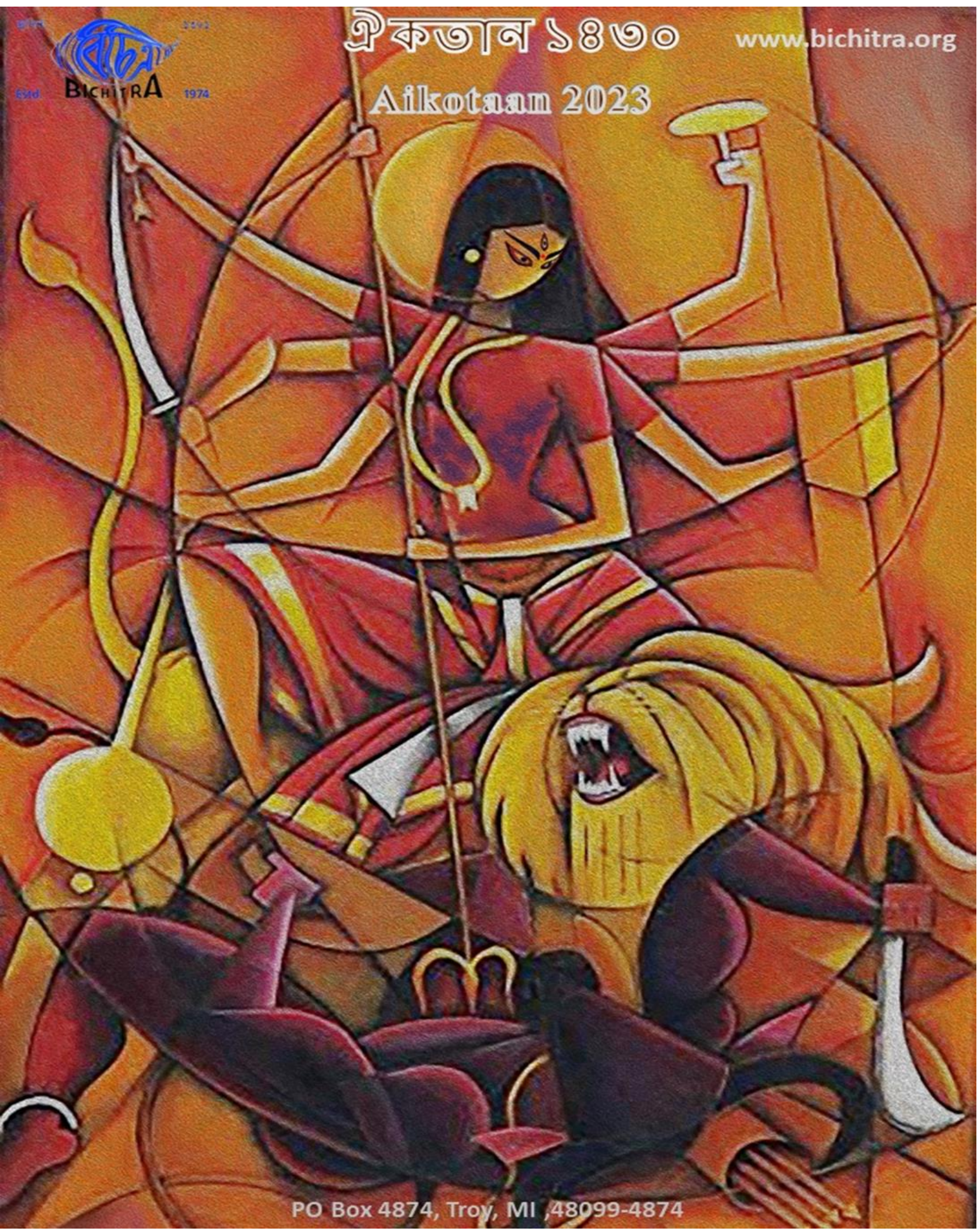


Aikotnam 2023



সকলকে জানাই শারদীয়ার স্মৃতি, শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন
Manjusri Roy and family from Plymouth, Michigan



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BICHITRA 2023-24 GOVERNING BODY

Board of Officers

Executive Committee	President	Jhulan Chatterjee
	Vice President	Sumit Basu
	Deputy President	Partha Sarathi Das
	Secretary	Anirban Chandra
	Associate Secretary	Subinoy Das
	Assistant Secretary	Kripa Bandyopadhyay
	Treasurer	Kapil Gupta
	Associate Treasurer	Tuhin Ray
	Assistant Treasurer	Anindya Roy
Endowment Committee	Principal Endower	Shampa Mukhopadhyay
	Associate Endower	Sampada Banerji
	Assistant Endower	Anjan Mitra
Education Committee	Principal Educator	Tanima Basu
	Associate Educator	Tapas Dey
	Assistant Educator	Paromita Banerjee

Board of Trustees

Advisory Committee	Principal Advisor	Sudharanjan Bhattacharyya
	Senior Advisor	Somnath Mukhopadhyay
	Junior Advisor	Manoranjan Santra
Preservation Committee	Principal Preserver	Sutapa Santra
	Senior Preserver	Maitreyee Paul
	Junior Preserver	Subhajit Sengupta

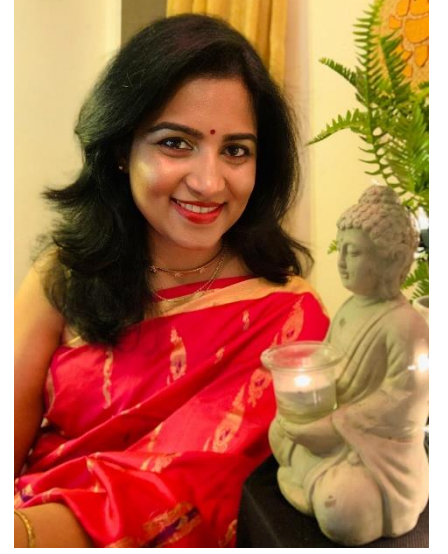
Board of Directors

Planning Committee	Principal Planner	Pulak Bandyopadhyay
	Senior Planner	Soumya Mukhopadhyay
	Junior Planner	Probir Sil
Audit Committee	Principal Auditor	Debjani Nayak
	Senior Auditor	Debabrata Sarkar
	Junior Auditor	Amit Chatterjee

From the President

It is said that "the greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members."

I was fortunate to join Bichitra in 2004 and over the years have understood how the compassion and dedication of community members can keep an organization running for 49 years and counting. I am honored to be the President this year 2023-24. This time has allowed me to put into action what I learned from my parents and family: the value of community service, the importance of relationships, and the belief that we can, and always will, do more together than we do alone.



Jhulan Chatterjee

I want to take this opportunity to appreciate my extended family of volunteers, Governing body members, sponsors, donors, and outright good people for supporting us, respecting us and courageously standing with us in demonstrating what Durga Puja is all about...celebration of good over evil and the recognition of feminine power. 😊

We all have different childhood memories of Durga Puja from our 'shohor' but now that we are here, we can create memories that we can look back to at a later stage of life. So let's create good moments and great memories that would be heartwarming and precious.

Thank you for your many compassionate actions, support, partnership, and friendship over the years. I remain grateful, humbled, and inspired.

May Maa Durga in all her glory usher you with new beginnings, an abundance of hope and courage, and lots of love.

Shubho Sharodia/ Happy Durga puja to you and all your loved ones! 🙏

দুর্গাপূজার শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন



জয় বাবা
ভারকনাথ



সুতপা, সৌমি, মনোরঞ্জন ও কৌস্তভ সাঁতরা

Happy Durga puja to you and your family



Anjan, Sarbani, Tanisha and Anish



Ma Durga's blessings to all

From the Ghosh, Ray and Rosa families

Runa, Ruby, Ravi, Gigi, Partha, Jayanta, Cayden and Cristian

Governing Body Members – can help you get connected with the community.

Mrs. Sutapa Santra



I love to live with relatives and friends. Honestly, I cannot survive without them. Although I don't have relatives in USA, but I found very nice friends like Modhuda and Tapatidi using Yellow/White phone books. Tapatidi told me about our Bichitra Bangla school, Path Bhaban. Path Bhaban not only became the Bangla school for our children but also our social and cultural relation with Bangla speaking people and others. Eventually, I have been involved in various committees of this Bangla organization, Bichitra since 2005. I have always loved everyone in this Bangla organization, Bichitra as my friend and relatives.

Thank you.

Tanima Basu



ছোটো বেলায় পূজো পূজো গন্ধ পেতাম বাগানে শিউলির আশ্রানে ।
আমাদের দুটো শিউলি গাছ ছিলো । আমার মেয়েবেলাতে আজো তার
অনুভূতি টাটকা । শিউলি সাদা ফুল ও তার বোঁটা গেরুয়া । সেখান
থেকে কমলা চুঁইয়ে একটা ফোঁটা বিন্দুতে মেশে । তাই এই ফুল বিশেষ
ভাবে প্রিয় আমার মতো অনেকের কাছে । সকাল সকাল ফুল ঝরে পড়ে
গাছের নিচে । তার ওপর শিশিরের জল টলমল করে । এতো নরম ফুল ।
সময়ে তুলতে হয় ।

আমাদের পাঠভবনের রুবি জুবিলি অনুষ্ঠান হলো এই বছর । বিদেশের
মাটিতে বাংলা শেখার স্কুল। ৪০ বছর ধরে সেই স্কুলের জীবন নদী প্রবাহিত
। জোয়ার ভাঁটায় আমরা আশা রাখি এভাবে পাঠভবন বাংলা শিখিয়ে
যাবে । শিখিয়ে যাবে বাঙলা গান, কবিতা, নাটক, ও আঁকা ।

সকলকে জানাই শারদীয় শুভেচ্ছা । -তনিমা

Sampada Banerji



Endowment committee - associate endower

Soumya Mukhopadhyay



My history with Bichitra goes back 40+ years when my parents started bringing my brother and I to the Bichitra Pujas.

Having grown up in the Ann Arbor area (Go Blue!), we weren't able to attend all the events but we really looked forward

to attending Durga Puja. It gave us the opportunity to see many of our friends and more importantly play all day...

As I got older, I got more involved in the local Bengali organizations, starting with Ann Arbor's Mitali and then Bichitra

(once my wife and I moved to Troy over 15 years ago).

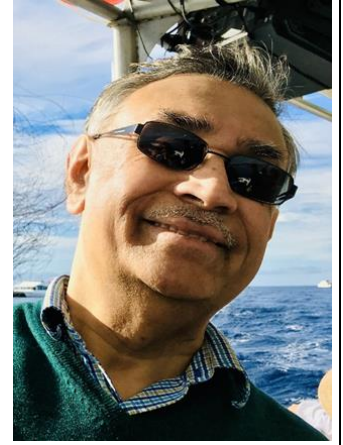
Over the years, I've held various governing body positions in

both organizations, but the work I enjoyed the most has always been the transportation team work.

I'm so happy my son is able to grow up in such a wonderful Bichitra community and is able to experience many of the

same things I did as a child. Some of my closest friends to this day are folks I grew up with within the Bichitra community and it looks like my son is following in my footsteps...

Pulak Bandyopadhyay



Current Position

Principal Planner,

Bichitra Governing Body

2023-24

- Bichitra Member for the last 40 years. Was Bichitra President in 1993-1994.
- Chairperson for Bichitra 40th Anniversary Celebration in 2015.
- A true believer of Bichitra's Motto – "Together we build a better community".
- Happy to see new members working enthusiastically for the organization.
- Eagerly waiting for Bichitra's Golden Jubilee Celebration (UTSAV50) to happen.

Anirban Chandra



Connected with Bichitra for the past 3 years.

Connection to the Bengali roots for the entire family and making friends motivated me to join Bichitra.

I will always fondly cherish all

The adda, fun and social

interactions that Bichitra community has added to our lives.

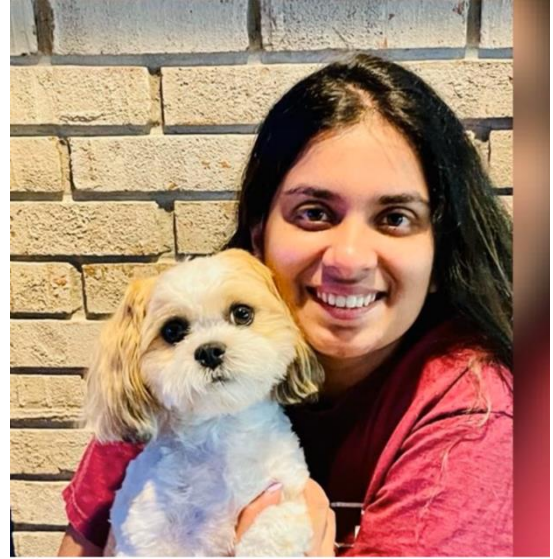
Let's keep the community membership growing, have bigger and better events and work together to instill love and pride for our Bengali heritage in future generations.

Sudharanjan Bhattacharyya

I came to America with a creative zeal and commitment to community that drove me to help establish Bichitra. Throughout all the many changes and challenges, I remain committed to perpetuating our culture and nurturing our community spirit for generations to come.



Kripa Bandyopadhyay



Youngest member of the Bichitra Executive Committee. I have an MS in Management from Walsh. I grew up within the Bichitra Community and attended Troy Path Bhavan. I'm crazy about dogs and have a teddy bear canine named ChomChom.

Anjan Mitra

My name is Anjan Mitra, and I am currently a member of the Endowment Committee. It has been a long association with Bichitra family. I landed in USA during late 2003 and witnessed the first overseas Puja in Bichitra in 2004. Today Durga Puja has been enlisted by UNESCO list of intangible cultural heritage, but it did not have such worldwide recognition in those days. It was beyond our expectation to regain the energy to recollect the melodious sounds of Kansor Ghanta and Dhak outside Kolkata/West Bengal. But Bichitra made it happen. It was mind-boggling experience to see Engineers in the role of Purohit, taking part in various creative competitions, and exhibitions & performance by our friends, endless adda and reaffirmation of happy self.



Despite the fact that overseas Puja is condensed to two and half days from five days (as in Kolkata) the celebration is much more beyond the time constraint. Key motivation behind wearing the traditional Bengali Kurta-pyjama out from the suitcase, fire up the GPS, arrive at the Puja venue is the tonic of increased socialization and strengthen bonds between friends and families. We all celebrate this great festive event of our community together with fun and frolic. Be it for few moments – we keep our minds away from the competition, share markets, globalizations, mergers, acquisitions and enjoy every bit of the jam-packed cultural program.

Shampa Mukhopadhyay



I came to Detroit in Summer 1990 and got involved with Bichitra the same year. In last 33 years Bichitra presented me many close friends who became just like our family members. Thanks Bichitra for gifting us a home away from home !

Sumit Basu - I hope that you are having a wonderful time at the Bichitra Durga Puja celebrations making new friends. I have been associating with Bichitra since the last 5 years. One of my college buddies, Pinaki Gupta, introduced me to this organization. The two little girls in the picture are my daughters- Anooa (Gooni) and Adrija (Gyaani). Gooni and Gyaani like to sing, play with dolls, and are budding artists. I live in Macomb County and work on Data Science at General Motors. Bichitra is like a second family to me. In times of crisis, Bichitra folks have been a huge pillar of emotional support to me.



As a social and cultural organization, we try to keep ourselves connected to our Bengali roots by celebrating all the important festivals and try to maintain our religious and cultural heritage. We try to nurture the Bengali language and dramatics skills of our Bichitra kids by offering language classes as well as cultural events all year round at PathBhaban. As a non-profit, we try to reach out and touch upon the lives of the less fortunate and make a positive impact. We are a close-knit Indian community in Michigan. Come join us, celebrate, and boost the Bengali spirit in you, and help us grow our family.

Kapil Gupta - Associated with Bichitra from 2018

Since 2018, introduced by close friends at first and then got more involved through cricket, picnic and Durga Puja.



Bichitra provides opportunities Bengal and festivals while away from home, socialize and spend quality times with friends and family.

What do you expect next from Bichitra
Grow bigger as an organization, conducting membership drives.

Probir Sil - Involved with Bichitra for around 19 years My reason to join the Bichitra community was more self-centered. I was desperately looking for a community that could give me the feeling of home away from home.



As time progressed, I and my family took it for granted that every year we will get to enjoy the festivities rooted in Bengali culture without knowing how things were managed, but we were happy that we could relive our back home days and were able to give our children some sense of what it means to have Bengali root.

With time, came the realization that this wonderful tradition cannot continue if we just enjoy from the sidelines. It depends on our active participation. It is now my turn to give back to the community that welcomed me with open hands and keep the ball rolling.

Paromita Banerjee



I'm Paromita Banerjee and I have been a part of Bichitra's governing body for the last two years. I also conduct monthly art classes for Path Bhaban.

I work as a Senior Data Scientist at General Motors. Outside of work, I like oil painting, traveling, and reading books.

Manoranjan Santra:



Junior Advisor
Working department of Ophthalmology at Wayne State University.

Maitreyee Paul/ মৈত্রেয়ী পাল

Involvement with Bichitra~ around 24 years!

Motivation reason - Community plays a great part in human life- specifically where we have not much relatives around in this state; so upon moving to Detroit in 1999, within few weeks we were invited at Gopal Roy's home Puja, we met there with Satyen Basu and other then-Bichitra stalwarts. Satyenda took our contact, made and felt us included and this journey began. Following that Novi PathBhaban branch opened under Shampa Mukherjee and Suranjeeta Dhar's tutelage and initiative – my daughter joined there on the very first day and thus grew the bond; Slowly the involvement and eventually manifested in broader Bichitra activities. Later on, I was included in the Governing Body and till this date, continuing this journey.

Day to come - We try to assist Bichitra in every respect with open heart and needless to say, the rate of return is way too high to be appreciated! The bondage and mutual respect have been ingrained now. Finally, I must say my culinary confidence and playground of culinary activities are the Bichitra events...I look forward as my friends are my guineapigs of my Sandesh(LOL)!

Bichitra believes in Growth - Ever-After!



Subinoy Das



I am Subinoy Das and I joined the Bichitra Governing body as an Associate Secretary in 2022. I first came to the US in 2008 and since then I have visited Bichitra Org during Puja on multiple occasions.

I spent my childhood in the historical locality of Barisha, Sabarna Roychowdhury, Kolkata and got blessed to observe the rich heritage of "Atchala *Barir* Durga Puja" closely. The puja which started in 1610, depicts the enigma, bond, culture and profound tradition of Bengali Puja celebrations. Puja in Bichitra not only appealed to me with the "closeness", friendship, *adda*, food, ambience, it also proved to be "home away home". Obviously, I have witnessed some of the great stalwarts of Bengali/Bollywood music industry here during Puja and I have made some great relationships here which will stay with me.

I work with IBM as a Senior Business Development Manager and in my passtime I enjoy sketching, photography. There is another thing which when given an opportunity with the right place and time, I find difficult to resist - dancing with "dhaak". To me "dhaak" resonates the heartbeat of Puja and dancing alongside is an expression of joy, bhakti, love as a tribute to Maa Durga.



Jhulan Chatterjee – Just like “a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step”, so did my journey in Bichitra began with a single step at the 2004 Durga puja and the countless steps continue from then onwards- 19 years and counting.

It's not the number of years that defines our closeness to Bichitra but, the quality. The quality within the people, their warmth, dedication, and their ability to make everyone feel special. In a community of about 600 people at that time, when one feels at home away from home, it means a lot. This sense of belonging made us loyal and dedicated members of Bichitra. In addition to that, every little skill or idea that got shared was taken with open arms, making it culturally rich. In short, we got a community that was real...a combo of ‘tak’, ‘jhal’, and a lot of ‘mishti’.

I hope that Bichitra continues to grow as a family where people feel welcomed and loved. A family where the members can express and participate; making it the strongest Bengali cultural community that our next generations will feel proud to associate with.

Hope people love the first Bengali community, Bichitra beyond words or reasons...just the way we love our family.

PUJO PROGRAM পুজার অনুষ্ঠান সূচী :: ~

FRIDAY OCTOBER 20TH	
6:00 PM	Puja & Arati
7:00 PM	Dinner
8:00 PM	Concert (Auditorium)
SATURDAY OCTOBER 21ST	
10:00 AM	Puja
11:00 AM	Anjali
Noon	Lunch
2 PM	Dance - Avni Rao
	Agomoni Program
3:00 PM	Natok - Durghatona - MILITS
4:00 PM	Natok - Borda Dev Hazra(Chicago)
5:00 PM	Dandiya & Dhunuchi Dance
6:00 PM	Arati
7:00 PM	Dinner
8:00 PM	Concert (Auditorium)
SUNDAY OCTOBER 22ND	
10:00 AM	Puja
11:00 AM	Anjali
Noon	Lunch
2:00 PM	Pujor Adda
4:00 PM	Concert (Auditorium)
6:00 PM	Arati
7:00 PM	Dinner



Cultural Program - সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান

Padmasri Kavita Krishnamurthy-Subramaniam

"Kavita Krishnamurthy's golden voice has given life to many lyrics and screen heroines."

- The Times of India

Kavita Krishnamurthy-Subramaniam, often credited as Kavita Subramaniam, is an Indian playback singer. Born on January 25, 1958, in Delhi, India, she has made significant contributions to Indian film music in various languages, including Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Gujarati, Marathi, and more.

Kavita began her training in classical music under the guidance of Balram Puri, a classical singer. Later, she had the opportunity to work with the legendary Indian composer, R.D. Burman. Her breakthrough came in 1985 with the song "Tumse Milkar Na Jane" from the Hindi film "Pyaar Jhukta Nahin."

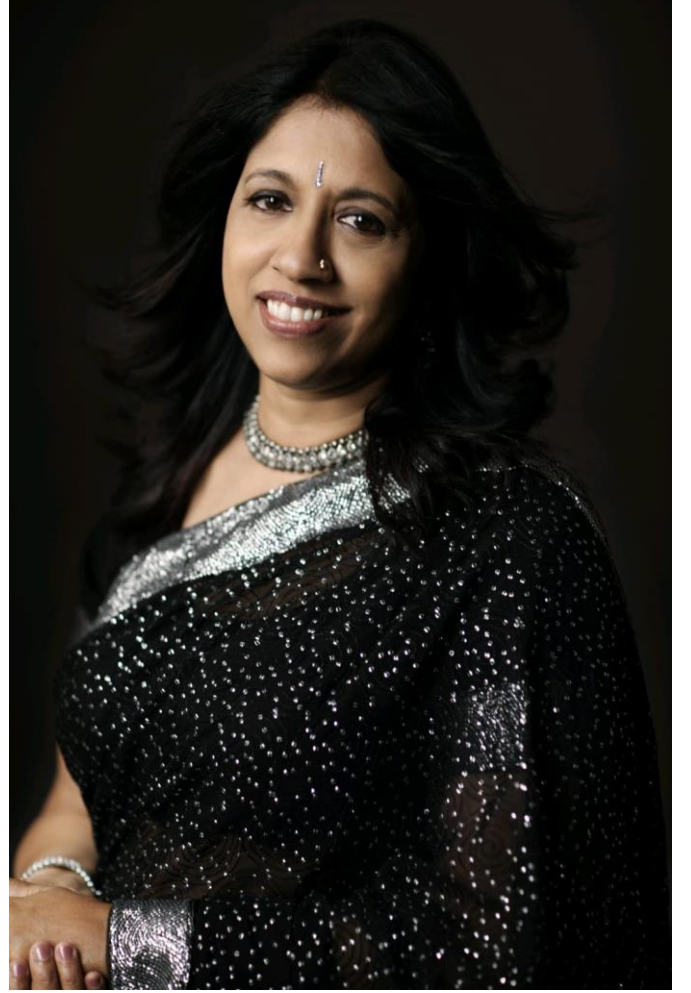
She has worked with many significant music composers, including A. R. Rahman, Ilaiyaraaja, S. D. Burman, and Laxmikant-Pyarelal. She has rendered her voice to many famous actresses in Indian cinema and is known for her versatility and range.

In 1999, she married violin maestro Dr. L. Subramaniam, becoming Kavita Krishnamurthy Subramaniam.

Over her career, she has been honored with numerous awards. She has received the prestigious Padma Shri award by the Government of India in 2005 for her contributions to the arts. She has also been a four-time recipient of the Filmfare Best Female Playback Singer Award.

Outside of her film music contributions, Kavita is actively involved in various philanthropic endeavors. She is a prominent member of the Global Symphony of Dr. L. Subramaniam, which provides free musical education to underprivileged children.

Bichitra is honored to have Kavita Krishnamurthy-Subramaniam performing at Durga Puja 2023 on Sunday 22nd October, 2023.



The Anupam Roy Band - Anupam Roy, Music Director, Lyricist, Singer

Sandipan Parial (Parial), Drums

Nabarun Bose (Nobby), Keyboards/Backing Vocals

Rishabh Ray (Rishabh), Guitars (Electric/Acoustic)

Kaustav Biswas (Rono), Bass Guitar

অনুপম রায় ব্যান্ড

সব বাঙালির কাছে কবিগুরুর "যদি তোর ডাক শুনে কেউ না আসে তবে একলা চলো রে" এই গান একাকী মনে মনে গেয়ে ওঠার কম বেশি অভিজ্ঞতা আছে ।

নতুন প্রজন্মের কাছে সেই রকম একটি গান হলো -

"আমাকে আমার মতো থাকতে দাও ।

আমি নিজেকে নিজের মতো গুছিয়ে নিয়েছি ।

আমাকে আমার মতো থাকতে দাও ।

আমি নিজেকে নিজের মতো গুছিয়ে নিয়েছি ।

যেটা ছিল না ছিল না সেটা না পাও ই থাক

সব পেলে নষ্ট জীবন । "

গভীর ভাবনা কে কি ভাবে সহজ করে বলতে হয় সেটা করতে পারেন আজকের সঙ্গীত শিল্পী অনুপম রায় । তিনি বাংলা গানে কবীর সুমন, নচিকেতা, চন্দ্রবিন্দু এদের যোগ্য উত্তরসূরি । ২০১০ সালে অটোগ্রাফ সিনেমার দুটো করে পথ চলা শুরু ।

নতুন ও পুরোনো সব বাঙালি এখন অনুপমের গানের ভক্ত । অনুপম রায় নিজে গান লেখেন, সুর করেন, এবং গান গাইতে ও পারেন । নিজের গানের অনেক অ্যালবাম রয়েছে । গত দশ বছরে ত্রিশ টার মতো বাংলা সিনেমাতে মিউজিক দিয়েছেন । সৃজিত মুখার্জী, কৌশিক গাঙ্গুলি এদের মতো ডিরেক্টর দেব সাথে কাজ করেন নিয়মিত । বিখ্যাত সিন্ধার অরিজিং সিং ও শ্রেয়া ঘোষাল এরা গান করেছেন অনুপমের সুরে ।

বর্তমানে বলিউডের সিনেমাতে পাঁচটার ও বেশি সিনেমাতে কাজ করছেন । সৃজিত সরকারের হিন্দি সিনেমা পিকু ও অক্টোবর সিনেমাতে মিউজিক ডিরেক্টর হিসেবে কাজ করে সারা ভারতের কাছে তুলে ধরেছেন তার গানের ডালি ।

অনুপম রায় খুব পপুলার ওনার ব্যান্ড এর জন্য ও । সারা বিশ্বে গান পরিবেশন করেন তারা । অডিয়ন্স রা গানে গলা মিলিয়ে গাইতে থাকেন । এটাই অনুপমের গানের বিশেষত্ব যে সকলে তার গানের মর্ম সহজে বুঝতে পারে । মনে হয় এই কথাগুলো তো আমার জন্যই লেখা । কন্ট্রোলারি ও মাটির কাছাকাছি গান বানাতে পারেন। লোকগীতি, কীর্তন, ও অন্যান্য ভারতীয় সংগীতের প্রভাব আছে অনুপমের গানে । কিন্তু একটা স্বকীয়তা আছে -যেটা সবার থেকে অনুপম কে আলাদা করে ।

প্রতিদিন তার গানের মাধ্যমে সাধারণ ছেলে মেয়েদের আনন্দ ও নিজেদের স্বপ্ন বোনার অনুপ্রেরণা দিয়ে চলেছেন ।

তার গানের মধ্যে সবাই খুঁজে পায় এক আরাম - মাটির গন্ধ । তার গানের লেখায় পাওয়া যায় ঘরোয়া সব শব্দ, খাবারের কথা যা আগে সেভাবে আসেনি বাংলা গানে - "যত শুকনো পেয়াঁজ কলি ফ্রিজের শীতে" বা "কত কত দিন কাব্য হীন থেকে যায় ডিমের সাদায়" ।

অনুপমের ঝুলিতে অজস্র পুরস্কার । একটা ন্যাশনাল অ্যাওয়ার্ড আছে প্রাক্তন সিনেমার বেস্ট লিরিসিস্ট । তিনটে ফিল্মফেয়ার অ্যাওয়ার্ডস । মিচি মিউজিক, আনন্দ সেরা বাঙালি, টেলি সিনে অ্যাওয়ার্ড আরো আরো অনেক পাতা শেষ হয়ে যাবে লিখতে গেলে সব ।

অনুপম রায়ের লেখা কবিতার বই আছে সারা রাত কেটে যায় তোর কথা ভেবে ও ছোঁয়াচে কলম ।

অনুপম রায় বাংলা ও ভারতীয় গানের জগতে এক নক্ষত্র ।

বিচিত্রা অনুপম রায় কে এইবারের দুর্গা পূজাতে আমন্ত্রণ জানাতে পেরে খুব আনন্দিত ।

Bichitra is honored to have Anupam Roy Band performing at Durga Puja 2023

on Friday 20th October, 2023.

“Singing was always my first love” - Surangana Bandyopadhyay.

Besides her acting, Surangana has always nurtured her talent as a singer. After singing several hits, she has recently collaborated with Mumbai-based music composer Debanjan Biswas in his first Indian-fusion in Bengali.

She started the career as a dancer. At the age of nine she was a participant and a semi-finalist of the popular dance reality show 'Dance Bangla Dance Junior' in the year 2007-2008. The first film she worked in was Aynate (2008) directed by Dulal Dey. In 2012, she worked in Goynar Baksho (2013) directed by Aparna Sen. She has worked in Open Tee Bioscope (2015) directed by Anindya Chatterjee who is a lead vocalist of Chandrabindoo band and produced by Shoojit Sircar. Recently, she has showed her talent as a lead actress in the movie Ballavpurer Roopkotha directed by famous actor Anirban Bhattacharya in 2022.



Surangana works as a playback singer of several films and short films such as Open Tee Bioscope, Uma, Brahma Janen Gopon Kommoti, Ballabhpurer Roopkotha and more.

Surangana works as a playback singer of several films and short films such as Open Tee Bioscope, Uma, Brahma Janen Gopon Kommoti, Ballabhpurer Roopkotha and more.

Singer Dipayan Banerjee

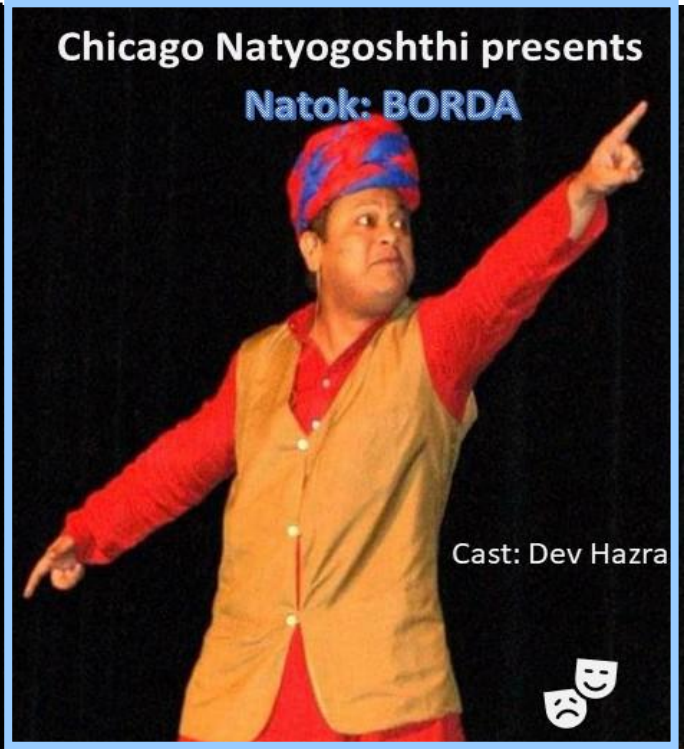
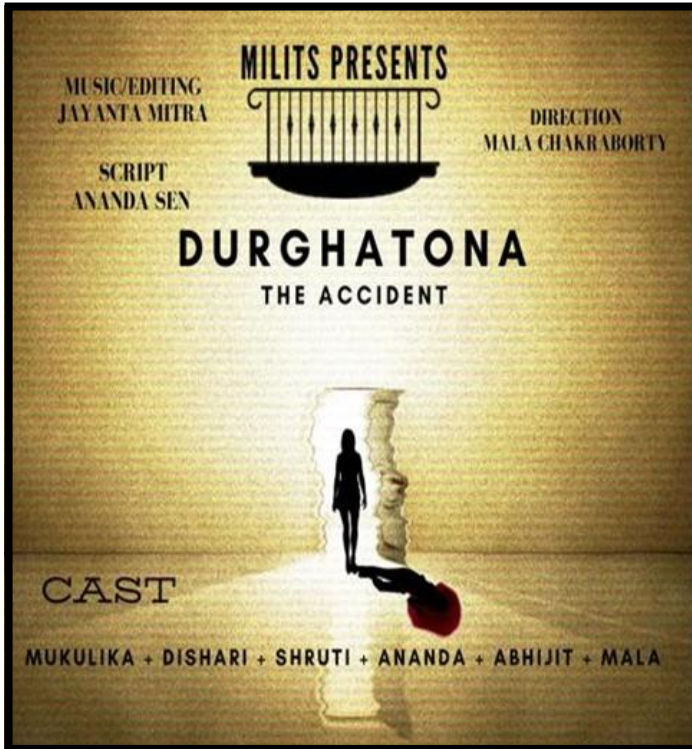
Dipayan Banerjee rose to fame with music reality shows. However, the singer then paved his road to success with serious training in music and hard work. Dipayan Banerjee is an Indian emerging singer and songwriter. He makes his musical albums on YouTube. He participated and selected as top 10 contestant of Zee TV show SA RE GA MA PA 2021.

Dipayan was born in 1992 in Kolkata, West Bengal. Dipayan has been learning music since childhood as he loves music and performed in several theatre productions. He completed his education from Delhi. Dipayan started his singing career in 2013 when he first appeared on Zee Bangla SA RE GA MA PA.

Recently, Dipayan tied up with actress-musician Surangana Bandyopadhyay in a musical collaboration.

Bichitra is honored to have Surangana- Dipayan Duo performing at Durga Puja 2023

on Saturday 21st October, 2023.



NATOK- DURGHATONA (3 PM) **NATOK- BORDA (4 PM)**
SATURDAY OCTOBER 21ST 2023
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Bichitra Dance Group 2023!

*Wish you great success, health,
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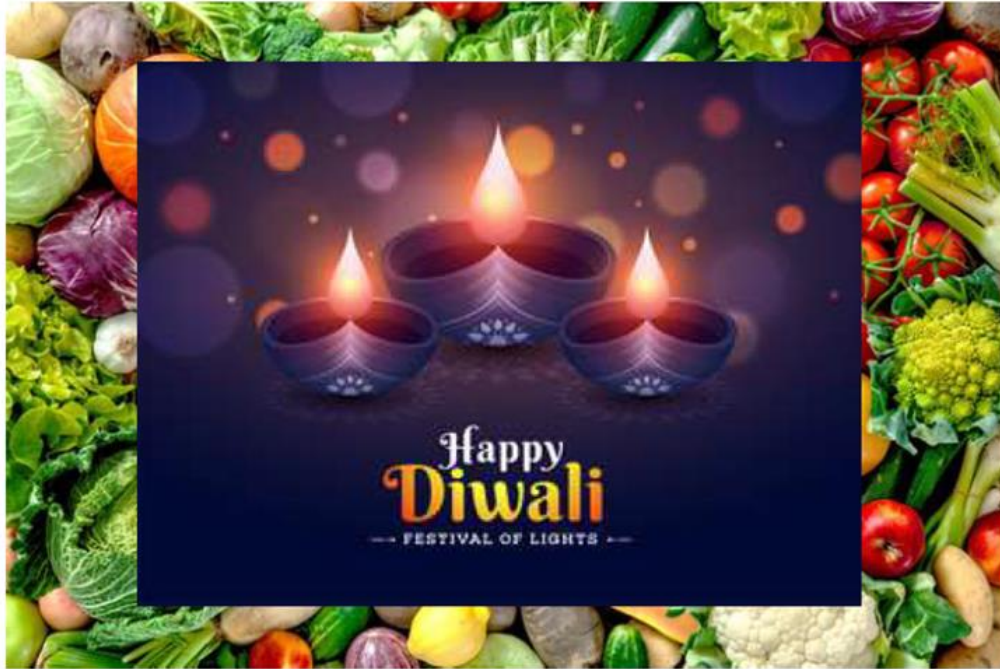
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Warm Wishes to All for Happy Durga Puja



From:

Ryan, Tanuka, Gregory,
Nabanita and Subhash

Wishing you all a very happy Durga Puja 2023
Chandras



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BICHITRA ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE
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BICHITRA ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE (BEC)

Our Mission: BEC helps less fortunate adults and kids in US and India by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors

Our Story: Bichitra Social Service wing has started its journey in 1992 and since then working towards its goal by giving volunteering hours and raising fund to help others who are in need. So far BEC has donated more than \$150,000 to many noble causes and has helped various worthy organizations who are contributing to the total upliftment of humanity.

Our Goal for 2023-24: Increase donation channels; Raise more funds; Expand volunteer base.

Recent Donations:

- ✚ Jeevansurya Hospital (India)
- ✚ Vivekananda Society (India)
- ✚ Aranyer Adhikar (Bankura, India)
- ✚ KBDS - Rebuild a school in Deora Village (India)
- ✚ Covid19 Relief for Kolkata during second wave
- ✚ Grace Center of Hope (Detroit MI)
- ✚ Neighborhood House (Detroit MI)
- ✚ Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries
- ✚ Avalon Healing Services
- ✚ Friendship Circle of Michigan



Club builds toilets for school kids

JHINUK MAZUMBAR

Calcutta: An all women's club set up toilets for children at a primary school in a village in South 24 Parganas because the existing ones were neglected and unserviceable. The toilets and wash basins have been set up at Sadihkhurdard. Five Primary School that has about 100 students up to Class IV, who have again started coming to school after two years of their pandemic. The old toilets were in a ramshackle state and fell into further disrepair in the last two years, a teacher said.

"We had been conducting eye camps and other projects in the school and noticed that they were in need of proper toilets. We decided to build it for them and also installed hand wash stations," said Agula Dutta, who was the president of Rotary Club of Calcutta Aryans till last month.

The inauguration was done last week. Dutta said that the project is part of the water, sanitation and hygiene project of the club. "It is not enough to set up wash basins. We also need to educate kids about hygiene and the importance of washing hands," said Dutta. Most of the children are from underprivileged families whose parents work as daily wage labourers.



Kids use the wash basins installed at the school



Photos for Jeevansurya Hospital (India), Rotary Club (India), Aranyer Adhikar & KBDS -Rebuild a school in Deora Village (India)

Recent & In Progress Events:

- ✚ Raising money through silent auctions.
- ✚ Selling food prepared by volunteers
- ✚ Approaching community members to donate money & Time for the worthy cause
- ✚ Approaching Bichitra Members, especially seniors and youngsters to join BEC as volunteers
- ✚ Arranging fun events for members during Thanksgiving & Holiday breaks
- ✚ Collecting clothing, House Décor, Utensils etc. to sell in events
- ✚ Can Drive, Collecting donation items from vendors, Winter Clothing Drive during Christmas, and Saraswati Pujo
- ✚ Starting discussion about corporate funding with experienced members



Please feel free to contact either Shampa Mukhopadhyay @ (248)-974-7254 or Sampada Banerji @ (678)-427-1088 or Anjan Mitra @ (734) 277-2086 if you have any queries or thinking about being part of this team.





পাঠ ভবন

চল্লিশ বছর আগে পাঠ ভবন শুরু হয়েছিল ট্রয় কমিউনিটি সেন্টারে কয়েক জন ছাত্র ছাত্রী দের নিয়ে মঞ্জু বসু ও মাধুরী হাজারার হাত ধরে।

বাংলা ভাষা /সাহিত্য ও সংস্কৃতির সাথে পরিচিত হতে থাকলো ছাত্র ছাত্রীরা। মা-বাবাদের সাহায্য ও শিক্ষিকাদের সাহচর্যে বাংলা স্কুল পাঠ ভবন ধীরে ধীরে অংকুর থেকে কিশলয়,গুল্ম হয়ে মহীরুহে। সময়ের সাথে সাথে অনেক শিক্ষিকা/শিক্ষিক এসেছেন। তাদের অমূল্য সময় দিয়ে বাংলা শেখানোর চেষ্টা করেছেন। তিনটে ক্যাম্পাস ট্রয়, নোভাই, ও ক্যান্টন - এখানে পড়ানো হতো। সব মিলিয়ে তিন শত ছাত্র ছাত্রী উপকৃত হয়েছে এই পাঠ ভবনের শিক্ষায়। শুধুমাত্র বাংলা শেখানো যে হয় তা নয়, এর পাশাপাশি আঁকা শেখানো হয়। ছাত্র ছাত্রীরা দল বেঁধে নাটক, নাচ ও গান করে বিচিত্রার নানা অনুষ্ঠানে। তারা বাংলা লেখা প্রকাশ করে পূজোর ম্যাগাজিনে। কোভিড এর সময় বাংলা শেখানো থেমে যায়নি। অনলাইনে পড়াশোনা চলছে। বাংলা শেখার নদী প্রবাহিত গত কয়েক চার দশক ধরে।

এই বছর আমরা সকলে মিলে পাঠ ভবনের রুবি জুবিলী উদযাপন করলাম। সারা দিন ধরে বর্তমান ও প্রাক্তন ছাত্র ছাত্রীরা হইহই করলো। তারা মঞ্চে নাটক করলো "রবিবার"। কয়েক জন মিলে কবিতা ও নৃত্য পরিবেশন করলো। পুরোনো ও বর্তমান শিক্ষিকা/শিক্ষিকরা যোগ দান করেছিলেন। সমবেত গান গাইলেন তারা। বিলের ধ্যান ধ্যান খেলা দিয়ে ছোটো দের ব্যায়াম শিক্ষা দেওয়া হলো আর বিবেকানন্দ সমক্ষে অনেক কথা জানানো হলো। মা-বাবারা খুব উৎসাহের সাথে হাতে হাত মিলিয়ে এই অনুষ্ঠান কে সফল করে তুলেছেন। কি সুন্দর যত্ন করে তুলে রাখা পুরোনো ছাত্র ছাত্রীদের হাতের কাজ ও আঁকা। এসব সাজানো হয়েছিলো অনুষ্ঠানে নতুনরা যাতে উৎসাহিত হতে পারে। নিজের বাংলা সংস্কৃতির আরো কাছাকাছি আসতে পারে বাংলা থেকে কয়েকশ হাজার মাইল দূরে থেকেও।

সত্যেন বসু ও বর্তমান শিক্ষিকা/শিক্ষিকরা এখনো পাঠ ভবন নিয়ে স্বপ্ন দেখেন কি ভাবে আরো নতুন ছাত্র ছাত্রীদের কাছে বাংলা স্কুলের কথা জানাতে পারবেন। আপনারা যদি বাংলা শিখতে বা শেখাতে চান তাহলে যোগাযোগ করুন পাঠ ভবনের সাথে। সকলকে শারদীয়ার শুভেচ্ছা।

Bichitra Education Committee

Accomplishments and celebrations:

Path Bhaban celebrated its 40th anniversary on 29th July 2023. Students, alumni, teachers, volunteers, and parents gathered at the Troy Community Center to celebrate the milestone. Troy Mayor and Michigan Congresswoman also graced the occasion. A special Brochure with 44 pages was published for the Ruby Jubilee event. Students and alumni submitted their write-ups and art works for the Brochure. Many alumni shared videos in which they reflected on how the Bangla school had shaped their lives. Students performed on the stage. They participated in drama, dance, recitation, yoga, etc. An educational tour for the Path Bhaban students was arranged at the Natural History Museum in Ann Arbor on 30th July. Current students and alumni who have been associated with Path Bhaban for over five years were awarded. Path Bhaban has also recognized all the teachers and volunteers during this celebration.

Regular Path Bhaban activities:

Regular Canton Path Bhaban Sunday Bangla class continues virtually. Online Art class and Adult Bangla class both are continuing this year.

Challenges:

It's clear that things are not the way they used to be before 2020. Path Bhaban is not an exception. During Covid-19 pandemic, Bangla class also went into online learning mode. There are many benefits in online learning. However, there can be a lack of engagement in virtual classrooms.

Future Plans:

We have observed during the preparation of the Ruby Jubilee event how excited and engaged the students were when they met face to face for the rehearsals. They seemed to enjoy each other's physical presence. Students were able to connect with their Bangla school friends and their bonds became stronger after a couple of in-person meetings. It would be beneficial to the students and teachers if Path Bhaban could adopt a hybrid approach. A monthly in-person class in addition to the online Sunday class would be a better option. Students will get an opportunity to interact and connect with their peers through in-person classes. We can offer small group discussions and introduce Bengali culture. Path Bhaban wants to promote and continue to support children's cultural activities mainly at Bichitra's events and in the local communities. Performing on a stage helps boost children's confidence and unlocks their ability to express themselves around others.

The Education Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank all our teachers, students, parents, volunteers, and donors for their continuous effort, time, and enthusiasm.

শুভ শারদিয়া

Shubho Sharadia

Tanima Basu (Principal Educator)

Tapash Dey (Associate Educator)

Paromita Banerjee (Assistant Educator)



Congratulations High School Graduates 2023

Graduate Name
Parents
Graduated from/school
Going to/College/Post college

: **Apurva Poddar**
: Indrani and Ashish Poddar
: International Academy East
: Michigan State University



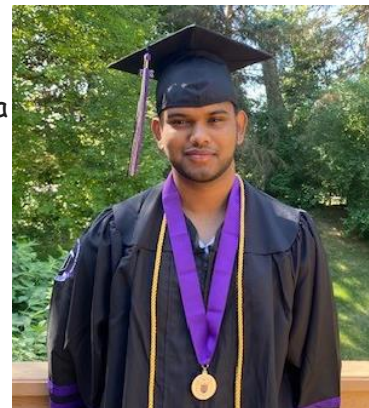
Graduate Name
Parents
Graduated from/school
Going to/College/Post college

: **Ishan Desai**
: Atasi Bagchi and Sheel Desai
: Novi High School
: University of Michigan
Ann Arbor



Graduate Name
Parents
Graduated from/school
Going to/College/Post college
Major

: **Anish Dutta**
: Sanghamitra Sircar & Alope Dutta
: Bloomfield Hills high school
: Michigan State Univ
: Business



Congratulations High School Graduates 2023

Graduate Name : **Ankita Howlader (Sneha)**
Parents : Ratan & Happy Howlader
Graduated from/school : Novi High School
Going to/College/Post college : Wayne State University,
Major : Major in Neuroscience



Graduate Name : **Abhik Goswami**
Parents : Prabhati & Ashis Goswami
Graduated from/school : Novi High School
Going to/College/Post college : Michigan State University
Major : Business



Graduate Name : **Dustin Chandra**
Parents : Siladitya and Sherri Chandra
Graduated from/school : Farmington High School
Going to/College/Post college : Michigan State University
Major : Computer Science & Business



EMERGING PROFESSIONALS

Name : **Dr Soumi Santra MD**

Parents : Sutapa and Manoranjan Santra

MD from Rosalind and Franklin University of Medicine and Science.
Chicago, IL



Name : **Dr. Tanisha Mitra**

Parents : Sarbani and Anjan Mitra

Graduated from A.T.Still University, Arizona

Going to University of Texas, San Antonio

Started Residency from July 2023.

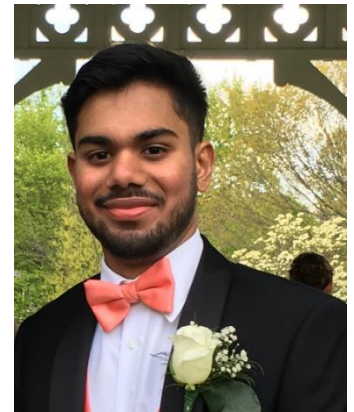


Name : **Pratik Goswami**

Parents : Prabhati & Ashis Goswami

Graduated from University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Bachelor of Science, Computer Science



Name : **Srijani Sengupta**

Parents : Chandrani & Subhajit Sengupta

Graduated from University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Bachelor of Science, Biology, Health, and Society





৪৯তম শারদোৎসব ১৪৩০/২০২৩!

এবং বাৎসরিক "ঐকতান" র "১০"-এ পা !

“অধিক সন্ন্যাসী-তে গাজন নষ্ট” ... মনে পরছে কথাটা?

Know a little folklore behind the Gajon festival!

~~~ as told by Dr. Dharendra Roy



Chaitra Sankranti is a momentous day that almost sneaks past very quietly; this is the last day of the Bengali calendar. Equally quiet is the passing of the week of Gajon, which ends with Charak puja and coincides with Chaitra Sankranti. The folklore and cultural significance behind gajon is fascinating, but it is difficult now to find people within the urban milieu who know of the festival, especially among the millennials and further.

Even people like me who is little over ½ century old hardly recall the painted gajon sanyasi faces and to me they pass like a dream seen 4 decades back...one of the reasons could be the shadowing of the subaltern by elitist culture. In Charak Gajon, mela or, fairs used to be a prime feature, where people gather to celebrate all aspects of the festival. চল গাজনের মেলায় চল.....!

The festival is ingrained to rural Bengal as to what the Themed DurgaPuja is to Kolkata.

Shiva and Parvati (Debi Durga incarnated as Maa Kali)'s marriage ceremony, or, Harakali's marriage ceremony are at the center of the celebration held on the occasion of Chaitra Sankranti, the last day (April 14) of the month of Chaitra, which is followed by Poila Baisakh, or Bengali New Year. On this feisty occasion, village folks atone for their sins and seek divine blessings for a bountiful harvest in the coming year. This is a three-day festival, which is celebrated in Tripura, Assam and almost all Hindu dominated rural Bengal, ending on the last day with some mind-numbing rituals.

The exuberant performers and devotees in costume are often called Gajon sanyasis or [bohurupis](#), some even refer to them as shawng (সং) or jesters. The roar or garjan of the devotees accompanied by drums and trumpets is often attributed to the origin of the word Gajon. The other theory is the combination of Bengali words gna ( গাঁ= village) and jan (জন=people) and for a festival that brings together communities associated with deities such as Lord Shiva, Neel, and Dharmathakur

Gajon sanyasis, with painted faces and costumes, were often seen on Kolkata streets singing Gajoner gaan even until a few decades ago, but not so much anymore.

In an 1833 journal article written by Dewan Ramkamal Sen, secretary of the Asiatic Society, the author mentions the rituals, writing, "The word Charak is derived from Chakra or Charaka, which means a circle, and is used to signify moving or swinging in a circular direction; Charak Sanyasa implies leaving off worldly business, living abstemiously, observing austerities, for the propitiation of Siva."

Each locality has a set of rituals, some common and some different, that might be interesting to see but not are not for the weak hearted. The traditions of Charak Puja involve worshipping the charak or gajari tree and devotees piercing themselves with sharp objects like hooks or long needles as an act of penance. The melas are usually organized on open fairground and see the participation of different ritualistic communities of all nearby villages.



Many of the rituals involved in Charak are performed as acts of penance and are not for the weak hearted. Seen a Hindu devotee, during Charak Puja festival at a village in Barpeta district of Assam last year, nailed.



This festival of Bengal involve pantomimes in colorful costumes by devotees and daring rituals.

Devotees paint their faces to dress as gods and mythological characters and sing songs known as 'Gajaner gaan'

Courtesy- Plabon Das, Debasish Bose



*The typical scene at a Charak fair!*

In some cases, mothers bring infant children to be blessed by the sanyasis. Like with many such festivals in India and around the world, the devotees are oft-heard saying that they are in a trance when performing these acts. Many such daredevil acts — including rituals with fire, being pierced by arrows and lying on a bed of nails — are

part of the rituals for the festival.

The acts were once seen as a way for peasants to gain the respect and favor of landlords. During the British Raj, official orders prohibited the piercing of bodies and hook swinging in public. The festival continued despite the ban, but over time the acts of self-inflicted pain reduced and the traditional public show — shawng, bohurupi or pantomime — were seen more.

Notable places to feel the prime Charak Gajon festivities in Bengal are::

- Krishnadebpur near Ambika Kalna- Bardhaman
- Shantipur in Nadia
- Gurudasnagar near Diamond Harbour
- Bijna village near Halisahar
- Gangatikuri village near Katwa in East Bardhaman
- Bagnan in Howrah
- Baruipur
- Joynagar-Majilpur



গাজনের ঢাকি





গত আট বছর ঐকতানে'র কাজ করছি, আপনারা যারা বিচিত্রা'র পরম অনুগামী, সবাই জানেন প্রতি বছর আমাদের শ্রদ্ধেয় শ্রী ডঃ ধীরেনদা'র লেখা পূজাসংখ্যার ঠিক মধ্যের পাতায় থেকে পূজা'র লেখাকে কতটা আকর্ষণীয় করে তুলত! আমার সত্যিকারের পরম সৌভাগ্য ছিল প্রতিবছর তাঁর লেখা পাণ্ডুলিপি কে লেখার রূপ দেওয়া- এই সূত্রে তাঁর সাথে আমার প্রতি পূজো'র আগে রোজ ঘণ্টাখানেক কথোপকথন হতো!

পূজাসংখ্যা-র এই নাম “ঐকতান” তাঁর-ই দেওয়া!

বলাই বাহুল্য, তাঁর অসীম বাংলা ও ইংরেজি জ্ঞান মাপার ও বলা আমার পক্ষে অসম্ভব!

এই বছর কেউ ফোনে আমায় বললও না...” এই যে মৈত্রেয়ী এবার কলম কাগজ আনো “...তাঁর অনুপস্থিতি ও হাস্যমুখের ফোন পূজার আগে'র এই হাল্কা দুপুরের রোদে, ঝরা পাতা র সাথে একটা বিরাট শূন্য নৈঃশব্দ্য! ২০২২ এর সেপ্টেম্বরে গতবছরের ডায়েরি তে লেখা আছে, উনি তখন হসপিটালে চিকিৎসাধীন ছিলেন, এত ভালবাসতেন নিজের কৃষ্টি, বাংলাদেশ-কে, বাংলা-কে, আমায় বলেছিলেন কয়েক-টা নোটস...আমাদের অতি পরিচিত উৎসব “গাজন ও চরক” এর ওপর, আর বলেছিলেন সেদিন

“ যখন সময় পাবে মৈত্রেয়ী, এটা শেষ কোরো ”

My tears rolling, I do not know Dhirenda...but I'm sure there must have been some uncanny connection of us in past life that YOU had been so kind to teach me the fundamentals....so here it is for YOU to read and confirm if I have done it right, as YOU would have always validated every year thus far!  
Hope I could fulfill your command!

*You had an unique hearty smile, that was contagious to all,  
With a heart of gold that never falls.  
As my teacher role model, you set the bar so high,  
Recall that you taught me all I can do is keep head high and try!*

২০২৩'এর পূজার প্রণাম নেবেন, ইতি, মৈত্রেয়ী

## মিলন

### চন্দ্রা নাথক

অচিন্ত্য ট্রেনে করে মা ও বাবার বাৎসরিক কাজ করার জন্য গয়া রওনা হচ্ছে । ইচ্ছা সেখান থেকে কাশী ও হরিদ্বার হয়ে নিজের কাজের জায়গায় ফিরবে । সে দর্শন শাস্ত্র পড়ায় একটা কলেজে । বিয়ে থা করেনি । যাকে সে ভালোবাসতো সে তাদের সমান জাত না হওয়ায় বিয়েটা আর হয়ে ওঠেনি । এক কথায় তার বিয়ের ফুল এখনো ফুটলোনা । কাজ সেরে সে কাশী ও হরিদ্বারের পথে রওনা হয় । যদিও এই উত্তরা খন্ডে সে বছবার এসেছে । নানা ধরণের সাধু, সন্ত সে খুব পছন্দ করে । মনে তার খুবই অনুসন্ধিৎসা যে কিসের টানে তাঁরা ঘর সংসার ছেড়ে সাধু হয় । এবার কুম্ভ মেলার যোগে সারা পৃথিবী থেকে প্রায় লোকজন এসেছে । বিভিন্ন সম্প্রদায়ের সাধুরা ও সন্ন্যাসীরা ও এসেছেন । "হর কি পেয়ারী "র ঘাটে সঙ্ক্যায় বেদগান ও বৈদিক মন্ত্র উচ্চারণ করে যখন "মা" গঙ্গাকে আরতি করা হয় , সে দৃশ্য এক দেখবার মতেন । আলোয় আলোময় হয়ে ওঠে ।



অচিন্ত্য চেয়ে থাকে সেদিকে আর ভাবে হয়তো কোনো দিন পারিজাতকে একসময় মনের মানুষ ছিল দেখা হয়ে যেতে পারে । অচিন্ত্য এখনো পারিজাতকে ভালোবাসে । সুদীর্ঘ ত্রিশ, পঁয়ত্রিশ বছর কেটে গেছে । সে আর পারির সাথে যোগাযোগ রাখে নি ইচ্ছা করেই । যতদূর জানে সে সুবিমলের সঙ্গে ঘর করছে । আর কিছু জানে না বেশী । দিনের বেলা পাহাড়ের দিকে ঘুরে বেড়ায়, রাতে গঙ্গা মাইয়ার আরতি দ্যাখে । একদিন হটাৎ একটা পাহাড়ের গুহার কাছে এসে দ্যাখে একজন সাধু প্রায় বছর ষাট, পঁয়ষট্টি বয়স তামাটে রঙ বসে ধ্যান করছেন । অনেক জন সমাগম হয়েছে । খুবই নাম করা সাধুজী । মাথায় লম্বা জটা গায়ে কোনো বস্ত্র নেই । শুধু কৌপিন, একটা চিমটে আর একটা বুলি । সাধুবাবা ধ্যানে মগ্ন । এত লোক সমাগম কিন্তু সাধু বাবার চোখ বন্ধ ।

কি আশ্চর্য্য এই খানে হটাৎ অচিন্ত্যর মনে হলো পারির মতো কাউকে দেখলো সে ।

কাছে যেতেই বলল - কি তোমার নাম পারি ? পারি বলল - তুমি অচিন দা ?

- আমি আজ পঁচিশ বছর আমার নিরুদ্দেশ হয়ে যাওয়া স্বামীকে খুঁজে বেড়াচ্ছি । আজও পাইনি ।

অচিন্ত্য বলল সে কি? এত কিছু ঘটে গ্যাছে ?

তারা দুজনে সাধু বাবাকে জিজ্ঞাসা করল - বাবা আপনার নাম কি? আপনি কোন সম্প্রদায়ের সাধু? কেন সাধু হয়েছেন? সাধুবাবা হিন্দিতে যা বললেন - তার বাংলা করলে হয় - তিনি নানা সম্প্রদায় ভুক্ত । আমি নিজের ইচ্ছায় বাড়ী ছেড়েছি - আমার গুরু দেহ রেখেছেন । তাঁর কাছেই আমার শাস্ত্রশিক্ষা । আর আগের কথা সাধুদের বলতে নেই । এটুকু জেনে রাখিস ।

পারিজাত বলল অচিন দা এই সাধুর পিঠের ডান দিকে একটা মস্ত বড়ো জরুল, এসো দেখে যাও । আমার মনে হয় ইনি আমার স্বামী ছিলেন । সুবিমলের পিঠেও ঠিক এই জায়গায় এমন একটা জরুল ছিল । দাড়ি , গোফে , জটায় ভর্তি সাধু বাবা কে চেনা যাচ্ছে না ।



- আমি বলছি ইনিই সুবিমল ।

এই সাধু বাবার এখন নাম গিরি বাবা । উনি বিভিন্ন জায়গায় ঘুরে ঘুরে বেড়ান । পারিজাত বলে অচিন দা ওনাকে আর কিছু জিজ্ঞাসা করবো না ওনাকে ওনার সাধনার পথে তপস্যা করতে দাও । আমি বাধা হয়ে দাড়াবো না । এই বলে কাঁদতে কাঁদতে পারিজাত চলে যাচ্ছে - এই সময় অচিন্ত্য বলে -দাঁড়াও আজ আমি এতদিন পরে তোমাকে দেখলাম আর তুমি স্বামীকে দেখতে পেলে । বলুন আর না বলুন তুমি চিনতে পেরেছো । আজ সন্ধ্যায় আমরা আরতি দেখব - কেমন ?

**প্রশ্ন**

**চন্দ্রা নায়ক**

মা মনোরমা কে ডাকলো - রমা এদিকে আয় বাবাকে এক কাপ চা করে দে - রমা বলে আমি পারবো না তুমি বড়দিকে বল - মা এক প্রস্থ খুব বকাবকি করল - বড়ো মেয়ে পদ্মা সবসময় মায়ের ফাইফরমাশ খাটে  
- সে এগিয়ে এসে বাবাকে চা করে দেয় । রমা একটু কুঁড়ে , দেখতে সুন্দর, ফর্সা ।  
ভাবে তার বিয়ে বড়দির আগে হয়ে যাবে । মা বাবার ও খুব চিন্তা হয় । বড়ো মেয়ে  
পদ্মা অত দেখতে ভালো নয় । কিন্তু খুব গুনের ও কাজের । লেখা পড়ায় মাথা নেই  
অত ।



বিয়ের সময় হল । পদ্মাকে দেখতে এল । তাকে দেখে পাত্রপক্ষ এর খুব পছন্দ হয়ে গেল । ছেলে অত টা দেখতে সুন্দর নয় । তবে খুব কর্মঠ ও গুনের । নিজেদের কাপড়ের ব্যবসা । এদিকে রমার বিয়ের সময় হলো । তাকে পাত্র পক্ষ কেবল পছন্দ নয় বলে যায় । মা, বাবার চিন্তার শেষ নেয় । শেষ পর্যন্ত একজন ছেলে শ্যামলা রঙ, মুখ চোখ সুন্দর রোমা কে পছন্দ করে গেল । যথা সময়ে রমার বিয়ে হয়ে গেল । শাশুড়ী অসুস্থ থাকায় রমা কে সংসারের সব দিক সামলাতে হল । যদিও সংসারে চারজন লোক তাকে নিয়ে ।

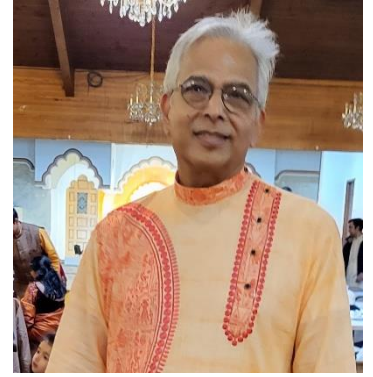
একদিন ভাত নামাতে গিয়ে হাতে ভাতের ফ্যানে হাত পুড়ে যায় । সে কিছু করতে পারে না । শাশুড়ী খাবার পায়না ঠিক সময়ে । স্বামীর রমার ওপর একটু রাগ হোল । রমার স্বামী সুকান্ত রান্না করতে জানে । কোনো রকমে সেদ্ধ ভাত করে সকলের মুখে খাবার তুলে দেয় । পরের দিন দ্যাখে সুকান্ত এক ভদ্র মহিলা কে বাড়ী নিয়ে আসে রান্না করার জন্য যে কদিন রমার হাত না সেরে ওঠে । এই মহিলার সঙ্গে একটি বছর পাঁচেকের বাচ্চা ছেলে ও আসে । বাচ্চা ছেলেটির নাম বাবলু

- রমা জিজ্ঞেস করে তোমরা কোথায় থাকো ? বলে ভাড়া বাড়িতে । জাননা বাবা আর আমার মা ও আমরা সবাই তো একসঙ্গেই থাকি । রমা একটু অবাক হয় । বাবা,মা তো এক সঙ্গেই থাকবে । এ আর নতুন কি আছে ? সুকান্ত কে আঙ্গুল দিয়ে দেখিয়ে বলে ওইতো আমার বাবা । রমা অবাক হয়ে যায় । তার স্বামী ছেলেটির বাবা - তাহলে কি সুকান্তর আর একটি বিয়ে আছে ?

## Arranged Marriage

### SuSanta Sarkar

Arranged or not? Let's ask the guru, chatGPT, what is an arranged marriage. Here is its answer!



*“Arranged marriage is a cultural practice in which families or matchmakers choose spouses for individuals based on a variety of factors, such as social status, education, and family background. While arranged marriage may not align with certain Western cultural norms, it is a common practice in many parts of the world and has been for centuries. In terms of natural selection and evolution, arranged marriage may not necessarily go against these processes. Natural selection is the process by which certain traits become more or less common in a population over time based on their ability to aid in survival and reproduction. Arranged marriage does not necessarily prevent individuals with advantageous traits from reproducing and passing on those traits to their offspring. That being said, arranged marriage can potentially limit the genetic diversity within a population, which could have negative consequences in the long term. Additionally, arranged marriage can lead to individuals being paired with partners who they may not be compatible with, which could have negative effects on their mental health and overall well-being.”*

Well, do you agree with the answer. I would say it needs improvement!

First of all, arranged marriages are not one size fits all. To give you a couple of examples, do you think prince Williams and Kate's marriage was arranged? You probably know Harry's was not! Now, I am not going to bring up which one is successful so far, we will talk about that little later in the write up. Yes, there are marriages still being arranged in villages of India where the groom and bride meet for the first-time during marriage ceremony! By google search the rate of separation of such arranged marriages are lower than not arranged ones! Interesting, isn't it? I did not say those are happy marriages or not, mind it!

Arranged marriage in this day and age may involve some other parties suggesting a suitable match considering partner's background and most cases followed by one-on-one meeting. In not arranged marriage, the would-be spouses may fall in love at first or subsequent sight while in college or high school or church or concert hall or more likely in a bar. The bar encounter could be happening while slightly inebriated state, in a dimly lit establishment imagining the would be romantic partner, as very close cousin of Tom Cruise or younger version of Meryl Streep. There is no third party involved. The folk wisdom says, one's heart will seek out the right mate. But here is a curve ball, per Google, seeking to meet someone on a dating app accounts for over 30 percent of people looking for romance. Sometimes, these apps claim to be intelligent, artificial kind. Scratching my head to figure if that can be labeled arranged or not?

Now that I have elaborated on arranged and not arranged marriage, let's get to the improvement part.

The opposite of arranged is random or haphazard, something like that. So, do you think majority of marriages in USA are not arranged? Remember, the guy, from a middle-class family, has to always at least



meet the girl's father! And the girl has to meet the boy's mother! Often wondered, why the mother is not the gate keeper for the Romeo, sorry I digress! If there is some discord in these meetings a lot of family drama ensues. Remember Harry and Megan! But the point is, it is not completely random or haphazard even in marriages that are not arranged.

Coming back to disagreement with ChatGuru. **The first disagreement is this:** *...While arranged marriage may not align with certain Western cultural norms.* Well, King Charles, sort of, had an arranged marriage with Dianna. So did Prince William. And average middle-class families practice some form of arrangement in their marriage process. So, it is not entirely out of norm for western culture to half align with arranged marriage. Oops, the example of King Charles does not go hand in hand with happy marriages, does it? But King Charles's first marriage was arranged, none the less!

**Second disagreement:** *That being said, arranged marriage can potentially limit the genetic diversity within a population, which could have negative consequences in the long term.* I think it is completely opposite. Arranged marriage tries to prevent the bad effect of gene incompatibility. My argument against this is, if one excludes tribal marriages, which I agree limits the gene pool, then this statement holds no ground. Per Indian custom, professional match makers look at, cultural and family background. Some professional matchmakers, not the ones popular in TV shows, keep generational information about successful marriages and health and well-being of progeny's, from details based on family, clan (Gotrom), location, etc. To make sure about compatibility, they use birth chart as a unique record locator! They try to prevent bad outcomes regarding mental and physical health. In this context, note that in Silicon Valley there is preponderance of children with ADHD, related to bunch of very smart people falling in love at first sight and marrying! So, sorry chatGuru, I don't buy this statement!

**The last sentence is hard to wrap one's head around:** *...Additionally, arranged marriage can lead to individuals being paired with partners who they may not be compatible with, which could have negative effects on their mental health and overall well-being.* As I outlined above in match making, they look at the compatibility based on not only the individual, but family, social standing, education, etc. I am not sure how this statement arrived at. Could not find any example of this in current time. But, in not arranged marriages I can site plenty of incompatibility. If you have sneaked out to Hindi movies in your teenage years, the majority of movies were based on rich guy falling in love with dirt poor girl or other way round. In the whole movie the hurdles the hero and heroine had to go through can be dealt with only by Bollywood heroes and heroines with divine powers. Can you handle villain Pran's cunning? You are not Dharmendra or Hema Malini, are you? So, success of getting married with such incompatibility is close to zilch!

But I can give a very successful example of arranged marriages. Have you watched Mrs. Sudha Murty's interviews about marriage?

**About the Author** - *After working for a very long time Susanta Sarkar retired from being an Automotive Engineer. Since then, he plays a lot of tennis, reads a lot of short stories and novels, and tries to play musical instrument and sing.*

## ***Where the Sky Meets the Earth***

***Tanima Basu***

While visiting Monument Valley, the 17-mile loop road which just reopened during the pandemic, we experienced the vastness of nature with our eyes. This place is called Navajo Nation's Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park. Monument Valley (Navajo: Tsé Bii' Ndzigaii, meaning valley of the rocks) is located on the Arizona and Utah state line of the United States of America. Navajo Nation is one of the largest native American reservations in the US. We have witnessed one of the most majestic places on earth. This great valley boasts sandstone masterpieces that tower at heights of 400 to 1,000 feet, framed by scenic clouds casting shadows that graciously roam the desert floor. The angle of the sun accents these graceful formations, providing scenery that is simply spellbinding. The red soil always attracts me and reminds me of my homeland. I grew up in the state of West Bengal in India. My hometown is in the district of Purulia. We have red earths. This laterite is both a soil and a rock which is rich in iron and aluminum.



The landscapes of Monument valley overwhelm all of us, not just by its beauty but also by its vastness. The fragile pinnacles of rock are surrounded by miles of mesas and buttes, shrubs, and trees. This valley presents magnificent colors and shapes. This is really a beautiful land.

Natural processes started way before, even before human existence. This Park was a lowland basin. For hundreds of millions of years, materials that eroded from the early Rock Mountains deposited layers of sediment which cemented a slow and gentle uplift, generated by ceaseless pressure from below the surface, elevating these horizontal strata quite uniformly one to three miles above sea level.





This basin became a plateau. Natural forces like wind and water that eroded the land spent the last 50 million years cutting into and peeling away at the surface of the plateau. The simple

wearing down of altering layers of soft and hard rock slowly revealed the natural wonders of Monument Valley today.

There are many landmarks in Monument valley such as the East, West Mittens, the Merrick butte, the Totem pole, the North window overlook, the Three sisters, the Elephant butte, the Artist's point. If you come near to these landmarks and close your eyes, you will feel the existence of an almighty or something powerful. It is a sacred place indeed. Sunrise in the early morning is a

magical event in this valley. When first sunrays fall onto red rocks of the desert the entire place looks marvelous. You can enjoy different shades of red because light reflects in different angles looks marvelous from these curves of the canyon which were sculpted over the years. The desert offers different vistas when the sun is on the middle of the sky. The angle of the sun accents these graceful rocks, providing scenery that is simply awesome. The dry and dusty desert is wild in the winter days.

Monument valley is unique because of its archaeological and cultural intrigue. Navajo Tribes live in this land. It was amazing to explore that Navajo peoples are 'luchi' lovers like us. They call it 'Frybread'. It's like unsweetened funnel cake, but softer and thicker with a lot of air bubbles and greasy. The size is bigger than our luchi and it is served by cutting it into four pieces. Traditionally, it is served with honey or powdered sugar. The ingredients are the same as flour, salt, and water. They use lard also. One of the slices of frybread has 700 calories and 25gm of fat. This food habit has caused diabetes pandemic and obesity in the reservations. Similarly, diabetes is very common in India because of the carbohydrate enriched food. The history of this frybread is attached with perseverance and pain. Navajo frybread originated 144 years ago, when the United States forced Red Indians living in Arizona to make the 300-mile journey known as the "Long Walk" and relocate to New Mexico. This new land couldn't easily support their traditional staples of vegetables and beans. To prevent the indigenous populations from starving, the government gave them white flour,



processed sugar, and lard—the makings of frybread and canned goods as well as There are some other cultural similarities among indigenous people (red Indians) and Asian Indians. During springtime, regional people of West Bengal celebrate folk festivals by doing song and dance festivals attached to the celebration of Lord Shiva during ‘Charak’ festival. The Charak, derived from the word ‘chakra’ or the wheel, represents the movement of the Sun. It is symbolized by a high pole,



from which the devotees hang suspended from iron hooks, as a symbolic sacrifice to Lord Shiva. They take fasting all day and walk on the red-hot coal pieces with bare feet. Devotees pierce their tongue, skin of the upper chest or upper back with sharp objects. Similarly, these types of practice are present among red Indians in the United States. It is known as “Sun-dance”. When practiced, self-mortification was generally accomplished through piercing: mentors or ritual leaders inserted two or more slim skewers or piercing needles through a small fold of the supplicant’s skin on the upper chest or upper back; the mentor then used long leather thongs to tie a heavy object such as a buffalo skull to the skewers. A dancer would drag the object along the ground until he succumbed to exhaustion, or his skin tore free. Piercing was endured by only the most committed individuals; it was done to ensure tribal well-being as well as to fulfill the supplicant’s individual vow.

The Monument Valley portrays the beauty of nature, packed with scenic vistas in all directions. This is the place where the Sky meets the Earth. It’s more than just a visual treat, it uplifts your soul. These magnificent mountains teach us humility and gratitude the best. I immediately time travelled to the motherland when I touched and smelled the red soil.



# REMEMBERING MY FRIEND



In the dimmed, soft glow of my study, surrounded by books and memories, I find myself reflecting on my dear friend, Dharendra Roy.

Sounds of his heartfelt laughter and serious arguments are still echoing in my ears, and now, all that's left are the haunting memories of his vibrant presence. Dhiren-babu, as I used to call him, was not just a friend, to me he was a well-wishing brother and the stitching in the tapestry of our group, binding us all together, irrespective of age-difference. During our 22-year long friendship, I had the privilege of knowing him in diverse social circumstances, and never saw him lose his temper or raise his voice.

Irrespective of our differences of opinions- and there were plenty of those - we enjoyed each other's company with mutual respect. He was proud of his ancestry and quite often talked about his life in Brahmanbaria, Agartala, Kolkata and Germany, his parents and grandparents. His narratives often were so vivid that an inspired listener could have, if so desired, collected these to eventually publish as Dhiren babu's memoirs.

Dhiren-babu didn't have any enemy. His optimism was unparalleled. He was passionate about his profession and that was amply evidenced by his dozen or so technical patents. He was always ready to explain to others his opinions with great enthusiasm and sincerity. I have many fond memories of our friendship - especially spending numerous evenings with him over a cup of tea or a glass of wine, reminiscing about events of our lives and often arguing on any topic - technical, political or even personal.

His sudden departure has left a void in us. The days feel emptier, the nights longer, and laughter a bit more forced. Yet, in the midst of this grief, his lessons resonate even more profoundly.

Dhiren-babu may not be physically present, but the essence of his personality lives on in the stories we share, the memories we cherish, and the lives he touched.

\*\*\*\*\*

Jay Chakraborty September 27 2023



## Thakurbaba- the twice refugee teenager...

By: Kripa Bandyopadhyay

It was time again to think about what I would write for this year's Durga Puja Brochure. Many ideas were coming to my mind, but nothing was really sticking. Finally, I looked over some old papers where I had interviewed my grandfather when he was in a pensive mood, and I chose to narrate my Thakurbaba's story about escaping a war-torn Burma and becoming a refugee for the first time in 1942. Although, he and his family had become refugees for the second time in 1947.



As a child I was often intrigued by the fact that every member of my family had baby photographs, some in color and some in black and white, but no childhood photographs existed of my maternal grandfather (lovingly called Thakurbaba). Later I found out that he was a child refugee who fled war-ravaged Burma during World War II and again from East Pakistan, after the partition, never going back to the countries he fled from. On the morning of December 7<sup>th</sup>, 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. And, on December 8<sup>th</sup>, 1941, America, under President Roosevelt, and Great Britain declared war on Japan, marking the US' entry into World War II. Thousands of miles away, this event would change the destiny of my mother's family forever. I had the opportunity to interview my then 87-year-old Thakurbaba about his six months ordeal leaving Burma during World War II.

Thakurbaba and his extended family lived in Rangoon, (now called Yangon), the capital city in southern Burma for 3 generations. He said, "the news was that the Japanese were going to invade Burma from the South and Rangoon was their first target." The Japanese forces were quickly gathering strength in Southeast Asia and reports were coming in daily, that they were winning against McArthur's forces, so an attack on Burma was imminent. "So, the whole family decided to move to Maubin," a town west of Rangoon. "One fine December day, after school, I found out that we were moving to Maubin. I went and said goodbye to my buddies, and we left our home on Thomson Road, not realizing that I will never go back again."

The news about the northward aggression of the Japanese from the Philippines was in the air. "We again decided to move, this time a little North to a place called Henzada (now called Hinthada), but that too was not safe. My father and my uncle decided that we should move further north to a place called Allneyo on the river Irrawaddy." The Japanese were quickly moving North covering a lot of grounds and the British were no match. "We moved again, this time by steamer on the river Irrawaddy. It was a beautiful journey; although there was a war happening, the trip was a very peaceful one." In retrospect, this was probably the calm before the storm; "We



reached Mandalay (the second largest city in Burma) and stayed there for a few weeks in a beautiful house, but my mother and grandmother became petrified when they found the house infested with dead and living rats; ‘a sure sign of Plague’ they said.” At that time there were reports of the Plague in rural Burma.

The elders were extremely frightened by the Plague; “The family packed everything up and decided to leave Mandalay and move to a hill station called Maymyo.” Maymyo was a picturesque town in the Shan highlands in northern Burma. Amidst its beautiful flora and fauna, the family thought it was a safe place. “There were periodic air raid sirens and when that happened, we all went to the jungle to hide.” Soon the city of Rangoon fell to the Japanese who destroyed its port and oil refinery; “News came that the Japanese were further advancing northward, and in the house, with the help of locals, we started digging up a L shaped slit trench overnight, making a trench roof of logs covered with sandbags.” The intent behind the L trench was to hide from the Japanese bombers in the event they would come to bomb. My family likely thought the frequency of bombing would increase, and they were right.

The bombing soon began; “I vividly remember one morning the siren going on and we ran to the trench. I looked up and I saw the silver wings glistening in the sun. Soon the bombing started. Every time the bomb fell, the whole trench would violently shake. It was very frightening.” Thakurbaba and his family eventually came out after an all-clear siren; “I went outside to check on our neighbors and all I saw were dead bodies lying on where a bomb eventually landed, just a hundred yards away from our trench. Had the bomb landed on our trench, we would have all perished.” Maymyo, the sleepy town, was now a ghost town. Being a curious teenager, Thakurbaba wanted to take a piece of bomb shrapnel home as a souvenir, however “it was so sharp and hot that it almost ripped off my finger and I got into a big soup as everyone hollered at me!” he smiled, nodding his head as he reminisced.

The family now had to leave Maymyo, "but the problem was getting a train reservation." There was a war, and so everything was disorganized, and resources were scarce. “We had to go back to Mandalay to catch a train and head further North.” At this time, they were driving towards Mandalay. “When we were nearing Mandalay, the city was burning. The houses in Mandalay were made of wood and the British were following ‘the Scorched Earth Policy’ and fleeing north to a place called Michina.” Houses were set on fire so that the Japanese could not use the land's resources when they captured it. Michina (spelled today as Mytkyina) was the northern-most river port and railway point in Burma.

Each person was allowed to carry a shoulder bag weighing no more than two kilos. The journey of five hundred miles, which usually took a day by train, took several days to complete; “It was a horrific journey! When the train engineer heard the noise of aircrafts, he would stop the train and we would leave and go to nearby villages to get temporary shelter in the thick tropical under growths below the tall trees.” The Japanese would carry out massive carpet bombing in the area trying to destroy the infrastructure, “but luckily our train was spared every time. We saw

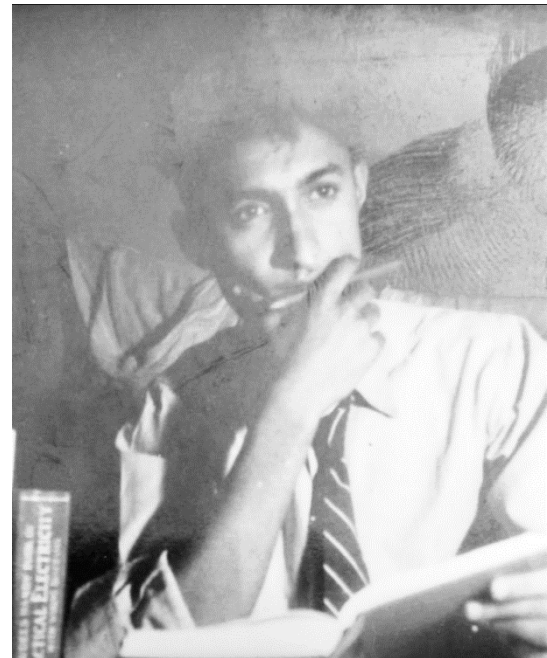
countless bodies on the way strewn by the railroad's tracks." The situation was also worsened by a cholera epidemic, "fearing drinking the local water; my father would go to the engine room and get hot boiling water for us to drink" as cholera was a water born disease.

They reached Michina and stayed in a refugee camp where "the houses were made of bamboo slates with a very flimsy cover. We had to stand in a long line every day to get food like rice and lentil soup." This was a real hand to mouth existence. "One day in May we were told that we were to be relocated to India by air. We were packed in a jeep and sent to the nearest makeshift airstrip", an open space and runaway made of steel slates organized by the USAF. The planes were Dakotas flown by American pilots. "When we arrived, the plane's propellers were rotating as it was ready to depart, so we were quickly put onto the plane, squatting on the floor as it was packed like a cattle wagon. This was our first air journey, and I was 14 years old."

"The two-hour flight landed in Dinjam in Assam, northeast India. We were now refugees at the mercy of God and the Government." During this time, the government was slow to respond to the needs of the civilian refugees; "The government gave us pillows and blankets and food for a week." They were taken to a school in Tezpur, Assam. Finally in May 1941, they boarded a steamer on the river Brahmaputra and left for Chittagong in Bangladesh; "We finally arrived at our ancestral home much to the relief of the family, who were anxiously waiting for us every day for several months."

Every time I see a picture of a curious child refugee in the news, I think of my Thakurbaba who overcame tremendous hardships and challenges during his teenage years. Like many refugee children he was homeschooled, and later moved away from his family to study Engineering at Jadavpur and then at Glasgow. My Thakurbaba became philosophical and told me, "My grandmother, your great-great grandmother, always said 'never underestimate the power of your faith and your prayer' for it is by divine blessing that all of us miraculously survived the 1940s and did well in life."

So, I hope, one can understand why he is my hero and inspiration!



Shri Gopal Krishna Chakrabarti  
(pic @ Jadavpur Engineering College, 1947  
April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1928 - August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020



# NATURE'S BEAUTY CAPTURED IN MY MIND AND MOBILE

GARGI SRIMANY



Sultanate of Oman, located on the Southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula shares its land borders with Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen while shares its maritime borders with Iran and Pakistan. Due to its geographical location at the arid and semiarid belt of



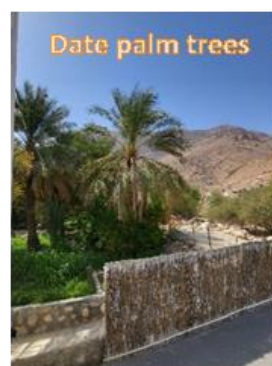
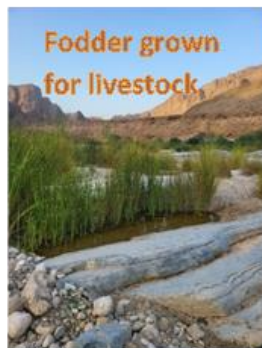
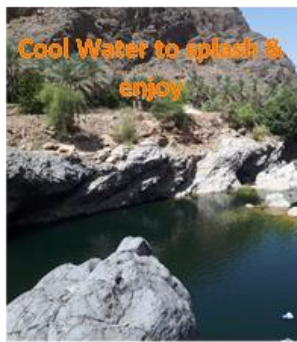
the globe, it is classified as an arid country. But it is full of varied and attractive landscapes with unspoiled wilderness provides outstanding leisure opportunities.

If any long weekend arrives our minds run fast to visit the beautiful places which are abundant near Muscat, the capital city of Oman. And really such an opportunity arrived on the last weekend of September 2023 and we a group of 5 friends visited Wadi Al Arbeien located in Al Sharqiyah region of Oman in our 4WD car. Wadi, is a term derived from the Arabic language and can be translated as a valley or ravine. Wadi Al Arbeien is about a distance of 127 kms from Muttrah, a center of commerce, one of the largest seaports of Oman.

The sea-green, clear, cool water of the wadi, the greenery, the rugged mountain cliffs, the scorching sun during noon and soothing calmness of setting sun in evening, the cool breeze with moon sight in the clear blue sky at night – all different natural phenomena enriched our mind and soul and aroused our willingness to capture vast different scenes in front of our eyes with our simple mobile phone cameras.



Our entire day and night stay in Wadi Al Arbeien will remain in our mind for long and one most important message that I want to spread is to Save and Protect Our Mother Earth for the survival of Mankind.



# Mango Pickle

-by Harshil Pathak

“Please go inside. I don’t think I will be able to come early. Two lanes are already closed due to construction and there is an accident on the only open lane. Even ambulance is not able to reach to them.” Arjun’s voice had a mixed feeling of anger and frustration.

It’s been more than 15 years since Arjun and Geet dated each other. Now they both have stable careers and that is why they have decided to inform their parents about their desire to marry each other. Geet was meeting Arjun’s mom for the first time, but Arjun got stuck in traffic so bad that it seems impossible for him to be there on time. And now he is convincing Geet to go inside his house and meet his mom without him.

“I am not going by myself.” Geet gave a straightforward response.

“But you have been waiting for an hour already. What is the point of sitting inside your car while it is parked right outside my house? Please go inside. I will call mom to open the door for you. And anyway, she must be waiting for you. You should not be late.” Arjun did his very best to convince her.

“She is waiting for both of us. And what am I going to talk to her about?”

“I don’t know. You both are ladies. You can talk!” Arjun said that. I didn’t. Please don’t judge me!  
“Go, start walking and fix our marriage so you can scold me for your whole life. I am calling mom”  
He hung up.

Geet sat there speechless and had no choice left. She looked at herself in the car’s mirror one last time. She adjusted her *bindi* and took a deep breath, got out of her car and started walking towards the main gate.

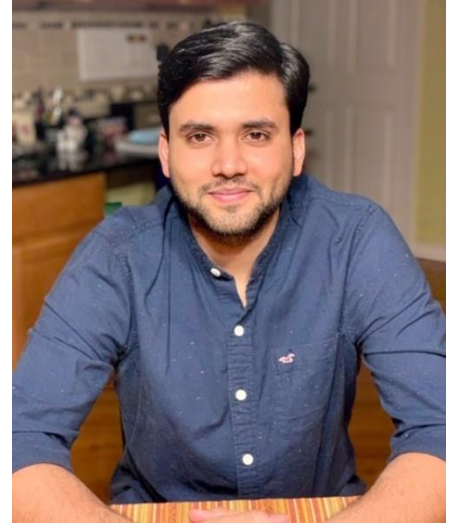
“Why are you not coming home? Tell her she can come some other time when you are home.”  
Rekha, Arjun’s Mom, asked her son a bunch of questions.

“Please let her in maa. Please make her comfortable. I will come as soon as I can.”

“But what am I going to speak to her about?”

“I don’t know. You both are ladies. You can talk!” Again, Arjun said that. I didn’t. Please don’t judge me!

Rekha opened the door. She saw Geet was walking towards her. Geet saw Arjun’s mom standing on a door looking at her. She smiled but Rekha was still talking, “Oh this skinny girl is Geet?”





“Mom! Please don’t say it loudly. Just let her in and make her comfortable. Bye!” Arjun started praying.

“Hello Rekha aunty. I am Geet, Arjun’s friend.” Geet greeted awkwardly.

“You can call me *auntyji*. Please take off your shoes by the door and come in.” Cold response from Mom. Sorry Auntyji.

Geet followed what Rekha said and went inside.

“Please take a seat, I will get some water for you.”

Geet tried to say Thank You, but Rekha was gone before that.

“What kind of friend do you have. She didn’t even touch my feet.” Sound of a disappointed mom.

“Mom she is a nice girl.” Typical son response.

“Why didn’t you touch my mom’s feet?” Geet received a text message.

“I tried! I will explain it to you later.”

Rekha brought water and put it on a table. “I was going to call the cops.”

Geet’s eyebrows raised, “Why Aunty? Is everything alright?”

“Yes. I didn’t know it was you who parked outside our house. I was a little bit concerned.” Boy’s moms always love to do such things to their girlfriends.

Geet smiled awkwardly. That’s all she can do right now.

“So how long you guys know each other since?”

“From high school. More than 15-16 years by now.”

“Oh! You guys have known each other for that long. That is almost more than half of your life.” That was said in a sarcastic tone. Rekha turns on the fan’s switch. But it didn’t turn on. “Oh, this fan again!” She sounded disappointed.

“What happened Auntyji.”

“This fan is misbehaving nowadays. Sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn’t.”

“I think the capacitor needs to change. Do you have extra?” Geet puts her glass back on the table.

“Yes, I have extra. I called the electrician yesterday. God knows when he will come.”

“I can fix it. It is very simple. Why do you want to pay someone for such easy job?” Geet stood up.

“Geet, we are talking about fixing an electrical item. Men can do these things better. It is their daily job.”

“My dad is an electrical engineer. He has always done and fixed our home’s smaller electrical issues. I always help him and learned from him. Trust me aunty...ji, I can fix this if you don’t mind.” Geet’s voice was full of confidence.

Rekha gave her an extra capacitor, small ladder, required tools, and a thumbs up sign. Geet used all and fixed the fan, and asked Rekha to turn it on. She did and it worked. Rekha had a little smile but faded away quickly. “So, you are an electrician?”

“No Auntyji, I am a copywriter in an advertising company.”

“Is this your actual job?”

Geet nodded.

“How much does an advertising company pay you? Are you not looking for any stable full-time job?”

“Actually! This is very stable and very flexible as well. I can work from anywhere. And I can choose my own time too. I do write a novel on side. This job gives me enough time to do that. And because of this job I do lot of freelancing work too in this field.”

“What freelancing work?”

Geet looked at the TV. Rekha was watching one of the Indian daily soaps. But, because of Geet she muted the TV. “Do you watch this show?”

Rekha looked at TV, “Oh yes! ‘Main Barbaad Hoon’ (I am Broke) is my all-time favorite show.”

“I wrote their title song.” Geet explained her freelancing work, I guess.

“Oh!” Rekha understood. “But the main guy of this show is not broken yet. Please ruin his life so it justifies the title.”

“I am not the lead writer, but I know them. I will give them your suggestion.” Geet was laughing inside.

“Arjun will be late. Let's have dinner. Come.” Rekha invited Geet.

Rekha had everything ready on the dining table. Geet realized that she prepared everything for them. Rekha put a mango pickle on Geet’s plate. She immediately dipped her finger and licked it, “Hmm! It still tastes the same!”

“Wait a minute! Have you had this before?” Rekha was surprised.

“Actually! Amm!” Geet blubbered. “Arjun brought it in a school one time. So, I had it from his lunch box.” Awkwardly answered.

“Oh! You guys have known each other for that long. I must say you have a good memory. Only had it once in school time and still remember the taste.” Rekha back to being sarcastic.

“Arjun brought it once, when he came to visit me at my college in Jodhpur.” Geet added more details.



“So, your name is Vishal.”

“Sorry?” Geet was confused.

“Arjun told me he was meeting his friend Vishal in Jodhpur, and he will miss my food, so he wanted to pack some mango pickle with him. Kids now a days are bad liars.” Rekha started eating.

“So how do you make this pickle Auntyji?” Geet trying to cut the awkwardness.

“It is a long recipe. Before that Arjun will bring it you.” Rekha playing offensive.

Geet smiled awkwardly and started eating.

After dinner they started walking towards the porch. Rekha asked Geet to take a seat on a swing. “You know, Arjun was only 8 years old when his father died. He was a government officer, so I got his job. Because of that we never had to face any financial crisis. I made sure that Arjun gets good education, and for that I gave him everything that he needed. I have only him. I did my struggle, so he didn’t have to go through it. And I just wish good for him. I never said no to him for anything. If Arjun wants to spend his life with someone, I thought that person should know all this.” She was looking directly at Geet.

“I do respect your struggle Auntyji. Arjun is always talking about it and we both are very proud of you. I will make sure that your relationship with him will always stay strong. I will never bother you two. Just like how you fulfill all his wish, I will do that too.”

“What?” Rekha interrupted. “Why would you do that? I never said no because he is my son. He is not your son. It will be his job to say yes to his life partner for everything. That’s what I taught him. Wives should demand, husbands must fulfill. I have done that. I am sure your mom has done that too.” Rekha put her hand on Geet’s hand, “Arjun has mom. He needs life partner.”

Geet’s face showed she was not expecting this answer from her.

Rekha gave her a small jar. “What is this Auntyji?”

“Mango Pickle. I can see you love it. So, I thought I should give you this time as Arjun is late. But next time when I make it, I will need help. That way you can get a recipe too. Anyway, I will have to forward it to the next generation.” Rekha smirked.

Geet had a little smile. She looked down due to shyness while holding a jar with both hands.

“How is everything going?” She received a text from Arjun.

“Take your time. Everything is fine here.” She responded with a red heart emoji.

“Oh Auntyji! Is this the radio Arjun gifted you on a Mother’s Day few years ago?” Geet pointed at the radio on a table next to swing by Rekha’s side.

Rekha looked at the radio, “Oh! You guys have known each other for that long. You even know that this radio is a gift from him. Let’s play it and see what song it plays.” She pressed the play button.

Radio played ‘*Uthe sab ke Kadam, dekho rum pum pum, kabhi aise geet gaaya karo. Kabhi khushi kabhi gham, tara rum pum pum, haso aur hasayaa karo*’ from *Baton Baton Main* movie. Both Rekha and Geet were enjoying the song as the swing slowly moved back and forth, following the rhythm. Trapped in traffic, Arjun had no clue that Geet had just fixed their marriage.

# Durga Googley.

By: Subhadra Bandyopadhyay

## Down

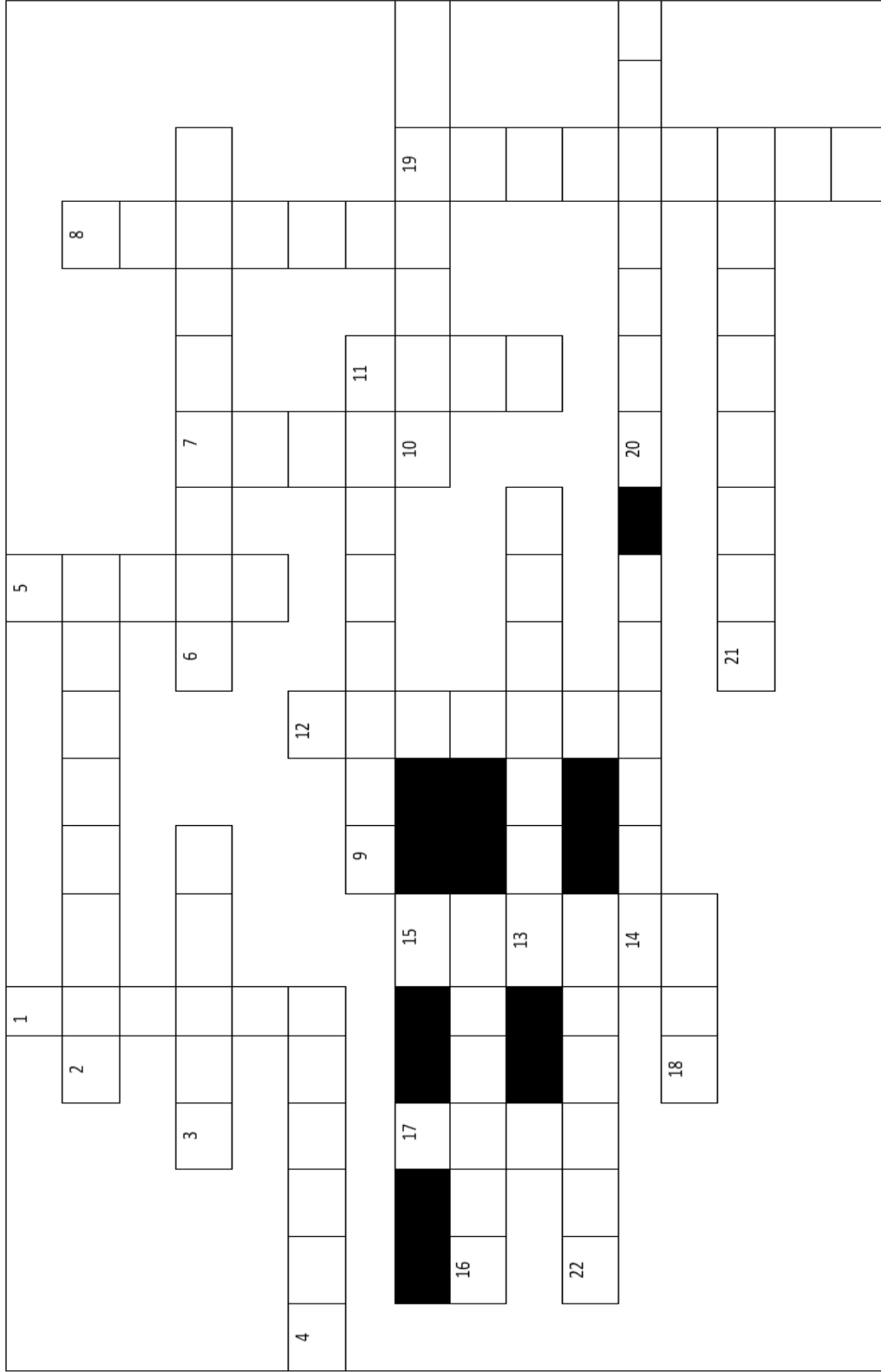
1. The giver of wealth
5. The fair one
7. The eternal one
8. The daughter of the mountain
11. The mother
12. The giver of life
15. The victorious one
17. The virtuous one
19. The one worshipped by sage Katyanan



## Across

2. The killer of the demons Chanda & Munda
3. The delicate one
4. The beautiful one
6. The one with 3 eyes
9. The great illusion
10. The mother of the universe
13. The triumphant one
14. The enlightened one
16. The fearful one
18. The peaceful one
20. The benevolent one
21. The one with severe penance
22. The picturesque one





**Answer Key**

1. Dhanya, 2. Chanmunda, 3. Tanvi, 4. Lalita, 5. Gauri, 6. Trinetra, 7. Nitya, 8. Parvati, 9. Mahamaya, 10. Ambika, 11. Amba, 12. Bhavani, 13. Jayanti, 14. Yogini, 15. Vijaya, 16. Chandi, 17. Sati, 18. Uma, 19. Katyayani, 20. Kalyani, 21. Mahatapa, 22. Chitra

## ফিরে দেখা

সেদিন ছিলো কত হাসি মোর আঙ্গিনায়,  
আজি সে স্মৃতি পর্যবসিত শুধুই বেদনায়।  
তোমার হাতে ছিলো চাবুক জোড়া,  
দুর্বীর বেগে ছুটত তখন টগবগিয়ে ঘোড়া।  
আজ আফিমের নেশায় বঁদ নিস্তেজ যেন মৃৎপ্রায়,  
অস্তিত্ব ফুরালে, করো না কেউ হয়, হয়।  
ক্ষণ তিষ্ঠকাল তরী আসিবে তীরে,  
মিলে মিশে হবে একাকার জনসমুদ্রের ভীড়ে।  
কিছুই তো যায়না সঙ্গে নয়কো একটুকরো সুতা  
'ফির ভি ইয়ে দিল কিউ রোতা!!'  
জানা, অজানা তার কাছে আছে সবার স্থান,  
ফিরে আসুক আন', রেখো না মুখটি স্নান।

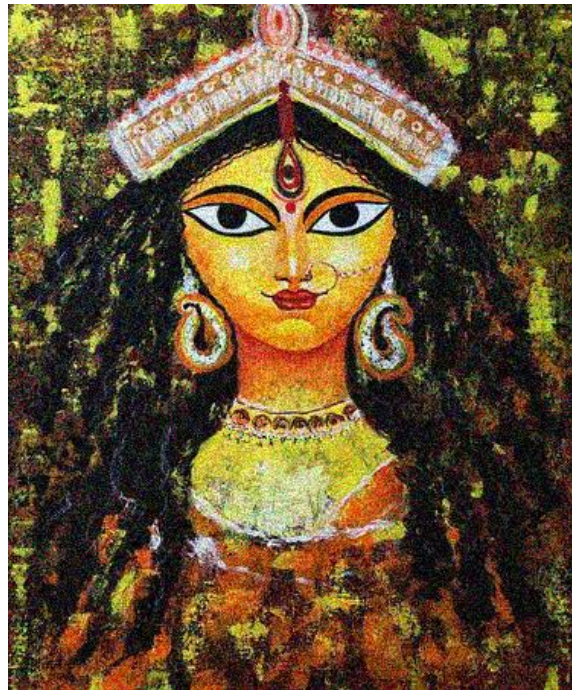


অদिति বিশ্বাস

হাকিমপাড়া, শিলিগুড়ি

জেলা-দার্জিলিঙ, পশ্চিমবঙ্গ

ভারত





# শুভ দুর্গা পূজা

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# ছোটদের পাতা

VACATION DESTINATION: PURI

Mihika Das, 13 years

This summer, I visited India after seven years. I was excited to come back after so long. The last time my family went to India, we visited another state besides our home state, which was Goa. Similarly, we planned to do the same this time. Puri, Odisha was our vacation destination.



The standout part of this trip was the sea. The first day after we arrived in Odisha, my younger sister begged me to go swimming in the sea. The warm water of the Bay of Bengal surprised me, especially when compared to our freezing Great Lakes. The sea was also so much more forceful than the Great Lakes. I remember মেসোন peacefully sitting down in the water until a wave came and knocked him over. We all laughed at him, but some of our family also attempted sitting. At least, that was before Mama yelled at us to stand up. One fun thing was jumping over the waves. We had to get the perfect landing, or else we'd fall over. My মনি-মা insisted that we go to the beach at night, which, to me, was a very unusual thing to do. Unlike what I thought, the sea wasn't that entertaining at night. However, the things on land were fun to watch. There were dozens of crabs on the beach. If we were far enough, they'd pop out of their holes in the sand and shift around. If we got too close, they'd scurry back into their holes. মামাই managed to catch a crab under his foot, despite how fast they were.

One of my favorite parts was the night bazaar. There were so many little shops set up on the beach with colorful umbrellas covering almost all the shops. It was crowded with stalls and people. I bought four shells from these stalls. Three were for my friends, along with one for myself. It was interesting watching Mama, মনি-মা, and মিমি arguing with the shop owners to lower the price on some random item, even though it was much cheaper than things in America. I, for one, would've gladly bought whatever I wanted and given the money, because at least it's not as ridiculously expensive as US souvenirs! We also strolled around on the streets of Puri. I got a nice dress from a shop on the street, which I wore on the first day of school. I also rode my first Toto and Auto in years! It was nice to be sitting in one of them again, holding the handles attached to the roof, with no doors to block the view out the side of the vehicle. No regrets.





Before we left Puri, we also went to the Sun Temple at Konark. It's probably my favorite ancient structure I've seen. It's massive, with most of it still standing. It's crazy how quickly roads deteriorate these days, and we see these buildings that are 500+ years old, still standing tall. We also went to the Jagannath Temple. The lines were massive, and we got a tour around the temple.

after visiting the Thakurs. We got a glimpse of the cooks who made food for the Thakurs every day. I thought it was crazy how all the utensils that the cooks used one day couldn't be used again the next day. There was also a priest who we gave our names and addresses to. While we sat down and talked with him, there were many small monkeys running around that scared Baba. Sisi had lots of fun laughing at him.

We had an Airbnb by the sea. When we looked out the window, the sea would be in sight. There were even small balconies for each floor of the huge house! We ate so much food here that it was hard to eat the next meal. Nevertheless, we always ate the next meal because it tasted good (obviously). We had a nice ride back to Kolkata on the Vande Bharat Express. Before the train took off, Baba took me to the head of the train to take pictures. Apparently, as Baba later explained to me, this was one of the best trains in India. It was sufficiently cooled and the view outside the window passed by quickly. It was a very fast train. Before we knew it, we were back in Kolkata. Though I do love Kolkata very much, visiting Puri was an unforgettable experience that I would recommend to anyone.



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# My Experience at Bichitra's Durga Puja

(By Aditya Chandra)

Last year my dad volunteered as the treasurer of a non-profit Bengali organization, called Bichitra. Bichitra does five main events, the biggest being Durga Puja. It is a two-and-a-half-day event starting on Friday evening and ending on Sunday night.

My dad said that he had to go at 6:30 in the morning. I was amazed that he was making that commitment because he absolutely loves to sleep, especially on weekends. The same goes for me as well! On Friday night, I asked him out of curiosity and amazement if I could go with him on Saturday and he said, "Sure, if you can wake up on time."

I took that as a challenge. The next day I was so excited about going, that I woke up at 5:30 AM! One whole hour before I was supposed to, but then I kept taking small naps every ten minutes till 6:00 am and then I woke up at 6:00 am because I was afraid that if I took any more naps, I would sleep till 7:00 am. I was very glad that I was able to meet my goal.

We got ready and reached the Duga Puja venue at 7:20. Initially, I sat at the front desk with my dad while he was working. Soon I was bored out of my mind. But one of my dad's friends kindly gave me the job of sorting out the meal tickets to save space in the small box that they were being stored in. I made sure to organize the different colored tickets with rubber bands in a group and everyone at the front desk appreciated my effort.

In a couple of hours, a lot of people started to pour in. Many of them seemed unsure of where to go. So, I started helping people by providing them directions to the puja and lunch location. This continued for a while. At lunch I volunteered to serve people with a spoon and napkin neatly put on their plates. People were so impressed that they started taking pictures of me!!!

After lunch I was finally able to get a break to go back to the front desk to sit down. It was exhausting to stand around for so long. When I got there and saw some kids playing behind me, I started to play with them, and we became good friends and had a lot of fun together. I look forward to seeing them again this year!

One week after the event when I came home from school, I saw a certificate on my desk!!! I asked my dad if it was real, and he said yes! I was overjoyed! I didn't even know that I was going to get anything. I simply wanted to help my dad and Bichitra. This year I am going to volunteer again and am looking forward to it!



## BUDDING ARTISTS



Anoova (10 years )



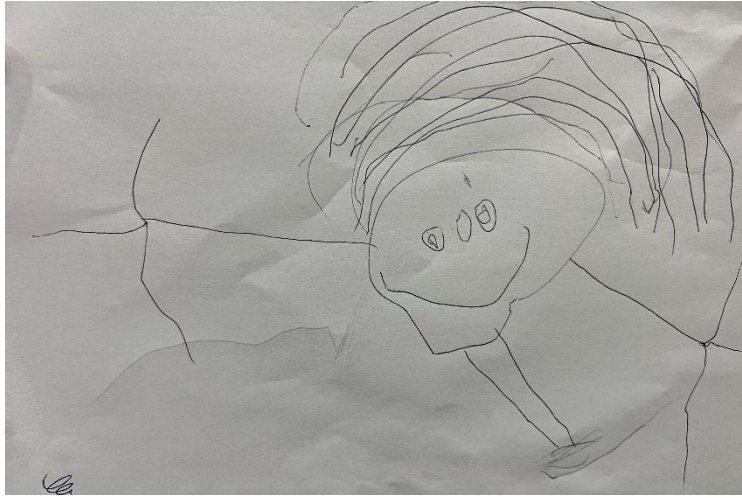
Adrija ( 8 yrs)



Irsia Ball (11 yrs)

Artwork: The Roar





Karina Bhattacharyya Kahlon, (4 yrs)



Sahana Bhattacharyya Kahlon (8 yrs)



Annika Bhattacharyya Kahlon (10 yrs)





Ishana Das (10 yrs)



Aariya Roy (6 yrs)



Teesta Banerjee (7 yrs)



Sohan Chandra

## How do the lessons taught in Hindu epics help us in today's world?

Almost everyone has heard of the Ramayana. The moving story of Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu, rescuing his wife, Sita, from the clutches of the demon king Ravana is told throughout our lives. After being exiled for 14 years, Rama, Sita, and his brother, Lakshmana live contently in the forest until one day when Sita is snatched by the demon, Ravana. Rama goes on a quest to bring her back. Another example of one part of a revered story is in the Mahabharata, telling the story of the war between the Pandavas and Kauravas. They are cousins from the Kuru clan that are fighting for the throne of Hastinapur. The story of the war ends with the Pandavas winning, but not without losing some of their own.

These two widely known stories have given us so much insight into our traditions and culture, but their benefits don't stop there. Many lessons taught in these stories are still relevant today. They can teach us defining traits, such as loyalty and courage, and good acts/morals, such as being kind to your elders and not giving up. For example, in the Ramayana, the story goes on because of Rama's loyalty to his wife, Sita, and his determination to free Sita is a testament to his perseverance. Finally, his willingness to follow the deities' judgment at the end of the story is a reminder of the significance of justice. In the Mahabharata, during the Kurukshetra War, which goes on for 18 days with a huge death toll, Krishna and the Pandavas eventually win, but not without casualties. The moral of the story is not only to never give up, but to stay focused on your goal, and remember that through hard work and sacrifice, any battle can be won. Most dismiss these stories as a legend, or something taken from childhood we have heard in some way, but there are many lessons taught through the stories, and these values can still be applied to modern society. As we encounter new experiences and opportunities throughout life, remembering our culture and stories can help guide us in our decisions and how we interact with people around us.

**Aurel Chatterjee**



# Robotics <3 <3

My name is Aarushi Chatterjee and I love to do robotics. Last year was my first year ever doing it and it was so fun that I am doing it again this year. Last year my FLL robotics team's name was the Electra Girls because the topic of that year was ENERGY. In FLL robotics you build a robot and program it to do missions, which is called a robot run. You also do a project where you



try to solve a problem that is related to the topic. Our team did 5 missions in total. For our project we did a short skit about our idea. The idea was that solar panels on roofs are really hard to clean when snow or rain gets on them. Our team designed a floating boat mechanism that would replace a pool cover. We built a model of it and showed it to experts and users to get their feedback. It was so fun, and we all had a great time. This year our team's name is the GearBox Girls and our topic is ART. For our robot run we do 10 missions in all. For our project, the problem is that bleachers at swimming competitions are hot, uncomfortable, and overall disgusting. Our team's solution was a portable chair that had a detachable fan that also mists you, a renting system, a cold gel seat and much more! This year for our skit we are doing mixed-up fairy tales. I am so excited to continue doing robotics next year too. Hope you like my experiences with robotics. Have a great festive season.

**Aarushi Chatterjee**

# NEWBORNS



Name : Deanna Malik  
DOB. : December 02, 2022  
Parents : Soumyajit Malik &  
Sonantika Saha Malik



Name : Riaan Banerjee  
DOB. : June 24, 2023  
Parents : Neha Chatterjee and  
Rishi Banerjee  
Grand Parents : Anuradha and Ramu  
Chatterjee



Name : Desmond and  
Emiliano  
DOB. : 31st August, 2022  
Grand Parents : Manohar and Rina  
Das

# WEDDING ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Kayley Chandra married Mack Daniels in June 2023.**

Parents: Siladitya & Sherri Chandra





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*Dr. Dhiren Roy*



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Doting Father to Anindya and Angkana,  
Forever encouraging Father-in-law to Sumita and Michael  
and  
the most supportive Dadu to Aarush,  
Aakash, Ashaan, Avi and Aariya

**ডঃ ধীরেন্দ্র চন্দ্র রায়**





**HE LIVED HIS LIFE SO PRECISELY WELL!**

**HE WAS SURROUNDED BY HIS ENTIRE FAMILY UP TO HIS LAST BREATH AT HIS HOME IN PLYMOUTH.**

**DHIREN ROY WAS MOSTLY KNOWN AS DHIRENDA/KAKU TO ENTIRE BENGALI COMMUNITY OF DETROIT AREA. WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF BICHITRA. HE WAS THE TREASURER OF BICHITRA ORGANIZATION DURING 1975-1976 FISCAL YEAR. HIS PASSION AND LOVE FOR BICHITRA'S PROGRESSION WAS WELL KNOWN AND HIS PERSONAL ENCOURAGEMENT TOWARDS EVERY ONE OF THE COMMUNITY TO BECOME A PART OF THIS ORGANIZATION IS A HALLMARK.**

**BORN IN BRAHMANBARIA, KUMMILA, THEN BRITISH INDIA. DURING 1947, MIGRATED TO AGARTALA WITH HIS FAMILY. LATER JOINED THE RAMKRISHNA MISSION AT AGARTALA AND FINISHED HIS SCHOOLING. THEN CAME TO CALCUTTA AND JOINED VIDYASAGAR COLLEGE. IN 1962, HE LEFT INDIA AND CAME TO GERMANY, BERLIN. HE JOINED THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF BERLIN, WHERE HE FINISHED HIS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING DEGREE. LATER IN 1970, HE RECEIVED A DOCTORAL DEGREE IN CHEMICAL ENGINEERING FROM THE SAME UNIVERSITY. HE WAS ALWAYS PASSIONATE ABOUT HIS PROFESSION AND THAT WAS AMPLY EVIDENCED BY HIS DOZENS OF TECHNICAL PATENTS WHICH WAS APPLIED TO MANY FORD MOTOR CO VEHICLES.**

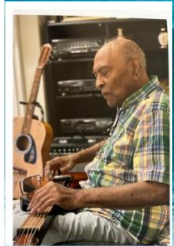
**HE WAS EXTREMELY PROUD OF HIS ANCESTRY AND HERITAGE AND ALWAYS LOVED TO TALK ABOUT THEM. OFTEN, TALKED ABOUT HIS GRANDPARENTS, UNCLES (MAMA) AND OFF COURSE ABOUT GERMANY. HE ENJOYED TALKING ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD MEMORIES.**

**AN ENIGMATIC PERSONALITY WHO VALUED EDUCATION THROUGHOUT HIS LIFE AND ENSURED HIS CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN UNDERSTOOD THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION.**

**HE ENJOYED PARTIES! BOTH AS HOST AND GUEST. MOSTLY HE USED TO LOVE HAVING FRIENDS OVER HIS HOUSE, HAVING GOOD FOOD ALONG WITH GERMAN BEER AND MOSTLY DEBATING ABOUT ANYTHING - IT COULD BE POLITICS, EDUCATION, OR ANY OTHER TOPICS.**

**HE FOLLOWED THE PRINCIPLE "WRITE AND ABIDE BY WHAT SHOULD NOT BE FORGOTTEN"! AND HIS PASSION FOR MUSIC WAS WELL KNOWN TO HIS PEERS AND ADMIRERS AND PLAYING HAWAIIAN GUITAR WAS HIS IMMERSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH INTELLECT.**

**DHIREN WILL BE ALWAYS MISSED BY HIS FAMILY, FRIENDS, RELATIVES, AND MANY OF THE BICHITRA COMMUNITY.**





# ঐ গঙ্গা – In Memoriam

## Amalendu Mitra

**Amalendu Mitra**, was associated with Bichitra for a longtime, left us all on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022, for the most peaceful environment. He is survived by his wife Nanda, daughter Anamita, son Arghya, son-in-law Subir, loving grandchildren Ishwori, Shohom, Raiyasri, and many other relatives and friends.



Amalendu was born on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1941 in Kolkata. At the age of 19, he left India to pursue his Mechanical Engineering degree at Dortmund, Germany. After graduation, he immigrated to Canada, where he worked for 2 years.

Amalendu married Nanda in 1969. In 1971, they moved to Chicago and then in 1973, the family moved to Dearborn, Michigan. Amalendu started working for Ford Motor Company. After working there for long 30 years, Amalendu retired as a Product Engineer. During the Mitra family's stay in Dearborn, all of them were involved with Bichitra programs, especially Anamita and Arghya, who participated in many performances.

Amalendu was known for his fun-loving, generous spirit, helpful, yet with fierce determination. He spent most of his life in Michigan. He will be missed by his relatives and friends. *May his Soul Rest in Peace.*

---

**Dr. Lalgopal Banerji**, "Laluda" to many Bichitra friends, left for Eternal Peace on 15th February 2023 at his Kolkata home. He went to India for a short visit but due to heart problem he expired in his home. Dr. Banerji survived by his sons Bhaskar (Gora) and Ranjan (Raja), daughter-in-law Maria, a granddaughter, a grandson, and many other relatives and friends in several countries. His last rites were performed in Kolkata.



Lalgopal Banerji was born in Kolkata (used to be Calcutta) on 1st September 1934. He was a very intelligent student and graduated with high grades at a young age from Calcutta Medical College with MBBS Degree. He continued with research studies and completed his M.D. degree. After that, he went to England in 1966 for further studies and became the Fellow of Royal College of Physicians (F.R.C.P.) of England. Lalgopal came to USA in 1972 and stayed in Michigan for the rest of his life.

Dr. Banerji, a well-respected kindhearted gentleman, willing to help everyone to the best of his ability. He was known for his social work in several communities inland and abroad. Dr. Banerji, a past president (1983-1984) of Bichitra was a real patron to the organization since its inception. He will be remembered for his volunteerism for years to come. *May his soul rest in eternal peace.*

*OM GANGA*

## DR. SUBIR BANDYOPADHYAY 26-Jan-1947 - 30-Aug-2023

Dr. Subir Bandyopadhyay, a longtime Bichitra member, left for Eternal Peace on 30<sup>th</sup> August 2023. He was survived by wife Bharati, son Avik, daughter-in-law Anjali, daughter Shatarupa, son-in-law Prosenjit, grandchildren Nayan, Neha, Keya, Anik, relatives and friends.

Subir was born in Chandan Nagar, near Kolkata on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1947. He was academically gifted. He went through Hindu School, Presidency College, and Calcutta University, where he received his master's in physics and PhD in electronics engineering. In 1973, Subir married to Bharati and came to Canada, earning the prestigious Commonwealth Scholarship. He completed his second master's degree in computer science from the University of Waterloo. Their son Avik was born in



1974. They went back to India in 1975. Subir took a job as a professor at the Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata. Their daughter Shatarupa was born in 1977. In 1982, the family came to Europe, when Subir was teaching at Queens University Belfast. In 1983 the family came to Canada, when Subir accepted the job as professor in Computer Science at the University of Windsor. In a few years, he became the head of the department. During his entire stay, Subir counselled as well as mentored many students. Incidentally, at young age, Subir's friends used to call him 'Chata' as he would always carry a large umbrella with him. The 'Chata' signifies helping, comforting, protecting, sheltering, which Subir used to provide throughout his life to students, colleagues and all.

Subir and Bharati developed a wide social network in Windsor and Michigan. They were respected all over as friends, parents, grandparents. They both served Bichitra Governing Body, where Bharati accepted Presidency in 2001. Subir retired in 2017 and moved to Burlington. Subir performed Durga Puja for the community there. Subir did his utmost to help everyone he met. He will be dearly missed by all.

May his soul rest in Peace.



Best Wishes to Bichitra

2023 Durga Puja – Banerji Family

শুভ শারদীয়ার দুর্গোৎসবে আপনাদের জানাই  
আন্তরিক প্রীতি, শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন



In Loving Memory of Dr. Lal Gopal Banerji  
(Bichitra President 1983-1984)





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