

FIRST DAY – 10.08.2008

Mobile phone rings.

Mr.Tapan we are at Tatanagar junction. Where are you?

I am here.

Some confusing noise is heard and the mobile goes dead. I tell Aruvi that I couldn't get what he told.

Try again.

We will wait for some more time.

An old man with his wife comes near the luggage and they stand silently near it. They were clad in dhoti and sari. They are not the railway coolies but poor people looking for work to fill the stomach. I say we are waiting for someone. The old man looks at us blankly and moves ahead to find another customer. The lady follows. They might be poor old farmers. I call Tapan again.

Hello. Hello. Tapanji, the train just came in. We are at platform number four.

I am near the entrance of the railway station. I am buying platform tickets. Can you come to the entrance?

We are here with all the materials. Can you come to platform number four?

O.K. I am coming.

We gaze at the empty platform where the crowd had receded. I am still carrying the luggage. Looking around I see a metal bench where a boy and an old lady is sitting. She is counting coins. She might be a beggar. There is only a little place between the lady and the boy. It's enough to hold me, but not my luggage. I keep my luggage down.

How much time will it take to reach here? Half an hour. Okay. I will wait.

I am looking at the train in which we came from Chennai. Someone probably an employee of the railways is shutting the doors and windows. He is doing it with speed. He might have got used to it by doing it every day.

What is this paper? These guys are always troublesome.

Hey get down. I am closing the doors and windows. Yeaah . This window is stuck. I shut the glass window instead of the metal window.

The windows are being shut with heavy noise. A small kid with a rag on his back is getting down from the train with all the empty water bottles from the train.

He crosses me and move towards the metal bridge.

A coolie with the uniform comes near the luggage. He looks at me and asks something in Bihari.

We are waiting for someone. I ask him to wait in hindi.

He stands near the luggage looking at us. By this time I had forgotten the idea of taking a place in between the lady and boy. Aruvi is looking slightly restless. He puts his leg to support one of the bundles as if creating a wall with his leg. The coolie is around 50 years. He takes a metal box and takes out raw tobacco and puts it in his hand. From the other side of the small metal box he takes out a little bit of sunnambu and mixes it with the tobacco. He then puts it in his mouth.

Come here.

The police man with a metal detector in his hand calls the boy with the rag on his back. The boy runs away. The constable smiles and crosses me. He then looks at the other man leaning against the train with a smile. The guy smiles back, they exchange some dialogues in Oriya and the police man moves away. The guy leaning on the train must be a coolie. Another coolie with luggage on his head crosses us, the bag on his head is about to fall and this guy helps him keep it straight. Then the coolie with the owner moves away. The owner was also carrying a bag along with a plastic container. The container is blue in colour. It looks like a chemical container.

Muthu is it Tapan?

He was pointing at a middle aged man, well dressed, pushing a metal trolley and moving towards us.

Will he be so thoughtful as to bring a trolley to carry the luggage? He is mostly not Tapan.

He comes near us, keeps the trolley and moves away.

He is not Tapan.

I hear my mobile ringing. I pick up the phone and it says Tapan. Before I answer the call, the ring dies. I wonder why Tapan is giving a missed call. I call back again looking at the platform and one short person is walking towards us. He picks up the phone and then waves his hands towards us. I keep my mobile in my pocket and wave back.

Hi, I am Tapan.

We shake hands. He looks at the coolie standing near us. The coolie suddenly becomes active and he starts taking the luggage.

How much do you want?

Fifty rupees, Sir.

They are our guests. Don't ask so much. Okay. We will give forty rupees. Carry it for us.

The coolie carries few boxes to his head and we help him carry it. We also carry some of our luggage. I carry my back pack and shoulder bag. Aruvi, video camera bag and the other person who came along with Tapan carries the tripod. We all walk together towards the metal bridge.

So you must be Muthu.

Yes .I am.

I am Aruvi.

Fine.

On the way the coolie lags behind. So we wait for him to join us. By this time, the driver moves ahead leaving us. As soon as the coolie comes in sight we hurry up to catch the driver. We cross security without any hassle and reach the place where the vehicle is parked.

We couldn't get Bolero. So we have got a car.

What car we have got?

Ambassador.

We look at the car and the driver opens the dickey. We try to keep everything inside and there is no space. So we take my backpack, camera bag and the speaker outside. The car driver locks the dickey and opens the back door. I give fifty rupees to the coolie and get back ten rupees. Now I was about to board the car when the coolie asks

Are there coolies in Chennai?

Yes.

But, less in number. I nod my head without saying anything and board the car.

What was he trying to say? The car starts. On the way out of station we buy a parking ticket.

Do you know that Lallu is recruiting coolies? The age limit has been fixed as forty or forty five.

Is that so? I never knew.

All coolies are Biharis. Whether they are in Chennai or Calcutta they will be Biharis. They are very rough people. The first thing that tries to become is a police man. If they are not eligible for that they become coolie. Hard labour.

We were sitting at the back of the car with our bags and video camera bag. Tapan was sitting in the front. There was some space in the front to keep the video camera bag. He offered to keep the bag.

No. It's fine. We are comfortable here.

Driver. Stop at some place for Chai.

Can we have some tea?

We nod in agreement. We are travelling on a road which is not well laid.

There is politics everywhere. Look sir. Look at the road condition. They allot one crore for laying out the road. But thirty five percent goes for the Minister in that area, twenty five percent to the local gundas and other persons in the government and only rest forty percent is left for putting the road. In that engineers and others will take some amount. The state is fully corrupted from top to bottom. What can we do sir?

You nod your head in acknowledgement.

The car enters another muddy road.

This is Adityapur. It belongs to Seraikella district. Jamshedpur ends with the previous road. Can we stop for tea here?

No. We will stop at the next place.

Look outside. This is all surrounded by hills.

What hills are these?

He mumbles something which you don't get.

You ask him about Parasnath hills.

That is fully under M.C.C.

What is M.C.C?

Some...Maoist Communist group. They are keeping it completely under control. All of them there are terrorist.

You remain silent hearing that. You want to ask about the Jain Tirthankars who got enlightenment there on the Parasnath hills. You want to visit that place where all these Jains go for pilgrimage.

There is lot of political unrest in Jharkhand these days. One of the ministers when he went for school inauguration was killed by the terrorist. Some more officials were killed in other attack.

Was he blasted?

No. No. When he was about to give his speech he was shot dead. Thankfully it was not a blast. If it had been a blast then more people would have been dead. Only few children died in the attack.

We were travelling for some time in silence. There came a tea shop. The driver parked the vehicle by the side of the main road and we got down.

Is it locked properly?

Yes sir.

We walked toward one shed where lot of people are eating food around tables. In one corner one of the worker is making jalebi with polythene cover and others are busy serving. We were looking for place to sit and finally found a place near the sweet stall. You and Pattanayak sat at one table. Aruvi and the driver sat at another table nearby.

Can we have Dosas?

Why not?

Morning I had two teas. No food. So I am hungry.

He orders four Dosas.

Can we have some sweets?

You nod your head.

Bring four rasagullas.

We eat sweets first and then Dosa. The Dosa is slightly different here with more oil and masala. But it is delicious.

I never expected Dosa in this place.

Yeah. Me too.

Dosa is popular throughout India. It contains onions, potatoes etc and it tastes really good. Whenever we go to Jamshedpur your Bobby always want to go to south Indian restaurant to eat Dosa. It is very costly here.

You eat slowly and he finishes first and moves out of the table. You finish your Dosa and wash your hands with Aruvi. You look around to locate him. The driver is still eating. There he is outside the shop. You go to him and he is having change in his hands.

Come we will have some tea. He takes us to the nearby shed where tea is made. There we see oil cans arranged at the entrance. The place looks shabby.

These are all Bengali sweets canned and kept for sale. Bhai bring us three teas.

We have our our teas and I pay for it. He says he will pay and the server refuses to take money from me. Now the driver joins us. You ask him whether you can order tea for him. He refuses and goes to the car. He goes to pay the money and you wait there. After some time he comes back with the pack of sweets. We board the car.

My daughter asks for sweets whenever I come to Jamshedpur.

How many children do you have?

Two. Eldest is the son. He is studying sixth standard and he is in the hostel.

How old is the daughter?

She is eight years old studying in third standard.

Okay. Where are we going now?

We are going to my mother's house where we are going to keep the equipment and then we are going to the Academy where you can stay. Your Bobby gave this idea to keep NFSC at the house. There is only mother and a servant. There are plenty of rooms which are vacant. We can allot two rooms for NFSC.

You say yes.

Here everything is political. It's not like south. We are from south. I am from Orissa. We have similar facial features. Our color is the same. South retains its culture. It's the place of the goddesses. What we have in north except Himalayas. South is good.

You say nothing. The journey continues.

You could have got down in Sini junction. It's just fourteen kilometers from Seraikella. I forgot to tell you.

You tell him that you know. But you didn't get down at that place because it stops only for two minutes. It's difficult to get the luggage out. Moreover he will be waiting in Tatanagar junction.

This is the road which takes you from Sini to Seraikella.

You say yes. The journey continues.

He shows us the Academy of Archery and says that it is there for name sake, but didn't function properly.

He also shows us the DC residence and other official buildings.

We are entering the Seraikella town now. The road divides into two and he shows us the path we are taking as the road leads to his house. He says the other road leads to the market. We enter a narrow street with houses on both sides. The car stops in front of a large gate. We get down and enter the gate and unload our luggage. You ask him how much you should pay. He says that it is his friend's vehicle and he will send a bill and after that you can pay to him. You enter a house with a lot of tiny rooms built in random fashion. You keep the entire luggage in the visiting room and sit on a chair. He says that it's his guest room.

We all sit in the visiting room for some time. Then he shows us the house. He takes us to different rooms, some old and some new. The old part of the house is retained as such. There is not much light inside the house.

This is all used only when my sisters come.

Then he shows us the photographs hanging on the walls.

This is my Guruji. He is bedridden for the past five years. He is not like what he used to be. I had always seen him with happiness and style. He used to be so smart. Now he had become so small, lying in one corner of the bed. He is not able to talk. He says Tapanwho...Fine. He has lost his memory. I don't go to see him because I don't want to see him like this.

You see his guru's photo.

This is me when I was young. You see a beautiful young guy with ornaments on his neck.

This is my elder son. This is when he was young. This is me with your bobby. This is my mother. She is very religious. She wants to retain this part of the house like as it is because it reminds her of my father.

You saw the cupboard with all the swami photos. You are quite puzzled with the photo he showed because it was shot during a death ceremony. But in those days photography was rare and it happened only on special occasions like marriage or death. You ask him when his father died.

He died in 2004. He cleared up everything before he died. We had a cow which was not giving milk. He told me, Tapan you can't take care of it after me. So he sold the cow. He was telling my guruji's son that nobody knows who go first. Him or Guru. He suddenly died one day.

The smell of his father is still maintained there by his mother. You think about them. Then we come back and sit in the visiting room. Tapan vanishes for some time. You wonder what sort of surprise this place has got to offer you. You and Aruvi wait in silence.

Tapan comes back wearing a towel and inner vest.

You say that you want to start the work on the first day. You want to record the discussion.

We will first write down the village names in Seraikella district which perform the Chhau during the festival. We will write down the names of all artists and their details.

Is Chhau dance performed not by all?

Yes. But some are artists in Chhau dance. There are eight blocks in Seraikella district. We will start with ones which are nearby and then cover the entire district. Now it is cultivation time and the land is filled with mud.

You ask how you can start collecting the details. We can start asking about how long he is practicing Chhau. From whom did he learn? What Chhau means to him?

You tell him that you should make a list of festivals in each month.

Yes. For example, there is Karma pooja going to happen in September. They worship the Sun god.

You ask him about the myth behind it.

Karma and Dharma are two sons of God. Karma is worshipped by doing work and Dharma is worshipped by practicing austerities and praying. Karma is worshipped by the farmers. They take broken branches of the tree and plant them in the field and because of that bacteria doesn't attack the paddy.

You say this is the science behind it.

Yes. They also pray to the sun god to give rain and light during the required period.

You understand.

After that Mansa Sankaranthi is coming. You know Poornima?

You say full moon day.

Yes. Before that is Sankaranthi. They worship Mansamaa.

Is Mansamma a kind of snake?

No. Mansamaa is the mother of snakes.

Oh. Is it snake goddess?

Yes. We pray to Mansamaa because snake is our friend. It prevents some harmful bacteria and kills the rats which destroy paddy fields. And moreover for three months snakes are on the land. To prevent them from biting us we should pray to goddess. In October all the snakes goes back into the land because of all the prayer that we have done. I also pray to Mansamaa. You know swan?

Swan?

Yes. It's nothing but duck. I give duck as a sacrifice. I give it to Buddhru and he goes to that place and sacrifices the duck. It's just faith. According to Hindu religion faith is important. All religion says to love others. But what do we do?

We destroy each other. Why?

You say because we are selfish.

Yes we are selfish, jealous, lazy etc. There is a sloka in Mahabharata which ask you to do your duty without thinking about the benefits. Do you know why Rama asked Sita to enter the fire after coming from Lanka?

You say you don't know.

According to Thulasidasa in Rama Charithra Manas, when Rama goes to the forest, he prays Agni Deva to keep Sita with him. And what Ravana captured was nothing but the shadow of Sita. So when she comes back from Lanka Rama again prays to Agni Deva to give back Sita. What is burnt in the fire was nothing but Sita's shadow.

You are wondering whether you could get away from your shadow. Was she shadow-less all her life after that. How different will it be?

Do you know that Lord Jagannatha doesn't have hands, legs, face? He has only eyes and no eyelids. Do you know why?

You say that you don't know.

It's because he never sleeps. In Oriya, Jagan means universe and Nath means head. He is the head of the universe. He has to take care of everything. So how can he sleep? That's why eyes without eyelids.

You are surprised by the myth and actuality. You want to tell him about Nirvikalpa Samadhi or continuous awareness. How can a person in Nirvikalpa Samadhi sleep? You give a smile. How beautifully art had represented such a state. You are in love with Lord Jagannatha.

Do you know why Jagannatha doesn't have body?

You say you don't know.

It's because if you see any handicapped person. He also doesn't have hands like Jagannatha. So he is also the god. So you should love him. That's the reason.

You couldn't believe this construction of images, words and meanings. It's just flowing from one point to another. You know that truth is spherical without any beginning or end. Infinite. Now you see an example of it in front of your eyes. You just have to close your eyes to believe it. How can you close? You are Buddha with his half closed eyes. Will I ever be that? Will I ever know it? It's something in between knowing and not knowing. Neither this, nor that. You are it.

You ask what the relationship between Lord Jagannatha and Seraikella is.

Yes there is relationship. We worship Lord Shiva in our rituals. Lord Shiva is the first formed god, the oldest god. That's why you call him Mahadeva. He is formed from the fish according to Machasya purana.

You listen carefully.

The first formed is the sound from Tamaru. It's not rhythmic but it is just sound. At this time Ravana worships Shiva by describing his features. On hearing it Lord Shiva starts his Thandava. What will happen when the lord dances? So all the goddesses pray to Parvathi. To pacify Shiva, Parvathi come to Shiva. That is Lashya, the feminine part. Already, the Tandava, the male part is already there. When the feminine part comes the sound becomes a rhythm and that's how Thaala is formed. After that the creation happens by Lord Shiva. This is one of the

portions in Chhau ritual. According to Natya sastra, we have four rituals. First is Sub ghat meaning happy start. Then comes Jatra Ghat. It happens at the first yuga. That is where creation happens. When creation happens the Lord is in the form of Arthanaareswara. We start from that. Then comes Gharia Ghat. This happens in Lord Krishna yuga/ Dwapar yug. Then comes Tritha where Rama fights Ravana. Lastly we have the Kali yuga. This is actually Kali yuga. We are living in Kali yuga. After all this our Chhau dance starts.

You seem to understand vaguely. You want to go into details, but you refrain.

Chhau started in Seraikella by the royal family in 1610. At that time there was no wooden mask. Only bamboo mask. Then came the wooden mask, then the clay mask. Do you know why they use a mask in Chhau?

I don't know.

ASK TAPAN

In Chhau there is transformation of characters. I get transformed into the character of the mask that I am wearing. Chhau means shadow. We portray the character according to the sastra.

In peacocks only the male dances and the female doesn't dance. Do you know why?

Is it to attract the female?

Yes. But there is a myth behind it. According to Siva Purana when Siva and Parvathi are about to mate the peacock creates noise and disturbs them. So Shiva curses the peacock that it can never mate. That's why when peacock gets excited and dances its semen falls down and the female peacock swallows it and then lays eggs. There is no mating process that's happening. Do you what is rudhraksha?

No.

It's the tears of Lord Shiva which fell on earth and grow as rudhraksha tree, according to purana. Life is like an ocean and we are sailors in the ocean with a boat. We travel according to our karma.

Ok. In Chhau only men dance. Is it right?

Not right. But when it was promoted by the king they were orthodox at the time to not allow women to dance. After that the tradition followed that only men should dance. And moreover it's based on martial art form. Women's body is not fit for that kind of workout. But I had tried putting women in 1994.

You nod your head.

Do you know that Kung – fu is an Indian martial art form?

No.

It's not Japanese, it's Indian. Even Chandralekha told me about this.

You mean dancer Chandralekha.

Yes. Whenever she creates a new choreography she will ask me to comment about it. That's artist life. Now I feel like a government servant. The body language is vast in Chhau. So everybody likes Chhau. At that time I was really young. I was thinking only about how to perform. Now I feel bad working as a government servant.

I am an artist. If you put me to look at files and ask me to take care of law and order what shall I do. Sometimes I get angry and say that don't put my name in your list. What we are going to do now is artistic job. So now I am happy. We might walk in mud to meet the people. But I am happy. I did a similar study for Sangeet Natak Academy in 1991 – 92, but the file is missing. Everything is gone.

The servant girl comes and informs us that lunch is ready.

You want to take bath before having lunch. Tapan leads us to the backyard and shows us the bathroom. It's a dingy place and there is no light. You take bath and come. You wait for Aruvi to finish his ablution. When he is finished, you go up to have food.

You are sitting in front of the table and Tapan's mother serves you food. She is short with brownish skin. She must be in her seventies. She reminds you of your mother. You are expecting roti and they serve you rice.

Don't you eat rotis?

We eat rice in the afternoon and roti during the night. We belong to the south and not north.

There is rice, dal, mango pickle, some unidentified vegetable and potato. You finish eating and wait for others to finish. Then you wash your hands in the nearby wash basin and Tapan takes you to the terrace. From there he shows us the garden which contains mango trees, papaya tree, drumstick tree and coconut tree. The coconut trees branches are all cut.

Aruvi says this is not the way to maintain coconut tree.

One of my [mistry](#) asked me to cut it down.

All these trees are planted by my father. He used to take care of it. He will ask the servant to clean it properly and teach him how to do it on his own. Every hour he will ask my mother to prepare tea for him. Now nobody takes care of it.

He points at the other side of the terrace where two workers are busy laying bricks. They lay the bricks at a very slow pace.

They are building this house for the past three years. Tapan laughs. They are building it little by little. When somebody comes to me asking for work I never say no. I give them some work and pay them. Here people are poor. So I do this.

You smile at him.

Then he introduces us to his daughter Sipra who is glued to the T.V.

During Sundays she will do nothing else except watch T.V. She has school from morning 6.30 A.M to 11 A.M after that she comes home, eat food and take rest up to three in the afternoon. Then she goes to tuition and comes back by six. She watches T.V up to eight and then does her homework up to ten. Then she sleeps.

Sipra gives us an alienated look and watches T.V.

We again come down and sit in the visiting room. After some time a middle aged man with dark skin enters the house and Tapan introduces him as Buddhru, his peon. He is chewing tobacco and he gives a warm smile at us.

We can go to the academy and see the rooms now.

You decide to pack up the bag. By then another new person comes. Tapan introduces him as the senior instructor Mr.Bijay. He is fair, lean, tall and reminds me of Sreekumar's father. Tapan says we can pick up the bag later. You say that you don't want to disturb him by staying in his house. He says it's not a trouble.

You sit behind Tapan on his bike and Aruvi on Bijay's. Buddhru follows us on his cycle. Tapan ask you not to tell anything about the project to Bijay.

You reach the Seraikella Chhau Academy. It's a cluster of buildings built around various corridors. There is place for practice in between two rooms. There is a small auditorium nearby. There is a separate building for mask making. Buddhru brings chair for all of us. We all sit. Bijay and Tapan discusses something in Oriya. Then Tapan takes us to the room where we are going to stay. There are two beds and fans but the smell is not good. Tapan takes us to the toilet. There is no separate bathroom.

Is this okay for you?

You say this is fine.

We come back again and sit. Tapan and Bijay discuss something serious and then Tapan makes a call on Bijay's phone.

You can stay at my home in the visiting room. I discuss with Bijay and we don't feel that this place is safe for you to stay. It's a very quiet place and both of you don't know much Hindi. Though Buddhru is here, he is not equipped with guns to fight against the terrorist. Who knows what will happen in this place. You say you don't want to disturb him by staying in his house. He says you can stay in the house and can eat outside. You say yes.

Today is Sunday. There will be no hotel open in the town. You can eat in our house. I have already informed your bobby.

Thanks.

You go for a small ride on the bike looking at various places within the town. He also shows you the hotel. The town is not a big place. Its diameter will not be more than two kilometers. There is a small vegetable market with a small temple, a bazaar street, a palace, a school and a college within its periphery. You come back and Bijay leaves.

Tapan introduces his wife and we have our food. You go for a small walk in front of the house. Tapan says he owns two acres of land and that it will fetch him 80 lakh if he sells it. But he doesn't want to sell it. His dream is to build a Kala Mandalam in that place when he is old. You doubt whether the land will cost so much in this little town. But you never say it.

You come back and set up the computer in the visiting room itself. Tapan was not happy. He says that you can buy the furniture on next Monday from Jamshedpur. You agree. Then you discusses about the next day plan. We decide to meet at around 10.30 A.M in the academy. You are tired with the train journey. You sleep.

SECOND DAY – 11.08.2008

You don't know how you woke up. You are still lying in the bed thinking. Then you lazily turn over [on the bed](#). You are still dizzy. You slowly turn around and sit in the chair. You sit there for quite some time. The morning sun had come up and you pick up your mobile and call.

Is that you?

Yes.

I am on bus. I will call you back after some time.

Okay.

You pick up the soap, brush, paste and towel and go to the bathroom. When you come back there is a missed call in your mobile. You call back again.

I am in the bus.

Okay. I will call you in the night.

Aruvi is back after bathing. We dress and when we are ready to leave the servant girl brings us tea. We drink the tea and leave the biscuits. The biscuits we gave to Sipra. Cream lemon biscuits. We take our still camera, voice recorder and leave. We go to the hotel which Tapan had suggested.

What do you want? Rice?

You are in no mood to eat rice. You discuss with Aruvi. He says we can have Dosas somewhere else.

There is a dosa seller near the high school on the main road.

We say thanks and leave. Walking for some time you find a dosa maker on a [wheel cart](#). You walk to him and order two dosas. There is one small boy helping him in supplying the prepared food. It doesn't look hygienic but there is no other option. The dosa is served and Aruvi asks me to have the first one. There is Morning Prayer assembly at the nearby school.

Look the leader is checking for nails, Aruvi says.

You look at the leader of the school checking students for clean nails. Will she complain if it is not cut or will she forgive? Will there be an understanding between the students and the leader. You don't know. You finish your dosa and Aruvi hurriedly.

You go to the nearby tea shop. They are making Laddus. One person is sitting on the ground and making laddus into shape. He is about to fall from his small stool, but then he manages. We ask for laddus and jalebis. The waiter brings it. We finish it and gulp down the bad tea. Then we walk towards the academy.

When we reach the Chhau academy Tapan had not yet arrived. Buddhru brings us chairs and we are seated. Another person also joins us. There are two more students. You sit there without making any conversation. The new person talks with the students in Oriya. You want to talk with the students but this person is interrupting the conversation in Hindi. After sometime he leaves. Now you feel free to talk with the students. You talk with them in Hindi. Both of them are training in Chhau dance form and they had just finished their rehearsal. One of them has a scholarship from the government and the other doesn't. The other student who is not getting scholarship has interesting facial features. His lips look attractive. But he doesn't have sharp features. He looks feminine. The way he talks and the way his body moves around looks real feminine. You ask Aruvi to take photograph of the students.

Tapan comes. He said that the parade just got over. He asks one of the students to take out a file from his bike. Bijay comes and they discuss about something in Oriya. Then the students leave and we walk towards the office. You sit down. Tapan takes out the framed photographs of the masters of Chhau and shows it to us. You ask him whether you can take photos of these pictures. He says that's why he had shown it to us. You ask Aruvi to take photographs of the picture and you take pictures in your own camera.

There is reflection in the photographs. Is there some way to cut it?

You finish taking photographs and Bijay comes. They discuss again. You ask Aruvi to take pictures of the campus. You sit there waiting in silence. Finally Bijay leaves.

When are we going to the BSNL office?

Tomorrow after I come back from parade at around 11 P.M.

Can I take this map of Seraikella for scanning? Is there a map in English?

No problem I can trace it and translate it into English.

That's double work. Can you get me a town map of Seraikella?

I have to ask the municipality. Mostly you can get it.

By this time Aruvi comes back after taking photographs. You look at the photographs. You look at the musical instruments and the masks. You ask how the mask is made. You want to take an interview about the gurus of Chhau dance. He says he is not feeling good now.

We can do it in the afternoon at the house.

We leave the academy and he goes home. You go for lunch. It's the same old hotel. You wash your hands and sit inside. You are served with rice and dhal with little bit of potato fry. You are asked whether you want fish.

Yes. Fish fry.

Just one piece is enough. You actually don't want to eat fish. But he likes the taste of fish. Because of him you take. When you are finished you wash your hands and pay for the food. It

seems slightly costly. You come back to the house and wait for Tapan. You start typing the report. He comes back only in the evening.

You discuss with him about your plan to proceed. He says we will prepare a list of all the Chhau groups in and around Seraikella. You say you also need to prepare a list of festivals and ceremonies that happen in Seraikella not necessarily pertaining to Chhau. He says yes.

Do you have any browsing center in Seraikella town?

I had asked my niece to come. She teaches computer in one place. She must know about it.

Can we take the voice recording about the masters of Chhau?

No. Not now.

Some two people come to his house and you give your chair for them and move to the bed to sit. They talk for some time and then he introduces them to you. One is the head clerk in the revenue department and the other is a subordinate to him. After some time they leave.

They came looking for a place to accommodate the audit party. There is some auditing going on in his department. I suggested our academy. There are two beds and they can stay.

You nod in agreement.

This auditing business is big money. They go from one place to another looking for money. Ten thousand, twenty five thousand and fifty thousand. And the food and accommodation had to be provided by these people for free of cost. If you don't provide it properly then they will write remarks. That's why these people are afraid. They are also government servant and we are also government servant. But we cannot say no to it. How corrupt is our government.

By this time the servant girl brings tea for us all. You ask her name. She says Usha.

Do you know what Usha means? The first ray from the sun is called Usha.

We have our tea and pack our camera to the academy.

We hear the sound of drum beats while nearing the academy itself. It's not that interesting. It sounds monotonous. When we reach a performance is happening and we watch it without disturbing. You ask Aruvi to shoot with the video camera and you take photographs. When you sit and watch closely you understand the greatness of Chhau. It is just an extension of the body movement when you hear music. The beat makes you to move in certain ways and it is practiced in some rhythm. It is not something artificial. The greatness lies in its simplicity and [naturalness](#).

The beat is just to maintain the rhythm and not to add anything more to it. It looks like a minimalist art. The beauty lies in its body movements. The body creates spaces within itself, among themselves and with the surrounding. The body moves gracefully over space in a very natural fashion.

First a group of ten to twelve people dance for the beat. The part I like most is when they move like a snake in zigzag fashion. Then a group of three girls dance for the national anthem. One of them acts as mother India and the other two as followers worshipping her. Out of the two one was dancing perfectly and the other was learning by looking at her. You cannot really express how it feels to see a good dance. If you dance then it will be even more interesting. You are thinking about yourself. You hate the body that you have. You want it to be fit and agile. You want to practice yoga. He laughs at you.

You ask Aruvi to shoot in night mode as there is no light. But he says that it's not working properly and is showing in slow motion.

The third performance was by students whom you had met in the morning. They play as Krishna and Radha dancing before the Mahabharata war. Now you know why he looks so feminine. He dances perfectly like a female. It is not his hips. It is her hips. This was again wonderful with beautiful coordination between the two dancers.

The last performance was by two unknown middle aged people. They acted as if fighting with each other with mock swords. Suddenly Buddhru and Tapan join in and they move around the stage acting as if they are fighting. Buddhru dances really well.

You feel some kind of happiness oozing within you, looking at an art form where there is space for each and every one. Tapan can dance, also Buddhru. There is some sense of equality that's been established. Art is doing what it is actually meant to do. It is relaxing them from their usual routine and transforms them completely. The difference between traditional classical dance and Chhau is this. You need not be a trained artist to transform yourself and transcend the limits of the body. If you know a little, Chhau allows you to dance and perform the basic movements that come very naturally to the body. You imagine the past where people working in the fields for the whole day want to relax in the way they like and invented Chhau which they can perform with their bodies and with few instruments. You could see the origin of dance.

You like taking pictures in motion and seeing it blurred. There is some beauty in looking at things in not so clinical fashion. You like looking at the grey zones. Blur is a continuity of an action frozen in time. And you like playing with time and space.

Tapan says Chhau started in 12th century. The dance form which is earlier than Chhau is Kathakali. It started in 10th century. He is tired and exhausted after the dance. He says he can get back to form if he practices for one month. He says he can't stop dancing hearing the drum beat.

There is a small party happening in another corridor. Some four people are boozing under the moonlight and you get introduced to them. One of them is a mask maker and another is a singer. The third person is one of the gurus of Tapan. You leave the academy and pee on the road in darkness. You come back to house and keep the equipment. You go to have your dinner.

They give you rotis and chenna masala to eat. You say two rotis are enough. But it's not enough. You ask for one more and eat. After this you go to the nearby sweet shop and have something that is a hybrid of cake and milk sweet. You come back and sit quiet for some time.

You try to call up Deepak. But he is not picking up the phone. You receive a message saying that we can talk in the morning. You say goodnight.

Tapan comes and you start typing the village names and the Chhau groups. You work for more than one hour and you are tired. You say that you are tired and can continue tomorrow. Tapan says goodnight. You get into your bed without saying another word. You are really exhausted.

THIRD DAY – 12.08.2008

You are in your hostel. And you happen to see Swathi smiling at you and going. She had put on tremendous weight. But her smile is always the same. Senthil says she is smiling at you. How lucky you are. I see Sheetal and Chitra walking as a pair. I cross my leg and Sheetal slightly stumbles and recovers. Chitra smiles at me and tell something secretly into Sheetal's ears. Rajakrishnan says he is married now. You ask him when and where and expect a foreigner from Bauhaus. He says it's his classmate. But you can't find who his wife is. There is some competition going on. Is it hostel day. You are standing in the staircase. You have found a jacket. There is enquiry in every room. Some of the boys are walking around in their underwear.

The jacket is found. Prassana talks to you. There is some mystery that's been solved. But there is something which is not revealed. Puri Jagannath is without any body. It's complete awareness. Nirvikalpa Samadhi. There is still something stopping me. You feel pain in your head. You look for the Vicks balm in your bag and apply a little bit on your head. You still feel heavy. You try to make yourself comfortable. There is only little space and time. You look into your mobile phone. It says eight A.M. You still don't want to get up. You are trying to think and relax yourself. Awareness. Hazy awakening. Will I be able to be with it completely? When will it happen? Will it happen slowly for me as destined? You doubt it. He says yes. You move your hand towards the mobile phone thinking about your parents and the phone rings. You say its confusion of mind. He says this is just happening and just believes it.

How are you?

I am still in bed and trying to wake up.

Should I call you up again?

No. I will call you in the night.

Can I keep it?

Fine.

You get up from the bed and sit on the bed for some time. You see Aruvi still sleeping with his face pressed on the pillow. You go to the chair and sit on it with your legs spread. You fart. You stay like this for some time. Then you pick up the soap, brush and paste to the bathroom. By the time you come back Aruvi is awake.

Good morning officer.

You say good morning and switch on the computer. He picks up his stuff and goes to bathroom. You are trying to type the report. When you have typed little bit he comes back. Both of you get dressed. You are wearing the same shirt which you were wearing yesterday. When you are about to leave Usha comes with tea and biscuits. You sit down and hunt for the bun that you got in Chennai. You give one to Aruvi and keep one for yourself. When you are finished having tea and bun, Aruvi picks up the biscuit and put it in a cover and gives it to you.

Will be of some use.

You get it and put it in your bag and say nothing. You think you should buy a biscuit packet and give it to Sipra. You wear your chappals and leave the house. You reach the market place and order for two Dosas. Already three persons are waiting. A short man with a big belly is eating idlis. He is drinking the sambar first with the spoon and then eating the idlis. Another school going kid is eating one idli in chunks. He is not touching the sambar. He is just eating the idli alone. The shopkeeper had made dosas to others and we were still waiting. Now two dosas were made and it's not given to us. It goes for the parcel. Finally one dosa comes and I give it to Aruvi. He refuses. You compel him to have it and wait for your turn. After some time you get it. You swallow it in parts. You eat only with the chutney. You don't want to eat with sambar. By this time Aruvi helps himself with two more idlis. You are done. You pay the bill and walks towards the tea shop.

You order for the nameless snack. It tastes something like murukhu. Also you order for two teas. You gulp down the hot water and pay the bill. You are surprised by the bill as it is so cheap. You discuss with him and start walking.

By the time you reach the Chhau academy, Tapan is already there. He was sitting along with the dhol master on the chair near the main entrance.

Are you coming from the market?

Yes. We got late.

Both of you sit down. Tapan talks with dhol master in Oriya. You don't understand anything. You take out a book from your bag and start reading. After some time, the dhol master leaves and Bijay comes.

When are we going to BSNL office?

I have to write a letter to my high official.

When do you want to write it?

We will finish it now and then go to BSNL office.

All of us walk towards the office. You ask Aruvi to go home and do the log sheet for photos. He leaves. You follow Tapan to his office. All the three fans are running full speed. Both of you sit down. He begins to write the letter. You start reading.

You know that I am just talking to myself to alleviate my loneliness. You know that this loneliness of mine is incurable, that no one can save me and that I can only talk with myself as partner of my conversation.

As I listen to myself and you, I let you create a she, because you are like me and also cannot bear the loneliness and have to find a partner for your conversation.

So you talk with her, just like I talk with you.

She was born of you, yet in an affirmation of myself.

Even I can't distinguish how much is experience and how much is dream within my memories and impressions, so how can you distinguish between what I have experienced and what are my figments of imagination? And in the end is it necessary to make such distinctions? In any case, they aren't of any significance whatsoever.

Bijay comes in and you see them discussing the letter. Tapan gives him some papers and Bijay leaves the place.

You know, he is a very confusing person. I know two plus two is four. So I write it as four. He is not sure about it. So he is confused and also makes us confused. I say nothing. I just smile at him.

You are not sure about two plus two equals four.

We have to wait till Bijay comes back from Xerox centre.

We stay in silence.

I don't know whether or not you have noticed but when I speak of me and you, and she , him, feminine they and masculine they, I never speak of we or us. I believe that this is much more concrete than the sham we which is totally meaningless.

It is only by getting rid of you that I can get rid of myself.

My stomach is upset. I will go to the toilet and come.

Tapan removes his shirt, watch and keeps it on the table and goes out of office. He comes back after fifteen minutes. You wait in silence.

Bijay comes back with the papers and we walk out of office.

When we are in the portico Buddhru comes from nowhere and closes the office room. He is putting the screen in place and closing the door. You wonder how he knew that we are leaving. No words passed.

Tapan drives the bike and I am seated at the back. We are crossing gullies after gullies. [The bike is jumping heavily on the road.](#) You say the road is bad.

This is the best road in Jharkhand.

He gives a big grin. The road crossed the D.C residence and crosses a lorry and moves forward. Another jeep comes from behind and passes the bike. The jeep has got a conductor who is counting the money. It crosses us. After 15 minutes of travel we reach the BSNL office. You see the hoarding on the compound. He parks the vehicle outside. You ask him to look at the hoarding.

There is broadband available in the town.

You walk along with him towards the main building. Some known persons smile at Tapan. He asks for directions. We walk on a corridor and come to a glass door. The room inside is dark and is lit only by the computer monitor light. Tapan goes in and you wait outside. You look around. You see the telephone cables running in all different directions inside a open room. **It must be the main connection room.** You remember the Telephone exchange in your place. It's not like this. It's for more maintained well. You walk the corridor and go to the entrance. On the wall there is fire extinguisher, fire alarm system and a fire alarm button covered with glass.

Break the glass to push the button during fire.

There is a small hammer which is connected to the box with a small chain. I take that hammer and gently tap the glass. The glass must be real strong. You wonder why you should break the glass to push the button. If it's without glass then you can press the button without creating such **devastation.** This shows the violence within the human mind. You wonder whether this alarm will ring in the fire station. Will they come even for a small fire?

You touch the fire extinguisher. It must be real old. But the chemicals are designed to remain active even after so many years. You wonder whether there is any expiry date for a fire extinguisher.

Tapan comes out with another short fair person with a Hitler moustache. He asks him to check with another clerk. He calls out his name. We hear a reply from another room. Another middle aged man in a horizontally-striped T shirt comes out of the nearby room.

We are looking for the old records of the users who had failed to pay their telephone bills.

How many months?

At least eight months. But I am sure that it's less than a year.

We don't have any records here. Go to Jamshedpur.

He goes back in to his office. The short man with the Hitler moustache tells Tapan to follow the clerk. We go to the nearby room and the clerk is already searching for the records in the shelf.

Please sit.

You sit down.

The clerk after some search finds out the records and gives it to Tapan. The short officer also enters the room. You get up from your chair to give space for the short officer. They look at the records and discuss.

If you pay at Jamshedpur then you need not pay the rent for six months. You can just pay the old bill which is not paid.

Can we pay the bill at the head office? Two thousand rupees less than the actual amount.

You say yes.

We can go there on Monday.

You say we can combine it with buying furniture on Monday.

Tapan introduces you to the officer. You smile. We discuss the tariff plans and the officer writes down the specific details in the form by himself and gives it to Tapan.

You have to fill in your name and signature and I have filled the rest. You think about how remote places like this work. If it is your place then the officer will never fill the form. He will ask you to fill.

You say thanks. We move out.

Can we take the furniture in the same vehicle that we are travelling?

I can ask the driver to put the luggage stand on the top.

We can finish all this work on Monday and give the form to this office on Tuesday.

How many days will it take to get connected?

One week.

We need an electrician to fix up all the electrical work.

We will look for him on the way.

We get on to the bike and move towards home. On the way we stop at a small shop for tea. We order two teas. It's a small shed with one cooking area and an eating area. There is a young man sitting in the bill counter in the cooking area.

This is one of the oldest hotels in Seraikella. It was started by his grandfather's father.

So he is the fourth generation running the shop.

Yes. They used to prepare very good snacks in the old days.

We sip our tea. The tea is not great. There are lots of snacks kept in different vessels. Another person is eating on the other side. We finish our drink.

You pay the bill. It's just one rupee a tea.

He is also a very good Chhau dancer, Tapan smiles.

You wonder how everybody in this place could dance. But you know the reason. You get back home.

You guys can go for lunch and I will come down by 3 o'clock.

You say fine. You see Aruvi doing the log sheet. He asks you to check. You do. You say you will say corrections after lunch. Both of you leave.

How much is this Reebok slippers?

Thousand nine hundred or seven hundred.

I told my father once to get me a Reebok shoe and he told me that he is wearing a shirt which is costing him two hundred. Why will I buy a slipper for such a cost?

Your father would have thought the same but he will never say. He will not say anything against your wish.

It's worth. I have this for two years. Actually I like Nike. It comes out cheaper around thousand three hundred.

You say that you are not going to Puri this weekend. Instead you are going the next.

We can book the tickets on Monday when we go to Jamshedpur for buying furniture.

We walk towards the shop which sells lunch.

We are greeted with a lot of enthusiasm.

We have our food. You try to reduce your food quantity even though you are hungry. It will be nice if you need not eat at all. You finish it fast and wait for Aruvi. Then you pay the bill. It's the same amount as yesterday.

You walk into the nearby shop to buy biscuits for Sipra. You ask for a Good day biscuit packet and get it. You come back home and sit quietly for some time. Then you tell Aruvi about how to enter data in to the log sheets. You discuss it with him for a while. Then you show him how to do it. Then you start typing the report.

At about 4 P.M Tapan comes back and says he had stomach problem and that's why he couldn't come. He apologizes. You say its fine. Then both of you sit together and type the village names and the Chhau groups in each village. We have tea. When you are just about to finish power goes off. Tapan says he will go and check for the electrician.

You don't know what to do. You feel exhausted. You look for Aruvi and he is sleeping in the next room. You pick up the ipod and start listening to songs.

[Everywhere – Fleetwood mac](#)

[Can you hear me calling?](#)

[You know that I have fallen in love and don't want to say](#)

Why is the body so stiff?

You relax your hand and make it free. Then you put your one leg over another leg and then keep it on the bed. Now you feel okay.

You wake up to find Aruvi sitting in the chair. You get up and go to the bathroom at the back and wash your face. When you come back Tapan is already there. The power had come now. He says we can go for the rehearsal. You want to record the music of the Chhau. You ask Aruvi whether he had taken the voice recorder. He says yes. When you are about to leave a new man enters the house. Tapan introduces him as the electrician. We again get back to the room and discuss the fan and other electrical fittings that need to be fixed in the room.

We can buy the materials from my friend's shop. We can give the money only after the cheque comes from Chennai.

No problem. He is my friend. I can give him a slip and it's done.

Tapan and the electrician go to the front room. You tell Aruvi that Tapan is giving a dingy small room for NFSC. You also add him that Tapan is planning to put beds here in the same room. He smiles.

All of us walk towards the Chhau academy. When we reach there half the rehearsal was over. We record whatever little bit is left. Then the crowd gets into party mood with one of the trainers singing old songs of Kishore Kumar. Everybody enjoys. You remember Viswamitran. What is there in imitation? What is preventing them from becoming a great singer? If they really have that thing for song they should have become somebody known. You understand that it's because of the lack of exposure and continuous effort in one direction. You are afraid thinking about yourself.

Buddhu is also sitting and listening to the songs. You wonder how he will enjoy himself singing in his own circle. At least he is getting exposed to people expressing themselves without any fear and inhibition. Will this act as a stimulus or will it retard his growth. You are not clear. You imagine Buddhu trying to sing when he is drunk and expressing himself without fear and inhibition. You believe that is the only situation when Buddhu can sing.

The singing stops. There is no power. But you have not realized it. You are busy listening.

Buddhu take this harmonium away from me. It will make me sing without stop.

We all leave.

We will go to the market and have food and come home.

Okay.

You and Aruvi walk towards the hotel in the darkness.

What are we going to do in the hotel? There is no power.

By the time we reach there power will come back.

When we reach the hotel we see light in the hotel. Emergency lamp. We are greeted with warmth.

What do you want sir? We have lot of varieties. Parotta, roti, mixed parotta etc. What do you want sir.

You ask for two plates of mixed parotta.

He starts making arrangements for making the parotta. He mixes the flour.

Where have you come sir?

To the Chhau academy.

How many days sir?

Up to 29th of this month.

Up to 29th.

Yes.

Aruvi is feeling hot and couldn't sit inside the hotel. He goes out and stands for some time.

To our surprise he prepares poori-like stuff and calls it as mixed parotta. We try eating it.

Sir. I am from Puri, Orissa. I work here for two and a half years.

You smile at him. He is a Brahman. But how come he cooks fish in this hotel. But fish is considered as vegetarian by Bengalis. You are not sure.

Do you want anything else sir?

No thanks.

We pay him the amount after finishing the dinner. He gives us the account. Does he need tips?

We walk to the nearby sweet stall and have gulab jamuns. Is there any place which sells mineral water bottle?

No. Let's check in that shop.

Do you have water bottle?

No.

I told you know.

And we come back walking in the dark. Sipra comes down and opens the door in the dark. She had brought a small light with her. We take the emergency lamp and give it to her. She takes it upstairs and we ask for water. She brings back another lamp with water. You give her the biscuit packet.

You sit in darkness switching off the light. Aruvi is changing. You decide to make a call home. You press the call button.

I was also calling you.

Is that so?

Your mother tells you that its thoughts wave length. You are not sure about it. Do thoughts exist as waves? You remember Yogi Ramalingam. Am I connected with my parents? Are we in sync with each other? Did I miss the chance to get in synchronization with the whole world? You don't know.

How is health?

It's fine. Did you eat the tablets?

No. Not yet.

Why are you dull?

There is no power.

Should I call you back after sometime?

No. Not needed. We are just going to talk. What is the need for power?

Are you eating fruits?

I couldn't find any shop. I have to find it tomorrow.

Where is this place without any fruit shop?

You keep silent.

We are going to Dr. Natarajan to check for sugar in the morning. Any how I will call around 8 A.M.

Okay. Fine. Goodnight.

Goodnight.

You change, pick up the emergency light and go to the toilet. Is everything that happens accidental or is it according to some plan. If there is no power shut down I would not have got this emergency light to use it in this bathroom which doesn't have bulb. You say it's just coincidence. He says it's not.

You come back and sit in darkness for some more time. Then the power comes back. At around 10 P.M. Tapan comes back and says that his stomach is not well.

I went to the toilet four times. It's because of the panneer which I had yesterday. It's costly and I like it. But this is not the best time to take panneer. He talks something. You are not in a mood to listen.

How much is this Jagannath picture?

Your bobby brought it from Orissa. It must be 150 or 200 rupees. Your bobby is from Orissa.

Tapan shows you all the cups and shields that he had got. You smile at him. He leaves. Aruvi is playing with Sipra. They are trying to teach each other one language they know. They are playing with the ipod for some time. You are typing the report. It looks like an interesting exercise for you. Sipra leaves and Aruvi sleeps. You hear some songs in ipod and continue to type the report. You want to pee. You don't go to the bathroom as there is no light. You pee in the open. And you go back to sleep by 1.30 A.M.

FOURTH DAY - 13.08.2008

Are you in continuous reality? Do you miss it so badly? When you had it you were not able to handle it properly. But now you are dreaming about it every day. You wake up wishing that you are in it. Automatically you take your mobile and make a call.

We are at the hospital checking for sugar.

How much is it?

It had come down, but not drastically.

Okay. I will call you in the night.

Aruvi is still sleeping. You pick up your stuff and go to bathroom. When you come back he is still sleeping. You wake him up saying that you had planned to shoot the morning rehearsal. He hurriedly finishes his work and we dress and take the equipment and walk to the academy.

You see Buddhru and Bijay sitting in the practice area. You ask them about the rehearsal.

It was cancelled today.

Will it happen tomorrow morning?

We have to discuss with the director and will let you know in the evening.

You say thanks and leave the academy. You go back home and drink some water and keep your bags. Then you go to have your breakfast. He gives you dosas immediately. Then you go to the nearby tea shop. You order tea. There is a tribal look-like couple sitting with a small kid of three or four years old. The kid asks his father to slice the rasagulla with the spoon and he eats it little by little after he had chopped it down. You try to remember whether you have done something similar in your childhood days. How difficult will it be to become a father who is always caring for his kid? You are completely dependent on your parents when you are a kid. You don't even know how much you are taking from them. And your parents do what all they could do for you without expecting anything. And this dependency creates a kind of power over you and they take pleasure in helping you out in every way possible.

You finish your tea and come back home. You wait for the power to come and talk some trivial things with Aruvi. When the power comes you start typing the report. It goes on till you go for your lunch. After lunch you don't feel good. So you buy chocolates to change the taste. You buy one for Sipra and one for Usha besides for you and Aruvi.

Usha is sitting on the lawn and cutting some wood. You hand over the chocolate to her. Her face becomes real bright. She might not expect such a gift from us. I give another chocolate to Aruvi so that he can give it to Sipra. We wait for Tapan for some time and then the rain starts and I start typing the report. In the evening Usha comes with tea. It was divine in such a rainy atmosphere. The power goes off.

How are you?

I am fine. So what did the doctor say?

The sugar had come down a bit. But he wants to change the tablet and see. We are going back on Tuesday.

You say fine.

How is your work happening?

Today it rained heavily and he is busy. Not much work is done today. I was just typing the report.

Don't take me wrong. But do you take a survey of what the population is and other details about the village. Because we used to do it when we used to visit villages.

You think about the human nature. It can comprehend anything only in relation with itself. This is how evolution had happened over millions of years and here we are at Kali yuga.

No. Not that way. But we document everything that's related to culture.

Did you have food?

We are going now.

What did you have?

Wheat Dosa.

Okay. Goodnight.

You go for your dinner. In the hotel again there are another son and father eating rotis. You watch them. The father tears up the hot rotis and help the son to have it. It reminds you of the scenario in the morning. You smile.

When you come home Tapan is back.

Today I am really busy. We had meeting till now. Did the electrician come?

He parks the scooty inside the house.

This is for your bobby. If you are a married man then you have to do all this. Tapan laughs.

Can you give me five minutes so that we can discuss about what to do tomorrow.

Now?

No. After dinner.

Okay.

You get engrossed in typing the report. After an hour Tapan come back with drooping eyes and says we can talk tomorrow morning. You smile. He says goodnight. You get back to typing.

FIFTH DAY – 14.08.2008

You see Aruvi going to the bathroom. You lie lazily in bed. You wake up and sit on the chair till Aruvi comes. There is no power.

There is no water officer. There is half a bucket left in the bathroom.

You feel disgusted early in the morning. You go to the bathroom, pee and brush your teeth and wash your face with the available water. You sip the tea that Usha brings. It refreshes you but you still feel lazy because haven't taken bath. You sit in the chair and stare at the powerless fan.

Tapan comes down after some time.

Can we go to the electrical shop to buy the materials?

Sure. But there is no water.

Yes there is no power in the house. I have told Usha to fill in the bucket with water.

We can go and come back and have a bath.

You leave on Tapan's bike leaving Aruvi at home. The shop is quiet nearby. It's big enough for Seraikella standards. You sit in a chair provided within the shop. The owner is a fat person with **neckband** around his neck. He wears a spectacle. He is some Goyal. You don't know from where he had come and settled from. A few others are buying switch boards. There is a person looking for **tarpaulin** sheets. Another was looking for dog chains. Tapan talks with the owner and he ask you what kind of fan you are looking for.

Anything which runs well is okay.

Branded fans are costly and local fans are slightly cheap.

You go in for one branded and one local fan. You also buy tube lights. Then you sit behind Tapan carrying all the materials. On the way you stop at the electrician's shop. His name is Raju. It's very near your house. He says that he will come after some time. You come back home and keep all the materials in the back room.

I have to go.

When can we meet again?

Two to three I am free.

Okay.

You go to take a minimalist bath with the available water. You feel a little fresh.

Can we go for breakfast?

It's already late. Should we go?

We will go. If there is food we will eat otherwise we can come back.

Both of you walk to the Dosa stall and find the owner cleaning the vessels. He says that it's over. You come back to another sweet stall near your hotel and try different varieties of sweets.

We have also become like north Indians eating sweets.

You smile. By the time you reach home there is power and you try to type the report. But the fluctuation is so much that the computer doesn't work. You listen to music.

What if – coldplay.

You go for lunch in the afternoon without any change. You buy Kitkat. This is becoming habitual. When you come back there is enough power to type in computer. You type in between as much as twenty power shut downs. Tapan didn't come. In the evening there is no power. You are trying to read in the available light. But it is tiresome. So you put away the book. You have a conversation with Sipra and learn through the conversation that her pet name is Neha. You also come to know that Usha had been mentally ill for some time for some unknown reason. Neha doesn't know the reason. She tells you about how her elder brother broke his legs and hands in his school. You also come to know that there is a nude photograph of him with his mother. You smile. Children and their world are always fascinating to you. How much energy do they have? Neha speaks so much that you get tired. You decide to take a walk.

You and Aruvi take a road which opposite to the market area. You hear the sound of running water. You are curious what it is. There is small temple. A small man with a limp crosses you with umbrella in his hand. You follow the road and it takes you to the river. The river is broad but it is not full. There is a running stream but the current is not that much. You watch the river for some time. Then Aruvi insists on looking at the river from another view point. So we travel to some other place and look at it. There is a dilapidated bridge over it. You couldn't see clearly. It's getting dark. You walk to the hotel and have your dinner and sweets. You come back home.

When you come back the power is back, so you start typing the report. The power fluctuates so badly that you get really frustrated switching it on and off.

Did you have your food?

Yes.

It's raining here? How about there?

It was raining heavily yesterday. But not today. Where is she?

She is not at home. Your aunt is serious. They had admitted in the hospital. So she had gone to see her. Chandra came and took her. It's always like this. I washed the remaining clothes. Arumugham had bought some new land and I didn't have the money to pay it.

Why did he buy without permission?

It will pick up well in that area it seems. A new IIM is going to come in that area.

IIM will not come to Tamilnadu as we have an IIT.

Anyhow university is there. Okay will call you tomorrow morning.

Yes.

Tapan comes back late in the night.

I am tired. We had meeting till now.

You say you want to roam around the town tomorrow. He says that you can do it day after tomorrow as there is red alert on 15th August.

Okay.

Tapan goes to bed and you back to typing till the current goes off. After that you listen to songs sitting in darkness.

SIXTH DAY – 15.08.2008

You are attending an examination. But you haven't prepared very well. As usual you had prepared in the last minute. You write the exam. The next day you see students standing outside the classroom. They give a sad smile. Only two persons are sitting inside the class room. Bhuvaneswari miss is giving your paper. You have got Sixty five. She looks at the paper again and adds three more marks. She is looking at the other answers that you had written. You had written well about cinema directors. That question you had got full marks. Other questions you haven't received full marks. That's geography paper. Mams is really angry with you because you had done well in the examination. He says that you are intelligent and not a good friend. There is something which you want to say but you don't.

Anandswamy is standing with a cap on his head and looking at a car. He tells a number to mams and he moves out of the scene. He had tricked. He had deceived Anand. The car moves away. Anand removes his cap and wonders why the car had left without him. He is having a briefcase in his hand. Somebody switches off the fan. It's not cool anymore. Neha comes and says that the country had got Independence and everybody is celebrating. She is having a plastic flag in her hands and she is waving at you. He also sees it. And then you see Aruvi sitting in a chair drinking water. You are waiting for your call.

You pick up your stuff and moves towards the bathroom. You see a small snake in front of you. You had always expected it. Shiva with his snake is dancing in front of you. Your fear is your snake. Generations of fear. It had been imbibed into you. You can't throw it away in a second. If you are self realized, then you probably won't have this fear. Maybe you are Shiva. Snake moves away in a zigzag fashion. You are watch it again and again. When you come back you feel fresh. Aruuvu goes to bathe. Usha comes with tea and biscuits. You are waiting for that moment to have your tea. You like it so much. You make a call.

Where are you?

On the road.

I am fine. When did she come back?

She came back yesterday night itself.

Okay. I will call you back.

You go to have breakfast. Everywhere you could see the tricolor flag flying high. Every vehicle has it. You have your breakfast. You go to the nearby tea stall and order sweets. Many people are buying sweets and there is a big crowd. Maybe because of the holiday. The laddu master is not seen around. The owner himself is making laddu. On the way Aruvi points out the cobbler. I will have to mend my slippers in the afternoon.

You come back home and start typing the report. Who is typing it? Is it you or he? You and he are not the same. Is it so? Are you sure? You are not sure about it. It's he who is writing through you.

You ask Aruvi to do the still log sheets. You are relieved. You just laze around for some time. Those who are not reading collected short stories are hunted down by the military. Nelson leads the team. The writers name starts with 'E'. You are reading the collection. Racks and racks of book are to be read. Aruvi is still at the computer. You say you can go for lunch. As you are late the shop is being cleaned. There is no dal, so they give you something that they have prepared for the night. The food tastes delicious. You thank them for giving you food after the regular time. You go looking for the cobbler. You had brought the slipper along with you. You explain what has to be done.

Fifteen rupees.

Okay.

In order to spend the time you go to the tea shop and have tea. When you come back the slipper is ready. Good work done. You pay and come back to house. There is no power and you are feeling lazy. You lie on the bed.

Raju comes and fixes the tube light which doesn't work. He also fixes the switch board. Tapan is back with his son. He is a short fellow, a little fat, a Tapan look-alike. He talks to us in English. Neha is busy playing with her brother. When the power comes, Siddharth wants to try his hand with MS Word. So Aruvi lets him play with the computer. We decide to take a walk.

You see the market. It's big for Seraikella. There are people everywhere buying and selling goods. It's a real dirty place with water all around but people still sit on it on rugs. There are a lot of ducks being sold. They are specially sold for the Mansamaa festival that's going to happen tomorrow. We could finally see some buses on the roads. There are police everywhere. We come back soon.

Looking at Siddharth working on the computer Aruvi goes back to his childhood days.

I was afraid about working on the computer. I always had a fear that I will make some mistake and it will break. I saw computer only in my [eighth](#) standard. I never did my practicals. I always failed. I was beaten up for every mistake that I did. I was in fear always. I was out of the class most of the time either for not doing home work or for some other reason. I used to be moving between principal's room and class room always. My hand used to go numb with the beatings. I used to be a dull student. I used to have lot of hair and it would have lot of oil. Oil would flow on my face and make my face even duller. I got rid of the fear about computers only after coming to college. Only in my second year I had a mail account. Only in the final year I started using computer to prepare resumes and other things. Only then I learnt how to open mail box and how to send mail.

You say that the beatings had made him as a dull student.

Yes. I was always in fear at school.

You think about the school system. You think about the students who had lost all joy because of meaningless lessons and the way teachers treat students. You go for dinner. After dinner you

go looking for an internet browsing center and find one. But unfortunately the net doesn't work and you couldn't book your tickets to Puri.

When you come back there is no power and you make a call.

Did you have your food?

Yes. How is aunty?

She is still serious. Lot of people had come down. Even Mr. Mariappan is there.

Did you meet him?

Yes. We had a formal meeting. He is staying in the university guest house. So how is work?

We did nothing. We will have to start from tomorrow.

Okay.

You want to meet him. But before that you want to do something so that you need not say that you are doing nothing. What shall you do? Will you be doing the change or film? You want to concentrate on change as soon as you go back to Chennai. You don't want to miss the opportunity. You have only one life and you should do what you like to do. After that you will meet him and have a hearty chat. You will take care of him in his old age if it's needed. The old must go. That's the rule. The golden rule. Aruvi is working in the computer. Tapan comes late in the night.

We had the final meeting. My work is over today. We can start our work from tomorrow onwards.

Have a good sleep. Goodnight.

SEVENTH DAY – 16.08.2008

You are driving the car. Two women are seated at the back. Sometimes it looks like a rickshaw. One of the women is your friend or somebody. She is related to you in some way. The other is a customer. She is a Malayali. You are going in rounds but you don't know the destination. You ask her where to go.

Where do you want to go?

You should have asked this first.

Now that I am asking you please tell me.

I want to reach the peak where there is completeness, purity and bliss. I want to reach my mother. I want to go back to my childhood days with all its innocence.

Isn't innocence related with ignorance?

What so if it is? It is blissful.

People say complete awareness is bliss and can be achieved only by deliberation and discrimination. Discrimination is the quality of Devas.

What nonsense are you talking about? How can there be any distinction between you and me. Are we not the same?

There are no we. It's you and me.

Then what is oneness?

That is within oneself and with the world around oneself.

Then what is this world?

You ask too many questions.

There is a fight between the two women. You watch it. Is he also watching it? You don't know. Aruvi comes back from the bathroom. It's your turn now. You finish and go for breakfast. You go for tea. There is no tea. They are busy making laddus. You have some sweets. Then you come back and wait for Mansamaa festival. Bijay comes. Tapan's mother brings us all Prasad. We all eat.

What is the special occasion today?

Today is the day of Bala Bhatra. Today is goma poornima and that's why we are celebrating.

Who is Bala Bhatra?

Bala Bhatra is the elder brother of Lord Jagannath. Have you seen Jagannath of Puri?

No.

Jagannath is black in color. Bala Bhatra is white in color. Subathra is yellow in color. Jagannath is Lord Vishnu's incarnation and Bala Bhatra Lord Shiva's and Subathra was Brahma's incarnation according to Vishnu purana. Today is also Raksha Bandhan day.

Why is Raksha Bandhan day celebrated? Is there a myth behind it?

It's actually not our festival. It's followed from north. Basically it is celebrated to maintain the relationship between the brothers and sisters.

Okay.

Today is also Mansamaa pooja day.

Who is Mansamaa?

She is the snake goddess. She is the daughter of Shiva.

Why is this festival celebrated?

I don't know. I will let you know later. There are four Mansamaa pujas from August to October. Only during this period, snakes are seen above the land. To appease them this festival is celebrated. In October the snakes go below the ground because of pooja. During pooja they give sacrifice. They sacrifice swan, hen, pigeon and goat.

Why do they give sacrifice?

This is to appease the snake goddess and as a gift to god because whatever they had wished had come true with the help of god.

Why swan in particular?

Swan is given as sacrifice by the rich people. In villages and from lower castes they give hen as sacrifice.

So does sacrifice vary according to caste?

Yes. It's also according to the availability. This festival is spread from rural sides of Bangladesh and Bengal. It's basically a farmer's festival. There are some folk song sung during this festival.

Can we record it?

Sure.

Bijay leaves and we go to see the sacrifice. When we reach the temple the festival is in progress and we see the ducks being cut and thrown in front of the god. The body of the duck makes its last move blurring out all the blood it has. You capture the whole scenario with blood

dripping from your half pants. Generally in Tamilnadu the Brahmin priest is not involved in giving sacrifice. But here it's different. You take the picture of Mansamaa and the religious crowd surrounding the temple. You go from there to another place owned by the Pattanayak family. It is again a small temple with a Mansamaa statue. The priest gives you coconut as Prasad. It's in red color. You don't know whether it's from the kumkum or because of the blood. You give it to the kids standing there. You want to hear stories about the temple but you get no information.

Then you go to Jagannath temple built by the Maharaja of Seraikella. It has got Jagannath, Bala Bhadra and Subhadra in it. The ten avatars of Vishnu are painted on the walls. This temple must have been built only in the 20th century. It's made of cement and is similar to the architecture style rampant in Orissa. You come back home. You have food at Tapan's house as the shops are closed for the festival. Aruvi is doing the log sheet and you doze off.

Usha brings you tea. And Tapan comes down asking you to get ready for the dinner at his uncle's house. You go to his house and have dinner. Then you go to his uncle's house to take photographs of the pooja room. You have been turned into a family photographer. From there you come back to Tapan's house. Tapan's brother-in-law had come. You are introduced to him. You discuss the things that you plan to do in the coming week. You stress that you need to train the field workers with equipment. You jot down things in your note book. You also tell him about your plan to go to Puri the coming Saturday.

You can take a train to Bhuvaneswar and then you can go from there.

Okay.

Do you know that Bhuvaneswar is a planned city like Chandigarh?

I never knew.

The land value in Bhuvaneswar is as costly as Mumbai. I have a house there. It is fourteen kilometers away from the main city.

Tell him about [xxxxx](#)

There a Nepalese girl crossed the 140 KM in eight hours and forty five minutes and fell down dead at that place. That's the record till now. I take about three days to cross the whole distance. I cover forty five KM in one day. People from all over the world come to this place for worship.

I had taken five days to cover the distance.

Then Tapan goes out with his brother-in-law.

You are asleep.

Yes.

Will call you tomorrow.

Fine.

Tapan comes back and tells you that you are his younger brother. He tells you about his childhood days. He got his first bicycle when he passed seventh grade. That was the first bicycle in that area. He used to go for dance practice but he used to study well. After passing ISC he applied for the entrance exam for medicine. He got through. His father didn't believe it. But his mother was always a believer. He joined medical college but that was on the Nepal border. He studied there for six months. After that he went to Denmark to perform in 1982. That was his first foreign trip. From that he never turned back. He travelled all over the world with his guru. He skipped his studies. His father was not happy. So he applied for B. Sc. and graduated. When he was doing his postgraduation in Mathematics he got a job. He worked in many places. Finally he got the post of director in 1994. He is the youngest director in Seraikella history. He strongly believes in Indian culture. India is the place which turned Chand Ashoka into xxx Ashoka. He also remembers the days when he used to go and see films at public screenings and the fun in doing it. During that time petrol was cheap at around three rupees fifty paisa per liter. He says that those times are gone. He feels very nostalgic about those days. You just smile.

Will you also be nostalgic about your times?

I don't think so. You always want to live in the present. The time now is always good. It's with so many opportunities. It's just that you need to keep your eyes open. The unblinking eyes of Puri Jagannath. Complete awareness.

Tapan says he had missed many opportunities to teach Chhau in other countries. He says he doesn't work for money. He wants to be known as the guru of Chhau dance. That's all. Nothing more.

The French gave me a contract of five years to teach Chhau in Paris. They will pay five thousand Indian rupees every day after taking care of my food and accommodation. Your bobby refused. We are happy this way.

That's good.

After a long speech Tapan finally said goodnight. You think about what you are going to do with your life. You are just at it. You will go wherever it goes.

Are you going somewhere?

You are.

EIGHTH DAY – 17.08.2008

If memories can be canned, will it have an expiry date – Chunking Express

You don't remember what you saw that day. Now that you are writing after three days you wonder what to write. It was a usual Sunday with not much change. You and Aruvi are dressed and are getting ready to go and have your breakfast. You are wearing the half sleeves kurta. Tapan says it's a nice one. You say that you bought it from Khadi Bhavan, Bombay. There is a Khadi Bhavan in Seraikella also, Tapan says. When you are about to leave, Tapan's brother-in-law joins you.

On your way he wants to meet his friend. He has an X-ray shop in the market road. He is a tall guy with a thin frame. You are introduced. He says that he had seen you quite a few times. All the four of you walk toward the usual dosa shop. But it was closed. Our new friend takes us to another place which sells dosa. This is in a small lane in the market road. It is not visible from the main road. You and Aruvi sit inside the shop watching some hindi film starring Govinda. You eat your dosas while they are chatting outside. After that you take a small walk up to the new friend's house and drop him there. Tapan's brother-in-law says he might need some help when he comes to Tirupathi in future.

You are welcome.

You come back and sit at home for some time. Fortunately there is power and you start typing the report. After some time Tapan comes in. He decides to take you to the culturally significant places in Seraikella. You sit behind Tapan and Aruvi sits behind Tapan's brother-in-law on his scooter.

The first place we visit was a group of rocks in a small compound.

This is Maa Powdi.

What is special about these rocks?

These are one of the oldest rocks and it faces in the direction of south. I don't know the myth related to it.

You are thinking about its background, the story behind these rocks. You are not able to come to any conclusion. You go in and see small stones kept below the main rock.

What are these?

This we call as Saligram. They are the personal gods of the people.

What importance do they carry?

They are not stones. They are gods.

What are these small mud pots for?

They are used to bring water to Maa Powdi during the ritual. Come we will go to the next place.

We go to Buddeshwar Baba Temple at Kudhar Sahi on the banks of river Karkai. You see two kids playing on the sides of the temple and a man sleeping in front of the temple. A pandit is doing pooja inside. It's a small temple made of brick and cement in the modern fashion. There is no statue inside the Garbagriha and there is only a shivalinga with the metal snake surrounding it. Outside the temple you could find lot of Saligrams surrounding the tree. Now you could understand how Shiva had acquired the form of Shivalinga. From the temple you could see the ruins of the old palace in between the river Karkai. The palace was destroyed during the great flood in the year 1770 AD. You could barely see the structure. Only thing you could see were the bricks.

Also far away in the middle of the river you could see a spot surrounded with trees.

That is Mirki Kinngda.

What is it?

This is the place where women go for picnic after Makar Sankaranthi. The first Saturday following the Sankaranthi is dedicated for this gathering where all women folk in the house go to this place and cook food and are happy. No men are allowed in this gathering. This is celebrated by the order of King Udit Narayan Singh Deo in the 18th century. The reason behind this is to allow some freedom to women after the festival. They must be tired after doing all the work for Sankaranthi. To relax them this festival is celebrated.

Then we see the Baghmara stone. The belief is that if the stone is submerged inside water then the whole town will be under flood. This is the water level indicator of the town. Another myth about this stone is that the king had shot a tiger and it had turned into the stone. You are surprised by the story and its relation to the water level of the town.

You could also see the origins of Shiva Linga in the form of Saligram. Then you go to a tree goddess called Maa Jumkeswari (Sakthi Peet) . During Chaitra Parva, artists worships this goddess before starting their dance. During Makar Sankaranthi, all people of Singbhum district will come together to worship in this place. Basically, it's the goddess of the lower caste. The priest is not a Brahmin and is a Devri. Maa Jumkeswari is worshipped by Bhuhian, a kind of caste who worships only nature. You are very curious to learn about this particular tribe. But you don't get much information about them. Another interesting aspect about Maa Jumkeshwari is that the Prasad will not be taken by women (upper caste) and it has to be eaten within the river area or near the temple and should not be taken home and eaten.

You smile.

She also smiles.

Are you that precious? I never knew.

I am Sakhthi, the mother of all creation. How can I be polluted with all these Prasad of trivial goddesses like Maa Jumkeswari. Moreover she is not accepted as goddess by the Vedas.

Is there something greater than Prakrithi, nature?

No.

We are the worshippers of Prakrithi. Why not you accept us?

She gives a deceitful smile as usual.

There are lot of Saligrams and everywhere you see red. Red bangles, red saris etc. Red is the color of creation. Tapan is standing next to you and worshipping.

Why this specific tree is worshipped? Is there any reason for that?

Tapan remains in silence.

You want to hear the story about this. But there is no one to tell the story.

Then you reach the temple of Maa Samsang Kaali. This is maintained by the Pattanayak family. You could see the black statue with its tongue protruding out. Here again the Prasad is not to be taken home. All these temples are located on the banks of river Karkai. There is a small group of people doing the last rites to their dead father. You go around Maa Samsang Kaali temple.

There you could find the photo of Maa Tharani (Ghata Gang in the district of Kendhujar, Orissa). The base is painted in red and the tree rising from the peet has coconuts bound by red cloth. When you come back to the front you see Tapan talking with a kid who is rearing cows. He insists that he study. He had left studies in the last year. Tapan asks you to take one photo and you do.

Then you go to Pancha Mukhi Shiva temple at the banks of river Karkai. This temple was built by King Veer Abhiram Sing. On the river bank you see Majanakhat from where all the rituals start during the Chaitra Parva. There you see a small tortoise sculpted in stone. You don't know the importance of tortoise in Hindu mythology.

From there you could see the Busha Pat temple

NINTH DAY – 18.08.2008

You are sitting in your room. Nedu is copying something in his note. Also Dayanithi. He is wearing his spectacles. You look at what they are copying. They are copying some notes on interaction design. These guys are shrewd. You look at the front of the notes and look at the google logo. Will it be of any use to change? If it's needed we can look at it later. There is a group of people dressed in white pants and pink shirts standing near their bikes. They are striking a pose. Is it some movie that you are looking at or is it a scenario that you are passing by.

The kids on the vehicle are sitting at various places. The young kid in front is reading a comic book with chocolate in its mouth. The kid sitting behind is having a toy in its hand. The last one is a baby sitting on the back. It's dressed in red. All of them are from sophisticated families and they look like foreigners. They are sitting on the tram and at the end of the track there is no support to stop them from falling from the top. When the vehicle starts they are done for. There is no way to escape. The tram starts moving and you are wide awake. You finish bathing and you wait for the call.

Tapan comes back from dropping Siddharth and he looks tired.

Madhu Khoda's party is down and Sibu Soren's party is in power. So there are many processions outside. Some of the roads are blocked. I will check in the market by 10 AM. Only after that will we decide about going to Jamshedpur.

You say fine. He goes away. You and Aruvi go for breakfast. After that you go looking for the reservation counter to book tickets to Puri. The counter is closed. You have your tea and check again. It's still closed. So you come back to the house.

Where is your father?

He is sleeping.

Here are some chocolates and biscuits for you. Take it.

Thanks. Do you know that I have many names?

I don't know. Please tell me.

Sipra, Neha, Rimjim, Padmini, Barsa, Mahima. These many names I have. Can you guess my favorite name?

Is it Rimjim?

No.

Is it Neha?

No.

Is it Mahima?

Yes.

Some students of Tapan come to get attestation from him. Tapan comes down. He signs the certificates.

You see, I am really tired mentally because I dropped my son in the hostel. That is the real reason for us not going to Tatanagar. We can go on Wednesday because tomorrow the main bazaar is closed.

Yes. Please take rest.

Let's have some potato vada and tea.

We all have another round of food. Then we decide to go to the ticket counter and check again. When we reach, it's open. Two persons are booking tickets and you get the reservation form to book tickets. When your turn comes you give your form. The staff there says the trains are cancelled and that there is one train in the morning. You go for it. You also book a return train from Bhuvaneshwar. You are short of hundred rupees. You go back home and take the money and get your tickets. When you reach home it's past lunch hour. Then you start typing the report. You work for some time and then ask Aruvi to number the photos. You start reading. At around three thirty Tapan comes as promised to help you index the photographs. When you are finished indexing the temples Tapan's wife and mother come. So you show them what you have shot. When you are done with that, you scan all the pictures that Tapan had given you. You also make a recording of the story of the Mansamaa festival.

The story goes like this. Long ago there lived a king called Chand Saudhaghar. He had seven sons. He was a devoted worshipper of Lord Shiva. One day Naradha meets Mansamaa in heaven. Mansamaa is the daughter of Lord Shiva. He tells her that no one on the earth worships her. She replies that she doesn't want anybody to worship her and that's why nobody worships her. If she wanted to, she could make anyone worship her with her powers. Naradha with a deceitful smile tells her that she can't make Chand Saudhaghar, a devotee of Shiva, worship her. She says she can make anyone not just Chand worship her with her unlimited powers. Naradha says no. In order to prove her power, she comes to earth and goes to Chand's palace. There she sees him worshipping Shiva.

Dear Chand, you are such a sincere devotee of my father. You should worship me like you worship my father.

Dear Mansamaa, I am a sincere devotee of Lord Shiva. I don't worship anyone apart from Lord Shiva. Please forgive me.

Chand you don't know my powers. I can do anything in this world. So please worship me.

No I can't. There is Shiva to protect me. I will not worship you at any cost.

You don't know about me. I will show you who I am. Then you will worship me.

At any cost I will not worship anyone apart from Lord Shiva.

Mansamaa moves silently away and goes to the place where his seven sons are. Only six sons are there and the other one is missing. Milk has been kept ready for them to drink during the night. Mansamaa pours a little bit of her poison into the milk. All the six children drink it and are dead in no time. Chand comes to the place crying. Mansamaa also appears in front of him.

Look what you have done to your kids. Because of you, your sons are all dead. Do you understand my power? So worship me without fail.

So what if my six sons are gone. I have my seventh son Luckindhar who is getting married to Behula today. I will be happy with him. I will not worship you even if you kill him. Do what you can do.

On hearing this challenge Mansamaa is really angry. She wants to find his son and kill him. But he is a new groom and he is in some other place. Chand had built a strong house for him with the help of Viswakarma so Mansamaa cannot enter. Mansamaa forces Viswakarma to create a hole in the building so that she can go and kill him with ease. During the first night the couple is tired and asleep. In order to kill Chand's son, Mansamaa sends a poisonous snake through the hole made by Viswakarma. The snake enters and bites the sleeping Luckindhar. Behula wakes up to see the snake biting her husband. With anger she picks up the betel cutter and fights the snake. The snake doesn't want to harm her and retreats. Before it retreats she cuts off its tail with the betel cutter. The snake moves away without a tail. Behula, determined not to give her husband to the hands of death, worships Shiva. Shiva is pleased with her determination and devotion and decides to solve the problem by bringing Luckindhar back to life. So he talks with Mansamaa. She says she can bring him alive only if Chand worships her. Shiva appears before Chand and asks him to worship Mansamaa for his sake. Chand consents to worship Mansamaa because of Shiva but says he will worship Mansamaa only with his left hand as he worships Shiva with his right. Shiva agrees and Chand worships Mansamaa with his left hand. She brings Luckindhar to life and everybody is happy.

Were they happy like they show in movies at the end?

They should be. It's much older than the movies.

Did they take a family portrait with smiling faces to retain it for eternity.

You say that you don't know. But you are sure of one thing.

Do you understand the story?

Ya. It's a simple story. What is there to not to understand.

Are you that clever? I never knew.

She giggles.

Mansamaa festival originated from the rural areas of Bangladesh and West Bengal. It is observed mostly by farmers and members of the lower castes.

Shiva, are you with me?

He says yes.

You ask her again.

She just gives you a smile. You can't find out whether she understood or not.

Do you understand?

Yes.

Tapan says he can arrange for a small meeting and training session with the field workers tomorrow after insisting. He says that he is going to the academy for some work and he will be back after an hour.

You are sitting in darkness.

"Talk about something," she urges.

"What shall I talk about?"

"Anything."

"He went out."

"What happened when he was out?"

"People on the street were rushing about."

"Go on."

"He was surprised."

"Why?"

"He couldn't understand why people were rushing about."

"The only thing they can do is to rush about like this."

"Surely there is no need for it?"

"If they were not busy doing something they would be anxious."

"The shops had all shut,"

"He wasn't hurrying to go anywhere, he seemed to have somewhere to go, and people usually call it home, to procure this room he had even argued with the caretaker."

“Still he has a room,”

“But he can’t find the key,”

Can we go for dinner?

Should we shut the door and go?

There is no key.

Aruvi and you go to have dinner. Fortunately the hotel is open and you have your food. Then you have sweets. You feel like having some tea and you order it. When you come back it is still dark. There is no news about Tapan. You can start typing only when there is some consistent power supply.

TENTH DAY – 19.08.2008

Mostly it is Mohsen Makhmalbauf who is going to teach you how to make cinema. He is staying in a hotel. All the students are assembled. He comes and scrutinizes everybody. Then he says that the first thing that you should take care of is the body. Cinema comes next. So he brings in a plastic bucket filled with sand and asks you to practice with it. You try.

You are in a kung-fu pose and are about to run. But you don't run because you are waiting for something. You miserably fail in the competition. There is somebody who is accompanying you. You don't know who it is. Shounak comes back saying hey man how is you. He had passed in the physical fitness test. He has long hair on his head. You desire his body. The next year Mohsen comes back again and you want to join but you find no use for it. You have applied once and failed miserably and so you don't want to join.

You are in your mathematics class and are arguing with your teacher for some theorem. The teacher says that it's wrong. But the students support you. Even the class leader Raman. You tell your friends that the specific theorem is definitely going to come in the exam. You are in your exam hall. You do all the sums properly. You somehow manage to do one sum which you don't know by guess work. When you are asked to say the answer to one question the entire class supports you. Manian says that you are intelligent. Bharat Kanna checks his answer with you after the exam. But what is Tamil teacher doing in mathematics examination. You have got no answer.

You bathe and check your mobile for time. There is no signal. Might be a problem with the service provider. Aruvi comes back. It's a usual day. Nothing different. After having tea you go out to have your breakfast. Same old dosa. You go the tea shop and have some tea. You also have some sweets. For the first time, you buy an English newspaper. You come back home and look at the newspaper. You read about Madhu Koda, Shibu Soren and about Mussharaf. You are waiting for the field workers to turn up. But nobody comes. After some time, Tapan comes.

The students didn't turn up today. In the evening Pinky and Baby will come. You can tell them how to work with computers.

What happened to the field workers? We are supposed to be training them today.

Nobody turned up.

You don't answer.

Tapan goes up and there is no power. You read.

Tapan comes back.

We are out of schedule. We haven't gone to Jamshedpur yesterday and today we haven't trained the field workers.

Yes. I know.

Can we meet the prince this coming Friday? We can collect a lot of material from them.

It's difficult to get permission. Last month when a Bengali director came I tried contacting him twice, but in vain. Now his wife had become the chairman of Seraikella. So he has become proud again. He still thinks that he is king.

Let's try on Friday. Because they have lot of information. They are the patrons of this art form.

If my guru is there, then I will not have had any problem accessing them. The previous prince was my Guru and he danced up to the age of 72. You know he was once a raja and after 1990 he was a beggar. Sometimes he used to come to my home tired and saying that he hasn't had any food.

I used to ask him what he wanted.

I haven't had fish for many days. Can you fry some fish?

Sure guruji.

My mother is very fond of guruji and she cooked the best food for him. She used to prepare fish with two or three vegetables and rice. He used to love the food. They were very rich till 1980's and after that they slowly **deteriorated**. They literally become beggars. They were once kings and are now nothing. But he is such a great man. Whenever he used to get money from abroad he used to give some money to me as a token of friendship, but I never took anything from him. But he had a peaceful death. He was in bed for just 10 days and died without any problem. Bijay's father was raised by the royal family from when he was eight years old. But he never took care of the prince in his old days. That's why he is bedridden for the past five years.

You reap what you sow.

You nod your head in agreement.

Then you go for lunch. You come back and read. Shivaraj calls up on Tapan's mobile. You talk with M.D.M and tell Tapan that he is really angry and wants the project to pick up some speed. You list the things that M.D.M wants you to do within the next few days. Tapan's face darkens and he talks with no energy. He says that things will be alright in the next month and he goes back to the academy.

You sit in darkness with Aruvi. You are happy that Tapan is afraid of M.D.M. You assume that things will work well from the next day onwards. You could see a sea change in Tapan's attitude from the next moment. You are blissfully happy.

Did you see the change in Tapan's face?

Yes. He became dull.

He should have taken us to Jamshedpur on Monday and arranged for the meeting with the field workers. Then there would not have been any problem.

Yes. Now he is afraid.

You have your dinner as usual and make a phone call home.

We were trying since morning.

There is no signal. There is some problem with the service provider. What happened with the check up?

You need to put insulin and slowly reduce it to tablets. The tablets are not working for her body condition.

Okay. Goodnight.

When you come back, Tapan is back.

Did Pinky come?

No.

What is she doing? I will call her and check.

It's sad to look at Tapan. He is looking real dull and tired. He is drenched in the rain.

Why don't you dry yourself and come.

Yes.

He comes back and asks whether we had dumped all the CDs that he had given. You say no.

There is no power. It came just now and there is low voltage.

You try to console Tapan.

Don't worry. We can do it. I will take with M.D.M tomorrow. We will slowly pick up speed.

Now it's rainy season. That's why I am not able to move anywhere. In September, there will be no rain. We can work at a good speed at that time. We can visit one village each day.

Fine don't worry too much.

Finally we could see some smile in Tapan's face. You sit down and prepare the list of festivals till November. You decide to elaborate on it when you meet the field workers. You insist that if you could fix up a dedicated field worker then the problem is solved. He agrees. You need to get up early in the morning tomorrow. So you do the report fast. You are about to sleep.

Reality exists only through experience, and it must be personal experience. However, once related, even personal experience becomes a narrative. Reality can't be verified and doesn't need to be, that can be left for the "reality-of-life" experts to debate. What is important is life.

Do you agree?

ELEVENTH DAY – 20.08.2008

You don't remember what exactly happened. You were clear about it sometime before. But now you don't. When the mobile plays its alarm you wake up Aruvi. You are still feeling sleepy. Aruvi goes to the bathroom. You are still dozing in bed. When he comes back you wake up and go to the bathroom with all your stuff. Today is a new start, so you take a head bath and wear a new T-Shirt. When you are up and ready, Tapan comes there saying that there is some strike and you can't go to Jamshedpur. You are really disappointed. You ask about the alternative plan.

We can visit two villages in the afternoon.

Okay.

Pinky comes and you teach her how to scan an image. She religiously takes notes. She doesn't speak English and she is a proper village brought up girl. You ask Aruvi to teach her how to take still photographs with the camera. Aruvi teaches her all about the still camera. By the time she is learns how to do the log sheets the power goes off and she says that she will come in during the night.

You go for breakfast. On the way there is a big crowd looking at a something and a guy in the middle is telling something in Oriya. You have your dosa. You enquire about today's strike and get it confirmed from the dosa master. Then as usual you have your tea. When you come back the power is fortunately back and Aruvi starts dumping the files in the CDs to the hard disk. After that he starts doing the log sheets for the remaining pictures. Tapan asks us to have our lunch so that we can go to the village by 2 in the afternoon. We hurriedly have our lunch and come back to the house and the rain begins. Bijay also comes. All of you are waiting in the room for the rain to subside.

The rich will make temples for Shiva.

What shall I,

A poor man,

Do?

My legs are pillars,

The body the shrine,

The head a cupola

Of gold.

Listen, O lord of the meeting rivers,

Things standing shall fall,

But the moving ever shall stay.

- Basavanna

The rain never stopped. Tapan and Bijay decide to go the next day. You say that you are planning for Jamshedpur.

We can come back from Jamshedpur before lunch.

Then it's fine. We can go to Rangpur and Tentapouzhi after 2 P.M.

Then Bijay goes. You start writing the report. After some time the power goes off. You don't have the mind to read or sleep. You sit in darkness. Then you decide to buy biscuits because you will probably not have dinner. You and Aruvi go for a walk and buy biscuits. When you are back Pinky is waiting for you and the power has come. You teach her how to use the voice recorder. When you are about to teach her how to dump files on the computer Tapan comes back saying that the people of Pandra are waiting for us to start the function. Your stomach is not good and you go to the toilet and start immediately after picking up the required equipments.

By the time you reach, the idol has been kept outside waiting for you to be lifted. The moment you reach, the singing starts. An old man is singing and the youth surrounding him are dancing to the rhythm of his song. You are not as excited as before. But you do your work. You start recording the songs sung during the lifting of idol.

The crowd moves around the village and stops at different places. Whenever they stop there is a kind of declaration that happens at each point which you don't understand. They are telling a story at each junction, but it's frustrating to move around without understanding. Is it some story about the village or about the god or about something else? You don't know. Even if you ask Tapan you are sure that you won't get the real story. It will be his own version of what is actually said with Vedas and Puranas as supporting elements. Every time they keep the idol down there is somebody who is beaten up with the whip. What is the need to punish them so severely like this? Is there a hidden story behind it?

We reach the pond and the song reaches its climax. The idol is removed from the pole that is carrying it and is immersed in the pond. You walk back to the village with the crowd singing songs. After that you leave the village saying thanks to the person who had arranged for it.

You come back home, leave all the equipment and go for dinner. Today there is some special variety added to our food - eggs. We have our dinner and, as usual, have our sweets. The people in the shop were watching National Geographic as usual. You come back home and there is no water to drink. There is nobody to ask also. You wait for somebody to turn up and nobody comes. You suddenly feel empty inside as if your energy has been completely sucked out. You ask Aruvi to download the photos and audio into the computer and lie down on the bed.

What's wrong Officer? You never sleep before twelve. Why so early?

You keep silent for some time.

These guys will not tell the truth about the dialogues that they spoke when they put down the idol at each junction. They will give only a biased version of it. We should do a project within Tamilnadu to understand this or we should learn Oriya.

The field workers will be of some help.

Hope so.

You feel completely empty and tired. You lie on the bed and you are not there anymore.

TWELFTH DAY – 21.08.2008

You haven't slept properly. You didn't have deep sleep. You are almost conscious of what you are thinking. Is this complete awareness? The alarm rings and you put it on snooze. Again it calls. You have no choice other than getting up. You wake up but you don't like to be in this state. You try to walk around and sit on the chair. You are confused early in the morning. You gather all your strength and move towards the bathroom. When you feel the cold water on your body you feel better. But some kind of sick feeling that you cannot understand exists within you.

When you come back Aruvi is awake. You ask him to get ready quickly as you have planned to hit the road to Jamshedpur early in the morning. As you slept early yesterday the report is not complete and you plan to start now. When you sit down at your computer, Pinky comes.

You ask her to sit down and start teaching her about the voice recorder. You give a demo of how to record and ask her to do so. She tries her hands with it and asks many doubts which you clear. Then you teach her to download audio to the computer. Then you teach her to do the log sheet for audio. She struggles so much to understand the cross referencing system that you had adopted in your log sheet. You ask her to take pictures again and store it on the computer. Then you teach her the need for cross referencing. When you are teaching Pinky, Tapan comes down.

Can we go now? We are ready.

I have got some work in the academy. I will finish it within half an hour and come back.

Okay.

It's time for Pinky to go to her computer institute and you start typing your report. Tapan comes back as promised. You all have tea and you ask for some water to drink. You haven't had water for more than twelve hours.

Why is this vehicle not coming? I had asked him to come by this time.

You are silent.

I will go look for the vehicle in the market.

Yes.

We wait and, after 15 minutes, Tapan come back with the Bolero. You pack your bag with the camera and the book to read. Tapan sits in front, you and Aruvi at the back. The vehicle starts.

Where can we keep the furniture? There is no carrier.

We can put it in the back.

Are you sure it will fit in the back?

Sure.

You are travelling the horrible roads of Jharkhand with many potholes. You haven't had breakfast. More than that you haven't slept properly. You feel like vomiting. But nothing comes out because there is nothing inside your stomach. You just want to go home and sleep. You want to see your parents and sleep in their warmth. There is nothing else you want at this moment. So many thoughts cross your mind.

Did you make the right decision at that time? Are you regretting what you have done? You are not able to bear the loss of one day of sleep. How can you resist that time? Is self realization so difficult? It's taking you for a ride and you are travelling with it.

You or me?

It or that?

You remember her. Does she exist in the future or in the past? It can be either or but surely not the present. You want to see her, talk with her. You remember the flat at Bombay. Will you make it? You are not sure. You are thinking about the Cannes festival and the award winning speech that will be made in your absence. There is nothing that is holding you. There is nothing that you run for. When you have lost your animal instinct then it's difficult to run for anything because there is nothing that tempts you. It's hard to bear this loneliness, this emptiness. That's why people in the olden days were filled with the concept of god, an entity to search for all your life. There is not a moment where you will feel like this.

You want to meet the yogi when you go back to Madurai. You want to tame this body. Till you reach Jamshedpur you are immersed in your own thoughts. Everything around you is irritating. Tapan and the driver are continuously talking in Oriya. This irritates you. You want silence. You want some peace. How stupid is the human mind which thinks that surrounding silence will make it better. But you think so and you desire it. When it does not happen you are angry. You have lost your mind. You have entered Jamshedpur and are in front of BSNL office after some searching.

The moment you get down from the vehicle you feel better. You and Aruvi follow Tapan to the office. Tapan goes inside the accounts section and you wait outside. You sit on the bench that's put in the main veranda. Tapan comes back.

We have to pay this money in the accounts section.

You go to the accounts section and Tapan goes to pay. You call up Rajasekar to check for the place to stay in Bhuvaneshwar.

We have shot nine tapes.

Good. How did you do it?

We shot mostly in bus stand. Now we are going back to Chennai.

Okay.

You think about the amount of tapes that you have shot. It's far lesser. You have done your work sincerely. This is the speed with which Seraikella can move. You cannot force it to move faster. You are content with your work. It takes one and a half hour in the office and the work is done. Now you have to give it in the branch office in Seraikella and the connection will be given within a week's time. You board the vehicle.

I definitely need some tea.

We will stop at the next place possible.

The vehicle moves down the lanes of Jamshedpur and Tapan stops at one place to buy mushrooms.

My mother likes it very much.

Then we stop in one of the tea shops and have samosa, jalebi and tea. The jalebi is hot and tastes really good. Now you feel far better. Is it the lack of food that had troubled you so much? You are not ready to believe it. With resumed energy you look around Jamshedpur. It is not a very big city, about as big as Trichi. People are moving everywhere and you see some female wearing jeans after a long time.

Is XLRI in Jamshedpur.

Yes.

What is XLRI?

It's one of finest institutes for management studies.

You reach a medium sized furniture shop and ask for computer table. They show you two different kinds of table. The larger and costlier one looks fine, but you decide not to buy it because it will not fit into your vehicle. You select a simpler one and Tapan says yes. There is no chair in this place and you have to search for it in another place. There is no place to load the table in the back and you load it on the middle seat. You sit holding it and Aruvi goes to the front.

By the time you reach that place, it is closed and will be opened only by five in the evening. So you leave Bistupur and go to Sakchi market. You find a small shop but when you enter you find it is spread over four floors. There is a chair you like and you decide to buy the cheapest model. The vehicle driver carries the chair himself. Such an act cannot be expected in Chennai or Madurai. We load the chair in the back. Then we decide to have lunch in Maderasi hotel. We order dosas and are the last person to enter the hotel. After that the hotel is closed. There is one photo of Lord Ayyappa. The owner must be a Keralite. We finish our lunch, board the vehicle and start our return journey towards Seraikella.

You are sitting far more comfortably than Aruvi and Tapan, holding the computer table. They are sitting in front and are not able to balance. You don't feel the way you felt on the onward journey. Now you can face anything. You are not feeling empty inside.

She laughs at you.

You ask her the reason.

Are you pretending to yourself? Where is this emptiness arising from? Is it coming from outside?

You say you are not able to understand.

Is it yourself or your emptiness?

You say you are feeling lonely.

Are you not feeling lonely now? Even when you succeed you will feel lonely. But you will be happy about being lonely at that point. Won't you be happy at the peak of your success?

You say that you don't know.

Tapan says he knows the reason for Jharkhand's present state. The main reason is corruption from top down. Jharkhand is rich in mineral resources. The only thing it needs is good leaders to take it in the right direction. It is not a poor state like other undeveloped states. It's problem lies in not understanding it's capabilities.

You say corruption is everywhere. Probably here it might be a higher percentage.

We will get down at the Seraikella BSNL branch and give the application form.

Should we give it now? It's already late.

Let's try.

When we go in the Junior Engineer had already left and only the clerk remains.

You ask him whether he can accept the application form.

I can accept but you have to attach the Xerox copy of the bill along with it.

We can do it tomorrow morning.

Okay.

You board the vehicle and drive back home. The driver unloads the furniture and you and Aruvi pick it up and put it inside. Tapan settles the payment with the driver. You are really tired of travel and really want to sleep for some time. You lie down on the bed and Pinky comes. You ask Aruvi to teach her about the video camera and you doze off. You don't have deep sleep but it's enough to rejuvenate you. You wake up and go for dinner. As usual the sweets follow. When you come back there is no power and you don't hesitate to ask for water. You drink water. When the power comes you start typing the report.

THIRTEENTH DAY – 22.08.2008

Mappu is still the same. He hasn't put on weight. He is still lean. He was enquiring about something that Meena left. You say something. There is little interaction. You pat him on the shoulders. You are determined not to see him. What happened to that? He leaves your place shortly on a scooty. The moment he left you are angry with him. He never asked anything about you. You also didn't tell anything about yourself. Did you ask about him? You don't know.

Selva is angry. He doesn't show his anger. He is covered with a bed sheet and is sleeping on a wired cot. His wife is trying to console him. She says that you have stopped eating fish. You have joined the others. Selva says it's like this only. People always ditch their beloved ones. He is coughing and trying to sleep with his bed sheet.

Jeyakumar enters the room. He is nude. He is playing with his penis. You are sleeping inside the room. He is trying to penetrate her. You feel disgusted. You get up and go outside. You sleep on the terrace looking at the stars. This had made all the difference. This act has granted all your wishes.

You are shaken awake by Aruvi. You see Pinky and another person sitting on the chair. You sit on the bed. Aruvi comes in saying that he will teach them how to handle the still camera. You go to the bathroom and bathe. You are still sleepy. When you come back and dress, there is another girl. You are in no mood to teach them. She introduces herself as Baby and the other person introduces himself as Pradeep Kabi. You sit in the chair feeling numb.

Aruvi teaches them how to handle the still camera and you stare at them. Then Aruvi goes to bathe and you oversee what they have learnt. You ask Pinky to teach them about downloading images to the computer. She teaches them what she had learnt in the past two days. You correct her mistakes and give reasons for each action.

At 10 A.M. they leave because they have to go to the institute. You ask them about the subjects that they teach in the institute.

We teach DCA.

What is DCA?

Diploma in Computer Applications.

What is covered in it?

We teach MS Word, Power Point, Excel.

Okay. See you at six in the evening.

All of them leave and we decide to have breakfast. When you come back the power is still on and Aruvi starts doing the log in sheet. You are in no mood to read and you lie down on the bed and doze off. You wake up after Aruvi is done and start typing yesterday's report. When you are done, you go for lunch. After lunch you look for Zyrtec. The medical shop says they have

something similar to that. You say that you have drug allergy and cannot take drugs other than the prescribed ones. Finally you get it in some other medical shop. When you come back Bijay is there and you are happy that you are finally going to the village. But to your great disappointment he says that the person we are about to visit is not there. We can visit on Monday. Since today is market day many people will not be there in their villages. Reasons and more reasons.

Finally Bijay leaves and Tapan gives a small talk about the creation of Ganesha from Siva purana. Then Tapan goes to the market and you start typing the report.

When Tapan comes back there is no power. He talks about his dance career and his wish to form a research centre after retirement. He is working for the pension. That's why he is working as a director of Chhau. Otherwise he could have left this job and joined some other organization for private practice. But still the dancer within him is aching for the stage. He talks about how he gets inspired from nature and how he inculcates all those movements into his dance. He talks about lot of things. Finally he says that he is going to the academy. You start typing the report and Pinky comes. You wait for Pradeep to join you but he doesn't turn up. You ask Pinky to do the renaming of the previous photos. After some time the power goes off.

Tapan comes back and takes you to the place where you can get a jeep early in the morning.

You can get a jeep at around 4.30 AM.

How much time will he stop here?

For five minutes.

Okay.

You come back home