything, and were pleasantly surprised to have won prizes. And it is not one prize of that value, the total prize amount is Rs. One Crore.

So all are welcome to participate in the one crore sweepstakes. You need not buy anything from us to participate in it.

**Kloud9:** One last question, sir. What is the purpose of your visit to Bhubaneswar?

**MS:** Well, we have heard a lot about KiiT, and its founder, Dr. Achyuta Samanta. It's an excellent organisation you people have set up out here. Dr. Samanta is truly doing an amazing work in the field of social service. His contribution towards education, especially for the tribal children in KISS (Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences) is remarkable. I believe there are about 12000 students in KISS getting free education. I have come to see this great institution, to interact with the founder Dr. Achyuta Samanta, and to look into the prospect of doing a feature on KISS in our magazine.

**Kloud9:** Thank you very much for your time, sir.

# JIM CORBETT'S KHANSAMMA

By Ruskin Bond

## CHAPTER - 3

It was a long, hot summer that year, but a summer in the plains has its compensations – such as mangoes and melons and lichees and custard-apples. The fruit-seller came to our house every day, a basket of fresh fruit balanced on his head. One morning I entered the kitchen to find a bucket full of mangoes, and Mehmood busy making a large jug of mango milk-shake.

'Pass me some ice, baba, you'll find it in the bucket. You can have a milk shake now, and another with your lunch. Carpet-sahib thought highly of my milk shakes. During the mango season he'd have two glasses of mango milk shake first thing in the morning, and then he'd go out and shoot a tiger!'

'Did you ever shoot a tiger?' I asked, accepting a glass from Mehmood and adding a chunk of ice to the milk shake.

'I shot a leopard once,' said Mehmood. 'I wasn't supposed to touch the guns, but one morning, after his milk shake, Carpet-sahib said I could accompany him into the jungle, provided I brought along a large thermos full of mango milk-shake. It was a hot, humid morning and Carpet-sahib was soon feeling thirsty. "Hold my rifle, Mehmood, while I have a drink," he said, and he handed me his gun and took the thermos. While he was quenching his thirst, a cheetal – a spotted deer – appeared in the open just fifteen to twenty feet in front of us. "Shall I shoot it, sir?" I asked. I'd seen him shooting many times, and I knew how the rifle worked. "Go ahead, old chap," he said. "Let's have some venison for dinner."

"So I put the rifle to my shoulder, took aim, and fired. It was the first time I'd fired a gun, and the butt sprang back and hit me in the shoulder, while the bullet itself whizzed over the deer and into the tree beneath which it was standing. Away went the cheetal, while I held my shoulder in agony. I'd missed it by several feet. But then there was a terrible groan from



the branches of the tree, and a huge leopard came crashing through the foliage, falling with a thud at our feet. It was quite dead, baba. I missed the cheetal and shot a leopard! It must have been watching the deer, wanting to pounce on it, when it was struck by my bullet.

"Good shot!" cried Carpet-sahib. "Well aimed, Mehmood. I didn't see that leopard."

"Nor did I, sir," I said.

"But you shot it all the same," said



Carpet-sahib. And since I did not want the skin, he rewarded me with five hundred rupees. The leopard was stuffed and kept in his verandah, to scare the monkeys away. Of course he told everyone what a good shot I was, although it was the last time he asked me to hold his gun.'

'Never mind,' I said, 'You shot the leopard, and you saved the life of that pretty cheetal. And your mango milk-shake is the best in the world.'

'Thank you, baba,' said Mehmood, refilling my glass. 'This is a good year for mangoes.'

And it was a good year for mango milk-shakes, as I discovered.



## CHAPTER - 4

Later that summer I was sent to a boarding school in the hills, and it was several months before I saw Mehmood again. In those days, boarding school food was awful – dull, tasteless, monotonous – and I missed Mehmood's koftas and curries and cutlets. Variety is the spice of life. I missed his stories too. But I regaled the other boys in the dormitory with Mehmood's tales of man-eating tigers and other denizens of the jungle, and everyone was envious of the fact that the great Jim Corbett's *khansamma* was now my cook. And in some ways my personal cook, for not many had been privileged to hear his stories.

When the winter holidays came around I was relieved to find that Mehmood was still in our employ. He celebrated my homecoming by making an extra-large Christmas cake. A plum cake, he called it, and it was full of good things like raisins, dates, cherries, figs – and of course plums.

The Christmas cake stood in the middle of our dining table, but it was in the kitchen that I conducted most of my conversations with Mehmood.

'What was your most frightening experience?' I asked him. 'Your encounter with the tiger, or the crocodile?'

'Oh, they were as nothing compared to my fight with the king-cobra.'

'A king-cobra!' I gasped, 'That must have been really scary.'

'Indeed it was, baba. We were spending Christmas in the jungle – Carpet-sahib, his sister, and some friends of theirs, and of course I was there with a couple of helpers to make sure that no one went hungry.'

'The winters can be very cold in the

Terai regions, and at night we had to use blankets and *razais*. It was windy too, and we kept the tent flaps closed. I thought nothing could get into my tent, but I was wrong. I am a good sleeper, hard to wake – as your good parents well know – but in the middle of the night I woke up with a horrible sensation. Gliding slowly across my face was the cold, scaly body of a large snake!'

'And it wasn't only on my face that I felt the slimy creature. It was moving across my legs, up my right side, and over my right upper arm. Was it one snake, or several?'

'Baba, there can be nothing more terrifying than waking up in the middle of the night, to find a huge snake coiled around your body!'

'I lay still as death. I could see nothing of my terrible bedfellow. I did not dare to move a finger or even turn my head, as part of it still rested against my throat. My mouth was parched and dry. Normally I am not a very religious man, but I sent a silent appeal to the Almighty, seeking his help.'

'I think the snake was anxious to get out of my bed and out of the tent into which it had strayed, but had found itself trapped in the bed sheets and blankets. It passed on from my throat, moved down my waist, and crawled across my stomach. Moonlight streamed through the tent opening on to the bed, and I could make out the snake's head, broad and blunt, only a few feet away from my face. Suddenly it was still. Then it poked its black forked tongue in and out, while its body stiffened as it prepared to strike.'

'My body was covered in perspiration, and I could hear my heart thudding. The snake must have heard it too. Suddenly it reared its head a foot in the air, and remained poised there, its cruel black eyes glistening in the moonlight. The slightest movement of hand or head, and those deadly fangs would be buried in my quivering flesh!'

'I shut my eyes and waited in fear for the snake to strike. But now the snake seemed to lose interest in my face, and once again it slithered down between my legs. A horrible sensation, baba! I was shivering all over. But then slowly I began



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to realize that the snake was not interested in me, it was interested only in getting out of my bed and out of the tent. I longed to help it on its way. But if I made a sudden move, or leapt out of my bed, it would sink its fangs into me, of that I was certain.



I remained still, trying to control my shivering. The snake was trying every corner of the bed, looking for an outlet. I felt its head against the palm of my hand. I could wait no longer. I gripped the snake by its head, digging my fingers into its under-jaw, and leapt to my feet, standing upright with that huge King-cobra coiled around my

waist. It writhed and tugged, trying its utmost to free its head and strike me dead. But I did not lose my hold on its head. I kept twisting its neck until – crack! – the sound of its neck breaking told me I had finished it off.

'That snake measured over seven feet in length, baba. Carpet-sahib could not believe I had killed it with my bare hands.'

'You have strong hands, Mehmood,' I said, staring at his huge hands; I could well believe that he had throttled a king-cobra, and other creatures besides.

'Well, I need strong hands for chopping meat and making mutton cutlets for you, baba. Not to speak of that Christmas cake, which was heavy-going. Don't eat too much of it, baba, it's full of richness!'

But I failed to take Mehmood's advice, ate too much cake, and spent most of Christmas day in bed with a tummy-ache.

These are episodes of a series of stories by Ruskin Bond, which will continue in the next issue. Each chapter is an independent story.

Face to Face with

# Ruskin Bond



Ruskin Bond's first novel, **The Room on the Roof**, written when he was seventeen, won the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize in 1957. Since then he has written over 500 short stories, novellas, poems and articles that have appeared in a number of magazines and anthologies. He received the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1993 and the Padma Shri in 1999. His short stories "**The Night Train at Deoli**", "**Time Stops at Shamli**", and "**Our Trees Still Grow in Dehra**" have been part of the school text books in India.

His story **A Flight of Pigeons** was about the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 and was made into a film by Shyam Benegal with the title **Junoon**. Vishal Bharadwaj made films based on his stories **The Blue Umbrella** and more recently the film **Saat Khoon Maaf** was based on Ruskin Bond's short story "**Susanna's Seven Husbands**".

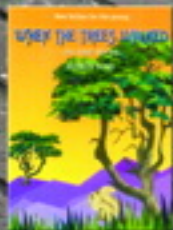
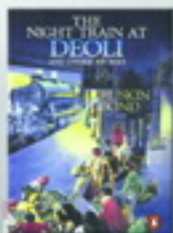
Interview by  
**ARYA VEDANT**



Class - VI



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**Arya Vedant:** Why did you become a writer?

**Ruskin Bond:** Because that was the thing I did best. Even at school, I wrote fluently in English.

**Arya Vedant:** Who inspired you the most ?

**Ruskin Bond:** Other Writers, Great Writers like Dickens, Conwad, Stevenson, Maugham, Barrie, Priestley.. I wanted to emulated them.

**Arya Vedant:** When did you write your first book?

**Ruskin Bond:** When I was seventeen. It was called "The Room on the Roof" . It was a novel. It' yet to be published.



**Arya Vedant:** Did you receive an award for it?

**Ruskin Bond:** I received the John Flewellin Rhys Prize, a British Literary Award given to a Commonwealth writer under thirty for a work of outstanding literary merit.

**Arya Vedant:** Did you pass any exam?

**Ruskin Bond:** Only my Senior Cambridge School Leaving Certificate Exam. I did not go to College.

**Arya Vedant:** How did you make a living?

**Ruskin Bond:** As a young man I had several jobs- Just with a travel agency, then with a manufacturer of photographic equipment, then as a Magazine Editor.

**Arya Vedant:** When did you become a full-time writer?

**Ruskin Bond:** When I was twenty-one. See my autobiography, "Scenes From A Writer's Life".

**Arya Vedant:** You have been called a "Nature Writer". Comments.

**Ruskin Bond:** The world of nature has always been close to me. Animals, birds, insects, trees, flowers, fruits, streams, the sea, mountains, deserts all play a part in my stories.

**Arya Vedant:** Apart from nature, what else inspires you ?

**Ruskin Bond:** People. Peoples are stores for millions of stories.



**Arya Vedant:** What is your ideology in Politics and on Politicians?

**Ruskin Bond:** As an Indian Citizen I do vote in both local and general elections as far as possible, for the candidate who appears to be the most honest, irrespective of his or her political party.

**Arya Vedant:** And sometimes you write ghost stories?

**Ruskin Bond:** The ghosts of interesting people, what we see in our dreams. Those are the real ghosts- dream people.

**Arya Vedant:** Many of your stories for children . Do you prefer writing for children or for adults ?

**Ruskin Bond:** I enjoy all kinds of writing. But Children are special. Their response is important to me.

**Arya Vedant:** Do you suffer from writers block?

**Ruskin Bond:** Not very often. But if I do, I put aside what I am stuck with, and turn to something else, **A waste-paper basket is also useful.**



**Arya Vedant:** One of your Children's Stories, which is your favourite?

**Ruskin Bond:** "The Blue Umbrella", probably.

**Arya Vedant:** Wasn't it filmed?

**Ruskin Bond:** Yes, by Vishal Bhardwaj. It was a sensitive film, true to the story.

**Arya Vedant:** And your funniest stories?

**Ruskin Bond:** My 'Uncle Ken' Stories. And also Mr. Olwer's Diary, a little book about an eccentric school master.



Ruskin Bond 1936



**Arya Vedant:** And your Next Book?

**Ruskin Bond:** My next is a poetry collection "Hip Hop Nature Boy", should be published in August. A comic Blue Umbrella, a novel Maharani and Cherry Tree which will be out in November/December.

**Arya Vedant:** Are you working on anything else?

**Ruskin Bond:** I'm struggling with a novel. Hope to finish it by the end of the year.

**Arya Vedant:** You will be 78 in May. What are your thoughts on reaching this milestone.

**Ruskin Bond:** How very lucky I am to have enjoyed a rich and fulfilling life. Very few regrets. If I was to have my life all over again, I wouldn't change much.

**Arya Vedant:** After School, you left India. Were you planning to return?

**Ruskin Bond:** Not really, that was 1951, I was seventeen, and I thought I had better prospects in the U.K.

**Arya Vedant:** So where did you go?

**Ruskin Bond:** First, to Jersey in the Channel Islands, where I had relatives, and then to London.

**Arya Vedant:** How did you make a living

**Ruskin Bond:** I took a job. First, with a travel agency, and then as a clerk with the Public Health Department in Jersey. When I went to London, I worked with a firm that made photographic accessories.

**Arya Vedant:** And when did you start writing?

**Ruskin Bond:** I had been writing since leaving school. But it was not bringing in any money. So I took these jobs and wrote on holidays or at night.



Arya Vedant with Ruskin Bond

**Arya Vedant:** And that was how you wrote your first book

**Ruskin Bond:** That's right. "The Room on the Roof", my first novel. But it took me a couple of years to find a publisher.

**Arya Vedant:** Why was that?

**Ruskin Bond:** It is never easy for a young writer to have a first novel published. For a publisher it is a commercial risk.





**Arya Vedant:** Did you receive anything for it?

**Ruskin Bond:** In those days, the standard advance was £50.

**Arya Vedant:** And what did you do with the money?

**Ruskin Bond:** I came back to India. We traveled by sea in those days- a voyage of about 3 weeks. Its cost roughly £40.

**Arya Vedant:** Why did you return?

**Ruskin Bond:** I longed to be back among friends, loved ones, familiar places. I missed India very much.

**Arya Vedant:** And after you returned, how did you make a living ?

**Ruskin Bond:** I put a new ribbon in my old typewriter, and began typing out stories and articles for magazines and newspaper.

**Arya Vedant:** Did you earn enough that way ?

**Ruskin Bond:** About Rs. 300 to Rs. 400 per month, enough for simple living in 1956.

**Arya Vedant:** That was in Dehradun?

**Ruskin Bond:** That's right . But moved to Delhi in 1959, life was more expensed there.



**Arya Vedant:** How long were you in Delhi?

**Ruskin Bond:** A little over 4 years. A long time. I was writing, as always, but not selling much. So I took a job with a foreign aid agency. That kept me going.

**Arya Vedant:** Did you think of getting married?

**Ruskin Bond:** Several times. But no one wanted me. My prospects were nil.

**Arya Vedant:** What made you leave Delhi? You gave me a good job?

**Ruskin Bond:** Yes, I wanted to write full-time, and I thought I could do it better by living in the hills- in a quite corner closer to nature.

**Arya Vedant:** Why did you choose Musso-ri?

**Ruskin Bond:** I had been there often, doing my year in Dehradun. It was home ground.

**Arya Vedant:** And was the move a successful one ?

**Ruskin Bond:** Oh yes, almost immediately. Stories flowed from my pen and typewriter. Soon they are being published all over the world.



**Arya Vedant:** So your surroundings made a great difference?

**Ruskin Bond:** They certainly helped. There I was, hiding in the lap of nature, in a small cottage far from the town. I could not have asked for more.

**Arya Vedant:** So what has inspired you the most over the year?

**Ruskin Bond:** Books, Nature, Children, People from all walks of life. Life itself !!

**Arya Vedant:** Which authors inspired you the most?

**Ruskin Bond:** **Charls Dickens. I read all his great novels before I was sixteen. "David Copperfield" was my favourite.**

**Arya Vedant:** Did anyone encourage you when you were a child?

**Ruskin Bond:** **My father encouraged me to read and keep a diary. I could read and write before I went to school.**

**Arya Vedant:** Did your teacher encourage you?

**Ruskin Bond:** One or two teachers did encourage me. A good teacher can make a lot of difference to a child.



**Arya Vedant:** Have you ever been punished at your School?

**Ruskin Bond:** Everyone was punished from time to time. We were caned for minor misdemeanors. Physical punishment is now a thing of the past.

**Arya Vedant:** Were you good at games?

**Ruskin Bond:** I was a good football player. Hockey too. Cricket did not interest me much.

**Arya Vedant:** How did you spend your holidays?

**Ruskin Bond:** Reading, going to the Cinema, Listening to the Radio, TV in those days.

**Arya Vedant:** At what time do you get up?  
**Ruskin Bond:** 5 am. **It is cool and fresh at that time.**

**Arya Vedant:** Do you like naughty children or well behaved children?

**Ruskin Bond:** For a writer, naughty children are more interesting.

**Arya Vedant:** In your family, who is the naughtiest child?

**Ruskin Bond:** I am still the naughtiest child, according to everyone.

**Arya Vedant:** Which things give you the most pleasure?

**Ruskin Bond:** A Flower. A young leaf.

**Arya Vedant:** Your Favorite tree?

**Ruskin Bond:** The banyan tree. It spreads far and wide, and many birds and small creatures live in it.

**Arya Vedant:** You have spent most of your life in hill station. Why?

**Ruskin Bond:** Well, I was born in Kasauli, a small hill station. My father sent me to a boarding school in Shimla and I was there for eight years. And I have been living in Mussoorie since 1963 Obviously I like being in the mountains!

**Arya Vedant:** If you could not live in the mountains, where would you like to be?

**Ruskin Bond:** My early years were spent in Jamnagar, near the Gulf of Kutch. And as a young man I spent two year in Jeosey, in the Channel Island, between France and England. I love the sea. And I have read stories about the sea.



Ruskin, aged 4

**Arya Vedant:** Recently you were in Odisha. Did you visit any of the coastal towns ?

**Ruskin Bond:** Odisha has a wonderful coastline. Puri has a magnificent beach. So does Gopalpur-on-sea, a charming resort further down the coast.



**Arya Vedant:** What took you to Odisha?

**Ruskin Bond:** I was invited to a literary forum organized by Dr. Achyuta Samanta, the founder of KIIT University, its International School, and KISS.

**Arya Vedant:** What is KISS all about?

**Ruskin Bond:** It is a school where over 17,000 tribal children receive a complete school education—a dream of Dr. Samanta's, which he has made a reality through tremendous dedication and hard work.

**Arya Vedant:** How often have you visited KIIT in Bhubaneswar.

**Ruskin Bond:** Several times. I am also an Ambassador for KIIT International School, which is now four years old.

**Arya Vedant:** When did you first meet Dr. Samanta?

**Ruskin Bond:** About 3 years ago, when I visited KISS and KIIT and start the work, he has been doing for tribal children.

**Arya Vedant:** Sooner than you have visited Bhubaneswar several times?

**Ruskin Bond:** At least twice a year, now my capacity as Ambassador for KIIT International School.

**Arya Vedant:** Tell me about the Magazine you are editing for the School.

**Ruskin Bond:** Cloud 9, It is a Magazine for children, more of it written by children. We want to encourage young people to use the written word to express themselves and put forward their views and opinion encourage their activity.





On the beach, Jamnagar, 1936

**Arya Vedant:** Do you enjoy visiting Orissa.  
**Ruskin Bond:** Yes, & love the coastal scenery, the people, the open spaces.

**Arya Vedant:** What do you think of Bhubaneswar?

**Ruskin Bond:** An open city, with wide streets, with plenty of space and Puri and Cutack are near by.

**Arya Vedant:** And you love the mountain?

**Ruskin Bond:** Yes, my love and reverence for the mountains is evident for my essay and poems.

**Arya Vedant:** Do you like traveling?

**Ruskin Bond:** I am not a great traveler, but sometimes my publishers take me on book promotion tour.

**Arya Vedant:** How many publisher do you have?

**Ruskin Bond:** Several, Penguin India, Rupa, Ratna Sagar, National Book Trust etc. All in India. Some of my books have also been published in others countries.

**Arya Vedant:** We know you like flowers?, Which is your favourite flowers?

**Ruskin Bond:** The sweet-pea because of its lovely fragrance. But I love all flowers.

**Arya Vedant:** Do you have a garden?

**Ruskin Bond:** No space for a garden. But I grow geranium's in my windows sill.

**Arya Vedant:** What kinds of food do you like most?

**Ruskin Bond:** Home food, Home Cooking.

**Arya Vedant:** Can you cook?

**Ruskin Bond:** No, I can't cook anything. Gautam's mother does the cooking. Gautam is one of my grand children.

**Arya Vedant:** When you are on your own, how do you manage?

**Ruskin Bond:** I eat lots of bread and butter. Sometimes with mango pickle, And hard boilded eggs. I can boil an egg. I am good at boiling eggs. But Omelettes are tricky.

**Arya Vedant:** Have you met any famous writers?

**Ruskin Bond:** I met Mulk Raj Anand when he was 95- still mentally abet and full of energy. I have also met Khuswant Singh, Nayantara Saigal, Ramachandra Guha, Chetan Bhagat, a few others all successful authors.



With Rakesh

**Arya Vedant:** What advice would you give to would-be authors?

**Ruskin Bond:** Make sure you can write fluently. Don't insult the language. Have something to say. Be original. Try to understand human nature. Then go ahead.

**Arya Vedant:** **And your advice to young people in general?**

**Ruskin Bond:** **Discover what you like doing most, and then make a career out of it.**

**Arya Vedant:** The secret of your success?

**Ruskin Bond:** Perseverance. Beliving in myself. Not giving up.

**Arya Vedant:** And the secret of happiness?

**Ruskin Bond:** Living for others. Not wanting too much for oneself. Leading a simple life.

**Arya Vedant:** **What is your favourite time of day?**

**Ruskin Bond:** **Dawn. Daybreak. I open the window of my room and watch the sun come up. New Day. I want to greet it.**

**Arya Vedant:** Do you think good writing often comes unbidden?

**Ruskin Bond:** It can because sometimes, quite spontaneously, you might feel the urge to write a poem or an essay or just a personal entry in a journal. You'd call that spontaneous writing. It's often the best that a writer does. Of course, there're kinds of writing that require planning and organisation like long novels or biography. As far as poetry goes, even the essay at times, or even occasionally a short story, can be the result of spontaneous urge which is often unplanned.



With Aunt Emily and Alan- 1952





**Arya Vedant:** Do you feel bugged by the awareness of time ticking away?

**Ruskin Bond:** Not so much now, because I write now really for pleasure and what I feel like writing. Perhaps, I felt it more when I was in my 50s or so, and felt there were things that I hadn't done and which should have been done. But I've done the best I could. Anything I do in the future will be pure bonus for me. In a way it's more of a joy to write now. I'm not under pressure.

**Arya Vedant:** Do you think everything in your life has served you, brought you to this moment?

**Ruskin Bond:** To a great extent yes; because, being a subjective writer, I've written out of my life about myself or people around me or relationships. Writing has been a part of living in a way. The two go together: writing and living.

**Arya Vedant:** In your last book you wrote about this Eastern canal in Dehra where writer Nergis Dalal once fell trying to save her dog...

**Ruskin Bond:** Well, I wasn't present. But I heard about it. I was then already living in Mussoorie. She was trying to rescue her dog. She's very fond of animals. So you could perhaps confirm with her whether it's her own dog or someone else's. But she certainly did try to rescue a dog and fell into the canal herself and got hurt. I think she was swept some way down. I fell into the canal once too while trying to get a football out of it, not a dog! As I was young, I was able to get out of it without much difficulty.

**Arya Vedant:** You wrote her a moving letter when her husband passed away...

**Ruskin Bond:** Oh, I might well have done. Yes, they both had an accident. They were together when they had this motorcycle coming at considerable speed on the Rajpur Road in Dehradun hit them. She was thrown to one side and her husband to the other. He received a head injury from which he didn't recover.

**Arya Vedant:** You've read so many thousands of books over the years. Which book in particular still cuts a deep groove in your mind?

**Ruskin Bond:** I've been a prolific reader from school days. Now I'm nearing 78. It's very hard to pinpoint a particular book. I'm still deep into Dickens. *Alice in Wonderland* is another favourite of mine. I've read it several times. *The Good Companion* by Pristley, also *Father & Son* by Edmund Gosse (1900). It's about the conflict between the author as a young man and his

father who was a very strict and religious disciplinarian. In the end they part and go their different ways. Shakespeare by Bill Bryson. He makes it interesting for general readers. At the moment I'm reading a collection of short stories by Nobel Prize winners. May be they could have chosen better stories.

**Arya Vedant:** These days a lot of murders are taking place in Dehra. Are you aware of all that's happening?

**Ruskin Bond:** It is nothing new. If we go back to the 1950s and 60s there were murders taking place then. Of course there'd be more now since it's almost a city. There are a lot of affluent and older people living in retirement. There's a good deal of unemployment. So all those factors are there behind it. It's not that it was always a peaceful place.

**Arya Vedant:** Some people recently stabbed writer Steve Alter and his wife fatally...

**Ruskin Bond:** I think it was a straightforward case of thieves breaking in.

**Arya Vedant:** Are not the litchi and sal trees disappearing fast from Dehra?

**Ruskin Bond:** Well you see, as far as fruit tress and orchards go, there's no protection given to them. Now the property values are so high in Dehra that people would rather have housing estates on their land rather than litchi tress as simple as that. The sal tress of course would be protected in forest areas. There're are still some but they've been reduced considerably over the years.





**Arya Vedant:** Do you still go and spend time in Dehradun?

**Ruskin Bond:** Not so much in the last year. I have been very busy. There's a lot of work to do. I liked walking on the maidan. But now you'd fall into a pothole. Walking along the road with so much traffic is not fun anymore. I do still walk around.

**Arya Vedant:** You still go to the station sometimes?

**Ruskin Bond:** Yes, the station has not changed much. That's true. It's interesting!

**Arya Vedant:** **So many of your stories are woven around the station...**

**Ruskin Bond:** **The station buildings are the**

same. May be there's one more platform now. It's more orderly these days. It was rather chaotic during my childhood days. In those days, you rushed to the station, didn't book in advance, clambered into a third class or second class compartment. There was often a rush and struggle and confusion...

**Arya Vedant:** This year it seems you've not been invited at the Mussoorie Writers' Festival...

**Ruskin Bond:** Well, I was not asked to participate or be involved in it. I was told that I was most welcome as an observer. That suited me. I'm not a great one for conferences, literary get-togethers.

**Arya Vedant:** **What you're working on at present?**

**Ruskin Bond:** I've done a sort of film script. I don't know if it's going to be filmed or not. It gave me something different to do.





**Arya Vedant:** It's a script based on your own story?

**Ruskin Bond:** No, it's an original. I've written it specially for him. Let's see. Later on, it could be reworked into a novel. I've been doing some school stories for children-The Parrot Who Wouldn't Talk and Other Stories will be shortly brought out by Penguin. Then a collection of new essays for which I don't have a title yet is slated for next year. I keep on doing different things.

**Arya Vedant:** In one of your columns recently published in Outlook, you wrote about how frequently you had returned home from Delhi and elsewhere quite late at night and spent the better part of next morning sleeping, feeling groggy rest of the day...



**Ruskin Bond:** In the past year I have been out quite often, more than I normally do. I have been to Bhubaneswar couple of times on invitation as a sort of ambassador for an international school, attached to KIIT, (Kalinga Institute of Technology), which is a university. I liked that area, and the people there. May be from time to time I'll go down there. Then I went to Bombay twice. Once at the invitation of the Crossword bookshop, to give away their awards. They offer their annual awards for fiction, non-fiction, translation etc. Quite generous awards. I didn't get an award! But they asked me to come and present them...

*to be continued ...*



# THE CADI OF BASSORA

(A Folktale from Turkey)

Retold by Surendra Mohanty

**I**t was the time when the Caliphs ruled the Abbasid Kingdom. (In those days the kingdom encompassed all of present day Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia, and parts of Egypt.) Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid was a benevolent caliph and during his reign there was great cultural, scientific and economic prosperity in the kingdom.

One day Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid disguised himself as an ordinary person and travelled through his kingdom to find out how well his people fared. He mounted a horse and travelled up to the city of Bassora (the modern port city of Basra in present day Iraq). Outside the city he came across an old lame man begging for alms.

The caliph took pity on him and gave a coin. 'Old man, where are you going?' he asked the beggar.

'To Bassora, not far from here,' replied the poor man.

Noticing the man's physical disability, the Caliph offered him a ride on his horse to the city. When they arrived at the city the Caliph asked the man to dismount. To his surprise the beggar said, 'You dismount. This horse belongs to me.'

'What?' said the Caliph. 'This horse belongs to you! You ungrateful wretch! I gave you alms and

offered you a ride on my horse taking pity on your plight. Is this how you repay my kindness?'

'But I say the horse is mine.'

'And I say it's mine.'

'Can you prove it?' asked the beggar.

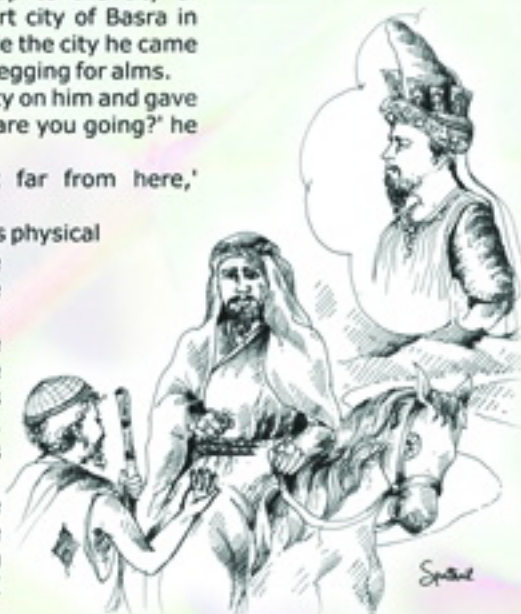
The Caliph realized it was his word against the beggar's in a city where he was a stranger. He thought of many options - he could push the old man down and move on, but then the man would yell and gather a mob against him; he could offer him more money and claim back his horse, but that would only encourage the scoundrel to cheat others, besides he would be rewarded for his deceit instead of getting punished; or he could go to the Cadi (judge) of the city to settle their dispute. The third option appeared good because he could also see how the Cadi of Bassora dispensed justice.

'Let's go the Cadi. He will decide whose horse this is,' insisted the caliph.

When they reached the Cadi's court they found him dealing with two other disputes. The first was a disagreement

between an oil merchant and a porter. The porter held a gold Dirham and claimed that it belonged to him.

'Your Honour, this gold coin is mine,' argued the oil merchant. 'I have always owned it and carried it with me and the coin has brought me good luck. This porter stole it from me today. I pray Your Honour to kindly give me justice



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and restore my Dirham to me.'  
'Do you have any witnesses?' asked the Cadi.

'No, Your Honour,' replied the merchant.

'Well, then leave the coin with me and return to my court tomorrow for my judgement,' said the Cadi.

The next case was a dispute between a writer and a tailor. The bone of contention was a book. The writer accused the tailor of having stolen his Book of Learning which he used to read for knowledge.

'Do you have any witnesses?' asked the Cadi.

'No, Your Honour,' replied the writer.

'Well, then leave the book with me and return to my court tomorrow for my judgement,' said the Cadi.

Then was the turn of the disguised Caliph and the old beggar. 'What is your complaint?' asked the Cadi.

'Your Honour, this horse belongs to me,' replied the old man. 'I am a poor lame man and my faithful horse is very helpful in carrying me around. Without my horse what will a cripple like me do? This man comes from nowhere and says it is his horse. I pray Your Honour that justice be done to me.'

'Where do you come from and what have you to say in this matter?' asked the Cadi to the other complainant.

'Your Honour, this man is a liar and a cheat. I was travelling on horseback on my way from a distant land. At the city gate, I spotted this old man begging for alms. I took pity on him and not only gave him a coin but also offered him a ride into the city. Upon reaching the city, he refused to get off my horse and instead claimed my horse as his own.' The Caliph waited to find out how wise was his Cadi and what he would decide.

Just as before, the Cadi asked, 'Do you have any witnesses?'

'No, Your Honour,' replied the Caliph.

'Well, then leave the horse with me

and return to my court tomorrow for my judgement,' said the Cadi.

The Caliph found it a very strange way to render justice. How would the Cadi decide by keeping the disputed things with him? he thought. In the morrow, the Caliph arrived at the courtroom early to hear the Cadi's judgement in all the three cases.

The Cadi held his court at the right hour. First he called the oil merchant, handed him the gold Dirham and said, 'This is your coin and you may keep it. And you,' he said to the porter, 'will receive twenty lashes for trying to cheat.' He asked the soldiers to take him away and carry out the sentence.

Next he turned to the writer and the tailor. 'The Book of Learning belongs to the writer. The tailor is a thief. Soldiers, he is to be given thirty lashes.'

Finally the beggar and the Caliph stood before the Cadi. The Caliph was eager to know if the Cadi was truly wise and if he dispensed good judgement. 'Good traveller,' began the Cadi, 'the horse belongs to you. You may take it and continue on your journey. You have shown kindness to the old man, but the ungrateful man does not deserve any kindness.' He then turned to the old beggar. 'For your ingratitude, you will be thrown into the prison,' he gave his verdict.

The Caliph did not leave the courtroom but waited until everyone except the Cadi had left. He then approached the Cadi and said, 'My dear Judge, I admire your wisdom. But I am intrigued. Will you be so kind to tell me how you came to your decision in each of the cases. I found it very strange that you kept the disputed items in your custody overnight, and by the morn you could tell who the rightful owner was.'

'These were very simple cases,' explained the Cadi. 'The case of the gold coin was the simplest of all. I put the coin in a small container of clear water. In the morning I found traces of oil floating on the surface. So the oil merchant was telling the



truth that he had always owned the coin and had carried it with him.

'But how did you make out who the owner of the Book of Learning was?' asked the Caliph. He was now able to see the wisdom of the Cadi.

'That also was simple. Upon going through the pages of the book I noticed that the pages containing the duties of writers and scholars were the ones that were most used. So the writer was the rightful owner of the Book of Learning.'

'That was truly excellent judgement!' extolled the Caliph, who was by now impressed with the Cadi. 'But in my case, how did you settle that the horse

belonged to me?'

'Your case was slightly difficult,' admitted the Cadi. 'I stabled your horse at a place where both you and the beggar had to pass on your way to the court. And I waited and watched the horse as each of you passed by. When the beggar went that way, the horse didn't even look up. But when you passed the horse neighed and beat its hoof to gain your attention.'

'Your Honour, your wisdom is beyond compare!' announced the Caliph. 'I am Caliph Haroun Al-Rashid,' he disclosed. 'You are truly a wise and an honest judge and a man of great learning. I hereby elevate you as the Grand Cadi of my Caliphate. I need you in my capital city, Oh Honoured Judge!'

**Note:** Haroun Al-Rashid ruled as the Caliph of Baghdad from 786 AD to 809 AD. This period is marked by great prosperity. He is considered a legendary and learned Caliph under whom intellectuals of that period flourished. Haroun's court has been immortalised as the setting for **The Book of One Thousand and One Nights**, in which the stories have been fantasised by the raconteurs of his court and some by Haroun himself.

## SANDY'S MISERY

Malavika Roy Singh



**W**hy do we have to do everything by ourselves?' whined Sandy, a pale brown dog as she rummaged through filth, in search of food. 'Why can't we live like those humans?' she asked Bushy, a white spaniel.

'Well that's the way our lives are designed, buddy'. Bushy replied, without looking up.

'Oh, but why?'

Everyday Sandy and Bushy came to hunt for scraps of food in the waste bins. And Sandy hated the sight and stench of egg shells, rotten eggs, leftover food, fruits, vegetable peels, rotten meat, chicken bones and liver.

'I hate this stray-dog life, where I have to sniff rotten things and plunge into waste every morning. I don't like it at all.'

'Oh come on! What do you want, a chauffeur driven car stuffed with loads of food?'

Sandy's eyes glistened in excitement. 'Can that happen to us?'

'No' Bushy declared solemnly. 'And now get going. We have loads of other work today.'

'Like what? I thought I would eat and sleep on the pavement. I didn't sleep last night. Those human hooligans chased me in a car and nearly killed me, and since then I just stayed awake in fear.'

Bushy muttered, 'I know these humans don't know how to control themselves and they have the nerve to drive silly gadgets that look bigger versions of Cuba'.

Cuba was a ferocious looking Doberman, who lived opposite the road, in a house. He belonged to a hefty looking man who walked him every morning.

'Oh yes, not to forget him. I don't mind when humans trouble, at least they can be scared, but Cuba, he's insane and un-canine. My days are mostly spent in misery thinking about him all the time. I hate when he conspires with other domestic dogs to hit on us. It's terrible.' Sandy paused to breathe and then continued, 'I hate him. The other day he bared all his teeth at me as if he was going to rip me apart.'

'And why was that?' Bushy asked tearing an intact part of ham.

'Because he felt I shouldn't be where he was. Imagine he was in my area and then was showing me attitude. What cheek! Sometimes, I pity them; they're just so ignorant and don't learn anything in life or rather from us, free dogs'

'Oh don't bother about those high class canines. They live in posh places, get everything under their nose, eat clean tasty food and sleep on comfortable rugs. They are shampooed and bathed and walked and are taken to a vet when they fall sick. What do they know about our lives? For them, we are the lower class, but do we care? No, so just relax and ignore him.'

'How could I ignore him, when all he does is annoy me? He knows I can't fight back and he's taking advantage of that.'

'Don't react on his face, but wait for the right time. He is doing this to get rid of us' replied Bushy. 'And we know he can. With those teeth, he can transform us into bits and pieces.'

Sandy knew it was true, but she wanted justice. She wanted to put an end to the Cuba-menace, no matter what it cost.

---

She frowned, licked his lips elaborately, shook dust and food particles off his body and stepped away from the garbage heap.

'Are you done?'

'Yes, I am. C'mon let's go and see what can be done to address your grievance.'

'You mean the Cuba meance?'

'What else? I was thinking of trying one trick. It can't get wrong.'

'I thought you had work?'

'This is work too. Isn't it?' said Bushy winking at Sandy.

They left wagging their tails in excitement. Sandy liked Bushy's place. It was at the far end of the road, where lay a patch of grassland with a sandy area in a corner. There were no sources of disturbances here and it was a place where all sorts of tricks and creative punching techniques could be conceived and tried out.

Sandy fondly dreamt about Cuba getting all beaten up.

'Stop dreaming and see your rival from here', Bushy spoke hoarsely. Unlike Sandy he had a voice that sounded as if he had a cough.

But Sandy had a sweet voice and why not, she was a girl.

'How I hate him!' she said, grinding her teeth in revenge.

From a distance they could see Cuba playing with his master and two other people. They were playing with a red ball.

Sighing, Sandy said, 'I don't even have a ball or anybody to play with, except for last week, when a couple of children played with me and gave me an ice cream to lick. It was the nicest thing that I had tried in a longtime.'

'Oh great, now you are whining for the ball?' jeered Bushy. 'You can never get your priorities straightened. At one point, you criticize dogs like Cuba and then you want a ball and everything nice like those silly domestic dogs!'

Sandy was about to revolt when suddenly, something hard hit on her back.

'Ouch', she cried wincing in pain. She turned around, but Bushy had already jumped behind her.

'How dare you do that to her?' he yelled.

A towering figure rose and Sandy yelled in fright. It was Cuba.

'Oh my, did I hurt your girlfriend Bushy baby?' said Cuba, in his rough voice.

'Yes, you did and you will pay for it soon', warned Bushy as he protected Sandy behind him.

'Oh my, how will it be? Will you send those clumsy looking weaklings, whom you rescued from my grip the other day? Oh well, I am scared now' and he mocked Bushy by doing a fainting act. 'So tell me the day, I will come for sure.'

'You will know soon', said Bushy calmly.

'I will wait, but if you lose then see me rip you apart and yeah that girlfriend of yours too', and he winked at Sandy before he left with the ball in his mouth.

Sandy was trembling all over.

'Why did you say soon? We haven't planned anything! And by the way, I'm not your girlfriend.'

Bushy turned and shook his head, 'I know. Now let me just call my friends, the supposed weaklings to our macho figure, Cuba and he'll see how wrong he is.'

Bushy whistled and immediately, two rough looking street dogs joined in. When Sandy saw them, she thought Cuba was right, they were brown and pale yellow colored weaklings and their rib cage protruded nicely on their backs. They were indeed very poor and cut a sorry figure in comparison with the robust, glowing Cuba. Such malnourished mongrels are the prime targets dog catchers.

They soon got to work, but Sandy did not understand much of it.

'So when will you be able to execute the first step?' asked Bushy.

'Tonight', they said together.

Sandy shifted her stare from Bushy to the faces of those two gravely sick looking dogs. 'How on earth will they do it?'

---

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she thought aloud in her mind.  
Bushy saw them off and returned to Sandy.

'Off you go then. Your problem will be dealt with tomorrow morning, without anybody seen or heard.'

'But even if Cuba is taught a lesson, he wouldn't know who did it?' Sandy was skeptical and tense.

'Not exactly!'

Sandy was still unsure about the efficacy of the plan, but she did not criticize it. She waved at him and got back to her place, which was along the pavement of the road.

Throughout the night, she stared into the darkness, trying to listen to the sounds that told her that life existed, be they that of the zooming, swishing cars, blaring horns, footsteps of pedestrians – they all added to the life around Sandy.

When she woke up, the sun had not risen. She stretched, yawned and moved around to get her body into some movement. It might be required today, but she hoped not.

She quickly went to have her breakfast of the leftover food. She was happy to get a slice of pizza with chicken and ham toppings. She wished every day was Sunday as Saturday nights always provided better quality of leftovers from the local households. She quickly rummaged and found some pieces of chicken, still juicy with the gravy around and bones and lots of bread disposed neatly in cardboard boxes. She dragged the entire box, into which she had put the edible crumbs and remnants of her food. Since Bushy was doing so much, she thought he deserved Sunday food too.

'Oh my, they had some party!' exclaimed Bushy, diving in.

'Wouldn't it be nice, if they simply gave the food to us directly rather than throwing it in that stinky bin. At least, then we'll not have to smell the horrible stench,' added Sandy.

But Bushy was not listening, any food to him was welcome and if the food

was of that quality, he wouldn't mind rummaging any number of bins. He chomped and ate hungrily, making no remark.

The two emaciated mongrels, Bushy's partners in the revengeful plot, joined in. They quickly filled in Bushy with the updates of the plot.

'We have done it. The step number one is executed and so is number two,' the pale yellow dog said.

'Thanks Burly!'

'Burly? But you're anything but burly,' Sandy said looking surprised.

'Well I was when I was given that name.'

'Anyway, what steps are you talking about?'

'I'll explain later,' he interrupted getting up and beckoning her to be ready.

'Will we have to fight?' she asked looking scared.

'Let's see, hope not.'

'But what are we going to do now?'

'We still are left with the last and the most important step.'

She arched her eyebrows in question.

'Well, this is to get Cuba caught by human dog catchers.'

Sandy's eyes widened in surprise and horror. 'What if we get caught?'

'No we won't.'

And Bushy quickly told others to hurry and they went to the road where Cuba went for a walk every morning. Today they hid themselves behind trees that lined along the walking pavement and waited with bated breath. The van of the dog catchers came at exactly eight.

'Here he comes!' whispered Bushy's henchmen. Sandy peeped from behind a tree to see Cuba sniffing and moving around.

'Hey, where is his master? He's with someone else?' said Sandy, sounding concerned.

'Yeah, on Mondays, he goes with his master's servant', explained Bushy.

They walked past and they got to

the end of road. They made a turn into the concrete, deserted road. Bushy's friends crept in slowly.

Suddenly, Sandy saw Burly and his partner trot up to the end. Bushy went a little closer to the end, but remained unseen. Sandy was tired of this suspense, when suddenly she saw Cuba's servant darting off being chased by some strange dogs. Cuba was nowhere around and neither were Bushy and his accomplice.

'Honk', sounded the dog catcher van.

'Oh hell, where are they gone?' Sandy thought aloud. She broke into a run to look for them and reached the end of the road. She took the left turn and called out Bushy's name.

'Oh shut up, you mud head', whispered a familiar voice. Sandy turned to find Bushy, hiding behind the bin, signaling her to hide. She did as was told and jumped behind a bush. She turned her neck in the direction of a sound at the end of the lane

Cuba was surrounded by Bushy's two friends and some more odd-looking weaklings.

'Oh my, you two have come again?' Cuba said in a tone of surprise. 'I guess a day's bashing was simply not enough. Was it?'

'It's your turn today Cuba, we shall settle scores, here.'

Cuba smiled and then grew ferocious. 'You think I'm one of those silly looking dogs, who hide behind the master. Let me tell you, I'm one, but enough for ten of you. I can rip ten at a time.' And he bared his teeth to Sandy's horror.

'Let's see,' said one of them and pounced on Cuba, and got slapped on the face instantly.

The dog fell flat with a thud, but got up instantly and prepared to attack once again.

'Didn't I tell you, I am the master of all these tricks?'

'Oh yeah', the rest growled and jumped on Cuba, almost together.

As the fight began, Sandy couldn't make out as to who was who. But it was a match and sight that would make even the humans halt and watch. It would put any match, played by humans, to shame.

They fought heroically. Though the rogue bit and badly thrashed them, a couple of them punched and knocked him out real hard, giving Cuba the shock of his life.



Sandy saw a couple of dogs backing away. She focused to see two men, with a huge net, pounce upon the group, catching Cuba unawares. His rival gang who had seen the men coming skipped and fled, while Cuba got trapped, unguarded. They hauled him into their van and disappeared the way they had appeared.

'Bravo my boys', Bushy jumped in joy, hugging his friends in glee. 'You've done it. Our plan did work.'

'Yeah it did, no suspicions too', they laughed and exchanged high-fivers in celebration.

Sandy stood like a rock. Too much happened too suddenly, leaving her frozen. The joyous screams of Bushy and his gang brought her back into her senses and beside herself with joy. She dashed into Bushy's arms.

'Would you now be my girlfriend?' She blushed and rubbed her muzzle on his cheek.



## AN OVERVIEW OF THE OLYMPICS

Article by Sanjay Suar

The modern **Olympic Games** are a major international event featuring summer and winter sports in which thousands of athletes participate in a variety of competitions. The Games are currently held in four categories: (1) Summer Olympics, (2) Winter Olympics, (3) Paralympic Games for athletes with a disability, and (4) Youth Olympic Games for teenage athletes. The most popular one is Summer Olympic games.

### HISTORY OF OLYMPICS

The creation of Modern Olympics was inspired by the ancient Olympic Games, which were held in Olympia, Greece, from the 776 BC to the 393 AD.



#### The Location of the Ancient Olympic Games in Olympia, Greece

The ancient Games included running, long jump, shot put, discus & javelin throw, Wrestling, boxing, pankration, Pentathlon and equestrian events.

Baron Pierre de Coubertin founded the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1894. In a meeting held at the Sorbonne University in Paris, it was decided that the **first Olympic Games**, to come under the auspices of the IOC, would take place in Athens in 1896. These Games

brought together 14 nations and 241 athletes who competed in 43 events. The IOC elected the Greek writer Demetrius Vikelas as its first president.



#### 1st Modern Olympics (1896 Summer Olympics) Opening ceremony in the Panathinaiko Stadium, Athens, 1896.

Women were first allowed to compete at the 1900 Summer Olympics in Paris.

The Winter Olympics were created to feature snow and ice sports that were logistically impossible to hold during the Summer Games. The first Winter Olympic Games was held in 1924 in Chamonix, France. Initially the Winter Games were celebrated every four years on the same year as their summer counterpart. This tradition was upheld until the 1992 Games in Albertville, France; after that, beginning with the 1994 Games, the Winter Olympics were held every four years, two years after each Summer Olympics.

The 1936 Summer Olympics in Berlin were the first Games to be broadcast on television, though only to local audiences. The 1956 Winter Olympics were the first internationally televised Olympic Games

Being determined to change public attitudes towards disability, Sir Ludwig Guttmann brought 400 athletes for the 1960 Olympic Games, in Rome,, to compete in the "Parallel Olympics", which became known as the first Paralympics.

The **Youth Olympic Games** were conceived by IOC president Jacques Rogge in 2001. The first Summer Youth Games were held in Singapore from 14–26 August

2010, while the inaugural Winter Games were hosted in Innsbruck, Austria, from 13th to 22nd January, 2012.

From 241 participants representing 14 nations in 1896, the Games have grown to about 10,500 competitors from 204 nations at the 2012 Summer Olympics at London from 27 July to 12 August 2012. International Olympic Committee (IOC) is responsible for selecting the host city, overseeing the planning of the Olympic Games, updating and approving the sports program, and negotiating sponsorship and broadcasting rights.

### The Olympic Flag



The Olympic Movement uses symbols to represent the ideals embodied in the Olympic Charter. The Olympic symbol, better known as the Olympic rings, consists of five intertwined rings

and represents the unity of the five inhabited continents (Africa, America, Asia, Australia, Europe). The coloured version of the rings—blue, yellow, black, green, and red—over a white field forms the Olympic flag. The flag was adopted in 1914 but flown for the first time only at the 1920 Summer Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium. It has since been hoisted during each celebration of the Games.

The Olympic motto is *Citius, Altius, Fortius*, a Latin expression meaning "Faster, Higher, Stronger".

Though the flame has been an Olympic symbol since 1928, the torch relay was introduced at the 1936 Summer Games, as part of the German government's attempt to promote its National Socialist ideology.

The Olympic mascot, an animal or human figure representing the cultural heritage of the host country, was introduced in 1968.

In any Olympic game, three national flags are hoisted while the corresponding national anthems are played: the flag of the current host country; the flag of Greece, to honor the

birthplace of the Olympic Games; and the flag of the country hosting the next Summer or Winter Olympic Games.

### India at Olympics

India first participated at the Olympic Games in 1900, with a lone athlete (Norman Pritchard) winning two medals in athletics. The nation first sent a team to the Summer Olympic Games in 1920, and has participated in every Summer Games since then. India has also competed at several Winter Olympic Games since 1956.

So far, with poor performance, Indian athletes have won a total of 26 medals, mostly in field hockey. For a period of time, India's men's field hockey team was dominant in Olympic competition, winning eleven medals in twelve Olympics between 1928 and 1980, including six successive **gold medals from 1928–1956**.

In the 2008 Summer Olympics, India won three Olympic medals in three different sports and also the first ever Individual **Olympic Gold medal** by Abhinav Bindra in the 10m Air Rifle event.

The 2012 Summer Olympics saw an 83 member Indian contingent participating in the games as the most successful Olympics ever for India in terms of the total medals won by India at an Olympic game.



Abhinav Bindra

This was the most successful Olympics ever for India, where India got 6 medals (one silver in the 25-meter Rapid Fire Shooting by Vijay Kumar, one silver in 66 KG freestyle wrestling by Sushil Kumar, one bronze in shooting by Gagan Narang, one bronze in women's badminton by Saina Nehwal, one bronze in women's 51 KG boxing by MC Marykom, and one bronze wrestling by Yogeshwar Dutt).

### FUTURE OLYMPICS HOST COUNTRIES

- 2014 Winter Olympics at Sochi, Russia
- 2014 Summer Youth Olympics at Nanjing, China
- 2016 Summer Olympics at Rio-de Janeiro, Brazil
- 2016 Winter Youth Olympics at Lillehammer, Norway
- 2018 Winter Olympics at Pyeongchang, South Korea

# HAIKU



## SHORT POEM (Cinquain)

### DEATH

Dew drops  
fade away to  
nothingness under harsh rays;  
fleeting moments of life wilt  
slowly.

### HAIKU

1

The gypsy dancers  
prancing in bright petal skirts  
look up to the sun

2

A walk in the woods  
ripe berries, cherry blossoms  
my mother and me

This time we have received three short poems – one Cinquain and two Haikus – from Jahnvi, a student from Paramakkavu Vidya Mandir, Thrissur.

Cinquain is a short poem of six lines (including the title, if any). The number of words in each successive lines follows an ascending pattern, that is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and the last line has only one word.

Jahnvi is a grade 9 student of Paramakkavu Vidya Mandir, Thrissur

## TEACHER'S DAY

By Nikita Ahya

Come teacher's day and we have a plethora of pleasurable moments commemorating the unfathomable contribution of the teachers – the pillars of any educational institution in particular and the society in general. The fifth day of September, is observed as Teacher's Day in India. It is the birthday of Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the first Vice President and second President of the country. He was an eminent educationist, a scholar and had a great affinity towards the teaching profession. In 1962 when some students approached him on his birthday to celebrate the day in his honour, he said, "Instead of celebrating my birthday separately, it would be my proud privilege if September 5 is observed as Teachers' Day".

So this day is observed as a token of appreciation to all those human beings who tie the virtual umbilical chord with every batch of students, nurture them and nonchalantly leave them for the higher grades, consequently preparing them to learn the game called "LIFE". The source of Inspiration, the rope of hope and the scale of truth is provided by the teachers. This is sine qua non of education. Simplifying complexities, making tiny tots learn the first letters, to the role model for the kids, struggling through their adolescence,



guiding them to glorious future, relishing the success of the students, being in the indelible memories defines a teacher.

Students take pride in honouring their teachers and joining in the celebrations with them. Some senior students even take up the job of teaching or similar activities for the junior ones on that day. The day is marked with fun-filled activities. The special programmes by the students are but a small gesture of reciprocation of the priceless service offered by their teachers.

Many countries celebrate Teacher's Day on different days, but the purpose is the same – to appreciate the laudable tasks performed by the teachers in shaping the future of the younger generations. World Teacher's Day is officially celebrated across the world on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October.

## TAKING STOCK OF OUR FREEDOM

By Shyam Sunder Rajaram

Through sheer strength of will and perseverance, and using those very unconventional weapons- non-violence and non-cooperation - the practical application of which the world had never witnessed, Indian National Congress, under the leadership of great men such as Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, won political independence for the country on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1947. Indians all over the world celebrate the Independence Day with fervor and after the celebrations, most of us fall back on to the normal routine, blissfully unaware of the rottenness that is eating into the flesh of modern India.

Therefore, it is worthwhile taking stock of the socio - political scenario of today's India, and try to invent weapons as unconventional and as effective as the ones used by our forefathers against the British, weapons that all honest Indians may peacefully use against the greedy, corrupt lot who are in power and who determine our nation's fate.

Sixty six years after independence, the enormous democratic mechanism called India is on and is rolling. But now it is an impersonal mechanism that has taken rust and needs to be oiled, and many significant parts replaced. As this giant democratic apparatus rolls on, it churns out mountains of common human rubbish and produces some elite piles of wealthy and super-wealthy parliamentarians and bureaucrats, many of whom are deified and, in their delusions of grandeur, speak and act like gods. They are notorious for

their hubris. They reign happily because they are tolerated; they loot and laugh and ridicule the very spirit of democracy because of the lackadaisical attitude of the majority. If this process continues unattended and unchallenged on national level, sooner than later, the mechanism may come to a grinding halt and chaos may ensue.

In modern India, the stench of corruption merges with the stench of poverty and other social evils. The mendacity and hypocrisy of our all smiling, khadi clad leaders and the impunity which they enjoy have become proverbial. They are men of the people. Let no one bark when they ope their mouths.

However, we have solid reasons to be optimistic about the future of our country because India is a huge reservoir of young talents in various fields, that need to be discovered and brought out for the benefit of the nation and of the mankind. Who can be more qualified and suitable than teachers to work with young minds and to inculcate in them characteristics such as honesty, open-mindedness, empathy, courage to fight injustice etc? These are some of the essential traits that we ought to develop in all children as we strive to make them knowledgeable and skillful- a task very much achievable, if the teaching fraternity of this country is determined to achieve it.

If we have the vision of a truly happy and prosperous India and if each one of us is determined to contribute the way we can towards getting that vision realized, six decades down the line, people will celebrate India's independence with a different spirit because, by that time, they will have developed a very different socio-political system that truly works for the people. By the way, we may not live to see that happy future of India.

But our children will reap the benefit of our efforts, and let them.

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# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

## FOR STUDENTS

1. Students of Class/ Grade/ Std 8 and above are eligible to submit their stories, poems and articles. We may consider articles of junior students, if the standard of the work is good.
2. We accept short stories, poems, personal experiences, opinions, travelogues, anecdotes, jokes, puzzles and interesting facts. But originality is the prime factor for selection.
3. All submissions must be in English, and MUST be the original work of the student.
4. Short stories and non-fictions should be below 2000 words (about 1500 words is ideal). Poems should not exceed 20 lines (may or may not broken down to stanzas).
5. Suitable pictures and photographs may be scanned and emailed in JPG format for travelogues, other articles and stories. But do not download from the Net and send it. Scan resolution should be 300dpi
6. Email your work to [kloud9@kiitis.ac.in](mailto:kloud9@kiitis.ac.in) or post a neatly handwritten or typed manuscript to The Editor, Kloud 9, KiiT International School, KiiT Campus 9, Bhubaneswar – 751024, Odisha.
7. Handwritten, typed or emailed articles must mention clearly the writer's full name, class/ grade/ standard, school name, and email address. 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 selected writers will be contacted.
10. 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 selection/ shortlist.

