

Poetry section

# The Step- Mother

By- Dr. Nunglekjam Premi Devi

She seems beautiful and active;  
She seems to wears her best clothes;  
She seems to adore enchanting smiles;  
She seems to have a good heart;  
She seems to capture everyone at her centre;  
She seems to have her final words to each  
And every one on her good tone notes;  
She seems to please me and all;  
She seems to be the best mother I ever have;  
She seems to a cool being; but  
She is too uncertain and slick.

She talks sweet and lustrous;  
She invites brilliantly;  
She accomplishes her mission well superb;  
She's brightly artful and she polishes differently  
She's talented; she is capable-  
Capable to apt metaphors promptly;  
She's punctual;  
She's quintessential;  
She's skillful and very professional-  
Her masterly home-making; I ever have  
She seems to a cool being; but  
She is too uncertain and slick

She's bounded with techniques;  
She's reverberating; and her words repeating  
She tries and tries; she never gives up tough  
Her peal of my absences; her peal of my duties  
Echoing all day throughout; reverberating through my veins  
I ever feel haunted in my territory; my home  
Her reign; her tempting  
She seems captivating; her alluring innocence  
Her suppression; her concealments to her evil-doing  
I am never a being; I bear no identity  
She seems to a cool being; but  
She is too uncertain and slick

She seems motherly;  
She knew seemingly and she professedly reacts;  
Her moves stirring, her evidences overwhelming;  
Her affectionate ego is proving thousands and millions;  
She bravely attacks; I ever submerged damages  
She knew no boundary; she knew not her category;  
But she seems strikingly mother; mother of agitation  
She lies undisturbed; she hides her distress  
She hides all her hates;  
All her ache mellow; her carving to her tormenting life  
She's plague;  
She's cursed;  
She make-up her desolate gloomy soul;  
She still sings of melancholy; All I ever experienced  
And all I ever have unconditionally; step-mother  
She seems to a cool being; but  
She is too uncertain and slick

Dr. Nunglekjam Premi Devi

Associate Research

School of Women's Studies

Faculty Council of Interdisciplinary Studies, Law and Management

Jadavpur University, Kolkata

premithoudam9@gmail.com

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## "A tale of two voices - the inspired and the unsung"

By : Rajkumar Panthoiren

Just the other day, I was watching this rousing and hard-hitting Denzel Washington movie called "The Great Debaters" (2007), and unsurprisingly, it managed to stir me up while also bombarding me with some questions to which I couldn't give an honest, full answer. It led me to question my own education and also of my brethren belonging to the far east corner state that is ours.

To bring into context the relevance of the said movie, let me outline the basic storyline which, as it happens, was a true episode in American history (although, from the creative standpoint, there were excusable historical flaws in the movie). It's a story about a feisty and enormously intelligent English teacher with uncompromisable morals in the small all-black Wiley College located in the backwater of Marshall, Texas who trained a formidable debate team that won the national championship by edging out the then reigning champion all-white University of South California debate team (which has been changed to the Harvard team in the movie). Even better, 'the Great Debaters' of Wiley College remained unbeaten for a record decade. This was in the 1930s. And why was it a defining achievement for this bunch of bright-eyed, driven youngsters armed with historical and social consciousness of their place in the society they were in, and also the tough-loving yet inspiring guidance of their father figure teacher Prof. Tolson, who also was a noted poet himself?

### Dehumanization, shame and resistance:

In the Jim Crow South even as the country was reeling under the Great Depression (1929-39), there was endemic racism and institutionalized discrimination ('separate but equal' segregation policy being the tip of the iceberg), where the Negroes (Black/African-American hereafter) weren't allowed to share the same space in educational institutions, transportation, entertainment facilities, hospitals, etc. with the Whites. Worse, there were disturbing instances of lynching of Blacks, particularly in the South. It was a time of racial terrorism where the Blacks were made to feel like second-class citizens by design through intimidations ranging from as severe as lynching to the milder but nonetheless, no less sinister

everyday racial slights by the dominant Whites, borne out of ignorant hatred and prejudice. Considering this unsettling social background, the brave act of reasoned and fearless articulation in public platform by the young debaters of Wiley College which earned them a favourable reputation across the country, despite belonging to the margins, qualifies without a shred of doubt as a revolt against the unjust laws and narrow social perception to which they and their brethren were subjected with magnifying intensity. A classic case of the resilient and disciplined underdog finding their strengths, and pulling themselves through many slippery paths to ultimate victory.

The growing reputation of the debate team led to the organization of the first ever inter-racial debate in 1930 against the University of Michigan, a big and welcome change towards desegregation, at least in the mental sphere of the public. The hitherto unequals were finally on the same platform as equals, competing for a common prize. To top it, the famed Wiley College team had a woman member named Henrietta Bell Wells, who proved no less compared to the male debaters—a progressive choice by Prof. Tolson for the time. And another young member, James Farmer, distinguished himself by growing up to be the founder of CORE (the Congress of Racial Equality), and being a towering figure in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. All of these are a fine, impeccable testament to what a great teacher could instill in their students. What Prof. Tolson did was to help them embrace their own potentialities, their worth as equal humans as the Whites, their flourishing individuality full of possibilities, and most importantly—not to feel fearful or ashamed to be a Black in those uncertain, turbulent times. They were taught by him to stand their ground backed by the power of education and exhaustive efforts to be erudite minds. What can we, especially our own teachers, learn from Prof. Tolson and his famed team of 'the Great Debaters'?

### Relevance to the 'Chinky' racism - from a Manipuri's lens:

Are there certain parallels in the situation between the Blacks of the Jim Crow era and the people from the Northeast region of India, not

strictly in the severity of sufferings but in the underlying modus operandi of racial discrimination adopted by the dominant mainland Indians towards the minority folks, specifically belonging to the Mongoloid stock? I am afraid so. Agreed that we are not being lynched anywhere or our bodies strung up in trees and burned. Also, we are not made to use separate public facilities in mainland India. We even get to study in different colleges across the country. Even the same laws for us as for the mainland folks. So far, so good. But how can I possibly overlook the cases of students belonging to my region murdered in the not-so-distant past in mainland region? Should I lie for the sake of political correctness that our people feel welcome and wanted by the mainlanders? Should I ignore the curious, mocking gestures and abrasive comments hurled at our backs almost every day in the streets (even some of the so-called educated lot are worse. I have had a brush with a racist college principal, all the more cementing the social reality, to quote personal experience)? Should I forget the judgemental looks and the severely dehumanised perception with which they evaluate our worth? Can all the stereotypical, xenophobic cynicism towards people from my region be brushed aside just like that?

And how do I say that the imposition of the draconian and heavily misused Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 in certain states of the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir is fair? The very dreaded act which a number of UN treaty bodies have pronounced to be in violation of International Law and which the UN, on 31 March 2012, asked India to revoke saying it had no place in Indian democracy; the very act which has been criticized by Human Rights Watch as a "tool of state abuse, oppression and discrimination". Maybe, the wisdom of St. Augustine that "an unjust law is no law at all" doesn't apply to the Indian state yet. Maybe, the Indian state still doesn't want to acknowledge the right to self-determination, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter of 1945, of peoples who fulfil the factors required to possess the same, viz. a history of independence or self-rule in an identifiable territory, a distinct culture, and a will and capability to regain self-

governance (Karen Parker - Understanding Self-determination: The Basics).

Does the above sound any fair at all? If not, then who will point them out for us when we ourselves are comfortably self-anesthetized and scampering for excuses every time?

### Clarion call to my lost brethren:

In this concluding and the most important section, we are back to square one. The questions stirred in me by the movie and the historical ideas it depicted which are relevant to our situation haven't been answered.

Wiley College had Prof. Tolson and his young student team of 'the Great Debaters' to raise a legitimate voice of their people's cause in the platform they best excelled in, which played an important role in busting the myth of Black inferiority as was generally perceived by the dominant Whites of the time.

What about us, the "Chinkies", as the majority mainlanders would like to call us? Who do we have?

Why are our voices heard less often than needed? Who will take up our issues?

Can you name a single college or university professor of the state who can claim to have inspired and instilled in their students a responsible sense of social consciousness in recent time? Not one. Most of them are just too content with the fat pay checks they get. Where is the leadership of both our teachers and students (no, we don't need any more of those mushrooming self-righteous, mindless "student leaders". What is needed desperately is student leadership. There's a difference)? It's the same old sea of mediocrity normalized to such an extent that no one dare disturb the status quo. The pervasive motto, it seems, is to play safe. Now, here lies all the rot. Not anymore, the pretentious voices masquerading as heroes will work because they fall flat as soon as the bell is sounded. As long as they are made to reign supreme while the genuine voices aren't upheld, our issues will never be taken by the powers that be with the seriousness they deserve.

Now, only one question remains: will we ever have our very own Prof. Tolson and if yes, then when will he incarnate amidst us? The answer, it seems, is blowing among the half-dead souls of this ancient, beautiful and multifariously cracked land we call home. Sorry, Bob.

## National & International News

# Donald Trump's Never-Ending Campaign

BY: SCOTT BIXBY

As President Donald Trump's unfledged administration careens from crisis to crisis like an unsteady toddler running with pilfered scissors, the president returned on Saturday to the part of being president he appears to most enjoy: running for the office he already holds.

"I want to be among my friends and among the people," Trump told a crowd of 9,000 supporters—and at least a few protesters—at Orlando Melbourne International Airport in Melbourne, Florida, explaining his desire for a "campaign rally" after less than a month in the Oval Office. "I wanna be in a room filled with hardworking American patriots who love their country, who salute their flag, and who pray for a better future!" Apparently unwilling to put behind him the daily adoration, applause, and affirmation of the presidential campaign that elevated him to the highest elected office in the land, a tieless Trump descended from the sky in Air Force One to a braying crowd of his most diehard fans, to whom he pledged "to speak... without the filter of the fake news, the dishonest media." As he lambasted the news media and vowed to "expose them for what they are," the image-obsessed president could not have found a better bookend to the East Room press conference on

Thursday. (The 77-minute slugfest was reportedly chaotic enough to convince a potential national security advisor to say "thanks but no thanks.") But instead of hundreds of skeptical journalists fact-checking him in real time, Trump was greeted at the stage by thousands of the latter-day descamisados who helped sweep him into power.

"The White House is running so smoothly," Trump told the crowd, despite what they may have been told by the "dishonest media" and their lying eyes. "So smoothly. And believe me, I and we inherited one big mess. That I can tell you."

The more drab aspects of governance, meanwhile, were left to other members of the executive branch: thousands of miles away, Vice President Mike Pence was reassuring U.S. allies at the Munich Security Conference that the White House would "hold Russia accountable" for its aggression in eastern Ukraine. Those assurances were perhaps undermined by Trump's speech in Florida, in which he accused NATO allies of "not paying their bills."

With one eye perpetually trained on his upset victory in 2016, Trump gave what amounted to a fairly standard general-election stump speech, albeit one with a presidential patina. Complete with appearances by campaign-rally mainstays like Lynette "Diamond" Hardaway and

Rochelle "Silk" Richardson—"When I say 'all aboard,' you say 'choo-choo!'"—Trump's speech, for which his fans had waited in line for up to 13 hours, was studded with standard rhetorical devices ("you look at what's happening...," "crooked media...," "believe me...") and vague promises to repeal and replace the Affordable Care Act, take China to task for currency manipulation and to build a 2,000-mile wall along the U.S. southern border.

The crowd roared with every pledge and promise—never mind that Obamacare repeal is mired in congressional infighting, that a recent conversation with President Xi Jinping of China ended without so much as a peep about currency manipulation, or that the Department of Homeland Security's evaluation of Trump's proposed border wall pegs the construction cost at more than \$10 billion over his estimates.

So enthusiastic were Trump's throngs that at one point, Secret Service agents scrambled in confusion when one of the president's most ardent admirers—Gene Huber, who had arrived thirteen hours early to be first in line for the rally—was invited by the president to join him onstage.

"We the people, our movement, is the reason why our president of the United States is standing here in

front of us today," said an emotional Huber. "I knew he was gonna do this for us!"

"I wouldn't say that Secret Service was thrilled with that, but we know our people," said Trump afterward, still beaming from Huber's remarks as the presidential protective detail helped escort him from the podium.

## 'BJP is winning by absolute majority in Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections'

**Lucknow, Feb. 19:** Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh has claimed that his party BJP is winning the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections 2017.

"Not only clear majority, BJP is winning by absolute majority in Uttar Pradesh," Rajnath Singh said after casting vote in Lucknow.

Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday cast his vote here in the third phase of the Uttar Pradesh assembly election.

Accompanied by his wife Savitri Singh, the Home Minister cast his vote at the PWD polling station.

Earlier on Sunday, his son and Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Noida, Pankaj Singh cast also his vote in Lucknow and claimed an overwhelming support from the BJP.