

WISHING YOU A PEACEFUL UTTARAYAN

from

TEAM PRAYAS

A Plea from a Handicapped Messenger of Peace

To fly in the vast open sky, to glide on the refreshing breeze and to witness the beauty of lovely Mother Earth, is a gift given only to birds. Amongst all my flying friends I was the fastest and the best. I had a wife and three loving babies in my nest at Jawaharlal Nehru Park in Surat city. To gather food for my chicks, I flew far off every day. My wife and I would spend the entire day feeding our chicks. We could not contain our tears of happiness when we first saw our babies spreading and flapping their wings!

To celebrate this occasion, I decided to fly to the house of a nice man who would spread his terrace with *jowar* everyday. When the first sun ray shone into our nest, I hugged my growing chicks and whispered in their ears, "I'll be back soon with tasty seeds." Full of hope and with new excitement in my wings, I took flight alongside the Tapi River.

Today the scene in the city was different. The sun had barely risen but there were people already on their terraces! By the time I reached Gopipura the terraces were full of families enjoying food and music. We birds felt as if we were attacked by a thunderous army of noise and flapping kites. Kites with long strings covered with sharp glass had attacked our sky – and soon, we birds were getting trapped and torn apart by them. I saw one friend fall to the ground with a severed wing and die. We shivered in fear and confusion. There was no escape from the threads that snarled and tangled with us as more and more birds were injured and began to drop from the skies. Here the massacre had begun and all the people were shouting in glee, "Kaipo chhe!"

I gathered all my courage to fly home. Praying to God, I somehow reached the Tapi bank. Below, I could see the white bodies of innumerable swans, streaked red with blood. I was completely shattered. My sole aim at that moment was to reach home safely. As I finally reached Jawaharlal Nehru Park, I relaxed my caution and increased my speed, now turning towards my nest. I was brought up short with a jerk. I flapped my wings wildly in panic but I was caught by my leg in a golden thread stretched between the trees. There was no escape! After a particularly strenuous bout of flapping, I banged into a tree trunk and knocked myself unconscious.

When I opened my eyes, I was in hospital. My wings were bandaged and blood had dried and clotted my feathers. The pain was unbearable but I wept also for my family. I couldn't fly to them. I overheard the vets saying, "A morning walker saw this poor bird hanging in the branches and called the **Prayas** helpline. Volunteers from **Prayas** rushed there with the Fire Brigade and somehow managed to save it with their long ladder. But the bone on the right wing had to be amputated. The bird should recover but unfortunately it will never fly again."

How do I understand Man? One kills and the other saves! And how do I explain that a bird's life is in its wings? Which medicine can cure the pain of separating forever from my family? What will happen to my poor babies?

UTTARAYAN is here again and **Prayas** has started working hard to save the birds. This time, I wish to join their plea:

Could you just peep into my nest and see if my wife and my three little babies are still safe?

PRAYAS EMERGENCY HELP LINE 982519081