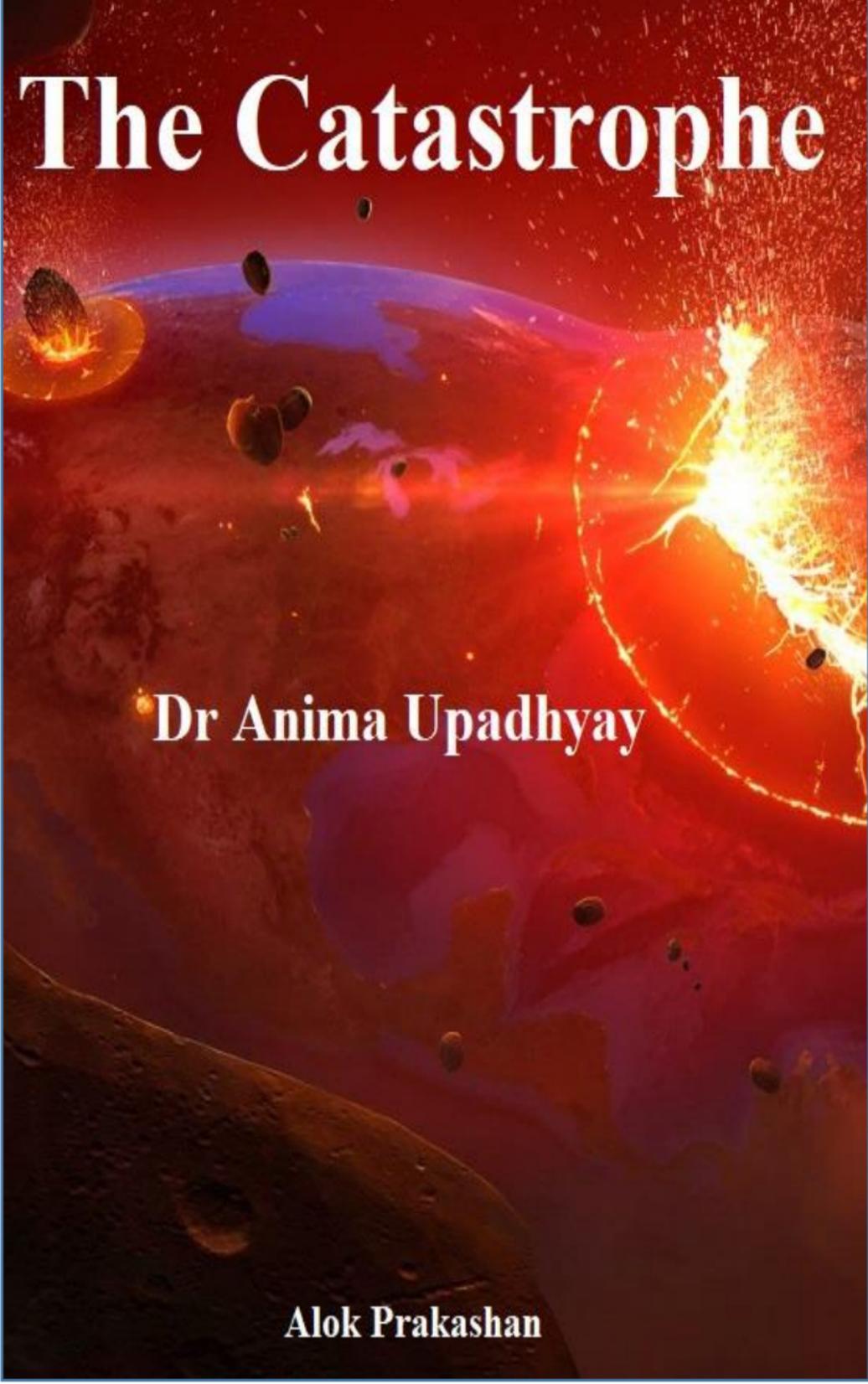


# The Catastrophe

The background of the cover is a vibrant, fiery space scene. A large, reddish-orange planet with a blue and purple horizon line dominates the center. To the right, a bright, glowing star or sun is partially visible, emitting a powerful light. Several dark, rocky asteroids are scattered throughout the scene, some appearing to be in motion. The overall color palette is dominated by warm, intense tones of red, orange, and yellow, creating a sense of heat and danger.

**Dr Anima Upadhyay**

**Alok Prakashan**

# **The Catastrophe**

**Dr Anima Upadhyay**

**C – Dr Anima Upadhyay – 2019**

**Alok Prakashan**

## **To the Readers**

Dear Reader these fiction stories imaginative work of author. Each story has a different flavour and will fill the readers with thrill, excitement and adventure. If one story will take you to the land of hopes and happiness, the other may bring fear and fright of the unknown and could make you feel puny. The stories are on authors assumptions and imagination of the most talked about topic of apocalypse but request you to read them only for fun as they have no scientific base.

Dr Anima Upadhyay

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## The Valediction



Kiah, Som, Raza and Pia are stuffing their bags with valuables and prized possessions. They have mixed feelings. They are happy that they are going to a new safer place where they can live and flourish but they are sad too that they have to

leave their eternal mother “Earth” never to see it again....”

Before leaving they prayed for its regeneration and then they started collecting all what they wanted to carry with them. These valuables were actually the minicules filled with soil, seeds, eggs, and germ cells of various animals, plants and their own species “the humans.”

Pia is a microbiologist and genetic engineer. With her hard work and dedication, she has managed to preserve specimens in minicules. These are nano-sized capsules which they call minicules. Under ideal conditions of temperature and pressure these minicules will rupture to produce individuals with

their natural traits and intelligence. In this way her mission of conservation of species will become a great success.

Kiah is a chemo-physicist and has designed the minicules for the storage of specimens which will not only support life but will also help them grow in secured conditions till they become self- sufficient and self- supporting.

Raza and Som are nanotronics and space tech experts with a great understanding of geo, aero and oceanography. They are almost in their late thirties, but they started their mission ENED “Exploration of New Earth- Durina” in their late teens. This was the time when most

of the scientists started talking and predicting the drastic climate change and its repercussions on the Earth's existence leading to its end.

They as students decided to learn and experiment on their own. They shared same scientific interests and hoped to sustain and survive if not on Earth than elsewhere. They started their mission secretly. With the rapid rise in sea-levels and melting of glaciers they were sure, that the situation of earth being wiped away will be sooner than expected and predicted. Although scientists had predicted that they still have 200-250 years for such a natural disaster to occur but inside everyone was worried that the

process of deterioration will expedite and in such a case even a hundred years will not be left for their safety and survival.

These young enthusiast's secret mission was hidden from old wizards and they used a code "ENED", Exploration of "New Earth- Durina" for their mission of finding a new habitable planet.

One night while discussing their plans Som declared to the teammates "Friends we have just sixty or less years to flee from here. I can see this clearly as per my quantum calculations."

Raza nodded in agreement.

In next 5-6 years of hard work they managed to locate a place far away in the galaxy which no other has actually found. They equipped themselves to send their space ship there but were in doubt if they could do it all alone?

Pia was getting anxious now and could not hold herself back retorted “In the past whenever we reached with any sensible news of exploration, we were never taken seriously so this time we should go ahead quietly as a secret team.”

Kiah supported Pia and said how many years we will wait for a surprise to come. Let’s go ahead with our mission ENED and prove it. They all agreed to this and then

they sent their first ship with a very few samples which they have prepared and tested for Durina, the name they gave to this new planet, which means deathless. It has environment quite similar to Earth with a slight difference. It has little less nitrogen and carbon-dioxide in air as we have on earth.

Its more than 20 years that they had sent their space ship to Durina but had lost their link with it soon after that. In the mean time they tried several other planets but none had shown any viable signs. Earth in all these years had lost most of its population in floods, heavy cyclones and explosive temperatures and now earth was

just a piece of only 1500 Kms land and the remaining is already drowned under the sea. It has hardly a few teams of around 1200 scientists left on it. The Chief of all the teams Mr Ross had called a meeting and finally announced to go to one of the moons of Mars where they had established a centre with 30 scientists already working there.

One of the senior scientists from the team then asked Mr Ross “Are we all going together to this safe abode”?

No... replied Ross. “It is not feasible for everyone to go there and a maximum of only 250 people we can carry and we have time and

fuel for only two such rounds that means the others have to sacrifice themselves for the safety of the mankind” Ross declared.

“Oh!!! So that is your plan Ross to leave us all here and die” said the other one. “Clarify this also who are those lucky ones whom you will take along”?

The third shouted in panic “we have all worked together in this mission we all have the right to live and with this erupted a war of survival”.

Seeing this, they had no hopes of their survival too. They were the youngest among them all and were their children or students but to their surprise none of them cared

about it. They were all fighting for their own lives. The four were shattered and left the place towards their hiding.

They had in all these years created a hole under the ground with facilities to survive for 10 days. They had made two adjacent rooms under the ground one as a store of around 6 feet by 6 feet to keep their minicules , adjacent to it was their small lab of 12 feet by 12 feet. They had also stored their food and water capsules along with some oxygen balls in the lab.

This all will last only for 80 - 90 days said Kiah with a smirk. After that we are also destined to die.

“No, none of us will die”. We will find a way said Som with assertion.

“But how?? Even our last hope “Durina” is also lost as we have not received any signals from there too” questions Pia

Raza sitting quietly on his hologram was still busy in monitoring near and far planets by sending signals to each of them as this was their last hope.

Raza is it working asks Som? “No everything in vain” he replies back.

Almost 12 hours passed in hiding and to keep them away from that bloody scene which they never wanted to experience.

Next morning Som and Raza went out to the labs and found everything deserted...

Ross has fled to his new destination that night with his few friends and others were all dead. They have killed themselves... They were taken aback with this kind of humanity!!

They came back in a shock and sat on their holograms without uttering a word.

Kiah and Pia knew what they have seen outside so kept quiet feeling aghast.

Kiah listening to the sound of ocean asked Som what do you think are the chances??

It is rising sooner than we expected.... But...

But What??? I know we will all die here said Pia in melancholy...all our efforts gone in vain.

It was almost 48 hours in the hole and they had no clue of escape. Suddenly Som saw a strange signal on his screen from Durina and then it changed into a blurred image which gradually faded away.

After 10-12 hours same thing repeated and this time, he showed everyone his findings. They felt happy and relieved with some hope, but it died away as nothing happened after that and even their signals went unanswered.

Leave it said Kiah... It's just hallucinations, false signals and false hopes and saying this she retired on her hanging bed.

Raza was enthusing Som and Pia who were still working on their monitors and holograms trying sending messages and signals and not letting them getting away with any negative feelings.

After around 90 hours Raza found some beeps coming on their monitor along with beeps, he found some real time signals too. He shouted and called everyone near him. To their sheer surprise they could see on their hologram the signals turning into real images. They could clearly see now trees

and bushes on their screens and along with them some little creatures too. Close observations make them realise that these were butterflies and rabbits flying and running around the bushes and trees.

Kiah who was still depressed joined them. She was not finding anything amusing, but suddenly she shouted with joy, “hey look there at a distance, near that far bush something standing amongst the bushes”. And they all shouted in surprise it is Doris our beloved dog’s clone. Oh!!! We have got it back at Durina.

Pia exclaimed O My God!! Our mission has succeeded, our

experiments have worked. The specimens that we have sent there are now living and adjusted there happily. Durina is showing positive results of life....

In that case we should also try to locate our own kids said Pia

Our kids?? Asked Raza...

“Yes...you heard right” said Kiah ... “Do you remember you were annoyed when I told you once that along with other specimens and clone of Doris, I am also sending minicules carrying our fertilized eggs one XY and other XX taking sperms from you guys and fertilizing with our ova.”

Then suddenly two human figures appeared a boy and a little girl playing with each other and running around the bushes healthy and fit.

They were delighted to see the Adam and Eve of “Durina”.

Now we can die in peace said Pia we have really saved the mankind and performed our duty....

Why lose hopes let's start on our final journey for the new destination to live happily with our kids said Som.

Yes, shouted Raza I have already made our ship ready for the departure. Hurry up everyone and start collecting the valuables not all

but a few. We have only 30 minutes to leave... Ocean is on the rise otherwise we will be drowned...

In no time they were up in the sky with ocean everywhere on the Earth. They bid goodbye to their mother with teary eyes hoping to see it again.....

## Analogous World



Amy and Ron wanted to spend a day of leisure after an exhausting week. Amy a design engineer in a multi-national Company enjoys exploring the world through travelling and reading books. Ron is a software engineer in a reputed company, and his favourite time

pass is sitting at home and playing games on the X-box. He loves speed and if somebody asks him to go on a ride, he is the first person to be on his heels. So precisely they both are way apart in their habits and nature still are very warm childhood friends. They have difference of opinion on each matter and never ends up to the same conclusion. Still they enjoy each other's company and respects each other's space.

So when they thought of spending the weekend together Amy suggested to go to a safari, but as usual Ron was of the opinion of having lunch outside and then watch a thriller at home. So, after a

long discussion and argument they decided to finally go to a restaurant in the old town and then from there to a ride to a safari and have some fun.

Amy collected her head phone as she is a great lover of music and Ron took his packets of snacks to munch while driving his newly bought car. They love to be in their own spaces even when they are together and never tries to trespass other's feelings until required.

Before starting on their journey Ron booked a table in the restaurant to avoid the delay in the meals expecting large crowd and long waiting list due to the weekend. Soon after reaching the restaurant

they ordered the food and while the food was served, they surfed the map to reach the safari on their mobile. The staff of the restaurant was cordial and efficient and the food was served in less time as expected by them looking at the rush in the restaurant. Amy looking at the food said delightedly oh!! I am really hungry.

Ron felt hungry too...

They quickly finished the food and found it very tasty.

Amy food here is really good. You suggested the right place. Have you been here earlier too?

Hmmm.... No never... Just read the reviews and selected it but yes, the choice was right.

Seeing that Ron is going a little lazy after a good diet reminded him about the long ride to safari.

Oh yes Ron almost sprang from his chair cracking a stupid prank which does not impressed Amy at all.

Ok.... Ok let us move said Amy.

Ron paid the bill and joined Amy taking big steps towards their car, please don't leave me alone here Amy. I feel insecure and they both smiled with a light laugh.

Ron started the engine and Amy looked into the Google map on her mobile said "Ron it's just 10 miles

from here and as per your driving speed it may take 20 minutes to reach there”.

Ron pressed one eye to her and said 15 and they both started laughing.

“Amy look into your watch and tell me the time and I will prove what I have just said” announced Ron.

Amy seeing into her mobile said its 2.30 sharp O.K.

O.K said Ron so we will be there by 2.50 and accelerated his car on the road.

In no time they were on the highway towards the safari.

Ron realised that though it was a weekend there was very little traffic

on the road heading towards the forest. It was a double road and he found that the vehicles returning from there are more compared to the cars going towards it.

Amy laughed and said who would like to go to the forest in the afternoon except us. Ron smirked and agreeing to her said yes, only crazy people, like us who are going to touch it and come back.

No, not just touching it and coming back grugged Amy. I will do some hiking and some sightseeing too. We still have a few hours before the sun sets.

O.K said Ron you can go for hiking while I will have a cup of hot coffee in the cafeteria.

“you... lazy boy” giggled Amy and Ron joined her too.

They didn't realize how long it had been.....

Suddenly they felt that the road has gone completely empty on both sides. The vehicles in front also have disappeared and in the rear mirror also they were not able to locate anyone following them. In the beginning they were reluctant and kept enjoying the ride but then Ron felt strange and asked Amy to see the time as he thought they had already ridden for a long-time

despite of very less traffic as by now they should have reached their destination safari.

Amy looked into her phone and almost screamed ....

Ron my watch says its 3.50.

What?? Laughs Ron.

Your battery is dying so your phone gone slow saying this he looked into his mobile and was taken aback to see the same time flicking in it too.

Now they looked around with a suspicion that they have taken a wrong turn while talking.

Ron see how long we have been driving? Although it was just 10 miles.

Yes, said Ron.... Then where are we??? See in your map.

Amy tries to locate the safari but to her surprise the screen of her mobile went blank. She tried on Ron's mobile too but in vain.

They felt a chill in their spine. They looked around and lowered their window glasses and found a chill in the air too. The trees the breeze and also few animals around were differently strange everything looked bizarre which they have never seen or heard before.

Amy suddenly located a car far away at the distant slopes and said cheerfully, Ron look we are almost there and then fell quiet feeling something strange. The car they saw was not like any earthly car but was weird. One such similar car they saw floating in the water in a far lake and one they saw flying in the sky.

By now Ron has almost bring his car to a still. Amy thinking of getting down to find some sign board tried to unlock the gate, but Ron not only stopped her from doing so but also prevented her to roll down the window glasses.

Amy noticing a fear in his eyes felt frightened too.

It looks dangerously strange. We should not step down but should go back immediately saying this he started the engine which he has killed by now and pressed the accelerator. He almost dived on the divider which was not very high but a few inches from the ground with lights fixed on it. They thought that in doing so they might have smashed a few lights but when they looked back the lights were intact and there was no damage caused to them.

They went straight back on the road about half a mile, but to their sheer surprise they found themselves going in the same direction from which they had taken a U- turn.

Amy looking into her phone once again tries for the map and this time it started showing the directions as well as their destination which was just a few meters ahead.

They gazed at each other and then on the road and finds cars similar to theirs coming and going in both the directions.

Amy- “I hope we are safe now....”

“Yes” Ron replies with a sigh of relief, and says “finally we are here....”

He parks the car in the parking slot and gets down to open the gate for Amy.

Amy also comes out and stands almost tranquil wondering whether

she should walk or get back in the car. She asks Ron can we go for a walk.

Yes why not, says Ron, but not too far....

Amy strolls here and there for a while and then looks into her watch and this time she shouts back to Ron with a surprise. Look Ron into the watch it is showing 2.50pm. it's the same time what we expected to reach this place.

Ron looks into his watch which was still showing an hour ahead. They confirm the time on the clock in the cafeteria and with a few people walking around and it was 2.50.

Oh my god!! She exclaims then  
where were we all this time??

They look at each other with  
dismay and excitement.

Were we teleported to some  
unknown land for a while???

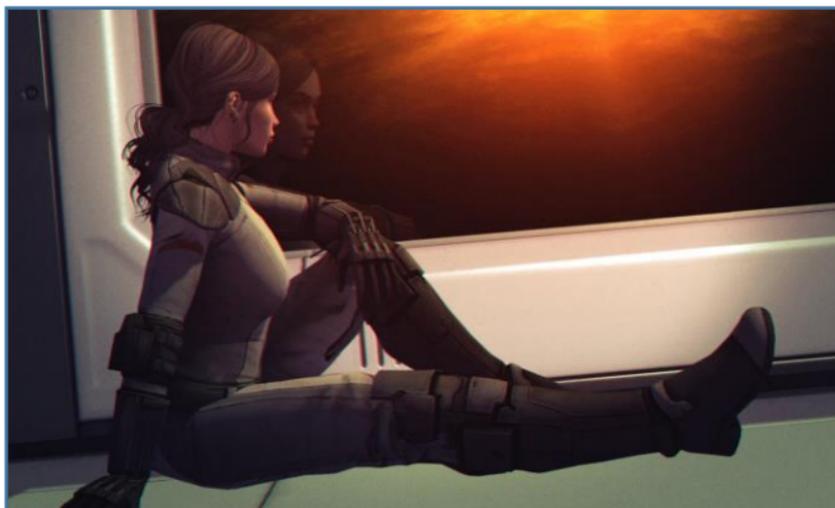
And a sparkle comes to their eyes  
and they chuckle....

After an hour or so even Ron's  
watch starts showing the same time  
as Amy's...

They are still in a state of  
confusion.....

Were they really teleported to some  
parallel world!!!!

## The Stranger



Mr Batra and his daughter Ria are sipping tea in their small garden. They are looking perturbed and at the same time anxious too. Mr Batra is a bit scratchy and insecure about the telephonic conversation he had with some stranger

yesterday. He is still in qualm whether it was real or dream?

Ria: Papa it's ok I know what you are going through but are you absolutely sure that he was telling something about Shubh?

Mr Batra: Yes, the man on the phone was telling exactly this, he quoted "I have some belongings of Shubh which I want to return to you but in exchange I want a reward...."

Ria: What !! reward!! what he expects from us??

Mr Batra: That I don't know, he said he will announce on meeting us...

Ria: Shall we inform police?

Mr Batra: No use. Ria we all know Shubh died in a devastating torpedo in Australia two years ago so there is no question of ransom. If we don't want to take his last few things, we can just refuse to him... but... shall we do this or pay him or whatever reward he wants from us give him and collect the memories of our lost son from him.

Ria: Papa if he asks a huge amount of money from us then?

Mr Batra: No, I don't think so this is not exactly about money...and this is what is bothering me...

Ria: How could you say that? Any clues

Mr Batra: Because when I spoke to him for money he laughed and said something more precious than that...

Ria: But what dad? I am not only getting confused but a bit scary too.... Who is he? Any name?

Mr Batra: Ria I am freaked. I really don't know whether to allow him to meet us or turn down this offer but he is not asking me my permission to visit us actually he is forcing this meeting upon us and that too he has set the date that is for tomorrow. This is what is upsetting me from yesterday. Then lowering his voice, he says please don't tell this to your mom otherwise she will not listen

to us and will call him immediately as it is related to Shubh.

Ria: Yes, and her words died off under sobbing... Why papa? Why this happened to us? Why brother went to the sea that day and got stuck in that storm? Why God has taken him away from us...

Mr Batra: Control Ria... It's not only our family that suffered in that shocking disaster it took away so many lives. It's our destiny and we have to face it bravely.

Looking at the door and seeing Mrs Batra coming through it with her cup of tea they closed the matter their and Ria wiping her eyes changed the topic and started

talking about the flowers and weather.

Mrs Batra: What are you guys hiding from me? I know you were talking about something else and look here, your father has left his mobile in the bed and someone has called him some half a dozen times since morning. Looks like a desperate soul.

Mr Batra with a faint smile takes the phone from wife and looks into it. Ria it is the same number.

Mrs Batra: Who? Whose number may I also know the conversation between you two or is it a secret says with a smirk!!

Mr Batra tries to ignore but Ria hurriedly says nothing Mama some brother's friend wants to come and meet us to return some of his belongings.

Mrs Batra: Oh!! Then let him come home what is the debate?

Mr Batra: But he wants a reward in return. Is this correct to take a reward that too for returning belongings of a departed friend.

Mrs Batra: Oh, come on don't be hyper!! For this stupid thing you were so upset from yesterday. You could have told me this earlier I would have clarified it with you. Was he saying his name "Shagen"?

Mr Batra: I hope so! I don't remember but something like this a bit strange never heard such a name earlier.

Mrs Batra: Once Shubh told me about one of his friends whose name was Shagen and he is a bit strange fellow as he talks about only universe and extra-terrestrial things and certain creatures from other planets and their existence can neither be felt nor can be declined.

Ria: Hugs her mother and comforts dad saying "the issue is resolved" and sips her remaining tea in a gulp. I am relieved mom and laughs.

Mr Batra: But he did not request he just announced that he is coming to return some of Shubh's belongings and in turn take some special reward from us. He was sounding very strange, oh I cannot explain what I felt, but the feel was not good at all.

Mrs Batra: Oh, dear why you think that this is strange, after all this young generation always sounds peculiar, he might be joking about the gift and whatever he is our sons' friend and want to return his belongings to us which was in his possession till now.

Mr Batra: nodded his head in denial, whatever, he should have

asked me at least of our availability a common courtesy.

Mrs Batra: Are you gone crazy? This is India, here we don't book such appointments.

Mr Batra: You have valid points, hope you may be right, still I am not getting convinced. His way of talking, his tone, his behaviour. I must say everything was very weird. "This is my gut feeling" he still looked unconvinced.

A quietness prevailed for a while till Mrs Batra broke the silence. Oh, come on old man and leave your bizarre experiences aside. Better you leave a message to him that we invite him for a lunch. And now,

as we are expecting a guest both of you come inside quickly and finish your breakfast. I have little time left to finish off so much uncompleted work in the kitchen saying this she leaves.

Mr Batra: you saw Ria, she without thinking of pros and cons has invited a complete stranger for “lunch”.

Ria smiled with a smirk and then goes into the house. Mr Batra follows her still asserting that he doesn't want to show any hospitality to this stranger.

Ria looks back and holds his hand in hers and comforts him.

Mr Batra: Brooding on the same issue suddenly speaks aloud “Ria!!! “his” voice was sounding as if it is a recorded message and coming from somewhere very far away or probably a well. It was neither warm nor rude but indifferent without emotions”.

Strolling slowly, they come to the dining table to have their breakfast.

Mrs Batra: Oh, so finally you guys are on the table.

Ria: Let me see what mamma has prepared for me today and looking at the roasted bread makes faces.

Mrs Batra to Ria: You can have some muffins with jam.

Mr Batra: Ria today you have to help you mom in fixing the lunch and if required please don't hesitate in asking me too.

Mrs Batra: Look Ria, who is extending a helping hand to me for the first time in life. Your dad is looking too generous to me, but I don't want any help from anybody. I can manage everything on my own. The only thing which I expect from you two is to get ready by lunch time.

they cracked some jokes on the table trying to make the conversation light and then leaves the dining room.

By 1 PM they were ready and were waiting eagerly in their living room for their strange guest. At around 1.15 they saw somebody on the gate trying to unlock it and come inside.

Mrs Batra rushes outside unlatching the wooden door and greeting him brings him inside. He was tall but thin. His way of walking was different. He wore a wind cheater which was almost hanging on his shoulders as if he has only bones and no flesh. He has kept his hands in his pockets and was showing no inclination to take them out of it. Mr Batra extended his hand for shake but he just shook

his head in response and strolled towards the sofa.

Mr Batra: Ria please get a glass of water for...

Stranger: Shagen. That's what people call me.

Ria goes in and gets water in a tray in no time. All this time Shagen was keeping his hands in his pockets.

While offering water to him Ria notices that his hand was not a normal hand. He had very long three single joint fingers with no nails and no flesh attached to a small palm. She was shocked and taken aback but tried to hand over the glass to him in a composed way.

Realizing that Ria is looking at his hand he withdraws it immediately into his pocket refusing to have water.

Ria turns to her chair in dismay and sits down.

Mr Batra has also noticed his creepy hand and was gazing at his face which was looking eerie too. He was wearing a big cap which was covering most of his forehead and ears. He has also not removed his sun glasses as if he wanted to hide most part of his face.

Mr Batra offered him to remove his cheater, cap and sun glasses and asked him to be comfortable, which he refused with a grin. First time

they heard him laugh but they could hardly see any tooth in his mouth.

Then he spoke in a rough voice: “No, No I am fine and I am here for a business. Let us finish it quickly as I am in a hurry to leave and as you have already promised I will take away something as a token with me”.

Mr Batra: But I never promised anything to you.

Mrs Batra: Its ok we will see that later. Come and join us for the lunch.

Shagen: “No mam” he refuses and takes out a small packet from his pocket and keeps it on the table in

front of them. Then he raises from his chair walks towards the door.

Mrs Batra: What is in the packet?

Shagen: Looks back this time with a devilish smile, your son and leaves.

Mr and Mrs Batra follow him to the door beckoning him “stop, you wanted some reward from us in return”

Without looking back, he takes big leaps and waves his hand saying “it will follow me, I have already taken it”.

As they return to the living room finds a peculiar smell filled in the air. It was probably the smell of sulphur in the air.

They then notice that the cushions of sofa where he sat was shining like gold and so was the dust on the ground.

Suddenly Mr Batra looks at Ria who was holding the packet given by the stranger in her hands and trying to unwrap it.

Mr Batra shouts at Ria not to open the packet but she without paying heed to his words as she was in some kind of trans uncovers it and puts the box opened on the central table.

With the opening of the box they were shocked to see Shubh in a miniature form standing there just 10 cms tall. He gradually grows

back to his normal size and then they feel that the pungent smell of the air has gone back to normal.

Both Batra's in a shock and trans runs to hug their son. Mr Batra suddenly looks back for their daughter and calls her to come and hug her brother but was staggered to see Ria nowhere...

Shubh: She is gone Dad. They have taken her away. We are just specimens for them.

They sat devastated with her fragrance which prevailed for a long time in the air.

## The Connoisseur



Vikram an expert of Environmental Sciences was preparing a presentation on “The Climate Change and Human activities” which he has to deliver in a colloquium of highly enlightened scientists & technocrats. They were all gathering to discuss the Drastic

## Environmental Changes and its impact on the Earth's Future.

He was happy that he has laid everything in place in a convincing way by assigning maximum blame on the man-kind who according to him and many others were responsible for bringing this unwelcoming change in the climate. These changes according to his theory will lead to a complete disaster on Earth and this will be no later but sooner. After writing the conclusion he retired on his sofa and soon he started dozing.

Don't how long he slept but when awake he found himself in a garden with blossoming trees laden with fruits. When he looked around, he

found one or two people walking and enjoying the pleasant breeze. He looked a little far through the trees and saw people walking outside the garden too... probably it was the road, beside which the garden was located.

He came out of the garden and tried to speak to them. But, to his surprise no one paid any heed to his words or probably they ignored him completely. Feeling sad he came back into the garden and plucked a fruit from a tree.

He just had a couple of bites of the fruit and he felt his stomach to be too full. He again thought to go out on the road and explore the place further. This time he examined the

road and the people minutely and carefully. He found that the people were not moving in vehicles but were only walking and there was no vehicle or carts of any kind on the road. He also noticed that the lanes were very narrow and were not tarred or made of any concrete material but of something that was shining like silver.

He also saw that everyone was draped in a similar kind of silky white flowing gowns which covered their bodies completely except their faces and neck. He also found that there was a glow on each face and everyone was smiling but with a expressionless face. Then he looked down and saw that each one

of them was wearing similar type of shoes made of some kind of glowing material.

He was finding it difficult to walk on the road as there was very little friction for him to walk, on the contrast he could see these people walking comfortably as if they were moving on wheels.

Oh! so it is there shoes which are helping them to move so swiftly on the road he thought.

“What a wonderful place if I could be here for all of my life” he thought and then smiled on his own thought.

He saw a structure at the far end down the road. He managed to

reach there with difficulty and was shocked to see a palatial building with glowing walls. He looked for the door but could not find any. He tried to peep into it but his efforts went in vain. He again started to look for some kind of entrance but soon got exhausted and leaned on the wall to relax.

When he leaned on it putting his head on the wall, he found the material on which he leaned melted into a jelly and to his astonishment he was inside a big hall. He touched his hair but there was no jelly sticking to his hair. They were dry and normal as usual.

He looked around the hall and saw a few floating almirahs filled with

silky white gowns and shoes stored in them and stacked neatly. He pulled out a gown and wore it and then he gently took a pair of shoes and wore in his feet. They were extremely comfortable and soft. The shoes actually helped him move swiftly on the floor. He felt self-elated and his assumptions about shoes.

Then a flash thought came to his mind of seeing himself in a mirror and immediately lakhs of mirrors appeared around him as if the entire hall was a mirror. He felt guilty of himself as he has taken things without the permission of the owner of the house. But thinking that someone here is definitely

allowing him to do so he pushed his guilt aside...

He walked all around the hall and looked at it in amusement. It was a big quadrangular structure with shining glazed flooring and sky-high walls. when he reached to a corner of the hall, he saw a small square of 3 X 3 feet which was looking different from the rest of the floor.

In curiosity he stepped on it and he felt as if he has entered some vacuum space as he become weightless. Then he started feeling drowsy and soon he went into a deep sleep. How long he slept he didn't remember but when awake, he felt extremely hungry and tired.

Then he heard a munchy crunchy sound coming from nearby. When he turned in that direction, he got numb to see a giant about 8-10 feet tall covered with dense hair looking like an early man. He was eating freshly killed prey with his mouth and canines covered with blood. He felt like vomiting and in dismay he turned his face away from him. Then he looked on the ground for the first time and seeing himself lying on bare ground with long grass got even more frightened. He looked back again on the giant and saw him wrapped in animal skin around his waist. He felt weakness in his bones and a chill went down his spine.

On looking around he found himself in a dense forest. He could hear the sounds of weird and fierce animals around. But then he realised that probably he is invisible to this crowd in the jungle and felt safe and relieved. He noticed a group of giants coming towards him and they were signalling to each other in a strange sign cum noise language which he couldn't make out whether they were talking or quarrelling. He then saw a huge flying creature which in one go picked a hand full of giants and crunched under its terrible jaw. Looking at this sight, he got extremely frightened and insecure and fainted.

When he regained his consciousness, he was in a totally different land with no light, all dark and floating. He could sense the presence of some “others” but was unable to see them. He thought of holding something as he was finding himself in a continuous moving state and finding himself very unstable. In doing so he tried to stretch his hands but to his utter surprise he found he had no limbs or any other body parts. He was shocked to find himself turned into a sphere. After a while when his eyes got accustomed to the darkness, he was able to see some other spheres moving around him. All these spheres were highly agile and trying to hit the other. He

noticed that his senses were working and he could feel the air which was stale and smelly.

“O my god I don’t want to be here. Please let me out of this place” he prayed to God.

Suddenly his siesta broke and he found himself in his room lying in his sofa. Seeing his own cosy home, he was happy and relieved. Looking at the clock he rushed to the bathroom to get ready for the colloquium.

He washed his face with Luke warm water in the sink and as he stood in front of a large full -sized mirror he saw a strange image. It had his face but the body covered in

a white silky flowing gown. He looked back at himself and then looked down at his feet. He was wearing white soft shoes and not his usual slippers. He peeped back into the mirror in disbelief but... he noticed the smile on its face it was the same smile of the people of the unknown land he had visited in his dream.

He screamed “I am caged” and fainted...

## The Survivors



An oval space vehicle travelling from extra stellar space heading towards the BLUE Planet, which is third among nine planets circling around their very own star “The Sun.” The space vehicle has only two travellers who are in a hurry to

reach to the Blue Planet which their records also name as “Earth”. They are aware that the Earth has unique resilience capabilities and has gone through multiple cycles of the doom’s day and revival through its self-restoration mechanism. Therefore, they have a slight hope of Earth’s restoration again but during the process of restoration earth will remain covered with salt water and gases that hardly supports life for millions of years. Under such circumstances the only survivors on it could be those who will be able to tolerate the toxic gases such as  $H_2S$ ,  $NH_3$ ,  $O_3$  as well as radiations of all sorts. But the frequent hazards and rising sea levels is going to kill almost all the

present life-forms whatever is there forever. They have very little time to reach the earth to bring some specimens from there if they really want to propagate their planet with Earth like life forms and bio-diverse ecosystem. These young enthusiastic scientists are full of hope, and courage to go and fetch knowledge from a doomed planet like earth whose inhabitants are responsible for its fate. This extra stellar expedition is guided by excitement of hope but a sense of despair in case they fail in their mission.

Sanje looking at his watch and as per estimated time realizes that they have only couple of hours left for

dusk on earth. If they don't land on Earth before this it will be too late. He shouts at Kriti..... Fast raise your speed. Then realising that he is sounding a little rude to her, lowers his voice and says again politely.... Fast baby.

Kriti knows the impatient nature of Sanje and realising the lapse of time speeds up their ship taking the directions from the hologram, sets a uniform acceleration. After increasing the speed to almost double she takes out a few packets of snacks from the drawer and throws one towards sanje to munch it.

Now what's this?? Sanje asks irritatingly!!!

Energy!! Kriti replies back with a smile.

Munch this, it will give energy and also keep us rejuvenated at least for another 48 hours. Hope that much time is sufficient for us to explore and achieve for what we are going there.

But I don't like its taste Kriti and you know this well Sanje says in disgust.....

I am not asking you to like its taste... just have it and that's it saying this, she closes the argument and concentrates back on her screen.

Checking the directions, she starts swallowing snacks from her packet.

Hurry up Sanje finish it off quickly as we will be shortly there at our destination and throws herself on her seat fastening her seatbelt tight.

Sanje in one go transfers all the snacks in his mouth almost jumps back on his seat to start locating the exactness of their position on the hologram.

He wants Kriti to land the ship very precisely on the earth....

Kriti signals to Sanje to fasten his seatbelt as the countdown begins.

In no time they were on something hard probably the land.

Sunlight was slowly fading out with the setting of Sun. They pull their transparent cloaks from the

drawers above their heads and wears them cautiously over their clothes. These are not just cloaking but the entire security system well equipped with all sort of gadgets required for them on this unknown land.

The ship after landing on earth moves to a little distance and then stops quietly and smoothly without any sound. As they step out of their ship Sanje warns Kriti to be careful, alert and watchful for any unwelcoming situation.

Yes whispers Kriti and asks in a low voice “are you sure we have come to the right place”s.

“I guess so” says Sanje, but we have to be extremely vigilant he warns her again in his sign language.

Sanje this land looks the same as was described in the Wikipedia of the Earth....

Yes Kriti, then it must be occupied and.... before he could have completed his sentence, he saw Kriti dodging to her side and protecting herself from a huge striped creature with great canines.

Well-done Kriti great instincts and good job he praises Kriti. She smiles back and continues walking.

Suddenly there were footsteps very close to them and assuming the

danger, they press hard against the ground pumping some sort of fuel through heels and almost flies over a herd of 12-15 terrifying creatures who were in a charging mood.

Kriti look they all seems to be highly restless and agitated. It looks like this land is reaching its end earlier than we expected says Sanje.

Kriti realising that this time Sanje seems to be really worried pats his back.

We should make haste to search and locate our place as soon as possible. It must be somewhere here near this huge tree, saying this Sanje creates a screen in the air. Yes, we are here look Kriti. The

tree with its branches holding the ground and becoming the tree themselves and there is the sign same as on our ship.

Ooh!!! Sighs Kriti this must be the Great Grand Banyan Tree right.

Right said Sanje.... Absolutely the one which we were searching for.

They walk towards the tree looking for the oldest trunk which could be the main stem. As soon as they reached there Kriti pointed her finger and made a (+) sign on the ground with something sharp in her hand puts her palm on it.

With this small exercise a door suddenly flung open and they jump inside it. They almost bang on the

ground but without getting hurt tries to get up.

But before they could stand on their heels hears foot -steps and as they look up finds two men approaching them.

They found them addressing by their names and comforting them by saying that they have arrived at the right place.

How do you know our names Kriti asks astonishingly?

Because we were waiting for you replies one of them....

Please be comfortable and remove your cloaks as they are not required here....

With this they walk through a corridor towards a lift.

In the lift the one who spoke to them earlier introduces himself as Dhir and the other as Abir to them.

Good says Sanje ... Nice meeting you two but.....

No more questions Abir pronounces... be quick.... We have to reach as soon as possible time is short.....

Dhir presses a green button and the lift goes down two floors and stops smoothly. The door slides open automatically and they come out in a large room.

The environment is artificially created here with garden on one side and flowing water on the other.

Walls are also decorated with huge paintings and texts. However, all these does not interest them at this point of time. They quickly reach to the next room in which they find slight chill and dim light, but with a low roof.

As soon as they enter it, they were shocked to see their twin lying in the double bed there.

Who are they!!!! Exclaims Kriti and Sanje together.

They are “you” and we all are their creations says Dhir.

What???? They almost shouted.

Yes, it is true they hear a meek voice from the lady in the bed.

Sanje's twin signals them to draw chairs and to sit near them.

As they sat on the chairs a big screen appears in front of them. The screen first shows the pictures of the present and then takes them in the past probably their flash back.

They find themselves as young kids playing in bright sun and in beautiful gardens with water and fountains.

Then they see the rivers, forests, birds, butterflies and trees laden with fruits. They were taken away!!!! Oh! What a beautiful sight and beautiful the earth is....

No... not now it was.... a few hundred years ago but now it is almost a dead planet corrects the pale dying Sanje in bed....

The scene then changes and they find them under the scorching sun, their skin getting burnt, holding oxygen cylinders on their backs and only tall buildings with AC's and water and food capsules but no rivers or lakes, no trees or gardens, and no plants.

They find no one outside but everyone enclosed in the chambers with all artificiality.

Then the scene changes further and they find themselves in the underground dwellings with few

people or survivors left including humans with some other creatures and plants.

Tears rolls down their cheeks with a sigh at this gloomy sight.

Ah!!! The dying Sanje also sighs. With all technology and science, we thought ourselves to be rulers and winners but we were actually the great losers. We lost everything in this quest. Somehow with our knowledge of science and technology we managed to create ourselves as clones and kept sending them in space with the informations of the dying Earth in hope of keeping our species alive. Hope we have not failed.

No .... Certainly not.....says Kriti and Sanje together, now we will take you all with us.

No... definitely not.... Kriti and Sanje in the bed says sternly and strongly. Not we.... but our experiences and seeds of all species will definitely accompany you. We have preserved every species in this underground establishment who have suffered due to our over ambitious nature. But now move fast you have very less time to escape. Don't worry about us we will be alive in you.....

But Dhir and Abir.... What about them???

For the first time after their arrival in this gloomy room they saw a sheen in the eyes of the two pale creatures lying there.

Let them be here with us. They are just machines, the humanoids but not humans.

Create your own but better world this time, saying this they close their eyes as if they are in deep sleep...

Kriti and Sanje ejects themselves from the chairs and rushes towards the lift.

As the lift stops on upper floor, they drape their cloaks and, in the meantime, Dhir and Abir brings them the two small spheres in

which all the species were preserved. Without making them waste any seconds they help them to eject from their underground establishment from where they had entered. They hear them saying GOOD BYE with teary eyes and a faint smile.

“Hurry Kriti time is running out” looking into his hologram screen screams Sanje.

Locating their ship, they take a long leap and reaches out there.

Kriti stops for a moment and turns back but Sanje pushes her into the ship and throws the spheres into the vacuum of the ship closes the door behind them.

“Kriti take your position quickly and start the engine” orders Sanje.

Kriti feels numb but Sanje shouts, hurry Kriti hurry no time to look back or we will be lost for ever in the storms....

Kriti presses the buttons spontaneously and in less than quarter of a second they were out of the Earth’s atmosphere.

Come Kriti see on the screen we are just saved by fraction of a second otherwise... and his words drowns in the giant waves of water which covers the entire Earth.

We will come back again to you mother “Earth” when you are ready

to revive yourself and to greet us  
saying this, they bid good bye .....

## About the Author



Dr Anima Upadhyay is Assistant Professor in Chemistry in an Engineering College in Bangalore. She has authored many books in Hindi on **Poetry** and **Short stories**. She has authored books on **Chemistry** and **Environment**. She is also a **YOUTUBER** and has a **YOUTUBE Channel** by the name **Dr Anima Upadhyay**. **Catastrophe** is a collection of **FIVE** stories on **science fiction**.