

RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS

DEV



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Disclaimer



The stories in the book are creative fictions.

Facts and fiction are blended.

The characters and events mentioned in the book
are purely work of Author's imagination.

Resemblance of any character living or dead
is purely coincidental.

Rain Of Encounters



Introduction

I am trying to bring the scenes to live, painting a picture for the readers through well-chosen and appropriate sensuous, picturesque, imagery words.

It's my attempt to make a painting from experience and memories and make the readers realize that they are on the journey with me.

The thoughts in mind generates from the emotion in man like happiness, love, humour, sorrow, pain, anxiety, anger, agony, jealousy, hate, fear and doubt, excitement. After enacting and being driven by the thoughts and emotions, the consequences are in the form of book.

Hope everyone will like it and it will be a good entertainment.

Your suggestions, appreciation and criticism will be appreciated, which will encourage me to think and write further.

A Big Thanks to the readers,

DEV

(DEV BHOOMI)

UTTARAKHAND.

Praise For The Book



RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS is a book without any picture or illustration, then also chosen words forms lines and colourful strokes, paints a beautiful picture.

It's full of knowledge and experience, teaches to deal with real difficulties in life, when we face unexpected encounters in life. The stories written by Mr. Dev are heart touching.

Readers will certainly read and relish.

*Mr. Anurag Anand,
Director,
Pine Hall School,
Dehradun.*

It's is to my extreme wonderment that a person who designs the book can write and publish a book.

RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS is book with facts and fiction, which has knowledge and entertainment. The word power has made the places, persons, things and situations live, vibrant, colourful and multi-dimensional. His creations are full of deep emotions and feelings and heart felt.

The book not only provides pleasure but it is an educative book at the same time.

RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS is not only to taste or swallow but to chew, digest and relish.

Mr. Dev, I would inspire you to discover and write more.

Dr. Kirtima Upadhayay,
Principal,
North Point Children's Academy,
Dehradun.

I know, Mr Dev since his childhood, seen his rise and fall, I was always with him in all odds and against. I always supported him as a true friend.

He once said, "When great personalities like Shakespeare, John Milton, Homer, Helen Keller, Soor Das, Kalidas can write, then at least I can gather some courage to write something in small form."

I was highly delighted to see his unexpected creation at this level.

Everyone can feel the overflow of emotional powerful feelings, while going between the lines in his book **RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS**.

Mr. Naresh Talwar,
Retd. Regional Manager,
United India Insurance Co.

All bright and beautiful images are formed in the mind of readers by the colourful and sensuous words strokes by Mr. DEV. Everything, all places described in **RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS** are full of imageries.

As I read further, I got so deeply connected that I myself felt as a companion, alluring the natural beauty, including

flora and fauna. How his characters are struggling to reach home; all are full of deep emotions on re-union after separation in the life.

RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS is a combination of natural beauty, experience, knowledge and facing unexpected circumstances and coming out of the rain of encounters successfully.

I love to read and enjoy more stories from Mr. Dev.

Hope to see you back soon.

*Mrs. Jyoti Lama,
Friend.*

We were colleagues once; later we became friends, companions and guides for each other. I found, he is versatile and talented. We always supported and encouraged each other.

His book, **RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS** covers various aspects of life of man, related to every person.

I was completely lost into reveries on reading his book. All the scenes and images were coming to my mind repeatedly. I was emotionally connected to the plot and characters. It is his maiden creation and I am overwhelmed to see it in the world.

I wish Mr. Dev a success and expect he keeps on writing for reader's pleasure. I will suggest everyone to read and relish but once.

*Mrs Kavita Gurung,
Teacher.*

Traveling provides knowledge and experience we read but in the manner the events and places described with minute details, makes them live and multi-dimensional.

The book not only provides knowledge, experience and entertainment but it also gives lesson to deal with unexpected situations in particular circumstances or in life.

It will be adventurous and full of entertainment for the readers.

MR. DEV good luck and keep on writing more and more.

Mrs. Anurima Rana,

Teacher,

North Point Children's Academy,

Dehradun.

Foreword



RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS contains live picturesque description of persons, places, things and events, every minute detail make everything colourful and real.

It's provides knowledge and experience, entertainment, along with unconquerable will to struggle against odds in life.

It bounds the readers so deeply that they become curious to find that how and when the raining of encounters will end, without stopping, as if themselves are co-travellers and facing the rain of encounters.

Powerful feelings and emotions overflows spontaneously on going through the lines. Readers are strongly connected to the stories.

RAIN OF ENCOUNTERS is to be read and relish; chewing and digesting.

It can be recommended to include in any Board and Council syllabus.

I extend my heartiest wishes and always encourage and inspire you to write for readers.

Mr. Samarjeet Singh,

Director,

Saigrace International Academy,

Dehradun.

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Kedarnath



Om Shivay Shivay

*"Fasten your seatbelts, the journey starts,
there may be ups and downs and midways,
bumpy and rough, dusty or muddy or pooled road,
clear, smooth or super highways .*

Turning left or right or have a dead end.

With rumbles or speed breakers, but finally comes to the end.

*The journeys can be adventurous, thrilling and full of enjoyment,
beautiful and lovely, with feeling of joy and contentment.*

*or long, tiring, full troubles and difficulties,
through dry, dusty, barren places, full of sadness and worries.*

Destination can be peaceful and calming like heaven, in the end,

How reached the final destination, that all depends.

How you find, what you find, where you find the Destination.

*decisions and plans, road taken to reach the destination,
all the things are counted at the end."*

Kedarnath



We, our family and Kavita's family planned for Kedarnath Darshan. Both the families had long term relationship. I and Kavita had good intimacy, deep bonding as we were colleagues, neighbours, friends, companions and guides. My wife, my mother, Surya my son, Kavita, Arunima, Jyoti, Anurag, Kirti, Ashu, and their children Ashi, Chinchin, Rishi, Tunni and Ashima, all prepared for the trip to Kedarnath.

Sudhanshu (Ashu) and Kirtima (Kirti) are the owners of a 10+2 school in Dehradun.

Kedarnath Temple is open for Darshan from April to November. In winter due to heavy snowfall it remains closed. Prayers are held in Omkareshwar Temple at Ukhimath.

14 June 2013, Early morning, it was clear, bright, colourful, sunny and moderate day; lower Garhwal Himalayan Range, is well known for pleasant cool weather in summer due to high altitude which makes mountains cooler than plains.

We checked weather forecast, for a week, it showed no rainfall or warning. Then also we packed some woollen clothes and jackets as the weather in the mountains is always unpredictable.

We hit the road to Kedarnath early in the morning, by my new Toyota Fortuner, mid-size SUV, top spec GR S 4x4

with hybrid Anroid features. It's spacious and comfortable for a family. The best, I could buy for myself, worth Rs 53 lakhs.

They had already told me in advance, "Sir, you will not smoke, it is a holy trip." I did smoke at all at beginning of the trip, to smoke later neither had I got any chance nor there was any desire of smoking or any temptation.

I was driving, like a motor rally drivers; many people appreciated and loved my driving; saying, "What a command!" Many said, "What a dirty and rough driving you have." My family, Kavita (everyone at home calls her Pindi) Arunima, Ashi, Rishi Ashima were in my Fortuner. Ashu, Kirti, Jyoti, Anurag, Chinchin, Tunni were with Ashu were in Mahindra Scpio N. Anurag was leading our tour. He organized and coordinated whole tour and made all the booking for our stay at places.

On the drive to our destination we countered first Rishikesh which is a major hub for pilgrimage and travellers. The beginning of the journey we followed Alaknanda River, good pavements and moderate road width. The scenery is enchanting and captivating with the river, valleys and mountains dominating the landscape. We passed Byasi, a small village and many other small places without stopping.

Devprayag at the confluence of River Alaknanda and Bhagirathi forms the River Ganges. As we were driving further, the road became narrower and more winding, with the demanding bends.

Most important feature of Devprayag-Kirtinagar, it has constant steep downhill gradient, known as Ghadiyal Dhar. After every short distance marker boards are fixed to alert

and warn the drivers - 'CHECK BRAKES.' Driver has to keep on checking brake pressure else on steep slope brake fails and the consequences are being disastrous.

Driving ahead through Srinagar, which is a prominent place in Garhwal; offered scenic views and glimpse of Garhwal Culture.

We had a break at Srinagar for lunch and tea at Fork and Knife Restaurant, we preferred common Indian food rice, yellow dal, chapatis, alloo gobhi vegetable or alloo ke paranthas, followed by tea and children had pizza, sandwiches, burgers, coke and ice cream. We had little rest to hit the road again and continue the journey further comfortably.

We felt sudden change, air became cool and windy, temperature and pressure fell down steeply. Indicating approaching storm, strong winds from high pressure areas, along with heavy precipitation like heavy rain and snowfall. Potentially severe weather was expected ahead.

Rudraprayag is another confluence of Alaknanda and Mandakini rivers.

On the way, at a place huge amount of water was falling and rolling down from the mountain, running across the road over wide area. We drove across that splashing the water high. Water inter-acting with air caused breaking of water into smaller particles and mist all around. It was fascinating sight on the mountain in cloudy weather and mist caused by falling water.

We drove through Agastamuni, a small town known for the temple of sage Agastya. Once I had a chance to stay there for a week when my brother (Bhanu) and friend

(Ganesh), both were posted there in Bank. Then we visited the temples at Ukhimath.

Later, we were at Guptkashi, which is known for the temples of Vishwanath and Ardhnarishwar. This segment of journey offered more rugged terrains and breath-taking views of Himalayas, peaks shining like gold in the morning, like silver in the night, shining in lustrous red at sunset.

A loud thunder of rumbling, groaning and grumbling noise of stones at a high intensity feared us. A shudder wave of fear ran across in the body completely, stunning and freezing all of us. A part of the mountain had split apart; dust, debris and huge boulders were rolling down the mountain and taking away the trees, bushes and the road along with it. We stopped, that was the first time in our life we saw an active landslide. It was a huge landslide which we could see at a distant mountain. There was huge cloud of thick brown dust rising from bottom to the top of the mountain and blowing along with the wind.

Finally, we passed through Sonprayag, where the road continued to wind through the mountains.

The journey from Rishikesh to Kedarnath offered a beautiful transition from lower Himalayan foothills to the higher range of snow-capped peaks.

Gaurikund is known for hot water spring and Gaurikund Temple is dedicated to Goddess Parvati. There are some other temples also like Shaktirupini Devi Temple, Maa Daulya Devi Temple, Khatami and Durga Temple.

That was the end of the last road and a base for 16 kms trek to Kedarnath, at an altitude of 3540 metres above the sea

level. Kedarnath is a hindu temple, known for one of the twelve Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva. It is a big substantial part of Char Dham and Panch Kedar circuits. It is situated on the bank of the Mandakini River.

15 June 2013, the next morning, its 16 kms walk to Kedarnath and advised to start trekking in early hours, the final leg on well-built pathway mixed with natural trails, passing through lush green forests along the river with a panoramic view of mountains and valleys. On the way as we were moving there were tea stalls, restaurants and resting point, guest house, along the pathway with various facilities like fooding and lodging and medical assistance. The trek was mix of spiritualism, Divine connecting and natural majestic Himalayan landscapes, including Chatti, Bimbal and Linchuali jungle.

We preferred trekking, bought walking sticks, for my old mom, with the studs having broad base and hired a pony for the children. All of us moved in small groups lead by Me, Anurag and Ashu following each other at a distance.

All were Hindu pilgrims trekking to worship Lord Shiva. It is one of the twelve Jyotir-lingas. Some pilgrims were in traditional clothing, others in modern trekking gears and many were in saffron robes showcasing their spiritualism, devotees believe that trek is to cleanse themselves from sins and connect to Lord Shiva.

The Kedarnath Temple is a magnificent structure built of large stone blocks inter-locked with clamps without the use of mortar, the main feature of Garbha Girah for worship and Mandap for gatherings, marking Ancient Indian Craftsmanship and resilience. It is a south facing temple, usually temple are east facing.

Pilgrims travel with various options, direct helicopter ride from Guptkashi, Phata and Sersi offers direct route to Kedarnath. Once I got a chance to stay for a week at Phata when my brother was posted there. His health was not in good condition. I was not able make the opportunity for Kedarnath Darshan fruitful.

Gaurikund onwards the trek was uphill climb. The trek is challenging with medium and steep gradient but it is an integral part of pilgrimage experience. Elderly people those were not able to walk they were going on ponies, palkis (sedan chair), kandi (carried by porters). These are always available at Gaurikund. The Trek is a test of physical strength, mental fitness and faith.

We reached the temple by the night, after some rest; we lined to move into the temple for darshan. What a splendid sight was that! The main deity in the temple is triangular shaped lingam believed as a hump of Lord Shiva, when he appeared as a bull; are placed in Garbha Griha. There is a small pillared hall near the entrance where the statues of 'Pandvas and Draupadi' and other Dieties are featured. Statues of Lord Krishna, Nandi (Shiva's mount) and Virabhadra are also erected. Abhishek (bathing of lingam) and applying ghee is the main worship.

Prayers are with deep devotion in the peaceful atmosphere of Himalayas with chanting of "Shiva-Shiva" in unison. The sacred sounds of pujas and aartis are with extreme faith has a deep spiritual connection with Lord Shiva. Pilgrims feel overwhelmed with emotion; experience a cleansing of pain and sin. The prayer is not only about ritual but also about an internal journey, a 'Sadhana' through focusing mind, breath and sound creating a powerful resonance within the sacred space.

Photography is prohibited in the temple.

After finishing the rituals we came out of the temple. It was the early-mid hours of the day. We stopped at the Shiv Shakti lodge and had breakfast and some rest for few hours. It started raining, the temperature dropped down rapidly, children were shivering. Thank God we carried jackets and woollen clothes then also Anurag and Ashu bought pair of gloves and raincoats for all of us.

There was no warning or any kind of alert flashed, declared or announced by National Weather Service (NWS) or Meteorological Department (IMD) or Disaster Management or any private agencies such as AccuWeather, IPAW. The warning about severe weather, a message of heavy rain in the mountainous regions was flashed by IMD. It was expected.

We were at the Mandakini Hotel by the evening; the children were under the powerful spell of deep sleep. Our movement to return was already planned but preferred to stay for a night as the day was the tiring. Not at all wise to make journey on the dark hills in the dark night, in bad weather, the rain was heavy and continuous. The Manager of the hotel told that it was a cloud burst at higher altitude from Kedarnath.

It was about mid night, the disastrous. All jumped out of the beds on the roaring of mountains and river. Huge thunder, roaring, rumbling, grumbling and groaning were deafening the ears, the ground below the feet was rocking. The shudder wave made all piloerection and white faced with shivering high tone screams. There was commotion in the hotel all over and above all there was the power cut. Mountains, valley, river, buildings and everything were

dark black and the continuous thundering sound was rocking the earth.

Everyone found the way to the windows in gallery in the darkness all around. Nothing could be made out. Everyone was feared and asking one another.

‘What was that?’

Women embraced their babies in their arms, in shaky deep voice were calling their husband and children. Everyone had one question at tongue.

‘What happened?’

‘What was that?’

“Havoc”

‘O God! Mercy, Save Us!’

Children were frightened and screaming.

Men were making women and children calm and encouraging everyone.

That was the night of havoc.

What exactly happened, no one knew. Only the nature was replying to all queries with roaring wind, heavy continuous rain, thunder and lightning; accompanied with roaring mountains and river; shivering earth below the feet, enveloping everything in darkness.

Every second of every minute, every hour feared us all, the night became longer and longer as if it had no end.

All that was depicting a form of God and Goddess are in anger and wrath and all that was a forceful expression of justice.

The divine expressions of anger are not random acts but acts of vengeance for the actions that disrupt the harmony of the universe though it may be destructive. The Hindus believe, Divine havoc and vengeance through cosmic justice. God's like Vishnu and Shiva act to create balance by defeating evil, with actions being a necessary part of a righteous cosmic struggle.

17 June 2013, the next morning, the entire scenario all around was devastating. The road has been washed away by the strong over flooding current of Mandakini River hitting the outside bank of the river. Our cars with our belongings and other vehicles parked on the other side of the road were no more seen, some were drowned and some were slipping, sliding and hanging in the roaring flooded river. Soil erosion at the bank of the river was so heavy that some lodges, shops and restaurants fell into the river like a deck of cards and drowned. That was the sight of heavy destruction and devastation, rain continued without stopping.

It was a flash flood triggered by heavy devastating rain and cloudburst leading to overflow of Mandakini River and Chorabari Lake causing widespread devastation in entire region. The entire scenario was terrifying and spine-chilling.

Whole night frightening flooded river with huge water, debris and boulders rolled down the mountain with scary noise. Few slabs blocked the Kedarnath Temple and the Temple faced everything strongly.

The Chorabari Lake is 2km above Kedarnath burst it bank formed by melt water from Chorabari Glacier, released large volume of water, debris along with huge boulders,

severely flooding and devastating Kedarnath and surrounding areas and swept away many villages also impacted Rambara and Gaurikund.

Relief and rescue teams, Para military forces, Police, Army and The Indian Air Force were in action. Many agencies collaborated to address the situation.

The Indian Air Force had an important role in airlifting supplies and personnel, including ferrying fuel to restore connectivity. Air Force provided essential support in disaster relief and humanitarian, using helicopters to transport fuel and essential supplies to remote areas like Dharasu and Harsil, using the unique under slung operation to carry fuel, material to build bridges and material to restore communication and connectivity.

A special control room was established at the Police Headquarters to monitor continuously over the situation. It issued daily situation report based on the information from the various sources.

Highly sensitive modern equipment like Cadaver dogs, Victim location and thermal imaging systems were in use, focusing search and rescue, relocating people from unsafe and remote areas, providing emergency aid.

The government had urged all forces and agencies to work under an integrated command system to enhance the speed and effectiveness of rescue operations. Effective efforts were being made to relocate people from the areas to safer locations.

The Meteorological Department's weather alerts were widely communicated to public through social media.

All around, the scenario was of causality, loss of property and some offices at side of Mandakini. All were washed out and carried away by the flash flood in the river. Many people were missing, some drowned and died. Others were highly panic stricken. White faced as if no blood running in veins. The rain was merciless. Roads had been washed by Roaring River and massive landslides were at many places. Transportation and communication at that moment was not completely restored. We were completely cut off from the entire world. We were left in the arms of cruel nature. Not at all knowing what we may encounter further, we were on an unpredictable journey.

18th June 2013, it was around afternoon. It was drizzling, the active relief team and forces informed about relief plan to relocate the victims at air base.

All the people collected their children, remaining belongings, eatables, whatever we had and moved on foot with our groups in sprinkling shower as and where commanded.

My wife, Kavita, Arunima and Jyoti filled the bottles with the rain water as water supply was completely affected in the region.

Kavita, Arunima, Jyoti and my wife had tied the children in a sling of cloth at their back and covered them with the rain coats which we had purchased. All were moving in a pile with their walking sticks in hand.

Anurag, Ashu and I were leading the ladies and children in small groups on rugged pathway up and down winding the mountain in a pile, with our bags at our back and walking sticks in our hands. It was drizzling continuously. We were wet and tired, above that it was getting cold with

the passage of time. Water was sprouting from the springs at places on the mountain and flowing over the pathway making the way slippery. We had to walk and cross the places very carefully with sturdy steps.

That moment, thoughts about the life of the Indian soldiers covered my mind. How they stand like firm Himalayas at the border in extreme hot and cold conditions, even in hostile weather. Defending the Nation from the enemies leaving their families somewhere far behind. People, hardly have a minute to think, what exactly the soldier really is! A soldier is an innocent child of his parents, beloved husband of wife, caring father for his children, a friend for brother and a brother for friends. After the rigorous training, facing the encounters with enemies, seeing redress at border, cruelties, killing of other soldiers who are like friends-brothers, having good time few moments before. He is transformed to the skilled, multi-talented soldier, a gentleman officer. Today, I think about a student of our school, who was Major in army, martyr in Pulwama attack. He was honoured with 'Shaurya Chakr'. We paid tribute to him on 18th February 2019 at school.

Relief teams had created new pathway avoiding the direct transfer of landslide zones. Nets were tied and some sandbags were also placed at the landslide areas to create temporary safe pathway. At a large landslide zone or narrow pathways, the rescue teams transferred victims one by one across the landslide using ropes, gears and harness. They instructed, not to panic, not to look down, be rigid and calm, look straight and walk. All of us were moving together in a line on the difficult and rugged pathway with our group. There were not one but many landslides; we were crossing one by one and feelings victorious as moving

ahead. Somewhere in our hearts, we were gloomy on the loss of our expensive cars.

It was still drizzling, soil and gravel on one part of the mountain was loose, where I slipped, my reflexes are always good and I managed to balance well but I hurt my left wrist. The pain was agonizing, gradually back side of my hand swelled. There was relief team ahead, one of them sprayed pain reliever and other bandaged the wrist with crape and gave me four tablets to take after every four hours and recommended to consult orthopaedic doctor at Dehradun. We started ahead for Rambara base camp following the pathway on the difficult terrain. Not only we had to cross the steep sloped landslides but we had to cross Mandakini River also which was flooded with a powerful strong undercurrent, with large amount of debris. The impassable and turbulent current swept away everything in its way.

The Indian Air Force relief teams for crossing flooded Mandakini River at Kedarnath primarily used helicopter to airlift and constructed some temporary foot bridges. Indian Air Force helicopters were extremely crucial for rescue and aid delivery.

Border Roads Organization and National Disaster Response Force managed to clear debris and construct temporary foot bridges. All the efforts for flood relief at Kedarnath were named as: 'OPERATION SURYA HOPE'

After moving for five hours, we crossed the Mandakini River over temporary foot bridge made of wooden logs, those moments were extremely fearful was potent mix of primal terror for survival, rooted in the overwhelming power of a rushing river, psychological distress rising from

the sudden loss of normalcy and the constant threat of life. Simply that was rising of fearing sensation, piloerection and numbness, as brain was blocked completely.

Victims of Kedarnath flood were airlifted from Rambara and Linchuali. We reached Rambara by the evening. There was IAF support to transfer the victims to Shersi air base and later to shift to Dehradun Base.

Rambara air base was crowded and we had to wait long there, for airlift to Shersi.

The sight of victims was heart rendering there. Some alive, some half dead, some were injured. Many were drowned and died in that torrential flood, people lamenting over loss of the life of their own's, full of sadness, deep sorrow and their heart were torn and broken.

At the air base Rambara, we came to know the Police officer fell in the river as he slipped and drowned, other cases were also heard. Can't be said, whether they were rescued and alive. Victims were in pain of separation, they were searching for own's one's. People were not yet out from the grip of fearing scenario. At the base camp we were provided with basic relief items, family packs food, basic survival needs, drinking water, non-perishable, ready to eat food and shelter, blankets and medicines. The disaster relief efforts was to ensure sustenance (food and drink essential to keep alive) in the immediate consequence of disaster, provided by Indian Red Cross Society.

We were able to contact in Dehradun to our families after 5 days about our well-being. Everyone was worried on hearing about Kedarnath flash flood disaster. I consulted the camp doctor about my pain in wrist. He gave me pain reliever medicine and suggested to consult orthopaedic

doctor in Dehradun. We had to wait there for a complete day.

21st June 2013, tea and breakfast was served and before lunch time we were air lifted for Shersi. The entire place was so much crowded that Chinchin and Ashi were left behind at Rambara and we reached Shersi. Kavita and Kirti got panic stricken. My wife, Arunima and Jyoti comforted both of them.

At Shersi, Ashu, Anurag and me reported entire matter to Station Camp Commandant; he summoned his two officers and told them to do the needful. It took two hours to find Chinchin and Ashi at Shersi. Those two hours were like ages for Kavita and Kirti. The eyes of Kavita, Kirti and children were welled with tears. How deep is the pain of separation, only he knows who faces.

22nd June 2013, we were asked to be ready, we will be transported to Dehradun by army bus.

We were at Dehradun, our trip to Kedarnath Temple was over, blended with moments full of happiness and sorrows, with some pain and some relief. All of us reached home safe. That hostile weather and fearful night is unforgettable. The faces of victims were coming in my mind again and again. What is pain of separation, only one who faces can understand.

My left hand wrist was fractured; a plaster of Paris, cast was left on my hand for six weeks.

Our little children Ashi, Surya, Ashima and Chinchin were in fever for few days.

We can't say here, 'All is well that ends well.' But we can definitely say 'If there is a life there is the world.'

On 25th June 2013, at relief operation of Kedarnath flash flood disaster in Uttarakhand, Indian Air Force helicopter Mi17V5 was crashed out in north of Gaurikund, after returning from Kedarnath. All occupants, five crew members, nine National Disaster Response Force officers, six of Indo Tibetan Border Police soldiers were killed. The tragic crash was due to hostile weather conditions, which resulted into a great loss for the on-going rescue operations.

IAF, IDRF, ITBP, BRS, IMD and IRCS worked in coordination to conduct rescue relief operations.

Their relief efforts were commendable. They deserve huge honour for their prompt services to the nation at crucial hour.

The Missing Child



*O! My child, for years, where are you,
My love, for you, in my heart, is deep.
In which corner of the world, for you I peep,
O! My mum, where are you, I find you only in my sleep.
I search for you my mum everywhere,
But I find you nowhere.
O! My God! Mercy, soon we may meet,
I know for me you are kind and sweet.
Hopes in our heart will end never,
We will meet one day, in the world somewhere.*

The Missing Child



The Lost Identity

Bruno and Annemarei couple, nuclear family, comes to India along with their son Felix (means good luck and prosperous) hardly two years, could just speak 'mathar' (mom), 'fathar' (father) and 'was ist das' (what is that or what is this?). He could hardly call out his own name.

Bruno was in 30's, around 6 feet tall and healthy, red-round face, greyish-blue spell casting eyes, short trimmed hair and sheep moustaches. Annemarei was also 6 feet tall, around 27, tall and slim, little long white face with prominent cheek bones and jaw line. She had deep black eyes smeared with kajal (since the day she was in India), round black eyes brows and waist long hair, sometimes she left loose hanging rolling down like perfumed black cascade and sometimes she would wound like a bun. Her mark of beauty was a small mole on the right side of her chin and dimples on cheeks. She loved to wear nose ring and big size ear rings.

They both were a perfect match, lovely couple; both had similar tastes of life style.

Felix their sweet child had round red face, greyish-blue eyes, chubby cheeks and dimple chin and black hair.

They were resident of Munich, Germany. They have a culture to separate clearly the work and personal life. Mostly the foreign visitors learn about currency, culture,

language and common customs of the place where they plan to visit.

The most vibrant places and picturesque towns in Germany are Munich, Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Cologne. The Black forest, The Rhine River, the romantic roads and villages are felicitating.

Munich, Germany is in upper plains of Bavaria, is a vibrant city in southern Germany, about 50 km north of the Alps. The city is 1700 feet high above sea level, in Northern Alpine Foreland, with the Isar River flowing through it. The landscape is mostly flat, glacial activities transported rocks and sediments from the Alps.

It marks rich history, cultural attractions and thriving economy. It is a major attraction for art, technology, finance and education, with high standards and spirit of living. The city is famous for beer gardens, the annual Oktoberfest celebration and beautiful architecture Marienplatz, the city's central square. Churches and palaces renowned for its art scenes and for numerous world class museums like Alte Pinakothek (old masters) and Brandhorst.

Munich has long history back to twelfth century. It once holds the seat for Bavarian Royalty and played a significant role in German political and cultural life.

Alpine Foreland has shallow, poor nutrient soil, composed of gravel from its glacier period. A deciduous broadleaf forest covers the land, though urban development has considerably altered the natural landscape. Munich's green belt and private gardens play important role to support recreational spaces and local food production.

Their schedule was to visit historical places, forts and museums at Delhi. Later to Ajmer sharif- khuwaja din kishti, Jaipur and Udaipur, to see specially Mughal art, Indian art and culture, forts, palaces and museums. The last and the most important was The Kumbh at Haridwar. Their return flight was already booked.

Bruno and Annamarei read everything and collected every bit of information.

Delhi is rich in historical sites, forts and museums are worth visiting. Main points of attraction include the Red Fort, Qutub Minar, Humayun's Tomb, India Gate and Lotus Temple. Museums like the National Museum offer insights into India's rich history and culture.

They knew little and like to know more and see more and experience more.

Red Fort (Lal Qila): A UNESCO World Heritage site and a symbol of Mughal power, featuring impressive architecture of red stone walls and historical importance. The Red Fort is known as Lal Qila, is a historic fort in New Delhi, built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in 17th century. It served as the main residence of the Mughal emperors for nearly two centuries.

Qutub Minar: Another UNESCO World Heritage site, this is towering tallest brick minaret in the world. The minaret is known for impressive carvings projecting balconies, is a stunning example of Indo-Islamic architectural pattern.

India Gate is memorial in honour of Indian soldiers, who sacrificed their lives in the World War I and Indo-Pakistan war in December 1971. It is located in public park. It is 42 metre high, an archway in the middle of road. His Royal

Highness the Duke of Cannaught laid its foundation in 1921. It was designed by Edwin Lutyens. Amar Jawan Jyoti was added after independence. The eternal flame burns day and night. India Gate is floodlit at night and the fountains make a lovely display with coloured lights.

Jama Masjid: It is the largest mosques in India and a landmark with splendid example of Mughal architecture.

It was built by the emperor Shah Jahan between 1644 and 1656. It is a blend of Indian-Persian architectural style. Mosque has a large prayer hall, minarets, three onion shaped marble domes.

National Museum: It is a vast repository of India's cultural.

Gandhi Smriti: It is a museum dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. Ashram is known as Gandhi Smriti, showcasing his life and teachings. It has great historical significance where Mahatma Gandhi spent the last few months of his life.

Crafts Museum: It exhibits traditional Indian crafts and textiles.

Lotus Temple: It is a modern architectural marvellous design. It is known for unique Lotus like design, has become the main attraction of the city. It was completed in 1986. It is open to all religion or qualification. The building has 27 free standing marble clad petals; they are arranged in cluster of three and form nine sides with nine doors. All doors open into centre hall which can hold the gathering of 1300 people.

Jantar Mantar: It is an ancient astronomical observatory with impressive masonry instruments which are designed to be used with naked eyes. Jantar Mantar means

measuring the harmony of the heavens. It consists of 13 astronomical instruments.

Bruno and Annamarei did not carry many clothes to India. In Delhi they were in khaki trousers and white shirts and both put black glasses and khaki hats. Bruno hung Felix in front in sling baby pack and a camera slung around neck and a Bisleri water bottle in one hand.

Ajmer Sharif: Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti is also possessed as Gareeb Nawaz which means 'protector of poor' is a famous sufi saint, has dargah in Ajmer. He was founder of Chishti order and made Ajmer his Abode. His Dargah Ajmer Sharif is an unassuming religious site in India and is visited by people of all religions. Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti was born in 1141 AD in Sistan Afghanistan. After coming to 1192 AD, he made Ajmer his centre and there he passed away in 1236 AD.

Udaipur is known as the 'city of lakes' or the 'venice of the east' is felicitating.

The City Palace, Lake Pichola, Jagdish Temple, Fateh Sagar Lake and Sajjangarh Monsoon Palace are the main places to see.

City Palace: It is a marvel compound of palaces, courtyards and museums reflecting royal history of Udaipur. It is a wide multiplex overlooking Lake Pichola, showcasing Rajasthani, Mughal and European architectural and royal memorabilia artefacts. The Palace is a UNESCO World heritage site.

Lake Pichola: It is a charming lake with breath-taking scene of City Palace, Jag Mandir and beautiful view. It is an

artificial, fresh-water lake created in year 1362, named after nearby Picholi Village.

Jag Mandir: It is an island palace on Lake Pichola is known for its unique architecture and serene ambiance, picturesque view of City Palace. It was built by several generations of Sisodia Rajput rulers of Mewar.

Jagdish Temple: It is a Hindu temple in between Udaipur in Rajasthan with intricate carvings and a towering spire, located in the heart of Udaipur just outside the royal palace. It has been in continuous worshipped since 1651. It is a big tourist attraction; the temple was originally called the temple of Jagannath Rai but is now called 'Jagdish ji'.

Fateh Sagar Lake: It is picturesque lake with several attractions like Nehru Park and an island garden. It is an artificial lake named after Maharana Fateh Singh of Udaipur and Mewar.

Sajjangarh (Monsoon) Palace: A majestic hill top palace offers breath-taking view of the city and Fateh Sagar Lake, palaces and surrounding landscapes and Aravalli Hills. It was named Sajjangarh after Maharaja Sajjan Singh of Mewar Dynasty. It was built chiefly to watch the monsoon clouds, hence, appropriately, it is popularly known as Monsoon Palace. It is said that Maharana built it at the top of the hill to get a view of his ancestral home, Chittorgarh. This place provides the beautiful scene of sunset.

Ambrai Ghat (Manji Ghat) and Hanuman Ghat are charming sites for enjoying sunset over Lake Pichola witnessing the sensuous scenic city's beauty.

Shilp-Gram: It is a rural arts and crafts complex showcasing traditional Rajasthani village life.

Jaipur - A Pink City offers splendid heritage site, high-spirit markets in the context of culture. Ajmer Fort is a historic fort at hilltop. Hawa Mahal, City Palace, Jantar Mantar, Jal Mahal and Nahargarh Fort are highly appealing and unmissable sites.

Hawa Mahal is a Jaipur's milestone. It's a five level palace with hexagonal aspect. The purpose was to allow royal women to behold life of commons, being themselves remaining unnoticed. It was constructed in 18th century. Its intricate delicate and decorative repeating hexagonal shape pattern offers visitors a dazzling sight. Hawa Mahal's leaves visitors awestruck under moonlight night.

City Palace: It is a multiplex having courtyards, gardens and buildings with a blend of Rajput and Mughal architecture. The museums present royal relics and remains.

The Palace was raised in 1732 and it is a location of religious ceremonies and cultural activities. It is now known as Maharaja Sawai Man Singh II Museum, and was the home of the Jaipur royal family. The royal family had 500 personal servants. The palace complex has several buildings, various courtyards, restaurants, and Museum Trust office.

Jantar Mantar: It has the collection of 19 astronomical instruments. It was built by the Rajput king Sawai Jai Singh, the founder of Jaipur. The heritage was completed in 1734. It features the world's largest stone sundial and is UNESCO World Heritage site. It is next to City Palace and Hawa Mahal

Nahargarh Fort: The Fort is on the edge of Aravalli Hills, offering a panoramic serene of Jaipur, with its intricate

structure and historical information. Once, the Fort formed a strong safe guard for the city. The fort was named as Sudershargarh, but it became to be known as Nahargarh, which means abode of tigers.

Jal Mahal: It is a charming palace situated in the centre of the Man Sagar Lake has an amazing panoramic view. It is also known as water-palace. The palace has five levels of which four levels are submerged, when the lake is full, gives appearance of floating. It has been built with the red sandstone, featuring classic Rajput architecture.

Albert Hall Museum: It is Rajasthan's oldest museum presenting a wide collection of relics, paintings and sculptures.

Jaigarh Fort: The Fort is known for massive artillery 'Jaivana' cannon, offering panoramic view of the outskirts. It is the oldest museum in Rajasthan and a prominent landmark with impressive Indo-Saracenic architecture and houses a diverse collection of remains and relics. The museum is at Ram Nina's Garden outskirts of the city wall near New Gate.

Patrika Gate: A majestic, colourful entrance to Jawahar Circle Garden. It is perceived for original, splendid structure planned and designed by Anoop Barataria, a Jaipur based architecture. It is an amazing combination of architecture and art. The structure is in harmony and proportion and has pastel coloured interiors. Patrika Gate drives its name after Rajasthani newspaper and Media Company. The Gate is to connect with city gates of Jaipur's walled city.

Maharajah Sawai Jai Singh II founded the pink city in 1727 AD, protected the city with a wall and eight gates. The city

was based on the Vaastu and Shilp Shastra principles. There are nine pavilions 9 feet wide. The width of the gate is 81 feet and the height is 108 feet, which coincides with the width of markets in the walled city. Patrika Gate is marked as the ninth gate of Jaipur. Patrika Gate is inspired by the old architectural of the traditional architecture and featuring Jharokhas, Pols pavilions and the Chhatris. The design of each of the nine entrances is unique and represents of Rajasthan's culture and religion.

Johari Bazaar: It is a bustling market known for its jewellery, clothing and traditional Rajasthani Handicrafts, with its vibrant atmosphere and rich cultural heritage in the heart of Jaipur city. The name 'Johari' comes from the word jewellers, highlighting the market's especially in jewellery making trade from sparkling gemstone to intricate handcrafted bangles and traditional sarees.

Birla Mandir: It is also known as Laxmi Narayan Mandir. It's of felicitating white marble which dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi.

It was built by the Birla family in 1988, it's known for its intricate carvings peaceful atmosphere and beautiful gardens. It is enriched with tranquil and spiritual experience.

Samode Palace: This palace is located outside Jaipur, offers breath-taking and enchanting cultural richness with beautiful architecture and serene ambiance.

Samode Haveli in Jaipur as well as Samode Palace and Samode Bagh in rural Samode village just outside the Pink City, are an elegant reflection of Rajasthani reality. Showcasing the wildlife of Bandhavgarh National Park in Madhya Pradesh

When they were in Udaipur and Jaipur, Bruno put on Rajasthani kurta and dhoti and Annemarei was wearing Rajasthani kurta and salwar. Both of them put Rajasthani pagri on head and Rajasthani juti in feet.

Bruno and Annemarei both were in complete Rajasthani wardrobe, they were also wearing Pajeb (anklets), Rakhdi (head ornament), Tussi (necklace), Baju Bandh (armlet), Adah (special necklace), Gokhrus (bracelets). Only the difference was in jewellery of both was weight, size and design. Their tourist guide enriched their knowledge with all historical, cultural and traditions of India.

The Maha Kumbh Mela is worldwide popular, attraction to all the countries, including Germany. Devotees hold strong belief in the spiritualistic energy and significance of The Kumbh Mela as a place of spiritual growth and connection of Sanatan Dharma. It is the personal experience of some German devotees attending Kumbh is feeling of joy, purification and gratitude to attend Kumbh. The experience and prospective on Hindu traditions and spirituality are further shared in their country. Germans praise the organization and infrastructure of Kumbh Mela, highlighting the efforts of authorities and government in managing such a large gathering. Certain German culture surprising resembles to Indian culture like Yoga, Meditation and Ayurveda. Germans are further exploring spiritual paths beyond traditional western religions, finding balance with Buddhist and Hindu Philosophy. Germans hosts numerous cultural events like Art, Music and Dance as a symbol of cultural exchange and strengthening the relationship between the two countries. The large Indian diaspora in Germany contributes to the

vibrant culture scenes, enriching German society with Indian traditions and observance.

The Maha Kumbh Mela is not held in Haridwar but rather regular Kumbh Mela is held there every 12 years.

The Maha Kumbh is vibrant and larger more significant event that rotates between four locations Prayagraj (formerly known as Allahabad), Haridwar, Nashik-Trimbakeshwar and Ujjain and is held every 144 years.

The next Maha Kumbh Mela event will be in 2169. It occurs at a specific astrological alignment, most significant and much rare occurrence gathering of Hindus at confluence of The Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati rivers. The last Maha Kumbh was held in 2025 at Prayagraj marking 12 cycles of 12 years and before held in 1880.

Mauni Amavasya is generally the most important and crowded day of Kumbh Mela, considered particularly significant for taking Holy Dip, crowd in millions anticipate attending. A diverse group of people take Holy Dip, Nagas of akharas traditions takes first holy dip followed by, Sadhus, general public, aesthetic devotees from various walk life including foreign visitors.

Bruno had made pony of his hair and Annemarei formed bun of her hair.

Bruno was carrying Felix in sling baby backpack. He slung a DSR Nikon DI camera on a shoulder.

At Haridwar they were in Dhoti and kurta with a print of 'Har Har Ganga' on it. Both were wearing a turban and also some rosaries in neck and wrists, of Rudraksh. They had applied tilak on their forehead with white four fingered, white sandalwood paste.

There are various kind of rosaries like five-decade rosary, one-decade rosary, rosary bracelets, seven sorrows rosary with unique structures and purposes. These are made up of wood, metal, gems and even of cords.

At the first day in Haridwar they visited Mansa Devi, Pawan Dham, Bharat Mata Mandir, Chandi Devi, they had Indian lunch and dinner; and yes 'paan' after every meal, they heard about 'paan' and they really relished the 'banarasi paan' it is a great delight for some foreigners.

They were telling the things to Felix in German about India. They were moving on the crowded road and were passing the shops and stalls. Felix asked them many times 'was ist das?' They answered to his questions.

Mum, 'Ich will das'. (I want this)

Both in unison use to say, 'spater, nicht jetzt. (Later, not now).

"Sei ein braver Junge."

(Be a good boy)

There were heights of pleasure, enjoyment and they were in high spirits, full of zeal and enthusiasm.

Who knew, about the black hidden serpent under panoramic view of the golden beautiful mustard fields. The black serpent like hostile time would spin and hiss their happiness, spreading the venom of unhappiness into their lives forever.

Many temporary bridges were constructed by Public Works Department across the Holy Ganga for the devotees to reach Har Ki Pauri, the heart of Haridwar. The worst was, one of the make shift bridge started collapsing, loud

screams, a clamouring, ear-deafening cacophony of screams rent the air. People rushing and pushing to save life, running madly, few fell down, other ran stepping over them, many fell and drowned in the stream. Finally it was stampede; entire scenario was terrifying and spine-chilling.

Blood drained out from parents face, revealing yellowish, jaundice faced. Felix was nowhere near them.

They shouted calling at the top of their voice.

“Felix.”

“Felix, where are you?”

Their shouts were not far reaching as one side there was huge commotion, calls for help; announcements for instructions and commanding to divers and rescue teams; other side were slogans ‘Har Har Gangey’ on loud speakers.

They never ever dreamed about this kind of miss-happening. Tears were cascading, uncontrolled, pouring like rain, rolling down the cheeks and chin. Tears were unstoppable. The ground below them was rocking. Both of them were almost senseless for few moments. They could not see Felix around. They followed Felix in almost all the directions, asked at stalls, people around but either refused or did not have any attention. As some were calling for help, some crying, some were busy in searching their owns. Even they checked and asked at the stalls and shops where Felix asked them, ‘Ich will das’. Both of them were unable to trace footsteps of Felix.

A pandit (Indian Priest) Shanker Dewedi, who had a stall at Har ki Pauri, was in dhoti and shawl and half naked, had applied vermilion and turmeric long tilak on forehead. He

had fair skin, round-faced, clean shaved, thick black short hair and black round eyes.

Bruno, Annemarei asked him things about the tradition, culture and spiritual beliefs in broken Hindi. Then they walked to the Ma Ganges to take the holy dip, the most pious dip of their life.

Annamarei was in water and Bruno was ready and waiting for her to come out. She came out and Bruno was about to go for the dip.

The bridge collapsed there was a huge commotion and cries, large cluster of people bumped into his stall when they ran for their lives. He (pandit) jumped and ran for his life. He saw Felix alone without his parents. He held the child and both started searching the parents and parents were searching Felix. Their search was in different and various directions in huge crowd. They were unable to see each other.

When they were at the road hand of Felix got loose, the pandit stopped to tell about the spine-chilling happening in mela. Felix disappeared in the crowd in search of his mum and paa. His parents had been always telling him (Trauen Sie keinem Fremden und Essen Sie nichts, was Ihnen ein Fremder gibt) 'do not trust any stranger and don't eat anything given by any stranger.'

This thing had left the deep scar in his mind.

Small Felix, walked in crowd eager to find his parents calling out mum-paa but his words were unable to reach his own ears, his throat choked. His eyes welled with tears, everything was blurred. As Felix was walking he crossed beggars, people placing coins for exchange, new and old

coins, selling toys, candies or fruits. Many vendor's and hawker passed; he passed the shops of prasad, toys, sweet, just kept on walking searching his parents without noticing anything, he had no interest in anything.

Bhola Sweet Corner: Bhola was having a common sweet shop in the Bazaar of Haridwar. He was fat, middle aged, half baled, wheatish complexion. He was having a pair of tiger moustaches and unshaven beard. He was in habit of twirling his moustaches round up. He simply wore pyjama kurta and gamcha on one shoulder. He was not having any child so he had special liking for kids. He could speak little English. He noticed small Felix, sweating and crying, without any elder. Felix face was smeared with dust, sweat and tears. Bhola asked in English.

"What is your name?"

No reply, Felix only was calling for his mum and paa.

"Where is your mum?"

Felix, didn't reply.

"What happened child?"

Felix was only calling for his mum and paa. He could tell nothing more.

Looking all around Bhola took him inside his shop and made him comfortable, in front of the pedestal fan. Then gave some sweets and namkeen in a quarter steel plate and water in steel glass. He kept on trying asking about his parents and where is he from and what happened?

Felix didn't answer to his any questions. Felix was unable to understand or speak English or Hindi.

Bhola thought to report the matter to police. He had to walk to the nearest police station as there was no phone. He told the boys working in his shop to take care of Felix. After sometime the boys got busy in work and attending the customers. Felix slipped away and was lost in the streets of Haridwar once again. Bhola tried to look for that missing child but he could not do anything more to help the child or his parents. Later Police team came, but Felix was lost in the streets of Haridwar again.

Madaris with monkeys, bear were moving on the road. Somewhere monkey show was going on, people were gathered but he had no interest at all in anything. Further snake charmer was sitting with his variety of snakes for snake dance but Felix had no interest in that too. His small feet were tired of walking that too alone in the crowded Bazaar of Haridwar. Crowds, groups people and procession with flags in hands and slogans on speakers were bustling on and on. He was constantly looking for his parents but could be hardly seen anywhere.

At a distant, somewhere saw a gathering of people, at side of the road, a white couple was there. They were not his mum-paa. He walked and saw a girl walking on tight rope with a bamboo in hands without safety net. She performed summer saults, back flips, diving through series of rings and then a dive through ring of fire. At the end of all she moved around, asking for money. These are known as Indian Nats or Madari artists. These are traditional street performers, specifically at fairs and festivals, referred as street performers. Felix stayed though the entire crowd moved and disappeared in the street. Those people gave Felix some fruits to eat; he ate some and some he left. Later

he also walked in search of his mum and paa. His hope perched in his little heart to find his parents.

Chandu and Kala, their eyes fell on Felix, small boy walking alone in the street, without any elder or any parents. They both tiptoed after him for some distance, passed the message to their group and then to the boss and gave the descriptions of the child. The boss declined the kidnapping or abducting of foreign child or Indian babies. The local police was active on the matter of child trafficking, especially at Haridwar during Kumbh.

As recently, Uttar Pradesh Police had unearthed child-trafficking racket, four persons, including a couple were arrested on the charge of abducting children from tourists or railway passengers while they were sleeping on the Haridwar Railway Station Complex. Police said, they used to sell these children at high prices to the affluent families who are eager to buy them for adoption. This gang was indulging the children into beggary or prostitution. Police rescued five babies from their possession. Several cases related to kidnapping of babies had been reported at Haridwar GRP Police Station over the past few months. Several Cases under section 363 of IPC were registered in GRP Police Station, Haridwar.

Felix, small feet, small tired tender steps, took him at a barren isolated open land at the side of the road. For a small boy of less than 2, was an unnatural, unpleasant sight, it was a group of strange kind of men, never seen before anywhere. It was a cremation ground area and body of those people was smeared in cremation ash. They had human skulls for decoration and bowls. Smoking marijuana and drinking alcohol in skull. They were seated in meditation on the corpses. Some eating mortal remains

of the dead. What kind of world is that! Who these people are? What do they do? What are they eating? Felix mind got clouded over with all sorts of questions.

They are known as 'Aghoras' Hindu order of shaivite sadhus in Uttar Pradesh tradition of tantric, non puranic form of shaivism. Exhausted and blurry eyes could not bear the sight. He found something like eatable leftover on the ground, he tried but he could not as it was tasteless and hard to chew. He quietly slipped away being noticed by none.

The sun was setting, it started getting dark, and he was walking along the stream on the stony river bed. Felix was hungry, tired and exhausted but he could not find his mum and paa. Many times he stumbled; he was still in tears and sweat. This time he was walking along the stream. He lost the balance and plopped into the stream. He was unconscious and was carried by the strong current of water.

When Bruno and Annemarei were not able to find Felix anywhere, on roads, streets and ghats, even on the shops where Felix was asking to buy things for him. They tried many times searching each and every place where ever they could but they failed. They lodged the missing complaint of Felix at the nearest police station. They also extended their VISA to get some more time to find Felix, a constant light of hope kindled in their heart. They never had any food properly, never slept properly, without being tired kept on looking for Felix, with gloomy face and tears in their eyes, unkempt clothes and hair.

Lalli was around ten, wheatish complexion, dwelling in the small cluster of huts made up of mud walls and thatched

roof, made by the shepherds at the wide bank of the Ganges few kilometres down the stream in the jungle area. Lalli was an orphan and staying with her old grandparents. She along with the other children of her age use to go to collect coins from the dry or wet river bed of the Ganges, under the railway bridge, where people from the passing train over the bridge offered coins to 'Har Har Ganga' or 'Ma Ganga'.

Sometimes she dived in shallow water with the piece of glass in hand searching for coins, placing the coins in mouth, then swimming under water in search for more. When and where water becomes shallow or deep hardly made any difference to her and in this way she turned to a good swimmer.

That day Lalli was alone and it was little cloudy. While walking along the stream; she saw a cluster of dry wood, flowers and garlands, among that a small white face baby floating, where water was shallow and stagnant. It was alive, baby had breadth and pulse, heart was pumping and he was groaning.

She hurried to that place and saw a baby. She courageously pulled out the baby from the stream, made him lay prostrate on the grassy bank of the Ganges. She sucked out water from baby's mouth. Then she rolled and turned him upside down, pressed his back to flush out the water from his stomach. Rolled him again and breathed into baby's mouth, baby choked and opened his eyes and cried aloud calling 'mum.' She asked him, his name, who is he. Felix was not in condition to answer any thing. She carried him on her back to her hut. She and her grandparents gave some milk and fruits, which they can find in that jungle. Felix was not in good health he could not eat properly, he

just had some without any interest. He only wanted to meet his mum and paa.

Mira, wheatish complexion of 26 years old, mostly clothed in brown sari, was a rag picker, lived in a juggis near Lalli's hut and she scavenge through half of the garbage bins of the streets early morning hours and hauling plastic, tin's lid, canisters, bottles in her gunny bag which slung over her back to raise good sum of money. Later, many a times she hired the motherless child from drunkard neighbour, grubby and messy, wrapped in a piece of cloth and slung over shoulder and hanging around her waist. She would make handsome alms from the rich people, especially from those moving in cars. After getting the money from her work she used to cook food for herself and her husband on the make shift fire place made from the red bricks. She hung the kitchen wares on the tree after washing and cleaning.

She came to know about the child whom Lalli saved. She met them and came to know about the condition of boy which was not good. She convinced them she will take him to Haridwar get check-up in Government Hospital and if needed also go to police station and hand him over to them.

All those words were only words from her sweet voice without any meaning but her mind had a mischievous designs. Mira took the train to Jwalapur, a railway station near Haridwar, along with Felix when he was asleep. His eyes opened at the jerking with some noise of railway carriage. That was something new for Felix, he had never seen the train in real, except in children book showed by his mum. Mira held him by hand and took him into the streets of Jwalapur. While walking on the road Mira stopped at a shop to buy 'biris and gutka'. Felix did not feel something

good about Mira and he took a cover behind cemented water tank, shifted behind garbage container, then behind stacks of bricks and behind tented shops. Soon he was out of Mira's sight and in the street of Jwalapur. Mira looked around, asked people, tried to follow Felix but both were moving in opposite direction.

Felix was once again walking alone on the road towards railway station.

A tall, very fair, slim lady in black glasses and black exclusive dress was smoking Dunhill King Size cigarette in a slender tube. She was in Indian make-up, followed by an umbrella bearer and two attendants. She was looking no less than any Indian actress or a royal princess. It was a 'shemale' (a kinner or third gender), her slang, her slant, masculine voice was the only difference. She was decked with expensive jewellery, diamond necklace, golden nose-pin, golden ear rings and diamond ring in her ring finger.

She was known as Hussan-e-Malika, Noor Jahan in short 'Malika Noor Jahan'. She was educated and highly influential and a social activist and was kindest at heart. She was from Dehradun.

Felix looks captivated her attention and Noor Jahan found herself was drawn toward him.

Noor Jahan came close to Felix and said. "Hi John" she noted the tears, the boy was shock stricken. It was as if Noor Jahan had understood about the pain of Felix was suffering from, without any word from his silence.

She just squatted and took Felix in her arms. Since that moment 'Felix' was known as 'John.'

Noor Jahan moved her hand in Felix hair just like her mum. That was a non-verbal communication between the two, expressing, her love, trust, and care and made Felix feel that he was in safe hands. It was like some a strange kind of vibes or relation or bond between both of them. The looks, tender touch, jesters and sweet smile created a unique relationship between them.

She lifted John (Felix) in her arms, took at a better place and herself fed John with her hands. Next, she lodged FIR at Jwalapur GRP station without any delay, gave her details. She also made a point in the report that she would keep John in her care and will hand over to his parents whenever they will come to collect him. Then they hit the road by their own luxury car to Dehradun. Later, she also intimated Embassy about lost and found report of missing child.

There was on information about Felix parents for years. No information from police or embassy. Noor Jahan (Noori) adopted John legally but she always kept on waiting for intimation about parents from Embassy or other sources.

Annamarei could not bear the loss of Felix, she was in trauma, her health deteriorated day by day. Pain of separation had torn her heart and mind completely.

Noor Jahan took good care of John like a good mother. She brought John in princely manner. She educated John in Wynberg Allen School, the most esteemed and prestigious school of Mussoorrie. John was one of the bright students. John started addressing Noor Jahan as 'Noori'

Noor Jahan managed to educate John for higher education from University of Oxford, United Kingdom.

Felix (John) and his parents were left with the hope alive in their hearts that one day they will meet. Since then they attend every Kumbh at Haridwar. They meet also people and stalls, shops whether anyone of them had seen or have any information about their Missing German Child. They never got any clue or trace about their Missing Child but they never lost their hopes.

It was felicitating day of John (Felix). He had become the renowned writer, he was a famous personality in the world. He was not Felix anymore, now he was known as John Rusty, a resident of India with the new identity. Bruno and Annamarei were also present there. None of them were able to recognize each other as there was no mark identity. John Rusty invited Noor Jahan (Noori), mum for honour at the stage. Noor Jahan introduced and revealed the past about John (Felix) how and where she found the missing child, with no identity. Who was not in condition to speak and not even to explain anything about him.

That was the happiest moment in the life of Annamarei and Bruno; Noor Jahan and Felix-‘John Rusty.’

They all had smile on their lips and tears in their eyes.

The Road



*If paths are there,
Then destinations are there,
If destinations are there,
Then courage is there.
Life is a path, leads anywhere,
Stopped steps, leads nowhere,
Worries about paths,
Displease the destination.*

The Road



THE FIRST ENCOUNTER

A friend, for whom Anil had deep intimacy, can't say where, when and how did they meet?

Yes, Anil saw him first time writing on cinema posters at Chaman Arts, in Prabhat Cinema Hall Compound, generally localities called it 'The Hall in a pit'.

His appearance was unpolished boy from Hills of Garhwal.

Next time they met in the campus of DAV Post Graduate College Dehradun, in the Applied Arts section of the college. He told Anil, his is Manoj from Purola.

Anil had dropped his studies for some years as did not succeeding in any competitive exams IIT, MNR, ROORKEE ENGINEERING. He was completely dishearten as that time students were unaware of other examinations and parents forcefully pursued the children to take those examinations only, always giving examples of those, who qualified. Above all, that time there was no system of extra guidance.

With the passage of time both were friends and a year, Manoj's appearance and language all improvised. His instinct and prospective were good in Art. Most of their time was utilized working together either in college making posters and illustrations which were in their syllabus or to complete orders which they got from market. It was brought to knowledge through college mates that to apply

for the post of TGT/PGT in Uttarakhand, one must have the subject regular till MA, which they didn't have so they appeared for IGD (Intermediate Graded Drawing) and Intermediate Technical Art (additional subject) Examinations together.

It was 1989, Manoj told about his sister's marriage somewhere in village of Garhwal and Himachal Mountain ranges. Manoj invited Anil, insisted again and again, finally Anil had to agree.

DAY 1

Both took leave from work for 4 days. They received the amount of Rs 400 after making and fixing Glow Sign Board of a shop.

Anil was never feared of long drive or any kind of odd situation. If co-driver is intelligent and supportive then it's a biggest support, the encouragement was on the extreme heights. Anil always believed in, 'Well Begun is half done'.

Purola, Tiuni and Arakot region is also known for the Mahasu Devta Temple in Hanol and Lakhamandal Temple, they had no interest in all those things as the time was short and they had to attend marriage and return on time.

Next day, it was the cold morning of the month of December; they were covered with jackets, gloves, caps, with their bags at their back with needful clothing's. They wrapped themselves in thick woollen sheet and started on BAJAJ CHETAK 1980 make, with full petrol tank.

It was happy ride full of excitement; they were discussing plans of marriage, returning and all other general topics.

They were driving on the road through high hill and deep valleys, without stopping at any place; they continuously drove for 90 km. Then they stopped at Lakhwar Dam site where the construction work was going on.

They were carrying an old fashioned Konica Minolta camera. They clicked some photos. They could see green brook of water and a small tunnel deep down the hill in the valley. There was no sign of any house or any shop on the road side to have water or tea. Anil took out cigarette and lit. Every puff was giving him a great relief.

Lakhwar Region lies in Uttarakhand characterized by mountainous terrain with steep slopes and complex geological formations. It is the part of Lesser Himalayas. The Lakhwar Dam is located in Dehradun District. It is situated on the Yamuna River, near the village Lohari of Kalsi Tehsil. It's the part of Larger Lakhwar-Vyasi project. After collecting the information they headed on.

They drove through a market type place after driving about 25 km without stopping anywhere, along the Tons River.

Anil asked, "What's this place known as"?

Manoj replied, "It's Damta, a small village in Dehradun district which has a total population of 256 comprising of 22 families that reside in Damta village, it comes under Kalsi Block and Tehsil".

As they drove on and on, their attention was caught by clear long snow clad Himalayan range in contrast with clear crystal blue sky. It was fascinating and captivating view of The Himalayan Range. They started taking photos of the beautiful sensuous scenes all around them as they were strongly touched by the sense of sight.

Next moment, they saw a shepherd boy around 12 year old, holding a white lamb in his arms was standing close by them in the traditional Himachal dress, 'Chola and Dora' which was a knee long loose woollen coat, tied with a woollen rope like thing around the waist, made of hand spun sheep wool. That attire was deeply relating the pastoral life style.

They had photos with him and his photos also and headed on as they planned to reach the place of wedding by the evening.

Common birds and animals found in this region are Kalij Pheasant, Turtle-dove, Himalayan Swift let, Plum Headed Red Breasted Parakeet, Brown Scaly-Bellied Woodpecker, Long Tailed Shrike, Blue-Throated Barbet, Himalayan Goral, White Boar, Musk, Sāmbhar and Barking Dear, Leopard and Himalayan Tahr.

As they entered further in this region they got a chance to see cluster of parakeets flying overhead with loud chitter-chatter, and heard sound of Woodpecker bird they drove on further ahead, group of musk and Sāmbhar deer were standing in group and some were playfully running around.

Kachhaa Rastaa

Anil was driving over unmetalled road of the span over 104 Km. Moving on smoothly over the ups and down, crossing the running streams across the road and splashing water was making shoes wet, on left, right and sharp curvy U-turns of the rough stony and dirt road.

The portion of land in this region was surrounded with the tall trees, including deodar, cedar, oak and banj, with scattered bushes and shrubs around with little grass here and there, somewhere they could see the soil and rocks. It was plain, mountains were at long far distance, and one side after the far long distance a deep river valley could be seen and across it were the bluish green, snow-capped peaks of the Himalayan Range.

They had driven about 100 km with a halt where they had taken some photos. Then at the time of mid-day they were at a small hill place Purola. They had hot tea and somosas, its aroma stimulated the temptation.

Anil knew about Purola that it is in the heart of Garhwal Himalayas, Uttarkashi District of Uttarakhand. A hidden treasure, serene villages located at 1524 meters above sea level. It is a blend of natural beauty; cultural richness and tranquillity that beckons everyone's eyes. It is along the bank of Kamal River, surrounded by lush green forests and valleys and terraced fields. It is known as the 'Gateway to the Tons Valley also referred as Har Ki Doon Valley.'

The villages are surrounded by lush green forests, providing a delightful backdrop for photographers. The entire region is enchanting during spring when rhododendrons fill the air with their vibrant colours.

They drove through such a delightful place of beauty. After 10 or 15 km, there was a water fall at a sharp bent of the road and huge amount water was running across the long curvy road. Manoj told to Anil be careful at this place, slow down, it can be mossy and slippery, though Anil was very careful and at very slow speed then also the scooter slipped and they fell down along with the their bags and scooter but unhurt they got up, little wet in water.

JAKHMOLA DHAR

It was a smooth ride over The Jakhmola Dhar, metalled road had begun from here, running between tall pine trees on the either side of the road. Dry pointed brown leaves falling with the breeze of wind were making the place magnificent and breadth taking.

Soon after driving around 60 km they were crossing the Cheer Baghs (PINE TREES) of Tiuni. These trees are mainly found in mountainous regions, in Northern Hemisphere

where temperature is cool and pleasant with sufficient rainfall and favourable soil conditions.

Here Tons River flows between Tiuni and Arakot. It is the main tributary of Yamuna River. Here is Tiuni Arakot Hydroelectric Project utilizes the waters of the Pabar River a tributary of the Tons River.

They had lunch at Tiuni at road side hotel of village, a typical Garhwal Hills food which was very cheap but delicious.

After some time they met there Ganga another college mate, he was from Mori. Anil did not know whether he will find any shop further on the way so he purchased two packets of Gold Flake King Size Cigarette, that time a packet of cigarette cost was just for Rs 12.

All three sat on the scooter and it was a drive around 25 km along the Prabar River. Ganga told that they will have to leave the scooter and walk across the river over the hills on the other side of the road. Proper arrangement to keep the scooter at shop was done.

It was around 5:00 pm and the sun was about to set soon as things were turning darker.

Anil was only one who used to smoke among all three of them and was having break for smoking off and on.

They went across the river with their bags at the back and sticks in their hands crossed the wooden bridge, over the stream, made in the stony and rocky, dry river bed.

The real fun started when they were moving upward and onward, both Anil and Manoj asked Ganga, How far is Thansar village?

Pointing towards a tree on the hill in night falling darkness, "Just there, not very far, we will reach soon." Ganga replied.

All three, with sticks in hands, were ascending on the hill. They were marching on the hill in the darkness of the night. For the light in dark forest of hills Anil was having a match box and cigarette, which he was using it well again and again.

An hour passed, but they were not near around that tree on the hill, which Ganga showed.

On asking again, Ganga replied, "We are about to reach, there is that tree." He pointed again.

"How far is the village?" They asked him.

"Just 2 km only, yaar, bas pahuch gaye."

As ascending and moving forward both of them kept on asking repeatedly and Ganga's reply was same again and again.

It was around seven past half hour, it started drizzling; they kept on moving but not felt tired at all. The shoes Anil was wearing were just ordinary without lace canvas shoes, which started getting wet and started slipping also as moving upward and onward.

Manoj said, "Anil it's snowing." White powder like things started precipitating; it was gradually covering the jackets.

They got a great relief, when they saw a light glowing at nearby distance but snowing was getting thicker and thicker.

The danger of wild animals in hills is always there especially moving in dark night in the forests of the hills.

Other friends use to tell how the bear or leopard jumped over their head. They were completely under shock with fear for the few moments. They were frozen with fear.

Anil's next neighbour, who was of around 50's in 1980 and was a forest ranger, told about his encounter with the tiger in the Ghansali forest, near Tehri.

He told that never to turn back on the sight of the tiger. Tiger always attacks from behind, at the back. They had to walk (plodded) for few kilometres without turning direction.

Many times it was heard from colleagues, when Anil was teaching in Mussoorie that bear and leopard attack while one is walking alone. Anil had read also that wild animal attack the one who is the most fear stricken or the weaker one in the group. Sometimes knocking in the night is heard at the door. Do not open the door on hearing any knocking at the door in the night. In hills of Garhwal forest wild animals like bear, leopard, moose, wolf and lynx can be commonly encountered.

They never thought or talk about that kind of that fear. The fear was miles and miles far from their mind. They neither heard any grunting, howling, roaring nor they saw any bright glowing eyes in darkness of the night watching or crawling towards them.

What kind of vegetation was around, Anil could not make out at all. It was all dark and black. Black were the trees, bushes, rocks, all mountains and valley, all the houses around.

At last they reached the village where the wedding ceremony had to be held. They found logs of wood were set

on fire and they stood there with all other present there, warming up them and trying to dry some clothes which got wet. None of three talked about any sign of tiredness, fatigue or any kind of sickness or any kind of worry.

After some time all of them were invited inside for dinner.

Who took their bags from them, where were they placed they didn't know.

Arrangements for having food were done on wooden floor. The common food of Garhwal was served. It was jhangora barnyard millet, rice, rotis, local dal, til ki chutney. Manoj told Anil about how the food is served to the guests in hills that Desi Ghee is serve until one tells to stop.

After the dinner was over, the room was set for singing and dancing. It went for long. The language and dialect was beyond Anil's understanding as he was resident of proper Dehradun, never had a chance to talk in Garhwali or Himachali. Dogri, Kangri, Kinnauri, Chambeali, Churah, Bhatiyali, Pangwali, Mandiyali, and Mahasu Pahadi, everything, all those dialects were 'nil bataa sanatta' to Anil. All was Greek and Latin to him.

Traditional Garhwali wedding customs are rich with rituals and customs blending religious significance and cultural celebrations the main feature is Barat (groom's procession), the exchange of garlands, the sacred pheras (seven circles around the fire) and the solemnization of the marriage with vermilion and mangalsutra. But they didn't get a chance to see all that.

None, whether men or women were in extraordinary wear. Everyone was in common winter attire as it is generally found in Garhwal. Men were in kurta or shirt, doti or

payjama or trousers, jackets or sweaters, himachalSi caps and mufflers. The women were in common wear ghagra (long skirt), choli (blouse), orni (a woollen cloth to cover head) and woollen jacket or sweater.

Married women were in gulaband (a maroon or blue band with gold squares and other ornaments like nath, necklace and earrings).

At the last, Anil came to know that it was not Manoj's house or village. They have the custom that people from bride's side, along with bride come to groom's village for the solemnization of the marriage ceremony. This variation emphasizes the bride's introduction to the groom's community and family, fostering a sense of belonging and integration. Finally the day ended well as everyone was under the spell of deep sleep.

DAY 2 & 3

The second day, their plan was to move to Manoj's home, to stay there for a day and then to return back to Dehradun,

It is around 10 or 12 km at the top of the mountain from Arakot, lies just by the side of The Prabar River. It was in mind already that the mode of conveyance is a private bus, only once a day, starting from his village in the morning and returning at 4:00 pm daily. Name of the village, Manoj had told but Anil had completely forgotten. He tried to recollect hard, scratch his mind but it was completely out of his mind. They need to reach Arakot in time else they would have to walk all the way on foot in the evening and in dark hours of the night.

One thing is sure, whether its mountains or plains, weather is always unpredictable and changes in minutes. Sometimes, it changes the entire life.

When they got up from deep sweet sleep and opened their eyes.

Manoj said, "Anil it's heavily snowing outside".

Anil looked outside the window, thick snowflakes were falling down. All that was stunning, beautiful and enchanting as all the mountains around, trees, shrubs, fields and valleys were covered with white sheet of snow and all the movement outside the house and work were restricted. Anyway they had to move out in the snowy morning for nature's call. Bathing in snowy weather, no question arises. They simply washed face with hot water which was placed outside for every one present there. Within no time, the cold wind forced all of them to dart

into the room and they pushed themselves back in the warm quilts, covering them up to their noses. They were served with hot tea, the special one, kangra tea the most famous, known for its unique aroma and subtle flavour, infused with lemon and ginger.

As the distance was long, only way on the mountain was just pathway to walk in pile (no vehicle possible, not even any two wheeler), walking down the mountain, when it's covered with the white sheet of snow was not at all safe. They were forced to change plan and better to stay inside.

After an hour or two, the snowing stopped for some time.

Ganga said, "Common, get up, we will have move on".

"Where to move out in such severe weather", Anil asked.

"We will be staying at another place". Ganga said.

With the bags on back they were walking on grey, wet, frozen ground. The shoes were wet, slipping in the snowy layer; Anil had to manage hard to stop himself from slipping. Ganga and Manoj were constantly telling to Anil to thrust the heels of the shoes hard into the ground, nothing will happen. Anil's shoes were almost flat but nothing happened except shoes and socks were wet again. Their feet were frozen, white, chilled and numb, as if blood has stopped running and all over frozen.

The place was not very far, soon they reached in the warm wooden house.

This time in the grey daylight got to see the panoramic view of the village on the hill while walking. The sky was covered with dark grey clouds all over, everything shrubs, bushes, trees, mountains and slopes were grey. Deodar wood and stone built houses of slate tiles roof to shed

heavy snowfall whether on the hill or down in the valley all were grey.

Deodar trees are in abundance at this altitude and entire Himalayan Range has formed by sedimentary rocks and risen from The Tethys Sea millions of years ago. The layers of sedimentation are clearly visible.

Wood and slate tiles are conveniently available in this region. Mostly houses are made up of rocks and wood in Himachal and Garhwal.

They were lead into a wooden room which was warm enough to keep warm. Beds on the floor were already made for them. They removed gloves and shoes, slipped into the beds. There was nothing named as 'cold' in the room. They were four in the room, a pack of cards was pulled out and they started playing seap, game after game, with long puffs of smoking which gave great relief. A woman entered and served ginger and spice infused tasty tea, gave great pleasure. In the same room she started cooking. They didn't move to the other parts of the house at all, stayed in and kept on playing game of cards with cigarette in hand, one after another. At the after noon time lunch was ready. The food is generally prepared from whatever is available in the harsh climatic conditions. It was dal-bhaat, the local mix dal. Everything tastes good at leisure time and nothing else was there.

First time Manoj noted the excessive sweating on Anil's head, laughed; it was just like someone had poured water from jug on his head and on the other side it was snowing on the mountains outside in December.

When Anil's colleague noted it, earlier, some smirk, one said, how much you are sweating sir. The other would say

he could have a heart attack on seeing sweating like that. Some relatives used to say what is it Anil? That was a peculiar metabolism of Anil's body since childhood, beyond understanding. Somebody told him it is gastro sweating, he must consult a doctor. He always ignored. Really having food in summer days at hot places is a real problem for him today also.

After lunch the game and smoking resumed. It went on continuously without stopping. Tea was served, after tea the game started again and went on till night.

After dinner also, the game and smoking continued till they were tired and prepared to sleeping, cigarettes stock was over. They were waiting for the clear weather and discussed about further movement. One good thing they maintained that the language and mind, both were clean. It was the sound sleep all over the night without any disturbance.

Next morning, all of them woke up but it was to their utmost dejection, their excitement to move ahead was completely shattered as the heavy snowfall was continuously going on. They just went out on the nature's call. Bathing in such an extreme weather doesn't make sense, they just washed faces with warm water and that was all. They were ready to start the day.

(This was the practice in those days only. A day without bathing is not at all bearable.)

They were back to life like the second day, everything same repeated on the third day but this time instead of cigarettes Anil was having biris, which the master of the house kept on offering. The day passed happily but somewhere in the corner of heart was a thought was craving that they are losing time. They will not be able to reach home at given time. The night fell and it was a deep sleep without a single disturbance.

DAY 4

They were highly delighted and encouraged, completely full of excitement, when they opened eyes. It was bright and sunny day. On looking outside it was bright colourful Himalayan Range with white snow and green grass with the crystal clear blue sky, spread wide.

Their bags were ready, first tea was served; soon, the lunch was ready. After having lunch they bid them bye with thanks for their warm hospitality.

Who were those people; neither had they told nor Anil asked but over all they were very nice people as everything was good.

They walked down along the mountainous path way in a pile, being led by Ganga. Descend was easy enough without any deep breath.

The surface of the ground was watery at places.

At a place the slope was so steep and slippery that Ganga called loudly, "Beware, slow down and move with rigidity, else you land fast into the valley on the other side".

Really, the walking down the mountains was so quick and fast, they were surprised. What was time, they didn't check. After crossing the wide dry river where water was running at only one place, they crossed the river over the wooden bridge. They were on the road. At the shop the scooter was waiting for them, it was thinking where my driver has lost for the past two days. He must be feeling happy to see Anil back. So delighted, that it started with a single kick. All three, set and moved for the next destination, which was

around 10 km, it was Arakot. Without any trouble and within no time they were at Arakot.

It was their utmost dismay, they were not on time the bus had left or that day there was no service of bus. This time also the proper arrangements were done by Ganga for keeping the scooter at some office place like safely. Anil had no worry about the scooter.

Manoj said, "We will have walk on foot, it's around 14 km. Will you be able to walk such a long distance, Anil?"

Anil just nodded head in big yes. There was no sign of any kind of unhappiness or trouble on faces. All three looked for sturdy stick and started moving. Not very far on unmetalled motor road there was a shop where they had tea and Anil bought four packets of cigarettes, after taking the lesson from his previous experience.

They were wide spread on road and marching on together with sticks in hands, bags at the back and singing the songs of 1980s movies.

Later after some time their topic was about college leader of students from federation of India (SFI) Vedika Ved and the leaders of other parties then shifted to our college mates and changed to girls in college of Geography Department, those who were familiar to them by face and name, later it shifted to government school teacher appointments. What else could be more interesting than girls talk and walk in the silence of the high mountains. They never tried to get closer to them, always maintained a good distance because boys in college get aggressive soon in the matter of girls.

The time passed on nice and swift. At places, chirping and chitter of birds was falling in the ears. With all those things

Anil was having pleasure of Gold Flake King Size. The kachha road was winding around the mountains, somewhere up and down, they were walking and moving on and along with them was moving time.

It started getting dark, wherever the sun was not reaching. About wild animals none of them talk or thought, as those ideas were far away from their mind, so no sight of any animal they had. Without any kind of fear or worry they kept on moving.

They kept moving on and on. How much distance was that? It was difficult to say as there were no mile stones. It was not completely dark; they reached a point where the un-metalled road ended. There was a hut type of kachha house which was locked, red post box was hanging outside and a painted tin board was hanging on the wall but it was rusted completely, the name of the place was not clear. That was the post office for all the nearby villages of the hills. Name of Manoj's village was not clear. It was completely out of Anil's mind.

Anil was little bit happy thinking at last, today's journey was over. No not yet, from there onward started a foot way going through the cluster of trees to the top of the mountain.

This time, Anil asked, "Have we reached, for how long more we have to walk further?"

Both of them together replied, "Just 2 km more."

The distance of 2 km was appearing like unending. Every time it remained 2 km.

While walking through the forest in the mountains in silence of the dark night a thought about ghosts and

witches ran across Anil's mind. He heard many times from the people. Its most commonly believed in the hills or at other places also.

Once, few teachers and other staff members who were working with Anil in a residential school told that they had seen the ghost at the night. In that context even the owner of the school admitted that the ghost of their grandfather is seen some times.

In other residential schools also where Anil worked ghost story were often heard from the students.

Once, Anil was working in a School in Nepal. There was an Indian teacher from Haridwar. He used to say that he sees ghosts at night, while returning from dining hall. He always concluded that he didn't tell as other might get afraid. He always claimed that he can call spirits; he knows the mantras, if anyone wants to see he can call but they get angry if we disturb them.

Even in Dehradun, on the ghost topic, people started telling that they have seen ghost. They are commonly seen on the road side if one is traveling at night on Dehradun-Mussoorrie Road.

Once, a friend, who might have seen a bus accident and got involved in rescuing the passengers on Dehradun-Mussoorrie Road. He returned, where Anil was working, he was under some effect. He was behaving a like a female passenger who was crying aloud to rescue her children. They tried to ask him what actually happened. He didn't tell anything but kept weeping and crying loudly like that lady. It was very difficult to control him; some colleagues hired an auto and took him to his home. When they went again him at night, his condition was same. They were four,

thought to give him good shock, caught him by hairs and even slapped but there was no improvement. The next day he was normal. Things like this were seen earlier also; like occurrence of Devi or Kul-Devta or talk and behavior not at all normal and natural.

Conclusion was, either sometimes it was a hallucination or some control of some sub-consciousness mind is so strong that strong sub conscious mind controls over all voluntary actions of the body.

In this context Anil says, "I hold an opinion of, Willing Suspension of Disbelief."

That day they didn't see anything, any image or appearance of ghost or any kind of hallucinations. Fear about ghosts, spirits and witches were miles from their mind. Neither was there any kind of talk about it. There were dark bushes, trees and mountains and pathway. They were talking and walking and moving forward, upward and onward to Manoj's home. This showed that they also had no belief in ghost type stories.

People from various regions may have variations in thoughts and practices in this context, but that is not the topic for discussion. They didn't see anything, as seeing is believing; many things are not seen, it doesn't mean they are not there.

It was night they were ascending and moving, onward and upward. It might be around 8 at night.

They could see in the night a small iron gate like thing. They went through it and after walking about a km, finally they were at Manoj's home. It was wooden house glowing with the light of a bulb.

They were quite satisfied and happy at heart, thinking about that tomorrow they can drive back to Dehradun.

They had dinner, same dal-bhat, mix dal, which commonly grows in the mountains of Garhwal. They slept well whole night long, without any kind of disturbance throughout the night.

DAY 5

Next day was colourful, everything was clear, the sun was brightly shining, the sky was clear blue without any sign of clouds, mountains and valleys were green, some mountains top were shining white on falling rays of sun. Their happiness was on the extreme heights and the heart was jumping out on seeing all the positive indications. They could move down and proceed to Dehradun.

All of them went out. They met some men and women on the way. Everyone was unknown to Anil but everyone young or old was wishing. Manoj talked to few of them in the local language, which was beyond Anil's understanding. At a point, on the side of a mountain they saw common cemented water tank for the villagers. A proper tap was fixed on it. People were taking water buckets to their home. Young girls and women were washing clothes and kitchen wares there. It was too cold; they were in jackets, caps and mufflers. Once, a thought came to Anil's mind to bathe but people stopped as bathing in cold water in extreme cold weather can be a great risk. Cold water can make the blood freeze, reduces the blood flow potentially, icy crystals can form in tissues and blood, which damages cells and clots blood, further reduces blood flow and oxygen delivery.

Other thing Anil realized that, the mountain side was completely dry, except that source of water tank. He could not imagine of getting warm water for bathing at Manoj's home. After moving all around the village on that mountain side, they saw all houses were of same pattern, made up of deodar wood and roof was of slate tiles and they were stilt houses. They returned to his home.

One thing Anil liked about the mountainous region, the tea is aromatic and tasty. Which he had at every place they stayed.

They had to resume the journey, food was cooked early. After the lunch they picked their bags and were ready to leave. That time Anil saw Manoj's mother, father, brothers and sisters. His all brothers and sisters were not present. He was unable to make out how many siblings they are. They bide them farewell and three started descending the mountain on the stony and dirt pathway in single pile.

Moving ahead on descend; there was some flat place where some children were playing Gilli Danda very common hindustani khel. This time of the year schools are mostly closed for winter vacations. Another common thing available is kaphal and kinkod on wild bushes, spreading here, there, everywhere in mountainous places. Kaphal are yellow of sweet taste and Kinkod are black purple of tangy taste. It's a fun to see tongue of other person. Some children gathered around the bushes and plucking, eating and enjoying, laughing aloud to see the other tongues, turned purplish-black. They too had as much as they could as they are not found in plains and low altitudes. Other names for these are wild raspberry and Himalayan raspberry.

Ganga was also from the same village.

He said, "I want to stop at my home for some time and see my parents. Come let's go and wish them". As Manoj also wanted to meet them, Anil had to agree and all moved to his home. His home was not far from the pathway, it was just at the path side, few wooden step and they were in his home.

Ganga led them into the room said to be comfortable. Soon, the tea was served in steal glasses, pleasant sweet smelling aromatic tea, infused with lemon and ginger, they had, more was served again along with strong and spicy Aloo ke gutke in the snacks. It was spicy and tasty and delicious and they relished it.

They could hardly finish the tea and snacks, it started raining and it was getting heavier and heavier. They got stuck and were bound to stay, where they were. They were thinking to move on as it will stop, instead it got heavier, sky was dark black and the dark thick clouds covered the sun. Everything around was dark. They could see thick snowy flakes falling down and covering trees, mountains, ground, roof of the houses, once again.

Raining and snowing forced them to stay indoors. They were lead into the wooden room, on the wooden floor bedspread were arranged with the quilts, it was having the kitchen in the same room.

They were four in the room. Deck of cards was pulled out. Cards were mixed, shuffled, stripped and the game of seap started again. Games after games went on and along with game cigarettes were being lit one after another.

A lady entered in the room, dressed in sari, coat, her head was covered by woolen pichora and a nath in nose. Sat down at fire place and started cooking dinner. They didn't know anything more about the women who were meeting at places. Anil's glance never rested on anyone's face for long. She prepared dal-bhat and chutney.

They had the dinner, just went out of the door on wooden extension part of the house, generally called 'Dhara' to wash hands and rinse mouth with warm water. Icy flake

were falling inside with the force of wind that made them hasten inside the room. They were back in the warm quilts and the game resumed. Till late night, they kept on playing, thinking that tomorrow it might be a clear day and they can descend down the mountain and can drive back to home, the way they covered the distance in a day while coming.

At last the game ended somebody switched off the light and all of them were in sweet deep sleep. None of them had the habit of waking up in night. It was long tight sleep whole night.

DAY 6 & 7

It was cold night; they slept tight the whole night. When all of them woke up they went out at dhara to brush up teeth, washed their face, sprinkled some warm water on head to make hair wet and combed them, that was all. They were again in quilt, wounded it around and sat.

Some body from Ganga's family said, "How will you go?"

Gave the latest news about weather and the damage happened last night, which was not at all encouraging. It was that the big boulders have rolled down the mountains and blocked the road completely. There is a landslide of wide gap near about Tiuni and also told that Jakhmola Dhar is completely covered with snow. It is difficult to cross. They were again forced by the cruel weather to stay where they were. They were not able to keep up with the time according to the plan so they decided to do and act according to the befalling situations.

The day started with tea followed by breakfast and then rounds after rounds of seap, cigarettes; all went on like the previous days, when they were stuck the last time. There were rounds after rounds of games, cigarettes; tea, lunch, round of games again, dinner and games. Hardly did they dare to come out but stayed in the room whole day long, till they felt sleepy. Light was switched off and they were in the lap of sweet sleep.

Time and luck was not at all in their favour to move ahead. They woke up next day. Whole day passed like the previous day in doing things in same way, same order.

By the evening, around 4pm the clouds in the sky started getting clear, the sky was in red. They felt little happy and moved out. It was cold freezing wind, the ground was wet. There was places where snow was hanging from the window shed, Ganga and Manoj plucked the hanging snow and began eating and savoring. They got for Anil, he was having it. That was a completely different kind of enjoyment.

At last they slept, hoping for better tomorrow, with plans of movement. The problems which they were going to face ahead on the way tomorrow were all brought to their knowledge. This time they were determined to move tomorrow.

DAY 8

Thank God! It was bright sunny and clear day. They woke up early that day, quickly brushed up themselves. Just after the tea, they picked their bags and stepped out of Ganga's home and bidding farewell to everyone. They walked down the mountain on the muddy stony pathway which was wet, in a pile. The pathway was just 1 km or little more.

Soon they were near the post office like kachha house, passed it and were walking on the kachha motor road.

While moving on the pathway, they saw a man carrying a wooden bed on his head ascending on the way to the village. Other man was ascending with the gas cylinder on his shoulder. In the village they met a person, whose face was having left over scar of the bear's attack and a small boy playing and running outside the house whose finger was fractured and splint was tied at palm and fingers. They had also seen earlier, women climbing on the trees with sickle to cut leaves and cutting dry sticks from bushes and carrying bundles of sticks or leaves on their head to home to use as fuel for their home and fodder for their cattle. That was amazing strength. They found an answer to themselves why people from interiors, mountains and villages are more found in army and police services. Anil was smoking with long satisfying puffs. It's the best companion or best girlfriend. Anil used to think, everything in life will leave but it will not leave him till his last breadth.

It was a bright day and everything was looking bright and beautiful.

On the way they found Timla (a wild fruit) growing in large clusters on the on the trunk and branches of the tree. They had some as Manoj removed more from the tree. It was very sweet and delicious.

They continued the walking further, it was not at all difficult and it was easy descent. All three were moving at good pace.

That time they felt how strong and rigid and peaceful are the huge mountains. At a U-turn there was water source gushing out of a place in the mountain. They stopped there have to some water.

Ganga showed one more tree of wild fruit and said that this is Kilmode also called jujuba, taste the sweetness of it.

That was the time when Anil felt, with cigarette in his hand he was feeling like a man.

Walking down was not at all exhausting, soon they were at Arakot. Walked across the iron bridge on the other side of the river where Anil's scooter was waiting for him for the last two days.

They reached to the place where they had kept their scooter at safe place. At Anil's sight as if he was saying, "My master, where had you been for the last two days? Weather was hostile and rough. I was safe. How are you?"

He patted the scooter replying, he was fine. They rolled it down to the road. It was so happy to see them us that it started in a single kick, it was so reliable and trusted that Anil could gather courage to make his trip. All three sat on it and it was running like the historical 'CHETAK'.

Soon they had the next encounter a boulders as big of the size of a car had rolled down the mountain; a big boulder

had blocked the road completely. Thank God, It was the clear day and labour was there and clearing the road. They requested to help them in taking the scooter over the boulder on the other side. Three of them and two more people came and lifted the scooter over that boulder and took it on the other side. That was great. They paid some money for their tea and refreshment. Further, there were one or two places in the way, where there were the small blockage on the road, boulders were small they managed and moved on. At other place the heavy current hitting bank of the river had washed away half of the road. Some white washed stones were placed on the road for the safety and caution. They got down from the scooter and rolled safely on the other side.

They were at Tiuni, at the roadside hotel where they had lunch last time they stopped there for tea, fused with ginger and spice.

Anil asked, "Where can I get some petrol?"

He knew there is no petrol pump till Purola.

Ganga replied, "Request the shift office of road department, someone could help."

Then Ganga left and returned to his home.

Manoj and Anil, both of them drove ahead crossing the iron girder bridge over the river, towards workshop, they met a man there and requested him for petrol and he said to come next day as all seniors and executive officers were around. He will charge Rs 15 per litre.

They requested but he said to come on the next day. They were left with no other option; they had to wait a day more in order to get petrol.

Manoj made the arrangements to stay there, a man let both of them into the room with a bulb and he lit the bulb. Can't say who that man was, whether driver, cleaner or porter. He cooked yellow rice or khichdi, soon one more joined, the game of seap started again, along with tea and biris and it went on till dinner, till they were in beds and went to sleep.

They had good hopes for better tomorrow.

DAY 9

They woke up early next morning, had tea and bread omelettes as the mind was preoccupied with the movement plan. Thank God! It was bright sunny and clear day. They didn't waste any time and went to the workshop around 9 at the morning, as that man had told, he was also there at time. They just asked him to fill the petrol tank full, 6.5 litres.

With thanks, they paid Rs 75, he didn't demand for more. They thanked him.

They started the scooter and drove on to the highway to Purola.

It was cloudy but not raining. They headed on. Anil thought that weather could be hostile again so its better get light, horn and brake properly checked up. They found the shop of a mechanic and asked him to check light, horn and break.

They paid him and were just collecting the things to move. It started raining, Anil asked Manoj, "What to do? Should we move further in rain? "

Anil said, "Yes."

They drove further, it was hardly few kilometres, they saw a long portion as long as 100 meters landside, where mountain top and river in valley were clearly visible. But there was no sign of road. They could not dare to cross that span of landslide alone.

They saw a man, present there, under an umbrella, with trousers rolled up to his knees, shoes and legs smeared in mud. They asked him, how they can get across that span of

the land slide. He told that it was not possible that day as no labour was there; he asked them to come on the next day.

They were helpless and they had to return to Tiuni, back to the same place.

They changed and quickly slid into the quits and were back to the same previous life style, tea, cigarettes, game of seap, lunch, tea, cigarettes and dinner and sleep.

The day was over with a little victory and little defeat. They were waiting for tomorrow morning.

DAY 10

Next day, they got up early. It was a bright, sunny, clear and colourful day and no sign of any kind of clouds were in the sky. Their courage and enthusiasm was on greater heights. They had morning tea and alloo ke parathe at tea stall at side of the road. Paid for it and started further. Very soon they were at the place where there was a big span of land slide. They were happy to see the enough labour working there. They asked their head to help in taking the scooter on the other side, they would pay. The main person asked both of to leave the scooter and to come at the safer side as a small slip of foot could roll them down without stopping down the mountain into the river, he advised to walk very carefully, it was the unstable slope of the mountain and gravel was rolling along with the boulder. Five persons took the scooter, held in their strong hand, only one was at the side between the scooter and river below the mountain. They were walking straight; they didn't have any courage to see down below to the river down the mountain or to see towards the high mountain. Finally they were able to make it. They were on the other side of the mountain slide with their scooter. They paid them some money and drove ahead with high spirits as if they have won a big battle.

Driving after the distance of few km, they were at Jakhmola Dhar, as they were ascending they found some patches of snow on the mountain and the road. They kept on driving; the snow on the road was getting thicker and thicker. Neither it was raining nor snowing. As the layer of snow was getting thicker, scooter's rear wheel started slipping. Anil had to ask Manoj to get down and walk. The distance

was less than a km which Manoj had to walk, this mountain side was getting more rain, no sun, not enough sun to melt the snow and it was getting more and thicker as they were ascending. It was so thick that at a u-turn Manoj had to push the scooter. There was no road blockage or land slide and finally they were at the top. There was flat land and a locked temple. They parked the scooter on the road side and walked over the snow toward the temple. They took some photos to show at home and to friends in Dehradun. Anil was thinking and telling Manoj, driving on the snowy slope of the mountain would be difficult, when snow freezes and after dew, it becomes harder and slippery. They started, with the thought, whatever may happen they will manage. It that was the greatest surprise after covering the distance of 200 meters there was no sign of the snow as that was the sun facing warmer slide of the mountain, they were driving over the plain clear smooth metalled road at the good speed. It was the leeward side of the mountain.

Further at two places on the kachha road small boulders rolled down the mountain which were blocking the road, as it was not huge they managed to make the way. Moving on some kilometres more they saw a truck was stuck at a point on the road due to road block. Two persons were busy in breaking the boulder for making the way. They had to wait for half an hour for getting the road clear. Those people were not looking like labour. As soon the road was clear they mounted on the truck and moved on. After the truck passed, Anil and Manoj crossed and moved further. They considered themselves lucky as they got the clear road else there was no sign of man who could help them in getting across that road block. Thanked God for the unexpected

help, they patted the scooter and commanded the scooter to take them further.

On the way to Purola, one road was diverging towards Barkot. Manoj said "Anil lets go to Barkot, it is just 30 km." As one of their college friend, Jaynender was from Barkot.

Anil replied, "OK," as they were already late, what a difference one day more delay will make. He agreed.

They drove over the iron girder bridge across the river. Stopped at a shop had common lunch, dal-bhaat and quickly moved on. Hardly after an hour, were they at Barkot. Left the scooter at the side of the road and Manoj searched for Jaynender, they found him soon and saw him coming toward them from the other side along with one more college student.

They were made comfortable at a hotel type building, neat and clean. Jaynender told what ever needed for eating just order, will get everything.

They talked all about marriage, their parents, about the weather and about our all the encounters they faced. Jaynender left them and said, "Take rest and let's meet tomorrow.

They had good but common food at dinner and were relaxed, as most of the troubles were over.

They went to sleep early as they were little tired. It was tight sleep that night.

DAY 11 & 12

That was bright, beautiful and sunny day, sun was spreading its warmth and shining all over, that part of Uttar Pradesh (Uttarakhand) where they were, about the rest of Uttar Pradesh (Uttarakhand), God only knew.

Their heights of pleasure soon shattered on coming out of the hotel. They came to know that Students Union had called BANDH for 48 hours. That was like the biggest fall, completely unexpected.

The first thing they did gave their college introduction to the supporters and leader and told the urgency of their movement on the scooter. They said apologetically, "If we allow, if we give you a pass, we can't give you any assurance that nothing will happen. Somebody can pelt over rain of stones further or set the scooter on fire or harm you physically. How can we take such a risk? Who knows what kind of mob you may face ahead on your way." They wanted BANDH peaceful, without any damage and keeping the image and reputation of college students union clean.

What could they do? Where could they go? Instead the students of the union said to support them sit with them. It was as if they were confined for two more days.

Anil looked at scooter. It was at its place, looking safe.

Other college friends from Dehradun met there, they walked into the market and all around it was locked.

To pass the time, all of them walked towards the Yamuna River that was not very far. They crossed hanging bridge made of wood and ropes, suspended from the stone

cemented pillars on the either side; they were on the other side of the river. It is commonly used to cross by men or carry things on mule, hardly 4-5 feet wide

Those who are not habitual, for them, it's very scary, that roaring, rumbling and rushing sound of water was terrifying and piloerecting.

Standing stationary on the bridge for few seconds, its amplitude could be felt, swinging and shaking and blowing wind was adding heights to fear. Then also they clicked the photos and had some fun. Across the river they went to the river bank, the rumbling water was looking muddy indicating rainfall at higher altitudes.

They hopped and jumped over some stones in the river having photo shoot.

A passing man shouted and warned them.

"What are you doing boys? A slip of foot will carry you to Haridwar, without any rites"

After the fun and food they were back to hotel.

The same way, moving on the roads in the market they passed the next day. It was boring. What else they could do? The day ended. They had dinner and they were in bed.

DAY 13

They were out with bags at back ready to move. They could not wait any more. The scooter was standing at its place like a dumb statue, no greeting this time. They unlocked the steering; it revolved 340 degrees instead of 200 degrees. Some miscreants had damaged the scooter steering. They informed the friends, tried to find out, had a thought of making a police complain but all was useless and waste of time. Scooter was kept safely, they kept an eye on it, and then also it was damaged. They had to lift front wheel and carried the scooter to the nearest good mechanic. He said, "I don't have steering, get the steering, I will change."

Anil and Manoj, both tried to search at other spare parts shops in Barkot but all efforts were in vain. One mechanic told they could get the steering at Purola.

Both sat in the bus and started for Purola, they got it within no time near bus stop only and returned immediately. Before the night fell they were back with the steering. Mechanic repaired it. The scooter was ready once again to run like historical CHETAK.

They could not move at that time on the dark roads of the mountains. They had to wait for one night more to return home.

This time they were little tired, little upset, little bored but not yet defeated. They had something for dinner early and went to bed.

This time the only thought in the mind was to reach home; God only knows what they may encounter tomorrow. As everything they faced was unexpected.

DAY 14

They had packed everything last night before sleeping, quickly without wasting any more time, left the room. They had a cup of tea at a stall outside, informed Jaynender about their movement to Dehradun.

They reached to Chetak, he was also in high energetic spirit. Said, "Come! My master, all well? It has been a long time. Let's go."

They moved on and on at good average speed, this time, no alluring natural beauty, no photos. To reach home was only the thought that was covering the mind; without stopping at Damta they drove on.

The series of troubles had no end as they were driving along the Tons River the back tyre of scooter was flat. That can happen with anyone and anywhere. Anil changed it within 10 minutes and moved on. Hardly could they drive a kilometre or two, again the back tyre was flat. That was too much; scooter cannot be driven on one tyre. What to do?

Anil sat on the mile stone, lit the cigarette and thought about, what can be done.

They saw a bus coming towards them and going towards Damta.

Anil said, "Manoj, you stay with the scooter in the mean time I will get both tyres vulcanized."

It was about 10 km.

As quickly as possible, Anil got the job done and immediately returned, where Manoj with the scooter was

waiting for him. Anil fixed the tyres and had a cigarette again. They sat on the scooter and said to Chetak, "Chal yaar, Ab le chal ghar."

It was like a victory and they were in great delight, they were moving ahead towards home, thinking that the troubles were over but the worst was yet to come. They were wrong.

As they were ascending the high road Lakhwar Dam site. A loud bang was heard, the scooter stopped.

Manoj asked, "What happened, Anil."

Anil replied, "Let me check."

They got down and slid open the right panel of the scooter. The spark plug had come out from the head of the engine of scooter. Anil opened the tool box (diggi) and took out tool kit and screwed the plug back in head of the engine. The moment Anil kicked to start the plug came out again. He tried again and again it came out again and again. Thinking deeply what can be done to resolve this problem; they sat on the middle of the road, tried to stop the other vehicles to seek help but no one stopped. As no one trusts strangers on the lonely roads, it could lead them in big trouble. They had no option.

Anil lit the cigarette again and he was in full concentration and told Manoj, its nature's call, wait, "I am just returning and let me think."

He came back, looked around the scooter carefully and on its platform also. His attention was caught by a rusted electric wire fitting clip on the platform of the scooter and an idea ran across mind like a rabbit running in the bush. He picked it and along with the clip he screwed the spark

plug again and kicked to start the scooter, it started. They shook hands, patted the scooter, and thanked it. Anil was not a mechanic but sometimes he tried to repair the things, sometimes he was able repair else it went completely out of order. Garbage was the right place for it then. That instinct worked well, it was just like 'a stitch in time saves nine.'

Once again, they started on the way to Dehradun. They were at the top of the mountain at Lakhwar Dam. They stopped there for some time to take a breadth, this time they were very close to Dehradun. Anil lit a cigarette again, that was the greatest relief. It was like a big relief, after fighting and winning a battle.

Anil started the scooter and they were on the way to Dehradun. No they were wrong again. This time, there sound was 'kad-kad-kad-kad' and the gear wire had snapped this time. They didn't stop but rolled the scooter down the mountain and thinking what to do next. As they were descending Anil just twisted the gear a little. It might be that a thin line came on the right slot, Anil manage to drive till Vikas Nagar. They stopped at the first mechanic shop got the wire changed.

Finally started again, it was the great heights of spirit. They were back to home within next half an hour, undefeated.

Throughout the journey they never felt dejected or discouraged. Many times the partner's support doubles the strength.

They didn't have to pay anything for food or where they stayed. They had to pay only then, whenever they had tea at road side hotel at the stalls. They were not in position to choose good hotel and sumptuous food as they had limited money in hand. Everyone, where ever they stopped and

stayed, showed great feeling of hospitality and made all arrangements.

‘When we work together, stay together, eat together, pray together; intense intimacy and proximity develops. The bond between gets strengthened.’

Manoj ended saying, “Yaar, It is hardly a night and few hours, stay at his own house, out of those 14 days.”

At Anil’s home and office everyone was worried as he had been away from home for 14 days instead of 4 days. They were just about to lodge the missing complaint and wanted to start self-search.

The Last Encounter



Where and how is Manoj Chauhan today about that Anil having the least idea.

Anil wanted to pursue Applied Arts in M.A. but H.N.B. Garhwal Univerty did not have the subject and he was bounded to live in Dehradun with parents and his family. He had to pursue M.A. in English Literature and Manoj continued with Drawing and Painting M.A.

Anil got married in 1990. Manoj attended all the functions of the marriage. Manoj got married in 1992. He invited Anil at his HALDI HAATH marriage custom where he was tenant, at Neshvilla Road. They were in touch till that time, at Manoj place. Anil had to leave Dehradun. He went to Nepal for teaching in the far western in Police School. Later Mussoorie, Shahjanpur and back to Dehradun. Their contact was completely broken. After that they never met, neither was there any contact through any mean. Where Manoj was living, that place had been converted into shopping complex.

That was the last encounter.

It's true that sometimes a smallest gap makes distance of miles and miles apart.

Anil came to know later that Manoj was working as an Art Teacher in a Government School, somewhere in Garhwal.

He tried to contact him but could not get through. Both might have forgotten each other for some time but the sweet memories will remain forever.

He must be around of same age as Anil, leading his retired and contented life somewhere in Dehradun or Garhwal Hills with his family but Anil now does not live in Dehradun.

Flood 88



Dinki always used go to meet his school time friend, Chunki wherever he was posted, whether it was Bank or Insurance Company. Once, he met him at Augustmuni Garhwal, they stayed together for a week. Those days they were not in habit of drinking. There they had a long walk along the bank of Mandakini River, went on the mountain on other side of the river and crossing wooden suspension bridge. That was the time they enjoyed the life. They also went to see temples at Ukhimath with the families of other bank colleagues. Chunki never smoked but Dinki was a chain smoker. Cigarette was his best companion wherever he was alone or in group, happy or sad, busy and tired or idol, excited or passive. He never left cigarette and cigarette never left him. When he met at Ludhiana and Moradabad, he stayed for 3-4 days. They were good at Boozing. After returning from office, all friends use to sit at night with Rum or Whisky for long till, late night. Their discussions were on school days and college days, friends, events and their teachers, in the year 1980. More things to enjoy telling about the funniest things, those happen in day to day life or earlier.

Chunki was at Moga, that time both of them were singles. It was the month of July 1988. Moga is a district in the state of Punjab, located on Ferozepur and Ludhiana road. It is known for Nestle factory and Adani Food Products.

It rained cats and dogs, drumming whole day long and whole night long. They thought seriously, how they will pass time in that wall of rain. A day before, Chunki told Dinki that it gets flooded sometimes in heavy rain in some parts of Punjab. Both of them rolled up our jeans up to their knees, with umbrellas in hand and a bag at their back and bare foot, they were out into the streets, walking in the lashing and hammering rain. The roads were pooled, they waded through it slashing and splashing water. They bought some eggs, cooked chicken, some pack of Maggis, onion, packets of cigarettes and the last but not the least four bottles of Whisky.

The sky was covered with thick dark clouds, streets and road turned into river. Water was streaming, falling from the cantilevers and broken downpipes like a cascade of water falls.

The roads and streets were isolated; few people were seen in the struggle to reach home. Some people were in rickshaws, in a car or on a motorcycle.

It seemed that rain had sworn an oath, "I will not stop."

That night both of them had non veg in dinner and few pegs of Whisky in the restaurant on the way. Later, they had more and more at home. More rain and more whisky; neither rain stopped nor they. They were busy with school time talk about their teachers, classmates, incidents, picnics and punishment; all were unending, along with long puffs of cigarettes. When did both of them were under the spell of sound sleep, they knew not.

Next morning, the sight was despairing and full sadness. The room was submerged in knee-deep brown, muddy water. Slipper, shoes, broom, dust bin on the floor along

with other waste things were floating in the rushing, swirling and rising water in the rooms. They scrambled and leapt over the bed in panic. It took few minutes to understand and to think what they could do. They were completely stunned. Only the option left for was to take refuge in tin shed on the rooftop.

They picked some rice, potatoes, coffee bottle, pack of Maggie and picnic gas, two plates and two glasses and their most precious treasure, liquor bottles and cigarettes. The moment Chunki open the door to go upstairs, it opened with rushing, surging, gurgling noise of water full of debris, cans and polythene and bags. Water was rising every inch, every minute. They waded through water, stepping upward on the mossy slippery bricked stairs. Second time they took folding beds and with bed spreading and whatever eatable things for cooking they had to cook. Water level had risen up to windows. They tried third time to bring some more cooking things from the room on the roof but water level had risen higher and they huddled back to the roof.

The nearby neighbours were also seen on their roofs in their attic, tarpaulin tents, or tin roofed sheds with their essential things. Some were calling owns one the rooftop, some asking to bring things to the roof; some calling for help in their common local Malwai dialect.

Mostly men were muktsari kurta and payjama, some men were in turban. Women were in Punjabi Salwar long shirt (kurta) and dupatta over shoulders or covering head. Younger were in modern western robes jeans and T-shirt. Long lasting rain did not spare any one whether rich or poor, men or women, children, young or old; all were wet, equally, none less, none more, without any partiality.

Outside drains and roads were covered with dirty brown muddy water with debris and street garbage, sloshing in the shops and houses and tapping against the buildings. Somewhere water had risen up to windows and somewhere up to the rooftops and some houses were destroyed. People were being relocated with their essential things under umbrellas in the wading boats to safer place. Buildings were converted into a refugee camp by relief teams and administrative authorities. Some people loaded with their essential things on their head and shoulders were wading in the flooded water, covering them with polythene. The lashing rain continued mercilessly. At some distant places people were crying desperately for help.

The most heart touching was the sight, people in the rain were carrying covered mortal remains for the cremation or burial through the flooded water to hand over the bodies to the authorities to handle for the last rites with the assistance of priest as the mortal remains can't be kept for days at home. Whether for cremation or burial, they were unable to make out. They knew in flood situation mass burial and mass cremations are preferred, to prevent the potential spread of disease.

Chunki and Dinky placed the things spreading all around in the tin shed, which was having half bricked wall without plaster, iron grills in the window on the two sides in the room with a bulb and a ceiling fan, which was painted but rusted at places. Electric power supply was cut off by Punjab power to prevent short circuit and electrocution.

The scene outside the windows was devastating all around. The shops and houses were partially or completely submerged in the flood. All around the view was as wide spread brown muddy watered lake, as far as it was visible,

up to the horizon. Everything was submerged, houses and shops were more than half under water, only rooftop could be seen of some houses with some helpless people hoping for help; the rice fields and trees were half or more than half under the water. The luggage and cattle were carried away by the strong current. They could see only railway signals, no sign of railway track or railway crossing; half submerged railway bridges were hardly visible in the violent rain. Somewhere far a human figure could be seen sitting on a tree waiting for rescue. A family got trapped in rising flood under Railway underpass.

There was water, water everywhere, all around, on the ground and in the sky but not for drinking at all. Although they were safe from flood but life was not safer.

Moga is the region having flat farms, rich alluvial plain formed by the deposit from five rivers of Punjab. It is mainly known as a "Wheat Bowl of India" and "Land of Five Water." Moga is major agricultural region of Punjab due to rich alluvial plain region, is located near river Satluj. The flood in Moga was due to the overflow and River Sutlej and Beas, as a result of heavy rainfall in the and higher regions of the Himalayas.

Weather was hostile, above that Chunki got sad news about the next neighbour's mother demise, who was in her eighty's. It was necessary for him to go at her funeral. Both of them went to neighbour's home wading through waist-deep water. Mortal remains were at the roof top under tarpaulins tied on the poles. Few neighbour, relatives and friends were present there in raincoats or umbrellas. The cremation was unavoidable. Things for the last rites could not be arranged as it was raining continuously and flooded all around. A Mortal remains was given final wash with

rain water mixed with Ganga jal and cleaned and kept in shroud; which was arranged anyway. It was covered with polythene to keep it dry. For the last rites some Desi Ghee they carried and the remains were carried to especially alternative cremation ground on four wheel cart sloshing and wading through the water. Later it was carried by the mortuary van to alternative cremation ground at higher ground.

What could they do! They themselves were in danger, their life was at risk. They had taken refuge on the rooftop. They returned to their rooftop and bathed in the rain and that was all. Time passes and things are forgotten soon, life comes back to the reality. They boiled some rice or eggs with salt, which was their meal, sometimes in day or early nights. Sometimes they boiled Maggi in rain water whenever they were hungry. They had enough liquor but limited water. That was the only source to keep them busy to pass time and good stock of cigarettes. At the beginning they used mineral water till it finished, then rain water; later no water, they had their drinks neat.

Natural shower was given to them by nature, when they wanted to have or didn't want to have. They played chess, it was long game of hours from gambit to check mate. They didn't keep any time limit to make the move. That was the good time pass. School time talks were never ending. Cigarette and liquor were their two more friends to accompany them. They had limited sources, days after days passed on and on a day their food, liquor, cigarettes and cooking fuel in picnic gas all exhausted. They knew not what to do next, water level was higher in the locality. Only rain water was there left for survival. It was scary and frightening at nights in hammering rain on the tin roof.

Army, Air Force, National Disaster Response Force and other relief teams were immediately in action. Trapped people on the roofs of lower area were relocated to the refugee camps at higher grounds. Food, medicines and material for tents was immediately supplied by the air force helicopters to the flood affected regions.

Communication and transportation systems were badly affected. Dinki could not go to his home or communicate to anyone at home. Days after days passed on in a hope that God will have mercy and the rain will stop.

It started dewatering; the level of water was receding by diverting the water from flooded river, creating levees and pumping.

At last they were down on the ground floor in home. The condition was worst; all the things those were left behind were not of any use. They had to be thrown. The mud and garbage was clinging on the walls, doors and windows. Rooms needed to be repaired, white washed and painted.

They cleaned the rooms, collected all the garbage in the compound of the house. It took them two complete days to collect and throw out the waste.

Dinki stayed with Chunki for four days more, to help Chunki and re-arrange the rooms and the rooms were in little better conditions in two days.

Bread is essential for everyone, both for rich and poor. Some vendors and pedlars were selling things on cycles or on rickshaws in area where flood was bit clear; to earn for their living by selling things, instead keeping locked in shops and leave to stale.

At last, Dinki collected his things whatever had left and started his journey back to his home. At some places land roads were clear but damaged. At many places roads and plains were submerged in water.

Dinki returned home after 15 days. His parents were worried but what could be done. Communication system had totally collapsed. There no was mode of transportation possible in flood.

Life is a challenge, to be facing it strongly.

Gauri And Nandini



Gauri and Nandini were cousins, close friends and neighbours in Chinyalisaur region of Uttarkashi District, Uttarakhand. Chinyalisaur is known for scenic views of forest, mountains and Bhagirathi River at the height of 1100 metres. It's a lush green part of Garhwal Himalayas region.

Gauri was thinking, how good are our owners, they had provided us good barn for protection from extreme weather, sun, cold, wind, rain and hailstones. We had comfortable bedding, dry and clean of thick layer of straw for resting and also a large paddock, with covered area, which our masters had made for us, where we could move around freely. Whenever it was clear and bright day our masters would put us in paddock with food and water. Gauri could see Nandini; we always had nonverbal communication, with our eyes expressions and with "moo and lowing."

Our masters were brother, Badri ji, elder and Kashi ji younger with that relation we were cousins. They had separate house, next to each other, in the same compound. We could converse with each other any time whether we could see each other or not. We were white skinned, with innocent looks; our horns were painted white with red strips, bells were tied around our necks. Our master used to put vermilion tilak daily on our forehead, enhancing our beauty. They also offered prayer to us daily with folded hands and touching our foreheads. Hardly, we could

understand any word but their gestures somewhere touched our hearts.

What a life is it, full of love and cares!

Masters were kind enough, they took our special health care by giving us footbaths and also provided good amount of air space and good bedding. We had proper manger for food and trough for drinking water and we had wide area for moving and clean place to rest with bedding in the barn and paddock.

Many times we loved to go to higher mountain pastures, in summers to graze diverse flora; spend days foraging our favourite vegetation on the steep slopes of the mountains. It was our daily activity. We need it to make energy expenditure for feeding. Our day culminates in producing milk, which is used for making high quality cheese.

We spend daily around 12 hours in resting, 5 hours in multiple small meals; 5 hours in cuddling and ruminating after eating and around 2 hour being milking, which occurs twice a day.

Our village is situated near Bhagirathi; two main rivers originate from Uttarkashi, other is Yamuna.

It was bright and beautiful; warm and sunny of mid-May. Our master had left us free for grazing in the pastures. Every time we used to go on the mountain to graze and use to return home by the evening. This time it was more greenery down, near the river with diverse varieties of flora and good fodder for grazing, I could see all around down the mountain.

We hurried down to the bank of the river, where the banks were far wide and the water was low. Both of us were

enjoying and grazing, really such a tasty and fresh meal we never had. We wanted more so we went on grazing; the thought in our mind was who knows when we will get such a chance to come again. Water level was low, our side of the bank was shallow and little far in the mid river was risen land like a hill with more greenery and more varieties of fodder.

I said to Nandini, "Come, Nandini, let's go there, we will get more tasty fodder there."

"Yes, come Gauri, come, it will be a great fun today."

Our happiness was not long lasting. Hardly after an hour, we heard some gurgling and rumbling sound from a distance. Our minds were still for few moments and were unable to think. Eyes were open wide with fear, there was uncontrolled leakage of waste, as if something stuck in our throat; our heart was knocking against ribs. Sensation of fear was running all across the body in our organs. There was completely lack of coordination in our organs. Our voluntary and involuntary functions were failed.

Feared, Gauri said, "Nandini did you hear? What is that sound?"

"Yes, Gauri, It looks like some trouble is coming towards us. Let's get out of here." said Nandini.

Gauri, "Leave Nandini, let's go, come fast, don't be slow."

Both of us hurried down as fast as we could but muddy brown water was gushing in the small hilly islet. Flowing current was strong enough to carry us away. We didn't dare to jump into the water to cross the river to the bank. Water was increasing every minute. It carried away

everything came in the way, it was full of debris, boulders, bushes, trees and animals.

We could feel, our life was in danger. Both of us were in tears. Suddenly it started raining heavily. Lashing rain was frightening. Both of us moo-ed for help simultaneously but we were far away from the road and the market and the village. Our moo-ing could be hardly audible to anyone. There was hardly any human figure nearby who could hear or see us trapped on the hilly islet. Rain continued on and it was getting cooler and cooler.

“Gauri, it getting darker, night is about to fall. What will happen? Will someone come to save us?” asked Nandini.

“Don’t lose hope, somebody will definitely hear our call or see. We will be rescued soon.” replied Gauri.

Both of us were standing in cold rain water, on the hilly islet in non-stop noise of grumbling water. We were shivering in cold, our moo-ing changed to lowing. Our eyes were wet more with tears than with water of the rain.

Hours after hours passed, we kept on waiting. It was cold, dark night with dark clouds covering the sky. It was raining continuously. Visibility reduced in dark rainy night. Chances were getting fewer and fewer with the passage of time. No one heard us, no one passed from there and no one came to help us.

They saw a cow and some sheep were being carried away in the flooded river, moo-ing and bleating for help. No one was there to hear their call for help except us. Ha, what could we do, we ourselves were helpless and waiting for help. One good thing was that; we were lucky at least could not be drowned by the overwhelming river.

Our master must be worried about us, as we did not return home in time and they must be looking for us. They must be searching us somewhere else. We were thinking and asking each other, what we can do to draw the attention of our masters toward us.

The night was dark, wet, cold and long with no end for both of us.

Nandini said, "I hate you rain, you are cruel and merciless. Why are you not stopping? We want to go home. O! Rain stop, please stop. We will fall sick. Give us some time to go home."

Gauri said, "I hate you night, you are dark, cold, long and sometimes too cruel. Why don't you get over? Go away soon. We want to go home. See, we are frightened and feeling sick. When will you get over? Rise up the dark curtain as early as you can. Let the people see us and rescue us or we will die here today and we will blame you for our death."

That cold rainy night was hard to pass for both of us. We were cursing rain and night as they were not at all helping us.

Next day early morning, everything around was faded with the sheet of mist. Far on the mountain, we saw a hooting car running on the winding road of the misty mountain. It stopped and a man in khaki came out with a binoculars. Looking all around, towards us then constantly looked in our direction.

I think we were located by these people. We had lost the energy in the struggle to fight against the battle with the nature but our heart was filled with hope for life.

I said, "Look Nandini, somebody has seen us here. Soon somebody will come to rescue us. Just bear with patience and courage."

Nandini opened her eyes and gathered her whole strength to look and stand. She said, "Thank God, somebody is here, at last."

Our masters Badri ji and Kashi ji certainly had reported our missing complaint. "See, Nandini, how kind are our masters. How deeply they love and care about us." said Gauri.

More people started pouring in, more jeeps, cars, tractors and crane along with the villagers and our masters. Our hopes for rescued turned from feeble to strong enough.

"Thank God! At last you send the savours." Said Nandini.

We saw more and more people from police, state disaster response force, local specially trained professionals to rescue animals, some were show watchers among them. They were in cars, public carriers and crane; many were on foot. Rescuers were coming down the road towards the river with strong wooden logs, harness and nets.

Four of them swam to towards islet with rope tied at their back, held by others on the bank of the Bhagirathi. The relief team people tied the rope across the either side and transported logs and harness towards our side on the islet. They also created a wooden bridge with logs. First, Nandini was harnessed and tied with ropes to prevent from moving erratically; it may assist in pulling and keeping her in proper direction.

Nandini had grown weak and looking ill. Team shifted her first, some holding her and supporting her on the logs,

others people were pulling her to the other side of Bhagirathi. Nandini was feared as the strong muddy undercurrent of the river was frightening. The fear was combination of all fears fear of water (aquafobia), fear of deep water (thalassophobia) and fear of flooding (antlophobia).

Honestly, I was also deeply fear struck, with similar phobias, we were under loss of normalcy and gripped under fear of life.

People of rescue team were trained and strong, for them it's a daily task. They didn't have to face any big problem to bring us on the safer side of the river.

Our both owners Badri and Kashi were waiting for us on the other side of the river. On the arrival of Nandini they put their arm around her neck and starting caressing her.

Next was my turn to be harnessed and tied with ropes and to be pulled and pushed with the support. I was safe on the other side of the violent river. The owners treated me similarly like Nandini.

We were stressed, fatigued, suffering from hypothermia and under temporary breakdown.

We were still panic struck, trembling had faster heart rate, low body temperature and tried making aggressive efforts to escape but were completely helpless and could not do anything.

We were trapped and stranded for 20 hours on that islet surrounded by flooded river and rescue team took 4 hours to rescue us from flooded river.

We were elevated into the public carrier over the wooden inclined planks. We were taken to government veterinary hospital.

Doctors and medical team took immediate medical care, vaccinated and footbaths and liquid syrups were given to us for strength and to prevent disease or illness.

After all, at last, we reached our home.

The first thing at home was that our masters worshipped us with prayers, tilak holding worship plate with lit diya in it. Both of us were provided with healthy food for strength.

Rescue team of State Disaster Response Force provided us with numbering and tracking device.

It was the end of our fight for flight.

Nandini and me, both of us will for remain thankful to the people who were involved in rescuing us. Thanks to our masters and Thank God.

About Stories



Kedarnath: The story is about a family, encountering an unexpected flash flood and struggling to return home.

The Missing Child: It is a story about missing German child of hardly two year in Maha Kumbh at Haridwar. Encounter each other by chance after twenty five years.

The Road: A story about the struggle of friends to return home, after encountering the unexpected situations. They returned after 14 days instead of 4 days. Everyone was worried about their missing.

Flood 88: Chunki and Dinki, trapped in the devastating flood situation in Moga, Punjab.

Gauri & Nandini: Stranded on the islet in the Bhagirathi River at Chinyalisaur in Uttarkashi region for a night.