

SAMASTHA LOKA SUKHINO BHAVANTU

venugaanam

Sai Krushna Charitable
Trust Newsletter

August, 2013

IN THIS ISSUE

From Team venugaanam

We are delighted to bring you the 25th edition of Venugaanam this August. With Swami's grace and your contribution, we enter the third year of Venugaanam with this edition. This month, we bring excerpts from Swami's Divine Discourses on Guru Poonima. Read this know His message of 'Grow in Love'.

In Atmajyothi, we continue with a new series of discussion on Narada Bhakthi Sutras. These Sutras or aphorisms contain the secret of true devotion and highlight its glory.

In the article- "Initiation of Swami Namdev" Swaminathan quotes the story of how Swami Namdev got the deeksha of humility and devotion from his guru.

Prakash gives us a quick insight into the world of phone applications that are making life easy. Read his article "Apps- Revolutionising our Lives".

T R Mist starts off a new serialized story "the Night" which is bound to keep you hooked on.

Sai Krushna Mandir now has four children who have been residing in the children's home and attending school for the last one month. With Swami's blessings, we have identified a cook. To know more, read the construction update.

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We also invite applications for a watchman for the children's home.

We are happy to have your feedback on how to make 'Venugaanam' a better communication tool. You may kindly mail us at contactus@saikrushnamandir.org. Do feel free to share with us your experiences in following Swami's teachings or on any other theme of your choice. We pray to Swami to bless all the children and inmates so that they may all come up to His expectations. May Swami turn our lives into a celebration of His message of love, sharing and caring.

With All our Prema,
Team ~~venugaanam~~
Sai Krushna Charitable Trust

Grow in Love- The Message of Guru Poornima

Excerpts from the Divine Discourses by Bhagawan Shri Sathya Sai Baba

The festival of Guru Poornima is one of the most significant celebrations in the Sai calendar. Over the years, Bhagawan has used this occasion for the unfurling of many landmark events of His mission, be it the opening ceremony of the first college campus of Sri Sathya Sai University in 1971, or the inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, Stage-I in 1995, or the announcement for the establishment of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, in 1999, or the revelation that He is in fact the Shiva-Shakthi Avatar on earth in 1963. And on every one of these momentous days He blessed the devotees with a profound discourse.

Many wonder what is so significant about Guru Poornima? Why do we celebrate this festival? And how should we observe this day? Bhagawan has given clear answers to all these and much more. Let us now recapitulate this immortal message of the Sadguru, the Supreme Teacher, through a few simple questions.

Q) Why do we celebrate Guru Poornima?

Guru Poornima is dedicated for offering gratitude to the guru. On this day, the Moon, which is the presiding deity of the mind, is full, clear, cool and bright! It has no blemish or dullness which diminishes its glow. The guru too is pictured and praised on this occasion as unblemished, bright and affectionate. He is full of devotion with a sense of surrender to God. He is tolerant and truly peaceful. He is the living example and embodiment of the virtues he desires his disciples to develop.

The guru that initiates one into chanting a particular mantra is a *Dheeksha Guru*, while the guru who transforms and elevates the personality of his pupils is a *Siksha Guru*. It is this latter guru that is reverentially praised in thousands of ways in the holy texts. He removes the faults in vision and destroys the darkness of ignorance. He reveals the *Atma* to the individual and makes him free.

The sacred festival of Guru Poornima is dedicated to such gurus. Poornima (the full moon day) celebrates the fulfilment that is the goal of all life.

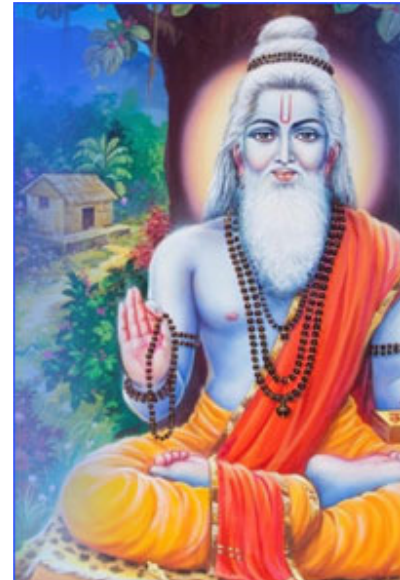
[Divine Discourse - July 27, 1980]

Q) Why is this day also called Vyasa Poornima?

Sage Vyasa was born with a great urge for spiritual upliftment and he entered into deep study and *sadhana* (spiritual practice) even as a child. He acquired such divine wisdom and glory that he is identified with Narayana (God) Himself.

He stands out as the *Lokaguru* (World Teacher) for he codified the Vedic hymns and prepared the great Vedantic text 'Brahmasutras', besides the epic commentaries of the Veda-vedanta (teachings based on Upanisadic philosophies), Mahabharata and the Srimad Bhagavatham.

He is called 'Veda Vyasa' because of his service to the students of the Vedas which defied understanding since they were countless and fathomless. It is for this reason it is said **Anantho vai Vedah – The Vedas are limitless.**



Vyasa helped mankind to earn peace. Therefore, Vyasa refers to the person who has elaborated and expanded the knowledge of truth, that is to say, the universal eternal energy.

Even Vyasa can only show you the road. You have to traverse it alone. He gives you a *mantra* (a sacred word or formula) which you repeat; though you may not know its meaning, it will act as the purifier of your mind.

Humanness is holy; it is neither mean nor low. It has the status of God, though clouded and contaminated. For this faith to strike deep roots in our minds and to keep us fixed in that belief, a guru is needed. Vyasa is the first guru who demarcated the path and the goal. That is why he is associated with the *Poornima* day.

[Divine Discourses - July 24, 1964 and July 27, 1980]

Q) Who is our true Guru?



Gu means darkness and *ru* means light. Guru is one who removes darkness through light; he imparts wisdom which roots out ignorance. Render unto him as much homage as he deserves, but not more. You repeat the *sloka*:

***Guru Brahma gurur Vishnuh,
Gurur dhevo Maheswarah,
Gurussaakshaath Parabrahma,
Thasmai Shri Gurave namah***

This is usually interpreted as indicating that the Guru is Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara (The trinity of Godhead) and that he is the visible Parabrahma(God).

But this hymn can be understood in a nobler manner: "Brahma is the Guru, Vishnu is the Guru, Maheshwara is the Guru, truly, Parabrahma is the Guru."

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Pray to the God within you, the Maheshwara, the Vishnu, the Brahma, or the Parabrahma Principle to reveal Itself. Accept that as the Guru and you will be illumined. The Gayatri mantra is a prayer for the progressive upsurge of intelligence so that Truth may be grasped by the seeker. Subordinate the mind to the pure intelligence which is but a reflection of the God within. Then, you have the Guru of Gurus as your guide.

Man is consumed by time; God is the Master of Time. So, take refuge in God. Let Him be your Guru, your path and your Lord. Adore Him, obey His commands, offer Him your grateful homage, and hold Him fast in your memory. This is the easiest way to realise Him as your own reality. This is the one and only way.

[Divine Discourses - July 18, 1970 and July 2, 1985]

Q) How should we celebrate this day? What is Swami's message for us?

Guru Poornima is sacred for many reasons:

This day, the seeker who suffers from identification with the false objective world is initiated into the reality of the 'Unseen Motivator' within him. This day, those who have no urge to tread the spiritual path are inspired to seek the bliss which that path will confer; This day, aspirants are helped to achieve the consciousness of the One, which is known by many Names and Forms, in various languages and lands.

Guru Poornima must be celebrated with prayer and penitence as that alone can cleanse the heart and not by feasting or fasting which affects only the body. This is the day when you decide to become masters of your senses and intellect, emotions and passions, thoughts and feelings, by *sadhana* (spiritual discipline). Even during *dhyana* (meditation), the ego will obstruct you.

Nivedita asked for advice from Vivekananda to gain one-pointed focus during meditation. "Do not allow Margaret Noble to come between you and God," Vivekananda said. Margaret Noble was herself. "Nivedita' means 'Offering'," Vivekananda explained and added, "Offer yourself fully to God."

This total dedication cannot emerge from scholarship. The scholar is polluted by ego; he delights in putting pros and cons against each other; he raises doubts and disturbs faith. They mix the secular and the worldly with the spiritual and the other-worldly. They worship God in order to extract worldly gain. But prayers to God have to be for spiritual progress.

Embodiments of Divine Love! If you want to understand Divinity, you should have the firm faith that Divinity is everywhere. There is no place or object without God. Guru Poornima means full moon without any defect or lacuna. Moon is nothing but mind. When the mind is completely perfect, it sheds light.

Guru Poornima is not performed by circumambulation and offerings to the Guru. What is the real offering? It is the offering of one's love. To know that God exists everywhere is circumambulation. If you understand these terms, every day is Guru Poornima. There is only one Guru, that is God, and there is no other Guru. Contemplate on that Guru.

Therefore, engage yourselves in *sadhana* (spiritual practices) without delay. Cultivate virtues; be free from evil habits, thoughts, words and deeds. Grow in love and greet Nature with love. This is the way to *Ananda* (bliss). This is the message for Guru Poornima.

[Divine Discourses - July 27, 1980 and July 14, 1992]

Atmajyothi

by Shri Lakshminarayan Aithal

Lakshminarayan Aithal has served for over 3 decades in Swami's institution and is the former Principal of the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institutions at Muddenahalli. Inspired by Swami's direct message to study the Upanishads, he first learnt Sanskrit and then studied the direct works of Adi Shankaracharya and Swami. Sincere perseverance led him to the reality of Aham Brahmasmi and He realized and experienced Swami's words: "I am God and so are you". He shares the import of the Upanishadic teachings with us in this series of articles.

MEANING OF व्याख्यास्यामः

वि(very clearly), आ(by all manners) and ख्यास्यामः:(we analyse) – are three parts in the word व्याख्यास्यामः. There is a danger of misunderstanding devotion that it is similar to ordinary worldly love if that word is not clearly defined. We discuss the following questions : What is devotion? What is its characteristic feature? What are its appearing different forms? What are its means that cause its appearance? How does its fruit touch the mind? What are the qualities of devotees? The meaning of all answers are included in the आ part of the word.

In this manner, in this aphorism of solemn declaration – the devotion which is the subject matter of the scripture and its use are clearly indicated.

CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF DEVOTION

Already it is told that 'we are going to explain devotion', isn't it? Now, the character of devotion is narrated :

सा त्वस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा ॥2॥

But, that is of the Supreme Form of Love in Him.

MEANING OF PRONOUNS IN THE APHORISM.

सा(that) means devotion. A pronoun considers the present object. In the aphorism of solemn declaration, it is declared to explain devotion; therefore, it itself is the present object. Hence, the devotion itself is the meaning of the pronoun सा(that).

But, अस्मिन् (in Him) pronoun is not like सा; for, 'He' doesn't refer to any present person here. It is natural that 'this' refers to the nearby object and 'that' refers to the distant one.

Here, a distant object is not referred; अयम् (He) refers to a nearby person; therefore, it should be considered that this pronoun is used to refer to a famous meaningful nearby one. It is famous in the Vedas and the Traditional Laws (श्रुतिस्मृत्योः) that the Supreme Self is the Inner-most Self of all and He is the all-pervading perceptible (अपरोक्ष) and the superlative Principle (निरतिशयतत्त्व). It is famous among the experienced devotees also. [Some of the texts read कस्मै instead of अस्मिन्; but, former अस्मिन् itself is the famous reading; and it is known from the further explanation that the latter word has naturally a good meaning.]

यत्साक्षादपरोक्षाद् ब्रह्म य आत्मा सर्वान्तरः (बृ. 3-4-1)

This sentence of the Upanishad tells: The Principle is directly the main meaning of the word 'Brahman'; It does never have any veiling either of space or of time; therefore, the Perceptible Principle is God; and not only that the very same God is the Self of all. The Self is an object which is one's Own Form. Fully ignorant strongly identify themselves in their respective wife, children, house, etc. Not only common people, even the prudent have 'I-feeling' in body, organs, vital air, mind, intellect and ego. 'I have come', 'I am seeing', 'It seems so', 'This itself is my decision' – in these feelings 'I-notion' and the word 'I' are employed. According to the view of scriptures, God is beyond these feelings; He exists in the individual souls who are 'doers' (कर्तृ) and 'enjoyers' (भोक्तृ); He is all pervading and the Real Self of all imagined selves; and, therefore, He is called the Supreme Self (परमात्मा). Therefore, this Upanishad calls that He is the Inner-most Self (सर्वान्तरः).

Similarly, Law-Books like the आपस्तम्ब सूत्र, etc. tell that God, Himself, is the real Self of us all. There is one example: पूः प्राणिनः सर्व एव गुहाशयस्य (आ. ध. 1-5-22-4). All animals are castles (पुर) of God who lives in

caves. आत्मलाभान्न परं विद्यते (आ. ध. 1-8-22-2). There is no greater profit than obtaining the Self. In these two sentences, the Supreme Being (God) is called as the Self. Similarly- आत्मा क्षेत्रज्ञ इत्युक्तः संयुक्तः प्राकृतैर्गुणैः । तैरेव तु विनिर्मुक्तः परमात्मेति उदाहृतः ॥

क्षेत्रज्ञ is the self who is endowed with the qualities of the nature (प्रकृति); but, God is freed from such qualities; ममान्तरात्मा तव च ये चान्ये देहसंस्थिताः (मो. ध. 251-4) really the Inner-most Self, himself, of mine, yours and indwellers of bodies – is God. Thus, it is told in the भारत. Similarly, in the विष्णुपुराण :- विस्तारः सर्वभूतस्य विष्णोः सर्वमिदं जगत् । द्रष्टव्यमात्मवत्तस्मादभेदेन विचक्षणैः ॥(वि. पु. 1-17-54).

This whole world is the glory of विष्णु who is in the form of all living beings. Therefore, prudent having absence of difference should see Him as their Self – thus speaks प्रह्लाद.

एकः समस्तं यदिहास्ति किञ्चित् तदच्युतो नास्ति परं ततोऽन्यत् ।

सोऽहं स च त्वं स च सर्वमेत-दात्मस्वरूपं त्यजभेदमोहम् ॥वि. पु. 2-16-23॥

Whatever is seen here, that everything is One God, Himself; that itself is this अच्युत; nothing exists other than Himself. He Himself is I am; He Himself is I; He himself is you and He Himself is all these; give up the affection of difference (भेदमोह) – thus निधाघ has told.

In this manner, it is famous in श्रुति, स्मृति and पुराण that everywhere One God Himself is the Self of everything; therefore, it should be understood that here, the sage नारद, keeping his celebrity of scriptures (शास्त्रप्रसिद्धि) in his mind has used the pronoun अस्मिन्.

The Making of Sai Krushna Mandir

Construction Update

With the Divine Blessings and grace of our Beloved Swami, the Phase 1 of the children's home – Sai Krushna Mandir – has begun operations from June 23rd, 2013.. The "Gruhapravesam"(House Warming Ceremony) of the children's home was held on 3rd June. The first four children have joined and two more will be joining in the first week of July. The children are attending school at the associated Sharavathi Higher Primary School. We thank Swami for sending us a cook and helper for the children's home. We have also found some volunteers to live with and take care of the children. We also invite applications for a few more suitable caretakers. The caretakers would also be paid suitable as per their experience and ability. Support staff families would be provided suitable accommodation and their children would be given appropriate educational facilities also.

Some other minor construction works like the bathrooms for visitors and external staff are in progress to facilitate the effective working of the children's home.



Phase 2



Sai Krushna Mandir

We are very happy to have had devotees from Sai Gruhalakshmi family, Sai Gitanjali and Padmanabha nagar Samiti come and visit Sai Krushna Mandir in the month of July.

We look forward to all your active involvement and participation in this God given opportunity. We also welcome you to come and visit the site and participate in the activities of Sai Krushna Mandir. We pray that Swami's grace will crown our genuine intentions and He will continue to guide and bless the children and residents to live in a happy home and grow to His ideals.



Sai Gruhalakshmi family's visit to SKM : with the 4 children Chandan, Sridhar, Devi Prasad, and Shreyas (L to R)



Sai Gruhalakshmi family with SKM and school children on 17th July, 2013

Shreyas and Chandan are admitted in Class 2 of the Sharavathi school while Devi Prasad and Sridhar study in class 1. The children have adjusted well to their new home and are growing up happily.

Initiation of Swami Namdev

by Swaminathan

Swaminathan is a software engineer in Bangalore. He loves reading and travelling. His curiosity makes him want to explore all the aspects of life. Keen to learn anything and everything new!!

'Swami Namdev' would not entirely be a new name to most of the Hindus, especially if they are more enchanted towards Pandu Ranga - a form of Sri Krishna himself.

Some of his contemporaries, who are known to this world through their devotion to Pandu Ranga are Swami Gora Kumba, Swami Dynaeshwar, Mukta Bhai, Janaa Bhai etc.

Swami Namdev was one of those very few blessed children of the Lord - who happened to have the divine sight of the Lord Pandu Ranga himself at the age of five. A Marathi Abhang [Song parsing Lord Panduranga], says that, Lord descends himself and starts dancing with love and joy, the moment Namdev starts singing. The thought of getting the sight of the Lord himself dancing, whenever he sings on him, had him held as a victim of his ego for a short span of time.

Once, all the divine Bhagawatas[devotees] of Pandu Ranga, reached Gora Khumba's hut for a holy gathering. Gora Khumba welcomed all as how he would welcome Lord Panduranga himself. Their lunch was served miraculously with the divine blessing of the Lord. Spiritual Satsang [Holy gathering] started after the lunch and it was the event that Lord had in his mind to help Namdev to get on to his next level towards reaching him. It started through Mukta Bai, who happened to see a stick sneaked

Dyaneshwar as well. The "real-game" continued further with other Bhagavathas too, until Mukta raised the ultimate question. She asked Gora "Can you test Swami Namdev please?". Gora, with the same playful mood, approached Namdev and unfortunately Namdev was not playful about it. He stopped Gora and shouted at him saying that he is the only one whose singing can make Lord come down and dance. He continued further that it is a deliberate insult made by Gora to such a great devotee like him and he decided to leave the place out of his anger. Mukta ran towards Gora and said "Goraji, Namdevji's devotion is incomplete, just like of your un-dried pots". This infuriated Namdev further and he ran towards Panduranga, crying and sobbing and said that he had been insulted deeply by Gora and other devotees. Panduranga

somewhere over the roof of Gora Khumba's hut. Expressing her curiosity, Mukta asked Gora - "What is that stick for?". She was just 3 years of age and Gora was physically very old. He explained her that he is a potter, and after making the pots out of the clay, they need to be exposed to fire for the final drying process for its completion. He further continued saying that, patting the pots with the stick would help him understand which of them had been completed and ready and which of them aren't.

Mukta mischievously asked – "Oh! really? So, is it possible to pat us with this stick and find out who among us have complete devotion and who does not?" Gora exclaimed "Yes!", immediately, as he thought of it as a child's game of Mukta. Mukta continued if she can be tested with the stick first. Gora patted her with the stick and said, "Ohh, you are full of devotion and it is a complete one in you!"

Dyaneshwar, Mukta's brother, bowed before Gora and requested him if he can be tested too. Gora said that he is just playing along with Mukta and there isn't anything serious about what he had been doing. Dyaneshwar expressed his willingness to be patted and he also conveyed with humbleness that Gora's mere touch with the stick would bring him complete devotion, if he is not having that already. Smiling with love, Gora patted chuckled and laughed with love and mischief. He answered Namdev saying it was not Gora who insulted him, but it is the other way around. He stressed Namdev to go back to Gora immediately and fall on his feet and ask for his forgiveness for acting indifferently to a true devotee. He said that whatever had been happening there is very true and his devotion is certainly incomplete, just like an undried pot. Namdev was shocked! He asked Panduranga whether he did not have bhakti at all? If so, why Lord dances whenever he sings? Lord replied back with mercy, "It was not your devotion, which made me descend down and dance, but the boon that I had given you in your past birth. You requested me to come and dance whenever you sing and I had agreed to it and gave that boon to you. My manifestation when you sing was to keep up my words

and not for your devotion". Upset Namdev, ran back immediately and fell on the feet of Gora Khumba and pleaded for his forgiveness and requested him to be his GURU and initiate him towards completing his devotion. Gora, who is an epitome of purity, replied back with kindness and love. He explained him that he was not Namdev's GURU. Namdev's true GURU, was an old-saint, who was from the lineage of Gorakhnath, was residing in a Shiva temple which was on the way towards to Pandarpur. Upon receiving this information, Namdev started immediately to find his GURU and get his initiation.

Namdev reached the Shiva temple that Gora Khumba had indicated. One more final blow to his ego awaited him as he approached the main shrine of Shiva. He happened to see an old-saint, who was lying down and sleeping in Shiva's shrine, with his head rested on the floor and his leg over the Shiva linga itself! Namdev was shocked and thought to himself, "What a blasphemy!! Is he the one I have been looking for to get my initiation? What a

mistake!" He shouted out loud, "Oh old man! Are you out of your mind? You are resting your legs over the Shiva linga! Take it off". The old-saint calmly replied "Oh! Is it? You see, I'm old enough to see and distinguish objects now and that would have put me in such a situation. Please take my legs off the linga and help me rest them in a place where there is NO SHIVA". Namdev came running to him and grabbed his legs with his hands and tried keeping them on the floor. Before he keeping it down, a new Shiva linga rose up by itself in the same place from the ground. Namdev was shocked to see that. Namdev's several attempts turned futile, as he saw Shivalinga rising in the very place where he wanted to rest the old man's leg. The old saint asked "Are you still holding my legs? You haven't found a place where Shiva is not there yet?" These questions, opened up Namdev fully and he responded, "Yes Swami, I have found out the place, where Shiva is not there" and pressed the saint's feet over his chest. He thus got Padma Dheeksha through him and progressed towards completion.

Apps-Revolutionizing Our Lives

by Prakash Srinivasan

Prakash is a student of Swami who completed his B.Com, MBA and PG Diploma in Culture and Philosophy from Sri Sathya Sai University. He is a talented singer with the enthusiasm for Swami's work. Prakash is currently working at HP, Bangalore.

Life in these modern times is pretty hectic, fast and sometimes unpredictable. Man has never been so technologically advanced and we have all the gadgets and tools for making our life easier and information exchange is almost real-time.

One of the products of the modern smartphone-tablet age are apps. I was quite ignorant of apps until a year ago when I changed my phone and got a basic Android smartphone. Over the past year I have discovered quite a few apps which are actually very useful and they are a perfect substitute for many things I don't need to buy (will explain this soon). I will list and shortly explain the apps which have made life better for me, saving me time and money and the cherry on the cake is that all of them are free!

1. CamScanner: This app is my replacement for a scanner at home. Using this I can scan any document and mail it to the contacts from my smartphone. I was initially skeptical when I

installed the app but I was pleasantly surprised by the scan quality. I used the scan for sending my passport scans to a foreign embassy, such was the clarity. This is a must-have for anyone. There are many other scanning apps and I guess they must also be good.

2. Whatsapp: This is probably the most popular smartphone app. It connects us to our families and friends and we can share docs/photos and even videos using this app. My wife, sent me a few photos of the gift options thro whatsapp (we had planned to buy for someone) and we were able to decide/select the gift even without being together!
3. Pixlr: This is a very nice photo-editing app with which we can crop photos, add frames, polish them and even add snazzy colourful captions. I know there are many others apps for photo editing and they do an equally good job. So we can click a snap, decorate it and send it off to our

family and friends almost instantly through whatsapp.

4. Viber: This is the Skype for all smartphones, almost as popular as Whatsapp. Few years ago, Skype revolutionized the way we spoke to each other, all that was needed was just an internet connection and calling became free. Viber has used that idea and we can call any of our contacts (provided they also have Viber which almost all have) with a wi-fi connection at home.
5. Easy notetaking: Noting down to-do lists with pen/paper is passé and there are a variety of note

taking apps suited for all types of notes, checklists/to do's etc. The prominent ones are Innote, Inkpad, Evernote, Onenote. Moreover we can copy paste the notes from one place to another very easily. I have my address stored in notes to send it through whatsapp or sms when I need to.

I have tried to cover the different types of apps under different categories. The best thing is, though these apps are free, they work flawlessly and simplify our lives.

The Night

by T.R. Mist

T.R Mist is a new entrant to Venugaanam. He is a resident of Puttaparthi and would be contributing a serialized story "The Night".

It was the haze of dark nothingness that bothered me always. It is something I could never get away from, even in those brightly lit streets with various kinds of shops that sold happiness. As I looked I saw men, women and their children happy, some of whom I knew, others who were strangers enter and exit from these brightly lit shops of a dreary city, with an air of nonchalance. They had what they wanted. And they were happy. For them the haze seemed nowhere. I had stopped gazing too long and with a start I started back on my way. Bright lights were not for me.

I walked. The din relented in its assault. From harsh to soft to feeble. After several hundreds of paces I turned right. The bright lights and shops were behind me, and the din gone. Dim street lights flickered above. I halted and my gaze was drawn to our locality. How different it was from the brashly glowing inner city. There were just a few buildings and those too were by and far empty. All slimy grey, they seemed to stand in a solemn contemplation. It did not matter to them that some of their walls had their plaster peeling off showing the brick and mortar underneath. Nor did it the onslaught of icy winds bother them. With their windows lit up they stood still and solid, keeping the hope burning in their hearts of a tomorrow,

which was bright and real. I smiled and walked on.

It was just early evening, well that is what the clock tower declared, there was hardly any other way to find out, for it was dark as ever, save the pale light from the distant light globs, which filtered through the mist. It was lonely in this part of the city, few stayed here. The wind wailed through the streets, looking for somebody to share its grief with. I looked the other way. Casting a forlorn glance at me, the wind rushed past picking up the shreds of orphaned news sheets and some plastic refuse for companionship.

I looked at the sky, I knew it was an unnecessary exercise, which some of us had grown used to. It had always been dark for quite sometime now and there had not been even a pretense of it ever getting bright. Even the stars seemed dead and no Moon ever rose. But faith and hope have hardly ever followed the rules if reason.

We live on the margins of the city, and since the Sun went out, we have been relegated here. Not that we are not welcome in the city, we are, we all work in the city, but staying under glow of the artificial 'suns' was never meant for us. So we made our home away from the bright lights, waiting for the real Sun to rise.

The city had not always been this way. It was bright, very bright. The Sun rose in the East and set in the West. In the mornings day after day the horizon beyond the high blue mountains would go from crimson to orange to yellow, till finally the Sun rose over the dark mountains and gradually breathed warmth into the cold morning air and pushed the mist to the darker reaches of the lush forest below the mountains, where it hung a bit longer. Then began the cacophonous symphony of the birds, starting with a few chirps and then turning into a grand orchestra that lent a strange tranquility to the city. People would then go about their chores. The Sun's brightness and warmth nourished and sustained them all. The Sun retired in the evening behind the mountains and the colours danced once more on the horizon to the dramatic notes of the bird symphony. Winter brought snow and the blue mountains would have heavy streaks of white on their tops, which threw golden and copper colours into the already colourful mélange of morning and evening. This happened with such simplicity that we seldom noticed. We took everything for granted, the colours, the warmth, the cacophonous symphony, the forests and finally the Sun Himself. Wish we had not.

One day a rumor floated of the coming eclipse. We looked at the Sun. He seemed bright as always. But some people said they could see some spots. We never believed. Then one day the eclipse happened. Eclipses happened with the Sun many times. So we hardly bothered. "He would disappear and reappear as always," we thought. People said this time the Sun will never emerge from the eclipse. We knitted our brows in contempt. The day arrived and the Sun went from bright to dark, from full to black. We knew it was temporary. The temporary blackness, however, remained. We waited. The Sun did not return. We waited a bit longer, still light eluded us. Moments gave way to days and days gave way to months and months to years, we waited still.

Darkness overwhelmed us. With the darkness came the cold. Plants withered under the onslaught of the dark and cold. The lush green forest turned into a dreary jungle of rotting trees. The Sun no longer rose behind the dark mountains. No longer did the birds chirp. Their symphony died and they died soon after, their lifeless bodies littering the city streets. The crimson, orange and yellow, golden and copper were gone.

The humans, however, survived. The municipality had been pretty helpful. Soon after the eclipse, at various

places in the city, the municipality erected enormous concrete pillars on tops of which were placed huge round electrical lights, which simulated the light of the Sun during the 'morning' hours. People called them mini suns, some others simply the suns. For us on the margins, however, they were light globs. The 'sunrise' and 'sunset' time was fixed by the municipality. At 'sunrise' the light globs would burn softly which would increase in intensity till noon and then die out at 'sunset'. Food started getting grown in green houses, of course, supported by electrical lights. And more and more modes of diversion started appearing in the city. The bright dazzling shops were a part of that project.

A masterstroke was the Sun parlour. People could enter one of these parlours, lie down on a couch with eyes closed. An electrical light would be switched on over their eyes and the people would feel the warmth over their faces and redness in front of their eyes, just as they would if the Sun had been there. They talked about how they felt that the Sun was present in the Sun parlours. "You and the Sun parlour would burn to cinders if the Sun had been really there," I would counter. I found it hard to understand why people preferred to go to the parlours when they could do it themselves at their homes, with the electric lights they had. "You need to visit a parlour to know the difference," people would tell me. "I prefer home," I would reply.

* * *

I trudged laboriously along the staircase of my building. The clack of my boots came back to me from the whole structure. My home was on the second floor. I reached the door. The flaking white paint greeted me as cheerfully as it could. I too was tired. Searching for the key in my coat pocket I turned it in the key hole. The locked groaned, I pushed the door softly, but the hinges resisted and then groaned. I ignored the protest and pushed a bit harder but stopped. I thought I heard soft footfalls behind me and some heavy breathing. I turned around, in the hazy glow of the dim light on the stairs, I could not see anybody. "Too tired, my mind is playing games, this wretched mind," I thought and turned around. Suddenly I felt a huge hand over my mouth. I gasped, but could not breathe. The hand was gradually choking me.

To be continued...