

# **North America Sarbojanin Kalipuja Association**



22<sup>th</sup> October, 2022



# Kalipuja 2022

Welcome to our 13<sup>th</sup> Kalipuja. We wish all our patrons happiness and prosperity. May the blessing of Maa Kali be with you always.

## Venue

Rocky Hill High School

50 Chapin Ave, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

## Event

**22<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

3:00 PM–5:30 PM Puja

5:30 PM–6:00 PM Pushpanjali

6:00 PM–6:45 PM Bhog Distribution

6:30 PM–8:00 PM Dinner Distribution

8:30 PM–10:30 PM Kushal Paul Live in Concert

# North America Sarbojanin Kalipuja Association Inc.

PO Box 8310  
Manchester CT 06040

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

<http://naska.org/>

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## NASKA Executive Committee

Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay  
Ranadip Acharya  
Arindam Chakravarty  
Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee  
Girija Bhunia

Ayan Pal  
Ananya Ganguly  
Joybrata Das  
Malay Nag

## Board of Authority

Priest Arrangement	Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay, Animesh Chandra, Tarun Chowdhury
Publicity & Communication	Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay, Joybrata Das, Animesh Chandra
Food	Ayan Pal , Nirupam Basu
Prasad Distribution	Ananya Ganguly, Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee and team
Puja Arrangement	Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee, Ananya Ganguly and team
Advertisement	Ranadip Acharya, Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee, Animesh Chandra
Artist	Ranadip Acharya, Sanjit Sanyal
Decoration	Girija Bhunia, Arindam Guha, Malay Nag
Vendor Management	Joybrata Das , Animesh Chandra
Venue	Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay, Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee, Ranadip Acharya
Transportation Logistics	Ranadip Acharya , Joybrata Das
Priest Transport	Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay , Sanchita Maitra Chatterjee
Front Desk	Arindam Chakraborty, Subhasis Ganguly

## Souvenir

Animesh Chandra : Collections & Editing  
Ayan Pal : Design

## MESSAGE FROM NASKA

May this message find you all in good health and spirit. Over the past 12 years, this space has become a medium for us, the NASKA EC team, to connect with the ever-growing NASKA family, and share our ethos and actions that continue to evolve with time. And this year we have even more reason for sharing and spreading our joy and happiness with you. 2022 can very well be called the year of resurgence. It has been less than two years since the devastating pandemic, and already the world is taking massive strides towards wiping away all signs of slowdown and stagnancy. At NASKA, we are saluting this resurgence and return to near normalcy, by celebrating Kali Puja 2022 with full fervor, in line with the style and scale that was prevalent during the pre-pandemic years.

It is indeed heartening to see how the NASKA family has stayed together and grown over the years, and more importantly during the last two years, which have been challenging for one and all. Now that we seem to have turned the tide, it is time to be grateful to the Lord Almighty for the grace and blessings showered upon us. NASKA is thankful to each one of you who take pride in your association with the organization, for your faith, solidarity and continued patronage. NASKA's Kalipuja, has grown over the years and become a key community event, celebrating and

symbolizing festivity, diversity, love, friendship, and inclusiveness. The pandemic did force us to curtail the scale during the previous two occasions. But this year, let nothing hold us back, as we come together once again, with folded hands, in devotion and prayers to the Divine Mother.

Since the inception of NASKA Kalipuja, we have been truly fortunate to get generous support from our trusted sponsors, not to forget our guests and volunteers. We would like to acknowledge all of you for your enthusiastic participation and much appreciated assistance, making our Kalipuja a memorable success, every year.

We are happy to share that NASKA has continued to support multiple philanthropic activities both in the USA and India.

Before we end this message, let us pray and seek blessings for those who have faced adversities during the pandemic. May MA KALI continue to fill our lives with good health and happiness and give us the strength and resilience to overcome the challenges that come our way.

- NASKA Executive Committee

“Om Sri Maha Kalikayai Namah”

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## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Teenage is the start of anyone's prime time. What better year could it be for NASKA to embrace not only the teenage but also a new beginning of a post-covid era.

As the worries and apprehensions of COVID-19 are subdued with the vaccine and boosters, life is slowly going back to the mainstream "normal". In light of that new hope, we are happy to celebrate the 13th year of NASKA Kalipuja on full-scale after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Last year NASKA Board of Trustee were tasked with the project to fulfil the long-term vision and our community's dream to build a Kali Temple in CT. The committee has made significant progress in this endeavor, and you'll see an update on our efforts in subsequent pages.

We made sure that the Puja is performed with utmost devotion, adoration, and dedication and hence chose the date closest to the Amabashya tithi in Krishnapaksha.

I sincerely hope that this souvenir magazine would also contribute to the cause and take you to a 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 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

“ Through selfless work, love of God grows in the heart.  
Then, through His grace, one realizes Him in course of time.  
God can be seen, one can talk to Him, as I am talking to you. “

- Sri Ramakrishna



# Kali Temple in Connecticut



On behalf of NASKA, our Board of Trustee initiates the project to fulfil the long-term vision and our community's dream to build a Kali Temple in CT.

Your active participation and suggestions are welcome to make this dream a reality.

## **Contact NASKA Trustee Board:**

Animesh Chandra – 818 224 8760

Dhrubajyoti Chattopadhyay – 848 469 9100

Nirupam Basu – 860 202 3453

Ranjit Basak – 203 444 3060

Tarun Choudhury – 201 310 0949



## **MESSAGE TO OUR COMMUNITY**

Four and half years back in May of 2018, NASKA community formed the Board of Trustee (BoT) and honored us with a challenge to initiate the NASKA Mandir Project. In 2021 on the day of NASKA Kali Puja, we announced that the journey has begun. In less than one year's time, we made progress and with the help of enthusiastic philanthropists and benefactors and MAA's blessing we are very close to acquiring a large piece of land for the project.

MAA willing, our vision is to build the largest MAA Kali Tirtha Kendra in North America with a goal to provide religious support and service to devotees throughout the different stages of their life, in short a center for human development. This project is aimed at all of North America, and especially for North-Eastern part of the USA.

Future generations will have a place of worship, carry on the tradition and festivals and expand the capabilities of NASKA.

Your participation is important and crucial, it will make a great success story.

Several community members got involved with their intellect, moral and generous donation but we need each and everyone's participation. We will reach out to each of you for your suggestions and support.

This is just the beginning of a long journey. We are in this together. We need your support, time and energy. Please join us in being the champion!

We will continue to keep you posted on further updates once we finalize land purchase. In the meantime, if you have any queries or want to help in the project then please reach out to one of the BoT members.

Thank you for your incredible support for our organization!

We hope and pray each of you to stay safe and healthy, and find moments of happiness every day.

**Board of Trustee, NASKA**

**October 22, 2022**

# ডেড়ার পাল

শিবাজী বগ্নাজী

একটা দোলাচলের মধ্যে আছি বহু দিন ধরে  
জীবিকার জন্যে দিগ দ্রাবু আর ছুটেতে হবে কত,  
এখনো বাঁক নেবার সময় আসে নিরে?  
অল্প কিছু মানুষ তাদের মনের মতন কাজ করে,  
শুকনো যাপনের কাছে তারা মাথা করেনি নত।  
একটা দোলাচলের মধ্যে আছি বহু দিন ধরে।  
ওঁরা খুঁজে বার করেছে কি করতে পারে  
মনের আনন্দে, যা নয় গজ্জালিকার মতো।  
এখনো বাঁক নেবার সময় আসে নিরে?  
আমরা ডেড়ার পাল ছুটলাম নিরাপত্তার পরে  
ওঁদের মতন ঝুঁকি নিতে পারলাম নাতে,  
একটা দোলাচলের মধ্যে আছি বহু দিন ধরে।  
ঠিক কি যে চাই তা বুঝলামই না ঠিক করে  
জীবন ডর শুধু ডেবে গেলাম ছাই যত শত  
এখনো বাঁক নেবার সময় আসে নিরে?  
মন পাখিকে বল, কত দিন আর থাকবি নীড়ে,  
এরপর ওড়ার সময় যে হবে তোর গত।  
একটা দোলাচলের মধ্যে আছি বহু দিন ধরে,  
এখনো বাঁক নেবার সময় আসে নিরে?

## Poems by Manojit Sarkar

The discontent summer clouds  
in the deep bosom of the sky,  
An amorous looking green field  
is shaped for sportive tricks-  
A sparrow, wingbroke, laments awhile,  
obsequiously;  
Its untimely fall on direful sick-  
The fret he felt, weariness and fever,  
Forlorn he tries to climb its way  
back with a shiver.  
He can't fly yet, and for a moment  
The circus appeared to be still.  
And he recalls the virgin dawn's quietness!  
He felt the morn was unravished.  
Up in the tree a happy unwearied abode he  
needs,  
A burning forehead prevents a parching wing  
Yet high, high above the sky  
the Skylark sings!!  
Wrath-kindled sky if was ruled by me  
Thought he, 'atone you - as I can't  
But we will see'!

Might sleeps in the darkness of deception.  
As you witness my might -  
Thunder will pause and  
Lightning will be pale!  
On the face of righteousness  
Terror shuts its crooked eyes.

ধোঁয়াশা আর অন্ধকার  
কি সমান্তরাল! ?  
তা কি করে হয় -  
ধোঁয়াশা আগমনী।  
ভোরের আগের শরৎ সুবাস  
রোদের রংধনু হওয়ার সংবাদ।।  
অন্ধকার চিরন্তনী,  
ইলোরার খোদাই এর মতন  
কঠিন পাথরে বছরের আঘাত  
পরিবর্তনহীন - মাটি চাপা!  
অন্ধকারের প্রাণ হয়না  
জানালা বন্ধ, কৰ্কটরোগ  
গ্রাস করতে জানে  
রঙিন হতে পারেনা।  
ধোঁয়াশা হলো  
অহল্যার অপেক্ষা -  
সে আসছে তার সুর শুনিয়ে  
জীবনের আতর অতল স্পর্শ নিয়ে।



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ॐ महाकाल्यै च विद्महे  
शमशान वासिन्यै च धीमहि।  
तन्नो काली प्रचोदयात ॥

Om Great Goddess Kali, the One and only one, who resides in the Ocean of Life and in the Cremation Grounds that dissolve the world. We focus our energies on you, may you grant us boons and blessings.

---

*With Greetings*  
&  
*Best compliments*

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 #archyevent



# মকর সুখ

অশোক চন্দ্রবর্তী

নতুন ধানের ঘ্রাণে,  
ফসলে-ফসলে ভরা উঠানে,  
আজও দেখি সেই পৌষালী চেউ-  
দুব দিয়ে গঙ্গায়,  
পুনেগরই কামনায়  
অসংখ্য নর-নারী,  
বাদ নেই কেউ!!

চরিদিক গমগম,  
দিঠে-পুলি রমরম,  
আনন্দ-উল্লাসে গেয়ে ওঠে গাঁ-!  
তুমি যে আমার জন্মভূমি,  
সবুজ শ্যামলিমা !!

তবু মন কেন আজ ভরে ধন্দে-  
বুঝি মানুষ নেই কো আর  
সেই আনন্দে;  
অসহায় স'য়ে যায়,  
সয়ে সয়ে রয়ে যায়  
ভাঙ্গা-চোরা ছন্দে !

মা- , সবাই বলে না'কি  
তুমি জাগ্রত--;  
তবে আরো একবার আনো'তো  
পল্লীনারীর সুখ-ভরা মুখ  
আবার ফিরুক তার  
উঠানের সুখ!!

## কাক

অশোক চন্দ্রবর্তী

দাঁড়িয়ে ছিলাম ট্রেন স্টেশনে  
একটু দূরে গাছের আড়ে--,  
আমার ট্রেন, ডাউন শান্তি লোকাল  
ঠিক নয়টা সাত --!  
তার আগেই আছে বারাকপুর  
১০ মিনিটের তফাৎ !!

হটাৎ করেই দৃষ্টি গেলো একটু দূরে  
পাঁচটি মেয়ের কলকলানি স্টেশন জুড়ে ----;  
একটি মেয়ে নজর কাড়ে,  
দৃষ্টি থমকে যায়-----,  
চোখের পাতা নামিয়ে নিয়ে  
আবার ফিরে চায় ।  
সবাই যখন ট্রেনে ওঠে, হাত নেড়ে যায় মেয়ে  
চলতি ট্রেন দূর চলে যায় আমার পাশটি দিয়ে।  
----শুধু মেয়ে রইল আমার দিকে চেয়ে।

হটাৎ দেখি দু'টি লোক তার হাত ধরেছে চেপে,  
'বাঁচাও বাঁচাও' চিৎকারেতে শুধু স্টেশন যাচ্ছে কেঁপে----- ।

আমি'ত এক আমজনতা, দুকলা-পলকা মানুষ  
আমার'তো নেই জাদুদন্ড, যে বানিয়ে দেবে রজনী কিংবা ধানুষ ।

কাক খেয়ে যায় কাকের মাংস  
এই সমাজে যখন ---,  
কাক-ই জাতীয় পশু,  
মানিয়ে নেবো তখন।

# একটি কালীপূজোর সকালের গল্প

কৌশিক মজুমদার

আজ কালীপূজো। তবে তাতে আমার আর কি! দিন দুয়েক হলো সেই যে পেট গুড়গুড় শুরু হয়েছে, খামার আর নামই নেই। পূজো টুজো মাথায়। চোখ বুজলেই বারে বারে ভেসে উঠছে ক্লাস সেভেনের ঘর। দেখছি খাতা আর কোশেন পেপারের গোছা হাতে রবীনবাবু গটগটিয়ে ঢুকছেন, একবার সোজা তাকালেন আমার দিকে আর সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আমার হাঁটুতে হাঁটুতে ব্যান্ড বাজতে শুরু করলো! আসলে ভাইফোঁটার পরদিনই অ্যানুয়াল আসছে কিনা! প্রথম দিনই আবার অঙ্ক। রেজাল্ট বেরোনোর পরদিন বাবুও কেমন যেন অন্যরকম হয়ে যায়। সেসময় সামনাসামনি হওয়া একটু ইয়ে আর কি। বাবু মানে বাবা, আমার বাবাকে আমি আর দিয়া বাবু বলেই ডাকি।

এখন তো পূজোর ছুটি চলছে। দাদু বলেন, ‘কালীপূজো তো রান্তিরে, দিনের বেলায় না পড়ার কি?’ তাই একটু ট্রান্সলেশন আর অ্যালজেব্রা করে দাদুর কাছে জমা দিয়েই দে ছুট মণ্ডপের দিকে। দাদু তখন মন দিয়ে কাগজ পড়ছিলেন, তাই আর তক্ষুনি তক্ষুনি কারেকশান করতে বসলেন না। জোর বরাত, পাক্কা আধা ঘন্টা বেঁচে গেলো! বেরোনোর আগে ঝপ করে একবার ছাদে গিয়ে রোদে বিছিয়ে দিলাম আগের দিন বাবুর আনা গাদা গাদা রকমারি বাজি। সন্ধ্যাবেলায় পাড়ার সন্ধাই মিলে ফাটানো হবে।

আমাদের পাড়ার ক্লাব ‘সংঘ-শক্তি’। ছোট ক্লাব। ‘মুক্তবিহঙ্গ’ কিম্বা ‘তপন স্মৃতি সংঘ’র কাছে পাত্তা পায়না। তা হোক, আমাদের তো খুবই ভালো লাগে। পূজোর মাত্র দিনদুয়েক আগে টুকটুক করে ছোট প্যান্ডেল বাঁধা হয়। ঠোঁটের ফাঁকে চার-পাঁচটা পেরেক একসাথে নিয়ে মানস ডেকরেটরের দাদা যখন ছোট হাতুড়ি দিয়ে ঠুকে ঠুকে একমনে সিলিঙের কাপড় সেট করে, সে একটা দেখার মতো ব্যাপার। অতটা উঁচুতে ব্যালেন্স রেখে কাজ করা কি চাট্টিখানি কথা? মুখের স্টক ফুরিয়ে গেলেই গলায় ঝোলা থলি থেকে আবার খানকতক পেরেক নিয়ে নেয় দুই ঠোঁটের ফাঁকে, তার কায়দাই আলাদা!

পূজোর দিন সকালে দুলুকাকা আসে লাইট লাগাতে। বাজেট বেশী নয় বলে অল্পে অল্পেই সারা হয় কাজ। কাঠের ভারী মই ঘাড়ে দুলুকাকা যখন রাস্তার মোড় থেকে সবেধননীলমনি ফোকাস লাইটটা লাগাতে যাচ্ছে, ক্লাবের দাদারা তখন সেক্রেটারি রবীন খাঁড়ার নেতৃত্বে শেষ রাউন্ড চাঁদা তুলে ফিরলো। ছোট্ট রেঞ্জিনের ব্যাগ থেকে সব টাকা বার করে গৌনে রবীনদা, চোখে মুখে ফুটে ওঠে চিন্তার ছাপ!

মণ্ডপের ঠিক উল্টোদিকেই বাপিদের বাড়ী। তারই বাইরের দিকে একটা ঘরে ‘দীপমন্দির’ নামে নাটকের ক্লাব। সারা বছর সেখানে পাড়া আর আশেপাশের বড়োরা নাটকের রিহর্সাল দেয়। হারুকাকা, মানে আমাদের বাপীর বাবা কোন সদাগরি অফিসে বেশ ভারী কাজ করেন। তবু বাড়ী ফিরেই ভিড়ে পড়েন রিহর্সালে। কোন সন্ধ্যায় পড়তে বসে হয়তো কঠিন অঙ্ক নিয়ে

হিমশিম খাচ্ছি। হঠাৎ করে সেই ক্লাবঘর থেকে ভেসে আসা তাঁর কিম্বা বিপ্লবকাকুর অটুহাসিতে আমাদের মন কয়েক মুহূর্তের ছুটি পায়!

যাক সে কথা, পুজোয় ফিরি। পুজোর দু’তিন দিন ‘দীপমন্দির’এর সেই ঘরখানা হয়ে যায় আমাদের ‘সংঘ-শক্তি’র ঘর। ওদের বিরাট ম্যাচ বোর্ডে সারাদিন ক্যারম খেলে চলে আমাদের ক্লাবের ছেলেরা। আমরা ছোটরা বড়োদের দয়ায় কখনো সখনো এটু চান্স পাই। ঘরের এককোনে দুলুকাকুরই দেওয়া একটা ভাড়া খাটা লজবড়ে রেকর্ড প্ল্যার। সেদিন তাতে প্রবল টাল খেতে খেতে চলছে লালকুঠি, কবিতা আর সদ্য বেরোনো ত্রয়ী ছবির মারকাটারি হিট গান। মাইকের চোঙে সেই গান গাঁক গাঁক করে ছড়িয়ে পড়ছে চতুর্দিকে। হেমন্তের শিরশিরে সকালে কিশোর, আশা ভেঁসলে আর লতা মঙ্গেশকরের জোরালো হাতছানি। আমার অবশ্য বেশ লাগছে। এই না হলে আর কিসের পুজো ! আমি আর বুড়ো একমনে দেখছি ক্যারম খেলা। একটা সহজ বেসের ঘুটি দু’দুব্বারের চেষ্টাতেও ফেলতে পারলো না এক দাদা। আমি আর বুড়ো সেই দেখে ঠোঁট উল্টে চোখে চোখে নিঃশব্দে হাসি বিনিময় করলাম।

ঠিক এমন সময় ক্লাব ঘরে বাবুর প্রবেশ। দেখেই তো আমার হার্ট চলে এলো গলার কাছে। আর এসেই প্রবল ধাক্কা মারতে লাগলো। নির্ঘাত দাদু লেখাপড়া নিয়ে কিছু রিপোর্ট করেছেন। তাই সময় নষ্ট না করে বাবু এসে গেছে এখুনি সকলের সামনেই হাতে হাতে প্রাপ্য মিটিয়ে দিতে! না হলে জীবনে কেউ কোনোদিন বাবুকে ক্লাবঘরের মতো জায়গায় কল্পনা করতে পেরেছে কি? এঘর থেকে বেরোনোর আরেকটা যে পথ আছে, সেটা দিয়ে বাপিদের বাড়ির ভিতরে চলে যাওয়া যায়। পারলে সেই পথ ধরে তক্ষুনি পিঠটান দিতাম। কিন্তু এই কদিন ক্লাবের ছেলেরা দিনরাত হুল্লোড় করে বলে সেই দরজা সঙ্গত ভাবেই ওদের ভিতর থেকে বন্ধ! এমতাবস্থায় অজ্ঞান হওয়াই সবচেয়ে নিরাপদ। কিন্তু কে জানে কেন স্বেচ্ছায় কিছুতেই অজ্ঞান হওয়া যায় না। বিচ্ছিরি!!

মনে মনে চরম একটা অপমানের জন্য যখন প্রায় রেডি হয়েই গেছি, তখন একগোছা রেকর্ড একটা প্যাকেট থেকে বার করে গোরাদার হাতে দিয়ে বাবু খুউউউব শান্ত গলায় বললো, ‘কি সব এলোমেলো গান বাজাচ্ছিস সকাল থেকে! এই নে, এগুলো বাজাস। দেখিস, স্ক্র্যাচ ফেলিস না যেন। ‘ তারপর ফিরে যাওয়ার মুখে, ‘সাউন্ডটা একটু কমিয়ে দিস, জোরে মানেই সব সময় বেশী ভালো নয় রে!’

ব্যাস, হয়ে গেলো। সারা পৃথিবী জুড়ে আবার আগের মতোই পরম শান্তি বিচরণ করতে লাগলো ! রেকর্ডগুলোর কভার ঘুরিয়ে ফিরিয়ে দেখতে দেখতে পাড়ার দাদারা নিজেদের মধ্যে বলতে লাগলো, ‘কি সব ভালো ভালো কালেকশান শ্যামলদার! ভাড়ায় কি আর এইসব রেকর্ড পাওয়া যায় কোনদিন? নে, একে একে চাপা সব!’ তারপর আমাকে দেখে কি ভেবে, ‘কিরে, একহাত খেলবি নাকি ক্যারম?’ আমি নিঃশব্দে একটু ডান দিকে ঘাড় কাত করতেই বড়োরা সানন্দে উঠে গেলো আর ওদিকে বসে গেলো বুড়ো।

রেকর্ডে কে এল সায়গল উদাত্ত গলায় গাইতে লাগলেন, ‘এদিন আজি কোন ঘরে গো খুলে দিলো দ্বার, আজি প্রাতে সূর্য ওঠা সফল হলো কার!’

# Kalipuja

Just coming out of the Pandemic, we did the Puja on a smaller scale with limited participants in Riverfront Community Center, Glastonbury.



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# Right from Bathroom

Aswini Boruah

It was a pleasant Sunday morning. The place was as far as Jorhat in Upper Assam in India. The time was about twenty years back from now. The Sthan (place), Kaal (time) and Patra (the person) being well defined, I can now go to the heart of the story of Rojot Kakoti, the man from banking service who retired just before that particular Sunday mentioned in the very beginning.

Before going deep into the story, it will be better to tell a little about Rojot Kakoti, the man, so that the readers will be able to read his mind better. From now on I will simply call Rojot Kakoti by his first name only to minimise spending of any extra word fitting to his character. In fact Rojot was a miser of the highest category. He would not spend a "cawrie" on anybody except his own family, and that too reluctantly. Prior to his being a family man after marriage, he was living with his only elder brother who almost brought him up from school days to getting a job in a private sector bank in Guwahati. Both the brothers were living together in a small house and around that time I came to know his elder brother Romen. On the first day of Rojot getting a job in a bank was a day of celebration when we assembled at Hotel Malabar in Panbazar, Guwahati.. That hotel is no longer there now. That was a good day for all of us. But only after thirty days from then, the picture was totally different. In the evening that day, Rojot's elder brother came to my maternal uncle's quarter where I met him. I saw tears on Romen's eyes. On enquiry, he replied, "Rojot got salary today and for the first time he locked his trunk putting his "booty." I told him that some humans are like that only..

And that same Rojot got retired finally and on that Sunday morning he was seen sharing tea with his wife Ronjona, who was not miser like Rojot. Rojot's elder brother died by then. Now Ronjona asked him to do some repairs of their house. She wanted their bathroom to be renovated first with all the needed amenities with his pension money. Rojot thought that to be her only wish and so he agreed to fulfil that. But then, there was no end to her "khwaish", I mean her wishes. So day by day, her wants went on increasing and 'poor' Rojot had to agree against his will. When one day, while taking tea together on a similar Sunday, Shrimati Ronjona discovered that the four boundary walls were killing the beauty of the just renovated house and she expressed her desire to get the walls also to be re-built. At this Rojot lost all his cool and blamed his wife in harsh words of trying to make him bankrupt.. The sober Sunday took a reverse turn when their son intervened and wanted from his father a little amount of money to go to the just started Book Fair to buy some books. At this, his father, already upset told his son harshly, "Can't you drop your book buying idea this time? Have you not seen me spending all my money on this house right from the bathroom to the boundary gate? I cannot afford anything". Seeing her son's saddened face, Shrimati Ronjona also told him that his father had been spending all his money on the house renovation and can not afford any extra 'fazul' (!! ) expenditure like books and all that.

That poor boy had no answer to all these madness but simply told his mother that a miser always pay double the wrong way at the end without his knowing. "A house without books is no house", saying so he left the place without mincing any word further.

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# Wait Yamuna ! I'm coming !!

Mridul Kumar Barooah

Nobody has bothered to change the dead walk-clock battery in the room. Barun Choudhury does not know what day it is, what month it is. Considering the hot weather, may be it is July or August. Choudhury cannot remember how and when he started losing track with the time. Whatever it is, Choudhury is not much worried for this peculiar situation. He knows, the battery of his life-clock has become weaker and weaker day by day. Any time, any day, the clock will stop. Even so, it has been a great challenge for him to fight with the time still available to him. Time for him is like a vast sea. The manner in which the waves hit the shores relentlessly, the waves of time have been hammering on his chest mercilessly, so unbearable, so hard to grasp.

So far Choudhury could remember, it happened about two year back. After the spring festivals were over, he started feeling uncomfortable. Something appeared to be wrong. He was about to talk with his son Bhaikan about his continuing uneasiness. But the stroke didn't wait for him. He was rushed to a hospital in a coma-stage. Fortunately enough, he got back his senses after twenty-four hours. But everything was not good with Choudhury. He lost his capacity to speak. He failed to utter a single word. The brain, his eyes, his ears were back to normal. The legs, his hands became stiff. After having nursed in the hospital for about a month, he succeeded in some way to move his fingers. The legs however couldn't be fully restored.

From the day he was taken back home, he has been confined in a room located in the extreme corner of the house, generally meant for guests. During the first five-six months, the people in the house were very concerned for his comfort and well-being. Choudhury's two office-going sons, Bhaikan and Jitu, the two office-going daughter-in-

-laws, Nita and Pallabi, never forgot to see him before they left for office. During holidays, they frequented his room two-three times a day and gave him company. His grand-children came rushing to him after they were back from school. His relatives, his old colleagues, his well-wishers flocked in his room during Sundays. The presence of people made him happy.

Things started changing in the passing of time. Everything inside the room remains the same excepting the old warm atmosphere. The presence of people gradually started declining. The anxiousness, the love and attention of his very close people faded. Not to speak of outsiders, his two sons do not feel for giving him a company any more. They just come to see him just for a minute or so during night hours before going to sleep. Perhaps they want to be ascertained how long their father survives. Choudhury is aware of their presence. He simply closes his eyes to show them that he has nothing to complain. He can't remember when he last saw his grand-children. This surprises Choudhury most. Don't they desire to see their grandfather with whom they were once anxious to pass time, were anxious to listen the fairy tales? Who knows, their parents may have barred them to come to him. Nothing is impossible. The door in his room always remains closed. People coming to the house cannot imagine that there is a man, the head of the family, living in the same house, all alone, unnoticed, in a silent room. Barun Choudhury knows, he is now a burden to the house. He wants to die. But death is not coming to him.

After about a month he was back from the hospital, Dharmeswar has taken over the charge of his care. He is very punctual. If any emergency arises, he sends his brother for a day or two to



look after him.

For the first few months, Choudhury enjoyed the company of young Dharmeswar. He was very jolly, always with a smile in his face. He always tried to make him smile. He told jokes, read out the headlines of the newspaper every morning. Choudhury got all the informations about the people in the house from Dharmeswar. Having been in his care for months, Dharmeswar very well understood the body language of Choudhury and tried his best to comply. But with the passing of time, Dharmeswar was no more the same person. Now-a-days, he never utters a single word, always keeps his mouth shut. He mechanically goes on performing the same duties like an oiling machine without showing any feelings. His normal routine includes, changing the diapers three times a day, washing his body with a wet towel, giving him a thorough massage, changing his old clothes, combing his hair, making him sit for a few minutes in the bed with the pillows behind, feeding him with the foods provided, both in lunch and dinner time, offering two cups of black-tea with biscuits twice a day, administering the medicines in the morning and evening hours.

Choudhury fails to discern Dharmeswar's sudden change. Why has he stopped talking? Has anyone instructed him to do so? Dharmeswar was his only inspiration. It was Dharmeswar who was his sole company. Now this Dharmeswar has changed abruptly. Choudhury eagerly looks at him for hearing something. Choudhury's mind say : 'Speak Dharmeswar, speak. Speak something about the people in the house, about the little children - how they are doing - whether everything in the house going right. Dharmeswar can read his mind well, but it no more concerns him.

Barun Choudhury sometimes loses his cool. He gets impatient. In normal situation he would have commanded him to speak. His mind revolts. But it becomes meaningless. He is helpless. His body does not permit. Being frustrated, he blames his fate. Coming from a poor family background, he succeeded in establishing himself in a high position by virtue of his hard work and determination. Throughout his life, he remembers, he has never

done any injustice to anyone. He has treated everyone with love and affection. But what fate has brought to him ! To-day he is dead alive.

For the last few days, Choudhury's mind frequently revolves round Yamuna. It's almost four years since she suddenly left him. Choudhury still cannot accept - how she could leave him in a time when he needed her the most. The fatal disease came to her. Choudhury left no stone unturned to get her well. He took her to Delhi, Mumbai three four times. Choudhury even did not mind selling two bighas of land at his native village inherited from his family to give Yamuna the best of the treatments available. The doctors assured her at least another ten years of life-time. But this was not to be. Yamuna suddenly developed complications. She was again hospitalized. But this time she did not come back alive.

Whenever Yamuna's picture flashes before him, a series of past memories come to him one after another. He remembers his talks with Yamuna for the last time.

: Hello my dear, why do you look so worried for me? You have done the maximum possible for me. Since the day I was diagnosed with the deadly disease, you have been with me like a shadow. I cannot imagine a happier wife than me.

: You've done a mistake Yamuna. It is impossible for me to compensate what you have given to me. Whatever I have got to-day, it's all because of you. You're the woman behind my success in life.

: My dear, it hurts when one tries to think of returning something offered to the most important person one loves.

: I know Yamuna, you're quite different. Still let me give a chance to serve you at least for my satisfaction. By the way, the doctor has advised you to talk less.

: Forget what the doctor says. Doctors say many things and all are not true. I know the seriousness of my illness. I have gone through many books, many articles. I know, you also know, medical science cannot help me. Knowing

everything, simply for your mental satisfaction, I have never raised any protest. Yes, I don't want to die. I don't want to leave this beautiful world. I am worried of your life without me. But destiny does not listen to human desires. Anyway my cup is already full. I have nothing to complain if it overflows.

: Please, please Yumuna .... I don't like hear such things from you. You better have some relaxation. Try to close your eyes for sometime. Try to think something good, something positive. You've not slept well last night. I have noticed. You were just closing your eyes so that I am not disturbed. Now, please, keep silent for at least sometime. There is nothing impossible in this world. Who knows, a miracle may happen.

: A miracle ! Such miracles take place in novels, in movies. The real world is very cruel; it has no place for such wonders. But my love, we should better be prepared for the inevitable. You've lots of things to do. You're yet to complete two novels. The publishers have been pressing you for the collection of your poems. As for me, I am satisfied with what I've got. My desires are already fulfilled. Nobody should aspire for more than what one deserves. This illness - this is just a pretence. My time in this world has come to an end. I am happy - happy because I will be departing before you. I have told my sons - take care of your father's wishes after I leave. Your father has sacrificed a lot to make you happy, to get you established in life. Now it's your duty to look after father's sentiments. You will be glad to know, I am happy to see their love for you. They are ready to do everything for your comfort, for your happiness.

: You make me laugh, Yamuna ! Can anybody in the world take your place? What I fear most, after you leave, I shall be very lonely. You know everything well. I cannot allow you to leave.

: My dear, if you can stop me from leaving, it will be your credit. But I don't desire for a long life. I just want to give you company for a few more years. Life is full of dreams, full of attractions, at the same time it's also very cruel. You'll learn to live peacefully without my company. Finish your writings, finish the novels you've left undone, listen

to your favourite music, specially Robindra Sangeet which you like the most. Pass time with your grandchildren - tell them beautiful stories, go to Robindra Bhawan, go to Kalakhetra to enjoy plays. Take Sunil, your trusted driver, with you. Try to keep yourself busy. and one day we'll meet together once again somewhere in our next life.

Barun Choudhury gets lost in Yamuna. Suddenly someone switches on the light. The light is too bright for his eyes to bear. Dharmeswar has come. He will again try to force him with the same foods he hates most. If Yamuna could have known about the nature of the foods offered to him, she would have been furious. There are many other etables suitable for him, other than the ones he have been served with everyday. However Choudhury also has almost lost his appetite for any kind of food. He now eats much less than he should. Perhaps this is why he has become weaker day by day. At the beginning a doctor visited him every fifteen days. For the last few months, no doctor has come to him Choudhury does not understand why it's so. He can't ask anyone.

Dharmeswar tries to feed him. Choudhury takes one or two tea-spoon and then closes his mouth. Dharmeswar does not insist. He has noticed, Choudhury has not been eating well for the last ten-fifteen days. He has informed the matter in the house. He has done his duty. But nobody in the house seems at all concerned. Dharmeswar fits the mosquito net properly and switches on the dim light before he leaves. Perhaps Dharmeswar's mind was pre-occupied with something. He forgets to close the only door in the room for the first time.

Choudhury closes his eyes and tries again to get back to Yamuna. But it doesn't work. As the door is open, he hears people talking loudly in the other part of the house. Since a longtime, Choudhury has not heard the voices of the people in the house. Choudhury gets eager to hear the talks. He feels, something has happened. The voices are loud, - may be there is a quarrel - between Bhaikan and wife Nita. He tries to concentrate on their talks.

: Bhaikan, you tell me, what in your final decision.

: Listen Nita, I don't want to repeat the same again and again. In any circumstances, I cannot agree with your brutal proposal of shifting my father to a rented house. You know Nita, this house we live in was built by my father with his hard-earned money. His sweat, his blood, is spread in each of the bricks. I cannot imagine my father to die elsewhere. My decision is clear. My father will have his last breath in this house. By the way you may perhaps be happy to learn that my father's health has come down a lot. He is getting thinner and weaker. Dharmeswar also has reported me about how his condition is breaking down everyday. Father has almost stopped eating.

: But how can you be assured ? For almost the last two years he has been lying bed ridden. Can anyone live in the house in such an atmosphere? Nothing special has taken place in the house. We have skipped the birthdays of our children. You know, my mother is also not doing well. I planned to keep her with us for sometime. Now I have to give up that wish too. What guarantee in there that father will die soon? We have waited such a long time. Who knows he may be dragging in this manner for another two-three years? Shall we have to live in this poisonous atmosphere for an indefinite period?

: Nita! What is your problem? What have you done for my father? Can you remember the last day you visited my father? I couldn't imagine that you could be so selfish. It's for you and Pallabi that we are maintain a distance from our father. It's only for you people that we are trying our best not to disturb the normal functions of the house. Dharmeswar is looking after everything.

: Why do you blame me alone?

: I have observed Pallavi's apathy too. But at least she is not insisting on shifting my father to a rented house.

: I don't sense any bad in the proposal. Only the house will change, other things will remain the same. Dharmeswar will be there - if necessary we can think of a nurse who will be by his side for twenty-four hours.

: I can't believe, Nita. You've also your parents.

Can you show the same attitude to your parents? I know, you cannot.

: Listen Bhaikan, nothing can change my mind. I have taken this step for the interest of our children. We cannot think of sacrificing them for a lost cause. The present atmosphere in the house has already done enough harm to them. They've a future ahead of them. Whatever you think or do, I am moving from this house with my children within fifteen days.

Choudhury suddenly heard something break down with a big sound. Bhaikan failed to suppress his anger. He smashed the flower-vase on the floor and left the spot in a hurry. There was pin dropped silence.....

Yamuna ! Yamuna ! Yamuna !

Barun Choudhury shouted for Yamuna. In spite of enforcing all his energy, he couldn't pronounce anything. The veins in his neck became distinct. He felt, his breathing will get stopped at any moment. Some gelatinous substance came out from his throat. There was a massive stress on the wind pipe - as a result some drops of blood sprinkled in his clothes, in the bed-sheet, the pillow covers. Choudhury knows, Yamuna is not there. Still, he relentlessly exerted all his energy to shout for Yamuna. The flow of blood started increasing. Choudhury never gave up - he tried harder and harder to shout for Yamuna without success. He felt as if someone has placed a big stone on his chest. Hissing sounds from the wind-pipe could be heard in the room. This continued for a few seconds. And then came the silence. His entire body lied still, motionless, - as if some refreshing drops of rain after a big thunder, after a spell of unbearable heat.

Choudhury raced forward to the unknown world of Yamuna, - to get united with her once again.....

*[Translated from the original Assamese short story 'Moi Goi Asho Yamuna' by the same writer]*

**Mridul Kumar Barooah**  
Khanapara, Guwahati

# মা

রত্নাবলী রায়

জগৎজোড়া যত মা আছে তোমাদের আমি নমি,  
তোমরা ছাড়া বিশ্ব যে হতো শূন্য আশানভূমি I  
‘মা’ শব্দটি ছোট্ট অতি, এ সংসার মাঝে,  
কিন্তু তার অসীম বয়স্টি পৃথিবী জুড়ে বাজে I  
কত যাতনায় জন্ম দিয়েছে যে সন্তানেরে তুমি  
মানুষ করেছে পরম যতনে, পালন করেছে তুমি I  
ভবিষ্যতের স্বপ্ন বুনেছে তাদের হৃদয় মাঝে  
তাই তো পৃথিবী সদাই এতো সুন্দর রূপে বিরাজে I  
সন্তানের তরে বাঁচো যে তুমি নিজেকে নিংড়ে দাও  
উজাড় করে নিজেরে বিলায়ে তবু কিছু নাহি চাও I  
মায়া মমতায় গাঁথা যে তোমার সোনার হৃদয়  
বিশ্বব্যাপী মঙ্গল কামনায় অবিচল যে রয় I  
মা কালি হয়ে আগলে রেখে মোদের সারাঞ্জন  
মানবতার দীক্ষায় তুমি গড়ে দাও সবার জীবন I I



## সুন্দরী নারী

রত্নাবলী রায়

দোকানের সামনে থেমেছিল গাড়ি  
স্ট্রিয়ারিং ধরেছিলো সুন্দরী নারী I  
বব কাট চুল দেখে লোভ হলো ভারী,  
ঘাড় দেখে মনে হলো যেন অঙ্গুরী I  
সুঠাম দেহ তার সিক্কেন কেশভার  
ড্রেসটিও লোভনীয় আছা মরি মরি I  
মুখখানি দেখিতে ছুটি তড়াতাড়ি  
গিয়ে দেখি ওমা একি!!  
খুশনি তে তার যে ফেঞ্চ কাট দাড়ি I I

# প্রথম শিক্ষা

তপন দত্ত

থাগের কলম, মাটির দোয়াত, ছোট্ট শেলেট নিয়ে  
সেদিনের সেই শিক্ষা শুরু এক বুক ভয় নিয়ে।  
কাঁপা কাঁপা হাতে কলম থাকতো না ঠিক সোজা  
বলছেন কি গুরুমশায় যেতো না ঠিক বোঝা।  
মাথার 'পরে হাত বুলিয়ে নরম স্নেহের সুরে  
বুঝিয়ে দিতেন সহজ করে ভয়টা যেতো দূরে।  
যখন শিক্ষাগুরুর আশির্বাণী বরলো অবিরত  
ভয়টা তখন ভালো-লাগায় হলো পরিণত।  
পাঠশালার সেই মধুর স্মৃতি যায় না কভু ভোলা  
ভয় জাগানো শিহরণটা মনে জাগায় দোলা।  
প্রথম যিনি শিখিয়েছিলেন পরম যতন ভরে  
স্থানট তাঁহার সুরক্ষিত আজো হৃদয় প'রে।  
শিক্ষার সেই প্রথম পাঠ মোমের আলোর মতো  
পথ দেখিয়ে এলো নিয়ে ভেসে বাধা যতো।  
মানুষ আমরা হয়েছি কিনা বলবো কি করে?  
আঙ্গল মানুষ তিনিই, যিনিদিলেন মোদের গড়ে।

## স্বাধীনতা, তুমি

তপন দত্ত

স্বাধীনতা, তুমি প্রাণের আরাম, মলয় দখিণা হাওয়া  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি অনাবিল স্রোতে জীবন- তরণী বাওয়া।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি পেঁজা পেঁজা মেঘ অসীম সুনীল গগনে,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি বেজে ওঠা ঢাক চির সুমধুর লগনে।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি ক্ষেতে বেড়ে ওঠা সবুজ ধানের গুচ্ছ,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি দোয়েল ফিঙের উর্দ্ধে নাচানো পুচ্ছ।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি রঙিন ডানার প্রজাপতি চিরচঞ্চল,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি চির অমলিন ভারত মাতার অঞ্চল।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি রাখালিয়া বাঁশি, জাটিয়ালি গান অনুক্ষণ,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি নর্তকী পায়ে মধুর নূপুর নিক্ষেপণ।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি দামাল ছেলের বাজি ধরে রাখা তাজা প্রাণ,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি বাড়ল মনের গলা ছেড়ে গাওয়া মেঠো গান।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি কল্ কল্ করে বয়ে যাওয়া নদী অবিরাম,  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি ভোরের আজান, সংকীর্ণনের হরিনাম।  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি ফড়িং ডানায় রামধনু রঙা রোদ্দুর  
স্বাধীনতা তুমি সবুজ বনানী চোখ চলে যায় যদূর।  
স্বাধীনতা, তুমি বুড়ে হলে নাকি পঁচাত্তরে পা দিয়ে?  
স্বাধীনতা, তুমি বাঁচাবে না আজো আধ-মড়াদের যা দিয়ে?

# Income Expense Report – 2021

## Balance Sheet

	As of	
	2021	2020
<b>Assets</b>		
Cash Balance	32,660.75	29,324.95
Other Assets	0	0
<b>Liabilities</b>		
Pending Liabilities	0	0
	<b>32,660.75</b>	<b>29,324.95</b>

## Income Statement

	2021
<b>Revenues</b>	
From Donations	12,729.77
From Advertisements	525.00
Others	
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>13,254.77</b>

## Expenses

Puja Expenses	
<i>Venue</i>	1,600.00
<i>Food</i>	3,082.84
<i>Snacks &amp; Beverages</i>	-
<i>Materials</i>	120.70
<i>Transport</i>	681.79
<i>Priest</i>	522.00
<i>Other Miscellaneous</i>	65.68
Publicity	
<i>Magazine</i>	563.17
Performance	
<i>Artist &amp; Hospitality</i>	
<i>Sound</i>	
Operating Expenses	
<i>Insurance</i>	550.00
<i>Storage, Lock</i>	1,518.79
<i>PO Box &amp; Tax Filing</i>	214.00
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>8,918.97</b>

Charity & Donations	1,000.00
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<b>Total Donations</b>	<b>1,000.00</b>
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<b>Surplus</b>	<b>3,335.80</b>
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# 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.

We sincerely thank our Volunteers , Advertisers , Sponsors and Patrons



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# The God of Afterlife

Anirban Mukherjee

*London, 1888*

If he hurried, getting into the museum would be easy. Haroon Rashid made brisk pace through the streets of London, inky, midnight darkness spilling heavily over the buildings and seeping into recesses and alleyways. Outposts of warm orange light glowed from windows and streetlamps, staving off the twilight and enlightening Styx-black puddles. He was used to this trip by now, had been making it regularly for the past few months. The regularity furnished Haroon with some degree of confidence - for every undetected trip he gained an extra morsel of nerve - yet the compulsion to make the trips remained the same, if not markedly stronger each time.

He was only a few minutes late. He pressed on, angled into the drizzle, hands stuffed into his overcoat pockets and bowler hat tipped forward, through mostly vacant cobbled streets. Ornate, white stucco-clad Georgian buildings loomed on either side, aloof, perhaps judgmental. He strode forward with as much purpose as he could muster, until the tall streets yielded and gave way to the grandiose British Museum, at once resplendent and imposing in its Greek-revival stonework.

Haroon swallowed and took a deep breath. Threatening as the building seemed, he had found a chink in its stone armor. He knew of an entrance, and of a gap in the security shift pattern. Bolstered by his experience of many previous successful infiltrations, he stole across the road and fell instinctively into his task. With adrenaline and bated breath, he found his way, once again, into the building.

His footsteps echoed in the dark, cavernous interior, shrouded as it was in perfect, delicate stillness. Haroon found his way to the staircase, carefully fumbling his way up to the first floor. Past glass cabinets and along hard tiled floors which rang a resounding 'clack' with each step. Soon he felt the familiar doorknob, and pushed his way inside, he exhaled shakily and wedged the door from the inside.

After a few moments, he took off his coat and satchel, from which he retrieved matches, some small candles, and a lantern. With a scrape he brought a match to light, dispersing a tiny glow across the chamber; the orange haze spread more generously once the lantern was lit. The room was not particularly large. It housed Egyptian artefacts, from the new kingdom, from the valley of the kings, taken during the recent archaeological surge which Haroon had in fact been a part of. The ceiling was high, and the warm light danced across beautiful ancient Egyptian frescoes and wall paintings, dispersing through glass cabinets, and bathing the contents, illuminating enrapturing turquoise *shabti* figures, canopic jars, and unflinching statues of the guardians of Egyptian underworld. A theatre of surreal animal-human deity faces stared back at Haroon as he slicked back his hair and ran a finger through his beard, ready for the task at hand.

It took no time at this stage to find what he was looking for, he had returned here enough times; the life-sized, basalt statue of Osiris in the middle of the far wall, stood on a podium. It still terrified him. Its glaring



stone eyes stared him down, set within a cold, judging, seemingly angry face, crowned with a monumental headdress and complete with a jutting false beard. He collected the candles, and a whip from his satchel. He removed his jacket and shirt, fingers shaking slightly over the buttons, unceremoniously dumping them next to the rest of his items. He walked over to the statue. Laid out the candles in a semi-circle around it, lighting each one. He stepped within the candle circle. Then dropped to his knees. Whip in his right hand.

With a piercing, resounding crack, Haroon flicked the whip across his own back before the statue. He grunted mutely, repressing the urge to eject a scream. He felt the familiar split, the warm, small trickle of blood. He always whipped six times. The statue stared back, seeing his guilt, yet still unforgiving.

*His mind drifted back to Egypt, to Luxor, a year prior in 1887.*

The robbery had gone horribly wrong. Haroon and fellow officer Samuel Howard clumsily ran from the tomb, clutching canvas bags stuffed with artefacts, feet uncertain in the sand, breath ragged from panic and exertion. After what felt like an age running across the dunes, they collapsed upon reaching the pre-ordained spot, frantically dumped the bags in the pits they had dug and covered them with sand, before hotfooting back to the main expedition camp and into their tents, ready to pretend nothing had happened. It was not long after dawn broke that news of some commotion at the tomb began to make its way through the encampment.

This was a British-led archaeological expedition, now centered around the recent excavation of a previously undiscovered tomb dating from the New Kingdom, in the Valley of the Kings. And people were saying it had just been robbed. Not fully, but a proportion of smaller items had gone missing. Nevertheless, it was not a total disaster for the excavation leaders. There were still ample treasures to make the trip worthwhile, of import to Egyptian history. Such is what Haroon had expected; the robbery had been his idea initially, and he had planned it on such grounds; in the grand scheme of things, a few missing treasures would not be terribly missed. Why then, shouldn't he and his friend Howard take advantage?

The two were fairly high-ranking officials on site, and a week earlier had seen the opening of the tomb for the first time in over three-thousand years. As the leading archaeologists filed in and took stock of the contents, it was immediately clear that this was no ordinary find. It was enough to fill a whole floor in the British Museum, and a starscape of gold and shimmering colors dazzled in the lamplit antechambers. Nobody had ever seen anything like it; such was the magnitude of the discovery – all Haroon saw was a life of wealth set out before him, if only he was ready to take the chance.

He deliberated for a little while, but eventually resolved to do a small raid. It should be simple enough, he had thought. In and out, don't take too much, bury the loot until the most opportune time to send it back to England. Then resale at various auction houses shouldn't raise too much suspicion. He confided in Howard, the only person who he felt was at once trustworthy enough for such a venture.

The guards had been easy, far more so than they had expected. Haroon had found them milling around site, let loose his silver tongue and promised them a cut of the takings if they agreed not to be at the tomb entrance during their shift. This oratory was more than enough. All that was left was to source some equipment; some lanterns, bags, and a revolver; just in case anybody needed to be threatened, he thought.

On the agreed night, at the agreed spot, Haroon found Howard, dust scarf around his face, clothes tugged by

the prevailing wind. The two were quiet as they trudged across the dunes, the full moon hanging stark and white against the twilight sky flecked with stars. Light winds scattered thin gusts of sand across the peaks and troughs. The night was cool and dark blue. It appeared even the gods and sleeping pharaohs were unaware of the presence of the two men. Haroon's heart was in his mouth as he rounded upon the tomb. The guards, true to their word, were absent, and the prospect of success – somewhat closer now. Haroon made his way to the makeshift door, unlocked it with a key.

Leaving the door for Howard, Haroon immediately set to taking out and lighting a lantern and lowering his own dust scarf. With trembling hands, he held the light aloft and advanced down the entrance corridor and into the tomb. Sand and rock soon gave way to radiant white walls, decorated lavishly with paintings of characters and scenes from afterlife, saturated with rich color, as fresh as the day the tomb was sealed. Two dimensional gods and monarchs presided over the frescoes, arms outstretched, other figures depicted smaller in varying stages of subjugation. Hushed and crouched, the two crept onward, until the corridor opened into a main chamber, upheld in the center by two rows of square columns twinkling with gold leaf and luxurious with hieroglyphs. Branching off from various walls of the main chamber were a series of antechambers. Hand on his revolver, not breathing, Haroon peered into each room. Only when he was certain nobody else was here did he deflate the tension with an exhale, quickly reach for his bag and tersely say to Howard that they only had ten minutes. As Howard quickly made way for the burial chamber, accessed through the wall opposite the entrance corridor, Haroon turned around. There, against the wall of the main chamber, next to the corridor passage, was the statue. He was immediately arrested, as it seemed to stare back with glowering eyes. It was Osiris, god of afterlife, and the grim stone expression seemed to be angry at the defilement of the tomb. Momentarily transfixed, Haroon shook his head and dismissed his fragile state of mind. His eyes began roving for the pickings of greatest value. All the while he felt the statue's eyes boring into him.

A few minutes had elapsed, bags had filled, and both were now in the burial chamber when they heard a voice. Perhaps Arabic? Then, in a thick local accent, an inquisitive, tentative 'hello?'. The two froze and stared at one another. In the shaking voice and the approaching lamplight, it was possible to imagine the nervous stance and the slow walk of the approaching figure as he came down the corridor, each careful footstep a knell ringing around the tomb. Haroon and Howard ducked for cover as the figure entered the main chamber. The figure was stood in the central section when Haroon gulped, popped out from cover, and pointed his revolver square at the new arrival. He was clearly a worker, barely twenty, who must have seen them enter the tomb, or perhaps grown suspicious at the lack of guards or at the orange glow of light emanating from the entrance. His eyes immediately grew to the size of saucers and his hands flew up. Haroon was trembling; this was not supposed to happen.

Then there was a change in his expression. The worker's eyes narrowed, and his mouth opened slightly in realization of what was happening. The expression hardened and brows furrowed. Thief! He cried. Haroon felt a wave of hot panic coursing through his being. Then a sharp intake of breath. Recognition. 'Mr Haroon! Mr Howard!' Then all of a sudden, the worker frantically turned on his heels and bolted back towards the corridor. His gait was angular, and his arms flailed as he ran back towards the entrance, and with him ran all of Haroon's worst fears. Of detection, of dismissal, of disrepute, of punishment and of poverty. And the fear – and soon rage - came in full force, with each haggard step the worker took.

The shots flew instinctively with calculated, murderous accuracy from Haroon's revolver. The scene, which seemed to have been playing in slow motion, fell back hard into reality as the workers body careened off balance and crumpled across an object, red splotches spreading across his pure white robe. Haroon shakily stood up and moved towards the corpse. With dread, he saw that it had spread over the feet of the statue of Osiris; the statue's face seemed to curl into a venomous, soul-eating picture of malice. Howard's incomprehensible shouting and maneuvering – nothing Haroon could fathom, except Osiris' piercing, penetrative basalt eyes which pervaded everything, surrounding, and engulfing and omniscient, judging and hating. There and then he firmly believed he was cursed, the ancient god frothing with fury, ready to smite him. His body felt puny and infinitesimal as he moaned and writhed on the floor.

A sharp kick from Howard stopped the chamber from spinning. He thrust Haroon his bag, and warned him that they needed to go, now. Carried by nothing but survival instinct, Haroon followed Howard out of the tomb, stumbling and panting. The run across the desert was hellish. Osiris was following them, Haroon cried. His face was in the night sky, his stone form kept shooting out from the sand in front of them, he was behind them as they ran from the tomb. They reached the pits they had dug, and in the brief respite Howard was saying something to Haroon, but his voice was echoing. It was something about trauma and stress, about Haroon merely hallucinating, then something practical about the fact that people likely didn't hear the shots, but that they would certainly find the body soon enough.

Haroon had eased marginally over the coming days and weeks. The missing treasure and the murder had been attributed to some local gang of bandits, likely escaped by now. Howard had ensured the bags were discreetly and securely delivered to England. The two left Egypt within a few months. Slowly, the rest of the findings from the tomb were catalogued by the excavation expedition and sent to various places, with most ending up in the British Museum.

But that night never really left him. When Haroon heard that the statue had found its way to England and the museum, he felt a supernatural compulsion to visit and supplicate. Although the initial stupor had subsided and he could function from day to day, the visions, and nightmares, when they came, were as vivid as that night in the tomb. Any time during his waking hours, Osiris could invade his mind, He was left white, sweating, and shaken, sometimes in public, as the god came to admonish his sins. Something primal pulled him to the statue once it arrived in England, and he felt the need to profess his guilt before it in the hopes that the visions would subside. The first time he crept into the museum and performed the first ritual, the guilt seemed to ease and ebb with the blood drawn from the whip, and Osiris did leave him alone for some time. But the god returned. And so too did Haroon return, to perform the ritual again. And so it continued, as the urges became more frequent, perhaps never ever to end.

After a few months, London Times published a short column – *“Haroon Rashid, a former team member to the British archaeological mission to Egypt, was found dead under mysterious circumstances at the HM Prison Wandsworth, last night. Mr. Rashid was arrested three weeks back accused of breaking into the British Museum and for a suspected act of vandalism caused on a basalt statue of Osiris.”* The tabloid also reported that Haroon's body contained mysterious marks of crocodile bite all over his body.

# মাতৃরূপে সংস্থিতা

Suparna Bhattacharya

স্টেশনের কাছে এখনো যে ছোট মাঠটা আছে ওতে আজকাল শুধু বস্তির বাচ্চাগুলোই খেলতে আসে। সাধারণ মধ্যবিত্তের বাচ্চাদের আজকাল খেলার সময় কোথায় ? মধ্যবিত্ত থেকে উচ্চবিত্ত হওয়ার দৌড়ে তাদের মা বাবারা এক টিউশন থেকে আরেক টিউশন পাঠাতে ব্যস্ত , খেলাধুলা করে নষ্ট করার মতো সময় কোথায় ?

এই মাঠটা আবার প্রতীতির বাড়ি ফেরার শর্টকাট! দিনের শেষে স্টেশন থেকে বাড়ি ফেরার পথে রোজ দেখতে পায় , পড়তে বসার তাড়া না থাকা বাচ্চাগুলোর হুল্লোড়ে শৈশব আর ভাবে মায়ের কথাগুলো , আমাদের মতো মধ্যবিত্তের পড়াশোনায় সব ! পড়লে ভালো চাকরি পাবি , মায়ের মতো হেঁশেল ঠেলে মরতে হবে না। মা আর নেই, মায়ের কথাগুলো রয়ে গেছে , প্রতীতি পড়াশোনা শেষ করে ভালো মেয়ের মতো ভালো স্কুল চাকরি নিয়েও দিনের শেষে ঘরে ফিরে সেই হেঁশেল ই ঠেলে ! কারণ সংসার তো মায়েরই দেখতে হয় , আর আজকে প্রতীতি ও মা। আজকে থেকে স্কুলে পুজোর ছুটি পরে গেলো কাল থেকে এক মাস এই ডেইলি প্যাসেঞ্জেরির ধকল নেই। আপন মনেই হাসে প্রতীতি , ঠাকুমার কথাই, সত্যি ইহকাল পরকাল দুই ই গেছে ওর ! ছোটবেলা , বড়বেলা দুই ই খেটে মরল। আপন মনে এসবে ভাবতে ভাবতে , কিসে একটা হেঁচট খেলো প্রতীতি ! কারো পা ! মোবাইল এর টর্চটা জ্বালিয়ে দেখলো , আধো আবছায়া তে টিনের শেড এর তলায় একটা মানুষ ! আরে না তো ! একজন মহিলা !

একটু জল দেবে মা ?

প্রতীতি একটু ইতস্তত করে নিজের জলের বোতলটা বাড়িয়ে দেয় , আকর্ষণ জল খেয়ে মহিলা বললো , বাঁচালে মা !

কথার ধরণ দেখে ভিখিরী মনে হচ্ছে না , খুবই মার্জিত আচরণ !

এদিকে কোথায় এসেছেন মাসিমা ? কোনো ঠিকানা খুঁজছেন কি ?

আমি তো আসিনি মা ! আমার ছেলে ট্রেনে বসিয়ে বললো, মা এক বোতল জল নিয়ে এফুনি আসছি , ট্রেন ছেড়ে দিলো , ছেলেটা ধরতে পারেনি , হয়তো চিন্তায় অস্থির হয়ে আছে , আমি সেই ট্রেনে বসে বসে , এই লাস্ট স্টেশনে নেমে অপেক্ষা করছি , স্টেশনেই ছিলুম , কুকুর তাড়া করতে , হাটতে হাটতে এই মাঠে এসে বসলুম।

কথা শুনে প্রতীতি তো অবাক !

আপনার ছেলের কোনো মোবাইল নম্বর মনে আছে ? বাড়ির ঠিকানা ?

ছেলের নাম অবিনাশ পালিত , আগে বর্ধমানে থাকতো , ছেলে বড় চাকরি নিয়ে, বর্ধমানের ভিটে মাটি বিক্রি করে মা কে নিজের কাছে দিল্লীতে নিয়ে যাচ্ছিলো। এছাড়া ভদ্রমহিলা আর কিছুই বলতে পারলেন না। প্রতীতি বুঝতে পারছিলো না , ভদ্রমহিলার কথা যদি ঠিক হয় , তাহলে দিল্লীগামী ছেলে মা কে কল্যাণী লোকালে বসালো কেন?

বর্ধমানে কি আপনার কোনো আত্মীয় আছেন ? তার ঠিকানা ?

ভদ্রমহিলা র কিছুই মনে করতে পারছেন না , নিজের নাম বললাম অসীমা পালিত আর স্বামী মৃত অশোক পালিত।

এরকম একটা সিচুয়েশনে প্রতীতি একবার ভাবলো পুলিশ স্টেশনে নিয়ে যাবে , কিন্তু ভদ্রমহিলার মুখ চোখ দেখে মনে

হচ্ছে সারাদিন কিছু খাননি। তাই সাথে করে বাড়ি নিয়ে যাওয়ায় ঠিক করলো। আবার ভাবছে পিউর বাবা না বকাবকি করে ! একবার ফোন করে জিজ্ঞেস করবে কি ?

না থাক , জিজ্ঞেস করলেই বকা খাবে। তার চেয়ে বরং সোজা বাড়ি নিয়ে যাক , যা হয় হবে।

মাসিমা চলুন আমার বাড়ি , কিছু খেয়ে নিয়ে তারপর খোঁজা যাবে আপনার ছেলেকে।

তা হয়না মা, ছেলেটা না জানি কোথায় কোথায় হন্যে হয়ে ঘুরছে , আমি স্টেশনে মাস্টারের সাথে কথা বলে এসেছি , ছোট স্টেশনে ওয়েটিং রুম নেই তাই মাঠে এসে বসা , উনি বলেছেন খবর পেলেই জানিয়ে দেবেন।

কিন্তু মাসিমা , আপনার খিদে পায়নি ? কিছু খেয়েছেন ?

সেই কবে থেকে কষ্ট করে ছেলে মানুষ করতে গিয়ে , কত উপোসকাবাশ করেছি মা , একবেলা না খেয়ে থাকলে কি আর হবে? আর অভি হয়তো এই এলো বলে !

আরো কিছুক্ষন অনুনয় বিনয় করেও যখন মহিলা কে টলানো গেলো না, প্রতীতি একা বাড়ি ফেরায় মনস্থির করলো।

রাতে ফিরে, ময়নার মার করে যাওয়া খাবার বাড়তে বাড়তে মনে পড়লো আর একবার , সেই মাসিমার কথা ! বললো ও পিউর বাবাকে ! পিউর বাবা বললো , আজকে রাত হয়ে গেছে , কাল মর্নিং ওয়াকে গিয়ে না হয় দেখে আসবো কেও বসে আছে কিনা , থাকলে থানায় একটা খবর দিয়ে দেব !

সারা রাত কোনো অজানা উদ্বেগে ঘুম হলো না প্রতীতির !

সকাল হতেই , পিউ আর পিউর বাবা ঘুম থেকে ওঠার আগে নিজেই বেরিয়ে গেলো মর্নিং ওয়াকে

দূর থেকে সেই টিনের শেডটা দেখা যাচ্ছে ! মানুষ না , একদল কুকুর শেড এর তলায়, শেডের ওপরে অনেক কাকের ডাক !

দম বন্ধ হয়ে আসছে যেন প্রতীতির ! একছুটে কাছে গিয়ে দেখে , এক টুকরো রুটির প্যাকেট নিয়ে কুকুরগুলো কাড়াকাড়ি করছে , শেডের তলায় কেউ নেই !

দূরে মাইকে ভেসে আসছে ‘যা দেবী সর্বভূতেশু মাতৃ রূপেণ সংস্থিতা ‘

নিজের মনেই প্রতীতি ভাবে অবিনাশ বাবুর মা ও যেন মাতৃরূপে নিজ স্থানে ফিরে যান , মা দূর্গা , কোনো মা কে গৃহহীন , সন্তানহীন কোরো না ।

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| Roof Clean Up           | Patios & Driveways  |
| Asphalt Shingles        | Garage Additions    |
| Emergency Roof Services | Bathroom Remodels   |
| Seamless Gutters        | Replacement Windows |

## FINANCING AVAILABLE

# ॐ Sri Maha Kalikayai Namah!



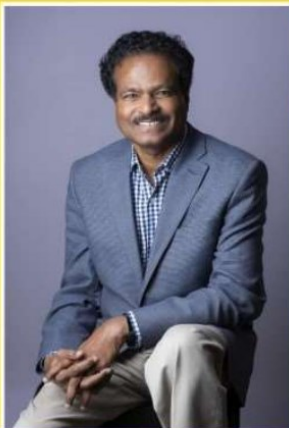
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