Appendix - VI

RENUNCIATION (ATMASAMARPAN)

Anuradha Sharma Pujari

: Papa, why such a crowd at grandfather’s place?

: Kaka is no more.

Nilakantha Duara was a very nice person. Even after retiring as the chief of a department like DRDA he could not do any better than constructing four rooms of his house. He enjoyed doing social welfare work after his retirement. Moumon addressed Duara as Koka (grandfather). She took him to be his own grand father. As a neighbour or as a man next door Nilakantha Duara and his wife always used to enquire after their well being. So Sandhya sobbed hearing the news of Duara’s demise. She said to Dipak – “You stay home with Moumon, she has never seen a dead man, moreover, she loved her grandfather very much. I am going there; you will attend the funeral procession.

“Papa, what do you mean by being dead” long after Mouman sitting at his lap asked Dipak. At the same time she had been looking at the corridor to find out whether Nilakantha Duara was sitting there.

That means he is no more alive. You would not see him from tomorrow. He had gone away flying to the sky.

: Wah! So nice. Kaka will be able to fly with the birds, play with them.

: Who else will be there with Koka, Papa?

: Many people will be there, those who are already dead till now… they will stay.

: Where would they live?
Dipak stumbled over the word 'God'. Would she ask now the definition of God. But she didn’t. Perhaps her mother made her understand something about it.

Papa, why are the people crying aloud? It’s only for good that he is dead.

Dipak could not think of an answer. In order to satisfy her said – “Let’s go inside to play. At that instant Sandhya came in. she has been wiping her tears with the pallu of her Sari.

Oh mother, let me go with Koka, let me go to the sky

Sandhya felt bewildered at such a request from Moumon. Suddenly Dipak slapped Moumon at her cheek. Moumon stood entranced for a moment. In the short span of her four years old life she did not have the experience of being beaten. She was shocked at this new development. Sandhya dragged her away from Dipak’s lap – “I thought you have become a human, but you are still a beast”.

“Beast” – not only a word, but the kicking/stumping of thousand horses on his head. One single word tore him with slaps from a whip, brought back his old fury, one dead body woke up to dance. Uttering a hideous cry Dipak started towards Sandhya. “What do you say – beast me a beast – why did you come to this beast? Why do you take meals provided by this beast? Why have you become the bedfellow of this beast? Haramjadi…. obscene words spurted out of Dipak’s mouth. Holding Moumon tightly to her breast Sandhya started running through the rooms. Chairs, table, vases made sounds falling down on the floor and Moumon howled as much. Sandhya tried to enter the bathroom and shut the door but Dipak pulled her out. Moumon was flung off at a distance. Dipak started giving severe blows to Sandhya in great fury. She stated howling finding Dipak in such as terrible state. She
said sobbing—"I will say, beast, hundred times, thousand times, what else but a beast? Can anyone other than a beast beat a person like this? An ancient wild bell started ringing inside Dipak’s head. He kept looking towards Sandhya like a mad man. The terrified eyes of Sandhya were about to come out of its socket. Raising both the hands Dipak advanced towards Sandhya inch by inch in an attacking gesture of an animal. Sandhya retreated. The vision of a particular woman surfaced before Dipak’s eyes. Holding on to the bullet – ridden body of her husband she also said like this – beast! You are not human, only beast. How can a man who could not save ten thousand rupees in his lifetime, give you money? You have killed an innocent man at someone’s order. “Not only that, the woman put the neck of the revolver to her breast and shouted – kill, you kill me too, beast kill all of us.” Where did it happen? In which town? He could not recall. It may be any town, as the incidents are similar, the towns are also the same. An ordinary woman would call him a beast? She would lead a cozy family life, and they would keep moving around the forest, eating leaves and meat of wild animals and keep fighting for the cause of the nation and tolerate chidings? He held the woman tightly by the shoulder and kept his finger on the trigger. All of a sudden the woman sat on the floor sobbing. Half of her blouse remained in his hands. Wife of such a higher officer. Should she wear such a blouse that gets torn as an old cloth. Sandhya collided with a table and fell on the face. Her Saree went up to her thighs. The blouse is torn. Stains of blood all over her body. The body of that woman was smeared with her husband’s blood. Still she did not refrain from calling him a beast. Uttering a shrill cry he jumped at the woman and squeezed her neck. The writhing of the woman gave a strange excitement to his senses. Smell of blood came out of the woman’s body——a queer
smell. The smell of a wild boar skinned alive in the forest. However much the boar cries, their hunger increases. He had the opportunity to touch a female body for the first time in life like this. A female body exploded in fury and terror, smeared with blood, smelling like wild boar... in his anger he clutched at her muscles... feeling the trigger at his back he came to his senses and stood up. A strong sense of hunger turned him mad. His friend who accompanied him dragged him out. He heard the women shouting at his back – beast ... coward! Call me a beast again, will you? – Sandhya cried aloud, pushing him away, holding Moumon who had been stunned like a dove struck by hail storm, she started howling.

Dipak regained his senses. As if a torrent of hot blood retreated slowly from his brain. What has he done? Did he try to take revenge upon Sandhya’s body of an unfulfilled horrible grievance of his past. That means his old fury and the agitations of the past – that he discarded had not subsided totally. With whom is he angry now? Upon whom did he frown? Even after believing whole heartedly on the ideals of the revolution he sometimes felt angry, despised certain words, cherished ill – will. Those particular words were stitched tightly with needle inside their brains. They knitted on their heart some other dreams; there was always a scuffle between the dreams and the words. The husband of that woman was the victim of his last murder. What wrong had Sandhya done that he has punished her today like this. His one time classmate Sandhya was his safe resort. His firm faith on Sandhya was at the root of his surrender. Sandhya was separated from her parents also. Only her younger brother Santanu keeps contact with her. And he has beaten this Sandhya in the presence of Moumon – has he raped her also? He felt chagrined with shame and dishonour.
**Hari Bol! Hari Bol!** The chorus resounded in the area. The funeral procession of Nilakantha Duara might have begun. Until an hour ago it had been decided that Dipak would join the procession. Sandhya joined the tiny palms of Moumon and said – fold your hands in prayer, Mouma, we have to pay homage to the dead. Koka was a very nice person – Mouman followed her mother in prayer to some unknown power.

Suddenly Dipak howled a cry. He started cruelly beating at his own body. Thumping his head against the wall several times he ran towards the Motor bike outside. Instantly he started the bike and went away somewhere at a great speed.

He loitered through the lanes and bylanes of the town for an uncountable period of time. Why did he go out one day to abscond? And why did he surrender? What was the correct aim of his life? He was a brilliant boy securing eighty per cent marks in the Matriculation examination. He realized in his college life itself that everything is meaningless. He was moved and shaken by the dream of a revolt. The day he finished reading “Long March” by Mao Tse-Tung he promised his revolutionary friend. Then began a period of nickname, disguise and absconding. Crossing over the insurmountable hills he took the training on rifle shooting. The boy who could not look at the killing of a duck or a pigeon gradually became proficient in murdering people. He met Sandhya one day like that. It was only Sandhya who gave him shelter without hesitation and asked him to surrender whenever he had the opportunity. She advised him to surrender and undertake some welfare work that could be done without the use of weapons. Her words were so nice that he started to believe her words sincerely. How long did he leave behind his past? And how long is he living with the present? Dipak is never able to lead a social
life. No one offers him open hearted hospitality no neighbour wishes him warmly. Whenever some anti social event is reported in the town he is summoned to the police station. Day after day he has been living in the circle of dreadful suspicion. Perhaps his name will never be deleted from the register of surrendered revolutionaries till his death. Sometimes he is terribly angry with Sandhya and he becomes insane in his desire for revenge. Sandhya revolutions may be of different types, you who surrendered start working for the people. What would you get doing brisk business in the town? Better start a co-operative, go back to the village, try to find out why the dams in the river erode, why the villagers do not get medical attention. Instead of looking for the brokers of call girls try to find out the reason why fathers sell their daughters only for a meager five hundred bucks. If you could have shown how people can live in a respectable manner without being corrupt no one would have suspected you. Suspicion of the police, of the neighbours and of Sandhya in this web of suspicion he has been confined and turned gradually into an insignificant spider. The brilliant younger brother of Sandhya tease him time and again – If you have surrendered why did you accept money from the government?

: How could I have earned my livelihood?”

: At the time of revolting with guns in hand did you not think that you would have to labour to earn you livelihood, did you not realize the difference between a ten rupee note given by someone and one earned by your own toil.

: Now we have been working.

: That is begging for sympathy, you have cultivable land at the village why did not you start cultivation instead of accepting pity from the government as alms? Why did not you ask for loans? Why did you sell yourself to the government?
: Shut up, Santanu? If you have so much faith in the revolution why don’t you go yourself? Why do you brag sitting safely at home?

: I have been studying to be a doctor, and listen, you are the witness, I would never request the Health Minister to transfer me from the village hospital to a hospital in the city. I shall start revolution with my occupation. The day I make a retreat I will actually die – such arguments occurred many times. Whenever he is defeated he becomes terrible. Then Sandhya and Santanu remain silent.

Sometimes Dipak feels like strangling Santanu to death, sometimes he thinks of doing that to Sandhya also. Sometimes he wants to break the bones of people around him by hitting them with his motorbike. Shikhandi is he a Shikhandi? never! He does not like to die like a Shikhandi (one from behind whose cover some misdeed is done, he is not afraid of anything but a phantom shadow of death. He is really afraid of dying, not only scared but hates it also. Often at night cry of someone disturbs him in sleep, he vomits sometimes at the smell of blood. Suddenly he felt a numbing in his stomach. Is he going to vomit? No, he is terribly hungry. Stopping by the road he puts his hands in his pocket. Searching through all the pockets he found only two rupees seventy five paisa. Could not he bring some money at the time of coming out? What would he eat with two rupees? At what end of the town is he standing? He advanced some distance. Then he entered a tea-stall.

: Babu, what would you take?

: What is the time, now?

The boy about ten years of age stood bewildered for sometime and then asked the owner of the stall.

: It is forty five minutes past two.
What do you offer in the menu?
Poori – Sabji, mutton- paratha, Omelette
Bring an Omelette, what is the cost?
Five rupees fifty paisa for double Omelette,
Bring only a single omelette.
It costs three rupees.
Why, it should be two rupees fifty paisa only.
Hey, why are you going on attending the same person, other customers have been waiting.

Dipak’s fists tightened at the words of the owner. In his fury he broke one glass from the table. Then standing up he brushed his hands over his waist. Instantly the owner understood something and ordered the boy – “Hey, why have you been waiting, bring some meat and Paratha for Sir.” Suddenly he grew in respect. He laughed in self satisfaction. Then still he has value. Other customers of the shop looked towards him in fear. An emaciated boy in the table just opposite to his has been casting a sharp glance at him. His glance has a similarity with somebody’s glance. With whom? Sandhya? Or Santanu? Sikhandi, Sikhandi – as if that glance uttered loudly. Opportunist – in reality you are an opportunist, does that boy tell him like Santanu. He could not keep himself looking at the boy. The waiter placed a plate of smoked meat and hot paratha on the table. The flavour doubled the hunger in his stomach. All of a sudden he did something strange. Leaving the dishes like that he went to the counter. Then he took out two rupees and fifty paisa from the pocket and said to the owner – “This is the price of the broken glass”. He did not stop, jumped on his motorbike and went away.
Where to go? to home? Yes, to home. Strangely the fire in his stomach is no longer burning. Instead of it, his mind is now filled with a sense of quiet. It may be a small gesture, but he had been deprived of this simple pleasure for a long period of time. He feels like meeting Sandhya at that very moment. He started the bike towards home at a great speed. Sandhya always says “No doubt you have abandoned the weapon, but still much is left to understand the greatness of life. Be a human being first, it is rather more difficult to be a man than to be a revolutionary. From the day you learn to respect individuals, the real revolution will begin. The senses of peace you get in doing good will increase your self-confidence…” a police jeep braked and stopped in front of him at that moment. The known face of a policeman asked through the windows of the car

: Where have you come from?

: I went somewhere.

: On what errand?

: Nothing particular.

: What do you mean by that. You were not in your home last night.

: I was there. Did anything happen?

Throwing a searching look at him from head to foot with suspicion the policemen said – “So you don’t know, two military officers had been killed one hour ago. We have got the registration number of the bike. They had gone towards the direction of your neighbourhood. You might have to come to the police station in the evening. Saying that in a sarcastic manner the police officer drove away.

Drops of perspiration appeared over Dipak’s brow. How long will be more in and out of police station shouldering the responsibility of how many people? For the
last five years, he is not in touch with the past, but at the news of every killing, every explosion he is ridden with terror. Had he known it earlier, he would not have surrendered. But could he accept unquestionably the language of weapons? Could he realize the import of the assignments and signals coming to him. Did his conscience try to follow blindly the fixed terminology of revolution. Shikhandi, Shikhandi – as if Santanu put an arrow in his brain for every. He also will die one day like this. What will be the identity of Moumon’s father then? Would he get an unblemished death like Nilakantha Duara? A streak of sweat came running down dipak’s earlobes.

As he was taking turn at the bend of the road, a man came out opening the door of an ash coloured Maruti van that was parked from the past. He sometimes meets many of them like this. He sometimes meet many of them like this. He stopped by the car unwillingly. “A motor bike is there it your place. We could not manage to keep it moving. Change the number plate, or place it somewhere else. Saying the words without any prologue his companion from the past entered the van and disappeared. Dipak waited there for sometime as if being thunder struck.

Then slowly he started towards his home. He felt very thirsty. Like a thirsty wanderer in the desert he swallowed his spittle.

Opening the gate he threw a cautions look all around. The doors and windows of the house were shut. The motorbike was kept by the hibiscus near the veranda. Without looking at the motorbike Dipak parked his bike at its usual place. He pushed the calling bell and Sandhya opened the door. Without looking at the motorbike Dipak parked his bike at its usual place. He pushed the calling bell and
Sandhya opened the door. Without looking at her he moved towards the telephone. Hello, police station.

Dipak related the entire incident with exact description without concealing anything and informed that the motorbike is still lying at his yard. Sadhya run out and looked at the bike and then being puzzled she shouted at Dipak – “What have you done?” without replying Dipak moved towards his bed with uneven steps like an intoxicated person and fell there.

: Now police will take you away. Do you thinks that they will believe your words?

: I’ve no other way out and am tired of bearing the burden of this life. I cannot hide the motorbike anywhere.” – Dipak stammered.

: But you’re revealed their names, their hideouts, would they allow you to live?

: No one allows me to live. Though one day I came out to live in my dream abode, a freely like a bird, quite distinctly from others, knitting the web of my dreams I have been hanging imprisoned in that net like a tiny Spider. I would never have the opportunity to atone. There is only one way to be released from this net. I know that the police would never take me into confidence. But how shall I be able to aim their faith! Be good! I’ve been tired nominating over all these.

: What sin you are atoning for? About me and Moumon! You never gave a thought? Dipak gave her a wave smile – “Why are you feeling scared? I have no grudge against anyone. I want to do penance towards my life. You
used to educate me with five vocabulary to come to a new world. Were those fake? Tears drops appeared at Sandhaya’s eyes.

Sound of several cars hated outside was heard. A slight commotion. The sound of heavy boots shook the ground. The sound of boots grew noisier towards the room where Dipak was sleeping.

Dipak’s confessions were printed in bold types next day on the newspapers. On the basis of that confession four extremists were enabled from the home of an honourable citizen.

Another news was printed after three days in a corner of the newspaper. Last night some unknown person shot dead the surrendered extremist Dipak Saikia. It is worth mentioning... that on the basis of the astounding witness given regarding the killing of two army personal.

Sitting by the deceased body brought home after the post marten, Moumon, joining her hands in the gesture of a Salute looked at her mother – Ma, was my father a nice person? Would I salute him?