



**TRANSLATION**

**An Assamese Story**

**ETA BYARTHO FANTASY ARU KISU NAWSHTA SARITRA**  
from the collection of short stories called ‘Jaatra Enekoie’

Original By **PRARTHONA SAIKIA**

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**AN ASTOUNDING NARRATIVE**

**AN UNSUCCESSFUL FANTASY AND SOME SPOILED  
CHARACTERS**

Translated by

**SUBHAJIT BHADRA**

(Based on an Assamese story called ‘ Eta Byartho Fantasy aru Kisu Nawshta Saritra’ from the collection of short stories called ‘Jaatra Enekoie’ by Prarthona Saikia)

He once said this to her. She heard the saga of his desire and that special song and without wasting time any further, she called him ‘crazy as you were’ and burst into the peel of laughter.

The breeze that had spread the sweet-smelling scent from the wild flowers at once caught their attention. Suddenly Himangshu became exuberant – “ O you all, (Clapping his hands with force, he took a deep breath ) the smell is simply fantastic.”

(Dragging Shahjahan nearer to him, he patted on his back) “Friend, let’s go and seek the source of the scent.”

Shajahan did not utter anything. Bowing his head down,he sat on a rock lying on the edge of the hilly road.

Seeing the indifference and inattentive reactions of Shahjahan despite the warm proposal from Himangshu , Pranjali and Hiranya came beside Himangshu.

They even looked insipid in comparison with Himangshu. But they were, at last, ready to go with Himangshu. When Himangshu, Pranjali and Hiranya went farther scaling the sides of the small hillock, Bhaskar, Shahjahan and Kartik Dutta sat on the rocks lying on the edges of the



road. Shahjahan became restless after having torn away the bunch of leaves lying by the road. He offered a proposal to Bhaskar in a hurried manner --

“Let’s go back ,brother Bhaskar.” He knelt down like small boy near Bhaskar looked upto his eyes as if he were begging for his mercy.

Bhaskar gave the last puff to the fag end of the cigarette and looked at Shahjahan’s eyes. A small line of laughter was visible on one corner of his lips. He said in an unclear voice ---

“Is death so easy ?”

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He did not go up the hills with Himangshu and others . He knew. He had known about their plans very well. But he was also unavoidably busy. He had many things left to do ! He became busy once more. He thought, which book should he lay his hands on—Das Kapital ! Oh no. he would listen to Suman’s songs – that special song and read out the poems of Phalguni Roy. He turned on the music-system. He took the poems of Phalguni Roy on his hands...he started reading....

Many works are still left - still left to read the thieves’ journals

The world is still left to be seen through the spectacles of Manik Banerjee

Still left to ride the newly coloured tram causing the death of Jibanananda Das

Still left to get hooked up with a woman with a smooth pair of thighs

Still left to sit with folded knees by the silent graves of Michael and Henrietta

On top of the flowers of grass spread all across

Many works are still left to be done.

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Himangshu climbed down carrying a bunch of wild flowers in his hands. Pranjali and Hiranya also followed him. Everyone’s face was brightened with smiles. Himangshu felt doubly encouraged. His rough voice was coming like the falls of the small hillock being obstructed by rocks in its way down.—

“ Oh dear ! A bunch of flowers... they must be some kind of orchids. Have a look, here !”

Himangshu quickly passed on the bunch of flowers in the hands of Shahjahan. Shahjahan unwillingly smelt the violet flowers. A strange kind of smell entered his nose.

He shrank his nose –



“O shit ! the unwanted smell of this bunch...”

Everybody seemed to roar while laughing. At the end of the laughter session , Hiranya forwarded a bunch of white flowers before everyone with pride which he had brought hiding at his back. The air was soon filled up with the scent of wild flowers which seemed to madden Himangshu a while ago. With a gloomy face, Shahjahan looked furtively at the bunch. A bunch of ‘gutimali’ flower was visible in Hiranya’s hands.

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“Fie ! such a bad smell this is !” He put his hand on the nose. Having sat opposite to her, he smoked out his cigarette and looked at her. Being sentimental, she sat gravely and quietly with a bitter face like a ‘bashful and speechless new bride.’

“ Hello dear ! Will you listen to a song ?”, he asked with a deep tone and feeling. She did not utter a single word. He opened the window of the room facing the north. Showing the ‘sotiana’ tree lying by the room , he said---

“ I told you about this tree, dear.”

She uttered a word ‘ish’ and she sprang up from where she was sitting and shut the window forcefully. She looked at him angrily and told –

‘How crazy you are !’

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She was listening to the song repeatedly in the walkman. She took away the cassette from him by force. After having listened, she rewound and listened to it again.

‘Hang, hang yourself ,Dipali Mahato

The towel is lying on the branch of the tree

Whose shameful daily activity drove you to tie the knot on your neck .

.....

.....

The deadbodies of the four daughters

Kept close to the tree

Now Dipali is observing the branches of the banyan tree...’



When she left her body lazily on the bed, the voice of Kabir Suman rang up in her ears and when she tried to sleep keeping her eyes shut, the image of a helpless mother lying close to the ‘sotiana’ tree, came up before her eyes.

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“ To hell with democracy ! Voting, Minister, M.L.A. President and people ; there seems no existence of people in the democracy.” Himangshu spitted.

“.....For that reason... for that reason only we wanted to fight against this system.” Hiranya said so removing the large dangling locks from his forehead

“.....but what’s the benefit ? Before we could dream of breaking the system , all the documents having details of our modus operandi reached the hands of the system-keepers , shit !” Pranjal became really excited.

Shahjahan began in a slow voice –

“Look brother, Himangshu ! I told you this earlier also that there is no use dreaming of breaking the system. If we can do something special being within the system....”

“ Leave your leftist propaganda of the student movement. Those bloody hounds call ourselves as naxalites, and condemn us as escapists....and themselves act as dogs loyal to their masters, they drag the feet of those who fly the flag of democracy high...all...all of them are no better than young ones of pigs..”

Everyone remained silent till Himangshu cooled down. Sipping his third peg of whisky, Bhaskar seemed to say to himself –

“ Meaningless....simply meaningless . In reality all these words have no base at all. Some abstract principles.....democracy, socialism all are meaningless....!”

With a long yawn, Himangshu said –

“ For that sake , friends ! We made elaborate arrangements for that sake only.”

“...But brother Himangshu, hiding this way , have we really...” Pranjal covered Hiranya’s face

without allowing him to speak any further—

“...I have also thought about this. But, is it worth dying without doing anything substantial ?.. There will be no change even if we die ! Therefore....”

“Go , and live free from this moment..... Why should you lay down your lives listening to this Himangshu ? You should not. Better you continue to live. Everyone has got the right to



live...like those nocturnal bats.....I've just told you about my decision.” Himangshu would die.

Because he had no interest to live . He was very much worthless and helpless ! Himangshu emptied the remaining amount of whisky at a single draught and stared at the bottle.

Sitting in a corner, Kartik Dutta, too, stared closely at fire. Looking at the fire shining in his glass, he told slowly ---

“Death has become a necessity. I have also felt it like Himangshu. We could do really nothing. There’s really none who can make us free from the bondage ! We can’t simply untie ourselves. The globalization has kept people amused. We have realized, observed, heard. But could do nothing. It’s better to die than to live as inert, speechless, sightless like a dead man ! Let me accept it...”

None had spoken anything for a long time. Himangshu and comrades continued to sit around the burning fire in the hilly forest. Sometimes the sound of wild insects could be heard from a distance. When the burning fire was beginning to turn ash, Pranjal lightly messaged his eyes and stood up. He took away the bottle of remaining whisky forcibly and prepared a peg for everyone. Throwing two pieces of fire-wood into the source of the fire, he almost shouted –

“Cheers ! Then this happens to be our last night.”

Everyone stood up one by one. Everyone held his glass in his hand and advanced towards Pranjal’s glass. A ‘ting’ sound could be heard. Before the sound finished its echoing, everyone shouted ---

“Cheers !”

Then , the next dawn was not too far away.

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He kept a close look to ‘Sotiana’ tree through the window. Sotiana is a firewood tree. He buzzed in his mind and laughed. Lighting a new cigarette, he continued to look at the tree. Suddenly it crossed his mind that Himangshu and his men had been hanging from the branch of the tree. They were united as they had some desires and unwillingnesses in common. They have a common desire even now also. All of them wanted to die together. He also wanted to.

But he did not want to die by jumping from the peak of the hillock, but by hanging from the ‘sotiana’ tree. Like the mother described in Suman’s song. Like the mother failing to look after the children, fed poison to her children and she died by hanging in the ‘sotiana’ tree ! ...he remembered her. Even she was there with Himangshu, Pranjal and others. She joined them as soon as she left the left-wing students organization. Even her father’s administration could not bind this freedom-loving girl. During the election , she aptly and whole-heartedly



canvassed against her father in different areas of the constituency. Her father only won the elections most of the times and she cried as loudly as she could putting her hands on her head or forehead. On the day prior to the election date, her father would distribute carfuls of money, clothes and mosquito-nets in front of her eyes and showed his supremacy. They did not tell her about their decision to commit suicide....only a few days ago , she divulged a ‘master-plan’ to them. She told about their positions in the forthcoming election ! ...and she added that she believed that a revolution would take place one day. People would come down on the streets putting off their shirts of the globalization....could my dream go in waste! She would never know the reason behind his death or that of Himangshu and his comrades ! They had nothing to write about themselves !.. Should he write something to her ! – he thought. Specially at least from his side... No, he would not write anything to her..he would rather commit suicide before it was morning... The sun was about to rise in the east.

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They did not utter a single word while they were coming down the hilly terrains. They walked as they were habituated. None of them had the enthusiasm to talk or to have eye-contacts with one another. They came down to the nadir of the barbarism from the zenith of the civilization. All of them were naked or coverless. Having reached the peak of the hillock , they were unable to face the death and they fled away from there like timid individuals .

They once desired to get ready to jump and fly the air from the hilltop. Himangshu cried “Good bye, friends.”...The sun that looked like the yolk of an egg gradually brightened before their eyes..... a flock of birds flew in.....the hilltop was echoing the sound of the birds. The birds seemed to defy the height of the hill and gliding along deeper and deeper in the sky. The height of the hill seemed nothing to them. Himangshu stayed back. As also Pranjal, Hiranya and Shahjahan. Bhaskar was static. Then Kartik Dutta also stepped back. After sometime all of them did the same – Pranjal, Hiranya and Shahjahan. Himangshu dragged back Bhaskar with a force. Himangshu murmured with his dry lips – “We’ll fight till the end of the pain.”

Himangshu could really understand that he had wanted to cover his weaknesses. The talk seemed to be really unnecessary.

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Sitting under the ‘sotiana’ tree, he also felt it -- unnecessary....death was unnecessary. What’s the meaning—of dying at one’s own will ! There were a lot of reasons to continue living..... he had still to understand how the society got divided into classes.....how men are divided in the name of communities.... of countries. Only Heaven knows how much was left to be known, understood, seen....nothing could be done with regard to them and the pain. For which kind of pain he would own death as ‘means’ ....was he really helpless like the mother ! No, no....time was still there. He had much time to hope for a positive change. At least time



should be there.....like her dream....and the most importantly, he had a life to live...keeping aside the society and the country....both she and he had a separate life.....

He sat on the grasses under the 'sotiana' tree. He dreamt a dream in the sunshine of the morning.....an unsuccessful fantasy was hanging in the 'sotiana' tree. All his words made inroads into her mind, like that mother, my mind wanted to swing from the 'sotiana' tree rather than leading a 'meaningless' life...She again pressed the 'play' button on her walkman again...she listened to the song and remembered his lines simultaneously...she thought for whom death was very much necessary-- for that mother or for her. All of a sudden she thought that death was necessary for herself only....at a young age, she collected funds for the students' organization in the box made of cardboard...actually she started to weave her dreams....but when she grew up, she found that the political equations under the cover of the students' organization were different from her ideals...She left the organization when she felt that those were all gimmicks under the banner of the leftist ideologies....she came across Pranjali and others....she held public meetings against her father in every election....seeing dried and gloomy face of mother, she could not leave her home also. Her father became indifferent to her....in every election, her father made her realize how unsuccessful she was...and even after that....and after that she expected a full-fledged revolution...no, no she was mistaken...in reality she had nothing besides loneliness, failure etc. She was defeated. She was badly defeated...and for that reason, death became essential for her..yes, according to her, it was better for her to hang from the 'sotiana' tree than leading a meaningless life...

She switched off the moving ceiling fan. She drew out a white side-cloth from somewhere and dragged the table right under the fan...she placed a chair on top of that...for a moment she thought about him...then afterwards the mother....that special song of Kabir Suman rang up in her ears...the 'sotiana' tree lying to the north of her room appeared before her eyes....

.....She lay hanging.

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