

Translations



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Antari

**Eagam Khaling*

*Translated from Nepali by **Rathika Subba*



Antari'sⁱ head is aching. She has been picking tea leaves all day in the tea garden. Her son Shyam is memorizing his school lessons for some time. Shyam's father, Harke comes home, drunk as usual, barging into the room where Shyam is studying. Seeing Shyam reading like that, he is silent for a while, and then starts shouting, "Ae Shyam! Where is your mother? Is she not

ashamed even though she has a husband at home? If I don't chop off her supervisor's head, then I am not my father's son!"

Shyam sits silently without saying anything. After shouting for a while Harke goes to the lower village. Shyam starts reading again. Antari starts preparing dinner as if nothing has happened. Shyam's father comes home after a while, snatches the book from him and then tears it to pieces! The louder the son cries, the louder the father screams, "You won't do anything by studying, don't study, nothing happens by studying. You won't be getting a job. I utterly dislike your mother's and your behavior."

Harke kicks the hearth when helpless Anatri is trying to light the fire with a 'sote'ⁱⁱ. Then he starts beating her everywhere. She endures the beating. Shyam starts crying loudly seeing his mother beaten in this manner. One of the neighbors comes out and asks Dal Bahadur who is standing on the hillock yonder, listening, "Who is shouting down there uncle? Is there a fight?"

- "It's not a fight; it's a spectacle of Harke's! Every evening, he comes drunk and beats his son and wife. Poor Antari never has any peace! Harke's father also used to beat not only his sons, daughters and wife but also his parents. Now the father's ailment has affected the son." Saying this, Dalbahadur uncle walks towards his house.

Next morning Dalbahadur uncle does not know what to say to Harke when he visits the family. How to advise this man? Harke is chopping firewood in the small yard in front of the kitchen; Antari is kindling the fire and Shyam is pasting the torn pages of the book one by one with the cooked rice grains. For the entire day Antari did not feel like working in the tea garden. Her whole body continued to ache. When she is sitting in a corner of the tea garden, her co-workers advise her, "How long will you endure this? Go to your parents' house instead and stay." But Antari remains silent and sits like a lifeless statue.

ⁱ Antari means the fifth sister and is a common noun.

ⁱⁱ A wind blowing pipe for lighting the fire made of bamboo and iron.

Note: The photo is from the internet.

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***Eagum Khaling**, born on 14th November, 1979 is from Chandraman Dhura, Rangmook Tea Garden, Sonada, Darjeeling. He has completed his M.Phil. in Philosophy from Vinayak Mission University, Tamil Nadu in 2008. His doctoral thesis is on “Kante’s Philosophy of Physics” and he obtained his Ph.D. degree from the Department of Philosophy, University of North Bengal in 2021. He is the first researcher from the university to research on Philosophy of Science. His first anthology of poetry is *Anubhutika Laharharu* (2001). Apart from poetry, he is also a writer of short stories and editor of periodicals like *Muhar, No.1*, published by Sadhbhawana Pariwar (2008) and *Parivartan, No.11*, published by Ramakrishna B.T. College, Darjeeling (2014-2015). He has also been the guest editor of *Prerna, No.1*, published from Miling Tea Garden in 2008.

He started his creative journey with poetry writing. He has written poetry in Hindi and English. He has been awarded by various organisations and by Short-story Society, Nepal. He is a regular writer of poetry, stories, essays and articles in various on-line and off line journals and has published widely.

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