

# DURGA PUJA 2009

## সর্বজনীন দুর্গোৎসব ১৪১৬



Bengalee Association of  
Greater Hartford

BAGH, Inc.

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# Bombay Olive

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# Bombay Olive

## Is Proud To Cater During Durga Puja Celebration 2009

Brochure Editing, Layout, and Design:  
Nitis Mukhopadhyay

# Durga Puja Program



<b>Friday, October 2</b>	<b>Pratima Installation and Decoration</b> Dinner	<b>7:00 PM</b>
<b>Saturday, October 3</b>	<b>Morning Schedule</b>	<b>9:00 AM</b>
	Pratima Sthapan, Shasthi, Saptami, Ashtami, and Navami Puja	
	Pushpanjali	<b>12:00 PM</b>
	<b>Afternoon Schedule</b>	
	Prosad and Lunch	<b>1:00 PM</b>
	<b>Evening Schedule</b>	
	<i>Abahani Sangeet</i> : Performed by Local Artists	<b>5:30 PM</b>
	<i>Play</i> : Staged by a Local Group	<b>6:00 PM</b>
	Dinner	<b>7:00 PM</b>
	<b>Featured Guest Vocalist:</b> <b>Ms. Mayuri Ray</b>	<b>8:00 PM</b>
<b>Sunday, October 4</b>	<b>Morning Schedule</b>	<b>10:00 AM</b>
	Puja, Bisorjan	
	<b>Afternoon Schedule</b>	
	Prasad and Lunch	<b>1:00 PM</b>
	<b>Variety Cultural Program</b>	<b>2:00 PM</b>



## Welcome from the President

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the Bengalee Association of Greater Hartford (BAGH, Inc.), it gives me great pleasure to welcome you and your friends and families to the 2009 Durga Puja Festival. We celebrate and worship the Supreme Goddess, Ma Durga, to purify our souls and remove all obstacles, pain and suffering inflicted in this world. We pray for Her guidance to reach more fulfilled and happier lives in all corners of this Greater Hartford community and beyond.

Our age-old tradition and sacred scriptures will inspire us in welcoming and serenading Ma Durga. Ultimately, the Durga Puja would evolve into a genuinely collective desire of all for peace and harmony for all creatures in this universe.

The prayers and festivities surrounding the Puja are intertwined with a definitive sense of pride in our heritage. Such heightened sense of community and friendship certainly include good food and great entertainment for both mind and spirit.

I hope that you will all find time to share cheer and camaraderie, renew friendship, and you will take this opportunity to make new friends. Welcome to the celebration. With heartfelt Puja greetings,

Saumitra Banerjee  
President, BAGH, Inc.

### Executive Committee

Saumitra Banerjee	President
Tapas Bandyopadhyay	Vice President
Arindam Dasgupta	General Secretary
Subhojit Maitra	Treasurer
Tirthankar Choudhuri	Cultural Secretary
Ruma Basu	Member
Gopal Das	Member
Gautam Maulik	Member
Vivek Mukherjee	Member
Nitis Mukhopadhyay	Member



বাজলো তোমার আলোর বেণু

## From Editor's Desk

This brochure includes nearly forty pages of literary work and artwork combined. It highlights the work of writers and artists from our local community and beyond. Some local children have contributed masterful pieces with remarkably expressive ideas. I am indebted to those who have graciously contributed their original work for everyone to enjoy. Thanks to all contributors.

A brochure such as this clearly depends on its sponsors and I thank them profusely. I also thank those who helped me, especially, Debanjan Bhattacharjee and Pradip Basu. Kudos to all!

I should add that BAGH, Inc., its members, members of its Executive Committee or I are not responsible in any shape or form for any opinion expressed (or implied) by an artist, author, sponsor, or advertiser.

Happy reading and have a great time. Wish everyone the happiest of this Durga Puja season. Make a new friend.

Enjoy, enjoy, and enjoy some more!

Nitis Mukhopadhyay  
Member, Executive Committee



## *What Does Mahalaya Signify?*

*Mahalaya* ushers in the aura of Durga Puja. The countdown for the Durga Puja begins much earlier, from the day of 'Janmastami'. It is only from the day of *Mahalaya* that the preparations for the Durga Puja reaches the final stage. The midnight chants of various hymns of 'Mahishasura Mardini' reminds one of the beginning of Durga Puja.

*Mahalaya* is an auspicious occasion observed seven days before the Durga Puja, and heralds the advent of Durga, the goddess of supreme power. It is a kind of invocation or invitation to the mother goddess to descend on earth - "Jago Tumi Jago". This is done through the chanting of mantras and singing devotional songs.

The day of *Mahalaya* is also the day of remembrance. On this day, people offer 'Tarpan' in memory of their deceased forefathers. The banks of River Ganga becomes a sea of humanity. Priests are seen busy performing 'Tarpan' for devotees in groups. The rituals start from early dawn and end during the midday. Devotees and worshipers buy clothes and sweets to offer to their forefathers. 'Tarpan' is to be performed in empty stomach. After offering 'Tarpan', people eat at the same place.







বুদ্ধের স্মৃতি। শোভার মুহূর্তে স্মরণ রসিছে। নিরন্তর মুখা  
 স্বাস্থ্য নানা প্রকারে যত্ন করিতে থাকিলেন অধীশ্বর। যা অসম্মানিত  
 তিনি অসম্মানিত হইতে চাহিতেন না।

সন্ন্যাসী হইয়াই নানানী পূজা কল্যাণ করিলেন। দেহী যুগে লক্ষ্য  
 করিলে সন্ন্যাসী হইতে হইলেই হইবে চন্দ্র মাসে করিলেন সন্ন্যাসী হইয়া  
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প্রত্যেক সন্ন্যাসী হইলেই হইবে চন্দ্র মাসে করিলেন সন্ন্যাসী হইয়া  
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সন্ন্যাসী হইলেই হইবে চন্দ্র মাসে করিলেন সন্ন্যাসী হইয়া  
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 ଉପାଧିକାର





# Visiting Madhya-Maheshwar: Lord Shiva's Own Land

Deep Mukherjee  
University of Connecticut-Storrs

(Based on May'07 Travel by Deep Mukherjee & Saikat Maitra)

According to the Hindu mythology, the Himalayas is adobe of gods. In reality too, land of Garhwal-Kumaun host many of the holy shrines for devotee Hindus. According to the legends, the Pandavas after having won over the Kauravas in the Kurukshetra war, felt guilty of having killed their own relatives and sought penance with Lord Shiva's blessings. Lord Shiva eluded them repeatedly and on being detected by them assumed the form of a bull. The second of Pandavas - Bhima tried to pick him up, but Shiva sank into the Earth and only the hump came in Bhima's hand. That is the origin of Kedarnath. The other parts of Shiva's body, namely, the arms, the face, the navel and hair locks appeared at Tungnath, Rudranath, Madhyamaheshwar and Kalpeshwar. Pandavas worshipped Shiva at those five places and after seeing their determination the Lord was pleased and He freed them from their sin. These four sacred shrines along with Shri Kedarnathji are worshipped as "Panch Kedar". With the passage of time, Kedarnath *dham* has become more popular to the common people and the rest has almost sunk in the oblivion. In general, Madhyamaheshwar temple opens in the first week of May. There are two seasons to undertake this pilgrimage trekking: May-June and September-October.

We reached Rishikesh early on a Saturday morning. From here, it took us 4.5 hours by a shared jeep to Rudraprayag (cost: Indian Rs.160/person). Thereafter, one can take either Guptakashi → Nala → Kalimath route or Ukhimath → Uniana route to approach Madhyamaheshwar. Local buses/jeeps will take one to Ukhimath or Guptakashi. We had two hours on our hands to catch the next bus for Ukhimath/Makku at 1 pm. So, we went for *darshan* of Koteswar Mahadev, located on the right bank of Alakananda river (5 km). See Figure 1. The main temple is a river-made cave giving shelter to many naturally created lingams. The place and the atmosphere is very quiet and awe-inspiring. We reached Ukhimath, the winter-time resting place for Shri Kedarnathji and Madhyamaheshwarji around 3:30 pm. One will find Garhwal Mandal Vikash Nigam (GMVN) tourists' rest house, many lodges, and Bharat Sevashram Sangha available for staying over in Ukhimath. The location of the GMVN bungalow and Sangha house is superior to others, as they offer a mind-blowing view of Mandakini valley and Kedarnath range. But one should make reservations in advance, because being the major halt-station on way to Badrinath, Ukhimath experiences a rush of tourists in peak seasons. One can visit the temple during the evening walk. If one wants to proceed beyond Ukhimath on day 1 itself, shared jeep leaves from the bus stand for Uniana (cost: Indian Rs. 30/person). Some jeep drivers come from nearby villages such as Mansuna, Uniana, Ransi (Figure 2) and they return to their sweet homes at sunset, making their last trip to their villages. If you decide to stay over in Ukhimath in a much more comfortable accommodation, then one should be prepared to pay a little extra next morning! In hills, buses are infrequent and their schedule is too uncertain. So, to reach Uniana (the base for Madhyamaheshwar trekking) one may have to reserve a jeep (cost: Indian Rs. 500). We did not have prior information regarding this potential problem and hence when we came to know about it, it was too late.

On Sunday, after having the breakfast, we started our journey to Uniana around 7:30 am in a reserved taxi. Our driver told us that it would take 60-70 minutes to reach Uniana – the last village up to which a motor car can travel. On the way, we crossed Mansuna, a big settlement. After acclivity, comes declivity. At Jugasu (5 km from Mansuna), we crossed the Madhyamaheshwar Ganga that we traced through the next 4 days. The surroundings near the Jugasu Bridge were such that it drew our attention. Treeless, scratched hilly slope, and big boulders lay in riverbed – all manifested by the Himalaya's fierce side. In the later half of August 1998, severe rain lashed Garhwal, causing devastation. Mansuna village almost disappeared with a death-toll of 24 from landslide. Debris and boulders had fallen into the Madhyamaheshwar Ganga, plugging its flow and causing the formation of an artificial lake. But the river is so powerful that in course of time, it eroded the pile of boulders to make its own way. The deadly beauty of



Figure 1. Koteswar Cave



Figure 3. Madhyamaheshwar Temple Complex



Figure 2. Ransi Village



Figure 4. Chaukhamba and Mandani Peaks  
from Buda Madmaheshwar

the spot really made me shiver. After 10-15 minutes of steep climb over mostly rocky terrain, we reached Uniana. We decided not to take a guide or porter and reach our destination that day itself. Later, we realized that we simply overestimated our skill-level. Within half a kilometer of plain walking from Uniana along the side of the mountain on a jeepable-road crossing a small bridge, one reaches the last white house of the village. The shorter path is the one to take while going downhill. It was nearly 9 am when we started our main journey. The road is quite rocky as uneven stone blocks are used to hold together this hilly trail.

Someone who is not physically very fit or new to climbing a mountain, should walk very slowly at the beginning in order to first acclimatize.

We picked up cane-branches lying by the side of the trail to use for the support. After 10-15 minutes of walking, turning a bend, we saw an ice-capped Himalayan range (locally known as *dhaulā khambir*) – the mountain whose ice-melt water created Madhyamaheshwar Ganga. After nearly 1.5 hours of decent climb, we reached Ransi – the largest village (Figure 2) on this route. We decided to take a break here for 10 or 15 minutes. My heart filled with joy when we saw local children were greeting us with smiling faces. Their cordial uttering of “*namastey*” had a magical feel-good impact on my tired mind. While having some tasty tea (rich with cow’s milk) at local Choukhamba hotel, the shop owner encouraged that if we continued at this same pace, we could make it to the Madhyamaheshwar by 7 pm. Then we visited Rakeshwari temple inside the village. It is a simple structure, harmonizing easily with the daily village life, as the grain-drying in the courtyard testified. According to the legend, Lord Moon meditated here to get rid of curse with the help of Lord Shiva’s blessings. After leaving Ransi, another half a kilometer of level-walking brings one to a waterfall and a bridge. Crossing that, for the first time, Chaukhamba (one of the prominent mountain massifs in the Gangotri group of mountains) appeared in the horizon with awe-inspiring *darshan*. See Figure 4. The route goes gently downhill from here. We noticed that the forestation became more dense and wild than it was before. We have now entered the Kedarnath sanctuary (established in 1972, spread over 967 square km). This happens to be one of the world’s richest bio-reserves.

A pin-drop silent forest (one only hears the roars of the Madhyamaheshwar Ganga and the noises of the crickets), a river flowing like a silver ribbon through a gorge wrapped in a green carpet will definitely charm you. A cascade (locals call it Bhimsi *jhora*) and a temporary wooden bridge are the lowest point in this route, after which a 2-km gentle climb through a pine forest took us to Gaundhar – the last village enroute. This picturesque village has few lodges and many travelers stay here overnight. Though we were tired, we decided to try hard to reach our destination that same day. We stopped for half an hour at a shop-cum-lodge to have *khichdi* for lunch. The shopkeeper suggested to us that if we felt that we could not make it to the end, then we should stop over at Khatara Khal *chati* run by Devender Singh of Ransi village – the last settlement with good overnight facilities. After 10 or 15 minutes of level walking, we reached the confluence of the Madhyamaheshwar Ganga and the Markendeya Ganga. Sounds from the gushing water of these streams flowing a few meters below were mind-blowing. With a tiny bit of climb after crossing Bantoli Bridge (over the confluence), we saw Vishwa lodge – a sophisticated resting place for tourists. After Bantoli, there is only Madhyamaheshwar hill to climb to reach the temple. The path went upward steadily and along with it came the fatigue. We became so slow that this 1.5 km trail to Khatara khal seemed never-ending at times. After a steep climb, when we reached the solitary mud hut at Khatara khal around 3 pm, that simple hut felt like the heaven. Devender Singh cordially provided us shelter. Soon after that, a large group of travelers arrived to have some tea and snacks. Unfortunately, they were too loud, discussing mundane stuffs and it might sound rude, but, after their departure we felt more at peace. The dusk came in with all its beauty. It was like a heavenly experience. Young Devender became very friendly with us and shared many local stories. He sat in front of us while we were eating *roti-dal-sabji* to make sure that we were feeling comfortable in his *gareeb-khana*. The bed on a *charpai* and pillow felt damp. On top of that, he warned about rats in his hut. But, we knew that his place was the last ‘best’ shelter we could get, after Vishwa lodge!

After having our breakfast - *aloo-parantha* and tea in Devender Singh’s hotel, we embarked upon our mission around 8 am on Monday morning. From Khatara, we maneuvered the steep and rocky climb of 2 km in 1.5 hours to reach Nanu – another small settlement consisting of 4 or 5 huts. After Koon chati, the climb became very steep and the high altitude made us gasp for air as we struggled upwards through dense forest of Oak and Deodar towards Madhyamaheshwar. The natural beauty was dramatically wild with deep gorges and valleys, mountain sides flung upwards towards the skies, the forests (and various types of orchids during monsoon season). One should appreciate the other name of the destination – Motto-maheshwar (meaning Drunken Shiva). The exuberance at this spot suggests intoxicated joy. The uneven road is covered with a carpet made of dry leaves, so one has to be very careful here. At one point, we became frustrated as we could not see where the serpentine path was heading to nor could we gaze how much farther distance to trek. Finally, the path evened out and we reached an alpine meadow at the far end of which lay the unimposing Madhyamaheshwar Temple (Figure 3) surrounded by mountains. The solemn atmosphere around this 1500 years old (according to history, but if one believes in mythology the figure is 5000!!)

temple is awesome. Three or four mud huts converted into a ‘hotel’ provided accommodation along with a tourist lodge. The temple committee’s lodge (cost: Indian Rs. 150 per room) was a better option since as it came with a bathroom. The sandhya-aarti began around 7 pm.

Next morning, we woke up early to visit Buda Madmaheshwar which we believed was in the top of the hill that we were climbing. It should not take more than 45 minutes to trek to the top of the ridge lying in the north-west side of the temple. On our way, we paid homage to Lord Vairabnath – the watchman of this holy land when this temple is closed (and Madmaheshwar-*ji* is worshipped from Ukhimath) in winter. Watching a sample of orchids that we could find in this area, it was easy to extrapolate the floral beauty of this valley when the entire slope would be covered with abundance of bloom in August. Reportedly, there are over 100 species of wild flowers that can be found here. After an ascent of some three fourths of a kilometer, the snow peaked caps of the majestic Chaukhamba (Figure 4) was suddenly visible. Further up, we were greeted by the beautiful sight of a lake lying in a flat lush green meadow on top of the hill. The view of the snow capped Chaukhamba (7130 meters) and adjacent Mandani or Sumeru (6350 meters) peaks and their reflections in the lake were simply mind-blowing. There was also a tiny but older shrine nearby with a black *lingam* called *Buda Madmaheshwar*.

In a nutshell, the experience was unforgettable, but one has to endure many hardships to carry out such strenuous trekking. Far away from the madness of a city life and the rat-race in career-tracks, our souls got the much needed break. But all on a sudden, an outburst of a quarrel between the local hotel-owners reminded us that we could not escape completely from earthly conflicts. They were arguing over who would provide breakfast to us! Though we understood that poverty had led them to do so, that incident raised a question in my mind: 5000 years ago Lord Shiva tried to escape from the sinful Pandavas to emerge here and that is why this picturesque and quiet place is glorified as the ‘land of Shiva’. Is He still here or has He taken the refuge somewhere else that is more serene far away from the daily grind of the so-called ‘civilized’ and ‘modern’ life-style?

**Travel tips:** Madhyamaheshwar (3120 meters) is not a popular tourist destination. One should not expect good hotels and quality food en-route. When we visited the place, electricity was not accessible. So, it is wise to carry candles and matchboxes on your own. One should also carry some urgent medications. The road became too cumbersome and steep after Gaundhar. In order to cover the rest (11 kilometers) of the trip, one has to climb 1320 meters. So, if one is not physically fit and experienced for trekking, one may not attempt this adventure in the Himalayas as a first-timer.



# এক ঝাঁক কবিতা

ইন্দ্রনীল সেনগুপ্ত  
টালীগঞ্জ, কোলকাতা

নদীর জলের স্বাদ নেব

ওপারে ঈশ্বরের বাগান, কোন লামাসেরি;  
যেমন সাংগ্রিলা এবং এক সভ্য জীবন সভ্যতা  
থেকে দূরে নিজস্ব অস্তিত্বে।  
আদিম পর্বতে বন্য লতাগুল্ম পাকদস্তী  
এবং শ্বেতশুভ্র বিশালকায় শৃঙ্গ নদীর উৎস,  
মতভেদে মহাদেবের জটা।  
অবশেষে এই নৃত্যঙ্গনা জনপদ আলিঙ্গনে  
বহুস্পর্শে বারান্দনা;  
বহুসন্তান জননী গাফারী পরমপূজ্যা।

বহুবল্লভা, প্রজ্ঞাময়ী অস্তিত্বে নমস্যা যেন মাতা  
বহুসন্তান প্রাণা, বহুতে বিলীনা।  
বেগবতী প্রাচীনা নটীর স্বাদ নেব মোহনায়,  
মাতার স্পর্শ নেব উপকূলে।  
এ দেশ তাঁর সুতোয় গ্রন্থিত,  
ভিন্ন বহিরঙ্গে অভিন্ন মানুষ,  
তিনি প্রবাহময়ী- ফল ফুল শস্য প্রদায়িনী,  
আর বিধৌত করেন শতাব্দীর ফ্রেদ-  
আমার প্রনাম জানাব তাকে,  
মোহনায় নদীর জলের স্বাদ নেব।

শেষবারের মত ছুঁয়ে যাওয়া

অন্দরের বাগানে ছিল অনায়াসলব্ধ সুবাস;  
আর আশ্চর্য সেই অর্বাচীন নক্ষত্র-  
দীর্ঘতর অপরাহ্নের ছায়া তাকে কাঁদাতে  
তো পারেই নি, বরং ঠিক বিপরীত -  
আকাশের আয়নায়  
মুখ দেখল সে,  
আর ছুঁড়ে দিল অতিদীর্ঘ বল্লম-  
দেশান্তরী রোদ্দুর।

এ রকমই সাহস তার  
এভাবেই তার চুম্বনে আশ্রয়ে অবনতা  
বেলাশেষের জলজ পাঁপড়ি।

ঝড়

কুঞ্জবনে বসে বালিকা,  
চোখে নীল অঞ্জন;  
আলুলায়িত কুস্তুরাজি স্পর্শ করল  
মৃন্তিকার সীমান্ত;  
তখনই হা হা শব্দে  
প্রচণ্ড ছঙ্কারে আকাশ বাতাস মথিত;  
প্রবলবেগে হঠাৎ ধাবিত হল শক্তিপুঞ্জ  
বাধভাঙা আবেগের মত ছুটে এল  
জলপ্রপাত আর আকাশ জুড়ে আলোর  
বল্লম পুরোন বাড়ির ফাটলের মত।

মুহুর্তে উৎপাটিত শতাব্দী প্রাচীন  
বৃহৎ বনস্পতি,  
মুহুর্তে বিলীন নিশ্চিত আশ্রয়স্থল।  
নীল অঞ্জন কুঞ্জবালিকা বীভৎসতার  
খেলায় মগ্ন, জীবন বাজি ধরে  
পাশা খেলে প্রকৃতি বালিকা।

নারী

নারী তুমি তো জান, প্রেম ও স্পর্শের কাঙ্গাল আমি;  
এবং কখনো কখনো ঘটে গেছিল সমাপন অথবা সন্ধিপাত।  
সমকেন্দ্রিক নয় এমন বৃত্তরা ই তো স্পর্শ করে জ্যামিতিতে;  
জ্ঞান বিজ্ঞানে মিথ্যে না হলেও মনের ভেতরে আলোড়ন আর  
অঙ্গীকারের ঢেউ।

অস্তির পৃথিবীতে আমার নির্মোহ সত্ত্বার বিচরন আমাকে আদর্শ  
ধার্মিক অথবা সাধুর পরিচিতি প্রদান করে, অথচ ভন্ডামিতে সেরা  
জানি আমি নিজে কি!

মোহ আর প্রেম কার কোথায় সুরু কোথায় শেষ নারী তুমি কি তা জান!  
ভিন্ন ভিন্ন বিভঙ্গে আলোড়ন তোল বার বার, আমার খেরোর খাতায়  
হিসেব গুলো সব লেখা আছে, মুখগুলো ও যতটা পারি নিখুঁত আঁকি;  
কিন্তু নির্ধূর সময় সব কিছু কেড়ে নেয়-  
বিবর্ণ কাগজ গুঁড়োহয়ে যায়- ভাঁজে ভাঁজে কেটে যায় চিরকুট।

একটাই প্রশ্ন ভাসে কোথায় কেমন আছে দীর্ঘ দিনের যত্নে লালিত  
অধুনা বিবর্ণ মুখের মিছিল।

আমার হৃদয়গান্ধীর আড়ালে উঁকি দেয়,  
কৈশোর, যৌবন এমন কি প্রৌঢ়ের নারীরা ও-  
এক শীতাতপ অনুভূতির মত আচ্ছন্ন করে বিভিন্নরূপে,  
হাতছানি দিয়ে মিলিয়ে যায় অর্বুদ ক্ষণস্থায়ী বিষ,  
বাতাসে ভেসে থাকে সুগন্ধী তেলের সুবাস।

## A Hindi Poem

### Āāp Āāo Jis Tarā Hā Mein Chāhā

Indranil Sengupta  
Tollygunge, Kolkata

कई साल और रातों तुम मुझे नींद बिहीन रखा  
काश मैं उपहार में कम से कम एक तुम को देता.  
देखो हम गर्मी कि शर्म राजमार्ग पर चला  
और तुम्हें पाला अपने दिल के अंदर नरम आग.

सड़क, हवा और वृक्ष  
में अभी भी हमें याद करे  
और मैं उन से बात करते हैं.  
हम सब तुम्हारे लिए इंतजार कर रहे हैं .

अपने छोटे युवा चेहरे जो मैं इन सभी वर्षों  
मन में पोषित किया है  
उनके साथ आओ,  
अपनी नाजुक युवा शरीर के साथ आओ  
वोही मुलायम शर्मिली मुस्कान के साथ आओ  
अपने दिल के अंदर कि मुलायम आग के साथ आओ.  
मैं इतनी देर इंतजार किया !  
आओ जिस तरह से मैं तुम्हें पसंद किया.  
नहीं तो मत आना.

# Remembering a Dear Friend: Personal Thoughts

Anjan Roy  
South Windsor, Connecticut

I started my career in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. That was the first time I was down south and I must admit that it was one of the most memorable times of my life. I met a number of good friends, and this story is about one of them.

One morning as I went to my office, I was introduced to a 6 feet tall and lean pitch-black guy, who would hardly resemble a college student, but more like a construction worker. He was wearing an un-ironed shirt, an old pant and slippers. He was sitting shyly next to my cubicle. Upon asking him, he said that he was there to work on his project that he had to do in our company. “My name is Anto Benildes Raja – but you can call me Benny,” he said.

Later in the day, I was contacted by my Project Manager and he asked me to include Benny in my team. Apparently, his rank was 2<sup>nd</sup> in his university examination and he came highly recommended by his professors.

Benny was one of the hardest workers I have ever met in my life. We used to call him “The animal”. He could work tirelessly for hours without getting up from his seat. Only time he would get up would be during the lunch break, and at that time, he could eat a meal that is meant for 3 people. We used to laugh watching him eat.

Later, we became good friends. At work, I think I was probably the only person who knew about his whereabouts and with whom Benny would talk. Once he took me to his house on a weekend. He belonged to a very poor family. His father was a part time truck-driver and the only earning member. He had two younger brothers, both of them studying. Despite their poverty, his family was proud of Benny and wanted him to have a great career. To someone like me who was away from his family in a totally new environment, Benny was a real friend.

After Benny completed his project, our company offered him a job which he accepted. He was transferred to Chennai after he joined. We met a few times after that. In the meantime, I was planning to come to the United States. Even after coming to U.S., we were in touch. I learned later that Benny got married, he had a baby boy, and had gone to United Kingdom on an assignment.

Nearly a year and a half ago, I was talking with Benny online when he told me that they were expecting their second child. I congratulated him. He later said that he was planning to go back to India to have the baby delivered in his home town.

Life got busy and I almost forgot about this. Last week, I was talking with one of my friends online and he asked – “Hey, did you hear about Benny?” “No,” I said, “Why, what did that Animal do?” Then I got the shocking news.

On their way from Chennai to his home town, Benny and his family met with a fatal accident. Benny was killed on the spot. His pregnant wife and their 3 year old son were also in that ill-fated car. I did not have the courage to ask what had happened to them. We always say, whatever God does is meant for something good. I am not sure what “good” was hidden in this.

In the journey of life, there are many people that you and I continuously meet and forget, but Benny was someone close to my heart whom I will never forget.

I simply pray to God almighty to bestow upon him and his family some peace.

# বাংলা কবিতা নব কলেবরে

Sanchaita Das  
Middletown, Connecticut

## Cheleta Meyta

chelata r meyetar namkoron kori  
mita ar omita.  
sei ekush ki ekshotti prothom alap er din.  
hajar mombati r finfine roddur er sathe  
probol progolbhotay.  
cheletar hate chilo mithe kancha am.  
ar meyetar hate ekkadokkar ghuti.  
prothom bar lenden prothom khunsuti.  
cheletar bikeler roddur chader chilekothay.  
jomanno thakto deho ar agun.  
meyetar majhrate jyotsnay bheja mone.  
hridoy ar soisob er onuranan.  
esob kotha bole ki labh  
esob golpo doinik chapa hoy.  
prem kobita prem bhalobasa ekgheye  
sob dogdoge gha e r moto.  
tabu ei cheleta ar ei meyeta olpo kichu alada.  
sopno bunechilo..soptopodi na..hoyto ekushpodi..  
othoba unoponchas..sorir na..mon othoba manobikota?  
thik jani na bunte bunte kotota  
sotyi ar kotota mithye likhechilo?  
cheleta meyetar ar pachta purus nari na hok.  
bondhu hoechilo..kothao hridoy e  
ektare bejechilo iman bharabi,  
eksahosi bhalobasay tader deho mon.  
soisob er subhodristi hoechilo.

## Kachpoka

bikeler rod ghare porte dekhlam.  
ojutho akashchumbir niche..ek  
kachpoka ami.  
sir sire sorir ar ofuranto mon.  
kokhono jeno kom poreche bastobik benche thakay.  
rod mithe theke arektu kalche hoe elo.  
godhulir alo lukate lukate dekhlam.  
sohosro jonaki ami..alor pichone kiser chotachuti.  
muthir bhitor alo niye ami surjo ar chandrer moto  
agun hoe puri..purte purte jokhon chita kome ase  
bedona ar bhalobasar artite..kulungir oi  
kunke tate dekhi..ajo pore ache sorol chelebela.

**Editor's Note:** These days, numerous readers communicate ideas expressed in Bengali by composing them phonetically and using English alphabets. I strongly believe that this style of communication is here to stay. Hence, I feel proud to embrace this new concept in presenting two Bengali poems from Sanchaita (<http://sanchaita.blogspot.com/>). Readers will surely get a flavor of the poetry.



## লিখিও, উহা ফিরত চাহে কিনা

সুভাষ রায়  
স্টরস, কানেটিকাট

টুকলু আমার গা শিরশির শীতের দুপুর, কমলালেবুর নরম খোসা - টুকলু আমার ঘোড়া  
নিমের শুকনো পাতায় কুটুরমুটুর কাঠবেড়ালি, ছেলেবেলার ছড়ার ছবির রঙীন মলাট,  
হাটিমাটিম, দুষ্ট ভারি - বেজায় খুশির মজন্তালি।

ঘুমপাড়ানি গান শোনাবে মধ্যরাতের গাড়ি-  
অচেনা কোন ইস্টিশানে মাসি পিসির বাড়ি;  
এবার বুঝি একলা সফর, অচিন দেশে পাড়ি ?  
হারিয়ে যাবার জংশনেতে কখন ছাড়াছাড়ি !

বুকের মধ্যে নুপুর বাজায় শাদা বাঘের দুপুর; সাজায় ছুটির দিনের চলতি ছবি -  
শ্যামবাজারে কফিহাউস, সন্ধ্যাবেলায় বহুরূপীর অয়দিপাউস। শহর জুড়ে নীলপতাকার বৃষ্টি  
এলে বুঝিমিয়ে আধ ঘুমিয়ে আধো জাগায় বুকের মধ্যে খুন হয়ে যায় রাতদুপুরে সোনার  
মাছি। এমনি করেই বেঁচে আছি।

ছেলেবেলার পোড়া বাড়ির বাগান জুড়ে  
শালিখচড়ুই খেলতো যারা কোথায় উড়ে  
চলেই গেছে -আজ সে কথা কেমন করে জানাই!  
এখন বাজে বিদায় ব্যথার বিসমিল্লার সানাই।

যৌথ রাজ্যে কর্ডনিংয়ে বুলবুলিদের বেজায় আকাল; নতুন পাখি গান শোনাবে। এবার  
গোলাপ চাইবো না আর চুলে তোমার পরিয়ে দিতে; বরা বকুল আঁচল তোমার ভরিয়ে  
দিতে। ঝড়ের দোলায় নৌকা এবার ভাসিয়ে দেবো। এবার শুধু দু হাত ভরে বিদায় নেবো।

টুকলু, এবার বিদায়।  
এবার শুধুই বিদায় ॥



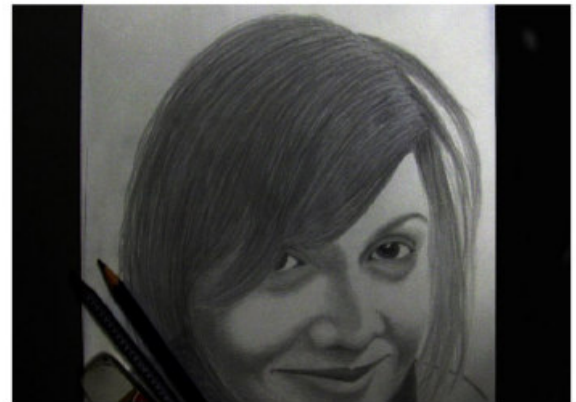
# Four Sketches

Souvik Roy

Maastricht University, Netherlands



A Baby



A Girl



Swami Suparnananda Maharaj  
Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Residential College  
Narendrapur



A Smile

## Wings

Saparja Nag\*  
Cheshire, Connecticut

Wings  
slowly descending  
onto blackness.  
Into nothing.  
Can't see anything  
below you.  
Hard to think  
hard to breathe.  
Mind goes  
blank.  
Can't hear  
anything.  
Except loud  
screaming.  
Crashing.  
All around.  
Suddenly.  
It's quiet.

\*Saparja is 14 and she is a ninth Grader  
at Cheshire High School, Connecticut

## Spring Breeze

Mitali Bandyopadhyay\*  
Farmington, Connecticut

In my yard the air rests  
Spread out on a chair  
Waiting and watching  
To discover what's there.

Everything is silent, peaceful  
There are no people around  
There's beauty in my yard  
From the azure sky to the hard ground.

The trees are dancing  
The swings are swinging  
Everybody's happy with  
The changes summer's bringing.

Everyone is quiet  
Everything is fine  
There is nothing in the world  
Quite as divine.

In my yard the air rests  
Spread out in a chair  
Waiting and watching  
To discover *more* there.

\*Mitali is 11 and she is a sixth Grader at West  
Woods Upper Elementary School, Farmington,  
Connecticut

# ঘুম আয়

(সদ্য প্রয়াত প্রিয়জনের স্মৃতিতে)

নীতীশ মুখোপাধ্যায়  
গ্ল্যাষ্টনবেরী কানেটিকাট

একদিন এই ধরিত্রীতে মা ব'লে ডেকেছি  
সেও আগলেছে পিতৃ-মাতৃহীন শিশুটিরে মাতৃসমা  
আড়ালে রেখেছে সহস্র শকুনের গ্রীবা  
আর অজস্র মানুষের থাবা।

হয়ত বা কোনোদিন বহু দূরদেশে  
পরম যতনে মা দূর করে 'দেছে মোরে  
ক্ষুধার্ত শৃগালের মানুষের নাগালের ওপারে।

মানুষের অরণ্যে তবুও কখনও ঘুম আসে  
তখনই শৃগালেরা মানুষেরা ঘিরে ফেলে  
যুদ্ধশেষে রক্তাক্ত ধরিত্রী ফিরায়ে আনে ঘরে  
স্নিগ্ধ মাতৃক্রোড়ে পরমনির্ভয়ে পুনঃ  
জেনেছি নিঃস্বার্থ ভালোবাসা বলে কারে।

আজ সন্ধ্যা আসে ধীরে  
পথহারা-নক্ষত্রের আলোর নিশানা রেখে  
কেন চলেছি পিতৃ-মাতৃহীন অসহায়?  
চলেছি কিসের অন্বেষণে মৃতের মিছিলে?  
শবদাহ গৃহদাহ নিজেকে বয়ে চলেছি নিজেই  
হারাতে বসেছি কোন্ অসীমের অন্তরালে?

ভাই-বোন যারা ছিল সব তারা  
ছেড়ে চলে গেছে একে একে  
আবছা মনে আসে আমি বসে রই  
জানিনা আমার কিসের এত দোষ  
মোর অভিমান কেন তুচ্ছ-কমদামি?  
না-বলা কথা আজও সুর খুঁজে ফেরে  
ক্লান্ত আমি চলেছি একা শান্তির পারাবারে  
মা, শুধু একবার ব'লো আমি একা কেন?

কথার সময় যে ফুরলো  
গীর্জার ঘড়িতে ঢং ঢং,  
নটে গাছটিও যে মুরলো -  
মা, সময় শেষ, মুখ ফুটে কিছু ব'লো!

বুঝিবা শুধু কেবলই নিয়েছি প্রতিদিন  
তবুও তোমার করুণার সব শেষ দান  
তারই এক কণা পাই যেন আজ শেষ দিন।

রাত্রী নামে ধীরে আজ আমি প্রশান্ত  
নিষ্পলক দেখি শকুনের ডানায় আঁধার  
অচেনা গুহার হিমেল আঁধার নখ-দন্ত  
শুনি শৃগালের মানুষের উসখুস্ চারিধার।

আমার ধুলির খেলা সাজ করি আজ  
পথের সাথীরা ডাক দিয়েছে যাই  
রইল পরে যা যেখানে অসম্পূর্ণ কাজ  
মা, এক নতুন কবির আশা তাই -  
কাল সে গাইবে তোমার জয়গান  
সবার তরে রইল পরে মোর ভালোবাসা  
সেই ত' আমার শেষ সম্মান  
তোমার আকাশ আবারও ভরবে আলোয়  
এক নতুন কবির তান।

ভাসলো তরী উজান বেয়ে  
আমিই আমার নায়ের নেয়ে  
হয়ত তখন একটি প্রদীপ জ্বলে  
হঠাৎ তুমি রইবে নীরব আকাশপানে চেয়ে-  
তখন সাজিয়ে দিতে হাত কাঁপেনা যেন  
তুমিই আমার কাজলাদিদিটি হয়ে  
চুমু ঐকো কপোলে মোর  
কাজলের একখানা টিপ্ দিয়ে।

কানে কানে এই শেষবার শুধু ব'লো-  
“সন্ধ্যা হ'ল মাগো, এইবার তুই ঘুমো”।

৭ই সেপ্টেম্বর, ২০০৯

আছি এক হয়ে  
নীলোৎপল সান্যাল  
কলাশ্ৰিয়া, মিসৌরি

অতল থেকে অসীমে আছি  
আমি আর তুমি  
আছি এক হয়ে।  
আছি কালের এপারে ওপারে  
আকাশ ছুঁয়ে বাতাস ছুঁয়ে  
যুগ থেকে অন্য যুগে  
আছি এক হয়ে।

এক হয়ে আছি ভোরের আলোয়  
পাখির গানে  
ফুলে ফলে ঘাসে পাতায়;  
আছি রাতের কোলে চাঁদের আলোয়  
তারাদের আশেপাশে;  
আছি গ্রহে নক্ষত্রে নীহারিকায়  
ছায়াপথের অজানায় অজানায়।

এক হয়ে আছি যেখানে ভেসে থাকে স্বপ্নরা  
তাদের লাল নীল হাসি নিয়ে  
তাদের নীরব ঝর্ণধারায়  
আলো ঝলমল শুভ্রচমকে।  
এক হয়ে আছি যেখানে রঙ-বেরঙের অনুভূতি  
স্বপ্নমেঘে অবুঝ হয়ে ফুটে থাকে  
হাতছানি দিয়ে ডাকে অপলকে।  
আছি শব্দের বুকু  
কথার মাঝে ছন্দে ছন্দে,  
আছি সুরের দোলায়  
নীরবতার আনাচে-কানাচে।

আছি সুখের দিনে রঙের নেশায়  
শিউরে ওঠা ভালোলাগায়,  
আছি বেদনায় হাহাকারে  
হতাশ মনের শূন্যতায়;  
মনের স্রোতে যেখানে ভেসে বেড়ায়  
ইচ্ছা অনিচ্ছার নৌকোগুলো  
জ্যেৎস্না রাতের স্নিগ্ধ আলোয়  
স্বপ্নসাগর মাঝে,  
সেইখানে আমি আর তুমি  
আছি এক হয়ে।  
সপ্তসাগর তলে পাতালপুরে  
আকাশশেষে স্বর্গলোকে  
আছি এক হয়ে।

এক যুগ থেকে আর এক যুগে,  
তুমি হও কবিতা  
আমি হই কবি,  
তুমি হও সৃষ্টি  
আমার হৃদয় ফুঁড়ে,  
মিশে যাও আমার জীবনে,  
ছুঁয়ে ছুঁয়ে যাও  
আমার আকাশ আমার বাতাস,  
আমার অন্তহীন ইচ্ছাপাখি হয়ে  
উড়ে যাও গভীরতায়।

এক যুগ থেকে আর এক যুগে  
তুমি হও নারী  
আমি হই পুরুষ;  
কোন যুগে তুমি চাও আনন্দময় বন্ধন,  
কোন যুগে আমি চাই দুঃখময় মুক্তি।

বহু যুগ ধরে শুধু  
আমি আর তুমি  
বেয়ে চলেছি সৃষ্টিতরণী,

কখনও অশান্ত জলধীগর্ভে  
বজ্রনিদাদ-ঘোরকলেবর তরঙ্গমাঝে,  
কখনও অপার শান্ত নদীর বুকে  
রাত্রিজলের মুক্ত-ভাসা খেলার ছলে।

কখনও তুমি আসো সুখের ডালি হয়ে  
মনের ঘর-বাহির সুখসমীরণে ভাসে  
অপূর্ব রঙে জাগে হৃদয়বনরাজি,  
মনে হয় অবশেষে যেন আমি ছুঁয়েছি তোমারে।

কখনও তুমি আসো যন্ত্রণাশিহরণে  
স্রুত নীরব অশ্রুধারে বিদীর্ণ করে হিয়া  
উগ্রশির গর্ব যত মেলায় সে নির্মমে,  
সব অভিমান ধ্বংস করে তবে দিতে চাও ধরা।

কখনও তুমি বোধের গহনে মৃত্যুজননী সাজে  
আপ্লত করো আমার চেতনা বিচিত্র প্রেমরাগে  
সন্তানহেন অন্তর মোর আনন্দগীতে জাগে,  
মৃত্যুর কোলে জন্মেছি আমি ভয় নাই আর ভয় নাই!

নৈঃশব্দের বুকে যেথা আছে শাস্ত্রতের হৃদয়  
সময়ের ঢেউ থেমে গেছে যেথা আছে শুধু বিস্ময়!  
আলোর সীমানা আঁধার পেরিয়ে হয়ে গেছে একাকার  
সেইখানে আমি আর তুমি আছি এক হয়ে নিশ্চয়।।



# Never Underestimate the Greek Gods

Basudha Chaudhuri\*  
Ellington, Connecticut

Jilly Andrews ran into her room, weeping after overhearing a heated argument between her parents. She thought over all the issues they fought over realizing that they were fighting not about her but because of her.

Dimming the lights, she sat down with a cheery book that would hopefully wipe away all of her tears onto her bed. It wasn't quite long before she was swept away into sleep ....

But unlike her usual dreams, where she would appear into an, this time she condensed onto the heavens above, yes, the abode of the Greek Gods. Not very far from her, stood a gate, massive with rods of gold. "Whoa," Jilly whispered as she entered through by giving the gate a heavy push, with one big hearty smile.

Everywhere around her, she looked and saw people running around with either loads of packages or bags full of shopping goods. *Looks like they're busy around here, but for what?* thought Jilly. Then suddenly people began stopping to edge into take a look at her. "Is it her?" they began questioning in voices you could barely hear. Then suddenly, a big man stepped out of the crowd and turned her topsy-turvy, facedown, and carried her off to the big golden palace.

"Hey, what the heck do you guys think you're doing with me?" she yelled at the top of her lungs, while they carried her off, without paying heed to anything that she said.

Once they brought her over, to the golden floor in front of Gods, she was greeted with a big smile from them. "Well, hello, little earthling. I hope you liked the accommodating ride to the palace," Zeus, said as the giant dropped her onto the floor, with Jilly holding her back in pain. "Yeah, sure," she muttered silently.

"You have been brought here to give you something very important, at least to you and us," Athena claimed, as Jilly tried at moving a bit forward toward them. "We have been noticing the fights among your parents, and have tried at making life easier for you since you are a god child, with roots to me.

"We would like to give you something that you should value. If you keep this at hand at ALL times, then all the havoc in your house will deteriorate. "But why me?" Jilly cried. "That's because dear child, that you have royal blood from us; your father's side has roots from Hermes, and me; your mother's side contains blood from Apollo and Demeter. I don't think anyone would like to see troubles in your future that early. You may not want to hear the possible future of your parent's fate.

"But am not I dreaming right now? I wouldn't see that thing when I wake up, will I?" Jilly asked with a questioning look on her face. "You will dear, because this dream isn't like others, since we have called your presence among us."

"But anyways dear, let me explain what this object is. This is a goblet with holy water from the Styx. It is enchanted to never run out, even if you put it in the scorching heat of the sun. You shall have to conceal this very intently, for many an earthling, would like to put their dirty hands on a treasure like this. You must pass this on to future generations, so trouble doesn't befall on them like your parent's might."

"How can I ever thank you enough!" Jilly exclaimed with joy. "There's no need for that dear. If we don't tend to our descendants, then who will?"

"Now we are going to get you back on your cozy bed and you will wake up to a new morning." blessed Athena. Hearing that, Jilly felt a very sudden urge to fall asleep, and fell into the hands of the giant.

As Jill awoke, she found herself all comfortable, without a single ache in the back. She peered onto her desk to find a small goblet with dark liquid. "So that's what they were talking about", whispered still with the sleep in her eyes. She stood up to find the house peaceful and quiet. For the first time in many years, Jilly tried venturing into her parent's room. She found them holding each other with a smile on their faces. She went into a quick run and jumped onto her parent's bed. "Oh, sweetie, aren't we so glad to have you."

\*Basudha is 12 and she is a seventh Grader in Ellington Middle School

# কবিতা

জয়ন্ত নাগ  
চেশার, কানেটিকাট

## অনুভূতি

তোমার নিস্পাপ স্তনের ঈষৎ ওমের মধ্যে কপাল রেখে  
অনুভব করলাম  
পৃথিবীতে এখনো অসম্ভব সুখ আছে।

তোমার জলভরা চোখে চোখ রেখে বুঝলাম  
পৃথিবীতে এখনো পবিত্র দুঃখ আছে  
যা মানুষকে মহত্তর কোন ভুবনে নিয়ে যায়।

তোমার হাতের মধ্যে হাত রেখে জানলাম  
কি করে প্রকৃতির পুলকিত স্পর্শ  
সমস্ত কষ্ট জল করে দেয় এক নিমিষে।

তোমার নগ্ন নিসর্গে নিমগ্ন হয়ে  
জীবনে প্রথম  
সৌন্দর্য সন্ভোগের অনুভব পেলাম।

তোমার ভালোবাসার পরম প্রাবনে ভাসতে ভাসতে উপলব্ধি করলাম  
কোন জীবনই অর্থহীন নয়  
শুধু অর্থময় করে নিতে হয়।

## জানতে ইচ্ছে করে

জানতে ইচ্ছে করে  
মানুষ মৃত্যুর খুব কাছে চলে এলে  
কি মনে হয় তার সব থেকে বেশী করে।

সেই কবে চলে যাওয়া বাব-মার কথা?  
আত্মজ-আত্মজার কথা?  
প্রিয় কোন বন্ধুর কথা?  
নাকি শুধুই নিজের কথা  
অথবা কিছুই মনে হয় না তার।

সম্ভবত যুদ্ধরত মস্তিষ্কের কোষে কোষে  
তখন কোন অনামিক অনুভূতি খেলা করে,  
তারপর এক সময় শূন্যে মিলিয়ে যায় চিরতরে।

মানব মনের এই অস্তিম মূহূর্তের কথা  
কোনদিনও সম্ভবত জানা যাবে না ঠিক ঠিক করে,  
এ নিয়ে অনেক দর্শন ও তত্ত্বকথার জন্ম হয়েছে  
আরো হবে  
কিন্তু নিরংকুশ সত্য আমাদের অধরাই থেকে যাবে সম্ভবত।

তবুও জানতে ইচ্ছে করে  
মানুষ মৃত্যুর খুব কাছে চলে এলে  
কি মনে হয় তার সব থেকে বেশী করে।

# The Knowledge Not Spoken Of

Aparna Das  
Somerville, Massachusetts



Blood and Bones  
(Detail)

Date: September 2008  
Dimensions: 4' X 3.5'  
Medium: Acrylic, Collage

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I am in trance,  
Perched astride a broad stretch of Kailash  
Perhaps doing penance

My hair coiled and matted  
A sanyasi in the making  
When my godhead began speaking  
Through me she spoke in first

Aamar mon bhuliye diye  
tumi aamaake tomar bondhur mauton baniye badhiye diyecho

I now translate

The mythology that is not spoken of relates  
your godhead is a chameleon

The intrigue that is not spoken of relates  
your godhead and my godhead had a one-night stand  
in a seedy part of town  
bated desperate hurried  
and your godhead might have been Genghis Khan at the time

I apologize  
Error in translation

The intrigue that is not spoken of relates  
your godhead and my godhead coupled amorously  
one jasmine-scented night  
on steamy river banks  
and your godhead was indeed Genghis Khan at the time

Your godhead had an inexplicable attraction to my godhead  
curious in that your godhead was as drawn to  
as repulsed by my godhead  
as ocean and moon

The mythology that is not spoken of relates  
your godhead is a germaphobe  
I suspect you knew this as a child  
When you first heard rumors of your godhead

In any case  
the passionate nature of their encounter  
would have rivaled a clash of titans

as they were churning cream into butter  
their heat built to such astonishing levels  
as to begin clarifying that butter into ghee

One drop  
heavy with promise  
fell from the sky

at that exact moment  
I looked up  
My mouth open in wonder  
And a soft warm oily  
Kiss of ambrosia  
landed on my tongue

Unhappily I did not reach enlightenment

And unfortunately  
for both our godheads  
in the realms where our godheads were presently occupied  
your godhead's obsession with hygiene got in the way

as my godhead's hot fetid mouth opened for him  
your godhead watched  
entranced and horrified  
still, though reluctantly, he slipped out his tongue

gagging  
he succumbed to such shock he nearly flatlined

in this darkness he struggled  
cajoling his numb mind when his dead muscles had quit  
he knew he had to believe that he had not kissed my godhead  
you see to acknowledge that would mean  
he was as filthy as her hot mouth  
he wouldn't be able to live without cracking up  
further?

being the mind-reader she was  
my godhead was displeased

she had not even gotten to that warm melty feeling  
so abruptly he had fallen from her  
as hard and frozen  
as a petrified tree

and more urgently still  
that moment when that drop of nirvana touched my tongue  
my godhead felt a tug  
deep in her womb

and now  
struggling in pitch  
he was denying responsibility in their pregnancy

Though your godhead eventually brought himself back  
he could not escape my godhead  
nor did he wish to

he remained with her by her side  
for all the days her belly grew  
fetching her this and that and whatever was her desire  
and he did so attentively  
as he did for the melons he tended in his garden

finally it was time  
my godhead was ripe with stretch-marks  
and as she went into labor  
at the local hospital  
your godhead stood waiting  
just outside the door jamb of the delivery room

to distract himself from her anguished cries  
he began talking to the voices in his head  
he calmed them by singing a lull-a-bye

their baby screamed it's first hello to the world  
when Eve bit the apple

when Krishna first played his sweet flute  
to a married woman  
my godhead had just bitten through the umbilical cord  
releasing her baby to the world

livid she turned her jaundiced bloodshot eyes  
over to where your fidgety godhead was now sitting Indian-style  
rubbing his head frantically  
still murmuring his story

the poisoned snake had just withdrawn to nestle  
in the roots of the life-giving tree  
when my godhead had had enough

fuming she flung the afterbirth  
hotly flushed out  
the bloody pulps struck your godhead on his face

he bolted to his feet  
in violent revulsion  
stamped a blinding hole into the universe

his story stopped forever

the earthy sickly sweet scent of blood  
turned his stomach  
shaking  
he stumbled backwards

losing footing  
he fell into the hole he had stamped earlier  
and found his nose and belly  
pressed against a spongy warm egg  
with hard-boiled consistency  
smelling familiarly of freshly hatched chicks

on his lips he felt the pulse in that egg  
beating on his heart like a gong

something impending  
grew within him  
pushing at his throat

so tremendous the pressure  
he drew in a yoga breath for the ages  
and out it gushed in a flood  
washing over his baby and the mother

as suddenly  
quietness and surety filled him

that lull a bye he had earlier released to the world  
that it was incomplete hardly mattered anymore  
in the face of this awesome fierceness that took hold of him  
he no longer needed his stories

he understood now  
the mother would always know  
a breath before each one he drew  
and this knowledge my godhead planted in my ear

it is as a shell floating  
in the tumultuous sea of women's blood  
chanced upon by the light of blue moons  
oft kept mired in fear  
and acted upon so rarely  
as to appear divine to humankind

\*\*\*\*\*



A Portrait of Netaji by Indramouli Saha  
The artist hails from Kolkata, India

# A Collage: Recent and Not-So-Recent Durga Puja Festivals and Picnic of BAGH





# A Selected Sample of Alpanas: Glimpse of a Rare Art-Form

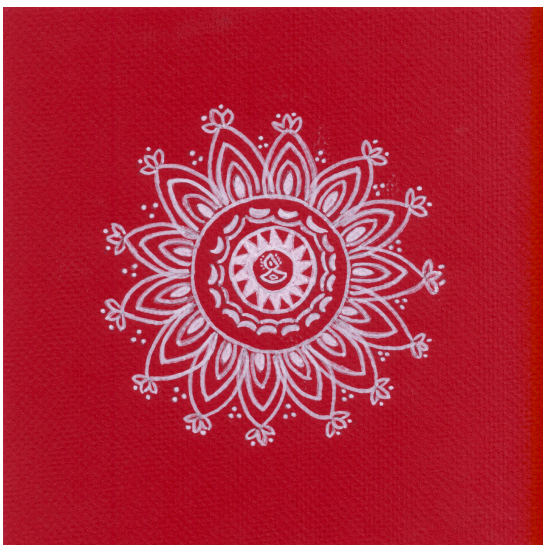
Ruma Tarafdar Basu  
Willington, Connecticut



**Butterflies**



**Diwas**



**Circle**



**Duck**



**“Great Mother” by Aparna Das**

Dated September 2009, Dimensions: 11" X 8.5", Medium: Pen and Ink

The artist hails from Somerville, Massachusetts



**A Portrait of Helen Keller by Kumarjit Saha**

The artist hails from Hooghly Mohsin College, Chinsurah, India



# A Layman's Translation: Two Verses from Tagore's Gitabitān

Nitis Mukhopadhyay  
Glastonbury, Connecticut

In a musical program consisting of *Rabindrasangeet* prepared for a predominantly mixed audience, it is a good idea to provide *some* English translations of the set of selected songs before their rendition. That aspect in itself may not sound too special to the readers. After all it is considered routine when someone normally explains the *storyline* of a *bandish* in English prose before a performer proceeds to sing a piece of Bhajan or Thumri in Hindi.

But, generally speaking, in the case of Rabindrasangeet, there is rarely a substantial storyline of any kind. Moreover, even if there is one in a handful of Tagore songs, a storyline is truly an insignificant part of the whole experience that is to be normally derived from the totality of a Rabindrasangeet. The individual words, their total structure, the poetic fervor, the tune, the rhythm, the style of singing, the mood, the musicians, and other aspects — all come alive together in a remarkable unison under Tagore's magical touch. In Tagore's writings of all kinds, the presence of poetry is paramount.

Ultimately, a listener is supposed to experience a new height of an artistic creation of what is called Rabindrasangeet that amounts to something significantly more sublime than a simple lyric, its message, its music, or a particular rāgā its musical notes are based on. Indeed, very early in Tagore's career, he used to write down the name of the basic rāgā on top of each of his own musical compositions. When he matured, he abandoned this childish practice calling it a hindrance to music appreciation. But, without poetry, anything Tagorean is rendered practically lifeless.

Hence, a curious listener may rightfully want to know the inner "meaning" in a particular piece of Rabindrasangeet. Tagore himself translated some of his poetry, musical lyrics, and other selected literary work into English. Other literary giants from all over the world have translated some of Tagore's work into English and other foreign languages.

This painstaking effort continues in many institutions of higher learning. However, many translations are not readily available to a lay person like myself when I need them the most, particularly when I frantically look for a quick reference material prior to set up a musical program.

It has been my personal experience that a particular verse of interest that is chosen for a recital is often not readily accessible in English! My urge to translate some of the literary works of Tagore originated from such dire necessity of my being able to share quickly an approximate poetic sentiment expressed in Tagore's verses with the audience who may not be fluent in Bengali.

Personally, however, I dislike a word for word translation of a mundane story line. Indeed, the focus should not be entirely on a story line even if there is any. The primary focus should rather be on creating some poetry in English as *a kind of vehicle* to carry an original piece written in Bengali. The readers should not misunderstand me. My translations are not supposed to be substitutes of Tagore's original Bengali verses. In fact, Tagore's own translations or anyone else's translations are not real substitutes of Tagore's original Bengali verses either. They just cannot be! It is that simple.

Knowing fully well that an English translation will never replace an original piece in Bengali, I *attempt* to come up with some simple poetry in English from an original Bengali piece of Tagore, if possible. With all my own parameters of limitations in place, I am still tempted to share two examples below.

If anyone discovers a glimpse of poetry in them at all that will be my icing on the cake to take home. Happy reading.

**Pujā: Verse No. 337, p. 140**

(Mahāvisvé mahākāshé mahākālo mājhé)

On this eternally endless universe,  
Man wanders alone and puzzled.  
My Lord, the unique creator:  
    you solemnly exist in divine grace, yet  
    utterly quietly lonesome in your infinite mystic.  
In this never ending time and space,  
    you, my Lord, nurture my sole,  
    hold a candle under the lighted sky,  
    as I look up to you for guidance.  
All hustles give way as true peace descends.  
Man accepts your uniqueness,  
    'midst you, the fearless and lonely seek refuge.

**Swadésh: Verse No. 44, p. 266**

(Bidhir bādhan kātbé tumi émon shaktimān)

You defy our fate, you appear so strong -  
But, are you really!  
Our upkeep is in your hands, you take such pride-  
But, isn't that pretense!  
All along you have been in the driver's seat,  
    us merely following you around  
    from behind and down under -  
But how can you carry that burden around,  
    'midst our formidable resistance,  
    you just don't have the strength.  
Engulf us with your rules and doctrine, but remember:  
    Even the weak and pale devours the urge to live.  
    it doesn't really matter how big or tall you are.  
    God is after all on our side.  
You can't expect to haunt us for too long,  
    by weakening the bond amongst us.  
Soon after the baggage feels unbearable,  
    the boat you seemingly navigate will go under.

# The Mystery of the Fainting Lady

Oisharya (Moon) Dasgupta\*  
West Hartford, Connecticut

It was a warm, spring afternoon and Rani and her sister Rebecca were walking around at the park complaining about the heat. "It's never been so hot in the spring," Rebecca whined. "At least not as long as we've been alive." "Let's go to the Los Angeles Metro Museum. They have air conditioning inside," Rani suggested. "Good idea!" So the two girls sprinted off to the historical museum which was only a couple of blocks from the park.

"It's so nice and cold in here," Rani murmured as she walked inside. The two sisters walked around the entrance debating on where to go first. Finally they decided to go to the gem and precious stone section. Rani and Rebecca slowly walked to the gem stone exhibit and looked for their birthstones. "Look at that beautiful diamond necklace!" Rani exclaimed. Not getting any response, Rani turned towards her sister and found her observing a man. The man was dressed in a black pullover and pants. The peculiar thing was that he was wearing dark sunglasses and a baseball cap. "Doesn't that man look suspicious?" asked Rebecca. "He looks kind of strange but I don't know if that is suspicious," replied Rani.

Suddenly they heard a thud and the sound of people gasping from the other side of the room. Rani and Rebecca turned towards the commotion and saw a crowd gathering around a corner and other people in the room walking towards them. As the two sisters joined the crowd, they saw a lady lying on the floor. A couple of ladies were kneeling on the floor, trying to see what was wrong. Museum guards came rushing to see what happened. Slowly the woman opened her eyes. "Should I call an ambulance?" a young man asked. "No, no, I'll be fine," the woman fumbled. Everybody suggested that she get medical help but she refused all offers.

"Well, I'm feeling a lot better now," she said as she sat up. "In fact I'm meeting my husband a few blocks down and he is a doctor. Oh my, I'm getting late. Thank you all for your concern. I will be fine, really," said the lady as she made her way towards the exit. "That's strange. The lady practically ran away for a person who just fainted," Rebecca remarked as she watched her leave. Rebecca turned to Rani and said "Come on, let's go follow her!" Rani was about to protest but Rebecca grabbed Rani by the arm and pulled her out the entrance.

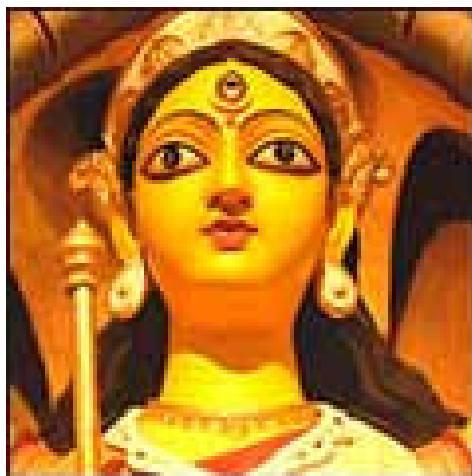
The two girls hadn't gone fifty feet from the entrance of the museum when somebody hurriedly brushed past them. "Look where you're going!" Rani exclaimed as she looked at the rude pedestrian. Surprise! It was the mysterious man from the museum. However the man paid no attention to the sisters and kept walking rapidly till he caught up with the lady. The two sisters looked at each other. "Wow! The mystery deepens," remarked Rebecca. Rani groaned. The two sisters walked behind the couple, careful to stay out of sight. They walked for three blocks. Then the couple turned into an alley. As the sisters reached the alley they saw no sign of the couple but a green Honda sedan was leaving. Rebecca snatched a pen from her sister's pocket and wrote the car's license plate number on her hand. The number was: *LAW-429*. "Well?" Rani asked. "I don't know what but something strange is going on," Rebecca answered. "You're just being a paranoid. I think you're reading too many Nancy Drew mysteries. Let's just go home," urged Rani. That evening the two girls were watching the news. Suddenly the newscaster announced that there had been a theft at the metro museum. After the museum had closed that day, the

museum employees discovered that a diamond necklace was replaced by a fake one sometime during the day. An unusual event also happened in the same room in the afternoon when a lady fainted but later recovered and left on her own. The police thought the fainting lady had someone to do with the theft and said whoever had any useful information about the incident would get a \$1000 reward from the museum and should contact police on their Crime Hotline.

Rebecca jumped up, turned off the TV set, and shouted; “We know the license plate of the get away car. Let’s call!” “What are you silly girls talking about?” their father asked. The two sisters could barely speak through their excitement. But finally managed to explain the events of the afternoon to their parents. “We must call the police at once,” said their mother. Within half an hour two police detectives arrived at their home. They were very grateful to get a very important clue and were confident that with this information they can locate the car and arrest the thieves. They also recommended the sisters for the award.

It was almost midnight when the family was finally ready to go to bed. Just when she was about to turn in Rebecca teased her sister, “Looks like I’m not so paranoid after all!”

\* Oisharya (Moon) Dasgupta is a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader in Aiken Elementary School, West Hartford, Connecticut



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