

A SHORT STORY

Bridging lives

- By JAYDEEP SARANGI

“Since the early 1990s, Microsoft operating systems and Intel hardware have dominated much of the personal computer market, first with MS-DOS and then with the "Wintel" (Windows + Intel) combination.” Titas quotes from Wikipedia, a favourite resource. She went on with her verbose presentation to popularise the use of modern technology in a new discourse over the phone. She is an expert of classroom technology and she believes that only through technology learners can be motivated to attend lectures. Applications, games and programmes for PCs are typically developed in order to match with the demands of time. She speaks for today's users who have access to a wide variety of commercial software and freeware. Generally, on sun days, most of the time she is on phone or video conference talking/chatting to prospective clients and colleagues.

Samudra, her husband is a poet who senses even small changes around him. They are happily married and they have a child, Nirban. Samudra is from Sudra caste and he subscribes to ‘Dalit Mirror’, a leading magazine and the mouthpiece of the voiceless community in Kolkata. He has attended a few Chuni Kotal Memorial lectures and contributed to the discourse. He has some poems and essays on mainstreaming the marginalised.

Samudra is not even aware of Microsoft Disk Operating System. He writes with his old fashioned pen and asks his busy wife to type for him. Titas has been constantly persuading him to familiarise himself with Programming languages so that he can be more accessible to his readers. Samudra goes by the wind of ideas. Blue sky is his favourite; green turf is his engagement for poetic frenzy. For him an artificial language is like junk food from roadside. Of late, he has been working for a volume to be released in a conference of writers in Midnapore. Some of poems have a personal and colourful account of the ‘forced marriage’ between the men and women who wield power.

It is a lazy Sunday afternoon. Titas is preoccupied with her usual weeklong preparation for audio-visual presentations. Nirban is with his pet laptop. He calls out, “Mother, see my facebook account has stopped sending friends requests.” Titas runs to her son hastily and sits beside him “Show me. Did you send friend requests to people you don’t know?” “This is not good.” “Mother, yes. I couldn’t resist sending a couple of requests.” “Your friend request will remain blocked for six days.” It is a protective measure from various types of cyber-crime.

Nirban is the proud owner of all the latest Play Station 4. He is a dedicated collector of the latest released video games and glibly narrates their features to his friends. He enjoys being the weekly donor of game-hours on his play-station to neighbouring children, though under his strict surveillance. For Titas video games are a boon to keep her child engaged during her study. “The games take care of him for hours! Or else he keeps nagging about ‘getting bored!’” However Samudra keeps urging his son, “Why don’t you play outdoor games and mingle more with your peers? They play out every afternoon. You will earn life giving relationships. It is healthy exercise too.” Such urges can hardly penetrate his mother’s firewall and reach Nirban lost in the mesmerising LCD screen!

“Titas, are you free? I need to type these poems for an anthology to be edited by Dr Jana. Can you help me?” “Is it for some digital journal? You should publish these poems on online journals where page navigation is easier and faster. We must embrace open-source technology, dear. Where are the poems? Show me.”

“No, dear. It is for a printed book, not for any online assignment.” She took the manuscript with a familiar sigh, “When will your tribe learn modern skills!”

“You are my best reader,

You are lovely from a distance

We quarrel when we huddle together in a small metro flat

Our history is witness

Our sweet bitter love!”

Titus stops. “What’s it all about, dear? Are we party in this poem? I’m so happy with you. Why do you write about fragile and fractured relationships? Sometimes I really fail to understand you. We are so close! Our Nirban is happy about his parents.”

This is more familiar to read from notepad or i-pad. She takes sometime to adjust her eyes. Then, starts reading the next stanza....

“You are cold for sometime, and untimely hot again.

And, you leave us.”

“My God! You are so depressed! How can it be? How can a man be depressed when everything is going good?”

“I think it is time to design a programming to decipher poems. Otherwise, it is going to make our readers pensive! What do you say?”

Samudra sits on the edge of the bed. He looks at the clock on the wall.

“Can feelings be regulated like a mechanised discourse? Poems are honest expressions of the mind.”

“What? That means you are sad at heart? Did I ever say anything wrong about you and your choice of being a poet? I married you when you when you had no bank account. Now things are other way round.”

“Poetry is an act of complete immersion in truth. It is an engagement that delights me to the supreme. Creativity is the happy outcome of a blessed state of mind. Did I ever tell you about my unhappiness? I’m yet to use aniPhone or aniPad. I rely on your sweet will.”

“I’m serious about your poems. If they origin from a joyous fountain they must make the readers happy. For your information, iPhone 5 has been launched and as they claim, ‘it includes advanced and updated networks such as HSPA, HSPA+ and DC-HSDPA. Browse, download and stream content at ultra-fast speeds.’ I’ll put my insights into that. Why can’t we *make* poems together?”

After a minute’s silence Samudra moves back and stands below a photo of their marriage. Titas directs Samudra’s attention towards the photo. “See, it is there since 2001. We look so happy in the photo. There is hardly any change over these years. Technology has contributed so much to our being together over these years!”

Samudra ,with vacant eyes feels as if he is in dream. His lifeless piercing eyes catch up some fissures.

Silence prevailed in the room

“My Titas is no longer my sweet lover whom I married some years ago. The machine has entered in her soul.” Samudra, with tears rolling from eyes, hugs Titas and says, “Please return my poems. I’ll not take part in the upcoming anthology.”

Titas returns the poems with a smile as if nothing has happened.

One can feel the old clock ticking fast in the midst of silence of the room.

About the Author:

Dr Jaydeep Sarangi is a bilingual writer, academic, editor, translator, academic administrator and the author of a number of significant publications .He is the **Vice President**, GIEWEC (head office at Kerala). He is one of the founder members and the Vice President of SPELL(Society for Poetry,Education,Literature and Language)in Kolkata. Dr Sarangi has delivered keynote address in several national and international seminar and conferences. His stories are featured in different journals and magazines of international repute in different continents. He has been invited as guest writer/critic in Australia, Poland, Italy, Germany and Canada. He reviews literature regularly.

Dr. Jaydeep Sarangi is Associate Professor, Deptt. of English at Jogesh Chandra Chaudhuri College (Calcutta University), 30,Prince Anwar Shah Road,Kolkata-700033,WB, India.

E mail: jaydeepsarangi@gmail.com