

# NORTH AMERICA SARBOJANIN KALIPUJA ASSOCIATION



**14th OCTOBER  
2017**

**[www.naska.org](http://www.naska.org)**



**A non-profit 501(c)(3) Tax Exempt Organization incorporated in the state of Connecticut**

<b>Board Of Authority</b>	
<b>Priest</b>	Tarun Chowdhury, Animesh Chandra
<b>Sponsor</b>	Kaushik Mitra, Subhasish Ganguly, Samir Podder, Sanchita Maitra
<b>Publicity:</b>	Animesh Chandra, Tarun Chowdhury
<b>Food:</b>	Nirupam Basu, Saurabh Sen
<b>Puja:</b>	Sanchita Maitra, Swagata Podder, Joyeeta Basak, Pameli Basak
<b>Advertisement:</b>	Animesh Chandra, Samir Podder, Sanchita Maitra, Anirban Chakrabarty
<b>Artist:</b>	Sanjit Sanyal, Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay
<b>Sound System and Light:</b>	Sanjit Sanyal, Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay
<b>Decoration:</b>	Girija Bhunia, Ananya Ganguly
<b>Vendor Management:</b>	Kaushik Mitra, Samir Podder
<b>Venue:</b>	Tarun Chowdhury, Sanchita Maitra
<b>Transportation Logistics</b>	Kaushik Mitra, Raj Basak, Anirban Chakrabarty
<b>Priest Transport</b>	Animesh Chandra, Samir Podder
<b>Community Program</b>	Sanchita Maitra, Barnak Banerjee
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Souvenir Magazine editing, material acquisition, layout and design  
Animesh Chandra



# Message from NASKA

As nature in New England braces for the vibrant colors of fall our minds hover back to that special time of the year, fondly reminiscing the memories of celebrating the most joyous months of an Indian festival calendar. Bidding Maa Durga a somber adieu was always difficult in our growing years; however, with the Kali Puja around the corner meant there was one last hurrah left to our festivities for the season.

An eight year young NASKA welcomes you all with open arms and even more importantly open minds to this year's Kali Puja celebrations. You are the center of our celebration.

As our baby steps grow in size, the scale of our celebrations multiply in stature, we also acknowledge and humbly pledge to play our part in shaping a responsible society of the future. We believe in giving back to the community to whom we owe our very existence.

Today, with great pleasure we bring to you an evening of joyful and diverse festivities at Hamden High School, Connecticut. As always this year's Puja will hold its significance to a wide spectrum of the attendees in ways that appeal to you the most. From invoking the holy mother with the meticulously chanted mantras to conducting the various stages of the worship with utmost care and reverence, NASKA shall leave no stone unturned to make this an unforgettable evening for you.

This year our Puja will be performed by the inimitable and endearing Shri Samiran Chakraborty from New York Kali Mandir, whose rendering of the mantras and eye for the detail has been loved and appreciated by you over the years.

NASKA is thankful, more than ever, to all our sponsors and devotees for their support and renewed confidence each year. It is your love, energy and unstinted support that keeps us ticking and helps us raise the bar every year.

In keeping with our growing footprint and our endeavor to bring to you an even more enriching and engaging experience, NASKA will present a scintillating cultural event with none other than scion of modern Bengali playback singing – the one and only Rupankar Bagchi. A name that needs no introduction, Rupankar is a promise made and kept by NASKA to its beloved devotees, patrons and sponsors.

Through our celebration we make every effort to create a caring, compassionate community that engages and embraces people of all cultural, ethnic, and spiritual backgrounds. It also builds social cohesion that promotes assertion and respect of diversity, and celebration of the rich spiritual heritage of mankind.

As expressed over and over again, you are the heart and soul of this celebration and will continue to remain so in the years to come. We thank you for your gracious presence. We wish you all good luck, good health and happiness in every step of your way.

Let the celebrations begin.  
With best regards,  
NASKA Executive Committee  
October 14, 2017

## Events

- |                  |   |  |
|------------------|---|--|
| 3:00PM to 6:00PM | : | Puja(worship) and Puspanjali(flower offerings) |
| 6:00PM to 7:00PM | : | Bhog and Path (holy scripture reciting)        |
| 6:00PM           | : | Prasad(MAA's blessing) distribution            |
| 6:00PM to 8:00PM | : | Dinner   |
| 8:00PM           | : | Rupankar Bagchi live in concert                |



**NASKA Presents**  
**National Award winning singer**  
**Rupankar Bagchi**



# From the Editor's Desk



Bit by bit, we added and now we're a full byte. Standing on the octave year of NASKA Kalipuja celebration, I feel buoyant, passionate and full of positive energy. The number eight is considered to be a lucky number in Chinese because it sounds like the word meaning to generate wealth. I'm confident that this year will prove to be another successful year for NASKA.

Throughout the year, NASKA executive committee puts their utmost effort to make Kalipuja an unforgettable event of the year. Every attempt has been made to make this evening magnanimous. I sincerely hope that this souvenir magazine would also contribute to the cause and take you to the seventh heaven of reading pleasure.

This magazine showcases literary works of writers and creative geniuses of artists from around the world. I am grateful to all those who have so graciously contributed their work for everyone to enjoy.

I would like to send a special gratitude to Ms. Pritha Roy Choudhury for creating the cover picture of this year's magazine.

I would also like to thank all the sponsors and business owners for their advertisements in this magazine.

I would like to mention that neither NASKA, Inc., nor the members of its Executive Committee nor I are responsible, in any shape or form, for any opinion expressed (or implied) by an artist, author or advertiser in this magazine.

I wish you all the best and hope you will enjoy reading this magazine as much as you enjoy the Puja.

**Animesh Chandra**  
**October 14, 2017**

भारत का प्रधान कौंसल  
न्यू यार्क



CONSUL GENERAL OF INDIA  
NEW YORK



September 12, 2017

**MESSAGE**

I am glad to know that North America Sarbojanin Kalipuja Association (NASKA) is organizing 8th year of Kali Puja at Hamden High School, 2040 Dixwell Ave, Hamden, Connecticut 06514 on October 14, 2017. I have been told that it is one of the largest Puja in the New England region.

I convey my greeting to the organizers as well as to all devotees of Maa Kali. With her blessings, the event will be a good success.

संदीप चाक्रवर्ती  
Sandeep Chakravorty  
भारत का प्रधान कौंसल  
Consul General of India  
न्यू यॉर्क  
New York

*With Greetings  
&  
Best compliments*

from



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# অথঃ শ্রী কৃষ্ণ কথা শংকর পারিয়াল

শাস্ত্রীয় বিবরণ ও জ্যোতিষ গণনার ভিত্তিতে লোকবিশ্বাস অনুযায়ী কৃষ্ণের জন্ম হয়েছিল ৩২২৮ খ্রিষ্টপূর্বাব্দের ১৮ অথবা ২১ আগস্ট বুধবার। কৃষ্ণের জন্মদিনটি কৃষ্ণ জন্মাষ্টমী বা জন্মাষ্টমী নামে পালিত হয়। কৃষ্ণ যাদব-রাজধানী মথুরার রাজপরিবারের সন্তান। তিনি বসুদেব ও দেবকীর অষ্টম পুত্র। তাঁর পিতামাতা উভয়েই যাদববংশীয়। কৃষ্ণের জীবন বিপন্ন জেনে জন্মরাত্রেই দৈবসহায়তায় কারাগার থেকে নিষ্কান্ত হয়ে বসুদেব তাঁকে গোকুলে তাঁর পালক মাতাপিতা যশোদা ও নন্দের কাছে রেখে আসেন। কৃষ্ণ ছাড়া বসুদেবের আরও দুই সন্তানের প্রাণরক্ষা হয়েছিল। প্রথমজন বলরাম (যিনি বসুদেবের প্রথমা স্ত্রী রোহিণীর গর্ভে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন) এবং সুভদ্রা (বসুদেব ও রোহিণীর কন্যা, যিনি বলরাম ও কৃষ্ণের অনেক পরে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন)। ভাগবত পুরাণ অনুযায়ী, কোনো প্রকার যৌনসংগম ব্যতিরেকেই কেবলমাত্র "মানসিক যোগের" ফলে কৃষ্ণের জন্ম হয়েছিল। হিন্দুরা বিশ্বাস করেন, সেযুগে এই ধরনের যোগ সম্ভব ছিল। "ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণের পুরো জীবনীটা পাওয়া যায় শ্রীমদ্ভাগবতে, দশবছর বয়স থেকে মধ্যের রাজনৈতিক জীবনের সকল কথা পাওয়া যায় মহাভারতে; এবং শ্রীভগবানের বংশের পুরো ঘটনাবলী পাওয়া যায় মহাভারতের খিলকাণ্ড হরিবংশে। এছাড়া যেসকল গ্রন্থে বড় পরিসরে শ্রীকৃষ্ণের কথা পাওয়া যায় সেগুলি হলো- ব্রহ্মপুরাণ, বিষ্ণুপুরাণ, পদ্মপুরাণ, বায়ুপুরাণ, ঋন্দপুরাণ, কূর্মপুরাণ, বামনপুরাণ, ব্রহ্মবৈবর্ত পুরাণ সহ একাধিক পুরাণে। এমনকি বৌদ্ধদের ধর্মগ্রন্থ ত্রিপিটকেও একাধিক স্থানে, কিছু কিছু স্থানে বিকৃতভাবেও শ্রীকৃষ্ণের কথা পাওয়া যায়। তবে পুরাণগুলির মধ্যে পদ্ম এবং ব্রহ্মবৈবর্ত পুরাণ এই দুটি পুরাণের প্রাচীনতম পাণ্ডুলিপি পাওয়া না যাওয়ায়; বর্তমানে পদ্ম এবং ব্রহ্মবৈবর্ত নামে যে গ্রন্থদুটি পাওয়া যায় সেটি অনেকটাই বিকৃত হয়ে যাওয়া এবং সুস্পষ্টভাবেই বোঝা যায় গ্রন্থদ্বয়ের অনেকটা অংশই যে প্রক্ষিপ্ত।"

বাল্য ও কৈশোর

নন্দ ছিলেন গোপালক সম্প্রদায়ের প্রধান। তাঁর নিবাস ছিল বৃন্দাবনে। কৃষ্ণের ছেলেবেলার গল্পগুলি থেকে জানা যায়, কিভাবে তিনি একজন রাখাল বালক হয়ে উঠলেন, শৈশবেই কৃষ্ণ এতটাই দুর্ধর্ষ আর অপ্রতিরোধ্য প্রকৃতির ছিলেন যে তিনি তাঁর প্রাণনাশের চেষ্টাগুলিকে চমকপ্রদভাবে বানচাল করে দিতে পারতেন এবং বৃন্দাবনবাসীর জীবনরক্ষা করতেন। কৃষ্ণের প্রাণনাশের জন্য কংশ পুতনা সহ অন্যান্য রাক্ষসদের প্রেরণ করলে সকলকে হত্যা করেন কৃষ্ণ। যৌবরাজ্য যৌবনে মথুরায় প্রত্যাবর্তন করে কৃষ্ণ তাঁর মামা কংসের অনুগামীদের দ্বারা সংঘটিত বহু হত্যার ষড়যন্ত্র থেকে আত্মরক্ষা করে কংসকে বধ করেন। তিনি



কংসের পিতা উগ্রসেনকে পুনরায় যাদবকুলের রাজা হিসেবে সিংহাসনে অধিষ্ঠিত করেন এবং নিজে সেখানে অন্যতম যুবরাজ হিসেবে অবস্থান করেন। এই সময়ে তাঁর সাথে অর্জুন সহ কুরু রাজ্যের অন্যান্য পাণ্ডব রাজপুত্রদের সখ্যতা গড়ে ওঠে। পরবর্তীকালে তিনি যাদবদের নিয়ে দ্বারকা নগরীতে (অধুনা গুজরাত) চলে আসেন এবং সেখানেই তাঁর রাজত্ব স্থাপন করেন। কৃষ্ণ বিদর্ভ রাজ্যের রাজকন্যা রুক্মিণীকে তাঁর অনুরোধে শিশুপালের সাথে অনুষ্ঠেয় বিবাহ মণ্ডপ থেকে হরণ করে নিয়ে এসে বিবাহ করেন। এরপরই কৃষ্ণ ১৬১০০ নারীকে নরকাসুর নামক অসুরের কারাগার থেকে উদ্ধার করে তাদের সম্মান রক্ষার্থে তাদের বিবাহ করেন। কৃষ্ণের মহিষীদের মধ্যে আটজন ছিলেন প্রধান, যাদের অষ্টভার্যা নামেও অভিহিত করা হয়। এঁরা হলেন রুক্মিণী, সত্যভামা, জাম্ববতী, কালিন্দী, মিত্রবন্দা, নগ্নাজিতি, ভদ্রা এবং লক্ষ্মণা। কৃষ্ণ নরকাসুরকে বধ করে সমস্ত বন্দী নারীদের মুক্ত করেন। তৎকালীন সামাজিক রীতি অনুসারে বন্দী নারীদের সমাজে কোন সম্মান ছিল না এবং তাদের বিবাহের কোন উপায় ছিল না কারণ তারা ইতিপূর্বে নরকাসুরের অধীনে ছিল। বৈষ্ণব মতে কৃষ্ণের সমস্ত মহিষীগণই ছিলেন দেবী লক্ষ্মীর অবতার অথবা সেই সব নারী যারা বহু জন্মের তপস্যাবলে কৃষ্ণের স্ত্রী হওয়ার অধিকার লাভ করেছিলেন। এছাড়া তাঁর এক স্ত্রী সত্যভামা ছিলেন রাধার অংশ। শ্রীকৃষ্ণের ১৬০০০ অধিক পত্নী ও অষ্টভার্যা সম্পর্কে সঠিক ভিত্তি নেই। বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় এর রচিত কৃষ্ণচরিত্র প্রবন্ধে শ্রীকৃষ্ণের বহুবিবাহের ভিত্তিহীন তথ্য সম্পর্কে যথেষ্ট তথ্যপ্রমাণ দেওয়া আছে। কৃষ্ণচরিত্রে দেখা যায় যে, কৃষ্ণের ১৬০০০ অধিক পত্নী শুধু পুরাণের একটি অংশে সীমাবদ্ধ। শ্রীকৃষ্ণের জীবনের অন্য কোনো কার্যক্ষেত্রে এসবের উল্লেখ নেই। তিনি এটাকে নেহাতই উপকথা বা গল্প বলে উল্লেখ করেন। শ্রীকৃষ্ণের জীবনচরিতে রুক্মিণী ভিন্ন অন্য কোনো পত্নীর কার্যক্রম দেখা যায় না। কুরুক্ষেত্র যুদ্ধ কৃষ্ণ ছিলেন প্রখর কূটবুদ্ধিসম্পন্ন পুরুষ এবং মহাভারতের যুদ্ধ ও তার পরিণতিতে তাঁর প্রগাঢ় প্রভাব ছিল। তিনি পাণ্ডব এবং কৌরবদের মধ্যে শান্তি স্থাপন করতে যথাসম্ভব উদ্যোগী হয়েছিলেন। কিন্তু দুর্যোধনের কূপ্রচেষ্টায় তাঁর সমস্ত প্রচেষ্টা ব্যর্থ হয়ে যুদ্ধ অনিবার্য হয়ে ওঠে তখন তিনি ক্রুর কূটনীতিকের ভূমিকা গ্রহণ করেন। যুদ্ধকালে পিতৃ-পিতামহের বিরুদ্ধে সঠিক মনোবল নিয়ে যুদ্ধ না করার জন্য তিনি অর্জুনের উপর ক্রুদ্ধ হন। একবার তাঁকে আঘাত করার অপরাধে কৃষ্ণ একটি রথের চাকাকে চক্রে পরিণত করে ভীষ্মকে আক্রমণ করতে উদ্যত হন। তখন ভীষ্ম সমস্ত অস্ত্র পরিত্যাগ করে কৃষ্ণকে বলেন তাঁকে হত্যা করতো। কিন্তু এরপর অর্জুন কৃষ্ণের কাছে ক্ষমাপ্রার্থনা করেন এবং পূর্ণ উদ্যম নিয়ে যুদ্ধ করার প্রতিজ্ঞা করেন। কৃষ্ণ যুধিষ্ঠির এবং অর্জুনকে নির্দেশ দেন যাতে তারা ভীষ্মের দেওয়া যুদ্ধজয়ের বর ফিরিয়ে দেয়, কারণ ভীষ্ম স্বয়ং সেই যুদ্ধে পাণ্ডবদের প্রতিপক্ষ হিসেবে অবতীর্ণ হয়েছিলেন। ভীষ্মকে এ কথা জানানো হলে তিনি এ কথার অন্তর্নিহিত অর্থ বুঝতে পেরে কীভাবে তিনি অস্ত্র পরিত্যাগ করবেন সে উপায় পাণ্ডবদের বলে দেন। তিনি বলেন যে, যদি কোন নারী যুদ্ধক্ষেত্রে প্রবেশ করে তবেই তিনি অস্ত্রত্যাগ করবেন। পরের দিন কৃষ্ণের নির্দেশে শিখণ্ডী, অর্থাৎ যিনি পূর্বজন্মে অম্বা ছিলেন তিনি অর্জুনের সাথে যুদ্ধে যোগদান করেন এবং ভীষ্ম

তাঁর অস্ত্রসকল নামিয়ে রাখেন। এছাড়াও কৃষ্ণ ধৃতরাষ্ট্রের জামাতা জয়দ্রথকে বধ করতে অর্জুনকে সহায়তা করেন। জয়দ্রথের কারণেই অর্জুনের পুত্র অভিমন্যু দ্রোণাচার্যের চক্রব্যূহে প্রবেশ করেও বেরিয়ে আসার উপায় অজ্ঞাত থাকায় কৌরবদের হাতে নির্মমভাবে নিহত হয়েছিলেন। কৃষ্ণ কৌরবদের সেনাপতি দ্রোণাচার্যের পতনও সম্পন্ন করেছিলেন। তিনি ভীমকে নির্দেশ দিয়েছিলেন অশ্বখামা নামক একটি হাতিকে বধ করতে এবং তাৎপর্যপূর্ণভাবে দ্রোণাচার্যের পুত্রের নামও অশ্বখামা। এরপর কৃষ্ণের নির্দেশে যুধিষ্ঠির দ্রোণাচার্যকে গিয়ে চতুরতার সাথে বলেন যে অশ্বখামা নিহত হয়েছেন এবং তারপর খুব মৃদুস্বরে বলেন যে সেটি একটি হাতি। কিন্তু যেহেতু যুধিষ্ঠির কখনও মিথ্যাচার করতেন না তাই দ্রোণাচার্য তাঁর প্রথম কথাটি শুনেই মানসিক ভাবে অত্যন্ত আহত হন ও অস্ত্র পরিত্যাগ করেন। এরপর কৃষ্ণের নির্দেশে ধৃষ্টদ্যুম্ন দ্রোণের শিরশ্ছেদ করেন। কর্ণের সাথে অর্জুনের যুদ্ধের সময় কর্ণের রথের চাকা মাটিতে বসে যায়। তখন কর্ণ যুদ্ধে বিরত থেকে সেই চাকা মাটি থেকে ওঠানোর চেষ্টা করলে কৃষ্ণ অর্জুনকে স্মরণ করিয়ে দেন যে কৌরবেরা অভিমন্যুকে অন্যায়ভাবে হত্যা করে যুদ্ধের সমস্ত নিয়ম ভঙ্গ করেছে। তাই তিনি নিরস্ত্র কর্ণকে বধ করে অর্জুনকে সেই হত্যার প্রতিশোধ নিতে আদেশ করেন। এরপর যুদ্ধের অন্তিম পর্বে কৌরবপ্রধান দুর্যোধন মাতা গান্ধারীর আশীর্বাদ গ্রহণ করতে যান যাতে তার শরীরের যে অঙ্গসমূহের উপর গান্ধারীর দৃষ্টি নিক্ষিপ্ত হবে তাই ইম্পাতকঠিন হয়ে উঠবে। তখন কৃষ্ণ ছলপূর্বক তার উরুদ্বয় কলাপাতা দিয়ে আচ্ছাদিত করে দেন। এর ফলে গান্ধারীর দৃষ্টি দুর্যোধনের সমস্ত অঙ্গের উপর পড়লেও উরুদ্বয় আবৃত থেকে যায়। এরপর যখন দুর্যোধনের সাথে ভীম গদাযুদ্ধে লিপ্ত হন তখন ভীমের আঘাত দুর্যোধনকে কোনভাবে আহত করতে ব্যর্থ হয়। তখন কৃষ্ণের ইঙ্গিতে ভীম ন্যায় গদাযুদ্ধের নিয়ম লঙ্ঘন করে দুর্যোধনের উরুতে আঘাত করেন ও তাকে বধ করেন। এইভাবে কৃষ্ণের অতুলনীয় ও অপ্রতিরোধ্য কৌশলের সাহায্যে পাণ্ডবেরা কুরুক্ষেত্র যুদ্ধ জয় করে। এছাড়াও কৃষ্ণ অর্জুনের পৌত্র পরীক্ষিতের প্রাণরক্ষা করেন, যাকে অশ্বখামা মাতৃগর্ভেই ব্রহ্মাস্ত্র নিক্ষেপ করে আঘাত করেছিলেন। পরবর্তীকালে পরীক্ষিতই পাণ্ডবদের উত্তরাধিকারী হন। "যোগেশ্বর সনাতন ধর্মের প্রাণপুরুষ পরমেশ্বরের অবতার শ্রীকৃষ্ণ। একজন আদর্শ নেতা, রাজনীতিক, রাষ্ট্রজ্ঞ, ধর্মসংস্থাপক এবং মুক্তিদাতা। ধর্মরাজ্য সংস্থাপক শ্রীকৃষ্ণকে নিয়ে বহুগ্রন্থে বহু রকমের কথা বলে তার জীবনকে পৌরাণিক, অলৌকিক ও কিছুটা অবিশ্বাস্য করে তোলা হয়েছে। আজ আমরা ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণের ঐশ্বর্যময় রূপ নয়, বৈরাগ্যময় রূপ নয়, তাঁর ধর্ম সংস্থাপন রূপ নয়, তাঁর পুরুষোত্তম রূপও নয় ; তাঁর শ্রেষ্ঠতম ঐশ্বরিক মাধুর্য রূপকে, আমাদের মনুষ্য অথবা মনুষ্যেতর পর্যায়ে নামিয়ে নিয়ে এসে আমরা ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণকে প্রতিনিয়ত অপমান করে চলছি। ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণকে মনুষ্যকৃত প্রেমিক

সাজিয়ে আমরা অসংখ্য কাব্য,নাটক, সিনেমা এবং যাত্রাপালা করে চলছি। কিছু মানুষের সৃষ্টির নামে অপসৃষ্টি দেখলে মনে হয় ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণ বুঝিবা নাটক, সিনেমা, যাত্রাপালারই চেংড়া নায়ক!

তাই বাধ্য হয়ে বলতেই হয়, যেদিন থেকে ভগবান শ্রীকৃষ্ণ যাত্রাপালার নায়ক হয়েছে সেদিন থেকেই হিন্দুদের কপাল পুড়েছে। জীবনব্যাপী চরম রাজনৈতিক বিচক্ষণতা ও জগতের অশেষ কল্যাণ চিন্তা করে তিনি সেই সময়ের সকল কল্যাণকামী রাজাদের একত্রিত করেছিলেন। এমনই স্বাথহীন ছিলেন যে রাজ্য জয় করেও নিজে কখনো ক্ষমতা গ্রহণ করেননি। হাজার হাজার নিপীড়িত নারীর আত্মধ্বনি ছিলো নরকাসুরের কারাগারে, সেই নারীদের মুক্তি দিয়ে তিনি নারী মুক্তির পথও উন্মোচন করেছিলেন। প্রায় দশবছর বয়সেই তিনি বৃন্দাবন থেকে মথুরায় চলে যান। এরপর আর কখনোই তিনি বৃন্দাবনে আসেননি।"

তথ্যসূত্রঃমুক্তবিশ্বকোষ, কৃতজ্ঞতাঃ শ্রী কুশল বরণ চক্রবর্তী, অধ্যাপক,চট্টগ্রাম বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় ও সাহিত্যসম্রাট বংকিম চন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় এর কৃষ্ণচরিত,মহাভারত, হরিবংশ, ভাগবত পুরাণ ও বিষ্ণু পুরাণ গ্রন্থের ভিত্তিতে শ্রীকৃষ্ণের জীবনের এই বিবরণী প্রকাশিত হল।

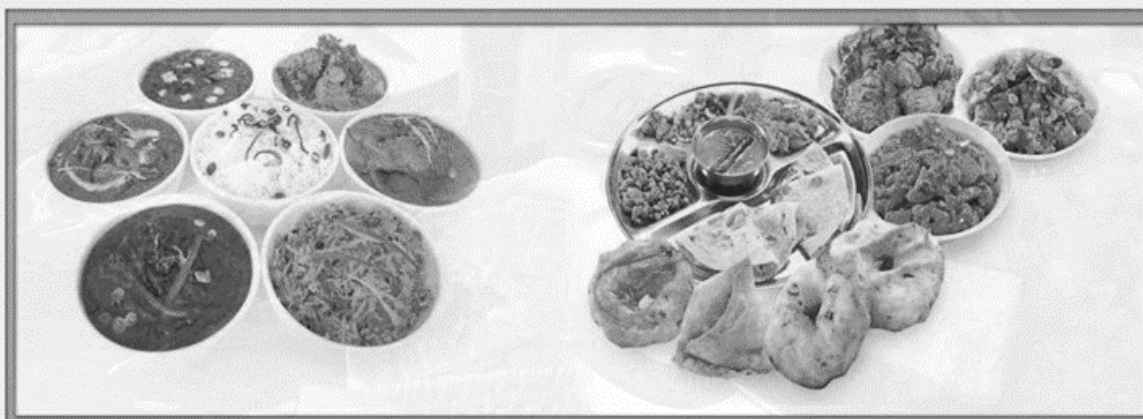
*Wish you*  
*A very happy*  
*Kalipuja and Deepavali*  
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# আত্মহত্যা

## অঙ্গনা মুখার্জী সাহা

ঠিক এক বছর আগে আজকের দিনটা ছিল আমার জীবনের খুব গুরুত্বপূর্ণ একটা দিন। আজকের দিনটা ছিল অর্জুনকে জবাব দেওয়ার দিন। তাই তার আগের দিন রাতে উত্তেজনায় প্রথমে ঘুমই আসতে চাইছিল না। একটা একটা করে সব কথা মনে পড়ে যাচ্ছিল।

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যবে থেকে আমার জ্ঞান হয়েছে, আমার মনে পরে ৩৪/৭ গলফগ্রীন ই ছিল আমার ঠিকানা। কিন্তু আমাকে যখন নতুন বাড়িতে চলে আসতে হল, তখন পুরোনো বন্ধুদের ছেড়ে আসতে ভীষন মন খারাপ লেগেছিল, পরে যদিও মনে মনে ভেবেছিলাম ভাগ্যিস এসেছিলাম!

নতুন ফ্ল্যাটে প্রথম প্রথম খুব একা লাগত। তবে তিন তলার এই ফ্ল্যাট টার জানলা দিয়ে তাকালে অনেক দূর অবধি দেখা যেত, কারন ওদিক টায় কোনো বাড়ি ছিল না, বরং গাছ গাছালাতেই ভর্তি ছিল। আমি দুপুর বেলা ঐ জানলা দিয়ে হুগলী নদীর ফুরফুরে হাওয়া খেতে খেতে আকাশ দেখতাম। অমনই এক দুপুর বেলা আমি প্রথম অর্জুন কে দেখি। অর্জুন আমাদের বাড়ির কাছেই থাকত, কিন্তু এতদিন খেয়ালই করিনি। অর্জুন তখন যুবক। যৌবন ওর শরীর থেকে উপচে পড়ছে। ওর পেটানো চেহারা দেখে আমার সারা শরীরে এক অদ্ভুত লজ্জা খেলে গেছিল। অর্জুন আমাকে প্রথম কদিন দেখতে পায়নি। কিন্তু দিনের পর দিন ওকে জানলা দিয়ে লুকিয়ে লুকিয়ে দেখার পর, অবশেষে একদিন আমি ধরা পড়লাম অর্জুনের নজরে। অর্জুনও আমাকে এক বড় মায়াবী দৃষ্টিতে দেখল কিন্তু কিছু বলল না। পরের দিন বাড়ি থেকে উনি কাজে বেড়িয়ে গেলে আমি যখন জানলার পর্দার আড়াল থেকে অর্জুনকে দেখার চেষ্টা করছিলাম, অর্জুন আচমকা চোঁচিয়ে আমার উদ্দেশ্যে গেয়ে উঠেছিল,

“দিবস রজনী, আমি যেন কার আশায় আশায় থাকি

তাই চমকিত মন, চকিত শ্রবন,

তৃষিত আকুল আঁখি”।

আমি চমকে উঠেছিলাম আর তারপর লজ্জায় লাল হয়ে গেছিলাম।

তারপর একদিন আমার আলাপ হল পিকলুর সাথে। পিকলু ক্লাস সিন্স এ পড়ত, ও আমার পাশের ফ্ল্যাটেই থাকত। আমি দেখতাম পিকলু রোজ বিকেল বেলা স্কুল থেকে ফেরার পথে অর্জুনের সাথে প্রায় এক দেড় ঘন্টা করে গল্প করত। অর্জুন হুগলী নদীর ধারে যখন হাত পা ছড়িয়ে বসে একটু জিরোতো, পিকলু তখন ওর সাথে টানা বক বক করে যেত। অর্জুনই বোধহয় পিকলুকে আমার কথা বলেছিল। পিকলু একদিন আমাকে এসে বলেছিল, “লিলি দিদি, অর্জুন দাদা বলল ও তোমাকে খুব পছন্দ করে”। ক্লাস সিন্স এ পড়া পিকলু কি বুঝেছিল কে জানে। তবে এরকম অনুভূতি আমার জীবনে আগে কখনো হয়নি, তাই কিছু বুঝে উঠতে পারার আগেই আমি ঝপ করে অর্জুনের প্রেমে পরে গেলাম। সেই থেকে আমি আর অর্জুন পিকলুর মাধ্যমে কথা বলতাম, পিকলু আমারও খুব ভাল বন্ধু হয়ে উঠল দেখতে দেখতে।

আমি একদিন পিকলুকে জিজ্ঞাসা করেছিলাম, “পিকলু, তুই কি এত কথা বলিস রে রোজ অর্জুনের সাথে?”। পিকলু বলেছিল, “সে অনেক কথা, আমার স্কুলের কথা, হোমওয়ার্কের কথা, মা বাবার কথা, দিদির কথা, দাদুর কথা আরো কত কি! আমি অর্জুন দাদাকে সব বলি। অর্জুন দাদা সব মন দিয়ে শোনে। আমার কোন বন্ধু নেই জানো লিলি দিদি! আমার মা বাবা রোজ ঝগড়া করে একটা আন্টিকে নিয়ে, আমার খুব ভয় করে, আমি তখন দাদুভাই এর কাছে চলে যাই দৌড়ে। জানো ওরা দাদুভাইকেও খুব খাটায়। দাদুভাইকে আমি খুব ভালবাসি কিন্তু ওরা দাদুভাইকেও খুব কষ্ট দেয় আর বলে বৃদ্ধাশ্রমে চলে যেতে। আমার খুব কষ্ট হয় দাদুভাই এর জন্য। সেই কষ্টের কথা আমি অর্জুন দাদাকে বলি। আর আমার দিদিও খুব ভাল মেয়ে জানো, আমাকে খুব ভালবাসত। দিদি আমার থেকে আট বছরের বড় তাও আগে আমার সাথে কত খেলত। মা বাবা দিদির বিয়ে দিয়ে দিতে চায় কিন্তু দিদি একটা অন্য দাদাকে বিয়ে করতে চায়। মা বাবা বলেছে দিদি যদি আর ঐ দাদা টার সাথে কথা বলে, তাহলে ওরা দিদিকে আর ঐ দাদা টাকে খুব মারবে। তাই দিদিও এখন খুব চুপচাপ হয়ে গেছে। কারো সাথে কথা বলে না, আমার সাথেও না। তাই আমার এখন একমাত্র বন্ধু হল অর্জুন দাদা”। পিকলুর মুখ থেকে এক নিঃশ্বাসে এত গুলো কথা শুনে একদিকে যেমন মানব জাতির উপর ধিক্কার দিতে ইচ্ছা হল এই ভেবে যে, যে মা বাবা জন্ম দিয়ে এত বড় করল, তাদেরই বুড়ো বয়সে অত্যাচার করেছে আবার দুটো প্রাণ যারা একে অপরকে ভালবাসে তাদের এক হতে দিতে চাইছে না। অপর দিকে অর্জুনের প্রতি সম্মান অনেক বেড়ে গেল এই ভেবে যে ও কেমন পিকলুর বন্ধু হয়ে উঠতে পেরেছে, পিকলুকে কেমন ও একাকিত্বের হাত থেকে খানিকটা হলেও রক্ষা করেছে, কেমন দিনের শেষে পিকলু ওর সামনে হরহরিয়ে তার মন উজার করে দেয়।

পিকলু কয়েক দিনের মধ্যেই আমারও খুব কাছের মানুষ হয়ে উঠল। সেটা আরো ভালো করে বুঝতে পারলাম যবে পিকলু স্কুলে ক্লাসমেট দের হাতে ভীষণ মার খেয়ে এল। পিকলুর বন্ধুরা ওর জামা পর্যন্ত ছিড়ে দিয়েছিল। ও অর্জুনকে জড়িয়ে ধরে যখন খুব কাঁদতে কাঁদতে বলছিল, “আজ বাড়ি গেলে বাবাও খুব মারবে জামা ছিড়ে

গেছে বলে”, তখন জানলা দিয়ে এসব শুনতে শুনতে আমার কণ্ঠে বুক টা ফেঁটে যাচ্ছিল। অর্জুন ওর মাথায় হাত বুলিয়ে ওকে শান্ত করেছিল।

এই পিকলুই অর্ধেক দিন অর্জুনের কথা এসে আমায় বলত আর আমার কথা অর্জুনকে। কয়েক মাস পিকলুর মাধ্যমে আমি আর অর্জুন মনের কথা আদান প্রদানের পর, আমি বুঝতে পারলাম যে অর্জুন কে ছাড়া আমি থাকতে পারব না। অর্জুনের পুরুষালী চেহারার মধ্যে যেমন ছিল তীব্র আকর্ষণ, তেমনই অর্জুনের পরোপকারীতার মধ্যে ছিল কাউকে অভিভূত করার এক অন্যতম শক্তি। সেই শক্তি আমাকে ক্রমশ ওর দিকে আকৃষ্ট করেছিল এবং আমি মন প্রাণ দিয়ে অর্জুনকে ভালবেসে ফেলে ছিলাম।

অবশেষে এক ভরা পূর্ণিমার রাতে, অর্জুন চাঁদকে সাক্ষী রেখে আমায় প্রোপজ করেছিল। অর্জুন ভালমতই জানত আমার জবাব কি হবে, তবু ও আমার মুখ থেকেই ঐ তিনটে শব্দ শুনতে চেয়েছিল। আমিও অর্জুনকে বলতে চেয়েছিলাম আমার মনের কথা, আমিও অর্জুনকে একটু ছুঁতে চেয়েছিলাম, কিন্তু আমার ভয় করেছিল যদি উনি মেনে না নেন? অর্জুন আমাকে এও বলেছিল যে ভয় পাওয়ার কিছু নেই, যদি আমি রাজী থাকি তবে পিকলু নাকি আমাকে বাড়ি থেকে বের করে আনার দায়িত্ব নেবে। আমি অর্জুনকে কিভাবে জবাব দেব ওর প্রোপজালের, সে কথা ভাবতে ভাবতে তারপর যে কখন ঘুমিয়ে পরেছিলাম কে জানে!

||৩||

পরদিন সকাল বেলা ঘুম থেকে উঠতে একটু দেরীই হয়ে গেছিল। কিন্তু ঘুম টা ভাঙ্গতেই মনটা যেন খুশিতে ভরে গেছিল এই ভেবে যে আজ অর্জুন কে মনের কথা জানানোর দিন। চোখ টা কচলাতে কচলাতে জানলা দিয়ে বাইরে তাকাতেই আমার বুক টা ছাঁত করে উঠল। এ আমি কি দেখছি? আমি কোথায়? আমার সামনে ধূ ধূ করছিল জমি টা। আর তার উপর অর্জুনের দেহ টা ছিন্ন ভিন্ন অবস্থায় পরে ছিল। কতগুলো ছেলে এসে পাঁজা করে করে লরিতে তুলছিল অর্জুন আর ওর আরো দশ বারোটা বন্ধুদের দেহ। আর দূরে বসে পিকলু অঝোড়ে কেঁদে যাচ্ছিল অর্জুনের গুড়িটা ধরে। পান চিবোতে চিবোতে প্রোমোটোররা নিজেদের মধ্যে অটুহাস্য করতে করতে কাঠুরে দের আদেশ দিচ্ছিল, “ঐ কদম আর অর্জুন টাকে গোড়া থেকে উপড়ে ফেল, এখনো বেচে আছে একটু”।

||৪||

আমি যখন গলফগ্রীনের বাড়ি তথা ফুল গাছের দোকানে থাকতাম, তখন এত কিছু বুঝতাম না, জানতাম না। শুধু দেখতাম মানুষ হাজার হাজার টাকার বিনিময়ে আমার, জুঁই এর, গোলাপের মত গাছেদের কিনে নিয়ে

যেত নিজেদের ঘর সাজাবার জন্য। আমিও জানতাম আমাকেও একদিন চলে যেতে হবে কারো না কারো ঘরে। কলকাতার বুকো বাঙালীরা অর্কিড, লিলির থেকে বেশি গোলাপ,বেল, জুঁই কেই পছন্দ করত ঘরে সাজাবার জন্য তাই আমি অনেক বড় অবধি ওখানেই থাকার সুযোগ পেয়েছিলাম। অবশেষে এক গুজরাটি ভদ্রলোক আমাকে কিনে এনে এই নতুন ফ্ল্যাটের জানলায় টবে করে সাজিয়ে রেখে দিয়েছিলেন। উনি ছিলেন অবিবাহিত, সকাল বেলা তেই কাজে বেড়িয়ে যেতেন ফ্ল্যাটে তালা দিয়ে। ঐ বন্ধ ফ্ল্যাটের ঐ খোলা জানলাই ছিল আমার প্রাণ ভরে প্রঃশ্বাস নেওয়ার একমাত্র জায়গা। ওই জানলা দিয়েই আমি বাইরের পৃথিবী কে দেখেছি, অভিজ্ঞতার পর অভিজ্ঞতা সাজিয়ে একটু একটু করে বড় হয়েছি। ঐ জানলা দিয়েই আমি বট, অশ্বথ, জাম, কদমের মত আরো একশ টা গাছকে ঝড় জলের বিরুদ্ধে জীবনের সংঘর্ষ করতে দেখেছি। ঐ জানলা দিয়েই আমি অর্জুন কে দেখেছি, অর্জুনের প্রেমে পড়েছি, ওকে ভালবাসার স্বপ্ন দেখেছি। ঐ জানলা দিয়েই আমি পিকলুর মত মানুষ কে জেনেছি। আবার ঐ জানলা দিয়েই আমি জেনেছি সব থেকে বুদ্ধিমান আর শিক্ষিত প্রাণী হওয়া সত্ত্বেও মানব জাতি এখনো এমন পাপ কাজ করে চলেছে যার কোন ক্ষমা হয় না। এরাই বলি দেওয়ার বিরুদ্ধে স্লোগান তোলে আবার এরাই বলি দেয় হাজার হাজার গাছের, তারা বোঝে না যে হাজার হাজার গাছবলি দেওয়ার সাথে সাথে তারা বলি দিচ্ছে হাজার হাজার প্রাণ, গাছদের মেরে তারা পরোক্ষ ভাবে আত্মহত্যা ছাড়া আর কিছুই করছে না। সত্যি মানব জাতি আর বদলাল না! অবশ্য তারা যদি জন্মদাতা-জন্মদাত্রী মা বাবার উপর অত্যাচার করতে পারে তবে বৃক্ষরা আর কোন ছাড়! তারা যদি নিজেদের সন্তান দের ভালবাসা বুঝতে না পারে, দুটি প্রাণ কে মন খুলে ভালবাসতে দিতে না পারে, তবে গাছদের ভালবাসার কথা কি বুঝবে? মানব জাতি যেমন নিজেদের ঘর সাজাবার জন্য আমাদের যত্ন আত্তিও করতে পারে তেমনই নিজেদের আলিশান ঘর বানানোর জন্য আমাদের নির্দিষ্ট ক্যাটাগরি ফেলতে পারে। যতই হোক গাছ তো আর চাঁচাতে পারে না, আর চাঁচালেও সে চিৎকার ওদের কান অবধি পৌছায় না। বেকারই জগদীশ চন্দ্র বোস এত খেটে খুটে প্রমান করতে গেছেন আমাদেরও প্রাণ আছে। বেকারই পিকলুর মত ছেলেরা গাছ কাঁটার বিরুদ্ধে জ্ঞান দিতে গিয়ে মার আর প্যাঁক খায় বন্ধু দের কাছে, “ঐ দেখ বড় গাছ প্রেমী এসেছে”!

||৫||

অর্জুন চলে গেছে আজ এক বছর হয়ে গেল। আমার আর বাঁচার কোন ইচ্ছাই ছিল না। কিন্তু পিকলুর মুখের দিকে তাকিয়ে আমি এখনো বেঁচে রয়েছি। ঐ ঘটনার পর পিকলু ওর দাদুর জমানো টাকা দিয়ে আমার গুজরাটি মালিকের কাছ থেকে আমাকে কিনে নিয়ে এসে আমাকে ওর বাড়িতে রেখেছে। এখন আমিও পিকলুর বাবা মায়ের নোংড়া ঝগড়া শুনতে পাই, ওর দাদুর উপর অত্যাচার দেখতে পাই, দম বন্ধ হয়ে আসে এসব দেখতে



দেখতে আমার, কিন্তু পিকলুর জন্য আমাকে বাঁচতেই হবে। পিকলুর বন্ধু হয়ে আমাকে অর্জুনের শূণ্যস্থান পূর্ণ করতেই হবে। কারন, মানব জাতি নিজেদের আত্মহত্যা করতে উঠে পরে লাগলেও আমি তো জানি, একটি গাছ, একটি প্রাণ। একজন মানুষের কাছে একটি প্রাণের মূল্য না থাকতে পারে কিন্তু আমার কাছে পিকলু নামের এই প্রাণটির মূল্য অনেক।

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# The Fan

## Anirban Mukherjee

*Timeline: May, 1999*

Mirza let out a sigh of relief as he stepped out of the railway station. In his mind he was quite certain that no one will recognize him here, his must have condition for the hide-out.

The purlieu was wrapped in a coat of darkness; the silence resembled the stillness of death in an isolated graveyard. Like the guiding star in a lost trail, there was a solitary dim lit flickering bulb glowing above the exit gate facing towards the tracks, supposedly trying to illumine, in vain, an elongated parabolic fractal of the lonely platform. One could barely read the name of the station painted on a grimy battered rhombus shaped board, hanging on the far side into the penumbra; it read Pipria, in Hindi and Urdu as scruffy rust had engulfed the letters of their English counterpart.

The train by which Mirza arrived had left long back. The cacophonic cry of its machinery had temporarily shattered the deathly silence of the ambience; it took hardly any time for it to regain its unnerving grip, within minutes after the train had moved on. There was no station master to be seen; no coolie; no ticket checker, not even a tea vendor was there. Mirza felt, he has entered the city of the dead, as if the life had evaporated suddenly by some mysterious spooky magic.

He was unperturbed, however. He glanced at his radium lit watch; 2.30 AM; what else can one expect other than this at this hour in an unknown settlement in a remote corner of the country. Mirza understood that he had to wait for atleast couple of hours for the sleepy hamlet to come to life and provide the requisite resources to find a shelter for himself. For now, he decided to occupy the bench, placed in the middle of the platform, aslant to the radius of the arc of light, which obliquely sliced the bench; half of it into the light and the other half in the darkness. Mirza chose the gloomy side to lodge himself; his fair and tall figure looked like an eerie silhouette from distance.

Mirza felt unfazed by the gloom around him; it was much less dark than the dejection in his mind, he felt. He even cherished the overpowering silence. This silence was not empty for him; he felt it was full of answers. Answers to the overwhelming questions that were consuming him from within. He started to hum, *'hazaron khwahisen aisi ki har khwahish per*

*dam nikle; bahut nikle meri arman lekin phir bhi kam nikle.*' He had intoned this ghazal for umpteen number of times over the years, yet today the tune seemed distressing to him. Mirza closed his eyes to focus; he failed; rush of thoughts came gushing in; images from past, all that he experienced in Mumbai, conquered his mind. Sounds resonated in his ears: 'Traitor he is; his songs speak of treason in the name of Sufi!'; 'Pack him off to Pakistan, let him join his brotherhood there!!', 'Har Har Mahadev!! How on earth can an infidel, understand the spirit of Hindustan?'; 'Strip off his Padma award, let his name be stricken off from all annals;' Mirza opened his eyes in horror and found himself in a pool of sweat, enveloped in the darkness around him.

Mirza Aftab Ali, was a young Sufi vocalist from Burhanpur, who arose into prominence at quite a tender age, leveraging on his euphonious expressions; his mastery in classical music; his immaculate sophistication of presentation and the simple but intricate way to help a common man correlate couplets of Mirza Ghalib with their day to day affairs. Soon Mirza Ali stepped out of the narrow alleys of Burhanpur and entered the boulevards of Mumbai, the runway for the flight of Indian mainstream entertainment. In no time, Mirza Ali was a household name.

An ardent follower of Ghalib, Mirza retained only that portion of his original name as his homage to his role model. He gave one masterpiece after the other and won almost every prominent award related to entertainment. Then came the purple point of his career when he rendered his voice to '*mohabbat me nahin hai farq jeene aur marne ka, usi ko dekh kar jeete hain jis kaafir pe dam nikle*' which became a sensation and transformed him into a national celebrity overnight and provided him access to the stardom of the who's who of the Indian entertainment world. Within a year he received the Padma Sri award from the President of India. Life was on high for Mirza, who continued to marvel in every attempt he made.

Mirza, however, had no idea that fortunes of a man can alter any time. Terrorist and military conspiracies across the border, suddenly, threatened the nation's northern most borders, as rampant attacks were carried out by militants and bands of soldiers on the Siachen glacier and on the valleys of Kargil and Dras. Suddenly, the nation observed, India got into a war against Pakistan, the fourth time in its history, to defend Kargil and the adjoining areas. While the army were busy in the frontiers, the political scenario across the country gradually started to paint itself in religious colors. Mumbai was suddenly transformed into a saffron



fortress, regimented with iron fist by a fanatical and religiously fundamental institution, who launched a witch hunt to identify, isolate and defame all celebrities whose faith was Islam. Through a structured and well organized campaign they moved from one celebrity to the other to fulfil their vested political interest.

Mirza, till then, was untouched as the zealots were focusing on the bigger names, but then in a public function when Mirza performed a ghazal, '*bagicha e aftaal hai duniya mere aage, hota hai shab-o-roz tamasha mere aage;*' some of the words in its lyrics was interpreted by a tabloid as inappropriate considering the contemporary affairs and fueled an unsolicited controversy. Members of the radical institution pounced on the matter without haste and overnight portrayed Mirza as an enemy of the state, a probable secret agent from Pakistan. While several other critics found no offence in the concerned words in the lyrics, the fundamentalists refused to give up. Mirza's house was mobbed, his effigies were burnt all over Mumbai and later in various other parts of the country. The household name suddenly became an element of tremendous disgust. The shattered Mirza left for Burhanpur, only to be abused, insulted and mistreated all the way and then when he reached his home town, he was greeted with black flags, slogans demanding him to leave at once and then an unprovoked assault where he was thrashed and pulped to the extreme. Mirza had to be rushed to the hospital.

After his recovery, Mirza remained almost house arrested in his Burhanpur home. Unable to understand why exactly people were after his life, the saddened soul turned his attention back to Ghalib. He tried to focus on his songs to keep his mind away from the madness around him, but could not concentrate even a bit. One night, when Mirza was all alone, trying to sing, '*dil e naadan tujhe hua kya hai; akhir iss dard ka dawa kya hain?*' he noticed a familiar figure appearing in front of him. It was almost a mystic whirl of cloud, shapeless, yet it was trying to form a shape. Mirza did not understand if that was his hallucination or it was really happening; before he could figure out, it was darkness everywhere.

That night Mirza got answers to many of his questions; revealed by the strange façade that seemed to have appeared before him.

'Why are they doing this to me?'

'Because, you don't care to understand their feelings.'

'But I am just a Sufi singer. I have never tried to hurt anyone's feelings!'

'You are a *Hindustani* first; then a Sufi singer.'

'What do you mean?'

'Didn't they accuse you for not understanding the spirit of *Hindustan*?'

'Yes; but ...'

'*Hindustan* is not only the land of Hindus; it is the spirit of an ancient culture; the legacy of an antiquity.'

'I did not understand'

'You need to figure it yourself my boy. Come out of shackles of urbanization; visit the real *Hindustan*, try to understand its spirit.'

'How do I know where to go?'

'You will find your answers at the oddest of places from your perspective'

Mirza's stupor was diluted by the chirping of birds. He opened his eyes to find the darkness has faded considerably and the apparent ghastly ambience of Pipriya was slowly embracing the signs of life, like the petals of a sunflower unfurls to its crowning glory when it is kissed by the warmth of sunlight.

Mirza came out of the station building and started to walk along a cobbled path towards the settlement slowly getting visible at the horizon. He did not have to walk far before he found a rickshaw heading towards the station. The rickshaw was empty; the tired Mirza stopped the vehicle at once and ordered the rickshaw driver to take him to a place where he could find shelter. The rickshaw driver informed that there is a solitary hotel at the center of the small town, next to a temple, which was the settlement's most prized possession.

Mirza was lost in his thoughts as the rickshaw made its way through the narrow paths towards the temple, whose unmistakable skyscraping pyramidal crown was now visible to Mirza. He was too tired to pay any attention to anything but; suddenly, he heard something very familiar, which was enough to steady his nerves and attract his full attention. The rickshaw driver was singing; '*unke dekhe se jo aa jaati hain muh pe raunak; vo samajhte hain ke bimar ka haal accha hai.*' A *ghazal* which he has performed so many times. He was unable to understand by which means a humble rickshaw driver from an unknown hamlet could even be aware of a song of such highest pedigree, let alone singing it in the most appropriate manner. Mirza remained silent and kept listening before the morning bells of the temple

became loud enough to suppress the vocal power of the rickshaw driver. Mirza understood he has reached his destination.

'*Babuji*, will you prefer to go around a bit, later during the day?'

'I would love to, my friend. Can you come back and pick me up around four in the afternoon?'

'Certainly *babuji*; you will find no better guide than this Gopal.'

Gopal! Mirza was surprised to hear the name as well. We had assumed that the rickshaw driver was a Muslim, hence has interest in Sufi genre of highest order. But a Hindu rickshaw driver at Pipriya, singing Ghalib, was beyond his wildest of imagination.

In the afternoon as Gopal took Mirza around, Mirza had no interest in the places that Gopal showed him. A lake behind the temple called Man Sarovar; an ancient banyan tree where some sage in antiquity attained his salvation; a mound, locally believed to be the seat of a famous emperor; the *mazar* of a *faqir*, who was a messiah for the locals and huge ground where an annual fair takes place. All that was unimportant for Mirza as Gopal kept on singing one *ghazal* after the other, in same order in which he had presented them in his album, for which he had received the Padma award. Finally, Mirza had enough; he could not help but ask Gopal that how on earth he knows all that he was singing?

'*Babuji*, I have heard them many, many time on my cassette player. These are songs of my favorite artist.'

'Do you realize what these lines mean?'

To his surprise, Gopal provided a lucid yet vivid explanation of the saying in every ghazal, in a way that Mirza couldn't have done himself, despite spending his entire life with them.

'I find solace in these songs, *babuji*!'

'But how? You are a Hindu, right? How can these words provide you such a degree of inner peace?'

'What is there for me in Kaaba or Kashi, *babuji*? For me my lord resides in these songs; blessed is the saint who sings them in such a melodious manner.'

'Do you know the name of the singer?'

'Ofcourse I do. Mirza Aftab Ali.'

Mirza was shell struck. He never ever had imagined to find such an ardent fan in such an unprecedented demographic, who portrays Mirza in most divine manner. Was this another

conspiracy against him? He suspected, did they know who he was? Is this fabricated to lure him into another trap?

‘Mirza *ji* must be a great saint,’ Gopal continued. ‘That’s why I worship him alongside my deities and Ghalib *sahib*.’

‘He is no saint, Gopal. People say he is a traitor; an enemy of the state.’

‘All rubbish,’ Gopal said in disgust, ‘these folks in the big cities only knows how to do politics. I am sure my saintly God is pushed to the extremes.’

Mirza remained silent and listened, ‘if I ever get to meet Mirza *ji*, I would advise him not to be perturbed. God has blessed him with the skills to narrate His words, he should rather focus on that and not on all those rubbish. And about those accusations? I would say Mirza *ji*, that even your prophet was not spared from being judged.’

Mirza did not realize that Gopal has stopped in front of a dilapidated shed. He told Mirza, that is where he lived and took him inside to offer him some tea. ‘You are my guest, *babuji*. How can I let you go like this?’

As Gopal was making tea; on one corner of the dimly lit room, Mirza saw a small alter; on which amidst a bouquet of fresh flowers resided idols of Ganesha, Shiva and Laxmi; alongside the deities the alter also contained two other photographs; one was a portrait of Mirza Ghalib and the other was a distorted picture of Mirza Aftab Ali receiving Padma award from the President.

Mirza quietly stepped out of the shed and headed straight towards the station. By then he had understood the meaning of the spirit of *Hindustan*.

Few months later, after the dust of the war had settled under the carpet; Mirza had shifted his base to Calcutta from Mumbai. He had just finished working on his latest album; another collection of Ghalib’s immortal couplets like ‘*humko malum hai Jannat ha haqiqat lekin; dil ke khush rakhne ko ghalib yeh khayal accha hai.*’ Album was published shortly after and was titled as ‘Gopal: the unknown spirit of Hindustan’, launched on Independence Day at the iconic ‘Nandan’ auditorium presided by an august gathering. The album was launched by one Gopal, an unknown rickshaw puller, from an even more unknown slice of the real *Hindustan*.



# **The Rendezvous**

## **Angana Mukherjee Saha**

(1)

“A promise is meant to be kept

And there lies our friendship’s depth!”

Yesterday was no exception! Like every other night, yester night also Mark with his drowsy eyes, kept murmuring those words, the last words uttered by three of them! Chris, Jenifer and Mark himself! Twelve years back, on today’s date, three of them departed with a promise. A promise to never forget one another, a promise to never let go their friendship, a promise of the rendezvous!

Mark still remembers the first day, when they met! Mark’s father’s job was transferable. Mark used to hate his life of a nomad; every year new places, new neighbours, new schools. And most importantly, he was tired of making new friends. At the age of seven when Mark shifted to New York with his parents, he first met Chris and Jenifer who used to stay in the same neighbourhood. On their very first meeting they felt an inner bond, a bond too strong to perish. At that age, to the other children the word ‘friendship’ meant sharing chocolates and playing together in summer holidays. But their friendship was more than that. Their friendship was beyond sharing chocolates and toys! Their friendship was about sharing emotions. Mark still remembers at the age of eight, how horrified he felt when he heard about Chris’s father’s death. His father was a reporter and was stabbed by a hooligan. More than a friend, Mark started playing the role of Chris’s elder brother. He used to take care of him; whether Chris has had his lunch or not, whether he has done his homework or not, whether he is both physically and emotionally alright or not, all these became Mark’s concerns. And with this caring nature towards Chris, Mark decided in his mind to protect Chris throughout his life.

More than a decade is over, many colourful relationships have turned into grey but not a single day from that golden era has faded away from the memories of Chris. Chris remembers every nook and corner of Jenifer’s house where they often used to play hide and seek. Chris remembers the tiny porcelain tea-cup set in which Jenifer used to serve water as tea! Chris remembers the Barbie in the blue gown, in which he used to imagine Jenifer as a bride! Chris

remembers how happy Jenifer used to be when she was with his mother. As the year passed and Chris stepped into adolescence, he indulged himself to make a silent wish. A wish to give Jenifer a good mother and a wish to give his mother a beautiful daughter-in-law!

Jenifer was the youngest of all. Beauty was her weapon but her reticence was her weakness. Thus she had no friends in school. No one ever bothered to ask an introvert her whereabouts. Still she was fine in her solitude until her step mom entered the scene! When she was regularly being tortured by her step mom, she hated her inattentive, careless father in every possible way. Then Mark came into her life as a saviour. After being friends for many years, Jenifer gradually realized that Mark became more than a friend to her. Marks's caring nature towards Chris provoked Jenifer to deliberate, unlike her father how good a husband Mark would be, how good a father Mark can be to her children! Jenifer used to relish her dream only by gazing at him but she was never been able to express her feelings to Mark.

(2)

Tomorrow is the day! 20th October, 2017! The day of the grand rendezvous!

In next five hours, Mark's flight is going to take off. Before leaving with his suitcase Mark stared at his father for a while and then sighed. It reminded him of every single word that his father once told him.

After settling a bit in New York for nine years, his father was again back with his futility. They were about to leave New York and shift to Madagascar. But Mark was stubborn; he was not ready to leave his friends.

His father said to him with laughter, "You are not ready to leave New York for Your friends my boy? How funny is that! My boy, don't worry, in Madagascar you will make more and better friends!"

Mark replied, "Dad, I don't know about more, but better? Not possible! I can never ever have friends like them."

Mark's father broke into huge laughter, "Ha ha ha ha! Okay my boy! Let's see! When you will be grown up enough, I shall ask you! But I'm sure when you will grow up, you will not remember a single one of them!"

Sitting on the porch Chris took a sip in his morning coffee and dialed the number. Chris's colleague yelled at him over phone, "Are you mad Chris? Are you seriously going to meet them today? Do you really think the other two will turn up?"

Chris smiled and said, "Yes my dear Roger! I haven't forgot the helpless face of Jenifer when I and Mark both were about to leave her. She was never the kind to stop anyone. Still she did that day. She asked me, "Mark's family is leaving that's why he has to, I understand. But why are you Chris?" I said, "My mother has got a good job in Mexico and you know our financial condition Jenifer! The decision of not grabbing the opportunity would be too luxurious to a boy without father. I have to go Jenifer". Jenifer was quiet! What else could she have done? She asked for more than what she could have. Thus I must go Roger, I must go!"

Jenifer boarded into the flight from Miami International airport. She was quite in a dilemma whether she is doing the right thing or not. But how can she forget the promise? How can she forget the moment when after staying under the umbrella of friendship for nine long years, all of a sudden she was again on her own? When followed by Mark, Chris informed her about his departure, Jenifer couldn't believe her ears. She didn't have anyone in her life apart from these two fellows. And now they too are leaving and perhaps forever. Jenifer was shattered! Again she was curled up in her claustrophobic shell.

But every night comes with a dawn! Thus Mark came up with the promise; the promise of the rendezvous. Beyond every single silent wish, the loud promise of the three was the ray of hope for their lives! Three souls came together under the gloomy sky and uttered every word with unforgettable firmness.

Mark: "Today I and Chris are sixteen and Jenifer, you are fifteen! After twelve years from now, we will be meeting. What do you say?"

Chris: "That's great Mark! We will be big enough then! Won't we be?"

Mark: "Yes Chris, big enough to take our own decisions! So come on, let's make a promise today!"

Jenifer: "Yes! We promise that we shall meet after twelve years"

Chris: "At the same place, on the same date"

Mark: "And at the same time. We may forget everything but won't forget this promise. Because

A promise is meant to be kept  
And there lies our friendship's depth!"

Chris and Jenifer reiterated together, "Yes!

A promise is meant to be kept  
And there lies our friendship's depth!"

(3)

Under the shiny sky, surrounded by the soothing breeze, all three reunited. They toasted the champagne, they laughed out loud, and they poured their hearts down to the cafe table. They had a whale of a time.

Mark was tickled pink to see Chris stable. He felt like laughing at himself; how stupid he had been to think that he would always protect Chris like a brother! But Mark is more than happy that even without his protection, Chris has been able to provide himself a secure life with a great job! What else could have made him happier?

Chris was happy too to see Jenifer happily married! He found himself in quite embarrassment when he remembered his dream to marry her! But he was happy that Jenifer has not forgot the two of them, he was happy that Jenifer turned up in a beautiful blue gown! His dream to see her as a bride came true today! What more he could ask from life?

Jenifer couldn't believe her eyes that the two of them turned up today. They left her in void but they returned as promised. They were true to their promise. It must be difficult as well as expensive for Mark to come from Madagascar, still he managed to be true to his words. Here lies the divinity of friendship.

(4)

After the successful rendezvous now it's time to depart for another time, but this time with the phone numbers of one another!

After getting into the flight to Madagascar, Mark got a voice message from the hospital. It was Doctor Andrew who was in charge of Mark's father who has been in comma since last three years.

"Hi Mark, I am sorry to inform you that your father is fighting his last battle! I already told you that his condition is a bit critical nowadays. I told you it can be risky for you to travel to such a long distance in his this condition. I am afraid Mark, that when you will come back, you may not see him anymore. Please come back as soon as possible!"

Chris got the call almost at same time. It was Roger. "Chris my friend, I couldn't do anything, you have just lost the chance of your promotion! I told you not to go Chris. You struggled so much to reach this position. Just one day was left to complete this project. Then you could have touched the sky! But unfortunately.."

Chris smiled and said, "No problem man! They may think I am an irresponsible man to leave his work undone, but Roger you must know; I committed my friends twelve years ago. And if I cannot keep that promise, how can I bear my company's responsibility?"

Jenifer got the text message after she had landed in Florida! It was John, her so called loving husband.

"Dear Jenifer, by leaving me like this on our first anniversary, you have hurt me a lot! You know what these special days mean to me. Still you preferred your friends to me. I won't deny, your beauty has always made me insecure. And thus, I choose to have a serious discussion about our marriage which I think is breaking!"

Jenifer didn't have any clue how to save her marriage, how to make her paranoid husband understand the importance of the rendezvous!

Like Jenifer, the tranquility of the atmosphere also had no clue about the inner turmoil of the three friends. The lustrous sky, the green grasses, the orange maple leaves, the bird chirping and the concrete buildings witnessed only their euphoria; but they were unaware of the sacrifices which these three fellows have gone through. Those sacrifices to keep that one promise will always be buried!

They valued their friendship more than their personal loses. They may lose the individual battle but their friendship will always come up as the winner! Because they know-

"A promise is meant to be kept  
And there lies our friendship's depth!"





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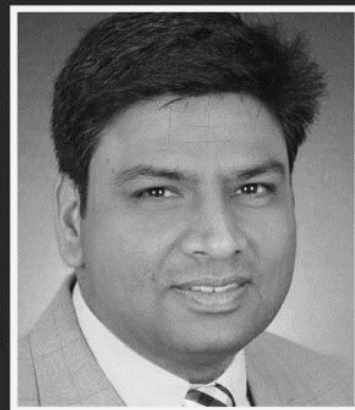
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# আজিকার কৃষ্ণ-বিনোদিনী

নীতীশ মুখোপাধ্যায়  
গ্যাপ্টনবেরী, কানেকটিকাট

আজিকার শুভ প্রাতে বিনোদিনী রাই  
জাগিবার বোরে, মৃদু-মৃদু তানে  
কহে কানে খাটো কৃষ্ণ-কানে -  
“প্রভু, মথুরার পথে আজি নাই যদি যাই  
চলোনা গৌ যাই ঘুরপথে  
হ্যাঁ গৌ, চলো বস্টন যাই, বস্টন চলো যাই”।

কৃষ্ণ ভুল শুনি বলে, “কী कहিলে? কী যে মধুর कहিলে রাই -  
বাসি বিছানায় বসি এক-বাটি দহি-বড়া যদি পাই।”

এইকথা শুনি কী মজা, কী যে মজা হবে ভাবি -  
সাথীগন জাগি ওঠে গাহি  
তাই-তাই-তাই তাই-তাই-তাই  
সুদামের গৃহে চলো সবে আজি  
সেখা কতু কিল-চড় নাই।  
বিনতা বিনোদিনী কহে ক্ষীণস্বরে -  
“আজি নিশীথে নাহিবা ফিরিনু, ক্ষতি আছে তাতে?  
ভাবি দেখ কৃষ্ণ ক্ষতি কিছু নাই  
চলো না গৌ বস্টন যাই, বস্টন চলো যাই”।

এইকথা শুনি, সখা-সখী সবে আনন্দে আবীরে  
নয়নের বারি রঞ্ধিতে না পারি  
দুঃখ তুলি গাহে “জয় কৃষ্ণ-বিনোদিনী জয়” -  
এমৎ প্রহরে, কৃষ্ণ ঘিরিয়া সখা-সখী সনে  
নাচে সানন্দে বিনোদিনী রাই।  
নাচিতে নাচিতে কৃষ্ণ দেখে বেসামাল রাই -  
তারস্বরে সকলে গাহিতে লাগিল একজোটে  
“চলো চলো তবে বস্টন যাই, বস্টন চলো যাই”।

বিরত রহিতে আর নাহি পারি  
কৃষ্ণ-বিনোদিনী মাঝে ধরে ধূয়া -  
“খাই-খাই-খাই খাই-খাই-খাই, দহি-বড়া যদি পাই  
সবে মিলি চলো তবে বস্টন যাই  
চলো বস্টন যাই, বস্টন চলো যাই”।

# Shukla Paksha and Krishna Paksha

## Raima Maitra

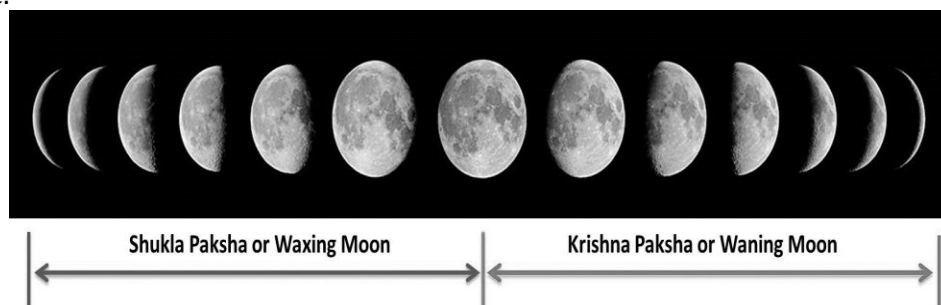
A Paksha is a lunar month divided into two sections and those Pakshas are called Shukla paksha and Krishna Paksha. There are fifteen days in each paksha and those fifteen days are:

Shukla Paksha	Krishna Paksha
1. Prathama	1. Prathama
2. Dwitiya	2. Dwitiya
3. Tritiya	3. Tritiya
4. Chaturthi	4. Chaturth
5. Panchami	5. Panchami
6. Shashti	6. Shashti
7. Saptami	7. Saptami
8. Ashtami	8. Ashtami
9. Navami	9. Navami
10. Dashami	10. Dashami
11. Ekadashi	11. Ekadashi
12. Dwadashi	12. Dwadashi
13. Trayodashi	13. Trayodasi
14. Chaturdashi	14. Chaturdashi
15. Purnima	15. Amavasya

Shukla paksha means bright fortnight. It is a period of fifteen days which begins on the new moon (AMAVASYA) and culminating full moon (PURNIMA) day. The moon is waxing which means moon is increasing in size during this period and getting brighter. Krishna Paksha means dark fortnight. It is a period of fifteen days which begins on full moon (PURNIMA) day and culminating the new moon (AMAVASYA). The moon is waning which means decreasing in size during this period of time. Shukla Paksha is the period of bright phase of the Moon and it is considered auspicious for commencing any new task. Krishna Paksha is the period of dark phase of the Moon and it is not considered very auspicious for commencing any new tasks.

A very interesting fact about people born under Shukla and Krishna Paksha is that characteristics of people born on the same tithi of either waxing or waning cycle of the moon are believed to be the same. The exception to this rule is when an individual is born on Poornima (full moon) or Amavasya (new moon).

Nevertheless, people born in Shukla Paksha have with certain characteristic traits- they have a charming disposition and are known to be possessed with a pleasing personality. If an individual is born in Shukla Paksha, he would have an utmost desire to learn, with a passion for new technologies. Understanding about matters regarding education and commercial ventures comes naturally to the ones who are born under Shukla Paksha. These individuals are hardworking and responsible.





# Little Ganesh

## Shriya Sanyal

Once upon a time there was a woman. She wished for a child so much. So she started to use some clay\powder kind of materials and started making a child statue. She used her magic (she was a goddess) to make her statue come to life. When the magic was done, she stared at her son proudly and embraced him. Mother: "My dear son, look at you, you are a work of art, I will name you .....Ganesh!!!

Ganesh: "You look very happy ma".

Mother: "Oh my god, you called me Ma".

Ganesh: "of course, I did."

Mother: "I know I will be happy with you."

Ganesh: "You will always be my ma".

Mother: "Nothing can go wrong".

Ganesh: "Yes, Ma".

Mother & Ganesh: Ha ha ha !!

So over the years, the mother taught Ganesh ABC's and counting, reading, writing, and math. Then he became 1 then 2 then 3. But when he became 4, now this is where it gets interesting. After he became 4, Ganesh started having fun with the others. One day Shiv thakur had to go to a meeting, so once he was about to leave, Ganesh stepped in front of him and blocked his way.

Shiv thakur: "Hey, little boy, move out of my path!"

Ganesh: "Ah Ah Ah say the password, say the password!"

Shiv thakur couldn't control his temper and with one swish of his trident Ganesh's head and body were sliced in half! Every god and goddess came to see what had happened causing such a noise in the council. Bishnu thakur, who was not only Durga's son-in-law but also a senior member of council, was very worried too.

When Ma Durga came to know about this, she became furious and decided to destroy the entire Creation! Brahma thakur, being the Creator, pleaded that she reconsiders her plan. She said she would, but only if two conditions were met, one, which Ganesh be brought back to life, and two, that he be forever worshipped before all the other gods. Shiv thakur sent Brahma out and brings back the head of the first creature he crosses that is laying with its head facing north. Brahma soon returned with the head of a strong and powerful elephant, which Shiv thakur fixed onto Ganesh's body. Breathing new life into him, Shiv thakur declared Ganesh to be his elder son and made him chief of his army. As promised, Shiv thakur gave him the status of being foremost among the gods, and leader of all the ganas (classes of beings), Ganapati.

....yeah that's why you see in the Ganesh statue instead of having a human head you'd find him with an elephant head. But if you found a Ganesh statue with a human head, then that would be rare!! So that's the end my dear friends, enjoy! Thank you for reading the story.



## Poems by - Dipanwita Pal

### Slothful Gait

My lazy feet shuffle off  
The dust of worn out ancient city.  
Lost its glory in the hands of  
hypocrisy,  
Grasping control within a crafty fist,  
Inflated with persuasive faculty.

The cacophony does ring every night  
Smudge off the dreams of deads.  
Reminiscence of past lost green  
gratitude.

The sloth crumbled gray matter of  
flesh 'n blood,  
Warning inevitability  
Catastrophe proceeding climactics.

### In the Hinge of a Daybreak

The flesh and blood(s) are walking  
Through the incarnadine realms of  
false Anarchism  
Where the consciousness is veiled  
with zom(bias) manifestations.

The divinity falls under the boot  
stamps of polite autocracy  
Where everyone is an indirect  
audience, passing on in every streets.

The streets and lines and ways and  
alleys and veins and chutes  
And roads are chartered with a click  
in a fraction of a second.

Mortals are ignorant of the ingenious  
agents of Nature,  
Of the faculty of the grey matter that  
throb within the great lobe  
They unveil the falsity of sane  
existence  
Bulldozing out the staggering  
insanity in vein.

Only to wait for the catastrophe  
Only to wait to face the evanescence  
Only to dig out the acre of grass  
Only to live in devastated existence  
Proceeding Metamorphosis.

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# 5 Wishes

## Anwisha Chandra

“Do we have to go” whined Emily.

“Yes we do” Jessica explained.

It was the 5th week of middle school and Emily did not like going there but her best friend Jessica, loved going to school. Emily hated going to school because Jessica was very very popular. Jessica would get all of the attention and nobody would ever forget her name, her favorite color and, everything else about her. But poor Emily didn't even get recognized because people barely knew her name. But Emily did not show her jealousy to Jessica because then she would break their friendship. So they went to their math class. Both Jessica and Emily hated math class but Emily hated math 15% more. Emily hated math class a bit more because Jessica found some of her friends that know her. They kept on talking and talking like “Oh hey Sarah”, “What do you want to do when you get home”, “Call me” and all of those stuff, but again poor Emily was not included. Emily sobbed and thought “Why doesn't anybody know me, the only person that is my friend is Jessica and sometimes she goes away so why can't I find another friend”. Emily kept thinking and thinking this question over and over again for the whole math class. Finally math class was over and Emily was so excited that she screamed out

“YESSSSSSSSSSSS MATH IS OVER TODAY YYYY !

She was so happy that math was over but her teacher, Mr. Nunes was very angry. He was so angry that he put Emily in detention.

“But that's not fair” shouted out Jessica.

Emily was so happy that her best friend said that because she actually felt like Jessica loves her and always cared about her. But Mr. Nunes was not happy about Jessica shouting and he put her in detention too. Mr. Nunes said that their punishment after class would be cleaning the old, rusty, dirty and creepy attic. Both Jessica and Emily groaned. They did not want to go to detention but they did anyway.

“Why did you scream so loudly” scolded Jessica.

“I screamed because you were talking to your friends the whole time in class and you didn't even let me talk with you because you forgot that I was even there”, said Emily frustrated.

Then Emily walked to the back of the room and started cleaning. When Jessica saw Emily cleaning in the back Jessica decided that she was going to clean in the back too; so she did. Emily and Jessica didn't talk for a while then half an hour later Jessica found a shiny gold item. "What is this", said Jessica surprisingly. Jessica cleaned it off and when she did a genie came out. Emily was right next to Jessica and she was amazed when she saw that a genie came out.

"Hello" said the genie.

"Wow" said the girls.

They couldn't think anymore because they were too excited.

"Hello my name is GiGi and I am both of your genies".

"How many wishes will you give us" said Emily.

"5 wishes" explained GiGi,

"but will each of us get 5 wishes?" questioned Jessica.

"No the total amount of wishes there will be for the both of you is 5" told GiGi.

"Ok so each of us will get 2 wishes to ourselves and the last one we will choose together" said Emily.

"Right" agreed Jessica.

"But be careful of what you wish for because you might not know what will happen" said the genie.

But the girls didn't even listen to the genie because they were too excited. First Jessica decided to do her first wish "I wish to get 100 beautiful dresses". "Your wish is granted" chanted GiGi. And of course Jessica got 100 beautiful dresses. They were so beautiful and gorgeous. 40 dresses were all shiny and silky leather and 60 were complete silk they were all so so pretty. "Thank you so so much" said Jessica. She was so excited and happy that she got so many beautiful dresses. "Are you going to use one of your wishes Emily" said GiGi. "Nah, I don't think I need to use one of my wishes at the moment right now" said Emily. "Remember to say GiGi I need you so that you can say it when you need me". Later it was about lunch time and Emily felt nervous. Emily didn't feel like going to the lunchroom because she knew what was probably going to happen. When Emily would go to the lunchroom Jessica would probably forget all about her and talk to all of her other friends with, Emily sitting all by herself. And sadly what Emily thought was going to happen actually happened. Emily was crying all by herself sitting on the floor. Then Emily decided that she wanted to try to ask if she could talk to them, so she wiped off her tears



and went to the table where Jessica was sitting (called the cool kids table). When Emily got there she said "Can I please sit with you guys because it looks like there is some room for me so can I sit here with my best friend Jessica and maybe with you so we can be friends". Jessica was just about to say yes to Emily until Emily worst bully Sarah Mcalister interrupted her. "Actually no you cannot sit here you YOU BIG FAT DORK!

The whole table was quiet for a minute. Emily's eyes became watery and her face was red as she cried all the way to the end of the hall then everyone started talking but not Jessica. Jessica kept thinking for about 5 minutes about what Sarah did and how Emily cried. Then Jessica quickly ran over to the end of the hallway and found Emily crying in her arms so badly. "What's wrong" questioned Jessica. "Me! ,you always talk with your REAL FRIENDS when you don't even remember me sometimes and that makes me alone and just don't you know how I feel?" said Emily in a sad voice. "I do know how you feel and I tried to tell them to stop plus you never tell anybody your feelings except me and lastly I can't be the only person you should talk to because you could talk to so many other people like Demy, and Meghan". "You know what GiGi I need you", and suddenly GiGi poofed out of nowhere. "Yes master Emily" said GiGi. Then Emily said a wish that Jessica was very confused about. "I wish that I was popular". "But Master Emily are you sure". "GiGi do it" said Emily being serious. "Are you sure" Jessica said," I am sure so do it now" Emily screamed then sadly GiGi said "Your wish is my command". Then Emily went outside and tried it out "Hey Emily you look good" said David, "Love your hair" said Ashley and even Emily's nightmare Sarah was nice to her. "Hey do you want to join my gang of girls. There is Jennifer, Taylor, Claire, and of course Me. So do you want to join? "I don't think I really want to because I have this friend called Jessica and I really want to be best friends with her so I'll pass" replied Emily. "Fine", said Sarah "Ok bye". Emily was so excited because her wish was true, she was finally popular. "Jessica I'm so excited, I mean I'm finally popular" Emily replied. "Yeah I'm so excited" said Jessica sarcastically. "Why don't you feel happy for me" Emily replied. But before Jessica could say anything Emily ran off. Then suddenly GiGi appeared. "I think we should fix this", GiGi said seriously. "How did you know what was happening" Jessica replied. "I always know what is happening to my finder's" GiGi replied. "I have a plan" suggested GiGi. Then GiGi whispered the plan to Jessica it was a good way to make sure that Emily would not be popular for the rest of her life and sadly Jessica too. First Jessica wished that she wasn't popular for the rest of her life so GiGi granted that wish. Now it was Emily's turn not to be popular. Their plan was to try to

convince Emily to be unpopular so they did. For example Jessica said "Emily remember the time we both had milkshake's and you spit it out of your nose please remember". But even though the GiGi and Jessica kept on trying Emily would not listen because every single day Emily got brattier and meaner. She even joined Sarah Mcalister. "What are you 2 loser's doing here" replied Emily in a super rude voice. Jessica and GiGi didn't know what to say so instead they gave up on that plan. Jessica then started crying, "Why did Emily become so rude". GiGi didn't know what to say so she just stayed quiet. For months Jessica and GiGi were alone together. They really missed the real Emily and were tired of Emily bullying them now. Then Emily started to become very, very, very rude. She was even ruder than Sarah. "YOU DON'T BELONG HERE YOU BIG FAT LOSER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Everybody then started to hate Emily. They spread gossip about Emily that she got offended of all of the gossip. Weeks later Emily became her normal self. Everybody was so happy even Sarah Mcalister was really happy. "Well Emily what are you going to do for your last wish by yourself because you're popular now" said GiGi. "I wish that not to be popular just like my best friend Jessica" said Emily. "Your wish is granted" said GiGi happily. "Let's have a party", screamed Jessica and everybody agreed. Then everybody celebrated about who they really are whether they're popular or not. "I'm having the best time ever" said GiGi "But sadly when your wish is done I will be back to my lamp all lonely without my genie friends". "We know what we can do" said Emily and Jessica. "We wish that you and all your genie friends will live together in your lamp". GiGi was so surprised that she smiled. "Your wish is my command" replied GiGi. Then all of a sudden GiGi's friends came. For example Gloria, Genia and, Gerald. "You guys are all here, Emily Jessica thank you said GiGi very happily "And bye". "Bye" said the girls. Then GiGi disappeared with all of her genie friends into the lamp while Jessica and Emily discovered who they are and want to be.

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# Did she come really?

**Ashwini Boruah**

'Did she really come? Or was it really so?' , I ask my mind or my mind asks me whenever I stay at home or roam alone at any opportune time , at midnight too when I stay awake or at daytime when I water the pot plants at my flat's balcony . This has happened to me after what I saw at my house while opening the door one fine morning after I returned home from my usual routine morning walk.

I had a strange feeling that morning while walking by some dingy roads of Guwahati city. The sidewalks were full of filths carried by the previous night's rainfloods and I had to jump from one place to another to avoid putting my feet on dirty objects like old thrown away brooms to used sanitary napkins. Just in doing so I felt like seeing a lady of short stature walking fast ahead of me. By that time I reached a corner at the end of the footpath and found a better road unaffected by the previous night's torrential rains. There too I felt like seeing that lady walking fast ahead of me. To get near to her, I increased my walking speed as much as I could and suddenly a familiar smell greeted my nose. She was there ahead of me and I was trying hard to reach her by all means and see at least her face once to ascertain whether she was my mother, despite the fact that she died long fifty years ago. That was not practically possible I knew but then I felt perplexed as to the smell I got when I was somehow near to her minutes ago. The smell appeared known to me. It was of my mother's body and her clothes. It was like the smell of mother earth that we get when the first rains come. But how that could be possible!! She died long fifty years back, as I said. My zeal to overtake and see her face increased and I moved ahead with more speed. But by that time, some boys on motorbikes just came along at break neck speed and in the process the lady of my thoughts went far away and vanished.

She vanished leaving that heavenly aroma around me. It was her body odour only I could guess since in her whole life time of forty-five years on earth, she never used any such luxurious cosmetics whatsoever. She could not afford such luxury. We were not rich enough to indulge in such things and I remember the pitiable lifestyle my mother used to have. I was with my mother just for about nine years or so as I was sent to my maternal uncles' house for some kind of better education!

On return home after my routine morning walk, I went on thinking whether that was sheer hallucination. It was probably due to the fact that I used to think of my mother all the time.



For the last fifty years, not a day or a moment passed without having a thought on her. And probably because of that I saw my mother

In that form or she came down from above

Just to have a glimpse of me. It was absurd I knew but to make myself content, I took the matter that way. And an idea just crept into my mind. A crazy idea though. I thought of writing a letter to her, knowing fully well that there was no way to write to someone who had left this world. The idea behind this was to thank her whole heartedly for all the love and care she bestowed on me. It is because of her what I am today. A great lady she was, though her education was not as wide as one may think. She read up to about the fourth standard and knew around twenty words in English which she used often. People thought she was really very highly educated. Educated she was. She used to read a lot in vernacular language and guided me and her other siblings too properly enabling all to face the world. She left us when I was twenty five. And today at seventy seven, I weep for her like a child and because of that probably she came down from where she was in that morning and walked before me to some extent before vanishing abruptly. Whatever it is, I framed a letter in my mind and till I reached home, the words kept on coming to my mind. It was alright if I write and read that myself only, my mother in the outer world would definitely know about that. I started composing the letter in mind while walking back home

“My Maa, dear Maa, have my love and regards. You will be surprised to know, that in all these years, fifty to be precise, I have been thinking about you, at day time or at night or at any place, home or outside. I cannot forget your sacrifice and love in bringing us up in the midst of acute poverty that you faced. I know you had high hopes on me but I could not repay anything when you were alive. I knew you had high expectations on me, but why I do not or did not know. I am what I am today is only because of you and I am content whatever life has given me. But I am terribly upset because you did not give any chance to share my joys with you and left the world so soon. Forty five years! That was not ‘age’, so to say. Tell once Maa, did you come down today to see me or show yourself to me somehow in disguise? O’h, what a fool I am? You cannot come down from the place you stay now. You must be living in the heaven only since you cannot live in hell. Hell is not the place for you. And there is no hell also up there. Hell is here where we live.

This earth I mean, very bad place. Whatever it is, just try once if possible to come down here for a short time. I have so many things to tell, you know. I am missing you, missing you terribly. Or have you taken rebirth? No, you cannot take rebirth since I am always waiting to

meet you and talk to you about the things covering all these fifty years. You know fully well that I stopped believing God after you left for the other world, but because of you only that I have started believing in rebirth. Don't take rebirth Maa till I meet you there, up above from here after only a few years from now, sooner or later as time for me too is ripe now for our reunion. After that, go wherever you like. By the way, do you meet daddy there? Whatever you may think, he was a real good man and a pious soul. Tell him about me if you meet. Before I conclude, my request again, please try to come just once. Did you come down today ? I saw someone on the road who exactly looked like you from behind .But I did not see the face, so sad you know! Bye Maa...."

By the time the draft of the letter to my mother was fully ready in my mind, though, I reached home. And when I opened the door, lo, what I saw you know? The framed photograph of my mother that was hung on the wall was lying on the floor totally smashed .Her photograph inside was lying on the side along with the only letter she wrote to me when alive during my staying away from home. She wrote to me asking to write her back about my welfare and about the places I visit around Delhi during any trip from office work..." remember you too often... worry also for your being away at such a far off place...Stay safe and write to me about places you see... I am recovering now...Your Maa..."

My mind got confused and perplexed again. Was that woman I saw ahead of me on the road in the morning my mother? Did she come to my home too? O'h, how her thoughts turned my morning so fragrant and soft! Wait Maa, I will meet you soon...

I have to meet my father too. It is just a matter of time...

# Happy Mother's Day

## Indrani Kushari

I had received a formal invitation from my daughter's school to celebrate Mother's Day. I was super excited to receive an invitation in a foreign land and that too in a country from where this day originated. It was my first Mother's Day since my arrival in USA. I took leave from office to celebrate this special occasion. I was busy the entire morning choosing the right dress, accessories and definitely practising the perfect smile on my face. My daughter had been regularly rehearsing the songs she was taught in school. I found her pretty serious about the event. She told she had a surprise for me which she did not want to reveal. I loved surprises so I was fine with it. As my good luck would have it, Father's Day followed Mother's Day, so I already was a winner. This itself was a great feeling, hard to describe.

My husband dropped me to school and left hurriedly. Was it the feeling of coming second in this race that he left without even saying 'bye' to me? Anyway, I hardly had time to analyse my husband's feelings. I had bigger goals to achieve. "To make this Mother's Day a memorable one". I saw my daughter in one corner of the room with her eyes eagerly waiting for me. The moment she saw me enter the room she came running with a flower in her hand. She told me that she had made the flower in 'Art and Craft' class. I proudly said to myself 'Definitely must have inherited the handiwork skill from me'. I immediately took my selfie with flower in hand and posted it on facebook. Did not forget to tag my husband :-):-) . I smiled sheepishly. Next the children started singing the songs planned perfectly to suit the occasion. The songs were beautiful with full of praises for moms. The final leg of the program was 'Mother's Day Card' which each kid had created. My daughter handed me my card. It was a beautiful pink colour card written and decorated by my daughter. I opened the card to see what was written inside. It had favorite of the mom's. Favourite color, food, dress...At the end, it had a question, "What does your mother like to do MOST?" My daughter had written, 'TO SLEEP'. I could not believe my eyes. I almost fell from my chair. How could my own daughter do this to me? A strange thought crossed my mind. Is the hospital responsible for this? I would not be surprised. They had so many babies in the nursery with same pink dress. You hardly can spot the difference. I was shocked, devastated, heart broken. I imagined the expression on her teacher's face when she read this. Why give such tricky questions to 5 year old kid? Her teacher did not know I was such a hard working lady. Should I meet her teacher and clarify it? The idea sounded stupid, would do more harm than good. Not my daughter's fault. Definitely influenced by my husband who kept saying how lazy I was who loved to sleep and did not exercise.

How could I show this to my husband? It felt like showing your report card to your parents with fail marks in Maths. My husband came to pick us and saw the report card, sorry, I mean Mother's Day card. The expression on his face looked as if he had won the Battle of Plassey. I had turned from hero to zero. I had no option but to keep quite. I could not fight or argue with my darling daughter for what she had written. The person who benefited from my loss was my husband. Not only he had enough time to prepare before Father's Day but he knew

the questions before the exam. He took full advantage of the situation and made all efforts to show how deeply he was interested in tennis, swimming, badminton and other outdoor activities. I heard him posing this question to our daughter when I was not around, "What does your father like most to do?". I did make faint protests of 'cheating' but not much success. I comforted myself saying "At the end of the day it does not matter who wins...We are finally going to celebrate together". This thought made me feel better.

For the next few years, this competition continued and we BOTH made efforts to impress our daughter with extra curricular activities (singing, dancing, cooking, indoor-outdoor sports) before Mother's/Father's Day so she writes them if asked in the Card(Very similar to the way professionals do before year end appraisals to impress supervisors). Not sure how many years we will succeed in influencing our daughter and get good rating. Children grow up real fast, you know!!! Hope my daughter gets impressed with my new hobby 'Writing Humour Stories'.

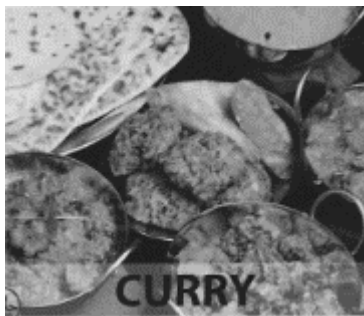
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# Paths in the Forest

## Rishika Maitra

In my neighborhood, a dirt path passing by woods and streams is now a bike trail paved smooth. Behind the trees and tall grasses, however, smaller paths emerge from the trail like leaves from a stem. I imagined that they were more like the infinite tendrils of twisting and turning vines, creeping out from the trail and intertwining seamlessly with our world of suburban neighborhoods and shiny cars. I imagined myself walking for miles along these tendrils, heading into endless depths. In reality, the entire twisted vine occupies a small space in its surrounding forest.

The significance of our place in this forest is dependent entirely on perception. The common housefly, in its four weeks of life, will travel only approximately two miles from where he is born; he occupies a relatively large place in the world he knows. We are born houseflies. Our world is our immediate surroundings, only what we are exposed to. As we grow, our place in the world shrinks, and our world becomes a neighborhood and perhaps a nearby bike trail. As we grow, our world expands, and we go from seeing ourselves as the center of our own universe to realizing that we are miniscule particles in comparison to the stars and galaxies around us. Even with this knowledge, it is our place in this vast world that is ultimately most important to us in our microscopic lives. Our place is infinitely small in an infinitely large universe. Eternally, we search in vain for an infinity within our world that can contain our existence.

As fall gives way to winter's chilling winds, when damp leaves coat every surface and silence my footsteps, I follow the snaking paths off of the bike trail to see where they will lead, searching for a place where the trail never ends. One path takes me through a forest, trees towering over my head like enormous skeletons as I maneuver around exposed roots, to an abrupt end, as the shell of an ancient metal bridge jutting outward from the end of this trail stops just short of reaching the other side of a narrow gulch, a work left incomplete. I walk to the edge and realize that, just like everything else in our world, this path comes to an end. As I discover its finite nature, I am struck with disappointment that this seemingly boundless tendril of the path curls to a point and ceases to grow. The illusion of infinity belies the truth that its place in the forest is limited.

Another path branching out from my beloved bike trail leads to a wooden bridge, overgrown and rickety, across a pale algae-covered pond. I walk across the pond and into a clearing on the opposite bank. The surrounding forest thickens, and I hope that I have found my endless path. I delve deeper into the woods, as a dense cover of branches darkens the sky. The path stretches on forever; it occupies an unbounded place in the forest. Then all of a sudden, the



illusion of endlessness is shattered once again. The forest around the path thins and the trees become sparser, giving way to an apartment complex. The place the path once occupied shrinks and becomes finite. Just like that, the enchantment and mystery of the untrodden paths dissipates, and humanity demonstrates once again the way in which it forces nature into convenient microcosms – an unfinished bridge and a cleared forest containing a paved bike trail.

To create a place for ourselves, we must preclude the existence of another, and only then can we truly exist. The cuckoo bird, for example, lays her eggs in the nest of the magpie or another bird, claiming the nest as her own to raise her family. Like the cuckoo bird, we too are nesting, or forging a place for ourselves, by forcing competing birds out of their place. We make our homes by replacing nature – her skeletal trees, her silent leaves, and her twisting paths – with our suburban neighborhoods and shiny cars. Taking on the role of gods, we mold our surroundings to accommodate our presence. If a creator has given us existence, we are still nothing without a place. To find this place, we must become parasitic and take over our surroundings.

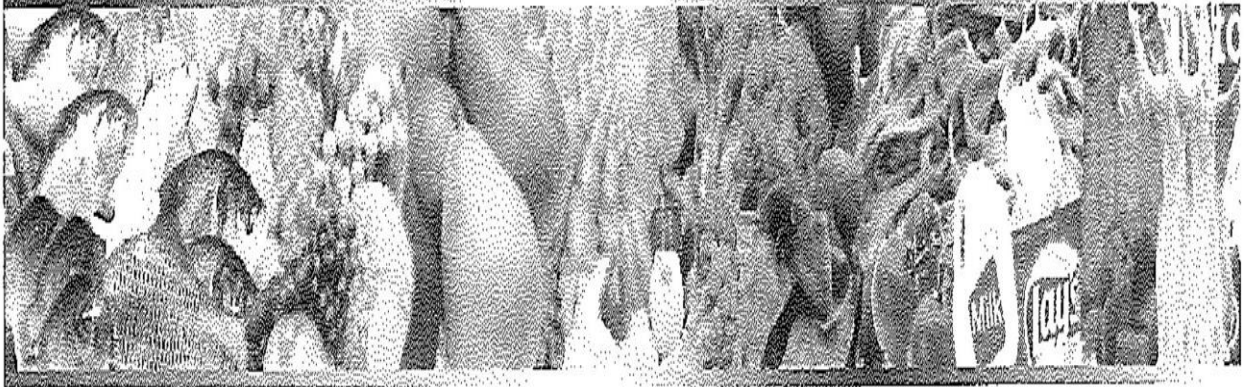
Humans are viruses; we take root in an unfamiliar environment and make it our own. A virus is not truly alive until it comes into contact with something alive. We do not truly exist without our world to contain us – the living, breathing, environment of nature. When it encounters its host cell, a place to claim for its own, the virus takes complete control of all of its surroundings. We are viruses – we cling to a place and infect it with our presence. We take over a niche and make it our own. We strive to fit like puzzle pieces with each other and our world, and it is finding our place in the infinite cosmic puzzle that gives us purpose.

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Our status of 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization can double your contribution to NASKA by as simple as downloading 501(c)(3) charitable matching contribution form from your employer's web site and forwarding the form to us. We will take care of all paper works. Some employers may need registering NASKA as eligible 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in their database. This is a onetime process and should take 2-3 minutes at your end to complete the form.

This small effort from your end can go long way in making NASKA a successful organization.

If you have any question about the process, our office bearers will be grateful to assist you. Please forward your queries to [naskact@yahoo.com](mailto:naskact@yahoo.com).

# SPECIAL THANKS

Executive committee of NASKA would like to express their gratitude to all the donors and sponsors who preferred to remain anonymous and helped with their support and donation. We would also like to thank the following individuals for their help and generous donation during Kalipuja.

Thank you!!!

Ajit Karmakar	Ipsita Vashisht
Ananda Banerjee	Manish Balakrishna
Anil Banik	Oindrila Sen
Anirban Chakraborty	Prabitra Saha
Arindam Chakraborty	Raja Banerjee
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Bhaskar Dutta	Sib Roy
Biswajit Karmakar	Subir Kar
Deepak Mishra	Sudhangshu Bose
Dipak Adhikary	Tapas Mahapatra

## A note of thanks!

Executive Committee of NASKA Inc would like to thank you for all your support and cooperation. It has helped us immensely in our endeavor. Thank you for recognizing the spark in NASKA and giving us the opportunity to be what we are today.

Thank you.

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# Income Expense Report – 2016

		Income	Expense
Starting Balance		\$ 18,961.56	
Income			
	Sponsors	\$ 10,537.00	
	Gate Collection	\$ 12,926.00	
	Advertisement	\$ 1,650.00	
	Vendor	\$ 100.00	
	Total	\$ 25,213.00	
Expenses			
	Admin/Publicity		\$ 1,508.33
	Admin/Publicity - Sub total		\$ 1,508.33
	Venue		\$ 1,337.50
	Storage		\$ 948.00
	School Insurance		\$ 475.00
	Transporation		\$ 1,160.00
	Vanue and transpotation - Sub total		\$ 3,920.50
	Priest		\$ 501.00
	Prist Transport		\$ -
	Puja - Sub total		\$ 501.00
	Artist and Music Band		\$ 5,500.00
	Sound System		\$ 500.00
	Artist		\$ 6,000.00
	Food		\$ 5,036.36
	Food - Sub total		\$ 5,036.36
	Total	\$ 25,213.00	\$ 16,966.19
	Balance	\$ 27,208.37	





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