

This incident is related to my father , with my dream and also with the city. There is an innate fear of the city , this incident is related to that also.

My father was then fifty-five years old having skinny body. His hair was as white as corn cobs. It's like you have cotton on your head. He used to think a lot and speak very little. When he would speak, we would feel relieved, as if a delayed breath is coming out. At the same time, we also feel scared. He was a great mystery to us kids. We knew that the vault of all the knowledge of the world is with him. We knew that he could speak all the languages of the world. The world knows him and respects him, fearing him like us. We were proud to be his children.

Sometimes, as it happened once in a year, he would take us out for a walk with him in the evening. Before walking, he would stuff tobacco in his mouth. He could not speak because of tobacco. He would remain silent. This silence seemed to us very solemn, glorious, surprising and overwhelming. If the younger sister ever wanted to ask him something on the way, I would try to answer it immediately so that he would not have to speak.

However, this work was very difficult and risky. Because I knew that if my answer was wrong, he would have to speak. He had difficulty in speaking. Firstly, he had to spit the tobacco, then he had to come out from the world in which he lived. By the way, there was nothing special in the questions of the sister. As if she would ask, what is that bird sitting on the dry branch of chile in front of you called? Since i knew all the birds, i could tell that that is Neelkanth and must be seen on the day of Dussehra. I would try my best to keep my father at ease and continues his thinking.

Both my mother and I tried our best to ensure that father lived happily in his own world. He should not be forcibly taken out from there. That world was very mysterious to us, but many of the problems in our house and in our lives were solved by my father remaining in that mysterious world. For example, when my school fee was due , at that time even the last glass we had was lost and everyone used to drink water from the Jug. Father remained completely silent for two days. Mother also suspected that father had completely forgotten about the fee or the solution was not in his control. But on the third day, early in the morning, father gave me a letter in an envelope and sent me with it to Dr. Pant in the city. I was very surprised when the doctor offered me juice , took me inside the house and introduced me to his son and gave me three hundred rupees notes.

We were proud of our father, loved him, feared him and the feeling of his presence was like living in a fort. Such a fort, around which deep canals are carved, bastions are very high, walls are made of hard red rocks and our fort is impregnable in front of every external attack.

He was a very strong fort. Forgetting everything, we used to run and play on his ramparts. And, I used to sleep very soundly at night.

But that day in the evening, when father came after a walk from outside, his ankle was bandaged. In a short while many people of the village came there. It is learned that father has been bitten by Tirich (Vishkhapar, a poisonous lizard) in the forest.

We all knew that a man cannot survive when he is bitten by an Tirich . At night, in the dim light of lanterns, many people from the village gathered in our courtyard. Father was sitting on the ground among them. Then the Chutua barber of the nearby village also came. He used to remove poison with the ashes of castor leaves and tubers. I had seen Tirich once.

It was going towards the pond to drink water by coming out of a crack in one of the big rocks that were piled up on the banks of the pond, and which used to get very hot in the afternoon.

Thanu was with me. He told that it is tirich, it has hundred times more poison than black cobra. He told that a snake bites only when it is stepped on or when someone forcibly disturbs it. But Tirich runs and follows even at the sight of someone. One should never run straight. One should run in a zigzag, circuitous, roundabout way.

In fact, when a man runs away, he not only leaves his footprints on the ground, but with every footprint, he also leaves his scent in the dust there. Tirich runs with the help of this smell. Thanu told that in order to dodge Tirich, a man should do this, that first he should run for some distance very quickly, keeping his steps very close, and then make a very long jump four to five times. Tirich will come running sniffing, where there are footprints nearby, his speed will be very fast there and he will get confused after coming to the place from where the man had jumped. He will wander hither and thither to find the next footprint and the smell it has left.

We knew two more things about Tirich. One is that as soon as tirich bites a man, it runs away and urinates there and rubs it's body in that urine. If Tirich does this, then the man cannot survive. If man wants to escape, he should either drown himself in a river, well or pond or kill the Tirich before Tirich spits in its urine.

The second thing is that Tirich runs to bite only when its eyes collide with the man. If you see Tirich, never make eye contact with it. As soon as its eyes meet, it recognizes the smell of a man and then follows him. Then even if a man goes around the whole earth, tirich follows.

At that time, like all other children, I was very much afraid of Tirich. The most dangerous characters in my nightmares were only two - one elephant and the other Tirich. Even then the elephant used to get tired of running and I used to escape by climbing the tree, or used to fly, but I used to get trapped in some magic trap in front of tirich. If I was going somewhere in my dream, I would suddenly meet it at some place, its place was not fixed. It didn't have to be in a crevice of a rock, behind old buildings or near a bush—I could find it in the market place, in a cinema hall, in a shop or in my room.

I would dreamily try not to make eye contact with it, but it would look at me with such familiar eyes that I could not help myself and just as soon as its eyes met, its gaze would change—it would run and I would run.

I used to go round and round, take quick steps and suddenly take long jumps, try to fly, climb some high place, but in spite of my thousand attempts, it would not dodge. It seemed to me very consummate, intelligent, clever and dangerous. I thought it knew me very well. The glint of familiarity in its eyes made me feel like it was my enemy who knew every thought that crossed my mind.

This was my most dreadful, torturous, horrifying and unsettling dream. While running, my whole body would get tired, my lungs would inflate, I would be drenched in sweat and breathless and a very scary, numbing death would start coming very close to me. I used to scream loudly, would start crying. I used to call father, thanu or mother and then I would know that this is a dream. But even after knowing this, I knew very well that even then I cannot escape this death of mine. Not usual death but by Tirich killing me. In such a situation I would try in my dreams to somehow wake up. I would try my best, tear my eyes open within the dream, try to see the light, and say something out loud. Sometimes I would even succeed in waking up at the very opportune moment.

Mother used to tell that I have a habit of speaking and screaming in my dreams. Many times she had seen me crying in my sleep. In such a situation, she should wake me up, but she used to cover my forehead with a quilt and I was left alone in that dreadful world. Running, running and screaming in a feeble attempt to escape my death - rather my murder.

By the way, gradually I had come to know from experiences that voice is my biggest weapon on such an occasion, by which I could avoid tirich. But unfortunately,

every time, I remembered this weapon at the very last moment. Then, when it was just about to get me. My murderous breath would touch me, I would be engulfed in a lifeless but terrifying darkness, intoxicated with death, I would seem to have no solid ground beneath me – I am in the air and the moment would come when my life was about to end. . Only then, in this very short and delicate moment, I would remember this weapon of mine and I would start speaking loudly and with the help of this voice I would come out of the dream. I would wake up.

Many times mother used to ask me what had happened to me. I didn't have enough language then to tell her everything, every single thing in the same way. I was acutely aware of this inability of mine, and because of this I would be filled with a strange tension, restlessness and helplessness. In the end, being defeated, I could only say that it was a very scary dream.

Don't know why I suspected that father was bitten by the same Tirich, which I knew and which used to come in my dreams.

But one good thing happened that as soon as Tirich ran away after biting father, father chased him and killed him. It was certain that if he could not kill him immediately, it would certainly urinate and roll back in it. Then father would not have survived in any situation. This was the reason why I was not so worried about my father. Rather, a kind of relief and happiness of liberation was slowly arising within me. The reason, one, was that my father had killed Tirich immediately, and the other was that my most dangerous, old acquaintance enemy was dead at last. It was killed and now I could go whistling anywhere without fear, within my dreams.

There was a crowd in our courtyard till late that night. Father's exorcism continued. The blood was also taken out by ripping the wound of the bite and the red medicine (potassium permanganate) poured into the well was filled in the wound. I was relieved.

The next morning my father had to go to the city. He Had a court appearance. The summons came in his name. Buses to the city used to pass through a road that started about two kilometers from our village. Their number was hardly two or three throughout the day. It was a matter of luck that as soon as father reached the road, he found a tractor going to the city from a nearby village. The people sitting in the tractor were familiar. The tractor was to reach the city in two-and-a-half hours which was long before the opening of the court.

There was an conversation of tirich on the way. Father showed his ankle to those people. Pandit Ram Avatar was also in the tractor. He told that one of the special features of Tirich's poison is that sometimes it appears after twenty four hours, at the same time when Tirich bites the previous day. So he should not get relaxed as yet. Tractor's people also attracted my father's attention towards a big mistake that it was good that he killed the tirich immediately but tirich should not have left like that. It should have been burnt.

They were saying that many insects and animals get revived in moons light. Cold and due of moons light has elixir ( Amrit) and it has been observed many times that the snake which was thrown after killing assuming that it had died used to revive after soaking in moon light . And it starts looking for revenge.

The people of the tractor suspected that it might happen that after waking up in the night, Tirich would urinate and roll back in it. If this happens, twenty-four hours will pass, at that very moment, Tirich's deadly poison will begin to attack my father. They also advised that my father should return from there and if by chance, the dead body of Tirich was lying there, it should be properly burnt to ashes. But my father told them how important his appearance in the court was. This was the third summon. And if he didn't appear in the court this time too, there was a fear of issuing a non-bailable warrant. The hearing was also related to our house, in which our family was living. The lawyer was not paid for the last two hearings and if he showed negligence and the judge became angry , he could have got our Kurki - decree ( impounding of house) done.

The strange situation was that if father had got down from the tractor and returned to the village to burn Tirich's body, he would have been arrested under a non-bailable warrant and our house would have been snatched away from us. The court would have turned against us.

But Pandit Ram Avtar was also a ayurvedic doctor. Apart from astrology almanac, he also had a deep knowledge of herbs. He suggested that there was a way by which father could appear in court and be saved from Tirich's . He told that the essence of Charak is in the formula that poison is the antidote for poison. If the seeds of Dhatura can be found somewhere, he can prepare the antidote of tirich poison.

In the next village, Samatpur, the tractor was stopped and Dhatura plants were found in a nearby field. A decoction ( kaadha) was prepared by grinding the seeds of Dhatura and boiling it with an old copper coin. The decoction was very bitter so it was mixed with tea and father was given that tea. After this everyone became relaxed. An attempt was being made to get my father out of great danger.

Well, I knew a third thing about Tirich, which I suddenly remembered several hours after my father had left. This thing was similar to that of the snake, as a result of which the camera was later invented.

It was believed that if a man was killing a snake, then before it died, that snake, for the last time, looks very intently at the face of its killer. During the killing process snake is recording each and every detail of that man's face in the inner screen of its eye by gazing. After the snake's death, the picture of that man gets clearly registered on the inner screen of the snake's eye.

Later, after the man leaves , the other pair of snakes go and look inside the dead snake's eye and thus the killer is identified. All the snakes start recognizing him. Then wherever he goes, they keep on taking revenge on him. Every snake is his enemy.

I suspected that father's face would be registered on the inner screen of the dead Tirich's eye. Some other tirich will peep through the eye of that corpse and father will be recognized there. An uneasiness arose within me that why did father not take this precaution? Along with killing Tirich, he should have crushed both its eyes with a stone and burst them. But what could happen now? My father had gone to the city and I was faced with a dilemma and a challenge to find the place where he had killed Tirich and left it in the huge forest near the village.

I wandered in search of Tirich in the forest with Thanu carrying kerosene oil in a bottle, matchstick and stick. I knew that tirich very well. Very well. Thanu was disappointed.

Then, I suddenly felt that I knew this forest very well. Each and every tree started becoming familiar to me. I ran from this place many times in my dreams to escape from Tirich. I looked carefully everywhere—this was exactly the place. I told Thanu that a narrow stream ( naala-drain) flows far to the south from this place. Above the stream, where there are big rocks, there is a very old kikar tree, which has big honeycombs on it. Looking at them, it seems that they are many centuries old. I knew that brown rock, which was half-submerged in the water of the drain during the rainy season, and when it came out after the rains, its hollows were filled with mud and strange vegetation grew from there. A layer of green moss used to form on top of the rock. Tirich used to live in the topmost crevice of this rock. Thanu was considering this as my imagination.

But very soon we found that drain. That old tree of Keekar, which had honeycombs on it, and that rock too. Tirich's body was lying on the ground, on the grass, a little away from the rock. It was exactly the same tirich. There was a sensation of violence and excitement and happiness running through me.

Thanu and I collected dry leaves and sticks, poured a lot of kerosene into it and set it on fire. Tirich was burning in this. The intoxicating smell of its burning was spreading in the air. I felt like shouting out loud but I was afraid that I might wake up and it might all turn out to be a dream. I looked at Thanu. He was crying. He was a very good friend of

In my dream, that Tirich followed me several times at this same place. It was a wonder that in spite of knowing its hideout so well for so long, I had never come in the day and made any attempt to kill it. I was extremely happy today.

Pandit Ram Autar told later that the tractor had crossed the Chunginaka of the city around quarter to ten. There he had to stay for some time to pay the toll tax at the naka. There my father got down from the tractor and went to urinate. On his return, he told that his head was spinning a bit, by then it had been almost one and a half hour since father had drunk the decoction of Dhatura. The tractor had dropped father in the city around five to seven minutes past ten. Master Nandlal of Palda village, who was sitting in the tractor, said that when father was dropped from the tractor at the intersection near Minerva Talkies in the city, he complained that his throat was a bit dry. He was also a little worried because he did not know the way to go to the court and he had a lot of trouble in asking the people of the city to go somewhere.

There was also a problem with my father that he used to remember the paths of the village or the forest, but he used to forget the roads of the city. He rarely went to the city. If he had to go, he used to postpone till the last moment, until it was absolutely necessary to go. Many times it also happened that father left for the city with all the luggage and returned from the bus stand. The excuse is that the bus was missed. Even though we all knew it did not happen. My Father must have seen the bus, then he must have sat somewhere-to pee or to have paan. Then he would have seen that the bus was leaving. He must have waited a little longer. When the bus would have picked up speed – then he would have run for some distance. Then his steps would have slowed down and he would have returned expressing regret and anger. While doing this, he himself must have felt that the bus had really missed. In such a case, when we would have assumed that he had gone to the city, he would surprise us by returning.

From the time the tractor got off at the intersection near Minerva Talkies, right in front of the Sindh Watch Company, at about ten past seven until six in the evening, only a vague idea of what happened to my father in the city can be made.

This information has also been received after talking and questioning some people. After someone's death, if that death happened in a very sudden and unnatural manner, such information is found. On that day, Wednesday, May 17, 1972, from 10:00 am to 6:00 pm, it is difficult to get a very accurate and detailed description of where my father went, where and what happened to him in about eight and a half hours. Through the information or information that was found later, those events can only be estimated.

As Master Nandlal of Palda village said, when father got down from the tractor, only then he complain of dry throat. Earlier, near Chunginaka, when father had returned after urinating, he had talked about dizziness. Means the effect of the decoction of Dhatura seeds had started on the father. Anyway, by the time he reached the city, it had been almost two hours since he had drunk the decoction. My guess is that father must have been very thirsty at that time. He might have gone to some hotel or dhaba to cool his throats, but as I know his nature, he may have stood there for a while, and then could not decide to ask for a glass of water. Once he also told us ,

that a few years ago, when he had asked for water in a hotel during the summer days, the servant working there had abused him. My father was very sensitive, so he must have suppressed his thirst and left.

No information is available from anywhere about where father went for forty-five minutes between ten and eleven o'clock. In the meantime, no such special incident happened, due to which one can say anything. Then it is difficult to ascertain whether any of the people coming and going on the road in the city have paid attention to him, seen him. By the way, I have my own idea that in the meanwhile father must have asked some people the way to go to the court and it must have been in his mind that after reaching there he would meet his lawyer S.N. Agarwal and will ask for water from Agarwal. But when he would have asked, either the people would have kept quiet and moved on quickly, or someone told him something in such a flurry and haste that my father could not understand properly and was left only humiliated, sad and upset. This happens in the city.

By the way, my own guess about that 45 minutes time period is that in the meantime the effect of the decoction on my father must have increased a lot. May's sunlight and thirst would have made this effect even more intense, even deeper. His feet would also have started to stagger and it is quite possible that once in a while, he would have felt dizzy.

Father had entered the State Bank of India building on Deshbandhu Marg in the city at eleven o'clock. The reason why he went there is not exactly understood. By the way, Ramesh Dutt of our village is a clerk in the Bhumi Vikas Sahakari Bank in the city. It is possible that father had only the bank in his mind and while passing by he suddenly saw State Bank written and he turned there. He hadn't drunk water yet, so he must have thought that he would ask Ramesh Dutt for water, ask him the way to go to the court, and tell him that his head was spinning, and that Tirich had bitten him last evening. . According to State Bank cashier Agnihotri, he was checking the cash registry at that time. Around twenty eight thousand rupees bundles were kept on his table. At that time it must have been two or three minutes past eleven, when father came there. His face was covered with dust, his face was scary and suddenly he said something loudly. Agnihotri said that I suddenly got scared. Usually such people are not able to reach the cashier's table so much inside the bank. Agnihotri also said that if he had seen his father coming towards him a few minutes earlier, he might not have been afraid. But it so happened that he was completely engrossed in the calculation of the cash register, when suddenly father made a sound and as soon as he raised his head he saw my father. he was scared and screamed. He also rang the bell.

According to the peons, two watchmen and other employees of the bank, all of a sudden they were startled by the cashier's scream and bell sound and ran in that direction, till then the Nepalese watchman Thapa caught hold of the father and took him towards the common room while beating him. A peon, Ramkishore, who was in his forties, said that he thought either a drunkard had entered the office, or a lunatic, and that since his duty was at the main gate of the bank, the branch manager could have charge-sheeted him. But it so happened that when father was being beaten he started speaking something in English. Because of this the suspicion of the peons increased. Meanwhile, perhaps Assistant Branch Manager Mehta said that after thoroughly searching this man, only then he should be allowed to go out. By the way, the peon Ramkishore said that father's face had become strangely scary. Dust had gathered on it and retching was coming. The peons of the bank denied that they beat father excessively, but Bunnu, who used to sit in the paan shop outside the bank, right near the door, said that when father came out of the bank around 11.30 a.m , When he came, his clothes were torn and the lower lip was cut, from where blood was coming out. There were swelling and brown spots under the eyes. Such rashes later turn purple or blue.

After that, that is, between 11:30 and 1 o'clock, there is no information about the father's whereabouts. Yes, Bunnu, who set up a betel shop outside the State Bank, had told one thing, although he was not completely clear about it, or may be he was shying away from telling clearly because of the fear of the State Bank employees. Bunnu told that on coming out of the State Bank, probably (he was stressing on 'probably') father had said that his money and papers had been snatched by the peons of the bank. But Bunnu said that father might have said something else, because he was not able to speak properly, his lower lip was severely cut, saliva was

also flowing from his mouth and his mind was not right.

My own guess is that by this time the effect of the concoction on father had become too much. However, Pandit Ram Autar denies this. He used to say that Dhatura seeds are mixed with cannabis during Holi, but it never happens that a person becomes completely mad. Pandit Ram Autar believes that either the poison of Tirich had started rising in the father's body at that time and its intoxication started reaching his mind. Or it is quite possible that when father was thrashed by the watchman and peons in the State Bank, then there was an injury on the back side of his head and due to that blow, his mind went crazy. But I think by that time father had regained his senses a little and was trying his best to get out of town somehow. Perhaps because of the snatching of money and court papers in the bank, he thought that there is no point in staying here anymore. He might have even thought once or twice to go back to the State Bank and at least bring back his papers. Then he would not have had the courage to do so. He must have been scared. It was the first time in his life that he had been hit like this, so he might not be able to think clearly. His body was very lean and he had a complaint of appendicitis since childhood. It may also be that by that time the effect of the decoction has become so much on him that he was not able to think on one thing for a long time and thoughts or new thoughts that are born every moment in the mind, like small bubbles. He must have been moving from here to there under the control of the tremors. But I know this, that a constant idea of returning home and getting out of town, however faint and dim must be on his mind.

Father had reached the city police station at about quarter past one. The police station is near the Vijay Stambh built near the circuit house on the outskirts of the city. Surprisingly, there is also a court barely a kilometer away from the police station. If father wanted, he could have reached the court in ten minutes on foot from here. It is not clear that if father had reached this far, had the matter of going to court still remained in his mind? His papers were not left though.

The SHO of the police station Raghavendra Pratap Singh said that at that time it was fifteen minutes past one o'clock. He was preparing to take lunch by opening the tiffin brought from home. Today, bitter gourds were kept in the tiffin along with the parathas. He could not eat bitter gourd and was confused as to what to do now. Then father came there. There was no shirt on his body, his pants were torn. It seemed that he must have fallen somewhere or some vehicle must have hit him. At that time only one constable Gajadhar Prasad Sharma was present in the police station. The constable said that he thought that perhaps some beggar had entered the police station. He also called out my father but he reached till then had reached Pratap Singh's table. S.H.O. Said that anyway his mood was off because of the bitter gourds. In spite of thirteen years of married life, the wife had not been able to discover what things he absolutely disliked, so much so that he loathed them. As soon as he put the morsel in his mouth, father reached very close to him. There was vomit all over my fathers face and shoulders, and it smelled very strong. S.H.O. Asked what's the matter. So it was very difficult to understand what he said in response. S.H.O. Raghavendra Singh was later regretting that if he had known that this man was the head of Bakeli village and a former teacher, he would have made him sit in the police station for at least two to four hours. Do not let go out But at that time he felt that he was a madman and seeing him eating, he entered here, that is why he shouted angrily to constable Gajadhar Sharma. The constable dragged my father out. Gajadhar Sharma said that he did not physically assault his father and that he had seen that his lower lip was cut when he came to the police station. There were scratch marks on the chin and elbows were peeled from falling after being rubbed. He must have fallen somewhere.

No one knows that after leaving the police station, where father wandered about for one and a half hours. It is difficult to know whether he had taken a drink of water between the time he arrived in the city at 10.07 a.m. and alighted from the tractor at the intersection near Minerva Talkies. The chances of this are also less. May be till then his brain is not capable enough to even remember thirst. But if he reached the police station, in spite of his intoxication, there must be a very faint, dark thought in his mind that somehow he can ask for the way to their village, or the address of that tractor, or snatching complaint of his money and court papers there. It is deeply unsettling to even come close to thinking that at that time my father was not only fighting against the poison of Tirich and the intoxication of Dhatura, but the concern of saving our house was also somewhere in his addiction. That concern was raising its head again and again in his sleep of intoxication. Perhaps by now he would have started feeling that all this happening was just a dream, father must have been trying to wake up and get out of it.

Around 2.15 p.m. my father was seen trudging into the Itwari Colony, the most affluent colony at the very northern end of the city. This colony is situated at Sarafa Jewelers, P.W.D. It was a colony of big contractors and retired officers. Some prosperous journalist-poets also lived there. This colony was always quiet and eventless. People who had seen my father here told that by that time only one strappy panty was left in his body, whose threads were probably broken and he was holding it again and again with his left hand. Whoever saw him there thought that someone was mad. Some said that he used to stand in the middle and start cursing loudly. Later, Soni Sahab, a retired tehsildar living in the same colony and Satyendra Thapliyal, a special correspondent and poet of the city's largest newspaper, told that he had heard father's speech properly and in fact he was not abusing but was saying it again and again. " I Ramswarath Prasad, ex school head master... and village head of... village Bakeli...! " .

Poet journalist Thapliyal Sahab expressed his grief. Actually at the same time he was going to Delhi to listen to music at a special party of the American Embassy, so he left in a hurry. Yes Tehsildar Soni Sahab said that I felt pity for that man and I also scolded the boys. But two-three boys said that this man was about to attack Ramratan Saraf's wife and sister-in-law. The Tehsildar said that after hearing this, he also felt that it might be some miscreant and was doing a drama. The boys were busy teasing him and father used to say loudly in between, "I am Ramswarath Prasad... ex school headmaster...

If calculated, then the intersection near Minerva Talkies, where father got down from the tractor at 10:07 in the morning, from there to the State Bank of Deshbandhu Marg, then the police station near Vijay Stambh and Itwari Colony on the outer northern edge of the city. Together they had wandered to a distance of about thirty-thirty-two kilometers. These places are such that they are not in the same direction. This meant that father's state of mind was such that he could not understand anything clearly and he used to walk suddenly, in any direction. As for his assault on the moneylender's wife and sister-in-law, which Thapliyal Sahab believes to be true, my own guess is that father must have gone to him either to ask for water or to inquire about the road to Bakeli. Father must have been conscious for that one moment. But seeing a man of this appearance so close to them, those women must have started screaming in fear. By the way, the wound on the forehead above the right eye of father and the blood started seeping on his eye, he had suffered that injury in Itwari Colony, because later people told that the boys threw stone at him in between.

The place is not far from Itwari Colony, where father suffered the most injuries. Father was surrounded by an empty space in front of a cheap dhaba named National Restaurant. The group of boys from Itwari Colony who followed them, some older boys also joined them. Sattu, a servant working in the National restaurant, said that father had made a mistake that once he got angry and started pelting stone at the crowd. Perhaps a big chunk of the stone hit Vicky Agarwal, a seven-eight-year-old boy, who later got several stitches. Sattu said that after this the mob had become more dangerous. They were making hue and cry and throwing stones at father from all sides. Sardar Satnam Singh, the owner of the dhaba, told that at that time father's body had only a tights with a strap, the bones of the lean body and the white hair of the chest were visible. Stomach was flattened. He was covered in dust and mud, the white hair of his head was disheveled, blood was oozing from above the right eye and from the lower lip. Satnam Singh said with sorrow and remorse - "How did I know that this man is a simple, respectable, person of reputation and his condition has become like this due to luck." By the way, Hari, the servant who washed the cups and plates in the dhaba, said that in between, father used to thrash the crowd by hurling abuses – "Come bastards come...I will kill each one you bastards. ..your mother's..." But I doubt that father would have used any such abuse. We never heard him abusing.

I can say with confidence, because I know him very well, that, by this time, he must have felt at times that what was happening to him was not reality, but a dream. Father must have found all these incidents ludicrous, ludicrous and meaningless. He must have started disbelieving all this. He must have thought what the hell is all this? He has not come to the city from the village, he has not been bitten by any evil eye. Rather, there is no tirth, it is a concoction and superstition... and the talk of drinking the decoction of Dhatura is ridiculous, that too after finding its plant in a field. He must have thought and found that why would there be a case against him ? Why do he need to go to court?



I know that my father must have been having the same long tunnel-like dream, compelling but terrifying as I used to be. Many things between me and him were very similar. I think by this time dad must have fully accepted that all this happening is false and unreal. That's why he must have been trying to wake up from that dream again and again. If he was saying something loudly in between, or maybe started abusing then by this effort, he could come out of that nightmare with the help of that voice. As told by Sardar Satnam Singh, the servants and owner of the National Restaurant, father had suffered a lot of injuries at that place. Many bricks and stones had come and got stuck on his temple, forehead, back and other parts of the body. Arora's 22-year-old son, Sanju, who had taken the road contract, also hit him with an iron rod two or three times. Sattu had to say that any man could have died from so many injuries.

I feel a strange relief and after gasping for my breath again at the thought that Father must not have been feeling any pain at that time, because he began to believe thoroughly, rationally and deeply that It is all a dream and everything will be fine as soon as he wakes up. As soon as the eyes open, the mother will be seen sweeping the courtyard or me and the younger sister will be seen sleeping on the floor below...or a flock of sparrows...maybe they laugh at this strange-o-poor dream of theirs.

If the father started hurling stones at the boys himself in anger, then the first reason behind this was that he knew very well that these were going inside the dream and it would not hurt anyone. It may also be that they have been waiting anxiously and uneasily, pelting stone with all his might, that as soon as it goes and hits some boy's head, his forehead will be destroyed and this nightmare will be shattered into pieces in one blow. Dream Will go and the wild light of the real world will start coming in from all around. His loud screaming wasn't actually out of anger either, he was actually calling out to me, younger sister, mom or whoever, even if he couldn't wake up from this dream on his own then Anyone can come and wake him up.

One of the biggest irony also happened in the meantime. Pandit Kandhai Ram Tiwari, the sarpanch of the Gram Panchayat of our village and father's old childhood friend, passed by on the road in front of Nashenal restaurant around 3.30 pm. He was on a rickshaw. He had to return to the village by taking a bus from the next intersection. He also saw the crowd gathered in front of that dhaba and he also came to know that some man was being beaten there. He also had a desire to go there and see what was the matter after all. He got the rickshaw stopped. But when asked, someone said that a Pakistani spy had been caught who was going to poison the water tank, people are beating him. Just then, Pandit Kandhai Ram saw the village-bound bus coming and asked the rickshaw puller to hurry up to the next intersection. This was the last bus to the village. If there had been a delay of even three to four minutes in the arrival of that bus, he would have definitely gone there and seen father and recognized him.

That state transport bus was always half an hour or so late, but that day, coincidentally, it was coming exactly on time.

Satnam Singh said that the crowd left in front of the National Restaurant and the people dispersed when the father did not get up from the ground for a long time. A big lump of brick had hit his temple. Blood had started coming from his mouth. There were also injuries on the head. Satnam told that when the father did not move for a long time, one of the group of boys said that he seems to have died. When father did not move even after 10-15 minutes after the crowd had dispersed, Satnam Singh asked Sattu to sprinkle water on his face to see if he was only unconscious, then maybe he would wake up. But Sattu was scared because of the police. Later Satnam Singh himself poured a bucket of water on him. Due to the pouring of water from a distance, the soil of the ground had become wet and had rubbed against father's body.

Sardar Satnam Singh and Sattu both said that father was lying at the same place till about five o'clock. Till then the police had not come. Then Satnam Singh thought that he might not get entangled in Panchnama and testimony, so he closed the dhaba and went to Delight Talkies to watch the film 'Aan Milo Sajna'.

It was about six o'clock when father poked his head into Mochi Ganeshawa's Gumti, one of the cobblers' shops in a row on the tracks of Civil Lines Road. By that time there were no trunks left on his body, he was crawling on his knees like a quadruped. The body was covered with soot and mud and there were injuries at various places.

Ganesha is a cobbler from the hamlet across from the pond in our village. He told that I was very scared and could not recognize Master Saheb. His face had become scary and could not be marked. I got scared and came out of the gumti and started making noise. Apart from the other cobblers, some other people had also gathered there. When people peeped inside Ganesha's gumti, father was lurking inside the gumti, in its innermost corner, amidst broken shoes, pieces of leather, rubber and rags. His breathing was moving a little. He was pulled from there, out, on the track. Only then Ganesha recognized him. Ganesha said that he also made some noises in his father's ear but he was not able to speak anything. After a long time he said something like 'Ram Swarath Prasad...' and 'Bakeli'. Then became silent.

Father died around half past six. The date was May 17, 1972, twenty-four hours before, at about the same time, he was bitten by Tirich in the forest. Could father have predicted these events and this death twenty-four hours ago?

The dead body of the father was kept by the police in the mortuary of the city. The post-mortem revealed that his bones were fractured in several places, the right eye was completely torn, the collar bone was broken. He died due to mental shock and excessive bleeding. According to the report, his stomach was empty, there was nothing in the stomach. This means that the decoction of Datura seeds had already come out through vomiting.

However, Thanu says that now it is decided that no one can escape from Tirich's poison. Exactly twenty four hours later he showed his charisma and father died. Pandit Ram Autar also says the same. It may be that Pandit Ram Autar says this because he wants to assure himself that the decoction of Datura had nothing to do with father's death.

I think, I try to guess, that maybe in the end, when Ganesha must have whispered in his ear, outside his gumti, father must have woken from the dream. He must have seen me, mother and younger sister—then he must have taken the tooth. Brush and gone towards the river. He must have washed his face with the cool water of the river, rinsed his mouth and forgotten this long nightmare. He must have thought of going to court. The worry about our house must have bothered him.

But I want to tell about my dream, which comes to me quite often. It is like this - that I have reached the forest through the path of the fields, the path of the village. I see the Raksha Nala, the Keekar tree. That brown rock is there in the same place, which remains submerged in the water of the drain all the rain. I see Tirich's dead body lying on it. An overwhelming happiness envelops me. Eventually he was killed. I take a stone and start crushing Tirich, hitting him hard. Thanu is standing near me with kerosene and matchbox. Then, all of a sudden, I find that I am not on that rock. Thanu is also not there, there is no forest but I am actually in the city. My clothes have become very dirty, torn and like rags. My cheekbones are sticking out. Hair disheveled. I'm thirsty and I try to speak. Maybe I want to ask Bakeli, the way to my house, and then suddenly there is a noise all around... bells start ringing... thousands and thousands of bells... I run.

I run... my whole body starts to get breathless, my lungs inflate. Keeping my steps close together, I suddenly take long jumps, I try to fly. But the crowd seems to be about to reach me. A strangely hot and heavy wind makes me numb. The breath of my murder starts touching me... And finally the moment comes when my life is about to end...

I cry...try to run away. My whole body gets drenched in sweat even in sleep. I try to wake up by speaking out loud...I want to believe it's all a dream...and everything will be alright as soon as I open my eyes...I tear my eyes open inside the dream ...far away...but that moment eventually comes...

Mother looks at me from outside. She covers me with a quilt, caressing my forehead and I am left there alone. Struggling, breathless, crying, screaming and running trying to escape the death.

Mother says I still have the habit of babbling and screaming in my sleep. But I want to ask, and this question always bothers me, why don't I dream of Tirich anymore?

