

A Transformation

– Gopal Krishna Choudhury



On a bright winter day in 1998, the sunshine on the terrace of our Architecture building at Siddaganga Institute of Technology at Tumkur (a suburb of Bangalore) was really pleasant. During mid-day break, most of our faculty members from the staff room gathered around in one corner of the terrace to bask in the warm sunshine. Besides the faculty members, particularly happy were the students, mostly girls, who were merrily loitering on the terrace. Nature was at her best with flowers and foliage all around.

I had been standing in front of my room, slightly away from the crowd, enjoying myself and remembering my good old student days during the 50s. Presently I noticed Shyama – an intelligent and dusky first year student of our department, having looks close to that of “Kanya Kumari” sauntering towards me. She looked straight into my eyes with the hint of a smile. After a minute or so, I must admit, I felt nervous: all kinds of thoughts – white, black and grey – crowded my mind and blocked my sane thinking process. After one more minute, when I was completely at a loss, she spoke in a soft and melodious voice: "Sir, you are just like my grand father who is no more; he loved me so much!"

The utterance of those two key words – ‘grand father’ and ‘no more’ immediately brought me back to my senses, and I was relieved and ashamed at the same time. Since then she has graduated, got married, and became a successful home maker. Occasionally, I still send her e-mails, always addressing her as my "sweet grand daughter".

Thereafter, throughout the rest of my teaching career my status changed from a father-figure to a grandfather-figure, and I enjoy it.



A picture of Kanyakumari in her temple – the deity in her bridal attire (from Wikipedia)

Editor's note: According to a Hindu legend, Goddess Kanyakumari Amman ('kanya' literally means daughter or bride, 'kumari' means virgin and 'amman' means mother) is a popular deity of India and an incarnation of Parvati, the consort of Lord Shiva, the god of cosmic cycle. She was to marry Shiva, but as he failed to show up on his wedding day, the rice and other grains meant for the wedding feast remained uncooked and turned into stones as time went by. Some believe that the small stones which look like rice on the nearby shore of the Indian Ocean today are in reality those grains, remnant of the wedding that never took place. Kanyakumari Devi is now considered a virgin goddess who blesses pilgrims and tourists who visit her temple situated at the southern tip of India (source: Internet).