

COMPROMISE IS A PATH TO PROGRESS IN MODERN LIFE

A short story

By Aju Mukhopadhyay

Usually Digambar lives scot-free, without any involvement or entanglement in any affair. Smelling a rat sometimes he coughs up something in difficult situations. He is a peaceful man who does not interfere in others' affairs. He enjoys modern rowdy music but does not feel to take part in it. Violence he abhors but does not oppose. Borderline between immoral and moral is vague to him. A debonair, he is married too. No one officially interferes in his private affairs. His private affairs are managed tactfully.

Sometimes he feels grateful to his late father who knew that his son could not shine in any usual vocation with neither high education nor appetite for sports nor arts, without any sort of technical skill. The father felt himself responsible for his son's condition. He desired his son to be retained in the company he was employed which was a valuable nationalized entity. But there were hurdles too. Worries about his son's future killed him just a few months before his retirement. It became a very sympathetic case. With the help of his father's friends in the trade union, Digambar got the job wished by his father. Now he earns handsomely beyond his qualification; immensely better than the services many of his friends were doing with higher qualifications, many still remaining unemployed or underemployed.

Seeing her husband fidgeting and realising his mental state just after some hard talks with his cousins, Durga, his wife, coming closer hugged him with passion and said, "Do compromise with this affair also. Unless you donate this for Ritu Kaka your goodwill would be smashed against unsympathetic rocks. This sum of only 20000 rupees is nothing for you." Digambar remained indifferently silent. After sometime he turned to the opposite wall.

Silence brought back all the childhood memories of his visits with his parents to Jalpaiguri where Ritu Kaka, his uncle, was well paid, working in a supervisory capacity in Budapani Tea

Estate. They would enjoy living with his family which always welcomed them. He remembered running through rich tea gardens with green bushes on either side, with tea plucking damsels and birds; eating savories and drinking tasty tea, visiting the river with Rita, his cousin sister. He never forgot her like the river Tista. With a sigh he shuffled and shifted.

“But knowing full well that he’s in deathbed, what’s the use of taking him to a costly nursing home?”

“Oh! You almost said that. But won’t they try to save his life? He suffers from T.B. His family suffers from mal-nutrition due to irregular supply of money because of the falling conditions of all the tea gardens there for about two years. He does not get his salary after the recent final closure of the tea estate. They are still here and they expect and need you to come to their help!”

There was complete silence. He again shifted. Suddenly a girl’s face floated before his eyes who begged something from him but he avoided telling that he would give her the next day. “I won’t be here tomorrow,” she said standing before a huge pile of garbage spreading obnoxious odour.

Digambar always avoids such places but never complains to anyone for the existence of such accumulated garbage, compromising with the situation with a favourable idea that because of the existence of such piles the street urchins and perhaps a girl like her get chances of finding bits of loaf and remains of curry or a chewed bone to live on. But something was gnawing at his heart still as he remembered that he had never found that girl in that place again like the girl he had once been obsessed with. Digambar remembered how his affection for her was hurt when she was caught in a bus for stealing something from a lady’s vanity bag. She was only suspected, not caught red-handed. She was being taunted and harassed by some passengers. She wasn’t allowed to get down with benefit of doubt even when after sometime the victim of theft silently stepped down from the bus. Instead of helping her in her precarious situation Digambar got down to avoid any unforeseen situation. Little affection or subdued attraction does not matter much to him.

Irked a little with his wife's insistence but remembering the fact that his wife too is from the Jalpaiguri town and their family had very good relation with Ritu Kaka who they regularly helped, he finally agreed to give them more than that amount the next morning. A more potent fact was that Durga was the only child of her parents who owned a good landed property there. With a mixed feeling Digambar hugged his wife as a result of this compromise for quite some time in the bed until both slept.

Bio

Aju Mukhopadhyay, settled in Pondicherry, is a bilingual award winning poet, author and critic, writes fictions and essays too. He has authored 30 books and received several poetry awards from India and USA besides other honours. He has published two volumes of short stories some of which have been chosen for noted anthologies. He has contributed essays on literary and environmental subjects in more than 50 scholarly books. He is a member of the Research Board of Advisors of the American Biographical Institute and registered in the Who's Who of Sahitya Akademi, India. He is Vice President of the Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics. A member of many national literary and environmental institutions, he is also published as writer on animals, wildlife, Nature and Environment.

He has so far published seven books of poems in English besides two in Bangla. One more book of poems is ready for publication. Eight books contain critique on his poetry among others besides such critiques on his poetry and fiction scattered in several magazines. His poems may be broadly categorised in three groups: On Nature, poems with spiritual overtone and feelings and poems on social, political subjects, some of which may be categorised as rants. He is very subjective in his subtle feelings and expressions. He is known as one of the noted writers of Haiku and such genres of poetry from India. Such works by him has been published in many international magazines and ezines. His haiku has been specially chosen by some editors and awarded ranks on merits. Quite a few of his poems of the Japanese variety have been published in international anthologies and collections. He has his poems published in 16 anthologies which include two recent publications one of which is an Indo-Australian anthology of poems by three poets each from Indian and Australia, titled Poetic Conventions. He edited some literary

magazines in Bangla and is placed in the Editorial Board and Advisory Board of some literary journals for Indian English writing. As Guest Editor he edited <http://twenty20journal.com>, an American Ezine for its Indian Edition; Summer Issue No. 3, 2011.

Besides the awards many of his poetic works have been acclaimed and honoured like one of his poems remaining at the top of the list of poems in www.asianamericanpoetry.com from December 2007 for about three months and inclusion of his poem in the list of top ten recent poems by www.Poetsindia.com. Lucidity Poetry Journal from Sugar Land, USA has awarded him Certificate of Merit for his poem, “Structural Violence” in June 2011. The American Biographical Institute offered him the American Order of Merit.

Following are the books of poems published by him in English. The Witness Tree, In Celebration of Nature, The Paper Boat, Insect’s Nest and Other Poems, Aju Mukhopadhyay’s Poems on Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, Short Verse Vast Universe and Short Verse Delight. The last two are books of Haiku and Tanka with some essays on the subject of Japanese short verses.