

# RHYTHMS & RHYMES



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# RHYTHMS

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&

# RHYMES

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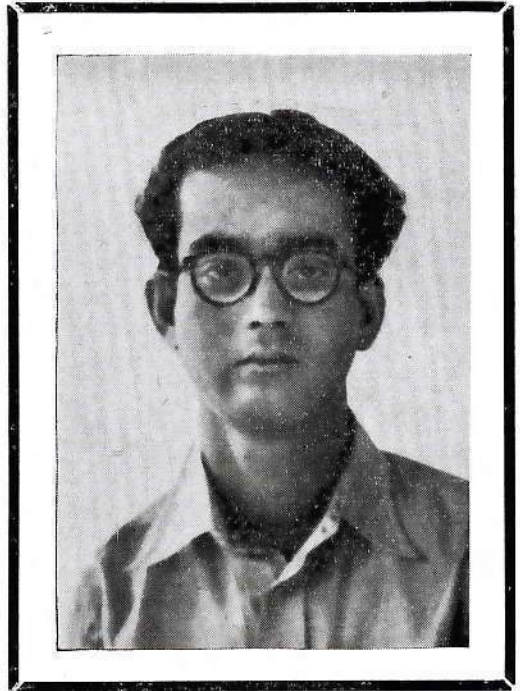
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*In*  
*Memoriam*

Niren Chatterjee



The 8th C.L.T. Festival opens on a very sad note. We have lost Niren Chatterjee, a pillar of strength to the C.L.T. organisation from the very year of its inception. Niroo, as he was affectionately called by his elders in the Governing Body and Nirooda by the younger and the children, passed away on Friday, the 27th November, three weeks before we were due to open this Festival. Niren was a sitting member of the Governing Body and his association with the organisation was that of a missionary for a cause—a cause for the children of this city and the State. It seems strange that we will never see him at the Festival Gate where he presided alone over many a fracas, dispute and trial between the authorities on the one hand and the turbulent elements amongst the visitors on the other hand. The C.L.T. organisation is built on personalities and as such the loss that it has sustained will be difficult to make up in the near future. Niren attended his last

Festival Committee Meeting on Sunday, the 8th November. He suddenly fell ill on Friday and after a fortnight's terrific suffering patiently borne he left his parents, young wife, a child, his only brother and his only sister and a host of friends in and around the dispensary, Saila Pharmacy in Rash Behari Avenue. Son of Dr. N. Chatterjee, a reputed physician in the city, and the only brother of Air Commodore Hiren Chatterjee of Indian Air Force, Niroo was friendly with the highest as also the poorest of the society. In talking of him we feel we speak of a part of ourselves. The C.L.T. will never never forget him. God bless his soul and may God bring peace to his parents and his family.

## *Editorial Notes*

### **Bombay Visit**

In October CLT went to Bombay—and of course it rained, just as it did in Delhi on our first visit in 1955! What Bombay thought of the three-day Festival, and an account of the visit are given on another page. This visit, successful as it was, showed nevertheless the unmistakable necessity of sending an advance party ahead of the main party of children and technicians. Very few organisers outside Calcutta and Delhi are aware of the tremendous impact on people in other places of a troupe of 65 children between the ages of 5 and 11 years, who can travel over a thousand miles and give performances for three days as if it was the most natural thing in the world. The billeting and comfort of these small children needs special attention, and an advance party could check these details, but their main object should be to give adequate publicity in the traditional manner of CLT. Gay cut-outs and hoardings are as much a necessity as newspaper insertions. Our friends in Bombay told us that on the day we left there were enquiries and entreaties from all over the city to hold the children back for a few more days. This, of course, was impossible, and we felt sorry that many who wished to could not see the Festival.



Fun in Bombay

Obviously public relations on such a tour must in future be handled by CLT's own executives.

### **Flood Relief**

CLT did its little bit in raising funds for the flood-stricken people of West Bengal. Three groups went out for a couple of hours one Sunday and collected Rs. 501, which they handed over the Chief Minister at his residence. Dr.



Roy's face was all smiles as he talked to them and told them how useful the money would be. It was only a token effort and no doubt more could have been collected, but we could not expect more of the children. Wherever they went people not only filled their collection boxes, but treated them to sweets also. It was a pleasing indication of the love of the citizens for CLT.

### **West Bengal State Centre**

The West Bengal State Centre is making good progress, and we have now in this Centre another creative artist in our old friend, Sm. Manjulika Roychoudhury. The main object of the West Bengal State Centre is to propagate the movement in the Districts, but this can only be done when we have more trained teachers.

### **Teachers' Training Course**

Our second Teachers' Training Course will start in January, and it is hoped that the district schools will send representatives to this course so that they can develop the talents of their teachers. The last date for applications for this course is 5th January, 1960.

### **Children's Day**

Universal Children's Day was observed with a function at the Training Centre, and a further effort was made to collect more money and clothes for flood relief. The children recited, danced and played on the CLT terrace and entertained themselves and parents and senior members. The singing group of older girls at the CLT is making excellent progress and their songs were very well rendered. The CLT offered its felicitations to the Prime Minister and wished him many more useful years in the service of the country. A fancy dress competition added a lively touch to the function and at its conclusion

Sri U. N. Sur, one of CLT's Vice Presidents, showed the children some interesting coloured slides of Italy and Yugoslavia.

### **CLT Library**

The CLT Library, which was opened in September is growing fast. Consulates and Embassies have kindly donated books, and further contributions are coming in steadily from the children and from senior members. The Library is intended to serve a twofold purpose, as a reference library for teachers and students, and as a reading room for the children. Two of our original Training Centre members, Beera Sen Gupta and Leela Sur have promised to act as librarians, to keep the library in order and to catalogue the books, and we are very happy that they can help us in this way. We are budgetting for the purchase of more technical books, but should be most grateful if those with such books in their possession could present them to CLT. We ask those who have passed out of junior membership on account of their age to ransack their shelves and turn out old story books for the children's reading room.

### **A Visitor from Ahmedabad**

Srimati Leena Behn visited our Centre in November and studied our work with great interest. She was able to give us information on the activities of the Children's Theatre movement in Ahmedabad, where in addition to a juvenile theatre, puppet shows have been developed by the children with the help of adult artists. We were happy to meet Leena Behn and she has promised to keep in touch with us and to exchange information and ideas. We hope that a troupe of children from Ahmedabad will one day be able to visit Calcutta and join in our Festival.

## As They Grow Up

Year after year we are faced with the difficulty of having to tell trainees who have reached 12 years of age that they must leave the Training Centre. It is heart-rending to tell them to go just when they have blossomed into finished artists, for the schools do not make full use of their talents, and the children miss the colourful classrooms of CLT. So we have been looking for some place for them in the organisation and have now decided to open both singing and music sections for the older children, so that they can play a role as playbacks or in the orchestra, or as commentators. In addition we can use them to help in making costumes and decor. We do not believe that young children can be given the entire run in technical matters associated with theatre production, but as our children grow up they can take up such responsibilities, and our costume designers can, we believe, make use of them.

## CLT on the Air

Friends often enquire why CLT programmes do not go on the air from Calcutta. It is a pertinent enquiry. CLT

ballets have gone on the air in Bombay and Delhi, and in the past also in Calcutta, but in recent years A.I.R. Calcutta, have pleaded lack of funds for such items. But it costs time and money to rehearse a programme for the radio, and the bare expenses of the technicians must be paid, and CLT can hardly be expected to meet these, when other radio items are paid for. It is a pity, but what can be done? At Delhi Broadcasting House raised a special pandal for CLT ballet, "PICNIC, in 1957, and MITHUA was broadcast on the External Service day after day as a prestige programme.

## CLT Executives

We are glad to welcome our Editor, Sm. M. Sur, back from England, and our versatile Sisir Basu, whose tireless efforts have been sadly missed by the CLT organisation in the last two years he has been away.

We are continuing in this issue our policy of introducing some of the 'people behind the scenes' to our many readers. This time we give sketches of our Vice Presidents, and the President of the Bengal State Branch of CLT.

Presenting  
a cheque for  
Flood Relief to  
Dr. B. C. Roy







Sm. Mangaldas with  
helpers in the  
Puppet Show



Colourful  
Saurashtra



Scene  
from  
"Pied  
Piper"



# The Place of Drama in Shreyas

Leena Mangaldas  
and  
Frenyben Desai

*Shreyas is a co-educational, cosmopolitan educational institution in Ahmedabad, which gives as much importance to music, drama, dance and fine arts as to academic subjects right through from the Montessori classes to the College.*

The desire to act is very strong in most of us and it is not surprising to find that Drama in its many and varied forms has played a significant part in the lives of all peoples at different stages of civilization.

In recent years there has been a growing awareness of the educational value of drama. We in Shreyas have experienced during the 12 years of our work that no medium gives as much scope for creative expression as does drama, which includes music, dance, puppetry and other allied arts. "Acting and all its allied branches is an art which can help to build human beings into something better and more understanding than they are by nature—to build them into sensitive creatures able to feel the sorrows and joys of others as their own", and what loftier aim can we as educationists have than this?

So, music, dancing, arts, crafts, are an integral and important part of our curriculum. We see that all these branches of art become mediums of expression for our students. To move with grace, to appreciate the beauty of line and colour, to enjoy good music, to speak well, to express one's thoughts and emotions through dance and drama are all necessary for the growth of the all-round development of a child's personality.

In our morning assemblies, individuals or groups of students, read extracts from literature, dance, sing or play the musical instruments, before the rest of us. They do this not with any elaborate preparation or any feeling of performing before an audience, but as a part of their daily work, which they enjoy themselves.

Besides these assemblies, seasonal and social festivals also play an important role in our communal life and provide opportunities for observing these festivals, with all the traditional rituals, colour and solemnity associated with them. All the merry-making and colour of Holi, all the beauty and bounty of Vasant-Panchami, the lights and the kite festival and the festival of rainy season in August have their legitimate place in the social life of the school. These functions in which children move and perform with grace, poise, dignity and spontaneity, prepare them in the natural course of events for more practical and polished performances.

The next step in this preparation, is the "Shreyas Mela" which is held every alternate year. This Mela includes an educational exhibition based on the main project of the year and also includes performances of puppet-shows, shadow-plays, ballets and dramatic episodes relevant to the project. One such show was a shadow-

play which dealt with a story by Shri Chandravadan Mehta. Across a smooth glass screen moved beautifully coloured shadows of creatures. Every movement of theirs was in tune to the appropriate music and songs. The story was about an old ant who wants to go to Heaven and who is followed by two frogs, a fox, a lion and an elephant. All these creatures big and small were children of the ages of 4 to 11 and wore flat coloured masks and moved across the screen. This fantasy was enjoyed as much by the spectators as by the performers.

When India and the entire world celebrated Buddha Jayanti in 1957, Shreyas took up a project on Buddha and the countries of Buddhism. Apart from the exhibition section dealing with the countries of Buddhism, their manners, art and culture, there was a procession of students clad in the yellow and ochre robes of Buddhist monks, which passed through the grounds chanting Buddhist slokas and beating the drum. These monks were followed by other students dressed as Tibetans, Chinese, Japanese, Burmese and Indonesians. Thus the students dressed and moved about and for the time being led the lives of the people of other Buddhist countries. Though this is different from performing on the stage, it has a tremendous educational value and provides a great experience to the students in projecting themselves into the lives of other people, with different manners and customs than their own. At the same time, on the stage also was depicted the splendour and grandeur of the court of Prince Siddarth, the pomp and rejoicing at his marriage feast, the pathos and solemnity of his great renunciation. With the vigour and vivacity of a Kathakkali dance, Mar tempts the Buddha away from the path of righteousness, but the curtain comes down on the defeat of Mar and the

triumph of the Buddha—the triumph of light over darkness.

These performances are not isolated stage-performances to delight audiences. They are a part of the educational activity of the year and the emphasis is on the planning and study involved, the joy of making and living and not on achievement in terms of a performance put up for the benefit of the spectators.

A special mention must be made of one such performance "The Circus". This was nearer a pantomime than a play. From the ring-master in top-hat and tail-coat and the clowns with their antics to the elephants, horses and monkeys, and dancing girls, all were enacted by students themselves. Every act on the circus arena was a spontaneous act especially on the part of the clowns. With hardly a word to be uttered, the circus kept spectators spellbound and roaring with laughter. It was really creative work in its truest sense and it gave plenty of scope for free expression and emotional outlet. A rather dull and backward boy selected to be one of the clowns, became a changed boy at the end of the circus. All his inferiority complex, his backwardness had vanished and he became a happy, normal child.

However the highlights of our dramatic activity are our drama festivals, held every alternate year. Drama, however, does not mean just the selecting and performing of plays. Plays are written and published by Shreyas. Drama in Shreyas covers a wide and varied range of activities. It begins with talks, pictures and study, of themes selected e.g., when we performed "Vadlo"—the story of an aged Banyan tree—it included lessons in nature study. The students found out and learnt how a storm gathers, what colours are there in the sky at dawn and at eventide. They studied the life and the habits of different plants and birds that come to



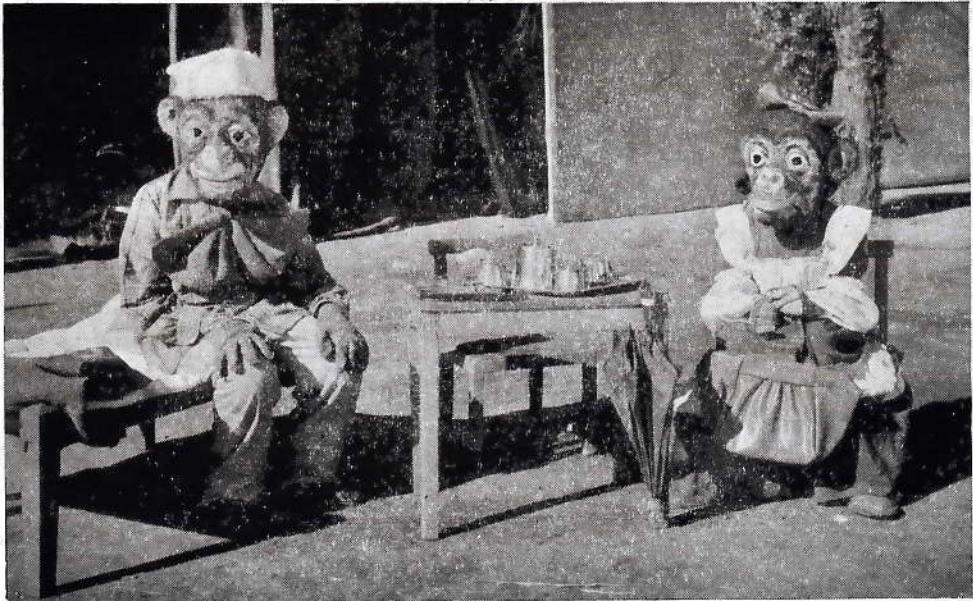
life in the story Shreyas made on a successful production of Maeterlinek's seven-act play of the "Blue Bird". Similarly when we acted an episode taken from the original Valmiki's Ramayana and Vyas's Mahabharata, they involved a study of the customs, manners, costumes, weapons and other articles of daily use, in those bygone days. Ravindra Katha—poems by Ravindranath Tagore were presented on the stage along with Gujarati poets like Nanalal, Kalpi and Dalpatram and age old ballads. Thus the appreciation and study of poetry was made through drama. Also our aim is to see that through the dramas we perform the students learn and live the life of different peoples in our own and other countries, in the present and other times and in this way come nearer to understanding and appreciating the other man's way of life and point of view. "To go through the strange experience of exploring in his own person, the life of another human being, expressing that life in the movement of his body, with his own lips and tongue and some-

times with his own words, seems to provide a child with necessary human experiences helping him to grow up and be receptive to art in all its forms".

Another advantage that we have is that the little ones of 3 in our infant, department upto students of 16 and more in our college section all together take part in these drama festivals, with the result that qualities like team-spirit, co-operation, helpfulness and consideration for others are developed.

When we staged "Pied Piper" in English, the cast consisted of about a 100 students, in which the little ones of 3 and 4 enjoyed themselves being rats and mice, eating the food and frightening the people, while a little older children aged 7 to 10, were the children who danced and clapped and followed the piper to the land beyond the mountains, while the older students and even some members of the staff took the parts of the greedy Mayor and his wife, the Councillors and the town-dwellers.

A word must be said about our stage.



Chimpanzee  
Tea party  
From  
Shreyas  
Circus



All our plays are performed on the open-air stage. There are no curtains. Perhaps our greatest achievement in the use of the open-air stage was our performance of "The Life of Christ" in April 1958. On this stage, 80' in length and 28½' wide, two raised platforms of 12' and 15', the entire life of Christ was presented by a cast of more than 200. Treading a stage that in itself was a technical miracle, dressed in costumes eloquent of the barbaric splendour of those times, we tried to recreate the profoundly moving story that began in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. The crowning success was the intense participation of the audience in the drama which was unfolded before their eyes. When at last it ended darkness descended on the stage and the pin-drop silence that reigned was a tribute to an intensely moving and sincere performance. A little boy of about 7 whose father acted the part of Judas, went to him and said "Oh! father, why did you betray such a good man"!

The same open-air stage was converted into colourful Saurashtra in April, 1959. On the stage was depicted the life of an Ahir family and the village folk with their colourful dresses, their rituals, their daily chores bhajans, songs and dances. Stirring incidents from the history of Saurashtra, from 1100 to 1500 A.D. were staged.

On all these occasions when we observe our dramatic festivals, though for some a part in the play is most important, there are others who are more interested in designing the scenery or making the costumes and the properties. Others still enjoy wiring the lighting sets, directing sound effects or choosing and arranging the incidental music. There are a thousand and one things to be done when

the play is on. There are many who work behind the curtains in the make-up room and many who work in the office making plans and arranging for the sale of tickets or working in the poster department, painting posters to announce the show. There is scope and plenty of work for every one for the making and presenting of a play depends for its success on the team-work, collaboration and sincere effort on the part of every individual in the institution.

Parents, friends, neighbours, all come to help us. Months before the performance charts are drawn up for the costumes, jewellery and make-up of every character. Books and pictures are referred to and most of the costumes are improvised, from material available at home or in our "costume and property room". All the properties from stage sets to masks and hats, umbrellas, thrones are made by the students in the art department, under instructions from specially qualified teachers. A band of students are also trained to work in the green-room. One applies the base, the other powder, the third paints the eyebrows and the fourth the lips. A character has to pass on from one stool to another in the make-up room, till he walks out of the room completely made-up.

Thus our dramas are a training for life. The performance is of secondary importance. The students learn to be helpful, self-reliant, steady and methodical in all their work. They learn to pay attention to the tiniest detail and consider no part or duty too inferior or below their dignity. They learn early and well,

"Honour and shame from no condition  
rise,  
Act well your part—there all the  
honour lies".



Letter  
from  
Mithua  
to  
Mini



DEAR MINI,

We did it this time! Samarda tried all these years to take us to Bombay and we did it this autumn. Our host was BOMBAY DURGABARI SAMITY, and we packed our little suitcases and hold-alls on the 9th October morning. At 4 p.m. we turned up at the Howrah Station. Ooops! We were 110 strong! Just think, 65 of us children of the performing and vocal group and there were musicians, Tapasda's men and our loving Madanda as well. We were divided into colours and Subhasda' and Sureshda' and others put us into our compartments. The Bombay Mail left Howrah just on time. Oh! It was very, very exciting for us. I could hardly sit still. There was a lovely moon. I tried to look through the window for some time. We sang, we told each other stories, and then—I don't know when—we were all sleeping. You know, Mini, the morning was equally exciting. We saw hills and dales, beautiful rivers and jungles—and what jungle! You could not see through it. Ma told

me when she came to see us off that there would be many things to see. I felt sad that Ma could not see these with me. We saw many strange places and people with fancy dresses. Monoda said that these were not fancy dresses. The people of our country wore many kinds of dresses and spoke many kinds of languages. The sight of Bhilai Steel plants thrilled us. And do you know Mini, every new station was a new find for me. The little Ghantiwalla sounding the bell for the big train to start—an old man waving the green flag for us to go. They looked quite different from the station people we know in our own State.

Passing through Raipur and Bilaspur we arrived at Nagpur in the evening. Many friends met us at the Station. Our old dining car men left and new people with new uniforms came in their places. We had travelled for 24 hours. Believe me, Mini, we did not feel in the least tired. All the time we were singing or reading story books.



Next morning when we woke up it was drizzling. The hills of the Western Ghats were covered with clouds. We missed the sunshine when we stepped from the train at Dadar Railway Station, for it was still raining. You should have seen our luggage, Mini! Oh heaps and heaps of them. Our elders sorted these out and we proceeded to the B.E.S. School. There were people to meet us at the station and we learnt that the Pandal was all mud and water. We chanted the old CLT rhyme "Wherever you go—Rain will follow!" Samarda' said "Don't worry. There is a Sun behind the Cloud." But Mini, it looked as if there was no Sun. First thing that struck us at Bombay was the double decker trams. They looked funny.

B.E.S. School was our home for the week. We made the best of it. Here we learnt how to make ourselves comfortable even under most adverse conditions. You know, it was like living in a Station Platform for seven days. On the 12th we were to put up JIJO. So we set about rehearsing it well. We were itching to get on the stage and this we did on the 12th evening. The pandal was huge but rain kept many friends away. And Mini, they did not keep the front for our friends, the children. There were only Uncles and Aunties. Did we please them, Mini? Of course we did. Look what the papers said the next morning! *Times of India* said 'Magnificent', *Indian Express* said 'Never seen like this before' and the Urdu and the Mahrashtrian and the Guj-rati papers said a lot of good things about us although we could not read these. Even our Dadas failed to translate these. The Bombay streets and fields were very wet even on the next morning and when on the 13th we played ABAN PATUA our playbacks were using the JIJO hats to prevent dripping rain water soaking them. Rinkudi' showed the way

and we laughed when even Samarda put a straw hat on his head.

Yes, Mini, it was quite exciting to do things in Bombay but we missed the friendly volunteers of our Calcutta Festivals. Here everyone seemed to be very grave and very important. But the little mike man was very friendly. He enjoyed our dances, clapped and sang. There were of course Ramenda' and Sankarda' and our old CLT chum Anjanava who, you know, played Mowgli a few years back in MOWGLI STORY. There were our friends of Monimela who came daily to the Schools to help us. They were with us when we went shopping. Most of us got Rs. 10/- or Rs. 5/- from our parents as pocket money and little Dalia—a six year old chum—did all the shopping by herself.

We went sight seeing on the 14th. Just think Mini, 100 of us going on a picnic to Aarey Milk Colony, Tulsa Lake, Juhu Beach etc. It was wonderful to play and run in the Milk Colony Garden. We had nice little milk-shakes and our lunch at the Milk Colony Lunch site. But Mini! Tulsa lake was our undoing. Lots of us could not stand the bus ride through hill roads and Samarda ordered us home! We were sad—we could not go to Juhu. But we did go on the next day. Monoda, Sadhanda' and others took us to Gateway of India and all other places around Marine Drive. Imagine we saw hilsa fish in the aquarium. I mean live hilsha fish. Have you seen one? There was also the Shoe House in Kamla Nehru Park. We loved the blue Sea and the millions and millions of waves.

Next day we presented MITHUA. There was a large gathering and Mini, this time we had our little friends in the front row! The old Mayor was also there. They could not believe that we could play so well! And there was no rain. The compound was dry and we run and played around the Cross Maidan.

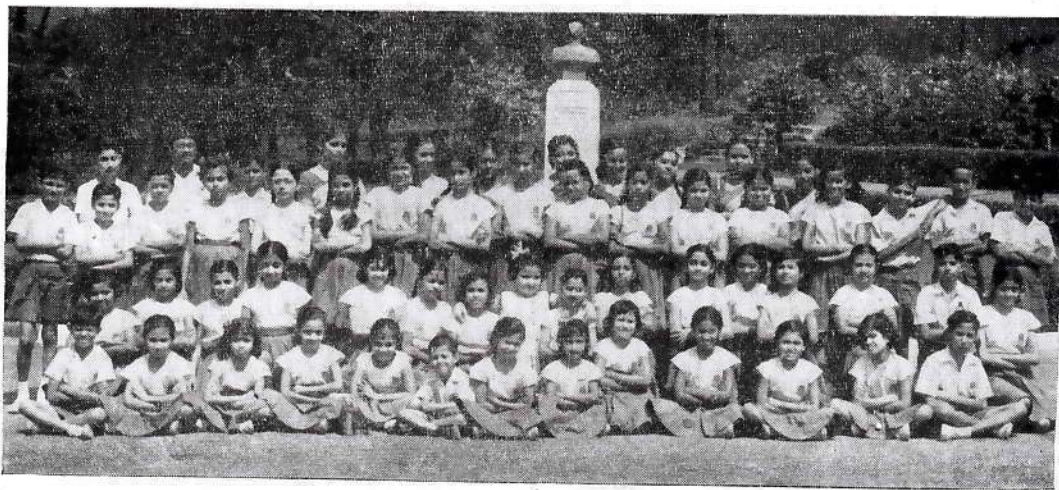




The Chief Minister attends the Bombay Festival.



CLT Vocalists in Bombay



CLT Troupe in Bombay.





Racing  
at the  
Milk Colony

The place was beautiful with lovely old houses. The Chief Minister came to our show when we repeated ABAN PATUA although everyone wanted us to repeat JIJO or MITHUA.

The Chief Minister was very pleased with the show. On this day the Auditorium was full and we did our very best. So many people came to say how much they enjoyed it.

But one thing, Mini. As I said before, there were few of our own age. Bombay people said that our friends were all doing their annual examinations and naturally they could not come. And so we finished our Bombay trip. There were many requests for us to stay but we couldn't. We left the Cross Maidan for the last time and said good-bye to many friends we had made there. Back at the school we tidied up things for the morrow. Punctually at 3-30 p.m. we came to Victoria Terminus and waited for the

train to steam into the platform. Our luggages were heavier as we had many things more in the suitecases. Little presents for Ma and Baba and for our little sisters and brothers. Our Uncles and aunties had also purchased lots of lots of shoes and bags and what nots.

Many people came to see us off. We bade them adieu as the train left the platform. We had done it, Mini. Bombay now knows CLT well. Those who saw us perform will remember us for some time.

And next time, Mini, you must accompany us. It's a pity we have never travelled together. When you go to Delhi, I am at home and when I go to Bombay, you are at home. Isn't this sad? Next year when we go to Madras and Bangalore and Cuttaek you and I must travel together. Lots of love,

Yours,  
MITHU.



# Vice Presidents



## Tara Sirkar

It was in 1952 that Samar Chatterjee went to see 'Auntie Tara' at All India Radio, and told her of his plans and hopes of building up an organisation which could provide rhythm and rhymes for children. Auntie Tara was enthusiastic, and soon there was a get-together with a number of others who also wanted to do something for the children, and thus CLT came into being. Auntie Tara had long been connected with All India Radio and was known to all child listeners as Auntie Tara.

Auntie Tara was the first editor of RHYTHMS AND RHYMES. She complained that she had no experience of editing, but she had done plenty of writing for children, and she made a fine job of our Journal. Some of her stories and plays have been reproduced in our Journal. She is a busy person with many other activities, most of them connected with children and young people. For some years she was President of the Calcutta YWCA, and she was also State Commissioner for Guides. It is therefore very appropriate that she should be one of the Vice-Presidents of CLT.

## Dr. Bibek Sen Gupta

CLT is really fortunate that busy men from all walks of life are willing to spare some of their precious time to help forward the cause of children's theatre. Among the outstanding citizens of Calcutta who could be busier than Dr. Bibek Sen Gupta, surgeon and specialist in gynaecology? He is Deputy Director of the well-known hospital, Chittaranjan Seva Sadhan, Member of the University Senate, Member of the Board of Faculty of Medicine and the Board of Undergraduate Medical Studies—to mention only a few of his many functions. Trained in Germany, he has a wide background and many contacts overseas as well as here. Yet with all the many calls on his time, he manages to put in much active work for CLT.

If you ask how he came to be associated with CLT, the answer is that he has a natural interest in the welfare of children, since he has helped to bring so many into the world! Ever since his family was drawn within the orbit of CLT in its earliest days, when his daughters, Esha and Beera, played in CLT features, both Dr. Sen Gupta and his wife, Anjali, have been keen supporters and helpers behind the scenes in their quiet and effective way.





### **Sookamal Kanti Ghose**

CLT's association with the press in Calcutta has always been on a friendly footing, and one of its earliest friendships was with Sookamal Kanti Ghose, Director of Amrita Bazar Patrika and Jugantar. Newspapermen are supposed to be hard-bitten realists, but Sookamal Babu promptly lost his heart to CLT at its earliest Festival and has been an ardent supporter ever since. He became one of its Vice-Presidents, and this year, when the new Bengal State Centre was formed, CLT was delighted that he agreed to become its first President.

Sookamal Kanti Ghose started his career in the newspaper world as soon as he graduated from Scottish Church College, and his love for journalism has never wavered. He is also connected with the publication of books and the distribution of foreign magazines. He takes interest in art, music, dance, theatre, sports, and scout activities, and all these interests seem to merge in CLT, for above all he is keen on the welfare of children. He has travelled extensively abroad, helping to build up close relationships with countries in Europe and with the U.S.A. and Japan. And always when he comes back from such visits, he tells us that he can find nothing like CLT anywhere else in the world!

### **Upendra Nath Sur**

CLT likes to make the parents work! Upen Sur's first introducing to CLT was as a weary parent waiting through long rehearsals of the original production of ABAN PATUA, in which his daughter, Leela, was playing Champ. She was only 6 years old then, and he expressed grave doubts as to whether she could manage such a part, but he found CLT was not only ambitious, but always confident that they could get the best out of the children. Far from becoming bored, this parent got more and more interested in CLT and the fine results it was achieving among our children, and both he and Mary Sur were soon drawn in as workers behind the scenes. Upen Sur as a qualified accountant was pounced upon to help on the tiresome but so necessary financial side, and was successively Auditor and Treasurer of CLT. His unofficial job for CLT seemed to be bus driver, for he was usually found after rehearsals and performances taking home a great crowd of children in his car and coming back for more!

Being Vice-President is not regarded purely as a sinecure in CLT. Upen Sur is permanent chairman of the Festival Committee, which means attending weekly meetings for two months before the Festival. He is always found in the office or the auditorium on every single evening of the Festival, and he is always available to do odd jobs or to give advice.





# Changes in CLT Constitution

Constitutions are rather dull documents, but we think it is important that you should know about certain changes in the CLT Constitution, which we outline briefly below.

## Membership

In future Cultural Members will be known as ASSOCIATE MEMBERS (Art. V. 3). A new class of JUNIOR MEMBERS has been started for our Trainees on completion of 12 years of age, so that we shall not lose touch with them. The monthly fee for Junior Members is Re. 1/- (Art. V. 9). All Membership Fees are now payable within September, instead of April. (Art. VI) Admission Fees : Senior Members Rs. 50/-.

Associate Members Rs. 10/-.

## Office Bearers

The term of office for Office Bearers has been extended from 2 to 3 years. (Art. VII. 2), and a new post of Hony. Assistant Treasurer has been created.

## Committees

The Music Committee and the Art Committee have now been merged into one standing committee under the designation of Training Centre Committee, under the supervision of the Governing Body. It was found in practice that the work of the two committees overlapped and that a single committee would be more practical. The duties of the Training Centre Committee will be mainly twofold, i.e. experimental research, and production, which will be conducted separately.

A new standing committee under the Governing Body has been formed in the Finance Committee, which will scrutinise

all budgets and give expert opinion and advice on all important financial issues.

## Branches

State Branches have now been renamed State Centres. The *West Bengal State Centre* has been formed and is affiliated to the CLT, India.

## Finances

Audited statement of accounts will in future be adopted annually in place of alternate years. (Art. X 1b.) The General Council has been given the power to create a Trust Body to take charge of properties, lands and buildings of the CLT (Art. VII. 1). This is a necessary measure in view of the developments which are envisaged for CLT and the increasing value of its properties.



*Message from President, West Bengal  
State Centre of CLT.*

You have once more gathered to enjoy the gay, colourful, innocent and invigorating annual function of the Children's Little Theatre. I welcome you all!

Today I am addressing you as the President of the West Bengal State Centre of CLT, but, like many of you, I have been enjoying this Festival since its inception. I love children—who does not! So we all want our CLT to prosper. Watching its steady progress, I am convinced that this institution has come to stay, for it has a very definite objective and mission to fulfil. It is an institution which perhaps is the only one of its kind in the world, capable of binding the family tie and offering wholesome entertainment to the whole family. Have we heard of any similar organisation either here or abroad fulfilling the great need of helping the children to inspiration and to self realisation?

Business has taken me to various countries a number of times; did I see anywhere a similar institution? I would emphatically say 'No!' Studying the reaction of the children and the elders in the auditorium year after year, do we not realise what great impact it would make if we could send our team overseas? Our children would win all hearts in no time, and would earn the well cherished goodwill and lasting friendship of other countries, which perhaps no other programme could do. I recall with pleasure and pride what Mr. Julian Huxley said when witnessing one of our shows. He said without a second thought that UNESCO should study the conception and presentation of CLT and should take shows like this to other lands.

Governments and various other organisations in different countries often invite troupes to their country for the sake of amity and friendship. I wonder why it did not occur to them to invite CLT, who would not only endear themselves to the people of the land, but would reach the families through their own children, making the foundation of friendship far deeper and more lasting. Should we not do something so that our children and their children come closer, so that peace and goodwill will have a better chance to exist in the next generation?

It is a pity that again stern reality has taken me away to other lands and I shall not be able to meet you, my children and you, my colleagues and friends at the Festival. I realise how much you will be enjoying yourselves, and that it is I who will be missing you. How sorry I am not to share in your happiness. I wish the Festival all success. You have won over Calcutta, Delhi and Bombay. God willing, you would some day win the world!

*Sookamal Kanti Ghose*





# The Mirror of Public Opinion

It is certainly hard to please everybody! This is the first thought that occurs when reading the reviews of the performances given recently in Bombay by the Children's Little Theatre of Calcutta. "Ninety minutes of magnificent fare" was how the Dance Critic of *Times of India* summed it up, and reports in *Indian Express*, *Sunday Standard* and some of the regional language papers were also enthusiastic, yet Nyan in *Free Press Journal* could write: "It was monotonous and commonplace in the extreme."

After the CLT's May show in Calcutta, the *Statesman* critic complained that CLT, being now established, was becoming too sophisticated, yet Nyan saw CLT as "an over-estimated group of untutored children", and bade CLT "cease to fight shy of sophistication—the breath of all art." On the other hand the Drama Critic of *Times of India* complained that the children were "almost drowned under a welter of quite unnecessarily elaborate production technique", and declared that children should be trained "to appreciate the need for uncluttered simplicity."

This is all rather bewildering, and CLT might very well say "a plague of both your houses" and go its own way, being guided by the appreciation of its child audiences, leaving the adults to the mood of the moment, sometimes carping, sometimes sympathetic. However, CLT is not just a vast organisation for entertainment, but has as its main aims the education of the young to appreciate music, art and drama; the development of physical and emotional poise through rhythm; and character-building through co-operation. In eight years CLT has grown up; it can

afford to laugh at exaggerated criticism, but it should not be afraid to study its face in the mirror of public opinion and learn lessons from what it sees there. So let us consider some of the points raised.

Most people feel that a CLT show would lose much of its charm if one could no longer enjoy what the Dance Critic of *Times of India* describes as "the many unrehearsed and unscripted little smiles that suddenly blossom on the kids' faces." The dictionary definition of sophistication is "depriving of simplicity" but we do not want that. The idea of sophisticated children is repugnant. Rather we want to help them to develop their own natural forms of self-expression without becoming artificial. We can safely quarrel with anyone who declares that sophistication is the breath of all art—certainly in so far as it applies to children's theatre.

We do not want to make of CLT a professional school of drama or dancing. We want it to find out above all what appeals to the children and develop their appreciation in that way. What the children of yesterday liked does not necessarily appeal to the children of today. What our children love today at the Festival may not appeal to the children of tomorrow. Our work must be experimental, a testing and a training ground. We are not really concerned with what the grown-ups like, or with adult standards of theatre, but we think that those who are still young in heart will be able to appreciate what the children like, and we ask for no more. Those who want more, who ask for sophistication from children, who measure results by adult standards, should not come to a CLT Festival, for it has nothing to give them.

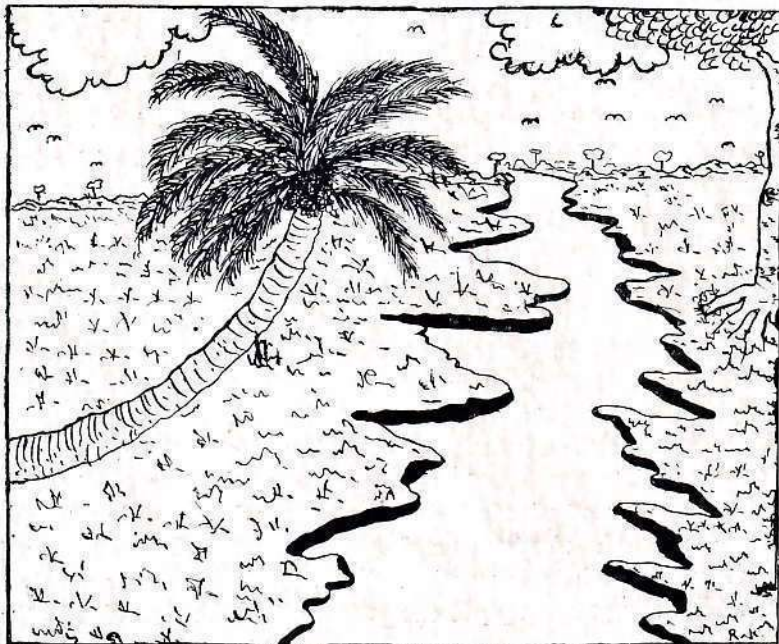
All organisations reach a stage of development, when teething troubles are over and they settle down as recognised institutions. This is often a danger point, for once established an institution may rest

on its laurels, or even slip back. At this stage it needs above all new blood, new enthusiasm, new ideas, but it must not throw over what was good and sound in its previous practice. It has often to make a delicate choice between the old and the new, after searching analysis of its aims and methods. It is too easy to run along in the accepted groove. CLT is very much aware of this danger. It does not want to lose its original spontaneity.

CLT has always been proud of its production technique, of the work that is done so quietly by the adults behind the scenes, the wonderful jungle effects of *Mowgli Story*, the superb lighting effects of *Jijo*, the magnificent costumes of *Aban Patua*, and the clever make-up of *Mithua*. Have we overdone it? Have we "almost drowned" our little performers under a welter of elaborate production technique? It is true that modern dramatic art spurns the use of too much scenery and too many stage properties, and turns back to the simplicity of the Shakespearian stage, but children like their story books

to have coloured pictures, and we think a children's festival should also be highly coloured and produce scenes which might have come out of a storybook. What is essential is that the art forms and colour used should be such as to help develop the children's sense of colour and form. Later they will learn to discard the frills and get down to fundamentals, but in the early stages you must nourish the eye as well as the ear. Prose and the abstract beauty of verse and form must come later. We must start with nursery rhymes and bright colours, for we must remember that CLT is an organisation for the under 12 age group, and indeed most of its performers are under 10.

What we must do is to avoid at all costs the tinsel gaudiness which is, alas, fed to the young so often through the films. Our colours must be pure and bright. But we agree that we must not forget, even at this early stage, the value of simplicity, a virtue which, with all its visual appeal, is usually lacking in the film cartoon. To this extent we can agree with our critic.





## CLT Introduces "The Puppets"

On a summer evening in 1952 an artist and three boys and girls were manipulating a few wooden Kalighat dolls with strings tied to their heads, against a backdrop of a bed sheet. The manipulators were struck with the amazing possibilities of the medium and began to study various techniques. Thus was born "The Puppets", a club for puppetry. Endless trials and experiments followed in the next few months. The wooden dolls gave way to dolls made of straw and later of wood pulp.

After further experimentation it was found that hand puppets, manipulated from below, provided a far greater pliancy of movement, more effective animation and

greater freedom of expression. The Club felt that in hand puppets they had found a suitable medium for the development of a form of art more suitable for the scientific age in which we live.

Members of "The Puppets" are all students, boys and girls who collectively provide the diverse types of talent needed to make a well-balanced team of puppeteers, artists to make dolls and paint scenes; tailors to make costumes; carpen-



ters to make articles of wood; actors, singers and musicians to provide dialogue and music; manipulators to breathe life into the puppets; and above all a producer to co-ordinate the activities of all these people.

Puppets look at the world from a peculiar eye-slant. It is the endeavour of "The Puppets" to turn the chastising influence of humour on social life, and at the same time to provide a form of entertainment specially suitable for children, for whom the elfin world of puppets has a special appeal.



# An Open Air Theatre in Yugoslavia

M. SUR.

It was midsummer at the Yugoslav holiday resort of Dubrovnik on the shores of the Adriatic Sea, and the annual Summer Festival was in full swing. Every evening there was entertainment under the stars: opera in an open air theatre in one of the high squares of the old walled city; Shakespeare plays in an improvised theatre in a corner fort of the mediaeval battlements; and tonight a gala performance of national dances in the public garden on the slopes of the newer town.

The folk dances of Yugoslavia are varied, colourful and delightful, and the costumes are exquisite, but it is not of them that I wish to write now, for the layout of this temporary open air theatre intrigued me. We were seated on long benches with only a wooden backrest, but all the rows were tiered so that everyone had an excellent view. The auditorium was extremely wide; each row had seating capacity for 50-60 people so that 25 rows could accommodate an audience of 1500. The whole theatre was open to the sky.

The stage consisted merely of a large square dance floor, only slightly raised from the ground and illuminated by arc lights. Behind and around the stage was natural woodland, with a slight clearing in the centre. The trees were thick enough to cloak the greenrooms hidden in the gloom beyond the aura of the lights. Between items darkness descended on the sylvan area, leaving only a glimmer on the stage itself. Each new item was heralded by an increasing glow of light behind the stage, and the performers were

seen coming forward, walking in a natural manner and talking together in pleasantly informal groups. They stepped up on to the stage as the illumination grew brighter, and reformed into groups ready for the dance.

The great advantage of this arrangement of stage and auditorium is that the wide set of the seating and the completely open stage without side screens, wings or curtains, gives a perfect view to everyone in the audience. Not a movement is missed, and as the whole auditorium is tiered and looks down on the stage, everyone can see without strain. By saving cost on the construction of the stage, by cutting out wings, and scenery, and by reducing green rooms to the simplicity of a canvas screen behind the trees, the greater part of the cost of construction can be concentrated on the auditorium to the greater comfort and clearer vision of the audience.

The lighting was directed and controlled from sentry box-like structures built up at each side of the auditorium, with further sources of light hidden within the trees. The operators could see clearly what was happening on the stage and direct their spotlights accordingly. Musicians sometimes appeared on the stage itself, when the orchestra consisted of accordion players. At other times the orchestra was grouped among the trees to the side of the stage, visible but not too obtrusive, with plenty of space and able to see the stage clearly.

Did the absence of scenery affect the production? I did not find it so; in



fact, the natural sylvan scene was the perfect setting for dancing. The whole tendency in modern dramatic presentation in the West is to reduce the scenery to the absolute minimum. There is nothing new in this. The Shakespearian theatre had practically no scenery except curtains, and stage properties were carried on as required by actors or attendants without the use of a drop curtain. At a performance of "Midsummer Night's Dream", which I saw recently in the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, there was a single setting cleverly adapted to represent both indoor and outdoor scenes, and properties such as benches were carried on by performers while the lights were dimmed between scenes.

This technique is used to some extent by CLT, for whose productions the drop curtain is not used between scenes, the

scenery being changed during the temporary blackout. But I wonder whether the complete blackout between scenes is not a mistake. Dramatic features may be enhanced, especially for children, by suitable scenery, or need special stage properties such as the house in that delightful fable "The Wily Fox." But could not screens and properties be carried on to the stage by children in costume to points already marked, while the lights are dimmed only? Blackout is somehow disturbing and tends to unsettle the juvenile audience. Would not this activity on the stage serve the useful purpose of keeping the children from getting restless between scenes? Would they not be intrigued to see what is happening and to guess what the stage will look like when the full lights go up? I think there is something that CLT could adapt from these stage techniques in the West.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

C. L. T. extends its sincere thanks to a host of friends and well-wishers who have all helped towards the preparation of the 8th, C. L. T. Festival. We are particularly grateful to :

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Calcutta.

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Amar Chatterjee  
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## FESTIVAL MAKERS

### RHYTHM MAKERS

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Panchanan Ghatak

### PLAY BACKS & SUPPORTING ARTISTES

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Chandana Das Gupta  
Santa Sen  
Atashi Ghosal  
Gayatri Dutta  
Minoti Banerji  
Anuva Bose  
Swapna Sen Gupta  
Annapurna Chakravarty  
Dhiren Bose

Archana Mukherji  
Swapna Mukherji  
Shyamali Sen  
Kanan Roy Choudhury  
Rukma Dutta Gupta  
Krishna Sen  
Kana Mukherji  
Monika Biswas  
Sailen Mukherji  
Pintoo Bhattachajee

Krishna Sen Gupta  
Pranoti Sen Gupta  
Sharmila Tagore

CLT Trainees : Gopa Dutta, Sucharita Ghosh, Anjali Law,  
Monju Sarkar, Aloka Ghosh, Suvra Chatterji,  
Gita Roy Choudhury, Urmila Mehrotra,  
Anuradha Bose, Enakshi Ghosh, Urmimala  
Ghose, Gouri Dev, Gita Gupta.

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Victoria Institution  
St. John's D. ocesan  
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Sishu Vidya Mandir  
Gujrati Bal Mandir  
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Desh Pran Mani Mela

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The puppets (Bengal)  
"Shreyas" Puppeteers (Ahmedabad)  
Kala Bikash Kendra (Orissa)  
Sab Peyechir Ashar (Jugantar)

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PROGRAMME  
EIGHTH CLT FESTIVAL

( Subject to alteration without notice )

**19th December ( Saturday )**

The feature of the Year :

**SONG OF INDIA**

**Selected CLT Trainees**

**Song of the Day :**

Chugger Choo  
(Sky Group)

This ballet represents the unity of the people of India, despite the diversity of climate, language and costume. From the Himalayas to Cape Comorin and from NEFA to Gujerat, the people by their devotion to the Motherland have brought about a synthesis of Indian culture. Our children can follow the steps and songs of any part of the country with ease. The CLT method is well depicted in this feature in which the senior group have moved on from the basic school steps to classical steps without difficulty, though they have had no special training in Bharatna yam, Katha kali, Katthak or Manipur dancing

**20th December ( Sunday )**

**MITHUA : The CLT fantasy**

**The Rhyme Toddlers**

A CLT miscellany  
Clap, Clap, Clap Away  
(Rose Group)  
The Cart (Rose Group)  
The Palanquin ,, ,,  
The Aeroplane  
(Violet Group)  
The Flying Carpet  
(Violet Group)  
The Tiny Tuner  
(White Group)  
The Dancing Birds  
(Rose Group)  
Kabadi Kabadi }  
Hei Mora Phulbagicha } (Green A)

This is the story of the sick child, Mithua who could not sleep at night, but watched the silent road crossing until she was sure that the inanimate objects of the street were coming alive. "Mithu" they called to her. "don't be unhappy. You shall be well again. Look, we have come to entertain you." Mithu suddenly found that she could join in their dancing. The Moon and Stars, Glow-worms and Fairies also join in and the night passed speedily until the sound of the first tram-car sent the street objects back to their accustomed places. When Mother woke up she found that Mithu was fast asleep at last.



21st December (Monday)

Tagore's well-known drama.

**VALMIKI PRATIVA—**

**Diocesan School  
sponsored by CLT**

**Song of the Day :**

Mago Bristi Bheja  
Kano Mana (Orange Group)

**International Programme :**

Items by children from United States,  
Britain, Sweden, France, Pakistan & Israel  
Sailor's Hornpipe—by Linda Walde.  
Oliver Twist—by Jane Mc. Kenzie.  
The leaf—by Leslie Green.  
Scottish Lilt—Lydia Turcan  
Jota—by Linda Walde  
Hanuka (Israel) Jewish girls' School  
A Ballet in 4 Movements—by Jane  
Leslie & Lydia  
Square Dance—by Children from  
America  
St. Luci—by Children from Sweden  
Folk dance—Pakistan

Every year we invite our little friends from overseas to contribute to our Programme, and we are very happy to have a number of them with us this year.

22nd December (Tuesday)

A west Bengal group of puppeteers directed by Raghunath Goswami.

**A day of Puppet Plays by  
"The Puppets"**

23rd December (Wednesday)

Programme presented by

**Sab Peyechhir Asar (Jugantar)**

Brishti parey Tapur Tupur  
Indur Puran

24th December (Thursday)

**PICNIC—**

**Victoria Institution  
sponsored by CLT**

Abole Tabole Rhymes :

Airey Bhola (Red Group)  
Thikana (Green Group)  
Kumro Patash " "  
Ram Garurer Chhana " "  
Bombagarer Raja }  
Ekushey Aine } South  
Suburban (Main)  
Megh Mulukey (Red Group)

**Song of the Day : Airey Bhola**

A Bengali folk dance feature. The Cow-herd boys decide to have a picnic and go from house to house in the village seeking contributions. Some are helpful, others not. The miserly, but shortsighted trader gives them only a chit, but they find he has written it on the back of a five rupee note! On their way the boys meet the mazdoor boys who are also enjoying themselves, and both groups get together and have plenty of fun.



**25th December (Friday)**

**CLT'S new feature:**

**SONG OF INDIA**

Song of the Day :

। u i Akasher Dikey Cha  
(Green Group)

**26th December (Saturday)**

**A CLT Play :**

**JHAGRATI PAROOAH**

(Fighting Alphabets)  
(Pink Group)

**Miscellany by Schools**

Gitabithika  
Latin Quarters School  
Dhaner Khetey (Sky Group)  
Daulatram Nopany School  
Deshpran Manimela  
Pratham Phuter  
Pabo Prosad Khani  
(Sky Group)

**Song of the Day:**

Dur Deshi Ek Rakhai Chheley  
(Sky Group)

**27th December (Sunday)**

**CLT'S new Feature :**

**THE CRAZY SQUIRREL**

(Blue Group)

**School Miscellany :**

Children's Nook  
Nritya Chhanda  
Abhinav Bharati  
Sangeet Shyamala  
Sishu Vidyamandir  
Gujrati Balmandir

See synopsis for programme on 19th.

This is an amusing play in which the players are alphabets, numerals, etc. It is a straight play interspersed with funny rhymes on Mohan Bagan and East Bengal teams. Specially suitable for kindergarten and primary school children.

A feature meant primarily for kindergarten children, this is a sequel to CLT's "Begging Mouse". Under the big tree the squirrels, rabbits, woodpeckers and other birds play the game of "Hide-and-Seek". The squirrel hides a couple of nuts in its ears. No-one can find the nuts and finally they give up and ask the squirrel to show them, but he has forgotten where he has hidden the nuts and has become deaf because his ears are blocked. Doctor Bear, Fox and Chimpanzee are unable to cure him, but eventually the three little ducklings find the nuts.



28th December (Monday)

**A new CLT Feature :  
UNDER THE SEA**

Puppet Plays :

**Shreyas Puppet Players from  
Ahmedabad**

A ballet based on a German fable to explain why fishes are dumb. Once upon a time under the sea fishes danced and sang and talked among themselves in their own language. One day the Prince of Fishermen tried to catch them in his net, but the fishes escaped into a cave. The Prince entices the Sea Snake Girl to tell him the secret of admission to the cave. The Snake Girl, who is the daughter of the Sea King, falls in love with the Prince, but her father is angry and forbids them to enter again into his kingdom. He then decrees that the gift of speech shall be for ever denied to the fishes, lest they should once again betray the secret of the Sea King's cave.

29th December (Tuesday)

A further day of Puppet plays by 'The Puppets' directed by Raghunath Goswami

30th December (Wednesday)

**UNDER THE SEA (CLT)**

Puppet Plays :

**Shreyas Puppet Players from  
Ahmedabad.**

Hashi Khusir Mela

See synopsis for programme on 28th.

31st December (Thursday)

**CLT Classic : JIJO**

Mixed fare :

Andhra Association  
Dur Deshi Ek Rakha Chheley  
(Sky Group)  
Dhaner Kshetey Raudra Chhayay  
(Sky Group)  
Pratham Phuler Pabo  
Prasad Khani  
(Sky Group)

The old Hatmaker and his two sons lived in the shadow of the mountain, Fujiyama. They were too poor to buy sweets for the Festival of the Four Goddesses, so big Brother suggested he should go to the town to sell some hats and buy sweets. He started out in a snowstorm and on the way he found the Four Goddesses on their pedestals but with no coverings on their heads, so he gave them the hats that he had meant to sell. The children of the village had brought presents to the Goddesses on a sledge, and when the old Hatmaker and his sons were asleep, the Goddesses brought the sledge to the cottage and on top were the hats—but turned into pure gold !

**1st January, 1960 ( Friday )**

The CLT Fantasy : **MITHUA**

The Rhyme Toddlers

**2nd January ( Saturday )**

CLT Classic Feature . **ABAN PATUA**

**Kala Vikash Kendra, Orissa,**

present :

Who is to Bell the Cat ?

Renu and the Week

Karama Dance

Odissi Dance

( see synopsis for  
3rd January )

**3rd January ( Sunday )**

CLT new Feature :

**SONG OF INDIA**

( see synopsis for  
19th December )

**Kala Vikash Kendra, Orissa.**

present their features.

See synopsis for programme of 20th December.

The little Princess wants to be a great artist, but when she tries to paint the beauty of the morning she throws away her paints in despair. Tilakdhari, the Court Artist, promises to bring his Guru, Abanpatua, to teach her. He finds him in the forest, and as they are leaving the monkey steals all except the red brushes. One day the Princess asks Abanpatua to paint for her, but he has only the red brushes and so he sets them to paint the white flowers, the Prince's white horse and the King's palace red. There is a great outcry, and Abanpatua recalls his brushes and tells the Princess that he must go back to the forest.

**Who is to Bell the Cat ?** The Rats are discussing how to escape from the Cat. Finally one suggests that they should bell the Cat, so that they will be warned by the sound of the bell. All admire the plan, but one old Rat asks "Who will bell the Cat?" No-one will undertake the risky job, and at last they agree on a combined effort. But the Cat, who was listening, jumps out at them and the Rats all run away.

**Renu and the Week.** Renu, the little schoolgirl, waits impatiently for Sunday to come so that she can play instead of studying. When Sunday comes she begs him not to leave, but after twelve hours he has to go. The other days of the week come in succession with their various tasks, but Renu will have nothing to do with them. Then they curse her and she finds she is unloved, and apologises and asks the days to bestow their blessings on her.



শিশুরংমহলের সৃষ্টি বল্মুখী। শুধু ব্যালে  
নয় ছোট ছোট মজাদার নাটিকা রচনায়  
ও অভিনয়ে শিশুদের এই প্রতিষ্ঠান সিদ্ধ-  
হস্ত। ঝগড়াটি পড়য়া পিষ্ট টুটুলের  
গোলমলে মস্তিস্কেরই একটি মজাদার সৃষ্টি।

সমর চট্টোপাধ্যায়

## আমাদের বোম্বাই ভ্রমণ

স্বপ্না সেন ( শিশুরংমহলের শিশু সদস্য )

ভারতবর্ষের পশ্চিম সীমান্তে আরব সাগর। তার তীর ঘেঁষে বিখ্যাত বন্দর বোম্বাই— ইংরেজী করে বললে—বম্বে। সুদূর পশ্চিম দিগন্তে হলেও বোম্বাই-প্রবাসী বাঙ্গালীদের একটি সমিতি আছে—“ভূর্গাবাদী সমিতি”। এখানকার সদস্যরাই আমাদের অর্থাৎ C.L.T বা শিশুরংমহলকে এবার পূজোর সময় বোম্বাই আসবার আমন্ত্রণ জানিয়েছিলেন।

আমরা অক্টোবর দিন অর্থাৎ ৮ই অক্টোবর দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব রেলওয়ের বম্বে মেলে কলকাতা ত্যাগ করলাম। হাওড়া স্টেশনে আমাদের মা, বাবা এবং আত্মীয়-স্বজনেরা আমাদের ‘সী-অফ্’ করতে এসেছিলেন। আমাদের জন্তে ট্রেনের একটি বগী রিজার্ভ করা ছিল। ট্রেন ছাড়ার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমাদের পাশের কামরার ছোট মেয়েরা গান শুরু করলো—“বাচ্ছি পূজোর ছুটিতে—চুঃ চুঃ! ছলছি রেলের গাড়ীতে—চুঃ চুঃ! চাগার চাগার চুঃ!”

আমাদের কামরায় ছিলেন সমরদা, বৌদি, অন্নপমাদি, করবীদি, মনোদা, অসিতবাবু এবং আমরা গানের গুপের আটজন মেয়ে। অবশ্য আমরা সমস্ত মিলিয়ে ১০৫ জন ছিলাম। ইতিমধ্যে ট্রেনটা স্টেশনের সীমানা ছাড়িয়ে অন্ধকারের মধ্যে দিয়ে ছুটতে শুরু করেছে।

ট্রেন খড়গপুরে এসে থামল। সমরদা এখানে নেমে গেলেন। ভোর বেলার দিকে আমি একটু ঘুমিয়ে পড়েছিলাম। ঘুম ভাঙলো সকাল ৮টার সময়। জানলা দিয়ে মুখ বাড়িয়ে দেখলাম ঝাড়শুগুদায় এসে ট্রেন থেমেছে। তাড়াতাড়ি হাতমুখ ধুয়ে নিলাম। আমি জাগার আগেই অস্থ সবাই জেগে গেছে। তাই সবারই আমার আগে হাতমুখ ধোয়া হয়ে গেছে। তারপর আমরা সবাই কলা, পাঁউরুটি আর ডিম দিয়ে আমাদের ‘ব্রেক-ফাস্ট’ সারলাম। কিছুক্ষণ গল্পগুজব হলো। আমাদের মধ্যে মনোদা ছিলেন সবার চেয়ে আমুদে মানুষ। সমস্ত রাস্তাটাই আমাদের হাসিয়ে মেরেছিলেন তিনি।

চারিদিকের প্রাকৃতিক সৌন্দর্য্য অত্যন্ত মনোমুগ্ধকর। বাংলাদেশে দেখা সবুজ-সজ্জিত প্রকৃতি দেবী এই অঞ্চলে যেন যোগিনীর মূর্তি ধারণ করেছেন। চারিদিকের পর্বত এবং শালের বনগুলি দেখে মনে হতে লাগল যেন বাংলাদেশের সেই লীলাক্ষেত্র প্রকৃতি দেবী এখানে তপস্বিনীর মূর্তি ধারণ করেছেন। একটু পরেই ট্রেন এসে রায়গড়ে থামল। আমরা এখানে ‘লাঞ্চার’ জন্তে ট্রেনের ‘ডাইনিং-কারে’ চলে গেলাম। ঘাঁরা গেলেন না তাঁদের জন্তে আলাদা করে প্লেট এলো। একটু পরেই ফের ট্রেন ছাড়লো। সেদিন রান্না খুব সুবিধাজনক হয় নি, কিন্তু খিদের তাগিদে আমাদের সেই আলুনি রান্নাই খেতে হলো। এর পরের স্টেশন বিলাসপুরে গাড়ী থামতে আমরা নেমে যে যার স্থানে প্রত্যাবর্তন করলাম।



সন্ধ্যা নাগাদ আমরা নাগপুরে পৌঁছালাম। সেদিন রায়গড় আর বিলাসপুরের মধ্যে দিয়ে যাবার সময় রৌরকেল্লা আর ভিলাইএর লোহার কারখানা দেখতে পেলাম। নাগপুরে আমার মামা আমার সঙ্গে দেখা করতে এসেছিলেন। সে দিনটা ট্রেনেই কাটলো। দশমীর দিন সকালে ইগতপুরীতে এসে ট্রেন থামল। এখানে স্ট্রীম এঞ্জিন পালটে ইলেকট্রিক এঞ্জিন গাড়ীর সঙ্গে জোড়া হ'ল। সেদিন আবহাওয়াটা খুব মেঘলা ছিল। ঝির ঝির করে বৃষ্টি পড়ছিল। এখানে চারিদিকেই কালো কালো আকাশ-ছোঁয়া পাহাড় আর মাঝে মাঝে ঝরণার ঝির ঝির শব্দ। এই পাহাড়গুলি সবই 'ওয়েফার্ড ঘাটরেঞ্জ'। মেঘের দল এদের চূড়াগুলিকে আলতো পরশ দিয়ে চলে যায়। এখান থেকে দাদার অর্থাৎ যে স্টেশনে আমরা নামলাম সেই পর্য্যন্ত ৯টা বড় বড় টানেল পার হলাম। টানেলগুলো ভীষণ অন্ধকার। ট্রেনটা আবার তৃতীয় টানেলের মধ্যে একবার থেমে গিয়েছিল। 'ব্রেকফার্ট' ট্রেনেই সারলাম।

বেলা ১১টা নাগাদ আমরা দাদারে নামলাম। সেখান থেকে টাক্সি করে আমাদের জন্তে নির্দিষ্ট স্থান দাদার বি, ই, এন্স স্কুলে গিয়ে উঠলাম। ওখানকার হেড্ মাস্টার মহাশয় আমাদের সমস্ত দেখিয়ে শুনিয়ে দিলেন। তারপর আমরা, গানের মেয়েরা, দোতলায় আমাদের ঘরে চলে গেলাম। আর নীচের তলায় গেল ছেলেরা। আমাদের দেখাশুনোর ভার নিয়েছিলেন অনুপমাদি। অল্প মেয়েরা এক এক গুপে এক এক ঘরে ছিল। তারা বেলাদি, মিসেস সরকার, মিসেস চাকলাদার আর মীরাদির চার্জে ছিল। সেদিন বিকেলে আর কোথাও যাই নি। স্কুলের হল ঘরে 'জিজোর' রিহার্সাল দিচ্ছিলাম, কেননা পরের দিনই ছুর্গাবাড়ীতে শো। যাই হোক রিহার্সালের পর খেয়েদেয়ে রাত্রি ৯টা নাগাদ শুতে গেলাম। আমাদের ঘরে একটা বড় টেবিল ছিল, সেটাই চৌকির কাজ করল। রুক্মা, কৃষ্ণা, শান্তা, অতসী আর প্রণতি ঐটের ওপর, আর আমি আর অনুপমাদি ছ'জনে নীচে শুলাম।

পরদিন ৩টার সময় ছ'টো বাস্ ভর্তি করে সবাই মিলে চার্চ-গেট ময়দানে গেলাম। সমস্ত ময়দানের অর্ধেক জুড়ে বিরাট প্যাণ্ডেল খাটানো হয়েছিল। সন্ধ্যা ৬টা সময় শো সুরু হলো। আমাদের শো দেখতে সেদিন ওখানকার অনেক বড় বড় কাগজের রিপোর্টাররা এসেছিলেন। তাঁরা সবাই আমাদের উচ্ছসিত প্রশংসা করে গেলেন। সেদিন সমস্ত দর্শকরাই 'জিজো' দেখে মুগ্ধ হয়েছিলেন। তাঁদের ধারণা ছিল না যে শিশুরাও কত সুন্দর অভিনয় করতে পারে। নাটক আরম্ভ হবার আগে একজন "জিজোর" গল্পটা ছোট করে হিন্দীতে বুবিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন। তাই সবারই নাটকটি দেখতে সুবিধা হয়েছিল। আর সেদিন সবচেয়ে ভাল হয়েছিল আলোর খেলা। অভিনয়ের পূর্বে যে কা'টি ছড়া পরিবেশিত হয়েছিল তাদের প্রত্যেকটিই খুব সুন্দর হয়েছিল। যা হোক, অভিনয়-পর্ব সমাধা হবার পর হৈ হৈ করতে করতে আর ছাঁদিকের রাস্তা দেখতে দেখতে বাড়ী এসে পৌঁছলাম।

পরের দিন সকালে আবার অবন পটুয়ার রিহার্সাল। সেদিন সকালে ৮টা থেকে  
কুড়ি]

১০টা পর্য্যন্ত রিহাৰ্শাল চলল। ৩টার সময় ফের চার্চ-গেট। সেদিন প্রথমে সমরদা ইংরেজীতে আমাদের C. L. T সম্পর্কে কিছু বললেন। তারপর অবন পটুয়ার গল্প ইংরেজীতে সংক্ষেপে বলে দিলেন। সেদিনের অভিনয়ও সবাইকেই আনন্দ দান করেছিল। সেদিনও আমাদের অস্থান দেখতে অনেক বড় বড় এবং খ্যাতনামা লোক এসেছিলেন। পরের দিন 'টাইমস্' ও অত্যা বড় বড় কাগজে C. L. Tর জয়জয়কার ঘোষিত হ'ল।

পরের দিন আর আমাদের শো ছিল না। আমরা বেলা ১১টার সময় ২খানা স্কুল-বাস্ ভাড়া করে বেড়াতে বেরিয়ে পড়লাম। আর সঙ্গে নিলাম শুধু গোটাকতক খাবারের বুড়ি। সেদিন প্রথমে দেখলাম আরব সাগর। সাগরের পাশ দিয়ে আমরা গেলাম আরে মিস্ক কলোনিতে; তারপরে তুলসী লেকে। এই লেকের মাঝখানে একটা দেওয়াল, আর এই দেওয়ালটা সোজা গিয়ে শেষ হয়েছে একটা বনের মধ্যে। বাঁদিকে পাহাড় আর ডানদিকে জল। আমাদের মধ্যে যাঁরা একটু সাহসী তাঁরা এই দেওয়াল ধরে বনের মধ্যে চললেন। আমিও তাঁদের পিছু নিলাম। বনের মধ্যে খানিক ছটোপাটি করে গাড়ীতে ফিরে এলাম। সেখান থেকে মিস্ক কলোনিতে এসে আমাদের লাঞ্চ খাওয়া হ'ল। সেখান থেকে তল্লিতলা গুটিয়ে জুছ বীচ্। ছোটদের মধ্যে কেউ কেউ এই সময়ে অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়ল বলে জুছ বীচ্ে যাবার আগেই তারা বেলাদির সঙ্গে স্কুলে ফিরে গেল। জুছ বীচ্ে বায়গাটা মেরিন ড্রাইভের চেয়ে নির্জন। অনেকক্ষণ জলে মাতামাতি করে আবার গাড়ীতে ফিরে এলাম। এখানে অনেক ফটো তোলা হ'ল। সেখান থেকে ঝোলান পোল, কমলা নেহরু পার্ক এবং 'শু-হাউস' ( জুতোর মতন আকারের বাড়ী ) হয়ে স্কুলে ফিরে এলাম। সেদিন পুরোপুরিই মজা করলাম।

তার পরের দিন আবার মিঠুয়ার রিহাৰ্শাল, কেননা ১৫ই তারিখে চার্চ-গেটে এটার অভিনয় হবে। ১৪ই তারিখে আমরা বিকেলবেলা কেনাকাটা করতে বেরিয়েছিলাম। কিছু জিনিষ পত্র কিনে আবার স্কুলে ফিরে এসে মিঠুয়ার রিহাৰ্শাল দিলাম। ১৫ই তারিখে আবার সেই চার্চ-গেটের প্যাণ্ডলে আমাদের দেখা গেল। সেদিন মিঠুয়ার অভিনয় দেখান হবে। বোম্বাইয়ের মুখ্যমন্ত্রী আমাদের অভিনয় দেখতে এলেন। তিনি আমাদের সবাইকে অভিনন্দন জ্ঞাপন করে গেলেন। সেদিনের অভিনয়ও সবারই চিত্তাকর্ষক হয়েছিল।

এদিকে আমাদের কলকাতা ফেরবার দিন এগিয়ে এলো। ১৭ই তারিখে আবার অবন পটুয়া হ'ল। আমাদের মধ্যে অনেকেরই বোম্বাই-এ আত্মীয়স্বজন ছিলেন। তাঁরা অনেকেই যে যার মাসী-পিসীর বাড়ী চলে গেলেন। বাকি রইলাম আমি আর চন্দনাদি। ১৮ই তারিখে আমরা আমার মাসতুতো দাদার সঙ্গে গেট-ওয়ে অফ ইণ্ডিয়া এবং মেরিন ড্রাইভ, এ্যাকুরিয়াম দেখে এলাম। তারপর বিকেল বেলা আমরা যে ট্রেনে এসেছিলাম সেই ট্রেনেই ভিক্টোরিয়া টার্মিনাস্ থেকে বোম্বাই ত্যাগ করলাম।



# মিঠুর ভাবনা

মিঠু পড়েছে দোটানায়—একদিকে পরীক্ষার পড়া, আর একদিকে মিঠুর জন্মদিন। নাঃ, দুটোই দরকার। তাই সন্ধ্যা হতেই মিঠু পড়ার টেবিলে হাজির। টেবিল ল্যাম্পের নরম আলোয় পড়তে পড়তে মিঠু নিজেকে হারিয়ে ফেলে। চমকে উঠলো বাবার ডাকে—“মিঠুমনির আজ যে বড় মনোযোগ।”



“মিঠুর জন্মদিন না আজকে? তাই পড়াটা সেরে রাখছি।” অকাটা যুক্তি। কিন্তু মিঠুর জন্ম উপহার? তাও মিঠু ভেবে রেখেছে। যাওয়ার পথে হগ্ সাহেবের বাজার থেকে কিনে নেবে মনের মত একটা ডল। বেচারী জানেনা বালীগঞ্জ থেকে যাদবপুর যাওয়ার সোজা পথে কোনও হগ্ মার্কেট পড়েনা।

বাঁকা পথেই যেতে হয় মার্কেটে। আলোছায়ার মধ্যে গাড়ী চলেছে ছুটে আমীর আলি এ্যাভিনিউ দিয়ে। হঠাৎ হেডলাইট জ্বালতেই একটা লোক সরে গেল পথ থেকে, তাকে যেন আলোটা ধাক্কা মেরে ঠেলে দিল। ভাগিন্স গাড়ীর আলো এতো জোরালো। গাড়ী এবার চলেছে পার্ক স্ট্রিট ধরে। রাস্তার বড় বড় বিজলীবাতির আলোয় সব কিছু চক্‌চক্‌ করছে। সূঁচ পড়লেও খুঁজে পাওয়া যায়।

মিঠুর আর সবুর নয় না। মার্কেটে গাড়ী পার্ক করতেই ছুটে চলে দোকানের দিকে। এ যেন পরীর রাজ্য। শোকসের জিনিষগুলো বলমল করছে রকমারী আলোর কারদাজীতে। মিঠুর বেশী ভাল লাগে তার পড়ার টেবিলের মিষ্টি আলোকে। কিন্তু নেশাবরানো আলো না হলে দোকানীর চলবে কি করে?

যাক্‌ সে কথা—ডল্‌ নিয়েই সোজা যাদবপুরের দিকে চলল গাড়ী। রাস্তাটা নির্জন, একটু অন্ধকারও। হঠাৎ রাস্তার মাঝখানে পথ আটকে দাঁড়ালো একটা লাল বাতি। তারপরই চোখটা ধাঁধিয়ে গেল। আগুনের পিচ্‌কিরীর মত পাশ থেকে পড়লো রেল ইঞ্জিনের হেডলাইট। ঢাকুরিয়া লেভেল ক্রসিং‌এর গেট বন্ধ। “খালি সময় নষ্ট,” মিঠু ভাবে।

নেমস্তম্‌ খেয়ে ফিরে এসে ক্লাস্ত মিঠু গা এলিয়ে দেয় বিছানায়। শান্ত নীল আলোর বেড সূঁচটা জ্বালতেই মিঠু ভাবে, “তাইতো, এতরকম বিজলীবাতি না থাকলে সবলের চলত কি করে? .. আচ্ছা সব বাতিই ‘কিরণ ল্যাম্প’ নাকি?” মিঠু কিন্তু ভাবছিল একটু জোরে জোরে। মা কখন ঘরে এসেছেন টের পায় নি। “দূর পাগলী,” মা বললেন, “কত নামের ইলেক্ট্রিক বাতি আছে। তবে হ্যাঁ, আমাদের বাড়ীর সব আলোই ‘কিরণ ল্যাম্প’। যত আলো তুমি আজ দেখেছ, তার মধ্যে ওদের ল্যাম্পও অনেক আছে।”

মিঠুর ভাবনা কাটলো। পাশ ফিরে গুতেই নিশ্চিন্ত ঘুম। শুধু সজাগ পাহারা দিতে লাগল ঘরের নীল আলোটা।

“কিরণ ল্যাম্পের” একমাত্র পরিবেশক—

**দি ওরিয়েন্টাল মার্কেটাইল কোং লিঃ**

এঁরা মিঠুদের ভাল বাসেন