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RAIN DROPS

E-MAGAZINE



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Editor

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Lali's Memory

The villagers of Kugaon village in North India were divided over cast. There were a large segment of upper cast and a smaller section of lower caste living on the opposites sides of the village, having their own independent farms, wells, schools, etc. However, there was a common hill not too far from the village which was a gateway to another state.

An eight year old girl called Sita belonging to another village came to live with her uncle for a few years, because her father had gone to the city in search of better financial prospects. Her uncle was one of the members of the village panchayat and belonged to the upper caste. She loved exploring the countryside. She was strictly warned from venturing into the other side by her uncle.

Sita, once went to play with a few neighboring kids on the hill, after some time, all the children left and Sita remained on the hill playing on a large tree. She was unaware that her friends had abandoned her and she waited for someone to catch her, while they played hide and seek. It was a long time and Sita grew worried, suddenly she heard a sound and saw a girl, whom she had never met before carrying a bundle of wild twigs, who rested below the very tree Sita was hiding. Sita climbed down and the young girl in tattered clothes was startled. The strange girl's first instinct was to run but her body failed to obey the command and she was rooted on the spot to see Sita coming towards her.

"Who are you?" asked Sita

"I am Lali", spoke the poor girl who was a little short of Sita. "Who are you?"

"I am Sita and new in the village. My baba has gone to the big town for work and I am living with my uncle," spoke the ever talkative Sita.

"Then what are you doing here?" asked Lali

"I am playing with my friends but now I can't find them?" looking sad and lost.

"Your friends have long gone, I saw them running away laughing. Now I know what made them laugh so much, they have abandoned you and run away."

"Have they", spoke Sita, getting angrier by the minute, "I shall see to them. But what are you doing here and how is that I've never seen you before?"

"I live on the other side," pointed Lali. "They must not see us talking or else I shall be beaten."

"Why not?"

"You are from the upper caste and I belong to a lower one."

"What rubbish, I think I like you...you are honest. How old are you? I am eight."

"I am seven..."

Soon Sita and Lali started talking like long lost friends. They would meet every afternoon and talk and play for hours. Lali showed all her hiding places and wonderful things on the hill. Sita would enthral her about the city life that she had experienced briefly.

Many moons later one of Sita's neighboring girls saw them together and went and spoke to her mother. She in turn spoke to Sita's aunt and the gossip reached the ears of Sita's uncle and others. There was a big commotion and Sita was packed off to the city to be with her father. Sita never found out as to what had happened to Lali. She was dreadfully sad that she was not able to even say goodbye to her and thank her.

What had happened to Lali? Her parents and she were tortured for even speaking to Sita. Lali's family left the village and became nomads, seeking work in different places to just survive. Lali had several older siblings who grew up, left the household and were either married off or settled to live in slums in the big cities. Lali could never forget the days spent with Sita and she cherished those memories and struggled through her miseries with the sweet memories. Till she died in an accident on the constructing site, where she was helping her mother carry stones and cement for the company building roads to connect the city to the villages. Lali was only 15 years old then.

- Dhara Kothari

The Better Man

*In the shadow of light,
And blinding clarity of sight,
An unsettling thought drives,
The mind, in the quest strives,
Why the apathy of sympathy,
Why a state of pity with so much witty,
Why claim land which then claims you
back,
Or tame the Lame when wits still lack,
Can it be a better place to be,
Or are we bound not to clearly see,
The children of men and of lesser God,
Or men thriving on pelf and fraud,
When will ever Sun here shine,
Better be man than Divine...*

By Aditya Gupte

INSANITY

*There is something
Inside you
Which is going to massacre you
One of these days*

*The whole world says
It is so stupid of you
To walk with this burden
On your head*

*It is like a crown
With scores and scores of thorns
Underneath it...*

*It annihilates you
It butchers you
It slaughters you
It decimates you*

BY NEELAM CHANDRA

REMINISCENCES

*It is so difficult to recollect,
Memory fades....
But the joys of those good old
days,
Shine like rubies and jades....*

*So naive, so novice
Were we all;
Dreaming and hoping
Making wishes so tall!*

*A moment friends,
Next moment anger would
drizzle;
But that would make us come
only closer,
Together would we dance and
sizzle!*

BY NEELAM CHANDRA



Silver Hoof

A long time ago, there was an old widowed hunter named Kokovanya. He was lonely so he adopted Daryonka, a poor little orphan girl. When he took Daryonka into his home with him, he also let her bring her scrawny kitten.

Kokovanya, Daryonka, and the kitten were not rich but they had a good life. While the old man hunted, Daryonka would clean the cottage and cook soup. Her cat kept her company. At night, Kokovanya told wonderful tales, but the girl's favorite was the one about Silver Hoof, the magical goat. Legend had it that Silver Hoof was a very special goat. Where most goats have two horns, Silver Hoof has antlers with five tines. On his right forefoot he had a silver hoof. When he stamped his foot, a gem would be left there. If he stamped it twice there would be two, but if he pawed the ground there would be a whole pile of gems.

Kokovanya told Daryonka that he had been trying for years to find Silver Hoof and that when autumn came he would be going into the woods to find him. Daryonka begged the old man to let her go with him, since she would be so lonely in the cottage and because she truly wanted to see Silver Hoof also.

So the old man, the young girl, and the cat headed deep into the woods. By now the cat was a very healthy and hearty cat and could offer them protection. They stayed in a cabin that the old man had there. The hunter hunted many goats, but he

never found Silver Hoof. Towards the end of winter, he told Daryonka that he had so many goat skins and meat that he would have to go into town to get a horse to help bring it all home. It would take him several days.

On the second day that Daryonka was by herself in the cabin, she heard a pitter patter outside. It was Silver Hoof! She opened the door and called out to him, but he ran away. On the third day the cat went out to play but did not return. Daryonka was worried so she went outside to find him. There he was in the glade with Silver Hoof. Both were nodding their heads as if they were talking to each other. Then they began to run about in the snow. The goat would run and stamp all around the cabin. Then he jumped upon the roof and stamped some more. Precious stones flashed out like sparks red, green, light blue, dark blue, and many other colors.

It was then that Kokovanya returned, but he did not recognize his hut. It was covered in gems and sparkled in the moonlight. Suddenly, Silver Hoof and the cat just disappeared from the roof. They were gone. The old man gathered some of the stones in his hat and then he and Daryonka went in to sleep. They had such wonderful dreams. When they awoke they ran outside to look at the wonder, but all the gems were gone. All they had left were the ones the old man had put in his hat. But that was enough to let them live happily ever after. No one ever saw Silver Hoof or the cat again, but sometimes people still find stones in the glade where the goat played that night.



One Good Meal Deserves Another

Anansi the Spider hated to share! When Turtle came to his house at mealtime, he said, "I can't give you food until you've washed your dusty feet!"

Turtle licked his lips when he saw the big plate of steaming food, but politely walked to the stream to wash. When he returned, the plate was empty. "Good meal," Anansi said, patting his full stomach.

"One good meal deserves another!" said Turtle. "Come to my house for dinner tomorrow." Turtle fixed a fine dinner at the bottom of the river. "Come on down and eat!" he said.

Anansi filled his jacket pockets with stones so that he would be weighted down enough to stay at the river's bottom and eat. "It's impolite to wear a jacket to dinner!" Turtle said, "Take it off!"

But when greedy Anansi took off his jacket, he floated back up to the surface of the water and hungrily watched Turtle eat his fill!



Between the Feathers

for Aseem Asha Usmanon on his 33rd birthday

Within the bird's cry
between feathers kissed by the wind
a ruby flutters silently

to soar alone is bittersweet
yet there is a secret joy
unknown to the flock

the nest holds the void alone
your hollow bones are made for flight
so ascend without cease

let your vision be unclouded
may you rise above the sea of infinity
and never forget the song in your heart

Michael Orlando Yaccarino

(<http://www.marchesacasati.com/authorsbios.html>)

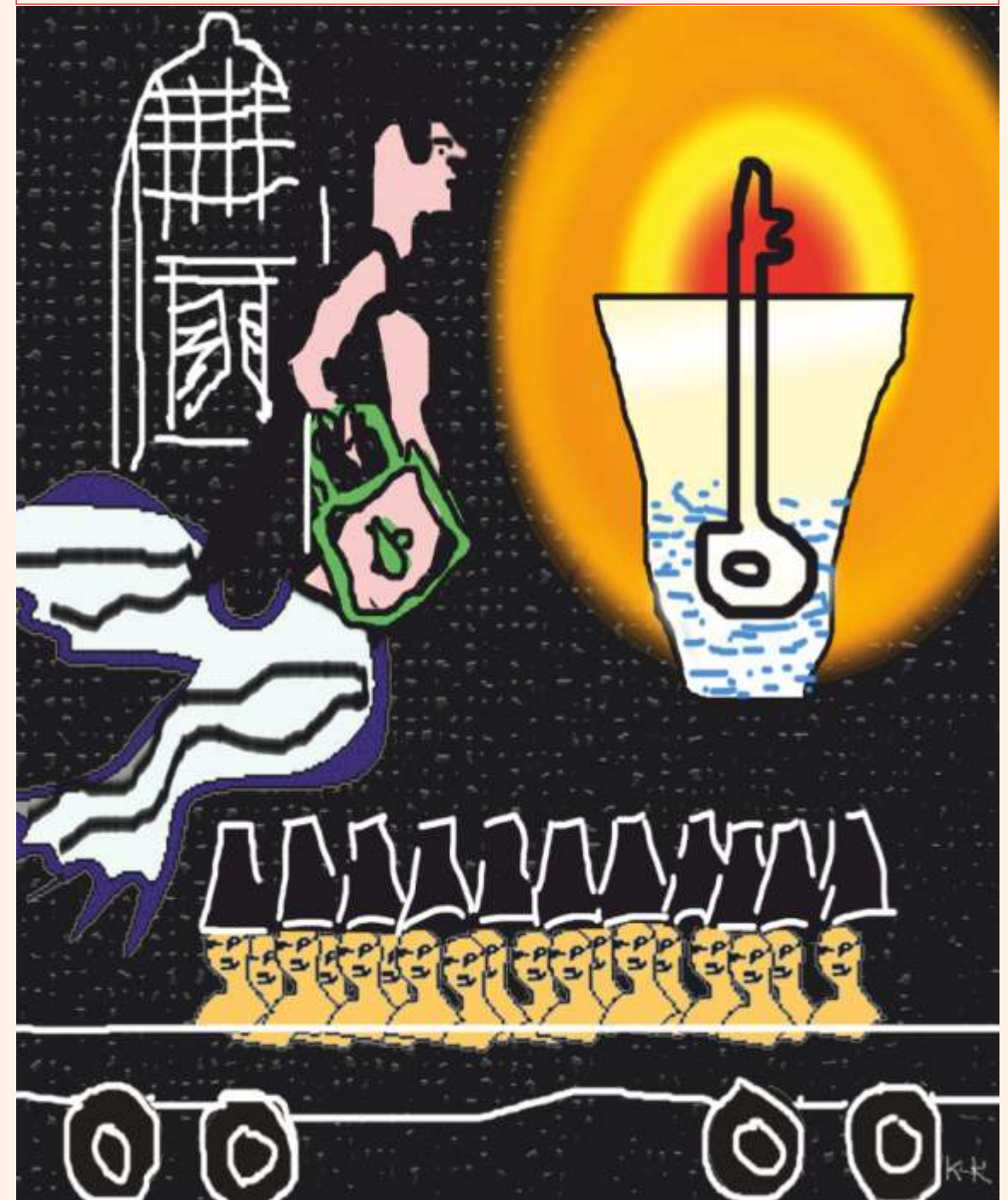
Michael is renowned for his analyses of genre films and interviews with their creators. His writings on fashion, music and unconventional historical figures have appeared in many international publications. He is volunteering from USA for Flying Birds of India group which is supported by Aseem ASHA Foundation. (<http://flyingbirdsindia.blogspot.com/>)

Kehkashan from Seelampur Community, Delhi



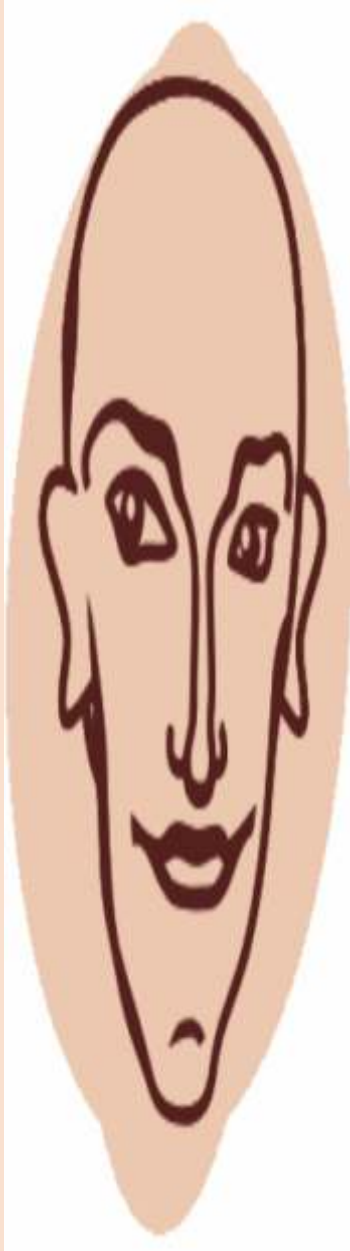
The digital graphic is made by Kehkasha from the urban slums of Delhi. After completing her computer course from Kalpana Chawla Media Resource Center, Jafrabad which is run by Aseem ASHA Foundation, she joined a government school as a computer instructor. I dedicate this lovely poem to Kekasha who dared to look beyond the stereotypes in her real life.

Kehkasha has graduated from Delhi University. She has excellent skills in DTP. She used different kinds of textures and effects in her Digital Sufi Paintings. She lives at Jafrabad.



मानव

By Dhirendra Asthana



हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /

तुम करते आशाएं,
मलि न मुझसे नरिशाएं,
करता मैं भी प्रयास पर,
इस जग में मैं भी अभनिव हूँ,
हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /

तुम चाहते
मेरे कर्मों में न तुरुटी हो /
कैसे करूँ कर्म ?
जनिसे तुम्हें भी संतुष्ट हो,
फरि भी जीवन में कर्म रत
हूँ,

तेरा ही तो बांधव हूँ/
हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /

चल रहा द्वंद्व मेरे भी
अंतर में
दया द्वेष प्रेम हर्ष है
मेरे भी उर में
नहीं मैं सर्वग्य

मैं भी अतगिव हूँ /
हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /
तुम चाहते
जीवन के झंझा में सहारा दूं
लहरों की थपेड़ों में
डगमग होती नाव को
कनिरा दूं
तुम समझते बट बटिप,
मैं भी पल्लव हूँ
हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /

माया प्रपंच से
मैं भी व्यमोहति हूँ,
समर्पति हूँ पूरण,
पर कामना से लपित हूँ,
नहीं मैं अमर्त्य
मैं भी अवयव हूँ/
हे, मेरे मानव प्रियवर
मैं भी मानव हूँ /

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