



IRIS

**SIBA Forum for
Creative Writers**

VOLUME V

IRIS
(VOLUME V)

SIBA FORUM FOR CREATIVE WRITERS

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Editor's Foreword

The dawn of the fifth year of IRIS in its aesthetic and academic journey is an event to celebrate. In most education systems, the fifth year is the landmark year in which formal education begins. So, one could argue that IRIS has reached a level of maturity and credibility in the field of education and creativity.

I would like to argue that this issue is a creative prism that reflects the hopes and aspirations, despairs and despondencies of youth - of those young students who follow courses at SIBA. It is distinctly a young IRIS. The contributors are mostly young, of course, with intermittent interventions by mature minds. IRIS, as usual, has become the form for expressing themselves; this volume of IRIS in its pages mirror not only joy and fulfilment, but also treachery and betrayal. The world of technology which has swept the world with almost violent force is naturally a concern with arguments in its favour as well as against it.

Both poetry and prose communicate the everyday and the mundane as well as the supernormal and the ideal. The poetry, as to be expected, very often reach the latter.

While we regret the absence of scholarly, erudite writings in this issue, we celebrate the spontaneous outpouring of love and passion by the young, their discernment of life in its various ranges and colorations.

Kamala Wijeratne

Editor-in-Chief



Rasula Dissanayaka

A LOAF OF BREAD FOR FREE

**Dear God!
The sacred gift you offered me,
was a loaf of bread for free.**

**How caring your heart was!
You serve me with your own paws.**

**(In every passing moment, you gave me a portion
In every passing portion, you gave me a moment)**

**When you were offering me the earliest slices,
I threw away millions of pieces.
I thought there were infinite slices.
That is why I threw away millions of pieces.**

**In the mid-slices;
(With butter, fruit butter, cheese, goat cheese or nothing,)
I perceived a few million pieces.
Of my choices?
(Most of the time) No!
The kind-hearted people who surrounded me,
They made the choices for me!**

**They were selfless,
I was speechless!**

**Now, you're offering me the final slice.
At the moment, I feel the hunger inside**

**I didn't feel this much before
Since you offered each time, one more**

**Oh God, it's burning inside!
Please give me one more time!
A tiny little slice.**

S.H. Rebera

A PAINFUL FEELING

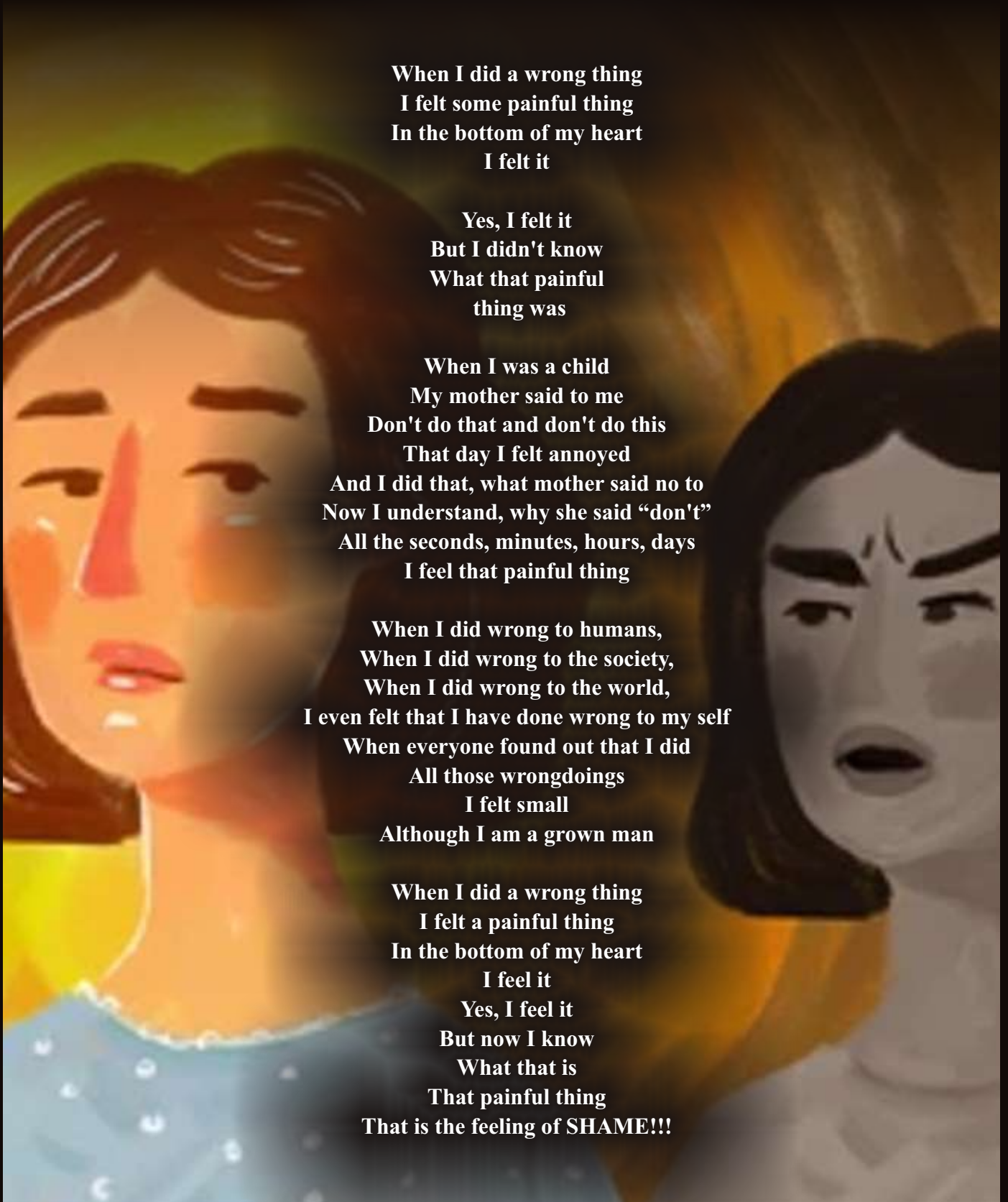
When I did a wrong thing
I felt some painful thing
In the bottom of my heart
I felt it

Yes, I felt it
But I didn't know
What that painful
thing was

When I was a child
My mother said to me
Don't do that and don't do this
That day I felt annoyed
And I did that, what mother said no to
Now I understand, why she said "don't"
All the seconds, minutes, hours, days
I feel that painful thing

When I did wrong to humans,
When I did wrong to the society,
When I did wrong to the world,
I even felt that I have done wrong to my self
When everyone found out that I did
All those wrongdoings
I felt small
Although I am a grown man

When I did a wrong thing
I felt a painful thing
In the bottom of my heart
I feel it
Yes, I feel it
But now I know
What that is
That painful thing
That is the feeling of SHAME!!!



ENTER THE WORLD OF CREATIVITY, CHASE YOUR OWN DREAMS



If the world is an empty book, then an entrepreneur is a person who fills that book with creative words and beautiful pictures.

He is a person who makes that book attractive. Entrepreneurs are people who make the impossible possible. An entrepreneur is a person who chases his/her own dreams. It's also about cultivating an attitude that welcomes risks, viewing setbacks as stepping stones to success, and never stopping to look for answers to the problems that characterize our day.

The capacity of entrepreneurship to promote economic growth is one of its most important functions. Entrepreneurs breathe life into economies by starting new businesses and producing jobs, which has a knock-on impact that is felt throughout entire communities. In addition to helping to create a strong and vibrant employment market, start-ups act as breeding grounds for creativity and innovation.

Additionally, the resilient spirit is embodied in entrepreneurship. Being an entrepreneur is a difficult path full of obstacles and disappointments.

Adaptability and persistence become the guiding concepts during this exhilarating trip. Through navigating uncertain business landscapes, entrepreneurs cultivate a persistence that extends beyond the corporate realm, teaching society a vital lesson. It makes changes in society. If everything else doesn't work out, people can try out this valuable opportunity. It will help them to reach the road of success.

Moreover, diversity and inclusion are highly valued in the entrepreneurial field. Entrepreneurship provides an environment of equal opportunity where ideas, merit, and

enthusiasm are given priority, in contrast to traditional career pathways that might be impeded by institutional impediments.

Opportunities have become more accessible to people from a wider range of backgrounds, which is empowering and enhances the business scene as well as society at large.

In summary, the significance of entrepreneurship goes much beyond considerations of market shares and profit margins. It creates new opportunities for the dream chasers to achieve their dreams.

In summary, the significance of entrepreneurship goes much beyond considerations of market shares and profit margins.

Entrepreneurship is the road where innovators are born with different thinking patterns. They are the people who make this world colorful. The path of an entrepreneur is not

only a way for financial success, but it also develops self-awareness and resiliency; it is part of the unwavering search for a better, more inventive tomorrow.



T.A. Manelka Sewmini

AN ICE CREAM SELLER

In the summer heat, the sun beats down,
A joyful jingle, a familiar sound.
Around the corner, a cart appears,
An ice cream seller, spreading cheers.

With a bright umbrella, colors ablaze,
A smile that warms, like sunny rays.
Chimes of laughter, children run,
Drawn by the colors of ice cream cones.

His cart adorned with flavors galore,
From classic vanilla to toppings more.
A world of choices, a sweet delight,
Frosty treats to beat the heat's might.

"Vanilla swirl, a cone, please!"
Says a little girl with eyes that gleam.
He scoops the ice cream, fluffy and light,
A summer memory, oh, what a sight!

Soft serve swirls, in cups they go,
Chocolate syrup, a playful throw.
With sprinkles dancing, a joyful show,
An ice cream dream, all in a row.

He serves each scoop with love and care,
A treat for all, a moment to share.
From young to old, a taste so sweet,
His ice cream cart, a neighborhood treat.

As the sun begins to set,
His work done,
with no regret.

For in every smile and happy face,
He finds his joy, his heart's embrace.

So, let's raise a cone, and give a cheer,
To the ice cream seller we hold dear.
A purveyor of joy, this vendor kind,
In summer's heat, a treasure to find.



ice cream

Drinking alcohol should be banned in Sri Lanka



D rinking alcohol should be banned in Sri Lanka for several reasons. Alcohol is a harmful substance that causes many problems in society. It leads to health issues, social unrest, and economic burdens.

Firstly, alcohol consumption has detrimental effects on people's health. It damages vital organs like the liver, leading to diseases such as cirrhosis. It also increases the risk of heart problems, cancer, and mental health disorders. Banning alcohol would protect the well-being of Sri Lankans, promoting a healthier society.

Secondly, alcohol-related incidents often result in social unrest and violence. Intoxicated individuals are more likely to engage in fights, leading to injuries and even deaths. Banning alcohol would reduce these conflicts and create a safer environment for everyone.

Furthermore, alcohol abuse places a significant burden on the economy. It leads to increased healthcare costs due to the treatment of alcohol-related illnesses and injuries. Moreover, productivity is affected as people suffering from alcohol addiction are unable to perform optimally in their jobs. By banning alcohol, Sri Lanka could alleviate these economic burdens and allocate resources to more productive

endeavours.

Another critical aspect is the impact of alcohol on families. Excessive drinking often leads to domestic violence, child neglect, and broken relationships. Banning alcohol would protect families, allowing them to live in a safe and nurturing environment.

Moreover, alcohol consumption

contributes to road accidents and fatalities. Drunk driving poses a severe risk to both drivers and

pedestrians. By prohibiting alcohol, Sri Lanka can reduce the number of accidents, preserving lives and minimizing injuries on the roads.

Drinking alcohol should be banned in Sri Lanka for several reasons. Alcohol is a harmful substance that causes many problems in society.

In addition, the cultural and religious values of Sri Lanka discourage the consumption of alcohol. Sri Lanka has a rich heritage and traditions that promote a healthy lifestyle and the well-being of its people.

Banning alcohol aligns with these cultural and religious principles, preserving the country's cultural integrity.

Lastly, banning alcohol would promote tourism and attract visitors who prefer destinations with strict regulations on alcohol consumption. It would create a positive image for Sri Lanka as a safe and responsible tourist destination, boosting the economy through increased tourism revenue.



Do you know ?



We rinse perfectly our home
We paint pictures with the colors of the rainbow
We enhance it with gorgeous blossom;
When the door is unlocked
Anyone can come inside and go outside.
When the door is locked
Nobody comes inside or goes outside.
When it drizzles evil
When Helios shines evil
It is exhausting to stay outside
So, we come inside our dwelling.
When it does not drizzle evil
When Helios does not shine evil
It is painless to stay outside
So, we go outside from this dwelling
Many things occur in nature
But home, it endures all
This home is very powerful
Which no one can destroy.

Bead Necklace



“Crack!” I had been quietly looking at the sky when my attention was diverted by the loud noise I heard from inside the house.

"Aunt..."

Shakya, my sister's only child, came running to my place suddenly.

"The cat dropped Aunt's ghost box."

On hearing these words, I ran into the house as if I had lost the most precious thing in life. All over the room, the beads of the pearl necklace that I had guarded so far were scattered. The Buddha statue, which

had been carefully protected for six years, was also broken. With tears in my eyes, I stepped into my six-year-old past with the broken Buddha statue in my hand.

The sunlight kissed the fresh air, infusing a lovely atmosphere that had never existed before. At home, it was a very hectic day. Mother and Grandmother woke up early in the morning and prepared food. Father took my sister and went to a beauty salon in the morning. Everything was ready for the arrival of the groom and his relatives.

"They are coming"

Saying this, my brother came running inside the house. Everyone rushed to the porch of the house to welcome the groom

and his relatives.

I noticed from far away that not only the groom's relatives, but also the groom's friend had arrived in the white van. When I saw him smartly dressed in a black shirt, I felt as if an electric shock had hit me in a way that I had never felt before.

All the special events of the day had taken place. They were about to leave the house.

Sihina, and that was his name, wrote down his phone number and gave it to my father. Then he walked up to me,

"I gave my phone number to your father, I am waiting to call you if you don't mind." That was all he said.

The next morning there was great confusion in the house. **"Sihina has sent a text message."** I felt a great desire to read that text message. My father nodded with a contented smile.

***"Sihina Dew Duwe
Obata Thun Lowe
Akama Namai Maa Danne
A Nama Adare"***

He had sent these lines of an old love song professing his love via a text message. That day onwards for ten or eleven months, he sent many songs including the word **"Sihina "**as text messages.

Time passed and on the day I met him at the Kekirawa bus stop, he gifted me a bead necklace, a parker pen and a small Buddha statue.

On 15th June 2018, my sister called my father. He is the only person who still knows what she said that day. The next morning my father said:

"Sihina passed away last night. He had been ailing from some chronic disease which was not disclosed to us. Your elder sister is going to the funeral from the campus."

"Sihina passed away last night. He had been ailing from some chronic disease which was not disclosed to us. Your elder sister is going to the funeral from the campus."

That's all I heard. I screamed loudly and when I regained consciousness, I was in my bed.

"Aunt"

Shakya's son was talking to me. His voice brought me back to my senses and back to the present.

I looked at my hands again. The memories of the first and the last romantic relationship in my life that I had protected for six years had been destroyed and its remains lie in my hands. Taking a long breath and hugging the memories of my lost love back to my chest, I got lost in a world of thoughts. Perhaps we are only

beads in the necklace of Samsara over which we have no control. The thread of fate bound us together. Sooner or later, it would loosen and the beads would separate.

I told myself to face reality. The past is gone. The broken necklace has given me an insight into reality. Why not start life all over? I discarded the beads of the necklace

into the dustbin and the broken Buddha statue was given a higher place in the store room. The streaks of sunlight peeping into the store room through the lattice of the window created a beautiful matrix on the floor.

BIRTHDAY GIFT



Even though I wanted to make my day very sunny, it was just another gloomy Day. I am Sohanna Michel, a semi-Indian girl. Why am I saying that? Because my mama is Indian and my papa is American.

But I would love to be an Indian since they give more value to everything. Today is my birthday and, as usual, my mama made my favorite Indian dishes for my breakfast. My papa gave me a big hug and a warm kiss as his birthday wish. I know that every year they may have something special for my

birthday as a gift. Last year, I got a new iPhone from Papa and Mama. As a practice, we have a small birthday party to gather all our cousins and relatives who live nearby.

Sometimes I wondered whether my parents' indulgence had made me a child who expected too much from those who loved me.

This year's birthday was the most special birthday for me. I had met Arjun at my college. He was a senior, and I had just joined my college at the beginning of last year. Actually, he was a very handsome and smart boy who was capable of attracting the attention of every girl in the college. But I was the luckiest. He asked for my hand at the end of last year. There was no reason to say no to him, so I accepted his offer. Our

relationship was now six months old, and my parents knew about it as well. There was no objection to our relationship since he came from a respectable family. I waited for Arjun to wish me and surprise me with something special. My instincts told me that he was a good lover - I told myself that he would definitely surprise me and propose to me on my birthday with a wedding ring.

Disturbing my reverie, my phone started to ring. "Oh, Arjun," I whispered.

I answered the phone.

"Many more happy returns of the day, my baby girl," he gave a warm kiss over the phone. I blushed even though he wasn't around.

"Thank you, my love. When are you planning to come here?"

I couldn't wait to see him.

"Shall we meet at our regular coffee shop? Or should I come and pick you up?" When I heard that, my hopes eventually faded away. I remained silent for a while.

"Hello, babe. Are you there?" Again, I heard his voice. "Ah, yes, babe. No, I will be there. At what time? Around 10. Now I am going to leave."

"Ah ok, I will be there." I was really upset, but there was still hope. I knew he loved me but didn't know why he behaved like this.

However, as discussed, we met at the coffee shop, and he wished me a happy birthday with a big hug and a warm kiss. He went back to his car and carried a teddy bear.

"Happy Birthday, Love."

My heart sank. Is this all he is going to give me on this special day, rascal!" I muttered to myself. I couldn't bear my sorrow and

anger. I started to shake with anger.

"Is this your gift, Arjun?"

I could not contain myself; I felt belittled by such an inexpensive and silly gift and flung it out to the road. Frantically, Arjun ran behind it to catch it before a vehicle ran over it. In a fraction of a second, a speeding red car screeched and Arjun lay prostrate hugging the teddy bear. That was all I could remember and I woke up in a hospital bed surrounded by family.

"Where is Arjun?" I screamed in spite of the acute pain in my head.

"We have to accept it, my darling, you will have to be brave," my mother told me hugging me tightly and stroking my head. Her sobbing revealed everything. I had killed him!

"He ... Arjun is no more, mama? Oh, mama I am a witch, I killed him. I am a witch, I destroyed him." I sobbed and sobbed clinging on to my mom.

The next day was the day my Arjun would leave me forever. My self-centredness and insensitivity have finally boomeranged on me, but at the expense of Arjun's life. I sat beside his lifeless body. No tears ran down my cheeks any more, no sighs passed out of my lungs. I hugged the teddy bear tighter and tighter when the time came closer for Arjun to leave us - leave us for ever.

Suddenly, the teddy bear spoke, "Darling, will you marry me?" I jolted at the unexpected happening and I dropped the teddy bear. The movement caused something glistening to roll out of the tummy of the teddy bear. I picked it up. It was a beautiful gold ring on which was carved the letters, A&S. I felt as if the whole world was whirling around my head pulling me into an abyss.

“Guru Mushtiya” - A TALE FROM “The Potted Plant” by Kamala Wijerathne



Kamala Wijerathne's collection of stories, *"The Potted Plant,"* published in 2015 by S. Godage & Brothers (Pvt) Ltd, sheds light on the intriguing conflict between ancient and modern thought patterns.

One captivating story within the anthology is "Guru Mushtiya" - *guru mushtiya* in Sinhala is a practice where the teacher refrains from revealing a portion of his/her knowledge to the disciples, so that they could never equal him.

The narrative unfolds with an eighty-four-year-old woman, preparing to consult an eye surgeon for her blurred vision, reminisces about her father – an indigenous eye doctor who healed patients with herbs.

In this story, the protagonist reflects nostalgically on her father's gifted skill of treating eye ailments using hibiscus. But he never shared the practice with his daughters owing to the deep-rooted gender related norms in society.

She shares the story with her niece with all its vivid memories, and recalls a day when a man sought her father's help for an eye injury sustained during the harvest. Paddy leaves, resembling long grass, cause painful injuries to many people during this season. The protagonist describes the danger these injuries posed and graphically emphasizes the need to administer treatment immediately to prevent blindness.

While narrating the incident, she reveals her own curiosity and attempts to learn her

father's herbal treatments. However, being a girl, she was not supposed to inherit some secrets. Her father's remedy successfully healed the patient, But the climax of the story is when she observes and discovers the ingredients which went into the remedy. She was so excited with her feat and revealed the ingredients to the healed man. This, unfortunately, infuriates her father.

The narrative explores the mindset of the generations of a

bygone era. Healing is related to *Athgunaya* (spiritual energy) and faith in the healer. Interestingly, the woman's niece neither accepts nor ridicules the older way of thinking. Instead she objectively presents the events just as they were narrated by the old lady. However, without discarding the old practices, she absorbs the positive psychological effect on the patient, of having faith in the doctor and the medicine.

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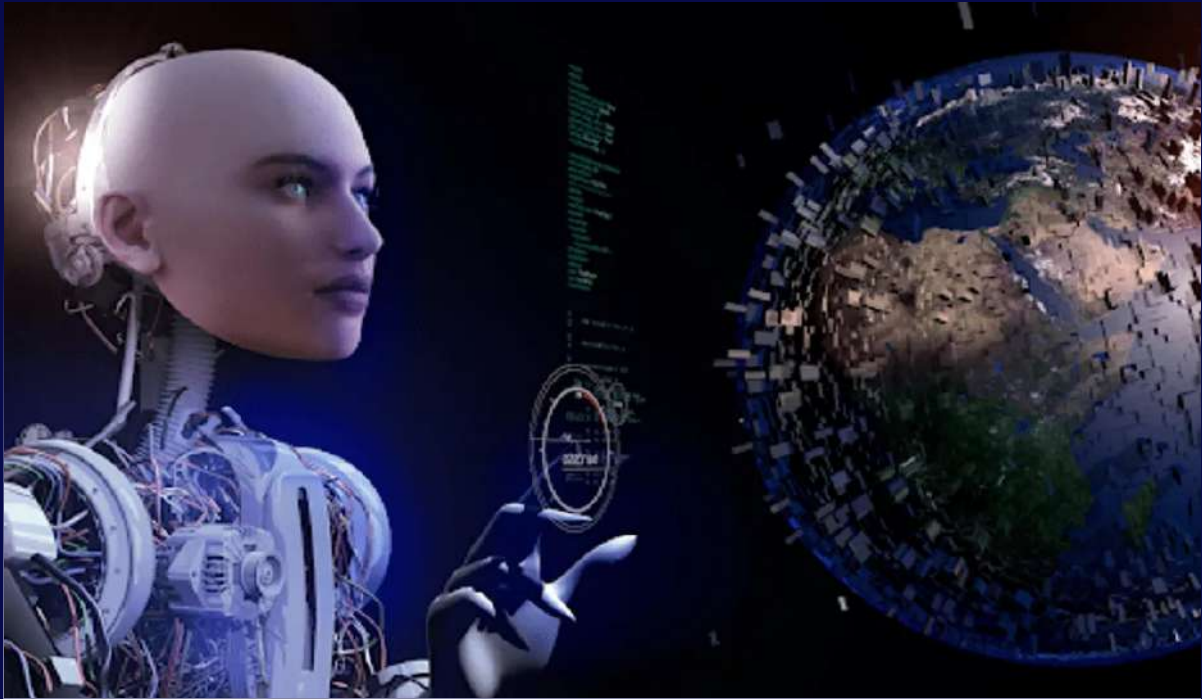
The story poses questions regarding the ethicality of keeping “*guru mushtiya*” which has seemingly inhibited the passing down of age-old medicinal knowledge to the next generation. The old lady shows profound admiration towards these traditional healing methods. But the

discrimination against the female child has deprived the curious and eager learner of opportunities to become a promising healer.

In conclusion, “*Guru Mushtiya*” serves as an

exploration of generational wisdom and at the same time, in a subtle way, it presents factors which inhibited traditional wisdom from thriving. The story “*Guru Mushtiya*” is suitable for readers of all ages, and the narrative weaves together elements of traditional beliefs and customs with familial relationships. The story is highly recommended for its engaging storytelling and thought-provoking themes.

QUICK LOOK AROUND THE WORLD OF TECHNOLOGY



Just as blood is a vital substance for all living creatures, technology also holds an incomparable significance in human life today. At present, it takes a few seconds for us to do something because the technology speeds up our lives. Technology is the vehicle that drives us forward to be on par with other countries in the world.

Imagine the world without the marvels of technology; people screaming out loudly to get a message across and having mountains misted with smoke signals. With time,

technology has advanced in leaps and bounds in parallel to all the spheres in the world. In the past, people had no idea whether the message reached the person we wanted to communicate with, but in the future there will be so many methods that we can use to communicate with others.

One of the major benefits of technology is drawing the lines of connectivity between people. It transcends geographical boundaries so that we can be introduced to various kinds of people. Social media platforms, video conferencing tools and messaging apps take an important place in our lives. If families are separated by

oceans, the gap can be filled with a simple video call; relatives living around the world can maintain their interconnections as well. Technology creates connections between people and increases the empathy level of people.

Moreover, technology provides great support when developing the world. In the healthcare sector, introducing new innovations like artificial intelligence has great benefits. In the manufacturing sector, and in so many other sectors, we use technology to increase productivity. There are various kinds of machines that help us in our daily lives. It motivates people to undertake new innovations. Technology has a great impact on the education industry too. In the past, students had to go to physical classes for their education, but at present, people have access to websites and are able to join online classes as well.

can search for reading material, web sites, tutorials, e- libraries...etc. Another benefit of technology is that it creates data privacy and digital security.

In conclusion, it has to be mentioned that using technology everyday makes our lives colorful. Technology involves communication, working, learning and all other things. It makes it easier for us to do all these activities. So technology makes our lives more colorful and helps us draw a colorful picture of our future.

People who have an internet connection

LIFE

I'm still searching for
What life is
I tried to see a word through
The gaps between
Because, I saw it was just
A mirage; looking for life to
Erase the gaps
Life is wonderful with
Bruises, pains, smiles, breakups
Just like the pauses you get when
You can't drug the wondering mind,
No matter how hard I try to give
you meaning, I'm left speechless...
Because I am still searching
For 'Life'



Love Seen in the Heart

**Slowly adding
lyrics to your name...
The wind blows for me
whispers about you...
Every day I go to sleep
with the hope of seeing...
The same dream of your smile**

**To the burning fire...
Need water to sleep
water to sleep...
Your smile can
Extinguish the fire in my heart...
Your hugs so warm
Ease my aching heart
Longing for a space in your heart
Carved out to place my name...**



Moonless Night



After years of self-exploration, Lord Buddha found out that the universe was built on a core element called “Ruupa Kalaapa”.

After years of his scientific journey, Dr. John Dalton found out that the universe was built on a core element called the “atom”.

After years of mathematical pursuit, Dr. Stephen Hawking found out that the

universe was built out of nothing.

Then my best friend Nayomi Kalubowila was born. Opposing all these geniuses, she said that the universe was built from colours.

In her opinion, colour is the chain that holds you inside “Sansara”. She says that if you try to see the world through its colours, you will understand the ultimate truth of the universe. If you try to see the universe without its colours, you will be enlightened.

“Is she a philosopher?”

“No, she is a thief.”

She is a 'Robin- not in the hood - but in Art'.

Every single night, like a spider, she slowly climbs up a great artist's mountainous kingdom of creativity and breaks down their rich work and steals what is worth stealing. Then during the weekends, she tries to combine, connect, modify, redesign, reinterpret and reinvent the things that she has stolen during the week, because Pablo Picasso once said that “art is theft”.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, creativity is 'the use of skill and imagination to produce something new'. But my friend believes that creativity is 'the ability to steal what is worth stealing and produce something from them'.

Later, I found out that her definition of creativity was also stolen.

Last night, she started to make a new art piece. She always tells me that creating art doesn't make you an artist. So she never calls herself an artist.

“I'm not an artist. I'm just a kid who is making some shitty art.”

She sent me an unfinished pencil sketch of her new work via Whatsapp. At first glance, it didn't make any sense to me. For me, they

were just some random linear and curved lines that were scribbled on a paper.

“It looks good! But what is it?”

And then she replied, “That's the real question bro! Ask it from yourself.”

She firmly believed that people should stop for a while - take a break from the race of life and stare at a piece of art and make an effort to understand the real meaning behind it.

So I stopped for a while and started to stare at her new work of art like a stupid child who stares at a rectangle to find the 'x' in a geometry problem. But they were distracting me.

“Who?”

Actually, there were two of them. The first one was the huge, black, ugly, untidy, cotton-y, ice drop donator; the clouds. The second one was the thick, yellowish-brown, black grassy, warm-salty drop secretor; the skin.

The donator was trying hard to pull out my hair shafts, while the secretor was trying to push them down and my eyes were locked down between the blue rays that were spreading out from my phone. But the pupils of my eyes were whirling through her drawn lines, while my lips were pressed together because I was whispering to

myself some tripe.

“A giant but thin girl- a little, but young boy-

The girl- what is she doing?

Is she kissing the sky? or is she kissing the clouds?

I don't know - I can't see her eyes? Why?

Because a cloud ties her eyes-

Her legs were stuck - underground? Or in the mud? Or in a flood?

I don't know-

The boy- what is he doing?

Is he kissing her chest? Or is he checking the rise and fall of her breath?

I don't know-

But he is hugging the girl- the girl- she is doing the same -

Why?

I don't know why-”

That is how I was trying to pull out the hidden colours behind my friend's ashy lines. After a few minutes she sent me a text:

“Bro! Try and try one day you can fly.

But for now, you have to lie.

Otherwise, your mom will open the door like a spy

to check what are you doing without sleeping at night.

Good night!”

After reading it, my pair of lips broke up with each other and separated. To live alone, they started to pull in a mile-long tub of air slowly and steadily, but then pushed it away in 1.68 kilometres per second while saying,

“Finally!”

And I replied to her.

“Good night!”

But it wasn't!

After seeing my message, she went to the kitchen to fill up a jar since she wanted to finish the art before sunrise. When she had gone to the kitchen, she thought she was alone in the dark. To dispel the dark, she turned on the switches of light bulbs. But she didn't notice that she was surrounded by a colourless gang of prisoners. They had made a hole and escaped from the prison of the gas pipe to find freedom in the earth's atmosphere. When my friend pushed the switches, they saw a bunch of little fire sparks and started to scream. They thought that my friend was trying to hurt the sparks.

So the pipe-prisoners teamed up with the fire sparks and attacked my friend.

8 hours later, I'm hearing an owl-moan mixed with a breezy wind through the root of her dried taste tester. Her moan is a torn breath. It is holding a bottom-visible deep heart while shaking it and begging for a life to fill it up.

I'm scared. I want to escape. But I can't leave you alone. I know that they can - the teardrops. They can leave you alone. They are falling down from my eyes with no intention. Soon after seeing you, they feel the same as I'm feeling right now and start to cry out loud. They are getting warm and are trying to hold me in their arms, but I'm holding you in my arms. So they are rolling down my cheeks carrying the pain of my heart.

I'm scared.

I want to escape. But I can't leave you alone. I know you want to fight - and you will. But you are fighting with an unbeatable force. Death.

Compared to them, you are just a tiny little sugar cube trying to survive against a trillion of red fire ants. I know, there is a zero point zero-zero-zero-zero-zero-zero-one per cent chance to beat them up.

But, my friend...

Victory has its own price. If you want it - pay for it!

Then your entire life will become a moonless night.

Song of Freedom

The Pearl of the Indian Ocean,
Sri Lanka is our motherland,
Let's sing together the song of devotion,
Adoring her with a garland of freedom.

Raise the lion's flag,
Raise it up high,
We truly love our country's flag,
Waving high in the sky.

Heroes live forever in our hearts,
To protect our country, they offered their blood,
The journey to freedom was not easy, but so arduous,
The souls of heroes are like blooming buds.

Today is our glorious Independence Day,
Let's celebrate it in a charming way,
Set free white pigeons and let them sway,
Hold hands for peace, and for prosperity let us pray.





THANK YOU POLLYANNA

Shamaya Harindi Usgoda

*Thank you, Pollyanna,
for teaching me
The spell of happiness
The art of smiling*


*You do it in an amazing way
happy about the crutch
That you received as a gift
When you expected a doll*

*I am also happy
That you don't want a crutch
Thank you, Pollyanna,
For this amazing spell*

*I also learn to find happiness
Whenever I face anything
I surely find happiness
From any dark cloud
It's the secret of a beautiful life
Once again and once again
Thank you, Pollyanna,
For this amazing spell*



The Best Motherhood

A soft, painterly illustration of a woman with long, wavy brown hair, wearing a white t-shirt, gently cradling a sleeping baby in her arms. The background is a light, hazy wash of colors, suggesting a peaceful indoor setting. The overall mood is tender and intimate.

Someone asked me, one day
How my baby was born
Normal birth or caesarean?
Caesarean... I said
Ah! Lazy mothers!
No pain no bond
That's what they say
Unless you undergo that process
You aren't a real mother,
I heard her murmur.

I felt her series of words like lightning;
Striking and burning my soul
I remembered the bundle I carried
With gleaming hopes
Of love and dreams
That surfaced day and night
To see my sweet cherub
Who would fill up my world,
Spent many a night without closing my eyes
To keep my little treasure alive.

Why would you bargain motherhood?
It is not limited to the moment of birth
but to a whole lifetime of care, sacrifice and love
I worded my thoughts thus,
At which she became quiet,
And stayed dumb for a while.

The Plain of Pain



We have been waiting for this day since we lost our king. They burned him alive with a warning of death for everyone, except for the women who can play with the devil.

Who is the devil?

The devil is the rebel who robbed our land. The devil is the fighter who will fight until his final breath. The devil is the warrior who won the war against our troops. The devil is the killer who killed our king and our people. The devil is the destroyer

who came to destroy our souls.

So why are they calling him a devil?

Because he wears the mask of a devil. Nobody has ever seen his real face - they have only seen a devil's face. But everyone can see his true soul because a devil has swallowed his soul.

Who can burn a man alive except for a devil?

"Sir! Our troops are ready."

"Good!"

He never speaks. But his acts speak for him.

He never plans. He is the plan.

Is he complicated?

No, he's simple. He just wants to watch the world burn.

*"Sir! We are discovered."
"Good!"*

Since they burned our king, I took upon the responsibility of caring for our people. But I'm not a king or a prince. I'm just a poor boy with a hope for a better future. And that's exactly what our people needed; a hope for a better future, hope for a better world.

*"Sir a messenger is coming?"
"From whose side?"
"Devil's side."
"Good!"*

Most of the people in our kingdom were farmers. They planted seeds and cultivated their sweat for survival. But today we are cultivating our blood for survival.

They were on paddy fields. We are on the battlefield.

*"Sir! The message reads that the devil wants to meet you alone."
"Before the beginning? or after the end?"
"Before they burn, Sir!"
"Good!"*

The place we were assembling in was a pleasing village with green plants, calming rivers, fertile soil and lovely people.

It was a dark night until we burned some wood and leaves to make a large bonfire. It looked like a sun had risen up at night. There was a tradition in our village that when someone married a girl from another village, the two families and our villagers got together to light up a bonfire. Our ancestors believed that, by doing this, a newly married couple would gain prosperity in their lives.

That night my brother was the groom. And when the bride came in, it was like the moon had risen up on a summer's night. And my wife was so upset because I was looking at her all the time.

*"Sir! We can see the devil coming."
"Is he coming alone?"
"Yes, Sir!"
"Good!"*

Then the party began. We sang while tasting delicious food. We danced while drinking some intoxicants. Everyone was happy until a hundred stars lit up around the burning sun.

Through the light, the devil arrived.

They burned our houses, tortured our brothers, raped our sisters and killed our innocent people! -----

But I survived! But my beloved let two people die. Because an unborn life was growing inside her.

Do you want to know what they did to my wife and unborn child?

They didn't kill her. They wanted to make an example.

The devil threw away his sword and went close to my wife. He rubbed her head smoothly. My love was begging for life! Not for her - for the one who had no idea what was happening.

*"You are beautiful!---like my sister. Don't cry!
I don't want to kill you! You can do it yourself!
I just came here to help you with that."*

Then he put his arm into my unborn child's living space through the lane where my child would come out to see the sunshine but it never came out the way we wanted. Because the devil dragged out our baby like a wolf who tears up a dead doe and threw it away into a burning cart.

*"Sir! The devil is waiting for you."
"Good!"*

I still remember the fear in her eyes. I still hear the way she screamed. I still feel her pain inside. But, I don't remember the eyes of my child.

Because I didn't get a chance to see those eyes. They were shining in a burning fire.

It hurts! The pain burns my soul.

So I named this place "The Plain of Pain" and chose here to end everything - the place where everything began.

"So you came here to die with your people!"

"No! I came here to stop your people!"

"(laughing) With your farmers? Very impressive."

"You know what? You remind me of myself in the past."

"Is that a compliment?"

"No! It's a warning. Do you know why I wear a mask?"

"I don't care about your mask. The only thing I care about is your actions."

"If you care about my actions, you must care about my mask."

"Why do you want me alone? To kill me?"

"(laughing) I don't want to kill you. Why would I do that?"

"Then why do you want me?"

"To tell you a little story."

"We don't have time for stories."

"Why are you hurrying? We have all the

time in the world.”

“Make it quick, if you want! Or I will pull your head off!”

“Okay! Okay!”

Right, Listen!

When I was a child there was a man with an army who invaded our lands. They burned our village, killed hundreds of innocent people.

(takes a deep breath)

They killed my innocent parents and raped my beautiful... lovely... innocent! sister.

I was five! I had no idea what was going on there.

I hit that man with a piece of wood.

Do you know what he did to me then?

(slowly takes his mask off)”

“(surprised) Your face!”

“Yes! My face! That man put my head into a burning cart!”

“He must be a devil like you!”

“Yeah! He was the true devil! And he was your king!”

“(surprised) What???”

“Yes! Your king was the true devil.”

“No! No! He wasn't.”

“Yes, he was!”

“No! No! Our king was good”

“The true devil; and I just wanted to take my revenge”

“Revenge? You burned him alive! Killed our innocent people. Isn't that enough for you? Do you want more?”

“That's all I wanted.”

“Then why are you still here?”

“Because of you!”

“Me? Huh! Huh!”

“I took my revenge on your king and your people in every possible way I could. Then a little poor arrogant kid showed up. You!

You made a lot of trouble here, kid! ”

Do you know what I want to do now?”

“How am I supposed to know? Do you want to talk? Or do you want...”

“War! I want war!

I want to watch all of your men burn. But you!

I won't burn you! I want you alive.

I want to show you, where your arrogance put your innocent people. I want to show you the way you let them suffer; the way you let them die!

After you understand the depth of your arrogance and the depth of your failure; nobody needs fire to burn you.

*You'll burn from the inside; until you
die!" (takes a deep breath)*

You know what?

I'm already burning inside.

Troops! On my word!

Attaaaack!"

The Regaining



I didn't mean to hurt her, let alone kill her! I wanted to shout out as loud as I could. If that day had never dawned, my life would never have changed this way.

I can remember that fatal day as if it were yesterday. It was the 10th of March, 2015. But, what made me lament so hard even today is because that day was my own choice. On that day, I had to make a choice; whether to be a bridesmaid at my cousin's wedding or to go on my last school trip. To be precise, the wedding was on the 10th of

March in Anuradhapura and I had to come back to Colombo to join the trip the following day - my father was rather furious at this.

He said, "You should choose between the two, because Anuradhapura is too far for us to come back from on the same day. I can't drive late because there are elephants on the road at night".

My mother protested, "Forget about your school trip, we should be there at the wedding, after all, you promised to be a bridesmaid."

“ I can’t miss my last school trip, you see, that will be the last time I’m going to be together with my school mates.”

My father finally gave in, “Ok, don't fight now, we will attend the wedding and come back to Colombo in the evening before it is very late.” I was jubilant.

That day was my first experience of being a bridesmaid. Indeed, I couldn't believe my eyes that day when I looked at myself in the mirror. I asked myself, “Am I so gorgeous?” I thought I should set aside my mischievous habits for one day and behave like a lady.

All my cousins were generous with their positive comments about my looks on that day. There were three bridesmaids, for two best men. I had no strange feelings and felt quite at home mainly because the other two bridesmaids happened to be two of my cousins.

It was just another family wedding if not for the reason that one of the other two bridesmaids seemed to be smitten with one of the best men.

She pinched me and said, “Please *Lokki*, will you support me - I want to ask him out.”

I thought that was being too abrupt and outspoken for a girl, “No, no Akka... don't be in a hurry. First, you have to show him

that you like him. First, smile with him and we will be friendly with him before we make a big move. Ok?” I advised her like a pro.

She agreed with me. And during the next photoshoot, we smiled with him. But to our utter disappointment he seemed to ignore us and looked more interested in his phone.

We would not give up that easily. I forgot my promise to myself to behave like a lady and helped my cousin to mastermind plan B. We pretended to be interested in another boy in order to catch the attention of the best man with whom she had fallen in love. But the arrogant fellow was still as cold as a cube of ice. Failing for the second time, I told my cousin whom I called *Sasini Akka*, and said, "You should give up on him, because he is too arrogant and not suitable for you."

But I saw her making several more unsuccessful attempts to communicate with him, even without my assistance.

My cousin went so far as to find out more details about him and stealthily whispered into my ear that he was an army cadet officer and that his name was Sirikumara and was called Siri for short by his friends.

I thought she would probably forget him once she is attracted to another person. How wrong I was! I wish now I could have understood the depth and intensity of her

feelings on that day. If only I knew that those feelings could be so self-destructive, I would have been by her side. If that knowledge had dawned on me earlier, things, perhaps, would have been different by now.

Towards the end of the day, everyone was taking leave of the new couple having wished them good luck. The time was drawing close to the happy and sad moment of seeing the couple off to their honeymoon. Unexpectedly, I found Sirikumara standing very close to me. He smiled and slipped something into the outer pocket of the bag I was carrying. I was petrified. I looked for Sasini Akka who was nowhere to be seen.

I was too scared to tell Sasini Akka about the incident, thinking she might feel offended if she came to know that Sirikumara approached me in her absence. Thanks to my father, we were able to come back to Colombo before it was very late. The next day was the happiest day in my life. The incident on the previous day was the highlight of the day for my friends. We chatted like parrots and I mimicked how he approached me in an exaggerated and a graphic manner, which entertained all my friends. One of my friends suggested we should tease him by calling him. Though hesitant, I agreed with the suggestion being reluctant to disappoint my friends. One of my friends called him pretending it to be me. As a result, I became partly responsible

for the tragedy that awaited us by agreeing to play with the feelings of Sirikumara.

My impulsive friend had to pay the price for her actions as Sirikumara had started to bother her day and night. Finally, she pleaded with me to rescue her from the trap she had set herself. I had no option but to call him and explain to him everything from A-Z.

After a few months, I got to know that Sasini Akka had revealed her feelings about Sirikumara to her parents after which they arranged for a proposal to be taken to his family. I heard that Sirikumara was over the moon to get a proposal from our family. But I was bothered. Had he mistakenly thought that the proposal came from me? When I met Sasini Akka, she was ecstatic about Sirikumara responding to the proposal in a positive manner.

She added, "I'm going to send him a beautiful picture of mine, how about this Lokki? He said he was going to visit me next week."

She was too excited to notice the confusion and anxiety I was going through at that moment. Next week clearing my doubts, I heard that when Sirikumara saw Sasini Akka's photograph, he had said, "Not this one, but I like the other girl" referring to me. For a young girl who was stung with passion so deep for the first time, how could she bear the immense pain caused by the sense of rejection and betrayal? She

refused to communicate with anyone and lived like a recluse for a few days. Against everyone's expectations for her to come back to her normal self, she forced us to hear the worst news of our lives. She took her own life, leaving a deep, dark hole in everyone's lives. Who was to be blamed? Sirikumara? Saisini Akka herself? Or me who encouraged my friends to play with human emotions? Or was it yet another evil plan created by the intricacy of fate?

I am still looking for the answer. I will continue to look for the answer in the future, yet I cannot say whether I will ever be successful in finding the answer.

THE UNFORGETTABLE



We all have to face some difficult times in our lives. We face different types of problems which befall us at unexpected times. Each problem may affect us in a different manner.

Some problems teach us unforgettable and enlightening lessons about life. Some leave us disastrously crestfallen. I also had a difficult time in my life which left me heartbroken - yet, I was able to piece myself together to rise out of the abyss of disappointment.

In 2020, the entire world was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic and Sri Lanka was locked down for a long time. During this time, I was studying for the A/L Exams at home. There were some friends in my neighborhood and I sometimes played outdoor games with them. But I prioritized my studies. I was engrossed in my studies for a while, but then, all of a sudden, I began to get distracted. Nostalgic reveries of my childhood days began to overflow my mind and I began to remember my old school days. Those days were so beautiful and unforgettable.

Of course, there were both sweet and bitter experiences but overall, they were the most joyous times of my life. Sometimes I wished I could go back and remain in the past forever. After I realized that it was impossible to do so, I began to cry silently all to myself. I know this sounds stupid but that was exactly what I felt all the time - old memories of the bygone days flashed across my mind.

I tried to hold back memories lined up to enter my mind. I began to question myself "What is happening to me?". In answer to that question, my mind began to start asking "Is this what you wanted?" and "Do you want to stay happy or live with the suffering of your lost dream?". I was not able to focus on my studies anymore and I felt sick. Then my mind began to be occupied by those questions. Finally, the lockdown was over!

Physical tuition classes started to re-open. Therefore, I had the opportunity to go out. But I was still being influenced by my own thoughts about the past, my dreams and my high aspirations which were never realized. I cried for those lost hopes and dreams sacrificed in favor of the dreams and desires of my parents and relatives. I knew, at the same time, it was not their fault, it was my own choice. Perhaps if I had articulated my aspirations to them, they would have let me have my own way. But I did not have the courage to reveal my mind. What anguished me most was not abandoning my own dreams, but crushing their dreams.

The frustration drove me to the point of depression.

I realized the solitude brought about by the pandemic had left me reminiscing too hard, too deep. It made me probe the wounds which were on the verge of healing. On one gloomy day, while the darkness laid upon us by the pandemic was being slowly lifted, I went to town for my ICT class. I subdued the demonic temptation to jump in-front of a speeding vehicle. Why? Because I was under stress - I was overcome with nostalgia and the pain of crushed dreams.

I wanted to forget them. But I didn't want to commit suicide. I soon realized how stupid I was. But I didn't have the heart to go to classes. So, I went to the Dalada Maligawa and stayed outside. My parents, my friends and my relatives panicked because I didn't answer their calls. I finally decided to answer a call from my mother who was crying. I told her where I was and she asked me to stay where I was. After a while, my uncle arrived and he took me to my parents.

On my way home, I told him everything. I told them that I was worried about their dreams about me, but I felt no happiness after I realized that I had sacrificed my own dream for their dreams. I also told them that I always wanted to see their smile. My mother said "Don't think too much! Just try to do your best! Don't make too much of an effort! Relax."

After that day, I always try to do whatever I

like which helped me to achieve my dream. And I decided to spend my time happily, have now found that when you are happy, the reasons to be happy always come along.

Be careful when you are making decisions. Don't try to kill yourself in the face of failure. Who knows what the future holds for you? And at the same time, remember, there is no turning back in life. It moves forward like a river over boulders and through the thicket towards its destination.

TOO MUCH IS TOO MUCH



Sahan... Sahan, where are you?" Mr. Perera, Sahan's father called out to his son. They had just returned from his parents' place. The grandparents had also arrived to spend some time with their grandchildren. Grandmother was especially excited to meet her grandson after a while.

"He might have gone somewhere." Grandmother observed. "The door is open- he may be studying."

"Come out this minute. We know you are trying to play hide and seek. Come and see who is here," Mr. Perera, who knew that his son was always up to some mischief, shouted a little louder, but there was a note of chiding in it too.

"Amme... Amme... Ane Aiye..." Sahan's sister's agitated voice made everybody dash towards his room, including the old grandparents.

They were all shocked by what they saw. Sahan was tied up on the bed groaning, and on seeing the horrible sight his

grandmother fainted right away. Mother hugged Sahan and pleaded with him to talk to them while father was hugging his mother who had just fainted. The whole house was in turmoil and everyone was confused as to what had happened to Sahan.

The next minute, an ambulance arrived and both the grandson and the grandmother were dispatched to the same hospital, Sahan was still groaning. And his grandmother was still motionless. All of them tried to make them talk, but failed. Finally, they reached the hospital. Immediately their pulse was checked and all other relevant tests were done. Grandmother was administered saline, but the physician who observed Sahan asked his father to come to see him.

“Does your son use any intoxicants?...” the doctor asked directly - it was such an unexpected question.

Father was confused, and it was noticed by the doctor.

The doctor spoke again.

“I mean, did he go for a party today?”

“No, Doctor, why did you ask such a question?” Father asked before the doctor finished his question.

“He has no discernible illness - have you ever noticed him using something like

narcotics?.”

“No, never, Doctor. He is a good child, he was alone at home since morning since we went to bring my parents to our home to spend a few days together,” Father said. “When we came home we found him on the bed tied up with a rope. He usually plays pranks on us,” he added.

“Ok, stay outside. If necessary, I'll call you. By the way, how is your mother now?” the doctor asked before Father left.

“I don't know, Doctor, I'll go and find out,” Father paused for a while.

“Hope she'll be ok soon,” the doctor added. Father nodded and left.

Both Sahan and his grandmother were lying in beds at the hospital. Although the worried family members left the hospital they spent around two more hours outside the hospital. The following morning all of them gathered at the hospital to see the patients. Grandmother had fallen asleep and when they went to see Sahan, they were shocked to see the bed occupied by another patient. So Sahan's father went to a nursing officer.

“Excuse me, good morning, Miss.”

“Good morning, yes, may I help you?”

“Where is my son? He was there in that bed.” Father asked.

The nursing officer revealed, “He was sent to side B. But don't disturb him,” she added quickly.

When they went to Sahan, they noticed he had fallen asleep. Suddenly a doctor came and they were asked to leave the place. They waited outside until the doctor talked to them. Father was asked to go to the doctor.

“How is he now, Doctor?”

“He is ok now. He is to be discharged. If you can wait for about an hour, you can take him home,” said the doctor.

“What had happened to him doctor?” Father finally asked the question that he had wanted to ask since the turmoil took place on the previous day.

“Don't ask him or tell anything to him. How does he normally spend his time at home?”

“He always tries to be happy and he also tries to make us happy”

“He is worried about the things that happened, and he is worried most about his grandmother's situation”

“Tell me, Doctor, what was wrong with him? Had he done something mischievous?” Father asked impatiently.

“Don't take it seriously. He wanted to play a prank on you.”

“Was he acting, Doctor? It can't be. How could he do something like that? To us?”

“He wanted to play a prank and to make it more natural he had taken some sleeping tablets to pretend he was ill and the dosage was too high. Don't tell anyone about it till he fully recovers.”

Sahan's father did not know what to say, whether to laugh or to frown. Sahan had always been a cheerful child and had won the hearts of many with his fun-loving nature. However, “Too much is too much” Father told himself while pondering whether or not Sahan had learnt a lesson this time.

University Mother

I now live in a sky-high dream
I entered through the gate
Not knowing anything
between high walls,
but met new friends.

When getting out of the car
I had a new feeling
No sarees or classrooms to be seen
Only lecture rooms...

Lectures, a new word,
Lectures...
In an unintelligible language
To write,
Hanging down my hand
With mercy and affection
Oh! Mother SIBA!

With passion, I learned
a new language, trembling
Unfamiliar to the tongue
Unfamiliar to the mouth
But it was a DREAM...

Mother SIBA
You became my best friend
Through day and night
I strive to be your best daughter
Mother SIBA

The sky-high DREAM
Adorned in a black coat
Wearing a saree, stepping up
Bless me, Mother SIBA!

To be a wonderful graduate
Bless me Mother SIBA!

The Turning Point



I didn't mean to hurt her, let alone kill her!

I want to shout out as loud as I could. If that day had never dawned, my life would have never changed this way.

I can remember that fatal day as if it were yesterday. It was the 10th of March, 2015. But what makes me lament so hard even now is because what happened that day was of my own choice. On that day, the 10th March, 2015 I had to make a choice; that

was whether to be a bridesmaid at my cousin's wedding or to go on my last school trip. To be precise, the wedding was on the 10th of March in Anuradhapura and I had to come back to Colombo to go on the trip the following day; my father was rather furious about this.

He said, "You should choose between the two because Anuradhapura is too far for us to come back from on the same day. I can't drive late because there are elephants on the road at night".

My mother protested, "Forget about your

school trip. We should be there at the wedding - after all, you promised to be a bridesmaid."

"I can't miss my last school trip. You see, that will be the last time I'm going to be together with my school mates."

My father finally gave in, "Ok, don't fight now. We will attend the wedding and come back to Colombo in the evening before it is very late." I was jubilant.

That day was my first experience of being a bridesmaid. Indeed, I couldn't believe my eyes that day when I looked at myself in the mirror. I asked myself, "Am I so gorgeous?" I thought I should set aside my mischievous habits for one day and behave like a lady.

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It was just another family wedding if not for the reason that one of the other two bridesmaids seemed to be smitten with one of the best men.

She pinched me and said, "Please *Lokki*, will you support me, I want to ask him out? I thought that was being too abrupt and

outspoken for a girl, "No, no akka... don't be in a hurry, first you have to show him that you like him. First, smile with him and we will be friendly with him before we make a big move. Ok?" I advised her like a pro.

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But I saw her making several more unsuccessful attempts to communicate with him even without my assistance.

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I thought she probably would forget him once she is attracted to another person. How wrong I was! I wish I could understand the depth and intensity of her

feelings on that day. If only I knew that those feelings could be so self-destructive, I would have been by her side. If that knowledge had dawned on me earlier, things, perhaps would have been different by now.

Towards the end of the day everyone was taking leave of the new couple having wished them good luck. The time was drawing close to the happy and sad moment of seeing the couple off to their honeymoon. Unexpectedly, I found Sirikumara standing very close to me which made me start. He smiled and slipped something into the outer pocket of the bag I was carrying. I was petrified. I looked for Sasini akka, who was not there to be seen.

I was too scared to tell Sasini akka about the incident, thinking she might feel offended if she came to know that Sirikumara approached me in her absence. Thanks to my father, we were able to come back to Colombo before it was very late. The next day was the happiest day in my life. The incident on the previous day was the highlight of the day for my friends. We chatted like parrots and I mimicked how he approached me in an exaggerated and a graphic manner, which entertained all my friends. One of my friends suggested we should tease him by calling him. Though hesitant, I agreed with the suggestion reluctantly so that I wouldn't disappoint my friends. One of my friends called him

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Who is to be blamed? Sirikumara? Saisini akka herself? Or me who encouraged my friends to play with human emotions, or is it yet another evil plan created by the intricacy of fate?

I am still looking for the answer. I will continue to look for the answer in the future; yet I cannot say whether I will ever be successful in finding the answer.

Unexpected Encounter



It would have been another beautiful day if something unexpected had not happened. It was Shani's wedding. Shani was one of the few friends I had. It was held at a hotel in the Kandy city. Several of my other friends attended the wedding too.

It was after months that we had met, so we had plenty to talk about. The bride was like a blooming flower. We captured photos with the couple and enjoyed the day. As I had another event to attend in the afternoon,

I had to bid goodbye to my friends.

I looked at my watch and ran across the wedding hall. I looked around and went to the elevator. Just then my phone rang. While answering it, I climbed into the elevator. Suddenly, it went dark. My phone was also switched off. I was unable to understand what was going on. I started to tremble and I heard someone talking. From what the other person in the elevator said, I realized with a great shock that I was stuck in the elevator with a stranger. It was the greatest shock I had ever received. In a moment, a little light came on. I looked

around and saw that it was a light coming from someone's phone, probably from that of the other person stuck with me. His voice was of a young man and sounded strangely familiar, but his face was not clearly visible because of the darkness. I tried to switch on my phone. But it did not work. I felt that the stranger was also in great shock, but knowing that I was embarrassed and scared he tried to console me - he asked me not to be afraid and that we would be rescued soon. But his voice shocked and embarrassed me even more; he sounded so familiar. I stared at the floor in shock, but I desperately wanted to see his face. Even in the little light, I was able to make him out. Rohan, yes, that was him. I felt giddy and faintish - he was none other than my ex-boyfriend who had left me. "Rohan, is this really you?" I felt the shock he received when he heard my voice. I remembered the past events one by one. He was smitten with me and fell in love with me only to leave me even without telling me the reason why he decided to do so. But I had thought of his happiness and let him go.

"Nisha, you have done me wrong, but I am not cross with you." His complaint was most outrageous.

"What wrong are you talking about?" I forgot for a moment we were two victims inside an elevator which had been stuck and we ought instead be discussing how we could escape.

"Shehan told me about your affair with him."

"What?! Shehan approached me when you left me and he told me you had another girlfriend!"

"Ah, Shehan is a jackal, he has lied to both of us."

Rohan then showed me the wallpaper of his phone which was filled with the photographs we took on our first anniversary. "I was determined not to have another girlfriend in my life after what you did to me," his voice was marked with regret and self-pity.

"What? Why did **you** believe him?" I asked reproachfully.

"Why did **you** believe him? We are like two flies caught up in the same web made by the same spider,"

"We were to get married, the next month, but..."

"Yes, think about it.. perhaps this encounter was planned by the good forces of our fate to inform us of the truth."

We suddenly remembered we were stuck inside the elevator and we were uncertain as to how long we would have to stay inside. I wanted to cry aloud for two reasons now. I had gotten the two greatest shocks I was

ever to have in my life at the same time. How could I bear it! My head started to swirl and swirl. Last thing I remembered was falling into his arms.

When I woke up, I was on a hospital bed. I had only barely escaped a head injury because of the support I received from Rohan when I fell down in the elevator.

I was wondering about the unexpected twists that life takes. Just as I expected, Shehan never visited me during my stay in the hospital. I messaged GN to Rohan before I switched off the lights to enter the dream world.

The Meaning of Love



Once upon a time, there was a world filled with people. In this world, love was a mystery, yet it held great power. People searched for its meaning, longing to understand its true essence.

A young girl named Lily grew up in a small village. She was curious about love and its significance. She asked her parents, her friends, and even the wise elders, but their answers were complex and hard to grasp.

One day, as Lily walked through a meadow, she stumbled upon a wounded bird. Its wing was broken, and it couldn't fly. Moved by compassion, Lily gently picked up the bird and cradled it in her hands.

She cared for the bird, tending to its wounds with love and tenderness. She fed it, kept it warm, and spoke soothing words. Days turned into weeks, and the bird's wing healed.

One morning, as the sun painted the sky with hues of gold, Lily opened her hands and set the bird free. It spread its wings,

soaring into the heavens, a symbol of freedom and joy.

As Lily watched the bird fly away, she felt a warmth within her heart. In that moment, she understood the meaning of love. Love was not just a word or a feeling; it was an action—an act of kindness, compassion, and selflessness.

From that day forward, Lily embraced love in all its forms. She showed kindness to strangers, cared for those in need, and spread joy wherever she went. And as she did, she discovered that love had the power to transform lives, to heal wounds, and to bring happiness.

Lily shared her understanding of love with others, inspiring them to open their hearts and embrace its true essence. And in this small village, love became a guiding light, a force that brought unity and harmony among its people.

And so, the meaning of love, simple and profound, taught by a wounded bird and a little girl, lived on, weaving its magic through the hearts of all who embraced it. For love, in its purest form, has the power to change the world.