

Rokeya, the mother

Remembering on her birth and death anniversary

Female half

Rokeya Hossain Sakhawat

To treat an ailing person, it is necessary first to know the stage of ailment. So, to discover the path to progress for the female-folk, a display of the picture of their downfall is needed. In the article titled "Downfall of women" I have informed my sisters that we have

an ailment – 'Slavery'. The cause of the ailment and its stage has been described earlier to some extent. Now we shall try to show, how distorted our social condition has become due to that ailment. The prescription for medicines and diet will be provided elsewhere.

Here I feel the need to speak a few words for the awareness of my conservative purdah loving sisters. I am not standing against the system of seclusion. If someone finds in my article 'Downfall of women' nothing else except hatred for *Purdah*, then I shall have to understand that I could not express my thoughts in the best possible manner, or the reader has not read my article attentively.

In that article almost all women have been mentioned. Do the women in all societies remain imprisoned in confines? Or, have I deemed them completely developed because they are not *Purdanashin* (do not practise seclusion)? I have criticized mental slavery (enslaved mind).

When something new is attempted, society first raises a furore and later accepts the new ways – as its example I have referred to the changed condition of Parsi women. Earlier, they did not even have the right to use an umbrella, afterwards their excesses have crossed the limits, yet the earth has not been destroyed. It is true that now Parsi women have been freed from the purdah but has freedom from mental slavery been achieved? Definitely not. And their coming out of *Purdah* in no way acquaints us with their own agency and intelligence. Parsi men, just to blindly imitate the British, have brought their women out of *Purdah*. It informs us nothing about the vitality of those women; as inert they were, they still are. When their males kept them in *Zenana*, they lived there. And when the males have brought them out in the field, pulling their 'nose-ropes', only then they have come out of *Purdah*. What bravery of the womenfolk is there in this? This type of opposition to *Purdah* is never appreciable.

When Columbus determined to discover America, did not people call him insane? Women want to realize their own rights and ownership to consider themselves as superior as men, what is this, but insanity?

We cannot be fully content with the amount of respect shown by males to women. It is true that people worship the demonic goddesses like Kali, Shitala and others. But likewise, do not 'goddesses' like tigresses, female serpents, lionesses also receive awe and worship? So, it is quite evident who is getting the worship – the woman Kali or the demoness garlanded with human heads!

To instruct women, elders show Sita Devi as ideal. Sita of course was not *Pardanashin*. She was the female-half of Ramchandra, the queen, lover and companion. And Ramchandra was the lover, pious ... everything. But the

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From toxicwatch.org

Statement on 37th Anniversary of Bhopal Disaster

Written By Mediavigil on Thursday, December 02, 2021 | 9:04 AM

STATEMENT OF BHOPAL GAS PEEDITH MAHILA UDYOG SANGHATHAN & BHOPAL GAS PEEDITH SANGHARSH SAHAYOG SAMITI ON THE 37th ANNIVERSARY OF THE BHOPAL GAS LEAK DISASTER

For his valuable & selfless contributions in furthering the cause of the Bhopal gas victims, the Government of India conferred the 2020 Padma Shri Award posthumously to Shri Abdul Jabbar, former Convener, Bhopal Gas Peedith Mahila Udyog Sanghathan. Jabbar's wife, Sayra Bano, accepted the award from the Hon'ble President of India, Shi Ramnath Kovind, at the award ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in Delhi on 08 November 2021.

Another year has passed without most of the core issues facing the Bhopal gas victims remaining unaddressed even 37 years after disaster of 02/03 December 1984. The poisonous gas leak disaster had resulted in the eventual death of at least 25,000 victims and had caused injuries in varying degree to over 550,000 others. The escape of toxic fumes from a pesticide plant's storage tank containing about 40 tons of methyl isocyanate (MIC) – an extremely hazardous chemical – had spread to about 40 sq kms of area and had affected two-thirds of the city's then population of around 900,000. The pernicious impact on flora and fauna in the affected area was equally grave. The pesticide plant was operated by Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL). UCIL was then controlled by Union Carbide Corporation (UCC) – a company now owned by the Dow Chemical Company, a subsidiary of Dow Inc., a giant U.S. multinational chemical company.

Unfortunately, even over three and half decades after the disaster, neither the State nor the Central Government has attempted either to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the ramifications of the disaster or to take necessary remedial measures. The Supreme Court assisted Settlement of 14/15 Feb, 1989 for a sum of 470 million U.S. dollars (then about Rs,705 crores) – based on the assumption that only around 3000 victims had died and another 102,000 had suffered injuries in varying degree – was a complete sham with each gas-victim being finally awarded less than one-fifth of the sum allotted even as per the terms of that unjust settlement.

The current status of issues such as health care, compensation, prosecution of the accused, remediation of the environment, etc., may be briefly recounted as follows:

HEALTH CARE: Apart from the fact that a fairly large health-infrastructure has been built in terms of buildings and number of hospital beds (about 1000 beds exclusively for gas-victims) because of pressure exerted over the years by organizations supporting the cause of the Bhopal gas victims, the quality of health care in terms of investigation, diagnosis, treatment, research and record-keeping continue to be abysmal as ever. The persistent apathy of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the Government of Madhya Pradesh in monitoring the health status of the Bhopal gas victims is shocking to say the least. They have failed to maintain proper medical records of hospitals and clinics through computerization

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100 years of 'The Rebel'

Bengali language and culture have many things to be proud of. Just think and let it sink in! Bengali language finds the origin of its literature in a compilation of Buddhist verses, it's tryst with modern poetry in form and content (including revisit & reinterpretation of myths) in the writings of a Christian poet, it's moment of exultation in having the first Asian Nobelist and national voice in a Hindu poet and its expressions of fury against things old and rotten, against all forms of bigotry in the poems of a Muslim poet.

It's giving the world a mother-tongue day on 21st February, through martyrdom for independence is widely known fact. Also known is the fact that that even in the multi-lingual, multi-cultural ensemble that is India, it inspires other languages to fight for the constitutional rights given to their mother-tongue by the annual observance of 19th May – martyrdom day for Assamese Bengali-speaking people of Barak valley.

Now one more occasion for glorious remembrance has come. *Bidrohi*, or *The Rebel* is a celebrated poem by Kazi Nazrul Islam. In the year 1921 – as his friend Muzaffar Ahmad mentions in his memoir – in December itself, the poet wrote this poem. The poem was published first in a magazine. All its issues were sold immediately and a second lot had to be printed. Government was scared. Though not declared a ban officially, all the copies of the magazine were hunted out and confiscated. The poem was then reprinted in some other magazines as well.

those were also confiscated. The poem was finally included in his collection *Agnibina*. Reportedly, the collection was immediately banned by the colonial government. In fact, as Ahmad Rafiq, famous scholar on Rabindranath mentions in his article published in Nazrul Centenary issue of Nazrul Institute, Dhaka, "... along with *Agnibina*, five more books by the poet were banned and confiscated by the government – *Bisher Banshi*, *Bhangaar Gaan*, *Chandrabindu*, *Pralay Shikha* and *Jugbani* ..." This also is a unique fact for India, even now.

Two years later, in 1923, the poet would be jailed for his poem *Anandamayeer Agamane*, again a first of its kind (of course Sarojini Naidu and Subramanya Bharati were jailed earlier but not for their poems but for political activities), but that's beside the point.

Is the poem *The Rebel*, holds some justification for anarchy or more – all-round chaos and disasters? These lines: "I am irresponsible, cruel and arrogant, / I am the king of the great upheaval, / I am cyclone, I am destruction, / I am the great fear, the curse of the universe. / I have no mercy, / I grind all to pieces. / I am disorderly and lawless, / I trample under my feet all rules and discipline!" Do they carry justification for the rule of tyrant and various forms of modern extremisms?

For an uninformed reader, it may appear like that. It may appear like that if we assume that the poem was written directly against the colonial rulers or for that matter, any of the ruling cliques of the contemporary bourgeois world. Or, reversely, the poem kept in view the recent socialist revolution in Russia. Though Nazrul as a poet and citizen, whole-heartedly supported the revolution, it was *Langal*, the magazine edited by him, which first published Maxim Gorky in Bengali translation, yet the poem *The Rebel*, aimed in particular, not the ruler but the ruled. It aimed the cowardice of the Bengalee intelligentsia, litterateurs and the middle class in general from which they came. While in general it also aimed the unperturbed state of mind of people in general who thought, in the language of Tulsidas, "*Kehu nrip, hame ka hani?*"

Recently a very interesting page of a journal was floating on social media as an image. It contained a letter from Muzaffar Ahmad from District Jail, Meerut dated 12.7.1931 (he was one of the prime accused in Meerut Conspiracy case). The letter, written to Shibram Chakraborty, a great writer of puns, children's stories and serious prose complained that he didn't get any response from his friend writers (including Nazrul) when he asked them to send books for him. In the very next line he writes, "Moreover, I know that in our country litterateurs are scared of politics." And Nazrul struck that scare in his inimitable way. The poem talks about rebellion, jihads, wars of aggression, destruction, brutalities, natural calamities, disasters ... and again madness of love,

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Central Committee meeting of BAB



Physical meetings were not being held due to pandemic. Hence, after two years of few virtual meetings, second CC meeting of BAB since last conference, was held at APSS premises on 12th Dec. 21. Meeting had more or less good presence. Among a number of good decisions five can be noted:

1. Next conference or general assembly of BAB will be held at Patna any suitable day after third week of March 2022.



2. BAB, with an intention to participate in Kolkata Book Fair 2022, has already applied for a stall; if allotted it will represent and exhibit Bahirbanga as earlier.

3. Women's cell will be created with urgency at the central

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100 years of

sublimity of music, frenzy of dance ... anything which scares, tends to destroy the domesticated vegetative life of people. To relate all these with human history he refers to mythical and historical events, characters from all civilizations. He also refers to the profound values cultivated by the people in developing their culture. The Rebel needs the essential life-force from them all. But why? In end the poem says, "Weary of struggles, I, the great rebel, / Shall rest in quiet only when I find / The sky and the air free of the piteous groans of the oppressed." The poem began with the war-cry, "Say, Valiant, / Say: High is my head!" It ends with the strong affirmation about self, "I am the rebel eternal, / I raise my head beyond this world, / High, ever erect and alone!"

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Female half

behaviour of Ram towards Sita shows that Ram's relation with Sita was almost like that of a boy with a doll. The boy can love the doll to his utmost if he so wishes; can be restless in separation if the doll is lost; spend sleepless nights thinking about the doll; can exhibit vengeful wrath towards the person who had stolen the doll; can be beside himself with joy if gets back the lost doll; and then again, becoming annoyed without any reason can throw the doll in the mud – but the doll cannot do anything to the boy, because though having arms and legs, the doll is an insentient object. The boy can willingly immolate his doll, and on seeing the doll burnt can wail loudly rolling around in the dust!!

Ramchandra has shown fully that he is lord and master!! And Sita? – Only in expressing her wish to go with *Prabhu* Ram to the forest, has she revealed that she too has the power to express her wish. Ram, poor thing, ignorant boy, did not want to understand that Sita has the power of feeling, because in acting with understanding, ownership could not have been exerted in full; – such a pure heart of Sita could not have been trampled and crushed by the kick of mistrust!

OK! Let us accept, abiding by the rules of our times and our country, in union with the voice of the poet that we are not servants of our husbands – we are female halves. We are housewives in their houses, followers in death (or at least here and there due to their job requirements), co-sharers in their happiness and sorrow, shadow-like companion etc.

But has anyone perceived through their thought-eyes, how disabled the males have become with female-halves like us in this Kaliyug? It is a matter of regret (or of good-luck for the "masters") that I am not an artist, otherwise I could have drawn a picture showing what unique shapes they have got by taking such female-forms as halves.

White-haired wise persons say that our domestic life is like a two-wheeled cart – one wheel is the husband, other is the wife. That is why in English, wife is generally called 'partner', 'better-half' etc. Duties of life are very serious, not easy –

"Who can run in order,

The domestic affairs so difficult?

Finely therein remain the practices n' policies of statecraft."

Perhaps imagining this domesticity as a head, the authors of the *Shastras* have termed husband and wife as its limbs. Then let us see what is the appearance of society in present age.

Suppose, somewhere on the eastern side there is a big mirror in which you can inspect yourself – head to foot. Your right limb-part is the male and your left limb-part is the female. Look, standing in front of the mirror –

Your right arm is long (thirty inches) and stout, your left arm is twenty-four inches long and thin. Right foot is 12 inches long, left foot is very small. Right shoulder is five feet in height, left shoulder is four feet high. (That is why the head is not remaining upright, it is leaning leftward! Yet it is leaning a bit on the opposite side also due to the weight of the right ear.) Right ear is big like the ear of an elephant, left ear is long like the ears of a donkey. Look at it! look at it well! See, what is the image you present!! If this appearance is not to the liking of many of you, then let me show the movement of the two-wheeled cart. The cart of which one wheel is big (husband) and the other wheel is small (wife) cannot move a long distance forward; – it will move in a circle at the same place (dwelling). That is why Indians are unable to move on the road to betterment.

The rules and order of society have kept us completely separated from their situation; their joys and sorrows are of one kind, our joys and sorrows, of another. Here I am compelled to quote a few lines from the poem "*Nabodampatir Premalap*" by Babu Rabindranath Thakur:

"Groom – Why are you weeping in a corner darling?

"Bride – I have left the pet cat at home.

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"Groom – What are you doing in the woods, in the floral bower?

"Bride – I am eating ripe jujubes.

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"Groom – Roving the world, laying waste my life, what should I bring for you?

Tell me dear, what shall I do for you?

"Bride – Pluck for me six or more jujubes.

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"Groom – How will the hours of separation move?

"Bride – I will have a doll's wedding."

Hence, it is seen that the girls are not given education in a manner which would enable them to become shadow-like companion of their husbands. There is no end to the speed of learning of the masters, the farthest stretch of women's learning is generally up to '*Bodhodoy*'. (Primer)

When husband measures the distance of sun and stars from earth, the wife measures the length and breadth of a pillow-cover (to sew)! When the husband with the help of his imagination moves in the heavenly world surrounded by strings of planets and stars, measures on a weighing scale the volume of the solar sphere and determines the speed of a comet, the wife moves about in the kitchen, weighs rice and pulses and determines the speed of the cook. May I ask, O

Mr. Astronomer! Where is your wife beside you? It appears that if your wife goes with you into the solar sphere, she will evaporate in the heat on the way even before reaching there. So it is as well that housewives not go there!!

Many say that there is no need of higher education for women. Women can cook tasty food, can do many types of stitching, can read a few novels and that is enough. More than that is not needed. But doctors say that the need is there, since the sons take birth with the merits and demerits of mother. That's why we see that many boys pass F.A. and B.A., prodded by the canes of teachers and on the strength of learning by rote, but the minds of the boys move inside the kitchen with their mothers. Truth of this can be verified by examining their learning¹.

One friend of mine was explaining the cardinal points (the directions of north, south etc.) to his student. Finally, he put the question, if your right arm remains towards the west and left arm towards the east, then towards which direction will your face be? He got the answer, "towards my back!"

Those who think that physical exercise is unnecessary for their daughters, don't they wish to see their grandsons become healthy 'pehelwan'? Do they not wish that their grandsons would be able to give a slap if punched? If they wish so, then perhaps, they want to grow jackfruit on a delicate rose vine!! And if they wish that even their grandsons should not be strong, rather when beaten with a shoe, should cry with bowed head, "*Mat maro! Lagta hai!!*", and when the beating ends, should threaten the attacker from some distance, "*Kahe marta tha? Hum nalish karega!*", then I am unable to make them understand my point.

Though there are sufficient facilities for female education in Christian society, yet the women are unable to enjoy their rights to the fullest extent. Their minds do not get liberated from slavery. To some extent, it is true that husband and wife move together on the way of life, but not all the better-halves unite their lives with that of their partners and get absorbed. While the husband is dying of shame worrying about the web of debts he is caught in, the wife is contemplating a new bonnet. Because she has been taught to be poesy incarnate – ergo she wants to remain dressed as a charming poem. She is unable to comprehend the prosaic burden of debt.

Now, let us enter the Muslim society. According to Muslims, we are 'half' of male, that is two females are equivalent to one male. Or, two brothers and a sister taken together are 'two and a half'. You will see that in "Mohammadi law" the provision is that the daughter will receive half of a son's share in the paternal property. But this rule is confined only to books. If you take upon yourselves the trouble of watching the division of property of some rich Muslim, or go to see his zamindari, then you will see that the daughter's share is zero or negligible.

Now I will speak about intangible property. Father's affection, care etc. are intangible property. Here too there is too much partiality. Where do we get even half of the care, affection, support? The person who appoints four

instructors for the good education of his son, does he appoint two instructresses for his daughter? Where the son passes three examinations (till BA), does the daughter pass one and a half (Entrance pass and FA fail)? Schools for sons are uncountable, schools for girls are untraceable. Where the brother has become '*Shams-ul-olama*'², has the sister become '*Najm-ul-olama*'? No doubt in the sky of *Zenana* there are numerous '*N a z m u n n e s a*' and '*Shamsunnesa*'. But we want to see '*Nazm-ul-olama*' in the sky of literature.

For us in this country the structure of education is like this – first the alphabet of Arabi, then reading of Qur'an Sharif. But the meanings of the words are not explained to us; just recite parrotlike with the assistance of memory. If a father's patronage increases, he tries to make his daughter '*Hafeza*'. '*Hafez*' is someone who can recite the whole Qur'an. That is the extent of our learning of Arabi. If we want to learn Farsi and Urdu, straight off we are told to read '*Karima babakhsha e barhale ma*' and '*Banatan Naas*' (Urdu)³. Firstly, there are no diacritics in the text, to top that no easy textbook been read earlier, hence, the reading of those books never goes fast. For many, the girl-life ends before completing the reading of these few books. After marriage the girl thinks, "Whatever! At last saved from studies!" Some of the girls gain expertise in cooking and needlework. Even in Bengal, girls are not taught Bengali language properly. Some learn to read Urdu but do not learn to hold a pen. Acme of their progress is training in craftsmanship of embroidering with spangles and sequins and knitting woollen shoes and socks. If Prophet Mohammad (D), while settling your accounts, asks, "How have you done justice in your behaviour to your daughters?", what will you say?

It is said about the history of prophets that whenever humans have oppressed and sinned too much, one or another prophet has come to crush the wicked and nourish the virtuous. Women were being greatly oppressed in Arabia, Arabians were killing their daughters, then Hajrat Mohammad (D) stood as the guard of daughters. He did not remain content with only laying down various laws, he showed the ideal by bringing up his own daughter. Making his whole life lit with Fatema, he has shown, how adorable are daughters. That affection, that care is incomparable in this world.

To be continued in next issue

1. I couldn't resist the temptation to quote some questionnaire from the magazine '*Dasi*' – Question – When was Cromwell born? Answer – In the year 1649 when he was fourteen years old.

Question – Describe his continental policy. Answer – He was honest and truthful and he had nine children.

Question – What is the adjective of ass? Answer – Assansole.

Question – Who was Chandra Gupta? Answer – Chandra Gupta was the grand-daughter of Asoka.

"Mystery of examinations. English translation of '*Kala jhalsaito lagilo*' was asked. A student has written, 'roasted some plantations.' Another has written, 'roasted some plantagenets.' One other has written, 'roasted some plaintiffs.' Don't think that these are concocted answers. Really such answers have been received."

2. '*Shams-ul-olama* is a title for the learned. *Shams* means sun, *olama* is plural for *Alam*, learned men. In this way *Nazm-ul-olama* would mean 'the star of learned women.'

3. Here I remembered a girl in her tenth year. In the villages '*bhanani*'s are appointed to '*bhan*' (remove

husk) the paddy. That girl, thought that the work of the '*bhanani*'s of de-husking the paddy is easier than the colourful drama of the mood of Hosen Ara, while reading '*Banatan Naas*'. So, whenever she got a chance, she used to go to the shed where the husking pedal was kept and made a mess of a seer of paddy. The rice couldn't be cleanly husked out from that paddy – the queer thing, a mix of rice, husk and paddy, looked like 'whole meal' flour. For the patients who are given wholemeal flour as diet, for them that wholemeal rice powder would have been beneficial, no doubt.

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level and then at all levels.

4. With the help of ADRI a survey will be done on availability of Bengali teachers and textbooks in those schools of Bihar where Bengalee students are enrolled and have presence.
5. A convention of Bengalees from Bihar, including those who are living out of Bihar in India and abroad – with the help of organisations of Bhagalpurbasis, Purniabasis and Mungerbasis functioning at Kolkata – will be held in Kolkata as decided earlier, sometime after conference.

Withdrawal of Farm Laws

Historic movement of the farmers of the country has ended for the time being, after repeal of three contentious farm laws in the parliament and subsequent satisfactory written response to the leaders of Samyukta Kisan Morcha from the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare of central government on 9th December. The written response assures:

1. A committee comprising central government, state governments, representatives of farmers' organisations (making clear that representatives of SKM will also be included) and agricultural scientists will discuss inter alia, under the mandate – how to ascertain MSP to be made available to the farmers of the country. Government has already assured that present formula of MSP will continue till then.
2. So far as cases against farmers during the movement are concerned, UP, Uttarakhand, HP, MP and Haryana governments have already agreed that all the cases will be withdrawn with immediate effect.
- 2.A. Government of India also agrees that cases filed by related departments, agencies and all the Union Territories including Delhi on the activists and supporters of the movement will be immediately withdrawn. Govt. of India will make an appeal to other states as well to withdraw cases filed at their end.
3. Haryana and UP governments have principally agreed for giving compensations. Punjab government have also made public announcements regarding points 2 & 3 mentioned above.
4. Regarding bill on electricity, discussions will be held with all stake holders / Samyukta Kisan Morcha about its effects on farmers. After the discussions, the bill will be placed in the parliament.
5. Farmers have been made free of criminal liabilities as per the section 14 & 15 of the act passed by the government of India on the issue of Parali (hay-burning).

Plight of drivers

- Dipak Bhattacharya

A recent World Bank report on traffic crash highlighted the plight of truck drivers and its social impact in India.

The report, released by Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari, said while 53 per cent of truck drivers earned "a meagre income of Rs 10,000-Rs 20,000 per month, 93 per cent did not get any social security benefits such as provident fund, pension, health insurance, life insurance or gratuity".

Quoting figures compiled by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in 2018, the report said of the 1.5 lakh people killed in road crashes in the country, 15,000 (10 per cent) were truck drivers. Trucks were involved in over 57,000 crashes during this period.

According to the report, one of the biggest challenges in claiming compensation after a crash for truck drivers has been under-reporting of the incident and non-filing of FIRs. Overall, about two-thirds (66 per cent) of the 420 truck drivers surveyed for the study hadn't filed an FIR after the crash.

The study noted that despite having a high rate of crashes and resultant injuries, it was found that none of the respondent truck drivers had applied or benefited from any government-run scheme for compensation. They had neither laid claim to or benefited from any government scheme like cashless treatment at hospitals, solatium fund for hit-and-run cases, or any other ex-gratia schemes at the central or state level. "The process of claiming insurance is fraught with challenges for vulnerable groups like truck drivers who often hail from LIH (lower income households) and disadvantaged sections of society," the study observed. Only 40 per cent of the drivers were found to have life insurance.

Apart from the same, the plight of autorickshaw and E-rickshaw drivers in India is also overarching and extreme. The lockdown across India due to coronavirus had adversely affected the lives of daily wage workers which included more than 500,000 autorickshaw drivers in Mumbai. There were more than 500,000 daily wage-earning auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai. During the pandemic period, most of the auto-rickshaw drivers came from Bihar, Rajasthan, UP, and Madhya Pradesh. The biggest problem they faced during the pandemic period was starvation. Most of the auto-rickshaw drivers in Mumbai were migrant workers from Bihar, UP, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. They had been out of business for many weeks prior to the lockdown was announced on March 25, 2020 in India. Since schools and colleges had started closing down before the lockdown, the drivers were left with little business. On an average, in India an auto-rickshaw driver earns about INR 500 on an average per day. Some live with their families in little rooms while others live in shared accommodation, shared by up to eight drivers as per a report by Mr. Tiwari (President of Mumbai's Auto-rickshaw Union mentioned to SBS Hindi, 2020). Further, Mr. Tiwari said that "About 60% of the drivers were stuck in Mumbai and were unable to return to their villages because no trains were available for them. "Some tried to get back to their villages which were commonly about a 1,000 km away from Mumbai in their own rickshaw and met with fatal accidents," Mr Tiwari said to SBS Hindi. The lockdown critically depicted the plight of the

autorickshaw drivers.

The hike in petrol prices has also served as a plight for the cab drivers including public and private cabs across the country. The livelihood of Ola and Uber drivers, who are the backbone of these app-based ride hailing firms, has been adversely impacted due to price hike as well as the lockdown, but the question of their occupational health and safety has long been an issue. These drivers work in a "toxic and isolated work environment", a survey conducted by the International Transport Workers Federation (ITF), Delhi Office in collaboration with Indian Federation of App based Transport workers (IFAT). Drivers are independent contractors, and are not on the payroll of the company. They are a part of the gig economy, and are paid per task rather than a fixed compensation. However, the pay and incentive structure are not set by these contractors, but the companies themselves.

The survey was conducted between July and November 2019 in Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi NCR, Hyderabad, Jaipur, and Lucknow. There were 2,128 respondents, a little over half of which were from Bengaluru. The report, prepared by the Centre for Internet and Society, showed that a whopping 93.5% of drivers said that they did not have any insurance — accidental, health or medical. 0.15% said that they have accidental insurance, a sliver when the job involves being on the road all the time. Ola and Uber, over the years, have announced partnerships with different insurance providers to provide a cover to their driver partners. In 2017, Ola announced an in-trip insurance program for its drivers that included covering outstanding vehicle loan obligations, children's educational fee till Class 10, and business loss reimbursement in case of temporary disability. Accident or health insurance does not feature in the list. Similarly, Uber India in 2017 announced that drivers in India would get free life and accident insurance. In 2018, it announced Uber Care stating that it would help the driver partner seek health and life insurance and micro-credit opportunities from leading insurance and credit companies.

"Although Ola and Uber have claimed that there exist health insurance schemes for drivers and future initiatives being advertised and announced, on the ground none of these plans or measures are available to the drivers," the report states. Dwindling incomes have had a big impact on the lives of driver partners, leaving them with barely enough to cover expenses after paying off EMI, penalties, commission and the cost to keep the car running and fuel expenses. The report states that drivers are left with less than Rs 20,000 to support a family. In a profession that once promised drivers incomes of over a lakh rupees per month, earnings have reportedly dropped from Rs 70,000-1,00,000 per month to Rs. 22,000 - 25,000 per month over the last 4 years. The report attributes this steep drop to incentives and bonuses being cut, rise in fuel prices, and decrease in per kilometre rates. The report further claims that neither Ola, nor Uber give assistance when a driver faces harassment or violence while logged in. "Ola or Uber for the most part do not intervene if there is any intimidation from traffic police or local authorities, incidents of road rage, violent attack by customers or criminal elements that endanger drivers' lives, accidents while driving etc.," a release said. The system also makes it hard to exit because of debt and outstanding EMIs. As incomes have dwindled, it has resulted in longer hours on

the road. According to the report, drivers spend 16-20 hours on the road. "Drivers can't exit their current occupational status even if they want to because they are shackled in debts and outstanding EMIs. As a result, they race every day to complete targets so that they may earn just enough to pay these liabilities," the report states. As per the survey's findings, 39.8% of the respondents spent close to 20 hours in their vehicle in a day, and 72.8% of the respondents from Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad drive for close to 20 hours a day.

Due to long hours, 89.8% of the respondents have reportedly said they get less than 6 hours of sleep. Health issues are a natural consequence of these conditions. The report states that backache, constipation, liver issues, waist pain and neck pain are the top five health ailments that these workers suffer from due to the work. 60.7% respondents identified backache as a major health issue. As per the report, a large number of respondents had signed up on both platforms, and tend to switch based on surge pricing or daily incentives. However, it is to be noted that among the respondents, drivers on Ola were higher. Longer hours on the road for drivers, the report states, have also led to another consequence: An increase in the consumption of cigarettes and tobacco as the number of work hours increase. The report notes that both Ola and Uber have updated their service agreements, which absolves the company of all liability towards drivers and riders. "Uber has also stopped using the word "partner" in the agreement and now defines individuals utilizing their app service for commercial gains as "customers". This can be seen as Uber distancing itself from any language that would make them accountable towards providing the drivers with social security or any form of protection and acknowledging any form of "employee-employer" relationship," it states. Therefore, the report states that it is essential that the government look to safeguard the interests of the drivers.

The code was introduced to replace laws pertaining to social security, and mentioned that the schemes may include gig workers. While the code recognises gig workers for the first time, the report says that this code renders them more invisible as it does not use the words 'aggregator' or 'driver partner'. "The government has proposed in the Motor Vehicle Amendment Act 2019 that the "aggregator" will be governed by the Information and Technology Act of 2000. This further insulates the companies from labour litigations and allows them a freehand in how they can operate and employ the workforce to run their businesses," the report says. Terming the work of these drivers to be "representative of modern slavery", the report says that the algorithm pits against peers to maximise profit while also denying them social security and refusing to acknowledge them as employees.

Comparing with countries such as Europe and China, wherein health insurance is not treated as a luxury item and is provided as an amenity to drivers; India has something positive to imbibe. At the same time, US and Australia too has set examples by providing Universal health coverage to ensure a quality of life standard and ensure social security to the drivers for improved health outcomes and eliminate widening social inequalities. It is high time, the Government in India thinks on similar lines to alleviate the plight of the Indian, Cab drivers, autorickshaw and truck drivers.

Continued from page 1

Statement on 37th Anniv...

and networking and have failed to supply health-booklet to each gas-victim with his/her complete medical record. That proper protocol for treatment of most gas-related ailments has not been evolved even 37 years after the disaster speaks volumes about the apathetic attitude of the concerned authorities in this regard. Mere symptomatic treatment and over-medication due to lack of proper monitoring has resulted in increasing number of renal failures among gas-victims. What is equally shocking is that even 37 years after the disaster, most of the gas-victims seeking treatment continue to be classed as "temporarily injured" in order to deny them enhanced compensation for permanent injury.

Writ Petition (Civil) No.50 of 1998, which BGP MUS, BGIA and BGPSSS had filed on 14.01.1998 with pleas to restart disaster-related medical research, monitor & record health status of each gas-victim, improve health care facilities, develop appropriate protocol for treatment of each disaster-related ailment, etc., was upheld by the Supreme Court after 14 years of litigation on 09.08.2012. The Petitioners were further directed to pursue the matter before the High Court of Madhya Pradesh (as Writ Petition No.15658 of 2012), a task that BGP MUS & BGPSSS are actively engaged in at present. However, the matter continues to remain pending for the last nine years before the Madhya Pradesh High Court at Jabalpur since the Union of India has repeatedly failed to comply with numerous directions of the Court. As a result, several critical health needs of the gas victims remain largely unattended even 37 years after the disaster.

COMPENSATION: The failure on the part of the Supreme Court to hear the long-pending Curative Petition against the unjust settlement of 14/15 Feb, 1989, has had an adverse impact on the interests of the gas-victims. Curative Petition

(Civil) Nos.345-347 of 2010, which was filed by the Union of India on 03 Dec, 2010 to challenge the unjust settlement of 14/15 Feb, 1989 and to seek additional sum of at least another Rs.7728 crores as compensation was last listed before the Constitution Bench of the Court on 29 Jan, 2020. However, the hearing was postponed to 11 Feb, 2020. Sadly, the matter was never listed on that date or ever since then. Failure to dispose of the Curative Petition has also meant the indefinite postponement of the hearing of the Special Leave Petition [SLP(C) No.12893 of 2010] filed on 17 Mar, 2010 by eight members of BGP MUS and BGPSSS seeking enhancement of settlement sum by a factor of five in terms of the magnitude of the disaster as assessed by the Claim Courts and in terms of the gravity of injuries suffered by the gas victims on the basis of their medical records. Failure to dispose of the pending Curative Petition and the SLP for over a decade has effectively denied the gas-victims several thousands of crores of additional compensation that they are legitimately entitled to.

CRIMINAL CASES: The pace at which the pending criminal cases against the perpetrators of the Bhopal disaster are proceeding is concerned, there is not the faintest hope that they would ever be prosecuted in their life time since the whole process has become an almost complete farce. On the thirty-seventh anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, the gas-victims still fervently hope that all those who have the power to render justice to the gas-victims will not be found wanting in fulfilling their obligations.

ENVIRONMENTAL REMEDIATION: The environment in and around the former Union Carbide pesticide plant continues to remain contaminated with toxic waste, which was stored/buried within the plant premises as well dumped in the solar evaporation pond (dug outside the plant and lined with thin plastic sheets) during the operation of the plant from 1976 to 1984. In a preliminary study titled "Assessment and Remediation of Hazardous Waste Contaminated Areas in and around M/s Union Carbide

India Ltd., Bhopal" that was jointly carried out by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, and the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Hyderabad, during 2009-2010, it was estimated that "the total quantum of contaminated soil requiring remediation amounts to 11,00,000 MT [metric tons]"(p.68). Another 345 tons of toxic waste is stored in a shed within the plant. Representatives of BGP MUS and BGPSSS met Shri Vishvash Sarang, Minister, Bhopal Gas Relief & Rehabilitation Department, on 29.11.2021 and urged him to take the initiative in holding a workshop of all concerned parties, including international experts, to propose ways and means to remediate the contaminated site. It is hoped that the State Government would respond positively to the proposal since necessary technical expertise is available for the purpose.

Under the Circumstances, We Demand:

Speedy implementation of the Supreme Court Order dated 09 Aug, 2012 in Writ Petition (Civil) No.50 of 1998, which had directed the Union of India to provide the best medical care to the gas-victims;

Speedy Disposal of Curative Petition (Civil) Nos.345-347 of 2010, which is currently pending before the Supreme Court of India, for enhancement of compensation and for remediation of the contaminated site in and around the UCIL plant at Bhopal;

Setting up of a Special Court for speedy trial and prosecution of all the accused, who are responsible for causing the Bhopal disaster.

Proper rehabilitation of all needy gas-victims, especially widowed gas-victims; and

Provision of safe drinking water, free medical care and compensation to all victims of contaminated water and toxic waste.

<http://www.toxicwatch.org/2021/12/statement-on-37th-anniversary-of-bhopal.html>

“Enrich the life of the people in whose midst you may be living”

- Dr. Bimanbehari Majumdar

Presidential Address in the Xth Conference of Bengalee Association, Bihar delivered on 25th February, 1968 at Patna

Members of the Bengalee Association, Bihar, It will be height of impropriety on my part to question your wisdom in selecting a humble teacher like my poor self as your President for the present year. I have got neither the juristic eminence, nor the organising capacity which characterised your distinguished Presidents in the past. Probably you have selected me to indicate some changes in the policy of the Association. You perhaps want to convince some 1.2 million Bengalis in Bihar that it is your desire to make the base of the Association more democratic by electing a President from the humbler people. More important than that is possibly the fact that the Bengalee Association in Bihar will henceforth pay greater attention to social, cultural and economic activities than to questions which are purely political in character. Of course, in these days it is impossible even for a Students' Union to eschew politics altogether. But the emphasis of our Association will be on those aspects of work which are conducive to the growth of better cohesion amongst the people belonging to different strata of society, in helping them to equip their children to develop the faculties latent in them, and above all in evolving closer social relations with our Hindi-speaking Bihari brethren and in exerting strenuously for promoting the prosperity of the State in which destiny has placed us. The Bengalee Association was organised on 13 February, 1938 under the inspiring leadership of the late Mr. P.R. Das with the object of promoting unity among the Bengalis in Bihar and of fostering the spirit of co-operation and cordiality with the other communities in the province.

Between 1939 and 1947 the Association met in nine Conferences held at Jamshedpur, Hazaribagh, Muzaffarpur, Bhagalpur, Monghyr, Darbhanga, Purulia, Patna and Jamshedpur respectively. No conference has been held during the last twenty years. An organisation, the Bengalee Settlers' Association had been started on the eve of the creation of the Province of Bihar and Orissa and it was given the right of sending one representative to the Senate of the Patna University. The late Mr. S. P. Sen, son of the universally respected leader Guru Prasad Sen was the first to serve as the representative of the Association on the newly elected Senate of the University in 1918-19. The system of demanding Domicile certificate from all who desired to enter the service of the Government of the Province was introduced in 1918. It was granted rather

liberally till 1937. As it came to be enforced rigorously after the introduction of Provincial autonomy, the Bengalee Association put up a heroic fight against the irrational and ill-considered Brett Circular and the Owden Circular. Mr. P. R. Das pointed out that Section 298 of the Government of India Act, 1935 recognised an Indian domicile and that the rules as regards provincial domicile were ultra vires and against the creed of the Congress itself. The principle for which the Bengalee Association fought received a notable recognition in Article 16(2) of the present Constitution, which states that no citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for or discriminated against in respect of, any employment or office under the State.

The efforts of the Bengalee Association have been crowned with success in another direction. Before 1938 no College in Bihar had any arrangement for teaching Bengali as a principal subject, that is, in lieu of a classical language. At present the Patna College, B. N. College, Women's College, Magadh Mahila College, Commerce College, in Patna, L. S. College, Muzaffarpur, Katihar College, Purnea College, R. D. D. S. College, Monghyr, Sundarvati Mahila College, Bhagalpur, Deoghar College, Ranchi College, Tata College, Chaibasa, and Jharia Raj College, have got highly qualified staff to teach Bengali language and literature. A few of these Colleges have got arrangement for teaching the subject up to the Honours standard. More important than that is the fact that the University of Patna has set up the Postgraduate department in Bengali with two Readers and seven part-time Lecturers. This and the University of Delhi are the only two Universities outside West Bengal and East Pakistan which have made notable contribution to the advancement of learning in Bengali literature. A number of students also appear as non-Collegiate candidates every year at the M.A. examination in Bengali of the Bihar University, Ranchi University and the Magadh University. Their performance is distinctly poorer than those who get the facility for regular instruction in post-graduate classes.

While we are grateful to the Government and public of Bihar for what they have done with regard to the teaching of Bengali literature in the Patna University and several colleges, we cannot but point out that, these touch only the fringe of the problem. There is hardly any provision for teaching the children in most of the Primary and Secondary Schools in and through Bengali language. The latest Education Commission Report and all the authorities on educational methodology unanimously hold that boys and girls should be taught through their mother tongue at least for several years at the beginning of their educational career. No one has as yet suggested that the latent faculties of young children can best be developed by imparting education to them through a language which is not their mother tongue. But strangely enough in many of the schools

in Bihar there is hardly any provision for teaching the Bengali children through their mother tongue. The consequence has been disastrous as was evident from the hundreds of answer-books in Civics and also in Social Studies at the School Final Examination. The present speaker had the misfortune of being the Head Examiner of these subjects for a number of years. He found that the students of those centres, where there was provision for imparting lessons through the Bengali language, the ideas were expressed in good and idiomatic language and the answers revealed genuine understanding of the subject-matter. But where there was no such provision the knowledge of the candidates was poor and superficial and the language in which they wrote was a jargon of Hindi and Bengali words and syntax. What pained him most was the horrible spelling mistakes perpetrated by these candidates. The career of hundreds of boys and girls is being ruined for lack of provision for teaching them through their mother tongue.

Unrelenting efforts have got to be made by the Bengali community to put an end to this sort of affairs as early as possible. The problem is so gigantic in size that their own unaided efforts in this direction would be of very little avail. They should try to enlist the sympathy of the Government in solving this urgent problem. The complexity of the problem is bewildering in such districts as have got less than 10,000 Bengali-speaking population, because they form a small minority of the total population of the district concerned. The number of Biharis speaking the Bengali language according to the census of 1951 was as follows: — Gaya 3,955, Shahabad 2,630; Saran 3,008; Champaran 632, Muzaffarpur 1,324, Darbhanga 2,768, Palamau 2,030. The Bengali-speaking population in these districts is mainly concentrated in urban areas. If only two or three High Schools and a few dozens of Primary Schools are provided in each of these districts it will be of great help to the linguistic minority community living in this State. The problem is easier to tackle and has been in certain districts tackled where the number of Bengali-speaking population is above one lakh, e.g., Purnea 1,33,399, Santhal Parganas 2,11,451, Dhanbad 1,86,068, and Singbhum 2,68,785. It must be mentioned, however, that very few schools in the Dhanbad district afford facilities for imparting instructions through the medium of Bengali. In between the two extremes of less than ten thousand and more than one lakh population stand Patna (21,951), Monghyr (21,081), Bhagalpur (29,588), Hazaribagh (27,352) and Ranchi (26,186). In these areas some of the schools run separate sections for teaching through Hindi and Bengali but they are facing heavy financial burden on account of this sort of double arrangement. They deserve to be adequately helped by the Government.

[Continued]

Psychological Problems Faced by Children and Teenagers

- Sabarni Kumar Pal

Edited by Dr. (Capt.) D. K. Sinha

Continued from last issue

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) in Children

At times it seems quite normal that our children behave obstinate and react vociferously whenever a child's desires are opposed, not fulfilled or not agreed upon. They may often behave this way when they are tired, hungry, or upset. But if such behaviour is persistent and more than occasional, possibly, the child is suffering from Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD.) This disorder interferes with learning and school adjustment.

As parents, we alone can't handle such behaviour and we need help from a qualified medical person.

How a child with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) behaves

It is sometimes assumed normal to exhibit some oppositional behaviour of the child against parents, or seniors but insulting parents and the superiors is a clear sign of ODD. Almost 99% of the ODD develops in the early teen years. When it starts to develop, it creates a significant distance with the family, social activities, school, and work.

The common symptoms of an oppositional defiant disorder (ODD)

Child is angry and irritable, resentful towards others, and loses temper.

Children behave in an extremely touchy manner and are easily annoyed.

Being defiant and argumentative all the time, children blame others for their own mistakes.

Children being vindictive often deliberately annoys or upsets people.

Children often show temper and tantrums and refuse to obey adults.

Causes of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Researchers don't know what causes ODD. But there are some theories for why it occurs:

Developmental theory- This theory suggests that the

problems start when children are toddlers. Children and teens with ODD may have had trouble learning to become independent from a parent or other main person to whom they were emotionally attached. Their behaviour may be normal developmental issues that are lasting beyond the toddler years.

Learning theory- This theory suggests that the negative symptoms of ODD are learned attitudes. They mirror the effects of negative reinforcement methods used by parents and others in power. The use of negative reinforcement increases the child's ODD behaviours. That's because these behaviours allow the child to get what he or she wants: attention and reaction

Genetics- It can be caused due to the genetic predisposition or neurobiological differences in brain function.

Environment- Lack of proper parenting or lack of supervision or drug abuse can also develop such behaviours.

Risk factors of ODD are:

Child becomes too reactive or remains frustrated from every situation.

develops a problematic relationship with parents.

Children become prone to substance abuse.

Bad performance in social arenas causes a child to behave badly in schools, institutions, and the workplace.

Prevention of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Only early identification and positive parenting can be the best solution for the oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). It helps in rebuilding the positive relationship and positive mind-set in our children. It will also improve our child's relationship with

other adults in his/her life. Another way to treat the oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) is through therapies.

Therapies for the treatment of ODD

Cognitive-behavioural therapy: It trains the child to solve the problems and communicate better with the parents and others. They gradually learn to control themselves and their impulses.

Family Therapy: It helps in improving communication among the family members to treat the ODD. Improving the quality of family interactions is the main focus of this therapy.

Peer group therapy: the focus of this therapy is to improve better social and interpersonal skills among the children suffering from ODD.

Medication: Medicines positively modifies the aggressive attitude of the child but it must be supported with different therapies.

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