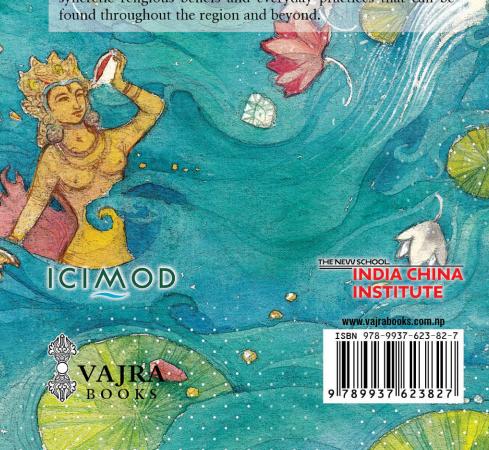
In this collection of folk stories from the Himalayas, retold and edited by renowned writers Kamla K. Kapur and Prawin Adhikari, the reader is taken on an enchanted journey through the shared sacred landscapes of India, Nepal, and Tibet/China. From magical flying horses and battles with mountain demons to the trials and tribulations of everyday people and pilgrims, the folk narratives offer a glimpse into the rich cultural tapestry of this unique landscape.

Recorded during a collaborative multidisciplinary study over a three-year period, these stories speak to timeless questions of love, sacrifice, heartbreak, redemption, and the search for meaning in life. The collection draws inspiration from the holiest mountains, called Kailas (and also known as Tise and Kang Rinpoche), and Lake Manasarovar, two important sacred sites located in Western Tibet. The stories speak to diverse and syncretic religious beliefs and everyday practices that can be found throughout the region and beyond.



# SHARED SACRED LANDSCAPES

SHARED

APE

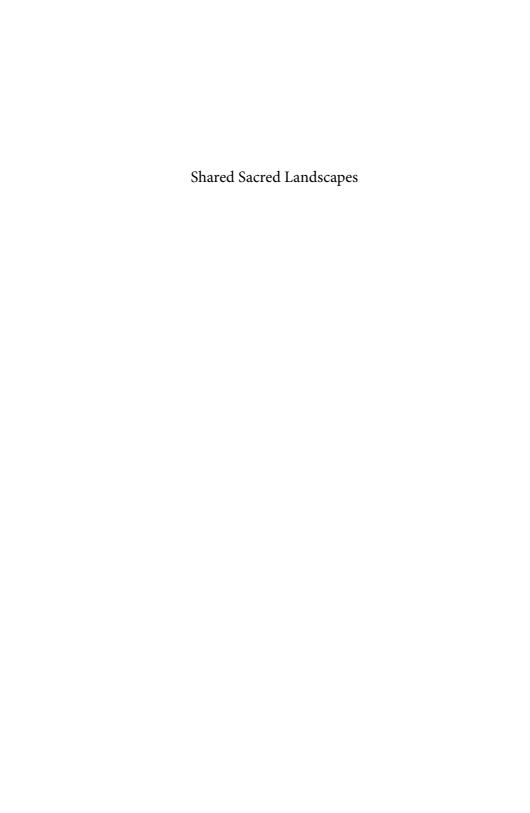
Prawin Adhikari

STORIES FROM MOUNT KAILAS,
TISE & KANG RINPOCHE

Edited & Retold by

Kamla K. Kapur

Prawin Adhikari



## SHARED SACRED LANDSCAPES

STORIES FROM MOUNT KAILAS,
TISE & KANG RINPOCHE

Edited & Retold by Kamla K. Kapur Prawin Adhikari



www.vajrabooks.com.np

Published and Distributed 2017 by

Kapur, K., & Adhikari, P. (2017). *Shared Sacred Landscapes*. Kathmandu, Nepal: Vajra Books.

Vajra Books Jyatha, Thamel, P.O. Box 21779, Kathmandu, Nepal Tel.: 977-1-4220562, Fax: 977-1-4246536 e-mail: bidur\_la@mos.com.np

The publication is available in electronic form at www.indiachinainstitute.org/sacred-landscapes-book/ and http://lib.icimod.org/record/32574

Cover illustration by Ubahang Nembang. Inside story illustrations by Rabin Maharjan.

The development of this book was the result of a collaboration undertaken between the India China Institute of The New School and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) through funds from the India China Institute, The New School, ICIMOD and the Luce Foundation.

#### Copyright and disclaimer

All material in this publication is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution BY-NC License https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/legalcode
The material here may be quoted, reproduced, or used in any form for education, research, and development purposes without special permission from the India China Institute, the New School or ICIMOD provided acknowledgement of the source is made. No use may be made for resale or other commercial purposes without prior permission in writing from The India China Institute, The New School.

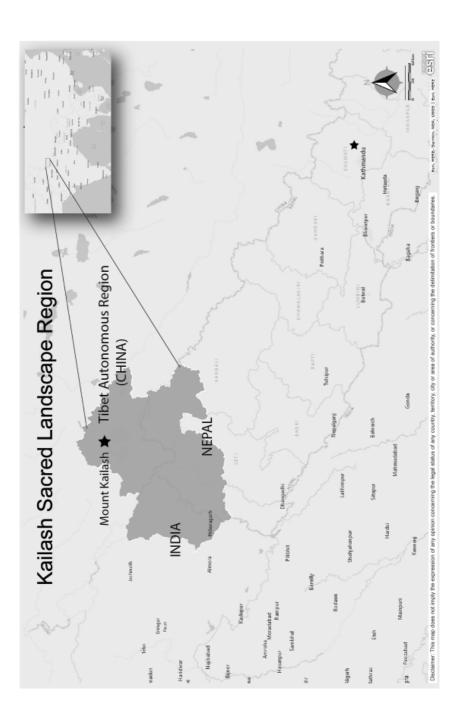
The views and interpretations in this publication are those of the author(s). They are not attributable to the India China Institute, The New School or ICIMOD and do not imply the expression of any opinion concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries, or the endorsement of any product.

All material from this publication should be attributed as ©2017 India China Institute. The New School.

Printed in Nepal

#### **Contents**

| Note on Folk Story Authorship      | vi  |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| Introduction by Ashok Gurung       | ix  |
| Journey to Bone and Ash            | 1   |
| र्हें हैं ने केता                  | 13  |
| The Color of the Name              | 24  |
| धर्मद्वार                          | 43  |
| You Don't Die Till You're Dead     | 64  |
| कैलास परिक्रमा पर तीन तीर्थयात्री  | 71  |
| Attitude of Gratitude              | 79  |
| कृतज्ञता                           | 87  |
| Ripples on the Mirrored Lake       | 97  |
| য়৾৽ড়৾ৼ৽৾৽ৼ৾য়ড়৽ৼয়৽য়ৣ৽য়৸য়য়৾ | 115 |
| Godsland                           | 133 |
| देवभूमि                            | 151 |
| The Miller's Song                  |     |
| घडेनीको कथा                        | 185 |



#### **Note on Folk Story Authorship**

 $-\infty$ 

The process of telling and retelling stories is always a group effort. This book would not be possible without many individuals sharing their time and stories with us. These folk stories were collected over the course of three years of exploration in the Himalayan areas of India, Nepal and the Tibet Autonomous Region of China. The stories were shared with our research team in many places—on dirt paths in the mountains; in communal halls around a fire; with locals one-onone in their homes; and in meeting with lamas, priests, storytellers and village elders. It was often the case that we would hear the same story told in multiple versions. Two well-known writers, Kamla Kapur and Prawin Adhikari, took these stories and gave them new life. We are very grateful to them. Most importantly, we would like to express our deep gratitude to the local villagers who shared their stories for the benefit of future generations. What you hold in your hands is the result of this collective effort. More information about the individual team members who collected the stories is included in the Introduction.

We also would like to thank the talented translators who helped make sure these stories would be understandable in each local language: Samip Dhungel, Rajendra Balami, and Kriti Adhikari (Nepali); Kelsang Chimee (Chinese); Bhuchung D Sonam and Thinlay Gyatso (Tibetan); and Chandresha Pandey (Hindi).

#### Introduction

 $\infty$ 

You hold in your hand a unique book of stories about a very special shared sacred landscape. This book celebrates and acknowledges the power of folk stories, which are amongst the most valuable treasures that one generation can pass onto the next. Folk stories inscribe collective meanings, give credence to cultural beliefs, and are an integral part of how a community understands not only its history and traditions, but also articulates its future goals and aspirations.

In publishing this book we wanted to draw attention to the uniqueness of this remote yet intensely revered region. This particular Himalayan sacred landscape is of equal importance to Bönpos, Buddhists, Hindus, Sikhs, and Jains. For example, Hindus refer to the most significant mountain within this sacred landscape as Kailas, the abode of Lord Shiva; Bönpos refer to it as Tise, and Tibetan Buddhist refer to it as Kang Rinpoche.

By bringing the narratives, peoples, and sacred landscapes together, we want this collection of short stories to convey to the reader some of the significance of the holy mountain and its surrounding regions. We also want to show how local knowledge illuminates the multiple connections and various traditions between religion and ecology, time and space, the past and the future. By making these stories available – both in print and digitally – we want to ensure that the folk traditions of this unique region are voiced, preserved and made accessible for future generations. This volume, as well as the online depository of many more collected folk stories, are available on the website of the India China Institute (www. indiachinainstitute.org).

The original versions gathered from this shared sacred region were often quite short in length, and, as is often of the case with folk stories, narrated with many variations. The primary sources of these stories — men and women, shamans, elders and priests in Humla, Ngari and Pithoragarh were informed that the material collected from them would be made freely available to readers and researchers around the world, and that their stories may be selected for retelling by writers, or for dissemination through the internet, or for educational purposes.

Because many of these stories transcend and overlap physical, spiritual, and cosmic boundaries, we invited two noted writers, Kamla K. Kapur and Prawin Adhikari, as special Editors to retell and situate the stories in the larger context of Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and Bönpo traditions. We are grateful to these two writers whose amazing talents flow through the pages of this book. In addition to these retold versions, readers also have the opportunity to access the original stories, including additional audio and video material, on the website of the India China Institute . As a way to honor the places where they were collected and to also make them accessible in the vernacular, select stories appear in the English as well as in the Tibetan, Nepali, or Hindi language.

This book emerged out of a three-year project designed and led by the India China Institute (ICI) at The New School in New York City and based on collaboration between The New School and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD). It is the product of a collaborative endeavor with ICIMOD's Kailas Sacred Landscapes Conservation and Development Initiative (KSLCDI), a transboundary conservation and development initiative working to strengthen regional cooperation among China, India and Nepal. ICIMOD's team Abhimanyu Pandey provided insight into the anthropology of the region, Rajan Kotru provided a platform to meet and interact with associated colleagues, and Swapnil Chaudhari coordinated with the team. Special thanks to Toby Alice Volkman at the Henry Luce Foundation for her intellectual contributions and support for the project. I want to use this opportunity to thank all of our supporters for their partnerships and generous contributions. Also a very special thanks to our fieldwork team: Sagar Lama, Himani Upadhyaya, Kelsang Chimee, Kunga

Yishe, Pasang Y. Sherpa, Sheetal Aitwal, Nabraj Lama, Abhimanyu Pandey, Shekhar Pathak, and Tshewang Lama (Chakka Bahadur) for their crucial role in gathering stories from the region. Thanks to Tenzin Norbu Nangsal for editing the Tibetan and Shekhar Pathak for editing the Hindi. I also want to acknowledge our Grace Hou and the rest of the India China Institute staff for all their support. In addition to contributions from The New School, primary support for the project came from the Henry Luce Foundation and additional support from the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD).

This project involved a unique collaborative effort with over twenty scholars and experts from many parts of the world and different disciplinary backgrounds - anthropology, international development, history, geography, arts, and politics. Some members are from the Himalayan region and have a deep connection to our work of the Sacred Himalaya Initiative (Shekhar Pathak, Tshewang Lama). Others have had extensive professional engagement in the Himalayas (Mukta Lama, Kelsang Chimee, Ashmina Ranjit, Anil Chitrakar, Kunga, Pasang Y. Sherpa, Ashok Gurung, Kevin Bubriski, Srestha Rit Premnath, and Amanda Manandhar-Gurung). We also invited scholars with no prior work in the Himalayas, but who nevertheless have deep knowledge and interest in the relationships between ecology, culture and religion from a global perspective (Mark Larrimore, Rafi Youatt, Nitin Sawhney, Chris Crews, Liu Xiaoqing, and Marina Kaneti).

Over the course of three years, between 2014 and 2016, members of our group engaged in several pilgrimages and field trips in and around the Kailas Sacred Landscape of India, Nepal, and Tibet. We spent many weeks hiking through the Himalayas at an average elevation of over 3,800 meters (12,500 feet). Encounters with the natural landscape, pilgrims of various faiths, and travelers drawn to the rugged beauty and serenity of the region shaped our understanding of this unique landscape as a shared sacred space. From the very start of designing this study in 2013, we were drawn to the significance of multiple and often overlapping meanings and imaginaries of this shared sacred mountain, both for people who inhabit the region as well as those who come from outside. We hope that our work will provide a glimpse into the unique traditions and cultures of this region. As you will discover throughout this book, many aspects of these ancient stories continue to inform the sociocultural traditions and everyday interactions of millions of people in the region. The stories allow us to better understand the revered past and the ways in which the Himalaya is connected to contemporary global questions of climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable futures. They show the various ways in which the past and the present, humans and nature, gods and animals are intricately and eternally connected. The stories inspire the reader with a yearning for meaning in life beyond one's own desires and needs.

As this shared sacred region becomes more accessible - both physically and digitally - many important questions emerge about its future. As the principal investigator of a project so intricately involved with this region, I will always treasure this once in a lifetime learning opportunity. As a member of the Gurung ethnic group from the highlands of Nepal who was raised in the Indian Himalayas and worked in Tibet, and as somebody steeped in the diverse traditions of Buddhist lamas, Hindu priests, and Animists, this project also resonated for me on a personal level. It allowed me to revisit and rediscover stories about Lord Shiva, the Goddess Parvati, Mount Kailas, and Lake Manasarovar that I had heard about as a child. Finally, as an academic, the project broadened my understanding of the many-layered and often contested meanings of the shared sacred region. There is no substitute to experiencing firsthand the various ways in which the region itself transcends both physical and temporal boundaries.

My hope is that the stories in this book will similarly allow readers to discover, or perhaps rediscover, this region in all its human diversity and sacred timelessness.

In these varied ways, our project went beyond just storytelling and brought a sense of what connects the peoples and the traditions of this region. It inspired us to think beyond state and national boundaries and to submerge ourselves in the vast universe of complex co-existence between so many different peoples and cultures.

#### Ashok Gurung

Senior Director, India China Institute, and Professor of Practice, Julien J. Studley Graduate Program in International Affairs, The New School



#### Kamla K. Kapur

Kamla K. Kapur was born and raised in India and studied in the US. Her writing has included plays, novels, poetry, essays and reimagining Indian spiritual writings. Her critically acclaimed books include *Ganesha Goes to Lunch: Classics from Mystic India* (2007, Mandala, USA; also retitled *Classic Tales from Mystic India*, Jaico Publishing, 2013), *Rumi's Tales from the Silk Road, Pilgrimage to Paradise* (Mandala USA and Penguin India, 2009), and *The Singing Guru, on the legends of Guru Nanak* (Mandala USA, 2015). Her highly praised books of poetry are *As a Fountain in a Garden* (Tarang Press, 2005) and *Radha Sings* (Dark Child Press, 1987).

Her poetry and short stories have appeared in *Yellow Silk* (Berkeley, California), *Journal of Literature and Aesthetics* (Kerala), and the anthology, *Our Feet Walk the Sky* (Aunt Lute Press, Berkeley, California, USA). Kapur was a semi-finalist for the Nimrod/Hardman Pablo Neruda Poetry Prize competition in 2006, and three of her poems were published in *Nimrod*, *International Journal of Poetry and Prose* (2007). Five of Ms. Kapur's short stories were published in *Parabola, journal of Myth*, *Tradition, and the Search for Meaning* (New York), two in *The Inner Journey*, (Parabola Anthology Series, 2007), and one in *The Sun* (USA, December 2012)

Ms. Kapur divides her time living in the remote Himalayas and in San Diego, California, with her husband, the artist Payson R. Stevens.

#### Journey to Bone and Ash

 $-\infty$ 

There was once an old woman called Dechen. People called her *Dechen Budhi* – Dechen, the old woman. She wasn't always old, of course. Once she was youthful, vibrant, very beautiful, with a slim, slight figure, high cheekbones, dimples, unusually large, dark eyes, smooth, clear skin like ivory, and thick, black hair. She took pride in her beauty and youth. A singer and dancer, she was adored and worshipped by men, and envied, if not hated, by women. The men courted her and lavished gifts and money on her, which she managed very carefully because she had known extreme poverty while she was growing up in a large family. She had eight siblings who were always inadequately clad, and she had experienced the death of two in the freezing winters. As a child Dechen was always hungry, like her brothers and sisters.

It was the custom of her polyandrous tribe for one woman to marry three or four brothers. "Even one husband," she could hear her dead mother's voice in her head, "is one too many. Managing four has brought me to an early grave."

Dechen had determined early in life not to marry but support herself by her own talents, and because she had many of them, she became very wealthy.

Dechen worshipped all the gods of prosperity: Pehar, Ganesha, Lakshmi, and all the Naga goddesses who generate and protect wealth. She buried her money under straw and grass piles on the ground floor of her three-story stone, wood, and mud house, the floor of which was used by cows, yaks and sheep. She even kept a few yaks and dogs on that floor to deflect attention from her secret hiding place, and hired the village idiot as a servant to graze and tend them.

In her mid-twenties, Dechen supplemented her wealth by weaving and tailoring woolen dresses that were much in demand. Both men and women wore them all year long in the high desert plateau where they lived. She also began to make chhang, the favorite stimulant of people in the winter months when the high plateau, home to some of the highest mountains in the world, was freezing cold. Dechen's chhang, however, was much more than just local beer made with barley. Using her grandmother's secret recipe, she fermented it with the best of yeasts and infused it with the highest quality cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg, cardamom, pepper and ginger. Moreover, she made it from the waters of Manasarovar, the healing, holy lake at the foot of the great Kailas Mountain, home of all the gods and goddesses of the Hindus, Tibetans, Jains and the indigenous Animist religions. Many swore Dechen's chhang was a tonic that cured them of colds, body and joint aches, stiffness and indigestion. People traveled far to buy it from her at a high price, and it swelled her wealth a hundred fold

Because Dechen did not believe in sharing – a habit she had developed early in life on account of having altogether too many siblings to share food and clothing with – by the time she was thirty, not an inch remained beneath the entire mud floor that didn't have a thick wad of money or bags of coins. She had to find other secret places to store it all. She sacked the village idiot for fear he might accidentally discover it, got rid of her yaks because she didn't want to risk leaving her house to graze them, and spread a rumor that all her wealth had been stolen, and a lot eaten by silverfish. To confirm her lie, she began to wear rags even though she had exquisite dresses of Chinese silk and woolen brocade hoarded away in wooden trunks. She also pretended to be mad as a result of the "theft" of her money.

Dechen had no friends, but she didn't care. She was self-sufficient and content with her wealth, the very thought of which was enough to send her into paroxysms of ecstasy. She spent her time hollowing out the legs of her bed and the frames of her looms to hide her money in and boarding up the windows.

In her early thirties, upon seeing a woman in the haat wearing an exquisite necklace made of gold, lapis, turquoise and coral, Dechen's lust for gold objects and jewelry was aroused. She decided that it wasn't enough to just have money that was hoarded away in various secret places of her home. She wanted to buy lovely objects that she could see, touch and admire - something real, solid, material and lovely.

For many years, with her house safely boarded up, she traveled far and wide, to India, Nepal, China, to find and buy up rare treasures made of gold and precious stones. She brought back her purchases - jewelry, mirrors, jars, boxes to hold her spices, finger rings, earrings, necklaces, and gold images of the gods and goddesses of wealth hidden in ragged-looking gunny sacks filled with rice, kindling, lentils and dung.

She placed the gold statues of the gods and goddesses of wealth on an altar, bowed to and worshipped them three times a day: Lakshmi; Ganesh adorned with garlands of gems, his rat regurgitating jewels; Demchong Chintamani, guardian of wealth, holding the luminescing wish-fulfilling jewel of abundance in his hands. She had fallen in love with a statue of Vajrayogini, a female Buddha, and even though the goddess was not associated with wealth, she had bought it impulsively. It was only much later she saw some disturbing elements in the statue: Vajrayogini held the curved driguk, a fiercelooking flaying knife in her right hand, and the kapala, a skull cup in her left as she danced in fire. But because Dechen had paid so much for it, she kept it and placed it on the altar.

Buying, organizing, arranging, dusting, admiring her home filled with her precious purchases for hours on end in the light of the yakbutter lamps that illumined her dark house became Dechen's whole life. Her other favorite preoccupation and passion was wearing her silk brocade gowns, adorning herself with necklaces, earrings, nose rings, and admiring herself in her jeweled mirrors. How proud she was of having fulfilled her heart's desire to be wealthy and never lack for anything! How proud she was of her beauty! Her intense attachment to her youth, her wealth, and her home were enough to give purpose to her life.

Dechen didn't realize then that having too much, and not sharing it, is worse than not having enough. She couldn't see how her obsession had made her a captive in her own home. She often wished she could hire servants to help with her many tasks, but since she didn't trust poor servants not to steal her things - any one of which would have helped them retire and live well for the rest of their lives - she had become her own servant and slave.

One day, however, as Dechen was sitting on the balcony on the third floor of her over-stuffed home, overlooking a playground in the village in which young children were playing, accompanied by their parents or older siblings, she felt something she hadn't felt before. She couldn't describe the feeling, but the first symptom of it was that she felt dreadfully lonely. She hurried inside to her pretty objects, lit her candles, and hoped they would cheer her up, but they failed to do so. The solitude to pursue her material passion turned into a haunting aloneness in which the walls of her self-made prison seemed to close in upon her.

A big, dark, frightening emptiness opened up inside her and she was certain she would fall into it and drown. As this was such a horrible feeling, and as she hadn't yet learned to give each feeling its due of attention and introspection, she now did everything in her power to ignore it, lock it up, throw it away, bury it.

But because she had buried a living and kicking feeling, it kept resurfacing, again and again. The only way she could think of banishing the feeling was buying more lovely things. So, wearing her rags and a cheap necklace of glass beads around her neck, she went on another tour. She bought turquoise artifacts and jewelry from China, amber beads from Tajikistan, coral and pearl necklaces from India, heaps and mounds of treasure to take back to her home.

Living her life the only way she knew how, without thought and reflection, Dechen didn't notice how Time was weaving its invisible net inside her body till she woke up one day and saw it in her jeweled mirror: a network of wrinkles crisscrossing her face like the gossamer threads of a spider that had caught her eyes, nose, mouth in its web; gaps where her teeth had fallen; the thinning, grey hair on her head. She turned to another mirror, and yet another: each of them had turned traitor and reflected the same image of a face ravaged by time. Dechen threw them away in disgust; people started calling her Dechen budhi, old Dechen, and paagal budhi, the crazy old woman.

The old feeling of despair rose from its grave and haunted her in nightmares. She dreamt about missing caravans because she couldn't pack her enormous treasure in time to take it along with her, of not having enough mules to pack them on, of thieves breaking into her home and carrying it all away. These nightmares were mild in comparison to the darkest ones that emerged from the crack in her psyche: gods and goddesses she worshipped to fulfil her material lust turned hostile and came to her as dark, evil, wrathful, demonic forces bent on destroying her. Demchong, Mahakal, came to her with the ashes of the dead spread on his body, beating his drum louder and louder as he did his dreadful dance of destruction, and trampled Dechen underfoot; Vajrayogini came, her fierce third eye spurting fire that burnt down Dechen's house with Dechen in it, turning it all to ash. In yet another nightmare Vajrayogini stepped on Dechen's body, bent her head downward, snapping it till it reached down to her heart. In another she flayed Dechen with her knife, catching her blood in her skull cup and drinking it as if it were the most delicious of wines. Dechen felt possessed, taken over, inhabited by dark and evil forces.

In her desperation she called for a Buddhist Lama to do a kurim, an exorcism, to expel the evil spirits. He came with his dorje, a twosided metal arrow, and phurbu, a staff, to drive them away and release Dechen from hell. But though the ceremony was elaborate and expensive, her nightmares continued. Next, she went to a dhami, the local spirit medium, and a dangri, an interpreter of the messages received by the dhami. The two would charge a great deal for their services. Besides, goats would have to be sacrificed and cooked for the village. Dechen was very reluctant to part with any of her wealth. She would rather have bought another gold object. But on the verge of madness, she decided to go ahead with it.

With ashes smeared on his face, matted hair coiled on his head, the *laru*, a long hairpiece wrapped with silver threads, draped around his head and neck like Shiva's snake, a trident in one hand, and a two-sided *damaru* drum in the other, the *dhami* began the ceremony after drinking copious amounts of *chhang*. The *dangri* and *dhami* both beat their drums, accelerating from a slow and steady rhythm to a maddening tempo that chased all thoughts away from Dechen's head.

The *dhami* shook his hair free, his eyes rolled up in their sockets, his body quivered, his movements became spastic and uncontrolled as he went into a trance. He began to dance, laugh and cry as the gods and goddesses entered him, talking simultaneously and cacophonously. He began to make pronouncements in a language that was neither Nepali, Kumaoni, Tibetan, Hindi of Hoon, nor any recognizable dialect. Dechen couldn't understand a word. She looked to the *dangri*, who had the skill to interpret what sounded like gibberish to most people. He was silent a long time, trying to decipher the words while Dechen stood by them, looking lost and confused.

"The gods and goddesses are saying you have poverty of the soul. You must die." the *dangri* said.

Dechen felt a bolt of fear shoot through her. Her knees gave way and she fell in a heap on the ground, weeping and wailing.

"But isn't there anything I can do? I don't want to die!" She wept as thoughts about leaving behind her precious treasure stung her brain like serpents.

The *dhami* muttered some more, and after a pause the *dangri* said, "It seems like a waste but he says you should throw all your valuables into the Dhauli River. Or you *will* go mad and then die."

Dechen was devastated by the message. Her long-cherished treasure, dumped in the river! No, she thought, this was a plot by the *dhami* and *dangri* to divest her of her wealth. They would waylay, loot and kill her.

But as the days passed, her state of mind worsened. After much deliberation and vacillation she decided that very night to take a muleload of her wealth to the river. She packed gunny sacks with the first objects to fall into her hands, boxes full of jewelry, tea sets and jugs made of gold, and loaded them on the mule.

The moon lit the path as she made her way to the river in the middle of the night and very reluctantly dumped the contents of the sacks into the swift waters that carried them away.

Meanwhile, from the other shore, a man watched an old woman wearing a ragged go pung gyan ma, gown, a worn hat and shoes, remove sacks from her mule, and empty glittering objects into the river. After she left, he went to the spot and saw them being swept away. He waded in and retrieved a gold box full of jewelry. He was baffled, and decided to see if the event repeated itself the next night.

This time Dechen decided to rid herself of all the gods and goddesses from her altar. It was a beautiful night as she stepped out of her house with her mule loaded down with sacks. The moon was almost full in its reflected radiance, bright and lovely despite its blemishes, its orb floating past a dark cloud edged with golden light as if pushed by the gentle breezes flowing down through high mountain passes.

As she arrived by the banks of the Dhauli River and unloaded a sack, a man came towards her. Dechen was dreadfully afraid: he was going to kill her and steal all her things! But the thought that disturbed her much more was: "I can't die now! I haven't lived yet!"

"What are you doing?" he asked her.

Dechen was stunned by his words. Nobody had ever taken the trouble to ask her, nor had she ever asked herself this question. His words came to her like a revelation, peeling away hardened scabs on the many wounds of her heart, allowing long-ignored feelings to seep through. She sat down on a boulder and burst into tears.

The man just stood by her and waited as she wept, letting the wave of her emotion break and pass, careful not to interrupt her tears with words.

Dechen looked up at him with swollen eyes. He was about the same age as she was; his overgrown hair and unkempt beard were grey, his mouth missing a tooth or two. Though he wore red velvet boots that came up to his knees, a *bakkhu*, long robe, an embroidered cap on his head, and spoke in her language, Hoon, there was something about his looks and his accent that told her he was not a local man. Because his eyes were gentle when he looked at her, she surprised herself by her instinctive choice to trust him.

"I am Terry, an Englishman. I have lived in these regions for over thirty years," he explained.

Dechen laughed out loud, something she hadn't done since she was a child.

"I thought you were a thief!" she laughed. "How foolish of me to fear losing that which I myself am dumping into the river!"

"Tell me why," Terry said.

Dechen burst into another heaving, wracking sobbing. Her madness had softened her to the point where she not only appreciated and valued, but craved real contact with a human being capable of listening with attention. Quieting down, she patted the boulder and invited him to sit by her.

"I'm very thirsty," she said. Terry fetched some water from the river in his *kapala*, a skull cup, which, along with a knife and a *kangling*, a horn made of a human femur, hung from his leather belt. Dechen was afraid again – the skull cup was an image from her nightmares. But her thirst made her reach for it and take a long draught.

Dechen told Terry her whole story. He listened without interruption as she spoke, wept, and opened up the sack of her heart, stuffed with sorrow and fear. He was silent a long time and then said to her.

"When I was in England, I too found myself buying too much, accumulating too much, consuming too much. When my marriage broke up – I have no doubt because of my own unconscious feelings about wanting more than I was getting in my marriage, I indiscriminately went through many women. Then one day I asked

myself the question, 'What hunger are you trying so desperately to fill?' The answer came to me with total clarity: all desperate hungers, like yours, like mine, seek only one food: the divine within and without us. All our striving must be to clear away the weeds that choke the divine inside us. When we find it inside ourselves, we find it reflected in the whole world."

Dechen was quiet.

"Let me see what you have brought to give away to the river today," Terry said.

Together they unloaded the sacks. Terry opened one of them and brought out the statue of Vajrayogini.

"Throw her away," Dechen exclaimed. "I hate her!"

Terry held it in his hand lovingly. Dechen once more questioned his motives, and once more laughed out aloud.

"Don't hate her," Terry said to Dechen. "She is your best friend, a guide, a heavenly messenger who has been speaking to you in your dreams and has come to bring you that which no money can buy: peace, joy, happiness, love."

"She hurt me terribly in my dreams!"

"They were the wounds inflicted by your perverse passions, Dechen."

"No, it was her! She tried to kill me! She did kill me!" Dechen cried.

"She kills our old, wornout selves that do not serve us any longer, like the tight skins of snakes, that have to be shed if we are to grow into our fullness. I have worshipped her for many years, not as a statue, which is only a representation and reminder, but as an energy that pervades the universe, an energy we have named Vajrayogini. She is the reason why I left England, where I was wealthy, but very unhappy, lost, confused, aimless, to come live in your land, abandoning my religion to find a home in yours. Vajrayogini tramples on distorted desires, worldly wealth, and the small, unconscious ego. She is the one who transformed my many material passions into the light of consciousness; now I live each moment with the awareness of the impermanence of everything, including my body. You already

know, I am sure, that drinking and eating from a human skull serves as a reminder of the dream-like nature of our bodies and possessions. Vajrayogini comes to destroy false illusions, delusions, ignorance, and bestows wisdom. She has blessed you by throwing her thunderbolt at you with full force; your wounds are invaluable; they will turn you towards the path of the Invisible Spirit, the dark and light filled, male and female primal energy of the universe; the energy of which all our lamas, rinpoches, gurus, gods and goddesses are emissaries. Open your heart wide and accept the death she is offering, Dechen; it is the beginning of new life."

Even though Dechen didn't understand everything he was saying, she listened intently. All her suffering had prepared her, like soil is prepared by the wounds of the plough, to receive the seeds of wisdom, our only true treasure, which transmutes lead into gold. She looked at Terry with tears in her eyes. Someone had finally taken the time to teach her her own religion, which was so rich in meaning.

"Are you married?" she asked, directly.

"No. I always thought spiritual development was more important than being a householder."

"And I have always thought that material possessions were more important than a family and love," she said, sadly.

"I have an idea," he said, sitting down on a mound and stroking his beard. "Instead of just dumping all your treasure in the river where it will be of no use to the fish, why don't you use your wealth to do some good?"

"Like what?"

"Let me see," he said, scratching his beard and looking thoughtful. "You know, so many pilgrims from so many countries and so many religions - Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Bonpo, Animists - come to Kailas every season. I myself have traveled to the holy mountain and done the kora more times than I can count. I can tell you from my own experience that the pilgrims have to brave many hardships on the way: hail, storms, snow, tornadoes, avalanches, blizzards, freezing cold, hunger, thirst, and countless other tribulations. I have had to sleep in hollows of ice to keep myself warm; the only habitations on the way are filthy and I couldn't rest in them because of the fleas and lice. Once I slept with lambs to keep from freezing. I have eaten whatever leaves I could find, and gotten diarrhea and a terrible upset stomach and lain on the snow encased in an inch of ice, my half-starved mule, collapsing with weakness and cold, lying next to me. Once it broke my heart to see the poor beast eating dry dung in his hunger."

Dechen saw tears in Terry's eyes as he recalled the event. She realized how her lust to accumulate, her avarice, greed and selfishness had hardened her heart so much that there was no room in it for others. She looked at her mule, standing by the river, loaded down with sacks full of heavy gold, and realized how little, if at all, she had thought about anyone but herself. But seeing the tears in Terry's eyes, her heart opened wide. Concentric circles of compassion radiated out from it to Terry, her mule, the hardships of the pilgrims and all the suffering people and creatures of the world.

"On my journeys," Terry continued, "I often wondered why there aren't any dharmashalas, buildings that provide food and shelter to pilgrims at points along the way. It would be such a caring thing to do. Think, Dechen, of how many dharmashalas we could set up on pilgrimage routes with all this wealth."

The we in his sentence made Dechen's heart leap into her mouth. "Yes," she said, happily. "Yes, let's do it."

Terry looked at Dechen. Her small, long face, unmistakably Tibetan, was a mass of wrinkles, her eyes grown smaller with age. He saw beyond it to a beauty that bordered on luminescence, as that of the moon. He smiled at the image of two-ratty looking people in ragged garments, both of flesh and dress, planning a future together.

Dechen looked at the old Englishman who looked like a tiger that had allowed time and age to work their magic on him, and felt a great warmth suffusing her heart.

In the long silence that followed as they sat under the stars, Terry removed the flute made of a human thigh bone from his belt, and began to play it. The, deep, haunting, eerie, harmonious sound singing its urgent reminder of our unshunnable journey to bone and ash, drove home its message and dissolved whatever doubts and resistance remained in Dechen.

They loaded the sack with the gold divinities onto the mule again and tied them down.

"Come," he said, turning the mule around to face the village. "Let's give some of this away to needy people, make our plans for the dharmashalas, and get you some nice garments to wear. This is no way for a rich lady to dress."

"I have many," Dechen said. "But they may be all moth-eaten by now"

Day was dawning as they walked together to her house in the village. Released of her heavy burden, Dechen's steps were light and buoyant as she walked straight and tall beside Terry in the early morning. As the sun poured liquid gold on the trees and rooftops of houses, Dechen, vibrantly aware of the fleeting nature of all phenomena, including herself, looked at everything with new eyes. She found reality pulsing with an intensity she had never felt before.

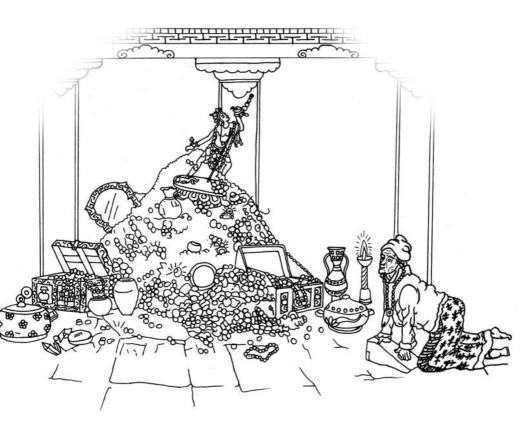
A sweet love, the kind that can only happen later in life when youthful passions are spent, sprang up between the two people who had known aloneness so intimately. Together, Dechen budhi and Terry budha worked towards their goal, building well-stocked dharmashalas for pilgrims in Darma, Tibet and in the Humla, Jumla and Bajhang areas of Nepal. If a pilgrim looks closely at the surroundings of a temple in Darma, she can see a weathered statue of Dechen budhi, the woman who transformed from a dragon hoarding treasure to a compassionate being capable of sharing and caring for those in need.

### र्झे.झे.चने.कुवी

-5555

क्रीशा प्रटिकानु स्वान्तर्याक्ष्यः क्राच्याकान्तः च्रीत्राव्यक्ष्यः क्ष्याः स्वान्तः स्वान्तः स्वान्तः स्वान्त द्वा वर्ने क्ष्यः क्ष्ये अस्तरः क्षेत्रः क्ष्यः क्षयः क्ष्यः क्षयः कष्यः क्षयः कष्यः कष

क्री विश्व स्थाप्त स्थापत स्य स्थापत स्य स्थापत स्य



क्क्र्यमान्यायाम्यायदे तुन्येन हेना धेन स्रम्यमा देयायमा क्रुवित्र स्ट्रिन्य क्रिया ষ্ট্রবাধ্যর্ম হার্টুসা

नने क्रेत क्री अर्दे र वें र अर्दे र वें र प्रेंट वें र प्रतेय क्रु र दें र नन्न हं अड़ व प्रतः | इअर्था सर्वेद'नग्न'त्य'र्सेन्यस'मदे'ख्र'सू'ख्रुंकेंन्यस'स'न्यस्य प्याप्य न्यान्य होन्'नविद'र्सेन्। देस'मस्य ॊॕढ़ॱॺॖ॔ॱॺॖऀॱॺॖॕॣऺ<del>ॸ</del>ॱज़ॕ॒ॸॴॖॴॱॺ॓ॸॴढ़ॴॸॸॱॺॏॱॴॱॾॕॱॶऀॸॱॺऻॶॴॴॴॻॹॖज़ॱॸऻढ़॓ॱॾॕॺऻॱ <del>ફ</del>ેવા'વાશુંસ'ક્**ત'** શુૈ'[ઘર'મલે 'દેવા'ર્કેવા', દુઃખેંદ'મલે 'ફ્ર" 'દુદ'| સ'ર્સેવાસ' શુૈ 'દેવા', દું સુસ' દ્વેત્ર' बुदःर्षेदःसन्देत्। देःद्वाःश्रेशःसन्नेशःसदेःकेदःवःद्युवाशःददः। वाधवाःस्वाःयःर्शेवाशःर्ङ्काः द्युवायायोत्रायात्रम् त्राप्तायम् वित्राचीत् क्षेत्रायाः या या दे क्षाव्यायाः स्त्रीत् स्त्रीत् स्त्रीत् स्तर *चवै:सु:*भे:से:भ्रुवाश:स:बेवा:फॅट्:स:ने:न्नु:वाष्यर:ग्रुश:स:सेट्रा

र्रे के भी के जो के जिल्ला के स्मित्र के लेक के लेक के लेक के के लेक र्बेट्यार्थन मुळे अपने के प्रतामन माने करा है। यस माने अपने के प्रतामन माने के प्रतामन माने के प्रतामन माने के याश्वरम्भी द्वार्यम् वितायह्वार्श्याश्वरम् वित्रस्थायित्तर्भेश्वरम् स्वरम् वित्रस्थाय नगुन देवे भ्रेट विंट सें अ र्वेट नायेन री क्रान्त है नये द्ये नये नये नये स्थान कर विना नर्डेट वर्जे नड्नामा कट दे नावत दट से वर्ज नर विट में हैं विमान में मानद नदे नहें · क्षेट्रशः नृदः खुदः प्रदे । सुद्रशः नवदः नवदे त्रशः नृदः । श्चरः क्षु। सः ससः मधिः सर्वद्वे त नवे कु त्रुवाश दश वर्षेश सूत्रश भे अरार्षेश करारे क्या पर्दा में वा त्रुस में श्री श्री सार् यतः वें प्येन् प्रान्ता भूना प्रमानम् वत् नाति ह्रेन्या प्यतः ना वें खुनाय वे तु वाया प्येन् क्रेन्य वेन् स्रायत चैर है। लीया योट सार्थ स्राप्ति स्थाते करा हुं सम्पूर स्थापय तक्र एव स्थापि विद्या र्विट:ब्रॅवे:कट:वी:देव:वॅट:wट:देश:घश:दधर:हे (वें:ब्रॅ:ध्रुवा:वर्वा:डेवा:हु:ब्यू:र्

*ব*Է৾ॱक़ॆढ़ॱक़ॖॖॖॖॖॖॖॖढ़ॱॸॖॺॱॿॺॱॺॊ॔ॺॱक़ॖॖॖॖॖॖॖॖड़ॱख़ॺॱऄॸॱॺॗॸॺॱऄॸॱॺॗॱक़ॆढ़ॱय़ॕढ़ॆॱॸॸॱऄॸॱॺॖऀॸॱ ८८:अक्अ.री.चर्चू.त्रिचा.ट्र्यूश.वीटा. हूर्य.क्ट.ट.के.चर्याच्य.की.ट्याय.टल.वाट.लट.श्रेट. <sup>.</sup>ગ્રદ્મનર્મો ત્વર્ગુશ્વરા તું કું કે સ્દાના બેશ સાના તુશા સાથે માટે મિર્ફો ક્રોર્સે કું કું કું કું કું કું કુ विरायदे दिया हु निहार वार्य राष्ट्र वार्य राष्ट्र वार्य राष्ट्र वार्य राष्ट्र विराय राष्ट्र विराय राष्ट्र विराय हे.स.क.र्ह्रेट.स.जैवा.मुटी *टेटिज.सॅस.स.स.स्*यूत.ट्यूस.यपु.स.यपु.या<u>य</u>स.कॅटस.कवास.सॅटना पूर. ૹૼ૱ૡૢઽ੶ઌ૽૽ઽ૽ૡૢ૽૽૾ૡૢૢ૽ઌૢૻ૱૱૽૽ૢૺ૱ૣૡ૽ૼૠઽઌ૽૽ૢ૽૽ઌઽ૱ઌૢૺ૱ઌ૽૽૾ૡ૽૾ઌ૽૱ૡૢૹ૱ૢૢૻૢૢૢૢૢઌ૽૱૽ૺઌૺ૱ૹૺઌ वयाञ्चेरासुन्यहरावरायाचन्। सराहेनाञ्चासुवायावळे वरासुवादादान्,म्यार्वेरावदेः 

२.२८. खेर. सपु. बर. ब्रिट. ब्रु. प्रु. क्रि. ब्रू. र. लूट श. क्र्या भा भी भा भू र. य. र. र. । ४८ वा ४ वा भा *ढ़*ज़ॖॱऄॳॱय़ॿॳॱय़ढ़ॆॱॸॖॏॕ॒ज़ॱज़ढ़ॺॱॾॗ॓॓॔॔ॺॱढ़ॺॱॸ॓ॱॸज़ॱढ़ॖॎॸॴॱऄॣ॓॓॓॔ॺॱक़ॆ॓ॸॱऄ॔ॱऄ॔ढ़ॆॱज़ॆ॔॔ॺॱक़ॆढ़ॱ

र्श्रेन्यान्ध्रयाञ्चरान्ध्रयात्रयान्दराहेन्य्रेयान्तरान्त्र्यान्त्र्यान्त्र्यान्त्र्यान्त्र्यान्त्र ·र्वेन्रप्तदे मुक्तिम्बीकार्थस्य सम्बद्धान्य प्रति । स्वति । स

नने केत य में राज्येन ने दे तर में ज्ञार में प्रस्में ज्ञार में ज्ञार में राज्य में रा चॅ्याया संस्थित त्यात स्थित स्थान स्थित स्थान स् शुः र्षेदः वा दे द्रवा वी शः स्ट हिदः वा द्रवादः श्चे द्रवा स्रोदः श्चे द्वः शुः र्षेद्रा वदे रक्के द्रवा द्रवा विनाः सूर नर्वे अवस्य ५५ द्वा सुरु स्य व्यक्तिय निव र्षेत्।

नरे केंद्र से रें इंस्तुय दुः से ज्ञारय दर क्षेत्रय र्या विस्यान विरादः सुदा से दियानीया देव क्रेव नार्थ र दर्ग नासी वै दे सूर्यायात्र करा चीच सह स्त्री क्षेत्र होता सहर | विं:श्रॅश:श्रॅं:श्रंदे:रट:ब्रिश:ब्री:ब्रॅंग्वश:लॅटश:य:द्रिय:इसशःग्रॉंग्:यहॅग्:ब्रश:लॅट्:ग्रटा *ॸ्*र्रेशःशुःषम्।नःपळटःदशःधेनःश्चेंदःश्चेःशःशःवन्त्वानश्यश्यादशःश्चवःळदेःनेपाशःवः वर्देन:संक्रितःसं क्रीश

૽૽ૺ૽ૄ૱ૄૻૺઌૼૹૼ૱ૹૼૹ૽ૼૺ૽ૡૡઌ૽૽૽ૺૢ૿ૢૼઌૢૹઌ૽ૼઌૹૹૹઌૹ૾ૢૼઌ૽૾ૡ૽૾ઌ૱૱ૢઌૻ૽૱૱ઌૹ૽ૼૹઌ देटा कु:गर-५८१ कु:दग वयाध्ययावरुषायाम्येर-५८:देदाळेदावळेंवावराध्रीदा र्वेदःगर्भेनःतृष्ट्वेरःर्वेग्। वेदःभ्रुनभ्। इःरशःन्डनःरयःविग्।गोवदःतुःवव्यशःददः। व्रेःनः र्श्रवायाची अद्भार्त मिदाकर मा अप्तारी श्रियाची अप्राम्भ मित्र मित्र के स्वास्तान स्वाप्त स्वाप्त स्वाप्त स्वाप रातु.सैंसा.सै.क्ष्र्यांना ध.मेची न्यहं य.मेची भु.मेच.त्यव्या.टेटा ब्रूटालेंदुःसै.यर्थेय.सै.क्ष्र्यांना वित्रार्येत्यात्राज्ञन्। विर्धेशर्तेत्रास्त्रेत्रास्त्रह्मात्रह्मात्रह्मात्रह्मात्रास्त्रेत्रात्रास्त्रात्रह्म <u> देर स्वापानाशुक्षारे प्रकलाद्यानापार प्रमृता हो दानिदार्थे दाला श्लाप्त हुन दे द्वाप्य पादका</u> इं.हं.रटा, रचिरश.१४ अर.धूर.ये.ह.इंट.य.श्वा योषय.लट.सें.यूर्धेय.वोषय.वुरा. नुर्देतः मुनः हेना सुवः प्येन। नने रहेतः मुभार्ते रः युः नक्षु नवे र्वे रः यः में हे वसन् यः सेवे सु नह्रद्र'वेना'ग्रुट'नह्यु'र्षेद्र'व्र्य'र्षेद्र'य'रेर'द्रेशन्यायायस्य मनुद्र'श्वायाद्रवा'र्येवे:र्छेर्यंत्र' वैर्ययग्रम्पयम् म्यास्यास्य भीता स्रीता स्रीतास्य स्याप्त स्यापत स्यापत स्याप्त स्यापत देवे:श्लु:ळ्याप:य्वय:पा:यळंद:र्रा:यर्षेटा। वसवाय:य्रेवे:युवा:वापय:पा:देर:य्रो:ग्वाविवा: नश्रूयंत्र'र्षेद्र'य'द्रद्र'वार्षेद्र'य'देर'ग्'य'थे'वेवा'नश्रूययाद्रय'येदे श्रेद्र'व्ययार्द्रे 'नर्भेद्र निवदार्थित्। धेरुवर्षापरिवर्धिसानेरान्स्युरिदाक्वेर्द्धान्यार्धेन्सूनसासर्केन्यार्भेद्धानेदेः क्षेट्रास्त्रुप्त सुद्राचल्या या रेट्रा

यरे.क्रुय.ग्री.म्र.क्र्.रेस.ब्र्स.चेर्द्र.स्वाय.क्रुं.ग्री.दर्। यत्यसःग्री वादर.म्र.यर्च्च.ग्री.ववशः त्याकुः क्वेन्यार सं विहें र द्वे या स्वया भ्रान्या ने तर विवाहिर हे र सके निये हैं विवाह

त्यश्रासद्यामु सेन्प्रम् खुश्यामु र्व्या प्रम्भूतश्रामे स्टाईन् र्व्याश्राम् केत्राम् मे मुन्त्रा म क्तुदःर्सेनार्यःकुदःकः यननार्याद्यस्य देनः सुद्धैः सेनार्यः धूदः चीः सेः विदः देवे द्वदः धूः यदिवा सि शुषु विष्युत्र विष्युत्तार वर्ष्केर प्येत् श्चित्र प्राप्त मुर्जेर रहे वर्ष स्रोत् श्चित्र स्राप्त श्चित्र स्र ક્રુેના ને નવેત્ર માઉલ છે. ત્રાંતા કરાયા કર્યા કર્યા કર્યા છે. ત્રાંતા કર્યા કરી કરી કરી કરી કરી તામ કરી કરી ત म्.कं.वीर.धीर।

भैयश्चेर्यस्त्रेच्यन् कुर्यस्त्रेश्चर्यस्त्रेच्यत्त्रम् स्त्रेच्यत्त्रम् स्त्रेच्यत्त्रम् त्यानर्वो निक्तान क्षान्या हे प्यान निष्या में मानिक विवासी कारी मानिक स्थानी

नने केंद्र क्षे अन्य संदेशियर संदेश्वर प्राप्त स्था हो न स्थान्त नार्धे नार्थे (वः न्या स्था सर्देन र्थेन्'ग्रुर्न ने'न्वा'य'धेन्'ळे अ'न्ना क्वेंअ'य'विय'वर्नेव नर्नेत्र रूर हेन्रर्नेव के वर्षेव कें विर्धीर लूरे ली प्रिं मुंदर भूर रहे हैं की भाकी पूर्य की प्रमा विष्टे वी विकास माने में माने माने શ્રેંત્રે ત્રદ<sup>ા</sup> ફ્રીય નુ ન વદ ન કરેં ત્ર ભૂ તુ ર શે : સ્ટ્રેંન 'ગા સેન નુ . શૂ રા

*'*ફેત્ર'લેવા'વને 'જેત્ર'ાવન ધાયાશું અર્જેવા'વો 'અન્વઃવાબન'ત્ત્રય 'ર્શેન'વાએન'ત્તન'વો 'ટીઅ'ન ૉર્વે સેવેઃએઅઅઃતુદ:ર્જેન:શ્રુદ:એન્:ઘંદે:એઅઅઃર્જેન:વાઅન:ઘઃલેવા:શ્રુેઆ ધોત;તુ:પ્પદ:૬:હદ: लीलासुषुःक्ष्र्र-ताःबुधाःभ्रीयातात्वयायाबयःयाह्न्द्राट्यायःयमःश्रीमःभ्रीयया वस्रवासमःबरायः क्षुत्रायात्रयात्रायाः स्वाप्यत्रायते पत्रायत् स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः श्रेंशशःयोश्,यदुः इ.य. भ्रेंशो प्र्रा<u>शुः कुरः विसः भिरः वी</u> क्र्यू र या देसः भ्रें क्र्यू र दे त्या वीशः য়য়ৼ৽য়৾৻৻য়য়ৄয়৽য়৽ড়৾ৼ৽য়ৣ৻৽ড়য়৽ঢ়ৢ৽য়৾৽য়৾য়৽য়৾য়৽য়৻য়৽য়ড়য়ঢ়ৼঢ়ঀ৾৽য়ৢয়৽য়ৼৼ৽ঀ৾৽ અર્વેદિઃર્કેના<sub>'</sub> ફુઃસૂન્ય ત્રયઃર્સે ઃસેંદે ઃલુઅઃસેંદે ઃન્તુ યાત્રયા વદેનાયા ચૂનઃચૂતઃવદે ઃસૂંનઃવા 'ಹેત્ર'ર્સે : ૾ૡૺઌૺ<sup>ૢ</sup>ઌ૽ૹૢૺ૾ૹ૾ૢ૽ઽૢૺૡ૾૽ૡઽૻૠૼૹ૾ૢઌૼૡૢૻૣ૽ૼૼૼૼઌૹઌૹ૽ૄ૽ઌઌ૽૽ૡ૽ૺૼ૾ૹ૽ૼઌૹૢૼઌૢ૽ૹૢૺઌૢઌઌઌ૽૽ૼૹૼૹૹૼૹ૽ૼૡ૽ श्रेषशः क्षेत्रः या वृत्तिः वतः प्राप्ते वितः वितः वितः वीशः त्युतः वा व्युतः वित्रास्त्र वितः वितः वितः वितः व 

धोद दायार कि से नार्येद से रासुका दुका सुदा सामद विना सिन् मारे से साम सुने मानेद नम् अवन् व्यानम् विकायम् अत्यानम् विकायम् अत्यानम् विकायम् वर्श्वेषायवे उप्तर्देशयास्य स्यास्य दुर्ने कुर्ने प्येष्य सम्यास्य देता ने मायहेष विराधिका स्वरं रवा मुन्तुर प्रते क्र वर्षिया द्वा भे वा नेवा ही भे ह्व हिंद देश श्वर प्राप्त उन्हें शहें हुते नर्भूर-नर्भूर-तर्भुद्द। र्विःस्थान् द्वनाद्वर्यान्यायुःधे उर्द्र्यान्दरःक्वतः स्रुव्हेन्यार्वेद्वर्याः त्या ५ हे में भे ५४ (Tajikistan) दश र्श्वेश भेत्य की खेर या कु यार दश कु ५ ५८ हा

ढ़ॖऀॴॱॺॊॱऒऀॱॹॖॖॖॖॖॸॱढ़ॕॴढ़ॺॱॸॸॱॿॖॎऀॴॸॖ॔ॱऄॖॸॱऒऀॴॱऄॖॸॱऒॣॸॴढ़ॊॕॸॱॶढ़॓ॱॸ॓ॴॺॱॸऻॸॕॴॸ॓ॱऄॗॸॱ ॷॸॴक़ॗॱऒऀॸॖॱॸॱॸ॓ॸऻ

यने छेनाया यने छेनाया यने छेन् श्री अश्रे छेन् श्री अवान्दर्न स्थान हैं या स्थान स्

द्रीयाः चेत्रस्रे द्रीयाः स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्व भूत्रसः स्वाप्ति स्वापति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वापति स्वापति

यश्यः स्वान्त्रश्यात्र्यः स्वान्त्रः स्वान्तः स्वान्त्रः स्वान्तः स्वान्तः

यहेत्र.योषट.लटा प्रि.शूर.तहेयाश्वाहेत्य.तायुर्ध.ताश्वाहेत्य.श्वेश.योष्ट्र.योश्वेश.योष्ट्र.योश्वेश.योष्ट्र.योश.योष्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.वेश.योप्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्ययाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्रयाश.योपट्ट्ययाश.य

व्हेव लिंग हे सु पार्रे व लिंग सु प्या सु प्येत के व में एवं पर में प्राप्त स्वा पर हो पर हो पर से पर से पर स अर्केन् सुया हे से में मार्थे प्येन्स या ही कान्त्री साम्रीन प्यान स्वता स्वता से साम्यान स्वता स्वता स्वता स જુતુ. મૈં. શૂ.મ.એય. તુવા ગ્રામાં કાર્યા મૈંમ. જુમ. તૈ. શ્રેં. જીમ. શ્રેં. ચેનજા ગ્રેને. ત્રલુષ. र्षेर्-रावे-रुभ-रेर-भुगिर्भेष्य-तुः क्रुर-प्रमानिर्हेर्-ग्रुभा

वनमः वि.च.र्चा चीमः से हेद्र रेर रेर वि.वी. रेर में विषा रेटा से कर्म से किया वि 'सैकायदुः ईशासिबीकारका सुनिर्ति पात्रा देश सुनिराय स्थासिका स्यासिका स्थासिका स्थासि सॅर-पाव-विशन्तवेश हेश व्यून-व्यून-पर-देशपश्चान-विद-वि; शेशश्चर्यान्यस्य ह्यूं-श्चिवं द्रावार श्चिवं नर्ग्या स्वतः श्चिम् नाम्यान्ति श्चित्वं स्वायाः स्वतः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स्वायाः स र्ट्स् अ.श्र.कें. ने . बिवाया सेवया सवी क्वा त्य से स्था स्था सवी क्वा त्य से स्था स्था सवी क्वा त्य से स्था स लर. भुष्ट. सुर्वा विश्व स्त्रीय विश्व स्त्रीय वीशःक्षेत्राःवारःपरःसःवाशुरुरायसः।वयः।वरःयव्याशःवर्यःदर्वोदशःसदेःवरःवारःविताः वाश्चर-दर्वो राज्येव चार्ज्ञवा वादर-वो प्येन् नास्य विदेश्वर विद्यार स्थेव वादर-वादर। देवे हेरा ૡ૽ૺૼૼૼૼૼઽ૽૽૽૽ૹૡૣૻઽૣ૽ૺૹૡ૽ૢ૽ૢ૽ૢૢૢૢૢૢૢઌૻૻ૱ૻૹૺૹૹઌ૽૽ૼૹ૽ૹ૽૽૱ૹઌૹઌૹઌઌ૽૽૱ૡ૽૱૱ૹઌ૽૽૱ૡ૽ૺ*૾*ૢૹૡ ૹૢેનઅઃબૅનઃૹૣૅનઃ<sub></sub>વાશુદઅઃશૅદઃલેઅઃક્ષુનઃસ્નુનઅૄ તિં'શૅવે'એસઅઃવઃનઅસઃધ્યુવઃવઅઃવદ્નઅઃ राषु.श्रेट.य.खुची.चैट.यंशी रट.एक्स्.श्र.चुय.रा.के.येर.एचीर.यंश.सीचाराच्या.कुय.सूचा.टे. . अन् र्नेन् विरोधेर सेसस्य दरार साम्रे के नावे नानी सेरान सेना पर्हे ना वुसाम दे कुर्ने साने . . द्या क्किंग प्रमुद्द : इत्या क्षे : त्द्वा ख़ुक्य : द्वे : क्षे का प्रमुद्ध : क्षे का क्षेत्र : क्षे : क्षे दर्रेट्. ये. पर्या श्रुप्यित्र रमायाः विवा च कु प्यूर्य ये प्रिरमार् वामावे मार्येर শ্বন্ধন

व्यूर्यश्यसः श्रेटः श्रुवः श्रुवेः प्रवापः स्थापः स्थान्तः स्थान्तः स्थान्तः स्थान्तः स्थान्तः स्थान्तः स्थान् "<sup>1</sup> કિર્- પ્રદાયા ભૂરા તાલું કે પૂરા ભૂર માર્ કે પ્રાપ્ત માર્કે તો માર્કે છે. તું તે કે સૈવુ પ્રદાયા ભીવો. नर्वेश ने क्षेत्र तहिन क्षे त्राव पत्के कु क्षा नहिन ने निर्मा के मान्य के मान्य के मान्य के मान्य के मान्य के

यर् छेद'ग्री अर्दे कें अरअरवगर्से से अरेश छे या देवा या से वा वहें वा ग्रु अर्ध दे कु हैं र दे न्ना द्धवे वर न्ना धुना कुवे नक्ष अर्ज्जे नार्ने र भूनका नर छेन् इन्नार्ने र पुः श्री व रावे खूर न प्टन् दे दे भुं हेत दर्मिं वी पार्श्व भुं राष्ट्रिय पार्श्व भार्ति अदि कुर्दे राम्यया उदायमें भूं रा नश्चीं हिंद चि कुंदु वनमा निवार दानमा निवार दे निवार के विवार के विवार के विवार के विवार के विवार के विवार के यम्भभा र्यातियायाराद्यासूराई गार्यासूर्यं स्थामानामा हो यायमास्या हे विदाहे र्षेचा.धे.शूर.क्षेत्रश्चध्या.रशिर.रटा.वालू.रची.ल.हारशःश्चर.शिशःधी शक्ष्यःशू.खुवा.धूँ.यीर. र्<sup>\*</sup>तॅर-तुॱवेन'यॱर्वे र-तुःवे रेन्।याक्ष्यःग्रे ।वयः क्वनःग्रेनानञ्जयः द्वाराक्षयः कुर्वः दरः नाश्चा कुदे मना नार्केन द्वारा प्रतान दर्भ वर्ष प्रतान कुन कि स्वराम कुन कि स्वराम प्रतान कि स्वराम स्वराम स्व न्यान्ता वायेरकी तुसामा वार्येयाहरे प्याक्रयार्थेवायार्वेत तुरावयानभ्रयानारेता

સહંતુ: ၎૾ગ્રીવ: વાસી: શું અ' ગ્રુદ: ભૂ: અવિતુ: સેનુ: પ્રતે: 'સુન અ ફ્રિ: પેર્નુ- 'ગ્રેએ: વર્લે અ' વર્લે: વસ: નુ दरः उन्देशिं ने नवा वाधुवा क्रुर चे व्हें अव वन्त्रेव क्षेत्र भ्रम्म श्री क्रुर से स्टर्सेन प्रवेश के विवा वीथार्चीदार्चीयान्यक्रान्यार्चीदार्यक्षेत्रस्थान्यार्थे हिया विदान्ति स्ट्रीट स्ट्री स्ट्रीट स्ट्रीट स्ट्री स्ट् केंब्र<sup>ॱ</sup>केंब्र'केंब्र'ची'ठ'नर्देश्र'वि'त्रश्य कुदेव्दर'वाधुवाब्र'न्य बर्वेद्र' हेंब्रेंब्रेंने 'श'क'ने द्वर्श वेद क्षेप्टेप्स्यायस्य स्था करेरा वर्षे द्राष्ट्रीय स्था क्ष्या प्रात्तर प्रविदार्थे प्राप्ते करेरे या देशा देशा ह योश्र-मी.मीथ.क्षा.प्रेटश.सपु.सैश.कैट.कैट.बुची.क्ष्-ाजुच.सीच.स.टटी पूर्ता.येटाशटश. वशासर हेव सळव से श्चरप्पर ने स्ट्रर पेंद्र से द स्ट्रा कुर वना न उदा

· અદ'ફેત્ર'દ્દેન:વદ્દે: ત્રેત્રન શું અઃ અર્જેદ્દ: વાર્ને અઃ શું ઃ વૃઃ દ્દારા દ્વેત્ર ઃ સુઃ નક્ષ્ત્ર ઃ બેંદ્દ અઃ ફેં વા અઃ श्रेर्यान्त्रं मुं नुष्य र्वेद्यंत्रेर स्ट्रास्य प्राम्य प्राम्य प्रम्य प्रम्य विद्यान मुंद्र ૡૂં Łતકૂં શતવું, ત્રાથ્વ્યે સુતું, ભૈતા હું દશાયા કું શર્ફ્યા ત્રેયા તેયા તે પ્રાત્ત્વે ત્યાં શતવા ને . વર્ષે कुर-क्रीचानाः कुतुः सहर-श्रुचनाः देशाद्यः राज्यः त्याचराचीरः नुभा विर्मिति हे प्रविभाशुः से विषा सेन भारति । यहे के समी न भारति । विषा से प्रतिभागी । नसद्वराक्तुः हेर् दर्भः द्वाप्पेरसः हेवाराक्तुः वदेवसः सूराक्षेत्रा विदः सेदेः नससः ह्विदेः बर्ट्स् न्त्रं के ब्राय्योगां ने स्राप्ते हो प्राप्ते के माले बर्ग क्रे माले वर्ष क्रुं माले क्रिं क्रिं के बर् ने'नशक्षेत्रश्चरस्यरःतु:ध्वेता

*क्षे'नेश्र'नने':केत्र'*या "<u>व्विन'स्त्याप्ते':ब्रेन्'क्</u>रेप्येना" हेश्य<u>'</u>देश नने'केत्यपन'नस्त्री' જીયા. મારા મુજાય માલે માર્ચિત્ર માર્ચ માર્ द्या<sup>.</sup>खुदः नश्चद्रः श्वःतुर्यार्वे स्रेतिः स्रावः सदः नतेः श्वेदः वीः सवार्यायः सन्तर्यः द्वेदः श्वेदः विदर्यः *शु*ॱॲ॔॔ॸॱय़ढ़॓ॱऄॺॴक़ॕॖ॔ॸॱख़ॱॾॣॕॸऺॴॸॷॎॱय़ॖॱक़ॴॴ॒ढ़ॕॎॸॱक़ॕॱॸॕॗॱढ़ॏॴॱॻ॓ॱॺॗ॓ॸॱॸ॔ॖॱॸॺ॒ॸ॔ॱॸ॓ ·ॳ्वाशःइवाः केतः वें शःदुशा क्षेः देशः क्षेत्राः वाहेवाः ग्राहः सः वाहें दः सरः वाहे : क्षेत्रः ग्रीः सूवाः वाह्यः लूरशर्ड्याश्राशंश्रशामी ही मात्राह्य नमारी जारशायशामिती

नयाः विश्वाश्चीश्वाशः र्हेना र्हेना रहेना नी स्नुहार नुस्ता स्वार स्वार है स्वार स्व यायळरामाती विमार्योम् हेरायमे रहेदायायमा मिर्से रामानमामन सुना मामारी रामी रामारी ढ़ॖढ़ऀॱढ़ॸॱॺॏॱॶॱख़ॕॸॱॺढ़ॱॾॕॺऻॴॱक़ॗॱॺ॓ॸॱॴॸॱऒऀॸॱॴॸ॓ॸऻ*ॖ*ॏॸॱॸढ़॓ढ़ॱॸ॓ॱख़ॕॱढ़ॾॕॱॸक़ॗॺॱढ़ॼॕॱ देशरेन्। ने प्रश्नेन हे नियान दे वियान हर दानार पर पर्ने मुन्या पर हे माया ઌ૾ૻૼઽ૽ૹૄૢ૾ૢ૽૾ઌ૾ૻૼઽૻઌ૽૽૱ૻઌ૽ૻઽૡ૱ૡ૽ૺૼૼૼૼઌ૿ઌ૽ઌ૽૽ૹૢ૾ઽઌ૽૽ૺ૾ઌ૽૽ૼઽૢઌ૱ૡ૽ૺૹઌ૽૽૾ૺૹ૾૽૱ઌ૽ૢ૿ૹઌ૱ૡ૱ૡ૽૾ૺૺૺ भैयमा यमः क्रियाम् अयम् मुस्ति । स्थानि अः
र्ह्वेज्ञश्चादःश्चल्या वादशःदेतः
देः
केःशःवादशःवञ्जेदः
शःविदश्वेदः
श्वेरः
श्वेरः र्थेन् भनारेन्। विंदः कें ते त्रदः यन्दा हेत् ह्या हेता होना वेंत्र वें हेना हाना वेंत्र वें होना होने होने होन रदेः ५ सम्बर्धेरः यामिने मान्या मार्या स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्ते स्वाप्त चारकार्यरा मुन्त श्रिराज्क्या चारकार्यमा मार्यका यम्भूकार्म्याचारम् स्वास् मूर्यस्थित्वराष्ट्रम् वर्ष्यस्थात्रेष्यः श्रीरायाराज्यम् वर्ष्यस्य वर्ष्यस्य यन्ते हो। वर्षे वायन्तर हिः भेवा वीयावित्यार्थेत्। बेदया भेवा र बेत्रा वया वया दया देते हेत <u>चुःक्षेॅ्वाशनः ने प्रतः सहसान् । हिवापाल भृष्याणें प्राप्तेवा कृष्ट्रेच सान्या वें प्राप्ते प्राप्त सा</u> त्रर्चे स. ब्रनः स. क्रम स. स्मेनस र स्मित्रेस स्थान सहस र दे स्मानस स. स्मेनस स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स बेशःश्रेषाःयः सक्केः सस्यावेरसः तस्यः यदस्यः सवैः श्चेरः नःयः स्वेरः न्त्रः स्वेरः नुस्य नदेः केदः स्वीर्यः रट.क्षेट्.क्चे.क्चे.ब्र्.क्ट्रश.क्चेंट्र.ट्राचार्यायार्थायाञ्चयाचीक्चेत्र.वर्ट्रट्र.व.क्ट्र.क्चट्रायट्र.वर्ण्य यदे र्वेचे.ज.चन्नन्राष्ट्रं चर्ट्रट क्रिंदु र्वेश क्रूटे लट वैट मु.चर्या प्रमानिक क्रिंग् प्रमानिक वि र्टिज्, ब्री भाषटभाराषु विकान्ये सेवाराषु सूर्यः देरायक भाष्ट्रायेषु द्रायेषु हे भाषा विकासि वियाने कार्या होता है । विवास कार्या है विवास के कार्या की अध्यान है । बिराविर:प्र:प्र:केर:क्री:क्री:वेर:बी पे:यबिय:यविश्व:यक्षींप:य:यवश्य:विश्व:यियी: ૹૢૢ૾ૺ૱૱૱ૡ૽૱ૹ૽ૢૺઽૡઽ૽ૡ૾ૺ૱ઽૹૺૹ૱૱૱૽ૣ૱ૢઌઌૹઌૹૹ૽૽ૼૡઌ૱ઌૡ૱ૡૺ૱ઌ૽ૼ૬ राक्षरायाशेयशायावित्र

नग्-विभाग्नीभासु-सम्बद्धाः दार्के नाद्यभानभूनः सार्वे नुभाषानः सार्वे नुभाषानः सार्वे नुभाषानः सार्वे निक् र्षेत्। नने क्रेत यम्भ। नर्मे रमामान्यवेष प्राप्त ने मेरायने मर्षेत्र मर्थे कुर्ते माने प्राप्त का द्धार्मे अपन्ते स्वेद्धार्मे क्षेत्र स्वाद्धार्मे स्वया स्वेद्धार्मे स्वया स्

त्रिया मिट क्षेत्र क्

चे न्याचित्र चित्र क्षाचित्र क्षाचित्र क्षाचित्र क्षाच्या क्षाच्य

वैरा वश्रास्त्रश्रेस्य स्वर्ध्य स्वर्धा स्त्री स्वर्धा स्वर्धा स्वर्धा स्वर्धा स्वर्धा स्वर्धा स्वर्ध्य स्वर्ध स्वर्ध स्वर्ध्य स्वर्ध स्वर्य स्वर्ध स्वर्ध स्वर्य स्वर्ध स्वर्य स्वर्य

त्रमा निर्देशकात्मान्य स्त्री क्षेत्रमान्य स्वयानी स्वाप्त स्वयानी स्वयान स्वयानी स्वयान स्वय

ૡૺૠ૾૾૱૽૽૽૽ૹ૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽ૢૼૡૹ૽ૢૼૡઌ૽ૼૡૡ૽ૹ૽ૼૹ૽ૼઌૡ૽૽ૹ૽૱ૡૡૹ૽ૼૹ૽ૢૼઌઌ૽ૹઌ૽ૺૹઌ मर्बिद दुवे यर र्क्टे यथ नम्य नवे नहे न्र राय रेवा महिता महरू रेवे के दुवा पर्वे नद्वम्याग्रीया वह्यान्त्रीरायार्धेम्यानारायात्रयान्त्रयान्त्र्भेरार्धेरायदे नेत्र्गीयात्रयात्रे पिया पृर्श्वे खेत्र विनश्च (वृष्ट निर्मान क्रिया सामा निर्मा प्रतासी विष्य क्षिया विना हिया विना सामा विच, विच, ज्यात्र्यं दे, यदुः योष्ट्र अ. दे, द्या जाला द क्षे ज्ये दे विदः यक्षे या अ. या क्रू यो दे यो हो यो व શું ભયતાના નલિયા મહેયા મૃત્યા ફિરાયા છે યા શું શું શાળા માના ત્રાંત્ર માને કર્યા તાલે કર્યા છે. કર્યા તાલે કર્યો चेव्यायाः सुर्वायाः वादः यदः विदाराः याद्याः वाद्याः विदाराः विद्याः वाद्याः विद्याः वाद्याः विद्याः वाद्याः व होरानविदार्थेरामारेता

## The Color of the Name

 $-\infty$ 

The villagers of Kudang, a mix of Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, Bonpo, Pagans and Animists, with antecedents from India, China and Tibet, and indigenous people, were poor, old, sick, physically incapacitated and chronically hungry. Not much grew in the highlands and food was scarce. Even their goats and yaks were skinny and did not yield much milk. In the winter, the small lake froze and it was arduous work to dig up ice with their feeble bodies and heat it with fuel that was hard to come by. They felt helpless, bereft, abandoned by life because of they feared sins committed in their previous lives, to which were added sins from the current one. They felt trapped in an endless round of accumulations of bad karma.

The main cause of their unhappiness was their frustration about their inability to undertake the long and difficult *yatra* to sacred Mount Kailas and do a *kora* around it. They believed that if only they were able to have a sight of the holy mountain, they would be healed and absolved of all their sins and be happy and rich ever after. They had heard stories, echoed down the generations, about all the gods and goddesses that meditated and sported eternally, joyously around the holy mountain, which was the very center of the universe, the very point, *bindu*, from which all life originates, and to which it returns.

One cold, overcast day, when the villagers were particularly morose, Sagar, a skinny, lame, half-blind, orphaned child, an outcast of mixed descent, whom the villagers considered a bit crazy, hobbled as fast as he could, followed by his bony dog and lean cat, to the village square and shouted joyously:

"He is coming! He is coming! He's coming to make us happy! My heart has been calling to him every day. I dreamt about him last night and he is coming up the hill to our village with another man following him! Padmasambhava is coming with a devotee!"

The villagers were convinced the boy, given to flights of fantasy, was just imagining things. Besides, no pilgrims ever visited their village, which was not on the way to Mount Kailas.

"Who is Padmasambhava?" someone asked. "Didn't he live and die hundreds and hundreds of years ago?"

"Yes, but he is still with us, though he is invisible. His body is made of a rainbow, and his eyes can see the Invisible!"

"Like yours!" someone said to a peel of laughter.

"It's all true! Padmasambhava was born as an eight-year-old boy in the blossom of a lotus! My father tells me all about him."

The villagers rolled their eyes. His father had been dead for four years.

Sagar looked at them and said, innocently, "But he comes in my dreams to tell me stories. He told me Padmasambhava's name means 'The Lotus born.' Padmasambhava can fly, and though he has been burned and destroyed, he is always here, and comes to the aid of those in need. He is a savior who kills demons that want to destroy mankind and he performs many miracles."

"Miracles!" someone scoffed.

"Mother always says that miracles are holes in the cloth of reason. I don't know what she means, but she says it so many times that I remember her words. Can anyone tell me what it means?"

"Nothing," someone smirked.

"If we listen carefully and walk on the path shown to us by Padmasambhava, we can drink the blissful drink of amrita, ambrosia!" Sagar exclaimed, his eyes sparkling.

"Amrita! Water would do."

"But hurry! We don't want to miss him!"

Most of the villagers went home, but a few, a mix of old and young people and children, followed the boy, his dog and cat at his heels. Sagar took them past the lake that froze solid in the winter, past the arid terraces where nothing grew for lack of rain, to the edge of the village, and pointed to the steep path ascending up to it.

"There! See, by the rock that looks like a bird. I see him clearly, walking with a danda staff, a jhola bag slung on his shoulder, a turban on his head, and a long beard. He is short, and a taller man carrying an instrument on his shoulder, is following him. The short holy sadhu man, in the long beard, is the same person, the very same that came to me in my dream. He laughed, picked me up, and held me near his heart! I woke up feeling so very happy! There he is, closer now, near the boulder that looks like a god with wings. He has come to remove all our troubles!"

The villagers thought the boy had lost his mind. They didn't see anyone or anything. Several more returned home. Some of the adults and most of the children, however, stayed. They wanted to have some fun with Sagar, whom they bullied as often as they could. They knew nobody would show up and then they could beat him up. They never played with him because even the untouchable children considered him more untouchable than they were.

"Can you hear that?" Sagar said, straining his ears. "They are sitting in the shade of the boulder. The taller man has taken out some instruments, and is playing. They are singing!"

"We hear nothing," the villagers said.

"Listen! Listen!" Sagar said, urgently. "You can!"

The villagers turned around and began to leave for their homes.

"You have come this far. Come further! Listen with the ears of your soul!" Sagar shouted. "Listen to the words of the song: 'Don't be one of those who are born only to die without hearing the music of worship."

Then, the strangest thing happened with Sagar's words. Streams and filaments of a blue, diaphanous mist shimmering with light arose spontaneously around them, wrapped themselves around their heads, entered their nostrils and mouths and lifted them as if they were made of air, and transported their brains with the speed of light into Sagar's spacious, open, wide innocent heart! Or was it Sagar's brain? It didn't matter, for Sagar's brain and heart were both in the same place, stimulating, questioning, guiding each other towards one goal. Although Sagar didn't know the name of this goal, he had been moving towards it like an unwavering arrow from the moment of his birth. No, perhaps even before it, even before conception, for our ancestors and guides have taught us that our souls have long roots that extend all the way to the beginning of time.

For an instant the villagers were bewildered and wondered where they were. They had never seen the world like this before.

Looking through the innocent child's eyes, the landscape was transformed. They saw it suffused with beauty. The bare mountain ranges surrounding a rolling valley lit up by the radiance of the early evening sun vibrated with subtle browns, blues, violets. In the distance they saw the snow-capped peaks standing tall and majestic, like guardians. Their practical, workaday sensibility that had been blind to the beauty all around them lit up with wonder; they began to see and hear invisible, unheard things.

They saw two strangers sitting by the boulder they had seen thousands of times without noticing that it looked like a god hovering from the ground up, wings spread wide in a gesture of protection; they heard drifting up on a current of air the musical strains of a song sung to the accompaniment of strings and the haunting melody of a flute. Though they could not understand the words, the language of music, beyond meaning and sense, penetrated their slumbering, despairing souls. Echoing through the valley, bouncing off the mountains, entering through the portals of their ears, reverberating in the hollow chambers of their hearts, it aroused in them a longing to connect more deeply with life, their own selves, and their gods; they tasted that hunger without which human life, no matter how luxurious and ease-filled, is a grind.

The sound, pouring into their ears like amrita, stilled all the noises of worry, anxiety and doubts in their heads. It unfurled a silence they had never heard before, nothingness, a shunya opening petal by petal like a lotus, space upon limitless space, empty space, without stars or clouds. In that silence something stirred, like a slumbering seed in the ooze of mud and waters. It awakened them to the sweetness of a long-forgotten dream: a path visible through the surrounding darkness winding soulfully up into the unknown to a magical perch, a perspective that turned every sorrow into mulch and slush from which blue lotuses bloom.

"They are singing, 'Remain awake and aware. Do not fall asleep!" Sagar, who understood all languages of the heart, translated for them.

The words were like bolts of blue lightning that tore through thick veils in their minds. Passion awakened in their hearts. One young girl remembered how she used to sing when she was a child; another recalled with what joy she used to spin and weave; a young, how he used to collect colorful pigments from the mountains and paint images of gods and mandalas on stones; another remembered his desire to become a herbalist and curing sickness. In that instant they resolved to pursue their long-forgotten dreams.

When the strangers were done singing, they picked up their bags, musical instruments and resumed their climb up the hill. Though the path was steep, they climbed up lithely, like birds cruising on an invisible current of air.

The strangers came closer. Though they had obviously undertaken a long journey, they looked fresh, vibrant, glowing with health and well-being.

They were not dressed in any garb that would distinguish them as belonging to any religion, though the taller one may have been Muslim, by the cut of his beard. They wore no saffron clothes, *rudraksha* beads, or matted hair to indicate they were Hindus; no maroon robes, shaved heads and begging bowls, like of Tibetan lamas. Though their countenances were radiant, like the faces of gods, they looked just like ordinary men in ordinary Indian clothes.

Sagar ran to the shorter of the two men, the man he had met in his dream, and threw himself at his feet. The stranger helped him up and Sagar instinctively clasped his neck with his arms and clung to him, sobbing and weeping with joy. Though the villagers fed Sagar

now and then, nobody, other than his parents, had ever embraced him like this. One day he ate leftovers in one home, the next day in another, and he slept with the yaks on the straw on someone's ground floor.

Sagar's dog leapt on the strangers, and his cat purred and rubbed herself against their legs.

The villagers, moved by the sight of the holy man embracing the ragged orphan, bowed and touched his feet. As they did so, they felt remorse at their treatment of the orphan child. They also touched the feet of the other stranger, who shone brightly from long proximity with the Enlightened One.

Without a word, the villagers followed Sagar, his dog and his cat galloping ahead of them, as he led the holy visitors back to the village. Passing by the terraces the stranger with the long beard took a handful of some grains from his bag and scattered them wide. On the next terrace, he took out a ball and threw it to Sagar, who caught it. They played so vigorously and joyfully that the other children who had accompanied their parents to the edge of the village, children who had never played with Sagar, joined them, jostling each other, running and shouting.

Later, on the way to the village, the stranger stood by the lake, plunged his danda with seven knots in it into the waters and stirred it, as if churning something up, laughing all the while. By the time they reached the village, a sweet rain had begun to fall. Everybody rejoiced, for they hadn't had any rain that year and the buckwheat and barley were drying up. Leaping and skipping, Sagar proceeded to the barn that he called home. A few roosters and hens greeted the throng, for that was what the meager few had become.

The dog and the cat that had followed Sagar to welcome the guests curled up on the straw in the barn that the boy called his bed, and fell asleep. When it was very cold, Sagar burrowed beneath it to stay warm.

The villagers surprised themselves by running to their homes to fetch precious food for the strangers. They discovered to their surprise and delight how much more food than they had thought they had. They brought buckwheat and barley cakes, tea leaves and yak butter for tea, dried yak meat, not just for the strangers, but also for Sagar and the others, and even something for the dog, the cat, and birds. Some brought extra mattresses, quilts, and hand-woven blankets.

Everyone partook of the feast. Even the holy stranger with the long beard ate heartily and moderately. Then he lay down on one of the mattresses, and fell fast asleep.

The villagers asked the taller stranger his name. He said he was Mardana from Punjab. "Most people call me Bhai Mardana."

"Bhai Mardana Lama," Sagar bowed to him.

"And he is Guru Nanak," Bhai Mardana said.

"Padmasambhav Rinpoche Nanak Guru," Sagar said, prostrating before him as he slept. "Does he kill demons?"

"All the time," Mardana laughed. "But the demons he teaches us to subdue - not kill; for they are unkillable - are the demons in our own minds."

"What is your relationship to Guru Nanak Rinpoche?"

"I am nothing if not the minstrel, companion, servant and devotee of my Guru. And he calls himself his Beloved's minstrel and slave. The Beloved has made him his instrument and sings through him. Baba Nanak doesn't speak much these days, unless he has to."

"Who is the Beloved?"

"The One who lives in all hearts, regardless of caste, color, race, class, nationality."

"But what is the One's name?" someone queried.

"The One is Nameless, though people call it by different names. Some call it Energy, some Mystery, some the Universe. The One has as many names as there are people who worship them and call them Shiva, Brahma, Durga, God, Tara, Shakti, Durga, Bhagwan, Allah, Rab, Waheguru, and thousands of others."

"Is the One a man or a woman?" a woman asked.

"Both and neither," Bhai Mardana replied.

"Yes, yes, my mother says that, too. She made a painting, there, that one, Shiva and Parvati, together, one body, one mind, one soul. She called it Ardhanarnari." Sagar went to the wooden wall of the barn where he had tacked his mother's paintings, and pointed at one of them. In the light of the lamp the villagers saw one body, half male, half female in its dress and anatomy, the former blue, unclad, the latter green and adorned with jewels. Their boundaries were fluid, merging into one another, dancing, changing, getting more and more abstract, almost invisible towards the top of the painting where waves of clouds dissipated into an undifferentiated blue.

"Mother father God!" Sagar said, exuberantly.

"Exactly!" Bhai Mardana said.

"What is your religion?" they asked.

"The religion of Nature and its Maker: the religion of the Creator of rivers, wind, fire, mountains, lakes, all of Nature inside and outside us. We are slaves of Banwari, the Lord Creator of the Universe, the Husband for whom all Nature, animate and inanimate, is bride, adorned in all her finery for her wedding night. We travel all over the world to worship beauty and to meet people from all countries. Whenever Baba Nanak sees any awe-inspiring place, he goes into a deep trance, marveling at and praising the grandeur of this Earth, and falls in love all over again, with the intensity of first love, with the Beloved. We have traveled all over the world, seen many places, met many people, seen their customs and rituals, and though there are different countries, different ways of living and worshipping, Baba knows the beautiful Earth, mother of us all, though she is cut off and parcelled into small countries, is one country, and all the people, in all their amazing distinctions, beliefs, and many-colored variety, are one people."

"What do you call yourselves?" Sagar asked.

"Sikhs."

"What does it mean?" The villagers, hungry with questions, asked.

"It comes from the Sanskrit word shishya, which means a student devoted to learning in all its forms. Above all, a Sikh yearns passionately to know, examine, explore the unknown country inside himself or herself, for that is the ultimate knowledge. Baba knows that this is the inward path that takes us to the Beloved."

"What else do you believe in?" someone asked.

"Baba tells his followers to live their lives fully. He himself is a farmer, a guru, a husband, a father, and performs all his roles well, participates in and engages with every aspect of his life dispassionately and detachedly. He lives like a hermit amidst life, like a lotus, unsullied by the dirt and slime out of which it springs. He tells his devotees to earn their living honestly, share what they earn with others, and treat everyone equally. Baba also says don't get stuck in superstitions. Live bravely and without fear. Use your mind but know its limits. Use the senses but know their boundaries, and above all, remember! Remember, remember the Great God's Great Name, especially when you are suffering!"

"Why?" a child asked.

"Because when we remember someone, that person comes alive in our memories and our minds, becomes present; because as soon as you remember the name of your Beloved, the Beloved is there! Repeat it whenever you can, make it your friend, so when you can't even remember to remember it, when you are in the deepest distress, it will remind you to remember. Ah, the name of our Beloved is our closest friend whose long, strong hand reaches down through the layers of thick snow when you are buried in an avalanche, plucks you to safety, and lights a fire in the blizzard to warm your bones! On our way to Mount Kailas we encountered a blizzard and let me tell you..."

"You've been to Mount Kailas?" the villagers asked in a chorus.

"Yes, we're returning from a yatra, a pilgrimage to Mount Kailas and Lake Manasarovar, where Baba and I swam with the fishes," Bhai Mardana said.

As soon as the villagers were reminded of their unattainable desire, the source of all their misery, a swirling, whirling blizzard with icy, furious winds flung them out of their warm, cozy corners in Sagar's expansive soul and hurled them back into their own unhappy brains. The storm that blew them out was nothing like the hurricane in their heads that raged furiously with wailing sounds, deafening them with its frightening cacophony. As they sat in the barn a change came over their bodies, too. Their limbs and bodies collapsed, slumped, their faces became long, their eyes mournful. Their moaning, groaning and whining began as they complained to Bhai Mardana about their miserable lives, their feeble and diseased bodies, their inability to undertake the pilgrimage that would cure them of their diseases, and absolve them of the sins accumulated over lifetimes.

"So that's why both of you are pure and radiant!" someone said bitterly. "Your sins and curses dissolved in the sacred waters and you have been made holy by your pilgrimage! Well, welcome to our unholy village."

"Kailas and Manasarovar are splendid sights, indescribable, but they are no holier than any other awe-inspiring place in Nature, no holier than your own village, homes and bodies," Bhai Mardana said.

"Blasphemy! Mount Kailas is the most special place in the whole world. It is the center and navel of the universe!"

"There are as many centers of the world as there are people and creatures," Bhai Mardana said. "Mount Kailas was and is a mythic metaphor before it was 'real."

"What do you mean? What is a metaphor?"

"A metaphor is a physical object, like Mount Kailas, that stands for a truth that cannot be described any other way. Mount Kailas stands for what Hindus, Buddhists and Jains call Mount Meru, or Sumeru, around which the sun, planets and stars are said to circle. Some say Meru is in the middle of the Earth; some say it is in the middle of an ocean; some say it is the Pamirs, northwest of Kashmir, some that it is Mount Kailas; most believe it is the place where all the gods live, the high mountain from which humans can climb into heaven and paradise," Bhai Mardana explained.

"Yes, we believe this, too!" the villagers cried with one voice. "But we will never be able to reach it! We are doomed!"

"But we must not make the metaphor the thing itself. If you worship an image made of stone, or a mountain, and forget that it is only an image, a representation, a reminder, then you close yourself off from the boundless, imageless, formless One that no metaphor

can describe, the One who is not confined to any one thing or place. We must question our beliefs when they limit us and the Limitless One. On my way to Mount Kailas I was wondering what the word 'Meru' meant. I asked many priests and holy men but none knew. And then one day I realized that it must be an affectionate variation of the word 'mera,' mine. 'Mera' has a lot of ego in it, but 'Meru' has sheer love. And in a way, it is all mine. In this sense, the whole universe is mine. This belonging happens when I enlarge my ego, like a balloon. But unlike a balloon that bursts as it enlarges, the ego stretches to include everything there is. Everything. Nothing left out. This is who we truly are, tiny but at the same time large enough to house the whole big universe!

Though people think Meru, or what you call Mount Kailas, exists in different places, yogis know it exists inside us. Enlightened ones of all times have known that our spine, which they call merudanda, the staff of Meru, is the axis and center of the world. We have to learn to climb from our baser instincts to the higher ones; from the bottom of our spine, where Mara and his many demons live, up through the nodes and knots in the spiral of our spine that lead to the thousandpetal lotus on top of our skull. This is the true pilgrimage, what Baba calls 'the pilgrimage to yourself'. It is this journey that makes us aware of our sins and with the Beloved's aid, makes us pure."

"Easy for you to say all this because you have been there," someone said angrily. "But we are physically debilitated, poor, hungry, and very unhappy. Our crops are blighted every season; the winters are so harsh that we lose many from our community; our children don't have enough to eat and many die before their first year."

"We have rotten karma, we are decayed from the inside out, stained and grimed with sins. We will never get to Mount Kailas, the Dharma Dwar, the gateway to heaven, that will make us healthy and whole again," a woman began to keen.

"Baba says in one of his songs: When your clothes are soiled and stained by urine, soap can wash them clean. But when your mind is stained and polluted by sin, it can only be cleansed by the Color of the Name."

But the woman continued to cry. Bhai Mardana despaired. He felt the villagers hadn't heard or understood a word he had said. Only Sagar was listening to him intently, eating and digesting all his words. Perhaps he had not been sincere enough, or sermonized too much, Bhai Mardana thought. He doubled his efforts.

"There is hope," he said. "I too was full of sins. I have doubted, cheated, lusted, raged, envied, coveted, held 'me' and 'mine' too tightly, been proud, arrogant and ungrateful. But Baba has helped me to become what I am, a *gurmukh*, one who faces the Guru of all Gurus, God himself, instead of his own ego. He has also taught me that what I was truly seeking beneath my searching for wealth and fame was the fountain of *amrita* that is within me. It is wherever I go. You don't need to go anywhere to be happy and healthy. Now that Baba has come to you, you have to trust that all will be well. You too will learn that your village, your home, your body is blessed and beautiful."

"What's so blessed and beautiful about it? What do you see here?" "You have to learn to open your eyes," Bhai Mardana said.

"But our eyes are open," they replied. "We are not blind!"

"See?" Bhai Mardana said, looking at the gallery where Sagar had hung his mother's paintings. He pointed at an image of two eyes shaped like fish and a third sitting calmly above them.

"See with your third eye, the one that unites our conflicts, our double vision and shows us the Truth. When you see through it, your sorrows become lotuses, and your curses turn into gifts."

"Tell us how to do it," the villagers pleaded. "We will work very hard to open our third eye."

Just then a loud chuckle was heard from Baba Nanak as he turned over in his sleep. Bhai Mardana shut his eyes and was silent, as if listening to something his guru had just conveyed to him. Then he opened his eyes and said, "Effort is important but will get you nowhere. See, I have been making so much effort to explain all this to you, but I am a fool. I forgot something very, very essential. I should have begun with a prayer to ask the magnanimous Fulfiller of

Dreams to help me in my efforts. Without the One's aid, all our efforts are straw in the storm."

"We pray a lot but nothing ever happens," the villagers complained.

"But how do you pray?" Bhai Mardana asked.

"With our mouths, of course."

Bhai Mardana laughed.

"Learn to pray with your heart. Be present. Know that the One you address is present, more present than what you see with your two eyes. 'He is! He is! He is! He is, He is - I say it millions upon millions, millions upon millions of times,' Baba sings ecstatically. The Truth of the One is Guru Nanak's most important message. Remember that when you take even one step towards trying to open your third eye, the Beloved, if you have remembered to love the Lord of the Universe, to ask for His aid on your pilgrimage, He will come towards you a thousand steps to help you to see. There are many, many precious rewards for our love. Baba says, 'If you listen to just one thing the guru says, pay attention to and act on it, keep it in your ear and heart, your mind will become a treasury holding precious rubies, pearls, coral and diamonds."

"Is it really true that the guru can give us wealth and precious stones?" someone asked.

"Our real wealth, the highest and best, is the One, in loving whom we can get both material and spiritual gifts, the most important of which is learning to see with the Third Eye. It is the Magical Eye that can turn ugliness into beauty, poison into amrita, and, as Baba sings, 'our sorrow into the most health-giving of tonics'. There are ways of seeing things from a height, as if from a star, as if from the pinnacle of Time that is far, far larger and vaster than our own past, present and future. Let me give you an example."

Bhai Mardana reached for his bag and took out a handful of seashells, worn smooth with age, some brittle, some whole.

"I know!" Sagar said. "They are called 'shells' and they are found on the ocean floor."

"What is the ocean?" someone asked. They lived so far away from the ocean that they hadn't even heard the word, let alone understand the concept. But somehow, somewhere, in the deep recesses of their memories, the ocean roared in their dreams.

"It is what my name means, Ocean!" Sagar said excitedly. "It is a vast body of water that . . ."

"Like Manasarovar?"

"Nothing like Manasarovar! There is much more ocean than there is land on this earth!" Sagar said excitedly. "My parents told me all about it! The ocean is so deep that there are mountains in it, large mountains and volcanoes. We know very, very little about it, it is mysterious and without limits, like God. They told me to always remember what my name means, that I have an ocean in my heart, and I must never forget it! Maybe that is what Rinpoche Mardana is talking about! Even though I have never seen it I feel it in my heart!"

"How can that be? We haven't seen it!"

"We have to admit to ourselves that many things exist that we can't see with these eyes," Bhai Mardana responded. "Did you know, for example that your high plateau and Mount Kailas were once the ocean floor? These shells are proof of it. Baba and I collected them on our way to Mount Kailas."

It took a while for the villagers to understand what Bhai Mardana was saying. They were silent a long time, trying to stretch their minds to envision Mardana's words.

"Nothing is forever on this earth. Mount Kailas, too, one day, will be beneath the sea again. But the mythic Mount Meru will never perish. It is within us. But I have been talking too much. Come, let us meditate and pray together." Bhai Mardana sat cross-legged, and instructed the villagers in a few brief sentences how to pray and meditate. His voice was gentle and full of compassion as he said, "Sit comfortably, shut your eyes, know that we are in the presence of the One who is within, like breath, and surrounds us, like air. If many thoughts crowd your mind, let them be, but gently steer yourself back to the presence of the One. Be grateful for what you have before you ask for what you want. Today, ask for help to embark upon the journey of all journeys, the journey to the home of the Beloved in your heart, the Beloved that erases suffering."

Their brief sojourn in Sagar's trusting and hopeful heart had made the villagers want to return to that place where they saw, heard and felt things that had filled them with hope. They were sick of being sick and sorrowful. They did as they were told.

When they opened their eyes after meditation, they felt something had shifted in their consciousness. They had moved on from their locked in, habitual mode of thinking and feeling. Their minds, which had been stagnant for so long, were flowing again.

Bhai Mardana yawned. It had been a long night, and he had talked too much. He smiled to himself as he recalled the sound of Baba's chuckle. In the silence that followed he had asked for help to help the villagers. After all, that was the reason Baba had suddenly changed course in the middle of his travels and headed towards Kudang. He went where he was needed.

The villagers, relaxed into peace, began to yawn, too.

"I have a message to convey to you from Baba," Bhai Mardana said, as the villagers began to touch his feet before leaving for their homes.

"Tomorrow morning, when the night is drenched in dew, and the stars are still twinkling brightly in the sky, gather in the center of the village and follow Baba and me to the crest of the hill that separates your village from the next village, Sosa. Baba will take you to the dharma dwar, the gateway and threshold of all that is sacred. By visiting it whenever you feel you need to, you will dissolve your suffering. It is a place holier than Mount Kailas and more sacred than Manasarovar."

Although their old minds still whispered to them that the crest was too high to climb and that they would never be able to do so, the villagers, eager to follow Bhai Mardana and Baba Nanak on the path that would give their suffering wings, agreed.

At dawn the next day, all of them, including some old people and children, assembled in the center of the village. The dog and cat were there too, excited at the prospect of an adventure. They too were eager to follow a path that would help them reincarnate as humans in their next life. Guru Nanak, whom the villagers now called Padmasambhava Rinpoche Nanak Guru, was vital and energetic. Bhai Mardana Lama too was glowing with energy and health. More than anything else, their aspect and appearance, conveying wellbeing and vitality, made the villagers trust them.

After a prayer led by Bhai Mardana, the villagers took their first step in the direction they had never gone before. Although some of the villagers huffed, puffed and groaned a bit, they all made it up the hill to the crest. They were amazed at looking down the path they had climbed, it seemed in retrospect, so easily. They saw their village as if for the first time. How lovely, cozy, heartwarming it was, their collective home, tucked into the sides of their mother mountain, as if in the folds of Parvati's protective body.

The villagers felt invigorated, healthy, alive after the exercise. Their bodies sang with gratitude and joy. This, they knew, was the purpose of the ascent, for Mardana Lama had already told them they contained Mount Kailas, the axis, the center of the universe where gods meditated and sported. The lesson was driven home on the summit of the crest.

Morning had not yet dawned though there was enough light to see by. It was the brief and fleeting time of day when gates to others world are wide open for all to walk through. The indigo sky was still embroidered by stars as the holy current of healing and awakening dawn breezes, that sages in India called malyanil, blew gently down from the peaks of the high mountains, caressing their limbs and entering their lungs.

Guru Nanak pointed his staff to a large arch in a huge rock eroded by the elements of wind, water and time. Through it towered snowcapped peaks that were so high that their tops were veiled with clouds and mist, peaks unseen by any human eye. The sight filled the villagers with wonder, and as one body, they bowed down in worship and awe that something existed so close to them without their knowing it. The sight opened their hearts and minds to humility: how little they knew! How closed and blind their sight had been as they huddled in misery in their village of Kudang, without venturing out of the borders of their minds!

The insight, accompanied by harmonic chords of music, filled them with amazement at the mystery of their own existence within the presence of the universe. They turned around from the sight of the peaks to see that Bhai Mardana had taken out the rabab and was playing it. Baba cleared his throat, shut his eyes.

A note, emanating from somewhere deep within him, was carried on the waves and currents of air all around them till the mountains, valleys and high peaks echoed with it. It drifted back into their hearts and minds, enlarging them in a way they had never dreamed possible.

The note, unfurling in its many permutations, under and over tones, morphed like a wave into another note that reflected and contained it, and then another, and another, all strung together like prayer beads on a string, till it became an irresistible melody that penetrated, possessed and suffused their beings with its magical, transformative power. All their suffering and Bhai Mardana's sermon the previous night had ploughed, cleared and prepared their hearts and minds for Baba's song and message, for blessed music and winged song reach to the depths and pinnacles of our soul where no words can go. They did not understand the words Baba sang but since they had already imbibed its lesson through Bhai Mardana, the song worked its magic in their souls. They would never be the same again.

They understood that though the dharma dwar existed for those who wanted to make an external pilgrimage, they didn't need to go anywhere to reach the fountain of healing within them. All they had to do was sit in the comfort of their own homes, meditate the way Bhai Mardana had taught them to, and bathe in the holy waters of Manasarovar at the foot of Mount Kailas within them.

Bhai Mardana and Baba Nanak got up, picked up their bags and began their descent to the next village that needed their presence to open its eyes. Sagar was about to cry but understood instantly that he would never again be separated from his Padmasambhava, who had come to transform his life.

The villagers strained their eyes to follow them down the long and visible path to Sosa, but they never caught sight of the strangers again. They had disappeared as if they had never been.

In the days, months, years, and decades that followed their sudden appearance and disappearance, the villagers saw green shoots of rice spring out of the soil in the terraces that Rinpoche Nanak Guru had strewn with seeds of rice; the lake didn't freeze where their holy visitor had roiled its waters with his danda; the child Sagar grew up and funds arrived magically for him to open up a gompa, a small temple of religious learning; the villagers, much more prosperous than before Baba Nanak paid them a visit, told, retold and embellished the story of the visit of the holy ones to their children and grandchildren. They and their descendants often wondered if the story was just a myth and a dream - a dream that had changed everything.



## धर्मद्वार

कुदांग नाम के एक गाँव में मिश्रित रूप से बौद्ध, हिन्दू, जैन, बोनपो, कुछ मूर्ति की पूजा करने वाले लोग व कुछ आध्यात्मिक लोग रहते थे जिनमें से कुछ वहाँ के मूल निवासी थे व कुछ प्रवासी भारत, चीन, तिब्बत से आये हुए थे। वे लोग बहुत ही लंबे समय से भूखे,गरीब, बूढे, बीमार व शारीरिक रूप से विवश थे। कुदांग गाँव के पर्वतीय क्षेत्र में ज्यादा कुछ नहीं पनपता था अतः वहाँ खाद्य बहुत कम था। यहाँ तक की उनकी बकरियां व याक सभी बहुत कमजोर थे और दूध देने में अक्षम थे। इसके अलावा सर्दियों में वहाँ की भील का इलाका भी जम जाता था और अपने दुर्बल शरीर से उस बर्फ की खुदाई करना व गाँव में उपलब्ध अल्प ईन्धन से उसे गरम करना उन लोगों के लिए बहुत ही दुष्कर कार्य था।

वे अपने आप को बहुत असहायी, दुखी व जीवन द्वारा त्यागा हुआ महसूस करते थे । वे हमेशा इस आशंका से भयभीत रहते थे कि उनके पिछले जन्म के पाप इस जन्म में भी उनके साथ ही हैं एवं वे एक के बाद एक अपने बुरे कर्मों के जमाव के अंतहीन चक्र में फंसे हुए हैं ।

उन लोगों के दुखी होने का प्रमुख कारण उनकी यह कुण्ठा थी कि वे लोग पिवत्र कैलास पर्वत की लंबी व किठन यात्रा एवं उसकी पिरिक्रमा करने का बीडा उठाने में असमर्थ थे । उनका विश्वास था कि उस पिवत्र पर्वत की भलक मात्र से ही वे अपने सभी पापों से दोषमुक्त हो जायेंगे व हमेशा के लिए सुखी व समृद्ध हो जायेंगे । युगों युगों से दोहराई जाने वाली देवी देवताओं की कहानी के बारे में उन्हें मालूम था जिन्होंने अंतकाल तक उस पिवत्र पर्वत के पास आनंद पूर्वक ध्यान किया, वही पिवत्र पर्वत जो की ब्रह्माण्ड के केंन्द्र में

स्थित वह बिंदु है जिससे जीवन की उत्पत्ति हुई है व जिसमें जीवन विलीन हो जाता है ।

बादलों से घिरे हुए एक सर्द दिन में जब सभी गाँववाले बेहद उदास थे, एक दुबलापतला, अल्प रूप से अन्धा, मिश्र वंश परंपरा से बहिष्कृत एक अनाथ बालक जिसका नाम सागर था एवं जिसे गाँव के सभी लोग थोड़ा पागल समभते थे, अपने उदास कृत्ते व पतली बिल्ली को लेकर तेजी से लंगडाते हुए गाँव के मध्य में पहुंचा और वहाँ से उत्साहपूर्वक चिल्लाने लगाः

"वो आ रहा है ! वो आ रहा है ! हम लोगों को सुखी करने वो आ रहा है । मेरा हृदय उसे हर दिन पुकारता था । मैंने कल रात ही उसे सपने में देखा था । और देखो आज पद्मसम्भव अपने एक भक्त के साथ हमारे गाँव आ रहा है !"

गाँववालों ने उस लड़के को समभाया कि उनके गाँव में आजतक एक भी धर्मयात्री नहीं आया है जो कि कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा के मार्ग पर हो । वह खाली कोरी कल्पना की उडान भर रहा है।

किसी ने प्रश्न किया, "कौन पद्मसम्भव? क्या उनकी सदियों पूर्व मृत्यू नहीं हो चुकी है?"

सागर ने कहा, "हाँ । परंतु अदृश्य होते हुए भी वो हमारे साथ है । उनका शरीर इन्द्रधनुष का बना हुआ है व उनकी आँखे अदृश्य चीजों को भी देख सकती हैं।"

"हाँ, जैसे तुम्हारी !" किसी ने मजाक उड़ाते हुए कहा ।

"यह सत्य है। मेरे पिता ने मुभ्ने बताया है, पद्मसम्भव खिलते हुए कमल में आठ वर्षीय बालक के रूप में पैदा हुए थे।"

सागर के पिता की मृत्यु को चार वर्ष बीत चुके है, यह सोचते हुए सभी गाँव वालों ने अपनी आँखें घुमाईं।

सागर ने उन लोगो की तरफ देखा और भोलेपन के साथ बोला, "परंतु कल वह मेरे सपनों में आये थे और उन्होंने मुक्ते कहानी भी सुनायी। उन्होंने ही मुक्ते बताया की पद्मसम्भव का मतलब है 'कमल से उत्पन्न' । यद्यपि उनका दाह किया गया था फिर भी वे उड सकते हैं। वे जरूरतमंदों की मदद करने के लिए हमेशा यहाँ रहते हैं । वे महान रक्षक हैं जो मानवता को दुष्ट आत्माओं के द्वारा नष्ट होने से बचाने के लिए चमत्कार करते हैं।"

"चमत्कार !" किसी ने उपहास करते हुए कहा ।

"माँ हमेशा कहती है कि कपड़ों में छेद चमत्कार के कारण ही होते हैं, मैं नहीं जनता इसका क्या अर्थ है परंतु वो अक्सर यह कहती है ताकि मुफे यह बात याद रहे । क्या किसी को इसका अर्थ मालूम है?"

"इसका कुछ अर्थ नहीं है," किसी ने बनावटी ढंग से मुस्कुराते हुए कहा । "यदि हम ध्यान पूर्वक सुनने का प्रयास करेंगे और पद्मसम्भव के बताये हए मार्ग पर चलेंगे तो अमृत सुधा का पान करने का परम सुख मिलेगा," सागर ने चिल्लाते हुए कहा । उसकी आँखें चमक रही थीं ।

अमत !

"परंतु जल्दी करो । हमें यह सुअवसर खोना नहीं चाहिए ।"

गाँव के ज्यादातर लोग अपने घरों को वापस जाने लगे लेकिन कुछ जवान, बच्चे व कुछ बुजुर्ग सागर के साथ चल पड़े । उसका कुत्ता और बिल्ली भी उसके साथ थी । सागर उन लोगों को भील की तरफ ले गया जहाँ सर्दी में भील ठोस रूप से जमी हुई थी। पिछले कुछ समय से जिन शुष्क सीढ़ीदार खेतों में वर्षा की कमी के कारण कुछ नहीं उगा था वहाँ से गाँव के दूसरे किनारे तक ऊपर की ओर सीधी ढाल वाले रास्ते की ओर सागर ने इशारा किया ।

"देखो ! उस चट्टान की तरफ जो किसी पक्षी की तरह प्रतीत होती है, वहाँ एक लंबी दाढ़ी वाला, लाठी के सहारे चलता हुआ, कंधे पर भोला लटकाये हुए, सर पर पगड़ी पहने हुए एक व्यक्ति मुभ्ने साफसाफ दिखाई दे रहा है। उसका कद बहुत छोटा है और उसके साथ एक लंबा व्यक्ति अपने कंधे पर कुछ सामान लिए उसके साथ है। ये छोटे कद व लंबी दाढ़ी वाला साधू वही व्यक्ति है जो कल रात मेरे सपने में आया था । मुफे देखकर वह हंसा व उसने मुफे उठाकर सीने से लगाया । मैं जब सुबह जागा तो अत्यंत प्रसन्न था । अब वह हमारे बहुत करीब है, वहाँ गोल पत्थर के पास वह किसी पंखों वाले देवता की तरह प्रतीत होता है। हमारे दुख व सारी परेशानियों को दुर करने के लिए देखो वो आ गया है।"

गाँव वालों को लगा की उस लड़के की बुद्धि भ्रष्ट हो गयी है, क्योंकि उन्हें कोई भी कहीं भी दिखाई नहीं दे रहा था । अतः कई लोग वापस अपने घरों की ओर जाने लगे थे। कुछ लोग सागर के साथ रूके रहे। जिनमें अधिकतर बच्चे थे । वे बच्चे सागर को अक्सर त्रस्त करते थे व उसका मजाक उडाते रहते थे । वे जानते थे कि वहाँ कोई भी उन्हें सागर के साथ मारपीट करते हुए नहीं देख पाएगा । वे बच्चे उसके साथ कभी नहीं खेलते थे । यहाँ तक कि कुछ अछूत बच्चे उसे अपनी तुलना में ज्यादा अछूत मानते थे।

"क्या तुम्हे कुछ सुनाई दे रहा है?" सागर ने अपने कानों को हल्का दबाते हुए कहा । "वे लोग एक गोल पत्थर की छाया में बैठे हुए हैं व उस लंबे आदमी ने कुछ सामान को बाहर निकाला हुआ है और वे उन्हें बजाते हुए गीत गा रहे है ।"

गाँव वालों ने उत्तर दिया, "नहीं । हमें कुछ सुनाई नहीं दे रहा है ।" "सुनो ! सुनो ! सुनो ! तुम सुन सकते हो !" सागर ने उत्सुकता से कहा । तत्पश्चात सभी गाँव वालों ने अपने अपने घरों की तरफ चलना आरम्भ कर दिया ।

सागर ने चिल्लाकर कहा "तुम लोग इतनी दूर तक आ ही गए हो, थोड़ा और आगे आओ ! अपनी आत्मा के कानों द्वारा सुनने का प्रयास करो ! इस गीत के शब्द सुनने का प्रयास करो । उन लोगों की तरह मत बनो जो लोग भक्ति का संगीत सुने बिना ही मरने के लिए पैदा होते हैं।"

सागर के ये वाक्य सुनते के साथ ही एक अद्भुत बात हुई । अनायास ही धारा की तरह बहते हुए नीले रेशे, पारदर्शी धुंध व प्रकाश के साथ उन लोगों के चारों तरफ भिलमिलाने लगे व उनके हाथ के चारों तरफ लिपट गये और उनके नाक व मुँह में प्रवेश करते हुए उन्हें इतना हल्का कर दिया जैसे कि वे हवा से ही बने हों और प्रकाश की गति से उन के मस्तिष्क तक जाके सागर के बृहत्, भोले, विशाल व खुले दिल तक पहुँचे । वो सागर का ही मन था या नहीं इस बात से कोई फर्क नहीं पड़ता क्यूँकि सागर का मन व मस्तिष्क दोनों एक दूसरे को अपने लक्ष्य की ओर पूछताछ करते हुए, प्रेरित होते हुए उसका मार्गदर्शन करते थे । यद्यपि सागर जिस लक्ष्य की तरफ अपने जन्म के क्षण से ही और शायद जन्म की परिकल्पना से पहले ही किसी अटल तीर की तरह बढ़ रहा था, उस लक्ष्य का वह नाम भी नहीं जनता था। वैसे भी हमारे पूर्वजों ने हमें बताया है की हमारी आत्माओं की जड़ें बहुत गहरी हैं जो काल के अस्तित्व के प्रारम्भ तक फैली हुई हैं।

कुछ समय के लिए गाँववाले हक्केबक्के व किंकर्तव्यविमुद्ध ही रह गए कि आखिर वे कहाँ हैं । इससे पहले उन्होंने इस प्रकार अपना जीवन कभी नहीं देखा था । इस भोले बच्चे की आँखों के माध्यम से उनका पूरा दृश्य ही बदल गया था । उन्होंने उसे सुंदरता से परिपूर्ण देखा । नग्न पर्वतों की सीमाएँ व ढलावदार घाटी चमक उठी ओर ढलती हुई साँभ की शुभ्रता में सूर्य भूरे, नीले ओर बैंगनी रंगों से स्पंदित हो उठा । कुछ दूरी तक देखने पर पर्वतों पर बर्फ की चादर से ढकी हुई व सीधी खड़ी चोटियाँ इस प्रकार प्रतीत होती थी जैसे कि तेजस्वी संरक्षक का कर्तव्य निर्वाह कर रही हो ।

अब तक अपनी दैनिक व्यवहारिक सम्वेदनशीलता के कारण जो सुंदरता वो देख नहीं पा रहे थे वो अनायास ही अद्भुत तरह से चमक उठी एवं उन्हें अदृश्य व अनसूनी आवाजें भी सुनाई देने लगीं।

उन्हें एक शिलाखंड के किनारे बैठे हुए दो आदमी दिखायी दिए जिन्हें गाँववालों ने अनेक बार बिना ध्यान दिए देखा होगा लेकिन आज वे अपने पंखों को फैलाए जमीन पर मँडराते हुए एक रक्षक के रूप में बिल्कुल किसी देवता की तरह दिखायी दे रहे थे। उन्हें हवा में गूँजती हुई बाँसुरी की बार बार आने वाली धुन व तारों की संगत में सांगीतिक गीत की लय सुनाई दी । हालाँकि शब्दों और संगीत की भाषा को ना समभन्ते हुए भी अर्थ से परे का भाव उनकी सुप्त, निष्क्रिय व हतोत्साहित आत्मा को भेदता चला गया । पर्वतों से टकराती हुई व घाटी से गुँजती हुई धुन उनके कानों के परदों तक पहुँची व उनके हृदय के खाली कोनों में प्रतिध्वनित होने लगी । इस ध्वनि ने उन्हें उनके जीवन से,परमात्मा से व उन्हें अपने आप से जोड़ दिया था। उन्होंने उस तृष्णा का स्वाद चख लिया था जिसके बिना अनेक सुख सुविधा व भोग विलास के बाद भी व्यक्ति का जीवन व्यर्थ ही रह जाता है।

वह आवाज उनके कानो में अमृत की तरह घुलने लगी व उस ध्वनि ने उनकी सभी की चिंताओं, दुविधाओं और संदेहों को उनके मस्तिष्क में सून्न करके शांति का मार्ग खोला जिसका उन्होंने कभी अनुभव नहीं किया था । वे कमल की खिलती हुई पंखुड़ी की तरह एक शुन्यता की अवस्था में पहुँच गए जो उन्हें उस असीम विस्तार तक ले गयी जहाँ ना कोई तारे थे ओर ना ही कोई बादल । जिस प्रकार एक सुप्त बीज मिट्टी व पानी में द्रवित होता है उसी प्रकार वे भी उस शांति में द्रवित हो गए । जिस स्वप्न को वो लम्बे समय से भूल चुके थे उसी स्वप्न की मधुरता ने उन्हें प्रबृद्ध कर दिया था। वह प्रत्यक्ष रास्ता जो अंधेरे से घिरा हुआ था, वह भावपूर्ण ढंग से घुमते हुए चमत्कारिक ठिकाने तक पहुँच गया था और उनके दु:ख, हानि की सारी अवधारणा को एक मैले कीचड में बदल दिया था जिसमें से नीले कमलों की उत्पत्ति होती है।

सागर, जिसे उन लोगों के हृदय की भाषा समभ आ रही थी, उसने गाँववालों को अनुवाद करके बताया "देखो वो गा रहे हैं: जाग्रत रहो, सचेत रहो, सो मत जाना !"

किसी नीली बिजली के वजपात की भाँति ये शब्द उनके दिमाग के सारे परदों को भेद गए व उनके हृदय में उत्साह जगा गए । एक छोटी बच्ची को स्मरण हुआ कि कैसे वो अपने बचपन में गीत गाया करती थी । एक अन्य लड़की को याद आया कि किस आनंद से वह बुनाई का काम करती थी व घूमती रहती थी । एक नवयुवक को अपनी पुरानी यादें ताजा हुईं कि किस प्रकार वह पर्वतों से रंग इकट्टा करके लाता था और पत्थरों पर मण्डल व देवताओं के चित्र बनाता था । एक अन्य व्यक्ति को औषधि द्वारा लोगों का उपचार करने की इच्छा का स्मरण हुआ । उसी क्षण उन लोगों ने अपने भूले हुए सपने को साकार करने का संकल्प लिया।

गाना सम्पन्न करने के पश्चात उन अनजान लोगों ने अपने सांगीतिक उपकरण व भोले उठाए और पहाड़ी पर चढ़ाई करने लगे। एकदम सीधी चढाई होने के कारण वे लोग बहुत ही लोचदार ढंग से उसी प्रकार चढ़ाई कर रहे थे जिस प्रकार पक्षी बहती हवा में विहार करते हैं । वे अपरिचित व्यक्ति उन गाँव वालों के निकट आने लगे । यद्यपि वे एक लम्बी यात्रा करके आ रहे थे फिर भी वे स्वच्छ, फूर्तीले, सेहतमंद व स्वस्थ लग रहे थे।

उनके पहनावे से ऐसा बिल्कुल भी प्रतीत नहीं होता था कि वो किसी प्रमुख धर्म से सम्बन्ध रखते होंगें । हालाँकि लम्बे व्यक्ति की दाढ़ी से फिर भी लग रहा था वह मुसलमान हो सकता है। उन लोगों ने ना ही केसरिया रंग के कपड़े पहने हुए थे और ना ही रूद्राक्ष के दानों से बनी माला पहनी हुई थी और उनकी उलभी हुई जटाएँ भी नहीं थी जो उनके हिंदू होने का संकेत करती । ना ही उन्होंने गहरे भूरे रंग के चोगे पहने हुए थे, ना ही वे गंजे थे और ना ही लामाओं की तरह उनके हाथों में भिक्षा पात्र था । यद्यपि उनकी मुखाकृति कांतिमान थी जैसी देवताओं की मुखाकृति होती है। फिर भी वे साधारण सी भारतीय पोशाकों में साधारण से मनुष्य दिखायी दे रहे थे।

सागर दौड़ के उन दोनों के नजदीक गया व दोनों में से छोटे कद के व्यक्ति के चरणों में गिर पड़ा । वह छोटे कद का व्यक्ति वही था जिसे सागर ने अपने स्वप्न में देखा था। उस व्यक्ति ने सागर को उठाया और सागर अपनी सहज बृद्धि से उस व्यक्ति के गले लग गया और अपनी बाहों को उसके गले में डाल कर उससे चिपक कर खुशी से सुबकने लगा । वैसे तो गाँववालों ने ही सागर का भरण पोषण किया था परंतु उसके माता पिता को छोड़कर किसी ने भी उसे इस प्रकार से आलिंगन नहीं किया जिस प्रकार आज उसे प्राप्त हुआ था। किसी दिन वो एक घर के लोगों का भूठन खाता था तो किसी दिन दूसरे घर के लोगों का छोड़ा हुआ भोजन उसे प्राप्त होता था । वह बेचारा जमीन पर याक के साथ भूसे में ही सोता था।

सागर का कुत्ता उन अजनबी आगंतुकों के ऊपर उछलने कूदने लगा और उसकी बिल्ली उनके पैरों के इर्द गिर्द मँडराने लगी।

उस पवित्र व्यक्ति द्वारा उस अनाथ को आलिंगन करते देख गाँव वाले एकदम भावक हो गए और उसके चरणों में भूक गए । जिस तरह का व्यवहार वो उस अनाथ बच्चे के साथ किया करते थे वो याद करके उन्हें पश्चाताप होने लगा । उन लोगों ने उस दूसरे व्यक्ति के भी पैर छुए जो दूर से ही उस प्रबुद्ध व्यक्ति के साथ उल्लिसत दिखायी दे रहा था।

सागर उन आगंतुकों को गाँव की तरफ ले जाने लगा । बिना एक शब्द बोले गाँव वाले भी सागर के पीछे पीछे चल पड़े । सागर का कृता व उसकी बिल्ली उन लोगों के आगे तेजी से दौड़ने लगी। सीढ़ीदार खेतों से होते हुए जब वे गुजरने लगे तो दाढ़ी वाले व्यक्ति ने अपने भोले में से कुछ अनाज के दाने निकाले और उन्हें चारों तरफ बिखरा दिया। दूसरे खेत की ओर जाते हुए उसने अपने भोले में से एक गेंद निकाली और सागर की तरफ फेंकी, जिसे सागर ने उछल कर पकड़ लिया । सागर को इतने उत्साह पूर्वक खेलते देख गाँव के वे बच्चे जो अपने माता पिता के साथ गाँव के दूसरे छोर तक चले गए थे, जो सागर के साथ कभी नहीं खेलते थे, उसके साथ आकर खेलने लगे व एक दूसरे को धकेल धकेल कर चिल्लाने लगे और दौड़ भाग करने लगे।

बाद में गाँव के रास्ते में ही वह आगंतुक भील के किनारे खड़ा हो गया और अपने डंडे को पानी में सात बार डुबाया व उसे इस प्रकार हिलाया जैसे की मंथन कर रहा हो । अपने इस कृत्य में वह खूब खिलखिलाकर हंस रहा था ।

जैसे ही वे लोग गाँव पहुँचे वहाँ वर्षा होने लगी । हर कोई प्रफुल्लित हो उठा क्यूँकि उस साल वहाँ बारिश नहीं हुई थी और कूटू और जौ की फसलें सुखने लगी थीं । सागर उछलते कृदते हुए उन आगंतुकों को अनाज घर की ओर ले जाने लगा जिसे वह अपना घर कहता था। वहाँ पर कुछ मूर्गियाँ जमा हो गयीं जिनमें से कुछ बहुत ही दुर्बल थीं । सागर के कुत्ता व बिल्ली जो सागर के पीछे पीछे आ रहे थे, वे अनाज घर में घुसते ही भूसे पर लोटपोट करने लगे जिस भूसे को सागर अपना बिस्तर व कंबल समभ कर उस पर सोता था । अत्यधिक ठंड होने पर वह गरमाहट लेने के लिए उसके अंदर दुबक कर सो जाया करता था।

गाँव के सभी लोग उन आगंतुकों के लिए उत्कृष्ट भोजन लाने के लिए अपने अपने घरों की ओर तेजी से दौड़ पड़े । उन्होने अपने स्वयं में यह बदलाव पाया कि जितनी अभाव केंद्रित सोच व सम्वेदनशीलता में वो जी रहे थे उससे ज्यादा आनंद उन्हें भोजन लाने के लिए मिल रहा है। वे आगंतुकों, सागर व अन्य कुछ लोगों के लिए चाय की पत्तियाँ व याक का मक्खन, कूटू व जी की बनी मीठी रोटी, सुखाया हुआ याक का गोश्त लेकर आए और इतना ही नहीं वे सागर के कृत्ते, बिल्ली व पक्षियों के लिए भी खाद्य सामग्री लेकर आए । बहुत सारे लोग गद्दे. रजाइयाँ व हाथ से बने कम्बल भी लेकर आए ।

उस साधु व्यक्ति के साथ साथ लम्बी दाढ़ी वाले व्यक्ति ने दिल खोलकर पूर्ण उत्साह से भोजन ग्रहण किया एवं हर कोई उस भोज में सम्मिलित हुआ । उसके पश्चात वे आगंतुक वहीं गद्दों पर लेट गये और जल्दी ही सो गए ।

गाँववालों ने लम्बे कद के व्यक्ति से उसका नाम पूछा । उसने बताया कि उसका नाम मर्दाना है जो पंजाब से है और लोग उसे प्यार से भाई मर्दाना कहकर पुकारते हैं।

"भाई मर्दाना लामा," ये कहकर सागर ने उसे प्रणाम किया। "और ये गुरू नानक हैं," मर्दाना ने उत्तर दिया।

"पद्मसंभव रिन्पोचे नानक गुरू," सागर ने उत्सुकता भरे स्वर में कहा ।

चुँकि बाबा नानक सो चुके थे अतः सागर ने उन्हें साष्टांग प्रणाम किया और बोला, "क्या ये दुष्ट आत्माओं का विनाश करते हैं?"

"हाँ, हमेशा ही," ये कहकर मरदाना मुस्कुराने लगा । "परंतु वे हमें दुष्ट आत्माओं को वश में करना सिखाते हैं, मारना नहीं । क्यूँकि जो दुष्ट आत्माएँ हमारे दिमाग में हैं उन्हें मारा नहीं जा सकता।"

"आपका गुरू नानक रिन्पोचे से क्या सम्बन्ध है?" सागर ने पूछा ।

"मैं एक लोक गायक के अलावा कुछ भी नहीं हूँ । मैं बस अपने गुरू का साथी, सेवक और भक्त हूँ । बाबा नानक अपने आप को अपने प्रिय के गीत गाने वाला एक गवैया और सिर्फ एक नौकर ही मानते हैं। उसी प्रिय परमात्मा ने उन्हें बनाया है, उनके वाद्यों को बनाया है और उनके माध्यम से ही वो गाते हैं । बाबा नानक बिना किसी आवश्यकता के आजकल ज्यादा बात नहीं करते हैं ।"

"वह प्रियतम कौन है?"

"प्रियतम वह है जो जाति, रंग, वंश, वर्ग और राष्ट्रीयता से परे होकर हम सभी के दिलों में वास करता है।"

"लेकिन उस का नाम क्या है?" किसी ने पूछा।

"उसका कोई नाम नहीं है, वह अनाम है लेकिन हाँ लोग उसे अलग अलग नामों से पुकारते हैं । जैसे कुछ लोग उसे ऊर्जा कहते हैं, कुछ उसे रहस्य समभते हैं तो कुछ उसे ब्रह्माण्ड कहकर पुकारते हैं । उस एक के अनेक नाम हैं क्यूँकि बहुत सारे लोग उनकी आराधना करते हैं और उन्हें शिव, ब्रह्मा, दुर्गा, देव, तारा, शक्ति, भगवान, अल्लाह, रब, वाहेगुरू और अन्य कई हजारों नामों से पुकारते हैं।"

"वह आदमी है या औरत?" एक महिला ने पूछा। भाई मरदाना ने उत्तर में कहा. "या तो दोनों या फिर दोनो में से कोई नहीं ।"

"हाँ, मेरी माँ भी यही कहती थी, उन्होंने एक चित्र भी बनाया था जिसमें शिव और पार्वती दोनों हैं जिनका मस्तिष्क, शरीर व आत्मा एक ही है। वो उस चित्र को अर्धनरनारी कहती थी," सागर ने उत्तेजित होते हुए कहा ।

सागर अनाज घर में लकड़ी की दीवार के पास गया जहाँ उसने अपनी माँ के द्वारा बनाए हुए चित्र की ओर इशारा किया । दीये की रौशनी में सभी गाँववालों ने उस तस्वीर की ओर देखा जिसमें एक ही शरीर था, आधा नर का और आधा नारी का व शरीर रचना ही उनके कपड़े थे । वह चित्र आगे की तरफ का नीला व पीछे की तरफ हरे रंग का था। कहीं कहीं निर्वस्त्र और कहीं कहीं आभूषणों से सुशोभित था।

उनकी सीमाएँ एक दूसरे में प्रवाहित होती हुई, नृत्य करती हुई, परिवर्तित होती हुई व अत्यंत काल्पनिक थीं । चित्र के ऊपरी हिस्से में जहाँ लहराते हुए बादल फैले हुए थे वहाँ एक से नीले रंग में विलीन होती प्रतीत होती थी।

"हे माता पिता परमात्मा !" सागर ने प्रफुल्लित होकर कहा । "बिल्कुल !" भाई मर्दाना ने समर्थन में कहा । "तुम्हारा धर्म क्या है?" उन्होंने पूछा ।

"धर्म है ये प्रकृति और उसका निर्माता । धर्म है ये नदी, हवा, आग, पहाड़, भील एवं हमारी आंतरिक व बाहरी प्रवृत्ति । जो इस ब्रह्मांड का रचयिता है एवं जिसके लिए यह सजीव व निर्जीव प्रकृति एक दुल्हन के रूप में अपनी सुहाग रात के लिए सजी हुई व सुशोभित है, उस स्वामी का नाम बनवारी है जिसके हम सब सेवक हैं । इस संसार के सौंदर्य की उपासना करने के लिए एवं विभिन्न देशों के लोगों से मिलने के लिए हम पूरी दुनिया में भ्रमण करते रहते हैं। जब कभी भी बाबा नानक किसी प्रेरणाप्रद स्थल को देखते हैं तो वे इस पथ्वी की भव्यता को देखकर अचिम्भित हो जाते हैं एवं उसी प्रबलता से उसके प्रेम में पड़ जाते हैं जैसे किसी प्रियतम के साथ पहली बार प्रेम होता है और वे बिल्कुल गहरी समाधि में लीन हो जाते हैं। हमने पूरी दुनिया का भ्रमण किया, नए नए लोगों से मिले, उनके रीति रिवाजों को देखा समभा । यद्यपि वे लोग अलग अलग व उनका जीवन जीने का थे जगह के ढंग व तरीका भी भिन्न था। बाबा जानते हैं कि इस धरा पर हर देश कई छोटे छोटे देशों में विभाजित है और वहाँ के रहने वाले लोग पद प्रतिष्ठा. विश्वास एवं रंग बिरंगी विभिन्नता होने के बावजूद भी सभी एक हैं और ये धरती हम सबकी माँ है।" सागर ने पूछा, "आप अपने आप को क्या कहकर पुकारते हैं?" "सिख ।"

"इसका क्या मतलब होता है?" गाँववालों ने प्रश्न किया ।

"'सिख' संस्कृत के शब्द 'शिष्य' से आया हुआ है जिसका अर्थ है एक विद्यार्थी जो सभी विधाओं को सीखने के लिए निष्ठावान है। इन सबसे भी ज्यादा एक सिख वह है जो अपने भीतर के परम ज्ञान की खोज के लिए, उसे समभने, परखने व उसे ढूँढने के लिए लालायित है।"

फिर किसी ने पूछा, "इसके अलावा आप और किस चीज में विश्वास रखते हैं?" "बाबा का कहना है कि उनके अनुयायियों को अपना जीवन पूर्ण रूप से जीना चाहिए । वे स्वयं एक किसान हैं, एक पति हैं, पिता हैं एवं गुरू हैं जो अपने सभी कर्तव्य पूर्ण रूप से निभाते है एवं जीवन में आने वाली प्रत्येक स्थिति में निष्पक्ष रूप से असंग्लन रहते हुए भी उसके सहभागी बनते हैं । वे इस सांसारिक दुनिया में रहते हुए भी एक योगी की तरह अपना जीवन जीते हैं जिस प्रकार कमल का फूल कीचड़ से लथपथ होते हुए भी एकदम स्वच्छ रूप से बाहर प्रकट होता है।

"वे अपने भक्तों से कहते हैं कि सबको अपनी जीविका ईमानदारी से अर्जित करनी चाहिए एवं सबके साथ उसे बाँटना चाहिए और सभी के साथ समान रूप से व्यवहार करना चाहिए । बाबा यह भी कहते हैं की हमें अंधविश्वास नहीं करना चाहिए और बहादुरी से एवं भयरहित जीवन जीना चाहिए । अपने दिमाग व विवेक का इस्तेमाल अपनी सीमाओं में रहकर करना चाहिए । और सबसे महत्वपूर्ण बात यह याद रखो कि उस परम परमात्मा का नाम लेना मत भूलो । खासतौर पर जब तुम किसी पीड़ा में हो ।"

"आखिर क्यूँ?" एक बच्चे ने सवाल किया ।

"क्युँकि जब हम किसी को याद करते हैं तो वह व्यक्ति हमारे दिमाग एवं यादों में जीवित हो उठता है । अतः वह हमारा वर्तमान बन जाता है । जिस प्रकार अगर तुम अपने प्रिय का नाम स्मरण करो तो तुम पाओगे कि वह तुम्हारे पास ही है ! जब भी हो सके, जितना भी हो सके उस परमपिता परमात्मा का नाम दोहराओ, उसे अपना दोस्त बनाओ ताकि जब कभी तुम उसका नाम स्मरण करना याद ना भी रख पाओ तब भी तुम्हें वह याद रहे और जब भी तुम किसी गहरी विपत्ति में हो तो यह अभ्यास तुम्हें उसका स्मरण कराता रहे ।

"आह, हमारा प्रियतम हमारा सबसे करीबी मित्र है। जब भी तुम किसी दु:ख रूपी हिमस्खलन के नीचे दबे होगे तब यही मित्र तुम्हें अपने लम्बे व मजबूत हाथों से बर्फ की मोटी परतों के नीचे से सुरक्षित खींच लाएगा । और बर्फीले तूफान में भी सुख रूपी अग्नि प्रज्ज्वलित करेगा ताकि तुम्हारी हिड्डियों को गरमाहट मिल सके! कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा के दौरान हमने एक बर्फीले तुफान का सामना किया ।"

"आपने कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा की है?" सभी गाँववाले एक साथ बोल पड़े ।

"हाँ, हम लोग कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा से ही लौट रहे हैं। वहाँ मानसरोवर में मैंने और बाबा ने मछलियों के साथ खूब तैराकी की," भाई मर्दाना ने कहा । अचानक ही गाँववालों को अपनी अप्राप्य इच्छा का रमरण हो उठा जो उनके दुर्भाग्य की मूल वजह थी। और उस स्मरण ने उन्हें एक चक्रधार बर्फीले तुफान और प्रचण्ड हवा के वेग की भाँति सागर की उन्मुक्त आत्मा के आरामदायक कोनो से निकाल कर उन्हें उनके दुखी व दयनीय दिमाग की ओर ला पटका । उस तुफान ने उन्हें उड़ा दिया था । वह उनके दिमाग में आँधी की तरह घुसा और एक भयावह कोलाहल व दुखी आवाजों ने उनके उत्साह को चीर चीर कर दिया था । चुँकि वे लोग अनाज घर में बैठे हुए थे, अचानक ही उनके शरीर में कुछ बदलाव होने लगा, उनके कंधे भूकने लगे व शरीर के अंग एकाएक जवाब देने लगे थे. उनके चेहरे भारी होने लगे व उनकी आँखे शोक में डूबने लगी । वे भाई मर्दाना से अपनी दयनीय स्थिति व दुखी जीवन, गरीबी, कमजोर व बीमार शरीर के बारे में कराहते हुए व विलाप करते हुए शिकायत

तभी किसी ने थोड़े कड़े स्वर में कहा, "अच्छा तभी तो आप दोनों इतने पवित्र व प्रफुल्लित दिखायी पडते हैं ! आप के सभी पाप व श्राप मानसरोवर के पवित्र पानी में धूल गए हैं और कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा ने दोनों को पवित्र कर दिया है ! चलिए, आप लोगों का इस अपवित्र गाँव में स्वागत है ।"

करने लगे । उन्होंने अपनी धर्मयात्रा का संकल्प ना ले पाने की असमर्थता का भी उल्लेख किया जिसके पश्चात वे अपनी सभी प्रकार की बीमारियों से स्वस्थ हो जाते एवं जो उन्हें उनके जन्मों जन्मों से जमा पापों से मृक्त कर देता ।

"कैलास व मानसरोवर दोनो ही अत्यंत विशाल व अवर्णनीय हैं । लेकिन वे प्रकृति के किसी भी लाजवाब प्रेरक स्थान से ज्यादा पवित्र नहीं हैं। यहाँ तक कि तुम्हारे अपने गाँव, घर, शरीर से ज्याद पवित्र भी नहीं हैं," भाई मर्दाना ने कहा ।

"यह तो ईश्वर निंदा है ! कैलास पर्वत तो इस पूरे संसार में सबसे विशिष्ट जगह है। यह तो ब्रह्माण्ड के केन्द्र में स्थित है।"

भाई मर्दाना ने उत्तर में कहा, "पूरे संसार में बहुत सारे केन्द्र हैं क्यूँकि यहाँ मनुष्य व जीव रहते हैं । अतित और वर्तमान में भी वास्तविकता से पहले कैलास पर्वत एक पौराणिक उपमा के रूप में प्रसिद्ध है।"

"उपमा से आपका क्या मतलब है?"

"उपमा एक भौतिक विषय है जैसे की कैलास पर्वत सच्चाई के लिए जाना जाता है और अन्य किसी भी रूप में वर्णित नहीं किया जा सकता । हिंदुओं, बौद्धों व जैनीयों के लिए कैलास पर्वत मेरू या सुमेरू पर्वत के रूप में प्रसिद्ध है जिसके लिए कहा जाता है कि सभी ग्रह, सूर्य व सितारे इसकी परिक्रमा करते हैं । कुछ लोग तो यह भी कहते हैं की मेरू पर्वत धरती के बीचोंबीच स्थित है। कुछ लोगों का कहना है की यह समुद्र के मध्य में स्थित है। कुछ इसे कश्मीर के उत्तरपश्चिम में स्थित 'पामिर' मानते हैं तो कुछ इसे कैलास पर्वत कहते हैं । लेकिन ज्यादातर लोगों का यही मानना है कि यही वह स्थान है जहाँ सभी देवों का निवास है एवं जिस ऊँची पहाड़ी पर चढ़ कर मनुष्य स्वर्ग की ओर जा सकता है." भाई मर्दाना ने समभाया ।

सभी गाँव वाले रोते हुए एक साथ बोले, "हाँ, हम भी यही मानते हैं ! परंतू हम यह सुख कभी प्राप्त नहीं कर पाएँगे ! हम सभी लोग अभिशापित हैं !"

"परंतु हमें इस अन्योक्ति को ही मुख्य विषय नहीं बनाना चाहिए । यदि तुम पत्थर की बनी मूर्ति, किसी पर्वत की पूजा करते हुए यह भूल गए हो की यह सिर्फ एक प्रतिरूप व स्मरण किए जाने योग्य रचना मात्र है, तब तुम अपने आप को उस चित्र रहित, आकार रहित व असीम व अपार भाव से दूर कर लेते हो जिसका वर्णन किसी एक उपमा के द्वारा नहीं किया जा सकता एवं जो किसी स्थान विशेष के लिए निर्धारित नहीं है । यदि हमें हमारी आस्थाएँ किसी सीमा में बाँधती है तो हमें अपनी आस्था की जाँच करनी चाहिए ।

"कैलास पर्वत से लौटते समय मैं सोच रहा था की 'मेरू' शब्द का क्या अर्थ है? मैंने बहुत से पुजारिओं व साधुओं से पूछा पर किसी को भी इसका उत्तर पता नहीं था । तत्पश्चात एक दिन मुभ्ते समभ्त आया की यह 'मेरा' शब्द का ही स्नेहमयी परिवर्तित रूप हो सकता है । चूँकि 'मेरा' शब्द में अत्यंत अहंकार भरा हुआ है परंतु 'मेरू' शब्द पूर्णतया प्रेम से भरा शब्द है । और इस तरह से सभी कुछ मेरा है। 'मेरू' के अर्थ में यह सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड मेरा है। अपने अहंकार का विस्तार करने पर यह सम्बन्ध बनता है परंतु यह विस्तार किसी फूले हुए गुब्बारे की तरह है । यदि उसे ज्यादा विस्तारित किया जाएगा तो वह फट जाएगा । जब हमारे अंदर अहंकार फैलता है तब वो अपने साथ प्रत्येक चीज को फैलाता है और कुछ भी शेष नहीं रह जाता । वास्तविकता में हम प्राणी यही हैं, अत्यंत छोटे भी, और पर्याप्त रूप से बृहत् भी कि इस संपूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड को अपना घर बना सकें ।

"यद्यपि कई लोगों को लगता है कि मेरू पर्वत, जिसे तुम कैलास कहते हो, अलग अलग जगहों पर विद्यमान है । योगियों का कहना है की यह हमारे भीतर विद्यमान है। हर एक काल के जितने भी प्रबुद्ध व्यक्ति हैं उन सभी का कहना है कि हमारी रीढ़, जिसे उन लोगों ने मेरूदंड कहा है, वही मेरू का आधार है, वहीं संसार की अक्ष रेखा है और वहीं संसार का केन्द्र है। हमें अपने स्वभाव की प्रकृति के तले से लेकर ऊपर की ओर चढ़ना सीखना है। जिस प्रकार हमारी रीढ़ के तल पर जहाँ 'मेरा' और उससे सम्बंधित दैत्य का वास होता, वहाँ से ऊपर की ओर हमारी पणग्रंथि व रीढ़ की चक्रधार गाँठों से होते हुए हजार पंखुड़ी वाले कमल की तरह हमारा मस्तक स्थित होता है। वास्तविक रूप से यही असल धर्म यात्रा है जिसे बाबा स्वयं की ओर की यात्रा कहते हैं । यही यात्रा हमें हमारे द्वारा किए गए पापों से अवगत कराती है एवं परमप्रिय के स्मरण की सहायता से हमें शुद्ध बनाती है।"

ये सुनके एक व्यक्ति ऋोध में बोला, "आपके लिए यह सब कहना बड़ा आसान है क्यूँकि आप वहाँ जा के आ चुके हैं । परंतु हम शारीरिक रूप से रूग्ण हैं, गरीब हैं, भूखे व बेहद दुखी हैं । कड़ाके की सर्दी की वजह से हमारी बिरादरी के कई लोग अपनी जान गवाँ बैठते हैं । हमारी फसलें हर ऋतु में कुम्हला जाती है, हमारे बच्चों के पास खाने के लिए पर्याप्त भोजन नहीं होता है और कई बच्चे तो जन्म लेने के बाद एक वर्ष भी नहीं जी पाते।"

"हमारे कर्म दुषित हैं । अपने पापों की वजह से भद्दे व मैले हो चुके हैं एवं हम भीतर व बाहर दोनों तरफ से पूरी तरह से सड़ चुके हैं। हम कैलास पर्वत, जो कि स्वर्ग का द्वार है, जो हमें हर प्रकार से स्वस्थ कर देगा, उस धर्म द्वार की यात्रा कभी नहीं कर पाएँगे," ये कहते हुए एक महिला शोक के कारण रोने लगी।

"बाबा अपने एक गीत में कहते हैं: जब तुम्हारे कपड़े कीचड़ से और मलमूत्र से रंगे हों, तब एक साबुन की सहायता से उसे साफ किया जा सकता है। परंतु जब तुम्हारा मस्तिष्क ही तुम्हारे दुषित कर्मी की वजह से मैला हो, तब सिर्फ उस परमपिता के नाम से उसे साफ किया जा सकता है।"

परंतु वह महिला अभी भी शोक में डूबी हुई थी। यह देख भाई मर्दाना हताश हो गए । उन्हें आभास हुआ की उन्होंने अभी तक जो भी समभाया उसका एक शब्द भी गाँववालों ने नहीं समभा । सागर ही एकमात्र था जो उनके शब्दों को गहनता से सुन रहा था, उन्हें ग्रहण करके आत्मसात कर रहा था । भाई मर्दाना ने अपने मन में सोचा शायद वे ही पूर्ण रूप से निष्कपट नहीं हैं, और वे बेकार में उपदेश दे रहे हैं, उन्हें अपने स्वयं पर ही संदेह होने लगा।

तत्पश्चात उन्होंने कहा, " भरोसा रखो । मैं स्वयं भी अभिशापित था । मुफमें भी लालच, धोखा, संदेह पूर्ण प्रवर्ति, ईर्ष्या, लालसा, लत, 'मैं', 'मेरा', अत्यंत अहंकार, अभिमान व कृतघ्नता सभी प्रकार के अवगुण थे । परंतु बाबा की छत्रछाया में मैं पोषित हो गया । मैं एक 'गुरमुख' हूँ जिसका अर्थ होता है वह व्यक्ति जो अपने अहंकार के आगे, एवं अपने भगवान से भी पहले अपने गुरू को ही देखता हो । उन्होंने मुफे यह भी सिखाया की मैं जिस सुख, सम्पत्ति, प्रतिष्ठा की तलाश में था वो असल में मेरे अंदर ही अमृत के फरने के रूप में बह रहा था। चाहे मैं कहीं भी रहूँ यह मेरे भीतर ही रहता है। सुखी व समृद्ध रहने के लिए तुम्हें कहीं जाने की जरूरत नहीं है। बाबा आज तुम्हारे पास आए हैं । तुम्हें उन पर भरोसा करना चाहिए और देखना सब कुछ अपने आप ठीक हो जाएगा । फिर तुम्हें भी तुम्हारा शरीर, तुम्हारा गाँव, तुम्हारा घर सब कुछ सुंदर एवं धन्य दिखायी देने लगेगा।

"यहाँ कुछ भी धन्य नहीं है। आपको यहाँ क्या सुंदर दिखायी देता है?" भाई मर्दाना ने कहा, "तुम्हें अपनी आँखे खोलनी होंगी।"

"परंतु हमारी आँखें तो खुली हुई हैं, हम अंधे थोड़े ना हैं," उन लोगों ने जवाब दिया।

"देखो !" भाई मर्दाना ने बरामदे की ओर इशारा किया जहाँ सागर ने अपनी माँ का बनाया हुआ चित्र टांगा हुआ था । उसने चित्र में बनी आँखों की ओर इशारा किया जिसमें से दो आँखें मछली की तरह दिखती थी व उनसे ऊपर तीसरी शांति से बैठी हुई दिखती थी।

"अपने तीसरे नेत्र से देखने का प्रयास करो, वही नेत्र जो हमारे अंदर के अंतर्द्वन्द्व एव विरोधाभाष को समेटता है व हमें सच्चाई से अवगत करता है। जब तुम इसके पार देखना शुरू कर दोगे तब तुम्हारे दु:ख तुम्हें कमल के पुष्प की तरह लगने लगेंगे और तुम्हारे अभिशाप उपहारों में बदल जाएँगे।"

सभी गाँववाले उनके आगे निवेदन करने लगे, "हमें बताइए हम ये कैसे करें? हम अपना तीसरा नेत्र खोलने के लिए मेहनत करने को तैयार हैं।"

तभी बाबा नानक के करवट बदलने की आवाज सुनाई दी । भाई मर्दाना ने अपनी आँखें बंद कर लीं और एकदम शांत हो गए जैसे कि उनके गुरू ने उनसे कुछ कहा हो । तत्पश्चात उन्होंने अपनी आँखे खोली और बोले, "प्रयत्न करना महत्वपूर्ण है । परंतु जरूरी नहीं है कि ये हमें अपने लक्ष्य से मिला देगा । देखो, मैं तबसे तुम्हें समभाने का प्रयत्न कर रहा हूँ । लेकिन मैं मूर्ख था ।

में सबसे आवश्यक बात ही भूल गया । मुभ्ने मेरे प्रयत्न से पहले उस उदार व सारी अपेक्षाएँ पूरी करने वाले परमात्मा से प्रार्थना करनी चाहिए थी । उसके सहयोग के बिना यह प्रयत्न किसी तुफान में फँसे तिनके की तरह है जो साकार नहीं हो सकता।"

गाँव के एक व्यक्ति ने शिकायत भरे स्वर में कहा, "हम तो बहुत प्रार्थना करते हैं पर कभी कुछ भी नहीं होता।"

"परंतु तुम कैसे करते हो अपनी प्रार्थना?" भाई मर्दाना ने पूछा । "अपने मख से।"

ये सुनते ही भाई मर्दाना मुस्कुरा उठे और बोले, "वर्तमान में जियो और अपने दिल से प्रार्थना करना सीखो । समभो, जिसके आगे तुम प्रार्थना कर रहे हो वही एक मात्र विद्यमान तत्व है। तुम अपनी दोनो आँखों से जितना देख पाते हो उससे कहीं ज्यादा वह अस्तित्व रखता है। 'वही है', 'वही है', 'वही है', 'वही हैं', 'एकमात्र वही हैं' । मेरे बाबा भी हर्षोन्मत्तता के साथ यही गाते हैं और मैं लाखों लाख बार यही कहना चाहता हूँ कि एकमात्र वही है। गुरू नानक का भी सबसे महत्वपूर्ण संदेश यही है कि उस एकमात्र का होना ही परम सत्य है। स्मरण रहे जब भी तुम अपनी तीसरी आँख खोलने के लिए अपना पहला कदम बढ़ाओगे और उस प्रियतम अथवा सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्मांड के स्वामी को अपनी धर्म यात्रा की सहायता के लिए प्रेम पूर्वक याद करोगे, तब वह तुम्हारे आगे हजार कदम बढ़ा देगा ताकि तुम अपनी खुली हुई आँखो से देख सको । हमारे प्रेम के फलस्वरूप वो हमें अनुमोल उपहारों से सम्मानित करेगा । बाबा का कहना है कि यदि तुम अपने गुरू की कही हुई केवल एक बात को भी सुनके, उसपर ध्यान देकर उसका अनुसरण कर लोगे एवं उसे अपने कान व हृदय में सदा के लिए स्थान दोगे तो तुम्हारा मस्तिष्क मुल्यवान मणिकों, मोतियों, हीरे जवाहरत रूपी ज्ञान का भंडार बन जाएगा।"

"क्या यह वास्तव में सच है? क्या गुरू से हमें सम्पत्ति और कीमती रत्न मिल सकते हैं?" किसी ने पूछा।

"हमारी असल, उच्चतम एवं सर्वश्रेष्ठ सम्पत्ति वही एक परमात्मा है जिससे प्रेम के फलस्वरूप ही हमें भौतिक व आध्यात्मिक दोनों प्रकार के उपहार मिल सकते हैं । सबसे महत्वपूर्ण यह है कि हम उसे देखने के लिए अपनी तीसरी आँख खोलना सीख जायेंगे । ये बहुत ही चमत्कृत आँख है जिससे असुंदरता भी सुंदरता में और विष अमृत में परिवर्तित हो जाता है। जैसा बाबा अपने गीत में गाते हैं कि यह हमारे दखों को आरोग्यता प्रदान करने वाली औषधि है। जीवन को अलग से देखने के अलग अलग तरीके हैं। जैसे कि हम सितारों से देखें या समय की परम सीमा जो कि बेहद बड़ी व वृहत है, वहाँ से देखने पर हमारा भूत, वर्तमान एवं भविष्य अत्यधिक दूर दिखायी देता है। मैं तुम्हें एक उदाहरण से समभाता हूँ..."

मर्दाना ने अपना फोला उठाया और फोले में से मुडी भरके समंदर की सीपियाँ निकाली, जो कि कुछ सम्पूर्ण थीं, कुछ थोड़ी पुरानी होने की वजह से घिस गयी थीं व उनमें से कुछ टूटने लगी थीं।

सागर बोला, "मैं जानता हूँ ये शंख हैं और ये समंदर के अंदर पाये जाते हैं।"

किसी ने उत्सुकतावश पूछा "समंदर के अंदर क्या है?" वे लोग मानसिक रूप से इतने अवरुद्ध हो चुके थे कि उन्होंने एक शब्द भी ध्यान से नहीं सुना । और वे सारे वर्णन को समभना छोड़ चुके थे । परंतु कहीं ना कहीं उनकी स्मृति के गहरे कोनों में और उनके स्वप्नों में 'समंदर' शब्द गुँजता था ।

"मेरे नाम का मतलब भी यही है, समंदर !" सागर ने उत्सुकता पूर्वक कहा । "यह पानी का विशाल स्थल है ..."

"जैसे मानसरोवर?"

"नहीं मानसरोवर की तरह नहीं ! इस पूरी पृथ्वी पर उतनी जमीन नहीं है जितने कि समंदर हैं !" सागर ने अत्यंत उत्साह से कहा । मेरे माता पिता ने मुफे इसके बारे में बताया था । समंदर इतने गहरे होते हैं कि इनके अंदर बड़े बड़े पर्वत, बड़े बड़े ज्वालामुखी भी स्थित हैं । भगवान की ही तरह यह भी रहस्यमयी एवं असीम है, इसके बारे में हमारा ज्ञान बहुत तुच्छ है। मेरे माता पिता मुभ्ने अपने नाम का अर्थ याद रखने के लिए बोलते थे और यह भी की मेरे हृदय में समंदर समाहित है। अतः मुभ्ने इसे सदा याद रखना चाहिए। मैंने कभी समंदर नहीं देखा परंतु मैं इसे अपने हृदय में महसूस कर सकता हूँ । शायद लामा मर्दाना भी इसी के बारे में बात कर रहे हैं।"

"ये कैसे सम्भव है? हमने तो कभी नहीं देखा !"

"हम में यह स्वीकार्य भाव होना चाहिए कि जो हम अपनी इन आँखों से नहीं देख सकते वे चीजें भी संसार में अस्तित्व रखती हैं," भाई मर्दाना ने प्रति उत्तर में कहा । "उदाहरण के तौर पे क्या तुम जानते हो कि तुम्हारे ऊँचे पठार और कैलास पर्वत भी किसी समय समंदर के भीतर ही थे? ये शंख और ये सीपियाँ उसी का प्रमाण हैं जिसे मैं और बाबा नानक कैलास पर्वत की यात्रा से वापसी के समय एकत्रित करके लाए थे।"

गाँववालों को भाई मर्दाना की बात समभ आने में कुछ वक्त लगा । कुछ समय के लिए वे एकदम शांत हो गए व मर्दाना की बातों पर खयाल करते हुए अपने दिमाग पर पूरा जोर डालने लगे।

"इस संसार में कुछ भी सदा के लिए नहीं है। यहाँ तक कि कैलास पर्वत भी नहीं । एक दिन यह फिर से समंदर के भीतर समा जाएगा । परंतु मेरू पर्वत की ये पौराणिक कथा कभी भी समाप्त नहीं होगी । ये हमेशा हमारे मन में रहेगी।

"मृभ्रे लग रहा है मैं काफी समय से बोले जा रहा हूँ, आओ हम सब मिलकर प्रार्थना करें." मर्दाना ध्यान के आसन में बैठ गया और गाँववालों को विनम्र एवं करूणामयी आवाज में प्रार्थना करने की विधि समभाने लगा ।

"आराम से बैठ जाओ और अपनी आँखे बंद करो । परमात्मा हमारी सासों में बसा हुआ है और हवा की तरह वो हमारे चारों ओर है। उसकी उपस्थिति को महसूस करो । अगर तुम्हारे मन व मस्तिष्क में विचार उत्पन्न हो रहे हैं तो उन्हें आने दो और धीरे धीरे अपने ऊपर से ध्यान हटाते हुए अपने आप को उस परम तत्व को समर्पित कर दो । उसके द्वारा प्रदत्त हर चीज के प्रति आभारी रहो और वह परम प्रिय परमेश्वर, जिसका बसेरा तुम्हारा हृदय है एवं जो सारे कष्ट व दु:ख मिटाने वाला है, उसकी खोज की यात्रा प्रारम्भ करने के लिए पार्थना करो।"

सागर के इस आशापूर्ण हृदय के प्रति थोड़े समय के लिए किए गए भरोसे ने गाँववालों को एक नयी उम्मीद से भर दिया । वे अपने इस रूग्ण एवं उदासी भरी प्रवृत्ति से निकलकर उस जगह पर आना चाहते थे जहाँ पर उन्होंने उम्मीद से परिपूर्ण स्थिति को देखा व उसे अनुभव किया था। अतः उन्होंने मर्दाना द्वारा बताए गए निर्देश का पालन किया।

ध्यान के पश्चात जब उन्होंने अपनी आँखें खोली तो उन्हें अपनी चेतना में कुछ परिवर्तन आभास हुआ । जिस धारणा व आदतन सोच के जाल में वे बंद थे उससे वे बाहर आ चुके थे। लम्बे समय से निष्क्रिय हो चुके दिमाग फिर से सि्रिय हो उठे।

काफी रात बीत चुकी थी और मर्दाना बहुत देर से बोल रहे थे। अतः उन्हें थकान के कारण उबासी आने लगी। बाबा के द्वारा की गयी हल्की आहट को याद करके उनके चेहरे पे मुस्कान आ गयी । उस शांतिमय वातावरण में उन्होंने परमिता परमात्मा से उन गाँववालों की सहायता की प्रार्थना की । आखिर बाबा का अचानक अपनी यात्रा के बीच में ही कृदांग गाँव आने का कारण भी तो यही था । मर्दाना ने मन में सोचा, "जहाँ बाबा की जरूरत होती है, बाबा वहाँ पहुँच जाते हैं।"

गाँववाले भी अब बहुत तनाव मुक्त अवस्था में पहुँच चुके थे और वे भी उबासी लेने लगे थे।

वे मर्दाना के पैर छूकर अपने अपने घरों की ओर जाने के लिए निकलने ही लगे थे कि मर्दाना ने कहा, "बाबा ने आप लोगों के लिए एक संदेश भिजवाया है।"

"कल सुबह, जब रात्रि पूरी तरह से ओस की बूँदों से भीगी होगी एवं आकाश में सितारे टिमटिमाते दिखायी देंगे तब गाँव के मध्य में आकर एकत्रित होना एवं बाबा और मेरे पीछे पीछे उस पहाड़ी के शिखर तक चलना जो तुम्हारे और गोसा गाँव को विभक्त करती है। बाबा तुम्हें धर्मद्वार की चौकठ तक लेकर जाएँगे जहाँ के दर्शन से तुम जब चाहो अपने दुखों का विसर्जन कर सकते हो । यह जगह कैलास पर्वत से भी अधिक पवित्र है और मानसरोवर से भी अधिक पावन है।"

कहीं ना कहीं अभी भी गाँववालों के वृद्ध दिमाग यही सोच रहे थे कि उस पहाड़ की ऊँचाई बहुत है और वे उस पर कभी नहीं चढ़ पाएँगे। पर फिर भी वे बाबा नानक और मर्दाना का अनुसरण करने के लिए लालायित थे। अपने दुखों से मुक्ति पाने के लिए पर्वत शिखर पर चढ़ने के लिए तैयार हो गए।

अगली सुबह सभी बच्चे, बुजुर्ग एवं अन्य लोग गाँव के मध्य मैदान में एकत्रित हुए । सागर के कुत्ते, बिल्ली भी उत्सुकता से इस अपूर्व यात्रा के लिए सबके साथ हो लिए । वे भी अपने अगले जीवन में मनुष्य योनि की प्राप्ति के लिए अत्यधिक आतुर थे ।

गुरू नानक, जिन्हें गाँव वाले अब पद्मसंभव रिन्पोचे नानक गुरू कहकर सम्बोधित करने लगे थे, अत्यधिक ऊर्जावान एवं ओजस्वी लग रहे थे। भाई मर्दाना लामा भी अपनी स्वस्थ ऊर्जा से चमक रहे थे। असल में उनकी चेतनत्व छवि व कल्याणकारी उपस्थिति के कारण ही गाँववालों ने बिना किसी दूराव छिपाव के उन लोगों पर विश्वास किया एवं उनके बताए मार्ग पर अनुसरण करने के लिए तैयार हो गये।

मर्दाना के मार्गदर्शन में गाँववालों ने प्रार्थना की एवं उस पावन यात्रा की ओर अपना पहला कदम बढ़ाया जिस दिशा में वे पहले कभी नहीं गए थे। यद्यपि कुछ गाँववाले अपनी यात्रा के दौरान भुँभलाहट के साथ कराह भी रहे थे परंतु फिर भी उन सभी ने उस पहाड़ी के उच्च शिखर तक की यात्रा सम्पन्न की । जब उन्होंने वहाँ से नीचे भाँक के देखा तो वे उस रास्ते को देखकर अचिम्भत हो उठे जिस रास्ते पर वे चल कर आए थे। अपनी यात्रा को याद करते हुए वे हैरान थे कि कितने आराम से वे उस पहाड़ी तक पहुँच गए थे। आज पहली बार उन्होंने अपने गाँव को ध्यान से देखा । वह कितना प्यारा. सुखद एवं दिल छू लेने वाला दिखायी दे रहा था। उनके अपने ही घर उनके गाँव जननी पहाड़ी की सतह से इस प्रकार लिपटे हुए लग रहे थे जैसे की मानो पार्वती की रक्षात्मक देह के वक्रों में सिमटे हुए हों।

गाँव वाले अपने इस अभ्यास के पश्चात स्वयं को काफी स्फूर्तिवान, स्वस्थ व जागृत महसूस करने लगे थे । उनके शरीर कृतज्ञता से परिपूर्ण होकर आनंद रूपी गीत गा रहे थे । वे समभ चुके थे कि इस आरोहण का लक्ष्य भी यही था । मर्दाना के अनुसार उनकी यात्रा का मतलब कैलास पर्वत ही है, जो कि ब्रह्मांड के केन्द्र का आधार है एवं जहाँ सभी देवों ने आनंद से ध्यान किया है। शिखर पर उन्हें सीख मिल गयी थी।

यद्यपि तब तक पूर्ण रूप से सवेरा नहीं हुआ था। फिर भी चारों तरफ काफी रौशनी फैल चुकी थी। यह सुबह का वही क्षण है जब दूसरे जगत अर्थात ध्यान की अवस्था में जाने के लिए प्रकृति अपने सारे दरवाजे खोल देती है। नीला आसमान अभी भी सितारों की बूटियों से सुसज्जित था एवं सुबह का जागृत व उपचारात्मक मंद पवन का बहाव जिसे भारतवर्ष के ज्ञानी मलयानिल कहते हैं. ऊँची पहाड़ी की चोटियों से बहने लगा था एवं उन गाँववालों के हृदय को दुलारते हुए उनके अंगों व श्वासों तक पहुँच रहा था।

बाबा नानक ने अपनी छड़ी से एक बड़ी चट्टान पर बने वृहत घेरे की ओर इशारा किया जो कि पानी व हवा के कारण धीरे धीरे नष्ट होने लगा था। उस चट्टान की प्रारम्भ से अंत तक बर्फ से ढकी हुई चोटियाँ इतनी ऊँची थीं की उनके शीर्ष बादलों व धुँध मे छिपे दिखायी पड़ रहे थे एवं वे मनुष्य की आँखों से अदृष्ट थे। गाँववाले यह दृश्य देखकर अचिभत हो उठे और एक साथ ही उन सभी ने श्रद्धापूर्वक अपने शीश भूका दिए ।

उनके आसपास इतना कुछ विद्यमान है जिसका उन लोगों को कोई आभास नहीं था । यह सोचकर वे सब विस्मित थे । उस दृश्य ने उन सभी के हृदय व मन को विनम्र कर दिया था। वे सोचने लगे कि उनकी समभ कितनी अल्प है एवं वे कितने मंद व अंधे थे कि अपनी दयनीय सोच की सीमाओं से बाहर भाँकने का साहस किए बिना ही वे अपने गाँव कुदांग में दुखों से भरे हुए बैठे हए थे!

भाई मर्दाना ने अपना रबाब निकाला व उसे बजाने लगे । यह देखते ही उन लोगों ने अपना ध्यान पहाड़ की चोटियों से हटाकर भाई मर्दाना की ओर किया । उस लयबद्ध स्वर व मधुर संगीत में आत्म निरीक्षण करने लगे । इस ब्रह्माण्ड की उपस्थिति में उनके स्वयं के अस्तित्व के रहस्य ने उन्हें घोर आश्चर्य से भर दिया । तभी बाबा नानक ने अपना गला साफ किया और अपनी आँखे बंद कर ली।

उनके अंतर्मन से एक शब्द प्रकट हुआ और हवा की तरंगों के साथ बहता हुआ उन लोगों के चारों तरफ भूल कर घाटियों, पहाड़ियों व ऊँची ऊँची चोटियों तक गूँज गया । तत्पश्चात उन लोगों के दिल और दिमाग तक पहुँचकर उन्हें इस प्रकार स्वतंत्र कर गया जिसकी कभी उन गाँववालों ने कल्पना भी नहीं की होगी।

वह स्वर प्रसारित होता जा रह था। वह किसी एक तरंग में निहित दूसरी तरंग के प्रतिबिम्ब की भाँति आकार लेने लगा एवं कई अधिस्वरों में परिवर्तित हो गया । एक के बाद एक वे सभी स्वर मंत्र जाप करने वाली माला की तरह तब तक एक तार में बँधते चले गए जब तक वह स्वर अपनी जादुई शक्ति से उनके अस्तित्व को अपने अधीन कर के उनके हृदय के आर पार हो जाने वाला अत्यंत सम्मोहक धुन में ना बदल गया । पिछली रात्रि के मर्दाना के धर्मीपदेशों ने उनके कष्टों व दुखों से भरे हृदय व दिमाग को जीत कर साफ कर दिया था । अब उनके दिल व दिमाग बाबा के संदेशों व मधुर धुनों के लिए तैयार हो चुके थे । ये संगीतिक व उद्दात्त गीत हमारी आत्मा की उन गहराईयों एवं परमशीर्षों तक पहुँच सकते हैं जहाँ कोई नहीं पहुँच सकता । बाबा जो गीत गा रहे थे उसका अर्थ उन्हें समभ नहीं आ रहा था परंतु फिर भी भाई मर्दाना के सहयोग से वे उस संगीत को आत्मसात कर पा रहे थे और उस धुन ने उनकी आत्मा में जाद सा घोल दिया था। वे अब पहले वाले लोग नहीं रहे।

बाहरी स्वरूप से की गयी धर्म यात्रा का भी अपना अस्तित्व है । परंतु उन लोगों के लिए जो इस धर्म यात्रा का मार्ग अपनाना चाहते हों । लेकिन उन गाँव वालों को अपने अंतर्मन के रोग हरने के लिए कहीं और जाने की आवश्यकता ही नहीं पड़ी । यह बात अब वे समभ चुके थे । उन लोगों ने अपने घरों में एकांतपूर्वक व धेर्यपूर्वक बैठकर भाई मर्दाना की सिखायी हुई बातों के अनुसार ध्यान किया । अतः उन्होंने अपने ही भीतर स्थित कैलास पर्वत के चरणों में बहने वाली आनंद रूपी मानसरोवर भील के पवित्र पानी से स्नान कर लिया था ।

तभी बाबा नानक और भाई मर्दाना अपने स्थान से उठे व अपने फोलों को उठाते हुए उस गाँव की ओर प्रस्थान करने लगे जहाँ उनकी उपस्थिति से लोगों के मन की आँखें खुल सकें । सागर भावुकता से भर गया और रोने ही वाला था कि उसे यह बोध हुआ कि पद्मसंभव, जो उसके जीवन को पूरी तरह से बदलने आए थे, उनसे वह फिर कभी विमुक्त नहीं होगा।

सोसा गाँव को जाने वाला निचला व लम्बा रास्ता जहाँ तक दिखायी देता था वहाँ तक गाँववाले अपनी आँखें मीच मीच के बाबा नानक और भाई मर्दाना को जाते हुए देख रहे थे । परंतु थोड़ी ही देर में वे उनकी दृष्टि से बाहर हो गए और इस प्रकार अन्तर्ध्यान हो गए जैसे कि मानो वे कभी थे ही नहीं।

उन महान गुरूओं के आकस्मिक आगमन व अन्तर्ध्यान के साक्षी कई दिन, महीने, साल, दशक पश्चात गाँववालों ने धान में से निकली हुई हरी कलियाँ देखीं जो कि उस मिट्टी में से उगी थी जिस पर रिन्पोचे नानक गुरू ने अपने हाथों से धान के बीज बिखेरे थे। जिस भील के पानी को उन पावन आगंतुकों ने अपने डंडे से हिलाया था वह फिर कभी नहीं जमी । सागर भी अब बड़ा हो गया था एवं धार्मिक शिक्षाओं के लिए एक छोटा सा गोम्पा बनाने के लिए उसके पास जादुई ढंग से धन एकत्रित हो गया था । जिस समय बाबा नानक ने उस गाँव में अपने कदम रखे थे उस समय की तुलना में वे गाँव वाले ज्यादा समृद्ध थे। उन लोगों ने अपने बच्चों व उनके भी बच्चों को उन महान लोगों के भ्रमण के किरसे सुनाए । वे और उनकी कई पीढ़ियां इसी विस्मय में रहीं कि क्या यह कहानी कोई पौराणिक कथा थी या कोई सपना जिस ने सब कुछ बदल दिया ।

## You Don't Die Till You're Dead

A herbalist, a stone carver and a cook were very close friends, even though the herbalist was a Bonpo, the stone carver a Buddhist and the cook, a Hindu. They had a lot in common: they were weary of their wives and their children's demands. Their wives nagged them to get better and bigger houses, better kitchens to cook the family meals, more and more land to grow fruit and food, better conditions for their children and their families, while the children were fighting bitterly among themselves and with their parents for the family's inheritance.

All three felt tormented by their wives and mauled by family conflicts. They decided that life was not worth living on these terms, and what they really wanted was to renounce "Maya," the illusion of the material world, all attachments and possessions, and take a holy vow to go on a quest to affirm, protect and worship the sacred in nature, undertake a pilgrimage to the holy Mount Kailas whose one glimpse washes away sins, enlightens the soul and elevates it above attachments and afflictions. They would gain merit by circling the inner, more difficult path at its base, then spend the rest of their lives meditating, the way Lord Buddha had done under the Bo tree, or Shiva had done in the lap of the sacred mountain near the holy lake, Manasarovar. Lord Buddha, too, had left his young, beautiful wife, Yashodara, their son and kingdom. Lord Shiva had shunned the

comforts and struggles of a household, left his wife, Parvati, for solitude and peace in the very navel of Mother Earth. Both had learned to control their minds so strictly that they did not stray to material things.

They decided, as many before them who had taken the same path to liberation, to perform their own funeral rights as a symbolic gesture of dying to the world, to everything profane including their bodies and their incessant needs and cravings, before leaving. In the middle of the night when the villagers and their families slept, they made their way to the village cremation spot by a pool on the banks of the river. They placed effigies of themselves on piles of wood that served as funeral pyres, poured ghee on the effigies, and set them ablaze. Throughout the burning they chanted mantras and prayers for their own souls. When the effigies turned to ash, they took fistfuls of their own remains and consigned them to the river in a ceremony that included the lighting of lamps and feeding the fish the cooked rice and lentils they had brought with them in lieu of feeding the villagers, to whom they owed a feast on their deaths.

At three in the morning, when the ceremony was over, the friends left their sleeping wives and children and set out on their journey with only the clothes on their backs, the shoes on their feet, and their begging bowls. But each, without telling the others, had sewn up money in his clothes. The reason for the secrecy was because they did not want to appear to be materialistic. They also wanted to keep the money safe from the many deadly dacoits whose profession it was to guiltlessly rob and often kill pilgrims as they trudged devoutly on in their quest towards godhood in the difficult, dangerous terrain and inclement weather to the very center of the world: the axis from which one made it to another dimension, known to the gods as Mount Meru, and to humans as Mount Kailas.

They climbed throughout the day, chanting "The tree is holy; the dirt on the path is holy; the stone is holy; the river is holy; the sun, stars, moon are holy; all nature is holy, holy."

In the late afternoon they rested in the shade of a boulder at the foot of a mountain of sheer rock devoid of vegetation, their feet, limbs and joints hurting, their mouths parched with thirst, their bellies growling with hunger. But they had to keep up appearances and did not admit any of this to each other.

Finally the cook, feeling faint, said, "It would be so good to have some tea."

The herbalist licked his lips at the very thought, tasting it on the tongue of his mind as his wife made it, with yak butter, honey, pepper and spices.

He said, "Why don't we make some basil tea? I know the sacred herb, tulsi, grows here! It is Vishnu's own plant, and it is so magical it will infuse us with energy and quell all our hungers!"

"And I will go collect some stones to make a fire pit. Hopefully I will find some dried yak dung or prickly bushes for fuel," the stone carver said eagerly.

"And I know just how to brew it!" the cook replied. "I'll go fetch some water from that stream."

It took a while for the herbalist to find a stunted little bush with tiny blue flowers, purple stems and leaves. As he reached his hand to pluck some leaves and stems, he paused.

How can I pluck something that is so holy? he thought. Tulsi is a goddess, after all, a manifestation of Lakshmi, goddess of wealth, and consort of Vishnu.

An image of his Hindu wife worshipping the plant that grew out of a pedestal pot in the center of their courtyard flashed before his eyes. Each morning she bathed, wore clean clothes, swept the area around it, fetched water in a pot scrubbed clean with ash, lit incense, lovingly washed the plant, and circled it, chanting prayers to the holy herb.

The herbalist withdrew his hand. No, he could not pluck it. He started back for the campsite empty-handed.

The stone carver, on his quest for stones to make a fire pit found, after a great deal of wandering, a cairn of mani stones that other pilgrims on the same journey had left as an offering to the spirits of the place. He knew from carving the prayer Om Mani Padma Hum on them with utter devotion all his life that these stones were

altogether too sacred to make a fire pit. Besides, misfortune always befell those who used them as anything other than prayers to the deities. How could he profane them to make tea? For the briefest moment his desire for tea overcame his conscience and he reached out to pick up three of them. But he withdrew his hands instantly.

The cook, dipping his begging bowl in the stream, also stopped midway in the act.

He thought, How can I take away this holy water from a stream that is most probably a tributary of the most sacred of all rivers, Ganga, the goddess who flows like the liquid stem of a lotus flower from Vishnu's very toe!

He stood beside the stream and recalled yet another myth of Ganga's descent to the realm of matter. Daughter of the Himalaya, descendant of Mount Meru, the mythic name for Mount Kailas, Ganga was very angry when – in response to the pleading of the gods - her father ordered her to go to earth for the good of humankind.

Who in their right mind would abandon the bliss of heaven and descend to the land of suffering? Besides, being a goddess, Ganga could see far, far into the future and see herself dammed, polluted, abused by ignorant, foolish, exploitative and short-sighted human beings with no respect or understanding of nature and her ways.

But her father brooked no argument and forced her to go.

Expelled from heaven, she landed in a fury, cursing and swearing, on Shiva's head as he meditated in isolation and utter peace on the high peak of the mountain. In order to save the world from the destruction Ganga could unleash in the world, Shiva braided the river, like a strand of jasmines, into the coils of his matted hair and checked her headlong course. He held her till she calmed down, reconciled herself to her fate, and learned patience to wait for millennia for Homo Insapiens to truly become Homo Sapiens, respect and honor her, and all the rivers of the world for the goddesses that they were.

Then Shiva released her into a lake from which she flowed into many tributaries and distributaries, blessing the land she gushed and meandered through, irrigating it to create an abundance of food and fruits, and quenching many material and spiritual thirsts.

No, I cannot make tea out of this goddess! the cook thought. I won't commit this sacrilege!

So, all three friends gathered together again with empty hands. Each related his experience to the others. Though they were comforted by the knowledge of their similar reactions, they could not help be disappointed. They had given up hope of sustenance, but their stomachs still growled. They sat dejectedly in the fading light, too tired and too hungry to move.

As they sat thus, an old shepherdess with her goats, yaks and sheep passed by, wending her way back home from a green valley. Her face beneath her headscarf was wizened and wrinkled in the harsh weather, her teeth missing in her mouth, her eyes sharp and piercing. She saw the three men sitting forlornly by the boulder, stopped her twirling spindle with which she spun yarn rapidly, and said in a less than friendly voice:

"And what is the matter with the three of you? You look like you have swallowed dung!"

The three men began relating their story to her.

"Hurry up, I don't have all day!" she snarled. They told her about their wives, children, funerals, quest to become gods above the mess of human existence, their thirst for tea, and how they dare not disturb and consume holy things.

"The grass is too holy for my cattle and food and drink too holy for you? Everything is holy except you and your human needs? Don't you know the Great Being that made us made all things for our use? Everything is food, fools! Everything is a sacrifice for holy life! You will feed worms when your time comes, feed fire and wind and fish in the ponds! Learn to be fully human before you can learn to be gods!"

"But," said the cook, "We have to protect nature from predation by man! We have to respect water, plants, trees – all that is holy in Nature!"

"We can't abuse sacred things!" cried the carver.

"Everything was made for our use and for our benefit. Use, don't abuse it. Make sure to replant seeds to replace the things you consume, ensure the water of life continues to be pure, abundant and free for all, that holy stones remain holy when you clean and return them to the cairn after enjoying your tea. You don't die till you are dead. Morons!" She added in a whisper loud enough to be heard. Then, resuming her spinning, calling and whistling to her cattle, she moved away.

Her words were like hammer blows on their heads. That one word, "morons", pierced through the veils of their perceptions, revealed their folly to them, and woke them up from their unrealistic desires. They admitted that they had been wrong in reinforcing these desires in each other, of not questioning and examining them in themselves, of being afraid to mention their own truths. They also confessed about the money they had stashed away in the lining of their clothes.

Convinced that they and their needs, too, were holy, they reverentially fetched the stones and water, plucked the tulsi, made their tea in one of their iron bowls, and sipped the warm fluid with much pleasure. Resolving in the next town to buy provisions, hire donkeys to carry them, and have a comfortable journey, they proceeded to Mount Kailas.

After braving a fierce storm and more hunger, they arrived in a town, relieved and happy to find barley flour, lumps of brown sugar, tea, biscuits, flints, ghee, lentils, wheat flour, umbrellas, bedding and balms. As they were loading up their donkeys, the cook said, courageously:

"But what about after our pilgrimage? Do we want to go back to our wives and our homes? I do."

"But a householder's life is so much trouble and conflict!" the stone carver said.

"Life is trouble and conflict. You don't think the storm we went through was any less trouble? We have to learn to become enlightened, which for me means gaining the right perspective and not allowing ourselves to waver with every whim of circumstance and event," the herbalist replied.

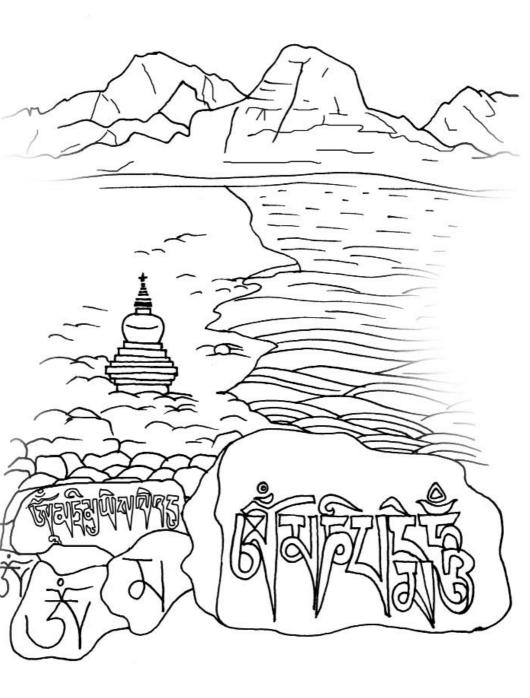
The three men succeeded in completing their pilgrimage in as much comfort as such a difficult journey allows. Praying that Mount Kailas would wash away their ignorance, teach them to listen to, respect and love their own holy selves and all of nature, to take conflict in their stride, they made their way home.

## कैलास परिक्रमा पर तीन तीर्थयात्री

 $\infty$ 

एक वैद्य, एक प्रस्तर मूर्तिकार एवं एक बावर्ची बहुत अच्छे दोस्त थे। यद्यपि वैद्य एक बोनपो था, मूर्तिकार एक बौद्ध और बावर्ची एक हिन्दू था, फिर भी उन तीनों में एक बात समान थी — वे तीनों ही अपनी पत्नियों और बच्चों की मांगों से ऊब चुके थे। उनकी पत्नियाँ बड़े और बेहतर घर, अच्छी रसोई और अच्छे खाने के लिए उनके पीछे पड़ी रहती थीं। वो चाहती थीं कि उनके पास फल व अन्न उगाने के लिए ज्यादा से ज्यादा जमीन हो और उनके बच्चों व परिवार की हालत बेहतर से बेहतर हो। बच्चों में भी पुश्तैनी सम्पत्ति के लिए आपस में और अपने माता-पिता के साथ खूब भगड़े होते थे।

वे तीनों दोस्त अपनी पिल्नयों से उत्पीड़ित महसूस करते थे व पारिवारिक द्वन्द्वों से आहत थे। उन्होंने ये तय किया कि इन शर्तों पै जीवन नहीं जिया जा सकता है। वे सारी मोह माया, सांसारिक दुनिया और उसकी सारी भौतिक सुविधाओं का त्याग करना चाहते थे। उन्होंने दृढ़संकल्प लिया कि वे अपने अंदर की वाणी की खोज, प्रकृति की पिवत्रता की पूजा तथा रक्षा के लिए कैलास पर्वत की तीर्थयात्रा पर जाएंगे। वह कैलास पर्वत जिसकी भलक मात्र से ही सारे पाप धुल जाते हैं और पीड़ा व बंधनों से पार होकर आत्मा प्रबुद्ध होती है। उन्होंने सोचा कि उस पिवत्र पर्वत की सबसे कठिन भीतरी मार्ग से पिरिक्रमा करके वे लाभान्वित होंगे और उसके पश्चात वे अपना शेष जीवन ध्यान में बिताएंगे। उसी प्रकार का ध्यान जो भगवान बुद्ध ने बोधिवृक्ष के तले एवं भगवान शिव ने पिवत्र मानसरोवर के पास के पर्वत की गोद में किया था। भगवान बुद्ध ने भी अपनी यौवना व सुन्दरी पत्नी यशोधरा व अपने पुत्र व



राज्य का त्याग किया था और भगवान शिव ने भी स्वयं को घर परिवार के संघर्ष व सारी सुख सुविधाओं से दूर करते हुए माता पृथ्वी की नाभि में शांति एवं एकांत की खोज में पत्नी पार्वती से वियोग को चुना था । भौतिकता एकाग्रचित्त को न भटकाए उस हेतु दोनों ने ही अपने मन मस्तिष्क को पूर्णतः नियंत्रित कर लिया था।

उन्होंने यात्रा पर जाने से पहले ये निश्चय किया की वे अपनी सभी तृष्णाओं, अनवरत आवश्यकताओं और वे अपवित्र वस्तु जिसमें उनका शरीर भी सम्मिलित है सबका त्याग करने के लिए स्वयं का अंतिम संस्कार करेंगे। जो कि संसार से विदा होने का एक सांकेतिक भाव है। उनसे पहले भी कई लोगों ने मृक्ति के लिए यही मार्ग अपनाया था । अतः मध्यरात्रि में जब सभी ग्रामवासी व उनके परिवारवाले सो गए तब वे नदी के किनारे तालाब के पास स्थित गाँव के श्मशान घाट पर गए । उन्होंने चिता पर ढेर सारी लकडियों के ऊपर अपने स्वयं के पुतले रख दिए । उस चिता में शुद्ध घी डाला और उसे प्रज्ज्वलित कर दिया । जब तक चिता जलती रही वे मन्त्रोच्चारण करते रहे और अपनी स्वयं की आत्मा की शांति के लिए प्राथर्ना करते रहे।

जब पुतले जलकर भरम हो गए तब उन्होंने अपने अवशेष मुझी में लिए और रस्म के अनुसार उन्हें नदी में अर्पित कर दिया । प्रथा के ही अनुसार उन्होंने दीप जलाये व मृत्युपश्चात जो दावत गांव वालों को देनी थी उसका समापन मछलियों को दाल चावल खिलाकर किया।

सुबह के ३ बजे जब अंतिम संस्कार की विधि संपन्न हुई तब वे तीनों दोस्त अपनी सोती हुई पत्नियों व बच्चों को छोड़ कर हाथों में भिक्षापात्र लिए हुए और जो कपड़े व जुते वो पहने हुए थे उसी में ही तीर्थयात्रा पर निकल पड़े । किन्तु हर तीर्थयात्री ने अपने साथियों को बताये बिना अपने कपड़ों में कुछ नकदी छुपाई हुई थी । वे साथियों के सामने भौतिक वस्तुओं से सुख प्राप्त करने की विचारधारा को छुपाना चाहते थे इसीलिए उन्होंने अपने साथियों को ये बात नहीं बतायी । और वे अपने रूपयों को उन खतरनाक डाकुओं से भी बचाना चाहते थे जिनका पेशा ही था तीर्थयात्रियों को लूटना व निर्ममतापूर्वक उनकी हत्या कर देना । वे तीर्थयात्री कठिनाईयों भरे मृष्टिकल क्षेत्रों व तुफानी मौसम में संसार के मध्य से दूसरे आयाम तक जाते पर्वत जिसे देवता मेरू और मनुष्य कैलास पर्वत के नाम से पुकारते हैं उसी पर्वत पर परमात्मा की खोज के लिए श्रद्धापूर्वक तीर्थयात्रा पर चल पड़े ।

वे दिन भर चढ़ाई करते रहे और यह मन्त्र दोहराते रहे: "वृक्ष पवित्र है, पत्थर पवित्र है और रास्ते की धूल पवित्र है, नदी पवित्र, चाँद पवित्र, सितारे, सूर्य एवं सारी प्रकृति पवित्र है।"

दिन के अन्तिम प्रहर में वनस्पति रहित चट्टान वाले सीधे पहाड़ के तले एक बड़े से पत्थर की छाया में उन्होंने विश्राम किया । उनके पैरों में, जोड़ों में व शरीर के विभिन्न अंगों में पीड़ा होने लगी थी । मुँह प्यास से सूखने लगा था और भुख के कारण उनके पेट में गुर्राहट होने लगी थी। परंतु बिना किसी के सामने इस कष्ट की चर्चा किये हुए उन्हें अपनी यात्रा जारी रखनी थी और एक दूसरे के सामने साहस का दिखावा कायम रखना था।

आखिर में उन तीनों में से बावर्ची मूर्छित अनुभव करने लगा और बोला, "अगर कहीं चाय मिल जाती तो बहुत अच्छा होता।"

चाय के बारे में सुनते ही वैद्य ने भी अपने होंठों पर जीभ फेरी और मन ही मन अपनी पत्नी द्वारा बनाई हुई मक्खन के साथ शहद व कालीमिर्च के मसाले की चाय का स्वाद लेने लगा।

उसने कहा, "क्यों न हम तुलसी वाली चाय बनायें ? भगवान विष्णु इस पौधे के स्वामी हैं। मैं जानता हूँ ये पवित्र पौधा यहाँ पाया जाता है। ये हमारी भूख को भी शांत कर देगा और हमें नयी स्फूर्ति से भी भर देगा।"

"और मैं कुछ पत्थर के टुकड़े इकड़े कर के लाता हूँ ताकि हम आग जलाने के लिए गड्ढा बना सकें। शायद मुभे कहीं कुछ याक की सूखी हुई खाद या सूखी भाड़ की टहनियाँ भी मिल जाए जलावन के लिए," मूर्तिकार ने उत्सुकता से कहा ।

"इसे तैयार करने की विधि मैं जानता हूँ। मैं नदी से पानी लेकर आता हूँ," बावर्ची ने उत्तर में कहा ।

कुछ समय पश्चात वैद्य को एक शुष्क भाड़ी मिली जिस पर नीले रंग के छोटे-छोटे फूल लगे हुए थे, जिसकी शाखा व पत्ते बैंगनी रंग के थे। पत्ते व डंडियां तोड़ने के लिए उसने अपना हाथ आगे बढ़ाया ही था कि वह अचानक से ठहर गया।

उसने सोचा, इतने शुद्ध व पवित्र पीधे को मैं कैसे तोड़ सकता हूँ? आखिर तुलसी भगवान विष्णु की पत्नी है, जो सम्पन्नता की देवी लक्ष्मी का ही स्वरूप है। और उसकी आँखों के सामने अपनी पत्नी द्वारा आँगन में लगे एक गमले

की पूजा करने का दृश्य उभर आया । प्रत्येक सुबह वह स्नान करके, साफ-सुथरे कपड़े पहन कर पूरा आँगन साफ करती थी । राख से रगड़ कर साफ किये हुए बर्तन में पानी भर कर सुगन्धित धूप जलाती थी । पौधों को बहुत प्यार से पानी से धो कर मन्त्रों का जाप करते हुए उस पवित्र शाक की परिक्रमा करती थी।

नहीं नहीं, वह यह पत्ते नहीं तोड़ सकता । यह सोचते हुए उस वैद्य ने अपने हाथ वापस खींच लिए और शिविर की ओर खाली हाथ ही रवाना हो गया।

पत्थरों की खोज पर निकले हुए मुर्तिकार को बहुत घूमने के पश्चात आग जलाने के लिए पत्थर मिला । उसे एक बुद्ध मन्त्र ॐ *मणि पद्म* हूँ तराशा हुआ पत्थरों का टीला भी मिला, जिन्हें शायद उन से पहले आए हुए तीर्थयात्रियों ने भेंट के रूप में अर्पित किया होगा।

अपने पूरे जीवन में जिन पत्थरों की उसने नक्काशी की, अत्यंत श्रद्धापूर्वक उपासना की व ॐ मणि पद्म हूँ का जाप किया, उन्ही पत्थरों पर आग जलाने के विचार ने उसे भयभीत कर दिया । वह जानता था जिन लोगों ने इसे ईश्वर की प्रार्थना के अलावा किसी और रूप में प्रयोग किया तो उसकी सदा दुर्गति ही हुई है। चाय पीने की प्रबल इच्छा ने एक क्षण के लिए उसकी अंतरात्मा को वशीभूत कर लिया था और वो उन पत्थरों को उठाने के लिए तत्पर हो गया था । परंतु मन्त्र अकिंत उन पत्थरों को वह चाय बनाने के लिए कैसे अपवित्र कर सकता था? वह भी वहीं ठहर गया गया ।

नदी से अपने भिक्षापात्र में पानी भरता हुआ बावर्ची भी बीच में ही रूक गया । उसने सोचा की यह पानी का स्रोत सारी नदियों में सर्वश्रेष्ठ और स्वयं विष्णु के पैर के अंगूठे से निकलकर कमल पुष्प की पतली डंडी की तरह बहती हुई देवी पवित्र नदी गंगा की सहायक नदी हो सकती है। मैं इस नदी से निकला ये पवित्र पानी कैसे ले जा सकता हूँ ?

वह नदी के किनारे खड़ा होकर गंगा के उदभव की पौराणिक कथा के बारे में सोचने लगा । हिमालयपुत्री गंगा मेरू पर्वत - जो कैलास पर्वत का पौराणिक नाम है - की वंशज है। देवताओं की याचना के फलस्वरूप उनके पिता ने उन्हें मानव जाति की भलाई के लिए पृथ्वी पर अवतरण करने का आदेश दिया था।

कौन होगा जो स्वेच्छा से स्वर्ग के सुख का परित्याग करके पीड़ा जगत का भोगी बनेगा ? दूरदर्शी देवी गंगा अदूरदर्शी व शोषक मनोस्थिति वाले मूर्ख जिन्हे प्रकृति और उसके स्वभाव की न कोई समभ है और न ही कोई सम्मान वैसे अनभिज्ञ लोगों के द्वारा अपमानित होते हुए और प्रदूषित व अवरूद्ध होते हुए स्वयं का भविष्य देख सकती थीं।

परंतु फिर भी उनके पिता ने उनकी एक दलील न मानी और उन्हें पृथ्वी पर भेज दिया । स्वर्ग से निर्वासित होकर वो ऋोध में श्राप देते हुए भगवान शिव के सिर पर अवतरित हुई जहाँ शिवजी पर्वत के उच्च शिखर पर अत्यधिक शांति व एकांत में साधना में लीन थे। दुनिया को विनाश से बचाने के लिए शिव ने गंगा को अपनी उलभी लटों में चमेली की लड़ियों की तरह गूँथ लिया था एवं उनकी अनियंत्रित गति को नियंत्रित करके गंगा को इस संसार में प्रवर्तित किया था । भगवान शिव ने गंगा को तब तक बहने से रोक कर रखा जब तक कि गंगा शांत न हो गयी व स्वयं सन्तुलन न बना पायी । वो धैर्यपूर्वक हजारों वर्षों तक अमानव के मानव बनने की प्रतीक्षा करती रहीं । भगवान शिव ने गंगा को संसार की सभी नदियों की देवी बनाकर उनका सम्मान व आदर किया।

उसके पश्चात शिव ने उन्हें एक सरोवर में प्रवाहित किया जिससे वो बहुत सी नदियों व उपनदियों में विभाजित हो गयी । घुमावदार मार्ग से होते प्रत्येक भूमि को सीचती हुई प्रचुर मात्रा में फल व भोजन रूपी आशीर्वाद की बौछार करते हुए मनुष्य की आध्यात्मिक व भौतिक प्यास बुभाते हुए बही ।

नहीं मैं इस दिव्य पानी को अपवित्र नहीं कर सकता एवं इस पानी द्वारा बनी हुई चाय नहीं पी सकता, बावर्ची ने सोचा ।

अतः वे तीनो मित्र पुनः खाली हाथ एकत्रित हुए व एक दुसरे को अपने-अपने अनुभवों के बारे में बताया । यद्यपि वे एक दुसरे के समरूप अनुभव से आश्वासित थे फिर भी वे एक दूसरे की निराशा में किसी भी प्रकार की सहायता नहीं कर पा रहे थे। आहार पाने की सारी आशा वे खो चुके थे परंतु अभी भी उनके पेट में गुर्राहट हो रही थी। अत्यंत भूख व थकान के कारण वे चलने-फिरने में असमर्थ थे और अंत में फीकी पड़ती हुई संध्या के प्रकाश में उदास भाव के साथ वहीं बैठ गए।

तभी पहाड़ों के बीच बने रास्ते से एक गडेरिया स्त्री अपनी बकरियों, याक, भेड़ों के साथ घर वापस लौट रही थी। उसने सिर पर एक दुपट्टा ओढ़ा हुआ था जिसके नीचे रूखे मौसम की वजह से सूखा हुआ उसका भुरीदार चेहरा नजर आ रहा था। उसके मुँह में दाँत भी टूटे हुए थे। आँखें तीक्ष्ण एवं लक्ष्यभेदी प्रतीत होती थी।

उसने उन तीनों दोस्तों को एक गोल पत्थर पर बड़े दयनीय भाव में बैठे हुए देखा । उसने अपनी सूत कातने वाली घुमावदार छड़ी को रोका ओर थोड़े कठोर स्वर में बोली, "तुम लोग यहाँ ऐसे क्यूँ बैठे हो? क्या बात है? ऐसा लगता है जैसे तुम तीनों ने गोबर निगल लिया हो।"

उन तीनों दोस्तों ने उस स्त्री को अपनी कहानी सुनानी प्रारम्भ की । "मेरे पास दिन भर खाली समय नहीं है," उसने थोड़े गुस्से में कहा। उन तीनों दोस्तों ने उसे अपने सभी अनुभवों की कहानी बताई । अपनी पत्नियों व बच्चों को छोड़ने की, अपना अंतिम संस्कार करना व परमेश्वर बनने की चाहत, मानवीय अस्तित्व के जंजाल से ऊपर उठने की चाहत, चाय पीने की ललक व पवित्र चीजों का उपभोग एवं उनसे छेड़छाड़ का दुस्साहस न करने इत्यादि का वर्णन किया।

यह सुनकर उस महिला ने विस्मयपूर्वक कहा, "क्या ये घास मेरे पशुओं के लिए ज्यादा पवित्र है या फिर ये खाद्य और पेय पदार्थ तुम्हारे लिए ज्यादा पवित्र हैं ? क्या मनुष्य और उसकी आवश्यकताओं को छोड़कर सब कुछ पावन व पवित्र है ? तुम यह नहीं जानते कि जिस परमात्मा ने हमें बनाया है उसी परमात्मा ने हमारी आवश्यकताओं के लिए इन चीजों को बनाया है ? अरे अज्ञानी ! इस संसार में सभी कुछ भक्ष्य है । पवित्र जीवन के प्रति सभी कुछ समर्पित है। जब तुम्हारा समय आएगा तब तुम भी जीवों को भोजन दोगे, तालाब की मछिलयों को आहार प्रदान करोगे और अग्नि व वायु को पोषित करोगे । परमेश्वर बनने से पहले पूर्ण रूप से मनुष्य बनना सीखो ।"

"परंतु, हमें पानी, पेड़-पौधों का सम्मान करना है व प्रकृति में जो भी पवित्र है उसे मानव द्वारा समय से पूर्व नष्ट होने से बचाना है !" बावर्ची ने कहा । "हम इन पवित्र तत्वों को हानि नहीं पहुंचा सकते," ये कहते हुए वह मूर्तिकार भी भावक हो पड़ा ।

उस स्त्री ने उन्हें समभाया, "प्रत्येक वस्तु हमारे उपयोग व लाभ के लिए बनी है । इसका उपयोग करो परंतु हानि मत पहुंचाओ । सुनिश्चित करो कि एक पौधे द्वारा प्रदत्त चीजों का उपभोग करने के पश्चात् उसका पुनः बीजारोपण हो । हमेशा इस बात का ध्यान रखो कि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के लिए जीवनामृत जल प्रचुर, शुद्ध व स्वतंत्रतापूर्वक बहुता रहे और जिस टीले के पत्थर की प्रयोग से बनी चाय का आनंद लोगे, उस पत्थर को पूनः साफ करके शुद्ध रूप से वापस रख दोगे।"

"अरे मूर्खों ! मृत्यु से पहले मरण बेकार है," उस स्त्री ने फुसफुसाते हुए कहा परंतु वह इतना स्पष्ट था की सभी को सुनाई दिया जा सके। तत्पश्चात उस स्त्री ने अपने मवेशियों को सीटी बजाकर आवाज लगाई और अपनी सुतकताई पुनः आरम्भ करते हुए वहां से चली गयी।

उस स्त्री के चले जाने के पश्चात उसके शब्द उन दोस्तों के सिर में हथौड़े की तरह आघात करने लगे । उस स्त्री द्वारा उनको 'मूर्ख' बोला जाना उन्हें विशेष रूप से उनकी मुद्धता का आभास दिला गया एवं वह एक शब्द उनकी अभिज्ञता के पर्दों को भेदते हुए उन्हें अवास्तविक इच्छाओं से जगा गया । उन्हें यह अहसास हुआ कि वे एक दूसरे की गलत आकांक्षाओं को बढ़ावा दे रहे थे एवं आपस में पूछताछ व परिक्षण करने के बजाय एक दूसरे के सामने अपनी

वास्तविकता का उल्लेख करने में डर रहे थे। उन्होंने अपने कपड़ों के अस्तर में छिपाये हुए पैसों की बात भी एक दूसरे के समक्ष स्वीकार की।

अब तक वे समभ चुके थे कि वे स्वयं और उनकी आवश्यकताएं दोनों ही नितान्त पवित्र हैं। उन लोगों ने बहुत ही आदरपूर्वक पत्थर एकत्रित किये, पानी लेकर आए, तुलसी के पत्ते तोड़े और अपने साथ लाए हुए लोहे के बर्तन में चाय बनाकर उसे बहुत आनंद के साथ पिया । उन्होंने खाने-पीने का सामान खरीदने के लिए अगले शहर जाने का निश्चय किया व आरामदायक यात्रा के लिए गधे किराये पर लिए और कैलास यात्रा को आगे बढाया ।

भीषण आँधी व बढ़ती भूख का सामना करने के पश्चात वे एक शहर पहुंचे । वहां वे जौ का आटा, चीनी का ढेर, चाय, बिस्कुट, दाल, घी, गेहूं का आटा, छाता, सोने के लिए बिछौना व मलहम देखकर अत्यंत प्रसन्न हुए । गधों पर सामान को लादते समय हिम्मत करके बावर्ची ने प्रश्न किया, "तीर्थयात्रा के पश्चात हम क्या करेंगे? क्या हम वापस अपनी पत्नियों के पास घर लौटना चाहेंगे? शायद मैं वापस लौटना चाहुं," बावर्ची ने साहसपूर्ण भाव से अपने साथियों से कहा ।

मूर्तिकार ने बावर्ची की बात का उत्तर देते हुए कहा, "परंतु गृहस्थ जीवन अत्यधिक कष्टों से व दुविधाओं से भरा है।"

"कष्ट व दुविधा ही जीवन है । क्या तुम्हे लगता है जिस तूफान से हम निकल कर आए हैं वो कम कष्टदायक था? हमें प्रबृद्ध होना सीखना पड़ेगा जिसका अर्थ मेरे लिए जीवन का सही दृष्टिकोण प्राप्त करना व किसी भी परिस्थिति व अवसर में स्वयं को लडखडाने से बचाना है." वैद्य ने उत्तर दिया ।

यात्रामार्ग की कठिनाई के हिसाब से जितनी आराम से यात्रा हो सकती थी तीनो मित्रों ने उतने आराम से सफलतापूर्वक तीर्थयात्रा संपन्न की । वे यह प्रार्थना करते रहे कि कैलास पर्वत उन्हें अपनी आवाज सुनना सिखाए, हर कदम पर संघर्ष करना और इस पवित्र प्रकृति व स्वयं की आत्मा को आदर व प्रेम करना सिखाए ।

"हे कैलास पर्वत ! हमारी नादानियाँ व अज्ञान को मिटा देना !" यही प्रार्थना करते हुए वे तीनों अपने घरों की और चल पड़े ।

## The Attitude of Gratitude

 $-\infty$ 

Matsya and Devi, an aging fish couple, lived in a pond of the Karnali River by the village of Chhipra. Since the pond was by the village crematorium, fishing was not allowed, so the couple was safe and survived into adulthood and beyond. They fed on the bones and mineral-rich ashes of the dead, on smaller fish, and the rice grains that relatives and friends consigned to the river to carry to their loved ones in the afterlife.

Matsya had been very discontent lately. He knew he was aging. Also, being used to the clean, clear waters of the Karnali River all year round except during the monsoon, he was particularly distressed and depressed as our story begins. It was monsoon season and he was weary of the muddy waters of his habitat and of being pelted by rain. The year before they had hardly had a monsoon, and they almost perished from lack of water.

"What is life all about?" he would frequently ask his wife, Devi. "Yes, we have increased the population of Karnali River by our offspring, we have hunted and eaten, and now we are going to die."

Devi, who had grown happier as she aged, tried to tell her husband about the attitude of gratitude that had enriched her own life in her later years. She reminded him that they were lucky to be alive; that even at this late age they hadn't been caught and eaten; that while so many other fish starved for lack of food, they had plenty; that they now had a measure of peace and leisure after a lifetime of spawning and rearing.

But nothing affected Matsya's discontent.

Devi, who knew that her husband had always wanted to travel to newer territory, had an idea to cheer him up.

"Let's go on a pilgrimage like the humans! Let's get away from the heat and the constant rain. Let's go to the Mount Kailas, home of the gods and center and axis of the universe! The place where Lord Shiva dances and sports with his consort, Parvati, and the Ganga River streams out of Lord Vishnu's big toe," she said, flapping her fins and looking at her husband with eyes wide in her head.

"Are you mad?" he replied. "We are not young anymore like these other fish that sometimes take the long and arduous path to the source. My digestion is bad. I can't eat the bones anymore, and sometimes even the smaller fish upset my stomach. The only thing that goes down well is rice, but sometimes even that passes through my body without being digested. Go upstream at this age? It will kill us!"

"We are going to die, anyway," Devi reasoned. "Everything that is born, dies. We should know that from a lifetime of living by the cremation grounds. Why not die doing something you have always wanted to do? Some Hindus who undertake the sacred journey perform their own funeral rights, kill their fears and desires, and head up to Kailas, source of the many rivers, and the turquoise lake, Manasarovar, the Lake of the Mind. It is a boundless expanse of blue that mirrors the heavens and is the true home of so many fish like us. It is our source, beloved, from which our own home river flows!"

Devi knew the last detail of her description was false. A visiting fish returning downstream had told her the Karnali originates far west of Manasarovar. She forgave herself the lie because she had heard her husband mention the lake before and knew he would be excited about visiting it.

Matsya looked at her skeptically and Devi wondered whether he had seen through her lie.

"Even if we don't reach it, we could have a glimpse of Mount Kailas, and that alone will be enough, and more than enough! I would be so happy if you agreed!"

Matsya was silent. He felt the stirring of desire in his heart, but his fear subdued it.

"You, Matsya, are named after Vishnu himself, Lord of the Waters," Devi reminded him.

"Oh, what was that story again?" Matsya asked, almost despite himself.

"In one of his incarnations Vishnu became a huge, horned fish named Matsya."

"Why did he bother? Wouldn't it have been better for him to have stayed a god?" Matsya replied cynically.

"Manu, the first man Vishnu created," Devi began her tale, glad to see that her husband's eyes had a sparkle of interest, "was bathing in the river one day when he caught a tiny fish. It flopped about in his cupped hands, scattering rainbow reflections from its shimmering scales, and cried, 'Please don't eat me! I am not even a morsel for you, and I want to grow up, live and experience my life!'

Manu, feeling his heart opening with love and compassion for this tiny creature with fins, small round eyes, and colorful scales, agreed to release the fish back into the water.

'Please also protect me from the bigger fish,' the little fish pleaded.

'How can I do that?' Manu asked. 'If I throw you back in the river so you can live, you will be eaten up unless Vishnu protects you.'

'Keep me in a jar,' the little fish advised. 'When I grow bigger, put me in a small pond. When I become too big for the pond, put me in a bigger pond, and finally, when I am so big no little pond can contain me, put me in the ocean.'

'The ocean! But you are a freshwater fish.'

'Never mind the details. In time you will know who I am.'

Manu did as he was told. The fish grew and grew till it became so enormous that Manu - reluctantly, because he had grown to love and adore the fish - had to take it to the ocean and release it. But before the fish swam away with a huge splash, it said to Manu,

'Let me repay you for your kindness. A great deluge is coming; all land on this planet will become the bed of the sea. Build a ship, and stock it with grains, seeds, all varieties of creatures, and the Vedas, repository of all the wisdom of the Earth. Call on me when you find yourself in trouble, and I will come and rescue you.'

Manu, who trusted the creatures of the Earth and knew that they knew far more than he did, built himself a ship and stocked it with animals, seeds, grains, and a copy of the Vedas. Just before the deluge came, rending and tearing the skies in a thunderous uproar, Manu climbed aboard. And just in time. Incessant torrents flooded the banks and shores of rivers till the great ocean rolled upon land and swallowed up everything.

Manu felt safe and in his mind thanked the fish for saving him. But he didn't know what danger lay ahead. Huge waves and swells rose all around him, wide vortices appeared before him that threatened to suck his little ship down to the dark depths and destroy the very seed of all life. Manu was dreadfully afraid.

Just then he heard the fish's words in his head: 'Call on me. I will save you.'

'Oh Fish, great Fish, come, please come and rescue me!'

A huge hump obscured the horizon as the Great Horned Fish, grown so large that Manu couldn't see the end of it in any direction, appeared before him. It dived beneath the ship, rose till the ship rested safely on its back, and began to swim with great muscular force towards the North in a journey that took a long time. It swam till Manu saw on the horizon a huge round peak covered with snow, standing tall and majestic above the waters. The Fish, which as you know, was Vishnu himself in his incarnation as Matsya, threw a great thick rope around the peak and moored the ship to it so it was safe till the flood receded. That peak, my beloved husband, was Kailas!"

Matsya was silent. He had to admit to himself that Devi's story had cheered him up and calmed him down. Yet his mind kept interfering with his peace.

"Why did you tell me that story? What relevance does it have to what we were talking about? I don't believe these stories. They are just stories," Matsya grumbled in his habitual way.

"Don't you see? Remember, we both have a spark of Vishnu in us! He will protect us! We both have a purpose to our lives."

"Yes, he'll protect us like he protects all the fish that get eaten up by other fish. Purpose! There is no purpose!"

"Let us not fear and doubt, dear husband. Take courage, and let us begin our quest!"

Matsya grumbled and was quiet. But his wife's words and descriptions stayed with him all night, entering his dreams and his fantasies. In the morning he said to her,

"Oh, alright! Let's give it a try. But will I find rice on the way? It is the only thing I can digest now."

"We know that humans always burn their dead by rivers and many cast grains into the water together with bones and ashes."

"Why?" asked Matsya.

"Rivers are symbols of life, dear, the energy stream that generates all life, that brings, gives, takes away, and brings again."

Matsya looked uneasy, and Devi reassured him, "We can keep an easy pace, and when we get tired, we can stop and rest."

Because fish don't have to pack anything when they go on long journeys – they are luckier than humans that way – and because they were refreshed by a night of sleep, they started right away after Matsya had had his fill of rice. While Devi was much more excited than her husband about the adventure ahead, Matsya prided himself on being realistic, and said over and over, "We will die before we get to the lake."

They swam upstream, a little bit at a time, pausing to catch and eat smaller fish and nibble at the grasses and moss on the many boulders in the river, avoiding and dodging bigger fish, resting and sleeping when they needed to. Fortunately, because it was harvest season in the lowlands, there were always, in addition to other fish, some grains of rice for sustenance in the shallows around cremation grounds. And as they swam further, their stamina and excitement grew, for the holy journey they were on fueled their quest.

But though their hearts were aflame to reach their goal, their bodies were wearing out.

Midway through their journey, it was evident that their life force was ebbing. They spent more and more time trying to recoup their energy, resting instead of swimming upstream. They knew their end was near. When they reached Kholsi, Matsya's guts gave out, and Devi's body, too, was spent. Though she was, through a long practice of acceptance of all life brings and takes away, reconciled to her fate, Matsya, his eye dimming in the dawn, looked at this wife and whispered,

"Purpose?"

With one final burst of energy, Devi leapt out of the river, landed on the shore, flip-flopped her way further inland, and looked around her.

"Look," she said to her husband. Matsya, too, wanting to die within sight of his wife, sprang out of the water and onto land. He followed her gaze as she looked north at the banks of the Karnali. A clump of rich, emerald green swam into his dimming eyes.

"Rice," whispered Devi, with her fading breath. "You, my beloved, have brought rice where it has never grown before! You have performed a great deed in your life! How glad humans will be when they see this!"

"What about Manasarovar? What about Kailas? We have . . . failed," he gasped.

"Manasarovar means the 'Lake of the Mind,' my husband. It exists within us. And wherever we, sparks of Vishnu, are, is the axis of the world."

Matsya looked at the Karnali River, in which he had lived all his life. Now that he was out of it, he could truly see it for the first time, bouncing, leaping, dancing and shimmering downstream in the morning light, lovely beyond description; he could see, too, how every little pebble changed the flowing pattern of the river.

"What a lovely river was given to us as our home, my wife," he said, looking at his mate with eyes full of love for her and everything he saw around him.

As the light began to fade in his eyes, his inner vision sharpened. Matsya closed his eyes for the last time. As he did so, he found himself leaping with a rainbow flash into a boundless turquoise lake so tranquil that he knew he had arrived at his source in Paradise.

Matsya and Devi's bodies began to harden into stone at the arrival of day; in time the rock bodies of Matsya and Devi grew larger, like Vishnu morphing from a tiny fish to a huge horned fish. In time, the sprouts of rice, too, grew to maturity, the wind scattering the seeds far and wide till there grew entire fields and terraces of it; in time humans migrated to the blessed rice fields. Worshipped by the villagers for bringing them rice from the lowlands, the fish couple can still be seen today, side by side, standing tall, firm, majestic in Dharapori, the habitation that sprang up around the fields of rice, that rich and delicious source of sustenance.



## कृतज्ञता

 $\infty$ 

छिप्रा भन्ने गाउँनजिकै कर्णाली नदीमा एउटा पोखरी थियो । पोखरीमा मत्स्य र देवी नामका उमेर ढल्दैगएका एक माछाका दम्पती बस्थे । त्यो पोखरी गाउँको मसानघाटनेर भएकाले त्यहाँ माछा मार्न पाइँदैन थियो । त्यसैले मत्स्य दम्पतीको युवावस्था र पिछको समय ढुक्कसँग बितेको थियो । तिनीहरू त्यही पोखरीका

युवावस्था र पछिको समय ढुक्कसँग बितेको थियो । तिनीहरू त्यही पोखरीका संसाना माछा र मसानघाटमा दाहसंस्कार गरिएका ल्याइएका लाशका हड्डी, अस्तु

मृतकका आफन्तले नदीमा चढाएका अन्न खाएर गुजारा टार्थे।

केही समय यता मत्स्य एकदमै निराश थियो । आफू भन्भन् बूढो हुँदैगएको उसलाई थाहा थियो । साथै, वर्षायाममा बाहेक वर्ष भरी स्वच्छ र सफा हुने कर्णालीको पानीको बानी लागेको मत्स्य हाम्रो कथाको सुरू हुने बेलादेखि नै निकै उदास थियो । त्यस बेला वर्षाको मौसम थियो । आफ्नो वासस्थानको पानी धमिलिएको देख्दा देख्दा र आफू पनि त्यही वर्षाको पानीले चुटिँदा चुटिँदा उ थाकिसकेको थियो । अघिल्लो साल भने राम्ररी पानी नै नपरेकोले पानीको कमीले मत्स्य र देवीलाई जीवित रहन पनि निकै गाह्रो भएको थियो ।

"आखिर जिन्दगी भनेको के हो ?" मत्स्य पटकपटक आफ्नी अर्धाङ्गिनी देवीलाई सोधिरहन्थ्यो । "हामीले यही कर्णाली नदीमा आफ्नो वंश बढाएका छौँ, सिकार गरेर पेट भरेका छौँ । अनि अहिले हेर हामी मर्न आटेका छौँ।"

बढ्दो उमेरसँगै भन् सन्तुष्ट र खुसी हुन थालेकी देवीले आफ्नो जीवन सार्थक र आनन्दमय बनाउने कृतज्ञताको भावनाको बारेमा आफ्ना पतिलाई भन्न खोजिन् । उनले उनीहरू जीवित नै रहेकोमा, यति उमेरसम्ममा पनि कसैले मारेर नाखाएकोमा, अरू माछाहरू खानाको अभावमा भोकै भए पनि आफूहरूलाई सँधै पर्याप्त भएकोमा आफ्नो भाग्यप्रति कृतज्ञ हुन आग्रह गरिन् । देवीले उनीहरू आफ्ना सन्ततीलाई हुर्काएर अहिले आराम र फूर्सदको जीवन बाँच्न पाएकोमा पनि भाग्यमानी हुन् भनेर मत्स्यलाई सम्भना दिलाइन् ।

तर, मत्स्यको निराशा केही कुराले पनि कम गर्न सकेन।

नयाँनयाँ ठाउँहरूमा घुम्न रूचाउने आफ्नो पतिलाई राम्ररी चिनेकी देवीसँग मत्स्यलाई पुनः हर्षित मुद्रामा ल्याउने एउटा जुक्ति थियो ।

"हामी पनि मानवहरू भीँ तीर्थयात्रामा जाऔं न ! यहाँको गर्मी र निरन्तर वर्षाबाट टाढा जाऔं । त्यो टिलिक्क टल्किने हिमाल कैलाशमा जाउँ जहाँ देवताहरूको घर छ, जुन यो ब्रह्माण्डको केन्द्र हो ! त्यो ठाउँ जहाँ शिवजी आफ्नी पत्नी पार्वतीसँग खेल्छन् र ताण्डव नृत्य गर्छन् । र, त्यही ठाउँ विष्णुको विशाल पादुकाबाट गंगा नदी उर्लेर आउँछिन्।" देवीले आफ्ना पखेटा फटफटाउँदै र निकै उत्साहका साथ आफ्ना पतिलाई हेर्दै भनिन् ।

"तिमी बौलाएकी त छैनौ ?" मत्स्यले जवाफ दियो । "हामी अब तन्नेरी रहेनौँ । अरू माछाहरू जसरी हामी उद्गम विन्दुसम्मको लामो र कठिन यात्रा गर्न सक्दैनौँ । मेरो पाचन शक्ति पनि कमजोर हुन थालिसक्यो । अब त म हुड्डी पनि पचाउन सक्दिनँ र कहिलेकाहीँ त साना माछाले पनि मेरो पेट गडबड गर्छ । मैले राम्ररी हजम गर्न सक्ने भनेको चामल हो तर कहिले काहीँ त त्यो पनि मुस्किल नै हुन्छ । अनि यो उमेरमा माथि हिमालतिर जानु ? मार्छ यसले त हामीलाई !"

"मर्न त हामी यसै पनि मरिहार्ल्धौँ नि ।" देवीले तर्क दिन थालिन् । "कुनै चिज सुरू हुन्छ भने त्यसको अन्त्य पनि निश्चित् छ । यो कुरा त हामीले जिन्दगीभर मसानघाट छेउ बसेकोले पनि बुझ्नु पर्ने हो । तर, मर्ने छ भने आफुलाई मन लागेको कुरा गर्दै मर्न पाए बरू कित बेस होला ? कित तीर्थयात्रीहरू त आफ्नो किरियाकर्म आफैँ गरेर आफ्नो डर र चाहनाबाट मुक्त हुन्छन् । तिनीहरू कैयौँ नदीको मुहान कैलाश पर्वत र मनको ताल मानसरोवरमा तीर्थ जान्छन् । आँखैले नभ्याउने गरी अलौकिक नीलो रंगले ओगटेको त्यस स्थानले स्वर्गलाई प्रतिविम्बित गर्छ । अनि हामी र हामीजस्ता माछाहरूको प्रमुख घर हो । त्यो उदगमस्थल हो प्राणनाथ, जहाँबाट हामीले घर भनेको नदी बग्छ ।"

देवीलाई थाहा थियो उनको भनाइमा पूर्ण सत्य थिएन । एकपटक माथिबाट फर्किरहेको एउटा माछाले उनलाई कर्णाली मानसरोवरको सुदूर पश्चिमबाट सुरू हुन्छ भनेको थियो । तर, त्यस तालका बारेमा पहिले पनि धेरैचोटि मत्स्यबाटै . सुनेकी देवीलाई त्यहाँ जाने कुराले पक्कै पनि मत्स्य उत्साहित हुन्छ भन्ने थाहा थियो । त्यसैले, भुटै बोले पनि उनले आफूलाई माफ गरिन् ।

मत्स्यले देवीलाई शंकालू आँखाले हेऱ्यो । देवीलाई लाग्यो कतै उसले उनको भुट त प्रक्रेन ! उनले त्यो डर लुकाउँदै भनिन् - "अनि कथंकदाचित हामी त्यहाँ पुगेनो नै भनेपनि, हामी कैलाश पर्वतको त दर्शन गर्न पाउँछौँ नि । त्यतिमात्र हुनु पनि निकै ठूलो कुरा हो । हे पतिदेव, तपाईँले सहमतिमात्र दिए पनि म निकै प्रफुल्लित हुने थिएँ।"

मत्स्य अभौ चुपचाप थियो । उसको मनमा मानसरोवर जाने इच्छा उर्लेर आएको त थियो तर गुम्सिरहेको डरले उसलाई जकडिरहेको थियो ।

"तपाईँको त भन् नामै क्षीरसागरका राजा विष्णुको मत्स्य अवतारलाई लिएर राखिएको छ ।" देवीले मत्स्यलाई याद दिलाइन ।

"ए. साँच्वी त्यसको कथा के पो थियो ?"

"आनो प्रथम अवतारका रूपमा भगवान विष्णु मत्स्य नामको एउटा ठूलो, सिंग भएको माछाको रूपमा धर्तीमा आउनुभएको थियो।"

"किन दु:ख गरेको होला उहाँले ! आरामले भगवानै भएर बसेको भए फन् बेस हुँदैनथियो र ?" मत्स्यले व्यंग्य गर्दै भन्यो ।

कथाको लागि मत्स्यका आँखामा जिज्ञासू चमक देखेपछि भन् खुसी हँदै देवी कथा सुनाउन थालिन ।



विष्णुले रचना गर्नुभएको पहिलो मानिस मनु एकदिन खोलामा नुहाउँदै गर्दा उसले एउटा सानो माछा फेला पाऱ्यो । मनुको अँजुलीमा त्यो माछा आना कपकपाइरहेका कत्लाहरूबाट इन्द्रेणीको प्रकाश छर्दै छटपटिन थाल्यो । उसले मनुलाई रूँदै बिन्ती गऱ्यो - "हे मानिस, कृपा गरेर मलाई नखाऊ । म त तिम्रो लागि एक गाँस पनि हुन्न । म अभै ठूलो हुन चाहन्छु, जिउन चाहन्छु ।"

गोलो गोलो आँखा, रङ्गीबिरङ्गी कत्ला र पखेटा भएको त्यो सानो जीवमाथि मनुलाई दया र करूणा जागेर आयो । आनो हृदय ठूलो पार्दै त्यो उसले सानो माछोलाई पानीमै छोडिदियो ।

"हे सज्जन मानिस, कृपया मलाई यहाँका ठूला माछाबाट पनि जोगाइदेऊ ।" त्यो सानो माछाले बिन्ती गऱ्यो ।

"म कसरी तिमीलाई जोगाउन सक्छु ?" मनुले प्रश्न गऱ्यो । "अहिले मैले तिमीलाई यही नदीमा छोडिदिएँ र विष्णुले पनि हेरेनन् भने त ती ठूला माछाले तिमीलाई खाइहाल्छन् नि ॥

"मलाई एउटा भाडोमा राख ।" त्यो सानो माछाले मनुलाई सुभाव दियो । "अनि जब म ठूलो हुँदैजान्छु मलाई एउटा सानो पोखरीमा राख । जब म त्यो सानो पोखरीमा नअट्ने हुन्छु, मलाई अलि ठूलो पोखरीमा सार । र, अन्त्यमा जब म कुनै पनि पोखरीमा नअट्ने गरी ठूलो हुन्छु, मलाई महासागरमा लगेर छोडिदेऊ ॥

"महासागरमा ! तर तिमी त नदीका माछा है। "

"अहिले त्यतातिर नजाऊँ, हे मानिस । समय आएपिछ तिमीले आफैँ चिन्ने छी म को हूँ भनेर ।"

सानो माछोले जसो भन्यो मनुले त्यस्तै गन्यो । त्यो सानो माछो ठूलो, भन् ठूलो हुँदै गयो र बिस्तारै यति विशाल भयो कि उसलाई महासागरमै छोड्नुपर्ने भयो । यतिका समय आफुले नै हुर्काएको त्यो माछोलाई मनुले निकै स्नेह र माया गर्न थालिसकेको थियो । मन नलागी नलागी भए पनि उसले त्यो माछोलाई महासागरमा लगेर छोडिदियो । पानीमा ठूलो छप्ल्याङ्ग गरेर जान् अगाडि त्यो माछोले मनुलाई भन्यो - "मलाई तिम्रो यो गुण र उदारता चुकाउन देऊ । निकट भविष्यमा एउटा ठूलो जलप्रलय आउँदैछ, यो सारा भूभाग जलमग्न हुनेछ, समुद्रमा विलीन हुनेछ । यसबाट जोगिन एउटा ठूलो पानीजहाज बनाऊ, आवश्यक अन्न, सारा प्रजातिका प्राणी, संसारको सार विद्याको संग्रह वेद भण्डार गरेर राख । तिमी कुनै पनि संकटमा पऱ्यौ भने मलाई पुकार, म आएर तिम्रो उद्धार गर्नेछू ।"

संसारका प्राणीहरूलाई विश्वास गर्ने मनुले पुनः त्यो माछाको कुरा मानेर उसले भनेजस्तै एउटा ठूलो जहाज बनायो जसमा थुप्रै जनावर, अन्न र बीउ अनि वेदहरू राख्यो । उधुम गड्याङ्गुडुङ्सँगै आकाश चिर्दै आएको भयङ्कर जलप्रलयको ठीक अगांडि मनु पनि जहाजमा चड्यो । लगत्तै विशाल महासागर उर्लैंदै जिमनितर गयो र हेर्दा हेर्दै सारा स्थल आफूभित्रै समायो ।

मनु आफू सुरक्षित भएको महसुस गऱ्यो र मनमनै त्यो माछोलाई धन्यवाद दियो । तर, अब कुन संकट उसको प्रतीक्षा गरिरहेको थियो उसलाई केही पत्तो थिएन । अगांडि बढ्दै जाँदा ठूला ठूला लहर र छालहरू उसको वरपर आउन थाले । जहाज निलेर सारा अन्न, बीउ र प्राणीलाई अन्धकारमा ड्बाउँला भैँ गरेर उसको सामु एउटा ठूलो भुमरी पनि आयो । मनुलाई एकदमै डर लागेर आयो ।

त्यो माछाले पहिले भनेको कुरा उसले याद गऱ्यो - "मलाई पुकार, म आएर तिम्रो उद्धार गर्नेछू ।"

"हे माछा, हे विशाल माछा, कृपया यहाँ आएर मेरो रक्षा गर । मेरो उद्धार गर 🖺

क्षितिजलाई पनि ओभोल पार्दै एउटा ठूलो सिंग भएको माछा मनुको अगाडि आयो । त्यो माछा यति ठूलो भएको थियो कि मनुले त्यसको अन्त्य कतैबाट पनि देख्न सकेन । त्यो माछा पानीभित्र पूगेर जहाजलाई उठायो र आनो काँधमा अड्यायो । अनि पूर्ण शक्ति र तेजका साथ उत्तरतिर लग्यो । यो यात्रा तय गर्न उसलाई निकै समय लाग्यो । त्यो माछा जहाज बोकेर पौडिरह्यो जबसम्म मनुले क्षितिजमा पानीमाथि सानका साथ उभिएको हिउँले ढाकेको ठुलो अग्लो हिमाल देखेको थिएन । हामीलाई त थाहै छ त्यो माछा भगवान विष्णुको मत्स्य अवतार थियो । उसले अलि नजिक पुगेपिछ एउटा ठूलो लामो डोरी त्यो चुचुरोको वरपर बाँध्यो र जहाजलाई त्यसैले कस्यो ता कि त्यो बाढीमा जहाज सूरक्षित रहोस् । हे पतिदेव, त्यो हिमाल, हाम्रो सुन्दर हिमाल, कैलाश थियो ।"



मत्स्य शान्त थियो । उसले मान्नै पऱ्यो देवीको कथाले उसलाई पक्कै पनि खुसी बनाएको थियो र शान्त पनि पारेको थियो । तर, उसको मन भने उसको यो शान्तिलाई भंग गर्न आइराख्यो ।

"यो कथा चाहिँ तिमीले मलाई किन सुनाएकी ? हामी जुन सन्दर्भमा कुरा गर्दे थियौँ त्यसमा यसको के प्रसङ्घ वा सम्बन्ध छ ? मलाई त यी कथाहरूमा विश्वास लाग्दैन । यी त कहानीमात्र हुन् ।" मत्स्य आफ्नो स्वभावानुसार भार्कियो ।

"तपाईँ किन बुझ्नु हुन्न ? थाहा छ नि तपाईँलाई, हामीभित्र विष्णुको अंश छ ! हाम्रो उहाँले अवश्य पनि रक्षा गर्नु हुन्छ । हाम्रो जिन्दगीको पनि कुनै उद्देश्य छ, आशय छ।"

"अँ ! उहाँले अरू सबै माछा जो अरू माछाको आहारा बन्छन् तिनको रक्षा गरेजस्तै गरेर हाम्रो पनि रक्षा गर्नू हुन्छ । उद्देश्य ? हाम्रो जिन्दगीको पछाडि कुनै उद्देश्य छैन !"

"हे पतिदेव, यसरी आशंका र हरेश नखाऊँ । हिम्मत गरौँ र हाम्रो यात्रा आरम्भ गरौँ ।"

मत्स्य मुर्मुरियो अनि चुप लाग्यो ।

तर, रातभर उसकी पत्नी भनेका शब्दहरू र कुराहरू उसको सपना र कल्पनामा पनि प्रवेश गर्ने गरी दिमागमा आइराखे । बिहान उठेर उसले देवीलाई भन्यो -"हुन्छ, ठीक छ । जाउँ न त । तर, के म यात्राको दौरानमा बाटोमा चामल भेटाउँला त ? अहिले मैले पचाउन सक्ने भनेको त त्यहीमात्र हो ।"

"हामीलाई थाहा छ नि मान्छेहरू लाश नदी किनारमै जलाउँछन् । अनि थुप्रैले हड्डी र खरानीका साथ धान र चामल पनि पानीमा विसर्जन गर्छन्।"

"किन ?" मत्स्य ले पुनः प्रश्न तेर्सायो ।

"नदी भनेको जीवनको प्रतीक हो, प्राणनाथ ! यो त्यो शक्तिधारा हो जसले सम्पूर्ण जीवनको सिर्जना गर्छ, जीवन ल्याउँछ, दिन्छ, लिन्छ र फेरि ल्याएर दिन्छ ।"

मत्स्य फेरि बेचैन देखियो । अनि देवीले फेरि उसलाई विश्वस्त पारिन "हामी बिस्तारै जाऊँला । अनि जब हामी थाक्छौँ तब आराम गर्न रोकिऊँला ।"

यात्रा लामै भए पनि माछाहरूले मान्छेको जस्तो सामान लिएर जानू नपर्ने अर्थात केही समान नलिई पनि जान मिल्ने भएकाले पनि तिनीहरूलाई सजिलो थियो । राति निकै आरामका साथ निदाएकाले तिनीहरूले मत्स्यले पेटभरि चामल खाइसक्ने बित्तिकै आफ्नो यात्रा सुरू गरे । उनीहरूको यो साहसिक यात्रामा देवी आफ्नो पतिभन्दा निकै नै उत्साहित थिइन् । तर, मत्स्य भने आफूलाई यथार्थवादी भनेर घमण्ड गर्दे बीचबीचमा "हामी मानसरोवर नपुग्दै मर्नेछीँ" भनिरहेको थियो ।

उनीहरू ठुला माछाहरूलाई छल्दै, चाहिएको बेला आराम गर्दै र सुत्दै अलि अलि गर्दै माथि पौडिंदै गए । उनीहरू साना माछा समात्न, किनार छेउका घाँस र लेउ खान रूक्थे । भाग्यवश, त्यो बेला बेसीमा अन्न काट्ने समय भएकोले माछाबाहेक पनि तिनलाई खानका लागि मसानघाट छेउको पोखरीमा धान र चामलका गेडा भइरहन्थे । यो पवित्र यात्राको लागि उनीहरू जति जति माथि पौडिंदै गए, त्यति त्यति उनीहरूमा जोस र तागत बढ़दैथियो ।



तर, उनीहरूको मन लक्ष्यसम्म पुग्न जित नै उत्साहित भए पनि शरीर भने थाक्न थालिसकेको थियो ।

यात्राको मध्यतिर आइपुग्दासम्म उनीहरूको शक्ति क्षिण भइरहेको थाहा हँदैथियो । उनीहरू आफ्नो शक्ति सञ्चय गर्न लगातार माथि पौडिइरन छाडेर बढीभन्दा बढी समय आराम गर्न थाले । उनीहरूलाई आफ्नो अन्त्य नजिकै आयो भन्ने थाहा भयो । उनीहरू खोल्सी आइपुग्दा मत्स्यको तागतले हार मान्यो र देवीको शरीर पनि थाकिसकेको थियो । जिन्दगीको लेनदेनसँग बानी परिसकेकी देवीले उनको यो नियति स्वीकारिन तर मत्स्यले भने आफ्नो निन्याउरो भएको आँखाले देवीलाई हेर्दै सुस्तरी भन्यो - "उद्देश्य ?"

आफुमा बाँकी रहेको सारा बल लगाएर पौडीको गति बढाउँदै देवी नदीबाट बाहिर तटमा उफ्रिइन । उनी जिमनमा अलि पर गइन र आफ्नो पखेटा फडफडाउँदै वरपर हेरिन ।

"हेर्नुस् त !" देवीले आफ्ना पतिलाई बोलाइन् । पत्नीसँगै मर्न चाहने मत्स्य पनि पानीबाट बाहिर जमिनमा आयो । मत्स्यले पनि देवीको नजर पछ्याउँदै दक्षिणतिर कर्णालीको तटमा हेऱ्यो । बन्द हुनै लागेका आँखाले पारी हरियो पलाएको धानको एउटा गुच्छा तैरिरहेको देख्यो ।

"धान ।" देवीले आफ्नो बन्द हुनैलागेको सासले सुस्तरी भनिन् । "प्राणनाथ, तपाईँले यो कहिलै धान नफलेको जिमनमा बीउ लिएर आउनुभएको छ ! तपाईंले आफ्नो जीवनमा निकै नै उत्तम कर्म गर्नुभयो । यो देखेपि मानिसहरू कित हिर्षित हुन्छन होला !"

"अब मानसरोवर ? अनि कैलाश ? हामी असफल भयौँ देवी ।"मत्स्यले दम लिँदै भन्यो ।

"मानसरोवर भनेको मनको ताल हो । यो हामीभित्रै त छ । अनि जहाँ हामी विष्णुका सन्तान छौँ त्यो नै संसारको अक्ष हो।"

मत्स्यले आफूले सारा जिन्दगी बिताएको कर्णाली नदीतर्फ हेऱ्यो । अहिले, जब क नदी बाहिर थियो उसले पहिलो पटक कर्णालीको उत्साह, छलांग र नाच देखिरहेको थियो । उसले देखिरहेको थियो त्यो भृल्के घामको किरणसँगै भिररहेकी कर्णालीको बगाइ कसरी साना गिट्टीले बदलिरहेका थिए । कर्णालीको सुन्दरता बयान गरिनसक्नु थियो ।

"हेर त देवी, हामीलाई कित सुन्दर नदी घर स्वरूप दिइएको थियो।" मत्स्यले वरपरका दृश्य र आफ्नी पत्नीलाई अधिक स्नेहपूर्ण नजरले हेर्दै भन्यो ।

मत्स्यको बाहिरी आँखाको तेज जित मधुरो हुँदैगयो, उसको भित्रीनजर भन् तिखो हुँदैआयो । केही समयपिछ उसले आफ्नो आँखा अन्तिम पटक बन्द गऱ्यो । उसले आँखा बन्द गर्नेबित्तिकै आफूलाई शान्त र असीमित नीलो तालमा सजिएको इन्द्रेणीमा छलांग मारिरहेको भेट्टायो । ऊ स्वर्गमा, आफ्नो उदगम विन्दुमा आइपुगेको उसलाई थाहा थियो ।

त्यहाँ पुगेकै दिन मत्स्य र देवीको शरीर पथ्थर जस्तै कडा हुन थाल्यो । समयसँगै ती दुईको शरीर फुल्न थाल्यो जसरी विष्णु एक सानो माछाबाट ठूलो सिङ भएको माछा बनेका थिए, उनीहरूसँगै आएका धान पनि लहलह भूलेका

बाली भए । ती बालीका बीउहरू हावाले उडाएर चारैतिर छरिदियो र खेतका कान्ला र खेतभरि धान फल्यो । केही समयपश्चात त्यस पवित्र र अभिमन्त्रित स्थलमा मानिसहरू बसाइँ सर्न थाले । त्यस ठाउँमा धान ल्याएकाले मानिसहरूले निकै आस्था र कृतज्ञताका साथ पुज्ने ती मीन दम्पती अभै पनि धारापोरीको धानखेत र सम्पन्नता बीच भव्यरूपमा सँगै उभिएको देख्न सिकन्छ ।



## Prawin Adhikari

Prawin Adhikari writes screenplays and fiction, and translates between Nepali and English. He is an assistant editor at *La.Lit*, the literary magazine. He has translated *Chapters* (Promilla & Co., 2011), a collection of short stories by Amod Bhattarai, and *A Land of Our Own* by Suvash Darnal (LSE, 2010). His collection of short stories *The Vanishing Act* (Rupa, 2014) was shortlisted for the Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize. His stories and translations have appeared in publications like *The Open Space* and in *House of Snow*, an anthology of Nepali writing. His translation of short stories by Indra Bahadur Rai is forthcoming from Speaking Tiger.

## Ripples on the Mirrored Lake

-0000

As surely as sowing must come before the harvest, and as surely as a pebble thrown into a still pool creates ripples, cause and effect are forever related: the cause must precede the effect, just as the effect must follow a specific cause. As simple as this may seem, most people do not immediately understand it; instead, they spend most of their lives fighting hard, pretending that this law doesn't apply to them. They will pray to a god, if that helps, or pretend to be a god, if that makes matters easier, instead of sitting down to close their eyes, introspect and acknowledge that, indeed, effect follows cause, and that rejecting this law leads to sorrow.

Once upon a time, in a roving settlement of felt tents in the grasslands of Tibet, lived a king blessed with a plentitude of cattle and sheep and horses, a kingdom full of pastures and gentle streams, a son and a daughter, and a queen. His name was Joro.

His wife, Lhamo Tsendama, was his true treasure, for she caused his prosperity to grow through diligence and diplomacy. She established ritual friendships with the nomadic traders from south of the Himalayan mountains, and begged them to take the extra trouble of bringing her timber, so that she might build monasteries. Whenever she managed to bring the statue of Milarepa out from a cave high on the face of a cliff to the spacious and well-lit wood-

paneled halls of a monastery, nomads from as far away as four days' ride would make a pilgrimage, bringing offerings to the monastery and commerce for the people of her husband's kingdom. When Lhamo Tsedanma received Indian sages versed in the art of healing, the Gyeshe at the monastery obtained invaluable supplies of herbs from the Indian coasts, or even the island of Sri Lanka, and the ailing and infirm among her husband's subjects benefited. She possessed soft words and grace, which she often had occasion to employ on behalf of her husband and young son, for they lacked these virtues.

Joro and his son Palden possessed the pride that is the particular mark of those who are born into divinely ordained kingship: their word was law, this they knew. They therefore keenly enforced their superiority over their subjects: the fattest sheep and the finest wool in the kingdom were demanded in tribute from all who toiled in Joro's kingdom. Palden played at being a king and ordered his playmates to carry him on their shoulders. When a merchant arrived from Persia or Mongolia, Joro demanded that they beg for an audience in his stately tent and present him with turquoise and silk. But he didn't share his wealth with his subjects.

Joro and Palden liked to ride their swift horses and chase and shoot deer and pheasants, while Lhamo Tsedanma taught her daughter Dolma the prayers to the Avalokiteshwor who offered wisdom and protection. With the wind sweeping through the manes of their horses and with their mastiffs running down stags, the men of the family felt their power ripple outwards through the world, subjugating and conquering everything within their dominion. But the women of the family felt their compassion radiate out to bring succor to the suffering of the people, and knew that they accumulated merit for themselves and for every sentient being in the universe. By the time the children had reached adolescence, Dolma's prayer beads were worn smooth with the oil of devotion whereas Palden's prayer beads hung around the forearm of his right hand, knocked coarse by mindless action.

On a morning dulled by grey clouds that covered the skies after the southern wind had been beaten back by the cold northern winds, Lhamo Tsendama felt fade. As she watched her husband laugh loudly with his men, the hair on his chin wet with chhang, and as she watched her son wrestle away the rib of a yak from his favorite dog while his playmates pretended to feast on dishes of dry grass, she understood that the men didn't possess the virtues of kindness or the grace needed for serving others.

"Dolma," she called to her daughter, who came and sat by her. Lhamo Tsendama took her daughter's hand and said, 'Yama, the lord of death, will come to take me to the underworld soon, but you will have a long life ahead of you. Make no mistake, daughter - it will be a life of hardship and trials, for suffering is the nature of the world, and only mindful action and constant compassion will deliver you from suffering. There is nothing I can do to mitigate the vagaries of the world, the miasma that is samsara, but I will give you this gift, she said, and handed Dolma a box made of tough ox-hide and tied shut with a leathern cord.

"Your father and your brother will require compassion from you: they do not have the inner eye to see the future results of their actions. Nor do they possess the eye that looks inward in introspection to identify the past causes of their present actions. I fear that they will treat you cruelly and with disdain. Forgive them. But, do not abandon yourself to suffering. When the peril is the greatest - and this you will recognize when the time comes - when you realize that your mortal life is in danger, open this box, read the letter inside, and do exactly as I ask you to."

"Yes, mother," Dolma said and quietly accepted the box, for she was obedient.

And, as the air turned colder, as snow first fell like a dusting of tsampa flour and then as heaps of lamb's wool and then turned into hard stones of ice, the flame of life in the queen's heart grew dimmer, and her breath turned short as the days turned shorter, until one night she quietly passed away, led by Yama's servants through the gates of the afterworld. Dolma, who had been attentively praying by

her mother's side, recognized the passing of the soul. She lit a lamp by her mother's head and through the night recited mantras to the compassionate forms of the Avalokiteshwor.

Joro was astounded to find his wife dead, and Palden wailed like a child, for Lhamo Tsendama's death had caught them unaware. Seeing that neither her father nor her brother had the fortitude of spirit to confront the death of her mother, Dolma went to the monastery and informed the Gyeshe, who made arrangements for the funeral. The men of the camp carried away Lhamo Tsendama's body to the cremation grounds and consigned it to flames. From her tent across the frozen meadow Dolma watched the dark smoke from the pyre rise to the skies.

Dolma gave away her mother's possessions to mendicants and minstrels who passed through the camp, and she fed the hungry so that they would offer prayers in her mother's name. After fortynine days, when a portrait of her mother was offered up to a ritual fire to signify the final perishing of Lhamo Tsendama's mortal form, Dolma set about keeping house for Joro and Palden as if her mother had never existed. From nothing Lhamo Tsendama had passed into nothing, and Dolma was certain that her mother's noble virtues and accumulated merits would free her from rebirth into the lower orders, perhaps opening the path to rebirth as a highly realized man who would, over the next few births, pass forever into the great nothing. But the actions of her father and brother, who, although they had been born as men and into the light of the Buddha's teachings, still neglected their duties towards all sentient beings, and towards their own consciousness, worried her.

A few days after the last of the snow had melted, Dolma heard heartrending squeals of pain mingled with laughter of bloodcurdling cruelty outside the tent. Palden's dog was tossing about a gaunt marmot, its hindquarters mangled, but the life in it still strong. Perhaps it had strayed out of its burrow after the winter, weak from the hibernation, and had been set upon by Palden's mastiff. Each squeal of terror made Palden laugh, which encouraged the dog to toss the poor rodent about to elicit more laughter from Palden.

Dolma was transfixed with horror: compassion melded her mind with that of the marmot, and she experienced its pain and fear, along with its strong desire to live. Many moments had passed before she could move to intercede on behalf of the marmot. Joro had emerged from another tent. "What is this noise?" he bellowed, took a brief look, clipped Palden on the side of his head, kicked the dog in the rib and stomped the marmot on its head.

"No!" Dolma screamed, but knew immediately that the marmot had died.

"Did you want the rat to scream more? Did you want it to live in pain?" Joro turned his angry eyes to her.

"No," she said, eyes downcast to hide the hot tears. "It could have lived."

"It is a rat. Dogs kill rats," Joro said, and returned to the tent from where he had emerged.

A few days later, Dolma found Palden alone. "Brother," she said haltingly, "the dog, the yak, the rat, the men and their horses – they are all the same." She had given this speech great thought and carefully chosen the words, for she knew these would be the first words he would hear of the path towards compassion, the path that leads away from suffering. But Palden laughed.

"Are you the old Gyeshe at the monastery?" he shrieked with laughter. When the noise made one of his lackeys peep into the tent, Palden repeated Dolma's words in a high, mocking pitch, making it preachy and singsong. Palden's friend joined in the mocking.

"The worm and the bird are the same," one said.

"The mud and the dung are the same," another said.

Yes, they are, Dolma wanted to say triumphantly, but that was not in her nature. Instead, she turned away from them and found refuge in the corner where her mother used to pray, and where she had given up her spirit.

Over the next month, Joro's attitude towards her turned from negligence to disdain to something akin to barely suppressed hatred. As if she had deeply offended him by showing concern for the mangled marmot, he now sought every opportunity to force her into situations of cruelty and degradation: he put her in charge of the hunting dogs.

"Palden, you will learn the son's trade: you'll study the horses in our possession, for they are true wealth. Dolma, you will care for the dogs." Joro intended his son to grow up to be a great king and owner of a prosperous stable, so he taught Palden how to recognize strength and stamina in a horse. He would prop Palden before him on the saddle of his horse, so that he might learn to ride the steed, and chase the other horses through the meadows as he exercised them. Dolma was plopped behind Joro on the same horse, learning to command and bring to heel the mastiffs that ran after their quarry.

But the dogs had eaten from Palden's hands since they were pups, blind balls of fur and teeth. Palden knew everything about them, as he liked to boast to Dolma, and he relished the opportunity to show how he knew more about the task given to her. Also, it was in his heart to hunt and kill, skin and roast, eat and belch out the flesh of birds and animals. He became more animated each time the ferocious mastiffs stretched their necks and shot through the grass of the meadows. Dolma, on the other hand, could barely see the dogs, since she had to close her eyes tightly and cling to her father's back as the horses galloped through the grass. She learned to become one with the horse, to feel the dirt and grass through the horse's shod hooves, to register the tremors of hesitation or excitement in the horse's muscles and sinews when it prepared to leap over a brook or bank around an insurmountable obstacle. The horse was of the wind, while the dogs were of the earth, and Dolma learned to fly with the horse.

And that was no accident, for her father's horse was capable of flying; just as it was capable of understanding the suffering of the people around it. Gyadong Syabu, the treasure of the kingdom, and the pride and joy of Joro, could fly into the skies and over the mountain, not merely as metaphor, but in substance and body. Similarly, Senya Chumo, the second best prize in the stable, was like a golden fish in the ocean, for it could glide through the grass of the

meadows and over the rocks and snow of the mountains, and turn in a flick to face the direction whence it had come, just like a nimble fish in the ocean.

On the day when the sun took the longest to journey across the skies, and the shortest night was set aside for bonfires and feasting, Joro took Palden and Dolma on a hunt and quizzed them about horses and dogs. While Dolma did not surprise her father with the meager amount she knew about dogs, he was dismayed to know how little Palden knew about horses.

"Son," Joro said, "We are nothing without our horses, for they are the source of our wealth and power. If you can't learn about the horses in your herd, how will you learn to understand your lieutenants, your allies and your enemies? How will you be king?"

Dolma saw the distress on her brother's face and out of compassion whispered answers to him. When Joro saw this, he was alarmed. "Does your sister know more about horses than you do?" he asked in disbelief.

"How does it matter?" Palden answered with irritation. "I knew all the answers to your questions about the dogs, just like she knows about the horses!"

"She is a girl," Joro muttered. "I am not disappointed that she doesn't know about dogs. But you..." he said, but he didn't finish his sentence. Instead, he quietly turned around, and without waiting for his son or his daughter, Joro walked his horse back towards camp.

Dolma watched as Joro became more and more restless, sometimes asking for chhang even before Dolma had finished her morning prayers. He would stare at her with undisguised hatred and mutter under his breath. One day, late in the night, as she lay in bed, she heard her father growl, "I'll kill her if I have to, but my kingdom will not pass to a woman. I'll be mocked by all kings and princes of the world if they learn that my son is unworthy."

Dolma now understood the extent of her father's pride, and the utter absence in his heart of any light of compassion or humility. A man so engrossed with his picture of himself as a man of strength that he would resent his daughter the knowledge of horses! What might she have possibly done in her past lives that she should be born a daughter, only to be murdered by her own father? She wept silent tears, decided to pray for safety through the night and, oppressed by gloom, resigned herself to her fate. She didn't indulge in the selfish act of counting the merits of her karma to find a way of explaining her present predicament. What shall come shall come, she thought: I can only be righteous in my actions; I cannot be responsible for the thoughts and actions of others.

Yet, the next morning, when her father left on yet another hunt, seating Palden behind him on the horse, Dolma sought out the box made of ox-hide. Inside were a pendant of silver and a letter in her mother's hand.

"Go to the kingdom of Lo, to the south. There, present this pendant to the king, for it once belonged to his house, and was given to me as a token of respect. Lose not a moment, daughter - make haste. Take with you the flying stallion Gyadong Syabu, for he is the fastest, and not even the second treasure of your father's stable, the mare Senya Chumo, who can outrun the wind, can catch him."

Dolma was too afraid to be seen flying through the skies in the day, so she waited for the night. In the night, when she stole to the stable with nothing but the ox-hide box and a handful of tsampa, she hesitated to steal Gyadong Syabu: after all, the flying stallion was her father's favorite horse. The loss of the flying horse would cause immense anger and grief in Joro's heart, and his anger and grief would amplify upon learning that his daughter had stolen his beloved steed. Dolma, through her compassion, felt just a fraction of Joro's emotions of disappointment, loss and anger. She turned away from Gyadong Syabu and defied her mother's wish. She felt a barb of regret for disobeying her mother, but she put away that feeling, like an oyster does a grain of sand, or a wound does the sting of a thorn, not knowing what fruit it would bear far into the future.

She said to herself – "Flying through the skies could bring me face to face with the siddhas and dakinis, those who traverse the skies on their magical tasks. What if they take my flight as an insult and punish me for my hubris?" And, so, Dolma took the mare Senya Chuma and rode towards the kingdom of Lo.

The next day, as she was resting the mare in the shade of a large rock in the desert plateau between the meadows of her father's kingdom and the fertile lands of Lo, an old man in a long, worn robe approached her. "Where do you go, daughter?" he asked.

"To the kingdom of Lo, old father," Dolma replied. The old man regarded the mare and smiled at Dolma.

"I have water to share if you are thirsty," the old man offered. Dolma accepted the water with gratitude, but she shared it with her mare before wetting her own lips.

"Why do you go to the kingdom of Lo?" the old man asked. Dolma's eyes welled up with tears, but she didn't want to speak ill of her father. "My fate takes me there, old father," she said.

Dolma offered the old man half of her tsampa and watched him eat it. When he had finished, she made the rest of the tsampa into a ball, divided it into halves, and gave one portion to her mare.

"Ah, daughter!" The old man scratched his head. "You show compassion, yes, but daughter, she is a mare. She will happily eat grass when she reaches the valley." Dolma then laughed, because her stomach did growl with hunger still.

The old man and the young princess traveled towards Lo. Sometimes the princess rode on Senya Chuma, and sometimes she dismounted to beg the old man to rest his feet astride the mare, and sometimes they led the mare as they walked. This they did not merely out of compassion for the mare, but also because there was joy in conversing, and telling each other stories about their lives and the sights they had seen along the road.

"My mother asked me to visit the king of Lo, old father," Dolma told her fellow traveler after they had exchanged enough stories to build trust.

When they reached the gates of the walled city of Lo Manthang, the old man bid Dolma to stay outside the city. "But, do give me your mother's pendant," the old man smiled.

Soon, a young man came running out of the gates, and begged Dolma to ride the mare while he led them into the city, his hand on the bridle, until they reached the house of the Gyalpo, the king of Lo. The old man, still in his robes, sat to the right of the king's throne, on a chair piled high with yak pelts and sheep skin.

"Bring her to me, my son," the king commanded in a kind voice.

"Yes, father," said the young man by Dolma's side, and with a sweep of his arm, begged her to approach his father, the king.

"Your fate and mine met on the road, didn't they?" the old man said with a chuckle as she approached the king of Lo. "Nephew," he addressed the king, "This young woman is the treasure born to the wise and pious Lhamo Tsedanma, wife of Joro, to whom our house had sent this pendant as a token of our esteem. It is true that I failed in my embassy to the kingdom of Amdo to return with the princess betrothed to your son. But, instead of a lotus from the gardens of a mansion, I have brought you a blue poppy of the vales. Instead of a painted doll swathed in silks, I have found a compassionate heart and boundless virtue."

Dolma slowly understood what was happening, and with astonished eyes looked at the king, the old man and the young prince by her side. The prince smiled back kindly; there was no spark of mischief in his eyes, but they pooled deep with a constant light of compassion. Dolma saw that she had been delivered into a new family that welcomed her. She would respect and love her father as long as she lived, but this would be her new home and family to which she would forever be devoted.

She bowed with gratitude and prayed to the siddhas and Avalokiteshwor to bless every sentient being in the universe.

Many years passed. Joro tried to forget his losses - a daughter who would have made a good bargain as a bride for a merchant or a prince, along with the jewels of his possession, his miraculous horses. Years of increasing poverty had forced him to part with the flying horse. Joro had entrusted the money from the sale of the horse to Dorje, a nephew, who then bought a large herd of horses and trained them to be sold to warring kings in India. Palden and Dorje had crossed the mountains to the south to sell the horses. But when they returned, Palden had brought Dorje home bound in ropes. Refusing to believe Dorje's protests that he was innocent, Joro had his nephew's eyes put out with hot needles for stealing the money earned from the sale of his herd. When Dorje shouted, rolling in the dust outside Joro's tent, that someone in the king's caravan had stolen the money, and that he was innocent, Joro had the blind man's tongue cut out for his lies.

Joro treated his other subjects no better, and Palden learned no better from Joro than to bully and exploit. His subjects began pitching their tents farther and farther away from the large tent of their king, until, one winter night when Joro came out of his tent, desiring more beer with which to warm himself, he could barely make the outline of the nearest tent, pitched a hundred yards away, and with a blizzard raging in between.

"Fetch me a bowl of beer," he growled at Palden.

"Do it yourself," the prince muttered as he turned around on his pile of sheepskin and went back to sleep.

Joro kicked Palden. "I am your father! Is this how you show obedience?"

Palden reluctantly got out of bed, grumbled under his breath as he swaddled himself in a coat of fur, braced against the cold and went into the blizzard. When he returned an hour later, most of the beer had spilled or frozen into slush. Joro glowered at Palden, but the prince laughed derisively and said - "Are you the only one who feels the cold?"

As Palden lay snoring drunkenly in his corner, Joro thought of his tent, his grasslands and his kingdom. When merchants came from the south or the west, they rarely stopped with him for the night anymore. Instead, they quickly paid their respect in reluctant bows and tribute in goods of inferior quality, and journeyed with their caravan to the edge of his kingdom. Although his subjects grazed their sheep and yaks on the greenest and sweetest grass of his kingdom, the cattle he received as tribute rarely had a shiny coat or fat thighs. The tent was always dim, even in noon when the sun glimmered fiercely outside. A pall lay over everything that he touched.

Joro closed his eyes and tried to find the signposts along the path of life that had brought him to a place where he found no love or respect, but only barely concealed contempt and fear. He remembered the manner in which he had treated his daughter, and realized that she had run away because of his own conduct. He remembered the insolence Palden showed him. Doesn't the tree show what seed it came from? Joro had never taught his son kindness and grace: he had only taught him strength of arm and roughness of voice. Joro thought of his wealth and influence: he had scared away his kinsmen by forcibly taking from them without ever giving them anything in return, so that when his people fell away from him, just as birds flee a blazing tree, he had been left with nothing. The monks at the monasteries built by his wife no longer invited him to the many ceremonies to which people flocked from miles around because he had once tried to strong-arm them into paying him a tithe instead of offering them his share of wool and sheep. As he lay there in the dark, Joro saw that every misfortune that smothered the peace of his mind now had its origin in an act of unkindness or a hurtful remark. For the first time in his life, in the autumn of the breaths left to his name, tears of remorse wet Joro's cheeks until he fell into a sweaty, uneasy sleep.

"Father!" Palden awoke him the next day. Joro sat up with bitterness clinging to his tongue, his breath foul even to himself. A merchant stood by the entrance, cap in hand, confusedly studying the tent.

"Am I in the right home?" the merchant asked. "Am I before our king?"

Joro waved him towards a low table by the stove gone cold in the middle of the tent. The merchant took out a sack of hulled rice, a bundle of incense sticks, silver coins from the valley of Nepal, which was now the currency at Lhasa, and a small lump of deer-musk. He bowed deep and started walking backwards towards the mouth of the tent.

"Wait," Joro said. "Sit."

The merchant looked at the lackluster surroundings.

"Where do you come from, friend?" Joro asked as politely as he could.

"From Leh, south of the Shang Shung," the merchant replied. A curious smile spread on Joro's face. He walked to the merchant and held him by the arm and sat him down.

"Son," Joro said to Palden, "Go to Dorje's and ask his wife to come here. Without a woman's graces in the house, hospitality is incomplete."

Dorje's wife arrived with dried *jimbu* grass, the rare pods of red chili, flakes of sun-dried yak meat and anything else her neighbors could afford to share to welcome their king's guest. Palden watched the sudden turn in his father's behavior until, his belly filled with warm food and beer, the merchant boasted of his kingdom's splendors and his king's riches. After drinking some more, he raised his arms and made swooshing sounds, as if flying, and then neighed and snorted like a horse.

"It is a splendid horse, but it keeps trying to fly back to where it came from," the merchant said with a twinkle in his eyes. "Do you know where my king bought it?"

Joro smiled broadly and slapped the merchant's back and roared with laughter. Palden also laughed.

"It is your horse!" the merchant pointed to Joro and giggled.

"My horse," Joro laughed. "My flying horse!"

A scheme had suggested itself to Joro's mind, and, for the first time in his life, he was putting aside his pride in order to plot, scheme, deceive and trick someone. One aspect of evil had shielded itself from him while another aspect now befriended him and whispered

into his ears. Was it really stealing if he could affect the theft without once setting foot into the house of the owner of the goods? Was it collusion if his partner in crime knew nothing of what he was doing, and why?

The day came for the merchant to leave for his home. Joro bowed before him and said, "Sir - have we not become the best of friends over the past week?"

The merchant blushed at being addressed so intimately by a king, albeit a poor king in a shabby tent. When Joro took his hand, the merchant began nodding vigorously in agreement.

"Have you not made me happy, my friend, by sharing my hospitality?" Joro asked again, and the merchant stuttered in agreement, "Yes, my king, yes! The honor has been immense."

"You will go home and brag to your wife about sharing a table with us!" Palden joined in on the ribbing. The merchant beamed brightly.

"I beg you this small favor, my friend," Joro said as he took off a boot and pulled out the insole. "Take this to your king's stables and burn it in a place where my beloved Gyadong Syabu lives now. When I had to sell him to your king, a piece of my heart withered and died. I am sure my horse grieves for me, too. If he smells the odor of the insole of my boot he will remember the fond hours we spent together, roaming through the grassland and climbing to the night sky. It will bring him solace to know that I still remember him, and it will bring me solace to know that he will embrace me once more, through the joy in his heart, over these vast distances that separate us."

The merchant was overcome with sorrow for Joro and the horse, and immediately agreed to do as instructed. He took his leave and headed homewards.

"A day will come when I will need your help, Palden," Joro said to his son. "You will do exactly as I ask you to, and our fortunes will turn for the better."

And so the father and son waited for the day when the merchant would reach Leh, steal into the king's stables and burn Joro's insole at a spot where Gyadong Syabu could smell it. The scent would be the magical signal to put the horse into a frenzy; it would break all chains and fly into the skies and race swiftly over meadows and valleys, rivers and mountains to alight outside the tent. Joro's wealth would return after years of want and penury!

Joro would close his eyes through the long autumn afternoons and imagine the path to Leh, just where the merchant would rest for the night, or just when he would approach a village late in the evening. Joro counted the days on his fingers, then with knots of grass outside his tent, then with scratches into the tent-pole nearest to his bed. He forgot the taste of food and the comfort of his bed because the constant coveting of the mere possibility of wealth grew too big inside him and made him restless. Until one evening, he suddenly sat up in his bed and shouted.

"Palden!" he said, "prepare for Gyadong Syabu's return!"

"From where?" Palden asked. "It has been many years since we sold him. Why would he return to us now?"

"You don't know of the scheme I have effected, and you don't know of the magical bond I have with the horse. Just do exactly as I say, and we shall have our wealth return to us." Joro told Palden to find a wide clearing with soft soil underfoot and burn a bright line of torches to guide the horse safely to the ground. "Go now!" Joro shouted, "And do exactly as I have said. When the horse approaches the torches, it will neigh loudly. You must shout out his name at that exact moment, so that he knows he is awaited. If you fail to do this, all will be lost!"

There always comes a moment in a story, just as in the pages of our lives, when events shape up in defiance of our expectations; these are either moments of unexpected joy, or of undeserved violence and grief. When they happen in our lives, such accidents make us wail in grief and disbelief and ask the skies -"Why?" The mind searches for reasons why something should have occurred in the manner it did; then it fantasizes about all other possible alternatives. Then it seeks to lay blame on anybody or anything at all, and, if nothing surfaces, it tries to make sense of the strange thing called coincidence. The mind resists seeing it for what it truly is: the inevitable result of a past action. It resists giving credence to the inevitable bond between a moment and the next: an action and its consequence. The mind tries to live in fantasies of how an event would have turned out if, at the most crucial juncture, an event or intention or word or action had been ever so slightly different; it desperately invents fantasies of alternate futures. The mind bathes in the kaleidoscopic pictures of fictional pasts and fictional futures, while stubbornly refusing to see the plain, unadorned nature of everything that unfolds in the present.

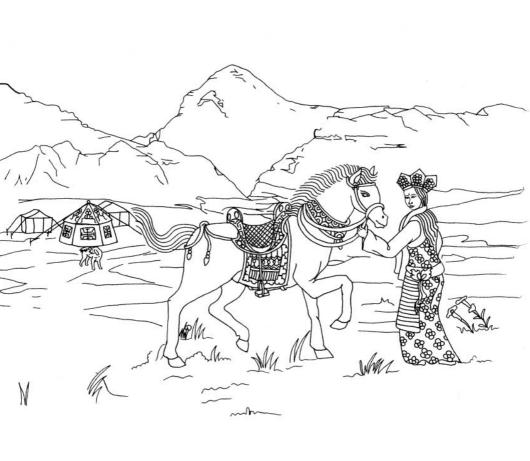
What happened next wouldn't have come to pass if Dolma had obeyed her mother and escaped with Gyadong Syabu. It certainly wouldn't have happened if greed hadn't entered Joro's heart, or if Palden had obeyed his father. But, these three actions were already in the tomb of the past, and in the womb of the future the consequences were sliding towards the moment when they would become actions in the world, the echo in the samsara of past deeds.

Palden found a wide, soft clearing, but he didn't bother to light the torches. A magical flying horse should have enough sense not to fall to the ground. What is a torch to a fantastical beast that can fly over fortresses of snow and rock, high in the southern skies? When Gyadong Syabu approached the meadow near his former master's dwelling, he saw no beacon to guide him. Palden didn't see the horse rapidly approach him against the dark sky, and therefore didn't call out Gyadong Syabu by his name, which was itself the magic and talisman, and thereby caused the horse to slam headfirst into the ground, break the bones in his neck, and instantly die.

There is a story, repeated over the ages in many books, about two birds sitting on the branches of a fruit tree. One bird feels hunger and thirst; it feels also the sweetness of ripe fruits and the bitterness of the unripe. So it pecks at the fruits, titters in delight when the flesh is juicy and sweet, and screeches in dismay when it is raw and bitter. The other bird doesn't feel hunger or thirst; it feels no need for the sweet or bitter tastes of the fruit. It merely witnesses the first bird, for it *is* the first bird, snared inextricably in the senses, and it is also the second bird, aloof from the material world. It is aware of its separation from the world of sensations and desires. The first bird doesn't know that it also exists as the second, on a different and higher branch of the same fruit tree. And, so, the first bird thrashes about in briefest agony or joy, never once looking up to watch the serenity and majesty of the second.

When Joro was brought news of his horse's death, Joro suddenly understood what had happened: he had murdered Gyadong Syabu! His greed had called the horse over the mountains. His conduct towards Palden had made the young man disobedient and insolent, lacking in industry but brimming with arrogance. There was no such thing as a coincidence: no effect arises without a precedent cause. Just as joy is a consequence of a past action, so is grief a consequence; and all are ripples on the mirrored surface of the great lake of Time.

A bird flew out from Joro's body and climbed to the top of his tent and watched down, detached from this world of words and signs, attachments and desires, the incessant deluge of consequence after consequence that tumbled forth from all the nodes and moments in the past, incessantly being devoured by a million different possible futures. It watched itself, Joro, as the old king went blind in a flash of comprehension, for the sudden confrontation with the light that separates this world from its eternal and unblemished second self is too terrible to behold.



## बे'र्वेद'दर्'नदे'बर्ळे'र्देश'ग्री'क्वनश'स्त्र

-0000

तक्षःस्रोटं,जयोत्राज्ञीत्राचर्त्रं,स्रुयोत्यं,स्याःस्याःस्यात्रं स्यात्रः सरतःस्यःसस्यःस्यात्रःस्यात्रः स्यःस्यःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्या

यम् तर्म् में क्ष्यां में त्रीयां प्रकृत स्वीत् वर्ष्य क्ष्यां क्ष्यं क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां क्ष्यां

त्यं व्यव्यात्वस्य व्यव्यक्तं क्षेत्रस्य कष्टि क्षेत्रस्य कष्टि क्षेत्रस्य क्षेत्

वहं वार्याञ्चर ब्रवाळेट ळेंटर राप्तवाची यादगाय व्ययायाचे याद्व वार्याचे वार नात्रशास्त्रे श्री त्याम्रशास्त्रे त्वरःश्लु होना पूर्वि साने क्वि होना में शास्त्रशास्त्र श्री साने विद्यानी शामित्रा नीरःश्वरःचर्याष्ट्रवःचवे प्रवेषितःचवे पर्वः प्रवादितः चुःचान्वः पर्वेषः (बुर्याः चे प्रवाद विवादः सम्माने वा व ळॅंशन्त्रींद्रासरासळेंन् इसान्नारिंग्सेंदे हिंग्विः मुखायनरसायाळेंना इसाहिरादसाळेंना। सूर्ये। न्यत्रभारते द्रनो न्यत्रे अर्के त्या कु न्यू रसर्के सम्यद्र र से द्वार्यात्र सर्वे द्वारते हु श्रूत देत महान्यया न র্ষন| বার্বাপার্ম্বরমান্তমমানাদ্রনের শ্রীমামর্মানের ক্রিলানন্রমান্তমান্তমানাদ্রমানাদ্রমানাদ্রমানাদ্রমানাদ্রমা  $+ \frac{1}{2} \left[ \frac{1}{2}$ चते तु त्य प्पेंब पृत्र ने न्या यो अ र्सेंट यम यहेब विंद सें अ नु अ द अ नु अ खु विंद यहि अ छी रहन हु अ *दशः*श्चेत्यःदत्तेयःनःन.तृदः।

<u></u>Ĕૼ૽<del>ૼ</del>ૼૻૺ**ૢ**ઽૢઌ૽૽ૼઽઌ૽૿ૢ૽ૡૢૻૡઌૡૣ૱ૡઌ૽ૼૹૻૹ૽ૼૼૼૹ૽૽૱૽૽ૢ૱૽૽ૢ૱૱૱ઌ૽૽ૡ૽૽૱ૡ૽ૺૡ૽ૺ૱૱ઌ૱ૡ૽ૺ भ्रुभारायान्द्रभेषायान्यययान्त्रीप्रामुखाय्वता विरामहेशान्त्रीयानभूनान्त्रिययान्त्रीया श्रीभायदे भीभाषा देरावहेद विंदाविभाष्ठ्र द्वारा प्रमाण के पार्वे বিন্দী ক্রিলাঘন দুন্দেশ ক্রিলা ব্রীন্দের কেননে শক্ষর শাস্তী রামনে দী প্রেলা মার্ক্রীরামার্কের শব্দের নি षमा-र्वेशः इस्रशः कुयः र्वे व्यायनुवान र्वोशासये नामायन महा। न्ययः धूतः क्रीशः हेन् सेये विन्तु न्या ॱढ़॓ऀॸॱक़ॖॖख़ॱय़ऀॱख़ऀढ़ॱॿॖख़ॱॻॖॖॖॖॖॺॱॸॖ॓ॱॸॸॱॺॏॱ<del>ॾ</del>॓ॸॱॸॕ॔॔॔॔ॺऻॺॱढ़ॖॺॺॱॻॖऀॱॿॺऻॱय़ॸॱॿॖॎॸॱॸॖॱॺड़ॖॺऻॱॱॸॱॿ॓ॺऻॱॸड़ॱऄ॔ॺऻॱ लीलाय्याञ्च्याः खुयात्वर्त्त्रः स्मैययाय इति अयया क्यायतः स्वीत् यीत्रः तीत्रः तीत्रः तीत्रः तीत्रः तीत्रः तीत्र नामान्त्रा विदायान्त्राचनान्दानाषुर्धायोगमानुभावत्वायान्त्रीमानवे नामान्यान्यान्या विंदःवीशः सदःवी: क्रुःवें सःवेंदशः श्रें दःग्री: वदः वशः वयदशः द्वश्रशः वः वर्षे : श्रूवः शेः श्रें द्

*૾૽ૼ*૽ૠૼ૽ઽઌઌૡૡ૱ઌૹ૾૽૱ૠ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૢૼૼૼૼૼ૱૱ૡ૽૽૱ૡ૽૽ૼ૱૱૱૱૱૱૱૱૽૽ૼ न्वादः बिन्। व्यूर्के व्यूत्रः सर्वास्य स्ति विद्यूष्टे विद्यासायासर्वे विद्युत्व स्ति विद्युत्व स्ति विद्युत्व रशः नीवेनाशः ग्रेः श्रूर्वः तथाः नश्चनशा इतेः हैंना सः श्रुरः नीशः श्रुरः नतिवः रसः नी पर्वेना हिः नना नीशः यदः सूर् १ कर् १ द्वर १ द्वर १ वर्ष १ कर् ळदःदेवे भ्रे पार्के पार्वे अर्ग्धे अर्दरावी ग्रहर से सभा ग्री देंदर सूदावी अर्भवा वर्षया ग्री अरसदर वर्षा वार भूनशःभ्रेतःविरःद्रगे नःत्रश्रम्थःहे व्हेग्हेत्रः न्यात्रश्रःशेशशः ठतः गुत्रः वर्शे नरः होत्।

૽ૢ૾૱ઌઌઌૢ૽ૺ૱૱ૹ૾ૢૼઌૼૡૼઌૹૢ૾ઌૡ૽ૹૢઌ૱૽૽ૺ૱<u>ૻૹૣૼ</u>ઌૹ૱ઌ૽૽ૺૹૢૣઌ૽૱૱ઌ૽૽૱ ૹ૽ૼૡ૽ૺૹ૽ઽઌ૽૽૱ઌ૽ૺૹૼઌ૽ૹૹ૽ૹઌૢૼૹૢૻૢઌ૽ૻઌ૽ૼઌ૽ૼઌૢ૽૱ઌઌૹૹૣઌ૽૽ૢ૽ઌૹઌઌૹઌ૽ૡ૽ૹ૽૽ૼઌઌ૽૽ૣૹ मवे खेर न ने न सस मिलिया से र मिले मुले हुं र मिल सुन र मास र मास सुन मुले हुं र स्वी स

'हेद'देवा'वो'र्देवायायरायर यर स्टर रहत यी यहर द्वर यो या वें द्वर यहर देवर देवर या यावर श्वेद यया नार्षिनान्तरः हे क्रिंदिनन्तरः स्वीनान्तरः तर्नान्ता स्वार्धे के क्षित्रः सानान्तरः मी के ख्रीनानी क्रान्तरे ख्रीदरसेदेः ञ्चर्यायह्न,त्याक्षेत्रपदे स्ट्रिंस्त्याञ्चेय। विरासीयात्रस्य निर्माणीयात्रीयात्रस्य स्ट्रिंस्त्रस्य निर्माणीया अर्बेद'मशन्तर्वेद्'हेर:क्रु'स'द्रशाग्रुर:कर'वहंस'मायानधूश| स्टानी'नुश'र्वे'स्टानी'वर्दर'के'मवे' नार्श्रव:र्यार्ट्रव:र्याचीत:रावे:र्रुव:नश्रुव:राव:न्यश्रव। दे:न्य:र्वेट:र्श्रव:र्य:व्यान्वदःर्श्रेट: नरःशर्वे नदे नुस्रास्त्रेस्या ग्री व्यव कृतः न्दः विन्देदः वी गुतः श्रीं न् सेन् प्रानेश

"য়ৣ৾৽৽য়৽৽ वृहःसुदुःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रःसुद्रः केंॱ<u>ध</u>्दॱसंसार्यः स्टः'वी'तु'सेंदिं खवा'सर्वी'द्रशान्त तुरः श्लेष्ठी "दक्के'नदवा'पा'सद'हःगा'से 'देर'नद'र्पेटः श्लेष्ट रट. द्वी. श्रदे तीया थे. त्वीत् त्वीं हिन्स्ट त्यान् नुह के के के के लेका वीया समुद्रा दा श्रुवा वि र्क्षा अंधर्यात्मात्रात्विका यहेवाहेद्वे सूनानस्याग्रीयानुनायदे स्टानिव उदाविनाकी सम् क्षे क्रें हे नगद सूना नर त्यन त्यन वीर नो से स्थाप के स - दरक्र्नि-प्रामेन्प्रते चुम्रमा सेम्रमा चेन्नि क्ष्या चिन्नि क्ष्या चिन्नि क्ष्या चिन्नि क्ष्या चिन्नि क्ष्या वक्रयः श्चेन् कुर न् वार्हेन विश्व राज्य सामाना विश्व विष्य विश्व ग्रह्म ह्यार्श्वित्रयायमाहम्ययानेमार्थेन्।" बेयानयन्यवेदाम्यमार्गेयान्वेद्यायमार्गेयान्वेद्याने यर्चेत्रश्वास्तुः श्रीयः विचाः श्रुष्तः यः यः श्रीत्।

"डिन्-रन्ने अन्यन्न्न्यः विन्युं न्याहिन् ग्रीः ह्यस्य स्रोधस्य स्वितः स्वितः स्वितः स्वितः स्वितः स्वितः स्वि चःश्चॅर् न्ये क्रु न्युर नदे प्दर्भ नेदि पायसमादीय हो नपदे तुसाय ने प्रसाय स्ति। पाय दिन ૹૣઽ૽ૡ૾૽ૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺઌ૿ૡૼ૱ઌ૽૽ૼઽઌ૽૽ૢ૾૱૽ૢ૽ૺ૱ૹ૽ૢૼઽઌ૽૽૾ૢ૱ઌૹ૽ૢૼ૱ૡૺઽ<u>ૢૡ૱ઌ૾ૼ૱૱૱ૺ</u>ૹ૽૽ૺઌ૱ૺ <u> प्रिंट पार्ट्से अप्यान वेंद्र राज्य प्रत्य प्रतान वित्य प्रतान वित्य वित्य वित्य वित्य वित्य वित्य वित्य वि</u> ૽૽ૺ*૾*૽ૢૻૢૡૼૹ૾ૢ૽ૣૼૢૼ૽૽૾ૢૺૹ૽ૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૹૢ૾ૡૻૡ૽૽૾ઌૣૻૡ૱ૻૹૢૺૡૢૢૢૢૢૢૢૢૢૡ૽૱ૹૢ૽ૹ૾ઌ૽૽૱ૡ૽૾ૺ૾ૢૼ૱ૹૢૺૢૹૢઌ૽૱૽૽૱૽૽ૼૹૼૡ૱ ૄૢ૽ૼૼૼઽ૽૽ૢ૿૱ઌ઼ૺ૱ૢૢૹ૱ૡઽ૾ૺૢૡ૽ૢૺ૱ૢ૱ઽ<u>ૻૣૻ૾ઌ૽ૼ</u>ૼ૾૱ૡ૽ૺ૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽૽ૢ૽૱૽ૣ૽ૣૼઌ૱ૢઽ૱૽ૢ૽ૢૼ૾ૡ૽૱ઌૺૺ૾૱૽ૢૼ বৰীব্যর্-ট্রিমা"উম্যানপুরা

र्क्षेवासक्षे वात्राक्षक्र में प्रिनायम्बर्धाः "यम्बर्धाः असा" वेषायन् मे मे सुराह्म मे ह्वी 줘드지

ष्ट्रैस्ट्रे.बंस्व्याहे.बंस्पुरायावा क्र्यायसायाचा स्थानायास्यासायास्यानाया ૡૢ૽ૢ૽૽૾ૢ૽૽ઌૡ૽ૡૢૻૠ૽૽૱ૹૡ૽ૻ૽૽ૼૡૢ૽૽૽ૡ૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૼૹઌૢૼૹઌૢૼૹઌૢ૽૱૱૱૱૱૱૱૱ૡ૽ૹ૽૽ૺૡ૽૽ૢ૽ૺઌ૽૽૱૱ૡ૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૢૺૺૺૺ *देवे वेद-* ग्राट-ह्य-दिश-ह्य-देश-ह्य-त्री स्था स्थान हिन्द क्षेत्र स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान स्थान द्याः बुर-र्-श्रेर-श्रेष्ट्री क्षेत्रः विवा वी स्थळंत्रः श्रेर-विर-श्रेः वि नर-वा वेवायः विर-वळे नरवा वी र्ह्वित र्हेरः इसमः ग्रेमः द्वैःसदेः पुषः नृःद्वन्यः स्री सेसमः नापीं नः सेनः प्रमः अस्यदेः दन्त्रसः नृः नासीयः नः स्रीतः षयायने नयानित परि नु से र्से वास्याहमानियानित नित्रात्ति परि स्त्री तास्यानित स्त्री तास्यानित स्त्री स्त्री स सर्केद् से श्वर सक्त पार में राया है नियार से पिर मुस्य स्ट्री राहे पी निर्मा है र उत्तर प्रमास र শ্বর মেগারীবাঝাবার্রি অবাবদ্বা

सर्दरमःसर:रु:भ्रद्गनम्बा कु:सर्द्यदे निर्दानिहेमःग्रीमःस्र के:स्वास-विनासम्बास . ત્રેન્ અત્યન્દ્રદાસું ત્રેં વૃદ્ધિયામ્ય અત્યત્રે વિજે ત્રાયા વૃદ્દિ ત્યે કૃષ્ટે નું વિષ્ટું વિજયો એક્પન सर्वेट:श्रे:नु:सॅ:र्ब्रूल:स:रट:केट:दर्गेद:सर:र्येट:दर्श-दर्गे निक्रे स्वापन स्वापन स्वापन स्वापन स्वापन स्वापन निक्रायम् अर्गे अर्र्र्यत् वामी में क्षेत्राचेनाअर्भरमात्रद्विता के से से स्थारी अर्थे से स्थारी षदःस्टर्सःस्टर्सःस्टर्मात्त्रःस्टर्मात्तरःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्याःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्यात्रःस्यात्र ૡૠૼૡૡૢૡૢૻૹૼૹૣ૾ૼૡૹૹૡૢ૱ઌૡૢ૽ૡ૽ૹ૽ૡૹૹ૱ૡૡ૽ૡ૽૽૱ૣ૾ૹ૾ૢ૱ૢૹૹૹૡૡ૽૽ૡ૽૽ૢ૽ૺૢ૱ૹૹૢૡ૱૱૱ रेर:नक्षूश्र

- प्राप्तः श्रे द्वारा प्रकृतः । प्रयोकाः श्लें का खीका सदमः प्राप्ता स्वापः श्ले द्वारा प्रकृतः स्वापः स्व अ'हे'वर्देव'त्'नङ्ग 'हेव'लग'ले'न्ज्'र्शेट'नवे'त्र्य'शु'ख्रे'कें'छे'छ्व'अवे'वत्र्य'शुक्र'श्चे'ग्रुग्न् वाहे'वर्देव'त्'नङ्ग हेव'लग'ले'न्ज्'र्शेट'नवे'त्र्य'शु'ख्रे'कें'छे'छ्व'अवे'वर्त्र्य'शुक्रा'शुक्रे' 'सुर-प्पेरअ'सु'वहेवा'यवे ह्वाअ'सु'वर्:यर-विवा'से 'यर-क्रेंद्र'यवे क्रेंक्रें सेंवा'स्रअ'वर-यवे 'दर-वी' उ'यवा' इसरा हैं रें प्राप्त प्रमुत पाहे राष्ट्री के प्रमुत प्रमुत पाहे राष्ट्र प्रमुत . हेर.चेश वें. मु. हेर.म. हे. चेर.म. हे. चेर.म. हे.म. ૹ૾ૼૼૼૼૼૣઽૺૹ૾૽૱ૡ૽૽ૺૹૄ૽ૡ૽ૻૼૢૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૹ૽ૺૡૺૺ૾ૹ૾ૹ૾ૹ૽૽ૹૹૹ૽ૹૹ૾ૹૹૡ૽ૢૡૼ૽૽ૡ૽ૺૺ૾ઽૢૹ૽૽ૺૹૣ૽ૼૼૢૼઌ૱૱ઌૹ૽૱૱ૹ૽ૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼ ५ भी नर से प्रमुर बिरा विवा नुसार भी भारत हैं वास खर बिवा ए भी नदे त्यस विहेर ने कें रवर्भः नुःस्रदे व्हरः नुःचहः प्यदः स्रोदः स्रोदः व्यव्यव्यक्ति स्रोदः स्रोदे । विदः स्रोदेः प्रान्तः नुः स्रोदे । स्रोदे । विदः स्रोदे । प्रान्तः स्रोदे । विदः स्रोदे । કુરા છે : ર્હેરા છે : સૂર ન ર્લેર્ નિરાસ નુસાસ સુરો અ ર્લેર્ન ત્રાપાર | વિરા નિરાસ છે સામે સમય રહ્યા ત્રમામાં उदःदरःदरःवीः इस्रान्वेशःवः व्यादात्रः यात्तुः स्वतेः दरः द्धंवः देशः तुः सें क्षेत्वः वः सेस्रश्राह्मवः क्षेत्रश

સદ્વાસવિ? વિત્વસ્થય લે હ્વરાવિ જેવન્ય છે કે અસુ શ્રેત્ર વિવાય વિત્વસ્થા છે કે અસુ શ્રેત્ર વિવાય વિત્વસ્થા છે ક चुःर्से र्स्सेवासमान्दरादमा देववाध्वराष्ट्री हिमान्विरादमान्त्रा स्त्री पानेवा वर्षा वर्षा वर्षा वर्षा वर्षा व षरः वाधुवाः सरः वाधुवाः ग्रेनः ग्रेनः यहेन विश्वः सन्ते होने विवाः भ्रूनः वास्त्रः अस्ति । स्वतः स्वतः स्वतः स ऍ८-व.लट.ब्रुच.कर.भ्र.पर्चे चाडुच.चेश्व.व.चे.च.५.२.५चीव.२४.इ्चेश.सपु.हं अ.सी.स्ट.ची.सी. हिर देश हीर प्रविश्व राज्ये हें हो । र त्रिय क्षेत्र ही होत राय हिर हिर स्था ही स्था होता है । त्त्री:हिशन्त्र इतः नेत्र व्हेन्यश्रप्यतः नी: द्वरः नीशः दुः भ्रदः ने रे से स्वरं द्वरं व्यवस्थाः दर्गे दः श्ली मुँजासद्भै न्दर्र अभूगानीय प्रमुखास्री सुराधर गुरूष चुस्र अस्य स्था मुक्त मिर्ट सिंद से स्था सा <u> ५८.५ची.यपु.शुश्रायाध्यात्रीया.ये.वी.ये.वी.यश्ची.यश्ची.यश्ची.यश्ची.यहु.वाश्चीया.ये.वहु.वाशःस्रीया.रट्सायरःसू</u> |वॅदःबॅबःग्रुटःश्चरमःबेदःदेवेःवर्क्षःवर्देदःग्रेःवर्त्वःवःष्यरःविदःबॅबःक्षेदःश्चनःवरःग्रुद्य| र्नसःश्मेदः ब्रनं मानुमा द्वारा द्वारा मानुमान्य विवामी वराव का क्षेत्र विवासी समूरा क्षारे के से ना से के का विदेश चल्वेदाव्हियाद्याचस्रम। वि.समान्याक्यं क्री मध्याव्याक्ष्याक्षेयां क्रायक्षेयां क्रायक्षेयां क्रायक्षेयां वि.समान्याक्ष्या लार्ह्ना र्ह्रे सामक्री राष्ट्री प्राप्त स्थाने हिन्दी स्थानिक स्थानिक

"દે.વર્ચાસકોદ્યા" કેચાર્સ્સ્વાસચાદાવર્સેદ્યાનુસાગ્રાદ્યવધું ન બે.હ્વર્ચાવને સાથવા દિલ્હા <u> </u> हॅ:रॅअ:विंट:ब्रिंवे:श्रेम:बुट:विंट:शॅ:य:महन:दे| "ब्रिंट:ग्रीअ:के:के:देअ:द:त्र-दु:वर्वेद:स्रट:ढस: <u> इश्वाद प्दर्ने प्रमा क्विं प्रप्राची श्वाने व इत्याची वर प्रप्ते पुरावह प्रदेश प्रमा क्विं प्राप्त विश्वाप्त</u> "येन्" डेश्रासर्वे र्ने श्चनाकुर्देन् सेन्यत्वोनशर्वेन्त्र्न् ॥हिन्सेन्द्रव्धे नने वर्केः र्षेर्श्चेत्।" हेशन्त्रम

"ने ते हैं हैं हैं हो बोग ने ना हि स्पेश हैं हैं गार्शेन मार्केश हैन ने ना है शहें में श्रामन ने निस्तर 

'ફેત્ર'વનાવે'<u>ફે</u>શ'શુઃ સુંભ'સશ''દ્રમભ' છૂત્ર' નાં કેના 'શું કેંદ્ર' માં સર્કેદા " 'શું કોં " કિંદ સેંશ' ત્રસા સેંસ' म्बेशयन्त्रन्तुम् "ब्विप्तराम्पम क्षेत्रेप्तराधी न्त्र्राहरूर्वेगशक्रम्याम्बेनासक्र्र्स्यः . ત્રેન્ " વિંદ:શ્રેં અ: શ્નેન્: હ: વર્ને :વ: શ્રેં ક્રાં ક્ર ક્રાં ના કરાયા કરો છે. તે કરાયા કરાયા કરાયા કરાયા जायबुन्-रान्नर-सृवा-वस्वावदेशसाम्भावितानदे क्रीमानदे क्रीमानदे स्वाप्ति क्रीमानदे स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स्वाप्ति स বশ্বা

"हिंद्र-रदःदर्गेद्र-रदे द्रदःनी दनी प्रमेश्य भेषादे । अध्येष्ठ्र।" बेश द्रमय स्था स्था होय दर्गेद्र-सुश् भूम-र्डिम-क्री-नगर-वीश-नगर-प्रवाध्व की वार्षिवा में लिया वीश त्यम क्री जमर सक्स्म श्रावस न्याय स्थाय यात्रा न्ययाः भृतः श्री आर्थिः यथाः वीं स्तु प्राप्त प्र प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप ५८। विरामी र्सेम् अप्याप्य विदेशहें अप्याप्य अपे प्रमुखें मुख्य

"दतुः दरः तुः इस्य याचे वाः सेदा" डे या विवा वीया नियान "यन्रअन्दर्भे नामियान्तेन।" हेरामान्तरनेरान्यन्।

वर्देन:गुरने व्यून ने निर्मा न वी'अ'अअ'म्ऑत्य'न'र्श्केद'यअ'वदेनअ'अवे'मु',बुर्र'वेवा'र्थेद'रा'दे'रु':ॲर:दअ'नशूद'डेर'नर्क्केद'रा' ब्रेन्प्रदेप्तयान्यस्ट्रिस्

<u> ने त्यभ झ न हे भ अदे त्यन नु हें र्</u>देश विंद शें ता नश्नेत प्रते स्था त्यु र ते स्था ते नु र से न्ये न्या ते वयासर्हर-कुर-बुर-प्राप्तायकुर। सर्हर-कुर-बुर-पाने प्यर-बु-र्-सासर्व परिवर्शस्य स्वर-सेस्य स्वर-सेस्य <u>२८:गृतःत्रशःसर्द्धरःश</u> स्रशःर्श्गेतःकेदःर्यः वर्डे सःयदेः वर्द्धेः वःषः सेससः वृत्तरः वृत्रशः यः देसः विःषः र्वेन' बन्ना क्रेक् चे निहर ने स्वर्भ की भूनका क्या ग्रुट या नहें के श्री किर के क्यू के क्यू निहर निवास *'*बेट.रशदत्त्वच.की.योष्टशःश्रेटशःत्त्वा.धे.याच्चरशः ह्र.पूर्यःत्रात्त्रःश्रु.चे.चे.वी.यो.वी. বব্বার্থ্রম:বর্গ্লুকা

"न्यत्राध्वा हिंन् ग्रेअ तुः बेवाची तुः वन् र्स्सेन सें न हिंन ग्रेअ हिंन ग्रेअ हिंन ग्रेअ हिंन ग्रेअ हिंन ग्रेअ इससायावितायह्ना गुप्तर्वे साहे ने इससा कुर्वे सार्टे साने प्येत प्रसायीता क्रियास हिंदा ग्रीसाहि इसमानामा भूरि: र्हेम। " हॅ रेवे वकरनावि या विवे नु वकर वेरमा नुरान् माहर के में पेरि प्रवे क्रियशः केदान्तीः क्रियार्थः विवादः वर्ष्युरः दर्वोशः स्रायाः विषयः स्टः वी सुःवाहः वाः श्वाशः दरः सुद्राव्ये द परःश्वेरित्रपद्गापान्याहराहामान्याहराहरायाहरायाहरान्याहराहराहरायाहरायाहरा र्रेंदे हिंदे पर्वेर अप्यानर्विद दशाही हुसअशहे सूर्य हे अर्शु पेंट र् पट्ना पर नक्षुन अ

ૡ૽ૼૼૼૼૼ૱૽૽ૺ૾૽૱ૹઌ૽૽૽ૢૺ૾ૹ૾ૣઌૢૻઌ૽૽ૡ૽૽ૡ૽ૺ૾ૹૣઌૹઌઌઌ૽ઌ૽૱૽૽ૢ૽ૺ૾ઌઌૢ૽૽૱ઌ૽૽૽ૼૼ૱ઌઌ૽૽ૼ૽ઌૠ नहेत्रसळे न र्चेनाश नवे नवा र्झेट वनाव वस्याय प्रायम्य। द्रावा वृत्र त्री शाही ने निवा नी र्झेट का कंटा नः वेशः सरः नहेतः वीं भ्रानशः त्राः चुरः यः भ्रावः सरः धूरः सवेः व्यातः विश्वोर्धे सशः हे ः धूरः वेशः सः हेसः र्शे होत्। दसयाध्व हे स्टायबेदा हो या से प्रवास हेंदा सर द्वाया वार्केदा सर्दा वाहुन या য়ेनाया भ्रेंकाहे स्रेनश्रमायाया नित्ता हुन ठढा ही हि इसस ही स्रेन से रसहे सदय . क्षेत्र:क्रुं चर:क्षेत्र:तु:क्वुनाश:पाव:प्राय:प्याय:पाव:क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:पाय:पाव: क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:पाय:पाव: क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:क्षेत्र:पाय:पाव:

वर्त्तरभावानिवरित्रे हे इर्म्य प्रमुवाभाभ्रवभारतावी भ्रेषा वर्ष्वभावभावभाषाया वर्म्य प्रमुवाभाभ्रवभाषा श्रुम्य। यान्मानु त्यार्थेन्ययान्त्रेत्रे सेनामान्यानेनामान्मान्यान्यस्य स्थानस्य स्थानस्य स्थानस्य स्थानस्य स बे:र्क्केअ:दर:दररअ:श्रुवा:वीअ:र्सेव:राम:५१र्केद:दर:सुअ:य:यदर:प:विर:र्सेअ:र्क्केर:बुव| ह:सर्केवा: ते<sub>'</sub>क्चर-पर-अर्द्धरअ-भेर-द्वि'क्वर्द्रअश-श-पर-१८६। क्वेंब'अश-ह-पर्वेद-हे-ग्रु-पर्वेद-१८५-पर-নমুনমা

विंदः सेविः अप्तिः हत्यसुरः सुरायात्रे स्रेअः द्वदः विवायाः वाधीत्। हासर्केवादे अप्तः वीरिवार त्त्री'सेवे' स्वा'नस्व'णपरहेंवाय' बुन। कु'वार्नेर'तु'तु'त्ते' कुव'वन'नेवे तें रें'तु'न्र'हें' रें' थें र्सेनय'न' - इंटरन्दे क्रिन्पेन त्या निवासित्त हो हरा हिन्दे के स्वाप्त स्वाप्त का स्वाप्त का स्वाप्त का स्वाप्त का स्वाप निष्टान्यः सामित्रः स्वर्टेदः शुक्षः धोद्या हे । दे । दर । यदः निरुष्टे । सामित्रः सामित्रः सामित्रः सामित्रः स सर्वेदे दरानी कुवा इता पर्दे समाधिर नामे राष्ट्र बिना प्राप्त प्रमाणक कार्य है। सम्बद्धाः समाधिक सम र्सेन्यायाञ्चर देनानी दर र् ज्रिन्द्रयादर्शे दिर देर नर होत्र

'हे'सदे'त्द्युत्य'नत्न्' केश'रेर'नदे'हेद'र्से 'हेदे'सळंद'त्र्य'केश' श्रुर'न'भेद्या सळंद'र्से 'हेर'से' નક્ષન ફ્રેન્નાએલ ફ્રેંક્ નન્નમ કું ગુરા ફેંસેંબે અન્દનલ હ્રક નન્દ ફ્રેંલ સ નફે અ દ્વેન કરા સે ન્વાયા <del>ૄ</del>ૼ૱ૄૼૺ૾ૹૼઽ૱ૺૺૺ૾૾૾ૢૼૣૼૹૡૢૼઽ૱ૺૹઌ૱૱૱૱૱ૢૼૹૢઌૢ૽૱૱૱ૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૹૢઌ૱ઌૢ૱૱ૢૺૹૢઌ તાસદસ્યાસ નેયાનય ભાવાયાર્શ્વે તથા ચૈદા તથી , દું દૂં શાયબંદ ક્રિયા , દેં ક્રાંત્ર તેયા ક્રિયા નિ बूर्यः अत्यास्त्रेत्। क्रुं अळवं द्वे म्यळेंद्रे व्ययः श्विषायः नम्युं द्वे स्यक्ते । व्युम्पाद्वम्यः हम्प्रेता रिश्वी.र्मूच.र्मश्वा.र्स.र्मीय.र्मूचीश.र्स.रची.र्मश्वा.ह्.रहेर.खेश.सर.ठचीरी ब्रिट्रस्ट.कीया.स्.स्. हे क्षूर दर्ग"

র্ম্ব্রীঅ'মম'স্ন'নী'ব্যু'রীরি'বার্ন্ন্রিন'রী'মীমম'নআমর্স্রিন'নম'মান্র্রীর্ন'নম'্নি'নিরি'র্র'অম'ন্'রিম' यव द्वमा भुन भुन पुन पुन पुन कि हैं रें भागवा महिला है। सर्वेद न व प्यासक व के दे रें के भागी "ફ્રિંન્'ગ્રે'શેન્'શેં અફ્લે'ૹ્નેંન્'વ્યફ્રિંન્'વ્યઅભૂવા'કે 'લેવા'નેઆ" લેઅ 'વેન'સ જેઅ નન્દ' દેશ

"ने याष्ठिन सम्यामे यन्त्रा" के यान्याय स्वासी यार्षित सिंदी सम्याय स्वासन्य "स्याष्ट्रीन् श्रीआद्रेशासदे विदे भ्रें र श्री पाद काळट नेशासामित विदार्वे र श्रें र भ्रें र श्री र शास्त्री श्री र शास्त्री

"विराध्युं ते 'ये खू खुवी पुरी" के बाहू रूप की याचे राष्ट्रीयी "विराध्युप क्षित्रे सूराया था की बा नगर्ना हें नगर्नित्र अर्थेर प्यति हिंद्र । अर्था स्वर् हें नश्चर सार्हे नश्चर स्वर् हें नश्चर स्वर् र्षेवाक्षेत्रेतिःस्टावःक्षेत्रःवर्षेत्रःवयःस्टावीःतुःस्टातुःक्षेत्यःवञ्चवयःस्यःस्तुन्र्येदः। हेर्देशःस्टावीःहः ब्रिन्दे दे से से सिवाय सुर्वे व

ब्रुॅंबरअयर्हेर्ट्रवर्गनर्झर्ये अर्थन्यर्श्वराचा हेर्युवादया हेर्युवा हुर्वेव स्वाप्ताचा स्वाप्ता अन्यर रेरःर्ङ्केवाययार्वेनवायाये विषायर्देवायाः स्वार्येन्वयाः स्वार्थेना विष्ययाय्ये साम्या बोन्'यदे'ले'सून्'चीशःर्श्वेषायायाचेरानेराधुःचान्दरःश्चानासूनःश्चीशःसून्यःकानभून। हेदालेचाचीः "न्वीं अन्दे अनुतुन्द स्वार्थे वार्थेन् कुण्येव। द्वे कुण विन तुन् सेन् हेवा वी व्यवा तृस्ये व्हें वा वि वया.लुषी तह्त्रा.मु.स्.वी.कि.स.सू.स्टर.कि.स.स.भीय.बी.स.स.पु.स.स.सू.स.स.स्.मु.स.स्. क्क्ष्यादात्यात्याः क्क्ष्यां निकायन्तरायां

য়ৢয়য়ৼ৾ ৼৢয়ৼৢৢৢ৾য়ৼয়য়ৼৼৼঀ৾ৼয়ৼ৾ঽৼঢ়ৢয়ৼঀৣ৾ৼড়ৼৼৼৼ৾ঢ়ৼয়৾ৼয়য়য়য়৻য়৻ঀ৾ৼয়য়ৼৼঢ়ৢয়য়ৼ नह्रुव्यायां सर्वे त्वें कर्ते हे हे दे क्रें क्रें क्रिक्श क्रिक्त क्रिक क्रिक्त क्रि सर<sup>्</sup>यस'न्द्र'के 'वेवा'नसवास' हे 'न्यार्वेन्'नु 'र्से 'वेवा' हु 'श्लेस'न्द्र-'श्लेस'त्रस' ग्रुट'र्स्ट 'वी'नस' नामन् प्रस्पत्र्यूर्यः नेर्द्रम् विद्रः स्थान् स्यान् स्थान् स्यान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्थान् स्था ऍट्:चेदे:ब्रॅ्रेड्यं, प्राय:चेर्ह्या पी:सुवा:चर्या सहस्यपट:ऍट्:खेट्:प्याय:देवट:प्याय:चेर्ह्या विटःस्याय: त्यश्रः के 'बिना' नश्रम् श्राम् दे 'न्यन् मिश्रान् 'सूबे' न्याद सूना' वर्ने 'स्न 'मवे 'वर्ने वर्गे वर्ग नश्नि 'वर्के वर्ग नर्ग स त्यरी भूषु अभभाशि कुषी वर्षीर तर वर्षीर या मु वर्षीर वर्षी र र र र र पु सूर र पुर सूर्य अ इर-वर्नेद धीद र्केन वाबद क्रीश के नश्रमान पर होर सम्मार वादा प्रवीद से दी के शानश्रमश्र

देंत्र'ग्रहः। सुःक्षेत्र'र्वेनाश्रासरार्थेः स्टानी'खासश्राह्मधायुत्र'हतेः पर्येदश्रादानानामश्राहेः द्वाशहें बर्तुः कर्भायात्र क्रिंवाययात्रायायात्री में विदेश्वयात्री स्वराह्मा क्रिंव वर्षा देवे वरातु विदेश वरातु ५५,व्यः क्रीः भ्रेः क्रुवः विवाद्यार्वियः स्टेरिः अयस्य श्रेशः यदिः भ्रेः वोः विवादेता

"शूट्री क्रुं ब्रुंचीयाशी:वीषशासपुर क्रुं मिलावयाता:शूट्री ट्रेन्ट, श्री मिथातपुर क्रियाद्रीया र.ज.ब्रॅर.च.र्र्रा च.ब्र्स र्अ.सॅर.ड्या.क्स.लर.ज्ब्र्.यक्ष्या.ध.स.योहरा रूमा घे.युवेर. वसुरः नवे :हः अर्ळेना क्रु :नार्दे रः चुः तुः अर्क्चेना याः वे याः ये दायाः र र नी याः विदी हिंदे : याः यदे :हः र देः बर्नि, देलाची, पूर्वा, जुर्चा, चीत्रा, विकास, चीत्रा, विकास, चीत्रा, विकास, चीत्रा, चीत्र, **ॻॖ:तुशःहेशःवेदःधरःवशुरा**"

'हे'सदे'र्देन्'न्,'तस'सविदत्र'दसुर'त्र'ग्वित'ग्रीश'सर्वेन्'नर'क्रुग्व'तस'सळंत्र'र्से'नर'न्,'नक्षुग्वाश अळदः से से रूट वी शहरा दा शहर दंश दट में श्वराही र दश प्रह्मश है। हर पा से ट मार्ने ट

नमुं क्रुं र हे व्हें अ नुश् हे न्यन्द गुर द्राया यावर प्रस्तान हे स्वर्के वा है विंद खें हे । अपने प्रदेश प्र र्जुशन्देरी से.पट्टे.यञ्चयोगाय.प्रू.प.प्रूर.प्रू.पट.श्रुशशः सूर्याः कर्तः श्रेनः श्लीः यरः प्रवाहरः या प्रू.सदे सु ૹૢૼૹ<sup>ૢ</sup>ઌૠ૾૾ઌૢ૾ૹૹ૽૾ૹૢૹૹૹૹૣઌૣ૽૽ૡઽૡ૽ૢૼૼૼૼૼૡૹ૽૽૱ૡઌ૿ૢ૽૱૽૽ૢ૽ૹૡૡૺૡઌ૱ૡઌૄ૿ૢ૱ૢ૱૱૱ૹૹૹૹૹ त्यानहेत्त्त्रशिंदिः स्रेंदिः अपनेदे भूगानस्याद्दः क्वेंप्रसाविदाविदावित्रसात्रीं क्रास् सें उसार्थे द्राने अपने स्वादे स्वा ळॅं.र.बुव:पर:श्रुर। विंद:ॲअ:कु:पार्देद:ग्रु:तु:दश:वर:पॅपा:हे:अ:अवे:रे:प:य:अ:४दा। रद:पी: . ७। स्रादे |वायाःसान्नदानसायकुँदाःसेससाइवार्याः विवाः भ्रोसाग्रहः । १ स्वीसाग्रीसान्ते। वर्षुः वर्षे साहाः ૡ૾ૼૼઽૹઃધૠ૾ઌ૾ૺઽ૾ઌ૾૽ૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼઌ૽૾૱૿૽ૺૡઽ૽ૡ૽૽ૺઌૢૺૹૢૺ૾ઌ૱ઌ૽૽૱ૹ૽૱ઌૹ૽ઌ૽૽૱ૡ૽૽ૺ૱૽૱ઌૺ বৰীব ক্কুব দু বৰুবা

"वसास्रावतःवःवसुरःवःधोदःवस्वसःस्रावरःगवस्यःवदेःगञ्जगसःसेन्दरःहःवसुवःग्रीःवसःसूतः यदे । ह्युद्र मार्केद : दुः सर्वेद : क्रुं यदे : रक्तु वा क्रुं : देव : दुः तुः स्व क्रुं का स्व निक्तः व क्रु नन्द्रश्रा र्श्वेयासमार्केद्रसम्बर्धान्त्रम् । स्वर्षान्त्रम् स्वर्धान्त्रम् स्वर्धान्त्रम् स्वर्धान्त्रम्

नात्रश्रास्तरे हो चरात्र प्पेर्न सते हें सर्वेर केत्र में बिना नी देना था नश्रेया द्वीन ही तरा हु हाथार या नार्शे - तुःच हुवा दश्य नशूर प्रते : क्वें। श्रे : क्वार्ये : खूं च : देर : यें क्वें द्र : देवा विवा विवा सें देवा अ ब्रॅ.ब्रिंट.चट.रे.क्ब्री, वुश.ब्र्.सश.हेशी

"श्रुं त्यन्याया ट र्व्यू कु तावस्य त्या वर्त्यु कु त्ये ता वेय र्ब्यू वास्य त्यत्य त्यत्या स्रीतिस्य स्रीतिस् र्केन्स्सर्थः नविदःर्श्वेतास्रदेः श्वेतास्यायहं सःविनानसूत्रा

"દઃવઃ&ઃબૅદ્રઃવાવઃફેઃફિંદ્રઃવઃૠૂઁ૱ઃશુઃબૅદઃઠા" લેચઃમુંઢઃદેચઃનબદા ૠૣ૾ૢ૾ૼવઃચચઃનગવઃફેઢઃહુઃ नवेत सुन्तर्भ हे र्से दायर हुन हे अर्द्य में प्रार्केत पर हुआ

"होन्-न्न-हेते होन् हें कुयान् वर्के नायी मन्यम् है अन्यन होने सेवा अवत्यक्रे सम्पादिनम् गुर्रित्रर वी जायि नुर्दे प्रमास्यम् नुर्दे प्रमास्यम् निर्दे । "र्हे विवास विदेश यशरादेराविदानविदार्धेत्।" डेशानन्त्र

र्क्केव'सस्य स्टरनी'इस'स'दीट्र'ग्रा'क्त्र'र्घेट्र'दीद'हे।विंसस्य इस'स'झ'त'य'त्रवृश्य विंसस्य इस' यानवर्गास्त्रं त्यात् विंदार्थे शास्त्राची इसायाञ्चना साम्रस्य में निष्टेना हेना व्यापात्र सामे वे खेताना स्वा गेर्क्रर्केर्यरः हीता

"द्री यु:र्श्री" मदःर्श्रशःसर्ग् त्सुवा नतिदःन्तरः मुद्री "र्ध्विरःवः ग्रुस्यः श्रीरः हे ःध्रवा देवः . चटा बुःब्रा देवें। देवे हर्केदः अविगारेदा हरे खुरः गुब्दः दुः वेव सन्दर्दनाव सेवे स्टरः वशः हुः ज्ञः દેશા" ૹ૾ૣૢૻૼૹૹ૽૽૾૽ૹ૽૽ૼ૬ૄૹ૽ૼૹૢ૽૬ૢઽૢઌઌૹ૽ૢ૽ૹ૱ઌ૽૽ૺૹૢૹ૽૽ૼ૱ઌ૽૽૱ઌઽૢૹૹૹ૽૽ૹૼઌૹૼઌ૱૱૱ૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺ૾ૺૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽૽ઌ૽ૼ૱

म्य.मू.र्टर.मैल.मू.ह.संग.सू.च.हेग.सूँ.मैल.मी.सूँ.पीया.शे.तचील.नर्धर.चीया अक्सरा. सक्तराया वित्रस्था है त्यान वित्र सक्तराय स्वराय वानर्वित्रत्रभार्यम् वीम्मरायास्यान् वीत्राचीत्राचीत्राचीत्रभा अस्त्रभाष्ट्रस्थाः अर्वेभाष्ट्रस्थाः वीत्रभागीत्रभा हाबिन्ने अँटा वने वे हार्केन अप्यास्त्रे राहे से अपना नहिना सुरा से दान विदान है अपना स्त्री साम नन् कुर र्रे न र्येन प्रमाधित। वित्याविषा के मार्चिता विषय विवास प्रमाधिता विवास प्रमाधिता विवास 

. ૹ૾૾૱ૹ૾ૢ૽ૢ૽ૢૢ૽ૢ૽ૢૢૹ૽ૺૹૹૢૹૹૣ૽૽ૹૹૣ૽૽ૹૣ૽ૹૹૣૹૹૹઌ૽૽૱૱ૡ૽ૢ૽ૺૹૢ૽ૹ૽ૹ૽૽ૹ૽ૼઌ૽ૻૡ૽ૹ૱ૹ૽ૺ૱ૡઌૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹૹ श्रूरा" बुशन्त्रवरी

<u>বিন্দো</u>ঠকার্য্যমন্ত্রনার ইকানসুদ্রনার স্কুন্দর বিশ্বরার করার বিদ্যানি করি করি করা করা করি করি করি করি করি করি করি क्त्रार्चे अर्थे स्टार्चे टाड्डे राड्डे खें खें वाया शुर्श्वे रायर पश्चेवा "वेंद्र ग्राटा टाया हिंद छे । खास थे ने क्ति सूर्र स्वाया" वेयान्तर स्याय स्याय स्वाय स्वाय

ॱॶढ़ॱॸऀॸॱख़ॱख़ॊ॔ॸॱॸॸॱऄ॔ॱॻऻॿॕढ़ॱॿॎ॓ॻॱक़ॗॖज़ॱऄॗ॔ॱॸॺॱफ़ॗॕॻऻॴऄ॔ॸॱऄॗॱऄॗ॔ॴॴॴक़ॕॸ॔ॱॴॸऻॿॕढ़ॱॸॸॱ श्चेनअ'नर-५,विंग्यअःश्केष्य'अदेःअन'अ५र'दह् अ'द्रअ'र्शेरः। क्रद'र्घअ'र-५,र'पदःश्चरःग्चीःयु'नः नक्षेत्रायायदे सुना स्रेत्राया स्रेत्र प्रम्त

"विंदःश्रॅं द्वे व्यायान् विदेन् र्वेषा" हे या क्या या या प्राप्त प्र प्राप्त प्र प्राप्त प्र प्राप्त प्राप्त प्र प्राप्त प्र "अप्या यम्बर्श्वा" विष्यः र्स्नेवास्यरे व्यासान् पर्यन् परिस्वासान् स्वासान् स्वासान् स्वासान् स्वासान् स्वासान मदेःवन्यवित्वम्राञ्चेत्वारार्थेःवर्विदारम्यो।अन्यार्थेःकुवार्येदेःदन्यसम् वर्षे

`विंदःब्रॅ`क्कुलःवें'त्व्युअःतुःवरुरःवःब्राः "देदःविदेशःग्रीःत्वश्चःदवदःत्वशःतुःश्चवाःवःश्वरेदःदशाः" बेशःगनःर्सेन्त्र्वेन् नबेदः म्वार्येशः नविन्तेन्। क्वार्यः वा "कंर्वे पर्वेदः तुःशवने देशे हें नेपः नगाबिर पर भूत पा भू के भूत सा से हिं स्वि हिर सर से सा से के स्वा निया से ती भू के भूत यायादाळेदुर्विश्वययाः भे मियात्रे दिस्यू दुर्वास्यायाः अकूयात्रायाः कृतात्रे प्राप्तायाः अ सर्देवे:स्रायान्, नन्यानी भाषात् राह्मन छी। द्वाना सायवाना नने दार्सेन्। द्वीना या सामानी सामानी सामानी सामानी मक्रेत्रःस्मानाम् मुन्तरादेःस्रमार्थेःद्रान्यक्रमानुः र्योदः र्योत्। विदः क्षेत्रामीः स्र्यः स्रदेः तदः मी मङ्गालना रमाष्ट्रिन्त्यासुन्त्वतिरावी सिङ्क्यार्स्ट्रेन्ये हिन्यार्सेन्यार्सेन्या न्यात्रवारा न्यात्रवार्यात्रात्रात्र यमःरमः ग्रुममः भ्रुदः हे 'ददः सहदमः भ्रुदः हेदः प्यद्वा" हेमः नम्

*(*धुद'त्त्रीश'र्स्नेव''सस्य हे 'देवा'पद्युद्ग'त्रदेव' स्थापेस'स्युद्ग स्थासस्य स्थापेस स्थापेस स्थापेस स्थापेस क्तुवार्से न्दःस्तर्से न्दःसी विदेशस्यार्सेन्यदेर्से निर्देशयान्यस्य क्रिवास्यराष्ट्रीयानहेरसेसया · ध्रुवःपादेः यहाँ अः श्रृृंदः पादेव पत्त्व । विं पादेः श्रीवा वृदः तुः पद्य अध्यक्षः श्रीअः इत्यः पादेः विं प्रूषः श्रे पत्त्वाः ग्राट-ब्रिस्य-ब्रीट-हे-ल्री-सन्दर्स-क्रीन-क्र्य-क्र्य-क्रीन क्रूब्य-सम्बर्ध-स्ट-स्ट-क्रीन-ल-प्रनाद-निस्य-ळंट विवायान अनुवाद शर्चेदायाळें रा विंदा से दें एक साथा है : श्रेटावळें प्रदे पर प्राप्त से से से दिया है । नक्षेत्राज्ञुश्रादाणाः व्याप्तान् व्याप्तान्त्रीत्राचानित्राद्वान्त्राच्यात्रच्यात्राच्यात्राच्यात्राच्यात्राच्यात्राच्यात्रच्यात्राच्यात्रच्यात्यात्रच्यात् नदेःनहें नदेः खुवः धेत्

क्षॅश'नगृद'देव'धेन'स'इव'नवेवर'गृदश'हेद'न्न'दसम्बर्शराधुव'न्रश'म्डेम्शस्याधुन्न'दळस्य' विदःगर्शेवःचःवदेवशःयःधेता

·ऄ॔ॱॺ८ॱऄ॔८ॱनवेॱॾॆ॒*ॺ*ॱॺॖॱॾॆ॔ॱऱॅ*ॺॱॸ८*ॱवीॱक़ॗऀ॔८ॱज़ॖॸॱक़ॖॺॵऄॺॵढ़ॺॱॻॾॆ॒ॸॱय़ॸॱख़ॸॸॱॸॿॎ॓ढ़ख़ॎॸॖॴॗ र्वि'मदे'सु'र्बे'म्र-'कुब'ळ| ५'रु६':मु'मदेवेद'रसुम्'मदेर'म्'मठश'ग्रीश'र्केट'म'वेवा'वीश'यवा'दश'रु' लवासर सुर्धे भ्रियालूर सूरी जूर सम्मुद्ध में बी भ्रिया है स्वार भे सूर्य स्वार स्वार स्वार सुर स्वार स्वार स्व *ॾ्*ॱय़ॾॖऻॖय़ॱॿॖढ़ॱय़ढ़॓ॱहॱॸॣॸऻॺॱक़ॖॖऺॴॸॣक़ॕॴॹॗॸॱऻ<sup>ॱ</sup>ॾॕॱॸॕॴॸॸॱक़ऺ॓ॱक़ॱक़ॕॱॾॕढ़॓ॱख़ॴय़ॸॱॾ॓ॱय़ॿॴढ़ॱऄॗॕॸॱ <u>ॲॅ॰ॲॅ८:वर-७८-छेर्य:बुर्य। कु'ग्नर-५'नुस्या'यह्न्या'बुेन्-विद्यर्यये:कुव्यर्ये-न्या'यःवर्रेन्-विदेश</u> र्देहे थी अन्ति व्याप्ते के अर्दे निया श्री प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त प्राप्त के प्राप्त क *हे 'क्ॅ्रॅं चुँज्*र अ', इ' नर्डें द'नर-ऑदा व्रॅंब' ग्रुटा व्रॅंद'नहे अ' खेर क्रें न, देश' देश क्रें हे र ववात्रयानम्बर्धयाद्यस्याञ्चेतय। र्देग्हेयास्य हेन्।याहेयायाचेन्।संयानम्निग्यस्थिन्।स्रेयाया प्रसःहाष्टुःष्पताःचे पर्देदशःपतिःक्षेत्रः स्त्राः तमुश्रः प्रदे केशः प्रायः हे चे प्रशेशः स्त्रेदः यशः या स्रायशः प्रदे प्रदः वी कं र्वेदे सेवा वाहे असे व्यादमानदे खुवा अव्यवेषा हेवा वी अधिमानहें हा हैं हैं हैं हैं र्वेदे त्वामान्ती बदःवीःक्षेःबिवाःधोदःसःददःविंददःयः केश्वःसःक्षेद्रःद्धयः चलदःस्य विंद्यश्रः हृदःचलदःस्वेश्वेशःसदः **ब्रे**'गर्डेन्'न्ड्ग

द्रम्थः भृतः श्रीः भः ग्राटः स्टः नीः सः स्यः प्रश्लायः त्रीः नात्वतः सः नात्वतः नार्वेतः द्रदः सन् । नार्वेना हो दः हाः यशयन्त्र। यनरशक्षेत्रस्याग्रीसम्मानविः मुन्दिक्षेत्रस्य न्यानिः स्वरानिः स्वरानिः स्वरानिः स्वरानिः स्वरानिः स न्त्रः क्रुन्यः प्रते प्रते प्रक्रम्य। प्रत्या विनानी के में में म्राप्तः नी न्त्रः में म्राप्तः में प्रतान में नदःकेन्दःन्तःकरःविवानन्त्रन्त्रम्भभानाव्याः क्रिक्टःचवाक्षेत्रन्तेःव्यान्त्रम्भानावाः <u> ५.तम्भनःवर्यास्यावःवःवःश्चानो विदः५.वीः५वीनशःदश्यःयःश्वरःभवेदः५र्गोदःसरःश्वरःवर्या</u>

"८.ज.कट.सूर.स.चट.पड़िर.सूची, कुश.ट्रसज.र्जंय.ची.सुट.री.सैट.चचीची "रर'हेर'र्अर'।" बेथ'क्किय'ख्रथ'ग्रीथ'भ्रद'श्वाथ'द्रथथ'र्येथ'न्वन्द'रे'ख्वा'ञ्चन्ययाचेनायः संदे क्याबिदे स्ट्रेट र् अर्थे वा केवा न क्व न स्ट्रे अट न सुर वाहे न

<u> ફ્રૅ.સૂઝારનળર્નેવ.તાકૂતાકૂજાતથી વાકી , ૧૮ ફ્રિટ્ડી.ભારાકુરી ફ્રિટ્ડીજાપાતાસ્ત્રી સ્થેરજા</u> यदे पद्म बिया सेन म्या

न्यताः भूतः त्यन्यः त्याः विष्यन् ग्री भाषायाः ययाः ययः भी निष्यः भी मूर्तः सुरा मूर्ति । स्वर्षाः स्वरः स्वरः याः शुः द्वीरः श्चेत्रव्यायात्वा करः यवाके न वावावाकं राता प्राप्त प्रवास सम्भवाया विवास राजित्वा करा स्वापित स्वाप *ऍॱर्रेश*-दमयःध्रुतःयःश्रेनाःयंनाःभेनाःनधूश्रातःष्यदः। दमयःध्रुतःषःश्रळद्वत्रशःननादःकेदःनभदः क्त्रम् "म्राम्प्रस्ट स्ट्वें म्राधिन स्ट्वें म्या स्ट्राम्य म्या म्या स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य

<u> न्यत्याभृत्यस्या मुत्रानुस्यनुप्यत्रे प्रस्यायमेत्यत्रे प्रम्यम्यत्रे प्रस्याय</u> क्वें प्रत्यो म् म् प्रत्य क्षेत्र विष्या क्षेत्र विष्य क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र क्षेत्र - ८८:सक्स.र्.विनार्स्ट् होरास.क्टा - दे.सम.क्वा.क्रे.व्रि.क्र.सम्प्राचीनम.क्री.मा.क्री.व्यासी.सा.सर्वे. ञ्चिम् दर्भानगुम् भ्रे (ब् नाप्न र्यूम या भ्रुभागा (बद प्रते उप्नेर्ट्भासुवाद्म स्कुवापना ग्री अववावा वर्जे । न्याप्रेत्रा विरायदे त्यारमा से स्ट्रिमा स्ट्राम्य निया क्षेत्र विष्या स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य स्ट्राम्य नवः कुः बर-र् क्रें र ख्वाप्रकें व प्यरा विंदाया स्वयः नवे वें ना नी वर-र् प्याने र क्रिका की र क्रायर् ना लेग्रथःमः विगः दर्गेत्। विंदः गीः यनदशः से व्हेंशः विंदाः यः श्रूपः कः नश्वदः श्रूपशः ग्रुथः पासे दः सदेः हसः वर्ष्युरः र्क्षेत्र। क्षेत्रः गुरः ही : भेः के रिंदरः है : भूरः गुरुषः त्राप्तः गुरः गुरुषः ही : त्रिरः भूतः देवेत। विं : पर्यः यार.ज. बीया.च. बश्च १३८ .जी. शर्टर ४१ ४४ ४। यर. पर्यीस

*૾૽ૼ*૾ૠૼ૱ૹ૽૽ઌૣ૽૽૱૱૱૱૽ૹ૽ૺૹ૽૽ઌ૾ૺ૾ઌૹૣ૽ઌ૱ૡૺૺ૱ૢ૱ૹૢઌ૱૱ૹ૽ૢ૽ઌૺૺૺ૱૱૱૱ૹ૱૱૱૱ *वदे वासे भावहे ना न्दावहे नाम्*रसे होन्यान्दा ही स्थान वदे यानभूवानरान्यसानिना नुस् वित्रस्ति नुस् वित्रस्ति वित्रस्ति वित्रस्ति वित्रस्ति वित्रस्ति वित्रस्ति वित्रस वाबदःसीयाः रं. ब्रेंशाराः मारा विरायः प्रायोगाः सामिताः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः स्वायः શું અપ્તસ્ત્રપતે ગુઅએ ૧ છે : સું ૧ પાક્રા સેંદ મેં લેવા વી અને છે ૧ અર્વે વાદ ત્ર અર્યું ૧ મેં સેંદ वया हैं दें अन्दर्नी तु व तु अभ स्ट्रेर हे दर दु व अ शुद ही हों द प व अ पर व सुव अ से दि प्रभावश्चवश्चात्रे प्रसुदः श्रूवश्चाद्दः भ्रदः भूतः भृषाश्चात्रे वा सुदः वी भूषाश्चात्रे वा प्रस्ता होते प्रस् नमार्विटः क्रें भुवादमावादर् प्रश्चित्राचारेत्। से त्याचर्यवामावादे स्ट्रेंट र्यो त्यमा शुवस्य ना चित्र से । इसमार्थिः स्टान्टा ग्रीमाना दार्थिना या हे प्याराध्या सेना विराम्हा ग्रीमा सुदासमा नामाना स्वारी प्राप्त समान

देवे<sub>ॱ कु</sub>ॱअळंद्रॱदे 'वेंप्यशदर्वेद्र'प्यायास्याची शुनाद्याया श्रेंन्यशद्याया स्वर्थेद्र प्रवे ।वे प्रवरायश्येर्वेद वर्षयाचे न् क्रुं सर विवादिर्वेद सदे स्वादिशावर्ष क्रुं स्वाधिशाके दिस्र क्रिंग स्वाधिशाके स्वाधिशाके स्वाधिशाके स्व <u>સુર 'द्रमा'दर-'र-'१, '१, प्रा'च सरामादीमा नुसामा द्रामि मंद्रमें से सरामी 'वे 'चे 'चे मुना'मंदे 'चें द्रामी प</u> माम्रस्य उद्गेति प्रवृद्धात् विद्यान्य निष्य देशा स्थाने स्था नःअर्बेट्। विंग्वतेःश्चेःश्चन्याःश्चेवयायवेःश्चवयायदेनःक्वेयार्वेवायम्वर्वेद्।येययाग्चीयाम्नावी दब्रअ'रा'अळे'अअ'नक्षुद'बेर'म् बुग्रअ'र्सेर'ह्याळु'नत्र्र'तबेद'धेर'से'नरे'नदे'महेर'र्र-र्नेर्

"अया" नमयाभूदानीयानी हेदार्वितामहिनादयानयन्। विस्तियानी मेर्नियानी स्थानी [पार्ह्मरुषायी: तुषादी वार्षि पार्ट्स हेन्द्रवायाहा से पर्वेद्र हेना पेंट्र ब्रुक्षें प्यना हुन्व बुदाविर सेंट्र ऀवेनाःन्*रः*ग्रीःर्श्वेःतुःस्यरःशःवेरःसर्गेःदबुसःसदेःह्यःदश्वृःसःग्रीःसःन्।तःसःसःनवेहःपर्नन

"गुरपदे रेर रमा रप्ते कुलर्ये रेस्त्र मुल्ये रेस्त्र में के सर्वे र माने

न् म् क्री प्रश्चेत्र प्रश्चार स्रोत्र खुर्या प्रते प्रवार गिते त्व्यास प्रश्चान वर्षे न प्रस्त प्रते विना स्रोत बुँचायाशुः हें 'हें यायवा नह नथून। क्वें दाययायत्रया हिवा यावाद दरा। क्वें या खुना याविवा खुन्या <u> नुःनर्गेवः र्क्रेना डेटः नवः सुवः द्रश्रः वेदः नदिः नद्दयः र्क्षेत्रः व्यः क्षेत्रे निर्मेदना कृतः कृतः नहेना नहशः क्षेः</u> নস্তমশ্বানা

"श्चिमान्द्रा" वेशःह्रेर्द्रशानन्त्रा "सरःह्रेद्रा" র্ক্ষদের মার্যার বিশ্বর্ত্তী স্থান্ত ক্রম মার্যার ক্রান্ত ক্রম্পার ক্রান্ত ক্রম মার্যার ক্রম মার

"श्चेष्रभार्येम्। वम् विम्वी श्चेश्चिष्रभाराय्येम्।" डेश स्ट्रम्भायव महन्। असम् श्वम् वी वहुं अ'तेन' हें 'रेंदे 'नोर्नेट' व्य' ह्या विंद्य अ'र्केंट' द्यंदे 'व्यन् 'द्यंद्र अ'होन' दे 'अ'व्य हेंद्र 'न् 'व्युन

<u> ફ્રેં. ફ્રુંચાર્ત્સવાત્રો સુધી શિરાન્સ્ટ્રેફ્ટુંકુ કુંચાલા શુદ્ધાવા શુદ્ધાવા ક્રુંટ્સાલનું કેટ્સ્યું</u> हिस'यः भ्रुं'स'वेग'गे'सहरस'र्श्वेर्'रसेर'सर'सर्गेद'नश्रुदे'श्रे'येद'ळ'ळंर'नर'से'दश्रुर्'' वेस' 795

અર્વે(ત્ર'ર્સ'શ્વે') એત નુે ન પ્રતે : के ન 'નું 'ફ્રીઅ' અર્જે અ' ન વા' વી અ' વાન: 'શ્વેં ન ' શુન' ધ' તુ અ પ્રોહે મ' ને 'શ્વેન અ <u> न्नलाध्व क्रीअन्मर वी वीं निर्वाचका दें दारी न्या करा वी का क्षा क्रा वा का नम्य निर्वार क्री मुर्वे निर्वार</u> बुर-५-१वशुर-१र्थेन-शुर-१वर-१वश्वम। व्हेर-ध-देश-विंन्दर-नी-कुल-१वन-ग्री-सहेश-धवे-र्श्विन-व्हेश-५८दर्सर-वर्षः नम्-वश्वतः विर-मृते श्वर् प्रु-प्-कृता-य-निर-वर्के र-भून-वर्षे त्यर-विश्वा श्वर्मा वर्षे र-वर्षः वश्वतः विर-मृते श्वर् प्रु-प्-कृतः वर्षे र-भून-वर्षे त्यर-वर्षा याः वर्षा वर्षा वर्षा वर्

यदः दुर्भाः हिंदः ग्रीकाक्षेत्ने व्याः वेका विकायन्त्री "देवे क्षाय्त्रीया स्ति क्षाया विकाय वि

स्कृतः स्थान्यम्। न्यायः स्थान्यम्। ह्र्यूशाय्यद्वात्रायन्यभावः विवार्षेष्यं प्रतिवार्षेष्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं प्रतिवार्यं

"रदःसान् हॅर्स्यान् कॅर्निनानी" "रदे प्रस्तरम् मुनः पर्वः स्यान्य स्तान्य स्त

स् स्वेयः चित्रायः प्रस्तित्वा वर्च्चा वर्च्चा वर्च्च स् देवे स्त्रीयः स्वायः स्वयः स्वायः स्वायः स्वयः स

र्क्षरायात्रदेवे वरारेराचिकार्यो के स्ट्रिंग स्

द्यात्वीर्यंत्रे म्यं विष्यं विष्यं विष्यं विष्यं विष्यं विषयं वि

યથી "કુર-जયોશી રાષ્ટ્ર-ધ્રિયાના કુરા કુરા કુરા કુરા કુરા ત્રાના સુર-ત્યાના કુરા ત્રામાં કુરા ત્યાના કુરા ત્યાના કુરા ત્યાના કુરા ત્યાના ત્યાન ત્યાન ત્યાના ત્યાના

स्तुः योट्ट्रान्त प्रह्मा क्रीया विस्या विस्या विस्तर्भ स्त्रीया विस्तर्भ स्त्रा विद्रान्त स्त्रा विद्रान्त स् श्रीत् विशास स्त्रीया विश्वास स्त्रीत् विद्राया स्त्रीत् विद्राया स्त्रीत् स्त्रीया स्त्रीय स्त्रीया विद्राया स्त्रीय स्त्रीय

તુઃલેના ક્રમમાત્રમાં ભે : સેંદા દરે : हम: ग्રह: દરે : ફુંનમાં સુ: મેમમાં સૂના તુંદ : નલે ક : બેંદ : દેમા वायःश्चेन विंग्यसम्दे खूस्राक्टरमा ग्रेन्सा स्ट्रेन्स दिन्दा विकास के स्वत्र वार्य स्वत्र विवास स्वत्र स्वत्र सक्सान् सुन्दे कु मान्या कुषामान्य सक्त से देव समान्य प्रदेश मान्य प्रदेश स्था स्था स्था स्था स्था स्था स्था स ५:५८-विंगः र्षेन्यः नेशकें विंगः या श्रेशशान्ते वेनशः रेश विंगश्राश्चाने रावे त्राप्ता नभूर-इत्यप्रदर्भसमायार्भेयायसेयानानेयाळे प्रायप्यत्सेसमान्येयसेनाम्यप्यान्य

*૾૽ૼ*ૻૠૼૡૡ૽૽૾૽ૺૡૼૡૢ૽ૹૻ૽ૼૡઌૹૢ૽ૢૼઌ૽૱૱ઌૹૢ૾ૢ૾૱૱૱ૡ૱૽૽ૢ૽૱ૹઌ૽૽ૢ૽ૡ૽૽ૡૢૡઌૹૢૢ૽૱ૡ૽૽ૼ૱ૡ૱ नन्दान्त्रस्य विश्वास्य वित्यस्य होत्यस्य होता वित्यस्य होत्स्य होत्स्य होत्स्य

"દઃવ્યાર્ફ્કેન્' ગ્રું 'ર્સેવાશ્વાસ'ન્દ્રવર્ષે શ્વાસંદે છેવા 'હેવા 'હેવા 'હેવા 'હેવા 'હેવા કેવા હો' છે. જો કેવા 'હેવા 'હ "ब्रिन्'ग्रेअप्रअ'र्डे निवन संब्रुस्य निर्मुत्य पूर्वे या हिन् यहिका ग्रे क्रु हिन्य विद्यास्य स्थानिका धर.वर्धेर.दुश्री,

हे.स.ल.ल्ह्यका.ब्रेश.ब्रुंस.क्रे.क्वे.स्वें.स्वें.देवेंद.वी.वीत.क्षेत्राच्या.वी.क्षेत्रा.क्ष्यक्षा.क्षेत्रा. .ळंदशःग्रे द्वे :सश्यः हुन्दे रेहेद् रेहेद् से :कुंग्रशःग्रह्म त्याः सुन्यः निर्मात्र स्वर्गः स्वर्गः निर्मात्र अविरःवसुरःदशःङ्गः वदः दृरःसुरः वाबुरः। वाडं रःसें :दृरः देः छेदः सेंवायः वक्ताः व्ययः स्तुरः क्रीः क्षेरः वर्षेत्र देश दे 'दर अक्रअ'द् 'वें अद व्या धुर अ'रावे 'द्ववा सेंद्र अ'ग्री 'पाद अ'द्दे 'देवे 'क्रेंप अ' वर्त्ते रःश्चरःग्रव्यास्य विदारम्याधित

૾ૣર્કેફ 'વિલે'ફેફ'ર્સે'-'5વા'ર્ફે' ર્નેસ'-'75' સૌવા'નહું સસાફસાસું' ત્યા વર્લે 'નલે 'વાસ' વાપી 5' વા'નર્ફ્સેસસ' *ब्रुयार्क्केट* सन्देश स्थान स Ĕ<sup>੶</sup>ᠽᢅ୶ᡏᡜᠬ᠋᠋ᠴᠽᡃᡲᢋᢅᡸᠵᡄᡎᢆᢂᡩ᠋ᠴᢣᡆᡏᠽᠴᢡᢂ᠋ᡶ᠂ᢋᡧ᠊ᡴᢩᠽᢠᢅ᠂ᢋ᠂ᢩᢎ᠄ᡱᠬᡎ᠉ᢣᡳᠸᡃᠴᠴᢩᡖᠴ શ્રું 'ફેન્ન'ર્સે' નફ્રેશ 📑 ને ત્રશાર્વે 'રાવે' અવા 'ફોવે' ત્રના સાનું 'બેંન' માને તે 'શ્રેન' નું 'સે 'સેં 'કો શા' ને 'ફેન્ન'સેં' नक्षेत्र। रदःवी कुर्देर प्रयेश नवे वी भून याया ह्या कुर यदः इता सर नहेत वि सार्थे द से वह वी या · सर् श्रुरः नः प्रारं १९ व अर्थे दे : ब्रुशः प्रारं अळव अर्थे व प्रारं निवास है । १९ व विवास विवास है हैं हैं यवःब्रि.जश्रःलरःदश्री

"न्ययः ध्रुवा" बेश विराय अभून नकुना "कु नार्ने र खेर स्वाप्य र जा के वार् की नार्वे शा "न्यान्य मा" न्याया भूता क्री भा देश "मा क्रिया मिं स्माप्त स्माप्त स्माप्त स्माप्त स्माप्त स्माप्त स्माप्त स्म यद्भाराळे.जार्थ्य.ज्यात्रायुक्तःकीयात्रायुक्तः

"ब्रिंन्ग्री अप्रअप्रकरम्बि नर्गेन्यः से ने आ हुने न्दर्दे नरायारे सकराध्वापि स्तरा  वक्तुरारेश।" हिंर्सेशन्,नृतान्धवाय्वन्याशहीर्यान्देरान्ने,शालेग्,नृहाग्नारानु,यने खेग्रशन्ताः व्यवन्त्रवेषियायते स्वेषिया स्वेष्ठा होत् केत्रत्यवायवयर यदा वर्ष्चेषया हे स्वरूप वेषियायर वर्षा ॥ "त कुँचेश.कुंची, बुंश.हूं.हूंश.सैर.चक्चेची ,रश.चलर.स.हं.यबुंध.रे.चसैची हेरसंतात्ययर.रंची. म् १३ राम् स्रोत्या स्रोत्या प्रक्रेम स्रोत् श्रीत्राया केत् कि मान्या स्रोत्या स्रो वर्त्र-र्मुमा ने क्षर विभव रे निक्ष मात्र विभाव किया है स्थित किया है से क्षर क्षर किया किया है किया है किया है किया है किया किया है क श्चनायाश्चनाळे। हाने त्रयाधारामञ्जापत्रे नाधीया

८.क्टुंद्र,शु.ष्ट्र,लु.सूची.कुं.रची.रट.सर्थरश्चर.स.स्येर.ची.यट.री.लट.घी.य.यश्चरा.स्थ्रश.यश्वरा.त. व्हर्में तर्वे न र्योत् वाद्या भूत्या पदि द्वादे केंद्र द्वावा या बुवाय दे केंद्र वाद्या या स्वाप्त वाद्या प्र ननःसदःस्यार्श्वेन्द्रन्द्रस्यानस्यायेता नावन्द्र्यन्द्रस्यःस्ट्रेत्रःस्यदेनस्य ल्ते-सं.कुम.सेटःस्वानस्यानदेःस्टानस्यान्तस्यान्तान्तरःसः "हेदेःस्त्रेरः" वेमायदेःनालेत्रा मुन्नमा मुन्नम वर्चुदःक्रेनाःमरःनशयःक्षें नार्हेदःनःभेनशःक्षेत्राः स्ट्रेनःश्ले सुरायःदेदेनःश्लेनःवर्षःक्षेत्रः स्वातः नाबद कुं अर्वो र प्रहें न वन भर हो र पर र प्या अरुद प्रदे हे भर न न न ने पर र ने भर पर वी पर हे र वन भर चित्रायच्यारेत्। अध्ययाचीत्राञ्चनार्ष्ट्वायाद्दाञ्चनाह्यायाच्यादायाच्याचार्यादाया ૡૢૼઌ.ઌ.૮૮૮૮ૢૺઌૢૺ૾ૹૢૼઌૼ૽૽ૢ૿૽૱ઌૡૹઌઌૢૺૺ૾૽૾ૹૹઌઌૹૹઌ૽૱ઌ૱ઌૢૡ૽ૡ૽૽ઌ૽૽ૡ૽૱ૺઌૡૢૹઌઌૢ૽૱ઌૢ૽૱ઌૢ૽ૺઌૡૢ૽ઌૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺૺઌૡૢ૽ઌૺૡ૽ૺઌૺૡ૽૽ઌ૽૽ૹ૽૽ૺઌૹૢ૽ૼઌ૽૽ वायायवार्याक्रास्ते त्या शुर्येद खी पर्दे द मा विवाद । पर द स्निद्ध के विवा *ॱ*इटर्डअ'से'२इ'नर:ग्रुअ'र्पेट्'द'ग्रुट्'र्देद'वेग'रे'२इ'वेग'र्,ग्रुट्र'नर:नर्यअयगविग'ग्रेट्'य| अ' द्रूटशत्मःश्चःवरः विवायवेरः भ्रुवः द्युशःमः धोद्या सेस्रश्चः पङ्कवः मरः व्रृः तुदेः वर्षशः मः प्रदः सः व्रूटशः यदे वर्डे अः अदे व्हेवा हेत्र तु व्दर्के विराद क्षुप्द चुराववित यदे चु वाह्म अभाग्री स्टाववित वा से क्षा

र्क्केव'सस्य स्टरनी'ख'सब्दे'वि'ख'क्द के क्वानिंदर द्वानु पर्विद दिस के किया है वे हिस है सा सु द्वीटर द्यत्यः भूत्रः मुक्ताः स्टान्ते । अः सदी । तायः १९६ । व्याप्तः स्वाप्तः स्वाप्तः स्वाप्तः स्वाप्तः स्वाप्तः स्व ધોના

न्यवाध्वरःग्रीशः वरः प्यत्राः विदःशः र्शेनः शः विवाः हेन्द्रः प्यतः न्यवः व्यत्रः श्वेन्। हः वस्वाः श्चीशप्तसुर्रायदे हासळेवा हेवा पाचरा नु से श्लूरायदे सेस्रसाळें राष्ट्री नु विका वारसान्या हो। क्रॅ्रं सबदे दसःसमिदःयः दसुरः बुनःमदे र्टे सक्टरः <u>व</u>ितःमदे हत्ते वितायः दनयः क्रीका हे होत्। क्रुः वार्देर:बु:तु:बूॅद:बु):रर:वी:वनवा:बॅदे:बूॅट्:अदे:ङु:बर:ब:क्षेत्रअ:स:द:बुॅव्यअ:बूॅद बुेट्:यदे:न्सवः दनरःश्रेन्'राःश्रेष्ट्र। न्यताःस्वःश्रेशःश्रुवःवनानीःवयःश्रावदःवःस्टःनीःश्रेनिशःशुःशर्श्रेनीशःर्यरः षरः हुः वड्युवः क्रीः त्रायः भूवा देरः यहेवः हवेः अर्वो र्वेः यः यः यहन यः हे ह्नी रहेवायः यहवा वया दया है सा चग्राः हुः भी

देनः अरः सेंदेः दरः नुः प्यरः दशः प्यरः नुः कुदः देरः त्रेशः सदेः श्रुरः चन्नशः लेगः प्यन्। दे दे तुः ग्रः चित्रेशः ૡ૽૾ઽઃૢ૾ૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼઌ૽૽ૼૺ૾ૻૡ૽૽ૺઌૡૻઌ૽૽ૺૹ૽ૢૺઽ૽ઽૢૻઌૹૄઽૢઌ૽૽ૹ૽ૺૹૣૼૼૼૼૼૼૼૼઌૹૺૢ૽ૼ૱ઌ૽૽૱૽ૺૹ૽ૢૼઌૼ૱૽ૣૺૹ द्यात्यः सक्तुः नश्चुद्राते 'श्चेद्र'वेदः श्चुद्रायः यः श्चित्राक्षः द्यादः नशः नश्चेदः या सः श्चेद्रावेदः श्च स्र-कु.धु.स्रान्तपु.ररःसर.कुर.कुराक्चिया ची.याचधाने.ता.कूर्याश.सु.श.वी.कुर.य.सुर.ताशन.ताशा सरमःस्रीमः क़ॖऀॱक़ॕॱज़ॱज़ॸॱख़॔ॸॱड़ॺॊ॔॔॔॔॔ॺॱय़ढ़॓ॱक़ॕॸॱॸॱऄॸऻ<sub>ॱ</sub>क़ॖॱॸ॔ॸॱॸॕॱढ़॓ॱक़ॕॱढ़ॸ॔ढ़ॱक़ॖॱढ़ॢ॓ॱॺॱख़ॕॸ॔ॺॱॶॖॱॸढ़ऀॸॴॱ ॲंदॱग्रुटॱ। ब्रु:वाक्रेशःस'देःव्हेवा'हेद'ब्री:दर्देशःस'दर'ॲंदशःशु:ब्रवावशःॲंद'स'अ'बद्। स्ट'केदः वहेवाहेदान्त्री क्रिंस्पर्नु न्दरवर्देन् हसाद्दान्नवार्षेद्र नायार वेश नुन्दर में सानु वाहेशाया ने प्यर र्ति'स' बदः चित्रे त्रेंदः चें नाडेना चित्रे स्ट्रेट नी 'प्यत्य ना सर्त्रे 'बेट नाबद 'बेना नी 'स्ट्रेट 'त्रावद अप्पेंद 'स' से ' नुशा र्र-न्यहेय.ची.रट.सू.र्र.श.कुश.बीट.सपु.र्जवा.यर्जन.रट.र्ज्ञू.य.वीट.स्रेयश.श.शकूट्र.वायश. શ્રે ઋ ન ખેતા

`<del>ऍ</del>ॱरॅ'ब'र्न्स्पी'ह्'भी'नवे'ग्वह्रश्राहुंबा'ने'न्नभून'नादा'वें'न्रश्रा'हे'हेगाचु्र्स्पाचें'वर्ळेंशहे। ने'हे' ॊ॔ॱय़ॺॱक़ॖॖॱॸ॔ज़ॕ॔॔॔ॹॖज़ॖॱय़ॺॸॱय़ॱॸ॓ऻ॒ॊ॔ॱॸ॔॔॔ॸॵॱॶ॓ॺॵॶॺॱढ़ॱॸ॓ॱऄॖॸॱॸ॓ॱऄ॔ॱॹॹॺॱॻॖऀॱॷॸॱढ़ॺॱ ह्यू र भूतका के नवे प्रसाद पुरानु । व से प्रदेश हो से प्र वर्षिदः भ्रेशः नेवाः तुः त्युरः पाया वर्षे व पाये प्रेरे दारा से दारे हरारा सुवा कुषा से देशा प्राप्त विवा तुः वर्षे व *ॱ* श्रेअ'न्नन्त्वेअ'म'वेबा'र्षेन्'म'अ'भेबा कु'र्श्वेद'न्'अ'र्शेन्'नम्'व्यअ'तु'व्युह्'से'श्रेना ने'नवेद <u>र्</u>ट.चर्-भ्रीन्:ग्रम्स्र चुर्याचेर चुःतः विवाची त्वर्याचुः प्रवास्त्र स्था स्वास्यस्य प्यम् देने प्रविदः स्री ઌૣૻૻ૾ૡૣૻૻ૽૱૱૱૱૱ઌૢ૽ઌૢ૽૽૽ૹ૽ૢ૽૱૱ૹૢઌૢ૽૱

द्यःविनाः हें स्ति ना त्राना अर्थिः श्रेट वया प्रस्त हे ना र की श्रेट हैं नवया वया सर वर्षया वहिना ·हेत्रच्चैःक्षेनान्दरह्नाश्रासळेता वर्नेन्रळनाश्रान्दरनुदःवर्नेन्। श्रृंत्रच्चैःचःनान्दरनुश्राम्यस्याउनः  $\mathsf{A}_{\mathsf{A}'} : \exists_{\mathsf{L}'} \mathsf{A}_{\mathsf{L}'} : \mathsf{A}_{\mathsf{$ चलाद्रभानवृत्रम् ने प्रीभार्टे में महामानवृत्रम् हे में दे ने निष्म ने भारतायमा प्रमासन सुम्

त्युॅर्-श्रेस्य-दर-सृत्ता-तस्य-श्रुट्स-स-देर्

## Godsland

\_\_\_\_\_\_

In Humla, gods and goddesses walk among the folk in the guise of men and women. They have multiple abodes, inhabiting villages far and wide, and they keep the dharma in the world. They answer the prayers of their worshippers, and they enforce the laws of dharma by punishing transgressions. The land touched by the river Karnali is strewn with evidence of their prowess: in cliffs and along river banks, deep in alpine forest or in unattainable caves are the petrified remains of demons and monsters slain by the gods. In the lives of the people of Humla are echoes of old tales transmitted over the generations, recounting the glory of ancestors who became gods, or gods who granted protection or delivered retribution to ancestors. Their stories are retold during the festivals all through the year: each deity's dangri, who is the interlocutor between the heavenly world of the deities and the mortal realms of the people, recounts in painstaking detail the journey his deity must make from the holy mountain of Kailas, passing the holy lake Manasarovar, and entering the body of the deity's own dhami, so that they may listen directly to the petitions made by the sick and the unfortunate, or accept the grateful offerings of petitioners who have received grace and benevolence from them.

Jumla, an empire to the south of Humla, was once called Vishnubhumi, or the land of Vishnu, signified in the person of the king who ruled there. In Jumla, the laws of the king were kept. But in Humla the laws of the gods, or dharma, were kept by the *dhamis* and

dangris, speaking directly to the gods and to the people. This is the story - or, rather, the manifold stories - of how the gods came to walk the earth in Humla, giving their patronage to the land and people there, and thereby giving it the name Devbhumi, the land of gods. If the stories seem a babble of voices, a polyphony of narratives, it is because there are many gods speaking simultaneously through a host of dhamis spread from Kholsi in Humla, where the Khas have their farthest-upstream settlement, to villages in Achham, far downstream. Each dhami or dangri will expand the story of his deity and embellish it with details about their lord's latest outburst of anger or most clement act of mercy.

Each sacred shrine or grove, or stream or meadow or pass or recess in the forest, has a story, enmeshed with the lives of the villagers in nearby settlements, of gods and demons, or of ordinary men and women who were suddenly confronted by divine or hellish beings from other worlds. It is only possible to imagine a complete canon of these individual stories; it is not possible to collect every story of every god's exploits in this vast, difficult land. These are not static stories belonging to a specific place and time alone, but are stories that are ever-mutating, growing with every new act of divine miracle or human error. But it is possible to discern the outlines of the astonishing web of stories that bind the world of the twelve brother gods and cast their awesome shadow over the Karnali and Mahakali region in Nepal and India. Here is such a story, significant for the fact that it recounts the arrival and settlement of the gods, but insignificant in the fact that it is but a mere fragment of the great repository of images, songs and rituals preserved in the magical nexus between a divine being, their shamanic medium the dhami, and the dangri interlocutor between the realm of the gods and our own world.

In Indralok, where ruled Indra, king of the gods, his younger brothers who are the twelve gods of Humla heard that a heap of cowdung had taken the form of a mountain and that a half-liter measure of water had become a lake in the plains to the north of the Himalaya. The gods said to each other, "It is a sacred sign. The mountain is Kailas, and the lake is Mankhanda, and there is merit to be earned by bathing in the sacred lake and circumambulating the mountain." They approached Indra and begged his permission to make a pilgrimage to the newly emerged abode of the holy and the sacred.

"Yes, brothers," Indra said to the twelve brothers. "Go to the land to where Kailas transfixes all realms, and around which the cosmos revolves. And make haste: once the mortals learn that the briefest glimpse of Kailas or the touch of the waters flowing from the lake of Mankhanda liberates the soul from the eternal cycle of rebirths, they will flock thither, wishing to shed their mortal selves on the arduous pilgrimage. Before their presence befouls the sacred, go and pay your respects."

The gods journeyed to the land to the north of the Himalayas. The twelve brothers, Rampal, Haripal, Ghantapal, Banpal, Madhumpal, Shankhapal, Kalshilta, Gura, Betal, Shuklahansa, and the two Mashtos, Daarhe and Dudhe - the former fond of the blood of sacrificial victims, and the latter placated by milk alone - bathed in the blue Mankhanda lake and praised the Creator; and they circumambulated Mount Kailas, where lived Shiva, the primal yogi who, out of incomprehensible compassion takes on the terrible duty of destroying Creation, so that Brahma, his equal and other self, may renew it through the awesome agency of imagination.

There, in the brilliant and blameless light remaining from the first flash of Creation, the gods lost all sense of time and spent twelve varshas and eighteen yugas, entire cycles of creation, sustenance and destruction for their mortal subjects, but a mere blink of the eyes for the three self-created lords, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, who together weave the snares of illusion and also offer paths of salvation. Yet, the twelve brothers were mere gods, not self-created but begotten, and, in time, they felt the need to travel back to Indralok, from where they could watch over the world of the mortals, and through the mortals play out their games of amusement.

"We have not received any offerings for twelve varshas and eighteen yugas," said Rampal, the eldest. "Without the libations and sacrifices in our names, we grow weak and wither with hunger and thirst. We must return to Indralok and seek sustenance before the fiery tapas of our inner selves dims."

Rampal's words brought to the wandering brothers sudden weakness of the body, and, as if they were mere mortals, they felt thirst and hunger, and fatigue of the limbs. As they returned homewards, a demon of vast dimensions barred their way.

The demon of Dangechin was no ordinary demon: he was the king of the race of demons that inhabited the rocky and sparse land between the abodes of snow and the sacred mountain and lake further to the north. He called the twelve gods trespassers over his land, and challenged them to a battle, refusing to let them pass without inflicting punishment.

"I have held dominion over this land since the dawn of Creation: these grasslands are mine; the birds of the air and the beasts on the ground are mine. To me is owed the blood of all sacrifices, the smoke of all incense, the water offered to placate my wrath. When devas like you walk these grounds, the mortals from across the Himalaya will follow, and they will worship you, instead of offering me the stillbeating heart of the ram, or milk, or grain and salt. I must destroy this path that you have walked from your realm into mine, and I must destroy you."

The twelve gods faced up to the battle and tore the demon of Dangechin asunder, painting the hills with his blood, crushing his body into the ground. Even today, as a pilgrim marks her journey from Hilsa to Purang, she may see the petrified remains of the demon, the red heart and the plucked kidney strewn across the land, the head thrown miles away from the torso.

Or so goes one version of the story. But the *dhamis* of the powerful deity Lauhasur, begotten not in the dawn of Time, but to an unholy union between a chaste goddess and lustful demon, tell a different story that gives their god primacy in the events that led to the victory of the gods. Thus goes their version:

The battle between the twelve gods and the legion of demons raged for another twelve varshas and eighteen yugas, a length of time too vast even for the gods. The demon captured the brothers, one by

one, bound them in chains of iron and packed them in a cage, and buried them in a cave deep under the red dirt and snow of Tibet.

There, the gods remembered a nephew, a half-caste born to a union between an asura and Bhawani, their sister and manifestation of Shakti, the energy that sets existence in motion. This nephew possessed supernatural strength and intelligence superior to that of his reluctant uncles.

"Nephew," the gods now called from their prison. "None but you can be our liberator!"

But the nephew had endured insult and disdain from his uncles. Let alone accept him as an equal in strength, the gods had always reminded him of his lowly origin, treating him as a pariah.

"What is in it for me?" the nephew asked. "What share of your glory will you offer in exchange?"

Although some of the gods still retained their arrogance and scoffed at this just but proud question, others saw the good sense in offering their nephew a place by their side for all time to come. After all, he was their nephew, begotten to their sister, and therefore filled with the light of the divine.

"Liberate us, our nephew, and you shall live among the mortals as our equal, asking and accepting from them your share of offerings. They shall build you shrines and bring you the best of their harvest, wool from the flock and grain from the land, milk from the cattle and the blood of sacrifice."

Pleased with this offer, the nephew traveled to the depths where his uncles were imprisoned, and, with his sharp teeth, he chewed through the iron chains that bound the gods, and tore away the iron cage, and freed his uncles. The gods emerged from the earth, from the snow under which they were buried, and challenged the demon of Dangechin to another contest, from which they emerged victorious. And they painted the land between Hilsa and Purang with his blood, strew his organs over the barren land, and forever after secured the path through the Himalayas to the sacred sites of the Kailas and the Mankhanda.

Liberated into the light of the day, Rampal, the eldest among the twelve gods, called his nephew to his side and said, "Forever hence, you shall have renown as Lauhasur, for you have liberated us from a prison of lauha, the element that is iron."

Or so say the *dhamis* of the god Lauhasur. But there is yet another version, told by the dhamis of the goddess Bhawani, once again giving primacy to their own deity in the events that led to the victory of the gods. Their version goes thus:

After a battle that raged for twelve varshas and eighteen yugas, the gods felt their virility and prowess diminish even as the demon grew ever more powerful, as if every blow they dealt him was absorbed into his limbs as strength. Although the twelve gods tussled with the demon of Dangechin, each god wrestling a separate form of the demon who was a master of illusion and could generate a multitude of selves, no god managed to get an upper hand over the demon. As they grew weaker and the demon grew stronger, the gods cried in despair.

This was not an outward cry, but the inward cry of terror and helplessness. In this brief moment when they each experienced perfect humility, their despair also became a prayer. When their masculine exertions bore no fruit, their pleas turned to the feminine inherent in all aspects of existence, and, from the evocative power of their imaginations, they called forth into their presence Shakti, in the form of Bhawani, their sister. She took corporeal form to answer the despairing cries of the gods. Bhawani is the very essence of compassion, and she is also the utter wrath that animates all aspects of existence. She is the warm breath of life and she is the cold ether that rises from death. She is both the illusion and the absence of it.

Bhawani saw the terrible battle between the gods and the demon of Dangechin - and the legions generated in his image - and jumped into the melee.

Bhawani engaged the demons and, like an enraged elephant rushing through a field of sugarcane, trampled underfoot the minions of the demon king, and reached the demon himself. With a swift stroke of her curved and bloodthirsty blade she cut him down. But, from every drop of blood that spurted from the headless demon and touched the ground sprang another form, as ferocious as the demon himself, and as powerful in every respect. Although Bhawani stormed through the battlefield with electric speed, and although she cut down every head of every form of the demon of Dangechin, from the fresh fountains of blood sprang fresh legions of demons.

The goddess of terrible beauty realized that the demon of Dangechin, who fought not only to defeat the gods but to defend his domain from invaders who had crossed the Himalayas to sup on the bliss that filled his land, was undefeatable. She decided upon guile.

When dusk fell, Bhawani assumed her form of irresistible beauty as Devi, a maiden untouched by fire or by water, radiant and without material or immaterial blemish. As Devi, she walked through the battleground, and yet she was untouched by grime or gore, and all of Creation paused to watch her walk. The battling hordes held their breath; when she walked to the shores of the Mankhanda lake and sat down, even her reflection in the lake's water became still and watched her, enamored.

"We cannot attack a maiden of such beauty," the demons heard themselves say even without their will. "She should become the queen to our king, who, although he is possessed of unparalleled virility and strength, has never found a consort of his match."

They rushed back to their king, who separated a form of himself from the dozen images that engaged the twelve gods and asked, "What news?"

"A maiden, our king, more beautiful and possessed of grace than imagination or reason can account for. She sits by the lake and with her presence enchants even the ripples on the water. It is our humble prayer unto you, our king, that you accept this maiden as your consort, for there isn't another maiden in all of Creation worthy of your valor and virility. Every king needs a queen, after all."

Even in the heat of the battle the demon king was persuaded to marry the maiden. "Carry to her my message," he shouted before leaping into the air with his mace and blade, "Tell the maiden that she shall sit by my side and rule over all three realms."

Devi's enchantment grew thicker, and her gossamer charm wove itself thick in the minds of the demons; the king's emissaries even believed that it was their idea to find a queen for their king, and not an enticement lit in their minds by Devi. They arrived before the goddess, pleased with themselves, and put their helms by her feet and said, "Maiden! Our king possesses all the powers befitting a king, and he has in his thrall all men, beasts and gods of this land. But he has no queen to grace his court. And there is none that compares to you in beauty and grace. Come with us, maiden, and make our king happy."

"You say you want me for your queen, and yet you address me with such rudeness," the maiden said. The demon emissaries were taken aback, and felt bashfulness color their countenance. "Return to your king, and tell him this – I do not take entreaties from emissaries. If the king desires me, let him come to me and ask for my hand."

The demon king's emissaries rushed back to their king and relayed the message, overjoyed at the opportunity to report the rebukes of the goddess. Even as he traded blows with a god, the demon of Dangechin laughed, his ego tickled by the response of the maiden, and roared, "Let the sun go down, and let me beat into the dust this southern invader who calls himself a god, and I shall entreat the maiden in person."

Later that night, after the retreat was sounded on both sides for the night, the demon king haughtily approached the divinely beautiful Devi, and she promptly devoured him whole.

After their king was thus tricked and killed, the demon hordes attacked Devi with renewed fury. Devi returned to her wrathful form as Bhawani and continued the slaughter of the resident demons of Dangechin. Yet they refused to die, each multiplying into a host with every decapitation. Another twelve varsha and eighteen yugas of hard-fought battle passed before Bhawani paused for a moment and felt the sheen of sweat on her brows. She wiped the sweat from her face and threw it to the ground.

Immediately as the sweat of the goddess hit the ground, it transformed into a swarm of flies that multiplied to cover the dirt of the battlefield. Now, whenever Bhawani decapitated a demon, the flies drank up the blood before a single drop of it could hit the ground and take the form of a demon. Thus, the gods were granted victory by Shakti, in the forms of Bhawani and Devi, at turns using strength and seduction.

After the battle of Dangechin, the gods returned to their home in Indralok. But they had lived for many an epoch as prisoners and in battle, and their hunger and thirst were great. The twelve brothers appeared before Indra, covered in grime and gaunt with hunger, and, in a babble of desperate voices, said, "Brother - look at us! We have been away for many varshas and many more yugas, wandering and warring. We slept naked in the snow, and we went without nourishment: What have we to eat? What have we to drink? What have we to clothe ourselves in? What is to become of us?"

"You are right," Indra replied. "You have warred without eating or drinking, and you have received no gifts. You have suffered greatly. Return to the land of the humans, my brothers, and there be the keepers of my dharma: Let no man profit from wealth earned through dishonesty. Let Death claim nobody before their appointed hour of demise. Let there be no miscegenation; keep strictly the rules regarding the defilement brought by menstrual blood and untouchable castes. Punish adultery, punish falsehood, punish disrespect to the elders and gods. Go to Humla, and claim it as Devbhumi, Gods' land, and there, play the horns and the drums and dance in joy. There inflict suffering upon the people, so that they may invoke you to talk to them and walk among them through human vessels, and from them take your fill of the blood of the sacrificial victim, and grain of every harvest."

The twelve brothers agreed to this arrangement and descended once more from Indralok to Hilsa, at the edge of the plateau where they had battled the demon king and his horde, and been handed victory. There they danced on a meadow and brought forth nine springs of the water of Manasarovar, and there they washed thmselves clean of the grime of battle and suffering.

Somem say they bathed on their way to Indralok, right after the battle in which they killed the demon of Dangechin, or perhaps right after their nephew sprang them from the cage of iron and cut them out of fetters of irons and helped them kill the demon, or perhaps after Bhawani had created the swarm of flies to assist her in liberating her brothers from the frozen pit into which they had been thrown. However, at the nine springs of Naumule the gods did wash themselves and dance.

Their hunger wasn't yet sated, so the gods looked at the world around them and saw a Jaad merchant with more wealth than suits a mortal, from the land around what is now the town of Purang in the Ngari prefecture of Tibet, and what the Khas of the Karnali basin call Taklakot. His house was splendor itself, and his possessions rivaled that of Kuver, the store-keeper for the gods. In his flock was a fourhorned ram with a white face, a magnificent beast that would satisfy the gods. But, when the gods approached him for the ram, the merchant refused them.

Gura, the youngest of the twelve brothers, inflicted the Jaad merchant all over the body: he broke bones, he festered boils, brought aches to the teeth and to the belly, he smothered the merchant with fever, hoping that he would offer up the ram. But the Jaad was a learned man who knew the herbs of his land, and healed himself without the gods. He made balms and salves, potions and incense, and drove out every ache or disease that the gods threw at him. Then, Gura, entered the merchant's eyeball and caused blinding pain.

The Jaad was finally at a loss for a remedy, for the eye couldn't be lanced to ease the pain. No balm could be applied to the eye, and no potion or incense could heal it and it couldn't be set like a broken bone. Admitting defeat, the merchant offered the four-horned and white-faced ram to the gods. Gura accepted the offering and healed the eye.

The four-horned ram was wrestled to the ground and its stomach was cut open, its still-beating heart was pulled out from its chest and Gura drank its blood, and it delighted him. He feasted upon the ram

and went to the springs to wash himself after this eminently satisfying but profane act of feeding.

When Gura arrived at Naumule after feasting upon the fourhorned ram, his brothers demanded, "Where is our share?" Gura laughed at them. His brothers were displeased, and set about dividing the realm of the mortals among themselves: one would bring children to the childless and accept blood sacrifices and offerings; another would maintain the cycle of seasons and permit sowing and harvesting and accept sacrifices and the first ears and fruits of harvest. Yet another would protect the traveler from malevolent spirits, and another would punish adultery, and so on. They left Gura with no function in the world of the mortals, exposing him to the possibility of spending eternity without food or shelter, for why would a mortal pray to a god without a function, without the ability to inflict misfortune or to correct them?

"This is injustice, my brothers," Gura protested. But his elders scoffed at him and dismissed him, for they had each secured a role in the mortal world, where they would dance and play music and increase their tapas through accumulation of praise, for the good they did and the terror they promised. Gura seethed inwardly and waited for the opportune moment when he would avenge himself.

The gods went to the springs to bathe, and thereafter to dance in the meadows and celebrate their status in the world of mortals, when they saw Gura bounding away.

The eleven brothers frantically looked around and discovered that Gura had stolen the four Vedas from them. No mortal would respect a god who didn't have the knowledge of the Vedas, but Gura now sought to deprive them of their most important source of credibility.

"Come back this instance," Rampal roared and chased after Gura. But, like a sulking child, Gura bounded from rock to rock, up and away from the meadow, and answered, "You have wronged me, brothers, and you know it. You have left me nothing with which to terrorize the mortals or bring them prosperity. I have known hunger for many varshas and many more yugas, and I have no intention of living as miserably again. The Vedas are mine to keep, and for you to covet"

Although the other gods tried to capture and chastise Gura, he leapt into the Karnali with the four Vedas in his possession. Rampal caught hold of Gura's long top-knot.

"I will cut off your lari, proof of your divine status, if you don't return the Vedas to us," he threatened Gura.

With a bitter smirk on his face, rather than return to his wrathful brothers, Gura cut off his own lari, and let the Karnali sweep him downstream. Ever since, the dhamis of Gura do not grow a lari, whereas all other dhamis must bind theirs - first in gold when they are initiated, and in silver each year thereafter, until the moment of their death, when the *lari* is taken back to where the gods first bathed in the mortal world: the shores of the Manasarovar.

This was done in a flash of rage and resentment, but over the ages, the gods forgave Gura, and Gura relented, so that all dhamis could have knowledge of the Vedas, for the holy books contain the language in which the gods communicate with the mortals who bow to them and seek their patronage.

Of course, the land was already populated with the Jaad, but they had a separate pantheon: they invoked and worshipped other gods of the land, and didn't offer sacrifices to the twelve gods who had descended from Indralok, battled demons and bathed at Naumule, and followed the waters of the Karnali as it flowed downstream. Those who kept faith in the twelve gods migrated upstream, from the empire of Jumla, and brought with them rice, the four varnas of men as defined by Manu, and all the laws of dharma.

So began a time of prosperity for the gods: their shrines multiplied as they kept the dharma in Humla. The gods rewarded good conduct and punished infractions. As more men brought their families to Humla, they brought along more gods. Along with Lauhasur came other nephews of the gods: Lhango, Sarki and Betal, brought in secret by their faithful from their original shrines in the faraway kingdoms of Bajhang or Achham. Sometimes the gods lived in harmony and shared a mandu shrine between them. Sometimes they instituted and maintained rivalries that feuded over many mortal generations.

A supplicant might speak to the dangri of her misfortune: an ache where the gallbladder is, perhaps, or her adolescent daughter's sudden giggles and whimpers, or of the barb that stuck in the softest of her hearts when her neighbor and cousin called her a barren waste of a womb. The dangri would then speke to the god, residing temporally in the dhami, in the sacred and secret tongue.

The *dhami* would recall the lineage of the particular god: which of the twelve brothers, or which nephew of the gods, or which form of Bhawani? Or, perhaps one of the many land and forest and water spirits of the valley? These were matters of common knowledge, necessary to test whether a man was indeed the possessed vessel and voice of a god, or if he was mimicking a performance. Only the perfect recall of the path the god needed to take all the way from Kailas would be sufficient proof that the dhami was genuinely possessed by a god.

Once, a supplicant said, "My husband's lawful and first wife uses her black tongue against me, slanders me for a thief and a witch, drives away my family and wishes me rejection."

"What do you wish for her?"

"Nothing now, not in this life, O god - I shall take the barbs and insults; I am a destitute in this life, and I seek no comfort for myself. But, let her suffer eternally a thousand-fold the suffering that she wishes me now. Take from her the sons who already have sons; take from her grandsons their breath also. She has enjoyed watching sons beget sons: let her watch from the afterlife how her line ends, how her name is erased from the register of Time. Let her writhe in hunger and thirst, for she will be without a man to carry forth her name and to offer her sustenance in the afterlife through ancestorworship. Then, as she watches her name disappear, give to my sons and their sons the wealth that she enjoys now."

"And, what shall I have?"

"The blood of an unblemished goat-kid, black from unformed horn to tender hooves, every year at the full moon of the month of Shrawan, for seven generations to come, O god, if you deliver me my revenge! I will make your name the secret prayer of all of my sons, and their sons in turn, so that they remember where their fortunes came from."

And so the god would bide his time over generations and effect his game. But, this is a game that everybody plays: all the gods, all men, and all women. Sometimes a god, lusting for the blood of sacrifice as promised by a supplicant - and, as promised to him by Indra - would sometimes find himself pitted against a fellow god as the mortals made offers and counter-offers to placate, incite and goad them on to battle on their behalf.

The woman who wanted the decimation of her rival wife's line had gone to Kalshilta, a powerful god with powerful dhamis scattered around Humla. Kalshilta had taken the lives of the two young sons of the lawful wife, rendering her aput, sonless, and consigning her to an eternity of hunger and thirst. Her wealth had passed to the surviving sons of her late husband: sons born to the second and unlawful wife who had made promises to Kalshilta. But, after a generation or two, the men who had benefited so greatly from Kalshilta's intervention had forgotten the secret prayer of their ancestor's promise, and driven by lack of land and the friction that comes from too many generations living cheek-by-jowl in a crowded village, they had spread far and wide. Nothing is more loathsome to the gods than the scattering of their mortals: for, this is how dharma is weakened, how rites are abandoned and forgotten, how the praise decreases and the hunger and thirst of the gods increases. Over seven generations, the descendants of the supplicant had forgotten their promise of the sacrificial blood of an unblemished goat-kid, black from unformed horns to tender hooves.

In the seventh generation, in our very time, with the story of their ancestors long forgotten to the opaqueness of time in a place where the seasons of growth are short and full of labor, and where the snows of winter linger on for far too long and the mind is numbed by hunger and cold, a man desired to move away from his clan. He had earned enough wealth to build a house somewhere far away. His

daughter, young and educated, yearned to move away from the village and perhaps even take up employment.

This angered the god. So, to punish the folk who had forgotten him, Kalshilta started pelting the young woman with stones as she walked alone in the forest. She would frantically look around, but would see no one, hear no rustle in the woods. Meanwhile, her father's trade suffered losses, pushing the family to the brink of bankruptcy. Women fell ill with aches that couldn't be treated with pills or balms. The family deity immediately knew that the family had offended Kalshilta. The elder of the family went to the dhami for Kalshilta in utter submission and supplication, offering his services to the god for as long as he lived, and offering the promised sacrifice of the black goat kid for as long as his progeny lived in their rightful place in the village of Dadafaya, on a ledge above the river Karnali. Appeased, the god Kalshilta halted the torture being inflicted upon the young woman who, against the laws of the gods, wanted to enter the world of men and migrate away from the land of her gods, and he blessed the family with favors again, taking away the aches and pains of the women and multiplying the men's profit in trade.

Thus, the gods lived among the folk, sometimes afflicting men and women with misfortune and diseases, so that they would offer the fattest ram or an unblemished goat kid in sacrifice. Sometimes they accepted the sacrifices given and rewarded their supplicants. They didn't let wealth from injustice prosper; didn't let death come before its time; brought falsehood to kneel before the truth. They increased the harvest, grew the flocks, and gave sons to the sonless. Each year, they gathered in villages across Humla to wear splendid dresses and dance to the music of drums and horns and pipes, to bathe ritually and drink the blood of the victims of sacrifices, and to perform miracilous feats before their worshippers.

The dhamis, containing their long top-knots in turbans of purest white, and in their ears wearing large hoops of gold beaded with coral and turquoise, would sing and dance together to represent the gods who filled them just as water fills empty vessels. Then they would perform miracles as proof of their divinity: they would crush a handful of highland wheat into flour; a stone they could crush with their bare hands into dust; a handful of sesame became oil. The ring of an iron tripod stove was heated red hot and the dhamis pressed it to their tongues, lapping the hot iron without fear, and wearing the ring around their neck without burning themselves. With each astonishing feat, and with the recollection of the superhuman deeds of the gods over all of Creation's age, the folk of Humla witnessed directly the presence of the gods in their midst.

Eventually, stories of the miracles being performed in Humla by the dhamis, aided by the dangris, reached Jumla, where Vishnu ruled and kept the dharma as the mortal king. But what offended the king the most was the news that the dhamis also claimed to be the enforcers of the laws of dharma, preserving the rules of conduct for each caste according to the scriptures, showing men and women their place in the hierarchy of society, and passing judgment on the conduct of the folk in relation to everybody else. The half-liter measure of rice that the dhamis and dangris accepted in exchange of opening channels of communication between the realms of men and gods also angered the king: nobody but the king was owed taxes and offerings.

The king of Jumla sent his soldiers to round up the dhamis of Humla and bring them before him. Or, as the dhamis of Humla say, the gods, in the person of their individual dhamis, were brought before Vishnu, in the person of the king of Jumla.

"Who are you to dwell among the people of my kingdom and take offerings from them?" the king thundered at the *dhamis*.

"We were given leave by Indra to dwell among the people and to bless or afflict them as we saw fit to accept or demand our share of their harvests and flocks," said the dhamis. Then one of them took a fistful of barley and crushed it into a black powder to demonstrate the divine power with which *dhamis* were appointed by their gods.

The king made a fistful of barley into black powder, for he, too, possessed the power to perform this miracle.

The dhami made a fistful of barley into red powder, and the king did the same. Next, the dhami took a fistful of sesame seeds and crushed it until oil flowed from his fist. The king also pressed oil from sesame with his bare fist. The *dhami* grabbed a stone and made it into dust, and the king repeated the feat. Proving himself the equal of the gods, the king said, "You may not invoke gods in my kingdom and accept offerings."

The dhami then heated oil in a copper cauldron. Once the oil came to a boil, the *dhami* drank it. But the king couldn't drink boiling oil, and finally accepted that the *dhamis* had a place in his kingdom.

"I am Vishnu, the self-generated elder, and you are the begotten gods, my younger. You shall keep my laws in Humla. You shall reward virtue and punish crimes according to my laws. You won't allow anyone to commit adultery or theft, or to deceive anybody. You may afflict the people and demand your share of offering," said Vishnu through the king.

"You are the elder, and we are the younger," said the gods through the dhamis. "We shall reward and punish according to the ancient laws. We shall keep your laws of dharma; we shall bathe in Manasarovar and pay our respects to Kailas by walking around the sacred mountain. We shall never accept any offering that is not our share. As Jumla shall be Vishnubhumi, land of the king, Humla shall be Devbhumi, land of the gods."

Eons after the battle with the demon of Dangechin, or, as in other versions of the story, the battle with the demon-king of Dangechin and a host of his minions, or, as in yet another version of the story, the battle with the demon-king of Dangechin and a host of demons made from his blood and in his image, the twelve gods who had set out to venerate Kailas by ritually perceiving the mountain through the act of darshan and to purify themselves by bathing in the lake Manasarovar continue to live and dance among the people. They breathe and move in the very earth and air of Humla.

These days, however, their number is shrinking. The people have forgotten ancient strictures against commingling with the Jaads or with people of other and lower castes. Sins offend the gods, as they are offended by the consumption of chicken, and even more by women who now spend nights in the family home during the days of the month when they are with the curse, and so they refuse to fill the vessel of new dhamis when old dhamis die and their topknots are cut off to be offered to Kailas and Manasarovar. Folks of the lowest rung of Khas society - those generated from the feet of Brahma - offend the gods by acquiring knowledge of the alphabets and coming into the presence of Saraswoti, who resides on the tongue of Brahma himself. The gods are offended that their worshippers come to them in a moment of panic and ask for advice, but they don't follow the gods' instructions, and instead, travel to Simikot, Nepalgunj, Kathmandu, Delhi, in search of other healers wearing white robes and stethoscopes. Dharma, the eternal way, is being corrupted, and there isn't enough awe or praise for the gods, without which their tapas, the self-generated heat that comes from being in concordance with Rit, the correct cosmic order, begins to deplete.

Perhaps a silence will come over Humla soon, one made of the absence of the divine echo in the actions and thoughts of the mortal men and women, and perhaps the multilayered unity of the elements and human actions will decay. Perhaps the men and women of Humla will break the rules that keep their societies intact, and the gods will feel fatigue and thirst, hunger and homelessness. Or, perhaps they will continue to sing and dance as long as breath is given to their stories.

## देवभूमि

हुम्लामा देवीदेवता पुरूष र महिलाका भेषमा मनुष्यहरूबीच नै घुमफिर गर्छन् । परपरसम्म फैलिएका अनिगन्ती वासस्थानबाट यी देवताले संसारमा धर्मको संरक्षण गर्छन् । देवता आफ्ना भक्तजनका बिन्ती सुन्छन् र अपराधहरू दिण्डत गरेर धर्मको नीति कार्यान्वयन गर्छन् । कर्णाली बग्ने भूमिमा उनीहरूको शुरताका प्रतीक छरिएका छन्ः भिर र नदीहरूको गहिराइ अनि नदीतटमा, विकट हिमाली वनहरूमा र अगम्य गुफाहरूमा देवताहरूले संहार गरेका राक्षसका पाषाण अवशेष अभौपर्यन्त भेटिन्छन् ।

एउटा पुस्ताले अर्कोलाई सुनाउँदै गरेकाले बाँचेका यी पुरातन कथाहरू हुम्लाको सामान्य जनजीवनमा गुन्जिन्छन्, देवता बनेका पुर्खा तथा आफ्ना पुर्खालाई संरक्षण वा दण्ड दिने देवताहरूको बयान उनीहरूको जीवनमा भेटिन्छ । वर्षभरका चाडपर्वमा देवताहरूको कथा स्मरण गरिन्छ, प्रचार हुन्छ — परलोक र मर्त्यलोकबीच संवाद गराउने सामर्थ्य राख्ने डांग्रीहरूले आआफ्ना आराध्य देवताले दुखी दरिद्रीको याचना सुन्न अथवा देवकृपाप्रति कृतज्ञ भक्तहरूले चढाएको भेटी ग्रहण गर्न कैलाश पर्वतबाट मानसरोवर हुँदै धामीको शरीरसम्म गर्नुपर्ने यात्राको विवरण सुनाउँछन् ।

हुम्लाभन्दा दक्षिणमा पर्ने जुम्ला साम्राज्यलाई विष्णुभूमि भनिन्थ्यो । त्यहाँ राज्य गर्ने राजा विष्णुका अवतार मानिन्थे र त्यसैले जुम्लामा राजाको कानुन लाग्थ्यो । तर, हुम्लामा भने देवताहरूको वा धर्मको नियमकानुन पालना गराउने जिम्मा देवता र मानिस दुवैसँग प्रत्यक्ष सम्पर्क राख्नसक्ने डांग्री र धामीहरूको थियो । यी कथा देवताहरू कसरी हुम्लामा विचरण गर्न आए, कसरी यो भूमि र यहाँका बासिन्दालाई प्रश्रय दिए र कसरी यस ठाउँको नाम देवभूमि हुन गयो त्यसैका बारे हो ।



यो कथा आफैँमा अल्मलिएजस्तो, अनेक बयानहरूको सम्मिश्रण भएजस्तो लाग्न सक्छ । यस्तो हुनुको कारण यी देवताले खसहरूको माथिल्लो बस्ती खोल्सीदेखि अछामका तल्ला गाउँहरूसम्म छरिएका आफ्ना धामीका माध्यमबाट एकैसाथ आफ्नो कथा सुनाइरहेकाले हो । अभ हरेक धामी र डाङ्गीले आफ्नो देवतालाई अहम भूमिका दिएर कथा बुन्छन्, आफ्नो देवताको ऋोध र करूणाको नवीनतम गाथा समेट्दै फुलबुट्टा भरेर सुनाउँछन् ।

प्रत्येक पवित्र माण्डु वा ह्यूल्सा थान, कुनै खोल्सा वा कुनै घाँसे मैदान वा भन्ज्याङ वा नजिकैको कुनै जंगलको आफ्नै अनौठो कथा हुन्छ । यी कथा नजिकैका बस्तीमा बस्ने मानिसहरूको जीवनसँग गाँसिएका हुन्छन् । आफूलाई अकस्मात देवता र राक्षसहरूको उपस्थितिमा पाउने जनसाधारणका कथा हुन्छन् ।

कथा वाचकपिच्छे नै बेग्लाबेग्लै यस्ता कथाहरूको सम्पूर्ण संग्रहको त कल्पनामात्रै गर्न सिकन्छ । वृहत् र जिटल यस भूमिमा हरेक देवताको पराऋमको हरेक गाथा एकत्र गर्न असम्भव नै छ । अभ यी कथाहरू कुनै एक समय र स्थानमा सीमित नहुने भएकाले यी कथा सदा परिवर्तनशील छन् । एकअर्काका घटनाऋमका पात्र छन् र हरेक नयाँ दैवी घटना र मानवीय त्रुटिसँगै थप विस्तृत हँदैछन् ।

परन्तु, कल्पना गर्न सिकने सम्पूर्णताबीच खोज्ने हो भने नेपाल र भारतका कर्णाली र महाकाली क्षेत्रमा आफ्नो अद्भुत छाप पारेका बाह्र भाइ देवताका आश्चर्यजनक कथाहरूको खाका कोर्नसम्म चाहिँ सम्भव छ । यहाँ यस्तै प्रकृतिको एउटा कथा प्रस्तुत छ – हुम्लामा देवताहरूको आगमन र बसाइको इतिहास बोकेकाले सार्थक तर देवता. धामी र डांग्रीबीचको अन्तर्निहित सम्बन्धमा संरक्षित कर्णालीका विशाल विम्ब. गीत. परम्पराको भण्डारको सानो अंशमात्रै भएकाले निरर्थक पनि ।



इन्द्रलोकमा रहँदा देवताका राजा इन्द्रका बाह्र भाइहरू जो कालान्तरमा हुम्लाका बाह्र भाइ देवता बने उनीहरूले सुने कि हिमालयभन्दा उत्तरको मैदानमा गाईको एक थुप्रो गोबरले पर्वतको रूप लियो र एक माना पानी विशाल ताल बनेर फैलियो ।

ती भाइहरूले एकअर्कासँग भने – "यो त पवित्र संयोग हो । त्यो पर्वत कैलाश हो अनि त्यो ताल मनखण्ड हो । तालमा स्नान गरी पर्वतको परिक्रमा

गर्नाले पुण्य प्राप्त हुन्छ।" उनीहरूले इन्द्रसामु उपस्थित भई भर्खरै उत्पत्ति भएको त्यो पवित्र स्थलमा तीर्थ गर्ने अनुमतिका निम्ति बिन्ती गरे ।

"हुन्छ," इन्द्रले आफ्ना बाह्र भाइलाई भने - "त्यस भूमिमा जाओ जहाँ कैलाश तीनै लोकको मेरू बनेर बसेकाछन् र जसको वरिपरि सम्पूर्ण ब्रह्माण्ड घूम्छ । विलम्ब नगरी जाओ, किनभने कैलाशको एक भल्को दर्शन र मनखण्ड तालको पानीको स्पर्शमात्रले पनि जन्ममृत्युको बन्धनबाट आत्मा मुक्त हुन्छ भन्ने रहस्य मनुष्यहरूले थाहा पाए भने उनीहरू पनि आफ्नो मुक्तिका लागि त्यहाँ पूरनेछन् । उनीहरूको उपस्थितिले त्यो पवित्र भूमि बिटुलो हुनुअघि नै त्यहाँ पुगेर दर्शन गर ।"

र, त्यसैले हिमालयभन्दा उत्तरमा पर्ने भूमिका लागि देवताहरू यात्रामा निस्के । रामपाल, हरिपाल, घण्टपाल, वाणपाल, मधुम्पाल, शंखपाल, कालशिल्त, गुरा, बेताल, शुक्लहंस र बलिको रगत पिई प्रसन्न हुने दाह्रे र दुध खाएरै सन्तुष्ट हुने दूधे दुई मस्टोसहित बाह्रै भाइले मनखण्ड तालको नीलो पानीमा स्नान गरी सृष्टिकर्ताको प्रशंसा गरे । कैलाश पर्वतको परिक्रमा गरे जहाँ आदियोगी शिव वास गर्छन, हाम्रालागि अबोध्य करूणासहित सुष्टिलाई भष्म गर्ने जिम्मा लिन्छन् ता कि उनकै समरूप ब्रह्माले आफ्नो अद्भुत कल्पनाशक्तिद्वारा पुनः सृष्टिको अर्को कल्प निर्माण गर्न सकुन् ।

त्यहाँ सृष्टिको आदि कालदेखि नै बाँकी रहेको निष्कलंक र अनिन्दा तेजमा देवताहरूले समयको चेतना गुमाएर बाह्र वर्ष र अठार युग बिताए । यो समय मनुष्यजातिका लागि सृष्टि, पालन र संहारको एक सम्पूर्ण चक्र हो तर एक अर्कासँग मिलेर माया र मुक्तिका लिला रच्ने ब्रह्मा, विष्णु र शिवका लागि एक निमेष भरको समयमात्र हो । तर, यी बाह्र भाइ स्वयम्भ् थिएनन, दितीका सन्तानमात्रै थिए । केही समयपिछ उनीहरूलाई इन्द्रलोक फर्किनुपर्ने आवश्यकता महसुस भयो जहाँबाट उनीहरू मर्त्यलोकमाथि दृष्टि राख्न सक्थे र मनुष्यहरूमार्फत् मानोविनोद गर्न सक्थे।

बाह्र भाइमध्ये जेठा रामपालले भने - "हामीले बाह्र वर्षसम्म केही भेटी प्राप्त गरेका छैनौ । हाम्रो नाममा तर्पण र बली नचढे हामी भोक र तिर्खाले निस्तेज हुन्छौँ । हाम्रो तपको तेज मधुरो हुनुअघि नै हामी इन्द्रलोक फर्किऊँ जहाँ हामीलाई सहारा प्राप्त होस् ।"

रामपालको शब्दले सबैको शरीरमा एक प्रकारको कमजोरी ल्यायो । उनीहरूले नश्वर मानिसहरूलेभैँ भोक र प्यासको अनुभूति गरे । हातगोडा थाके । तर, इन्द्रलोक फर्केंदै गर्दा एउटा भीमकाय दानवले ती बाह्रभाइको बाटो छेक्यो ।

डाँगेचीनको दानव कुनै सामान्य असुर थिएन । ऊ हिमालय पर्वत शृंखला र त्यसको उत्तरमा पर्ने पवित्र पर्वत र तालबीचको विकट र उजाड भूमिका बासिन्दा असुर जातिको राजा थियो । उसले ती देवताहरूलाई अनधिकार उसको भूमिमा प्रवेश गरेको आरोप लगायो र विनादण्ड जान नदिने भन्दै युद्धका निम्ति ललकाऱ्यो ।

"सृष्टिको आदि कालदेखि नै यस देशमा मेरो अधिकार छ । यी घाँसेमैदान मेरा हुन्, आकाशका चरा मेरा हुन् र जिमनका प्राणी पनि मेरा हुन् । यस भूमिका सबै बलिको रगत र धूपको धुवाँ मेरो । सबै अर्पित जल मेरो क्रोधबाट बच्नका लागि हो । तिमीहरूजस्ता देवता यो भूमिमा हिँड्न थाल्यौ भने हिमालयपारिका मनुवाहरू तिमीहरूको बाटो पछ्याउँदै आउनेछन् । च्यांग्राको धड्किरहेको मुदु, दूध, नुन र अन्न मलाई चढाउनु सट्टा तिमीहरूको पूजा गर्नेछन् । आत्मरक्षाका लागि तिमीहरूको लोकबाट मेरो देशसम्मको बाटो मैले मेटाउनै पर्छ. अनि तिमीहरूको पनि विनाश गर्नैपर्छ ।"

ती बाह्र देवताले असुरको चुनौती स्वीकार गरे र डाँगेचीनको दानवका हातखुट्टा च्यातेर फाले । उसको रगतले भिजेर वरिपरिका डाँडाकाँडा रातै भए । उसको शरीरलाई जिमनमुनि धसाए । आज पनि कुनै तीर्थयात्रीले हिल्सादेखि पुराङसम्म यात्रा गर्दा बाटोभर छरिएको त्यस दानवको रातो मुटु, चुँडिएको मृगौला, धडभन्दा धेरै पर उछिट्टिएको शिर आदिका अवशेष देख्न सक्छन् ।



कथाको एउटा वर्णन यस्तो छ । तर आदिकालमा एउटा शालीन देवी र कुनै कामातुर असुरको अपवित्र सम्बन्धबाट जन्मिएका शक्तिशाली देवता लौहासुरका धामीहरू भने अर्के कथा भन्छन् । देवताहरूले त्यस असुरमाथि विजय प्राप्त गर्ने ऋममा भएका घटनाहरूमा आफ्नो देवताको प्रधानता स्थापित गर्ने गरी कथा सुनाउँछन् । उनीहरूको वर्णन यस्तो छ :

ती बाह्र देवताहरूले राक्षस सेनासँग अर्को बाह्र वर्ष र अठार युगसम्म युद्ध गरे । यो समय देवताका लागि पनि निकै लामो समय हो । एकएक गरी त्यस दानवले ती भाइहरूलाई पछाऱ्यो र बन्दी बनायो, फलामको सिऋीले बाँधेर फलामकै पिँजडामा कैद गरेर तिब्बतको रातो माटो र बाक्लो हिउँमुनि कूनै गहिरो गुफामा पुऱ्यो ।

बाह्र वर्ष र अठार युगसम्म कैदमा रहेपछि देवताहरूलाई सृष्टि गतिशील तुल्याउने दैवी शक्तिको अंश र उनीहरूकी बहिनी भवानी र कुनै असुरको सम्बन्धबाट जन्मिएकाले जात खसेको एक भान्जाको स्मरण भयो । यी भान्जामा

दैवी शक्ति थियो र उसलाई भान्जा भन्न संकोच मान्ने मामाहरूभन्दा बढी बृद्धि पनि थियो ।

"भान्जा," देवताहरूले आफ्नो पिंजडाबाट पुकारे —"तिमी नै अब हाम्रो मुक्तिदाता हुन सक्छौ ।"

तर, ती भान्जामा मामाहरूबाट अपहेलित र तिरस्कृत भएको सम्भाना थियो । आफूसँग समान व्यवहार गर्नु त परै जाओस् हरेक मौकामा ती देवताले आफ्नो भान्जालाई उसको निचताको स्मरण गराउँथे, छी:छी: दुरदुर गर्थे ।

"त्यसको बदलामा मैले चाहिँ के पाउँछु ?" भान्जाले मामाहरूलाई सोधे । "जितको कति अंश मलाई दिन्छौ ?"

केही देवताले अभै पनि अभिमानी भई आफ्नो भान्जाको त्यो न्यायोचित प्रस्तावको उपहास गरे पनि अरूले भने आफ्ना भान्जालाई सधैका लागि आफ्नो बराबरमा राख्नु बुद्धिमानी नै हुने ठाने । आखिर आफ्नै बहिनीकै सन्तान भएकाले भान्जा पनि दिव्य ज्योतियुक्त थिए ।

"हामीलाई यहाँबाट मूक्त गर भान्जा ! अनि तिमी मनुष्यहरूबीच हाम्रो बराबरीमा बस्नेछौ । उनीहरूबाट आफ्नो भागको प्रसाद माग्न र ग्रहण गर्न पाउनेछौ । तिम्रो नाममा पनि उनीहरूले मान्डु बनाउनेछन् । सबैभन्दा उम्दा बाली, भैंडाको सबैभन्दा राम्रो ऊन, खेतबारीका पुष्ट अन्नपात, गाईवस्तुको दूध र बलिको रगत तिम्रोलागि ल्याउनेछन् ।"

यो प्रस्तावबाट प्रसन्न भएर ती भान्जा मामाहरू थुनिएको गुफासम्म पुगे । तीखा दाँतले देवताहरूलाई बाँधेको फलामे सिन्नी चुँडाए । फलामको पिँजडा च्याते र आफ्ना मामाहरूलाई मुक्त गरे । देवताहरू जिमन मुनिबाट निस्किए, उनीहरूलाई पुरिरहेको हिउँबाट निस्किए र डाँगेचीनको दानवलाई अर्को युद्धको लागि ललकारे जुन युद्धमा उनीहरू विजयी भए । हिल्सा र पुराङ्बीचको भूमि त्यो दानवको रगतले रंगाए । त्यस उराठलाग्दो भूमिमा डाँगेचीनको दानवको शरीरका टुक्रा छरपष्ट पारे अनि सदाका लागि हिमालयबीचबाट कैलाश पर्वत र मानखण्डका पवित्र तीर्थस्थल जाने बाटो सुरक्षित गरे।

घामको मुख देख्न पाएका बाह्रभाइ देवतामध्ये जेठा रामपालले शुरवीर भान्जालाई आफ्नो छेउमा बोलाएर भने – "हामीलाई लौहबन्धनबाट मुक्त गरेकोले आजदेखि तिमी लौहासुरको नामले प्रख्यात हुनेछौ।"

अर्थात्, लौहासुरका धामीहरू चाहिँ यसो भन्छन् ।

यही कथाको अर्को वर्णन पनि छ जुन देवताहरूले त्यस असुरमाथि विजय प्राप्त गर्ने ऋममा आफ्नी इष्टदेवीको प्रधानता स्थापित गर्नेगरी भवानीका धामीहरूले भन्ने गर्छन् । उनीहरूको वर्णन यस्तो छ :

बाह्र वर्ष र अठार युगसम्म युद्ध चलेपिछ देवताहरूले आफ्नो पौरूष र युद्धकौशल घट्दैगएको अनुभव गरे । उता डाँगेचीनको दानवको शक्ति भने भन् बढिरहेको थियो, मानौ त्यो दानवमाथि उनीहरूको हरेक ऋद्ध प्रहार उसका पाखुरामा थप शक्ति बनेर पस्थे।

देवताहरूले डाँगेचीनको दानवसँग जित भिडे पनि मायावी दानव आफ्नो कायालाई दुईगुना, चौगुना गर्दे बढाउँदै लैजान सक्थ्यो । हरेक देवताले उसको अलग अलग रूपसँग लड़े तर कुनै पनि देवता त्यस दानवलाई जित्न सकेनन् । दानव शक्तिशाली अनि देवता कम्जोर हुँदै गएपछि नैराश्यले मलिन देवताहरूले आर्तनाद गरे।

त्यो कुनै सामान्य आर्तनाद थिएन तर त्रास र निरीहताको भित्री चिच्याहट थियो । जुन निमेषभरमा हरेक देवताले निष्पाप विनयबोध गरे त्यसै निमेषमा उनीहरूको नैराश्य एक शक्तिशाली मन्त्र बन्यो । जब उनीहरूको पौरूष निष्फल भयो उनीहरूको याचना सम्पूर्ण सृष्टिमा अन्तर्निहित नारी गुणतर्फ मुखरित भयो । कल्पनाशक्तिको प्रयोग गर्दै बहिनी भवानीका रूपमा उनीहरूले शक्तिलाई आफ्नो माभ बोलाए । युद्धमा होमिएका देवताहरूको दयनीय गुहार सुनेर शक्तिले ओतप्रोत ब्रह्माण्डबाट शक्तिले शारीरिकरूप लिइन् ।

भवानीले देवता र डाँगेचीनको दानवबीचको घमासान युद्ध देखिन् । दानवले आफ्नो रूपमा उत्पन्न गरेको फौज देखिन अनि आफू पनि त्यस लडाइँमा होमिइन् । भवानी दयाकी सार हुन् र अस्तित्वका सबै पक्षहरू सचेतन गराउने क्रोध पनि हुन् । भवानी जीवनको न्यानो श्वास हुन् भने मृत्युबाट उठ्ने चिसो वायु पनि हुन् । भ्रान्ति पनि उनै हुन् र यथार्थ पनि उनै हुन् ।

भवानी दानवहरूसँग भिडिन् । उन्मत्त हात्ती उखुको खेतमा पसेफैँ दानव राजका सेनाहरूलाई खुट्टाले कुल्वीइन्, अनि सिधै डाँगेचीनको दानव नजिक पुगिन् । रक्तपिपासु खड्गको तीव्र प्रहारले दानवको शिरोच्छेदन गरिन् । तर, त्यो दानवको काटिएको गर्दनबाट भुईँमा खसेको रगतको हरेक थोपाबाट त्यो दानव जितकै उग्र र उत्तिकै शक्तिशाली अर्को दानव उत्पन्न भयो । विद्युत्गतिमा भवानीले युद्ध मैदानबीच दौडिंदै सबै दानवको टाउको छिनाए पनि रक्तधाराबाट उत्पन्न दानवहरूको सेना फेरि लड्न तयार भयो ।

अति सुन्दर ती देवी र देवताहरूलाई पराजित गर्नमात्र हिमालयपारिबाट दिव्यभूमिको पुण्य शोषण गर्न आएकाहरूबाट आफ्नो राज्य बचाउन पनि युद्ध गरिरहेको त्यो शक्तिशाली दानवलाई हराउन नसिकने रहेछ भन्ने भान भयो । उनले अब छल प्रयोग गर्ने विचार गरिन ।

जब साँभ पऱ्यो भवानीले आगोपानीले नछोएको, धपक्क बलेकी, लौकिक र अलौकिक कुनै पनि किसिमको दोष नभएकी एक अति सुन्दर मोहिनी देवीको रूप धारण गरिन । देवीको रूपमा उनी युद्धभूमिको बीचैबाट हिँडिन । यसरी हिंड्दा पनि उनलाई भुईँमा जमेको रगत र मैलोले छोएन । सम्पूर्ण सृष्टि नै उनको चाल हेर्न एकछिन सुस्तायो । लिंडरहेका जत्थाहरूले सास थामेर हेरे । जब देवी मानखण्ड तालको किनारसम्म पुगेर बसिन सरोवरको पानीमा परेको उनको आफ्नै छाँया पनि उनको सुन्दरता देखेर मोहित भई सरोवरका छालसँग खेल्न छोडेर टक्क अडियो ।

"यति सुन्दरी युवतीलाई कसरी आऋमण गर्नु ?" दानवहरूले अनायासै यस्तो भनिएको सुने । "यी कन्या त हाम्री रानी बन्नुपर्छ । हाम्रा राजासँग अद्वितीय पुरूषार्थ र बल भए पनि उनलाई सुहाउने स्त्री छैनन् ।" ती दानव हतारहतार राजा सम्मुख गए । बाह्र भाइ देवतासँग लड्दैगरेका आफ्नै दर्जन रूपबाट अलग भई दानवराजले सोधे – "के छ खबर ?"

"हे दानवराज ! कल्पना वा वर्णन गर्न सिकनेभन्दा पनि सुन्दरी र आकर्षक एउटी कन्या सरोवर छेउ आइबसेकी छे । आफ्नो सुन्दरताले तालको पानीका छालहरूलाई पनि मोहित पारेकी छे । राजन, हाम्रो विनम्र अनुरोध छ, यी कन्यालाई आफ्नो पत्नी स्वीकार गर्नुहोस् ! हजुरको पराऋम र पुरूषार्थलाई सुहाउने अरू कुनै कन्या यस जगत्मा छैन । आखिर हरेक राजालाई एउटी रानी त चाहिन्छ नै।"

युद्धकै वातावरण भए पनि दानवराजलाई ती कन्यासँग विवाह गर्न उक्साइयो । गदा र तलवार लिएर आक्रमणका लागि हावामा उफ्रनुअघि त्यो दानवराजले भन्यो – "ती कन्यासम्म मेरो सन्देश पुऱ्याइदेऊ, मेरो काखमा बसेर तीनै लोकमाथि राज्य गर्नेछिन्।"

देवीको प्रभाव बढ़दै गयो र उनको आकर्षणको मिहिन पाश ती दानवहरूको मनमा बाक्लियो । राजाका दुतहरूले आफ्ना राजाका लागि रानी खोज्ने विचार पनि देवीले उनीहरूको दिमागमा प्रज्ज्वलित गरेको प्रलोभन नभई आफ्नै विचार थियो भन्ने विश्वास गर्न थाले । आफैँसँग प्रसन्न तिनीहरू देवीको सम्मुख पुगे । देवीको चरणमा आफ्ना पगडी राख्दै बिन्ती गरे – "हे कन्या ! राजाका लागि उपयुक्त सबै गुण हाम्रो राजामा छन् । यो देशका सबै मानिस, प्राणी र देवताका उहाँ प्रभृ हुनूहुन्छ । तर, उहाँको राजसभाको शोभा बढाउने रानी छैनन् । सौन्दर्य

र शोभामा तिम्रो तुलना कसैसँग गर्ने सिकँदैन । हे कन्या ! हामीसँग आएर हाम्रो राजालाई प्रफुल्ल बनाऊ !"

"मलाई रानी बनेको देख्न चाहन्छौ तर यस्तो अशिष्ट सम्बोधन गर्छौ ?" देवीले भनिन् । यो सुनेर राजाका दूतहरू भरिकए र लज्जाबोधले अनुहार रातो भएको महसूस गरे । "आना राजासाम् जाऊ र भन – म द्तहरूबाट निवेदन स्वीकार गर्दिन । राजालाई मेरो चाहना छ भने उनले आफैँ आएर मेरो हात मागून् ।"

देवीको जवाफ सुनाउन आतुर दूतहरू हतारहतार आफ्नो राजाकहाँ पुगे । बाह्र भाइ देवतामध्ये एकसँग शस्त्र हानाहान हुँदैगर्दा पनि यो कुरा सुनेर दानवराजले अट्टहास लगायो । देवीको जवाफले उसको अहंकारलाई कृत्कृताएको थियो । "साँभ पर्न देऊ । आफूलाई देवता भन्ने यो दक्षिणी अतिक्रमणकारीलाई पहिले धुलो चटाउँला अनि स्वयं ती कन्याकहाँ बिन्ती गर्न जाउँला ।"

साँभ परेपछि जब दुवै पक्षले रातिका लागि लडाइँ बन्द गर्ने शंखघोष गरेपछि दम्भी दानवराज अलौकिक सौन्दर्यले परिपूर्ण देवीको नजिक पुग्यो देवीले उसलाई सिङ्गे सर्लक्कै निलिन् ।

आनो राजा छलपूर्वक मारिएपछि पुनर्जागृत रोषका साथ दानवहरूले देवीमाथि आक्रमण गरे । देवीले फेरि भवानीको रूप लिइन र डाँगेचीनका अरू दानवको संहार गर्न थालिन् । तर, उनीहरू मरेनन् । हरेक पटक शिरोच्छेदन गर्दा उनीहरूको संख्यामा वृद्धि ह्न्थ्यो । अर्को बाह्र वर्ष र अठार युगसम्म युद्ध चलेपछि भवानी एकछिन अडिइन र आफ्नो निधरमा पसिनाको ओस महसुस गरिन् । अनुहारबाट पसिना पृछेर भवानीले जमिनमा फालिन् ।

देवीको पसिनाले जमीन स्पर्श गर्नेबित्तिकै त्यो माखाको एउटा ठूलो भून्ड बन्यो अनि कहालीलाग्दो संख्यामा विभाजित हुँदै ती माखाहरूले युद्धमैदान पूरै ढाके । अब भवानीले कुनै दानवको टाउको काटुनेबित्तिकै एक थोपा रगत पनि जमीनमा भर्नुअघि नै माखाहरूले रगतका ती थोपा पिउनथाले । यस प्रकार देवी र भवानीको रूपमा कहिले बल र कहिले छलको प्रयोग गर्दै आदिशक्तिले देवताहरूलाई विजयदान दिइन ।



डाँगेचीनको लडाइँपछि देवताहरू आफ्नो घर इन्द्रलोक फर्किए । तर, उनीहरू धेरै युगहरूसम्म बन्दी भएर र त्यसपिछ पनि युद्ध गर्दै बाँचेका थिए । उनीहरूको भोक र प्यास प्रचण्ड थियो । मैलोले छोपिएर र भोकले क्षीण भएर अस्पष्ट र

विचलित शब्दमा ती बाह्र भाइले देवराज इन्द्रलाई भने – "दाजु, हेर्नुहोस् हामीलाई ! हामीले अनगिन्ती वर्ष र युग तीर्थयात्रा र युद्धमा बितायौँ । हामी हिउँमा नाङ्गे सुत्यौँ, भोकैपेट कैयौँ युग बितायौँ । भन्नुहोस् त, हामीसँग खानका लागि के छ ? के पिएर बाँचौँ हामी ? शरीर केले छोपौँ ? हाम्रो के गति होला अब ?"

"ठीकै भन्यौ," इन्द्रले सहमति जनाए । "खाई नखाई अनि पानीसम्म नपिई तिमीहरूले युद्ध गऱ्यौ । भक्तजनले चढाएका दान पनि केही पाएका छैनौ । तिमीहरूले ठूलो कष्ट बेहोऱ्यौ । प्यारा भाइहरू, मनुष्य जगतमै फर्क र त्यहाँ मेरो धर्मको रक्षा गर । अकृत सम्पत्ति कमाएर कसैलाई धनी हुन नदिनु । मृत्यु योगभन्दा पहिले कसैलाई पनि मर्न निदनु । जातपातबीच लसपस हुन निदनु । अछूत जात र रजस्वलाको रगतबारे नियम कडारूपमा पालना गर्नु । परगमन र मिथ्यावचनलाई दण्डित गर्नू । ईश्वर र पितृको अनादर दण्डित गर्नु । भाइहरू – हुम्ला जाओ ! त्यो भूमि देवताको नाममा लेख । त्यहाँ उमंगले बाजागाजा बजाउ, नाचगान गर । मनुष्यलाई कष्ट देऊ ता कि उनीहरूले तिमीहरूलाई अनुनयविनय गरी पुकार्न परोस् । मानव चोलामा उनीहरूबीच विचरण गर र तिनीहरूबाट आफ्नो भागको बलिको रगत तथा बालीको अन्न लेक ।"

ती बाह्र देवताले यो व्यवस्था स्वीकारे र फेरि इन्द्रलोकबाट दानवराज र उसको सेनासँग लडेर विजय प्राप्त गरेको तिब्बती फाँटको दक्षिणी छेउमा पर्ने हिल्सामा भरे । उनीहरू त्यहाँको घाँसे चरनमा नाच्दै मानसरोवरको पानी खिचेर त्यहीँ नौवटा मूल फुटाए र स्नान गरी युद्धको मयल र दुःख पखाले ।

हुनसक्छ, बाह्र भाइ देवताले इन्द्रलोक जानुभन्दा अगाडि नै त्यहाँ नुहाए । अथवा, डॉंगेचीनको दानवलाई मारिसकेपिछ वा भान्जा लौहासुरले फलामे पिंजडा र सिक्रीका बन्धनबाट मुक्त गरेर त्यो दानवलाई मार्न सहयोग गरेपछि नुहाए होलान् । अथवा, भवानीले आफ्ना दाजुहरूलाई बरफको खाल्डोबाट कैदमुक्त गराउन सहयोगका लागि माखाको उत्पति गरेपछि नृहाए होलान् । जे भए पनि नौमुलेका नौ मूलमा देवताहरूले पक्कै नुहाएका र नाचेका थिए ।

दिव्य स्नानपछि थकान मेटिए पनि देवताहरूको भोक अभै मेटिएको थिएन । त्यसैले देवताहरूले वरिपरि हेरे अनि तिब्बतको ताक्लाकोटमा नश्वर मानिसलाई सुहाउनेभन्दा बढी सम्पत्तिको धनी एक जाड जातिको व्यापारी देखे । घर उसको भव्य थियो र सम्पति त कुवेरलाई पनि लाज लाग्ने गरी प्रशस्त थियो । उसको बथानमा देवताहरूलाई सन्तुष्ट पार्न सक्ने सेतो अनुहार

भएको चारसिङ्गे च्यांग्रा थियो । तर, जब देवताहरूले उसको सामु उपस्थित भएर त्यो च्यांग्रा मागे त्यो धनी जाडले च्यांग्रा दिन मानेन ।

बाह्र भाइमध्ये सबैभन्दा कान्छा गुराले जाडले च्यांग्रा अर्पण गर्ला भन्ने आशामा त्यो व्यापारीको शरीरभर घाउ बनाए । उसको हाड भाँचे, शरीरमा फोका पारे । तर, त्यो जाडलाई आफ्नो परिवेशका सबै जिंबनटीबारे ज्ञान थियो । उसले देवताहरूको याचना नगरीकनै सबै रोग निको पाऱ्यो । आयुर्विद्या प्रयोग गरी उसले लेप, रस र ध्रुप बनायो र देवताहरूले दिएका हरेक कष्ट र रोगलाई शरीरबाट धपायो । जब गुराको भोक र कुण्ठा चरमोत्कर्षमा पुग्यो उनले त्यो जाड व्यापारीको आँखामा बसेर उसलाई सताउन थाले ।

पीडा निको पार्न आँखा चिर्न निमल्ने भएपछि त्यो जाड यत्नहीन भयो । आँखामा कुनै लेप लगाउन मिलेन, कुनै औषधिको फोल वा कुनै पनि ध्रूपले पनि त्यो निको नहने भयो । भाँच्चिएको हाड मिलाएजसो मिलाउन पनि सिकएन । अन्ततः व्यापारीले हार मानेर ती देवताहरूलाई आफ्नो सेतो अनुहार भएको चारसिङ्गे च्यांग्रा चढायो । गुराले च्यांग्रा स्वीकार गरे र आफैँले लगाएको आँखाको रोग निको पारिदिए ।

गुराले चारसिङ्गे च्यांग्रालाई भुइँमा लडाए अनि त्यसको छाती फोरे, धड्कीरहेको मुटु चुँडे र रगत पिए । उनलाई अत्यन्तै आनन्द भयो । उनले त्यो च्यांग्रा पूरै खाए । र, त्यो सन्तुष्टि दिने तर बिटुलो भोजनपछि आफूलाई पखाल्न गुरा नौमुलेतिर लागे ।

चारसिङ्गे च्यांग्राको भोजन गरेर गुरा नौमुले पुग्दा उनका दाजुहरूले सोधे – "हाम्रो भाग खै ?" जवाफमा गुरा हाँसे । एघार जना दाजुहरू रिसाए । एघार भाइ देवताले मर्त्यलोकमा कार्यविभाजन गर्न लागे । यौटाले निःसन्तानलाई सन्तान दिने र सट्टामा भोगको रगत र भेटी स्वीकार गर्ने भए । अर्काले ऋतुचक्र कायम गर्ने र रोपाइँ र बाली भित्रयाउने अनुमति दिएबापत भोग खाने र न्वागी खाने भए । अभ अर्कोले भूतप्रेतबाट यात्रीहरूको सुरक्षा गर्ने, अर्कोले परगमन दण्डित गर्ने आदि गरी सबैले केही न केही जिम्मेवारी लिए । तर गुराका लागि क्नै भूमिका बाँकी छोडेनन् । फलस्वरूप, उनी अनन्त कालसम्म भोको र आश्रयविहीन हुने सम्भावना उत्पन्न भयो । विघ्न सिर्जना गर्ने वा हटाउने क्षमता नभएका देवतालाई आखिर किन कसैले पूज्ने ?

"दाजुहरू ! ममाथि त घोर अन्याय भयो," गुराले विरोध गरे । तर, उनका दाजुहरूले उनको उपहास गरे र बिलौना बेवास्ता गरे । किनभने उनीहरूले मनुष्यलोकमा हरेकका लागि केही न केही भूमिका निश्चित गरिसकेका थिए । नाचगान गर्दें. उपकार गरेर वा त्रास देखाएर आफ्नो भक्ति गराई आफ्नो तपस

बढाउने बाटो खोलिसकेकाथिए । गुरा भित्रभित्रै क्रोधित भए र आफूमाथि भएको अन्यायको पतिशोध लिने मौकाको पतीक्षामा बसे ।

देवताहरू नुहाएर घाँसे मैदानमा नाच्दै मनुष्यलोकमा आफ्नो प्रतिस्थापनाको उत्सव मनाउने मन बनाएर नौमुलेतर्फ जाँदै गर्दा गुरा उफ्रिँदै भागेको देखे ।

एघारै भाइले व्यग्र भई वरिपरि खोजतलास गरेपछि थाहा पाए कि गुराले चारै वेद चोरेछन् । वेदको ज्ञान नहुने देवतालाई कसैले आदर गर्दैन । गुराले आफ्ना दाजुहरूबाट उनीहरूको विश्वसनीयताको सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण स्रोत खोस्दै थिए ।

"तुरून्तै फिर्ता आइज," रामपालले गर्जिंदै गुरालाई लखेटे । तर, बालहठले आक्रान्त भएभैँ एउटा चट्टानबाट अर्को चट्टान गर्दे मैदानमा माथितल भाग्दै गुराले जवाफ फर्काए, - "दाजुहरू, तिमीहरूले ममाथि अन्याय गऱ्यौ र यो कुरा तिमीहरूले बुभेका छौ । मनुष्य मनमा त्रास वा प्रलोभन उत्पन्न गर्ने कुनै उपाय मलाई छोडेनौ । मैले युगौँयुग भोकको सङ्गत गरेँ, अब फेरि त्यस्ता दिन हेर्ने रहर छैन । यी वेद म राख्छु । तिमीहरू यसका लागि लोभमात्र राख ।"

अरू देवताले गुरालाई समातेर दण्डित गर्न खोजेपनि गुरा चारै वेद समातेर कर्णाली नदीमा हाम्फाले । रामपालले गुराको लरी समाए ।

"वेदहरू फिर्ता गर् नत्र दैवी हैसियतको प्रमाण तेरो लरी काटिदिन्छु," रामपालले गुरालाई धम्काए ।

आफ्ना ऋद्ध दाजुहरूकहाँ फर्कनुको साटो अनुहारमा बनावटी र अमिलो हाँसो ल्याउँदै गुराले आफ्नै लरी काटे र कर्णालीको भेललाई आफूलाई बगाउन दिए । त्यसै बेलादेखि गुराका धामीहरू लरी पाल्दैनन् जब कि अरू सबै धामीहरूले पहिलोपटक सुनले र तत्पश्चात् प्रत्येक वर्ष जीवनपर्यन्त चाँदीले लरी बाँध्नपर्छ । मृत्युपि लरीलाई देवताहरूले प्रथम पटक नृहाएको स्थान मानसरोवरको किनारसम्म लगिन्छ ।

यो सबै रिस र रोषको क्षणिक ज्वारमा भएको थियो तर समय बित्दै जाँदा देवताहरूले गुरालाई माफ गरे । भगवानहरूले आफूप्रति श्रद्धाभाव देखाउँदै आश्रय खोज्ने मनुष्यहरूसँग बोल्ने भाषा भएको वेदको ज्ञान सबै धामीले पाउन भनेर गुरापनि दाजुहरूप्रति नरम भए।



हो, त्यस भूमिमा पहिलेदेखि नै जाडहरूको बसोवास थियो तर उनीहरूको छुट्टै देवगण थियो । उनीहरू अरू नै देवताको आह्वान र आराधना गर्थे र इन्द्रलोकबाट भरेर दानवहरूसँग लडेर नौमुलेमा नुहाई कर्णालीसँगै तल बगेका बाह्र देवताका लागि दान बलि चढाउँदैन थिए । बाह्र देवतामा आस्था राख्ने मनुष्यहरू जुम्ला साम्राज्यबाट माथि बसाइँ सरे र आफूसँग धान र मनुले सिर्जेको वर्ण व्यवस्था र धर्मका हरेक नियम ल्याए ।

यो देवताहरूको समृद्धिको समय थियो । उनीहरूले हुम्लामा धर्मको रक्षा गरेसँगै उनीहरूको मन्दिरको संख्या बढयो । देवताहरूले मनुष्यलाई राम्रो कामको प्रतिफल पुण्य र खराब कामको प्रतिफल स्वरूप कष्ट दिए । हुम्लामा बसाइँ सर्दै थप मानिस आउँदा उनीहरूले थप देवता ल्याए । लौहासुरसँगै देवताका अन्य भान्जा पनि आए । ल्हंगो, सर्की र बेतालले बभाङ र अछामका मन्दिरहरूबाट आस्थाका रहस्यहरू ल्याए । कहिलेकाहीँ देवताहरू मिल्थे र एकै माण्डुमा दुई तीन देवता बस्थे । कहिले भने एकअर्काका शत्रु बन्थे अनि थुप्रै पुस्तासम्म भगडा गर्थे ।

देवताले आफ्नो माध्यम वा धारण गर्ने सेवक खोज्छन् अनि उसमा कम्पन पैदा गर्छन् । त्यसपछि त्यो माध्यमले देवताको भाषा बोल्छ जुन सामान्य मान्छेलाई बड्बडाएजस्तो लाग्न सक्छ तर परलोक र मर्त्यलोकबीच वार्तालाप गर्ने सामर्थ्य राख्ने डांग्रीको लागि त्यो देवताको स्पष्ट बोली हुन्छ । एउटी निवेदिकाले डांग्रीसँग आफ्नो दुर्भाग्यको बारेमा बिन्ती गर्छे । सायद, पित्तमा पीडा छ अथवा उसकी किशोरी छोरी एक्कासि हाँस्ने र रूने गर्छे अथवा उसको छिमेकीले वा दिदीभाइले उसलाई बाँभी, कोखको नाश भनेर सराप्दा उसको कमलो मुटुमा काँडा बिभोको छ । अनि धामीमा चढेको देवतासँग डांग्री पवित्र र रहस्यमयी भाषामा भलाकुसारी गर्छन्।

धामीले त्यसपछि त्यो विशेष देवताको वंश सिम्भिन्छ । भवानीको कृन रूप हो, वा बाह्र भाइ देवतामध्ये को हो ? कृनै भान्जा वा कृनै अरू देवता ? अथवा, त्यो उपत्यकाको माटो, वन वा पानीमा बस्ने अनेकौ आत्मामध्ये कोही हो कि ? कुनै धामी साँच्यिकै देवताको धामी हो कि ढौंगी हो भनेर जाँच्नलाई परीक्षा लिने यो उपाय साधारण ज्ञानको विषय पनि थियो । देवताले कैलाशदेखि गर्नूपर्ने यात्राको सटीक विवरण दिनसक्नु नै धामीको सत्यताको प्रमाण थियो ।

निवेदिका भन्छिन् – "प्रभू, मेरो पतिकी वैधानिक पत्नी आफ्नो कालो जीब्रोले मेरो कुभलो होस् भनेर सराप्छे, कहिले बोक्सी त कहिले चोर भनेर गाउँमा मेरो बदनामी गराउँछे । मेरा सन्तानलाई पाखा लगाएर मेरो बहिष्कार होस भन्ने इच्छा राख्छे ।"

"के होस त त्यसलाई ?"

"अहिले त केही गर्नुपर्दैन, प्रभु ! अपमानका यी शुल म अहिलेलाई स्वीकार्छु । यो जुनीमा त मैले दुःख पाइसकेकी छु । मलाई आफ्नालागि केही चाहिएको छैन । तर, त्यो आइमाईले ममाथि परोस् भनेर इच्छा गरेको सबै दु:ख हजार गुणा त्यसलाई सधैँसधैँको लागि लागोस् । त्यसका छोराहरू मासिउन् र तिनका छोरा पनि मासिउन् । त्यसका छोराहरूले छोरा नै जन्माए । त्यसलाई खुब आनन्द भएको छ । तर, जिउँदै छँदा आफ्नो वंश सिक्कएको देख्नु परोस् त्यसले । समयको पुस्तकबाट त्यसको नाम मेटिएको हेर्नुपरोस् । वंशनाश भएपछि पितुलाई तर्पण दिने छोरा नहुँदा त्यसलाई भोक र प्यासले सताओस् । अनि, जब मेरी सौता आफ्नो नाम मेटिएको हेर्दै हुन्छे मेरा छोरानातिले त्यसले भोगिरहेको सबै सम्पति पाउन ।"

"मैले के पाउँला ?"

"मेरो बदला सफल भयो भने म आउँदो सात पुस्तासम्म प्रत्येक साउन पूर्णिमा सिंग नउम्रिएको र कानदेखि खुरसम्म निख्खुर कालो कुनै चोट नलागेको कलिलो पाठो चढाउनेछु । मेरा छोरानातिका लागि तपाईंको नाम नै गोप्य मन्त्र बनाइदिन्छु । यसरी आफ्नो सौभाग्यको स्रोतबारे उनीहरूलाई स्मरण रहनेछ ।"

यसरी देवताले आफ्नो नाम पुस्तौँसम्म उसका सन्तानसँग जोडिदिन्छन् र उनीहरूको जीवनचर्यामा प्रभाव पार्छन् । र, यो खेल सबै देवता, सबै महिला र सबै पुरूषहरूले खेल्छन् ! आफ्नालागि भक्तले भाकल गरेको वा इन्द्रले अधिकार दिएको भोगको तातो र रातो रगतको लोभमा देवताहरू कहिलेकाहीँ आफूलाई अरू देवतासँग प्रतिष्पर्धा गरिरहेको पाउँछन् । आफ्नो हितको निम्ति रिफाउन, उक्साउन वा एकअर्कासँग लडाउन मानिसहरूले देवगणसाम् प्रस्तावमा प्रतिप्रस्ताव राख्छन् ।

सौताको वंश निर्मुल पर्ने इच्छा राख्ने महिला हुम्लाभरकै सबैभन्दा शक्तिशाली धामी भएका देवता कालशिल्तकहाँ पुगेकी थिइन् । कालशिल्तले सौताका दुवै छोराको प्राण लिएर त्यसलाई अपुत बनाए सौतालाई सदाका लागि भोकैप्यासै छोडिदिए । उसको सबै सम्पत्ति उसको पतिका जीवित छोराहरूलाई गयो । कालशिल्तलाई पुस्तौँसम्म पुज्ने वाचा गर्ने ल्याइते पत्नीका छोराहरूलाई गयो । तर, एकदुई पुस्ता बितेपिं कालशिल्तको कृपादृष्टिले धेरै फाइदा कमाएका छोराहरूले आफ्नो पुर्खाले गरेको वाचा र कालशिल्तको गोप्यमन्त्र बिर्सिए । खेतीयोग्य जमीनको कमी र मान्छे धेरै भएको गाउँमा पुस्तौसम्म नजिकै बसेपछि कुटुम्बबीच आउने घर्षणले गर्दा उनीहरू बसाइँ सर्दै छरिए।

देवताहरूलाई आफ्ना पूजकहरू छरिएको भन्दा घृणास्पद अरू केही लाग्दैन । किनभने धर्म यसरी नै तेजहीन हुन्छ । मानिसहरूले रीतिरिवाज भुल्छन् वा छोड़छन् । भक्तिभाव घटछ र देवताको भोक र तिर्खा बढ़छ । सात पुस्तामा त्यो विनयी महिलाका सन्तानले हरेक साउन पूर्णिमामा सिंग नउम्रिएको र कानदेखि खुरसम्म निख्खुर कालो पाठोको रगत चढाउने वचन बिर्सिए ।

हाम्रो आफ्नै समयमा आइपुग्दा सातौँ पुस्ता पुगेका र पितृहरूका कथाहरू समयको अपारदर्शितामा हराएका यी दरसन्तान एउटा यस्तो गाउँमा बस्छन् जहाँ खेतीपातीका ऋतु छोटा र कष्टकर छन् र जहाँ हिउँदको हिउँ महिनौसम्म जिमरहन्छ । तन र मन दुवै भोक र जाडोले ककर्किन्छन् । त्यस्तो गाउँका एक व्यक्तिले नयाँ घर बनाउन पुग्ने पैसा कमायो र कुटुम्बहरूसँग बस्दा बेहोर्नुपर्ने वैमनस्यदेखि टाढा घर बनाउन जिमनको टुक्रा फेला पाऱ्यो । उसकी पढेलेखेकी छोरीले संसार देख्ने र सायद रोजगारी भेट्टाउने आशा गर्न थालिन ।

यस कुराले देवता रिसाए । आफूलाई भुल्ने मान्छेहरूलाई सजाय दिन कालशिल्तले त्यस युवतीलाई वनमा एक्लै हिँड्दा ढुंगाले हिर्काउन थाले । युवती आत्तिएर वरपर हेर्थिन तर केही देख्दैनथिन । वनमा कृनै आवाज सुन्दैनथिन । यहीबीच उनका पितालाई व्यापारमा ठुलो घाटा भयो, परिवार टाट पल्टिनमात्र बाँकी भयो । महिलाहरू विरामी परे, कुनै लेप वा औषधीले निको भएनन् । उनीहरूको इष्टदेवतालाई फट्टै थाहा भयो कि यो परिवारले कालशिल्तलाई अप्रसन्न गरेका छन् । घरमूली पूर्ण समर्पण र विनयभावमा आनो परिवार पितृको उत्पत्तिस्थल कर्णाली नदीमाथि डिलमा रहेको डाँडाफाया गाउँमै बसोबास गर्ने. सिंगदेखि खुरसम्म निख्खुर कालो कमर पाठाको रगत चढाउने र देवताको आजीवन सेवा गर्ने वाचा गर्दै कालशिल्तको धामीकहाँ पुगे ।

यसबाट प्रसन्न भएर कालशिल्तले देवताहरूको नियमविपरीत पुरूषहरूको संसारमा प्रवेश गर्न खोज्ने र आनो देवताहरूको भूमि छोडेर जाने इच्छा गर्ने त्यो युवतीलाई दिइरहेको यातना बन्द गरे र पुनः परिवारलाई आशीर्वाद दिए । महिलाहरूको शारीरिक कष्ट फिर्ता लिएर घरमुलीको व्यापारमा दोब्बरचौबर फाइदा गराए ।



यसरी मोटो च्यांग्रा वा निख्खुर पाठाको आशामा कहिलेकाहीँ मानिसहरूलाई रोगव्याधिले सताउँदै देवताहरू मनुष्यबीच नै बसे । कहिलेकाहीँ आफूलाई दिइएको बिल स्वीकार गरी चढाउनेलाई प्रतिफल दिन्थे । अकुत सम्पत्ति बढ्न दिएनन्, समयभन्दा अघि कसैलाई मर्न दिएनन्, असत्यलाई सत्यको अगाडि घुँडा टेकाए । उपज वृद्धि गरिदिए, गाईवस्तुको बथान ठूलो पारिदिए, अपुतालाई सन्तान दिए । हरेक वर्ष आकर्षक पोसाकमा सजिएर दमाहा, कर्नाल र नर्सिङको संगीतमा नाँच्दै

परम्पराअनुसार नुहाएर भोगको रगत पिउन र भक्तजनका सामु चमत्कार गर्न उनीहरू हुम्लाका विभिन्न गाउँमा जम्मा हुनेभए।

रित्तो घडालाई जसरी जलले भरेर पूर्णकलश बनाउँछ त्यसरी नै आफूलाई भर्ने देवताको प्रतिनिधित्व गर्दै लरीलाई चोखो सेतो फेटामा बाँधेर, कानमा सुन, मुगा र फिरोजीको ठुलो गोलो मुन्द्रा लगाएर धामीहरू नाचे । आनो दैवी गुणको प्रमाणस्वरूप चमत्कार गरे । एक मुठी गहुँ लिएर पिठो बनाए, हातैले ढुङ्गालाई थिचेर धुलो बनाए, एक मुठी तीललाई तेल बनाए । फलामको ओदानलाई रातो होउन्जेल तताए र त्यसलाई बिनासंकोच लपलप चाटे । त्यसलाई घाँटीमा माला लगाए जसरी पहिरिए तर त्यसले उनीहरूलाई पोलेन । हरेक चमत्कारको माध्यमबाट देवताहरूले सृष्टिको आयुभर गरेका अलौकिक पराऋमको स्मरणबाट हुम्लाका मान्छेहरूले प्रत्यक्षरूपमा देवताहरू आफूहरूमाभ उपस्थित भएको देखे ।

कालान्तरमा हुम्लामा धामीहरूले डांग्रीहरूको सहयोगमा चमत्कार देखाएको खबर जुम्ला पुग्यो जहाँ विष्णुले मनुष्यहरूको राजा भएर धर्मको रक्षा गरिरहेका थिए । हम्लामा शास्त्रअनुसार हरेक जातको आचरण निर्धारण गर्ने, समाजको वर्णानुक्रममा पुरूष र महिलाको ठाउँ तोक्ने र सबैको आचरण बुभेर धर्मको रक्षा गर्ने जिम्मा धामीहरूले आनो भएको दाबी गरेको खबरले राजालाई पटक्कै चित्त बुभेको थिएन । मनुष्य र देवलोकबीच संवादसेतु खोलेबापत धामी र डांग्रीहरूले एक माना चामल लिने गरेकाले पनि राजालाई रिस उठेको थियो । संसारभरमा कर र भोगमा त राजाको एकलौटी हक थियो ।

जुम्लाका राजाले हुम्लाका धामीलाई पत्रेर आफूसामु ल्याउन सेना पठाए । अथवा. धामीहरूको भनाइ मान्ने हो भने धामीको रूपमा रहेका देवतालाई जुम्ली राजाको रूप लिएका विष्णुको सामु ल्याइयो ।

"मेरा प्रजाबीच बसेर उनीहरूबाट भोग लिने तिमीहरू को हौ ?" - राजा धामीहरूसँग कडिकए ।

धामीहरूले भने – "मर्त्यलोकमा विचरण गर्दै आनो भागको अन्नबाली र पशुबलि माग्न मानिसहरूलाई दण्डित वा पुरस्कृत गर्ने अधिकार हामीलाई इन्द्रले दिएका हुन्।"

त्यसपिं, आनो दैवी अधिकार देखाउन एउटा धामीले एक मुट्ठी जौ लिएर हातमै थिचेर कालो पीठो बनाए ।

राजाले एक मुड़ी जो लिएर त्यसलाई कालो पीठो बनाए । ती राजासँग पनि यस्तो चमत्कार गर्ने क्षमता थियो ।

धामीले एक मुद्री जौको रातो पीठो बनाए । राजाले पनि त्यही गरे । धामीले एक मुठी तील हातबाट तेलको धारा नबगुन्जेल च्यापे । राजाले पनि आनो मुठीमै तील पिसेर तेल निकाले । धामीले ढुङ्ग समाती धुलो बनाए, राजालेपनि त्यसै गरे । आफूलाई देवताहरू बराबर प्रमाणित गर्दै राजाले भने – "मेरो राज्यमा तिमीहरूले देवता पतुरेर भाग खान पाउने छैनौ।"

अनि धामीले तामाको कराईमा तेल तताए । तेल भक्भक उम्लिएपछि धामीले तातो तेल घटघट पिए । तर राजाले उम्लिरहेको तेल पिउने आँट गर्न सकेनन् । अन्ततः राजाले आनो राज्यमा धामीहरूका लागि ठाउँ छ भन्ने स्वीकार गरे ।

"म विष्णु हुँ, स्वयम्भू र ज्येष्ठ । तिमीहरू पिछ उत्पन्न भएका देवता हौ, मभन्दा कनिष्ठ । तिमीहरूले हुम्लामा मेरा नियम पालना गराउने छौ । मेरा कानूनअनुसार पुण्यको पुरस्कार र अपराधको दण्ड दिने छौ । कसैलाई पनि चोरी वा परगमन गर्न वा कसैलाई छल्न दिने छैनौ । मान्छेहरूलाई आऋान्त गरेर आनो भागको भेटी माग्न पाउनेछौ," राजाको माध्यमबाट विष्णुले भने ।

"तपाई ज्येष्ठ हुनुहुन्छ, हामी कनिष्ठ ।" धामीको माध्यमबाट देवताहरूले भने – "तपाईँका पुरातन नियमअनुसार नै हामी पुरस्कार र दण्ड प्रदान गर्नेछौँ । तपाइँको धर्मका नियमको रक्षा गर्ने छौँ । हामी मानसरोवरमा नृहाएर पवित्र कैलाश पर्वतको परिक्रमा गरी आदर प्रकट गर्ने छौँ । हाम्रो भागबाहेक हामी कुनै पनि दान भोग स्वीकार्ने छैनौँ । जुम्ला विष्णुभूमि भएजस्तै हुम्ला देवभूमि हुनेछ ।"



# The Miller's Song

 $-\infty$ 

We do not know how long ago the events described here occurred – or where in the weft of events past or yet to come these people lived and died – but, in the village of Yari, deep in the shadows of the Himalayas, in a valley of plenty and gurgling with the restive Karnali, lived a merchant with an insatiable desire. It wasn't merely greed or ambition, for he was a learned man, a man of the world who believed in hardwork and who had met and studied a thousand other men just like him. His desire was built on caution and thoughtfulness: as a child he had seen deprivation, and as a merchant he had profited

from the hardships and the excesses of others. But, as much as he knew how to gain and gather wealth, the miracle through which it

could be retained for all ages to come had eluded him.

Every morning, well before his sons or their wives awoke, the merchant chased away sleep and wiped clean his mind muddled with dreams. He cleaned the shrine for the ancestors kept in a corner of the wide, flat roof of his splendid house. He offered water and incense to the aged brass statue of the Buddha in the shrine, and remembered the gods of his home, of the village and the valley, and then remembered all the shrines, peaks and passes, rivers and lakes, meadows and forests where he had prayed for safe passage. In the few moments of rest before the day awoke like a beast in a hurry, he allowed the mind's eye to wander, and allowed himself the proud but quiet joy of watching himself on his roof, in the home he had built to tower above all the houses in the village, a house that was slightly

bigger than the village monastery. There were forty rooms under his roof, each built during the spring thaw of the forty years since he had started his life as a trader.

The merchant hadn't started rich; he had grown up in a two-room hut, fatherless, in the bosom of a mother who shied from accepting charity and chose instead to labor for each rope of garment and each morsel of food. When his brother, older by two years and a lifetime of hardship already, had failed to return after a summer of herding cattle in the highpastures, he told his mother that he wanted to become a trader instead of working his kinsmen's fields in exchange for just enough grains to see them through the long winter.

His mother had taken his face in her hands, gazed into his eyes, and quietly walked out of the house. She returned in the evening with a bundle of lamb's wool. "Urgyen, you'll repay them, each of them, before you gather your own wealth," she said and recited to him a list of names and measures: women in the village who had put them in debt by sparing a handful of wool each. Even now, in his ripe old age, standing on the roof of the house where he had gathered more wealth than all the wealth of the richest men in every village within three days in every direction, he could recite the list of names, recall the face of every aunt or elder who had gently pushed him towards his fate.

Through that first winter, when the snow lay thick over the valley, the young merchant spun and wove and carded and felted the wool. His mother sat by the fire and prayed. When the thaw came and the first of the green shoots of wheat peeked out from the wet and dark soil, when traders who had wintered in the southern plains returned with bales of printed cloth and sacks of grain, pots of oil and boxes of ivory and coral, and news of beasts made of iron and smoke, the young merchant was ready with two blankets of coarse black wool to trade and a felted shawl under which to pass the nights.

His kinsmen who had crossed the high passes into the blue skies of Tibet and the frothy rivers to the dark jungles of India, who spoke sometimes among themselves in tongues he knew to be foreign smiled at him with compassion and took care never to speak to him harshly, even when they scolded or pelted their own sons with the dry droppings of goats and yaks for laughing too much or letting a goat wander off the trail. And the young trader repaid them with his only possessions: service, loyalty, obedience and deference. He took special care to know which cattle belonged to which merchant, and, without eavesdropping or being intrusive, he made it a point to remember the particulars of each kinsman's transactions with traders along the long route over and around the mountains. He learned to look at the facts of trade like a handful of grains to be sifted, the chaff to be separated from what could become seeds to be sown in the coming year.

After the spring spent trading in the endless grasslands and saltswamps of Tibet, the pair of blankets became twenty sacks of salt. He accompanied his kinsmen back to Yari for a spurt of hurried farmwork before continuing south, through the gorges cut by the Karnali and past villages of Khas people, who saw his age and assumed innocence and tried to seduce him into parting with his sacks of salt for cheap. But he persisted; he watched how friendships were made, how belligerently or politely bargains were struck, how quickly some kinsmen converted profit into goods or how they sewed coins into the linings of their coats. He didn't sell his salt, but he readily opened a sack to hand out a large fistful to poor women with sons of his own age. He smiled politely and pretended not to understand the gestures made by Khas men with thick arms and soft bellies, but he spent the evenings sharing his tsampa with, and accepting salted gruel from, boys who wore hunger around their eyes and soil under their nails.

"Sell your salt," kinsmen only a few years his elder would tell him. "Sell it, buy the grains you need and return to your mother. She must be worried sick."

But he persisted, without seeming stubborn, without causing offence to those who were clearly more fortunate, and therefore may have taken offence at his ambition. He didn't offer excuses, and he didn't let it appear that he sought greater profit.

He had seen how a day's walk northwards into the windswept plains of Tibet or southwards into the humid stench of the hot valleys

of Salyan increased the value of his goods. In Yari, a measure of salt could be bartered for three measures of grain brought by Khas traders from Jumla. But a measure of grain would become three measures of salt when transported to the salt swamps of Tibet, where all day long the women and children carried buckets of brine to their raised terraces where the sun separated the salt from the water. The trader's life was full of hardship between the two ends of such journeys, but the reward was of the ever-increasing sort. Even as a young boy, the merchant could count in his mind the vast possibilities of wealth that he could command. Accordingly, he acted with caution, holding back his merchandise until the very moment when the potential for gain was the greatest.

Gradually, his kinsmen retraced their steps homewards, loaded with dried apricots and obdurate highland wheat and mustard oil. But the merchant was determined to see the end of the road, to encounter the iron beasts that carried more goods in a day than all the yak caravans of the world combined, to befriend the dark men of the forested plains, for there the greed for gold and musk, the perfume of mountain hashish and sap of pine the was greatest: there lay the wealth he needed for his mother.

Coral, mirrors and glass beads, statues and amulets with the image of the Buddha – if a trader went deep into the malarial south, these were the goods he brought home. But when the young merchant returned, just before harvest, he had acquired two new pack mules, and each was laden not with the trinkets or trifles expected of a novice, but only with grains. He showed his face to his mother. She touched foreheads with him, muttered a prayer of thanks and peered deeply at his face, then set about boiling water and preparing him a meager but warm meal. The young merchant immediately went around the village to the door of each woman who had given him a measure of wool.

"You are too generous, Urgyen," each woman said when she saw the measure of grain set before her as repayment. He didn't look up as he added more grain to the already generous portions, and, in response, the women climbed the ladders to their stores and each brought back an armful of fine wool. "Son," each of the women said, "don't embarrass us by repaying this gift. Your father was like a brother to me, and this I give because I have the right to love you like you are my own son."

And that was a very long time ago – forty-one winters had passed since. His mother had died, leaving him truly orphaned, but the merchant had built a wide world for himself. He had built his house one spacious room at a time, climbing up the terraced mountain. He had been still young and virile by the time he had gathered wealth enough to last his lifetime. Kinsmen who had once taught him to distinguish between coarse and fine merchandise brought to him their young sons to learn the trade. Richer men offered him their daughters in marriage, but he chose for his bride a poor orphan who knew little of luxury but enough of hardship and economy. Sons were born, and they, too, learned to trade, married pretty brides and filled the house with their laughter.

Now, when he took account of the wealth he had laid away - the gold and silver, the musk and yak tails so sought after in the plains of India, the bales of fine silk in teakwood chests and heads of cattle strewn across seven meadows and a week's walk, blocks of sandalwood and utensils of brass - he accurately counted that his sons and their sons, and their sons and grandsons after them, could live for seven generations to come without ever having to card wool or carry salt, without ever having to leave the village of their birth. The merchant let out a sigh as he opened his eyes to face the gods on the altar of his house - this wouldn't suffice, this horde that would last a measly seven generations after his death. What of the sons and daughters to come after? He needed to work harder if he was to earn enough to last another seven generations beyond the seven he had secured against the tomblike cold of the winters and the sharp hunger that infected those months of inactivity.

But lately, as the end of his days approached, his mind had lost the surefootedness of his youthful years when every calculation fell snugly into place, like the hooves of the bellwether yak that plods through blinding blizzards on the high passes across the Himalayas. The beads on the abacus that in years past had flitted about like the shuttlecock on a loom now moved clumsily, as if tired after a life of counting and recounting, and the thread of his thoughts often frayed abruptly. It was in one such moment that he finally recognized the melody that he had often heard through his days filled with industry, when he heard for the first time the words in the songs that he had mistaken for a voice inside his own mind. The merchant was amazed that his daily routine had all along been accompanied by songs so full of reward; the calm and patience he had experienced for so many years was owed to the voice of another, to songs that echoed through the village and found him as he worked. When he understood this, he felt the shores of his patience and calm crumble away, for they had never been his possession, but simply gifts borrowed until this moment of rupture.

Didn't the merchant once have a friend who died of malaria, nearly twenty years ago? Did the man not leave behind a child? No fate worse than to die shivering of sweat and fever in the winter, with the paths to shrines and sacred groves of ancestor gods buried under snow, weighed down by the helplessness of knowing that the disease had smuggled itself here from a faraway land, so that no local spirit or god could answer the appeals, for the gods, too, admitted to their inadequacy at such times, and the dhamis halfheartedly muttered their incantations, the smoke of the incense only stung the eyes and didn't fill the flesh with the hope of healing. Malaria should kill men in the damp swamps of the Terai, not in the crisp air and crystal light of the mountains. And, so, after prolonged suffering, the man had died, leaving behind a seven-year-old girl, who, straightaway, knowing fully the hardship that awaited her, pursed her lips in quiet determination and set about being the orphan who doggedly pursues survival.

The merchant now remembered, not without revulsion, the cold and rational manner in which he had asked his eldest son to carry a sack of rice and a blanket to the orphan, and never since given any thought to his dead friend or his daughter. She was the singer: this he now learned. And he also learned that he no longer remembered her name.

The merchant came to the edge of his roof and watched the young woman - what was her name? Sonam? Tseten? - as she walked past his house. She glanced up and saw him. He froze in guilt; she smiled and scratched her head, walked around the corner of the house and began humming her tune again. The merchant walked to the room where he worked - a brazier in a corner, a tiger-skin rug before a low table, an abacus, a bowl and a flask of water, ink, discreet heaps of scrolls. He scratched his head tilted to a side to follow the orphan miller's song.

Every day, the orphan miller walked to the top of the village, to the mill on the stream that rushed through, and waited for villagers to bring her grains to be milled. Her share was a measure of the flour she delivered to their homes in the evening. Every year, each family also spared her their old clothes and blankets. There was no trade to be had through the winter when the stream froze over - she had to set aside a portion of her wages each day, a fistful of the flour or tsampa, a store against the lean months. She lived downstream of the village, in a hut on the way out of the valley. The merchant rode his horse past the hut four times every year, and when he put his mind to work recollecting what he had heard and seen of the hut each time, he realized that he had seen nothing and heard nothing: through the always open door, past the threadbare blanket draped halfway across the threshold, he had seen nothing but the dim shape of a pellet on the damp floor and two pots stacked by a corner bearded in soot. He had heard nothing, but the miller's song had always chased him to the gorge leading out of the valley, or welcomed him home after his lengthy travels.

Grief had left no score on the orphan: within weeks of her father's death, Thendup, the old miller, had invited the geshe from the monastery and asked elders from each household to drink tea at his house. "I have milled your grains, brothers, but now I am tired. Geshe has given me mantras to chant, and a hut behind the monastery where I can rest my old bones, and I hope you will come when he calls you to bury my body. But, my brothers and nephews, know that you will not see me again in this village."

The men had nodded their heads solemnly, scratching their bare heads, waiting for someone to ask the necessary question: "But, who will take your place, Thendup?"

Before anybody did ask the question, Thendup spoke in a soft voice, asking the men to lean in and listen. "I have learned something that none of you have - milling is not a job for someone without gratitude. Yes, the stream turns the water-wheel and the millstones grind the grains, but the miller makes the flour." Everybody understood Thendup: without the care and compassion of the miller, each batch of flour wouldn't match its purpose.

"We have among us an unfortunate child. Geshe knows better if she suffers now because of her father's karma, or if this suffering is due to the karma of her own soul." It was understood then that the child would become the village miller. For months to come, the women of the village would have to show the child how to mill the flour for noodles and how to grind roasted grains for tsampa, how to break grains for cattle-feed and how to store the chaff of wheat. But the orphan learned, and became the miller.

And, as her work became her life, when her daily routine required no effort, the orphan started singing. From dawn to dusk, with each breath, she sang - of gods and love, of faraway lands she had heard of only in songs, of the mother whose love she had never known, of the wind that brought snow and rain, and of the sun that brought the thaw. She remembered a song after hearing it once, and she could recite the songs of harvest and rain, songs of pilgrimages to Kailas in Ngari and to Swyambhu in Nepal. Her songs became the yarn that stitched together the village: they awoke to a song and were lulled to sleep by another; in the winter the songs touched the ache in the bones, sometimes taking away the pain, and sometimes sweetening it into a longing for the first runs of snowmelt in April. In the short spring the song was the smell of new grass and the flitting of butterflies among short-lived flowers. In abrupt moments when a man caught himself mid-thought, the miller's songs were his thoughts, fading away in smoky curlicues. The wails of births and deaths in the village were twined with the miller's songs.

The merchant spent the day poring over accounts, distracted, worrying the cubes of *chhurpi* mixed into the dry *tsampa* in a pocket of his chuba; he had always disdained the interruptions that came from his body: the need to feed, the need to chew his food, the cramps and aches in his limbs and joints, the need to empty his bowels even as he was in the middle of planning the next caravan to Purang in the north or Achham in the south. It felt profane, this insistent repatriation back to carnality. His daughters-in-law knew this, and all day long they quietly circled him, placing before him warm, salty tea or porridge flecked with dried yak meat, adding wood to the brazier or cracking open the window to let out the smoke. When his moon-faced second daughter-in-law climbed up the ladder with a bowl of rice and meat, he asked her to wait. He scratched under his hat, thinking, but she waited patiently.

"Dawa," he said, "when did you go to the mill last?"

"I am going tomorrow, father," she said.

"Go today," the merchant said. "Go today."

In the evening, the merchant heard the miller approach his door and call Dawa.

"I am coming," Dawa said as she hurried down a ladder. The merchant called her in a louder-than-usual voice. "Dawa! Come up for a moment."

Dawa stood on the ladder and peeked into the room, just her head and shoulders appearing through the passage on the floor.

"Give her more than her usual share, will you? Give her two times what you would give."

Dawa nodded and smiled. As she climbed down, the merchant muttered, half a command to Dawa and half a reminder to himself, "We have enough to spare, don't we?"

"Tseten," he heard Dawa call. "You will need a bigger sack today!"

Over the next week, the merchant sent Dawa to the mill twice, and heard a lift in the miller's songs. He instructed his daughters-in-law to bring to him their tattered old dresses, and although they protested that they didn't have any tattered old dresses, that they had been well provided for, he nevertheless cut a comical figure, the patriarch rifling through the clothes of the women of the household and picking chuba robes and a thick outer bakkhus.

"Send these to the girl, Dawa," he said.

When he noticed that the miller walked barefoot, the merchant sent her his dead wife's shoes. And he wondered if he had done enough, if it was quite enough. Throughout the week he listened to the miller's song, now with a certain amount of proprietorship. He even tried humming along to one of her songs, but was too embarrassed to listen to himself. However, with each day, through his mind's eye, he saw how little work he was getting done: he watched himself go about the day clumsily, mislaying scrolls, forgetting trading camps along a route, losing confidence that he had successfully imagined what people in a particular village would want beyond just the bare necessities of salt, grain and yarn. He had lived for so long now with the singular purpose of increasing wealth, without pause or rest. But he was restless now; he knew he was still poor, because the merchant inside him could feel the raw absence of what would bring fulfillment.

On a quiet evening, after watching from his roof as women gathered grains and greens drying in the sun, or gathered the children playing in the alleys, and as men ducked indoors to close the purse of the short autumn day, after listening to the miller walk past his house with her upbeat songs, the merchant put on a hat trimmed with fur and stepped out. "Urgyen la," a cousin called from his house, "Where are you going?" But the merchant didn't stop for longer than it took to wave at the cousin to signal that he was on urgent business. With each turn in the alleyways that took him farther from his house and closer to the mill he felt more like a thief. The cold lump of a silver ingot in his pocket felt heavy. He was grateful when the jumble of houses ended abruptly and the path to the mill opened up before him, hugging close to the clear, cold stream.

The millstone, resting still for the night, was as broad as the merchant was tall, and the mill was swept clean, with not a stray grain or sprinkle of flour anywhere. Water rushing under the mill chilled the air but the smell of crushed grain brought warmth to the merchant's mind. Surely, nobody ever came here in the dark - to the young and innocent the stream was the abode of a water-demon; and the mill was the domain of the miller, where only her labor was of a thing of value, for the rest were stone and wood and nothing more. The merchant took out the silver, embossed with an imperial seal – shaped like the head of a horse, with eyes cut into deep grooves – and carefully placed it by the millstone. Will she recognize it for what it is, he wondered. Only a man as widely traveled as he was, and only a man as wealthy, could tell the rare piece of silver from a misshapen lump of tin. It was the emperor's own coin, worth a cartload of sandalwood, a hundred cartloads of salt. This was his gift for the poor miller: he wanted her to share in his wealth just as he had shared in her wealth of songs. A lifetime's worth of wealth for a poor miller. But she will recognize it, the merchant told himself. When she arrives in the morning, even in the dim light of dawn, the silver will gleam and catch her eye, he thought.

Dawn broke the next day, as it did every day in the village of Yari, in the plentiful valley under the Himalayas. First stirred the fog from the river, rising to hide the stars already retreating from the morning's brilliance, then stirred the birds in the pine and juniper, then came the calls of deer farther out in the forest and the lowing of cattle in their enclosures. A murmur filled the valley as men awoke to pray and women to prepare for the day. Incense rising from the sweet resin of juniper boughs chased after the thinning fog, meeting it midway between earth and sky, and dissolving before they could together smother out the sun. The miller's song approached the merchant's house and passed without hurry. The merchant smiled at the altar to his ancestors and touched the statue of the Buddha, calling forth a witness. He settled at his low table; the abacus and the scrolls rolled towards him. A shaft of sun illuminated the heavenward path for his prayers and offerings.

An abrupt silence snaked through the village and entered the merchant's room: of course there were a thousand other noises that made up the voice of routines roped together like the crackle of fire and the gurgle of boiling gruel, but there was also the dread absence of a particular note: the miller's song had gone quiet.

Drugged as they were by the omniscience of the miller's songs, the villagers failed to hear the silence, but the merchant's ears rang with the coarseness of an uninvited silence, and he saw the song withdraw and fade from the overlay of the village: now, the alleyways would seem dimmer, the cattle restless, the light in the ears of wheat dull. As the echoes of the miller's songs faded away, the suffusion of warmth that had covered the village also ebbed and dissipated. The silence was a shadow, as if the gods had turned their backs upon the people of the valley.

Throughout the day, the merchant got up abruptly to stand at the edge of his roof, high above the rest of the village, to lean in the direction of the mill, as if through this supplication he could call forth the lost songs. He saw women carry sacks of grains to the mill, and, surely, he heard the millstones grind. But the miller didn't sing. The merchant watched the miller hurry past his home in the evening, huddled under a bakhhu he had given her. In the morning, the merchant searched for the wisp of smoke that should have come from the miller's hut, but saw nothing. When she hurried past his house, without looking up or making smalltalk with Dawa, it was already midmorning, and she had an unpleasant look pasted to her face, as if the villagers calling her to the mill had stolen the morning from her.

"Dawa!" the merchant called his daughter-in-law when he heard the millstones grind to a halt sometime in the mid-afternoon. "Go to the mill. Dawa. Take two baskets of wheat."

"Father," Dawa said. "We have more flour than we need for the entire winter."

The extra flour, the clothes and blankets and shoes – the merchant turned red with embarrassment. What explanation did he have to give? What must they think, his sons and daughters-in-law? But he didn't have the patience to explain anything just then.

"Daughter, just go, will you? Half a basket of wheat, if you think we already have too much, but go."

When Dawa returned, the merchant tried to think of a way in which he could ask her about the miller, if she seemed sour or if she had laughed freely, but without letting his impatience and dejection become apparent. Just then, he heard Dawa talk to her sister-in-law.

'Something has taken over Tseten. She is pale, she is shivering, as if she hasn't slept for a week. She didn't even hear me call her name, and when she saw me, she jumped up, scared, and ran to a corner. She wouldn't come to the door, she wouldn't move her feet. She must have been hiding something. She stood like this, on her bakkhu, like she was killing a frog under her foot. She scared me.'

The merchant had to sit, because now he understood why the miller had stopped singing: the silver he had offered her had become her demonic master; greed had bred fear, and suspicion in her heart now poisoned every comfort. He looked at the wealth around him: the silk khata around the Buddha, which he knew was cut from the same cloth that a Lhasa merchant had offered to the Potala to be sewn into the robe that His Holiness the Dalai Lama wore for his ascension to the holy seat; the tiger pelt on which he sat daily; the ivory of his pen and the sandalwood of his table. The many rooms in his house where nobody slept or sat around a fire, but which were all full to the rafters. Debts outstanding that he hoped to collect from Limi, from Purang and Dunai, from Achham and Ladakh. The chest of turquoise that bore his seal and sat idle in a Muslim merchant's home in Srinagar. Far to the east, in the valley of Nepal, in a Shakya artisan's home in Patan, his name being carved into the base of a bejeweled statue of the Guru Rimpoche, with rubies and lapis lazuli on the sage's crown. The silver was a paltry nothing compared to the wealth the merchant surrounded himself with every day, but it had been enough poison to seed suspicion and greed in the miller's mind. Urgyen had taken away the song from her.

That night, after washing his bowl with hot water and drinking down the swill, the merchant asked his sons to sit with him. He passed around the scrolls and asked them to recite the contents to each other, then quizzed them hard. Dawa came into the room twice to replenish the oil in the lamps before the merchant was satisfied that his sons knew every detail he wanted them to remember.

"Go to your beds now," he told his sons. "Remember - this," he swept an arm around, a finger pointing to the skies to encircleg everything he owned in the world. "All of this is yours, for you to keep and enjoy until the end of your days." His sons looked at him with worry, but they were obedient, and so they went quietly to their wives. Perhaps he had given them too much to remember all at once.

The merchant didn't bother with the gods on his roof when morning broke the next day. Before his daughters-in-law could rouse their tired husbands, the merchant had put on his fur hat and left the house. He was astonished to find the miller in the mill, sitting still in a corner as if somebody had forgotten her there a thousand years ago. When he stirred in the doorway, she looked up, recognized him, and scurried back with a tiny yelp of protest. Her knuckles went white from gripping the silver ingot in her hand. The merchant could make out the shape of the piece of silver under her bony palm. What names old Thendup would call me now if he could see what I have done! My sin is the greatest, he thought, for I have done worse than harbor greed: I have tainted an innocent mind with greed and avarice.

The merchant kneeled by the door, keeping out of the morning light. "Why don't you sing anymore, Tseten?" The merchant was embarrassed by how simple and plaintive he sounded. The miller didn't answer. This woman - this poor orphan, this daughter of a dead friend - how pitiable and ugly she had become over just a few days!

"Tseten," he tried to approach her, but she retreated into the dark. "I haven't come to take back what I gave you. I have come to ask why you don't sing anymore. Your song was the joy of our village. It was my joy, too. But you have taken it away from us."

The miller watched the merchant as if it was he who had lost his mind. She tried to laugh, but only a repulsive twitch of the mouth filled her face. She buried the silver piece deeper into the flesh of her chest.

"It is only silver, Tseten! It isn't the breath of life or the blessings of our ancestors. It can buy silk and wine, but it cannot buy a moment's peace in the world." Was the merchant telling this to the miller, was it Urgyen pleading to Tseten? Like scales falling away from a serpent, or like the colors of a sand mandala being swept away to reveal the plain ground underneath, desire fell away from the merchant, even as he realized that more and more desires were clinging to the miller every new moment.

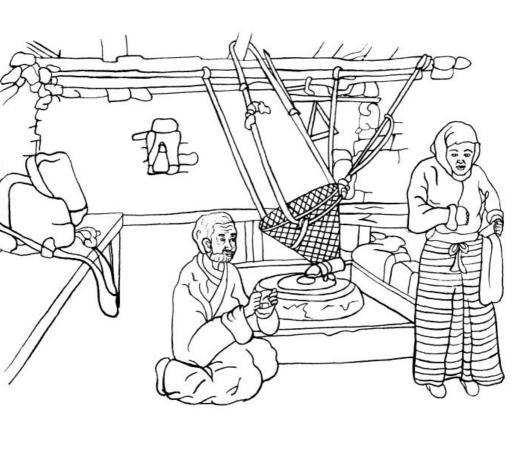
After a long and quiet moment, the merchant kneeled before the miller and spread a scarf on the mill-floor. "Daughter," he said, "Give me a fistful of flour."

As he walked away, lightened of a burden, weighed down by another, he heard her call after him in a voice made ragged by a new fury – "Doesn't fill your belly, a song doesn't. Doesn't keep you warm, doesn't fatten you, doesn't make you the mistress of a big house like it makes your daughters-in-law, a song doesn't. What do you know of want and poverty? When have you known the cold embrace of the floor and the shattering lightness of an empty belly?"

It didn't take the merchant as long as he had feared it would take to walk far away enough that he wouldn't see any of the mountains around his village: after all, the trading route hewed close to the serpentine rush of the Karnali. A sharp bend in the river, and everything else in Creation was hidden out of sight, save the bluetinted light of the space and whatever life found a hold within. Knowing that he no longer saw his village or valley instantly put the miller's song out of the merchant's mind. In a fold in his coat he

carried a small sack of tsampa, and in the lining were three gold coins. A party of Khas shepherds recognized him and flocked to him, bringing him firewood and water, showing him a flat recess in a fireblackened cave where to sleep, never daring to question why he was so far from home and so obviously without kinsmen or merchandise, horse or mule. He tried to share his tsampa with them, but they laughed and brought him misshapen copper bowls of hot food instead.

The fire burned bright and hot for an hour, but soon no spark from the crackle climbed with the smoke, and the ash on embers turned as grey as the moonlight on it. When he saw that everybody around him was warm and asleep, the merchant spread his bakkhu by the fire, covered himself with an old and worn felt blanket, and waited for sleep to find him.



# घट्टेनीको कथा

 $\infty$ 

समयऋमको कुन मोडमा यहाँ वर्णन गरिएको कथाका पात्र जीवित थिए अथवा उनीहरूको जीवन विगत वा आगतमा किहले अवस्थित हो त्यो किटान गर्न असम्भव भएपिन यतिसम्म हामीलाई थाहा छ — हुम्ला जिल्लाको उत्तरी भेगका हिमालको गिहरो छायाँमा अधीर कर्णाली नदीको संगीतमय वेग र उर्वरताले सजेको यारी गाउँमा विशाल आकांक्षाका धनी एक व्यापारी थिए। उनको आकांक्षा लोभ वा अनियन्त्रित अभिलाषाबाट जिन्मएको थिएन। किनभने उनी परिश्रमी र विद्वान थिए र आफू जस्तै हजारौँ व्यक्तिहरूको उनले मिहिन अध्ययन गरेका थिए। बरू उनको आकांक्षाको जडमा थियो सचेतना तथा सावधानी — यी व्यापारीको शैशवकाल अभावमै बितेको थियो र वयस्क जीवनमा प्रवेश गरिसकेपिछ उनले अर्काको लोभ तथा दुखबाट फाइदा लिँदै आफ्नो सम्पत्ति जोडेका थिए।

तर उनले धन कसरि कमाउने र संचय गर्ने भन्ने जित राम्ररी बुभेपनि आजसम्म यौटा महत्वपूर्ण रहस्य उनले बुभेका थिएनन् : आफूले संगालेको धन पुस्तौँकालागि

पुग्नेगरि कसरि सुरक्षित राख्ने?

प्रत्येक बिहान छोराबुहारीहरू उठ्नु अघि नै यी व्यापारी सपनाले धुमिल बनाएको मनबाट निद्रालाई लखेट्दै जागीसकेका हुन्थे । आफ्नो भव्य घरको फराकिलो छतको एक कुनामा पूर्वजहरूको श्रद्धाकालागि बनाइएको पूजाकोठा सफा गरिसकेका हुन्थे । बुद्धको काँसको पुरानो मूर्तिलाई धूपपानी चढाउँथे र आफ्नो घरका देवीदेवतालाई सिम्फिन्थे । अनि मनमनै सिम्फिन्थे सम्पूर्ण भञ्ज्यांग र देउरालीहरू, टाकुरा र गल्छीहरू, नदी र तालहरू अनि पाटन र वनहरू जहाँका देवीदेवता, नाग र डािकनी, भूमेवायुलाई उनले आफ्ना अनिगन्ति यात्राका ऋममा सुरक्षाकालागि गुहारेकाथिए । अनि जुर्मुराएको पशुभौँ अत्तालिएर दिन उठ्नु

अधिका केहि क्षण जसमा उनले शान्ति अनुभव गर्न पाउँथे ती क्षणमा उनले आफ्नो भित्रि आँखालाई त्यसै टहल्न दिन्थे र छतमा उभिएको आफ्नै आकृतिलाई नियाल्ने समय दिन्थे । यो घर गाउँभरिमै सबैभन्दा ठुलो थियो र गाउँमाथिको गुम्बा भन्दा अलिकतिमात्रै ठुलो थियो । चालिसकोठे यो घर जसका हरेक कोठा उनले पछिल्ला चालिस वर्षमा प्रत्येक पटक व्यापार गरिसकेर गाउँ फर्किएपछी एकएक गर्दै थपेका थिए ।



व्यापारीको जीवन समृद्धिमा पक्कै सुरू भएको थिएन । दुइकोठे भूपडीमा उनको जन्म हुँदा उनि टूहरो भइसकेका थिए । उनकी आमा इखालु थिइन्, स्वाभिमानी थिइन्, त्यसैले अर्काको दयामा भरपर्नुको सट्टा हरेक दाना अन्न र हरेक सरो लत्ताकालागि जुझ्न मनपराइन् । यी व्यापारीभन्दा दुइ वर्ष जेठा इनका दाजु जाडोयामको पहिलो हिउँ पर्दासम्मपनि खर्कबाट नफर्किएपछि यी व्यापारीले आफ्नी आमालाई भने "आमा ! जाडोयामभरि पेटमा माड लगाउन मात्रै पूग्ने अन्नकालागि म ठूलाबा र काकाहरूको चौँरी पछ्याउँदै खर्कखर्क डुल्दिनँ, मलका भारी बोकेर कान्लाकान्लै हिंडदिनँ । बरू म व्यपारी बन्छु ।"

उनकी आमाले उनको अनुहार हातमा लिईन र उनका आँखा नियालिन अनि निशब्द घरबाट बाहिर गईन् । त्यस साँभ जब उनि घर फर्किईन् उनको हातभरि भैंडाको कमलो उन थियो । "उर्गेन," उनले भनिन्, "आनालागि सम्पत्ति जम्मा गर्नू अघि तैंले यी सबैको ऋण तिर्नेछस् " त्यसपछि उनले यी व्यापारीलाई गाउँभरिका ती ममतामयी महिलाहरूको नाम र सापटीको मात्रा सुनाइन् जसले उनलाई थोरैथोरै उन दिएर सधैँकालागि ऋणी बनाएका थिए । अहिले हरेक दिशामा तीन दिनसम्म हिंड्दा पनि उनीजित धनी अर्को मान्छे भेटिन्नथियो । तैपनि अधवैंशे उमेर पूगीसकेका यी व्यापारीलाई अभौपनि ती महिलाहरूको नाम स्पष्ट सम्भना थियो जसले आफ्नो वात्सल्यभाव र करूणाले उनलाई सानैमा अहिलेको भव्य भाग्यतर्फ धकेलिदिएका थिए ।

फाँटभरि हिउँको बाक्लो चादर बसेको त्यो पहिलो जाडो भरि यी व्यापारीले भैंडाको ऊन केलाए र धागो काते, हाते तानमा कपडा बुने । उनकी आमा अँगेना नजिकै बसेर मन्त्र जप्दै बसिन् । जब हिउँ पग्लियो र यारीको उर्वर, कालो माटोबाट गहुँका हरिया टुसा पलाए, जब दक्षिणका मैदानहरूमा जाडो याम बिताएर बुट्टे लत्ताकपडा, बोराका बोरा अन्न, तेलले भरिएका घडा तथा धुँवा ओकल्ने लौहराक्षसका कथा लिएर गाउँले व्यापारी फर्किए, तबसम्ममा यी व्यापारीले बेच्नकालागि खस्रो ऊनका दुइ कम्मल तथा रात कटाउनकालागि च्यादर बुनिसकेका थिए।

यी व्यापारिलाई देख्दा हिमालपारी तिब्बतका नीला आकाश र भारतका बाक्ला जंगल देखिसकेका र आफूआफू गफिँदा परदेशी बोली बोल्ने उनका कुटुम्बहरू दयाभावसहित मुस्काउँथे र उनसँग कहिल्यै पनि हिष्कको स्वरमा बोल्दैनथिए । आफ्ना छोराहरूले बाखा हराए गाली गर्दै चौँरीको गुईँठाले हिर्काउँथे तर यी व्यापारीसँग भने मिठै वचन गर्थे । अनि प्रत्युत्तरमा यी व्यापारीले आफुसँग भएको सबै गुणले आफ्ना अग्रज बन्धुबान्धवको करूणाको पैँचो तिर्थे - इमान, लगन, आज्ञाकारिता र सम्मान देखाउँथे । व्यापार गर्न हिँडुदाको लामो र कष्टदायी बाटोमा कुन चौरी वा भैंडा कुन नातेदारको हो, बाटोमा पर्ने कुन गाउँमा कसले कोसँग कस्तो व्यापारिक सम्भौता गरेको हो सबै सतर्कताकासाथ याद राख्थे । र यिनै तथ्यहरूलाई दाइँको खालमा अन्नलाई निफनेर अर्को वर्षकालागि बीउ बचाएभैँ व्यापारकालागि प्रयोग गर्थे ।

वसन्त र गर्मी याम तिब्बतका नुनखानी र अनन्त घाँसेमैदानमा व्यापार गर्दै बिताएपछि यी व्यापारीले बोकेको एक जोडी कम्मल बीस थैली नून बन्यो । आफ्ना नातेदारसँग हतारिँदै यारी आएर त्यतिनै हतारमा खेतीपातीको काम सकाएपछि यी व्यापारी दक्षिण हानीए । कर्णालीले पहाड चिरेर बनाएको बाटोमा दक्षिण लाग्दा खसभाषी गाउँलेहरूले उनको कलिलो उमेर देखेर सोभो मानि उनलाई फकाउन खोजे, नुनका भारी सस्तोमा बेच्न भने । तर उनले ढिपी गरिरहे । व्यापारीहरूले खसभाषीहरूसँग मित लगाएको हेरे. मोलतोल गर्दा कत्तिको आवेशमा अथवा शान्तिसहित वार्तालाप हन्थ्यो, केहि नातेदारहरू कित आतुरताकासाथ कमाइलाई व्यापारको समान अथवा बख्खुको तहमा सिउने सिक्कामा परिवर्तित गर्थे त्यो अध्ययन गर्दै बसे । उनले आफ्नो नुन बेचेनन्, तर आफ्नै उमेरका छोरासहितकी गरिब महिलालाई अन्जुली भरिभरि नुन दिन बोरा खोले । बाक्ला पाखुरा र पुटुक्क पेट लागेका खसभाषीले समान साटासाट गर्न गफिन आए नबुभे भैँ गरे तर आँखामा भोक र हातका नङमूनि खेतको माटो बोकेका गरिब ठिटाहरूसँग भने साम्पा बाँड्दै र उनीहरूको खोलेमा हाल्न नुन भिक्दै खसभाषा सिक्दै साँभहरू बिताए ।

उनीभन्दा केहि साल मात्रै ठुला नातेदार पनि भन्थे – "नुन बेची हाल्। अनि चाहिने जित अन्न किनेर आमाकहाँ फर्कि । बिचरी सूर्ताले मरिसकिहोलिन् ।"

तर यी व्यापारी आफ्नो अठोटमा अङिग रहे । उनिभन्दा भाग्यशाली र सम्पन्न कसैलाई पनि उनको महत्वाकांक्षा प्रति आपत्ति नहोस् भन्ने ख्याल पुऱ्याईरहे । आफ्नो तर्फबाट कुनै बहाना बनाएनन्, अनि मुनाफाकै लोभमा उनि लागेकाछन् भन्ने पनि उजागर हुन दिएनन् ।

तिब्बतमा बतासले बिथोलेका मैदान अथवा सल्यानभन्दा दक्षिणका वाफिएका बैंसीहरूमा एकै दिन मात्रै धेरै यात्रा गरे सरसामानको मोल कत्तिको बढ़न सक्थ्यो भन्ने उनले देखेका थिए । यारीमै व्यापार गरे एक पाथी नुनले जुम्ली खसहरूले बोकेर ल्याएको चामल तीन पाथी किन्न सक्थ्यो । तर तिब्बतका नुन खानी जहाँ दिनभरि केटाकेटी र महिलाहरू दिनभरि छालाको थैलोमा नृनिलो पानी बोकेर डाँडाका कान्लामा फैलिएका गहाहरूमा त्यहि पानी घाममा सुकाएर नुन सोहर्थ त्यहि एक पाथी चामलले तीन पाथी नुन किन्न पुग्थ्यो । यस्ता गन्तव्यबीच रूमिल्लएको व्यापारी जीवनमा दुख धेरै थियो तर मुनाफा पनि दोब्बरचौबर गर्दै बढ्थ्यो । उमेरले काँचै भएपनि हाम्रा यी व्यापारीले आफूले कमाउन सक्ने सम्पत्तिको अथाह भण्डार कल्पना भने गर्न सक्थे । र त्यसै अनुसार उनि होशियारीका साथ काम गर्थे – आर्जन सबैभन्दा धेरै नहोउन्जेल सामान च्यापीराख्थे. अनि मात्रै बेच्थे ।

उवा, सुकाइएको खुमानी र तोरीको तेल बोकेर उनका नातेदारहरू ऋमशः घरतर्फ लागे । तर यी व्यापारीलाई यात्राको अन्तिम गन्तव्य देख्नुथियो, एकैदिनमा संसारभरिकै सबै चौँरीहरूलेभन्दा बढी सरसामान बोक्नसक्ने फलामे राक्षस भेट्न मन थियो । उनलाई दक्षिणका काला वर्णका मानिससँग मित्रता गाँस्नु थियो किनभने उनिहरूमा कस्तुरी र हिमाली चरस अनि सल्लाको खोटोकोलागी विहंगम लोभ थियो र त्यसै लोभमा यी व्यापारीकालागि आमाको चरणमा समर्पण गर्न चाहिने सम्पत्तिको प्रचुर सम्भावना थियो ।

हैजा फैलिएको दक्षिणी जङ्गल छिचोलेर व्यापार गर्न हिंड्नेहरूले गाउँ फर्केंदा ल्याउने सामानमा समुद्री मुगा, ऐनाहरू र भिलिमिली चुरापोते, बुद्धमूर्ति तथा बुद्धचित्रांकित गरगहना हुन्थे । तर बाली भित्राउने समय नजिकै घर फर्किंदा यी व्यापारीले भने व्यापारकालागि तडकभडकका सामान होइन अन्नमात्रै बोकेका दुइवटा खच्चर मात्रै लिएर आएका थिए । उनले आमालाई घामले डढेको आफ्नो अनुहार देखाए । आमाले स्नेहकासाथ उनको माथासँग आफ्नो माथा छोइन्, कृतज्ञतासहित प्रार्थना गरिन र नियालेर छोराको अनुहार हेरिन । ती व्यापारी पनि तुरून्तै भैंडाको ऊन दिएर गुण लगाउने महिलाहरूको ढोकाढोकामा उभिन गए ।

"तिम्रो मन ठूलो छ, उर्गेन," हरेक महिलाले ती व्यापारीले उनको अगाडी राखिदिएको अन्नको थुप्रोलाई हेर्दै भनिन् । उत्तरमा ती व्यापारीले पनि केहि नभनिकनै एक चुली अन्न अभै थिपदिए । अनि ती महिलाहरू पनि एकएक गर्दै

आफ्ना घरका माथिल्ला तल्ला चढेर अँगालोमा मसिनो ऊन ल्याए । हरेक महिलाले भनिन्, "बाबू, यसको चाहिँ पैँचो तिरेर हामीलाई लाजैमर्दी नपार । तिम्रा बुवा हाम्रा आफ्नै दाइसरि थिए । तिमीलाई पनि आफ्नै छोरासरि माया गर्ने अधिकार छ हामीलाई, त्यसैले यो ऊन तिमीलाई दिंदैछीँ।"



त्यसबीच धेरै समय बितिसकेको थियो । व्यापारीकी आमा उनलाई साँच्चै टुहुरो छोडेर बितिसकेकी थिईन । तर यी व्यापारीले आफ्नोलागी फराकिलो संसार बनाइसकेका थिए । फराकिला कोठा भएको घर बनाएर डाँडा ढाकिसकेका थिए । यौवन र बल बाँकीछँदै उनले जीवनभरिलाइ पुग्ने सम्पत्ति जोडिसकेका थिए । उनलाई असल र कमसल सामानको भेउ सिकाउने उनका ठुलाबडाले आफ्ना छोराहरूलाई उनीसँग व्यापार सिक्न पठाउँथे । अभै धनी मानिसहरू उनलाई छोरी दिन आउँथे। तर यी व्यापारीले ऐशआराम भन्दा बढी दुख भेलेकी टुहुरीलाई आफ्नो पत्नी बनाए । छोराहरू जन्मिए, र तिनले पनि व्यापार सिके, हिस्सी परेका पत्नी बिहे गरे र त्यो ठुलो घरलाई उनीहरूको खुशीले भरे ।

ती व्यापारीले जब आफूले कमाएको सबै सुनचाँदी, भारतका दरबारमा खोजिने कस्तुरीको बिना र चौँरीका पुच्छर, अग्राखका सन्दुकमा राखिएका मिहिन रेशमका कपडा, सातदिनको बाटो परसम्म चरिरहेका गाईवस्तु, चन्दनका मुढा र काँसका भाँडाहरू आदि सम्पत्तिको लेखाजोखा गरे उनले अड्कल काटे कि उनका छोराहरू र तिनका छोरानाति गरि अर्को सात पुस्तासम्म कसैले पनि ढलेको सिन्को नभाँचि वा व्यापारकालागि गाउँ नछोडी खानपुग्ने सम्पत्ति जम्मा भैसकेको थियो । तर आफ्नो घरका देवताहरू अगाडी उभिएर सोच्दा ती व्यापारीलाइ घोर निराशाले घेऱ्यो यति दुखले आर्जेको सम्पत्ति जम्मा सात पुस्ताकालागि मात्रै पुग्ने आठौँ पुस्ताका छोराछोरीले चाहिं के गर्लान् ? यदि यी व्यापारीले आफ्ना सन्ततिलाइ हुम्लाको घोर चिसो र भोकबाट जोगाउने हो भने उनले अभै थप सात पुस्ताकालागि पुग्ने सम्पत्ति जोड्नु पर्ने भो

तर जीवनको दोसाँभमा आइपूग्दा उनको मनले युवावस्थाको तीक्ष्णता हराउन थालेको थियो । पहिलेजस्तो उनको हिसाब बाक्लो हिमआँधीमापनि खुट्टा नकमाई हिमाली भञ्ज्यांग पार गर्दै हिंड्ने याक जस्तो थिएन, केहि कदम चुक्थे । पहिले कपडाको तानमा यौटा कुनाबाट अर्को कुनामा हत्तिने गोटी जस्तो थिएनन् उनको अबाकस गिन्ताराका गोटीहरू । बरू शिथिल बनेका थिए । अनि उनको विचारले पनि द्रुतता हराएको थियो, अचानक चुँड्ने धागो जस्तै भएको थियो । यस्तै छिनछिनमा टुट्ने विचारले भरिएको एक बिहानमा एक्कासी आजपर्यन्त घोरिएर काम गर्देगर्दा आफ्नै विचार भनि भृविकएका शब्द र गीतलाई चिने । यसरि हरेक दिन काममा घोतिलँदा सधैँ पृष्ठभूमिमा गुञ्जिइरहेको गीतमा रहेको चैन र शान्तिको आभास पाएका रहेछन् । उनले अहिलेसम्म अनुभूत गरेको अमन र स्थिरता, हृदयको शान्ति त आर्कै कसैको गीतको माधुर्यले पो सम्भव बनाएको रहेछ । यस्तो गीत जुन गाउँभरि गुञ्जिएर उनलाई खोज्दै उनको कोठासम्म आइपुग्थ्यो । जब उनले यो सत्य बुभे, उनलाई अचानक आफ्नो शान्ति र धैर्यको तट भिक्किंदै गएको आभास भयो - ती त कहिल्यैपनि उनको आफ्नो अधिनमा रहेनछन्, बरू यो विस्फोटको क्षणसम्मकालागि उधारोमा लिईएका रहेछन् ।

ती व्यापारीका एक साथी थिएनन् र जसलाई भण्डै बीस वर्ष अगाडि औलोले लगेको थियो ? उसले यौटी छोरीलाई टुहुरी बनाएर गएको हैन र ? बिचरा ! मध्यहिउँदमा ज्वरोले असिनापसिना हुँदै, थरर काम्दै मर्नुभन्दा दुर्भाग्य अरू के हुनसक्छ ? त्यतिबेला ह्युलसा वा मान्डु जाने सबै बाटो हिउँले पुरिएका हुन्थे । र रोग पनि सर्यौं कोश टाढाबाट बोकेर ल्याईएका हुन्थे । त्यसैले त भूमेसिमे अथवा कुनै अर्का रैथाने देवताले हार मान्थे । धामी र डाँग्रीले पतुर्दा पनि उनीहरूको आवाजमा आत्मविश्वासभन्दा संकोच धेरै हुन्थ्यो । धूपको धुँवाले तनमनमा स्वास्थ्यलाभको आशा भर्नुभन्दा बढी आँखा मात्रै पोल्थ्यो । औलोले त यसरि हिमालको चोखो, चिसो हावामा हैन तराइका सिमसारमा पो मान्छे मार्नु पर्थ्यो । यसरि धेरैबेर पीडामा तिडुपएपिछ त्यो साथी आफ्नी सात वर्षे छोरीलाई टुहरी बनाएर बितेको थियो । उसकी छोरी भने तुरून्तै आफ्नोअघि कस्तो दुख छ भन्ने बुभोर प्राण जोगाउने प्रबल इच्छा सहित चुपचाप जीवनसंघर्षमा होमिएकी थिईन ।

र अहिले सबै तथ्य सम्भिनंदा व्यापारीलाइ आफैँप्रति अलिकति घृणा पनि जाग्यो – आखिर उनले आफ्नो जेठो छोरालाइ एक बोरा अन्न र यौटा कम्मल बोकाएर टुहुरी बच्चीकहाँ पठाएदेखि अहिलेसम्म उनको मृत साथी वा टुहुरी छोरीबारे एक पटक सोचेकापनि थिएनन् । उनले बल्ल बुभे कि तिनै टुहुरीले नै उनको मनशान्तिका गीत गएकी थिइन् । अनि उनले यो पनि बुभे कि उनलाई ती टुहरीको नामपनि याद थिएन ।

ती व्यापारी आफ्नो घरको डिलसम्म आए र ती टुहुरीले हिँड्दै गरेको हेरेर उभिए । के नाम थियो उनको सोनाम ? छेतेन ? माथि पुलुक्क हेर्दा टुहुरीले व्यापारीलाई देखिन् । व्यापारीलाई ग्लानीले जकड्यो । टुहुरीले गाउँदै गरेको गीतको लय तोडिन् र व्यापारीलाई हेरेर मुस्काईन्, सम्मानमा टाउको कन्याइन्, घरछेउ हुँदै बिलाइन् र फेरी गाउन थालिन् । व्यापारी आफूले काम गर्ने कोठामा छिरे – कुनामा मकल, होचो टेबल अगाडी बाघको छाला, गिन्तारा, बटुको र तातोपानीको भाँडा, मसी र टेबलमा अस्तव्यस्त कागजहरू । यस्सो एकातिर टाउको ढल्काएर उनले ती टूहरीको गीतलाइ पच्छ्याईरहे ।



यारी गाउँकी घट्टेनी ती ट्रह्री हरेक दिन गाउँको ट्रप्पोमा रहेको घट्टसम्म जान्थिन् र गाउँलेहरूले घट्टमा पिँध्न ल्याउने अन्न पर्खिएर बस्थिन् । बेलूकी घरमै पिठो ल्याईदिएबापत उनले पनि भाग पाउँथिन । हरेक वर्ष गाउँलेहरूले घट्टेनीकालागि पुराना बख्खु, चुबा र कम्मलपनि छुट्टाउँथे । हिउँदका महिनामा गाउँको खोला जम्थ्यो र घट्टमा अन्न पिँध्न कोहि आउँदैनथ्यो । त्यसैले घट्टेनीले हरेक दिन पाउने भागबाट मुट्टीमुट्टी जोगाएर हिउँदकालागि जगेडा गर्नुपर्थ्यो । उनको सानो भूपडी गाउँबाट बाहिर जाने बाटोमा खोला किनारमै थियो । यी व्यापारी हरेक वर्ष चारपटक घोडा चढेर त्यहि भूपडीकै बाटो आवतजावत गर्थे । तर अहिले सोच्दा उनले थाहा पाए कि उनले त्यहाँ केहि देखेका वा सुनेका रहेनछन् – भूपडीको ढोका त सधैँ खुल्लै हुन्थ्यो । ढोकामा टाँगीएको पुरानो कम्मलभित्र हेर्दा देखिने भुइँ ओसिलो थियो, अनि अँध्यारो कुनामा कतै भुइँमा ओछ्याइएको लम्पट नजिकै धुँवा र मोसोबीच हराएका दुइवटा भाँडा देखिन्थे । व्यापारीले घट्टेनीको गीतबाहेक केहि सुनेका थिएनन्, तर उनको यात्रामा टाढासम्म पच्छ्याउने र लामो यात्रापछि गाउँ फर्किंदा स्वागतमा पर्खीरहने पनि तिनै घट्टेनीका गीत हन्थे ।

दुखले घट्टेनीमा कुनै छाप छोड्न सकेको थिएन । उनका बुवा बितेको केहि हप्तामै गाउँका पुराना घट्टे थेन्डुपले गुम्बाका गेशेलाइ निम्तो दिएर बोलाएका थिए । हरेक घरबाट एकएक जना थेन्ड्रपको घर चिया खान पुगेका थिए । "मैले तिमीहरूको अन्न पिँधेको धेरै वर्ष भयो, दाजुभाइहरू, तर अब मलाई थकाई लागिसक्यो । जपिराख्न भनेर गेशेले मलाइ मन्त्र दिनुभएको छ अनि गुम्बा पछाडी यौटा कटेरोमा मेरो ज्यान बिसाउने कुनो पनि । म मरेपछि मलाई बोक्न आउँछौ भन्ने आशा गरेकोछु । तर, दाजुभाईहरू, मेरा भतिजहरू – यति बुझ्नु कि अब यो गाउँमा मेरो अनुहार देख्ने छैनौ।"

त्यहाँ जम्मा भएका सबैले गम्भीरताकासाथ टाउको हल्लाए, निधार कन्याए र सबैभन्दा महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्न अरू कसैले सोधोस् भन्ने आशमा कृरिरहे – "तर, थेन्ड्प, तपाईँको काम चाहिँ अब कसले गर्छ नि?"

तर कसैले त्यो प्रश्न सोध्नुअघि नै थेन्डुपले मसिनो स्वरमा भने, "तिमीहरू कसले निसकेको यौटा ज्ञान मैले सिकेको छु – घट्टेको काम कृतज्ञता नबुझ्नेकालागि हैन । हो, खोलाले घट्ट घुमाउँछ, अनि घट्टले अन्न पिँध्छ, तर पिठो चाहिँ घट्टेले नै बनाउँछ।" सबैले थेन्ड्रपक क्रा बुभे – घट्टेले करूणा नदेखाऊने हो भने हरेक पटक पिँधेको पिठो र त्यसको प्रयोजन मिल्दैनथ्यो । साम्पा खाने पिठो र वस्तुलाई खुवाउने पिठो एकैसरि हनसक्दैन।

"अहिले हाम्रोबीचमा यौटी अभागी टूहरी छे । उसको बाबुको कर्मको फलले उसले यस्तो दुख पाएकी हो कि उसकै पूर्वजन्मको कर्मले हो, त्यो त गेशेले मात्रै बुझ्नुहुन्छ होला ।" त्यति बेलानै सबैले बुभीसकेका थिए कि त्यहि टूहरी अब गाउँकी घट्टेनी बन्नेछिन् । त्यसपछिका थुप्रै महिना गाउँका महिलाहरूले ती टूहरीलाई थुक्पा बनाउने पिठो कसरि पिँध्ने र साम्पा बनाउन भुटेको अन्न कसरि पिँध्ने अनि वस्तुका दाना कसरि पिँध्ने र उवाको भुस किन जोगाइराख्ने सबै सिकाए ।



यसरि जब उनको काम नै उनको जीवन बन्यो, जब दैनिकीका उतारचढावमा धेरै सोच खर्चिनु नपर्नेभयो, ती टुह्रीले गीत गाउन थालिन् । मिर्मिरेदेखि गोधुलीसम्म हरेक साससँगै देवता र प्रेमका गीत गाउन थालिन् । गीतमामात्रै वर्णन सुनेका सुदूर देशहरू, आफूले कहिल्यै अनुभव गर्न नपाएको आमाको माया, हिउँ र वर्षा बोकील्याउने हावा र बरफ पगाली चिसो भगाउने घामको रापकाबारे गाउन थालिन् । एकपटक सुन्ने बित्तिकै उनलाई जुनसुकै गीत पनि याद रहन्थ्यो । त्यसैले उनी वर्षा र बालीका गीत, हिमालपारी ङारीको कैलाश अनि नेपाल खाल्डोका स्वयम्भूका तीर्थयात्राबारे गाउन सिक्थन् । उनका गीत त्यस्ता सूत्र बने जसले गाउँले जीवनलाइ यौटै मालामा गाँसेका थिए – गाउँलेहरू यौटा गीत सुनेर उठ्थे अनि अर्को गीत सुन्दै निदाउँथे । हिउँदको जाडोमा उनका गीतले जिजभित्रै पुगेर कहिले त्यहाँको पिडा हटाइदिन्थे अनि अहिले जेठमा बरफ पग्लिएर बन्ने ससाना खोलाको मिठो सम्भना बन्थे । वसन्तका ती थोरै दिनहरूमा उनका गीत हरियो घाँसको सूगन्ध र अल्पजीवि फूलहरूबीच आतुर पुतलीहरूको नाच बन्थ्यो । अनि जब कसैले एक्कासी आफ्नै मस्तिष्कको विचारलाइ यौटा

कुनाबाट अर्को कुना भाग्दै गरेको क्षणमा पाउँथ्यो, घट्टेनीका गीत तिनै विचार हुन्थे, धुँवाका विलयमान आकार भेँ । त्यस गाउँमा जन्म र मृत्युका क्षणका चिच्याहट दुवै तिनै घट्टेनीका गीतसँगै गाँसिएका थिए।



व्यापारी दिनभरी आफ्नो खातामा हिसाब केलाउँदै बसे, चुबामा राखेको साम्पामा छूपी खेलाउँदै बसे । तर उनका विचार आत्तिएका भँगेरा भेँ यताबाट उता भागीरहे । उनलाई सधैँ आफ्नो शरीर एक अवरोधभौँ लागेको थियो - सधैँ पोषण माग्ने, खाँदा पनि बेर लगाएर चपाउनुपर्ने, जिउ भरि किंहें न किंहें दुखिरहने, उत्तरतर्फ ताक्लाकोट अथवा दक्षिणमा अछाम जाने योजना बनाउँदैगर्दा पनि बिचैमा शारीरिक आवश्यकताले गिज्याउने । यसरि सधैँ फर्कीफर्की भौतिक शरीरमा फिर्ता आइराख्नु पर्नु उनकालागि घृणालाग्दो थियो । उनका बुहारीहरूलाई यो कुरा थाहा थियो, त्यसैले उनको अघि तातो नून चिया अथवा याकको सुकूटी राखेको खोले ल्याईदिँदा वा मकलमा कोइला थप्दा अनि धूँवा बाहिर जाओस् भनि ण्याल खोल्दा उनीहरू एकदमै चुपचाप आफ्नो काम सकाएर हराईहाल्थे । जूनजस्तै अनुहार भएकी माइली बृहारी एक कचौरा भात र मासू लिएर माथि आइपुग्दा व्यापारीले उनलाई पर्खन भने । टोपीमुनि टाउको कन्याए र गम खाए । बृहारी पर्खिएर बसिन ।

"दावा ! तिमी घट्ट गएको कति भयो?" उनले सोधे । "भोलि जाँदैछु, बुवा," दावाले भनिन् । "आजै जाऊ." व्यापारी ले भने । "आजै जाऊ ।"

साँभ्रपरेपछि व्यापारीले घट्टेनीले घरबाहिर आएर दावालाइ बोलाएको सुने । "आउँदैछु !" दावाले भनिन् र हतारहतार भन्याङ् भर्न थालिन् । व्यापारीले प्रायः बोलाउनेभन्दा ठूलो स्वरमा उनलाई बोलाए, "दावा ! एकैछिन् माथि आउ त!"

भ-याङ्मा उभिएरै दावाले भित्र हेरिन् – कोठामा उनको टाउको र काँधमात्रै देखिन्थे ।

"अरूबेलामा दिने भन्दा अलि ठुलो भाग देउ है उसलाई आज । दोब्बर नै देख ।"

दावाले मुस्काउँदै टाउको हल्लाइन् । तल भार्दै गर्दा आधा दावालाई र आधा आफ्नै सन्तुष्टिकालागि भनेभैँ ती व्यापारीले भने, "हामीसँग त पुग्नेजति छँदै छ नि, हैन र?"

दावाले तल जिस्काएको सुने – "छेतेन् ! आज त ठूलै भोला चाहिनेभयो !"



त्यसपिछको हप्ताभरिमा व्यापारीले दावालाइ दुइपटक घट्टसम्म पठाए र त्यसैअनुसार घट्टेनीका गीतमा उमंगको नयाँ उठाई सुने । उनले बुहारीहरूसँग तिनका पुराना कपडा मागे । "हामीसँग पुराना कपडा नै छैनन्, बुवा !" भन्दाभन्दैपनि उनले बुहारीहरूका कपडाबाट यौटा बाक्लो बख्खु र दुइवटा चुबा रोजे ।

"त्यो टुहुरीलाई लगेर देउ, दावा," उनले भने ।

व्यापारीले जब घट्टेनीलाइ खालीखुट्टा हिंडेको देखे उनले आफ्नी दिवंगत पत्नीका जुत्ता पठादिए । तर सधैँ आफूले पर्याप्त दिएँ कि दिइनँ भन्ने चिन्ता गरिरहे । हप्ताभरिनै उनले घट्टेनीका गीत सुनीरहे - तर अब भने उनलाई ती गीत आफ्नै सम्पत्तिको अंश भएभैँ लाग्नथाल्यो । कहिलेकिहैं आफैँ गाउने कोशिश पनि गरे तर आफ्नै स्वर सुनेर उनलाई लाज लाग्यो । तर उनको अन्तर्मनले भने उनलाई घच्घच्याइराह्यो - दिनदिनै उनी अभै थोरै, अभै थोरै काम सकाउँदै थिए । व्यापारमा जाँदा बाटोमा पर्ने बासहरू बिसैँदै थिए । त्यहाँका मानिसले नुन, अन्न र राडीकम्मलबाहेक उनबाट के किन्न चाहलान् भन्ने कल्पना गर्ने आत्मविश्वास घट्दैथियो । उनले यत्तिका वर्ष सम्पत्ति जोड्ने इच्छाबाहेक अरू क्नै विचार मनमा पालेका थिएनन्, न त उनले सुस्ताउन नै सिकेकाथिए । तर अहिले अचानक उनि आतुर भएकाथिए - अन्तर्मनमा यौटा रिक्तता महसुस गर्दैथिए । त्यो रिक्तता नमेटी उनले सन्तुष्टि पाउन नसक्ने भएकाथिए ।



एक साँभ गाउँलेहरूले छानामा सुकाएको बिस्कुन उठाइसकेर जताततै छरिएर चिच्याउँदै, गाउँदै खेलिरहेका केटाकेटिलाइ घर बोलाएको हेरिसकेपिछ अनि शिशिरयामको छोटो दिनमाथि पर्दा लगाउँदै सबैले आफ्नाआफ्ना घरका दैलो लगाएको देखिसकेपछि र आफ्नै घरछेउबाट उमंगका गीत गाउँदै घट्टेनी आफ्नो भूपडीतिर गएको थाहा भएपछि भुवादार टोपीले टाउको छोप्दै व्यापारी घरबाट बाहिर निस्किए । "उर्गेनला !" यौटा भाइले बोलायो, "कता लाग्नुभएको ?" तर उसलाई "पिछ आउँला" भन्न लाग्ने समयभन्दा बढी खर्च नगरि व्यापारी अपर्भट काममा गए भैं हतारहतार गए । हरेक कदमले उनलाई आफ्नो घरबाट टाढा र घट्टको नजिक लग्यो र उनलाई मनमनै आफू भनभन ठुलो चोर हुँदै गएभौँ लाग्यो । खोकिलामा बोकेको चाँदीको टुक्रा भनभन गहुङ्गो हुँदै गएभैँ लाग्यो ।

रातकालागि स्थिर घट्टको चक्की ती व्यापारीको उचाई जित्तकै चौडा थियो र घट्ट अत्यन्तै सफासँग बढारिएको थियो – कतै अन्नका दाना वा पिठो देखिन्नथ्यो । घट्टमनिबाट बगिरहेको पानीले घट्टलाई चिसो बनाएको थियो तर अन्नको सुवासले व्यापारीको मनमा यौटा अनौठो न्यानोपना ल्यायो । यहाँ रातको समयमा त कोहिपनि आउँदैनथिए – साना नानीहरू घट्टमा पानी राक्षस बस्छ भन्ने विश्वास गर्थे भने अरू सबैले घट्टलाइ घट्टेनीको ठाउँ मान्थे जहाँ उनको श्रमकोमात्रै अर्थ रहन्थ्यो र बाँकी त काठ र ढुंगा मात्रै थियो । व्यापारीले आफूले ल्याएको चाँदी सतर्कतासाथ भिके । त्यसमा चिनियाँ सम्राटको छाप थियो – घोडाको टाउकोको आकार, आँखाकालागि गहिरा धार काटिएका । व्यापारीले त्यसलाई घट्टको चक्की नजिकै राखे । छेतेनले यसलाई चिन्लिन र? उनले सोचे । यसलाई चिन्न त यी व्यापारीले भौँ आधा संसार देखेको हुनुपर्छ, नत्र चाँदी यो ठुलो रकम र टिनको टुऋामा केहि फरक देखिन्न । यो त चिनियाँ सम्राटको आफ्नै मुद्रा थियो – यसले आधा गाडा चन्दनका मुढा किन्न सक्थ्यो, सयौँ गाडी नुन किन्न सक्थ्यो । ती गरीब घट्टेनीकालागि बाँचुन्जेल पुग्ने सम्पत्ति थियो यो । तर उनले यसलाई चिन्नेछिन्, व्यापारीले आफैँलाइ सान्त्वना दिँदै भने । जब छेतेन बिहान आउँछिन मिर्मिरे को धुमिल प्रकाशमापनि यो चाँदीको मुद्रा चिकनेछ र उनको नजरमा पर्नेछ ।



र, जसरि आजपर्यन्त यारी गाउँमा बिहानको मिर्मिरे आउँछ त्यसरीनै त्यो दिन पनि हिमालको छायाँमा अवस्थित त्यो उर्वर उपत्यकामा बिहान भयो । सबैभन्दा पहिले कर्णाली नदीबाट हुस्सु उठेर आयो र सूर्यको तेज अघि विलाउँदै गएका ताराहरूलाई छोप्यो । त्यसपछि सल्ला र धूपीका जङ्गलमा चिर्बिराउँदै चराहरू बिउँभे र त्यसपिछ टाढा जङ्गलमा मृग कराए अनि गोठबाट चौँरी डुऋन थाले । मानिसहरू उठेर प्रार्थना गर्दे दिनको सामना गर्न तम्सिए । धूपीका पात बालेर निस्किएको धुँवाले हिमालतिर लखेटिएको हुस्सुलाई पच्छ्यायो तर दुवैले मिलेर घाम छेक्नु अधिनै आकाश र धरतीबीचमै हरायो । घट्टेनीको गीत व्यापारीको घरछेवै हुँदै घट्टतर्फ गयो । व्यापारीले प्रार्थना कोठामा रहेका पूर्खा र देवताका मृर्ति हेरेर मुस्कुराए, साक्षी बोलाए भें बुद्धलाई छोए ।

अकस्मात यौटा सन्नाटाले गाउँलाइ छोप्यो र व्यापारीको कोठासम्मै आइपुग्यो । हुन त अगेनाको आगोमा दाउराको चिटचिट र ओदानमा उम्लिरहेको दूधको भुकभुकजस्तै सँगसँगै जेलिएर हजारौँ आवाज आए र ग्रामीण जीवनको निरन्तर दैनिकीको संकेत दिईरहे । तर ती सबै आवाजमाभ्न यौटा विशिष्ट ध्वनीको अनुपस्थिति टड्कारो थियो – घट्टेनीका गीत निशब्द भएका थिए।

घट्टेनीका गीत सर्वत्र छँदा त्यसको नशामा लड्ड भएका गाउँलेहरूले त्यो सन्नाटा सुनेनन तर यसरि अप्रत्याशित आइपुगेको रूखो सन्नाटाले व्यापारीको कान बजायो । उनले घट्टेनीका गीतले ऋमशः यारी गाउँ छोडेर हिमालका छायाँमा हराउँदै गएको देखे । अब गाउँका गल्लिहरू अँध्यारा देखिए, गाईवस्तु बेचैन भए र उवाका पाकेका बालामा लागेको घाम पनि फिक्का, बेस्वादिलो देखियो । जसोजसो घट्टेनीको गीत हराउँदै गयो तसोतसो गाउँलाइ अहिलेसम्म ढाकीराख्ने न्यानोपना पनि हराउँदै गयो । यो सन्नाटा बाक्लो छायाँसरि थियो । लाग्थ्यो अब देवताहरूलेपनि यारीलाइ माया मारे ।

दिनभरीनै व्यापारी व्याकुल भएर अकस्मात टेबलबाट उठ्थे, छतको डिलसम्म गएर यसरी घट्टतिर हेर्थे मानौँ यो प्रार्थनाद्वारा उनले ती गीत फिर्ता ल्याउन सक्छन् । गाउँका महिलाहरू अन्न बोकेर घट्टतिर गएको पनि देखे, र घट्टको आवाज पनि सुने, तर कुनै गीत कतैबाट गुञ्जिएन । व्यापारीले हेर्दाहेर्दै घट्टेनी साँभपख उनैले दिएको बख्खुमा बेरिएर आफ्नो घरतर्फ हतारिँदै गइन् । बिहान व्यापारीले घट्टेनीको घरतिर हेर्दै चुल्हो बलेनबलेको भेउ पाउने कोशिश गरे तर असफल रहे । बिहानपनि दावासँग गफ नगरी अनि व्यापारीको मुखसम्म नहेरी हतारिँदै जाँदा घट्टेनीको अनुहारमा यौटा अनौठो विक्षिप्तता थियो ।

"दावा !" दिउँसो कुनैबेला घट्टका चक्की रोकेको आवाज आएपछि व्यापारीले माइली बुहारीलाई बोलाए । "घट्ट जाऊ, दावा । दुइ भारी गहुँ लैजानु ।"

"बुवा," दावाले भनिन्, "हामीलाई हिउँदभरि चाहिने भन्दा धेरै पिठो<sup>ँ</sup>छ घरमा ।" सधैँ थपिथपि पठाएको गहुँ, कपडा र जुत्ताहरू अनि कम्मल – व्यापारी अचानक लाजले राता भए । कसैले सोधे के जवाफ दिने ? जे सोच्दा हन् छोराबुहारीले ! तर त्यसैबेला सबैकुरा बुभाईरहने धैर्य उनमा थिएन ।

"नानी - खुरूक्क जाउ, हुन्न? घरमा पिठो धेरै छ भैँ लाग्छ भने आधा डोको गहुँ लौजाऊ, तर जाऊ ।"

दावा घट्टबाट फर्किएपछि बुहारीलाई घट्टेनीकाबारे कसरी सोधौँ भन्ने छटपटी भयो व्यापारीलाई । उनि अमिलिएकी थिइन् कि हाँसेरै कुरा गर्देथिईन् ? आफ्नो अधिरता र खिन्नता लुकाएरै कसरी सोधौँ भन्ने द्विविधामा थिए । त्यसैबेला दावाले आफ्नी जेठानीसँग कुरा गरिरहेको सुने ।

"छेतेनलाई त केले छोप्यो जस्तो छ । सेतै भएकी छे, कामिरहन्छे, एक हप्तासम्म ननिदाएजस्तो । मैले बोलाउँदा पनि सुनिन । अनि मलाई देख्नेबित्तिकै तर्सिएर भागी, कुनामा अँध्यारोमा गएर बसी । ढोकासम्म आउन पनि मानिन । खुट्टानै नचलाउने, बख्खुमुनि केहि लुकाएजस्तो ठिंग उभिईरही । भ्यागृता मारेजस्तै पैतालाले मिचीरही । मलाई त कस्तो डर लाग्यो ।"

जब व्यापारीले घट्टेनीलाइ के भइरहेको थियो भन्ने बुभे, उनी त्यहीँ थचक्कै बसे । उनले दिएको चाँदीले बिचरी टूहरीको आत्मामाथि कब्जा गरेको थियो – लोभले डर जन्माएको थियो र मनको जरोमै बसेको शंकाले हरेक खुशीलाइ विषाक्त बनाएको थियो । उनले आफ्नो वरिपरीको धनदौलतलाई नियालेर हेरे - बुद्धलाइ लगाईदिएको रेशमी खादा, आफूले दिनहुँ बस्ने गरेको बाघको छाला, हात्तीदन्तको कलम, चन्दनको टेबल । उनका घरका ती दर्जनौँ कोठा जहाँ कोहि सत्दैनथ्यो न त कोहि आगो वरिपरी गिफँदै बस्थे तर दलिनसम्मै सम्पत्तिले भरिएका थिए । लिमी, ताक्लाकोट, दुनै, अछाम र लद्दाखसम्म फिर्ता लिनुपर्ने ऋण । उनको आफ्नो मोहर लागेको र फिरोजी ढुंगाले भरिएको सन्दुक जुन काश्मिरका एक मुसलमान मित्रकहाँ सुरक्षित थियो । सुदुरपूर्वमा नेपाल खाल्डोमा एक शाक्य बाँडाकहाँ उनको नाममा बन्दैगरेको गुरू रिम्पोचे पद्मसम्भवको मूर्ति जसमा पन्ना र लालमणिको मुकुट लाग्दैथियो । व्यापारीले हरेकदिन आफ्नो वरिपरी राख्ने सम्पत्तिको दाँजोमा त्यो चाँदी त नगण्य र नाथे थियो तर त्यसले घट्टेनीको मनमा भने शंका र लोभ भित्राइदिएको थियो । घट्टेनीको गीत मारीदिने उर्गेन नै थिए।



त्यस रात आफ्नो कचौरा तातो पानीले सफा गरेर पानी पिईसकेपछि व्यापारीले आफ्ना छोराहरूलाई एकैछिन बस्न भने । आफ्नो बहीखाताका अक्षरअक्षर हरेक छोरालाइ पढ़न लगाए र त्यसपिछ अबेरसम्म हरेक हरहिसाबबारे केरकार गरिरहे । व्यापारीका छोराहरूले सबै विवरण राम्ररी सिकिसके भन्ने चित्त बुभ्रुञ्जेलसम्ममा दावाले दुइ पटक दियोमा तेल थपिसकेकी थिइन् ।

"भयो ! अब सुत्न जाउ," व्यापारीले छोराहरूलाई भने । "सुन - यो सब्बै तिमीहरूकै हो," व्यापारीले चोर औंलाले सारा संसारलाईनै इंगित गरेभैं भने । "तिमीहरू रहन्जेल भोग गर्न ।" व्यापारिका छोराहरूले आफ्नो पितालाइ चिन्ताकासाथ हेरे, तर आज्ञाकारी भएकाले चुपचाप आआफ्ना कोठातिर लागे । शायद उनले छोराहरूलाई एक्कासी एकदमै धेरै कुरा सिम्फन भनेका थिए कि ?

भोलिपल्ट घाम उदाउनेबित्तिकै व्यापारीले पूजाकोठाका देवतालाइ वास्ता नगरी बुहारीहरूले छोराहरूलाई उठाउनु अघि नै आफ्नो भुत्ले टोपी र बाक्लो बख्खु लगाएर घरबाट बाहिर निस्किए । घट्टमा घट्टेनीलाई अँध्यारो कुनामा कुँजिएर बसेको देख्दा उदेक लाग्यो घट्टेनी यस्तो देखिन्थिन् मानौँ कसैले हजारौँ वर्ष पहिले कुनै मूर्ति त्यहाँ बिर्सिएर गएको होस । ढोकामा व्यापारीको छायाँ चलमलाउँदा घट्टेनीले माथि हेरीन्, उनलाई चिनिन र चिर्र मिसनो आवाज निकाल्दै पिछ हटिन् । चाँदीको त्यो मुद्रालाई बलले समात्दा उनका औँलाका आँख्ला सेतै भए । बिचरा थेन्ड्रप बुढाले मलाई अहिले देखे के भन्दा हुन् ! मेरै पाप सबैभन्दा ठुलो छ, व्यापारीले सोचे - मैले लोभ मात्रै गरिनँ, बिचरीको निस्कपट मनमा पनि लोभ र लालचको कलंक लगाईदिएँ ।

व्यापारीले ढोका छेवैमा घुँडा टेके र बिहानीको प्रकाशबाट रातकै अँध्यारोमा प्रवेश गरे । "तिमी अचेल किन गाउँदिनौ, छेतेन?" आफ्नो सोभ्गो तर याचनामयी प्रश्नले व्यापारीलाइ लिज्जित बनायो । घट्टेनीले जवाफ दिइनन् । बिचरी - यो टुहुरी यो गरीब, मेरो साथीकी छोरी - दुइचार दिनमै कति कुरूप, कति दयनीय भईछ !

"छेतेन !" टुहुरीतिर सर्दै व्यापारीले भने, तर उनी भन्ने भने अँध्यारोमा हराईन । "तिमीलाई दिएको सामान फिर्ता माग्न आएको हैन म । तिमी अचेल किन गाउँदिनौ भन्ने सोध्न मात्रै आएको हुँ । तिम्रा गीतनै यो गाउँको खुशी हुन् । तर तिमीले हामीबाट त्यो खुशी खोस्यौ !"

घट्टेनीले व्यापारीलाइ यसरि हेरिन् मानौं व्यापारी पो बहुलाएका छन् । हाँस्न खोजिन, तर अनुहारमा एकप्रकारको विकृतिमात्रै छायो । चाँदीको त्यो टुऋालाई भन् बेस्सरी छातीमा लुकाइन् ।

"चाँदी मात्रै त हो, छेतेन ! त्यो प्राणवायु वा पुर्खाको आशिर्वाद त हैन नि ! यसले रेशम र दारू किन्न सक्ला, तर यो संसारमा बाँच्न चाहिने एकछिनभरको शान्ति त किन्न सक्दैन ।" व्यापारीले यो सबै घट्टेनीलाई भन्दैथिए कि उर्गेनले छेतेनसामु याचना गर्दै थिए ? सर्पको काँचूली फरेर गएफैँ अथवा पूजा सिकएपछि मण्डललाई लामाले बढारेर हावामा हराउन दिएभौँ व्यापारीको मनबाट कामना हरायो । र त्यहि क्षणमा उनले यो पनि बुभे कि घट्टेनीको मनमा अभै धेरैधेरै कामना थपिँदै थिए ।

यौटा लामो र निशब्द क्षणपि व्यापारीले घट्टेनीसामु भुइँमा रूमाल फैलाएर भने, "छोरी ! मलाई एक मुद्दी पिठो देउ ।"

जब व्यापारी घट्टबाट जाँदै थिए यौटा भारि बिसाएभैँ हलुङ्गो महसुस गर्दै थिए भने अर्को नयाँ भारले थिचेभैँ पनि महसुस गर्दै थिए । पछाडीबाट नयाँ आवेशले रूखो बनाएको यौटा स्वर सुने - "पेट त भर्देन, गीतले भर्देन । न्यानो राख्दैन, ज्यान लगाउँदैन, तिम्री बुहारीलाईभौँ ठुलो घरको मालिक्नी बनाउँदैन, गीतले सक्दैन । तिमीले के जानेका छी गरिबीबारे ? चिसो भुइँको अँगालो र भोको पेट कहिले चिनेका छौ?"



आफ्नो गाउँबाट देखिने पर्वतहरूबाट ओभोलिन जित टाढा पुग्नुपर्छ भन्ने ती व्यापारीले कल्पना गरेकाथिए, त्यति टाढा नपुग्दै कर्णालीको नागबेलीले उनलाई गाउँबाट नदेखिने ठाउँ पुऱ्यायो । नदीले यौटा तेज मोड लियो अनि त्यो साँघूरो उपत्यकाको निलो प्रकाश र त्यहाँ अटाउने जीवनबाहेक सृष्टिभरिका सबै दृश्य हराए । आफ्नो गाउँ र यारीको उपत्यका अब देखिन्न भन्ने बुझ्नेबित्तिकै व्यापारीको मनमा यौटा अनौठो शान्ति छायो र घट्टेनीको गीतको सम्मोहन पनि हरायो । उनको बख्खुमा साम्पाको सानो भोला थियो, अनि बख्खुको फेरमा सिलाएर लुकाईएका तीन असर्फी । खस गोठालाहरूको एक समुहले उनलाई चिन्यो र उनको वरिपरी भूम्मियो । ठिटाहरूले दाउरा र पानी ल्याईदिए । धुँवाले कालै बनाएको ओडारमा सूत्ने ठाउँ देखाईदिए तर घरदेखि यति टाढा आफ्ना नातेदार वा सरसामान र घोडाखच्चर नलिईकनै कता हिंडेका भन्ने प्रश्न भने गर्ने ऑट गरेनन् । उनले आफ्नो साम्पा सबैसँग बाँड्न चाहे, तर साम्पाको सानो फोला देखेर उनीहरू हाँसे अनि आफ्नो अँगेनाबाट तामाका कृच्चिएका भाँडामा तातोतातो खाना ल्याईदिए ।

एक घण्टासम्म रापिलो र उज्ज्यालो आगो बल्यो । तर छिट्टै धुँवासँग माथि उक्लिने भिल्कापनि सिकए, दाउराको चिटचिट आवाज पनि शान्त भयो । भुंग्रोमाथिको खरानी जुनको प्रकाशजस्तै कैलो भयो । जब व्यापारीले सबैजनालाई न्यानो निद्रामा देखे उनले पनि आगो नजिकै आफ्नो बख्खु ओछ्याए र यौटा पुरानो कम्मल ओढेर निद्राको प्रतिक्षामा आँखा चिम्लिए ।

## Journey to Bone and Ash

Collected from Chaudhans, Uttarakhand, by Himani Upadhyaya from Dhiren Budhathoki. Retold by Kamla K. Kapur. Translated into Tibetan by Bhuchung D. Sonam.

## The Color of the Name

Collected from Chaudhans, Uttarakhand, by Himani Upadhyaya. Retold by Kamla K. Kapur. Translated into Hindi by Chandresha Pandey.

#### You Don't Die Till You're Dead

Based on a Tibetan story recounted by Tshewang Lama (Chakka Bahadur) of Humla. Retold by Kamla K. Kapur. Translated into Hindi by Chandresha Pandey.

#### Attitude of Gratitude

Collected from Dharapori, Humla, by Sagar Lama from Krishna Bahadur Shahi. Retold by Kamla K. Kapur. Translated into Nepali by Kriti Adhikari.

# Ripples on the Mirrored Lake

Story told by Po Wobu, Ngari, Tibet Autonomous Region. Collected by Kelsang Chimee. Retold by Prawin Adhikari. Translated into Tibetan by Thinlay Gyatso.

#### Godsland

Based on conversations with *dhamis* Man Bahadur Shahi, Tul Bahadur Shahi and Suvarna Roka of Humla. Written by Prawin Adhikari. Translated into Nepali by Samip Dhungel.

# The Miller's Song

Based on a story told by Kharkyap Dorjee Lama of Yari, Humla. Collected by Sagar Lama. Retold by Prawin Adhikari. Translated into Nepali by Rajendra Balami.

## About ICIMOD

The International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) is a regional knowledge development and learning centre serving the eight member countries of the Hindu Kush Himalayas – Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan – and based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Globalisation and climate change have an increasing influence on the stability of fragile mountain ecosystems and the livelihoods of mountain people.

ICIMOD aims to assist mountain people to understand these changes, adapt to them, and make the most of new opportunities, while addressing upstream-downstream issues. We support regional transboundary programmes through partnership with regional partner institutions, facilitate the exchange of experience, and serve as a regional knowledge hub. We strengthen networking among regional and global centres of excellence.

Overall, we are working to develop an economically and environmentally sound mountain ecosystem to improve the living standards of mountain populations and to sustain vital ecosystem services for the billions of people living downstream now, and for the future.

Within its Transboundary Landscapes Programme, Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KSLCDI) is a flagship transboundary collaborative initiative between China, India, and Nepal that has evolved through a participatory, iterative process among various local and national research and development institutions within these countries. The Kailash Sacred Landscape represents a diverse, multi-cultural, and fragile landscape. The programme aims to achieve long-term conservation of ecosystems, habitats, and biodiversity while encouraging sustainable development, enhancing the resilience of communities in the landscape, and safeguarding and adding value to the existing cultural linkages between local populations across boundaries. The Kailash Sacred Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (KSLCDI) is supported by partner organizations: Department for International Development (DFID) - UK Aid, and Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung/ Deutsche Gesellschaft for Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.







### About ICI

The India China Institute (ICI) is based at The New School, a university in New York City. Established in 2005, ICI supports research, teaching and discussion on India, China and the United States, with special focus on making comparisons and understanding interactions among the three countries as well as their joint impact on the rest of the world. Through fellowships, courses, public events, publications, and collaboration with a wide range of institutions around the world, ICI promotes academic and public understanding of issues of contemporary relevance.

This publication is part of ICI's Sacred Landscapes and Sustainable Futures in the Himalaya Initiative, funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, The New School and ICIMOD. For three years (2014-2017), ICI worked with a team of scholars, policy makers and artists from India, China, Nepal and the United States to study relationships between religion and ecology, sacred landscapes, pilgrimage routes and ecological, economic and cultural sustainability and resilience in the Himalayas.

### About The New School

The New School is a university founded in New York City in 1919 by a small group of prominent American intellectuals and educators, amongst them Charles Beard, John Dewey, James Harvey Robinson, and Thorstein Veblen, who were frustrated by the intellectual timidity of traditional colleges and envisioned a new kind of academic institution, an innovative college where faculty and students would be free to honestly and directly address the problems facing society. With over 135 undergraduate and graduate degree programs, The New School offers a more creatively inspired, rigorously relevant education than any other.

