

Sunday Special

Poetry Section

Flowering A Xewali

By- Parthajit Borah

(This verse is translated from the poem
"XEWALIR SOITE TUMIU PHOOLA" composed by Papu kalita)

You flower with whitish xewali
Falling with the pure dews
Rolling on your pearly cheeks
Sprinkling its fragrance
in the moonlit evening,
in the autumnal evening.

I stare you at the heart of dog grass
When I long to touch you.
Arming you with my sulky hands
I smear every dew droplets on my eyes.

Why vibes often lose yet
Earning you at the autumnal lap.
I keen touching you even at fallen frame,
at the losing fame.

(**** Xewali : a kind of white flower.)

To my sweet daughter

By- K. Dineshwori

Sometimes it's hard to tell
How much you meant to me.
The day you came to this earth
All pains and worried left,
It was joy, happiness you brought us.

Your coming to us is the best gift
You might not know
How much you are to me and your mother
You have grown now,
But remember
You came from within,
from just beneath our heart.

It's there you'll always be,
Though your own life will now start.
You're growing so fast it sends us awheel,
With misty eyes I ask,
Where's my little girl?
I know, I seem harsh and so unfair,
But one day you will see.

May be I had little time to look after you
But everything I told you was because
The next few years will so quickly fly,
With laughter and joy, mixed with a fear
As you begin your growth to womanhood
this fact you must know.

You'll always be our source of pride,
no matter where you go.
You must stand up tall and proud,
within you feel no fear,
For all your dreams and goals sit before
With God's love in your heart and the
You'll always be my winner, and victor.
For you this poem was written, with hope
to show you, how much we care for you

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What is a True Leader?

The purpose and intent [of a true leader] shall be to elevate mankind's faith,
and to fill the world with justice — Maimonides, Laws of Kings, 4:10

Everyone must be a leader — The Rebbe

At some point in our lives, we have all had a relationship with someone — a parent, a teacher, or employer perhaps — who greatly changed the way we look at life and the world. Someone who had high standards and truly stood for something. Someone who inspired and motivated us. Someone who taught us to set goals and instilled the confidence and spirit to achieve them. Such a person is a true leader.

Today, we are surrounded by people we may call leaders — in government, in business, in education, in the arts. But we are suffering from a scarcity of genuine leadership. Where are these people really leading us, and why?

After witnessing so much deceit and such frequent abuse of power, many people have stopped trusting their leaders. Still, no matter how cynical we may grow, we resign ourselves to the fact that we need someone to keep our various houses in order. Since we are so preoccupied with our own lives, we are willing to elect or appoint officials to manage the affairs of the land.

But is a leader merely a manager? What should we expect from our leaders? And do we really need leaders in the first place?

Yes, we do need leaders. On our own, we lack the vision, direction, and strength to reach our goals. We all begin our lives in need of guidance — even the most precocious child could not possibly be expected to make certain crucial decisions. Once we become adults, with the capacity to reason for ourselves, we are so overwhelmed by the pressures of daily survival that we rarely find the time and energy to focus on life's larger issues. And when we do, our emotions and inherent subjectivity limit our vision and constrict our movement.

A leader provides a new perspective, inspiring us to abandon our narrow field of vision. When we are preoccupied with our self-interests — be they petty or great — a leader sends out a wake-up call, alerting us to seek the true priorities in life.

This sense of urgency is just as important in a leader as a sense of vision. Leadership today is sorely lacking the quality of urgency. Many of our leaders are effective managers, and some are even inspirational; we have CEOs who can direct thousands of employees toward a single objective, and politicians whose rhetoric inspires millions of citizens to support them.

What these leaders don't provide is simple — and essential: a vision of life itself. Genuine leadership must give people a long-term vision that imbues their lives with meaning; it must point them in a new direction and show how their every action is an indispensable part of a purposeful whole. It is not enough for our leaders to teach us to be productive or efficient; they need to inspire us to change or improve the world in a productive, meaningful way. And this creates a compelling sense of urgency: to fulfill this vision of life.

What Makes a True Leader?

With so many people purporting to be leaders these days, how do we recognize a true leader? To answer that question, we must step back and ask: What is it that a leader is really trying to accomplish?

A true leader wants nothing more than to make people stand on their own, as leaders in their own right. Instead of trying to blind us with his or her brilliance, a true leader reflects our own light back to us, so that we may see ourselves anew.

Moses was the quintessential leader. We see in Exodus that he was a shepherd — a rather modest

beginning for the man who would speak to G-d. He kept watch as thousands of sheep wandered the fields. Moses noticed that one sheep was missing and went off to look for it, finding it at a distant brook. When the sheep had finished drinking, Moses lifted it onto his shoulders and carried it back to the flock.

When G-d saw this, he realized that Moses was a man of reason, empathy and selfless devotion, a man truly worthy to lead His people. After all, no one was watching Moses; he could easily have thought to himself, Why be concerned with one sheep when there are thousands?

In our secular society, we tend to think of a leader as a person who is well-connected, who is powerful or charismatic or wealthy. We judge our leaders by what they have. But a true leader should be judged by what he has not — ego, arrogance, and self-interest. A true leader sees his work as selfless service toward a higher purpose. As the sages say, "Leadership is not power and dominance; it is servitude". This does not mean that a leader is weak; he derives great strength from his dedication to a purpose that is greater than himself.

Each generation has its Moses, a leader who inspires absolute trust, who is totally dedicated to fulfilling his unique role. He understands and appreciates each person's role in perfecting this world, and guides him or her accordingly; he rises above any individual perspective to take a global view, seeing how each person and issue fits into the entire scheme of the contemporary world.

A true leader shakes people from their reverie and tells them, "No,



you don't need to live a life of desperation and confusion. Yes, you do have the ability to find meaning in your life, and the unique skills to fulfill that meaning. You are an important link in a chain of generations past; you have a legacy worth preserving and a future worth fighting for."

A true leader shows us that our world is indeed heading somewhere and that we control its movement. That we need not be at the mercy of personal prejudices or the prevailing political wind. That none of us are subservient to history or nature — that we are history and nature. That we can rid the world of war and hate and ignorance, and obliterate the borders separating race from race, rich from poor.

Centuries ago, kings and queens ruled the world, but we are today far removed from the very concept of absolute leadership. Indeed, leadership would seem to contradict our democratic tradition, which has taught us not to subordinate our lives to another human being. But we cannot afford to be so literal-minded: If the ideals of democracy were followed to the extreme, if the public demanded a referendum for even the smallest piece of legislation, society could not function. So our current political makeup is a

pragmatic and acceptable compromise, allowing individuals a role in choosing their leaders while holding the leaders responsible to society.

Still, many people have lost faith in contemporary leaders. The solution is not to resign yourself to this sad state of affairs, but to search for and demand a leader of sterling character. The ultimate goal should be to have all the benefits of democracy and the benefits of a visionary leader.

It is important, especially today, to distinguish between leadership and demagoguery. A demagogue may inspire people, but his motives are impure and his expectations unrealistic. It is wise to be a bit skeptical when assessing a leader: Is he truly devoted to his mission or just seeking glory? Is he truly interested in the welfare of others or simply building a flock for his own aggrandizement?

A true leader does not want followers; he wants to teach others how to be leaders. He does not want control; he wants the truth. He does not impose his leadership on others, nor does he take away anyone's autonomy. He inspires by love, not coercion. When it comes time to take credit, he makes himself invisible; but he is the first to arrive at the time of need, and he will never shrink away in fear. He is so passionate about your welfare that when you consult him for guidance, it is like coming face to face with yourself for the first time.

A true leader must be a living example of his teachings. When we see that a leader's personal life embodies his philosophy, we too are inspired to learn that philosophy. Conversely, if we see that a leader does not live by his own words, we cannot trust him.

It is useless for a leader to be a visionary in the abstract; he must be a successful communicator whose vision can be translated into specific, applicable principles — not knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but knowledge that can actually help improve the world.

So a leader must be many things — selfless, devoted, visionary, courageous, and above all, humble. When G-d chose Moses to lead His people out of bondage in Egypt, Moses replied, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" (Exodus, 3:12). Indeed, "Moses was humbler than any man on the face of the Earth" (Numbers, 12:3).

We must recognize the characteristics of a leader — not only so we can weed out the demagogues, but so we can freely embrace a true leader when he does emerge. When people sincerely believe in a leader, they rise above their petty self-concerns. They become eager to accept his direction and input, and are inspired to accomplish far more than they could have on their own.

By recognizing the characteristics of a true leader, we set a standard for our leaders and, more important, for ourselves. Setting your sights on the summit, even when you have yet to arrive there, is the surest way of completing the journey.

After the passing of his father-in-law, the previous Rebbe, in 1950, the Rebbe initially declined to lead the Lubavitch movement, saying that one needs to have "special strengths" for such a task. A year later, on the first anniversary of his father-in-law's death, he finally accepted and formally assumed leadership.

One of the rare occasions on which he addressed his role as leader was during a celebration for his eighty-third birthday, in 1985. "Immodesty is one of the most destructive attributes in human nature," he said. "It is the root of all inappropriate behavior. How can we then allow people to gather here today in honor of one individual?" The Rebbe explained that the gathering was not meant to honor an individual, but an entire movement toward righteousness. "Therefore, it isn't relevant which individual heads the movement — only the movement itself," he continued. "The success of the movement is dependent on the unity of all its followers, a unity that transcends their differences. However, in order to unite people who are diverse by nature, there needs to be one leader who is a servant to the cause, whose sole role it is to teach and inspire and perpetuate the activities of the movement."