

25 Years of Durga Puja in Tokyo

- Rita Kar

When the editors of Anjali asked me to write about our 25 years of celebrating Durga Puja in Tokyo I was not sure if I could conjure up my memory and chronicle the details of our 25 years of celebration here. I found it hard to recount it all as I feel overwhelmed by a rush of memories and associations. It will indeed be a very difficult to catch up on all, so I decided to hit the highlights.

Durga Puja in Japan was a time only for nostalgia and get-togethers. In 1989 Durga Puja was over a long weekend and the very few families living in Tokyo and Yokohama tried to make the best of it by meeting at each other's homes over lunch and dinner and live the spirit of the Puja season. Saraswati Puja was already being held in Tokyo and the idea of having a Durga Puja in Tokyo was floated. The yearning was there but the practicalities were still being doubted. In Japan we have never had a steady group of families who could organize Durga Puja every year. Throughout the year the few families toyed on the idea and the decision was made - Durga Puja will be celebrated in Tokyo.



1990: The first Durga Puja in Tokyo was held for one and half days. There were no images but a picture of Durga and plenty of excitement. The cultural program was performances by the children within the community and the lunch and dinners prepared by the ladies. On a very personal note, Ruma and myself were in-charge of cooking the lunch on Puja day.



1991: After a very successful completion of the first Durga Puja we were now more enthusiastic to carry on the next year. One of our community members brought an image of Durga made out a paper and created by a young girl in Kolkata.

1993: Definitely things were looking more positive now. Our first formal Puja meeting was held and the unanimous decision was we should get a idol from India. One of the members took the responsibility of contacting his family back in India, who agreed to oversee the whole process and our first Durga image from Kumartooli was here. The white Shola image was indeed what we wanted in Tokyo.

All this time community was growing - enthusiastic members were becoming more involved with new ideas about the decoration and of course the cultural program was becoming a focal point of the Durga Puja. Rehearsals were becoming a big attraction when we could all meet for weeks leading up to the final day - an excuse for "adda" and food. Cooking Khichuri, the curry and even making the mistis were prepared with no complaints at all. Families who were deeply involved in initializing Durga Puja in Tokyo and then, those who helped to keep the Puja going on, had left and new members came in and filled the void.



In the true Bengali spirit, over the last 25 years we have celebrated Durga Puja with its religious solemnity, weaving into it our cultural and community driven spirit - one time of the year when all the families get together to celebrate Durga Puja far away from home and to be a part of it.

Whenever we meet friends who have left Japan after a few years or even after a year always talk about Puja in Tokyo and how it always felt like it was a family affair. Just to wrap up I would like to narrate a conversation we had with some families who were here in the very first years of Durga Puja in Tokyo. One said "when I read in Anjali now as someone mentioning "Our Pujo" I get very upset. How can it be your Pujo - it is our Pujo" And that is how we all feel about Durga Pujo in Tokyo. 25 Years of Durga Puja in Tokyo has not merely been a religious occasion it has been the bonding of a community, a cultural celebration where numerous families have come together and made this Durga Pujo their own.



On this occasion I fondly remember them all - the laughter and joy we shared, that makes our Tokyo Durga Pujo so special - and we have kept the spirit going with our present members too. ■

Healthy Relationships: Their challenges and solutions

- Swami Medhasananda

There is an oft-quoted title of a poem by John Donne called, 'No Man is an Island'. Since we live in a society our life is not possible without constant, mutual giving and taking. Thus, relationships are connected with life and this is the starting point of making relationships with others. This constant, mutual giving and taking is not optional or voluntary, it is a necessity. Life is crippled without it.

What is an ideal, healthy human relationship? A relationship which is happy, sustained, creative and elevated is an ideal relationship.

There is one Japanese publication 'Naikan' (Introspection) wherein the author, Norimasa Nishida, says that in all important relationships three questions must be asked and deeply reflected upon. These are:

What did that person do for you?

What did you do in return?

How much trouble did you cause that person?

This book is about applying these questions to every relationship. It states that if you ask yourself these questions and deeply reflect the answers, all relationships will be good.

In Hindu scripture and tradition there are lots of discussions and anecdotes on relationships. The Ramayana, the great Indian epic, alone is full of stories on ideal relationships. There is the story of an ideal son, an ideal husband, ideal wife, ideal friend, ideal brother, ideal master, ideal servant and ideal king. In the Mahabharata as well, there are important discussions on relationships. Sri Krishna's wife Rukmini goes to Draupadi, wife to all five Pandava brothers, and asks how it is she maintains happy relations with her five husbands and keeps them in good humor, while she found it difficult to do so with but one husband. One piece of advice Draupadi gives is to not dote too much on adolescent sons or husbands may become jealous, or simply feel left out, which is very true. Words of such practical wisdom in such ancient scripture is amazing.

In Hindu scripture it is also noted that it is one's duty to please the gods, the sages, one's ancestors, all fellow human beings and animal beings. This is called the Panch-mahayajna or five great sacrifices. We receive as humans much from them, so we must do something in return to please them. So remember that this idea is not limited only to human relationships, but extends to other beings as well.

Present discussion is mostly concerned with human relationships because there are so many aspects and dimensions to these. There are relationships with immediate family, relatives, friends, neighbors, members of a group or community, colleagues or bosses at work, teachers and students, students and students, etc. Then in the immediate family itself there are many relationships; husband and wife, parents and children, brothers and sisters and in-laws. Within each of these there are common stages that one passes through as well, from troubles related to childhood, one's teen years, pre- and post- marriage.

Let us highlight a point by point examination of healthy relationships in general and give a more thorough look on some of these:

1. In order to maintain healthy relationships we must first have an **awareness and understanding of the goal of a relationship**. Without such awareness and understanding there can be no motivation to accept the challenge to make the goal of relationships reachable. The goal of marriage is a happy life with mutual support and help of both the husband and the

wife. So if giving birth and raising children and maintaining happy, sustained relationships is the goal of married life, each spouse must accept the challenge of achieving this goal. If there is no such awareness and no such motivation, the relationship will become vulnerable.

2. Then we need to **'think twice' before establishing a long-term, close relationship**. The Panchatantra, is another ancient, Indian collection of moral tales and stories, full of practical teaching on relationships comparable to Esop's Fables. It advises us to give establishing such relationship deep consideration. Love at first sight and instant marriage is fine to read about in stories, but in actual life this not a safe practice. Impulsive decisions can result in life-long regrets.

I remember once a fellow train passenger was telling me about his very young daughter's impulsive marriage and subsequent divorce with a child. She and the baby were now living with him. He was so sad about what she had done to her life.

Hence, we need to **maintain a space between 'liking' and 'loving'** because one is not the same as the other. Be very careful about love and reposing deep trust in others, because there are some serious challenges to the successful accomplishment of such a relationship. In fact, we should not be impulsive in any such relationships of deep mutual trust. Observe the nature of the person under consideration, whether it is a marriage or even business. Observe how he or she behaves with you and others. This is important because if someone is interested in you he may be nice to you, while disrespectful or worse, utterly selfish, in his behavior to others. So maintain a space between liking and loving.

3. Mutual love and respect and faithfulness. This should be practiced especially between husband and wife, teacher and student and friend and friend. There are two kinds of marriage, one being the arranged or negotiated marriage, and love marriages, which are becoming more and more common in many countries. There are many arguments in favor of and against each. Romance in an arranged marriage, usually starts after marriage, while in a love marriage, romance precedes marriage and that fades after it. The point is that romance fades sooner or later in either case, and it is then that the challenge of a sustained relationship between the spouses becomes evident.

This challenge should be faced by the couple with mutual understanding, love, respect, and faithfulness. Even in Hindu scripture we see so much emphasis on the idea of the wife looking upon the husband as God, but not so much the idea of the husband looking upon the wife as Goddess. If only the wife is required to observe the idea, there is every possibility that it may make the husband egoistic. That is why it must be mutual. If the husband also regards his wife in this way, and attitude of humility is created in the husband, rather than egotism. Faithfulness cannot be expected from the wife only, but from the husband as well. Thus, the relationship between them will be balanced.

Mutual love and respect is important in the relationship between parents and their children. Not only should the children love and respect their parents, but the parents must love and respect the children as well, though the expression of such love and respect obviously differs. Parents should consider that it is God who has come in the form of children to receive their service. This helps increase the self-esteem of the children.

Mutual love and respect is also important in teacher and student and guru and disciple relationships. A true Guru is always aware of the presence of Brahman in his disciples. Obviously the expression of mutual love and respect between a husband and wife differs from that between a teacher and student, and what I mean to say here in the case of teacher and student relationship is that both should maintain an attitude of loving respectfulness for each other.

4. The bringing up of children is another dimension of the family relationship. By trying to be too nice, **by pampering our children, we sometimes ruin them.** Today we have a nuclear family. In days past of an extended family, grandparents were there to teach and help in bringing up children. These days there is less such guidance from elders and I'm not sure whether young mothers educate themselves regarding child rearing. Relying on one's own common-sense is not enough in such an important matter, with so many things to take care of. These days a one-child family is common and whatever the child wants is purchased or accommodated since parents want to please the child.

Thus, the child develops an attitude of being appeased: 'Whatever I want, my parents will provide for me, and whatever I do, my parents will accept.' More than mere manner training, if parents don't teach values and the difference between good and bad, many problems will occur with such an untrained child. It is too late to discipline a teenaged child and correct unacceptable behaviors, such as late nights with friends and delinquent school assignments.

In Sanskrit there is the saying, 'Bring-up a child by indulging him for the first 5 years; then discipline him for the next 10' Meaning, that while of course we always love the child, these should not be much pampering or displays of love after 5 years of age. More than simple table-manners and appropriate greetings, a mother needs to impress upon her child that hard work is necessary for success, she also needs to teach that there will be failures as well, and that this is to be expected and faced.

Children also need to be taught that we need to think of others; to consider their situation; and whenever possible to help others. I still remember as children while traveling with my father, we would occasionally come across a beggar. My father would give us coins to take to such people to teach us the attitude of helping others. This attitude grew in us. In this way my father taught us that we must not be selfish, but do something for society. So these are not only spoken words, but actions. We also had many mango trees in our garden. Our parents would also give us loads of ripe mangoes to distribute around the neighborhood. Later, when I came to school at the Ramakrishna Mission, I found this tradition of help and sharing was one of its main mottos. As this Mission is focused on serving others, that become one my purposes in joining the Order.

5. **Women play the key role in the family.** I am sure that most of the credit for a happy and successful family goes to the woman. Here the same woman is playing the roles of mother, wife and in extended households, daughter, too. There is a saying in English, 'The son is son until he marries, and the

daughter is a daughter till she dies.' The long-held tradition of the eldest son taking care of the parents is all but lost, and it is daughters who now do so.

Centripetal and centrifugal forces apply here. Wikipedia says in essence, '... centripetal force is that by which bodies are drawn or impelled to a center, while centrifugal is an outward force away from a center.' I would like to believe that nature, at God's bidding, is operating centripetal force in relationships through women. The women's liberation movement may diminish or demean this role, but women play a great role in society by creating good citizens. If you study the lives of all the world's great men, many of them were greatly influenced by their mothers. This includes Swami Vivekananda.

By serving in the roles of mother, wife, and daughter devotedly and wisely, there is a definite benefit to the woman. This service makes her mind pure; makes her mind broad; makes her perfect. In the Mahabharata, and in Swami Vivekananda's Karma Yoga we find references to wives doing their duty perfectly and becoming perfect souls. Their perfection is not attained by intense meditation or spiritual practice, but by being perfect wives, mothers and daughters. These are not useless duties.

In performing all these duties, can there be no space for herself? Yes. By doing one's duty to the family as much as possible, one can definitely do something for her own development. There are examples of housewives fulfilling their roles and doing something remarkable in a career also. One such example is our devotee, Ms. Rie Ueno, who, after playing her role as wife and mother and now runs a successful business, gave an inspiring speech on 'Positive Living' at our Vivekananda Celebration at the Indian Embassy in 2011.

6. **Give more, take less.** Practice unselfishness and give in the spirit of service. Swami Vivekananda said, 'Unselfishness is more paying, only people have not the patience to practice it.' The common idea is that we must be selfish to live well, but Swamiji says, 'No!' This was also advice from Holy Mother to a young girl, 'If you want to love everyone equally, don't want anything from anyone.'

Practice contentment. 'Let me be happy with what I have.' One of the causes of bad relationships at home is when one or both in the couple are very demanding. The wife makes demands on the husband. The wife makes demands on the husband. The husband complains he works so hard and demands to know what the wife does for him. If both are demanding, one can just imagine how such relationship fares.

7. **Find the balance between giving freedom and exerting control.** This must be thoughtfully practiced. If we give too much freedom the relationship is not serious. Too much control is more like a slave and master relationship. There can be no double standard either. If the husband wants to exercise strict control over the wife, yet he wants complete freedom for himself, this will create disharmony. Finding and exercising balance is important in all our relationships at home and at work.

8. **Give more time and feel more concern for family members.** In family relationships, giving time to family members is important. 'I have no time!' is a band and untenable excuse.

Husbands, especially, should not feel their contribution

or duty to the family relationship is only earning money. This is really harmful to family relations, as it puts distance between the husband and his wife and children. The son should be given the feeling that not only his mother, but his father too, is concerned for him. In my case, my father was a doctor who worked hard from early morning to late at night and I went to a residential college of the Mission about 50km away in Kolkata. My father would make it a point to regularly come to the college and meet with me and ask the resident monks of my behavior and progress in studies. At times I would protest, 'Why do you need to come? It is so far and not an easy journey. You are so busy and tired.' But he never relented.

So if it is possible to give one's time in such a case, why not in a household where the family lives under one roof? There are weekends and holidays. Surely it is possible to give some time to the family. Whatever time you have, show concern for your children, show interest in what they do; their studies. This is not the exclusive responsibility of one's wife, but also that of the husband.

9. Love expressed in words alone makes it shallow, but love expressed in service makes it deeper. In all our storybooks and films what happens? After but a few meetings the hero declares to the heroine, 'I love you, I love you.' Of course you know what fate lies in store for such examples of surface love. Does the mother, the embodiment of love for a child, continually say 'I love you, my son', or does she express her love for him through her whole being. The child, realizing the mother's love in his heart, reciprocates and, thus, love is sustained.

10. In any relationship, if something improper was done to you or by you, **apologize, forgive and forget as soon as possible.** By seeking to apologize we do not lower ourselves, but raise ourselves. Once Swami Brahmanandaji ('spiritual son' of Sri Ramakrishna and first president of the Math and Mission) became angry with a disciple's misdeed and slapped him. Later he apologized, saying what he did was not good and to please forgive him, even though it is the privilege of the Guru to discipline his disciple, which can be painfully harsh at time. The *sattvic* anger of a sage is soon gone like a child's, but *rajasic* and *tamasic* anger can drag on and on. Don't drag it on. Discuss and settle the matter, don't give up and break the relationship.

It is easy to turn ones back, to walk away, quit. This is going to be harmful in the long-run because there will always be a canker in your heart. The person we hate may not be affected at all, but we will suffer. If there is hatred and long-term anger in our hearts, we cannot develop spiritually, nor can we get peace. This is why Jesus says in Mathew, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.' Discuss and settle accounts with wife, children, and colleagues. Who will go first? Let me go first. There is no problem that cannot be settled with discussion.

Of all the negative emotion we possess, it is anger which has the most disastrous effect on our relationships and is one of the chief sources of peace-lessness. Hence, for most of us, our main concern is how to control anger. One of the best tips on controlling anger, and one which I, myself, try to practice, is to not express my anger immediately when angered. So try to **allow some time to pass before expressing your anger.** If we can do this, half, if not two thirds, of the battle against anger is won. The rest becomes easier, as with the passage of time we calm down and can tackle the task more effectively.

11. 'Hiss but don't bite.' When encountering an evil person try to avoid him. When avoidance is impossible, hiss as advised in the story of the brahmachari and the snake found in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna. Hiss to protect yourself, but don't bite, cause no harm to him.

12. Change yourself before changing others. Everyone thinks about changes they'd like to see in their spouse, or their children, co-workers, etc., but we never consider changes others may rightfully like to see in us. Everyone thinks everyone else needs improvement. No, if you really want to change others, first change yourself. When we try to change ourselves, we come to realize how difficult it is to change, and with this realization will come more patience and understanding. Moreover, if we can change ourselves, it inspires others to change themselves. This is a natural law.

13. Put others first. In the book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, the author notes these people first seek to understand others, then seek to be understood. In another book author, Eknath Easwaran, an Indian Professor of English and, later, spiritual teacher working in the USA, writes in 'Take Your Time' of a young man who tells of his tension in his relationship with his girlfriend and asks for advice. Easwaran's advice is, 'Put your girlfriend first!'

After two or three days young man returns all smiles. The professor asks why he looks so joyful. The young man replies that the couple went to a restaurant and that he was always in the habit of what he liked first. Thinking of the professor's advice, the man insisted that his girlfriend order first. This pleased the girl immensely and they had an enjoyable dinner. This is but a small example. Put others first. Seek to understand, rather than insisting on being understood.

A big problem in many relationships is the continuous grumbling of one to the other, 'You don't understand me'. This attitude needs to be reversed. There has to be a genuine attempt to understand each other's situation, because mutual complaining alone does not work. For example, after retirement, the husband may spend a lot of time at home. The wife doesn't like this, because for years she had freedom of the household. While the wife should accept and adjust to their new situation, the husband, too, should respect his wife's sentiments and together come to an accord.

14. Don't brag about your achievements around others as it creates distance and irritation in others. I haven't seen much of this in Japan. In fact, I really appreciate this quality in Japan that one rarely talks about one's achievements.

15. Speak less, listen more. There is a tendency in many of us to do most of the talking when we meet people without considering that others may have something to say and contribute.

In 1937 when Swami Siddheswarananda ji of the Ramakrishna Order was asked by its headquarters to move to France and take up preaching Vedanta there, Miss Josephine Macleod, one of Swami Vivekananda's closest American friends and devotees, gave the swami the following piece of valuable advice which Siddheswaranandaji always remembered, 'Gopal (the swami's pre-monastic name) look!' she said. 'I have noticed that when you meet some people. You talk and talk without letting others speak. This is considered bad manners in the West. So when you meet guests, restrain yourself and allow them to speak.' Then Mrs. Macleod added, 'you all know that Swamiji

(Vivekananda) would talk and others would listen intently. But what you don't know is that he was a patient listener too, which made his devotees feel so comfortable with him!

In fact if we take the lion's share of time in a conversation not intended to be a discourse, we may appear to be too assertive or to be advertising ourselves to guess, which is not conducive to establishing sustained relationships.

16. Find the good qualities in others. Appreciate their good qualities and ignore their shortcomings. If not, fault-finding becomes a disease and destroys any relationship. Become like honeybee, and not the common fly. When we see fault and defects in others we are like a fly. When we only see the fine qualities in another, we are like honeybees sipping only nectar. This is important in our personal lives, because we degrade and pollute ourselves in faultfinding. If someone is constantly pointing out my failing, naturally I am not very comfortable around such a person.

Holy Mother is oft-quoted as saying on her last day, 'If you want peace of mind then give up faultfinding. If you find fault and all, find your own faults and shortcomings. Learn to treat everyone as your own. No one is alien to you, the whole world is yours.' Sri Ramakrishna could see into a person's heart like seeing into a glass wardrobe. He could immediately recognize another's negative side or shortcomings, but His technique of teaching was in appreciating and encouraging whatever good qualities a person had. This was also practiced by Holy Mother and Swami Vivekananda. The teacher's duty is to make better persons, and this needs to be done with a loving heart.

17. Build-up creative relationships. It is possible and to some extent desirable when family members, relatives or friends are engaged, for example, in some sort of cultural activity intellectual pursuits, undertaking some voluntary service or even pursuing some business undertaking together. In fact, examples of such relationships are not wanting, which should be emulated.

18. We should also transcend relationships from the lower to the higher, from surface to deeper, from physical to mental and spiritual. How do we transcend relationships? If love is only concerned with the body, then it is only animal love. If the love encompasses both the body and mind, then this love becomes somewhat deeper. And even if the physical side of love fades, love may continue. But love will be sustained, pure and blissful, when love encompasses the spirit inside our beloved. This is what is called 'spiritualizing the relationship.'

This relationship will not only elevate the one you love, but will elevate you as well. It may start with loving the body and mind, but finally, it must transcend and mature into a spiritual relationship.

19. By broadening the boundaries of relationships, we can broaden our heart and get greater joy. We need not just limit love to our family, to our friend or to our neighbors. It is possible to cultivate of love anytime and anywhere in anything. In my own way, I want to be a friend in our locality; with children by giving candy; by talking with local people who are out for morning walks; being friendly with their dogs; friendly with the postman, deliveryman, cab drivers and shopkeepers.

What is the way? Giving smiles, sincere greetings and candy Prasad, Everyday greeting with feeling and a little smile go a long way in fostering relationships with others, as such gestures of goodwill count much in many ways.

20. Our eternal relationship is with God. We should always be aware of this relationship and cultivate it accordingly. Focusing on this relationship with God and adjusting our other relationships accordingly helps in all our relationships.

Conclusion:

At the end of this lengthy discussion on healthy relationships, if it is asked what the prerequisites of such relationships are, the answer is that primarily three things are essential. The **first** thing is reducing the level of the ego and the **second** is enhancing the level of patience and the **third** is to see your 'self' in others and other's self in you. If we remember and practice these three rightly and earnestly, the practice of the other techniques of healthy relationships will become easier.

The bottom line is how to practice these three basic things; reducing ego and enhancing patience and seeing the 'self'. The best way to curb our ego is to substitute our 'I-ness and my-ness' with 'thou-ness and thy-ness'. This has two aspects. One is putting others first, whenever, wherever and to whatever extent possible, which we already noted. The second aspect is to try to get connected with God and then to connect to others through God. Meditation and prayer helps a lot to inculcate this attitude in us.

Enhancing our level of patience becomes easier if we can practice this curbing of our ego with some success. In addition, we will grow the power of understanding others and have better control of mind through self-analysis, meditation and prayer. Meditation on our real nature also helps us to see our self in others and others self in us. Thus the practice of meditation, prayer, self-analysis, and some basic disciplines are not only vital for our spiritual life, but also vital in establishing an enjoyable, sustainable, creative, and elevated relationships with others, which every one of us craves for. ■

India, as a part of me

- Koji Sato

I was a college student when I first visited India in 1993. With the travel guide “Chikyu-no-arukikata” at hand, I made a backpacking tour of North India, from Delhi to Calcutta. As many backpackers did in Calcutta, I stayed at a cheap hotel along Sadar Street and volunteered assisting Leprosy patients at Mother Teresa’s facility for a week. I still recall the first encounter with an Indian film at the cinema hall near the hotel that mesmerized me totally. After coming back to Japan, I sought out a job that might lead me to India once more, and joined the Japan Foundation in 1995, the cultural wing of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. There I got a chance to work with the Indian Embassy for the Indian film festival in 1998, where we introduced some of Raj Kapur’s works and several Bollywood masterpieces including ‘Mr India,’ directed by Shekar Kapur. The summer of 1998 was the first wave of Indian movie boom, when commercially distributed ‘Muthu’ and ‘Bombay’ and our festival made good influence on each other to popularize Indian movies. I still remember well the excitement I was feeling to be a part of the forefront of India-Japan exchange.

In early 1999, I got the order from the Foundation to work at its office in New Delhi. It was spring in Tokyo, but when I reached there, the LOO was welcoming me. Yes, it was the hottest season of the year in Delhi. At that time I did not know any Indian language, but soon after arrival, I met with an Indian gentleman I owe a lot for making what I am now-‘juta hai Japani, fir bhi dil hai Hindustani.’ He was Dr. Bharat Singh, a professor at Central Hindi Institute (currently the principal of the Delhi school). He is I am sure one of the best Hindi teacher in the world and not only succeeded in making me fluent in the language in just the first 6 months’ teaching, but internalizing Indian culture into my body and soul. “Treat guest as a member of the family” was the core value of his teachings, and he taught it to me by his regular daily action. His family welcomed me every time I visited them, even when I didn’t give them previous notice. On holidays, they often took me to their village homes where I could learn the simple and beautiful life and culture through communication with the local people. I believe that the culture of forwarding hookah to each other sitting on charpai is one of the best moments you can experience only in India and I regret still now that I did not bring back to Japan the charpai that guru-ji gave me as a gift to keep it at my residence.

Among the arts and culture that I love, music is what I cherish best by practicing personally. Another guru of mine was Mr. Sandeep Shrivastava, who taught vocal music at the Gandarva School of music at that time. Although I could touch upon only the threshold of Indian classical music by learning several ragas from him, the ragas and songs that I memorize such as Bhopali and Bhimpalasi are my precious treasures. It is really wonderful that you can share the mystical sentiment whenever by chanting the lyrics of bhakti such as ‘Sakhi madhur madhur murali bajaye’ or ‘Biraj main dhoom machayo shyam.’ Talking of music, I am a big fan of rock n roll and one of the first things that I did at the initial stage of my living in India was to search for good Indian rock music. The CDs that the owner of a shop at the Khan market recommended to me were titled ‘Desert Rain’ and ‘Kandisa,’ played by a band named Indian Ocean. I was knocked-out by the originality of their sound that rocks and at the same time has its base on their roots folkloric

music. It was not long before I got a chance to go to their concert and made friends with the members of the band. By



the time I learned Hindi and Indian culture more, I also got to be attracted by the lyrics of the songs that the members found the seed ideas from Hindu mythology and poems by Kabir or contemporary revolutionary, Gorakh Pandey. I was especially moved by the story behind the song called ‘Kandisa,’ that is one of the most popular and most beautiful songs of the band. It is the Christian chanting that travelled from ancient Syria and kept being sung to the present at local churches in some parts of Kerala in Aramaic, the language said to have been spoken by Jesus Christ. I love the band not only for their music but for their personalities, wit, intelligence, and friendship. Aside from the concert, it was always fun to visit their rehearsal at Karol Bagh or home parties. Other than the influence of two guru-jis, what the band members contributed to make me Indianized was huge! And I must tell you, the reader of ‘Anjali’ that out of the four original members of the band, three are Bengalis. Because of the fact, I tend to trust what the Bengalis talk about even at the first meeting.

Our friendship had developed into the next stage after I took leave from the office to join the band on their participation in the performing arts festival at Edinburgh. Through the process of struggling together on the streets in UK in order to promote the band’s concerts, lodging together at the same rented house, I got to feel myself to be a part of the band. From the time on, I started to talk about the band as ‘We’ and the passion to introduce the music to people in Japan was growing bigger day by day. I wrote about the band and sent it to the Headquarters and our music events collaborators. It was not an easy task, but finally my passion bore fruit in the project to present the music of India, Bangladesh and Afghanistan at one time in Japan. It was August, 2002. Because it was my ‘dream project,’ I took days off from the office once again and flew to Tokyo several days after Indian Ocean left for Japan. When I checked in at the hotel in Tokyo and joined the band, they started talking nice things about a Japanese lady who was assisting their tour. As I have written, I tend to trust whatever the Bengalis talk about. The lady is with me now as my wife and we named our two daughters Sara and Maya, both after Indian goddesses (Sara is from Sarasvati, Maya is, of course, the mother of Buddha). Indian Ocean, as you may know, has become very popular now, writing soundtrack for several films such as Aamir Khan’s ‘Peepli Live,’ and just released their new album ‘Tandanu,’ in collaboration with such super musicians as Shubha Mudgal, Karsh Kale, and Shankar Mahadevan. I am

very pleased to see the development of the band's music, and wish to see them again soon.

Another Bengali who gave me strong impressions was a writer, Ms. Mahashweta Devi. Some of her works have been translated in Japanese, including "Death of Jagmohan," and it was a great honor to have a chance to meet her. I met her at her residence with some Japanese writers who visited India for writers' exchange program. Her message to us that lives strongly in my mind is; "Do what you want to do, live as you wish. Life is very short."

After my tenure in Delhi was over, my duty at the Japan Foundation shifted more west to the Middle East, and my second overseas mission was Cairo, Egypt from 2007 to 2011. It is frustrating that I do not have enough chances to visit India,

but I keep trying my best not to lose touch with my good old friends there. The last time I visited there was the summer of 2009, when I was surprised to see the city development, especially the airport and underground! It was a little pity to have fewer chances to see cows on the street, but I was quickly relieved to find the same 'Aapka ghar jese sochhyega' kind of great hospitality of the people there.

According to jyotish, Indian astrology, in previous life I was an Englishman who lived in India for long to seek for nirvana. In this current life, I was born as Japanese and again, called by India's strong gravity. It is a great honor to be welcome by the Bengali association in Tokyo, and all our families look forward to see you all at this year's Durga puja and many other happy occasions. ■

**IT is the mercy of my true Guru that
has made me to know the un-
known ;**

**I have learned from Him how to walk
without feet, to see without eyes,
to hear without ears, to drink with-
out mouth, to fly without wings ;**

**I have brought my love and my
meditation into the land where
there is no sun and moon, nor day
and night.**

**Without eating, I have tasted of the
sweetness of nectar ; and without
water, I have quenched my thirst.**

**Where there is the response of delight,
there is the fullness of joy. Before
whom can that joy be uttered ?**

**Kabir says : " The Guru is great
beyond words, and great is the
good fortune of the disciple."**

**KABIR'S POEM TRANSLATED BY RABINDRANATH TAGORE ASSISTED BY
EVELYN UNDERBILL**

Matrimony Bengal

- Sougata Mallik

Its summer, and a few wedding invitations have been received already. Always nice to dress well, enjoy the fine cuisine, chit-chat or gossip with folks and recline in the happiness of the newly wed youngsters. As much as I enjoy being part of these, I also keep wondering to myself – how hard is it to arrange a wedding, does the inadequacy in a character reveal itself in these alliances, can you judge the impending happiness or success of such treaties?

I am speaking of the recent weddings that I happened to attend. Rewinding back a few months or years, I find a current trend in North America of Bengali parents seeking Bengali alliances for their sons and daughters. That should not be difficult considering the numerous population of Bengal-bred professionals settled or living here. As we live, breed and flourish – the extended families grow and every corner of this foreign soil holds its head high with existence of engineers, doctors, IT professionals, entrepreneurs etc. When the family is young, we will find parents touring, enjoying with kids. When these kids grow up to be teenagers, parents are overly conscious of their academic achievements and trying to settle them in their respective fields. The heritage with which their parents inherited the distant land has to be maintained. And – in time when these children grow up into their adulthood, the parents become overwhelmed with prospective marriage plans for their offspring. When we colonize overseas, we bring with us a heavy baggage of values and traditions. That ambience becomes our signature, and we carry it on our shoulders with might and pride.

So it was.....One fine day I get call from a lady whom I have met few times. After courteous exchange of greetings, she requests me to alliance between her daughter and the son of my friend. She gave a vivid description of how good her daughter is, how accomplished the girl has been, how well she is doing at work, how attractive she looks, how Bengali alliances can be reliable, and on it went. The mother has been trying for last 4 years to find a suitable alliance for her daughter and is hoping my association may help her succeed in this endeavor. Honoured I was that I have been remembered in such need, but also bewildered and confused. An accomplished, successful girl as her mother describes, is unable to necessitate a suitable match! A complete stranger like me who is forced to believe in whatever the mother says is entrusted with the heavy responsibility of chartering a future life. But my joy and self-esteem were in leaps. How important I have become now!! I readily jumped into action. Called my friend (mother of prospective groom) and narrated the innumerable qualities of this unfamiliar girl and how the two unknown characters can be a perfect match. The excitement I experienced was vast. I was being embedded in joint alliance of a future that I can claim to be a part of. Someday when they recall their lives, I may be remembered fondly. In this little cartography of life I am holding the pen. What plentiful achievement I am realizing

here! Time will tell how much or how little I have triumphed in my professional and personal life; but at this moment I am quickly graduating to 'Ghotki' (certified marriage-maker in Bengal). And – it didn't go unnoticed. My husband and daughter, drop-jawed were gazing at me in incomprehension. Their eyes stared in perplexity, as if they had never seen me before. Both spurted out, "What are you doing?" I beamed radiantly and replied, "I am fixing a match....."

It didn't end there. A middle aged Bengali lady, a professor in local college whom we all know as single, diligent career woman unexpectedly declares that she is looking for a life partner and would like to be associated with my family members. The news was appreciated but was also a bolt as far as I was concerned. She intends to settle down – that's good. But opting for Bengali alliance again? She had two Bengali husbands with divorces. Similarity of language, food, culture could not reign over incompatibility of temperament and personality. Wouldn't that be a lesson learnt to exercise flexibility? Is it worthwhile to seek Bengali alliance again?

As I am writing this article, I have open next to me a thank-you note for presents and attendance from a newlywed couple who tied their knot recently. I was happy and impressed at the courtesy of these youths. Engrossed as they are in

their new status and honeymoon voyage, they have made sure to remember gentility and refinement. They are fine young man and woman with an interesting marriage arrangement. The groom was raised in Africa and the bride in Middle East, but both are residing in North America now. While education and job took them around different parts of the world, none of them got the time to settle down yet.

Hence, the mothers take it as their responsibility to bug them to get married, get involved in the choices they are making or might be making, and when time comes try best to make the perfect celebration and festivity. I am a mother too – I can understand their feelings. The groom's mother being a professional literate took to online system, rather than call friends or relatives. Of course the filtering came down to 'Bengali girl settled in North America'. After a serious hunt for about a year and \$300 annual subscription to the online organization, she was starting to lose patience. On one such despondent moment she showed the site to her son and told him about her relentless efforts. He eased it for her by choosing one such match and their relationship blossomed on the computer – Email, Messenger, Skype. Within a short time the girl succeeded to get her posting in a location closer to his. Their bond matured and the happiness on wedding day proved they complemented each other well. No matter what - we have to trust our children. Kids these days are far more enterprising, practical and adventurous than what we are as parents, or what we were at their age.

The best surprise and amazement in Bengali matrimony



trend came from this incident. Two families who lived in the same city for many years were somehow not on cordial relation with each other. In natural course the members of these two families were not well acquainted. As fate would determine, the son of one of them and the daughter of the other happened to work in the same vicinity. Unaware they met, courted and found out that they belong to the families who are unwarm of each other. Their parents were happy when they initially learnt that the prospective other half is Bengali. Not soon after did they realize the actuality of strangeness. Needless to say, a wedding was arranged, all were invited and the celebration was festive. Once again it ascertained that youngsters these days are courageous, ingenious and can take bold steps above the ordinary. They submitted to Bengali alliance, but also succeeded in bridging a gap with harmony and friendship. Both families were made to forget petty differences of many years and revel in happy spirit of the occasion. From childhood we had heard of the saying '*Man proposes but God disposes*'. In the last two incidents I mentioned, all I can say is '*parent proposes and child disposes*'!

Bengali weddings are fun, elaborate and time-taking. There is no harm in opting for Bengali alliances. It gives one the chance of indulgence, exercising acquaintance and expertise. Very little is foreign in such alliances. So the ease of preparation, the joy of organizing is always there. But when it comes down to the recent trend of choosing Bengali bride and groom, it makes me wonder is it worth the cliché? Marriages are meant to be a union. When the mind and soul merges, it is enough to transcend geographical and cultural barriers. When I witness the smiling faces and sparkling disposition of youngsters in matrimony, I marvel at their accomplishment, dexterity, agility. As I indulge in the glee and fun of these wedding parties I forget who they are, which state they come from, what language they speak. I see the bright light of happiness and find solace in thinking that this ray of bliss will contribute to peace in its own little way. Their happy life will breed happy posterity. The contentment will spread from one to the other, from one generation to the next. If all happens in this way, maybe we can look forward to a sphere of harmony and content that is devoid of unrest, quarrel, instability. ■

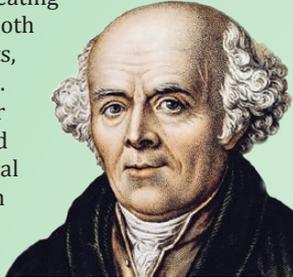


Homeopathy

- Dr. P.S Krishnamurthy

Transcript of a discourse at Nippon Vedanta Kyoukai, transcribed by Nishant Chanda

I am very happy to address you all about Homeopathy. Dr. Hahnemann, the founder of Homeopathy, was living in Germany. He was treating in Allopathy so many diseases, both acute and chronic with no results, except a small variation of pain. Actually, Hippocrates, the 'father of medicine', he mentioned there are two types of theoretical approaches to treat diseases in people. First he said Allopathic medicines, which works on law of opposites. For example, there is a Diarrhea, the Allopathic doctor gives him medicine to make him constipated. This is called to 'treat on opposites'. This is called in Latin, *Contraria Contrariis*. So Hahnemann, was not satisfied. But Hippocrates had mentioned another law that was, to treat the patient's disease on the symptoms of similar. That is called in Latin: *Similia Similibus Curentur*.



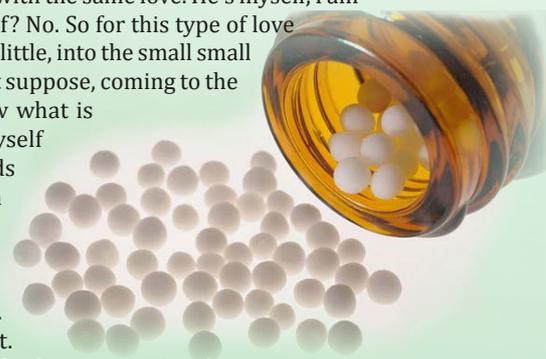
Dr. Hahnemann

There is another important point, Hahnemann has introduced himself, which was: only one medicine to use at a time, and secondly to give it at a minimum dose. These two were his contributions. And most importantly, he mentioned, the materialistic medicine with matter is one aspect which brings lot of side-effects. Even now, if we take painkiller Anacin, it produces a side-effect. Such side-effects are not there in Homeopathy. My own brother, disciple of one of the presidents of Ramakrishna Order, he was taking every time Anacin for small pains here and there. So in Chennai Madras, he had a heavy bleeding, from mouth, nose, and anus. Usually in such bleedings, we transfuse blood. But any amounts of transfusions of healthy normal blood did not help, he passed away. So such side-effects, what we call in medicine; drug induced effects. That is common with any medicine like Allopathy etc. That is absolutely unavoidable.

So, now coming to the point of, what is the greatness of Homeopathy: it is matter less. Homeopathy does not use matter. He introduced Dynamization, which is, a small particle of matter, is put into sugar of milk, and is pulverized hundred times. Another point Hahnemann introduced is, Potency, which means nine parts of sugar milk to one part of 1X medicine. So how this medicine is acting without matter? That is an interesting question to ask oneself. So in the process of dynamization, its not dilutionized, it is dynamized many times. So, that becomes energetic. Matter and energy, their related physics are sides and the reverse of the same coin. So, that is the beauty of Homeopathy.

Another point is, how many diseases can it treat? Usually, when a patient is suffering from a disease or illness, we will put a number of grades (1st grade, 2nd grade, 3rd grade, and 4th grade). Suppose diabetes, which has four stages. The first two three grades it can definitely be eradicated easily. It need not be completely cured. That is very important. You take for instance, blood pressure. The normal blood pressure is 120/80 for all age groups. So, as blood pressure increases, one has to take an allopathic medicine to reduce it reduce it, and lifelong to use it. But that does not mean it is cured, it is controlled. What is controlled is the level of blood pressure; the disease

is not cured. That is when homeopathy comes in. Homeopathy cures, and medicine is not required lifelong. There is a wrong notion in the public about homeopathy: the small tiny pill can it cure such a big disease? It cannot cure, we are taking so many tablets, vitamins, etc, 15~20 types of medicines, in a day. When that is not able to cure, then how can this small pill cure the disease? It is a strange condition wrong notion in the public. So we have conducted, 100s of experiments, BP, diabetes, and other incurable conditions. To cure an acute and chronic disease is normal but, Homeopathy has a specialty and what is that specialty? Not only to cure acute and chronic diseases, but also narrow down incurability in the patient if it is in the early stages, the first two or three stages. Suppose it is in the terminal stage, the last stage, it can be cured still. That is the definition of cure Hahnemann had put forward. You see, very small tiny pills. Just like a mosquito's egg. You see this liquid, just one drop, or even half a drop, that's enough. So people believe this is a small- no no no no. We want so much. For BP, for headache, for migraine, for constipation, for my pain in the liver, for my heart attack, like that They are right, so the doctor who treats the patient should have enormous love. What is that Enormous Love? As if he is my own, I am him, I am he. So how affectionately you will treat such people? You put your feet, in the shoes of this patient. How many doctors are treating the patients with such an ideal treatment? There is a booklet, *Love Medicine* The medicine is to love, love means not at the physical level, but at the spiritual level. I'll give you a small example, what the definition of love is, Jesus Christ being crucified, yes, crucified. And then, they wanted to punish the people who were crucifying. Do you know what Jesus said? Please, don't punish them, they do not know what they are doing. That is the law of love. How many doctors are doing that? Mahendralal Sarkar, who is a doctor, of course Maharaj has mentioned. He was a very famous Allopathic physician. That he was treating Sri Ramakrishna or any other patient, with that ideal of love. Actually, Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, if he asks Mother Kali, does she not be able to cure cancer? He did not ask. He knows it, but he didn't do that. Why? Because he is an incarnation of her. He has come and taken human birth, so he has got to fulfill his duty, in the world. And then, there is, wonderful another beautiful saying in Islam. This morning, Maharaj was talking about renunciation. Renunciation, forget everything, leave everything. You know the Quran says? Of course it is in Urdu, I slowly tell it. (Marjao, marne ka paha) You die before you are dead. The spirit of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna was this one which Maharaj was carefully mentioning this morning. You can say that, "this is not homeopathy, what is it you are telling all about it". I am telling the question of love. How many doctors, are treating their patients, with the same love. He's myself, I am himself. Do I neglect myself? No. So for this type of love to express, I transgressed a little, into the small small things, excuse me for it, but suppose, coming to the point of obesity, you know what is obesity? Oh, Boy. I was myself weighing 110kg. 2.2 pounds is one kilogram. You can imagine how huge I was, my wife will tell. Of course I have taken medicine, and then, I observed the diet. Food intake I observed it. There are some people, who live to eat. But there are some



people, who eat to live. Maharaj is like that. Of course I am telling many people are there, I am not denying that. But I'm telling that, eat a little, that's a discipline, greatest discipline in the world. Don't live to eat.

So coming to the point of, Homeopathy, I am now, devoted, and dedicated, to treat any number of patients. I don't wish that you should be sick, but if you have any health problems, please pass it on to my ID, through Swamiji, or his assistants, not only now, but during my whole life time. I will be too happy, to treat you, with that love of affection. Yes, I've treated about twelve Japanese, 20 years ago, they visited me, unfortunately I did not have their addresses. It's a mistake... So when I was coming here, I searched here and there, and couldn't find it. Believe it or not, one person was having severe migraine. You know what is migraine? Severe headache... So severe, he wanted to break his head against the wall. Unbearable pain! And two of my patients, they drowned in the well, because of pains and sufferings. So that lady was very happy, she had no pain. So I was citing this he gets headache on every alternate day. I gave him only one, single dose, but he may not believe it, so I gave him some placebo. What is placebo is some sugar of milk for about three months. And he went away, and he said, I have no headache. This is the type of love, I exhibited. And another lady came, suffering from cancerous pains. You know cancer? Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna, was treating through me. I'm not treating.

Where am I? Because Maharaj was telling this morning, ego... ego, it doesn't go. No no no, Even the lord Sankaracharya, he kept for himself, a small element of ego, to teach in the 34 years of life. He kept a small ego, to educate, to give out, and Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna had such a small ego. Yes, but he said all the things. You open the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna* you find all Vedas. There are four Vedas you know? You find the substance of Vedas. They are given by God.

See one of the important researches I have done is, on fat people. I gave few medicines, because, one medicine cannot cure all fat people, no. Each individual is different. But in Allopathy, they give the same medicine, killing their appetite, so if there is no appetite, they may reduce. So half-salad take four five drugs from Homeopathy, here the selection is very difficult. You may have something, and the same obese man may have something else, and I may have something else. All the three people require three different medicines. So therefore, they were alright, they became normal, not reducing the diet... no, but not eating to live...no. Limited food, sumptuous food, all food, good food. They are all right. And then, in diabetes, the sugar level will be really high, there however we treat in other systems of medicines, they do not come under control. There is one medicine in Homeopathy that was actually Allopathic medicine. 3/4ths of Homeopathic medicines are Allopathic. We brought them and prepared them into our laws, it is called fluorine. It was published in the medicine magazines. You believe it or not, the sugar-levels, absolutely came down to normal. This is a very good experiment, one important factor I wish to tell you.

You see in homeopathy, there is a type of individualization. That means, hundred questions, what is this man, does he feel happy, if he has got pain here, if you press it, does it get well, or it gets worse, the head ache gets worse by pressing, eliminated or aggravated. Suppose you know I told you about migraine. What was he doing, he was pressing his head against the wall.

Maharaj: So different types of same patients, what are the circumstances. Then symptoms also, different. Homeopathy asks many questions about that. That means, for example, cold, you see cold because of fatigue, then because of change in weather, or sudden exposure to heat, or change of season, or because of constipation, so many reasons are there. So homeopathy is asking, what are the details, how you had the disease.

Dr. Krishnamurthi: That is the law of homeopathy.

Similar treats similars. What are the symptoms of this patients, you collect them, and what are the symptoms of the drug you are giving, and match them, if they are similar, then it choose.

Maharaj: First, very important, you have to match two things. First of all, the symptoms you have. Then, if you take this medicine, what are the symptoms. You see, when you take the medicine, what are the symptoms you have. Then you match. Then that is the treatment.

Dr. Krishnamurthi: I'll give you a small example. You know Bheema, brother of Pandavas, and there is one Kheechida, the demon, Duryodhan's brother. So this Bheema beat the Kheechida, black and blue, so much he beat, then, the Kheechida went to homeopathic doctor. This homeopathic doctor, asked Kheechida, were you beaten by his right hand or left hand. That is homeopathy.

I'll give one example and close it. A big contribution by Hahnemann. He said, whatever medicine you give, you have to know what it does. Suppose you are giving some medicine, before giving the medicine, you should first of all prove yourself, what symptoms it produces, what diseases it cures. This is not there in other systems. This is the contribution of homeopathy and Hahnemann. And not taken a surgical diseases, no. Surgery is common to everybody. That's it. And some people do, animal experimentation. Researches, in Allopathy. They don't perform on humans. But Hahnemann did on himself, his wife, his children, and his friends, and disciples, and found out what are all the symptoms of the drugs. And prepared a materia medica. Different medicines. That is homeopathic medica.

So question and answer now? Ask any question. Maharaj should translate it.

Q. Is there any treatment for skin allergy?

A. The doctor who treats allergies, is called an Allergologist, he is specialist. So what he said, allergy cannot be completely cured. No. We can give medicine to stop itching, a little. But then again, he goes on scratching. ...Maharaj, he wanted me to go somewhere to treat a lady, who has an allergy for small food, rice. So we both went there, I forgot the name of the country. Singapore. You believe it or not. We give one medicine, and only placebo, placebo. For about six months, and she is eating lot of rice and no allergy. Similarly, the latest dermatology, skin disease eczema, there is a weeping eczema, ring worm, like that. Dermatology first of all, we should know, what type of disease of this skin, the patient is suffering from. So that symptoms we collect. Then we will find out, from the Homeopathic drug, those symptoms which have produced the skin symptoms in that patient; eczema or whatever it is. So, she got well.

I will tell you, you know white patches? Vitiligo, you know what is vitiligo? Depigmentation...In the research we have done, we have documented, I will show you before treatment and after treatment. This is science and art. He said, science without cause and science without reason is no science. Maharaj mentioned this morning.

Maharaj: I said, science without religion has no root.

Dr. Krishnamurthi: Wonderful

Maharaj: And religion without science has no fruit.

Dr. Krishnamurthi: Good. He was telling. Truth.

Maharaj: Dr. Krishnamurthi, now my question is, for example Allopathic medicine ingredients you see, some sort of, different types of, some time vegetable, sometime copper, or iron, many types of things. Then sometimes snake's poison, so from many things they, prepare the ingredients. Q. What are the ingredients of homeopathic medicine?

Dr. Krishnamurthi: There are three types of homeopathic drugs. From vegetable kingdom, that is any type of plant medicine, is Vegetable kingdom. And mineral kingdom, what is mineral kingdom? Gold, silver, yeah mineral kingdom.

And also, animal kingdom. Yeah. Animal kingdom. We have a medicine. You know what is scorpion? We prepare, medicine out of it. Yes, for those people, who are bitten by it, you know? It bites... doesn't bite, but you know it stings? It stings like that and unbearable pain. So we have three varieties of medicines: vegetable, mineral, and poisonous. You know cobra? And you know Hahnemann's disciple Herring? Herring is Hahnemann's disciple. So when he was preparing the venom of the cobra. Venom, into homeopathic medicine he had lots of side-effects on his whole skin and it became black, yeah...Cobra. If you ask me, I will give you only one medicine, you take it and treat means that medicine is called Lachesis is the venom of the cobra. It is useful, in majority of the women's disease. Menopause, so many things. And madness, you know what is madness? Became mad, you know? It is a beautiful medicine.

Similarly, along with three varieties, there is another fourth variety, that is energy. You know magnet? What is there in the magnet? Magnetic Energy. South Pole and North Pole. Electricity, is an energy. So we expose delusions, empty delusions to the light. Where do we get the biggest light? Near the sun rays, yes, and then prepare it. You know big industries has lots of noise? So we put, where there is noise, a small, delusion, kept it there for three days, that medicine is treating deafness. Yeah. I'm not joking! You give me some half dozen deaf people, I'll give some medicines and go away, and inform Maharaj, how far their hearing is cured. There is a metri... you know audiometer? The ENT surgeon uses it how much deafness has gone, 20 degrees, 40 degrees, how much, how much in left ear, how much in right ear. So that will keep it, and after the medication, we'll get it again and scan it, by ENT, it's a normal. That's it.

Recently, I prepared another medicine. That is proton, and neutron. Atomic energy, you know? You have atomic energy also, proton, and electron, these are the two powers of energy. Proton and neutron. This placebo liquid, near that proton generating this thing. And, we prepare two medicines, you believe it or not, they are doing excellent work. For majority of 80% of chronic disease. And where the sun heat is there you know? The sun heat, where summer is more. I don't know about your weather problems here summer is very high you know? Very high. Maximum. Tropical countries, means very strong heat. And they have lots of problems. Weather illness, suppose you go out in the rain, you get shyness, or headache, or fever. No I'm just telling, called weather vagaries. So for that, those

two medicines, are working very well, I have offered them to the government of India, to prepare more medicines. And also, I suggested to our Prime Minister, sent an email. Dear Sir, please see these medicines are useful for the villagers, poor children. There, who will treat them? They have their dispensaries.

Q: What is the mechanism of treating Arterial Sclerosis in Homeopathy?

A: Arterial Sclerosis in other words is called the ageing of tissues, bone, skin and muscle tissues ageing process. That does not mean an 80 year old or 90 year old person will have Arterial Sclerosis. The people who does not have, as defined before by me, who eat to live, observe strict discipline in life, regulated life, mentally no depression, and love for everybody, in this condition of life there is no Arterial Sclerosis. Some people are aging gracefully, who doesn't have this disease. Some people who are ageing prematurely, such people can be treated as they come in early age group like in their 20's or 30's. Like they have grey hair, wrinkled skin, without any energy, they can be treated definitely.

Maharaj: Every system has their special effects on some diseases. In that way no system is perfect. On other hand can cure many diseases. The problem is when the doctors claim, like an Allopathic doctor claims that our system is the most scientific and all other systems are unscientific, we can cure all diseases. Homeopathy also says Allopathy is full of reactions so come to us. Ayurveda is telling we are treating with all natural materials so come to us. Then Yoga people will say don't have any medicine, do some Pranayams, Yogic postures will cure you. Spiritualist will say nothing necessary realize your own nature. Your 'Atman' is a source of unlimited energy. But my conclusion is, at certain point for some diseases, it's better to consult an Allopathy, in case of surgery. If bone broken you have to go to a surgeon, there Homeopathy could not help. In some children diseases and some chronic disease, Allopathy only suppress that but can't control. There Homeopathy does excellent job there! Then Ayurveda is excellent in diet, controlling the diet. Also has some medicine and massage.

So all the systems are helpful in treatment from case by case. So can't say any system and Doctor is good or bad. It varies from case by case. So don't be dogmatic. I'm trying to bring the balance.

Dr. Krishnamurthy: Very nice words from Holy Mother "Don't find fault in others, find your own faults!"

(Dr. P.S Krishnamurthy is the winner of Dhanvantari award in 2008. Dhanvantari Award is considered as the supreme emblem of the recognition for a medical man in the country which is awarded annually since 1973 for the outstanding contribution to medical science. This is the only award in the country which is presented to practitioners of alternate medicine apart from allopathic practitioners and has helped in encouraging holistic approach.)

The Fund Manager Dada

- Tapan Das

Nomoshkar, I am Robinsen Bonar. I'm a 'pret-manob'. No, I am nothing like those Hollywood-designed ghastly looking Halloween weirdoes called zombies. Neither do I eat brains. I look like an average, non-descript potbellied *Bangali* with oil-sleeked side-parted hair, powdered back-of-neck, with an all-purpose *rumal* in my pocket. I just happen to hold dual citizenship: of human world and of spirit world.

Yes, I know what's on your mind. I am lucky. I am one of the chosen few. But to be honest, I have visited the spirit world only twice before: mainly because the immigration officers at the entry ports are a pain in the neck. "Why are you visiting?" "Whom will you visit?" "What have you brought with you?" "We will have to check all your recent updates on social networking sites first": they take the pleasure away from trips. But I do visit them virtually on our networking sites: 'chayakhata' and 'spiritweet'. Such fun that is. I get to follow all the stars and divas of my dream: Uttam, Suchitra, Manna, Rituporno...my friend list glows with glamour! Just a few months ago, Uttam da posted on 'chayakhaata' that thank goodness that Suchitra and he had already exited the human world, or they too would have been sent for election campaigns to Birbhum Bankura and what not, in the blistering summer heat. I quite like following their updates on social networking sites. I even got a ticket to a Manna Dey-Jagjit Singh concert recently. This is something that I indeed enjoy of my dual citizenship. I have always looked forward to a post-retirement permanent residence in the spirit world.

But right now, I am in a terrible mess.

I was tugging at a piece of lamb meat at lunch this afternoon, trying to ease the meat off the bone when suddenly the marrow from the bone shot up my windpipe in rocket speed. I choked. Before Reema, my wife, could come and do something to revive me, I had stopped breathing. Now this was a very different feeling. I felt light as air, floating around like a formless, transparent scarf. I understood that my body was completely separated and I was now only a soul. I felt myself sitting on the fan blades (my goodness! Who knew the blades had gotten so dirty and grimy even after the massive cleaning done a month ago!) looking down at my open-mouthed body, still grabbing the culprit bone in gravy-sodden fingers. Reema ran out to find help and in the meanwhile, I just thought I'll make a quick visit to the other world and then when Reema gets back with the doctor, I will slip quietly back in within my earthy form. But now I am in trouble. Reema got back, along with a doctor and some neighbours. Soon Jimmy, our son, joined the howling, head-banging crowd of mourners too. I hurriedly tried to get back into my body, but I failed. Now I panicked. This has never happened before! I had always been able to leave the body for a while and visit the other world, but could always get back in.

Much that I enjoyed being 'dual-spirited,' I wasn't yet ready for a final exit from the human world. And now of all days! It's *pujo* in a month and I am the convener of the purchase committee of our *Club pujo*. These boys will all be lost without me, their favourite 'Angrez da', as I am called by them at times! Not to say anything of missing the nabami feast and the post-dashami bijoya feasts that are supposed to keep me occupied for a month. And then there is Reema – I can't possibly leave her all by herself yet. We are a team, a rocking one. Our partnership has been stuff of movie plots: conservative Brahmin girl marrying an 'Anglo' against the wishes of the Chabi Biswas-type patriarch in the family made quite a sensation those days. Even before the dust on such a marriage had settled down, we kept popping

up in conversations in the hood: for our polar difference in temperament, yet the fevicol-bond we shared. I am outgoing and thrive on social interactions and participation. She gets tired of too many people around her. So each time that I have stood in the elections in the past thirty years, Reema campaigned against me and requested people to not elect me, so she could ensure that I spent more time with her and Jimmy. Without fail, every evening I would bring home something special for her and she would cook something finger licking good for me, to go with hot chapattis. A few pegs of 'Old Monk' have always done the trick for me. Rafi, Manna Dey, Shakti Chakraborty, and Ezekiel would all come flooding my sensibilities. Countless evenings I uttered my favourite lines pointing to my wife and son:

'I am standing for peace and non violence
Why world is fighting,
Why all people of World
Are not following Mahatma Gandhi,
I am simply not understanding.
Ancient Indian Wisdom is 100% correct.
I should say even 200% correct.
But modern generation is neglecting-
Too much going for fashion and foreign thing.'

I can't deprive her of my company so early, so much without preparation.

I was feeling very dejected that I would not be able to be a part of the grand Puja celebrations, I was supposed to take up the role of 'Heramba babu' in our club drama, 'Lord Cornwallis'er Chata'. I had planned to enjoy the Bombay night with my friends sitting in the first row with the VIPs and even have Shankar Panda's 'LuchiMangsho' at his stall. Alas! What can I do now?

I thought fondly of my *tentultala addas*. As coffee House was to Moidul and D'souza, *Tentultala* is to me. From self-composed sher o shayaris to lines from The Beatles, from trifolia street lamps in Kolkata to the Telengana issue, Intensive survey, Indranil's mind boggling souvenir and memorabilia collection ,or our Choto Shakeel's sher o shayeri, our adda has always been my lifeblood. The past few days we had been so incensed with the ebola virus that it formed most of our two/three hour adda sessions. Besides, my tentultala buddies have been my support system always. From kids' career and admissions and jobs to each other's health and hobbies, from puja planning to winter picnics, planning newer ways of membership induction drive, Football, Cricket, we tentultala buddies are always living



the shared experience of life where age is considered just a number. The spirit world can never provide me with such fulfilling tentultala experience, I'm sure!

Most of all, I had a score to settle with Haripal Bhatta of our *pujo* committee. He has always been mad at me for not letting him pocket extras from the *pujo* fund. His disappointed comments were peppered with 'Oh shit' without the 'h'. 's[h] it Robin babu, you are just always messing up my plans. Oh S[h]it! You are such a bummer!' But I have always managed to keep him checked. This time, I suspect he is up to some big trick, just to get at me. How can I go away and let him win? *Maa, oshoter joy hotedionaamaa, Bhattaashurke aamaay thanda korar chance daao, maa*, I implored in despair as I looked at my shroud covered body and the queue of mourners coming in to drown me in more and more flowers and garlands.

I just had to sort this mess out. I just *have* to get back in my human body.

I reached the citizenship office of the spirit world and demanded explanation, but the bored-looking *pret*-clerk, who kept playing solitaire on the computer even as I spoke, eyed me suspiciously for arriving from earth, tested me for ebola, and just asked me to 'file a complaint.' Indignant, I vented it all out on *chayakhaata* and *spiritweet*. In a minute, my post had 90 'likes' and several consolatory messages. But nothing to resolve my issue! Dejected, I hit the bar. At least here 'Babaji marka amrit,' a version of *somras*, was free and of unlimited supply – this cheered me up a little. Floating by, I came across several spirit rehabilitation centres. In an open window I spotted our unique moustache man *Virappan dada*, doing mandatory community service as part of the criminal correction and rehabilitation plan: burning chunks of sandal wood to circulate sandalwood smoke through the spirit world. Hmmm, not bad, I thought. I also saw several young lads, may be in their early twenties, looking after infants and toddlers. I spent some time watching them, curious about the type of correctional therapy they were undergoing. Finally it dawned on me: on earth, they had been hanged for being guilty of rape. Here in this spirit world correctional facility, they are being made to 'mother' a child: they were being made to do all that a mother has to do to take care of a child. This way, by doing selfless acts of care and service as mothers do, they are learning empathy, learning to respect others and themselves.

I wandered along, still feeling restless. I peeped back at the human world and saw that the fight over my body was still on. I tried shoving all *horidaspals* out and tried whispering in Reema's ears but could do neither. I felt helpless. Floating by in the spirit world, looking for a solution or at least an explanation, I bumped in to a small group of people gathered under a tree. Had to be a Bong gang, I thought to myself! Look at those steaming cups of cha and cigarettes between fingers and the rising voices on *didi's* politics and future of Congress, this club, that club, Brazil, Germany and Bharat Ratna. I could even hear a passionate rendition of 'Abanibariaaacho?' It reminded me so much of tentultala and our gang. As I went closer, I suddenly felt a sharp jolt of pleasure! So many long-gone known faces! Ramu da, Jeevan da, Sengupta da, Sreengupta da, Chatterjee da, Bose da, Maity da, Dutta da, Sen da, Das da, Lahiri da, Ghosh da, Chanda da, Mukherjee, Mondol Saheb, Ahmed miyan! They waved at me as soon as I approached.

"Arrey Robin! You here too, finally?"

"Bonar babu! What a pleasure!"

"Tumi kobe ele Robin bhaya? Just the other day I saw you campaigning for elections. Did you win?"

I was pumped by these hearty comments of welcome and recognition. I told them my story. Suddenly, they were all rather quiet, eyeing each other knowingly. I sniffed a rat. But they didn't say anything on this anymore. Mukherjee and Bose da took me to a meeting that evening, which turned out to be a spirit world *pujo* committee meeting. I wasn't surprised, because it was festive season, and I knew the spirit world celebrated all festivals: from Navroze to Durga puja to lantern festivals. This was truly one world. I had learnt so much about world festivals from pictures and updates in Chayakhata. But this time, I was not quite in the mood. So I floated around half-heartedly, sad about the festivities I was missing on earth. And now it is too late, I realised. Too late to go back. My body was already being cremated. I read some of the messages people had posted on my Facebook page.

The messages suddenly flared me up again. This is after all a technical fault on the part of the spirit co-ordinators! I wasn't supposed to be permanently up here as yet. I was to be given a day's notice at least, as per the rule book *pret-manobs*. I felt angry but it was frustrating because I had no body now. So I couldn't ball up my fist, couldn't kick, couldn't push or scratch or pinch or punch.

Just then, Bose da whispered in my ears: "Don't be upset about being brought without notice. We always wanted you up here on a permanent basis to manage our festival committee funds, you know. In the recent years funds have been really mismanaged. I read on *Spiritweet* how skilled you are at fund management and we know how you have been keeping that man 'Haripal Bhatta' at bay in human world all these years. So who better than you? So we asked spirit hackers to program your dual spirit account in such a way that as soon as you make a visit here, your return function will be locked, so you can stay here forever. And we will hold an election here and I can assure you that I have hold on a large voter bank. You WILL win the post of fund manager, I can tell you."

"Elections here too?!Really?"

"Yes absolutely. It has to be a democratic choice after all. You don't expect our community to just place someone in authority without popular approval, do you? Haha. Then you don't know us yet."

"No, I agree, elections are the way to go. But..."

"Don't worry Robin, we'll compensate you well for this forced employment." Bose da winked. "free 24/7 virtual access to life on earth."

Well, real managers don't crib. They negotiate to get the maximum. And that's what I did.

"I need a bonus, Bose da. My wife's dual spirit status is to be unlocked so she can come visit me anytime she wants."

"Done, Robin. You indeed are a fevicol-couple."

Well, readers, I can't complain much now, can I? Wife, tentultala, pujo committee – all there. Win-win situation.

As I clapped my hands in joy, with a jolt, my eyes opened. A dream after all! But wouldn't it have been nice if we could commute between the two worlds?

(Strictly Fiction)

So far, so close.....No matter what.....

- Ahnick Bhunia

Sometime during mid of 2009

From past few weeks Aashu was just following her on Orkut, Yes! You read it right, Orkut, the pre-Facebook era, but could not send a connection request. And she might be following him as well. Found her location as Hyderabad, and Aashu had been staying in Mumbai since mid 2007. There was long gap between them, it was a time gap, was a gap of friendship, may be due to anger, misconception and many untold things.

But luckily there was a common friend of them during school days that helped to get connected over Orkut and passed on their phone numbers. Both sides were hesitating to call each other even though they had each other's number. They could have sent a message, but they couldn't.

It was peak of recession and Aashu didn't have much work in office. That's why he started gym for first time ever in his life and shed down 3-4 kilos in first two weeks and brought down it to a double-digit number in terms of kilos. Most of the time he used to stay with his parents in Mumbai and sometime alone. He started daydreaming of lean physique all the day. He is getting used to few words like repetitions, sets, cardio, training, protein, carbs, and fat etcetera. It was a relaxed and stable life for him. But there was a much better reason to be happy and gay because he could trace her, yes finally! But there was no profile photo except one yellow rose on her profile. But Aashu had put a photo with his big chubby face with a voluptuous tummy.

But the situation in Hyderabad was little different. Whole world when struggling with recession, then especially Indian software market could not escape from that. She was worried thinking that she would be the possible victim. There were rumors like her employer might stop their India operation. She was going through lot of depression as she was away from her home, and unfortunately such situations arose during her initial stage of career. The only brighter side was that she could get Aashu's phone number. Actually she was following him since long back when she did not have any social networking account. She had all information about Aashu, like his college, location and all. But never tried to contact him.

28th of May 2009 was a bright warm colorful day for both of them. Aashu was just back from office and was normal chatting with his mother and getting ready for gym. And since morning after so many plans, determined to give her a call. It was 7'o clock in the evening, Aashu was just about to leave for the gym, and the phone rang! SHREYA! Oh gosh, he was not prepared to say "hello".

But Aashu got enough courage to receive the call and started the conversation with hell lot of stammering.

Late 1998 to 2007

Shreya and Aashu, both are from Durgapur, an industrial city of West Bengal. First time they met during privet classes, those were so called tuition batches of 9th standard. But after that they came to know that their preschool and primary school were same and realized that they must have met before, but could not recognize. Shreya belongs to the group of top-notch students, with higher grades and goals, a good girl to every teacher.

Aashu was a kind of struggling in studies, immature, with many complaints from teachers, never ever could put down any dictation perfectly. Eventually he had to borrow others note books to take a copy after every lecture. But none was too kind to lend him, his or her copy every day except Shreya. So with much confidence he used to take her copies after every tuition batches. And every time he used to forget to return her copy back, so finally Shreya started making another copy of her notes for herself first, then she used to pass her copy to Aashu. Slowly and steadily we became good friends, just a good friend to each other.

As the years passed, their friendship got mature. They had got almost all common tutors, and it was like meeting twice or thrice a day while hopping among the classes. There were innumerable memories, fights, incidents, and accidents. Once Aashu said to Shreya "I will slap you." in front of everyone in Physics batch. And Aashu will never forget the consequence. It was nothing less than getting physically slapped back on him. Then Secondary school over, and as usual Shreya could able to fulfill everyone's expectations. Anyhow Aashu could also able to secure as decent grade too. Now they got in the same school for higher secondary but different sessions, that is morning for her and afternoon for me. They became frequent visitor to each other's house to exchange study materials. But be assured that there was nothing but pure friendship between them. But that lasted for very short time.

There was a boy. Good looking, smart and kind of famous in school with a gang of followers came between them. Even though there was no emotional or serious relation between Shreya and Aashu but don't know why the boy and those followers were not taking that positively. Aashu was simple boy, as always, he never understood that something was going wrong around them. He was threatened several times not to roam with Shreya, and not to talk to her, or not be in same privet classes. But he did not take all those seriously.

Aashu was completely unaware that the boy was in contact with Shreya. They started spreading rumors and some crap against Aashu to Shreya, and possibly Shreya believed those partially. During late 2002 they lost frequent meet ups as Shreya got busy with her studies, and Aashu was also struggling to make his parents happy with percentage. Aashu could not realize that Shreya was avoiding him. Because there was nothing serious between us, so Aashu also took it lightly.

But still the ragging was going on in school and classes. That boy used to make fun of Aashu in front of everyone. But Aashu never reacted. But the worst day came shortly after. Unfortunately something wrong happened, and once Aashu could complete all harder problems from Physics book, just in a day and he submitted the assignment. And Shreya borrowed that copy from Aashu, may be for first time. As a result the very next day, after biology tuition, a gang of boys caught Aashu. It was late evening of cold winter. They started hitting without allowing him to utter a single word. Then Aashu realized that the boys were nothing but his friends from his school. Punches and kicks; and literally blood was coming out of his nose and lips. And Aashu had been instructed not to meet or talk to Shreya further. Aashu nodded his head and left the place.

As a consequence, Aashu was so horrified that he could not disclose this to his parents or teachers, and not even Shreya. He felt like crying, was morally so down, confidence was at level zero. Exams, Engineering, JEE, Medical, etcetera were knocking

So far, so close.....No matter what.....

on the door. And the day came and Aashu broke down in front of Shreya, and left just saying sorry. And that was the last time they saw each other.

Aashu got busy with his studies and exams. School over, exams over, results are out. As promised, Aashu could secure merely seventy five percent. Also took admission in Engineering. Those days Aashu was not at all bothered about Shreya or that boy, except anger within him. Aashu had no news or information about Shreya.

On the other hand Shreya got much higher marks that was eighty three percent and secure better rank in engineering. So she entered in a government engineering college in computer science department.

Both of them moved to hostel away from Durgapur, started a new phase of life, which was certainly one of the important and memorable phases, which brings the confidence, personality and most important true friends in their life. In four years of college life, they hardly remembered each other. The only thing that used to hurt Aashu all the time thinking Shreya might have misunderstood him. He should have told her everything. But it was too late. And Aashu believed that he'd remain under guise. Shreya was also unaware about the fact, the only grief with her was how being a friend Aashu could do this to her.

College was over by 2007 and struggle of life begun. It was to secure a job, to earn money and to do whatever wants to do with that money. Aashu moved to Mumbai, and by mid of 2007 he started working in an engineering firm. Shreya also moved to Hyderabad and started working with an IT company. It was another phase of life for both of them, life of freedom.

Back in Mid of 2009

28th May 2009 was the day when they spoke for first time since those long seven years. Yes they never ever encountered each other in last seven years. Nothing even over e-mails or messages as well. Aashu said sorry again, and he could do that, but this time he could explain the proper reason why he escaped seven years back. There were so many things, so many words, so many incidents, and stories lying in those past seven years. They started talking with much dignified voice and maturity. But it was not usual between them. May be all these years brought this change. Aashu explained the incident of getting beaten up by that group and all threats and of course his immaturity. The conversation lasted for over an hour that day. They might have found it very difficult to put down the phone and say bye.

What next? Everything was clear between them. There wasn't any problem between them anymore. But they wanted to explore more and more about each other. But how? Who will call first?

They waited for few days. They couldn't find any reason to call. Meanwhile Aashu is alone in Mumbai those days as his parents were on visit to native place. Everyday he felt like calling her, but could not as he was worried of thinking she might take it in a wrong way.

But he took the risk and called her up, and found it very easy to talk and more casual this time. It went for more than two hours, that also in their second phone call. Again after a day they spoke. There were lots of topic, past and present, incidents of college, office, crushes and many more. Not on a regular basis but they started chatting over phone quite frequently. Meanwhile Aashu skipped a couple of days to call her. There was no reason to call. But Shreya already started missing those calls. She gave a call this time. In those two days she waited for Aashu's call sitting alone on the stairs of her apartment building. She admitted that she expected the calls. It was really unexpected for Aashu.

So in this way, very similar to any teenage relation, long phone calls started, for hours, everyday, turned to three to four times a day. Still Aashu was unaware about how she looks after seven years. Only he could remember the school era and got the blurry image of her geeky face with boys' cut hair. But they didn't think they were in love. They believed that they chat because they were friends. And due to heavy phone calls Aashu used to reach his monthly bill credit limit within a week or two. So after few months, Aashu realized that it was time to choose some economy plan for his phone, and in India a few service providers are popular among love birds for free calls and economy packages. Aashu changed his number. But what was the reason he could explain to others! Very simple and effective, lost his SIM card, yes only SIM card, not the device. Thank god!

But Shreya was not well. The turmoil in her office took her sleep and appetite away. She planned for further studies and returned home. Shreya took admission for Masters and started lectureship in a college. Aashu was always standing beside her in every bad phase during these months. Even Shreya kept him awake whole night till morning, but over phone.

After all those months now the time was to meet face to face. So Aashu planned to visit Durgapur, for first time after he moved to Mumbai, during Durgapuja in October 2009. They planned to meet in a coffee shop and it was a shock for Aashu. He never could imagine Shreya like that. How could she be Shreya! Was it real! So skinny, brownish skin, dark circles! Aashu could not greet her after this shock. And so the coffee tasted bitter too. Might be that was their first date. After that day they met again on Asthami evening and it was an entirely different experience for both of them. They roamed around and hopped few puja-pandals. Together they met few old school buddies. And that was very surprising as well as shocking for them. Shreya and Aashu again together! How! But this time none could dare to ask anything. That was a wonderful evening for them. They will remember each and every moment of that evening forever. Holidays were over. Aashu had to return to Mumbai and resume office. They could meet only for two days in all those days.

Both were back to their normal life and the best part of each and everyday was their hours long phone calls. Finally the day came. Aashu broke his emotion.

It was 16th November 2009, after they ended their phone, Aashu could not hold back the emotion and sent a text to her. It was written just an "I Love You". But soon after Aashu realized that this could be the end of their friendship, which might not be fixed again. He was not prepared to face the consequences. He kept his mobile switched off for the night. Aashu was really worried. On the other hand Shreya was confused. She thought it was merely a joke, like Aashu used to say frequently "Let's get married." She tried his number that night several times, but could not reach him. She was worried too. Next morning Aashu found twenty-one messages of missed call alert and a single text message from Shreya "Was that a forwarded SMS?" As expected Aashu got a call in the morning and this time Aashu could not escape.

Shreya: Hello, Aashu

Aashu: Hello

Shreya: What have you sent me last night?

Aashu: The truth

Shreya: What is truth?

Aashu: The fact

Shreya: What is fact? Don't play with words. What do you mean by that? I cannot concentrate on my studies and nothing is clear to me. What's wrong with you?

Aashu: I cannot take all this like that, I liked you and now I am in love with you.

Shreya: You are immature and kiddish.

Aashu: Whatever. But I told you the fact. Now it is up to you. I am not forcing you or not asking you about anything. This is what I feel about you. That does not mean that you also feel the same.

Shreya: But suddenly what happened to you? Everything was well and good, then why are you trying to bring all these?

Aashu: Sorry, I am in office; I don't have time to discuss all these with you now.

Shreya: But Aashu listen, you cannot escape like that. Explain to me.

Aashu: There is nothing to explain. If you don't want to understand then none can make you understand. And if you don't believe the same what I have sent you, then better I will stay away from you, an I'll refrain myself from calling you. So Bye!

Aashu just tried to get over her by voice, he didn't give a single chance to her to speak. Aashu didn't even call her that day. Shreya tried again and again to call him, but he avoided. Aashu was not happy, neither was Shreya. Next evening at last he received the call, and Shreya started crying. But Aashu was so rude, he didn't even listen to her, after a minute or two he said bye and cut the call. To take some break, he went to the bowling club that evening. Physically he was present in the club but mentally he was completely lost. And so he got a minor injury in finger while bowling and left the club in anger. When he reached home, he found the keys were not with him.

Now nothing can be worse than that. He realized he forgot his keys inside the room and the door was auto-locked from inside. It was late, around 11 o'clock and hard to find a key-maker. He searched a lot, he found one key-maker shop near his apartment but the shop was closed. But the phone number was visible in dark. Finally he managed to call him and managed to bring him, got the duplicate keys.

Aashu realized without Shreya everything will go off track. He called her that night. He broke down. And Shreya said "Yes, I love you and I'll marry you." suddenly. Of course there was a win for Aashu but "I'll marry you" started resonance over Aashu's eardrums. Aashu was not prepared to hear that or not enough matured to understand. He became silent for a while but he never reacted over that. After that he started avoiding those words, and continued with normal friendly conversation. He was worried about commitment. They would have to keep long distance relationship. Shreya was ready but Aashu was reluctant although he proposed. Aashu never expressed himself, or his worries to Shreya. Aashu's family knew that they speak over phone frequently, but as friends. Shreya's family was completely unaware about the fact. Most of the time Shreya used to keep herself busy in studies and assignments, placement preparations. Aashu used to be busy with office, gym and gym-mates. So completely different lifestyle which results frequent fights. And they were not able to meet frequently also due to distance. But Aashu said to her once, "We'll be there on time, no matter what. No matter what happens, we'll still be friends". Aashu believed what he said and he did not want to lose her again. In terms of patience Shreya was a clear winner. But both of them had the similar contribution to keep relationship safe in spite of long distance. Both of them waited for next Durgapuja when they would meet again. Meanwhile Aashu disclosed everything to his parents, they reacted very calmly and accepted, there was no major issue.

Year 2010 and so on.....

So one year passed so quickly and Aashu came again to Durgapur during Puja '10. The feeling was awesome for both of them. Both were shy and behaved like strangers to each other. They used to meet almost every day during this time

and without consent of parents went to Kolkata and roamed around. Aashu introduced her to his parents, although since childhood Aashu's mother had seen her many times. Eating out and movies, hanging around, intimacy, first kiss - all a different and new experience for them. But none has the hold over time, so the vacation ended so quickly, they were back to their normal lives.

But this year was a year of new happenings. Shreya secured a job in a software firm. So now everyone is relieved and happy. But still her parents were unaware about the relationship. Shreya moved to Kolkata after her masters and started her job. This was a relaxed phase of their lives. But also they hardly could meet, phone was the only medium. Because there was no reason for Shreya to visit Mumbai or Aashu Kolkata as Aashu's parents used to stay with him in Mumbai. The only reason was again and again puja. Aashu used to take long holidays during puja.

But year 2011 was special. Because this time it was in Kolkata. There was one more reason to make it special. From his office, Aashu's trip to Germany was scheduled just after the vacation. So both were very happy. Aashu booked a guest house for three weeks stay, very near to Shreya's apartment in Salt Lake area in Kolkata. They will never forget those days. Aashu was not aware about any places in Kolkata.

There are few special moment they will cherish throughout their life. Shreya's waving hands from outside of airport arrival, while Aashu's standing in prepaid taxi queue. 'Masala-coke' from the mocktail shop near Salt Lake Bigbazar. Presence of Shreya used to add extra spice in masala-coke as always. They were the daily customers of Broadway for movies; they believed that they generated maximum revenue of Broadway during those days. Revisited 'Mainland China' to 'fuchka' and 'chur-mur', 'Bhojohori manna' to roadside 'ruti-tadka'. 'Dokkhineshwar' to 'Aquatica'. No luxury can compare the bus journey between Kolkata and Durgapur. Roaming around together in a cycle rickshaw was always thrilling for them. And nothing could be much exciting as pandal hopping in Durgasthmi evening in home town. Meeting with old school buddies and showing up their relationship, truly an awesome feeling. The best of their relationship was that Aashu never tried to hide about their relationship from other, he always gives proper recognition to Shreya, and he was ready to give the relationship a name. So he never hesitated to introduce Shreya as his girlfriend, sometime even fiancée to others. Each and every girl on this earth expects a proper name from every relationship.

Shreya first time ever spoke to her parents about their relationship and she also kind of demanded them that she will marry that boy. Her parents were not hesitant about her wish even though they don't belong to the same caste. Once Aashu fell ill and was hospitalized for a couple of weeks, that time Shreya paid him a visit to Mumbai. And that was her first time in Mumbai at Aashu's place. Shreya stayed in his house for a week with Aashu's family. Relation between the families was getting better and better. Few days later Aashu moved to Dubai and take up a new job there. And the long distance relationship was getting longer. But he didn't like the place and within a year came back and moved to Japan. Now middle East to Far East. This is rarest of rare case when you hate someone, at least you don't like someone, and never contacted for more than seven long years, suddenly patched up, off course by god's grace, and going to marry that someone, going to make that someone to your own. It was not so easy to keep such long distance relationship for years. Commitment, compromise, confidence and trust are the four pillars of their relationship even though they could meet only once a year, still they do the same. They met again during their wedding. Yes, finally they got married early 2014 but still they are keeping long distance relationship. Hope in future they will stay together forever. ■

Kaleidoscope: New York and Los Angeles

- Shoubhik Pal

I am one of those extremely privileged people to have lived in two cities perceived to be high in the league of best cities in the world for a concerted period of time. New York and Los Angeles are names in the bucket list of many people when asked where they would like to visit once in their lives. While they are both in the same country, it wouldn't be erroneous to state that these two cities are as different as chalk and cheese. It would explain why they are both on the furthest sides of the East Coast and West Coast, respectively. These are complete opposites not just in terms of structure but also in terms of people.



One of the most vivid experiences of my life was when I saw New York for the first time. My cousin lives in New Jersey and we had taken the train to come and spend a day at the 'Big Apple'. We raced through the modest and quiet sceneries of New Jersey before a structural marvel was in front of us. The second I stepped on the escalator that took me up to downtown Manhattan from Penn Station, I reassured myself that I had never seen a city more stunning. There were skyscrapers galore, all concentrated as if someone had taken the city and compressed it together. Real estate prices are supposed to be some of the most exorbitant in the world in New York. It isn't surprising considering there isn't a yard of idle space in this city.

This was in stark contrast to the first time I saw Los Angeles, a city very close to the undergraduate college I attend. I remember being in the window seat of my flight, watching Los Angeles unfold around me. It was a much bigger city than New York, humongous in its span. It also seemed much less to marvel about, except for the famed Financial District of the city and of course the indomitable Hollywood sign. However, what made it picturesque was that the entire city faced the beautiful Pacific Ocean.

What you have to consider about Los Angeles is that it provides you a package which is 'So-Cal' or Southern California. Beautiful beach towns like San Diego and Santa Barbara are around two hours away from the city. One of the freeways to reach California's other hub, San Francisco, is one of the most picturesque routes in the world. There are beautiful locations to camp and spend some quality serene time with family. California is one of the more prominent states in America and for good reason. Its natural beauty is unparalleled and that gives a certain sense of calm about the place. This translates to its people as well.

In the earlier paragraph, I mentioned the word 'serene'. That is a word you absolutely cannot associate with New York. Everyone in the city seems to be in a hurry. You can see people frantically taking takeout from Starbucks early in the morning for their caffeine fix and run off in a feverish pace to their place of work. The city is in a state of perpetual traffic, with cars blaring their horns almost in the same frequency as you would in India. In Los Angeles, you would have to call a service to get a taxi. Here, if you stand in the side of the road, a vacant cab comes swirling past you slowly asking for confirmation every minute or so. This rush gives New York a feel different from most cities. There is no wonder this city is called 'The City that Never Sleeps'. It wouldn't be wrong to say that New York is the city for Type A people, individuals who are engrossed in their work and very focused about their careers.

This is in complete opposites to the people of Los Angeles. Everyone is very relaxed about life, a facet that has a lot to do with the fact that the city is the home of Hollywood, the biggest movie society in the world. The entire state is also known for its start of the hippie movement, which you can see in abundance once you get to places like Venice Beach and Malibu. Like New York is the place for Type A people, it wouldn't be wrong to say that Los Angeles and all the prominent towns near it attract more Type B people.

That isn't to say that there is no moment of respite in New York City. The wealthy suburbs called the Hamptons are a great place to recharge your batteries and get a dip in the water. A great thing about New York City is also the fact that there are many prominent cities near it should you get tired of the hassle of this wonderful city. Cities like Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore and Washington DC are very close by and could be reached by driving less than half a day.

One factor that New York has over Los Angeles is its level of diversity. Along with the various Middle Eastern food carts that pepper the streets of the city, it also boasts of multiple locations based on culture. There is Little Italy, Chinatown, Little India, Little Havana, even a Little Bulgaria. This gives New York a lot of varied food options, and it wouldn't be wrong to state that this East Coast hub has better prospects of eating than Los Angeles.

Overall, I am very honoured to have been near both cities for a concerted period of time. Both these cities have their own feel and vibe, which adds to their standing of being two of the best places to visit in the world. ■



SMILE

- Jayeeta Sen

As I walk down the lane of life-
With the spectral light leading my way,
With utmost plead-I pray to god---
“Please give me one more day!”

One more day to feel the heat—
One more day to smile the smiles,
One more day to shed the tears—
One more day to run million miles!

The million miles that I have passed
from the day I had opened my eyes
I have seen light beyond the dark nights
I have made my smile dominate my cries!

I have unmasked the masked—
I have masked the unmasked!
I have said a simple ‘yes’
to the questions life had asked.

I have talked the talks—
I have cheered the cheers
I have stood up against
my darkest fears!

“Then why one day more?” god asks me—
“When you have fought through—till the end!”
I say, with my choking voice—
“Something’s there I need to mend!”

As the dimensions change—from three to two,
As I walk down my last mile,
I want to end the book of my life..
with peace, courage, and a brave smile.

A brave smile from the people I love
--to make me smile till my last breath
--so that I can close my eyes
with happiness, when I welcome death.

The Nature of Happiness

- Udita Ghosh

I have a big heart, with resilient walls
For all the grief that is mine.
But happiness I can't hold in inside—
For the gratification of one, all alone - No,
Joy - is a frothy, bubbly drink
That flows, grows and spills;
It's a pressure building up
Ready to burst out of me.

Hold my hand when I weep,
But Friend, if you truly are
Help me release all this joy
Out into our world,
Show me how it soars,
How to dance in its downpour
Be happy with me
And double it with your presence—

Time to spread the joy of the new,
That is realized by few,
To the many who cling on to the old,
And thrive in its protective fold,
Let it all bubble up and out,
That optimism shall all over sprout.

And, take with me, if you can
A bite of this joy, my friend.”

They Play the Trick

- Dipankar Dasgupta

I loose myself in that beautiful aura
Intoxicated by its power, I keep walking
The unfolding secrets deepen the mystery
No sound, as the eyes do all the talking

The tricks they play as they draw me near
Pulling the heart strings from down deep
They wander about like a gleeful child
Am I dreaming or awake in my sleep

Imagination captivated in many a way
Charming me with its enchanted gaze
Senses are enthralled in its beauty & depth
The mind drowning in a kaleidoscope of daze

Time and space slowly halting to freeze
Holding on in a desperate attempt to beguile
It slowly move away like a changing scenery
Leaving me a mirage and an attempt in futile

Destiny

- Soumitra Talukder



When passions of life gets ignited to the lure of its necessity,

Pursue your goal midst the glowing inferno of your wishes,

Pick all your breath in a spurt of your profound energy!

Let the calmness of the depth of ocean redeem your faith of eternity,

For the deserts of hardship will test your ultimate deed of entity.

Stand apart in the rubble of fallen spirits of destitute and envy!

Take your courage to a fury for the slay of your enemy,

For devil will not show you any mercy or feel of pity!

Scoop your maid of her feet, for the spirit of love knows no boundary,

Worry not whether you win or lose the hearts swollen in insolent pride,

The path of yours will stand apart for a few to emulate in respect,

Let the body bleed for the free of shackles of ignorance and greed!

Stand upright in the glory of purity; let you be tested in path of your deed

Luck or no luck, life will not offer you times of immorality,

Live once for the life's sake; create your path of your own destiny!