

The Saccharum Falls

Everyone wanted to get there, to the Saccharum Falls. After all, who wouldn't want to stand there, as water intermingling with sugarcane juice, falls upon you, while the bamboo flautists play the Sucrose Melodies.

They came, because they had fallen short of the ideal of themselves: they came to atone. To draw strength to carry on, crying under the cascade. The water from the falls, hid the water from their eyes, so they let it all out; crying for the past, feeling more hopeful for the future; not just for their personal ideals, but for neighbourhood cohesion also; the better them, for the betterment of all. The Saccharum Falls will do that to you; make you feel renewed, positive.

Some begin their days with coffee, a jog, or fried breakfast. Every morning, those immersed in regret, rose, chanting the Sweetwater Mantra...

"Under the cascade,
Sweetwater Blessings,
Wishing for Saccharum Falls"

So people came from all over, going in the direction of the Falls. Like the one known as the "Pineapple Penitent." A record was made of an encounter he had with an older supplicant.

"Greetings young man"

Good afternoon elder."

"So what brings you to Saccharum Falls?"

"I've come from a militant place."

"War zone?"

"No, jail! Little battles, leading to serious wounds, erupting all the time."

"May I ask why you were there?"

"Well...for violence. Gang runnings. If I don't stop now, I'll be going back and forth there." I've made my contribution to the words aggression and assault, so its time now, to withdraw my input to them." The second jail I was in had a great librarian, so I got into books and reading." He did more for me, than any teacher, therapist or pyschologist in the place: he set me on the road to change."

"Yes, the power of books! So tell me, what was the first one you read?"

"A collection of folktales by a Martiniquen writer, Patrick Chamoiseau. There's a tale in it, about generosity and karma. An old woman, living alone, living on next to nothing, cares for an injured bird, until it can fly again. In return, the bird gives her a pumpkin seed, which every day, provides her with a meal. That tale touched me. Sitting in twenty three hour lock

up, I had a lot of time, to think about the consequences of my violence: my legacy. What will I leave behind?"

"Yes, folktales are the stories of you and I, passed down through time."

"Yes they are. I learnt so much from them. About the true meaning of respect, in a tale about kola nuts from Burkina Faso. One from Jamaica, involving ackee and the results of greed. Every night in the cell, after doing my exercises, I'd read myself to sleep, with tales by Birago Diop, Bernard Dadie, Suzanne Comhaire-Sylvain and others. And I began to withdraw from gang activity in there. Just did my exercises and read books."

"So they became your way through"

"Yes, gave me clarification. I was brought up as a Christian, so I've read the Bible. Because there' was a lot of Muslims in there, I read the Koran also. And I agree with the folklorist who said " A collection of folk tales carry a route to wisdom and redemptive potential, as the Bible, Koran, or any religious text."

"Never heard that before, but I agree with that." I've learnt as much from the stories of Anansi and Mbe, as I have from Sura Luqman and the Solomonic Proverbs."

"Yes, yes, I feel the same way!" Good to speak with you elder"

"And with you young man." But don't let me keep you."

"In jail, showers could be kind of heavy, people getting stabbed and slashed in there." So I'm looking forward to standing under the Falls, enjoying the solitude and tranquility."

"Go young man and we shall speak again later. And I see you've brought a gift of pineapple, for the Saccharum Healers."

"Yes, for the caretakers of the Falls."

"I wish you redemption, as I have wished it for myself. Enjoy the Sweetwater."

"I shall elder, giving thanks."