

2004-2005

# THE PRESIDENCY COLLEGE MAGAZINE



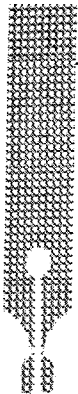




*The  
Presidency College  
Magazine*

*(Volume 66)*

*(2004 - 2005)*



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*The force that through the green fuse drives the flower  
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees  
Is my destroyer.  
And I am dumb to tell the crooked rose  
My youth is bent by the same wintry fever....*

*—Dylan Thomas*



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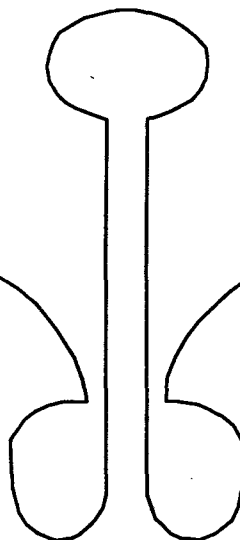
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## Message From The Principal

*It gives me great pleasure that a new-look magazine has come out this year. It contains a number of interesting articles by our distinguished ex-students and some present students and teachers. The College Magazine has always reflected the mind of the students and over the years has been appreciated by one and all.*

*The College has been recognised as an institution with potential for excellence by the UGC and has received a handsome grant of Rs. 35 lakhs for networking, connectivity and total modernisation. The college has also obtained academic autonomy for its nine full-fledged and independent Post Graduate Departments. Discussion on total academic autonomy of the institution is going on. Placement of students is proceeding in an encouraging way.*

*I wish all students of the college a grand success.*

*Professor Amitava Chatterjee  
Principal  
Presidency College, Kolkata*



# How the Magazine Began

BARNALI DAS  
RAJRUPA BANERJEE

It was a fine evening in September 1914 when the Principal of Presidency College Henry Rosher James was going home on leave. He eventually saw two of his pupils approaching him and was mightily pleased by the fact that both of them had come to see him off and wish him a safe journey. What is of interest to us is that these were the same students who had earlier approached him to start a college magazine and stabilize it financially through compulsory subscription. Being a liberal of the Oxford School, Principal James was opposed to the idea of compulsory subscription. Since voluntary efforts in those days could not have sufficient strength to sustain the magazine for any great length of time, the life of the college magazine had hung in the balance.

When the guard of the train had blown his whistle the students again asked their Principal whether he would change his mind and levy a compulsory contribution from the students of the college. The Principal was then probably thinking of his sweet home and its cosy hearth; so in a moment of pleasurable excitement, he nodded approval. The train steamed off.

Permission had been granted. When the Principal came back, the two students presented him with a petition signed by a vast majority of the students of the college asking for an imposition of compulsory subscription. H. R. James was a man of honour—he had given his word. And thereafter the college magazine came into being, its first number appearing in November 1914.

The Principal chose the two students—Mr P. N. Banerjee as the first editor & Mr Jogesh Chandra Chakravorti as the first general secretary. Later Principal James said in the inaugural note that:- "Rightly understood, a college magazine is an organ of the corporate life of the college. It is at once an expression of the common life and a quickener of its activities. It fulfills these functions better in proportion as it keeps closely in touch with the actual work-a-day life of the college. It should chronicle events; it should communicate views; it should afford opportunities for free discussion of college affairs and interests... a college magazine should, in the second place, find place for news

from other colleges and keep its readers informed of matters of common interest in the university. This is the second natural function. A third is to foster literary and scientific interest by printing contributions ..... which reach a sufficiently high standard."

These are the aims with which the Presidency College Magazine was first started. Over the years certain 'agitations' and 'grievances' were also supported by and ventilated through the magazine. One of the first and foremost was a demand for a college hall. A need was felt for it because without it, to quote the founder editor in his second number:

"we can not effectively have a college union, no permanent stage, no histrionic club, no big college meetings..."

and finally, though years later, the formidable Presidency College Hall was built, and it was called the Derozio Hall. The magazine had also raised its voice in protest against the paucity in the number of prizes awarded by the College to its distinguished students at the different examinations. To quote an editor :

"no doubt a good deal of the spirit of emulation stimulated by the award of prizes is due to the fact that they are given away in public and the recipients are publicly honoured. We have none of it for the simple reason that we have not got a College Hall."

This grievance was also met with. Today the Founders' day of the college every year includes a prize-giving ceremony and, in the process, the interest and importance of the day is much enhanced. The magazine had also from time to time expressed the need of a College Association and the lowering of the high rate of fees charged by the college.

The college magazine has been a common platform for the students to voice their opinions and grievances and has thereby contributed to changing the face of the college. But interestingly enough there is one problem which had plagued the college student back then and continues to do



so even now. That is the management of the college library. To quote the edition of the Silver Jubilee Number of the magazine (1939):

"The library seems to be hopelessly understaffed. Students have now to wait long before a bearer can be found to serve their requisition slips. The author index is hopelessly antiquated: enquiries show that the management cannot spare a hand to bring it upto date. With the passing of years our library has amassed a collection of books that can rouse the envy of any academic institution, but no arrangement seems to have been made to house the expanding stock of books in a systematic manner, with the result that there is further delay in supplying the demands of students." What is surprising is the fact that even after more than half a century has passed, things have hardly changed. And the student, even in the year 2005, has to deal with this hopeless situation.

A perusal of the editorials over the years brings out the fact that the most ancient grievance is not the absence of the assembly hall, but the paucity of good contributions. The magazine came out first in 1914 amidst tremendous enthusiasm, but as early as 1917 we find the editor lamenting: "we cannot keep confessing that of late we are painfully conscious of the paucity of contributions worth publishing from the members of the college past and present. In fact, the interest that used to be taken in the past is visibly on the wane." The editor went on to quote, as many of his successors have quoted in their turn, the words of H. R. James : "When Presidency College does have a magazine, it is incumbent on every member of the college to do what he can to make it a success." Another subject of editorial comment has been the preponderance of the poetical in the contributions. One editor remarks : "Poems have reached him which have caused him to exclaim with Pope—it is not poetry but prose run mad.... and even... pieces of drama in which-'the tragic muse smiled and the

comic slept' ". To encourage contributors the Magazine Committee in 1924 declared that a medal would be awarded to the best article of the year. Vol XI shows that the medal was awarded to Birendranath Ganguly for his paper on 'Pauperism' (printed in XII). Unfortunately that was the only time the medal was awarded.

There have been many things which the editors of our magazine, like all great editors, have dealt with. They have discussed changes in the college and the grievances of the students; they have gloried in the achievements of the college and refuted our fault-finders; they have suggested improvements; they have talked of the outside world; they have even dabbled in some politics. Some of them have been admirably chivalrous; the admission of three lady-students in 1917 made one of them comment : "it is with much pleasure that we note the welcome presence of three lady-students among the freshers...Would that mean that such admissions were ever on the increase and less like angel visits few and far between." What the magazine was at the time of its inception can hardly be judged from what it is now. Revolutionary and baffling changes have swept over the face of the world since the misty morning in November 1914, when the Presidency College Magazine issued its first number.

In a previous birth (about 1905) it knew the wrath of a Government because of some offending article, while on another occasion it had the experience of seeing its pages torn and a bonfire made of them by furious students because of an editorial comment which they thought had offended the memory of a great leader.

In keeping with the glorious tinges of history that are associated with the bygone formative days of this magazine, we must all put in zestful effort so that the Presidency College Magazine continues to weave its marvellous skein through the opening and closing casements of time.

# প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ

রজত কান্ত রায়

১৮৫৫ খৃষ্টাব্দে ইংরেজ সরকার হিন্দু কলেজের অবসান ঘটিয়ে ধর্মনির্বিশেষে সকল সম্প্রদায়ের ছাত্রের জন্য সরকারী শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠান ‘প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ অফ বেঙ্গল’ স্থাপন করেন। বেসরকারী হিন্দু কলেজ (১৮১৭ খৃঃ) ছিল বিশেষ ভাবে উচ্চবর্ণের হিন্দু ছাত্রদের শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠান। হিন্দু ধর্মের উপর কোনও আঘাত না আসে অথচ ছেলেরা ইংরেজী শিক্ষায় শিক্ষিত হয়ে বিষয়বৃদ্ধি করতে পারে, এই উদ্দেশ্যে কলকাতার নতুন বড়লোক ‘জমিদার’ ও ‘বেনিয়ান’রা ধর্মসংস্কারক রামমোহন রায়কে দূরে সরিয়ে রেখে নিজেদের কর্তৃত্বের আওতায় হিন্দু কলেজ প্রতিষ্ঠা করেছিলেন। ‘টোল’ বা ‘মাদ্রাসা’র স্থানে আধুনিক ‘কলেজ’ খুঁজতে গেলে, হিন্দু কলেজই ভারতবর্ষে তথা প্রাচ্যে প্রথম আধুনিক উচ্চশিক্ষার প্রতিষ্ঠান।

প্রতিষ্ঠাতাদের উদ্দেশ্যে আঘাত হেনে তরুণ ফিরিশ্চি শিক্ষক হেনরী লুই বিবিয়ান ডিরোজিও (১৮২৮-১৮৩১) তাঁর ছাত্রদের প্রগতি-নাশক ‘কুসংস্কার’-এর বিরুদ্ধে উত্তেজিত করে তুললেন। সেকালের ওরিয়েন্টাল ম্যাগাজিন-এ দেখা যায়, ‘He was neither a fluent nor an eloquent speaker, but the little that he said contained bone and sinew, and furnished a large stock of accurate information.’ তাঁর শিক্ষাদানের মাধ্যমে ডেভিড হিউম’ এর যুক্তিবাদের সঙ্গে এদেশের ছাত্রসমাজের সম্যক পরিচয় ঘটল। সচকিত কর্তৃপক্ষ তাঁকে কলেজ থেকে সরিয়ে দিলেন, কিন্তু ততদিনে সুবিস্তৃত ইংরেজী শিক্ষা নিছক বিষয়বৃদ্ধির সীমিত লক্ষ্য ছাড়িয়ে ছাত্রসমাজের বুদ্ধি এবং হৃদয় উভয়কেই গভীর ভাবে নাড়া দিয়ে গেছে। হিন্দু কলেজের আর এক বিখ্যাত ইংরেজ শিক্ষক ক্যাপ্টেন ডি এল রিচার্ডসন (১৮৩৭-৪৩) ছাত্রসমাজে শেক্সপীয়রের নাটক বহুল ভাবে চালু করলেন এবং ভাবাবেগ ও অনুভূতির জগতে এক রোমান্টিক বিপ্লব ঘটালেন। লর্ড মেকলে তাঁকে বলেছিলেন, ‘I may forget everything about India, but your reading of Shakespeare, never.’ এই সময় থেকে ছাত্রসমাজে নতুন এক ভাবমণ্ডল গড়ে উঠল। চিন্তাচেতনায় প্রখর যুক্তিতর্কের সঙ্গে আবেগ-অনুভূতিতে সূক্ষ্ম রোমান্টিকতার দেশীয় সমন্বয় ঘটল। পরবর্তীকালে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের প্রেমচন্দ্র রায়চন্দ্র স্কলার প্রিয়রঞ্জন সেন (১৯১৭-১৯১৯) লিখেছেন, ‘Young Bengal responded creatively, and not just imitatively, to European literature.’ হিন্দু কলেজের ছাত্র মাইকেল মধুসূদন দত্ত (১৮৩৭-৪২) এবং প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের ছাত্র বঙ্কিমচন্দ্র চট্টোপাধ্যায় (১৮৫৮) সাহিত্যচর্চা শুরু করেছিলেন ইংরেজী ভাষায়, কিন্তু তাঁরা অবিলম্বে বাংলা ভাষাতে যথাক্রমে কাব্য

ও উপন্যাসের আধুনিক ধারা প্রবর্তন করলেন। সেই সঙ্গে প্রতিষ্ঠাতাদের আকাঙ্ক্ষিত লক্ষ্য বিষয়বৃদ্ধিও হতে থাকল। হিন্দু কলেজের ছাত্র সত্যেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর এবং জ্ঞানেন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর যথাক্রমে প্রথম ভারতীয় সিভিলিয়ান এবং ব্যারিস্টার হয়ে প্রতিষ্ঠাতাদের উদ্দেশ্য সফল করলেন। প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের গোড়ার দিকের ছাত্রদের মধ্যেও বাংলা থেকে রমেশচন্দ্র দত্ত (১৮৬৬) এবং অসম থেকে আনন্দরাম বড়ুয়া (১৮৬৫-৬৯) সিভিলিয়ান হয়ে, তার পরে দেশীয় সাহিত্য চর্চায় দেশের মুখ উজ্জ্বল করলেন।

উনবিংশ শতকের দ্বিতীয়ার্ধ থেকে অদ্বিতীয় প্রিন্সিপাল জেমস স্টার্ক্লিফ’ এর নেতৃত্বে (১৮৫৫-৭৫) প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ সকল সম্প্রদায়ের ছাত্রদের উপস্থিতিতে এক সর্বভারতীয় আকার ধারণ করল। উনবিংশ শতকের শেষ দিকে এবং বিংশ শতাব্দীর গোড়ার দিকে ভিন্ন ভিন্ন সময়ে যারা এই কলেজে পড়াশুনা করে পরে নিজ নিজ ক্ষেত্রে যশস্বী হয়েছিলেন তাঁদের মধ্যে আছেন ডিরেক্টর অফ পাবলিক ইনস্ট্রাকশন সৈয়দ হোসেন বিলগ্রামি (বি.এ. ১৮৬৭), অসম কংগ্রেস নেতা নবীনচন্দ্র বড়দোলই (১৮৯৫-৯৭), পাঞ্জাবের শিক্ষাবিদ এবং লেজিসলেটিব্ কাউন্সিল মেম্বর গোকুলচন্দ্র নারায়ণ (এম. এ. ১৯০২), মাড়বারী ধনপতি বদ্রিদাস গোয়েঙ্কা (১৯০০-০৫), স্বাধীন ভারতের প্রথম প্রেসিডেন্ট এবং কলেজের ঈশান স্কলার রাজেন্দ্র প্রসাদ (১৯০২-১৯০৭), নেপালের সৈন্যবাহিনীর কর্ণেল ও হাকিম দমবর শমশের থাপা (এফ. এ. ১৯০২), গুয়াহাটি মিউনিসিপালিটির চেয়ারম্যান ও অসমের রাষ্ট্রনেতা মুহম্মদ সাদুল্লাহ (১৯০৩-১৯০৬), এবং গুয়াহাটির কটন কলেজের অধ্যাপক এবং ‘জয়মতী উপাখ্যান’ ‘অহোমের দিন’, ‘Life of Anandaram Borooah’ রচয়িতা সূর্যকুমার ভূঁইঞা (১৯১১-১৬)। হিন্দু কলেজ যেমন বাঙালী উচ্চবর্ণ হিন্দুদের অগ্রগতিতে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রতিষ্ঠান ছিল, প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ তেমন বাঙালী, বিহারী ও অসমীয়া মুসলমানদের আত্মোন্নতিতে একটি লক্ষণীয় ভূমিকা পালন করেছিল। প্রথম দিকের মুসলমান গ্র্যাজুয়েট (১৮৬১) দেলবার হোসেন আহমদ পিছিয়ে পড়া বাঙালী মুসলমান সমাজে সর্বপ্রথম আধুনিক যুক্তিবাদী চিন্তাধারার প্রবর্তন করেছিলেন এবং সেই ধারা অনুসরণ করে ইকনমিক্সের গ্র্যাজুয়েটদ্বয় কাজী আবদুল ওদুদ (১৯১৭) এবং আবুল হোসেন (১৯১৮) ঢাকাতে বিংশ শতকের দ্বিতীয় ও তৃতীয় দশকে ‘বুদ্ধিমুক্তি আন্দোলন’ শুরু করেছিলেন। এই সব উজ্জ্বল ছাত্ররা পাঠ নিত প্রধানতঃ ইণ্ডিয়ান এডুকেশন সার্ভিসের সাহেব অধ্যাপকদের কাছে, কিন্তু ক্রমে ক্রমে বেঙ্গল এডুকেশন সার্ভিসের

ভারতীয় অধ্যাপকরাও কলেজে স্থান করে নিচ্ছিলেন। বিখ্যাত প্রিন্সিপাল হেনরী রশার জেমস'এর সৃজনশীল নেতৃত্ব (১৯০৭-১৬) কালেই প্রথম মহাযুদ্ধের সময় থেকে সাদা-কালো জাতিবৈবরণ প্রভাবে কলেজ প্রাঙ্গণে বর্ধিত অসন্তোষ দেখা দেয় এবং ইতিহাস বিভাগের প্রধান ই. এফ. ওটেন পেছন থেকে আক্রান্ত হন। সুভাষচন্দ্র বসু ছিলেন কলেজ ইউনিয়নের সেক্রেটারী এবং দর্শন বিভাগের ছাত্র (১৯১৩-১৬)। শান্তি স্বরূপ তিনি কলেজ থেকে বিতাড়িত হন। সাইমন কমিশনের বিরুদ্ধে প্রতিবাদের সময় ১৯২৮-২৯ খৃষ্টাব্দে পুনরায় বিক্ষোভ দেখা দেয়, প্রিন্সিপাল এইচ ই স্টেপলটন আক্রান্ত হন এবং এবারও কলেজ ইউনিয়নের সেক্রেটারী প্রমোদ ঘোষাল বিতাড়িত হন। এইসব ঘটনা সত্ত্বেও শেষ ইংরেজ প্রিন্সিপাল জন রথনী ব্যারো'র অবসর গ্রহণ পর্যন্ত (১৯৩০) কলেজের শাসন সুষ্ঠু এবং সুপারিকল্পিত ছিল এবং তারপর প্রতিভাবান ভারতীয় প্রিন্সিপাল ভূপতিমোহন সেন'এর নেতৃত্বে (১৯৩৯-৪৩) সম্পূর্ণ ভারতীয় অধ্যাপক মণ্ডলীর পঠনপাঠনে কলেজ তার উজ্জ্বল ঐতিহ্য বজায় রাখতে পেরেছিল। ইতোমধ্যে যেসব সাহেব ও দেশীয় অধ্যাপকদের প্রতিভা বলে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ নিছক ইংরেজী শিক্ষা থেকে পা বাড়িয়ে মৌলিক বিজ্ঞান চর্চার পথে অগ্রসর হতে শুরু করে, তাঁদের মধ্যে আলেকজান্ডার পেডলার (১৮৭৩-৯৩) কেমিস্ট্রিতে, জগদীশচন্দ্র বসু (১৮৮৫-১৯১৫) ফিজিক্সে, প্রফুল্লচন্দ্র রায় (১৮৮৯-১৯১৬) কেমিস্ট্রিতে, সি ই কালিস (১৯০২-১৯১৭) ম্যাথমেটিক্সে, এবং কুলেশচন্দ্র কর (১৯২৭-৫৫) ফিজিক্সে বৈজ্ঞানিক আবিষ্কার করে যশস্বী হয়েছিলেন।

স্বাধীনতার সময় গুরু শিষ্য পরম্পরায় যে সুষ্ঠু শিক্ষণ পদ্ধতি কলেজে অনেক দিন যাবৎ সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত ছিল ('One's brilliant pupils in due time becoming one's valued colleagues'), দেশভাগের ফলে কয়েকজন প্রতিভাবান মুসলমান অধ্যাপক পাকিস্তানে চলে গেলেও সেই সুষ্ঠু পদ্ধতি ব্যাহত হয় নি।

এই সময় গবেষণার ধারা নতুন নতুন পথে প্রবাহিত হল। ইংরেজ আমলে যে তিনটি প্রথম-স্থানীয় 'প্রেসিডেন্সি' কলেজ স্থাপিত হয়েছিল, অর্থাৎ প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ অফ বেঙ্গল, প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ অফ ম্যাড্রাস এবং বম্বে'র এলফিনস্টোন কলেজ, তার মধ্যে একমাত্র কলকাতার প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজই নিজ প্রদেশে তার প্রথম স্থান ধরে রাখতে সক্ষম হল। ১৯৫০ থেকে ১৯৭০ পর্যন্ত কলেজের যে সব ছাত্র গ্রাজুয়েট হয়েছেন, তাঁদের মধ্যে অশীন দাসগুপ্ত (ইতিহাস, ১৯৫২), অমর্ত্য সেন (অর্থনীতি, ১৯৫৩), সুখময় চক্রবর্তী (অর্থনীতি, ১৯৫৩), পার্থসারথি গুপ্ত (ইতিহাস, ১৯৫৪) অমিয়কুমার বাগচী (অর্থনীতি, ১৯৫৫), শিশিরকুমার দাস (বাংলা, ১৯৫৫), সুমিত সরকার (ইতিহাস, ১৯৫৮), কেতকী কুশারী (ডাইসন) (ইংরেজী, ১৯৫৮), গায়ত্রী চক্রবর্তী (স্পিকাক) (ইংরেজী, ১৯৫৯), সুদীপ্ত কবিরাজ (রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান, ১৯৬৬), পার্থ চট্টোপাধ্যায় (রাষ্ট্রবিজ্ঞান ১৯৬৭), সুকান্ত চৌধুরী (ইংরেজী, ১৯৭০), ইত্যাদি অনেকেই আন্তর্জাতিক ক্ষেত্রে নিজেদের প্রতিভার স্বাক্ষর রেখেছেন। এই বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত পরিমণ্ডলের মধ্য থেকেই হিংসাত্মক বিপ্লবের পথে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজে নকসাল আন্দোলনের গোড়াপত্তন হয়। ১৯৬৬ থেকে ১৯৭২ পর্যন্ত কলেজ প্রাঙ্গণ অশান্ত এবং উত্তাল ছিল। তা সত্ত্বেও কলেজের বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত পরিমণ্ডল স্তান হয় নি। কিন্তু ১৯৭৭ খৃষ্টাব্দে পশ্চিমবঙ্গের বামফ্রন্ট সরকার ক্ষমতায় অনুষ্ঠিত হয়ে কলেজের বিরুদ্ধে 'elitism' এর অভিযোগ আনলেন। সরকারী হস্তক্ষেপে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের ক্রমবিকাশ ব্যাহত হল। ১৯৯২ এর ৭ই নভেম্বর The Telegraph কাগজের মন্তব্যঃ 'The decrepitude of Presidency College is there for all to see.' এই সংকটে পড়ে এলফিনস্টোন কলেজের মতই প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ আর পূর্বের গৌরব বজায় রাখতে পারে নি।

# Swami Vivekananda's Message of This-Worldly Spirituality: Its Relevance in the Age of Globalisation

TAPAN K RAYCHAUDHURI

Post-modernist theorists often emphasise the concept of the real reader. Translated into simple English, it underlines a well-observed fact in the history of literary appreciation, and in fact, of appreciation of all art forms. What Greek tragedies meant to the ancient Greek audience was something very different from what it means to modern readers of the same literary works. The ancient Hindu temples were, and still are to the devout, sacred spaces, not artefacts to be admired for their aesthetic beauty, the aesthetic itself informed by the sensibilities of another culture.

What is true of responses to artistic achievement is at least equally true of messages from leaders of men and culture heroes. I have argued elsewhere that one of the most influential figures in modern Indian history, Swami Vivekananda, had an impact on the minds of his countrymen which was essentially different from the one he had intended. I shall briefly return to that theme later in an appropriate context. Today, I should like to open my statement with another more basic question: do "messages" matter? Do people actually listen to them and act accordingly? Or are the profound thoughts of men and women, past and present at best admired and never acted upon? I have formulated the question in an extreme form so as to reduce it to an absurdity, the absurdity in its turn facilitating a realistic appraisal of the impact of great ideas on the minds and actions of human beings. Of course, great ideas influence our thought and action albeit rarely in the way intended by their progenitors. The religions of the world are the most striking proof of this simple principle. Few Christians actually love their neighbours, not to speak of their enemies, but even fewer among them will acknowledge mutual hatred as an acceptable basis for human action. Gandhi converted only a handful of people to the ideal of non-violent struggle, but the vast numbers inspired by his words into non-violent action are testimony to the power of his ideas. I am trying to tackle here an even more difficult question: Can the life, work and words of a nineteenth century Indian monk, a

renouncer, have any relevance in this age of globalisation when the central mantra is the market, and the old utilitarian message of enlightened self-interest has been rephrased in terms of an apotheosis of profit and limitless consumption. Can a doctrine of limitless greed share any platform with an agenda which ultimately celebrates renunciation and service to others? I shall argue that it can, paradoxically, both as an inspiration and as a constraint.

Young Narendranath Datta, born into an affluent family which had inherited the high tradition of Indo-Mughal culture, both social and intellectual, and added to it the advantages of a western style education, began his life in an ambience of civilized hedonism. His early aspirations were typical of the aspiring upper middle classes of the time – academic qualifications leading to a successful professional career or a well-paid job, the good life rounded off by a suitable marriage. But early in life he had developed an unlikely yearning, if we are to trust his biographers: a yearning for the knowledge of God, in no sense a typical pursuit for the educated young in the second half of the nineteenth century. That concern took a more serious turn through his encounter with a man he repeatedly described as the mad Brahmin of Dakshineswar. The guru initiated him into sanyasa, the ascetic mode of life and the several years which followed, he devoted exclusively to his quest for God. In the final four years of this quest, following the prescribed regime for sanyasa, he adopted the life-style of a homeless wanderer, parivrajaka. Evidence suggests that he found his new mission in life during these years, a mission which transcended his essentially individualistic quest for a realization of unity with the Godhead. His famous response to the query of his fellow disciple, Turiyananda, sums up the *raison d'être* of his new emerging agenda. Asked if in his wanderings he had found God, the young monk replied that he had not, adding that he had, however, learnt to love human beings. He had learnt this, as his other statements indicate, from his awareness and

experience of hunger, a phenomenon he had encountered throughout the length and breadth of the subcontinent. This encounter with the masses had other consequences as well which I shall touch upon in their appropriate context. For the moment I should like to focus on the new agenda for his action shaped by that experience. He wanted to raise funds to tackle the massive problems faced by the poor in India and the one way to achieve this end was to get access to philanthropy in the land where he felt every thing was possible, USA. And as in that land of all possibilities, he formulated his ideals, his vision of a new India emerged. That vision is the message appropriate to the purposes of this talk.

In his many speeches, letters, occasional writings and dialogues, he spelt out the contours of that ideal India. In a dialogue with his disciple, Saratchandra Chakravarti, he made an explicit statement: the India of his dreams would have a western type society. What did he exactly mean by that? The answer has to be gleaned from his many statements on the West and from his articulated vision of India's future relationship with the nations in the vanguard of modern civilisation. He interpreted the modern West in terms of three alternatives as also mutually complementary paradigms. First, he located his formulation within the classical Indian concept of gunas, qualities which distinguish individual human beings and at the same time were to be found in different proportions in the personality of every one of them: sattva, saintly qualities, rajas, manly attributes and tamas, the bestial in man. He found in the Western life a perfect embodiment of the quality of rajas, a throbbing, resplendent vitality which had earned for them the leadership of mankind and clear dominance over them; it had also helped them push the limits of human civilization beyond the wildest dreams of man in earlier ages. He saw in rajas, western style, a deep spiritual quality in that it raised human life to a higher level of consciousness and activity. While he was convinced that in the last analysis India's spiritual tradition was something uniquely excellent in terms of human values – and her relationship with the West had to be redefined in terms of a teacher-pupil relationship, it was the West that was best placed to realize that higher spirituality in their lives, for India, impoverished, enslaved, sunk in bestial tamas was in no condition to attain the transcendent quality of sattva. "Nayamatma valahinena labhyam" and India was in the nadir of feckless decay, both physical and spiritual. To attain sattva one could not skip the necessary intermediate stage of rajas so manifest in Euro-American life.

From time to time he spelt out the many splendours of Euro-American rajas. He marvelled at the ancient Greek delight in the beauties of man and nature, which he saw as a major influence on the aesthetic-artistic development of Europe. Here was a quality of joy in the life as lived on earth, resonant with an ennobling spirituality. He admired the French as the true inheritors of the Greek sensibility and marvelled at the way they savoured life. Even their vices had an aesthetic quality to them and the sage implied that they were somehow less unacceptable on this account. Such ways were certainly superior to the Indian life experience of breeding like pigs amidst the squalor of torn quilts. He saw a different manifestation of rajas in American life, in its throbbing vitality which to him was symbolized by electricity, the discovery which had transformed their material life, and he admired the role of women in American life, their vigour, their education and their active involvement in a wide range of social concerns. Though he was anxious to project the high ideal of Indian womanhood as recorded in tradition, in his preachings abroad, in his letters home he contrasted the "fallen" state of Hindu women made to bear children at the age of ten with the very worthwhile life-style of their American sisters. When he recommended the western model to his fellow countrymen sunk in tamas, such were the things he had in mind. He summed up his prescription in one famous dictum: "Chai shiray shiray sanchalita rajogun." What is required is the quality of rajas pulsating in every vein." Attainment of sattva, the ultimate purpose of human life, must wait, because spirituality was not attainable on empty stomachs. The slot where he fitted in the West, in the paradigm of human life defined in terms of the threefold categories of gunas, became relevant to the contemporary Indian life in these terms.

A second paradigm he deployed to understand and interpret Europe so as to assess its practical relevance for the regeneration of India is somewhat startling at first sight. He referred to the cultural-moral dichotomy manifest in the Puranic concept of Devasura, the gods and the demons. He interpreted this to mean stages in the development of human civilization which co-existed at a given period in time. The Asuras were the hunter-gatherers, the Devas were humans in a more settled stage of development, agriculturalists. Each had their own code of morals appropriate to their level of cultural evolution. In fact, he pointed out, if the Puranic tales were any guide, the Asuras had a distinct moral superiority over the lecherous gods of Hindu mythology. In this dichotomous interpretation of ancient myths, he saw traces of ancient history. Europe's ancestors from the barbarian tribes of

Asia's steppes were the original Asuras. They explained the element of boundless energy in European veins. Energy is the secret of human excellence and hence the Asura inheritance in the Western tradition was something to admire. Again, the implied message was that India should emulate the attitudes and actions which derived from that energy. This is why there was more virtue in kicking a football than in reading the Gita. The emphasis again is on this worldly energy, that would burn out the heavy accretion of tamas, bestial inertia, which Swamiji saw as the bane of Indian life.

A third paradigm also derived from the Indian tradition referred to the caste system as a universally valid category. He saw human history as a record of social-political domination by the different castes, which meant no more than large categories of occupational groups. The age of priest kings, i.e., Brahminical domination, had given way to the rule of warriors, Kshatriyas who had now been displaced by the Vaisyas, merchants and traders. In the context of globalisation would it be correct to say that swamiji had foreseen the creeping power of the corporate sector, for he went on to assert that no king or emperor had ever exercised such concentration of authority as was now vested in the capitalist class. At this point, he went silent as to the desirability of this development and predicted about a future stage when the sudras, the working people, would inherit the earth. But on one point, he had no doubts or hesitations. In this age of Vaisya rule, India had to emulate the ways of the modern Vaisya, the western industrialist and seek salvation through energetic enterprise, not any contemplation of the infinite.

His ideas on an agenda for India's regeneration emerged in bits and pieces over a period of time, but certain core themes emerge fairly early and are constants in his evolving ideas. One of these is industrialization. When he decided to go to U.S.A. to attend the World Congress of Religions in Chicago, his declared objective was not the Propagation of Hinduism, in whatever form, but two very different yet linked purposes. First, he hoped to raise funds for the amelioration of poverty: it is still not clear how exactly he planned to set about the latter task. His second purpose which he evidently hoped would help realize his first objective was to seek American help in importing technology suitable for India. Though his later efforts, focussed on service to the poor with very specific ends in view, did not emphasize any strategy for industrialization, the theme keeps recurring in his statements in a variety of contexts. We gather from one unconfirmed anecdote that when he travelled to the USA via Japan, Jamshedji Tata was a fellow passenger on his way to Japan to secure a contract

for the import of safety matches. Swamiji, we are told, requested him to try and import the technology instead of the finished products so that the matches could be manufactured in India. While the truth of this anecdote can not be verified, it does fit in with his ideology of industrialization as glimpsed in his various statements.

I have discussed so far Swamiji's emphasis on a cult of high this worldly energy, focussed on economic regeneration through industrial enterprise and a vigorous enjoyment of this world within the framework of virtuous living. The this-worldliness of this ideology is patent enough, but where is the spirituality? In his courageous agenda for changing the world as well as India, he emphasized his culture's inheritance of profound spirituality. Nowhere else in the world had he come across such deep and abiding concern for liberation of the human soul. This was the precious gift India could offer to the advanced civilizations of the world in return for their help in the material progress of India who would be both teacher and pupil to the West in a fair exchange of cultural treasures.

And what, precisely, did he wish to offer to the West from the vast storehouse of India's spiritual tradition? It can be summed up in one word: Vedanta. But what did Vedanta mean to him? One must recognize that his interpretation of that particular mystic philosophical tradition was highly unorthodox. In the history of Indian philosophy, the Vedanta encapsulates one particular component of the Indian interpretation of the Reality underlying the Universe: that there is only one underlying Reality, the manifest universe being a projection, essentially, an illusory projection of that Supreme consciousness. This is the doctrine of non-duality, Advaita. But to Swamiji all religious beliefs, as distinct from organized religions which he described as creeds, embodied the same truth expressed in a variety of idioms. That truth was Vedanta. Dualism, Dvaitavada and Advaita, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity were all Vedanta in various forms. The life of his Master, as witnessed by him, was its highest realization. It is this Vedanta that he wanted to preach to the West, – a system of beliefs which embraced and actively respected all faiths but emphasized their basic unity as multiple expressions of the truth encompassed in Vedantic thought. He wished that one day the West with its immense energy would accept and adopt that truth, gratefully learnt from India, as the foundation of their lives and thus lead the world into a millennium of spirituality coexisting with an active pursuit of the good life on earth. He wanted future India as well to have a Vedantic soul, which would be a source of infinite strength based on the realization that the self was but an expression of the ultimate reality



underlying the Universe. He decided to create a band of monks and nuns brought together in an institution named after his Master who would work for the realisation of this dream.

He and his fellow monks preached this ideal in the West explaining and interpreting India's spiritual tradition as embodied in the Vedantic texts and in the associated discipline of Yoga. For India, he devised a very different programme linked to the original intention which took him to the USA. Its immediate object was amelioration of the intolerable conditions in which the poor lived. Hence the active agenda emphasized service to the poor, – attending to their needs for basic nutrition, health and education, especially when threatened by major catastrophes like natural disasters and epidemics. But in occasional statements and letters to his fellow monks, he explained a higher purpose which had emerged in his consciousness at some unspecified point in his career. He set it out in one famous letter where he emphasized the crucial role which the dispossessed had played in the creation and development of human civilization and received no thanks for it. He wrote of the immense power lying dormant in the lives of the poor in India. The educated middle classes were, to use his words, virtually dead: the babu had nothing to contribute to the future life of the nation. But he still had one duty to perform: to bring to the dispossessed an awareness of the wider world and of their own power, through the blessings of education and by helping them secure the minimum wherewithal for physical survival. Once this was achieved, they would devise their own agenda and, in due course, inherit the earth which was largely their own creation. In one throwaway statement, Swamiji described himself as a socialist, but never explained what exactly he meant by the term. His language suggests that empowering the poor and the downtrodden was to him a moral necessity, an essential ingredient of the spiritual millennium which he thought of as an entirely realizable goal. Here again we have another significant dimension of his this-worldly spirituality. Spiritual realization for mankind was to him a social rather than individual goal, – a significant digression from India's grand tradition. And that goal to him was inconsistent with grave injustice to the dispossessed whom he considered the true builders of human civilization. It is necessary to emphasize in this context that his purpose was not simply to serve the poor in the old spirit of *seva* for *daridranarayana*, God incarnate as the indigent, but something more fundamental, empowerment of the poor through their own effort, the more privileged merely assisting in the

realization of their power.

At the heart of his contemplated moral-spiritual utopia was a vision of future India. And what he had to say in this context has acquired a peculiar relevance for our country in the new century. Leaders of men like Swami Vivekananda both give shape to the spirit of an age and at the same time are products thereof. The patriot-prophet lived and preached at a particular juncture in the history of Indian nationalism when there was a clear tension between two mutually opposed perceptions of India's mediaeval past. Basing their conclusions on the writings of one school of mediaeval Muslim historians, the British scholar-administrators like Eliot and Dawson had projected a simplistic view of our middle ages which also suited their political purpose in the age of rising nationalism, no longer starry-eyed about the providential nature of British rule in India. The orthodox fundamentalist tradition was a significant component of the intellectual traditions dominating Indo-Islamic culture. Significant, but not dominant, as is their situation in most Muslim countries today. India's frustrated Taliban of yester year preferred to read the history of Afghan and Turkish conquests in India in a particular light: they saw it as the history of successful jihad, the victory of Islam over kufr, idolatry. Only the logical conclusion to such glory as they saw it, the conversion of the infidels, had not been realized. Idolatry was not merely tolerated but actually encouraged through measures like extensive land-grants to temples and the idolators held high office under the sultans and the badshahs, much to the chagrin of the very orthodox mullah. Hence in their historical writing they twisted reality to suit what they would have liked to see. Every battle between a Hindu chieftain and a Muslim dynast, who was fighting for his dynasty or tribe rather than Islam became an exercise in Holy War. The repression which inevitably followed any conquest was the legitimate punishment visited on idol worshippers even though as early as the first Arab invasion of Sind in the seventh century the Hindus had been recognised as people of the book *Ahl-ul-qitab*, entitled to protection under Muslim rulers. This distorted view of mediaeval Indian history was music to the ears of our colonial rulers eager to cling to any available straw in their propaganda onslaught against nationalist criticism of their providential rule. As Eliot and Dawson put it after reading their carefully selected extracts from the history of India as told by her own historians, i.e., the fundamentalist Muslim intellectuals deeply unhappy at the toleration of Hinduism, no babu would have the gumption any longer to criticize British rule in India.

This particular view of our middle ages as a

story of endless struggle between Hindus and their Muslim oppressors, with the Rajput and Maratha chieftains defending their patrimony or newly acquired territory, projected as champions of Hindu independence, became the dominant historical wisdom in the nineteenth century. As the very Hindu Bhudeb Mukherji pointed out, this pernicious myth subversive of potential unity, was accepted by the young acolytes of the British masters. The construction of Indian nationalism in the nineteenth century accepted this version of Indian history as gospel truth and that acceptance gave it an aggressive Hindu outlook, identifying Muslims as the historic enemy. The commercial stage in Calcutta and Bombay resonated with echoes of valiant struggle against multiple Muslim villains. Bal Thakrey, one must not forget, had respectable predecessors.

As Indian nationalist thought reached a certain level of maturity, this ill-informed perception of the Indian past came to be questioned. As some writers pointed out, the continual reference to jaban villainy on the Calcutta stage was unlikely to endear the nationalist cause to Muslims whose integration into the future nation was essential for its viability. Bhudeb Mukherji, the most orthodox of Hindu reformers, referred to the Muslims as foster-brothers nourished by the breast-milk of mother India over six centuries. Rabindranath in a remarkable essay written in 1898 described in his inimitable language how the material and spiritual culture of India, – from religious thought and music to textiles and *objets d'art* were the joint products of Hindus and Muslims. "If some day," he wrote "the Hindus with their thousand divisions could unite into a nation, there is no reason why Hindus and Muslims too could not become integral parts of the same nation. All the beneficent forces of our history were leading in that direction and it was in that direction that our future welfare lay."

Vivekananda was a product of this phase of Indian nationalism and his thoughts gave powerful expression to this new perception. It is a travesty to regard him as a pioneer of Hindu revival or to claim him as the intellectual forefather of those who destroy mosques or assist in state-sponsored programs against hapless minorities. He took great pride in the Indo-Islamic heritage and would be almost speechless with emotion when talking of the great and beautiful architectural achievement of the Mughal era. He described the fact, that under the Mughal policy of marriage alliance with the Rajput dynasties India was ruled by emperors who had Muslim fathers and Hindu mothers, as the result of genius very special to Indian culture, its ability to absorb into one unity apparently irreconcilable elements. The future Indian, he hoped, would have

Muslim bodies and Vedantic souls – hardly the sentiment of any leader of Hindu revival.

Swamiji's vision of a future India where there would be a perfect merger of its Hindu and Muslim cultures anticipates in some ways the contemporary policies and outlook often stupidly described as "secular". But if secular means a non-involvement with religion in any form, as indeed is the dictionary meaning of the term, nothing could be further from Vivekananda's agenda for future India. If his spirituality manifested itself in prescriptions for an intense involvement with man's life on his planet, his this-worldly agenda was informed at every step with a profound spirituality. His delight in the Indo-Islamic heritage did not derive merely from aesthetic sensibilities or practical concerns for building an inclusive nation. He had a profound admiration for Islam as a religion which admitted of no intermediaries between man and his creator, and wherein the Deity was worshipped without the intervention of any artefacts such as music or art. It was man standing in the presence of god in the blinding light of the desert sun. His love of Islam was inspired by this grand perception of the faith. It was reinforced by a certain view of world history. He emphasized the contribution of Islam to the growth of world civilization, especially the emergence of modern Europe. He contrasted the tolerance practised by Muslim rulers with Europe's record of stupid persecution of non-Christians, heretics and any scientific thought which was subversive of Biblical cosmogony. He described the prophet as one of those exceptional human beings who can not be judged by yard-sticks applicable to ordinary mortals. And this wide range of ideas which flowed from his pen were not cold academic statements. They were informed with a rare passion which easily translated into a love for the community whose faith meant so much to him. Here we have an unusual amalgamation of sensibilities which is worth emphasizing as well as spelling out. His attitude to Muslims is informed with the characteristic concern of the age for building a nation through assimilation of diverse cultures into one integrated nation. We have here hints of an agenda which is essentially this-worldly, a political purpose with a cultural ambience. It is charged with a passion typical of the man, an intense pride in the Indo-Islamic inheritance. But it does not stop there. His passionate love for things Indo-Islamic ranging from architecture to music and cuisine is ultimately rooted in something that remains with him always of supreme interest: matters affecting the spirit and beliefs associated with it. Hence his impassioned reverence for a faith in which man stands directly in the presence of his God and a faith which embodies in its daily practice

constant reminders of the brotherhood of man. Here indeed is a supreme example of his this-worldly agenda resonant with passionate spirituality.

The other side of this admiration is his contempt for popular Hindu practice, often mindless and inhuman in its indifference to human pain and idiotic in its allegiance to practices which lead to a shocking waste of resources. One passage in his writings which encapsulates the very violence of his sentiments on these issues has a peculiar relevance to our age when Hinduism has come to be equated with excessive concern for repossessing a temple site and celebratory massacre of a hapless minority. I quote it at some length: "Oh God, a country where the most powerful intellects have been weighing for two thousand years whether to eat with one's right hand or the left will of course sink into degeneracy. Today we have bells, tomorrow we have the flute on top of it, day after tomorrow there will be fanning with yak tails.... On top of all this, there are two thousand cock and bull tales to beguile the people – the disc, the mace, the lotus and the conch shell, the mace, the lotus and the disc etc. etc. etc. This is what is described as imbecility in the English language... We are wretched and are kicked around because such are the limits of our intellect. If you wish for anything that may one day be of benefit to you, I say, throw away your bells and the rest of the rubbish into the Ganges and worship the God incarnate in man, worship all who are born as men... a crore of rupees is spent each day just to open and close the temple doors at Kashi and Brindaban. Now the deity is changing his clothes, now he is having his lunch, now he is offering pinda to the ancestors of these stupid bastards. [The expression he uses in Bengali is priceless: *antkurer byata*, i.e., sons of fathers incapable of having children]. And all the while the living God perishes for want of food, for want of education." He went on to castigate a faith which led to the belief, "I alone am pure; everyone else is impure". "This," he commented with his characteristic vehemence, "is a religion from hell, a faith suited to demons and devils." Here it is clear that his attitude to religious reform has ostensibly a practical, this-worldly purpose: to reconcile belief and practice to the minimal demands of rationality and to redirect the enormous resources wasted on rituals towards the service of the needy, their nourishment and instruction. But again this worldly purpose is resplendent with spiritual faith. God is incarnate as man, every man, especially the dispossessed of this earth. True worship is to attend to their needs.

The Indian intelligentsia in the nineteenth century was almost obsessed with the issue of response to the West. Most thinkers prescribed a

policy of open windows. Open, yes but very selectively so. Vivekananda was no exception in this respect. His main concern was to inject into Indian veins heavy doses of Western energy, *rajas*, which to him had a moral and potentially spiritual quality. It was a very necessary step towards attainment of *sattva*, spirituality. In his imagined Utopia, India would enrich the West with the gift of her rich spiritual inheritance in which she had a unique advantage over all other cultures. The leaders of modern civilization, the great nations of the West, especially America, further strengthened and ennobled by this new acquisition, would lead the world into a new millennium of unprecedented moral, spiritual and material excellence. They would gratefully help India, their mentor in matters spiritual, to emerge out of poverty and squalor through technological change, and thus from *tamas* to *rajas*. The new world order would be a true brotherhood of man permanently energized by Vedantic spirituality and a deep acknowledgment of the fact that the same truth underlay all religions. Here was a vision of globalisation of extraordinary nobility. Its political morality emphasized that the poor and the dispossessed, once they had access to a knowledge of the world beyond their narrow limits, would realize their potentiality without any further external help: and then they would inherit the earth. It needs to be noted that this particular political vision goes beyond the world dominated by capitalism, the age of the third caste, *Vaisyas*. Vivekananda did hope and believe that the advent of the fourth age, dominated by the *Sudras*, the humble toilers who supplied mankind and civilization with all their needs, was nigh.

His perception of the capitalist order which he greatly admired for its sheer power was complex and interesting. His opinion, that it had no precedents in history, was spelt out graphically in terms of his caste paradigm: the age of *vaisya* rule. Under the Brahmins and the *Kshatriyas*, society had accumulated learning and culture. Under *Vaisya* rule all energy was focussed on accumulating wealth. The traders are forever united to protect their self-interest. They terrorize the world with the power of credit. They are forever vigilant so that royal power may not create any obstacle to their accumulation of wealth. Hence their anxiety to curtail royal authority. But they have no desire to see that power, in due course, descends to the *sudras*.

Vivekananda admired the immense power of western capitalism and appreciated its contribution to world culture. The modern *vaisya* went everywhere carrying the art and learning of one country to another. The arteries of trade acted as so many channels carrying the accumulated lifeblood

of man's culture to all parts of the human society. Civilization benefited thereby.

He did not propose any barriers to the free exchange of ideas, and hence, by implication, of products both material and cultural between nations. In this he was almost unique among the intellectuals of his time. The selectivity in his prescriptions as to what one would learn from the West was determined by what one would describe today as matters of taste, culturally determined preferences in matters of life-style and consumption. He also had some shrewd judgements on aspects of the western claims to superiority.

Let us begin with these judgements, because they have acquired a peculiar relevance in the first decade of the twenty-first century when USA is threatening to lead the politically benighted parts of the world by force into a millennium of democracy. He was far from impressed by the way democracy functioned in the West. Senates, parliaments, vote by ballot, he felt, merely camouflaged one universal phenomenon: all societies were controlled by the powerful, driving the rest like so many sheep in any direction they like. European politics was to him a feast of bribery, robbery in broad daylight. The reins of government were firmly in the hands of the rich who robbed the people and sent them off to distant lands as soldiers. Victory meant more wealth for them bought at the cost of poor people's lives. Does this description bear some resemblance to USA under the neo-cons, the Bushes, the Rumsfelds and the Cheyneys?

And as to cultural preferences in matters of consumption, he, like many other Indian visitors to the West in the nineteenth century, was repelled beyond a point with the endless preoccupation with consumer goods, the unbounded stimulation of appetite for more and more things which was a central plank of capitalist enterprise. He recognized the many positive qualities in Americans. But, to his great disappointment, all their efforts were centred on the body and all their energy spent on satisfying its needs, keeping it in shape and embellishing it in a thousand ways. They had "a thousand variety of implements to pare their nails, ten thousand for cutting their hair and, as to perfumes and cosmetics, the number is truly infinite... this satisfaction of appetites is their God. Hence the rivers of wealth, floods of beauty, waves of learning and surfeit of luxury... they were given to excess in all their habits of consumption. At the height of winter they would not drink a glass of water without chunks of ice..." Beyond a point despite his great love for Americans, he found their "busy, meaningless, moneymaking life", their love of razzmatazz hollow and tiresome. In the new age of

globalisation, when market is sovereign and endless consumption the only true God, I believe, his message would have been, "Stop, and think how worthwhile is this unrelenting pursuit of consumption, how much satisfaction does it truly bring, consider where one must draw a line."

Let me go back to a question I raised in the early part of this lecture: do messages, especially from earlier times matter? As Keynes put it, politicians who deny the relevance of economic theory in the formulation of their policies were often simply following the theories of an earlier age or the ideas of some economist disputed by others. In our daily life and in our public action, we do invoke ideas formulated by great men, even though we often interpret them in our own light according to our predilections. We may not act according to these but they do define some parameters of our action.

Vivekananda's ideas inspired generations of Indian nationalists. They read in his statements the calls to action which would lead to the independence of the Motherland. He never issued any explicit call focussed on such purposes. The various stray statements and even actions attributed to him on this score are all of questionable provenance. As against that we have his very unambiguous statement to Sarat Chakrabarti that he was not in the business of politics. Yet an entire generation of patriots in the heyday of nationalism read in his statements the call to self-sacrifice in the cause of independence. We see here the "real reader" in action. Historians in later decades have seen in him a, if not the, leader of Hindu revival, despite his fierce lampoons of neo-Hinduism and its leaders as also much in the grand tradition going back to the Grihya-sutras. Another instance of the proverbial "real reader". In more recent years, organizations which have rejoiced at the destruction of the Babri mosque and actively participated in the Gujarat pogrom, have tried to claim the prophet of total tolerance as their own intellectual ancestor. I hope his vision of a universal culture, informed by profound spirituality and manifest in a vigorous pursuit of virtuous life on earth and of a world which must one day be inherited by the dispossessed of this earth will not be interpreted today as one sanctioning unlimited pursuit of profit and the stimulation of shoddy consumption, with no holds barred. A thinker from an earlier age can rarely stem the course of history. But one can at least try to halt gross distortions of Vivekananda's message and emphasize to anyone who cares to study his life and work their profound spirituality informing his very this-worldly agenda for India's regeneration, his hopes of future glory for his country drawing upon the wealth of its Vedantic and Indo-Islamic past.

# Who is afraid of Experimental Physics?

SABYASACHI BHATTACHARYA

The year 2005 is being celebrated the world over as the year of physics. It marks the centenary of three papers, all in the year 1905, by Albert Einstein. One of these papers established the concept of special relativity and provided an understanding of the puzzle presented by the celebrated experiment conducted by Michelson and Morley. Another demonstrated that the experimental results of photoelectric effect are explained by quantum physics, ahead of the formulation of quantum mechanics in its full glory. The third formed the basis of modern statistical mechanics through an exposition of Brownian motion. The century that followed has often been called the century of physics. The study of physics went from strength to strength, unlocking the mystery of nature and its laws, phenomena in and structure of the universe around us, from the most basic subnuclear particle in apparent isolation to the structure and behaviour of an assembly of  $10^{23}$  mutually interacting atoms. In its wake it generated brilliant experimental methods, observations, inventions and discoveries matched by theoretical breakthroughs, analytical tools and conceptual leaps. It produced a foundation of knowledge with robust philosophical underpinnings that is able to explain and predict natural phenomena around us with spectacular precision. At the same time it produced high technology, from X-rays to integrated circuits, the Nobel Prize winning work in 1901 and 2000, respectively. In between, it unlocked the power of nuclear energy and invented, for example, transistors and lasers. In short, it gave rise to technology that has transformed the world we live in.

Contemporaneously with Einstein's work, the experimental physicist par excellence, Jagadish Chandra Bose produced frontier physics in the form of transmission of millimeter waves at Presidency College, Kolkata. Two decades later, in the same city, within a stone's throw from the College, C.V. Raman discovered the effect that carries his name, another major triumph of experimental science. While the former was not accorded his rightful international recognition at the time, the latter won the Nobel Prize in 1930, two years ahead of Heisenberg and three years ahead of Schrödinger and Dirac, the founders of quantum mechanics. Other major physics achievements, most notably by Saha and S.N. Bose (both alumni of the College),

put India firmly in the front rank among the nations of the world with regard to both the quality of work and the balance between experiment and theory. For a country nearly untouched by the industrial revolution except through colonial exploitation, the contribution of the city and specifically of the College to modern physics in this period of our history is nothing short of miraculous.

In the hundred years that followed Bose's demonstration of radio wave propagation, the country became independent. The leadership of the nation, singularly mindful of the role basic science can play in the life of the nation, created institutions dedicated to higher learning and research. They made investments in science and scientific infrastructure that would be considered vast relative to the financial resources of an impoverished country. The same period, however, saw a major bifurcation in the way the Indian physics community approached two organically coupled parts of physics, theory and experiment. Our society engaged in creating and nurturing what might be termed a "brahminical" scientific culture that worshipped what it perceived to be theoretical physics and displayed an utter disregard for experimental physics. The prospect for India to play a major role in the world of physics faded as a result. This bifurcation remains one of the main obstacles to our society in recapturing the promise of those early years.

Today, in institutions of scientific research such as the one the author works in, it is axiomatic that the vast majority of students will consider theoretical physics as the only honourable vocation. Many of them will try to avoid even the slightest contact with a laboratory, will resist attending any lecture or colloquium on experimental physics, treat their colleagues pursuing experimental physics with something akin to contempt and propagate the myth that the experimentalist is merely a failed theorist (but never the other way around!). The more elite and the more "Metro city" based the undergraduate institution is, the more severe the crisis. The situation is particularly striking for students of Presidency College or, more generally, those from the city of Kolkata (who are still a major presence in these institutions). This phenomenon is worthy of analysis by sociologists and historians in the larger context of a "bhadrak" culture and the

overarching dominance of form over substance. As a practising experimental physicist, I believe it is causally and systemically related to a highly unbalanced undergraduate teaching programme. The situation has not changed substantially in the three decades since my time as an undergraduate.

The principal problem stems, paradoxically, from what is otherwise a successful activity. Elite undergraduate institutions in the country, Presidency College among them, continue to have a tradition of excellent classroom teachers, nearly all of whom are theoretical physicists. These outstanding teachers, who quickly become role models for the students, unwittingly add credence to the already forming view of the inherent superiority of theoretical physics. Absent from the classroom lectures in these colleges are practical demonstrations of principles and true historical perspectives on how concepts emerge out of a vigorous interaction between experiment and theory. Instead, the lectures often convey the impression that concepts are formed by the sheer brainpower of exceptional minds, plucked out of thin air and are then proved right in experimental studies. In real life, the situation is mostly the other way around. Few students are even aware of the historical fact that experimentalists outnumber theoreticians by the ratio of two to one among winners of the Nobel Prize in physics. The word genius, so often used to describe heroes such as Maxwell and Einstein and Heisenberg, is rarely used for Faraday or Michelson or Rutherford or for our own Jagadish Chandra Bose, because the genius of the second kind is now entirely outside the intellectual experience of both the teachers and the students. The same is true for the sense of aesthetics, which plays a vital role in the life of a scientist. While ideas and concepts are often described as "beautiful" and "elegant", using the same adjectives to describe an experiment usually draws blank stares from the audience.

The problem is compounded by the lacklustre way experimental physics is taught in the colleges. Some point to the nature of the experiments; that they are antiquated, that they "do not work". Nothing can be further from the truth. Experiments have no business "working" by themselves; they need to be made to "work" by those who are working with them. The students need to be able to set them up from scratch and manipulate them beyond the narrowly prescribed methods. In other words, the experimentalist needs to "experiment" with the experiment. Students define a "good" experiment as one that requires minimal physical participation, is mostly a turnkey set-up completed according to specification, and yields the expected result. The "good" experiment,

therefore, has little to teach the student about experimental physics. Given the near total absence of the culture of "tinkering" in our homes, and that dirtying one's hand is relegated to a "lower" form of activity (the job of a "mistry"), this attitude is to be expected.

From my own student days, I recall various practices of dealing with "bad" experiments, such as entreating the previous batch of students working on the experiment to leave the set-up in the final data-taking stage, going through the motion of taking data, and, when all else fails, engaging in the time-honoured tradition of "back calculating" and producing fake data that give the right answer. Apart from the obvious ethical implications, these practices create a lifelong disaffection towards experimental physics. Communicating the real flavor of experimental science at its innovative best to students in this cultural milieu is a difficult task. Every practicing experimental physicist knows that experiments worth doing seldom "work" and those that do not work often have more instructional value than those that do. The joy of experimental physics lies in figuring out how to make the experiment reveal what is not obvious, an experience almost never felt by an undergraduate student in our colleges.

The truth is, today's students are tomorrow's teachers and researchers. Hence this tradition is perpetuated, each generation passing on its fears and prejudices to the next, thereby increasing the lack of both quality and balance not only in teaching but also in research. In the absence of significant experimental activities here, theorists must depend on experimental results obtained elsewhere in order to find problems to tackle, but only after their counterparts in those countries have staked their claim to the cream. Alternatively, they are forced to work in esoteric areas, where the playing field is supposedly more even, but with little immediate bearing on observable effects in nature. Experimentalists, who are products of the same system, are prone to acquiring, whenever possible, turnkey instruments built elsewhere. These instruments, much like the "good" experiments, work with little human intervention and are controlled these days by software whose source code is not available to the user either. Results appear on the computer screen at the touch of a button, results that are often "not even wrong" and matter little at the frontier of science. When the instrument fails, it is carefully repacked to be shipped to where it came from. After months it reappears having been "fixed" and the ritual of experimental physics begins again. Those exceptional souls who attempt to innovate or build their own or try things out of the ordinary, soon run



out of interested students who are afraid more of the long time needed in "bad" experiments than of not learning anything at all. The academic reward system, rarely anything more than a paper-counting exercise, then self-selects the "good" experiments as the desirable mode of work. The result is a long downhill journey for creative and innovative experimental physics as a viable and vibrant component of physics research and physics teaching. One wonders if we have, in effect, eliminated the possibility of producing another J.C. Bose or another Raman in today's world of "organised science" in our country.

How do we address this issue? I am told we need to fix the "system" first, whatever that may be and whomever that comprises. But we have neither the luxury nor the time. The crisis deepens every year; the interest of the gifted and the curious, who can make a difference, declines by the day.

What one needs is an alternative model in a select number of institutions across the country and a handful of individuals in each of these institutions who are willing to experiment at the edges without trying to fix the entire system first. The curriculum in the alternative model needs to be roughly equally divided between theory and experiment and the classroom teaching needs to be closely coordinated with what is taught by experimental demonstrations and by experiments performed in the laboratory by the students. No physics concept should be taught in an undergraduate class for which there is not a clear and palpable experimental demonstration. Laboratory experiments need to be designed so that students can "play" with them without the fear of being reprimanded. If they are broken, the students should be encouraged to try to fix them. Designing such experiments is not a difficult task; examples are available in the curricula of many educational institutions around the globe and can be read up on the web. The evaluation should be based on real performance of the students monitored during the experiment and not on the students' ability to find the "right" answer by hook or by crook. Any sign of an innovative experimental approach outside the prescription needs to be given the highest reward.

The laboratory experience has to be reinforced by classroom teaching. Theoretical concepts need to be taught within their proper historical context so that students understand the real nature of the progress of knowledge. Contact has to be made with experiments to be done in the laboratory and concepts need to be illustrated with appropriately illuminating demonstrations. Most

important of all, students need to be encouraged to explore their own interests and aptitudes and made to understand for themselves what they truly and honestly enjoy and not what they ought to enjoy in order to be regarded as "bright". Teachers have to repeatedly drive home to students that physics is primarily an experimental science and without a healthy culture of experimental work in the immediate environment, theory too does not progress. In order to succeed in this, the teachers have to be convinced themselves. They will also need to dispel the notion that the gifted need not dirty their hands by actually doing an experiment and actively stamp out that argument whenever it is raised.

Needless to say, such an overhaul of the curriculum and teaching methods is more feasible within the framework of a deemed university set-up that some of our best institutions seek and is indeed the *raison d'être* of such autonomy. An academic experiment – called the National Initiative of Undergraduate Sciences – began last year at the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research under the auspices of the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education. It is a nurture programme, covering all the natural sciences, for undergraduates including those who are now enrolled in engineering programmes across the country. It is an intensive course offered during the summer and winter holidays in the colleges. Practicing research scientists are collaborating with science educationists in designing and teaching these courses. Students enrolled in this programme will be given no degrees, no diplomas, no prizes, no certificates; nobody will pass or fail. Central to the programme is the development of a laboratory course designed to achieve what is outlined above. The programme will also develop teaching modules both for the classroom and the laboratory, which will be made available to anyone interested. This initiative is not meant to replace the "system" as a whole but is an effort to create a counter-example. One hopes a few institutions will respond positively to this initiative and participate by providing both dedicated teachers and motivated students, or will create their own versions of such a programme. The rest, one expects, will find flaws in the programme, argue why such attempts do not solve the problem at its core and predict that it is doomed to fail in its mission. These institutions will, therefore, continue in the comfort of a well-honed but failed programme for the foreseeable future.

One hopes Presidency College will be on the right side of this debate.

# দুটি অনুবাদ :

সমীর কুমার মুখোপাধ্যায়

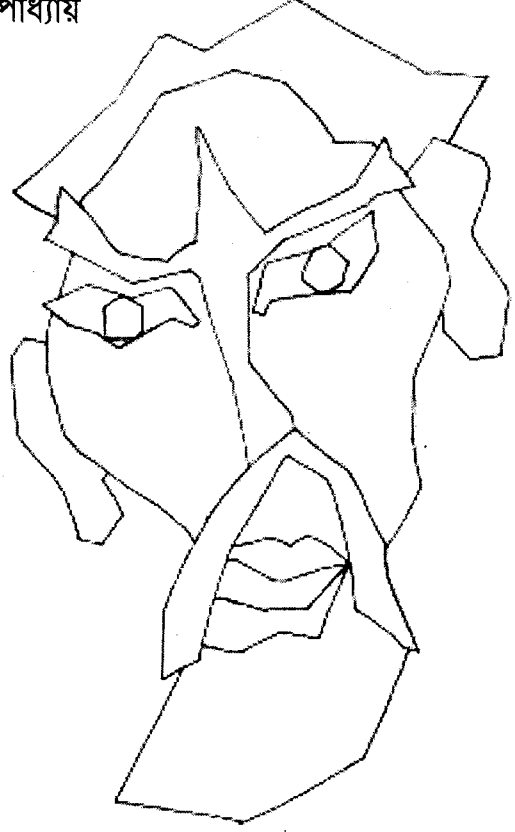
## পিয়ানো

ডি. এইচ. লরেন্স

শ্লিষ্টস্বরে অন্ধকারে এক রমণী শোনায় গান  
নিয়ে যায় করে পার অনেক অতীত বৎসর  
দৃশ্যে জাগে শিশু এক পিয়ানোর পাশে মুগ্ধপ্রাণ  
সুর ও সম্মোহন আনে সুহাস জননীর প্রিয় কণ্ঠস্বর।

আমাকে বিহ্বল ক'রে এ গানের আবেগ প্রবল  
নিয়ে চলে অতীত অপারে,  
আমার আত্মা কাঁদে ব্যাকুল সজল  
সে সকল রবিবার আবিষ্ট সঙ্ক্যার হাহাকারে।  
বাহিরে হিমের শ্রোত—  
ভিতরে স্তোত্রগান, বৈঠকী আলাপ, পথিকৃৎ সুরের সঙ্গত।

এ গায়িকার সাধ্য নেই উতরোলে ভেঙ্গে দেয় আজন্ম অধিকার  
কৃষ্ণকালো পিয়ানোর আবেগ কম্পন,  
শৈশবের হৃত আলো আনে জাগরণ  
ভেসে যায় পৌরুষ স্মৃতির বন্যায় চারিধার।  
অতীত শোকে চেতনা ঘোরে হৃদয়ে দূরগামী  
শিশুর মতো ককিয়ে উঠি আমি।



## একা

ফিলিপ লারকিন

এ সবেৰ ওপারে একা হওয়ার নিবিড় বাসনা।  
আকাশ যতই হোক গাঢ়, পাঠাক নিমন্ত্রণ  
যতই না মেনে চলি মুদ্রিত লিঙ্গ বিভাজন নির্দেশ  
যতই না পারিবারিক ছবি থাক দেয়ালেতে আশ্রয়  
এ সবেৰ ওপারে একা হওয়ার অপূৰ্ব আবেশ।

এ সবেৰ অতলে ছুটে চলে বিস্মৃতির নেশা  
কালপঞ্জীর সুকুশলী আততি অবহেলে  
জীবনবীমা, থরে থরে সাজানো সব উর্বর প্রথা  
মৃত্যু হতে ফিরানো সব মূল্যবান দৃষ্টির অনীহা  
বিস্মৃতির ইচ্ছা ফেরে এসবেৰ গভীর অতলে।



# Imperial Tool 'For' Nationalist Resistance : The 'Games Ethic' in Indian History

BORIA MAJUMDAR

The Indian public school was created out of a hotchpotch of Victorian motives – imperial calculation, ethnocentric self-confidence and well meaning benevolence. Even in its more socially restricted form, however, the early Indian public-school system provides a fascinating illustration of the cultural diffusion of an educational ethic arising out of imperial conquest. And, in only gently modified form, it has survived the imperialist.<sup>1</sup>

Sport in general, and football in particular, were important 'colonial technologies of conquest and rule', to borrow the phrase from Nicholas Dirks. Missionaries and teachers involved in integrating the game with the educational programmes of the schools opened by the British were very conscious of its power to transform bodies and minds. The game carried within it a moral order based on the ethics of commitment and dedication, of team spirit and the subjection of the individual to the demands of the group and valour and personal bravery. Colonized peoples were often portrayed as lacking just such attributes and thus football was seen as one method of introducing them to such desirable characteristics. Football was certainly one of those sports that were believed to be a stylized epitome of a moral order and the metaphoric essence of a cultured civilization. (However) an assessment of the impacts of these intentions and programmes is a different matter altogether...How far soccer actually taught 'fair play' and for how long the lessons of men such as Tyndale Biscoe have continued to be learnt are important issues for future research.<sup>2</sup>

Mangan, as much as anyone, has put forward a cogent case for the proselytizers in articles such as 'Eton in India', where he demonstrates that imperial diffusion of the games ethic was accompanied by the establishment of colleges such as Aitchison, Daly, Mayo and Rajkot. He is undoubtedly right to stress the 'eventual success of Macnaghten and his proselytizing successors in smoothly translating an education ethic from England to India', and to argue that the educational ethic 'in only gently modified form' survived the imperialist. However, for those who

look at – cricket and colonialism more 'from below', or from the perspective of the recipients of the games ideology, there are significant problems with the perspective that concentrates exclusively on the proselytizer. Where does the promoting hand of the colonial master stop and where does the adapting and assimilating indigenous tradition start? Is it merely adaptation and domestication or does it go beyond that to constitute resistance and even subversion?<sup>3</sup>

Mangan, for instance, has demonstrated that within the framework of the imperial college a significant number of pupils were impressed by the games ethic, and some of its leading graduates, notably Ranji, accepted enthusiastically both the games and the associated ideology. Mangan, however, would be the first to admit that four imperial colleges represent only a small part of the diffusion of the games ethic to Indian societies generally. So the question must be posed, even for 'historians from above', as to what happened to the games ethic outside these colleges – or what occurred when the 'converted' attempt to apply the games ethic outside the narrow arena of school or a similar institution where the ideology of games could be inculcated effectively. Even a cursory examination reveals that games and the games ethic were significantly adapted when they were taken out of the closed environment of the school to wider society with different values and demands.<sup>4</sup>

This essay contributes to this engaging discourse. That the colonial games ethic was in part adapted, adjusted and tailored to suit indigenous concerns is now accepted.<sup>5</sup> This point is well demonstrated by Mangan in the concluding section of his essay in *Soccer in South Asia*.<sup>6</sup> This essay, while accepting Cashman's contention that there are problems with an approach that concentrates exclusively on the proselytizer, demonstrates that it is not necessary on occasions to go beyond colonial academic institutions to understand the impact of the 'games ethic' on Indian society. Even within colonial academic institutions, as demonstrated in the subsequent sections of this essay the 'games ethic' was

successfully subverted for purposes of resistance. Products of the exported public school system, who in subsequent stages of their careers became students and teachers in other colonial educational institutions, took the lead in initiating this process of subversion. To that extent, the history of the origin and flowering of colonial sports in colonial academic institutions can be seen as part of a nationalist enterprise.

This study examines the sporting history of Presidency College, Calcutta,<sup>7</sup> one – of the premier academic institutions of colonial and postcolonial India, in trying to comment on the trajectory of the evolution and development of sporting practices in Bengal. Individuals influenced by the imperial curriculum who attached considerable importance to sporting practices played a leading role in the college's establishment in 1817. Sport, they realized, was key to character building. After the mutiny of 1857,<sup>8</sup> increased importance was attached to sport, which gradually became a means of challenging the colonizer. With the mutiny brutally suppressed, political action against the might of the colonial state was doomed to failure. As the Raj grew more secure than ever, it was time to devise new ways to challenge colonial superiority. Sport emerged as the arena where imperial supremacy was successfully challenged. Accordingly, it is natural that there is a stark contrast in the nature of sporting activity in the Presidency College of pre- and post-partition India. With nationalist resistance no longer an issue after independence, sports in the college gradually took a back seat from the 1950s. Students gave up sport for specialized academic training to contribute to matters of planning and development, issues that plagued a newly independent Indian nation state. Sport, which had played its part, gradually became inconsequential, hardly of significance in the life of the educated youth of independent Bengal. Considered frivolous, time spent on sporting activities was regarded as a waste, giving birth to the vernacular proverb 'Khele samay nashto koro na'. ('Do not waste your time playing'). This mentality finally underwent a change after India's triumph in the cricket World Cup in England in 1983.<sup>9</sup> Post-1983, cricket emerged as a viable career option for educated Bengali / Indian youth, evident from the flowering of numerous cricket academies and coaching clinics in and around Calcutta.<sup>10</sup> However, this transformation failed to generate any interest in cricket among the College's students. The 'Past versus Present' cricket match, a key event of the college's social calendar in the past, has attracted no more than a handful of students in recent years.<sup>11</sup> Continuing

antipathy towards sport in post-independence Presidency College, this essay argues, is the outcome of the absence of a nationalist agenda. With anti-colonial resistance no longer an issue, students of the college in post-independence India consider(ed) sport as an infringement upon their scholastic time.

This aversion explains why, in a history of the college written in the 1990s, sport finds no mention. This history, co-authored by two leading professors of the history department, dwelt upon the college's numerous activities while completely ignoring sports.<sup>12</sup>

### ORIGIN OF SPORT AT PRESIDENCY COLLEGE

Sporting activities at Presidency College started in 1856 when a Gymnasium was set up for the students.<sup>13</sup> However, it was soon closed down, to be opened again in 1879.<sup>14</sup> From this year, a regular gymnastics class was started with professional training being imparted to interested students. Students who attended the class not only went through ordinary gymnastic exercises but also played football and cricket. Around this time, Nagendraprasad Sarbadhikary, in collaboration with Professor Charles Henry Tawney of the college, took the initiative in organizing the Presidency College Corps, to train Indian students in rifle shooting.<sup>15</sup> He also took the lead in organizing the Annual Athletic Sports for the Indians in Calcutta from 1883 onwards.<sup>16</sup> Presidency students featured prominently in this annual competition. Under the superintendence of Professor Bipin Behari Gupta, college students set up a Cricket and Football Club in 1891.<sup>17</sup> Soon a suitable plot of ground on the maidan<sup>18</sup> was granted for their use, the outcome of an application made to Calcutta's Commissioner of Police.<sup>19</sup> In the same year, gymnastic exercises, earlier optional, were made compulsory for students for three days a week, unless their parents and guardians presented sufficient reasons for exemption.<sup>20</sup> The gymnastics class, the *College Register* published in 1928 asserts, had helped foster a spirit of camaraderie among students and had contributed to the formation of Athletic Clubs in the 1890s:

A spirit of comradeship among students being thus encouraged, athletic clubs, which hitherto rested on an unstable basis, came gradually to stay. In 1894 an Athletic Club was attached to the college, the Government granted annually the same amount of money as the students raised by subscription from amongst

themselves during the year. Students of the first year class were thereafter [1897] required to attend the gymnastic class regularly. Only those, who were physically unfit or had to come from a great distance were exempted. Subscription of 2 annas per month (or Re.1 – annas 8 annually) to the Athletic Club was also made compulsory for all students. They began to realize the advantages of physical education and with the consistent progress of the Athletic Club, it was possible in five years' time to purchase two large tents with the accumulated funds.<sup>21</sup>

Compulsory subscription was the result of the efforts of Professors Narendrakumar Basu, Satinath Roy and others.<sup>22</sup> Under their initiative, the college's first annual sports meet was held at the Calcutta maidan in 1900.<sup>23</sup> A playing ground, as suggested earlier, was also secured in the maidan, though it had to be given up during the Second World War.<sup>24</sup> By 1911 an athletics committee was in charge of all athletics activities. It consisted of captains, vice-captains, secretaries and class representatives, under the general guidance of a professor-treasurer. In 1933, Principal B.M. Sen set up a sports committee with himself as president.<sup>25</sup> The annual sports, reports published in the newspapers and college magazines attest, was a major affair with leading sporting patrons of the state present on most occasions.<sup>26</sup>

### SPORT AS MEANS OF NATIONALIST RESISTANCE

While it has been argued that the gymnastics class had helped foster a spirit of comradeship, that it did much more is not difficult to prove. The class was resumed in 1879, a year after the passing of the oppressive Vernacular Press Act.<sup>27</sup> In the 1880s, nationalist resistance in Bengal was gathering strength and in the absence of an armed uprising, the sporting field contributed in a large measure to challenging British supremacy. From the early years of the nineteenth century, the British had attempted to portray the Indian male as effete, a portrayal that had acquired a specific connotation by the late nineteenth century. By this time, it was directed almost exclusively at the educated Bengali middle classes.<sup>28</sup> Drawing upon Mrinalini Sinha's analysis of political controversies over the Ilbert Bill (1883-84), the Native Volunteer movement (1884-85), recruitment to the Public Service Commission (1886-87), and the age of consent controversy of 1891, it is clear that the charge of effeteness

continued to be directed against the Bengali middle classes well into the 1890s.<sup>29</sup> It is hardly surprising that the gymnastics class was made compulsory for all students of the college in 1891.<sup>30</sup> Rigorous physical exercise, it was thought, was a way to counter the British stereotyping of effeminacy. The move to playing cricket and football is not a coincidence either. The realization that the cultivation of masculine strength by participating in indigenous sports such as wrestling and bodybuilding were not enough prompted the shift to cricket and football. The futility of the physical culture movement, in evidence during the age of consent controversy,<sup>31</sup> in establishing the Bengali's physical strength vis-a-vis the British had made it imperative for the educated Bengali middle classes to practice manly colonial sports such as cricket, football and tennis.

It is not surprising therefore that the first decade and a half of the twentieth century was the golden age of the college's sporting history.<sup>32</sup> This was also the period of major nationalist resistance in Bengal. The Swadeshi movement, a concerted campaign against the partition of Bengal – which eventually led to its annulment in 1911 – and a phase of revolutionary terrorism marked the political life of Bengal of the period.<sup>33</sup> In the first decade of the twentieth century, when nationalist resistance was at its peak, the college won the Elliot Shield, the premier inter-college soccer tournament for five years in succession (1904-8).<sup>34</sup> In 1912, all major inter-college football competitions were won by the college.<sup>35</sup>

The importance given to sporting activity is evident from the detailed reports published in the college magazines soon after the publication of the first edition in 1914. Early magazines carried detailed match reports, hardly ever seen in college magazines of the post-independence period. For instance, the Elliot Shield final between Presidency College and Medical College was reported thus:

The day of the final dawned and there was no sign of the weather clearing up. This was unfavourable to the chance of Presidency College, because the Medicals play better on a wet ground. As the day advanced there was not much sign of rain and this inspired some little hope into the hearts of the supporters of Presidency College.

The game started late as two of the medical players did not reach the ground on time. Presidency won the toss and decided to defend the Southern goal. The whistle blew and B. Ghose kicked off for the Medicals. From the start, our opponents took the aggressive, and S. Bose ran

down the line and centred, but the shot proved abortive. The Medicals continued the pressure and were on the point of scoring, when Radhanath saved brilliantly though at the expense of a corner. The corner, shot by S. Chatterjee was a marvellous one but Mukherjee fisted it out. This opening did not promise well for Presidency College's chances. Presidency, however, rallied and quickly took the lead. Some up and down play followed and then the Medicals broke through and S. Bose after a fine individual run centred cleverly, but failed to score. Presidency replied to this with a combined rush of the centre and wings, and after some net passing between J. Dutt and D. Das, Anam sent in a low angular shot and scored amidst loud cheers. Two minutes later the whistle blew for half time.

After ends were changed, the Presidency forwards, who were much encouraged at their success, were playing a sound game and an individual run by P. Roy was much applauded. The Medicals tried hard to take the offensive but our centre half J. Sanyal and our back Banerjee, who were all along playing in brilliant style, were not to be beaten. When there was only ten minutes left for the game to close, our captain thought it wise to strengthen the defence. The Medicals none the less broke through and B. Ghose tried a good hard shot at goal, which Mukherji saved in equally good style. Presidency College was again pressing when the final whistle blew, leaving them the winners of the Elliot Shield the eighth time. For the winners, J. Sanyal, U. Bannerjee and G. Mukherji played well, while S. Bose of the Medicals was decidedly the best forward on the field. The Shield and the medals were then presented to the Captain and the players of the winning team by the Persian Consul.<sup>36</sup>

Even friendly matches were reported in detail. The college had once made a journey to Krishnanagar to play a game with a local college. The match, it was later reported, was watched by a large number of spectators and had generated considerable enthusiasm among the residents of the area. This encounter, hardly one of significance, was described in detail in the magazine.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that while the college magazines described in detail the performances of the college in football, cricket and tennis, other indigenous sports such as wrestling hardly found a mention.<sup>38</sup> Special care was always taken to mention worthy performances against European teams and individuals. Even when ex-students performed creditably against leading European sides their feat was lauded in the college

magazines. The reports published on the college's soccer, cricket and tennis history in the centenary volume of the college magazine bears testimony to this point.<sup>39</sup>

## BRIEF HISTORIES OF EUROPEAN SPORTS AT PRESIDENCY COLLEGE

### Football

'The first fifteen years of the present century constitute the great period of college football. By 1914 the Elliot Shield had been won eight times including five consecutive wins from 1904 to 1908.<sup>40</sup> In 1914 the college won the Hardinge Shield for the first time and in 1915 the college eleven 'held the famous 10th Middlesex regiment to a draw'.<sup>41</sup> In 1918, Presidency won the six-a-side Cossipore Shield by beating Kumartuli in the final and followed this up by winning the Hugli Gladstone Cup. The college won the inter-collegiate league in 1928, besides winning the Hardinge Shield again that year. When two of the college's students played for the Mohammedan Sporting Club in the 1930s, it was a matter of great pride.<sup>42</sup> Their performances for Mohammedan Sporting, winning five straight league titles by defeating leading European sides, was perceived by the students of the college to be a major nationalist triumph.

### Cricket

The first cricket match described in detail in the college magazine is one against the all-European Calcutta Cricket Club played at the Eden Gardens. 'In 1907 in an exciting match, Sri P.C. Ray tells us, the College defeated the formidable Calcutta Cricket Club at the Eden Gardens by one wicket. Debendra Lahiri scored 90 not out, a remarkable performance for those days.<sup>43</sup> This was a historic triumph and was reported in vernacular journals of the period. The college secured the double in 1912/13 winning the Lansdowne and Harisson Shields. In 1914/15 and 1916/17 they drew against the Calcutta Cricket Club, a feat that attracted considerable attention.<sup>44</sup> However, when Presidency lost to the all-European La Martiniere College in 1914, players were severely criticized.<sup>45</sup> These strong words are enough to draw our attention to the importance attached to winning at the College, more so against European academic institutions:

But the big defeat of the college team by La Martiniere College cannot be forgiven. The conduct of some of the players on that day was anything but sportsmanlike. The game was supposed to

commence at 11 o'clock punctually, but after the toss there were only four or five players present. The result, of course, was a foregone conclusion; a lost match and a loss of prestige for the college team.<sup>46</sup>

It is striking to note that in almost every year the annual report of the cricket season in the college magazine included detailed comments on matches against the Calcutta Cricket Club. Even when the report is a relatively smaller one in comparison to other years, the match is never left unmentioned. The 1928 cricket report, a comparatively small one, went thus:

We have had very strong fixtures this season. Up to this date games have mostly been drawn ones, including the games with HE Governor's XI and with the Calcutta CC. These games drew admiration from the local press for our team. Our performance was also highly praised by His Excellency the Governor and Hon. Lady Jackson as well as by other distinguished visitors. Ardhendu Das's brilliant 56 not out attracted the notice of distant papers like the *Times of India* of Bombay. Ardhendu Das and Bishnu Sarkar (Captain) have been honored by His Excellency's invitation to play for his team against the Anglo-Indians. HE the Governor told the Captain that he would ask Messrs Lagden, Hosie, Lee and others of the Calcutta Cricket Club to coach our players from the next season.<sup>47</sup>

In 1929, when the cricket report was an even smaller one, the college's performance against the Calcutta Cricket Club and the Governor's XI was described in detail:

We had a very strong fixture this session. The games have mostly been drawn including the games with HE the Governors XI and with the Calcutta CC. Our captain, Mr B Sirkar and Mr Ardhendu Das deserve special mention; as they were included in His Excellency's cricket team, an honour which comes rarely to few players of Bengal.<sup>48</sup>

In fact, the match against the Calcutta Cricket Club was the central attraction of the college's cricket season and its temporary discontinuance in the early 1930s resulted in a decline in interest in the college's cricket fixtures. The Cricket Secretary's report in 1934 draws attention this fact:

It must be added that efforts must be made to improve the standard of our fixtures and renew the traditional match against the Calcutta CC. This, I am sure, will lend more fillip to our cricket and we

can look forward to a still better season than what we had just had.<sup>49</sup>

As this match was not revived, interest in cricket waned persistently and rowing, tennis and basketball gradually replaced cricket as the college's foremost sporting activities. Football, however, retained its place thanks to the performances of Abbas Mirza and Rashid Ahmed for Mohammedan Sporting. The college magazine described the 1936 football season thus: 'Our football season ended with a dinner party held in honour of two of our players, Messrs Abbas Mirza and Rashid Ahmed for their brilliant achievement in securing the 'A' division football league and the IFA Shield in the same year on behalf of the Mohammedan Sporting Club.'<sup>50</sup>

### Tennis

Students actively took up tennis from the second decade of the twentieth century. A patent-stone court in the college grounds was secured in 1914 and by the next year two lawn courts were ready. The college won the Duke Cup in 1916, 1917, 1919 and again in 1927. In 1939/40 the college won the inter-collegiate lawn and hard court championships.<sup>51</sup> In the 1920s, P.L. Mehta brought great renown to the college. Between 1924 and 1929, he figured in nine great finals and was All-India champion in 1929. In 1928, he was selected to represent India in the Davis Cup. Dilip Bose, another Presidencian, emulated Mehta's feat and was chosen to represent India in the Davis Cup in 1939.<sup>52</sup> He was also the first Indian to be seeded at Wimbledon.

Reports in the college magazines demonstrate that even when the college students played against European members of the staff the matches generated considerable excitement. This was because the students were, on most occasions, determined to get the better of their professors. Commenting on the match between the European Staff and Students in the college magazine, the Tennis Secretary declared:

Really I cannot guess what it was that attracted the greatest book worms I have ever seen to witness a match. There was a gentleman with a scholarly air about him who could not understand why on earth the net was placed in the middle of the court or why the players constantly changed positions! Another interesting feature of the match of the day was the presence of a large number of professors (they are so scarce on the field of sports here) on the field... The games of the second set were of a more interesting character for

now the strongest professorial combination was pitted against the strongest students' pair – Messrs Wordsworth and Sterling meeting Messrs Chakrabarty and Law. It was a treat to see these determined pairs beat each other down. The brilliant flashes of Mr Chakrabarty were greatly admired, while his partner Mr Law proved to be a very sturdy opponent indeed. There was complete understanding between them and therein lies the secret of their fine show. However, they had a very strong pair to beat. The Principal worked very hard throughout, while Mr Sterling with his long hand shots defended the back line well. But in the end superior skill and tactics prevailed and Chakrabarty and Law went away victors much to the delight of the students.<sup>53</sup>

Given the importance attached to these colonial sports, it is not surprising that the college produced many of Bengal's leading cricketers, footballers and tennis stars in pre-partition India. Kanu Ray, a key member of the team that won the Elliot Shield five times in a row, was also a key member of the Mohun Bagan side that won the IFA Shield defeating the East Yorkshire Regiment in 1911.<sup>54</sup> Other footballers, too, secured great distinction in the 1930s while still at college. In 1933, Nassim and Abbas were in the Varsity XI and Nassim was selected for the Indian side to tour South Africa.<sup>55</sup> Three college students were in the University XI in 1934. In 1936/37, Abbas Mirza and Rashid Ahmed led Mohammedan Sporting to victory in the Calcutta League and finally in 1941/42 Nirmal Chatterjee was included in the Bengal XI against the Rest and was subsequently included in the All-India XI.<sup>56</sup>

Interestingly many of the famous footballers of the 1904-8 period also won distinction as cricketers. The likes of Purna Ray, Kanu Ray, Jitendra Mukhopadhyay, Praphulla Bandyopadhyay, Kshetrapda Basu and Sudhir Ray showed prowess in both, cricket and football.<sup>57</sup> Purna Ray was a favourite of Maharaja Jagadindranarayan Ray of Natore and played with distinction against the Natore side, which included in its ranks leading Indian players such as Baloo, Vithal, Semper and others.<sup>58</sup> Sailaja Ray of the college was a leading sporting patron of the state and was a key member of the Bengal Gymkhana founded in 1910. P.B. Dutta and Nirmal Chatterjee played for Bengal with distinction in the Ranji Trophy, the national championship for cricket in India instituted in 1934.

## RESISTANCE FROM WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED CONFINES OF THE GAMES ETHIC

"How far can the colonial acceptance of cricket be seen as superior colonial salesmanship or a successful exercise of social control using the highly developed and subtle ideology of games and colonialism? Or was it that many colonial subjects chose to pursue a game, because of the ideology, or even in spite of it, because it suited them to take up cricket for their own reasons? Or was the ideology of colonialism the starting point for the adoption of cricket but once the game was launched other factors came to bear which led to its spread and consolidation."<sup>59</sup>

Having asked these pertinent questions, Cashman goes on to declare that to find out the complete story of what actually happened to the 'games ethic' in course of time, we need to step out of the bounds of colonial academic institutions. While earlier sections have tried to expose the problems with this view, the following section will demonstrate that even when colonial subjects, men who were products of the public school system, openly advocated the merits of the 'games ethic' they were using it for purposes of resistance. This was a two-pronged strategy. On the surface, it demonstrated to the colonial masters that the 'games ethic' was a successful imperial tool, and that their subjects were advocating the virtues of fair play and sportsmanship, something the colonial state badly wanted. Accordingly, British administrators hardly ever thought of suspending sports promotion in colonial academic institutions. Rather, on many occasions the colonial masters took the lead in providing equipment, necessary infrastructure and funding so that sporting activities could flourish. This explains Principal Edwards's<sup>60</sup> direct involvement with the college's sporting activities:

Our cricket season was a fairly successful one and the college thanks all those who lent a hand in making it what it was. To our Principal, above all, our thanks must first go out because of his keen interest and sympathetic co-operation. By his occasional participation and continual care he has infused new life into every department of our athletics as in every other branch of college activities. It is exhilarating to find that the ground adjoining the Baker laboratory is now perfectly fit for use and indeed has been regularly and perfectly utilized by our sportsmen.<sup>61</sup>

It needs to be mentioned that having imported cricket, football and other sports to

discipline the colonial subjects, colonialists necessarily needed to look upon native sporting prowess as symbolic of the success of the imperial agenda. The suggestion that native success on the sporting field could bring in its wake a nationalist resurgence was peremptorily dismissed. This may have been prompted by an underlying realization and consequent apprehension that sport had the potential to stir up a national resurgence in the colonies; and imperialists did their best to blunt this potential. More than the reasons and significance of a native victory, what was emphasized was the harmony and sporting spirit evinced by rival teams following the contest. That the spirit of the celebrations never went beyond the acceptable norms associated with sport was touted as a success of the colonial enterprise.<sup>62</sup>

Taking advantage of the situation, colonial subjects, while claiming that winning or losing hardly mattered, simultaneously emphasized the belief that to lose through lack of resolution and energy was deplorable. In his report on the working of the Athletic Club in 1913/14, the athletics Secretary declared:

The annual report of the Athletic Club for the year 1913-14, though not very cheerful reading, furnishes grounds for reflection on matters, which demand the earnest and immediate attention of everyone interested in college athletics. That the athletic club is far from realizing its mission of providing for the adequate physical culture of our students and for inculcating the true spirit of sport among them is admitted on all hands. Failure in this direction may be due either to want of proper facilities or to incapacity to turning them to proper account... Defeats in themselves are not discreditable, for it is really a small matter whether a college wins or loses provided it wins or loses well. To win all inter-collegiate trophies in football and cricket in one year, as for example in 1912-13, is a brilliant achievement of which we may be proud. But to lose all the trophies in the next year simply through lack of resolution and energy is indeed deplorable and is a sad commentary on the patriotism of our men, who it has been said, were never willing to play or practise when an attractive cup match of the type which has become so frequent in Calcutta of late years was taking place.<sup>63</sup>

Finally, he went on to assert that 'True sportsmen do not attach much importance to victory or defeat in competition matches, but inglorious defeat through lack of practice, failure of members to play when requested, and above all through internal dissensions is quite another thing

and cannot be connived at or condoned on any consideration whatsoever.'<sup>64</sup>

These descriptions demonstrate that the educated Indian subjects hail successfully utilized the 'games ethic' to suit their nationalist needs. In fact, it would not be wrong to assert that the 'games ethic' was their only available means of resistance, opposition that did not incur the wrath of the colonial state. Belief instilled on the sporting field, that the Indians could defeat the British, contributed in no small measure to challenging British superiority in the political realm.

That the educated Indians had successfully utilized the 'games ethic' by openly advocating its virtues is evident from Tony Mason's interpretation of the Mohun Bagan victory in 1911. Commenting on this victory, Mason asserts that while it was clearly indicative of native sporting prowess in a colonial sport, it was also reflective of the success of the imperial mission behind promoting these sports in the colonies. He sees the victory as a success story of 'cultural imperialism',<sup>65</sup> a fruition of the colonial endeavour in spreading to the colony sports deemed essential for character-building in Britain. That it was symbolic of a nationalist awakening against colonial policies and practices hardly finds mention in the writings of Mason.<sup>66</sup> Such understanding would, however, undergo a radical revision when vernacular sources are referred to.<sup>67</sup>

In fact, the notion that a triumph against the English on the sporting field had the potential to inspire similar feats in other arenas of the state and politics has hardly merited consideration in European writings on Indian sport, clearly indicative of the success of the strategy of covert resistance from within the confines of the 'games ethic'.

### SPORTS IN POST-PARTITION PRESIDENCY

In contrast to the college magazines of the pre-independence period, which carried detailed reports on the college's sporting activities, magazines of the post-independence period hardly attach any importance to sport. Sports reports are often absent in these magazines, and even when sporting activities are written about they are mentioned briefly.

By the 1950s, cricket at Presidency, hardly written about in the college magazines of the period, was virtually dead.<sup>68</sup> Compared to full cricket seasons in pre-partition India, where the college played an average of 25 to 30 matches, in 1952 Presidency played four friendly matches.<sup>69</sup> Football too suffered a decline. The college never



once won the Elliot Shield after independence and on many occasions failed to field a team in the competition.

Even the renewed interest in cricket in Bengal after India's World Cup triumph in 1983 hardly made a difference to cricket at Presidency College, making this aversion worthy of study. Even today there is no talk of introducing a sports quota in the college and sporting activities at Presidency remain confined to a minuscule minority.

When I was student at the college between 1994 and 1997, tickets allotted to Presidency by the Cricket Association of Bengal during key cricket encounters at the Eden Gardens were often used as instruments of electoral propaganda. Instead of those who represented the college in the inter-college competitions, tickets were distributed to those who would vote for the ruling party in the annual college union elections. The post of sports secretary, once adorned by stalwarts such as Nirmal Chatterjee, is often given to one with little or no interest in sport. A recent sports secretary of the college, when asked how many bails there are on the three stumps, confidently answered 'three'. His explanation was that 'as there are three wickets so there ought to be three bails'. While watching India play Pakistan at the Eden Gardens in 1998/99, in one of the most thrilling test matches of recent years, the college's sports secretary was caught napping. Asked how much of the contest he had watched, he honestly confessed that he had seen very little of it. The Past versus Present match, which generated great excitement until the 1960s, has been watched by a handful in recent years. Students who are present at the college ground while the match is played, in January, are there to enjoy the pleasant winter sun. The cricket going on at the ground has little or no significance for them. In 1998/99, there were exactly eight students on the ground watching the proceedings. There was another group of six present (including me) but they were busy making plans for the annual college festival, Milieu, usually held in the last week of January.

With nationalist resistance no longer an issue from the 1950s, sport in Presidency College has died a slow death. It had certainly played its part in pre-independence India, but with independence bringing in its wake other no less tangible concerns before the students of the college, modern-day Presidencians are keen to develop specialized skills – knowledge that will enable them to contribute to the challenges confronting the modern Indian nation. Sport hardly

matters, best evinced from the lack of protest against a history of the college that has no mention of sport.

#### NOTES

1. J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001) p141.
2. J.A. Mangan, 'Soccer as Moral Training: Missionary Intention and Imperial Legacies', in Paul Dimeo and James Mills (eds.), *Soccer in South Asia: Empire, Nation, Diaspora* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2001), pp41-56.
3. Richard Cashman, 'Cricket and Colonialisation: Colonial Hegemony and Indigenous Subversion', in J.A. Mangan (ed.), *Pleasure, Profit, Proselytism: British Culture and Sport at Home and Abroad, 1700-1914* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), pp.260-1
4. *Ibid.*, pp.263-4
5. For a fascinating study of how the games ethic was appropriated see, C. I. R. James, *Beyond a Boundary* (London: Stanley Paul, 1963).
6. J. A. Mangan, 'Soccer as Moral Training' in Dimeo and Mills, *Soccer in Asia*, pp.41-56; Also see Mangan, 'Series Editor's Foreword' in *ibid.*, p.xiii.
7. Still regarded as one of the best institutions of the country. The college was established as the Hindu College in 1817. Rammohan Roy, David Hare and Gupimohan Tagore were instrumental in the college's establishment.
8. Regarded by some historians as the first concerted struggle for India's independence. Others call it a mutiny of 'sepoys', i.e. soldiers.
9. India's unexpected victory against the West Indies in the final of the Prudential Cup at Lords in 1983 is justifiably regarded as a watershed in the history of Indian cricket.
10. Currently there are more than 50 cricket coaching centres in Calcutta itself. Many former players are now engaged as coaches in these centres, which parallel in popularity the leading academic institutions of the city.
11. Rather than the cricket, this match has increasingly become an occasion where some of the past students can meet their successors. It is played in January during founders' week.
12. Rajat Kanta Ray, Subhas Chakraborty and Benjamin Zachariah, 'History of Presidency College', in Mushirul Hasan (ed.) *Knowledge, Power and Politics - Educational Institutions in India* (Delhi: Roli Books, 1999), pp.302-88.
13. *Presidency College Centenary Volume* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1955), p.191.
14. *Presidency College Register* (Calcutta: Presidency College, 1928), pp.27-8.
15. Saurindra Kumar Ghosh, *Krida Samrat Nagendra Prasad Sarbadhikary 1869-1940* (Calcutta: 1964),



- p.165.
16. Ibid., p.122
  17. Presidency College Register, pp.27-28
  18. Term used to describe a sporting field. The Calcutta maidan is the vast expanse of land used for sporting activities in Central Calcutta. Most of this belongs to the military.
  19. Presidency College Register, pp.27-28
  20. Ibid., pp.30-31
  21. Ibid.
  22. Presidency College Centenary Volume , p.191.
  23. Ibid.
  24. Ibid.
  25. Ibid.
  26. Reports of the sports in the college were published in leading dailies such as the Amrita Bazar Patrika, Anandabazar Patrika and The Statesman. Leading sports patrons of the state such as the Maharaja of Santosh often attended this annual event as chief guest.
  27. The Vernacular Press Act , passed in 1878 by Lord Lytton , was one in a series of oppressive acts passed by the colonial state to curb nationalist tendencies among the Indians, another being the Arms Act. Under the terms of the Vernacular Press Act the freedom of the press was seriously threatened.
  28. John Roselli, 'Self Image of Effeteness: Physical Education and Nationalism in Nineteenth Century Bengal', Past and Present, 86 (February 1980), 121-48. Also see Mrinalini Sinha, Colonial Masculinity, The Manly Englishman and the Effeminate Bengali in the Late Nineteenth Century (Manchester : Manchester University Press, 1995).
  29. Ibid.
  30. Presidency College Register, p.27.
  31. Sinha, Colonial Masculinity.
  32. For details, see Presidency College Centenary Volume, pp.191-202; Presidency College Register, pp.27-32
  33. For details on the political climate of Bengal in the first decade of the twentieth century, see Sumit Sarkar, Swadeshi Movement in Bengal - 1903-1908 (New Delhi: Peoples Publishing House, 1973).
  34. Presidency College Centenary Volume, pp.191-202.
  35. Ibid.
  36. Presidency College Magazine, 1914/15, 57-58.
  37. Ibid., pp. 58-59.
  38. This is a feature of the college magazines of pre-independence India.
  39. Presidency College Centenary Volume, pp. 191-202.
  40. Ibid., pp. 195-6.
  41. Ibid.
  42. Ibid.
  43. Ibid., p.197.
  44. Ibid.
  45. Presidency College Magazine, 1914/15, 296.
  46. Ibid.
  47. Presidency College Magazine, 1928, 185.
  48. Presidency College Magazine, 1929, 91.
  49. Presidency College Magazine, 1934, 286.
  50. Ibid., 168.
  51. Presidency College Centenary Volume, pp.198-9.
  52. Ibid.
  53. Presidency College Magazine, 1916/17, 242-43.
  54. This victory is often erroneously regarded as the first major triumph of an Indian team against the British. Sovabazar Club had achieved this feat in 1892.
  55. Presidency College Centenary Volume, pp.191-202.
  56. Ibid.
  57. Ibid.
  58. For details, see Jagadindranath Roy and Prabhatkumar Mukhopadhyay (eds.), Manasi o Marmabani (Calcutta, 1925/26).
  59. Cashman, 'Cricket and Colonialism', p.261.
  60. Principal of Presidency College between 1899-1903 and again 1913-1916. However, on both occasions he was away on a number of occasions when others deputised for him.
  61. Presidency College Magazine, 1916/17, 294-6.
  62. Tony Mason , 'Football on the Maidan', in J.A. Mangan (ed.), The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society (London: Frank Cass, 1992), pp.142-54.
  63. Presidency College Magazine, 1913/14, 118-19.
  64. Ibid.
  65. Mason, 'Football on the Maidan'.
  66. Ibid.
  67. For details, see Boria Majumdar, 'The Vernacular in Sports History', The International Journal of the History of Sport, 20, 1.
  68. From the 1950s onwards, even when the college magazines mention cricket , such references are extremely brief, often restricted to a couple of lines.
  69. Presidency College Magazine, 1952, 32.

# A bit faster, brother

SUBHASH MUKHOPADHYAY

*Translated by Abhijit Dutta*

I

Every beginning has an end; every end has  
a beginning.

Like a pair of snakes, entangled into one another,  
Like a flood containing silt and silt containing flood

The point is how does one see, when and  
from where.

Is it the seed lying in a piece of grain culminating into  
infinite grains? Or, is it the grains  
mixed with the baits of petty coins that are thrown  
in front of a cot, resting on shoulders?

Is it liberty in future, or is it the end now?  
Is it a flare-up in a flash, or  
a sudden blow out?

Kiss of fire, or a gust of wind?

I would say, let it be, let it be as it is –  
some day life will recover all the debts with the  
impressions of ten fingers.

In fact, that is a cliché, a pretty common one,  
For example, one of us used to say

The office head had said, I am leaving  
I said, the office head had said,  
You will say the last words.

I keep telling  
and telling  
foam came out from my mouth  
Now I hear the office head has another head  
over him  
Nothing will come out unless you raise it a bit more.

II

In our local streets,  
do not mention it mister,  
twisting hunger throughout the year  
grabs our feet once we step out.  
And so disobedient, what should I say.  
To whomsoever I say, stand up –  
he lies down straight.

Does not get up any more.

Sunlight enters through the railings of the window  
dressed in the robes of a hospital patient.  
Turning aside, I see  
the morning newspaper lying down on the floor.  
I saw a man yesterday – about the age of  
my son – in a second-class tram compartment  
In my heart, I was shell-shocked.  
Feeling sleepy throughout  
he was returning from his job.  
The corner of his eye, tip of his nose,  
slimy lips,  
the palm below his dirty nails  
all were white like a paper.

I can get the paper if I reach out.  
I do not feel like it at all –  
Since I would see a dead mother floating in the  
flood water

holding a dead child to her chest  
side by side  
perhaps

three corpses are  
chattering it hot  
if one says, rain  
then another claims drought  
together they conspire  
to make the third rot

Or

with a headband and a string around  
the neck  
acts like a buffoon  
chips in comments, self-styled chieftain  
a religious goon

flatters all around, is otherwise a turncoat  
just for a fortune  
asks everyone tell me my man,  
I am for whom?

Just now, I can make a paper boat and float it in  
the street

or light up a fire if there is no water.  
But that will not discard these people.  
Only the curtain will drop between us, and from  
behind that cover  
with some changes in their names and dresses  
and flags  
either cropping their hair short, or painting  
them white  
The same people will come out in the next scene  
with absolute command.

The chains are rattling inside the head  
while clapping,  
the white paws covered in black gloves in daylight  
are drawing out their sharp claws in the darkness  
the jobless boys, blindly,  
having nothing else to do  
are burning their  
Useless hands.  
Clouds are gathering in the sky

Not seeing the pole-star some people are feeling  
uncertain in stepping out of their rooms.

I do possess an age-old compass  
my heart.

I am continually going in and out  
to hand it over to some stranger.

### III

We have kept Lenin standing at Dharmatala  
beside the tram-shade.

A group of people eating rice  
bit-by-bit picking it up from the dustbin.

Lenin is watching.

A man from a village came to the city to become a  
pauper visiting doctors  
but he was robbed off beforehand  
by a pickpocket.

Lenin is watching.

The girl who was picked up in the afternoon  
by a taxi,  
once again she has come back in the evening  
standing below the tree yawning.

Lenin is watching.

Lenin, while standing all the time, felt like yawning.

All on a sudden, I saw him straightening up a bit.

Looking in the direction of his sight, I saw  
a huge procession of workers bearing red flags  
Approaching.

I felt as if Lenin was shouting,

The century is drawing to an end –  
a bit faster, brother, a bit faster.

# প্রাচীন ভারতীয় সাহিত্যে নৃত্যপ্রসঙ্গ: একটি খোঁজ

কবিতা চন্দ

(এক)

সাহিত্য ও নৃত্য। আপাতভাবে দুটি ভিন্নধারার শিল্প সম্পর্কে প্রাচীনকাল থেকেই ভারতবাসীরা সচেতন ছিলেন। ভারতীয় পুরাণে সকল কলাবিদ্যা ও জ্ঞানের অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেবী হলেন সরস্বতী। পুরাণোক্তর যুগে ‘নাট্যশাস্ত্র’-কার ভরত চারুকলার মধ্যে পৃথকভাবে কেবল নৃত্যকলাটির দ্বিতীয় একজন অধিষ্ঠাতার নাম উল্লেখ করলেন। তিনি নটরাজ শিব। যিনি জানালেন, ‘ময়াপীদং স্মৃতং নৃত্যং সন্ধ্যাকালেষু নৃত্যত’।<sup>১</sup> অর্থাৎ সন্ধ্যাকালে আমি এই নৃত্য স্মরণ করলাম। শিবনৃত্য পুরাণস্বীকৃত প্রসঙ্গ। কিন্তু ভারতীয় নৃত্যের সূক্ষ্মাতিসূক্ষ্ম ভাগ ও বিজ্ঞানসম্মত প্রয়োগকলার প্রচালক হিসেবে শিবের পৃথক স্থান-নির্ধারণ করে দিলেন ভরত-ই প্রথম। এক্ষেত্রে লক্ষ্যণীয় যে শিব বা সরস্বতী কেউ-ই এই শিল্পটির স্রষ্টা নন। অধিষ্ঠাতা, অর্থাৎ নিয়ন্ত্রক মাত্র। শুধু শিল্প কেন ভারতের আদি সাহিত্য বেদও সেই অর্থ অপৌরুষেয়। এর থেকে অনুমান করা যায় যে, যে কালে মানুষের মনুষ্যত্বের উন্মেষ হয়েছে সে কাল থেকে মানুষ একই সঙ্গে শিল্প ও সাহিত্যকে আপনার মধ্যে অনুভব করে প্রকাশবেদনায় তড়িত হয়েছে, এবং সেই প্রকাশের আনন্দকে দেবতার হাতে সমর্পণ করে নিজেকে ধন্য মেনেছে। ভারতীয় শিল্প ও সাহিত্য এই সূত্রে প্রথমাবধি ধর্মসম্পৃক্ত হয়েই আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছে।

প্রাচীন গ্রীক ভাবনাতে দেখেছি শিল্প ও সাহিত্যে সবই যেন কোন জন্মান্তরের সঞ্চিত-স্মৃতি-জাত। এই ধারণাতে স্মৃতিদেবী নিমোজিনী (Mnemosyné)-ই এসবের মূলে। তাঁর ন’টি মিউজ-কন্যা গ্রীক সাহিত্য ও কলার ধারক এবং বাহক। এর মধ্যে এককভাবে দেবী টার্পসিকিউর (Terpsichore) আবার নৃত্য ও কাব্যসাহিত্য দুয়েরই অধিষ্ঠাত্রী।<sup>২</sup> ভারতীয় ভাবনায় এইভাবে যুগলকলার দায়িত্ব একা সরস্বতীর উপর ন্যস্ত হয় নি, নটরাজ শিবও নৃত্য ও ভাষার অন্তর্গত বর্ণমালার সঙ্গে যুক্ত। তিনিই বর্ণমালার উদ্ভাবক, -বলেছেন নন্দিকেশ্বর তাঁর ‘কাশিকা’-য়।

‘কাশিকা’ অধুনালুপ্ত। ‘কাশিকা’-কার নন্দিকেশ্বরের প্রাচীনতা নিয়ে নানা মূনির নানা মত প্রচলিত আছে। কেউ বলেছেন ইন্দ্রকে নৃত্যশিক্ষা দেওয়ার জন্য তিনি ভারতীয় নৃত্যের বিশাল গুরুভার থেকে নির্বাচিত অংশ নিয়ে নাকি ‘অভিনয়দর্পণ’ রচনা করেছেন। কেউ বলেছেন তিনি শিব অনুচর। কেউ বা তাঁকে বলেছেন ভরতগুরু। বর্ণ সম্পর্কে তাঁর লিখিত শ্লোকটি এই রকম-

“নৃত্যবাসানে নটরাজরাজো ননাদ ঢক্কা নবপঞ্চবারম্  
উদ্ধতকামঃ সনকাদি সিদ্ধান এতাদ্বিমর্শে শিবসূত্রজালম্।”

এই শ্লোকটির প্রবেশক-ব্যাখ্যাতা আমাদের জানিয়েছেন যে, নটরাজ মহাদেব কনক সনৎকুমার প্রভৃতি সিদ্ধগণকে উদ্ধার করার

অভিপ্রায়ে নৃত্য শেষ হলে নবপঞ্চবার অর্থাৎ চতুর্দশবার ডমরু বাজিয়েছিলেন। শ্লোকটির সমাপ্তি অংশে ‘মহেশ্বররানিসূত্রার্থনাদি’ থাকায় ব্যাকরণবিদদের ধারণা যে নটরাজের ডমরুধ্বনি থেকে ‘অইউন’ ‘ঋ ৯ ক্’ ইত্যাদি চোদ্দটি বর্ণসূত্রের আবির্ভাব হয়েছে।<sup>৩</sup>

প্রাচ্য ও পাশ্চাত্য দুটি দেশের প্রাচীন ধারণাতে দুটি পৃথক বিষয়ের একই অধিদেবতা থাকতে স্বভাবতই প্রশ্ন জাগে এ দুটি বিষয়ের অন্তর্নিহিত মিল-অনুভূতির স্বরূপ কি? উত্তর খুঁজে পাওয়া যায় দুটির নন্দনতত্ত্ব প্রকাশলক্ষণে। প্রকৃতপক্ষে সব রকমের শিল্পের মধ্যে শুধু নৃত্য ও সাহিত্যেই চলমান জীবনসম্পন্দন ধারাবাহিক ভাবে প্রকাশ সম্ভব। স্থাপত্যে, ভাস্কর্যে, চিত্রকলায় এমন কি সঙ্গীতেও এক একটি রসাবেদন পৃথক পৃথকভাবে প্রধান হয়ে ওঠে। কিন্তু নৃত্যে ও সাহিত্যে যথাক্রমে নৃত্যাস্থিকের ও ভাষাশিল্পের মাধ্যমে মানবজীবনের ম্লিষ্ট, মিস্ট, তিজ, কষায়, উগ্র সবরকমের অনুভূতি একসঙ্গে প্রকাশ করা সম্ভব। এ সম্পর্কে ভরতের সচেতনতা লক্ষণীয়। তিনিই প্রথম নৃত্যকে নাট্যের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করেছেন। আর সেই সূত্রে ‘নাট্যতত্ত্ব’তে নাটকের চরিত্র উপযোগী রস-ভাবাদির বিস্তারিত যে বর্ণনা দিয়েছেন<sup>৪</sup> প্রকৃতপক্ষে নৃত্যমাধ্যমেই তার প্রকাশ বেশি উজ্জ্বল হয়। এছাড়া সাহিত্যে সর্বজ্ঞ লেখকের যে ভূমিকা থাকে একটি নৃত্যকলা নির্মিতির সময় নৃত্যশিল্পীরও সেই ভূমিকা থাকে। কালিদাস তাঁর ‘মালবিকাগ্নিমিত্র’ নাটকে এই বিষয়টি প্রকাশ করেছেন। মালবিকার নৃত্য দেখে মুগ্ধ পরিব্রাজিকা বলেছেন, “যেমন দেখলাম সবটাই চমৎকার। কেননা, শরীরের অভিনয়ে এবং প্রকাশভঙ্গীতে অর্থ (গানের) সুন্দর স্পষ্ট হয়েছে; প্রতি পদক্ষেপ লয় অনুসারে হয়েছে, রস যেন (তার সঙ্গে) একাত্ম হয়ে গিয়েছিল, হাতের মুদ্রা ছিল সুকুমার; আর পরের পর একটিভাবে সরিয়ে অন্যভাবে ক্রমশই স্থান করে নিচ্ছিল। যদিও মূল ভাবরস ছিল সেই একই।”<sup>৫</sup> উল্লেখযোগ্য যে সাহিত্যই প্রথম এইভাবে নৃত্যকে কবিতার ব্যঞ্জনাবাহী বলে চিহ্নিত করেছে।

(দুই)

কিন্তু যে যুগে মানুষের শিল্প ও অশিল্পের মধ্যে পার্থক্য করার মত সচেতনতা বা বিজ্ঞানবোধ জাগে নি, সে যুগে শিল্পের সমাজ অবস্থান কেমন ছিল? বস্তুত সেই অতি আদিযুগে মানুষ যখন প্রাকৃতিক সমস্ত ঘটনাকে অতিপ্রাকৃতের অংশ বলে ভাবতো, কিংবা যে কোন বাধাবিলম্বকে যাদুক্রিয়ার মাধ্যমে বা আরাধনা করে জয় করার স্বপ্ন দেখতো, সেই যুগে উর্বরতামূলক সৃষ্টিই ছিল তাদের সকল আকাঙ্ক্ষার মূলে। পৃথিবী তখন ছিল মাতৃদেহস্বরূপ। আর মানবদেহ ছিল একই সঙ্গে কামনার আশ্রয় ও সৃষ্টির উৎস। এই সৃষ্টিধারা অব্যাহত রাখার জন্যই যেন তাদের ছিল সব প্রতীক ও পূজা। শিল্প আবির্ভূত হয়েছে এরই মধ্য থেকে।

অবচীনকালে আবিষ্কৃত মহেঞ্জোদাড়ো ও হরপ্পার সময়কার সুপ্রচুর শিবলিঙ্গ প্রজনন-সঙ্কীর্ণক সেই প্রতীকপূজার ইঙ্গিত দেয়। ঐ সময়কার অসংখ্য শিল্পমূর্তিতে পাওয়া গিয়েছে যোগীমূর্তি, বৃষমূর্তি ও ত্রিশূল।<sup>৬</sup> এর থেকে অনুমান করা অসম্ভব হবে না যে পরবর্তীকালে যাকে আমরা লিঙ্গরাজ বা মহাদেব শিব বলে জেনেছি প্রাচীন ভারতবর্ষ তারই আরাধনা করত। উল্লেখযোগ্য যে ঐ একই সময়ের দুটি বিবসনা নৃত্যরত নারীমূর্তি পাওয়া গিয়েছে। একটি নারী ডান হাত কোমরে রেখে পিছন ফিরে দাঁড়ানো। বাঁ হাতটি তার জঙ্ঘাশ্রিত। বাঁ পা ভূমিস্পর্শী। পাঁচ হাজার বছর আগের এই মূর্তি ভরতমুনি উল্লেখিত ‘নট’ ভঙ্গিতে দাঁড়ানো, ভঙ্গিটি নৃত্যশুরুর ভঙ্গি। আজও অনেক নৃত্যের নৃত্যশিল্পীরা এই ভঙ্গিতে দাঁড়ান। আবিষ্কৃত অন্য নারীটি কালের প্রভাবে শিরহীন হলেও সমস্ত অবয়বে সে যেন নৃত্যছন্দকে স্থিরবন্ধনে বেঁধে রেখেছে।<sup>৭</sup> কোনো বিবসনা নারীর নৃত্য শিল্পসিদ্ধি লাভ করেছে এ ধারণা অসম্ভব। কিন্তু আদিযুগের এই নৃত্য কালক্রমে সমাজ পরিবর্তনের মধ্য দিয়ে শিল্পসিদ্ধি পেয়েছে এ কথা মনে করাই যায়।

যদিও যে যুগের দুটি নৃত্যরত নারীমূর্তির কথা আমরা বললাম, তার থেকে বৈদিকযুগ সভ্যতা বহু পরবর্তীকালের, তবুও কৃষ্ণযজুর্বেদের সপ্তম মণ্ডলের পঞ্চম ঋকের দশমমন্ত্র থেকে যাদুক্রিয়া সম্পাদনে এই ধরনের নৃত্যভঙ্গির কথা আমরা জানতে পারি। এতে নারীদের বিবসনা দেখা না গেলেও ঐন্দ্রজালিক কারণেই যে প্রাচীনযুগে নৃত্যের প্রথম ঢল দেখা যায় সে সত্য স্বীকৃত হয়েছে। ঐ মণ্ডলটিতে বলা হচ্ছে, “চর্মবন্ধনের দ্বারা যজমানের পাপের বন্ধন করা হয়। জলপূর্ণ কুন্ত নিয়ে দাসীগণ নৃত্য করতে করতে মধুর গান করে। মধু হচ্ছে দেবতার পরম অন্নরূপ, এর দ্বারা যজমানের মহত্ত্ব বিস্তার লাভ করে। দাসীগণ কুন্ত মন্তকে নিয়ে যজ্ঞভূমির চারদিকে নৃত্য করে এবং নৃত্যের তালে তালে দক্ষিণপদের দ্বারা ভূমিতে তাড়না করে ও মধুর গান গায়।”<sup>৮</sup> ইংরেজীতে যাকে ‘ম্যাক্‌বার ডান্স’ বলা হয় সেই ঐন্দ্রজালিক ‘হনন নৃত্য’ অবশ্য আজও কোন কোন ধর্মের অন্তর্গত বিষয় এবং কোন কোন অলৌকিকতার জীবনের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। তিব্বতে বৌদ্ধ তান্ত্রিকদের ক্রিয়ার সঙ্গে আজও এই ধরনের নৃত্য লক্ষ করা যায়। শ্মশানে অনুষ্ঠিত এই নৃত্য রীতিমতো কঠিন আয়াসসাধ্য ও গুরুমুখী। নর্তকরা নিজেদের প্রেতযোনি মনে করে সারারাত এই ধরনের নৃত্যক্রিয়ার পর সকালে শ্মশান থেকে ফিরে একটি পবিত্র দেহের মাধ্যমে নবজন্ম লাভ করেছে বলে ভাবেন।<sup>৯</sup> পশ্চিমবাংলায় শবরজাতিদের মধ্যে লোকচক্ষুর অন্তরালে মাথায় আগুন নিয়ে আজও নারীদের (কারো কারো মতে বিবসনা) নৃত্যের চল রয়েছে। এই নৃত্য অনুষ্ঠিত হয় ইন্দ্রধ্বজপূজা অর্থাৎ বৃষ্টির প্রার্থনায়। তবে যে উদ্দেশ্যেই অনুষ্ঠিত হোক না কেন প্রাচীনতম দিনের এই ধরনের নৃত্যই ধীরে ধীরে মানুষের মনে প্রথমে আনন্দ দানুভব ও পরে শিল্পভাব জাগিয়ে তুলেছে। তবে তার জন্য খুব বেশি দিন আমাদের অপেক্ষা করতে হয় নি, নৃত্যের শিল্পস্বীকৃতি ঘটেছে বৈদিকযুগেই। আরো পরে এইসব আয়াসসাধ্য কঠিনতম লোকনৃত্যগুলিই অনেকসময় পরিমার্জিত হয়ে মার্গনৃত্যের রূপগ্রহণ করেছে।

## (তিন)

ঋক্বেদে দেখেছি একমাত্র উষা ছাড়া বাকি প্রত্যেকটি নৃত্যজ্ঞানসম্পন্ন দেবতা হলেন পুরুষ। অঙ্গরা ও গন্ধর্বদের দেবতা পর্যায়ভুক্ত করা যায় না, যদিও তাদের নৃত্যপ্রসঙ্গ ঋক্বেদে আছে। ঋক্বেদে দেবী সরস্বতী নদীরূপা। তিনি নৃত্যরতা এই ছবি যেমন এখানে মেলে না, ঋক্বেদে ‘শিব’ নামটিই নেই। আছেন বজ্রদেবতা রুদ্র। ঐক্যেই অন্যান্য বেদে শৈবদেব, সহস্রবাহু, মহাদেব-পশুপতি, উগ্র, ঈশান, অঘোর, গিরিশ, নীলগ্রীব, পিনাকী, কপদী, সেনানী, ভীম, শিতিকান্ত ইত্যাদি আরো বহু নামে সম্বোধন করা হয়েছে। রুদ্রের শিব নামটি আমরা পেয়েছি সবচেয়ে প্রথমে শুক্লযজুর্বেদের ‘রুদ্রাধ্যায়’-এ। সেখানে বলা হয়েছে-

নমঃ শম্ভবায় চ ময়োভবায় চ

নমঃ শঙ্করায় চ ময়ঙ্করায় চ

নমঃ শিবায় চ শিবতরায় চ।<sup>১০</sup>

ঋক্বেদের ভয়ানক রুদ্রদেবতা এখানে শান্ত ও মঙ্গলময়। এইভাবে প্রাগার্য দেবতার আর্থস্বীকৃতি ঘটেছে। পরবর্তীকালে নটরাজ নৃত্য শিবের এই মঙ্গলমূর্তিটিকেও লক্ষ করা গেছে।

ঋক্বেদে দেবতার মধ্যে ইন্দ্র, মরুৎ ও অশ্বিনয়ের নৃত্য উল্লেখই সবচেয়ে বেশি। এর মধ্যে প্রথম মণ্ডলের একশ’ ত্রিশ সংখ্যক ঋকের সপ্তম মন্ত্রে আমরা ইন্দ্রকে যুদ্ধকালে নৃত্যকারী ও নৃত্যশীল বলে সম্বোধিত হতে দেখি।<sup>১১</sup> অন্য একটি মন্ত্রে অশ্বিনয়কে প্রাজ্ঞ, নেতা ও নৃত্যশালী হওয়ার আহ্বান জানানো হয়েছে।<sup>১২</sup> একটি মন্ত্রে মরুৎগণকে নৃত্যকারী সম্বোধন করে সাধারণজনেরা যে তাঁর সখ্যলোভী সে কথা প্রকাশ করা হয়েছে।<sup>১৩</sup> ঋক্বেদে এই মরুৎ-এর পিতাই হলেন রুদ্র।

সে যুগে শরীর সুস্থ রাখার উপায় হিসেবে বিশুদ্ধ নৃত্যের প্রয়োজন স্বীকার করা হয়েছে। দশম মণ্ডলের আঠারো সংখ্যক ঋকের তিন সংখ্যক মন্ত্রে উদ্‌গাতা মৃত্যুকে মানবজীবন থেকে দূরে থাকার আবেদন জানিয়ে নিজেদের পরিচয় জানিয়েছেন এই বলে, “আমরা প্রকৃষ্টরূপে নৃত্য ও হাস্য করিয়া থাকি, আমরা উৎকৃষ্ট ও অতিদীর্ঘ আয়ু প্রাপ্ত হইয়াছি।”<sup>১৪</sup> উল্লেখ্য যে এই যুগেই প্রথম নৃত্যের নিজস্ব ভাষাকে কবিভাষার সঙ্গে অধিত করার প্রয়াস শুরু হয়েছে। কবিতার অলংকারে বাকচিহ্ন ও প্রতিমানির্মাণে নৃত্যের ছন্দগতি ও চাঞ্চল্যকে সংযুক্ত করে দেওয়া হয়েছে। তাই একটি মন্ত্রে নৃত্য এসেছে উৎপ্রেক্ষা অলংকার রূপে, “দেবতারাই এই বিশ্বব্যাপী জনমধ্যে অবস্থিত থাকিয়া মহোৎসাহ প্রকাশ করিতে লাগিলেন। তাহারা যেন নৃত্য করিতে লাগিলেন, সেইহেতু প্রচুর ধূলির উদয় হইল।”<sup>১৫</sup> অন্য দুটি মন্ত্রে পরপর বর্ণিত হয়েছে যে প্রস্তর মুখে সোমরস ধারণ করে সোম নিষ্পীড়নকারী আঙ্গুলের সঙ্গে যুক্ত হয়ে নৃত্য করছে। এবং এই যুগবিচরণক্ষেত্রে মনে হচ্ছে যেন আকাশের পাখীরা কলরব করছে এবং যুগবিচরণক্ষেত্রে কৃষ্ণসার হরিণেরা চলাচল করে নৃত্য করছে।<sup>১৬</sup> শ্রব্যচিত্রকল্প ও দৃশ্যচিত্রকল্পের এ এক অসাধারণ মিলিত ছবি। এই রকম দেবনৃত্য ও নৃত্য-অলংকার প্রসঙ্গ যজুর্বেদ ও অথর্ববেদেও বেশ কয়েকটি আছে।

ঋক্বেদে অপ্শব্দজাত নৃত্যরতা অঙ্গরাকে পেয়েছি। আবার নদীরূপা সরস্বতীও জলযুক্তা, জলের স্বাভাবিক ধর্ম গতিময়তা। তাই বেদে সরস্বতী সম্পর্কে বিদ্যাদেবীর পাশাপাশি নৃত্যদেবীর একটি ইঙ্গিতও লক্ষ করা গেছে। অথচ ঐ সময় এ দুটির কোনটিরও অধিদেবতা বলে তাঁকে মানা হয় নি। একটি মন্ত্বে তাঁকে শুভ্রবর্ণা বলা হয়েছে।<sup>১৭</sup> একটি মন্ত্বে বলা হয়েছে তিনি বাক্যময়ী।<sup>১৮</sup> অন্য আর একটি মন্ত্বে বলা হয়েছে তাঁর গমন কল্যাণপূর্ণ ও সুন্দর।<sup>১৯</sup> এক্ষেত্রে মনে হয় নদীর জল সৃষ্টিধারার সঙ্গে যুক্ত বলেই কল্যাণপূর্ণ এবং স্রোতস্বিনীর গতিসৌন্দর্য নৃত্যানুগ বলেই পরবর্তীকালে সরস্বতী নৃত্যদেবী রূপে স্বীকৃতি পেয়েছেন।

জৈনপুরাণে আমরা নৃত্য সরস্বতীর উল্লেখ পেয়েছি। জৈনধর্মে জীবের চারটি ভাগ আছে। ভবনবাসী, ব্যস্তর, জ্যোতিষ ও বৈমানিক। তার মধ্যে ব্যস্তর দেবতা পর্যায়ে চারজন গন্ধর্ব মহাদেব আছেন। তার মধ্যে গীতযশং নামক মহাদেবের দুই পত্নীর নাম সুস্বরা ও সরস্বতী। জৈন ধর্মে যাঁরা দিগম্বর সম্প্রদায়ের তাঁদের মতে গন্ধর্বমহাদেবের মধ্যে যিনি ‘গীতরতীন্দ্র’ বা ‘গীতরতি’ তারই দুই মহাদেবীর নাম স্বরসেনা ও সরস্বতী। এই সরস্বতী গন্ধর্বের গীতরতির প্রধানা মহিষী।<sup>২০</sup> ইনি যে নাচ জানেন এখানে প্রত্যক্ষভাবে তার উল্লেখ না থাকলেও মহাদেবের মহিষীরূপে তাঁকে আমরা এই ধর্মেই প্রথম পেলাম। অন্যদিকে ভারতের ‘নাট্যশাস্ত্র’-এ শিবমহিষী পার্বতীর নৃত্য উল্লেখ রয়েছে।

“রেচকৈরঙ্গহারৈশ নৃত্যতং বীক্ষা শংকরম্।  
সুকুমার প্রয়োগেণ নৃত্যতি থ চ পার্বতী।”

অর্থাৎ “শিবকে রেচক ও অঙ্গবাসসহ নৃত্য করতে দেখে পার্বতীও সুকুমার (লাস্য) নৃত্য করেছিলেন।”<sup>২১</sup> এইভাবে শিব মহিষীসূত্রে দুটি দেবীর অভিন্নতা স্বীকার্য। লক্ষণীয় যে পার্বতীর নৃত্য স্বীকৃত অথচ নৃত্যের অধিষ্ঠাত্রী দেবী হলেন সরস্বতী। ব্রাহ্মণ্যপুরাণে শিবপত্নী সরস্বতীর উল্লেখ কোথাও নেই। তবে দেবী দুর্গা মহাভাব আশ্রয় করেও শ্বেত ও উজ্জ্বল মহাদেবকে আশ্রয় করে আছেন বলে দেবীপুরাণে তাঁর আর এক নাম মহাশ্বেতা।<sup>২২</sup> এদিকে সরস্বতী আপন রূপেই মহাশ্বেতা নামে পরিচিত।

হৈসল স্থাপত্যের নিদর্শন হিসেবে মহীশূর রাজ্যের অন্তর্গত সোমনাথপুরের কেশব মন্দিরে নৃত্যবিষ্ণু, নৃত্যগণপতি ও নৃত্যলক্ষ্মীর সঙ্গে নৃত্যসরস্বতীর মূর্তিও পাওয়া গিয়েছে। “এই নৃত্যসরস্বতী দ্বিভুজা। নানা রত্নালঙ্কারে ভূষিতা। দেবীর হস্তে বীণা নাই। নৃত্যসরস্বতীর এই মূর্তিটি অতি সুন্দর। ভঙ্গিও মনোজ্ঞ। হলেবিভূতে একটি সুন্দর নৃত্যপরায়াণ সরস্বতী মূর্তি আছে।”<sup>২৩</sup> এ ব্যাপারে অমূল্যচরণ বিদ্যাভূষণ আমাদের জানাচ্ছেন যে, “কৈলাস পর্বতশৃঙ্গে রত্নখচিত আসনে সমাসীনা দেবী গৌরীর সম্মুখে চন্দ্রমৌলী শিব সন্ধ্যায় নৃত্য করিতেছেন, সকল দেবতা সেই নৃত্যে যোগ দিয়াছেন-ব্রহ্মা করতাল, হরি (বিষ্ণু) পটহ, ভারতী (সরস্বতী) বীণা বাজাইতেছেন এবং নন্দী ও কুমার বাদ্য বাজাইতেছেন। (এখানে) শিবের নৃত্য ভূজঙ্গরাসিত।”<sup>২৪</sup> এইভাবে বিভিন্ন পুরাণ ও উপপুরাণে সরস্বতী ও পার্বতী দুজনেই শিবপত্নীরূপে পরিচিত। এবং দুজনের সঙ্গেই জড়িত আছে নৃত্যাধিকার প্রসঙ্গ।

সরস্বতীর বাহন হংস। মহাবীর জৈনের সামান্য আগে বুদ্ধের আবির্ভাব। তাঁকে অবলম্বন করে সৃষ্ট জাতকগল্পগুলির একটি হল ‘নৃত্য-জাতক’। এটিতে সুবর্ণহংস বলে একটি চরিত্র আছে। ইনি নৃত্য-বিরোধী। বৌদ্ধধর্মে নৃত্য নিষিদ্ধ শিল্প। সেই নিষেধের গল্পে সরস্বতীর হংসপ্রতীককে ব্যক্তির নামরূপে ব্যবহার করার মধ্য দিয়ে সেকালের হিন্দু বৌদ্ধ ধর্মসংঘাতের পরিচয়ও পাওয়া যায়।

গল্পটি এই রকম। একবার রাজা সুবর্ণহংসের কন্যা স্বয়ম্বর হয়ে একজন উজ্জলগ্রীব ও অসাধারণ সুন্দর পেখমধারী ময়ূরকে ভাবী স্বামী হিসেবে মনোনীত করে। লোকমুখে রাজকন্যার ইচ্ছে জানতে পেরে অহংকারী ময়ূর পেখম তুলে নৃত্য করতে লাগল। এতে অশোভনভাবে তার শরীরের অধিকাংশ স্থান উন্মুক্ত হয়ে পড়ে। রাজা সুবর্ণহংস ময়ূরের এই লজ্জাহীন ও অসংযত আচরণের জন্য ক্রুদ্ধ হয়ে তাকে কন্যা সম্প্রদানে অসম্মত হন।<sup>২৫</sup> বলা বাহুল্য রাজা সুবর্ণহংসই ছিলেন জন্মান্তরের বুদ্ধ।

ধর্মে স্বীকৃতি না পেলেও বৌদ্ধমূর্তিশিল্পে অবশ্য সরস্বতীর অস্তিত্ব পাওয়া যায়। ইনি বোধিসত্ত্ব মঞ্জুশ্রীর শক্তি সরস্বতী। এঁর বাহন সিংহ।<sup>২৬</sup> ইনি বাগদেবী ও সঙ্গীতঋদ্ধা হলেও এঁর সঙ্গে বৌদ্ধধর্ম নৃত্যের কোনো যোগসূত্র রচনা করে নি। প্রসঙ্গত স্মরণীয় যে স্বয়ং বুদ্ধ তাঁর সময়ের বিখ্যাত রাজনর্তকী আশ্রপালীকে ভোগসর্বস্ব জীবন থেকে মুক্তি দিয়ে প্রব্রজ্যার পথে নিয়ে গিয়েছিলেন। লক্ষণীয় যে, যে শিল্প জীবন-আসক্তির সঙ্গে যুক্ত তা সম্পূর্ণ পরিত্যাজ্য এই সত্য প্রচার যিনি করেছেন তাঁর জীবনোত্তর কালে সেই ধর্মাবলম্বী (ও জৈন ধর্মাবলম্বী)দের স্তূপগুলির সজ্জাতেই ভারতীয় নৃত্যশৈলী প্রথম শরীরী হৃন্দে আত্মপ্রকাশ করেছে। এ সম্পর্কে একটি প্রচলিত ব্যাখ্যা আছে যে যা কিছু পরিত্যাজ্য তা উপাসনা মন্দিরের বাইরেই থাকা উচিত, এই ইঙ্গিত প্রচারের উদ্দেশ্যেই বৌদ্ধস্তূপগুলির বাইরে নৃত্যভাস্কর্য খোদাই করা হয়েছে। যে সময়ের কথা এসব, সে সময়ে অবশ্য ভারতীয় স্থাপত্য ও ভাস্কর্যশিল্পে এক রূপান্তর ঘটে গেছে আলেকজান্ডারের ভারতে আসার সূত্রে।

### (চার)

আমরা খুঁজে চলেছি প্রাচীন ভারতীয় সাহিত্যে নৃত্যপ্রসঙ্গের উল্লেখ। আলোচনা সূত্রে এর সঙ্গে স্থাপত্য ও ভাস্কর্যের যে যোগসূত্র রচিত হল তার কারণ সেকালে এই প্রত্যেকটি শিল্প ছিল একে অপরের অন্যান্যনির্ভর। তাই যে সম্পদে ভারতের ‘নাট্যশাস্ত্র’ সমৃদ্ধশালী হয়েছে তার উৎসই যেন নিহিত আছে উল্লিখিত অপর দুটি শিল্পে। বিষয়টি সামান্য পরিসরে হলেও আলোচ্য।

দেখা গেছে সেকালের ভারতীয় শিল্প প্রথমে গ্রীক প্রভাবকে সঙ্গে করেই পুনরুজ্জীবিত হয়েছিল। কিন্তু প্রকৃত শিল্পমাত্র যেহেতু যে কোন দেশের নিজস্ব প্রাণস্পন্দনবাহী সেহেতু গান্ধার অঞ্চলকে কেন্দ্র করে যে গ্রীক প্রভাবিত শিল্পের অগ্রগতি ঘটেছিল তা দেশজ প্রাণনিষিক্ত ছিল না বলেই হয়তো তার শরীরীভঙ্গি ও আচ্ছাদনের অতি সূক্ষ্মাতিসূক্ষ্ম বিন্যাস সত্ত্বেও তাতে রক্তমাংসের সজীবতা আনা সম্ভব হয় নি। অথচ ভারতীয় নৃত্য সে সময়ে ভারতীয় নারী

(দেবদাসী) কর্তৃক নিবেদিত হত। শিল্পে তাকেই চাই। এই আকাঙ্ক্ষাতেই সেকালের ভারতীয় রূপদক্ষেপরা তাঁদের প্রেরণাদাত্রীদের নৃত্যভঙ্গি একের পর এক গঁথে ছিলেন বৌদ্ধ ও জৈন মূর্তি, চৈত্য এবং গুহাগুলিতে। তাই খ্রিঃ পূর্ব তৃতীয় দ্বিতীয় শতক থেকে খ্রিষ্টাব্দ প্রায় পঞ্চম শতক পর্যন্ত নৃত্যভাষ্যসমৃদ্ধ বারহুত, সাঁচী, অমরাবতী, মথুরা এবং ভুবনেশ্বরের উদয়গিরি (বাণীশুম্ফ ও হাতীশুম্ফ), খণ্ডগিরি, নাগার্জুনকোণ্ডা, অজন্তা ইলোরা প্রভৃতি স্থান সেই স্বাক্ষর বহন করেছে।<sup>২৭</sup> ভারতের ‘নাট্যশাস্ত্র’ (আনুমানিক খ্রিঃ দ্বিতীয় শতক)-এ এই নৃত্যভঙ্গিগুলিই সব্যাক্ষা লিখিত মর্যাদা পেয়েছে। বলাবাহুল্য রামায়ণ ও মহাভারত ছাড়াও সমগ্র সংস্কৃত সাহিত্য এই নৃত্যখণ্ড গ্রহণ করেছে। তবে এর চূড়ান্ত সিদ্ধি ঘটেছে কালিদাসের হাতে।

### (পাঁচ)

এর পরেকার সাহিত্যের ইতিহাস থেকে যদি নৃত্যমণিমুক্তা আহরণ করতে যাই তাহলে দ্বিতীয় আর একটি নিবন্ধ প্রস্তুত করতে হবে। কারণ কবিমাত্রই নৃত্যশিল্পটির গতিময়তা ও সৌন্দর্যলোভী। কিন্তু নৃত্যের মত প্রকাশ্য অনুষ্ঠেয় শিল্পের সঙ্গে সাহিত্যের আত্মিকতার একালের ছবিটির সামান্য উল্লেখ না করলে সেকালের কবিপ্রাণের অকথিত আবেগের ছবিটি সম্পূর্ণ হবে না। এ সম্পর্কে একটি রবীন্দ্র উক্তি স্মরণীয়। ‘সাহিত্যের পথে’ প্রবন্ধে তিনি জানাচ্ছেন, “সেই যুগে স্বামী তার স্ত্রীর পরিচয় দিয়েছে, প্রিয়শিষ্যাললিতে কলাবিদ্যে। যে দাম্পত্য সংসার রচনা করত তার রচনাকার্যের জন্য ব্যাঙ্কে জমানো টাকাটাই প্রধান জিনিস নয়, তার চেয়ে প্রয়োজন ছিল ললিতকলার। যেমন তেমন করে মালা গাঁথলে চলত না, চীনাংশুকের অঞ্চলপ্রাপ্তে চিত্রবয়ন জানত তরুণীরা, নাচের নিপুণতা ছিল প্রধান শিক্ষা, তার সঙ্গে ছিল বীণা, বেগু, ছিল গান। মানুষে মানুষে সম্বন্ধ সেটার মধ্যে আত্মিকতার সৌন্দর্য ছিল।”<sup>২৮</sup> জীবনে ললিতকলার মূল্য যাঁর কাছে এমন সেই রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাবনাতে বাঙালীর জীবনোপযোগী একটি রুচিসম্পন্ন নাচের সৃষ্টি হয়েছে। সে নাচের গভীর আবেদন-কথায় সজ্জিত তাঁর একটি গান।

“নব বসন্তে লতায় লতায় পাতায় ফুলে  
বাণীহিল্লোল উঠে প্রভাতের স্বর্ণকূলে,  
আমার দেহের বাণীতে সে গান উঠিছে দুলে  
এ বরণগান নাহি পেলে মান মরিব লাজে,  
ওহে প্রিয়তম, দেহে মনে মম ছন্দ বাজে।”<sup>২৯</sup>

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# Mango Showers

NISHIT RAWAT

Papa used to work for a railway track material manufacturing company. He was a young, non-descript engineer, fresh out of Allahabad University, trying to find his feet in the metropolis, living with his two brothers, their wives, their children, an elder sister, her children and his parents in a small one-bedroom house in Kankurgachi. In those days Kankurgachi was pretty much an outskirt of the city and had open spaces all around.

After showing no signs of academic brilliance, my uncles had come from Rajasthan. My grandfather had been an honest lawyer in Sikar and had not accumulated any wealth worth its name. It was now upon my uncles to make their way in life on their own.

My uncles had started their own business. Like many other young Marwari men, they started trading in steel. The Marwaris had built a fiefdom around the steel trading business - sourcing materials from rolling mills that dotted the Howrah region and selling them to BHEL and other such giants across the country. While some businessmen had fled the city due to Naxalite violence, most had preferred to stay back.

Those were the days of struggle; of a hand-to-mouth existence. And every effort had to be made towards cutting costs. But those were days of joys too, when even the smallest victory was celebrated. And while new clothes were always bought for Diwali, they were mostly off the footpath, from where they were brought home and refurbished with some embroidery or patchwork to make them look presentable.

Vegetables were bought from Machhua bazaar. Though quite some distance from Kankurgachi, it was a cheap wholesale market. Ma (my grandma) and Bhuaji (Papa's elder sister) would go in crowded buses and trams once a week to buy the weekly ration. This episode goes back to one of those days when Ma and Bhuaji went for their weekly vegetable shopping to Machhua... sometime early in an April of the seventies when I was only a few years away from seeing the first light of day. I guess they left sometime late in the afternoon, around three perhaps, after Bhuaji had had her mandatory afternoon siesta and Ma, her cup of tea.

They took a bus from Kankurgachi to Maniktala and then perhaps a tram to somewhere close to Machhua. After that, they would have to walk their way. Those days, the bus fares and tram fares were very low. And, for this the credit must go to no less a person than Jyoti Basu - Jyoti, by the way, in Hindi and in Bengali and in many other languages means light. And, Jyoti Basu had been a fiery young man indeed - in more ways than one, one might suspect. As a young leader, he had led dharnas against the government on every paisa increase in ticket fare. Jyoti Basu's dharnas used to be full of light and, I daresay, fire. So every time the government raised the bus fare, the only way to make them retract, would be to burn a few buses.

Anyway, the fare had not been raised in the past few days and it was otherwise pretty much an ideal day to travel... and as the afternoon sun was shining at its brightest, so Ma and Bhuaji suspected no trouble with the weather either.

Some things never change. Like the Mango Showers. When the scorching heat of summer begins to grip most of the country, Bengal gets a brief respite in March and April when the north-westerly winds bring with them grey skies, dusty roads and thunderous showers. These showers, which normally arrive late in the evenings, are also called *Kalboishakhis* - black clouds and showers in the month of *Boishakh*. And, what is special about these showers is that even as they wreak havoc when they come, some water seeps into the parched lands where mango trees grow, and brings to life the juicy mango fruits that begin to arrive a month later.

For some reason, Ma and Bhuaji, did not factor in the Mango Showers that day. After hectic bargaining, with loaded baskets when they boarded a tram near Machhua, the skies became grey. It was the rush hour when the offices gave over, and people were jostling for space in the crowded little tram.

All this while, I have been talking of Ma and Bhuaji together almost as if they were inseparable. But alas they were not!

At the very stop before which Ma and Bhuaji were to get off together, they got separated. Ma,



along with her basket full of vegetables, got pushed out by the rushing passengers whose destination had arrived. Bhuaji struggled, got off at the next stop and started walking back.

The winds had started to blow by now. Dust was swirling all around, and the trees were waving hastily. For once, Bhuaji felt that she would get blown away in the madness of the elements. But that did not happen, and drenched in the now pouring rain, Bhuaji reached the tram stop where Ma was waiting for her. Together again, they sighed a sigh of relief, and boarded the next bus to Kankurgachi.

It was a minibus; unlike the other tin plated buses, this looked a lot more modern with its red and yellow coloured exteriors. Though it was a matter only of a few paise more, travelling in minibuses was a rare luxury for the family then. If it weren't for the rains, Ma and Bhuaji wouldn't have boarded one.

As luck would have it, they had to get off it soon too. The moment a conductor came to sell the ticket, Ma and Bhuaji together realized that the handkerchief in which all the money was tied and which was kept in the vegetable basket that Ma was carrying, was no longer there. And, so, all the money for the entire month was gone in one shot. All the money – with which all household expenses for the month were to be met – vegetables, fruits, milk, rations, school fees for the kids, travel expenses, house rent to be paid to Mrs. Basu, electricity bill – everything was gone.

For a while they stood stupefied by what had happened. Then, not knowing what else to do, they started walking towards home. The rain was getting only worse, and water ran past their cheeks

mingling inseparably with tears. They wept and they walked and kept walking, even as Bhuaji's only slippers came off and floated away with the current of water that was beginning to flow like a stream in rage. Ma fell down and hurt her head.

A guilty and upset pair – Ma and Bhuaji reached home late. Night had descended on the city by then, and the rains had subsided. Those were the days of severe power shortage in the city, and the situation only worsened when it rained. So, everyone in the city knew this was to be a dark night. Quietly, Ma and Bhuaji slipped into the kitchen where my aunts were already cooking the meals.

Later that night, when Bade Tauji, my eldest uncle, came home, they let their little secret out to everyone and Bhuaji started crying again.

My uncle just smiled.

"Tum aam laayi ya nahin?" (Did you get the mangoes or not?), he asked.

"Aam abhi kahaan, unke aane mein to abhi kam se kam ek mahina hai" (Mangoes will take at least one more month to arrive), retorted Ma.

And then consoling Bhuaji, Bade Tauji said, "Jiji, yeah din bhi nikal jayenge. Kyun chinta karti ho?" (Sister, we shall see these days off as well, why do you worry so much?)

That night no one slept well at home. But time passed by, and somehow the expenses were met that month.

A month later, my uncles got their largest contract till then. They earned a lakh from it. And, Ma and Bhuaji, bound to habit, got vegetables from Machhua bazaar. With them, they brought home some deliciously ripe mangoes.

# Exploration of the Iconicity of New Theatres

SHARMISHTHA GOOPTU

*This essay probes the iconicity of New Theatres, exploring the hypothesis that its genesis in the 1930s was rooted in aspects of contemporary life in Bengal that went much beyond the realm of cinema. The objective is to look deeper and understand cinema as an institution with roots in the politics and economy of early 20th century Bengal.*

## I

New Theatres, created in 1930 by Birendra Nath Sircar, had an important role in the creation of the Indian film industry. Functioning from Calcutta, it was not just a well-equipped studio; it was a system, a way of life for the people working with it..."Sircar wanted not just cinema halls and a studio; he wanted a system. A pervasive, self-supporting, effectively-managed, supremely equipped, network of men and women and machines which would sell the celluloid dream like it had never been sold before in the country..."<sup>1</sup> As in the above extract, most available literature on New Theatres, Bengal's leading film producing concern in the 1930s and early 1940s, exudes a celebratory rhetoric. The romantic discourse surrounding New Theatres is one of the enduring nostalgias of the Bengali bhadralok.<sup>2</sup> The above quote indicates that the New Theatres ethos, glorified for its efficiency, commercial viability and machine-like coordination, is also celebrated as 'a way of life'. Herein, the iconicity of New Theatres is informed by certain elements basic to bhadralok life. Chief among these is 'bhadrota' which may be interpreted as cultured gentility. Kanan Devi, a leading star of the 1930s and 1940s, who worked at New Theatres between 1936 and 1942, commented, in her tribute to B N Sircar, founder-proprietor of New Theatres, "I was under contract with Radha films when I received the offer to play the role of Parvati in Devdas. I could not accept in spite of my enthusiasm for the offer. My regret was that I could not work with Mr Sircar. He had by then earned a very high reputation in the film industry as a noble, erudite and respectable filmmaker."<sup>3</sup> In a similar vein, actress Umashashi Devi, who made a name for herself at New Theatres, reminisced in later life:

When I was at New Theatres, we used to compare ourselves with a happy family...What a wonderful feeling of goodwill and happiness permeated the studio. We would enter the studio in

the early hours of the morning and would not leave till our work was complete. Since discipline and adherence to principles regulated our lives, projects were always completed in time. What intimate bonds held us together.<sup>4</sup>

These constructions of respectability and extended family came together in the public face of New Theatres. Herein, the imagination centering on New Theatres stands out as unique when placed against, for instance, the "electrified utopias" of America, studied by David Nye,<sup>5</sup> where, electricity, as a symbol of technological progress, became a dominant icon in the first three decades of the 20th century.

That the iconic status of New Theatres was entrenched by the 1950s is evident from the following extract from an essay in the souvenir brought out on the occasion of the silver jubilee of the Indian talkie in 1956:

It was after that memorable film 'Chandidas' was made when a Bengali pioneer, Shri B N Sircar, showed me one day around his New Theatres studio which has served for full 25 years not only Bengal but the whole of India as a veritable cradle of all-India talents on a national-cultural basis. The studio invested a fortune not in rewarding or capitalising on 'artists' but in building up new traditions for the techniques of acting, direction, photography, sound recording, etc. It is because of these that this pioneer Bengal studio has become a veritable institution and a promoter of talents that has largely influenced the whole course of Indian films. Bombay and Madras studios may have advanced further in some respects but the Bengal studio experts did the pioneering job on the technical side.<sup>6</sup>

This rhetoric has survived till date, not only in reminiscences of an older generation, but in much of contemporary writing on the subject, and in popular discourse in the tele-visual media.<sup>7</sup> According to such accounts, New Theatres was the

perfect organisation till besieged by war (Second World War), communal turmoil and finally the partition.<sup>8</sup> It is my understanding that this unproblematic narrative derives partly from a nationalist-cum-civility subtext. Most importantly, however, I would like to relate the iconicity of New Theatres to entrepreneurial success and commercial viability, and the associated sentiments of self-worth that were crucial to the *bhadralok* in those years when New Theatres was rising to prominence.

In this essay, I probe the iconicity of New Theatres, exploring the hypothesis that its genesis, which I locate in the 1930s, was rooted in aspects of contemporary life that went much beyond the realm of cinema. The objective is to look deeper, and understand cinema as an institution rooted in the politics and economy of early 20th century Bengal. The final section of the essay aims to provide a brief insight into the lasting iconicity of New Theatres in contemporary India, where the concern has lingered as a shadow of its former self. However, before embarking on an understanding of the icon, I would like to chart the history of the institution, from foundation to dissolution, and subsequent revival.

## II

B. N. Sircar, founder-proprietor of New Theatres, sustained Bengal's leading film producing concern for 25 years, 1931-55. Sircar holds a record of film production in India, having produced 177 films under the New Theatres banner.<sup>9</sup> B N Sircar, who belonged to one of the illustrious families of contemporary Calcutta, entered the film industry in 1930 when he formed International Film Craft in partnership with friends Amar Mallick and P N Ray, who had been associated with the making of Himanshu Rai's<sup>10</sup> 'A Throw of Dice' (1929). The concern folded up after making two silent films 'Chorkanta' and 'Chashar Meye'. Following this, Sircar formed New Theatres in February 1931, a family concern with himself as managing director. In the same year, he opened New Theatres Studio in Tollygunge, in south Calcutta. Like other studios in contemporary Calcutta, namely, Bharat Laxmi Pictures, Devdutta Films, East India Film Co, Kali Films and Radha Film Co, New Theatres contracted artists as salaried employees, generally on the basis of monthly payment. The company had three fully equipped units, and boasted of the best technicians and music hands.

New Theatres' first success was 'Chandidas' (1932), based on the life of the Vaishnava<sup>11</sup> saint of the same name. It was remade as 'Puran

Bhakat' (1932) in Hindustani for the North Indian market, setting a trend of bilingual and multilingual features, and finally turning the tide for B N Sircar who had been struggling to find a distributor in Bombay, by then the established nerve-centre of the Indian cinema industry.

By 1934, New Theatres was a growing presence in parts of north, north-west and south India, as evident from the following report:

Mr B. N. Sircar with Mr I A Haffesji of New Theatres Ltd. left Calcutta on the 7th instant for an all-India inspection tour for better distribution of N T films and rearrangement of existing areas and circuits. The area covered in this tour is extensive and we were given to understand that very important arrangements have been made with local distributors regarding better and more methodical publicity and distribution of New Theatres pictures. It was found out in this tour that distributors of Madras, Madura, Tricinopoly, Erode, Bangalore, Poona, Bombay, Cawnpore, Lucknow, Kangra Valley and Lahore are very very willing to take N T Films for their respective circuits. It is expected that this willingness on the part of provincial distributors will result in big business - which means big money for both the parties. 'Puran Bhakat' and 'Yehoodi-ki-Larki' have brought new ideas and new colours into Indian filmdom.<sup>12</sup> New Theatres' Bengali films also had a market in non-Bengali speaking areas, primarily on account of their music, which contemporaries have cited as one of the principal strengths of New Theatres' films. Aurobindo Mukhopadhyay reminisces:

In my student days, we lived in Manihari village in the Katihar district of Bihar. Like boys and girls now sing Hindi film songs, Bihari boys and girls then sang the songs of 'Chandidas'. After the evening's play, Bihari boys went home singing the song 'Phire Chal Apan Ghare'. Many ustads from Bhagalpur would invariably sing the songs 'Chunyeona bandhu' and 'Shatek Baras Pare' at the end of each function. If they did not, the Bihari audience would send up requests for these.<sup>13</sup> In a similar vein, Panna Raiji, who wrote the first Ph D thesis on Indian cinema, recalls, "I liked watching New Theatres' films but most of all I liked listening to the music that came out of New Theatres, even though I did not understand Bengali. I developed a taste in Rabindra sangeet through listening to the songs of Pankaj Mallick."<sup>14</sup>

The largest market for New Theatres' films was, however, concentrated in the east. At the beginning of 1940, New Theatres was a formidable presence in eastern and north eastern India, as revealed by a New Year's announcement of New

Theatres' offerings for the coming week in Amrita Bazar Patrika titled 'New Theatres Extends Through Their Distributors'.<sup>15</sup> Apart from Calcutta, New Theatres' films were showing in various mofussil towns and suburbs of Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and other regions of the north-east. In East Bengal, New Theatres' films were showing in Dacca, Mymensingh, Barishal, Kusthia, Tangail, Chittagong; in West Bengal in Sreerampore, Chinsura, Krishnanagar, Nabadwip, Sreepur, Sonarpur, Malda, Barrackpore, Ghatsila, Bankura, Uluberia, Andul, Kidderpore, Behala; in Bihar in Patna, Gaya, Muzaffarpur, Dhanbad, Katihar; Cuttack in Orissa; Dibrugarh, Nowgong, Imphal and Burma in the north-east. 1940 was, on the whole, a good year for New Theatres and saw the release of some notable films, Phani Majumdar's 'Dactar', Pramathesh Barua's 'Zindagi', and Devaki Bose's 'Nartaki'. However, at a time when New Theatres was at its peak, Pramathesh Barua, one of its biggest stars, left the fold, never to return. Barua's departure heralded the beginning of the end.

With the onset of Second World War, the government of India imposed a quota on the supply of raw film. During the initial months, producers were allotted only five reels a week, inflicting heavy losses on the studios, which had to maintain large establishments and salaried staff. At this time, B N Sircar's monthly expenditure on staff salaries alone amounted to about 40,000-45,000 rupees, a large sum by contemporary standards.<sup>16</sup> Later, however, the government appointed an ad hoc committee that allotted quotas to producers on the basis of an average of films made till date. B N Sircar was granted a permit for the production of six films annually.<sup>17</sup>

Sircar mentions the 'excess profit'<sup>18</sup> tax as a subsequent setback, but the devastating blow came in the form of the communal riots of 1946 and the partition of the country in 1947. All work remained suspended during the period of communal turmoil between August 1946 and August 1947, and studio-owners sustained huge losses. Finally, with the partition of the country, the East Bengal (which became East Pakistan and subsequently Bangladesh) market for Bengali films was practically destroyed. Following partition all commercial exchange between East and West Bengal came under international trade laws, which complicated the situation, making producers and distributors wary of sending out films to east Bengal. In the 1956 Silver Jubilee Souvenir of the Indian Talkie, the president of the Bengal Motion Picture Association in Calcutta, commented, "Even

after their release, the pictures cannot be properly exploited because of the absence of adequate scope for their maximum exploitation. The East Bengali market is now lost to Bengali films as a consequence of the Partition."<sup>19</sup> It may be mentioned here that the Bengali film industry was concentrated in West Bengal, in Calcutta. East Bengal had no organised film industry before 1947, the only known efforts at filmmaking in the colonial period being experimental ventures of members of the family of the Nawab of Dhaka.<sup>20</sup>

The tumultuous events of 1946-47 seriously affected the film industry in Calcutta, particularly the bigger studios. By the beginning of the 1950s, the halcyon days of New Theatres were over. In the words of Dilip Kumar Sircar, B N Sircar's son, who joined the studio in 1951, "Our people had left for Bombay; finances were in disarray. There were court cases...my father had virtually closed shop".<sup>21</sup> In 1954, New Theatres ran into financial crisis following the liquidation of the Calcutta National Bank, creditor to New Theatres. In such a situation of crisis, the rights for the management of the New Theatres studios were handed over to Aurora Film Company in June 1954, on the basis of an arrangement that would allow the home concern to use the studio floors for its own productions 10 days every month. For the rest of the time, the studios were to be hired out by Aurora. Aurora managed the studios till December 1954. From January 1955, management passed into the hands of industrialist Deepchand Kankaria's Delux Films.<sup>22</sup> In August 1956, a Receiver was appointed by the Calcutta High Court to liquidate the dues of the Calcutta National Bank by a sale of the assets of New Theatres. In January 1956, New Theatres was closed down. However, Dilip Sircar, who, by this time, was working full-time at New Theatres, arrived at an agreement with the Receiver and the New Theatres studios were re-opened in December 1957.<sup>23</sup> However, on account of legal complexities, during this period Dilip Sircar produced films under the name of Sircar Productions, a banner he launched in 1955.<sup>24</sup> In his words, "Those were the crucial years, 1957 to 1961. It was a struggle just to keep the place alive".<sup>25</sup> New Theatres scraped through the 1950s by making a few films and by hiring out their studios. In 1961, Dilip Sircar amalgamated with India Film Laboratories, which, at the time, had on its board some of the biggest names of Indian/Bengali cinema – actress Kanan Devi, who had risen to prominence during her stint at New Theatres, Bengali superstar Uttam Kumar and director Ajoy Kar.<sup>26</sup>

New Theatres went into liquidation in March 1962. India Film Laboratories managed the NT studios through the 1960s to the present-day. Through the 1960s to the 1980s, Dilip Sircar made films under various banners, namely, Sircar Productions, Sircar Productions Pvt Ltd and New Theatres Exhibitors Pvt Ltd. It was following his efforts, since the mid-1980s, that New Theatres Limited was revived on August 8, 1991, when the liquidation was revoked by an order of the Calcutta High Court.<sup>27</sup> New Theatres has since existed as a skeleton concern, their only production in these years being a five-episode commissioned serial for the National Network of Doordarshan titled 'The Story of New Theatres'.<sup>28</sup>

Having charted the narrative of New Theatres, I intend, in the forthcoming sections of this paper, to delve into the roots of New Theatres' iconicity, starting with a 'nationalist-civility subtext' that gave the concern legitimacy.

### III

In Bengal in the 1920s, cinema was being looked upon as a realm of nationalist assertion, as evident from the following extract from a contemporary film journal which berated the makers of a recently released film on the ground that they had not bothered to append a Bengali nomenclature:

British Dominion Films Ltd's new feature, 'Flames of Flesh', was shown in Pearl Cinema. They haven't given the film a Bengali name. A film produced by a Bengali company should have been given a Bengali name. People have called the film 'Kaamanar Agun', 'Lalashabanhi', or anything that suited them, but there was no sign of any such name on the screen. Well, it is only natural that British Dominion will be loyal to the British dominion.<sup>29</sup> It is possible to situate New Theatres in this tradition. Nationalist sentiments were openly aired in Chitra, the New Theatres house magazine, lending credence to the hypothesis that apart from the obvious aspects of profit or the glamour of the medium, cinema was also alluring as a space for self-assertion, and a covert challenge to the west, and was seen as such by at least a section of the bhadralok. In the May-October 1936 issue Chitra carried an essay exhorting Indian producers to develop technical expertise to avoid dependence on imported technology from the west. It was declared that Indian cinema had started out with an imitation of western techniques and methods of production, and continued as such even though contemporary technicians had proved themselves as adept as their western counterparts. The writer

lamented that no encouragement/inducement had been offered to technicians to carry out independent research which could make the Indian cinema industry "really self-supporting, healthy and progressive".<sup>30</sup> Declaring that Indians would be "mere imitators and not creators" as long as they continued to work without co-ordinated effort, it was suggested that "our producers should...get together and have some kind of collaborative Research Institute...For, until and unless we are prepared to face facts and organise our resources so as to make our technical body a creative force, there can never be any hope of this industry being acclaimed as anything but one built and dependent upon imitation of others."<sup>31</sup> The writer concluded with the following plea for self-sufficiency, even if industry folk did not muster mutual trust to collaborate as suggested above:

Our suggestion for such cooperation will perhaps be considered too idealistic, in as much as our producers are too suspicious of one another ever to pool their own resources even for their own benefit. In which event we would suggest that every producer should at least for his own benefit make it a point to include in his production expenses, on every picture that he makes, a certain sum of money which will be set apart expressly for research work...which may make our industry independent of outside assistance in the future and also impart to it a reputation which will be respected throughout the world.<sup>32</sup> This essay is reminiscent of the trend of 'Atmasakti' or self-sufficiency propagated by Rabindranath Tagore during the Swadeshi Movement in Bengal.<sup>33</sup> New Theatres' 1938 hit 'Deshar Mati' (The Motherland) had a storyline that drew directly on the Tagorean ethic of self-sufficiency and self-help, in large scale agriculture,<sup>34</sup> and was publicised as follows:

'The Motherland' – Never to my knowledge has a bolder or more sincere effort been made in the history of the Indian screen to embody the ideals of constructive and co-operative living, *sane nationalism* (emphasis mine) and eloquent appeal to go back to the land of our forefathers, as is being made by Nitin Bose in his latest venture, which he has titled The Motherland – aptly enough, the Bengali title literally translated means 'our national soil'.<sup>35</sup> In fact, New Theatres' Tagore connection is a much told story in histories of Indian/Bengali cinema. Towards the end of 1931 Tagore had arrived in Calcutta with a Visva-Bharati drama troupe to put up a stage production of his musical opera 'Natir Puja'. Upon Birendranath's request for a film version Tagore obliged, consenting to the filming of the stage presentation.

For five days, a 20-member New Theatres' crew, which included Subodh Mitra, who became a well known director in the 1940s, litterateur Premankur Atorthy and ace technicians Nitin and Mukul Bose, worked with the Santiniketan team.<sup>36</sup> Obviously, the project was expected to be a resounding success, as it had been decided that 50 per cent of the film's proceeds would go into funding Tagore's Sriniketan<sup>37</sup> project, and was vigorously publicised through the distribution of posters and handbills throughout Calcutta.<sup>38</sup> The 10,577-foot long cinematic version of 'Natir Puja', released on March 22, 1932, though a commercial failure, must have added significantly to the prestige of New Theatres, since contemporaries clearly identified the project as a Tagore handiwork. The Bengalee wrote:

Rabindranath has immortalised in poetry that sublime tragedy which the twilight of an autumn witnessed in a solitary corner of the king's garden at Magadha half a millennium before the birth of Christ. Natir Puja, for that is the name of the film version of the poem performed by the students of Shantiniketan, started its run at Chitra on the 22nd, Vasanti Purnima day, the date of the birth of Lord Gautama. As everyone knows, apart from the charm lent to it by the poet, the story has an intense appeal of its own. And considering the fact that the artists were all amateurs in their teens, it may be said without hesitation that the charm has not suffered and the interest of the play has been maintained throughout. The songs, under the direction of Mr Dinendra Nath Tagore, have been well sung and are sure to be appreciated by all, especially the swan song of the dancing girl. But the most striking feature of the film is the interpretative dance of the artiste who played the role of Srimati. To Rabindranath belongs the credit for revival of this ancient Indian art and its inclusion in this film must give an opportunity to many, who have not seen it danced by the poet and his pupils during the seasonal festivals he is in the habit of celebrating in Calcutta, to see and admire these dances.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, B N Sircar, though attributing the commercial failure of 'Natir Puja' to the short shooting schedule,<sup>40</sup> nevertheless cited the project as a memorable episode in the history of New Theatres, making obvious the significance attached to this association with Bengal's leading light.<sup>41</sup>

The prestige/respectability attained by New Theatres through the Tagore connection was buttressed by B N Sircar's own reputation of being a gentleman. In 1932, a letter to the editor of a

contemporary film journal carrying the heading 'A Very Reasonable Man' contained the following appraisal of B N Sircar:

Referring to your comments in the leading article of your issue dated 24th instant regarding unfair treatment meted to the Bombay productions by Local Exhibitors, who are producers also, I presume this refers to New Theatres Ltd. I am also an agent of one of the leading Bombay producers and I had the same impression in the beginning but on approaching Mr B N Sircar personally I find that I was mistaken and that he is a very reasonable man and always fair and gives justice wherever it is due. To prove this I will quote the following example, which is self explanatory. My picture 'Saubhagya Sundari' is having a run at present in New Cinema and Mr Sircar has given me better terms than what his own production 'Puran Bhagat' enjoyed. To be more explicit 'Puran Bhagat' was discontinued for further weeks when a gross taking amounted to a certain figure while 'Saubhagya Sundari' will continue to run for further weeks even if the income is a couple of hundred rupees less than that certain figure of 'Puran Bhagat'. This proves the justice given by Mr Sircar to Bombay productions.<sup>42</sup> That New Theatres was identified with bhadrakal Bengal becomes further evident from the following description of B N Sircar in the Indian Cinematograph Year Book of 1938, "He is the gentleman of the industry – his personality is at once inspiring and pleasing. Culture is written all over him".<sup>43</sup>

It would be reasonable to assume that the nationalist-respectability subtext, in place since New Theatres' early days, and glorified in later literature/popular discourse,<sup>44</sup> was an important element in the coalescing of New Theatres' iconicity. It is my understanding, however, that the most decisive element which made New Theatres an icon was, as mentioned earlier, its success as a commercial concern. The next section of the paper locates the birth of iconicity in the triumphs of a bhadrakal enterprise at a time that may be characterised as one of general dystopia for the bhadrakal.

#### IV

#### Amidst Dystopia

The 1930s were a period of great flux in the political economy of Bengal. Bengal, which had been the key player in Indian nationalist politics till the mid-1920s, saw itself being marginalised in the 1930, with the central Congress leadership displaying a growing apathy towards the bhadrakal who dominated the Bengal Congress.<sup>45</sup> In his two-

volume autobiographical work published at the beginning of the 1930s, the noted scientist, Prafulla Chandra Ray, noted, "The Bengali is now awakening to the fact that his leaders are very old men, that no one is taking their place, and that whether in Delhi or inside the Congress his representatives have little influence. The political centre of gravity is shifting northwards and westwards."<sup>46</sup> Marginalisation in national politics was accompanied by a minimisation of the bhadralok's regional hegemony, an outcome of what Joya Chatterji has called "the emergence of the mufassil in Bengal politics".<sup>47</sup> Chatterji shows how the metropolis, which had dominated Bengal politics till the end of the 1920s, increasingly became less significant from the early 1930s, as political fortunes began to be determined by the Muslim vote concentrated in rural and small town Bengal.<sup>48</sup> This transformation, an outcome of the Communal Award of 1932 and Government of India Act of 1935 which enlarged Muslim representation in the provincial assemblies at the expense of the Hindu vote, culminated in the accession of the Krishak Praja Party<sup>49</sup> – Muslim League ministry led by Fazlul Haq in 1937.

The new ministry soon set in motion a series of reforms that affected the interests of the Hindu bhadralok. As Joya Chatterji enumerates:

In 1938, the Fazlul Haq ministry changed the rules about police recruitment so that "while enlisting Bengali constables the Superintendent of police must see that not less than 50 per cent of the recruits are Muslims". In the same year, the ministry passed legislation that stipulated that 60 per cent of all government appointments be reserved for Muslims. In 1939, the government instructed local bodies "not to propose for appointment to local bodies persons who were known to be actively opposed to the policy of the ministry", and slapped administrative controls on nominations to the union boards, which accounted for one-third of their total membership.<sup>50</sup>

Rajat Kanta Ray, in his discussion of the end of Congress rule in the Calcutta Corporation,<sup>51</sup> a bhadralok bastion since 1924, notes that the shift in the balance of forces in the arena of municipal politics was clearly manifested, soon after the new ministry came into power, in the new favourable position of the Calcutta Electric Supply Corporation vis-a-vis the Calcutta Corporation. From the beginning of the 1930s, the Congress had been pressing for a take-over of the Electric Supply Corporation arguing that it would reduce the total cost of consumption per year, a proposal repeatedly rejected by the government. The new

Muslim ministry, which was backed by European big business interests, rejected the take-over proposal in the legislature, even amidst scathing criticism from Congressmen. Thereafter, in 1939, the Calcutta Municipal Amendment Act formally put an end to Congress supremacy in the Calcutta Corporation. The next year, the ministry introduced the Secondary Education Bill, which wrested control of higher education in the province away from Calcutta University and vested it in a Secondary Education Board in which Muslims were to be given a greater say. As Chatterji puts it, "Higher education was not only a mainstay of bhadralok power and influence, it was also a symbol of their exclusive identity. In threatening their control over this vital asset, the bill also challenged the very basis of their 'cultural superiority'..."<sup>52</sup> Like higher education, administrative and political appointments had been bhadralok preserves, and this challenge in a hitherto uncontested public sphere greatly unsettled them.<sup>53</sup> The blow was all the more severely felt as bhadralok incomes from land had fallen drastically during the Depression, the crisis being compounded by the enactment of anti-zamindar legislation by the Haq ministry.<sup>54</sup>

The 1930s also witnessed a shift of economic power in the region from Bengali entrepreneurs to the Marwaris, a business community of western India who migrated to Bengal in the late 19th and early 20th century. This process may be dated to the First World War and was consolidated in the 1930s. In his autobiography, Prafulla Chandra Ray lamented the economic conquest of Bengal by non-Bengalis, chiefly the Marwaris and Gujratis, and to a lesser degree the Punjabis,<sup>55</sup> noting that businessmen from western India had been able to influence government policy through the capture of such bodies as the Federated Chamber of Commerce.<sup>56</sup> Commenting on the commercial milieu of late colonial Bengal, Jawaharlal Nehru also observed, "Calcutta has been and continues to be the chief centre of British capital and industry, and the English and the Scotch dominate business there; but they are being caught up by the Marwaris and Gujratis. Even petty trades in Calcutta are most often in non-Bengali hands".<sup>57</sup> Though John Broomfield has argued that the relative absence of Bengali capital in Calcutta should be viewed as an indication that Bengalis were responding to new opportunities in the hinterland,<sup>58</sup> the fact remains that Bengali entrepreneurship was now a thin presence in the economic/commercial nerve centre of eastern India.



Omkar Goswami has shown that the rise of Marwari enterprise was accompanied by the fall of a small group of Bengali bhadralok from earlier positions of affluence.<sup>59</sup> These firms, which had prospered for a while since the days of the Swadeshi movement,<sup>60</sup> lost their vitality and petered out from the city's economic landscape by the 1940s.

### Seeing Cinema with New Eyes?

Broadly speaking, therefore, the Bengali bhadralok was undoubtedly at the receiving end of things, though, of course, the extent to which they were affected remains debatable. Given the above mentioned circumstances, however, it is my understanding that closer competition in the established spheres of public life, such as politics and government jobs, led the bhadralok to better appreciate opportunities thrown up by newer, relatively unexplored avenues like the cinema. In his autobiography, actor Dhiraj Bhattacharya, who started his career in 1929,<sup>61</sup> describes the following conversation with his uncle, clerk in a merchant office:

Suddenly, uncle asked, "How much are they giving you each month?" Fanning the flames of envy, I exaggerated somewhat, "One fifty now, it'll become five hundred once 'Kalparinay' releases." Eyes wide open, uncle gasped, "Five Hundred?" Nonchalantly I replied, "O yes, what's great about this." The way cinema is becoming popular by the day, it'll be easy to earn thousand a month in a year's time". Dumbstruck, uncle stared out of the window...Still staring out, he said dully, "What are you saying? People with BA, MA degrees consider themselves fortunate if they can earn hundred a month. And you people will earn that much by just colouring your face and cavorting with those females?" Clearly I had destroyed uncle's peace for some time to come.<sup>62</sup>

The above interaction indicates that cinema was opening up to the imagination of middle class Bengalis. Further, it may be surmised that though having to compete with The Marwaris, who, by the 1930s, were a formidable presence in the film industry,<sup>63</sup> the limited nature of Muslim involvement in Bengal's cinema industry made it a relatively safe investment for the bhadralok, otherwise challenged in all spheres of public life by the Muslim component.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, the cinema had also become an epitome of technological progress and 'modernity' to educated Bengalis. The Filmland Puja Special of 1935 carried an essay by the Maharaja of Santosh, a prominent member of Calcutta's elite circles, that

extolled the cinema as representative of a new age, "if the present age indicates anything it indicates motion...The old modes of entertainment suggest a static condition and that is why they are going out of existence. Cinema indicates motion. In a whirlpool of action, the total world is epitomised; its total knowledge is codified".<sup>65</sup>

Taking cue from the above observations, there is room for the argument that a growing awareness and appreciation of cinema, on the part of the bhadralok, produced sentiments of self-worth in the triumphant moments of bhadralok enterprise.

### A Triumphant New Theatres

In the wake of the success of 'Manzil' (1936) the New Theatres mouthpiece declared, "As I predicted, 'Manzil' the Hindustani version of 'Grihadaha', has been declared another all-India triumph for New Theatres. With the release of this latest opus of Pramathes Barua, the stock of 'Jumbo' (the Elephant) has risen yet another score of points to a new high – as they say in the Stock Exchange at New York!"<sup>66</sup> The jubilation in the above declaration is telling. New Theatres' strategy of double versions was bearing fruit at a time when it was increasingly being realised that it was imperative for Bengal's film industry to move beyond Bengal if it was to sustain commercial viability, and there were calls for more undertakings in the direction of multi-lingual features. An article in the Filmland Puja Special of 1935 had made the following case in favour of diversification:

The language is a great drawback. A Bengali Talkie is a commodity which has a demand only in Bengal, Assam and in certain cities of northern India where a considerable number of Bengali immigrants reside...if the Bengali studios go on manufacturing Bengali films only, it will be hardly possible for them to keep themselves going on businesslike lines. Though Kali Films have been one of the pioneers in producing Bengali Talkies, they have produced a few Tamil-Telegu pictures as well as one Hindi-Urdu film 'Amina', in addition to their Bengali productions. Radha Films' 'Manmoyee Girls School' has no doubt captured the Bengali public but the studio could not possibly flourish on productions of this nature alone.<sup>67</sup> According to Pradip Krishen, it was the practice of making films in double version that had projected Bengali filmmakers like Devaki Bose to all-India standing.<sup>68</sup> Contemporary accounts testify that New Theatres was better organised and financially more stable than most concerns in Bengal, one of



the few that could successfully compete with Bombay; one such account cited below clearly celebrates New Theatres as an exception to the rule:

Bombay studios know the marketing of the films all over India much better than the Calcutta studios. Excepting the New Theatres, whose publicity organisation is much more perfect than any other studio of India, all other Calcutta studios suffer very seriously from improper publicity organisation and the exploitation side of the films is practically at nil compared to the Bombay studios.<sup>69</sup> By the mid-1930s, New Theatres was being named one of the top studios in the country – “The major producers...number about 20...Amongst these major concerns Ranjit, Prabhat and New Theatres Ltd. are the leaders. The direction of progress depends upon them”.<sup>70</sup> According to Baburao Patel, editor of *Filmindia*, a leading contemporary film magazine, “The best were the movies produced by B N Sircar. Santaram’s were slightly crude but B N Sircar’s films were very fine...B N Sircar’s ‘Vidyapati’, ‘Manzil’ were great films. He had these great people – P C Barua, Devaki Bose, particularly, and Nitin Bose...Bombay Talkies films were quite good, not great. Not on par with the films of New Theatres.”<sup>71</sup> Such assertions assume significance when inserted into the political and economic milieu of late colonial Bengal. As discussed above, Bengal, in the 1930s, was beginning to lose its earlier prominence in national politics, and the *bhadralok*’s earlier dominance in the regional politics and economy was being seriously challenged. It is my understanding that New Theatres, a leading concern that was clearly identified as ‘*bhadralok*’, was on its way to acquiring an iconic status by the middle of the 1930s because it expanded and flourished at a time when, generally speaking, the *bhadralok*’s fortunes were on the ebb. In fact, by the latter half of the 1930s, New Theatres was clearly anxious to negate all regional connotations. As publicity for the Hindi version of New Theatres’ great hit ‘*Mukti*’, released in northern India in December 1937, the house magazine wrote:

Those who have been fortunate enough to have seen the Bengali version of ‘*Mukti*’, which was released three months ago, will have had their appetites whetted for the release of the Hindi version of this superb creation of Pramathes Barua. It is not necessary to understand the Bengali language to see this great picture. So simple has been the treatment, so delicate the touch of the artistes, so subtle the psychological

reflexes, that the picture unfolds itself and you do not need to understand language at all, but you know the poignancy of the story that is unfolded before your eyes.<sup>72</sup>

In a similar vein, a poster in the same issue declared that ‘*Mukti*’, which still awaited release at some centres had already “created a New Record at Delhi.”<sup>73</sup> Evidently, the desire was to project a trans-regional/national persona, which, it may be assumed from the above discussion, had become crucial for the *bhadralok* at a time when they were being challenged/marginalised within the province and in the country at large.

## V

The exaltation of the dead ‘elephant’<sup>74</sup> has been pervasive in contemporary Indian popular media,<sup>75</sup> more specifically in West Bengal. As concluding comments to this paper, I would like to offer an insight into the enduring iconicity of New Theatres, viewing nostalgia against the backdrop of a failing Bengali film industry.

On his death, on November 28, 1980, an obituary to B N Sircar in a leading Calcutta daily informed, “New Theatres (also) made films in Hindi to cater to a wider market – a practice that is being advocated to tackle the current problems of the film industry”.<sup>76</sup> Economic crisis has been a recurrent note in the Bengali film industry since the end of the 1960s. Speaking of the crisis of Bengali cinema, Kironmoy Raha observes, “When by the late 1960s one indifferent film after another failed at the box office, Bengali commercial cinema did not know where to look for remedies”.<sup>77</sup> The industry had been riding on the shoulders of a star system, that too, began failing in the 1970s, when even reigning matinee idols, Uttam Kumar and Suchitra Sen, failed to deliver the goods.<sup>78</sup> At the same time, from the 1970s the commercially viable Bombay/Hindi cinema became a closer reference and mainstream Bengali cinema began incorporating the ‘*masala*’<sup>79</sup> elements of Hindi cinema, like fight sequences and archetypal villains, to somehow produce a more saleable package. ‘*Amanush*’ (1974), and ‘*Ananda Ashram*’ (1977), two of the most successful Bengali films of the late 1970s, both featuring Uttam Kumar, blended the Bombay formula with the Bengal landscape. However, ‘*Amanush*’ and ‘*Ananda Ashram*’ were exceptions and most of Uttam Kumar’s later films lost out at the box office. Raha comments, “Only when a producer from Bombay, Sakti Samanta, came with his resources and experience...people thronged the theatres...But the very success of these two films showed up the

deficiencies when producers here tried out anything on their own".<sup>80</sup> Though a new 'formula',<sup>81</sup> inaugurated by Anjan Chowdhury's 'Shatru' (1984) brought audiences back to the theatres in the mid-1980s, mainstream Bengali cinema had largely lost out on its mainstay, the Bengali bhadralok. Mainstream Bengali cinema now came to be characterised by a move beyond the metropolis of Calcutta in search of subjects and core audiences.

The Bengali film industry remained bogged down by economic crisis through much of the 1980s and 1990s. Through this period, mainstream Bengali cinema, by and large, came to be characterised by a mofussil and/or folk ethos. The Bengali cinema that had been characterised 'middle class'<sup>82</sup> (read bhadralok) was no longer the bhadralok's preserve. Viewed against the above backdrop, one begins to comprehend the nostalgic tone of contemporary (post-1980) discourse on New Theatres, that gloats over a golden era of Bengali cinema when the perfect marriage of economics and respectability ruled the roost.

#### Notes

1. Brochure published on the occasion of a screening of selected New Theatres films under National Film Heritage, a collaborative programme of the Centre for Development of Instructional Technology and the National Film Archives of India, February 18-23 (1985), (Centre for Development of Instructional Technology for India International Centre, New Delhi, 1985).
2. Bhadrakok is a generic term used widely in Bengal to refer to an educated, though not always affluent, middling to upper stratum of society. The historical data provided by scholars like S N Mukherjee and John McGuire provide room for the argument that the category bhadralok refers to both a class of aristocratic Bengali Hindus, and those of more humble origin. While some of them had made their fortunes through service to the Mughals, most of them "rose from poverty to wealth" in businesses and occupations as varied as shipping, indigo plantation, banyans to the British, purchasing zamindaris and flour mills. Below this group were the large shopkeepers, small landholders and white-collar workers in commercial and government houses, teachers, 'native doctors', journalists and writers. This group was referred to as the 'madhyabitta' in early 19th century Calcutta, S N Mukherjee, Calcutta: Essays in Urban History, (Calcutta: Subarnarekha, 1993); John McGuire, The Making of a Colonial Mind: A Quantitative Study of the Bhadrakok in Calcutta, 1875-1885, Australian National University Monographs on south Asia, no 10 (1983).
3. Kanan Debi's tribute to B N Sircar on the occasion of the release of New Theatres' 100th film. For details see Bagiswar Jha, B N Sircar: A Monograph (Calcutta: The National Film Archives of India, Pune, in association with Seagull Books, 1990), 53.
4. Umashashi Debi's tribute to B N Sircar. For details see Jha, *ibid*.
5. David E Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880-1940*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 1990), 29-84, 339-77.
6. Kalidas Nag, 'Bengal's Cultural Contribution to the Screen' in *Indian Talkie 1931-56: Silver Jubilee Souvenir*, (Bombay: Film Federation of India, 1956), 13.
7. See Gourangaprasad Ghosh, *Sonar Daag* (Calcutta: Jogomaya Prakashani, 1982), 141-43; Jha, *op cit*, 3-25; Robi Basu, 'Talkie'r Swarnajug Ebong Chalachhitre Uttaran', *Anandalok*, March 31 1990; Ashoke Sen, 'Remembering New Theatres', *The Telegraph*, March 15, 1991; 'The Renaissance Man of Indian Cinema, B N Sircar', a documentary film on B N Sircar, on Doordarshan, July 9, 2000; Telecast of coverage of B N Sircar's Centenary Celebrations, on ETV, September 17, 2001; 'Kathae Kathae', a live programme on New Theatres and B N Sircar on Doordarshan Calcutta, October 30, 2002.
8. Jha, *op cit*, 7-8; Arundhati Ray, 'The Drama of New Theatres, All Over Again'.
9. *Cine Advance*, December 5, 1980.
10. Actor/filmmaker; in 1934 founded Bombay Talkies, the best equipped studio of the country in the 1930s and 1940s.
11. Popular religious cult in Bengal.
12. 'Notes and News' in *Varieties Weekly*, March 1934.
13. Arabindo Mukhopadhyay, 'Shastri Debaki Kumar' in 100 Years of Debaki Kumar Bose (Calcutta: Eastern India Motion Picture Association, 1999).
14. Interview with Panna Raiji (Shah), July 7, 2002. Her thesis was published as *The Indian Film* (Bombay: The Motion Picture Society of India, 1950). One of Bengal's best known music directors, Pankaj Mallick, started his film career at New Theatres.
15. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, January 1, 1940.
16. *Chitravas*, Vols 2 and 3 (14), 101.
17. *Ibid*, 101.
18. *Ibid*, 101.
19. M D Chatterjee, 'Rising Costs and Crushing Taxes' in *Indian Talkie 1931-56: Silver Jubilee Souvenir* (Bombay: Film Federation of India, 1956), 29.
20. For details see Anupam Hayat, *Bangladesher Chalachhitre Itihas*, (Dhaka: Bangladesh Chalachitra Unnayan Corporation, 1987), 9-12.
21. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, November 20, 1983, 28.
22. *Jugantar*, July 26, 1984.
23. *Ibid*.
24. Interview with Dilip Sircar, Calcutta, August 18, 2002.
25. *The Illustrated Weekly of India*, November 20, 1983, 28.
26. *Ibid*, 28.
27. Interview with Dilip Sircar, Calcutta, August 18, 2002.
28. Till date, the only feature on a filmmaking concern

- commissioned by the government of India.
29. Bioscope, Vol 18, March 8, BS 1330 (1923).
30. Chitra, Vol 2, No 2. May-Oct (1936), 1-3.
31. Ibid, 1-3.
32. Ibid, 1-3.
33. Anti-colonial resistance movement against the Partition of Bengal, 1905-08. The movement has often been seen as the initial coming together and subsequent parting of ways of Indian nationalists. Sumit Sarkar has identified four strands within the Swadeshi Movement. First, the old moderates, Surendranath Bannerjee and Gopal Krishna Gokhale who believed in constitutional methods but were deeply offended by Curzon's aggressive measures. Second, leaders of society who until 1905 had called for a process of self-strengthening or 'Atmasakti'; Rabindranath Tagore is the best example of this legion. Third, a new generation of assertive leaders who propounded passive resistance and boycott and also violence if repression became intolerable. Among the main votaries of this form were Lala Lajpat Rai, Tilak and Aurobindo Ghosh. Finally, there were small bands of angry young men who took to the cult of the bomb, believing revolutionary terror to be the only language the colonialists would understand.
34. For the storyline of 'Deshar Mati'/'Dharti Mata' see Rajadhyaksha and Willemen (eds), *The Encyclopaedia of Indian Cinema*, 236.
35. Chitra, December, 1937.
36. Ashoke Nag, 'The Reel Tagore', *The Telegraph Magazine*, March 18, 1990, 10.
37. One half of the twin campus of Visva-Bharati, Sriniketan, 3 km distant from Santiniketan, is made up of a cluster of institutes/Bhavanas and centres engaged in tackling the different aspects of rural rejuvenation and reconstruction. The genesis of Sriniketan lay in Tagore's scheme for rural reconstruction started in his ancestral estates as early as 1905. The present-day campus was established in 1922 with focus on rejuvenation of village society through the development of village crafts, upliftment of health and improvement of agriculture through the methods of science.
38. Nag, op cit, 10.
39. *The Bengalee*, March 28, 1932.
40. The Santiniketan group could only allot five days as Tagore was then preparing to leave for Europe to raise funds for the Sriniketan project. The trip was eventually cancelled, when Mahatma Gandhi, hearing that Tagore was undertaking the long journey in failing health, dissuaded the latter, and arranged for funds.
41. Chitravas, Vols 2 and 3 (14), 102; Also see B N Sircar, 'Films Are Made in a Crisis All Over the World' in Jha, op cit, 44.
42. *Filmland*, July 1933.
43. B D Bharucha (ed), *The Indian Cinematograph Year Book*, 74.
44. Ghosh, Sonar Daag; Jha, op cit; Tributes to B N Sircar by film personalities at a programme at Nandan on the occasion of B N Sircar's birth centenary, June 9, 2002.
45. For details on the Bengal Congress' growing rift with the central leadership see Joya Chatterji, *Bengal Divided*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994), 18-54, 103-49.
46. Prafulla Chandra Ray, *Life and Experiences of a Bengali Chemist* (Calcutta: Chuckervertty, Chatterjee & Co, 1932), Vol 1, 471.
47. Chatterji, op cit, 55-102.
48. Ibid, 18-102.
49. Led by Abdul Kasem Fazlul Haq, the Krishak Praja Party drew its strength from the mass following it enjoyed among Bengal's Muslim peasantry and intermediate shareholders.
50. Chatterji, op cit, 107-08.
51. Rajat Ray, *Urban Roots of Indian Nationalism: Pressure Groups and Conflict of Interests in Calcutta City Politics, 1875-1939* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1979), 194.
52. Chatterji, op cit, 108.
53. Ibid, 18-54, 103-49.
54. Joya Chatterji points out that while such legislation equally affected Muslim zamindars, "(For the) Muslim elites such as the Dacca Nawabs, economic losses in their estates promised to be amply compensated for by the rewards of office. But the Hindu zamindars faced the prospect of further economic loss without corresponding political gains", *ibid*, 107.
55. Ray, op cit, Vol II, 433-35, 451, 470.
56. Ibid, Vol II, 472.
57. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (OUP, New Delhi, 2002), 333.
58. John Broomfield, 'The Rural Parvenu: A Report of Research in Progress' in *Mostly About Bengal: Essays in Modern South Asian History* (Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1982), 240-57.
59. Omkar Goswami, 'Calcutta's Economy: 1918-1970: The Fall From Grace' in Chaudhuri (ed), *Calcutta: The Living City*, 88-96.
60. For details see Sumit Sarkar, *Swadeshi Movement in Bengal: 1903-08*, (McMillan, New Delhi, 1973).
61. Bhattacharya's first film was Madan Theatres' 'Sati Lakshmi' (1925). This was followed by a long pause, and his film career actually started in 1929 when he joined Madan Theatres as a salaried artist.
62. Dhiraj Bhattacharya, *Jakhan Nayak Chilam* (New Age Publishers, Calcutta, 2000), 45.
63. Marwari and Gujrati businessmen had been quick to appreciate the scope for profit in the fast growing cinema industry. One of the first to invest in the industry was Lalji Haridas, a businessman from Kathiawar, who founded M/S Lalji Hemraj Haridas in Calcutta, a firm dealing in piece goods. In 1918 he secured the Bengal agency for the Kohinoor Film Company of Bombay, and became agent for Sharda Pictures in 1926. In 1930 he was managing Jupiter Cinema in Calcutta. With the advent of the talkies, he secured the distributing rights of, among others, Bombay's Wadia Movietone, Paramount Film Company and Shree Vishnu Cinetone. In 1936-37, Haridas managed the Bharat Laxmi

Theatre in Calcutta. By 1937-38, he was one of the leading distributors of Indian films in eastern India, Burma and the Far East, with offices in Calcutta, Rangoon and Singapore respectively. In 1938, Lalji Hemraj Haridas were the sole agents of Wadia Movietone, Paramount, Indian Liberty Pictures, Shree Vishnu Cinetone, Jaybharat Movietone, Diamond Pictures, Daryani Productions and Wishvakala Movietone for Bengal, Bihar, Orissa and Assam. Similarly, Bajrang Lal Khemka, one of the first among the Marwaris to go into the film business, had been dealer in piece goods, jute, hessian, importer of sugar and motor spare parts, and invested part of his profits therein in the fast expanding film industry. In 1932, soon after New Theatres was formed, Khemka started the East India Film Coy. In 1937 he launched the Metropolitan Pictures in Calcutta. Soon he owned cinema houses in various parts of the country. Radha Kisen Chamria of Radha Film Co, Babulal Chowkani, proprietor, Bharat Laxmi Pictures, and exhibitor/distributors H M Chamria and Chandanmal Indrakumar were other Marwari business magnates who claimed a plum share of profits accruing from Bengal's film industry. These businessmen were close competitors of the Bengali bhadralok, men like B N Sircar, Anadi Bose, proprietor of Aurora Film Corporation, P N Ganguly, proprietor, Kali Films, P C Tagore, chairman of the Board of Directors of the Film Corporation of India, or producer/distributor Prafulla Ghosh, proprietor of Prafulla Pictures formed in 1936. Aurora, for instance, though one of the leading 'Bengali' distributors in Calcutta was evidently operating on a much lesser scale than Lalji Hemraj Haridas. Compared to the latter's holding of sole distributing rights of eight Bombay concerns, Aurora, in 1938, was distributing for New Theatres, Radha Film Co, Bharat Laxmi Pictures and Kali Films. Further, Aurora was not distributing for New Theatres in the most significant eastern region, as revealed by Dossani Film Corporation's claim of being the sole distributing agent for Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Burma for New Theatres. B D Bharucha (ed), *The Indian Cinematograph Year Book* (The Motion Picture Society of India, Bombay, 1938).

64. Till the mid-1920s, there is no evidence of Bengali Muslims' involvement with the cinema. The first involvement came in 1927-28 when members of the family of the Nawab of Dhaka made an experimental short film 'Sukumari'. In 1929, the same group embarked on the project of a full length film, released as 'The Last Kiss' in 1931. These initiatives apart, Bengali Muslim involvement in the film industry, through the 1930s, was confined to solitary figures like Kazi Nazrul Islam and Abbasuddin Ahmed. Though later initiatives like the Chalachhitra Darshak Samiti (1939) and Bengal Tiger Pictures (1941) were patronised by some of the Muslim elite like Fazlul Haq and Humayun Kabir, they were marginal projects, and Bengali Muslims, by and large remained detached from the film industry, so much so that Dhaka had no organised film industry till after independence.
65. Raja Sir Manmatha Nath Ray Chowdhury, 'Does Cinema Read the Spirit of the Age', *Filmland Puja Special* (1935).

66. *Chitra*, Vol 2, No 2, May-Oct (1936), 4.
67. P Trivedi, 'Indian Film Industry: Our Difficulties', *Filmland Puja Special*, 1935, 42.
68. Pradip Krishen, 'The Heady Thirties', *Fifty Years of Indian Talkies (1931-81): A Commemorative Volume* (Indian Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Bombay, 1981), 40-44.
69. K P Ghose, 'My Impressions of Bombay', *Filmland, Puja Issue* (1934), reproduced in Bandopadhyay (ed), *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties: A Celluloid Chapter Documentation* (Celluloid Chapter, Jamshedpur, 1993), 41.
70. Jatindra Nath Mitra, '4th Feb 1931 to 31st Dec 1934: What Happened and What Will Happen?', editorial, *Moving Picture Monthly, Annual Issue*, (1935), reproduced in Samik Bandopadhyay (ed), *Indian Cinema: Contemporary Perceptions from the Thirties*, 29.
71. Baburao Patel, 'Film Journalism Down the Ages', *Fifty Years of Indian Talkies (1931-81)*.
72. *Chitra*, December (1937).
73. *Ibid*.
74. The New Theatres' emblem.
75. News item titled 'Ajke' on the occasion of B N Sircar's centenary, on Doordarshan Calcutta, July 5, 2000; A documentary film on B N Sircar, titled 'The Renaissance Man of Indian Cinema, B N Sircar' on Doordarshan (national network), July 9, 2000; repeat telecast of the documentary on Doordarshan Calcutta, July 15, 2002 and August 21, 2002; telecast of first episode of docu-serial 'The Story of New Theatres', on Doordarshan, July 28, (2001); second episode, February 4, 2001; third episode, February 11, 2001; fourth episode, February 25, 2001; fifth episode, March 4, 2001; Telecast of press coverage of B N Sircar's centenary celebrations, on ETV, September 17, 2001; news item on New Theatres on Star News, September 6, 2002; a live programme 'Kathae Kathae' on B N Sircar, on Doordarshan Calcutta, September 30, 2002.
76. *The Sunday Statesman*, November 30, 1980.
77. Kironmoy Raha, *Bengali Cinema*, (Nandan West Bengal Film Centre, Calcutta, 1991), 72.
78. From 1976-77, most of Uttam Kumar's films failed at the box office. For details see Gourangaprasad Ghosh, *Amar Ami*, (Calcutta: Dey's Publishing, 1980). Suchitra Sen's last film was 'Pronoy Pasha' (1978).
79. A generic term used to refer to the formulaic Hindi film.
80. Raha, op cit, 72.
81. "He made no attempt to copy Hindi popular films and did not rely on stars. He invented his own Bengali formula of escapist entertainment and served his fare in a manner which the Bengali viewers liked"; Raha, *ibid*, 72.
82. "The films that were made in Calcutta, by and for the middle class, were mostly inspired by literature...Bengali cinema became Bengali middle class sentiments peppering romance and music"; Rajat Ray, *Banglar Chalachhitra Sanskriti* (Srishti Prakashan, Calcutta, 2001), 15.

# Second Home<sup>1</sup>

ROHAN DEV ROY

Ninety-nine students writing their mathematics papers in the selection test in a rectangular study-hall without any invigilator supervising it. This is the memory of the exam I last appeared for in the secondary residential school which grew me up. I joined that school while I was barely 9 years old and left it when I was almost 17. In the Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith (Purulia) conformity to the set codes (niom) of the institution is ensured through a balance between the fear of a 'spectacular' punishment, the strategic network of 'disciplinary' protocols and a subtle, but constant and even at times unaware, engagement with one's 'self'.

The life of a student in the junior classes revolved around a calendar of fears. Secretary Maharaj, the head of the Institution, hardly ever shocked us with a visit without notice. 'The Vidyapith Court' was seldom convened. Incidents of caning or bashing were indeed very rare. We did not know of more than a couple of 'cases' who received Transfer Certificates ("which could not be challenged at the court of law and the Vidyapith Prospectus specifically mentions this," we were warned). But, their possibility was never contested, giving kids below their teens perpetual nightmares.

The Vidyapith was referred to as our 'second home' bound by a chain of affection. "Ghar chara pai ghar/ apon holo por..." Thus went the 'Vidyapith anthem'. We were 'governed' with an art that was analogous only to familial care. The occasional harsh and abusive comment was defined as a contingent moment. 'Toder bhalor jonno'. Our school had a claim for knowledge over all its students as individuals. The wardens, the teachers who lived with us could 'compare, differentiate and hierarchize between us.'<sup>2</sup> Bicchu cheley. Baddho cheley. Pampered cheley. Boroloker cheley. Paka cheley. Mature cheley.

The Vidyapith hated punishing us. It had embarked on a project of 'normalizing' us. "Education is manifestation of the perfection already in man,"<sup>3</sup> we were repeatedly reminded. The teachers and the hostel wardens in collaboration with the student-monitors, who were secretly caricatured as 'man eaters', had set out on the task of correcting the 'imperfections' in us: unpunctuality, absences, inattention, negligence,

impoliteness, disobedience, insolence, idle chatter, 'incorrect attitudes', irregular gestures, lack of cleanliness. Any deviation from the 'norm' exposed us to 'a whole range of subtle procedures : from light physical punishments to minor deprivations and petty humiliations'. In the vocabulary internal to Vidyapith the student-monitors had a rather deceptive designation: sevak. The sevak was expected to function in such a way as if he thought that he were in the service of those whom he 'governed' i.e. his juniors and batchmates.

If 'the perfect disciplinary apparatus is that which makes it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly'<sup>4</sup>, then the Vidyapith, in certain aspects was an almost perfect disciplinary apparatus. During drill time, at 5:30 in the morning, we assembled in the parade grounds grouped in four different 'platoons' in 'perfect alignment, immobility and silence. Each platoon was divided into three rows and a definite number of 'sections'. The cadets were arranged according to their height and each had a fixed row and a section. Such an arrangement enabled the platoon commanders through a mere cursory glance, and via him the Physical Education teacher, to locate whether anyone had skipped the session. Such cadets were considered physically unfit for the day and were 'relieved' of their duty to join their friends at play later in the afternoon.

Our school boasted of 22 fairly well maintained playing fields which were located on either side of a narrow avenue. The monks and the staff who had developed the habit of taking evening walks through that avenue, often halted to appreciate our performances on the field. We received their indulgent glance as a disciplining gaze that regulated every emotion expressed while at play, including the frustration of being out first ball for a duck.

Play over, as dusk approached Purulia, clad in white dhoti and kurta we headed towards the shrine. Away from our homes, suffering the claustrophobia of a monotonous hostel routine, the shrine to many of us provided refuge. In a regimented voice, in that congregational moment as we sang 'khandana bhaba bandana' a vague sense of spirituality engulfed us. The usual protocols of discipline seemed unnecessary. The

ambience, the changing shades of weather in nocturnal Purulia took away the restlessness in us, at least for some time.

The study was a huge rectangular hall where the hundred of us were arranged into five different rows. In each row sat twenty students facing the blackboard on the wall and the photograph of Sri Ramakrishna above it. The study-supervisor sat behind all of them and kept watch. It emerged as a brilliant strategy which enabled one teacher to regulate the behavior of a hundred students.

At times we had to write 'statements'. The 'power of writing' formed an essential part of the mechanisms Vidyapith employed to 'discipline' us. The statements were 'public'<sup>5</sup> confessional, apology letters usually addressed to the warden or the chief warden (in more serious cases). These statements formed the evidentiary basis of the Annual Conduct Reports that were sent home to our parents along with the Marksheets.

In the Vidyapith any achievement was explained to have emerged out of a combination of individual skill and divine grace. Purushokar and Kripa.<sup>6</sup> This was only one among the many ways of restraining our expressions of euphoria and questioning the legitimacy behind pride and complacency.

The hostel room that I had to share with five other classmates was the site of intense relaxation. It was the cocoon we retired to at the end of a tired day and discussed ourselves and our homes. We had to chat in a low voice because talking was prohibited after the 'third bell'. In the distinct pronunciations emerging out of our different dialects, the cultural lineage and the social ambience we brought with us, it seemed that the hostel room could house different worlds. The homogenizing strategy implicit in the uniform failed to erase the traces of those places to which we actually belonged. The hostel room was 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible'<sup>7</sup>. In the depth of the night, as the sevak and their bosses slept anticipating another hectic day that awaited them, I occasionally woke up to discover best friends (best-tuos, as they were called in our school) sharing beds. In those moments poet Bhaskar Chakrabarty seemed most appropriate:

*"raat dupure manusher janalay uki mere dekhechi ami  
khola shorirer opor, khela korche, khola shorir  
holud bichana, bheshe choleche sorger dikey..."<sup>8</sup>*

The most minor component of the academic curriculum in Vidyapith was the class on Indian Culture, I.C (I was miserably unaware of the

completely different connotation the abbreviation I.C was to play later in my life. The political movement I had been a part of while in college was Independent's Consolidation, I.C). We had to attend one I.C class every week. One of the many books suggested to us as texts included 'Self-development'.

It was basically an ethical manual on the 'self'. The I.C classes harped on the cultivation of three fundamental qualities: honesty, purity and unselfishness. Read in the specific context of my school these qualities could be reduced to produce very specific meanings.

Honesty meant refraining from the use of illegalities during an exam. Purity implied abstinence from homosexual ventures. Unselfishness meant sharing among friends the food that was supplied to us during the 'guardian days'. The reiteration of these normative manuals in the dining hall, in the shrine, in the hostel room, in the school assembly, in the play ground assured that the entire span of seven years might appear like an I.C class in extension.

Conformity to the set codes of the institution was most effectively established through an ethical obsession with the 'self'. Even where the institutional strategies exposed its limits, we as individuals continued to grapple with the techniques for self-improvement. We began to fashion ourselves as the moral subjects of our own actions. Even in the most private moments we were locked in a constant tussle against masturbatory fantasies, against greed, against lethargy. The manuals of self-improvement pointed towards 'asceticism'<sup>9</sup> – meditation, confession, exercise. In the intensely collective existence which the hostel room made possible, we could without much effort constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others.

*"Bahirer ei bhikkha bhora thali/ ebar jeno nisshehe  
hoy khali/ antaro mor gopone jay bhore/ ..... hey  
bondhu mor, hey ontoro toro/ e jibone ja kichu  
sundoro / sokoli aaj beje uthuk shure..."<sup>10</sup>*

The spiritual discussions in Vidyapith presented us with two unachievable goals, the immediate and the more distant. The Vidyapith projected us with exemplary role models, the kind of beings whose beatitude we could aspire towards if we behaved in a moral way, in ex-students who invariably had done exceptionally well in their studies. We failed miserably whenever we tried to model ourselves on Tridip da, Debanjan da or Santanu da because their images which were presented to us did not conform to the reality.

'Tridip da, Debanjan da or Santanu da' were mythical artifacts constructed in the folklores of Vidyapith. Another more complex and distant goal was that of mukti – freedom, which the path of self-improvement ultimately aspired for.

*"Aro koto dure ache shey anondodham.  
Ami sranto, ami andho, ami pawtho nahi jani"* 11

The 'path' to 'freedom' seemed to us hazy and obscure as it did to most of our teachers.

With hindsight, I am amazed at the remarkable similarity between the I.C classes and the Moral Science syllabi at Holy Cross, the convent school that I attended as a toddler before joining Vidyapith. As I journeyed from one missionary school to another, text-books changed their titles. The normative values they inculcated remained much the same. The Vidyapith was structured into a secularized catholic ethos, despite its deep Hindu leanings. The disciplinary strategies employed bore the resonance of the normalizing mechanisms which had their origins in the Christian Schools, military academies of the 17th and the 18th centuries.

The predictable reactions to the repressive schedule of hostel-life were rarely, if ever experienced. In Vidyapith, we seldom perceived ourselves as repressed. We had learnt to adapt our definitions of happiness and freedom within the permissible limits of 'niom' that the Vidyapith imposed on us. It was in Narendrapur, during my higher secondary days, that some of us emerged as notorious authors of naughty anecdotes involving some of the monastic members of the faculty and the conformist breed of students. But, that is a different story.

In Vidyapith, Bangla was certainly more than a medium of symbolic communication. We came into being through Bangla. Bangla signified the horizon of possibilities within which life could be celebrated. The outside world defined us through Bangla. "Medhabi authocho kebla". "Diligent but unsmart". "Banglay strong, English e kacha."

Two years later, as I stood in front of the colossal gates of 'up campus' Presidency, I was struggling to shake off the 'missioner cheley' tag around me. I was keen on exploring the company of women and desperate to improve my English.

Yet, I have failed to unlearn Vidyapith. She returns to me not merely as the nightmarish memory of that tough mathematics paper I faced in the selection tests, but also as the everlasting impressions of our young headmaster, my admiration for whom I have seldom concealed. Saikatesh da. The best looking man I have ever known. My most favourite singer. A monk. A poet.

*"Tomar kache, kache thekeo onek dure  
Onek dur o icche hole kache boshe  
Ulka pater tarar jonno matir achol ashon patey  
Tomar kache ke ba thake. Tomar kache key ba  
thake.  
Tomar kache, dure thekeo onek kache."*

#### Notes :

1. This is an unworthy tribute to Saikatesh da, Bodhisattva Kar and Manas Ray.
2. Michel Foucault, "The means of Correct Training", The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow, p195.
3. This is how Swami Vivekananda defined education.
4. Michel Foucault, "The means of Correct Training", The Foucault Reader, ed. Paul Rabinow, p191.
5. Immanuel Kant, An answer to the question: What is Enlightenment? , informs my use of the word public.
6. Letters: Swami Turiyananda.
7. Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', Diacritics, Spring, 1966.
8. Bhaskar Chakrabarty, Bhromon, Shitkaal kobey ashbey Suparna? 1971.
9. This expression is Foucault's, quoted in Ian Hacking, 'Self-Improvement', in David Couzens Hoy (ed.), Foucault : A critical reader.
10. Rabindranath Tagore, Geetabitan, p 43.
11. ibid. p.170



# The Course of Stem Cell Research : From Science to Politics of Ethics

NAIBEDYA CHATTOPADHYAY

## How cellular totipotency led to stem cell concept

Mammalian cell totipotency is a subject that has fascinated scientists for generations. Totipotency, a term most likely used for the first time in 1909, refers to the capacity of a portion of an organism to generate or regenerate an entire new organism. In higher mammals, totipotency has proved difficult to achieve. Instead, multipotency and pluripotency of mammalian cells have been explored in recent decades. By injecting embryonic carcinoma (EC) cells derived from the central portions of mouse embryoid bodies into blastocysts, scientists have demonstrated that EC cells can contribute to the development of most of the tissues and cell lineage in the newly formed mosaics. These observations led them to conclude that these EC cells remain multipotent, despite being passaged in vivo as an ascites tumor for 8 years. Culture conditions were subsequently established that allowed the isolation of pluripotent embryonic stem (ES) cells from mouse embryos.

## What are the raw materials for embryonic stem cells?

In 1998, researchers discovered that ES cells could be derived from early human embryos. Interest in stem cells has been greatly stimulated by the isolation of human ES cells and their potential use in cell-based therapies. How are ES cells derived? In human, the fertilization of an egg by a sperm generates a zygote that thirty hours later begins to divide. By the third to fourth day the embryo develops to a compact ball of twelve or more cells called a morula. At this stage cells are totipotent which means that it has the potential to create any type of cell necessary for embryonic development (this included extraembryonic membranes and tissues, the embryo itself, and all postembryonic tissues and organs). After several more divisions, the morula cells begin to specialize and form a hollow sphere of cells called a blastocyst. A blastocyst is a ball of cells consisting of a hollow outer layer of cells named the trophectoderm (TE) and the cells inside inner cell mass (ICM). The cells of the ICM are pluripotent, which means that they are able to give rise to many, but not all cell types necessary for fetal development (for example, they are able to give rise to fetal tissues, but not placental tissue). It is this pluripotent stem cell that is currently

under investigation for medical use. These pluripotent stem cells can give rise to all cell types of the three embryonic germ layers, i.e., ectoderm, mesoderm, and endoderm, and the germ cell lineage.

In recent years, ES cell lines (cell line refers to immortalized cells with unlimited power to divide like cancer cells) have been derived from the ICM of human embryos. The established human ES cell lines had the ability to renew themselves continuously under appropriate culture conditions and to develop into cell lineages from all three embryonic germ layers. Thus, ES cells have almost unlimited regenerative capacity and can potentially provide an unlimited source of adult cells, such as bone, muscle, liver, or blood cells, brain cells, cardiomyocytes, pancreatic islets and the cells of the vascular system. Despite a tremendous interest in ES cells, relatively little is known about what defines their pluripotency and what drives ES cells to differentiate into specific cell types.

The pluripotent cells then further specialize into another type of stem cell, a multipotent stem cell. Multipotent stem cells are committed to give rise to cells that have a particular function, for example, blood stem cells give rise to red blood cells, white blood cells and platelets, skin stem cells give rise to the different types of skin cells, mesenchymal stem cells give rise to muscle and bone forming osteoblasts and so on.

## Recipe for culturing embryonic stem cells

In laboratories, ES cell lines are derived from explanted culture of the ICM and can be maintained in an undifferentiated (and pluripotent) state by culture in the presence of the cytokine LIF (leukaemia inhibitory factor). LIF is a polyfunctional glycoprotein cytokine whose inducible production can occur in many, perhaps all, tissues. LIF acts on responding cells by binding to a heterodimeric membrane receptor composed of a low-affinity LIF-specific receptor and the gp130 receptor chain also used as the receptor for interleukin-6, oncostatin M, cardiotrophin-1, and ciliary neurotrophic factor. LIF is essential for blastocyst implantation and is used extensively in experimental biology because of its key ability to induce embryonic stem cells to retain their totipotentiality.



With few exceptions, the methodology for ES cell differentiation involves formation of embryoid bodies EBs, cellular aggregates that undergo a program of differentiation reminiscent of embryogenesis. Initial formation of extra-embryonic endoderm from outer cells is followed by processes recapitulating proamniotic cavity formation and establishment of primitive ectoderm-like gene expression in the pluripotent cells, which subsequently differentiate into cell types representative of all three embryonic germ layers. Progenitor cells formed within EBs differentiate further to form a variety of mature cell types including nerves, cardiomyocytes and blood in a manner that reflects developmental progression in vivo.

### Applications of embryonic stem cell research

Given the almost unlimited regenerative capacity and the potential to generate any body tissue, ES cells hold great promise for the cure of degenerative human diseases. Chronic diseases are common and deadly. Stem cell therapies have received intense interest for the repopulation of damaged or diseased tissues. A detailed understanding of the similarities and differences between embryonic stem cells and somatic stem cells will enhance our understanding of mechanisms of tissue repair or cellular augmentation. Recent studies have utilized emerging technologies to define a molecular signature of embryonic stem cells and selected somatic stem cell populations. These strategies will be useful for the definition of a molecular program that promotes a stem cell phenotype (i.e. stemness phenotype). The use of cell biological and molecular technologies will enhance our understanding of embryonic and somatic stem cell populations and their molecular regulatory events that promote multipotentiality.

It also has a great application in regenerative medicine. Regenerative medicine is an emerging, but still poorly defined, field of biomedicine. However recently, the extension of knowledge about cell biology and embryology has naturally moved the focus from tissue restoration to tissue regeneration. The main problem of regenerative medicine is not so much stem cell differentiation, isolation and lineage diversity, although these are very important issues, but rather stem cell mobilization, recruitment and integration into functional tissues. The key issue in enhancing tissue and organ regeneration is how to mobilize circulating stem and progenitor cells and how to provide an appropriate environment ('niche') for their tissue and organo-specific recruitment, 'homing' and complete functional integration. We need to know more about basic tissue biology, tissue regeneration and the cellular and molecular mechanisms of tissue turnover (both cellular and extracellular components) at different periods of

human life and in different diseases. Systematic in silico, in vitro and in vivo research is a foundation for further progress in regenerative medicine. Regenerative medicine is a rapidly advancing field that opens new and exciting opportunities for completely revolutionary therapeutic modalities and technologies. Regenerative medicine is, at its essence, an emergence of applied stem cell and developmental biology.

### Therapeutic cloning to reproductive cloning to quagmire of ethics

Under specific culture conditions, ES cells can be committed into a variety of differentiation pathways, giving rise to large amounts of cells corresponding to different tissues (neurons, cardiomyocytes, skeletal muscle, etc.). However, producing these tissues from already established ES cell lines would lead to immune rejection when transplanted to patients. To prevent this pitfall and using the expertise accumulated in animal cloning by nucleus transfer, it has been proposed to adapt this technique to human ES cells. The therapeutic cloning consists in transferring the nucleus of somatic stem cells isolated from the patient into an enucleated oocyte, to allow blastocyst development from which ES cells will be derived. From these stem cells, compatible tissues will be then produced. The problem is that it is in theory possible to reimplant the cloned blastocyst into a surrogate mother for obtaining a baby genetically identical to the donor. This is called reproductive cloning. This worrying risk raises important ethical and legal questions. These ethical issues threaten to paralyze public funding for ES cell research leaving experimentation in the hands of the private sector. The bioethical controversy about public policy in the United States regarding human stem cell research primarily pertains to the sources of stem cells that are aborted fetuses, unimplanted embryos following in vitro fertilization (IVF), and embryos created through IVF or cloning for research purpose. On the one hand, the debate about the use of federal funds for this research was not resolved by President Bush's policy, announced in August 2001, because only a few cell lines are available under this restrictive policy. On the other hand, debate persists about whether the US should adopt a prohibitive, regulatory, or permissive policy toward the deliberate creation of embryos for biomedical research through somatic cell nuclear transfer. Although there is a wide consensus about the need to ban cloning-for-reproduction, there is deep division, reflected in the work of the U.S. President's Council on Bioethics, about a possible ban on cloning-for-biomedical research. Ethical controversy will probably persist about both types of policy, and the policy stalemate will probably also continue, because of fundamental disagreements about the moral status of the early embryo. One must

not forget that at the core, U.S. is an evangelical country.

### **From ethics to politics**

As with any governmental policy making in a democratic set up, approval, regulation and prohibition of certain advanced medical research and technology, especially when they could invoke moral disputes in society, requires public debate. Public policies on organ transplantation, definition of death, euthanasia, genetic screening and diagnosis are recent examples in western countries. Public debate on human stem cell research is likely to be worse as Biblical dogma dopes the minds of common Americans. The concept of consensus is elusive, along with the measures to secure it. Technocratic decision making, as a paternalistic activity frequently led by experts, sometimes poses a challenge to democratic decision making, supposedly based on a well-informed and rational public. Since public involvement in such kind of policymaking is unlikely to yield a solution to ethical value conflicts in society, politics will be writ large.

### **Status of India in the science and ethics of stem cell research**

Free from the ethical and governmental barricades that stand in the way of American scientists working on human embryonic stem cells, Indian researchers think that they can forge ahead in the field by taking advantage of some tight restrictions on U.S.-funded research set by President Bush. Two Indian research organizations, the National Center for Biological Sciences in Bangalore and Reliance Life Sciences in Bombay possess colonies of a total of ten cell lines. Government spending, however, on stem cell research program has been a modest \$200,000, last year. But futuristic experiments like stem cell research are a low priority in a country in which millions of people have no access to basic health care. Our most urgent health needs are still good vaccines, drugs and clean water.

Lack of restrictions in India is due to the absence of public clamor against stem cell research and most of the scientific work here is being conducted quietly. Despite the increasing scientific enthusiasm in stem cell research in India, some health activists warn that the combination of traditional Indian prejudice against female babies and the nationwide rise of sex-selective technology and abortions could give rise to unscrupulous dealings in human embryos for stem cell research. Although most Indians are unaware of the controversial nature of this research, not some traditional Hindu priests, the foremost of whom, Shankaracharya Jayendra Saraswati, who is

currently sitting in the jail on a murder charge, said in a written statement, "Abortion, artificial insemination or even test tube babies are sinful acts and are not acceptable." But it is anticipated that barring occasional religious disapproval of stem cell research, most Indians will remain passive to this issue.

### **Justification of stem cell research in India from our past**

Let me end this article on a funny note. It is well known that Americans are masters in making wild fiction out of scientific theory and the potential of stem cell research has evoked all sorts of Frankensteinian imagination. But Hindu Indians also have a mythological approach towards science as we are given to understand that our past was glorious with no match. The best example I can come up with is a passage written by Nirad C. Chaudhuri in his book, *The Autobiography of an Unknown Indian*. Mr. Chaudhuri writes about the high tide of Bengal Renaissance near the end of nineteenth century:

"Towards the end of the century the Hindu counter-reformation swung to the opposite pole of grotesqueness. Every Hindu custom and every Hindu taboo found its justification in some theory of electricity and magnetism. At times even the science of bacteriology, new at the time, was invoked. It was proclaimed that if a Hindu kept a pigtail it was only as an electromagnetic coil; if he bathed in Ganges it was because an unspecified European (for preference German) scientist had demonstrated that Ganges water killed bacteria instantaneously; if he fasted at full and new moon it was only to counteract the gravitational forces of the sun and the moon; the Diwali illumination was supposed to be a collective lighting of fire for burning up the poisonous gases given off by the earth on that evening."

That was then and now it is said by some that perhaps stem cell research was altogether a lost science of ancient India. By citing our story from the Adi parva of mahabharata, Dr Matapurkar of the Delhi Maulana Azad Medical College thought that the ancient sages of India must have perfected the art of regenerating entire human beings from cells. In that story, it is said that after two years of pregnancy, Gandhari delivered a *pinda* [a ball of flesh]. It was then handed over to the sage Dwaipayana, who then divided it into one hundred parts and treated with herbs and ghee. The pieces were then covered with cloth and kept in a chamber to cool for two more years; out of them the Kauravas were born.

A sense of smug satisfaction like this is something which Indian scientists should avoid in pursuing a field of knowledge like stem cell research, which has immense potential.

# A Movable Life

DIPAK RUDRA

It was time to strike camp again, and a fresh surge of nostalgia threatened as I looked at the accustomed sprawl of books, pictures and potted plants, crystal and china and carpets, a lifetime's memorabilia scattered about in our fifth floor eyrie in upmarket Alipore. From there the city seemed distant, the trees and open skies around filtered and muffled the street level welter below. In a sense, the same process of filtration and distancing had taken place with old friends and coevals, valued acquaintances and even close relatives. Three years in a bank had been an escape from known realities, a sudden isolation in corporate heights one has never experienced before in the civil service. And, like all things good and bad, this too had to end. Moving to Salt Lake in winter, hopefully, would be our final encounter with cardboard, hessian and straw, the breakage and loss always more mental than material.

The first few rounds of this business of packing and moving and settling in were relatively easier. The stints at each place – Midnapore, Contai, Calcutta, Howrah, Darjeeling – were short, never far beyond the second year, and all our earthly effects went comfortably into jeep trailers and half-trucks. Partings, too, were less painful, though the human interfaces at this stage were more intense and genuine – with village teachers, small-town lawyers and doctors, a museologist, a Sanskrit scholar and part-time homoeopath, a poet-publisher, and nameless fellow travellers in flood relief, elections, riot and Naxalite control, people who made the daily grind of the field years bearable and often enjoyable.

Our early homes were nondescript regulation-PWD, hence eminently forgettable – except the ones in Howrah and Darjeeling. The first was a collonaded 18th century mansion, a brewery manager's flight of fancy older than the Raj Bhawan, which we briefly rescued from the grime and soot of the railway yard behind it; the second, a wistaria-clad Scottish country house named Rivershill, its overgrown garden smothered by azaleas and arum lilies, with a ringside view of the Kanchenjunga and the Little Rangeet from its gabled bay windows. We did not stay long enough in either to savour their delights fully, to entertain and fill them with laughter and grace.

Shifting to Delhi in the tenth year of service was a major break – the pre-Asiad capital was still bearable, without its fancy flyovers and present-day

five-star frippery. As a Minister's aide, one secured accommodation some notches above one's entitlement, close to India Gate and Purana Qila. Travel now meant crossing continents and time zones, as often as one had crossed districts in the past, and the bare flat in Bapa Nagar started filling up with cut glass and curios, wall hangings, souvenirs and plaques, most importantly toys for the children. Long hours at Udyog Bhavan and sheer physical distances precluded any sustained re-discovery of the city, but a status-conscious P.A. brokered a first car for us – a second-hand Fiat with a leaky radiator – and ensured mobility. So, weekend forays to Suraj Kund or Rohtak, once even up to Mussoorie and Hardwar, became possible, and assuaged the guilt of one's frequent junkets abroad.

Of our immediate neighbours we knew little – they were too senior to hobnob with the likes of me! Our toddlers and their maid (an acquisition from rural Howrah) insisted on socializing though, and regaled their local counterparts with their mixture of sign language and highly inventive Hindi.

Half the extended family – two brothers, two sisters, a niece – was firmly ensconced in Delhi already, and while they provided convenient middle-class co-ordinates, a Rajput colleague in the Ministry and his princess took charge of us and literally swamped us with their feudal generosity. Sundowners in coffee shops and guided tours of the city's night life alternated with lavish trysts with the sasural (the Jodhpurs and HRH Baroda, no less), casual gifts of Balenciaga and Jacques Fath topped off polo lunches at the Roshanara. This profligacy of attention extended to our tours with the Minister – box seats for Covent Garden plays, cognac and chocolates left in one's hotel rooms, a chance to hear Trini Lopez live at the Golden Gessakai – and when we weighed anchor at last, even the foreign posting coming up spelt desolation and heartbreak.

The thought of living and working in Germany, xenophobic by all accounts, shaken by ostpolitik and the Baader Meinhof, was depressing. Ma, from her sickbed in Calcutta, urged us to go – hadn't I always wanted to be in the IFS, never mind whether we would ever see her again. We prepared to leave in a hurry, before we changed our minds, but both the children came down with measles, and for a fortnight we sat and ate on our crates and boxes, slept on khatias borrowed from my P.A., and listened to Vividh Bharati.

Easter and April showers awaited us in Frankfurt, the freezer was stocked for a week, my Bengali second-in-command oozed confidence and *gemuelichkeit*. The apartment was spacious and airy, fitted out like a film studio set, carnations and nasturtiums were in bloom on the balcony, yet we felt we did not belong. We clung to ourselves and our fifty basic sentences of Hochdeutsch for a while, then ventured forth to decipher street signs and strassenbahn routes, locate spice shops and supermarkets with summer sales. Slowly, as the language and the autobahns shed their terrors, we discovered Banerjees and Gangulys in Stuttgart, Roys and Haldars in Altena, Sens in Dietzenbach, and a Porsche-driving, Kalighat-bred Chattopadhyay in nearby Offenbach.

Fairs in Cologne and Berlin brought in silver- and brassware makers from Moradabad, garment exporters from Delhi and Ludhiana, leather dealers from Calcutta and Madras, and the electronics whizkids from Bangalore and Bombay. Whenever we took them home for dal-roti or machherjhol-bhat, the nights turned long and raucous, and often next morning there would be stern little notes in our letter box – "The Rudra family believes in sleepless nights", "We live here too, you know", "Next time we'll call the police"! Indeed, as in Delhi, we rarely saw our Teutonic neighbours, except our landlord and the dentist downstairs. The people out on our quiet linden-lined street were all old, or so it seemed, abandoned by children who had grown up and gone away. Even the pretty Lutheran church, framed by our kitchen window, had few takers but the dead and their mourners.

Ma left us in 1977, with a year left of our sojourn in alien corn, and one rushed back, in driving September rain, for the obsequies. It was never the same again, though a Pakistani family of four, and our own dear Consul General, purveyed much sweetness and warmth over the long, dark winter. One last white Christmas, a broken wrist encased in plaster, and we were almost through.

Returning to Calcutta, initially, was a continuum of the idyll. The Italian villa on Red Cross Place, complete with Carrera marble floors and Corinthian pillars, would have done a count proud, and, despite the Gandhian I served in Raj Bhavan, we decided to live out the dream – an impossible blur of parties and house guests, chandeliers, polished mahogany grand staircase, soft-footed retainers, the whole works. Not to mention the rats in the pantry and the bats on the terrace – the rats came, we were told, from Curzon Park, when they tired of the vegetarian offerings of their Rajasthani devotees!

Stately homes have never been our destiny, and in eleven months flat we were back in a Government ghetto on Ironside Road, amid kindred

souls and service mates. At long last we were in a para, befitting our descent to normalcy, and for fourteen years we learnt to conform and adjust, to do our beds and clean our toilets, visit and receive the long-lost and the newly-found, join clubs, fight, love, write, sing, and turn bibulous at the slightest pretext. Durga Puja in our quadrangle became a focus of our lives, as did the annual school and college examinations. The children grew from careless infancy through awkward adolescence to youth and strength, the gul mohurs and kadam trees dressed and undressed with seasonal certainty, and familiarity, inevitably, bred a measure of contempt. A sudden crop of High Court judges entered our campus, quick to shed their judicial distance and eager for acceptance. A much-admired Calcutta buff martyred himself; another, a veritable firebrand, dared Writers' Buildings and stayed at home with his dogs. When the monsoon came, for a whole decade rain water rose knee-deep in our ground floor flats, and all around us the laid-back gardens and bungalows of the Lahas and Chowdhurys and Mukherjees gave way one by one to high-rise monstrosities. Our telephones started going on the blink on weekends – after all, old Ballygunge had become mini-Burrabazar, and the newcomers needed their hawala and hundi connexions more than we did!

The last lap – retreat to the eastern wastelands – looked bleak and uncertain. How, we asked, would we survive the rest of our years beyond the Bypass? (Cities, like human beings, want bypasses as much for status as for survival). There would be mosquitoes, surely, the water had too much iron, public transport was scarce, the markets were understocked. Would there be doctors at short notice, plumbers, electricians, cable operators, domestics? How far was the police station, the post office, the nearest medical centre? Should we invest in an air-conditioner, or would a desert cooler do? Silly, unfounded fears blotted out the anticipation, the expected pleasures of having a place to call one's own, a final transplantation to spread out and take root. Perhaps it was the distance, the separation from known worlds, that one dreaded the most.

Yet the years away from the corridors of power have not been wholly static. True, the silences lengthen by the hour, and death is no longer a visitor to unknown homes. The winters are sharper, the summers more searing, but there is a burgeoning of the future all around. Swanky new hotels and hospitals, take-aways, malls and multiplexes, call centres, jewellery and software parks rise overnight from the marshes. Men and jackals scurry into the shadows beyond Mollar Bheri, and, in the white heat of a city on the move, furiously making up for lost time, one has scarcely any space for memories of a portable life.

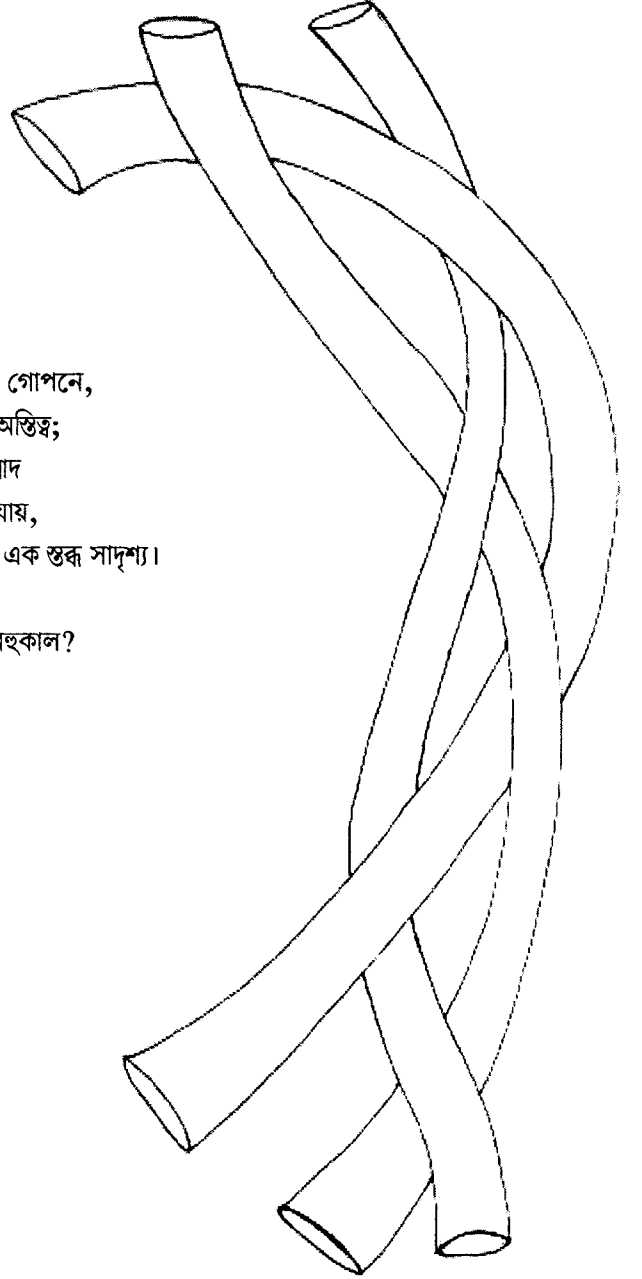
# সহবাস

সন্দীপ্ত নাগ

প্রতিধ্বনিত হয়েছে, কখনও?  
পাতার মশারি ছিঁড়ে,  
কতবার হতে পেরেছ  
কিংশুক কিংবা রক্তকরবী?  
কখনও কি মনে হয় সাংঘাতিক  
এক ভূমিকম্পে ভেঙে যাবে রাজাসন,  
খসে পড়বে খোলস, বৃত্ত যাবে মুছে?

পাখোয়াজ মানুষ এখন জাল ফেলে গোপনে,  
টেরিলিন চিবুকে সময়ের উপোসী অস্তিত্ব;  
সময়কে অবজ্ঞা করে যে উলঙ্গ উন্মাদ  
ঘাসের বয়স মাপতে মাপতে চলে যায়,  
মনে হয়, কোথায় যেন রয়ে গেছে এক স্তব্ধ সাদৃশ্য।  
তবে কি ও আমাদেরই আত্মজ?  
অপ্রকাশে রয়ে গেছে অপরিচিত, বহুকাল?

নতজানু হয়েছে কখনও?  
এক আকাশ তরঙ্গিত মুহূর্তের জন্য?  
আলাপে, কিংবা সংলাপে, কিংবা  
বেদনার হলুদ দ্রাঘিমায়?  
তবে কি এখন আর সোনার কাঠির  
ছোঁয়ায় কেঁপে ওঠে না রূপোর পালঙ্ক?  
ঘটে না সহবাস?  
বৃত্তহীন বেঁচে থাকায় স্বরূপ হয়নি জানা?  
অরূপ শৃঙ্খলে শুধু অজস্র বীথিকা,  
রোদে আর বৃষ্টিতে, ছায়ায় আর ধ্বনিতে।



# হাওয়া বাগান

রঞ্জিত সরকার

উনিশশো বিরানব্বুই-এর  
শেষ চেয়ে-রাঙা মেয়ে - ঝুম কঁদেছিল।  
আতান্তর! এসবের আমি কিছু জানি?  
তাই ব'লে আমি কি কাঁদিনি?

কান্নার কথা তো নয়! রাগী বন্যতা  
মেঘপুঞ্জ শীকরাভিমান  
হাওয়াবাগানে ঠেলে দিয়ে  
বেনো জলে ভেসেছিল। কণন বাজিয়ে  
মার্জনার অছিলায় দায়িত্বটি নিয়ে  
কাঁদছিল - কান্নায় মাথুর - কাছে এসো,  
যেটুকু বুঝেছি - যাও, দূরে যাও - রাজা, ভালোবেসো।

তার মুখে টোল। রেজালার ঝোল  
বাঁ হাতে মুছিয়ে দিতে, বলল, কী হল ...

হঠাৎ কাঠিন্য এল। আমার ফ্যান্টাসি  
শুনতে আগ্রহ নেই : লিখুন না, লিখেই ফেলুন!  
আপনি কলমটি নাকি? আজ তবে আসি।

ফিরবার পথে  
এবড়োখেবড়ো রাস্তা গোম্পদ জাঙাল  
কোন্ যেন অ্যাভিনিউ - একটি লোহার শিকে  
আরেকটু হ'লেই - হাত আটকে দিলুম।  
বলল, আমি দেখেছি তো!  
শ্রোতা তো নিঃঝুম, কিন্তু অনর্গল  
বকে গেল ... তাই না, কী ভালো হল ! ... আমাকে চেনেন? তবে এবার চিনুন।

দুটি বাসে উঠে গেছি।  
আমার আহিরীটোলা, ওর লেকটাউন।

(লেখকের অনুমতিতে পুনর্মুদ্রিত)

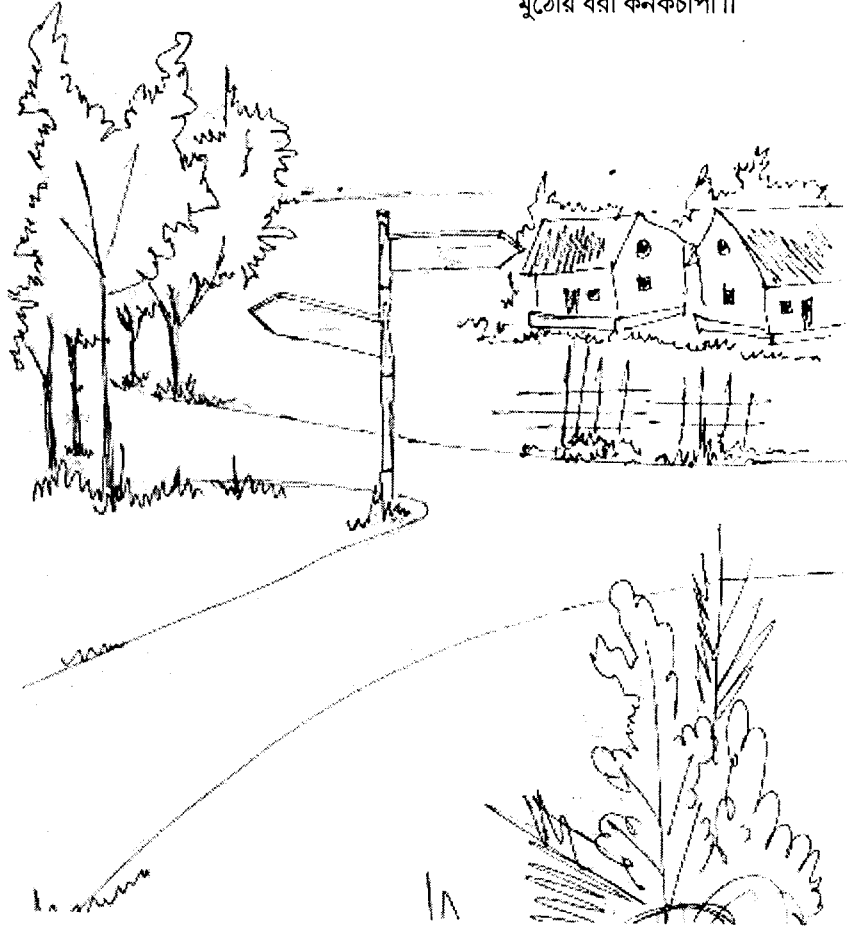
# মুঠোয় ধরা

দেবলীনা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

আমার আকাশ সোনা আকাশ কালো—  
মনটা যখন যে তান ধরে  
আলোর সাথে সুর মিলিয়ে,  
চোখের কাজল জলে ধুয়ে,  
সেই রঙেতেই রাঙে আমার  
আকাশ সোনা আকাশ কালো ॥

আমার ভালো লাগার লাল করবী—  
নতুন দিশায় পথ বিছিয়ে  
হাত বাড়িয়ে ছোঁওয়ার আগে,  
হঠাৎ পাওয়ার পূর্বরাগে  
আকুল হাওয়ায় দোলে আমার  
ভালো লাগার লাল করবী ॥

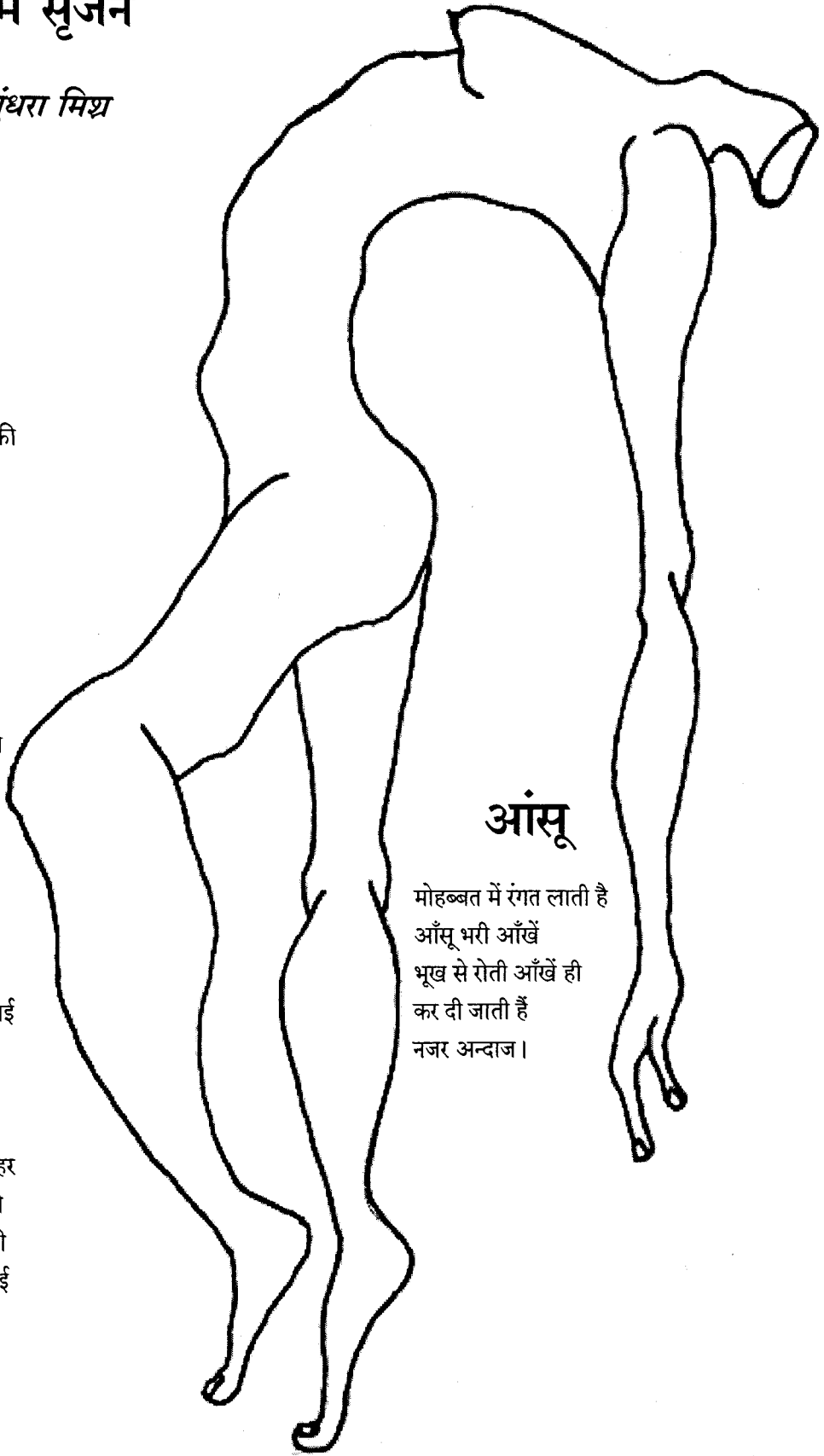
আমার মুঠোয় ধরা কনকচাঁপা—  
দুঃস্বপ্নের শেকল ছিঁড়ে  
আজ সকালের আশার থালায়  
আকাশ কালোর রাত সরিয়ে  
আবার ওঠে হেসে আমার  
মুঠোয় ধরা কনকচাঁপা ॥



# प्रथम सृजन

वसुंधरा मिश्र

शब्दों का आकार बनाई  
रंगों का परिवार लाई  
भावों का उपहार लाई  
करती जो जीवन साकार  
छीटा-कसी दो हृदयों की  
सुख-दुख भरी सहेलियों की  
टीस-कराह विधवाओं की  
आनन्द भरे उपदेशों की  
भरी टोकरियाँ लाई  
कविता ही लाई  
कुछ कहती नेताओं की  
कुछ भूखे बच्चों की  
वर्तमान देश की छवि की  
भिन्न विचारों की है बगिया  
कविता की फुलवारी लाई  
नदियों की धारा में बहती  
जीवन की सच्चाई लाई  
मेघों के श्यामल रंगों की  
विहँस कथा ले आई  
न जाने क्या-क्या ले आई  
रहस्य स्वयं ही समझ न पाई  
हो सके तो बंजर खेतों को  
दे-दो कविता की तरुणाई  
संभव है फूटे उनमें  
प्रथम सृजन का बीज मनोहर  
भर जाए वह फल-फूलों से  
बस हर ओर फैलें हरियाली  
यह निराली कविता ही लाई



## आंसू

मोहब्बत में रंगत लाती है  
आँसू भरी आँखें  
भूख से रोती आँखें ही  
कर दी जाती हैं  
नजर अन्दाज।



# Parting Blues (and Reds)

## *Of a Derozian*

DIPANJAN RAI CHAUDHURI

One of the better aspects of life is that time passes and things change. I leave this place which has fashioned much of what I am and, then, again, I come back. Every time, the ambience is different, from the faculty with its varied opinions, hidebound or free soaring, clash of ideas and of personalities, tradition and iconoclasm, boredom and care, to the boys and girls with their preoccupations, aspirations, dreams, and conflicts. Visible is the fine dust of time's passage on the trees, ledges, doors and windows, portraits and boards, visible are new structures and wrinkles on the old, ugliness and beauty.

If I have to put my finger on the one thing which is like a maker's mark, elusive but indelible, that quality which leads even a brief exchange between any two of us to a recognition of the common origin, and is the foundation for mutual respect even within the tension of opposing ideas and opinions, I would point to the Derozian spark which each of us picks up here, whether one likes it or not. One may be ignorant of its presence and be surprised when it suddenly leaps out of one's own mind overthrowing convention and conformity, or, one may even throw away the inheritance and conform to values set by others, but the sense of loss will then last like the ghostly feeling of an amputated limb: a hound of heaven.

Nothing is good enough but the truth. As Maitreyee asked of Yaajnabalkya, 'Yenaaham naamritaayaam kimaham tena kuryaam?'

One may not be strong enough to bear the truth, or to live by it, but one must testify to it, to bear witness by searching for it or, even, fighting to show its non-existence. But this must be a search undertaken by oneself. What is not allowed is to accept without scrutiny other people's truths, or, rather, what they say are truths. What is not allowed is to give up one's own intellectual journey. Everything must be analysed and scrutinised for falsity, rectified and understood. Nothing can be taken on authority, without question, for granted, however hoary its history and impressive its pedigree. This is what we learn here. This is the spark.

How did I know of this, of what was required of me? A part was the contribution of my teachers. Their scrupulous intellectual honesty, encouragement of inquisitiveness and inquiry, disdain for all lies, show and trappings, the legend of these lives spent in search of truth were the pointers to how life may be lived without too much regret. Whenever a decisive act was called for, involuntarily the messages flashed, "What would they have thought of it, would they have approved?" Alas, we are pale shadows of our teachers. Have we been able to transmit the spark? I do not know.

Then, there were classmates and batchmates and dasas and juniors. We crossed foils in discussion, the points not always buttoned. Blood was drawn at times. Quarter was neither asked for nor given. Ideas were sharpened, logic learnt, knowledge assimilated. Exchanges were not as desiccated as this perhaps suggests. There was a whole culture to unfold, what books to read, what music to hear, what films to view, what pictures to see, what poetry to marvel at. There was romance and love, heartbreak and ecstasy, and all this was also the truth, its colouring and texture, cadence and music. A look was often enough invitation to a romance, but heartbreak always took three weeks to cure. Love could come at first sight or over time. Which was better? Opinions varied.

My own quest drew me to what people call Marx"ism". Its attempt at putting together into some sort of order large chunks of history, sociology and political movements seemed impressive. Especially interesting was its espousal of the scientific method, comprising hypotheses to be generalised from experience, and consequences to be tested against happenings. It promised to be a science of social change, and, moreover, one which could only be grasped fully as a participant: the philosophers had wanted to interpret the world, the point, however, was to change it.

My journey into participation brought me under the influence of priests. To prevent real radical change, Marx"ism" has been distorted by

the capitalist roaders, defenders of capitalism in red masks of various hues from pale pink to bloody crimson, into religions, each with its popes, priests, monastic orders and lay followers, vituperating against one another in the name of heresy. The writings of Marx and other leaders, properly canonised by the popes of the order in question, have been ossified into religious books. The points they made are not treated as scientific principles to be used in analysing specific situations in the fight for social change, and certainly not as principles, moreover, which are subject themselves to sharpening and change as the social and economic basis which threw up the principles goes on changing.

Poor Marx, the anti-cleric *extraordinaire* has a restless grave indeed. Poor I, the sceptic who became a devotee.

But I recovered. The Derozian spark, I suspect, was not wholly dead in me. I recovered to continue viewing Marx"ism" as a vigorous and vital intervention in our quest for radical social change, with the potentiality of developing into a scientific method of understanding and altering social reality. It is a pity that the courageous people who are fighting the new imperialism all over the world, and in this country, are not working to use this sharp rapier to penetrate into the economic working of the new imperialism, to tell us about its new-found strengths and continuing weaknesses, and to develop a contemporary, convincing road map of how we may unite to defeat the enemy. The weapon has either been thrown away or its point blunted into the familiar litany of dogmatic quotation.

This is a great pity because, as the new millenium gets under way, so much has to be done to channelise technology and the productive forces away from destroying the earth. We must colonise the moon and the planets and their satellites. Dirty factories, nuclear and chemical pollution spewers, have to be set up away from the earth. The riches of the entire solar system must be put into use. We must populate the moon and the near planets and multiply instead of overcrowd or stagnate. After all, the biological success of a species lies in its numbers. We must tame aging, cure cancer and AIDS, learn to remove and replace disease prone cells and even genes. All this needs an explosion of technology in all the required fields and not merely in those ancillary to mass murder and repression. Furthermore, it needs a united effort of humankind, united in a vision which can arise only from a notion of indivisibility. It needs the surge of initiative which can come only from people in love

with their work. The required thrust cannot come from the labour of the apathetic oppressed, disease-ridden and prematurely aging, or the self-interest of the manager in pursuit of a private plane, a castle in the country, a holiday in Bali. The talents required cannot be identified if the search has to be limited to a body of educated and trained young people which represents a tiny fraction of the latest gene pool. Finally, there must be total co-operation in pooling together all available resources, instead of profit driven waste, suppression of knowledge, distortion of goals, and war. It would be an irony of history, indeed, if we reach the moon only to fight over it with thermonuclear devices. The only system of thought with some sort of a theory for these requirements, independent of the bagatelle of monopolistic profitmaking, is still Marx"ism". It needs to be honed or even refurbished? Well, do it. You need a new theory? Go and find it. Only don't tell me to believe that the magic wand of the profit motive will yet make a Prince Charming step out of the money behind Bush. And don't tell me what is happening in Russia and China shows the failure of Marx's ideas, Marx never thought state capitalism was the answer.

The acceleration required in the field of science and technology is no less demanding. The sun is yet not old, but it will age. It will redden and swell and kill us all before it recedes to become a dwarf of blinding power. Long before that, the changes in the sun will make life impossible in the solar system. So, we will have to emigrate to some other solar system in good time. Can you imagine the advances in physics, engineering and biology required over millenia, the efflorescence and training of talent, and the co-operation between scientists, even apart from the magnitude of the pool of material resources itself? We need a soaring vision, an eagle's eye view. Profit burrowing by rodents and stealing by stoats will hardly suffice.

Time flies. There is so much to do and see and not enough time. What do I say at parting? I strove with none, but fought the good fight. Not being cut out to be a lily of the field, I toiled and spun. Toiling and spinning, and, to the last, talking and lecturing, I go, but I leave so much of myself behind, that if, dear Presidencian of the future, you feel a light wind in your hair in some quiet corner of the library, or think you heard a whisper while hurrying on your way down a passage or the staircase, you might easily bet on whose ghost has just been breathing down your neck.

# South Asia : Competing in the Global Economy

SHILPA SINGHAL

## Introduction

Economic Development, in today's information, finance and integration driven 21st century has come to be almost synonymous with Competition. So much so that stalwarts of the new-age economic thinking, including the Bretton Woods twins (The International Monetary Fund and The World Bank), WTO (World Trade Organisation), etc. are once again clamouring to be guided by Adam Smith's invisible hand and urging all those over whom they exercise even the merest influence (read: the developing countries and Least Developed Countries including South Asian nations) to incorporate the principle of laissez faire in the international economic process. Newspapers conscientiously publish reports about anti-globalisation lobbies like WSF (World Social Forum) and protests like the one at the WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle calling for protectionism. These instances present the divergent views about what people think brings about economic development. This essay aims at assessing the development process of the South Asian countries forming the Indian subcontinent, namely – India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, in this global context.

## What drives the 21st century economies?

The Global Competitiveness Report (2001-2002) published by the World Economic Forum has identified three types of economies in the world representing three different stages of economic development, which are –

1. Factor-driven economies
2. Investment-driven economies
3. Innovation-driven economies

South Asian countries primarily fall in either the second category (the developing countries of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) or in a transitional zone between the first and second categories (LDCs, namely Bangladesh, Maldives, Bhutan and Nepal).

## The changing face of competition in such economies

"Not a zero sum game."

The new age stress on world trade as the

key determinant of a country's growth prospects is not intended as a revival of the bullionism that dictated world economic thought in the 16th century and made imperialism inevitable. This is because the crux of competitiveness lies, not in 'parasitic' growth at the expense of another economy, but in 'symbiotic' growth that is the basis of comparative advantage of individual economies. 'Neo-imperialism', which is a term coined to make a dig at the power yielded by the world's superpowers (read: the G-7 nations), is not promoted by the proposed economic development framework, but more a result of socio-political and economic imbalances in terms of bargaining power which are not insurmountable by the weaker group of nations. This makes the proposed model of competition and global integration a viable and stable means of development and has come to be increasingly accepted as such in the post-Berlin Wall and post-Soviet Union world.

But one may argue that acknowledgment of the benefits of comparative advantage is not anything new. And that the argument of worsening terms of trade for primary commodity producing countries still holds ground. But some things have changed over the past few decades so that many of the arguments against free trade have fallen through. The key changes in the global economic architecture that have changed the development potential of economies around the world can be summed up as follows:

1. Financial and factor mobility along with increased focus on services trade.
2. Greater focus on technological and human wealth rather than land or capital.
3. Information and communication revolution enhancing speed of national and international exchange.

South Asia, particularly the developing countries, has considerable 'potential' for development due to its rich natural and skilled human resources, favourable and strategic geographical location, fast developing service, education and information sectors, etc. Translation of 'potential' to 'actual' however is not an easy task for reasons outlined in the next section.

## Manifestation of Competitiveness:

## Globalisation

"Economic reforms are a necessary but by no means a sufficient condition for growth and development."

Globalisation, that is, integration of world markets through unrestricted movement of goods, services, capital, technology and (to some extent) labour, has met with support as well as slander. The advantages of competitiveness are its chief defence. However, the wave of financial crises strangulating the trade-driven emerging economies like the East Asian nations, the global recession, increased volatility of financial markets and 2.8 billion of the world population living on less than 2\$ per day have forced reform driven economies like India, Sri Lanka, etc. to consider the other side of the issue.

Growing speculation and uncertainty due to fast resource flows in only partially developed international information systems and selective information sharing due to opacity in the decision making process of international institutions has made instability and crises frequent in the generally less informed emerging economies. While countries of South Asia were saved from the 'contagion' of the East Asian Crisis due to their protected capital accounts, a move towards convertibility of capital account and exchange rates may make the countries more vulnerable, particularly if the countries are unable to monitor the composition of foreign capital inflows. Another characteristic of these countries is total dependence on oil imports, which makes them susceptible to the whims of the OPEC (Oil and Petroleum Exporting Countries) - a major force behind fluctuating prices in the world market.

'Globalisation with a human face' is a phrase which has come to mean inclusive growth through fair distribution of gains from pursuing an open economic policy. The proponents of free markets, however, repose faith in a new variant of the by now discarded principle of trickle-down. It is called the trickle-down-plus, which says that growth is necessary and 'almost' sufficient for reducing poverty so that these welfare issues are conveniently sidelined and overshadowed by the current obsession with growth. Yet, it has been alleged, and often empirically proven, that opening up economies to foreign competition by LDCs with underdeveloped infant industries leads to large scale unemployment and increased poverty. Over a decade into partial opening up by some of the countries, South Asia has witnessed an upsurge in the absolute numbers of the poor.

## Where does South Asia stand in terms of the parameters defined above?

As per the Competitiveness Indices measured and published by the World Economic Forum in its Global Competitiveness report, the Growth Competitiveness Index (GCI) ranks India at 57, Sri Lanka at 61 and Bangladesh at 71 out of the 75 countries for which the indices were calculated. This can be compared against the ranks of some neighbouring countries like Singapore at 4 and Taiwan at 7- these being some of the East Asian countries that have made external trade their engine of growth.

While the above ranks indicate the vulnerable position of South Asian economies in internal and external competitiveness, we need to assess how open we are in view of the significant move of the South Asian nations towards internal and external reform through shedding of the protectionist garb. Another common measure of globalisation is openness to trade. Countries like India, accounting for about 72% of the region's economy, have hardly made progress in this direction with its share in the world trade being one of the lowest in world- around 0.7%. Economists are mulling over the questions of how 'ready' we are to 'open up' and whether the pace of our liberalisation is too slow.

The social indicators speak of the gross poverty and inequality suffered by the people of these countries. 44% of the world's poor reside in South Asia and the number has been increasing.

Clearly, the benefits of growth in the region have not 'trickled down' to the poor- a fact acknowledged by Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Indian Prime Minister, during the SAARC (South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation) Summit held at Islamabad in January 2004, along with proposals forwarded to make growth more inclusive. Proposals to develop South Asia into a powerful economic entity at the international level are also being considered, the logistics of which we will consider in the succeeding section.

## Moving from a non-cooperative to a cooperative economic framework: Multilateral and Regional Agreements

The world has come a long way since the days of Keynesian macroeconomic solutions of active state intervention to tackle macroeconomic instability in a 'second-best' world. The order of the day is an attempt to move towards the 'best' economic structure with minimal transaction cost and near-perfect information availability to ensure quickly adjusting markets. The Bretton Woods

twins have changed their position from backing Keynesian measures of government guided growth to promoting free markets.

This indeed appears to be a mammoth task, because even if some of the inherent costs of imperfect information and transaction costs have been greatly reduced through the information and technological revolution, the externalities of monopolistic tendencies through building up of artificial barriers is always present in a world of a finite number of economic agents. And it is not difficult to see that the world market has an oligopolistic structure limited by the number of countries participating in it as individual economic agents. A simple game theoretic framework is enough to reveal that in a non-cooperative framework (as existed before an international agency like WTO came into being), the equilibrium outcome would be the pursuance of a 'beggar-thy-neighbour' policy of protectionism. This idea can be easily understood by the following simple game description-

	Country A	Country B				
No tariff	<table><tr><th>No Tariff</th><th>Tariff</th></tr><tr><td>(200,200)</td><td>(100,225)</td></tr></table>	No Tariff	Tariff	(200,200)	(100,225)	
No Tariff	Tariff					
(200,200)	(100,225)					
Tariff	<table><tr><th>No Tariff</th><th>Tariff</th></tr><tr><td>(225,100)</td><td>(170,170)*</td></tr></table>	No Tariff	Tariff	(225,100)	(170,170)*	
No Tariff	Tariff					
(225,100)	(170,170)*					

The above game between Country A and Country B shows the 'pay-offs' by choosing alternative 'strategies'. It is clear that the '\*' marked strategy of (tariff, tariff) is an equilibrium because if one country chooses tariffs, so does the other country and we end up with protective markets.

The idea lies in releasing the game of freedom of international trade from the shackles of protectionism into a cooperative framework. Multilateral organisations like the WTO are an effort in this direction and their success depends upon their ability to make opening up a lucrative enough option (or protectionism an unprofitable one) for member countries through:

1. Sufficient representation of each country to ensure balance of power yielded by each player.
2. Sufficient transparency to ensure that information of defection is received soon enough to eliminate possibility of undue gains and losses.

3. Sufficient threat of retaliation through adequate punitive measures.

When we weigh the stance of the WTO against the above three criteria of success of the multilateral agreements, it is not surprising that the WTO Ministerial Conference held at Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003 failed in reaching a consensus on the Doha Work Programme. The WTO has failed to live up to its role in at least two of the above three issues, that of representation and balance, and transparency, due to its bias towards the developed countries, particularly the USA and European Union.

South Asian economies share a common history. Now, the call is for a more integrated economy in the region. In the recent SAARC Summit held at Islamabad, proposals have been made to rise above socio-political and other disputes and to set up a South Asian Development Bank and a common food bank to ensure food security in the region, and for the creation of a SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) by 2006, and maybe even a South Asian Economic Union by 2015 with the finance ministries and Central Banks of the seven nations exploring the idea of a common currency.

By our above arguments on the reasons for the low efficacy of multilateral agreements, such smaller agreements might be the only viable option. Possible gains from regional agreements are – improved trade relations, sharing of resources, harmonisation of tariffs, transport linkages, freer and therefore more efficient trade, etc. Such agreements can come about only with increased sharing of information and knowledge, which in the long run can only bode well for all the economies in the region. Compared to the multilateral agreements, regional agreements have greater flexibility, and greater knowledge of closer markets. Also, setting of standards is easier in a region. Such agreements also ensure preventive checks by other member countries on economic activity, particularly in meeting international standards and goals regarding important issues like environmental protection, health, etc. Regional cooperation also increases bargaining power of the individual developing countries with developed nation-dominated institutions like WTO. For countries like the LDCs of the region, this could also mean the stepping stone for multilateral trade agreements. These agreements are definitely a move towards greater Pareto optimality for LDCs because these are their first agreements, and for developing countries because their conservative outlook and cautious behaviour in the wake of

terrorist attacks, USA's military stance and financial crises may not allow them to take the leap towards full-fledged globalisation as yet.

However an important caution in this regard is the need for aligning the regional agreements with the multilateral agreements, so that the trade off between global opening up and regional opening up is not adversely affected. Also essential is flexibility in the agreements so that it paves the way for greater global integration in the long run if and when the current weaknesses of opaque and biased international institutions, rigid conditionality of foreign aid and foreign capital borrowing, glossing over of information and mutual distrust (political as well as economic) are overcome.

### **Brewing mixtures and solutions**

*The need of the hour, therefore, is a development process which ensures*

1. A static equilibrium in an artificial barrier free world which is already 'second best'.
2. A dynamic equilibrium through proper sequencing and timing of changes along with adaptability in an ever-changing situation, simultaneity and symmetry in information sharing, etc. so that the various multilateral and regional agreements are dynamically stable.

The myriad needs and economic problems of nations around the world preclude the possibility of there being a common panacea for all their ills. Economic policy involves trade-offs and cruel choices, and South Asia's development process is no exception. Extremes like the ready prescription of quick liberalisation and opening up by the Washington Consensus or the diametrically opposite one of blanket protectionism are not viable options.

We can identify some areas of focus for development in the South Asian region –

1. Managed budget deficits with stress on composition of the budget deficits rather than the size.
2. A more vibrant but stable financial structure is needed, particularly in the wake of the global recessions and the recent history of financial crises, to efficiently direct national and international fund flows into the most profitable avenues.

3. Improvement in the technological and labour-intensive service sector is a prerequisite to labour using growth as well as to ensuring a significant share in the world market with favourable terms of trade.
4. Improved communication, information exchange and transparency are of fundamental importance to distortion-free markets.
5. Sequencing and pacing of reform is necessary to ensure that the fundamental economic base is strong enough to meet the vagaries and cut-throat competition of the world market. So is democratic support for reform through inclusion of the masses in the reform process and mobilisation of public opinion for any country undergoing transition from a protectionist to an open state. In the context of the reforms undertaken by India, Gurcharan Das has written, "... none of the political parties has tried to sell the economic reforms to the people.... They have tried to do them through stealth".
6. Pro-poor growth along with fighting unemployment, illiteracy, health hazards like AIDS, environmental degradation, etc. are important for the 'growth' to translate into meaningful 'development'.
7. Fostering regional peace and economic co-operation in commodity as well as resource exchange through regional agreements like SAPTA (South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement) and SAFTA are important to ensure the balanced growth of the region as a whole.

The economic development of South Asia since its freedom from imperial rule has placed it on the world economic map as a key player. The SAARC Summit has seen the forging of close economic ties in the region. In the words of the Indian Prime Minister at the same Summit, "... rational economics must triumph over political prejudices (in South Asia)."

*(This essay was written in January, 2004, for the essay round of "South Asian Budding Economist Contest." This was part of the 'South Asian Economics Students' Meet', the first conference of international students held at New Delhi in February, 2004.)*

# Relocating Objectivity in History

PRATYAY NATH

Let's begin the discussion in a very cliched way.

"What is history?" is a question that has recurred repeatedly throughout the history of history (or historiography, should I say?). I am not going to address that question here. My concern will rather be to find an answer to a less broad question-what is the position of objectivity in the discourse named history?

Let me start with a search for the meaning of the word "objectivity". The Oxford English Dictionary (which is always referred to at this stage of a cliched essay) describes it as the condition of "belonging not to the consciousness of the perceiving or thinking subject, but to what is presented to this, external to the mind, real." Rajatbabu translates it in Bengali as "vastunishthata". The way I have perceived objectivity is that it is, as far as history is concerned, the representation of "what" "really" happened in the past in an perfectly "unbiased" manner by the application of a variety of methods like letting the "evidences of the past" "talk for themselves" and by "empathizing with the people of the past".

But let me first decide upon the more fundamental question, which can hardly be avoided, about what history really is. Without entering into the age-old debates which historians have indulged themselves into for decades, if not centuries, let me quote the most satisfactory description of "history" that I have come across so far – "history is a shifting, problematic discourse, ostensibly about an aspect of the world, the past, that is produced by a group of present-minded workers (overwhelmingly in our culture, salaried historians) who go about their work in mutually recognizable ways that are epistemologically, ideologically, methodologically and practically positioned, and whose products, once in circulation, are subject to a series of uses and abuses that are logically infinite but which in actuality generally correspond to a range of powerbases that exist in any given moment and which structure and distribute the meanings of histories along a dominant-marginal spectrum."

Now, the past is something that has already occurred. No one has seen it. People of the past have left behind their traces (archaeological "evidences"), and sometimes also accounts of the times they lived in. Since time-machines still unfortunately exist only in H.G.Wells-novels, Hollywood movies and childlike imaginations – these two things mentioned above are the only source of our knowledge about the past. Besides, since history, as I have already mentioned, is a discourse about the past, it is distinctly different from the past. The past is a huge collection of an infinite number of events. People of the past who

have written down things about their time have recorded only those things, which they have thought to be important. Thus when Kalhana wrote about the political history of Kashmir, he did not care to record minute events of the daily life of every single person of Kashmir. Besides, even how much of the politically important incidents of his concern was he able to record? Also, while writing "Rajatarangini" did Kalhana's own prejudices, viewpoints, perceptions not mould the text? Would the same events have been recorded and interpreted in the same way, had Kalhana been a different person? Thus, what the sources offer us is only a very minute fragment (which again can be seen only through the eyes of the writer) of the ocean of events of the past, about which we will never be able to know anything. Thus, we see that it is absolutely impossible for a historian "simply to show how it really was( *wie es eigentlich gewesen*)", as historians like Leopold Von Ranke and others would like him to do.

Again, since every historian reads the accounts of the past and treats the traces of the past in different ways, the interpretations and consequently histories produced are bound to be different. Let me illustrate this with a simple example.

Let us imagine that a geographer, a historian, a sociologist, an economist and a painter together go for a picnic to a place beside a river in front of a rolling landscape, dotted with settlements, with snowy mountains in the horizon. Now from this landscape, five of them will be able to draw different conclusions about different aspects of the place. The geographer might say something about the field-patterns, rainfall patterns, farming practices, communication networks and settlement patterns of the place. Using data of the past, the historian could speak about how the economy and demography of the place might have changed over time; land-ownership and the distribution of political power in the region could also be talked about. The sociologist could construct it sociologically, using the people of the region as data for knowing occupational structures, family units; population distribution could be considered in terms of sex, class, income, age etc. The economist could infer about the means of subsistence of the people of the region – whether they have an agrarian economy or a grazing economy and so on. The painter again would reflect upon the play of light and shade in the landscape and other aesthetic aspects of the scenery. What is interesting is that the scenery does not, on its own, speak for itself. It is the geographer, historian and others who attach specific meanings to different aspects of it, interpret them in their own different ways and make the mute landscape talk. Similarly, with



history, the traces of the past and the accounts do not speak for themselves. So the futility of advice like one should let the sources speak for themselves without allowing the historian to interfere in the process is pretty evident as the sources do not say anything until the historian attaches specific meanings to them and interprets the texts and the traces of the past in their own different ways and thus write different histories. These differences result from the methodological, ideological, epistemological as well as practical differences among historians. Since nobody has seen the past, there are no means of checking which history is more "correct" than the others. Thus all histories are equally legitimate and none is more/less correct than the other(s). Using the same source materials for the same period, a logically infinite number of histories can be produced. A man could write a sanitized history where conflict and distress are absent; another person could write a history that leads to pacifism; yet others could write history that provides strategies and tactics for revolution, history that embodies rugged individualism, history that provides grounds for counter-revolution and so on. And all these are equally legitimate. Thus we see that there is absolutely no scope whatsoever for the achievement of any sort of objectivity in history.

History is actually nothing but fiction. History is a "worldly, wordy language game" and learning history is nothing but learning to play the game in the way which people already in the game do.

But still some people keep on talking about truth, objectivity etc as the central concerns of history. Let me say, relentless pursuit of truth and objectivity are not the central concerns of history. Acceptance of universal relativism and the pursuit of relentless scepticism should be the basic essence of history. Whether the modernists call our scepticism "adolescent radicalism" or "infantile primitivism", I do not care. The present general quest for objectivity is due to the universalisation of the empiricist/logocentric/modernist discourse of history and the consequent marginalisation of other legitimate discourses. But this presently dominant discourse also has too many problems.

Modernist historians talk of historians and histories being biased and unbiased. They brand feminist, Marxist, rightist and other histories as being biased. But with respect to what? Usually by bias we understand deviance from objectivity. But since in history, there is no objectivity and no stance that is not ideologically positioned, there is no standard with respect to which deviance can be measured. Hence we see that bias does not exist.

The modernists talk about representation of "truth" in history. But living in the post-modern age, I can not but agree with Foucault in my perception of "truth" – "Truth is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, circulation and operation of statements. Truth is linked...with systems of power which produce and sustain it.

History is a discourse, a language game; within it truth and similar expressions are devices to open, regulate and shut down interpretations. Truth acts as a censor – it draws the line...truths are really useful fictions that are in discourse by virtue of power and power uses the term truth to exercise control: regimes of truth."

Last, but not the least, empathy. This pillar of "objective history-writing" is also quite frail. Empathy appears to be an absurdity due to four basic reasons.

- 1) We are all different individuals with our own minds, stances, prejudices etc. It is not possible for us to shun them completely and enter into another man's mind, that too of the past.
- 2) The bulk of the historian's sources consists of utterances made in and about the past. But the process of linguistic change is perpetual, not only in vocabulary and syntax but also in meanings of words and phrases. So in every step of interpretation of the sources and writings of history, an act of translation goes on, on the part of the historian. Besides, the problems regarding reading of texts are always there.
- 3) In theory, the historian is working within all kinds of assumptions of an epistemological, methodological and ideological kind and also has practical problems. These can not be got rid of.
- 4) If we think we are empathizing with Ashoka by reading the essays of Romila Thapar, we are actually empathizing more with Romila Thapar than with Ashoka as it is only through the eyes of the historian that we see (or at least try to see) characters of the past.

Actually, the stronger ruling blocks within the social formation employ "their" historians to write history for them. History is constantly reworked and reordered by those who are variously affected by power relationships. The dominant and dominated have their own versions of history while the same is refuted by the other. Thus objectivity is central only to the presently dominant empiricist discourse and not to the discourse of history as a whole. It is high time that we, for the sake of history, recognize once and for all that

"...the truth(s) of the past elude us; that history is intersubjective and ideologically positioned; that objectivity and being unbiased are chimeras; that empathy is flawed; that history is, in opposition to it being an art or a science, something else-something sui generis, a worldly, wordy language game played for real, and where the metaphors of history as science or history as art, reflect the distribution of power that put these metaphors into play."

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# KRSNA in Non-Hindu Theism

SOHAM PAIN

Swami Vivekananda once described Him as 'the most rounded man'. His celestial discourse delivered at the battlefield of Kuruksetra is a seminal document for the Hindus. Here let us discuss if this Dark God of Brindavan could establish any kingdom in the heart of the non-Hindus.

## KRSNA IN JAINISM

The founder of Jainism Rsabha was a seer who composed some of the Vedic hymns and who was later accepted in the Puranas as an Avatara (incarnation) of Visnu. It is well-known that Jainism received its final shape at the hands of Mahavira, who boldly challenged ritualistic disciplines in religious life, and called into question the supremacy of the priests. The same was later done by the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

The Jaina text '*Uttaradhyayana Sutra*' refers to Krsna and Balarama as cousins of Aristanemi, one of the Tirthankaras. It reads as follows: "In the town of Saurypura there was a powerful king, Vasudeva by name, who possessed the characteristic marks of a king. He had two wives, Rohini and Devaki; each of them had a beloved son, Rama and Kesava."<sup>2</sup> Kesava i.e. Krsna wanted the hands of the princess Rajimati for Aristanemi<sup>3</sup> but the marriage was spoilt as the groom renounced the world. Krsna has subsequently been called the 'hero of the Vrsnis'. The text even mentions his divinity.

Jacobi is quite correct in opining that the Krsna-cult was already popular in the first centuries of the Jaina creed. But the Jains while adopting the Krsna legend did not entirely follow the Brahmanical tradition, moulding it in their own way. In the Jaina version, the life of Krsna is interwoven with that of Aristanemi. After the canonical texts, the Krsna saga finds expression in Jinasena's Harivansa Purana in sixty-six chapters which was completed in 783 A.D. Krsna is the major figure while the arch enemy (Prativasudeva) is Jarasandha. The Krsna legend has been dealt with in the Prakrit work '*Vasudeva-hindi*' by Sanghadasa Ganin and Jinadasa, and

Amtagadadasao. In the last work Krsna has been made into a pious Jina.<sup>4</sup>

## KRSNA IN BUDDHISM

Buddhist texts like *Sutrapitaka* and *Lalitavistara* know Krsna.<sup>5</sup> But the Buddhist version of the Krsna story is found in the *Ghata-Jataka* (No. 454).<sup>6</sup> A summary of the story is as follows:

Mahakamsa, the ruler of Asitanjana, had two sons-Kamsa and Upakamsa, and a daughter, Devagabbha. It was foretold that a son born of the princess would destroy the line of Kamsa. Kamsa had his sister imprisoned in a tower. Now Upakamsa had a friend named Upasagara, a prince of Upper Madhura, who came to know about the matter during his stay in Asitanjana and subsequently fell in love with Devagabbha.

Nandagopa, the captive princess's attendant arranged secret meetings between the couple, having been bribed by Upasagara. Devagabbha conceived in due time and eventually bore a daughter. Afterwards, each time a son was born to her an exchange was made with a daughter of the devoted Nandagopa. This continued until ten daughters of Nandagopa had been exchanged with ten sons of Devagabbha. Among the Princess's eleven children were Anjana, Vasudeva, Baladeva and others. Barring Anjana, the rest were brought up by Nandagopa and her husband Andhakavenhu.

One day Vasudeva and Baladeva were summoned by the King at a wrestling competition, where they killed the two reputed wrestlers Canura and Mutthika. After this, the King was also slain by Vasudeva's wheel (the chakra of the Hindu version). The ten brothers then occupied the beautiful city of Dvaravati (i.e. Dvaraka).

The account further relates the story of the 'curse of seers' which enhanced the civil war of the Yadavas and eventually brought about their doom. A mention of Vasudeva's death at the hands of a hunter named Jara is also to be found in the



Jataka.

## KRSNA AND THE GRAECO-ROMAN PANTHEON

Long before the birth of Jesus Christ or the rise of Islam, the colourful faiths practised by the Greeks, Romans, Persians and Scythians had reached India. It is among the Greeks and some of the inhabitants of South-East Asia that we find evidences of an influence of the Krsna-cult.

Colonel Todd, a name to reckon with in this sphere quotes from an account of Pallas regarding a pilgrim-centre in Astracan in the distant Russian empire where we can discern clear traces of Krsna worship. Pallas writes that 'Mooltanis' from 'Indeskoi Dvor' (i.e. Indian court) had erected a temple in Astracan which had the figures of Rama, Jagannatha, Siva and the Devi in the background. The central figure was "a small idol... called Gupaledshi... at its right there was a large black stone, and on the left two smaller ones of the same colour, brought from the Ganges, and regarded by the Hindus as sacred." Todd opines that Gupaledshi is actually 'Gopalji' and the black stones, the 'Salgramas'. The only mistake of Pallas was that he thought the flute of Krsna to be a rod.<sup>7</sup>

Quintus Curtius informs us that an image of Herakles was carried in front of the Paurava army as it advanced against Alexander the Great.<sup>8</sup> Todd takes Herakles to be the Grecian representation of Balarama, and discovers a similarity between the Heraclidae and Harikula or Harivansa, the line of Krsna. He writes: "The Heraclidae claimed from Atreus: the Harikulas claim from Atri."

The Greeks or Ionians are descended from Yavan or Javan, the seventh from Japhet. The Harikulas are also Yavans claiming descent from Javan or Yavan, the thirteenth in descent from Yayat, the third son of the primeval patriarch.<sup>9</sup>

Later writers like Bhandarkar have, however, voted in favour of the identification of Herakles with Krsna, and not Balarama.<sup>10</sup> One would be amazed to find that there are quite a few myths regarding both Krsna and Heracles which are remarkably similar. Among the exploits of Krsna, the slaying of Putana is popular. Putana wanted to give the baby Krsna suck from her poisoned breasts, but could not withstand Krsna's power and eventually died.<sup>11</sup> Heracles as a baby drew milk from Hera's breast with such a force that she flung him down in pain, and a spurt of milk flew across the sky and became the Milky way.<sup>12</sup>

Then there is the well-known story of Kaliya's defeat at the hands of Krsna. There is a close parallel between this story and that of the death of

the Lernaean Hydra at the hands of Herakles. The demise of both the heroes is also similar. Both were killed, and ascended to heaven in a divine form, when their mortal bodies decayed.<sup>13</sup>

The other Grecian deity whose portrayal reminds us of Krsna is Apollo. Todd writes: "*Diodorus informs us that Kan was one of the titles of the Egyptian Apollo as the sun; and this is the common contraction for Kaniya, whose colour is a dark cerulean blue (nila): and hence his name Nilamath, who, [is] like the Apollo of Nile... S and H are permutable letters in the Bhakka, and Sam or Sham, the god of the Yamuna, may be Ham or Hammon of Egypt ... The distance of the Nile from the Indian shore forms no objection*"<sup>14</sup>

As we consider the story of the birth of Krsna, we note its similarity to the story of the birth of Perseus. It is said that it was predicted to the king Acrisius that the son of his daughter Danae would be the one to kill him. Acrisius imprisoned her in a dungeon. But fate could not be forestalled, as Zeus came upon her in a shower of gold and she bore a son, Perseus.<sup>15</sup>

## AN ARMENIAN LEGEND

P. Banerjee in the course of his significant research dealing with ancient international relations came across a fascinating story by the writer Zenob. "From Zenob's story of the Indians in Armenia it appears that the legend of Krsna travelled outside India during the second century B. C. Two Indian Chiefs, Zenob tells us, called Gisane (Kisane) and Demeter (Temeter) fled westward with their clan and found shelter with Valarashak or Valarsaces, the first Arsacid monarch of Armenia (circa 149-127 B.C.). Fifteen years later the king of Armenia put Gisane and Demeter to death."<sup>16</sup>

This Kisane was represented with long hair, and his followers also wore it long. Lassen suggested an identification of Kisane with Krsna. As regards Demeter, Kennedy suggested that he 'must be some compound of Mitra, perhaps Devamitra.' Banerjee himself suggests that Demeter can be identified with Balarama. He thinks this story is 'reminiscent of Krsna and Balarama's flight to Dvaraka from Mathura because of the pressures of their adversaries. Possibly, this story went outside and got mixed up with some local legend in Armenia.'

## KRSNA AND CHRISTIANITY

The birth-stories of Christ and Krsna betray a great many similarities. Their deaths are also similar on many points. Swami Vivekananda summarises them as follows: "There was the

tyrannical king in both places. Both were born in a manger... Both were saved by angels. In both cases all the boys born that year were killed."

At first glance, these similarities may seem to be purely coincidental. But Hopkins and Weber formulated a theory on the basis of these associations, that the Krsna-cult was a direct import from the Christian lands. Although many of the eminent scholars challenged such a theory, Bhandarkar opined that the Krsna-cult, at least the pastoral Krsna, is of foreign origin. According to him, the Abhiras who were acquainted with the legends regarding Christ were responsible for the spread of the cult of the cowherd Krsna.

Long before Bhandarkar, the likes of Bankim and Swami Dayananda labelled the pastoral legends of the Krsna-saga as spurious. Added to this was Adolf Holtzmann's ingenious theory, which was later on termed the 'inversion theory' by Hopkins. According to this theory, the Kauravas were the heroes of the original Mahabharata, but due to several tendentious revisions, the extant form glorifies the Pandavas. Winternitz supported this claim and concluded as follows : "It is possible, moreover, that Krsna did not figure at all in the original epic, and was introduced only later, perhaps with the express intention of justifying the actions of the Pandavas, which were shady from the moral point of view, by representing them as inspired by the "god" Krsna."<sup>17</sup> Thus the simplified assumption states that Krsna is an Indian version of Christ, brought to India by the Abhiras, and later on accepted as a character in the Mahabharata.

However, D. C. Sirkar has sought to refute such a view. First of all, the Rigveda speaks of one Krsna who lived on the banks of the Ansumati and was a formidable enemy to Indra. Sirkar opines that 'Ansumati' may mean Yamuna, for while the latter is the daughter of the sun in later mythology, the former has associations with solar rays, as is revealed by the name. Again, the Krsna of the Chandogya Upanisad was a worshipper of the sun and so was his guru, Ghora Angirasa. The Santiparava of the Mahabharata and the Gita (IV. 1) lend support to the solar origin of Vaisnavism. These indications suffice to conclude a pre-Christian origin of the Krsna cult.

#### **CHRISTMAS AND JANMASTAMI : THE NATIVITY OF THE SUN**

Christianity and Vaisnavism developed independently. Then why are there similarities? Trade and commerce don't solve the mystery. Mythology alone can attempt an answer.

The Vedas suggest that Visnu is an embodiment of the sun-god.<sup>18</sup> The Visnu Purana also supports the identification.<sup>19</sup> A curious verse in this text states that it was the sun-Visnu ('Acyutabhanuna') who came into the womb of Devaki [v.3.2]. The gods praised the pregnant Devaki as 'Suryasvarupagarbhasi', i.e., 'with the sun in the womb'. In a later work, entitled the 'Devibhagavata' (vii.30.70), Devaki becomes an earthly manifestation of the Divine Mother.

This concept of 'Mother of the Sun' is applicable to Mary also, whose son Jesus has also been identified with the Sun by the likes of Frazer and Swami Abhedananda. In the Swami's own words: "*The statue of the Egyptian Madonna Isis, holding the Sun God Horus, is to be found in ancient temples just as the Hindu Madonna Devaki held Krishna, the Hindu Christ in her arms centuries before the time of Jesus.*"

Hence the relations between Krsna and Christ are not at all accidental. Both Krsna and Christ were solar divinities in origin. In fact, the 'Mother of the Sun' varies only in name in different lands but not at all in character. The Virgin and the Child have continued to be objects of veneration in almost all the ancient religions.

#### **KRSNA AND ISLAM**

Ahmad Sirhindi, a great Indian reformer of Islam, accepted Krsna as a prophet of God.<sup>20</sup>

The Muslim poem *Navivansa (The life of the Prophet)* written in Medieval Bengal accepts Krsna as a prophet, but not as divinity.

#### **KRSNA AND SIKHISM**

Now we come to the final area of our discussion- the Krsna-cult and the Sikh religion. Mohsin Fani writes that Guru Nanak praised both the Muslim and Hindu avatars.<sup>21</sup> Dr. Gopal Singh observes : "*In the Guru Granth, God is remembered by almost all the names known to Hindu mythology ... Ram, Bhagwan, Damodar, Murari, Gopal, Govind, Girdhari, Gopinath, Shyam, Vasudev, Narayan, Hari, Madho, Keshav, Brahm, Parabrahm, Mukand, Vishnu, Raghurai, Prabhu, Ishwar, Gosain, Kanh, Krishan, Govardhan, Bithal, Mohan, Murli Manohar, Jagannath, Rishikesh, Narhar, and so on ...*"<sup>22</sup>

There are differences no doubt. Guru Nanak abhorred image-worship and other rites and rituals, which forms an important part of traditional Hinduism. Then again history testifies that the origin of Sikhism was rooted in the Bhakti cult. The Granth Sahib contains hymns of such Vaisnava

mystics as Kavir, Jayadeva, Mira Bai, Namadeva, Ravi Dasa and others. All the deities of the Hindu pantheon are only different manifestations of the One True God to Guru Nanak:

*'He's Shiva, He's Vishnu, He's Brahma.  
(None other)*

*And He's Parvati and Lakshmi, the Mother'.<sup>23</sup>*

In fact, Guru Arjan writes :-

*"A Vaishnav, of the cult of non-violence, is one whose life is approved by God.*

*Who throws up his allegiance to Mammon,  
And while exerting himself in action has no thought for reward...*

*He is absorbed in the service of love and the hymning of God's praises.*

*The Name pervades his body and his mind.  
He is merciful not only to animals, but to all mankind as well...*

*Such a Vaishnav has reached the highest attainment of life.'<sup>24</sup>*

Guru Govind Singh slowly came to the conviction that he was sent to the world to free the Hindus from tyranny just as Krsna had fought with the demons.<sup>25</sup> He believed that he was ordered by God to come to this world to protect truth and religion.

*"When God gave me the order*

*I assumed birth in this Kal age.*

*I did not desire to come,*

*As my attention was fixed on God's feet.'<sup>26</sup>*

However he never accepted Krsna as anything more than a prophet.

*"How many millions of worms like Krishan He created, built, fashioned, again destroyed, and created!"*

In fact, he boldly challenges the divinity of Krsna when he says :

*"If He whom we call Krishan were god, why was he subject to death?*

*Why should God whom ye describe as holy and without enmity have driven Arjan's chariot?*

*Worship as God Him whose secret none hath known or shall know.*

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*Say if Krishan were the Ocean of mercy, why should the hunter's arrow have struck him?*

*If he can save other families, why did he destroy his own?*

*Say why did he who called himself the eternal and the unconceived, enter into the womb of Devaki?*

*Why did he who had no father or mother call Vasudev his father?"*

At the very outset of his translation of the

'Krishan Avatar', he categorically writes:

*"I never meditate on Krishan or Vishnu;  
I have heard of them but I know them not;  
It is only God's feet I love."*

Thus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Govind Singh, the attitude towards Krsna may seem to have changed. But it should be remembered that although the first Guru was all admiration for this Hindu figure he never accepted his deification. Hence, Guru Govind Singh was not the first to challenge it. The only point of difference is that the first Guru accepted the teachings of earlier prophets to be true, while the last one remarked that all of them have set up false religions and diverted the hearts of devotees from God.

To sum up, it is completely undeniable that Krsna was a great personality whose life and teachings influenced many faiths in the world.

**N.B.** *We have excluded South-East Asia from the pale of our study as the people there knew directly of Hinduism.*

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# USA : Beyond the Facade

PRATYUSH DEB

The United States of America is a superpower most countries love to hate. The USA presents a facade of progressiveness, liberalisation and enterprise. But on piercing the facade, we find a particularly opportunistic and self-centred nation.

Let us consider the history of the USA. In 16th century Europe there was massive religious persecution on a minority which was largely from Holland. The 'Pilgrims' as they were known emigrated in a ship called the 'Mayflower' to the new world. They were largely Puritans. On the one hand, their hard work is laudable. On the other, these erstwhile victims turned persecutors themselves when they began interacting with the indigenous peoples of North America. They began spreading westward and through trading and colonisation began overpowering the American Indians who were divided into various tribes such as the Sioux, Cherokee, Hopi, Apache, Comanche. Thus, the wild west came into being. Gun battles came to acquire almost legendary importance. Since then guns have become an integral part of the American culture.

America soon came under British domination but declared its independence in 1776 and eventually drove the British out. In the declaration of independence, there is a clause pertaining to the right to pursuit of pleasure which is interpreted rather liberally even by present day Americans.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth century America fired salvoes from the shoulders of two stalwart inventors Alexander Graham Bell and Thomas Alva Edison. Between them, they grossed more than twelve hundred patents. The royalties from them now run into millions of dollars. Another achievement occurred in the field of civil architecture. Skyscrapers were first thrown up in America. The Chrysler building and what was till recently the World Trade Centre are magnificent examples of architecture.

Let us now consider American foreign policy over the centuries. America was not a conventional colonial nation. Its empire was economic rather than political. American governments connived with corrupt South American regimes using dollar diplomacy to usurp mining rights and to set up the so called banana republics. It ensured a diplomatic free for all in the conquest of China through the 'Open Door' or 'Me too' policy. Even today, Equatorial Guinea's resources are largely in the hands of American energy companies. America entered the First World War after many Americans died aboard the doomed Lusitania. Earlier, the Monroe Doctrine in 1904 divided the whole world into spheres of influence. America urged European imperialists not to interfere in its domain. After the war, Woodrow Wilson nearly crushed Germany with his fourteen points.

America kept up a reactionary and divisive policy towards the rest of the world. It was drawn into the Second World War after the attack on Pearl Harbour on the 7th of December, 1941. The nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were an outrage against all that humanity stands for. It was also quite unnecessary since Japan was almost crippled at that juncture and would have yielded without the bombardment. Since then USA has been a dominant force in the United Nations Organisation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation. Modern America continues to have a contemptuous attitude towards the rest of the world. The concept of a peaceful multipolar world is alien to them.

More recently in the war against terror after the World Trade Center attack, the American government linked Al-Qaida to Saddam Hussein on flimsy grounds. The war against terror was converted into a petty conflict with Iraq. The main motive was cheaper oil and petroleum. Behind this unilateralism lies the American desire to dominate the world.

Gunnar Myrdal, a European sociologist, exposed the fact that Americans consume fifty percent of the world's resources, even though they constitute only five percent of the world's population. Americans lead an indulgent lifestyle which has made them parasitical.

America rarely practises what it preaches. It talks eloquently of freedom but tries to dominate the rest of the world. Francis Fukuyama has pointed out that Americans have a tendency to interpret the world in terms of their own interests. America itself has weapons of mass destruction but as it won't allow others to challenge its monopoly, it tries hard to impose the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. America itself continues to test bombs through advanced computer simulation, exploiting a technical loophole in the treaty. America is the only country to reject the Kyoto Protocol all the while urging others to adopt it. It does so on the ground that conforming to emission norms would be too costly. One wonders then, how other countries are supposed to incur the same cost. The American Dream is a concept that classifies the desire for better things as an exclusively American desire. Though America is an advocate of racial integration racism is still practised in many parts and is often used surreptitiously in political manoeuvres.

Democracy in America is a self congratulatory exercise. The American Government pats itself on the back for allowing protest but has its own way all the same. An example is the Iraq war. America also encourages trade monopoly as symbolised by Microsoft Inc. America practises cultural imperialism and neo-colonialism through what it calls globalisation. Truly, as Nicannor Parra said the USA is the only country in the world where Liberty is a statue.

# কোথায় পাবো তারে

অর্ণব চক্রবর্তী

জীবনের স্রোত বাঁক নিয়েছে যেখানে, পথের কোণে সেই পথহীন জায়গা যেখানে তাঁকে স্পর্শ করতে চাওয়ার মুহূর্তরা দিশেহারা, ঠিক সেখানেই এক অচেনা মুখ এগিয়ে এসে প্রশ্ন করে “আপনার ঠিকানাটা একটু বলবেন?” তৎক্ষণাৎ অভ্যাসমত ওষ্ঠপ্রান্তে চলে আসে সেই এক জবাব, “... রোড, কলিকাতা-৭০০ ০?? ...”

কিন্তু সে তো আমার বাড়ির ঠিকানা সে বাড়িতে কোথা থেকে এসেছি আমি, তাকি জানা আছে? হ্যাঁ, সত্যিই তো, আমি বা আপনি কি আমাদের নিজ নিজ উৎসের সম্বন্ধে অবগত? শুনতে হয়ত অবাক হবেন, অবিশ্বাস্য মনে হবে—

যে আপনার উৎস আপনাকে ত্যাগ করে যায়নি।

আপনার সঙ্গেই আপনার উৎস রয়েছে—সর্বক্ষণ। সেই উৎসকে চিনতে পারা, উপলব্ধি বা অনুভব করতে পারাই হয়ত আধুনিক অর্থে ঈশ্বরকে পাওয়া।

অনেক মানুষের বক্তব্য উৎস অর্থে তেমন কিছু নেই—

কিন্তু সেই ‘নেই’ অর্থাৎ ‘Nothing’-এর মধ্যে বিজ্ঞান ও সর্বোপরি গণিতের ভাষায় উপলব্ধি করা যাচ্ছে অনেক কিছু—তাই আমি সেই সব মতবাদ ধারণকারী মানুষদের প্রথমেই বলে নিতে চাই, “Let us fathom it, whatever may befall,

In this, thy Nothing, may I find my all!” একসময়ে প্রত্যেক ধর্মের যে অন্তর্নিহিত বার্তা ছিল—এ বিশ্বব্রহ্মাণ্ড চালাচ্ছেন এক পরম নিয়ন্ত্রক তাঁর চেতনা ও বুদ্ধিমত্তার সাহায্যে (conscious intelligence) —আজকের বিজ্ঞানও কিন্তু তার কাছাকাছি বার্তাই পাঠাচ্ছে।

প্রথমেই ধর্ম এবং ঈশ্বরের সঙ্গে বিজ্ঞানের তির্যক সম্পর্কটা বুঝে নেওয়া দরকার, কারণ সেটা বোধগম্য না হলে আমাদের ঠিকানার সঠিক সন্ধান আমরা পাব না। সভ্যতার সেই প্রথম আলো যখন বিশ্বচরাচরে ব্যাপ্ত হল, মানুষ চারপাশের অত্যাশ্চর্য সৃষ্টি দেখে শুধুমাত্র মুগ্ধ ও বিস্মিত হল না, তার মনে জাগল এক বিপুল প্রশ্ন,

“কে সৃষ্টি করল এইসব?” কেমন বুদ্ধিমত্তার নিয়ন্ত্রণে চলছে এই আকাশ ভরা সূর্যতারা?

নিশ্চয় কেউ আছেন যার ক্ষমতা, মেধা ও বুদ্ধি আমাদের চেয়ে অনেক বেশী। কোন এক ‘বিরাট শিশু’ আনমনে খেলছে এই বিশ্বব্রহ্মাণ্ড নিয়ে। মানুষ কল্পনা করে নিল তার মনের মত ঈশ্বরকে। তাঁরই আইন এবং শাসন মেনে চলছে এই বিশ্বভুবন, এমনই ধারণা হল মানুষের। ঈশ্বরের প্রতি প্রার্থনা, ঈশ্বরকে পূজা করার মন্ত্র, তাঁর প্রতি ভক্তি ভালবাসা, ভয়—এসব থেকেই ক্রমশ জন্ম নিল ধর্ম। সভ্যতা ও বিজ্ঞানের ক্রমবিবর্তনের সাথে সাথে মানুষের বোধ ও

বীক্ষণ দুইই বদলাল। জীবন ও বিশ্বভুবনের রহস্যটাকে মানবমন এক অন্য আলোতে দেখতে শিখল।

“Science progresses through shifts of paradigm” —তারই ফলশ্রুতি হিসেবে যুগান্তকারী এক দিগন্তের নির্দেশ দিল পদার্থবিদ্যার ‘Big Bang Theory’ —যা আংশিক হলেও বৈজ্ঞানিক চিন্তাধারায় বিশ্বব্রহ্মাণ্ডের উৎস ও অবিচলিত নিয়ন্ত্রণের ব্যাখ্যা করল।

ধর্মের ব্যাখ্যার সঙ্গে বিজ্ঞানের ব্যাখ্যার গরমিল ক্রমশই প্রবল হয়ে উঠল—এমনকি বিজ্ঞান চ্যালেঞ্জ করে বসল বিশ্বভুবনের নিয়ন্ত্রক সেই ঈশ্বরকে! বিজ্ঞানের আবিষ্কার ও অন্বেষ ক্রমাগত আমাদের ঈশ্বর বিশ্বাসকে আঘাত করতে লাগল। সৃষ্টি রহস্য ও মহাবিশ্ব সম্পর্কে আমাদের স্বাভাবিক প্রশ্নের উত্তর আমরা ধর্মের কাছ থেকে পেলাম না—পেলাম বিজ্ঞানের কাছ থেকে।

১৯৬০-এ টাইম ম্যাগাজিনের একটি প্রচ্ছদকাহিনীর নাম ‘গড ইজ ডেড (God is dead)’। প্রচারিত হল এই ভাবধারা যে, ধর্ম হল সাধারণ মানুষের আফিং। ধর্ম একটি নেশা, যা মানুষের বুদ্ধি, মেধা, বৈজ্ঞানিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গি ও সর্বোপরি যুক্তি দিয়ে ভাবার ক্ষমতাকে গ্রাস করে ফেলছে। ধর্মকে নয়, ঈশ্বরকে নয়, বিশ্বাস করুন বিজ্ঞানকে—এই আধুনিক দৃষ্টিভঙ্গির প্রচারক হলেন মননজীবীরা। তাই ফ্রয়েড লিখলেন—

“Science is not an illusion, An illusion it would be to suppose that what science cannot give, you can get elsewhere.”

ভগবানের মৃত্যু তো হল—এবং বিজ্ঞানই মারল ভগবানকে। কিন্তু ভগবানের মৃত্যুই শেষ কথা নয়—সম্প্রতি আমাদের বৈজ্ঞানিক আলোতে আসল ঠিকানার সন্ধান আবার সেই ঈশ্বরকে ফিরিয়ে আনছে—বিমূর্ত এক আধুনিক ঈশ্বর, যে সর্বত্র বিরাজমান ও তাঁর প্রত্যাবর্তন রূপকথার মতই বর্ণময় ও অবিশ্বাস্য।

এক সর্বব্যাপী বুদ্ধিমত্তার অনুভূতিই ব্রহ্মকে উপলব্ধি করা—একথা বলে গেছেন বেদের মুনি ঋষিরা, এবং আধুনিক বিজ্ঞানও সেই ধারণাই পোষণ করছে।

‘ফিল্ড’ মানে খেলার মাঠ—আবার ‘কোয়ান্টামফিল্ড’ও এক ধরনের মাঠ—শক্তিক্ষেত্র। অনুমাত্র পর্যায়ের বিশ্লেষণের প্রচেষ্টায় আমরা ক্ষুদ্রাতিক্ষুদ্র পরমাণুর ‘অনুরাগের’—অর্থাৎ Quantum excitation-এর পরিচয় পাই, তার থেকে উদ্ভাবন হয় দু’রকম ফিল্ডের—

ম্যানিফেস্ট ফিল্ড বা প্রত্যক্ষগোচর ক্ষেত্র এবং প্রাইমঅরডিয়াল ফিল্ড বা আদিম বা মৌলিক ক্ষেত্র।

এই প্রাইমঅরডিয়াল ফিল্ড এক অর্থে সর্বত্র বিরাজমান, যাকে কোনও জায়গা থেকে সরানো যায়না। ফিল্ডের বংশপরিচয় হল, প্রত্যেকটি ম্যানিফেস্ট ফিল্ড তার প্রাইমঅরডিয়াল ফিল্ডের সম্ভান প্রত্যেকটি প্রাইমঅরডিয়াল ফিল্ডের পিতা হল এক এবং অদ্বিতীয় ‘উৎস’। আধুনিক বৈজ্ঞানিক ও গণিতজ্ঞের ব্যাখ্যায় এই ‘উৎস’ হল পরম ব্রহ্ম— চিরকালীন, সর্বব্যাপী। আমাদের চিরন্তন ও শেষ ঠিকানা এই ‘উৎস’

"the thin and shadowy form  
who has come among us  
with noiseless, trackless footsteps"  
উৎসের কি চেতনা আছে?

অনেক বিজ্ঞানীর মতে এর উত্তর আছে কোয়ান্টাম রহস্যের নিভূতে। কোয়ান্টাম বিশ্বই আসলে আমাদের প্রাথমিক বিশ্বকে ঠেকনা দিয়ে রেখেছে। কিন্তু এই বিশ্বে ঘটে চলছে এক অবিশ্বাস্য ঘটনা— ঘটনাটি হল কোয়ান্টাম তত্ত্ব অনুসারে একই কোয়ান্টাম কণা একই সময় উপস্থিত থাকে একাধিক জায়গায় এবং চলে একাধিক পথ দিয়ে। এই অদ্ভুত ঘটনা আমার ধারণা দিয়ে সঠিকভাবে উপলব্ধি করতে পারিনা, কিন্তু অঙ্কের মাধ্যমে এই বাস্তবে পৌঁছানো সম্ভব। এই প্রসঙ্গে গীতায় শ্রীকৃষ্ণের অর্জুনের প্রতি উক্তি এক সবিশেষ মহত্ত্ব ও তাৎপর্য লাভ করে,

“আমি একই সময়ে সর্বত্র বিরাজমান।”

কোয়ান্টাম রহস্যই আমাদের পথ দেখিয়ে নিয়ে যায় আর এক রহস্য—বিশ্বের চেতনায়। সাম্প্রতিককালের শ্রেষ্ঠ অঙ্কবিদ রজার পেনরোজ তো দ্বিধাহীনভাবে বলেই দিয়েছেন।

"A universe whose laws do not take

consciousness into account is not much of a universe."

আধুনিক বিজ্ঞানের আবিষ্কৃত আরেকটি তত্ত্বের নাম—

Anthropic Cosmological principle –

এই তত্ত্বের মূল বক্তব্য হল—প্রকৃতির মধ্যে যা ঘটছে তা সমস্তে রচিত নিয়মে শৃঙ্খলিত। এই নিয়ন্ত্রণেই সঠিক বুদ্ধিমত্তার প্রকাশ। অচেতন বা অবচেতন সঠিক বুদ্ধিমত্তা কি সম্ভব? এই প্রশ্নের সম্মুখীন আজ বিজ্ঞান। প্রসঙ্গত সিটফেন হকিংয়ের নতুন বই ‘The Universe In a Nutshell’ –এর কয়েকটি কথা তাৎপর্যপূর্ণভাবে প্রযোজ্য :

"Anthropic principle seems to be essential when dealing with origin of universe."

কালের প্রবাহে মানবজীবন যেমন প্রবাহিত, বিজ্ঞানও তেমনি অবিনশ্বর। ক্রমপরিবর্তমান বৈজ্ঞানিক দৃশ্যপটে আমরা প্রত্যক্ষ করতে পারি যে বিজ্ঞান ও ধর্ম হয়ে উঠছে পরস্পরের পরিপূরক—যা একসময়ে আইনস্টাইন চমৎকার ভাবে বলে গেছেন।

“বিজ্ঞান ধর্ম ছাড়া খণ্ড

আর ধর্ম বিজ্ঞান ছাড়া অন্ধ।”

আজকের অনেক বিজ্ঞানীরই বিশ্বাস, ধর্ম ও বিজ্ঞানের পারস্পরিক আলোকপাতই দেখিয়ে দেবে আমাদের সেই ঠিকানা, বা ‘উৎস’। সেই ঠিকানার সাথে যোগাযোগ হলেই আসবে পরিপূর্ণতা, এক সংযমিত আনন্দ। লক্ষ্য বহুদূর, এবং নতুন পথে অভিযান প্রচলন কুহেলিকায় আচ্ছন্ন। অজানার হাতছানি মানবমনের কাছে অনতিক্রমণীয়, ও তাই প্রত্যেক চিন্তাশীল ব্যক্তির মননে ও হৃদয়ে অনুরণিত হোক এই ভাব, “জয় অজানার জয়”।

# Poormeswar Singh

MADHURA MUKHOPADHYAY

The title might suggest a tall, broad shouldered, hefty young fellow with thick moustache curling at the end. However, the real picture is a complete antithesis of the description given.

Poormeswar Singh is a little scrawny boy of six, who walks barefeet and tends the buffaloes belonging to his father who acts as a guide to tourists, duped by unscrupulous "autowalas", 3 kms away from a place called Dharagiri Falls. Poormeswar's name, if pronounced correctly, should be Parmeshwar Singh. He is a little adivasi boy living in a village in the jungles surrounding the small town of Ghatsila in Jharkhand.

We were duped in the aforementioned way by an autorickshaw driver who left us to our own devices to walk the last 3 kms to the beautiful Dharagiri Falls. Poormeswar led the way. His thin, scrawny bare feet seemed to gobble up the roads, and he took us through a beautiful adivasi village on the way, where he said his home was.

The mud huts with thatched roofs were scrupulously clean with the most intricate and beautiful 'alponas' drawn on the threshold of the houses. Hens and chickens scuttled about everywhere and we saw a little girl about the same age and height of Poormeswar bringing along about 20 goats and kids. When I laughingly asked her how far the 'Falls' was, she shyly answered – with a mischievous glint in her glimmering black eyes – that since we had a guide she didn't know the way. On being asked later Poormeswar reluctantly answered that she was his aunt or rather his father's sister.

We kept on walking on the red road with the scenery changing as we proceeded uphill. At first there were paddy hills where the ripening paddy had the colour of gold; then came dense foliage on either side which raised our hackles for fear of the unknown; lastly came the stony path to the 'falls', which by normal standards was quite hazardous. We heard the sweet sound of the rushing waters nearby but, whenever, panting, we asked Poormeswar, "Aar katakhani re?" (how much farther?), he would answer "aar etuku" (just a little bit). His self confidence was supreme – his gait had the sprightliness of the young and when one looked

into his eyes one saw only innocence and purity.

Even though his small frame could hardly sustain the weight of my mother's shoulders, he told her to hold his hands while crossing a bamboo bridge. It seemed quite hilarious at that time, but looking back one can still see the supreme self confidence reflected in every action of his. He took us to the 'Falls' where only he could complete the picture of purity, where the tinkling pure water of the spring shone like diamonds wherever the sun fell on it and which made us shiver in delight at its coolness and wonderful taste.

He led us back, often slowing down for us as we fell behind, his incredulity at the city-dwellers' caprices increasing as he heard our grumbling for better roads, and this was clearly etched on his features.

My father bought him a cup of tea and biscuits and his wonder and delight at this made us feel as if we had just given him the Koh-i-Noor. He drank the tea till the last drop tilting the glass till no more would seep out. He kept holding on to the biscuit as if it was something precious. It made us wonder if he had ever eaten a biscuit in his life. On my father's encouragement he reluctantly bit into the biscuit as if he wanted to keep it forever. His eyes shone joyously when he was given 20 rupees for his services and he shyly said that he would buy a shirt with it. But the best thing that warmed our heart was his transparent joy when we told him that we would drop him off at his village in the auto-rickshaw. He regarded the auto-rickshaw with both eager anticipation and wary apprehension. He held on to his seat for dear life and yet the excitement flowing through his veins was clearly reflected in his eyes. When he got down from the auto-rickshaw a small gathering emerged and he got down from the auto like a king descending from his throne to grace the world of mere mortals.

His joy, purity, innocence suddenly seemed to reach into that point of our souls which had been hardened by the skulduggery, lies and all things impure, which blacken our souls while we try to succeed in the rat-race called life.



# Literature in Society

SAPTARSHI BASU

To me Literature is nothing but a study of the life and times of a character depicted on a social canvas. In other words, successful Literature is but a true and close depiction of the social scene and ethos. The central core of literature is thus replete with the spirit of the times. Oscar Wilde's comment- 'Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy but moulds it to its purpose', while seeming to suggest the opposite leads me to the following interpretation. Society is composed of several lives. Even when attempts are made – for instance during the "Art for Art's sake Movement" to create literature with only aesthetic pleasure as the end, it is seldom seen to have universal appeal. I feel that Literature which tries to remain aloof from the concerns of the social atmosphere, amounts to little more than intellectual curiosity.

Society, however, is dynamic and as a result literature must capture the reflection of changing times. Even when the conflict seems to be intensely personal, for example, the conflict between Achilles and Hector in Greek mythology, on closer analysis the individuals are found to be symbols of different social classes fighting for victory. In one sense it is suggestive of the struggle of the serfs to emancipate themselves from their feudal masters or the struggle of factory workers to break away from the fetters of the capitalist regime. This may be seen in the literature of our country during the period of our struggle for national liberation. However it was seen that when the writers belonged to a group who had vested interests in the British administration the tempo of the struggle was

broken by the intervention of certain abstract dogmas masquerading as immutable moral ideas. Interestingly Count Lev Tolstoy's works like 'Anna Karenina' or 'War and Peace', though primarily concerned with humanity, pits it against the social backdrop effectively as also Thomas Hardy in his Wessex novels.

The main function of literature is thus found to be portraying the basic class struggles, and the author should thus carry out his purpose in an unselfish manner. For example, it is sometimes pointed out that Shakespeare was conservative in his attitude to social life. Yet he represents with sufficient clarity the influence of the conflict between a vanishing social order and an emerging new one based on individualism. That is why he is truthful in representing the justice of the cause of the oppressed people like Caliban in 'The Tempest'. It is this objective vision that has ensured Shakespeare's supreme position in the world of literature, in addition to his poetic genius. Here we find the secret of the influence of literature on society.

The concern of literature in society is of primary importance. Undoubtedly style and fiction are necessary, but only as a means to an end. The end is all-important – and that end is linked with the social life of the people as a whole. The attention paid to the formal side of literature is taken into account long after the epoch of creation. After all, literature is not a contrivance but a depiction of society.

# কল্পনাসু

## মৃণ্ময় বিশ্বাস

পূর্ণিমার রাত। আকাশের বিরাট অবয়বখানি স্নিগ্ধ জ্যোৎস্নার আলোয় উজ্জ্বল। এমন রাত্রির সৌন্দর্য অনুভব করছি বারান্দায় বসে। কিন্তু চাঁদটিকে ঠিক চাঁদ মনে হচ্ছে না। বুঝে উঠতে পারছি না কেন তার মধ্যে আমি গণেশের দোকানের পাঁচ টাকার রাজভোগকে খুঁজে পাচ্ছি! বিরাট থালায় রাজভোগটি রাখা, থালা রসপূর্ণ, আর আকাশের তারাগুলি যেন— উফ! হতচ্ছাড়া একটি বেরসিক মশা রাতের মাহাত্ম্য না বুঝে ক্ষুধার ছালা মেটাতে চাইছে। তাকে প্রাপ্য শাস্তি দিয়ে রোমান্টিকতাকে বিদায় জানালাম। ঘরে গিয়ে শুলাম।

আচ্ছা আমি চাঁদটিকে কি প্রকারে রাজভোগ ভাবলাম! চাঁদ কবিত্বের অনুপ্রেরণা, চাঁদে কেউ দেখেছে তার প্রেমিকাকেও, আর আমি কিনা রাজভোগ, হুম! সুকান্ত যদি চাঁদে ঝলসানো রুটি খুঁজে পান তবে রাজভোগ আশ্চর্যের নয়। ক্ষুধার্ত পেটই মানুষের রোমান্টিকতাকে ঢেকে দেয়। (কথাটি কিন্তু ভুল, ক্রমশঃ প্রকাশ্য) আজ সত্যিই আমি অভুক্তই রয়েছি। তাই চাঁদও রাজভোগ। সৌভাগ্যক্রমে ক্ষুধার মাত্রা এত বাড়ে নি যে রাজভোগ থালা থেকে খেতে যেতাম, তার আগে মশা তার ক্ষুধা নিবারণের জন্য আমাকে কামড়েছে। পরলোকগত ক্ষুধার্ত মশার জন্য বড় আফশোষ হচ্ছে। মানুষ কত কিছুই না ভাবতে পারে। ভাবনার কোন সীমা নাই।

এইতো দু’দিন আগে আমার ছোট ভাই আমাকে মানুষ ও পশুর মূল পার্থক্যটি প্রশ্ন করে। আমি ভাবতে বসলাম। সরল ভাই মন্তব্য করল পশু বড় অসভ্য জামাকাপড় পরে না। মানুষের অন্ততঃ অতটুকু সভ্যতা জ্ঞান আছে। আমি উত্তর দিলাম আসলে মানুষ বুদ্ধিমান, পশুর সেটাই নেই। ভুল বলেছিলাম। সঠিক উত্তরটি বোধহয় এখন পেয়েছি। পশুর বুদ্ধির অভাব আছে বললে ভুল হবে। পর্যবেক্ষণ করা গেছে জঙ্গলে যদি কোন আগন্তকের প্রবেশ হয় তবে পশুপাখি কীটপতঙ্গের মধ্যে অদ্ভুত প্রতিক্রিয়া হয়। পশুরা নিজেদের মধ্যে চিন্তা-ভাবনার আদান-প্রদান করে তাও পর্যবেক্ষণ করা গেছে। তবে পশুরা তো বুদ্ধিহীন নয়। মূল কারণটি খুঁজে পেয়েছি। মানুষ কল্পনা করতে পারে। অন্যরা এটিই পারে না। তাই আমরাই শ্রেষ্ঠ জাতি। মানুষের কল্পনার ফসলই এই সুসজ্জিত পৃথিবী। যাদুঘরে একটি ছবি দেখেছিলাম একটি শিম্পাঞ্জী হাঁটতে হাঁটতে কখন যেন মানুষ হয়ে গেছে। হাঁটবার পথটিকে বিজ্ঞানীরা নাম দিয়েছেন বিবর্তন। মানুষ প্রকৃতিকে পর্যবেক্ষণ করেছে। প্রকৃতির কিছু বাঁধাধরা নিয়ম আছে। মানুষ সেই নিয়মকে উপলব্ধি করেছে। তার নিজের প্রয়োজন মিটিয়েছে। মানুষ কল্পনা করেছে, চিন্তা করেছে। চাকার আবিষ্কার মানুষের

জীবনে গতি এনেছে। চাকা যে মানুষের জীবনকে গতিময় করবে তা আগে জানা ছিল না। তাহলে ‘চাকা’ আসল কোথা থেকে! মানুষের কল্পনা বলেছিল চাকতির মতো কোন কিছু থাকলে কঠিন পথ সহজেই পার হওয়া যাবে। তার পরেই চাকার আবিষ্কার। জগত সংসারের প্রতিটি প্রাথমিক আবিষ্কারের ইতিহাস একই। এরপর বিজ্ঞান আসল। সূত্র, তথ্যের জন্ম হল। খাতার পাতায় অঙ্ক কষে জন্ম নিল আধুনিক সভ্যতা। তবু সবকিছুর সাথে কল্পনার শক্তি সমানভাবে মানুষকে সাহায্য করে যাচ্ছে। সে কোন কিছু কল্পনা করে যুক্তি দিয়ে তাকে বিশ্লেষণ করেছে। সিদ্ধান্তে উপনীত হয়েছে।

কল্পনাই মানুষকে যুক্তিবাদী করেছে আবার কল্পনাই মানুষকে যুক্তিহীন কাজের দিকে ঠেলে দিয়েছে। ঝড় উঠেছে, বন্যা হয়েছে, মানুষ কল্পনা করেছে এ-যেন কোন অশুভ শক্তির প্রকোপ। পৃথিবীতে যা কিছু প্রতিকূল অদ্ভুত তাই মানুষের কল্পনার অঙ্ককার দিক। সভ্যতার প্রথমদিকে তাতে বিজ্ঞানের আলো পড়েনি। সেই কালিমায় লুকানো আছে মানুষের ভয়। পরে যুক্তি এল, বিশ্লেষণ হল, মানুষ নিজেই তার চোখ বন্ধ করে রাখল। তার আজন্ম লালিত সংস্কার, তার কল্পনার জগদল পাথর আর সরেনি। তাই আজও মানুষ কুসংস্কারাচ্ছন্ন। অবলা বিড়াল রাস্তা পার হলে মানুষের দিন খারাপ হয়ে যায়। কুসংস্কার থেকে এসেছে অস্পৃশ্যতা, ধর্মাক্রান্ততা, মৌলবাদী মানসিকতা। মানুষ মানুষের মধ্যে যে ভেদ থাকাটা যুক্তিহীন ও হাস্যকর তাই তাদের উপলব্ধির বাইরে। অর্থাৎ কল্পনার তো শুধু ভাল দিকই নেই, খারাপ দিকও আছে।

মানুষের মন খুব অদ্ভুত। তাতে যা কিছু লিখে দিলাম তার পরে তাকে মুছে ফেলা খুব কষ্টের। তাই প্রথমেই প্রয়োজন মনকে যুক্তিবাদী করে তোলা। কল্পনাকে যুক্তির আঙ্গিকে বিশ্লেষণ করে সত্যের অনুমানই হল যুক্তিশীল মানসিকতার লক্ষণ। ভূত, অপদেবতা, মহাকাল, প্রায়শ্চিত্ত, সংস্কার যেন মনকে কলুষিত না করে। বিজ্ঞানের প্রসার ক্রমশই যুক্তিকে প্রতিষ্ঠিত করেছে। যুক্তির প্রতিষ্ঠার সাথে সাথে চিন্তাধারা বদল হচ্ছে। আজ কেউ বলে না সূর্য পৃথিবীর চারদিকে ঘুরছে। এই সত্য আজ মানুষের মধ্যে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে। মানুষ কল্পনা করবে কিন্তু তাতে কালিমা থাকবে না, উজ্জ্বল হয়ে থাকবে যুক্তির সোনালী সূর্য।

চোখ খুলে দেখি সাড়ে ছ-টায় সূর্যও জ্বলজ্বল করছে, তাকে ঠিক সূর্যের মতো লাগছে না। মনে হচ্ছে যেন ডিমের কুসুম। বুঝতে পেরেছি আর দেরি করা ঠিক হবে না। ভোরের সূর্য ও তোমাদেরকে সুপ্রভাত জানিয়ে আমি যাব এখন রান্নাঘরে।

# The All-Purpose Key

SABORNI MAITI

Recent advances in biomedical research are not only effective for various diseases and disorders but also for medical diagnosis and therapy. One such area of biomedical research is stem cell research. It is a very recent output of modern biomedical research. The stem cells because of their ability to get transformed into different types of cells, can be transplanted in the human body. It is thought that these cells have powerful therapeutic potential to cure various diseases.

There are two kinds of stem cells, namely, embryonic stem cells and adult stem cells. The embryonic stem cells are cells of the embryo in a very early stage of development. The embryonic stem cells are easier to grow and can divide for longer periods of time in the lab to produce more stem cells. Unfortunately, it is risky to transplant embryonic stem cells as they may develop into tumors. Adult stem cells reside in various adult tissues like bone marrow, muscle and brain where they generate replacement for cells which are lost through normal wear and tear, injury or disease. It has been observed that the adult stem cells may produce not only the type of tissues in which they reside, but can sometimes also form an altogether different tissue. That is to say under certain experimental conditions stem cells of blood can give rise to muscle tissue and neurons. The adult stem cells grow more slowly. The biggest drawback so far regarding adult stem cells is their inability to get transformed into many different types of cells. But scientists are still not clear about the sources of adult stem cells in the body. Are they "left over" embryonic stem cells from the process of development, or are they born in some other way?

Let us now discuss its utility in medicine. Stem cell research holds a promise of hope for the millions of people living with incurable diseases like diabetes, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinsonism, leukaemia, spinal cord injury and so on. It is quite amazing to know that stem cells grafted in the spinal cord of paralysed mice restored their ability to move. Stem cells transformed into insulin-producing cells could treat diabetes in mice. Stem cells of the bone marrow are pre-cursors of all blood cells that could be clinically used to restore the blood system after certain cancer treatments. The physicians might also be able to use the blood stem cells to generate the immune cells which are killed or destroyed by HIV invasion.

The medical scientists have already developed methods for developing these cells into more than 110 types of human cells such as bones, blood, brain, heart etc. which in turn can be used for organ transplantation. These tissues are also used to study the effects of new drugs and toxins thereby minimising clinical trials on humans and animals.

Cloning and embryonic stem cell researches bear few points of similarity. In stem cell research the embryo is destroyed after getting the stem cells from it, whereas in cloning the embryo is allowed to develop. Embryonic stem cell research is a controversial subject worldwide because there are differing views on when a human life begins. So now more emphasis is given to developing adult stem cells. However, what is of paramount importance is that beyond all these controversies stem cell research has the potential to develop into an all-purpose key for medical scientists.

# An extraordinary day in the Girls' Hostel

SAMBEETA DAS

## 8:30 AM:

The rays of sunlight woke me up. I was pretty annoyed and cursed the stained glass windows of the room. After tossing and turning for a few minutes, I reached for my walkman and started listening to that 'revered piece of symphony', "Dhoom machale...". Perfect for waking you up, trust me, it is. After 15 minutes my room mate came in wearing a bath robe. "Subah subah nahana!", I exclaimed from under my quilt. "Sleepy head, it is already 8:30 and you are supposed to catch a bus at 9:15." I sat up startled and realised that I had forgotten to set the alarm last night. Naturally, if you gossip till 3 o'clock in the night, this is what you should expect. Fine, now don't panic. I have managed even harder deadlines before. I picked up my brushing gear and rushed towards the 'little nun's room'. Bad luck continues, all the four bathrooms are occupied. I knocked on each of the doors and screamed "How much longer dearies?" The minimal time given by one was at least 3 minutes. I positioned my bucket in front of her door anticipating a sudden queue and asked her to pull it in as soon as she finished her bath. I even told her to call me as soon as she gets out. In the mean time, I started brushing my teeth but soon the breakfast bell rang. Almost sounding like my death knell, it suggested that it was already 8:45. I quickly washed my mouth and face and ran towards the toilet. On reaching, I found that my bucket was already in and the bathroom was empty. I quickly rushed to my room to grab my towel and soap case. Within the next two minutes I finished taking my bath and within the next two I got ready. This surely stands as a feat by itself. What next? God save the queen, my bag was not packed. In spite of the innumerable chidings from my parents for over ten years, I was still with my habit of not packing it beforehand. By the time I finished doing it, it was 9 o'clock. Ok, don't panic, take a deep breath, I still had 5 minutes to finish my meal. I quickly procured my meal coupon and took my food. Though it was supposed to be a delectable dish of mixed vegetables, the only vegetable I could make out was 'aloo'(potatoes). But who cares as long it is food and it fills your stomach. The big clock in the dining room told me that it was 9:07. Hurry nitwit! My mission was accomplished, so what if I had to run to the bus stop.

## 5:30 PM:

The clock showed 5:30 PM. I wearily trudged back to the hostel. Entering my room, I dumped my bag and grabbed a bottle of water. Suddenly I received a tight slap on my back; before I could turn around and utter a mouthful of 'obscenities', "click" it went. My friend has procured a new camera and overcome by a new hobby of clicking photographs of unsuspecting hostellites she went out in search of new hapless victims. I was not even given the chance of becoming angry. As I went for another gulp of the precious water, my stomach groaned signalling the immediate want of food. It was the time for a trip to Tapanda's. Tapanda is the only ray of light in the otherwise dark world of food of the hostellites. In spite of the exorbitant prices, his chowmein, rolls, chops and cutlets carry us through those long evenings. These gastronomical delights are available in a stall outside the hostel. I bought a roll to satisfy my 'unputdownable' hunger. It was time for putting on the thinking cap, or rather to take it off, the time for study. This may be well termed as the most difficult part of hostel life – finding time for study, especially during the first year. There are always so many different things to do other than studying. Never mind I tried too eke out some time.

## 9:00 PM:

The dinner bell rang, I took my meal and went up to the much sought after T.V room. The cable channel was showing "Musafir." I excitedly sat down to devour the film.

## 9:30 PM:

A battle ensued between two distinct groups; one was eager to watch the daily soap "Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahin", and the other, to which I belonged, raised their voices for the film. But majority wins, "Jassi" won over "Musafir". After the long list of daily soaps, we went down to wash our plates. It was 11 o'clock.

## 11:00 PM:

It was the time for the most coveted part of the day, the "room adda". After two short hours of interesting and 'spicy' discussion, which might remind you of old English women who sipped ginger ale and gossiped for hours, we forced ourselves to the Cimmerian planes. In borrowed words though, "Tomorrow is yet another day..."

# The Politics of Sex in Conventional Cinema: Production, Penetration & Vulnerability

IMAN K. MITRA

In conventional cinema, where a film is considered 'a process of approaching the inevitable', the 'unexpected' is isolated as a 'different' paradigm which does not fit into the map of make-belief. The conclusion (which is inevitable) is always drawn in favour of the power structure which decides the rules of social mechanisms like 'production' or 'penetration'.

Production, for example, as a social mechanism has to follow a set of socially ("collectively") evolved rules, better known as 'norms'. Norms do change from time to time, corresponding to the changes within and without the social system. Changes might take place through 'struggles' or 'achievements'. And they do take place to support and subserve the power-structure.

In conventional cinema however, the concept of 'sex' (from now on which will be called 'penetration' as it is 'usual' to conceive 'penetration') is always production-oriented. Like production, penetration is also considered a social mechanism. Like production, penetration too has to follow a set of norms. Anything outside those norms is 'abnormal' (e.g. homosexuality and even 'penetration from behind' which is still a crime according to the Indian Penal Code). There is always a conflict between the 'normal' and the 'abnormal'. This conflict can be easily translated into a conflict between the concepts of 'social mechanism' and 'individual mechanism'. The 'abnormal' activities are 'individual activities' according to many social scientists. It is rather interesting to note that the presence of the motif 'individual' is always considered 'abnormal' in the political, cultural and economic spheres.

Indian conventional cinema has always voted against premarital sex. Whenever there is premarital sex, there are accidents, calamities and suffering. Have you seen the movie '*Aradhana*'

(Dir. Shakti Samant)? In the movie, hero Rajesh Khanna and heroine Sharmila Tagore have sex before their social marriage takes place. After this episode Rajesh dies in a plane-crash and Sharmila is separated from her son (perhaps the greatest form of 'punishment' in Hindi Cinema). Marriage grants 'legitimacy' to sex in Indian conventional cinema. Here the sequence of '*Suhaag Raat*' invariably shows the 'violence' of love-making dissolving into the 'cry' of a newborn baby.

Why is production projected as the inevitable conclusion? There is a historical tendency to project the individualistic act of lovemaking as a collective social mechanism which serves the system at large. The concepts of collectivity and hierarchy are linked with the concept of production. The act of lovemaking has to be an activity, which produces something for the system. Here we have to consider the fact that the formation of the system is only possible after the introduction of the concept of production. Therefore, there must be a 'production-value' of penetration as a collective social mechanism. Production-less sex is looked down upon in Indian conventional cinema. No male protagonist has ever been caught 'guilty' of using a condom during the famous sequence of '*suhaag raat*'! This logic spills over into the attitude towards homosexuality.

On the other hand, women are always shown vulnerable in conventional cinema. Very often we hear the male protagonist telling his female counterpart, "Ye mardon ka kaam hain, tumhare bas ki baat nahin". Therefore, it is not surprising that we never have working women emerging as female leads in conventional cinema in India. And when we do have them, we never see them working. Madhuri Dixit happens to be a computer professional in the superhit blockbuster '*Hum Aapke Hain Kaun?*'. Did you know that? Even in

**Sholay** where one of the female protagonists Basanti is said to be an 'empowered woman' who works and earns for her family (in the absence of any man in the family), she is shown driving her Tonga with and only with the male protagonist(s). So many other instances can be given. Tomboys are always heckled and forced to return to 'normalcy' by the male 'heroes' (remember **Himmatwala** starring Jitendra and Shridevi).

Again, the female protagonists are bound to be loyal to their male partners. Sometimes they do get involved in 'extra marital affairs', but those affairs never draw them to the 'bed'. (Ed: But, see the next article on emerging trends in Bollywood, by Arko Chattopadhyay) All female leads in conventional cinema are virgins before meeting their male counterparts. Another important aspect of the story is that the female protagonist is at the most only molested, but never raped, and is saved by the hero just in time. We do have rapes in conventional cinema, but the kind-hearted rapists target only the poor 'sisters' of the male protagonists. Immediately after they are raped the 'sisters' commit suicide.

We have said earlier that conventional cinema can be described as a movement towards the inevitable, which in turn is always the ideal. Conventional cinema always thinks, dreams, talks

and sings about the ideal, 'what should be', not about 'what is'. It always promotes ideas, activities and concepts, which are conducive to the survival of the system. The 'good triumphing over the bad' is inevitably ideal. Now 'What is good?' and 'What is bad?' – these questions are debatable, but conventional cinema does not raise debates.

Sex as a concept is always idealised following the same pattern. Production-less sex is not acceptable as it brings nothing for the system. Women are conceptualized as and compared to the 'land'. 'Penetration', therefore, signifies the machinery which will bring some 'output' for the system. Women are always kept silent and vulnerable, otherwise it becomes harder for the men to produce. Fertility is projected as the greatest virtue of 'womanhood'.

Now these features of Indian conventional cinema may be different in details from the features of American conventional cinema, but the ultimate motive is the same - to work for the maintenance of the power structure. Indian conventional cinema, too, is changing its form as India changes from an economic unit with a feudal background to full-blown capitalism. The changes are complex. But the crux of the matter is that while the structures change their names the structurality, unfortunately, remains the same.

# 'Rosy Lips and Cheeks' : Emerging trends in Bollywood

ARKA CHATTOPADHYAY

A new phenomenon that has profusely entered Indian Cinema is the theme of extra-marital love or sex. And, it's mostly an off-shoot of the myth of globalisation. Bollywood, by and large, had not ventured into this territory and the propensity has largely been imported from the west. Party-life, discos and pubs, free mixing of men and women is the emerging reality today. Cinema is a medium which always mirrors reality as much for the sake of art as for commercial returns at the box-office. I don't believe that this theme is essentially so obscene and volatile that it should not be portrayed on the big screen, even if the trend has been set by the movie-makers of Hollywood.

In these days when sheer materialism is having its ultimate say in our lives, emotions like love, devotion and faithfulness are dying out. This dark side of passion is being brought out by the filmmakers, dishing out more and more the so long forbidden stuff. As a result the Indian viewers are fast waking up to a changing and exciting adulthood of onscreen sexuality.

The trend started with *Jism*. Through a spell-binding plot, it conveyed its message succinctly. There was a dose of extra-marital love in *Jism* but its focal point was the depiction of love as just a physical thirst as opposed to the sweetness of

romantic togetherness. It was all about loving one's own self only. There were a few scenes of love-making in the film which were shot with artistry.

After *Jism* set the cash-registers ringing all over the country lots of film-makers tried to encash on this euphoria. There came a host of flicks on extramarital affairs like – *Tum?*, *Hawas*, *Murder*, *Ek Stree*.

*Tum?* was about a married woman who slept with a man, in a drunken state. Though this rationale is a little difficult to digest, the portrayal of the affair was quite sensitive. This accident culminated into a string of other events, leading to a murder-mystery at the end.

'*Murder*' is a much-hyped film from the Bhatt-camp depicting the illicit affair of a woman who got involved in a relationship with her ex-flame. The film had its moments when it highlighted the woman's psyche, her dilemma beautifully, with the help of subtle, suggestive soliloquies. The situation in *Murder* spoke of the solitude of a married woman with an indifferent husband. Though it was the prospect of fulfilling physical desire which re-initiated the affair, the film-maker also dwelt on the nostalgia of the love which they had shared once. But then the plot took a twist and turned into another murder-mystery, diluting its previous impact.

Karan Razdan's *Hawas*, highlighting a post-



Artist : PIYA DAS

marital affair was a very poor projection of sensational and erotic scenes, again meandering into a kind of crime-thriller.

The basic problem in all these attempts to give the viewers some glimpses of the new adulthood, is that the makers and script-writers are never sure about how to treat the subject. Cinema is not only a facile documentation of reality. It must be enhanced and ripened by the maker's own imaginative vision, his individual creativity and comments should always be there to lend artistic wholesomeness to the plot. That seems to be missing in all these films.

The makers are confused whether to justify extra-marital liaisons or not, and about the stance they should take. Meghna Naidu's dance sequence in front of Devi Ma in **Hawas**, the scene where Manisha Koirala confesses to herself that she loves her husband only, after the dreadful night in **Tum?**, and the projection of Mallika Sherawat's married loneliness in **Murder** – are all examples that suggest a justification of their actions, but the films invariably slip into a thriller mode and lead to a climax where the heroines melodramatically confess their "sin" and their magnanimous husbands re-accept them. The first question is

whether this climax is realistic. This is a trite and conciliatory resolution, going back to the "traditional Indian values". There is neither realism nor courage in the so-called sexual defiance in these films. They bank on skimpily-clad women, petty sensationalism, and finally convey nothing. These films end up being examples of a confused and ill-directed search for the identity of the so-called passionate woman. They succeed only in projecting the wives as sexual delinquents and their husbands as generous males, cultured and sincere, steadfast in their approach to love. Is this projection compatible with the question of women's rights which these films claim to reveal in their pre-release publicity stunts?

On the other hand, Mahesh Manjrekar's **Astitva** – the most serious and mature portrayal of a post-marital affair was noticeably without a single "intimate" scene.

Thus, in today's glossy, globalised format, current Bollywood block-busters fail to work out any radical connotations of love, passion or female sexuality. 'The rosy lips and cheeks' do come within the 'compass' of the film-makers, but the 'dark Lady' of the sonnets or 'the woman of infinite variety' remains as elusive as before?



# একজন অঙ্কের গদার ভাবনা

দেবল ব্যানার্জী

"My films are always works of research. I do not consider myself a director who has already mastered his profession, but one who is continuing his search and studying his contemporaries. My work is like digging; it is archaeological research among the arid material of our times."

অস্তেনিওনি'র এই উক্তিটি বোধহয় যাদের স্বগতোক্তি বলে চলিয়ে দেওয়া যায় জঁ লুক গদার তাদের মধ্যে অন্যতম। "Begins – this is important" আলবার কামুর কথাটা বোধহয় গদারের শিল্প ভাবনার আকড় ছিল, তাই আঙ্গিক থেকে অন্তর্বস্ত সমস্ত ক্ষেত্রেই প্রাক্তনদের বন্ধন ছিন্ন করার বলিষ্ঠ প্রয়াস তার সিনেমায় দেখা যায়।

কোন বক্তব্যকেই গদার তাঁর সিনেমায় সম্পূর্ণ ব্যাখ্যা করতে চাননি, তার মতে "End of Story. End of Cinema" (Weekend)। যদিও প্রায়োগিক দর্শনের বিচারে গদার কখনো মার্কসবাদী কখনো অস্তিবাদী, সিনেমায় গদারের জীবন দর্শনের প্রভাব প্রসঙ্গে বক্তব্য রাখতে গিয়ে প্রখ্যাত চিত্র সমালোচক ধীমান দাশগুপ্ত বলেছেন—গদারের প্রথম পর্বের ছবিগুলি হল— "an existentialist's response to the dialectical montage" এবং দ্বিতীয় পর্বের ছবিগুলি হল— "Maoist response to existentialism."

আলোচনা যখন গদার নিয়ে তখন সিনেমা ব্যতিরেকে সে আলোচনা অসম্পূর্ণ। গদারের প্রথম পূর্ণদৈর্ঘ্যের ছবি প্রকাশিত হয় ১৯৫৯ সালে। ছবিটির নাম A bout de souffle যা Breathless নামেই বেশি পরিচিত। ছবিটির নির্মাণ সম্পর্কে প্রকাশিত বিভিন্ন তথ্য এবং আঙ্গিকের গঠনশৈলী ইতালির Neo realist ধারার সঙ্গে সাদৃশ্যপূর্ণ। গদারের এই প্রথম ছবি 'দর্শক পীড়নের' জন্য বিখ্যাত। ছবিটিতে গদার উদ্ভাবন (Improvisation)-এর উপর জোর দিয়েছিলেন তা চিত্রনাট্যেই হোক বা অভিনয়ে।

কিন্তু গদার স্বভাব বিরুদ্ধ কাজটি করেন ১৯৬৩ সালে, আলবার্তো মোরাভিয়ার কাহিনী অবলম্বনে তৈরী করেন Contempl / Le Mepris। ছবিটি তৈরী হয়েছিল অত্যধিক ব্যয়ের মাধ্যমে। কিন্তু পরবর্তী সিনেমাগুলিতে গদার সেই পথ পরিত্যাগ করেন। ১৯৬০ সালে তৈরী হয় The little soldier / Le petit soldat। Breathless-এর Existentialist গদার এখানে সম্পূর্ণ মার্কসবাদী। আবার ১৯৬২-এর Vivre sa vie-তে গদার পুনরায় অস্তিবাদী। এই অস্তিবাদী নন্দনতত্ত্ব বোধই গদারের ছবিগুলিকে ঋদ্ধ করেছিল, এবং অবশ্যই ঋদ্ধ করেছিল দর্শক সমালোচনার উপায়গুলিকেও। একইভাবে গদারের সিনেমায় যৌনতা এসেছে কিন্তু তা কখনও দর্শক সমালোচনার উপায় হিসাবে কখনও বা অস্তিবাদী চাহিদার অনিবার্য ফল হিসাবে, যদিও গদার Breathless ব্যতিরেকে অন্য কোথাও চুম্বনকে ক্যামেরাবন্দী

করেননি কারণ তাঁর মতে "চুম্বন একান্তই গোপন বিষয়"।

গদারের কর্মজীবনের একটি ছোট্ট বাঁক হল ১৯৬৫-এর 'Alphaville' ছবিটি যেখানে তিনি আপাতভাবে কল্পবিজ্ঞান এবং ডিটেকটিভ কাহিনীর চমৎকার সংমিশ্রণ ঘটিয়েছেন। ঐ বছরের শেষের দিকেই তৈরী হয় 'Pierrot Le Fou' ছবিটি। লিওনেল হোয়াইট-এর "Obsession" নামক উপন্যাস অবলম্বনে গদার ছবিটি তৈরী করিছিলেন। গদারের অস্তিবাদী বক্তব্যের চূড়ান্ত রূপ বলা যেতে পারে এই ছবিটি।

এর পর থেকেই দর্শনের বিচারে গদারের সিনেমা একটু একটু করে বদলে যেতে থাকে। গদারের ছবি থেকে অস্তিবাদের প্রভাব ক্রমশঃ হ্রাস পেতে থাকে এবং গদার ক্রমশঃ সম্পূর্ণ মার্কসবাদী হয়ে ওঠেন। কখনো বা গোঁড়া মাওবাদী।

১৯৬৭ এর 'Le Chinoise'-তে মার্কসবাদের গভীর প্রভাব দেখা যায়। ১৯৬৮-এর 'Le Gai Savoir'-এ মার্কসবাদের প্রভাব সুস্পষ্ট। ছবিটিতে মূলতঃ দুটি চরিত্র – দুটি ছাত্র। তাদের রাজনৈতিক মূল্যবোধকে গদার লেখনী হিসাবে ব্যবহার করেছেন। এই সময়েই প্রথম পর্বের সেই 'জনবিরোধী' গদার ক্রমশ জনমুখী হয়ে ওঠে। এছাড়াও – 'Nemero Duex'-এ পাওয়া যায় তৎকালীন ফ্রান্সের আখ্যান। ১৯৭৯-এর 'La vie' বা Every man for himself-এ সরাসরি মাওবাদ-ই একটি চরিত্রে পরিণত হয়েছে।

গদার অন্যদিকে আঙ্গিকের ক্ষেত্রেও তা'র ছবিতে বিবর্তনকে স্পষ্ট করেছিলেন। গদারের আঙ্গিক ভাবনায় বিভেদ বা বিচ্ছিন্নতা একটা বিরাট জায়গা নিয়ে আছে। বিপ্রতীপতা তা'র ছবিতে প্রায় অনিবার্য হয়ে ওঠেন। এই প্রসঙ্গে Stanley Kauffman-এর একটি উক্তি ভীষণ গুরুত্বপূর্ণ। তাঁর মতে—

"Unconventional Godardian narrative consists of simply blocks of material, juxtaposed but not joined, with slow camera movement within each block, with some reprises, and with a good deal of disparate wild dialogue on the sound track".

এ ব্যতিরেকেও 'কাট' 'ফেডইন', 'ফেডআউট' ইত্যাদি বিভিন্ন ক্ষেত্রেও গদার উদ্ভাবনী ক্ষমতা প্রদর্শন করেছিলেন, কিন্তু এই স্পল্ল পরিসরে এ সম্পর্কে বিস্তারিত আলোচনা সম্ভব নয় এবং সম্ভব হলেও এই অধম তা করতে অক্ষম।

অবশেষে বলা যায় একটি কথা। গদারের সিনেমা নিয়ে তো এতক্ষণ আলোচনা হল কিন্তু গদারের একটি প্রশ্ন থেকে বোঝা যায় তিনি সিনেমা নিয়ে কি ভাবতেন। প্রশ্নটি হল—

How many hours a starving African could survive watching video?

তথ্যসূত্র : চিত্রভাবনা, চিত্র চিন্তা এবং ধীমান দাশগুপ্ত ও মিহির ভট্টাচার্যের বিভিন্ন প্রবন্ধ ও বক্তৃতা।

# The Z files

Esha Sil



Z fell out  
Of a formless womb  
To give form  
An end.  
It ends they say,  
Z. A wry hello,  
'X-nihilo'  
Lets Go.  
Paradised, Un-paradised,

Guttered lies now,  
The blanched skeleton of The Fall.

They said alphabets  
Would be the salvage  
From un-being. They began  
A file. To record  
Strange new creatures  
Of an endless growth...  
Frenzied! who cried and cried  
Knowing not why.

There was no way out.

But to serpent them sinward  
To a robotic mid-wife  
Churning out flawless chips  
Of black and white  
To give form  
An end. Z.

# दो घूंट

रवीन्द्र कुमार पाण्डे

निशा के वक्त पहुँचा मैं नशे की खोज में तो  
मयखाने में महफिल थी किसी नन्हीं सी साकी की  
वह थी कर रही स्वागत सभी नत नयनों से  
कहिए और क्या दूँ अंधर पर बस रटन यह थी

आकर कही कहिए जनाब सेवा में क्या हाजिर करूँ  
नजर के आप आशिक हैं या अंधर से आप की खातिर करूँ  
अंधर में मद भरा ही था नजर से जब छलक जाये  
लगा मयखाना ही कहता हो कहिए हम और लाये

नजर से हम नहीं पीते अंधर की बात तो छोड़ो  
कहो कैसी हो, कब आयी यहाँ कुछ बात तो बोलो  
क्या रखा है इन बातों को अब कहने सुनाने में  
मेरा तो वक्त ही कटता है बस पीने पिलाने में

कौन पीता यहाँ आकर है किसमें प्यास अब बाकी  
नजर दूँढ़ती है मयखाने में बस तुम सा कोई बाकी  
जहाँ कुछ बात अपनी हो और एहसास अपनी सी  
मिली तुम भी तो कहती हो नहीं कुछ बात है बाकी

नहीं कुछ बात फिर भी तो अंधर का पट जरा खोलो  
कुछ अपनी है नहीं तो बस निशा की बात ही बोलो  
आधी निशा तो हो चली मनने-मनाने में  
आधी की बात ही बोलो जरा इस मय के खाने में

दिवा में हूँ नहीं पीता यही अन्दाज अपना है  
निशा में घूंट दो पीऊँ यही बस दिल का सपना है  
निशा यूँ ही चली गयी अब प्याली भी खाली है  
कल सजकर जरा आना रवि की प्यास बाकी है।

# साकी की ख्वाहिश

ध्रुव कुमार झा

जी चाहता है तुझे छुपा दूँ मैं कहीं  
कि तुम्हें और भी कोई पाना चाहता है  
तुम्हारे वजूद को सिर्फ एक जाम समझ  
कोई अपनी प्यास बुझाना चाहता है

तुझे छूने की हसरत है किसी को  
किसी में तेरे आने की आस बाकी है  
तुम साकी हो किसी प्यासे शराबी के लिए  
किसी में तुम्हें पीने की प्यास अब भी बाकी है

न मेरे लिए कोई साकी है  
और न ही जाम है कोई  
मयखाने जाने की ख्वाहिश है किसी में  
मगर यूँ ही बदनाम है कोई

न मेरे लिए साकी है कोई  
न किसी के लिए प्यास बाकी है  
साकी रहे सलामत हमेशा  
अब सिर्फ यह अहसास बाकी है

जाम को पीकर मिल जाता  
हर प्यासे दिल को करार है  
प्यासा ही रहूँगा, कभी न पियूँगा  
कि मुझे जाम से बेपनाह प्यार है

प्यासा हूँ मैं भी मगर  
अपनी प्यास नहीं बुझाना चाहता  
पीकर किसी जाम को मैं  
उसके वजूद को नहीं मिटाना चाहता

जिस साकी से मुझे प्यार है  
उससे कैसे मैं पी सकता हूँ  
उसके वजूद को मिटाकर  
मैं फिर कैसे जी सकता हूँ

बहुत मजा है काफी पीकर  
मयखाने को जन्नत कहने में  
मेरे लिए मजा है लेकिन  
मयखाने में प्यासा रहने में

प्यासा रहना मुझे मंजूर  
कि जाम से ही मुझको प्यार है  
सुबह तो सबको है पसंद  
उस सुबह की शाम से भी मुझको प्यार है

जाम पीकर मयकश को फेंकना  
हर किसी को आता है  
टूटे मयकशों को फिर से जोड़ना  
मुझ पागल प्यासे को भाता है

उसे समझकर इक साकी  
मैं भी प्यास बुझा सकता हूँ  
प्यास मगर बुझ जाये भी तो  
क्या फिर उसको मैं पा सकता हूँ?

मयखाने के रास्ते मालूम है मुझे भी  
मगर मैं मयखाने नहीं जाता हूँ  
जिसे चाहता हूँ मैं हद से बढ़कर  
उसे याद करके ही मैं रात बिताता हूँ

आकर मयखाने में हर कोई  
रोता है चिल्लाता है  
साकी के न मिलने पर वह  
चिढ़ता है झल्लाता है

मयखाने में शराबी है, साकी है  
और प्यास की नुमाइश है  
एक बार तो ठहरो, पूछो  
साकी की क्या ख्वाहिश है

कुछ प्याली मायखाने में खाली है  
लेकिन कुछ है भरी हुई  
भरी हुई प्याली पर फिर भी  
सबकी निगाहें हैं गड़ी हुई

भरी हुई प्याली जब इक दिन  
हो जाएगी पूरी खाली  
प्याली सूनी हो जाएगी  
मिट जाएगी उसकी लाली

उस सूनी प्याली को भी मैं  
अपने हाथों में भर लूँगा  
उसके सूनेपन को भी मैं  
अपने लहू से भर दूँगा

नशे की खोज में भटकना आसान है  
रात को मयखाने में अटकना आसान है  
साकी की ख्वाहिशें कोई पूरी करके दिखाए  
अरे! अपनी प्यास की नुमाइश करना आसान है।

## Of Life

ARINDAM BANERJEE

Droplets of tears  
Make rainbows of days  
Hopes are moulded from fragments,  
Dreams dissolve into haze.

Celebration of agonies,  
Survival's embrace  
Happiness in glimpses,  
Moments of grace.

Savour life's moments,  
Let naught strain or mar –  
Let best wishes attend,  
As you journey afar.

काई  
शंभु कुमार यादव

हर पांच साल बाद  
कुछ बरसाती मेढ़क  
टरीते, गिटपिटाते  
हमारी  
संसद में चढ़ आते हैं।  
बुद्धिजीवी गदहे  
नौकरशाह कीड़े  
कौओं की बीट में  
ढूँढ़ने लगे हैं 'समाजवाद'  
'रोटी' की खानापूर्ति में  
कीड़ों की बढ़ी आबादी  
करने लगे मेढ़क  
गदहों की सवारी  
और आबादी के नाम पर  
कोसी जाने लगी बेकारी।  
पंचवर्षीय योजना  
अब हो गई खटाई  
इस जनतंत्र में अब  
जमने लगी है काई।

## মানুষ

দেবলীনা দে

পেরিয়ে এলাম কত সময়  
পেরিয়ে এলাম কত অধ্যায়  
খুঁজে বার করেছি কত সত্য  
প্রকৃতির গর্ভ থেকে।

এত পথ পেরিয়ে এসে দেখি  
পৃথিবী পরিবর্তিত ধ্বংসস্থাপে,  
সামনে আজ অন্ধকার,  
মৃত্যু আহ্বান।

কিন্তু আজও আমি মানুষ।

# Of Moonlight

DEBASMITA BISWAS

Her beams of silver caressed through  
The leaves, drenching them in light.  
And all the world was bathed  
In balmy softness of the reflecting flame,  
That bore it to this gloomy world  
Through ages made and remade...

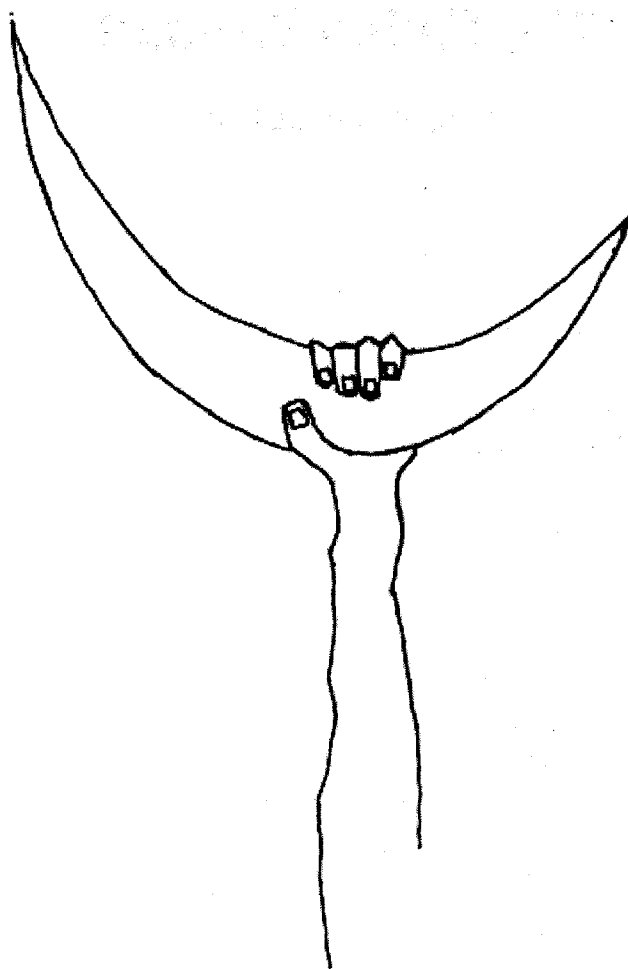
A piece of heaven, soothing, temperate.

Those rays that fell like flakes,  
On the lake of placid calm gave  
It a touch of powerful mystery.  
With all the green now turned hue-unknown,  
Far, stretching afar...  
This sleeping world of once-green  
Now wrapped in the garb of nightfall  
Has the look and eyes of Fate. And yet is

A piece of heaven, soothing, temperate.

Now there lies highest glory, joy,  
Where Nature merges in celestial play,  
With Divinity.  
These silvery beams connect the two arcs,  
Splendid angelic world with Dark mortality;  
Our utter, inevitable Transience  
Alive with the essence of divine moonlight...

This our piece of heaven, soothing, temperate.



## পাগল তোকে

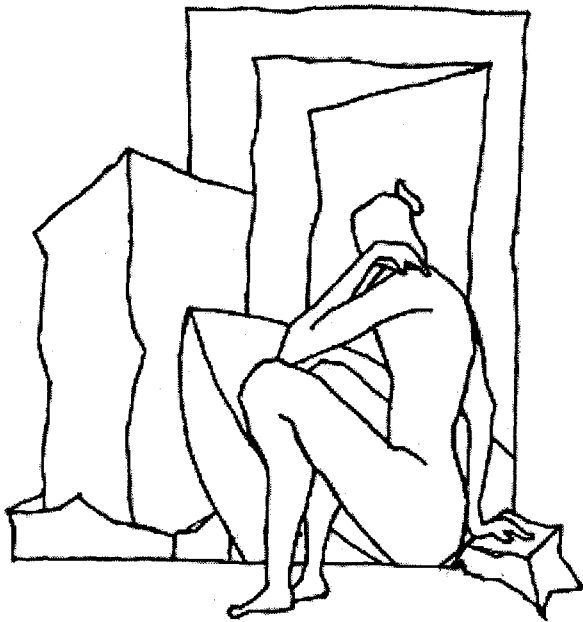
সঙ্ঘমিত্রা হালদার

পাগল তোকে দিলাম আমার অর্ধসমাপ্ত দিন,  
পাগল তোকে দিলাম আমার ক্ষয়সর্বস্ব পঞ্জরাস্থি  
পাগল তোকে দিলাম আমার সমস্ত পরিণতি  
দিলাম আমার সমস্ত বিনিদ্র রাত্রি।।  
পাগল তোকে দিলাম আমার মৃত্যুর একাগ্রতা —  
পাগল তবু তুই আমার না হাঁটা রাস্তা।

# The Fallen Woman

MALINI SENGUPTA

Days, more days of darkness. Of pain's excess...  
Surviving survives, life flows less and less.  
Her glass bangles glow red, day and night,  
But the pain in her heart burns more bright.  
She lingered to and fro, tears rolled down,  
Her senses revolting from that physique brown.  
Exploited every moment, reduced, marginalised.  
Haunted by happy-family faces, anatomised.  
Sport for some, ownership for the rest,  
Assaulted with inhuman, merciless zest.  
Crumpled by all, abandoned, defenceless.  
Hopeless of life, did she curse her weakness?  
Was her faith still unpliant in the righteous King?  
Would someone come, would her soul sing?  
Perhaps dreaming, more probably not, she bides in the lane,  
Among the pale faces passing you by, like faces on a train;  
An inmate of darkness, she un-breathes the forlorn sigh  
Clinging to nothing – lost, abandoned, fallen in every eye.



## A Modern Verse

ARCHI SARKAR

It is the modernity in me  
I seek to subvert  
And save my soul  
From urban despair...

Smoky streets house no home;  
Tenderness – a lonesome word;  
Lone hands buy lust, alcohol;  
Lone feet trudge on and on.

The mist lifts, the rubble dissolves,  
From a promise a vision appears...

Dew-kissed meadows, tender, green  
Purple mountains, crimson cherry  
And the joyous spring-song of love...

Real and shadow mingle.  
And yet a voice whispers:

It thrives, still thrives  
Somewhere it strives.

# Staring

SOURIT BHATTACHARYA

Plastic doors, scholastic theories. Hollowness.  
Blue flowers savaged by grey insects.  
Leaden chains fastening bud to bud,  
Then, glistening glimpses of bullets.

Black chair staring at brown table,  
Scattered books, yellow, forgotten.  
Pearl-white vase, flower-less, thoughtful.  
Far away the blue flowers.  
Crushed anguished souls.

A colossal figure precariously placed –  
Apollo. He laughed at the shabby books  
Knowing full well no music could emerge.

Look around the place. Everywhere  
Adam's posters strive for attention.  
In screaming letters  
Violets, blues, blacks. Grey hairs, brown heads:

This table never responded  
To soft strains of melody, although  
I look at it hopefully every day. But  
It remains pinned down.  
The books keep staring

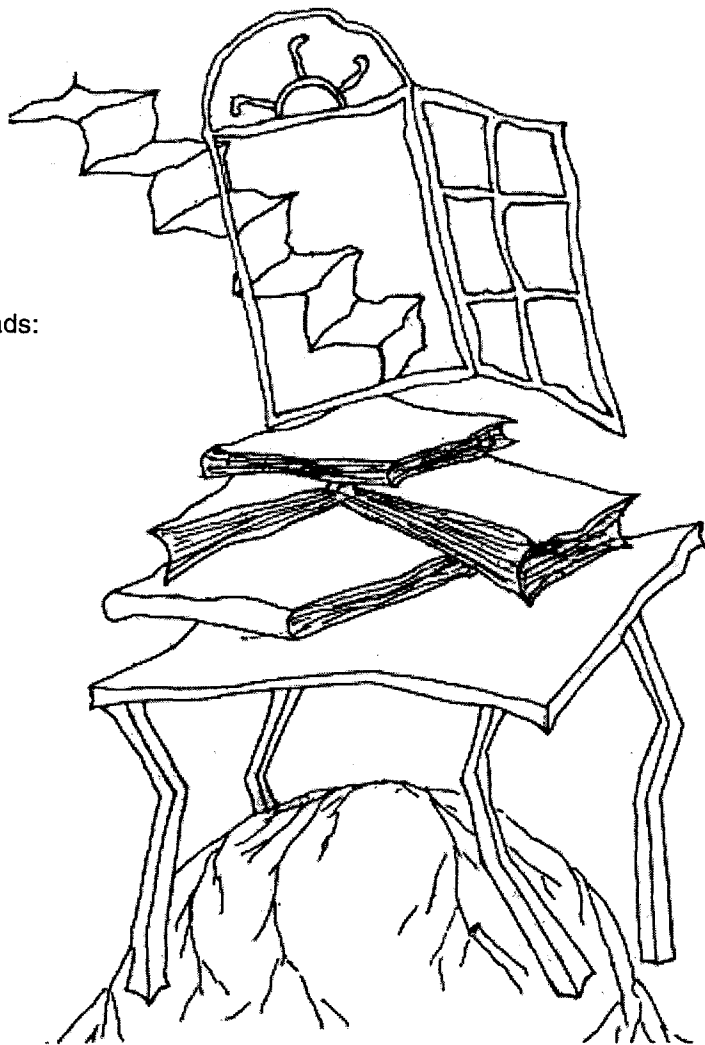
Lost in melancholy. Or polity perhaps.

In slow, creeping steps  
Day comes out. Touches the Table.  
The chair, still drowsy, waits on.

But what is that frail, faint voice in the air?  
Which steadily gains echoes?

Come out! Come out! Come out! ...  
A new leaf comes out from the day-tree.

Is winter departed then?





## नेता का छलांग

त्रिपुरारी कांत झा

नेता जी!  
शहर में आग लगी है  
दंगे हो रहे हैं  
और आप सो रहे हैं?  
ज्योहीं एक चमचा  
नेता को जगाते हुए  
यों बोला—  
त्यों ही ऊँधते हुए  
नेता जी लगे पूछने  
आग!

कहाँ है आग?  
मैं उसे जलता हुआ  
देखना चाहता हूँ  
आगामी चुनाव में  
वोट की  
रोटी सेंकना चाहता हूँ  
देखो बुझ न जाए!  
जनता विरोधियों से  
खुश हो न जाए  
क्योंकि  
शहर में अगर वर्ष में  
एक बार भी  
सांप्रदायिक दंगा है  
तो हर नेता  
पाँच साल तक  
भला चंगा हैं।

## कलेज ভোট

দেবহুতি সরকার

মফস্বলের দু' বিনুনি,  
রবীন্দ্রনাথ পড়তে জানি,  
ভালোবাসার সতি মিথ্যে—  
সেসবও না হয় এলো আয়ত্তে।  
তা বলে প্রেম দাবার চাল!  
একটা ভোটের জন্য জাল  
প্রেমকে দিয়েও পাতানো যায়?  
এ সব কথা মিথ্যে ভীষণ  
শিখিও না আর এ সব যা তা  
আগুন থাকলে প্রকাশ হবেই  
না থাকলে আর খাটাই বৃথা।

## At an Unknown Bend

KRITTIKA BANERJEE

Life.  
Is it you there?  
At every bend of this road,  
Pouring out of those mystery-encrusted  
windows?  
Is it you there indeed?  
Peeping, whispering, spying  
On me ?

You flow through me  
Like ancient waters  
Down the mountains.

And all the myriad things  
That your currents bring  
I accept.

Scattered are the meanings of me:  
Each fragment yours –

Sweeping the world in your tide  
You make them whole again.

## आवाज सुनो

बनीता नाग

कब तक इस जंजीर से  
बँधे रहेंगे हम मानव,  
वर्षों बाद आज कुछ  
कहने का वक्त आया है।  
दिल पे हाथ रखके  
कसम खाएँ इस मिट्टी की,  
न सुनेंगे अब हम उनको  
जो हमसे ईमान छीनने आया है।  
निडर देश के वासी है हम  
सत्य हमारी बोली है,  
तोड़ देंगे उस ताकत को  
अगर वो हमसे टकराया है।

अहिंसा के पुजारी बनकर  
अब नहीं रहने वाले हम,  
किसी तूफान का डर नहीं अब,  
हम तो मरके जीने वाले हैं।  
प्रकाशहीन इस धरा पर  
हम मशाल जलाने आए हैं,  
अपने हृदय के भावों को आज  
एक नए सुर में सजाने आए हैं।  
पहचानो इस आवाज को  
जो तुम्हें देने आए है,  
कुछ कर दिखाना है आज हमें  
वह हौसला बढ़ाने आए हैं।

स्वाधीन देश के निवासी होकर  
आज भी पराधीनता में जीते हैं  
कब आएगी शांति इस भू-पर  
इसी सोच में डूबे हैं।

बहुत हो चुका! ओ मानव  
हमें न घुट-घुट के जीना है  
झूठ का चोला उतार फेंक कर,  
एक नया वस्त्र धारण करना है,  
कहीं इरादा न बदल जाए  
आज अपने-अपको आजमाना है।

नवयुवकों को आज  
देश की सोई जनता को जगाना है  
एक बार फिर से आज हमें  
क्रांति का ऐलान करना है।

## अभिलाषा

नीलू पाण्डे

थी मेरी एक अभिलाषा  
जाऊँ मैं सातवें आसमान पर  
खूब होता मेरा नाम  
पाती सबसे आदर मैं  
जगह न होती खुशियों के लिए मेरे दामन में!  
सबके लबों पे होता मेरा नाम  
किन्तु लोगों ने घोट दिया गला  
मेरी अभिलाषा का  
इनके धर्म और तुच्छ विचारों ने  
जाने न दिया मुझे सातवें आसमान पे  
टूट गई मेरी आकांक्षा  
चूर-चूर हुए सपने  
क्योंकि थी मैं एक लड़की  
जिसे सीमित रहना था एक दायरे में  
चली थी कुछ बनने को  
अपना नाम ऊँचा करने को  
हुआ न मेरा सपना पूरा  
न पूरी हुई मेरी अभिलाषा!

## আমার ভাষা

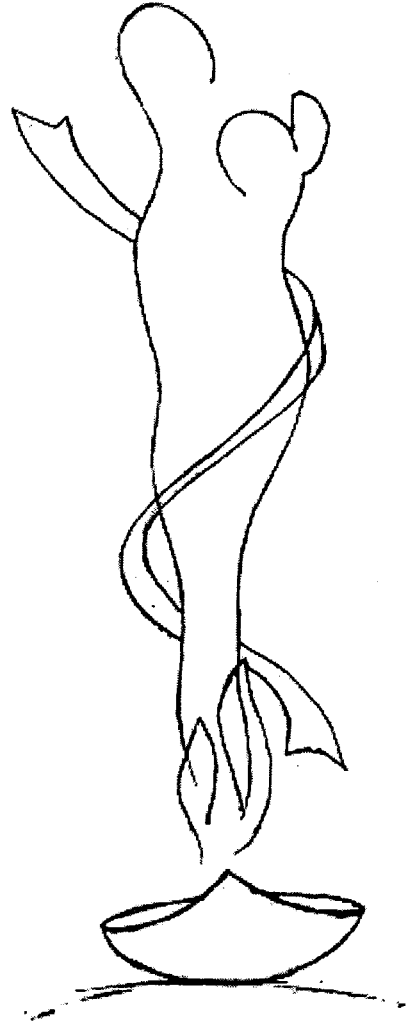
প্রসেনজিৎ ভট্টাচার্য্য

ভিজে গন্ধ,  
ল্যাম্পপোষ্টের আলো  
এক ঝটকায় সব টেনে ছুঁড়ে ফেলে  
আমি ভেসে যাই।

ভাসি আর ভাসি খড়কুটোহীন...

সে তো তারই, তোমারই অবাধ্য টান।  
পালহীন-হালহীন  
অজানা দিগন্তে একাকী কলম্বাস।

অসীম নীল সমুদ্রে,  
আমার দেহে,  
আমার ধমনী-শিরায়,  
তার অস্তিত্ব।



## প্রেম এল না

নবেন্দু বিকাশ রায়

প্রেম এল না ... শুধু রঙবেরঙের ইচ্ছে  
পাক খাচ্ছে খুলির ভেতর। যে যতটা দিচ্ছে ...

দেনেওয়ালা খুচরো মেলান অতঃপর  
এদিকে হৃদি মাঝে নকল বুঁদির গড়

ধ্বসে পড়ছে পোস্টমর্ডানে। চোখেতে সর্ষে ফুল  
কাল যেটাকে সত্যি ভাবি আজ দেখি তা ভুল।

# एक मुहावरे का झूठा होना

ध्रुव कुमार झा

बचपन में मैंने  
एक मुहावरा पढ़ा था  
'काठ की हांडी बार-बार नहीं चढ़ती'  
बाद में इसका अर्थ भी समझा  
बहुत ही अच्छा लगा था  
यह समझकर कि  
बार-बार किसी को धोखा नहीं दिया जा सकता  
अथवा छल-कपट बार बार फलीभूत नहीं होता।  
आज मैं थोड़ा बड़ा हो गया हूँ  
अपने पैरों पर खड़ा हो गया हूँ  
बिना किसी वैशाखी का सहारा लिए।  
लेकिन बड़ा अजीब लगा मुझे  
ज्यों-ज्यों मैं बड़ा हुआ,  
अपने पैरों पर खड़ा हुआ  
मैंने बचपन में पढ़े हुए मुहावरे को  
हर पाँच साल में झूठा होते हुए पाया  
एक ही काठ की हांडी को  
बिहार में चार बार  
तो बंगाल में पाँच बार  
चूल्हे पर चढ़ते हुए पाया  
बचपन से अब तक मैं  
बिहार-बंगाल में  
एक ही हांडी देखता आया हूँ  
मुझे शक हुआ और मैं  
द्विविधा में पड़ गया  
कभी लगता मुहावरा झूठा है  
कभी लगता हांडी काठ की नहीं  
किसी 'अक्षय धातु' की बनी है  
अन्त में मैं जा पहुँचा  
उस बूढ़े मास्टर के पास  
जिनसे मैंने यह मुहावरा पढ़ा था  
मास्टरजी से मैंने पूछा -  
आपने तो कहा था  
काठ की हांडी बार-बार नहीं चढ़ती  
फिर बिहार-बंगाल में क्यों  
यह मुहावरा झूठा पड़ रहा है?  
सच-सच बताइए  
मुहावरा झूठा है या  
हांडी काठ की नहीं है?

मास्टर जी बोले -  
हांडी तो काठ की ही है  
मगर चूल्हे में ही आग नहीं  
हांडी चढ़ाने वाले हर बार  
हांडी चढ़ाने के पहले आग को बुझा देते हैं।  
जिस दिन चूल्हे में  
आग जल उठेगी  
उस दिन यह हांडी  
फिर दुबारा नहीं चढ़ेगी।

## मानव तू संघर्ष कर

सुमन पारीक

जीवन एक अनवरत युद्ध है  
तू सिपाही इस युद्ध का  
लड़ना है तुझे हर दिन हर पल  
ना थक, ना निराश हो  
मानव तू संघर्ष कर।

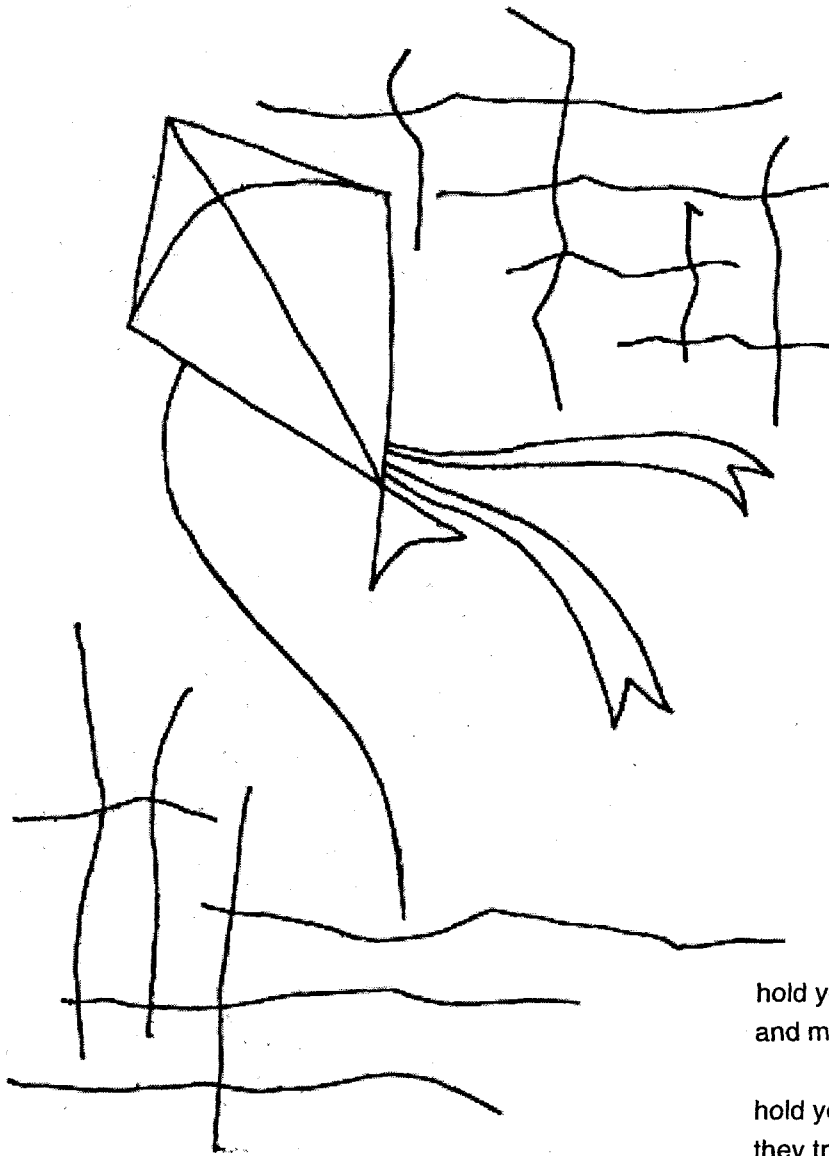
ना रूक, चलता रह तू  
अविचल अविराम इसी तरह  
मानव तू संघर्ष कर।

धरा पर यदि जन्म लिया है  
तो संकट भी निश्चय ही आएगा  
मत घबरा, न धीरज खो तू  
अभिमन्यु बन भेद चक्रव्यूह  
प्रशस्त पथ मिल जाएगा।

जीवन है सुख-दुःख से  
भरा एक अमर सत्य  
मानव तू संघर्ष कर।

जीवन है सुंदर  
ईश्वर की अनुपम देन है यह  
कर दीन-दुखियों की मदद  
स्वार्थ से अलग होकर  
मानव तू संघर्ष कर।

पोंछ आँसू रोती हर आँखों के  
भर उनमें सुख का सागर  
मानव तू संघर्ष कर।



## Pattern . . .

ANASHUA BANERJI

hold your words before they slip ...  
and melt into the nothingness  
which you never intended.  
hold your thoughts before  
they transform you  
to what you are not ...

hold your mind before it ceases to return  
from its flights of fancy  
and renders you lost between reality  
and dreams ...

hold your self  
before you lose your vision  
before you are left  
bereft of faith.

## প্রিয় মর্গ

সুজয় বার

হয়তো –  
এতদিন অসুস্থ ছিলাম  
তাই স্বাদের বিভেদ বুঝিনি,  
এখন মনে হয় সুস্থ, কেননা  
কোন ডাক্তার নেই অথবা নার্স,  
আত্মীয় / প্রিয়জন।  
তাহলে নিশ্চয়ই সুস্থ হয়ে গেছি, তাই না  
প্রিয় মর্গ?

# It was a Wednesday morning

ADITYA PRAKASH

I was sitting in an auto rickshaw, waiting at the traffic lights at the Deshapriya Park crossing. Was late for college. Constant glances at my watch didn't help abate the tension, either. Frustrated, I looked out into the street. There, on the footpath, lay scattered some pieces of glass. Shattered from the window of some car, no doubt, I thought. The auto inched forward, a little. The glass caught the sun.

A flash of light. It was as if the glass had imprisoned the sun's brilliance, and trapped it into a smooth, luminous reflection. The immense light burst forth, enveloping the cruel, jagged edges of

the glass in a softness endowed by illuminance. The vision shifted.

A rainbow of colours greeted every attentive eye, only there were none to attend... drops of colour, held still in an embrace of time, unknown, bizarre colours, one blending into another so fast that they were but a blur. The cosmos shifted by in that one frozen shaft of time.

The traffic lights turned green. Engines roared to life; a flurry of activity followed, signalling the forward march of a mob of vehicles.

The glass-pieces lay there, bleeding light and myriad colours. I passed them by. I was late.

## Jottings

DEVJIT ROY CHOWDHURY

A bespectacled alien humming notes of stored memory,

White curves fill, mingle and then are rushed away from vision.

Mundane strips of coloured paper

Stuck by bits of cheap cellotape

Onlookers walk by, gazes are arranged.

A monotonous whirring from the rotor blades of a fan...

The flickering existence of fluorescent lights. Between glancing furtively at the hands of the watch and hearing the voice, a mind is distracted by different thoughts and sights. The wooden gallery of benches emits a soft hue of brown.

A row of heads and hushed voices.

Shimmering green leaves enjoying the freshness of rays of sunlight, past the grilled bars of windows. Sounds from the narrow lane are camouflaged by the voice and a mind crawls back to its safe cocoon in the web.

A murmur of voices breaks the silence, an air of relaxation settles in. Tense limbs are stretched, a few bodies get impatient. The customary roll call then takes place. For once other voices are heard, not in unison but each one

different from the other – courtesy, impatience, respect – each stamping its own character. The class breaks, some stay behind, some don't.

Bare interiors of Derozio are left behind and a pleasant sight awaits. A gravelled road bordered by a foliage of greenery. The rumble of cascading water is heard from the reservoir and memories of rainy days are brought back only to be evaporated by the sweltering humid heat. The field with its dry jungle of grass is fenced in like a wild animal.

Tripping over chipped stone pieces embedded on the gravelled road, bypassing the grandeur of the main building, the canteen reidns. Whiffs of smoke, sticks of cancer, known faces and a few unknown ones. Soon more join in for the break. Half an hour passes. Noise and Commotion, then reluctant disperse. It is late, a class has already begun. A group prepares for its long trek back and a different route is followed.

Baker building becomes the shortcut. A climb through the staircase, a brisk walk through the corridors and the destination is reached. Class has begun. A hurried entry, glares from different eyes as one is seated. Time passes slowly.

A row of lonesome souls

Bound heads and bored hearts.

## जीने को

रवि कुमार केशरी

चुप, चूँप, चूँप  
क्या कहा?  
जीओगे, रौशनी बिखेरोगे!

पर,  
वह कशती कहाँ है  
जो डोल सके;  
तूफानों से मुख मोड़ सके?

कब तक;  
कब तक, जी पाओगे?  
तेल कहाँ से लाओगे?  
जानते नहीं  
जीने को हैं दो ही धर्म  
शान्ति—(भौँको मत) और  
उद्यम - (हिलाओ दुम)

## Just an Untitled Poem!

KOEL BANERJEE

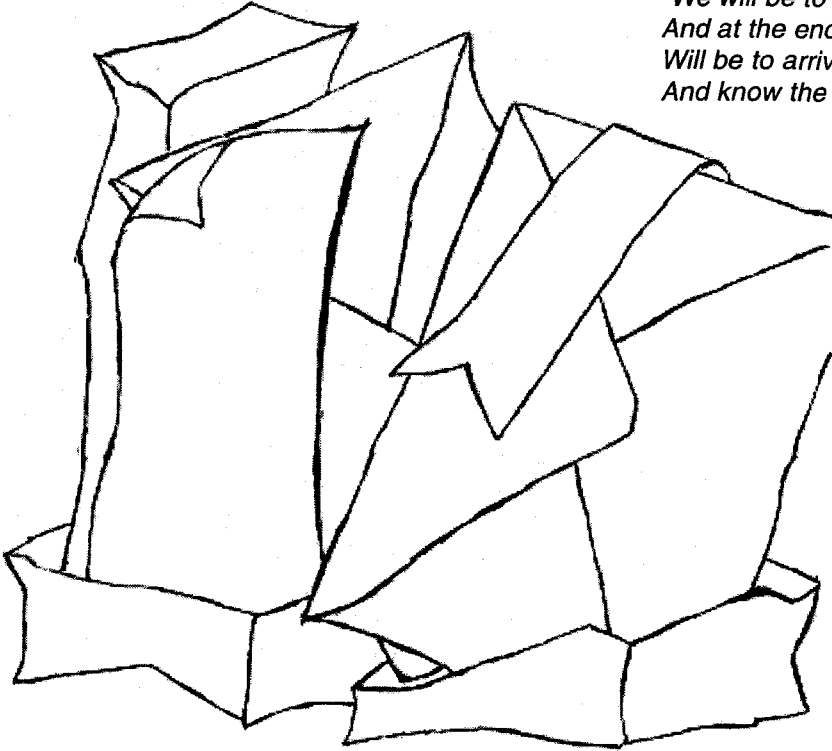
Caught unawares –  
In this mindless criss-cross.  
Of fragmented time  
I look back  
(A little cynically).

Winnowing what would fade  
From my haul of prized moments.  
I leave behind – a breathless sun.  
A few phlegmatic years  
And a lifetime of antiquated faces.  
I begin  
To end where I start...

Life is a full circle  
We only get distanced,  
Make no displacement.

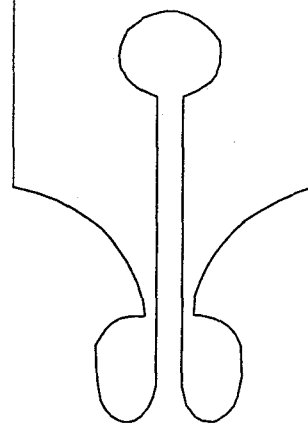
Living too little  
To draw a conclusion.

*(Eliot lovers on the Editorial board got reminded:  
"We will be to explore,  
And at the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.")*



- Proceedings from the seminar—"Changing Attitudes on the Campus: A Paradigm Shift"

- Three Generations in Presidency



*Life in the times of Presidency...*



## CHANGING ATTITUDES ON THE CAMPUS: A PARADIGM SHIFT

*(This seminar was recently held in the Bankim Sabha Griha. Both Professors and students were invited to speak. The proceedings were recorded, and later transcribed by Shirsha Sanyal, Malini Sengupta, Madhura Mukhopadhyay, Debasmita Biswas, Sreetanwi Chakravarti and Abhirup Dam of the English Department and Shiladitya Basu of the Physics Department.)*

**DIPANJAN RAI CHAUDHURI**

I understand from some of you who were coming to me and talking about the seminar, that it seems expected that I talk something about shifts in the political scene in college. Well, I was here with my friend Subhas Chakraborty from 1961-1964. In fact, he was here from 1960.

I don't see very much of a difference in the political scene from those days. Only a few people were interested in politics then, and I suppose that only a few people are interested in politics today. But there were warring groups, the few people who were interested in politics were quite determined in their views, as they are today, and there was quite a bit of debate and angry exchanges which I see today, too. But the perspective has changed quite a lot. At that time, to be of the Left was quite a risky venture. To give you an idea about the quality of politics at that time, let me recount what was used as a ploy by one of our senior dasas, Shaktida of Physiology. He was a Mukhopadhyay and at that time the I.G. of West Bengal was Upananda Mukhopadhyay. When we entered the first year, we were very hesitant about declaring ourselves as Leftists because at that time it was supposed to take you right into the records of the police. So we were taken to Shaktida, who said "Look, he is my uncle and if there is a record against you, he will erase it", and we almost believed it. That should give you an idea of the diluteness of the politics here at that time. But, still, I suspect that we were a bit more serious intellectually about our political leanings or thoughts. I think people who are now into politics in college are quite vocal about the issues they are raising, but I have a little doubt about how far they look into the foundations. Not that we were looking too far at the time, but do they read Marx or Sartre, or even their Derrida and Foucault? We tried to explore Marx, Camus, Sartre. We thought we should look into the foundations of the things we were talking about and I wonder if that is true today.

Remember, what I am talking about are my student days, 1961-1964. After passing out from the college in 1964, I got involved in active politics, and sort of came back to college and spent quite a lot of time here. I should say that was from 1966 to 1969-

70. Those were quite different days. Politics was the central theme of the times. There were two different camps in college. One was of the Left and the Left at that time took up a very extreme position. The other was, I should not say, of the Right really, but of those who were opposing the Left as a response to the challenge thrown by them. That was the time, if you remember, of the rise of Indira Gandhi. So it was not only the rise of Naxalism but it was also the rise of Indira Gandhi, which were creating an impact inside the college at the time.

About those days you know a lot from movies and books and folklore, and so I am not describing the situation. If you compare those days with today, you might think there has been a lot of shift. But let me tell you why I think it was atypical. It was an exceptional situation. Things were moving all about the country. For a short time there was an acute shortage of food which led to the Food Movement of 1965 to 1966. People ultimately took the law into their own hands and looted godowns where food was being stored and police firing took a toll of lives. This was just a part of the whole mess. For example, there was also a shortage of kerosene. The government faced a grave crisis. It stopped its purchase programmes, with disastrous effect. To take just one consequence, the railways stopped their purchases. Burn & Company used to manufacture a lot of rolling stock for the railways and when the railways stopped taking that stock, Burn & Company closed down, and there for the first time we found workers committing suicide. All this happened within a short span of a few months.

That was really a crisis. Not only that, for the first time perhaps in the history of India, peasants rose in political revolt in different pockets throughout the country, first with bows and arrows in their hands, and, then, guns. Now, it seems that even machine guns are in the picture. But the start was in 1967, and it really shook up the students. Students, not only here, but all over Calcutta, and in many parts of West Bengal, and, to some extent, in other provinces, too, were caught in this cauldron as the crisis continued in an acute state till 1972. A lot has been written about

it but a lot still remains to be studied. The political aspect has been blown out of proportion so that the social and economic aspects which gave rise to that crisis have not been adequately investigated by economists, sociologists and political scientists. Much remains to be done in this field. But I wish to emphasize that it was a special time, and I am sure that if such a time arises again we will get the same type of response over here, but the situation is not like that now and such situations occur but rarely. Of course an endemic crisis continues, making all of us sad. I am not saying that anything is going well. I would be the last person to say that. But I am differentiating between an acute crisis and an endemic crisis. The two have different symptoms and the two lead to different sorts of social and political upheavals.

So, because those heady days of 66-72 and those heady times were quite atypical, it is not surprising that dedication and confrontation of that ilk are not there today inside college. I say don't compare today with the days of 66-72, compare today with what went before and what came after, and you won't see a paradigm shift. When I compare today with 61-64, I feel, as I told you, not much of a difference in attitudes. We were more naïve, perhaps you are more sophisticated. We were more serious, perhaps you are a little less serious. But these are differences of degree, not of kind.

I have been talking about so many serious things. Before I go on to serious things again, let's have a lighter interlude, but should I really call romance light, that romance for which Presidency is so famous? Has there been a paradigm shift? Well, let's see. There was quite a lot of romance in our days and well I do see a difference. Again, people were more serious. There were suicides. Thankfully there are no suicides nowadays. Lots of nervous breakdowns then, no more nervous breakdowns now. Throwing up a career for love lost or unrequited may not be so uncommon even today, as I see in my own department. But, no, it is no longer rampant, there are just one or two cases. Well, so we had our Don Juans and many of them finally ended up as Malvolios, and may be the same thing happens today also.

But if you say that at that time we had a great idea of romantic love and today it has shifted to free sex, I wouldn't agree. I don't think there has been a shift of that magnitude or quality. Yes, people take romance in their stride and I think that you are more sober than we were, but that is good. If there are no suicides, there are no nervous breakdowns, if people go through with their careers with romance in a side-bag as it were I think it is a step for the better. I wouldn't say you have lost anything, I would say that you have gained something. But, more or less, things are going on in the same old fashion.

Coming to other aspects of life here, however, I see definite changes which make me feel sad. Well, not in Presidency alone, but everywhere the question of what to do with your life has come up with quite a different set of answers. We thought that an academic life – teaching and research – was the real goal of what we were doing, even though many of us did not finally enter academic life. At that time becoming a company executive was very easy and companies used to look for students from Presidency College. But these people who went away always thought that they were getting the second best. Even if they were earning much more money, they were regretful about what they had lost. Today I don't see that attitude in many of my students. There is hard calculation about money. Quite a few students do opt for the academic life, but I suspect that if the central government had not started pouring a lot of money into teaching and research nowadays, this trend would have dwindled to a trickle.

You see we didn't think so much about money. By that I don't mean we were ascetics. People who thought a lot about money were a bit shamefaced about it, and it was considered a little vulgar to attach too much importance to it. Nowadays it is not considered vulgar any more. In fact, you are considered a failure if you don't earn a lot of money. The trouble arises from school, you are taught to envy your peers who are going to the engineering and medical streams. Medical people take a lot of time before they settle down. That is true, but then the money flows in so fast they can hardly keep ahead of the taxman. Consider the money an engineer especially a software or say a management person – gets immediately after employment. Someone doing brilliantly in academia will need at least 6-8 years to get that sort of money.

In my own class of physics students there were toppers from the Delhi Board and the H.S. There was also school final at that time. All the toppers were in Presidency and the roll call was a who's who of the merit list. But you won't get that now. The people on top of the merit list have gone away to IIT, which is a loss but not an irreparable one. What is irreparable is the attitude of many who have come here.

In our times we thought that because we had our sights set on the academic life, we were the best, and, here in Presidency, we were getting the best. Now, I see that many people who do not get into engineering or something like that are possessed by a sense of deprivation, a sense of loss which was not there in our days. They feel that they have lost out on the best and this is the second best, and that is what I feel sorry about and what worries me. This is not a question of nostalgia. Society has changed and values have changed. It seems that the consumerist paradigm has finally caught up with the college.

Apart from general changes in values in society, there is one specific change inside the college which greatly affects the attitudes of today's students. See, when we entered the college we saw teachers who were renowned in Bengal, in India and perhaps the world. Our own teachers in physics were mentioned in the text books we opened. There was Bhabotosh Dutta, Deepak Banerjee, Amiyo Bagchi in economics, there was Tarak Sen, Amal Bhattacharya in English. So you see to be like them was a dream, and when you saw your own professor Amal Raychaudhuri, who had made significant contribution to the general theory of relativity, walking slowly, lost in thought, to MG Road to board a No. 25 tram, wearing that familiar dhoti and panjabi, everyday, till the end of his term here, you see, you wanted to be like him.

Now we do not see such teachers here. They have gone elsewhere and they go elsewhere and people who like them don't come to Presidency any more. I am not going to go into the reason. But, there is no doubt that I am a very poor substitute for Prof. Amal Raychaudhuri, and in every department that is true. We are nowhere near our teachers and we do not set that sort of strong magnetic example to you. OK. First of all you think that you have lost out on the best and then you come and don't see inspiring people. So? How can you expect anything different?

But it is a pity and a signal that things are not too well for our college. People should certainly think about replenishing the faculty here with academics who matter. See, things have become very difficult. My H.O.D. brought Amal Raychaudhuri from Asutosh College without much trouble. He said "I want this man, he is a renowned man, he wants to come here, and I will bring him". You can't do that now. An ex-student of the physics department, Asok Sen, is a Fellow of the Royal Society for four years now. He was the first Indian Fellow in theoretical physics since the time of Saha and Bose. He is a world leader in string theory. I went on asking people to bring him to Calcutta, either to Presidency College or to Calcutta University or to Saha Institute. But nobody was willing to stir a finger for Asok Sen. Nobody was interested in bringing him to Calcutta. So you see, attitudes have changed all over the place, and even if the best are willing to come to Presidency College, Presidency is not in a situation to welcome the best. I suspect that this has something to do with the shift in the attitude of the students.

I am taking too much time, isn't it? Well, I am coming to the end.

I came from a Bangal family, quite lower middle class, and, when I entered college, my cultural attainments were limited to Rabindranath and Bankim Chandra. I had heard a little, perhaps, of Jibananda

but had not read much of his poetry. Apart from this I had only read the usual Victorian classics. Everything I learnt later. My entire cultural development took place in this college, most of it in conversation with my friends and my seniors. I think everyone who read in Presidency College during those days would say the same thing. This was the place where we soaked up literature, poetry, philosophy and history. What was the philosophy of science and how do scientists proceed, what makes them different from historians? All these things we learnt here, not only from books, not from seminars and certainly not from seminars like this one. We did not have seminars like this, but, then, we were having seminars all the time and debates and inspiring exchanges in the Coffee House. That tradition is not there any longer and we don't go there any more. Coffee House is gone from Presidency's lexicon.

There is no such place in Presidency College today, but you have so many classrooms. Ask the Principal to give you coffee machines and make each room into a mini coffee house. Why don't you talk amongst yourselves? Why don't students of physics and students of history talk about history and science together? I know that some of you historians have physicist friends and some of my physics students say "I will ask somebody from philosophy to attend my talk". These things are there. They are not absolutely absent but they are not a part of everyday life in college. You are losing out on that. So that is certainly a change I regret. The loss is that of cultural interaction between students, especially of different disciplines. The loss arises from a view of the college simply as a place where you mug up things and pass exams for building up a career, apart from a certain amount of the "time pass" type of enjoyment. Now all these things were there in our time also, but we were always building ourselves up intellectually, and that is something, I suspect, which has a pretty low priority nowadays.

I have been talking for a long time. I grow garrulous as I grow old. No doubt, I will soon start wearing the bottoms of my trousers rolled. I have talked of changes, some of them have made me a little anxious as I said, a bit worried, a bit wary, but on the whole I think the potentiality is still there, and if you ask me bluntly, has there been a paradigm shift, I would say, No, but we are close to it. We are quite close to it, and if everyone is not conscious of the changes which are creeping in slowly, one day we shan't recognise ourselves. I would ask all of you to be alert and retain what good things we had while rejecting the bad things. I must say that I am pleasantly surprised by today's gathering and by the interest generated in the next seminar which we are going to hold on the 22nd. So, all in all, I remain hopeful.

## ISHAN SEN SARMA

To start with, I would like to make a rather daring suggestion. Perhaps, in my father's time, 'why not' would be a more prevalent question than 'why', whereas it is quite the opposite today. We try and justify all our actions and try and fit them into our spectrum of politically correct actions. I want to elucidate the fact that the end has become more important than the means. It has more significance in the present era than the means.

When I read the motion, I placed my focus on two words mainly, those being 'attitude' and 'shift'. When I focus on the word 'attitude', I have to ask myself – attitude towards what?

Let us analyse our attitude towards our academics and compare it with what we conceive to be the attitude towards the same in the past. For one, our academics have been gradually oriented towards designing lesson plans and models constructed chiefly for enhancing our performances in examinations. Not to say that this aspect of examinations oriented education was never present in the past, but I think we can safely say that inside the Presidency classroom, more focus was laid on the flow of sacred knowledge from one generation to another. Knowledge stood before petty examinations then, whereas the reverse pretty much holds true today.

There has been quite a change in the attitude regarding relationships also. Gradually, the idea of having a close friend is being substituted by the institution of several acquaintances. Relationships are beginning to show an utilitarian side, as against relationships that were very genuine at one point of time. In an age of cut throat competition, one finds little time to work on personal relationships and depend on friends for honest evaluations and suggestions.

Perhaps the canteen has had a prominent role to play. It brings together students from the various departments. Unfortunately, this has not really led to mass distribution of knowledge or dependence. We hardly find any academic discussion across the canteen tables. One suspects that Presidency of the 70s and 80s were characterised by wave of the intellect. Today the desire to be intellectually sound has given way to an attitude that is more frivolous than anything else. Our interaction with students from other disciplines is a casual spot. Aimless gossip and indulgence in tireless small talk seem to be the order of the day.

Teacher student relationships, as most speakers have mentioned before me, has been on a slight decline. One reason could be the rise of the institution of private tuition. Thus, to correctly analyse why student teacher relationships are beginning to be less prominent with time, we must look into the factors

that have been responsible for the rise of the institution of private coaching. One definite factor here is the degree of predictability of our university question papers. The questions cater to a set pattern and somehow the pattern has been remained untouched over the last 20-30 years. Thus, the natural disposition of a student would be to prepare according to that pattern and leave anything outside that untouched. In private tuition, we find the shortcuts of examination success. Tenacity and the hunger to acquire knowledge is found missing in the modern day Presidentialian. Of course, there are exceptions to all the conclusions that I have drawn.

Have there been any positive changes over the last few years? I leave that question to the panel, my co speakers and my fellow students.

Perhaps my view on the changes that our institution has gone through is very harsh on the present day Presidentialian. Let me step off the gas for my concluding section, for this is where I 'literally' analyse the topic 'word' by 'word'.

I would like to bring to everyone's notice that many of the factors I have elaborated upon are mainly associated with the trend of changing times. Society itself has changed and a large part of that change has percolated down to our own college too. From here on, I will be a little cautious in my use of the word 'shift'. Sure, there has been an exemplary change in the mindset of the Presidentialian over the last 20 years. But this change, I feel, is better represented by the word 'movement', rather than 'shift'. Let us illustrate this issue graphically. We consider mutually perpendicular axes, where the two variables are time and a cardinal measure of Presidentialian attitude. A function on this space would represent how attitude has changed over time, where the only reason for that change in attitude has been time itself. Thus, a 'movement' is shown by moving along a curve that represents such a function. A 'shift' then, is any deviation from the existing curve, where time has not been solely responsible for bringing along a change in attitude of the Presidentialian.

Thus, for all that our college has gone through, I would feel more satisfied in calling these changes as 'movements' rather than 'shifts'. Having said that, I have to mention also that there was a time when Presidency nurtured in her students a unique sense of culture and identity. That the changes in the macrocosm have affected the Presidentialian speaks for the changes that we have already elaborated upon. The trend setter seems to be a trend follower today. That I have even mentioned external life having a role to play in changing the attitude of the Presidentialian exemplifies the changing Presidentialian. I represent the 'paradigm' and my speech the 'paradigm shift'.

## SHUBHAS RANJAN CHAKRABORTY

There are three key words, pertaining to the topic I have chosen for discussion, the campus, the attitudes and the paradigm shift. Ignorant as I am, I am not too sure about the exact scope of the last phrase. I would confine myself to some common sense observations, because one does not exactly notice change when one lives through change. I joined Presidency College in 1960 and continued onto 1967. I spent seven years here. In 1968, I left the city, only to come back to the college in 1988 in my new 'avatar' as a teacher. There were some changes. Mercifully some were for the better.

The teaching and learning processes, i.e. class room teaching and other pedagogical methods which were followed in the college in the past and continues to the present day to some extent, demand attention. I do not know if it represents a paradigm shift but a great deal of shift was demonstrated when students of the college gathered in the Bankim Sabagriha for a seminar on "Gender Structure". I cannot imagine that in the 1960s students could gather in a classroom or even outside, both boys and girls together, to discuss freely gender structure and openly talk about sexuality, in the presence of senior professors and different Heads of Department of the college. In that seminar, I was trying to imagine Amalesh Tripathi in Rajat Kanta Ray's chair and even my wildest imagination was unable to conjure up the image.

Let me begin with the campus. In our times, if one entered the college at 9:30 A.M. in the morning, the sight of Principal Sanat Kumar Bose, formally attired in a suit, would catch one's eye. He had a pronounced bald patch, just like me. He would be accompanied by another person, equally formally attired and equally bald, but a couple of feet taller than him. He was the caretaker of the college, I am very sorry that I still do not know his name but for some curious reason the students used to refer to him as 'Teggart'. 'Teggart' was a hated police commissioner of Calcutta in the 1920s. The college was, as a consequence, spic and span in those days. We used to sit in the portico, just as at present. But the mere sight of any professor or the Principal would throw the students into a fit of frenzy. If anybody was recognized, then the next day a notice would be put up to effect that so and so is fined Rs. 5 for misconduct – such was the penalty for sitting on the college grounds and also for smoking. On this score there has certainly been a change for the better. I think my fluency as a smoker would not have found Sanat Babu's approbation, had he been the principal now. But the campus was much prettier then, and there were many flowering plants and beautiful trees. In front of the library, one dared not utter a word or even whisper had professor Taraknath Sen been there. The college ground had lovely fencing and not

the present ugly netting, which does not, as it is meant to, prevent the 'Kalabagan boys' from monopolizing the field. In my time, the college boys were seen playing on the field in the morning during the cricket season and in the afternoon during the football season. In any case, the ground was occupied by students and not by outsiders.

The doors to the Boys' Common Room opened onto the sprawling corridors. There were long benches and tables and I can recall the sight of newspapers lying on them – most probably 'The Statesman' and the 'Anandabazar Patrika'. In the adjoining room, there was a Table Tennis board and a Carrom board. I remember four Chess boards also. Even at 9:30 in the morning one would find some students picking up a game or two before going to classes. Going to classes was much more obligatory than it is now, even allowing for Dilipda's munificence.

The sorry picture presented by the college today troubles us. We hesitate in asking for NAAC accreditation as they would straight away put a B+ on seeing the squalid state of the college: "Pehle darshan dhari peechhe gun vichari". The ubiquitous posters, the political ones having emerged after 1966, trouble my sight. But even worse are the advertisements for coaching centres which have now engraved their way up to the staircase walls.

Let's come to teachers and classes. A revered teacher of my department whom I cannot let go without mentioning is Prof. Ashin Dasgupta. We knew the teachers of other departments also, even the ones whose classes we didn't attend. Prof. Paramnath Bhaduri, of the Botany department, Prof. Sivatosh Mukherjee of the Zoology department, Prof. Santosh Roy and Dr. Ajit Saha of the Geology department, Prof. Anil Bhattacharya or Dr. Atindra Mohan Goon of the Statistics department, Prof. Sachchidananda Bannerjee and Achintya Mukherjee of the Physiology department are a few of the legendary teachers who come to mind. The legends have continued from the 19th century to the 80s or late 90s. Even with one's best effort, one would probably find it difficult to create a legend today.

Another major point needs mention. Sailendra Kumar Sen had once said that one's brilliant pupil in time becomes one's valued colleague. Ashin Dasgupta, Rajat Kanta Ray and Sukanta Chaudhuri have all been outstanding students. They joined the college just after finishing their higher studies. They were able to continue the tradition, which I suspect is definitely over. I do not think there is much chance of reviving it. Classroom teaching was important, then, but there were also teachers whose classes we did not enjoy but were forced to attend. But the institution of private tuition did not exist. Whether it is good or

ugly I cannot say. We had to depend on what the teachers taught and on the books from the library. Prabodhda, the famous librarian of Presidency College would provide us with an extra book which he would smuggle out. There was no photocopying then, so we did a fair bit of reading though we did not enjoy it all the time. On this count, there has definitely been a change. Classroom teaching, I think is almost irrelevant today. The kind of attraction extended by Tarapada Mukherjee's reading of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner" or Prof. Taraknath Sen's discourse on "Macbeth" is surely missed. Kajoldi or Amal Bhattacharya's pass classes in English, Haraprasad Mitra's classes in Bengali, Bhabotosh Dutta and Ramesh Ghosh's classes in Political Science attracted the masses. We are not what our teachers were. For this reason or as a result of more pervasive changes in the academic atmosphere, private tuition rules. Things have come to such a pass that I have been requested to reschedule tutorials to allow

students to attend private classes.

When I came back in 1988, and was asked to take a pass class, I had more than a bit of trepidation. Students happened to be a bit naughtier than the apparent merciful lot today in the pass classes. There are numerous humorous stories... there is Kajol Di's almost apocryphal incident. When she asked the last bench in the class to get out of the room for making noise, the students simply dragged out the last bench. Prof Sanat Bose asked one of his students to stop the fan, through an incorrect usage. In response, the boy climbed up on a bench and physically tried to stop the rotating blades.

Politics on the campus has seen many changes but my friend Dipanjan has talked a lot on the issue. I have little more to add.

I am running out of time. I see there are several speakers after me, and I would like to stop here.

## PARAMA MAITY

The fundamental pre-requisite of one trying to compare two different time periods, is an objective understanding of both the times – especially the one in which he/she was not present. Else, needless to say, the comparison becomes biased and incomplete.

Thus, when Anwesha and I tried to analyze if, indeed Presidency College, had undergone an attitudinal transformation, we, in the first place, needed to know 'what' the attitudes were exactly like back then – how similar or dissimilar they were, to the times we live in.

We initially planned to trace the change in attitude of the students towards politics – both 'students' politics' and the larger arena. This was because, for more reasons many one harboured a rather romantic idea of Presidency College – one which was ideologically surcharged and epitomised altruism. Stories of the Naxalite Movement probably had a lot to do with that image. Being a Third Generation Presidencian, I had heard enough stories to give me a picture of 'then' which was vastly different from the one I occupy.

But, we decided to delve deeper; and spoke to those who were present then and are present now – those who have lived through both time slots. Dipanjan Babu of the Physics Department, surprised us, when he said he didn't observe appalling changes – at least in the sphere of politics. The present political scenario – though endemic, has not assumed the status of an

epidemic, analogous to the Naxalite Movement. If such situation arises, students, believes Dipanjan Babu, will certainly not lie low.

So, was our idea 'Utopian'? What about the dwindling interest of students in 'academic politics'? That was happening – agreed even the optimistic Dipanjan Babu. And of course, Rajat Babu, Uma Dasgupta. In trying to investigate the causes for this, we stumbled upon the papers preserved in the Sushobhan Chandra Memorial Collection – written by students themselves, where their observations regarding these shifts are recorded.

Political attitudes had, undoubtedly, changed in Presidency College and the reasons were rather varied – social, cultural, professional et al. A student ruefully corroborates, – "Politics has become passé and those associated with it have somehow come to acquire a seedy image.....students are no longer interested in Marxism and revolutions. They would rather master the art of sitting for Management or GRE Tests.....The bastion of Bengali intellectuals and student politics is giving way to 'a yuppie culture'.

This particular trend started emerging from the late 80s, early 90s with the slow but sure influence of Globalisation. This increased competitiveness, peer and parental pressure, and made the students fiercely career centric. Anshuman Ray believes that such is this career centrism that parents, politics and – irony of ironies – even 'academics' is an impediment in the

path of a prosperous career.

But again, this generation cannot be entirely blamed. There was nothing for them to emulate nor enough to discourage them. The students of the 60s could crave for socialism, while witnessing international socialist revolutions – political ideologies for them were not merely text book ideologies – but realities, which were highly instructive, emulative and encouraging.

'This generation, which had seen neither the fervour, nor the idealism of a group of young people who had challenged history, but were witnessing only their leaders, the hollow men, trying pathetically to piece together shattered lives.

The emergence of the 'fest culture' from roughly the 90's is a potent distraction for students today. The growing infiltration of the Bollywood culture, in addition, has given many of us a rather mindless (literally!!) preoccupation.

## AMITAVA CHATTERJEE

How do I exactly feel at such a seminar? I could start way back. Let me first of all clarify that the views I express are those of a student of this college. How the paradigm has changed, in what respect it has changed and in what respect it has not changed? I entered this college as a student of Economics in the year 1971. I was here from 1971-1976 till my post graduation.

When I joined the college I was not from the local education council. I was from the Delhi Board. Almost everyone I knew advised me not to join this college. Violence was so common in the late 60s and early 70s that parents were very apprehensive about students joining this particular institution. Against all such advice I was motivated by my desire that I would be at the best possible institution of Calcutta. I was awestruck by the wonderful tradition of the college.

The staff of the Economics department and the centre for economic studies was outstanding. Prof. Tapas Majumdar, who went on to become a professor emeritus at JNU and a member of the UGC as well, was the head of the department. Along with him was Prof. Dipak Banerjee, who was at his prime in the early 70s, Prof. Mihir Kanti Rakshit, one of the leading macroeconomists in India now, Prof. Amiyo Bagchi, Prof. Prahlad Jana and Prof. Nabendu Sen.

The standard of teaching was excellent, not only in our own department, but as has been mentioned amply by the two earlier speakers, the other departments were doing very well also, particularly the maths department of the college. I remember Prof. Biren Bose, Prof. Phatik Chatterjee, who wrote a book on algebra, Prof. Gopal Pal of the mathematics department, Prof. Amal Mukhopadhyay, Prof. Prasanta Roy of the department of political science, Prof. Sailen Sen, Prof. Arun Dasgupta, Prof. Kajal Sengupta of the English department. I also remember that many of my friends customarily used to attend honours classes in other departments. There was a tradition of students going ahead to attend classes which were generally attractive, a well known example being the famous classes of Prof. Susobhon

Sarkar of the History department. So, many of us attended the first few lectures delivered by Sukanto Chowdhury after he had just come back from higher studies abroad, and this was truly an unforgettable experience. Further, the college was a veritable centre of excellence.

As far as attendance at the lectures was concerned, yes, it was almost compulsory and students were also naturally motivated to attend lectures. This is where I agree with Prof. Subhas Chakraborty that there has been some kind of shift. Students went on their own to attend these lectures because they were interesting. There was rapt attention in the pass course classes of many of the teachers concerned, not to speak of the honors classes.

Students were academically minded, no doubt. That has been referred to earlier. A large number of rank holders were there in the various classes. At that time success was measured not only in terms of performance in the honors course but also by what one did in the pass course. That was taken to be a major discriminant between students in the various departments. I remember that there was great interest in knowing who topped the maths papers, a physics student or an economics student. Every year this was talked about in the 70s. I don't know whether it is discussed a lot among today's students. But I don't think students find the pass classes that attractive now. Regarding the change in attitude let me just mention one particular anecdote that would interest some students. In our time, Prof. Rakshit was a formidable person in the 2nd year honors class. Not only did he give out a list of books that students should not read, he used to give a proper explanation as to why the books were not to be read. All the university text books were there on the list. He also used to give out a list of books students should read. Very few of us could complete those books because their standard was much higher than what was generally taught or what was in the syllabus. He was not very much bothered about the syllabus. In fact, he cared very little about the syllabus. I think that is a



major tradition of Presidency College and a pointer towards the need for autonomy of the institution – the teachers here teach in their own way. If you try to constrain them you could be committing a great blunder, sometimes. This is our experience regarding Prof. Rakshit. Yes, let me come back to that. In one of the 2nd year lectures, it was a Monday, as far as I remember, Prof. Rakshit suddenly mentioned the name of a book. If I remember correctly it was a book by Patinkin called **Money, Interest and Prices**. An extremely difficult book no doubt and he gave us seven days to read the book and come prepared for the next Monday lecture. After that, probably no more napkins were available in the Coffee House. We had finished all of them drawing diagrams and trying to figure out various theorems in that particular book. Copies of Patinkin were not available any more. The librarian was tearing his hair out, all the students were rushing at him. Come the next Monday, Prof Rakshit arrives in class and glares at the students. The effect is almost withering. And then said "enough about Patinkin. I won't even talk about it." This was typical of the teachers of the time. They were whimsical, they went about in their own way.

Now regarding the change in the attitude of the

students, naturally I agree that it is not a fact anymore that a large number of rank holders join Presidency College. Definitely, a number of them go for the Joint Entrance, IIT examinations and for some reason they do not come to the general line. I do not think that their thinking is prudent because the career prospect of an engineer or a doctor is not too good at present. But you can't really change the mindset of the current generation, can you?

A few final comments about politics in the campus. Here I am in a somewhat difficult situation as all would realize, being in administration, but I will make one or two comments. At that time the campus was a very troubled place. I find it has become much more peaceful than it was during my days here. But there are a number of disturbing trends which I can not help noticing and which are quite upsetting. Regarding students' attitude towards politics, I think there has been a change; there has been a loss of interest among most students. There are a few people committed to political causes, of course. Again, the political issues do not remain confined to matters pertaining to Presidency College alone. Many broader issues are also addressed by students of the college. Let me end on this note.

## MILINDA BANERJEE

### "Judge not that ye be not judged"

On the plains of Judaea, 2000 years ago, so spoke a man, a man alone who promised a new world, a new dream, a new covenant. He was a man condemned, a man despised, but his words reach us across the centuries.

We are unhappy men, a generation condemned. We are accused of being selfish, of ruthlessly pursuing our ambitions to the exclusion of everything that really matters, we are accused of shutting ourselves against the miseries of this world. I see the anguish of those who accuse us, for I see that they do not understand us, and see coldness in our hearts. I understand their anguish, but I do not share their despair.

The world has changed, so have our dreams and hopes and ideals. There was a time when men would seek to change the state, when they struggled to transform the body politic through mass movement and bloody struggle. Today, our generation seeks to change the society, they try to transform the body civic through individual and group action. Between the two ideals is a shift of

paradigm, a profound metamorphosis in mentality. It is also the reason why the ideals of our generation are often not understood by our elders.

We are not selfish men. We too care for the suffering of others. But the way we go about it is different. We do not work through state changing ideologies and mass campaign. Rather we prefer to work through non-state modes, through NGOs, through public awareness programmes that try to raise consciousness among the people so that they charge society from within, slowly but steadily, not through turmoil and conflict, but through constructive and generative processes.

What I speak of is true of India in general, more specifically it is also true of Presidency College. My findings have revealed men and women in our institution engaged in working with NGOs in such diverse fields as women's rights, children's education, environmental awareness, helping the aged, removing drug addiction, disease prevention and control – the list goes on. Then there are students who contribute in money or in kind to various governmental and non-



governmental Societies; students who work so quietly and so invisibly that few even know of their selfless work.

And this is what I emphasise. The work of these men and women (women, perhaps, more than men) is slow and steady, unrecognised, unpublicised. They toil like the farmer, sowing the seeds which will mature one day into a beautiful future. Not many know of them, not even their closest friends. They are shy. One even told me frankly "What is the good of it if I boast about it"? If the previous age was of titans and warriors, our age belongs to the quiet plodder, his simple courage and firm integrity, his unstated honesty and non-demonstrative compassion. We do not see him in the blaze of lights, we do not see him in splendor and glory, his is not the earth-shattering triumph – his is the mellow dusk, the soft whisper, the quiet love that tries to speak but is too shy and too retiring, the quiet heroism that labours on

through the ages, the spirit which returns to build the world "when the battle's lost and won". This mellow golden dusk too has its beauty, and we must appreciate it.

I am not against what my elders have done. Their ideologies and their movements were inflamed by the noble heroism of their age, but so is our generation inspired by its own morals, dreams and virtues. What I say is that every age has its spirit, what German philosophers called the *Zeitgeist*, and it is this spirit which determines the way in which we show our care for others. It is the method of doing good that changes, not the heart that wills the good, for the heart does not belong to any one age or any one place, but is the flame of all eternity. In every age, men have cared for others. In every age men have shared their joys with others. In every age men have opened out their hearts and reached out to embrace the world – it was so in the beginning, and is now, and will always be, time without end, world without end.

## DALIA CHAKRABORTY

Before talking about my understanding of attitude on our campus, I must confess that my understanding is limited in two ways. First, my insight into it is not properly grounded on my experience of a cross-section of fellow class-mates in my student days (1989-1992) because the range of my friendship was limited. Second, the teachers were in general, remote from us. Hence I could only sense their feelings towards us. I do not boast of superior power of observation. Further, in all probability, my subjective position shapes my construction of attitudes, then and now.

I was the first member in my family to be in Presidency College. Hence there was no possibility of preconception except the idea that it was an institution of excellence. This made me somewhat apprehensive about my ability to cope with the academic demands of the College. This explained why much of my time in College I spent in attending classes usually from 10 to 3.30 and in EPL thereafter. I was an infrequent canteen-visitor. My middle class background too stood in the way of widening of my circle of friendship. I came back to College as a teacher in 1997. The time period between 1992 and 1997 or for that matter 1989-

2004 was a small time to locate stable change. It was also a time for stable change to take place.

Now looking back to the College days from the point of view of my student self and also looking at it as a teacher I intend to locate some attitudinal specificities and to identify change, if any, in it.

First the elders. Teachers were attentive, caring, and inquisitive about our needs like availability of books etc. Our Principal was quite a distant figure. Library staff was helpful and responsive. Students' Section was extremely pro-student in its approach. We did not have seniors, hence there was none to rag us but also none to give us necessary tips about how to go about in the college. These remain more or less the same today. But student- teacher academic interaction outside the class room has definitely declined. The increasing dependence on private tutors is one probable reason. Or it might be due to our incapability to draw them into interaction.

Now the youngsters: Majority of us were regular in attending the classes. Most of us used to do library work regularly. The practice of

photocopying reading material was already in vogue. We were not fiercely career-oriented. We spent most of our time wondering how we could cope with college examinations and the final University examinations. I can not recall a single classmate taking specialized training to clear the entrance examinations for any professional course along with the honours course. This situation, I believe, have changed dramatically. In each year I find some students very focused about their future career and working hard for its preparation.

There were mixed attitudes toward fellow class-mates : with some close proximity and strong emotional bonds, with others there was only working relation. Covert competitiveness was also very much there, so was tension. I think this continues to be the same. I appreciate a new development in inter-departmental seminars, which began with an inter-college and inter-disciplinary ( Sociology department of Presidency College, English department of Jadavpur University, and Psychology department of Gokhale College) seminar on Loneliness/ Isolation/ Alienation initiated by the students of my department in 2001. Such seminars bring student and teachers of different departments together.

We respected our teachers though often indulged in light-hearted comments towards them. Same I think is true for you. However, there has been a remarkable increase in joking relationship between even senior teachers and students, replacing avoidance. Teachers too, do not stop from joking with each other when students are nearby.

Politics did not create any serious division between us. Our attitude to politics was casual. College issues were the prime issues in times of election. Small and brief processions inside the campus were organized by all groups at the time of students' union election. I can not recall a single incidence of now frequently used form of politics, i.e. *gheraoing* the Principal and teachers, during my student years. However, there was tension during election. Casting vote was a thrilling experience.

Milieu was primarily a college affair without any mad rush for sponsorship. A number of inter-college competitions were organized. Students' participation both as competitors and as spectators was high. Competitions were held in lecture

theatres and programmes at the Derozio Hall auditorium but never on the college ground. The steady flow of outsiders, that we see these days particularly on the day of *Bangla Band* or Western musical programme was unthinkable then. I find my otherwise sober students temporarily turn into VJs. This change towards loud entertainment and lack of inhibitions becomes evident also in times of the Founders' Day celebrations and even on the first day of the freshers in the college. The noisy cheers for the recipients of various prizes on Founders' Day or the same to greet the departmental heads and the Principal, on the day of Freshers' introduction reduces, for me, the dignity of the ceremonies. A refreshing change was the performance of a Tagore dance-drama and a play by the students early this month. I hope this becomes the trend, which allows talented students to express themselves and reinstates Bengali culture in the corporate life of the college.

The students are mainly still from a middle class background, attentive to lectures, valuing lectures as a resource; sober in behaviour and in dress; aspiring for higher education here and abroad; and prefer an academic career. Just like us they are noisy in between classes, competing hard with fellow students, aggressive to an out-group within the class. There is still ritual political participation in students' election. And free-mixing, intimacy and tradition of romantic love continues. If I am permitted to draw on my senior teachers' reminiscence and thus push back the base years, two changes have become noticeable : first, we teachers tend to stick to a narrow definition of syllabus rather than take the learners beyond; second, there has been a remarkable loss of inhibition as students and teachers do not feel shy about a threadbare discussion on normal and alternative sexuality as in the last sociology-history joint seminar on gender structure.

Assuming that I may be called upon to talk on the same theme twenty or thirty years later, I intend to be little more watchful : whether the influence of western values will increase, whether careerism will get better of sensitivity to social issues, whether book worms will lose out to internet-surfers, whether girls with mehendi designs on their hand will be bolder, whether boys with ear rings will be more visible, and whether we teachers will try to be more populist.

# Three Generations at Presidency College

## প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের বিবর্তন

নীলা দাসগুপ্ত

গত শতকের চল্লিশ দশকের মাঝামাঝি, কথা হচ্ছিল তদানীন্তন প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের প্রিন্সিপাল শ্রীযুক্ত প্রশান্ত কুমার মহলানবীশ মহাশয়ের ড্রয়িং রুমে, চিত্রাচারিত প্রথা অনুযায়ী সাক্ষ্য-আসরে। তিনি চারিদিকে বিদগ্ধ ব্যক্তিদের দ্বারা পরিবৃত, বহু স্নেহভাজন প্রাক্তন ছাত্ররা তাঁকে ঘিরে নানারকম আলোচনা, সমালোচনা এমনকি ব্যক্তিগত ঘরোয়া কথা পর্যন্ত চালাচ্ছে; হঠাৎই জনৈক স্নেহভাজন প্রাক্তন ছাত্র (তখন উচ্চপদস্থ অফিসার) মহলানবীশ মহাশয়কে আফেপের কণ্ঠে বললেন, যে তাঁর কন্যা ম্যাট্রিক পরীক্ষায় প্রশংসনীয় রেজাল্ট করল, বিশেষতঃ সাইন্স-এ, কিন্তু সে মেয়ে বলে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের উন্নতমানের শিক্ষা থেকে বঞ্চিত। এটা বড় দুঃখের কথা। আর কতদিন এমনভাবে তারা বঞ্চিত থাকবে?

তখন বোধহয় যে কারণেই হোক, মহলানবীশ মহাশয়ের মনে ঔদার্যের হাওয়া বইছিল। তিনি তৎক্ষণাৎ বলে ফেললেন : “নিশ্চয়, কেন মেয়েরা বঞ্চিত হয়ে থাকবে?”

ঘর ভর্তি সকলে মহা উৎসাহে তাতে সায দিলেন। ছোট্ট একটি কথা, কিন্তু কত বড় সুদূর-প্রসারী তার Effect! এটা কত বড় পরিবর্তনের সূচনার সঙ্কেত দিয়ে গেল।

কিন্তু বলেই তাঁর মনে দ্বিধা-দ্বন্দ্ব দেখা দিল। তবে এতগুলো বিদগ্ধ মানুষের সামনে বলে ফেলেছেন, এবং অনেক স্নেহধন্য Old Student তাঁকে দিনের পর দিন পীড়াপীড়ি করছেন। অগত্যা, অনিচ্ছা সত্ত্বেও তাঁকে এগোতে হল।

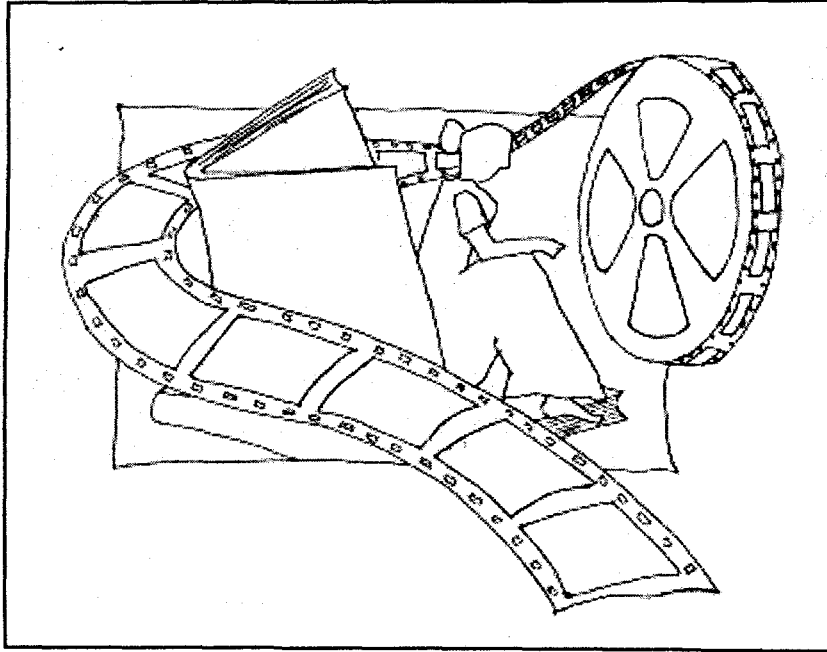
এইভাবেই Presidency College-এ Co-education-এর সূচনা এবং প্রবর্তন। তিনি কথা দিয়ে আর কথা ফেরাতে পারলেন না। এইভাবেই, সম্পূর্ণ ঘরোয়া কথার মাধ্যমে, ঘরোয়া পরিবেশে, একটি Emotion-এর ঘোরে, Presidency

College-এ Co-education-এর জয়যাত্রা শুরু। এটা কোন মতেই সুচিন্তিত পরিকল্পনা প্রসূত সিদ্ধান্ত নয়। একটা সরকারী বিজ্ঞপ্তি পর্যন্ত কোথাও দেওয়া হয়নি। কাজেই যারা জানল, এর Advantage নিল। যারা জানল না, তারা বঞ্চিতই রয়ে গেল।

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যাহোক, Presidency-র এই ছাত্রী Admission-এর জন্মলগ্নের উষ্মক্ষেপে, 1946 সালে আমি History-তে Honours নিয়ে তখনকার নিয়ম অনুযায়ী B.A., 3rd Year-এ ভর্তি হলাম। (1st এবং 2nd Year দুটিকে Intermediate Course-এর মধ্যে ধরা হত। 3rd এবং 4th year জুড়ে B.A.-এর Course ছিল।) মাইনে ১৬

(ষোল) টাকা (বেথুনে তখন তিন টাকা মাইনে দিয়ে এসেছি)। তবে ১৯৪৭ সালে, পশ্চিম বঙ্গের প্রথম Congress মুখ্যমন্ত্রী শ্রীযুক্ত প্রফুল্ল বোষ মহাশয় আমাদের কলেজে Inspection-এ এসে কলেজের মাইনে পনেরো টাকা করে দিয়ে যান। কারণ দেখা লেন, কলেজটা বড় বেশী বড়লোকের। এই মাইনে আমার পুত্র-কন্যার সময় ধরে,



নাতনির সময় (২০০৩) পর্যন্ত বহাল ছিল।

কলেজ বলতে তখন Main Building আর তার বিপরীত দিকে Science Building ছিল। মাঝে বড় Compound, Hare School অবধি বিস্তৃত ছিল। পশ্চিম দিকে টানা উঁচু পাঁচিল, যার ওপাশে কলাবাগান বস্তুি ছিল। Riot-এর যুগে পড়াশোনা আমাদের। কাজেই ঐদিকটায় তাকালে আমাদের ভয় করত।

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History Honours-এর Head of the Department ছিলেন Professor Susobhan Sarkar। তিনি আমাদের

European History আর Special Paper-এ European Reformation পড়তেন। Professor Sachchidananda Bhattacharya Indian History আর Special Paper-এ Maurya Period পড়তেন; Sixth Paper-এর 'Hindu Colonization In the Far East', উনিই পড়তেন। সেসব পড়ানো শোনা ভাগ্যের কথা।

আমার যতদূর মনে পড়ে, দোতলায় ওঠার সিঁড়িটা Marble পাথরের তৈরী ছিল। সেজন্য কলেজটাকে আরও majestic দেখাত।

করগিকদের অফিসের ভেতর থেকে একফালি জায়গা কোনওরকমে বের করে নিয়ে, Ladies' Common Room করা হয়েছিল। ভেতরে দুটো লম্বা টেবিল। কোনো Toilet ছিল না। Science-এর মেয়েরা তাদের কোনো এক ছাত্রীর Professor-আত্মীয়ের Personal Toilet ব্যবহার শুরু করল। যেদিন প্রথম কলেজে গেলাম, সেদিনই Ladies-Toilet-এর ব্যবস্থার সূচনা, Common Room-এর কোণায়, একটা Partition দিয়ে ঘেরা।

নিরাভরণ Common Room। পরে একদিন, 3rd Paper-এর অধ্যাপক মাহমুদ আমাদের জানালেন যে কলেজ কিছু টাকা পেয়েছে; তাই থেকে আমাদের Common Room-এর জন্য কিছু করা হবে। আমরা কী চাই? আমরা বলে পাঠালাম, আমরা Table-Tennis খেলার ব্যবস্থা চাই। Professor মাহমুদ আশ্চর্য হয়ে বলেছিলেন, “সে কী! Ladies' Common Room-এ একটা Dressing Table থাকবে না? তা হতে পারে না।” মেয়েদের তখন অত চাহিদা ছিল না। আমরাও সিদ্ধান্তে অটল রইলাম। কাকস্য পরিবেদনা! একদিন দেখলাম একটা সুদৃশ্য Dressing Table, আর বোধহয় একটা carrom-board, Ladies' Common Room-এ ঢোকানো হচ্ছে।

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আমরা যখন ভর্তি হই, বা পড়ি (১৯৪৬-৪৮), তখন দেশে রাজনৈতিক চেহারা বড় খারাপ। চারিদিকে “লড়কে লেঙ্গে পাকিস্তান” রব। শেষ পর্যন্ত পাকিস্তান-সৃষ্টি তথা দেশভাগ হল। কিন্তু সাম্প্রদায়িক বিষ গেল না। তারপরেও Riot লেগে থাকত, যদিও Great Calcutta Killing আগে হয়ে গিয়েছে। তখন History Honours ক্লাসটা হত দোতলায় উঠেই পাশের ডানদিকের ঘরটায়। এক-একদিন ক্লাশ শেষ হবার পর বারান্দায় বেরিয়ে আসতেই দেখেছি, সব থমথম করছে। কী ব্যাপার? কলকাতায় তীষণ Riot লেগেছে। Professor মাহমুদ দৃঢ় কণ্ঠে, উচ্চৈঃস্বরে বলে যাচ্ছেন: “বাইরে যা হচ্ছে হোক, কলেজে তার আঁচ আমরা লাগতে দেব না! কলেজে শান্তি-রক্ষা করতেই হবে।”

এমনও হয়েছে, League Ministry মুসলিম ছাত্রদের সুবিধার জন্য, বা কলেজে আসা-যাওয়ার সুবিধার জন্য যে “Special Bus” দিয়েছিল, সেই বাসে করে প্রফেসররা আমাদের ছাত্রছাত্রীদের সুবিধার জন্য, পাড়ায় বা বাড়িতে পৌঁছে দিয়েছেন। কলেজের Principal, Professor Khudrut Khudah, সেই বাসটিকে কলেজের সকলের সুবিধার জন্য ব্যবহার করতে অনুমতি দিয়েছিলেন।

Great Calcutta Killing-এর জন্য আমাদের কলেজ তিন মাস বন্ধ ছিল। কলেজ খোলার পর প্রফেসররা ব্যস্ত হয়ে পড়তেন Course শেষ করার জন্য। সেজন্য Prof. Sarkar-এর সুবিখ্যাত French Revolution পড়ান শোনার থেকে বঞ্চিত

হয়েছিল। হযত শুনতে পারতাম, কিন্তু মুসলিম ছেলেরা কোনমতে co-operate করল না।

এখনও মনে আছে: গান্ধীজী নিহত হয়েছেন; পরদিন দশটা নাগাদ, কলেজ Compound-এ, Science Building-এর সামনে আমরা সমবেত হয়েছি। “রঘুপতি রাঘব রাজা রাম” ভজনটি দুটি ছেলেমেয়ে খুব সুন্দরভাবে গাইবার পর, কলেজের তরফ থেকে আমন্ত্রিত শ্রীযুক্ত অশোকনাথ শাস্ত্রী গীতা থেকে পাঠ করে শোনালেন; কলকাতার Bishop Bible থেকে পাঠ করে শোনালেন। জনৈক মৌলবী সাহেব কুরআন থেকে পাঠ করে শোনালেন। দেখলাম, কোথাও কোনও গরমিল নেই। মহাসত্য সম্বন্ধে সবাই একই পথ নির্দেশ করে গেছেন। তবে কিসের দ্বন্দ্ব?

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তখন মেয়েরা ক্লাশরুমে সরাসরি ঢুকত না। ঘণ্টা বাজলে Common-room থেকে বেরিয়ে প্রত্যেকে নিজ নিজ ক্লাশের সামনে বারান্দায় গিয়ে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকত। Professor এলে তাঁর পেছন পেছন মেয়েরা ক্লাশে ঢুকত। তা না হলে মেয়েরা সবসময়েই Ladies' Common Room-এর ভেতরে থাকত। তখন একমাত্র বড় দরজাটিতে সবসময়েই একটা বিরাট ভারী পর্দা ওপর থেকে नीচে বুলে থেকে আমাদের অলক্ষে রাখতে সাহায্য ও চেষ্টা করত। সেটা একদিন কে যে ওপরের Rod-এ তুলে রেখেছিল, আমরা জানি না এবং লক্ষ্যও করিনি। হঠাৎ দেখি, Professor Susobhan Sarkar (liberal professor হিসেবে জানতাম এবং শ্রদ্ধা ও সমীহ করে চলতাম) কোথেকে এসে পর্দাটা नीচে টেনে নামিয়ে দিয়ে, যেমন বেজায় গম্ভীর মুখে এসেছিলেন, তেমন বেজায় অপ্রসন্ন মুখ করে চলে গেলেন। আমরা অপরাধীর মতো বসে রইলাম।

মেয়েরা Common Room-এ রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত গাইত। গলা একটু উঁচুতে চড়লেই, শাসন ছুটে আসত। তবে, আমরা মেয়েরা বর্ষামঙ্গল, বসন্ত-উৎসব এবং Sports-এ অংশ নিয়েছি। আমরা কলেজে খুব সাধাসিধেভাবে চলতাম। আমরা এখনও বলি, আমরা কলেজে এমনভাবে চলেছি বলেই Presidency College-এ পড়ার সৌভাগ্য থেকে ভবিষ্যত প্রজন্মের মেয়েরা বঞ্চিত হয়নি। তখন অবশ্য ছেলেরাও ভদ্র ও সংযত ছিল। ছেলেদের তরফ থেকে কোনও অশিষ্ট ব্যবহার আমরা কোনদিনও পাইনি। তবে সরলতা-ভরা দু-একটা দুষ্টুঁমি মনে আছে। আমরা যে ছ-সাতটি মেয়ে Arts বিভাগে পড়তাম, তার মাঝে একদিন মুখার্জী নামের একটি স্থলকায়্যা মেয়ে ভর্তি হল। প্রথম ক্লাশটা নির্বিঘ্নে হল। দ্বিতীয় ক্লাসে ঢুকেই দেখি Blackboard-এ বড় বড় হরফে লেখা: “DUNLOP MUKHERJEE”। এসবের ফলে বেচারী রোজ দুচামচ দই খেয়ে কলেজে আসত। সেজন্য একদিন কলেজ লাইব্রেরীতে অজ্ঞান হয়ে পড়ে গেল। কেউ তাকে তুলতে পারে না। তখন একজন weightlifter গোছের ছেলে এসে তাকে তুলে টেবিলে শুইয়ে দিল।

আর একটা দুষ্টুঁমির কথা বলছি। সংস্কৃত ক্লাসের Blackboard-এ লেখা: “মুখখানা চাঁদের মত সুন্দর হবে, চাঁদের মত গোল হবে না।”

কেউ যদি আমাদের সেসময় জিজ্ঞাসা করত, “কোন কলেজে পড়?” আমরা গর্বিতভাবে উত্তর দিতাম, “Presidency College”। প্রত্যেকে বিস্ময়ে জিজ্ঞাসা করত, “সেটা আবার

কোথায়?” উত্তর দেবার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সকলে হায় হায় করে বলে উঠত, “একটা কলেজ তবুও ছিল, সেটাও গেল!” কাজেই কলেজ কর্তৃপক্ষ চিন্তা-ভাবনা করতে লাগলেন, যে Presidencyতে ছাত্রী Admission বহাল রাখা উচিত কী না। যাহোক, ছাত্রী Admission আর বন্ধ হয়নি।

আমরা বোধহয় ছয়টি মেয়ে পরীক্ষা দিয়েছিলাম। চারজন পাশ করেছিলাম; তিনজন Second Class (Honours) সহ। অন্যজন First-Class-এ First হয়েছিল। Science বিভাগগুলির তথ্য মনে নেই, তবে একটি মেয়ে ওখানেও First-Class-First হয়েছিল।

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আমার কন্যা Chemistry নিয়ে Presidency-তে পড়েছে ১৯৬৯ থেকে ১৯৭২ অবধি। আমার নাতনি Physics নিয়ে পড়েছে ২০০০-২০০৩ সালে। আমার পুত্র Physics Honours নিয়ে ১৯৭৩-১৯৭৬ সাল পর্যন্ত।

এইভাবে এই কলেজে আমাদের চার অধ্যায় সম্পূর্ণ হয়েছে।

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অস্ত্রাচলের ধারে এসে, পূর্বাচলের দিকে তাকিয়ে লেখনীর মুখে যেটুকু স্মৃতিশক্তিকে ধরতে পারলাম, তাই লিপিবদ্ধ করে রাখতে চেষ্টা করলাম।

বার্ষিক্যজনিত অক্ষমতা হেতু এবং স্মৃতিবিভ্রমজনিত ত্রুটি-বিচ্যুতি হেতু ক্ষমাপ্রার্থী।

## JAYA DASGUPTA

Years ago I had been a privileged student of Chemistry at Presidency College. When I take a trip down memory lane so many incidents fleet across the mind's mirror.

After emerging from my sheltered school-life at La Martiniere for Girls', it was with trepidation that I entered the college on the first day, some time in mid-August, 1969. I had worn a skirt and a blouse on the first day, but I soon realized that anything other than a sari, was a strict no-no. Now when I occasionally visit the college, where my daughter recently studied, the opposite seems the order of the day – the Sari now seems to be a strict no-no.

The attempts at ragging by my seniors on the first day were so childlike that even now I cannot suppress my amusement when I think of it. But in comparison to the ragging in most colleges nowadays, it shows what a decent lot my seniors were.

In those days (in my 1st and 2nd years) the Chemistry Practicals were held in a large hall with an asbestos roof, situated in the quadrangle of the Main Building (now converted into a garden). I can still smell the unique combination of ammonia, hydrogen sulphide and various acids. I remember Dr. Ganguly's exasperation with my partner and me when we failed to draw out a molten glass rod into a thinner tube and his remarks that this process did not require physical strength, but finesse and correct tactics; or his victorious smile after obtaining the orange precipitate of antimony-sulphide, which always eluded me. Even now I wonder why, after

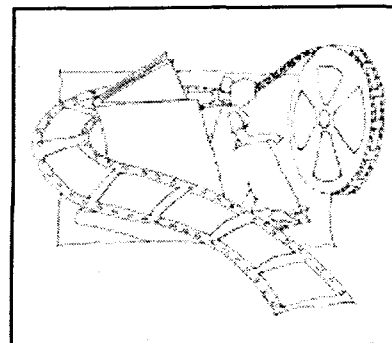
trying to maintain the right pH so valiantly, the coloured precipitate just would not come.

From our third years we shifted to the brand, new

Chemistry Building, from our classrooms in the Main Building. I remember trudging across the field, surrounding that centre of the archetypal unreal (which was open all around, those days), weary souls, well after sunset every day, post practicals, tired but happy with the knowledge that the ubiquitous inorganic salt had revealed its secrets.

Those days Presidency College was ripe with Naxalite activities. I remember we missed classes for nearly the whole of our second year, as college was declared closed. Policemen were always thronging the main gate. I remember at least one occasion, when we had to raise our hands and march out of the college gate in a single file.

I remember my batch-mate in Physics Honours (he stood first in the Higher Secondary Examinations of 1969) coolly dropping a bomb in the Hare School campus. He is now doing very well in the United States! One of my seniors participated in similar activities, before retiring to the USIS or British Council Libraries in the afternoons, to study



for the I.A.S. examinations!

Shuttling between the Chemistry Building, Baker Laboratories (Physics Pass) and the Main Building (Maths Pass), we did not have much time to preen ourselves in front of the broken mirror in the Girls' Common Room! But I will never forget the day before Holi, when I was in my third year – one of my classmates drenched me with distilled water while we

were doing our practicals.

I remember my Professors who made not a little contribution to my subsequent career in the I.A.S. Some of them were tyrants in the laboratories; a few others were too shy to look at us when we asked questions. But kudos to the professors at Presidency College. Life has taught me, they taught us well!

## JOYOSHI DAS GUPTA

My first memory of this college is one of picturesque serenity. The majestic buildings, suffused with sunshine and shadows of leaves; the serpentine queue for admission forms, that kept doubling back on itself; the student-volunteers who directed proceedings and checked our marksheets; the short bursts of rain that made a hundred umbrellas open out in a riot of colour.

The admission tests were conducted, and the results duly "prosecuted" (as the notices liked to put it). After another long queue (for admission) I walked into the college as a student one fine day in early September.

Derozio Hall was reverberating with the babble of a hundred voices, which completely drowned the Principal's welcoming speech. It was startlingly different from school, where we didn't even dare to whisper during such occasions.

After the ceremony, the freshers dispersed to their various departments. Our Head led us to PLT-1 (Physics Lecture Theatre). After some introductions, we were handed over to our seniors.

This was to be the much-anticipated (and dreaded) "ragging" session. Most of us were exceedingly nervous. To cap it all, no one else was wearing anything even remotely resembling my flouncy pink frock.

Contrary to our fears, our seniors were very nice to us. After a round of introductions, we were asked to perform according to our (presumed) talents. My three schoolmates and I were asked to stage a skit, about "a salesman trying to sell Polar fans to Eskimos". The efforts of the salesman in question to demonstrate the usefulness of the fans in "blowing away" the occasional "polar bear", were dampened with the Eskimos being "blown away" as well! It was fun.

A year later when we welcomed our immediate juniors, we picked on a particularly shy and studious – looking fellow, and asked him to

speak on a topic that ran:

“একফালি চাঁদ  
আকাশে, তুমি আমার  
বাঁ-পাশে”

("There is a bit of moon in the sky, and you are by my side"). After thinking for quite some

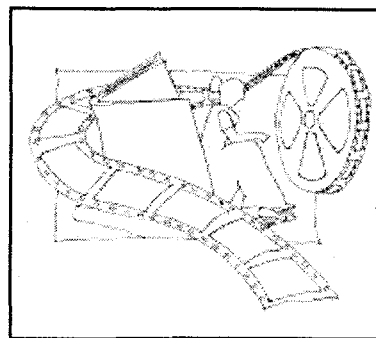
time, he delivered an emotional lecture on sharing a bench with a machine which can convert moonlight into usable energy!

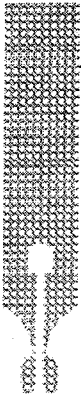
Classes were held regularly, in honours and pass subjects. About one-third of our class of forty students were girls. At first I found Physics too heavy and esoteric. I couldn't keep pace with the classes or didn't try hard enough – something I would rue just before the exams. Practicals were something of a novelty. We were fascinated by the myriads of colours coming out of the prism. Levelling and focussing the spectrometer though was a tough job. The first time we tried it, it took us over three hours. By the end of the year, we could complete the entire process in ten minutes!

One experiment required the use of sugar solution. Packets of sugar cubes emptied at an alarming rate, with more finding their way into our mouths, than the polarimeter.

The viva voce taken by our Professors before each experiment was exhaustive. Sometimes D.R.C. would question us for a whole day and half of the next. In the end, it all paid off. We entered college without much of an idea about the subject. By the time we left, the thorough and rigorous training our professors gave us, ensured that we have a firm grip over the subject.

The college has its many quaint nooks and





crannies. Take the second-floor passage just above the Girls' Common Room. It continues through one locked door and ends abruptly in another. I never found out what's behind those doors. Or take the chain-bound latticed door, also on the second floor. A spiral staircase leads from it to the roof, just beside the giant clock. The narrow stairway, dark except for a couple of slits in the wall, could well pass for something out of a medieval castle; the empty circular observatory under the dome – long ago, people used to climb up there at night to observe the heavens through a giant telescope. The list goes on. A word of caution to other adventurers – always be alert because with these old buildings, you never know what might give way, or what you may fall into.

From my sheltered life in an all-girls school, college was where I had to face the "big, bad world" all alone, for the first time. Some of us were already well-prepared for the challenges. For the rest of us it was a tedious, often painful, learning period.

College also provided my first (though indirect) exposure to student politics. It came with a growing awareness of the defects in our social and educational set-up. Some among us dreamt of glorious revolutions and believed that involvement in student politics would somehow help bring that about. Senior students from various parties frequently spoke to us about the need to remove social evils. There were altercations over raising the fees (mine was the last batch to have paid Rs. 17 a month), which erupted in a major confrontation between two groups of students.

Freedom of Speech and Expression is a Fundamental Right. We know that. Especially in Presidency. Accordingly posters full of allegations and counter-allegations run from the canteen, through the "lovers' lane", before exploding in a riot of red, black and blue in the portico. Do we like to wash our dirty linen in public? You bet we do!

The Science Library, with high partitions between desks, used to be a paradise to young lovers. After one stretch of holidays, we returned to

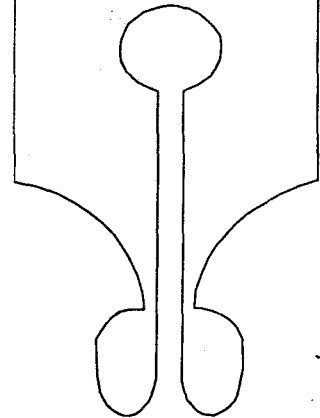
find the library eerily quiet. The exasperated library staff had turned the furniture around, so that one could take in the whole space at a glance! The nymphs and satyrs had fled to denser pastures.

My three years at Presidency, are a collage of images ... My first and only football game in the badminton court beside the canteen... windows all around the college, looking out on ramshackle buildings of considerable ancestry ... The Zoology Department, reeking of dissected fauna ... The tank in the Botany Department, full of hyacinths and red and black fish... The endless climb to the Statistics Department, drawn by the water-cooler (the icy cold water was like nectar in summers!)... The man in charge of gas supplies in the Chemistry Department, who sat in his little room all day played beautifully on his mouth-organ... Sports Day, with colourful umbrellas decking the field (a police-band performed but except for a handful of athletes the college was dishearteningly empty)... The tremendous work D.D.G and other professors put into the innumerable rehearsals for the Youth Parliament Competition, which our college went on to win... All the debates at the PLT, albeit with only about half the hall filled... Presicom, our Computer Club, which seems to have disappeared now.... A cat leaping down from a window and walking across the chemistry classroom, as though glycolic acid was the silliest thing it had ever heard of... New puppies gambolling about every year, only to disappear inexplicably.... The rickety table-tennis table and carrom board in the Girls' Common Room. They were always in use. The hard couches covered in orange rexin, which were engraved with unknown names and hearts-and-arrows.

Sometime during my third year, the rickety old dressing-table was fitted with a new mirror. After that, it became a general rule for any girl entering the G.C.R. to stand before the mirror at least once.

If that old dressing-table could talk it might have told many tales. My grandmother's, my mother's, mine are just three of them. Still newer faces will look into the mirror; new dreams shall be woven.

- **Rabindranath  
Tagore Live in  
Presidency**
- **Dismissal  
Proceedings of  
Derozio  
(by Sushobhan  
Chandra Sarkar)**



*Whispers of Immortality...*



## রবীন্দ্রনাথের অভিভাষণ

আমার এই মনে হয়, ইংরাজী ভাষার মধ্য দিয়ে জগৎ জ্ঞানের ও ভাবের সম্পদ গ্রহণ করছে, সেটা সত্য কথা। বর্তমান কালের ধর্মের বিরুদ্ধে গেলে মানুষকে ঠকতে হবে। যারা বর্তমান কালের মধ্য দিয়ে যায় নি, সে সমস্ত দেশ জীবন-সংগ্রামে পিছিয়ে পড়বে। ইয়োরোপীয় সভ্যতাকে যারা সত্য বলে গ্রহণ করেছে, তারাই উন্নতি করেছে। বর্তমান যুগ ইয়োরোপীয় সভ্যতার যুগ। এখন এমন কোনো জিনিষ চলবে না, যা ইয়োরোপীয় সভ্যতার সঙ্গে ছন্দ রক্ষা না করে চলবে। বিশ্বপৃথিবীর সহিত আমাদের ব্যবহারের মূলে ইয়োরোপীয় সভ্যতা। ইংরাজীর ভিতর দিয়ে ইয়োরোপীয় শিক্ষালাভ করার সুযোগ পেয়েছি, সেটাকে শ্রদ্ধার সহিত গ্রহণ করবো। আজকে সেটাকে যদি ব্যবহারে না লাগাতে পারি ত' আমরা ঠকবো। কিন্তু বাঙ্গালা ভাষা যদি আয়ত্ত না হয়, তা হলে যা আমরা শিখব তা প্রয়োগ করতে পারব না। যাঁরা ইংরাজী শিক্ষা করবেন, তাঁদের আপনার ভাষায় প্রকাশ করবার জ্ঞান যদি না জন্মায়, তা হ'লে সেই শিক্ষালব্ধ জ্ঞান মরুভূমিতে বৃষ্টিপতনের মত হবে। যেখানে আমরা ইংরাজীর ভিতর দিয়ে ইয়োরোপীয় সভ্যতাকে গ্রহণ করছি, সেটা যাতে সর্বত্র প্রচার করতে পারা যায়, তার ব্যবস্থা করা উচিত। আমাদের হৃৎপিণ্ডের একটা কাজ হ'চ্ছে—একবার রক্ত সেখান থেকে আসে, সমস্ত দেহে ব্যাপ্ত হয়, আবার হৃৎপিণ্ডে ফিরে যায়, সেইরূপ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়কে জ্ঞানদেহের হৃৎপিণ্ড মনে করলে দেখা যায় তার দুইটি ক্রিয়া আছে—তার একদিক দিয়ে জ্ঞান এসে জমবে, তারপর চারিদিকে সেটা পরিব্যাপ্ত হবে। দুইটিই চাই, কোনটিকে অবজ্ঞা করলে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উপযোগিতা আর থাকবে না। এ কথা অত্যন্ত সহজ কথা। এ সকল কথা বলতে গিয়ে যে যুক্তি দিতে হবে এ আমি মনে করি না। তবে যখন দেশে অস্বাভাবিকতার উদয় হয়, তখন সহজকেও বিশেষ করে বুঝতে হয়। ইংরাজী ভাষার চর্চায় পাছে লেশমাত্র ব্যাঘাত হয়, এইটি মনে রেখে আমাদের অভিভাবকদের মধ্যে বাঙ্গালা ভাষার আলোচনা সম্বন্ধে যে কুণ্ঠা দেখা যায়, সেটা ইংরাজের মনে ত' দেখি না। একটা কারণ, ইংরাজী ভাষায় আমাদের জীবিকানির্বাহের প্রয়োজন আছে। যেখানে ইংরাজী শিখলে রাজকর্মচারীর পদ প্রাপ্ত হওয়া যায়, সেখানে একটা আশঙ্কা হয়, যদি এর কোনও শৈথিল্য হয় ত' আমাদের পক্ষে সেটা সংঘাতিক হবে।

এ সম্বন্ধে জাপানের সঙ্গে আমাদের তুলনা করা যেতে পারে। ইয়োরোপীয় শিক্ষা যেমন জাপান আপামর সাধারণের মধ্যে বিতরণের উপায় অবলম্বন করেছে, তাতে ক'রে সে পৃথিবীর মধ্যে খুব একটা বড় স্থান অধিকার করেছে। আমি সেখানে গিয়ে দেখলুম, ছোট ছোট অল্পবয়স্ক দাসী জাপানী ভাষায় এমন এমন সব বই পড়ছে যে আমাদের শিক্ষিত লোকেও সে সব পড়ে না। আমার বাড়ীর বালিকা দাসী যখন বললে যে তার 'সাধনা' পড়তে ভাল লাগে, তখন বিস্মিত হয়েছিলুম। তার পর যখন সে দেখালে

যে 'সাধনা'র জাপানী অনুবাদ তার হাতে আছে, তখন আরও বিস্মিত হলুম। সেখানকার সাধারণ ব্যক্তি—সমাজে যাদের বড় স্থান নয়—তারা সকলেই উৎসাহের সঙ্গে জ্ঞানালোচনায় প্রবৃত্ত হয়েছে—নূতন যুগের নূতন রস, নূতন বার্তা তাদের মনকে অভিষিক্ত করেছে। এই নূতন যুগের সমস্ত জ্ঞান, বিজ্ঞান, সাহিত্যভাব—সমস্ত তাদের দ্বারে এসে পড়েছে—সমস্ত জ্ঞানের ভাবের সম্পদ জাপানের চিত্তের মধ্যে গিয়ে উপনীত হয়েছে। এইটে যখন চোখের সামনে স্পষ্ট দেখতে পারছি, তখন বুঝতে পারি যে আমাদের ভবিষ্যতে সমস্ত উন্নতি নির্ভর করছে আমাদের এই নিজের ভাষাকে গৌরবান্বিত ক'রে তোলার উপর। আমাদের দেশ কেবল ভৌগোলিক ভূখণ্ড মাত্র নয়, কেবল মাটি দিয়ে তৈরী সীমার দ্বারা আবদ্ধ নয়; এই যদি হ'ত তবে ত' চাষবাস ক'রে দিন কেটে যেত আর মনে হ'ত দেশের সম্বন্ধে সব কর্তব্য শেষ করলুম। কিন্তু আমাদের মানসভূমি আছে—আমাদের মন জন্মগ্রহণ করেছে আমাদের দেশের সাহিত্যের ক্ষেত্রে। প্রাকৃতিক শক্তিপুঞ্জকে—খনিজ পদার্থ প্ৰভৃতিকে যেমন আমরা ব্যবহারে আনতে পারলে উন্নতি লাভ করি, সেইরূপ আমাদের এই মানস জন্মভূমির এই সাহিত্যক্ষেত্রের সমস্ত শক্তির পূর্ণতা সাধনেই আমাদের উন্নতি। বাঙ্গালা দেশ কি কেবল ইয়োরোপের পাটের বস্তাই যোগাবে? বিদেশের সঙ্গে আমাদের এই বাণিজ্য-সম্বন্ধ আমাদের দারিদ্র্য দূর করেছে—সমস্ত পৃথিবীর সঙ্গে আমাদের যোগ ক'রে দিয়েছে তার সন্দেহ নাই, কিন্তু সেটুকু কত সামান্য। নীল, পাট, ধান, গরুর চামড়া কি হাড় দেশদেশান্তরে যাবে বলে সেইটুকুই সব হ'ল—তা ত' নয়। আমাদের মানসভূমির কি চাষ বন্ধ থাকবে? সেখানকার উৎপন্ন দ্রব্য কি পৃথিবীকে দিতে হবে না? জ্ঞানের পণ্য, ভাবের পণ্য সম্বন্ধে আমাদের কেবল আমদানিই চলবে আর রফতানি একেবারে বন্ধ?

সাধারণতঃ শুনতে পাওয়া যায়—অনেকে বলে যে তোমাদের সাহিত্যে আছে কি? কিন্তু সেটা বলতে লজ্জা পাওয়া উচিত। সে লজ্জা ভাষার নয়। আমাদের ভাষার এমন শক্তি আছে যে তাতে আধুনিককালের ও প্রাচীনকালের সমস্ত ভাব বাঙ্গালা ভাষার ভিতর দিয়ে প্রকাশ করতে পারি। যদি শিক্ষার সঙ্গে ভাষার যোগ না করতে পারি, ভাষা শিক্ষার সঙ্গে সঙ্গে বাড়বে না। শিক্ষার সঙ্গে সজীব ভাষার প্রত্যক্ষ যোগ। আমাদের মন যতটা পায়, সেটাকে আমাদের ভাষার মধ্যে প্রকাশ করতে হবে। ভাষা ও শিক্ষার সংযোগ না থাকলে দুর্গহ হবে। জৈব উপকরণ হ'লে মানুষ যেমন সেটাকে আপনার দেহের সামিল ক'রে নিতে পারে, লালার সঙ্গে মিশিয়ে, জারক রসের মধ্য দিয়ে আপনার শারীর পদার্থ করে নিয়ে আপনার স্বাস্থ্য বৃদ্ধি করে, ইংরাজী শিক্ষাকে আমরা তেমন ক'রে আপনার জিনিষ করতে পারি নি। যতক্ষণ পর্যন্ত শিক্ষাকে ভাষার মধ্য দিয়ে জৈব পদার্থ না করতে পারি, ততক্ষণ সে শিক্ষা আমাদের পরিহাস

করবে। এই পরিহাস দিন দিন বেড়ে উঠছে।

আমাদের বাঙ্গালা ভাষা ত' আর দাঁড়িয়ে নেই, যদিও বা এর সভ্য জগতে স্থান নেই, যদিও ভারতীয় রাজসভায় এর স্থান সম্ভবপর নহে, তবুও যখন থেকে আমাদের চিত্তের উন্মেষ হয়েছে, অন্তরের ভিতর তখনই তার জাগরণ প্রথম বিহঙ্গের অক্ষুট কাকলীর ন্যায় এই ভাষার ভিতর দিয়ে প্রকাশ পেয়েছে, সুতরাং আজকের দিনে এই ভাষাকে কেউ ঠেকিয়ে রাখতে পারবে না। আমার কথা এই যে আপনারা এতগুলি যুবক আছেন, আপনাদের মধ্যে প্রবল শক্তি রয়েছে। আপনাদের কাছে কত বড়

দাবী; আপনাদের সকলের কাছে উপস্থিত—দেশের ভাষার দাবী, মানস জন্মভূমির দাবী। এটা ছোট জিনিষ নয়। যা অসম্পূর্ণ আছে, সেটাকে আমাদের চেষ্টায় সম্পূর্ণ করতে হ'বে। এইখানে একটা গৌরবের কথা আছে, বাহির থেকে যা রুটিন ঠিক করা হয়, সেটা আমরা মানতে বাধ্য, কিন্তু যেটা আমরা আন্তরিক প্রীতির সহিত করব, সেটার গৌরব খুব বেশী। এই যে আয়োজন হয়েছে, এই যে ক্ষুদ্র সভাটি অত্যন্ত ক্ষমতার সঙ্গে প্রতিষ্ঠিত হয়েছে—ইহা সকলকে ছাড়িয়ে যাবে আমি এই আনন্দটুকু জানাবার জন্য আপনাদের কাছে ছুটে এসেছি।

১লা আশ্বিন, ১৩২৪

প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ বঙ্গীয় সাহিত্য সভার বাৎসরিক অধিবেশনে প্রদত্ত বক্তৃতার সারাংশ।

## প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ পত্রিকার জন্য লেখা দুটি কবিতা

"UTTARAYAN"  
SANTINIKETAN, BENGAL.

হৃদয়বির মাঝে মৃতদল  
ফুঁদিল হৃদয়কে।  
ফুঁদিল উঠুক নবীনা ভাষায়  
অসম্ভববির নবীন আমায়  
নব উদয়ের পায় ॥  
বৃষ্টিপাতাচাঁকুর

১৬শ  
১৩৪৪



"Uttarayan"  
Santiniketan, Bengal.

ହିନ୍ଦ

ମମତା ମମତା ସମ୍ପର୍କ ହେଉଛି  
ସିନ୍ଦୂରରାଶି ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରବାହିନୀ ବିନାଶୀ ।

କ୍ଷମା ଯେତେବେଳେ ହିନ୍ଦ କାମାନ୍ତ  
ବନ୍ଧନାଶିନୀ କାମାନ୍ତ ।

ସୁନ୍ଦରୀଙ୍କ ନୟନ ସାଗର  
ହିନ୍ଦ ମାୟା

ଅଳକା ପାର୍ବତୀ ହିନ୍ଦ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି  
ସୁଦୃଢ଼ ଶକ୍ତିର ମାୟା ।

ଅସୁରଙ୍କ ଶତ୍ରୁତା ହିନ୍ଦ,  
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ସିନ୍ଦୂରାଶି

# Extracts from the Proceedings of the Hindu College Committee relating to the dismissal of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio

*Culled by* — PROF. SUSOBHAN CHANDRA SARKAR

**Saturday, April 23, 1831**

**Present :**

Baboo Chundro Coomar Tagore – *Governor*

H.H.Wilson – *Vice Presdt.*

Baboo Radhamadub Banerjea

Baboo Radha Canto Deb

Baboo Ram Comul Sen

Da Hare *Esqr.*

Baboo Russomoy Dutt

Baboo Prasonno Coomar Tagore

Baboo Sri Kishen Sinh

Luckynarayan Mookerjee – *Secretary*

Read the following Memorandum on the occasion of calling the Present Meeting.

The object of convening this meeting is the necessity of checking the growing evil and the Public alarm arising from the very unwarranted arrangement and misconduct of a certain Teacher in whom great many children have been interested who it appears has materially injured their Morals and introduced some strange system the tendency of which is destruction to their moral character and to the peace in Society.

The affair is well-known to almost everyone and need not require to be stated.

In consequence of his misunderstanding no less than 25 Pupils of respectable families have been withdrawn from the College. There are no less than 160 boys absent some of whom are supposed to be sick but many have purposed to remove unless proper remedies are adopted.....

Memoranda of the proposed rules and arrangements.

1. Mr. Derozio being the root of all evils and cause of Public alarm, should be discharged from the College, and all communications between him and the Pupils be cut off.
2. Such of the Students of the higher Class

whose bad habits and practices are known and who were at the dining party should be removed.

3. All those Students who are publicly hostile to Hindooism and the established custom of the Country and who have proved themselves as such by their conduct, should be turned out.
4. The age of admission and the time of the College Study to be fixed 10 to 12 and 18 to 20 (sic).
5. Corporal punishment to be introduced when admonition fails for all crimes committed by the boys. This should be left at the discretion of the head Teacher.
6. Boys should not be admitted indiscriminately without previous enquiry regarding their character.
7. Whenever Europeans are procurable a preference shall be given to them in future their character and religion being ascertained before admission.
9. (sic)Boys are not allowed to remain in the College after school hours.
10. If any of the boys go to see or attend private lectures or meetings, to be dismissed.
11. Books to read and time for each study to be fixed.
12. Such books as may injure the morals should not be allowed to be brought, taught or read in the College.
13. More time for studying Persian and Bengally should be allowed to the boys.
14. The Sanskrit should be studied by the Senior Classes.
15. Monthly Stipends be granted only to those who have good character, respectable Proficiency and whose further stay in the College be considered beneficial.

16. The student wishing to get allowance must have respectable proficiency in Sanskrit and Arabic .
17. The boys transferred from the School Society's Establishment to be admitted in the usual way and not as hitherto and their posting class to be left to the head Teacher.
18. The practice of teaching boys in a doorshut room should be discontinued.

With reference to the 1 article of the above the following proposition was submitted to the meeting and put to the Vote.

"Whether the managers had any just grounds to conclude that the moral and religious tenets of Mr. Derozio as far as ascertainable from the effects they have produced upon his Scholars are such as to render him an improper person to be intrusted with the education of youth.

Baboo Chandra Coomar stated that he knew nothing of the ill effects of Mr. Derozio's instructions except from report.

Mr. Wilson stated that he had never observed any ill effects from them and that he considered Mr. Derozio to be a teacher of superior ability.

Baboo Radha Canto Deb stated that he considered Mr. Derozio a very improper person to be intrusted with the education of youth.

Baboo Russomoy Dutt stated that he knew nothing to Mr. Derozio's prejudice except from report.

Baboo Prosonno Coomar Tagore acquitted Mr. Derozio of all blame for want of proof to his disadvantage.

Baboo Radha Madub Banerjea believed him to be an improper person from the report he heard.

Baboo Ram Comul Sen concurred with Baboo Radha Canto Deb in considering him a very improper person as the teacher of youth.

Baboo Sri Kishen Sinh was firmly convinced

that he was far from being an improper person and Mr. Hare was of opinion that Mr. Derozio was a highly competent teacher and that his instructions have always been most beneficial.

The majority of the managers being unable from their own knowledge to pronounce upon Mr. Derozio's disqualifications as a teacher the Committee proceeded to the consideration of the negative question.

Whether it was expedient in the present state of public feeling amongst the Hindoo community of Calcutta to dismiss Mr. Derozio from the College.

Baboos Chandra Coomar Tagore, Radha Canto Deb, Ram Comul Sen, and Radha Madub Banerjea voted that it was necessary.

Baboos Russomoy Dutt and Prasanna Coomar Tagore that it was expedient and Baboo Sri Kishen Sinh that it was unnecessary.

Mr. Wilson and Mr. Hare declined voting on a subject affecting the state of native feeling alone. Resolved that the measure of Mr. Derozio's dismissal be carried into effect with due consideration to his merits and services.

*[Ed. Rules 5,6,11,12,19 were adopted. Rules 7,9,13 were adopted with modifications. Rules 2 and 15 were supposedly already in force.]*

—No. 30. Letter from Mr. Derozio communicating his resignation and commenting on the Resolution of the Committee passed at the Special Meeting to dismiss him without examining the circumstances thereof and affording him time to vindicate his character from those accusations which have been fixed upon it. — 25 April

No.31 Letter from Ditto furnishing replies to the Queries put on him by the Vice-President as to have inculcated the following lessons.

Firstly Denying the existence of God. Secondly Disrespect to Parents, & thirdly marriage with sisters. — 26 April

*[Ed. Socrates was tried and sentenced to death for "corrupting the youth".]*

● **Shyama Prasad  
Mookherjee**

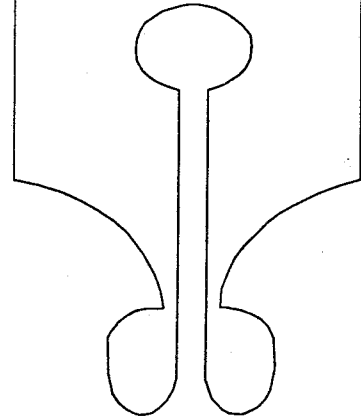
● **Tarak Nath Sen**

● **Ashin Ranjan  
Dasgupta**

● **Ketaki Kushari Dyson**

● **Gayatri Chakravarti  
Spivak**

● **Rudrangshu Mukherjee**



*Remembering some of our former editors...*

# Shyama Prasad Mookherjee

(Editor 1921-22)

## NOTICE

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There will ordinarily be four issues a year, namely, in the months of September, December, February and April.

Students, old Presidency College men and members of the Staff of the College are invited to contribute to the Magazine. Short and interesting articles written on subjects of general interest and letters dealing in a fair spirit with College and University matters will be welcome. The Editor does not undertake to return rejected articles unless accompanied by stamped and addressed envelope.

All contributions for publication must be written on one side of the paper and must be accompanied by the full name and address of the writer, *not necessarily for publication but as a guarantee of good faith.*

Contributions should be addressed to the Editor and all business communications should be addressed to Mr. Bimal Kumar Bhattacharjya, General Secretary, *Presidency College Magazine*, and forwarded to the College Office.

SHYAMA PRASAD MOOKHERJEE,

*Editor.*

*Printed at the Baptist Mission Press,  
41, Lower Circular Rd., Calcutta.*

# Tarak Nath Sen

(Editor 1929-30)

## Remembering Tarak Nath Sen

SURJA SANKAR RAY

Some time back my college celebrated her 175th year of existence, the umbilical cord, the prenatal stage accommodated, and I can only hope that the dust raised by limousines of dignitaries, motorcade of their minions, has repaired to rest. An exercise in Narcissism commented a young man, but would Narcissus find libidinal fulfillment among an array of cameras and lights? The Greek youth in me did not.

Amidst the spotlighted festivity and meretricious merriment the genius of the place was absent; the spirit of quiet intellectual pride tempered with tender grace had fled. Or perhaps with the passage of years it no longer continues to reign. Loud-mouthed ostentation has intruded upon its cloistered serenity. Macaulay's concept of a liberal occidental education can, after all, pay slow gilt-edged dividends in an age of desired quick returns. Teased out of thought by the mystery of change, an average mortal like me approaching middle age, a witness to things, returned as a pupil to the early sixties, to Presidency College and the Department of English, with Tarak Nath Sen at its head.

It was him that I missed most – his presence in the Arts Library, and, with him, a culture whose values were unmixed and untarnished like the Doric pillars that still support the clock-tower. "The tall deodars in the front, the sudden greenness of whose leaves one unperceived spring morning entered the heart with a gentle shock of mild surprise ..." have gone. What remains are scattered, framed images of a glorious past dedicated to scholarship and sharing its delights with students.

We, a group of eleven at first, which dwindled down to eight, met him formally in a cubicle below the book-racks of the Library. This is where he took his classes, often running for hours and deep into the evening. The magnificent flight of stairs, surprisingly without handrail, was strenuous for his afflicted heart. That this tall, frail man had a robust constitution only a decade back, that he was suffering from an unusual cardiac ailment early in life and living on borrowed time, I came to know much later from Prof. Subodh Chandra Sengupta's tribute and introduction to Tarakbabu's slender but distinctive corpus "A Literary Miscellany", published on his death. This perhaps accounts for his keen perception of time and mortality, and for the choice of the seven poems of Tagore he translated. I wonder whether any one has bettered them

Salt and pepper haired, neatly clad in dhoti kurta, the latter changing shade in winter, a parted 'chudder' over his shoulder, he taught, among other sundry items in the

syllabus, *Macbeth*, which may well be the richest among Shakespeare's tragedies. With a voice never rising above a hush, with delicate fingers elegantly expressive in movement, the black board sparingly used, he brought to life the Renaissance in Europe and the mighty civilisations of Greece and Rome, never for a moment losing sight of the text, punctuations included, or the Elizabethan stage. It seemed as if a parallel mind was at work on the bard. "Play's the thing" he used to say in his inimitable style as he dwelt on the self-slaughter of a man and woman and on that Rubicon of the soul which, unlike the one in history, once crossed, cannot be recrossed.

I learnt from my father to wonder and question, from the extra-ordinary headmaster Clifford Hicks I learnt to marvel. And though I enjoyed my years in a Methodist school, there was a sense of cultural isolation and the desire to return to the mainstream, to College Street, hallowed by memories of the greats of nascent Bengal. In TNS I saw them all, experienced their moral, intellectual and physical courage. And for the first time the world of romance that lies in precision was opened out to me by someone never nurtured in seminaries abroad, and yet whose command over many European languages was considerable – his English free from the redundant; his French a delight to hear.

The master's face was lit by a pair of clear but liquid eyes which would look at you calmly, with the look of a man who has experienced a lot through books, a phenomenal combination of the scholar and the teacher, of the specialist and the knowledgeable. I cherish a wet day in July when he read out for me "Huge cloudy symbols of a high romance," repeating the line six times, and I felt the indescribable in the pulse. In spite of his somewhat forbearing presence he had an internal fund of placid, quiet gaiety, his upright ears ever ready for an anecdote; himself a raconteur. When the news of the death of a certain important minister reached the college an overzealous colleague asked him "What should we do?", meaning should a condolence meeting be called, or a holiday declared, he quipped "If it's a question of should ... call him back to life."

In today's world of academics scurrying after favours and preferments, playing time-servers to the powers that be, lapping up private tutorships and running after the head examiner's post, I miss him more. I know that the shy, retiring, self-effacing giant of a man would have felt embarrassed reading this. So I conclude and with Lamb "*Fantastic forms! whither are ye fled!*"



# Ashin Ranjan Dasgupta

(Editor 1953-54)

## EDITORIAL

### Notes and Comments

To get an issue of the college journal together is a task which though not to be described as a job of Hercules, is, nevertheless, one of considerable difficulties. People do not seem to agree as to what should be the aim of a journal like this. There are, for instance, those amongst us who hold that it is the duty of the journal to focus our attention on what our students are doing outside the class room. The ideal issue, it seems, would be an impressive collection of the reports of our different committees punctuated by about half a dozen photographs of the same. This ideal is strongly criticised by another school of opinion, which dislikes committee reports, hates group photographs, and would like to get from their journal a Series of edifying articles set off to perfection with a nice sketch or two. There are people who want us to bring out an extremely progressive issue attacking all conceivable things under the sun. There are those who would read only short stories and nothing else and there are those who would like the editorial to be written in verse. All these make up that dynamic entity which we know as the Presidency College.

Subject to the ultimately determining influence of the economic factor, your journal strives, as best as it can, to act the mirror to all these different shades of opinion. Here is with you, what we trust to be, a representative cross section of the things that Presidency College does or feels. But this is no more than a cross section. The numerous bits that remain unpublished demand we make a few general comments about them. It is an obligation we owe them and it is a duty towards you that we have assumed. We are convinced that it is only by telling you what we feel about the things we got and the things we ought to have got but did not, that we can make a better job of our second issue, which – now that the first is already in print – is our main preoccupation.

A journal, if it is not to be cordially disliked by all, has to present a well balanced page of contents. But our contributors, it appeared, had made up their minds not to stand any nonsense in the shape of an editorial policy. We tried to procure a presentable one-act play. We failed. We expected some of our people to come forward with some

neatly turned out opinions about the latest additions in the field of books. No one did. We felt at least a short discussion on some international topic was badly needed. Our contributors ignored our feelings. The element of variety could not be smuggled in.

People who wrote displayed a remarkable penchant for short stories and what appeared to be suspiciously like prose lyrics. The run on short stories was very unfortunate. We have to lay aside regretfully some very cute attempts in this domain. We really wish these people – very accomplished writers most of them – had tried their hands at something else. The same is true of that undoubtedly difficult subject of prose lyrics. Our contributors came out as very good writers of prose but their lyrical ambition somewhat let them down. Our scientists from whom we expected discussions on scientific subjects in a popular vein, sent in very little. And most of this little appeared to be forbiddingly technical.

Our friends, on the whole, have been exceptionally cooperative. And we hope we have done nothing to lose this cooperation. A somewhat more judicious selection of the subject matter will, we feel, make a world of difference and we shall be spared the agonising spectacle of able contributors unnecessarily jostling with each other in an overcrowded field. And, incidentally, you will get a much better journal.

There is a very obvious topic, neglected by our contributors, which, we believe, can easily yield very satisfactory results, if handled brightly and judiciously. That is our college. Presidency College, these days, is displaying what one of our contributors would term, a very remarkable tendency towards 'association'. At the same time, we fancy, an acute conflict is going on amongst us between different sets of attitude. We should like to make our meaning clear. That our students are very much active outside their class rooms should be obvious. All our secretaries seem to be enthusiastic about it. We should like, however, to draw your attention particularly to a couple of things with which this journal feels connected. The activity of our study groups is a very pleasing feature in our academic life. The Third Year Study Circle is a very

important body. In their third year people can take their time and study things which within a year from now it would be quite impossible for them to do. The reason is obvious but as it is not considered good form to discuss unpleasant things, we do not mention it. We on our part, however, expect great things from this study group and we are looking forward to the journal that they tell us they are going to bring out. We also expect to hear about a First Year study circle very soon. Some of our talented friends have got together a group which they call the Poetry Association. We sincerely hope they are going to think up some very fine poetry and give it to us next time we go to press.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from these study groups another interesting feature of our academic life is the running of a few hand-written sheets. The College wall newspaper, *Dewali*, is already an established institution. Only very recently our scientists have begun taking a hand in its shaping. This is certainly encouraging but they must always bear in mind that whatever they have to say, has to be said in a popular vein. Otherwise the purpose of that sheet will be defeated. The enterprising folks of our First Year classes have their *Prathama*, which maintains a surprisingly high standard and almost invariably manages to come out in an impeccable get up. The History Seminar Wall Newspaper has nothing to boast of in its turnout. But it maintains a fair standard and it is the only sheet which has some of our professors and ex-students as regular contributors. Incidentally, it is interesting to note, that all the seminars of the post graduate department of our University have their own organs. The History Seminar has made a beginning which we think can well be followed up by the others. All these sheets serve the same purpose as does this journal. They enable us, moreover, to maintain a profitable lookout for possible contributors. And with the coming out of this issue, they are, we are sure, going to give us a crop of critical notices which cannot possibly be flattering but which will, nevertheless, be an invaluable aid to us.

This much about the very praiseworthy things that our friends are doing. These are all facts and no fancy. But the thing we are going to suggest next is, undoubtedly, a conclusion on our part, and if the reader himself has not felt it, it can, assuredly, be dismissed without a second thought. The general attitude of the Presidency College, we suggest, is getting more and more positive and what is singularly unfortunate, more and more narrow. All this is bound up, ironically enough, with our various progressive opinions. People are not only progressive – which is a very excellent thing – but are impatient of anything which is not. This last is not only unfortunate but dangerous. This is

evident in what we are writing in the columns of the *Dewali* and the *Prathama*. This is evident in what we are saying in our seminar discussions. This is evident in the very way we speak in our debates. Our generalizations are sweeping, our assertions are categorical and conclusions, necessarily, catastrophic. A well-balanced attitude is fighting a rearguard action all along the line. But it has not lost out yet and there is still time to rally. We shall give what we consider to be a typical example. Some time back a batch of American students visited us. We met them at a symposium, the subject for discussion being Academic Freedom in Universities. Our debaters straightaway threw all caution to the four winds and plunged in denouncing American Imperialism. The standard of debate in this college is as good as ever. And when that exceptionally skilful debater, S. Amartya Sen, launched his scornful shafts at the American attitude towards world problems today, the lecture theatre shook to the sound of stormy applause. Our visitors appeared a bit taken aback. So along came the tactful rejoinder from the chair that all this does not mean that we bear any ill-feeling towards the Americans. One expected a stony silence to greet such tact. But one was really relieved to hear Presidency College obliging with another burst of spontaneous applause. That is why we say that a sane attitude is still behind its guns. If we can persuade our progressives that a thing that exists is not necessarily bad, that a generalisation must have its loopholes, and that the best way to arrive at truth is to listen to what the other fellow is saying, we can still win out. Presidency College may be aggressively progressive, but Presidency College has as yet, never been bigoted.

It is very difficult to say why none of our contributors tried to tackle the topic of Education. A journal of this type, however, cannot allow itself to be presented without something being said about this subject somewhere in its pages. The topic is not easy to deal with and the pen that now is constrained to make the gallant but presumptuous attempt is far from being competent.

It is, nevertheless, possible to present a few facts which would outline some of the features of what the journalists love to describe as the Crisis in Education. That something has gone wrong is obvious but the thing that has gone wrong here with us is not the thing that worries people over there in the U.S.A., Britain or Russia. But both of them are connected. We shall try to show how.

In Britain and the U.S.A. it is held that people have different mental capacities and it is not possible to give all of them any very high standard of education. To determine the capacity of a student they rely almost exclusively on I.Q. tests. The concrete results so far have been that in Britain,

where they accepted the principle of universal education back in 1870, the act of 1944 has acknowledged in principle secondary education for all with a leaving age of sixteen, and in U.S.A. they insist upon equal opportunity for all with a general uniformity up to the age of eleven. In both the countries there is a wide variation in the standard reached and in U.S.A. in particular it varies from state to state.

In Russia, they believe that it is possible to educate everybody and up to a very fair standard. It is only after this stage has been reached that the question of aptitude comes in. This attitude of theirs is based upon a denial of the efficacy of the I.Q. testing system. They claim that data gathered on observation contradict the results given by 'intelligence testing and that children from unfavourable environments are adversely affected by the system. They have made seven years' schooling compulsory for all children after which the institute called Tekhnikum gives four years of vocational training. There are also special centres where higher studies in the humanities can be undertaken. By 1960 they hope to extend the compulsory schooling period to ten years. Prof. Giles is of opinion that this ten years' schooling would enable all the Russian children to reach the old matriculation standard of the London University.<sup>2</sup>

This feat of the Russian government, which can, perhaps, be described as commendable, has set the people in Western Europe, thinking. And as it happens so often, these days, when people indulge in thinking, they think politics. In the U.S.A. they are persuaded that if Russia can educate her people and if the free world cannot, then Communism will spread. Thus for an example if the Jamaicans find that after three hundred years' of British rule 80 per cent of their people are illiterate while in Russia within thirty years of their revolution they have achieved cent per cent literacy, then they may very likely commit the blunder of equating communism with education and democracy with illiteracy.<sup>3</sup>

This acute reasoning on their part has made the United States do a thing which, peculiarly enough, is not at all a bad one. They have poured out money to get the UNESCO going and the UNESCO is one of those bodies which enable us to think that all sanity is not lost yet. They are working right in our midst and they are doing good work. This brings us to our own problems and worries. The experts of the UNESCO have already undertaken studies of the educational system in Thailand, the Philippines and Afghanistan. The reports they have submitted are instructive. In Thailand, we are told, the government passed a law

of compulsory education back in 1921. Between 1921 and, March 1951 the Thai cabinet changed fifteen times. The Thai people got fifteen different educational policy statements. The sum spent on education rose by one per cent. And there it stopped. These are facts which some people have found amusing and others, grim. They are undoubtedly peculiar but very typical. The report about the Philippines is severely critical and that about Afghanistan is not exactly complimentary. The experts came to the conclusion that to do anything good these people have to change their social setup a bit, regulate their finance, eliminate corruption and show some efficiency.

We should not of course dream of applying these observations our own country. We had our own University Commission. Scholars differ as to what has happened to the Radhakrishnan Report. Its ultimate fate is a matter of metaphysical speculation. Our government is going ahead with its scheme of spreading the light. In our Adult Education programme we are bringing our people up to the fairly high standard of class four. The new scheme of the West Bengal Government contemplates the employment of graduate teachers at eighty-five rupees a month. As a matter of academic interest we could mention that the Brooke Bond Tea Company employs labourers at not less than Rs. 120/- per month. But of course our government is not in a position to spend so much money. An irresponsible section of the students is talking about a twenty per cent budgetary allocation for education. But our authorities are persuaded that the only thing to do to these young men is to reorient their moral outlook, preferably through religious instructions. And there the matter rests.\*

- 1 Please give us a chance to do something which may please you. When you form a study group try and tell us about it so that your journal can take up an important aspect of the academic life not covered by your secretaries' reports – En,
2. Prof. Giles in the spring issue of the Anglo-Soviet Journal, 1952.
3. They may not be as clever as Prof. Dobhison, who points out that Russia could do it only through the coercive power that it exercises [British Journal of Educational Studies, May, 1953]. The force of the argument is tellingly driven home when we consider that nothing would scandalize the British Government more than any idea of using coercion in one of its colonies.

\* this note was written before the students, 'apparently under the influence of external agencies', dared defy our authorities, who religiously put them down at Lucknow and elsewhere.

# Ketaki Kushari Dyson

(Editor 1958-59)

## সম্পাদকীয়

পরীক্ষাকেন্দ্রিক শিক্ষাব্যবস্থার ঘূর্ণাবর্তে জড়িয়ে পড়লেও আমাদের কলেজের ছাত্র-ছাত্রীরা যে তাঁদের মুখপত্র প্রকাশে সমর্থ হচ্চেন সেটা কলেজের সকলের পক্ষেই সান্ত্বনার বিষয়। শুধু যে বছরে দু'টি সুদৃশ্য ও সুপুষ্ট সংখ্যা প্রকাশ করবার পক্ষে নির্দিষ্ট অর্থ অপরিপূর্ণ তাই নয়; একটি সর্বাঙ্গসুন্দর পত্রিকা প্রকাশ করতে হ'লে চাই কলেজের প্রতিটি চিন্তাশীল ছাত্র ও ছাত্রীর সহযোগিতা; কিন্তু অবসরের একান্ত অভাবে এই সহযোগিতা অন্তরঙ্গ হ'য়ে উঠবার সুযোগ পায় না। বিশেষত লক্ষ্য করেছি পরীক্ষার খাতায় অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে গুরুত্বপূর্ণ প্রশ্নের উত্তর দেবার দৃষ্টিতে ছাত্রদের সৃষ্টিশীল রচনার ক্ষমতাকে কিভাবে ব্যাহত করতে পারে। অল্প সময়ের মধ্যে জ্ঞানভাণ্ডার উজাড় করতে গেলে রচনামূলকভাবে নানাপ্রকার অস্বাভাবিকতা প্রবেশ করতে পারে; কিন্তু পত্রিকার জন্য লিখতে ব'সে পরীক্ষাহলের মেজাজ বজায় রাখলে আমাদের উদ্দেশ্য সম্পূর্ণ ব্যর্থ হবে। হালকা চালের লেখা আর গুরুগম্ভীর লেখা উভয়ই আমাদের কাছে সমান অভ্যর্থনীয়; কিন্তু যে বিষয়ের উপরেই ছাত্রেরা লিখুন না কেন, তাঁরা লিখবেন তাঁদের মনের কথা, প্রশ্নোত্তরের কৃত্রিমতাগুলোকে বর্জন করে, এটাই হলো কাম্য। কলেজ পত্রিকার সার্থকতা বিভিন্ন বার্ষিক শ্রেণীর ছাত্র-ছাত্রীদের মৌলিক চিন্তাধারার পূর্ণ প্রতিনিধিত্ব; প্রসঙ্গ উল্লেখপূর্বক ব্যাখ্যার উষ্ম মরুভূমিতে এই চিন্তাধারা যদি নিজেকে হারিয়ে ফেলে তবে তা হবে নিদারুণ পরিতাপের বিষয়।

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শুধু পরীক্ষাব্যবস্থা কেন, আমাদের কলেজজীবনের রন্ধ্রে রন্ধ্রে এমন নানাবিধ বস্তু আছে যা হরেক রকমের ফর্ম্যালিটির প্রকৃষ্ট উদাহরণ এবং সে-হিসাবে আমাদের ব্যঙ্গরসিকদের প্রচুর খোরাক জোটতে পারে। শ্রদ্ধেয় অধ্যাপকদের কামরার দরজায় 'প্রবেশ নিষেধ'-এর ফলকটি বা টাকা লেনদেনের কাউন্টার থেকে শুরু করে গ্রন্থাগারের তথাকথিত রিজেক্টেড স্লিপ-সমূহের পাজা পর্যন্ত বিস্তৃত মজাদার ক্যানভাসে এমন অনেক উপাদান আছে যা আশ্রয় করে বিশুদ্ধ ল্যাম্বায় রীতিতে একাধিক ডিসাটেশন রচনা করা যেতে পারে। কেন যে সরকারী কলেজকে চেক টাকা দেওয়া যাবে না, কেনই বা প্রতি মাসে বেতন দেওয়া একটি ছোটোখাটো বিভীষিকা হয়ে থাকবে এ-সব প্রশ্নের সদুত্তর বোধ করি একমাত্র ঐ স্বচ্ছদৃষ্টি পুরুষই দিতে পারতেন। বলা বাহুল্য সমাজজীবনের আরও অনেক ফর্ম্যালিটির মত এ-সব ফর্ম্যালিটিও একাধারে অনন্ত কমেডি ও অনন্ত ট্রাজেডির উৎস। ছাত্রদের রুটিন-বাঁধা জীবনে এরা যদি কিছু বৈচিত্র্যের স্বাদ সঞ্চারিত করতে পারে তবে আমরা এদের সহজে বিদায় দিতে চাইবো না! অন্তত কমিক চিত্তশুদ্ধির উপাদান হিসাবেও এদের কিছু মূল্য আছে; মধ্যে মধ্যে এদের সঙ্গে ধাক্কা না খেলে বুদ্ধির ভারসাম্য রক্ষা করা যায় না। এই কথাকেই ঘুরিয়ে বলা

যায় যে এ-সব ফর্ম্যালিটির মধ্যে বহু শিক্ষণীয় বিষয় আছে ব'লেই কোনো শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানে এরা হয়তো সম্পূর্ণ বেমানান নয়।

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দ্বিতীয়বার চিন্তা করলে মনে হয় মানানো না-মানানোর কথা বেশী জোর দিয়ে না বলাই নিরাপদ। আমাদের কলেজের গেটের সামনে, কলেজ স্ট্রীটের বইয়ের দোকান আর রেস্টোরাঁর আনাচেকানাচে যেসব শিশু ভিখারীদের স্বরাজ, যাদের অনুরোধ-ভৎসনা-স্বাধিকারবোধ-মিশ্রিত দাবি শুনে মনে পড়ে ছেলে-ভুলানো-গল্লে লেটুস্ পাতার প্রতি গিনিপিগশাবকদের উক্তি :

Lettuce! O Lettuce!  
Let us, O let us,  
O Lettuce leaves,  
O let us leave this tree and eat  
Lettuce, O let us, Lettuce leaves!

তারাই কি বেমানান? প্রাত্যহিক অভ্যাসের স্বার্থপরতার কাঠিন্যস্পর্শে আত্মবিস্মৃত না হ'য়ে থাকলে আমরা তো প্রতিদিন বেঁচে মরতাম এদের দেখে। অস্তিত্বের অর্থহীনতা যখন সর্বত্র প্রবলভাবে নিজেকে ঘোষণা করছে তখন আমরা যে কলেজে যাওয়ায় করছি, হাসিঠাট্টাতেও যোগদান করছি, পত্রিকাও প্রকাশ করছি, সেটা অপার্থিব করণার ফলেই কিনা তা চিন্তনীয়। আমাদের শিক্ষাব্যবস্থায় করুণ, নিষ্ঠুর, হাস্যকর, নিরর্থক প্রভৃতি বিভিন্ন শ্রেণীর হেরফেরের কতখানি প্রয়োজনীয়তা আছে তা নিশ্চয় করে কে বলবে?

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অনার্সের মান-অনুসারে সংস্কৃতির অনুশীলন আমাদের কলেজে না হওয়াতে ক্লাসিকাল সাহিত্য পঠন-পাঠনের যে স্বকীয় আবহাওয়া আছে তা ধীরে ধীরে লুপ্ত হয়েছে। এমন নয় যে বি.এ. বা ইন্টারমিডিয়েটের বিষয় হিসাবে আমাদের কলেজের কেউই সংস্কৃত নেন না বা রাস্তার ওপারে সংস্কৃত কলেজে পাঠগ্রহণ করতে যান না। কিন্তু দৈনিক কর্মসূচীতে সেটা যেন কয়েক মিনিটের ইন্টারলুড, প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজে ফিরে এলে সেটার স্মৃতি ঝাপসা হয়ে যায়। প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের কলা বিভাগের পক্ষে এই ক্ষতি আমি অপূরণীয় মনে করি। আমি জানি অর্থনৈতিক দিক দিয়ে সংস্কৃতির আকর্ষণীয় ক্ষমতা কম, এবং তৎসত্ত্বেও যাঁরা সংস্কৃতির প্রতি গভীর অনুরাগবশত এ-বিষয়ে উচ্চশিক্ষালাভে অগ্রসর হন তাঁরা স্পেশলাইজেশনের অমোঘ নিয়মে সংস্কৃত কলেজে জড়ো হন। ঐতিহাসিক এই প্রাচীন শিক্ষাপ্রতিষ্ঠানটির সঙ্গে হার্দ্য সম্পর্ক অটুট রাখলে প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের লাভ বই ক্ষতি হবে না। কারণ উপরিউক্ত আবহাওয়ার পুনরুজ্জীবন প্রাথমিক; বিশেষত সাহিত্য এবং দর্শনের ছাত্রেরা সংস্কৃতকে বাদ দিয়ে যে বেশীদূর অগ্রসর হতে

পারবেন না সে-বিষয়ে আমি নিঃসন্দেহ। অবশ্য সংস্কৃতকে বাদ দেবার ইচ্ছা ছাত্রদের মধ্যে বেশী প্রবল, না বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-কর্তৃপক্ষের মধ্যে বেশী প্রবল, তা আমার কাছে খুব স্পষ্ট নয়, কারণ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নিয়ম অনুসারে ইংরেজী অনার্সের ছাত্র সংস্কৃতকে পাশের বিষয় হিসাবে নিতে পারলেও বাংলা অনার্সের

ছাত্র সে-সম্মানের অধিকারী নন। নিজের দেশের পুরাতন ও নূতন ভাষা, সাহিত্য, সংস্কৃতি প্রভৃতি বিষয়ে একই ব্যক্তি একসঙ্গে অনেক কিছু জেনে ফেলবে, এটা বোধ হয় অপরাধ। এই প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ পত্রিকাতেই সংস্কৃত-সাহিত্যবিষয়ক কোনো প্রবন্ধ আজকাল প্রকাশিত হয় না সেটা দুঃখের বিষয় নয় কি?

## In Conversation with Ketaki Kushari Dyson

DEBADITYA BHATTACHARYA

*'Cramped by years, the mind now rues  
The tempered joys and spent up-hues...'*

Such was the mood of a veteran student of Presidency College, while she recorded in a fit of nostalgia: "Presi, in our days, happened to be a very lively place...We used to term it as a 'go-go' college, as opposed to a 'no-go' one..." None other than Ketaki Kushari Dyson, hers is a name which has essentially engraved itself on the fertile soils of literature, as a synonym for 'artistic ingenuity'... Her bespectacled eyes sparkled with youthful lustre as faded reminiscences flitted across her mind. We were all sitting in front of her with an impish greed to gobble up all her words, while she treaded down the lanes of her youth with renewed zest and vigour...

Having completed her schooling from St. John's Diocesan in 1954, Dyson passed her I.A exams in 1956 from Lady Brabourne College. "Brabourne, as I now remember, was different... in the sense that it appeared to us as a stepping stone between school and college"-she added with a smile. Subsequently, the year 1957 marked the initiation of a new episode in Dyson's life, with her admission into Presidency College. Remembering her exact contemporaries, Damayanti Basu and Chanchal Mazumdar, she proudly proclaimed-"Presidency, then, was a like a myth to us... getting admitted here meant a pilgrimage for me..."

The frenzied euphoria and jubilation unleashed by the recent attainment of independence breathed into the young souls of the day an "immense pride for the Indian heritage." Impelled by an ardent patriotic fervour to "serve the country and her citizens", Dyson claimed to have belonged to a "principled generation."

While excavating the fragments of her college-experiences, she paused at times to relive a few tempered moments and to revel in her former status as the Editor of the college magazine..."It was a tradition in those days, that the best arts graduate was to be made the Students' Editor", she quipped.

Sensing our desire to tease out a few more details about the publication of the college magazine in those days, she continued:

"In our times, we had an adequate sum allocated for the magazine. So, there was no financial headache as such. Isn't it still the same for you?..."

Well... well... the present publication secretary, sitting by my side, almost jumped off his seat to voice a dissonant protest against the 'adequacy' of his exchequer. But thankfully however, we were spared the disgraceful revelation of our penury by the wealth of reminiscences that continued to flow from Dyson.

"Interestingly, my review article on **Doctor Zhivago**, which was published in the college magazine, helped me in securing a berth at Oxford. Further, to my great surprise... I was joined there in my research by Boris Pasternak's niece, Anne Pasternak Slater, during the 1970s. She too commended me highly for this article..."

Citing a number of anecdotal incidents from her college-life, Dyson repeatedly asserted: "We, the girls of the Department of English, were exceptionally mischievous...Coffee House, as you could well guess, was our favourite food- joint...With just a cup of coffee steaming our primordial session of 'adda', we would delve into the fathoms of the three P's of Presidency-Prem, Poetry and Politics."

Asked whether such 'intellectual banquetings' ever demanded a compromise on her academic routine, she categorically pronounced, much to our disappointment..."I never even bunked my pass classes."

Testifying brilliance and sincerity, the name of Ketaki Kushari Dyson stands almost unrivalled today, among those rare practitioners of poetry, who simultaneously write in two different languages. For the versatile Ketaki, "poetry in any language should be endowed with the essence of your mother tongue." She feels – "language is but the vehicle thought", and "whenever a feeling is born in the mind,

it should be liberated from the mental womb in all the freedom afforded by a language." Though herself a student of English Literature, Dyson contended: "English, ever a foreign language, has now been much more colonized... Today's craze for speaking in English is simply the consequence of a gross inferiority complex."

Quite evidently, while initiating her literary career, Dyson had adopted Bengali (her mother-tongue) as the medium for conveying her ideas and opinions. Her choice, as she herself stated, was ratified by a sense of satisfaction at being able to inject the pulsations of reality into whatever she wrote. For her, "Each language is like a pair of glasses... the perspective I look from and the clarity of what I look at, depends on the kind of lenses I choose..."

According to Ketaki, the cultural heritage of a country remains rooted in the history of its civilization. Language- which essentially demarcates territory - hence, "preserves the values of a particular community." Such ethical nuances are embedded in a linguistic mode like "dust particles on a sheet of cellophane." It is almost impossible, she argued, to delve deep into the roots of an alien culture and impart animation into the spectres and phantoms, conceived of by the native mind. Yet "people are under the illusion that they can paint a faithful picture of their own society with the strokes of a foreign language!" Why should we deck our thoughts in borrowed attires, when something as effulgent is afforded us by our mother-tongue?

Vehemently critical in her attitude towards some of the Indian writers in English, Dyson opines:

"Indianisation of English is an absolutely ambivalent project which must be undertaken with great care."

Though admitting the fact that in the modern age of globalisation, Indians would naturally want to employ English as a means for catering to the global market, she sadly added - "the media-academia nexus in extracting the greatest profit through an often ruthless militation of social reality, is not only detrimental to the health of the country, but also to that of literature." In most cases, their efforts at colonializing native characters end up with the introduction of acerbic caricatures. "Such writers are basically playing a disastrous role in misconstruing the image of Indian abroad," she summed up. Having initially resolved to write only in Bengali, Dyson now reminisces:

"After motherhood, I discarded my isolated identity abroad and developed a sense of attachment and some kind of an identification with the British women around me. It was then, that I started writing in English, my first poem being, 'Still Falls the Rain.'"

The conversation had gone on for over an hour now, and we reluctantly took leave. There was still so much to talk about! Another time, Ketaki Di promised. As we parted we took home the message -

*'Aspire to goals bright and grand...  
Revere the soil on which you stand!'*

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## Gayatri Chakravarty Spivak

(Editor 1959-60)

### EDITORIAL

### Student Indiscipline

As we write, the Intermediate Examination in Arts and Science of the University of Calcutta continues, the University apparently undisturbed. Students have stampeded out of the examination Hall, compelling others to follow; desks have been broken, ink has been split, invigilators and high officials of the University have been manhandled and ejected. Nothing beyond normal expectations, of course. And therefore the Syndicate decides to let the examination continue.

Over the last five or six years, examination disturbances have become a regular feature of

Calcutta life. Amusingly enough, even M.A. examinees complain of "stiff" questions. About the only genuine protest against this state of affairs made so far is the one by Professor Bhabatosh Dutta and Professor Tapas Majumder of this college, who have severed their connexion with the University's Post-Graduate Department of Economics. One wonders whether the significance of this gesture has been appreciated by the University or the students.

"Student indiscipline" has earned for itself a place among the more "fashionable" topics of discussion. Pseudo-intellectuals murmur vaguely

about "revolution", about "blowing up the facade of the intrinsically rotten social superstructure" to get at the root of the problem. Diehards bluster about our ancient ideals of education. Both suggestions undoubtedly have their attractions. The former, however, is a trifle impracticable. The latter may be dismissed as at best a Utopian precedent, inapplicable in a modern industrial setup.

The factors that have emerged, out of more serious considerations of the problem, as the reasons for the present situation, are economic, social and political.

Today's economic imbalance is too pronounced to be ignored. Education has been inevitably commercialised into a "vocational" process. It is a means to an end. It is not knowledge or the acquisition of it that matters, but the all-important degree, a passport to a job. "Education" being an exchangeable commodity, all obstacles to it ("out-of-syllabus", i.e. out-of-the-beaten-track, questions, for instance) must be therefore summarily removed. The best answer to examination questions is force.

This attitude is fostered by the academic despotism to be encountered in most of our colleges. We are held down to a groove by the examination, the "course", "probable questions". The business of education has been accordingly reduced to the passing on of a basic minimum of stereotyped information. The questioning spirit, the creative urge, is unknown in the average student.

With industrialisation, urbanisation, democracy and growth of mass-education, the impersonal collective has come to lie emphasised. The objective of education is to fit the student to a basically vocational bias.

The social factor runs parallel to the economic one. To fit the students into a technocratic background, fundamental studies are becoming insignificant. The social reflection of the present economic position is gradually reducing professors to commercial entities. In the place of the pursuit of education, the modern youth concerns himself with "the pursuit of self-sufficiency in a modern educational set-up".

The position of the college professor in West Bengal is not at all enviable from the socio-economic point of view. It is extremely unfortunate that many of them feel and show signs of frustration. It cannot be denied that lack of social assurance robs a professor of much of his dignity. The students' contempt for him is perfectly condemnable but not entirely unnatural.

The political situation lends itself to condemnation just as easily. Ever since the days of the Freedom Movement, the students of Bengal have been extremely interested and even involved in politics. Pre-Independence political feelings amongst students had a certain urgency and unity of approach. After the Independence the political passion has lost coherence. The student community has split into groups lacking the former centripetal character. A tendency towards

"slogan thinking" has developed. It is very rarely that a student understands, or is even aware of, the precise and entire meaning of the particular -ism to which he subscribes. The result is not only a neglect of studies *qua* studies, but also a development of insincerity, irresponsibility and entirely unjustified pretensions.

An additional source of trouble is the relation between the Government and the University. The Government supply the funds, and exercise the ultimate control over universities. The clash between political power and academic freedom has not been very happy.

All this is undoubtedly the truth, but not the whole truth. For instance, speaking of economic imbalance, we must remember that even though economic causes necessarily bring about intellectual impoverishment, it does not follow that the removal of the first would correlatively remove the second. A telling example is that of the United States where economic affluence has only led to a general lowering of intellectual standards.

Neither is it very relevant to consider the social position of the teacher in analysing the attitude of the student. If education, in the ordinary sense, "may be defined as *the formation, by means of instruction, of certain mental habits and a certain outlook on life and the world*"<sup>1</sup> social sentiments are not of signal importance in the determination of its quality. It is a matter of communicating "instruction" (not information): the academic structure is necessarily intellectual. It is the intellectual position of the teacher that should determine, the attitude of the student. Thanks to the examination despotism and the information-mongering, it is this intellectual position that has suffered most.

Not that the intellectual position of the student is very secure. The so-called student intellectualism thrives on a few carefully built-up cults of the personality. Mysterious are the ways of the wise: it is impossible to know by exactly what process these select few come to exert such tremendous influence. Scholastic achievements or personal excellence are by no means necessary conditions. However, the cults flourish and undigested erudition is their greatest legacy. It is obvious how very conducive this is to the development of student indiscipline.

We feel that this "unrest" is not by itself a bad thing. What is really deplorable is that its form of expression should be such. A group of young people breaking out against the established order have not always been proved wrong. The point, however, is that to-day's young people are not breaking out against the established order. Organised student movements have concerned themselves with political disturbances in Hungary and Lebanon but never with our own educational problems at home. If the student feels that the present system of examination, the quality of the teaching personnel and the method of questioning are worth breaking out against, he has the right to do so in



an organised protest. Why is he unconscious of this right? Why are undignified and ludicrous walkouts and rowdyisms the only form of protest he can think of when organised movements are launched, in plenty in support of or against more or less remote political problems? The cult of the personality, of course provides the explanation, and, in this case, the "personalities" are peculiar. The Students' Unions of most Colleges and educational institutions are controlled by "professional students" (and amateur politicians). Basically unimaginative, their sole objective is to win college elections. Years of practice give them a certain technical skill at this, and they do win. Perhaps, it was under such leadership that boys in their early teens and even younger children marched along

the corridors of the University – shouting anti-American slogans – at the time of the Lebanon disturbances. We do not mean to question their sincerity or even their integrity. It is, we repeat, the quality of imagination that they lack.

We offer no trite suggestion for a remedy. It is obvious that an imaginative and concerted approach on the part of the students is at least necessary. The expression of, or the protest against, student unrest should not be as it is now – sound and fury culminating in futile private or sectional rages.

**Note :**

1. Bertrand Russell: *The Place of Science in a Liberal Education (Mysticism and Logic)*.

## Editing the Presidency College Magazine...

**GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK**

...~~was~~ the second responsibility that I had ever undertaken. The first one was the secretary-ship of the British Council debating circle, which I was given in 1957. I was precocious in my studies. I was born in 1942, so you can figure out how young I was when I took up these things. I was fairly sharp, so I could hang in with the work for the exams, but I was in fact a teenager in other respects, with very little experience of the world. I think the editorship suffered from this.

I never did grow out of this general intellectual insecurity which I couldn't show because I was running in a bigger league. In my time, there was a good deal of sexism around in the academy, which did not conflict, as it does not now, with women being "good students." In later decades, as I went further and further into areas where I could not be patronized as "a good Indian," this insecurity would have destroyed me but for the intellectual support of, first, my learned mother, Sivani Chakravorty, who earned an M.A. in Bengali literature from Calcutta University at the age of 24, in 1937, when sexism was, of course, completely out of control. She could not have gone ahead without my father's encouragement. (Again, the general sexism in the culture did not interfere with the existence of respected female freedom fighters. This is called "exceptionalism.")

Later I was supported by my growing samizdat reputation (I quote a student) among students. I suffer from intellectual insecurity still, but I like to think that it has protected me from taking seriously the uncomfortable phenomenon of a degree of cultic reputation.

College did good things for me too. A certain degree of independence, a lifelong friendship with Shamik Bandyopadhyaya, and the extraordinary teaching of Tarak Nath Sen. Amalababu was also fantastic, but in retrospect, I think he was too far ahead of me in a way that I sometimes am in class now. Tarakbabu's genius was that he came down to us without compromise and taught us how to read. It is because of that pugnacious literalism that I could clue into De Man and discover Derrida on my own. As I have repeated many times, when I ordered *De la grammatologie* from a catalogue in 1967, I had no idea who Derrida was at all.

When I came abroad, I found that I was a good exam-taker, but not very free in my thinking. This was not really the fault of Presidency College, but, with hindsight, that combination of being terribly young and precocious at the same time. My father had died when I was 13, and my mother acknowledged my intelligence right from the start. This blessing, I think I can say without any disloyalty to that outstanding woman, came to me perhaps too soon. I think the greatest joy of my



time as a graduate student at Cornell was stumbling along, trying to be free. I grew into my mother's expectations at Cornell.

I was tremendously burdened by US exoticism, from which Paul De Man alone was miraculously free. I have had great good fortune in my teachers. Charubala Das, the superb principal of Diocesan school, who becomes my role model more and more every day, Nilima Pine, who laid the foundations of Sanskrit in me so well that I could hold a conversation with Bimal Krishna Matilal in the eighties, Sukumaridi at Lady Brabourne, and then the ones that I have already mentioned. On this list I put my father, Dr. Pares Chandra Chakravorty, who taught me the principles of democratic behavior, already in my preteen years. And Swami Pavitrana, my friend and mentor, to whom I confessed my loss of faith in

1963 – only to be told "tomar adhyayan-i toposhya" – the material significance of which phrase I discovered after Bimal's death, pursuing our work together, when I read that story of Brihaspati's sweat in the Satapatha Brahmana: the root sense of tapa in tapasya is body heat! To Pavitrana, I confessed my fear in 1964, when I received my Assistant Professorship at the University of Iowa, already slated to teach a graduate course in French and German poetry, and he told me that I should think, as a paid teacher, that I was my "chhatrer bhrityo." That lesson comes to me every day of these last forty years. To recite Yeats, "Tell them my glory was I had such teachers."

Good fortune in students, too. But that's another story.

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## Rudrangshu Mukherjee

(Editor 1973-74)

সম্পাদকীয়

### না পড়লেও চলবে

"Words whose utter inanity proved his insanity"

Lewis Carrol; *The Hunting of the Snark*.

প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজের একটা পত্রিকা আছে; সেটাকে নিয়মিত প্রকাশ করার একটা দৃষ্টি চলেছে। গত বছরের সংখ্যা হয়ত আপনাদের অনেকেরই চোখে পড়ে থাকবে। শুভাখীদের সব আশা ধুলিসাৎ করে এই যে আবার একটা সংখ্যা আপনাদের কাছে পৌঁছে দেওয়া গেল সেটা ঐ দৃষ্টিরই পরিণাম। আশ্বাস দিচ্ছি, কাগজের মান এখনো বেশ ভালো—উনোন আগের মতই ধরানো যাবে।

প্রেসিডেন্সি কলেজ পত্রিকার উন্নাসিকতা নিয়ে বাজারে অনেক দিনের দুর্নাম আছে। আমরা দেখে খুশি হয়েছি যে আমাদের এক বন্ধু কলেজের পত্রিকা ও আমাদের এই উন্নাসিকতার প্রতি নজর দিয়েছেন। আমরা আশা করছি যে গত বছরের মত, এই বারের পত্রিকাও উন্নাসিকতার দুর্নাম বজায় রাখতে পারবে। কলেজের কিছু ছাত্রছাত্রীও এই উন্নাসিকতার প্রতি গতবার নাক সিটকিয়েছিলেন। তাঁরা অবশ্য একটা ছোট কথা ভুলে গিয়েছিলেন : কলেজের ছাত্রছাত্রীরা যেভাবে কলেজ পত্রিকা গড়ে তুলতে চান, কলেজ পত্রিকা ঠিক সেই ভাবেই গড়ে ওঠে। মনে রাখবেন সম্পাদক লেখা নির্বাচন করেন মাত্র,

লেখার ভার কিন্তু আপনাদের ওপর। অতএব যখন দেখা যায় যে এই রসরঙ্গপিপাসু ছাত্রবৃন্দ রসসৃষ্টি করতে নারাজ তখন যে কটি গুরুগম্ভীর প্রবন্ধ ছাত্র ও প্রাক্তন ছাত্রদের কাছ থেকে পাওয়া যায় তাই দিয়েই পত্রিকার পাতা ভরাতে হয়। ভালো গল্প ও হাস্য প্রবন্ধ ছাপাবার জন্য আমরা উদগ্রীব, আপনারা লিখুন তাহলেই আমরা ছাপাবো।

যাঁরা নাক সিটকিয়েছিলেন তাঁরা এক দিক থেকে ভালো। কারণ তাঁরা পত্রিকা সম্বন্ধে সচেতন। আরো এক দলকে কলেজে দেখা যাচ্ছে যাঁরা পত্রিকা বেরুলো কি না বেরুলো, ভালো হল কি খারাপ হল তা সম্পর্কে একেবারেই উদাসীন। দুঃখে অনুদ্বিগ্ন ও সুখে বিগতসম্পূর্ণ এই পাশবালিশের দল ভগবদগীতার আদর্শ মানুষ হতে পারেন, আজকের দিনে বিপদ ঘটান। এঁদের যত তাড়াতাড়ি কলেজ থেকে অগস্ত্য যাত্রা হয় ততই মঙ্গল।

পত্রিকাটি একবার উল্টে দেখবেন—এই অনুরোধ সকলকে করবো। এই শত কাজটা যদি একবার করে ফেলেন, তাহলেই বুঝতে পারবেন যে অর্থনীতি, বাংলা, দর্শন ও বিজ্ঞানের ছাত্ররা আগের থেকে অনেক বেশী পড়াশুনা করছেন, আজকাল তারা বেশী করে কম লিখছেন। স্নাতকোত্তর ছাত্রছাত্রীদের কাছ থেকে এবারও লেখা কম এসেছে। ধন্যবাদ।

# Can One be Taught Writing?

RUDRANGSHU MUKHERJEE

"In the middle of the journey of my life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost": thus realises Dante in the first canto of *Inferno*. I begin with this because around the age of forty, I felt confused and decided to move away from the familiar road I had been travelling on. Since the age of seventeen, when I entered the portals of Presidency College and had been introduced to studying history by Ashin Das Gupta, I had wanted to do little else save teach and write history. I trained as a historian and began to teach history in the University of Calcutta, and as love's labour also in Presidency College at the invitation of Professor Rajat Kanta Ray. After twelve years at the chalk face, I was a bit lost and decided to change my vocation and I became a journalist with The Telegraph. Now I find myself in the thoroughly amusing situation where my historian friends consider me a journalist and my journalist colleagues consider me a historian.

Perhaps because I was once a teacher and now I am a wordsmith, I am often asked the question, "Can good writing be taught?" The question itself can be followed very logically by another question, "What is good writing?" There is no agreement on this principally because answers to the question are inevitably subjective and therefore vary from individual to individual. In fact, the answer may not even vary from one person and another, it can, indeed, vary within one individual. There are times when I think that George Orwell's or Graham Greene's unadorned and limpid prose is good writing, and at other times it seems to me that in terms of sheer evocative power nothing can surpass the richness of the language that is the hallmark of Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead Revisited*. I'm sure each one of my readers has personal favourites and models of good writing, which are at variance with my choice.

The question becomes even more complicated because good writing is related to thought since language and the thinking process are inextricably linked. One cannot think without language and one cannot write without thinking. May I hazard then one common feature of good writing? It is conditioned by clarity of thought and is therefore cogent and lucid. This fulfils the most important function of language i.e. communication. Good writing must be understood at least by the target audience.

This leads to another somewhat grey area. One can have a series of grammatically correct sentences expressing an idea or ideas and these sentences and their purport can also be clearly understood. Will that make for good writing? I'm certain the answer will be no. Good writing has an extra something to it. Good writing gives pleasure, it is an aesthetic experience and therefore it transcends correct grammar and even clarity. That famous last section of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* has very little of either grammar or clarity yet

it is very moving to read. Let me quote a few lines from the very end of the novel:

*...I was a Flower of the mountain yes when I put the rose in my hair like the Andalusian girls used or shall I wear a red yes and how he kissed me under the Moorish wall and I thought well as well him as another and then I asked him with my eyes to ask again yes and then he asked me would I yes to say yes my mountain flower and first I put my arms around him yes and drew him down to me so he could feel my breasts all perfume yes and his heart was going like mad and yes I said yes I will Yes.*

Is this good writing or not? Did anybody teach Joyce to write like that?

Writing by definition is about expressing oneself. We also express ourselves through speech and through gestures and even sometimes through looks. Writing is a special category of expression which some do better than others. And this brings us back by a different route to the question with which I started. Do some people express themselves better in writing because they were taught or is it a talent one is born with? For good or bad, I think I should clarify my position on this. If there is a genuine talent around, she will write well irrespective of what she is taught sometimes in spite of what she is taught. But I think even such gifted people occasionally need a little bit of guidance. To borrow from other creative fields: a Mozart had to be taught how to play the piano and a Picasso had to go through the drill of an art school. But lesser mortals like most of us need tutoring to learn the nuances of syntax, the structure of a good essay, the form of a story or a play, the complexities of rhyme in a poem and so on. Some one who can write can always be taught to write better.

When I came to Presidency College as a very precocious seventeen year old with a voracious appetite for reading, my teacher, Ashin Das Gupta, taught me to harness my intellectual energies. He taught me that it was not enough to read, it was as important to think, to comprehend, to assimilate. He lectured on eighteenth century India but taught some of us how to think for ourselves. He opened up our minds and made us think for ourselves without fear or prejudice. That was his greatest gift to me. Good writing, I feel, brings to readers the same gift. It provokes, energizes and enriches our minds. One learns to write and teach well not because one has been taught to do so but because one learns through example.

Having said all this, I want to end on a cautionary note. I believe that the biggest bogey of expression and creativity is an obsession with originality. A writer (and I suppose a teacher also) has inscribed on his ego the memorable words of an Irish poet, "Talk to me of originality and I will turn on you with rage. I am a crowd, I am a lonely man, I am nothing."

# INQUIZITIVE!

SAURAV JHA

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. What is the name of the STF Chief who killed the notorious smuggler Veerappan?                                      | 1. K. Vijay Kumar   |
| 2. In which country was Yasser Arafat born?  | 2. Egypt  |
| 3. Who came first in the Olympic trap shooting event in which Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore bagged the silver medal?      | 3. Ahmed Almatoum   |
| 4. Which African country did the tsunami affect?   | 4. Somalia  |
| 5. What did the 'rule of thumb' originally represent?  | 5. In nineteenth-century USA you could beat your wife with a switch no thicker than your thumb. This gave rise to the oft-used "rule of thumb". |
| 6. Which MNC did the American President Ronald Reagan work for?  | 6. General Electric   |
| 7. In the USA what is known as 'daddy juice'?  | 7. Coca Cola  |
| 8. What is the name of V.S Naipaul's latest novel?   | 8. Magic Seeds  |
| 9. Which Mughal general did Shivaji slay with the tiger claws?   | 9. Afzal Khan   |
| 10. What is the new name of Ballygunge Circular Road?  | 10. Pramathesh Baruah Sarani  |
| 11. What is the Sethusamundaram project?   | 11. It refers to the canal which links the Arabian Sea to the Bay of Bengal through the Palk Strait   |
| 12. What was common to Moshe Dayan and Rex Harrison?   | 12. Both have a patch over their left eye.  |
| 13. Which is the fifth most spoken language in the world?  | 13. Bengali   |
| 14. On which cartoon hero is the superhero Batman based?   | 14. Phantom   |
| 15. What is the name of the Russian traveller who went to the Bahmani kingdom?   | 15. Athanasius Nikitin  |
| 16. What is common to the 'voyager' and the 'spaceship one'?   | 16. Both were designed and built by Burt Rutan  |
| 17. Who called the uprising of 1857 the 'first war of independence'?   | 17. Veer Savarkar   |
| 18. When was the word 'socialist' incorporated into the preamble to our constitution?                                  | 18. 1976  |
| 19. Which recent novel has caused an uproar in the Vatican?  | 19. The Da Vinci Code   |
| 20. What is the name of the spaceship that NASA is planning to crash into a comet, and what is the name of that comet? | 20. Deep Impact, Comet Temple 1   |

ANSWERS

**SAMPLE SIZE :**

**Three hundred**

**PROJECT SUPERVISOR :**

**Prof. Asit Baran Aich**

**QUESTIONS FRAMED BY :**

**Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri**

**Shyamantak Ghosh**

**Devapriya Roy**

**SURVEY CONDUCTED BY :**

**Abhirup Dam**

**Debaditya Bhattacharya**

**DATA ANALYSIS :**

**Shreetama Datta**

**Adrija Bhattacharya**

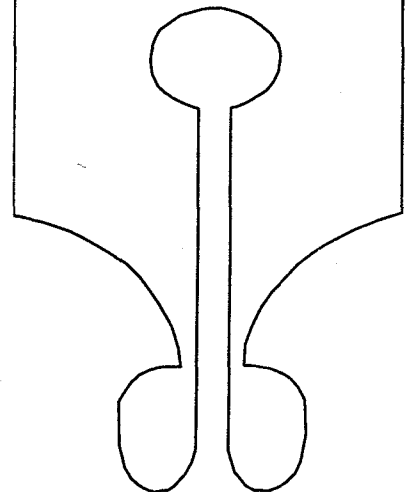
**Shreya Sengupta**

**Kasturi Bardhan**

**and Anashua Banerjee**

**(1st year students of the**

**Statistics Department)**



*What constitutes the Presidencian today?*

# What Constitutes the Presidencian Today?

To find out what the Presidencians are thinking today, a survey was conducted covering a sample of 300 undergraduates of the college. We asked many questions and obtained a wide array of answers, from which our statisticians have been able to bring out some definite trends.

## 1. What do our Presidencians do with their free time?

They **READ**. In spite of the constant bombardment to the mind by consumerist trivia and by the endless distractions of the "time-pass variety" its a great relief to find that people still read, and with a vengeance. What do they read? We come to that shortly.

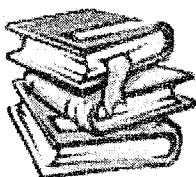
**Surprise! Surprise!** Next on the list is **ADDA**. (Aren't you indeed surprised that this is Number 2 and not Number 1!)

Now for the bad news.

**DRAMA, DEBATES, QUIZZES and ELOCUTIONS** are really low down on the list of preferences, as (Thank Heavens!) is **TELEVISION!**

"Reading maketh a full man; conference (read: adda) a ready man; and writing an exact man."

Francis Bacon



*Had our magazine received more write-ups we might have, with greater confidence asserted that Presidency is still churning out "complete" men and women. Well at least Presidencians are on the right path, full and ready...*

## 2. Having said all this we must confess that the most favoured subject of Adda is "PERSONAL AFFAIRS". (I'm sure Mr. Bacon wouldn't have thought too highly of this! But who cares?)

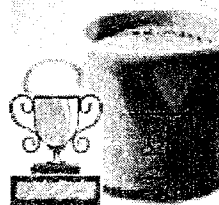
Presidency Watchers, especially our friends

in the Media would be disappointed to know that **POLITICS** is the least favoured subject of discussion among the undergraduates, ranking even below "Intellectual " adda.

Overheard:

“কাহারও নিন্দা শুনিলেই মনে হয় তাহার প্রকৃত পরিচয় পাইলাম।”

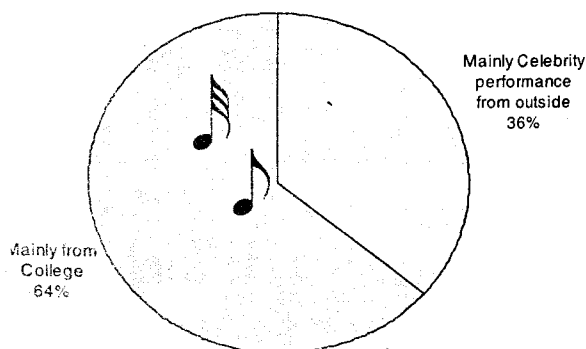
## 3.



**COFFEE HOUSE** emerges as the most favourite haunt outside campus, followed closely by **PUNTIRAM**.

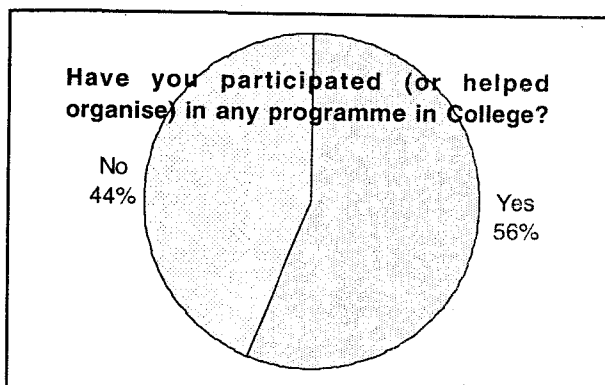
## 4. It is refreshing to learn that in spite of the big names in fests, and the relentless call of raucous sponsors, most students would prefer performers at college events to be mainly insiders.

In your opinion performers at college performances should be a) mainly from college b) mainly from outside



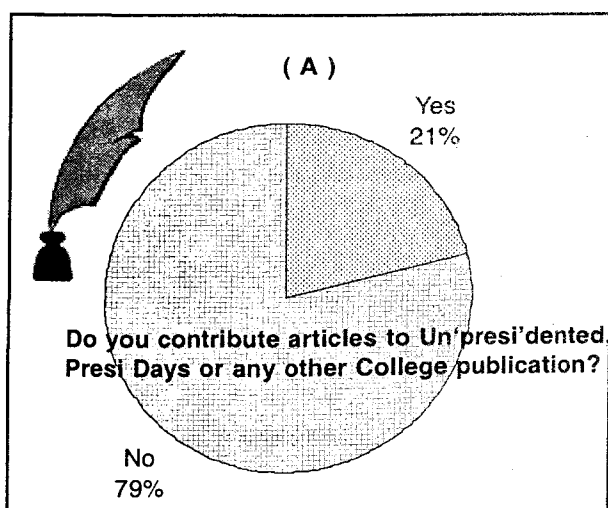
5. When we enquired we found a significant number of participants in college programmes.

Closer questioning reveals that the participation is mainly in the **ORGANISATION** of events.

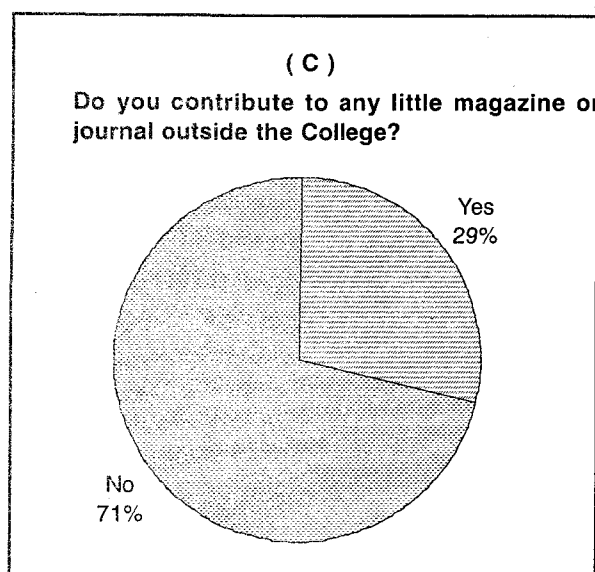
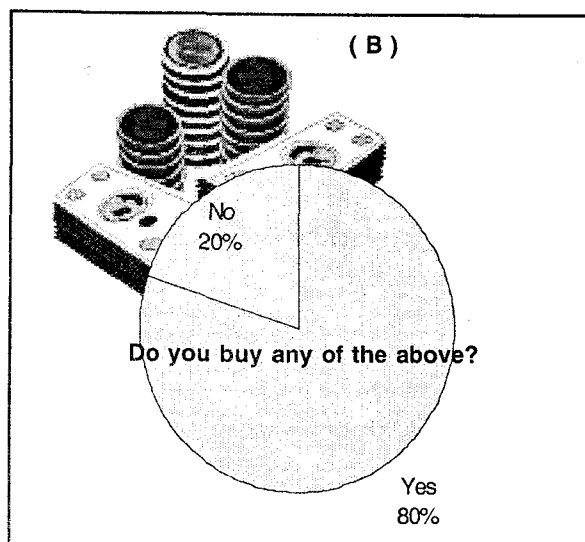


Those who hadn't ever participated were asked why. Most said that it was because there was a **CLASH WITH CLASSES**, while others simply **DIDN'T FEEL THE NEED** to participate!

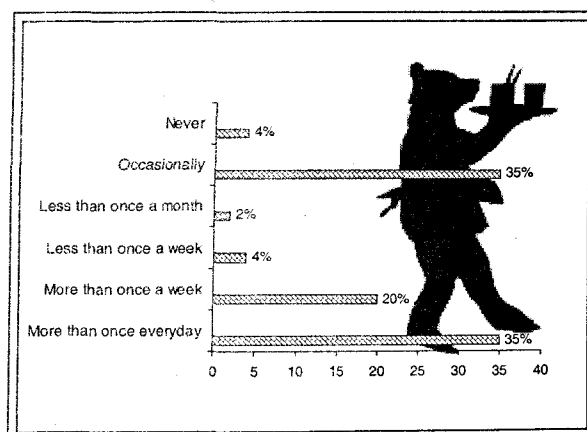
6. One can well understand why the editors of Unpresidential, Presi Days or the College Magazine go about with such hassled faces. Most students **DO NOT** contribute articles to these publications. But then again, in these arid days when only sensation sells, almost 60 writers in 300 is quite heartening!



Then, note that a large number of people shell out hard cash to patronise such enterprises.

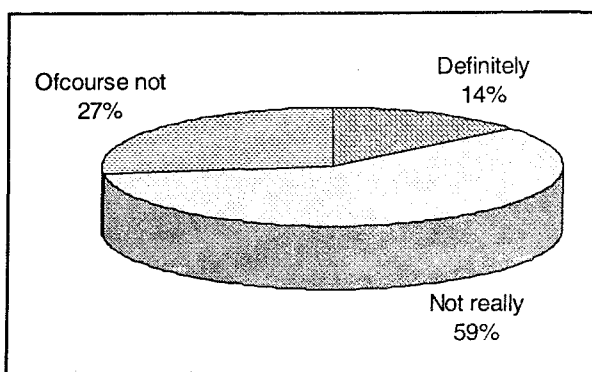


7A. How frequently does an average Presidencian visit the canteen?



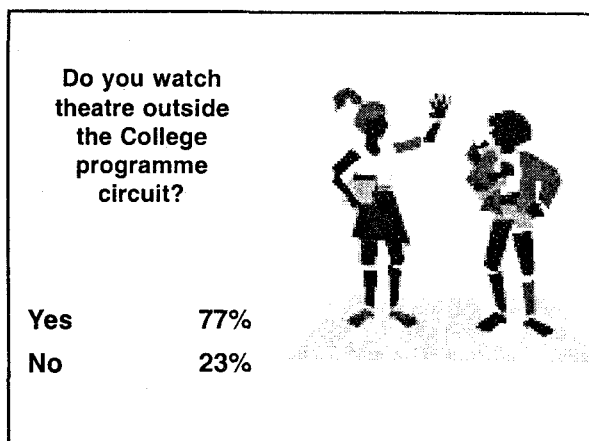
What the survey does not take into account is the number of times the canteen-livers visit the class-rooms!

7B. Do canteen-goers and non canteen-goers belong two different worlds?



More than half the respondents deny that canteen-goers and non canteen-goers belong to two different worlds. What is suggestive is that the number of occasional visitors is practically the same as the number of semi-permanent residents!

8. Though drama fares rather poorly as a favourite past time, there is no dearth of avid theatre-goers among Presidencians.



9A. We asked our correspondents to tick the films they'd seen out of a list we provided.

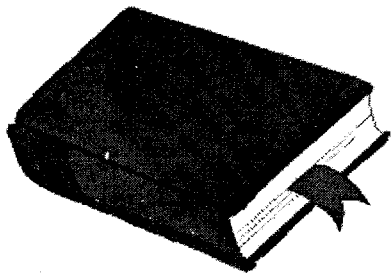
It appears that Superheroes still captivate us, patriotism + heartthrob sells as well as ever, and thankfully sensitivity is still appreciated, though one might have expected a better turn-out for Ritwik Ghatak or Chaplin. It is of interest that the likes of Swapan Saha are finally finding an audience (however miniscule) in Presidency!

SPIDERMAN	82%
LAKSHYA	72%
MASOOM	70%
MEGHE DHAKA TARA	56%
MODERN TIMES	31%
SWAMI KENO ASHAAMI	02%



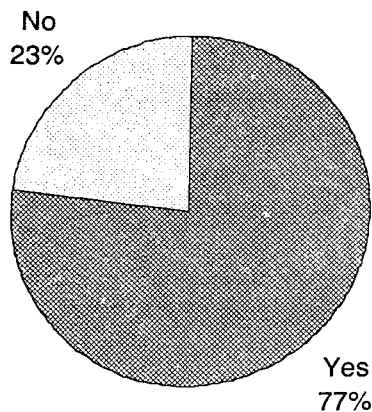
9B.

*Hope you remember we had promised you  
The secret life of the reading few –  
Holmes in his deerstalker leads the chase  
With Tintin following the "Elementary" maze.  
Lo and Behold, who could have believed  
On Harry Potter, Shesher Kobita clinched a  
lead!  
Like The Poet, Premchand, too, still endures  
Sexists still resist Tasleema's lures  
The greatness of Tolstoy remains largely  
untapped  
While not too many follow the path Shiv Khera  
mapped  
Though names dropping is very much the order  
of the day  
Yet most jargonisers keep Orientalism at bay!*



<b>SHERLOCK HOLMES</b>	<b>81%</b>
<b>TINTIN</b>	<b>79%</b>
<b>SHESTER KOBITA</b>	<b>49.5%</b>
<b>HARRY POTTER</b>	<b>48.5%</b>
<b>STORIES OF PREMCHAND</b>	<b>43.5%</b>
<b>AMAR MEYBELA</b>	<b>26.7%</b>
<b>ANNA KARENINA / WAR AND PEACE</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
<b>YOU CAN WIN (SHIV KHERA)</b>	<b>18.3%</b>
<b>ORIENTALISM</b>	<b>2%</b>

**10. Do you read poetry outside the school/college curriculum?**



**"In the effort to keep day and night together.  
It seems just possible that a poem might  
happen  
To a very young man: But a poem is not  
poetry-  
That is a life."**

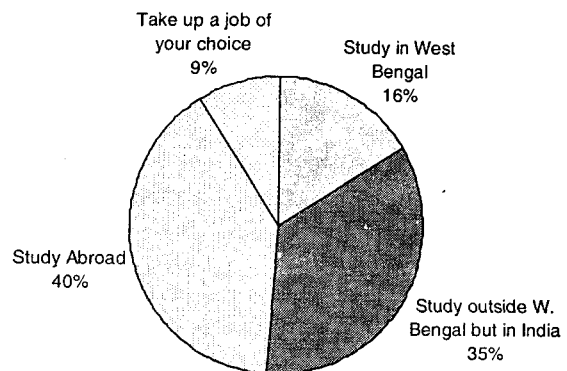
**— Eliot**

**11. It is a cause for grave concern that after graduation most students would go abroad at the first opportunity.**

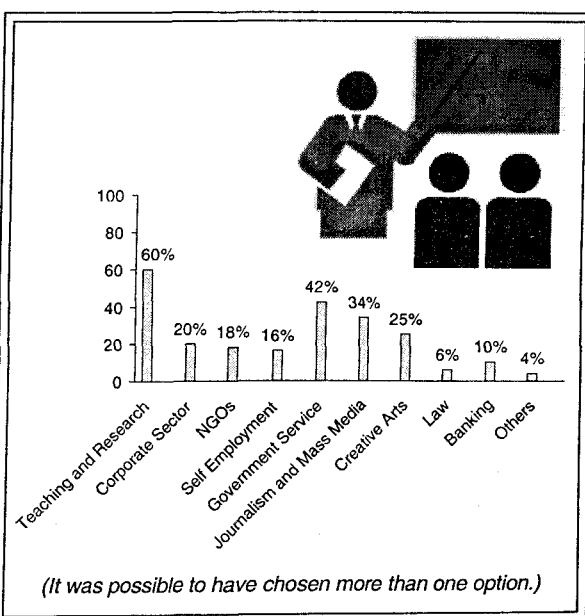


**Mandarins of the system in West Bengal may also take note that very few wish to stay on in the state.**

**If given an opportunity to pursue what you wish to, after graduation, you would:**

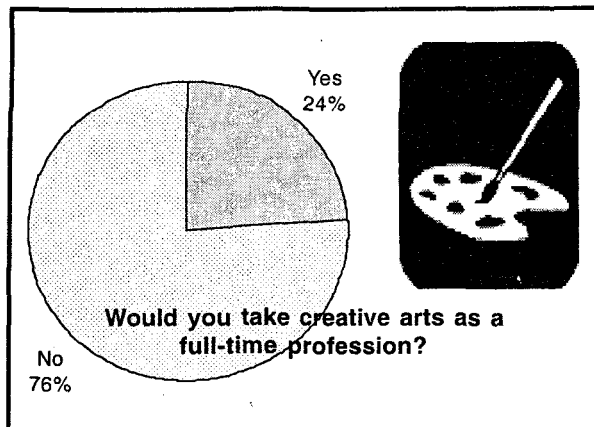


**12A. We asked the students about the kind of profession they would like to pursue. The myth of mercenariness was challenged by our findings:**

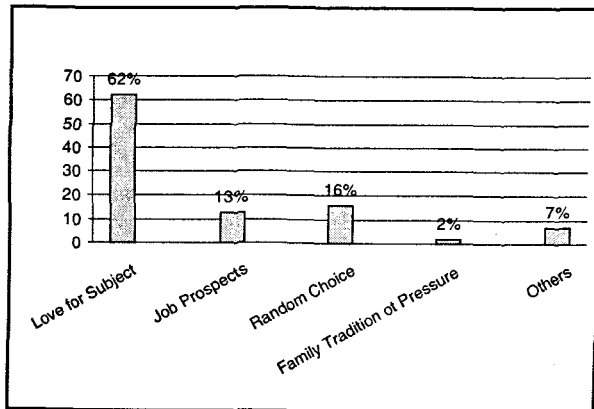




12B. Of course risk taking does not extend to taking creative arts as a full time profession for many, but even 24% is enough to show that there are a healthy number of dreamers.

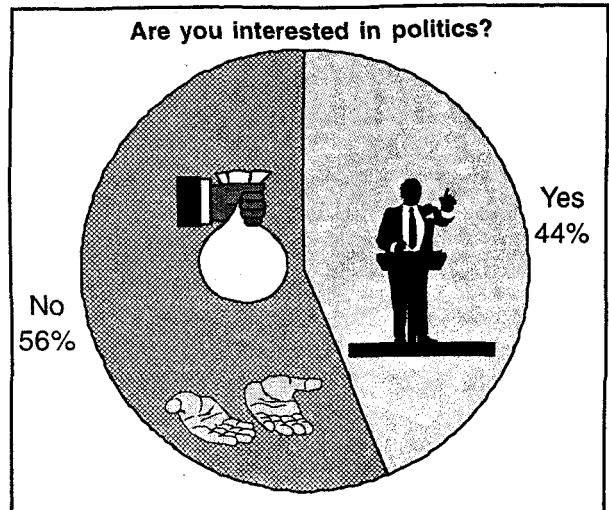


13. Why have you chosen the subject you are studying?



14. One might suppose that the usual media projection of the Presidential as an articulate political animal is supported by the fact that almost half the respondents are interested in politics. But a closer look reveals that most of them view an awareness of politics as a cosmetic for the personality.

Among the non-believers there exists a healthy dose of cynicism.



**Those who are interested in politics are because :**

- Political information is a necessary part of general knowledge today. 12%
- Political awareness is the mark of an all-round personality. 42%
- One cannot be but interested in the political fortunes of the country and the world. 13%
- Social commitment demands not only awareness but also active participation in politics. 29%

**Those who are not interested in politics are so because :**

- I don't think politics affects anyone's day to day life. 2%
- Politics interferes with studies and a safe, secure career. 4%
- All political parties are bogus. 20%
- I am waiting for the political party of my choice. 11%
- Whichever party comes to power, life remains the same. 38%
- Politics bores me. 25%

## ढोंगी नेता और असहाय जनता

क्यों करें इनका विश्वास?

जो कहते तो कुछ हैं और करते कुछ,  
जिनकी कथनी-करनी में जमीन आसमान का फर्क है।  
जो स्वयं तो असत्य के मार्ग पर चलते हैं,  
पर हमें सत्य का पाठ पढ़ाते हैं।

क्यों करे इनका विश्वास?

आज देश की जनता भूखी है, नंगी है, बेघर है,  
पर नेता सत्ता के लोभ में पड़े हैं।  
नहीं जाता ध्यान किसी का इस भूखी, नंगी जनता पर,  
नहीं जाता ध्यान किसी का इस बेघर जनता पर।

क्यों करे इनका विश्वास?

किसान जो दिन-रात मेहनत कर हमारा पेट भरते हैं,  
आज वह स्वयं दो वक्त की रोटी के लिए पथराई  
आँखों से देखते हैं।

मजदूर जो भवन निर्माण करते हैं,  
स्वयं वह किधर है आज!

क्यों करे इनका विश्वास?

आज देश में भ्रष्टाचार मंहगाई अपनी चरम सीमा पार कर गयी है,  
पर सत्ता लोलुप लोगों का ध्यान इस तरफ नहीं जाता।  
क्या स्वतंत्र भारत का स्वप्न यही था,  
क्या आजाद भारत का स्वरूप यही है।

क्यों करे इनका विश्वास?

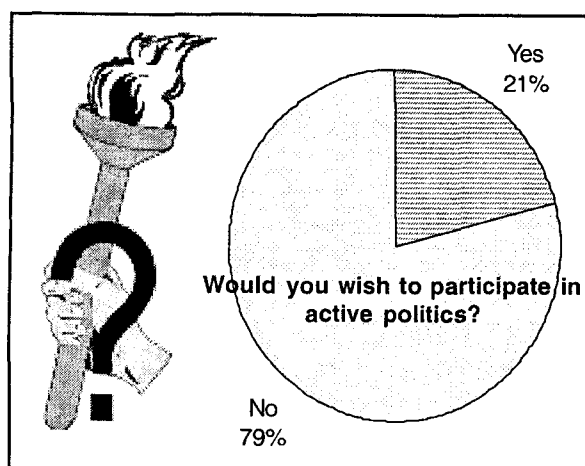
नेता जो वोटों के लिए बड़े-बड़े वायदे किया करते हैं  
जो वायदे करते हैं कि हम गरीबी खत्म कर देंगे,  
पर भोली जनता को क्या पता कि  
ये गरीबी के बजाय गरीबों को ही खत्म कर रहे हैं।

क्यों करे इनका विश्वास?

स्वतंत्र भारत किस ओर जा रहा है, उत्थान या पतन की ओर,  
क्या इसी आजादी के लिए भगत सूली पर चढ़ा,  
क्या इसी आजादी का स्वप्न बापू ने देखा था,  
इसी आजादी के लिए?

शुचि उपाध्याय  
(स्नातकोत्तर, प्रथम वर्ष)

15A. Most of those who are interested in politics though would not like to participate in active politics.



15B. Those who wished to remain active in politics, would prefer to remain outside the purview of main-stream political parties.

- 16% would be joining a main-stream political party
- 58% would remain active outside mainstream politics (say, as activists)
- 26% would remain as critics (say, as political analysts)

"Turning and turning in the widening gyre  
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;  
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold

\*\*\*

The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,  
and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity."

—W. B. Yeats

16. As we had expected most Presidencians continue to believe that Presidency is indeed a crash course on growing up as a complete human being. There were, as expected, a certain number of cynics too! But that's fine.

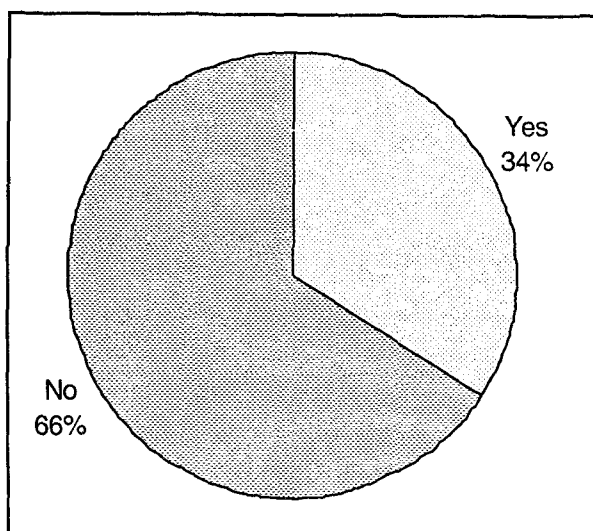
“তারপার কালাজ প্রাণ, প্রথম যৌবন;  
শেষ্ঠ দিবগুলি এক এক গেল,  
ইতিমধ্যে ইতস্তত, আবার মাতা  
মদনরাজ্য থেকে বার কায়ক বিতাড়িত।”

— সময় সেন

- Presidency is the best place to bring up a person culturally, emotionally, academically and in many other ways. 68%
- I came for academic reasons which are more or less fulfilled. 17%
- The experience here was okay, but nothing to write home about. 8%
- The "Presidency culture" is grossly over-rated. 6%
- I would rather not have come to Presidency. 1%

17. Language, it is often said, is a territory that is not too easily transgressed. And yet, here we are - a largely tri-lingual generation of students. Does language play a role in constructing "the other"? We asked our correspondents if they thought that a communication gap existed between the students from an English medium and those from a Bengali medium back-ground.

While most answered in the negative, a sizeable chunk agreed with this assertion.



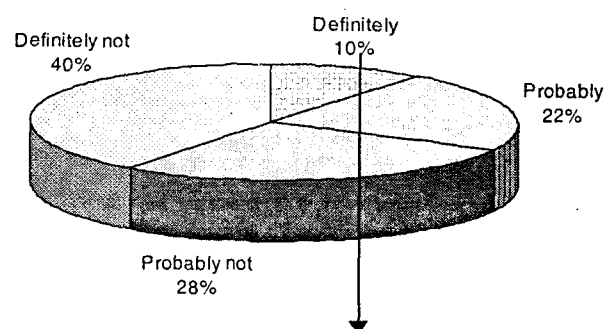
18. The sense of history pervading the college still has an overwhelming number of takers, but quite a few claim they haven't noticed anything particular. Still others couldn't care less!

Your feeling about the sense of history, and the myths and legends lingering about the college is:

- I love it. It gives the place a character and makes me belong. 81%
- I feel quite over-burdened by it. 2%
- People keep talking about it. But I can't say I noticed anything particular myself. 9%
- I don't care about it. It makes no difference to me today if there is a story about Netaji and the Main Stair-case. 5%
- I hate this hankering for the past 3%

19. Even in these 'liberated days' Presidency remains by and large conservative. Or at least pretends to be so. Look at the results:

A. Would you consummate your relationship before marriage?



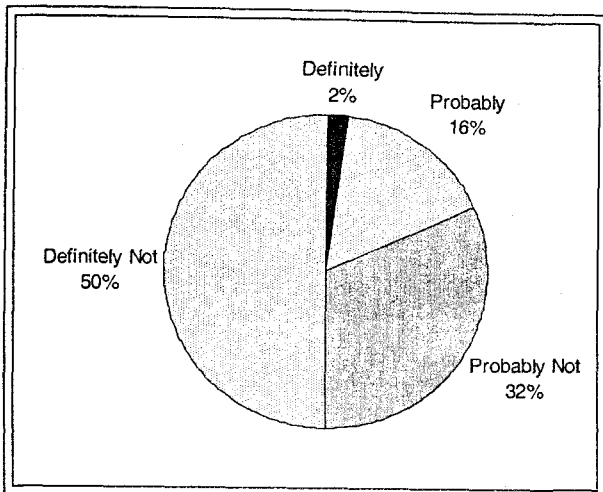
"If we had world enough and time  
This coyness, lady, were no crime...."

❖

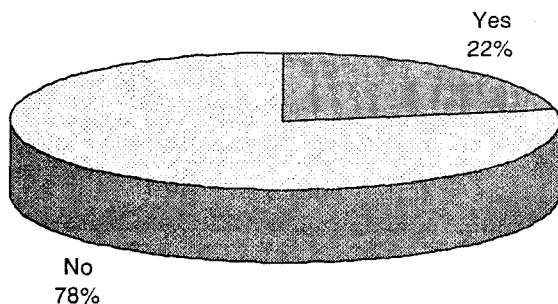
But at my back I always hear  
Time's winged chariot hurrying near."

— Andrew Marvell

**B. Would you live in with your partner before marriage?**



**20. Would you ever agree to casual sex?**

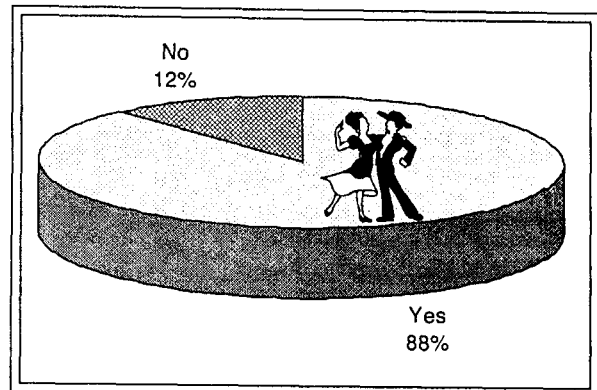


While an overwhelmingly large number of people believe in the institution of marriage (look at the next question), there are a few among these believers who would not also hesitate to indulge in casual sex!

As a saving grace one invokes Dowson:

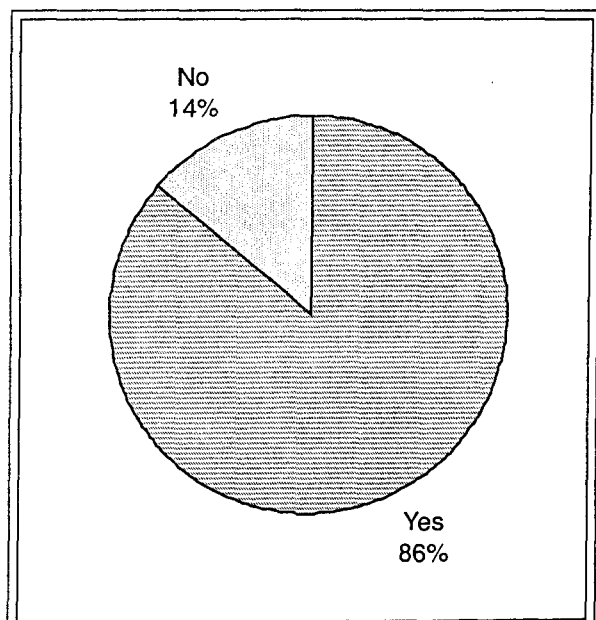
"Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine  
 There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed  
 Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;  
 And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,  
     Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head:  
 I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion."

**21. Do you believe in the institution of marriage?**

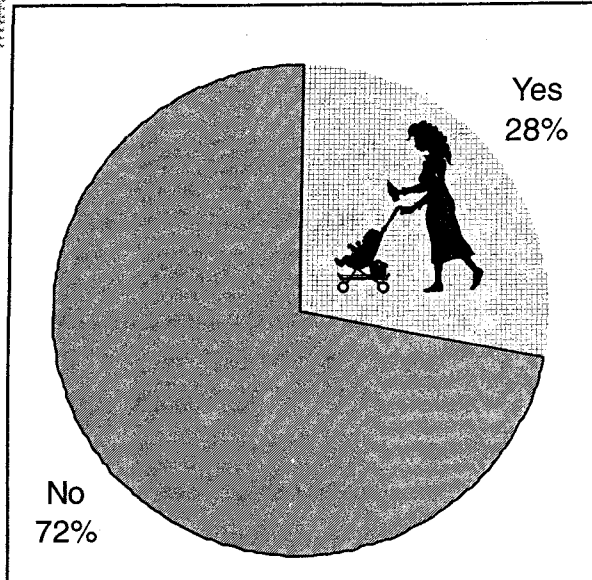


**22. Although 86% of our correspondents believe that the husband of a working woman must clean nappies, which is a very politically correct thing to say, observe that only 72% really mean it. (Look at the answer to B!)**

**A. The husband of a working woman must participate equally in cooking, washing, washing-up and cleaning nappies. Do you agree?**



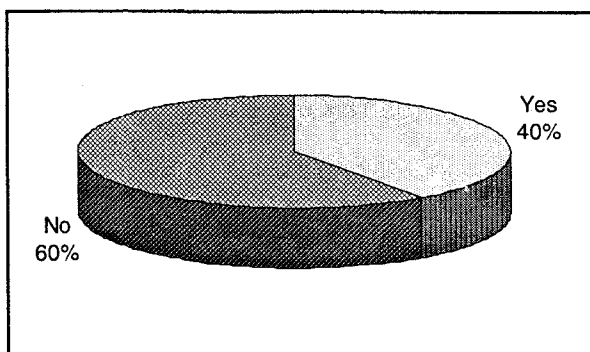
- B. When both husband and wife work, the wife will have to shoulder most of the domestic responsibilities. Do you agree?**



23. While 60% of the women would not like to give up their jobs for household priorities, 57% of the men believe that this might have to be done. Then, it is not surprising that only 30% of the men believe that they might have to give up their jobs for household priorities.

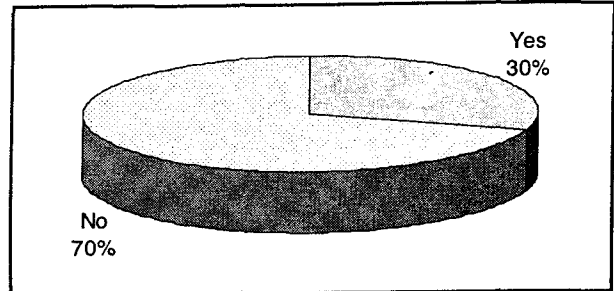
**A. For Women**

There may be a situation where I might have to give up my job for house hold priorities.



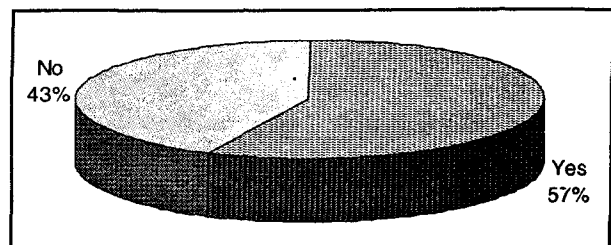
**B. For Men**

- I. There may be a situation where I might have to give up my job for house hold priorities.**

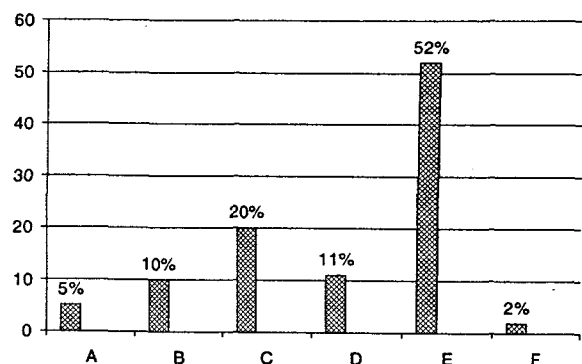


**B. For Men**

- II. There may be a situation where my wife might have to give up my job for house hold priorities.**



24. As far as the issue of alternative sexuality is concerned, most of the Presidents are on the right side of the debate, and take a very sensible stand.



- |  |  |
|--|--|
| A = I do not believe that it is possible | E = I am comfortable about it but don't believe in celebrating or denigrating it |
| B = I abhor the idea of it               | F = I celebrate it as superior   |
| C = I do not think it is normal          |  |
| D = I am uncomfortable about it          |  |

# What is Love?

"What is love?" I ask myself...  
 Can't figure out, I need some help!  
 Looking for love here and there.  
 Vagueness, Vagueness everywhere...  
 Can't find love, nor can I know  
 Where it is or where it could go!  
 A voice within me answers soon, ...  
 "Love is a blessing, it is a boon."  
 Love is tender, Love is sweet  
 Love is selfless, Love is discreet,  
 Love can fulfil, Love can destroy,  
 Love makes you lost; it makes you coy.  
 Love can caress, or turn cruel  
 It can sometimes give rise to a duel.  
 Love speaks volumes, without speaking at all  
 Love can do wonders, be they big or small.  
 When you are in love, you lose your senses,  
 You never can know when love commences.  
 You cannot eat, you cannot sleep.  
 You're always lost, thinking deep,  
 Such is the magic of love, my friend,  
 It does not obey any rule or trend.  
 This is the essence, I hope it's enough!  
 The rest you'll know when you're in love !  
 —*Titli Ghosh, B.A., 1st Year, (English Hons.)*

## ON SUCCESSFUL LOVE

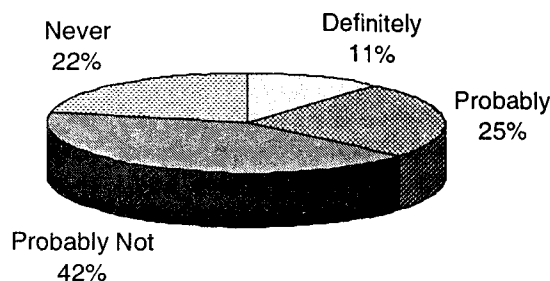


'I do'

(Design and Composition of Survey : Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri and Devapriya Roy)

25. Presidency boys and girls seem to know each other too well for a lifetime together. But there remain the daring few for whom the apt adage is: "Fools rush in, where fools have been before!" (Do not be angry folks, yours truly is there too!)

Have you chosen or do you wish to choose your partner from within Presidency?



## ON UNSUCCESSFUL LOVE

### IFLeF

I know of a boy – a rather self-centred one at that, who had fallen in love. He sometimes spoke of that winter evening, when dusk had fallen softer than usual... of her flowing brown dress. He spoke of her lovely, laughing eyes... Somewhere he had read – "Love understands, and therefore waits." So he waited.

The first phase was of "falling" in love – deeper and deeper, as glimpses of her became fewer and fewer. Then was the phase of "rising" in love. He improved dramatically in studies and sports. And spent hours filling canvases with shades of his moods.

Friends tried mediating. But that didn't work. He wrote a letter to her. But she wouldn't read it. He tried calling. But was politely rebuffed. All doors closed. He was patient for a long while. Then gradually resigned to a romantic fantasy... perhaps years later they would meet perchance in some desolate street. And take a walk together. Perhaps...

It's been a long while now. Yet, I still have her picture in my heart. Less blazing of course, but definitely still glowing. I just wonder now and then – Is First Love ever Forgotten?

— *Sourav Dutta (Physics, 3rd year)*

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTHORS

(In order of their contributions)

**Rajrupa Banerjee** and **Barnali Das** are both third year students of the English Department, and, as can be imagined, did quite a bit of research for this piece.

**Rajat Kanta Ray** is a professor of History in Presidency College.

**Tapan K Raychaudhuri**, an alumnus of the History Department, is an Emeritus Fellow, St. Antony's College, University of Oxford.

**Sabyasachi Bhattacharya** is a distinguished alumnus of the Physics Department. He is currently the Director, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research, Mumbai.

**Samir Kumar Mukhopadhyay** teaches English Literature at Presidency College.

**Boria Majumdar**, class of '97, Rhodes scholar of the Dept. of History, is currently the Editor of the *International Journal of the History of Sport*. His latest book *22 Yards to Freedom* has been published in 2004.

**Abhijit Dutta** teaches Economics at Presidency College.

**Kabita Chanda** teaches Bengali at Presidency College.

**Nishit Rawat** is an alumnus of the Economics Department. He is currently working with Hewlett Packard. His e mail address is [Nishit\\_rawat@yahoo.com](mailto:Nishit_rawat@yahoo.com), and you may also contact him at <http://ofjourneysdeepwithin.blogspot.com>.

**Sharmishtha Gooptu**, an alumnus of the Dept. of History, is currently a Phd. Student at the University of Chicago. She is working on the social history of Bengali cinema.

**Rohan Dev Roy**, alumnus of the Dept. of History, is currently a research student at The Centre For Studies in Social Sciences.

**Naibedya Chatterjee** is an alumnus of the Physiology Department. He is currently a Professor at the Harvard Medical School.

**Dipak Rudra**, an alumnus of the Economics Department has been an IAS officer for many years. Now he is the Director of the Institute Of Modern Management.

**Sandipta Nag** teaches English Literature at Presidency College.

**Ranjit Sarkar** teaches English Literature at Presidency College.

**Debalina Banerjee** teaches English Literature at Presidency College.

**Vasundhara Mishra** teaches in the Hindi Department of Presidency college.

**Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri** an alumnus of the Department of Physics has just retired as the Head of the Department.

**Shilpa Singhal** is a third year student of the Economics Department. This essay won her The Budding Economist Of the Year Award.

**Pratyay Nath** is a student of the Department of History and one often hears him at seminars.

**Soham Pain** is a first year student of the Department of English, with a profound interest in mythological studies.

**Pratyush Deb** is a first year student of the Department of Economics and the editors are glad of the variety introduced by his polemical style.

**Arnab Chakraborty** is a first year student of the Department of Physics in the college.

**Madhura Mukhopadhyay** is a first year student of English Literature.

**Saptarshi Basu** is a first year student of English Literature.

**Mrinmoy Biswas** is a first year student of the Department of Chemistry.

**Saborni Maiti** is pursuing her masters degree in Botany in the college.

**Sambeeta Das** is a first year student of the Physics Department. Needless to say, she stays in the Girls' Hostel.

**Iman K. Mitra**, the Secretary of our Rabindra Parishad, is a third year student of the Economics Department.

**Arko Chattopadhyay** is a first year student of English Literature.

**Piya Das** is a first year student of English Literature, and a talented artist.

**Debal Banerjee** is a third year student of the Department of Philosophy.

**Esha Sil** is a third year student of the English Department. As is evident, she is reading a lot of Milton!

**Ravindra Kumar Pandey** is a second year student of the Hindi Department.

**Dhruv Kumar Jha** is a third year student of the Department of Hindi.

**Arindam Banerjee** is a second year student of Geology in the college.

**Shambhu Kumar Yadav** is pursuing his Masters degree in the Hindi Department.

**Deblina Dey** is pursuing her Masters degree in the Zoology Department.

**Sanghamitra Haldar** is a third year student of the Bengali Department.

**Debasmita Biswas** is another budding poet of the first year English class.

**Archi Sarkar** is a third year student of English.

**Malini Sengupta** belongs to the first year English class.

**Sourit Bhattacharya** is yet another first year student of the English department. Last heard he was reading a lot of Sartre.

**Tripurari Kant Jha** is pursuing his Masters in Hindi.

**Debahuti Sarkar** is a second year student of the Bengali Department.

**Krittika Banerjee** is a first year student of Economics. She, along with her friends, brings out a journal called "Raison de Etre".

**Vaneeta Nag** is pursuing her Masters degree in the Hindi Department.

**Neelu Pandey** is a first year student of the Department of Hindi.

**Prasenjit Bhattacharya** is a first year student of the Physics Department.

**Nabendu Bikash Roy** is a first year student of the Department of Chemistry.

**Suman Pareekh** is a third year student of the Hindi Department.

**Anasua Banerjee** is a first year student of the Department of Statistics and often wins prizes at creative writing competitions

**Sujoy Bar** is pursuing his Masters in Bengali Literature.

**Devjeet Roy Chowdhury**, one of the editors of the students newspaper Un'presi'dented, is a second year student of Economics.

**Aditya Prakash Iyengar** is a first year student of the Statistics Department.

**Ravi Kumar Kesari** is pursuing his Masters in Hindi.

**Koel Banejee** is a third year student of English Literature.

**Ishan Sen Sarma** is a third year student of Economics.

**Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarti** teaches History at Presidency College.

**Paroma Maity** is second year student of the Department of History.

**Milinda Banerjee** is a student of History, currently in his second year of college, and he is an avid debator.

**Dalia Chakraborty** teaches Sociology at Presidency College.

**Nila Dasgupta** has been a student of the History Department between 1946 and 48.

**Jaya Dasgupta** is Nila Dasgupta's daughter. She was a student of the Chemistry Department between 1969 and 72. She is currently an officer in the Indian Administrative Services.

**Joyoshi Dasgupta** is Jaya Dasgupta's daughter. She graduated from the Physics Department of the college in 2003, and is doing her Masters now.

**Shyama Prasad Mookherjee**, one of the prominent visionaries of India, was a student of the college and also the Editor of the college magazine in 1921. There was no tradition of an editorial then, but we managed to retrieve the editorial notice.

**Tarak Nath Sen**, the legendary teacher of English Literature at Presidency College was the Editor of the college magazine in 1929.

**Surya Sankar Ray** is an alumnus of the Department of English. He was one of Tarak Nath Sen's favourite pupils.

**Ashin Ranjan Dasgupta** is an alumnus of the Department of History, and later one of the finest Professors of the Department. He had been the Editor of the college magazine in 1953.

**Ketaki Kushari Dyson**, an alumnus of the Department of English of Presidency College and was the editor of the magazine in 1959. She is a distinguished litterateur, who continues to write in both English and Bengali.

**Debaditya Bhattacharya** is a second year student of the Department of English, and is himself a poet.

**Dr. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**, one of the most renowned literary theorists of the day needs no introduction. She completed her graduation from Presidency College and was the editor of the college magazine in 1960.

**Rudrangshu Mukherjee**, an alumnus of the History Department, is currently the Editor of the Editorial pages, The Telegraph. He has been both the Editor and the Publication Secreary of the college magazine in the 70s.

**Saurav Jha**, an alumnus of the Department of Economics is presently pursuing his Masters degree in the Jawaharlal Nehru University.

**Suchi Upadhyay** is pursuing her Masters degree in the Department of Hindi.

**Sourav Dutta** is a first year student of the Department of Physics.

**Titli Ghosh** is a first year student of English.

**Vivek Shaw** is pursuing his Masters degree in Hindi Literature.

**Devapriya Roy** is a third year student of the English Department.

**Abhirup Dam** is a second year student of English Literature.



## सम्पादकीय

किसी भी सम्पादक के समक्ष दुविधाजनक स्थिति तब आती है जब एक साथ कई सुन्दर और प्रौढ़ रचनाएँ छपने के लिए प्रस्तुत की जाती हैं और संपादक उनमें से कुछ रचनाओं को स्थानाभाव के कारण छाप नहीं पाता है। मेरे लिए भी परिस्थिति कुछ इसी प्रकार की ही थी। कुछ शब्दों को भाव साथ नहीं देता तो कुछ भावों को शब्द। वही कविता उत्तम बन पाती है जिसमें शब्दों के साथ भावों का सामंजस्य सबसे सटीक हो। किसी भी कविता को पूरी तरह से त्रुटिहीन मानना या मनवाना विवादास्पद है फिर भी मैंने अपनी सोच और विवेक के आधार पर यह कोशिश की है कि किसी भी रचना के साथ अन्याय न हो। जिनकी कविता नहीं छप रही है वे यह न समझें कि वे छपने योग्य नहीं थी बल्कि स्थानाभाव के कारण यह एक सम्पादक की विवशता है। मैं आशा के साथ यह विश्वास भी करता हूँ कि सुधी कवि और पाठकगण मेरे निर्णय से संतुष्ट होंगे।

वर्तमान समय हिन्दी कविता की अस्मिता की रक्षा करने की मांग कर रहा है। इस दिशा में प्रस्तुत कविताएँ अगर हिन्दी कविता को समृद्ध कर सकें और “काव्यशास्त्र विनोदेन कालोगच्छति धीमताम्” चरितार्थ हो सकें तो मैं इस प्रयास को सफल समझूँगा। फिर भी कोई त्रुटि अगर हो तो मैं इसके लिए आपके समक्ष क्षमाप्रार्थी हूँ।

इन्हीं शब्दों के साथ मैं आपके समक्ष इस पत्रिका को प्रस्तुत करने जा रहा हूँ। हिन्दी विभाग के छात्र-छात्राओं और गुरुजनों से जो सहयोग मुझे मिला इसके लिए मैं हिन्दी विभाग का आभारी हूँ।

# INSTEAD OF AN EDITORIAL

During the months of working for the magazine – raising money, collecting articles, distributing questionnaires for the statistical survey, chasing errant writers who went into hiding as deadlines drew near, and falling out with my Publications Secretary at least twice a day, I judiciously kept the task of writing the editorial at bay. Then there was the eternal question – what kind of an editorial should it be?

Now, should it be a sharp, stinging one like Rudrangshu Da's classic-70s piece?

Undoubtedly, there is some space for sharp criticism. It is quite worrying to note that the magazine has pretty much been relegated to a mere footnote in the cultural (?) life of the college. Not too many are even mildly concerned about the fate of this once-prestigious publication. They do not care whether it is published or not! In our turn, we've been rather sorry seniors since most of our first years didn't even know the magazine existed. After all, creative writing, by and large, needs to be nurtured in a healthy tradition. Then one would have liked more articles in Bangla. We didn't receive too many. A lot of poems came in, but one wonders why people do not write short stories, short plays or even funny, irreverent pieces any more?

But enough of the negatives. As I sit to write this piece, I do not at all wish to strike that angry note of criticism. (We have enough of it from the media anyway!) And strangely, the college has its own mysterious way of conquering all irate feelings, its own way of absorbing anger. It makes one relent, after all.

Then should the editorial be issue-based, serious and grave?

Oh but that would be such a bore!

So I guess I'll just let it flow, let it become what it will. And now that I am one of the "outgoing students", one who would be leaving college in some months, my little remembrances here and there, would, I guess, be forgiven by the indulgent reader.

But first, to go about things in the proper way, the Magazine Committee offers

## A SINCERE AND HEART-FELT APOLOGY ON BEHALF OF THE SHARP PAIR OF STEEL SCISSORS

used by the teacher editors and yours truly on the published pieces.

Each having written at some point of time, and having been at the receiving end of the editing stick, we are indeed aware how cutting and pruning one's literary output is almost as painful to the writer as bodily incisions (if not more). And yet, Editors, like Critics,

continue to thrive (though no statue is ever made of them!), continue to take their jobs seriously, and wield their weapon sharply.

Those much outraged by the actions of the instrument may be mollified by its many apologies- it blames its users, and they confess the crime. Those still angry, could take some comfort from Alexander Pope. In *The Rape of the Lock* Lord Peter defends his assault on Belinda's lock of hair, saying:

*"What Time would spare, from Steel receives its date,  
And monuments, like Men, submit to Fate."*

The weapon used to perpetrate both the crimes, one suspects, is the same.

\*\*\*

The Magazine Committee remembers

## THE MANY WHO MADE THIS VENTURE POSSIBLE

It is a well known fact that the firmament of literary efforts (from the Elizabethan times till date) has always found support in the magnanimity of firmly grounded real people.

First, **Mr. S.K.Birla and Birla Eastern Limited (9/1 R.N. Mukherjee Road, Kolkata -01)** – their invaluable support has made the magazine possible.

Then, the donor who took less than 20 seconds to agree to pay a very generous sum to the Cause. He wishes to remain anonymous, but he has definitely left us a lot less cynical.

**Mr. Sarajit Jha and Mr. Preetam Roy**, both alumni of the Economics Department who not only contributed generously, but also mobilised a lot of money on our behalf with great enthusiasm and minimum fuss. They would both vie for the Most-Interested Ex-Presidencian Award!

Thank you **Mr. Ashish Sil and Mrs. Sonali Sil**, who have always unhesitatingly agreed to fund uncertain projects of enthusiastic youngsters! Thank you **Mr. J.N. Chandra** for timely intervention.

Thank you so much for all the help and support – **Mrs. Alpana Maitra, Gitanjali Ray Maitra, Paromeeta Mathur Banerjee, Piya Sinha Roy, Jenea Sengupta, Sudarshana Kundu, Sudeshna Maitra, Nishit Rawat, Arjun Chatterjee** (Editor, 2001-02), **Pradip K. Chattopadhyay, Sourav Saha, Jayati Mitra, Deepayan Chakravarty, Partha Sarathi Ray, Anasua Banerjee** – all Presidencians. Among our Professors, **Prof. Rajat Kanta Ray, Prof. Nupur Choudhury and Prof. Deepak Dasgupta** were generous in their contributions.

## AND THEN THERE WERE

those wonderful people who were there with us through the labour pains...

**Prof. Amitava Chatterjee** and **Prof. Devashish Sen**, the two people who went way out of their way to organise the funds. We were given permission to go ahead with the magazine just the way we wished, and were even allowed to be as ambitious as it gets! In a world of cutting corners such liberty is unprecedented.

**Prof. Aneek Chatterjee** was always there by us, whenever we needed anything.

**Prof. Rajat Ray** gave some invaluable suggestions, and offered a lot of help as far as hunting the archives was concerned. He also readily gave permission to print the proceedings of the seminar.

**Prof. Dipanjan Rai Chaudhuri** would patiently hear out my ideas at every stage, and tactfully point out the fine line between possibility and impossibility, a distinction which to my starry eyes was often blurred; and finally during the endless hours at the DTP place it was he who maintained sanity as we brainstormed.

**Prof. Subhas Ranjan Chakrabarti**, of course, knows just about everybody! And he was always just a phone call away.

**Mr. Sujoy Gupta** and **Dr. Jayati Gupta** guided us amateurs to Albatross Software, did the first round of talking on our behalf and helped us at every stage. The magazine wouldn't have been possible without them. Not to mention the fact that Ma'am always understood my absence at the tutorial!

**Prof. A.B. Aich** of the Statistics Department supervised our survey at every step.

Then there is the artist-poet **Dibyak**, who designed the entire magazine for us. He worked meticulously on the details, came up with great concepts in what seemed to us like the blink of an eye and gave all that we had wished an even better shape! Can one thank artists really...?

And thank you **Avishek Ganguly**, Columbia University, who responded promptly to a rather difficult request on e-mail from a departmental junior he'd never seen or heard of! And delivered the goods, the moon really, which is what had been requested!

I wish to thank **Shi Debnarayan Chakraborty** and **Sri Bijay De**, of our library who took precious time off to help me search for old magazines and documents; all the other library staff who helped in many ways; **Prof. Prabir Dasgupta** who spent hours to scan the old documents for us; **Dr. Kabita Chanda**, who was very encouraging; **Dr. Debalina Banerjee**, who had kept an entire back-up chain ready, in case we ran out of money; **The Presidency College Alumni Association** in general and **Mr. Partha**

**Sarathi Sengupta**, **Dr. Jyotirmoy Pal Choudhury** and **Dr. A.M. Goon**, in particular, who were wonderful to us; **Mr. B.D. Bose**, Chairman, Saurashtra Chemicals, for all he did. **Dilip Da**, always ready to share his wonderful stories; **Boria Majumdar**, supportive of the venture from the start; **Mr. P.S. Roy** and **Mr. Mohiuddin Molla** of Albatross Softwares who were in the fire with us; **Vivek Shaw** and **Dhruv Kumar Jha** for all the pains they took with the Hindi editing; **Batushka Majumdar**, for quietly helping out; **Riddhi Shankar Ray**, **Shyamantak Ghosh**, **Shilpa Singhal**, **Anirban Chaudhuri**, **Pinaki Maiti**, **Shiladitya Basu**, **Ritam Haldar**, **Ipshita Chaudhuri**, **Sneha Biswas**, **Romit Chowdhuri**, **Amrita Dasgupta**, **Kaushik Baishya**, **Arka Chattopadhyay**, **Karnali Bose**, **Sayantani Roy**, and **Angana Dutta**, **Srijoni Das**, **Pallavi Dubey** and of course **Esha Sil** and **Debaditya Bhattacharya** (the proof readers!) who were always there.

Here I might do well to remember a set of long-suffering people – the **Professors of the English Department**, who despaired of my absences; and **Nilanjan Roy** and **Manidipa Roy**, who, I suspect, never quite gave up on me.

Not forgetting at all, thank you **Sharmishtha Mukherjee**, who in spite of being a Xaverian helped out.

And finally, **Saurav Jha**, for all the oxygen.

N.b. There is nothing to thank **Abhirup Dam**, co-survivor, about.

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## NOW, TO THAT WHICH WANTS TO BE SAID:

*"They enter the new world naked,  
cold, uncertain of all  
save that they enter...  
But now the stark dignity of entrance –  
Still, the profound change has come upon them;  
rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken."*

– William Carlos Williams

In his article Sir says: "I leave this place which has fashioned much of what I am and, then, again, I come back." As the days slip by, the time of my first departure draws near. And I go back.

Joie-de-vivre was the first impression, the sheer joy of flying... Gradually one got to know the teachers better, in a staff room which unlike the one in school was never out of bounds... One also got to know friends better, and there were always some surprises in store!

There was a lot of love in the air. One came across committed couples, did-not-believe-in-commitment-couples and legendary couples... but

definitely a lot of couples.

Then there was discovering Theory. First came resistance to it, then inevitably names and jargon were picked up here and there, and finally, by the third year we spent hours and hours debating in Rooms 22 and 23, whether studying English meant carrying forward a colonial legacy! Was English then a foreign language, a second language... or an Indian one? Could we, born in the 80s, speak English without the anxiety of historical fetters?

And then, in retrospect, was the poetry. Surging, swelling poetry everywhere... in the long, grubby corridors, the trees by twilight, the library, touched by the slanting, late-afternoon sun, where I looked at old, yellowed magazines and documents, and the solitary class rooms ... There was discovering Pablo Neruda by the dark shadows (" And it was at that age... Poetry arrived /in search of me.")...discovering in Neruda a strange tender fullness of love –

*"Tonight I can write the saddest lines.  
I loved her, and sometimes she loved me too.*

*Through nights like this one I held her in my arms.  
I kissed her again and again under the endless sky.*

*She loved me, sometimes I loved her too.  
How could one not have loved her great still eyes."*

It was the poetry, finally, which, resonating, echoing, managed to lift one above the pettiness, the hypocrisy and the desultoriness which one encountered here too. And yet, these don't remain. Only the essence does. And the growing up.

One wondered again and again, what it was that gave the place its defining edge, that particular

Presidencian quality ...Sir is right when he calls it the Derozian spark. It is that which teaches us to question and seek, to go forth into the uncharted without maps or compasses. Interestingly, though the college is quite a cocoon, it also has its own way of distilling the rumble tumble noises of the world outside into one's blood. It keeps reminding us – the mountains cannot be bypassed, they must must be traversed.

There was this other trait I found too, but that is a little difficult to explain. In one of her letters Sylvia Plath wrote that she read D.H. Lawrence "selfishly" for influence. It is this kind of selfishness that I have found in most of my co-students here. There is something or the other, from which they "selfishly" draw – and it is a unique, distinguishing factor, so to say.

And finally, as the shadows lengthen, and the birds fly home, the lights in the bookstalls on College Street start to twinkle. I take a look again at the place which has absorbed history over the years, and yet remained largely stable... the Revolution which almost happened being just another episode in its time, and yet the darkest, the finest, and the most deeply moving. One often wishes our generation too could have given birth to a movement.

Darkness falls on the Portico for the night, reminding me it is time to pack my few belongings, and go out into the world.I take back Dylan Thomas with me.

*"Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.*

*Do not go gentle into that good night."*

## Editors and Publication Secretaries of The Presidency College Magazine

YEAR	EDITORS	SECRETARIES
1914-15	Pramatha Nath Banerjee	Jogesh Chandra Chakravarti
1915-17	Mohit Kumar Sen Gupta	Prafulla Kumar Sircar
1917-18	Saroj Kumar Das	Ramaprasad Mukhopadhyay
1918-19	Amiya Kumar Sen	Mahmood Hasan
1919-20	Mahmood Hasan	Paran Chandra Gangooli
1920-21	Phiroze E. Dastoor	Shyama Prasad Mookherjee
1921-22	Shyama Prasad Mookherjee	Bimal Kumar Bhattacharya
	Brajakanta Guha	Uma Prasad Mookherjee
1922-23	Uma Prasad Mookherjee	Akshay Kumar Sarkar
1923-24	Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta	Bimala Prasad Mukherjee
1924-25	Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta	Bijoy Lal Lahiri
1925-26	Asit K. Mukherjee	Sunit Mahbub Murshed
1926-27	Humayun Kabir	Lokesh Chandra Guha Roy
1927-28	Hirendranath Mukherjee	Sunit Kumar Indra
1928-29	Sunit Kumar Indra	Syed Mahbub Murshed
1929-30	Taraknath Sen	Ajit Nath Roy
1930-31	Bhabatosh Dutta	Ajit Nath Roy
1931-32	Ajit Nath Roy	Nirmal Kumar Bhattacharjee
1932-33	Sachindra Kumar Majumdar	Nirmal Kumar Bhattacharjee
1933-34	Nikhilnath Chakravarty	Girindra Nath Chakravarti
1934-35	Ardhendu Bakshi	Sudhir Kumar Ghosh
1935-36	Kalidas Lahiri	Prabhat Kumar Sircar
1936-37	Asok Mitra	Arun Kumar Chandra
1937-38	Bimal Chandra Sinha	Ram Chandra Mukherjee
1938-39	Pratap Chandra Sen	Abu Sayeed Chowdhury
	Nirmal Chandra Sen Gupta	
1939-40	A.Q.M. Mahiudin	Bimal Chandra Dutta
1941-42	Arun Banerjee	Golam Karim
1942-46	(No Publication)	
1947-48	Sudhindranath Gupta	Nirmal Kumar Sarkar
1948-49	Subir Kumar Sen	Bangendu Gangopadhyay
1949-50	Dilip Kumar Kar	Sourindra Mohan Chakravarti
1950-51	Kamal Kumar Ghatak	Manas Muktamani
1951-52	Sipra Sarkar	Kalyan Kumar Das Gupta
1952-53	Arun Kumar Das Gupta	Jyotirmoy Pal Chaudhuri
1953-54	Ashin Ranjan Das Gupta	Pradip Das
1954-55	Sukhamoy Chakravarty	Pradip Ranjan Sarbadhikari
1955-56	Amiya Kumar Sen	Devendra Nath Banerjee
1956-57	Ashok Kumar Chatterjee	Subal Das Gupta
1957-58	Asoke Sanjoy Guha	Debaki Nandan Mondal
1958-59	Ketaki Kushari	Tapan Kumar Lahiri
1959-60	Gayatri Chakravarty	Rupendra Majumdar
1960-61	Tapan Kumar Chakravarty	Ashim Chatterjee
1961-62	Gautam Chakravarty	Ajoy Kumar Banerjee
1962-63	Badal Mukherjee	Alok Kumar Mukherjee
	Mihir Bhattacharya	
1963-64	Pranab Kumar Chatterjee	Priti Nandy
1964-65	Subhash Basu	Biswanath Maity
1965-66	(No Publication)	
1966-67	Sanjay Kshetry	Gautam Bhadra
1967-68	(No Publication)	
1968-69	Abhijit Sen	Rebanta Ghosh

YEAR	EDITORS	SECRETARIES
1969-72	(No Publication)	
1972-73	Anup Kumar Sinha	Rudrangshu Mukherjee
1973-74	Rudrangshu Mukherjee	Swapan Chakravarty
1974-75	Swapan Chakravarty	Suranjan Das
1975-76	Sankar Nath Sen	Paramita Banerjee
1977-78	Sugata Bose. Gautam Basu	
1978-81	(No Publication)	
1981-82	Debasis Banerjee Somak Ray Chaudhury	Banya Dutta
1982-83	(No Publication)	
1983-84	Sudipta Sen Bishnupriya Ghosh	Subrata Sen
1985-86	Brinda Bose Anjan Guhathakurta	Chandrayee Niyogi
1986-87	Subha Mukherjee Apurba Saha	Jayita Ghosh
1987-88	(No Publication)	
1988-89	Anindya Dutta Suddhasatwa Bandyopadhyay	Sachita Bhowmik
1989-90	Abheek Barman Amitendu Palit Adrish Biswas	Debashis Das
1990-92	Jayanta Ray Shiladitya Sarkar Debraj Bhattacharya Pathikrit Sengupta	Pratik Mitra Chandrani Majumdar Sanjoy Chakraborty
1993-95	Soumya Sundar Mukhopadhyay Arjun Deb Sen Sharma Debanuj Dasgupta Santanu Das	Ananda Sankar Roy Soumya Sundar Mukherjee
1995-96	Sanjoy Chakraborty Saibal Basu	Arijit Bhattacharya
1996-98	Bodhisattva Kar Anirban Mukherjee Anindyo Sengupta Kumar Kislay	Raja Bhattacharya Ashis Pathak
1998-2000	Riddhi Sankar Ray Lincoln Roy Ashok Kesari Phalguni Ghosh	Roshni Mukherjee
2000-2001	Paromita Chakrabarti Sapna Gupta Soumitro Ghosh Kunal Singh	Lincoln Roy
2001-2002	Arjun Chatterjee Uditi Sen Deblina Sengupta Nabaruna Bhattacharya Saubhik Ghosh	Atig Ghosh Roy
2002-2003	Riya Bhattacharjee Shatarupa Banerjee Shibaprasad Amritava Dey Shubro Bhattacharya	Abheek Banerjee
2003-2004	(No Publication)	
2004-2005	Devapriya Roy Vivek Shaw	Abhirup Dam





"Do not go gentle into that good night,  
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light."

