

# UPAHAAR 2016

A souvenir for the 4th Durgapuja Utsav of Toledo

Presented by Hindu Temple of Toledo





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## INTRODUCTION

It is that time of year again.

The sky is a brilliant blue with fluffy white clouds, and Nature is bountiful. The stage is set for mother Durga to descend from her heavenly abode and bless our mortal lives with celestial love.

As the first sunrays on Mahalaya strike the Eastern sky, the mundane universe seems to be transformed into something rich and wonderful. Every object appears to be the expression of *Mahamaya*, and universal love.

This is the time for us to spread happiness, a time to touch hearts with love, a time to wipe tears away from sad eyes, a time to fill deprived souls with warmth, a time to partake in the feast of life.

For the fourth year, the Bengali community of Toledo takes pride in presenting Durga Puja with the pomp and pageantry of shakti aradhana. We will celebrate with diyas, aartis, dances, singing, food and rejoicing. We will worship our primordial mother with lavishness and pray to Her to bless our lives in grand measure.

*Rupang dehi, jayam dehi, jasho dehi, disho jahi*

Give us beauty, give us victory, give us fame, and defeat our foes

Sincerely,

Your Durga Puja Organizers

# *P R A Y E R*

*When life is parched and filled with pain  
Let thy mercy flow like rain*

*When love is nowhere to be found  
Play for me thy melodious sound*

*When duty strangles from all sides  
Step in my life in gentle strides*

*When my mind is poor and I am feeling low  
Light my life with thy regal glow*

*Translated from the immortal verses of*

**RABINDRA NATH TAGORE**

# PRAYER

*Light in my soul your divine spark,  
Make my life sublime*

*Raise my body from the dark,  
Make it a lamp in heavenly clime.*

*Let me feel thy touch in the dark,  
While stars bloom through the night*

*Let my vision melt darkness away  
And see your divine light*

*Translated from the immortal verses of  
RABINDRA NATH TAGORE*

# PROGRAM

## DURGA PUJA UTSAV - 2016

Hindu Temple of Toledo, October 15, 2016

<i>Daytime Puja</i>	<i>9.00 am - 1.00 pm</i>
<i>Pushpanjali</i>	<i>1.00 pm - 2.00 pm</i>
<i>Daytime Puja Continues</i>	<i>2.00 pm - 5.00 pm</i>
<i>Evening/ Shandhi Puja (Arti with 108 Diyas)</i>	<i>5.00 pm - 6.00 pm</i>
<i>Cultural Program Part 1</i>	<i>6.00 pm - 7.00 pm</i>
<i>Concluding Puja/ Sindoor Khela Cultural Program Part 2</i>	<i>7.00 pm - 7.45 pm</i>
<i>Sunderkhand CD Release</i>	<i>7.45 pm - 8.00 pm</i>
<i>Catered Bengali Style Dinner</i>	<i>8.00 pm</i>

### *Tentative Cultural Program 6-7 PM*

- 1. Dance by Novi Pathbhavan kids*
- 2. Violin by Rito Ray*
- 3. Dance by Swajan kids*
- 4. Electric piano by Ruchita Coomar*
- 5. Violin recital by Shreyas Bannerji*
- 6. Dance Tina Nandi*
- 7. Sitar recital by Sarit Dhar*
- 8. Tabla recital by Partho  
Karmakar with group*
- 9. Dance: Paramita and team*

### *Tentative Cultural Program 8.00 pm onwards at Dinnertime*

- 1. Tagore songs by Noyana  
Dasgupta*
- 2. Nitin Hardalkar 2 songs*
- 3. Modern Bengali and Hindi  
Songs By Indrani Ghosh, Ann  
Arbor MI*
- 4. Ramprasad Vocal*

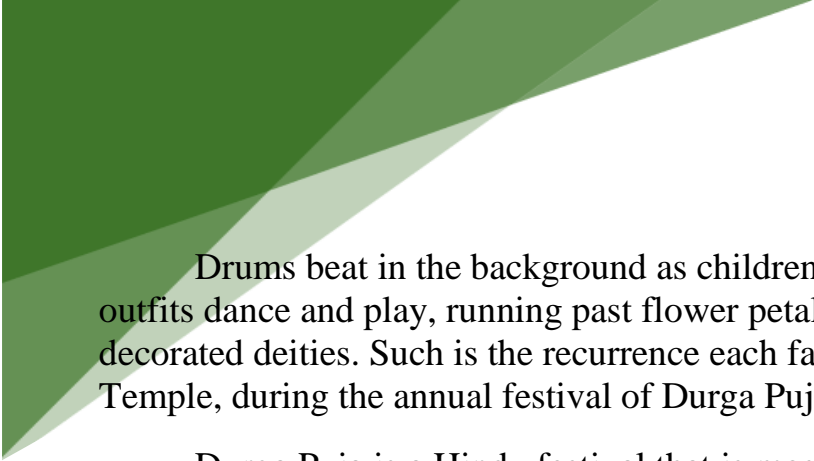
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# DURGA PUJA

## BRIDGING GENERATIONS THROUGH CULTURE

*TANUSHREE DEY. WHITEHOUSE, OH*



Drums beat in the background as children in bright, traditional outfits dance and play, running past flower petals strewn at the feet of decorated deities. Such is the recurrence each fall at the Toledo Hindu Temple, during the annual festival of Durga Puja.

Durga Puja is a Hindu festival that is most widely celebrated by the Bengali community in India. For us, Bengalis, this is considered to be an auspicious and joyous time, similar to the magical feeling that Christmas evokes here.

Many Bengali families endeavor to inculcate in their children the culture and traditions they grew up with. They hope for the next generation, although raised in America, to retain these values and cultural pride to pass on to future generations. Durga Puja exposes children, who have grown up outside of India, to Bengali culture. They look forward to aarti, eating Bengali meals and sweets, and seizing the opportunity to wear ethnic Indian outfits.

Given the hectic pace of life, where I rarely have time to be involved culturally, Durga Puja is a day where I am able to take a step back and contemplate on my roots, cultural identity and what it means to be Bengali. As an American-Bengali, I have heard stories from my parents, from their childhood in India, and now I am discovering my own stories, developing each year.



# MY GOD SAID, “LOVE THY NEIGHBOR”

**DANA DAVIS**

I went to the movies with my best friends last night, they are Indian American and I am a white American. We have been best friends for 9 years and we say that we are family. Odd family? Not to us. People stared at us at the movies while we were waiting to get our popcorn, people always do. My Indian friends believe that the people who stare at us are usually white Americans but I have seen that other Indians stare at us as well. Is it true to say that Indians are usually only seen with other Indians? I believe that to be true with the older generation but not the younger or should I say the “ABCD” generation.

Yes, I learned that term from my Indian family. If you don’t know what it means, ask another Indian. Being “ABCD” is not a bad thing if it means that you are more accepting of other people. The same is said for the younger generation of white Americans. People in general are surprised to see the type of relationship we have together as a family. We don’t mind when people stare at us, in fact we think it is funny. We laugh and say, “I wonder what they must be thinking?” Maybe they are just thinking that we are pretty! Or maybe they are wondering how our families became such good friends. Regardless, we hope that when people see us together in the community they will think to themselves that it might be really great if they also had American or Indian friends like us. I suppose that many of you have friends of other ethnicity but I would certainly win a bet by saying that they are probably more of an acquaintance than a friend. If you aren’t sharing the same activities with them as you are with your other friends then you are just acquaintances.

What are the obstacles? How did we manage to overcome them and become so close? There are no obstacles aside from the ones you create yourself. When our families talk about religion, we do it inquisitively. We tend to ask “why” very often. Not because we are questioning each other’s religion but because we really want to understand. We want to learn. It is so interesting to hear about each religion; what we believe, why we believe it and the history behind it all. We never try to challenge each other’s religion or change what we believe in. We respect each other’s beliefs and honor them and celebrate them equally. Being of a different religion does not change the equality in which we see each other either. I pray for my friends and they pray for me and we hope that all the Gods, or one God, will hear our prayers and keep us safe and happy and healthy for as long as is meant to be.

Let’s talk about food. Food could be an obstacle but only if you create the obstacle yourself. I am possibly the pickiest eater on this planet. Bad news if you have an Indian as your best friend right? Wrong! We have no trouble at all. We have had breakfast, lunch and dinner together more times than you can imagine. Mostly because we are neighbors and we just show up at each other’s house unannounced and quite often wearing our pajamas! I told you we were family. When we come to each other’s home to eat together we always compromise for each other. We make separate dishes or change our recipes a little bit. We avoid religious foods and allergic foods. My Indian friends usually have to compromise on their food more than we do and I feel bad about that but I am such a picky eater. Although, my palate has gotten a lot better over the years of exposure to new Indian foods. In fact, I ate a spicy Indian dish just the other day and it was great. My friends were so happy. If you are willing to make sacrifices to try to understand the needs of each other, you can make it work. On the other hand, if you say, “I’m not inviting them over for dinner because I don’t know how to make their type of food, then you have created your own obstacle. Sometimes we just say, “Thank goodness for Pizza”! Everyone likes pizza.

Lastly, I will talk to you about two obstacles our families have created for ourselves. We work on overcoming these and I think we are doing a good job. These obstacles are: raising children and what's important in life. It is well known to us and countless others that Americans and Indians tend not to agree when it comes to these two things. If you are just someone's acquaintance, these issues would be of no concern. Once you become best friends or family, these concerns can assume a big dimension and could even prevent you from being close friends in the first place.

So how do you overcome that? Well, for us, we have spent hours sitting around our living room and dinner tables talking about how we feel and what we think. We have cried and laughed and maybe even raised our voices but in the end we discovered that we were both wrong about some things and we were both right about some other things. We learned from each other, and became better parents and better people because of each other. We love each other very much and since I did write this paper, I gave myself the right to say one thing that I wish for my Indian friends to do and others who read this to do; start looking your loved ones in the eye and saying to them out loud, "I Love You".

---

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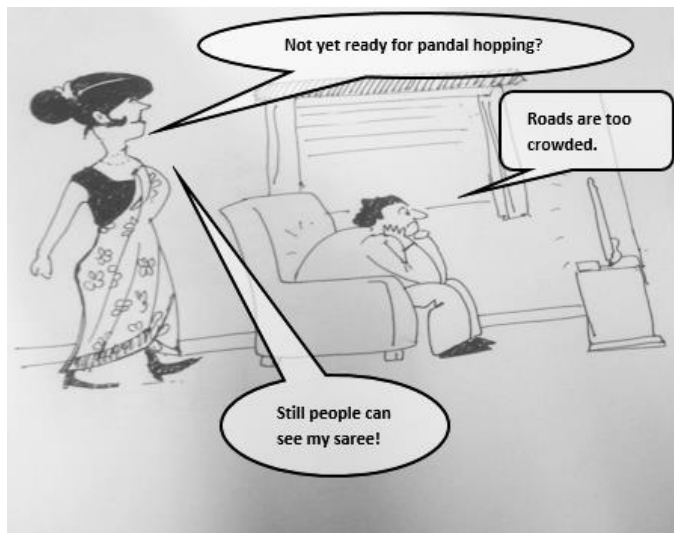
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# TEN SHADES OF DURGA PUJA CELEBRATION

PRASENJIT DAS CANTON, MI [PRASENJIT14@YAHOO.COM](mailto:PRASENJIT14@YAHOO.COM)

“Won’t it be nice to get new curtains for our flat?” asks ever-optimistic Shruti, a middle-aged homemaker cum financial analyst, and one who has always enjoyed spending money. “Curtains can change the complexion of a home. Can you please do some research first and find out what’s trendy these days”, replies Rajdeep, the compulsive planner husband and a biomedical engineer by profession. Within minutes, thanks to Pinterest and WhatsApp, Shruti knows exactly what she wants. “Are you serious? You want us to spend 1 lakh rupees on curtains!” exclaims Rajdeep, who deep inside though, instantly knows no matter how much he resists, this is what she is going to get and before he can complete his mental calculations, an over-excited voice interrupts, “can we get it before Puja?”



(Cartoon courtesy Ankan Ray)

For most Bengalis, the word “Puja” doesn’t require any additional qualification. It is the Durga Puja. Although necessities of a typical Bengali household have changed and so has technology available at their disposal, one thing that has still not changed is their propensity to plan major activities and expenses around the Durga Puja. No matter how hyped they get while celebrating New Year’s Eve or Poila Baisakh at an extravagant EM Bypass restaurant or while away in a foreign vacation, Durga Puja still marks the beginning and end of a special calendar.

So what is it about Durga Puja that draws them so much to it? Is it merely the religious aspect or is it the prolonged break from work or is it the opportunity for a family reunion? I hardly know of any Bengali who spends more than an hour in religious activities during the Puja that extends over a period of four days. From kids to elderly people; from those living in Kolkata to those who live outside Kolkata; from those who stay in India to those staying abroad; everybody has their own reason to look forward to the celebration.

For a kid, the major attraction of the Puja is the opportunity to spend four consecutive days differently from daily mundane and the hope that blessings from the Goddess can magically change one’s life. “Daddy, the priest that performs the Puja, is he an IAS officer?” asks seven year old Rajdeep. “No son, he is a fruit vendor”. A bit shocked, young Rajdeep does not fail to understand that the Goddess doesn’t limit her blessings only to those who fast for long hours and worship her. But before he can think more about it, a bunch of his friends gather around him and he happily joins them playing with cap and toy guns. At that age, Rajdeep’s Puja experience was limited primarily to the one in his neighborhood and he would mostly spend his time with his parents or nearby friends. As Rajdeep grew, he got busy with studies and other extracurricular activities. He now had far less opportunities than before to skip school, and quite often, he yearned for vacations from school. Can’t blame him though; the heat after summer vacation was over was no less merciful and whatever relief monsoon used to bring disappeared as roads got flooded with knee-

high water and distinguishing the road from the drain became a major challenge! “Just a few more days son till the Puja holidays start” comforts his mother. Back in the mid-eighties, weather used to be more or less pleasant during the Puja and once it was over, people would gradually start digging out their winter clothes.

Impending Puja slowly changes the ambience everywhere, and towards the middle of September, at school recess and lunch break, the topic of discussion among friends slowly starts shifting towards what are the must-visit Puja pandals; what are the pandals that have won Asian Paints Durga Puja awards in the past and how they are planning to spend the forthcoming Puja. Rajdeep, by now, has already learnt from his younger sister Preeti that he can't buy just any clothing for Puja; he needs to look around for what his friends are wearing and what is being shown in the latest TV serials and movies. As Puja approaches weekends start passing by more quickly, busy playing cricket during the day and Puja shopping during the evening. Ingenuous Rajdeep, however, can barely wait till Saptami to put on his new clothes! He anxiously waits for the Puja because he wants to discuss with his father the different pandals in the city and also wants his help to prepare the route for pandal hopping. “Let's start from the one farthest from our home”, his father would instruct their chauffeur to take them to College Square. With no EM Bypass back then, the foremost decision that needed to be taken soon after leaving their home at Garia, a southern suburb of Kolkata, was whether to take Road number 5 (through Jadavpur and Gariahat) or 6 (through Bansdrone and Tollygunge). Either way didn't make much difference. Traffic was standstill and how soon one reached a destination depended solely on how familiar and knowledgeable the chauffeur was with local bylanes and alleys. Fortune didn't change much even after arriving at a pandal. Waiting in long lines was not quite fun. Nonetheless, this taught Rajdeep the art of offering remote pranams to Gods and Goddesses, a skill he kept mastering as he grew up. And before too long it would be time for dinner. The long wait at the restaurants, though, was worth every second as the entire family relished the much needed break from hopping.

Years came and went and Rajdeep reached college. By now, he has had enough of pandal hopping and enough of expeditions in the city during the Puja. That an entire city would come to a halt for four days with almost all essential services suspended has started to trouble him. What also started to bother him were the unscrupulous methods a lot of Puja organizers and volunteers would use to collect contribution. That was the period in his life when he would wait for the Puja only in alternate years, the years the family would go out on long vacations once the Puja was over. Priorities had also changed during the Puja days, which meant he now preferred spending more time with his close circle of friends. He started getting closer to the Puja in his neighborhood. Most of the time he was seen around the nearby pandal except for couple of evenings he would spend with his college friends in his favorite restaurants. With pressure of studies slowly subsiding, he now started developing a closer bond with relatives that visited his family during Puja as well as with neighbors who approached him for help or suggestions. He at all times did try his best to help others, whatever little he could. Solving a real life problem for a real person gave him a sense of accomplishment much more than solving fictional problems under fictional circumstances. Looking back, he feels, those apparently trivial incidents had a profound impact on what his priorities would be for the rest of his life.

As time passed, little did he realize, knowingly or unknowingly, that his formal education had made him a part of the rat race and he was slowly getting ready to leave the people he loved and cared; the culture he cherished; and the values he learnt all his life and that got ingrained in him. How is his new experience and new life going to be? Is he going to miss what he was leaving behind? “Will meet in two months during your Puja vacation”, yells someone in the neighborhood, as his car leaves for Dum Dum International Airport for his journey abroad. Who will explain this neighbor that there are places in the world where Puja is not a four day spectacle and “Puja vacation” is a thing unknown!

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# BITS AND PIECES FROM BEIJING TRAVEL

PRADIPTA CHATTERJI VESTAL, NY

Traveling by air China from New Delhi to Beijing was exhausting but The Beijing Capital International Airport welcomed us with charm and grandeur. This airport opened in the year of 1958 and is located in the northeastern part of Beijing. It is the second busiest airport in the world by passenger traffic, and its two terminals efficiently manage several thousands of scheduled domestic and foreign flights daily. Exclusive shopping, dining, informational and several other customer-friendly services are easily available here for thousands of customers.



China is one of the biggest countries in the world and also is one of the oldest civilizations. Its capital city Beijing is very ancient and still quite modern. Beijing had been the major city and the most important business center in China since 221 BC, and served as the capital of several royal dynasties. In 1949 Beijing became the political and cultural capital of the People's Republic of China.

Beijing thrives as the nation's political, cultural, and educational center. China's largest state-owned companies and its major national highway, expressway, railway, and high-speed rail networks are located here.

Beijing can be considered as a center of culture and art as it is renowned for its extravagant palaces, temples, parks, gardens, tombs, walls and gates, art treasures and famous universities.

China has shown great economic growth since the late seventies, and supposedly will take the place of the second largest economy by the year 2030. Beijing's economy ranks among the most developed and prosperous in China

Beijing has unique architectural styles. The traditional style of architecture of imperial china is expressed in the structures of the symbols of Beijing, such as Tiananmen Square, Forbidden City, Lama Temple and similar other building constructions.

While in Beijing, one cannot avoid driving by the Tiananmen Square and Forbidden City as they are centrally located and cannot be overlooked. The present square has an area of 440,000 square meters and has become a popular place for people to visit, relax, walk, and fly kites. The morning of our actual trip to the square turned out quite windy with drizzling rain. Parking in designated areas and crossing heavily traffic ridden highway-like streets were a bit challenging as umbrellas were flying away while resisting the wind. The massive size of the square is always overwhelming, crowded with tourists from all over the world, taking selfies and pictures of their loved ones. It was built in 1949 by



Chairman Mao. His huge portrait is visible from a great distance and possibly reminds travelers the infamous recent past of the Tiananmen Square. The great hall of the people, Monument of the people's heroes, and the Mao Zedong Mausoleum surround this area.

Tiananmen Tower is located at the north end of the Square, originally built in 1417 during the Ming Dynasty and was the front door of the Forbidden City.



Entrance to the tower was only permissible for the royal family and aristocrats until 1911 until the last feudal kingdom's existence.

The Forbidden City was constructed in the early 15th century, and was the palace-residence of the Ming and Qing dynasties. It is quite well preserved palace designed by the unique Chinese style building structure....made with wood with yellow glazed tile roof top. This colossal framework has 9000 rooms with valuable antiquities, 70 structures with a delightful imperial garden in the back. A moat and high walls surround the whole area.

Originally commoners were not permitted to enter this palace-complex. Beijing's Forbidden City now welcomes travelers from all socio-economic groups.

The granite Monument of the People's Heroes was built in 1952. Eight unusually large relief sculptures exhibit the development of Chinese modern history. Two rows of white marble railings enclose the monument.



During recent years Beijing has witnessed tremendous growth of new building constructions, exhibiting various modern styles from international designers which can be seen at the 798 Art Zone, which mixes the old with the new. Additionally there are much more modern architectural forms, most noticeably in the area of the Beijing CBD and Beijing Financial Street.



Wangfujing Street is one of the oldest and busiest shopping streets in Beijing with



approximately 100,000 visitors daily, the sale of consumer goods both retail and wholesale accounted for about 1/8 of Beijing's economic output in 2013. The Silk market and Pearl market of Beijing are two popular shopping centers for visitors. Valuable and costume jewelry, silk, leather and numerous other souvenir items are available here. Bargaining is

allowed and encouraged here. The vendors speak English and are quite courteous when bargaining does not reach a ridiculous point.

Qiamen Dashila is Beijing's most ancient commercial center, with a history dating back to some 580 years in Ming dynasty. Many old shops and time honored brands are available in this 275 meter long pedestrian street



Beijing Railway Station, is the city's main railway station, which opened in 1959. Beijing Railway Station had 173 trains arriving daily, Beijing West had 232 trains and Beijing South had 163. The Beijing North Railway Station, first built in 1909 and expanded in 2009, had 22 trains.

The station was quite close to our hotel, and we accidentally discovered it. This

finding seemingly thrilled my husband, as he insisted on taking daily walks back and forth to the station. Manas possibly found affinity of this environment to his college days in India when he commuted to Calcutta via Sealdah Station. However our walks were exhausting as the heat and humidity of the month of July in Beijing was unbearable. The sidewalks were crowded, as we got closer to the station the crowd increased and it was harder to go through, bumping onto people and avoiding broken cracks on the streets, and avoiding crack holes. Many people hurriedly passed carrying small tin- trunks possibly to catch trains. It could be called a nostalgic experience at a different place and in a different time.

Anyway this walk became our morning ritual and while we reached the rail station, we found an old green colored bridge which would take us to the other side of the big street. Again there were many stairs to climb up and down in the heat. We had our lunch usually at the shopping mall just across the station. There were tempting lunch places everywhere ...busy and noisy serving hot bowls of noodles with meat, fish, and seafood. We generally chose McDonalds or Kentucky fried chicken for lunch as we were intimidated by the foreign environment and were afraid that we wouldn't be able to select suitable dishes which we regretted. In the evenings of course we were able to try all kinds of delicious Chinese dishes in our hotel and also to fancy restaurants accompanied by our local friends.



Chinese food is colorfully appetizing and healthy; cooked with very little oil and most dishes are steamed instead of fried. Tastes are definitely different from the popular Chinese dishes available in the USA. Various types of meat, noodles, green vegetables, and tofu are used in cooking. Fruits are commonly served as desserts.



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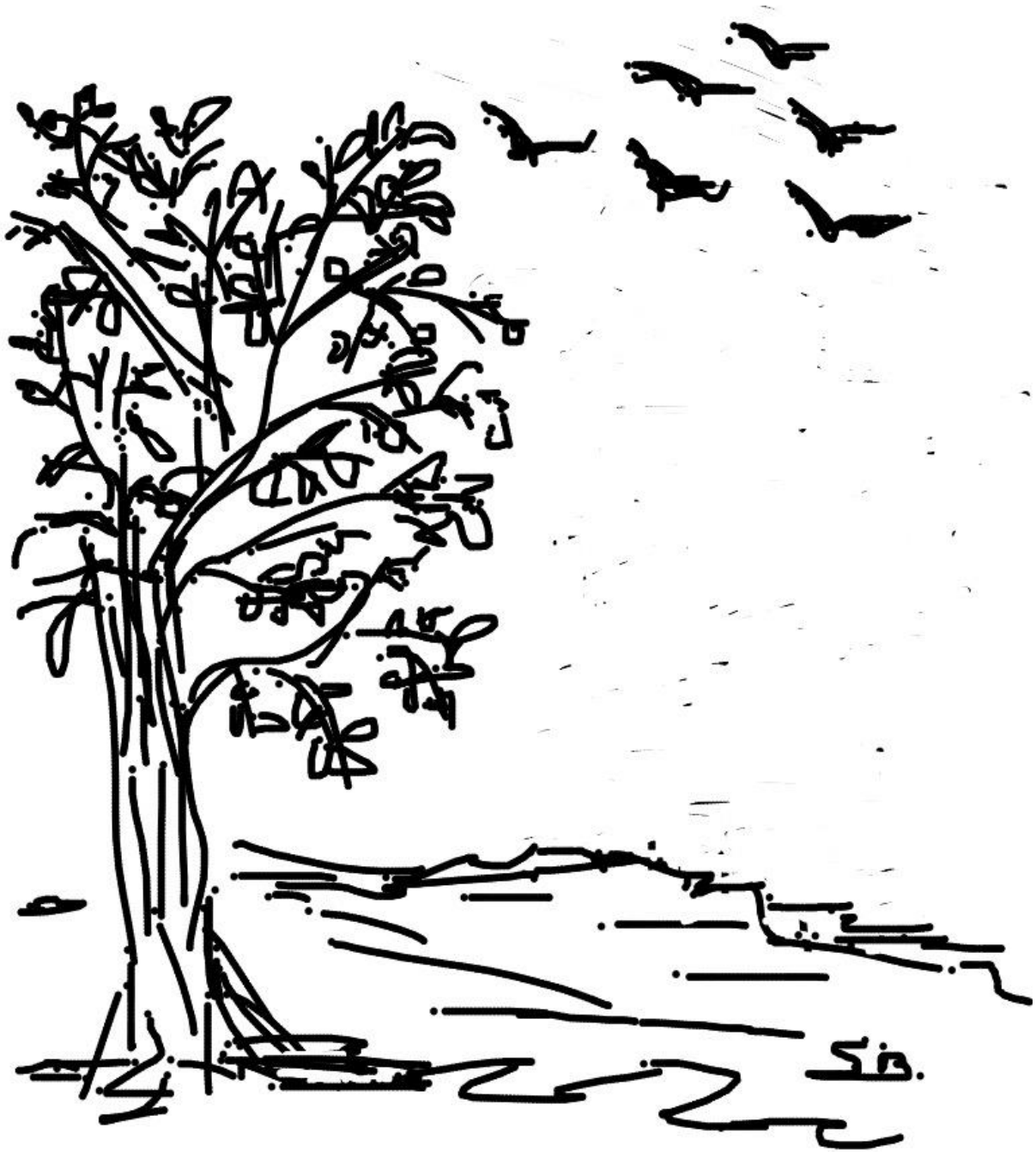
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# HEMANTA

SUBHADRA BANDOPADHYAY



# A MOMENT OF CHANGE

**DR. KIRTI PARIKH. VADODARA, INDIA**

**T**his incident occurred 40 years ago when I was a student in a Calcutta college. One of my friends Somnath Ghosh used to stay near our house. We were both in the same class and we were very pally. I used to go to read at his place every day.

In those days an old Pishemoshai used to come to his house. (Pishemoshai means father's sister's husband in Bengali. They have such words as Babumoshai, Jethamoshai and Mesomoshai

This Pishemoshai was originally Bengali but had settled in Nepal since several generations. His grandfather had done commendable service in the Nepal King's army, so he was given huge estate in reward. People used to call him Sardar. Pishemoshai was also such 'Sardar' type, royal in appearance, tall hefty build, fair complexioned, baroque voice, sharp nose and thick moustaches. By nature he was very strict and mixing.

When one day he had come to my friend's place, the friend was late in offering him a glass of water, he shouted at the top of his voice "What's holding you from bringing a glass of water." Oh, once he had a dispute with his 22 year old younger son. The son argued with him and so Pishemoshai, a military -natured father asked him "get out of my house here and now". The son was also similar natured and so left the house immediately. Everyone in the house tried to stop him from leaving, but not his father. Leaving his house, he started working in Pokhra hill station hotel.

Pishemoshai would often tell us anecdotes about his youth days. In those days he used to come for 'Shikar' (hunting) in the forests of Uttar Pradesh. He would describe those Shikar parties in a manner that would leave us awe- stricken. His style of description was such we would listen to him in total silence.

Once it so happened, as usual, Pishemoshai went to Uttar Pradesh for Shikar. He had four servants with him. He also took along a small goat which was to be used as a bait.. In the dense forest, in early afternoon, he saw a clearing and asked his car to be stopped there. He ordered his servants to erect a scaffold there with bamboos and asked one of the men to tie the goat to a nearby tree as a bait.

He stood there, a cigar in his mouth looking at the forest around him. Just then, about 200 meters away he saw a tiger approaching them. He stood in utter silence, holding his breath for a minute. Two little cubs were coming ahead of the tiger. The tiger was 10-15 feet behind the cubs. Pishemoshai tightened his grip around the rifle and lifted it to take aim. With his left hand he instructed his men to be silent. The tiger had now stopped. It was fine if the tiger could be shot and killed in the clearing but what if the tiger was only injured and then attacked? Was the risk worth taking? Pishemoshai was thinking about it. At that moment, the tiger came ahead of the cubs. Raising its left front paw, it as if asked the cubs to wait behind him.

For a moment Pishemoshai and the tiger looked at each other. What was the tiger thinking at that moment? Strategy for the attack? Or was it that the tiger had seen a Shikar party in the past and knew death was near? Pishemoshai was confused. But whatever that might be the tiger had kept the cubs behind and taken the lead in attack or may be it wanted to face the attack and render the cubs safe. Pishemoshai said" for a moment I thought how such a wild animal like tiger also wishes safety and well being of its offsprings." At that very moment his grip on the rifle loosened. Putting the rifle on the ground he told the driver "everybody get into the car we want to return." One of the servants said "sir, you had mercy on the tiger today" Once out of the forest, Pishemoshai told the driver "We

want to go to Pokhra.” “Kathmandu or Pokhra?” asked the driver. Pishemoshai snapped back “Do as I told you.”

At Pokhra he went to his son’s room and cried a lot in front of his son. “Even a beast protects its little ones from dangers of the world around. How come I left my child to face this harsh world all alone?” He told his son”Suketu come home. Forget the past. Forgive your father. Your mother and the relatives could not persuade me about this thing when you left. That a dumb beast has explained to me in a moment.” Come on son come home with me.

Kirti Parikh

Vadodara



# GREECE - A TRYST WITH THE PAST

ASISH MUKHERJEE MAUMEE, OH

This is the land where Gods once roamed and myths were born, the land where modern philosophy germinated, and Western civilization reared its head. As the flood of time has flowed down the sandy shores of civilization it has shaped and eroded many edifices of human culture. Many storms of hatred, jealousy and greed for power have swept across Man's fondest creations. Of all that is left of our mesmerising past, Greece boasts some of the most iconic remnants.

Yet, like many other civilizations that have carried the torch of enlightenment, this nation has fallen behind in the modern culture of competitive capitalism. Banks are running dry for this honest and proud nation. However, Greece enchanted me with the mingling of third world poetry with first world prose which was evident everywhere I went.

Athens has been continuously inhabited for at least 7000 years. The oldest known human presence here is the Cave of Schist, which has been dated to between the 11th and 7th millennia BCE. From 900 BCE onwards Athens was one of the leading canters of trade and prosperity in the region. Democracy was introduced in Athens by Cleisthenes as early as 508 BCE.

We alighted from our flight on a warm fall afternoon, at the modern Athens airport. After an expeditious passage through immigration, we were greeted by Vasius, the driver assigned by AthensToursGreece - our travel agency. His overused and under-maintained Mercedes did not feel like a luxury vehicle, but he was an engaging and knowledgeable man. He filled us in on his country's history as we drove into this historic city named after Athena the goddess of wisdom. Ancient Greeks believed Athena to be the guardian deity watching over her favorite city from her temple high in the Acropolis.

We arrived at Hotel Hera in the tourist quarters. Its rooftop restaurant typical of most European cities, commanded a panoramic view of the city. High above, on a rocky hill was the citadel of Acropolis. Its stately columns breathed of a seminal culture in human history. In dramatic contrast, structures below in the present city made up a concrete jungle. Its square roofed buildings of uneven height lacked the elegance of graceful red roofed houses of most European cities.



Acropolis

Restaurant in Plaka



We had dinner at a traditional restaurant in the historical neighborhood of Plaka, which had narrow serpentine streets lined with cobblestones and brightly lit stores on either side peddling usual souvenirs. We had a typical Greek dinner and watched dancers perform in traditional flowing Greek attire. People were warm and lively and midnight struck before we knew it.

Next morning we embarked on the climb for Acropolis. This is an ancient citadel located on high ground. It contains the remains of several ancient buildings of great architectural and historic significance. The word is derived from Greek meaning "highest point of city". There is historical evidence of human presence in this hill as far back as the fourth millennium BCE. Most important

buildings at this site include the Parthenon, the Propylaia a monumental gateway to the Acropolis, the Erechtheion, a temple dedicated to Athena and Poseidon, the Temple of Athena Nike, and many others.

Pericles, a prominent Greek statesman began construction of the Parthenon in 447 BCE. This is a temple with Doric and Ionic architectural features. It stands on a platform of three steps and is surrounded by columns carrying a superstructure.

There are eight columns in double row at either end, and seventeen on the sides. The platform on which the columns stand has a slight upward convexity meant for shedding rainwater and reinforcing against earthquakes. The columns themselves lean slightly inwards along a line that would meet a mile above the center. This Parthenon was the seat of the 13 meters tall gold and ivory statue of Athena Parthenos. This was a symbol of Athenian hegemony, expressing glory of the city and its patron deity.



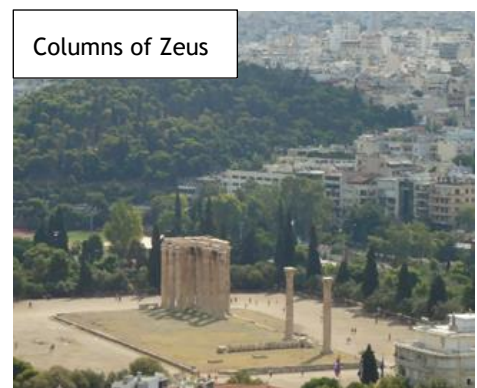
Parthenon

The earliest temple to Athena at this site known as *Athena Polias*, was erected around 570-550 BCE. Many relics survive from this limestone building. Between 525-500 BCE yet another temple was built on the Acropolis by the Peisistratids (group of three tyrant rulers), which was known as the Old Temple of Athena, usually referred to as the *Arkhaios Neōs*. It was destroyed by Persians in 480 BCE. The Parthenon and the other buildings constructed by Pericles were seriously damaged during the 1687 siege by the Venetians in the Morean War when they were hit by a cannonball.

I spent hours roaming the magnificent ruins and steeped my thirsty soul in the reviving wine of the past. Looking down, I could see the columns of Zeus which were remnants of a colossal temple built in 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. I could see amphitheatres of utmost symmetry where ancient



Amphitheater



Columns of Zeus

Greeks in white tunics must have thronged in the evening to watch the enactment of human drama.



Statue of Leonid

The next day Vasius took us on a drive to Delphi. The weather was brilliant and the roads were scenic. Our driver as usual gave us a lucid summary of the history of the area. On the way we stopped at Thermopyles. In 480 BCE one of the most remarkable battles in history was fought in a narrow strip of land next to the sea. There were three hundred Spartans and seven hundred Thespians under the leadership of Spartan king Leonid. On the other side was the huge Persian army numbering one million and seven hundred thousand under the command of Xerexes. Xerexes had demanded of the Spartans that they give up

their arms. To this Leonid had famously replied “come and get it”. This is inscribed under his statue

at the site of battle in the accompanying picture. Spartans had defended themselves well till they fell victim to treachery from their midst.

We had good Greek coffee at Thermopylae, and drove on up hilly roads to Delphi. Delphi had grown famous in old times as the site of “consultation with the oracle” which was widely used for taking important decisions throughout the ancient classical world. In addition, it was considered to be the navel of the world as signified by the Omphalos, a marble monument recovered from this location.

In the classical period of Ancient Greece (510-323 BCE), the site of Delphi was believed to be determined by Zeus when he sought to find the center of the Earth by launching two eagles from eastern and western ends of the world. Their paths crossed over Delphi. Pythia, the priestess of the temple of Apollo, was established as early as 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE to articulate prophecies by Apollo. Pythia had to be an older woman of blameless life chosen from among the peasants of the area. She sat on a tripod seat over a chasm in the earth, and uttered unintelligible sounds which were translated by other priests. Some analysts say that the chasm emanated toxic gas which altered the Pythia's mental state, and her gibberish was translated by officials as they preferred. This may have been one of the earliest examples of military espionage and political maneuvering.

During classical times Delphi served as the major site for worship of Apollo who was said to have slain Python, a serpent or a dragon who lived there. Every four years starting in 586 BCE, athletes from all over the Greek world competed in the Pythian Games which was one of the precursors of Modern Olympics. Victors at Delphi were presented with a laurel crown ceremonially cut from a tree.

The ruins of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi visible today date back to 4th century BCE. It was built on the remains of an earlier temple, dating to 6th century BCE which itself was erected on the site of a 7th-century BCE construction. The most recent temple survived until AD 390, when the Roman emperor Theodosius destroyed it and most of the artefacts in order to silence the oracle. The site was completely destroyed by Christians in an attempt to remove all traces of Paganism. The ancient theatre at Delphi is located further up the hill from the Temple of Apollo commanding a breathtaking view of the valley. It was built in the 4th century BCE. Emperor Nero visited here in 67 A.D.

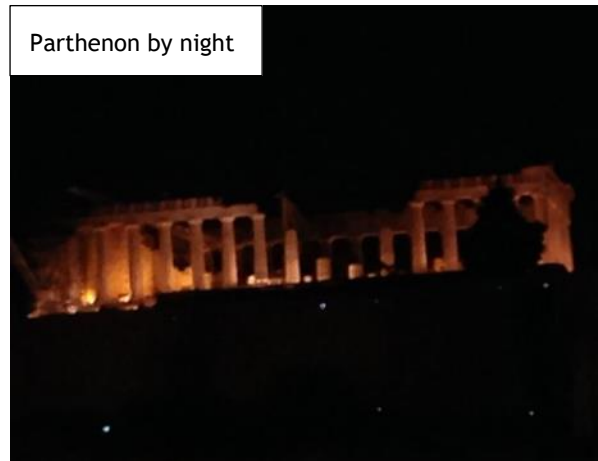


The Tholos at the sanctuary of Athena is located approximately a half a mile from the main ruins at Delphi. It is a round structure, built upon a podium with a ring of columns supporting a domed roof. It was constructed between 380 and 360 BCE. It consisted of 20 columns of Doric architectural style with 10 Corinthian columns in the interior. Three of the Doric columns have been restored.

All visitors to Delphi including contestants in the Pythian Games and oracle seekers stopped to wash themselves and quench their thirst at the Castalian Spring. Pythia and the priests cleansed themselves here too before the oracle-giving process. Two fountains, which were fed by a sacred spring, still survive. This 6th century BCE fountain has a marble-lined basin surrounded by benches. Water



Castalian Spring



Parthenon by night

was brought here by means of a short aqueduct and distributed by lion-headed spouts. I could not believe that this sturdy rock pool was 8 and a half thousand years old. So I got my iPhone out and verified what Vasius was saying. I kept staring in amazement.

We enjoyed the beautiful country for another few days and it was time to leave too soon. As I sat on the balcony on my hotel room at night and looked up at the Parthenon gloriously lit by

flood lights, it seemed to me that it was a lodestar that could guide confused human masses struggling today in the throes of ignorance.

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**POEMS**

# SCULPTORS

*SOMNATH DUTTA SYLVANIA, OH*

I look at the world and think  
Gods have walked here.  
Gods of industry  
Gods of literature  
Gods of war

Individuals who shaped the world  
And are never again known.  
Never recognized  
Never remembered  
Never cared about

Their names are forgotten  
Lost to the concept of forever.  
Forever fallen  
Forever lost  
Forever dead

These gods have saved lives  
They never met.  
Mothers  
Fathers  
Children

Every move the gods made  
Shaped the world.  
Every step  
Every choice  
Every god

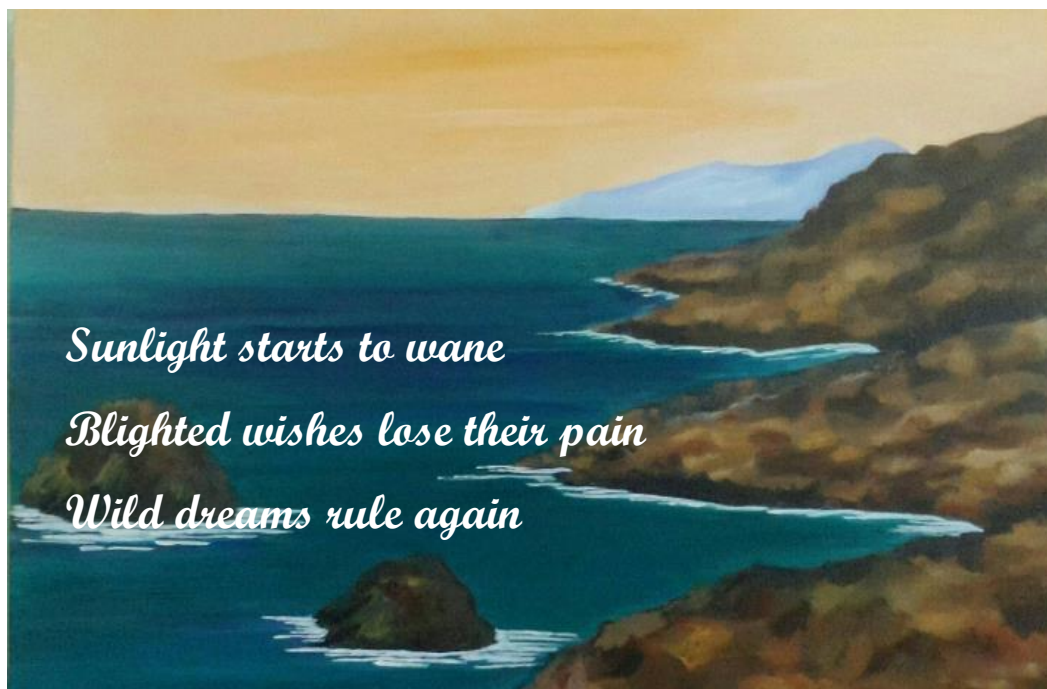
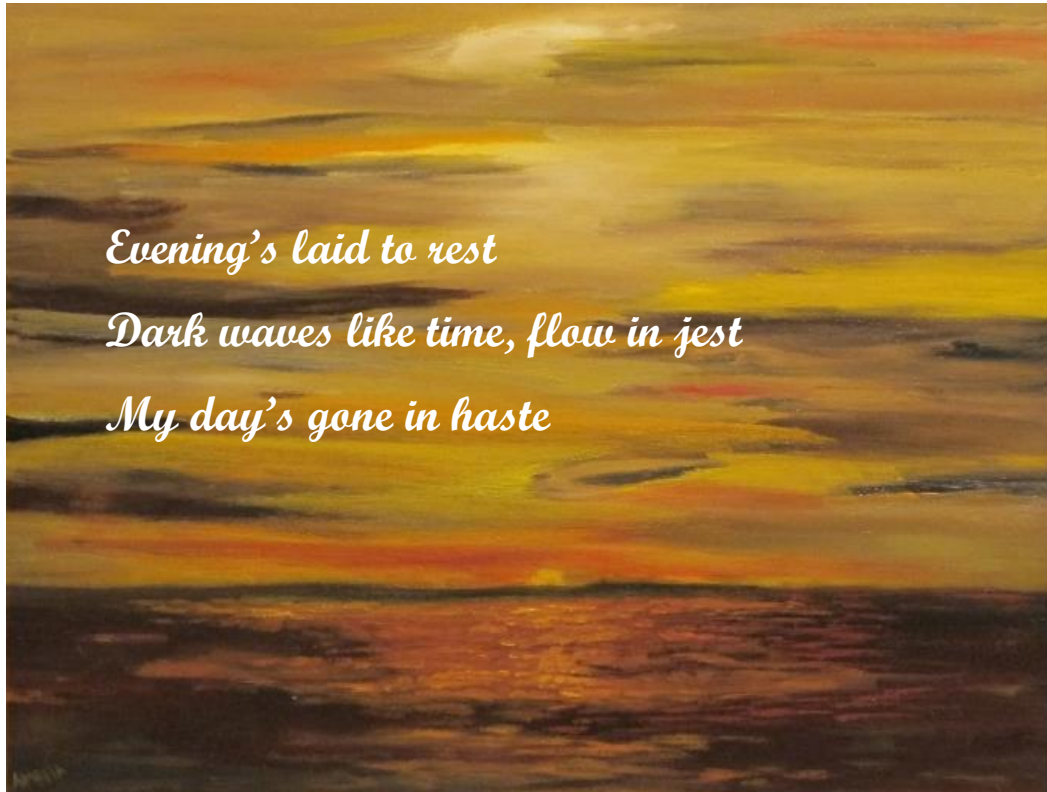
We are their successors  
We shape the world.  
Forever  
For eternity  
Till death

We walk in shadows of gods

# HAIKUS TO A LONELY DUSK

WORDS: ASISH MUKHERJEE, MAUMEE, OH  
DRAWING: AMRITA CHATTERJI, KOLKATA, INDIA

Haiku is a Japanese poem form usually in 5-7-5 syllable format typically dedicated to Nature. They are unique in their brevity.





*My friend, if you're nigh  
Watch with me this rosy sky  
Stay, don't pass me by*



*Share with me this dusk  
Breathe a whiff of antique musk  
There's nothin' more to ask!*

# TAANDAV

*GAURAV CHOUDHURY NEW YORK, NY*

My body walked in a crowd,  
But I drifted away, slowly at first.  
Through the mist of snowflakes,  
Then rapidly, into a swirl of light

Presently, the swirl slowed,  
Revealing beyond the mist,  
A jumping joyous giant,  
Who was lightly skipping.  
The dust which was us, he was disturbing.  
Engrossed in His rhythmic prancing,  
My intrusion was unseen.

Suddenly. He noticed my incursion,  
Into his world, of  
Dancing destruction.  
Angered. He glared.  
My spellbound blank being,  
Didn't know trepidation.

He resumed.  
Invoking an incantation,  
Shuddering. Overwhelming.  
My being, wholly enticed.  
Blank to joy and sorrow.

To the celestial drumbeat,  
He thumped the dust.  
My world, shaking. Me, awakening.  
To this vocal vibration.

Mesmerized, I swayed,  
To its magic.

He saw this.  
Mischievously kicked up the dust at me.  
Smiling. Inviting.

Unshackled I hopped over to join Him.  
Began playing with dust in the rhythmic prance.  
Swirling with fantastic fervour  
Merging from distinction into a blur.

Dust - kicked up into a storm,  
Transformed - into a mist of  
Glistening shards - a new form.  
Crystallized in this divine pulsation  
Our world was created anew.  
I was witness, to  
A new world the Destroyer drew.





**CHILDRENS'  
CORNER**

# AN OLD RABBIT

*AARIT DAS, 7 YEARS*

Canton, MI

Once upon a time there lived a funny old rabbit who liked to trick other animals around him. One day he fooled a goat to think a rope as a snake. Another day, after he woke up from sleep, he saw a group of cows grazing; he asked them if they wanted a special treat and gave them fake grass.

One hot day, a horse was drinking water. The rabbit met the horse and told her to follow him. He took her to a dried creek and said the creek has invisible water. A monkey was watching them from the top of a tree. He waved at the monkey and gave him a plastic banana. Next he tried to fool a younger rabbit by giving him an orange crayon hoping he would eat it as a carrot; but this didn't work. The moral of the story is you cannot trick everybody.

# ORLANDO TRIP

*AISHANI DAS, 5 YEARS*

Canton, MI

When I went to Orlando, I did not go by myself. I went there with my dad and brother because my mom went there by herself before all three of us. Once the three of us got at Orlando airport, my mom was not there and I was so sad and I was so worried for my mom. But I became so happy when I met her at the hotel. Next day I went to Sea World with my dad and brother. After that we went to Panera to eat dinner. I ate mac and cheese and drank mountain dew. Then all of us went to magic kingdom, animal kingdom and Daytona beach. It was so much fun because I met Rapunzel and Cinderella.



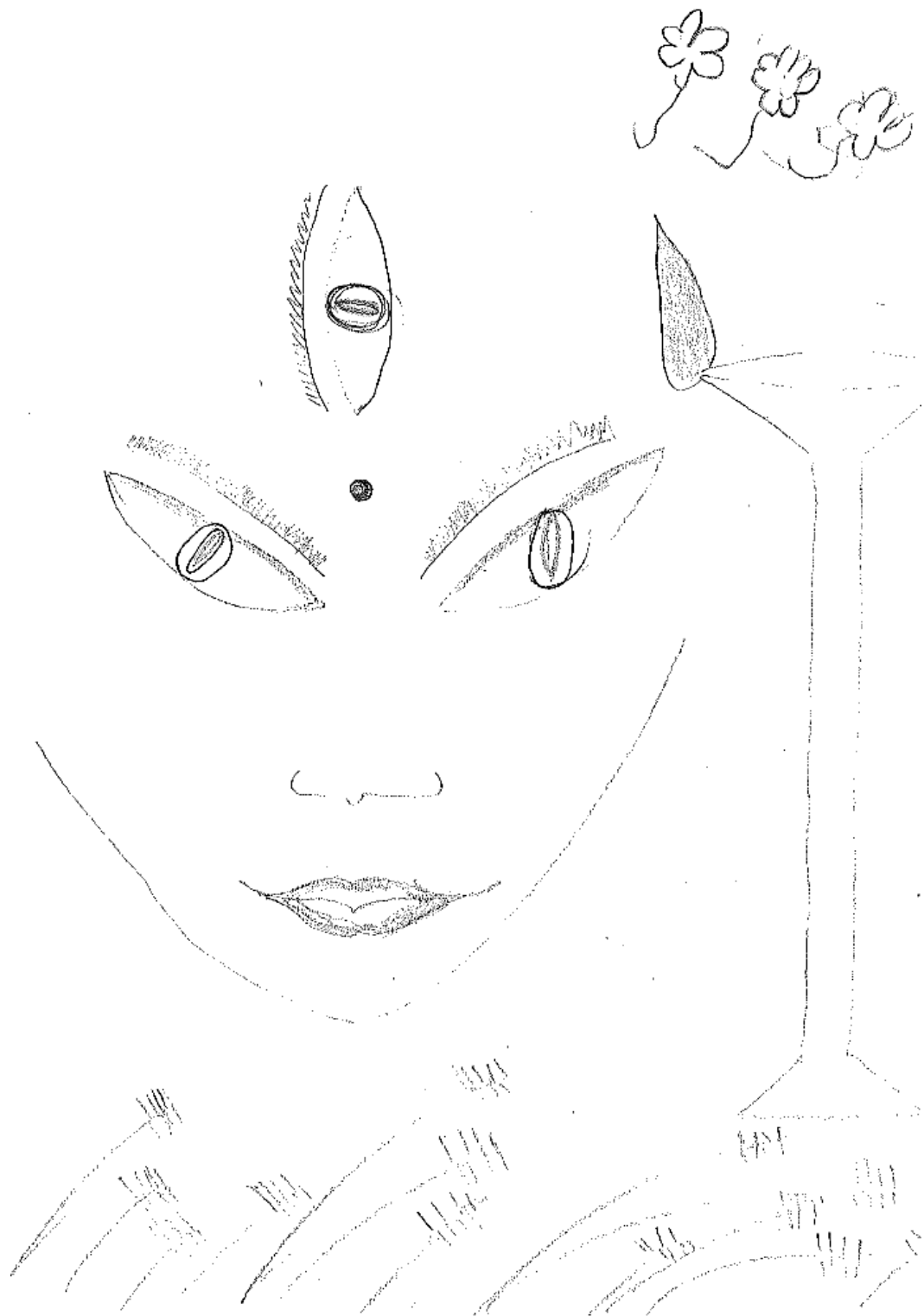
# MA DURGA

ROHINI SEN. MAUMEE, OH 6 YEARS



# MA DURGA

PRITHA DUTTA, SYLVANIA, OH 8 YEARS

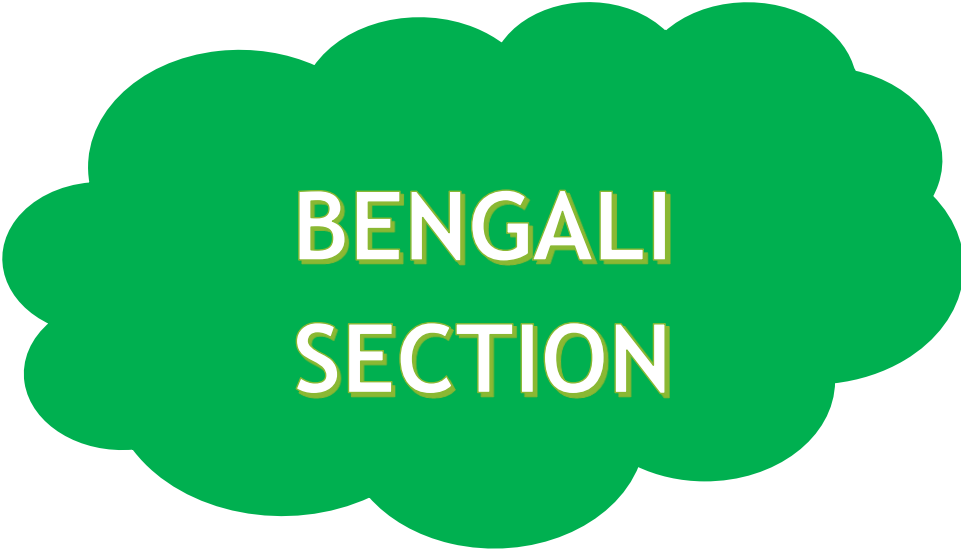


# INDEPENDENCE

RITO ROY. PERRYSBURG, OH. 8 YEARS







**BENGALI  
SECTION**



# মায়ের লেখনীতে

মূল রচনা: স্বর্গতা ভারতী মুখোপাধ্যায়

সংগ্রাহিকা: কন্যা প্রদীপ্তা চ্যাটার্জি

আমার মা ভারতী মুখার্জির কৈশোর ও যৌবন কেটেছিল ভারতবর্ষের ইতিহাসের একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ অধ্যায়ের মধ্য দিয়ে। সেই সময়ে বাংলার ছাত্ররা মেতে উঠেছিল স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামে, ...অবিভক্ত বাংলা জেগে উঠেছিল ইংরেজ শাসনের বিরুদ্ধে..দেশ মাতাকে পরাধীনতার শৃঙ্খল মুক্ত করার আশায়া আবার প্রায় সমসাময়িক কালে সুরু হয়েছিল পুরনো দিনের কলকাতার সাংস্কৃতিক নবজাগরণ। মা ছিলেন এই সময়কালের বহু ঘটনার প্রত্যক্ষদর্শী। মার ডায়েরি থেকে মার লেখা কিছু ঘটনা অবিকল তুলে দিলাম কোনও কোনও পাঠকের ভাল লাগার আশায়া। মায়ের লেখা তথ্যগুলির সঙ্গে পাঠকের যদি মতের তারতম্য হয়, এই ভেবে আগে থেকেই পাঠকের কাছ থেকে ক্ষমা প্রার্থনা করে রাখছি।

## ‘হল্ট’ অ্যান্ড ‘ফ্রেন্ড’

সে সময় খুলনা, বরিশাল বিপ্লবী ছেলেদের ঘাঁটি ছিল। সেটা খুব সম্ভব ১৯৩০ বা ১৯৩১ সাল। বাংলায় তখন বিপ্লবী ছেলেরা সাহেব খুন করে বেড়াচ্ছে। সেইজন্য সব ইংরেজ ও বাঙালী উচ্চপদস্থ অফিসারের সঙ্গে দুজন করে পাঠান গার্ড থাকতো রিভলভার নিয়ে, যখনই কেউ তাঁদের বাড়ী যেত তখনই ওরা চৌঁচিয়ে উঠত ‘হল্ট’ বলে, যে যাচ্ছে তাকে হাত তুলে বলতে হতো ‘ফ্রেন্ড’। তখনকার দিনে ইংরেজকে খুন করে অনেক বিপ্লবী ফেরার হতেন। খুলনায় বাড়ী বাড়ী সার্চ করে পুলিশ তাঁদের খুঁজে বেড়াতো। আমাদের পাশে হেমবাবুদের বিশাল বাড়ী ছিল। তাঁর ছেলে গোবিন্দ ব্যানার্জি চন্দননগরে বোমা তৈরি করতে গিয়ে ধরা পড়েন ও জেল হয়, পরে তিনি জেল থেকে পালান, পুলিশ তাঁকে হস্তে নিয়ে খুঁজে বেড়াতো, হেমবাবুর বাড়ী পুলিশে ঘিরে থাকতো; রাত্রে টহল দিত, যে কেউ বাড়ীর সামনে দিয়ে যেত তাকেই মুখের ওপর টর্চ ফেলে জিগ্যেস করতো, আপনার নাম কি গোবিন্দ ব্যানার্জি? আমরা এ নিয়ে হাসাহাসি করতাম, আমাদের যে সব পুলিশ অফিসারের বাড়ীর সঙ্গে আলাপ ছিল তাঁদের বলতাম, এ কি বোকামি, যার নাম সে কি স্বীকার করবে? তাঁরা বলতেন, কারো নাম হঠাৎ যদি জিগ্যেস করা হয়, তাহলে সে হঠাৎ হ্যাঁ বলে ফেলতে পারে। নইলে আপনার নাম কি? জিগ্যেস করলে, সে অন্য নাম বানিয়ে বলার বুদ্ধি ও সময় পেয়ে যায়। মাঝে মাঝে হেমবাবুর বাড়ী সার্চ হতো; তখন পুলিশ এসে বাবাকে সাক্ষী হতে ডেকে নিয়ে যেত। বাবা যতক্ষণ না ফিরতেন, আমাদের খুব দুশ্চিন্তা হতো।

## অনুজ গুপ্ত

আমার বাবাও খুব স্বদেশী ছিলেন, তিনি খন্দর ছাড়া কিছু পরতেন না, আমাদের চরকা কাটা অভ্যাস ছিল। বাবা ছিলেন গাণ্ধী-পন্থী।

তখন আমরা কিছুদিন কলকাতায় আছি, একদিন আমি মা ও বাবা একজন আত্মীয়ের সঙ্গে দেখা করতে ক্যালকাটা হোটেল এ গিয়েছিলাম, এখন যেটা শ্রদ্ধানন্দ পার্ক তখন তার নাম ছিল মির্জাপুর পার্ক, তারই

উল্টোদিকে প্রকাণ্ড বাড়ী ছিল এই ক্যালকাটা হোটেল । বাংলার বাইরে যাঁরা থাকতেন, কলকাতায় বেড়াতে এলে তাঁরা নিকট আত্মীয় না থাকলে এই হোটেলে উঠতেন । সেখানে আমাদের শিল্পী অসিতকুমার হালদারের পরিবারের সঙ্গে দেখা হয়। আমরা গল্প করছি এমন সময় একজন এসে আমাদের শীঘ্র বাড়ী যেতে বললেন কারণ অনুজ গুপ্ত বলে একজন যুবক টেগার্টের গাড়ী লক্ষ্য করে বোমা ছুঁড়েছিল, সে বোমা টেগার্টের গায়ে লাগেনি উল্টে অনুজ গুপ্তই মাটিতে পড়ে গিয়ে পকেটের বোমা ফেটে সঙ্গে সঙ্গে মারা গেছে। অনুজ গুপ্ত খুলনার ছেলে, বাবার কাছে বহুবার নাম শুনেছি, টেগার্ট তখনকার দিনের প্রবল পরাক্রান্ত ব্যক্তি, কলকাতা পুলিশের সর্বোচ্চ পদে রয়েছেন । আমরা তাড়াতাড়ি অন্য রাস্তা দিয়ে ঘুরে বাড়ী ফিরে এলাম । বাবা সারা রাস্তা অনুজ গুপ্তের ব্যর্থতার জন্য দুঃখ প্রকাশ করতে করতে এলেন ।

## বড়মা

বিখ্যাত ব্যারিস্টার ডাবলু সি ব্যানার্জি ছিলেন দাদুর মামা । মানে মার ঠাকুমা ছিলেন ডাবলু সি ব্যানার্জির পরের বোন, মার ঠাকুমাকে আমরা বড়মা বলতুম । আমরা তাঁর পৌত্রীর মেয়ে হলেও তাঁকে খুব সম্মম দেখেছিলুম। তখনকার দিনে খুব কম বয়সে বিয়ে হতো, কাজেই নাতি নাতনী খুব কম বয়সেই হতো। বড়মার কোন ডিগ্রী না থাকলেও খুবই শিক্ষিত ছিলেন। দাদুর সংসারে তিনিই কত্রী ছিলেন ও অতি পরিপাটি করে সংসার চালাতেন। সন্ধ্যাবেলা বড়মা বসে সুপারি কাটতেন, সে সময় কত নাম করা গণ্য মান্য লোক যে তাঁর কাছে বেড়াতে আসতেন তার ঠিক ছিলনা। বড়মা নিজে লেখিকা ছিলেন, বনপ্রসূন বলে তাঁর কবিতার বই বেরিয়েছিল, কোন পত্রিকাতে মনে নেই, কবি হেমচন্দ্র বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় বাঙালী মেয়েদের বিদ্রূপ করে কবিতা লিখেছিলেন; *থ্যে য়ায় নিয়ে য়ায় আর য়ায় চেয়ে, য়ায় য়ায় ঐ য়ায় বাঙালীর মেয়ে* । এই রকম একটি খুব বড় কবিতা, আমার শুধু দুলাইন মনে আছে। বড়মা একটি বড় কবিতা লিখে এর উত্তর দিয়েছিলেন, যার থেকে দুলাইন হোল; *কোঁচা দুলাইয়া থায় দুধ সাবু, য়ায় য়ায় ঐ য়ায় বাঙালীর বাবু* ।

প্রথমবার স্বশুর বাড়ী যাবার সময়ে বড়মা এমন চিৎকার করে কেঁদেছিলেন যে পুলিশ এসে পাক্কি ধরেছিল। সে সময়ের কলকাতার অন্যতম ধনী বিশ্বনাথ মতিলালের দৌহিত্রের সঙ্গে বড়মার বিয়ে হয়েছিল। তখন কলকাতার বৌবাজারে কোনও বাজার ছিলনা, বিশ্বনাথ মতিলাল সেখানে একটা বাজার বসিয়ে তাঁর পুত্রবধূকে যৌতুক দিয়েছিলেন, বৌয়ের বাজার এই কথা থেকে ঐ পাড়ার নাম হয় বৌবাজার ।

## রবীন্দ্রনাথ

১৯৩৬ সালে শান্তিনিকেতনের মেয়েরা নিউএম্পায়ারে চিত্রাঙ্গদা অভিনয় করলে, আমরা দেখতে গেলাম। তার কিছুদিন পরে পরিশোধ নৃত্য-নাটক হোল আশুতোষ কলেজ হলে, পরিশোধের নাম পরে শ্যামা করা হয়, দুজায়গাতেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ আগাগোড়া স্টেজে বসেছিলেন। পরিশোধে রবীন্দ্রনাথ “দে দোল, দে দোল”, কবিতাটি আবৃত্তি করেন, সেই-সঙ্গে তাঁর নাতনী নন্দিতা নাচলে, আমরা মুগ্ধ হয়ে দেখলাম। অভিনয় হবার ১৫ দিনের মধ্যে আমি চিত্রাঙ্গদার দুটি গান অল ইণ্ডিয়া রেডিওতে গেয়েছিলাম ।

YWCA তে একটা গানের জলসায় আমরা গান করেছিলুম আর সেখানে পরিচয় হয় পরবর্তীকালের খ্যাতনামা অভিনেত্রী ও পরিচালিকা অরুণুতি গুহঠাকুরতা ও দক্ষিণী স্কুলের প্রতিষ্ঠাতা শুভ গুহঠাকুরতার সঙ্গে। এর পরে শান্তিনিকেতন আশ্রমিক সম্মে, জোড়াসাঁকোতে ঠাকুর বাড়ীর বিচিত্রা ভবনে, মাঘ উৎসবে, এবং আরও অন্যান্য কলকাতার অনূর্ধানে আমরা কয়েকজন রবীন্দ্র-ভক্ত ও রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতে পারদর্শী



ছেলেমেয়ে; অরুন্ধুতি, শুভ, জর্জ বিশ্বাস, সবাই একসঙ্গে শৈলজারনজন মজুমদার ও অনাদি দস্তিদারের পরিচালনায় গান গেয়েছি ।

## গীতবিতান

রবীন্দ্রনাথ জোড়াসাঁকোতে তাঁর গানের বই গীতালির নামে একটি সম্মেলন মতো প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। গায়ক সমরেশ চৌধুরী তার শিক্ষক নিযুক্ত হলেন। আমরা চেয়েছিলাম এই সম্মেলনেও গান গাইতে তবে আমরা কয়েকজন অল্পবয়সী ছেলেমেয়ে এত নামজাদা প্রতিষ্ঠানে প্রবেশ করবার সুযোগ পাইনি, তাই শুভ গুহঠাকুরতার প্রবল ইচ্ছা, উদ্দীপনা ও পরিশ্রমে ও আমাদের সবাইকার ঐকান্তিক চেষ্টায়, আমরা গীতবিতান বলে নিজেদের গানের স্কুল খুলি। সেই সময় শুধু রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত শেখাবার কোন প্রতিষ্ঠানই কলকাতায় ছিলনা। রেডিওতে পঞ্চজ মল্লিকের আসরে মাঝে মাঝে রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত শেখান হতো, পঞ্চজ মল্লিক ও হেমন্ত মুখার্জি রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত গাইতেন রেডিওতে, আর ছিল কনক দাসের রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতের রেকর্ড, এ ছাড়া রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতের তেমন প্রচার তখনও ছিলনা । আমাদের ডাঃ কালিদাস নাগের সঙ্গে পরিচয় ছিল, তিনি সানন্দে স্কুলের প্রেসিডেন্ট হতে রাজি হলেন। শৈলজারনজন ও অনাদি বাবু তাঁদের নাম ব্যবহার করতে দিয়ে ও গান শেখাতে রাজি হয়ে আমাদের অনেক উপকার করেছিলেন। অনেক খুঁজে লেক মার্কেটের কাছে রাসবিহারী এ্যাভিনিউ এর ওপর একটি বাড়ী ভাড়া করা হয়, তার একতলায় হোমিওপ্যাথি ওষুধের দোকান , দোতলাটা হোল গানের স্কুল। তারই ছাদে ম্যারাপ বেঁধে, চমৎকার করে সাজিয়ে রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীতের জলসা করে আমাদের গীতবিতান স্কুলের উদ্বোধন হয়। সেদিনের তারিখ ছিল ৮/১২/৪১, সেদিন জাপান ইংল্যান্ডের বিরুদ্ধে যুদ্ধে যোগ দিয়েছিল । আমাদের ফাংশন শেষ করে বাড়ী যাবার পরে রাত্রি দুটোর সময় জাপানের মিত্র বলে ডাঃ কালিদাস নাগ কে গ্রেপ্তার করা হয়।

এই গীতবিতানই পরে কলকাতার নামি সংগীত শিক্ষায়তন হয়ে দাঁড়ায় অনেক নতুন পৃষ্ঠপোষকের সহায়তায়, তখন অবশ্য আমরা সরে এসেছি অনেকদিন আর শুভ ও আলাদা হয়ে তার নতুন স্কুল দক্ষিণী গড়ে তুলেছে ।

## উপসংহার

এই রকম অনেক অনেক ছোট ছোট ঘটনার বিবরণে মায়ের ডায়েরি সমৃদ্ধ । আজকের বিশ্বায়নের যুগে এসব ঘটনা গল্প-কথা হয়ে গেছে । সেই কোন ১৯৪৭ সালে পাওয়া স্বাধীনতা আমাদের কাছে এখন পুরানো হয়ে গেছে , সবসময় তার যথাযথ মর্যাদাও বর্তমান সমাজ দিতে পারেনা; অনেক অগ্ন্যায় ও দুর্নীতির কোনও প্রতিকার হয়না স্বাধীন ভারতে। এখনকার তরুণের মনে রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত বোধহয় আর তেমন ভাবে আলোড়ন তোলে না।

হয়তো এটাই স্বাভাবিক, এইভাবেই ঘটে সামাজিক বিবর্তন বা একেই হয়তো বলে *কালের যাত্রা* রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাষায় ।

তবে আপাতদৃষ্টিতে মূল্যহীন বলে মনে হলেও ভারতের স্বাধীনতা সংগ্রামের ইতিহাসে একদিন বাঙালি তরুণ অতি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ভূমিকা পালন করে ছিল, আর বাঙালির সাংস্কৃতিক নবজাগরণে রবীন্দ্রনাথের অবদান অমূল্য।



ইতিহাসের উপর-ভিত্তি করেই গড়ে ওঠে বর্তমান সমাজ, তাই মনে হয় এই অতীত রোমন্থন আজকের দিনে হয়ত সম্পূর্ণ অর্থহীন নয় ।

### **Bharati Mukherjee**

Bharati Mukherjee lived in Kolkata, and in USA during her later years. She studied B.A. with Sanskrit honors in Ashutosh College Calcutta (1938-40).

### **References:**

**Debabrata Biswas** (also known as George Biswas and George-da; 22 August 1911 - 18 August 1980), was an Indian Rabindra Sangeet singer.

**W.C. Bonnerjee** (or Umesh Chandra Banerjee by current English orthography of Bengali names) (29 December 1844 - 21 July 1906) was an Indian barrister and was the first president of Indian National Congress.

**Bowbazar** (also spelt Boubazar) (Bengali: বৌবাজার) is a neighborhood in central Kolkata, in the Indian state of West Bengal. The neighborhood has been at the forefront of Kolkata's changing society.

**Bowbazar** is said to have been part of the share of a daughter-in-law of **Biswanath Matilal**, but some historians have failed to trace or identify that person.

**Kalidas Nag** (1892-1966) was an Indian historian, author and parliamentarian. He was nominated to the Rajya Sabha in 1952 and served till 1954.

**Suvo Guha Thakurta** was a devotee of Rabindrasangeet. He wanted to spread it among Bengali masses which was then confined primarily to Santiniketan. On the advice of **Shailaranjan Majumdar**, he founded **Dakshinee** on 8 May 1948.

**Sir Charles Tegart** joined the Calcutta Police in 1901, becoming head of its Detective Department. He earned notoriety amongst the Bengal opponents of British rule, especially from independence activists. Tegart was reported to have survived six assassination attempts in India.



OLD COURT HOUSE STREET, CALCUTTA

# ভাইটুমামার কাণ্ডকারখানা

## সুশোভিতা মুখের্জী। মমি, ওহাইও

তখন আমরা থাকতাম বোকারোতে। ছবির মতো সাজানো গোছানো ছোট্ট শহর। আমরা দিব্বি ছিলাম। থাকতাম DVC-র বাংলা বাড়িতে। বাড়ির সামনে ছোট্ট পাহাড়, শীতের কুয়াশায় ঢেকে থাকতো।

এমনি এক সুন্দর সকালবেলায়, দাদু দূরে বসে চা খাচ্ছিলেন, মা সকালের জলখাবার গোছাতে গোছাতে আমাদের তাড়া দিচ্ছিলেন, “খেয়ে নাও, স্কুল এ যেতে হবে, বাস মিস হয়ে যাবে”।

এমন সময় বাবা রাজ্যের কাগজপত্র ও বাইরে পড়ে থাকা চিঠি নিয়ে ঘরে ঢুকলেন। মার দিকে এগিয়ে দিলেন একটা চিঠি।

“তোমার জন্যে কলকাতা থেকে এসেছে”।

দাদুও মুখ তুলে তাকালেন। মা চিঠি পড়তে পড়তে বললেন, “ভাইটু আসতে চাইছে আমার কাছে কিছুদিনের জন্য”। বলা বাহুল্য ভাইটু আমাদের ছোটমামা, মার ছোট্ট ভাই।

দাদু বিরক্ত হয়ে বললেন, “আবার ভাইটু? সে এখানেও তাড়া করেছে? কটা দিন নিশ্চিন্তে কাটাও ভেবেছিলাম, তার উপায় নেই”।

ভাইটুমামা পরিবারের “Black sheep” ছিল। পরীক্ষায় ফেল করে রকে আড্ডা দেওয়া ছাড়া আর বিশেষ কিছু করতনা। তাই সবাইকার তাকে নিয়ে চিন্তার শেষ ছিলনা। তবে আমাদের কাছে ভাইটু মামা ছিল একেবারে হিরো। লোকেরা বড় হলে গুরু ধরে, আমরা ন’ দশ বছর বয়সে গুরু মেনেছিলাম এই মামাকে।

ফড়িং ধরা, ঘুঁড়ি উড়ানো, গুলতি তৈরি করা, মার্বেল খেলা এইসবেরই হাতেখড়ি মামুর হাতে। তাই ভাইটু মামা আসছে শুনে আমরা নেচে উঠলাম। দিনগুলো জ্বরদস্ত কাটবে।

মা বললেন, “আসতে চাইছে আসুক না, তার একটা চেঞ্জ হবে, কলকাতাতে তো তাকে দেখাশোনা করবার কেউ নেই”। দিদা বেশ কিছুদিন আগে মারা গিয়েছেন, মামু একা থাকতেন।

একদিন ভোরবেলা বাবা স্টেশনে গেলেন মামুকে আনতে। আমরা দুই ভাইবোন, বাইরের গেটে দুলতে লাগলাম। জিপগাড়ি এলে ছুটব। মুখে হাসি ধরেনা। কিছুক্ষণের মধ্যে বাবা মামুকে নিয়ে এসে উপস্থিত। সেই চিরপুরাতন চেহারা। লম্বা চুল, গায়ে জমকালো শার্ট। মাকে দেখেই বললে, “দিদি তুই এবার পূজোতে দুখানা রাজেশ থান্না শার্ট কিনে দিস তো”! দাদু লাঠিটা হাতে ওঠাতেই, বাবা বলে উঠলেন, “আরে করেন কি, করেন কি?” মামু দাদুর দিকে তির্যক দৃষ্টি তে তাকিয়ে বললেন “ওসব আপনি বুঝবেননা”

আমাদের দিকে চোখ পড়তেই একগাল হেসে মামু বললেন “তারপর ভাগ্না ভাগ্নী, কেমন আছ সব? খালি দু দু ভাতু খেলে স্মার্ট হওয়া যাবেনা। এরকম ক্যাভলা হলে কলকাতায় পড়াশুনা করবি কি করে?” আমরা কাঁচুমাচু মুখ করে মার আঁচল এ মুখ লোকালাম। ভাবটা এই যে মামু সব ধরে ফেলেছে। মামু উত্সাহের সঙ্গে বললেন “নো চিন্তা ডু ফুর্টি, আমি যেকদিন আছি তোদের ট্রেন করে যাব”।

দাদু বিড় বিড় করতে করতে ঘরে ঢুকে গেলেন। “ছেলেটা মনে হচ্ছে এবার আমাকে এখান থেকে তাড়াবে”।

সকালে উঠে মামু ঘরে এসে হাজির। বললে “ট্রেনিং শুরু, চল পাঞ্জা লড়ি”।

আমার ভাই রোগা পটকা ভীরু ধরনের, আর মামু গাড়াগোটো শক্ত ধরনের। দুটো ঘুষি মেরে নাক ফাটাতে বেশি সময় লাগবেনা। আমি ছিলাম ভাইয়ের পাহারাদার। সব সময় চোখে চোখে রাখতাম ও বিপদ থেকে বাঁচাতাম। দরকার মতো মাকে বলে দিতাম, তাই আসল অর্থে মামুর চেলা আমার ভাই ছিল, আমি উপলক্ষ মাত্র। পানজাতে ভাই হেরে গেল, এরপর শুরু হলো ভেড়ার লড়াই- মানে মাথা ঠোকাতুকি খেলা। মামু হামাগুড়ি দিয়ে এসে ভাইয়ের কপালে দেয় এক ধাক্কা, আর ভাই তিনপা পিছিয়ে যায়। শেষমেষ ভাইয়ের কপাল ফুলে ঢোল। ভাইটুমামু ছাড়বার লোক নয়। বললে আজকের মতো এটা শেষ ট্রেনিং - তুই আমাকে ঘুষি মারবি আর আমি তোকে মারব, বসে পড়লেই হার। আয় খেলবি আয়। প্রথম ঘুষিতেই ভাইয়ের নাক দিয়ে দরদর করে রক্ত পড়তে লাগলো, আমি ছুটে গিয়ে মাকে নালিশ করতে যেতেই মামু পিছন থেকে বললে “আজ তোদের সন্ধেবেলায় কোকোকোলা খাওয়াতে নিয়ে যাব”।

কোকোকোলা সবেমাত্র সেই অঞ্চলে এসেছে। আমাদের তখনও খাবার সুযোগ হয়নি। বন্ধুদের কাছ থেকে শুনেছি এটা মার্কিন সরবত- যেমনি মিষ্টি তেমনি ঝাঁজ ঝাঁজ। হা পিত্যেশ করে বসেছিলাম এতদিন কবে বাবা খাওয়াতে নিয়ে যাবেন। তখন এলো এই অসাধারণ প্রস্তাব। মনের রাগ মনে পুষে মামুকে বললাম “ঠিক তো? নাহলে মাকে বলে দেব তুমি ভাই কে মেরেছো।” মামু হাত তুলে বলল “তথাস্তু”।

সন্ধেবেলা আমরা তিনজন হাঁটতে হাঁটতে বাজারে পৌঁছলাম। বাজারের মুখেই রাজ আঙ্কেল এর বিরাট চক চকে বোর্ডওয়াল দোকান। লোকের ভিড়ের শেষ নেই। মামু বললো এখানে দাঁড়িয়ে লাভ নেই, চল দোকানের পিছনে। আমরা সেখানে যেতেই বললে, “দাঁড়া দুটো বোতল নিয়ে আসছি”। একটু বাদেই দুটো বোতল স্ট্র সমেত পেলাম। আমরা সন সন করে টান মারলাম। কিন্তু কিরকম অদ্ভুত খেতে! টক, তেতো, মিষ্টি সব মেশানো আস্বাদ। আরেকবার চুমুক দিতে জীব জ্বলে গেল। “এর নাম কোকোকোলা? বিশ্বাস হচ্ছিলনা। মামু মিটিমিটি হেসে জিজ্ঞেস করলো “আর খাবি”? আমরা সজোরে মাথা নেড়ে বললাম “না”। “এর থেকে খামার ঘোল অনেক ভালো খেতে”। মামু হাসতে হাসতে গড়িয়ে পড়তে গিয়ে বলল “লে হালুয়া পছন্দ হোলনা? ইটা মাদ্রাজিরা খায়, ভালো জিনিস, এতে আছে তেঁতুল মধু আদার রস আর শুকনো লক্ষার গুঁড়া। শুনে আমাদের কান্না এসে গেল। এত বড় ধোঁকা, আর আমরা কিনা এত বড় বোকা? আমাদের আগেই বোঝা উচিত ছিল। সেদিন আমরা মামুকে আলাদা ফেলে বাড়ি ফিরেছিলাম।

দুদিন চুপচাপ গেল। মামুকে আমরা এড়িয়ে চলছি। হঠাত তিনি একদিন উপস্থিত হলেন পড়ার ঘরে। আমরা মুখ তুলে চাইতেই মামু বললে “তোদের লেগহর্ন গুলো ডিম দেয়না তাইত?” আমরা অবাক হয়ে জিজ্ঞাসা করলাম “তুমি জানলে কি করে?” মামু অমায়িক হেসে বলল “ওদের চোখ দেখে বুঝলুম। পশুপাখিরা আমাকে খুব ভালবাসে তো?”

লেগহর্ন দুটি বাবা রবিবারের হাত থেকে কিনেছিলেন। আমাদের ভাইবোনের খুব প্রিয়। উঠোনে গেলে আমাদের পায় পায় ঘুরতো। ঘুম থেকে উঠেই তাদের গমের দানা খাওয়াতাম। কিন্তু পাখি দুটো একদিনও ডিম দেয়নি। আমরা রোজ সকালে যেতুম পাখির খাঁচার কাছে, কিন্তু দুবছরেও কোনো ডিম দেখিনি। মামু বললে, একটু ডেটল এর ব্যবস্থা করিস। ওদের পেটে ইনফেকশন আছে। তাই ডিম দেয়না। আমরা চমকে উঠলাম। তাইত এটা কখনো মনে হয়নি। মামুতো বেশ বড় ডাক্তার! আমরা ছুটে গিয়ে একটা শিশি যোগাড় করলাম আর বাবার শেভিং সেট থেকে খানিটা ডেটল চেলে ছুটলাম। শুরু হলো অভিয়ান।

মামু জাপটা জাপটি করে মরগি দুটো ধরে কোনরকমে তাদের ঠোঁটের মাঝে দুধ মেশানো ডেটল ঢেলে দিল। তারপর আমি আর ভাই অধীর আগ্রহে অপেক্ষা করতে লাগলাম ডিমের জল্যে। কিন্তু সেরকম কিছুই ঘটলনা। মুরগী দুটি যেমন ছিল তেমনই রইলো। মামুর বীরষ নিয়ে যথেষ্ট সংশয় দেখা দিল আমাদের মনে। ভাবতে লাগলাম মামু বক্সাবাজ, আসলে কিছুই জানেনা। আমরা এড়িয়ে চললুম।

তবে মামু ছাড়বার পাত্র নয়। একদিন দুপুরে সবে এনিড ব্লাইটন এর বই ধরেছি, মামু এসে বলল অঙ্ক শেখাবো, তোদের শুনেছি অঙ্ক মাথা নেই।

“কি অঙ্ক মামু?”

“এ হচ্ছে অঙ্কের রাজা লসাণ্ড আর গসাণ্ড”।

আমরা মুখ চাওয়াচায়ই করে ভাবছি যে বাবা তো বলত কালকুলাস হচ্ছে অঙ্কের রাজা, মামা একই বলছে?

মামু কে বললতেই বললে “দূর, কালকুলাস তো বাচ্চা রা করে”

মামু খাতা টেনে নানারকম আঁকিবুকি করলে, পরের দিন সেই খাতা অঙ্কের টিচারের হাতে পড়ল।

সুমিতা টিচার বাড়িতে কম্প্লেন পাঠালেন। রাত্রে খাবার টেবিলে বাবা বিরক্ত হয়ে বললেন “এ কি হচ্ছে?”

আমরা উত্তর দিলাম “কেন” মামুই তো আমাদের এই অঙ্ক শেখালো”।

বাবা উত্তর দিলেন “আরে ওত তরা আগেই শিখেছিস HCF LCM!”

দাদু বাজখাই গলায় বললেন “আজ ভাইটু র খাওয়া বন্ধ।”

এইভাবেই দিন গড়িয়ে যাচ্ছিল। মামুর কাণ্ডকারখানার শেষ নেই। পূজা কেটে যাবার পর শহরে যাত্রার পর্ব শুরু হলো। সেবছর নাটক কোম্পানি এসেছিল। পালার নাম সীতার বনবাস।

বাবা হঠাত একদিন ক্লাব থেকে ফিরে বললেন যে দলে যে লক্ষ্মণ এর চরিত্রে অভিনয় করবে, সে অসুস্থ হয়ে পড়াতে যাত্রার দল একজন লোকাল অভিনেতা খুঁজছে। পালা মঞ্চস্থ করবার আর তিন চারদিন বাকি।

ভাইটু মামু নেচে উঠে বলল “আমি রাজি”।

“বলিস কি? তুই তো কোনদিন স্টেজেই উঠিসনি!” দাদু চমকে উঠে বললেন

মামু তুড়ি দিয়ে উড়িয়ে বললে “ওসব আমার হাতে ছেড়ে দাও। অভিনয় আমার সুপ্ত বাসনা। স্টেজে মাতিয়ে দেব।”

দাদু কাঁচুমাচু হয়ে বললেন “দেখ, শেষ বয়েসে কি লোকের জুতো খেতে হবে?”

মামু বললে “নো জুতো, আজ থেকে ভাইটুকুমারএর জন্ম। অগত্যা বাবা মামুকে নট্ট কোম্পানির ম্যানেজার এর কাছে নিয়ে গেলেন।

ম্যানেজার বললেন “পার্ট বিশেষ বড় নয়। ঠিকঠাক মুখস্থ বলতে পারলেই হবে। রামের ভূমিকায় বড় অভিনেতা আছেন, তিনিই টেনে নিয়ে যাবেন।”

মামু দিনরাত পায়চারী করতে করতে পার্ট মুখস্থ করতে লাগলো। আমরা চলারা খাওয়া দাওয়া ছেড়ে পায়ে পায়ে ঘুরঘুর করতে লাগলাম।

সেই দিন এসে গেল। মামু বললে তরা আমার অ্যাসিস্ট্যান্ট, স্টেজের সাইটস্ক্রীনে থাকবি, দরকার মতো সাহায্য করবি। যথাসময় পালা শুরু হলো। মামু স্টেজের পাশে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকলো। তারপর সময় এলো লক্ষ্মণ এর প্রবেশ করার। মামু কিছুতেই নড়েনা। একেবারে ফ্রীজ করে গেছে। আমরা বেগতিক দেখে পাশে পড়ে থাকা একটা লম্বা ছাতা দিয়ে মামুকে গুঁতো মারলাম। সেই ধাক্কার চোটে মামু স্টেজে একেবারে রামের পায়ে গিয়ে পড়ল। কিন্তু তাতে কি হবে, মামুর মুখে কোনো কথা নেই। প্রম্পটার বলে যাচ্ছে “বলুন বলুন, লক্ষ্মণ এর ডায়লগ বলুন” শ্রোতাদের মধ্যে হাসির রোল উঠলো। প্রম্পটার আরো চিত্কার করতে লাগলো “নেশা ভাং করেছে নাকি?”

এইবার মামু হঠাত রামচন্দ্রের পা ঘরে হাউহাউ করে কাঁদতে লাগলো। “হে প্রাণনাথ বিপদে মোরে রক্ষা কর।”

প্রম্পটার আবার চিত্কার করতে লাগলো “সীতার ডায়লগ কেন বলছেন?”

শ্রীরাম চন্দ্র বেগতিক দেখে বলেন “কি বিপদ, পা ছাড়ুন”।

ডিরেক্টর এর পেছন থেকে চিত্কার “স্ক্রিন ড্রপ কর।”

জনতা বেশ কিছু ডিম ও জুতো ছুঁড়তে লাগলো। পরের দিন দাদু মামুকে নিয়ে কলকাতা ফিরে গেলেন।

উত্তমের মা সকালবেলা ছুটতে ছুটতে এলো

“দেখ বাবুলোক, মোরগা আন্ডা দিয়া।”





*See you next year!*

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S. S. S.  
Aug 15, 2014