

The Bhagavad Gita - Nature of Work

- Suneel Bakhshi

The Bhagavad Gita, as is well known, is a beautiful and powerful text that is overflowing with wisdom.

One of the central Truths in the Gita is that the fruit of all action should be renounced. This Truth is explored in many ways across the Shlokas of the Gita to ensure the underlying rationale is well understood, so that true conviction for this chosen path can be attained.

For this short article, I have selected a few Shlokas which explain the nature of work, and which subtly guide us towards mastering the approach to that necessary part of our daily lives which is to do with work. These selected Shlokas, enumerated in Chapter 18, allow a glimpse of the depth of thinking, the hope and optimism, as well as the succinct expression of the seers of ancient India.

The Gita says :

WORK IS A FUNCTION OF NATURE

Chapter 18, Shloka 13:

pañchaitāni mahā-bāho
kāraṇāni nibodha me
sānkhye kṛitānte proktāni
siddhaye sarva-karmaṇām

पञ्चैतानि महाबाहो
कारणानि निबोध मे ।
साङ्ख्ये कृतान्ते प्रोक्तानि
सिद्धये सर्वकर्मणाम् ॥

O Mighty Armed (Arjuna), learn of Me, the five factors, for the accomplishment of all actions, as declared in this wisdom.

Chapter 18, Shloka 14:

adhīṣṭhānam tathā kartā
karaṇam cha pṛithag-vidham
vividhāśh cha pṛithak cheṣṭā
daivam chaivātra pañchamam

अधिष्ठानं तथा कर्ता
करणं च पृथग्विधम् ।
विविधाश्च पृथक्चेष्टा
दैवं चैवात्र पञ्चमम् ॥

(1) The seat of action and likewise (2) the agent, (3) the instruments of various sorts, (4) the many kinds of efforts and (5) providence being the fifth.

The doctrine explains that there are five factors contributing to action. First, our physical body (ADHISTHANAM) - the seat of desire, hatred, happiness, misery, knowledge and the like, i.e. the seat of their manifestation. Second, the AGENT (the actor): the phenomenal ego or enjoyer is simply one of the determining causes. Third, the VARIOUS INSTRUMENTS - for example, we may take the sense of hearing as an instrument by which we perceive sound. Fourth, the FUNCTIONS, or the various kinds of effort. One can visualise these starting simply with inbreathing and outbreathing. The final of the five causes of action is THE WILL OF THE DIVINE. In the words of Swami Ranganathan of the Ramakrishna Mission, a profound thinking underlies this statement. It is the faith that there is an infinitely wise, all-seeing will that is constantly at work in the world. Crucially, this doctrine says that this fifth factor is not simply "Lady Luck". It is much, much more than that. It is the grace of divinity.

What can be the meaning of such "providence", or the "grace of divinity"? The Gita says that, while it rules unnoticed by our five senses, it exists and works in each individual for its own divine "incalculable purposes". Mankind may be only dimly aware of the aim of this grace. But from ancient times in India, it has been seen as the fruit of our past actions which, step by step, allows a rise from our animal ancestry to the divine ideal. This will of the divine, manifested in man, continues to overcome the presence of nature, of heredity and of the environment.

Chapter 18, Shloka 15:

śharīra-vāñ-manobhir yat karma
prārabhate narah
nyāyam vā viparītam vā
pañchaite tasya hetavaḥ

शरीरवाङ्मनोभिर्यत्कर्म
प्रारभते नरः ।
न्याय्यं वा विपरीतं वा
पञ्चैते तस्य हेतवः ॥

Whatever action a man undertakes by his body, speech or mind, whether it is right or wrong, these five are its factors.

Chapter 18, Shloka 24:

yat tu kāmepsunā karma
sāhankāreṇa vā punaḥ
kriyate bahulāyāsaṁ
tad rājasam udāhṛitam

यत्तुकामेप्सुना कर्म
साहङ्कारेण वा पुनः ।
क्रियते बहुलायासं
तद्राजसमुदाहृतम् ॥

But the action which is performed desiring results, or with self-conceit and with much effort, is declared to be Rajasika.

Doing necessary but unpleasant things from a sense of duty, feeling the unpleasantness all the time, is of the nature of a Rajasik (whose fruit is pain) action. The consciousness that we are grimly passing through toil takes away the value of the act. But doing it gladly, recognising that one of its factors is the Will of the Divine, is of the nature of a Saatvik (whose fruit is wisdom) action. In the words of Pandit Radhakrishnan, it is the difference between an act of love and an act of law, an act of grace and an act of obligation.

Together, these four Shlokas constitute an extraordinary statement and ideal. They say that, to attain freedom man must learn to be free of attachment, and learn to do his work as the instrument of the universal spirit and for the maintenance of the cosmic order. Man performs even terrific deeds without any selfish aim or desire, but because it is the ordained duty. What matters then is truly not the work but the spirit in which it is done.

Such a man knows that all fruit (phalam) decays, and that only ONE fruit is eternal: the purified mind that follows from detachment. It is this purified mind that goes forward into even future lives, and so into eternity. ■



How I wish to be Ravan from this Dussehra!



- Somik Ghosh

No you heard me right. It's not a printing mistake in this magazine. Yes, this Dussehra I want to be Ravan (not RA-One) and I invite you all to take up this challenge.

By now you must have made a perception about the writer and more offended with the shamelessness he is declaring his aspirations to be "**Ravan**". Please don't get me wrong and go through this short introspection which I want to share with you today.

Our experience in life make us so routine that at a young age we start identifying good and bad by magic words like "**Ram**" is positive and "**Ravan**" is negative. We pass on this simplistic learning unhesitantly to the next generation too.

When we remember Ravan the first thing that comes to our mind is a kidnapper of someone else's spouse isn't it? Well that aspect of this mythological monster is very well known to us but how about the other aspects of his life. Ravan was bestowed with ten heads at the time when his contemporary mortals like Shree Ram had only one head overlooking only one aspect of life.

Ram exhibited ideal behavior. He was goodness personified and showed how to do things "right" as the society expects you to do. There were little or no controversies and a proven way of life.

Ravan, I feel preached practicality and how to co-exist in different characters in one single life. He brings in versatility and thrill not only his life but others around his life including Ram. You may simply disagree on this thinking my thoughts are devoid of logic or maybe you semi-agree but reluctant taking Ravan side openly may jeopardize your social status. Well you don't have to do anything as of now. I am not here to take any one's side and preach right or wrong like some modern day Guru. Right or wrong anyway is a function of time and situation and I believe and you are the best judge.

Readers, I am going to present to you a modern day Ravan (V 2.0) whom I (and after sometime you!) would aspire to be. Some mythology or myth says Ravan was a multi-faceted all-rounder, an expert musician, great warrior, a laureate, intelligent and a philosopher besides being evil. Anyways. keeping this morality dilemma and mythology aside let's imagine of a human being with ten active heads. Each head is dedicated to each task and aspect of life. The first one is the **biological** head visible to the world. Second one concentrating hard to prosper at job (**Career** head), one struggling hard to clear JLPT exams (**Academic** head), one calculating EMI's and investments (**financial** head), one planning weekend and utilizing season leaves (**travelling** head). One head trying to mitigate problems at home and render family "less" complaining (**family** head, not "head" of the family by the way) while other head trying

hard to be socially popular amongst friends and acquaintances through SNS like Facebook and Instagram (e-**Social** head). One head is thinking how to contribute to Sharodia magazine (**creative** head) while other head is thinking about how to get entertained (food /fun/love/hobby/dress/make-up etc.). And the list continues.....

Don't you identify yourself with modern Ravan (V 2.0)? You are already a Ravan with more than ten heads on your mortal body. I'm sure all the "lady" Ravans will have few more heads to add on to the list. To be honest all the heads I mentioned is part of the first head →the biological head residing in different compartments. There's the problem dear readers. Like 狭い (narrow) streets in Tokyo city where people tend to collide against each other, our thoughts from different compartments of small biological brain collide against each other. It inflicts pain and instills dilemma in our mind. Today most of us are stranded in a "**To do or not to do**" situation like the Shakespearian Hamlet. One priority collides with other one. For example, working late at office to reach zenith of your career can eat away your time to make weekend plans or travelling places every now and then may shrink your savings and financial planning. All are equal priority. Isn't? When we are prioritizing one thing we tend to believe we have to compromise on other things. Why it has to be like that always ?

I feel being Shree Ram is relatively easy. Just lead life one way, do all-good how society wants to see us, bound by cob-web of morality. All other heads remain dormant like a beautiful Mt. Fuji to look at. Go ahead if you are happy with it, nothing right or wrong about it. But if we want to explore this life and your capabilities further we need to be Ravan V 2.0. Just shedding one head which thinks about kidnapping your beloved, can set Ravan as a modern day example to lead life. **Prioritizing every aspects of life and thinking about these independently** at the same time is the essence of modern day Ravan's character. He is also fearless, adventurous, un-yielding and not hesitant to explore all possibilities that life has to offer.

Choose Ram or Ravan, who you want to be but please don't be a Hamlet lost in the Tokyo or Barabazzar streets. Also, let's stop identifying Ravan only with evil and negative, since you realize we are all Ravans already in our life striving hard to strike balance.

These are my thoughts on the onset of Sharod-utsob and I invite you all to take up this challenge to be a Ravan (V 2.0) by next Pujya 2020. Remember it's not an easy task by any way! Are you ready? I'm.

Asche bochor abar hobe, dekha hobe! ■

Arrival of the Pet Puja - The Feast vs. Fast!!!

- Arjyama Choudhury

I will begin with an Apology note to the Readers as you will find a few Bengali phrases being used in this blog in a few places. This is because when I write about Pujo, the so called "Bong" in me which normally lies neutral within the cosmopolitan surroundings we live in, becomes very dominant. Though a Non-Kolkatan (Probashi) Bangali and have spent all my life outside Kolkata, but when it comes to a few things like Pujo, Rabindra Sangeet o Rachana, Uttam Suchitra movies, Maacher Jhol with Fulkoi, or my parents' rich knowledge about the bengali art and culture which they have instilled in me with each and every small act, I become a true Bengali. Mane jeno hotath akta excitement jege othe moner bhetor. May be that is why I was always sure that I wanted to get married only to a Bong and I am glad to have found the one :)

Coming to Pujo:

Pujo manei sei Shefali Phuler Gondho, Dhaaker shobdo,
Pujo manei sei Aaroti, Dhanuchi Naach,
Sei chhotobalar pistol e nokli guli bhore phatano,
Sei thakurer pae boi chhoano. Pujo mane koto kichu.
Pujo manei notun jama, laal paar shaari, sindoor khala.
Pujo manei khawa dawa.

Ha khawa dawa. Fast noi. Feast. Ar sei jonnei aro besi ami erom life partner cheyechilam je amar pujor requirements gulo na bujhleo amar feast er requirements gulo bujhte parbe. Yes true, no matter however different our food habits are but when it comes to feasting in Pujo, me and my life partner always stand united. And now our daughter is also joining the united club and she is a die hard chicken fan!!!

So what is the basic difference between Navratri and Durga Puja celebrations? Nothing to do with Religion. Its purely Gastronomical! Yes, while the own country fasts at this time, we bongs feast!!! As in there are very limited fasts among the bongs like Shiv Ratri, Shashti, Ashtami & Saraswati Puja (till Anjali). That too are not mandatory among all caste of Bongs. No wonder I have dealt with a big time struggle all these years with my husband for keeping all these fasts and with the addition of the Karwa Chauth, the struggle was even bigger!!!

Navratri folks:

Fast, No meat, No onions, No garlic

Durga Puja folks:

Anandamela begins with the mini feast where every household participating jumps out into venturing whatever possible they can. From Mutton Chop to Chicken Chaap, From Dimer Devil to Egg Roll, From Chicken Tikka to Mughlai. And mind it. We call it starters. The main course is incomplete without Biryani. My husband who is otherwise not a fan of these stuffs, also gulps onto it at this time. The amount of stuffs that is in display in the stalls across the Pandals is unimaginable.

So? Which gang are you in? ■



Future of Ageing society

- R.Selvacanabady

Before we get into this topic let us look at the following statistics* that we need to be aware of:

- Between 2015 and 2050, the proportion of world's population over 60 years of age will increase from 12% to 22%
- In 2010, an estimated 524 million people were aged 65+ and by 2050 this number is expected to touch 1.5 billion people (expecting 16% of world's population)
- By 2020, the number of people aged 60 years and older will outnumber children younger than 5 years old
- In India by 2050 the people aged 65+ will be closer to 225+ million and in China it will touch 325+ million people
- Already in Japan one third of the population is aged 60+
- By 2050, 80% of the older people will be living in low and middle income countries

The above statistics sounds alarming from the aspect of the preparedness of the society to accommodate elderly population. With advancement in the medical technology including diagnosis and treatment of the diseases increased the life expectancy. For instance in Japan the government started preparing the society to live for hundred years.

The key aspect to the longer life expectancy is **“how healthier one lives”**. Let us discuss different facets of the ageing society.

*Source: World health organization / United Nations. World population prospects

Social aspect of the Ageing society:

With the long life expectancy one can re-invent their hobbies and passion post retirement and that will help them to see engaged. On the other hand, as we live in a more nuclear family society with the rapid increase of the aging population, they tend to live alone and start feeling isolated. As more and more older people tend to live alone, there will always be concerns among their loved ones regarding safety and well-being. If the age related diseases are not diagnosed at appropriate time then it might impact healthier life span.

In developed countries like UK and Japan, the health care cost borne by the government to support the ageing society is increasing every year and it has impacted national pension system.

The above situations in the future will lead us to an important question on how we are going to address the social aspects of the ageing society? Are the above challenges might lead us to new opportunities or only to worries ?

At this point of time we might not have answers to all the challenges but with the advancement of technology around the world few of them are already being addressed. I would like to highlight few technology areas that are being considered to address these challenges.:

Big Data and artificial intelligence (AI) :

By analyzing huge data sets to identify the trends and patterns, with the advanced AI algorithms the treatment can be personalized for individual patients. By bringing together clinical, biological and life style information we can paint a unique picture of the patient and target treatment to achieve the prevention or management of patients disease.

AI can be used to detect the disease at an earlier stage and apply more preventive measure rather than spending efforts on treatment. This might improve the healthier life span as well.

Smart homes:

As more elderly population will or are already living alone, there are more focus on turning their home to a smarter home by installing smart devices such as robots that can talk and monitor the moods of the people, cameras that can monitor the elderly ones movement etc. These devices are connected to internet and their family members can monitor elderly people remotely as well. There are social innovation coming into this space to address the challenge.

Research shows that loneliness might deteriorate health as well. The device like KOMP addresses the issue of loneliness. This startup came up with an idea to address loneliness by creating a device that can be easily used by elderly people to communicate with the family members by message, video call and sharing the photos. Easy to use with minimum features are the salient points about this device. The spectrum of Smart homes will become norm for the future homes. With the increase in internet speed and more & more devices connected to the internet, Smart homes are already becoming a reality rather than a fiction.

Conclusion:

I would like to conclude this with some thoughts for us to think further. We are obliged to create a good society for the aged people to live happily and this should be social responsibility for us in the future. This cannot be achieved by an individual or a corporate or non-profit organization or government alone. There has to be strong collaboration among all of us. Technology can be just a tool that can be leveraged to address the challenge in front of us but won't solve the social issue. More important aspect towards the aged society is to create the “Empathy” with them. ■

What's My City?

- Shoubhik Pal

Everyone seems to have a city. I'm a Delhi boy. Mumbaikar for life. Proud to be a Bangalorean.

And in many cases, personality traits seem to be derived from the city people identify with. It goes into conversations with others - where you're from often gives others preconceived notions over what you should be. That's such a Delhi thing to do. Of course she's well dressed - she's a Juhu girl. It makes sense that you're chilled out - you're from Bangalore, no?

All throughout my life, I have found myself struggling to identify with a city I can truly call my own.

Here's a rundown in percentages of places I've stayed at in my 26 years on this strange world: 19% in Mumbai during my formative years, the same percentage for my time in Japan, the same in USA for my undergrad studies and 8% in Delhi during a recent job, which leaves a solid 35% for the city I currently reside in - Bengaluru.

Theoretically, Bengaluru should be the place I identify with the most. I stayed here for most of my teenage years - a unique time where growing pains collide with personality consolidation. You have an idea of who you think you're going to be as an adult without realizing you don't have a clue. Location is important during these confusing times.

It's also where I've spent most of my work life, an ascending period of hysteria where you're perpetually busy but there's an asterisk over how much you're actually learning and growing. Professional and personal life collide, detach, push each other aside - all heady stuff where location should again take precedence.

But consider this: the only Kannada I know is how to say 'I don't know Kannada' and 'Come to location' (usually reserved for Uber drivers and Swiggy delivery executives). Doesn't that make it an automatic disqualification?

What exacerbates the situation is the fact that my parents are true blue Bengalis yet I've never stayed in Calcutta for more than a month. In a world where everyone hails from somewhere, I hail from many places yet no one place in particular.

This opened a completely different can of worms: while everyone is unique through their interests and reaction patterns, there's a certain overlap in personality traits when it comes to certain factors. Here's the simple one: family. Characteristics and, more importantly, principles are derived from your parents and elders of your family. They are the figures you look up to at your formative years, thus what they preach gets instilled inside you.

But location is interesting. It's not just people who govern your characteristics (family, neighbors, friends) but also know-how.

Let's dive into this. I'll list out the various traits you can possibly derive from your city:

- (a) Various catchphrases and sayings that people around you use that goes into your daily verbiage (it can be as simple as constantly using 'bhai' to address people - 'macha' in Bangalore)
- (b) Quintessential activities that everyone in your city does



(eating at a late night famous restaurant, attending spaces that are renowned for creativity)

- (c) An affinity for enjoying the local food (for me, there's no better breakfast than South Indian breakfast)
- (d) The kind of music you enjoy (for example, Shillong is a city where EVERYONE listens to heavy metal)
- (e) Championing local heroes because of a misplaced belief that a part of you is inside them as well (you should really see how movies with Rajinikanth are greeted with mega fanfare in Tamil Nadu - even Tamilians I've met in Bangalore go for the first day, first show when his movies release)

Obviously, there's many more observations I can put, but I'll spare you the redundancy. The point remains: we're different yet strangely similar in certain ways to the people around us.

But now, the rules have changed thanks to the smartphone. You not only are a physical being, you now are a digital being with your profile on Facebook and your handle on Instagram. And your digital being is not restricted by location because you can interact with anyone across the world.

A great example of this is the sudden hip hop movement in Mumbai. The Mumbaikar rappers who champion this movement derive their experiences from Western rappers. Rap is not a product of Mumbai but it's become part of the culture - it's inorganic but perfectly fitted to the way these rappers want to convey themselves. You don't need to be there - you just need to have identified with it.

Moving forward, will these interactions make the concept of hailing from a city redundant? After all, kids are being given smartphones at an alarmingly young age these days and thus, are subjected to worldwide content that transcends location. Will the concept of a Delhi boy or a Bangalore girl be irrelevant in the near future?

I wish I knew the answers to this - predicting human behavior is tough business. It's good then that I don't work in a job that concerns this.

Just kidding. As a digital advertising professional, that is my job.

Isn't that great? ■

Tokiwadai Diaries~ Niku Ya san

- Piyali Bose

Tokiwadai, in Yokohama, was a small neighborhood near the Yokohama National University, with its cluster of small establishments, a cake shop, a meat shop, a book shop, a medicine shop a small supermarket, a traditional soba restaurant and a barber shop too. The local hospital and the elementary school were very near to our place. It was a self-sufficient place with a distinct character of its own; a small world within a larger one. The distinctness of the Japanese society with its old world charm and the fast paced developing one seemed to reside in tandem.

The old world charm was hugely brought about by the small business establishments which were run by aged couples. They were the Niku ya san (meat shop lady), the Hon ya san (the book shop lady) and so on. These old souls, ever smiling would get hold of my son, inquiring about his studies, family and people back in India. The boy would come back with goodies and over the years, this almost became a daily ritual with them becoming an extended family.

After our return in 2009 and in the years that followed we received news of the closing down of these shops, due to rising cost of maintenance and also with fierce competition from the big retailers.

Cake ya san, was the first closed shop and our friend Atsuko traced her to her small home in a nearby condominium which she shared with her son and therein she lovingly had adorned her wall with one of son's picture!

Cut to circa 2017, A nostalgia filled trip after 8 years, more so for a 17 year old, who left a part of his childhood there.

Most shops, were closed, old age giving away, or broken down for big retailers! The character of the neighborhood, somewhat alien, somewhat distant.

Niku ya san (the meat shop lady), never knew of our

visit. When we stood before her on this sunshiny day, it was a customer standing at first, a foreign customer at second and then a look at Atsuko san (our friend) and recognition flashed through her face! A wide grin and then a search, for the little boy, was it?

The tall teenager somewhat shy, somewhat reticent but with a twinkle in his eyes, asks, oboyete imaska? (do you remember?).

The nod and the loving gaze turn into a broad grin as she settles to compose and understand her disbelief! Conversations follow, her husband joined in. She rued, she may no longer be around as old age is catching up soon and such hard work is becoming increasingly difficult.

The boy extends a small packet of okashi (savories from India). The lady overwhelmed, tears in her eyes, turns back and among the rack of papers in her shop takes out an old letter and photograph of hers with the kid and says, her day isn't over without having one look at it!

Speechless, we bid adieu to visit the others, with similar stories to tell when we find her calling my son back. He returns with a small piece of paper which has been forced into his palm and puzzled when he opens the fold, finds a currency note of sen yen (10,000,yen)!

The lady meantime is busy attending her customers (its noon and lunchtime) and as we stand on the road overwhelmed with emotions, the boy runs back to return the money. We look from afar, as she holds hands, pleads and says, "I may not be around next time, take this as a memento and COME BACK SOMEDAY".

Her gesture of love was not perhaps in giving away her month's profit but more of a future in which she could have one more glimpse of a youngster, more a man then reminding her of hay days in his eyes! ■



Grandfatherly Legacy

- Udita Ghosh

19 April 2019.

On some year, Indu Bhushan Ghosh's birthday fell on Good Friday, and so it was set that my grandfather's birthday would always be marked on Good Friday. Not that he would have cared - I never met him, but his modest reputation is well-known - as remarked by my uncle Satyasri Ukil, on a Facebook post my mother shared about his birthday, he wouldn't have wanted the "pronam/pranam"s that people are offering.

This short remark is also what set me off on a trajectory thinking about my 2 grandfathers; about how similarly they stood for principles on individual convictions against accepted wisdom, and against continuing inherited conventions thoughtlessly. What does it matter whether one says or performs what we call "pronam kora" - it must seem to most people. Yet like many politically-minded men of that generation, the performance (or rejection of) of personal rituals in one's own life mattered to my Dadu in his effort towards shedding all hierarchical and vestigial practices. I.B. Ghosh was an artist, with multiple talents - a bonafide painter; make-up artist in theatre, a carpenter, and craftsman, building beautiful and exquisitely detailed furniture from scratch, also knitting a sweater for his dog, not to mention the large and beautiful paintings in graceful Oriental Art style. He was a socialist, and an atheist - but a quiet man, who married a austere vegetarian, Brahmin, religious woman and never obstructed her ritualism, though he practiced his principles to the end, living modestly and eschewing many customs. Last year, my grandmother revealed to us that he even told her when he proposed to her that he did not care that she had ever been close to another man before, he did not wish to know more and certainly did not believe it made her any less eligible. I cannot stress enough at how I marvel at such behaviour from an Indian man in the 1940s. The habit of foregoing pronam is not the pinnacle of his ethical endeavours; rather it is a small symptom of his greater campaign towards living by his principles.

My other grandfather, TK Sengupta was equally remarkable. He grew up in a village in Birbhum, moved to the city and helped bring along many others from the village who were looking to work and support their families. He was a religious man, yet one who chose to forego superstitious, ritualistic behaviour, teaching his children to focus on what is really important in faith than on the performative customs. He was the fatherly figure to many, and never seemed bowed by the responsibility and expectation. He was ever the authoritarian decision-maker, often enacting very harsh punishments towards his own children for what appears today like minor transgressions. Yet he was also the peacemaker, holding the bridges open between warring egos, and hurt pride. He stood in support of inter-caste marriage for his children, his nieces and nephews, even in the face of family opposition, disallowing dowry in the weddings in his family, and even as a stern disciplinarian and patriarch, encouraged his children to

search their own hearts in seeking life partners whether of their own choosing or arranged.

I had the good fortune of living with him in my early years, by which point he had mellowed down considerably, and my earliest memories are of sitting next to him and watching in wonder as he prayed every morning and evening, singing, chanting and finally weeping with devotion for his gods, while I sometimes helped make the sandalwood paste, and eat bataashaa out of the side of the plate meant for the gods and goddesses. Yet he heartily embraced an atheist son-in-law, just as by contrast, and atheist I.B. Ghosh did his religious wife. Both men were warmly loved and cherished by the people around them, and though unfortunately, they may not have been the feminist husbands to their wives they should have been, they were very much the fathers who helped raise strong, independent daughters, and encouraged their wilfulness.

Much of this is of course from what I have heard in anecdotes of both. I wish I had the opportunity to ask them this directly --- where did such conviction come from, to do things differently from the people around, from the people before? How did you live within traditional society and still think for yourself, examining the practices you inherit and choosing which ones to keep and which to let go? And how, most importantly, did you do all this without the bitter anger towards your narrow-minded peers, without alienating everyone around you? I guess this about IB Ghosh, but certainly know that the TK Sengupta I met in my early years, seemed to have done away with most of the human ego - and I cannot think of a greater stepping stone towards a free and liberated mind than the lack of personal pride or arrogance - or a greater resource for social progress, than millions and billions of free liberated minds stretching their thoughts towards growth and knowledge into that heaven of freedom. [...let my country awake, Rabindranath Tagore]

When I consider how much more orthodox society was in the times I.B. Ghosh and T.K. Sengupta lived in, and how even now with many years of hard-fought social reform, younger people who are reaping the benefits of this progress, are still often loathe to question traditions in their own families, fearful of challenging people they love and respect, or just uninterested in doing more to move forward and build on the progress previous generations have made to eliminate social evils - it is truly extraordinary to me how these ordinary men lived their lives 2 generations before, pushing forward on class, caste, and gender dynamics in their own lives and families with all the confidence of independent men in a newly independent nation free to envision a better future.

Happy Birthday Dadu(s). ■

A Warm Welcome

- Nishant Chanda

The transition between high school and college is a tough one as one is let out from a bubble under the affectionate care of his or her parents into the vast world where anything can happen. I was fortunate enough to be dropped off by my parents all the way to my dorm, but it wasn't all pleasant. We had a great trip in Switzerland prior to my first day in Germany, and that day was when I made a rather big mistake.

After arriving in Germany, on 4th August, my family and I reached Karlsruhe Hauptbahnhof by train. From there we took a tram to our hotel, dropped out stuff and decided to explore the city on tram on Route 4 from Waldstadt to Tivoli. After a while, I was getting hungry so we decided to get off and eat. I ordered a subway and that's when I realized I'd left my phone on the tram. I felt uncomfortable as it was rather expensive and I had just bought it intending to use it for the many years to come. I told my parents about my realisation and we set about immediately to find my phone.

Initially, we went to the police office at the station. There was only one officer on duty as it was a Sunday so he said he didn't want to come out and help. However, he told us that we could try asking the tram station office right outside the building. We went there, but it was closed as most stores are since it was a Sunday. Calling their numbers using payphones also brought no results. We then used Google Maps to figure out what time the tram with my phone would come back again to the stop we got off on if it went all the way around again. We split into two and got on the tram we guessed it would be on as



Primary Tram#330

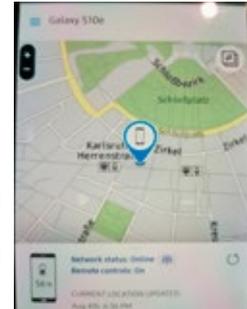
Secondary Tram#347

well as the next tram in case we estimated wrong. On the tram we scanned the seats from the front all the way to the back to no avail. At the end of the line we knocked on the driver's cabin and asked him for suggestions for a lost phone. He told us to go to their office center in Europaplatz the next day. We did the same for the other tram. Finally we decided to stop trying for the day and try again on Monday when everything would open and went to find dinner.

We found an excellent Mexican buffet, however I couldn't fully enjoy the meal with the lost phone on my mind.

I remembered seeing my friends use "Find My iPhone" all the time back in high school so I searched on my father's phone if the Samsung version existed and it did. I tried all sorts of combinations of emails and passwords and in the end one worked and led to a screen showing the location of my phone. I was really excited.

We left the restaurant almost immediately to see if we could track my phone down. It was at the end of the line of the tram I'd left it on. Every time I refreshed the tracking site, I could see the phone come closer and closer. Finally it reached the station we were at so we all got on. We scanned the seats again, but couldn't find it. Refreshing the tracking site showed a location quite a bit behind where we currently were so I thought it could be on the tram behind us. We got off at the next station with our hopes still up.



As the tram left, I refreshed again and suddenly it showed my phone going further down the track, on the tram we just got off from. I started running after it and ignored all the people staring at me hysterically chase down the tram. I narrowly missed the tram at the next station. Upon seeing that, my dad started chasing me leaving my mom on the street while she helplessly stayed back, praying for us. I continued running station after station. Wrestling season had ended four months ago so I was totally out of shape and having the Mexican buffet just before didn't help at all. My mobile was in the tram that I was chasing, my dad's mobile was with me for tracking my lost mobile and my mom's mobile (without a data plan) was with my dad. So we were all disconnected during this crisis period on our first day in Germany.

For a while, the tram had left my sight and I realized I was nearing the end of the line. I had run for 4-5 kms already. I decided to catch my breath and try to catch it on its way back. I saw it coming in my direction then heard someone call towards me. It was the driver. The driver I had asked what to do about my lost phone about an hour ago. He had a smile on his face and said he had my phone. He opened the door to his cabin and told me to climb the ladder and stand next to him till the next station. This was a special treat for me. I obeyed and upon reaching, he took out my phone from a pouch and asked me to unlock it to prove it was mine, which I did successfully. I left the driver's cabin at the next stop. Meanwhile, my dad had lost sight of me too and had followed the tram line until Karlsruhe Hauptbahnhof station and got into the same tram that was on its way back towards our hotel. He didn't find me in the tram, so he went to the hotel and connected to wifi to discover with relief that I had found the phone and was coming back by the next tram. After the whole ordeal, I found my way back to the tram station for the hotel, where I found my parents waiting for me. ■

There Is A City/ Elegy for Yokohama

- Utso Bose

Let me tell you a story:

There is a city which never sleeps

Which believes it has to be

Busy

Busier

Because of its neighbour

It runs,

Like an abject steam engine suffering from April asthma

Or

Perhaps something like this:

It is the grasshopper turning brown

And turning

Turning to stone and dust

It is also the mantis in a

Kabuki costume

Looking at the clouds,

Discolored cotton candy

and/or

Mansions built of and on plastic tiles

A city wearing earthquake caps

There is a city which never sleeps,

Because winning ideology says,

Sloth is a sin

And

New is always better.

The neon signs blare:

“Shop till you drop.”

And as time goes by,

All the shops vanish like camphor

No one can compete with the

Corporations

But what of the conversations at

The local cake shop?

Yamashita is named after a mountain's base,

It is a freckle

On the cheek of the Ring Of Fire

Named after a mountain's base,

(A mountain's base)

The margin of the city,

City by the bay.

The sea and the sky meet

At Kataware doki

When time breaks,

And shards of glass

Shafts of dying light

Images of a dead past

Of another city

Come to life, momentarily

Like the memory of a Tasmanian wolf.

Minatomirai is the promise of

A future

Growing,

Like the tail of a spider,

A future like a Ferris wheel?

Ferris wheels are Sisyphian

But sunsets can be seen

Like clockwork oranges,

Yolks being

Eaten by the sky.

Kanto is an upturned palace with

Walls of cicadas

And floors of afternoon rain,

Yokohama,

Brilliant, grotesque,

My Autumn colored memory,

Also

Walks by the sea and

Xenophobia in the fourth period

Of Junior school.

Racism is a spectrum staircase,

Gradation: ascending order of melanin.

The stronger bullying the weaker,

Chopsticks are superior to hands.

There is a city which never sleeps,

It hangs by the rings around its eyes.

There is a city which never sleeps,

It wants to, and it cries.

Intelligence Re-invented

- Debraj Dasgupta

Wherefrom have we come and
Where shall we go
We ponder
For the next generation
A world divided
Roiled by hatred, nationalism and greed
Intelligence is what we need
But insanity is what we breed
Common sense is not so common any more
As human intelligence is on decline
And artificial intelligence is on the rise
They say AI will make better decisions
As if they know better
They say AI will make us more efficient
As if they know better
We built social media on the promise of good
We got fed junk instead of real food
And we got our privacy murdered
And our democratic process compromised
And we elected leaders we can only hate
We created climate change
And got our kids to shame us
For the lack of future we portrayed
We made education expensive to all
When newsbots have a free for all
We breed hatred for fellow humans
And love for people who breed hatred
While rich evade taxes and get tax breaks
Ordinary folks are working double jobs and no breaks
We gave away privacy, honesty, sympathy and simplicity
And settled in for hatred, narrow-mindedness and duplicity
I say its time we brought back human intelligence
More than ever we need it
Its time we listen to our children
More than ever we need it
Listen to the sounds of birds and animals
Rather than the shrillness of the news media
Because when we bring back real human intelligence
Even artificial intelligence will survive

The Heart and the Angel

- Soumitra Talukder

There was a placid bliss in the abode of peace,
Hidden in the hushed pantheon of silence
The quiescence of solitude lay like the haze of mist
As if the heavens resided in measure of the spirit
The seraphs took upon the burden of pain
To go through the discourse of the parson
The verity lost as a virtue of a bygone fable
And the content of life seemed in deceit of illusion
As the sermons grew more suasive,
The "Heart" draped the serape closer
To hide the abrade of the truth.
It stood baffled in the choice of probity,
It whispered, which is the world you made! O God!
One with the cross of thorns to bear the rectitude,
Or the other in glitterati, a realm of delude!
Between the province of the promised Avalon
Or amidst the camouflage of our demesne,
All it wanted was a console of love and a touch to care!!
As if it was the path of the destiny,
The angel smiled in the glow of her own radiance,
She would take care of the heart now and forever.

Kurseong - My Mountain Home

- Joyita Basu Dutta

Tender memories of nimble daisies,
flitting gently in the breeze,
misty Himalayan mountains,
enduring pine tree curtains,
cheery picnics on rocky ledges,
crashing into prickly hedges,
unadulterated rambunctious laughter,
intangibile keepsakes ever after,
vibrant hues and crimson skies,
manifestation of a force in disguise.

Mornings ushered with a ruckus,
birds chirping songs so joyous,
I part the curtains for the first sight,
my treasured mountains of pure delight,
through the valley the river meandering,
the water lazies, gliding and shimmering,
the piercing blue and soothing green,
my soul satiated and my heart serene,
to feel such beauty always around me,
blessed in the midst of nature's bounty.

Adding to the morning din,
it's whistle blasting shrill and thin,
the toy train approaches with a chug,
it's tracks flanked by a mossy rug,
spewing smoke while it exhales loud,
that rise and join the billowing clouds,
crisscrossing along the curvy frills,
traversing verdant undulating hills,
disappearing into a fleeting white shroud,
of mist and smoke and puffy white clouds.

Pristine unrestrained streams,
gurgling music weaving dreams,
scattered crusty pine tree cones,
paths carved out of pebbly stones,
exotic orchids in delicate clusters,
adding to tree trunks a mellow lustre,
enchancing pink rhododendrons,
dancing amidst green cauldrons,
precious moments of happy serendipity,
scarlet sunsets echoing divinity.

Thick fogs heavy and grey descend,
silhouettes of frolicking friends,
running, treading uphill breathless,
drizzly drops chasing us relentless,
exhaling misty swirls of smoke,
in the chilly nights as we spoke,
lightning bolts and thunder storms,
ensconced in our wooden dorms,
with steaming mugs on window sills,
young hearts that shared the same thrills.

Heavens dazzling with a million stars,
hamlets glimmering on hillocks afar,
that retreat into oblivion every morning,
vanishing like wonder years so charming,
indelible memories of a childhood,
held together faithfully for eternity,
those joyous calming sights,
and dreamy restful nights,
in the shadows of the beauteous,
ethereal Kanchenjungas.

A Man Playing a Guitar

- Purnima Ghosh

Up above the spring sky, the bright sun is shining.
Leaves dance happily, as the cool breezes are passing.

A lonely young man sits beneath the tree on a chair,
Nearby the convalescent center; his home for many a year.

I often see him playing the guitar,
But haven't seen his happy face so far.

No rhythm. Sounds only. No matter!
The music makes him feel better.

Does he share his untold story with nature?
The story he couldn't share with others!

Oh man! You are not alone. Smile and cheer!
Nature is with you. Gentle winds whisper in your ear.

