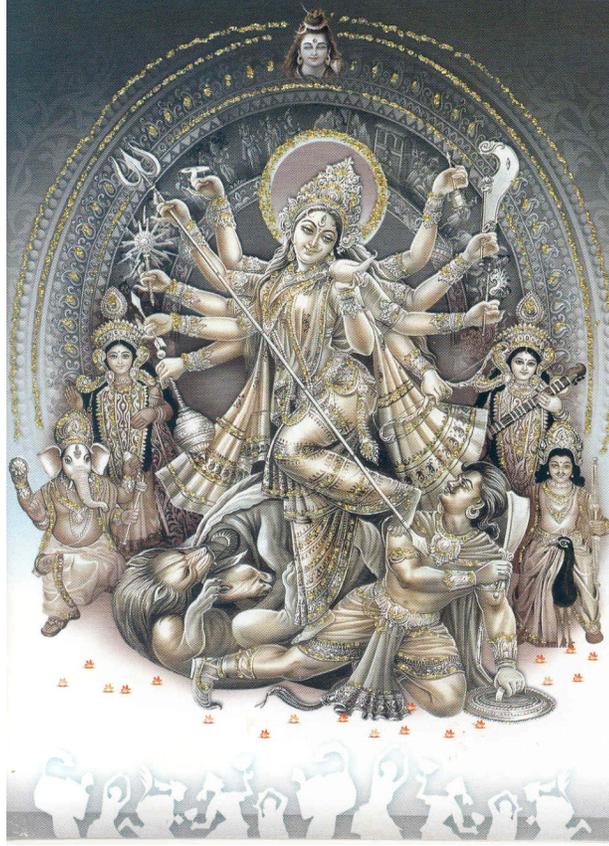


পঁচিশ বছর উদযাপন
সর্বজনীন দুর্গোৎসব ১৪১৭



Silver Jubilee Celebration
Durga Puja 2010

Bengalee Association of
Greater Hartford (BAGH, Inc.)

www.baghonline.org

Durga Puja
Greetings and Compliments

from

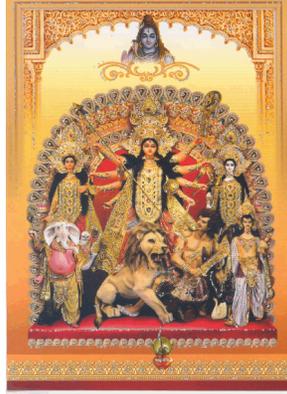
Dr. Nasima Banerjee
Dr. Michelle Normandin
Dr. Bella Mandavelli
Dr. Mathew Curran

at

Bristol Pathology Consultant, P.C.

SOUVENIR MAGAZINE EDITING:
MATERIAL ACQUISITION, LAYOUT AND DESIGN
NITIS MUKHOPADHYAY

Durga Puja Program



Friday, October 15	Pratima Installation and Decoration Catered Dinner	6:00 PM
Saturday, October 16	Morning Schedule	9:00 AM
	Pratima Sthapan, Sasthi, Saptami, Ashtami, and Navami Puja	
	Pushpanjali	12:00 PM
	Afternoon Schedule	
	Prasad, Catered Lunch	1:00 PM
	Evening Schedule: Cultural Program	5:30 PM
	<i>Children's Dance</i>	
	<i>A Selection of Songs</i>	
	<i>Vocalists:</i> Gopal Das, Devoshri Mukherjee, Mahua and Nitis Mukhopadhyay	
	<i>Accompanists:</i> Saumitra Banerjee (tabla), Anishaa Mukherjee (ghungroo) and Nitis Mukhopadhyay (manjira)	
	<i>Direction:</i> Mahua Mukhopadhyay	
	<i>Dance Recital:</i> Rachna Agarwal	
	<i>Bengali Drama (Akok):</i> Abanti Chakraborty	
	Dinner: Catered	8:00 PM
	<i>Bangla Band:</i> Aapar Bangla	9:30 PM

Sunday, October 17

Morning Schedule

10:00 AM

Puja, Pushpanjali, Bisorjan

Afternoon Schedule & Cultural Program

Prasad and Catered Lunch

1:00 PM

Modern Songs

2:00 PM

Featured Artist

Haimanti Shukla

3:00 PM



THE FEATURED ARTIST: HAIMANTI SHUKLA



Her name is her introduction, a musical rhythm, a phenomenon in music in the hearts of the thousands of music lovers. She is Haimanti Sukla. Singing came to her naturally at a very tender age owing to her celebrity father, the very well known Late Pt. Harihar Shukla. The tradition of Indian Classical Music in her family helped her in developing the foundation for music in her golden voice.

The charm in her voice was soon recognized in the year 1972 with her first recording “E to kanna noy amar” lyrics and music given by the famous Shailen Mukhopadhyay and Pulak Bandyopadhyay. But, before that she had carved out a special image for herself in the sections of Khayal, Thumris and Bhajans as a regular performer on the All India Radio.

A chance rendered to her by her Patron, Pulak Bandhyapadhyay, and the famous singer, Manna Dey. The song was supposed to be sung by Manna Dey himself but he made way for this budding singer and the song “Aamar bolaar kichu chilo na” became an instant hit and is still a very popular number.

It was her magical voice and her undiminished sincerity in music that she became a favorite of the likes of musical maestros including Ustad Ali Akbar Khan, Pt. Ravi Shankar, Pt. Bhimsen Joshi, and Ustad Alla Rakha Khan as well as Naushad. Apart from these exponents of classical music, great composers such as Hemanta Mukherjee, Salil Chaudhuri and Manna Dey scored memorable music for her.

It is natural that such a celebrated artist will be honored with a number of awards and accolades. To name a few are the Sur Sringer Academy award for her song “Kahan se aaye badra” in the hindi film “Chasme Baddor” in 1981. She is also a proud recipient of Mian Tansen Award awarded to her in the year 1975.

Haimanti Shukla has a history of four decades of a successful musical career. And yet she is also considered to be one of the modern singers of today. From Classical Music to Nazrul Geeti to Modern songs - she performs them in an effortless manner that has made her so popular among all classes of music lovers.

She has performed here on behalf of BAGH at least twice before and many would recall those rousing concerts. The organizers are thrilled to invite her back for yet another delightful encounter.



Welcome from the President

On behalf of the Executive Committee of the **B**engalee **A**ssociation of **G**reater **H**artford (BAGH, Inc.), it is my great pleasure to welcome you and your families and friends to the *2010 Durga Puja* festivities. This year, we are celebrating 25 years of the spirit of BAGH.

This club started its humble journey so many years ago and through its own process of evolution and continued growth, it has changed us all. It is indeed difficult now to think of our festivities and culture in this region without BAGH. So, we again worship the *Supreme Goddess, Mother Durga*, to purify our souls and remove all obstacles in the way of our earnest desire for good health, prosperity, and universal friendship. I hope that this special season of Durga Puja will evolve into a genuinely collective prayer for the ultimate peace and harmony in this world.

I also hope that you will find time to share some cheer and camaraderie, renew friendship, and spread the word of goodwill among your own as well as new found friends and families. This should be a moment of great pride and some humble reflections too. With the very best of my heartfelt Puja greetings,

Saumitra Banerjee
President, BAGH, Inc.

The 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

From Editor's Desk

“গগনে গগনে আপনার মনে কী খেলা তব।
তুমি কত বেশে নিমেষে নিমেষে নিতুই নব।।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ

This year's Durga Puja marks the beginning of BAGH's 25-year celebration. In order to commemorate this special milestone, I decided to bring out a very substantial *Souvenir Magazine*. It includes nearly 117 pages of literary work and artwork plus the customary pages with sponsorships as well as advertisements. It has been a task of gigantic proportion and I took it upon myself to edit this huge magazine out of my love for BAGH.

I may mention that this magazine was going to include an article on a story of BAGH outlining how it began through what it is today. The article was prepared-revised-edited a number of times, finally readying it for publication. Unfortunately, the author decided to pull it at the last minute. Some readers may miss such a historical account during our 25-year celebration. I know that I do.

On a positive note, however, this magazine includes some personal reminiscences with *partial* historical accounts of a series of Bengali plays and numerous cultural programs made possible under the auspices of BAGH. These articles, filled with nostalgia, will make it possible for many to walk down memory lanes and appreciate BAGH's accomplishments.

This magazine includes a number of articles, short stories, and poems written in Bengali. I have especially tried to preserve each author's individual spelling and style when it comes to Bengali compositions. That should add a sense of pure authenticity of such matters.

I have highlighted the works of writers and artists in our community at large from both near and far. I vigorously pursued local children to prepare masterful pieces of literature and artwork in recognition of their remarkably expressive ideas. I am indebted to all those who have graciously contributed their original work. If one likes what one sees or reads in this magazine, the credit should squarely go to all writers and artists of all ages.

This project clearly depended upon invaluable support from BAGH plus its sponsors-friends-families, and I thank everyone involved. This year, I personally sought additional sponsorship exclusively geared toward this magazine's production process. In this regard, I thankfully acknowledge Sanjay and Krishna Banerjee, Ashis Basu and Ruma Tarafder Basu, Nitya and Soma Chakraborty, Arindam Dasgupta and Mallika Ghosh, Nitis and Mahua Mukhopadhyay, and Indra and Bandana Purkayastha for their generous financial support. Your extra care shows.

I also thank those who have individually provided valuable and productive contacts among other numerous kinds of help. It will be terribly unfair of me if I do not mention some of them, especially, Pradip Basu, Debanjan Bhattacharjee, Bhargab Chattopadhyay, Vivek Mukherjee, Mahua Mukhopadhyay, and Pronoma Srivastava. Kudos to all!

It should be understood that BAGH, Inc., its members, members of its Executive Committee including the editor are in no way 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. Wishing everyone the happiest experiences during this Durga Puja season. Make a new friend,

Nitis Mukhopadhyay

Member, Executive Committee of BAGH, Inc.

শ্রীদুর্গা মাতৃ বাহন সহ পরিবার

উমা বোস*

মিডলটোউন, কানেটিকাট

শ্রীদুর্গা পূজার প্রারম্ভে বহুসংখ্যক প্রচলিত পুস্তকবিধি প্রান্তিকিধি
রূপে গায়ত্রী পুস্তক হয়ে থাকে। তাম্রকায় বাথালীয়া মন্দির পিন সেক্টর ফরি।
প্রসঙ্গিক তিনটি পুস্তক সংক্রান্ত পুস্তকটিতে প্রতিজ্ঞা বিবরণ, জ্ঞান জ্যোতিষ্মানে
প্রতিপদে প্রচলিত হওয়া সত্ত্বেও প্রক্ষেপে প্রতিপদাদি কল্পনার প্র।

চন্দ্রীতে গায়ে গায়ত্রী পুস্তক অধিকার করে বহু করে দুর্গা মাতৃ বাহন
অধিকার করে বহু করে চন্দ্রমাসিকের দুর্গা পুস্তক সংক্রান্ত পুস্তক দুর্গা গায়।
দুর্গা মাতৃ বাহন অধিকার করে দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের পুস্তক অধিকার
তার তিনি দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের পুস্তক অধিকার করে
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বাহনীর দুর্গা মাতৃ কর্তা। গায়ত্রী পুস্তক অধিকার দাঁড়িয়ে গায়ে।
তার চন্দ্রমাসিকের পুস্তক অধিকার করে দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের
পুস্তক অধিকার করে দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের পুস্তক অধিকার করে
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গায়ত্রী পুস্তক অধিকার করে দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের
পুস্তক অধিকার করে দুর্গা পুস্তক। প্রায় তত্ত্ব তাম্রকায়ের পুস্তক অধিকার করে
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মা দেবী সর্বভূতেশু গায়ত্রী পুস্তক অধিকার।
নগরসংক্রান্ত পুস্তক অধিকার করে নগরসংক্রান্ত পুস্তক অধিকার।



*One of the most senior and distinguished authors in this area

দেবী-সরস্বতীর বাহন হুগা, ধূল ও দুই প্রকম্পিত পিঙ্গলিগেদিলে হুগা
কলে বাদীদে হুগিচি পান করে পরে হুগারে নিতু অনিতু, ওচলিগাণ সম্ব
আধো প্রকৃত গুণনী ব্যক্তি অনিতু অসার বস্তু গ্যাস করে নিতু ওসার
বস্তুই প্রবর্ত করে থাকে। তাঁর বিবেক তাঁকে জানিয়ে দেয় কোনটি প্রায় হুগার
কোনটি গ্যাস। প্রবর্তন ব্যক্তিরে বলা হুগা পরগহুগা।

হুগা গুলি আধোবিন্দু ধূলতার গ্যাসে লাগে না। প্রবর্তন পরগহুগা
মুগুগা হুগা তাঁরা হুগারে সাফল্যে সাংসারিক গ্যাসিতু তাঁদের গুণ
করে না। হুগারে হুগেন সম্পূর্ণ নিষ্কিন্তু। সরস্বতী উপস্থিত হুগার নিষ্কিন্তু
হুগা যে সাবপ্রাণী।

- শ্রী কার্তিক -

শ্রীমদে কার্তিক হুগাচারী হুগা। হুগার দেহতামণির পর বহুদিন শিব গুণী
যানে গুগা ছিলেন। গুণী হুগা হুগা হুগারের গুগে গুগা নিজে বহুদিন
শিবের গুগা ওপস্থিত করে তাঁর হুগা ও গুগে ছিলেন। কার্তিক গুগা ছিলেন
অসংসার্য রূপবান হুগার হুগার হুগার।

দেবগুগা ওরফে হুগার অসংসার্য হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার
গুগা হুগার
হুগার। তিনি হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার।

হুগার
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কার্তিক হুগার
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- গুরু -

শ্রী কার্তিকের বাহন গুরু। কার্তিক পরগ গুগার, গুরু ও গুগার প্রাণী
কার্তিক হুগার গুরু ও হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার হুগার
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Namostaswai Durge

Kanti Bhusan Chakrabarti*
Bhopal, MP India

Durga is omnipotent and omnipresent. Brahmaa, the Supreme Soul and the Energy thereof, are the same and ever-existent.

1. GODS AND THE UNIVERSE ARE A PART OF CREATION

All gods are a creation of the Supreme Soul along with the Universe; and these gods are eliminated with the dissolutions of the universe at the end of each Kalpa. Gods are there to generate and maintain various functions of the Universe and thus the Universe operates with an accuracy and precision beyond any human perception. The Kena Upanishad explains that the extended Energy of Brahmaa operating in all the gods is the cause of their strength.

Durga is the Jaganmata, the Mother of the Universe, and every other being therein. She is existent in everything all through the Universe, including the gods.

The Supreme Lord says, “Ekam Sadvipram Vahudha Vadanti” - Soul is one.

Gods are created beings, and avatars, such as Ram and Krishna, are appearances of the extended energies of the Supreme Being to execute specific performances.

The original God is named as *Brahmaa*, and performs the acts of creation. Creation is caused by the Supreme Soul (Lord) through the extended Energy called Jaganmata. The Supreme Soul is one and infinitum, bereft of origin and unknown to every being in existence. The Gods are also ever engaged in penance to know the Supreme Soul.

2. DURGA IN CREATION

Durga is engrossed in the Supreme Soul. She is puissant, worshiped by the gods and all living beings, and appears in various formations in numerous occasions.

The concept of creation is relevant to comprehend these facts.

“All complexity came out of simplicity, heterogeneity out of homogeneity, perfection out of imperfection, variety out of uniformity.”

“In some far-off period, the whole universe existed in a state of ‘paramanu’ (atoms), invisible, subtle and unmanifested.” Our glorious Rishis explained, “Before, O child, this was a mere state of non-being, one only, without a second...from that non-being proceeds the state of being”. Rishis named the womb of light as “Hiranyagarbha”.

The atoms came closer together and united in different proportions and formed molecules. The union implies the contraction of primeval mass which generated a great deal of heat. While the Rishis named the self luminous vapor as “Prajapati” or Brahma, the lord of creation, modern science identifies these incandescent vapors as “nebula.” (The Vedas, Pandit Vidyalkar).

Thus the process of creation continued and the universe emerged. According to Vedic opinion, this created universe will exist for 2,333, 227, 018 years. [Note: The *Brahmaa* is the Supreme Soul, and Brahma is the created god.]



*Professionally passed through Corporate Management holding top-management positions in the Government and Public organizations in India. Dedicated to Spiritualism, Vedic Studies, Tantra, Yoga, Reiki, Astrology, Mantra-sadhana. Thanks to Ela Banerjee from Farmington, Connecticut, the author’s granddaughter, for helping with this piece.

Nasadiya Sukta in Rigveda has mainly narrated Creation. “In the beginning the *Divine Will* arose. This was the first seed of the mind of the *Creator*. Those who can see beyond by pulling their mind and heart together found the binding link of the existent, the non-existent existing in the existent” (Rig.10.129.4).

“The rays of the Divine will spread across the whole world. They spread below and above. And the result was that small and big organisms bearing seeds were born” (Rig. 10.129.5). Thus the matter came into existence from the spirit which acted with the *Divine Will*. “He indeed, is all this, what has been and what will be. He is the Lord of Immortality, transcending through Material existence” (Purusha Sukta, Rig. 10.90.2).

It is further said that this created universe, “which is mortal, occupied only a quarter of Him, leaving the rest as [the] Supreme Region of immortality” (Rig. 10.90.3).

Any speculation about the creation hereinafter cannot be true for the enormous limitation of the organs of the speculators. “Who truly knows, and who can declare whence it cometh and whether it Vanisheth? The Divine people who know were born much after creation came into being. Who then knows whence it has come about?” (Rig.10.129.6)

“The Creator is perfect. He possesses perfect power. Whence is created perfect Nature? The perfect Universe derives life from the perfect Creator” (Atharva. 10.8.29).

The above citations, amongst many, reveal the Creator and *Divine Will* as the Supreme Existent causing the emergence of the Universe, which includes the gods. “Deva na jananti kuto manushya” - If the gods are not knowing HIM, then how can Man?

“Aham Sube pitaramasya murdhan. mama jonirapswantah samudre. Tato vitisthe bhuvanau Vishwotamum dwam barsmanopasprishami” (Devisukta-7) - I have delivered all being (dwulok) and the father (cause) of Supreme Being, centre of supreme consciousness is my abode. I exist as *Brahmaa* (consciousness) in every being in multifarious forms. I am the illusionary existence spreading everywhere.

“Ahameba bata eba prabamya ravamana bhuvanani vishwaa. Paro diva paro ena prithivyaitabati mahina sambabhuba” (Rig. Devisuktam 8) - I roam freely inside and outside of every living being like air, after creating all of them. Though I am beyond the space and world, dissociate-Supreme Spirit by formation, yet I have taken up the form of the entire Universe by my own grace.

3. DURGA IN VARIOUS FORMATIONS

The daughter of Ambhrin Rishi, Vak, adopted Brahmaa Shakti in herself through penance. She has narrated the Devisuktam.

Brahma Vaibarta Puran (2/66/7-10) has narrated that the Universe has been created from the Spirit-origin.

Brihannaradiya Puran addressed the Devi as the all powerful deliverer of the Universe and stated different names of the Devi such as Uma, Shakti, Lakshmi, Bharati, Girija, Ambika, Durga, Bhadrakali, Chandi, Maheshwari, Kaumari, Vaishnavi, and Varahi.

Devi Bhagavat states, “Seyam shaktirmahamaya sachhidanandarupini rupam vibhartarupacha bhaktanugrahaahetabe” - Thus, the Universe materialized from the Supreme Lord through the extended Energy of Jaganmata Durga, and she continued to remain in all beings.

The management of the Universe has been vested upon the rulership of Manus, which are 14 in number, each lasting for 71 years, comprising 4 yugas i.e. Satya, Treta, Dwapar and Kali. The sum-total of these is known as Divya-yuga, where each Divya-yuga lasts for 4,320,000 years.

The names of the 14 Manus are (1) Swayambhuba (2) Swarochisha (3) Uttam (4) Tamas (5) Raivat (6) Chaksusha (7) Vaivaswata (8) Savarni (9) Dakshasavarni (10) Brahma Savarni (11) Rudra Savarni (12) Dharma Savarni (13) Deva Savarni or Rouchha (14) Indra Savarni or Bhoutya. The name of the transition point of each of the Manus is Manyantar and the present ruler is the Vaivashwata Manu. As said, Durga is omnipresent in every being and everywhere; she appears every time the necessity for redressing the sorrows and sufferings arises.

Durga is also known as Yogamaya. Some devotees consider Yogamaya and Mahamaya as one and the same. Shri Vishwanath Chakraborty of Bhakti-fame, however, disagrees. Yogmaya is the illusory energy which covers the “avatars” or incarnations of the Lord, such as Shree Krishna (“Yogamaya Samabritam” – Geeta). Mahamaya, on the other hand, is the all-pervading illusory energy omnipresent in the Universe and existing in every being, sensory organs, matter, and space. “Taya sarvamidam tatam” (Shri Chandee) - She has no birth but an appearance. “Devanam Karyasidhharthamavirbhabati sa sada” (Chandee 1/65) - She is the “Yoganidra” of Hari, she keeps the Universe under Illusion, and she charms the mind of the sane person.

Yoganidra is also known as Atmamaya or Yogamaya. Shree Hari incarnates by adopting this Supreme Energy and covers himself with the same. “Sambhabamatmamayaya” (Geeta 4-6). “Naham prakashah sarvasya yogamaya samabritaha” (Geeta 7-25) - That is why everybody cannot know HIM.

This Yogamaya appeared at Mathura before the incarnation of Shree Krishna, being asked to do so, “Nandagopa grihe jata Yasoda garbhasambhava” (Chandee 11/42). “Bhagabanapi vishwatma viditya Kamsajam bhayam. yadunam nijanathanam yogamaya samadisat. Gachha Devi Brajam bhadre gopagaviralamkritam” (Bhagavat 10/2/67) - She, (Yogamaya) had fully developed the instinct of deepest love amongst the Gopikas on the eve of Rasa Lila, the celebration of Supreme Love.

“Bhagavanapi te ratreeh sharodatfullamalikhah. Vikshah rantum manashchakre yogamayamupa-shritah” (Bhagavat 10/29/1) - In Krishna stuti by Brahma (Bhagavat 10/14/21), the Energy, Yogamaya, was mentioned. Shri Krishna engrossed Mother Yasoda by Vaishnavi-Maya (illusion) to enhance her affection to the son manifold - “Prabridhhasnehakalilahridayasit yatha pura” (Bhagavat 10/8/44).

Through the Mohini Energy of Yogamaya, Yasoda saw the entire Universe through the mouth of Shree Krishna. The Vaishnavi illusion has been narrated in Bhagavatam (10/8/43) as, “Ethham viditatyayam gopikayam sa Eshwarah. Viashnavim byatanonmayam putrashnehamayeem vibhuh.”

In Shri Chaitanya Charitamrita (Adi, 4 Chap), the power of Yogamaya to create illusion over the Bhagavan and the Devotees has been narrated beautifully. Yogamaya is also the Energy of kindness. So Chandee says, “Sa vidya parama mukterhetubhuta sanatanee. Saisa prasanna varada nrinam bhabati muktaye.”

Mahamaya being pleased can release the devotee from the bondage of the life-cycle. “Anaya sulabho gneya adidevohakhileshwarah” (Narad-pancharatra). This Energy of Mahamaya is above the Tri-gunah. Yet, another covering Energy of Mahamaya is engrossed with Tri-gunah. “Yaya mugdham jagat sarvam sarve dehavimaninah” (Narad Pancharatra). Shri Bhagavat says, “Yaya sammohito joba atmanam trigunatmakam.”

Shree Geeta mentioned, “Devi hyesha gunamayee mama maya duratyaya, Mameba ye prapady-ante Mayametam taranti te” (7/14) - My maya is having various qualities and is unsurpassable. Only by worshipping me can this maya be surpassed.

4. WORSHIPPING DURGA

Shri Durga has been worshiped and propitiated by gods, incarnations, Brahmins, saints, warriors, kings, the rich and the poor and all sufferers through all the ages and yugas for redressal and removal of sorrows and sufferings, for success, peace and prosperity.

Shree Krishna advised for Durga’s worship on the eve of the Kurukshetra war, “Shuchibhurtya Mahabaho samgramabhimukhe sthitah. Parajayaya shatrunam Durgastotram pathaid dhruvam” (Bhishma Parva, Mahabharata).

Similarly, the Pandavas prayed for the success of their exile by worshipping Durga, “Namaste sidhhasenani, Arya Mandaravasini, Kumari Kali Kapali Kapile Krishnapingale. Bhadrakali Namostubhyam Mahakali Namostute. Chandi Chande Namastubhyam Tarini Baravarnine. Katyayani Mahabhage Karali Vijaye Jaye.”

Shri Rama also worshiped Durga for his success in war, “Om Oim Ravanasya Vadarthaya Ramasyanugrahaya Cha. Akale Brahmano Bodho Debyastwayee Kritah Pura” (Ramayana).

Saint Medha narrated the necessity of worshipping Durga (Chandi) to King Surath and Vaishya Samadhi. Both of them worshiped Durga in the Mrinmoyee idol. “Munestasyopadeshen Mrinmoyem

Madhumasatah. Murtim nirmaya tan pujancha chakrartubatsartrayam. Tatra agatya sa Devi tavyamis-tam baram dadan. Durgabaram samalavya suryabirya samudbhavah” (Rudra Chandee).

Devi Bhagabat has narrated that the Supreme Soul (Lord) as having two features: one, ever-joyful and the other, Energy of Maya. It is like Fire and its Burning Power or Heat. This Puran has specially narrated Devi Durga as a powerful redresser of sorrows, diseases, fear, sufferings and unhappiness (Brahmavaivarta Puran, Prakriti Part, 53).

The worship of the Mrinmoyee idol and appearances of Devi are supported by the numerous instances of Shri Rama, King Surath, Shri Ramakrishna, Kamalakanta, Ram Prasad, etc.

Shree Shree Chandee is a part of the Markendeya Purana, where the essence of Tantra Sastras is incorporated therein. Hence, making it compulsory to recite Shree Shree Chandee during Durga Puja.

Shree Shree Chandee is also known as Durga Saptashati and Devi Mahatma. It contains 107 Mantras. In Durga Hom (Havana), 107 “Ahutis” are performed with each of these Mantras. The Mrinmoyee Idol is the most worshiped form of Durga in Bengal, where she is also known as Mohimamoyee duly worshiped by Suratha and Samadhi.

Devi Durga or Mahamaya, though all pervading throughout the Universe, is particularly exposed through women. Young, adult and old females are the living formation of Durga, and worshiping them is the great sadhana as prescribed. During Durga puja, formal “kumari puja” on the Astami and/or Navami day is compulsory. As in Mrinmoyee idol, Dhyana (meditation) on the females considered as an exposition of Durga, is the worship of high order. “Tam stree tam pumanasi tam kumara uta va kumaree. Tam jirno dandena vanehasi tam jato bhavasi vishwatomukhah” (Shwetashwara Upanishad 4/4). Devi has pronounced about her uniformity, “Ekai vaham jagatyatra dwitiya ka mama-para” (Shree Shree Chandee 10/5).

SHE has adopted ten forms, i.e. “Kali, Tara, Mahavidya, Shorashi, Bhuvaneshwari, Bagala, Sidhyavidya Ca Matangi Kamalatmika, Bhairavi, Chhinyamasta Ca Vidya, Dhumavati tatha.” “Eta Dasa Mahavidyah Sidhyavidyah Prakirtitah” (Chamunda Tantra). Durga has been transforming into numerous formations, features and faculties over the ages, yugas, and reigns of Manus.

SHE has also adopted formations and formalities of numerous regions and societies.

SHE is the Deity of all and everybody.

SHE is the giver of health, wealth, peace and prosperity, dharma and moksha, wins, and wisdom.

SHE has become Katyayani to fulfill the prayer and penance of Saint Katyayan, Sati as the daughter of Prajapati Daksha; Uma Haimavati became daughter of Menaka, Parvati in Himalaya Kingdom, Uma.

SHE has not only produced everything but entered into all of them.

“Tat sristwa tadevanupravishat” - SHE is transcendent and immanent (Devisuktam-8, Rig.)

APARAJITA STOTRA has narrated the MATRISHAKTI vividly. This Devisuktam is all benevolent. Day to day proper recitation of the Aparajita Stotram awakens “kundalini,” the dormant power located in the Muladhara Chakra of the Devotees with achievements of beneficial powers to lead a spiritual life having Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha, subject to regular practices with dedication. Kundalini gradually rises up through the susumna channel towards Swadhisthana, Manipura, Anahata, Vishudhha and Agya chakras. The ultimate chakra is the Sahasrara to enter into Samadhi.

Shree Shree Durga has been worshiped in various names by Buddhists, Jains, and the Lamas of Tibet amongst others. Kalpatantra, Samajtantra, Tripitak of Buddhism, Ratnasagar of Jainism, etc. may be referred to as her names for the same. Shree Guru Govind Singh compiled “Dasm Badshah ki Granth” 4th, 5th & 6th part, compatible with Shree Chandee. Chanasti Devi and Kotishri Devies are worshiped in Japan. Marichi Devi is “Dasabhuj.” Lamas in Tibet invoke Marichi Devi as Usha Devi also, and so on.

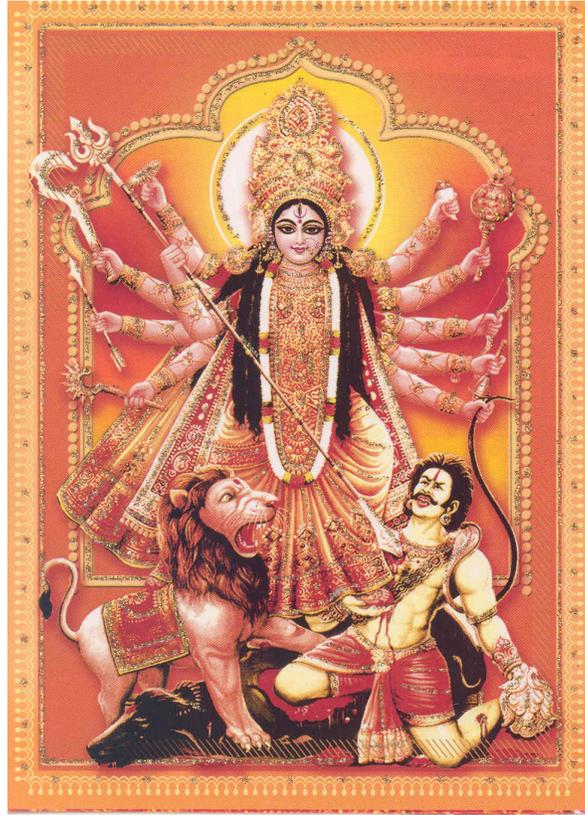
Properly remembering Shree Durga and narrating HER glories can be made only by a saint of Vedic status, which will be voluminous and as sacred as the Vedas which is impossible for a humble person like me.

Prayed that SHE energies everybody, the suffering persons of all status, to be capable and enable one surrender to HER feet breaking through the coverage of Maya, the illusion. As prayed by Kazi Najrul, we may also surrender to her, so that she will always remain in our soul as Chinmoyee Mother, “Chinmoyee Roop dhare aay.”

We may also recapitulate Ravindra Nath’s submission to HER, “Charana dharite diyogo amare niyo na niyo na saraye jivana marana sukh dukh diye bakshye dharibo jaraye.”

An adjunct to this humble submission for the devotees of the Mother to be recited 1008 times daily to realize the effect of Durga’s power: “OM HRIM DURGE DURGE RAKSHANI SWAHA.”

OM TAT SAT



মহালয়ার সময় যে চণ্ডীপাঠের অংশ পাঠ করা হয় তার প্রথমার্ধে দেবী দুর্গার সু-উক্তি বা সোজা কথায় 'দেবীসূক্তম' (নিজস্ব বানী)সংস্কৃতে পরিবেশন করা হয়। তার বাঙলা তর্জমা কবিতায় নীচে দেওয়া হলো

দেবীসূক্তম

দিলীপ ভৌমিক
বাল্টিমোর, মেরীল্যান্ড

আমি রুদ্র, বসু ও আদিত্য বিশ্বদেবী
এ ভুবনে আমি একাকার।
আমি সূর্য, বরুণ ও ইন্দ্র, আমি অগ্নী
আমি দুই অশ্বিনী কুমার।।
শক্র অন্বেষণে আমি, অন্তরীক্ষে
একাকী যে করি বিচরণ।
হবিষ যজ্ঞ যে করে, প্রার্থনা তার
আমি করি সদাই পূরণ।।
আমি পূর্ণ রাষ্ট্র অধিশ্বরী, বর দিই
চায় যারা রাষ্ট্রের কল্যাণ।
প্রপঞ্চ জগতে মোর আছে বিচরণ,
দেবগণে আমি করি অবস্থান।।
অন্ন ভক্ষণ করে জীবনেতে শক্তি সঞ্চারণ
সেই শক্তি এনে দিই আমি।
এই শক্তির পথ খুঁজে পেতে গেলে,
ব্রহ্ম শক্তির পথে হও অনুগামী।।

দেবদেবীগণ মাঝে পূজিত যে আমি।
আমি পূজ্য মনুষ্য মাঝারে।
ভক্তি ভরে উপাসনা করে যে আমায়,
দেখা আমি দিই নিজে তারে।।
তামস শক্তিতে, আমি রুদ্ররূপী,
এই রূপে শক্র করি বধ।
আমায় যে স্মরণ করে মনে,
তার বিপদ করি প্রতিরোধ।।
পিতৃরূপে এ জগতে করি বিচরণ
ঘুরে ফিরি আকাশে সাগরে।
পরব্রহ্মে পরিব্যাপ্ত আমি
ছড়িয়ে রয়েছে এই চরাচরে।।
আমার প্রেরণায় চলে নিশ্বাস প্রশ্বাস
বায়ু বয় এই বিশ্ব ভুবনে।
আপন মহিমায় আমি প্রকাশিত,
এই পৃথিবী আর অনন্ত গগনে।।

* * * * *

ওঁ শান্তিঃ, ওঁ শান্তিঃ ।।।



Dilip Bhowmik is a celebrated author of numerous books and articles in and about literature, history, and languages. He is an acclaimed poet, lyricist, and a musician. Songs written and composed by him have been recorded by legendary performers including Haimanti Shukla and Sriradha Badyopadhyay.

Collage 1



(1)



(4)



(2)



(5)



(3)



(6)

(1)-(3): BAGH participated in the “Incredible India” Festival, September 2010 held in Riverfront Plaza, Hartford. This was a charity-event to raise fund for Hungry Children of Connecticut.

(4)-(6): BAGH picnic, Summer 2008.

Remembering



Dr. Amitabh R. Ram

The families and friends of BAGH deeply mourn Amitabh's passing. We remember his genuine warmth, friendship, softness, humor, and invaluable service to our community, including past membership in the Executive Committee of BAGH, and beyond.

“সমুখে শান্তিপারাবার -
ভাসাও তরণী হে কর্ণধার।”

রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর

One with Infinite Glow

Sib S. Ray*
Newington, Connecticut

On witnessing human misery, different people react differently. Some will heave a big sigh; others will have tear roll down their cheek. Some talented ones will write a story, novel or even a play. A compassionate journalist may write a heart wrenching report spanning several columns. But, very few will come forward to alleviate the distress. We had one such exceptional man among us who successfully helped deprived children of Calcutta and Benaras in India. Unfortunately, this year he left us, forever, on July 15.

Upanishad says one should offer himself with respect and that is indeed what he did. The children he tried to help with their education came from the most deprived and stigmatized sections of the Indian society. One might think that some basic education would be enough for them. But he did not look at it that way. He tried to make available for them the state-of-the-art education in computer and spoken English so that they could gain confidence to compete more evenly with others.

How was the man? It is hard to explain because he camouflaged himself with the help of wit, humor, and mock arguments. Most of the time, his humor was at his own expense which made it even more enjoyable to others around him. Once during a trip to New York City to watch a show, I had the privilege to ride with him. Throughout the entire trip he kept us entertained with jokes and stories, and finally he looked up a Burmese restaurant so that we could taste a different type of food.

Then, one day came the news of the dreaded illness which ultimately overwhelmed his body but never subdued his mind or spirit. At that juncture when many others would be busy making provisions for the immediate family, his concerns revolved around the children of his schools in India.

How was he as a physician? I have no first-hand knowledge because my children were not young enough to be seen by him. But those who read the guest book entries following his obituary published in the Hartford Courant or those who were present in the standing-room-only memorial services for him know what a compassionate and competent physician he was.

So many parents and their children paid tribute one by one to “Dr. Ram” and shared their personal accounts of how he touched their lives or how he made himself available 24/7. After all, many illnesses do not necessarily present themselves between 9 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday. There was no hypocrisy in his Hippocratic Oath.

Amitabh, the name means the one with infinite glow. His glow shall never dim in our mind.



*Has played crucial roles in the upbringing and nurturing of BAGH since its inception. He has served as an officer of BAGH in a number of capacities including treasurer and a membership in its election committee.

Remembering Amitabh Ram

Nitis Mukhopadhyay
Glastonbury, Connecticut

On Thursday, July 15, 2010, Amitabh Ram, MD, passed away by attaining eternal rest and peace. He is survived by his mother, wife (Piyali), daughter (Pronoma), and a younger brother. This account of my appreciation was prepared with the help of some pertinent information obtained from The Hartford Courant (July 18, 2010) supplemented by my personal reminiscences.



Amitabh was a Pediatrician by profession. He ran two successful pediatric practices in Hebron and Hartford. His staff, patients, and community remember him for his quality of care, service, compassion and competence. With his customary dedication and devotion he built his practices. They will continue to serve the community.

He received his medical degree from National Medical College, Kolkata, India. Amitabh was truly an exceptional individual, compassionate towards the community and a pillar of strength to his family and friends. He excelled as an Assistant Professor at the University of Connecticut Health Center in Farmington with his deep rooted life-long passion for both teaching and research in medicine.

Amitabh cared deeply about children and understood their needs. He passionately started a non-profit U.S. organization called *MSIHA* (Magis Slyvestris International Health Agency). MSIHA (P.O. Box 359, Hebron, CT 06248) had begun with the primary mission of serving under-privileged children in India and that same mission has continued to blossom since its inception.

Currently, MSIHA runs two thriving educational centers, one in Kolkata and second one in Varanasi. These wonderful centers provide training in computer literacy and spoken English for children from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those who are physically challenged. Amitabh's vision, contribution, sacrifice, and humanitarian work in this field are inspirational and remain unmatched. His friends and family hope to carry forward his pioneering work with support from those who care to lend a helping hand.

Many friends and families of BAGH are gathered here. Some knew Amitabh well, others perhaps less. But, Amitabh felt close to all of us. He was a charmer with his characteristic smile, softness of heart, genuine warmth, and most of all his sense of caring, friendship, and humor. He loved watching serious films and not-so-serious films, enjoyed serious music and not-so-serious music. He loved to read and he loved his family.

Amitabh was truly a pillar of this community but he never sought the limelight. Given all the fame and kudos that he deservedly earned, he was one of the most easy-going friends that I have met. In this crowd, I can vouch for many who will agree with me with heart and soul. All friends and families of BAGH will continue to miss Amitabh dearly for a very long time.

Good bye, my friend.

বাঘের নাটক এবং বাঙালিয়ানার টান

নিত্য চক্রবর্তী*
ফার্মিংটন, কানেকটিকাট

ছোটবেলা থেকেই আমার জানি যে শুধু ঢাকের তাল কোমর নাচালেই চলবে না কিছু সৃষ্টি করতে হবে। বাঙালি কালচার ধরে রাখতে হবে। আমি এদেশে এলাম ১৯৮৭ এ, দেখলাম বাঙালিয়ানা বজায় রাখার সব ব্যবস্থাই করে রেখেছেন আমাদের পূর্বসূরীরা।

পূজো,তার সঙ্গে নাচ, গান,নাটক ইত্যাদির সব ব্যবস্থা করে রেখেছেন সুরত বসু, শিব রায়, সুরত রায়,রঞ্জিত চ্যাটার্জি, অনিল চক্রবর্তী, ধিষপতি চন্দ, সুধানসু বসু, অসিত রায়, মনোরঞ্জন রায়, সৌমিত্র ব্যানার্জি এতক পূর্বসূরীরা। ১৯৮৬ এ বাঘ এর জন্মা সেই বছরেই দুর্গা পূজো দিয়ে বাঘের যাত্রা শুরু। সব চেয়ে গুরুত্ব পূর্ণ জিনিস বাঙালি কালচার এ হলো খাওয়া দাওয়া, নাচ গান, কবিতা ও নাটক। আমি এখানে লিখব শুধু মাত্র বাঘের নিবেদিত নাটক এর কথা। বাঘের নাটকের প্রাণ পুরুষ যদি কাও কে বলতে হবে তবে সুরত বসু কেই বলতে হবে। এমন হই হই করা মানুষ খুব কম দেখা যায়। সেই ১৯৮৬ তেই প্রথম বাঘের প্রযোজিত নাটক চিকিত্সা বিদ্রাট। সুরত বসুই নাটক এর ডিরেক্টর। তার মত সতস্ফূর্ত এনার্জেটিক মঞ্চ অভিনেতা বাঘে আর কেউ নেই। ১৯৮৬ এর সেই নাটক টা সবাই খুব সানন্দে গ্রহন করেছিল। ১৯৮৭ এ ছোট দের নিয়ে একটা নাটক করার চেষ্টা হয়েছিল তার কোনো বিস্তারিত খবর আমার জানা নেই।

১৯৮৮ এর পূজোর তিন সপ্তাহ আগে সুরত বসু আমাকে ফোন করে ডেকে নিলেন তাঁর বাড়িতে। তখন সেখানে পূজোর মিটিং চলছে। একটা নাটক নামাতে হবে এবার পূজোতে। নতুন কোনো নাটকের বই আনিয়া নাটক তৈরী করার সময় তখন ছিল না। অল্প সময়ে তৈরী করার মত নাটক আমার মুখস্থ ছিল। আমি বললাম, আর দেবু ভট্টাচার্য লিখে অনেক গুলো কপি করে দিল। তিন সপ্তাহে নাটক দাঁড়িয়া গেল। নাটক টা ছিল "ভজ গৌরাঙ্গ কথা"। ওরিজিনাল লেখক রাধারমন ঘোষ। পরিচালনা নিত্য চক্রবর্তী। হই হই করে নাটক সফল হলো। অভিনয় করে ছিলেন সুরত বসু, সুরত রায়, সৌমিত্র ব্যানার্জি, অর্পিতা ভট্টাচার্য, অমিত রায় এবং নিত্য চক্রবর্তী। বহু যুগ আগে গ্রীস দেশের আরিস্তফিনিশ প্রথম চালু করেন ননসেন্স কমেডি। তারপর সেটা কে বহুল প্রচারে আনেন ফ্রান্স এর মলিয়ারঁ। সেই ননসেন্স কমেডি কে বাংলা তথা ভারতে নিয়ে আসেন জ্যোতিরিন্দ্র, দীনবন্ধু, অমৃতলাল প্রমুখেরা। দেখে মনে হবে যে এই নাটক করা খুব সোজা। মোটেই না ঠিক উল্টোটাই।

নাটকের অনেক ধরণ আছে। যেমন ঐতিহাসিক, সামাজিক, ব্যালগাত্যক, আদিরসাত্মক ইত্যাদি। সব থেকে কঠিন হলো মুক্ত হাসির নাটক করা। তাই গোটা পশ্চিমবঙ্গে হাজার নাটকের দলের মধ্যে মাত্র একটা কী দুটো হাসির নাটকের দল আছে। সেই ধরণের নাটকে যখন এখানে সবাই সাফল্যের সঙ্গে পরিবেশনা করলেন তখন বোঝা যায় চাইলে এরা করতে পারে অনেক কিছু।

১৯৮৯এ পূজো তে নাটক করা হলো না। ঠিক হলো ১৯৯০ এর বসন্ত উতসবে নাটক করা হবে ফুল লেংখ ড্রামা। আমাকেই পরিচালনার ভার দেওয়া হলো। সে নাটকটা তে অনেক নতুন মুখ পেলাম। রঞ্জিত চ্যাটার্জি, স্বপ্না মাইতী, আশিস দাস, প্রদীপ বসু। সঙ্গে ছিলেন সুরত বসু, অমিত রায়, দীপক দাস এবং আরো যারা ছিলেন তাদের নাম মনে পরছে না। নাটক টা ছিল "বৌদির বিয়ে"। বেশ জম জমাট নাটক। এই নাটক টা সমাজের এক অদ্ভুত সমস্যা নিয়ে ব্যঙ্গের নাটক। এই নাটকে অমিত রায় প্রধান চরিত্রে ছিলেন। দারুন করেছিলেন।



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১৯৯১ এ নিভেদিতা মিত্র একটা দারুণ কাজ করলেন। উনি তখন কার বাচ্চা দেব নিয়ে রবীন্দ্র নাথ ঠাকুরের ডাকঘর নাটক করলেন। সেটা ছিল সত্যি কারের একটা সফল নাটক বাঘের প্রযোজনায়। ওই নাটকে অভিনয় করে ছিল, আররণ, অমিত, ফ্রিস, জয়, রুমা, টিকু, প্রবাল, দেব এবং আরো অনেকে। সেখানে প্রতিটি ছেলে মেয়ে সুন্দর ভাবে অভিনয় করেছিল। আমরা সবাই গর্বিত হয়েছিলাম। নিভেদিতা মিত্র যে

উদাহরণটা দিয়ে ছিলেন সেটা আমরা ধরে রাখতে পারিনি। এই প্রসঙ্গটা উপসংহার এ পরে লিখব। এর পর ৯১/৯২ তে নিভেদিতা মিত্র এবং কেয়া দাস এর চেষ্টায় “অবাক জলপান” করানো হলো বাচ্চাদের দিয়ে।

১৯৯৩ তে অমিত রায়ের পরিচালা এ কাঞ্চন রঙ্গ নাটক হয়েছিল। সেই নাটকে রঙ্গা রায় এবং সুধানসু বসু দারুণ অভিনয় করে ছিলেন। সেই নাটকে আরো অনেকের সঙ্গে ছিলেন পৃথা বসু আর সমিত চট্টোপাধ্যায়। নাটকটা খুব প্রসংসা পেয়ে ছিল।

১৯৯৪ এ সুরত বসুর লেখা নাটক “কিছুক্ষন” হয়েছিল। পরিচালনা করেন সুরত রায়। সঙ্গে ছিলেন দীপঙ্কর মুখার্জি, অনিল চক্রবর্তী, পৃথা বসু, সৌমিত্র ব্যানার্জি এবং আরো অনেকে। ওই নাটকে সুরত বসু একটি মহিলা র চরিত্র করেছিলেন। অসাধারণ। বঙ্গ সন্মেলনে ওই নাটকটা হয়েছিল। এই নাটক সম্পর্কে অনেক কথা বলা যেত। কিন্তু লেখাটা অনেক বড় হয়ে যাবে। অল্প কথাতে বলা যায় লেখাটা ছিল নতুন ধরণের। ৭০ এর দশকে বাদল সরকার, রাধা রমন ঘোষ এবং সরোজ রায় তিন জনে একই সঙ্গে নাটকের এক নতুন যুগের সূচনা করেন আকাদ পঞ্চহতি। মানে ইংরাজি টা হলো (automatic characterization through automatic dialogue). বাদল সরকার করেন সিরিয়াস নাটক “এবং ইন্ডিজিভ”, রাধারমণ ঘোষ করেন সেরিও কমিক নাটক “কলি বুলি”, আর সরোজ রায় করেন ননসেন্স কমেডি “গরুর গাড়ির হেডলাইট”। সেই পদ্ধতি অনুসরণ করে লেখা কিছুক্ষণ নাটক। আমরা অনেক যত্ন নিয়ে নাটকটা করেছিলাম।

১৯৯৫ এ বাঘের প্রযোজনায় নাটক হলো “সদানন্দের সাত কাহন”। নাটকটা পূজোর সময় তেই হলো। মজার নাটক। আমাকেই পরিচালনার ভার দেওয়া হয়েছিল। রঙ্গা রায়, অমিত রায় দারুণ অভিনয় করেন তাতে। সঙ্গে ছিলেন সুরত বসু, দীপক দাস, গৌতম মউলিক, তুলি চক্রবর্তী আরো অনেকে।

১৯৯৭ এ নাটক করলেন রঙ্গা রায়। ফরাসী লেখক কামু র লেখা থেকে নেওয়া বাংলা নাটক “চাঁপা পৃথিবী ও ইশ্বর”। সঙ্গে ছিলেন ধ্বিপতি চন্দ, সুরত রায়, চিন্ময় ঘোষ এবং নিত্য চক্রবর্তী। এই নাটকে রঙ্গা রায় প্রমান করলেন যে তিনি শুধু ভালো অভিনেত্রী ই নন তিনি একজন ভালো পরিচালক ও।

২০০০ এ গেল রায়, তপন রায় এর বউ, দারুণ একটা লেখা লিখে ছিলেন বাংলা দেশের যুদ্ধের ওপর। সেটা নিয়ে সুরত রায় একটা দারুণ নাটক নামিয়ে দিলেন। সেই নাটকে অভিনয় করেন রাখি চৌধুরী, অনিতা রায়, ধ্বিপতি চন্দ, গৌতম মৌলিক ও আরো অনেকে। সবাই ওই নাটকটা এনজয় করেছিল। নাটকটা হলো বসন্ত উত্সবে।

২০০২ এ নাটক হলো “বিবাহ বিত্ৰাট”। পরিচালনা করলেন সুরত রায়। নাটকটা হলো পূজোর সময়। দারুণ নাটক। অভিনয়ে ছিলেন সুরত বসু, অনিল চক্রবর্তী, ধ্বিপতি চন্দ, সীমা ব্যানার্জি, তুলি চক্রবর্তী, পৃথা বসু, চিন্ময় ঘোষ, সুধানসু বসু, নিত্য চক্রবর্তী, ভিভেক মুখার্জি, আবু ফাসিউদ্দিন (মিলন) এবং আরো অনেকে। নাটকটা র সব থেকে বড় জিনিস ছিল টিম অওয়ার্ক।

২০০৩ তে পূজোর সময় নাটক হলো সারে চুয়াতর অবলম্বনে একটা হাসির নাটক। বিখ্যাত বাংলা সিনেমা থেকে লেখা লিখে ছিলেন কাবেরী চক্রবর্তী এবং নিত্য চক্রবর্তী। পরিচালনে নিত্য চক্রবর্তী। ওই নাটকে সুরত রায়, সুরত বসু, কাবেরী চক্রবর্তী, সুধানসু বসু দারুণ অভিনয় করেছিলেন। আরো যারা সঙ্গে ছিলেন তারা হলেন সীমা ব্যানার্জি, তুলি চক্রবর্তী, পৃথা বসু, সৌমিত্র ব্যানার্জি, ফণী চক্রবর্তী, পার্থ পাল, রাজ রায়, প্রতিক লাহিড়ি আবু ফাসিউদ্দিন (মিলন) এবং আরো অনেকে। নাটকটা সবাই এনজয় করেছিলেন।

এর পর বাঘের নাটক আর বিশেষ কিছু করা হয়ে উঠলনা। সেই সময় গুলোতে বাঘ আর একটা বেঙ্গলি

সংস্থা "পরিচয়" কে আমন্ত্রণ জানায় বাঘের পূজো তে নাটক করার জন্যে ।

গত বছর ২০০৯ এ আবার ২২ বছর আগের করা নাটক "ভজ গৌরাঙ্গ কথা" করার কথা হলো এবং আমরা আবার সেই নাটকটাই ২০০৯ এর পূজো করলাম । সুরত বসু কে পাওয়া গেলনা তাই ওনার রোল টা আমাকেই করতে হলো । অমিত রায় কে পাওয়া গেলনা তাই সৌমিত্র ব্যানার্জি কে ওনার রোল টা করতে হলো । দীপক দাস কে পাওয়া গেল না সেই রোল টা করলেন আসিস বসু । নতুন তিনটে চরিত্র করলেন সুধানসু বসু, মল্লিকা চ্যাটার্জি এবং সুভাদীপ । সবাই খুব ভালো অভিনয় করে ছিল ।

আমরা কেউই প্রফেশীয়নাল নই নাটকের ব্যাপারে বা গান বাজনা বা নাচের ব্যাপারে । কিন্তু যখন আমরা কিছু করি সেটা কে অনেক চেষ্টা করে প্রায় প্রফেশীয়নাল পর্যায় নিএ যাই । কিন্তু আমাদের একটা ভুল শুধরে নিতে হবে এবার । আমাদের উত্তরসূরী আমরা তৈরী করতে পারিনি । আমাদের পূর্বসূরী বা আমরা যখন এলাম এদেশে, সামাজিক কারণেই হোক আর কাজের চাপেই হোক আমাদের ছেলে মেয়েদের আমাদের নিজের ভাষা সম্পর্কে সচেতন রাখতে পারিনি । তাই বাঘ যে পর পর অনেক গুলো বছর নাটক করতে পারছে না তার একটা প্রধান কারণ আমরা আমাদের উত্তরসূরী কাওকে তৈরী করিনি । ১৯৭০/৮০ র যুগে ১০% বাঙালি চেষ্টা করত যত তারাতারি বাংলাটা ভোলা যায় । আর বাকি ৯০% এর ভুল ধারণা ছিল যে বাড়িতে বাংলা বললে বাচ্চারা সব গুলিয়ে ফেলবে । সেই কারণেই আমাদের ছেলে মেয়েরা "এ, বি, সি, ডি" । কিন্তু বর্তমান গবেষণা প্রমাণ করেছে যে বাচ্চারা ৬ টা ভাষা এক সঙ্গে শিখতে পারে সমান ভাবে । ১৯৯১ এ নিভেদিতা মিত্র সেই সময়ের বাচ্চাদের দিয়ে ডাকঘর নাটক করিয়ে আমাদের সকলের চোখে আগুল দিয়ে দেখাতে চেয়েছিলেন "ওহে বাচ্চাদেরকে সুযোগ দাও । আথেরে আমাদেরই লাভ হবে" । আমরা সে কথা শুনিনি । অল্প বয়সী চরিত্রে অভিনয় করার মত কাউকেই পাওয়া যাবেনা । এখন ৬০ বছর বয়েসে যদি ২৫ বছর বয়েসী সেজে নাচা কোন্দা করি সেটা একটা প্রহসন হয়ে দাঁড়াবে । ভদ্র লোকেরা হয়েত হাত তালি দেবে কিন্তু সেই হাততালি যে আসলে কী সেটা বোঝার মত বুদ্ধি আমাদের থাকা দরকার । যাই হোক, একটা সুখবর হলো আমাদের থেকে যারা বয়েসে ছোট মানে যারা নতুন এসেছে বা কয়েক বছর আগে এসেছে এবং যারা এখন ২০/৩০/বা ৪০ এর ঘরে তারা কিন্তু আমাদের থেকে স্মার্ট । তাদের বেশির ভাগই বাড়িতে বাংলা এ কথা বলে । বাড়িতে রবীন্দ্র ও নজরুল রচনাবলী রাখে । বাচ্চাদের দিয়ে বাংলা নাচ গান কবিতা করায় নিয়মিত ভাবে । আশা করা যায় এই ছেলেমেয়েরা যখন ২০/২২ বছরের হবে তখন তারা তাদের অরিজিন ভালো করে বুঝবে । তারা আর "এ, বি, সি, ডি" হবে না । অন্য কালচার কে সম্মান জানানো এবং সেই কালচার এর কিছুটা নেওয়া সত্যিই ভালো । কিন্তু নিজের জিনিস যদি কিছু না থাকে তবে সেই অন্য কালচার এর লোকেরাই তোমাকে বলবে "সব সময় কী ময়ূরের পালক ই পরে থাকবে হে বাঙালি" ।



Reminiscences of Cultural Programs Under the Umbrella of BAGH

Mahua Mukhopadhyay*
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Introduction

Twenty five years ago Bengali Association of Greater Hartford (BAGH) was formed. Throughout the years, there have been many changes and now it is called BAGH, Inc. My family and I moved to Connecticut twenty five years ago. We were fortunate enough to attend BAGH's first Bijoya gathering held in 1985. I remember enjoying that cultural program very much, where our own Mrs. Pranati Chakraborty (Pranati-di) was the main singer and accompanying her on tabla was Dr. Saumitra Banerjee (our very own, Saumitra-da) who is now the President of BAGH, Inc. Unfortunately, I do not remember who else performed with Pranati-di during that program. Since my family and I were very new to the community, I remember wanting to meet the performers.

I, myself, loved to sing and so my personal interest in meeting Saumitra-da was very important at that time and what a journey it has been!

Some Early Performers

Pranati-di was a student of Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh and she often sang his selections from his music. She enthralled our audiences in many programs and everyone, including myself, used to wait for her to go on stage. Whenever Pranati-di sang, Saumitra-da's tabla accompaniment used to reach a different height. I fondly recall Dr. Amal Das's (Amal-da) melodious renditions of Rabindrasangeet and Mr. Amit Ray's (Amit-da) mastery in playing his favorite mouth-organ. They enthralled the audiences many a time.

The year was 1987, when I was asked to perform during Durga puja. I remember the year vividly because my parents were visiting at the time and my younger son, Ranjan, was just a few months old. This was my first performance at a BAGH program. Needless to say, I was very excited and felt honored at being asked to sing. I, along with my husband, Nitis, sang a few songs and Saumitra-da accompanied on tabla. That was the beginning of our long personal association with BAGH, Saumitra-da and its numerous cultural programs.

As my two sons, Shankha and Ranjan, grew older, they also started performing in BAGH's cultural events, primarily during Saraswati Puja. They were both talented and the four of us, the Mukhopadhyay family, had great opportunities to perform in many of our festivities during Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, and Basanta Utsav. As years passed, we included many of our local friends in performing with us, including young children and our two sons.

Cultural Secretaries

The wonderful Cultural Secretaries took their responsibilities very seriously and they worked very hard, just like other committee members. I remember Dr. Sudhangshu Bose (Sudhangshu-da), Saumitra-da, and others wearing Cultural Secretaries' hats a number of times. In the past few years, Mr. Tirthankar Choudhary (Tirthankar-da) has been doing a great job in this regard.



*A long-time associate of BAGH. Few years ago, she held the office of its cultural secretary.

Sound System

Those of us who have performed on-stage know very well how critical it is to be blessed with some great help managing and directing our sound system. Sudhangshu-da, Tirthankar-da, Indrajit (Purkayastha) and others have run this system for many years.

Tirthankar-da continues to setup and run our sound system like a magician. I recall that Sudhangshu-da often sat with the sound system along with the helping hands from younger Kris and Jay (the Bose children).

More Recent BAGH

As BAGH evolved, so did its committees, visions, and views. These things should have changed over time and they did whether one liked the changes or not. Few years ago, the association was registered as a not-for-profit and non-taxable entity. That was a great undertaking. Thanks to the younger confidants for moving this along. This was long overdue.

When such changes were taking place, I once became the Cultural Secretary. During my time in office, I had the opportunity to organize a number of cultural programs where talented young children were the featured artists. Since my sons were very involved, I wanted other children to have the same opportunity to showcase their talent. These children had to be taught to sing Bengali songs and play Bengali songs on their instruments of choice. It was my pleasure to teach these children (who are now all adults) and give them the confidence to perform in front of an audience. These programs were big successes and I enjoyed being a part of their success.

Old Times

I remember at least one occasion when Mrs. Papiya Chanda (Papiya-di) performed Orissi dance. I also recall when Pranati-di led a large group of singers including Dipa (Mrs. Dipa Choudhury) and Dali-di (Mrs. Dali Basu) on-stage. They were the pioneers and no one should forget that they paved the stage for the rest of us that followed.

Our own Payel (Mrs. Antima Chakraborty) was, and still is a talented dancer. I remember waiting for any dance-item performed by Payel and/or her mother, Mrs. Soma Chakraborty (Tuli). Those were simply unbelievable dance recitals. Lucky for us, they also danced to the tune of the live music performed by Nitis, myself and others in our group.

I especially recall a very early encounter with the children's program in 1986. The Riju and Raja (sons of Dr. and Mrs. Asis Das), Babul (son of Dr. and Mrs. Dipak Das), Payel (daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Nitya Chakraborty), and Deboshri (daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Dipak Dey) sang. Shankha accompanied on tabla which was sizably big for him at the time. These children were so small at the time and so serious about their music!



From left to right: Shankha (tabla), Nitis and Mahua, Deboshri, Raja, Babul (keyboard), Antima, and Riju. West Hartford, 1986.

I recall that at one cultural program, Shankha and Dev, son of Dr. and Mrs. Subrato Ray, played violin duet together. It was wonderful seeing the two good friends play their instruments together on stage. I also remember Payel singing during a Saraswati puja program. She was very young, already a great dancer, but she never sang on-stage before. She had to learn a Bengali song and perform flawlessly in front of the audience. Payel was fine. But, I recall how nervous her mother was. In that performance, Payel stole everyone's heart and Tuli became much calmer after Payel finished singing.

In another program, two very young children, Neel and Akaash (sons of Mrs. Abha Mazumdar) sang a few songs. At that time I was their music teacher. I also had the privilege of teaching Tisha (daughter of Mrs. Piyali Srivastava and late Dr. Amitabh Ram). She also performed during many of BAGH's Saraswati Puja programs.



From left to right: Saumitra-da (playing tabla), Shankha (percussion), Nitis and Mahua, Jhumi, and Durga Dutta-Ray. West Hartford, 1986.

I remember enjoying the musical programs of exceptional artists who came from Calcutta. I heard Nirmala Mishra, Banashree Sengupta, Anup Ghosal, Indrani Sen, Alok Roychoudhury, Rezwana Chowdhury Banya, the Barman brothers (Madhu and Gopal), and many others. Without BAGH in place, these kinds of programs would have been impossible to organize.



The Barman brothers (Madhu and Gopal) playing drums with Mahua accompanying on harmonium. BAGH Durga puja, October, 2008

In the year 2001, we began performing on-stage as a large group. The name of our group was Sur-O-Chanda founded by Keya-di (Mrs. Keya Das), Pankaj-da (Late Dr. Pankaj Kumar Das), Nitis and myself. We rehearsed for nearly four months to produce "Ruposi Bangla", a *Geeti Alekhya*. Nitis and I selected and edited the songs appropriately and then threaded them with poetry of Tagore, Jibananando, Shakti, and others. At that time, our group of singers included Keya-di, Jhumi (Mrs. Jhumi Ghosh), Pritha-di (Mrs. Pritha Basu), Dipankar-da (Dr. Dipankar Mukherjee), Milan (Dr. Abu Fasihuddin).

Kaberi-di (Mrs. Kaberi Chakraborty), Chinmoy (Dr. Chinmoy Ghosh), and Pankaj-da recited the parts that connected the songs. Several children including Probal (son of Mr. and Mrs. Pradip Basu), Piku (son of Dr. and Mrs. Chinmoy Ghosh), Farah (daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Abu Fasihuddin), Shankha, Ranjan, took part with great enthusiasm and interest.

We followed “Ruposi Bangla” by another *Geeti Alekhya*, “Jibaner Jalshaghare”. That was also well-received by our friends and the Bengali community. My sons are now adults and they no longer perform in BAGH programs. Now we enjoy watching the children of new and younger couples get up on stage and perform. It seems it was only a few years ago that our sons and some of their friends were on stage!



The *Mukhopadhyay family* performing during Saraswati puja at Connecticut Valley Hindu Temple, Middletown, February 1992. From left to right: Shankha (violin), Ranjan (percussion), Mahua (harmonium) and Nitis (tabla).

It is so wonderful that Sudhangshu-da has picked up saxophone. His sincerity and devotion to music is something that we should all try to emulate. Over the years, BAGH has invited the talented group of musicians and literary figures from the Greater New Haven area to entertain our audience here in the Greater Hartford area. They have always been our great friends and compatriots. Their Porichoy group has and continues to have many talented singers including Ratna-di (Mrs. Ratna Mukherjee) and Shanta (Mrs. Shanta Nag). The children’s group from Porichoy have also performed wonderful segments with music, dance, and plays.

More Recent

Now, there are many talented children in this area with enthusiastic parents. The names of Shibani (Mrs. Shibani Bandyopadhyay), Mallika (Dr. Mallika Ghosh), and host of others come to mind as leaders who continue to produce high-quality children’s cultural programs, especially during BAGH’s Saraswati Puja festivities. The little and not-so-little talents are our hopes in the future. Therefore, I urge their parents to continue to help in guiding their unbound energy in order to foster their cultural interests.

In the last few years, one young dancer has caught everyone’s attention. I am talking about, Riaa, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Vivek Mukherjee. Her mother, Rina (Mrs. Deboshri Mukherjee) is in her own right an accomplished singer and dancer. But, within her cohort, Riaa is an unbelievable star. She is very young, but she is a star in our eyes. Thank you, Riaa, for entertaining us through some serious dance routines.

More Thoughts

When I think of local cultural programs, I will be nowhere without BAGH’s help and support. Now, numerous younger parents are here and they are trying their very best to uphold our traditional culture through their children. I believe that must be the focal point of BAGH’s future initiatives. Perhaps,

a small-scale music school is in order. Perhaps a small-scale library is in order to cater to our future cultural needs and upbringing.

It is well understood that local artists are not always the “draw”, but these artists form the local blood-line. Local children are more likely to learn and sustain the values of our cultural heritage by watching local artists perform. Local talents, children or not, must be nurtured locally. BAGH has an important role to lead here and provide everyone a kind of organized structure to stream-line and enhance the local children’s needs to uphold the flag of our wonderful heritage.



Left panel: From left to right, Saumitra-da (tabla), Mahua, Debanjan Bhattacharjee (percussion) and Nitis (manjira). Right panel: From left to right, Anishaa (Riaa), and Rina (Deboshri) dancing with the live music. Durga puja, October, 2008.

Some Conclusions

BAGH has helped support the production and staging of a number of exceptional plays. I am not qualified to add a discourse on that topic. Our own Nitya (Dr. Nitya Chakraborty), Kaberi-di, Sudhangshu-da, Subrata-da (Dr. Subrata Ray), and Ranta-di (Mrs. Ratna Ray), among host of other extremely talented friends and actors, are infinitely more qualified than me to highlight BAGH’s initiatives in this regard. Nitya has written a brief but wonderful account on these pages of our magazine.

During BAGH’s grand festivities, the religious hymn, pujas, the music, the dance, the smell of food and new saris, the dresses, the glitter of new jewelries – everything ends at some point. What stands out and stays around for a very long time is this magazine itself. BAGH’s Durga Puja Souvenir Magazine has always filled a crucial niche for authors and artists, both locally and beyond. In another twenty five years, we will have on hand, the last fifty years’ magazines. What a rich and useful history that will be to make, preserve, and then move forward with!

To all my younger friends and many newcomers, I should add that sometimes you may feel a little left out of the big picture. Sometimes, you may even entertain a thought such as “How is it that they are doing everything, and we are invisible nobodies.” Twenty five years ago, when I, with my family, first moved to Connecticut, we felt the same way. It is always hard to crack open an existing organization, especially an organization that is 25 years old now. I understand the frustration. But, from my own experience, I may just tell you this: There is no “they” here, instead, it is all “us”. Become a member of BAGH, get involved, let your opinions be heard, attend BAGH’s General Body meetings. You may not see changes tomorrow, but you will see changes as the years go by, I guarantee it.

This year, Nitis and I have been asked to perform at the puja program again. Since this is BAGH’s 25th year, it will be our pleasure and honor to entertain our friends and new members of the Bengali community. Along with Rina, Gopal-da (Mr. Gopal Das), and Saumitra-da, we will have a wonderful time entertaining our friends and others. I sincerely hope that this culture continues for another twenty-five years and we see many new performers on stage. In conclusion, I say thank you to BAGH and our great community in letting me and my family to become an integral part of this rich heritage. It has been a wonderful, and sometimes challenging, journey. But, I will not change a thing even if I could.

পিছুদেখা

সোমা চক্রবর্তী (তুলি)*
ফার্মিংটন, কানেকটিকাট

বাগের পূজোর পচিশ হলো ডঙ্কা বাজিয়ে,
"মা" দুর্গা আসেন আবার দোলা সাজিয়ে ।
সাজ সাজ রব চারদিকে তাই জেগে ওঠার পালা,
একসাথে সব জড়ো হয়ে আনন্দেরই মেলা ।
প্রনাম জানাই তাদের প্রতি যাদের জন্য আজ,
বাগ বাজালো পচিশের এই সার্থকেরই শাঁখ ।
মনে পরে প্রথম যখন বিদেশেতে আসি,
দুর্গা পূজো স্মরণ করে মনটা ওঠে কাদি ।
সবাই বলে মনটা কেন খারাপ করো, তুলি
বিদেশ বলে আমরা কি আর "মা" কে আছি তুলি?
ওমা! তাইতো, গিয়ে দেখি একি অবাক কথা-
শতক যোজন দূরে এ যে মিলন সেতু বাঁধা ।
চার্টার্ড-দা ব্যস্ত বড়ো "মা" কে নিয়ে তথা
কৃষ্ণা-দি, তো তটস্থ তাই যোগান দিতে সদা ।
দীপা, রত্না, পৃথা, হীরু, গীতা, শূখী মিলে,
ফল কাটার-ই দায়িত্ব নেয় আনন্দেরে তুলে ।
অনিতাদি প্রনতিদি পাপিয়াদি বসে,
ফুলের ঝুড়ি নিয়ে তারা মালা গাঁথে হেসে ।
স্টেজের উপর "মা" কে ঘিরে শোলার সাজের সাজ,
শুনতে পেলাম এসব আমার সুদেষ্ণা-দির কাজ ।
মাঘের গাঘের গহনা শাড়ির মন ভোলানো রূপ,
সবই মোদের ডালি দিদির হাতের কাজের গুন ।

শ্যামলীদি, কাবেরিদি আর নিবেদিতা মিলে,
প্রসাদ বাটে সবার ভরে আপন পর তুলে ।
ক্ষিপতি, অনিল, দীপক, মনো-দাদা মিলে,
রাগাঘরের খিচুড়িতে মনটা দিল চেলে ।
তার-ই পাশে আছে আমার গেল-দিদিরই কিচেন,
পিচ্ছা, পাস্তা, ব্রাউনি নিয়ে বাচ্ছাদের এই হেভেন ।
চাটনিতে নেই কেউ তো আজ সীমা দিদির জুড়ি,
কেয়া দিদির উদার হাসি মনটাকে দেয় ভরি ।
শিব-দা বসে সঙ্গে নিয়ে হিসেবেরই খাতা,
সঙ্গ যোগায় সুধানশু আর ফনী দাদায় তথা ।
মাইক পেয়ে মহা খুশি মোদের সৌমি-দাদা,
আওভান দেয় জনগনে দিতে কিছু চাঁদা ।
সন্ধ্যা বেলার অনুর্তানে সুরতদের খেলা,

দুজন মিলেই স্টেজকে মাতায়, কাউকে না যায় ফেলা ।
তারই সাথে নায়ক রূপে সৌমি-দাদার ট্রিক,
পটলি-রূপি অর্পিতা-কে হেলায় করলো টিট ।
যার জন্য সান্ধ্য-নাটক পেল জয়-জয়কার,
সে তো মোদের সবার প্রিয় নিত্য ডিরেক্টর ।
স্টেজের পাশে আছেন সজাগ তপন দাদা তীর্থ
লাইট সাউন্ড যাদের ছাড়া এক্কেবারেই ব্যর্থ ।
কল্যাণ আর দীপঙ্করদা বড়ই শান্তশিষ্ট.
কাজটি তাদের দ্বারের কাছে সবে আওভান সুমিষ্ট ।
যাদের কথা স্মরণ করে চোখটি ভরে জলে
প্রনাম জানায় পঞ্চজদা শ্রী-রাম আর ইরানি-দির ভরে ।

এই তো ছিল বাগের শুরু, এলো পরে যারা,
জয়পতাকা হাতে নিয়ে জোরকদমে তারা,
করছে বহন মোদের প্রানের ঐতিহ্য ধারা -
উত্সাহ দিই তাদের ভরে, রইলো আশীস ধারা.....



*A very talented actress, dancer, and a long-time associate of BAGH.



Collage 2



(1)



(4)



(2)



(5)



(3)



(6)

(1)-(3): BAGH's 2008 Durga puja, Saturday,
October 11 night.

(4)-(6): BAGH's 2008 Durga prastima decoration
on Friday, October 2 night.

Jainism and Jainness

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1. Introduction

'Namo Arihantanam'

This is the first line of the fundamental prayer of Jains that says 'I pay my profound respect to any living person who has conquered his/her inner enemies (or his/her own lower nature)'. This is irrespective of the religion, caste or social status of the individual.

Jainism is derived from the word *Jina* in the old Indian language of *Ardha Magadhi* which was the common language in some parts of India 2,500 years or so ago - the word *Jina* means 'the person who is a spiritual victor' and Jainism is now taken to mean the religion followed by Jains. However, to emphasize the path followed towards self-conquest rather than the religion, we will understand Jainism as *Jainness*. Indeed, the greeting used by Jains is *Jai Jinendra* which means 'honour to the supreme Jina'.

Loosely speaking, Jainism was founded by those who are referred to as *Tirthankaras*. Tirthankaras are the people who show the true way across the troubled ocean of life; they are leaders on a spiritual path. In all, there were 24 Tirthankaras. The first of them was Rishabha.

Rishabha flourished ages ago according to Jain tradition, but the historicity of the religion has been unanimously accepted from the time of its 23rd Tirthankara, Parsva, about 2,800 years ago (traditionally dated 872 BC-772 BC). The Jain logic and philosophy came into prominence at the time of its 24th Tirthankara, Mahavira (Mahavir Swami), who was born in 599 BC and whose nirvana took place in 527 BC. He was a contemporary of Gautama Buddha (563 BC – 483 BC), the overlap being 36 years, *but* they did not meet. One of the great admirers of the Jain religion was Mahatma Gandhi who was greatly influenced by certain Jains, such as Srimad Raychandbhai.

2. Main Characteristics

The most important principle of Jainism is that of non-violence in thought and deed, not only towards fellow human beings but even the smallest forms of life. Thus, most followers are vegetarians, avoiding even honey and alcohol, which are believed to contain microscopic life.

Truthfulness, refraining from stealing, and moderation in acquiring personal possessions and in sexual passions are other important facets. Meditation and general self-control also form a part of Jainism.

Jains do not believe in any external God who created and sustains the world, neither do they believe in any means of redemption outside themselves. The individual has to achieve his own salvation by right faith, right knowledge, and right conduct.



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Salvation/*Moksa* is believed to terminate the cycle of births and deaths and reincarnation, when the soul is finally liberated to eternal bliss and infinite knowledge.

Amongst themselves, there is no single leader such as a pope, neither has any person supreme authority. However, there are monks and certain teachers and lay leaders who are given particular respect. There are many scriptures but no single book like the Bible. However, Umasvati's *Tattvartha-sutra* (second century CE) is the most comprehensive single treatise on Jainism (for a standard translation, see Tatia, 1994).

Notwithstanding these aids, however, the individual must ultimately find the truth for himself as no priest or scripture is believed to have all the answers. The principles are intended to be self-verifying, so that the follower discovers truths for himself rather like a researcher in a laboratory.

Amongst the Jains, there are a few different schools. The main schools are 'Digambara' and 'Svetambara'. Both believe in idol-worship. However, their idols differ; in Svetambara, eyes, lips and torso are marked. The Digambara believes that their monks should renounce everything, even their clothes, whereas Svetambara monks wear white clothes.

3. The Karmons

Einstein (1940) said that

*Religion without science is blind,
Science without religion is lame.*

Jainism is a religion with science. Every aspect of Jainism is based on understanding the cosmos, and the living and non-living entities in it. Modern science is capable of illuminating part of the truth. It explains matter in terms of forces and small particles. Electricity, through electrons, gives rise to light in the room; radio-waves, through electric-magnetic forces, result in sound on a loudspeaker and so on. Jainism explains life through the interaction of such invisible small particles and the soul. The small particles are *Karmic Particles* or *Karmons* and they create a *Karmic Force*. We keep on absorbing these karmons through activity, and throw some out after their effect has taken place. Thus, the soul has a *Karmic Computer* attached to it. This personal karmic computer keeps all the records - it also dictates some tasks from previous records, that is, past lives.

4. The Four Axioms

Jain *Dharma* (righteousness) has developed through many centuries and has provided a rich inheritance of universal thinking/philosophy on a scientific basis, which means many Jain concepts have more relevance now than ever before. However, the ancient Jain texts are written in an obscure technical language that makes them almost impenetrable to modern times. Some of the concepts are very deep and to us now it is surprising that these could have been propounded in a non-scientific era. To interpret in a concise way what is written in Sanskrit and Prakrit needs a quantum leap. However, the need to re-interpret the concept is extremely urgent so as to make it palatable to the present generation and the generations to come.

These points have led to Four Noble Truths (*Chatvari Arya Satya*) of Jains or Axioms, first published in Mardia (1990) has attempted to explain Jain science, logic, and philosophy in terms of modern concepts and ideas. A penetrating review of this book can be found in Chandaria (2003). These Axioms give the basis of Jain way of life through Jain science in the language of today. Some truths along these lines are necessary to keep our perspective clear in this turbulent modern world.

The Four Axioms show the gradual evolution to the central aim to become a *siddha*, that is, to achieve *moksha* (enlightenment). These are:

1. 'The soul exists in contamination with karmic matter and it longs to be purified.'
2. 'Living beings differ due to the varying density and types of karmic matter.'
3. 'The karmic bondage leads the soul through the states of existences (cycles).'
4. (A): 'Karmic fusion is due to perverted views, non-restraint, carelessness, passions and activities.'
4. (B): 'Violence to oneself and others results in the formation of the heaviest new karmic matter, whereas helping others towards Moksa with positive non-violence results into the lightest new karmic matter.'
4. (C): 'Austerity forms the karmic shield against new karmons as well as setting the decaying process in the old karmic matter.'

5. Commentary

Axioms 1-3 set out the science of the soul, and the three parts of Axiom 4 give their Jain applications. The foundation of Jainism starts from the first Axiom that believes in the existence of karmic particles or *karmons*; these are unusual elementary particles in the sense that they interact with the soul. That is, Jainism explains life through the interaction of such small invisible atomic particles and the soul.

Invisible particles such as photons, which give light, became known only at the beginning of the last century. So, it is surprising that *Tirthankaras* could propound such a concept of 'spiritual photons' so many centuries ago. If karmons are physical particles then it is still a challenge for science to hunt their existence. These particles form what is called karmic matter, which is embedded in the soul, and this matter obscures inherent key properties of soul such as infinite bliss.

The second Axiom implies that this karmic matter is responsible for different species. So, in some sense karmic particles are far more subtle than DNA. It has only now become clear through genomics that there is hardly any difference between DNA/genes in human beings and chimpanzees and many others. There are also questions that prompt a further look into Jain belief and cloning. The Jain belief is that all souls are separate entities, that is, individuals, whereas one feels that cloning would imply a new life can be born. But this is a misunderstanding because cloning only provides a surrogate mother, so the fundamental Jain principle is still valid.

6. Destructive Emotions

This concept in turn leads to an explanation of the cycle of birth and rebirth through the karmic matter (Axiom 3). This karmic process can be stopped and rehabilitated through Jainness. One of the key negatives responsible for (heavy) karmic matter (Axioms 4A, 4B) is *kashaya* (destructive emotions); *kashaya* is composed of Anger (A), Ego (E), Greed (G) and Deceit (D) which has an apt acronym AGED (introduced by Gurudev Chitrabhanu). Indeed, the term *Jain* stands for the one who has conquered these inner enemies. Surprisingly, Albert Einstein's idea of a true religion was as follows (Einstein, 1940):

'... a person who is religiously enlightened appears to me to be one who has, to the best of his ability, liberated himself from the fetters of his selfish desires ...'

There has been considerable work on understanding these emotions in the present time, including the rise of interest in emotional intelligence or EQ (emotional quotient) versus the old intelligence quotient (IQ). One of the key factors in EQ is to achieve emotional intelligence (this is similar to *samvayaktva* or first awakening, the fourth step of the fourteen Jain purification steps called *gunasthana*). One of the key qualities in EQ is empathy, that is, the ability to sense how other people feel and to accept their feelings. We may call it the quality or ability to listen to others without getting carried away by personal emotions, to be able to distinguish between what others do or say, and one's own personal judgments. This is the definition of a *shravak* (a great listener - for the Jain layman).

7. Karmic Stains and Personalities

These *kashayas* are correlated with the colour coding (*leshya* = karmic stain) of the karmic density of soul. Of the six consecutive levels (black, blue, grey, yellow, lotus-pink and luminous white) the first three represent heavier karmic density whereas the next three represent lighter karmic density. In practice, an analogy of picking fruits from a tree is used to classify the degree of colour stain (Scripture: Sthanag Sutra, verses 537 & 538). A person with the first level uproots the tree for its fruits, the second cuts the tree from its trunk, the third cuts a branch, the fourth cuts off a bunch, the fifth plucks ripe fruit from the tree and the sixth (the true Jain) merely picks up ripe fruit fallen to the ground.

8. Jain Logic

To bring rationality into thinking, Jainism has its own system of logic. Jainism believes in the principle of conditional predication (*Syaadvaada*) so that everything is conditioned by our knowledge at a particular time - and there is nothing absolutely known unless the soul is 'perfect' - that is, when the divine quality of *Jainness* is fully developed. Soul with karmic matter is like crude oil compared with petrol; the more refined it is the more power it has. Non-absolutism in thinking is what is recommended in Jainism. This principle operates clearly in scientific research (cf, Karl Popper's system). Also Jain logic recommends relativity in thinking through its holistic principle called *Anekantavaada*.

9. Jainism and the Future

Jain *Dharma* has developed through many centuries and has provided a rich inheritance of universal thinking/philosophy on a scientific basis, which means many Jain concepts have direct relevance now.

In his dialogue, Mahavira said to his disciple Gautama a key message:

'*Ma Pamayae*' (Scripture: Utradhyayana-sutra, chapter 28, verse 35),

which broadly means 'be alert every second whatever you do', that is to have the dynamic awareness as a way of life, and still has clear relevance today. True Jains are eco-warriors whose *Dharma* is to observe and promote ecological values!

We have become insensitive; everything is so packaged that we take the natural resources and their uses for granted. This is a very simple example but it goes into the heart of misuse, wastage, and insensitivity in destroying the world's resources. This, with climate change and terrorism are some evils of the 21st century.

The Scripture/Agam Dasavaikalika (chapter 4, verse 10) makes the following fundamental statement:

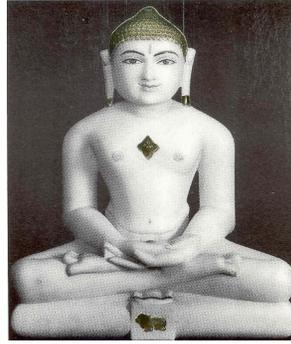
Prathamam jnanam, tato daya,

which says that 'first knowledge, then compassion'; so the emphasis is on the knowledge-based Jainism and ecological values that includes compassion toward every form of life.

10. The Purification Path

To sum up, Jainism believes that time, space, life, non-life (matter) co-exist and will co-exist forever - the universe is self-regulating; life is mainly regulated by karmons unless these are all removed.

How can these be removed? A path of purification is prescribed. It is not easy since Jainism believes existing karmic matter can only be removed (before predetermined duration) through austerity, otherwise the personal karmic computer will keep on accruing karmons. It prescribes self-restraint rather than self-indulgence.



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Furthermore, the person with the highest spiritual level has the total preservation of the environment in the forefront, merely picking the ripe fruit from the ground, and the karmon intake is increased on creating waste and pollution since these are regarded as acts of violence. The cue is taken from ‘the bee that sucks honey in the blossoms of a tree without hurting the blossom, while strengthening itself’.

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Appreciating Gautama Buddha's Blind-Thinking

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1. Introduction

Once upon a time, some 2500 year ago, there was a prince charming in the region of Nepal and North-East India, called Siddhartha Gautama. As he was being trained in all the knowledge and the skills a king should have, like martial arts, politics and managing the subjects, Siddhartha's mind turned into unresolved eternal questions: *what, why* and *how* we are! Concerned parents quickly got him married to a very pretty princess and she remained with the prince charming for the rest of her life but she could not quite get the *happily-ever-after* royal life she was expecting! At the age of about 29, Siddhartha left home and traveled far and wide until he found the answers to his questions and achieved Siddhartha, implied by his name. He came back home, not as the king, but as the enlightened Buddha to help all humanity, recognized in greater India as an incarnation of Vishnu. As is customary for lesser humans all over the world, we make messiahs out of all great thinkers, especially, if they are way ahead of their time in their perception of the real world, irrespective of whether the knowledge relates to spiritual engineering (customarily known as religions), social engineering (known as politics) or nature engineering (known as sciences). This is simply because most of us are mentally lazy and are always looking for quick-fix cook-book recipe from great messiahs! If we can get the answer without much effort, why waste time? Follow the leader and make him a messiah, which then becomes a powerful tool in the hands of the socially privileged class to control the masses by keeping them deprived from learning the deeper platform of knowledge, especially, the process of framing the right questions, which helped the messiahs, in the first place, to figure out the answers.

This article is not devoted to preach Buddhism. It is meant to elucidate Siddhartha's enquiring mind that made him the Buddha. We know that if we do not construct the question properly, we rarely understand the deeper meaning of the answer even when it is given to us as a useful recipe. If the knowledge is congruent to our survival, we just keep on repeatedly using it mechanically, as all other animals also do. But Buddha did reveal the key to his methodology of thinking as an allegorical example. How can a group of people, blind from birth, figure out the process of *visualizing* and *modeling* an elephant that they have never experienced? And, if the elephant is this cosmic universe, how do we figure out how to describe it, understand it and live in harmony in it? How can we consciously construct road-maps for our collectively purposeful life congruent with the cosmo-spheric evolution?

The depth of Buddha's allegorical example can be appreciated only if we try to literally dissect the process by which a group of blind men would figure out how to understand and describe an elephant. Since their visual sensor, the eyes, do not function, they have to use their other bodily sensors like touch, hearing and smell. And then each blind man creates a personal interpretation as to what an elephant might look like. Obviously the interpretations cannot be precisely objective and neither can they be congruent with each other since none of them have ever *seen* an elephant. Somebody *perceived* the elephant as a python (the trunk), while somebody else challenges this interpretation since he *perceives* it as a set of pillars (the legs), etc., etc.



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And the *mean-minded* or the *limited-brain* intellectuals begin to quarrel: My elephant is the real elephant and is definitely better than yours! My image of the cosmic elephant represents the ultimate truth in this universe. Why Buddha (i) underscored blind men, instead of people with perfect vision and (ii) underscored a group of blind men, instead of a single blind person?

1.1. Why analogy with blindness?

First, scientifically speaking, we really do not *see* objective reality as it is around us. Our brain creates the illusion of seeing the outside world with an excellent approximation close to the reality that has been essential for our successful survival and evolution. We see a beautiful three dimensional world around us. In reality, we construct a two dimensional inverted image on the retina and the pixilated image information is sent by the rods and cones to the visual cortex in the back of our head that occupies almost a third of the total brain volume. The highly evolved brain has learned to project an erect, three dimensional image approximately at the right distance and of right size. Those who wear glasses know that the observed image position changes with and without our correction glasses! Or consider the color of the rainbow, or that of the setting sun, or that of a bouquet of beautiful and colorful flowers. Perception of color is a hundred percent *hallucination* that is purposefully created by our brain for our successful evolution to quickly distinguish between food and poison, between threatening and friendly animals, etc. Light that helps us *see* does not possess any objective property that we can call color. Color is a complete *figment of our imagination*! We have three sets of retinal molecules sensitive to the red, green and blue frequencies of light. Our brain synthesizes the color perception out of these three different signals so we can make quick judgments about things around us besides providing us with the faculty of enjoying colorful sceneries and movies! The deeper subtlety is that we are all color-blind relative to each other. While we democratically agree to basic three colors and happily think that the world is really objective and colorful; at the subtle level, our color perceptions are slightly different from each other based on the differences in the density of our rods and cones, the subtle differences in the molecular twists and the differences in our genomic interpretation propensity. We will never know precisely what subtle differences are there in the perception of colors experienced by our friends when we are looking at the same painting by a great master! Fortunately, we do not normally start digging into it and start quarreling about it.

Buddha needed to construct a story with people who are totally visually impaired to bring home the depth of problem behind our *normal thinking*! Buddha realized that the key psychological problem in human thinking arises from the very success of our imaginative brain that has become so efficient that it sees only that limited amount of information which is necessary for our efficient survival; but a very complex real world is out there deliberately neglected by the brain. Buddha was asking us to nurture our normal thinking to go deeper and visualize the invisible realities. This was a remarkable forward thinking and realization by Buddha some 2500 years ago when nobody had any ideas about the formation of inverted images on the retina and about rods and cones in the retina, and forget about their frequency selective sensitivities to red, green and blue frequencies of light and their imaginative interpretation by the visual cortex in the back of our head! Even today we are really *blind* as far as we are concerned about seeing the precise objective reality around us!

1.2. Why analogy with a group of blind people?

That persistent debate among diverse serious thinkers facilitates the creation of a better and yet evolving model of the objective reality of the universe we live in, was well appreciated by the intellectuals of Vedic and Upanisadic scholars, dating back perhaps some six thousand years. Debate was a part of the routine culture in those days and women philosophers were not rare. Buddha also encouraged that tradition and the modern Buddhists follow that tradition. Vedic scholars fully appreciated that no single individual can fathom the complete reality of the evolving cosmic universe

and hence the acceptance of, not just tolerance to, diversity was considered a key tool for continuous progress. Under this context it is easy to recognize why Buddha's allegorical example incorporates a group of blind men, rather than a single person. Is the elephant really like a python (the trunk), or is it like four pillars (the legs), or is it like a pair of spears (the tusks), or is it like a thick rope (the tail), etc., etc. Every serious observer captures some truth about the real world, but nobody can capture all the truth all the time under all circumstances. So, Buddha's blind men needed to sit down together, compare their notes and then collectively try to imagine (visualize) a living animal by bringing some conceptual continuity among the diverse images perceived separately, while imposing some logical congruence among all of them required by a living animal. Eureka! *An image closely resembling a real elephant emerges. This is the genetic root behind the intellectual power of many Indians to bring unity out of diversity!* Diversity is not just an expedient political slogan; it is at the very root of our successful evolution! Evolution is collective, not individualistic, irrespective of how hard the Western societies try to sell individualism. Everybody must be nurtured to maximize their individual potential, but within the context of collective well being for our sustainable evolution.

It is a telling story that a giant thinker, like Buddha, whom we have made a messiah, have tried to empower our thinking capacity by asking us to think like blind men while collaborating collectively. If he thought that a few individuals like him can and had mastered all the knowledge of the universe, he would have asked us to become Buddhas by relinquishing the material world. His allegorical story tells us that we must be continuously vigilant that we do not freeze the evolution of human minds by accepting any individual's truth as the final truth!

2. What Is the Connection Between the Blind-Thinking Promoted by Buddha and That Practiced by the Modern Societies?

It is clear from above discussions that all of our knowledge is organized based on limited information about the universe that we can gather from our sensors and instruments with their limited capacity and our limited interpretations. Yet, in every field of well organized human knowledge systems, we have declared and accepted some messiahs based on their outstanding contributions, which must not be challenged! Let us quickly review the current status of several critically important fields of human endeavors that we now consider prides of modern human civilization. We will recognize that we must replace our *modern blind-thinking* by *Buddhist blind-thinking*!

2.1. Current cultures, concepts and theories threaten our very sustainability

2.1.1. Limits of current economic theories

“Successful” capitalist system is driven by continuous growth and exploitation & control of nature. But the biosphere is driven by punctuated sustainable evolution through cycling and recycling everything. Our economic system must learn to adopt and adapt to this 100% recycling system. The alternate is to court human extinction. We still have not fathomed the deeper working rules behind the very complex biospheric system. Our scientific and engineering knowledge is still very far from proactively creating and nurturing any alternate biosphere to keep us alive. We certainly have not mastered the terra-forming technologies. In the past, Capitalism meant control and management of finance capital to create profit for the owner of the capital by producing socially congruent goods and services. Thus, in spite of exploitation of human labor and natural resources (biospheric capital), there was a tacit understanding that Capitalism serves the overall greater good and collective well being of the human society. Now the key *purpose* of Capitalism has become maximizing the profit for the capital owners, not necessarily for the production of goods and services that are clearly congruent with sustainable evolution of the humans and the biosphere.

Supporting greater social good and promoting collective well being are no longer underscored in major business schools even though they are essential for our sustainability. The “best and the brightest” are heavily incentivized to constantly invent and improvise newer “financial instruments” that are beyond the controlling laws in the Government books, while mocking at them with the motto “greed is good” with great pride!

While capital has now become the key tool to control wealth production systems, the real wealth (real goods and real services) is created by entrepreneurs, supported by the workers and managers. Thus, modern successful society must consciously and selectively nurture and empower Entrepreneurs and Entrepreneurism, while keeping under control the forces that hold and manipulate the finance capital to make money out of money without producing any real goods and services. About 40% percent of US corporate profits are created by simply manipulating the financial instruments, rather than producing real goods and services! These symbolic *digital* profits are the key tools to siphon off the real value out of the real goods and services created by the middle class and the lower echelon people.

2.1.2. Limits of current political ethics

Socio-politico-economic-system is still under the control of less than 1% of the tribal leaders just as it was 100 thousand years ago, or even deeper past. Over the millennia, only the names of the ruling systems have been changing while the sophistication of the brainwashing methodology has been intensified to control the free-will of the human masses, starting from early childhood, beginning with parents, then schools and finally the socio-politico-economic system, using the tool of fear for our survival. Private wealth, whether accumulated by force or by “Golden” rules enforced by the “Gold Owners”, is still controlling the governments around the world, just as it had in ancient times. Physical and mental well being of well over 50% of humans are challenged daily as they are forced to live on a subsistence level like animals through sustained daily toils without time to reflect on social issues as humans should. In a Knowledge Age, even business leaders will agree that this is a very unproductive use of many billions of potentially creative minds.

2.1.3. Limits of current social ethics

Even though we have advanced ourselves into the Knowledge Age, globally more and more people are steadily falling into the group, “wealth and knowledge have-nots”, creating definite grounds for serious political disruptions and instabilities. Current terrorism is just a child’s play compared to what may come if we continue to believe that “financial might is right”. Asymmetric warfare is not winnable by exerting “political will” along the same line of philosophy that “our model” of socio-economic system is the “ultimate and best” system. Our evolution is collective at the very molecular root of DNA formation. Pure individualism and the neglect of the well being of the masses are counter to sustainable evolution. The entire living biosphere is a collective and inter-dependent system.

2.1.4. Limits in current model of battling infectious diseases

Staggering financial successes behind all pharmaceutical industries lies dominantly with the philosophy of killing the bacteria. But many of these bacteria become resistant to any medicine we can make within weeks. The very philosophy is counterproductive. We are ignoring that our body thrives symbiotically and synergistically with 100 trillion bacteria and microbes of different kinds, 10 times more in number than the number of our own human body cells! If bacteria, with 3.5 billions of years’ of maturity, were really “out to get us”, they could have done so long time ago. The epistemology of killing bacteria, while our own bodies thrive on symbiosis and synergy with trillions of them, is counterproductive epistemology. The focus of the current human culture, dictated by the system to make profits, is on allowing diseases to thrive, not on promoting the knowledge on how everybody can live a balanced and healthy life naturally!

2.1.5. Limits of current epistemology of Physics

Purest of the sciences, physics has been focused for centuries just to model what we can observe or measure, rather than understanding and visualizing the invisible interaction processes that give rise to the measurable transformations. Interpreters of Quantum Mechanics, dominating the current knowledge gate of physics, are very sure that attempts to visualize the invisible interaction processes between electrons, protons and neutrons, are forever beyond human imaginations and human modeling capabilities. The claim is that they have already constructed and defined the final edifice of science. Future generations can only discover pieces of *stones* that must exactly fit into this already constructed edifice. This epistemology has forced many to promote mystical concepts like springing up of *multiple universes* after every quantum mechanical interactions set by a human, which are beyond verification by our current stretch of engineering imaginations! In spite of staggering advancements in our technologies utilizing knowledge created by physics, its century old epistemology will eventually slow down the progress of technology unless we focus our attention to model the invisible interaction processes (recall Buddha's blind-thinking). It is by emulating the processes behind natural phenomena that we create new technologies to assure our sustainable evolution.

2.1.6. Limits of present religions in guiding societies

Minority right-wings of all major religions are successfully wedging divisiveness among global population rather than bringing spiritual convergence and harmony, essential for our collective well being! Moderate majority is afraid to speak out against the self-declared representatives of their gods. When we accept any human organized body of knowledge as the final and inviolable ultimate truth, whether meant for complex social engineering or nature's technological engineering, we consciously court the freezing of our mental and material evolution. Such cultural behavior is not congruent with our sustainable evolution.

2.1.7. Limit of the life of our Sun

Our social strategies do not appear to be congruent with our desire to keep on evolving forever. We may delay the "Global Warming" by some changes in our behavioral economics, but the insurmountable "Solar Warming" is coming to dry up the earth in about one billion years! We must learn to proactively nurture our biosphere now to buy time, while preparing for terra-forming other planets of our Solar system and then in other stars to assure continued human evolution in some other planets.

2.1.8. Limit of purposeless evolution of humans

The magnificent cosmo-sphere and the biosphere are evolving in a remarkably orderly and creative fashion. We are evolving inside this vast physical domain but keeping our minds totally rapped under our limited, narrow-vision cultural domain. We raise our children to develop some specific purpose for their lives. But, have we ever defined a collective purpose for the evolution of the human species? Should we? Can we? Or, will we grow more divisive and become Knowledge Age Neanderthals? We cannot keep on evolving forever and become successful space travelers without a *collective endeavor guided by some collective purpose*, which itself must keep on evolving!

It is high time for us to replace our *modern blind-thinking* by *Buddhist blind-thinking* to assure our sustainable evolution!

[Second part of this article contains a brief segment taken from the following published article, *The consilient epistemology: structuring evolution of logical thinking*, by C. Roychoudhuri (2010, *Proc. 1st Interdisciplinary CHESS Interactions Conf.*, pp. 273-295. World Scientific: London].

Practicing Dharma: Our Living Durgas and the Course of Herstory

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Durga puja is remarkable because it claims *public* space for celebrating female personification of strength and valor. When the *sarbojanin* worship of this manifestation of Brahman was popularized in the 19th century, it was intentionally set up outside the private spaces of temples and homes to break the caste/class/gender hierarchies that structure many forms of worship. This worship of a deity in her public role restoring dharma on earth, who is yet a beloved daughter tied to us through bonds of love, implicitly and explicitly calls us to transgresses this private/public (e.g., men's achievements in the "real" world vs. women's caring, support at home) divide that seems to shape much of our thinking and practice. Durga puja behooves us to venerate those who have worked to restore dharma to homes and public spheres. In this essay I attempt to follow this dictum by reflecting on the achievements of some remarkable women, who, oddly, seem to have vanished, or have grown very dim, in our collective memories. Most of our children in the diasporas have not heard about these women, many sections of Indians have not heard of them either. So, in the spirit of puja, I recall some remarkable herstories that remind us the Durga puja is not a matter of episodic celebration, but, rather, a set of principles to guide how we compose our lives.

Durga puja is celebrated in Fall (*sharat kaal*); the United Nations (UN) was established around this time, on October 24, 1945. Then, in 1948, this body instituted a revolutionary document that, in my mind, enacts the lessons of Durga Puja in our daily lives. Sixty two years ago, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was written emphasizing that each individual, irrespective of where she or he was geographically located — in colonial territories, dictatorships, kingdoms or democracies — were entitled to socio-political-economic-cultural rights that would enable her/him to live a life of dignity. Two sets of social atrocities drove the people and nations to write this document: the holocaust of the Jews, Roma, LGBT people in areas ruled by the Nazis, *and* the atrocities committed by colonial governments on their subjects around the world under the guise of civilizing missions. At the conclusion of the second World War, as the United Nations was formed, nations and their representatives as well as social justice groups and their leaders came together to craft a set of principles that would recognize the inherent humanity of all human beings, and try to assure them socio-political-economic-cultural conditions that would allow them to build lives of dignity.¹

Initially, the discussions on human rights were part of the discussions in the General Assembly of the United Nations. Later the Human Rights Commission was formed to create a formal charter on human rights. In both of these bodies were two remarkable Indian women, who challenged racism and argued for women's



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¹ The full text of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is available at: www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml

rights, the two most significant adharmic practices we have faced over hundreds of years, and, sadly, continue to face today.

The Indian representative to the UN General Assembly, in 1946, was Vijay Lakshmi Pandit. Sadly, many people only remember her as a sister of Jawaharlal Nehru (the first Prime Minister of India). Yet Vijay Lakshmi Pandit was not only a remarkably effective voice of conscience at the UN, in 1953 she was elected as the President of the United Nations' General Assembly. I was reminded of Vijay Lakshmi Pandit's remarkable international achievement a few years ago when I had the honor of talking to Ahmed Kathrada, one of Nelson Mandela's brothers-in-struggle, who also served twenty seven years in prison for his anti-apartheid activities in South Africa. Kathrada recalled that for groups that were struggling against harsh racist rules with very few opportunities to bring their situation to the attention to the international community, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit vocal and public denunciation of apartheid at the UN;² was a very significant event. Students of Indian history might trace the historical lineage of Pandit's denunciation to Gandhi and South African Indian activism. However, Vijay Lakshmi Pandit *made* apartheid an international issue, even though the US, Britain, and Canada actively supported the white South African government. The political space that she opened up in this international body by denouncing racism and apartheid was quickly taken up by many groups around the world including the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the United States³. This international spotlight was strong enough that countries like South Africa, United States, Britain, France and Canada, later joined by the USSR, fearing that other marginalized groups would bring their grievances to this international platform, put pressure on their representatives — e.g., Eleanor Roosevelt for the US — to lobby for the *principles* of human rights, instead of supporting a binding commitment.⁴

Vijay Lakshmi Pandit's profile includes many other remarkable achievements, but this role alone, that she brought world attention to apartheid, and persisted against the might of some of the most powerful governments on earth, is a remarkable contribution to the eradication of one of the most persistent human evils of our time — the *adharma* of racism and apartheid. Those of us who live in the US should especially remember her forever with reverence. The Civil Rights struggle in the US, coupled with this international spotlight on racism and apartheid from the end of the 1940s, led, ultimately, to the rescinding of the Asian Migration ban that had been passed in the US in 1917, enabling many of us to migrate to this country, in large numbers, after 1965.

But the crafting of UDHR engaged the energy of another Durga — Hansa Mehta. Sarojini Naidu had inducted Hansa Mehta into the movement for women's rights in India, but Hansa Mehta quickly charted her own revolution by marrying a man of a lower caste, writing incessantly about women's property rights and education rights, joining the nationalist struggle and standing for elected seats in local governments. When the Human Rights Commission was formed in the UN, one of the members was Hansa Mehta. Hansa Mehta was very active in reminding the commission about the need to enshrine women's human rights in this declaration. The view of most of the members at that time was that references to men's rights included women, so there was no need to additionally mention women in the UDHR. Mehta is credited, along with the commissioner from the Dominican Republic, Minerva Bernardino, for the gender-neutral language in the UDHR, as well as the specific mention of the "rights of men and women" in the Preamble. Since many of us have gotten used to gender-neutral language, Mehta's achievement may not appear to be remarkable in the

² Mr. Kathrada has written about her in his Memoirs. See Ahmed Kathrada, *Memoirs*, (2004), Cape Town, South Africa: Zebra Press, p.51.

³ See Paul Lauren, *The International Evolution of Human Rights* (2004). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁴ These countries succeeded in adding a qualifier to the UDHR that human rights would be subject to the national security concerns of states.

21st century.⁵ But women's rights is a subject that garners significant lip-service, while it is marked by relatively slow progress in enacting legislations and safeguards to ensure women are able to live lives of dignity, not as dependents in the eyes of laws or to their families, but in their own right as human beings. The barriers to ensuring women's human rights is clear when we examine two sets of information. CEDAW, the convention on the elimination of discrimination against women — which centrally raises questions about routine violence against women and discrimination in education, jobs, health, property rights, political representation — was finally formalized in 1979, decades after UDHR. The US and India signed onto the CEDAW in 1980. India ratified it in 1993. The US is still to ratify it. So, the issue of women's rights that Hansa Mehta raised six decades ago remains relevant today.

The his/herstory of the struggle for human rights does not begin or end with these two remarkable women. Indeed, these women were products of a longer struggle for women's rights in the India. The Indian movements for women's rights were underway in parts of India, especially Bengal by the turn of the 20th century. Sarojini Naidu was claiming rights for women in the language of human rights by 1905 as she urged Indians, especially young men, to support the right of women to get an education. A dazzling array of leaders and activists for women's rights — for instance, the women who organized the *mahila siplamelas* to open up opportunities for women's economic independence in the late 19th century, Sarala Debi Chowdhurani, who organized local women's organizations in Bengal and then the first national women's group Bharat Stree Mahamandal in 1910, Basanti Debi, Sarojini Naidu, Margaret Cousins, Dorothy Jinrajadasa of the Women's Indian Association, the women of the All-India Women's Conference — are but a few of the thousands of women who actively organized for the cause of women's rights, especially her right to education, suffrage, freedom from violence, health, right to own property, right not to be married off as children, and overall status within family and society.

But this linking of Durga puja to women's activism is not simply about retelling past histories, though these are important for us to remember. Let us consider some Durga's of our times who struggle against adharma. An abiding lesson of Durga puja is that we are an indivisible part of a larger whole — Brahman — and understanding our connections to animals, birds — *bahans* — and plants, earths and waters, is part of our *manava dharma*. Surely then, the Chipko activists, Vandana Shiva (of Navdanya) and Medha Patkar (of the Narmada Bachao movement) are reminding us of the same lesson, linking us to our natural environment, reminding us of the struggles of those who are being disposed through large-scale development projects, our soil, air, water in jeopardy. Durga puja also reminds us that the battle against *asur* is to arrest conflict and restore peace on earth. Thus we can reflect on the life of the young activist, Iron Sharmila, who has been fasting for the last eight years — and is being force fed in prison — to protest the atrocities and violence by terrorists *and* security forces, eroding the ability of people in Manipur to live lives of dignity.⁶ Or recall the protest by older women in Nagaland who took off their clothes in a public place to draw attention to the impunity with which army personnel can rape women in areas designated as “security” problems; they used this form of protest because they had not otherwise been able to get people to recognize rape as *public* violation against women's dignity. See *Building a Fabric of Peace* of Bandana Purkayastha (2008) that appeared in *Armed Conflict and Conflict Resolution* edited by Giuseppe Caforio, Gerhard Kuemmel and Bandana Purkayastha. Should we support Ela Bhatt, and the three million women of the self employed workers association (SEWA), who continue to struggle to ensure a modicum of economic human rights to the most marginalized female workers in India? Or pay homage to Mahasweta Devi as she continues to struggle to keep the rights of indigenous groups relevant to the social and political discourse of

⁵ Zehra Arat, Women's Rights as Human Rights. UN Chronicle, June-Sept 2008.

⁶ Deepti Priya Mehrotra, Burning Bright: Iron Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur (2009), Penguin Books, India.

modern India. Or their counterparts in other parts of the world: Wangaari Maathai (Kenya), Rigoberta Menchu (Guatemala), Ela Gandhi (South Africa), Las Madres of Playa Del Mayo (Argentina), or the hibakusha (female survivors of the atom bomb) (Japan), who struggle against might forces to restore dharma. Should we simply ask, “*jahara tomar bishayeche bayu, nibhayechhe tobo alo, tumi ki tader kshama koriacho...*” or meld our action with forgiveness and love?

Our worship of Goddess Durga has never been based on rituals confined to temples. Reflecting on Brahman, through the personification of feminine valor, has been, and continues to be about doing dharma, a charter of action for social justice, action without generating further divisiveness or violence, a coming together of people, transgressing embedded social boundaries. It is up to us to bring the principles of dharma to our social lives, and practice these principles with vigor and valor. Following the paths of some of these remarkable women is a standard to which we can all aspire.



A painting by Rounak Bhunia, a seventh grader at the Griswold Middle School, Rocky Hill, Connecticut

Third Eye Fell

Aparna Das*
Somerville, Massachusetts

These days I have been looking downwards
so down my eyes got crossed
And when I sleep the lids cover them still crossed
The third eye, though, always fidgets

One day it squirmed out of the socket from all the neglect

I am woken by the splash and see it glisten
It is as a happy fish swimming in a stream
carried like driftwood
I dive stealthily like a crocodile into the waters
my eyes on the sliver of reflected light on its scales

It is collected by an errant eddy
As I reach slowly with open hands and cautious fingers to cup it
it flits beyond my grasp into the rush of waters again
I cry out
It turns about to watch me
straining against the currents
teasing me with its might before it dives out of sight

A flash in the deep I hold my breath and dive in
crushing my eyes closed against the stinging silt
I grope blindly as air escapes in bubbles
I surface wiping the mud from my face
and start howling in laughter

The dark clouds fall towards me in thick rain
I feel the stings of the rain, but the water is so warm I am joyful
Lightening strikes and the sky booms as I dive once more
I feel the swishing of the silt the leaves and muddy particles stroking past my body
I let my arms float outward and feel the heaviness of my body sink buoyantly
The big toe of my right foot on the grainy soil the only sense of rooting in the expansive
warm sea

Suddenly I feel a nibble at my smiling mouth
Calmly I allow it to seek comfort in kisses
loosening my jaw every so slowly
Into my mouth it goes
tickling the length of my tongue
Creating a bubble I press my lips closed
feeling it nestle on my tongue

*Author Introduction: Next page

I pull out of the water
and release the stunned fish into my palms
It is so beautiful
winking at me

I press my forehead to my palms and it slips into the socket
wiggling happily
I feel a funny sensation behind my ear down the sides of my neck
All my eyes turn up



*Aparna is a founder of Workshop Salas, a fledgling experimental performance group, which through community workshop techniques, develops theater and movement performance pieces with a political bent. She enjoys dancing and singing.



A New Season

Mitali Bandyopadhyay**
Farmington, Connecticut

When I step outside
I see
The beautiful landscape spread
Out before me
A new season has come
Spring

The grass is shiny, green and new
Covered with tiny droplets of silver dew

The sun is perched high at the top of the
sky
Waiting and hoping
For a robin to flutter by

The clouds are big white marshmallows
Floating in the sky

Racing and chasing
As they happily soar by

Daisies and tulips are here and there
But dandelions are everywhere!

A bird is busily building a big brown
nest
Other animals are awakening from their
Long winter rest

Trees are sprouting little leaves
Their branches swaying in the breeze

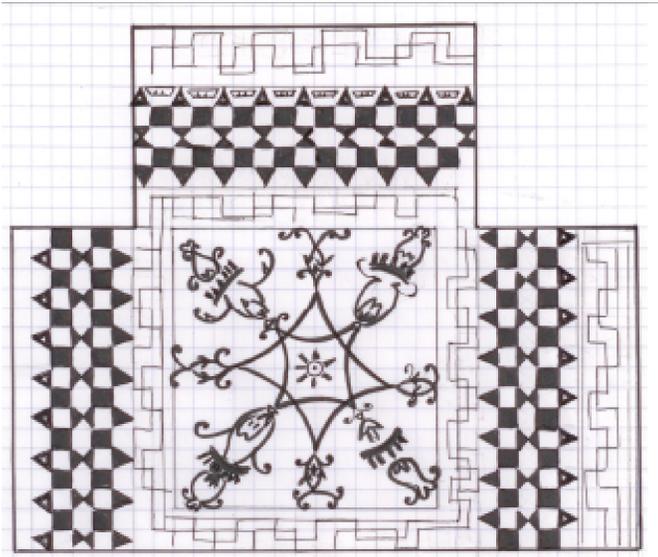
Winter is over, gone, done
But a new season called
“Spring”
Has just begun



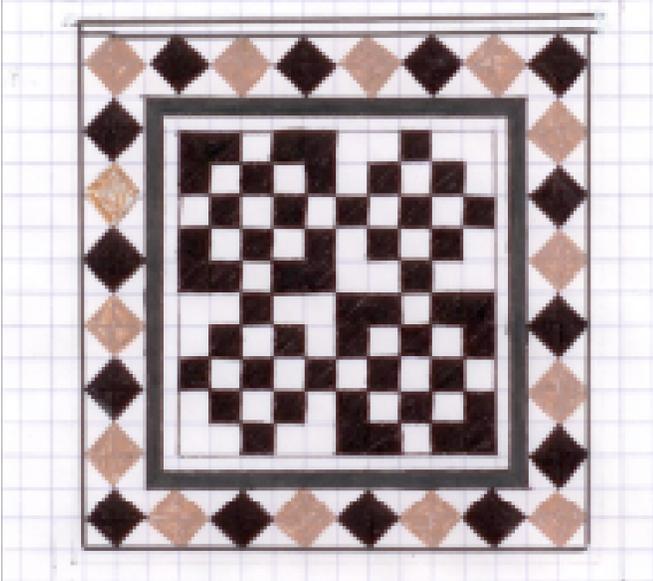
**She is a 7th grader at Irving A. Robbins Middle School, Farmington

Geometric Patterns from Roman Mosaics

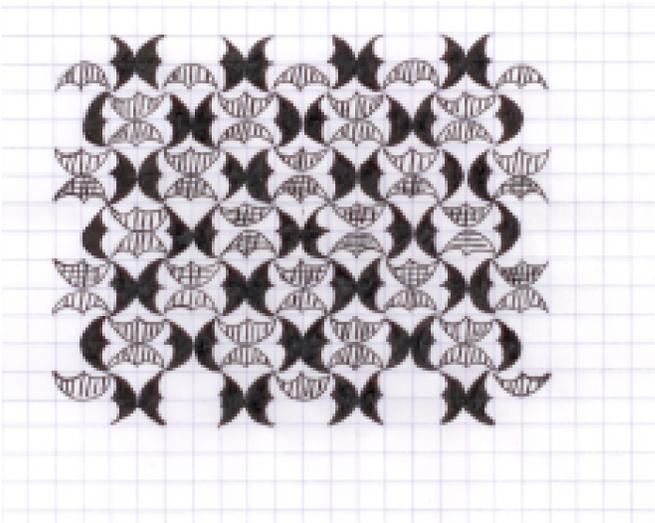
Ruma Tarafder Basu*
Willington, Connecticut



Hospitalium of Hadrian's Villa at Trivoli



Mosaic from Silchester



Courtyard from the Museum of Cordoba



*A long-time associate of BAGH and a very talented artist. She has been serving as a member of the existing Executive Committee of BAGH.

সিঁদুর কোটো

মিনতি বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়*

ব্র্যাম্পটন, ওন্টারিও, ক্যানাডা

বাতীতে সিন্দুর কাজ করছে। গ্রীষ্মের অধিকারী
দুপুর। আশি বাতীর উপরতলা থেকে বীচে নেমে আসছে। বানি,
কিনয়, ট্রাঙ্কেট চাপি দিক অগভির করে বেয়েছে। অন্ধকার
আমাদের গর্ভস্থিকীকে হারিয়েছে কিছুদিন আগের। ঠিকি দিয়ে
বীচে নামার সময় হঠাৎ বজবে এমন স্নানের দুটিং ডেবল। জন্ম
থেকে ঐ আওয়ারটি দেখতে অভ্যস্ত। ফুনার হুইল, স্নানাদিত
অবস্থায় ঠিকি এককোণ পাতে আছে জোটে। কি মনে হুঁস,
একটু দাঁড়িয়ে থেকে স্নানের ড্রায়র মুকলম। অন্যরানকে কিছু
উদেখারীমভারে ড্রায়রের মার্বেলে জিনিসপত্র নাড়াচাড়া করতে
করতে গেয়ি- ওসুয়ের প্লেআস্টিক পলান, বাজারের মর্দ,
স্নানের চিরনী, অব্যবহৃত ওসুয়ের পারিকডক অম্বশেষ,
সুখে স্নানার ফিলের অফাংকা, লোন এবং একটি সিঁদুর
কোটে।

জন্মাবধি এই সিঁদুর কোটোটি স্নান ব্যবহার করত
দেখে এসেছি। একটি নাম ও হুঁসের চেকবর্গটা সিঁদুর কোটে।
ওটা স্নানে স্নানে গেয়ি স্নানাদিত অবস্থে স্নান ড্রায়রের
গোছলে পাতে রচমেছে। একদিন মেটের প্রয়োজন ছিল
জিনিসপত্র। মা প্রায় স্নানাদিত স্নান মেবে গরম মর্দে
কোটেটি স্নানে সিঁদুরে সিঁদুর গরতেন। স্নানে স্নানে
সিঁদুর থেকে স্নানে কিছু সিঁদুর বগলান ও নাক হাউসে
দিত। ওসুয়ের স্নানাদিত স্নান বেনা স্নানে স্নানের স্নান
করে স্নানে স্নানে। সিঁদুরা স্নানে, স্নান বসুইকস
সেইস্নান। স্নানে স্নানে স্নান স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে
সিঁদুর হুঁসেছিল। স্নানে ঐ কোটোর প্রয়োজন স্নানে
চিরতরে।

স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে স্নানে
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*I enjoy writing and love to read. If my work gives anybody pleasure that will be my best reward. I was blessed by wonderful teachers including Ashutosh Bhattacharya, Sankaryprosad Basu, Ashit Bandopadhyay, Narayan Gangopadhaya, and Haroprasad Mitra.

শুভ বসন্তে অক্ষয় কাছ বিষ্ণুগান শক্তিপূজা ডিভিন পবিত্রত্বের জ্যেষ্ঠা
বর্ষ, মাগা, পৃথিবী ছিঁড়ার তাঁর অসামান্য গাম্ভীৰ্য ছিল। হারা হীন
কর্তব্য কল্পে তিনি অস্তিত্ব নিষ্ণা অস্বপ্নেরে বরণতা শয়নতেন।
শুভে মাগু পবিত্রত্বের প্রবর্তনী মূত্র নন, স্বীকৃতি দক্ষিণোত্তরীয়ের জ্যেষ্ঠা
স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে তিনি স্বীকৃতিগণের রানীর পূজাপার্বণেরে তার অক্ষয়
গাম্ভীৰ্য অপ্রকৃত স্বপ্নে গর অস্তিত্ব প্রকৃত করেছিলেন।

জ্যেষ্ঠা পূর্ণিমা স্বপ্নে দায় গাম্ভীৰ্য অস্বপ্ন
তাঁকে স্বপ্নে শয়নতেন। তাঁর অসামান্য নিষ্ণা, জ্যেষ্ঠার আগ্রহ,
শয়নত্বের অস্তিত্ব তাঁকে অনন্য রূপে ব্রহ্মত্ব ছিল। জ্যেষ্ঠার
অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে সুমিত্রের মাদুরাণেরে ব্রহ্মত্ব অস্তিত্ব। অস্বপ্ন
অস্তিত্বেরে তিনি পাতকোত্তর নিষ্ণে মারতেন। শুভে স্বপ্নে গাম্ভীৰ্য,
নিষ্ণত্বেরে গাম্ভীৰ্যে। অস্তিত্বেরে ছিল অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে। জ্যেষ্ঠার
শয়নত্বেরে জ্যেষ্ঠার অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে
অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে জ্যেষ্ঠার। অস্তিত্বেরে ও অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে
তাঁর অস্তিত্বেরে ছিল অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে গাম্ভীৰ্যেরে স্বপ্নে
তাঁর স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে
স্বপ্নে গাম্ভীৰ্যেরে অস্তিত্বেরে জ্যেষ্ঠার।

গাম্ভীৰ্যে ছিলে মারো অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে গাম্ভীৰ্যেরে অস্তিত্বেরে
স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে জ্যেষ্ঠার অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে ও অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে।
শয়নত্বেরে অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে গাম্ভীৰ্যেরে স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে, জ্যেষ্ঠার-
শয়নত্বেরে, অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে দক্ষিণোত্তরীয়ের অস্তিত্বেরে
জ্যেষ্ঠার স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে পূজা স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে জ্যেষ্ঠার গাম্ভীৰ্যেরে
শয়নত্বেরে, নিষ্ণ অস্তিত্বেরে জ্যেষ্ঠার স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে।

শয়নত্বেরে স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে, অস্তিত্বেরে
শয়নত্বেরে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে ও
শয়নত্বেরে। পূজা স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে ও
অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে। অস্তিত্বেরে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে
স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে। পূজা স্বপ্নে স্বপ্নে

A Summer That Was Hard to Bear

Oisharya (Moon) Dasgupta*
West Hartford, Connecticut

My summer was going great. I was having a blast at the Mountain Summer Camp making new friends, learning cool facts and thoroughly enjoying myself. But then of course something had to happen. Something exciting - no, come to think of it, downright terrifying.

I was sitting at a picnic table with my friends during lunch in the Camp courtyard. We were done with our lunches and I was just finishing up my dessert, blueberries dipped in honey. My back was facing the woods and I couldn't see what was behind me as I was merrily chatting away. Suddenly my friends went silent and looked past me wide eyed. I had no idea what was going on. Startled, I looked back and almost froze in fear.



Standing about hundred feet behind me in the bushes was the biggest black bear I have ever laid my eyes on, staring straight back at me. Its dark fur looked velvety and soft. It had stern, shiny, brown eyes. There was something about the way the bear acted I had a feeling that it was a male bear. By the look in the bear's eyes I felt that it was really hungry. A sudden sense of fear struck me. I screamed so loud that probably people in China could hear me. I jumped onto the table and jumped off on the other side. I raced away from the bear. There were other people around but the bear kept coming after me. Many thoughts were racing through my mind but I was so scared that it did not occur to me that bears like honey and berries and while I had jumped and screamed and ran, I have not let go of my lunch-box. My only thought was to keep running and not to look back.

In front of me were a few short, thick branches. I decided to throw them back to distract the bear, but it did no good. In the background I could hear people shouting at me to drop the container but I couldn't comprehend what they were saying. The only thought in my mind was to run. I could feel the bear's footsteps vibrating the ground behind me. It seemed to be getting closer and closer. I was so tense I couldn't think or do anything but keep my feet moving. A bird flew over us chirping very loudly. Apparently this made the bear more irritated, it stopped and it grunted. Then it stepped back and stormed after me again. I could feel sweat dripping down my forehead and neck. It was not only because of the exhaustion on a sunny, humid, 90 degree day, it was partially because of the fear of getting chased by a huge black bear.



*She is a 6th grader in King Phillip Middle School, West Hartford, Connecticut

I wasn't sure how much more I could run. It must not have been more than thirty seconds since I first saw the bear but it felt like I am running for thirty minutes already.

I started looking for a tree with low branches so I could climb it. The next moment when I looked forward, about 3 feet in front of me, was a long, moss covered log blocking the whole path. That can never be a good thing when you are running as fast as you can, downhill. I couldn't stop and found myself sliding into a hard but hollow log. My leg got caught in a tangle of sticks, as my body flew forward my hand bumped a tree branch and I could feel the plastic container fly out of my hand. At that moment I landed with a loud thud. As I lay there in the bushes, I saw the container soar up in the air and land a good forty feet away near the bottom of a tree. This is it for me, I thought. The bear is going to be on top of me any second now. I was looking for a stick or a stone to fight it with.

But then nothing happened. I looked back and saw the bear stop in its tracks with a puzzled look on its face. It was looking back and forth between me and the direction where the lunch box landed. In an instant the bear changed direction, ran to the bottom of the tree, grabbed the plastic container and disappeared into the bushes surrounding the school playground, opposite to the direction it came from. A few teachers rushed over and helped me up. They helped me brush off all the dirt and leaves from my clothes. My knees, elbows and palms were all bruised but not badly.

Our teachers quickly got us into the building, in case the bear returned. The Camp Director came out of the office to see what all the noise was about. When she heard everything, she went very pale. After all she is responsible for all of us. "That's it", she said, "I am going to call a fencing company tomorrow and putting up barbed wire all around the school ground. I am so glad nobody got seriously hurt today. Till then we shall only have indoor lunch and recess".

It has been a few weeks since that incident, but when I close my eyes I can still see the scary gaze of the black bear, staring right at me.



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.



*She is a 6th grader in King Phillip Middle School, West Hartford, Connecticut. This story was inadvertently left out from 2009 souvenir magazine.

"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!"

A Trip To Another World

Paroma Lahiri*
Clifton Park, New York

On Neptune the Cabogians were having a huge feast. In three days it would be the Gorulugion Festival. Menthnor Gorulugion was the one who gave Neptune freedom from Saturn. Cabogians all around were decorating, cooking, cleaning and shopping. Everyone was having fun. But fun was far beyond Megnor Gelugan. She was up in her cave with nothing to do. The door was blocked. Her room was bare. She felt terrible.

On Earth, in the streets of Washington D.C., everyone was hustling and bustling too. They were getting ready for the Cherry Blossom Festival. Everyone except for Rachel Disher. She looked out the window sadly, her ocean colored eyes filled with tears. She was grounded. Everyone was having fun without her. She felt like an abandoned kitty.

Back on Neptune, troubles were rising. All the gold dishes had been smashed in a tentacle fight. Nobody knew what to do. They had to have gold dishes for the Festival. It was considered rude not to. Finally a scientist, Dr. Eaglor, told everyone about the gold on Earth. Dr. Eaglor and a dentist, Orthadoniest, were ready to invade Earth.

Rachel had her nose buried in a book. Her parents should have been home hours ago. Rachel wasn't worried though. She could easily find a key and get out of her room when she was sure it was safe. She could hear the snores of her babysitter on the downstairs couch. It was time. She took the paperclip off the pile of homework. She bent it until it was a straight line. She poked it into the keyhole and jiggled it around until she heard a click. She crept downstairs, her fire red hair sticking to her face with sweat. Finally she reached the downstairs door. Fresh air and moonlight she thought as she stepped outside.

It wasn't windy but people were flying kites. They looked like UFO's. But there was something strange about them. They seemed to be coming *closer*. Rachel realized that they *were* coming closer. They *were* actual UFO's. They were also coming straight toward her house.

The UFO's landed in the backyard. They were as tall as Rachel's house and made of glistening green metal. A blue and purple squid-like creature came out of one of the UFO's. It was carrying a huge black sack. Rachel turned around to run. She felt something pull her back. It was something slimy and sticky. Rachel turned around to see a tentacle wrapped around her leg. The creature was slithering with its feet toward her, three tentacles were opening the sack. In a flash, Rachel was tied up, thrown into the sack and flung into the UFO while the aliens looked for gold. After a couple of hours, the aliens went back to Neptune with Rachel in the prison room.



*Paroma is a ten-year old fifth grader at the Tesago Elementary School, Clifton Park, NY

Two hours later Rachel's parents came home. They paid the babysitter, and then went to find Rachel. They checked everywhere but didn't find her. "We are so going to fire that babysitter," Rachel's mom said. Then they went outside to try and find Rachel.

In the bag all Rachel could hear was the engine grinding. It wasn't really grinding though. It made a gurgling sound. Soon the sound started to weaken and stop altogether. They must have landed.

The aliens carried Rachel into a dark room. They took her out of the sack and left her tied up.

Rachel felt like drinking a gallon of snake venom. All she wanted to do was go home and see her parents' loving faces. She wanted to be off this weird planet and see her friends again. If you saw her, it would be like seeing a puppy dog at the pound. Rachel fell asleep feeling like a chewed up pencil.

She woke up to see one of the aliens standing above her. It was Megnor. "I can help you escape," she said. "Why should I trust you?" Rachel asked. "Because I'm your ticket out of here," Megnor replied. Then she grabbed Rachel's hand and together they ran outside.

The air was bone chilling. There was so much ice on the ground that you could see your own reflection everywhere. So, it was easy to see the enormous UFO parked outside. Megnor shoved Rachel inside, shut the door and took the controls. Before long, they could see Earth.

Rachel's parents were walking home very worried. Nobody had seen Rachel. So when they saw Rachel at the front door, they almost fainted. Rachel told them all about the trip to Neptune, showed them the rope burns, and even introduced them to Megnor. Her parents were awestruck to see a live alien in the house.

When Megnor left, Rachel felt very lonely. After that she always thought of Megnor. Her parents were so much kinder to her too. Rachel loved the new life she led.



ভুতুবাবুর পূজোর বাজার

প্রদীপ দাস*
বেলগাঁও, কর্ণাটক

গিন্নি বলেন শুনছো ওগো,পূজোর তো নেই দেরী
পূজোর বাজার করবে কবে বলোনা তাড়াতাড়ি,
গতবছর বলেছিলে দেবে আমায় জামদানি।
তা না দিয়ে মঙ্গলাহাটের টাঙ্গাইল দিলে আনি,
পীরিত করে বলেছিলে দেবে আমায় বাউটি,
মাগ্নি সোনার দোহাই দিয়ে দিলে শেষে আংটি।
চেয়েছিলাম মাকে আমি করতে গরদ শাড়ী ভেট,
ভুলো ভুতু তোমার ভুলে হল মাথা আমার হেঁটা।
তোমার ভুলে গরদ শাড়ী পেলেন জগন্নাথ,
মায়ের কপালে জুটলো কিনা লালপেড়ে কঙ্কাপাত,
থাক চাইনা ঘাঁটিতে আর পুরাণো সেই কাসুন্দি,
চেষ্টা কোর পূজোয় যেন বজায় থাকে ঘরের শান্তি।
বিনীত ভুতু হয়ে ভয়ভীত করে নিবেদন,
রাজধানীতে হয়েছে এক খেলার মহা আয়োজন,
আয়োজক মশাই উদার ভীষণ,নেই কোন খুঁত,
কমন মেনের ওয়েলথ তিনি দিচ্ছেন হরির লুটা।
গিন্নি তোমায় বলা হয়নিকো নাম দিয়েছি প্রতিযোগিতায়,
ইভেন্টের নাম আদিম কলম চালাও যেমন ইচ্ছেতাই
কাল সকালে রওয়ানা দেব নিয়ে হরির নাম,
সঙ্গে নেব দাদুর কলম,হবে না বিধি বামা।
শোন গিন্নি জেনে রেখো জিতে আমি ফিরবো,
বাউটি ছাড়ে, তোমায় আমি সোনার পাত দিয়ে মুড়বো
বনবানিয়ে গিন্নি বলেন কি যে তুমি করো,
ওইসব স্পর্শকাতর কলম আদি ছাড়ে,
এবার পূজোয় নাই বা দিলে শাড়ী গয়না,
আসছে বছর দিও কিন্তু রইলো আমার পাওনা।।

হারিয়ে যাবার ছড়া

ইন্দ্রনীল সেনগুপ্ত*
টালিগঞ্জ, কলকাতা

চল ভাই, কাজ ভুলে যাই ।
ভুলে যাই হিসেব নিকেশ পদ্য পড়া,
ইন্ড মাসীর বিবিত্ত খেলা,
দম বেদমে তাল ঠোকা—
তাল ঠোকা আর শাল ঠোকা ।

চল ভাই আজ ভুলে যাই
কালকের পাওনা কর্ডি,
হাট বাজারী দোকানদারি—
সেজে নিই রঙীন সাজে,
সলমা জরি জামার ভাঁজে —
লাল নীল রঙ বাহারী ।

চল ভাই চল চলে যাই
আয়নাপারা জলের ধার,
সুন্দরের মধুর টানে
আপন মনে ঘাসের বনে—
তুলো ছেঁড়া মেঘের মাঝ
চল ভাই হারাই আজ ।



*Has written humorous poems on Bhutu
-babu's life. He is deeply interested in
photography, traveling, music, and cooking.



*An established poet in his own right

On Origination and Propagation of Tabla: Prepared from Sudip K. Chatterjee's Notes

[Editor's Notes: *Kolkata has had a long tradition of producing many great maestros of the art of tabla playing. A great many of them have been regarded as the very best that India could offer to the world of percussion. Sudip Kumar Chatterjee is a young talent from Kolkata who is highly acclaimed among his peers. I invited him to prepare an essay on the origination and propagation of tabla that will be suitable for our general readership. While Sudip thankfully turned in cursory notes, between other commitments and concerts he could not come up with an essay. Hence, I took it upon myself to prepare this essay based on Sudip's notes. I have provided the photos accompanying this piece. Happy reading!]*

1. A Brief Introduction of Sudip Kumar Chatterjee

Sudip Kumar Chatterjee is a young tabla exponent of Beneras gharānā. He began learning to play tabla when he was 12 years old under the gracious guidance of Prof. Nitin Chatterjee (a disciple of Padmabhusan Pandit Samta Prasad). He also learned the craft under the supervision of Shri Rudranarayan Kalyani (a disciple of Prof. Sandip Deb, Pandit Nanku Maharaj, and Padmavibhusan Pandit Kishen Maharaj). Sudip continues to learn table playing under the tutelage of the illustrious tabla maestro, Pandit Shankar Ghosh.



Sudip Kumar Chatterjee, b. 1983

Sudip completed M.A. degree in tabla from Rabindra Bharati University. He received numerous awards and honors all over India including: The Santana Panza Memorial Shield (first prize) at the All Bengal Music Competition in 2002; Ranked First Class First in All India Merit Test organized by Nikhil Bharat Sangeet Samity and obtained the Gold Medal in 2008; Sangeet Ratna Award from Bangiya Sangeet Parishad; Awarded Sangeet Bivakar (M. Mus. in Tabla with first class) from Sarba Bharatiya Sangeet O Sanskriti Parishad and from Nikhil Bharat Sangeet Samity in 2008.

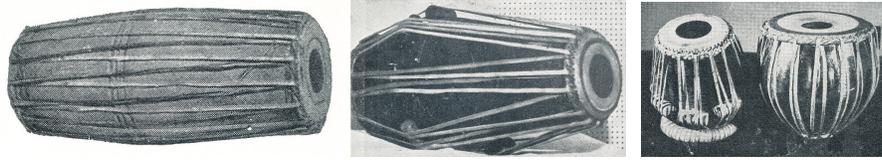
He has performed, both solo and accompaniment, extensively at Calcutta Television Network (CTVN); Ustad Amir Khan Sangeet Samsad; Kalamandir; Birla Academy; Lahabari Music Conference; and Gyan Manch, to name a few.

Sudip received the Certificate of Honor of the United Minds for Peace Society (UMFPS) from Pandit Subhankar Banerjee at a concert that was organized by Musical Oasis for Resurrection under UMFPS.

2. Origination

About the origin of the musical instrument called tabla, many a guess and conjecture, fable, and legend fill the air. Indian experts often say that tabla has been derived from pakhawaj because the former has two parts cut apart from mridanga. Many Muslim tabla players from one generation to the next, on the

other hand, never get tired of claiming that tabla originated in their families. So, there is plenty of controversy.



From left: Mridanga, Pakhawaj, and Tabla

But, history has a different story to unfold. Long before the Muslims rechristened mridanga and pakhawaj, and indeed long before the birth of Islam, tabla occupied a prominent place among many musical instruments that came from Arabia. In pagan Arabia, it was a popular but somewhat different instrument in its construction. In ancient Arabia, the duff was the most popular among all percussion instruments covered with leather. Duff is a percussion instrument belonging to the class of tambourines. It is said that Tubal, son of the musician Tubal from Arabia, invented both duff and tabla.

The word tabla came to be used as a prefix to other drum instruments. It seems that the Muslims had brought with them their favorite version of tabla. But, in India they found a variety of well developed percussion instruments. So, they improved their own tabla along the lines of then existing Indian varieties and laid the foundation for a new type of instrument. They added a smaller variety of the duff and because of its similarity with tabla, came to be known as tabla and the latter, bayan.

Many experts claim that Amir Khusro made a great contribution by introducing tabla in India, but as we have explained, in its bigger size tabla was already used in Arabia. However, it is plausible that Amir Khusro, while introducing a number of ragas from foreign lands to Indian music, embraced tabla here especially in a shape and form that we are familiar with today.

One should note that percussion instruments came into existence before any other musical instrument, and hence tabla occupied the place of one of the fundamental percussion instruments. In performances of folk songs and folk dances, however, dhol, dapha and mridanga were used as primary percussion instruments. With the passage of time, classical music became popular in Courts and Darbars. In those times too, mridanga and pakhawaj accompanied with dhrupad and dhamar styles of gayeki.

During the 13th century AD, Amir Khusro, the Chief Councilor of Allauddin Khilji, brought in tabla, a new musical instrument by dividing pakhawaj into two equal halves. This new instrument was played by placing it in the front, but unfortunately it could not obtain acceptance from the royal families of those days. It was accepted in a very limited way by the proponents of kawals, gazals and the dancers who accompanied them. They often entertained the soldiers and warriors. Tabla happened to be the main instrument of their choice.

Now-a-days tabla has attained an appreciable status in standard musical societies. But, during the performances of Indian classical dances, mridanga is still frequently used as a percussion instrument.

After the invention of tabla, it was made immensely popular by Ustad Uddar Khan. He did not produce new bols, but he constructed them from the basic set of bols played on mridanga following old grammar of talas.

Aloke Dutta (*Tabla Lessons and Practice*, 1995) wrote: “Notwithstanding disputes regarding the origin of tabla, there is no controversy regarding Sidhar Khan (or Sudhar Khan) of Dheli as the first exponent of tabla playing. A contemporary of Sadarang, he lived in the 18th century AD. Sidhar Khan is also believed by some to have invented the tabla. In any case, it is known that he established the first originally recognized style of tabla playing, known as the Delhi style, from which all others, except that of Punjab, originate.”

3. Propagation

It is largely believed that Aamir Khusro is the creator of tabla in the 13th century AD, but there is no proof that any renowned tabla player existed before Ustad Sidhar Khan (Sudhar Khan) from the 18th century

AD according to the established history of Indian classical music. So, there is much appreciation for Ustad Sidhar Khan as the creator of the “tabla baaz”, the grammar and sound of tabla. He hailed from Delhi and so his style of tabla playing is called the “Delhi baaz”.

In a word “baaz” is also called the “gharānā”, a system of a social organization linking musicians or dancers by lineage and/or apprenticeship, and by adherence to a particular style of music. A gharānā also indicates a comprehensive musicological ideology.

This ideology or doctrine or discipline tends to vary substantially from one gharānā to another. It directly affects the process of thinking, teaching, execution, performance, and appreciation of music. Ustad Sidhar Khan was regarded a great exponent of tabla playing in the 18th century AD and his established Delhi gharānā is largely accepted as the first gharānā among all gharānās of tabla playing that have come to exist. There are six fundamental gharānās in tabla and these are: Delhi gharānā, Lakhnaw gharānā, Farukhabad gharānā, Ajrara gharānā, Beneras gharānā, and Punjab gharānā.

4. Brief Accounts of These Six Gharānās

4.1 Delhi Gharānā

The Delhi gharānā is the oldest among all tabla gharānās, and is also the first to establish specific rules for improvisation. It was founded in North-East India, and is easily one of the most, if not the most, common gharānā (or baaz) used today. Recall that this gharānā was founded in the early 18th century AD by Ustad Sidhar Khan. Khan, having been a prominent pakhawaj player, was responsible for incorporating pakhawaj bols within this style. However, tabla, not pakhawaj, is now the main instrument of the Delhi gharānā.

The Delhi tabla style is famous for its vast and rich repertoire of kaidas. Overall, the quality of sound tends to focus on avoiding the overuse of loud, resonant banya (left-hand bass drum) strokes in favor of lighter and more precise strokes. Bols such as dha, tete (tite), terekete and tinnakena are prominent.

Some important tabla Ustads were Gamay Khan (1883-1958), his son Inam Ali Khan, Chatur Lal, and the last doyen of the Delhi gharānā, Ustad Latif Khan.



Chaturlal

4.2 Lakhnaw Gharānā

The great connoisseur, Nawab Wazid Ali from Lakhnaw, invited two tabla players, Miyan Bakhsu Khan and Mauzu Khan (both were grandsons of Ustad Sidhar Khan) from Delhi to accompany with Kathak dance in his royal court. The tabla and pakhawaj were used as accompaniments with dance and a new “vadan style” was created there.



Pandit Hirendrakumar Ganguly

This “vadan style” is called “Lakhnaw baaz”, a characteristic of Lakhnaw gharānā. Though kaida and gat are conventional in this gharānā, varieties of paran, gat, and chakradar are used.

In the case of a solo performance, the “uthan” is played first. Both dance and thumris are accompanied on tabla in this gharānā. Some of the tabla maestros in this gharānā were Khalifa wazid Hussain Khan, Ustad Afaq Hussain, Pandit Hiru Ganguly. Pandit Swapan Choudhury came from this gharānā and he has been a living legend and maestro in his own right.



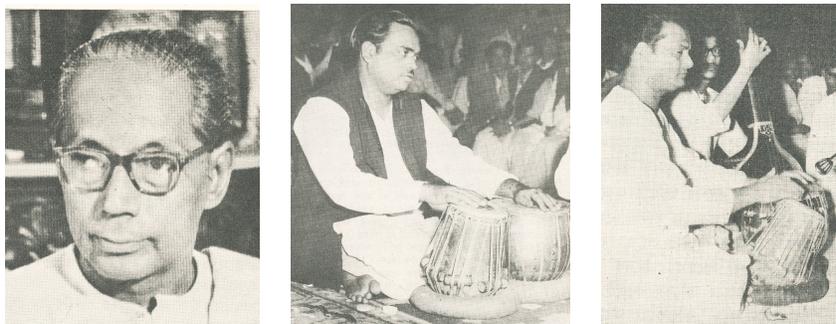
Pandit Swapan Choudhury (center) playing tabla solo in a concert in Calcutta, January 2010. Accompanying on Sarengi is Pandit Ramesh Mishra (right).

4.3 Farukhabad Gharānā

Fatema Bibi, the daughter of Ustad Bakhsu Khan (the most renowned table Maestro of Lakhnaw Gharānā), got married to Hazi Vilayat Ali Khan of Farukhabad. Hazi Vilayat received 12 kaidas and numerous gats during the wedding as dowry. Haji Vilayat Ali Khan is the regarded as the first tabla player of Farukhabad gharānā.

The gats of this gharānā have great rhythms. There are numerous gats included in this gharānā which is fondly referred to as the “stock pile of gat”. A solo performance in this gharānā commences with the “suruwat”. Sur, chati, gab are emphasized with regard to priority. Many kinds of bandishes are played here.

Some of the reputed tabla players from this gharānā include Ustad Masit Khan, Ustad Keramat Khan, Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh, Pandit Kanai Dutta, Pandit Shankar Ghosh, Ustad Sabir Khan, Pandit Anindo Chatterjee, Pandit Bikram Ghosh, and Pandit Subhankar Banerjee.



From left: Pandit Jnan Prakash Ghosh, Ustad Keramat Ullah Khan, and Pandit Kanai Dutta

4.4 Ajrara Gharānā

In the Meerut district, there is a village named Ajrara and two foremost tabla players, Kallu khan and Meeru Khan, took the tabla talim. At first, they learned from Bugrah Khan of Delhi and then they also learned from Ustad Sidhar Khan. This training or talim in tabla playing led them to create the Ajrara gharānā.

The kaidas in this gharānā include numerous great bandishes. The syllables or the words of these kaidas and the accompanied laya are extremely beautiful. Their gat and peshkar also have great specialties. The role of bayan is given priority and hence emphasized in this gharānā.

Some of the maestros from this gharānā were Hassu Khan and Sammu Khan. Ustad Habibuddin Khan, the son of and Sammu Khan, is regarded as the best tabla exponent from this gharānā.

4.5 Beneras Gharānā

The creator of Lakhnaw gharānā, Ustad Mauzu Khan, accepted Ramasahai ji (Beneras) as his disciple. This tremendously talented Ramsahai ji was the founder of the Beneras gharānā.

The bols are pronounced and then demonstrated on tabla in this gharānā. The laggi, ladi, chand are preferred here. Uthan must be played at the beginning in the case of any solo performance.

Many big compositions are played here but unlike what is heard in some of the other gharānās, kaidas are not so conventional here. The “theka ka prakar” is played here in-stead of “suruwat”.

The bayan has highly prioritized here. The quality of sound production from this gharānā is highly emphasized compared with other gharanas. “Gat-Fard” is played in this gharānā.

This style of table playing is very suitable for accompanying dance and instrumental music. The great tabla exponents of this gharānā include Pandit Baldev Sahai, Pandit Vikku Maharaj, Pandit Kanthe Maharaj, Pandit Samta Prasad, Pandit Kishen Maharaj, Pandit Sarada Sahai, and Pandit Kumar Bose.



From left: Pandit Kanthe Maharaj and Pandit Kishen Maharaj

4.6 Punjab Gharānā

Punjab gharānā (sometimes called Punjabi or Panjabi gharānā) is a style and technique of tabla playing that originated in the Punjab region of what is now split in present day Pakistan and India. The Punjab gharānā is possibly the newest of the six tabla gharānās (of which others are Delhi, Ajrara, Farukhabad, Lakhnaw, and Benares).

Initially a pakhawaj-playing gharānā, the Punjab school was created in the 19th century. Ustad Faqir Bokhs was the founder of this gharānā. His son Qadir Bokhs and disciples Karam Elahi and Malan Khan were great exponents.

Ustad Qadir Bokhs’s disciple was Ustad Allah Rakha (the legend of tabla) and Ustad Allah Rakha’s son Ustad Zakir Hussain made this Panjub gharānā of tabla playing more popular than some of the other styles.

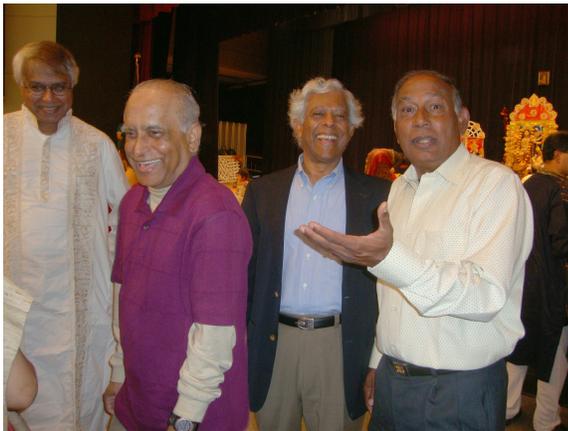
Some of the other notable exponents from this gharānā include Ustad Fazal Qureshi, Pandit Yogesh Samsi, and Ustad Shaukat Hussain Khan.

Big compositions are played in this gharānā. Their bols are very melodious. Chakradar, tukra, paran are played with different laykaris.

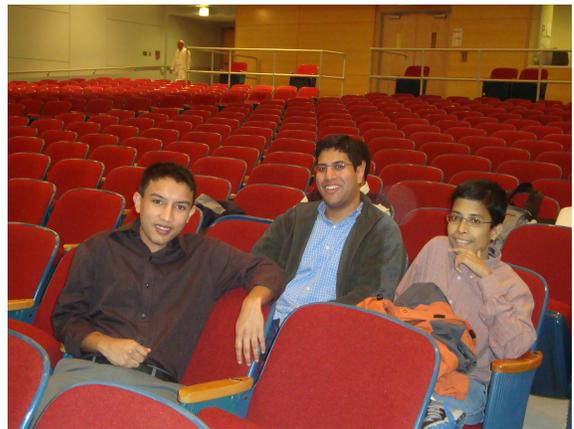
5. Final Comments

This article is aimed at general public with some appreciation of Indian classical music. It is not an article on any kind of exact theory, practice, and performance of the classical musical instrument, tabla. No attempt was made to define the minute specifics and characteristics of each gharānā. An interesting treatise on this subject is V. H. Deshpande’s *Indian Musical Traditions: An Aesthetic Study of the Gharanas in Hindustani Music*.

Collage 3



(1)



(4)



(2)



(5)



(3)



(6)

(1)-(3): BAGH's 2009 Durga puja, Saturday, October 3.

(4)-(6): BAGH's 2009 Durga puja, Saturday, October 3.

What Would You Do if You Did Not Get Admission to IIT? How About Winning a Nobel Prize?

Ashis Basu*
Willington, Connecticut

A speaker said that he appeared for the IIT entrance test but “did not get a single seat in IIT.” His parents thought coaching classes for entrance exams were “nonsense.” He also appeared in the entrance test for a seat in the Christian Medical College in Vellore in Tamil Nadu but was unsuccessful. He was not a total failure, however. He did receive a National Science Talent Scholarship to pursue undergraduate studies at the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda from where he graduated with a B.Sc. in Physics in 1971. The speaker was the 2009 Chemistry Nobel Laureate, Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, who was giving a standing-room only lecture at the Indian Institute of Science in January 2010.



Venki Ramakrishnan
Born 1952 in Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu, India

Venki Ramakrishnan¹, as he is commonly known as, moved to USA from India and received his Ph.D. in Physics from Ohio University, Athens, Ohio in 1976. In graduate school, Ramakrishnan realized that he was not meant to be a theoretical physicist and that his real interest was in biology. He gave up two offers of postdoctoral work at Yale University, including one from Tom Steitz, with whom, ironically, he later shared the Nobel Prize. He felt he must first broaden his knowledge of biology. So, he spent two years studying biology as a graduate student at the University of California, San Diego, making a critical transition from theoretical physics to biology. Then he did postdoctoral research with Peter Moore at Yale University from 1978-1982.

Ramakrishnan also recalled at the IIS lecture that, after his post-doctoral research, he could not initially find a job even though he had applied to 50 different universities. After spending a short time at the Oak Ridge National Lab, he joined Brookhaven National Lab in 1983, where he spent the next 12 years. He started crystallography of ribosomal proteins at Brookhaven, and this pursuit eventually led to solving the 30S subunit (vide infra) structure, which earned him the Nobel Prize. In 1995, he joined University of Utah as a Professor of Biochemistry.

Four years later, Ramakrishnan moved to the Structural Studies Division, MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge, England. Although he started working on the structure of ribosome in Peter Moore’s lab, after moving to Brookhaven, he gradually built a solid reputation as a leading researcher in ribosome structure and function. Ramakrishnan became a part of the major wave of breakthroughs in 1999 and 2000.



*Ashis Basu is a Professor of Chemistry at the University of Connecticut-Storrs

To appreciate this work, a brief overview of ribosome is appropriate. Ribosome is a ribonucleoprotein particle (70S) made of a small (30S) and a large (50S) unit². The word ribosome comes from *ribonucleic acid* and the Greek word *soma*, which means body. The central dogma of biology is that the information contained in DNA can be used to make RNA, which, in turn, is used to make proteins. The *messenger RNA*, which contains the base sequence information specifying a particular protein, acts as a template that directs the protein synthesis. Each triplet of nucleotides, called a codon, on the mRNA specifies one amino acid. A small (30S) ribosomal subunit binds to the mRNA molecule at a start codon recognized by a unique initiator *transfer RNA* (tRNA) molecule. A large (50S) ribosomal subunit binds to complete the *ribosome* and initiate the elongation phase of protein synthesis. The amino acids are attached to tRNA, which are then joined together by the ribosome. The ribosome progresses from codon to codon adding amino acids on a chain to make the protein until a stop codon is reached. The completed protein (or polypeptide) is then released from the ribosome.

Since the ribosome ‘translates’ the genetic information from RNA to proteins, the process is known as *translation*. The basics of protein synthesis are the same in all kingdoms of life, and ribosome, the protein factory, consists of approximately two-thirds by mass of RNA and one-third proteins. A cogent understanding the role of ribosome in translation requires determination of its high-resolution structure. Although the general structure of ribosome has been known for nearly four decades, the high-resolution crystallographic structure using X-ray diffraction has only been determined in 2000. The structure of the 50S (large) subunit from an archaeon *Haloarcula marismortui* was published by Thomas Steitz’s group at Yale University. The structure of the 30S subunit from *Thermus thermophilus* was published by Ada Yonath soon afterward, but it was incomplete and later found to be flawed. In the same month a more detailed and accurate structure of the 30S ribosomal subunit was published by Venki Ramakrishnan’s group at the MRC lab of Molecular Biology in Cambridge. These structures shed light on many specific functions including decoding (to inspect the pairing of codon with anticodon) and antibiotic binding. The Nobel Prize in Chemistry 2009 was awarded to Drs. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan, Thomas A. Steitz, and Ada E. Yonath “for studies of the structure and function of the ribosome.”

Venki Ramakrishnan’s group determined the complete atomic structure of the 30S subunit and its complexes with several antibiotics, initiation factor IF1, and cognate and near-cognate tRNA anticodon stem-loops complexed with mRNA in the A site. Recently, they have determined the high-resolution structure of the entire ribosome complexed with mRNA and tRNA.³ These studies continue to unravel the details of antibiotic function, the mechanism of tRNA and mRNA recognition, and decoding by the ribosome.

Aside from the Nobel Prize, of the many awards and honors, Ramakrishnan was elected a member of EMBO (2002); Fellow of the Royal Society (elected 2003); Member, National Academy of Sciences, USA (elected 2004); Louis Jeantet Prize for Medicine, 2007; Datta Medal and Lecture, FEBS annual meeting, Vienna 2007; Heatley Medal, British Biochemical Society, 2008; Foreign Member, Indian National Science Academy (elected 2008); Fellow, Trinity College, Cambridge (elected 2008). In 2010, he was awarded *Padma Vibhushan*, conferred upon him by the President of India.

Footnotes:

¹Venki Ramakrishnan’s Nobel Lecture published in *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* (**49**, 4355-4580, 2010) includes his (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/anie.201001436/abstract>) autobiography and a summary of his research on ribosome structure and function.

²S represents svedberg unit named after the Swedish chemist, T. Svedberg, and characterizes the behavior of a particle type in sedimentation processes. The svedberg is a measure of time and is defined as 10⁻¹³ seconds (100 fs). Bigger particles sediment faster and thus have higher svedberg values. Sedimentation coefficients, however, are not additive. Sedimentation rate does not depend only on the mass or volume of a particle, and when two particles bind together there is inevitably a loss of surface area. Thus when measured separately they will have svedberg values that may not add up to that of the bound particle.

³Visit Venki Ramakrishnan’s home page at MRC (<http://www.mrc-lmb.cam.ac.uk/ribo/homepage/ramak/index.html>) to learn more on his current work.

C. R. Rao: A Product of India

[Editor's Note: C. R. Rao, an elected member of the U.S. National Academy of Science, has been one of the most revered statistical scientists in the world. At the age of ninety, he continues to create new frontiers of research from statistics to brain mapping to microarrays to genome. In 2002, he was awarded the National Medal of Science by the White House. I requested C. R. Rao to prepare a piece about him in order to inspire us, especially the children. The following write-up is a result of that.]

C. R. Rao is among the worldwide leaders in statistical science over the last five decades. His research, scholarship, and professional service have had a profound influence on the theory and applications of statistics and are incorporated into standard references for statistical study and practice.

- S. Karlin, National Medal of Science Laureate, USA

C. R. Rao was born on September 10, 1920 in Huvinna Hadagali, a town in the erstwhile Madras Presidency, now in Karnataka State. He was the 8th child and named as Radhakrishna following the custom of naming the eighth child after Lord Krishna, the 8th child to his parents.

Early Education: He showed a natural flair for numbers at a very young age. By the age of six he memorized the multiplication tables up to 20 by 20. His teacher of the elementary school in Gudur (Andhra Pradesh) would line up all the students in the class and ask him to stand in front of them and recite multiplication tables, which the other boys would repeat. He was the top student in all classes from the beginning. He also participated in extracurricular activities winning prizes in elocution and debating contests, inter-school competition in drawing and sports. At the age of 15 he won the prize instituted by the Nobel Laureate C. V. Raman to be given to the one who scores the highest score in a competitive examination in Physics.

Academic Degrees: He has an M.A. degree in Mathematics (1941) from Andhra University with a first class and first rank, M.A. in Statistics (1943) from Calcutta University with a first class and first rank, a gold medal and record percentage of marks still unbroken. He started doing research as a student at the Indian Statistical Institute from 1941. In 1943, Prof. Mahalanobis, the founder of the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) offered him a job at Rs.75 a month with the designation of a *technical worker*, which was the beginning of his career in statistics. He started publishing papers in design of experiments, and in multivariate statistical methodology which he used in analyzing anthropometric measurements to study the affinities of different castes and tribes in India. He was deputed by Prof. Mahalanobis to go to Cambridge University on a request from the anthropology department of the University to help in the analysis of measurements taken on ancient human skeletons brought from Africa using Mahalanobis distance and other techniques developed at the ISI. He was employed in the museum of Archeology and Anthropology of Cambridge University during 1946-48 to analyze the measurements taken on the skeletons from ancient graves in Africa. (Perhaps, this is the only instance of transfer of technology from India to a developed country at that time.) In Cambridge he met R. A. Fisher, the father of modern statistics, who agreed to be his supervisor in case he wished to submit his work in the museum for Ph.D. degree. Fisher agreed, provided he spent some time in his genetic lab where he was mapping the chromosomes of mice. He worked in Fisher's lab and produced some papers on linkage studies published in *Journal of Heredity*. He received the Ph.D. degree of Cambridge University in 1948 by thesis based on the work done in the museum and the senior doctorate Sc.D. degree of Cambridge University a few years later by peer review of published work. To date he has 31 Honorary doctorate degrees

awarded by universities in 18 countries spanning 6 continents. He has guided the research work of 50 scholars for Ph.D. Degrees, who in turn produced about 300 Ph.D.'s. Rao's entry and success in statistics is a *tale of two cities, Calcutta and Cambridge*.

Contributions to Statistical Methodology: Rao received world-wide recognition for his contribution to statistical theory of estimation at a very young age of 25 with the publication of the paper, "Information and accuracy attainable in the estimation of statistical parameters", published in *Calcutta Math. Bulletin*, 37, 81-91(1945). This has given rise to several technical terms bearing Rao's name, such as Cramer-Rao inequality and Rao-Blackwellization which appear in all textbooks on statistics and Quantum Cramer-Rao bound, Fisher-Rao metric, Rao distance, Rao measure and Cramer-Rao functional used in special applications of image processing. Another paper, "Large sample tests of statistical hypotheses concerning several parameters with applications to problems of estimation" published in *Proc. of Cambridge Philos. Soc.*, 44, 5057 (1948) generated technical terms such as Rao Score test and Neyman-Rao test, which appear in econometrics literature. The two papers cited above are reproduced in the Publication: *Breakthroughs in Statistics, 1889-1990*, edited by Kotz and Johnson.

Rao has made some significant contributions to combinatorial mathematics for use in design of industrial experiments, the most important of which is *Orthogonal arrays (OA)*. The basic paper on the subject, "On a class of arrangements" appeared in *Proc. Edinburgh Math. Soc.* 8, 119-125, (1949). The referee of the paper reported that *it is a fresh and original piece of work*. The Japanese Quality Control Expert, G. Taguchi made extensive use of OA's (described by Forbes Magazine as a "new mantra" for industries), in industrial experimentation. Full length monographs have appeared on OA's and their applications. OA's, first introduced when Rao was 26 years old, continues to be an active field of research. The above three papers leading to a number of technical terms were written in the forties of the last century when statistical methodology was still under development while working as a *technical worker* at the ISI without any guidance from others.

Terry Speed, Professor at the University of Berkeley, writes in IMS Bulletin, Jan -Feb, 2010 issue: *The 1940's were ungrudgingly C.R.Rao's. His 1945 paper, which contained the Cramer-Rao inequality, Rao-Blackwell Theorem, and the beginning of differential geometry of parameter spaces, will guarantee that, even had he done nothing else-but there **was** much else.*

In an article entitled "The Statistical Century" published in the *Royal Statistical Society News* (Vol. 22, Jan 1995), the Distinguished American Statistician and National Medal of Science Laureate, Efron stated:

Karl Pearson's famous chi-square paper appeared in the spring of 1900, an auspicious beginning to a wonderful century for the field of statistics. The first half of the century was the golden age of statistical theory, during which our field grew from ad hoc origins, similar to the current state of computer science, into a firmly grounded mathematical science. Men of the intellectual caliber of Fisher, Neyman, Pearson, Hotelling, Wald, Cramer and Rao were needed to bring statistical theory to maturity.

Other technical terms associated with Rao are: Fisher-Rao Theorem, Kagan-Linnik-Rao theorem, Rao's Quadratic entropy, Lau-Rao-Shanbagh theorems, Rao's Least Squares, Rao's paradoxes in Sample Surveys and Multivariate Analysis, Khatri-Rao product, Rao-Rubin Theorem and Rao-Yanoi inverse of matrices. He is the author of 14 books and about 300 research papers. Two of his books, *Linear Statistical Inference and Its Applications* and *Statistics and Truth* have been translated into several European languages, Japanese and Chinese.

Fellowships of Academic Societies: Rao received fellowship of Royal Society (FRS), UK, National Academy of Sciences, USA, American Academy of Arts and Science, Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Third World Academy of Sciences, all three national science academies in India, Honorary Fellowship of European Academy of Sciences. Kings College, Cambridge University, made him an Honorary Life Member, an honor given to only eleven persons at any time. He has been the president of all prestigious statistical associations, International Statistical Institute, Institute of Mathematical Statistics, USA and international Biometric Society.

Scientific Awards: Rao received Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar Award for research work, Emanuel and Carl Parzen prize for outstanding innovations in theory and practice of mathematical statistics, Mahalanobis International Prize, India Science Award, the most prestigious award instituted by the Government of India, and Bioassay Excellence Award by the Global Bio Business Forum.

Medals: Rao received the Gold Medal of Calcutta Univ., Wilks Memorial Medal of American Stat. Ass., Wilks Army Medal (USA), Guy Medal in Silver of Royal Statistical Society (UK), Megnadh Saha and Ramanujan Medals of Indian National Science Academy, J. C. Bose Gold Medal of Bose Institute, Mahalanobis Centenary Gold Medal of Indian Science Congress.

National Medal of Science, USA: Rao was honored by the President of USA with the prestigious National Medal of Science *“as a prophet of new age”* with the citation *“for his contributions to the foundations of statistical theory and multivariate statistical methodology and their applications, enriching the physical, biological, mathematical, economic and engineering sciences.* This honor is given every year only to five or six scientists from all disciplines.

National Awards: The Government of India awarded him Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award and instituted a prize in his honor to be given to a young statistician once in 2 years based on significant contributions to statistics. He was made a National Professor. The Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation named the road around the University of Hyderabad as Prof C. R. Rao Road and the City Corporation of Visakapatnam named the road around Andhra University as Prof. C. R. Rao Road. The Postal Department in Hyderabad issued the first day postal cover on Rao’s 90th birthday.

Institute named after C. R. Rao: Rao has been honored with the establishment of an Institute named as C. R. Rao Advanced Institute of Mathematics, Statistics and Computer Science (CRR AIMSCS). The institute located in the campus of the University of Hyderabad is expected to play an important role in developing research in mathematical sciences.

Academic positions held in India and USA: Rao held important positions as Director of Indian Statistical Institute and Jawaharlal Nehru Professor in India during a period of 40 years. He came to US at the age of 60 and served as University Professor at the University of Pittsburgh for 10 years and moved to Penn State as Eberly Professor of Statistics and worked for another 20 years. He is still active at the age of 90 doing research and participating in academic activities.

International conferences: International conferences were held in USA (80th birthday), India (80th& 90th), and several festschrift volumes were published in his honor.

A place in the history of statistics: A living legend, Rao earned a place in the history of statistics with his name appearing in the websites: *Figures from the History of Probability and Statistics* (35 major contributors) produced by Professor Aldych at the University of Southampton, UK, *Statisticians in History* by the American Statistical Association, *Chronology of Probabilists and Statisticians* (57 scientists from 16th to 20th centuries) produced by the University of Texas at Elpasso, *Founders of Statistics* (a list of 25) , and *History of Econometrics* by Jan Kiviat and in the book *Faces of Science*, by Mariana Cook and *Some Famous Indian Scientists* produced by Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

Married Life: Rao is married to Bhargavi for 62 years and has a daughter and a son. Bhargavi has two MA degrees and provided the intellectual atmosphere at home necessary for success in academic life.



Padma Vibhushan by President Narayana-2001



National Medal of Science by President Bush - 2002



Professor and Mrs. Mahalanobis with CR and Bhargavi Rao following the announcement of FRS - 1967



With Watson (of DNA) at the exhibition of "FACES OF SCIENCE" at National Academy of Sciences, New York – Sept. 9-16, 2005

Has the Original Paradigm of the Indian Statistical Institute Lost Its Place After P. C. Mahalanobis's Death? Some Personal Thoughts

Kamalendu Bhattacharya*
Raghunathpur, Kolkata

[Editor's Note: Many scholars have written extensively about the significant loss of glory over the years when it comes to Rabindranath Tagore's *Visvabharati*. The list includes some of the highest ranking scholars who were closely associated with *Visvabharati*'s inner circle. In a parallel movement, P. C. Mahalanobis founded the *Indian Statistical Institute* (ISI) in Calcutta with the blessings and support received from many, including Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore. The ISI was the dream child of Mahalanobis. He had founded it practically from nothing and he was heavily influenced with Tagore's own vision behind *Visvabharati*. What is ISI's national and international status now? An important dialogue ought to begin. Hence, I requested Kamalendu Bhattacharya, a long-time associate and an insider from ISI as well as a close confidant of the Mahalanobis family, to write about this famed Institute's history for our general readership. This article is a result of that.]

Prologue

When I joined the Office of the Administration in February, 1958 at the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI), there was no designation for its employees. Everyone, from top to bottom, was called a "worker". More customary system of designation by rank following the Government's guidelines was introduced in September, 1967.

Subsequently, I became the Executive Officer in Welfare Services within ISI. For all employees, there was one organization called "ISI Workers Organization". I was a Vice President of this Organization and ISI Cooperative Society for a long time. I was also elected as a representative of ISI non-scientific workers and became a Member of the Governing Council of the Institute. I retired from the Institute as Selection Grade Executive Officer (now called Senior Administrative Officer) in-charge of Personnel Department and Retirement Benefit Cell of the Institute in August, 1993. Since retirement, I have served as a member of the Governing Council of the Asiatic Society (1997-2005) and as the Secretary, ISI Retired Workers' Organization.



Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis
June 29, 1893-June 28, 1972

I am not a statistician or a mathematician. But, I have known ISI, its founder, and dealt with them up close as an insider for a very long time. I became very close to Late Sm. Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis and was in great terms for many years.



*A Life Member of the Asiatic Society

I especially remember fondly the period of truly phenomenal growth of the Institute. I distinctly remember its climb to the top, both within India and internationally, in terms of its just fame, prestige, and glory that poured in beyond anyone's imagination.

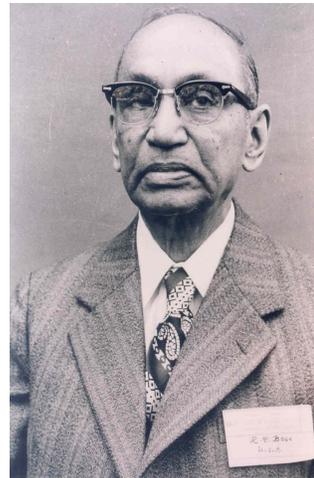
What has happened to this wonderful Institute lately? More importantly, why and how the Institute's paradigm shifted after the founder passed away. I believe that this shift was only natural. I will now briefly touch upon some of the issues that I believe are paramount.

A Basic Paradigm and ISI's Beginning

Everyone lives by an internal paradigm. Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis (PCM) was largely an applied physicist and an applied mathematician in his early career. His thought process was always aimed at practical applications of national importance through science and technology. PCM's internal paradigm was simply *applications of science and technology for the good of the country*. Though it is my personal observation, it is an important one to understand and appreciate the main thread that had led to the foundation and phenomenal growth of PCM's Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) under his reign. In more ways than one, the absence of the same paradigm after PCM's death lies as the root cause behind ISI's present less-than-glorified image.

PCM, without whom the Indian statistical movement would probably never have been initiated, was born on June 29, 1893 in Calcutta in the house built by his grandfather at 210 Cornwallis Street. His parents' family-friends and relatives were in the forefront of the nineteenth century awakening in India. After receiving B.Sc. (Honors, 1912) degree in physics from the University of Calcutta, PCM went for a casual visit to London in the summer of 1913. He was awarded a senior scholarship from King's College where he studied physics. Upon his return to India, he joined as a lecturer of physics in Presidency College, Calcutta in 1915. He became an eminent applied physicist of his time.

Within the Physics Department in Presidency College, PCM initiated the Statistical Laboratory in the late 1920's. This Statistical Laboratory eventually grew up to be the famed ISI on April 28, 1932. His energy and vision led to the phenomenal growth of a newly created discipline in India. Other brilliant individuals joined hands including R. R. Bahadur, D. Basu, R. C. Bose, S. N. Bose, D. B. Lahiri, S. K. Mitra, K. R. Nair, C. R. Rao, and S. N. Roy (listed alphabetically).



Left: Satyendra Nath Bose (January 1, 1894-February 4, 1974)
Right: Raj Chandra Bose (June 19, 1901-October 31, 1987)

As regards formation of ISI, PCM recalled (his circular dated 28 March 1958), "Since the formation of ISI started and after establishment of ISI as non-profit, non-Government, research institution as Society, the focal point of all activities was for building of nation and national causes of this country. In this background work started in 1918 or 1919. Early projects on rainfall and floods and agricultural field trials from 1923-28; small group working informally by 1928 or 1929. ISI established (with the group as working nucleus) in 1931-32 with one part time worker and first operating budget of less than Rs. 250/- in 1932-33, Sankhya started in 1933 (and also associated Eka Press), Research and training grant from ICAR of Rs. 2500/-, general research grant of Rs. 5000/- in 1936, grants for sample surveys of jute crop from 1937; gradual expansion of research, training and sample surveys till 1949. Institution of national sample survey (NSS) in 1950. Organisation of Research and Training School in 1951. Active participation in work on planning for national development from 1954. Rapid expansion since 1955. Staff of nearly 2000 with budget of Rs. 80

lakhs in 1957-58. Proposals for recognition of ISI as “Institution of national importance” (since 1953, draft bill of University type; draft ISI Bill introduced in Lok Sabha in 1956”).

It is on record that in 1941 Jawaharlal Nehru had asked for the help of the Institute with PCM at its helm for a statistical supplement to the reports on planning prepared by a committee set up by the Indian National Congress. It was Nehru, the Prime Minister of India, who sponsored through Lok Sabha and Rajyasabha the Indian Statistical Institute Act of 1959 declaring ISI as an “Institute of National Importance by the Parliament of India”. This also empowered ISI to award formal degrees in statistics. Nehru inspired PCM in all his national and international missions. Earlier, Chou En Lai visited ISI on December 9, 1956 and Ho Chi Min came on February 13, 1958. Those visits might have affected the political background of India at its highest level in the years that followed.



From left: P. C. Mahalanobis, R. A. Fisher
Extreme right: R. L. Plackett

Due to PCM’s initiative and involvement, ISI played a key role in formulating India’s second Five-Year Economic Plan in the post-independence era. In November 1954, Nehru came to ISI to inaugurate ISI’s undertaking of the plan-frame for the Second Five-Year Plan of India. Large-scale surveys were initiated and the National Sample Survey (NSS) was created. The National Statistical Service was established and PCM succeeded in obtaining the recognition of statistics as a discipline, a separate identity from mathematics, at the Indian Science Congress.

Meanwhile, Statistical Quality Control Division started forming in 1952 and activities started in 1953 in Bombay as a part of the Unit of the Institute. The first computer, HEC-2M, was installed at ISI in 1956. I cannot be very sure of this, but possibly this was the first instance of large-scale computer installation in an academic and research institution within India. Thereafter, PCM vehemently pushed to install more powerful computers in ISI from time to time, but the workers of ISI strongly resisted installation of such computers. While the grass-root movement at the time was genuinely motivated by the apprehension of losing their jobs to a computer, the movement itself was driven largely by the politics of fear. I was also a party to this at the time.

Later, I understood that it was wrong for us to oppose PCM’s much larger vision for a greater good. I understand now that whatever PCM decided to do, he was in a class by himself.

PCM was instrumental in creating a continuous flow of scientific exchanges and visits, particularly with U.S.A. and many East European Countries. He created a vigorous statistical infrastructure from one corner to another within India at all imaginable levels. He was a true ambassador of statistical science. Many internationally famous visitors came to ISI repeatedly and PCM and his wife, Sm. Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis hosted them all with open arms.

PCM’s Research: A Brief Account

First, let me admit that I am not qualified to address PCM’s large domain of research. Hence, it will be unfair of me to comment on his research. Perhaps, the best I can hope to do is to superficially touch upon few isolated items in layman’s terms for the general readership.

Apart from numerous accomplishments of national importance, PCM published 5 books and 210 research papers. On numerous occasions, he wrote very detailed and substantial circulars and letters professing issues regarding

utilization of human resources, mankind, development of the country, environment, health, scientific policies of ISI, work ethics, scientific freedom and other important matters. If we add these extraordinary items in his bibliography, PCM's list of publications will have well over 1000 items.

PCM's early papers on meteorology, anthropology, economic planning, flood control, psychology, multivariate analysis, design of experiments and sample surveys are particularly noteworthy. He was interested in all aspects of science, including biology, geology, genetics, botany, and speech recognition. He was also a literary figure and a literary critic of his time.

PCM used to refer to statistics as "technology". This philosophy was his heart's passion. He welcomed scientists from different disciplines to come and join ISI for collaborating research projects using statistics as the key technology. In large-scale surveys, PCM pioneered the idea of gathering samples in successive stages to increase efficiency.

PCM received the honors awarded by the Government of India including the title *Padmabibhusan*. During the centennial year 1993, the Government of India issued a *postage stamp* with PCM's picture on it. This is how the masses of India celebrated statistics and quantitative literacy!

PCM became President (1950) of the Indian Science Congress. Many other academies from India and all over the world bestowed honors upon him, including the Fellowship of the Royal Society, the Foreign Membership of the USSR Academy of Sciences, and the Statistical Advisor to the Cabinet of Indian Government since 1949, Gold Medal from Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences. He received a number of honorary degrees including the Honorary Ph.D. degree from the University of Calcutta and the Deshikottama (Honorary D.Litt., 1961) from Viswabharati.

A Humanist at Work

With regard to clarify some general perception about ISI, PCM wrote in a circular (dated 8 October 1951): "In order to act as a spearhead in common endeavour for national welfare, the Institute must function as an integral whole and not divide itself up into sectional interests or activities ... Specialization is necessary and desirable but only as a means to the end of serving the purpose of the Institute as a whole ...". On all issues regarding the needs of the workers, PCM explained his thoughts for grooming any suggestion concretely. In 1956, the ISI Club along with Kalpana Joshi and H. K. Chaturvedi discussed with PCM an urgent need to form a Workers' Organisation so that the workers in ISI could collectively vent their ideas and aspirations to ultimately help the administration to run ISI with greater efficiency (Reference: Memorandum issued after discussion with PCM on 24 August 1956). Subsequently, the ISI Workers Organisation was formed and soon afterward it became an integral part of the Institute.

PCM formed Kalyanshree unit in ISI under the patronage of Sm. Nirmal Kumari Mahalanobis to generate training and work for women to increase self-esteem by providing some limited financial independence in their lives. We see that the modern politicians are yet to pass the "women bill" in the Parliament. In the silver jubilee year of ISI, PCM appealed to the workers: "... There should not be a single illiterate worker in the Institute. A regular campaign should be started on this occasion to achieve such an end. ..." (PCM's circular dated 20 March 1956). Now, after 60 years of India's independence, a genuine concern may be raised as follows: Do the politicians of this country really want to see our people fully educated? Perhaps not, and it may be because the "game" of political exploitation of the people becomes that much harder when those same people are "educated". Regardless of any political doctrine, why should any political power require that its people be educated because ultimately that can lead to destruction of one's political power-house itself? PCM was a true humanist. The run-of-the-mill politicians are not.

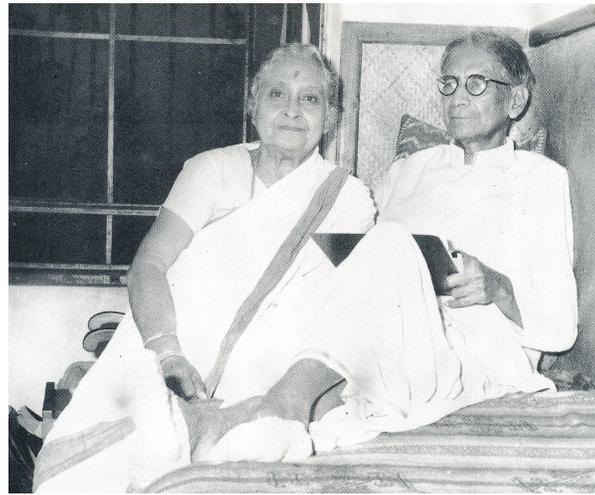
1972: The Year PCM Passed Away

On a number of occasions during PCM's life-time, attempts were made to split NSS and ISI by the Government of India. Obviously, such intended moves were motivated by the politics of the day. Such a split would have helped the politicians in power to manipulate both the output and conclusions derived from national surveys to cater their vested interests.

But, because of strong opposition from PCM, the Government could not dare translate its "plan" into "action" a number of times. It was only PCM who could publish a report showing who were controlling the country's monetary affairs and its capital and what was the size of this filthy rich group country-wide. According to PCM, any construction of a survey design and its implementation followed by appropriate analysis of data and a final report ought to be prepared objectively by a scientific institution with an open and independent mind. That way, one could hope to arrive at the truth in the interest of future developments in India rather than enriching the vested interests of politicians in power.

Eventually, in May 1972, the Government of India decided to take over the administration of the NSS from the hands of ISI. PCM believed that a large number of employees would not opt for the Government service. On the contrary, most of the NSS employees and some from the common services opted for the Government service. They felt that their jobs would be more secured that way with pension benefits which were not available at the time in ISI. PCM was shocked to see this move and he immediately formed a new Unit called the Survey Research Centre. He formed a core committee with D. B. Lahiri, Nemai Ghosh, and others hoping to form a new kind of “NSS” in the Institute.

In June, 1972, Mahalanobis was hospitalized for some surgery. He was recovering well. On June 27, like every other day, from his hospital bed he cleared some files and wrote letters. He gave dictations on some policy matters regarding the Institute’s affairs and its future. Perhaps he felt that the end was near! This superbly powerful, dynamic and productive visionary’s life came to a halt in Calcutta on June 28, exactly one day shy of his 79th birthday.



Nirmal Kumari and Prasanta Chandra.
Nursing home, Calcutta, May 24, 1972

Post-PCM Era: What Could Have Gone Wrong?

After PCM’s demise, no one from ISI emerged as a unique all-India figure of international repute with a true “vision” to put forward a case with the Government strongly enough, scientifically and politically, explaining the intricate reasons to bring back or maintain a scaled but effective version of NSS under the umbrella of ISI. After PCM, no one from ISI had a comparable academic stature or political power that could come even remotely close to what the Government was used to confront in PCM. At the expense of a vacuum of this kind to nurture ISI, it made itself wide open for a bad fall. Unfortunately, after demise of PCM, the Survey Research Centre as proposed by PCM did not materialize.

Interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research and teaching were considered essential for the field of statistics to grow for the true good of our society, both at home and abroad, in the 20th century. PCM practiced, marketed and implemented that vision vigorously through the model he had built within ISI. To manage this huge enterprise, PCM surely faced “Heads” of different programs with their own individual agendas. But, PCM could handle them effectively. Rarely, anyone would have had guts to argue with PCM once he had made up his mind about an issue on hand.

PCM had the technical know-how and administrative skill plus his conviction to foster multi-disciplinary culture in both research and teaching in ISI. PCM had a big vision for India and he saw the importance of interdisciplinary research in the 1930’s. Talk about a genius at work way ahead of his time by nearly 75 years! PCM and ISI became too successful whereas the Western world remained astonished at PCM’s rate of all-round success. PCM’s global view lost its relevance after he passed away.

After 1972, in order to continue to bear fruit, the ISI’s structure needed the best bureaucrat who was also an internationally recognized and respected scientist. PCM was just the right person to fit the bill at the right time! There are some small pockets generating bits and pieces of “hope”: For example, some colleagues in genetics and computer science at ISI are now fostering a new horizon called bioinformatics. There may be some other groups working diligently.

There are still some brilliant and hard working scientists in ISI. Their collective leadership may try to place the ISI on rail to fulfill the objects of ISI for which it was created under the leadership of PCM. On the contrary, some questions were raising again and again why the units like Geology, Bio-Science, LRU etc. should remain in ISI. There were super-brilliant scientists on the top after PCM, who unfortunately, were sometimes working on their own behalf without big or small views about India. I may also add that the political environment, both in and around ISI, at the time did not help in nurturing PCM's original paradigm in any way.

My main point is this: Like in all other institutions in India, after PCM's demise ISI had too many leaders. But, there was no genuine leader in ISI, and now too, who would build and shake a system in India as a whole like PCM did so elegantly for so long. India seems to have lost the environment to nurture someone like PCM.

At best, India may hope to breed and nurture mediocre leaders, academic and otherwise, so that the present political system's narrow and inward visions may perpetuate for a long time to come. Our political leaders are not visionaries of any kind. Politics aside, the sun has set on visionaries such as Tagore, Nehru or Radhakrishnan. I view PCM as their protégé.

In the last 10-20 years, India has not favored modern and innovative approaches for capital generation suitable to nurture big industrial and scientific initiatives. The Western world has progressed tremendously in areas such as genetics, biology, computer science, environmental science, engineering, health science, mathematics, physics, chemistry, and statistics realizing the importance of interdisciplinary and multi-disciplinary research and teaching. They have put together a pointed approach and they also spend lots of money on this. One really needs lots of money today, lot more than PCM needed in the 1930's-1970's to foster basic program in science and technology. Now, the Indian government is unlikely to award that kind of necessary but very large scale funding to ISI without strict governmental interference or micro management.

Now, the world is fragmented, the families are fragmented, the economies are fragmented, and politics certainly controls lives and livelihoods on top of everything else. I hear about globalization in India. It is a pity, but it is true that globalization is only a term in the books! One needs someone like PCM to work it to its fullest. But, where is my "PCM" in the 21st century?

Remembering PCM when I close my eyes, I see a straight tall man walking from the north end to the south end of the ISI complex, looking at every corner in his way, and loudly speaking: Do not waste water. Switch off the lights and fans in empty rooms to save natural resources of this poor country. Plant more trees to get refreshed with the smell of greens and flowers.

My Personal Plea

Before I move to something else, I must mention this: PCM's scientific publications in journals and numerous abstracts from his conference presentations all over the globe, especially those presented at the Indian Science Congress are well-documented. We must be thankful for A. Mahalanobis's written biography on "*Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis*" under national biography series (National Book Trust: New Delhi, 1983). But, his other writings, the letters and circulars, were inspirational and necessary for nation building at the time. These are difficult, if not impossible, to come by. ISI administration and researchers should form a team to collect-preserve-disseminate such material in the archive of ISI to carry out research on the history of the Indian Statistical heritage and its origin. . This material should be made available to anyone who may be interested in researching on history of statistics in general. This is my personal plea to the esteemed friends and colleagues who are running today's ISI.

Concluding Comments

Let me conclude by mentioning the name of Kabi Guru Rabindranath Tagore who had a similar stature with analogous views of PCM. That's what brought them together in the first place. But, observe what has happened to Viswabharati! We can blame politics or we can blame something else. But, the main pitiful thing is that Tagore is absent from this scene. No one at Viswabharati was capable to continue the journey along the path of Tagore's thoughts and visions in any sense after his demise. Why should ISI be any different? After all, history tends to repeat itself, unless we all grow up. To tell you the truth, we must.

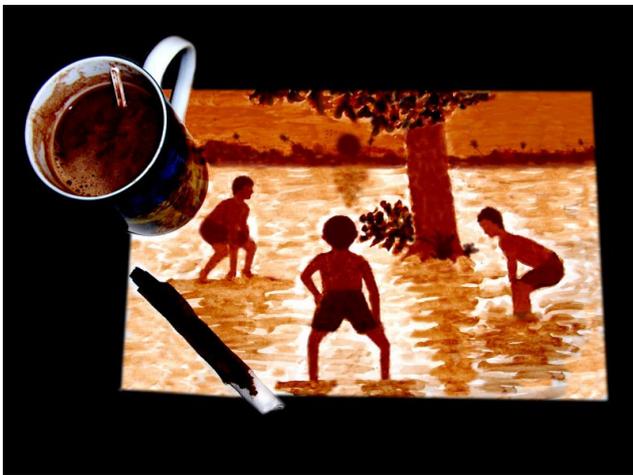
Three Paintings

Souvik Roy*

Maastricht University, Netherlands

The painter wrote, “I am sending one painting with water on our coffee table (top row: right panel) and another one with coffee (top row: left panel). These were derived from my own experiments with colors, or the span of colors, inherent when water or coffee was used as a medium! I have two different views for the ‘water painting’. Actually, the main idea is to use the shadow effect, that’s why I took two photos from two angles. The third painting (second row) shows a very simple sketch of ‘hands’.”

He wrote about the water painting, “A painting is a projection of the infinite dimensional colorful nature into a finite dimensional space, any number of dimensions work as long as that is more than one”. About the coffee painting, he also wrote, “... one always has a brush, a paper, and some colors to paint a picture, but what one needs most is to find those and then think!”



*By own admission, the painter refers to himself as a ‘player’ by profession. Others, however, call him a game-theorist. He loves and regards mathematics as no less than God.

Guptipara: The Birth Place of Barowari Pujo

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In 2006 Pluto, the ninth planet of our solar system lost its status of a planet and was demoted to the status of a minor planet. Although Pluto lost its status as a planet, it led to the addition of a new word in the English vocabulary. In January 2007, a new word “Plutoed” meaning “to demote or devalue someone or something” was added to the English dictionary.

The stories of new words being added to the vocabulary of different languages in the world have always been interesting, but probably none of this can match the addition of the word “Borowari” in the Bengali vocabulary. “Barowari” means community, and is often used as “Borowari Durga Pujo” to signify a community Durga pujo organized by collecting subscriptions from the members.

The word Borowari originated from Guptipara, in present day Hooghly. In 1761 (1790 according some other sources), few men were stopped from taking part in a household Durga puja. Twelve of them formed a committee and organized the first Barowari (baro = twelve and yaar = friend) Durga pujo. It was reported in the May 1820 issue of The Friends of India magazine, which was published from Srerampore. But, sadly there are no concrete evidences of when the word “Barowari” made its entry into the Bengali dictionary.

Guptipara is a great place for Bengal sweet lovers. The most famous of these is the *Gupo Sandesh*, considered by many to be Bengal’s first branded sweet – meat. It is made of channa extracted from cow’s milk. Guptipara is also the birthplace of sweet maker *Bhola Moira*, who was famous not for sweet making skills but for his Kabi gaan, folk songs. The famous musical duel of Bhola Moira and the Anglo – Indian Antony Firingi, has been made immortal by Uttam Kumar’s movie, *Antony Firingi*.

But today the primary attraction of Guptipara is the set of numerous temples. Located in a single temple complex, we find the four Vaishnava temples. Chaitanya, Brindabanchandra, Ramchandra and Krishnachandra temples together offer an interesting mixture of Bengal’s architectural content in its designing of temples.

These temples were constructed in different periods with Chitanya temple being the oldest one. It was built by Bishwar Roy during mid 16th century. Built in *jora-bangla* style, this temple consists of two thatched hut shaped adjoining structures. The temple is said to contain some of Bengal’s earliest terracotta carvings but sadly they have not survived the test of time.

The 60 feet high Brindabanchandra Temple, built in 1810, dominates the temple complex. Although the *aat-chala* (eight sloped roof) temple lacks the terracotta work, it is largely compensated by colored fresco on both outer and inner walls. This temple is flanked on the right by Ramchandra Temple and on the left by Krishnachandra Temple.



*Travelling is Rangan's passion and he lives to travel, but he does not travel to live. A post graduate in Business Management from Calcutta University, he skipped campus interview for the love of travelling and teaching. He teaches mathematics and statistics at a number of management and IT colleges in Kolkata on a freelance basis. Travel has taken him to numerous places including remote corners of the Himalayas, but he is no less fascinated by the heritage of Bengal. He is a regular name in the travel columns of leading Indian newspapers.

Photo 1 shows Brindabanchandra Temple, the tallest temple in the Guptipara temple complex, is 60 feet high and seen through the arch of the entrance gate.

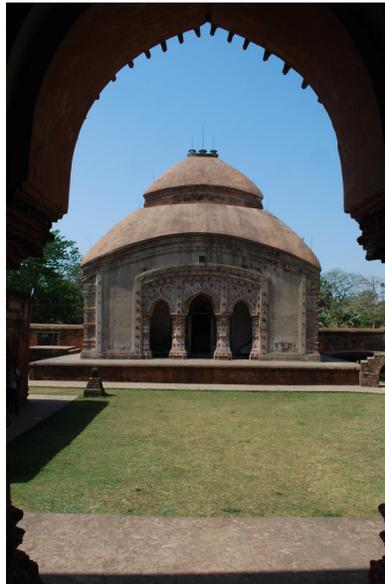


Photo 1

The *ek-ratna* (one-pinnacled) Ramchandra Temple, was constructed in late 18th century by the king of Sheraphuli, Harishchandra Roy. It is definitely the most elegant temple within this complex. The one storied temple crowned with an octagonal turret contains rich terracotta work on the front and southern walls of the ground floor as well as on the walls of the turret. The terracotta work often depicts war scenes from Ramayana, royal processions, marine voyages as well as scenes from day-to-day life. **Photo 2** shows a terracotta plaque depicting a royal procession.



Photo 2

The Krishnachandra Temple was constructed in 1745 during the rule of Nawab Ali Vardi Khan and follows the *aat-chala* style of architecture. All four temples stand on elevated platforms and are connected internally by narrow arched passageways.

Although Guptipara has the distinction of initiating Bengal's first Durga pujo, in itself Durga pujo utsav does not constitute as Guptipara's primary festival. When it comes to festivals in Guptipara, the first and foremost item that comes into mind is Guptipara's towering and colorful chariot. Being a Vaishnav centre, *Ratha Yatra* (chariot festival) is the major festivity and prime attraction in this area. **Photo 3** shows a tangle of ropes that lies on the foreground of the nine pinnacled rath, decorated with colourful festoons & banners.

The Brindabanchandra Temple houses the deities Jaganath, Balaram & Subhadra. On the day of the Ratha Yatra, the deities are carried out by the towering *rath* (chariot) to another nearby temple, known

as *Masir Bari*, where they are kept and worshipped for 7 days. This period culminates with the journey that is retraced by the *rath*, known as *ulto rath*, and the deities are brought back to their original place, the Brindabanchandra temple.



Photo 3

The gigantic nine pinnacled rath is decorated with colored festoons and banners and is fitted with wooden horses and several wooden statues. The multi wheeled rath is pulled by four thick ropes, out of which one is reserved for the women. A rope in the rear serves as the brake.

One needs to recall that *Ratha Yatra* is held during the rainy season. Hence, the rath is pulled by the thousands of devotees, both men and women, through muddy and slushy ground in a wild rampage. It seems like a miracle that the event goes on with the kind of a stampede that follows. But, the whole event is heavily monitored by the police who clear the crowd of additional thousands of assembled devotees who come to watch in order to make way for the rath.

The seven day period between the rath yatra and ulto rath yatra is marked with a mela (fair) of a gigantic proportion. The mela is complete with merry-go-rounds, magic and circus shows as well as makeshift stalls selling everything from house-ware to jewelries to decorative showpieces.



Photo 4

Even today, Vishnav singers perform reminding one of the glorious days of Bholā Moira and Antony Firingi. Last but not the least happens to be the numerous food stalls selling papad bhaja to hot jilipis. **Photo 4** shows a sweet maker frying jilipis in one of the numerous stalls during Guptipara's *Rather Mela*. The age-old fair has also gone through the process of evolution and now-a-days, it includes items such as egg rolls and chowmein. These days, egg rolls and chowmein are among the most preferred food items while stunt-bike-rides form a new source of entertainment. **Photo 5** shows a vaishnav singer performing during Guptipara's *rather mela*. **Photo 6** shows Ratha Yatra with the crowd.



Photo 5

Today, Guptipara is a town in the district of Hooghly, West Bengal. Located nearly 75 km away from Kolkata, Guptipara takes pride to its own railway station on Bandel–Katwa rail line. It is well connected with Howrah, West Bengal. A visit to Guptipara will definitely provide a deep insight into Bengal's rich cultural and social heritage. It would also provide a humbling opportunity to appreciate some of the richest terracotta work that has unfortunately been on the list of extinct or nearly extinct art forms from Bengal.



Photo 6

JOURNEY TO VINDHYACHAL

Mathew N. Schmalz*
The College of the Holy Cross
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When the Editor, Nitis Mukhopadhyay, asked me to share some reflections on Indian culture, I found the prospect daunting. Although I lived in India for four years, and teach South Asian Religions at the College of the Holy Cross, it is difficult for me to encapsulate my experiences and impressions in a short piece that would not seem hopelessly superficial. But when I was informed that my reflections would become part of a souvenir in honor of *Durga Puja*, everything became clear to me. You see, for me too, meeting Devi has been an important experience—at a place called Vindhyachal. With your permission, let me share how I got there.

I first went to India when I was a junior in College in 1985. I went to study at Banaras Hindu University (BHU) as part of a program sponsored by the University of Wisconsin. I studied Hindi and Urdu intensively over the summer, and continued that study at BHU. But what was most important about that year was my experience with the Pandey family, with whom I lived.

Hriday Nath Pandey, Pita-ji, was a retired civil servant. He and his wife had three sons—Ajay, Sanjay, and Ramu and two daughters, called by their nicknames Guddy and Pinky. The Pandey family had a long relationship with the Wisconsin Program and they graciously invited me to stay with them.



Figure 1. Left: Pita-ji with her daughters; Right: Author chewing *paan* during his first visit to India in 1985

Theirs was a middle class home on the banks of the Ganges and I had a small room on the second floor, just big enough for my wooden *chowki* and mattress. I remember waking up on the first morning, to hear Pita-ji chanting from an adjacent room:

रघुपति राघव राजाराम/पतित पावन सीताराम/ईश्वर अल्लाह तेरो नाम /सब को सन्मति दे भगवान



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My Hindi was good enough to understand the words, but not their meaning. The room adjacent to mine was the family shrine. Every morning Pita-ji would rise at 5 am, bathe, and then sit in the family shrine, chanting Sanskrit *slokas* and singing Hindi *bhajans*. As Pita-ji explained to me “Raghupati Raghav” was Mahatma Gandhi’s favorite hymn—it was sung in praise of Lord Ram, the scion of the Raghu lineage, but also in recognition to the divine principle that manifests itself in all religions. And so Pita-ji pointed to the images in the shrine—Lord Ram, with Sita and Hanuman; Durga-ji triumphing over Mahisha; and Lord Krishna dancing with the Gopis. Pita-ji explained that they would put a picture of Jesus in there for me if I wished—all gods were different, but they were all still One.

The Pandey family lived a fairly traditional Brahman life and I tried my best to adapt to the rhythms of their household. After bathing in the morning and before going off to school, all family members touched their foreheads to Pita-ji’s feet, and I did as well. Of course, the Pandey family was vegetarian and so I respected those commitments myself as long as I lived with them. For me, initially, the most difficult part was the lack of personal space. When I first explained this to Pita-ji, he smiled because I was the only one living in the house with his own room. But I eventually grew accustomed to this closeness and relished the family time spent over tea or in front of the television for special events like a cricket match or a film by Raj Kapur or Guru Dutt.

But my real introduction to the closeness of the Pandey family came when arrangements were being made for the marriage of the eldest daughter, Guddy. Then I learned about the network of relationships that sustained the extended Indian family. I also learned about the pressures brought about by dowry and the social expectation to have elaborate wedding receptions. I also learned about the joyful but painful transition that marriage brings. The night before Guddy’s wedding, we all spent time sitting with Pita-ji until the wedding party arrived. I remember Pita-ji explaining to me how arranged marriages usually work, even though the initial transition can be jarring. As he concluded his thoughts, all he could say to me was, “Yeh life hai.”

After the wedding, Ajay and I decided to go on a trip. Ajay was a few months older than I was and he had the responsibilities of arranging the wedding celebration and watching over the guests. Ajay said we needed to go to Vindhyachal, in the Mirazpur district, near the Pandey’s ancestral home in Chunar. He had made a vow to Ma Vindhyavasini at Vindhyachal for the successful outcome of the wedding and now it was time to return.

Ajay invited two friends to come along with us: Arun and Raju—although Raju insisted on being called “Bacchan-ji” since Amitabh was his favorite actor. And so we rode motorcycles to Vindhyachal and did many of things young men do—talked about girls, did motorcycle tricks, and even guiltily shared a bottle of Rosy Pelican beer.

When we entered the temple at Vindhyachal, our laughter turned to shouts of “Jai Mata Vindhyavasini.” Ajay had explained to me that Ma Vindhyavasini will grant any wish to those who come to her with an open heart. It was Ma Vindhyavasini who had granted Ajay’s wish about his sister’s wedding and so he encouraged me to ask for something from her. This I did and had a red *rakhi* tied on my right wrist. Ajay told me to wear the *rakhi* until it fell off on its own.

Although I now write a religion blog for the *Washington Post*, I never have mentioned this in print before. I left India the summer of 1986 and returned to Amherst College to finish my degree. My main goal, however, was to return to India anyway I could. And so I applied for a Watson Fellowship to do independent study in India about the cultural significance of *paan*.

Paan chewing was a habit that Pita-ji and I shared. On the very day I received the Watson Fellowship, the *rakhi* from Vindhyachal fell from my wrist. When I returned to Banaras and I told Pita-ji and Ajay about this and they weren’t surprised—after all, I had asked Ma Vindhyavasini to let me come back to India as soon as possible. And so since then, every year I have gone to India, I have made sure to go to Vindhyachal. I went there for the *mundan* of Ajay’s son, and I brought my finance there as well. I am a Roman Catholic and an American, but that did not matter at Vindhyachal or with the Pandey family. Instead all that mattered was having an open heart.

কবিতা

পার্থপ্রতিম ঘোষ*
কলকাতা

দেবীর জন্যে

আমার বেঁচে থাকা এখন এক দেবীর জন্যে ডাক ছেড়ে কাঁদে,
আমার সুখে থাকা দেবীর চোখের তারায়,
আমার হারিয়ে যাওয়া, হারিয়ে ফিরে আসা,
সব কিছুই দেবী জড়িয়ে ধরে থাকে ।

বটবৃক্ষের মত ধ্যান মগ্ন বক, মন না হারিয়ে ফেলা মৌন তাপজ
কুঁড়ি ফুটে জেগে ওঠা ভোরের প্রথম ফুল,
কান পেতে শুনতে পাওয়া হাত শব্দ ,
সব নিয়ে বসে থাকি আমি,
দেবীর ক্রুর ইশারায়,
ডাক দিয়ে যদি দেখা হয় পল্লবের বলে ।

সেই দেবীর জন্যে একটা কবিতা লেখা হবে বলে,
আমি পেরিয়ে এসেছি কত মাঠ, পথ, ঘাট,
শান্ত সরোবরে ঢিল ছুঁড়ে দেখি
এগিয়ে চলে চেউয়ের পর চেউ ।

ঘুন ঘুন করে একমেয়ে কেঁদে চলা,
রাতের আকাশে শুকতারার জেগে থাকা,
নদীর ধারে ভেসে আসা মলয় বাতাস ,
বিবর্ণ জীবন রঙীন স্বপ্ন ।

সব নিয়ে বসে থাকি আমি,
সেই দেবীর জন্যে কবিতা লিখব বলে ।

ফিরে এসো ভালবাসা

ফিরে এসো ভালবাসা তোমাকে ছুঁয়ে বলি -
আমি বেঁচে আছি ,
রাতের গভীরে থাকা এক তারা দেখা দাও,
আমি চাঁক কার করে বলি
আমি আছি ,
ভীষণ ভাবে বেঁচে আছি ফিরে এসো ভালবাসা ।

এতো কাদা যেটে পথে প্রান্তরে,
ভালো থাকা মানে বিষণ্ণতা,
ঘুমিয়ে পরা রাতের পাড়া
আঁধার নামে শহর জোড়া ।
ফিরে এসো ভালবাসা .।

এখন শীতকাল বড় কষ্টে কাটে
পাতা বরা আঁচ নিভু নিভু,
ঘুমিয়ে পরা একমেয়ে জীবন,
তুমি আসবে বলেই তাই,
আমি হারিয়ে যেতে চাই ।

মৃত্যুবত মানবেরা আন্বাহদে চাঁক কার করে
তুমি ফিরে এসো ভালবাসা,
আমিতো এখনও বেঁচে থাকতে চাই



*An engineer by profession. Inspired by his mother, wrote poetry from an early age. In his youth, edited a Bengali *Little Magazine*, *Kamellia*. Writes poetry to overcome failures and mundaneness of day-to-day life.

কবিতার ঝড়

পলা গুপ্ত*

টালিগঞ্জ, কলকাতা

প্রলাপ

পলা

এই ঘর বার সব নিছক এখন
বেদুইন জীবন তরা সুটকেশে।

গৃহদেবতারা সব ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে তাই
আমি যাবার, তুমি বাড়ি আগলিয়ে।

কতদিন তুমি আমি দাৰা খেলিনি,
ফেরার ফ্লাইটে তা মনে পড়ে গেল।

বিশাল ব্রিজ দেখলাম শপিং মল এ,
দিক্বি, মানাবে কি নিছক সংসারে?

আমি কিছ্র আগের থেকে ভাল আছি
এবার দু'ঘন্টায় একটুও পা ফোলানি।

ক্যাৰ এ এয়ারপোর্টে আসার সময় মাত্র
সাত টাকা খুচরো ফেরৎ নিলাম না।

দক্ষিণ ভারতীয় সুরে থ্যাঙ্ক ম্যাডামো,
তিন তিন বার, মনে হল সত্যয় পেলাম।

আজকাল পয়সার দাম নেই জেনেও
মধ্যবিত্ত মন নিয়ে কয়েন জমিয়ে যাই।

তার ফল বুঝলাম চেক ইন এর সময়
মেটাল ভিটেকটরের কোপে পড়লাম,

আমার ভ্যানিটি কে ছানবিন করে পেল
মুঠো দুই একটাকা, দুটাকা, পাঁচটাকা।

ক্যামেরা টা তলিয়ে গেল তল্লাশি তে
বারাসতের টুকরো সবুজ ধরা হলনা।

দমদমে নামার আগে ইটখোলা
আর সবুজ কাপেট মন্দ লাগে না।

এবার ফেরার সময় কানে সুমন ছিল,
রবি ঠাকুর, সে, আর মধ্যাহ্নের মেঘ।

সংসার মন সব সুটকেশেই থাকুক
এবার ও তিন সেট চামচ কিনেছি।

এক সুটকেশে বল আর ফত ধরে
কুড়ি কেজি বাঁধা আকাশ সংসারে।

কল্লুব মস্তন

পলা

আবার দেখেছি তোমার স্বপ্ন হে মহাপুরুষ
বিশর্জিত ভোরের দলছুট নীলাভ রোদে
শেষ প্রহরের কুয়াশার শৈত্য আর্তনাদে
তুমি মস্তন করতে এসেছিলে আমার কল্লুব।

আবার রেখেছি তোমায় গৃহিত করে ভূমিতে
একটু রক্তপাত নয়, শুধু অনিবার্য অশ্রুপাত,
আমি বার বার করি আপন সম্পদ নিপাত,
বিশ্বদুমাত্র কল্পিত হই না তোমায় সমাধি দিতে।

আবার আসবে জানি আমার এ শিথিল সত্ত্বায়
আশ্চর্য হ্রৈর্ষ, এভাবে তবু হারি কেন আবার
চলার পথে আঘাত করে নৃশংস মুষ্টি তোমার
এত প্রাণেতে আছ কতবার নাশ করব তোমায়।

এই শেষ বার শুনে রাখো হে প্রেমহীন মদমত্ত
আমি নই অবিনশ্বর, প্রকৃতির মত নির্ভয় আমি
কোথাও নেই বন্ধন আমার সব শূণ্য করেছে তুমি
পড়ে থেকে এই জগতে একা পাবে না আমার সত্ত্ব।

ভবিষ্যতের অপমৃত্যু

পলা

উত্তপ্ত রাজনৈতিক বাকবিতস্তা হাতাহাতির পর,
এক পাটি হাওয়াই চটি, হেঁড়া, রাস্তার পাশে,
সাক্ষী ছিল তোমার নিরীহ পথচারীর ভূমিকার।
পরীক্ষা দিয়ে আর ফেরা হয়নি ঘরে সময় মত,
অনেকের মত হারিয়ে গেছ উল্লুখণ্ডে হয়ে,
রাজপথ শোপিণ্ডের স্রোতে ধুয়ে দিয়ে গেছ,
তবু আরও রক্ত চায় পশিকের স্বদেশের মাটি,
সব প্রাণ এক একথা বোঝাতে পারত তারাই।



*An established poet and her work has appeared in leading magazines from Kolkata

KASHMIR: A GHAZAL *for Lalita*

Patrick Colm Hogan*
University of Connecticut-Storrs

Kashmir is what you've made of her--
everything that's lost; everything that is not here.

I like to think that, when I'm a thousand miles away,
I too become a part of that fantastical Kashmir,

no less naturally there than Vitasta or Jhelum;
my voice across the telephone like the soft evening prayer

that, every day, was what you'd hear before loudspeakers
came to blare that Hindu government must leave Kashmir.

Or Sankaracarya's temple, sarada script, the Goddess in the form of ice,
the songs your mother sang on our wedding night, too far away to hear—

even burqas, and invigilators of morality, who checked the girls for eye shadow and rouge,
everything, both good and bad, that constitutes your memory of lost Kashmir.

Your father too, renowned as a poet and a seer,
but, for most of his own family, a sort of ranting, senile Lear.

He saw the final unity of nature and all souls,
a philosophy, he claimed, inspired by just the beauty of Kashmir.

Who would have dreamed that he would have to sell his land,
and move to a strange state to live out his final years,

that first his father's home would be burned down to the bare ground
by militants demanding, now, their own Free Kashmir,

as if the government knew about the books and papers there
or, had they known, as if the loss would make them shed a single tear.

When away, am I as native as the men who fled, or the ones that set the flames--
as if my name were Kalam, but spelled queerly, like "cashmere"?



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I think our separation here pervades your memory of what's no longer there
like incense in your grandfather's puja room once pervaded the morning air.

But, of course, all this is nothing like the grief passed on from home to home, and fear,
from the decade's more than thirty-thousand dead in Jammu and Kashmir.

Still, we have our own shaikhs, soldiers, and politicians who,
now as always, have managed to keep crazy Manju from his dear

Laila. Some Christian scholars patrol the borderlines of our curricula
like Indian and Pakistani troops guard the Zojila Pass between the two Kashmirs,

while the only revolutionary goal you sought to reach
was to teach the continuity of Kuan, and Kalidasa, and Shakespeare.

But this is not unique to us; the shaikh and his Police of God
are everywhere—Washington, Ayodhya, Jerusalem, Kashmir.

There is no other place where we could go
to free ourselves from the president and the emir;

everywhere, we—and even the majority there—would seem too queer;
each place throughout the world is some version of Kashmir.

Your father sits in his corner, tears rolling down his cheeks.
He never speaks about it, but we all know what has brought him to despair.

He thinks that death is coming near and he will never see
the seasons change as he used to see them in his childhood Kashmir.

Being there is worse. Every four hours, every day, for fifteen years
someone in the valley has been shot, bombed, burned, or disappeared.

But once, it was a new moon night, without even a star,
and no electric power anywhere in your distant village of Kashmir--

I couldn't see an inch before my face; I heard the nearby river,
but it seemed as if you all just vanished in the air.

I didn't dare to move until your cousin took my hand and steered me clear.
Such simple acts of kindness also are Kashmir.

When you are gone, it's like that here, and with every step
I wonder if I will touch the ground or tumble off the pier

into the icy mountain water, caressed by Parvati's soft hands,
flowing to the lowest point—the valley of Kashmir.

Alone, what can I do? It's as if I've lost a skill
passed down for many generations, but now grown rare;

my hands without you are like the hands of master weavers, men
who fled, without their loom or wool, the soldiers' bullets in Kashmir.

No, I have it back to front. You are the weaver. I am the wool.
All at loose ends, I should have been a pashmina shawl for you to wear.

I am like a houseboat without a lake, a garland without a bride,
a kangri without coal, an India without Kashmir.

In moments of filmy melodrama, I fear even with my final breath
I'll whisper that single word of longing still, like Jehangir.

But maybe someone will take me by the hand and lead me over the clear stream
to a home that I have never seen, but which was always near;

then, in the end, we won't be exiles any more—
me from you, and you from your Kashmir.



সংকটের ব্যবচ্ছেদ

জয়ন্ত নাগ*
চেশার, কানেটিকাট

সংকট

কিছু কিছু মানুষকে অনেক কাছে নিয়ে আসে
একেবারে পরাণের গহীনে
তারপর
ভারা চিরদিনের বন্ধু হয়ে যায়।

সংকট

আবার অনেক দিনের চেনা মুখগুলিকেও
অনেক দূরে সরিয়ে দেয়
যেন অনেকগুলি আলোকবর্ষ।

সংকট

একান্ত আপনজনকে আরো কাছে নিয়ে আসে
জল-হাওয়ার মতো অপরিহার্য করে তোলে তাকে
তারপর
জন্ম-জন্মান্তরের সাথী হয়ে যায়।

সংকট

আনে উপলব্ধি, আনে জীবন যৌষা জীবনবোধ
দীর্ঘদিনের দর্শন চর্চায়
অথবা আচার অনুষ্ঠানের পরও যা ছিল অধরা
সে এক পরম প্রাপ্তি।

সংকট

জন্ম দেয় আশ্চর্য কোন কবিতার
যার শরীরে লেগে থাকে সূক্ষ্ম অনুভূতির স্পন্দন
যার সান্নিধ্যে মানবিক মন পূর্ণতা পায়।

সংকট

গুধুই বেদনার বাহক নয়, অশনি সংকেত নয়
এর ওপারেই অপেক্ষায় থাকে শুদ্ধতার বীজমঞ্জ
যা জীবনকে আরো জীবনমুখি করে তোলে।

যেহেতু মানুষ শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব

জয়ন্ত নাগ*
চেশার, কানেটিকাট

কখন কি বলতে হবে

কখন কিভাবে চলতে হবে
মানুষের মতো কেউ জানে না, বোঝে না
যেহেতু মানুষ শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব।

কখন, কোথায়, কিভাবে আপন স্বার্থে

সুখোপের সফল ব্যবহারের
পরম অস্ত্র প্রয়োগ করতে হয়
মানুষের মতো কেউ জানে না, বোঝে না
যেহেতু মানুষ শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব।

একজন ব্যথিত মানুষকেও

কিভাবে আরো ব্যথা চেলে দিতে হয়
মানুষের মতো কেউ জানে না, বোঝে না
যেহেতু মানুষ শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব।

কিভাবে অন্তরে এক

বাহিরে আরেক রূপ ধরে রাখতে হয়
মানুষের মতো কেউ জানে না, বোঝে না
যেহেতু মানুষ শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব।

তবুও মীল নির্যাতনে, দারুন দুঃখেও

কিভাবে আলোকিত আনন্দ আর
সুদিনের স্বপ্নগুলি নিয়ে এগিয়ে যেতে হয়
মানুষের মতো কেউ জানে না, বোঝে না
যেহেতু মানুষই শ্রেষ্ঠ জীব।



*An environmental scientist involved in agrochemical research & environmental risk assessment of agrochemicals. Deeply interested in politics, literature, music, movies, sports, writing and thought-provoking adda.

An Original English Poem with Its Bengali Version

Nitis Mukhopadhyay*
Glastonbury, Connecticut

On the pages of previous Durga Puja Souvenir magazines brought out by BAGH, on some occasions I have written about pros, cons, and hazards of translating literary work. Many literary scholars have expressed similar sentiments.

In spite of my limitations, in the past, on different occasions, I have published translations of selected poems and songs of Tagore, Jibananada, Shakti, and others.

This time, I am experimenting with a different idea. An English poem of mine (**Wake Me Up**) was published in the *Best Poems of 1998* (Watermark Press, p. 306). First, let me share that poem with the readers.

Wake Me Up

*If I ever fall asleep please wake me up.
This morning is so special
I cannot miss one single sparkle of sunlight.*

*If I ever fall asleep please wake me up.
I'll hate to miss the sound of raindrops on my roof.
I may just miss snowflakes dusting the driveway.*

*If I ever fall asleep please wake me up.
I will not hear the knock on my door
I will keep waiting for the ultimate love
I will miss that eternal music I long for.
Give me the sunlight raindrops snowflakes and all.*

*Give me a pen: I want to write the poetry of life.
Give me the voice and hand me a banjo
I want to sing the chorus of living.
Wake me up, please, before you light the pyre.*

Now, I will present a “translation” of this poem in Bengali. I do not like a word for word translation because then any intrinsic poetry often gets lost. It does not matter who the “translator” may be.

I will try to preserve the sentiment expressed in this poem by transforming it into a Bengali poem. I may hope to accomplish approximately that much. Please bear with me.

আমায় জাগিও

যদি বা ঘুমিয়ে পড়ি আমায় কিন্তু জাগিও।।
আজকের সকাল এত মধুময়
সোনারোদের এক ঝলকও যেন আড়াল না হয়।

যদি কখনও ঘুমিয়ে পড়ি আমায় কিন্তু জাগিও।।
ছাদে বৃষ্টির শব্দ না পেলে হতাশ হব
কাল্মা পাবে সিঁড়িতে নব তুষারের মসৃণ কার্পেট না দেখে।

ঘুমিয়েই যদি পড়ি আমায় কিন্তু জাগিও।।
আমার দরজায় টোকার শব্দ কানে আসবে না
রইব অস্থির অশান্ত পরম প্রেমের অপেক্ষায়
অনাদি-অনন্তের গান যদিবা ফিরে যায় অজান্তে।

দাও সূর্য্যরশ্মি বৃষ্টিধারা তুষারের কণা আরও সব
একখানা কলম দাও
আমি জীবনের কবিতা গাঁথব।

গাইতে পারার মতো কর্তৃ দিও
হাতে তুলে দিও একখানা ব্যাঞ্জো
আমি ত বাঁচার জয়গানই গাইতে চাই।

আঙুনের পরশমণি ছোঁওয়ানোর আগে
আমায় কিন্তু একবারটি জাগিও, লক্ষ্মীটি।।



*His dream is to become a good writer

গাছ

সুভাষ রায়*

স্টরস, কানেকটিকাট

*Poems are made by fools like me,
But only God can make a tree.*

Joyce Kilmer. 1886–1918

বৃষ্টির পুকুরে ডুব দিয়ে
ভিজ়ে চুল রোদে মেলে
আকাশে এলিয়ে
পল্লী বালিকার মতো
কোথাও একটা গাছ
আশ্চর্য্য কবিতা হয়।

প্রমত্ত দুপুরে
স্নিগ্ধছায়া তরুতলে
আদিবাসী মেয়েটির
কোলে পিঠে খেলা করে
দুটি ছাগলের ছানা।
মহিলাটি মমতায়
সজীব ম্যাডোনা হয়।
প্রকৃতির তুলির আঁচড়ে
কোথাও একটা গাছ
আশ্চর্য্য ছবি হয়।

বিকেলের বিমর্ষ আলোয়
বিদীর্ণ কোটরে
পলাতক পাখিটির
পরিত্যক্ত কাঠিকুটি বুকে ধরে
একা অবসন্ন বুরি
ফেলে যাওয়া প্রেমিকার মত
কোথাও একটা গাছ
আশ্চর্য্য কান্না হয়।



The artist, Kumarjit Saha, hails from Hooghly
Mohsin College, Chinsurah, India



*A professor of economics at the
University of Connecticut-Storrs and
a wonderful literary figure. He has
published in *Desh* patrika.

From editor's collection: Artist unknown

Is Separation from a Batterer the Same As Other Separations?

Patricia H. Aust*

In this brief article, I discuss the effect of domestic violence on children and the family as I understand it. It is so important to get the word out that there is help out there for this big problem.

1. SEPARATION

When I go on vacation, I leave behind my family, friends, neighbors, volunteer work, computer, and career. It is not a painful separation because it's temporary and I expect it to be fun and educational.

Many separations are not temporary or fun, but if those near us provide support, love, and concern, they are at least a little easier. Separating from a batterer is similar to separations such as divorce, death, or moving far away — with one big difference: this kind of separation may be lifesaving in every sense of the word.

Unfortunately, it may also involve a real threat to the well-being of the woman and kids who escape. Safety may become non-existent if the batterer stalks them, learns their new address, or knows where they work. Their income may drop to zero. Their personal living space may shrink to one room and they may lose everything, including their pets, because they are afraid to return home to claim their property.

Emotional separation from the batterer is extremely hard. Initially, a woman might hope the partner she once loved will change so she can return to him. Sometimes she questions why she stayed with him as long as she did and becomes very depressed. Her feelings are often intensely ambivalent and confusing as she is pressured by friends or family to “think of the children” and return home.

During this awful adjustment, she must deal with her children’s sadness, anger, confusion and sometimes *blame* for their huge change in lifestyle. Severe doubt about her ability to make it alone, especially if she has few job skills or inadequate education, may terrify her and slow her journey toward independence.

Many battered women do not survive this complicated, frightening separation with its court appearances, paperwork, support groups, job search, new schools for the kids, and the need to sever significant relationships and activities.

Some return home, believing this brief separation has changed their partner or that they are now better equipped to survive his assaults. Sometimes they return because of practical considerations like job responsibilities, finishing school themselves or to allow an older child to graduate from his own high school.

The women who stay in the shelter despite these problems, change the most. As they succeed in different ways despite the batterer's brainwashing about their incompetence, they struggle with separation less and less and work toward building a new life more and more.

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This is a monumental task. They must suppress every “easy way out” and plausible excuses that provide comfort if they are to completely separate from the batterer and their old selves. Some accomplish this the first time they leave. Some must make several attempts. Some never get away from the abuser, especially emotionally.

Nonetheless, they are all heroes to me. I have not walked in their shoes but I can appreciate their aching feet and admire their search for a better fit.

2. FAULT LINES

Sometimes in my small groups for kids at the shelter, we read a couple pages from a book about family violence. Then we talk about the issues on these pages. Recently, a character in the story asked, “Mom and Dad fight so much. Is it my fault?”

“What do you think?” I asked a group of six kids aged 6-11. “If the grownups in your house fight, is it your fault?” One kid shrugged. Two said “NO!” The rest stared at me or the floor.

I asked the kids who said “NO!” why parents fighting is not their fault. One said, “Because it is their fight” and the other said, “Because I did not do anything wrong.” I agreed with them, but other kids did not look convinced. “Okay,” I said, “What if you fight with a friend. Is that your mom’s fault?”

A couple more kids shook their heads “No,” and I agreed and explained why.

Then I asked, “What should you do if your parents fight?” More than one child said, “Stay out of it,” showing they had heard the message in the shelter Safety groups.

“Not me. I tell them to *stop!*” one child blurted. “Do they?” I asked. He nodded, “Sometimes.” “So it is your job to help grownups do the right thing?” I asked. He nodded again and I smiled. “Oh, I get it. You are a social worker or a priest or a psychiatrist, right?”



He laughed and said, “No!” The other kids laughed with him and jeered at the idea that he was a counselor. After more discussion, most of the group seemed to understand that parents had to work out their own problems and if they could not, or things got out control, kids should hide, ask a neighbor for help, or call 911.

One child pursed her lips, looked angry, and refused to share her feelings.

She is one of the ones I worry most about. She is afraid to talk, maybe even afraid to believe parents should take care of her, not vice versa. She understands fault lines *and they all point to her.*

I hope she will keep coming to group because most of the other kids have been where she is now. Though they are still confused at times, they believe or want to believe the competing ideas about family life, love, and responsibility that I suggest.

I want her to listen to the other kids. They can teach her a lot about confusion, ambivalence, and fear. And about courage.

That is what they have taught me.

3. BIRTH

Today, I celebrate the birth of my niece’s first child: a boy with a gentle father who loves his wife and all children and shows it. A mother who makes choices of her own, shares some with her husband,

compromises or gives in on others, and like all of us, deals with the unwelcome choices that life throws her way.

This couple is not perfect and they surely have had and will have significant disagreements, as all couples do.

At the domestic violence (DV) shelter where I volunteer, we have had many newborn (under three months) babies in residence. We have even had one baby born (in a hospital) while his mother was in residence.

What we do not have, as far as I know, are babies and children born into a family like my niece's. We are more likely to have women whose choices are *extremely* limited by her abuser. Normal choices like how many children they will have, how they will spend their income (including hers if she works), how she dresses, where she goes, whom she talks to or turns to for support, how they discipline the children, what food she serves and eats, if she should stay with him or not — these are, according to the batterer, HIS choices, not hers.

The birth of a child always brings with it many different feelings, stresses, and responsibilities.

But birth should not bring fear about whether a woman can protect herself and her children from someone who offers only one choice: immediate, unquestioning compliance with his cruel, controlling, abusive behavior. Someone who does not care how this affects others, including his own or her children. Someone who does not deserve the freedom he withholds from the woman he says he loves.

Birth should not be a prison.

A prison is for those who break the law — like the partners of emotionally or physically battered women.

4. STORMS

We were threatened with hurricane Earl this past week. Luckily, it fizzled, providing little more than rain on Friday followed by two lovely, breezy days. I put away my storm supplies with relief and hoped we'd get lucky during future storms.

The domestic violence shelter where I volunteer has plenty of storms — most internal.

The initial depression and anxiety shown by most women when they arrive at the shelter eventually turns to anger.

Anger is something a victim of DV holds inside because showing anger in her own home usually leads to violent “storms” inflicted by the abuser, to considerable fear — both her own and her children's, and often ends in injury and pain.

Once the abuser has dispersed his cruelty and control in a major way, he may apologize, feel or *appear to feel* guilty, make amends with more normal behavior, even loosen the reins.

Unfortunately, like fall weather on the East coast, there is always another hurricane forming, another “eye” of the hurricane, followed by another storm. Inside each victim's head (victims including children and other family members), the peaceful “eye” of the hurricane is not to be trusted.

They have learned how misleading, full of portend, and fickle the “good behavior” is, since it is usually *temporary* and followed by worsening abuse and loss.

Can you imagine what it is like to live inside a hurricane?

Can you imagine what it teaches children unable to escape the storm?

5. CROWDED

Everyone feels crowded sometimes. Years ago, I started out writing in the kitchen with an old typewriter. Then it was one end of the dining room table for a few hours on Sunday. Now I have my own home office. It is 8x10, but it has a door I can shut and it is all mine.

The DV shelter where I volunteer is filled up. All useable space is being used — often for more than one purpose. Sometimes we compete for what space is available. Sometimes we accept and do the best we can under the circumstances.

The women and the kids in the shelter come from all kinds of living situations--apartments, condos, houses, shared space. Some were crowded, some were not, *physically*.

There are ways other than physical, however, that they were crowded before they arrived at the shelter. Their feelings were pushed aside, by them or the abuser. Their personal space was invaded by abusers who stood too close, yelled too loud, restricted their movement, their activities, and even their thoughts. Their assertiveness was demolished by physical and psychological pain. Ditto their self-esteem. Their motivation was crushed because it was not allowed.

Now that they live at a DV shelter, they still feel crowded, but they have options. They can move to a different couch, room, activity. They can ignore demands or insults. They can ask for help. They can join others to make changes at the shelter or in their lives.

There are many kinds of crowding. The worst kind has more to do with freedom than space.

6. THE EMPTY SPOT AT THE TABLE

One night a week I set up my space at the domestic violence shelter where I provide small group counseling and therapeutic play for kids from 3-16. Then I have dinner with some of the residents, followed by my taking their children to this space for group before the “outside” kids and women come in for theirs.

One child, “Jesse”, his mother, and sibs stayed at the shelter an unusually long time. After he had taken part in a few groups with me, he started to sit next to me at dinner. He would be very charming as he told me about his week, showed me new toys, and expected my complete attention and approval.

This was fine unless another child sat down near or next to me while he was there. In that case, he escalated his “stories” and demanded my attention by raising his voice, grabbing my sleeve or doubling the charm. I would remind him he was not the only child in the shelter and that I liked all the children.

He would sulk or leave the table, apparently hoping I would change my mind and send the other child away. In group, however, he soon acted more appropriate and “shared” me quite easily.

Unfortunately, I learned from another mother and at dinner each week that Jesse's improvements in group did not carry over to daily life in the shelter. The other mother revealed that Jesse was often aggressive toward her child, but Jesse's mother did not think his behavior needed correction. She ignored complaints or laughed off his aggression as typical male behavior.

Why so different points of view? Think of your marriage or any significant relationship in regard to bringing up children. Do you both agree on what behaviors require limits/discipline and what can be ignored? Do you fear disagreeing with your partner or going against his/her wishes? Do you disregard your partner's wishes?

This is not a problem only in a domestic violence situation. It is a common, almost universal problem when raising children. The two people in charge need to *agree and cooperate* concerning their children's needs, struggles, and behavior.

Some people can do this without a huge power struggle; others can after counseling and some couples *never* agree on “appropriate” discipline.

In a domestic violence situation, however, power is mainly what the abuser is about. Some victims develop post traumatic stress syndrome as a result of sustained abuse and once they leave the abuser, may develop the dangerous belief that now they are in charge, there will be *no violence of any kind* visited on their kids ever again.

The problem is, the victim often confuses discipline (which means “teaching”) with violence or cruelty, leaving her unable to provide the appropriate limits and consequences children need every bit as much as they need encouragement and support.

“Jesse” and his family have left the shelter. I miss him but worry about his superficial charm, manipulative skills, and lack of regard for others. I wonder how long it will take his mother to realize she is already under his control in ways similar to those of the abuser she has escaped. I wonder how long it will take Jesse to figure it out.

A Cautionary Tale of Eye Diseases

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No other human frailty evokes as much anxiety as does the threat of vision loss. As the US population ages, there are many more people developing eye related problems. This discussion will cover three of the most common eye health issues.

Cataract

The eye is a camera. The focusing structures in the front of the eye include the cornea and the lens, and there is the film in the back of the eye called the retina. The lens of the eye is found behind the iris- the colored part of the eye. The lens focuses images to the back of the eye, and is also designed to be a filter of ultraviolet light. As one matures, the lens fibers begin to become cloudy due to the ultraviolet light exposure. A cataract is defined as a clouding of the natural lens of the eye. For most people cataracts begin to become noticeable in the mid fifties, but there is a lot of variation in the age of onset of cataracts. Although most cataracts are caused by the maturation process, medications (e.g., steroids or chemotherapy), trauma, and radiation exposure can induce early onset cataracts.

The first symptoms of cataracts include night glare, and a frequent change in glasses prescription. Over time the cataracts worsen to the point where one notices an overall degradation in the quality of vision. Many people describe the vision change as looking through a dirty window. Glasses are not able to focus light effectively through the cataract.

When the vision reaches a point where it is bothersome, cataracts can be removed with a surgical procedure. Historically, surgeons waited until the cataracts were “ripe”. This criterion for surgical intervention refers to about twenty years ago, when the surgical manipulation was quite extensive and had more inherent risks. Today when the surgical intervention is low risk, with predictable results, surgery is offered when the visual acuity reaches 20/40 or 20/50, or when people are bothered by their quality of vision. The decision to have eye surgery is individual, as there are few situations where one must have cataract surgery.

Modern cataract surgery is performed as an outpatient. The surgery is quick and painless. The cataract is removed, and replaced with a synthetic lens – an implant. The cataract is removed using ultrasound energy. At present, there is no such thing as laser cataract surgery. There are a variety of implants now available to reduce dependence on glasses after cataract removal. One should have a discussion with their surgeon in order to choose the most appropriate implant.

Glaucoma

One way to understand glaucoma is to think of the eye as a water balloon. The eye produces fluid all the time to keep it filled, but also drains fluid. The balance between fluid production and drainage creates an eye pressure. The eye pressure is not related to blood pressure.



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There is a normal range of eye pressure. If the eye pressure exceeds the normal level, it can begin to cause mechanical damage to the nerve in the back of the eye - the optic nerve. The best guess as to why people develop glaucoma is that the drain of the eye becomes relatively blocked, but the eye continues to make fluid, such that the increased resistance to drainage causes the eye pressure to rise. (The discussion here relates to chronic open angle glaucoma and not to narrow angle glaucoma, or to normal pressure glaucoma.)

It is important to have routine eye exams, as one is not aware of the rise in eye pressure until very late in the disease process when there is vision loss. There is approximately a 2% incidence of glaucoma in the population over age forty. A family history of glaucoma raises the risk for individuals, but there is a lot of variability in the genetics of glaucoma.

Glaucoma is evaluated with a complete eye exam. There are also diagnostic tests used to help identify glaucoma including visual field testing, and instruments that quantify the volume of nerve fibers in the back of the eye.

If one is diagnosed with glaucoma, the most common modality of treatment is eye drops. The drops are designed to reduce fluid production, to increase fluid drainage, or a combination of the two. With modern pharmacology most people require one to two drops per day. For those with more aggressive glaucoma, there are both laser and surgical interventions designed to lower the eye pressure

Macular Degeneration

Once again, thinking of the eye as a camera, we are now discussing the film of the camera – the retina. The retina is the sensory tissue in the back of the eye which acquires images, and sends them to the brain. The central part of the retina is called the macula. The macula is the area of the retina responsible for most of our vision. Macular degeneration refers to an aging process where the retina begins to wear down and lose its function.

Macular degeneration is divided into two types – wet and dry. Dry macular degeneration means that the retina wears down and atrophies. Wet macular degeneration refers to the situation when the retina wears down and new blood vessels grow underneath the retina causing bleeding.

The treatment for macular degeneration depends on the type. There is no specific treatment for dry macular degeneration. In general one ought to protect their eyes from the sun at all time with sunglasses, and take a good multi-vitamin daily. There are also eye specific vitamins. One should always check with a pharmacist for drug interactions before beginning vitamins. For wet macular degeneration there are now medication that are injected into the eye which cause the blood vessels to regress. The injections are performed by retina specialists.

There is a wide spectrum of vision change in macular degeneration, from limited vision loss, to loss of all central vision. Reading vision is most adversely affected by macular degeneration. It is important to note that macular degeneration does not cause complete blindness. Although one can lose all of the central vision, the peripheral vision remains intact. For those with vision loss, modern technology can be quite helpful. A large computer screen or digital reading device can be used to enlarge print. There are also low vision specialists who provide specific magnification devices.

Concluding Thought

In order to be evaluated for these conditions, it is important to have a complete eye exam every one to two years depending on one's age and risk factors.

Collage 4



(1)



(2)



(3)

(1) Puja continues; (2) Aparna Das reciting; (3) Bengali drama during BAGH's 2009 Durga puja festival, Saturday, October 3.



(4)



(5)



(6)

(4) Mayuri Ray singing and (5) Dancing continued on the floor as she sang on Saturday, October 3. (6) Ujjaini singing on Sunday, October 4. BAGH's 2009 Durga puja festival.

Out of Place

Nilanjan Bhowmick*
Storrs, Connecticut

I have never understood what I am supposed to do with myself during the Pujas. They are four days of a year that throw me off. I don't mind the weather. The summer begins to slip away. The *java phool*¹ blooms as never before. But the incessant flow of relatives, the roving crowds, shrill recitations into whining microphones of long poems of Tagore, the dull magazines published with advertisements from never-heard-of cement factories and bread makers, the sudden efflorescence of pent-up culture, all these make me feel a bit out of place.

And my mother's complaints increase exponentially. As she leaves, with a neighbor, for the nearby Kali Bari², she will say, as she rummages her purse for a last minute check about inconsequential things in it, "Look at my son. He is hiding inside. He is a shame, a sociopath. He never talks to anybody, does not want to go anywhere, only reads, reads and reads. He always has an excuse to stay back home. He didn't even go to Shamit's wedding. It is as if they teach him nothing at school; he has to read everything at home. He often cuts school. When this fellow grows up, who is going to marry him? God knows what job he will get? Who wants to employ a tongue tied book reader? I don't know what to do with him. And he reads all this garbage. You know literature, philosophy, that kind of thing. Who wants to read all this rubbish now, in this age? Today is the time for management, economics, engineering ..." Her voice trails away in the distance.

My father disappears for good for those four days. He sinks himself into the Pujas like people take a bath in the Ganges at Benares. He leaves early and comes back only at night, once, just to grab a cup of tea, and then he leaves again, religious merit slumped over him like a sack of jaggery. I have never understood what he does during that period. It must be important. My father likes importance.

And then there is Shyam Bannerji, my childhood friend. He will come bursting in, his hair properly oiled, wearing clothes appropriately purchased from some up market locale in Calcutta.

Hey, aren't you going to the Kali Bari? *Kalibari-te jabe na?*

"I could but I don't feel like it."

"Oh, come on."

"You run along. I will catch you there."

Shyam Bannerji always believes me and rushes off. He never complains if I don't show up.



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¹ Hibiscus rosa-sinensis, a flower that is popular as an offering during prayer to the Goddess Durga during the Pujas

² The word refers to a temple complex devoted to the Goddess Kali. The word Bari simply means house/home

On one such occasion, with the Pujas in full swing - it is the second day, a day *bhog* will be prepared - I turn to a creaking cassette player and play Ali Akbar's *Ramdasi Malhar*. The day passes. There is no one at home. I flip one *raga* after another. There is Mallikarjun Mansur, Bhimsen Joshi, Amir Khan, Ravi Shankar, Rashid Khan, but I tire of listening to all this. I play Bob Dylan's *Series of Dreams* for a while, repeating the song a number of times. Bored, I decide to walk out. The garden looks sun-bleached. The garden gate is rusting, with barbed wire clogging it like a parasitic vine. My mother has put that up, to keep the world out, as she says.

I walk the streets, slowly, sometimes counting my steps. I touch the electric poles that I pass. The moment I see someone remotely familiar, I step away into a side road. I see a park with a pandal spread out, its sides flapping like a bored elephant's ear. People are milling around. Lines are being formed. There is a loud, harsh announcement. The second round of *bhog*³ is going to start and people should get ready for it in an orderly fashion. The loudspeaker coughs and splutters. One can hear a number of consulting voices.

I hear the sound of a flute being played. It isn't a familiar tune. It is sweet and refreshing though, like the sound of water flowing in an unknown forest. I trace the sound to a man selling wooden flutes near the pandal. He is accompanied by a young girl, possibly his daughter. Sometimes he haggles with customers, mostly bored children who have got away from their parents. They don't buy anything. He has a pile of flutes, made of wood, of various sizes. They are decked out in nice colors, blue, green, white. Some of the flutes have two colors on them. I guess that he is not selling well. Occasionally, the man plays the flute, and again he plays an unfamiliar tune, haunting in its quality. I walk over.

"How much is one?"

"20 rupees" he says. *Kuri taka*. "But I am selling them at a discount, just for 10 rupees."

I pick up one and try to play it. A silly sound emerges. The man's expression does not change.

"How does one play as well as you?" I ask him.

"We make it, *babu*⁴. It is natural to us."

I hand back the flute, picking another.

"What is your name?"

"Anandagopal"

"And her"

He smiles and pats her head. "Jhumpa. She does not speak." Jhumpa looks up and smiles. She is a small child, maybe 7 or 8 years old.

"You should go in and eat."

"We tried. It's hard. There are too many people around. Long lines. I get some food, anyway"

I pick one flute after some indecision. It has a nice hollow sound to it. I think I will give it to Shyam Bannerji. He is learning to play the flute.

I am able to locate Shyam at one of the pandals. He is sitting on a plastic chair, spent out, like he has just finished swimming the English Channel. I hand him the flute.

"Nice color," he says.

"*Cha Khabe?* Want to have tea?"

He thinks for a while as if the question has some metaphysical content in it.

"Ok, let's go."

³ A delicious food cooked as an offering to the Goddess

⁴ A term used (here) as a mark of deference

At night, my father brings an aluminum bucket full of *bhog*, and another one of *payesh*⁵. I tell him that I have had dinner with Shyam. I have some of the *payesh*, for the sake of pleasing him.

The next day I find Jhumpa and her father at a different spot. I am thinking of buying another flute. Maybe I can get it cheaper. I can keep it for myself. Anandagopal plays the flute in short bursts. His flute is really good, for the sound is much clearer than the rest of the collection he has. He spots me.

“I hope the flute is working well,” he says.

“Yes,” I said. “I returned for one more.”

Jhumpa is looking away. She is twisting an empty plastic packet in her hands. Her eyes look distant. She is looking at children playing at a small merry go round.

There is a stew of people inside the pandal. Another day of *bhog*. Three batches can be fed today. The cooks are busy. The air is fragrant with incense. A tiresome recitation of a poem is on.

I look at the flutes more seriously. Some are thin, some rounder. I weigh them, one by one. I can't come to a decision.

“Can you pick one for me?” I said, looking up.

“Sure,” he said.

Instead of checking the pile in front of him, Anandagopal turns around and puts his hand in a cloth bag. He takes out a flute, light blue in color.

“*Eta dekhun*” he said. “Take a look at this one.”

I wasn't sure whether to like it or not. But I liked the color. I requested him to play some tune on it. He did so and again, it was not a familiar tune but the sound was clear as a church bell.

I bought the flute and said, “You should have *bhog* today. There won't be any tomorrow.”

He patted his daughter's head and said, “We come from far. It takes us two hours to get here. We take a train. My daughter clamors to be with me. That is why I bring her. But she will be bewildered inside. Too many people. Moreover, our clothes aren't any good. We have to sit in a corner and eat, as if we are beggars. You never know, we might get chased away. I was once, at another place. They wanted us to eat at the end, after everyone had. I didn't. Jhumpa would have been too hungry by then. We ate the food we had. It is not for us to have Durga's blessing. Not always.”

I wished him well and sauntered inside the pandal. I looked at some good paintings drawn by some 6 year old – a hill, sun peeping through, a hut, a tree, all that the boy had probably never seen together. I wondered whether that is why he could draw it. I slipped out homewards after I saw my mother coming in with an aunt of mine.

Next day, I got an empty lunch box I had not used in a while, cleaned it out, packed it with what we had left over from the *payesh* and the *khichuri*⁶, and went in search of Anandagopal and Jhumpa. The pandal was being taken apart. The statues had already been taken to the river. My father had gone in the morning. My mother was asleep, exhausted after three days of intense socializing and lamenting her lot in life. My aunt, who had decided to stay overnight, was frowning at an old copy of *The Statesman*.

I searched hard for the flute seller. He wasn't there, of course. It was the last day of festivities. Things were winding up. He must be in his village, taking rest after three days of sitting out in the sun. I didn't give up easily though. I asked around in a nearby market, and went to other pandals in other colonies. No luck. I even took a bus and went over to the railway station to see if I could find them

⁵ A preparation of milk and rice, which is sweetened

⁶ The term refers to a preparation of rice with pulses and potatoes, laced with clarified butter

there. But it would be like looking for Moby Dick in the Indian Ocean. It was all useless and about four or five hours later Shyam Bannerji caught hold of me alighting from a bus on a dusty street near home.

“Hey, where the hell have you been?”

“Why? What happened?” I said, hiding the lunch box.

“Ma is at your home. She has some special sweets. They have come all the way from Rajasthan. They are real good. I was sent off to look for you.”

I walked along with Shyam Bannerji.

“How’s the flute coming along?” I asked.

He said it was quite ok, too rough in its make but it produced a good sound if worked on for a while.

As we walked to my home, I discreetly dropped the lunch box at a dump. The food must have rotted inside anyway.

The sweets at home were really tasty.

Life had returned to normal after the Pujas and I remembered the tunes of Anandagopal for quite some time till they faded away from memory.

Just the last day, a few years down the line, another Puja day, when I was feeling out of place again, I unearthed the flute while looking for a book that I needed to return to the library.

I hadn’t played it at all.



খোশ গল্প

ইন্দ্রনীল সেনগুপ্ত*
টালিগঞ্জ, কলকাতা

এক:

আমার দুই মেসো। আপন।

একজন কিছুদিন আগে মারা গেলেন। দ্বিতীয়জন সুস্থ আছেন। আমি দু'জনেরই বিশেষ স্নেহভাজন। দ্বিতীয়জন একটু দূরে থাকেন, এক্স আর্মি। নিজে রামের একনিষ্ঠ ভক্ত, আমি তেমন ধার্মিক নই। তাই আমার জন্য হুইস্কি রাখেন। সন্ধ্যাহিক করার আমন্ত্রণ জানাচ্ছেন বহুদিন। সামান্য ব্যস্ততা থাকলেও গড়িমসি করেই যাওয়া হচ্ছে না। দু'জনেই অত্যন্ত বুদ্ধিমান এবং কর্মঠ। দু'জনকেই আমি শ্রদ্ধা করি।

প্রথমজনের মাথায় টাক ছিল। নিজের টাক নিয়ে ঠাট্টা করতে ভালবাসতেন। চুল না থাকার অনেক দুঃখ। যার নেই সেই বোঝে এরকম একটা বক্তব্য মাঝে মাঝে বলতেন বটে তবে যথেষ্ট সজীব ছিলেন। চুল বা টাক বা অন্য কোন বিষয়ে হীনমন্যতায় ভুগতে দেখি নি।

অবশ্য আমার এক সহকর্মী যার চুলে সবে পাক ধরেছে, তাকে একজন মাঝারি গোছের প্রবীন অথচ বিরলকেশ ওপরওলা যখন আহা রে মাথার সব চুল পেকে গেলো বলে ছদ্ম সমবেদনা জানাচ্ছিলেন তখন বরণ নামের আমার সেই সহকর্মী তাঁকেও যথেষ্ট বিনয়ের সঙ্গে স্মরণ করিয়ে দিল যে বয়সকালে চুলের দুই গতি, হয় পাকবে নয় পড়বে। ওপরওলা গস্তীর হয়ে যান। কিছুদিন পরেই বরণকে উত্তরবঙ্গে বদলী হতে হয় এবং সে ব্যাপারে ওই বিরলকেশ ওপরওলার যথেষ্ট ভূমিকা ছিল বলেই দুর্জনে বলে।

বিরলকেশ মেসোর কথায় ফিরি। অপর এক বিরলকেশের গল্প করেছিলেন একদিন। বেশিরভাগ চুল মাথার পেছনে। সামনে গোটা ছ'য়েক। মাঝখান ফাঁকা। সেই ছ'টার গুনে গুনে তিনটে বাঁদিকে তিনটে ডান দিকে স্থাপনা করা এবং মাঝখানে সিঁথি কাটার চেপ্টা পাড়ার সেলুনের গল্প।

টাকের বিভিন্ন নাম। স্মৃতিটুকু থাক, ওরা থাকে ওধারে- এইসব। কোথায় যেন পড়েছিলাম।

এছাড়া ছিলেন আমার মামা। উকিল। মুকঠিয়ার অ্যাট ল বলে তাকে ডাকতেন আর্মি মেসো। আড়ালে বলতেন হোগলাপাতা মোক্তার। সেটার ব্যাখ্যা এই রকম। সাহেব আমল। জুডিসিয়ারি ভাগ হয় নি তখন। জেলা শাসক তথা জেলা ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট এর প্রশ্নের জবাব দিতে পারলেই মোক্তার হওয়া যেত নাকি তখনকার দিনে। হোগলাপাতার চাটাইতে বসে হবু মোক্তার। ম্যাজিস্ট্রেট তো তাঁর চেয়ারে।

এক পড়ুয়াই উত্তর দিত। চাটাইতে বসে। ঠিক ঠাক জবাব দিতে পারলে পাস। তাঁকে ঘিরে চাটাই ছুঁয়ে অন্য পড়ুয়ারা। তারাও পাস হয়ে যেত, ওই আসন ছুঁয়ে থাকার দৌলতে।

সত্যি মিথ্যে জানি না। আমাদের সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মামাও আমোদ পেতেন।

দুই:

কিছুদিন আগে আপিসের এক গল্প বলি।



*An established literary figure who has written extensively in prestigious magazines published both in and around Kolkata. He is an acclaimed poet and has published in several languages including Bengali and Hindi. The readers will find a validation of that sentiment in the pages of BAGH's Durga Puja magazine 2009. He has a very soft touch of humor.

সবে আপিস সুরু। সেই সাবুদ করে সবাই একে একে যে যার টেবিলে চলে যাচ্ছেন। আমার ঘরের এক কোণায় হাজিরা খাতা। হঠাৎ সোরগোল। রোজ দত্তপুকুর থেকে ট্রেন ধরে শেয়ালদা হয়ে আসতেন একজন। সেদিন ও এসেছেন। ধরা যাক তার নাম রাম। আচমকাই কেউ লক্ষ্য করে তার মুখ কিরকম কালি বর্ণ হয়ে গেছে। ঘন সবুজ। আয়নায় নিজের মুখ দেখে রামও রীতিমত আতঙ্কিত। কেউ একজন আবার মাথায় ঢুকিয়েছে লিভারের মারাত্মক কোন অসুখ হলে নাকি মুখের রঙ এরকম কালচে পানা হয়ে যায়। যাই হোক, লম্বা একটা বেঞ্চিতে রামকে ততক্ষণে শোয়ানো হয়ে গেছে। এক ডাক্তারবাবুও এসে পড়েছেন। প্রেশারটা ওঠানামা করছে বলে তিনি একবার হাসপাতালে মেডিক্যাল চেক আপ এবং প্রয়োজনে ভর্তি করার পরামর্শ দিলেন। একদল তাকে হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যাবার জন্য এবং অন্যদল তার বাড়ীতে জানানোর জন্য তোড়জোর শুরু করেছে। আমিও উদ্ভিগ্ন হয়ে রামের কাছ থেকে ঘটনার বিবরণ নিই। আর পাঁচটা দিনের মত শেয়ালদায় নেমে জনস্রোতে মিশে হাঁটতে হাঁটতে ডালহৌসি এসেছে।

আর কি করেছে?

কিছুনা।

কোথাও দাঁড়িয়েছিলে?

হ্যাঁ, কলেজ স্কোয়ারে পানের দোকান থেকে পান খেয়েছিলাম।

আর কিছু মনে পড়ছে?

না তো।

ভাল করে ভেবে দেখ।

হ্যাঁ স্যার। বাড়িতে তাড়াহুড়োয় রুমালটা ফেলে এসেছি। একটা রুমাল কিনেছিলাম।

দেখি কেমন রুমাল ?

রামের পকেট থেকে রুমাল বেরোল। সস্তার ফুটপাথের জিনিস। ঘন সবুজ রঙ।

তিন:

এবার বলি এক আধিকারিক ও তাঁর পিওনের এক বহু পুরোন গল্প। সত্যতা নিয়ে সন্দেহ আছে। স্রেফ মজার জন্য বলি। শোনা গল্প। বানানোই মনে হয়। সেই জেলার পিওন ও আধিকারিক পরস্পরকে তুমি বলতেন। আসলে সেই জেলার রেওয়াজ ই হলো তুমি করে বলা।

শুনলাম তুমি নাকি বদলী হচ্ছে ?

হ্যাঁ।

মনটা খারাপ লাগছে, অনেকদিন এক সঙ্গে কাজ করলাম। তা তোমার জায়গায় আসছোটা কে?

এখনো ঠিক হয় নি। লোক খোঁজা হচ্ছে, তুমি রাজি থাকো তো তোমার নাম বলি।

হ্যাঁ তা বলতে পার।

তুমি করতে পারবে তো আমার কাজ?

কেন তোমার কাজটা কি এমন কঠিন যে আমি পারব না? সারাদিনে তো পনেরটা লোকের সঙ্গে দেখা কর। মিটিং কর আর চা বিস্কুট খাও। আর কিছু ফাইল দড়ি বাঁধা থাকে। দড়ি গুলো খুলে ঠিক কাগজের ডান দিকে যেখানে সেই আছে তার তলায় একটা করে সেই কর। দেখ আমি সারাদিনে দেড়শোটা লোকের সঙ্গে মিটিং করে পনেরটাকে বেছে তোমার কাছে পাঠাই, তাই প্রথম দুটো কাজ তোমার থেকে আমি আরো ভালভাবেই করতে পারব। আর কাগজের ডানদিকে তলায় সেই করাটাও আমি পারব।

চার:

ব্রিটিশ আমলের গল্প। বানানো যে বলাই বাহুল্য।

এক আধিকারিকের বিরুদ্ধে অভিযোগ, তিনি সন্ধ্যের পর মছয়ার রস পান করেন এবং আদিবাসী রমণী পরিবৃত হয়ে নৃত্য করেন। আত্মপক্ষ সমর্থনে জবাবে তাঁর বক্তব্য, হ্যাঁ, সামাজিক মেলামেশার কারণে তাঁকে এরকম করতে

হয় বটে। কারণ বিভিন্ন উন্নয়নমূলক কাজকর্মের সঠিক মূল্যায়ন করতে গেলে স্থানীয় অধিবাসীদের প্রকৃত মতামত জানাটা জরুরী। তাঁদের সঙ্গে একাত্ম না হতে পারলে এই মতামত কখনই জানা যাবে না। তবে যদি তাঁকে অপেক্ষাকৃত উন্নত কোন শহরে বদলী করা হয় শাস্তিমূলক ব্যবস্থা হিসেবে বা প্রশাসনিক কারণে তবে তিনি ওই সামাজিক মেলামেশার খাতিরে বিভিন্ন উন্নয়নমূলক কাজের পর্যালোচনার উদ্দেশ্যে স্ফূর্ত পান করবেন এবং সেই শহরের সোসাইটি গার্লদের সঙ্গে নৃত্যে অংশগ্রহণ করবেন।

পাঁচ:

এই ভদ্রলোকই ওই সামাজিক মদ্যপানের ফলে সামান্য বেসামাল হয়ে গেছিলেন। অব্যবহিত পরেই যখন তাঁর বেশ কিছু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ নথিতে দস্তখত করা জরুরী হয়ে পরে তখন তিনি নির্দিধায় নিজের বাঁহাতের বুড়ো আঙ্গুলটি মেলে ধরেন। তাতে কালি মাখিয়ে দস্তখতের বদলে টিপছাপ দিয়ে কর্তব্য কর্ম সমাধা করা হয়। পরবর্তী কালে যথারীতি তিনি ব্যাখ্যা দেন যে সেই নকল করা গেলেও টিপসই নকল করা সম্ভব নয়। যেহেতু নথিটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অতএব যথেষ্ট সতর্কতা আবলম্বন করতে গিয়েই তিনি টিপসই দিতে বাধ্য হয়েছেন।

ছয়:

সেই আপিসের গল্প আবার।

সেই আমার আপিস। অবশ্য তখন আমি নই, ওপরওয়ালা অন্য কেউ। অত্যন্ত রসিক মানুষ।

একজন ছুটি চাইল। একটু আগে আপিস ছাড়ার অনুমতি।

কেন, আগে বাড়ি যাবে কেন?

আজ্ঞে খিদিরপুর যাব।

তারপর?

ছাগল কিনব।

তারপর?

আজ্ঞে, বাড়ী নিয়ে যাব।

কোথায় বাড়ী?

বেহালা চৌরাস্তা।

কিভাবে নেবে এতটা পথ?

আজ্ঞে হাঁটিয়ে হাঁটিয়ে।

হ্যাঁ ভালই হবে। দু'জনে বেশ গল্প করতে করতে চলে যাবে।

যা বলেছেন আজ্ঞে।

সাত:

হঠাৎ মনে পড়ল একটা গল্প। অনেকদিন ছুটিতে থাকার পর আপিস জয়েন করে এক কর্মচারী বস্কে আশ্বস্ত করে বললেন, আর চিন্তা করবেন না স্যার আমি এসে গেছি।

বস্ বললেন, সেটাই তো চিন্তার কথা।

আট:

এবার ডাক্তার আর রুগীদের কিছু গল্প- হয়ত শোনা।

আর তো পারি না ডাক্তারবাবু।

কেন? কি হলো?

ওই যে সিঁড়ি দিয়ে ওঠানামা করতে বারন করেছিলেন। বলেছিলেন আমার পক্ষে মারাত্মক ক্ষতিকারক।

হ্যাঁ, আপনার হার্টের যা অবস্থা তাতে যে কোন সময়ে বিপদ হতে পারে।

কিন্তু এভাবেই বা কতদিন চলে ডাক্তারবাবু। পাইপ বেয়ে, কার্নিশ ধরে ঝুলে ঝুলেই বা কতদিন ওঠানামা করব ডাক্তারবাবু!

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ডাক্তারবাবু আমার ভীষন টেনশন। সবসময় দুশ্চিন্তায় থাকি। আপিসে এত কাজের চাপ। ব্লাডপ্রেসার প্রচণ্ড হাই। কিছুতেই কমছে না। আরো নানা রোগ। কি যে করি। ওষুধেও কোন কাজ হচ্ছে না।

আপনি রোজ তিন মাইল হাঁটবেন।

হেঁটে হেঁটে রোজ কবরখানা পর্যন্ত যাবেন।

কবরখানার পাশের বাঁধানো ঘাটটায় পনের মিনিট বসবেন।

তারপর হেঁটে হেঁটে আবার বাড়ী ফিরে আসবেন।

হাঁটার ব্যাপারটা বুঝলাম, কিন্তু ঘাটে বসা।

ওই আর কি! বসে বসে কবরগুলো দেখবেন। ওই কবরে যারা শুয়ে আছেন তাঁরা প্রত্যেকেই কাজের মানুষ ছিলেন। যতদিন জীবিত ছিলেন এই ধারণা নিয়ে বেঁচে ছিলেন যে তাঁদের স্থান অপূরণীয়, এবং তাঁদের মধ্যে কেউ কেউ হয়ত আপনারই মত দুশ্চিন্তাগ্রস্ত হয়ে চাপ নিয়ে পৃথিবী থেকে অকালে ঝরে গেছেন। পৃথিবীর গতি কিন্তু এক মুহূর্তের জন্য থামে নি।

তা বটে।

হ্যাঁ কবরখানায় বসে এই কথাটি যত ভাববেন, আপনি কিন্তু তত তাড়াতাড়ি সুস্থ হয়ে উঠবেন।



কিছু ব্যাথা, কিছু কথা, আর কিছু হাসি

রজত সরকার
মাঞ্চাট, ওমান

টিকে থাক

টিকে থাকে গুরু বাধার খুঁটি,
টিকে থাকে ছেঁড়া শীতল পাটি।
টিকে থাকে প্রবল জীবনস্রোতে,
যুদ্ধ ক'রে মানুষ পথিবীতে।

যুদ্ধ শুরু সেই যে ছোট যখন,
মায়ের নেশা, মাকে পাওয়ার কাঁদন,
সংসার আর শিশুর টাপ-অব-ওয়ার;
'মা'য়ের থেকে 'মেয়ে'র হারিয়ে যাওয়ার।

শিশু বড় হয় মা-বাবার কোলে চেপে,
হঠাত নতুন জগত টা কে দ্যাখে।
দশে এক হতে তাকে ভুলে যেতে হয়
নিজের জন্য একটুখানি সময়।

ডাক্তার 'সিএ' নয়তো ইঞ্জিনিয়ার,
ব্যাংক 'পিও' নয় সরকারি অফিসার,
পোয়াবারো যদি 'আই এ এস' কোনমতে;
'বিয়ের বাজারে' দাম চড়চড়িয়ে ওঠে।

'কালাপাণি' থেকে 'এন আর আই' প্রমোশন,
মাঝে কয় যুগ 'গ্যাপ-অব-পেনারেশন'।
'সবুজ নোটে'র দুর্বীর হাতছানি,
'ইউ-এস' যা কয় 'বেদবাক্য' মানি।

ছেঁড়া শিকড়েরা মুখে হাঁসে মনে কাঁদে;
পাড়ার বখাটে 'বোনপো' বিপদে আপদে।
যোগাযোগ রাখে 'সবুজ নোটে'র ধারা,
ন-মাসে ছ-মাসে ই-মেল ফোন'এর সাড়া।

শিকড় ছেঁড়ার কান্না কখন শুনি'
'সবুজ নোটে'র গরমে প্রমাদ শুনি।
'অস্তরাগে'র বিকেল কখন আসে,
হঠাত গলায় দমচাপা নিঃশ্বাসে।

'অপরাধবোধ' কিছু 'নস্টালজিয়া',
সুদূর দেশের ভাদর নদীর নাইয়া।
গাংশালিকের ডাক, ভাটিয়ালি সুর,
যেন 'রূপকথা', কোন সে 'অচিন পুর'!

যুদ্ধশেষের সন্ধ্যার পরে রাত,
'ফেলে কড়ি' মাথি তেল ক'রে বাজিমাত।
একনিমেষের প্রচণ্ড শেষ ব্যাথা;
'বলহরি', টিকে থাকে 'শুশানে'র চিতা

কাকে দেবো ভাবি 'শেষ পারাণে'র কড়ি;
হারি তবু যেন এইখানেতেই ফিরি

পূজোর পদ্য

পূজো মানেই টাটকা খুশি'র একপলকা হাওয়া,
পূজো মানেই যেখানে থাকি ছুটিতে বাড়ি যাওয়া।

পূজো মানেই নতুন জিনিষ, নতুন গন্ধ গায়ে,
নতুন জানা, নতুন শাড়ি, নতুন জুতো পায়ে।

পূজো মানেই মহালয়া, 'বীরেন খুড়ো'র পাঠ
কাশের গন্ধ, ঢাকের বাদ্য, মাতাল খুশি'র হাট।

'পূজো সংখ্যা', 'স্পেশাল অফার', ছুটিতে বেড়াতে যাওয়া,
সপ্তমীতে ঠাকুর দেখা, অষ্টমীতে খাওয়া।

'ষস্টীপূজো'র বোধনে শুরু, দশমী'তে শেষ,
কেন যে আসে 'নবমী'র রাত, শুরু না হ'তেই শেষ

চল্লিশের গান

মাথার চুলেতে ধরেছে অল্প পাক,
ব্রহ্মতালুতে উঁকি দিয়ে যায় ঢাক।

সাদা ছিঁটেফোটা দাড়িগোঁফ জুলফিতে,
সকালে 'অকালবোধনে'র সঙ্গীতে।

চারিদিকে কচিকাঁচা দেব ছড়াছড়ি,
নবযৌবনা হাঁটু'র বয়সী কিশোরী।

মন আনচান চিনচিনে ব্যাথা বাঁদিকে
বুকের, কি করে সামলাই সব দিকে।

গিল্লির কড়া চোখের শাসন থাক,
চুরি ক'রে মন উঁকিঝুঁকি মেয়ে যাক।



Rajat Sarkar, an Engineer, is a Telecom and Power Electronics Industry professional and a proud father of Roshni (daughter, 10 years) and Rajarshi (Son, 2.8yrs). His wife, Swati, is a High School teacher. He has a passion for music and likes to play flute and also little bit of guitar & violin.

মাস্টারমশাইদের নিয়ে গল্প

নীতীশ মুখোপাধ্যায়*
গ্ল্যাষ্টনবেরী কানেকটিকাট

মাস্টারমশাইদের নিয়ে ও তাঁদের বিষয়ে আমার নিজস্ব ও শোনা কিছু ছোটো ছোটো গল্প বলার লোভ হচ্ছে। অতএব পেন ধরা। খুরি, পেন ধরা নয়, বাংলা ফন্টে কম্পিউটার ধরা।

মাস্টারমশাইদের জগৎটা ত' বিশাল, সেখানে মজার মজার গল্প একেবারে ঠাসা। আমার পিতৃদেব পাড়ার বিনিপয়সার মাস্টারমশাই ছিলেন, আমার শুরুরমশাই অধ্যাপক ছিলেন, আমার এক দাদা অধ্যাপক, তিনি রিটার্ড। আমিও ৩৪-৩৫ বছর পড়াছি, বয়স ত' আর কমছে না! তা সত্যেও মাস্টারমশাইদের নিয়ে লেখার ন্যায্য অধিকারের কথা কেউ যদি তোলেন, ত' আগেভাগেই কিন্তু জানিয়ে রাখছি যে সেটা আমার প্রায় জন্মগত গোছের অধিকারই বলতে পারেন। যাঁদের নিয়ে এই গল্পগুলি ফাঁদা, তাঁদের মধ্যে অনেকেই গত হয়েছেন। অতএব আমার পথ আপাততঃ মনে হচ্ছে প্রায় পরিষ্কার ও বিপদমুক্ত। পরম শ্রদ্ধাভরে, সেই মাস্টারমশাই-গোষ্ঠী নিয়ে কিছু গল্প শোনাই।

পিতৃদেবের গল্প (ক)

আমি তখন খুবই ছোট। তবে আমি চিরকালই একটু পাকা, মানে একটু এঁচড়ে পাকা, এরকম বদনাম সেই ছোটবেলা থেকেই আমার আছে। চরিত্রের বহুবিধ দোষের মধ্যেই এই পাকামির অভ্যাস অদ্যাবধি ঝেঁরে ফেলতে পারিনি।

এক স্থানীয় ব্যবসায়ী মহাশয় আমাদের বসতিতে এলেন পিতৃদেবের সাথে দেখা করতে। তাঁর ছেলে ম্যাট্রিকে তিন তিনবার ফেল। দূর থেকে আকার-ইঙ্গিতে বোঝা গেল যে ছেলেটির বিবাহের সম্বন্ধ আসতে শুরু করেছে, ম্যাট্রিকে ফেল ছেলে, তাইতে সেই অর্থসম্পন্ন ব্যবসায়ীর মান এই যায় সেই যায়।

রব তুলেছে দুষ্ট লোকেরাও। পৃথিবীতে তেমন-তেমন দুষ্ট লোকের কখনোওই অভাব হয় না! গ্রীষ্ম-বর্ষা-শরৎ-হেমন্ত-শীত-বসন্ত, সব সিজনেই যেমন আগাছা জন্মায়, আর জন্মায় মানে বলা নেই কওয়া নেই যত্রতত্র। ম্যাট্রিকে তিনবার ফেল করা পাত্র, তাই কোনো পাত্রীপক্ষই যথেষ্ট টাকা ঢালতেও ত' নারাজ। এই দুঃসংবাদ রটি গেল ধীরে।

সেইদিন সন্ধ্যায় শুনলাম, পিতৃদেব আমার মাতৃদেবীকে বলছেন, “এক গয়লা তার বাসুর লইয়া আইসিল”। আমি বুঝলাম। মাতৃদেবীও নিশ্চয় বুঝেছিলেন, নইলে আমার ধারণা যে তিনি ডানহাতে আমার বাঁ কানটি ধরে রেখে আমার সাথে মুখোমুখি আলোচনায় বসতেন ঠিক।

যাই হোক, বাবার পাল্লায় পড়ল সেই যাকে বলে আকাট মুর্খ ছেলেটি। কথা আছে না কপালের নাম গোপাল! পরেরদিন ছেলেটি পড়তে এসেছে। পিতৃদেব জিজ্ঞেস করলেন, “য্যামিতি যান?”

ছেলেটি বললো, “হ্যাঁ, স্যার”। আমি ত' বাইরে থেকে শুনছি আর কাঁপছি। যতই সে জ্যামিতি জানুক না কেন, ছেলেটির সাথে সাথে “হ্যাঁ” বলাটা বড্ড দুঃসাহসের এবং কাঁচা কাজ হয়ে গেল।



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পিতৃদেবের গলা, “ঠিক আসে, য্যামিতি যহন যানই, ছনি দেহি বৃত্ত কারে কয়”।

বাইরে থেকে আমার উদগ্রীব কানে ওপার থেকে ভেসে এল আমতা আমতা উত্তর, “এ কার্কল ইজ এ প্লেন ফাইজার”।

পিতৃদেবের ছংকার শুনলাম, “বেটায় তুই কী কইলি?” আমি কেঁপে উঠে একটু পিছিয়ে গেলাম। পিছিয়ে যেতে যেতেই আবার কানে এল, “এ কার্কল ইজ এ প্লেন ফাইজার”।

আমি ৪-৫ বছর বয়স থেকে ইউক্লিড এর জ্যামিতি শিখছি পিতৃদেবের কাছেই, একেবারে তাঁর হাতে গড়া। তবে ‘শেখা’ আর ‘জানা’, দুয়ের মধ্যে বহুত ফারাক চিরকাল বহমান। তাই বুঝতেই পারছি যে এবারে ছেলেটির আর নিস্তার নেই। আমি ভাবছি, “এই সারসে”। সাথেসাথে কানে এল, “ফটাস”। তারপরও পুনঃ পুনঃ শুনছি, “ফটাস, ফটাস, ফটাস”।

অর্থাৎ কিনা বেত্রাঘাতের ঘনঘন শব্দ। আমি নিজেই কাঁপছি আমার কপালে কীই বা লেখা আছে কে জানে এই দুশ্চিন্তায়। আবহাওয়ার পূর্বাভাসের আগে নিম্মচাপের হঠাৎ দিক-পরিবর্তন হতে পারে ভাবলে যেমন একটা অস্বস্তি হয়, অনেকটা তেমন। আমি খুব নার্ভাস, মনে মনে কেবলই ভাবছি যে যতদূর মনে পড়ে ওখানে ত’ ছেলেটির বলার কথা ছিলো, “A circle is a plane figure”। নিজের পিঠখানা মুচড়ে উঠল আসন্ন বিপদের আশঙ্কায়, আমি তখন লোপাট হাওয়া।

বলা বাহুল্যমাত্র যে সেই ছেলেটির ম্যাটিকে পাশ আর হয়নি, তবে শুনেছি বৌ-ছেলে-মেয়ে সহ সে খুব ভালোই আছে। সে আবার দাদুও হয়ে গেছে শুনছি।

বলাই বাহুল্য যে তাঁর দাদু হওয়ার পিছনে তাঁর নিজস্ব অবদান কিন্তু খুব কম। তাই অবান্তর মনে হলেও এই দরকারি তথ্যটা এইখানে পাড়লাম এই ভেবে যে ঐ ছেলেটির নিজস্ব গুণাগুণ বিচার করতে গিয়ে আপনারা যেন অযথা ভুল করে অথবা হুজুগের বশে তাকে বিশাল একটা মার্ক আর আমায় অল্প মার্ক দিয়ে না বসেন। যত দাদু-দিদা দেখি, সবাই বেশ একটা গদগদভাব, বিশেষত এই দুর্গাপূজার সময়। দাদু-দিদাদের এই একটা অকারণ গদগদ ভাব চিন্তাবিদ হিসাবে আমায় প্রায়ঃসই ভাবায়। আমার কথাটাও একটু ভাববেন। একটু অবান্তর মনে হলেও কথাটার গভীরতা ত’ আমার মনে হয় প্রশ্নাতীত।

পিতৃদেবের গল্প (খ)

আমার ছোড়দির সাথে হয়ত একটু বাইরে যাচ্ছি, ঘরের ভেতর থেকে পিতৃদেবের আদেশ এল, “খোকা, কয়েকটা চিকণ বেত আনিস রে, এই সাগলগুলান আসে, ঘরের সব কয়টি বেতই দেখি ভাঙ্গা”।

আমাদের বস্তির নিকটেই মাধব ঘোষ লেন-এ মস্ত একটা বেতের গোড়াউন। সেখানে বেতের ঝুরি, বাস্ক ইত্যাদি বানানো হতো। সেই গোড়াউন এর বাইরে বেশ ফনফনে ফলাওয়ালা অনেক বেত উঁই করে ফেলা থাকত। ফেরার পথে বেছে বেছে বেশ কয়েকটা চিকণ বেত নিয়ে নাচতে-নাচতে ঘরে ঢুকেছি। অন্যেরা বেত খাবে, একধরনের বোকামি আর প্রতিহিংসা বসতঃ তখনকার মতো আমি বেশ আনন্দে ও গর্বে আচ্ছন্ন। সেই আচ্ছন্ন ঘোরের মধ্যে ততক্ষণে আমি নেংটি হুঁদুরের মতন ঝাপাঝাপিও শুরু করে দিয়েছি। আমি আর কী তখন জানি! এখন যেমন আমার জ্ঞান বেশ টগবগু করে উপচে পড়ছে, তখন ত’ আর এতটা জ্ঞান-গম্যি ছিলো না। আর ছিলো না, তাইবা বলছি কেন, হয়ত ছিল, জানতাম না।

যাই হোক, পিতৃদেবের কণ্ঠস্বর, “খোকা, বেত নিয়া আইসস? দেহি কেমনটা বেত আনসস”। পিতৃদেবের মুখের হাভভাব দেখে মনে হোলো যেন বেতের গুচ্ছ দেখে তখনকার মতো তিনি মহা খুশি। আপাততঃ আমি পাশ, এইটুকু বুঝলাম।

পিতৃদেব একগাল হেসে বললেন, “দরজার পিসনে অহন রাইখ্যা দাও”। উপরওয়াল হাসছিলেন, আমি বেয়াকুব, খেলতেই ব্যস্ত, শুনতে পাইনি।

কখন যেন আমার ঝাপাঝাপির মাত্রা বেশ বেড়ে গিয়েছিল, আমি কী আর জানি! শেষরক্ষা হয়নি। আমার নিজের হাতে যত্নভরে বেছে-বেছে আনা একখানা বেশ গিঁটওয়াল চিকণ বেত আমারই পিঠে পড়ল, আমি শুধু শুনতে পেলাম, “ফটাস”।

পালাবার পথ পাইনি। আগেই বলেছি না, কপাল। নিজের ওপরে ঝিক্কার জানাতে গিয়ে হতাশা, হতাশা গড়ালো দুর্বলতায়, আর সেই মানসিক দুর্বলতারই ফলস্রুতি হিসেবে মনে পড়লো বুরবক্ হলে এমনটাই হয়। এরকম আসল সারকথা আমার প্রায়ই মনে পড়ে, কিন্তু ঝড়ঝঞ্জা সব কেটে যাবার পর। সবাই বলে আমার এইটাই না কি সবচেয়ে বড় প্রব্লেম, বরাবর। আমার কিন্তু অন্য ধারণা। ডাক্তারবাবুরা, আমায় মাফ করবেন।

শুশুরমশাইয়ের গল্প

আমার শুশুরমশাই ছিলেন ভাষাবিদ, কবি, প্রাবন্ধিক, যাকে বলে এক্কেবারে ফিটফিট। বাবার একটা বাঙলা টাইপরাইটার ছিল। উনি সেটাতে কিছু টাইপ করতেন। প্রচণ্ড দ্রুত টাইপ করতেন, ব্যবহার করতেন ডান আর বাঁ হাতের একখানা করে আঙুল, ব্যসা। দু’হাতের অন্য আটখানা আঙুল যাকে বলে একেবারেই অপ্রয়োজনীয়! যাই হোক, আমি মেঝেতে বসে বই পড়ছি, হঠাৎ শুনি বেশ নিচু গলায় “দুস্ শালা”।

বাবার চেয়ারের পেছনে গিয়ে দাঁড়াতে ব্যাপারটা বুঝলাম। অনেকক্ষন যাবৎ উনি চেষ্টা করতেন “দরিদ্র” কথাটি টাইপ করতে। কথাটি আগে হাজারবার টাইপ করেছেন নিশ্চয়ই, আজ আর ঠিক হচ্ছেনা। বলেনা, কপাল! ধৈর্যের বাঁধ ভেঙেছে, বাঁধ সেধেছে ঐ শেষ দ-এর নীচে একটুখানি তুচ্ছ র-ফলা।

কিছুতেই ঐ র-ফলার দাগ আর দ-এর দাগ একসাথে মিলছে না। শুশুরমশাই এমনটা আগে মিলিয়েছেন হাজারবার, আজ ঐ যৎ সামান্য র-ফলার দাগ আর দ-এর দাগ একটু আগে-পিছে কিংবা একটু ওপরে-নীচে হয়ে যাচ্ছে বারবার। আজ অন্য জমানা, পার্টি বদল।

টাইপরাইটারের ঝামেলায় আসন্ন চায়ের রাউন্ডের আগে পর্যন্ত সেদিন দারিদ্র্য আমাদের কুঁড়েকুঁড়ে খেলো।

পরীক্ষার ফলাফল

১৯৫০-৫৫ সাল থেকেই নামী এবং রাশভারী অধ্যাপক, রাজ চন্দ্র বোস, এদেশে চ্যাপেল হিল-এ। ১৯৬০-৬৫র গল্প। তিনি ক্লাসে পরীক্ষা দিয়েছেন। দুদিন বাদে গ্রেডসহ পরীক্ষার খাতা ফেরত দিলেন। সবচেয়ে ভাল ছাত্রটি, সোমেশ দাশগুপ্ত, তাঁর পরীক্ষার খাতা ফেরৎ পেয়ে একটু অবাক হলেন। বলে রাখি যে আমাদের সোমেশদা আমার থেকে অনেকটাই বড় ছিলেন এবং পরে উনিও খুব নাম করেছিলেন। গুরুগম্ভীর সোমেশদা পেয়েছেন ১০০র মধ্যে ৮৮ যদিও ৮৮ই ক্লাসের সর্বোচ্চ নম্বর।

কিন্তু সোমেশদা বেশ ধন্দে পড়ে গেলেন। অধ্যাপক সবগুলো অঙ্কেই কোথাও কিছু মার্ক কাটেননি ভুল হয়েছে বলে। সব ঠিকঠাক আছে, মনে ত’ হচ্ছে, কোথাও একটা ফোঁটা ভুলের রেশ পর্যন্ত নেই। যে যুগের গল্প বলছি, সেই সময়টা আর এখনকার সময়টা অনেক আলাদা। নম্বর কম মিলেছে বা ছাত্রের প্রশ্ন আছে বলেই অধ্যাপকের আপিসঘরে ছুট করে ঢুকে যাবার রেওয়াজ তখন ছিলনা। অধ্যাপকের আপিসঘরে যেতে বুকের পাটা লাগত। আমিও ভুক্তভুগি, তবে অনেকটা পরে।

অনেক ভেবেচিন্তে, অনেক সাহস সঞ্চয় করে সোমেশদা রাজচন্দ্র বাবুর দরজায় টোকা মারলেন। ভেতর থেকে খুব তীক্ষ্ণ কণ্ঠের আওয়াজ ভেসে এল, “Yes, come in”।

সোমেশদা ভয়ে ভয়ে ঘরে ঢুকে অধ্যাপকের পা ছুঁয়ে প্রণাম করে, পরীক্ষার খাতা এগিয়ে দিয়ে শুকনো গলায় আমতা আমতা করে বললেন, “স্যার, আমি দেখছি ৮৮ পেয়েছি”।

অধ্যাপক সোমেশদার স্পর্ধা দেখে একটু বিরক্ত হয়েই বললেন, “তাতে কী হয়েছে?”

সোমেশদা এবারে ঘামতে ঘামতে বললেন, “না স্যার, বলছিলাম যদি ভুলগুলো একটু বলে দেন। তাহলে, ভবিষ্যতে ঐ ধরনের ভুলগুলো এড়াবার চেষ্টা করব”।

অধ্যাপক সেই পুরনো আমলের গোলগোল হাই পাওয়ারের চশমার ভিতর দিয়ে খাতাটি উল্টেপাল্টে দেখে সোমেশদার হাতে ফেরৎ দিয়ে দিলেন, তারমানে “সোমেশ, এইবারে তুমি এসো”।

সোমেশদা আমতা আমতা করে বললেন, “স্যার, তবে যে আমি ৮৮ পেলাম, সেটা কেন যদি দয়া করে একটু বলে দেন”।

অধ্যাপক এবারে দ্বিধাহীন কণ্ঠে বললেন, “আমার পরীক্ষার প্রশ্নপত্র ত’ এবারে খুব সহজ ছিলো”।

এই অকাট্য যুক্তির পরে আর কোনও কথা চলে না, রাজ চন্দ্র বোসের সাথে ত’ একেবারে নয়ই। “হ্যাঁ, স্যার” বলে, অধ্যাপকের পা পুনরায় ছুঁয়ে প্রণাম করে, সোমেশদা নিঃশব্দে ফিরে গেলেন নিজের আপিসঘরে। গল্পটি সোমেশদার কাছেই রসিয়ে রসিয়ে একাধিকবার শোনা।

ডানেটের সত্তরবছর বয়স উদ্‌যাপন

১৯৮০র মাঝামাঝি। নামী অধ্যাপক চার্লী ডানেটের ৭০ হোলো। ডানেটের নামে তাঁরই আবিষ্কৃত একাধিক টেষ্ট আছে যেগুলো সকলেই, মানে ডাক্তার-ইঞ্জিনিয়ার এবং অন্যান্য বৈজ্ঞানিকেরা, রিসার্চে ব্যবহার করে থাকেন। সেই চার্লীর ৭০তম জন্মদিবস পালিত হচ্ছে ম্যাকমাস্টার বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে। আন্তর্জাতিক কনফারেন্স।

বাঘা বাঘা সব বৈজ্ঞানিকের আগমন সেখানে। ডানেটের তখন প্রায় ৯০ বছর বয়স্ক বৃটিশ অধ্যাপক সেখানে উপস্থিত, সে এক আশ্চর্য অভিজ্ঞতা। আমিও আছি। আরে না, না, আপনারা ঘাবড়াবেন না, ঘাবড়াবার মতন কিছু হয়নি। হয়ত কেউ ভুলবশতঃ আমার নামটা লিখিতে চুকিয়ে দিয়েছিল। সে যাই হোক, কনফারেন্স শুরু হোলো ডানেটের সেই প্রায় ৯০ বছর বয়স্ক অধ্যাপকের প্লিনারি বক্তৃতা দিয়ে।

অডিটোরিয়াম একেবারে ভর্তি, ৫০০র বেশী বৈজ্ঞানিক বসে খুব মন দিয়ে বক্তৃতা শুনছেন। ওনারা সবাই বেশ কেউ-কেটা যাকে বলে। আমার স্বভাব বেশ খারাপ, আমি না মানলেও অনেকে আমায় একেবারে যাকে বলে ডেকে নিয়ে গিয়ে সামনে দাঁড় করিয়ে মনে করিয়ে দেয়। আমার আবার যা ভুলোমন! আমি সবসময় বেশ জোরের সাথে বলি যে এটা আমার পিতৃদেব-মাতৃদেবীর জিন-সংক্রান্ত। আপনারা হয়ত হাসছেন। সে যাই হোক, সেই আমি বসেছি অনেক পিছনে। আমার সামনে ২৫-৩০টা রো আমি পরীক্ষার দেখতে পাচ্ছি। আমার ভবিষ্যৎ সামনে বইয়ের পাতার মতন, থুরি কম্পিউটারের স্ক্রীনের মতন, খোলা।

আমার কানে আসছে একজনের খুব মৃদু নাসিকাগর্জনের আওয়াজ। আমি তৎক্ষণাৎ বুঝেছি কোথা থেকে আওয়াজটা আসছে। মিল্টন সোবেল্ বসেছেন প্রথম সারিতে বসে, উনিই নাক ডাকছেন। বলে রাখি যে মিল্টনকে একডাকে সবাই চেনে আর সকলেরই এটাও অবশ্যই জানা যে তিনি যে কোনও বক্তৃতায় ঢুকেই ঘুমোবেন। মিল্টনের বয়সও তখন ৮০ ছুঁই ছুঁই, তার সাথে শ্রবণশক্তি প্রায় ছিলই না বলতে হয়।

এদিকে ঘোর সমস্যা হোলো যে মিল্টনের নাসিকাগর্জন বেড়েই চলল মিনিটে-মিনিটে। ডেসিবেল উর্ধ্বমুখি। পিছন থেকে আমি একেবারে বিনি পয়সায় মজা লুঠছি। স্ট্র্যাটিজিক যায়গায় বসেছি, কী হয় কী হয় ভাব।

তারপর আর কী? ভবিতব্য। হঠাৎ দেখছি, প্রধান বক্তা তাঁর বক্তৃতা থামিয়ে দিয়েছেন।

মিল্টন চমকে ঘুমভেঙ্গে বেশ অপ্রস্তুত, উনি বুঝতেই পারছেন কী ঘটনাটা ঘটেছে, এবং সেই ঘটনার পিছনে কে জড়িত এবং কেন।

প্রধান বক্তা তাঁর পোডিয়াম থেকে মুচ্কি হেসে স্নেহভরে বললেন, “Milton, you may sleep through my lecture and many people have done so before you. It’s not a problem, but you may not snore”।

সত্যিই ৯০ বছর বয়স্ক রসিক অধ্যাপক। সমস্ত হলঘর হাসিতে ফেটে পরল।

দু মিনিটও যায়নি, আমার স্ট্যাটিজিক যায়গা থেকে আবার শুনছি মৃদু নাসিকাগর্জন। ভাবছি, আবার কী জানি কী হয়।

ইনফিনিটি বস্তুটি আসলে কী?

আমার এক অধ্যাপক-বন্ধুর একরত্তি ছেলে, অশোক, ১, ২, ৩ সম্বন্ধে প্রাথমিক একটা ধারণা করতে শুরু করেছে। আমি আর আমার স্ত্রী একেবারে যাকে বলে “হাঁ”। “হাঁ” হবারই কথা। আমাদের ছেলে বীতশোক আর ঐ অশোক একবয়সি। বীতশোক তখনও পর্যন্ত সবোত্তর কলাকে “ভালা” ব’লে আমাদের সবাইকে মাতিয়ে রেখেছে। আমি আর আমার স্ত্রী বীতশোককে নিয়ে খুবই গর্বিত যেমনটা সাধারণত হওয়ার কথা। শুধু ঐ ছোট্ট অশোকের বাবা-মা’র লজ্জার মাথা খাওয়া বাড়াবাড়ি দেখে মনে মনে গাইছি, “পিছিয়ে পড়েছি আমি যে/জিতব কেমন করে”। যদিও জেতার আশায় বালি!

নিজের মান বাঁচাতে আমি রটিয়ে দিলাম যে আমি ইতিহাস-ভূগোল পড়াই। এদিকে, ইতিহাস-ভূগোল অঙ্কের তুলনায় কমতি কেন, এই নিয়ে বিতর্ক শুরু হলো। আপনারা সকলেই অবহিত যে আমি আবার বিতর্ক একেবারেই পছন্দ করিনা কারণ আমি সকলের বাড়ীতেই খেতে যেতে ভালবাসি। খাওয়াটা হাতছাড়া হয়ে গেলে বেশ দুঃখ হয়।

আমার বন্ধু অসংখ্য, কিন্তু দুঃখের কথা হলো যে আমার বন্ধুরা সত্যি যেন সব কেমন। কি বলব দুঃখের কথা, নিজ-নিজ বিষয় নিয়ে আমার বন্ধুরা সকলেই ভীষণভাবে অকারণে স্পর্শকাতর, আমার মতন উন্মুক্ত মন আর দ্বিতীয়টি মেলা ভার। আপনারা আমার বন্ধু ব’লে কথাটি বললাম, কাউকে যেন আবার বলে বসবেন না।

যাই হোক, ফল ভালো হলো না। তবুও বলি, অঙ্কের লোকেদের অনেক দোষের মধ্যে একটা বড় দোষ হলো “ইনফিনিটি” শব্দটি যত্রতত্র ব্যবহার করা। আমার মতো আসপাশের আর সবাইকে অস্বস্তিতে ফেলার জন্যই বোধহয় এটা করা। আমি ইতিহাস-ভূগোল পড়াই, তাই ব্যাপারটা আপনাদের মতন আমিও খুব অপছন্দ করি।

অশোকের বাবা-মা দুজনেই অঙ্কের মাস্টার। যথাবিহিত বাব-মা’র চাপে, একদিন অশোক বেশ তরতরিয়ে গুণতে শিখে গেল। ভালো গাছের গোড়ায় বেশ মিরাকল-গ্রো আর জল পড়েছে নিশ্চয়। এদিকে আমাদের বাড়ীতে আবার জল বাড়ন্ত।

অশোকের বাবা-মা তাকে নিয়ে স্বভাবতঃই ভীষণ গর্বিত। আর গর্বিত কোন্ বাবা-মা-ই বা হবে না? যাকে বলে একেবারে হীরের টুকরো ছেলে। আমরা তাদের বাড়ী গেলেই, অশোকের পাল্লিক টেষ্ট শুরু হতো। এই চেয়ারের ক’টা পায়া? মা’র ক’টা চোখ? এখানে ক’টা চাবি, বাড়ীর সামনে ক’টা সিঁড়ি, ইত্যাদি ইত্যাদি।

এহেন অশোক একদিন বাবার সাথে জ্ঞানীয় একটি মল্-এ গেছে, বাপ-ছেলের আউটিং, একেবারে লাঞ্চে খেয়ে ফিরবে। মল্-এ ঢুকতেই, সামনে স্বপ্নের সিঁড়ি, এক্সালেটার। লোভ সামলাতে না পেরে, একেবারে লজ্জা-সরমের মাথা খেয়ে, বাবার সরাসরি প্রশ্ন, “আচ্ছা, বাবাই, এক্সালেটারে ক’টা সিঁড়ি আছে রে?” দুবছরের অশোকের দুম্ করে উত্তর, “ইনফিনিটি”।

আমি কী আর এমনি এমনিই অঙ্কের লোকেদের একটু-আধটু হিংসে করি! আপনারাই বলুন যে এ সহ্য করা যায়?

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The BAGH Executive Committee rejoices the lives and works of those family members, friends, and patrons who are all dearly missed during these festivities.

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