



Scalpel

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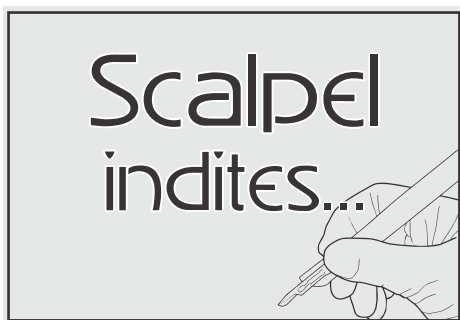


...Diary of a Surgeon



- Dr. Akhilesh Gumashta

Published by: **Virat Hospice Jabalpur**



...Diary of a Surgeon

*When there is no place for the scalpel,
words are the surgeon's only tool.*

- Paul Kalanithi

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Our Inspiration
Sadhvi Gyaneshwari Didi



My sis, as well his..

Of all sanguine and of all genuine Kinships,
With unknown bond, She's All-known sis.

For watery eyes, in it thirsty views....
For barren smiles, in it hidden blues,
For many more desolate deserts,
She is very much an Oasis.

In her a Devotion throbs,
In her a Vision hobnobs,
With Guru's precept of Oneness,
Her smiles have many sobs.

My sis , as well his...

With Unknown bond she is All- known sis.

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Foreword

In 2011, I was posted in UK High commission, London. I could feel the spiritual warmth of Gurudev PP Brahmurishi Bawra ji through two of the personalities Sadhvi Gyaneshwari Didi and Dr Akhilesh Gumashta. They were on a short trip to London. Before I could see a surgeon in Dr Gumashta, I had my first hello with him through his gigantic literary work Ramayan; The Hymns of Himalaya. His voluminous work , which enlivened ambrosial essence of Ram Charit, is certainly a divine part of the Eternity.

In the form of writing in a diary, he has created a book in Hindi on his perception about terminally ill cancer patients.

I went through the lines and stories, wonder-struck I was speechless, read the whole book in one sitting. Going through the

memoirs and anecdotes, the readers will surely immerse into the ocean of feelings and expressions.

These are not just stories but actualities of everyday findings which we overlook. All around, we have some or the other stories and feel humour and pain equally, but very few have caliber to pick and bring these emotions to the world of pages.

Since long, I wished this book be published in English for English-readers to reveal to them the world which is different from they ever have thought of.

Smt. Padmaja Pandey

Joint Secretary
Ministry of External Affairs
New Delhi

Letter of Publisher

The first edition of this extraordinary short-story book was demanded to be published second time in 2015. After author's popular book **Ramayan;The Hymns of Himalaya**, this was his first book in Hindi. In the manner of writing a diary this opus is without lapses and patchwork and with no unwanted stretches of words and lines.

Certainly these stories reveal not only the spiritual truth but mortal reality of somatic world as well.

Very eternal verity is disclosed by Dr Gumashta with delicacy and fineness. Every word of this work is carved with judicious sharpness and dexterity.

On demand of the English readers, we are bringing this work of author to English readers with the hope that this wonderful miracle of expression both in content and form, will be appreciated .

Publisher



First Worship

Since my childhood among many festivals, Ganesh festival was the most fascinating and was closest to my heart. Ganesha, the first worshiped God was made as clay idol reverently worshiped and at the end of the festivity idols in a conge-ritual were immersed in water. The dissolution of idol's clay and colour was ever painful to my little heart..... ever a painful send off.

Extreme impatience mixed with enthusiasm to serve but a fortnight had passed since we had commenced the hospice- our new volunteerism but not a single patient of terminally cancer disease had turned up. We were extremely perplexed presuming that our visionary project might fail.

Of a sudden one noon, one patient (CL) emaciated thin skeleton wrapped with skin was seen on bed. His life was only seeable in a breathing cage. His family kins had gloom in eyes but our eyes had a gleam. I approached close to him. He opened his eyes as if Lord Ganesha had himself appeared to accomplish our establishment.

Stealing sight of his relatives and my staff, I touched his feet and murmured, " O Lord! Thou art embodiment of accomplishment and Ocean of grace and so powerful enthroned on splendorous seat", but he was powerless straining to continue breath lying on the final bed of cancer. I continued my prayers, "Where were you? O God, Long was my waiting for you."

I observed his vitals but I was touching him with a different spirit as if I am

touching Ganesha's idol, as if our determination was taking shape and fructifying.

If he received saline bottle, I conceived it to be ablation ritual (Abhishek). Dressing materials seemed to me as Sandal paste and dressing procedure as besmearing ritual. Rarely he opened his eyes. His look I considered was very humble and gracious. He had throat cancer. He could hardly whisper. He was in great agony. One morning I had a phone call that it was his final call. All his agony and pain ended in a while.

Idol was ready for conge ritual. It for me was time to say Good Bye to Idol as ever a painful send off.





Lonely in the crowd

Because she was sitting all alone and isolated so my sight stopped on her. Railway platform was over crowded as usual. It was strange for me to see such gloomy reflection of a young beauty. I was scratching my head to recognize her, very same she saw me and made a bid with a flicker of smile as If trying to collect all of herself for that formal flicker.

I could recall, she was fiancée of our patient RJ Plainly many times I have seen frosted blight of crops in winter, I have eyed cracked land in summer, I have seen devastated villages in the flood but seeing

her my clinched fists perspired and dampened my eyes. Anathema of all seasons have fallen upon on her as if.

Buoyant girl with brilliant eyes when visited hospice, she did not know her fiancée had a short life of few painful months. She continued to visit RJ even after knowing the facts.

Somebody from medical fraternity had consoled, " Dear RJ, You will be cured completely". RJ told me that in his house some months back, His family was busy in preparation for his marriage but he developed ulcers in his groin. While narrating he had a smile but I was worried about non-healing smiles of the ulcers that jeered at preparation of his marriage. He was told by his kins that marriage was postponed by few months.

Seasons changed, new year arrived. Alas, what did not arrive was the Muhurat- the auspicious time of his marriage.

He always waited for the mobile ring. As soon as it would ring, he would pick it. RJ always had long talks with his fiancée. I could hear his voice "We will need more wedding cards, I have many more friends now and Dr. Saheb will also attend the wedding I suppose."

I remember some days before his death in my routine round, he opened himself before me, "Many times she phoned me today, so many missed calls, I did not pick the phone". I as a doctor kept indecisive poise...

Suddenly on railway platform there was an announcement of the coming train. In the mayhem of mob of people, I returned to the present.

She was lost in the crowd on the platform. I did not try to search her, for its easy to converse about joy but the pain is wordless.





E MIRROR

...nd my friend in the ward welcomed me. Staff nurse was sitting grasping her foot. There was reflection of agony with aching creases on her face and tears in her eyes. There were blood stains on the floor. I thought wound of some patient might have bled.

Staff nurse confessed that her foot was injured by glass piece. I never mislay chance to take to task the staff on recklessness. I exploded on them. None replied, all kept mum.

Then one female patient SD who had large neck glands told me with smile

"I have thrown the mirror, which then broke and injured nurse".

She laughed at her own jest. I name, such jest, a pale humour for usually it has no colour of joy.

Twenty nine years of SD was married two and half years back. Most beautiful bride of her hamlet. The chic bride flaunting herself reached to every limen of her hamlet. She earned blessings of all, specially Nani of ataari, florist Bua, bully grandpa of baakhar.

Here during my round one day she told me "My modish embellishment was ever annoying to my Mummy - Don't look into mirror too much - what for you talk to yourself spell bound in mirror. Shadows do deceive, shadows have evil eye".

Another day she told me "My friends would adorn me and my image would mesmerize me also". With deep sigh she

fell silent, totally lost in piercing hush.
Somebody had said "Even the happy past
is sore to the suffering present".

Now I could conceive the whole matter.
Her face was swollen, lips were
oedematous. Between ballooned eyelids
there were thin slits, she could hardly open
to see.

Staff nurse whispered "For many days
we had not shown her mirror. Today she
took the mirror and saw her face in it and
just threw the mirror on floor".

I realized the aching creases on the face
of staff nurse and tears in her eyes were
not due to injury on her foot.



ANITA

Ahalya's Character in Ramayana, I suppose, is the only most Pathetic and parallelly most august among scores of stories in the world.

She looked like this character. Flat hair, broad forehead, in white saree she looked like meek co-actress of Hindi Black and white films of fifties. Her name was 'Anita'. A short span of her married life with a drunkard, soon ended in split. Her sibling kept no concern with this burden.

She would have become plot for writer



like Leo Tolstoy or Ravindra Nath Tagore, but this slight widow was destined to lead a worthless life.

I can't think back how did she come to Ashram. To top up further to seared life, one day she was nabbed by cancer. Treatment was begun. She had to bear the pain of surgery and chemo. One more torment was added to her list of sufferings. But she ever looked at me with hope and reliance. I always tried to obviate and sneak from her sight, for her cancer was in third stage. My only concern was that she was from Ashram.

How pitiable it was that the town had no medical facility for such terminal patients. She was allocated a corner bed in my hospital. I instructed staff to observe her pulse and blood pressure every two hours. In a routine mechanized way they started counting pulse and blood pressure

of this worthless breathing thing. Her cries and sighs agitated other patients.

One morning her sighs stopped all of a sudden. She was liberated from all the pains, all the torments in a moment.

That very morning something pierced through and through my callous heart. How was that? Why was there no beds in hospital for such living dead. With such a low self esteem these patients die before they die. My tough heart touched the melting point. I discussed with Didi. Thus foundation of Virat Hospice was lead.

How worthy was the end of a worthless life.





A RICH POORMAN

There are two types of Rickshaw-pullers (Rickshaw Walaa) in Jabalpur. Oh! First know my Jabalpur Town. Jabalpur is a middle class town, Rickshaw is local transport and is cheap and affordable.

So I was telling about two types of Rickshaw Walaas. Between two types one are local and others are migratory from Rewa. Both have different characters. Local rickshaw puller are open, interactive (Some times talkative) and as a routine visit country wine- shop in evening. At odd hours

of night you will find only migratory rickshaw walaas of Rewa. They live on Jaggery and gramme. Sleepless nights and skipped diets, make them sore head. In odd hours I too some times get entrapped by them.

They pull rickshaws on crowded roads, on squares and every corner of the town. Those illiterates have no traffic sense. If you are driving a car and all of a sudden if you find a rickshaw puller in front, its sure that he is one of the migratory rickshaw pullers of Rewa. If you are passing by the common civil area and hear the yell crossing and cursing each other, be sure they are the same goths.

Biggest reason of unruly traffic of our town- these Rickshaws blocking movements in hit or miss manner are the reason for haphazard traffic and all road routs. I can measure this to the extent that it

has caused more fuel consumption which further decides the value of Indian currency, and thus Rikshaw walaas of Rewa, who are scattered from Kanpur to Nagpur, are damaging economics of India. On my supposition I was ready to deliberate with economists. Customarily we have family tradition of doing some charity on auspicious days. But I had passed statuary warning that these disorderly Rickshaw walaas should not get any charity.

Our hospice project was at its offshoot. I used to visit the site regularly twice a day. That day was hot and summer had started pricking. Near to the hospice, tyre of my car deflated with teasing noise. I came out of the car to go on foot. A Rikshaw immediately came by my side. Among all odds, two things seemed common, the tyre of my car and the flat face of Rickshaw puller. I loaded myself into Rickshaw. While pulling me he

tried to converse with me - I was alarmed by his accent which confirmed his being of two legged dunce of Rewa. I was worried he would haggle with me about fare. My temple started throbbing with added heat of temper.

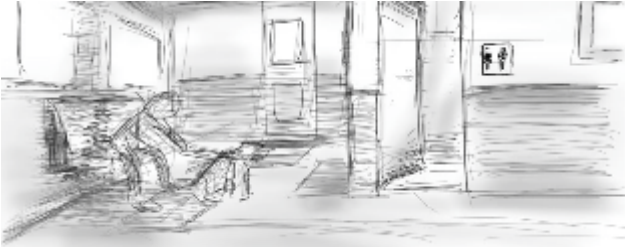
At hospice I got down and became alert trying to smell his stratagem. Abruptly he asked me 'Do you work here? Do you provide free aid to cancer patients?'. These queries were all unanticipated, I nodded in yes and started peeping into his muddy eyes. Mean while I took out my wallet. He also searched something in his sack. He pondered a little and took out some coins and note, and placed those on my hands - "Saheb! I am from Rewa. My mother had cancer. She died. I could not attend and serve in her illness. God-damn! died without chancing me to serve. Please use this money somewhere"

I counted twice the small sum of rupees twenty. When I looked up he was gone. In that sultriness a cool breeze ran along my nerves.



Still I remember his face. Even today, I search him among those goths, disorderly Rikshawalaas.





WHAT DIES NOT

I deliberately reached house of RC at five thirty evening. His wife was in last stage of cancer. Her life was pulled by coma. Often she had seizures. She was on feeding tube, air mattress, Catheters etc.

I have never seen anybody specially husband with such a dedicated care for comatose spouse. He used to come a little early from his usual time of office. We allotted her a bed on second floor. He requested to provide bed close to cooler saying that his wife could not bear heat. We accepted his request. None of our staff

enlightened him with the fact that comatose patients have zero sense to discriminate heat or cold. Some day he would rush to me telling "I touched her hand, she grasped my hand tight, is she improving?"

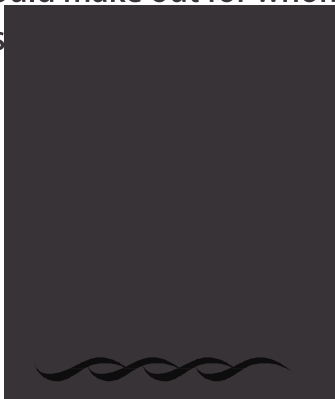
He would sit very close to her bed as if some loving couple is on date or like cooing between the birdie couple.

Spontaneously whenever she would open her eyes, husband would gaze and immerse into her eyes, As though, they have paired their blue tooth in eyes - Data getting transferred, exchanging underhandedly.

One eve while he was chatting with me his sight flipped through clock. With kettle in hand he rushed to his wife, gave tea to the nursing staff to be dispensed through feeding tube and he himself poured some tea in his cup and started sipping. He

returned to me within twenty minutes. Without asking he vindicated himself "We take tea at five thirty evening. From years together this is a routine. This is right time to chat, about all the developments of that day, then I have my own engagements and she too.... " He halted here as if tea was still in his throat.

It was almost three months after his wife had died. I reached his house, as I told, it was five thirty evening. I saw him with a cup of tea in his hand and one cup brimmed with tea was kept on the tea table - I could make out for whom that cup of tea was





BRAVE DIDI

Those days I was doing my postgraduation. Till that time of immature life, pain of patient really mattered for us. We used to talk and interact with patients with no ego complex those days. We had sympathy with patients like their own family members.

During same period of life I had my first hello with cancer patient. I remember her name was Aruna. She had gone for ample number of surgeries. She had a tumor in her wrist. A locally malignant tumor, not responding to any treatment with

recurrence many times. Then our Professor advised her to get her hand amputated above wrist. I communicated professor's decision "Aruna Didi ! We are going to cut your hand" - She smiled in response.

Her response was unthoughtful for me because first time I had seen such a reaction on decision of amputation.

Then we started calling her "Brave Didi". We were fed up and starved by the typed meal of hostel and so we would hanker after the tiffin brought from her house. Simply we would accept the insistence of sharing tiffin and soon we would consume it to the last morsel.

The day when her operation was posted, she put her hand on head and blessed me saying "You wouldn't get blessings from this hand here after" - and again she laughed.

One of my colleague in OT clowned and put the amputated hand on my head "Take blessings of Brave Didi". I did not remove it from my head. He, ablushed himself took away the amputated hand.

I have no idea where is Aruna Didi. Even don't know whether she remembers me or not, but the feel of blessing hand of Brave Didi on my head, is still a source of strength and inspiration in me, to day.



SARASWATI

I too have passed on the teaching of legacy to my children "To day is auspicious Basant Panchami. My grandpa had told me to do some creative writing on this day. Today is day of creation. Creative activity is worship of Saraswati, the Goddess of intellect and wisdom. Oblation of words delights Goddess Saraswati. Today she is most benevolent. Today Goddess Saraswati is most propitious"

Suddenly name of that patient Saraswati had knocked my mind. God knows who named her Saraswati. When she came to Hospice, She set dumb and lost. Instead of Signing she put her thumb impression on admission form. Illiterate, duncehead but her name was Saraswati i.e. the Goddess of wisdom. Coincidentally she really also looked like Greek Goddess Minerva, though in a while in her aggressive mood she would turn to Goddess Morta, Maa Chandika, Goddess of Death. She would hold her forehead and scream in agony. Often she had severe headache and at times she would become headache for other patients. At time she would dash her head on the wall as if trying to destroy her brain tumor. Her innocent mother would cry and say - "She has no brain since beginning but what aches in her vault? Doctor Sab! She has no brain then how come she developed brain

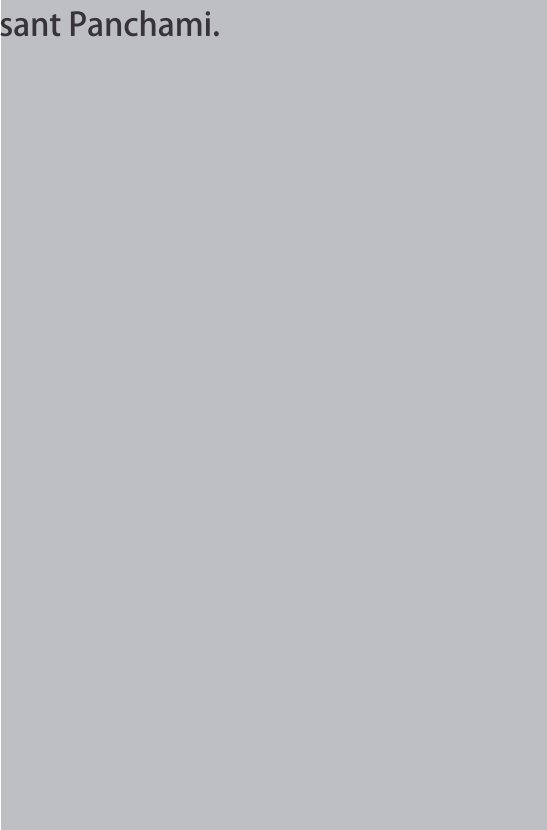
tumor?". I had no answer to this benign question.

Whenever she screamed of pain, She responded to solacing words. She never knew the meaning of the evening prayer but she mugged up the prayer soon. I talked to her more than I usually interact with other patients. My grandpa too had instructed longback. 'Oblation of words delights Saraswati'.

This evening she looked totally spent, soon she gasped her last. I declared her dead. Neither she nor her mother cried today. Today Saraswati was not propitious but petrified yet her calm countenance looked like blessed visage of Maa Saraswati.

Staff, as was trained for, had put a leaf of Tulsi and holy water of the Ganges into her mouth and put beads around her neck.

I asked my driver to rush and bring a garland of flowers, yellow flowers... Same as he brought for Goddess Saraswati on Basant Panchami.



THE TOPPER

This is not an anecdote, but I will call it my heart's report. Every word of this anecdote bleeds through my heart. This is about my close friend Ashok. In medical college we used to study together, live together, share day happenings, chagitation movements of college life.

I recall one of such agitation against

college was bouncy and vigorous. When college administration took disciplinary action then name of Ashok was on top of list. Ashok was very tall. College staff members recorded their statements "We do not know who else were there but we are sure of Ashok" Administrative committee declared a list of suspension. Ashok's name was on the top.

Not only here, but in curricular reports and examination results also, he topped ever. From first session to final year he topped always - First, First ever top hat. From Anatomy to Medicine ever topped in all subjects in all batches, Matchless topper as if he was made to top.

When I asked him to participate in musical night, He was straight in response "Listen! I know my limitations, I don't go on the platform where I doubt to be first".

In annual sports he participated only in

lemon spoon race. His concentration was good and stride was long so he came first. He never participated in any other sports event. Before Five Thousand metres Sprinter Mehte Sir, he showed his medal telling "I am also first".

He got offers from many renowned hospitals of country but he joined Government job with posting in Shahdol.

"He is the most trust worthy and topnotch" - Whenever somebody ever came from Shahdol I would ask his opinion about Ashok.

One morning his wife phoned me, Ashok had giddiness on duty. I advised her to come immediately to Jabalpur. Same evening we got his MRI done. It's image pierced my soul through and through.

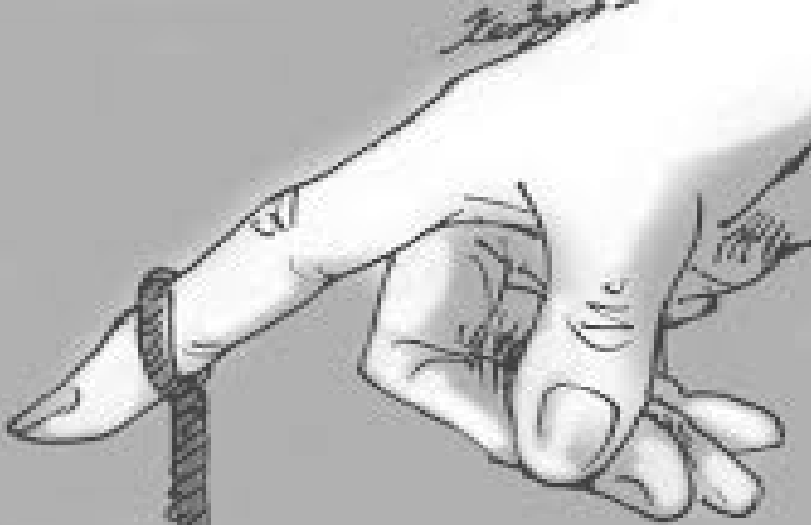
Tentacles of Brain tumour had unfolded to severest reach. His brain tumour was operated by the topmost

surgeon of India, but there was a bad news again. He had one more primary tumour in pancreas. His brain tumour was cured completely but the tumour of pancreas was green-eyed and could not digest our friendship.

What we suspected, after short time abruptly the bad news came. We all friends from different directions gathered to attend his cremation.

The funeral pyre was blazing. We all batch mates were sitting stunned and shocked, I whispered "Sallaa ! topped again the list of dead batch mates", Yes! he topped again.





HARI ICHCHHA (God's Will)

What ever was his name but all the staff called him 'Hari Ichha' which means God's Will. Emotional blackmailing may be learnt through his tricky activities.

One morning he called kitchen staff and declared thus - "I have a realization that I will be dying today. It's my last wish to feed this dying body of mine with Halwa". With great anxiety the cook phoned manager. Pudding was prepared delicious. He overate it. In days to come this became his trick. Again and again he saw death to the fore. Whenever his palate wished to have some yummy he would see death in front.

Slowly all the staff had understood his drama. It is our instruction that if there is no harm to the health then the demands of these patients should be fulfilled taking as their last wish. Staff started fulfilling his demand taking as God's Will and they named this patient "Hari Ichcha" which means God's will.

Soon he became the most favorite and beloved of all staff. He would make every

one happy so much so that some times it seemed this is not a hospice but a laughter club. He would Solace patient. He would converse with all like a wise man, would keep discipline of hospice like a teacher, would serve patients like a volunteer, would become uncivil and rugged like an unlettered peasant and would grizzle and hang back like a child - All diverse aspects of one person.

One drowsy night I had a phone call from hospice. Hari Ichchha wanted to eat papaya saying its his last wish to eat papaya, that very night. Agitated I reacted "If such patient come to hospice we will close the venture" and I put down the phone. The market was closed and I had no Papaya at my home. Staff contacted some well wishers. Papaya was arranged. Night staff phoned me again "Papaya is arranged, Hari Ichchha is taking it".

Before the dawn broke again a phone call woke me up - voice melted my ear drum "This time to take papaya was not his drama Sir! a real..."

I interrupted in the middle - "How? When did it happen". Reply came "just now, all of a sudden".

I sighed "Hari Ichchha! All God's Will"





CANCER BENEFITS

Didi phoned me today "Come Soon Today its not a hospice. It's a country side joint (Chaupal). all in celebration mode". I reached there in half an hour or so. When I reached there the music festival was still going. Murari was dancing. He had breathing problem but today he was not short of breath at all.

We also wish - may patient need not morphines but muffins instead, and in place of whispers and sighs have vespers and songs on their lips.

Tonight its no insomnia but a vigil festival, a black friday, shopping

happiness. One after other they all gathered in lounge and melodious eve began.

K.K. came here about a week back with agonising gripe in abdomen. Today he welcomed me saying "Smile! you are in Hospice" It was like a dream, none had any crease of ache on their faces. I remember R.K. is in coma since long back. He was genuflexed and clasped fist with twitching movements of ankle and wrists. His decerebrated condition of fists and ankle seemed today as celebrating twists. Every bit of the hospice was rhythmic.

Junior doctor brought before me a local news paper. Since beginning of the hospice we had decided to keep a distance from propaganda and news, keeping aloof from media. Let's test ourself first then promote the venture. It was more than a year since we have commenced. Today

there was a big coverage of Hospice published in popular news paper. Almost all patients had their photos and interviews published.

At this terminal edge they, as if bluffing death, could gain a moment of joy and self esteem and so they all were celebrating the same.

After sometime of celebration, I ordered "Its enough now, go to your bed. Its time to take medicines" All quietly got up and went back to wards. Their pleasant dream was over, and they again entered the same world of agony.

K.R. a patient of cancer bladder called me close and whispered "Doc Sab! We have a big gain out of cancer, otherwise what excellence would have chanced us of having photo in news paper".





THE SUSTAINER

Every morning the news paper knocks the door with all parcel of sins and perversions.

Arrayed in gown of virtues godman are getting exposed. Imposters are wearing masks and real distorted faces are hiding. A blush of shame has painted the society and the ink of news paper has smeared the face of society. Some wise pandit divined "Now its difficult. Now world will end."

I also thought with load of tons of perversion and sins how does the world sustaining?

We have observed kins of cancer patients are always pauper monetarily. We had made plans for patients, their food, care, medicines etc. but I confess here that we have not considered any plan for relatives of patients.

Making provision for patient ended our service and duty. We never had asked relatives "How are you? May I help you" etc.

One morning I took surprise visit of hospice and found relatives taking tea and breakfast. They offered me tea, but to my knowledge this arrangement was never made by our management; for such provision was beyond the scope of hospice financially.

I asked "Who has made this arrangement?" Hospice staff informed me "Some unknown person comes every morning and brings tea and breakfast for kins of patients, We don't know who is he?"

He would awake the relatives of patients and serve home made tea and breakfast.

I became curious to know more about this alien trespasser. So I came early morning many times and tried to meet him but he would run off seeing my car.

One day I came quietly and caught him. He looked like a common man of cartoonist R.K. Laxman. He stood so weepy as if I was going to penalize him. I was highly obliged from core but in tough manner I asked his name. His voice was Stammering as if crime report was being indicted against him. " I am a government

employee. I am Banerjee. I thought I should help a little these relatives of patients so that they could care their patients better"

Embodied answer to my flaming question was standing to the fore - With load of tons of preversions and sins how does the world sustaining?





THE HERITAGE

Some or the other day my diary gets new nutriments and victuals. Now, an old man has come from my native hamlet. By counting creases and furrows on his face one can measure he is nearing ninety, and those might have added one by one on his birthdays.

Listening to my family name all his creases started billowing. He took the

name of my native village and asked "Are you grand son of "Kunji Kakka?" He continued "Your grandfather was so truthful that in panchayat jury, people would take his name as pledge. Sweering by his name would weigh witness as virtuous". Many such stories like truthful woodcutter, Pancha Parmeshwar etc. knocked my vertex.

Ever I have shortage of time, so leaving the praises of my paters in the middle, I rushed to visit hospice patients.

'Shee' had oedama and pain in her upper limb. I consoled her- "you will be better in a fortnight".

'Ram' was worried of his bleeding per mouth. I smiled and said - all bad blood is coming out, let it be drained then only you will be alright. On the next bed, Granny who was waiting for her kins for last three month, I informed 'your kins are worried

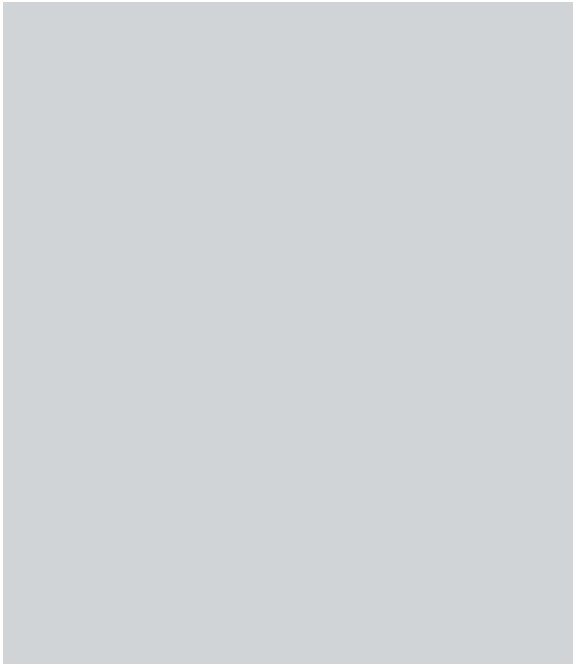
and ask about you every now and then. We have deliberately stopped them from coming'. Her eyes shone in satisfaction. I convinced RJ your wedding will be possible after Diwali till then you will be cured. On the next bed there was a nine years old child in coma, His mother asked me 'Doctor sab! when will my child go to school ?'- I don't remember what I replied but she had a broad smile.

SK was chanting name on beads, I invoked him with a mantra and beads. He had a misconception that he would be healed by beads. Posing as godman I must have told him so. Tumour of Dada M has flared and burst out - I made him believe it to be, good sign - Now everything will come out. I quoted example of some patient.

That day I had only seven patients and soon my routine round completed.

On hospice list I observed today all the beds are occupied, Beds are sixteen so I need to be a liar sixteen times.

- O my truthful paters! forefathers!!
Please pardon me for my sins... forgive my sins.





A DEFEATED WARRIOR

I was not very fond of Hindi movies, but one movie, because had science and emotions in one, I saw it thrice. Its name was Dard Ka Rishta - on a DNA alike of separated brother and sister which saves a sibling from blood cancer.

'J' was my cousin, not very close. Though she rarely attended my family gathering and Rakshabandhan, but if I call it a distant relation then ink of my pen might fade. Only I would say, in scientific language, his and mine DNA was same.

The day she came to my hospital she had a big node in her neck - a third stage cancer. Shocked, I talked to her husband (Jija) and instructed to rush to Mumbai in a day or two. But in two hours he arranged for departure to Mumbai on the same evening.

'J' had big joint family. Almost all came to railway station to send off. All were sad except 'J' because I solaced her that she would be alright soon.

In the train named Gareeb Rath she seemed to me as the most indigent and Gareeb. Faith in my words was her only treasure - I knew that treasure was a counterfeit coin.

Then started a long battle. She herself and her family fought it. Her inlaws took care of her like a doll. Often she had high grade fever. I would reply, 'It will be alright'. To my surprise she would have no

fever for few day then. On complaints of pain and swelling I would say that will pass off in few days. Her faith in my words - symptoms would subside in a day.

One day she said "Bhaiya! you told me I will be alright in two years. It touches your time line on sixteen september". I thought its uncertain time line but certain early dead line. I palmed off by saying "O you crazy! it was three years". I knew next september was not in her life line.

Then ultimately she was admitted in ICU. Kidneys were whipped. She was semicomatose. When I reached there, she opened her eyes. She uttered nothing, no questions, no pain, but her eyes were shining with same confidence and faith as if declaring - now Bhaiya has come, everything will be alright.

Today was her death anniversary. I went to her house. House was studded

with guests and relatives. On her photo frame there were disorderly scattered flowers and garlands. Like a defeated warrior I reached to her photo frame. I submitted my tribute with a bunch of flowers. I saw those flowers deriding and laughing at me. I saw, with saline blurred eyes that - flowers, those I surrendered before her, took shape of all my medical books, all my surgical instruments, all my medical degrees and medals. From the photo frame her eyes were still gazing me. I struggled to come out of eddies of her confident eyes. When I came out of her house then -

I felt a doctor in me and wrap of pompon had parted from me, what remained with me was a poor brother, a helpless brother, a defeated warrior.





CACTUS

It is summery in the month of March in Central India. Brairds of flower nursery start withering. It's time when nursery gardener is required most. Ralph Emerson said 'The Earth laughs in flowers'.

Watchman brought one gardener for job. He looked to me more a mendicant. He brought his daughter with him. I asked - "why did you bring her" Reply came after a pause "My wife died of cancer, We are two in family, Where should I leave her?". Suddenly I became keen on his narration

for my interest in getting some plot for my itch of writing. Meantime, his daughter froliced all about the garden.

I wanted some tulips, orchids, Iris, Lilies, Tulsi etc. While going to market gardener memorized. He brought all from nursery-market but forgot to bring Tulsi (The Basil braird) It is traditionally benedictory and sacred in India. In stead of Tulsi he brought many types of Cactii.

One day I was sitting in garden and he was clearing Tulsi Basin. Of his own he started sharing his mind with me "My wife was great devotee of Tulsi. She used to worship daily - Victory be to Tulsi! Long live Tulsi !! God has cheated us. We are deceived".

That day I realized why did he not bring Tulsi Saplings. He planted cactii in a very organised manner. I never liked cactus. No flowers, no butterfly, no greenary, no

fragrance, more over full of thorns.

He would serve cactii with full devotion. I could not understand him. He never liked Lilies, Tulips, Orchids and colours of nature.

One day I could not contain myself and asked him of his abnormal likings. He unfolded his mind "God has already blessed these varieties of saplings with beauty, fragrance and attraction. Nature has opened heart for them. But the cactus is deprived of all, yet in heat and sultriness among thorns it gathers all its strength and thus one flower blossoms on it"

My eyes were wide open, my tongue was speechless. He was a philosopher now, having his own discrete mind.

He further added "my life is also like a cactus".

I was happy to find a plot for my diary,

but then I cautiously restricted my pen, which is filled with ink of melancholy. His daughter should not be trapped in my tragic diary. By her little malaise I would become over-cautious. I don't want any further tragedy in the gardener's life; though it was going to price the writer not having emotional surge among readers.

True, It was. His life was a cactus with throttling greenness, more thorns, withered, no fragrance yet one flower, In a cactus we could see his life.

After Holi festival this year I asked him to bring more varieties of cactii. He looked at me with great surprize.

He returned back after sometime with many varieties of Tulsi saplings. He, with all devotions, bedded Tulsi in basin and in very orderly manner in low bed all round also.

I also wish the same what this gardener

wants. Nature can never be so vicious. My writer's pen is flouting at Charles Darwin and I saw face of daughter of gardener hovering to the fore with smile. This time flower of a cactus will evolve into Tulsi. - victory be to Tulsi! Long Live Tulsi !!



UNIVERSE MELTS

A phone call informed me - 'A twenty five years boy is admitted to hospice'. A thinned out fragile, only through eyes, we could make out the lamp was not blown out. His name was Deepak, which means an oil lamp. A desolate, one and only, all lonely he was. Though Deepak was the name but only God knew whose family lamp he was? He would gather all his twenty four ribs to ask for water. Kitchen staff informed me 'Every

he asked for water' I thought - 'Yes ! he is going thirsty, He doesn't know about parents'. Somebody left neonate in the hospital, brought

up by the hospital's careless care.

He grew up massaging calves of watchman. Smoking bidi that waterman took his last puff in his cozy hut and Deepak inherited from him the fire to scorch his own lungs also. Fumes and smoke were his next of kin. Darkness in his life ever jeered at his name Deepak.

One day while I was on hospice round, Didi referring him said "How pitiable is his life? None in there to cry on his death?"

On statement of Didi, my wise genie came out of bottle of my philosophical mind - 'No ! This is not true, for everyone God has created at least one mourner. If flower withers, butterfly cries, when the sun sets lotus turns dejected. After every death some of the ingredients of universe also melts".

Didi is well aware of my habit and meaning of my such contradictions. It's

never a serious statement, its all just a playful contradiction of everything what Didi says. In book of psychology they addressed it a sibling rivalry. Everybody knows me I leave no opportunity to convince everyone to my verdict.

That day after routine evening prayer, we all were chanting 'Om Shanti i.e. pacification mantra and before it finished, Deepak, the lamp extinguished. We all went to his bed.

Last worship, putting holy water and Tulsi leaf in month till them had become a mechanised routine at death of a patient. I signed on the death certificate. While I was getting down of stairs, I heard a low voice of sobbing on terrace. I could not see in dark but I thought some relative must have come and I settled down thinking that now we need not worry about his cremation.

Suddenly in a flicker of thought I started searching Didi, just to tell her that there was somebody on terrace who was weeping for Deepak. I asked manager "where is Didi?" ask her to come to the terrace" - I wanted to prove myself, Yes! there is somebody created by God who is crying for that Deepak. Just to prove myself against Didi's statement.

I phoned her but to no response. Staff tried to search her. Where is Didi? With the hope that Deepak's kin must still be weeping I reached to terrace.

O God! Didi was sitting on the parapet of terrace. For the first time she contradicted her own statement to prove my words.



Committed

This week I had among my patients , two of the patients about whom I should talk. These two have different professional lines but have similar sublime attitude and again have come from similar high altitude.

One was a soldier, who came from peaks of Kashmir Valley. He had a fall on the lcy rock and had severe pain, yet he

came on seventh day of the accident. He told he had bruises and contusions all over his back and hips and knees. But to my surprise he continued his duty. I asked " How could you continue your duty in such a pain?"

He simply replied " Doc Sab! pain is in body, and duty is" with pointing his index to the bosom "Commitment of Duty is a matter of heart". I noted this quotation in my diary.

Another patient , who came three days back , was a monk, who came from Rishikesh. He had severe stiffness in neck and back, but he did not give up his pilgrimage, walking from the Ganges to the Narmada river. He narrated history of catching cold while bathing in infant Ganges at Gangotri at its origin. He, yet, continued his holy dips twice daily, in chilly streams, on his pilgrimage along the banks.

I repeated the same question- "How could you continue your rituals in such a pain". Simply he replied just similar "Doc sab! pain is in the body, but the commitment to the Self is the matter of Mind". I noted his quotation in my mind.

Today I skipped to go to hospice because of demise of sister of a well wisher of hospice RB. He is the same person who was requested to take the task of writing a post about our hospice, every day on face book. And for last three years he is posting praises and information about hospice at a fixed time every day. To my surprise he never lapsed to do so.

Many members of hospice reached his house to console his aged father. Because he had already rushed to Gwalior to attend cremation of his sister. All the gathered mourners were sitting near his father to console him. They were collecting minute

to minute information about the happenings at Gwalior - Last procession has started, now all have reached the place, pyre is burning.

Somebody informed on phone "He is sitting near the burning pyre of his sister. He is so sad and lifeless that I had never seen him before". We all were sitting close to his father in Jabalpur, talking about the loss.

While I was coming out of his house, again a phone call informed "He is sitting under a tree. He is attending phone calls and probably replying condolence messages". While I was coming back , I received an alert ping on mobile. surprisingly, I beheld a brief FB post from RB. It was a fresh post. He could have skipped to post today about hospice, but he lapsed not.

I was surprised with a feeling of gratification. But I did not dial him to ask "How could you do this in such a pain?" . I did not ask him for I knew a soldier in him and a monk in him will together reply " Doc Sab! pain is in heart and mind, but the committed task is a matter of soul".
Let me engrave his quotation on my soul.



Mangal

Some people are born critic. They will sneer and make faces on every thing. For last three months one of such patient is in Hospice. His name is Mangal. He never smiles. Whenever I am on round he will pour some or the other complaint -Nurse does not take my care, today tea was cold, vegetable was half cooked, the door makes noise, taste of protein milk is not good and so on.

If he is not complaining then staff concludes he is sick. All other patients enjoy his annoyance when he talks to me.

One day all the staff decided to do everything so perfect that he might not get a chance to react. Whatever was done by kitchen staff, Nursing staff, manager and gardener, was done after his approval that day. In the evening I asked him about his complaints . He replied "No nothing went wrong, but this much perfection is also not good."

I tried to convince him - Look! Your name is Mangal which means Auspicious. Why do you carry inauspicious signs on your face?. Your parents named you Mangal so your look & outlook should also be Auspicious.

He, with such soremind, was found very happy one morning. All other patients and staff mobbed around his bed. He was very happy otherwise none had seen his

smile before. He gladly informed that his niece is getting married next week. He asked manager " I want to go to market to purchase cloths for me and my niece."

He counted money in his pocket. Other patients and relatives also contributed. He went with manager to market by ambulance and bought colourful cloths for the bride and himself.

He counted down the days. Seven days left, five days, three days, two days. ..Here I go.

But on same evening I found him again on bed. He looked very depressed. He was weeping. I asked in loud voice "What has happened ? Today is the wedding day, where are your new cloths?"

He replied that saddened every one in that ward. " I have thrown cloths in well of my house. The wedding was in the last week. Delibarately they informed the

wrong date. They told me -You have a stroma bag in your belly which stinks and contains stool, which in wedding of a girl is inauspicious, so we did not want you to attend." He again started weeping.

All other patients did not enjoy his words this time. Their eyes were wet. How a person named Mangal, be inauspicious?

Mangal, while I am writing his story, is still in ward, totally changed, now he never complains of anything.



BENIGN WISH

Very few of her schoolmates knew that her name is different from her nick name 'Heroine'.

Her mother told she looked different from other siblings. At the age of three she developed great aesthetic sense and fondness to good cloths, jewellerys and footwear. She ever kept herself embellished since beginning.

Looking to her extraordinary features and charming personality and glowing hue and thick long hair everyone of her Mohalla called her 'Heroine'. This nick name was carried forward to her school as it was.

Her mother told to us that all other children of family had a common living room but her room was separate. She at the age of eleven, appointed flatterer younger brother of six years , her secretary. She developed her own created aura and every one specially her parents felt proud of her childish pomps and pranks. She became talk of her mohalla and a focus of admiration.

Her mother was a good tailor and Heroine also had a sense of dress-designing, so she herself did her own dress making. One better than other.

Her mother told at another occasion- if you look at her room, it has many paper cuttings and collages of film stars. Mother whispered again- She is a fan of film star RR. She would see all films of RR, moreover many films multiple times. She dreamt to be a heroine of RR sometime in some bollywood movie.

All her mother's words echoed in my ears, while I closed her lids on wide dilated pupils of her askance, which was fixed on poster of RR. We allowed that poster near her bed on her asking.

Almost nearing the last month of her life, she came to hospice. She brought her course books of nursing (first year) with her. One day I peeped into her book, and found a red circle which was drawn over normal chest X-ray. I asked "What are you gazing at?". She replied there was a movie where a child concentrated on his brain tumour and it dissolved.

She wished to be a film star but The Almighty did not fulfill her desire.

According to Alfred Tennyson 'God fulfills Himself in many ways', and so one day RR came to Jabalpur for a movie shoot. Among all the newspapers, among young crowd, in college campuses, it was a talk of

the town. Every one wanted to meet him. He kept distance from all. In two days overwhelming enthusiasm of all fans turned into agitation. RR is snob, high headed, what he thinks of himself? All talks turned against him.

Our hospice heroine also wanted to meet RR. We conveyed the last breath emotion of this child to RR. Administration arranged a secret meeting. In husk of evening when ambulance reached the hotel backyard, she was in a new dress which she asked her mother to purchase as her last dress. She was very happy. Film star RR came into the ambulance. There was a short photo session. RR posed as if he is a great fan of her. RR told his heroine "Pardon! I was little late. For this great meeting. I took a shower, and specially dressed for you."

Next day all adverse remarks ended

into praises and goodwill of RR. A photo on bollywood page with this heroine was also published.

Hospice is not just thankful to RR who fulfilled our patient's wish but also we are thankful to The God, who in words of Alfred Tennyson fulfills Himself in many ways-

And we could know benign wishes of man become wishes of The Almighty, Himself.



SO IT BE



For my today's diary page its a gala day. My diary page is very happy today. It wishes to dance with other gloomy pages hugging those. A very short news is published in newspaper with photo of a lady doctor. She is going to present a research paper in an International conference.

When the pleasant time is blessed, bygone suffering do tickle as well. I am rewinding my memory to a four years old scene. Husband of that lady doctor works in our hospital and he is an inseparable colleague of mine. In the corridor of OPD I could hear his sobs. I rushed to him.

A bolt had thundered upon young couple. My friend informed that FNAC report came out to be positive.

This is peculiarity of medical language. Here, not the positive but the negative is welcomed. I had never seen my friend in such a glum. He looked devastated.

All friends together went to his house. We had a serious discussion for almost three hours. His house turned to war room and the war was against shrewd enemy, an enemy uncivil to rules of war. It seemed as a tempest would wipe out the nest.

Then started cycles of chemo, surgery, chemo, radiation, chemo.

She fought the battle like a warrior. During her struggle many times I saw her passing by. I saw her pale, bald, without eyebrows but with same greeting smile and glow in eyes. Getting chance to converse she would ask me 'How are you Sir? How is your fitness?''.

Her self confidence never allowed me to ask about her illness, because her replying eyes had a brimming confidence which ever told "Nothing has happened to me"

On facebook she posted her status and photo 'a bald lady', I commented to the post 'correct the spelling its 'a bold lady' which received hundreds of likes. She never used a wig or scarf. Bravely she fought with the actualities. I saw in her instinct of a great warrior which was

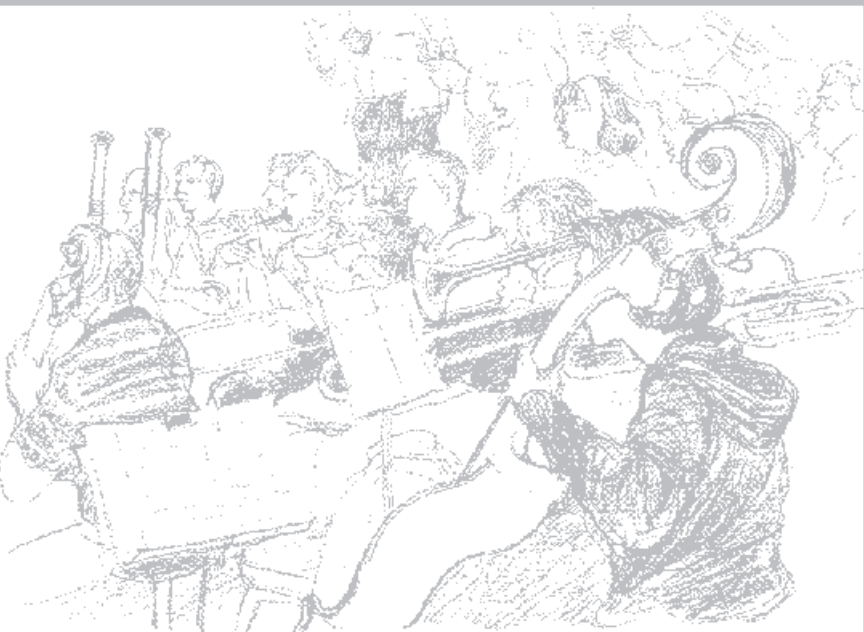
beyond natural and innate feeling of beautified manifestation of an adorned lady.

Gradually my friend also became comfortable and stress free. Some times he would bring sweets, cakes or prasadam - today chemo cycle is finished, today scan come out negative, Now memography is negative, and so are sonography and PAT. I have seen young couple fighting the battle and winning.

Today's news paper had a front page coverage of victory of giant team of cricketers. But for me a single column short news on fifth page was a more jubilant victory

News paper has become triumphant flag. For me this is victory over cruel destiny. It's not victory of a couple but the whole mankind has won.

In days and years to come, I will indite
many more diaries - May grace of god fill
all my coming diaries with such jubilant
victories - Amen! Tathastu!! So it be!!!





P.P. Brahmurishi
Vishwatma Bawra

Mantra of Shrimad Bhagwat is explicable here. Virat Hospice is true prayer of Bhagwan.

- Swami Shyamdevacharyaji Jabalpur

We can not add days to their life but definitely can add life to their days

- Sadhvi Gyaneshwari

I anxiously wondered why somebody is not working for them. Soon I realized I could be that somebody. And thus the Hospice was initiated

- Dr Akhilesh Gumashta

This is a fantastic centre. You all are doing a much needed service

- Jennifer Lowe, Texas US

What is seen here, is hard to believe. On this piece of land of Jabalpur, the dedication of Virat Hospice, what I perceived here, is almost nonextant in world

- Sanjay Sinha, Chief Executive, Aaj tak TV, New Delhi.

I have no words to describe my appreciation of the yeoman service to humanity rendered here. It is most noble

- Swadheen Kshatriya, Chief Secretary(rtd) Mumbai

Sincere efforts in care of terminally ill cancer patients. A really heartwarming experience and a learning visit

- Dr Adeela Abdullah IAS trainee, Mussorie.

A worth visit place. This is a pilgrimage, a temple and the holiest place.

- Dr Sunil Khare, Bhopal.