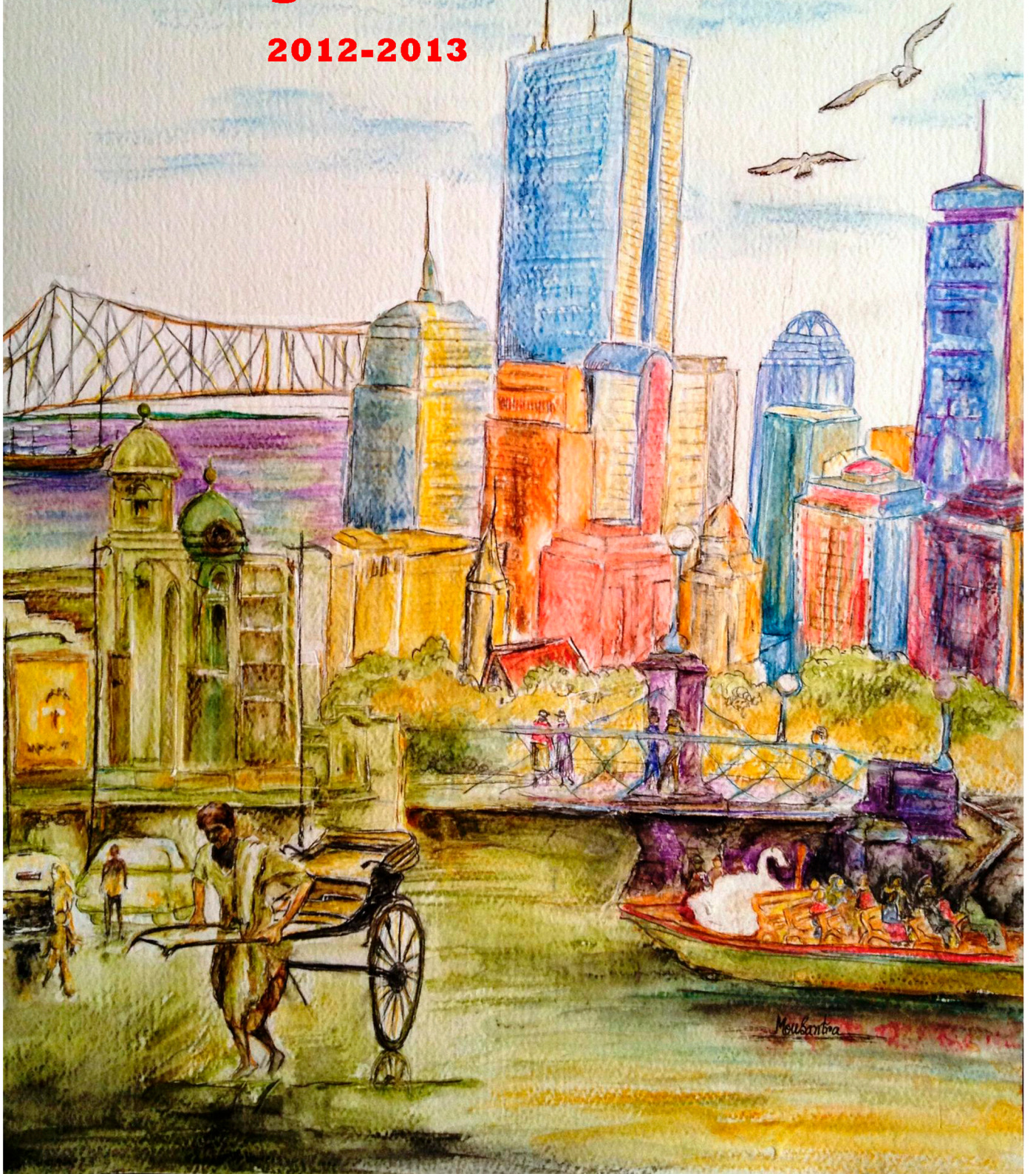


Bangla -O- Biswa

2012-2013



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A Message from the President of Bangla-O-Biswa

Greetings to one and all. It gives us great pleasure to publish our magazine for the year 2012-2013. 2012 is coming to an end and on behalf of the Executive Committee members I am happy to say that it has been quite a successful year. As we were just forming our 2012 Committee we felt a little lost when on account of job relocation, some of our very enthusiastic and dedicated EC team members had to move out of State. Yet, fortunately for us, we gained some new members while our past EC members still enthusiastically supports our endeavors. During every event we have new faces that willingly stand by us giving us countless hours of their time and we are extremely lucky to have the sincerity and well wishes of our senior members tightly woven into the tapestry, we lovingly call our Bangla O Biswa family.

Once again this year, during Durga Pooja, Vedanta Swami Maharaj led us through a marvelous spiritual journey, while Tejas Shastriji's Kali Pooja filled our hearts with devotion. On the Cultural side, with our Cultural Secretary's insight, negotiation skills and keenness to details and with the support and tireless enthusiasm of our Committee members, Bangla O Biswa entered a new dimension. We managed to dazzle you with one of Bollywood's finest, Bappi Lahiri and his troupe and then there was more, a showcase flourishing with many talents. On Saturday evening our attendance reached new heights, the number scale tipped off at the 800 mark. Of course a venture such as this could not have been accomplished without your grace, understanding and good will. So, from the bottom of my heart, I thank you, you who are the members of our community. I also thank the individuals without whose unflagging efforts in the kitchen and food preparation, on stage, at the front desk, pooja and proshad, marketing, community outreach, hosting, driving, our patrons and our grand patrons and the list goes on, such an accomplishment would have been hard to achieve.

As Bangla O Biswa approaches its thirtieth birthday it is our wish to remain steadfast in our mission which will include fostering and cultivating our religious and cultural heritage and to be involved with the community in India and the USA as a benefactor. Our vision is that someday we will have the resources to make a difference in the lives of people who have been not so lucky like us. It will be a happy day when we can say that our mission has been accomplished.

As my term draws to a close and I look back at the organization I have been involved with for the past thirty years, I say with great faith that Bangla O Biswa will keep flourishing as the years go by. Thanks to the vision and wisdom of our founding members and hooray to the immense energy, technological knowledge and talents of our younger and new members, Bangla O Biswa will keep moving on.

I remain yours faithfully,

Sharmila Biswas

(President)

Best Wishes From

Grand Patrons:

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Debraj & Deepmala Roy

Sagar & Piyali Dey

Bibekananda & Madhumita Das

From the Desk of the Editors

We the members of Bangla O Biswa are delighted to bring to you our magazine for 2012-2013. Our last magazine was published commemorating our 25th Anniversary celebration and it is a pleasure to put out another publication while Bangla O Biswa inches towards its 30th birthday. The sapling planted by our founding members almost three decades ago and nurtured with care by many committees and members of our commune, now stands tall and firm, spreading its roots deep within the community. It is just amazing to glance back and see how this organization continues to grow. Every year Bangla O Biswa is fortunate to find very energetic individuals whose sincerity amazes us. The infants and toddlers who grew up with Bangla O Biswa are now young adults themselves and that vacant spot have constantly been filled with a new generation of bright eyed youngsters whose laughter continues to echo in our hallways. The torch passes on.

With limits set on time and funding, our plan for this magazine was to focus more on the quality rather than the number of pages and we are quite confident that you will be pleased with what we have to offer. We wish to thank Mousumi Santra for creating a lovely cover page. A wonderful depiction of Kolkata (Bengal) and Boston coming together, very appropriate portrayal for an organization named Bangla O Biswa. Thank you Ananda Sankar Bandyopadhyay, Arindam Ghosh (Sr.) and Prosenjit Santra for arranging the collage of pictures. Thanks to our authors, poets and artists for sharing your talent and last but not least our advertisers and members for all your support.

As 2012 comes to an end, we hope all of you had a good year and we wish you a peaceful and joyful 2013. We appreciate your kindness and thoughtfulness.

Soumitro Pal and Sharmila Biswas

Bangla O Biswa Executive Committee (2012-2013)

Sharmila Biswas (President)

Arindam Ghosh (Jr) (Vice President)

Soumitro Pal (General Secretary)

Utpala Bandyopadhyay (Treasurer)

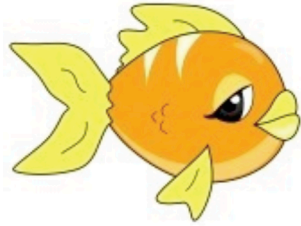
Gautam Maulik (Cultural Secretary)

Sameer Chakraborty (Member At Large)

Debraj Roy (Member At Large)

Indranil Sarkar (Member At Large)

Note: Bangla O Biswa is not responsible for the contents of the advertisements or the articles.



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ফেলুদা

-দিলীপ পাল

ইস্টন

এই পৃথিবীর পথে চলিতে চলিতে কত ধরনের লোকেরই যে সংস্পর্শে আসা হয় তাহার কোন লেখা জোখা নাই। তাহাদের কেহ ‘ছায়া হয়ে মিলায় দিগন্তরে’ আবার কেহবা মনে গভীর দাগ কাটে। এমনই একজন লোকের কথা এখানে লিখিতেছি।

তখন স্কুলে নীচের ক্লাশে পড়ি। পাড়ার ভেতর অনেক দোকানপাট- ইহার মধ্যে একটা দোকান ছিল ধান চালের আরত। সেখানে বড় বড় দাড়ি পাল্লায় ধান, চাউলের বস্তার ওজন হইতে দেখিতাম। নানা ধরনের ব্যাপারীরা কেনা বেচার জন্য আসিতেন সেই দোকানে। যিনি দোকানের মালিক তাহাকে খুব ভাল করিয়াই চিনিতাম। একদিন স্কুলে যাওয়ার সময় দেখিলাম একজন নতুন লোক গদিতে বসিয়া আছেন। স্কুল হইতে ফেরার পথে দোকানে একটু টুঁ মারিয়া গেলাম। আমাকে দেখিয়া ভুলোক হেড়ে গলায় বলিলেন-‘কি রে তোর নাম কি?’ আমার এবং পরিবারের পরিচয় দেওয়ার পর তিনি বলিলেন - ‘তুই আমাকে ফেলুদা বলে ডাকবি; এটা আমার দাদার দোকান, আমি কুষ্টিয়া থেকে এসেছি দাদার দোকানে কাজ করবো বলে।’ ফেলুদার চেহারা সাধারণ বাঙ্গালী গড়নের, কিন্তু তাহার চক্ষু জোড়া ছিল অতিশয় বড়, যেন কোঠর হইতে ঠিকরিয়া বাহিরে আসিবে। তাহার ব্যবহার ছিল অতীব মনোমুগ্ধকর। এজন্য মাঝেমাঝেই ওই দোকানে যাইতাম এবং মজার মজার গল্প শুনিতাম। অনেক সময় উনি রূপকথার গল্পও করিতেন। এইভাবে তাহার সংস্পর্শে আমাদের কয়েকজনের সময় ভাল কাটিত।

একদিন আমি একলাই ফেলুদার ওখানে বসিয়া ছিলাম। নানা গল্প গুজবের পর উনি আমাকে বলিলেন - ‘ভাই আমার একটা কাজ করে দিবি?’ বলিলাম -‘অবশ্যই, কি করবো বলুন।’ উনি বলিলেন -‘পাশের ডাক্তারখানা থেকে এই ওষুধটা এনে দিবি?’ এই বলিয়া উনি একটি চিরকুট হাতে গুজিয়া দিলেন। চিরকুটটি কম্পাউন্ডার মহাশয়কে দিতেই উনি একটি কাঁচের স্পল আমার হাতে দিয়া সাবধানে লইয়া যাইতে বলিলেন।

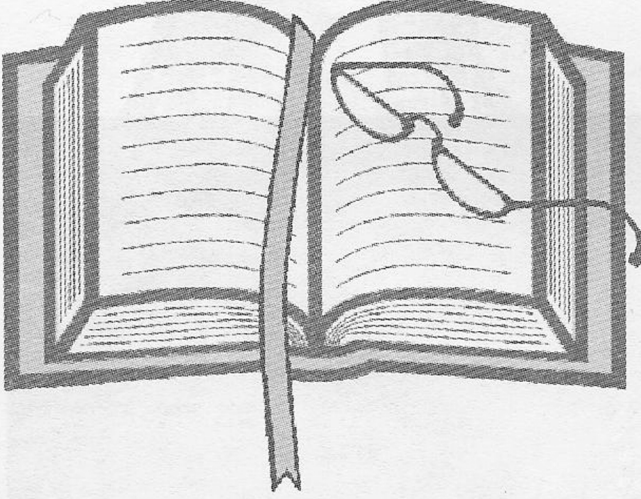
ইহার পর বেশ কিছুদিন পড়াশুনা লইয়া ব্যস্ত ছিলাম। একদিন দোকানে যাইয়া দেখিলাম ফেলুদা আর গদিতে বসিয়া নাই- ওই জায়গায় তাহার দাদা বসিয়া আছেন। সাহস করিয়া তাহাকে ফেলুদার কথা জিজ্ঞাসা করিতে ভরসা পাইলাম না। বন্ধু বান্ধবের কাছ হইতে জানিতে পারিলাম যে দাদা বৌদি ফেলুদাকে বাড়ী হইতে তাড়াইয়া দিয়াছেন, কারণ ফেলুদার প্রচণ্ড মরফিনের নেশা। নেশাগ্রস্ত ফেলুদা যাহা হাতের কাছে পাইতেন তাহাই বেচিয়া দিতেন মরফিন কিনিবার জন্য। তাহার দৌরাতে দোকানের সমস্ত ধান চাউলের বস্তা উধাও হইয়া গিয়াছে-এমনকি বাড়ীর অনেক বাসনপত্রও। যদিও দাদা বৌদি ফেলুদাকে খুবই স্নেহ করিতেন, কিন্তু তাহার এই দুর্বলতা তাহারা মানিয়া লইতে পারিলেন না। দাদা বলিলেন- ‘ফেলু তুমি দেশেই ফিরে যাও, ওখানে জমি জমা দেখে আর ঘর গৃহস্থালি করে তোমার জীবন ভালই কেটে যাবে।’

ফেলুদা ফিরিয়া গেলেন কুষ্টিয়ার গ্রামে। আমরা ওই সদা হাস্যময় লোকটিকে অনেকদিন ভুলিতে পারিলাম না।

একদিন লোকমুখে জানিতে পারিলাম- গ্রামে ফেরার পথে চলন বিলের ধারে তাহার মৃতদেহ পাওয়া গিয়াছে। মনে ভাবিলাম, ভাল লোককেই কি বিধাতা তড়িঘড়ি নিজের কাছে টানিয়া নেন!

সৃষ্টি

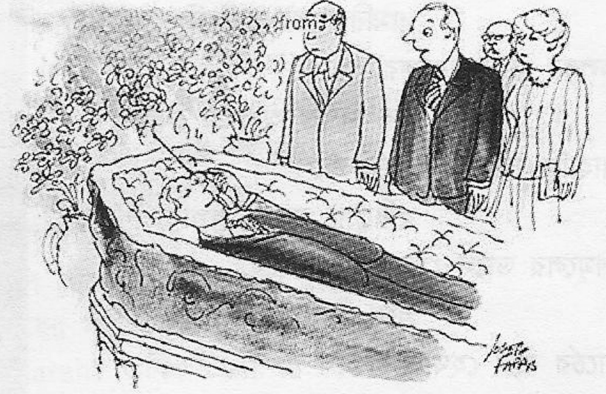
অরুন্ধতী সরখেল, ম্যাসাচুসেটস



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জন্ম নিলো 'দুট্টু বয়েস'
নীল বইতে কালো কালি
হৃদয় মনের গলাগলি।

শেষ

অরুন্ধতী সরখেল, ম্যাসাচুসেটস



সবাই তো একদিন মারা যাবে।
কেউ যাবে হাসি মুখে,
কেউ যাবে অসহ্য যন্ত্রণা নিয়ে,
কেউ যাবে নিঃশব্দে,
কেউ যাবে দামামা বাজিয়ে।
কিন্তু ক'জন যাবে
সুখ পেয়ে ও সুখী হয়ে?

প্রতীক্ষিত ভোর

অলকা মুখার্জী রায়

আমি সেই ভোরের প্রতীক্ষা করি
যখন সার্থক হবে সত্যি হবে স্বপন তরী,
সকল ক্ষোভ যাবে চলে উৎসধারে
আর আশার ঝুলি হবে পূরণ একেবারে।

আমি সেই ভোরের প্রতীক্ষা করি
যখন সকল ভয় অনেক দূরে দেবে পাড়ি,
মৃত্যু ছেড়ে পাবে সবাই অমৃতেরে
দৈন্য শোক যাবে উপে কোন সুদূরে।

আমি সেই ভোরের প্রতীক্ষা করি
যখন কোনো যুদ্ধ নেই কোনোখানে
আশার আলো ভরে যাবে সকল কোনে,
আনন্দেতে ভরবে এই গগনখানি
শান্তি আনবে পৃথিবীতে অভয়বানী ।



ONCE (Gouri Datta)

Once I was a raindrop
Now I am a sea
Once I was a sapling
Now I am a tree.

Once I was a wisp of smoke
Now I am a cloud
Once I used to limp, and now
I walk all tall and proud.

Once I was a crayon
And now I am the art
Once I lagged behind
But now I'm at the start.

Once I was an echo
Now a deep drumbeat
Once I was an alley
But now a busy street.

Once I was a candle
Now I am a star
Once I was a cocoa pod
And now a chocolate bar.

Once I was a lollipop
And now I am the moon.
Once I was a gain of sand
And now the rolling dunes.

Once I was a feather
Now I am a bird
Once I was a sigh
And now I am the word

Once I was a straw
Now I am a nest
Once I was a wanderer
And now I am the guest.

Once I was the horizon
Now I am the date
Once I was a longing
And now I am the fate.

Once I was a bubble
And now a water fall
Once I was a gurgle
And now I am the call .

Once I was a hope
And now I am a theme
Once I was a figment
And now I am the dream.

--- *Gouri Datta*

April, 2, 2012

বাংলার মুখ
-দিলীপ পাল
ইসটন

বাংলার মুখ আমি দেখিয়াছি,
ধলেশ্বরী, তিস্তা, করতোয়ার জলে-
দেখিয়াছি মুখখানি কাঁশবনের দোলায়,
আম, জাম, কাঠালের বাসে,
রক্তকরবী, জবা, টগরের বাহারে,
রজনীগন্ধা, চামেলী, গন্ধরাজের সুবাসে ।

চৈত্রের কাঠফাটা দুপুরে ঘুঘুর মদু তানে,
কাকের কাকা স্বরে, মাছরাঙ্গার চকিত বাপে-
দেখি বাংলার মুখ ।

শ্রাবন রজনীর বরবার বারিধারায়,
বাকুড়া, বীরভূম, রাঙ্গামাটীর মেঠো পথে,
বাউলের গানে, ভাটিয়ালির তানে,
দেখি যে বাংলার মুখ ।

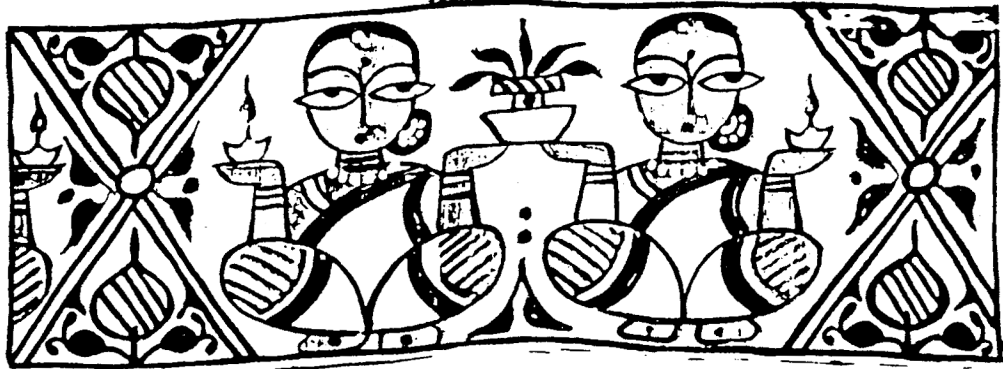
পৌষের নবানেন, শরতের শিউলিতে,
মায়ের সহাস্য মুখে, কিসানের ঘামে ভেজা শরীরে,
বাংলার মুখ দেখিতে পাই বারেবার ।

আবহমান বাংলার মুখ আমাদের স্নায়ুতে,
মঞ্জায়, আমাদের ইন্দিয়ের পুতি অনুভূতিতে,
আমাদের পুতিদিনের জীবন চরণে ।

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কিন্তু মন ক্রমশঃ ছোট হ'তে থাকে ।
ছোটবেলায় মনটা থাকে বড় ,
এত বড় যে শরীরের মাপে আঁটে না
তাই ক্রমশঃ ঘাটতি হতে থাকে
তার আকারে প্রকারে ।
একদিন ছোট হ'তে হ'তে
কোথায় হারিয়ে যায়
খুঁজেও পাওয়া যায় না তাকে আর ।
মন বলে কোনদিন কিছু ছিল
এ কথাটা ভাবাই যেন
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Silly World by Arnav Roy

It seems so silly,
That year after year,
The same things reoccur.

The actions that happened thousands of
years ago,
In that old city built on top of that hill,
Those mistakes that they were making back
then, we are making now.

It might be in a different form or shape,
Made by different people and different
men, at a different place,
But it's happening.

Most ironic of all is
We study it. We analyze. We break it down.
In classes, in cafeteria's, in coffee-shops.

Yet, year after year,
Day after day.
We make the same mistakes.

The same events, same actions come
before our eyes.
Yet we can't stop ourselves.
We fight the battles till the sun sets down,

Until the ultimate victory is achieved.
And what is that victory may I pray tell?
Death. The loss of a human life.

Do we realize?
Every person, every being, has a story.
A dream. A hope.
Is it really worth the price?

One land dispute.
One religious dispute.
A difference in governmental systems,
Does it all really matter?

Have we become so materialistic
That one square mile
Is worth more than one thousand
Living humans?

Is there no common sense?
No sense of life's worth?
Of what it means to have a
A blood-related brother for life?

What if we lived as children do?
Uncaring of the choices made around us,
Living in our own worlds, in our own
sandbox
Having our own play mates?

Or is it too late?
Have the Hunger Games begun?
Will forever in history this time period be
known as The Great Cold War?

Or can we come together?
As people, as humans
Understanding the beauty of life
As the greatest entity in this world.

The Evil Sandwich

By Shreya Sarcar (Age 9 years)

Once upon a time, a boy at school opened his lunch box and an evil sandwich flew out!! "Don't you dare eat me, I am poisonous" said the sandwich. It had a plan. He was going to take out the whole lunchroom!!! After hearing the news, the kids didn't want to go to the lunchroom to eat. They were terrified of the evil sandwich. Even the teachers were scared. So, the Principal called all the teachers for a meeting. "From now on, we will eat in our classrooms till we capture the evil sandwich," said the Principal.

Nobody saw that the evil sandwich was spying on them!!! The evil sandwich had a plan. He was going to invent a machine and make lots of evil sandwiches. He will then send them to the classrooms to create mischief. After making lots of sandwiches, he sent them to each classroom. The principal made an announcement via a microphone: "Now we are doomed. We will have to dismiss school. We will have to build a new school. In the meantime all children will stay home and we will mail your work home."

All the children went home except a girl named Lila. She refused to give up. She went to the principal and said: "I have a great idea. We can distract the evil sandwiches and cook them up. We can't let them take over our school!" The Principal really liked the idea and agreed to try it.

The next day all the children went to the lunchroom and started looking for the leader evil sandwich. Lila called out: "Oh evil sandwich, we have decided to give you the lunchroom." The evil sandwich and all the other sandwiches started dancing around the lunchroom in joy. Lila whispered to the Principal: "Please go and get the giant bag. She then told the children to hold the giant bag by its sides to grab the leader and all other evil sandwiches. Lila then asked the lunch lady to boil a giant pot of water and make a stew. She then told the lunch lady to help the children to throw all the evil sandwiches into the stew. Noone noticed that the leader evil sandwich escaped and disappeared through the window.

The whole school chanted, "Lila, you are our hero, you saved our school. The Principal ordered a pinata that looked like the leader evil sandwich. The children had lots of fun breaking it and getting lots of goodies from it.

The nasty leader of the evil sandwich winked and said: "I will be back soon." Then he disappeared into the air.



Women in Public Spaces: Why is it still such a radical idea?

Bandana Purkayastha, North Grafton, Massachusetts

During the turn of the 20th century, Begum Rokeya, the founder of Sakhawat Memorial School in Kolkata, wrote an inspiring story—Sultana’s Dream--where women moved around freely in the world, as they educated, invented, and governed the world. In contrast, men were confined to homes. Anyone who reads this story is struck by the idea of a society where no men are visible in public spaces. The idea that men have to be kept safe by confining them to secluded homes makes us pause; perhaps many of us secretly sigh with relief that this is a hundred year old *story* because such a reality is too preposterous for us to consider. Yet, we do not find it difficult to accept the idea that women are safest at home. Indeed, in a recent episode of *Satyameva Jayate*, several members of the audience expressed the opinion that women were mostly exposed to violence when they were out late at night, or they travelled in public transportation, or they were in public spaces.¹

In this essay I reflect on this “radical” idea of women in public spaces: their right to be visible, safely, outside their homes. My impetus is as an educator; I understand that we cannot claim to support education for women and girls, if we disregard the need to create safe public spaces where women and girls can move about freely, day and night, and their voices and visions are marked indelibly on public spaces.

This is not a new idea of course. I can name many historical and contemporary women whose activism and everyday actions—their sheer courage, determination and tenacity—have claimed public presence and spaces. I consider these women to be *Durga*, demon slayers and mothers, who have challenged the laws, policies, and customs that make it appear that we are safest when we are secluded, when our physical presence, voices, opinions, thoughts and yearnings, are safest within the private recesses of our homes.

A page from history

Let me begin with a historical figure, Sarala Devi Chaudhurani, an early pioneer in claiming her space in public arenas. Sarala Devi was born in 1872. Her mother, Swarnakumari Devi was a sister of Rabindranath Tagore’s, the editor, from 1884, of the journal *Bharati*, the founder of the Ladies Theosophical Society, and the founder of Sakhi Samiti, a women’s support group that paid particular attention to the need of widows.

¹ *Satyameva Jayata* is a popular social issues series on Indian television; conceptualized and presented by Amir Khan it creates consciousness about contemporary issues of injustice. This particular episode was about violence within homes, and pointed out, much like many researchers have documented that women are not safe within their homes either.

Sarala Devi was one of the earliest female graduates of Calcutta University (via Bethune School and College). She worked as the Assistant Superintendent of a girl's school in Mysore in 1894 and returned to Calcutta to take on the editorship of *Bharati*.

The “demons” of the time were the British colonial power and the lack of mobilization among men and women to act against social stasis. In her seminal history of the women's movement in India, Radha Kumar writes that Sarala Devi threw herself into a maelstrom of organizing to cultivate strength among men and women and to breach the home-world divide. She started with the *antaranga dal*, organizing young men who had to lay their hands on the map of India and pledge that they were ready to sacrifice their lives in the cause of India's freedom. As her realm of influence increased rapidly, she introduced a series of *bratas*, including martial arts training, as a way of getting young Bengali men to hone their mental and physical prowess. In 1904, for the Congress session in Calcutta, she trained the group to sing Bankim Chandra's *Bande Mataram*, and in 1905, through the *Suhrid Samiti*, she indelibly linked this homage to a motherland to the rallying call of the *Indian* nationalist movement. She started a *Birastami* festival to commemorate valor on the second day of Durga Puja where young people recalled past heroes and took a vow to fight imperialism. She was an outspoken supporter of the railway workers strike against the British in 1899. Undaunted by the attacks by large sections of Hindus who castigated her for behavior unworthy of a Hindu woman, she moved onto the national stage. In 1905, after the partition of Bengal and a rapidly rising fear among Hindu and Muslim women of being raped by British soldiers who were “keeping law and order,” she began to organize self-defense lessons for women as well.

In 1910, she organized the *Bharat Stree Mahamandal*, the first formal Indian women's organization. The aim of the organization was to spread female education, but, acknowledging that *purdah* and child marriage were the main obstacles to women's education, she began to organize money to send teachers into homes to teach women. Well aware of the efforts of the missionaries to reach the “recesses of the zenanas” to impart a “civilized education” to Indian girls and women, this organization created Indian texts to emphasize vernacular cultures, brought women's crafts and skills to the public arena through *mahila silpa melas*, and created avenues for bringing women's visions, women's writing to the public sphere. At the same time the organization organized relentlessly against child-marriage and *purdah*, two causes that were later taken up by a large number of other newly formed women's organizations. Sarala Devi's work is key to understanding women's participation in the nationalist uprising, formally through public participation in protests, boycotts, and later the students “terrorist” uprising. But she also inspired women's participation in public life through their use of *swadeshi* products, their role in circulating of nationalist *bratakathas* through women's circles, of harboring and aiding male nationalist “brothers and sons” who were fleeing from the British, through protest *arandhans* which served as means to raise family consciousness to protest British political decisions.

While recent historical reconstruction has credited Gandhi, solely, with moving women into the sphere of politics, Sarala Devi's work had been in-force for decades before Gandhi returned to India and started the *Satyagraha* movement. Her Durga-like combination of intellectual force, fearless-ness, valor, and steadfastness of principle,

created the idea that women could be leaders, women could, and did imagine ways in which to create just societies. And, most importantly, she was one of the early pioneers who created the conditions that brought women out in increasing numbers onto the streets as the independence movement grew on the Indian subcontinent. She paved the way for Sarojini Naidu, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay, Aruna Asif Ali and the large number of women who claimed public presence and space.

Two stories of contemporary valor

Sarala Devi's history is remarkable because of the context in which it unfolded: the British colonial government had unleashed state-sponsored violence that severely restricted the public presence of Indians: their physical presence in protests, their thoughts and ideas of freedom. Yet, sadly, such state sponsored violence is not unknown in India—or the United States—today. Three brief stories illustrate valor and claims of public space.

The states on eastern borders of India with China and Myanmar continue to be designated as zones with heightened action for national security: large numbers of military and Para military forces are stationed in the eastern states and union territories. As the decades long fast by Irom Sharmila, of Manipur, continues to remind us, “normal life” with full access to civil, political, and social rights is no longer accessible to people in these militarized zones.

These conditions are particularly troublesome for women. If the university students in Kolkata worried about their safety after dark in a bustling metropolis, the women and girls in these regions are afraid of their safety day and night. The Armed forces special powers act grants enormous and untrammelled powers to security forces. For many of us, our imagination about Manipur is shaped by the warrior princess Chitrangada in Rabindranath Tagore's dance-drama, where Princess Chitrangada well versed in martial arts and weaponry is capable of defending her subjects against outside invasions. At one level, the reality in Manipur is no different. Manipuri women have been attempting to defend their spaces. They have been protesting: some through fasting, like Irom Sharmila, others by filing legal challenges that are consistently dismissed. A particular news item that I first read in the Bengali magazine Sananda, remain etched in my mind because of the valor of women who took up a challenge against insurmountable odds, and the enormity of the life-conditions that lead them to take this step. That news item described a small group of Manipuri women, including grandmothers, who they protested by shedding their clothes and storming public spaces with banners daring the security forces to rape them (<http://www.countercurrents.org/hr-tukdeo241004.htm>). The inhumane (unsafe) conditions of their everyday lives that led to such a spectacular act of challenge offer us a contemporary lesson. If we support lives of dignity for women, we should never accept the suspension of checks and balances in any society, even on the excuse of national security, in any part of the world, if it is at the cost of women's safety in public spaces. Whether it is Kashmir or Palestine, Tibet or Treblinka, Bosnia or Standing Rock Sioux territory, when we pay little attention to the lack of safety for

women in public spaces, we add a brick to the wall that confines women to the “safety” of their homes, and diminish our humanity.

I have been inspired by another act of courage of a different kind. This August, Indian courts indicted some of the people responsible for organizing a massive carnage against Muslims in the state of Gujarat in 2002 (http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/03/world/asia/gujarat-riot-trials-may-alter-indias-cycle-of-violence.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)

For day’s parts of Ahmedabad, was at a standstill as riots rent the city apart. This violence has been documented by feminist groups in India (see, for instance, *Threatened Existence*, 2003). As violence spread, one of the most spectacular acts of courage was shown by the poor women who are members of the Self Employed Women’s Association (SEWA). The SEWA women are rag pickers, vegetable vendors, sub-contracted tailors, construction workers; relying on seasonal and ill-paid work, they work relentlessly to support their families. As the city smoldered, and people cowered in meager shelters to escape the wrath of whoever targeted them as “the enemy,” this union of poor female workers reached out to every member of the union and her family, irrespective of her religion, to bring food, offer shelter, and provide support so that they could resume their livelihood after the political violence died down. SEWA’s account of their effort is described in their publication *Shantipath, Our Road to Restoring Peace*. In another conflict-ridden situation, these women were on the roads, providing immediate practical help, thus challenging the violence that confined them to their homes. Equally importantly, in a riot torn city where the boundaries between religious communities were being politically mobilized and inscribed onto public spaces, they quietly but firmly breached this political divide. Unlike the Manipuri mothers they organized no protest, yet they went about re-claiming the public spaces in ways that fit their vision of peace.

The acts of courage by these women, during the time of India’s independence, or today, remind us about the important and essential role women play through their public presence. Yet that very presence in public spaces remained embattled. Weighing against every Sarala Devi or an Irom Sharmila or the Manipuri grandmothers, against every SEWA member in Ahmedabad after the Gujarat riots, there is the young woman who is afraid to stay on at her university library after dark, a woman who is afraid to speak out publicly against state or group sponsored violence, a women or child who is afraid of being in a public space simply because of her caste or religion or sex. Yet no individual can build lives of human dignity to the fullest measure if their world remains fragmented by narrow domestic walls. Organization of states, institutions, culture, customs, and ideologies a vast array of practices continues to militate against women’s public presence. I cannot help wondering how many more years it will take for the satire in *Sultana’s Dream* to become irrelevant in our lives?

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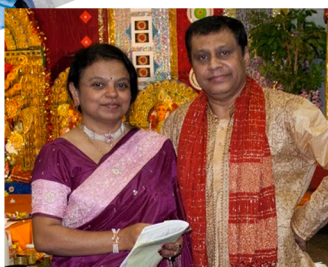
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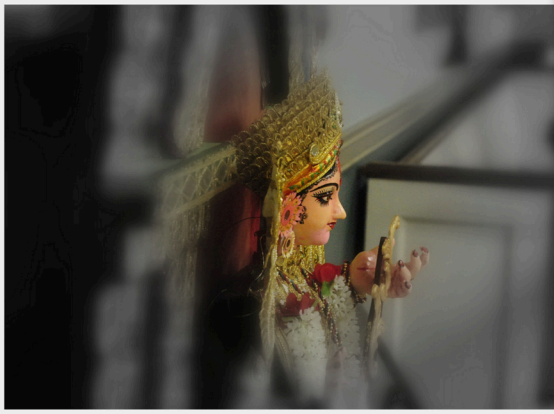


SOME OF OUR GOLDEN MOMENTS FROM PAST

Boshe ako - dariye dekho ..



Mar jharu mar jharu mere jhetiye bidey kor..



Ananda

Baag debi..



Ananda

"Agamanir Amantran.."



Ananda

Antar-mahal ..



Ananda

Adda..

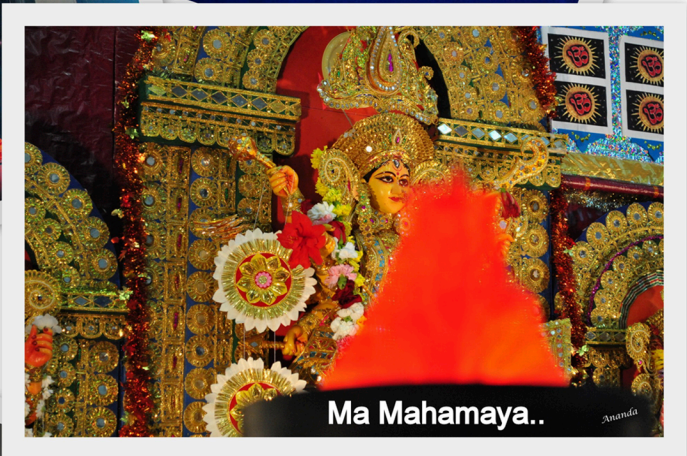
Mentors..



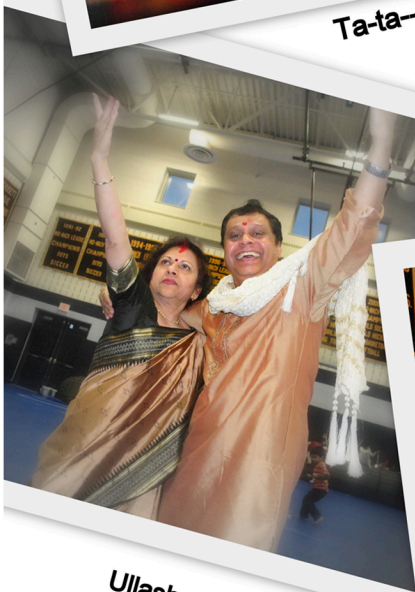
Arjun tumi Arjun



Ta-ta-thoi-thoi..



Ma Mahamaya..



Ullash..



Ek saathe..

We..the radhuni..



Rondhoner bondhone ..



Smiles..



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Aan-mone..maa'r shone..



Hasha-hashi..

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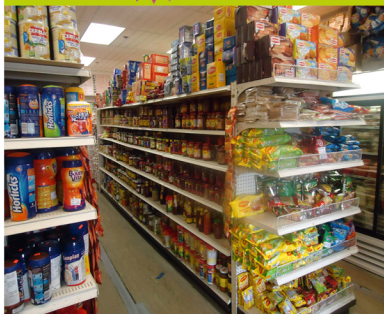
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