

## THE INSECTIVOROUS

Translated from Hindi  
by  
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Someone else has entered. It's a newcomer. I'm anxious, to see him, to understand and know and understand the drive which compelled him to come here. Has he dropped here unknowingly?

Yes! This does happen unknowingly only. Where is the sense at that time even if one knows?

"Hey"

"Hey"

We both have looked at each other, have tried to examine each other; to know thoroughly each other in a glance.

"Seem to be a stranger?"

I have asked in the expectation of the answer. He, with the reply, asks in the same manner-

"Yes! And you seem to be intimate here?"

"Don't worry; you too will become an intimate."

He is eager to become familiar, and I am perturbed.

"How does it feel?" I have asked.

"It's alright." He has answered excitedly; but I know well that he is feeling good, not alright, because the flower which looks attractive and beautiful from outside is as sweet from inside too. The bitterness hidden behind this is not recognized instantly.

He has started sucking the inner wall of the flower. He has begun feeling exhausted now.

"I want to spew." He is saying coming close to me. I have suggested him to vomit, but he is not agreeing—"Where should I vomit here? There is no place."

"Do it here only."

"No, it'll get dirty. We have to live here."

"So what? This is how we live here."

"No, no; I won't be able to do that." Saying this, he is again busy sipping the nectar. I can see that he is still restless, but won't spew. He is sipping more to withhold the vomit, but still he will not be able to satiating his hunger.

Yes, this is what has happened. He has returned uneasy and restless and says he wants to spew and is hungry. He wants to eat but is unable to. I've tried to make him understand that he must spew before satiating his hunger. He is perplexed.

"Come on, let me introduce you to the other inhabitants here." I say as if I know everything about here.

"Are there more people?"

It's natural for him to get astonished. I'm feeling happy.

The atmosphere here has once again become warm and enthusiastic with the formal smiles to see a newcomer. The walls have widened so that everyone can accommodate himself in this narrow, dark but elastic dunge. We meet all those prisoner beings sitting against the wide wall one by one. He calls them passengers, not prisoners. He even has clarified that yes, they all are waiting for the journey of the next day sitting in a dark cave. Some little ones are absorbed in playing, thinking that they have got the opportunity to go inside an upturned umbrella. They are overjoyed.

He even asks those beings how had they come here? So one of them said, “I was very hungry, so came to suck. As soon as I was full, the door had closed.” The other told, “I had always been attracted by the beautiful flowers. I ran and sat on its petal as soon as I saw this flower. No sooner had I sat, I slipped down and couldn’t find the way to return.” The third started saying— “I was very tired and came near this looking for some shade and shelter. I got a nap as soon as I came inside. It was already dark when my eyes opened, and was unable to even think of the way to come out.”

The fourth began telling that he didn’t come here on his own, he was in fact pushed by someone. Everyone couldn’t help laughing on his way of arrival.

Just then the newcomer asks me which sea does this dark river merge into? Where does it merge?

Hearing this, one of them laughs and says—“It is not a river; it’s a tent.” Somebody interrupts and says—“We all are under the lamp of *Aladdin*. Some miracle is sure to happen.”

The newcomer’s happiness is diminishing. He is becoming very depressed. His anxiety is intensifying. I showed sympathy towards him, but he has understood that no one is a friend to the other here, no one to share the anguish: I, not at all.

He asks—“It’s becoming dark. How will this small space occupy so many?”

“We will manage.”

“No. I’ll not be able to stay. I need a big space, separately.”

“We all have to sleep together here.”

“Oh, no! I’m suffocating. I’ll not be able to stay here. I want to go out.”

“You can’t.”

“Who are you to stop me?”

“I am no one. It’s the door which stops, which can never open till we are alive. This is only for entrance.”

“Where is the exit?” He is too distressed.

“There is none.”

“Oh! No! No! I’ll die. I’ll not be able to live. Have mercy on me. Please tell me the way to go out of this stifling darkness.”

“There is no way.”

I am laughing to see his anxiety. He is infuriated to see me laughing.

“You are laughing on my pain and helplessness? You are deliberately pestering me and enjoying? You are a devil.”

“You are right. The devil is, but not me, it’s he.”

“Who?” He has peeped into my eyes to know the truth. With a glance of trust, looking into his eyes and holding his shoulders, I begin saying—“My brother, we both us are suffering from the same pain and anguish, I too am helpless as you are. The only difference is that I am old and experienced. I have realized the truth of this. And you are a newcomer. will take some time. You too will become like me after some time—stubborn.”

“Aren’t you happy here? Then why do you stay here?”

I have begun answering even unwillingly—“Where should I go if not here? I have been perceiving lots of inspiration and hope from the red color. I was given shelter by these big petals sometimes. Even today, I had come here to save myself from another being.”

“Where would you go if that being comes here?”

“Nowhere. It will be the same then, whether I die in its stomach or die here. But, that too will have to die once he comes here.”

“How?”

“The door will close for it also once it is in. Then, I will become his diet and that it’s.”

“‘It’ means?”

His continuous interrogation makes me feel as if he is born out of questions. He shoots questions at me one after another-- like bullets shooting. But he is diverted towards something else before he listens to the answer.

Many of the beings have thrust themselves upon a lanky, weak and an impoverished being. All of them squeezing and devouring it, themselves being squeezed and squashed the next moment and wearily sticking on the inner wall of the flower look like the spots and stains on it.

“What’s that happening?” He is asking highly disturbed. I reply coolly, “They are dying.”

“Why?”

He doesn’t have the time even to get perturbed. He has grabbed the wall at once, but its grip has loosened, and he has tumbled down. His body is being sucked.

The top is slightly lighted up for a moment. Another being is coming in. I pity him. There is a slight feeling of joy too that someone has come to share my suffering, so as to bring down my pain. I want to go there to welcome him, but I am breathless. The lid has closed. My heart beat has slowed down. Perhaps I have reached the last stage of anemia. The body is being squeezed. I too will be unconscious the next moment. I will diminish... at this moment.

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**About the Author-** Prof. Diwa Bhatt has authored many collections of short stories in Hindi and Gujarati as well as published several of critical works. Some of her short story collections are- *Mere Desh ki Chandni*, *Nau Din Adahai Koas*, *Akshron ka Pul*, *Ksharna Bhaara Sahiyara* (Gujarati), *Adhunik Bhartiya Kavita mein Manav* (critical work), *Uttarakhand ki Lok Sahitya Parampara* (critical work), *Himalayi Jeevan* (critical work). She has also edited books like *Uttarakhand ki Lok Samskriti mein Vaigyanikta*, *Tumahari hi Bahinji*, *Panchayaan*(Kumauni). She has been acknowledged for her writings, and has been conferred with Uttar Pradesh Hindi Academy Puraskar, Bhagini Nivedita Puraskar(for Gujarati writings), Sarika Puraskar, Sanjivani Puraskar etc. She has published several of her articles in Hindi and Gujarati magazines. Her works have been translated into languages like Gujarati, Punjabi, Odiya, Malyalam and English. Prof. Diwa Bhatt has taught in the Department of Hindi, S.S.J. Campus, Kumaun University, Almora, for more than 30 years, and has just retired from her services, but is still an active writer.