

"North East Made My Life Brighter!"

The sun smiled brightly at my dark side of life as I woke up from a long sleep. For the first time in my 16 years of life, I slept so peacefully. As the truck, which was my home since the previous night, came to a halt, I opened my eyes fully. I sat upright on the stack of hay at the back of the truck as the clucking sound of the chickens came from a nearby field. I didn't know where I was. It was a beautiful sight! There were hills, clean water, greenery, women in the farms plucking leaves, and just a lot of hills! I was excited to see a place where there was no dust and pollution, as in my city, Mumbai, we never get to see such clean roads and sight. As I was exploring the place with my eyes, the driver of the truck came behind, as he saw me day dreaming behind his truck, he began to shout, "Kun beh toi? Mur truck or pispahale kio thiyo hoi aso? Ketia pora thiyo hoi aso hah? Bhaag yaar pora!" I didn't understand a word, but he seemed to be very angry, so I ran away. I ran really fast, maybe because my whole life I have been running, from people, from problems, from situations, from everything! While running I looked back to see whether the driver is still in sight or not, he was nowhere to be seen. So while my legs were still running, I looked at the front and boom! I bumped to a lady almost my grandma's age. I fell down but she was so tough, she was still standing. She gave me a hand and said "Aha, utha. Eiphale aha." I took her help and stood up. "Dukh pala ni? Besi bikhaise ni? Bola, mur ghoroi bola moi olop molom logai dim. Bola." She said. I looked at her blankly, which I guess, made her realise that I don't understand this language she was speaking in. Then she asked "You know Assamese!?" I denied. "I said that if you got hurt you can come to my house and I will apply you medicine." She explained. She seemed to be sweet and I didn't know where to go, so I went to her place. The house was small and had a different smell. I sat on the chair and the grandma came with a green looking paste. She sat on the ground and applied that on my knee and elbow where I got hurt. Then she asked me about my parents. I told her, "I don't know where they are. I hate them." She was confused and said, "You shouldn't hate them. What wrong did they do?" I explained, "I live in an orphanage. My parents left me when I was 2 years old. My mom comes to visit me sometimes but I hate her. She says she left me forcibly. But she lies. I know. I don't wanna live in the orphanage. If she loves me then why she doesn't come and take me with her?" To which grandma smiled and said, "Have you heard the folk tale 'Kari'? It explains you very rightly that in family, you may think that the other person is wrong and you may cut ties with them, but at the end you realise that they did it for a very sweet reason. You should talk to your mom. She might be right." Then she told me the tale of kari. It was a beautiful story. After that she showed me her childhood photos. For once in my life, I had such a happy time. She showed me her photos from the festival Bihu, Hornbill and sekrenyi festival, Torgya monestry festival, Chapchar kut and many other festivals and fairs of northeast that they celebrate with pride. She showed me her travelling pictures to all the states of the Northeast. She told me stories about her friends from different religions and how they enjoy their time together. Her taste in music was phenomenal. To this, she replied, "I was born in Shillong, the music capital of India. Maybe that's the reason!" I smiled.

After a long chat, she brought me lunch. The food consisted of everything that I haven't tried in my life, except for rice! She said that the thali consisted of mutton, duck, chicken, pigeon, rice, axoni pork, pickled bamboo shoots and bhoot jholokiya which were some of the major food consumed here. I took

one bite and it was Heavenly delicious. There were so many flavours mixed together so well. After that she brought Tekeli Pitha for dessert. I already ate too much but couldn't resist it. It was so Good! Then she said " You should try Komolar Kheer, Narikol Pitha, Bora Chaulor Payas,and Goroor Payash. They are some of my favourites. The next time you visit me we will eat these and we will travel to all the places here in the northeast. " I smiled and nodded.

Then she took me to her field which had so many flowers, plants and crops. For the first time ever I saw the plantation of tea leaves in such a vast quantity! The aroma of tea came from a long diactance. It was so refreshing! Then she took me where the women were weaving and crafting. They all had a unique way of doing so. I never saw this kind of love and lifestyle in the cities! I asked grandma the name of the place. She said its " Haflong, Assam." I heard it for the first time but whatever it is, it's my favourite place now. I was eager to visit more places in northeast but I had to go to the orphanage and for once hear my mother. I told grandma that I have to go but I don't know how. I confessed that I was fed up of my orphanage and my mother coming there everyday and not taking me with her,so I ran away and sat in the truck which led me to her. She then called her son, who was also a truck driver, and explained him everything in the Assamese language . Then he told me to sit, this time at the front seat of the Truck! Phew. Finally I didn't have to spend an entire day being a thief. Then I bid goodbye to grandma and promised to visit her soon.Then she handed me a packet of refreshing tea leaves and a murti of Durga Maa. And said "Don't ever say again that you don't have a mother. Even if you still consider your mother wrong, you have two mothers who love you. Me and Durga maa!" I hugged her tightly. And then hopped on the truck. As I was leaving I realised I am taking a lot from this place along! The knowledge of different food and festivals, the folk tale which made me aware to listen the story of both the sides and these refreshing gifts! I am also taking her son and the truck to my city! And now finally I know what the driver meant, I was right , he was really angry! Now I also know the name of the place my eyes were Obsessed with. But the best thing which I'm taking along with me are the memories of the places I visited through grandma's album . As I wandered, we reached my city.And alas! My adventure ended with the truck and the son going back to the most beautiful mother, while I'm here waiting for my mother to prove me wrong and take me back to her life.