

Missive-September-2023-first-part

Human beings tend not to be deceptive and avoid being identified as betrayers. On occasions, they are however deviants presumably because of the circumstances or due to being instigated. The latter are dangerous because once they are asked to undertake activities by others and they immediately plunge into action by suspending their morality. The former are the product of the milieu which act critically in shaping their priorities. These prefacing remarks are made to situate this month's missive in a perspective.

Visva-Bharati was founded by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore in 1921 to develop an alternative centre of learning and pedagogy. Many academically acclaimed and appreciative of universal humanism joined him in pursuing his mission. Not only did he spend his hard-earned money, he also devoted wholeheartedly to the cause by doing whatever was required to be done for the nascent academic centre. My purpose is not to acquaint the readers with Visva-Bharati's history, but to highlight how it began its journey and what the founder had in mind while being involved in its creation and governance. This is important at two levels: at the level of Tagore's cognizance of the situation, the task did not seem to be easy one because (a) in opposition to the colonial rule that favoured English education, the establishment of an alternative was likely to be a source of irritation to those wielding political authority and (b) many in his family were also not favourably disposed towards the proposal of starting a new centre of higher learning.

Despite difficulties, Gurudev Tagore went ahead and his brainchild, Visva-Bharati appeared in the world of academia. Now the missive unfolds. After having served nearly five years, I am now well-placed to assess the nature of Visva-Bharati as an academic centre and how evil forces have contributed to its downfall in course of time. Nonetheless, the accolades Visva-Bharati receives despite being troubled by many even on flimsy ground are just due to Gurudev Tagore's good will among people almost everywhere in the globe and also those who carried forward the tradition on which Visva-Bharati was built.

Why had it happened to the oldest central university which was also declared as an institution of national importance. The distinction was bestowed probably in view of the fact that it was based on the humanistic ideas of one of the most illustrious interventionists in human history. In reality however, not only has Visva-Bharati become a free space for those seeking to realize their partisan goals, but also it has lost its past reputation and resultantly it has become on occasions a reason for ridicule. The downfall is steady partly because those who took charge of this university did not appear to have taken the thugs ruining the campus as strongly as was required and partly due to the fact that deviants, if not miscreants, were too powerful to be decimated completely.

Visva-Bharati began its journey as an academic institution by being handicapped from the very outset. There are many reasons. Prominent among them were the existence of many stakeholders who derived their legitimacy by being true followers of Gurudev Tagore's legacy. His only

survived son, Rathindranath Tagore was denied this label; those who claimed to have been very intimately associated with the bard insisted that they were true heirs of this legacy. The battle unfolded with the result, the first Vice Chancellor, Rathindranath Tagore, was hounded out of the campus by labeling fabricated charges of financial embezzlement. Many Vice Chancellors were victims of the vicious role of self-propagated stakeholders; they were unable to complete their term of five years and left as perhaps the most respectable route to lead a happy and peaceful life. I also had the same experience: many issues of alleged deprivation and the so-called unjust administrative decision were raised now and then; one of the common slogans was about the resignation of the Vice Chancellor as if with my leaving the campus, everything would be fine. The real reason was however that with my departure, the groups nurturing vested interests shall have established their hegemony and there will be no force within the campus to stop them from fulfilling their exclusive benefits. Visva-Bharati shall again be the den of those elements who operated freely for attaining their personal objectives at the cost of the university. As my presence is a deterrent, they always raise the demand for removing the Vice Chancellor.

What is most tragic is also the role of the media. As Visva-Bharati is the only Central University in West Bengal, the state government has no role to play in the appointment of its Vice Chancellor. S/he is chosen by a search committee appointed by the union ministry of education and selected for the post by the hon'ble Rashtrapati of India. Given the process of appointment to the highest authority of the university, s/he is denigrated as a representative of the party in power at the federal level. Or, in other words, S/he is being blamed as the mouthpiece of the party in power. This relationship is made just to abuse the Vice Chancellor for being servile to the ruling party. No exception is made in my case. I was always charged as being a stooge of the ruling party and hence I had no legitimate right to be here. As I mentioned, one of the leading media houses in Bengal that had an effective role in the nationalist phase of India's civilization was after my life. No matter what, this daily, which claims to be prejudice-free, publishes news items which are always tainted for reasons best known to them. When I joined Visva-Bharati in 2018, my honeymoon period with this media house began with loads of fanfare which was however short-lived. I was regularly contributing to many of its publications which received accolades from many readers, besides the editor. However, as soon as it was clear that I wouldn't toe the line of the ruling party in West Bengal, the same media house closed the door for me permanently because I refused to give an undertaking that I would not write anything which could be politically "INCORRECT". The editor of a weekly magazine where I wrote earlier confessed though on conditions of anonymity that "he had great respect for me as a creative author, but due to extraneous factors, he was unable to publish my critical essays". I immediately understood his predicament and also helplessness. Because this media house earns a lot from the government and the pro-government business houses in the form of advertisement, it is impossible to stand by the constitutionally guaranteed Freedom of Speech. What a travesty of the objective role of the so-called Fourth Pillar of democracy! Servility is preferable to throwing away silvers! If a large and traditionally well-off media house cannot afford to follow its dharma because of the anticipated loss of revenue, it is actually an impediment to the

creation of prejudice-free opinion. Nobody seems to bother although there is an underlying current of disenchantment among many; but they seem to be too scared to raise their voice. This is a perfect situation for the thugs/deviants/miscreants to raise their ugly heads. Now, there is no demand for the removal of the Vice Chancellor because these elements know that I am going to demit office soon. They are waiting for the opportunity when Visva-Bharati will return to what it was before November 2018 when I took charge of the university as its Vice Chancellor. For strategic reasons, the acting Vice Chancellor does not take decisions to the chagrin of these evil forces; instead, attempts shall usually be made to appease them for (a) ensuring the peace of life, and to (b) enhance the possibility of getting a permanent tenure as Vice Chancellor by demonstrating his/her capability of governing Visva-Bharati without disturbing the honeycomb which will endear him/her to those who matter in the selection process. It is a recurring feature in Visva-Bharati. Many flarry activities will now start to speculate who will be next incumbent of this highest position in the campus. Even the media houses will not remain muted spectators; they will also take part in the game to protect them and their minions.

The results are disastrous. Visva-Bharati is being squeezed by many at the same time to wrongfully make gains. The counter forces are either too weak to effectively act or too scared to raise cudgels to avoid being brutalized. Who will be the messiah? God even does not know!

It is true that reasons for Visva-Bharati's decay are deep-rooted and one needs to undertake sustained work for long to succeed in the mission. The task is difficult but is not insurmountable. What is required is a strong will to follow certain basic steps without diluting them under any circumstances. Here is a challenge which needs to be faced with the heart of steel and the mind of a Hercules.

Let me add a caveat: there are teachers, scholars and other staff (both academic and non-academic) who are conscientious in so far as their duties are concerned. There are however some who do not appear to pay as much attention as is required to teaching and his/her research to upgrade his/her knowledge repositories. In general, there appears to have emerged a mindset encouraging deviant practices and deeds which could be anything but not complementary to the attainment of academic excellence like other universities in the world. There is no magic formula to halt the process instantaneously as the malic is deep-rooted. What is required to be is to create a collective mindset determined to bring back Visva-Bharati's lost glory. The university community is duty-bound to undertake steps, if necessary, unpleasant steps should not be avoided, to ruthlessly weed out the bad/evil/pernicious/venomous elements from within the campus.

How is this doable? This is a million-dollar question. I don't know what is the way out. Some of our colleagues refer to the massive contribution of scholars of ancient India. Their significance as creative authors who helped build a solid set of knowledge system can never be belittled because it was they who took India to the pinnacle of knowledge. What happened then? India did not remain

intellectually as productive as in the past. India's past is replete with example of how internal feud among those who were decisive in charting out an independent course of steps for the landmass known as India but was divided into many kingdoms appeared to have become self-centric and remained indifferent when the external aggressors attacked other parts of the country governed by another rulers. This is the beginning of the history of treachery in India. Many plunderers came with the sole objective of looting India; none of them was not interested in staying back. Those who decided to remain in India as rulers came later. The Muslims invaded India and established a trend of ruling India as unassailable rulers. India was now beginning to lose her identity; she became a place for the outsiders to mould the country in every respect in accordance with their priorities. Many of lower castes were oppressed by the caste Hindu by virtue of being born so due to the accident of birth. They were reported to be happily converted to rulers' religion, Islam. So, the internal socio-cultural schism accounted for mass conversion of the so-called untouchables to Islam. The conversion story also continued once the Christian rulers' from the West came in the middle of eighteenth century. India lost her identity although because of internalization of many derivative ideas, her identity became far more complex than that of the past. It was difficult to even identify who was an authentic Indian! This was good and bad at the same time: good because India was benefitted by being endowed with socio-cultural resources from other religio-cultural civilizations; bad, because submerging of one's identity in others' socio-cultural ecosystem was tantamount to giving up one's own actual socio-cultural moorings for pleasing the Raj.

One's submission to the rulers as one is too weak or scared to stand up is understandable; but if one submits oneself to curry favour is beyond comprehension. This was unfortunately the general pattern in India barring a few exceptions. As it was nearly a general pattern, history followed a particular course which would have different had there been a united opposition to battle with the occupants. What was worse was the role of the comprador elements who provided all kinds of support to the conquerors which resulted in the weakening of the opposition who had the courage to challenge the opponents despite adverse consequences.

Muslim rulers had adopted a strategy to completely destroy the inner courage that Indians had before they became victims of whimsical governance at the aegis of the conquerors. Attempts had constantly been made to halt the process; and, those who spearheaded the campaign succeeded largely because of the civilizational inertia that Indians had imbibed by being born so. In other words, India continued to remain so since the civilizational ethos were too well-entrenched to be undermined or belittled so easily. History is a testimony. Temples were destroyed or transformed into mosques by the bigotry rulers and their lackeys in various places of their forcefully captured territory.

What is required to be done under the present circumstances? There is hardly an easy answer to this question especially in contemporary India when the ground level situation seems to be highly volatile with questions regarding the texture of India as a nation.

Conceptualizing India

The task is easier said than done. The recent Manipur skirmishes (beginning in May, 2023) between two ethnic communities who also believe in different religious faith raise some of the difficult questions challenging the conventional explanation articulated in a binary mode of conceptualization. This is too simplistic because the rivalry leading to killing each other is not just because of communal differences; just not due to ethnic schism; just not a battle over the spoils being institutionally distributed owing to chasm around the caste axes. The Manipur incident is a unique example of intersectional rubric of deprivations human beings are subject to. This is also illustrative of how intersectional axes of humiliation and emotional degradation or debasement leads to a prairie fire.

Hindu-Muslim amity (or its lack?)

The contemporary India is confronting with many issues of communal disunity around issues which are not just due socio-cultural chasm but also because of unequal distribution (prospective or otherwise) of resources. A careful study of the roots of the Manipur tussle between two tribes, Kuki and Meiti, reveals that it began as Meitis demanded being clubbed as an Scheduled Tribe which will enable them to share the benefits constitutionally guaranteed. So, it was a battle over sharing of benefits which the Kukls by being identified as Scheduled Tribes have been getting for decades. As is now firmly established, Hindu-Muslim schism in Bengal had also class dimensions which should also be taken into account to arrive at a plausible explanation.

The primary concern here is to understand why did Indians remain divided around many socio-cultural axes seventy-five years after decolonization. Hindus felt deprived despite being a majority; Muslims were reportedly united as a bloc since they generally vote *en masse* their to the political parties of their choice. Hence, their role is very critical in constitutional democracy of the Western mould which India adopted. BR Ambedkar, one of the most perceptive members of the Constituent Assembly, argued that constitutional democracy was a top-dressing in a highly traditional, if not largely feudal, Indian society. In order to instrumentalize his ideational vision, not only was he in favour of a constitution with well-elaborated provisions, he also accepted the state with its coercive tools as a key to the implementation of rules and regulations. Ambedkar was correct, at one level, because the state, being endowed with instruments of authority, is well-equipped to deal with human behaviour contrary to the well-defined constitutional provisions. At another level, he did not seem to have read the historical inputs highlighting the importance of well-entrenched human values nurtured over generations. One thus cannot change the human mind by applying force; it can be done temporarily, but not permanently unless the roots are destroyed. Secularism is one such practice; the 1950 Constitution of India did not include the expression SECULAR presumably because they were confident that it was ingrained in the Indian mindsets. Once the issue came up for discussion in the Assembly, two interrelated ideas emerged: the Nehruvian *dharma nirepekshata* (state being neutral while executing rules and regulations) and the Gandhian *Sarva-*

Dharma-Samabhava (all religions are equal). While the former is derivative of the Western discourses, the latter had indigenous roots. Gandhi while arguing his point mentioned that Indians were instinctively religious; so, those who were responsible for putting into practice the rules and regulations could never be divested of their instinctive socio-cultural beliefs. So, *dharma nirepekshata* did not seem to be a workable idea in India as *dharma* was part and parcel of the existence of Indians as a community. Gandhi's approach to secularism was realistic because he strongly believed that, instead of imposing the view that religion should be kept out of governance, the constitution should have allowed the claim that what was most important was to develop religious bonhomie which was possible if the idea of equal respect to all religious groups was inculcated. This would have been perhaps more effective in building a bridge of camaraderie among communities with different religious identities.

Religion and difference

Many analysts are of the view that differences to religious chasm are natural given the inherent socio-cultural practices linked with the texture of one particular religion. This is also axiomatic that living together separately also creates conditions in which communities belonging to different religious groups also borrow by being together for generations many customary practices which are alien to them. For instance, the most palatable of all foods, Biryani, despite being a Muslim delicacy is integral to Hindu palates; kurta-pajama or salwar-kamiz also became part of Hindu apparel; Ghazal is also the one that is always appreciated in Hindu household notwithstanding its Islamic roots and articulation in a tongue, Urdu, which is also considered to be exclusive to Muslims. Similarly, Muslims also have imbibed many Hindu habits. Illustrative here is the worship by Muslim fisherman and those who go inside Sundarban in West Bengal because they offer flowers to an idol, Banbibi with the belief that she will protect them from dangers in the forest. Similarly, the offering of flowers to another idol, Dakshina Roy, who is believed to have the power to take away from the tigers the capacity to be capable of harming them. These examples suggest that, differences apart, a syncretic culture evolved in India.

In the case of Hindus, the idea of diversity is often referred to while defending the argument that as they are socio-culturally disparate, they can never be united. This idea does not seem to be plausible for two reasons: first, communities build an emotional bridge among themselves as they are emotionally closeted by being appreciative of a unity based on civilizational uniformity. Or, it is because of civilizational unity, India as a collective remains united. Instances abound. Whether one goes to Kashmir or Arunachal Pradesh or down south, one invariably comes across artifacts supportive of stories of *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* or any of the glorious/courageous acts of any of the gods/goddesses in the Hindu pantheon. Isn't it amazing to witness Shiva and Vishnu temples in the south of India which one also finds in the north, east and western part of India? This syncretic tradition flourished in countries outside India: many south-east Asian countries represent the legacy of Hinduism. Core here is the point that communities in India also come together and remain so because of civilizational unity.

If the above is true, then why do religious differences lead to animosity in various parts of India? This is not the place to attempt a critical analysis of the contentious point. Suffice it to say here that religious division is generally fomented politically to accrue benefit by those who survive and thrive by being seriously engaged in such nefarious activities. It is thus easy to understand why politically-alert individuals affiliated to many political outfits are opposed to "faith-based" collectivisation but are favourably disposed towards "caste-based" identities for mobilizing support. In other words, garnering support on the basis of religious identities is an anathema while soliciting specific caste support for political gain is not so. This is a conundrum one needs to carefully address to get to the bottom of why Hindu nationalist vision is objectionable because it is claimed to be contradictory with the core values of secularism enshrined in India's 1950 Constitution. But, caste-centric political organization, despite being faith based as well, hardly raises eyebrows of the self-propagated secularists because, for them, clinging to one's religious faith is an antinomy. Here, one is reminded of Gandhi's insistence on the conceptualization of *Sarva-Dharma-Sambhava* because implicit here is the claim that despite being highly religious (as Gandhi was), one can be, simultaneously, respectful to others notwithstanding their completely diametrically opposite religious predilections.

Religion is a belief system, believed Gandhi. This is, in other words, a stick to hold and remain glued to a collective as it upholds the same belief system. Illustrative here is Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism* (1904). The famous German thinker, Weber, linked the growth of capitalism to the Calvinic spirit of capitalism. According to him, capitalism owed its expansion to the hard work of the Calvinic section of Protestants which confirms that since Calvins, given their religious commitment to the collective, also felt that without hard work, no development was possible. In his perception, the spirit of capitalism entailed a set of values, the spirit of hard work and progress. Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Weber argued that religiosity did not include abdication of the pursuit of wealth and possession. In order to defend his point, he referred to his intellectual mentor, Benjamin Franklin who redefined ethics completely differently by stating that

"Time is money which is of prolific and generating nature. Money can beget money and its offspring can beget more. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He who kills a breeding-sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth generation; he who murders a crown, destroys all that it has produced".

Franklin emphasized that earning profits was not contrary to religion presumably because in his conceptualization, money was needed to ensure human well-being; and if one avoided doing so, one was not serving humanity, he held. Following this critical intellectual input, Weber demonstrated that the pursuit of worldly activities dedicated to economic gain did not thus seem to be unfair and unethical. The attainment of worldly goods and comfort were not possible without meaningful planning, hard work and temporary self-denial.

The book stands out in Weber's intellectual journey for important reasons. This is the first treatise to persuasively argue that Protestantism is not just a religious doctrine, but to emphasize the desire to make profit as rational since newer investments for human progress remained unrealized without augmenting collective income. This was inconceivable without internalizing the idea that profit making was not inimical to religion or religious instructions. So, profit making was not only a religion-driven endeavour, but was also, at the same time, a rationally-drawn human act.

Gandhi's *Sarva-Dharma-Samabhava* was exactly a well-thought-out design for realizing the core objectives of religion. According to him, religion was not a set of rituals, it was also a device to transform human beings from being lazy souls to being active for realizing goals for human well-being. Like Weber who theorized how Protestantism contributed to human progress by inculcating a sense of service to humanity, Gandhi too reinterpreted religion as a design to create a set of values for mutual respect for one another which, he strongly felt, was a key to peaceful and humane existence of human being.

Visit to Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry

Twenty-Sixth of July, 2023 is an auspicious day for me. I visited Sri Aurobindo Ashram at Pondicherry in the morning. It was a god-send opportunity for me. Not only has my childhood dream been fulfilled but it is also the completion of my intellectual journey. My visit along with a fellow professor in Political Science from Punjab University. For both of us, it was coming together after nearly two decades. I am happy that the visit took place in his warm company. We were welcomed by the Reception Officer, Parimal Babu, a retired Headmaster of Dhupguri School in the district of Jalpaiguri, north of West Bengal. His presence made our visit interesting and nearly complete since we did not have time to be there in that holy place to our satisfaction. Nonetheless, the visit is memorable for many reasons: first, I considered myself to be most fortunate because I stepped into the building in a former French colony where one gets an imprint of French architecture in the buildings located in straight roads approximating to Boulevards in any of the French towns.

We were welcomed in the main entry door by Parimal Babu. We sat with him for a while when he elaborated the history of the building and how Sri Aurobindo came and stayed there between 1923 and 1950 when he left this world. We were told that for the first thirteen years after his arrival in the town, he changed his accommodation for more than thirteen times. As soon as the Ashram was built as per his specifications, he started living along with Mother Mira (who came to India permanently in 1921, and later became Mother to all the devotees of the Ashram) and other inmates of his Ashram.

In the three-storied Ashram building, Sri Aurobindo lived in a room on the second floor while Mother had her room on the third floor. As soon as we went out of the room where we sat at the

outset, we saw one Samadhi where both Aurobindo and Mother were buried. It is now a shrine for those who visit the Ashram. We were ushered in and offered our prayer and sat there for a while for meditation. We were then taken to another beautiful balcony with a very immaculately done bed. We were told that in the bed Mother's mortal remains were kept before it was buried. It was there for five days to allow her devotees to pay their last respect. The bed is maintained the way it was done then. We sat there to meditate for a while. Then we visited the Aurobindo school where we were told a completely different kind of pedagogy was followed. We saw students playing in the space located between the buildings. As we had time constraints, we did not have time to find out more about the pedagogy. What struck me was the absence of examinations or formal assessment criteria. The school was Mother's brainchild. We need to come back to comprehend the style and method of teaching there. Once our school visit was over, we were taken to the playground where we were told that Mother played lawn tennis even when she was seventy-six. There was also a photograph of Mother smashing a tennis ball.

The above description does not appear to add to our knowledge since those who visited the Ashram had the same story to narrate. As a student of social sciences, several questions came to my mind. Why did the otherwise successful nationalist leader decide to shift from Calcutta first to Chandanagar and then to Pondicherry. Perhaps in order to avoid the British police who were ready to harm him by deploying means of their choice, Aurobindo landed in the French controlled Chandannagar first and then Pondicherry. I was also struck by the fact that those who are managing the Ashram were Bengalees. It was a little surprising since Aurobindo idea of India comprises the undivided India. And, his creative texts published in *Indu Prakash*, *Karma Yogin* and *Bande Mataram* were testimonies of this and yet, the Ashram did not attract people from other provinces. The absence of people from other provinces was thus a little intriguing. I cannot however vouch for this because the duration of my visit to Ashram was also too limited to make a general comment. My comment is based on my being there for a couple of hours. That I met those in the Ashram were all Bengalees was what made me make this statement. The second intriguing issue which is also an outcome of my academic concerns related to my query on his abdicating the nationalist struggle in India when he rose as one of the most popular nationalist leaders. His incarceration followed the fabricated British charges of him being complicit with the preparation of bombs to challenge the Raj by resorting to violent means. It was an anti-national effort and hence was punishable. CR Das appeared on his behalf as a lawyer and he was exonerated. Then, why did he leave India when he could have effectively discharged his role along with those determined to emancipate India politically. It might have been true that had he not shifted to Pondicherry, we would not have had the two of his remarkably innovative texts, *The Life Divine*, *Savitri* and also his creative commentary on *Bhagwad Gita* comprising many of his brief comments on this epic text, published in *Bande Mataram* before he physically relocated himself in Pondicherry. Nonetheless, there is hardly a conclusive answer. I asked some of the inmates of Ashram, but was disappointed when they responded that he came to Pondicherry on the direction of Lord Krishna, the main proponent of *Bhagwad Gita*. I don't know whether it is plausible since

Aurobindo was a rationalist to the core and how far such a claim supportive of the supernatural intervention was tenable. The third issue that bothered me was why did he project himself as a Baba (the conventional expression in the Indian lexicon identifying those who claimed to possess supernatural spiritual power). Parimal Babu, in order to support the claim, took us to western side of the Ashram and directed our attention to a first-floor balcony, adjacent to his living room, where Aurobindo appeared regularly on his birthday (15 August) and Mother also followed the practice after Aurobindo's demise in 1950. We were told by Parimal Babu that the very sight of the balcony would bestow on us the blessings of Sri Aurobindo and Mother. Perhaps he had reasons to believe so although I was curious to find out the reason why he endorsed his image of being a Baba especially when he was an agnostic, if not an atheist. The fourth issue was linked with my query on how the expenses for such a huge complex were met. Perhaps it came from donations from many of Sri Aurobindo's devotees and later Mother's admirers. I asked this question to those involved in managing the Ashram and the answer I received defended the claim that the complex was built out of voluntary donations from those who were indebted to Sri Aurobindo and Mother for their enlightenment. The final question arose because we were told that the majority of Ashram's devotees were caucasians while the number of Indian believers was not insignificant either. This input is of critical importance and many ethnographic studies have shown that most of India's Ashram with an exclusive spiritual focus attract many from Europe, US and Australia. This is generally true because many of India's spiritual Ashrams survive, if not flourish, with patronization of people from these parts of the world. Perhaps, by not being troubled by the pangs of poverty, they have the luxury of exploring many of those areas which help them enjoy their worldly existence as ordinary mortals. One of the sources of their being unhappy despite being otherwise free from the drudgery of poverty is the lack of means for gratifying spiritual hankering for mental and heavenly peace. Hence, Baba's hand-holding enables them to be strong enough to sail through phases of personal emotional dissatisfaction. I am not satisfied with this explanation; but by providing this input, I hope to generate adequate inputs which will finally get translated into a plausible set of explanations.

An Addendum

Visva-Bharati is a peculiar space located in an equally peculiar ecosystem for many reasons which cannot be enumerated with adequate explanation in one missive. I need missives after missives in one go which is not a pleasant task because a missive means elaboration of individual experience for the past month by the Vice Chancellor. Nonetheless, I shall embark here on this task with apology for my inability to put in words what I propose to put in black and white. The reasons are many. Prominent among them the mindset governing those who are deprived of long-drawn benefits due possibly to the lackadaisical attitude of those formally shouldering the responsibility of running Visva-Bharati. What is critical to those associated with Visva-Bharati for earning their livelihood, those who are benefited out of Visva-Bharati and those stakeholders who failed to accrue gain as the nature of power dispensation have undergone a sea-change. The governing deity is the fulfillment of exclusive and, of course, unlawful, gains. And, if it is not possible, the deprived ones go to any extent to hit the authority by hook or crook. Here, the self-proclaimed Rabindriks, the deceptive Ashramites, the local people with the intention of making illegal money out of Visva-

Bharati by resorting to means which are everything but not legally-endorsed. But these deviants happily indulge in these practices because the law-enforcing agencies are adept in reinventing strategies in accordance with political directions or those of Bahuwali. The lodging of FIRs does not require proof or evidence; what is needed is a phone call from those without official position in the government although the university authority is not privileged so because the complaints from the University ends up with just a General Diary which never gets transformed into an FIR for reasons which are too well-known to deserve an explanation. Students with support from the political authority can lodge an FIR even if the complaint is frivolous; the Visva Bharati's staff have the same privilege if that causes discomfort or embarrassment to the Vice Chancellor; the outsiders from Bolpur are also well-endowed with this privilege because they help the ruling authority to accomplish its partisan goals. I am codifying my views on the basis of my experience as Visva-Bharati's Vice Chancellor for the last so many years. My experience is my evidence.

Now, I shall elaborate two of my recent experiences to substantiate my claim. I was flabbergasted when I came to know a self-proclaimed PhD student went to the extent of vilifying the Vice Chancellor even by stooping so low. This perhaps shows the nature of socialization she received at different stages of life before she became desperate to undertake such a despicable feat. The court of law, having understood the motivation behind this act, took an adverse view within a blink of an eye. She will end up being a teacher in an academic institution with blessings from her political masters - there is doubt here. What I am worried now is what knowledge she will transmit to her students when she develops expertise in heckling her teachers and also the top officer of the University.

On 13 August, 2023, the local dailies brought out a story on the basis of an anonymous post in the Facebook which was an attempt to defame Visva-Bharati since the detractors have not succeed so far to attain their partisan goal. Now, they have thus undertaken perhaps dirtiest trick to disrepute Visva-Bharati that provides them with sources of livelihood and if they are ousted from the University they will surely starve to death since a majority of them are incapable in all respects. This is a matter of disenchantment to many whether those who are getting a fat salary and other benefits deserve this. I never had occasions to assess their academic prowess because they neither appear in daylight; they are nocturnal animals. I am not sure whether they can be compared with them because they also govern their activities in accordance with certain rules and regulations. Those nocturnal creatures who are born as human beings prefer dark night to get involved in nefarious activities. They are adept at writing letters, sometimes anonymous letters as well. They are now in the spree of making money with the ostensible object of defending their misdeeds; but, in reality, the goal is different. Hence, I urge upon those who are likely to be befooled by this tactic of misleading individuals to not get misled.

Let me now focus on the second event. The government of India has promulgated many laws to help the disprivileged especially those who by being identified as a backward set of people, are required special care and protection. On the surface, this is a very welcoming decisions which the US Governments and the Government of South Africa have also adopted to assuage the feelings of those who were historically tortured due to the accident of birth. So, now, they were given benefits just to take them to that stage where the seemingly advantageous sections of the people are. Tragically, those who are in the "creamy layer" appropriate the benefits shamelessly. Those

who need support, they remain peripheral unfortunately. There are umpteen number of instances to substantiate the claim.

Prof. Bidyut Chakrabarty
Vice Chancellor, Visva-Bharati
Santiniketan
01 September, 2023

In this missive, I shall place before the readers two allegories in Bangla. The English translation, if required, shall be made available later.

এখন রূপকের ছলে আমি আমার একটি অভিজ্ঞতার কাহিনি শোনাব:

এক ছিল এক ব্রাহ্মণ-সন্তান। ব্রাহ্মণ হলে কী হবে? প্রকৃত ব্রাহ্মণত্ব তার ছিল না। ধর্মের পথ থেকে সে ছিল ভ্রষ্ট। বীণাপাণি তপোভূমি নামের একটি প্রতিষ্ঠানের কোষাগারের দায়িত্ব পেয়েছিল সে। নানারকম বিধিবহির্ভূত কাজকর্ম করায় ছিল তার বিশেষ পারদর্শিতা। যেহেতু লোকটার অন্যান্য পথে অর্থ-আত্মসাতের স্বভাব ছিল, তাই তাকে তপোভূমির কোষাগারের দায়িত্ব থেকে বিতাড়িত করা হয়। বীণাপাণি তপোভূমির জন্য অর্থমঞ্জুর করতেন দেশের মহারাজা। বীণাপাণি তপোভূমিতে যোগ দেওয়ার পর রাজার দেওয়া অযুত-নিযুত হিরে-জহরত সে আত্মসাৎ করেছিল। নিজের স্বভাবানুযায়ী সম্পদ-আত্মসাতের কৌশলগুলো তার ভালই জানা ছিল। দেশের বিধিবদ্ধ নিয়মকে বৃদ্ধাঙ্গুষ্ঠি প্রদর্শন করে এবং একই কাজের 'কুমির ছানা' দেখিয়ে সে একাধিকবার বীণাপাণির পুরস্কার দাবি করে। হিসাবপত্রে জল মেশানোর কাজটা সহজেই সে করতে পারত, কারণ বীণাপাণির সম্পদ দেখভালের দায়িত্ব ছিল তারই হাতে। সে ভাবেইনি যে এইভাবে অন্তত সর্বশক্তিমান ঈশ্বরকে ধোঁকা দেওয়া যায় না।

বীণাপাণি তপোভূমে নতুন সর্দার এসে বললেন, 'আত্মসাৎ করা সব মগি-মাণিক্য তোমাকে ফেরত দিতে হবে। তা নইলে শূলে চড়ানো হল রাজার বিধান' লোকটা কান্নাকাটি করে বলল, 'এমন কস্মো করবেন না সর্দার। আমি ব্রাহ্মণ সন্তান। আমার অভিলাষ আপনাদের গায়ে লাগবো' সর্দার অনড়। তিনি বললেন, 'আমি ধর্মের পক্ষে। ন্যায়ের পক্ষে। সেই ধর্ম এবং ন্যায়রক্ষা করা হল আমার ধর্ম। ব্রাহ্মণ বা শূদ্র দেখে ন্যায়ের বিধান চলে না। ন্যায়ের প্রশ্নে ব্রাহ্মণ-শূদ্রের ভেদবিচার ধর্ম নয়। অধর্মা' অগত্যা কঠোর শাস্তি এড়াতে লোকটা সামান্য যৎসামান্য হিরে-জহরত ফেরত দিল। কোষাগারের অন্য পদাধিকারীরা এসে সর্দারকে বললেন, 'সর্দার, হিরে-জহরতের সবটা এখনও কোষাগারে ফিরে আসেনি। লোকটা কিন্তু এবার এখান থেকে পালাতে পারে। সাবধান হতে হবে আমাদের।' সর্দার দেখলেন এই পারিষদদের অনুমান মিথ্যা নয়। সত্যিই অন্য এক তপোভূমে লোকটা একটা কর্ম জুটিয়ে সর্দারের কাছ থেকে মুক্তিপত্র চাইল। নতুন তপোভূমে চলে যেতে তার খুবই আগ্রহ, কেননা নতুন জায়গাটিতেও রাজা প্রভূত দান-ধ্যান করে থাকেন। লোকটা সর্দারকে এসে কেঁদে-কেটে বলল, 'আপনি যখন আমাকে বিশ্বাসই করেন না, তখন দয়া করে আমাকে এখান থেকে ছুটি দিন। আমি মুক্তি পেতে চাই।' সর্দার মাথা নেড়ে বললেন, 'না, তা তো সম্ভব নয়। তোমার হিরে-জহরত, মগি-মাণিক্য সবটা তো ফেরত আসেনি রাজকোষে। মহারাজার বিধান অনুযায়ী তোমার বাঞ্ছিত মুক্তি মঞ্জুর করা এখনই সম্ভব নয়।' লোকটা তখন সর্দারকে শাসিয়ে বলল, 'তবে আমি চললাম ব্রাহ্মণ-পরিষদে। ওখানে গিয়ে বলব, বীণাপাণি তপোভূমি এখন স্লেচ্ছদের রাজত্ব হয়েছে। ব্রাহ্মণদের ন্যূনতম মর্যাদা সেখানে আজ সুরক্ষিত নয়।' সর্দার নির্বিকার মুখে বললেন, 'আমার ধর্ম ন্যায়ের ধর্ম। ব্রাহ্মণ-শূদ্রের ভেদ আমি মানি না। ভারতবর্ষের ব্রাহ্মণত্বের প্রকৃত মর্মকথা আমি জানি। তৎকর্তাকে তা প্রশ্রয় দেয় না।'

লোকটা গেল ব্রাহ্মণ-পরিষদে অভিযোগ জানাতো। এই পরিষদও মহারাজার অর্থে পরিচালিত হয়। পরিষদ তলব করল সর্দার এবং তাঁর পরিষদদের। হুকুম করল, 'ব্রাহ্মণ সন্তানটিকে অন্য তপোভূমে যোগ দেওয়ার মুক্তিপত্র এখনই আপনাকে দিতে হবে। নইলে ধর্ম রসাতলে যায়।' পরিষদের ভূমিকায় লোকটা যৎপরোনাস্তি আনন্দিত হল। সর্দার পরিষদে বিনীতভাবে নিবেদন করলেন, 'হে আর্ঘ্যপুত্রগণ, মুক্তিপত্র প্রদানে আমার কোনওই আপত্তি নাই। আমি অবশ্যই তা মঞ্জুর করব। কিন্তু নিঃশর্ত মুক্তিপত্র মঞ্জুর করলে আমি নিজে ধর্মভ্রষ্ট হব। কেননা যে দায়িত্ব মহারাজ আমার উপর অর্পণ করেছেন সে হল ন্যায়ের ধর্ম রক্ষা করা। আমার কাছে সেই হল ধর্ম। আমি শুধু সেই ধর্ম প্রতিপালনে অঙ্গীকারবদ্ধ। সে ধর্মে ব্রাহ্মণ-শূদ্রে কোনও ভেদজ্ঞান করতে নাই।'

সর্দারকে অনমনীয় দেখে লোকটা এবার প্রাদেশিক রাজার শান্তিরক্ষকদের কাছে অভিযোগ দায়ের করে বসল। এর পিছনে একটা উদ্দেশ্যও ছিল। স্থানীয় রাজা ছোট ছোট রাজাদের নিয়ে দেশের মহারাজের বিরুদ্ধে একটা বিদ্রোহের ষড়যন্ত্রে লিপ্ত ছিলেন। তিনি এই সর্দারের ন্যায়পরায়ণতাকেও বিশেষ পছন্দ করতেন না। সুতরাং তাঁর শান্তিরক্ষক বাহিনীও সর্দারের প্রতি ক্ষুব্ধ ছিল। লোকটা সেইজন্যই গিয়েছিল তাদের দরবারে। কেননা স্থানীয় রাজার সেপাই-সাত্তীরাও সর্দারকে শাস্তি দেবার জন্য মুখিয়ে ছিল।

কিন্তু এইখানে গল্পটার একটা ছোট্ট মোচড় আছে। স্থানীয় ন্যায়ালায় কিন্তু স্থানীয় রাজার বশব্দ ছিল না। ফলে স্থানীয় শান্তিরক্ষক বাহিনী সর্দারের কোনও ক্ষতিই করতে পারল না। বিষয়টা গড়াল অবশ্য মহারাজার মুখ্যন্যায়ালায় পর্যন্ত। মহারাজার মুখ্যন্যায়ালায়ের ন্যায়াধীশ বললেন, 'ব্যাপার কী সর্দার? আপনি কি সত্যই ব্রাহ্মণকে অযথা অপমান করেছেন?' সর্দার আগের মতোই বললেন, 'ন্যায়াচার্য, আপনিই বিচার করে দেখুন। আমার দায়িত্ব হল বীণাপাণি তপোভূমের সম্পত্তি রক্ষা করা। এই দায়িত্ব পালনই আমার ধর্ম। যদি কেউ তা আত্মসাৎ করেন তবে ব্রাহ্মণ-শূদ্র নির্বিশেষে তাঁকে মহারাজের বিধান-অনুযায়ী শাস্তি দেওয়া আমার কর্তব্য। তা না করলে আমি নিজে যে স্বধর্ম থেকে বিচ্যুত হই!' ন্যায়াধীশ বললেন, 'কথা ঠিক। ন্যায়ের প্রশ্নে ব্রাহ্মণ-শূদ্র ভেদ থাকা উচিত নয়। ব্রাহ্মণ-পরিষদ অতিতৎপর হয়ে ন্যায্য কাজ করেনি।' অতঃপর মহারাজার ন্যায়ালায় থেকে নির্দেশ দেওয়া হল, সর্দারকে যেন অকারণে অপ্রস্তুত না করা হয়। এবার ব্রাহ্মণ-পরিষদও সুর নরম করে বলল, 'মহারাজার ন্যায়ালায়ের উপর কোনও কথা নেই।'

লোকটা এখন একা। তার পাশে দাঁড়াবার মতো আজ আর কেউ নেই। যারা ভেবেছিল এই সুযোগে সর্দারকে উচিত শিক্ষা দেওয়া যাবে, তারাও এখন অন্ধকারে নিজেদের গা-ঢাকা দিয়েছে। সর্দারকে বেকুব করার আগে এখন তারা নিশ্চয় দু'বার ভেবে দেখবে।

এদিকে স্থানীয় রাজা নিজের রাজ্যেই এখন বিদ্রোহের মুখে পড়েছেন। নিজের সিংহাসন বাঁচাতেই তিনি এখন ব্যস্ত। রাজ্যের বাতাসে কেমন একটা এলোমেলো হাওয়া বইছে এখন। আর সেই লোকটা? সর্দারের অনুগ্রহে শর্তসাপেক্ষ মুক্তি পেয়ে অন্য তপোভূমে যোগ দিয়ে সে এখন একা-একা হাওয়া মাপে আর জানলা দিয়ে তাকিয়ে মাঝেমাঝে দীর্ঘশ্বাস ফেলো। আর বোধহয় মনে মনে রামপ্রসাদী সুরে গায়: 'এমন দিন কি হবে তারা?/যেদিন সর্দার পরবে হাতকড়া!' লোকটা ফুঁপিয়ে কাঁদে।

এবারে দ্বিতীয় রূপক গল্পটা:-

An allegory (the English version)

As usual, this month's missive will also end with an allegory: an allegory focusing on the so-called **MAGIC BALL**. The inhabitants of Saiyalopur are highly inquisitive of the Magic Ball because they believe that Sardar remains undisturbed, unaffected, unnerved because he is in possession of

the Magic Ball which is both a source of his energy and a shield to protect him and his compatriots from being harmed by his arch enemies and detractors, both known and unknown.

Magic Ball

The location is Saiyalopur. All of a sudden, the detractors of the Sardar, Dhurto Kenan, Dhurto Kabur, his son, his other associates, Udhoto Kebabjanto, Unnashik Kyabla, and, of course, the Maharani, spread the story that Sardar cannot be defeated ever because he has, in his possession, a magic ball; it is a ball, like the magic lamp of Aladdin, which does wondrous feats. Kenan landed in Saiyalopur as he does like a migrant bird, for few days to inspire his servile associates; for him, it is necessary to continue with many of his illegal possessions. He is however sure, because his optimistic statement that Maharani will soon become India's Empress makes the former confident of becoming the latter. And, also, the blessings of Maharani are a shield to these Dhurtos because the *pyadas* are demotivated by the instructions that they are allowed to deploy means regardless of the consequences to protect the spineless creatures because they are blindly them to loyal to Kenan and Maharani. Recently, one of Dhurto's associates slapped and injured one of the children seriously in a school that Dhurtos govern; a complaint was lodged to the *pyadas*, but no action was taken; even the minstrels did not talk about this as they are too scared to be truthful in this regard. The situation is just the opposite as regards the Sardar and his compatriots who are working relentlessly for protecting Saiyalopur. At the drop of the hat, the *pyadas* become overactive to go to any extent to harm them as they are either servile or they know that they will be unlawfully rewarded.

Now, to the main plot which also has many twists because the Sardar baiters are convinced that Sardar is invincible because he possesses the Magic Ball. Maharani is intimidated; a security cover was spread in the hamlet: no one is allowed to go out or come in without being frisked by the *pyadas*. Life was thus made difficult because of the presumption that Sardar should soon be dispossessed of the Magic Ball. On many occasions, raids in houses are taken place to locate the coveted Ball, but these raids are futile because the Ball is not traceable.

Dhurtos and Kenan are now disappointed; they immediately inform Maharani who immediately sends the chosen fortune-tellers from other parts of her kingdom. Many misleading inputs regarding the location of Ball rolled in the hamlet; *pyadas* are deployed instantaneously to get the Ball; but they always fail. What to do? Many confidential meetings took place; *pyadas* in civil dresses are asked to follow Sardar day and night. Sardar is enjoying as he knows that their belief in the Ball is based on their archaic mindset which is natural because they, so far, ruled the hamlet according to their priorities by befooling the inhabitants and those who believe that mere boot-leaking will give them what they espouse for. They seem to have forgotten the dictum that there is nothing called "free lunch". One needs to work hard to attain the goal; no miracle happens in human life. Whatever human beings have achieved so far, they have done it by dint of hard work.

Sardar and his associates are enjoying every bit of Dhurtos' relentless search for the Magic Ball which, in fact, does not exist. Dhurtos think of the existence of Ball because they do not want to accept that there is no substitute for hard work. They need artificial props. Hence, they search for magic wand by believing that they will do wonders with the wand. They believe so because they are not ready to work hard for their betterment because they hold the view that by the miraculous intervention of the providential forced to enable them to reach the pinnacle.

What are the *mantras* for the success of Sardar in protecting the Kamdhenu and also the proverbial goose purportedly laying golden eggs every day? For the Dhurtos and Kenan (despite being exposed to culture attributing success to sustained hard work), magic is a dependable tool to befool their followers although they perhaps do not believe in this. This is a criminal offense because befooling many for fulfilling their exclusive goals is constitutionally punishable. But, with support from Maharani, they think of themselves invincible because a set of well-armed and brainless miscreants are there to defend them in case of any untoward incident.

Being short-sighted and also clearly myopic, the Dhurtos and Kenan engage themselves in a quest for the Magic Ball. Sardar and his confidants have the last laugh because what is Magic Ball to his detractors is nothing but relentless hard work by all those who internalize the mantra that "there is nothing called free lunch". What is required for success are determination, positive thoughts, willingness to suffer for attaining the goal, introspection to see what went wrong and if it was so it needs to be addressed collectively, among others.

Sardar's rise as an effective leader is based on the above mantras. As a doer, despite having respected human sentiments for god's/goddesses, he always privileges hard work which will, he firmly believes, bring about "miracles for the hamlet". While strategizing his task, Sardar undertakes regular introspection since he imbibes the spirit of Ghalib's couplet with an identical message: *Jeevanbhor bekuf Ghalib yea galti korta raha, dhul cheraha pe tha, aaiyana saaf korta raha* (misdirected Ghalib keeps making this mistake throughout his life by cleaning the mirror to see him clearly ignoring that it is futile since dust is in his body).

একটি রূপক

একই রকম ভাবে এ-মাসের বার্তাও একটি রূপক দিয়ে শেষ হবে, এই রূপকটির কেন্দ্রে রয়েছে প্রচলিত ম্যাজিক-বলের বৃত্তান্ত। শৈলপুরের বাসিন্দারা জাদু-গোলক সম্বন্ধে খুবই কৌতূহলী হয়ে উঠেছিল কারণ তারা বিশ্বাস করত এই গোলকের দৌলতেই সর্দার অনুদ্বিগ্ন, অপ্রভাবিত ও সুস্থির থাকতে পারেন – এই বলই তাঁর শক্তির উৎস, তাঁর ও তাঁর সঙ্গীদের চেনা-অচেনা শত্রুদের সামনে প্রতিরক্ষার ঢাল হয়ে ওঠে।

ঘটনাস্থল শৈলপুর। হঠাৎই সর্দারবিরোধী ধূর্ত কেনান, ধূর্ত কাবুর, তার ছেলে, অন্যান্য সহযোগী, উদ্ধত কেবলজান্ত, উন্মাসিক ক্যাভলা আর মহারানি সর্দারের কাছে আলাদিনের জাদু প্রদীপের মতো আশ্চর্য ক্ষমতাসম্পন্ন একটি ম্যাজিক বল আছে বলে তাঁকে হারানো যাচ্ছে না এমন একটি

গল্প ছড়িয়ে দিল। কেনান শৈলপুরে তার সহযোগী দাসদের উৎসাহিত করবে বলে পরিযায়ী পাখির মতোই কিছুদিনের জন্য অবতরণ করল তার অবৈধ সম্পদের অধিকার বজায় রাখার জন্যও এই অবতরণের প্রয়োজন ছিল। সে ঠিকই বুঝেছিল, 'মহারানি শীঘ্রই ভারতের সম্রাজ্ঞী হবে' তার এই ইতিবাচক ঘোষণার ফলে মহারানি তার ভবিষ্যৎ বিষয়ে আত্মবিশ্বাসী হয়ে উঠেছে। আর মহারানির আশীর্বাদ ধূর্তদের পক্ষে রক্ষাকবচ হয়ে উঠেছিল, কেনান আর মহারানির প্রতি অন্ধভাবে দাসপত্র লিখে দেওয়া পেয়াদারা মেরুদণ্ডহীনদের রক্ষা করার জন্য পরবর্তী প্রতিক্রিয়াকে উপেক্ষা করে যা খুশি পদক্ষেপ নেওয়ার অনুমতি পেয়েছিল। ধূর্তের এক সহযোগীর মারে একটি স্কুলের বাচ্চা জখম হল, পেয়াদাদের কাছে অভিযোগ দায়ের করা হল কিন্তু কোনও পদক্ষেপ নেওয়া হল না, এমনকী কাগুজে-দোহাররা ভয়ের চোটে সত্যকথা তো দূরস্থান কথাই বলল না। অন্যদিকে শৈলপুরকে রক্ষা করার জন্য সর্দার আর তার সহযোগীরা কঠোর পরিশ্রম করলেও তাদের একেবারেই বিপরীত পরিস্থিতির শিকার হতে হয়। শৈলপুরে পান থেকে চুন খসলেই পেয়াদারা দাস বলে কিম্বা অন্যান্য সুবিধে পাবে বলে ক্ষতি করার চেষ্টায় অতিসক্রিয় হয়ে উঠে তৎপর হয়।

এ গল্পের মূল বৃত্তে অনেক প্যাঁচ আছে কারণ সর্দারের বিরুদ্ধে যারা ফাটকা খেলছে তারা জানে জাদু বলের দৌলতেই সর্দার অপরাজেয়। মহারানিকে জানানো মাত্রই গ্রামের ওপর বিছিয়ে দেওয়া হল নিরাপত্তার আবরণ: পেয়াদাদের নজরদারি ডিঙিয়ে কেউই ভেতরে আসতে বা বাইরে যেতে পারল না। সর্দারকে জাদু-গোলক ছিনিয়ে নেওয়ার প্রয়াসে সাধারণ মানুষের জীবন দুর্বিষহ হয়ে উঠল। বহুবার বিভিন্নবাড়িতে জাদু-বলের সন্ধানে পুলিশি-অনুসন্ধান চালান হলেও বল পাওয়া গেল না।

ধূর্তরা আর কেনান হতাশ হয়ে পড়ল, তারা মহারানিকে বলল রাজ্যের অন্যান্য জায়গা থেকে ভবিষ্যৎ-বক্তাদের পাঠানো হোক। বলটি কোথায় আছে সে বিষয়ে নানা ভুল খবর গ্রামে ছড়িয়ে পড়ল, নানা জায়গায় সঙ্গে-সঙ্গে পেয়াদা লাগান হল কিন্তু সর্বদাই তারা ব্যর্থ হল। কী আর করা যাবে? গোপন মিটিং বসল, সাদা-জামার পেয়াদাদের দিন-রাত্রি সর্দারের ওপর নজর রাখতে বলা হল। সর্দার এতে আমোদ পেলেন কারণ তিনি জানতেন এই বল-বৃত্তান্ত প্রহ্ন মানসিকতার ওপর নির্ভর করে গড়ে উঠেছে – গ্রামটিকে শাসন করার জন্য এর আগে লোকদের এভাবেই বোকা বানানো হয়েছিল আর গ্রামের লোকেরাও ভাবত পা-চাটলেই বুঝি ঈঙ্গিত বস্তু পাওয়া যাবে। তারা ভুলেই গিয়েছিল যে 'বিনা পয়সার ভোজ' বলে কিছুই হয় না। লক্ষ্যে উপনীত হওয়ার জন্য সবাইকে কঠোর পরিশ্রম করতে হয়, মানুষের জীবনে অলৌকিক কিছুই ঘটে না। মানুষের জীবনে যা-কিছু অর্জিত হয়েছে তা কঠোর পরিশ্রমের ফল।

যে ম্যাজিক বলের অস্তিত্বই নেই, ধূর্ত নিরন্তর সেই জাদু-গোলকের অনুসন্ধান করছে দেখে সর্দার আর তার সহযোগীরা প্রতি মুহূর্তে আমোদ উপভোগ করল। কঠোর পরিশ্রমের বিকল্প হয় না এ ভাবনায় বিশ্বাস করত না বলে ধূর্তরা মনে করত ম্যাজিক বল আছেই আছে। তাদের কৃত্রিম উপকরণ লাগে। ফলে তারা জাদুদণ্ডের খোঁজ চালাচ্ছিল, ভাবছিল পেলে তারাও সেটি দিয়ে আশ্চর্য সব কাণ্ড করবে। তাদের এই বিশ্বাসের কারণ, তারা নিজেদের অবস্থার উন্নতির জন্য কঠোর শ্রমে প্রত্যয়ী নয় – তারা চায় আশ্চর্য শক্তির হস্তক্ষেপে তারা চূড়ায় ওঠার সামর্থ্য লাভ করবে।

কামধেনুকে আর প্রত্যেকদিন সোনার ডিম দেওয়া লোককথার হাঁসটিকে রক্ষার ক্ষেত্রে সর্দারের সাফল্যের পেছনে কোন মন্ত্রগুলি কাজ করে? ধূর্তরা আর কেনান, স্থায়ী পরিশ্রমের সংস্কৃতির কথা জানলেও, সম্ভবত নিজেরা জাদুমন্ত্রে বিশ্বাস না করলেও, তাদের অনুগামীদের বোকা

বানানোর জন্য এটি প্রচার করে। নিজেদের বিশেষ উদ্দেশ্য সাধন করার জন্য অন্য অনেককে বোকা বানানো সংবিধান অনুসারে শাস্তিযোগ্য অপরাধ। অবশ্য মহারানির সমর্থনে সশস্ত্র নির্বোধ দুষ্কৃতিরা যে কোনও প্রতিকূল পরিস্থিতিতে তাদের রক্ষা করার জন্য বহাল বলেই তারা নিজেদের অপরাডেয় বলে মনে করে।

দূরদৃষ্টিহীন ও ক্ষীণদৃষ্টিসম্পন্ন ধূর্তেরা আর কেনান ম্যাজিকের বলের খোঁজে লেগে রইল। সর্দার আর তার সহযোদ্ধারা নিরন্তর কঠোর পরিশ্রম করত আর 'বিনা পয়সার ভোজ বলে কিছু হয় না' এই মন্ত্র আত্মস্থ করেছিল, তাই শেষ হাসির তারাই অধিকারী। দৃঢ়তা, ইতিবাচক চিন্তা, লক্ষ্যে উপনীত হওয়ার জন্য প্রতিকূলতার মধ্য দিয়ে যাওয়ার মানসিকতা, কোনটা ভুল হচ্ছে তা বোঝার অন্তর্দৃষ্টি আর সমবেত ভাবে সেই ভুলের মুখোমুখি হওয়ার প্রয়োজনীয়তা স্বীকার করাই সাফল্যের চাবিকাঠি।

উপরের এই মন্ত্লেই একজন কার্যকরী নেতা হিসেবে সর্দারের উত্থান সম্ভব হয়েছে। একজন কর্মযোগী হিসেবে দেব-দেবীদের প্রতি তাঁর স্বাভাবিক মানবিক শ্রদ্ধা যেমন আছে তেমনি তিনি সবসময়েই এই গ্রামের ভালোর জন্য যে পরিকল্পনাগুলি ম্যাজিকের মতো কাজ করবে বলে দৃঢ় ভাবে বিশ্বাস করেন সেগুলির উপরই গুরুত্ব দেন। কাজের কৌশল স্থির করার সময় সর্দার গালিবের দ্বিপদীতে যে বার্তা ছিল তার থেকে প্রেরণা গ্রহণ করেন: 'সারাজীবন গালিব এই ভুলই করে গেল, ধুলো ছিল শরীরে, আয়না সাফ করল।'

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