



Swasthya Swaraj

A People's Movement For Swaraj In Health

NEWSLETTER

**ISSUE 19
DECEMBER 2025**

Editor's Note

For a long time, our engagement with nutrition has been shaped by numbers. Indicators of malnutrition, anaemia, and poor child health have repeatedly shown us the depth of the problem. This year marks the beginning of a shift from only tracking these numbers to actively responding to them. With the start of focused preschool and nutrition programmes, groundwork is being laid to support children and families early on. It is still the beginning, but there is a quiet sense of promise in seeing these efforts take shape on the ground.

Alongside this, important advances are being made in primary healthcare. At the Kaniguma Community Hospital, the strengthening of services and systems reflects the steady work of teams committed to improving care in remote settings. These efforts matter because gaps in primary care are not accidental; they are injustices that communities have lived with for decades. Addressing them requires consistency, skill, and presence.

This newsletter captures some steps towards more equitable health outcomes at an early stage. Together, these developments point to a shared direction. Much of the work ahead will depend on continuity, learning from experience, and staying with the process over time.

Aarti Kala



Table Of Contents

04 Strengthening Early Childhood Education:
A Community-Based Preschool Initiative

05 New Beginnings

08 Poems

09 Visits at Swasthya Swaraj

10 Encounters with Muri-Selling
Women

11 News in Short

12 The Museum Of Inherited Spaces



STRENGTHENING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: A COMMUNITY-BASED PRESCHOOL INITIATIVE

by *Shweta Sawale*

As a Programme Manager for the community-based preschool programme in Kalahandi, I have the opportunity to work closely with 80 Shishu Sathis across four clusters of the Thuamul Rampur block: Kerpai, Silet, Kaniguma, and Nehela. This initiative is built entirely on the principles of play-based learning, ensuring that children between 3 to 6 years receive joyful, activity-rich, and developmentally appropriate early education. The uniqueness of this programme is that it is driven by village girls who volunteer for two hours every day to engage with the children. The programme also reaches hamlets and remote habitations where Anganwadi Centres are not available, making it a true community-led effort.

During my field visits across Thuamul Rampur, I observed the ground realities of the local Anganwadi Centres. Across nearly eight Anganwadis that I visited, I found extremely poor conditions. Basic food items like rice were not available for days, leaving children without essential nutrition. Play materials were completely missing, and safe, child-friendly learning spaces were absent. In one centre in Serkapai, children's clothes had been destroyed by rats, indicating how vulnerable the centres are. In another village, uniforms were distributed only on the day we implemented our own programme activity, showing the irregularity in services.

A major concern expressed repeatedly by community members was that not a single Anganwadi Centre in the block opens regularly. Many Anganwadi workers reside in Thuamul Rampur town and visit the centres only once or twice a month. In some places, children receive eggs just once in an entire month. Because of these gaps, children are not getting the important supplementary nutrition and early learning support that they deserve at the right age. However, the situation also calls for stronger action from the system to ensure that every child receives quality



early learning, regular Anganwadi services, and proper nutrition. Because of this irregular functioning, children are not receiving proper nutrition at the right age. As a result, many children are becoming malnourished, which directly affects their growth and learning.

To address these gaps, our preschool programme focuses on building the capacities of Shishu Sathis. Many of them have minimal formal education, so our training emphasises simple language, clear instructions, and visual aids. We guide them on how to interact with children, how to maintain a positive and caring learning environment, and how to use Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs) through play. Despite their challenges, all Shishu Sathis show high interest, enthusiasm, and active participation in every training session. Their commitment is what keeps the programme strong, especially in clusters like Kaniguma and Kerpai, where all Shishu Sathis are fully functional and present. Understanding these challenges, our organisation has taken steps to support children. We are distributing nutritious supplements such as peanut laddus, ragi powder, and sattu powder to the children so that they receive at least some healthy food regularly. This has brought a small but meaningful change in the lives of the children.

Through this initiative, we are not only building early learning opportunities for young children but also empowering village girls, strengthening community involvement, and addressing fundamental gaps in the early childhood ecosystem. The journey is challenging, but the collective effort of Shishu Sathis, community members, and our team is creating a meaningful impact in one of the most remote and underserved regions of Kalahandi.

NEW BEGINNINGS



PRESCHOOL PROGRAM SUCCESSFULLY LAUNCHED ACROSS VILLAGES

We are pleased to share that out of 80 preschool villages, 60 preschool centres have been successfully established, including 15 Anganwadi centres, with the remaining centres operating in hamlet areas. This milestone represents a significant achievement made possible through the collective efforts of all stakeholders.

The program, supported by **Sachin Tendulkar Foundation**, focuses on children aged 3 to 6 years, with equal emphasis on early education and nutrition. Shishu Sathis actively engage children through play-based learning, picture cards, and teaching-learning materials developed from locally available waste and low-cost resources, making learning joyful, meaningful, and age-appropriate.

This is a community-based initiative with strong local participation to support the holistic development of young children. We acknowledge that in some Anganwadi centers, nutrition services are affected due to the non-availability of THR. To address this, we are collaborating with the CDPO and are committed to ensuring that all children receive proper nutrition at the earliest, recognizing it as their basic right.

SEVENTH BATCH OF DCHP BEGINS

The seventh batch of the Diploma in Community Health Practice (DCHP) programme (2025–2027) has commenced with the admission of a new cohort through written and viva examinations. The students were welcomed during Fresher's Day in the presence of parents, followed by the Lamp Lighting and Oath Taking Ceremony—marking their formal entry into the nursing profession and commitment to ethical practice, inspired by the legacy of Florence Nightingale.

NUTRITION REFRESHER TRAINING

A two-day nutrition training was conducted at the Kaniguma centre, followed by a similar session at the Kerpai centre, facilitated by **Dr Dhanshree Bagal**. The integrated refresher training brought together community coordinators and community health practitioners, focusing on core nutrition concepts, the newly initiated nutrition programme, and effective ways of communicating nutrition messages with communities on the ground.

SICKLE CELL DISEASE REFERRAL UNIT INAUGURATED

A Sickle Cell disease Referral Unit was inaugurated at Kaniguma Community Hospital. The unit has been established with complete support from **Azim Premji Foundation** and was inaugurated by **Dr. Niharendra Panda, the Chief District Medical Officer (CDMO)** and **Shri Dilip Dube, DPM (NHM)**, who appreciated the organisation's work in strengthening affordable healthcare in remote tribal areas and encouraged community use.

A key feature of the unit is a capillary electrophoresis machine, a high-end diagnostic tool that enables rapid and accurate differentiation between sickle cell trait, sickle cell disease, and other haemoglobinopathies. This has significantly reduced diagnostic delays, which earlier required sending samples outside the region and waiting up to two weeks for confirmation. The unit is also equipped with a five-part haematology auto-analyser to support detailed blood analysis.

Envisioned as a comprehensive referral centre, the facility will provide timely diagnosis, treatment, and emergency blood transfusions during haemolytic crises, representing a critical, life-saving addition to healthcare services in the region.



MOBILE MEDICAL UNIT LAUNCHED



Swasthya Swaraj Society, with support from **BRBNMPL**, inaugurated a modern Mobile Medical Unit (MMU) at the Kaniguma Community Hospital campus to bring primary healthcare services to remote tribal villages in the 35 villages of Padadunga Cluster. The launch, flagged off by the Chief District Medical & Public Health Officer, marks a major step in delivering diagnosis, treatment and health education directly to over 40 distant villages, reducing the need for long and costly travel for essential care. The MMU will provide vital services including medical consultation, basic testing and health awareness at community doorsteps.

MICROBIOLOGY LABORATORY ESTABLISHED



A Microbiology Laboratory has been established at Kaniguma Community Hospital with generous support from **Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Private Limited (BRBNMPL)**. BRBNMPL sponsored both the construction and full equipping of the laboratory, including facilities such as a biosafety cabinet, centrifuge, incubators, hot air ovens, sample storage refrigerators, and essential microbiology equipment.

The laboratory will enable culture and identification of locally prevalent bacterial pathogens, generating region-specific microbiological data and supporting clinicians in evidence-based decision-making, especially for complicated and multi-bacterial infections. The facility was inaugurated by members of the Board of Swasthya Swaraj Society during their visit to the hospital for the Annual General Meeting.

CCHP-LANJIGARH: PHASE I



The CCHP programme in Lanjigarh, supported by TATA TRUSTS was initiated in mid-October 2025 with the identification of three hard-to-reach panchayats Bijepur, Malijubang, and Pahadpadar located in the southern part of the block near the Rayagada border. Selected through consultations with the NHM team, MOIC Lanjigarh, and other organisations, these areas have poor connectivity and predominantly tribal populations with limited access to health services. After nearly two months of field visits, 23 villages across the three panchayats were finalised as the initial intervention area. Most villages are ST-dominated and located far from the nearest PHC, with limited or no road access. Community meetings were

then initiated to identify Swasthya Sathis, with four villages having already selected their Sathis and the process ongoing in others. Key challenges include low literacy among women and cultural beliefs around postpartum impurity, affecting women's participation in health roles.

Operational challenges included identifying suitable accommodation; however, with community support, a location was identified, though it requires renovation and toilet construction. Support from Panchayat representatives has enabled the use of the Community Hall for camps, and two educated local youths are assisting with community mobilisation. The programme is at an early stage, with sustained engagement needed to work towards Swaraj in health in these underserved communities.

PADADUNGA GSPG HEALTH CENTRE INAUGURATED

The Padadunga GSPG Health Centre was inaugurated on 17 October 2025 at Padadunga village, Thuamul Rampur block, Kalahandi, in the presence of Smt. Basanti Jhodia (Sarpanch, Maligaon Gram Panchayat), Shri Baldev Goud (Panchayat Samiti Member), Shri Tailok Jhodia (Ward Member, Padadunga), and Smt. Sevathi Jhodia (Ward Member, Digribandh). Community members, TULSI Sathis, Swasthya Sathis, and the Swasthya Swaraj team also participated. While services had begun earlier, the renovated community hall is now fully functional as a GSPG, with a basic laboratory, pharmacy, and stationed community health practitioners, strengthening community-led primary healthcare in the region.





EMBRACE

by Dr. Ashitha

In between 'Kai Ousibitha ouchi' and 'Kithe din helana',
 (What disease u have & since how long)
 Sometimes, I get lost —
 In those 3 Nose rings,
 In the curve of a Kogla around the neck,
 In a Pikka kept safely behind the ear,
 In those Breasts that defy shame.
 Sometimes, I follow those dots of Skin Art,
 Sometimes, I travel back in time —
 Looking at a Coin from an ancient era hanging from a child's
 neck.
 Sometimes, it's the children hanging in a gamcha tied to
 their mother's shoulder.

But at times, I get scared —
 By the Paleness of Pallor,
 The lowest possible BMIs,
 The Whiteness of a Cataract that may never be operated on,
 The extent of impetigo,
 The Duration of that cough,
 The Height of that Pahad they crossed to come here,
 That unusual obstetric score,
 The number of times a child has had Malaria,
 The Age of that pregnant mother,
 The extent of an Enlarged Spleen,
 The Lusterlessness of that hair,
 The time that lapsed between a child's first cry and delivery,
 The Bend of a bone due to malunited fracture
 The stories of Migrant workers who returned- due to illness

THE BREATH

by Dr. Aquinas Edassery

Breath is life — the visible and invisible sign of
 being.

Breathe in, breathe out,
 In that one simple rhythm we are bound:
 Bound to each other, bound to the universe,
 Now and to the timeless past—
 when life first stirred upon this planet.

O Breath you sustain the flow of existence.
 You are sacred,
 A quiet thread binding us
 to the depths of life itself.

O Breath you connect all beings—
 human and nonhuman,
 animals, trees, the unseen microbes,
 the forests alive with whispers and dance,
 the rivers, the hills, the mountains—
 all pulsating with life
 the Matti Ma, our Mother Earth.

Breathe in, breathe out.
 Receive life, give life.

What a contrast!
 The poor of the earth, though lacking
 comforts,
 are blessed with pure air, content beneath the
 open sky.

While the rich in crowded cities, with all
 luxuries at hand,
 suffocate in the smog of their own making,
 and they are never satisfied.

O Breath you are the common bond,
 the sacred gift,
 the gentle reminder
 that we are one.

To pollute you the life-giving breath
 in the name of progress
 is to destroy
 the very source of life itself.

Visits at Swasthya Swaraj

BRBNMPL TEAM VISIT



A team from **BRBNMPL** including **Mr D Purnachander Rao** (General Manager), **Mr K Navavasagam** (General Manager), and **Mr Krishna Mohan Vajpai** (PA) visited Swasthya Swaraj on 11–12 November 2025 to understand programme implementation and the impact of donor support on the ground.

The two-day visit included interactions with programme beneficiaries, livelihood teams, trainers, clinical staff, and community leaders across multiple locations. Key highlights included the distribution of sewing machines under the TULSI programme, demonstrations of nutrition education and livelihood skills, and visits to the Padadunga GSPG Centre, Mobile Medical Unit, and BRBNMPL-supported Microbiology Laboratory.

APF TEAM VISIT

Representatives from the Azim Premji Foundation, **Govinda Madhab Murari** and **Jitendra Kumar Rath**, visited Swasthya Swaraj for field interactions and programme review. During the visit, they met with Swasthya Sathis across Kaniguma, Nehela, Kerpai, and Silet to understand on-ground implementation and challenges. The visit concluded with discussions at the office, focusing on learnings from the field and planning for the next phase of programme activities.

LIFE SKILLS TRAINING FOR TULSI

A three-day life skills training programme for TULSI Sathis and Coordinators was conducted across Kaniguma, Kerpai, and Bhawanipatna in late November. The training was facilitated by **Dr Shishir Grahacharya** and focused on participatory learning, reporting, leadership, and field-level challenges. Strong engagement was observed at Kaniguma, while discussions with Coordinators highlighted practical solutions and the need for longer, phased trainings, improved activity spaces, and better integration of life skills, nutrition, and system-level knowledge to strengthen community work on the ground.

BMCRI STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN STEP PROGRAM



A group of medical students from **Bangalore Medical College and Research Institute (BMCRI)** participated in the week-long **tribal health exposure programme, STEP**, from 15 to 21 December 2025. The programme aimed to provide students with an understanding of the holistic aspects of health and the social determinants influencing health in tribal communities.

ENCOUNTERS WITH MURI-SELLING WOMEN

by Dr. Aquinas Edassery

She walked slowly, balancing on her head a big, heavy sack, her faint voice calling out as she moved from house to house—“Nani... nani...”

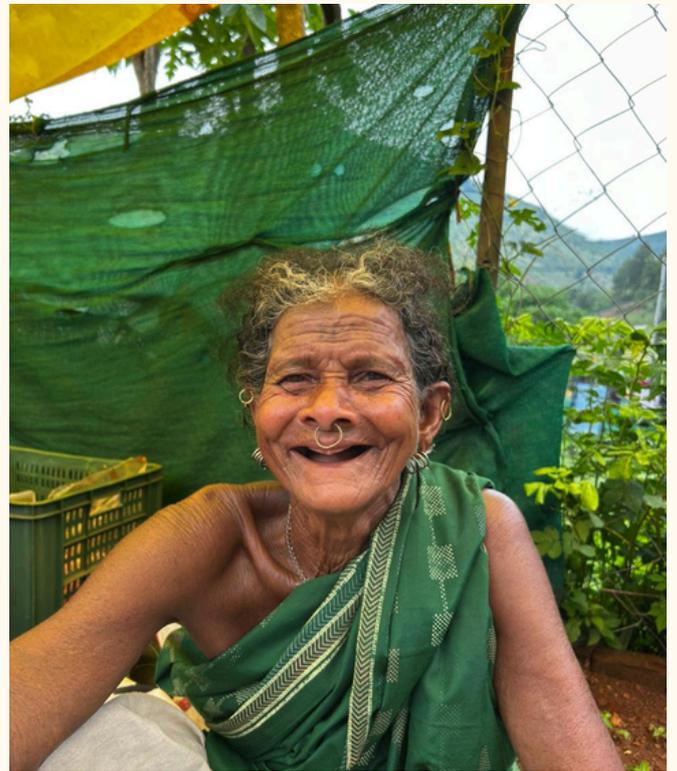
I saw her pause outside the polyclinic where government doctors run their thriving private practice. She lowered her headload onto a low wall, resting her thin frame for a moment. I went near and asked her what she was selling. “Muri,” she replied—flattened rice, hand-pounded. Mistaking me for a customer, she untied the sack, showing me the grains inside. “Eighty rupees a kilo,” she said.

This was not the fine, machine-flattened poha you find in glossy supermarket packets. This was coarse, uneven, hammered into shape with bare hands.

I looked at her face. Pale. Sunken eyes. Tall, bony, and panting heavily. She was severely anemic—her hemoglobin could not have been more than 5 grams. Yet, she had walked 5 kilometers from her village, Medinipur, to Bhawanipatna, calling on regular customers.

Muri is the poor person’s food—morning meal, travel snack, or quick sustenance in the fields. If you board a sleeper-class train, you’ll see migrant workers eating from sacks and jars of muri, moistening it with plain water. No sugar, no jaggery, no frills. Meanwhile, in shopping malls, we buy neatly packed poha to make upma, chivda, or cutlet mixtures.

The woman looked about 55 to me. Perhaps she was younger—poverty and relentless labour had aged her beyond her years. She is a picture of endurance, pounding rice by hand, hauling the heavy sack on her head, walking miles to sell it, week after week. Her blood is starved of oxygen, her body starved of rest. Yet, her family’s needs outweigh her own survival. Health is a luxury she cannot afford. How long can she carry on like this?



I met another muri-selling woman in the hospital. She, too, was above 50. She comes every three months to collect medicines for her hypertensive, paralysed husband and her grown-up son who suffers from epilepsy. She lives in a village near the Karlapat forest range. Unlike the first woman, she can no longer walk long distances. Instead, she prepares muri at home, sends the sack by bus to Bhawanipatna, and then herself travels by bus on market day. From the bus stand, she carries the load house to house on foot—walking nearly 20–25 kilometers in a single day of selling.

Her net profit? Less than Rs 200. But she is grateful for it. For her, it is survival money.

The truly poor and needy are often not inside our hospitals waiting for us—they are outside, circling around us, carrying their invisible burdens. We speak easily of slogans like “Health for All”* and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). But if these are to mean anything real, healthcare must look beyond the four walls of hospitals.

The muri-selling women remind us: poverty and ill health walk hand in hand, just outside our clinics. And unless we walk towards them, they may never find their way in.

NEWS IN SHORT

HNPS: ACTIVITIES IN SCHOOLS

As part of the HNPS programme, a range of learning and engagement activities were carried out across government schools in Silet and Kerpai. A **summer camp** was organised in 15 schools, featuring creative and sports-based activities such as music, dance, drawing, and games, with participation from **220 students**. Alongside this, **Weekly Library Days** were conducted in 10 schools, where temporary libraries were set up and Shiksha Sathis facilitated guided reading and storytelling sessions. Together, these initiatives sought to encourage regular school attendance, reduce dropouts, and nurture children's interest in learning and overall development.



TULSI FEATURED AT CHRISTMAS MARKET IN MUMBAI



The **Indo-Belgian-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce and Industry** organised a Christmas Market in Mumbai on 5 December, 2025. **Mrs Monique Van Goubergen**, one of the patrons of Swasthya Swaraj Society, showcased soft toys and other handcrafted items made by girls at the TULSI livelihood skill training centre in Kerpai, creating visibility for community-led livelihood initiatives.

STRI-AROGYA CONFERENCE ON RURAL OBSTETRIC HEALTH

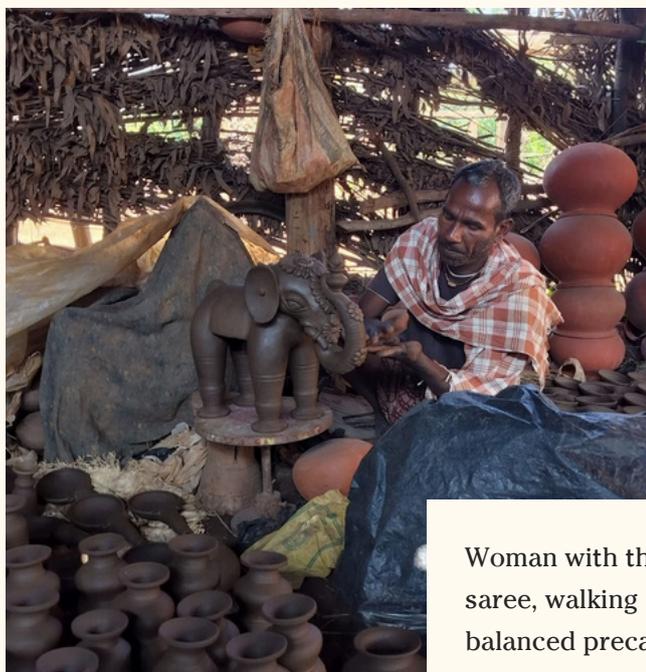
Dr Aalok Mehta represented Swasthya Swaraj at the STRI-AROGYA conference on tribal and rural obstetric health, organised on 21st to 23rd November 2025 by **Lok Biradari Prakalp** and **Basic Healthcare Services** at **Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences, Wardha**. The conference brought together healthcare workers from across India to strengthen the quality of primary obstetric care in government and NGO settings, and included a poster presentation on Swasthya Swaraj's work to improve women's health.

BLOCK-LEVEL SDG TRAINING

Deepak Gadgil represented Swasthya Swaraj Society at a block-level SDG training conducted using a group learning approach. The training focused on practical planning, field-level challenges, and integrating multiple SDG goals at the village and block levels, in coordination with the **Block Development Officer** and the **District Planning and Monitoring Unit**.

THE MUSEUM OF INHERITED SPACES

by *Dr. Aalok Mehta*



Woman with three nose-rings and wrinkled face, draped in a stained green saree, walking slowly along the pugdunde, freshly chopped timberwood balanced precariously on her head.

Smells of woodsmoke and the verdant forest.
Cows left out to graze in the meadowland.
Old women with dark, wrinkled faces squatting in the winter sun, smoking. Trees, some quite gigantic, with massive, rugged trunks, their leaves whispering softly in the gentle breeze.
The trail descending downhill through the forest towards the stream, birds teetering and chirping as they flit speedily past.

Women bathing down by the stream- lithe, agile, washing their clothes in the fast flowing water. Bathing their young ones who delight in the water's coldness, cackling as their mothers soap and lather them.

The hill rising steeply just across the stream, its gently rolling slopes interrupted sharply by angular outcroppings that shoulder out, casting gloomy shadows down on the forest.

On the way back home, villagefolk dancing merrily to the rhythmic beating of a large drum that two young men have hoisted onto their shoulders.

Then nightfall, and the sky.
An uncountable number of stars.
The thin, pale silhouette of a new moon.
The hooting of a lone owl, the chirping of crickets, and later in the night, the absolute silence that reigns in the hour just before the break of dawn.

Squat houses, red clay walls.
Slant roofs, baked tiles.
Stacks of firewood.
Brightly coloured clothes left out to dry.
Children with large eyes and runny noses, most malnourished, playing in the field. Dogs with mangy coats scratching vigorously on flea-ridden fur.
Sloping mountains on all sides, heavily forested.

The sun, ascending behind the hill.
The sky, changing in colour from blood crimson to saffron, to gold.
The sun dissipating the night's chill, warming the world awake.
The metallic ringing of goats' bells as they are shepherded to meadowland further down the valley.
The soft chatter of women as they go about cooking breakfast on their clay stoves.

The hacking cough of an emaciated old man echoing through the house as he wakes up from bed, his cough as red as the clay that he gathers everyday from the river's banks.
Prayers and a quick breakfast out of yesterday's rice, then away to work.
His thatch-roofed workshop, ornate pots left outside to dry in the sun.

Lifting a clump of clay with both his hands and patting it with all his might to form a spheroidal mound.
Thumping it onto the platform at the centre of his wooden six-spoked wheel. Setting the wheel into motion by deftly tuning it with both his hands, applying such force that the rims appear as blurred outlines, then only as a seemingly solid disk of wood, his hands moving about with such frenzy that it is hard to distinguish the right from the left.

His hands which he then dips into a pot of water, moistening the clay with a few drops that trickle down as his hands draw closer to the wheel, until he firmly cups the mound between his palms, his fingers intertwined as the clay rises heavenwards, as though bidding to his divine command.

His face rapt with attention as he prods the apex of the almost-perfectly formed cylinder with his index finger, thus causing a rimmed cavity to form, which he coaxes artfully with his calloused fingers into a slender vase, and which he masterfully adorns with an austere pattern of oblique ridges that go around the brim, notching delicately into the moist, pliable surface with a slender stick.

Rotating the spokes so that the wheel is yet again set into rapid motion, smoothing out tiny imperfections on the surface with the attentive employment of a bevelled stick, until he is satisfied with his creation, which he then separates from the mound with a string, ensuring as he cuts through that he achieves a level plane.

Setting to work on another lamp, and then another, until he has crafted enough ware to bake first in the sun, then in the kiln.

The setting up for the kiln- gathering all the pottery that he has left out in the sun, bringing it within, and making an orderly pile about 10 feet wide and an equal length across, the larger pots holding the smaller ones until he makes a conical tower of about his own height, then placing dry firewood all around the base in an octagonal fashion.

Placing freshly burnt firewood into the cavities of some of the larger pots, then covering the stack with dried hay, the yellow completely covering the brown underneath, then splattering onto the hay wet clay which he cups into both palms from pots scattered all around the workshop, evenly spreading it onto the hay until it is completely covered by it.

Covering this further with another layer of hay and clay, then setting the firewood all around the bottom aflame, until plumes of smoke emerge.

Lighting up the beedi that he has rolled by placing its

end near the kiln's naked flame, until a spit of fire incinerates the dried Tendu leaf, burning the stuffed tobacco within, the smoke calming him as he inhales deeply, sighing contentedly as he exhales.

From the corner of the workshop, the sound of a man coughing as he bends down to turn his wheel.

The harsh summer sun outside as he walks barefoot towards the handpump, the heat that the earth emanates scalding his soles.

The vigorous push-and-pull on the handle and the gushing sound of water as it ascends from the earth's depths, sounding through the hollow pipe as though the surging breath of a monster.

The cold water as it pours out forcefully through the tap, landing on the dusty ground with a splash, and washing away the dried clay on his hands and feet.

In the distance, from deep within the woods, the dull thud of an axe as it lands on a tree trunk. His gaunt-bodied form as he raises his axe high above his head. The momentary pause before he brings it down with all his might.

The deathly blow, and the mighty crash as the tree falls onto the forest floor, the sound reverberating throughout the woods, accompanied shortly by the excited ululations of startled monkeys.

The walk downhill back to his hamlet, nestled in the valley between steeply-sloped mountains on all sides, the heap of timber hoisted on his head, the weight pressing down upon his neck seemingly causing him no discomfort as he slowly treads upon the overgrown trail, humming softly to himself as he makes his way through the dense forest.

Children plucking mulberries from the tree just outside the village school- the ripest are the ones that appear the darkest, their colour much like a week-old bruise, a blue verging on black. The yellow ones and red ones are unripe- still quite hard and sour.

The ripest are incredibly flavourful, their sweetness balanced by a delicate tang that invokes memories of sleepy summer afternoons, their soft pulp seemingly melting within one's mouth, whereas their coarse, fibrous coats evoke a faint scratch at the back of one's throat.

But the tree is no more.

The potters have abandoned their art.

The forests have disappeared, and so has an indigenous way of life.

Where once was a village, now stands a quarry.

The stream ran dry a long time ago.

Now, even the groundwater smells foul.

Black is the dust and black are their limbs as they dig, dig, dig out of their mother's womb. Dark is the night and earnest are their prayers as they long, long, long for their mother's womb.

Near the mine, I saw two dogs, rather thin, united at their hips due to a congenital defect of some sort- one black with a tuft of white near the ears, whereas the other a full brown.

I wonder what the colour of their coats is near where they are miserably strewn together- surely the work of mischief that can only occur in the twisted mind of a cruel creator, or all the more proof of the lack of existence of such an entity in the first place.

Their misery is all-pervading and all-encompassing as each tries desperately to break free from the shackles of the other, darting towards a fast-moving rat or an intriguing smell, only to be restrained at the very last moment by the leash that shall let go of them when they each breathe their last.

I wonder what might happen if one of them were to die before the other- would the one who survives carry his dead brother's carcass with him everywhere he goes until he too dies, or will he be so overcome by the grief of his brother's death - his steadfast companion since the day he was born- that he too would much rather welcome death's embrace than accept the severance that he had longed for all his life, but which nature has the power to deliver to him only in spirit, and most certainly never in the sense that each of them desire for.

If, by some surgical intervention, it does occur that they're enabled to lead perfectly independent lives, I wonder if they would go on living together, if only by the force of habit than anything else; I wonder also, whether, upon having been separated, they shall take instantaneous flight, seeing in each others faces only the remnants of their miseries untold, and no trace of their awkward but nonetheless continuous

companionship; maybe they shall sense their own cruel reflections in each other's eyes, and so entire shall be their loathing for the self and for the world that they shall each retreat into absolute solitude, never again wishing to set sight upon one another.

Upon having thus been liberated from the shackles of restraint, will they find some measure of peace in each of their solitude, unbound as they shall become from the confines of the other, or will they instead long for those days of bittersweet companionship, when they each had the other by their side, a soldier-in-arms against the formidable fears of the outside world?

When it rains, and it is late in the night, they lie huddled together, warm and comfortable- they do not seem to mind each other then, and having observed them thus, one may gather the impression that they share between themselves a kind of sacred love; it is only when dawn breaks, and when the rain is interrupted by a brief spell of early morning sunshine, that they stir from their sleep, and awake to find themselves still tethered to that other- they are relieved then, and comforted too, but they soon discover the inevitable, and a profound sense of resignation washes over them, their crestfallen spirits reflecting in their weary eyes and their heavy bodies.

They have grown to realise that sleep is their only saviour, an escape that is total, the illusion of freedom that it weaves in each of their minds so enchantingly real that they dread with all their might those moments of awakening when the charms of independence that have so magically been spun in their minds are snatched away from them abruptly and unceremoniously.

Not all their dreams are pleasant, though. Cold and hunger sometimes conjure vivid horrors that leave them trembling with fright hours afterwards.

One recurring nightmare that each of them mysteriously seems to have, sometimes even on the same night, involves their turning into an infinitely-many-headed monster, their bodies screaming in pain as they are tugged and pulled to opposite sides, the air heavy with howls of torment as they each look down to discover that they are no longer just the two of them, but an uncountable many.

This Newsletter is only for private circulation

Visit or Contact us at:

Swasthya Swaraj Society,
(Regd under society act XXI of 1860 – XXVII/21/14/51 of 2014)
Regd u/s 12A& 80G, registered office, 2/379, Ramnagarpada,
PO: Bhawanipatna -766001, Kalahandi, Odisha, India

Admin Office: Mahaveerpada, MSA Chowk,
Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi, Odisha- 766001

Telephone no: 06670295476

Email: swasthyaswaraj@gmail.com

Website: www.swasthyaswaraj.org

Please send your donations to:

Swasthya Swaraj Society
BANK OF BARODA, Bhawanipatna
A/C No: 33670100007358 Bhawanipatna Branch
IFSC: BARB0BHAWAN (middle letter is digit 0)

Foreign Donors can make their donations through the following.

(FCRA Registration Number: 104950105)

Account No: 40469587654

IFSC: SBIN0000691

SWIFT: SBININBB104

