

## THE CONNOISSEUR

Miss Krishna first meets the author at an art exhibition, and shares his pitiable story with the author. From then Miss Krishna keeps visiting the authors house, were as the author feels much disturbed.

Miss Krishna is a spinster, aged woman above sixty five. She had spent her life looking after her ailing mother. She has become alone after her mother passed away. She had been left a small annuity and a tiny cottage. She spent all her life without any comfort and luxury. She had spent her days on think rough sheets on the bad, uncarpeted floors, pottery cups, plates and ugly, discarded furniture. In all her life she had been longing for beautiful things.

Miss. Krishna has a weakness or passion for beautiful things. They constitute the panacea for all her ills. Since she is not very rich, she cannot buy these things. Therefore she pilfers single and small items from the houses of people known to her. She keeps these items in black trunks. She also carries a large purse to take away tiny things from different houses. She calls them precious things which include a coffee cup and saucer, a crystal candle- holder, a wooden statue, a silver vase, a tiny jade Buddha, a jeweled watch and a Burmese box. The boxes were opened after Miss Krishna's death. They contain glass, silver, carved figurines, watches, jewellery, monogrammed ice-tongs and spoons, silver trivets, egg-cups, cigarette lighters and fountain pens. There are no sets but only single pieces and everything is small to go into the large purse. There is also the cordless transistorized nine-inch clock of the narrator. It has been missing for three months. Miss Krishna acquired these articles only to look at them with a sense of beauty. The narrator attributes Miss Krishna's mania for pilfering to a mild eccentricity common to ageing spinsters.

One day Ms Krishna knocks the author's door in the morning. Where, the author is busy in writing. And the author is forced to invite her and offers a cup of tea to her. Then Ms Krishna observed the beauty of the cup. How it was framed, designed and the beauty of the cup. She feels that she had been longing for such beautiful things in her life. Ms. Krishna observes while she was in sitting room, Chinese carpet, and blue as storm-dark seas, at the crystal ashtrays, the red ceramic bowls filled with roses, single-point footstool and the chair covers.

One day the author permits Ms Krishna to stay in her house while her own cottage is being painted and distempered. Ms Krishna was delighted and accepted at once, moving in with an astonishing array of black tin trunks. She arranged all the trunks neatly against the wall in the author's room. All the trunks were firmly locked. The author is much worried of making her room with too many untidy trunks. The author feels that ageing spinsters have such strange, unusual tendencies. Ms. Krishna was an irritating guest, enquiring about the house picking up things and asking endless questions. She was very much particular about food and insisting on brown sugar for coffee and fresh butter on all her vegetables. With this the author feels that it's very impossible to exist even one more day with her under the same roof. She starts enquiring all the personal matters like the author's family and financial matters. The author feels much disgusted with her behavior. She could not make a good guest. At last Miss Krishna had become very troublesome to the writer. It had come to such an extent that it became impossible to stay under the single roof.

One morning Ms Krishna was away for shopping. The author took her car and visited Ms Krishna's house. There she finds no signs of workmen anywhere. No ladders, no cans of paint of distemper. Everything was tidy and clean. She walked around the house and at the back of the house, found the mali potting geranium in the garden shed. Mali showed the house and showed the place, clean and dry and smelling very faintly of paint. Even the windowpanes were cleaned and shine up to match the rest of the house.

When the author returned her house and found that Ms Krishna was reading her latest manuscript. Ms Krishna overturned her chair in her haste to get up. The author tells to Ms Krishna that, she had just come from cottage and everything is finished and Ms Krishna can be moved right away. The distemping and painting was completed a week ago. Ms Krishna went right back with all her trunks. Ms Krishna visited her time to time. She told the author that she had a sister, got married and staying with her husband. She always carried with her a large old, leather purse. She opened her handbag and took out a tiny nice coffee cup and saucer, glazed red and gold, delicately translucent. And she said that whenever she feels disappointed, she goes out buy something beautiful. And this cup got her a low price. She puts the cup and saucer back into the bag and her bag was completely packed. The author suspects Ms Krishna's bag. Same night the author dined with Lalls. Rina was an old friend. When coffee was served, the author was

fascinated at the red and gold cups. Rina said that she bought a dozen cups from Paris, and one of them either lost or broken.

The author enquires whether Ms Krishna knows the Lalls. Ms. Krishna says that they are her sister's friend. She dined with the Lalls last evening. The author says that she saw the exactly the same cup as Ms Krishna has. Ms Krishna's face showed nothing but pretending as if she really bought.

Since then the author was very careful to keep a sharp watch on her cups and spoons when Ms Krishna was around. From time to time Ms Krishna showed her latest acquisition – a beautiful crystal candle holder made in the shape of a star, a polished wooden statue, a delicately embossed Silver base to hold a single flower, a tiny jade Buddha, and once a jeweled watch with a fine gold mesh strap. One day she produced from her bag a small Burmese lacquered box in black and gold. She was offering it to the author and said that 'to put your paper clips n things in'. The author thanked her politely and refused and started suspecting of her "little shop" which she had so fortunately discovered.

One day mali came running and tells to the author that Ms Krishna was lying on her bed and had not woken for her morning tea. Doctor said that Ms Krishna was dead from a heart attack. She had suffered at one time from a very mild attack of angina, but that had been years ago, and she was taking her pills regularly. Ms Krishna's sister made arrangement for the funeral.

Ms Krishna made a will on a sheet of ordinary letter-paper it was perfectly legal, and has been duly witnessed. Ms Krishna's belonging goes to the writer. They both see what is there in those trunks. All these days the author had suspicion about the trunks. At last the suspense was uncovered. They found that every single trunk was filled over with glass, silver statues, carved figurine, watches, jewelry, monogrammed ice-tongs an spoons, silver trivets, egg-cups made from polished wood, cigarette lighters and fountain pens.

The author wondered how Ms Krishna might have accumulated all these materials. There is no pair of anything. One cup, one glass, one spoon and so on. And everything is small 'to fit into her bag'. Among all those things the author found her a little nine inch clock half-hidden by a chiffon scarf. She had lost it almost 3 months ago.

## SAM PITRODA

Sam Pitroda was born in Titlagarh, Orissa on 4th May 1942 in a large family of seven brothers and sisters. His father had studied just fourth grade, but he believed in educating his children. Pitroda did his Masters in Physics and Electronics from Baroda. He moved to the United States of America to study Electrical Engineering. He was always fascinated to connect, spread telecommunication in small, remote and rural cities. Sooner, he had an opportunity to work on digital switching technology at GTE Inc., Chicago, USA that connected him in digital technology. After working in GTE for ten years, he started a telephone exchange company called Wescom switching in 1974. Later he sold Wescom switching to Rockwell for 10 million dollars.

In 1984 Sam Pitroda visited Saudi American Bank in Jeddah and introduced himself as a venture capitalist. At that time a few understood what this term meant. He had vision to set up cheap rural exchanges. Now his dream had become into reality. When the then Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi made him his Chief Scientific Advisor and requested him to start a new public sector venture called centre for the Development of Telematics (C-Dot). It started exporting the telephonic equipments in bulk to countries such as Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Uganda. It sold its design licences to about 20 different Indian equipment manufacturers. He successfully implemented the creation and launch of Rural Automatic Telephone Exchanges (RAX) designed and manufactured by him and his team of Indian engineers. As a result about 40,000 exchanges totaling about 20 million telephones equipped with SS7 Intelligent Networking Signaling systems - the systems which are used to find out if a number is busy or available and to check up the database of telephone numbers. These exchanges also provide toll free information services and see to it that the main telephone network does not get overloaded. All these systems could also interconnect mobile and landline telephone numbers and many changes had taken place in business, administration, education, information, media etc.

The important feature of this new communication network system is that all the switches operate without air-conditioning even in warm environments. Sam Pitroda became the chairman of National Technology Mission during Rajiv Gandhi's government and thus became the first chairman of India's Telecom commission.

Sam Pitroda wished that nation has to provide basic amenities like clean water, adequate shelter, communication food, sanitation, literacy and health, for this IT and advanced methods had to be exploited to make our nation as a self-reliant. He also focused that universities, colleges has to train students to create jobs but not job seekers, but our present system doesn't meet the challenging aspects. Sam Pitroda thoughts, mission, and approaches are high. He always wanted to see our nation to be a self-sufficient.

Pitroda's determination helped to create the concept and technology behind the network of STD/PCO, phone booths in every nook and corner of the villages. This idea generated self employment opportunities to many physically challenged people. The basic technology used to this network is simple and cheap, was created by Pitroda and his team at the Centre for Development of Telematics, which is found in 1984. He designed a simple device which displays phone number, call costs and duration of the call and generates an instant bill at the user's end. Along the way he notched up over 50 patents, for digital switching, synchronization, tone generation, tone receiving and conferencing. He was also largely responsible for shaping India's telecom policy and for all aspects of telecom legislation and development in the country. The fiber optic mechanism worked out by Pitroda made high-speed connectivity possible in telecommunications. Without Pitroda's and his team efforts, we couldn't have seen such progress in telecommunication.

Pitroda says that – India has a large pool of highly talented people, software talent, mathematicians, all this manpower has to be used in a best possible way to make our nation a self-reliant. Unfortunately, most of the talents are used for the progress of the other nations.

Pitroda was focusing much stress on the enhancement of IT to speed up the process of progress and to use the resources to solving people's problems in order to advance the Nation. Pitroda's vision could be grasped in his own words, "IT solutions can help us tackle problems in core areas of governance, commerce, finance, education, health, agriculture, environment, legal issues and employment. From opening a bank account to getting admission to a university, we are forced to fill innumerable forms and this puts bureaucratic hurdles in the way of people. Information Technology is used to simplify life and enable people to get things done with less hassles. He believed that IT is the best solution to realize the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi's to see India as a self-sufficient village community. Through IT application by connecting every village

in India with every other part of the country and the world. Our national agenda must reflect the multiple dreams and cultural diversity of India and every citizen must work towards this common agenda. We need to create a sense of urgency, hasten the process of development, build consensus by public debate, and create a climate for a new order and new ideas, and set priorities. We must encourage innovation and encourage people to think differently and give wild ideas a hearing”.

Internet will be a key tool in shaping many of these changes in the country. Through the backbones and the Internet Community Centres (ICC) the vision of developed India will be within the grasp of many more people than it is now and hopefully can become like the STD/ISD booths that have now become, an integral part of the Indian landscape following the telecom mission. With ICC, the access to computers will be available for public use, which will pave way for e-governance. “We do not need experts to tell us what the problems are. We need experts who will come up with solutions and will to make them work. And IT can provide us with solutions. Indians are highly talented in mathematics and we have large pool of software talent. Let’s cash in on these”.

Sam Pitroda associated with the international forums and was an advisor. In 1995, Pitroda founded World Tel – global organization to develop telecom infrastructure in third world countries and became the CEO and subsequently the Chairman. He was also an advisor to Kofi Annan, the United Nations General Secretary Citizen’s Award for his tremendous innovations and contributions in telecom. In 1993, he was awarded the IIT Alumni Medal, and in 1995 the international Distinguished Leadership Award. Apart from providing phone access to a billion people, he built a foundation for a wired India’s future as an information industry powerhouse. For this, Dataquest has presented the IT Lifetime Achievement Award for 2002 to Sam Pitroda.

The Electronic Wallet that Sam Pitroda is working on is like a magic box. It is designed to contain all kinds of cards - credit card, debit card, health care, insurance card, even the driving license. These cards facilitate electronic payment. This would be the latest mode of payment over the existing systems of payments. “The future lies in electronic payment system. The payment systems that exist are outdated. It would make such good sense for the Indian government to deposit the salaries of its employees in a bank straight away, cutting out the long process of writing out cheques and waiting in queues to deposit them. The same goes for the payment of

electricity and telephone bills” said Pitroda. All the payments would take its roll to speed up the work process and use our intellectual to the betterment of human life instead of wasting our time in unwanted delays.