

God in Chain

Maheshwar Narayan Sinha

We hired a private car from Jersidih railway station. Dewghar is just eight km away from here. Our car was densely crowded of us. Ops! Maternal uncles, aunties, grand mom, grand father, children all seemed packed like sacks of food grains. We had our goal only at eight km away, but ditch like path together with our congested position and very hot weather all had made it worst. Ah! The night long journey through railway was picnic like, and we had quite a glorious moment enjoying fully. But now, our pilgrimage has started- a tough moment! Our car would rise and fall like a wave in the ocean, person seated badly would recall God! Pilgrimage, a tough journey, although small but appeared breathtaking.

“Hey uncle, please don’t crush my legs. I’m getting badly hurt.”

“I can’t help my dear child. There is no space even for air.”

“We’ve few more miles to go. Have patience.” - Grand father tried to console us.

“Ah! These few miles and few moments seem infinite.”

“We must have hired an additional auto- rickshaw.”

“Forget it. We would have more sweets of this holy city, my favorite, instead of hiring an additional car.”

“Hum! You talk of sweets now. Ah! My back hurt, aah...go slow, go slow driver sir, please.”

It took hours - those toughest hours to reach Dewghar. Shivganga bus station, our destination.

We jump off the car hurriedly - all wet. What a humid region it was! Temperature more than 40 degree Celsius and relative humidity above 90 percent- I thought.

A rotten hot weather! Ops!

“Our native place seems a heaven” – all of us had the same opinion.

What now?

Grand father went away to have help of our family priest, who’ll help us meet the God, Lord Shiva. It was early morning and what we all needed was to have an inn, where we all could get refresh.

Soon grand father came back with our family priest; we all greeted him and followed him simultaneously. I too followed the crowd. Yes, we had a crowd. I was a part of it.

Oh heaven! The city looks so old. Houses made in old fashion, very packed. No proper windows or corridors for air passage. Sitting places have been used as a pathway. Pedal rickshaw, auto-rickshaw and motor bikes are running and noising along the way. Crowds of devotees look scattered all the way.

Humidity, dirt and crowds made me disgusted. I thought – No good civil aviation. Administration seems absent. What any good they do of rich funds collected here in the name of God? Not a single coin they've spent in the cause of public interest. Hell! Hell! Small hills of rotten wastage just aside the pathways. No dust bin!

We entered the inn, following our priest.

Hell! Dark and dirty. Bad smell struck my nose immediately. The room was large, two wooden cots, without a sheet, lying. An attached bathroom and water of tub. This was the inn where we had to make a halt for some hours.

I walked down to corridor and watched outside people there.

I saw only priests and their clients everywhere; the only relation between them was of a master and a client. Yes, all had some wishes, and they wanted to be fulfilled here at God's door. And, to reach that door they needed one middle man to carry them along. Clients had to pay for it. Nobody looks selfless. Everybody seemed rotating round their axis of wealth, health, prosperity, and all. Some wished for a better result in examination, some wanted to have their daughter married soon, some wanted to settle by getting a good job, some wished for money to build a grand house, and some wanted a good health and promotion in services. They all were in whirlpool of 'own'; nobody seemed to go beyond of it. The journey from self to the selfless was utterly unknown to them. They had no time to think over the subject that leads a man to a drop to countless water of ocean. Even none seemed serious to

look at the dirt of this city. They had accommodated themselves with it, and maybe would've liked anything existed already, however bad and unhygienic. They all have eyes, but without a vision. They do think, but their thoughts have restrained to a limit only.

How an old woman she is! Leaned and thin, stretching her hands for alms people passing by.

How a poor boy! Pulling a pedal rickshaw.

Why not they wished anything for betterment? Why a city of blessing, a holy place of Lord couldn't abolish disparity. People say this place fulfils all wishes if they are asked to God.

I stayed there thoughtfully to myself. I didn't know how much my 'self' was roaming through there. My 'self' seemed trying to knock at the door of God's self and ask endless questions unanswered until now. But, after all who encountered God, everyone is absolutely alone here at this battlefield.

I didn't know who was speaking to me. I didn't know who was furious to query. It was me, or out of me. Anything inside or outside!

I didn't know.

I was thoughtful. Soon I came off it as I saw my aunts coming fresh. They were looking beautiful.

We all moved ahead. I followed them dutifully.

We walked down to *ghaat* (the bathing place) of Shivaganga. Mythological character Ravana had urinated

there to make a pond. Wow! Mighty Ravana, a devotee of Lord Shiva, wanted His idol phallus of worship to establish at Sri Lanka. Lord accepted his wish but given that he would not drop it anywhere on the earth during his travel to Sri Lanka. It's said that Deity River Ganga entered into Ravana stomach causing him to pee. Ravana asked a country man to hold Lord Idol for a while until he urinates. Because, the rush seemed too much of Ravana, not ended up soon, and that man unable to hold the heavy idol, put it down the earth. Hence, in this way, that idol of Shiva (phallus erected over vagina, symbol of male- female energy of this universe) turned into a holy place.

Interesting and amazing story.

I felt a sort of disgust to know of pond which came out from urination, together the green and untidy steps around it caused my veins shiver.

Grand mom, father, uncles, and all children stepped down to have their dip in it.

Uncles went down, only a towel around their loin, some were in underpants only. Soon they got jovial; maybe the water would've made them fresh. They began playing with their sister-in-laws. There was a sportive moment for a while, my aunts seemed also enjoying in fullest. It was interesting to see them playing like young stuff. One of uncles, who had been smart in swimming, would dangerously dip my aunts one by one in the depth of water. They shout, and the depth of water would scare them out. But without fear of death, one can't enjoy the adventure.

I moved some of steps down to water. Oh heaven! Only two-three steps inside of water made me thrilled. It felt me as if water would lift me up in its lap. I was scared. God! How aunts and my smart uncle had been so far, reaching to its depth! How smart, fearless and sportive! I felt proud of his thick moustaches until now it was a subject of mockery for me. Well, there is reason behind such a bow like moustaches.

I tempted to have a fearless dip, but I couldn't gather courage to get over it. Suddenly, my smart uncle pushed me inside, and let me fall altogether into it. Ops! I thought I had gone! Mercy...God!

But, I too had a jovial moment playing with water. Uncle had killed all my fear and hesitation.

Nobody wanted to leave that game, children, my uncles and even my grand mom and father, we all.

The matchless thrill, the hot and humid weather, and our tired body needed the same what we had then. A divine moment!

'Water has life.'- Thought struck me through. I got to realize it. It has world. As we walk on the earth, here creatures too walk down. It has its own language, own ways of living. It's just not simply a way of purification. It has undercurrents, currents and waves. They all suggest us of something there is distinct existing. We're told of beloved's love games hidden within it, and of immense treasure hidden therein. In the past, Demons would hide for their existence after they'd committed sin. Water generates the organic and

inorganic materials; together water causes destruction of many civilizations, the same source being the force of creation and destruction. Some of hermits had achieved their austerity along here in depth of water.

Only chest height water surrounded upon me, and this glimpse of life I could vision. Amazing! Only a few minutes ago I had been so narrow of this consideration – my mind encountered only dirt and dust then.

Maybe I was purified. I wished if my naughty uncle again could push me down the deep of water.

We all moved ahead following our family priest. What a stomach he had! Something likes a big bucket. Wow! His stomach suggested of his luxurious life. No tension, they enjoy all wealth without performing any tough or rough duty. A traditional farming, respected and rich. Sorrow and pain of people bring them here at Lord's door. And no inn, no shops of *prasaad* (fruits and sweets offered to God as a blessing), hotels and restaurants here are likely to slow down economically. Aggrieve of one place has become a happy reality for others.

What a unique world we have!

We walked slowly along the narrow, very narrow roads, shops settled closely in a row exhibiting materials like flowers, garlands, pious leaves to submit Lord, sweets, fruits and holy necklaces, rings of Lord Shiva, small idols of Gods and Goddesses, photos, holy books and many other things related to rituals.

Crowds of people became intense as we moved to core part, that is, near temple. Our shoulders would rub off; there was no feeling of being man or woman. Everyone had turned into the same and one that mass feeling – Lord Shiva! Shiva - the only truth!

The all paths, crowds, shops, all noises were one - only 'Shaivism' existed all the way through.

Beggars with their alms bowl, seated all along the corner of path, waiting to return devotees to get coins of blessing.

We had approached the main gate of the temple, all of sudden. The crowd and narrow lane hadn't given the chance to look for the apex of the temple.

Ah, so simple! No any sign of grandness. Simple and plain! No specific work of architecture, no sign of Greek or ancient or medieval art and design. Simplicity, the real adorn of Lord Shiva.

A trident (a three pronged lance) at the apex of the temple, lying over a *kalash*. A trident has three spikes, suggesting of three dimensional worlds. The three sort of pain. A *damaru* (a hour-glass drum, it has two drumheads, when played by hands, produces a rattling sound) in His hand, beaten continuously, symbolic unification of Yin and Yang, together Lord's dancing pose as if a charmer spells bounds his or her viewers and entertains. Everyone followed by Him stay connected through eternal music and dance. So, we were there- was it a part of His dance? Master and pupils all seem to dance, oh! There was no difference between Him and us. The monkey and Master are the same all the way.

A crescent moons upon His head - a smiling face. It seems to suggest of our mind, always changing but ruling over our head. A snake resting round His neck, whirling through together its hood aggressive and erect, maybe this is world trying to enslave Him out. But, at the top, a stream of holy Ganga flows- suggesting of all source of absolute energy of intellects and bliss. And a third eyes over His forehead. Always closed. The all source of potential energy and ultimate knowledge of this Cosmo. To see everything and knows all. Why this matted lock of hair? Oh! This is world, very complex, as if suggesting us to live struggling here, always a challenge.

Lord Shiva's surrealist features fascinated me. Wow!

As we entered the temple, one behind another, holding our hands in chain, so that no any children would go missing, as the crowds had been more intensified. Children began crying out of fear, noises and suffocation. We thought we were grains under a heavy grinding machine being pissed altogether.

Our priest helped us quite a bit. Somehow we approached near God, touched and got the blessing all over our head and body.

The world was infinite, Gods were omnipresent, and still we all wanted specific place and a point to have to be blessed.

I too greeted Him, although I desired or demanded nothing. I know there were so many people who would ask for me. My mother, my father, my sister, my uncles, my

grand mom and grand father - the list was long. Why I should attach more demands and make the list longer?

We took the holy round of our beloved God. Inside the temple, bell rang non stop, flames and gaseous state just suffocated us. To bring a more comfortable state here group of priests would continuously throw sprinkles of water. It would help the space smoke-free.

But, noises, dust and smoke, very congested place and ringing bells had made us sickly sweet all the more. We all wanted to go off here, as we all had touched and have blessings of God.

When we were outside in a better open area, we all took a breath of relaxation. Ah! Thanks God!

Thereafter we visited all small deities along in the huge campus. The one chief lord stayed in the center and the rest in the periphery. All needed equal attention.

"This is sheer business, binding people to offer something more." - My moustache uncle said in objection.

"Devotion, business, faith and fraud are at the same floor." - One of uncles said.

"Right! Good and evil exist together" - My uncles picked up a discussion.

"Are we here to do any good? No, I think, not at all. We all are here for a deal?"

"Deal? What sort of deal we're making with God?"

“Didn’t we wish something to be fulfilled by Lord? What’s this, utterly we too are making a deal, only the shape and size of bowels are different.”

“Ah! You seem to fit well, but this is how our world is! God too wants to show His value and dignity.”

“Maybe He wants to show how He loves us. Maybe He wants to suggests to not to have disbelieve, I’m there with you.”

“Maybe! Maybe you’re right. We all are sinners, making some sort of fraud in our life, big or little, and maybe we want that God forgives us”

“But, they seem to making it here, at Lord’s corridor.”

“God existing every nook and corner, this entire world has been His corridor.”

Our uncles had been in an interesting debate about God. A beggar followed them stretching with his bowel of alms. Younger uncle dipped his hands to search for a coin. O! No coins, no small rupee even.

His face contracted for a while.

“Can’t dare to offer him a big rupee? How miserable we are! We’ve offered lots of money to these priests, and donated a fat sum to this temple, but when it comes to act genuinely, we feel dejected.”- My moustache uncle said straightforward way, as it was his trade mark, and offered a big note of rupee to that beggar.

Beggar turned back satisfied sending his way blessings. My other uncles looked puzzled for a while though. “Why

poverty prevails even at God's foothill!"- One of uncles murmured.

We already had walked past the lane of temple, and we had quite an open space. The sun struck overhead. The hot and sticky weather had brought us miserably. Together we all started feeling hunger. Only a small amount of fruits and sweets were not enough to get subsided our hunger.

"Without having a visit to Wasukinath (lord of snakes) temple, Lord Shiva will not get pleased and bless us."- My grand father announced. We looked each other a bit faded. By now, everyone was hungry, but to make our pilgrimage accomplished, we needed to take a round of another temple of Wasukinath, forty km. away from there. We'll have food stuff at a cheap rate there."- Grand father's note assured me.

But how we would move there? - Question arose.

Trip of public bus was cheap, but too lengthy to travel through, especially when we all were badly tired and hungry.

A hired car could be a good choice, but we had terrific session already in the morning, quite frightening. And, hiring two cars were expensive. Uncles and grand father stayed fixed for a while, a standing round table conference held right away, but without having any decision. Suddenly, my moustache uncle shouted for a car, and asked us to have our seats. We, again, like many sacks of food grains gathered in, children over the lap of elders, and soon our car moved fast.

Thanks God! Ditches were absent from the road.

The trip of Wasukinath was nice. Little crowds, spacious temple, clean and stretched hamlet that all we enjoyed. And, absolutely, we had a divine taste of foodstuff, we all dined quite widely.

By late evening, we planned to visit Navlakha Temple, just three km away of Shiva Temple.

It was different. Beauty and luxury existed all throughout. The nature around was scenic, towered palm trees, greeneries, and luxurious architecture simply welcomed all. Mesmerized. The walls and doors and floors, all clean. Oh! How nice! My moustache uncle touched the floors to see if there was any dust in it. What a temple! The God of beauty existed in every brick of the wall. Uncles and aunts opened their mouths as if to drink the fresh air.

'Wow!'- They exclaimed.

How this world totally differed from that of Shiva's world! There was no sign of struggle, poverty, and noises of desires. Only there had been a thorough ruling of wealth and cleanliness. Human's desires seem to vanish now, and only beauty prevailed. No dualism, now be a part of heaven. After struggle and conflicts, you needed to take rest at peace over the bed of roses. Here, you might have it! Nobody asks to have something here. Simply get connected to this wealth of heaven. Residual of human passion remained no more.

"I wish to salute for those creative brains that shaped such a work of splendor!"- said one of uncles.

“Wouldn’t you like to hats off to those miserable workers, who were almost a slave”

“Why not! But why we should be proud of a work, although decent, but comes out of tyranny of rulers.”

“What do you mean, Mister?”

“I want to raise a question against the tradition which was aggressive and against the commoners as it oppressed the masses. The stories of slavery have been earthed down deep and only glory of kings or feudal come out on the floor.”

“Why do you think so? Are not we a slave now? We’re, but not to a person or body, but we all bounded to obey a certain rule. Aren’t we?”

“Absolute freedom, I think, is a myth. We all have to be a part of a rule in anyway. Even those kings too were not free. The sun and the moon, all have a specific orbit. None can go beyond. I don’t see any reason that we should not be proud of such a creation of beauty and luxury.”

“I feel proud over it”

“Me too...”

“Why not we all should feel proud, if they would’ve enslaved the masses, they did a good job by not forming any destructive weapon.”

“Well said, sir!”

A flock of pigeons landed down on the top of roof, after a while, they flew away toward west in the sky. The redness

of sky had darkened as dusk had settled in. Some patches of clouds floated above in the sky. Chirping birds had started taking their shelter behind the shadow of trees, as the sun was near to set.

Night had stretched through when we reached our inn. Not a happy place though. All people continued talking about Navlakha temple. How luxury and beauty had touched them!

Ladies couldn't find the reason how those wide space of temple have had its tidy condition. In their houses, even so small room gets messy so easily. Since years the pillars and walls stay proudly as if untouched of dirt and dust. Amazing!

After having some rest with tea and snacks, we decided to have our dinner soon. Maybe we would leave the inn. We took our entire luggage with us. I heard elders talking about - what next in the schedule? I got a hint that maybe we would go Jersidih railway station to catch our latest train.

Town street light had lit up, the crowds were scarce. People had seen walking lazily, as if all seemed wretched and torn. Mosquitoes along the gutter side would buzz in harmony, as if praying for God's glory.

Again we dined widely near a hotel. Yes, with celestial taste. People say here stuff is nothing but offered as a blessing of Lord.

Uncles and grand father took betel leaves as to get freshen their mouths.

Next?

I heard them talking about to go again Shiva temple and look devotional decoration of Lord.

Again the same temple? This sheer thought made me pale. I was so wretched. I could only think of reaching my home and have rest for long. But, I came to know that our latest train was next early in the morning. No other way we had available by then.

I couldn't help myself except to go creeping behind them. Totally harassed and faded.

"Why people move here and there in search of blessings and all that. Why not we stay at a point and look for our duty to perform regardless of what result we get."- I thought more like a philosopher. Oh! Harsh moments keep up on another sphere of life letting us know other dimension of the reality.

"The real thing is whether you've faith. If it's there with you, almighty God knows it."

"This is not God's job or wish to let you migrate in a hard situation to get to know Him or Her. Sheer False!"

"I thought I was in chain, I had to creep here following them."

A series of thoughts hit me along the way. Maybe I was quite unable to console myself. Maybe my thoughts tried to make me console. I was very curious to visit this place, not because to have blessings, but because the vision in my mind about the place was decent. I thought I was visiting

for a great city which would be neat, clean and beautiful. I found here none, quite distracting to me.

“I don’t need a God who calls us and offers His blessings. I don’t need any free gift from anywhere or anybody, I should get what I worth for.”- Maybe I began thinking aggressively. I couldn’t abuse any, I couldn’t help myself.

We entered the main gate, big lamps welcomed us. There was sufficient light around. The entire atmosphere was something clean and cool.

We believe God has created and adorn this world; here devotees were doing the same with God.

Oh! The center of God was accumulated with flowers, garlands and leaves. Nobody could see where God was! Yes, we do the same thing in worldly matters, keeping all Godly affairs inside and only decorating this world with our garlands and flowers.

Outside the core temple, some devotees assembled in group singing holy songs in praise of Lord. They had native instrument and a local tone. O! How beautiful! I liked that.

I loved the way they instrumented and gone through in chorus. I recalled one of God’s forms as a Cosmic Dancer - Natraj!

Music made me forget everything for a while.

Finally, we marched for the station, although we had whole night ahead. Still, I was glad to feel going toward my home.

Home? Doesn’t God exist there in our homes?

When we're moving, a soft corner for all those priests generated inside me, whom I consider them lazy eating their paternal farming. Now on I thought for them,

'How tough their job had been, I can't stay even for a day here!'

The railway station was fully crowded. Tired people, all waiting for their train, had stretched out asleep. The messed up group of people, all seem to looking forward for God's blessings. Streams of desires have been running maybe a man needs some spiritual strength to have them accomplished, small needy desires, and always a necessity for masses.

It was near 11-PM, means we had to spend six more hours. A tough hours. Tired body and with heavy eyes. The retiring rooms were occupied already. However, we manage to sit and keep our luggage anyhow. Little children fell asleep in their mother's lap.

We all wanted to sleep, but only little children could go sleeping because they found shelter in mother's lap. We kept away of our sleepiness by smashing out buzzing mosquitoes around. Our uncles had some round of tea and tobacco session, too.

Finally, dawn broke and birds started chirping. That drowsy sleepless night was toughest, I think. Anyway, we got our berth in the train. My moustache uncle soon stretched out in his sleeper seat and began snoring. I found my seat of window side, my all time favorite. I'll be at home by late

night, today. The sheer thought thrilled me. Excitement had vanished away my drowsiness.

When the train whistled and I saw the green signal on right time, I couldn't believe!

The train moved, slowly yet.

I took a breath. I threw a glance outside to say goodbye this holy city.

The daylight was clear now. The cool morning air hit me over my face. Soon, the train caught its speed. The world outside me seemed to pass me through rapidly.

Oh God! How lucky I was! I just felt a kind of freedom. A freedom that I never enjoyed ever!

"Thanks God! I'm free now."- I greeted the passing city of Lord Shiva.

"Yes, you're free. But what about your Lord, a captive of devotee's desires and wishes since ages."- This question rose inside of me. Who was there to ask such a question in me?

I didn't know!

"We look at it and we don't see it

We listen to it and we don't hear it

We touch it and we don't find it

And at the most unexpected moment

It appears and gives us everything" (Lao Tzu)

Maheshwar Narayan Sinha graduated with English from St. Xavier's College, Ranchi, Jharkhand, India. His short stories and novels in Hindi have been widely published. Some works have come out in English language, too including Lalitamba - 4, (New York). His paintings have been published widely in national and international journals including Palooka, Cezanne's Carrot (cover art), DVQ, DeJonDe Magazine, and Folio, GFT Press to name a few.
