

DURGA PUJA 2021

The Autumn Festival

Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association



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Message



On behalf of Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association (HPCA), I welcome you all to celebrate Durga Pujo and Autumn Festival – 2021.

Its been tough, the last few months, almost getting to 2 years now. Every individual in the world has been effected by Covid, to proportions beyond imagination. Friends, family members, neighbours, colleagues...every individual has been impacted directly or indirectly in the last year.

During these months, as HPCA, we have tried to work with the community and help to the best of our abilities. Members made donations to the local food banks and Southampton City Mission on a regular basis for months.

We held online cultural events which not only kept the members connected and provided relief during lockdown but also raised funds through these events. This enabled us to make a £1374.25 contribution to the Southampton General Hospital. We also extended our help to communities in India, as the country was heavily impacted by Covid second wave, through the Sonu Sood Foundation charity.

This wouldn't have been possible without the efforts of each and every member of HPCA. I thank you all for your untiring support and contribution.

We are celebrating Durga Pujo after a gap of a year, HPCA's 13th Pujo, and there is an excitement to meet everyone and celebrate together as a community again.

The team is going to put together a splendid line-up of cultural events – An *Antakshari* on 8th October, HPCA'S own home grown – *Strictly Come Shining* – a medley of acts – based on multiple themes – Joy, Togetherness, Community cohesion and Cultural diversity on 9th October, and finally Eastern Euphony - One of UK's leading band performing live on 10th October.

I am grateful to our sponsors and on behalf of the entire team thank them from the bottom of my heart.

With warm regards,

Manish Mukherjee,
General Secretary, H.P.C.A.

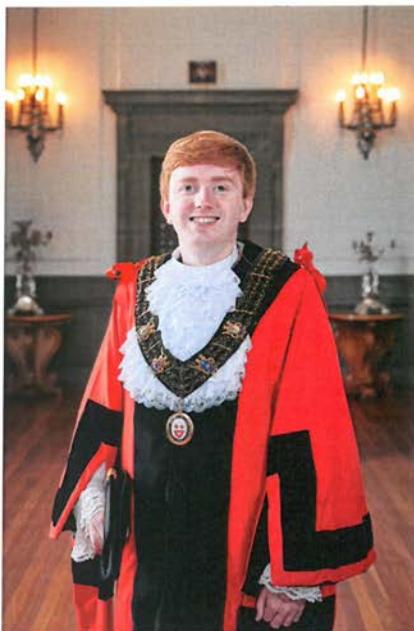
799th Mayor of Southampton
Councillor Alex Houghton



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 Pula and Cultural association success in delivering its aim and objective during the Festival in a safe way.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Houghton'.

Councillor Alex Houghton
The Right Worshipful the Mayor of Southampton



City of
Winchester

Councillor Vivian Achwal
The Mayor of Winchester
Abbey House
The
Broadway Winchester SO2
39BE

tel: (01962) 848259 or 840222
email: mayorssecretary@winchester.gov.uk



The past 18 months have been a very difficult time for everyone, and I sincerely hope that some type of 'normality' begins to return from now on.

My husband was born in India, and spent his childhood in Nasik. Since our marriage in 1980, I have been fortunate enough to experience and enjoy many colourful festivals. I love that the festivals always evolve around family and lots of homemade food, especially Indian sweets!

My special thanks go to the many volunteers who help at the Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association, and I wish all of you an enjoyable Durga Festival and best wishes for Anaya today.

Regards

Vivian Achwal

822nd Mayor of Winchester

I am delighted to send you my very best wishes on behalf of Hampshire Constabulary for the Durga Puja and Autumn Festival 2021.

As Chief Constable of Hampshire Constabulary it seems fitting that I should write, as you begin celebrations of a festival that epitomises the victory of good over evil. Hampshire Constabulary is committed to keeping Hampshire and the Isle of Wight a safe place for all of our communities.

As we begin to emerge from the last 18 months of covid restrictions, I want to thank you all for the support you have given us in helping to keep our communities safer. I am aware that many of us have missed out on celebrations and festivals since the pandemic began, so I am glad to learn of all that the HPCA have planned for this year and have every confidence this can be achieved in a safe way to ensure that all can enjoy celebrating.

As the days get shorter and the nights draw in it seems like Autumn is well on her way, and at this time of year it is traditional to give thanks for the Harvest. We are so lucky here in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight to have a wealth of local produce on our doorstep. Sadly, I know too well that not everyone is fortunate enough to know where their next meal is coming from, or able to take advantage of the wonderful food that our farmers and producers here in Hampshire provide for us. I know that over the last 18 months many members of HPCA donated to our local food banks and continue to do so. It is so important that we come together to support those in need and I am in admiration of your contributions.

I wish you, your family and friends my very best as you celebrate over these next 10 days.

Olivia

Olivia Pinkney QPM MA

Chief Constable



COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & HOMES

Southampton City Council
Civic Centre
Southampton
SO14 7LY



MESSAGES



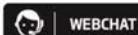
I am writing on behalf of our Stronger Communities Team. As a new team our mission is to ensure that our communities are active and involved, with so much to do and so much to learn after the experience of the Pandemic, which has shown us how capable and determined our communities have been at this critical time. The Vision for our Stronger Communities is to provide opportunities within and across our communities, and to ensure that the voices of our communities are heard, considered, and can impact on service delivery. Our places of worship and the HPCA have been at the forefront of local efforts to ensure the most vulnerable are supported and we are grateful for all of the work that HPCA is doing and hope this year's Durga Puja is a great success.

Jason Murphy – Stronger Communities Manager



On behalf of Communities, Culture and Homes and Southampton City Council I would like to wish you every success in this year's Durga Puja, which can only get bigger and better. After a turbulent period caused by the pandemic events such as these are important moments for us to reflect, but also come together, as well as showcase what a vibrant area we live in. Important steps towards our goal to become UK City of Culture 2025.

Mary D'Arcy – Executive Director of Communities, Culture & Homes



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MY ADVENTURE DIARY

BY Aishik Roy, 9 years

All Saints COE Primary School, Maidenhead

“Don’t be afraid to fail. Be afraid not to try.” - Michael Jordan



I love adventures. I love to try out new things, visit new places and gain new experiences. As far as I can remember and from what my parents have told me, I have been a diehard fan of nature especially animals from a very early age. One of my most favourite places used to be zoo but I have been told that nothing can beat outdoor adventures where I can experience nature and its habitats in their pure forms. So, starting my adventure journey in small steps.

During lockdown, I together with my mum and dad pitched a tent in our garden, did campfire and barbecue and stayed outdoor overnight. We could hear all sorts of sounds at night and woke up very early in the morning. It was super exciting.

We then went on a motorhome trip to Devon and Cornwall. It was my first ever stay in campsites and there were so many new rules to follow. I could never have imagined how an entire home could be fitted on wheels and everything was so much compact. I had a great time as my parents did all the works and we went to many beautiful places. The highlight of the trip for me was surfing in Sennen and Fistral beaches. Since this was my first time, I had to take lessons from instructor and Whoooooo! Learnt so many tricks and stuffs!! I was paddling on the board at first which beginners must do. After that I tried seating up, but I fell in the water! I tried again but I fell in again. I mastered the paddling, but so much more to do still and can't wait to go back to the waves. Luckily, there were no sharks in the water.

Since then, closer to home, I did kayaking with my Cubs friends in Taplow lake. There was one person per boat, and we played kayak cops and robbers. At the end some of us stayed back and swam in the lake. It was a bit deep as my head was going under water if I tried to keep my feet on the ground. But I managed it somehow, phew! Next time I want to go for swimming in River Thames.

Last but not the least and probably the best of my adventures is climbing Ben Nevis, the highest peak in UK. I have done hiking in other places before like Isle of Skye and Peak District, but this was the most challenging one. It was 1324m ascend and took us almost 12 hours to complete. The path was very rocky, steep and narrow and there were thousands of midgets but I focused well and although my legs were hurting at the end, I endured. My cousins were there as well so it was a lot of fun. When we reached the top there was a cuboid statue. It was the tallest point in the UK! People were allowed to sit on it so me and my cousins did. We sat at the tallest point in the UK!

This is just the beginning. I look forward to many more adventures in days and years to come.

Qantas Flight (QF) 72: Man Versus Machine

Miss Ayushna Mishra, 12 years

King Edwards VI School, Southampton



Travelling by plane is unambiguously a serious step into the boundary of an unknown. Passengers might wonder about what goes on in the cockpit- with all those buttons that control their fate of being alive on arrival. Undoubtedly, these buttons are our gateways to a safe flight. Yet, there is a possibility that things can go wrong; some can be explained readily, and some remain hazed in mystery. As technology gradually advances, we keep putting more and more trust in them than we do in people. But have you ever thought, what would happen if technology turned against you? What if technology tried to kill you instead of making your life secured? Well, there are several such instances. I am excited to describe one here that I am intrigued about. This is about Qantas Flight 72.

On October 7th, 2008, this Qantas Flight (Airbus A330-303) on her scheduled journey from Singapore to Perth, indeed appeared to turn against the people. It is an incident that can make an enticing story in a Hollywood movie. The plane was equipped with a fly-by-wire system, a computer-regulated flight control system that uses an electronic interface instead of mechanical flight controls. The computers monitor sensors around aircraft to make automatic adjustments that are necessary for the flight. On the day, the ascent of the flight to cruising altitude was perfectly fine,



nothing out of the ordinary. But during the smooth cruising at 37,000 feet above the Indian Ocean, all hell broke loose. Firstly, the autopilot got disengaged, forcing the pilots to manually control the plane. Few seconds later, a stall and overspeed warning came on – a sign of an impending disaster!

How could an aircraft fly at both maximum and minimum speeds – something of a nightmare to a statistician and more so, to a pilot. Half a

minute passed and nothing unexpected happened. The plane was back to its smooth sailing. But not long after, the plane suddenly pitched down at a dangerous rate in less than a second. As a result, the people at the back of the plane and the ones without seatbelts were flung onto the ceiling. In the cockpit, the pilots tried to override the faulty fly-by-wire system by pulling back on the control stick. The plane levelled off again but then, within 2 seconds, the plane plunged 150 feet. Few seconds after the plane nosedived, the pilots seemed to regain a bit of control, they let the plane descend and then cautiously climbed back to 37,000 feet. But, in less than a second the plane's gravitational force changed again which results in many people being thrown around in the cabin. Repeatedly, the pilots failed to override the system. The flight-control-system was becoming the first-in-command!

The reason why the pilots couldn't manage to override the computers' commands was due to the supposedly 'fail-safe' method of **fly-by-wire**. The very feature of the system that should make the flight safe made it impossible for the pilots to take control when they needed to. Due to faulty sensors, the system sensed that it was in danger therefore tried to correct it. But when the plane was trying to 'correct' the 'danger' it was only doing the opposite.

Technology is advancing; there is no doubt. Despite our herculean efforts to make machine the future, a large part of our strategy of predicting the unpredictability depends on the rigour of training and deep down – a sudden intuitive response to a time in distress. Indeed, the heroic pilots of Qantas 72 managed to give the plane a safe landing (that story is for another time!). In the conflict against the Machine, here the Men won and they must win!

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Computers

Devjeet Acharyya

Highfield CE Primary School, Year 6



Today, I am going to be writing about how computers work including the parts of a PC/Computer.

Now first, what exactly is a computer? A computer is a device which can carry out operations from computer programming. When people think of computers, they think of PC/Laptops. Those aren't the only things which are computers. Some machines can be considered as computers. Another example of a computer is something

we all carry it in our pockets every day. Yes, a mobile phone or tablet is considered as a computer. Any device, which can perform an output given to the input, is considered as a computer. Anyway, now that we know what a computer is, we can now talk in further depth on what it is.

There are seven types of computers including, Supercomputer, Mainframe, Microcontroller, Server Computer, Personal Computer, Workstation computer and a smartphone. I am going to be talking about 2 of those computers. 1, the Personal Computer and 2, Supercomputer.

First, let's talk about the Personal computer (PC). A PC is the most common type of computer. We use them every day. These vary for different people. People use them for gaming, some people use them for work and some people use them to watch YouTube etc. Some people build these machines. Retailers price these for very high, but really if you build your own, it will be cheaper. However in the current state of the market, some key component prices have significantly increased, due to lockdown. There aren't many parts to build a PC. You would need Memory, Hard Drive or Solid State Drive, Motherboard, Processor and a Power supply. You can add on a video card/graphics card onto it mostly gaming. Normal PCS normally cost around £200. If you would like to buy a typical gaming PC, with a great CPU, GPU etc., it would cost around £1000. I will go in further detail on what the 10 parts I have listed are. Memory (Ram) is used to store working data and machine code. Most PCS will have 8GB or 4GB. Some high end pcs will have 16GB and up to 128GB. A Hard Drive (HDD) or Storage State Drive (SSD) is what stores all of your files. An



for

SSD is more new, included newer technology. A motherboard is what holds all of your components together. It will hold the memory, HDD etc. in place. A GPU (Graphics card) is what creates an output on a screen. This is mainly used for heavy task, such as a processor (CPU) is what creates the output of what you see on your screen. A power supply is what powers your system.

I think we should move onto our next topic, which is a supercomputer. A supercomputer is a very powerful computer. It is not used for simple tasks such as searching the web etc. Most of the time, it is what most companies use for their databases including Google. Amazon uses a virtual supercomputer, which is very surprising because it might not be safe. A supercomputer contains everything that a normal computer will have such as memory, hard drives and processers. Here are some types of super computers, Titan, IBM Sequoia, K Computer, Tianhe-I, Jaguar, IBM Roadrunner, Nebulae, Kraken. I am not going to go more in depth with this now.

I hope you have learnt something by reading this. Thank you for reading.



Sports Day 2021



APJ Abdul Kalam

Jasmine Randhawa , 11 years

King Edwards VI School, Southampton



Avul Pakir Jainulabiddin or popularly known as APJ Kalam, was born on October 15, 1931, into a poor Muslim family. He was born and raised in Dhanushkodi, Rames Waram, Tamil Nadu (South of India). His father, Jainulabiddin Marakayar, had only one boat to help feed his family which wasn't enough.

Kalam was the 11th President of India and was the first President in India who was also an unmarried scientist. APJ was also called the "Missile Man of India" for his contribution to India's missile technology. Although he was a Muslim, he was a strict vegetarian and believed that children are the future of any nation. He was known as "The People's President" because of his simple and down to earth attitude.

Inspired by his life, a Bollywood movie called "I am Kalam" was produced to share with the world his motivational presidency and how he was different to many other Indian presidents. APJ also wrote a lot of poetry, especially in Tamil.

His first major project in 1979 as a project director, the SLV-3 (Satellite Launch Vehicle), failed, and he was shattered. He took the whole blame on himself and carried on working on the technology till next year when on July 18, 1980, the same team led by Kalam successfully launched Rohini RS-1 into the orbit.

Kalam received 7 honorary doctorates from 40 universities. He is honoured with

1. Padma Bhushan 1981
2. Padma Vibhushan in 1990
3. Bharat Ratna
4. Von Brawn Award

In 2012, Kalam was ranked as no. 2 by Outlook India's "Poll of greatest Indians". Kalam is a source of inspiration for millions of people, through his message on life which says 'if you fail, never give up trying' because

'FAIL = First Attempt of Learning', and
'End is not end, in fact END = Effort Never Dies'.
'If you get no for an answer, remember No = Next Opportunity'.

He was an avid reader and writer. He wrote more than 15 books on various topics, including nuclear physics and spiritual experience
On July 27, 2015 - the day he died, he was delivering a lecture at IIM, Shillong. He always had a passion for teaching and working hard. Thus, at the time when death captured him, he was doing what he loved.



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A tinted love for a hopeless dream

Kamolpriya Chakrabarty

The Westgate School

The silence could never drown out the screams,
the anger, passion and hatred.
Yet when the pin dropped it created echos,
words of life and creation,
It seemed that only the ones who knew the pin,
knew what was ever said.

Oh, the temptation of salvation,
at the pinnacle of humanity,
Oh, how the hope of it all,
was torn by disparity.
Oh, the ashes of dreams,
the bitter reality,
A new craze begins,
one of insanity.

A tinted love for a hopeless dream,
one just to escape reality,
and soon the laughs become profanity,
as each new truth becomes the enemy.



An alliance of liars

Kamolpriya Chakrabarty
The Westgate School

Their grimy hands tugged the almost untouched rope from above, and instantaneously, the usual black walls shone a luminescent white. I wiped the thick layer of dust on the wooden chair with my sleeve, finding it funny how it felt like fur and sat down.

They glared at me, almost as if I was a test subject in a cruel experiment. I shook the dust off, purposely on to their pristine polished black shoes, yet they still didn't say a word - just carried on staring in to my soul.

But I couldn't stand eye-contact, so I looked around the nearly empty room. I noticed scrawny writing was on the wall, carved out with what looks like a blunt knife.

“An alliance of liars,
an alibi required,
for there is much to be desired.”

His eyes peered to where mine were, and quickly covered the writing up with his flawless hands, as if it was outrageous language.

But then he looked down. He looked down and his eyes became red. His red eyes went back to me. Then back at the wall.



Holi Celebration

Mitanshu Basu, 9 years

St. Marks CofE Primary School

Holi is an Indian colourful festival where everyone spray colourful Abir (herbal coloured powder) and coloured water on each other. This festival marks unity, brotherhood, companionship and togetherness.

Like this!!! :)



It is a load of fun!!

I am an Indian, but as I live in the UK, I never got a chance to celebrate Holi properly ever in my life. However, this time in March 2021, we were in India for my grandma's funeral and then I got a chance to celebrate Holi at my nani's house. Although this was not a great occasion to celebrate Holi, I did not want to miss this chance at any cost. Therefore, as soon as we finished grandma's funeral at my grandpa's house, I headed to my nani's place with her.

My nani lives on her own. So, she was very very happy to have me for Holi and we were going to celebrate Holi together for the first time. So the adventure starts back at my Nanny's house after years.

We reached nani's House at night, ate dinner and I went to bed but I could not sleep as I was so excited to play Holi the next morning.

In the morning, around 10 O'clock, I went to the balcony to check what was going on in the street and saw that everyone had already started playing Holi in full-fledge. I asked my nani to get me coloured water which I can spray on everyone with my Pichkari which my mom specially bought for me for Holi. I went downstairs with a bucket full of water colour and sprayed everyone.

Everyone ran, then everybody chased me too. They covered my face with the green colour and poured loads of coloured water on me too. I was fully drenched in coloured water and abir that when I came back inside the house, my nani could not recognize me. It was so much fun! After that, I had a long shower with buckets of water to take the colour off my face but it did not come off fully. I still had some colour left on my face and body.



After that, I video called my parents and they were so happy for me. My mom asked me to spray some coloured water on my nani too. Then I did that and that was so much fun.

For lunch, my nani cooked loads of lovely traditional food like Puri, Chana Masala, Malpuas, Dahi Vada, Chatni, sweets and loads of other things, whose name I do not even remember, but it was fabulous. I overate and my favourite thing was Dahi vada.

In the evening, we went to my nani's friend's house. I also put loads of colour on everyone there and they coloured me too. I ate lots of food there it was so tasty. Then we came back to my nani's house and I was very-very tired after having so much fun and activities. I slept so well.

Next afternoon, my dad came to bring me back to my grandpa's house. I said good-bye to nani and thanked her a lot for such a lovely celebration of this wonderful festival Holi.

I will never ever forget this beautiful experience in my life.



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Silence

Renesa Rhine Barua, 15 years

St Anne's Catholic School



Silence.

She loved the silence. She basked in the normality of it; she smiled in the wake of it; she dwelled on the calmness of it. She had never felt more happy and serendipitous than in silence. Perhaps that's what drove her to insanity.

Silence.

Her whole life, she was hell bent over proving herself right while the entire world conspired against her. Her only source of comfort was sitting in the haze of a sunset at 7:30 pm every night with the arms of silence wrapped around her; suffocatingly cold and heavy especially with the added weight of loneliness caressing her hair. Her subconscious dictated her life's extremes and more times than not she found herself begging for forgiveness from her blackened and betrayed heart. Perhaps that's what drove her to insanity.

Silence.

One day or another the silence will leave her, leave her alone. She knows that but she doesn't understand why. Why should she be free of the one thing that gives her a wicked sense of freedom? The trap at home was far worse than any her mindless but harmless thoughts could create in her temporary home. Her jail cell. The overwhelming panic rose up and up till she choked up her necessary dinner onto her own lap. She sat in the mess she created for the next week, refusing to receive the help she so very clearly needed. Perhaps that's what drove her to insanity.

Silence.

She wasn't a danger to society anymore, that's what they happily replied with when she asked why she was being released from the tight hold of the law and government. Who made that decision? Whoever it was clearly wasn't aware of how crazy she really was. Surface level madness had passed years ago. The madness that inhibited her now wasn't erasable, it was engraved into her bones, her mind, her heart. They didn't see how a smirk curled itself onto her face when a dangerous thought crossed her conscience and they way her fists formed by themselves when the police told her there was someone there to see her, though that had not occurred for 7 years now; not since she screamed in her sister's face and laughed hysterically as they locked her up again, safe in the confines of her single cell. Perhaps that's what drove her to insanity.

Silence

The silence is her friend. Her only friend if she's being completely truthful. Her initial manic self confidence shone through her facade at the beginning of her stay in jail when she made friends with her cellmate; a fellow criminal with wise words and a big heart. But she left her; like everyone else she got bored and scared and left.

Silence.

Now she's leaving with nothing but herself and her freeing silence. The silence lets her feel normal, it provides comfort and shares secrets in hushed tones, The silence is hers and only hers. The silence will never tell her that she wasn't the victim. The silence believes her. The silence believes her story. Perhaps that's what drove her to insanity.

Silence



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Memories

Rhea Mukherjee, 13 years

(in conversation with my maternal grandmother, Bithika Ganguli nee Chaudhury)

Rhea's entry was one of the winners of the Family Leaves Competition jointly organised by ESAC and Unity 101



*My name is Bithika and I am from Ishwardi
A little village in Bangladesh, far away from the city.
The Padma river gurgling through
Surrounded by wilderness – a real beauty.*

*Made of clay and mud with a roof of tin, lay-
My childhood home spread out in wondrous display
Raised on a platform to keep out the monsoon river rage*

A secure refuge to keep jungle beasts at bay.

*I clearly remember the tiny motherless fawn
Dadu's jungle rescue - its eyes still shut,
I remember the sight of the enormous Ghani
Pressing out slippery oil from mustard and dried coconut.*

*Oh! And that long twisted cane my Baba shook so scarily
To get on his wrong side was rather a huge sin!
Old Dadu, on the other hand, doled out sweet white pills
The village folk adored him and his homeopathic medicine.*

*My belligerent Baba often yelled, "Oh Ma Bhuvaneshwari!"
Exclaiming in vain when we tried his patience.
My poor Ma tried to hide us from his rumbling wrath
Making us loudly recite our ABCs and one to tens.*

*I always wanted to be outside,
Climbing the many fruit trees that adorned our backyard
Swimming with my brothers and sisters in the village pond
With the fish and the snakes and the ladies washing up.*

Srimati Jugalbala Devi and Shri Khetrnath Choudhury

*My grandparents paved the way for their clan
Dida, soft muslin saree clad, strong-willed lady of steel -
Dadu, the pan-chewing, ever-supportive, indulgent gentleman.*

*The aroma of sweet Pithe and Payesh wafting through the air,
A piece of luscious Hilsa hitting the fry pan with flair
Melt-in-mouth rolled coconut Narus we didn't like to share
Those memories are of a flavourful childhood, so rare.*



*Did always made us little dolls from the river clay
We broke them often; she made us more
My precious cloth doll from the village fair locked up in a safe
To sometimes look, never touch - from far to adore.*

*We left it all behind when borders started burning,
Moved to a city, then a larger city, drawn by life's pull.
Krishnanagar. Calcutta. Bombay.....the wheels kept turning
.....Mumbai. Delhi. Kozikode. Kolkata. Nearly full circle.*

Those were the days, my memories timeless -

*The juicy fruits right off the tree when we were hungry; priceless!
The roar of the prowling tiger outside our home; priceless!
Ma's ghostly tales on the veranda in the dark; priceless!*

*A family held strong through love and loss
Few remain of that distant past
But when I look into my grand-daughter's eyes
I see a glimpse of that 'little me', sometimes.*

*My name is Bithika and I am from Ishwardi
A little village in Bangladesh, far away from the city.*



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The Peculiar holiday

Ridhit Barua, 10 years

Portswood Primary School



There was a strange family, called Rogers, who lived in America, they always planned something to enjoy their vacations but they didn't like any of them.

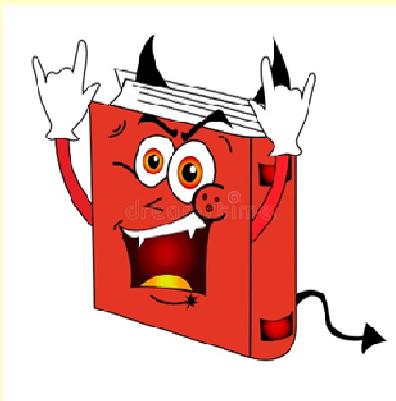
Few years back, they went to Sponge bob zoo, hoping to have a good time. But that time they hated it there!

Tigers roared at them ferociously, making the family's food fly away to a far-away place.

And for some unknown reasons, all the animal were let out of their cages. The eyes of these animal were dark purple with vicious fangs that stood on their jaws. All the visitors ran away, including the Rogers family but when they reached near to the door, it suddenly closed. The animals came rushing at them and then a tiger with vorpal teeth tried to gobble up the kid but failed miserably. What would they do?



The whole family managed to jump onto the cradled rocks, dive through the giraffe's neck and finally escaped the blood-curling zoo.



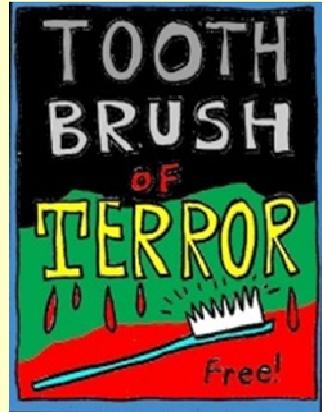
But what they didn't know was that the intensions of the animals were to play with them and be adored. Then they never ever came back to the zoo.

During 2018, when the Rogers family went to school, they faced a strange situation again. All the books and pencils unexpectedly turned to life and threatened them even more than the tiger. All the objects were looking at them with blood

dripping down the eyes that had been just sent into the circle of life. "RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!" The teacher screamed as every single kid ran with legs that usually be tired now scampering down the school hall. Nobody imagined a threat can be this big. BBC news told everyone that even if nobody goes to school the stationery had managed to escape from the school. Trembling in fear, the military took bazookas and all sorts of guns but they didn't even as much as make a dent in all the stationery in front of them. What would they do? The question we have to answer.

Its 2021, all the children of Rogers's family were too lazy to brush their teeth regularly.

"YOU HAVE MADE A GRAVE MISTAKE AND IT CANNOT BE UNDONE MUHAHAHA!" said the fuming tooth brush.



The next day, the kids were playing in the playground happily when they spotted a colossal tooth brush towering above them, "HOW DARE YOU DIDN'T BRUSH YOUR TEETH, NOW YOU WILL PAY!" said the toothbrush. The kids ran as the toothbrush followed them like a game of freeze tag but several hours later the kids legs got so tired that all the children collapsed. The next day they realized they were in the bathroom with their own toothbrush. Then the most relieving thing happened the massive toothbrush turned to a real toothbrush and then it flew towards the kids and brushed their teeth smoothly.

Later, they realized it was a nightmare which actually didn't happened.



"What a life! Watching tigers escaping from their cages and coming towards people, getting chased by books and pencils and now getting chased by toothbrush" Rogers' family imagined all these strange incidents while planning for their holidays. After the lockdown finish, will the Rogers family go for one more holiday or not!

'Bench'

Sam Ronak Chatterjee, 11 years

Marchwood Junior School

A long time ago, there was a bench; now this one was not your usual type of bench. It was a special one, because of its feelings.

From my birth till now, I saw many unusual people,
But one of them always stood out to me,
He was the one who handled me with care,
Painted me when I became rotten,
And most of all, he talked to me.

His name was Trevor,
Every day, he would come with his
sandwich and drink,
And sit down on me.
He would never be rude like so many
others,
He would handle me with care and
spread his wide arms around me.

But one day, it all stopped,
That was the day when he left me,
I always hated him for that.
He had just left me to fend for myself,
How was I meant to do that?

After a long time of him gone, I moved on,
But it was not the same,
I missed his love and his warmth,
It never occurred to me though,
To find out where he went,
I had just always thought he had left me.
But that was not the case.

Years later, I found out,
He had gone to war, a worldwide one,
It was those type of war which lasted an exceptionally long time,
Trevor was asked to go, and off he went
But he did not know what will be the consequences,
I found out he died fighting, a brave soldiers death

For years I hated him for leaving me behind,
But I did not know the whole story,
It was to save his country from terror, from an evil dictator
That day he became my hero,
And that is why I love him.



An (Imagined) insight of what it's like to be the star that we owe our existence to

Sayoni Pathak, 12 Years

Thornden School



Hello. I'm a low-mass main sequence star that was born approximately 4.6 billion years ago. Like other stars, I was formed because gravity pulled clouds of dust (nebulas) together. When this reached a sufficient mass, collapsing gas caused temperatures to become high enough to start hydrogen fusion, which is how I produce light and heat. The extra dust and rock formed planets, asteroids, etc. So perhaps it's not surprising that I take up 99.8% of all mass in the solar system. If I didn't exist, you wouldn't be reading this.

That's right, I am what humans call 'The Sun.'

Humanity's views of me in the past...and present

Throughout humanity's miniscule existence period, I've noticed that they always seem to worship me in some shape or form. For example, in Hindu and Greek mythology they worship a 'sun god' called "Suryadebota" (Hindus) and Helios (Greeks). Another example - "The prehistoric monument of Stonehenge has long been studied for its possible connections with ancient astronomy. The site is aligned in the direction of the sunrise of the summer solstice and the sunset of the winter solstice." – Wikipedia. Humans even have a 'Stonehenge Summer Solstice festival'. Don't ask how or why I know all of this.

Before the 16th century, humans believed that I rotated around your earth! But then an astronomer called Nicolaus Copernicus tried to prove them wrong with maths. In his model of the universe, the earth rotated around the stationary me. He called it the heliocentric model. Then, in the 1600s, Italian philosopher and astronomer called Galileo Galilei became very interested in this theory, too interested. Since religion at the time disagreed with the heliocentric model, Galileo was placed under house arrest because religious leaders at the time were afraid that the society would start believing in heliocentricity. Galileo and Copernicus were right about my solar system though. (Except for the part about

the sun being stationary. I am always moving, pulling the solar system with me. All celestial objects always revolve around the larger centre of gravity. This means that the entire solar system (you included!) is hurtling through space at 490,000 miles per hour right now. We are orbiting the super massive black hole at the centre of the Milky Way galaxy, the same way the earth is orbiting around me!)

Recently, humans have been in 'lockdowns' because of this virus that's managed to create a pandemic. From what I've been hearing, this virus is finally teaching 21st century humans some manners. They deserve it after what they're doing to Earth. If they keep this up, what happened to poor Venus will happen to Earth too. And now that they're stuck inside all the time, they are also finally starting to appreciate all the vitamin D that I give them! I've also heard that the virus is called COVID-19, which stands for corona virus disease. (The mutant COVID 19 started in December 2019). At first, I was slightly offended because my atmosphere is also called The Corona. But then, my atmosphere is a deadly temperature (hotter than my core in fact!), just like this deadly virus. But it's more likely that we look similar.

How astrophysicists (and everyone else) can see into the distant past

When you look at the sky on a clear day (I don't recommend that you look at me directly), it's easy to think that you are seeing the light as I release it. But remember, that's not exactly true. The light that I release at this second actually reaches your eye 8 minutes and 20 seconds later, because even though light is the fastest thing in the universe, it still takes light some time to cover the astronomical distances that it needs to (the distance that light travels in one year is called a light year). If this is applied to a larger scale, you will realize that when you humans stargaze on clear nights, you are *not* actually seeing them as they are now. Depending on how many light years away they are, you are seeing that number of years into the past. For example, if you looked through a telescope at a star that is 10 billion light years away from my solar system, that star might already be dead, but you can still see it shining. Why? Because it took the light that was released 10 billion years ago ten billion years into the past. So, we can see into our universe's past, just by looking at the sky. It's a cool concept...

Old age and death of stars

I went sort of off topic there. But it doesn't matter. Look, so, I don't know any more about the mysteries of the universe than Earth's scientists do, but I know the life cycle of a star (like your Earth scientists). I know how I will die. Since I am a low-mass star in my main sequence stage, I've still got 5.5 billion years until I finish fusing all my hydrogen and start burning helium – higher mass stars burn out faster. If you humans are still around and haven't gone extinct or destroyed earth or colonised the solar system and beyond by then, it will be a good time to leave. When stars finish their hydrogen, they will start fusing helium. This makes them expand, and humans call these stars red giants or hyper-giants. Lower-mass stars become red giants – this is my fate – and higher-mass stars become red super-giants. It should be noted that when I become a red giant, I will fill the orbits of Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars! The four inner planets will be toasted; only the outer planets will survive. Therefore, humans (or the dominant species at the time) probably shouldn't stick around on Earth in 5 billion years. You might ask, what happens next? High mass stars go from super giants to epic black holes or incredible neutron stars in stunning explosions called supernovas. But none of this will happen to me. I will become a planetary nebula (this is where a red giant's outer layers blow off to create a nebula). What is left behind is the unspectacular core. These are called white dwarfs. In billions of years, the only reminder of the star that had a stellar system with a planet which supported life will be an unspectacular, (unspectacular in my mind, at least) tiny, cold, dead, core of something long forgotten...

But it's ok. 90% of all stars in the universe will suffer with me.

Sports Day 2021



The Spectre of Light

Rhea Mukherjee, 13 years

The Mountbatten School



He walked towards her, his robes swishing behind him, strangely loud in the sudden hush that had descended around them.

A million scenarios whirled at breakneck speed through the girl's head.... none of them made sense to her. She stood where she was, gazing transfixed at her handsome father, someone she'd known all her life, someone who represented joy and strength, now someone who she

wondered if she knew at all.

He knelt by her, gently putting his arm around her.

"I wish you hadn't come", his warm yet anxious tones flowing like embers over her frayed nerves. "Not tonight when we're nearly at the end of our mission here".

Her heart sank. Was he involved with these hideous Soul-snatchers? Or worse, was he one of them? Memories of her father not being there for dinner on many occasions came back to her. Her mother's worried demeanour, her muted arguments with her father, her tears, the strain in the atmosphere, all came back to haunt her. She had never explained and somehow the girl had never asked. Her father was her hero, he could do no wrong in her eyes.

Trembling, she reached out and touched his face with her cold and clammy palm and whispered, "Are you one of them?"

Just then the door swung open yet again. Her father's face whipped towards the portal, grimacing in irritation.

Her uncle Harry burst in roughly, a young boy following behind him. It was he... the Spectre of Light! She would have known him anywhere...his pale scarred face, his dark beetle like eyes. He was the reason she had followed the soul-snatchers to this grim darkness...a wish to satisfy a gnawing curiosity and finally unravel the mystery that had always haunted her.

What was he doing here? Had he come to save her, and the lost souls trapped in this ominous prison? What would he do to her twisted father? And why was her uncle here?

"We've got to hurry. This opportunity will not come again in our lifetime...we've worked too hard, too long. Made too many sacrifices and we cannot go on like this forever. Come on now. No time to waste," her uncle charged urgently, "They are waiting for you".

"Sweetheart, I have no time to explain," her father stood up right away. Walking towards the door, nodded at the boy, the Spectre, who stood by the door, "Young Will here will help you in your noble work".

He walked out of the door with her uncle, leaving the girl with a million unanswered questions. Desperation and hope reflected on her face. She looked at the boy. He was around her age. Wearing the same robes that he had on earlier.

"He is our leader...our saviour," he stated simply, passing his cape onto her to wrap around her cold, shaking shoulders, "For centuries, our people have been prey to the soul-snatchers and for centuries people like your father have stood up to them in secrecy. Any open protest would lead to their families being targeted next. And for centuries, boys like me, have been the Sceptre of light... helping to keep the people safe. Come now.... let's release these souls in here...while the battle for survival rages outside."

The rest of the night passed in a blur for the girl. They worked rapidly together, running from cell to cell, joining souls to bodies while sounds of piercing intensity, cries of pain and triumph raged outside.

Once they had released all the unfortunate souls, she could not resist the urge to look outside. The sky was lit up in a kaleidoscope of colours and dust... humans and monsters battling it out in an epic battle that went on and on. Despite her pleas, Will did not let her go out and join them. Morning found them curled up in a corner of the room, fast asleep and exhausted.

She didn't hear the jubilant cries of victory, the wails of mourning. She didn't feel the warm hands that picked her up and held her close. She didn't remember the long walk back home. She was lost in sweet sleep.

Much later, when peace and light had returned to the little village, the whole story came out. Everyone sat in the village square, basking in the sun they had barely felt in their lifetimes. Generations ago, an evil eye had been cast over their village. Souls were stolen and sold to the devil by evil soul-snatching monsters. They had cast a shadow over the village and came out when it was dark to do their evil deed.

Some brave villagers had got together, inspired by a young boy who started lighting lamps, centuries ago. He had perished...a victim of those evil monsters. But with him had started a tradition of young boys from the village, who took on the mantle of the Spectre of Light till they grew older and bigger and more easily spotted. Meanwhile, a group of brave adults worked secretly and relentlessly to defeat this evil force. Many lives had been lost.

The girl's father had been a Spectre of Light as a young boy and he grew up to be their leader of this dangerous mission, which worried his wife a lot. The current spectre nearly lost his life when he was spotted by the monsters. Thankfully, all he got was a scar and had to be hidden away from people thereafter. Meanwhile, the search was on to find the soul-snatchers lair while they perfected the weapons needed to wipe out the evil. And last night had been the momentous hour of their mission...

The girl, hugging her father tightly, looked up at him and proudly declared to the whole village, "And I got in the way!"



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A cowboy chronicle
Shubhashukla Chakrabarty
The Westgate School

she came out of nowhere
with a lavish backstory nonetheless
manicured fingers and swanky skirts
a phony, but smoothed with finesse

the men hurried to her
deluded in her sweet-sounding intimacy
emptying their pockets in the faith of true love
that came in the form of banknotes, innocently

she warily neglected love
she would rather have a fancy car
so she crosses her fingers behind her back
and later laughs with a stolen cigar

Sports Day 2021



The Hidden Temple

Vihaan Bhadra, 10 years

St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Maidenhead

As The Explorer dismounted his weary elephant, he angled his pale fedora to shade his eyes from the Indian sun. As dawn started to cast a luminous shadow over the exotic country of India, The Explorer pulled out a gold tipped machete from his bag and began hacking away at the dense foliage. He had to meet someone but his insides were clawing at him, encouraging him to explore the dense undergrowth in front of him. He stroked his hand over the exotic flowers, stopping occasionally to smell the sweet perfume. Giant leaves covered the trees with a canopy of green. It was a verdant paradise. Unusually, the cacophony of screeching parrots was like music to his ears despite the fact it would be a normal person's nightmare. Silently, a soot black panther slunk through the rainforest stalking its next meal. The waters of the sacred Ganges River cut like a knife through the colourful country.

As he ventured further and further into the jungle, the vibrant colours began to fade and the shadows began to take control. The exotic chirps of the birds morphed into the howls of distressed wolves, the once enticing overgrowth now twisted into gnarled tangles of towering trees. The sweet perfume of exotic flowers now overpowered by the stench of rotting flesh. He was here -The black forest. In front of him was the path that he knew he had to take. The cave was a black hole -silent screaming mouth in the face of the rocky hill. The explorer crept in and the scene was changed in a swirl of sparkling light. He faltered. Once the explorer's eyes had adjusted to the light, he stepped forward, trying to avoid the enormous cobras that adorned the walls like poisonous decorations. He shuddered at the sound of their ominous hissing. Then he saw the man he was looking for, the cobra charmer. Bowing before his master, the weary traveller removed the satchel from his muscular shoulders and reluctantly handed it to the man towering above him. "I have the item you want," he whispered, careful not to catch his master's evil eye.

The cobra charmer took a few steps forward, snatching the bag from the explorer's shaking hand. Reaching his claw-like hand into the bag, the cobra charmer examined every nook and cranny of the golden artefact he carefully removed. The relic sparkled in the moonlight- unfortunately, not quite enough. "HOW DARE YOU BRING ME A FAKE, GUARDS TEACH THIS MAN A LESSON!" the cobra charmer hissed, making the walls of the cave around him shudder, almost like a rattlesnake warding off his prey. Before he had a chance to escape, ten hungry cobras had dropped from their hiding place on the ceiling

above and encircled him, pinning him to the wall of the cave.

“If you do not find the REAL artefact before the week draws to a close, I shall send my most poisonous henchmen- the king cobras-after you. They will find you and they WILL kill you,” the cobra charmer spat. Then he made a strangled hissing sound and the snakes returned to their hiding space, leaving the explorer alone with his thoughts.

The journey was long and monotonous: it was three whole days before he found it. Hidden behind thick tangled vines was the mouth of a low cave, only visible to the trained eye. The explorer slipped in. Once he had reached the end of the dark gloomy tunnel of the entrance of the lost temple, he saw the most wondrous sight his eyes could see. The walls were gold glimmering like the sun. Piles of gems were scattered across the room, sparkling like the Kohinoor. Three life-like tigers seemed to prowl across the room, stalking the explorer, this could last anyone’s lifetime worth of money. There it was, the golden tiger, covered with gems. The explorer posed himself in a careful way before snatching the ancient relic. He smiled to himself in a smug way, he thought he had outsmarted the Indians. However he had celebrated too soon, just before he turned around he saw the pedestal sink into the ground like magic. Realising what would happen next; he turned and ran just as a humongous boulder came rolling towards him. Rushing to the exit the corridor he managed to doge just in time as arrows came shooting out of the wall. He leapt through the exit as it burst into flames, he was safe for now.

The explorer set out again on the long and monotonous journey, venturing back into the black overgrowth. When he got back to the lair in the face of the cliff he handed over a fake he had cunningly crafted out of the gold and diamonds he had managed to snatch in the cave before the boulder came rushing at him, it shone like the real thing, immediately the cobra charmer’s anger dropped and everything was normal again. As the explorer walked back into the distance he pulled out the real thing, his forevermore.

We Will Remember You

By Vivaan Bhadra, 8 years

St Luke's CoE Primary School, Maidenhead

I am sorry for your loss, but
you were brave as a Panther!
We will remember you,
as you lay in Flanders Fields!
We will remember you,
when you saved us and the country!
We will remember you when you
fought for us in the war!
We will remember you
fought and died in the war!
We will remember you
when you lived in the trenches as cold as Antarctica!
Thank you for everything you did,
We will remember you forever!
(Dedicated to all War Heros!)

By Vivaan Bhadra





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নয়ন আমার যাকনা ধুয়ে অশ্রুধারে

Abanti Mukhopadhyay

ধুপধূনে ধোঁয়ার মধ্যে চোখের জল গাল বেয়ে নেমে বুক ভিজে যাচ্ছে। এইসময় চোখটা বুজে রাখাই কি ভালো? কিন্তু তাহলে মায়ের মুখটা দেখবো কী করে? এই আরতির স্বর্গীয় মুহূর্তের জন্যই তো সারাবছরের অপেক্ষা। মায়ের চোখে দৃষ্টি নিবন্ধ করে ডুবে গেলাম বহুবছর আগের এক মুহূর্তে, গঙ্গারধারে এক পিতা ও কন্যার কথোপকথনে।

সেই দিনটাও ছিলো আজকের মতোই আর এক অষ্টমী তিথি, গঙ্গার রূপালী জল তার নিজের ছন্দে বয়ে চলেছে, নোকোগুলিও সেই ছন্দে দুলে দুলে চলেছে, আকাশে সাদা মেঘের ভেলা, বাতাসে কেমন একটা স্নিগ্ধতা। পূজো, গঙ্গারধার তার নিজের একটা মায়্যা আছে, কিন্তু তার পরেও আরও তাঁপশ্রময় কারণ পিতা ও কন্যার এই কথোপকথন শুধুই মামুলি, নগণ্য, গতানুগতিক কথা নয়, এর মধ্যে আছে এক গভীর বার্তা, জীবনকে গ্রহণ করার একটি দর্শন। আমি মন দিয়ে ছোটো ছোটো ডেউগুলো লক্ষ্য করছিলাম, ভাবছিলাম ডেউ -এর নিচের অতল গভীরতার কথা। বাবাকেও দেখলাম তাকিয়ে আছেন ওপারের দিকে- বাবাকে সবাই স্থিতধী বলেন, হয়তো ওনার অসাধারণ আবেগ নিয়ন্ত্রণ-এর কারণে। শৈশবকাল দেখছি ওনার সদর্খক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী, সকলস্বরের মানুষের প্রতি প্রশংসাসূচক উক্তি; যা আমি অন্য মানুষের আচরণে খুঁজে পেতামনা। তাই, আমি উপবলকি করতে পারতাম যে আমি একজন ভাগ্যবান ও গর্বিত কন্যা। ওনার যুক্তিবোধ আমাকে প্রবল প্রভাবিত করে, ওনার কথা আমি মন দিয়ে শুনে বোঝার চেষ্টা করি। গঙ্গার ভরা সৌন্দর্যে মুগ্ধ আমি, চিন্তা করছিলাম গঙ্গার উঁস, তার বহমানতা, আর সর্বশেষে তার মহাসাগরে মিশে যাওয়া; এওতো জীবনের আর এক রূপ, অনুরূপ। আজ অষ্টমী, যে মা অপরিসীম আবেগ দিয়ে আজ পূজিত হচ্ছেন আর দুদিনের মধ্যে তিনি মিশে যাবেন এই জলে, মাটি মিলিয়ে যাবে মাটিতে আর পরে থাকবে শুধু কাঠামো। স্বতন্ত্র অস্তিত্ব-এর স্বতন্ত্র দৃষ্টিভঙ্গী, নৈতিকতাবোধ, ন্যায়পরায়ণতা, ধার্মিকতা ও জিতেন্দ্রিতা।

আমি জানি স্থিতধী এই মানুষটির ব্যাখ্যা কি হতে পারে স্বতন্ত্র অস্তিত্ব নিয়ে, তবুও বললাম, আমায় আজ **individual existence** নিয়ে কিছু বলো, গঙ্গার গভীর জলের দিকে তাকিয়েই উনি বললেন 'আত্মজ্ঞান', নিজেকে বুঝতে শেখো। **Know the ultimate reality, the eternal truth**, জ্ঞান ও সত্যতাই তোমার **perception** ও **assumption**কে ঠিক পথে চালিত করবে। বেদান্ত দর্শন-এসত্য, জ্ঞান ও অন্তঃস্থিত্যে কিছু ভাষাভাষা পড়াশোনা ছিল আমার, বাবার উচ্চারিত শব্দগুলি আমায় নাড়া দিয়ে গেল, ওনার সংক্ষিপ্ত কিন্তু নিগূঢ় বক্তব্যের মধ্যে অনেক কিছু অনুবিদ্ধ; যা অনুসরণ করতে হলে দরকার অনেক পড়াশোনা এবং তাঁর মূল্যায়ন, দরকার আবেগের নিয়ন্ত্রণ এবং সদর্খক চিন্তন। এপথ সহজ নয়, অনায়াসে সেই সত্যকে ছোঁয়া যায়না।

ছোঁয়া যায় সেই পিতাপুত্রীর কথোপকথন এর সেই মুহূর্তকে, যা মনের মনিকোঠায় সবসময় অপরিপ্লবন। আজ পিতা সেই পরমরহস্য- এর সঙ্গে মিলে গেছেন, কন্যাটি আর কোনোদিন ছুঁতে পারবেনা তাঁকে, কিন্তু ওই নিগূঢ় জীবন দর্শনকে অনুসরণ করতে পারবে। প্রতিটি শারদীয় অষ্টমী তিথিতে একটু একটু করে পরতে পরতে কন্যাটির হয় উত্তরণ। এই আরতির স্বর্গীয় মুহূর্তে মনে হলো, আবার যেন সেই সেই গঙ্গাতীরে, স্নিগ্ধ স্নেহময়, মায়্যা জড়ালো দিনটিতে দুটি মানুষের জীবনদর্শন প্রতিফলিত হচ্ছে রূপালি জলের ওপর দর্শনের মতো।



মনে পরায় ইতিহাস বই র রাসোনিং কথা ডালিয়া পাঠক,

দিনটা ২০২০ সালের March এর ১৬/১৭ তারিখ হবে, অদ্ভুত এক নতুন অভিজ্ঞতার সন্মুখীন হলাম, মেয়ে কে নিয়েস্কুল থেকে ফেরার পথে দোকানে ঢুকে দেখলাম সবাই লাইনে, আমরা ও সামিল হলাম! অনেক জিনিস কেনার অনুমতি নেই, যা রাসোনিং এর কথাটা সহজেই মনে করিয়ে দিয়েছিল। কিছুদিন পরেই (২০ শে March) ইংল্যান্ডসরকার lockdown ঘোষণা করলেন।

শুরু হলো এক নতুন জীবন। খাওয়ার আর ওষুধ মজুত করাটাই তখন মূললক্ষ্য ছিল। মহামারীর কথা বই এ পরে ছিলাম, বাবা, মা এর কাছে শুনছি কিন্তু নিজের চোখে দেখবো তা কল্পনা ওকরিনি। কর্ম জীবনের ব্যস্ততা থাকলে ও, দেশ বিদেশের খবর আমরা তো সকলেই রাখি, তাই সুদূর চিন দেশে করোনাভাইরাসের দৌরাত্যের খবরও কানে এসেছিল এক শীতের সকালে। মিডিয়ায় দৌলতে করোনা ভাইরাসের সব খবরই পাচ্ছিলাম, কিন্তু ভাবতে পারিনি যে সুদূর এশিয়া থেকে তা ইউরোপ এ হানা দেবে এবং ইংল্যান্ড ও বাটবে নাকরোনার খাবা থেকে। শুরুতে একটু অসুবিধা হলেও ধাতস্ত হয়ে গিয়েছিলাম 'লকডাউন' জীবনে। একটা হলিডে ফিলিং, ব্যস্ততার খানিকঅবসান। মেয়ের শুল্লু হয়েছিল অনলাইন পড়া। আমার ও কাজ চলছিল ঘরে বসে। লকডাউন র বিকেলে একটুরজন্য খোলা হাওয়ায় ভ্রমন বা সাইকেল করা, ঘরবন্দী অবস্থা থেকে মুক্তি দিত। বৈকালিক ভ্রমন এর সাথে যোগহয়েছিল বৈকালিক অনলাইন আড্ডা। রোজ ই মা, বাবা, ভাই, আল্মীয় পরিজন বা বন্ধু বান্ধবীদের সাথে চলতোখবরের আদান প্রদান, যা এখন ও বহাল আছে। শুধু কি online আড্ডা, zoom meeting বা online programme ঘরে থেকেই করছি।, “ পৃথিবী টা তো ছোটো হয়ে বোকা বাস্তব তে বন্দী ছিল “ এখন আরও ছোট হয়ে মূর্তোফোন(Mobile) আর laptop এ বন্দী হয়ে গেছে।

আমাদের Hampshire Puja and Cultural

Association র উদ্যোগে পূজা ও সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান সবই ঘরে বসেইউপভোগ করেছি। সবার সাথে দেখা, ক খাবার্তা হয়েছে laptop এর ওই একটা ছোটো জানালা (Window) রমাধ্যমে।

করোনার First wave এর পরে শুনতে পেলাম Second wave ও Third

wave আসছে, তা যে কোনো কোনো দেশেএতটা মারাত্মক আকার ধারণ করবে সেটা মনে হয় আমরা কল্পনা ও করিনি! এখন আমরা New normal এঅভ্যস্ত। “Mask”, “Sanitizer”, “hand wash “ জীবনের নিত্য সঙ্গী হয়ে গেছে। সব কিছু নিয়মে চললেও, একটাউঁকল্টা সব সময়ই ছিল, এখন ও আছে। আমার অনেক পরিচিত ই এখানের ন্যাশনাল হেলথ সার্ভিসে (NHS) কাজ করেন এবং সাধ্য মতন চেষ্টা করছেন, এই মারন রোগ থেকে সবাইকে উদ্ধার করতে। শুধুমাত্র স্বাস্থ্যকর্মীরাইনন, পুলিশ এবং ‘কি ওয়াকার্স’ রাও জীবনের বাজি রেখে কাজ করছেন। তাই গত বছর ২০২০ সালে প্রতিবৃহস্পতিবার রাত ৮ টার সময় এই দেশের নাগরিকরা হাততালি দিয়ে বা শব্দবাজি জ্বালিয়ে তাঁদেরসম্মানজানাতেন। যেটা এখন কা জের জায়গাতে “ Thank you gift “ এ পরিণত হয়েছে। staff room এ “ thank you card “ আর হরেক রকম ফল, বিস্কুট এবং কেকের সমারহ দেখলে মন্দ লাগে না।

এখনও পর্যন্ত ইউকেতে করোনা আক্রান্ত এর সংখ্যা ৫০,০০, ০০০ মতো, সুস্থ হয়েছেন অনেকে যদিও জানি না ক বেশে হবে এই সংখ্যা তত্ত্ব এর হিসেব, আশা করছি খুব শীঘ্রই আমরা জয় করতে পারবো এই অতিমারী। এর আগেওপৃথিবী অনেক Pandemic বা অতিমারী জয় করেছে, মানব সভ্যতা ঐক্যবদ্ধ ভাবে এই লড়াইটাও নিশ্চয়ই জয়করবে। আবার একদিন একটা সুন্দর সকাল হবে।

Bhaifota Kabita Majumdar



এই শতাব্দীতে দাঁড়িয়ে ,পিছন ফিরে তাকালে দেখতে পাই , আমাদের ছোটবেলার দিনগুলো সত্যি খুব সুন্দর ছিল। প্রতিটা বাড়িতেই অনেক কজন ভাই বোন হেসে খেলে বড় হত । প্রাচুর্য ছিল না কিন্তু অভাব ও ছিল না । বাড়ির একজন সদস্যের রোজগারে সবাই খেয়ে পড়ে হাসি, আনন্দে, সুখে শান্তিতে থাকতো ।

আমাদের কোন ভাই নেই বলে আমরা চার বোন খুব মনোকাঙ্ক্ষিত ভুগতাম। বিশেষ করে ভাইফোঁটার দিন । মা, কাকিমা, পিসিমা, ঠাকুমা সবাই সবার ভাইদের ফোঁটা দিতেন। আমরা চার বোন চুপচাপ বসে পুরো অনুষ্ঠান টা দু চোখ ভরে দেখতাম । এক সময় দিদি জামায় চোখ মুছে বলতেন ভাই থাকলে কি মজা হয় ভাই না ?

সবথেকে খারাপ লাগতো যখন কারো বাড়ি গেলে চার বোন শুলেও জিজ্ঞেস করতেন ভাই নেই? আমরা শুকনো মুখে অপরাধীর মত মাথা নিচু করে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকতাম । খুব দুঃখ হতো কারণ আমরা জানতাম আমাদের দাদা ছিলেন ! আমাদের জন্মের আগেই বছর পাঁচেকের দাদা মায়ের কোল খালি করে চলে গেছেন । সেই থেকে মা কোনদিন রঙিন শাড়ি পড়েন নি।

বাবা বলতেন, আমার মেয়েরাই আমার লক্ষী। খানার বড়বাবু ছিলেন বলে বাবার প্রচন্ড কাজের চাপ ।নাওয়া-খাওয়ার

সময়ছিলনা। কিছুদিন পরপরই খানার কাজে বাড়ি ঘর ছেড়ে এ দিক সে দিক চলে যেতে হতো। এসবের মধ্যেও আমাদের পড়াশুনা শরীর-স্বাস্থ্য ও চরিত্র গঠনের দিকে তাঁর সজাগ দৃষ্টি ছিল। বাড়ি থাকলে দুপুরে খাওয়া-দাওয়ার পর আমাদের কাছে ডেকে নিতেন। আমরা তাঁর পা টিপে দিতাম, সেই সাথে ঘরের যাবতীয় জিনিসের ইংরেজি শেখানো হতো । এমনি করে খেতে বসেও চলতো পড়াশোনা। বিকেল হলেই, মা আমাদের পরিষ্কার-পরিচ্ছন্ন করে মুখে আফগান স্নো মাখিয়ে , পন্ডস পাউডারবুলিয়ে ,চোখে কাজল দিয়ে,কপালে কুমকুমের ছোট্ট টিপ পরিবে,লম্বা চুল রঙিন ফিতে দিয়ে দুই বেনী করে মাথার উপর বেড়া বেনি বেঁধে দিতেন।

বাবা আমাদের জন্য খান ধরে জামার কাপড় কিনে আনতেন । মা নিজের হাতে সেলাই করে দিতেন সবাই একই রকম ফুল ফুল ছাপ হাটুর নীচ পর্যন্ত লম্বা সুতির জামা পড়ে খেলতে যেতাম। সবার বাড়িতেই বোনদের জামা একই রকম । নাম গুলোও বেশ মিলিয়ে রাখা হতো। চামেলী, বেলী , দিপালী, এমিলি, শিউলি। ঠাকুমা ও আমাদের সবার নামের শেষ অক্ষর , তা রেখেছেন !

তখন পুলিশ রেশন গাওয়া ঘি দেওয়া হতো ! কি সুন্দর গন্ধ । প্লেট ভর্তি ভর্তি ছোট্ট ছোট্ট ফুলকো লুচি, নিমকি চিনি দিয়ে খেতে দিতেন ঠাকুমা ।কখনো কখনো বাড়িতে বানানো ক্ষীরের সন্দেশ ও থাকতো।

অনেকদিন পর সেদিন বিকেলে আমরা সমবয়সীরা মিলে স্কুলের মাঠে একাদোকা, এলাটিং বেলাটিং শৈল , উপেনটিবাইস্কোপ খেলা , শেষ করে চু কিত কিত খেলছিলাম ! এমন সময় আমাদের

বাড়ির সর্বশৃঙ্খনের সঙ্গী শ্যামলদা, হস্তদন্ত হয়ে এসে আমাদের তাড়াতাড়ি বাড়ি যেতে বলে, হন হন করে হেঁটে চলে গেলেন। প্রায় প্রতিদিনই খেলার সময় শ্যামলদা এসে কোন না কোন ফরমান জারি করে খেলা পন্দ করেন। রাগ হলেও তাঁর কথা অমান্য করার ধৃষ্টতা ছিলনা। চুপচাপ গোমরামুখে বাড়ির পথ ধরলাম।

বাড়ির কাছে আসতেই ঝাঁকে ঝাঁকে উলুধ্বনি শব্দ ধ্বনি শুনতে পাচ্ছিলাম। আমরা শৌঁছতেই ঠাকুমা সারা মুখে খুশির ঝলকছড়িয়ে কাছে এসে বললেন। পাঁচবার উলু দিয়েছি কেন জানো? তোমাদের ভাই হয়েছে ভাই। বোন হলে তিনবার। যাওবাবাকে সু খবরটা দিয়ে এসো। আমরা তো বিস্ময়গ্রহ হতবাক হয়ে গেছি। তারপরই খুশিতে ডগোমগো হয়ে, শূন্যে দু হাত তুলে, কি মজা, কি মজা বলে, তিড়িং বিড়িং করে লাফাতে লাগলাম!

ভাই কোথায় জানতে চাইলে ঠাকুমা ছাগলের ঘর টা দেখিয়ে দিলেন। এটা আমার একদম মনঃপুত হলো না! বললাম কেন ঠাকুমা? ঠাকুমা হেসে বললেন কেন আবার ওটা কেই তো আঁতুড়ঘর করেছে।

আজও মনে আছে ভাই এর জন্মের খবর পেয়ে আনন্দে আন্মহার বাবা চারটে সিঁড়ি লাফিয়ে টপকে থানা থেকে এক ছুটেবাড়ি এসেছিলেন।

মা ঠাকুমার আদর যত্নে ভাই তরতর করে বড় হতে লাগল। দেখতেও ভারী সুন্দর হয়েছে। ফর্সা রং! মাথাভর্তি কোকডানোচুল! লাল টুকটুকে ঠোঁট!

আমাদের খুশির সীমা নেই। এবার আমরা ভাই ফোঁটা দেবো।

সারাক্ষণ ভাইকে বলতাম এবার তোমাকে ফোঁটা দেব কি মজা হবে। ভাই কি বুঝত জানিনা। সে ঠাকুমা কে জড়িয়ে ধরে শুধুই কাঁদত। বলত না না না!

অবশেষে এলো বহু প্রতীক্ষিত বহু আকাঙ্ক্ষিত সেই শুভ দিন। ঠাকুমার নির্দেশ মত সাত সকালে স্নান করে শিশির দিয়ে সাদা চন্দন বেটে পিতলের খালায় ধান দুর্বা সাজিয়ে প্রদীপ জ্বালালাম। দিদি ভাইকে স্নান করিয়ে নতুন পোশাক পরিয়েআসনে বসিয়ে দিল।

ভাই তো কেঁদেই চলেছে। একেক করে বাঁ হাতের করে আপুল দিয়ে ভাইয়ের কপালে চন্দনের ফোঁটা দিতে দিতে তিনবার জোরে জোরে উচ্চারণ করলাম, ভাইয়ের কপালে দিলাম ফোঁটা যম দুয়ারে পড়লো কাঁটা! মাথায় ধানদুর্বা দিয়ে প্রাণ ভরে আশীর্বাদ করলাম।

প্রদীপের ওম ছুঁইয়ে ইস্ট দেবতা কে স্মরণ করলাম। দিদি রূপোর বাটিতে এক বাটিপায়েস আর রূপোর গ্লাসে জল এনে ভাইয়ের সামনে রাখতেই, কাল্লা খামিয়ে পায়েস খেতে শুরু করে দিয়েছিল ভাই। খুশিহয়ে অপলক চেয়ে রইলাম আমরা!

ছোট্ট হাতে এক বাটি পায়েস খুব সুন্দর করে চেটেপুটে খেয়ে নিয়ে ছিল ভাই।

আমাদের জীবনের আনন্দঘন ঐতিহাসিক মুহূর্তটি ক্যামেরাবন্দি হয়নি তবে আমাদের মনের ক্যামেরায় দিনটি, চিরবন্দি হয়ে আছে!

এ ঘটনার পর থেকে ভাই রোজ একবার করে ফোঁটা দেবার জন্য বায়না করতো। বারে বারে জিজ্ঞেস করত। আবার কবে ভাইফোঁটা হবে? পায়েস খাব!

এরপর আমরা আরো ভাই বোন পেয়েছি! ছ বোন দু ভাই মিলেমিশে বড় হতে লাগলাম! কোনদিন ঝগড়াঝাঁটি হয়নি!

ওদিকে পূর্ববঙ্গে আমাদের কাকা হঠাৎ মারা গেলেন! বাবার কথা মত কাকিমা ছয় সন্তান নিয়ে পাকা পাকিভাবে আমাদের এখানে চলে এলেন!

সে সময় আমাদের পরিবারকে অনেকটাই আর্থিক সংকটের মধ্যে দিয়ে দিন কাটাতে হয়েছে। একটা ডিম চার টুকরো করেখাওয়া! এক বেলা ভাত খেয়ে দিন কেটেছে! তবুও আমরা খুশি ছিলাম।

মায়ের মুখে কোনদিন কোন অভাব-অভিযোগশুনিনি!

আমাদের ভাইরা এখন দলে ভারী হয়েছে। আমরা মনের আনন্দে ফোঁটা দিতে লাগলাম!

প্রকৃতির নিয়মে সবাই বড় হয়ে উঠল। বিয়ে থা হল! আমরা বাপের বাড়ি এসে ভাইদের ফোঁটা দিতাম। প্রত্যেকের স্বশুরবাড়ির মন্ত্র উচ্চস্বরে উচ্চারণে হাসি আনন্দে ভাইফোঁটা পর্ব টি সাঙ্গ হত !
হঠাৎ বাড়িতে একটা দুর্ঘটনা ঘটলো ! উচ্চ মাধ্যমিক পরীক্ষার্থী খুড়তুতো ভাই পায়ে বরফের কাঠিফু টে ধনুস্টংকার হয়ে গেল ! অনেক চেষ্টা করেও বাঁচান গেল না ! এই ঘটনায় বাড়িতে শোকের ছায়া নামে। মা কাকিমার ভাইফোঁটা বন্ধ হয়ে গেল। কারণ সেই মুহূর্তেই কোন না কোন অঘটন ঘটতে লাগলো ! শেষমেশ ভয় পেয়ে ফোঁটা দেওয়াই বন্ধ করে দিলে।

বিবাহিত বোনেরা আর পিসিমা অত্যন্ত নির্ভর সঙ্গে অনুষ্ঠান টি চালিয়ে যেতে লাগলাম ! এরপর থেকে স্বশুরবাড়িতে ভাইদের নিমন্ত্রণ করে অনুষ্ঠানটি পালন করা হত ! সেবার আমি আমার আরেক খুড়তুতো ভাই কে নিয়ে বাপের বাড়ি থেকে শশুর বাড়ি এলাম । শশুড়ি মা জোর করে ওকে কদিন রাখলেন। পিঠে পায়ের থেকে শুরু করে ও যা যা খেতে ভালোবাসে সব বানিয়ে খাওয়ালাম। আমার ওকে যেতেদিতে কেন যেন খুব কষ্ট হচ্ছিল । আমার ছলছল চোখের দিকে তাকিয়ে ও বলেছিল আবার আসব তো । এবার ফোঁটা নিতে সন্ধ্যা সন্ধ্যা চলে আসব তুই দেখে নিস । আমাকে কথা দিয়ে চলে গেল সে।

ভাইফোঁটার দিন খুশি মনে ওর পছন্দের খাবারগুলো বানাচ্ছিলাম। মনে হল রান্নাঘরের দরজায় এসে ও আমায় ডাকলো, মেজাদি ? চকিতে পিছন ফিরে তাকালাম কিন্তু ও তো নেই ! বিশ্বাস হচ্ছিল না। প্রতিটা ঘরে খুজলাম। মনটা কেমন খচখচ করতলাগলো। সারাদিন উপোস করে ঘর বার করতে লাগলাম । কেউ এলোনা । আমার শশুর শশুড়ি ও চিন্তায় পড়েগেলেন। তখন আমাদের এলাকায় দূরভাষ ছিলনা। স্বশুরমশাই পরদিনই খবর জানতে রওনা হলেন। খবরটা শুনে সবাই স্তব্ধ হয়ে গেছিল। বুকফাটা আর্তনাদ করে মাটিতে লুটিয়ে পড়লাম আমি । সেদিন শেষ রাতে ও গলায় দড়ি দিয়ে আত্মঘাতী হয়েছিল ! কেন যে আমার ১৮ বছরের মিষ্টি স্বভাবের কর্মঠ ভাইটা এই করুন পরিণতি বেছে নিয়েছিল। তা আজও অজানা রয়েগেছে । আজও ভাই ফোঁটা এলে ওর জন্য মন টা হু হু করে ।

~~~~~সমাপন~~~~~



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# The Cycle of Time

## Kajari Sinha

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### ***'Now I am become Death, the destroyer of worlds'***

Feels a bit relevant isn't it especially during the heights of the corona crisis, gripping the world by its throat and asphyxiating the essence of freedom from life. Nobody can be sure what exactly Oppenheimer thought when he quoted this from Bhagavad Gita while witnessing the detonation of a nuclear bomb. Though this infamous quote has come to define Robert Oppenheimer, but the meaning is much more convoluted than we realize.

I feel it defines the ***cycle of time***.

Time for every living existence when in nascent stage gives immense hope, aspirations and the drive to get to the next stage of life. If we consider human beings; babies are the epitome of dreams, dreams unfulfilled, dreams unlimited. Time progresses to childhood when we start realizing we are in a race. The race of being disciplined, race of being the favorite child of the parents, teachers; race of having more friends; race of being liked by peers.

As we proceed towards teenage, we are a bit adamant and unruly about the values of life, not really interested in elder's opinions and have a great feeling that we can revolutionize the way the world thinks. Time like Krishna smiles because time knows you must allow the seed to grow to its full potential before the inevitable death aka end happens.

As time rows us to the turbulent waters of adulthood we have become conscious of our responsibilities in some proportions. In the meantime, we learn to enjoy the newfound freedom. Freedom of thoughts, freedom of making folly but eventually swallowing the bitter pill as there is nobody to blame. Freedom of having one's own opinion and making a decision based on it. Freedom of having one's own earning and relishing the love of happy parents. In the same tempo we learn how to hide our true feelings, how to be a professional at work, how to throw all our concerns about future in a back bench and enjoy the present.

Except a few old souls I feel "the youth" exudes a never-ending fountain of time. It feels like time has come to a standstill and it will forever revolve around us. But "Time" the Supreme Leader knows what has started must go on till the end destroys it to give it a new form, new hope.

Next comes the phase of feeling matured (not entirely by us, mostly by family and friends) enough to take on the mundane path of having a blissful family.

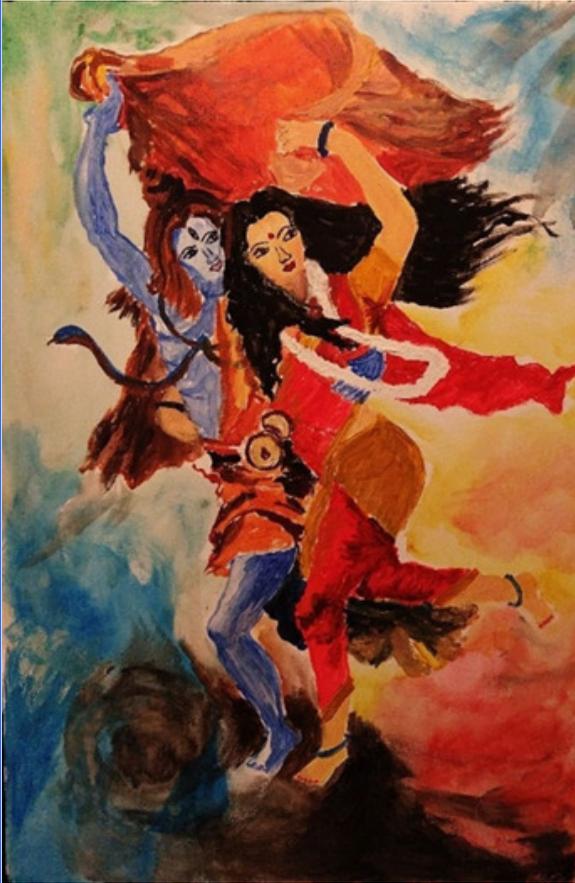
Now this is like catching a flight for a school reunion, you intentionally or unintentionally miss a few and there you are, a lost soul, trying to fathom the benefits of not being in the rat race of life. Let us for the time being concentrate on the jubilant and enthusiastic souls who have whole heartedly immersed themselves in building new timeline of life. During this endeavor most of them has become oblivious of their journey towards the end except when trivial health

issues propping up here and there reminds them the clock is ticking. Time has its own way of teaching us nothing and nobody is indispensable in life. Nevertheless as we nonchalantly gallop towards a rewarding end of career goal; grudgingly bearing the loss of lives of our dear ones ;the loss of company of our busy offspring's; loss of synchronous thoughts of our partner , siblings, friends and inner circle per se; by now the best teaching of Time – “Patience” is what we factually perceive.

Old age is trying for the majority of us. It feels as if the door is ajar, familiar faces waiting outside for you to join their company, but the undeniable thirst of life on the other side keeps you going. Although euthanasia according to me should be allowed for torturous physical or mental pain sufferers, a great proportion of us has a indubitable desire of being immortal and being a God. Time intervenes. Just like the after party gloom that fills us when the guests leave, the inevitable

departure is the greatest truth of life, yet painful for the ones we leave behind.

Everything has eventually to succumb to “The Time”. Time ages the matter. With age matters crumble, disassemble. The ingredients must be released to gain a new shape, novel form. This universe and the rest of the ones (inside a super universe) in this vast astral world are made of different arrangement of atoms. It is bit surreal to imagine that everything after a period of time destructs and again rises from the ashes to construct new forms of life.



## Teene (3) Konya

Priyanka Mukherjee Turnbull

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### Nostalgic Perfection

Nostalgia is a powerful emotion  
It adds colour to black and white  
manuscripts  
The faded words on yellow sheets  
Look deeper, darker and more alive  
Filling the pages fast  
With a myriad of prismatic memories...  
Memories larger than life...  
These memories lay resting  
In the same places we bury them  
Unscathed by the present  
Dead to the future  
But alive in the pretentious crevices of our  
minds....  
When nostalgia brings you to mind  
The moments we intersected  
Will always be perfect  
Something comforting about the fact  
In nostalgia you and I will always be perfect  
For as we took shelter at the familiar bus  
stop  
In the pouring rain and kissed goodbye  
I was content.  
Life was perfect  
“Mone pore ki bondhu”

Blue skies and green fields  
I am thinking of the older years  
Poila Baisakh comes along  
Baisakhi adorned in her rituals  
With sweetened thoughts and warm smiles  
Rosogollahs, mango sandesh, chaler payesh  
I am trying not to drool  
As we ventured into endless “Addas”  
Idle ‘cultural’ chatter on ways to change the  
world  
Broken roads, Kolkata monsoons  
“Hariken” and “Hathpakha” on sultry  
summer days  
Evening chats with my grandparents  
Hugging the “Pashbalish” tight  
Spiced tea, “Thakumar Jhooli, “Abol-  
Tabol”

Sharpen the dull ache in my heart  
Family and friends as my security blanket  
In an indigenous, chaotic but loving  
landscape  
Such priceless moments on a sunny  
balcony  
How my soul yearns for it all  
“Borodin” frenzy at Park Street, Camac,  
Russell Street  
Culminating at timeless Peter Cat, Kwaity,  
Mocambo: the cuisine spins a spell  
Not far from the old magic of New Market  
The excited giggles of school girls  
At Globe, Menoka, New Empire  
Hawker’s corner, Gariahat: now we are  
really spoilt for choice  
Durga Pujo, Ma aasche  
“Agomone” and “Bishorejone”  
An invariable flute replaying at Kumartuli  
Hails unprecedented excitement everytime  
Kali ghat, Dakhineshwar, Belur Math  
The images pause in my mind’s eye  
Minute details of holidays to Siliuri,  
Darjeeling  
Mone pore na tai na bondhu? I know it’s  
been a while.

Big dreams as our Kolhapuri chappals  
Slapped the narrow lanes  
Eden ye cricket, Mohan Bagan not far  
behind  
A madness unparalleled to none  
Madhyamik or ICSC-stern tuition hours  
Hard-earned College and University  
degrees  
Wreathed like garlands around our necks  
Hawkers, beggars, dogs and pedestrians  
All in a sweat of humanity swirl  
But if I had the chance to relive those days  
I would take it and run for good  
Back to who I was before life took over  
For nostalgia is what I feel  
It’s vibrant and it is very real  
My eyes grew dim  
And I could no more gaze

A wave of longing through my body swept  
Dewy dawn and a mystical twilight  
In benediction over divine temple bells  
Our Dreams were young  
Our future full of mythical retakes  
And, hungry for the old familiar ways  
Poila Baisakh fervour running deep  
through my veins  
As I bowed my head with misty eyes  
You held out your hand with a gentle smile  
And I grasped tightly  
This time promising to stay.

### **Made in Heaven**

She stares at herself pensive in silence  
Who is that blurred reflection in the  
mirror?  
What is her true identity?  
Can it be more than someone's entity?  
A girl, a daughter?  
A friend, a sister?  
A blushing bride  
Soon to be a wife...

Is she chained?  
Those bangles on her wrists  
A sign of pious bonding  
Binding her to her fate?  
What's around her neck?  
A noose or a jewelled necklace  
Both commanding presence  
In society's deceptions.  
Arranged marriage or arranged love  
Both so endearingly pretty in phrase?  
This mid-dot on her forehead  
Is that still a projection of her pride?  
Or a dented mystic supremacy?

Look at her hair parting  
Crammed with red lead  
(Or)  
Should I say the vermilion  
Just a mere compulsion  
Or her merry declaration?  
To the million dreams  
So much to express  
But left unsaid  
Captured in her faraway eyes  
Like a star-studded evening sky

Could be hiding a thousand lies  
Beautiful silver anklets  
Peeping from her feet  
Depiction of Indian roots?  
Or echo of nervous footsteps  
Drowning in fear of an arranged  
"unknown"

Her toe rings  
A peak of pleasure?  
Her longing, her desire  
Her hopes, her fears  
No time to manifest  
There is far too much pressure  
Raging passion  
Blindfolded eyes  
This is where Reality lies

If true love is her pedestal  
Nothing is without significance  
Everything disguised in her elegant poise  
Bridal glory shines and overpowers  
But please don't let her be a fake

Her emotions are a mix of shyness and  
pride  
God knows she has saved herself with such  
Authenticity ripe  
For this auspicious day  
By the glowing flames of the fire pure  
Will she fail?  
The test of time  
Will her vows endure and pray?

By the modesty of her bridal veil  
She romanticises commitment  
She would never fail  
The perfumed flowers in her hair  
Speaks of the future she entrusts to his  
care  
Please be careful and handle with care  
The essence of her fragile existence  
Now in his hands should stay.

His love, his joy  
Should be her goals  
Her essence and her existence both  
Taught as a little girl  
She is the body

He is the soul  
The glory of the seven steps seals  
Another TRUE marriage  
“Made in heaven” for argument’s sake  
Please stop frowning  
It’s your Day!  
Today you should be happy  
Today you are the Bride  
Arranged gracefully in your emotional  
cage.

### **Distant Devotee**

Faraway in my beloved motherland  
Humming a familiar advent song  
Resonating and stirring all my senses  
Integral to the essence of who I am  
A young Bengali girl  
Awakens with irrepressible excitement  
A long wait for Ma Durga and her family’s  
Arrival is actually about to end...!!

Alighting from the Himalayas  
Culminating into the eternal Truth  
A truth of waiting  
A year of anticipation  
MA’s blessings are paramount  
We must touch her feet  
But lest we forget  
The emphatic comradeship  
The blossoming love affairs  
The fervour and frenzy  
Splendour of community spirit  
All differences laid to rest.  
Running intricate through the veins of  
Every Bengali heartbeat  
Ma’s timely intervention really saves our  
DAY.

For Bengalis Durga Puja is not just a  
festival  
It is a throbbing emotion with all its crests  
and troughs  
Our pulse and reverberation a starting  
point  
In ancient scriptures and heritage depict  
We find our beloved Goddess amongst us  
Calming our mind and spirit  
The rich and the poor, the sinner and the  
saint

All unilaterally adorned in tailored clothes  
Shiny, new, even smothered with gold  
The excitement is unprecedented  
For the masses to participate  
All in a similar Hue;  
Irrespective of caste, creed  
And Religion.

The invocation of the Goddess  
Is a beautiful ethereal sight  
Our beloved MA  
Our supreme Hindu Goddess  
We bow to HER  
charitable and charismatic  
Irrevocable and extraordinary  
Spiritual powers  
Indomitable strength  
Compassion and enlightenment  
Deepest of the deep  
As SHE plunders all evil  
Making way for goodness  
Righteousness  
The balance of life  
To renew hope within us  
In HER utmost care.

Ma Durga is finally here with her children  
A sight that never fails to make people  
Fold their hands  
In pure approbation  
The elaborate images and pandals  
Dazzle our eyes  
Mesmerising onlookers with  
Four magical days  
Chanting and worshipping  
Blowing the conch  
Beating of drums  
And a rhythmic hymn  
Moving the mind to an unforgettable  
reverence

Melancholic in my grandparents’  
Ornate and majestic four-poster bed  
Drifting off to my  
Great grandparents’ plans for the day  
Impatiently waiting for my friends to call  
The rest of the family all busy getting  
dressed  
To “Meet and Greet” as Bijoy Dashami  
awaits

My heart fills heavy, the tears unshed  
I have never been good at Goodbyes  
But Lord Shiva seems wrought  
He detests the pangs of separation so  
Being away from His family can be hard

With a heavy heart and reluctance sore  
We brace ourselves  
To bid farewell  
Our Goddess of mercy  
Kindness and joy  
Hoping MA would never forget  
To hold us close to Her thoughts

The story is simple for all to know  
In a faraway land, far from her motherland  
A devout devotee from a childhood gone  
With staunch faith and benevolence strong  
Lives one such Bengali;  
An ordinary Brahmin with her “Agomoni”  
song.

## Sports Day 2021



## That Familiar Indian Bride

Priyanka Mukherjee Turnbull

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Monibala sat at the dressing table. It belonged to her grandmother, countless scratches of too many anecdotes she would love to hear again and again, the smell of old distressed wood but a sturdy and ornate antique she is nevertheless intimately familiar with all its hidden chambers and crevices. They comfort her essence in her long brooding moments of silence. Outside the pouring rain of the fierce Kolkata monsoons mingle effortlessly with the red earth and a damp pungent smell slice through her old grandiose yet stark bedroom. Her grandparents cradling her baby face in a classical frame fading but immaculate, imitates time. Sometimes she is startled on catching her flickering reflection in the mellow lantern gazing back at her mournfully on a humid summer evening. Smell of talcum powder and tuberose perfume gently teases her partly damp skin.

For once Monibala ignores her mother-in-law's calls to join her in the communal kitchen and help prepare the ritualistic evening "jolkhabar" She is sure her older sisters-in-law are already performing their duties, sweating and shouting orders to the cooks, complaining incessantly about everything under the sun yet skilfully mustering another grand banquet for their husbands to come home to and be oh so impressed. Brownie points scored. However today she is reluctant to keep up her part of this orchestrated show. She will simply bow to the inevitable reprimands, won't she?

Distracted, she stares blankly at her bejewelled reflection: the jewellery she caresses and polishes ever so carefully every single day. She frowns to recognise her face, the sneaky cynicism slightly disarming her alluring innocence. She ignores the lump in her throat and tries to blink away those silent tears. Stubborn and mute they roll down her carefully made-up powdered face and crusty red lipstick from biting her lips too often, sometimes humming a sighing brook of untold regrets. A luminous portrait in her hammering head hangs disjointed from a rusty protruding nail on a broken wall. Someday she would need to finish this painting and carefully decorate her room in sync with all the black and white family photographs gathering cobwebs in her sprawling North Kolkata room. But today is not that day. Today she is missing the essence of a little girl waking up dewy-eyed to her father helping her to worship her dreams but then why is obscurity never far behind. Her beloved father took them all away one by one as the grandfather clock groaned

(Shyamal Babu) expects Monibala to sometimes look like his English "mem" he left behind courteously in the land of milk and honey or mostly like his perfect mother every

single day without fail, it's what he always dreamt of in his sweet "Bou" whilst studying law in England. Much hedonism he witnessed there in his spare time for sure but he almost saved himself as he liked to tell her one too many times. He almost saved himself for his much-anticipated marriage to a nice well-educated Bengali girl from a respectable "bonedi" family. He could barely hold his breath for his consolation prize, poor man. Sounds familiar?

Shyamal Babu is yet to return home from working with the British Raj at Writers Building. The studebaker fretfully awaits. These foreign employers have their own work ethos it seems. Start early and work late most days. Home Baithak even later some days. Home life vastly curtailed. Another resigned thought.

Monibala's father insisted on convent education for all her brothers and sisters too in spite of her mother fearing for her girls becoming a bit too clever for accepting their future in store. They argued incessantly over this issue but hers was a patriarchal family too. The gilded cage gleams with a sly grin.



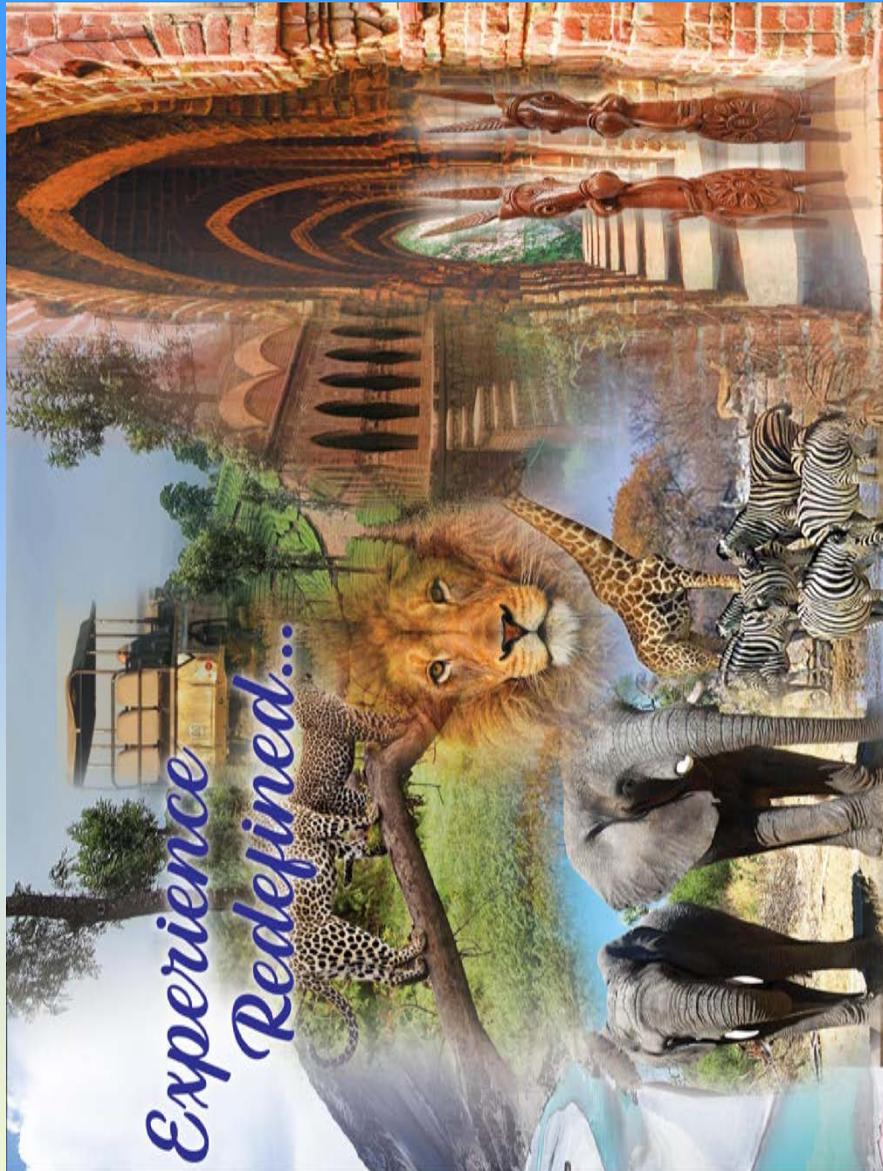
Was she in denial then? Monibala thought pensively, did her suitable boy save her life? Saved everyone's but hers maybe? Questions she hesitates to ask herself. They seem to make her choke like a swimmer who has gradually lost all coordination to stay afloat.

Her degrees are laid to rest in one of those forgotten drawers, collecting dust, shredding memories, ignoring the resplendent eyes of a young girl working hard to make her dreams come true: Dreams die hard but Hope even harder; she reaches for one such document and prepares to write her final letter bidding "adieu" to her beloved father. This time there are no tears. Monibala is going home to her grandparents.

.... A few centuries and much water has flowed under a new bridge on the Ganga. Monibala has become Madalasa or Mads to her friends. The cage is of a new design and made of translucent material. But the slats haven't gone away.

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# Kolkata Railway Chicken Cuisine (Bengali) By. Chef Satyapriya Podder



This is a chicken curry recipe which I conceptualized, remembering my childhood train journeys from Kolkata to Mumbai in 1990s. I used to always have this for my dinner, with the chicken curry being served in the compartment from the railway pantry. So I named this recipe “Railway Chicken” as it was once cooked by the chefs of Indian Railways. It tasted different than the chicken curries which we prepare at home. My recipe reminds me of the beautiful childhood memories related to the train journeys in 1990s.

### Ingredients:

400g curry diced Chicken, 4 potatoes diced into halves.

### Marination:

1 tbsp. ginger garlic paste, 1/4 cup curd, 1 tsp turmeric powder, 1 tsp Cumin powder, 1 tsp Coriander powder, 1 tsp red chili powder. 1 onion chopped, 5 to 6 garlic crushed, 4 green chilies in splits, 1/4 cup mustard oil, 2 bay leaves, 1 cinnamon stick, 4 to 5 cloves, 4 cardamoms.

### Instructions:

Marinate the chicken with turmeric, salt and ginger garlic paste for 20 to 30 minutes or overnight.

Boil the chicken and the potatoes in a suitable pan / pot. Once the chicken is tender, separate the chicken pieces and the potatoes from the stock. In a separate pan / pot heat the mustard oil - add whole spices, onion, garlic, chopped tomatoes and cook well till tender.

Add the chili, cumin, coriander and sauté for few minutes, before adding the boiled chicken pieces and potatoes and stir and mix well. Thereafter add the chicken stock and simmer in low heat for 20 to 30 minutes. Finally add 3 split green chilies, coriander leaves for flavors and salt / sugar to taste.

Serve hot with steamed rice, mango pickles, and poppadum's.



# The Bird That Twitters

## Sudakshina Bhattacharjee

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**Description:** This poem describes a unique bluebird – which has metamorphosed into a colossal social media platform! The question this posits is: do you follow this bluebird – or does it follow you?



Birds sing and they twitter  
They fly here and there, as they flitter  
And amidst them is a striking creature-  
It's a blue messenger- an amazing feature!

It tweets to its friends and strangers alike,  
It bridges the gap without taking a hike.  
Thousands follow it, day by day,  
"Let's follow the Bird Who Twitters," they say.

The rich, the poor and those in-between  
Follow this Bird and appear on the screen.

North, south, east, and west,  
The Bird Who Twitters flies abreast.  
Tweeting and Retweeting is its game,  
For those who want to gain some fame!

And for those who wish to pinch its share,  
Or stoke rage, fear, and envy with their glare.  
Trolling is what this is called  
And it's not for those who aren't bold.  
As it doesn't matter if you're young or old,  
The Bird That Twitters can be cold.

### Author Bio

Sudakshina Bhattacharjee (Kina) is a commercial writer, editor and digital content marketer based in the United Kingdom. In her spare time, she's a popular culture enthusiast and occasionally writes poems for various anthologies.

Visit her online at: [www.sudakshinakina.com](http://www.sudakshinakina.com)

Twitter: @SudakshinaKina

Instagram: @sudakshinakina

# স্মৃতির বেড়াজালে\_রন্ধনের বিদ্রাটে

Sushmita Barua



খুব উঁসাহ নিয়ে কি রান্না করা যায়, তার ই আলোচনা চলছে মেধা আর তিতিরের। স্কুল ফাইনাল পরীক্ষা শেষে এই মুহুর্তে পড়াশোনার কোন তাড়া নেই, ছুটির এই কমাস কি কি করা যায়, সেই **planning** চলছিল বন্ধুদের। তখন প্রথম, উজান এরা রান্নার চ্যালেঞ্জ করে বসল, বলল তোরা পড়াশুনা করে ফাটালে কি হবে, রান্না বান্না তোদের দিয়ে হবে না। তিতিরের একফুট দূর থেকে ফুটন্ত তেলের কড়াইয়ে **French fries** তাক করে ছুড়ে ছুড়ে মারা নিয়ে ও চলল হাসাহাসি। উজান তার চিরাচরিত ফিচেল হাসি দিয়ে বলল, দোস্তু তোদের মতন এই রকম নমুনা **friend circle** এ থাকলে আমাদের বিনোদনের কোন অভাব হবে না। প্রথম, তার ফাটা বাশের মত

কর্তে ফ্যাক ফ্যাক করে হেসে আরো কিছু যোগ করে ঘোষণা দিল, তাদেরকে একদিন ঠিকঠাক রান্না করে খাওয়ালে, তারা এই নিয়ে আর হাসাহাসি না করার আন্তরিক চেষ্টা চালাবে। রাগি তার স্বভাবসিদ্ধ নরম স্বভাবে এদের কথায় কিছু পাতা না দেবার কথা বললে ও মেধা আর তিতির ব্যাপারটাকে রীতিমত সিরিয়াসলি নিয়ে চ্যালেঞ্জ ছুড়ে দিল, যা তোদের সবাইকে একদিন ভালমন্দ রান্না করে খাওয়ানো হবে, তাতে তোদের মত হাতাতেরা আমাদের আর রান্না নিয়ে খোটা মারতে পারবিনা।

বন্ধু সার্কেলে সবসময় ঠাকারুকি লেগেই আছে, বিশেষ করে তিতির খুব অল্পেই রেগে যায়, তাই প্রথম, উজান, শ্রাবণ এরা কারণে অকারণে তিতিরের পেছনে লাগে, আর তিতির কোন কিছুতে রেগে গেলেই নিজেরা রাগ কমানোর কমিটি আর উপকমিটি গঠন করে, তার আবার সভাপতি , সহসভাপতি বিভিন্ন পদ গঠন করে। এইসবের মাঝে ওদের বন্ধুত্ব আরো প্রগাঢ় হয়।

এবারের চ্যালেঞ্জের খবর তড়িৎ গতিতে ছড়িয়ে পড়ে বাকি বন্ধু মহলে। একে একে সোহা, নীরব, গুলজনে এরা ও এসে জুটে দাওয়াতি গ্রুপে। এতোজন মানুষকে খাওয়ানোর বিশাল চ্যালেঞ্জ নিয়ে তিতির আর মেধা বসল

**planning** করতে। কোথায় কিভাবে রান্না হবে, কি বাজার হবে, কারা বাজার করবে এইসব নিয়েও যথারিতি আরেকটা কমিটি গঠন করে বাজার উপকমিটি, রন্ধন উপকমিটি টাইপ আরো কিছু উপকমিটি গঠিত হয়ে গেল এই উপলক্ষে। বন্ধুরা সবাই নিজেদের টিফিনের টাকা বাচিয়ে বই কেনার জন্য রাখা জমানো কিছু টাকা নিয়ে বিপুল উঁসাহে এই পরিকল্পনাকে বাস্তবে রূপদান করবার জন্য উঠেপড়ে লাগল।

মেনু ঠিক করা হল আর বাজার করার দায়িত্ব পড়ল প্রথম, উজান আর গুলজনের। রান্না করবে

তিতির আর মেধা আর খাবারের পরে বাসনপত্র ধোয়াপালা, আর বাকি সব পরিষ্কারের দায়িত্ব অন্য বন্ধুরা ভাগাভাগি করে নিল।

ভেনু কোথায় হবে, সেই নিয়ে যখন আলোচনা চলছে, এর মধ্যে মেধার মার হঠাৎ জরুরি প্রয়োজনে তার আত্মীয়ের বাড়ি যাবার সুবাদে মেধার মা উনার বাসাটা ছেড়ে দিলেন রান্না আর খাওয়ার জন্য। শর্ত একটাই, সব পরিষ্কার করে দিতে হবে, উনি বাড়ি ফিরে কিছু পরিষ্কার করতে পারবেন না আর মসলা ও কিনতে হবে না, রান্নাঘরে যা মসলা আছে, সেগুলো ব্যবহার করা যাবে।

চরম উপসাহে মেধা আর তিতির রুইমাছ, সবজি, ভাত, ডাল রান্নার সিদ্ধান্ত নিল। মাংস রান্নার চেয়ে

মাছ রান্নাটাই **তুলনামূলক** কঠিন আপাতদৃষ্টিতে, তাই মাছ রান্না করবার সিদ্ধান্ত।

নির্দিষ্ট দিনে মাছ কাটাবাছা করে ধোয়াধুয়ি করে এখন ভাজার পালা। ভাজার মসলা নিয়ে চলল কিছুক্ষণ গভীর চিন্তাভাবনা, তারপরে দুই বন্ধু ঠিক করলো, নুন আর হলুদ মাখানো হোক। হলুদের কৌটা বের করে তিতির, মেধাকে সন্দিহান দৃষ্টিতে জিজ্ঞাসা করলো, হলুদ গুড়া এতো ডার্ক কেনো? মেধা স্বতঃস্ফূর্তভাবে জবাব দিল, মা স্পেশাল জায়গা থেকে সব মসলা কিনে আনে তো, তাই এটা স্পেশাল মানের ডার্ক কালারের হলুদগুঁড়া। তিতির গম্ভীর মুখে বলল, আমাদের বাসার হলুদগুঁড়া তো হলুদ কালারের ই হয় রে। মেধা আশ্বস্ত করলো, নারে স্পেশাল হলুদগুঁড়ার কালার একটু আলাদা তো হবেই।

মনের আনন্দ মাছে সেই স্পেশাল হলুদগুঁড়া মাখানো হল। সাথে মাছে আলু দেয়া হবে, কাজেই আলুকে ও স্বাদ বাড়াতে হলুদগুঁড়া দিয়ে মাখিয়ে নেয়া হলো। গরম তেলে না ভেঙে হাল্কাভাবে মাছভাজার কঠিন পরীক্ষা ও শেষ হলো। এবার ভাজা ভাছ, রান্নার সময় আবার সব মসলার কৌটা অনুসন্ধান চলল মরিচগুঁড়া খুজতে। অনেক খোজাখুজি করে একটা কৌটাতে হলুদ রঙের মসলা পাওয়া গেল। এবার আর তিতির থাকতে না পেরে বলল, তোদের বাসার স্পেশাল হলুদগুঁড়া লাল আর মরিচগুঁড়া বুদ্ধি হলুদ হয়? কাচুমাচু মুখে মেধা বলে, নারে এটাই মনে হয়, হলুদগুঁড়া। তার মানে, মরিচগুঁড়া দিয়ে মাছ ভাজা হয়েছে। কিংকর্তব্যবিমূঢ় দুই বন্ধু ঠিক করলো, হেরে গেলে তো চলবে না। বিনা যুদ্ধে নাহি দিব সুচাগ্র মেদিনী। বাকি রান্নার কাজ ও জোড়াতালি দিয়ে শেষ করা হলো। রান্নার শেষে দেখা গেলো, মাছের জন্য ভেজে রাখা মরিচ মাখানো আলু ও তারা মাছে দিতে ভুলে গেছে, কাজেই সেটা সবজিতে যোগ করে দেয়া হল। স্বভাবতই সবজির সব ঠিক থাকলে ও মরিচভাজা আলুগুলো সবজিকে বানিয়ে দিল আগুনঝাল। ভাতটা কোনরকমে সিদ্ধ হলো, ঝরঝরে না হলে ও পাতে দেয়া যাবে। তাতেই দুই রাধুনী সন্তুষ্ট। যাক ভাতটা অমৃত মুখরক্ষা করবে। নিজেদের প্রতিভায় নিজেরাই মুক্ত দুই বন্ধু ঠিক করলো, তাদের এই হযবরল রান্নার দুর্বল দিক অন্য বন্ধুদের কাছে বেমালুম চেপে যাওয়াই বুদ্ধি মানের কাজ হবে। আর নিজেদের রান্নার প্রশংসা অন্যরা করল কি না

করল তার জন্ম অপেক্ষা না করে তাদেরই, খাবারের স্বাদ যে স্বর্গীয় স্বাদের চেয়ে কোন অংশে কম নয়, এই নিয়ে প্রচারণা চালাতে হবে। আর এই খাদ্য খাবার যে সৌভাগ্য সবার হয়না, সেটা ও বন্ধুদের বারে বারে বুঝিয়ে দিতে হবে যে তাদের সাত কপালের ভাগ্য এই রকম রাজকীয় রান্না খাবার সুযোগ তাদের হচছে।

এবার খাবার পালা, খাবারের রং নাকি আশাব্যঞ্জক হয়েছে, সেটা সবাই স্বীকার করল। খেতে বসে **অণ্ডুরা** কিছু না বললে ও উজান জিজ্ঞাসা করলো, তোরা কি মাছটা কেরোসিন তেল দিয়ে রেখেছিস? কেমন কেরোসিন কেরোসিন গন্ধ! তাদের পক্ষে সবাই সম্ভব। আর সবজি এতো spicy কেন রে? উজানের সাথে সাথে আরো দুই চারজন বিভিন্ন কমেন্ট করতে লাগল।

অনেকভাবে পাশ কাটানোর চেষ্টা চালালো দুই বিশিষ্ট রাধুনি। কিন্তু বন্ধু গুলো ও ছাড়বার পাত্র নয়।

বন্ধুদের অবিরত প্রশ্নবাণে শেষে তিতির আর মেধা তাদের মাছ ভাজার গোপন রহস্য জানিয়ে দিল। কিছুক্ষণ হতভম্ব হয়ে পরে সবাই তাদের স্বভাবসুলভ হাস্যহাসিতেই ফিরে গেলো। শুরু হয়ে গেল ওদের চরম রসিকতা। তবে সব বন্ধুরা স্বীকার করলো, রান্নাবান্না বিষয়টা ততটা সহজ নয়, আর তিতির মেধা জীবনে ও রান্না না করবার পরে ও আজ এতটা করতে পেরেছে, তাই ওদের কষ্টটার ও মূল্যায়ন করা হোক।

সেদিনের সেই মাস রন্ধনের স্মৃতি নিয়ে তিতির আর মেধার হাস্যহাসিটা আজ এত বছর পরে ও ফিরে ফিরে আসে বার বার। সময়ের ধারাবাহিকতায় আজ জীবনের প্রয়োজনে কত রান্না শেখা হলো। এখনতো রীতিমতন রান্না নিয়ে কত পরীক্ষা নিরীক্ষা ও চলে। কিন্তু জীবনের প্রথম মাছরান্নার স্মৃতিটা এখনো অমলিন।

মধুর মধুর স্মৃতিগুলো  
কভু কি হারায়  
মাঝে মাঝে আসুক না মেঘ  
রাতের তারায়।

আজ অনেকবছর পরে বন্ধুরা সব ছড়িয়ে পড়েছে একেক দিকে, কেউ কেউ আবার পৃথক মহাদেশে ও। মাঝে মাঝে গল্পে গল্পে ফিরে আসে সেই সব স্মৃতিরো সময়ের কাহন। মনটা ছুটে চলে যায় সেই মধুর দিনগুলোতে। মনের অজান্তেই আবার মন ছুটে যেতে চায় সেই শৈশব আর কৈশোরের সোনালী দিনগুলোতে।

মুছে যাওয়া দিনগুলি আমায় যে পিছু ডাকে  
স্মৃতি যেন আমার এ হৃদয়ে বেদনার

রঙ্গে রঙ্গে ছবি আঁকে।



# Underwood Barron

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## Ananya – The Unique Sutapa Mukherjee

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This is my offering to all the ladies I love -  
True goddesses of HPCA, true sisters from  
above.

Hand in glove with the men we walk,  
Our hearts molten gold, our support –solid as  
a rock!

When we take centre stage, our talent knows no bounds,  
We touch the stars, amidst the lights and sounds.

We wait eagerly for the days we can meet,  
An overflowing fountain of words to share, too sweet.

Be the occasion auspicious, chatty, sporty or fun -  
Our style is unparalleled, we bedazzle everyone.

When we laugh together, we're boisterous and bold,  
But when there is sorrow, our arms gently enfold.

Each one is Ananya - the Unique: beautiful and smart,  
May these goddesses of HPCA never grow apart.

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# DURGA PUJA

8 - 10th Oct 2021

Hosted and Organised by the Hampshire Puja and Cultural Association (H.P.C.A)

Strictly  
Following  
COVID-19  
Protocols

More details on following  
COVID-19 protocols will be  
provided on our Facebook  
page  
([facebook.com/thehpca](https://facebook.com/thehpca))  
and Website  
([southamptonpuja.org.uk](https://southamptonpuja.org.uk))

Evening programs:

Antakshari - Friday  
(7.00pm)

Talent Show - Sat  
(6.30pm)

Musical Extravaganza  
- Sun (4pm)



Dandiya - Sat (10.00pm)



Puja / Arati times:

Fri - 5pm, Sat - 9am, 5pm, Sun -  
10.30am

**ALL ARE INVITED**

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# Our first ever Southampton Durga Puja in 2008

## Prof. Sujit Sahu



*This is was the piece written on behalf of Southampton Puja and Cultural Association on the occasion of the first ever Durga Puja in Southampton and Hampshire.*

Durga Puja, or simply Puja, to every Bengali, especially those of us who were brought up in the Indian sub-continent, is like Christmas to every kid in the western world. The expectation of festivity, the scent of new clothes, the best ever look in the new sarees and cosmetics, the excitement of getting a new pair of Bata shoes, the temporary freedom to spend late night hours with friends, the competition to see the maximum number of Durga idols, are all embedded somewhere in our nostalgic memories. During the five days of the Puja there is simply magic in the air—most people are on happy holiday mood ready for some social fun and adda.



We have walked a long way to make this Durga Puja happen, for the very first time, in Southampton. At first, the odds were stacked against us. It was almost impossible to find a large enough hall round the clock for three-four days including a weekend. It was a huge financial undertaking—how were we to raise the funds? How could we get the publicity? Where and how would we get the Durga idol? Where would we get a Bengali priest? The obstacles were



perhaps as big as those faced by the epic king Rama to worship the Goddess Chandi at an unusual time.



Ever since the idea of Puja was mooted in March 2008 we have gathered tremendous amount of support and enthusiasm which helped us to form our association and a yahoo discussion group called Soton Puja. Our unique association is committed to performing Puja and organizing cultural events simultaneously. With our collective wisdom, commitment and hard

work we have tackled the obstacles one by one. We have won funding from the Southampton City Council and others for hosting the cultural programs, we have a Google friendly website, and, most importantly, we have found well-wishers like you as part of our community.

The people of the Vedic society have donated almost unlimited and free use of all the facilities—our special thank you goes to them. In addition, we thank all volunteers and friends for their help, encouragement, dedication and hard work. Pujariji, Pankaj, deserves special mention. He has shown us new ways to proceed whenever we got stuck. We also acknowledge our sponsors and advertisers for their generous support.

Friends and well-wishers, thank you for participating in our Puja this year. Our task, however, has just begun. We are seeking commitment and continuity to carry this momentum forward to the next year. One day we dream to have our own new idols and a permanent home where we can organize Puja and cultural programs. To achieve that goal, our first task is to register our association as a charity in England and Wales. In the short term, however, we can nominate a charity whom we can donate every time we organize an event like this to help less fortunate people at the time of our most joyous occasion.



May you prosper with friends, family, fame and fortune.

## List of HPCA Members

|    |                                       |
|----|---------------------------------------|
| 1  | Ananda & Ahana Chakrabarti            |
| 2  | Atul & Ipsita Roy                     |
| 3  | Bhaskar & Sweta Somani                |
| 4  | Chris & Peyalee Semple                |
| 5  | Colin & Soama Nicholson               |
| 6  | Debbie & John Hall                    |
| 7  | Kajari Sinha                          |
| 8  | Koushik & Aditi Maharatna             |
| 9  | Krishnan & Suparna Kundu              |
| 10 | Laxmikant Tiwari & Baishakhi Mazumder |
| 11 | Madhu & Bharati Acharya               |
| 12 | Manab & Arpana Basu                   |
| 13 | Manish & Sutapa Mukherjee             |
| 14 | Nandan & Kohinoor Roy                 |
| 15 | Pashupati & Anuka Das                 |
| 16 | Pronobesh & Sushmita Barua            |
| 17 | Priyanka Turnbull                     |
| 18 | Raj & Sandhya Banerjee                |
| 19 | Raja & Moumi Basak                    |
| 20 | Rana & Dayeeta Dasgupta               |
| 21 | Sadhana Chaudhuri                     |
| 22 | Saroj & Ratna Roy Choudhuri           |
| 23 | Swayamjyoti & Meenakshi Ray           |
| 24 | Shantanu & Manisha Poddar             |
| 25 | Shre & Sophie Chatterjee              |
| 26 | Siddhartha & Mili Ghosh               |
| 27 | Sujit & Ranu Sahu                     |
| 28 | Sumantra & Sumita Datta               |
| 29 | Tapas & Mamata Mishra                 |
| 30 | Tarun Khurana                         |
| 31 | Tonmoy & Haimanti Kumar               |
| 32 | Vivek & Sarbani Bhadra                |



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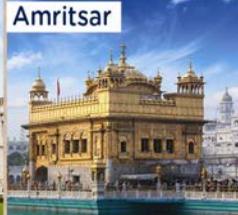
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