

A little prayer to Santa

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Under the night sky filled with stars, pegged to the rope, are socks of hope. Under the pillow, are empty stockings awaiting magic.

Clasping his nimble hands, the child prays to Santa Claus – and in his mind, all is true and possible. Away from the agony of broken expectations, away from the truth of complex contradictions, the child is assured that the stockings shall not remain empty. Assured, that the sun will rise, and a new day will come. It will not be just another day. All will be new, and ill shall fade away. He thinks, he believes, he knows.

And in the years that follow....he learns of another story.

That Santa is only for children. They, who don't know. The magic that they await is but the work of hands they know too well, but do not recognize. Wrapped in the joy of carols and Christmas bells, their minds disallow logic. Reason is not a word they acknowledge.

And so to him, Santa does not ride on reindeers, clad in red, with a white beard, and black boots, friendly and far from conceit, carrying a bag full of gifts hung on his back for all the children, rich or poor, far or near.

Alas, he knows!

And still - see how the heart hopes! How it yearns for love, and prays for hope!
Shameless, purposeful, habitual...

This year, is yet another year in the calendar of dates and months; and I am reassured, every moment, that this year will not get lost. Yes, it is yet another year – but for India, it shall remain, raw and remembered every hour. For this year, it saw death and destruction like it's never seen before. Blame it on the cruel floods, the senseless stampede, the communal and regional hatred, or the terrorist attacks – one of the worst that India will ever see. The dismay was immeasurable; the disdain continues. It renders the heart cold, from fear, from shame, from anger and pain, from helplessness, it is too speechless...sometimes too heartless too, for tears do not come easy. Sleep is far from restful.

WE fought for land, for religion, sometimes for legitimacy, sometimes for freedom, sometimes for identity, at others for 'no reason'. I say WE, for even in those 'others' I see a part of me. I say WE, for even in theirs' I see a heart beat, for even in their eyes the tears don't cease, they are no different from me. No, they are not. No, we are not divided. In land by borders, divided we are – by oceans and seas, we stand apart. Yes, we speak differently, but of the same things; we laugh when we are merry, we cry when we see death. Isn't it?

WE are all the same... or am I a child? To ask this, am I not a child? How trifling all my

reasons sound! Cannot I get an answer?

Why can't we fight for 'love' instead? Why can't we live in peace, instead? Why don't we leave hatred behind? What do we win by wars and battles? In bloodshed, in disaster – is not the colour of blood that flows in you same as it is in me? Or am I a child, when I ask these of you?

If so it is, let it be. Let me be a child, once again.

For this Christmas, I shall put my stockings under my pillow or even hang my socks from the rope on the terrace. And I shall pray. And I know Santa shall hear me. For I shall pray for love and hope; I shall pray for strength and I shall never give up. I shall pray for peace to come, I shall ask for faith to prevail. I shall ask to make us human, to help us Be, free from greed. And I know, Santa will come. He shall not fail me this time.

Once upon a time, on this very day, someone named Jesus, came to light the world. I ask him to come back... as Rama, as Allah, as a saviour in all of us.....for we need a light in these dark times, obscure with doubt, black with hate. India needs you...in all of us. Santa, do you hear? Will you keep my prayer?