

# Saikatey

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PUJA BARSHIKI

2018



**BENGALI ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH FLORIDA (BASFL)**



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**Cover Page Painting** | Minakshi De

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# President's Address



Yaa Devi Sarva Bhooteshu Shakti Roopena Sansthitaa,  
Yaa Devi Sarva Bhooteshu Bhakti Roopena Sansthitaa,  
Yaa Devi Sarva Bhooteshu Matri Roopena Sansthitaa,  
Yaa Devi Sarva Bhooteshu Shaanti Roopena Sansthitaa,  
Namastasyei Namastasyei Namastasyei Namoh Namah!!

Like every year, today we are here to celebrate our very own Durga Puja, **BASFL** is celebrating 11th Saradiya Utsav. **BASFL** (Bengali Association of South Florida)- in my view is not just an organization which arranges few events every year, is not even bounded by some rules, a committee or even the members but is a sensation which uncovers our childhood days from the memory lane each time we celebrate any event. It's an exhilaration which provokes us to join together for some greater success, It's an emotion which snatches the efficacy from our soul and shows the path of togetherness and I believe with this feeling, with this emotion we all were here in the past, we all are here today and we all will be here in future too.

As we know that this is not a very old organization, it has been founded in 2007 but the roots are deep enough to remind us of our culture, our orientation of family which we had to leave back in India, our rituals and in this way when we say that '*BASFL has organized the event successfully*', then indeed we all are appreciating our own involvement here, doesn't matter if you are the active member or the part of the bigger BASFL family, but with the presence of each delightful soul here we achieve the success and the real glory lies there.

This is my 7th year with BASFL but it seems like I just came here & engaged myself with the activities, with the culture. I can remember those days in 2012 when I came to know BASFL for the first time, when I came here I didn't feel like I was a new member. I entered into the auditorium, paid my registration fees and immediately became a part of the bigger BASFL family. I am pretty sure that most of you have gone through the same phase. Believe me there is a joy when we all work hard with every other person & I am lucky enough to be an active part of this phenomenon.

I joined BASFL when I was a bachelor, now I am married and we both are enjoying the Puja and every other occasion like you all. We are privileged to have you here & feel like family, especially when we are so far from our motherland, from our own families. I can still remember those school days back in India, when I was a kid & the thrill of wearing new cloths during puja. There was nothing in those 6 days which could stop me from just enjoying my puja

vacation. Yes, we miss those days, the pandal hopping, the street foods, those friends but we all are fortunate enough to have those touch here to some extent, so my mind is whispering like this ...

হঠাৎ মনে পরলো আমার ছেলেবেলার দিনগুলি.  
হঠাৎ আমার মনের পাতায় রামধনু দেয় রঙ্গোলি:  
মেঘ হয়েছে পেজা তুলো নীল আকাশের বুক চিরে.  
পদ্ম শালুক নাচছে জলে আগমনীর ঔ সুরে:  
ঢাকের কাঠি সুর তুলেছে. প্যান্ডেলের ওই কাজ চলে.  
পাঠশালা আর বাবার শাসন. মন ছুটেছে সব ভুলে:  
নতুন জামা নতুন জুতোয় খুশির হাওয়ায় মন মাতে.  
শারদীয়ার শুভেচ্ছাতে সবাই চলো এক সাথে.

And when we are announcing our successful journey of BASFL then I would like to thank each and every committee member, from the core of my heart, who is the warrior, fighting hard to ensure that we all are enjoying each event, each moment, also contributing funds for the events. We are grateful to each volunteer, whose tireless effort in every department, like food, decoration, cultural, puja preparation and overall coordination, is flaming the fire of success year after years. I would like to appreciate our school committee for providing us the venue and the local business for their contributions. We are very much thankful to the Cultural Division of Broward County for their continuous financial support. We all are privileged by having our local talents every year for presenting their beautiful flairs, which we are going to experience soon this evening as well and also appreciating the effort for each of them who contributed and helped to publish this year's "Saikatey" magazine.



Sincerely,

**Nilanjan Ghosh**  
President, BASFL-2018

# There is an App for That: Multiplatform Apps for Allergic Rhinitis Patient Education Dr. Shayan Mahapatra

## **BACKGROUND:**

Allergic rhinitis is a highly prevalent condition that affects between 20% and 40% of people (50 million people in US according to CDC). Many patients with allergic rhinitis also have asthma, allergic conjunctivitis, or atopic dermatitis. An application software (app) performs a group of coordinated functions for the benefit of the user. Google Android users are able to choose between 3.8 million apps. Apple app store has 2 million available apps as of 2018. Many apps aim at patients with multiple allergic comorbidities as they often coexist. This study aimed to determine the prevalence of apps focused on allergic rhinitis.

## **METHODS:**

The widely used systematic review methodology for assessment of apps, referenced below, was applied to allergic rhinitis apps. English-language Allergic Rhinitis apps for all ages were identified through a search of Google Android and Apple app stores. App content, quantity and quality was analyzed based on international allergic rhinitis guidelines including strategies for self-management. The three domains included comprehensiveness of information, consistency of advice with evidence and compliance with health information best practice principles.

A total of 52 apps were found on Google play store with 86.5% educational and 13.5% sales, targeting allergic rhinitis. On Apple Apps store a total of 33 apps with 57.6% educational and 42.4% sales for allergic rhinitis.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Our retrospective analysis indicates that quantity and content of allergic rhinitis applications were mostly educational which is in contrast to the previous studies where apps were mostly commercial. Though it's a big leap forward but it lacked international allergic rhinitis guidelines and hence was misleading to the general population. It is unclear if substantial clinical benefits can be realized from this apps which lacks standardization and do not adhere to accepted medical practice. As the percentage of medical apps used by people worldwide is increasing exponentially there is a potential need for standardization of the apps which may ultimately educate not mislead the general population

# Childhood Friends

## Lina Sengupta & Nandita Selvanathan

### Lina's Story:

I have a friend Nandita who lives in Winnipeg, Canada. It is quite amazing how I located her after decades. Our school friends dispersed soon after we graduated from Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya (VKM) in Banaras. After marriage, their maiden names had changed and we practically lost track of each other.

Nandita was from Banaras and stayed there longer than me. I had spread the word that I was trying to locate Nandita. With Facebook at our disposal, I was adding friends from all over and from all ages however Nandita was not there.

It happened that Anju, our common friend found her address in one of her discarded address book. I could half believe myself that it was the same Nandita with whom I spent years together in school. I remembered about her from Middle School. She was a petite, doe eyed little girl with straight shoulder length black hair. We were together in Middle school and High School only to go our own ways in College. She was very sensitive, bright and always spoke her mind. She had a sweet voice and did very well in music. Her voice was elegant with a touch of aristocracy. Each Saturday afternoon, VKM students congregated and performed songs, dances, debates etc. I remember her singing and was the center of attraction. We were in an "all girls" school and looking back it was very different from the life faced by teenagers today.

She was artistic and not as much into sports. It was one of the most carefree

years of my life. We were fast friends and always sat together in class, ate lunch together. I remember she used to bring a tiny lunch box with roti and vegetable dish cooked by her Mother. We called the little lunch box Akshaya Patra meaning never ending. She always shared her lunch with me Her home was a five-minute walk from school where I visited frequently on "half days". Life was fun and with Nandita as my friend I used to look forward meeting her in school and sharing with her all that happened the day before.

I had too much energy and was involved with team sports and often running around with classmates playing hide and seek during lunch break. I was into more active games while she was into arts and culture, so we drifted away from each-other but our bond of friendship was strong as we shared many a tit bits of our teenage years.

In eleventh grade (year before college) though we shared some common courses, we took different subjects. We separated in college and met her after my marriage when she came to meet me and wish me good and a prosperous future. She was wearing a green kurta and driving a moped. When she left my home, I had the least bit of inkling that I will ever meet her.

They say life takes strange turns. I was overjoyed to see her in Toronto after 30 years when she found time from her busy schedule to come and meet me at "Bongo Sammellan" 2013. We chatted with each other like teenagers and shared our moments of joy, we remembered from the past. Today, after so many years we talk to each other often forgetting that we are not the same as we were in our VKM days.

### **Nandita's story:**

I was studying in the local school called Vasant Kanya Mahavidyalaya which was at a stone's throw distance from our ancestral home. Situated inside the scenic Theosophical Society in Varanasi, the school was a reputable one. Lina Sengupta (nee Das Gupta) joined the school in my class in grade 6. She was full of confidence and energy. We were all very impressed by her as she came from the famous school called St. John's Convent, an English medium school. She joined our class and became the most important person. We became friends quite easily as Lina had great social skills and the capacity to befriend people even at that young age. One of the important points of our friendship was sharing the lunch. Lina's mother and my mother were both fabulous cooks so exchanging the lunch was a wonderful experience. I also remember doing joint study for Science and Mathematics. Lina was always the best student in the class and a perfectionist, therefore took initiative in these study sessions. We put lot of effort trying to remember all the mathematical formulae, details of Animal and Plant Kingdom, Geography and History. These sessions were intense especially before the quarterly, half yearly and annual examinations. We went over the syllabus over and over again – maybe too many times just to make sure that we remember each and every river, mountain in the world, every battle fought in India in the last 500 years and who won over whom.

Lina was not only good in academics but in sports activities too. I remember the local newspaper "Aaj" (meaning Today) came to our school for the prestigious Interschool basketball competition and reported "Lina Dasgupta ke khel se prabhavit hue." (Was impressed by Lina Dasgupta's skills). I attended the competitions and watched proudly as Lina won medals one after the

other be it in Relay race, discus throw, 50 and 100 m races. It was a great moment for our class when our school won the Junior Championship because of Lina.

I used to often attend the Drama sessions when Lina practiced her lines as Raja Dashrath. I was very impressed and proud of her achievements. We were there together for academics, music, sports events and many extracurricular activities. Then came the dreaded "High School". We both put all our efforts and did well in our exams.



Lina then selected the path to become an Engineer and chose Mathematics whereas I selected Biology as per my father's wish. I think that was the norm in those days– we selected the subjects as per the instructions of our father. I remember Lina studying during the lunch breaks along with her classmates in the lawn while I enjoyed the bright sunshine and my guava.

We used to collect Marks' sheet from the Banaras Hindu University Administrative Office. I remember Lina got 100 percent in Mathematics which she truly deserved. She was very happy and her lovely face remains etched in my memory. After we completed our Pre-University courses, Lina and I continued in the same University, but we hardly ever met. We both pursued our own education.

After 30 years we met again through Facebook. It is a unique experience to meet in person after so many decades. We both have changed with the flow of time, but Lina has remained that same multi-talented, energetic and vivacious person I have known for the last 50 years.

Thank you, Lina, for our friendship.



# The Lone Wonderer

## Ruma Bhattacharya

I sat on a rock at the edge of the cliff. It was still bright; the bright blue sky above was slowly turning yellow. I knew that in a matter of minutes the sky would burst into a riot of colors - colors that had long disappeared from my life. But I still loved to watch the sun set, the glorious colorful sky before it plunged the world into darkness. I looked up at the sky again and saw the yellow slowly replaced by a fiery orange and red as the sun made its exit.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" A voice said from behind.

I turned to look at a man, around 30 years of age. A slight stubble growing on his face gave away the fact that he had been on the road for a few days. An expensive camera in hand, he seemed mesmerized by the skies.

"Yes it is, never fails to surprise me." I replied, "By the way you forgot to capture it in your camera." I smiled.

He smiled and shook his head, "I guess I will have to come again tomorrow for that. By the way I am Nikhil." He extended his hand.

Taking his extended hand, I smiled and said, "Hi, Shonali."

"Do you stay around here?" he asked after a while, While clicking away at the fast disappearing Sun.

"Yes, sort of" I paused looking at the horizon and asked, "You are a traveler, aren't you?"

"What makes you think I am a traveler?" he asked.

"Hmm, Though this is a small place, we do get to see a lot of travelers like you with camera's hanging around their neck clicking away the Sunset. There was a time even I wanted to travel to far off places."

"You can still do that.." He smiled. He did have a nice smile.

We sat in silence as the colors of the sky changed from blue to yellow to a fiery orange, red and golden and then the grey as the dusk settled in.

"You must know the place pretty well" he asked and then continued as I nodded in affirmative. "Then maybe you could show me around?" He asked looking at me.

"Sure, there are some places even the locals are not aware of, if you are up to a trek that is?" I said.

"No problem at all."

"Great, I can throw in a few local stories as well, after all what is place if doesn't have some good stories to go with."

"True that, what is a place without a story. Look why don't we meet tomorrow and then you can show me around and tell your stories" He said.

"Sure where are you staying?" I asked

I knew the hotel he named. "Great I know where that is. Why don't you meet me around 9:30 in the morning tomorrow? There is an old wooden cottage at the end of the road leading to your hotel. I shall meet you there. "

"Great, I know the place you are talking about. See you in the morning then." He said getting up. We got down the cliff and parted ways.

As he walked back to his hotel, his mind kept going back to the girl he just met. He had not expected to see anyone when he climbed the cliff. In fact he didn't even notice her at first, it was only as he neared the edge of the cliff that he saw her silhouette and realized that there was someone else than him there.

His mind wandered back to the girl, Shonali. When he first saw her, she had a very sad and lonely expression on her face but she smiled a couple of times, as they got talking, although it seemed that the smile never touched her eyes. There seemed to be something mysterious about her. He had a quick shower and a laid back dinner before retiring to his room in the hotel. Next morning, he had a quick bath and hurried out to meet Shonali.

Shonali was already waiting for him at the corner of the road. Dressed in a pair of denims and a loose top with her hair tied up in a ponytail, she looked kind of cute. He hurried towards her completely captivated by the freshness in her face.

“Hi,” I said as I saw him walking towards me. “You look fresh and ready to go.”  
“Yeah, quite excited. Never had a female guide before, especially on a hike.” He teased.

I gave him a frowning look, “that’s pretty chauvinistic.”

He raised his arms and smiled, “Guilty, come lead the way. So where are you taking me today?”

“A hidden jewel, a beautiful waterfall deep inside the forest.” I replied.

“Sounds good.” he said.

“By the way, it is quite an uphill walk.” I warned Nikhil.

We walked in silence for a while. As I lead him onto the forest path, he said, “What about the story you promised yesterday?”

“Oh yes, the story. It is said that a few years ago a woman, a solo traveler and bag packer like you, visited this place. She liked the place so much that she decided

to extend her stay. She would wander around the place on her own. She would also teach the children and the women in the village. But one day she disappeared without any trace. Some said that she was killed by wild animals; some said that she fell in the gorge. But no one knew for sure.” I paused to look at him. “Hey you are falling behind. Come on, we are almost there.” I looked behind at him. I could hear the water falling over the stones on the sides of the mountain.

A few more steps took us to a small cove like clearing and there, right at the center was this beautiful water fall.

Nikhil came up behind me, slightly out of breath and stared in awe at the waterfall.

“Wow, this is amazing. You are right, this is a hidden gem.” Nikhil said.

I sat on a rock and watched Nikhil as he took a dip under the icy cold falls.

We spent a few more minutes exploring the small caves and crevices around the falls. Nikhil took out a couple of sandwiches and offered one to me.

I shook my head and said, “Thanks but I am on a very light diet these days.”

After the sandwich break, we slowly headed back.

“How did you manage to find such an amazing place inside the forest?” Nikhil asked on the way.

“Well I guess I am just a wandering soul.” I said a little dramatically making Nikhil laugh.

“So what happened to the girl finally? I think there is more to the story.” Nikhil said.

“Well there is. Why don’t we head back to the cliff to watch the sunset again? You get your pictures this time and I can finish the story.” I looked at him.

Nikhil agreed readily.

The hike to and fro to the waterfall had taken the better part of the day. And it would take another half an hour to reach the cliff. The sun sets early in the mountains. So we headed straight towards the cliff. It had been quite a tiring day, but the cool breeze and the beautiful view of the valley below is enough to rejuvenate any wanderer.

We sat in silence for a while, soaking in the beauty of nature.

“So what about the girl?” Nikhil broke the silence.

“Like I said that no one knew what happened to her. There is a boarding school around 11 km from here. A lot of rich kids come to study there. Three months after the girl disappeared, boy from that school fell sick. No one could understand what had happened to him. Despite taking him to hospital and arranging the best of doctors, the boy died. But before he died he solved the mystery of the lost girl and the story goes as this ...”

“The girl...The girl fell in love with this place the moment she set her foot here. She was supposed to stay only for one week, but decided to stay on exploring the surroundings. She would come to this cliff quite often. One day, after watching the sunset she headed back towards the small town where she was staying with a family, who were native to the place. Since it was already dark she took the highway instead of the shorter route through the forest. As she was walking, she heard a screeching sound from behind, she turned but was

blinded by headlights of a car and before she knew, the car had hit her. She lay on the road, alive but bleeding, she couldn’t move. The car stopped a few meters away. Four boys got down and came to check on her.

“She is still alive.” One of them said

“What do we do now? This will get us in jail. You should have listened to me.” Said another.

“Stop fighting we have to get rid of her.” One more voice.

“Let’s just throw her off the cliff. No one will know.” Said one quietly.

She opened her eyes and saw their faces. Two of them were boys from the boarding school nearby; the other two were probably their friends or brothers visiting them.

The boys argued with each other for a while and then picked her up and went towards the cliff. They then threw her off into the gorge below.

The surprising thing is that within the next three months all the four boys died under mysterious circumstances. Two of the boy’s fought amongst themselves and killed each other. One met with an accident and died immediately and the last one died due to the mysterious illness. It was only in his death bed that he realized that his other accomplices had died and he too would meet the same end and that is why he finally came out with the truth. “

“Wow, quite a story this one.” Nikhil was amazed.

“The best part is that just before the boys threw the girl off the cliff,, the girl had looked at them and said that if she died, they too shall not live. Those were her last words.”

“Quite an intriguing story. But how did you know what her last words were.” Nikhil asked.

I laughed and said, “I should know,” I looked at Nikhil, “because those were MY last words!!!”

# Killer Whales

## Monica Raichoudhury

In October 2017, I went to visit SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida to see the most enormous, beautiful creature in the ocean: killer whales or orcas. Orcas have always been my favorite animals since I was four years old. Of course at age 4, I first saw orcas in the Free Willy movie. After that, I have been a huge fan of Keiko, who starred as Willy in the movie, who I will mention about later.



*Mother and her baby*

The first show I went to see was in Shamu Stadium, which is the killer whale show. I found a perfect seat where the whales will splash, but I won't get wet! Before the show began, I watched the calves swim around the tank with their mothers. They splash the water with their tails, jumped, and came up to the surface to breathe through their blowholes. Once the show began, the calves began performing various tricks, which amazed me. They were also rewarded a fish for every trick

they performed. They splashed water over the audience with their large tails and some of us got wet! Everything I saw was amazing and beautiful. My favorite trick was when the trainers were about to feed fish to the whales. The trick was when the trainers had a small-sized fish in their hands; the whales shook their heads, "No!" Once the trainers held a big bucket of fish, they nodded. That was the hilarious trick I have ever seen!

Watching the show was something different. I had a different point of view while watching the show. I had the opportunity to see orcas right up close that I may or may not get when I visit the oceans. It is amazing to see how the whales jump and swim right in front of my eyes.

Unfortunately, the 2013 documentary, **Blackfish**, is based on an incident of an orca named Tilikum who killed his trainer, Dawn Brancheau in 2010. Since the release of **Blackfish**, people have begun to protest against captive orcas. Although people want all marine parks to free the orcas into ocean, it is impossible to do so because most of them are born in

captivity. Due to this, the number of visitors going to SeaWorld has declined in recent decades. This has changed people's view on captive animals and understanding of why all animals should remain in the wild.

### Keiko's Story

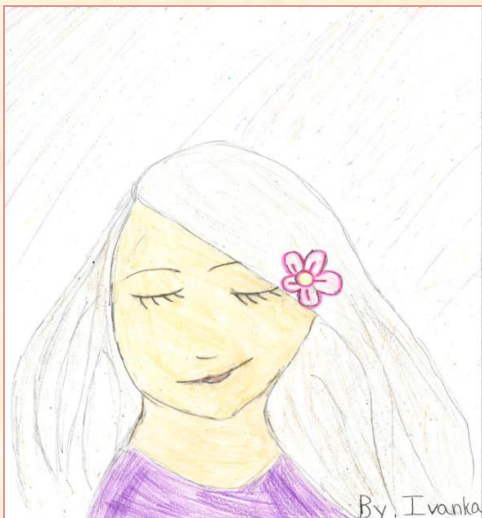


*Keiko*

The **Free Willy** movie inspired the whole world to free Keiko back into the ocean in real life. Keiko was born in the wild near Iceland. He was captured at

age two in 1979 and spent most of his life in captivity until 2002. After the release of **Free Willy**, everyone wanted him to be free. People created posters and donated money to implement this plan. The preparation for freeing Keiko began in 1998. He was trained to be a wild orca such as hunting a live fish for food on his own instead of being fed by his trainers. After setting him free in 2002, Keiko returned to his home. Although he was free, he still interacted with humans. While he was swimming in the Atlantic Ocean, he was actually following a boat with humans instead of a pod of orcas! Keiko's interaction with humans never changed even after being free. It was an amazing experience that could ever happen.

## Spring Ivanka Ghosh



Butterflies flying, pollen spreading  
petals flying in the wind  
Birds singing melodious songs  
As lovely as can be  
Rabbits hopping like cotton balls  
Colorful beauties  
A treat to see  
Spring as lovely as can be

# Maa Aaschen - The Homecoming of our Devine Mother

Nandita Dubey Mukherjee

Any Bengali would easily connect to this phrase! It symbolizes the homecoming of Maa (Goddess Durga) from the abode of her husband (Lord Shiva in *Kailash Parbat*) to her parent's house (the mortal world) to end Evil – *Mahishasura*. She is the supreme Goddess – *Adi-Parashakthi* herself. The term Durga means “the invincible” and is regarded as the prime female deity of the Hindus. She is believed to be eternal, with no beginning or end, and is also regarded as *Swayambhu* - one who has manifested on her own.

While the advent of the mother **Goddess Durga** is considered highly auspicious and is celebrated as an occasion for rejoicing and celebration, the different *Vahanas* (the mounts or carriers) that she uses for making this annual sojourn are considered equally important. This year, the arrival of the Goddess is on a Boat signifying good monsoon, fertility of soil, plentiful harvest and sometimes floods. The departure is on an Elephant signifying abundance and blessings.

Nothing compared to Durga Puja celebrations in Kolkata. During the festive season, the city doesn't sleep

and the people deck up in finery. This part of the country seems illuminated from the sky as it bathes in light – a five-day celebration with themed *Pandals*, traditional *Pujos*, food, friendship, *adda* and creativity. *Kumartuli* in Kolkata – holds a special significance as it is where the idols of Durga are sculpted and painted.

The festivities last for 10 days at a stretch and each day has its own significance.

**Mahalaya – Day 1:** The day when the goddess is believed to begin her journey from *Kailash Parbat* with gifts from various Gods present.

*Brahma* gives *Kamandalu* (Oblong Water Pot)

*Vishnu* gives *Chakra* (Disk-like weapon)

*Mahadev* gives *Trishul* (3-pointed spear)  
*In*

*Varuna* gives *Sankha* (Conch Shell)

*dra* gives *Vajra* (Thunderbolt)

*Vishwakarma* gives *Kulhar* (Handle-less Cup)

*Yamraj* gives *Kaldanda* (Weapon of Death)

*Vasuki* gives *Nag* (Snake)  
*Surya* gives *Khara* (Pointed Weapon)  
*Vayu* gives *Dhanushwar* (Bow and Arrow)

Sculptors, who have been working for days carving and chiseling the statue of Durga, carry out their final touch by drawing the eyes of Maa Durga on this day. This auspicious ritual is called *Chokkhu Daan* - offering of the eyes. It marks the beginning of Maa Durga's journey to the mortal world.

**Shashthi – Day 6:** On this day Maa Durga is welcomed with her four children - *Ganesha*, *Kartik*, *Lakshmi* and *Saraswati* with jubilation and fanfare amidst the rhythmic beatings of *Dhak* - a membranophone instrument.

**Saptami – Day 7:** The holy presence of Maa Durga is invoked into the idols in a ritual called *Pran-Pratisthan*. The day commences with the *Kola-Bou* bath - a banana tree is bathed before dawn in a river or body of water, dressed in a sari like a newly-wed bride.

**Ashtami – Day 8:** Maa Durga is worshiped in the form of a young unmarried virgin girl, adorned as Maa Durga. The ritual is called *Kumari Puja*. In the evening, Maa Durga is worshipped in her *Chamunda* form,

which slayed the two forms of *Mahishasura* – *Chanda* and *Munda*.

**Navami – Day 9:** Maa Durga is believed to have killed *Mahishasura* and she's worshiped in the form of *Mahishasuramardini*. Rituals during this time involve the use of 108 lotus flowers and 108 earthen oil lamps.

**Dashami – Day 10:** The final day of the long festive celebration! Women smear *Shindoor* - vermilion on each other faces as a mark of victory of good over evil. Maa Durga is immersed with the promise "*Asche bochhor abar hobey*" – "may the celebrations resume next year". It is believed that she will return to *Mount Kailash* to be with Lord *Shiva*. People greet each other with "*Shubho Bijoya*" - 'The Auspicious Victory' – and exchange sweets and gifts.

We Wonder... people talk about women empowerment now, whereas in Indian culture it traces back to centuries when feminism was worshipped as the ultimate *Shakti* - energy. *Mahishasura* (the evil) could not be captured by any man, **women power was (and is) needed to keep the world safe.**

# ' Skeleton '

by Sharmila Roy

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*' Yon lies the skeleton of an animal  
on the grass beside the way...  
On that grass , which had once provided it nutrient...  
gave it a soft resting place!  
By it lies a heap of pale bones...  
Times cruel laughter!  
As if death's finger directing me  
Telling me in disguise...  
'Your end is the same as it's,  
there's no difference!  
When the elixer of your life ends  
The broken cup will scatter lovelessly on the dust!'  
But replied I , ' Death , I don't believe in the mockery of your  
hollowness!  
My life is not that, whose journey ends with the emptying of all  
it's belongings..  
Whose debt of satisfying sleep and hunger is claimed by mere  
bones!  
The things that I've thought of and known,  
heard and spoken of...  
And have suddenly burst into joyful and melancholic songs...  
Cannot be restrained by your fencing , Oh Death!  
What I've received and lend ...  
this World cannot hold!  
The dance of my mind...  
has crossed the barrier of life and death ..  
to reach the land of forever beauty !  
How can it end within the border of a skeleton??  
The true me is not the weight of my flesh..*

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*- Translation of Tagore's poem 'Kankal' from Purabi book of poems in remembrance of my Mother and all other dear friends and relatives who have left this world!*



## New York City

Aaditya Mitra (8 ½ years)

In my summer vacation this year I visited New York City with my parents. We landed on a Friday afternoon. Then we took a yellow cab to our Doubletree hotel. We waited at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor for my dad. When my dad came back from his office meeting we checked into the hotel. Our room was on the 25<sup>th</sup> floor. Our hotel was right in front of Times Square. When I got to our room I went to the window and looked outside. When I looked down I saw how people in Times Square were looking like ants on the ground. There were indeed lots of ants!

After freshening up a bit we went downstairs and outside to explore Times Square. One fact about Times Square is that it used to be called Longacre Square long time back. The name was changed to Times Square in the year 1904. My eyes got dazzled from the all the lights. The I figured out that the lights were coming from the hundreds of advertisements on all the tall buildings around Times Square. The lights never get switched off and there are people in the streets all throughout the night. The city never sleeps! We were tired and so we had dinner and went to bed early. The next day will be exciting!

We woke up to a bright sunny morning and soon we were on the road.

Our first stop would be the Freedom Tower. It was fun to get a yellow cab. We just had to wave our hand and a cab will come! It took about fifteen minutes to reach our destination. The Freedom Tower is built at Ground Zero. It was built to remember all

the innocent people who died during the terrorist attack at the World Trade Center on 9/11. The Freedom Tower stands at 1,776 feet tall.

1776 is also the year of American independence which is when America got freedom. That is why the Freedom Tower is built to be 1,776 feet tall. The tower has 104 floors and it took the elevator just one minute to reach the top floor! The entire top floor is made of only glass windows. It was a fantastic view. You could see the entire city of Manhattan, the Statue of Liberty, and also New Jersey. I have never seen such a view before. While getting out of the tower they were handing out a \$5 gift card that we could use in any store in the city.

Our next stop was the Statue of Liberty. We took a yellow cab to Battery Park. You have to take a ferry to go the visit the statue. When we arrived, we saw that the line was super big and we thought that we couldn't make it to the ferry on Time.

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I felt very sad. Just when we were walking back we saw another short line to the side. We found out that there is a water taxi which does not go and stop at the Liberty Island but it goes very close to it so that one can get a very good view of the statue. I felt very happy and soon we were off on the water taxi. It took the boat around twenty minutes to reach close to the statue. The view was amazing. The boat stopped for a few minutes and we took some really beautiful pictures. The boat captain told us that the statue was a gift from France to America in the year 1886. I also learnt that the seven

spikes on the crown of the statue represent the seven oceans and the seven continents of the world. Before the water taxi came back, we got to see the Brooklyn Bridge. The bridge, which is huge and looks gorgeous, is one of the oldest roadway bridges in United States. It was a very long but exciting day for us.

The next day was our last day before we had to go home. We could choose only one more place to visit. We chose Central Park. The park was close to our hotel and so we went walking. Although most people were walking inside the park we decided to take the Horse and Carriage ride. It was my first ride on a horse and I loved it. As the horse galloped through the park I saw lots of big

playgrounds, very tall trees, and lakes. I also saw lots of huge rocks in the middle of the playgrounds. The horse driver told us interesting facts about the rocks. The Central Park used to be covered by glaciers long time ago. About 12,000 years ago the glaciers melted away leaving behind those huge rocks that we see today. Our beautiful ride came to an end after one-hour.

I started feeling sad that it was our last thing that I could see and that we had to go back home.

While we were returning back to our hotel my dad gave us a real surprise. He asked the cab driver to drop us at a place that was not our hotel. We got off the taxi in front of a Broadway show! Then he told us that he got us tickets to a show called the School of Rock. I could not believe it. School of Rock is a rock musical show based on a book written by Julian Fellowes and whose music is given by

Andrew Lloyd Webber. This was the first Broadway show for both me and my parents. The story is that of a rock singer and guitar player who has to be a substitute teacher in a very well-known school. While teaching music he formed a school band with fifth grade students. He trained the band secretly and made the band to win a very well-known music competition and became the most popular teacher in the school. I could not believe how such young boys and girls could act so well for such a long time.

It was time to go back to the hotel and then get ready to go to the airport. I was very happy to spend just a beautiful time in the city that is called the Big Apple. It was a truly memorable vacation for me and I hope I will go back to New York City again.

# My Trip to Bhutan

## Shirsho Banerjee

**DATE: WEDNESDAY AUGUST 1, 2018**

We have just landed in Bhutan, which I did not know existed until a few minutes ago. The first thing that came to mind when I saw the Paro Airport was “Well, that’s a small airport”. Also, the outside



*Tachog Lhakang Monastery by the Paro River*

of the airport looked like a palace. Plus, the runway was tiny compared to any of the other runways I’ve seen [I travel a lot]. All in all, it was a pretty neat airport. When we got to the front of the airport, there was a man holding a sign with my Dad’s name on it. He was our tour guide for the rest of the trip, so we followed him into the van.

Near a historic area in Bhutan, we took a photo break. The tour guide explained that the river beneath us is called the Paro River. If I were to use 4 words to describe that river, they would be: Vast, Rapid, Rocky and Grey. Connecting the riverbank on the other side to the one we were

on were 2 bridges: one old and another slightly more recent by a few 100 years. The old bridge is apparently 700 years old.

Unfortunately, it was boarded off. Thankfully, there was another bridge nearby. On the other side of the river [the side opposite to the van had a monastery called the Tachog Lhakang.



*The royal palace at Thimphu*

After an hour or so, we stopped in an animal preserve called the Royal Takin Preserve. In case you have no idea what a takin is, it is basically a goat mixed with a yak. At the preserve, we learned [or at least I did] that takins are not only the national animal of Bhutan, but they are also endangered.

Once we reached Thimphu, two things we saw the King’s palace and the Queen mother’s Palace [the queen is not allowed to live in the king’s palace]. After we passed that, we got to see a rainbow in the valley. Next, we got to see the gigantic sitting Buddha, made from

bronze, gold, lapis and diamond. Surprisingly enough, it was still under construction. Not so surprising was the fact that it was forbidden to enter the temple with shoes. Finally, at the end of the day we visited a weaving studio where we bought a scarf and after that we visited a few handicraft stores.

**DATE: THURSDAY AUGUST 2, 2018**

After leaving the hotel, we went to a place between mountains called the Dochula pass, which is home to 108 memorial stupas [mounds made of cremated people, clay and bon]. and is 3,100 meters [10170.6 feet] above sea level. Plus, the Himalayas are in view most of the time.



*Memorial stupas for soldiers at Dochula Pass*

After a few hours, we stopped in a town that was 20 minutes away from everything to see Chimi Lhakang, or temple of fertility. The name means temple of NO dogs. To make a long story short, there were lots of dogs there. ON the way back, there was an art store where we purchased 3 art rocks, 1 notebook, and 1 painting of a dragon. A little while later, we reached Punakha and stopped at the Punakha Dzong. Half of the Dzong is home to monks, while the other half is for part of the government. 10 minutes later, we walked on the largest footbridge in Bhutan. Called the Punakha

suspension bridge, it is 160 meters long. Sounds like no challenge, right? Well, imagine a metal bridge with a few grips here and there. Now imagine that same bridge, but you are trying to cross it in the rain. Now imagine trying to cross that bridge in the rain while at the same time dodging cow patties [via cow delivery system]. That's how hard it was. Finally, we went to our hotel, Meri Punsam resort.

**DATE: FRIDAY AUGUST 3, 2018**

Roughly 2 hours after we woke up, we went whitewater rafting. To make a long story short, it was a great and fun experience. For dinner, we had this thing called momo. Momo is basically giant pot stickers with chili sauce on the side. Nothing else really happened today. Besides going back to Paro.

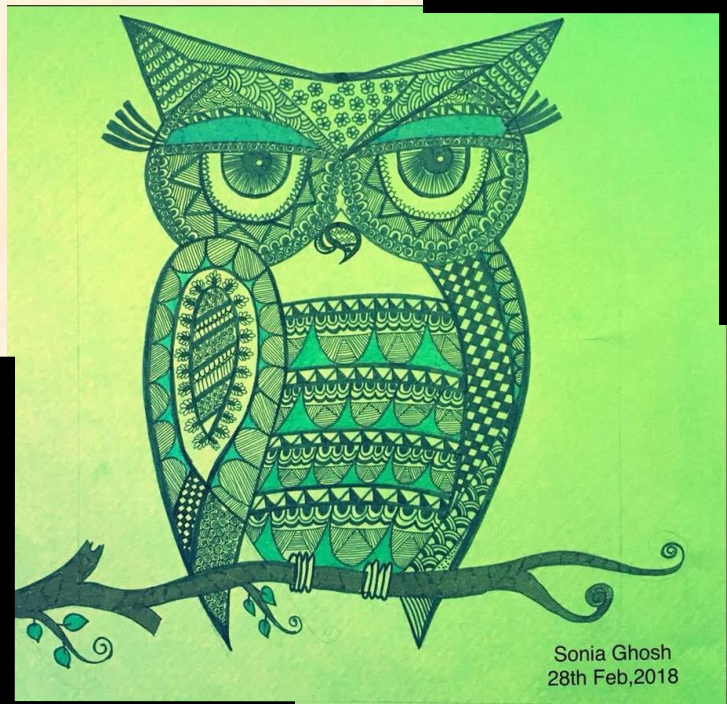
**DATE: SATURDAY AUGUST 4, 2018**

After about an hour after waking up, my parents and I, along with the tour guide, trekked halfway up the Tiger's Nest monastery [a.k.a. Takhsang monastery. Just 4 steep miles uphill completely wore us out. On the bright side, the café at the halfway point had excellent tea [and it still does]. After an hour of resting, we visited the makeshift National Museum of Bhutan. Why makeshift? Well the actual one was destroyed in an earthquake 6 years ago. 10 minutes later, at the end of the day we visited the oldest temple in Bhutan, the Kyichu Lhakang, which was built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. That's older than Christopher Columbus! And then, it was time for us to come down to the plains and finish the rest of our trip (to Kolkata).

# Art Gallery



Minakshi De



Sonia Ghosh

# Art Gallery



Mimi Ghosh

# Art Gallery



Ishita

Ishita Waddadar (7 years)



Srijani Deb (6 years)



Sarojini Deb (8 years)

# Looking Back ( 2017 – 2018 ) Photo Collage Shreya Dutta

Durga Puja & Saraswati Puja  
2017-2018





# Holi

2018



*Shubho Bijoya*  
&  
*Best Wishes*



*Shantanu, Nandina, Rohan*  
& *Ritika Samanta*

*Sarod*  
*Shubhechha*



*Kunal & Rini*  
*Banerji*

*Sarodiya Greetings*



**Sourav & Sudeshna**  
**Dasgupta**

সকলকে জানাই শারদীয়ার প্রীতি ও শুভেচ্ছা।



**Aditya , Tania ,**  
**Tilak and Manjusree**



**Wishing you all a Happy Durga Puja**

*Mimi, Partha, Ishika & Ivanka*



**Sarodiyar Subhechha**

**Dr R.K & Swapna  
Raichoudhary**

*Happy Durga Puja*

**Jay, Monica, Ishita  
&**

**Brinda Waddadar**





Sarodiyar Subhechha  
- From Goswami's



Sarad  
Shubhecha  
from our  
family to  
yours!  
From

**Roy Family**





শারদীয়ার শুভেচ্ছা  
ও  
অভিনন্দন ॥

SHREYA, SHARMISTHA &  
ARUP DUTTA

**May the divine blessings of Maa Durga, give you the strength to overcome all evils in you life. Have a blessed Durga Puja!**



**Shreya, Shruti, Suniti & Subir Bhattacharya**



*Shubho Bijoya!*

*From,*

*Abhijit, Chandrima,*

*Anwit, Malini and Anoocha*



Best wishes from the team of Property Solutions, LLC

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## Bengali Association Of South Florida



BASFL is a non-profit socio-cultural organization committed to serving Bengalis born and brought up in the United States. BASFL's members in South Florida and beyond who has contributed to helping us grow over the years. To learn more about BASFL, please visit our website at basfl.org

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শুভেচ্ছা ও  
অভিনন্দন