

Go! Kiss the World

Subroto Bagchi

A. Answer the following questions in about 200 words each:

1. Justify the claim that 'Go, Kiss the World' is about looking beyond yourself, broadening your vision and giving back more to life than what life has given to you.

Ans. In 'Go, Kiss the World' Subroto Bagchi narrates the broad vision and great concern to others of his parents. Bagchi learnt many good things from his parents and he shares those things with the graduate students of Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. According to Bagchi, his parents set the foundation of his life and the value system, which makes him what he is today. His father was District Employment Officer in Koraput, Orissa.. Though his father was allotted a jeep by the government he rarely used it. He never used the jeep to go to his office. Instead he walked on a foot to his office. Bagchi also never allowed his family members to sit in the jeep. They could sit in it only when it was stationary. The driver of the jeep was treated with respect due to any family member of his father's office. All the brothers used to call the driver by the suffix 'dada'. Subroto Bagchi repeated the lesson to his small daughters. They used to call his driver 'Raju Uncle'. To Bagchi, the lesson was significant- treat small people with more respect than how you treat big people. It is more important to respect your subordinates than your superiors. When his father was on deathbed in the Safderjung Hospital he was more concerned about the overworked nurse than his own state.

Author's mother used to fence the Government house without fence around. She would take her kitchen utensils and with those she and the author would dig the rocky, white ant infested surrounding. They planted flowering bushes. The white ants destroyed them. His mother brought ash from her chulha and mixed it in the earth and they planted the seedlings all over again. This time they bloomed. A few neighbours told his mother why she was taking so much pain to beautify a government house, why she was planting seeds that would only benefit the next occupant. His mother replied that it did not matter to her

that she would not see the flowers in full bloom. She said that she had to create a bloom in a desert and whenever he was given a new place, she must leave it more beautiful than what she had inherited. He learnt the lesson that success is not about what you create for yourself, it is what you leave behind that defines success.

2. Describe what Bagchi saw in Safderjung Hospital.

Ans. In 1992, when the author was posted in the US, he learnt that his father, living a retired life with his eldest brother, had suffered a third degree burn injury and was admitted in the Safderjung Hospital in Delhi. He flew back to attend to him- he remained for a few days in critical stage, bandaged from neck to toe. The Safderjung Hospital was a cockroach infested, dirty, inhuman place. The overworked, under-resourced sisters in the burn ward were both victims and perpetrators of dehumanized life at its worst. One morning while attending to his father, he realized that the blood bottle was empty and fearing that air would go into his vein, he asked the attending nurse to change it. She bluntly told him to do it himself. In that horrible theater of death, he was in pain and frustration and anger. Finally when she relented and came, his father opened his eyes and murmured to her why she has not gone home yet. He found that his father though on deathbed was more concerned about the overworked nurse than his own state. He was stunned at his stoic self.

3. Write about Bagchi's father. What did his father teach him?

Ans. Bagchi's father was a District Employment Officer in Koraput, Orissa.

He was a man of principle. He never used the government jeep for personal work. He taught his children to respect the small people like driver. Therefore they used to address him by using the suffix 'Dada' in public places. He also taught to get more concerned about the people than personal pain. One has to rise above the pain. His father also taught him to show consideration to others. He also taught him not to measure personal success and sense of well being through material possessions. He was a man whose success was defined by his principles, his frugality, his

universalism and his sense of inclusion. Above all, he taught Bagchi that success is one's ability to rise above one's discomfort, whatever may be one's current state. One can, if one wants, raise one's consciousness above one's immediate surroundings. Success is not about building material comforts- the transistor that he never could buy or the house that he never owned. His success was about the legacy he left, the memetic continuity of his ideals that grew beyond the smallness of a ill-paid, unrecognized government servant's world.

4. Classify Bagchi's concept of success.

Ans. According to Bagchi, his first lesson is success he learnt from his mother is that it is not about what one create for oneself, it is what one leave behind that defines success. According to him, imagination is everything. If we can imagine a future, we can create it, if we can create that future, others will live in it. That is the essence of success. To him, success is about the sense of independence; it is about not seeing the world but seeing the light. His father taught him that success is one's ability to rise above one's discomfort. one can, if one wants, raise one's consciousness about one's immediate surroundings. Success is not about building material comforts-the transistors that his father never could buy or the house that he never own. His success was about the legacy he left, the memetic continuity of his ideals that grew beyond the smallness of a ill-paid, unrecognized government servant's world.Success is not about the ability to create definitive dogmatic end state; it is about the unfolding of thought processes, of dialogue and continuum.

According to Bagchi, success is about vision. It is the ability to rise above the immediacy of pain. It is about imagination. It is about sensitivity to small people. It is about building inclusion. It is about connectedness to a larger world existence. It is about personal tenacity. It is about giving back more to life than you take out of it.It is about creating extra-ordinary success with ordinary lives.

B. Answer the following questions in about 75 words each:

1. What does Bagchi tell us about the “jeep” episode?

Ans. Bagchi’s father was a District Employment Officer and he was given a jeep by the government. As there was no garage in the Office, the jeep was parked in their house. His father refused to regularly travel from his house to the office. He told his family members that jeep is an expensive resource given by the government. He repeatedly told them that it was not “his jeep” but the government’s jeep. He insisted to use it only to travel to the interiors. On normal days he used to walk to his office. He also made sure that his family members never sat in the government jeep. They could only sit in it only when it was stationary. The driver of the jeep was treated with respect due to any other member of his Father’s office. His father asked them to use the suffix ‘dada’ whenever they were to refer to him in public or private.

2. What impact did the habit of reading the newspaper have on Bagchi?

Ans. The day of Bagchi’s family used to start with their gathering around his other’s chulha-an earthen fire place she would build at each place of posting where she would cook for the family. The morning routine started with tea. As the brew was served, Father would ask his sons to read aloud the editorial page of The Statesman’s ‘muffosil’(rural) edition-delivered one day late. They did not understand much of what they were reading. But the ritual for them was meant for them to know that the world was larger than Korput district. Bagchi gives credit of speaking good English to the practice of reading that English newspaper, despite having studied in an Oriya medium school. His father asked to fold the newspaper neatly after reading it. Father taught them a simple lesson. He advised them to keep newspaper and toilet clean as they expect from others to keep them clean. That lesson was about showing consideration to others. Bagchi used that advice of his father in his business affairs.

3. How did Bagchi’s mother tend the Government houses they were allotted? What was her reply to the neighbours?

Ans. Government houses seldom came with fences. Bagchi and his mother collected twigs and built a small fence. After lunch, his Mother would never sleep. She would take her kitchen utensils and with those she and Bagchi would dig the rocky, white ant infested surrounding. They planted flowering bushes. The white ants destroyed them. His mother brought ash from her chulha and mixed it in the earth and they planted the seedlings all over again. This time, they bloomed. At that time, his father’s transfer order came. A few neighbours asked his mother why she was taking so much pain to beautify a government house, why she was planting seeds that would only benefit the next occupant. His mother replied that it did not matter to her that she would not see the flowers in full bloom. She said that she had to create a bloom in a desert. She further added that whenever she was given a new place, she must leave it more beautiful than what she had inherited.

4. Describe how ‘ a sense of connectedness’ was created in Bagchi during his stay at Bhubaneswar.

Ans. Bagchi’s mother began developing a cataract in her eyes when he was very small. At that time, the eldest among his brothers got a teaching job at the University in Bhubaneswar and had to prepare for the civil services examination. So, it was decided that his Mother would move to cook for him and, as her appendage, Subroto Bagchi had to move too. It was around 1965 and the country was going to war with Pakistan. His mother was having problems reading and in any case, being Bengali, she did not know the Oriya script. So in addition to his daily chores, his job was to read her the local newspaper-end to end. That created in him a sense of connectedness with a larger world. He began taking interest in many different things. While reading out news about the war, he felt that he was fighting the war himself. Subroto and his mother discussed the daily news and built a bond with the larger universe. In it, they became part of larger reality. Till date, he measure his success in terms of that sense of larger connectedness.

5. What is the importance of imagination? Which act unlocked his imagination?

Ans. Imagination is very important. It is everything. If we can imagine a future, we can create it. If we can create that future, others will live in it. That is the essence of success. Subroto Bagchi wanted to serve the nation when India was fighting a war with Pakistan. He had no idea how he could serve his nation. So, after reading newspaper for his mother, every day he would land up near the University’s water tank, which served the community. He would spend hours under it, imagining that there could be spies who would come to poison the water and he had to watch for them. He would daydream about catching one and how the next day, he would be featured in the newspaper. Unfortunately for him, the spies at war ignored the sleepy town of Bhubaneswar and he never got a chance to catch one in action. Yet, that act unlocked his imagination.

6. “ Our household saw diversity in the political outlook of the two”. Explain.

Ans. Subroto Bagchi’s father was a fervent believer in British Raj. He sincerely doubted the capability of the post-independence Indian political parties to govern the country. To him, the lowering of the Union Jack was a sad event. His mother was the exact opposite. When Subhash Bose quit the Indian National Congress and came to Dacca, his mother, then a schoolgirl, garlanded him. She learnt to spin khadi and joined an underground movement that trained her in using daggers and swords. Consequently, their household saw diversity in the political outlook of the two. On major issues concerning the world, the Old Man and the Old Lady had differing opinions. In them, they learnt the power of disagreements, of dialogue and the essence of living with diversity in thinking.

7. What was Bagchi’s mother say to him when he was ‘leaving behind’ to go to the U.S.? What did she mean by her statement?

Ans. At the age of eighty-two, Subroto Bagchi's mother had a paralytic stroke and was admitted in a government hospital in Bhubaneswar. He flew down from the US where he was serving his second stint, to see her. He spent two weeks with her in the hospital as she remained in a paralytic state. She was neither getting better nor moving on. Eventually he had to return to work. While leaving her behind, he kissed her face. At that moment his mother asked him to kiss the world rather than kissing her. She wanted to convey him that he rise above the immediacy of pain. She was asking him to build inclusion. She wanted him to establish connectedness to a larger world existence. She was asking him to give back more to life than he takes out of it. It was the message of his mother to create extra-ordinary success with ordinary lives.