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# Ashvamegh

Poets from Ecuador  
special attraction

Book Reviews  
The protectors of Aesner  
Deadliest Secret of Truth

Poems  
Short Stories  
Articles & Essays

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Ashvamegh is an online international journal of literary and creative writing. Publishing monthly, Ashvamegh has successfully launched its 27th issue in April 2017 (this issue). Submission is open every day of the year. Please visit <http://ashvamegh.net> for more details.

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## What is inside to read?

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(note: you can download research articles and essays in a different non-fiction edition of the issue from the website)

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What is a classic? Is there any standard definition of classic? Different people will have their different versions to offer as definitions; however, the classic method to classify the 'classics' is simply trust your seniors. Isn't so true? I have been thinking about this for months now. Several discussions featuring many academicians and students took place but I could not find something which could console my craving to find a certain parameter on which we could weigh the 'classics'. What I got was simply the citations from scholars of literature and some classic quotations from Aristotle, Eliot, Arnold and sometimes the lesser famous critics. And now I pose this question in front of the readers and contributors of Ashvamegh. How do we identify the classic? I have written an article about the confusion in the classic method - [what is great literature](#)? I would welcome the suggestions and the opinions from scholars on this topic.

I would like to thank my friend and fellow member of the Ashvamegh magazine - Alan Britt. Alan has introduced many poets from Ecuador to the readers in this issue. You will enjoy reading the works of Ecuadorian poets which are published in both the languages - English translation along with the native text.

Anuja Rai, a fifteen-year-old girl from Delhi has impressed me with her writing! Her poetry, at this age, is remarkable! Seeing her writings, I think, we are on the right track. When Ashvamegh came to existence, I had thought that it will serve as the platform to showcase newer talents to the readers and I can see the talents finding this platform useful now. You can read the poems of Anuja along with other poets who have been selected for the issue.

Like always, I will request you all to post your comments on the writings you like. This will encourage the authors and the poets and keep creating...

With wishes & love,

Alok Mishra

April 15, 2017

(connect directly with Alok on [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Website](#))

## *Poets selected and the featured Poet*

- Featured Series on Ecuadorian Poets
- Anuja Rai
- Siddhant Bist
- Arushi Singh
- Mosiur Rehman

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*The Poets from Ecuador: special series on Ashvamegh*

In this issue, we bring to you a collection of poems from various Ecuadorian Poets. You will surely enjoy reading this series. The series contains the poems along with the introduction to the poets. The poems are in original language along with the translation in English.

The poets who are included are:

**Gina E. López**

**Luis Enrique Yaulema**

**Gabriel Cisneros Abedrabbo**

**Xavier Oquendo Troncoso**

**Simon Zavala Guzman**

**Marialuz Albuja Bayas**

**Ruth Patricia Rodríguez**

**Victoria Tobar Fierro**

**Fermin H. Sandoval**

**[Read the series by clicking anywhere in this line!](#)**

## *Anuja Rai*

### **About the Poet:**

Anuja Rai is a 15-year old student from New Delhi. She is an aspiring storyteller who wishes to tell her story in the form of poetry.

### **Blind**

The eyes on ruthless roads in careless cars  
Gleaming gluttony and grief, are blind.  
The hungry hands tapping  
Over their greedy glasses,  
Remain unaware, and unseen.  
For the eyes are blind, they cannot see,  
Love, laughter or epiphany  
Since they lay unseeing,  
They will never realise  
As their own senses  
Lead to their demise.

### **The Storm**

She sailed her tiny tempest  
In the seas serene  
Of his descending shoulders  
breathed a brontide  
Into his ear  
And rained  
And rained  
And rained

## *Anuja Rai*

Arms clutched in pain  
The ship capsized as ocean sat still  
Melancholy now mewed mellow  
Harpooned a smile, he, from within  
The brumous beams did tranquilize  
Into an icterine yellow  
Yet again  
The dog  
Triumphantly tamed  
His human.

## **Waiting**

Each night  
In dim light  
The squealing soprano sang for  
The empty chair  
That leered across  
The teakwood table  
Who cradled close  
A pair  
Of half-filled wine glasses  
Nails tapped over  
A reminiscent rhythm  
Her silk, her sapphire  
Anticipated  
With a dying will

*Anuja Rai*

Gaping outside

The wide window

As the last lot of tyres

Screached past

The brilliant black

But,

She never stopped

Waiting.

## *Arushi Singh*

### **About the Poet:**

Arushi Singh is studying literature at Mount Carmel College, Bangalore. She is from Delhi and had been experimenting in free style poetry for years. A classical and ancient history enthusiast, her poetry is influenced by the poets like Tennyson, Browning, Ginsberg, Milton and others. She has developed a writing style of her own (taking things from others and making an amalgam of that).

### **DEVIL**

And the sound  
Of that devilish grin  
Just slipped through  
This paper thin skin  
So scream my darling  
come drown the demons within

### **Midnight blues**

*Would you forgive me  
If I returned  
With marks on my arms  
And a  
Stranger's  
breath in my  
nightmares?*

*Arushi Singh*

**CAGES**

And so

They watched as we locked

Our hearts in cages

And set our lungs on fire

So dance naked on the street

Watch the cry

Try to drown your light

## *Siddhant Bist*

### **About the Poet:**

Siddhant Bist lives in Dehradun, the capital of the Indian state of Uttarakhand located near the Himalayan foothills. He has a bachelor's degree in English Literature, Psychology and Sociology. He likes to observe nature and watch the constellations at night.

### **The Universe**

The universe, and hence we, are composed of,  
Particles so small that we can't see them.  
Billions of cells live and die,  
As we, as a person evolve.

Evolve into a being capable of morality.  
A being that thinks about the stars, the moon, the sun,  
And all the other life around him in infinite forms and colors.

A being who is content.  
A being who is satisfied.  
A being who feels.  
And yet, he is just one,  
Among the infinite.

His perspective blinds him,  
It does not let him see.  
But he knows,  
That it can also let him see,  
More than he saw before.

Like how a writer's words can make him think,  
How a musician's music can make him feel.  
A painter's painting can inspire,  
How a philosopher's wisdom can make him wiser.  
And how someone's sorrow can make him compassionate.

Words written far away,  
Music made in silence.  
Paintings painted with feelings,  
Wisdom that came from experience.  
And sorrow, which is ever-present.

Astonishing nebulae in the eyes.  
A cluster of stars in the white sand.  
A spiraling galaxy in a flower.  
A supernova in a firework.  
A universe in a drop.

The universe, and hence we are composed of,  
Particles so small that we can't feel them.

Billions of cells live and die,  
As we, as a person evolve.  
Evolve into a being, destined for greatness.

## **A Day to Live**

Can you imagine?  
What you would do,  
If you had but a day to live?

Try and think, imagine,  
That you'd be gone tomorrow.

What would you do?  
What would you achieve?  
What would you try to accomplish?

What would you change?  
What things would you set right?

All the comfort, all the riches,  
Would become meaningless.  
What would we gather then?

We'd perhaps meet our families,  
Our friends and loved ones.

Ask for forgiveness maybe.  
Accept the inevitable,  
Give in, yield.

Be content and satisfied.  
Feel a sense of fulfillment,  
With the current moment,  
With the present circumstances,  
Whatever they maybe.

Happy, that we were given this chance,  
To explore and experience.

Little things would hold great meaning then,  
We'd no longer take things and people for granted.  
Things that were dull and tedious before,  
Would become compelling and exciting.

*Siddhant Bist*

Life would hold a profound meaning then.  
We'd become curious for every single little thing around us.

We wouldn't fight then,  
We wouldn't hoard riches,  
Wouldn't do no evil then,  
What would be the point?  
We'd die tomorrow anyway.

It would make sense,  
To leave this place in the best possible condition,  
And to be and to leave at peace.

I know what he'd do,  
If he had but a day to live,  
He'd live his last day,  
The way he lives every day.

Lights out, goodnight.

**About the Poet:**

Mosieur Rehman is a part-time teacher at a high school. He also works for an NGO that aims to provide better education to children from backward and poverty-ridden areas around Contai, West Bengal. Besides other hobbies like listening songs, singing, watching movies and painting, he loves travelling the most.

**A WOUNDED BUTTERFLY**

In the lawn I sat,  
Recalling the past days,  
There came a thought of fact  
This once swept away my gay.  
In the field near the vales,  
A butterfly sitting on a rock  
Unaware of anything else;  
As if, it was a rock.  
The plants were whistling,  
And jocund the environment was,  
The yellow flowers looked rocking  
On the branches that cares.  
But when I saw the little creature  
Closely: Oh! My heart melted for it,  
And I was unable to tolerate the pain  
Of the wounded butterfly, in vain.  
How did it get hurt? How?  
Did a thorn wound it?  
Or any object that is sharp?  
Or it once became a frog's prey?  
I could only have understood it,  
If I were of the same design like it.

**A POOR LORRY DRIVER**

Sitting in the dark  
With sadness in his heart,  
A poor lorry driver  
Was cooking in the dark.  
The winter's cold became more  
Which made the fuel-wood cold;  
He has to wait there till  
All the goods unload.  
The falling snow destroyed his food,  
Which then became warm to cold,  
He thought when the goods are unloaded,  
And in vain the cold food he chewed.  
Tears rolled down his cheeks  
"Oh how tough his life was!"  
There was no one around in that place,  
To comfort him in his disgrace.  
Work might be small or great  
It seeks for a true devotion,  
Like the poor lorry driver,  
Does his duty without rejection.

## *Authors selected and their stories*

- Where is My Language? By Kamana Aryal
- A Spanish Pure Bhakt by Shweta Chaudhary

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*Kamana Aryal*

**About the Author:**

Kamana Aryal is a student of M.A. English at Tribhuvan University, Kirtipur, Nepal. She occasionally writes short stories to convey her thoughts. She is from Kathmandu.

## **In Search of Language**

I was locked inside the room for four days. “Where is *did*i mummy? I have not seen her from last two days and why this door is closed. Hey, who is inside, please open the door” my eight years old brother said. I was about to forward my step to open the latch, my mother barked, “Hey you naughty, don’t go there. *Didi* is sick. You can’t meet her otherwise you will be sick too.” My mother sneaked into my room and immediately closed the door as if she was about to shoot by a gun. “I have brought dinner for you and keep the dishes apart after cleaning them”, she said. The door was again latched. To kill one day was like to slaughter a whole year. I did not even dare to peep outside from the window. I felt that even a detained person can have better situation than me. I used to sneak off to the bathroom with fear to change my pads avoiding the eyes of my father and brother. Naively, I asked “Mummy I am really tired to do all these which are not less than life punishment. Even I can’t meet my father and brother, why?” “What are you saying? It’s not only you, all the girls have to do this during their first menstruation otherwise god will curse us. If you see your father and brother, you will commit sin and your sin will give agonies to them”, she omitted hastily. My tongue could not dare to utter a syllable. “It is heaven for you. In our time we had to stay far from house”. My mouth got padlocked.

“To lose confidence in one’s body is to lose confidence in oneself.”

— Simone de Beauvoir

The thing in which we have our full right and control is our own body. We can do anything what we want with our body. But if your body is not yours than you are not alive rather you are dead. Everybody's freedom and liberality is deeply connected with exemption of his/her body. This dream of immunity regarding body is millions mile far from women. Their body is the instrument to satiate male. They are given place in the society so that so called male can degrade them all the time to prove themselves superior. A woman when she surrenders her body to a man, she losses her all rights, power and confidence.

I remember that day when I was waiting my turn to enter the room. I was quite nervous and feeling shy, thinking how to express my problems. Suddenly, one employee uttered the number that I was keeping on my hand, "Seventeen". "It's me", I said. "Please go inside the cabin, it's your turn now". A man of middle aged in a white apron looked me very carefully and asked, "What's your problem." Umm, my menstruation doesn't happen in time and during my periods I suffer a lot from stomach pain and bleeding is really uncontrollable". "Come lay down here", the doctor said. He checked me. "Ok, I will prescribe you some medicine that reduces your pain and if it will not work, you have to take a step for ultrasound once." I was lingering my head down while listening to him. I came outside the health post after getting medicine from the medicine distribution counter. "Hey!" Sudden voice came from the back, I turned back. It was the same doctor who checked me. "Don't think too much, it's normal, once you get married all the problems will be solved and if you want to solve the problem in very short time I can help you." I was shocked for a moment. My lips were trembling and heart was fluttering. I was sick and condition was so demeaning. "What", I replied. "Yes, I have helped many women personally and even I can give my address to you, you are welcome anytime." I stumbled and frozen, wanted to scold but

failed to collect the strength because a man of my father's age is talking disgusting things and as a school girl I could not dare to answer back. This storm shook the ocean of my face. I roamed my eyes around the health post, patients were entrancing and existing. I gazed his brutal eyes, felt as if they are going to strike me right there. I run as a horse, even forgot that I was ill, reached at home; gathered some courage and shared to mother. "How could he talk such cheap and rubbish thing?" she fired with anger. But I was riddled when she said, "All males are bastard but we can't do anything because the society points the finger towards a woman instead of pulling out such savage from the society." Silence took place in my mouth. Wiping eye drops, I thought whole night why did not I speak? Why did I remain silent? Why could not I revolt?

### **Who Am I?**

I remember being teased by boys while I was walking in the corridor of my college. "How beautiful eyes you have, turn back and wink upon us he he!" Violent anger came into my face but I did not resist. I was raised with the lesson that being a girl I have to be shy, silent, patient and should not give answer when boys tease you. Girls are like parrot in a cage; restricted to do anything whereas boys are free as the tiger of the jungle. My suppressed voice was humiliating me.

"Wait girls", said I. It was almost night when we were returning from the market. I had got little wound my right foot due to the slipper so I was walking slowly back to my friends. Eyes were almost like blind because they were hugged by the darkness. Moon was playing hide and sick. Road was so calm and silent and we were feeling scary as we were passing from the jungle side of the Murgiya which had a large ground in its north. As we were about to cross the ground, harsh and noisy sound of bike came from the back. It started to circle around us. "Hey beautiful

girls lets have some romance in this hot night. We are really eager to have fun with you”, two different male voices pierced into my ear. Though it was winter my whole body got sweated. Abruptly I opened my mobile and made a fake call to my mother. “Hello, mummy I am coming don’t worry. What! You are here to receive us. Where? Oh, at the end of the ground. Wait there, we are about to finish the ground.” The men run away after my call. My mind was working till late night. I could not sleep. I was moving in clockwise form on the bed. I thought if I did not make such trick what would happen to us? We were three and they were two but why we could not resist against those devils. Why our voice got dumbbed? I felt coward myself. For the first time I thought that my chastity is linked with my body and I cannot hug the ‘FREEDOM’.

“Where you want to go”, bus driver said when I was running from a few distance wailing my hand. “Koteshwor.” Bus was packed with passenger. I stood up for ten to fifteen minutes then I got a window sit. “How pretty girls are in the first semester, we missed the chance to flirt with them *yar*”, a rough voice came from the behind. “Give your tax mam”, conductor said. I gave him 30 rupees. Again the grody voice harshed into my ear, “Beautiful girls are still not provided ID card, may be professors’ eyes are still not passing on them. Can’t see full face? Oh god mask is playing the role of a villain.” I looked around the faces of other people; everybody was lost in their own world. No one had noticed what those rascals were uttering the words directly towards me. I did not turn back; I made my head straight and looked outside the window. I was boiling with rage but voice did not dare to come out. The girl, not speaking in such matters, is considered as moral girl. What exactly morality means? What is the cure for the volcanic feelings and repressed indignation rooted inside me because of abasement all the time? I cursed myself for not defending. I felt that I’m really anonymous.

## **Education: You Are Not 'Mine'**

I use to feel as if I am not a part of this planet when I find my image in other women who are accustomed to be apart in their whole life. One day my father returned from his brother's house, Barghat. My uncle is an Indian army so in his absence my cousin sister had to make the citizenship. "I am so tired. Whole day I stood up in a queue", my father said. I asked, "She even could make her citizenship in the presence of aunt so why did you go?" "Moron, don't u have studied father is necessary for the recognition of child, otherwise a child would be called a bastard?" My voice deemed down. Contradiction and confusions played as tempest in my mind which were raising only one question where is the woman's place then? Are women from the 'Pluto'? She gives birth to child but why father is needed to legalize the children as the citizen of the country?

I found no inter connection between my bookish knowledge and practical life like the Derrida's notion of signifier and signified. Once I was having conversation with my mother and aunt at upstairs. Unknowingly my father entranced. My aunt knelt down, veiled her head with shawl, touched the floor by forehead and bowed to my father. The next day, I asked to my father, "Buwa, why do aunts bow to you such pathetically as prisoner?" "What rubbish are you talking? It's the identity of Nepalese women. Women who don't follow our tradition, norms and values they are very flippant and frivolous. And you have to do same after your marriage?" I became mourn. I spun with the fine threads of subtle thought. Sometimes in rage I thought to burn down all the books which taught me women's right, women's empowerment, women's education because what they teach is not in reality. Reality is very harsh and pathetic. Education does not mean only to read books and to get marks to uplift the academic career; it is also related to our social development. But it does not fit applicable in my context till now.

In my college life, I got chance to go through the feministic theories which bewildered me

more. It introduced me with the reality of this patriarchal society but made me anxious as well because there is worthless of getting such knowledge as I could not practice them in reality. Once I took a microbus from Butwal to my home, Murgiya. As all the seats were packed I had to stand in the crowd. I stood up beside the left of one sit, caught its edge by one hand and hung another hand. As the bus moved, standing people were forcefully coiled with each other. The boy; whose sit I was catching, was of teenage, thin, wearing hip- pop dress and pierced his eyebrows; slightly touched my hand two times but I ignored. But suddenly someone touched me from back and when I returned the person was of middle age with black face, spectacle on the head, in formal dress and smoking. I wanted to burst out and even desired to slap but could not do so. Rather I moved ahead and stood in front of the door. Why did not I speak? I betrayed my humiliated feelings in the fake attempt to secure my so called good manners that make me a 'GIRL'. If I would speak I would be perceived as foolish and senseless girl instead of considering those evil males negatively. My education did not work there. I realized that knowledge is only limited to the papers. If the purpose of education is to empower and civilize the human beings, then why the female are deprived to use their knowledge and wisdom as a tool to defend themselves.

“Women’s biology as an important element of women’s situation in patriarchal society where it is used to justify her oppression as other”.

-Simone de Beauvoir

As I crossed the every academic arena, the level of my knowledge was increasing as well but it made me more puzzled because it teaches me to speak for own suppression which I can't dreamt to apply them in reality. Sometimes one question usually hunts my mind why I am reading only to turn the pages of books, to know the letters and to pass the exam for academic grade. Why I want to be educated which does not give me strength to turn back and answer when I get bullied

by boys. Why am I quenching for the knowledge which does not give me liberty in my own body?

### **No More Than A Marionette**

I remembered one incident from my intermediate level. A girl in the left corner of the last bench had lingered her head on the wall. She was whispering with the boy sitting next to him. They were sometimes whispering and sometimes pretending to look at the book. I was in the right corner of the first bench and mistakenly my eyes were falling on them. “Hey! What are you doing there? Do you come to read or kill the time? It’s ok for him but you are a girl, don’t you have any shame. How will you manage your home later? Your behavior reflects how you brought up. Flippant girl”, teacher blustered more upon girl but says very few to boy even after having equal mistakes. It made me to think that why a girl only has to give excuse when a boy is equal participant of the mistake.

“Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female — whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male.”

— Simone de Beauvoir

Sometimes when I used to be late to reach home at night I mostly used to hear,” it does not suit for a girl to come home late, society makes bad rumors, be concerned about our prestige in the society.” My brother, ten years younger to me, usually enters into the house with the setting sun. I have never heard him to listen such as I was habituated to listen.

One day I got the message that my friend’s father again got married after the forty five days of his first wife’s death. I regarded him negatively. When I shared this to my uncle he replied in angry mood, “who had put such nonsensical thing in your mind? He should marry otherwise who would feed him. He needs a wife for the survival who would feed and take care of him, house and the

children?” “Then why maximum females do not marry recently after their husband’s death or ever?” “Stupid girl, women have much more responsibilities, they have to take care of their children and because of the children’s love they cannot marry again. And what they will do after marriage because their life is not as enthusiastic and interesting as males’. Again, a huge paradox stored in my mind because his answer made me to think that it is not only me rather the whole womankind is perceived as junk and impoverished.

I hate how I grew up because it taught me to bow down without committing mistakes. When I use to see other girls I feel as if I am looking at the mirror. Till the time of today I am habituated to listen, “Well-bred girls do not answer back. It’s a part of day to day life; it is never ending custom, so you have to unheed such matters”. But how can I ignore my humiliation, inner suppression, robbery of my language and rape of my identity. I am getting success in academic arena but failing in my identity as a girl. In the class, when the topics of gender issues are raised boys defend themselves and accuse the girls. Only they speak, most of the girls remain silent. If any girl argues, her mouth is made shut. Her voice has been ceased. Although the teacher says,” Do not put your tongue in such argument. It’s the work of boys to argue and shout so don’t debate with them, its worthless, it does not suit you.” Where is the women’s voice? The word ‘SURRENDER’ , I think is made for women. Why is that only girls stand on the sides of their feet? As if they are afraid to plant themselves?

I think the emotional, sexual and psychological stereotyping of females begins when the doctor says, “It’s a girl”. There is not any moment to say that I was not treated low because of being a girl from my childhood to the time of today. Because of being a girl she must take unusual efforts to succeed. If she fails, no one will say, “she does not have what it takes.” They will say, “Women don’t have what it takes.”

## **Having A Male Tongue**

Once, my family members were gathered together. My father, brother and uncle were discussing about the politics. I felt interesting to listen. When the issue about the Nepalese politics was raised I dared to use my tongue and speak few words. Exactly at the right time my brother said, “Why do u try to drink the water from nose when already there is mouth? Don’t try to be much cockier?”

There is a cold war between my knowledge that I have achieved from my academic study and real life. If I attempt to exercise them in practical life, they are proved to be futile. I feel inferiority and abasement because what I have read in the books is only limited to papers but not reaches to the root of real life. Till the time of today I have not any moment to say that being a girl I would not suffer from patriarchal hegemony. In small age I would thought that it happened only to me, in teenage I found my reflection in many other girls and women and now when I am matured I understand that other women around the country, like me, are passing through same verbal, psychological and physical suppression. Human being is gifted with tongue to communicate and express feelings but this prize is, I think, worthless for women. I have found no changes till the level of my Masters. I think what I am tolerating in my country, the rest women from different parts of the world are going through the same situation.

## Shweta Chaudhary

### Introduction to the Author:

Shweta Chaudhary is post-graduate in English literature. She is interested in writing since her graduation days and actively participates in poetry and other literary gatherings. She is currently indulged in some research work in the field of spiritualism and education. Shweta has qualified NET examination in July 2016.

### A Spanish “pure bhakt”

It was a small town named Maligaon, in the northern part of India. The town was meticulously demarcated by two communities- Hindu and Muslim. The folk of each community were often seen mingling and having a heartily chat. Houses of the Hindu community faced Phoolbagh, a huge ground with dozens of temples contouring it. At the front-right side of the ground lived a Sadhu in his hut who has wittingly claimed autonomy over some few yards of the ground through support of local politicians and *Baniyas*. Though he had illegally grabbed the land, he kept it much cleaner than before through fencing and planting multi-flowering plants in rows neatly. Chrysanthemum, jasmine, marigold, lily, hibiscus, rose and palm trees; all went resplendent on the onset of spring. The sight rose to such aesthetic and auspicious beauty that it made people of the nearby villages throng in great numbers to the temples to bestow prayers to their deities.

The Sadhu was a blend of too many professions to suffice in one being. He was a palmist, ayurvedic doctor, astrologer, numerologist, yogi along with his mundane identity of a *tapasvi*. For some months he would be seen nowhere but enclosed in his hut with ash- smeared body. Sitting with his leg-crossed on his *chatai* he chanted *mantras* and *shloks* from *Ved Purana* days and nights. He would have only fruits and milk in between his long sessions of ruminations in those days. Adjusant to the wall outside his hut sat a vegetable vendor, Amit who hardly earned anything and passed his day smoking weed taken from Sadhu. Out of pity for the poor vendor, Sadhu gave a portion of his land to the vendor for selling his vegetables. He procured few vegetables every day from the *Mandi* and sold them at a higher notch; reasoning aptly as to why his customers sank every day. But his days changed when Maria came.

Sadhu went to the Kumbh mela in Ujjain for few days leaving his hut under the care of Amit. The latter came before the sunrise each day bringing his vegetables on his cart. He would then clean the hut and the ground everyday with a broomstick making the soil even; leaving no leaves or other garbage to litter around. Then he sprinkled water to make the clouds of dust settle firmly onto the ground. Amit was no less than a disciple of Sadhu. He held great awe for Sadhu in his heart and believed that Sadhu has gained some unnatural powers through his undeterred meditation practices. And subsequently he has worked hands in glove with Sadhu in popularizing and boasting his majesty in Maligaon as well as in the nearby villages to such extent that Sadhu has been felicitated by the name “International Baba” by the local folks. When baba returned after a fortnight his entry was no commonplace affair in the town. With him came Maria, a Spanish lass,

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who claimed to be a great devotee of Baba. In saffron kurta salwar she looked no less than a *Sadhavi*. With her arrival arrived the lost fortune of Baba. Garlands of marigold adorned them when they came. To steal a glimpse of ‘phirangan’ people hovered baba’s hut. Sometimes she rushed to felicitate; uttering “ram ram” or she would smile widest to her guest. She also offered her fruits to the poor. On one evening came a fellow begging her money, out of pity she offered him 2 thousand rupees and thereafter the number of poor that thronged to her had no limit. Baba had to harangue them for hovering too much around the hut. Getting to baba for ayurvedic, *muhurat*, palm reading, *havan* purposes became a mundane excuse for the town’s folk with an intention to get along with Maria.

Maria crowned in much talks of the town. Oldies sat circling the bonfire and they talked in length of Maria’s loving spirit, her affection for our land and our people. Criticizing their home ladies by juxtaposing them to Maria became a mundane babble for them. Some men were curious to know her food habits; other would peep into her canopy. With each passing day shine brighter, baba’s English brightened as well. Village men were left spell bound with their mouth’s wide open when baba flung his tongue around in his mouth to utter “crooked English”. Their praise for baba and his invisible powers was seen to have no sooner end. And the crowds went crazier than ever to seek baba’s benedictions. Rich would supply him with jute bags of grains, rice and pulses and poor came to seek his blessings hand-foldingly. Plagued swarmed his ashram for ayurvedic herbs and medicines. While those dying to get their daughter’s married or couples ailing for years to bear a son came running with their palms spread wide waiting for baba to announce the auspicious occasion. In short, baba’s business flourished like never before.

In one house among the many homes facing Phoolbagh lived my grandparents. My grandma was quite old and having no company for jesting around went to baba frequently and sat there for hours returning only before the sun going down. My grandpa was a tough old man who nurtured himself along with values of hardship, chivalry, honor and self-esteem. After his retirement, he travelled daily to village which was 8 km far from my home in town on motorcycle; looking after his orchids and cattle there, he would return contentedly every evening. Driven by Maria’s love for homeless dogs dallying around on roads, he brought one puppy from village in side bag attached to his motorcycle. The puppy made him wrestle around in between his voyage as it jumped from the bag many times and grandpa had to run after him to catch hold of him. Maria was so overwhelmed with joy that she bent down in gratitude a notable times to grandpa and cuddled and kissed the puppy.

When the winds were chilling and the sun was barred by thick fog I arrived to my town for some days. After dinner, grandpa lit some wooden pieces in a tin box to soak in some warmth. He told me about Maria and we visited her the next morning. Maria rose to welcome her guest. She showed her immense love for Shiva through a tattoo carved on her neck and narrated stories of how Shiva came into her dream some months before back at home in Spain and she was finally dragged by her spiritual thirst to visit India. She rummaged in her bag a photo of Jesus that her father had given him as she told. And went to tell me her love for holy book pronouncing erroneously

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“genesis” and I corrected her exclaiming “Genesis”. Then she switched the topic and came to talk in length of food problem she is facing due to low quality of vegetables and other edible oil and fruits. The dichotomy of food cultures in India and Europe spun the charm of her glossy skin in the air. Immense dirt and filth surrounding the country and noise pollution had her have many sleepless nights. Baba winked at her. Moving to me he muttered how good Maria feels talking in English to me as language stood a major bar in getting well along with folks that came to ashram. Baba told me how he met her at Ujjain kumbh mela and missing no moment thereby she fell to his toes begging to have her as his devotee. Then he went on to praise her Shiv love “ leaving behind her affluent family, *beti* she ran to our *des*, she wears simple *kesariya* coloured clothes like us, *beti*, a ‘pure bhakt’.. *beti*... a ‘pure bhakt’... a little amateur but beta... from where she has got this ‘caccine’ in her bag... spoilt by someone...I scolded her for sniffing her fragile health along with sniffing this ‘caccine’ she has left it now thoroughly... cute Maria... she sits with us in hawan betaji... and smokes sulfa with other baba that flock to me but that too only thrice a day... dancing and cheering in Shiv pooja.. ‘pure Shiv bhakt’, betaji..” grinning from behind, Maria told me of her plan of celebrating baba’s birthday next month. She left no easy escape for the land though; throwing her remarks she added “India will see her end soon due to dirt and macabre that surrounds all over”.

### **Glossary**

Sadhu- In Hinduism, Sadhu is a common term for ascetic

Banias- a caste in Hindus known for its business mindedness

Tapasvi- another word for ascetic

Chatai- a kind of mat

Mantras and shloks- a word or sound that has spiritual power

Ved Puran- A vast genre of Hindu literature consisting of myths, legends and lore

Kumbh Mela- a hindu festival held once in every twelve years at four locations in India, where pilgrims bathe in the waters of the Ganges.

Phirangan- an Indian slang for Europeans

Muhurat- an auspicious time for a ceremony to take place

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Havan- a Vedic ritual in which people put on a fire in the center and make offerings along with chantings of mantras.

Kesariya- saffron

Beti- daughter

Bhakt- a person who believe or faith in somebody he follows

Cocaine- cocaine