

Reflections

July 2021



People ■ Talents ■ Stories

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Tell us

What we're doing right and what we're
doing wrong and what you think of this
issue. We'd love to hear from you.

FROM THE EDITORIAL BOARD

I'm delighted to bring to you the next issue of *Reflections*. I hope you and your loved ones are safe and well. Human resilience has shone brightly in the first two quarters of 2021: countries are opening up their borders, vaccination is picking up, and sporting activities have resumed with limited spectators. This is how *homo sapiens*, nay all living organisms, have always overcome their challenges over the centuries. And we will defeat the pandemic too!

What better way to mock the virus than to show that we are *citius, altius, fortius – communis*. *Communis* meaning 'together' was proposed earlier by the International Olympics Committee President Thomas Bach. The Olympics started off with a bang with participation from all over the world, amidst a pandemic. What a delight it was to see the contestants' competitive spirit laced with humanity and perseverance. At just 13 years of age, skateboarder Momiji Nishiya of Japan has become one of the youngest gold medal winners ever. And guess what? The girls standing by her side on the podium were also teenagers.

This issue of *Reflections* reflects the resilience, perseverance and cheery spirit of the Newgen family. Sit back and enjoy reading the hilarious piece on 'Names' by Ujwala, a poem by Asha expressing her longing to return to the life before Covid, the travelogues by Lydia and Bidisha on the picturesque Monemvasia and Andamans, respectively, that would inspire us to start travelling again, and many more such enjoyable contributions ...

~ Hemalatha

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What's in a name ...

Ujwala Vaidya

Senior Manager, Copyediting

For the longest time that I can remember, my name has been a comedy of errors. Much as I love it (in Sanskrit it means brightness), I faced childhood and adulthood trauma of having to deal with people spelling it and pronouncing it in various hues and permutations and combinations. At times I would marvel at the ingenuity of people's ability to come up with weird spellings, and at other times I would go into a tempest. As time went by, I attained nirvana and learnt to laugh and felt I should not do much ado about nothing. So I shrug and say, "Go on, spell it as you like it."

And all's well that ends well!



HELLO, MY NAME IS...

But on a more serious note, names are what identify and give a person an identity. Of all the things that belong to a person, what is perpetual is one's name. And I think no one has a right to mess with that.

Whether it is spelling it or pronouncing it, we should take the trouble of getting it right. It is not wrong to stop someone and ask, "How do I pronounce your name?" Of course, Elon Musk's son's name doesn't fall into that category. He is called "X Æ A-12." So go figure!

Having said that, I honestly think that people should be able to change their names easily. Like how Phoebe Buffay in the sitcom *Friends* decides to change her name to the hilarious Princess Consuela Banana Hammock. Not very amused, her fiancé Mike is not to be left behind when he suggests that if Phoebe goes ahead with her name change, he would change his name to Crap Bag. Well! She then decides to just stick with "Phoebe."

My good friend Lydia had hilarious tales to narrate about how her name is never pronounced right. There have been instances where her lady-ness has come to be questioned when one guy insisted on calling her Lady-ah.

While we are at it, we should also acknowledge some unusual names. How's this for a cryptic heading, er ... wedding: "Socialism to wed Mamta Banerjee in Tamil Nadu, with Communism and Leninism in attendance"? According to *The Print* (<https://theprint.in/india/socialism-to-wed-mamta-banerjee-in-tamil-nadu-with-communism-and-leninism-in-attendance/676116/>), the groom's father is the district secretary of the Communist Party of India (CPI), who named his sons Communism, Socialism and Leninism to reflect the communist ideology. Disclaimer: The bride has no connections with West Bengal.

I was super thrilled to read Usain Bolt's son's name. One of the twin boys, born recently, is called Thunder Bolt. Wouldn't it be wonderful if the lad grew up to thunderously break his dad's 100 m Olympic record and live up to this name?

Kim Kardashian and Kanye West have named two of their kids North and Chicago. North West and Chicago West definitely have a unique ring about them, don't you think? Methinks they will not be directionless in life.

We have all been in embarrassing situations where we do not remember a person's name. A joke I read goes like this: An elderly man kept calling his wife "Darling" for years. His friends wondered at his love for the old wife. He replied wryly that he had forgotten the old hag's name years back and was afraid to ask her. Remembering names and saying them out loud helps us connect to people, and forgetting an acquaintance's name is borderline rude and guaranteed to leave us red-faced. But it happens to the best of us. Doesn't mean we have amnesia. A trick around this is when we hear someone's name, we associate it with something familiar. For instance, when someone introduces herself as Serena, try and associate with Serena Williams and how you think this person would look playing Wimbledon (as if anyone would get close to it ... no harm in thinking this absurd thought anyway—you'll remember her name even better). Repeat the name in your head, all the while linking it to the face in front of you. It would also help to say it a couple of times in the ensuing conversation. But don't repeat it too many times to start sounding creepy.

Another annoying thing is people replying to mails with a misspelt name. For heaven's sake, the person has signed their name in the mail we received. We only have to take that teeny-weeny bit of trouble to check the spelling while responding. It doesn't really take that much to be careful.

What's in a name, said the famous bard. A rose by any other name ... well! You know how that goes. But I think it is *all about the name*. So go out there, use these simple tricks and make people happy because it has been scientifically proven that people love to hear their names pronounced correctly or to read them spelled the right way.



Missing pieces of life

Asha Bhaskar, *Managing Editor*

Talk of losing something or someone
 In the days of darkness and fear
 As the lights go out on hope and cheer
 Never to see the ones near and dear

From the blaring of the traffic, the scream of a busy morning
 People here, people there, everyone everywhere
 To silence on the streets that the dogs don't understand
 What's keeping the folks away? What's the dread? What's the scare?

Rushing to school, dropping off kids
 Making a mad dash in a cab to reach breathless to work
 Trying to remember if you locked up the house
 While dreaming a dream drive, not in a hot motor but in a Merc

Picking up the choicest of fruits and veggies, clothes and all
 Meeting with friends over brunch, ice-cream or coffee
 Planning a beautiful surprise birthday party
 Will all that be only a memory of how it used to be?

Oh, the simple joys, the simple little worries
 A life that had everything that we forgot to see
 It will soon be fine, if not the same
 As prayers and hope build on from you and me

Remembering Yeats' The Second Coming

Bibi Christa Xavier

Books Copy Editing Team, Thomson Reuters, India

A hundred years ago, the Irish poet W.B. Yeats (winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature 1923) ruminated about the 'Second Coming' in brilliant poetry infused with imagery the likes of which the literary world is yet to behold. A hundred years from then, I wonder if the '*beast*' '*slouched*' to my country to be born. As the First World War ravaged through the human psyche and the 1918–1919 pandemic flu, aka the Spanish flu, infected close to one-third of the world's population, leaving over a fifty million dead, when Yeats' pregnant wife had a near-death experience, he wrote:

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre ...
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, ...*

As the second wave of the pandemic swept through our country leaving people dead on the high streets and in vehicles and hospital compounds, more for want of oxygen than by the disease itself, and as funeral pyres burnt through the night and day and into weeks, and as discarded bodies floated on 'holy' rivers as garbage, and as the less-fortunate deceased were cleared away in excavators and tractors like a sickly dead cow or a repulsive dead stray canine, heaping insults upon indignities on the dead, I wondered where those that led my country stood. On the edge of shame? Or has the *beast* been born in this great land? I wondered ...

The ‘*beast*’ of Yeats is the beast of indulgence, the beast of political greed that chose to ignore scientific warnings and led its citizens to untimely death. Every nation had its own share of woes, some slipped in their commitments as they battled for power on the political arena in a show of strength, while others guarded them with iron fists. When the Western nations’ vaccine-loaded jets took to the sky, one behind the other with their destinations clear, where lay our nation’s priority? I still wonder ...

Little did we know that our ‘*best lack all conviction...*’, or was it conviction grounded in unscientific beliefs and a desperate clamour for undeserved glory? Be that as it may, ‘the *blood-dimmed tide is loosed*’ upon our nation with countless widowed, orphaned, homeless and penniless and impoverished beyond return. Misery has engulfed and hollowed the lives of the majority. Did Nero *really fiddle* when Rome burnt? I shudder to wonder ...

I wonder, to believe with Yeats, that

Surely some revelation is at hand;

Surely the Second Coming is at hand ... somewhere in sands of the desert



*A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, ...*

I fear to think of what's coming. Will my nation crumble like a hollowed anthill? But I no longer wish to wonder. I join in with the nation's voices of dissent. The dead need an answer! Those who eked a living on the fringes of cities in their own which way are a part of this geography! But not for long ...

In this moment of 'absolute let-down', my hope lies in those warrior angels that guarded the nation's dying. Those that led the fight and came to the rescue of the sick and the dying with oxygen cylinders, truck loads of medicine, masks and food are my nation's strength, its future! The hands that stretched to help every man, woman and child never searched for the face of a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Christian, or a Sikh or a Parsee; those are the hands of humanity that will fight the 'beast'. There is an underlying spirit that unites every Indian in its moment of crisis, that once was and always will.

கொரோனா காலம்*

Inbakavi

Senior Executive XML, Books Production Team

எங்கிருந்து வந்தது
எப்படி வந்தது
எப்போது முடியும்?
எதுவும் அறியாமலேயே
கடந்து விட்டது
ஒன்றரை வருடம்!

உலகமே உயிர் பயத்தில்
உண்மை அறியாத குழப்பத்தில்...

விந்தை மனிதர்களை
விஞ்ஞானம்
நிலைகுலைய வைத்து,
ஒட்டுமொத்தமாய்
வீட்டினுள் பூட்டிய
விந்தை...

முககவசம், ஊரடங்கு
இதுவரை அறியாத
வார்த்தைகளுக்கு
அர்த்தம் கற்பித்தக் காலம்...

தனித்தே இருப்போம்
விழிப்போடு இருப்போம்!
முககவசம், தடுப்பூசி
உலகின் உயிர்கவசம்!

நோயின் விதியால்
மாண்டு போகாமல்
விதியை மாற்றி
விஞ்ஞானத்தை வெல்வோம்!
கொரோனாவை வெல்வோம்!

*The poem details the havoc that Corona has wreaked on life and mankind in general and ends on a hopeful note about how we will overcome it in the days to come.

The astonishing and alluring Andamans

Bidisha Dutta

Self-Publishing

Like all great travellers, I have seen more than I remember and remember more than I have seen. —Benjamin Disraeli

I belong to this genre!

In this travelogue, I recount the experience of one who was born to travel but forced to work. No, don't get me wrong, I love to work too.



Speaking of Andamans, it was for me a heaven on earth. The first impression of its surreal beauty was overwhelming.

Andamans is truly blessed with nature's bounty. It has the most crystal-clear glassy blue waters I have ever seen. It can easily be described as 'man's own heaven of blue'.

The reef is rated to be the third most beautiful and populated coral reef in the world by the locals. The temperature and the ocean currents along with various other geographical factors have over centuries built an enigmatic and secret underwater world. The feel and touch of the sand and waters and the variety of flora and fauna in Havelock are truly incomparable. This matchless beauty has been ardently guarded and ferociously protected over thousands of years.

The 'neat'-beach experience of Andamans is absolutely matchless. You tend to wonder a thousand times as you tread on the white sands and aqua-blue waters: are you in the same country as the famous beaches of Mumbai or those of the southern-most tip of the Indian peninsula so dirty and pathetically strewn with garbage? It pains me to see the beaches of Alleppey, Trivandrum, Chennai or Kovalam, or even the beautiful beaches of eastern India such as Digba, Puri or Vishakhapatnam, being at the receiving end of callous and irresponsible littering by people.

Port Blair

Port Blair presented a power-packed, intriguing visual and sensual appeal with its Cellular Jail, the crowded city markets, the aura of exquisite cuisines and the deep blue sea. The Cellular Jail of Port Blair is the primary attraction. It is a living saga of the struggle and pain of thousands of Indian freedom fighters. Each prison cell shrieks of the inhuman torture that the heroes underwent and the sacrifice they made to earn freedom for this great nation. The hour-long light-and-sound show conducted every evening makes the hair stand



With her family



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on end. A chill flows down the spine when we hear the stories in Om Puri's voice of the inhuman punishment and the cruelty that were forced upon the brave sons of the soil. Each cell is lit up with a weird, cold bluish hue and the narrative brings to life the spirits of the agonised souls. On each parapet and stone of the seven-winged structure of the Cellular Jail stands a proud witness, proclaiming the glory of the illustrious dissidents such as Batukeshwar Dutt, Yogendra Shukla, Vinayak Savarkar, Shadan Chandra Chatterjee, Upendra Nath Banerjee, Nand Gopal, and many others. One story relates how a conspiracy was hatched in 1868, in which 238 prisoners tried to escape. They were unfortunately caught and as many as 87 of them were hanged mercilessly. History also narrates how Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore intervened to the relief of the inmates. The fresh painting and restoration work of the hanging cell where three inmates were hanged together have not done much to erase the pain and stigma attached to humanity. It is open to curious visitors.

From the ramparts of the three-storeyed brick structure, you can view the pleasantly blue seas surrounding the island, the legendary Ross Island just across, and the adventure-filled North Bay Island a bit towards the left.

Neil Island

While we were still dazed and overawed by Port Blair, it was already time for us to visit the famous Neil Island the next day. Neil Island has four notable beaches with unsurpassed beauty named after the legendary characters of Hindu mythology: Bharatpur, Laxmanpur, Sitapur and Ramnagar. It is as picturesque as any human mind can dream of. The natural bridge of Laxmanpur Beach is a treat to the eyes. The receding water currents reveal the mysterious underwater creatures trapped in the rocky crags. I happened to spot the endangered jet-black sea cucumber, designer star fishes, colourful



and sprightly small fishes, molluscs of every size and shape and a plethora of living, wriggling sea shells that turn 90 degrees as the salt water recedes and bury themselves in loose wet sands nestled among the rocks.

Havelock Island – Radhanagar Beach Escapade

The journey to Havelock Island from Neil Island was one breezy glide through the warm, sunny blue waters of the Andaman sea. The magic of the iridescent blueness of the beautiful seas never dissipated even as we hopped from one major island to another. Each had its fair share of charm and allure. The ferry belonging to the Coastal Cruise was fitted with all modern amenities, and we enjoyed the calm blue seas and distant islands through the glass windows of the upper deck of the air-conditioned cruise boat. As we set foot on Havelock, the Experience Andamans Team was waiting to warmly welcome us.

After a short half-hour ride in an AC Mobilio, we reached the famed Barefoot Resort. The resort had an unnerving peace and quietude and was located deep inside the belly of a dark, deep-green natural forest on the sea shore. We could hear the roaring seas as the waves crashed and lashed incessantly against the finest of fine, whitest of white sands of the famous Radhanagar Beach. This beach is widely acclaimed for being the best beach in Asia popularized by the *Time* magazine and is one of the ten best beaches across the globe.

Barefoot Resort, Havelock Island

This resort itself is worth a line or two in the entire Andamans drama that unfolded scene by scene 40 km away from Port Blair. Barefoot, as the very name suggests, required removing footwear while entering their wooden cottages. The log huts though rustic in design were fitted with all modern amenities, a spacious washroom that had ample sunlight streaming in from the overhead glass roof, and the



best complimentary cookie jar that I have ever enjoyed in any resort. The wooden cottages stood single and solitary in the midst of dark, dense, primitive forests with humongous deep-rooted silent trees and the roaring blue seas as a backdrop. The morning started with the singing of the seas, cacophony of the tree birds, cackling of geese, clucking of ducks and cock-a-doodle-doo of the well-fed roosters. Breakfast was a sumptuous affair where we ate whatever we wished to eat. There was a wide spread of delicacies to choose from: white fluffy idlis and crispy dosas, puris, white fragile luchis and cholar dal (chana dal) with coconut bits, chocolate pancakes and fruit platters, cheesy omelettes and steaming coffee, fruit juices and saucy sausages – the list was neverending.

The solitary walks during the day and night along the smooth white sands of Radhanagar Beach, watching the sea creatures come alive in small water puddles, crawling and creeping on the small rocks that





dotted the shores, was pleasure unlimited. Snails and molluscs of every shape, size, design and colour pulsed and vibrated on the white sands, egging their way to the salty waters to be washed again to the sands with every breaking wave.

The next morning was particularly memorable when around 50 to 60 turtle eggs hatched in the sands and crawled out of their eggs, squirming towards the sea waters. It was breakfast time when the Barefoot Resort staff ran to inform the guests to rush to the seashore immediately to watch this miraculous feat of nature. The miniature turtles crawling to the sea under the protective guidance of the police and guards to fend away curious tourists were a sheer delight to watch. That was a rare, lucky sight.

The stay was turning increasingly adventurous when a short early morning walk along the restless seashore took us past the deep green forests beyond a rocky ledge. As soon as we stepped into that distant part of the extended shore, we spotted a sign board that said, “Beware



of crocodiles.” The speed with which we scurried back to the safety of Barefoot Beach was admirable.

Water sports in Andamans

The fun and adventure part of our Andamans tour was centred on the various adventure water sports available. Concentrated in the North Bay Island, 10 km away from Port Blair, these activities can be covered in a day's trip. There are ferries connecting Port Blair to North Bay Island, and it takes approximately half an hour to reach the hub of various exciting water adventures.

There are several options to choose from, and we experienced almost everything till we nearly dropped dead with exhaustion.

- Dolphin ride – An exclusive boat built using Russian technology, known to be the only one in Asia. It is provided with a glass bottom and glides on the coral reef and gives you a

glimpse of the colourful and mysterious underwater life as far as the sunlight can penetrate. So, approximately 20 feet of deep-sea experience unfolds before you, without you as much as dipping your toe in the water. This is especially attractive for people who are not courageous or fit enough to go for the more adventurous scuba diving, sea walking or snorkelling.

- Banana boat ride – A long air-filled raft that carries around six people and is pulled by a speed boat for a bumpy ride cutting through the waves and surf. You sit with your teeth gritted and try your best to keep your balance till the speed boat swerves, playfully dipping you into the refreshing waters.
- Jet ride – These are the master thrillers with a speed that kills. Go for a jet ride leaving a zooming white froth and take in the salty breeze and fill your senses. Hang on for dear life as the boat etches 45-degree swerves. Not for the faint-hearted!
- Tube ride – Where you are perched precariously on a tube and are pulled by a speed boat. You bob up and down and gush through a white froth and trail behind a speeding motorboat crying for life and balance.

Ross Island

The sedate and exclusive Ross Island proudly portrays the glorified remnants of the colonial rule. It is a small island extending over an area of 460 sq. km but occupies a big role in the history of India. It is situated 3 km from Port Blair downtown. The island showcases significant remnants of British occupation. Ross Island was the administrative headquarters of the Andaman group of islands for 85 long years till a major earthquake tore it apart in 1941. The remains of the rich heritage and the ruins of the great and notorious past still exist to tell tales of atrocities, sufferings, war and fierce patriotism. The abandoned structures, the British club houses, the dilapidated churches, swimming pools, hospitals, shops and bazaars – all of these unfold the ghost city of the past. The brick structures look deeply mysterious, imprisoned and

tightly gripped by the ever-growing giant ancient banyan roots. The huge trees and an unearthly silence prevail all over, barring the constant roar of the seas, creating a magic, forbidden and forlorn.

Scuba diving in the Andaman Sea – unforgettable and mesmerizing

Scuba diving with Dive India was a mesmerizing memory. The deep blue sea looked lighter and brighter under the filtering sunrays. Corals, the guide said, are created only where sunlight reaches the depth of the seas. The vast conglomeration of coloured fishes, big and small, needle-like and disc-like, the little families of Nemo shyly peeping out of the sea anemones, while Dory was a feet ahead and not at all that friendly (maybe she had forgotten to be friendly, suffering from chronic amnesia; I decided to forgive her for fleeing away from me), the deep mix of violet and indigo of the clams that shut determinedly when you floated past them—all these transport you to a fairytale land of animated graphics. The sensation of water, the lightness of body and the wonder that awaits at every corner of the coral reef baffle and numb you. As I looked up towards the source of sunlight, I could see huge shoals of miniature fish about two centimetres in length swim in a thick bunch and like electric shockwaves change direction from this side to that – the secret code, which scientists haven't yet decoded, that is used by such shoals to signal each other the exact instant when to change direction.

Somewhere I could see an angry-looking puffer fish and somewhere else I saw a shoal of seven yellow-and-silver-streaked fish standing (floating) still as if guarding the underwater kingdom. My hands itched to touch the gentle jelly and feel the rubbery starfish. But my instructor strictly and vigorously gestured me against it. Meanwhile an underwater photographer appeared from nowhere to shoot some candid and some orchestrated watery moments, which were to be delivered to me once I returned to base. My instructor had already



repeatedly warned me against smiling as is conditioned in us when we get clicked. He warned that it would be disastrous as it would mean a lot of salt water gushing inside my mouth and temporarily choking me. That was an alert enough to the best of my senses.

Andamans was a complete package of beauty, serenity and absolute oneness with nature. Innumerable imprints of nature's steadfast beauty have been etched deeply in its pearly beaches and crystal-clear azure blue waters, inhabited by millions of enigmatic sea creatures. Standing in knee-deep blue waters, you can actually see those tiny bunches of fishes hovering close enough for you to touch. You cannot, however, for they are superbly elusive. They will only lure you in with their beauty but somehow escape your touch. Some memorable moments of this superbly exotic group of 572 islands have become a part of my life's repository to be recollected and cherished in my private moments of leisure or loneliness.

The art of attaining competence

Anthuvan

Project Manager, OUP UK Law

Love what you do. Get good at it. Competence is a rare commodity in this day and age. And let the chip fall where they may. —Jon Stewart

When I was in the 11th grade, I was chosen as one of the candidates for school student leader. The candidates were to take part in 3 tests, and the one who excelled in all of them would be elected as the student leader. One task was to give a speech on a topic given on the spot. I was given ‘Spirituality’, and I couldn’t utter a single word in the 7 minutes allocated to each candidate.

When I think back about myself in that situation, I think I just lacked the courage to speak in front of an audience. But now, I know well that I lacked the competence to execute my thoughts into speech. So what is competence?

I googled the definition of competence, and it said that competence is ‘the ability to do something successfully or efficiently’. I believe competence alone cannot withstand in the long run. One must possess the associated knowledge to execute something successfully (don’t ask me if I knew about spirituality at the time of my test :)).

One can of course be competent enough to operate something efficiently without much knowledge on the subject. For example, it is possible in a team where one contributes knowledge and the other is responsible for processing the operations to reach the final goal. If



there is no knowledge contribution to begin with, there is no subject to process. Similarly, knowledge cannot live on its own. Knowledge should transform itself into a useful product to prove its worth.

Start with all your might and just be ready to face the challenges as you move on the path of your journey. It is possible to acquire knowledge on the go and to learn how to be efficient. What we are today is from our experiences from the past and how much we learned from them. Humankind evolved like that.

Set a goal, start your experiment and worry about your outcome once you reach there. Because, once you have the outcome your worry will be on how to achieve the desired result. You cannot make a start if you worry about the outcome before even doing anything.

Let me tell you a part of my life's journey. I began my career as a project manager 5 years ago. On my first day at work as a project manager, I was given 13 projects, 4 from my predecessor and 9 from my colleague who was going on a vacation at that time. I did not say no, though I had zero practical knowledge on managing projects, and I held on to that opportunity with all my might. I always believed in trial-and-error learning, so I accepted all those projects with the confidence that I could do well.

Contrary to my expectation, I made the worst mistakes I could do in my initial days. I was always dependent on someone else, and there were times when I literally cried my eyes out (of course without anyone knowing!) thinking I wasn't fit for the job. But I couldn't bring myself to give up on the opportunity that would get me one step up on the career ladder. I knew I lacked the qualities, but I was hell-bent on making headway and told myself that I wouldn't repeat the same mistake twice as I progress through this new role.

I was also lucky enough to get a mentor. My mentor guided me through project management during the initial months, and I could cope with my anxieties thanks to her guidance on how to recover from my mistakes. I slowly became someone who could manage work independently. Thus, although I started off with zero, I gained knowledge on my way here and increased my efficiency level too.

So all you need is the courage to step on the accelerator, have the mindset to accept challenges along the way, learn when to speed up and when to step on the brake, and with these you will reach your destination safely. It is imperative to learn from your mistakes.

Also observe the people travelling along with you and try to acquire for yourself at least one good quality you liked in them. Expect hindrance on the way and do not fear facing them. It is okay to fail, but don't give up. Look for help when you need some; I am sure you will find what you need in this vast universe.

As you march forward on your journey, time and effort will make you competent in your field. But don't limit that field to a certain area. Never stop learning and never be satisfied with yourself. Get out of your comfort zone.

As the saying goes, 'if you want to shine like a sun, burn like a sun'. The world will see the star in you one day. I am on my way to becoming one too, tag along!

Spotlight on Srini (Quality)

Say hello to Srinivasan Sivaramakrishnan (aka Srini, Quality), General Manager, Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) team. He and his team are currently working on data collection for quality control, trying to find specific areas to focus on for improvement.



Residing in Chennai, he loves the Marina Beach the most about the city. But he certainly wouldn't miss the fish markets for their stomach-turning smells!

Srini's happiest memory is when he was selected as a department head during his undergraduate days. "I was a very mischievous boy in college. It was like placing the key in the thief's hands!" He is also proud of guiding nearly 1,500 people by working as mentor/teacher to those struggling to get a job or grow to the next level.

Srini has a strong dislike for micromanagement, and seeing people bite their nails is his pet peeve. When asked if he has any secret talent,



With his family

he says, “I am an open book. Almost everyone who knows me understands my character, skills, thought process, etc. No secrets maintained so far.” The nicest compliment he has received: “All of my colleagues generally tell me that I am a caring person and a good people manager.” Reading and marking using hard copies is something he likes doing the old-fashioned way.

Srini enjoys hill stations and their proximity to nature. Kasi (also known as Varanasi, in Uttar Pradesh) is the farthest he has been from home. *Veerapandiya Kattabomman* is his favorite film, and if a movie were to be made on Srini’s life, he would like Ajith to play his role. He recharges by doing a bit of drawing and painting, and listening to Ilaiyaraaja’s music. He has more than fifty songs memorized that he can sing without slipping on a single line. If he didn’t have to sleep at all, Srini would just keep singing songs with all the extra time! He would also love to learn to play the violin and *mridangam* (a percussion instrument common in Carnatic music), if time permitted.

If he could have one superpower, Srini says, “I pray to have the power of healing to change my special son’s life—to speak, to eat, and to do his day-to-day activities independently.” Srini is anxious about his son’s future. “He needs help and support for any action he takes. How will he pull through?”

The top 3 items on Srini’s bucket list: finding the root cause and giving the best available treatment for his son; bringing in a good training system/model to avoid grave errors at work in any function across the company; and building a good QMS system where all users can easily see their level of performance on a day-to-day basis and improve their quality of work.

Srini is quite good at medical advice. “Most people come to me for medical help—identifying a good doctor, hospital, or treatment. Sometimes, they ask me to act as an attendant to the patient, to speak to the doctors and nurses.” His college physics professor, Dr. S. Krishnan, is a source of inspiration for him: “I completed my



With his son

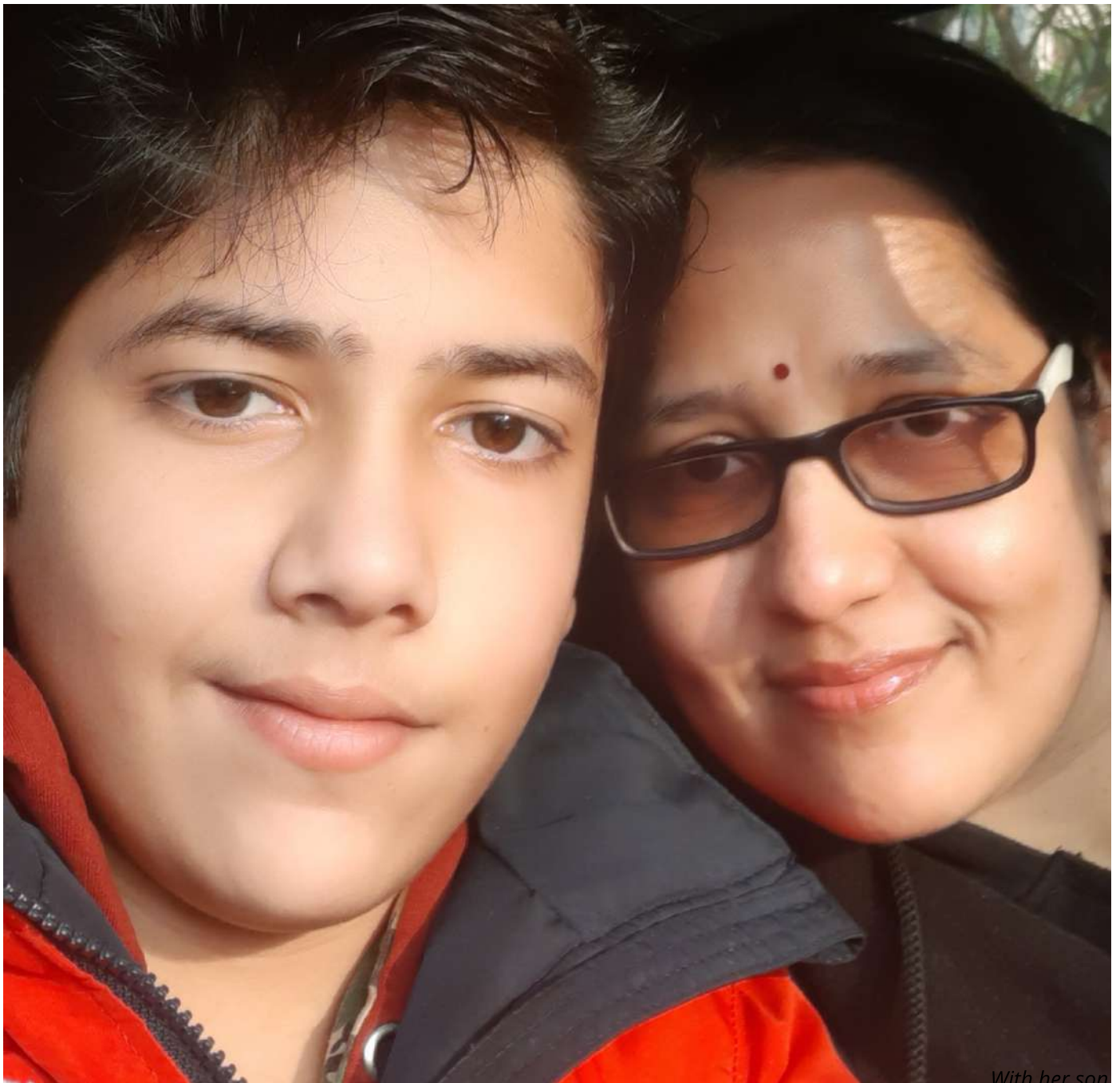
undergraduate and master's degrees only because of his support given outside the college too." When it comes to women, Srini feels that today's society still has a long way to go. He says, "Most men need to change their mindset and treat women as equal in all aspects."

A person's approach and attitude are the first things Srini notices about them. The most heart-warming thing he has recently witnessed is his neighbor meticulously feeding the street dogs every day, despite the pandemic situation. Some topics on which he can give a completely unprepared presentation: why quality is important, seven habits of highly effective people, lessons from pencil makers, and how to set SMART goals. Something that he thinks everyone should do at least once in their lives: "Help poor, disabled people and special children—they are really in need of wholehearted care."

Srini believes that there is not much in a person's name. "It's all about what you do for others to remember your name, either good or bad, even after you have left the world." He cherishes his photo collections and albums: "They are quite literally our memories; those days can never come back. The photos are a nice remembrance to look at as you grow older."

Spotlight on Abhilasha Pandey

Meet Abhilasha, Managing Editor, Contract Publishing. Her native city is Meerut, Uttar Pradesh. It offers benefits of a satellite city, as it is



With her son

part of the National Capital Region (NCR), and also gives the joys and comforts of a small-town life. Abhilasha is quite proud of her city's rich history:

The revolt of 1857 is said to have started from Meerut. The Indian sepoys were called the "Kali Paltan" (*Kali* for the brown skin; *Paltan* means platoon). The temple where the Kali Paltan used to pray has been worshipped continuously all these years and is one of the main attractions of our city.

Another fascinating aspect of my city is that it is believed to be the birthplace of Mandodri, the queen of Ravana. The city has an ancient temple with a lake. Mythological beliefs say that Mandodri used to visit this temple and pray to the Sun Lord. Thus the temple and the surrounding area are to date called "Suraj Kund" (Lake of the Sun God).

When asked about the greatest source of her inspiration, Abhilasha explains eloquently,

I am easily inspired and find sources of inspiration all around—at home, at work, in friends, in life. I also find the dedication and discipline of house helps inspirational. Someday, I will share the story of one such inspiration.

Still, my biggest inspirations have been my parents, Rekha and Vinay Kumar Dikshit. My mother's memories inspire me to be a better person each day, to be all heart in all my relationships. She was extremely sensitive, sensible, and perceptive as a parent. I try to imbibe those qualities as a mother.

My father has never been too religious, but he introduced me to the guidebook of righteous living, *the Bhagavad Gita*. I can never thank him enough for this. As a kid I always saw my father removing stones that came in our way, and his simple logic was to clear the path for those that come the same way after us. A small and simple gesture but profoundly philosophical.

Abhilasha is currently setting up a new imprint and helping the company initiate the journey as a publisher. "I am lucky that I have received continuous opportunities for working on and setting up new processes since 2015 onward, and that I have been instrumental in setting up newer services and have contributed in broadening the spectrum of services that Newgen offers."

Two things Abhilasha likes about herself are her sense of humor and being a good friend. "A number of fellow Newgenites will vouch for both!" she says. "I am quite a counsellor to my friends and am really good at pulling up sullen spirits. Pals come to me for a booster dose of

self-confidence, self-belief, and/or a good hearty laugh.” She is also working on the time she takes on starting something new. “I like to think things through, anticipate the potholes on the journey ahead, and plug any possible leaks. This helps me visualize and plan well, but I need to improve my speed at doing this. This is a work in progress.”

Abhilasha’s take on women’s place in today’s society:



Women have always held a place of significance in Indian society. We have numerous strong inspirational women in mythology, in history, in society. Over the years, women have only gone from strength to strength. I believe that our generation made one of the longest leaps in covering the gap in gender roles. Educated girls have grown up to be emancipated and responsible women. Women continue to be nurturers and homemakers and are contributing their due share in economic and social development too. The glass ceiling stopped us for a very long time, but more and more women are smashing off the glass ceiling.

My mother was one of the first women in her family to be a postgraduate, but her journey was stalled by the family, for a young girl could not be allowed to undertake research in sociology. This did not make her bitter; she only made sure that she sent her daughter to the best school in town and taught me to dream and allowed me to pursue my dreams. If there were just two or three girls from my mother’s batch at college who went on to become career women, then the number went up by almost 100 percent in my batch. Family, I believe, is a microcosm of society. Each family is supporting its girls and its women to move ahead in life and do it all. Together, this joins in to make a colorful and vibrant society where men and women join hands and take themselves, their families, their societies, and their nations forward.

Taking care of plants and nurturing them gives Abhilasha a lot of peace and satisfaction. She says she finds gardening therapeutic: “Being with plants is a great meditation. Dirtying your hands in the soil, pruning the plants, sowing seeds, and seeing new life-forms is an amazing way to recharge.” If time and money were not a concern, she would love to pursue hang gliding as a hobby. “I have a bit of an adventurer spirit, and while hang gliding may just be aspirational, a road trip to the Himalayas is surely on the cards (hopefully, real soon).” Kanyakumari, the southernmost part of India, is the farthest she has been from home.



Some small but special things that make Abhilasha's day amazing: the sleepy hug from her son early in the morning, a hot, steaming cup of tea with her dad, a simple chitchat with her brother, and a few good songs to listen to. Abhilasha feels that keeping a pet is something everyone should do at least once in life. "It makes us more responsible and gives us the experience of truly unconditional love," she says.

Abhilasha loves listening to old Hindi songs and can listen to *ghazals* all day long. She is good with words and can give an impromptu presentation on a number of themes, from history to literature to spirituality. *Shrikant* and *Charitraheen* by Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay are some of her favorite books from Hindi literature. "I find new facets to the writing style, the narrative, the emotion, and the Bengal society of the early 1900s each time I revisit these books."

Wuthering Heights by Emily Bronte, *Good Wives* by Louisa M. Alcott, *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by



Flowers from her garden

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Thomas Hardy are some of her favorite English books. However, the best book that she has ever read is *To Sir with Love*. “I had first read a portion of the book in a comprehension passage in my class 7 English language book. I had it noted with me and finally bought it with my pocket money when I was in class 12. I have not waited longer for any book ever!” If she didn’t have to sleep at all, Abhilasha would read classics of English and Hindi literature with the extra time. “I don’t think we can ever have enough books to read and enough time to read them all. There is always so much more to read, to learn, and to experience.”



தனிமையின் காதலன்*

Nagarajan

Executive Paginator, Data Division

உறவுகளுக்கும் உணர்வுகளுக்கும் இடையில்
எழும் வினாக்களுக்கு -- ஒற்றை
விடை தேடி அலைகிறேன்!

தோள் சாய்ந்திட
என் தலைகோதி புதுவிதி எழுதிட
ஒரு சிறு புன்னகையில் சிறை எடுத்திட
அழும்போது இமையாய் இருந்திட
இதற்கு வேறு பெயர்களில்
உறவுகள் வேண்டாம்! -- ஒற்றை

உறவு என் உணர்வாய் இருந்திட வேண்டும்!
விஷங்களை தடவி நீங்கள் பேசும் பொய் சிரிப்பில்
உணர்வற்ற என் நிழலும் நடுங்குகிறது
என்னைத் தொட்டாலும் சுடும்
உண்மையாய் இருங்கள் ஏற்றுக்கொள்கிறேன்!

*The poet prefers loneliness to fake company and false relationships.



மிதிவண்டியும் அவரும்*

Arockia Alexander

Manager, Books Pre-Editing Team

மாநில நெடுஞ்சாலை
பளிச்சிடும் வெயில்
கருத்த மேனி
சுருங்கிய கன்னம்

வண்டியில் கீரைக்கட்டுக்கள்
விறுவிறுவென மிதிப்புகள்
சந்தைக்கு பயணம்
போகவர பதினாறு மைல்

ஒட்டிய வயிறு
வெளுத்த வெள்ளைச்சட்டை
வியர்த்தொழுகும் தேகம்
பருத்தித்துண்டால் முண்டாசு

இத்தனை எளிதாய்
தற்சார்பு பொருளாதாரத்தை
விளக்கும்
வாழ்க்கைமுறை!

வெற்றிலைக்கறைப் பற்கள்
பித்தவெடிப்பான பாதங்கள்
பெயருக்கென செருப்பு
அப்பாகாலத்து மிதிவண்டி

அவர் மிதிக்கும்பொது
நகர்வது மிதிவண்டி மட்டுமல்ல
தேசத்தின்
பொருளாதாரமும் தான்!

*The poem beautifully describes how an elderly hard working man, simply by earning a living for himself selling vegetables, is also unknowingly carrying the fate of the nation on his shoulders.





அனுபவச் சிதறல்கள்...!*

Jeeva

Senior Executive, Quality Control, Education Division

ஐந்து பைசாவில் துவங்கிய நாட்கள்
அவை அழகாய்தானிருந்தன
ஐந்து பத்தாகவும்
பத்து இருபதாகவும் மாற துவங்கியது.

மாற்றம் தேவை தான்
அந்த மாற்றத்தின் விளைவை அறியவில்லை அப்போது....!!

அறியா பருவம் அது
ஆனந்தத்தின் எல்லை அது

அன்று
சிட்டுக்குருவி தான் எங்களின் போதி மரம்
இரட்டை சிட்டுக் குருவியை கண்டால் அன்றைய நாள் சுபம்....!!|

சில சமயம் பள்ளிக்கு செல்லும் வழியில்
அந்தோ பரிதாபம் ஒற்றைச் சிட்டுக்குருவி....!!
(புத்தருக்கும் சோதனைகள் பல வந்தன தாமே....!)
ஒடுவோம், தேடுவோம்,
மற்றுமொரு சிட்டுக்குருவியை காணும் வரை.....!!

*The poem begins with a nostalgic trip down memory lane remembering with fondness the things we did in our childhood. It goes on to describe in horrific detail the trials and tribulations of adult life.

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பள்ளி மணி அடித்ததும்
துள்ளி விளையாடச் சென்றோம்
பட்டமும் படிக்கவில்லை
சட்டமும் படிக்கவில்லை ஆனாலும் அங்கு
நாங்கள் தான் போலிஸ் (police)

சக்தி மானாகவும் (Sakhthiman) ஸ்பைடர்
மேனாகவும் (Spiderman)

வலம் வந்த நாட்கள்தான் எத்தனை...!!

நாங்கள் அம்புலி மாமா படித்ததில்லை - ஆனால்
எங்கள் மாலை நேர பொழுதுகளை
கபளீகரம் செய்த அம்புலிகள் பல உண்டு...!!
பெயர் அறியா அந்த அம்புலி மாமா (கதை சொல்லி),
கனவுலகில் எங்களை அழைத்துச் சென்ற
தூரம் தான் எத்தனை...!!

அன்று
கனவுலகில் எங்களை ஐனனம் கொள்ளச்செய்த
பிரம்மனாகவே தோன்றினார் எங்கள் அம்புலி...!!

இவ்வாறு
நல்லதங்காள் கதையினுள் சென்று
அவள் குழந்தைகளுக்கு நாங்கள்
உணவிட்ட நாட்கள் எத்தனை...!!

பசியின் கொடுமையினாலும்
தன்மானமே உயிரெனக் கருதியதாலும்
விளக்கினில் பட்ட விரலினை
விசக்கென எடுக்கும் குழந்தையைப் போல
உணர்ச்சிகளை ஒதுக்கிவிட்டு
தன்னுடைய
எல்லாக் குழந்தைகளையும் கிணற்றில்
தூக்கி எறிந்த பின்பு,
கடைசி குழந்தை அருகில்
வருகிறாள் நல்லதங்காள்...!!

தன்னையும் கிணற்றில் எறிந்துவிட
அருகினில் வருகிறாள் அன்னை
என புரிந்த குழந்தை விழுந்தடித்து ஓடுகிறது...!!

மானம் இழந்து,
பசியினால் உழன்று,
புண்பட்டு வாழும் இவ்வாழ்க்கையும்
தேவை தானா என எண்ணியபடி,
இளகிய இதயத்தையும் இறுக்கிக் கொண்டு,
ஓடிய குழந்தையை துரத்தி
பிடிக்கிறாள் நல்லதங்காள்...!!

அம்மா என்னை விட்டு விடு
அம்மா என்னை விட்டு விடு
விட்டு விடு...அம்மா
என்னை...விட்டு விடு என
கதறிய குழந்தையின் கண்ணீரோடு
நல்லதங்காளின் கண்ணீரும் எங்களின்
கண்களினூடாக உடையை நனைத்த நாட்கள்
எத்தனை...!!

கிணற்றில் விழுந்த நல்லதங்காளோடு
குழந்தைகளையும் காக்க
மறுநாள் (நீச்சல் கற்க)
இறங்கிய குளங்களும் கன்மாய்களும் தான்
எத்தனை...!!

புத்தனைப் போல் ஆசையை அடக்க முடியாமல்
நெல்லிக்கனிகளை சுவைத்து ஓளவையாக மாறிட
மாற்றான் தோட்டம் புகுந்ததும் உண்டு..
விசுவாமித்திரரால் வந்த சோதனை எனக் கூறி
அரிச்சந்திரனாய் மாறி பிரம்பினால் வீடுகளில்
ஆசி வாங்கிய நாட்களும் உண்டு....!!|

ஆம்..
இன்றோ நாளையோ என பறந்துவிட துடிக்கும்
வயோதிகத்தைப் போல மினுமினுக்கும் தெரு
விளக்குகள்...
இரவுப்பொழுதை துயில் எழுப்பி விடும்....!!

ஓடிய களைப்பில் சிறிது ஓய்வெடுக்க
மலையின் பின்னாக செல்லும் கதிரவனைப்
போல,
உணவினை தேடி, பின்பு ஓய்ந்திருக்க உறைவிடம்
நாடும் தூக்கணாங்குருவியைப் போல,
ஊருக்கு மத்தியில் ஒரு பொது தொலைக்காட்சி.
அங்கு
ஒரு குடும்பம் எனும் நிலை மாறி
ஊரே ஒரு குடும்பமாய் வெள்ளித்திரையில்
அமர்ந்திருப்போம்....!!
எங்கள் களைப்பினை மறந்திருப்போம்....!!|

(தேடல் தொடரும்)

நழுவும் உலகம்*

Kannan

Quality, Centralized Books Production Team

அந்தி சாயும் தூரியனை போல்
நழுவி கொண்டிருக்கிறது குழந்தைகளின் குதூகலம்!

கிரகணத்து இருட்டினை போல் விஞ்ஞானம் விழுங்கி
கொண்டிருக்கிறது சிறுவர்களின் உலகத்தை!

அகதிகளாய் அலைந்து கொண்டிருக்கிறார்கள்
Android உலகத்தில்!

தும்பிகள் பறக்கும் தூர வெளிகளில்
தூரத்திப் பிடிக்க சிறுவர்கள் இல்லை!

* The poet talks about a world that is fast slipping away from the hands of children because of an unchecked rise in smartphones and androids and a growing fascination for the digital world.



Google பார்க்க குனிந்த சிறுமிகள்
நிலாப் பார்க்க நிமிரவே இல்லை!

உள்ளங்கை விரித்தபடி உலர்ந்து கிடக்கின்றன
தெருக்கள் பம்பரம் ஆடும் ஸ்பரிசங்களுக்காக!

செவி திறந்தே கிடக்கின்றன வீதிகள்
பாண்டி ஆடும் பாதக் கொலுசுக்களுக்காக!

குழந்தைகள் தேடிக்கொண்டேயிருக்கின்றன
Google-ல் பாதம் சுடாத வெயிலையும்
ஸ்பரிசம் தராத மழையும் கூடவே தங்கள்
தாத்தா பெயரையும்!

உங்களால் உங்கள் குழந்தைக்கு ஆயிரம்
நட்சத்திரங்களை வாங்கித் தர முடியும்
ஒரு மின்மினி பூச்சியைக் கூட காட்ட முடியாது!

நீச்சலைக் கற்றுத் தர முடியும்
நதியை உருவாக்க முடியாது!

நிலாப் பார்க்கச் சொல்லுங்கள்
கடற்கரையில் கால் நனைக்கச் சொல்லுங்கள்
நீந்திக் குளிக்கச் சொல்லுங்கள் நதியின் சலசலப்பில்!

எங்கோ ஒரு வண்ணத்துப் பூச்சி திசைகள் அற்று
பறந்து கொண்டிருக்கிறது
சிறுநாடைக் கட்டிய சிறுமியின்
பட்டு விரலுக்காக!

எப்போதும் மழை மண்வாசனையை
அனுப்பி வைக்கிறது சிறுவர்களின் வருகைக்காக!

மடலில் தேன் நிறைத்து காத்திருக்கின்றன
சிறு பூக்கள் சிறார்களின் இதழ்களுக்காக!

முந்தானை நிறைய கதைகளோடு காத்திருக்கிறாள்
பாட்டி பேர குழந்தைகளுக்காக!

அலைபேசியை அணைத்து விட்டு
அந்த உலகத்தை திரும்ப கொடுங்கள்!

சின்னத்தாயவள் தந்த ராசா*

Prabha

Lead XML, Books Pre-Editing Team

அன்று மட்டும்
அதிகாலை
அந்த அபலைப்பெண்
ஈன்றெடுக்கிறாள்
சூரியனை!

பீறிட்டுக் கிளம்பும்
அழுகையினுடே
காட்டுக்குள் பாய்கிறது
புது வெளிச்சம்!

தூரத்தில் நிற்கும்
தொடர் வண்டியை
துணைக்கழைக்கிறாள்
துயரத்தில் பங்கேற்க!

வேறுன்றிக் கிடக்கும்
பழமைவாத சட்டகத்துக்குள்
அவள்
தாயாகத் தொடர்வது
சாத்தியமில்லைதானே!

நெற்றி நிரம்ப
முத்தமிட்டு - தன்
மாரைக்கூட முத்தமிடா
மழலையை
வழியனுப்புகிறாள்
கண்கள் நிரம்ப!

ஓங்கி ஒலிக்கும்
ஒற்றை ஓசையில்
உயிரின் வலியை
கக்கியபடி
தடதடக்கிறது
தொடர்வண்டி!

திறந்து கிடக்கும்
கதவினுடே
மெல்லமாய் முணுமுணுத்து
தாலாட்டைப் படிக்கிறது
தண்டவாளம்!

தாயைப் பிரிந்த
சிசுவுக்கு
தாலாட்டுத்தானே
தாயின் ஸ்பரிசம்!

அவனுக்கு
யாதொன்றும் நேராமல்
கண்ணுறக்கம் நோகாமல்
சின்னத்தாயவள் தந்த
ராசாவை
இசையால் கரைசேர்ப்பான்
சின்னத்தாயவள் தந்த
ராசா!

*The plight of a young mother on the verge of delivering a baby.

Childhood memories

Prince Peter

Trainee Copy Editor, Taylor & Francis



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I was so free and allowed to stay as I could be
None could stop me from climbing any tree
I had the power to make others smile along with me
My mood always lit up like a Christmas tree
Such were my childhood memories, until I was twenty-three.

I miss those wondrous days,
Why did I grow up, I always say
I miss those little Kinder Joys with toys to play
Making craft with clay and eating packets of Lays
Such are my childhood memories, I still want to chase.

Rain showered me with chills
And the very next day I had to take pills
Dancing like a peacock was the most exciting thrill
Running up and down through all the nearby hills
Such were my childhood memories, for which my heart stands still.

All day I could just sit playing video games
Never worrying about my life's aim
Being a naughty innocent child with no blame
Always present in everyone's cute little photo frames
Such are my childhood memories, I still want to reclaim.

Becoming best friends was just a coincidence
No one would ask me to prove my competence
Living life to its only essence of coexistence
When speaking my mind had no consequence
Such were my childhood memories, with such effulgence.

A letter to my dearest sister, who is not here

Kawiya Bakthavatchalam

Project Manager, Taylor & Francis



Hi little girl,
It's been 19 years since you left us!
You left us so early, may be God loved you more than us!
Our home is not the same without you.
I miss you every day, every second.
I missed you when my friends walked with their sisters in school
I miss you whenever I fill 'No' in the siblings column in any form
I miss you when I walk alone
I miss you when I share everything with our mom
 'cos she guides me as a mom,
but if you were here, you would have guided me as a friend.
I miss you when I search for a sister in someone else's family
I miss you when I pretend to the whole world that I enjoy being the
 only daughter (actually I don't)!
When someone asks me "what's your dream" whatever I say is
 not true.
Deep inside, I want to bring you back into this world to me.
I want to spend the rest of my life with you!
I promise, this time I will take care of you even better.
I promise, I will give you a comfortable life.
I promise, I won't fight for anything, this time
 everything is yours.
If tears could build stairs to heaven, I would have reached you
 a long time ago
Come back, my little girl!
I just can't wait to hold you in my hands.
With love, your sister who is eagerly waiting for you.

A place forgotten by time

Lydia

Managing Editor, Books Copy Editing Team

They say the business of life is the acquisition of memories. By that maxim, I am undisputedly one of the richest people in the world.

A creepy smile and a wild gesturing of the hands as he waved goodbye, we saw the receding backlights of the bus as his only and final word resonated in our sleepy heads: Bye!



This was the only word uttered by our bus driver after a back-breaking journey of over 7 hours as he unceremoniously dumped us by the side of the road several minutes past midnight. It was dark all around us and the town had gone to sleep with not a soul about. I looked at my friend and we looked at our bags as they bore silent witness to our plight. We were in a strange land, with darkness surrounding us, and not a clue as to head which way to find our lodgings. In one mad desperate moment, we even considered sleeping by the roadside and waiting for dawn to show us the way forward.

After a few moments, when we got our bearings and our eyes got accustomed to the dark, we walked about to see if there was anyone around. After walking down a few roads, we found a restaurant that had (from the looks of it) closed sometime back, but a large family (probably the restaurant owner's) was sitting at a table outside caught up in animated conversation. The remnants of a long dinner and drinks were on the table. A wonderful meal shared with family and friends. When was our last meal, I wondered? We walked up to them

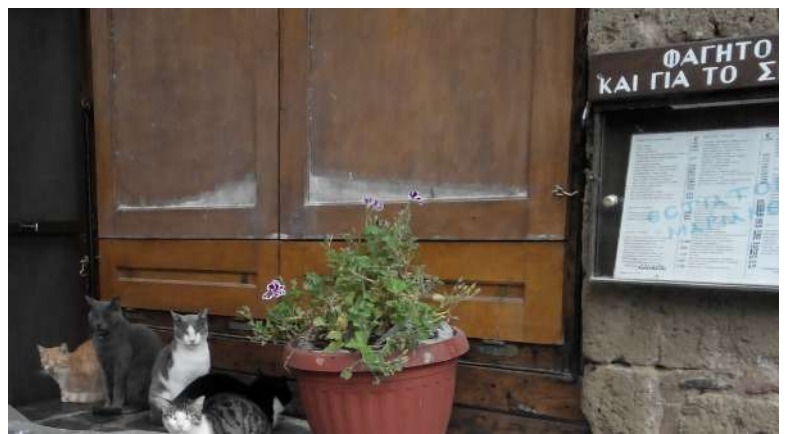


and asked for the way to Monemvasia. Promptly guessing we were tourists, they told us that the last shuttle to Monemvasia was at 12 midnight and that the next one would be at 6 am the following morning. And that's when it dawned on us that we weren't even in the city of Monemvasia but in the mainland.

We were two women on vacation in Greece, and we were making our way from Athens to the walled fortress city of Monemvasia. This castle town built during medieval times is situated on a small island to the east of Peloponnese. A single causeway connects the fortress town to the mainland. (The name Monemvasia comes from two Greek words, *mone* and *emvasia* meaning "single entrance.") We took the 5 o'clock bus from Athens in the evening hoping to arrive at our destination at 9 in the night. Instead, we arrived at the mainland well past midnight. The rest of the story is just incredibly wonderful.

As we looked to the family to point us in the direction of Monemvasia so we could make our way on foot, one man broke away from the crowd, disappeared behind the restaurant and within minutes came back driving a huge truck. He helped us load our bags and drove us to Monemvasia. It was a terrifying ride: it was pitch dark all around us, with the headlights showing only a strip of the narrow road that was steadily climbing up a mountain; we were at the mercy of a strange man and all the horrifying psycho serial-killer stories came to mind in such vivid detail; we could hear the sound of water all around us, waves lapping on rocks, but we couldn't see the water in the total darkness. Soon he came to a stop at the entrance to the walled city. We said our thank yous, forgetting to ask his name, and made our way into the fortress.

It seemed like we had stepped back in time into another world altogether. No cars or vehicles can come inside the city because it is built that way. The only means of transportation inside is a donkey ride, used mostly to carry goods. Paved with cobbled stones, with old mansions built entirely of rocks (now converted into houses or



(Clockwise from the top): View of the Aegean Sea and the surrounding islands from the rooftops of Monemvasia; beautiful stray cats in Monemvasia; view of the City Center; views of the narrow cobbled streets of Monemvasia

boutique hotels), beautiful stray cats lounging in the sun, views of the Aegean Sea all around make this place truly magical—a place forgotten by time. A church, an archaeological museum, the city center, and an artist’s house are the places to see in Monemvasia. But the city itself is wonderful in many ways and even more so are its people, warm and friendly like the nameless stranger who delivered us to Monemvasia.

I first saw Monemvasia on TV with my mother when we would watch “Passport to Europe,” hosted by Samantha Brown, a segment dedicated to travel in the TLC channel. We both fell instantly in love with the place. Over the years we often talked about Monemvasia and what a wonderful place it was.

I was able to make the trip to Monemvasia 4 years after my mother’s passing. While I had my dear friend to keep me company, that part of the trip was an homage to my mother and I was happy to see that beautiful city through her eyes.

If you wish to get a feel of the place, watch this video called “Walking in Monemvasia, Greece.” The first 4 min 36 seconds give you a glimpse of this beautiful city: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFpd3APq4T4>

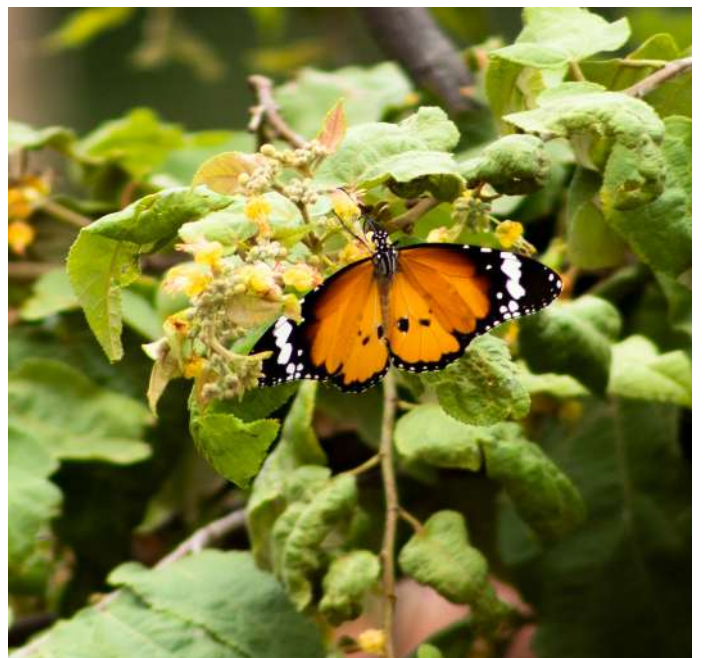


Our hotel in Monemvasia and its stunning views of the fortress city

Through the lens

Sundaramoorthy

Senior Lead, Technology



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A day at the beach

Arunkumar

Project Manager, NPUK Onshore Team



These pictures were shot by Arunkumar at Veerampattinam Beach, Pondicherry, with a Sony Alpha 350 camera and have been color corrected in Photoshop.

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Photos courtesy of Arunkumar