

The Child in me cried "give me my rights. I have a right to live with dignity and honour. I am the future of the nation. Do not neglect me otherwise the nation would suffer. If I blossom into flower, it would make the surrounding divine but if I am suppressed, tortured and neglected, I may snatch your sleep and revengeful."

It was a soliloquy and pricking of my inner soul that caused intense pain which pushed me out of my sleep well past midnight and left me sweating. It happened few months after my induction in the Committee when I became aware of the gruesome, unpleasant and disturbing events concerning the child. The plight of the children for safety, security, shelter and nourishment startled me. I put my head down in shame for the abuse and neglect the children face in the society. They are treated as chattels. This was the initial experience I had while functioning as member of the Committee.

Very often travelling in car we find children begging for money knocking at the windscreen only to be denied any alms. Children being forced to work at way side eateries and Dhabas both in city, suburbs and highways disregarding child labour laws by taking advantage of the inaction of the law enforcing agencies. Abject poverty and apathy of all the stakeholders notwithstanding several laws and United Nations Declarations recognizing child rights and several 'dos' and 'donts', situation remained the same until Juvenile Justice system found a patriarch in Justice Madan B. Lokur.

Today's children are tomorrow's citizen and shall shape the destiny of the nation in future. Welfare of the children

is of utmost importance and must be given topmost priority. Counselling, rehabilitation and re-integration with the society are the main objectives of the 2015 Act. While functioning as a part of the Committee, I have found that sensitization at all levels is called for and a general awareness of the child rights at all levels is required. The superintendent of the Homes is the person to whom a child would look for any need and it is all the more necessary that proper persons should be selected for the said Office. On 9<sup>th</sup> February, 2018, the Supreme Court took the extant Government to task for the "tardy if not virtual non-implementation" of Juvenile Justice Laws, and ignoring the plight of "voiceless if not silenced" children of India.

The lackadaisical attitude of the Government and authorities towards children are shocking. The conditions of children in shelter and observation homes are abysmal. There are an increased number of vacancies in Juvenile Justice Institutions. Profile of each child is to be made to understand his needs and, accordingly, to provide remedial measures. Conventional educations along with vocational trainings are to be encouraged. The latent talent of a child needs to be identified and nurtured. Idle brain is devil's workshop. The children should be engaged in activities to build physical and mental strength.

The Government is expected to create some sort of employment opportunities to ensure that the juveniles return to the society's mainstream after they complete their sentence and do not commit crime again. A meaningful rehabilitation of juveniles is what we look for and expect all the stakeholders to work in

that direction. Special attention is required for the juvenile offenders who are the truly neglected children and who are kept in institutions completely isolated from the rest of the world and leaves them to their own device with scant attention being paid to well-being and rehabilitation. They were completely ostracized. However, now the situation has changed by reason of the 2015 Act, where much emphasis is laid on restoration and rehabilitation of the CCLs.

A child does not require sympathy but affection. A child requires care, love, respect and is entitled to a decent living. He is entitled to education. There are various projects in place which are supposed to address child rights and child education but, in reality, they are not properly implemented. The children are not getting enough exposure and the benefits of various schemes in place due to lack of initiative of the stakeholders has aggravated their misery. However, the things have started improving and the stakeholders are now more vigilant. Unless we have a clear picture of what we are expected to do and a road map with milestones is in place the child rights would remain an illusion and only confine to the statute book.

"Best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children", is what Article 3 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) says and was ratified by India in 1992, and which now needs to be ensured and implemented. The term "best interest" broadly describes the well-being of a child being determined by various factors and individual circumstances such as age, the maturity level of

a child, the presence or



absence of parents and environment and experience of the child.

The Juvenile Justice Boards in most of the Districts were in shabby condition. However with the intervention of our Chairperson and the constant monitoring on the functioning of JJB, the things have started improving and there has been transformation of JJB in quite a few districts as well as in Government run Homes. Modern attractive child friendly structures arrayed with beautiful pictures and modern facilities have been introduced in JJB as well as in some of the Homes. We need to change our mindset. Fortunately, under the able guidance of our Chairperson and active participation of Justice Tandon, the things have started looking better and we hope a better future for the children.

I only hope and trust that all the stakeholders would work in unison to achieve the objectives of the 2015 Act and bring smile, hope and joy in their face.

There is no place for complacency and lots of things are to be done for the children. The children are lovely, sweet and adorable and for me "miles to go before I sleep and miles to go before I sleep".

**SOU MEN SEN**  
MEMBER OF THE JUVENILE  
JUSTICE COMMITTEE,  
CALCUTTA HIGH COURT

## SUCCESS STORY :

### STORY OF LILA SAHOO (name changed)

A girl of sixteen years from Bankura slum area and student of IX brought before the Juvenile Justice Board with allegation under Sections 341/323/325 of the Indian Penal Code. She was found guilty and given in probation for two years under Legal cum Probation Officer. Due to the incident she dropped out from her school. With the help of the Probation Officer her education in regular school had been restored. She appeared and succeeded in Madhyamik Examination in the Year 2017. Her early marriage attempted by her parents could be restrained. Department of Women Development and Social Welfare, Government of West Bengal provided her benefits under "Kanyashree" scheme. She is now continuing her education with a dream to have a successful career.

### STORY OF PAYEL DAS

**Payel Das** of Prabartak Home, Chandannagore has impressed the committee with her command over Bengali literature and passion for poetry. She has scored 71.4% marks in the Higher Secondary Examination and aspires to be a teacher in Bengali language. She wrote two soulful poems in Bengali during her interaction with the committee. She has now been absorbed as a staff of the home and is presently functioning as "Home Mother" in the Prabartak Home.

#### নিভুল সৃষ্টি পায়েল দাস

কোনো মাধুর্যপূর্ণ সম্পদ যেটা আমার,  
সেটা যেমন সকলের জন্য নয়,  
তেমনি কোনো সুন্দর দ্রব্য যেটা সকলের জন্য,  
সেটা আবার আমার প্রাপ্য নয়।

পৃথিবীতে একটা সুন্দর সম্পর্ক ভিন্ন এক স্থায়ী সম্পর্কে আবদ্ধ,  
কেন-না তা সকলের জন্য উজাড় প্রাপ্ত নয়,  
কারণ, ভিন্ন সম্পর্ক সমূহ সম্পর্কের দ্বারা আবদ্ধ।।

একটি গোলাপ নির্দিষ্ট একজন যত্নবান ব্যক্তির কাছে  
শুকিয়ে যাবার পরেও, তার সেই সৌন্দর্য স্থায়ী অবস্থান করে।  
কেন না সেই সৌন্দর্যপূর্ণ গোলাপটি,  
ব্যক্তির জন্য জন্মস্থিত এবং তার কাছেই শোভাপ্রাপ্ত।।

কিন্তু সেই গোলাপটি যখন যত্নহীন সমূহ ব্যক্তির হাতে পড়ে,  
তখন তার শোভাতেও দূরের কথা,  
সমস্ত পাপড়িগুলো তৎক্ষণাৎ ঝড়ে পড়ে যায়।।

কারণ, সুন্দর সবসময় সুন্দরের দ্বারা শোভিত হয় এবং স্থায়ীপ্রাপ্ত হয়।

পৃথিবীতে ভগবান যা কিছু সৃষ্টি করেন তা সকলের জন্য নয় -  
সেই সৃষ্টি স্থায়ী সম্পর্কের জন্য সৃষ্টিপ্রাপ্ত হয়।।

#### Flawless Creation Payel Das

*Like a beautiful treasure which is mine  
Is not for all and sundry  
So a thing of beauty meant for all  
Is not for me, much as I try.*

*A lovely relationship in this world  
Is tied to a differently permanent relation  
It is hardly open to all  
As different relations are tied in succession.*

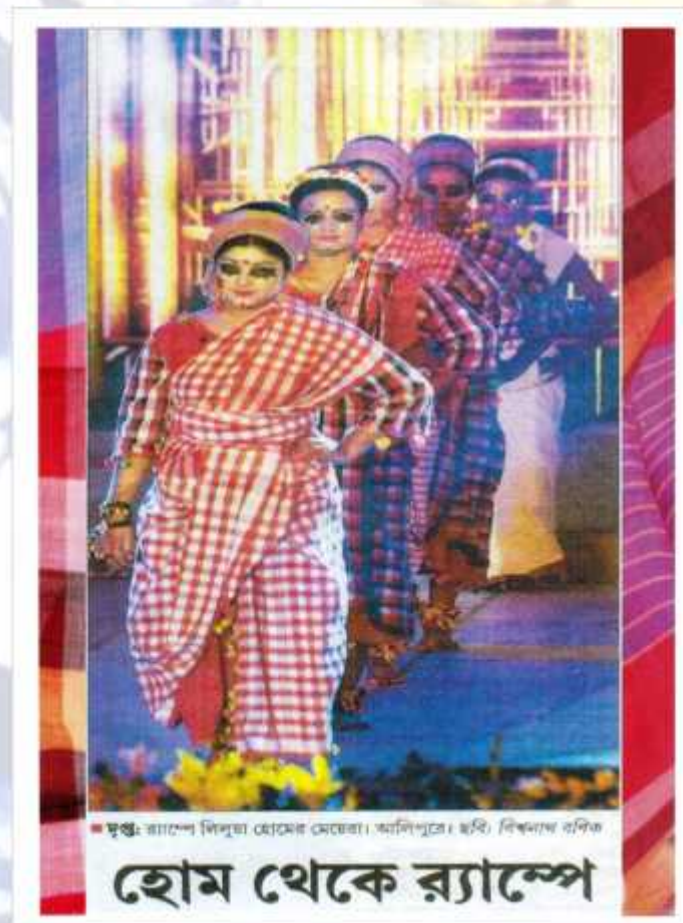
*The beauty of a rose survives  
In the hands of a caring person  
Even after it has withered  
Because for its existence the person is the reason*

*But that same rose  
When in uncaring hands it falls  
It blooms no more  
Sheds on the ground all its petals.*

*Beauty is enhanced and gains permanence  
Only amidst beauty, its reference.*

*Whatever God has created in this earth  
Is not meant for everyone  
Only such creation is permanent  
That is meant for permanent relation.*

## ACHIEVEMENTS



The West Bengal Commission for Child Rights has also recently organized at Uttirno, a State Auditorium in Kolkata, a fashion show where 33 girls, aged between 10 to 16 years and some of them are victims of human trafficking, of the State's largest Shelter Home – Liluah Girls Home, participated and walked the

ramp, wearing designer clothes and accessories designed by their fellow inmates who are currently being trained by **Bibi Russell**, a Bangladesh based international designer. The aim behind the initiative is positive skill development, apart from re-integration of these children into the mainstream.



***Dear Friend***  
***Bipul Mondal***  
***Class-III, Purba Medinipur***

*Why do you brood?  
O my friend, my dear  
Look up, for you I have come  
To the fair  
O my friend, O my dear  
Drop in your mouth a sweet  
Let Ma Durga  
Make your life a happy treat.*

***Bird of My Dream***  
***Sikha Mahapatra***  
***Class-VI, Purba Medinipur***

*A bird with plumage green  
Beak so red and gay  
What a song she sang for me  
Only yesterday.*

The Commission for Child Rights has played an important role in showcasing the talents of children staying at Homes in its publication "HULLOR", a quarterly Bengali Magazine, first published in March, 2017. The Magazine publishes articles, poems, drawings and

paintings of the children from the Homes as well. The Magazine also contains valuable articles on various topics written by scholars and eminent persons in lucid language which certainly will help the children to educate and develop themselves.

**Paintings of CCLs from Dhrubashram**

