

Durga Puja 2020

The Autumn
Festival

অনবঙ্গ



The Unique

Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association

HPCA Committee 2019-2020



(Left to Right) Sujit Sahu (Treasurer), Haimanti Kumar (Cultural Secretary), Suparna Kundu (General Secretary), Manab Ranjan Basu (Technical Secretary), Sandhya Banerjee (Media Secretary)

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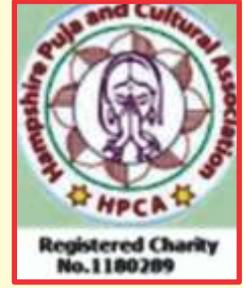


Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association

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MESSAGE

**Yaa Devi sarva bhutheshu Shakti rupena samsthithaa|
Namastasyie namastasyie namastasyie namoo namah||**

On behalf of Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association (HPCA), I welcome you all to celebrate Durga Puja and Autumn Festival – 2020 together, which has come on leaps and bounds year after year, due to the enormous support and commitment of its members.

Since its formation in 2008, the HPCA family has grown from strength to strength. It has seen an enormous growth in membership which has laid a strong foundation in building a diverse community that bring their immense talent towards making the festival the most enjoyable experience in Hampshire and also in neighbouring counties. This has enabled HPCA to consistently lead as the flag bearer in promoting cultural diversity and community cohesion in the region.

This year's Online Durga Puja would not have been possible without the hard work and efforts of the HPCA members. I thank all of them for their continuous support and their contributions year after year.

Cultural programme is an important aspect of Durga Puja. Like every year, HPCA's talented members showcase an entertaining programme that brings the whole community on a single stage captivating and entertaining the audience. This year's performances online – themed Folk was no less entertaining than previous years.

HPCA has a clear focus in creating cultural awareness amongst the younger people particularly the children in our community. Just like past years, there will be a performance by the children themed on 'Happiness' to create awareness of how it is important for all to be happy. Also, HPCA will be hosting an evening with Atreyee Saha, who is a renowned classically trained Bengali singer in her own right. She sings many modern Bengali as well as Bollywood songs.

The Covid Food Bank Charity this year has been one of our highlights. I can't thank you all enough for your support and contributions for a period of 6 months.

HPCA's annual Puja brochure (Ananya – The Unique) helps to raise funds for organising the Durga Puja. On behalf of HPCA, I am grateful to all our sponsors and patrons including the HPCA members who have contributed financially that has helped to sustain the Durga Puja and Autumn Festival celebrations for the past 13 years and hope that the same shall continue in the years to come.

With warmest autumnal greetings!

Suparna Kundu
General Secretary, HPCA

Message from Mayor of Southampton

798th Mayor of Southampton
Councillor Sue Blatchford



MESSAGE

On behalf of the City of Southampton I would like to send best wishes for the Durga Puja (The Autumn Festival) and hope it will be a great event celebrating safely in these unusual times.

I would like to take the opportunity to thank all those that have been involved in putting on this event; especially when there are many restrictions to adhere to this year. I would also like to wish all the Members of the Hampshire Puja and Cultural association success in delivering its aim and objective during the Festival in a safe way.



Councillor Sue Blatchford
The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Southampton

Message from Mayor of Winchester

The past seven months which have been some of the most challenging, not just for us here in the UK, but Globally.

This time has been unlike any other we have experienced in our lifetimes, and certainly for more than half a century. The covid-19 pandemic has impacted every aspect of life, social distancing has forced us all to change the way we interact and communicate with each other, managing new technology and coping with Zoom and Microsoft Teams. Throughout these difficult and worrying times we have seen so many local people volunteering and making sacrifices to help others less fortunate in their communities.

We are deeply appreciative of all those individuals from all walks of life and businesses who stepped up to the mark, and went beyond the norm to provide service and care to those who were self-isolating - including the Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association, who have shown what true community spirit really is, and I am proud to be able to recognise and celebrate this with you today in Ananya.



Patrick Cunningham
Mayor of Winchester
2020-2021

2020 Round-up

During current unprecedented times due to Covid-19, members of Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association came together to support the vulnerable sections of the local community at large.

HPCA members responded to the appeal by various food banks functioning across Southampton, Eastleigh, Romsey and Waterside.

These food banks are run by Southampton City Mission, Eastleigh Basics Bank and Trussell Trust.

Several members of HPCA came together to contribute weekly. After checking the relevant websites for required items and coordinating with volunteers of food banks, essentials were purchased and delivered to different venues based at Sholing, Burgess Road, Lordshill, Bitterne, Eastleigh, Waterside and North Baddesley.

Essential food items and other household goods were purchased and delivered each week - for 26 weeks - during lockdown (beginning during the last week of March 2020).

More than £3,000 were raised in weekly donations, which was used to purchase hundreds of essential items for food banks.

In addition to their weekly donations to food banks, HPCA members also contributed towards the Amphan fund raising appeal (in their individual capacity).

Haimanti Kumar interviewed famous Bollywood playback singer, Chinmayi Sripada on local community radio (www.unity101.org) to find out more about her charity activities during Covid-19 crisis in western India.

One of HPCA members, Jayshree Nishchal has been a key team member with Team Scrubbers - an initiative which has stitched scrubs for local hospitals. Both, Jayshree and Sandhya Banerjee were interviewed by Ram Kalyan Kelly, Station Manager of local community radio station to highlight their community work.

Sandhya Banerjee also represented HPCA on the Morning Breakfast program of BBC Solent (radio) on Wednesday, 20th May. She was invited to speak about the fundraising and donation campaign of HPCA re food banks.

Members of HPCA also supported the vulnerable members of the community, who have been shielding or self-isolating themselves. Regular weekly shops, collections of parcels and medical prescriptions were done on a voluntary basis.

Several members of HPCA came together to design cards for the elderly members, who are residing at local care homes.

It is worth a mention that some of our members volunteer at the local community radio station and continued to volunteer to present and entertain the local community during lockdown.

Some of our members joined hands with other community organisations such as Eastleigh and Southampton Asian Community (ESAC). They participated in Talent Hunt, Cookery Contest and Fancy Dress Competition as 'Judges' as well as 'Participants' - contests which were well-received by the local community.

Members of HPCA organised fortnightly quiz evenings for membership at large. Another fantastic initiative to keep the members entertained as well as informed during lockdown!

A few HPCA members regularly organised virtual Rabindra Sangeet evenings, which were thoroughly enjoyed by all participants.

Some members of HPCA were invited to perform in 'Geeton ki Mehfil' - a musical evening, which was enjoyed (through zoom video call) widely by the local community.

Several HPCA members continued to provide their vital services to the local community at large as 'key workers' - (working as members of NHS, teaching profession and other essential services).

An innovative social media project was also completed, which brought HPCA members together on the virtual, social media platform.

A virtual adda was organised during lockdown in which members entertained each other with their brilliant performances.

Last but not the least, in view of the current ongoing pandemic, all celebrations in 2020-21 will aim to bring the HPCA members together on the virtual platform, thanks to the existence of Zoom and FB live.

Follow the fb page of Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association OR visit our website for more information - <https://www.southamptonpuja.org.uk/>



The Modern Red Riding Hood

A play by **Rhea Mukherjee**, The Mountbatten School

SCENE 1: (A dark, dimly lit room)

Red enters stage right and looks around the room, grimacing at the cracks in the walls and the sounds of evening bustle streaming through the only, fogged up, dirty window in the corner.

Red: (sarcastically, with a shrug) Good evening to me!! It's a wonderful life.... hallelujah!

She walks over and reads a post-it note stuck on the table next to her bed.

Red: (reads out from the note, mechanically) Off to work. Have a late shift tonight. Spend the night at Nan's please, for me. Love you (Stamps her foot in frustration) No, I hate that. That old lady is always trying to preach at me. Getting me to eat my greens. Walk better, talk better, Like she's better than us. Why does Mom do this to me? I wish Dad hadn't died and left me his snobbish, high-society mum who treats Mom like dirt. Ugh!!! (mutters to herself) Where's that assignment of mine? And why, pray, does she want to have a look at my schoolwork? Well, she can have it then...all of it! Yes, I'll gift wrap my miserable life and give it to her.

Red picks up her bag, grabs her bright red jacket, angry tears spilling down her cheeks as she leaves the stage.

SCENE 2: A busy London street

Red walks in. She has a rucksack on her back. Head held low, tear-streaked cheeks, not looking where she's going, about to cross a street....

Man: Whoa! (Jerks her back from the path of an oncoming car) Watch it, girlie!

She looks up, shocked by her near death, frightening experience. A well-dressed man looks down at her suspiciously.

Man: Is everything alright? Are you in any trouble? NO wait...are you running away?

Red: (Rubs her arm where he had held her) Go away, Mister. Leave me alone.

Man: And, you're welcome too. Must say, you are a grateful little girl. Not. So, where are you off to in such a hurry? And are you with someone? (Looks around)

Red: Mind your own business, Mister. I am 12 years old. I don't need a minder. And you don't need to know, as I'm not supposed to speak to strangers but I'm off to see my Nan. She's very famous and she lives around here.

Man: Really? I've lived on this street all my life. Can't say I know any famous old ladies around here!

Red: She is famous, was famous, the 70s star Mar.....Oh no (agitatedly), I wasn't supposed to...(rushes off without saying another word, almost running in an attempt to get away)

Man: (whips out his mobile phone and does a quick search) The reclusive film actress Margaret Maan.... disowned her own son over his unwise marriage, rumoured grandchild living in poverty, ...could it be? Could I be that lucky?

Man has a contemplative look on his face.

Scene 3: Outside Nan's apartment block

Red: (Presses the intercom) It's me... Mom says I must come to you.

(There is only static and no response)

Red: Its Red, your, your.... (trails off). I've even brought you a bag of goodies. My schoolwork just like you asked for. (Rings the bell) It's freezing out here and I've had a fall. Can't you just open the door, for Goodness sake!!

The door is opened abruptly and a regal looking old lady stands there.

Nan: Mind your language, young lady. Did your mother not teach you how to speak respectfully? Come (stretches her arms out) ...give your grandmother a hug!

Red: (sarcastically) What big hands you have 'grandmother'! I'll pass...

Just then, there is a huge commotion. The Man from the busy block, jumps into the scene, followed by a man with a video camera, who is recording the scene.

Man: (whips out a mic and speaking into the camera) What a scoop for my viewers! You have here a touching re-union between estranged famous movie star Grandmother and secret Granddaughter. Let's go straight to the grand-daughter. (Shoves the mic into Red's face) Wasn't it lucky that you didn't quite follow your mom's advice and let loose a clue to a stranger? Tell me, when did you meet your grandma? Did she find you or did your mother 'the Gold digger' go looking for handouts?

Red: (Angry tears spill out) What? Who? How dare you....

Man: (carries on relentlessly) So, is it true that your mother married your father to be a part of Margaret Maan's legacy? Do you have an incurable disease like your father, her son, which is why Ms Maan has relented after 13 years to take you and only you back? Is your mother giving you up for a price???

Nan: (Shaking with anger, she stands ramrod straight) How dare you, you pestilent parasite from the paparazzi? What gives you the right to harass a young child right on my doorstep for your seedy show? I would like to put on record that whatever happened in the past shall stay in the past. It is the present that matters. I would like to put on record that my daughter in law is a hardworking, principled young woman, who has done an admirable job of bringing up my grand-daughter, who I love to pieces. Now, take yourself and your fungus out of my sight, or I shall sue you and your network without thinking twice. Now scoot or I call the police.

The two men immediately scamper away from the stage, taking their gear with them.

Red: (looks at her Nan in amazement) Wow Nan! You were amazing! You were no helpless old lady eaten up by the big bad wolf, waiting for the brave strong wood-cutter to cut her out. You were super-cool. (Giving her a tight hug) I never thought, I would say this, but I am kinda looking forward to starting off on a new foot with you.

Nan holds Red's hand and draws her in and closes the door.

The END



Our visit to Shaftesbury

Arnav Karode, Bishop Wordsworth School, Salisbury

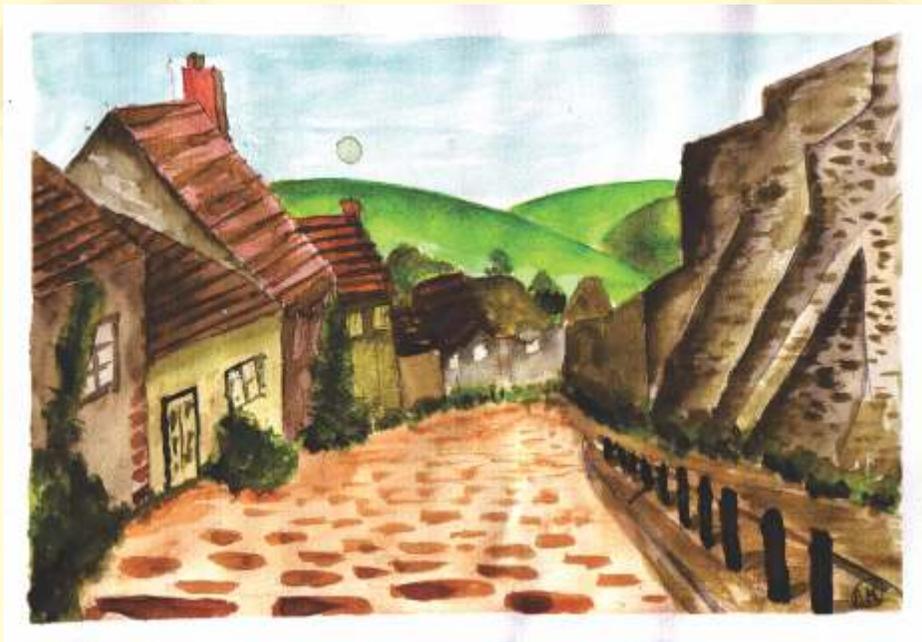
For the past 13 years, nearly every summer holiday, my family and I have been travelling to India to meet my grandparents and see places in India. This year, however, as a result of an unprecedented pandemic, a lockdown had been put in place and even now social gatherings of more than 6 are not allowed. With long distance travel out of question, to make use of the plethora of time we had during summer vacation, we found out small but interesting areas to go for a daytrip. This year normal vacation turned into a short but fun staycation. The daytrip I will be writing about is Shaftesbury, a picturesque and classic English village.

Earlier in lockdown, I was lucky enough to go to Shaftesbury (North Dorset) with my family. It was a scenic 50-minute drive, which took us through the countryside and even let us have a glimpse of an unusual, twisty-turny road that turned out to be very fun to ride on. We were struck with lots of cars, unfortunately leading to a delay. However, after a long 50 minutes we had finally reached Shaftesbury.

With 6 hours of parking at hand, we first headed towards the famous Gold Hill. At once, we saw the thatched cottages and the ancient cobbled street, which put together “one of the most romantic sights in England”. Additionally, Gold Hill's claim to fame was that it was the main setting for the 1973 “Boy on Bike” television advertisement for Hovis bread. Not only this, the advertisement was voted Britain's favourite advert of all time.

While in Shaftesbury, we also visited a small museum that housed many interesting artifacts about local history. We also visited ruins of an old Abbey and walked around beautiful side streets, which offered us views of the many cottages in Shaftesbury.

Shaftesbury was an intriguing little village, that I would recommend to people who want to explore the little places in England.





Stonehenge Trip

Mitanshu Basu

It was the last day of our summer holidays 2020 at Wales and we were supposed to head back home and I was not quite ready to come back yet. But unfortunately we had to go home and the fun was over :(therefore we loaded our car with the luggage and started towards home but I had no clue what my parents had planned :) I only realised that we are actually going to Stonehenge when I saw on Sat-nav of my dad's car.

This was my second time visit at Stonehenge. First time, I went to Stonehenge for my school project with my school friends and I had so much fun knowing the English history. That's why my mum and dad planned a surprise trip to Stonehenge once again.

Stonehenge was built about 5,000 years BC and the unique stone circle was erected in the late Neolithic period about 2500 BC. The stones weigh 50,000kg each.

It took us half an hour to go there from our hotel at Newbury, by our car. When I realised that we are actually going to Stonehenge but not home and it was not the end of our summer holidays yet, I was so happy.

The first place we went was Woodhenge. We got tickets first, and then we went to see the Stonehenge museum. The museum was very interesting with lots of

stuff to read and see which said why, when and how Stonehenge was built. After that, we went to the Woodhenge. We couldn't go inside the huts because they were closed due to Covid-19 protection



measures. But we took some photos luckily just from outside. Next, we went to the real Stonehenge. We had to walk all the way there and being careful of the cow poo everywhere! We finally arrived after a walk of around 40 minutes. Stonehenge looked very old, beautiful and fascinating as it was a very bright and sunny day. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to go within the circle of the stone as the stones are very, very old and fragile. After that, we took lots of beautiful photos with the Stonehenge. We had a small picnic by the beautiful Stonehenge on the lovely grass and had lots of fun. We also tried to speak to the sheep's in their language and it was so funny!

Finally, it was time to go home and we walked back to the car park and came back home. This is how our wonderful 9 days Summer holiday 2020 ended!





An Aviation Mystery Like None Other

Ayushna Mishra, King Edward VI School, Southampton

Do I really need to read this? You must be wondering, right? Well, I assume that you've flown on an aeroplane at some point of time in your life. Imagine yourself walking through the isles and sitting on your comfortable seat and having nothing to worry about at all. But wait...Have you ever wondered why those weird buttons are enticingly decorated in the cockpit? These are our gateways to a safe flight. Yet, many things can go wrong; some can be explained readily, and some remain hazed in mystery. I am going to write about one such plane crash that has been etched in our mind as one of the mysterious plane crashes in history. But, do not panic. My narrative is purely for an inquisitive mind, not the least to scare you to hell. This is about the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 -MH370. We all have heard about it from media, but where did the plane disappear?

To this very day, we wonder what actually have happened to MH370? Well, as we don't have much hard evidence, we may not know about what really happened. People have varying viewpoints. Maybe at some point in distant 2050, people would discover that the disappearance of MH370 (Pic-1) was nothing but an alien abduction or something similar. Imagination has no limit but when scientifically explained, they bring light to many unresolved mysteries. To this day, some even interpret that MH370 "disintegrated into confetti" (Fox News). But here, I will stick to the things that have been said with some evidence.



March 8 2014- At Kuala Lumpur International airport, a Boeing 777 is ready for departure. With 239 passengers and crew it takes off for Beijing (see the bold line in Pic-2 for the intended flight path). In the cockpit are, Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah and First officer Fariq Abdul Hamid. Less than an hour into the flight, the aeroplane is flying over the South China Sea at a cruising altitude of 35,000 feet. The sky is clear and weather is calm. At that moment, Flight 370 is instructed to signal ATC (air traffic control) in Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam when it enters Vietnamese air space.

About 2 minutes later, the flight vanishes from the radar in Kuala Lumpur, Beijing and Bangkok. A radar normally works by picking up signals from the two transponders in the front of a plane. If the plane did not show up on radar, we assume that both transponders ceased to function, or someone manually deactivated them on board. Flight 370 missed its scheduled arrival in Beijing by few hours and until today this flight is now officially declared missing.

How it all unfolded?

One of the most expensive searches in aviation history is about to start. Initially the search between the South China Sea and the Gulf of Thailand started, where the plane went missing. The search was soon stopped when Malaysian military radar disclosed some very important information. Unlike radar in airports, military radar uses reflectance to track aircraft. They claimed that the aeroplane took a reverse turn by veering to the left before turning right at the island of Penang. It maintained this route until it did not show up any further on the military radar (Pic-3). Over the next few days the Strait of Malacca, the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal were searched for the missing aircraft. Despite the intensive searches, there was not a single trace of the plane.



Meanwhile, investigators analysed the flight's satellite communication records. Just like all modern aeroplanes, the plane was equipped with a Satellite Communications Terminal (SATCOM). A signal from the ground sends radio signals to a satellite, which sends and receives transmissions to and from the ground. Before departure, the SATCOM terminal had logged onto the satellite network and had a connection at a ground station in Perth, Australia. That station kept a tab on traffic between it and flight 370. This is what the information from Australia contained: "The plane had lost its connection with the ground station for 3 mins before regaining it whilst flying over the Andaman Sea. After that, the satellite signal was not disrupted again for the next six hours until it crashed in the Southern Indian Ocean. During the final hours of the plane, two calls were made using SATCOM telephone, yet they were left unanswered. The terminal had also responded to five automatic status requests".



The site of the crash (part of the southern Indian Ocean) is so remote that it took more than six days just to get there. After searching around 4.5 msq km of ocean, flight 370 was nowhere to be found. No wreckage was found either. 16 months later, on the opposite side of the Indian Ocean few people cleaning up the beach in Reunion, found a long metallic object covered in barnacles. Investigators quickly identified the part to be a bit of the wing of MH370 (called the right flaperon, see Pic-4). Investigators then decided to shift their search more towards southeast Africa. During their search they found around 31 minor pieces of aircraft that could be part of MH 370. Later on, around early 2017, the search for MH370 was officially suspended.

Why did the plane crash?

There are many angles to the seemingly unfolding mystery...

Investigation found out that on the day of the disappearance, 2 passengers raised suspicion as they were travelling with stolen passports. The suspicion of a hijack was later dispensed with as these passengers were trying to seek asylum in another country. Could a fire have broken in the mid-air? Investigators then turned to think about the cargo load at the back of the plane. Their examination led to a new lead; one of the cargos held Lithium Ion Batteries. For MH370 a sudden deviation from the flight path could have been a response to a fire. The pilots could have attempted to make an emergency landing but it never occurred. Instead flight 370 remained aloft for another 6 hours. Another possibility could be a sudden or a gradual fall of cabin pressure. This could perhaps explain why the plane was flying for such a long time. But what is more puzzling is the change of direction of its scheduled path. Investigators established that the first turn was definitely manual, but the other turns could have been manual or automatic. Another alternative was that the flight was in manual control the whole time. In late June 2014, several news reports reported that a special investigation had held the pilot as a prime suspect. A later search of the pilot's home had gotten investigators an entirely new lead. A flight simulator in the pilot's home had a similar path plotted which allegedly ended in the southern Indian Ocean. If the pilot intended to crash the plane in the Southern Indian Ocean, even his motive remains a greater mystery, because both the pilots had a clean record.

It is hard to surmise that any hijacking would have actually taken place, given the available evidence concluding otherwise. We are still missing major pieces of the plane. Although we now know that the tracking systems were shut down manually and so was the plotting of the flight path, it is necessary to formulate competing theories. In my mind, I think that solutions to biggest mysteries lie in the simplest things we often seem to ignore. Wondering, what they are and if anybody ever can experience a Eureka moment!



তুমি এলে

Kabita Majumdar

বাড়ি পৌঁছে পিছন ফিরে তাকিয়ে অবাক রুচিরা ! আরে এ তো সেই ছেলেটা | বাসে এতক্ষন যার পাশে বসে এসেছে সে |

বান্ধবীর ছেলের অনপ্রাশনের নিমন্ত্রণ খেয়ে বাসে চেপে ছিল | অসহ্য গরমে প্রচল্ড ঘাম ছিল রুচিরা | ওর সহযাত্রী টি উঠে দাঁড়িয়ে বলে ছিল | আপনি চাইলে জানলার ধারে বসতে পারেন | মৃদু হেসে জায়গা বদল করেছিল রুচিরা | ধন্যবাদ জানিয়েছিল সহযাত্রী কে | শরীরটা খারাপ লাগছিল রুচিরার | ক্রমশই সেটা বাড়তে লাগলো | বোতল থেকে একটু একটু করে জল খাচ্ছিলো সে |

পেট্রলপাম্পে গাড়ি ঢুকতে ছুটে গিয়ে, হড়হড় করে বমি করল | চোখে মুখে জল দিল | ভ্যানিটি ব্যাগ থেকে পারফিউম বার করে গায়ে ছিটিয়ে নিল |

গাড়ির কাছে এসে দেখল তার সহযাত্রী টি দরজায় দাঁড়িয়ে উদগ্রীব হয়ে তার প্রতীক্ষা করছে | কাছে আসতেই , ইংরেজিতে বলল , আপনি ঠিক আছেন ? মুখে হাসি ফুটিয়ে ঘাড় কাত করল রুচিরা | বাসে উঠে ওপাশ ফিরে চোখ বুজে সিট এ গা এলিয়ে দিলো সে | তার হর্সটেল করে বাঁধা শ্যাম্পু করা লম্বা চুল ফর্সা পিঠ ছাড়িয়ে কোমর ছাড়িয়ে সহযাত্রী টি র কোলে এসে আছড়ে পড়ল |

এক অপরিচিতা যুবতীর একরাশ এলো চুল | সেই সাথে পারফিউমের মনমাতানো গন্ধ, যুবকের মনের মধ্যে একটা উত্তাল তরঙ্গ রচনা করলো | মেয়েটির প্রতি প্রবল একটা আকর্ষণ অনুভব করতে লাগলো সে | এদিকে রুচিরা অবাক হয়ে গেছে সেই সহযাত্রী টি কে এখানে দেখে | একদম খেয়াল করেনি , একজন তার পিছনে পিছনে আসছে | অথচ তার কথাই ভাবছিলো সে | ব্যবহারটা মুগ্ধ করেছিল রুচিরা কে | যথেষ্ট ভদ্র পরোপকারী |

আগন্তুক রুচিরার মুখোমুখি দাঁড়িয়ে একজনের বাড়িটা কোথায় জানতে চাইল | রুচিরা এখন অনেকটাই সুস্থ | হেসে বলল আপনি তো একদম ভুল পথে এসেছেন | সম্পূর্ণ উল্টো রাস্তায় | একথা বলেই সঠিক পথটা সুন্দর করে বুঝিয়ে দিল | আগন্তুক মনে মনে বলল | আমার তো মনে হয় , আমি এতদিনে আমার সঠিক পথ টি পেয়েছি |

ধন্যবাদ জানালো যুবকটি | বলল আমার নাম রাজা | আলিপুরদুয়ার থেকে এসেছি | এটা নিশ্চয়ই আপনাদের বাড়ি ? আপনার নামটা জানতে পারি কি ? রুচিরা হেসে বলল কেন ? আমার নাম জেনে কি হবে শুনি ? মনটা খারাপ হয়ে গেল রাজার ! ঠিকানা তো ছুঁতো | সে তো ওর বাড়ি চিনতেই এসেছিল | গম্ভীর হয়ে বলল আপত্তি থাকলে বলবেন না | ঠিক আছে | চলি তাহলে | চলে গেল রাজা |

মিটিমিটি হাসতে লাগল রুচিরা | ছেলেটা কালোর মধ্যে দেখতে-শুনতে মন্দ না | এই সফরে সারাঙ্ক্ষণ ওর খেয়াল রেখেছে | জানলাটা ঠিকঠাক করে খুলে দিয়েছে | মাঝে মাঝে জানতে চাইছিল কোন সমস্যা আছে কিনা | আর তাকেই কিনা রাগিয়ে দিল রুচিরা | আসলে কাউকে রাগিয়ে খুব আনন্দ পায় সে |

কাল থেকেই স্কুলে গরমের ছুটি পড়ে যাচ্ছে | আজ সকালে স্কুল | রোল কল হয়েই ছুটি হয়ে যাবে | হন হন করে হাঁটছে রুচিরা | পথে বিজয় দার মিষ্টির দোকান থেকে 500 টাকা খুচরো করতে হবে | দোকানে রাজাকে দেখবে ভাবতেই পারেনি রুচিরা | এতটাই অপ্রস্তুত হয়েছে যে খুচরো চেয়েও না নিয়েই হাঁটতে শুরু করে দিল |

রাজা ওর পাশে এসে বলল | আমার কাছেই আছে | এই নিন | বলেই টাকা এগিয়ে ধরল | ধন্যবাদ জানিয়ে রুচিরা বলল | কিছুদিন থাকবেন তো ? রাজা মনে মনে বলল | আপনি বললে নিশ্চয়ই থাক ব , কিন্তু আপনি কি বলবেন ? মুখে বলল না কালই চলে যাব |

রুচিরা কে অবাক করে দিয়ে রাজা বলল। রুচিরা দেবী, আপনি তো এখানে খুবই জনপ্রিয়। সবাই আপনার প্রশংসায় পঞ্চমুখ। কপট রাগ দেখিয়ে রুচিরা বলল ও আচ্ছা আপনি তাহলে আমার ব্যাপারে গোয়েন্দাগিরি করছেন? এভাবে কারো নাড়ি-নক্ষত্র জানা ভারি অন্যায়! হো হো করে হাসতে লাগল রাজা। বললো এতে গোয়েন্দাগিরির কি আছে? ফুলের গন্ধ যেমন চারদিকে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে। আপনার সুখ্যাতিও তেমনি ভাইরাল হয়ে গেছে।

কথা বলতে বলতে স্কুল এসে গেল। রাজা বলল আমি ততক্ষণ এদিকটা ঘুরে দেখি। একসাথেই ফিরব। রুচিরা না না করে উঠলো। কোন সমস্যা নেই জানিয়ে দিল রাজা।

ছুটির ঘন্টা বাজতেই, তড়িঘড়ি বেরিয়ে এলো রুচিরা। একজন তার জন্য প্রতীক্ষা করে আছে। ছি ছি মিছিমিছি সময় নষ্ট করল। কিন্তু রাজা কোথায়? হঠাৎ পিছন থেকে রাজা ডাকলো। এদিকে আসুন কিছু খেয়ে নেওয়া যাক! বড্ড খিদে পেয়েছে। খিদে রুচিরার ও পেয়েছে। তাই বলল আপনি আমাদের অতিথি। বিল টা আমি দেবো। রাজা হেসে বলল আপনার অতিথি আপ্যায়ন প্রশংসনীয়। তাহলে চলুন আজ বিকেলে চারপাশটা ঘুরে দেখি।

রুচিরা অত্যন্ত খোলা মনের মেয়ে। লোকের সাথে মেলামেশায় ওর জুড়ি নেই। আজ অবধি সবাই তার কাছে দাদা কাকা ভাই হয়েই রয়ে গেছে। ওই লক্ষণরেখা কেউ ডিগ্গোতে পারেনি। রাজার ব্যাপারেও কোন ভয় নেই ওর। এটা তার নিজের জায়গা। তবুও কিছু শর্ত রাখল। সে যেখানে নিয়ে যাবে সেখানেই যেতে হবে। সন্ধ্যার আগে অবশ্যই ফিরতে হবে। সব শুনে খুশি হয়ে রাজা বলল, তথাস্তু ম্যাডাম।

নির্দিষ্ট সময়ে নির্ধারিত জায়গা থেকে বেরোল দুজনে। রাজা আজ খুব মাঞ্জা দিয়েছে। বেশ ভাল লাগছে ওকে। রুচিরা খুব সুন্দর একটা চুরিদার পড়েছে। লম্বা বেণী পিঠের উপর দুলছে। মাঝে মাঝে চুলের বেনি টি সামনে এনে, নাড়তে নাড়তে কথা কইছে।

রাজার মনের মধ্যে তোলপাড় চলছে সে যে এরই মধ্যে রুচিরা কে ভালোবেসে ফেলেছে। তা বেশ বুঝতে পারছে। মেয়েটার মধ্যে এমন একটা কিছু আছে যা কিনা রাজা উপেক্ষা করতে পারছে না। সান্ধ্য চা পান পর্ব শেষ করে, ফেরার পথে রাজা রুচিরা কে নিজের মনের কথা, বলার জন্য ব্যস্ত হয়ে পরল। কিন্তু পারল না। ফোন নাম্বার চাইল তাতেও বাদ সাধল রুচিরা। বলল ওটার আবার কি দরকার? যখনই সময় পাবেন, চলে আসবেন।

এক সময় রুচিরা বলল তাহলে কালই চলে যাচ্ছেন? গোছগাছ শেষ? সাহস করে রাজা বলল আপনি চাইলে থাকতেও পারি। রুচিরা হেসে বলল। আপনার প্রয়োজন থাকলে থাকবেন। রাজা এবার অন্য পথ ধরল। বলল কেউ কেউ সব বুঝেও না বোঝার ভান করে। কি করা যায় বলুনতো? উত্তরে খিলখিল করে হাসতে লাগলো রুচিরা। তার ডান দিকের গজদন্ত হাসির সৌন্দর্যকে অনেক অনেক গুণ বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছে। মুগ্ধ দৃষ্টিতে চেয়ে আছে রাজা।

ভাবছে রুচিরা কি তার সব প্রশ্নের উত্তর এভাবে হেসেই উড়িয়ে দেবে?

বিছানায় শুয়ে রাজার কথাই ভাবছে রুচিরা। ছেলেটা খারাপ না। এত ঘোরাঘুরি করেছে কোনও বেচাল দেখেনি। প্রচন্ড মিশুকে। ওর থেকে বছর তিনেকের বড় হবে। কাল বিকেলের বাসেই চলে যাবে বলেছে। ফোন নাম্বার চেয়েছিল পেল না।

কিছু একটা বলতে চেয়েছিল তাও শোনেনি। কেন যে এমন করে রুচিরা। বয়সতো 28 চলছে! বাড়ি থেকে সম্বন্ধ দেখে দেখে নাকি তারা ক্লান্ত। এখন ওকেই দায়িত্ব দিয়েছে জীবনসঙ্গী বেছে নেবার। কথাটা শুনে সেদিন রাগে ফেটে পড়েছিল রুচিরা।

বাসস্টপে এসেছে রাজা। আশা করেছিল রুচিরা তাকে বিদায় জানাতে আসবে। ওর চোখ তন্ন তন্ন করে রুচিরা কে খুঁজছিল।

ভিড়ে ঠাসা বাস | পা রাখার পর্যন্ত জায়গা নেই | কে যেন ডাকল | রাজাদা এদিকে আসুন | রুচিরা দি
আপনার জন্য জায়গা রাখতে বলেছিল | রেখেছি | বসুন | বলে নেমে গেল ছেলেটা | নাম রঞ্জু | বিজয়
দার দোকানে ই আলাপ | ফোন নাম্বার আদান-প্রদানও হয়েছিল |

মনটা খুব খারাপ লাগছে রাজার | এত করে বলা সত্ত্বেও এলোনা রুচিরা | অথচ সারাক্ষণ ওর কথাই ভাবছে
সে | একটা দীর্ঘশ্বাস ফেলে মোবাইল অন করল রাজা | আর তখনই সে দেখতে পেল | রুচিরা বার্তা
পাঠিয়েছে | যাত্রা শুভ হোক ! কোন অসুবিধা হয়নি তো ?

লেখাটার দিকে একদৃষ্টে চেয়ে রইল রাজা | তার মুখটা খুশিতে উজ্জ্বল হয়ে উঠল |

স ম ঞ



The Ghost Conundrum

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'WHAT are you up to now'?

My mother was addressing me sternly on a humid evening, in a rather unknown remote village in West Bengal, India. One of my friend's parents complained to her a while ago that I had arranged to beat up their naïve son in the school!

Maa was in utter disbelief; she struggled to convince herself that a shy boy who barely spoke a few words despite prodding, could 'arrange' such a beating? I gazed long at her thoughtful face and realized her vexation. With a quick unarming smile I pressed her, 'Maa, do you believe so?' Before she spoke, I mumbled, 'Maa, I need to borrow a math book from my friend, Bidhan... I have some homework to finish tonight'. My shamefacedness spoke more eloquently than the urgency itself.

My good friend, Bidhan, always offered an unconditional help of sharing his math book as Maa could not afford to buy me one.

She softened a bit and commanded, 'run then, but return in half an hour'.

My friend's house was at the farthest corner of the village. The road leading to his house used to spook people even during the daytime. Numerous hearsays ran through the folklore that the revengeful soul of a certain widow still moved around those dark, gloomy and thorny bushes. Maa had apprehensions about my safety, but I had genuine reasons of an escape! Getting caught for arranging a beating and being told off was never a pleasant thing. More so, I, and my two sisters, were perennially afraid of something in Maa. Like a typical Bengali lady, her big expressive eyes, when angry, were enough for a year of our reprimand!

I suddenly stopped by my private tutor's house, which was on my way to my friend's. Deb sir, lovingly called by his students' parents, was a terror to his students, as he, often without proper investigation to a cause, would beat us up mercilessly. I, myself, was a regular victim of such an unwelcome whim. I would often ask him the cause of my punishment after his 'act' was completed to his satisfaction: 'Sir, why was I beaten today'? His response used to be more sarcastic and theatrical than convincing and logical, leaving our uncredulous young minds helpless to the extreme.

I was the head boy in my class and earned some natural followers. My trusted followers were always willing to help me on anything including this arrangement of beating. I discovered latter that they had already carried out some 'expected and desirable' tasks, without my permission. Those actions had natural spillover effects: I was regularly at the receiving end of strong 'disciplining' at home. When Deb Sir's uncanny flair of punishment was growing exponentially, my friends once proposed, 'brother, you need to do something to stop this merciless whim'. I reflected often that Deb sir carried a half-elastic bamboo stick, often used to spank poor cows. We were compared no better than those poor silent animals as Sir believed that our intelligence was as thick as those of the cows. An idea sparked in my mind as I was running towards my friend's house. I asked Sir's parents sitting nearby, about where he had gone. They relayed that Sir had gone to buy some vegetables from a weekly market that ran in a village about three miles away from ours. I sensed an opportunity and ran to my friend Bidhan's house. Upon arrival, Bidhan expressed agonies saying it was dark and it was not safe to go home alone. Bidhan's kind hearted parents fed me some puffed rice and milk and promised to me drop home. I insisted that I would not need any help and thanked them profusely for their kind offer. Before they picked up a lantern I

dashed off like a wind.

In the gathering darkness, on that ghostly sinuous road, I selected a berry tree (Jamun tree) and rode a familiar branch. That used to be my favourite spot as the sumptuous Jamun were normally left untouched by my friends given the spookiness of the place. I had a natural and uncontested monopoly of consumption in the fruit market.

I had noticed a persistent habit in Deb Sir. When alone, especially when he was afraid of something, he would sing, almost on a deafening high pitch voice. I trusted his nature and waited patiently on the Jamun branch that evening. From a distant, I could hear his 'angelic' voice and was determined that he would be punished for his wrongdoing; a double-edged boon I reckoned if my action got undetected. Like others, he was very much afraid of the darkness too. As soon as he approached the Jamun tree, I jumped on him. The next few moments were agonising as he tried to run for his life amidst those thorny bushes. He panicked, tumbled, growled, and asked for help saying that 'the widow ghost had attacked him, and he was then dead...' I was trying my best to stop the volcanic eruption of laughter but had a quick thinking. I ran in the opposite direction to my friend's house. Bidhan's parents, gave me a perplexed and surprised look, meaning why I did not take their help at the first place and why I ran now like a man in distress!

They accompanied me home. The way cuts across Deb Sir's private pathway. The sooner we reached there, we saw the whole village, with lanterns, had flocked to see him. Deb Sir had then fainted following the ghostly attack! Among the inquisitive folks was my Maa too; she was duly worried about my safe return. The grey-haired folks were talking about ghosts, which they had encountered at different places in the village and the women folks were captive in attention. The villagers summoned a ghostbuster, a well-known Mohammedan man, and tasked him to 'release' the Ghost. His methods of 'release' were objectionable as he bit Deb Sir with Shoes and Sweepers, a sight which bemused me for some moments! I thought this was an exact 'match' to his previous wrongdoings! But I began to become worried as the Ghost refused to leave Deb Sir! Until he fell unconscious and murmured 'I am leaving', he was mercilessly beaten and was made to inhale some unpleasant smoke. Finally, the Ghost got coughed out of Sir's body, and the villagers returned to their nests gossiping. Maa gave me an earful saying that 'do you now see... you never listen....'.

The following day, I accompanied Deb Sir to the tuition. He looked very sombre reflecting perhaps of his sufferings from the previous night. For some strange reasons, he forgot about his stick and he never carried one for as long as I remembered. Thanks to the Ghost Conundrum, we were all saved from his habitual beating. I carried a guilt nevertheless; although a bad trick supposedly 'reformed' him, it was not the right thing to do. Years later, I revealed the truth to him, and he laughed out heartily saying, sometimes a 'bad teacher needs a good student for a lifelong lesson!'

The END

The World Burns



Shubhashukla Chakrabarty

the milky hues of the moon,
in their dreamy, distant lies,
shimmering and soft, spun like caterpillar silk,
adored by tender smiles and sleepy eyes.
sunshine gold and stardust pink.
rosy-cheeked whispers under honeyed skies.
the smell of smoke lingers.
and the bitter slamming of doors,
from the broken promises and messy lies,
and the aching limbs,
that lie restless on the floor,
and the shadows become a suffocating darkness,
with the sulky thunderstorms.
around them, the world burns.

The Rain



Kamolpriya Chakrabarty

The air was cold,
the sky was grey.
I felt a drop,
then masses of rain.

The sun was gone.
Rays of happiness and light.
Now hidden by despair.
A gloomy sight.

I remember the rainbows,
after the stormy days.
I beg and I plead,
that this is the case.

I go to bed every night,
To wake up for rain to still be there.
The same old stories,
The same old miserable air.

But it finally hit me
I finally understood.
That to grow you need rain.
And rain was good.

Kali Puja 2019



Saraswati Puja 2020





HPCA MEMBERS' LIST - 2019/20 (Start of the year)

Acharya Madhu	Kundu Krishnan
Acharya Bharati	Kundu Suparna
Banerjee Anindo	Khurana Tarun
Banerjee Shikha	Maharatna Koushik
Banerjee Raj	Maharatna Aditi
Banerjee Sandhya	Mishra Tapas
Barua Pranabesh	Mishra Mamata
Barua Sushmita	Mukherjee Monoj
Basak Raja	Mukherjee Kajari
Basak Mouri	Mukherjee Manish
Basu Manab	Mukherjee Sutapa
Basu Roy Ratish	Nagpal Mahesh
Bhadra Vivek	Nagpal Artee
Bhadra Sarbani	Nicholson Soama
Chakraborty Ananda	Nicholson Colin
Chakraborty Ahana	Nischal Yogesh
Chakraborty Soumya	Nischal Jayashree
Chakraborty (Mukhopadhyay) Abanti	Pathak Debnarayan
Chatterjee Manas	Pathak Dalia
Chatterjee Urmi	Prem
Chatterjee Shre Kumar	Ray Swayamjyoti
Chatterjee Sanhita	Ray Meenakshi
Chatterjee Sophie	Rokade Ashok
Chaudhuri Sadhana	Rokade Kirti
Das Pasupati	Roy Kohinoor
Das Anuka	Roy Nandan
Das Bulbulee	Roy Choudhuri Saroj
Deb Rishi	Roy Choydhuri Ratna
Datta Sumantra	Sahu Jayanta
Datta Sumita	Sau Aparna
Ghosh Debanjan	Sahu Sujit
Ghosh Ray Atanu	Sahu Ranu
Ghosh Ray Aditi	Sarkar Gobinda
Hall John	Sarkar Aparna
Hall Debika	Singh Vinod
Jhanji Sumeet	Semple Chris
Kar Shantanu	Semple Peyalee
Poddar Monisha	Somani Bhaskar
Karmakar Snehmoy	Somani Sweta
Karode Shyam	Turnbull Priyanka
Karode Chhaya	Turnbull Nick
Kumar Tonmoy	Tiwari Laxmikant
Kumar Haimanti	Mazumder Baishakhi

