



Food for Thought

Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached.

~Swami Vivekananda

If you want peace of mind, do not find fault of others, rather see your faults.

~Sri Sarada Devi

Soul never dies, it passes from one body to another to regain its motion which is referred as "LIFE"

~Anonymous

Learn to make the whole world your own. No one is stranger. The whole world is your own.

~JESUS CHRIST

Mukti can be attained only by him who has forgotten self

~Sri Ramakrishna Dev

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.

~Herbert Spencer

HAVE YOUR SAY!!

Did Sharukh Khan use cricket matches for promoting "OM SHANTIOM"?

YES	NO
62%	38%

STOP PRESS

As the latest issue goes into printing, the annual Esha Memorial Seminar Presentations at Phoenix have started. Here are a few images.



A true friend makes one's life livable with love and affection. As the saying "A friend in need is a friend in deed." Happiness depends on one's choice of a friend, who will always remain honest and genuine. A true friend can be referred to as a true investment in life. In order to have a true friend we must be true to ourselves. My first and dearest friend with whom I am even connected today is Sourav Agarwal. He is modest, truthful, level-headed, enthusiastic and a man of his words. We first met at our school when we were studying in nursery. The first day I met him and introduced myself, he reacted very strangely. For two months we hated each other's guts and at last we had a fight.

One day a boy named Ashis had replaced my copy with his as he hadn't completed his work which Sourav saw but didn't inform me. When the teacher started blaming me Sourav defended me by blaming Ashis. Till date I don't know why this sudden change in his mind took place. We were young and I

was moved by what he did for me. I remember the date as being 24th August, 1990. It was not just because we became friends, but because it was the first time a school friend visited my home and my parents remembered it.

From that day life moved on we faced many things together and supported each other. We played together, sometimes quarreled, well, these are part



of life. Till Class X, the years were 'power years' for both of us and we shared the bad times of each other than good ones. In +2 he shifted to Ravenshaw College and I to Christ College and so during our graduation we were still connected in a way.

Now he is pursuing his MBA in Kolkata and I am here in Phoenix for Mass-Com.

The frequent meetings have stopped. Whenever we are at the same place we chill out together, otherwise we keep in touch through Orkut. I have very close friends but Sourav is beyond the closest in the long run. What has bonded us till date? There are reasons behind it. When we come to life we come alone and when we go we go alone. In the span between coming and going one needs support. It is the nature of life, first we as kids get support of parents, then come friends and then comes one's life partner.

As a friend Sourav is my support system. I will disclose an unpleasant event in my life and how he helped me out of this trauma. Once Sourav and I decided to go to his uncle's house in Paradeep. We were travelling in his car. I remember even today — it was Monday morning. Near Chandikhol we stopped at a dhaba to have breakfast. Suddenly we heard someone screaming. We turned around and saw a man with his neck

under a truck tyre. I started vomiting but Sourav managed to bring me to the car and we went to a nearby clinic for check up. We had to wait for an hour as we didn't have an appointment.

The check up was over by noon. Till that time Sourav didn't eat anything. He was with me. Even at that age how committed he was and how mature to handle these things so swiftly.

In school I had a stupid superstition that during exams I will not eat round things or I may get big ZERO. I was good in Hindi. It was in class VII when this happened. That idiot forced me to eat a *rasgulla* before the exam which he brought intentionally for me. I was very nervous after eating and went for the exam. I got 47 out of 50. Then he asked, '*kuch meetha ho jaye*'? I answered, '*diabetes hone ka sambhawna hai*', and we laughed.

These things are valuable to me and will go with me to the end of my life.

-RAJARSHI BOSE
MASSCOM 08

Kalamma's Tale

It was a scorchy summer afternoon in Sambalpur and the time for a get together at my uncle's place. The twelve-member group of my family seated themselves on the floor for the lunch. Suddenly, my mom and aunt's discussions headed towards those beautiful sarees which they had bought from an old lady.

The old lady! We called her reverently Kalamma. She used to wear an emaciated look. Her grizzled hair was prison-cropped which gave her the look of a septuagenarian. No one in my uncle's family knew where she had come from and with whom she lived. But, whenever, I would go

for an evening walk with my mom and aunt, she should be normally resting at the doorstep of her protective parasol kind of thatched hut. Probably, that must be a gift to her from her progeny.

I still remember the day. Once, I got an opportunity to



have a heart-to-heart talk with her. Pulling out a *Paan* from her *Paan box* which was tightened with the end of her saree *aanchal*, she began, "I have only one son who was my only hope since my husband's untimely death."

She hoped to have a life of rest in her old age with him. A tiny smile lit up her face.

In slow degrees, Kalamma's tone got shrouded with a sombre cloud. With eyes full of tears, she remembered her son's words, "Amma you had toiled and moiled for me during my troubled infancy with no one to help you. You had made me, what I am now." Also the son had catered to the old mother's comforts so much that it was reflected from her eyes when she remembered the dinners prepared by him.

When the brilliant son of our old Kalamma took the clerical job and married his classmate, it seemed that she had conquered the whole world all by herself. After the son's marriage, the first two years went of well. Contd P3

CEO'S VOICE



We have bounced back from the tragic loss of Esha; albeit like the proverbial Phoenix, with

the belief that she would have liked to see us all resolving not to give in to remorse. This issue is all about the local and personal experiences: issues emerging from the self and around. In our endeavour, we have learnt a lot in picking up stories, working on them and bringing the issues of concern to the limelight. In our humble effort, we have taken note of our learning process and have honed it to make it better in future. Shortly, we have to prepare for the Esha Memorial Seminar Presentations followed by the preparation of our Portfolios. As we look forward to the oft-heard nocturnal sojourns at the Computer lab, the practices at voice-overs and the hectic round of collecting and collating data, the spirit runs high in anticipation.

- Cdr. Debi P. Padhi

But, one night when the question of leaving the old mother all alone at home arose, all the happiness of Kamma's life received a jolt. And, whenever her son opposed, the daughter-in-law used to throw her tantrums, This old lady always stands in our way. I cannot get along with her anymore. She is fit to be in a nut house. Sobbing and sighing, she repeated the last

words, "in a nut house." Still, those words even ring in my ears.

"The silence of my son killed me that day", Kamma said in a grumbling tone. Did she deserve that "silence"? I wonder whether the "silence" or the harsh words used by the daughter-in-law pained her more. Hope it was certainly the son for whom

she had burnt herself like a candle.

That night she left her home in Mayurbhanj, without uttering a word to anybody. "And it is thus 'am here selling sarees to quench my hunger", said the old kamma in a heavy voice. She, then had walked out of our house without looking back at me.

My memories about the old lady got arrested and

they ran back to the get-together lunch. While we were having lunch, my sister and myself were offered an evening walk from my aunt. On the spur of that moment, I exclaimed, "An evening walk"! I got elated at the thought of meeting my Kamma once again. "This time, I will definitely pacify her if she cries", I murmured to myself.

But, something unusual was stored for me that evening. Walking down the road, I reached the destined point. There was a small crowd watching her. And, I saw the old Kamma lying at the doorstep as if in her sleep.

**-SIKTA SAMANTARAY
MASSCOM 08**

EXPLORING NEW HORIZONS

I still cherish the memory of the unforgettable trek to a beautiful place called Sandakphu. It was an awesome experience for me. It was in the year 2001. I was in Standard 9. I was young and had the curiosity to explore new places. I was only 12 years old and I had a passion to trek. As my family was settled in Siliguri, a city close to the hills, it was pretty natural for me to develop such a passion. Ascending the heights and being part of the beautiful landscape has always been an experience beyond comparison. Trekking for me is mix of adventure, pleasure and self-realisation.

It was in May, 2001, just after my exams, that we decided to go to Sandakphu. Sandakphu is situated at an altitude of 3636 metres and it is located at a distance of 58 km from Darjeeling. Sandakphu is a vantage point from where one can see four of the world's five highest peaks – Everest, Kanchenjunga, Makalu and Lhotse.

Our group consisted of my dad, two of my uncles, three cousins & of course me. The seven of us started our trek from Maneybhanjan, which is situated at an altitude of 2134 metres, is the gateway to the Sandakphu region. Before starting our trek we were in search of a good & experienced guide who would accompany us till Sandakphu. But most of them were rejected because they were asking for more money than what we were prepared to pay. Eventually we got an experienced 45-year-old who was a local man from Sandakphu.

The next morning we started our journey by 7 am and our destination was Chitrey. It was only 4 km away from Maneybhanjan but the road was steep uphill. The path was completely paved with stones. It took us around an hour and a half to reach there. At Chitrey we had our breakfast of noodles and tea. Then we had to hit the road for Meghma.

After reaching Meghma we decided to spend the night there. We stayed in a lodge that was attached to a private monastery. Later on I saw the owner and a few of his family members making butter candles. When I showed interest in their work they took us to all parts of the monastery. It was a spectacular

Our keen interest in Buddhism had borne fruit I guess!

The next day was very hectic. We started at 7 am and reached our



destination Joubari at around 3 O' clock in the afternoon. On our way we crossed a small village named Tumling where we had a brief 15 min break.



experience for me as I had never been to monastery before.

The section downstairs of the main building had a huge section of prayer wheels. But they had the real treasure upstairs where they had a large collection of Buddhist statues, and manuscripts.

I felt very privileged as they told us that they rarely mention it to other trekkers.

After getting to Joubari we saw an amazing set of architecture. There are many places in the Himalayas with a strong breeze but at Joubari the locals have to make cordons of bamboo slice along the northwest slope of the village to protect themselves from being blown away.

The next morning started by coming down to Gairibas, a checkpost on the Nepal-India border. After

that there was the sheer uphill climb to Kalpokhari. After taking a brief at Kalpokhari we moved towards Bikebhanjang, the last stop before Sandakphu.

It was fun as a local accompanied us from Bikebhanjang. He was with us till Sandakphu. When we finally reached the trekker's hut at Sandakphu we were welcomed by the caretaker of that hut. Later on people from nearby villages wandered over to meet us and to sell their local handicraft products. There were also other groups of trekkers belonging to different parts of the country at the hut. Almost everyone at the hut sat together for lunch.

Despite the language barrier I managed to exchange information. We exchanged photos, addresses and individual experiences of these trek. I had a great afternoon with them. In the evening we huddled around the kitchen fire as the chowkidar and his wife were busy cooking dinner for us. We stayed back as it was much too cold to move to any of the other rooms in the spacious hut.

The chowkidar promised to wake us up early if the weather was clear the next morning. Thankfully it was. He knocked at 5.30 am.

It was freezing cold but we were rewarded with a breathtaking view of the mighty Kanchenjunga. Along with that we saw the stunning Mt Everest, Mt Makalu, Mt Lhotse, and Pandim peaks. The view that we had is worth all the hardship endured on the way.

After experiencing all those magnificent views, I realised that this is what trekking is all about. It left an indelible impression on me. These moments will stay with me, eternally. Then later on after having breakfast, it was time to return. To be honest I did not wish to return. I wanted to stay there and enjoy that calm and heavenly atmosphere.s

Unfortunately I had no other options but to return. We returned via another way. As we climbed down we came across places like Chiyabhanjan, and at last we reached Rimbik. Rimbik to Darjeeling was a four hour drive. We spent that night night at Darjeeling. The next day we left Darjeeling early in the morning and a 2 hour drive brought us back to Siliguri.

On my way back I was thinking that Sandakphu is aptly called the paradise of trekkers. I am now left to cherish those moments by the photographs which makes me nostalgic, no doubt!

**-RATUL BHATTACHARYA
MASSCOM 08**

BIKER BOYZ MOTORCYCLING UNPLUGGED

Turn on the ignition, fire up those engines, first gear, sky high wheelies. Here we go! Down the slopes, round the bangs, through the sweeping corners, stopping for nothing, going at nauts with those massive engines growling between our shins tearing through the air. The wind blowing in my face is beautiful, the feeling can't be compared to anything else in the whole world. It was a cold night and I was already not well but nothing could stop me from our midnight drive, at this point I heard the roar of a bike behind me trying hard to overtake me.

It was my friend sending a message. I slowed down a little so as to allow him to ride beside me, he came closer and revved his bike hard and I knew. The race was on!

For a second we looked at each other through our helmet visors. He gave me a crooked smile and I said to myself bring it on!

I brought the bike from third gear to the first, revved the engine and let go of the clutch with a snap. The front wheel was popping in the air (boy do I love doing wheelies or what?) we both have the same bike but he knew I was the better rider. In a flash I was far ahead of the rest of the pack (we were eight guys) I looked back and saw the rest of the friends signalling me to slow down but I didn't give a damn. At this point nothing, absolutely nothing, mattered more than winning the race. That was all I had in mind.

I looked back again and saw I had established a good lead and could afford to go a little slower. I looked at that speedo. It clocked 92 kmph so I slowed down, bringing the needle to about 80 kmph, a

huge mistake. No sooner had I done it that my friend (the rascal) whizzed past me like a shot and I realized I had committed an unforgivable sin.

He established a good 20 yard lead and I had to ride real hard for the next 10 minutes to get to him. We were now riding parallel to each other. I noticed his bikes sound was smoother than mine. This meant his bike was already in top gear (I had an advantage) he looked at me again and smiled, I smiled back at him and said to myself, "I don't lose. Not now not never," put the bike into the fifth gear and raced ahead as always. It still gave me the same adrenaline rush as always. I entered a narrow lane and was welcomed by some ten to fifteen

35/35 watts bright head lamps glaring at me. We had reached our destinations, in a couple of minutes my friends also arrived.

Welcome to the Circuit — as we call it.

It's the place where all the speed freaks of our town get together every night (or should I say early every morning) to show off their mean machines, Bikes, Cars you name them, they have them, modified bikes, dirt bikes, sports bikes, custom made motorcycles, cruisers, choppers, semi-nude sports bikes. While almost all cars are modified, the same can't be said about the bikes.

There are riders who are willing to spend an obscene amount of money to get really powerful bikes. On both sides of the lane are shops selling fancy cars and bike items like lights, handle bars, horns, modify body parts, alloy wheels, thicker tiers, booster silencers, company spares etc. During the day they buy and sell, get their machines ready, fit in parts to boost the performance, at night they test them out.

Strangely, parts that are not available at company outlets are always available here. The bikers are always found tinkering away with their machines, always doing something new to improve the looks, the performance, or the handling of their bikes from regularly changing the spares to adding performance enhancing o r performance boosting parts like booster silencers or thicker tyres or may be even adding a couple of rings in the engine.

They are dead serious when it comes to their bikes. And boy! Do they love them or what?

You will rarely find someone sitting or maybe even touching a bike that's not his, the place has got everything and anything related to bikes and repairs, remodification, repainting, tacky sticker jobs all done at the same place. It is a world of biking in itself. In the day it looks merely like any bike bazaar but if you want to see its true colours, you've got to spend a night here. Bikers all over the town come here to have fun.

The crowd is divided into different gangs it all depends on the kind of the bike you have. There are sports bike gangs, dirt bike gangs,

cruiser gangs, chopper gangs they may be different gangs but the good thing about them is there is a lot of unity. For example if you have a problem with your bike all you have got to do is ask for help and it comes from all directions.

In no less than a minute you will have more than a couple of men ready to help you out with it. I have never left this place without having my bike completely sorted out by these guys.

The place has things you have to see to believe. There are kids — not teenagers — little kids with biking gyan way beyond their age you see guys and sometime even girls racing each other, you see every possible trick known to a good biker being performed all the time by some lunatic or the other. I myself learnt four tricks — the wheelies, the stoppies, the smoking wheel, and the sparks — all here.

You will find a biker from every gali and nukkaad of the city. Bikes to these guys are not merely machines. It is their most prized possession. It is a passion to them beautifully painted, stylishly remodified, cleanly stickered these machines mean the whole world to their owners they are treated like status symbols.

A better and more powerful bike is the indicative of higher status of the rider. A good-looking bike can really boost up the confidence of a guy it can make him very happy (ask me!). Similarly a lousy looking motorcycle can turn them off. After having said all that i have about the circuit it may sound like a "screw the rules" sort of a place but that is exactly where you are mistaken about it.

The circuit has its own set of rules and it is enforced rather stringently on the bikers. The enforcers of these rules are none other than the older bikers who are respected and loved by the youngsters and treated like elder brothers.

The rules are simple and if anyone violates them then they are fined. Firstly, people below the age of 17 are not allowed to become the members nor are they allowed to race. If you try to cheat your way in and get caught you are instantly thrown out. Second rule: no drinking, no smoking, no brawling. If two people have a problem with each other they race and the winner has his say.

To be a member you don't need to pay anything. All you need is a good performance-oriented motorcycle. If you come regularly to the place for a week you are considered a member.

Depending on the type of machine you have, you are placed in of the four gangs of the circuit but the minimum displacement of a bike has to be 150cc. Any bike that has a

displacement lower than that is not considered a performance motorbike. The higher t h e displacement the better



for the rider.

Most of the riders repair and re-modify their bikes themselves and are people with great biking knowledge. Anything that is new is always welcome. These bikers are not influenced by the styles and fashions of the manufacturing companies, they create their own signature styles and trends.

They believe that by constantly changing the way their bikes look they add their own touch to it. There are riders from both the old and the new schools of motorcycles.

The younger pack generally ride on bikes that are light, zippy, fast (mostly sports, semi-nude sports, and dirt bikes) some of them are completely remodified and reworked. These bikes have really high performance.

They generally have an engine capacity of 150-250cc. The riders from the old school believe more in comfort than performance. Their machines are more relaxed and comfort oriented. They do have high displacements but do not have engines as eager to perform. These are mostly cruisers and choppers. The place has people from different classes, religious beliefs but they are two things that bind them together.

Firstly they believe that they are a rare breed above the rest they believe they are different and they love it and secondly it is their common love for motorcycles and the joy of riding. Some of the guys have been members for ten to twelve years. They have seen people come and go fashion and trends change but they chose to stay because they believe they belong here. For these Biker Boyz, bikes, motorcycles to be more appropriate are not only about riding, speed, scales, or tricks. They are much more than that — a way of expression, its a passion, its what they loved to do, its who they are, it's like a second religion in other words its a lifestyle.

-RONAK SAHOO
MASSCOM 08

ON THE MOVE

It was drizzling that day. But nothing was going to keep me from meeting my best friend, Sonali, on her birthday. Sonali and I have been buddies since the second standard. She shifted to Bhubaneswar from Cuttack after her ICSE exams due to her mother's transfer. We always make it a point to visit each other on our birthdays. I can write volumes about our friendship but my intention here is otherwise.

I had to travel by bus to the state capital for the first time due to unavailability of alternative means of communication. The bus journey, all by myself, was to be a different experience — whether pleasant or unpleasant was yet to be decided.

I parked my two-wheeler at a stand in the premises of *Marwari Bhojanalaya* and got my ticket. I had to cross the busy road to reach the bus stand. The moment I beheld the bus with *Jagannath Travels* written on it, I doubted whether I would make it. "Anything for Sonali," I muttered and climbed into the bus.

Luckily, I got a seat in spite of the rush and breathed a sigh of relief after sitting down. I looked around and thought travelling by bus was not such a big deal. After all, hundreds of people commute across the twin cities by means of buses alone. I scolded myself for being so fussy.

Next to me sat a woman and her daughter carrying a large suitcase. Perhaps, they had come from their village. Both of them were busy talking to each other. The bus had not yet started moving. The conductor was trying to get more passengers into the bus by shouting "*Banibihar! Banibihar!*" in a coarse tone. I was getting bored while waiting for the bus to move. Therefore, I tried to divert my attention by looking at the interior of the bus. There was a portrait of *Maa Tarini* in front of the bus. Next to it was

a small shelf with sliding glass doors. The glass had cracked. Inside the shelf was a photo of *Jagannath Balabhadra Subhadra*, the trio of gods. A worn out marigold garland and burnt-out incense sticks adorned the photograph. Also visible, was one half of a portrait of *Lord Shiva*. The windows of the bus were covered by smelly blue curtains. The seats were torn. This is usually the plight of all buses travelling from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar.

After about twenty minutes of wait, the bus started moving. "Finally!" I whispered to myself. The non-rhythmic, odd horn of the bus was nerve wracking. I almost fell off my seat when the driver turned on the squealing music system to full volume. The song was from an Oriya Album, "*chhata upare kie lo!*" I was disgusted at the prospect of such music for the rest of the journey. There were non-stop stoppages between *Badambadi* and *Link Road* and the conductor kept on taking passengers although the bus

was completely packed with not even enough place to stand. Amidst this entire bustle, two newspaper hawkers entered the bus. They called out the names of the local newspapers they carried. One of them had better advertising skills and was successful in selling more newspapers. How you endorse your product makes all the difference, whether a newspaper or a jet. The bus started moving towards Bhubaneswar only after a few passengers complained that they would get off if more people are brought in.

The bus moved on and the conductor started collecting money for the tickets. I got my ticket. Then I called Sonali and told her that I was on the bus. I asked her to wait for me at *Banibihar*. I could not continue the conversation due to the usual network problem. "What to do next?" I wondered. The ambience of the bus coupled with the noisy music was not at all suitable for composing poetry. Hence, I decided to observe my fellow passengers.

Almost everybody was carrying an umbrella or a raincoat on account of the rainy weather. A typical Oriya lady, wearing a red and blue *sambalpuri* saree and with a splash of "vermillion" on her forehead, standing to my side was very difficult to put up with. She kept falling on me each time the driver braked. I

smiles and romantic gestures. I was happy for getting to witness a sweet love story. Had it not been for the "vermillion" lady to my side, I would have seen more.

By then, the bus had moved quite some way towards Bhubaneswar. I watched the billboards on the national highway. There was a lot of greenery on either side of the highway. But I also saw many buildings and factories under construction. The growing industrialisation was unmistakable.

I was thinking how busy and hectic life has become. I visit my best friend hardly once or twice a year. Distance and time cannot separate friends, though. I suddenly broke out of my reverie when I heard a girl shouting "How dare you!" and slapping the man standing next to her. Apparently, he had

in Oriya. It was a very embarrassing to hear the abuses. He was also removed from the bus.

When the bus crossed *Rasulgarh Chakk*, the stop preceding my destination, the "vermillion" lady got down from the bus. I was relieved that I no more had to put up with her regular intrusions. But the relief did not last long as I was nearing my stop. The conductor called out "*Banibihar!*" for the passengers to get ready. I stood up. The bus reached *Banibihar*. I got off making my way through all the passengers who were in a kind of a dash to get down from the bus.

Someone pushed me from behind and I would have had a bad fall if I had not been holding the door-handle firmly. I saw Sonali waiting for me near the stop. She asked out of concern, "Are you fine?" I nodded. Then I sat behind her scooter.

The young chap who was eyeing me in the bus got off and called for an auto. Now he was eyeing Sonali instead. Boys will be boys! Just then I saw the two love birds I had seen in the bus making their way to *Big Bazaar*, the biggest shopping mall cum supermarket of Bhubaneswar. They both were on the guy's bike. It must have been the fear of getting caught that made them travel separately from CTC to BBSR "Why can't the world stop being a villain in love stories?" I wondered.

On our way to Sonali's place she asked me how my journey was. To my own surprise I answered, "Interesting!" Yes, in spite of all the troubles and shortcomings, I found my short trip interesting and enjoyable. I was a silent observer and I witnessed so many stories. There was drama, romance and action. The journey was almost like a masala movie. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. A noteworthy experience, indeed!

-ARJYA PATNAIK
MASSCOM 08



THE BARGAIN

It was the day before Savitri Amavasya. Unlike other days, I woke up early - at 8:30 am. I was sitting on the sofa and saw the newspaper on the table. The first page did not have any good pictures. I wondered if I should go through it. Finally I picked it up and went straight to the entertainment section.

I was going through one of the articles when my mother came and told me to get ready soon. When I asked why, she handed me a big list and some money. "This is the list and the money. You go to the market and get all these things. Try to bring them in your budget." My immediate question was what if it does not come within the budget. She said, "Buy the more important things first."



The list consisted of a dozen bananas, half a kilo apples and a *sindoor* packet. It also had a packet of biscuits, noodles, and bread in it.

She gave me my breakfast and got busy with work. I was eating and listing the important things out. I suddenly thought of bargaining. I could get everything in budget and maybe even save some money for myself.

After my breakfast I got ready, took my bicycle and set out for the market. I had never bargained before. As a first-timer I was really nervous about it. I was overflowing with thoughts which product to bargain for.

What if the shopkeeper throws me out of the shop or makes a fool of me in front of others. The very thoughts embarrassed me. What if they

literally do it? Along with the nervousness, my ethics also came in my way. The shopkeeper is going to be an elder man. Being a 13-year-old girl, will it be right to argue with someone elder to me? These thoughts continuously haunted me.

I reached the fruit shop. The shopkeeper was a man around 40-45 years old. I asked him for bananas. He showed me two types. One cost Rs. 25 per dozen and the other one was Rs.30 per dozen. I preferred the second variety. It looked good. I was thinking of what price should I start with. I



gathered a lot of courage I started with Rs. 20. The shopkeeper looked at me with a grave face and said *no* straight.

I was more nervous, embarrassed than ever. Also speechless. I could not even look at his face. There was an old man standing beside me. He asked, "Bargaining for the first time?" I very reluctantly said yes. He said nothing but gave me a simple smile.

The shopkeeper's 'no' was so offending for me that I forgot the other fruit I had to buy. I just got myself a dozen bananas at a price the shopkeeper asked. Next I went to the grocer. Although I was nervous there,

I tried to pretend to be calm. I asked for the rest of the things. I saw the

MRPs and did not utter a word. I got satisfied with the discounts he gave me. I paid him the money and got the things. While returning home, I visualised my experiences but tried to divert my mind. At that particular time I did not want to think anything. I reached home and handed over all the things to my mother. She checked them all and found the apples missing. When she asked me for them, I had nothing to say except "Apples were not good. Not worth the price."

-MONIKA MONALISA
MASSCOM 08

THE BLACK DAY

Monday was a quiet morning and a cold wind was blowing. Our classes during the winter season starts at nine in the morning. At about 8.30 I was standing for my bus at the bus stand with some other girls of my school. Far away at the end of the road rally was carried out. Many men and women had taken part in the rally. They were the workers of the company. This rally had been carried out for the fulfillment of their demands regarding their working facilities. I saw the battalion of workers coming closure and closer towards us. It was interesting to watch them for I had never seen a rally before.

Everything was going peacefully men and women were shouting for their demands. The group had crossed us but suddenly I don't know from where stones were thrown on the group. All of their calm faces turned fearful. Their shout for wants became scream of anger. They became arrogant and started beating the people who were on the road. We were taken into a building nearby one of the parent of my schoolmate. The group picked up sticks and stones on the road and destroyed every thing that

they saw. Not even a feather could fly away from their hands. I was peeping out from the broken glass window to see the destruction on the road.

No one had called the police to control the situation. It was only



after an hour the force had come to rescue the public.

The battalion had become more forceful on the arrival of the police. They burnt tires and cars and

set fire on the shops nearby. The fire brigade came to put off fire. The women were being drugged by the police into a van. Nothing was of use, they become more fearful. Almost all were bleeding in the groups but they

the on the buildings. The building where we were hiding was also attacked. One of my schoolmates was hurt by a stone. She was bleeding and we could hardly do anything to help her. None of us could take her to the hospital. The roads had been blocked and the people and the people involved in the rally were standing below our building.

Time was running out of our hand but we were helpless. The police could hardly control the hustle and bustle created all over by the group. The RAF was then called for the group of people was then arrested. The place was immediately cleared up. Our companion was then hurried to the hospital. She was out of danger, but there were many who lost their life that day.

The chaos lasted for about three hours. Many lost their relatives in this black day. Nothing was gained except losing. I still remember flames of fire which destroyed many things. The only thing that was left behind was tears and painful emotions.

-MOUMALI MAJUMDAR
MASSCOM 08

didn't give up. They kept on destroying public and private property.

The residential buildings near the road were also attacked by the group. Bottles, stones were thrown on

REALITY FROM CLOSE QUARTERS

Sociology is my major for graduation. I love the subject. But I used to wonder why we did not have any practical paper or fieldwork in our curriculum. Theory, theory and more theory becomes monotonous. This year, however, we got an opportunity for being a part of a research oriented survey.

An NGO of international repute, *Pratham*, approached our department to accompany them to certain villages (25 km from Cuttack) for a nationwide survey to assess the literacy level of children between the ages 3 yrs to 15 yrs. The Annual Search Education Report (ASER) was to be based on the findings of this survey. Basically, we were supposed to find out whether the *Sarba Shiksha Abhijan* was having any outcome at all. We were divided into various groups and were allotted different villages. One person from the NGO was accompanying each group for assistance. My group had to visit *Kothabada* village in Salepur District. We embarked on the journey at 8'o'clock in the morning. Initially we were not able to get the exact location of the village. Hence, we went to the Block Development Office and approached the officials there. They helped us out and we reached *Kothabada* quite behind our schedule. Better late than never, I thought.

I was surprised to notice the change in the natural surroundings. We were not even 25 km away from Cuttack and this place was like an underdeveloped rural area one sees on television or reads about in books. We were told by the NGO official to start with the survey. Though I had read a lot about Social Research and had topped that paper in second year, it was slightly difficult to convert the theoretical knowledge into practical application.

Nevertheless, we started off. The survey material had clear instructions which were quite comprehensible. We had to visit every fifth house of the village (for the

purpose of random sampling) and ask them questions in accordance with the interview schedule. Next, we had to test the literacy levels of the children as per the test materials provided to us. We also had to visit the local school and find out information regarding infrastructural facilities, syllabus, courses, level of absenteeism, midday meal and other similar stuff. It was tedious but interesting work.

We met people, interacted with them in Oriya and tried to extract the required information. Initially, there was a feeling of resentment among the villagers. However, they cooperated with us once we explained them about our motive. Each family was different from the others. The common factor was their simplicity and honesty which we don't find in urban areas.

We found out that almost every family we visited had at least one child attending school. This was in spite of the fact that their parents were illiterate. This was a positive sign. It meant that the villagers had understood the importance of education in their child's life.



It is surprising yet true that there was no gender bias as far as imparting the child with primary education was concerned. The girls were given equal opportunities like their male siblings. Who says women's empowerment has not reached the villages? One of the little girls, named *Laali*, caught my attention. She was

extraordinarily bright and could answer questions of the level of sixth standard students, being merely in the second form. She also



followed us during the rest of the survey and was asking me the answers of the questions she did not know. I spoke to her parents about her calibre. I requested them not to discontinue her education as she was a prodigy in the making.

Her parents did agree but they had a genuine problem. Their reply introduced us to the dark side of the education system. "The teachers in the school do not teach anything. There are three female faculties who ask students to

have done better if she were born into a family like yours. How can I help it?" said *Laali's* father. I had nothing to tell him because all that

he said was true. The ills of private tuitions had spread its roots in these villages too.

When we reached the local school, we found it closed. Nobody around knew the accurate reason though. From our interrogations we got some revealing information. The government funds these schools for providing midday meals to the students everyday. In reality, the children used to get midday meals twice a week. Instead of getting an egg to eat each day, they got it just once in a month. "If we complain about midday meals, the teachers threaten us of failing our students in the examination," informed the mother of a child going to the same school. The school had drinking water facility but no electricity or toilets. The plight of the school was truly unimaginable for me having passed out of a lavish public school.

We also visited a Muslim family during the survey. Their warm hospitality touched my heart. The head of the family, *Muhammad Sheikh*, spoke to us. He had three daughters. They were in tenth, eighth and fourth standard. There was no ill feeling between Hindus and Muslims in the village. *Muhammad Sheikh* told us,

"All the children have to face the same problems. It does not make a difference which caste they belong to. The teachers do not cooperate with us. Half of the days, the school is closed for no reason. Sometimes they force us to send our kids to them for private tuition without which they don't award them with pass marks. I am worried whether my eldest daughter will be able to pass her matriculation"

What bothered me was that we were not able to do anything even after knowing the grievances of the villagers of *Kothabada*. I expressed my thoughts to the NGO official who was with us. He asked me not to worry as he would definitely send a report of complaint to the Education department. I offered him assistance to prepare the report.

On my way back, I drew some conclusions. The rural people were aware of the facilities and wanted to access them. The middlemen were causing the entire problem. The Government's initiative of implementing the *Sarba Shiksha Abhijan* was praiseworthy. However, the government authorities need to examine at regular intervals whether the rules are being adhered. The ASER is not enough. We mentioned all this in our report. I don't know whether the report made any difference. Nevertheless, I promised myself that I will surely come back to this village when I am in the position to do something for these people. I was happy to have come for the survey as I could view *reality from close quarters*. The experience was much more enriching than piles of bookish knowledge.

-ARJYA PATNAIK
MASSCOM 08

ONE NIGHT AT RAILWAY STATION

It was a cold night. I with my family were at the Cuttack station, waiting for the train to arrive. We were going to Kolkata to celebrate Dussehera. We had reservation in Puri-howrah Express. Its arrival time was at 10:30 P.M. The station was full of passengers as everyone were going to different places to celebrate Dussehera. We reached station by 8:30 P.M.; so we had two hours to spend at the station.

Suddenly, at 9:15 p.m the announcer announced that all the trains arriving after 9:30 p.m are delayed for two hours due to some technical problems. Everyone's excited faces turn to pale faces. I and my father went to ask the enquiry about the timing of the train. They said many trains were cancelled. Luckily, Puri-Howrah Express was not cancelled. They could not say the actual time of the train. So, we preferred to stay in the station. As the station was over populated, many people went

to their respective home. The station was looking like a mini fish market. The waiting room was also congested. There was no space to put the steps. We luckily got some chairs to sit. The food stalls and magazine stalls were also over crowded. Everybody were little tensed. They were trying to find a way to overcome the situation. However, they had no other option except to stay at the station and wait for the train.

Among everybody, the shopkeepers were the happiest people. Their joy knew no boundary as they were the only people who were in profit. There was a group including boys and girls, who were also enjoying the situation. They were engaged in making fun of other people. A very cute couple was busy in their lovely gos-

sip. They were not at all disturbed by the heavy environment.

At 11:15 p.m, Chennai-Howrah Express arrived. The passengers of this train had a sigh of relief. They boarded the train hap-

the platform. The child was the daughter of a beggar. She was being beaten mercilessly by her mother. On asking for the reason, the woman replied that her child was asking for food. I was moved by seeing this situation. I went to the

we found a small cute girl. She was busy in playing with her grandfather. Again I had some snacks. I sat beside my mom who was also feeling drowsy. I again switched on to F.M. While listening the songs I was thinking about the various faces of the world. At one side a child is crying for food whereas at the other side a child is very happy playing with her grandfather. There are different situations for different people. And we have no other options except to face the circumstances.

Finally at 1:45 a.m., Puri-Howrah Express arrived. We reached Howrah by 10 a.m.. At last we reached our destination. We enjoyed Dussehera with our relatives and friends. However, this journey has become a memorable journey for me. In the same night, even in the same place it has shown the agony as well as the joviality of life.

-PRIYANKA BISWAS
MASSCOM 08



food stall, bought a biscuit packet and gave it to the small child. As soon

as she saw the biscuit packet her face brimmed with a smile. The smile on the child's face was so beautiful to look.

I and my sister decided to have a small walk at the station platform. We found many poor people sleeping on the platform including the coolies. I was a very painful sight. Then after moving a few steps

REDIFF: DAY

It was a big deal. My very first day at the place that would be my workplace for over two years.

A lifetime of educational pummeling and doubts later, someone reads your resume and asks you to prove your worth.

My confidence levels were not really worthy of the Gods' envy. To boot, I had a mountainous pimple to the right of my lower lip which was threatening to explode any moment and bathe me in blood and puss. It also impeded clear speech to a certain extent.

Regardless of these mighty obstacles, I travel from Chennai to Mumbai in a hurry

and present myself for scrutiny at the head offices of Rediff.com.

I am asked to wait by a friendly bearded man. An hour passes and I imagine this is a subduing technique. Maybe I am under surveillance. They might want to know how I respond to solitary confinement. There is stress, uncertainty, and the general air of frustration that

At long last, someone comes along to 'interview' me. It starts off as a casual chat and grows into an interaction about my hobbies and interests. They do inquire about my references and qualifications but it merely seems something they



Then there is another interview by another senior editor. Then another, and another. At the end of close to three hours, I had had casual conversations with seven senior editors. I had lost track long ago of who was who. All I wanted to do now was go home and rest my pimple.

I was told there was an editing test forthcoming. I groaned but realised that perhaps this would decide my future with this company.

I gave the test to the best of my tired form's capacity and had not done a very good job of it. My delicate pimple kept most of my attention.

I was shown out with courtesy after they were done with me. In a few days' time, I would celebrate the appointment and the bursting of the pimple together.

-VIJAYENDRAMOHANTY
(mypajama.com)
Mentor Editor



all unemployed carry upon their countenances.

thought would be nice to know.

Awaiting The Spring

The songs of solitude ring in my ears
Time has flown over long, long years

I have been waiting for spring to come
And to bring with it happiness home

But the wait seems to linger on
Winter and I just sit and mourn

It snows incessantly with no sun's ray
Everything around is a shade of grey

The furnace in the corner has become old
The ceiling of the room is now old

Life is numb and silence exists
Light is away and darkness persists

Gone are the moments of intimacy, gone are the stolen kisses
I'm left with just the broken hopes and the lost promises

Tears have flown and dried again
There no more exists a trace of pain

I live like a leaf about to fall
Perhaps, spring was never for me at all

ARJYA PATNAIK
MASSCOM 08

Remembering You...

My heart melts without any noise,
At thy slumber so deep.
The reminiscence of those divine joys
Vents my rising despair and I weep.

Thy motherly love and peerless eyes;
Thy beauty shall no more be found,
Thy sweet words and tender lullabies
Shall never again sound.

But thy glory and living hues;
Shall make my woes tame,
And thy gentleness and virtues
Shall ever kindle like a golden flame.

My aching soul yearns thine august
Thy warm love and grace
Now folded in the cells of crystal silence
How pure is their dwelling place.

Days may turn into long years
Yet, I can ever bid those joys farewell.
Treasured in the recesses of pearly shell,
Sometimes they flow into a stream of tears.

Swifter than a falcon's flight,
Those beautiful days come and gone.
Thou have vanished into the darkness of night
Only thy memories are left alone.

SIKTA SAMANTARAY
MASSCOM 08



THE LOST INNOCENCE
ART BY RONAK SAHOO, MASSCOM 08



PHOTO BY RATUL BHATTACHARYA
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