

Poetry section

The solace of phanek

By : Dr. Nunglekjam Premi Devi

I know not what I am up to;
As I remember and remember
I was helping her, my mother;
She was as good as she did;
She utters no words of tiredness;
No signs of worries and pains;
She is soft, soften at her heart;
She's smooth by her skin;
She adores her long swaging hairs;
Her vibrant calmness, as she adores
Are her strength; I watch her all along
As I help her weaving loom, weaving phanek;
It makes no sense when I weave;
It means a lot, lot many senses when in use;

I know not what I am up to;
As I remember and remember
She's thin and tall; my mother
Her snowy complexion is all that she wears;
She sleeps soundly, late after everyone sleeps
She gets up early, early before dawn
She speaks no language; she speaks no actions;
She's quite as a golden leaf;
She sings her senses with the rhythm; that
Rhythmic rhythm of her tools tek-ta, tok-ta, tek-ta, tok-ta
She afraid no souls; she afraid no evils;
Her vibrant calmness, as she adores
Are her strength; I watch her all along
As I help her weaving loom, weaving phanek;
It makes no sense when I weave;
It means a lot, lot many senses when in use;

I know not what I am up to;
As I remember and remember; my mother
Her attic as I remember, full with cotton rolls;
She waves no help; as she rose every dawn
She's good as I weave and she speaks louder;
She keeps spinning as I weave; spinning and spinning
She's delighted, she's happy along the rhythm;
As I sings my senses with the rhythm; that
Rhythmic rhythm of my tools tek-ta, tok-ta; tek-ta, tok-ta
She reclaims my weaving; weaving phanek
She adores me, phanek; as I weave
I afraid no beings, I afraid no spirits
Her calmness as I recollect is my strength;
Her softness is my attire;
This silhouette memoir of mine; as I weave
As I help her weaving loom, weaving phanek;
It makes no sense when I weave;
It means a lot, lot many senses when in use;

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Army Recruitment Board exams paper leaked, 18 held

Thane, Feb. 26: In a major statewide crackdown, the Crime Branch Unit of Thane city police arrested at least 18 persons and detained 350 candidates from Pune, Goa and Nagpur on charges of leaking the exam papers of the Army Recruitment Board.

The exams of the board are being held on Sunday throughout the country. The city police also took into custody around 350 students from various parts of the state and 18 others have been detained, as confirmed by DCP Parag Manere.

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Glimpses of Puppets in India

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A puppet may be defined as an inanimate figure which can be manipulated by a human being, the puppeteer. It is given life by the puppeteer and made to perform according to the puppeteer's will. An important task of the puppeteer is to transform the puppet from being a mere "figure" towards embodying a distinct "character". For this, the puppeteer applies various techniques of manipulation and the various types of puppet forms corresponding to the demands of the character. The puppeteer usually culls materials from his own traditions and also applies his creativity in formulating the appearance and function of his puppets.

Puppetry has been part of the sacred rituals which were performed to propitiate the gods and spirits apart from the common theatre practice. In India, this tradition continues even to this day. It is believed that commissioning a puppet performance is equivalent to an act of divine service. The puppet plays are staged or commissioned to cure and eradicate diseases of men and animals, to invoke the rain gods to procure rain, or to free a person from an evil spirit's possession. In Karnataka, the episode of 'Virataparva' from the Mahabharata is performed through puppet plays to appease the rain god. In Tamil Nadu, Bommalattam are performed in villages and temples to ensure rain as well as to placate gods to prevent the outbreak of diseases. Sometimes they are also performed as part of the death ceremony. Moreover, certain rites are associated with the making and maintaining of the puppets. The puppeteers perform ritualistic sacrifices before creating the puppets and also when the figures are finished. In Karnataka, while making characters like Ravana, Kali etc., fowls are sacrificed and the figures are applied black tinge as the final touch (S.A. Krishnaiah: 1987). In some puppet traditions, the marking of eyes on the puppet which signifies the infusion of life

into it is observed with sacrifices. The puppets are also worshipped on certain religious occasions. Apart from it, as a ritual, the puppeteers regularly applied neem or eucalyptus oil on the puppets. This is beneficial as they act as a protective agent against insects and fungus and help in preserving the puppets. The purposes behind the manipulation of puppet figures can be variously defined as curing illnesses, ensuring fertility, eradicating the evil, propagating religious faith and also imparting education through entertainment or to just tell a story.

In India, puppets can be generally classified into four types according to its mode of manipulation. They are Hand or Glove Puppets, String Puppets, Rod Puppets and Shadow Puppets.:

1. Hand/Glove Puppet:

This is a type of puppetry where the puppeteer's hand is slipped inside the puppet and its movements are acted out by his fingers. Usually the forefinger becomes the head of the puppet and the thumb and the third finger act as its two hands. Hand/glove puppetry is quite prevalent in Orissa, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal. A popular glove puppet theatre form indigenous to Kerala is known as Pava Kathakali. The puppets are carved delicately in wood in the manner of Kathakali actors with their headdresses and costumes, painted and decorated by transparent coral and peacock feathers. Kundhei Nach (kundhei means 'doll' and nach means 'dance') is a popular play of glove puppets in Orissa. Another glove puppet tradition thriving in the Medinipur district is Benir Putul Naach. The heads of the puppets are made out of terracotta and the hands and stumps are carved

out of wood. The puppets have bells and cymbals attached to their wrists.

2. Rod Puppet:

Traditionally, rod puppetry prospered in the states of Orissa and Bengal. The rod puppets in Orissa are called Kathikundhei Nach (rod doll dance). Bengal's tradition of rod puppet performance is known as Danger Putul Nach. The themes of this performance are derived from the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and jattras.

Apart from these, there is a composite puppet-form in Tamil Nadu named Bommalattam which uses both string and rod puppetry. The performances were intended to ensure the timely arrival of monsoon and to placate the deities. The rods, unlike other forms of rod puppetry are attached from above. Strings are attached to the heads and limbs of the puppets. Smaller puppets are manipulated by strings only.

3. String Puppet:

This puppet tradition is prevalent in Orissa, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Rajasthan. Kathputli (wooden doll) of Rajasthan is one of the popular string puppets of India. In this tradition the puppets are carved out of a single block of wood and generally stand 1.5 feet in height. The puppets have long flowing skirts that hide the feet and their arms and hands are made of stuffed rags. Sakhi kundhei (companion doll) also known as Sakhi Nata, is Orissa's string puppet. The puppets are made of wood and the long flowing decorative skirts hide the legs. A puppet is manipulated by the strings (usually five to seven) attached to a triangular wooden control. Bommalattam (doll dance) of Tamil Nadu are among the heaviest and the largest puppets with some of them being as big as 4.5 feet in height and

weighing over 10 kilos. In Maharashtra, the string puppet tradition is called Kalasutri Bahalye (thread skill doll). Here the puppets' figures are artistically carved and painted. Sadly, this tradition is dying fast in Maharashtra.

4. Shadow Puppet:

Perhaps one of the oldest forms of puppetry, shadow puppets are found in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. Ravan Chhaya from Orissa and Tholpavai Koothu from Kerala are the two prominent shadow puppet theatre traditions of India. Ravan Chhaya puppets are made from the skins of deer, mountain goats and sheep and they are not painted so as to retain their natural colours. Sizes of the puppets vary from less than 20 centimeters to over 60 centimeters, with no joints. This tradition is named after Ravana as it is believed that Ram, a divine and illuminated being, does not cast a shadow. Tholpavai Koothu is an ancient form of art dedicated to goddess Bhagavathi, worshipped by the Hindu community of Kerala as the Mother Goddess. The puppets are opaque, thus casting black and white shadow, mainly in sitting or standing profile. Tolu Bommalatta (leather puppet dance) of Andhra Pradesh have puppets that are of human size with several joints. They are translucent and cast coloured shadows on the screens. The shadow puppet show of Karnataka, Togalu Gombeyatta shares certain similarities with Andhra Pradesh's Tolu Bommalatta. The figures in this puppet show are also translucent and they shed coloured shadows.

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National & International News

3-year-old Rohini twins found dead in washing machine

New Delhi, Feb. 26: A pair of three year-old twins died after falling into a washing machine in their house at Avantika housing complex, Rohini, on Saturday afternoon. The boys were found with their heads down in the tumbler of the machine. Police say a probe has been initiated into the cause of death. Through a preliminary report indicated it was an accident, the cops are looking at all angles.

Doctors confirmed death by drowning. The bodies have been sent to a government hospital for autopsy. The incident was reported around 12.40pm when their mother, Rakhi, left Laksh and Neeshu playing near the bathroom in their first-floor

apartment. Rakhi told the police that she had piled up clothes near the washing machine - a top-loading, semi-automatic model - filled it with water and gone to a grocery store nearby to buy washing powder. The door of the flat had not been locked. When she returned after no more than six minutes, she couldn't find the children. She looked for them in the neighbouring apartments and then informed her husband, Ravinder, who works as a manager with a private insurance company in Rohini. They have another child, Aditya, 10, who was in school. Ravinder came home within 10 minutes and joined the search for the children. "The couple returned home around 1.10pm and checked the washing

machine. To their horror, they found the children lying head down in the water," a neighbour, Jaya Sharma, told TOI. The couple pulled them out of the tumbler and rushed them to a private hospital where the boys were declared dead. Ravinders then took them to Jaipur Golden Hospital in Rohini where doctors confirmed death due to drowning. Meanwhile, Sharma had informed the police and a team from Vijay Vihar police station reached the house. "We found 12-15 litres of water in the washing machine. Though the family does not suspect any foul play, a probe has been initiated," said M N Tiwari, DCP, Rohini. Prima facie evidence suggests that the children might have climbed on a bucket beside the washing

machine and tried to peep into the tumbler. The bucket might have slipped due to which they fell head down into the water. However, it's a mystery how both fell into the tumbler. A crime and forensic team has lifted evidence from the scene. The washing machine had been purchased just a few months ago. The family has apparently told cops that Rakhi had left the children alone with the washing machine switched on earlier too without any trouble. "It is possible that the children tried to peep in out of inquisitiveness but we are probing how they managed to climb to a height from which they could fall into the tumbler," said a police officer. No FIR had been registered till late in the night.

Govt to hire 980 officers through civil services exam, lowest in 5 years

New Delhi, Feb. 26: The government will hire 980 officers to fill up vacancies in the prestigious IAS, IFS and IPS through civil services exam 2017, the lowest in the past five years. A total of 1,079 and 1,164 vacancies were reported to be filled through the civil services examinations 2016 and 2015, respectively. The results of last year's test are yet to be declared. 1,364 and 1,228 such vacancies were reported for the recruitments to be done through the 2014 and 2013 tests, respectively. A total of 1,091 posts in various central services were advertised

for civil services exam, 2012, as per the notification by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), which conducts the examination annually. The government had sought to fill 880 posts in various services through civil services exam, 2011. The number of vacancies to be filled on the result of civil services examination 2017 is expected to be approximately 980 which include 27 vacancies reserved for those in physically handicapped category, it said. The vacancies for this year's test are lowest advertised in the past five years by the government. "The final number of vacancies may

undergo change after getting firm number of vacancies from cadre controlling authorities. Reservation will be made for candidates belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and Physically Disabled categories in respect of vacancies as may be fixed by the government," the UPSC notification said. Thousands of aspirants appear in the civil services examination conducted annually in three stages — preliminary, main and interview — to select officers for Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and

Indian Police Service (IPS), among others. This time, the civil services preliminary examination 2017 has been preponed and it is scheduled to be held on June 18, instead of August. The Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) will be conducting the examination in June after a gap of three years. The preliminary tests for 2016, 2015 and 2014 were held during the month of August, a senior UPSC official said. The last date for receiving the applications for the preliminary test is March 17.