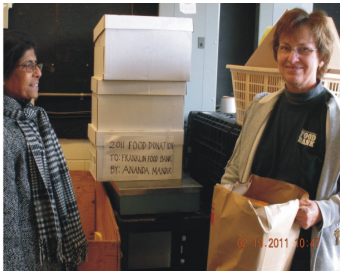




Another Successful Campaign for Food Bank Donation

Reported by Debajyoti Chatterji



Delivery to Somerset Food Bank by Krishna Dutta Roy (Left)

On February 19, Ananda Mandir volunteers delivered about 100 pounds of canned food items to Somerset Food Bank. This was the third year for the Humanitarian Activities Committee to collect canned food from members and visitors and help the local food bank. The committee chair, Krishna Dutta Roy, would like to announce that the collection of canned food items will now continue throughout the year. To that end, a collection box will be placed in the temple. Members and friends of Ananda Mandir are urged to bring canned food items and drop them off in the box whenever they visit the temple or the community center. The next targeted delivery date of collected goods to the food bank is around 2011 Thanksgiving. Closer to that date, Krishna is also planning to organize a drive to collect gently used clothing. She says that the effort to collect food and clothing for the needy needs active involvement of more volunteers, especially students in schools and colleges. She also points out that local food banks need more help than ever before because of the current economic climate. These efforts to serve the needy enhance Ananda Mandir's reputation in the local community and fulfill one of the fundamental missions of our organization. You may wish to organize a collection drive in your neighborhood or among your friends and bring your collection to Ananda Mandir. If you or your children wish to get involved in these types of humanitarian activities or have questions or suggestions, please call Krishna Dutta Roy (Phone: 732-390-8069).

Glimpses of Rising Talents at Ananda Mandir's Bani Bandana

By Sushmita Dutta



youngsters in our Saraswati Puja program, Bani Bandana, held on February 13, 2011

Behind every rising star there is a story of focused dedication. I remember listening to one interview of Lata Mangeshkar where she said very emphatically, "I couldn't have become anything else but a singer, because singing is the only thing that I can do." When I listen to extra-ordinarily talented singers of our community like **Shreya Bhanja Chowdhury**, or watch a gifted dancer like **Brinda Guha**, my

heart goes out in prayers for their future success. God bless them. There were many other youngsters in our Saraswati Puja program, Bani Bandana, held on February 13, that made me immensely happy and proud. The show was led by two young, budding MCs Shreya Mukherjee and Shankadeep Chakraborty. Rishav Das began the show, playing "Purano Shei Diner Kotha" on key-

board followed by Shivan Mukherjee playing "Om Jai Jagadeesh Hare". In the vocal music section there were a good number of talented singers. Shreya Bhanja Chowdhury, who probably inherited music from her family of musicians, filled the air with her melodious songs including a well-rendered semi-classical number, "Mata Saraswati Sharada".

Turn to page-4

Ananda Mandir Expansion Where Are We?

Friends:

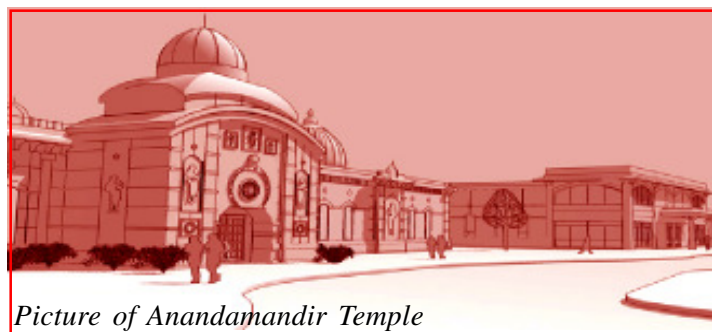
I am sure you have heard about Ananda Mandir's facility expansion plans from your friends or from reading progress reports published in previous issues of Ananda Sangbad. Where are we now since my last write up 3 months ago? We are moving ahead full steam in all areas as planned. We have submitted all engineering drawings to Franklin Township for approval. We are in the final stage of our construction loan negotiations with a bank based on the pre-approved term sheet. Our goal is to be ready to start the construction by mid-April of this year. To that end, we are planning a major ground-breaking ceremony-cum-fund raising event on Sunday, April 17th at Ananda Mandir.

As we excitedly prepare for the big celebratory event on April 17, we realize that we still have quite a bit of work left. Most importantly, we still need to raise \$200,000 from

the community to meet our need for cash as part of initial down payment towards the construction loan mortgage. You may receive calls from our volunteers for your donation to this project. Please make a generous contribution to help this endeavor. This is a life-time event for us as an immigrant community to see finally our center being developed to a fully functional religious cum cultural center. As a thank you, Board of Trustee has approved various products to recognize your contribution to Ananda Mandir. Details will be published in the next issue

Ashok Rakhit

Chair, Site Expansion Project



Picture of Anandamandir Temple

of Ananda Sangbad.

We invite you to join us on Sunday, April 17th celebrating Ground-Breaking Ceremony for our Site Expansion Project.

We hope that in two years from today, you will have a facility that would be beautiful with architectural work of Bengali heritage (see sketch), be functional to meet all your religious and cultural needs, and last but not least, be a place that will make you feel proud to bring your children and their friends to.

This will be your other home. Thank you.

Ananda Mandir Calendar of Events

(Dates are subject to change)

Please check our website frequently:

www.anandamandir.org

Tel: 732-873-9821

NOTE: If a particular puja time is not listed, please contact temple or visit our website

- Ananda Sandhya Friday, April 8, 2011 8:00 pm
- Basanti Puja April 9-13, 2011
- Ram Nabami Tuesday, April 12, 2011
- Ground-breaking 11:00 A.M. & Satyanarayana Puja at evening Sunday, April 17, 2011
- Shyama Puja Monday, May 2, 2011, 6:00 P.M
- Akshaya Tritia Friday, May 6, 8:00 A.M.
- Ananda Sandhya Friday, May 13, 2011 8:00 pm
- Ram Thakur Smaran Utsav & Satyanarayan Puja Sunday, May 15, 2011
- Baishakhi Purnima Tuesday, May 17, 2011
- Phalaharini Kali Puja Wednesday June 1, 2011, 6:00 pm
- Ananda Sandhya Friday, June 10, 2011, 8:00 pm
- Dashohara & Ganga Puja Saturday, June 11, 2011
- Satya Narayan Puja Sunday, June 12, 2011, 6:00 p.m.
- Ambubachi Prabriti Kama-kshya Aradhana Wednesday, June 22, 2011 6:00 pm
- Shyama Puja Thursday June, 30, 2011, 6:00 p.m.
- Ratha Yatra Sunday, July 3, 2011
- Ananda Sandhya Friday, July 8th, 8:00 p.m.
- Bipad Tarini Puja Saturday, July 9, 2011 9:00 a.m.
- Ulto Ratha Yatra Sunday, July 10, 2011

Special Religious Services:

Upon requests, the priest of Ananda Mandir also offers services such as in-house Shradhas, Rituals associated with Cremations (Anthesti Kriya), Death Anniversaries, Pre-wedding rituals (Nundimukh, Ashirwad, etc), Upanayan (Paitey), Annaprasan, Wedding Ceremonies & Wedding Anniversaries, Griha Prabesh (Bhumi Puja), Consecrations of new cars (New Car Pujas) and others. **If you have needs for any of the above or more, please feel free to contact Biswabhai @ 732-873-9821**

ANANDA SANGBAD

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Published By
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EDITORIAL

Community Support System at Ananda Mandir:

A community's strength lies in its people, not in numbers used in census reports but in the strength of their bonds, common goals and compassion for each other. To this end and to sustain these qualities, the members of the community must be ready to help and support each other in meeting the needs of others. There is always a need for support, at times of physical ailment, mental depression, family conflicts or simply due to the frequently afflicted loneliness at retirement and/or old age. In the United States there are hundreds of support groups, but they are not always compatible to various close knit ethnic groups because of the cultural diversity among the groups and the lack of commonality in life style. So, addressing to our community, do we need to have a concerted effort to initiate the various support systems within our community or just leave it for the time to take care of it, somehow? This is a topic we should be ready to debate on, particularly when Ananada Mandir is about to embark on a four-million dollar facility expansion that would create a center, probably worth ten million dollars in value to the community. Building, structures, parking lots are essential for the people to assemble together, but to sustain the 'togetherness' we must put a process in place to strengthen our bond, in meeting the needs of each other.

A quick survey of the region's various social organizations, including Ananda Mandir, reveals that none of them has seriously addressed this issue, except for making sporadic attempts to touch on certain standard charities, such as collection of some used clothing or unused

canned food for Red Cross or Salvation Army and time to time modest fund raising for charitable causes in West Bengal where the majority of our people come from. Undoubtedly, all these organizations are doing an excellent job in providing a platform to meet our religious and entertainment needs, but none is focused on providing the basic support services that we need for the community here, in the United States. The demand for this support will continue to increase as the community will progressively age and grow in number.

Ananda Mandir, as it is being generally recognized as "The Center" of our community, must address this issue now, not later, and should start identifying and putting in place the most needed community services and community support system as the expansion project takes off. This task must run parallel to the construction project, not in sequence. It should not wait until all the constructions are done, which could be a continuous process for several years to come. If it is started now, Ananda Mandir will then have a full fledged community support system by the time the expansion is complete. Regarding the publication, starting from this issue, Ananda Sangbad layout is being done in India by Bingshita and printing in USA by Aha Designs. The layout of the last two issues was volunteered by one of our co-editors, Sushmita Dutta, and she completed the job in a timely and professional manner. We applaud her skills and express our gratitude for her support and dedication.

Pronoy Chatterjee
Editor-in-Chief

President's MESSAGE

I am pleased to announce that Ananda Mandir achieved several milestones last year. We have increased the size of our property through the purchase of several acres of adjoining land. We have submitted all engineering drawings to Franklin Township for approval of our temple expansion and building a new community center. We are in the final stage of our construction loan negotiations with a bank based on the pre-approved term sheet. Additionally, we continued to organize Durga Puja, Kali Puja, Saraswati Puja, Shiva puja and other religious events like Janmashami in accordance with the Bengali panjika. We also held Satyanarayan Pujas on a monthly basis. For these Puja events, we have drawn more devotees than ever. We have continued to bring many local musical talents for our monthly Ananda Sandhya events. We initiated cultural and religious discussion meetings in our premises. Classes on dance, music and Bengali language are continuing to be held regularly at Ananda Mandir. We continue to provide our members free of cost with Anadalipi and Ananda Sangbad containing many relevant and timely news and outstanding literary works of local authors. Additionally, we have undertaken initiative to promote youth talent in literature, science and art by giving awards, and youth community service activities by providing grants.

As you know Ananda Mandir runs through financial and volunteer help from our community. Although our membership has grown steadily, the number of volunteers has not



grown proportionally. We are in desperate need of volunteers. I request that if you have some time to spare, please come to Ananda Mandir and give us an extra hand to keep our organization running smoothly and keep it healthy. We are also in constant need of more revenue. Please consider becoming a life member by paying \$1000 or a patron member by paying \$5,000. Please join me to make Ananda Mandir strong so that this organization continues to provide religious and cultural services to hundreds of Bengalis and friends of Bengalis in the tri-states area.

Dipak K. Sarkar, President
Ananda Mandir

In the Middle of the Egyptian Uprising: Vacation Turns into a Nightmare For Subhendu and Jaba Bagchi

By Debajyoti Chatterji

Editor's Note: This article is based on an extended phone conversation with Jaba Bagchi

This winter, as in previous winters, Subhendu and Jaba (Sipra) Bagchi, Patron members of Ananda Mandir, returned to India for a long vacation. With Kolkata as the base, they usually travel to religious and cultural sites in various parts of India. This year they decided to do something in addition: Take a vacation in Egypt, the ancient land of pharaohs and pyramids. So they signed up with a tour group for a 11-day sightseeing trip. On January 22, they left Kolkata for Cairo with 22 like-minded Bengali tourists and a tour director.

Everything went as planned for the first several days. Subhendu and Jaba visited the world-famous Egyptian Museum in Cairo, took in the breathtaking sites of the pyramids and the Sphinx, enjoyed a cruise on the Nile and marveled at the size and beauty of the ruined temples of Luxor and Karnak. Food was very good, weather was gorgeous and the group soon settled into a nice circle of friendship. Their final stops were the spectacular ruins at Abu Simbel and the colossal Aswan Dam. During the final leg of the journey they started learning about the crowds gathering in Tharir Square in Cairo and the increasing unrest across the country. By the time the group boarded the all-night train from Luxor to Cairo, they knew that Cairo was in turmoil. Everyone on board the train were tense and apprehensive, not knowing what was in store for them in Cairo.

After a restless night on the train, the group arrived in the Cairo station in the wee hours of January 28 only to be told that all the passengers had to stay right on the platform because the city was in a dusk-to-dawn curfew. After an agonizing 5 to 6 hours wait on the dimly lit and cold platform, the group members

were loaded into a bus and taken to their hotel. As the bus drove through the city, the Bagchis and the other members of the tour group saw empty streets and shuttered store fronts, and noticed military vehicles and army everywhere. The most menacing sights on virtually every street were the army tanks. Once they got to the hotel, they were told not to leave the hotel under any circumstances, and stay in their rooms. After a few hours in their rooms, the group members started drifting down to the lobby and huddled there. The lights in the lobby were turned off except for one at the reception desk. All the Egyptian television stations were off the air, and internet had been "switched off" by the Mubarak government. However, non-Egyptians TV channels like Al Jazeera continued to broadcast but the tour group members had little use of the news in Arabic language. Phone calls could not be made from the hotel. Basically the group of tourists were isolated and cut off from the outside world. The tour director was busy, trying to contact anyone and everyone who could help the group leave the country by air. The hotel management was very helpful. There was no shortage of food or drinks, and the tourists killed time, listening to rumors brought in people coming in or going out of the hotel lobby. A member of the tour group somehow managed to contact her son in Australia by cell phone, and those phone calls became the only (but infrequent) source of reliable news about the events unfolding in Cairo and elsewhere in Egypt. Interestingly, army personnel entered the hotel lobby every now and then and told the group members, "You are visitors. You have nothing to fear. Everything will be OK".

Their presence was oddly reassuring, Jaba noted.

The determined and persistent efforts by the tour director finally paid off on January 31, and the group was quietly loaded into a bus and driven to the airport. to board their Emirates flight to Kolkata. The bus drive went through several roadblocks, security checkpoints, and traffic diversions. Armored vehicles and tanks were everywhere but there was no violence or intimidation by the military. The long bus ride was really stressful because the bus driver and the tour director told them to occupy seats at the rear of the bus, and all the curtains were drawn to give the look of an empty vehicle.

Once the Bagchis and the rest of the tour group arrived near the airport, they were told that the airport was in utter chaos, with thousands of passengers trying to leave

the country. They could not disembark for almost six hours. Whatever food the group had with them, it was divided up among the members as they waited and waited. The tour director and the bus driver worked feverishly to arrange safe boarding for the members. Finally, they were told to enter the terminal building in single file and assume a very low key demeanor and not visit any stores or rest rooms but go straight to their assigned departure gate.

Once the aircraft pulled out of the gate, it had to wait on the tarmac for about an hour before takeoff. Considering the circumstances, that was "a small miracle", Jaba thought. There was a palpable air of relief on board the airplane. After 3 days of limitless stress, the group enjoyed every moment of the flight to Kolkata.

When they arrived in Kolkata airport, the group was greeted by a big group of reporters. Apparently the press had been tipped off

about the happy return of the Bengali tour group. The assembled press reporters held an animated discussion with several members of the tour group. Subhendu had lost his voice during the flight home, so Jaba fielded many of the questions

Next morning brought a pleasant surprise for Jaba and Subhendu. Ananda Bazar Patrika, the well-known Kolkata newspaper, carried a special report on the tour group's experience in Egypt. Jaba was featured in the report and quoted at length. Soon their phone started ringing.

Not only did their friends and neighbors call but also more press reporters wanted to interview Jaba. That evening Jaba was on local TV as the tour group's spokesperson in an hour long program with two more panelists (a professor and a journalist).

Subhendu and Jaba are back on their usual schedule, enjoying the warm weather in Kolkata and meeting and greeting relatives and friends. "Glad to be back", Jaba says to everyone.

Celebration of Shiva Ratri At Ananda Mandir

By Anil Raychaudhuri

Ananda Mandir celebrated Sri Maha Shiva Ratri on Wednesday & Thursday, March 2-3, 2011, starting at about 9:00 pm on Wednesday and ending at about 8:30 p.m. (the duration of the tithi) on Thursday. For the convenience of devotees, major rituals of the celebration were carried out on Thursday. The ceremony began with Rajbesh (Invocation) in the morning, followed by Himachandana Arati and Yagna. The Yagna (Havan) in itself was an elaborate ritual. There was a long line of devotees to join in the Yagna. The temple remained open from 9:00 am to 9:30 pm on Thursday to facilitate the devotees to worship Shivalinga by bathing the icon with a mixture of milk and water--a traditional ritual fol-

lowed by the Hindus on this occasion. Many devotees took part in singing devotional songs inside the temple. Though it was a cold wintry day, the weather was good enough to encourage the devotees to attend the ceremony in droves. There was a constant flow of devotees men, women of all ages with young children into the temple all through the day

As per religious tradition, the devotees, especially the young women and girls, bathed their favorite symbol of Lord Shiva, represented by Shivalingam, with milk to attain beatitude. In fact, the rituals started quite early with Mangal Arati followed by Shri Shiva Sahashra Naam Paath & Sri Rudra Suktam Paath. Throughout the day, Sri Shivastuti

Aradhana and special Puja were conducted by the priest in an atmosphere of piety. On this occasion, the devotees donated generously to the cause of Ananda Mandir, and each family of devotees was given a bagful of consecrated fruits as prasad to take home. In addition, the devotees were served with Bhog, specially prepared and kindly sponsored by the devotees for this occasion.

According to Hindu religious mythology, Shiva originated on the night of Shiva Ratri. As the legend has it, Shiva was married to Parvati, the daughter of King Hemant of the Himalayas on this night. The occasion of Shiva's marriage with Parvati is thus celebrated as Shiva Ratri in some parts of India (Vidyarthi, 1979:65).

Highlights of Recent Activities at Ananda Mandir—A Report

By Anil Raychaudhuri

●**New Year's Day Celebration:** As usual, the year began with the observation of New Year's Day. The door of the temple opened on Saturday, January 1, 2011 quite early in the morning for the visitors for Devi "Darshan" and Archana of deities. Following an exchange of wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year amongst the visitors, there was a flurry of religious rituals performed by the priest. The day's activity ended with Sandhya Arati at about 8:00 p.m. followed by Prasad and Bhog distribution.

●**Monthly Shyama and Satya Narayan Pujas:** As usual, Ananda Mandir continues with monthly Shyama and Satya Narayan Puja on the New moon and Full moon

nights, respectively. These pujas are becoming increasingly popular at Ananda Mandir, drawing a respectable number of devotees from the nearby community. Many devotees sponsor these pujas with bouquet of flowers, sweets and donations for the betterment of the temple.

The generation of devotees, who left the old world, has happily found a solid religious firmament in Ananda Mandir to offer their prayers. Ratanti Kali Puja: Ananda Mandir celebrated Ratanti Kali Puja on Tuesday, February 1, 2011 in the evening of Amabasya (New moon).

●**Ratanti Kali Puja:** is observed as a celebrated event which represents the ancient Kali Puja according to Hindu beliefs. Though it was a week day, a relatively large number of devotees showed up to

observe puja with great devotion and enthusiasm. As usual, the puja was performed by the priest in an atmosphere of solemnity and devotion. The puja ended with pushpanjali and sprinkling of holy water by the priest. One of the highlights of the Ratanti Kali Puja was that the devotees got a chance to be entertained with Shyama Sangeet by the local artists at the end of puja rituals. As it is customary with Ananda Mandir puja activities, the devotees received Prasad and Bhog at the conclusion of Puja.

●**Celebration of Makar Sankranti:** Ananda Mandir observed Makar Sankranti on Friday, January 14, 2011. The religious significance of this occasion, according to the Puranas that says that on this occasion Surya (the Sun

God) visits the house of his son, Shani (Saturn). Thus, the occasion symbolizes the importance of the special relationship between father and son. And the Sun transmigrates from Dhanu Rashi to Makara Rashi. (Zodiac Sign). This occasion also coincides with the Uttarayan (northern movement of the Sun from Dakshinayan). The Hindus are supposed to perform auspicious ceremonies during this time. So this occasion also represents the end of negativities and beginning of a time of righteous living. Many mythological stories are found in the Hindu literature regarding the religious significance of Makar Sankranti. On this day every year, a big Mela is held at Ganga Sagar which is attended by a large number of pilgrims from all over India. Presently, Makar Sankranti has turned out to be a social event.

The preparation of special

sweets called "Pithe" and lavish distributions thereof occurs in many families in Bengal and Bangladesh. At Ananda Mandir a number of families got together on this day under the leadership of Sanjit Dutta and emulated this event as it is done in Bengal and Bangladesh by arranging for a contributory dinner featuring special, delicious sweets called 'patishapta' and other home made sweets. All in all, it was an enjoyable evening among the friends of Ananda Mandir in an ambience of festivity and camaraderie

●**Saraswati Puja:** On Tuesday, February 8, 2011 Ananda Mandir celebrated actual Saraswati Puja rituals according to *tithi*, starting at 8:00a.m., and *Banibandana* was observed on February 13 with the traditional *Hathe Khari* given to the children. (Please read the details of this event in another article in this issue by Sushmita Dutta).

Glimpses of Rising Talents at Ananda Mandir's Bani Bandana

Turn from page no.1

When I heard Shankadeep Chakraborty sing a popular devotional song, "Shyama ma ki amar kalo", I had to ask, "Who sings at home, your mom or dad?" He said, "None". Shankadeep is a truly gifted singer. Being a student of Mitali Bhawmik's music school "Ethnomedia Music Studio", I am sure he is in good hands. Mitali's other students, Ria, Rahul, Megha, Sanjana displayed complete control over "Sur" and "Taal", and most importantly, grooming of a musical mind. For example, Rahul Palnitkar announced that he was going to sing a composition on Raga Tilang, and began his soul-touching rendering which showed his guru Mitali's teaching in making her students understand a composition, feel it from both lyrics and notation point of views and then sing. Another student of "Ethnomedia Music Stu-

dio", Dabanita Saha, probably the youngest singer of the program (9 years old), made me realize how proud we can be of our young talents in the community.

Students of Anushuya Roy's music school "Surapancham" Tanija, Parama, Shreya and Priya filled the air with melodious numbers on Saraswati Bandana and popular bhajans like "Baso more nainana mein nandalala". Debanjan Saha, another talented, up-coming musician of our community, accompanied all singers on tabla. Debanjan closes his eyes while his hands roll on tabla which shows how involved he gets while performing.

In the dance section there were a variety of rhythms, gorgeous, colorful outfits and gleaming, smiling, very eager to perform dancing stars. Mitra Purkayasta's dance school students,

Eamon, Annesha and Sunaya displayed their talents very well as up-coming dancers. Six years old Sunaya is extremely involved while performing and displays in-born dancing talent. Anisha Ghosh stepped-in very confidently to dance on the popular yet difficult semi-classical number "Mere dholna sun" and received a round of applause. Sunarita's dance school students Ramiyani, Anoocha, Tanija, Khushi, Piyal, Anishka, Parama, Truna, Tanuja and Julie, brought about rhythmic lure in the air. Very well rendered numbers of this team were well appreciated by the audience.

Of course, it was a treat to the eyes to watch Malabika Guha's school "Kala Mandir" students dance. What a performance by Brinda, Rea, Diya, Gouri, Sarah, Roshni, Kalayani and Pooja. On a recorded ensemble of popular folk

numbers like "Shohag chand badani dhoni", "Sundari Kamala" and "Shadher Lau", Brinda and Rea completely stole the show. I congratulated Malabika-di for grooming such lovely talents. Recitation was a small fragment of the show where Bengali school "Mrittika" students Amrita, Srijon, Kiru and Sunaya excelled in displaying their command over Bengali literary pieces. While Srijon Bhanja Chowdhury wearing a shiny kurta pajama recited by heart "Bir Purush Make Niye Jachhi Anek Dure" having his cute eyes fixed on his mother sitting in the audience. Amrita looked gorgeous in a red-bordered yellow sari, flamboyantly rendering "Ram gorurer chhana, Haste tader mana." What a nice feeling to see our next generation enjoying popular Bengali literary pieces that we grew up with. Credit goes to Mrittika's Dhriti Bagchi for her coaching and passing on our rich heritage.

A standing ovation is due to Rita Bhowmik, for organizing a superb cultural event "Bani Bandana" to commemorate 2011 Saraswati Puja celebration at Ananda Mandir. Ananda Mandir's cultural secretary Arun Bhowmik announced during the two and half hour ensemble of songs, dances, instrumentals and poetry recitations that Rita worked for almost two months to put the show together. The show concluded with adult talents present in the audience Suranjan Bhanja Chowdhury singing semi-classical songs and Arun Bhowmik filling the air with his melodious voice. While leaving the hall, somewhere, I felt an assurance from Goddess Saraswati that our young talents will be blessed and looked after. Thanks to their gurus for grooming them so well and of course big thanks to the kid's parents for nurturing their talents. Probably some of these kids will hit the lime-light someday.

Ananda Sandhya

By Anil Raychaudhuri

Presently, Ananda Sandhya represents the primary cultural component of the organization. Once more, just to remind the readers, the program was started solely as an evening entertainment program where the local artists would showcase their talents individually and collectively in their given area of expertise. Over the years, the program has slowly developed into a enjoyable musical variety. Over the years it has featured devotional songs, Indian classical music, Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti, modern songs, and children's programs. The ingredients of variety has made the program all the more entertaining and popular; it has also featured occasional, special dance program.

On Friday December 10, 2010, Ananda Sandhya featured an exciting sitar recital presented by Abhik Mukherjee before an appreciative audience. Abhik Mukherjee received his training in sitar from the eminent sitarist Kashinath Mukherjee. Mukherjee was accompanied by Anirban Roy Chowdhury on tabla, a young promising but highly accomplished tabla player. He is a newcomer in New Jersey.



Abhik Mukherjee

Abhik Mukherjee was born in Calcutta in a family which has a rich musical and educational heritage.

Abhik is an immensely talented upcoming sitar player of Kolkata, and belongs to Imdadkhani Etawah Gharana, also fondly known as Vilayatkhani Gharana after the name of Ustad Vilayat. He has become the heart throb of the young generation in classical instrumental music in Kolkata

Sri Rajesh Paranjape, vocal artiste, presented an exciting Hindustani Classical concert in the Ananda Sandhya program of Friday January 14, 2011 His presentation included Bhajans and devotional songs. He was accompanied by Sri Anil Khare on Tabla and Madhu Vora on Harmonium two regular, excellent instrumentalists in their own rights at this program.

Rajesh Paranjape began his music lessons at the young age of ten from his father Shri Vinayak Paranjape. Though educated in

A Monthly Evening Musical Soiree

electrical engineering, he decided on a promising career in music and dedicated himself totally to it. He took intensive training from Dr Ram Deshpande who is one of the leading Hindustani vocalist and who initiated Rajesh



Rajesh Paranjape-- Artiste of January

in the various fine aspects of music, combining the Gwalier, Jaipur and Agra Gharana. Rajesh has passed his Sangeet Visharad (Bachelor degree in music) from Gandharva Mahavidyalaya with first class.

February 11, 2011 Ananda Sandhya concert was graced by two musicians of extremely high caliber, Manoj Govindraj and Kedar Naphade. They were accompanied by Shri Anirban Roy Chowdhury on Tabla. Anirban also had a chance to showcase his skill as a solo tabla player that evening. The trio kept the evening audience at Ananda Mandir in a riveting spell of entertainment for two hours.



Manoj Govindraj

Manoj Govindraj is a Rank holder in music from Bombay University. He started learning at the age of seven. He received initial training in Hindustani music from Mrs. Vieeta Tembe. He also received training under Shri Prabhakar Karekar. Currently, he is a faculty member at the Academy of Music located in South Plainfield, NJ.

Kedar Naphade is a well known, highly respected harmonium accompanist in New Jersey. He has shared the stage with luminaries such as Pt. Jasraj, Pt Feroz Dastur, Smt Prabha Atre, Smt Laxmi Shankar and many others. He has played extensively in India, USA and Europe. He has been a leading disciple of Pt. Tulsidas Borkar.



Kedar Naphade

Kallol Corner

By Biman Bhatta

Kallol's last event of 2010, the New Year's Eve Party celebration, was held on December 31, Wednesday, at the Shezan Restaurant in Edison, New Jersey. One striking feature of the gathering this year was the number of attendees. For the last couple of years it felt like Kallol folks were gradually losing interest in this event. But this year that notion was put to rest. Even though some Kallol member families had left for Kolkata earlier to spend their winter vacations in India, the ever-increasing member families of the club in fact more than made up the slack. In fact, at one point Kallol management got worried about the venue become over-crowded since people kept coming until 10 PM. But finally the gathering turned out to be manageable.

The event provided lots of fun and entertainment to our visitors. Snack, dinner, and various beverages were in plentiful supply. The DJ performance was quite pleasing, and you could tell that by looking at the dance floor. Unfaltering body swinging of the people to the rhythms of the music throughout the whole duration of the party was remarkable. Then it all peaked at the strike of the midnight. With the live telecast on a large video screen ushering in the New Year, the champagne bottles were corked out for everyone. It was quite a scene as people hugged and wished each other a very Happy New Year. And when finally it was time to return home, people wondered why they couldn't party for the rest of the night.

Usually during January thru March Kallol activities lie dormant since no social events are scheduled in this period. The Executive Committee members use this time to collate and finalize their portfolio activities for presentations during the forthcoming Annual General Meeting. This year this meeting will be held on the last Sunday of March which will be the 27th. Along with the regular AGM activities, this year a new Board of Trustees will be elected to serve for the approaching term of 2011 thru 2013. Evidently Kallol members will be experiencing the enthusiasm that election processes always undertake to bring forth.

Updates on Kallol's forthcoming activities are regularly posted on the club's official website www.kallol.com. So please visit this link every now and then to keep yourself conversant.

Thank you and good luck for the New Year.

Medicinal Herbs and Spices in Wartime

By Jerry GaMarsh

Crowds of bees are giddy with clover
Crowds of grasshoppers skip at our feet,
Crowds of larks at their matins hang over,
Thanking the Lord for a life so sweet.

from "Divided", Jean Ingelow (1820-1897)

From early childhood, my love of gardening was cultivated by my parents. It amazes me that my recollections from twentieth century skipped over the fact that my mother (who was born in the nineteenth century) was also a homemaker herbalist of sorts. She had her own list of garden remedies for various ailments which by and large worked.

This medicinal herb connection kicked in when I recently visited an arboretum exhibit concerning the use of plant life in the treatment of disease and wounds during the nineteenth century.

Early in the 5th century BC, the Greek doctor Hippocrates listed about 400 medicinal herbs which could be used as medicines. Herbs have long been known for their medicinal uses and healing properties. Some believe that herbs keep the body in tune with nature. Generally speaking, herbs are safe and reliable with no side effects. However, some combinations with modern, non-herbal medications may be dangerous. Also, some unscrupulous businesses have been making unfounded claims about their products and selling herbs and spices which contain dangerous contaminants. More about that later.

The Egyptians were also highly knowledgeable concerning the use of herbs. An Egyptian text written in 1500 BC contained more than 700 herbal remedies. Chinese Tradition Medicine (TCM) has been using herbs for over 5000 years. A Chinese ancient text written in 2700 BC listed many usable herbs.

Today, herbs and spices have been used eve-

rywhere in the world. In some countries, these herbs and spices are available only by prescription. In Germany, one example is the hawthorn extract vitexin which is used in the treatment of various heart conditions such as angina, tachycardia and arrhythmia. In the USA however, hawthorn is available over the counter as a dietary supplement.

The differentiation between herb and spice is simple. The herb is the leaf of a plant. Any other part of the plant: buds, bark, roots, berries, seeds or the stigma of the flower is called a spice.

One of the primary reasons for using herbs and spices is for their high levels of antioxidants. They attack free radicals and destroy them before they have a chance to damage body cells.

Among the well-studied flavonoids in terms of cancer prevention are catechins from green tea, genistein from soy, curcumin from turmeric, anthocyanosides from blueberries, and quercetin from yellow vegetables.

But antioxidants are only one category of medicinals in the pantheon of herbs and spices. This is well documented during the Great War in America: the war between the Union and The Confederate States aka the "Civil War".

In 1861, this war started during a period in which there were no pharmaceutical companies, no commercially available drugs of proven value (many "elixirs" had the well earned sobriquet "snake oil") and indeed there were very few doctors with actual medical training. Many of those who were addressed as "Doctors" were men who

had apprenticed with "doctors" of questionable medical backgrounds. They all did by and large, however, have one thing in common: a knowledge of plants and their medicinal uses which were widespread during Revolutionary times through the 1800s.

Listed below are some of the more common plants with their scientific name which were in use.

Alumroot-Heuchera Americana—This astringent was chewed to relieve a sore throat

American Beauty Bush-Callicarpa Americana—Used for its diuretic qualities to treat edema

Blue Lace-Delphinium elatum—powdered leaves were used as an insect repellent

Boneset-Eupatorium perfoliatum—Useful for treating dengue or breakbone fever

Cayenne pepper-Capsicum annum—A salve was applied to muscles and joints to treat pain

Comfrey-Symphytum officinale—Containing allantoin, it was known for its ability to heal bruises

Dogwood-Cornus Florida—Was substituted for quinine in treating malaria

Elder-Sambucus Canadensis—Tea made from the inner bark has both diuretic and laxative properties

False Solomon's Seal-Smilacina racemosa—Powdered root was used to treat rash and skin irritation

Feverfew-Tanacetum—Has antipyretic properties and was effective in treating migraine headaches

Foxglove-Digitalis purpurea—Because of its cardiac glycosides it was used as a means of regulating heartbeat

"Gardenview Scarlet"-Monarda species—Tea made from its leaves was effective against intestinal worms

Gayfeather-Liatris spicata'Floristan Weiss'—Its demulcent properties were effective in soothing sore throats

Hops-Humulus lupulus—

Brewing its flowers produces a sedative elixir

Horehound-Marrubium vulgare—Its demulcent properties made it useful in the treatment of coughs and respiratory complaints

Indian Tobacco-Lobelia inflata—A powerful emetic to induce vomiting

Licorice-Glycyrrhiza glabra—The liquid extract of its seeds was used to treat lung disease

Poppy-Papaver orientale—This well-known plant produces morphine, a potent pain killer

Scullcap-Scutellaria laterifolia—Drinking an infusion of its leaves produces a sedative effect

Single Bloodroot-Sanguinaria canadensis—Was used as a vermifuge and to treat fungal disease

Sumac-Rhus aromatic—was used as a poultice to control bleeding

Wild Ginger-Asarum canadense—Used in poultice form, its leaves have antibiotic properties

Witch Hazel-Hamamelis virginiana—When applied to sore muscles, this tonic is both astringent and antiseptic

To be sure, this is only a partial list of plant based medicinals used but they were the most common in the mid 1800s.

It is interesting to note that the subject of medical botany which was once discarded from modern medical education is now a part of medical school curriculum.

As an aside, an interesting story about a problem which popped up during the early days of NASA and the training problems our astronauts experienced during training and the early flights.

The first flights were orbital in nature but still needed an oxygen rich atmosphere for the astronauts to survive. Although oxygen is vital to human biochemistry, it has one drawback in high concentrations. It dries out the nasal mucosa which is especially serious for the septum which is highly vas-

cularized. The result is atrophic rhinitis. In a short period of time with continued exposure to high concentrations of oxygen, the mucosa in the nasal passage becomes so dry it bleeds spontaneously NOT good in the confines of a space helmet. The medical personnel at NASA began looking for a solution to the problem but nothing in modern medicine seemed to fit the bill. I can only surmise that they started looking into alternative medical texts (Ayurvedic, Traditional Chinese Medicine and folk medicine) when they found an over-the-counter herbal-based nose drop which had been manufactured since 1931. It is formulated with oil of pine, oil of eucalyptus, oil of peppermint, oil of cottonseed and oil of cajeput. I have to admit that I had never heard of cajeput before. Cajeput oil is steam-distilled from the leaves, twigs and bark of an evergreen tropical tree closely related to the Tea Tree which is native to Australia and Indonesia. This not-so-modern miracle is both an emollient and anti-hemorrhagic. Problem solved. It was included in NASA's medical space kit.

Nose-bleeding problem is experienced by many during the winter when cold dry air outside teams up with warm dry air inside (when humidifiers are not working properly). For those of you who have that problem, this medicinal (which is manufactured here in New Jersey) is still available over the counter under the name "Ponaris".

When, in November, I signed off my article for the January issue, I wrote "Remember, gardening season doesn't stop until there is snow on the ground." What was I thinking?! As I am writing this article, I'm looking out of the window at yet another snow storm. Hopefully, the "expert" I saw on TV who predicted this as a 25 year trend was wrong.

Until the next time, happy gardening.

Yet Another Setback

By Amitabha Bagchi

Disappointments and heartaches are not new to Calcutta (now Kolkata). Insults have been hurled at it aplenty from Kipling's "The City of Dreadful Night" to Nehru's "Dead City" and "The City of Processions." It has known and absorbed body blows: the move of the imperial capital of the British Raj to New Delhi (1911); the influx of millions of destitute refugees after India's Partition (1947) and then again before the Bangladesh War (1971); the steady silting of the Hoogly river; and so on. Despite its seemingly friendly title, "The City of Joy" focuses more on the lepers in the city's outskirts and the lumpen elements in its midst rather than anything especially joyful to the average city dweller.

Even so, Calcutta was ill prepared for the recent setback, when an inspection team from the International Cricket Council (ICC) came to review the preparedness of the city's iconic Eden Gardens for a World Cup match and found it sorely wanting. Newspapers showed sorry pictures of tardiness and indifference to deadline less than a month before the game date: bamboo poles and tarpaulins, cement bags and paint buckets, all jostled merrily next to partially installed seats and half-finished visitors' boxes. This happened even though the World Cup schedule was declared well in advance, giving the organizers a long lead time and no real surprises. Small wonder that the ICC team gave an adverse recommendation, based on which the league-stage match between India and England on January 27 was moved to Bangalore (now Bengaluru).

Under the circumstances, the Cricket Association of Bengal (CAB) the organization responsible for the fiasco should have been the butt of the ire of all Calcuttans if not all Bengalis.

And indeed there was some anger and outrage expressed at the sloppiness and incompetence of CAB and its head honcho, Jagmohan Dalmiya. What was baffling, however, was the reaction of a majority of commentators in the local Press. They blamed the ICC decision on political machinations, and took turns either wallowing in self-pity or indulging in rank sentimentality.

The political angle was first explored by the Chief Minister of West Bengal, Buddhadev Bhattacharya, who called up the ICC chief and political heavyweight, Sharad Pawar, and apparently received assurances that the decision to move the One Day International (ODI) match to Bangalore would be reversed. The news of their conversation gave a short-term boost to the popularity of Bengal's beleaguered leader until Pawar reversed himself and put the onus on the other ICC members and "majority rule." The Bengali self-pity then went into overdrive; the ICC decision was viewed as a ploy by western India (read Maharashtra) to thumb its nose at eastern India (read West Bengal). Bengalis are yet to get over the sorrow of their beloved Dada, Sourav Ganguly, first losing his captaincy and then his place on the Indian cricket team. Conspiracy and foul play (by Maharashtrians and others) are an article of faith with them in explaining that episode.

But the oddest and the most interesting reaction was a frankly sentimental one. Several writers in the local papers thought that the ICC decision was an insult to Eden Gardens, which they claimed was either the most hallowed or the second most hallowed (after Lord's, presumably) cricket ground in the whole world. It was this claim that truly gave me pause.

In what sense is the

Eden Gardens more hallowed than the other famous cricket grounds of the world? I wonder. True, many of us (as young boys or girls) watched parts of the West Indies test match in 1958-59 when Rohan Kanhai scored a sensational double century on the first day, and later Hall and Gilchrist made mincemeat of Indian batting. We all remember M.L. Jaisimha bat on all five days against Richie Benaud's Australians and thus stave off certain defeat. And who can forget Laxman's double century against Steve Waugh's mighty Australian team after the follow-on that snatched an improbable victory from the jaws of an impending defeat? These are indeed hallowed statistics of a famous cricket ground.

Trouble is, other cricket grounds have their own histories too. What of Fred Spofforth destroying England at the Oval in 1882, which prompted the mock obituary in the Sporting Times of English Cricket being cremated with the "Ashes" being taken to Australia? What of Ivo Bligh bringing the actual "Ashes" (of burnt cricket stumps) from Australia in an urn, which is now housed at Lord's? What of Sir Donald Bradman's two triple centuries at Leeds, or Jim Laker's 19-wicket haul at Old Trafford? And what of the two tied test matches the first between Australia and West Indies at Brisbane in 1960, and the second between Australia and India (no less) at Chepauk, Chennai in 1986? The list could easily go on.

The India-England ODI on February 27 in Bangalore ended in a nail-biting tie. Calcutta's setback has yet to exact any price or set any head-rolling. Eden Gardens, with its majestic setting, missed out hosting a great game. But then, with a cool breeze blowing from the Ganga, the score there might have been entirely different.

The Coming of Spring

By Prasenjit Baisya

On the East Coast, the month of March, emerging from a long and cold winter, is a time to look forward to the thawing spring. This year, our winter has been especially bad, whether we blame it on El Nino effects or the vagaries of Mother Nature. Alas, if only snow shovels and blowers could speak! Many an interesting story they would have to tell.

Spring brings to mind one of our most boisterous and joyous festivals - yes, indeed the Festival of Colors, our beloved "Dol". One recalls wistfully the days of our boyhood, when we would start the morning with water colors, or as we grew older, with horrific shades of silver or black tar, to be sprayed on all and sundry who were unfortunate enough to cross our paths as we rambled across "paras" in search of innocent victims. We would often put these colors on ourselves first, mothers aghast at the faces of their sons. Then, in the late afternoon, we would either wander off to our houses to wash off the colors or jump in one of the nearby ponds to clean up. It used to be a matter of pride to have concocted colors which would not wash off but stubbornly remain for a few days on our faces, as evidence of our mastery and power. The evenings times used to be for a more sedate sprinkling of "aabir" in which seniors and parents would join in the merry-making gatherings as well.

Back in those days, traffic would be stopped on the roads for the day to allow for safety of the Dol revelers. I am almost embarrassed to recall now that in one particular year, having no recourse to public transportation, one of my friends and I bicycled 10 miles to go and meet my girlfriend of those days now my better half. We were apprehensive of getting pasted with colors from boys of her para, but by Cupid's grace, our luck held up pretty well! Strange indeed, as the good wife would retort - that I still remember that Dol, having forgotten many other occasions.

Calcuttans, at least back in my time, were generally not given to religious aspects of festivals; they would rather revel in the social and active parts, offering only the token obeisance needed. Never having been tuned to the religious part of this festival, I myself have never really participated in the Dol celebrations we have here in America in sundry temples and community gatherings. It is just the particular facets of our festivals we observed here, that by and large are religious, probably due to the fact that we do not have the luxury of having several days to observe them. More often than not, here we have to cram it all over a weekend, being mindful of the American lifestyles we all have had to adopt.

However, it is high time that I showed my daughter at least a representation of our Dol here, being bereft of my ability to show here our actual revelries that took place in Calcutta. In the past when she was younger, we were always worried about exposing her to the cold of April, since one needs to be outside to play Dol in a proper manner. For a girl entering Middle School, I guess I should not be worried about this any more; there are bigger problems coming my way!

That brings me to the day before Dol--the famed "Nera Pora" somewhat similar to camp bonfires here. As in all American outings/sports, bonfires here are much controlled, well thought out affairs under adult supervision, Our Nera Poras were more in the tune of-- "light up a fire with wood scraps, twigs, sticks, or whatever else you can find and keep throwing stuff in to keep it going!" If we ever had to hold such an event here, I dare say there would be several fire engines rushing to the place with sirens blaring. Many of us will recall the old rhyme, which I place here again for my younger readers, hoping they will keep reading with as much enjoyment as I do writing for them.

Aaj amader Nera Pora

Kaal amader Dol

Purnima te chand utheche

Bolo Hori Bol !!!

I wasn't the patient. My mother was; but because she was 92 years old, the hospital authorities allowed me to stay with her.

"You're going to learn a great deal about human nature", a friend said when she heard that I was staying at the hospital. She was right. I saw a very interesting cross section of people. I was also exposed, first hand, to the sheer physical, mental and emotional vulnerability of the human condition a vulnerability that has little regard for age or station in life. It is one thing to be intellectually aware of this, as we all are; it is another to actually experience it. I must also add that what I saw made me feel that of all human qualities, perhaps the most ennobling are those of compassion and empathy; and, in many situations, the one that makes life endurable is the seemingly simple quality of cheerfulness.

But let me first describe the hospital. The Command Hospital, the Eastern Command's medical facility in Kolkata, is in Alipore. Though it is well within the main city, it is in a less crowded area, and so its surroundings are more secluded than the rest of the busy metropolis that can seem not just alive, but alarmingly so at times. It is also a military institution, and so more organized than many other Kolkata organizations. Its administrators have tried to make it a pleasant place. Art prints by masters like A.R. Chagtai, Jamini Roy, and Ganesh Pyne adorn the walls. I always looked for Jamini Roy's "Shiva" when I went to the Ground Floor.

The Command Hospital has a small guesthouse with eight rooms for the relatives of patients who are critically ill. My mother did not fall into that category; besides, I was told, the guesthouse was full. But I felt I just had to stay with my mother. I decided to meet the Brigadier in-charge of the hospital.

I sat outside his office for about an hour and a half, and as the minutes ticked by I couldn't help thinking of everything that people say about Indian bureaucracy and officialdom *You wait and wait and nothing ever gets done. There's a lot of red tape involved.*

25 Days in a Kolkata Hospital

By Jayashree Chatterjee

When the Brigadier finally called me into his room, the first thing he did was to apologize for keeping me waiting so long.

"I was speaking to the family of an officer who died last week," he explained. "I had to give them all the time they needed."

"I understand," I replied at once. "I'm so glad you did."

He listened to what I had to say and he agreed that it would be better if I were to stay with my mother. He said he would inquire whether any of the other women guests would mind sharing their room with me.

In the meanwhile, I was staying with relatives in Ballygunge because my mother lives in Kalyani, which is 50 kms to the north of Kolkata. I would go to the hospital early in the morning and stay there till about 9 at night. In the afternoon, I went all the way back to Ballygunge for lunch because I was reluctant to eat at the local restaurants. Somehow, eating out every day in Kolkata does not agree with me. But it was tiring making that daily afternoon trip to Ballygunge. I asked where people who stayed at the Guesthouse ate their meals. At the Officers' Mess, I was told. But I was also told that the Officers' Mess was not like a restaurant. I couldn't just walk in and order a meal. It was only for officers and their wives and the guests in the Guesthouse. So I decided to see the officer-in-charge of the Officers' Mess.

"I've come to look after my mother," I said. "I don't want to fall sick now. If I get accommodation at the Guesthouse, I'll be allowed to take my meals at the Officers' Mess. Couldn't I eat there now and pay for my meals separately?" Once again, the officer understood my predicament. He called the Officers' Mess and told them to put my name on their guest list.

Then, two days later, I was told to meet a certain Mrs. Singh, the wife of a major who was a patient in the Officers' Ward; Mrs. Singh had agreed to let me stay with her.

The Officers' Ward has a long, sparkingly clean corridor with rooms on either side of it. It leads to a wide verandah that overlooks the lawn outside. There was sunshine playing on the verandah, that morning - the mild sunshine of a winter morning, and a fresh breeze. I met the young Sikh couple and took an immediate liking to them. They were in their twenties. The husband was posted in a valley on the Indo-Chinese border, and he was due to undergo surgery in the next couple of days.

Major Singh talked to me about his life in the valley, about its rigors and tensions.

"But that's all right," he said in a confident voice. "We're *fauji*", he added, using the Indian word for soldier. "We know how to face hardship."

Five days later, his doctor found that he needed a stent inserted in an artery. His wife told me he was in great pain, and so I went to see him. His face looked lined and flushed, and I couldn't help feeling very sorry. I knew better than to say so, though, and I merely asked how he was doing.

"They have to do a few pre-surgery procedures," he said. "It's a bit painful. But I'm *fauji*," he added quickly. "I know how to bear pain."

I looked at him and smiled, and what that smile meant was that I was celebrating the hope and confidence that are the prerogative of youth. What I wanted most of all was that young people like he should never become frustrated or cynical. And, perhaps because I come from a military family myself, I felt great pride in the Indian armed forces.

I was surprised by the very different kinds of ailments that people can suffer from. My mother's first roommate was a woman in her eighties. This was not the first time that she had been admitted to the hospital, her daughter told us. Ever since her father had died, her mother would go through spells when she would forget to eat and then she would suffer the effects of a nutritional imbalance, and she

would have to be rushed to hospital. In hospital, due to the routine of the place, she would start eating regularly. So she would go home, only to have the whole sequence of events repeated again. I saw this happen. She got well and was sent home, and then, shortly before my mother was discharged from the hospital, we saw her daughter bring her back to the Officers' Family Ward.

"We found her lying on the bathroom floor," her daughter told me. She'd fainted."

Then there was the patient who couldn't stop talking. I never did find out what exactly was wrong with her. Late one night, in fact the night before my mother's surgery, we heard a commotion in the corridor outside. There was the sound of heavy footsteps, and of voices, some subdued, and one, strident and continuous. A few moments later, four orderlies appeared bearing a stretcher on which lay a woman who had obviously been strikingly beautiful in her younger days. She was talking incessantly. Following the stretcher were two men with what looked like resigned expressions on their faces. The orderlies lifted the woman onto the bed next to my mother's, and left the room. At once the woman turned to the ayah (in a hospital the term refers to the Indian equivalent of a nurse's aide) and wanted to know her name. And then she started calling out commands, nonstop. "Give me water. If you give me water right now, I'll give you a big tip when I leave. Give me food. If you give me food right now, I'll see to it that my sons give you a big tip when I leave." And so it went, on and on. After an hour, I was afraid that my mother would not be able to sleep. I sought out the night sister in alarm. My mother was going to be operated on the next morning. She needed to sleep that night. "I'll be giving the new patient an injection", the night sister told me. "She'll be asleep in no time."

So I waited until they gave her the injection, and

within a few minutes she fell asleep. The next morning, I returned to the ward a little before 5 a.m. to find that my mother's roommate was already up and calling for the ayah to comb her hair, wash her face and change her sari.

There were two patients who brought good cheer to the ward. The first was an older, bespectacled woman who wore a coat over her sari and a black beret to ward off the cold. She loved to sing, and would visit the other patients and sing songs that she had learned as a girl at the Sister Nivedita School. The second was a young woman in her thirties who made it her business to talk and laugh with the other patients. Later, the matron told me that she had been diagnosed with cancer, and so stayed in the hospital overnight every two weeks in order to receive radiation treatment. We saw her again on the day that my mother was going home. She talked about her 7-year-old son that day. She said that even five years ago she had wanted him to be very successful in life. At that time in her life, being very successful meant being very rich, and so she wanted him to be a businessman. "But now," she concluded, "all I want is for him to grow up to be a decent person."

I gave her a hug and wished her well. And as she walked out of the room, the thought came to me that perhaps most of us need to go through a severe test of some kind in order to assess what truly matters to us. And perhaps one of the ways of going through a mini trial by fire is by spending a few weeks in a place that makes one confront the stark issues of existence a place like a hospital.

We said goodbye to the nurses and went downstairs where the ambulance was waiting to take us home. If all went well, in another week or so I would be flying back to New Jersey. But I knew I wouldn't forget the past 25 days in a hurry. I took a long look at the buildings that had become so familiar to me. Then the ambulance made a sharp turn to the right, and the hospital complex disappeared completely from view, leaving an accumulation of memories behind.

National Public Radio (*Like Father Like Son*)

—By Rahul Ray—

For all these years in the US life has been bitter-sweet, but one thing that has remained sweet all along is listening to the National Public Radio (NPR). I got hooked to NPR after coming to Boston to do my postdoctoral work at MIT. For the first time in life my work demanded that I drive daily to and from my work-place, and even on weekends and Sundays. Some days it took me 45 minutes to an hour fighting the Cambridge traffic, and NPR came to my rescue. I still remember the very first day I was driving to work and flipping through the channels in the car radio to listen to something substantial. These were pre-CD days, and my car didn't have a cassette player to play any music of my choosing. There were stations for pop, rock, jazz, classical music, call-in shows and what not, and finally I got stuck into a station where a deep and sincere male voice was talking about transcendentalist movement in New England in ample detail. I became curious. After a while reporting ended and this man signed off as "This is morning edition. I am Bob Edwards." The die was cast, and soon it became my habit to listen to Bob Edwards in the morning, and Susan Stamberg driving back home. The real kicker came one day when I heard one of the NPR personalities interviewing someone in Kolkata, asking why Calcuttans have such a love-affair with a city that appears moribund to most others. In replying, this person started bellowing his harmonium and soon the airwaves were filled with Rabindrasangeet (a genre of Indian light classical music written and composed by Rabindranath Tagore, a Nobel poet)! I was sold, but this made me a slave of NPR. Many days I sit in the car, even after reaching home or work to catch the tail-end of an interesting report.

I grew up in Kolkata at a time when there was no television, and radio ran supreme. On Sunday mornings, there was *Sangeet Sikkha'r Asor* (Forum for learning music), stewarded by Pankaj Mullick, the venerable Rabindrasangeet artist. Mr. Mullick in his deep voice would exclaim his oft-repeated phrase *Naa, hochhey naa, abar korun* (No, you are not getting it, do it over). In *Sishu Mahal* (world of children) Ms. Indira Debi, much like Mr. Rogers in Mr.

Rogers Neighborhood would begin her program with *-Chhotto sona bondhura sob, valo achho tow sob?* (My dear little friends, are you keeping well?), and all the assembled children would blare out in unison- *Ha-a-a-n (Y-e-e-s)!* Then there was Ms. Bela Dey in *Mohila Mahal* who would talk about sewing, cooking and other women-things. She made quite a name for herself during 1962 India-China war when she insisted her listeners not to waste any part of a food-ingredient. Even today, talking about something totally ridiculous we would repeat her instructions *Kumro-r khosa phele na diye, chhoto chhoto koray katun aar valo koray gawa ghiye mooch-mooche koray vajay cheenee'r rawsay phelun* (Why waste pumpkin-peels! Chop them up in small pieces, and fry them to a crunchy red in first rate clarified butter. Then dip them in thick sugary syrup). India was a desperately poor country those days. Still Ms. Dey's prescription was a bit too much. In the evenings there were *Anurodher asor* (Songs of your request) and *Chhayachhobir gaan* (film songs). There were only hand-cranked and later on electric gramophones in only a handful of households. Therefore, these two programs were acutely responsible for developing an ear for music for me and many others who grew up in Kolkata in those days.

On cricket days we were glued to the radio listening with rapt attention to ball-to-ball description by Aajy Bose, Kamal Bhattacharya and later on Pushpen Sarkar. Ajaybabu, in his slightly nasal but crystal clear voice would describe every little detail of the game, and often would ask his fellow commentator Kamalda, *aapni key bolen* (Kamalda, what do you say)? Kamalda would immediately pick up the link, and in his dulcet voice would explain the game played in front of him like a poem or a piece of good music. In those days there were no one-day matches, and games were slow and even-paced, as the game of cricket was supposed to be. On Sunday afternoons I enjoyed listening to audio-plays by legendary theater personalities. The grave yet mellifluous voice of Shambhu Mitra in *Raja* (The king) or *Raja Oydipous* (King Oedipus) still rings in my ear, so does Nilima Das with her superb

audio-acting in *Glass Menagerie*. Then there was this annual event of *Mahishasuromardini*. On the day of *Mahalaya* everyone in Kolkata would dutifully turn on their radio at 4 o'clock in the morning to listen to the oratory of Birendrakrishna Bhadra in his snuff-laden nasal voice. At times his voice would hit the ceiling, and in the next moment he would whisper in his un-imitable rendition of *Chandi* (a mythological holy scripture for Hindus). Those were the days! In short I was in love with radio.

I came to the United States as a graduate student to a very small college town in the Western part of the country. For the first two years I was completely engrossed in taking classes, doing the duties of a teaching assistant (TA) for professors and doing research, and I had barely any time to spare besides eating and sleeping. In the third year things became a bit easier, and I went to India to get married to Swapna, my university-sweetheart, and bring her to this country. I also had to move from my dorm-room to a one-bedroom apartment reserved for married students. Although TV was a novelty to me I didn't have much time to watch TV. But soon I learned that it is an absolute necessity if you have your spouse at home. Before Swapna started going to college she spent her days and afternoons watching TV till I came home in the evening. After dinner we would sit down together to watch TV. Soon I got hooked to watching the evening news followed by whatever was on. We also watched TV after dinner. In many cold winter nights we would cuddle up in a warm blanket and watch Archie Bunker snicker at his wife with racy jokes in *All in the family*, or Hawkeye Pierce and his team of miscreants running amok in the field camp with ever-present leg-pulling of 'Hot Lips Houlahan' in *MASH*. Then there was *Taxi* where we met Alex Rieger and his team of NY city cabbies, and most incredibly Latka Gravas who walked in goose steps and spoke in an invented language. We laughed and cried together, and went to sleep with a smile on our face. Radio was completely forgotten.

After my graduate studies we moved to Massachusetts, and radio came back in a very big way as a commuting-companion. Soon, many

NPR personalities became a part of my family. Sylvia Poggioli reported from Italy and other parts of Southern Europe in her whiskey and smoke-filled voice, or Nina Totenberg explained legal mumbo-jumbo with elegance and unmatched brevity. Then one day I listen to a report from Scott Simon hiding in some enclave in Nicaragua, while war raged on in this small Central American country which found herself in a proxy war between America and then Soviet Union. Twice a week, Terry Gross in 'Fresh Air' entertained us with her amazing array of guests and her cool yet piercing questions. Once in a while Baxter Black, a large animal veterinarian spoke of mundane things of farm life with a ready-wit and dark humor. Then there was this elderly lady from Missoula, Montana. One day in late March she was talking about spring arriving in Montana prairie. Her grandma-voice was so ebullient that I could feel and smell spring in the middle of a dreary and melancholy winter in Massachusetts. A warm feeling stayed with me for a long time. It was like listening to those Rabindrasangeets by George Biswas. They stay with you all day, and drench your heart like a monsoon drizzle.

That lady is long gone, Bob Edwards has bid farewell, but many other familiar voices have remained and continued to provide an essential ingredient of my daily life. Many new and exciting voices have also joined in. Ofeibea Quist-Arcton reports from Africa, and at the end of each report she signs off with "Ofeibea Quist-Arcton from Daa-ka-a-a-r". Each time I hear this long and drawling 'Daa-ka-a-a-r' a smile appears on my face. Every evening Tom Ashbrook brings in hour-long discussion and call-ins on politics, literature, cinema, music and any subject that one can think of. Some people are almost a permanent fixture for decades. Each Saturday Tom and Ray Magliozzi brothers of *Car Talk* lights me up with their wise-cracks about cars and what not! One Saturday I was listening to them in my car and these MIT ex-pats were talking about things related to space shuttles and astronauts. Suddenly a voice came to the airwave and started talking about life in a space-shuttle. Soon Ray commented you sound like a space-alien. After a short laugh the man replied I am actually calling from a shuttle. How often does one get to hear an astronaut live from space!

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National Public Radio (Like Father Like Son)

Turn from page-9

Soon it was discovered that the man actually lived in Cambridge, and used to take his Volkswagen Beetle to Ray's shop in Sidney Street for repair. Sidney Street is a short distance from the MIT campus, and one day I ventured into the Good News Garage. Ray, a short and stocky person with a heavy Italian accent was minding the shop. I always felt that Ray was a refined person judging from his comments on a wide variety of subjects ranging from philosophy to street smartness. To my bewilderment I couldn't help notice pictures of women in skimpy dresses dotting the wall behind him. Somehow it turned me off, and I never took my car to his garage, but I continued to listen to Car Talk regularly and laugh at his wisecracks.

Soon I learned that having fun, even listening to NPR is not free. Coming from India I never heard of a fund-raiser for a radio-station. Thus, when WBUR, a local NPR station started a fund-raiser and many of my favorite radio-personalities chipped in with an appeal to give to 'your' station, I was less than enthusiastic. Actually it was more of an irritant that they had to stop the programming to beg for money. But soon it sank into my head that these stations are largely run by listener contributions, and above all I should pay for my entertainment. My postdoctoral stipend was barely enough to make both ends meet for me and my wife. But tug on my morality was so strong that I called the radio-station and meekly offered a measly amount as my contribution. I was overjoyed when the person on the other side thanked me profusely and requested my permission to announce my name as one of the givers. This was my maiden attempt at philanthropy. An hour later I received an excited call from my wife. She had heard my

name in the radio that was a standard feature in the laboratory she was working at that time. She thanked me for this decision and informed that she was thinking of doing the same herself. To my amazement I learned that she has also fallen for NPR and its personalities. Now, that is two for two for a family of two.

Listening to NPR has had a longstanding effect on our psyche. Several years ago when we were seriously contemplating about going back to India for good we considered many things that we would miss. Those days India was very different from India today with burgeoning wealth. Therefore, we considered missing simple amenities of a comfortable middle class life, like a microwave oven or an automobile of our own. By this time our first son was born, and we were seriously concerned about available health-care for him. We also contemplated about somewhat intangible benefits of living in America, clean air, safe drinking water. But at the top of the heap of our consideration was listening to NPR! Those were the days before the rampant proliferation of internet. After much deliberation we decided not to go back and happily continued on listening to NPR.

Fast forward many years. We have grown old in our adopted country, picking up a lot of her nuances. Now in parties we talk excitedly about re-electing Obama to the White House or whether Celtics will make to the playoff this year. My love for cricket has waned to almost a nil, listening to cricket-commentaries in the radio is a very distant memory. Our way of entertaining ourselves has also changed dramatically. I always loved to listen to music, and bought a stereo system and a very expensive pair of Ohm speakers at a time when we could ill-afford them. Now with the advent

of laptops, FaceBook, YouTube, Twitter and the like, and the stereo system and those elegant wood-paneled speakers stare at me like ghosts from the past. But, one thing hasn't changed as soon as I turn the key of my car NPR comes on like an old trusted friend.

A few days ago I was driving to my work in Boston. It was a miserable morning. The sky was overcast and one could easily smell an oncoming snow storm in the air. This would be at the top of six feet snow banks all over the place! I was crouched inside my old Toyota Corolla with heavy boots, gloves, a parka jacket and a skull cap. It was one of those days when my mind was laden with worries about work, family, weather and what not. I seethed under my breath: For heaven's sake why can't we move to Florida or better yet to Kolkata where things have gotten much better lately. Suddenly I realized that the radio is turned off. It must be my son who took the car yesterday I contemplated and dutifully turned the radio on. Immediately a soothing and warm voice enveloped me. It took me a short while to figure out it is one of those long features where they have live interviews, bring persons with opposing views and above all take time to elaborate the issue with great care instead of a sound-bite. I was ready for a pleasant ride-along.

The topic was Women in the military. First voice was that of Kate Olson who joined the army in early 1950s. To my amazement, and also that of the interviewer she elaborated how different and difficult it was for a woman cadet at West Point, and later on in service. I laughed to my heart's content when she stated with a chuckle that those days in the army women had to take training in cosmetics and dresses and learn how to dress attractively, forget

about combat or flying an airplane. Do you mean you had to learn how to put on lipstick properly or what length skirt should one wear? interviewer asked in bewilderment. Yes, indeed how to be attractive to men-soldiers in the army. Then it was turn for Mandy Olson, the daughter. Mandy's mother elaborated how it was so very difficult to be a woman and be in the army and still raise a family. She was also unequivocal about not wanting her only child to join the army. Mandy was a very soft spoken young lady. She stated that she always looked up to her mother, and when time came for a decision she joined West Point, no regrets. Now Kate spoke with all her maternal instincts My child, you have such a gentle personality you can be an academic, but never a military person! No, maa, I am not readying myself for combat. I am planning to join the army medical school and be an army doctor. I am simply fol-

lowing your footsteps.

Last weekend my son took my car without intimating me. It was quite annoying because Swapna took her car to work to finish up a project and I had to run some errands urgently.

Very characteristically he won't pick up his cell phone, so I didn't have much choice but to wait. An hour later he drove in and I eagerly opened the garage door to quickly get into the car and get to my destination. Suddenly I noticed that the driver's door is half open, and my son is sitting there and listening attentively to something in the radio! The voice sounded very familiar to me.

Lately there is a lot of talk in the Congress about eliminating all funding for NPR and Public Television. Some lawmakers feel that NPR and PBS have been vehicles to spread liberal agendas! May be time has really come for us to close our shop in this country and retire in Kolkata.

NJPA Corner

By Kankana Sengupta

For the first time, NJPA decided to bring a taste of holiday cheer by celebrating NY's eve last year and party out this decade of the new millennium. Members and friends gathered at the East Brunswick Baseball Recreation Center for a spectacular celebration of music, cuisine, and dancing and made this an unforgettable one to ring in the New Year. Whether you like dancing to the hippest sounds from the hottest Hindi songs, swing and big-band music or the popular Bengali tunes, or the world's most beloved Waltzes, there was something for everyone to suit your every taste. A high-style sumptuous menu together with an open bar made the evening complete. The crowd dispersed slowly after the countdown, amid New Year's well-wishes with a memory of a night to remember.

On February 19th, amidst swirling colors and mesmerizing chants, NJPA celebrated the resplendent festival of Saraswati puja at the Kiddie Keep Well Camp in Edison, New Jersey. Bengalis flocked together to offer prayers to Ma Saraswati and mingle with friends, feast on the food and enjoy the cultural program. Festivals are an integral part of Indian culture, no matter that the country continues to make news in computers, science and technology. Wherever Indian may be in the world, you will find them painstaking celebrating little festivals in an effort to hold onto their identity. Each festival has a unique charm of its own, unparalleled anywhere else and people look forward to it with enthusiasm and fervor year after year.

Very soon, we will be holding our Annual General Meeting when we will be electing our new board of trustees. Please stay tuned for future announcements or check our website at <http://njpa.net>.

Recent Sahitya O Alochana Sessions at Ananda Mandir

By Subrata Bhaumik

Sahitya O Alochana, a literary forum under the aegis of Ananda Mandir, held several wonderful sessions over the September 2010 - February 2011 period that featured discussions about Toni Morrison, Premchand, Diaspora Theater, T.S. Elliot, and post-independence Bengali literature. As a separate article on Diaspora theater (held in Nov. 2010) was included in the last edition (January 2011) of Ananda Sangbad, this report will focus on the other sessions.

September

The session on Toni Morrison, a Nobel laureate and arguably the best known African American writers of our time, was held in September 2010 and was led by Subrata Bhaumik. Other speakers included Ragini Bhaumik and Amithabha Bagchi. Subrata gave an overview of Morrison's life and her works, read excerpts from, and discussed theme and style of "Song of Solomon", one her best known novels. Ragini took a deep dive into "Beloved", her best known novel and a Pulitzer Prize winner, while Amithabha reviewed his opinion on American Black literature adding his appreciation of Beloved. There was a lively exchange of comments and opinions about the central theme of Morrison's works, which is around the Black American experience in an unjust society. The discussion also covered the plight of most of the characters in of her major novels, who keep struggling to find themselves and their cultural identity in a society that impedes the growth of Black Americans as free individuals, magical realism in her work, and other recurring that "Good and Evil" and "Right and Wrong" are often different sides of the same coin. There was some passing discussion in the

meeting as to whether her contributions to the international literature rose to a level that would qualify her for the Nobel Prize.

October

The October session featured a discussion on Premchand, probably the best known Hindi/Urdu writer of the late 19th - early 20th century from the Indian subcontinent. Rachana Pant - a talk and musical show host from EBC radio led the session. She provided an overview of Premchand's work and theme including stories that reflected the insurmountable poverty and misery of ordinary people in northern India. Rachana discussed some of his better known works including Godan and, Seva Sadan (novels), Bade Bhai Sahab (story), Sadgati and Satranj Ki khilari (stories adapted in film by Satyajit Roy), etc. She also read excerpts from a unique piece entitled "Yehi Mera Watan Hai", which is the story of an early 20th century Indian man who spent most of his adult life in the U.S.A., and returned to India at an older age to relive and reclaim some of his childhood days. Alas, was he disappointed! This rang a chord with the participants who, in their hearts, dream of similar things. Aniruddha Sanyal offered his views on Premchand's writing and made a comparison with contemporary Hindu and Urdu authors, while Divyen Bajpai shared a video on Premchand.

December

The December session focused on the works of T.S. Elliot, a Nobel laureate and the most famous figure in modernist English literature, and was jointly led by Nandita Sen, Subrata Bhaumik, and Amithabha Bagchi

Subrata gave an overview of Elliot's life and works and read excerpts from Elliot's most famous poem

"The Waste Land" and reviewed and analyzed the multitude of themes and symbols that are present in the piece as well as other works by Elliot. He also explained some of them including the damaged psyche of the humanity caused by the war ravaged world, infertility, the changing nature of the gender roles, and the perceived doubt in the ability of human beings to regenerate them and rejuvenate the beautiful world they inherited. In the open segment of the session, there was some discussion with regard to some of the influences that Elliot had including German, Greek, and the Victorian English era (Sophocles, Jessie Weston, Chaucer, etc.); his love for oriental philosophy (Buddhist and Hindu); his use of religious rituals and figures (Fisher King character); his perceived anti Semitist view on life; and how these helped shape his works.

Nandita presented a wonderful review on one of Eliot's famous poems, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", that simultaneously lauded the end of the Victorian era and expressed concern about the freedoms inherent in the modern age. She explained that it was an examination of the tortured psyche of the prototypical modern man-overeducated, eloquent, neurotic, and emotionally stilted. This was reflected in the sense of the indecisive paralysis of the character, as Prufrock wonders whether he should eat a piece of fruit, make a radical change, or if he has the fortitude to keep living.

Amithabha Bagchi reviewed plays written by Elliot, especially Murder in the Church. He explained how this account of the killing of Archbishop Thomas Becket served as Elliot's protest to subversion of Christian Church by rising Nazism in Europe. Himanshu Pant, one of the participants in the session also read, "A Cooking

Egg", one of Elliot's short poems.

February

The latest session was led by Subhodev Das and a team of local writers and literary enthusiasts including Sudipta Bhawmick, Gautam Dutta, and Faruque Azam. The session focused on post independence Bengali literature from the two Bengals and featured an opening presentation by Subhodev on how the partition of the subcontinent changed a major symbolism in Bengali literature - from a patriarchal nationalism of motherland to motherhood in distress. This was followed by a discussion by Sudipta on the impact of partition in the Bengali theater movement, by Gautam on the evolution of the post independence Bengali literature from West Bengal, and finally by a musical presentation (Faruque and his team) pinning down some of the impacts of independence of Bangladesh on the cultural expression among the people of the other Bengal.

Sushodev reviewed a novel entitled "Epar Ganga, Opar Ganga" by Jyotirmoyee Devi that seeks to assess the impact of partition through the lenses of a refugee woman. The novel identifies patriarchy as the source of partition violence and critiques the fixation of the gendered female body as a site of this violence. He also observed that Ritwik Ghatak's film Meghe Dhaka Tara shows that the process that fixates 'women' as a metaphor of nation promotes exploitation of women and, further, that such a process of metaphoric violence claims individual women through sacrificial victimhood.

Sudipta started his segment with a short discussion about some of the horrific events including the famine of 1943 and the bloody communal riots leading up to the independence. He also reflected on the unpleasant

experience that independence represented in the minds of the Bengali milieu, and how this shaped Bengali drama movement in the years to come. He followed this up with reading of some excerpts from a book entitled "Kolkatar Natyacharcha" that chronicled the history of the Bengali theater during that period. Later, he also explained that how the famous early post independence theater movement of IPTA (Gananatya Sangha) presented the plight of the oppressed people, which remained unchanged even after independence.

Gautam reviewed the evolution of Bengali poetry in the post Rabindranath period with special reference to post independence era. He explained the gradual change over this period in subject, imagery, and structure of Bengali poetry including the some of the abstract and spiritual ideas attributed to Rabindranath to tangible issues and relationships of modern life, rhyming and metering, etc. He covered the major poetry movements during this period including the Pragati-Kallol, Krittibas, and the tide of the present time, and discussed works of some of the stalwarts of Bengali poetry including Jibananada Das, Bishnu Dey, Amiya Chakraborty, Shankha Ghosh, Shubash Mukhopadhyay, Sakti Chatyopadhyaya, Sunil Gangopadhyaya, etc., and the dazzlers of the recent time including Joy Goswami and Srijato Bandopadhyaya. He also read poems written by some of the poets he discussed. Bengali poetry is of world class, it doesn't receive the reverence and fanfare it deserves due to poor volume of readership and lack of decent translation work - he commented. In making such an observation, he cited an example - "Phul Phutuk Na Phutuk Aaj Bashanto" the most famous poem written by

Aadyaa Maa'r Sannidhi: Reflections of a Devotee

By T. V. Srinivasan

As I sit in front of *Aadyaa Maa'r Sannidhi* (near the altar) with deep devotion and faith, a very serene calm filled with joy and contentment completely covers my persona, and I am all ready to start my meditation on *Aadyaa Maa*, the original/primordial Mother of this entire Universe. As I look at the altar closely, I see the deity of *Aadyaa Maa* in the middle, which looks rather ferocious, but brings to an end all the bad deeds in the world, and at the same time gives gentle solace to the devotees that there is nothing to fear, being the Universal Mother to protect them at all times. She demonstrates this symbolically thru her four hands: "mudras" (gestures) on her two right hands - "vara-daa" (wish granting), and "a-bhaya" (fearlessness and granting protection); and the objects she holds on her two left hands - a large sickle (denoting protection of the world thru destruction of the evil) and a human head held thru the hair indicating that she will rid the world of evil doers at any cost. *Aadyaa Maa*, representing the "shakti" (power) of the manifest universe, is shown unknowingly stepping on her consort Lord Shiva representing the single, non-dual consciousness that pervades the entire universe of beings and non-beings.

Above *Aadyaa Maa's* *murthi*/deity, I view *Bhagavaan* Shree Krishna holding a flute between his hands, accompanied by his inseparable supreme devotee *Shreemati Raadha-Raani*. Beneath *Aadyaa Maa's* feet in the altar are seated the "Gurus" (spiritual masters who reveal to us the universal truth in our scriptures) - *Annadaa Thaakur* with *Manikuntalaa Devi* on the outside, and *Swami Vivekananda*, *Shaaradaa Maa* and *Sri Ramakrishna Parama-Hamsa Thaakur* in the middle. They are part of the *Guru-Shishya Param-Paraa* (Teacher-Student lineage) starting with our recent Gurus mentioned above, preceded by giant stalwarts like *Chaitanya Mahaa Prabhu*, *Raamaanujaachaarya* and *Shankaraachaarya* in the middle, and beginning from *Aadi-Guru*, the original teacher - Universal Trinity *Brahma/Vishnu/Maheshwara* (Creator/Sustainer/Withdrawer) of the Universe. The gurus represent the link between the individual (*jeeva*), the world around (*jagat*) and *Bhagavaan/Ishwara*, the very cause (*hetu*) of the manifest universe. The gurus guide us accordingly to assist us cross over this feeling of bondage to the world (also called *sam-saara*) by showing the right path to achieve this goal.

As I am deeply engrossed at the magnificent sight of the altar, I notice the four words inscribed therein: "Guru" (teacher) at the bottom, "Karma" (yoga of action) and "Jnaana" (yoga of knowledge) in the middle, and "Prema" (*bhakti* - yoga of devotion) at the top. As I sit separately in front of the altar, I realize that I am a devotee in this material world, trying very hard to fulfill the four goals (*purusha-arthha*) of human life - *dharma* (righteousness/keeping with the universal order like *ahimsa*/non-injury, *satyam*/truthfulness, etc.), *artha* (wealth, fame, etc.), *kaama* (desires), and *moksha* (liberation from the sense of bondage in day-to-day life), and I can use all the help I can get from my spiritual teachers to put the scriptural wisdom into my daily practice. I am trying my best to

focus on the first three worldly goals of life (*dharma-artha-kaama*), "a-praaptasya praaptih" - to gain the not-yet gained, through actions to stay happy and content. However, I realize that I have yet to focus on the goal that transcends this world, *moksha* (freedom from the sense of limitedness and unhappiness), "praaptasya praaptih" - to gain that which has already been gained, i.e., realizing that the freedom that I am seeking is already there before me, but I am not aware of it due to my ignorance (*a-jnaana*). The altar provides a clear message to me on the spiritual practices that will get me there, both for my worldly goals, as well as goals that transcend this manifest world.

As I have come prepared with two key scriptures in my hands - *Bhagavad Geeta* (BG) and *Chandi/Saptashatee*, I look forward to the altar to provide me the needed spiritual guidance to my path of *saadhana* (means to my spiritual goal). "Yoga" being the "union/yoke", I look up to the scriptures, gurus and my fellow saadhakas (devotees) to always guide me so that I tie all my ventures with the notion of union with the *Bhagavaan*, the Supreme Universal Self. This I remember being summarized in *BG Chapters 2 & 18*. Starting with my immediate Gurus, I seek their assistance in gaining the necessary preparation - *antah-karana-shuddhi* (purification within, including the body and mind) through *Sage Pathanjali's ashtaanga* (eight-limbed) *yoga - yama, niyama, aasana, praanaayaama, pratyahaara, dhyaana* and *dharana*, culminating in *samaadhi*, where the meditator dissolves into the object of meditation (*Bhagavaan*, the Universal Self), and what is left is meditation alone. I then recollect that *ashtaanga yoga* is described in *BG Chapter 6 [6.35]*, where *Bhagavaan Shree Krishna* says that the mind - more difficult to control than the wind - can indeed be mastered thru *abhyaasa* (repeated practice) and *vairaagya* (non over-attachment to the objects in the world perceived thru our senses and mind)].

Moving further, I need to live my everyday life thru actions, and when I yoke it with the Supreme, it becomes "karma yoga", which is described in *BG (Bhagavad Geet) Chapters 2 & 3*. I learn to perform every action of mine with an attitude (*buddhi*) as follows: treat it as an offering to *Bhagavaan/Ishwara (Ishwara-Arpana Buddhi)* and accept the result of the action with equanimity (*samatvam*), whether the results are successful or not (*Ishwara-Prasaada Buddhi*) as noted in *BG 2.48*. I also realize that, while I have control over my action (I can do, not do, or do it differently through my free-will given only to human beings (and not to other living beings), I have relatively no control over the result (due to various factors involved, including the notion of luck emanating from *prakriti* - universal nature and associated universal order), as noted in *BG 2.47*. I also recollect the characteristics of the spiritually wise (*sthhita-prajnah*), as stated in *BG 2.55-72*. Another key learning is that, one should be ever cautious that one's own actions are never influenced by "ragadweshas" (likes and dislikes), and treat them as the "robbers/muggers" blocking us from our spir-

itual path, as they take the objectivity out of our *saadhana* (*BG 3.34*). Ultimately, I recognize that I am the pure awareness who is witnessing my body/mind complex, but detached from it, that transcends the influence of the *kaama-krodha* (desire-anger) arising from my likes and dislikes (*BG 3.43*).

To prosper in both worldly and spiritual lives, I know that I need to have a clear mind, and use my intellect objectively. Thus, "jnaana yoga", where the intellect is "yoked" with *Bhagavaan/Supreme Self*, is the key to remove my ignorance of the universe and its creator. This is described in detail in *BG Chapters 4 & 5*. What is my key ignorance? It is my notion that I am the "kartaa" (doer) and "bhoktaa" (enjoyer), while in reality, *prakriti* - the universal nature is indeed the doer and enjoyer, which includes me as an individual with my body/mind complex. In reality, I am the pure awareness (*aatma-chaitanya*) that witnesses all the experiences of the body/mind complex. I recognize that there is nothing more purifying than knowledge (*na hi jnaanena sa-drsham pavitram iha vidyate*) (*BG 4.38*). Once I realize that the same Self in me (*Aatmaa*) is the very Supreme Self (*Paramaatmaa*) manifest in each and every entity of this Universe, but not affected by it, my ignorance disappears through this knowledge, and I realize my complete freedom from this life of "becoming", and move on with the life of "being" in the present with full acceptance of myself and the world, resulting in lasting contentment and joy.

One common thread to my *saadhana*, I observe, is inscribed at the top of the altar "Prem(a)" complete devotion to the very creator of the universe, who has also created me. Everything in my life from the beginning to now has been given to me - my body, mother, father, siblings, surroundings, senses, mind, intellect, memory, free will, desires, and wealth - and I am just a caretaker in charge of my body/mind complex. I thank *Bhagavaan* for giving me the opportunity to be the caretaker, and yoke all my activities and intellect to understand the truth of myself (*aatmaa*) as non different from the Supreme Self (*Paramaatmaa*), thus giving me the distinct clarity that the entire Universe is pervaded by this single, non-dual Supreme Self, also known as *Bhagavaan*.

As I conclude my reflection, I hear a devotee's enchanting rendering of *Chandi* in the background: **Rupam Dehi** - Maa, grant me the knowledge to recognize my *aatma-swaroopa* which is pure *chaitanyam/awareness*; **Jayam Dehi** - Maa, grant me *vijaya/victory* over *moha*, delusion created by *Maayaa*, that I am separate from *Bhagavaan* who is *purnam/complete*; **Yasho Dehi** - If at all you wish to grant me *yashas/fame*, let that fame be as a person who is seriously pursuing his *saadhana* to attain *aatma-jnaanam* and transcend *maayaa*; **Dwisho Jahi** - Maa, destroy *kaama* (desires), *krodha* (anger) etc. that impede my spiritual path to realize my true self which is non-different from *Bhagavaan*. As I hear this succinct, heart-felt prayer of *Aadyaa Maa's* devotee, my heart melts completely in full realization that there is no better prayer one could ever offer to *Jagat Jananee*, the Mother of this entire Universe, and my mind resolves immediately to start my meditation on *Aadyaa Maa* in full earnest.

Om Namō Aadyaayai Namō Namah

(Om, I bow to *Aadyaa Maa*, the Universal Mother - again and again)

News You May Have Missed

By *Debajyoti Chatterji*

Wild Elephants Cause Panic in IIT-Kharagpur Campus

Two wild elephants entered the campus on February 7 evening and caused widespread panic. They had apparently become separated from their herd, and after being chased by villagers and nearby forest department employees, they had broken through the boundary wall to enter the campus. The campus administration switched off all lights throughout the campus to prevent the elephants from going berserk. This, in turn, caused a chaotic situation because the students did not know the cause for the sudden black-out. Reportedly, the elephants had killed a man, critically injured a woman and destroyed a number of homes during the previous two days. The elephants were finally chased out of the campus late at night. (Based on a Times of India report of February 7, 2011)

New Dubai Airport Terminal is the Biggest Building in the World

If you thought that Pentagon was the largest building in the world, think again. The newly built Terminal 3 of the Dubai International Airport now has that distinction. It is not merely the world's largest air terminal; it is the largest building anywhere in the world (Remember that Dubai also boasts about having the world's tallest skyscraper). The new terminal occupies 370 acres and has 82 moving walkways, 97 escalators, 157 elevators, 180 check-in counters and 2600 parking spaces (Based on a New York Times report of February 13, 2011).

Diabetes Reaches Epidemic Level in India

The International Diabetes Foundation has ranked India as the country with the most diabetics in the world. This umbrella group of more than 200 national associations estimates that India has more than 50 million people with diabetes and that the disease kills about 1 million people in India every year, more than in any other country. India now has a diabetes epidemic, according to this non-profit organization. Unfortunately, the disease has become widespread as India advances economically - and Indians' eating and working habits change with increasing levels of income. (Based on a Bloomberg News report of November 7, 2010)

A Fortune in a Forgotten Junk in the Attic

A brother and sister found an unremarkable, 16-inch decorative vase "in a dusty attic" when they were cleaning out their family home near London's Heathrow airport. They got rid of other Chinese knickknacks for as little as \$100. However, when they took the vase to Bainbridge, an auction house, they learned that it was a valuable piece of antique from the Qing Dynasty (1735-1796) of China. In November, 2010, the vase was sold for a nifty \$69.5 million. Including taxes and "buyer's premium," the total price came to an amazing \$85.9 million, the highest ever paid in an auction for a Chinese antiquity (Based on a New York Times report of November 13, 2010)

Kerala Woman Sets World Record for Longest Dance

Mrs. Kalamandalam Hemaletta, a 37-year old mother living in Kochi, India, has established a new world record for continuous dancing. A dedicated student of Indian classical dance, she practiced for 10 hours a day and often ran for 28 miles to build her stamina. Her "Mohiniyattam" dance lasted for 123 hours and 15 minutes and earned her a place in the Guinness Book of World Records (Based on a Press Trust of India report of January 6, 2011)

Dogs Used to Detect Colorectal Cancer

A paper published recently in Gut, an international gastroenterology journal, reports that a Labrador retriever was successfully trained and used to detect cancers of the colon and the rectum almost as accurately as invasive and expensive procedures such as colonoscopy. Research showed that the dog was at least 95% as accurate as colonoscopy when smelling breath samples - and 98% correct with stool samples. The study does not, however, suggest widespread use of dogs for cancer detection because that would be impractical. The study instead suggests that there are volatile organic compounds present in breath and stool that are "markers" of colorectal cancers. Such markers, when identified, may lead to less expensive and invasive diagnostic tests for human cancer in the future. (Based on a report in Sarasota Herald Tribune, February 2, 2011)

Bhimsen Joshi Dead at Age 88

Bhimsen Joshi, the pre-eminent classical vocalist of India, passed away on January 24, 2011 at the age of 88. As a child growing up in a music-loving family, he was influenced by his mother's singing of devotional songs. At age 11, he heard Abdul Karim Khan, the great master of the Kirana school, on a 78 rpm record and decided to pursue Khan's style of blending elements of north and south Indian music. He ran away from home and crisscrossed India as a ticketless passenger on trains, visiting one great master after another. As a result, his style picked up influences from many parts of India. In 2007, he received Bharat Ratna from the Government of India, the highest civilian honor bestowed on an Indian citizen. (Based on a report in The Economist, February 5, 2011)

150 Mercedes Cars Purchased on the Same Day by Aurangabad Businessmen

Aurangabad is a fast-developing city in western India but the local businessmen felt that their success story is not well-known or well-appreciated outside their city. So they decided to do something unique to attract attention (and investment) to their city; a group of 150 local businessmen decided to buy, en masse, a Mercedes Benz car each, collectively spending almost \$15 million in a single day. The company has confirmed that this was the single largest purchase of Mercedes cars by a community of people. (Based on a report in The New York Times, October 24, 2010).

Recent Sahitya O Alochana Sessions at Ananda Mandir

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Subhash Mukhopadhyaya, which, he claimed, was a poem of unmatched caliber of its time across the world.

The last item of this session was a marvelous musical presentation by Faruque Azam and his team. This segment focused on the cultural issues of the partition - the Punjabi dominated West Pakistan was a completely strange phenomenon to the Bengalis of East Pakistan, despite Pakistan's early at-

tempts to win the Bengalis by including Surabardi into the new nation's power coterie. In the musical, they covered a long period beginning with Bhasha Andolan of the 1950s to the independence of Bangladesh in 1971. Faruque and Negar, one of his associates, presented the history of the cultural and economic struggle the people of East Pakistan had to go through in the aftermath of the partition of India. In doing so, they drew heavily on the works of Nirmalendu

Gun, an eminent Bangladeshi poet of the post independence period. Manirul and Brishti, the other two members of the team, provided high quality vocal musical support to the presentation. The musical included some popular songs including "Ami Banglai Gaan Gai".

The Trustees of Ananda Mandir take this opportunity to express its appreciation and support for the forum's contribution to the continuing cultural enrichment of the community.

Announcement:

Opening for a Bengali Instructor at Rutgers University

The Department of African, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Literatures at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey State, New Brunswick Campus, has an opening for a part-time Instructor of Bengali for 2011-2012 Academic year for teaching a basic level Bengali to college students at Rutgers University. Qualifications include: Native or near-native proficiency in Bengali, experience in teaching Bengali (preferably in a North American university) and competence in communication.

Please forward your CV, cover letter, and the names and contact information of three referees to Professor Alamin Mazrui, Department Chair, at amazrui@rci.rutgers.edu. For more information contact Professor Dipak Sarkar, Chair, Bengali Language and Culture Initiative Committee of Rutgers University at 732-932-1529

YOUTH SECTION

Boy Scouts

By Phani Paladugu

Scouting teaches young boys to be good citizens and trains them to become leaders. But how? Since the earliest recorded times, people have looked to the wisdom of lawgivers to guide them along their paths of duty and honor. From the Code of Hammurabi to the modern court system, most laws that people have written have begun with a "Do" or a "Don't", with a "You must" or a "You must not". They either command or prohibit. But the Scout Law does neither. It's simply a statement of fact of what's natural for a Scout, and what a Scout is all about. A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent. Teaching Scouts to live by these words in every part of their daily lives is how Scouting makes good citizens and leaders.

Lord Baden Powell, the founder of Scouting said, "Scouting is a game with a purpose." You've all seen pictures of a Boy Scout helping an old lady across the street. A Scout is helpful. But there is so much more to it than that. I've picked up bags and bags of litter on road cleanups, squeezed thousands of cups of lemonade for our Troops sponsored annual summer festival, painted walls, cleaned, dug holes, cut wood, collected boxes and boxes of canned goods for food banks, retired American flags at a military ceremony ... the list goes on and on. Yes, it was all considered work, but we worked together and made it fun.

Scouting provides opportunities for boys that they would probably never get to try otherwise. On a scout outing, I got to fly in a prop plane around the Point in Yards Creek and out to Kittanning. I've canoed (and

unexpectedly gone swimming); whitewater rafted, rappelled inside a cave, and hiked the historic Appalachian trail. I've camped in the pouring rain, the freezing cold, and the sweltering heat (OK, those may not be enticing examples). I've looked through a telescope, shot a model rocket, toured a paper mill, and researched my family tree. Where else would you get to try all those things?

Some say that playing sports make a man learn good sportsmanship and make boys strong. However, each time a Boy Scout says the Scout Oath he promises, in part, to keep himself "... physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight." So, contrary to sports, scouting is for everyone. It's not the most capable part of the group on an outing while others wait on the bench hoping for a turn. Everyone goes; everyone works together. Older scouts teach while younger scouts learn, until they are the older scouts and then they become the teachers. Everyone has something to contribute.

Scouting also provides opportunities to explore areas of personal interest through Cub Scout arrow points and activity pins and Boy Scout merit badges.

Cubs begin with simple skills like cooking meals or making kites. As Webelos they can study geology, build toolboxes from wood, perform plays and explore the law of gravity. Boy Scout merit badges are meant to prepare boys for adulthood. Last year over 96,000 American boy scouts earned the First Aid merit badge. I would definitely want one of them with me in an emergency. Citizenship in the community, citizenship in the nation, and citizenship in the World merit badges teach boys that what we do affects

others and what is happening on the other side of the world affects us all. When I earned Personal Management merit badge I had to prepare a budget. My counselor told me a budget is not just writing down that I spent the entire contents of my wallet and it is not hoarding all my money in a box. It's planning what I am going to save and what I can afford to spend. There are badges to explore public service--Fire Safety, Emergency Preparedness, and Crime Prevention. Other badges explore careers-- Engineering, Architecture, Journalism, Auto Mechanics, Medicine, and Law. And of course, what would Scouting be without outdoor skills? Wilderness Survival and Camping are a few. But, Pioneering was the best because we built a three-story tower with only logs and twines. There is nothing more satisfying than everyone climbing to the top and getting his picture taken, and Hiking was the best one adding to the fact that my dad was the counselor. Through this, scouting can be seen also as the best way a father and son can spend quality time together.

All along the way the work, the learning, and the fun are put together into two main awards that scouts earn. The Arrow of Light is the highest award in Cub Scouting and the Eagle Scout rank is the highest award in Boy Scouts. Boys that have taken the time and had the perseverance to have the privilege of wearing these patches show everyone that they are ready to become a useful part of society. Not only have Eagle Scouts learned about the skills needed as adults, they have also served as leaders to others. They have performed an Eagle Project - a service project of their choice. That project isn't that boy being helpful to others; it's that boy serving as the crew boss while his friends and scouts perform the service. The Eagle candidate has

ICC Corner

By Prabir Sarkar

After sailing through the ICC Election process, the new Executive Committee for 2011-2012 took charge at the beginning of the year 2011. The year 2011 started with a big bang. The Saraswati Puja celebration was a great success in terms of venue, children participation, the size of audience, exquisite presentation of cultural programs and donation collection.

The event was held at a brand new location in Whippany on February 13, 2011 at The Ukrainian American Cultural Centre which provided a perfect setting for the Puja and the cultural program. The whole function started at about 2:00 P.M., the community members donned in their best -- women in beautiful, decorative saris, young girls in *churidars*, men in *dhuti* and *kurta* and boys in *pyjamas* and decorative *kurtas* -- started assembling in the Puja venue from all over New Jersey and nearby states. By 5:00 P.M., a record crowd filled the assembly/dining hall of the center where the Puja rituals were about to be carried out. Aided by the members of Puja committee, the rituals were performed by Salilesh Mukhopadhyay, followed by "*Hate Khari*" and "*Pushpanjali*". After a few rounds of Pushpanjali and Prasad distribution, there were plenty of *luchi*, *torkari* and *payesh* as part of the bhog that kept the crowd fully satiated and happy.

The afternoon witnessed a galaxy of beautiful children participating in the evening's cultural program. Children clad in "*basanti*" color ushered in spring with dances to the tunes of Rabindra Sangeet "*Ore Grihobashi*" and "*Aji Dokhino-Duar Khola*", and our budding young talents performed a play based on Upendrakishore Roy Choudhury's "*Dustu Bagh*," and a hilarious re-enactment of Sukumar Roy's "*Kumro Potash*". Popular Bengali songs of *Basanta* were sung by none other than our very own Nanda Chakraborty. The featured artist was Santoneel Dhar from New York. Accompanying Santoneel were a talented set of musicians playing Octopad, Guitar and Keyboard. The event ended in a sumptuous dinner with traditional Bengali *Khichuri*, *Papad Bhaja*, *Bandhakopi tarkari* and *Chutney* with *Khair ChumChum* brought from New York to add a touch of sweet to the taste.

As we look forward, we are getting ready for the Baisakhi. Before I say good bye for now, I must acknowledge the contributions of each and every executive committee member, spouses of EC members and other ICC members who helped tremendously in making the Saraswati Puja 2011 such a great success. Please stay tuned to our website <http://www.icc-gs.org> for information on all other upcoming events.

to arrange the work schedule, make sure supplies will be ready, make sure workers will be there on time, and deal with any last-minute problems that may arise.

Only one in four boys in America will become a Scout, but it is interesting to note that of the leaders in this nation; in business, religion and politics; three out of four were Scouts. This story will never end. Like the "Golden Pebble" of service dropped

into the human sea it will continue to ripple in ever-widening circles, influencing the characters of men down through unending time. But you mustn't take Scouting for granted. You can do nothing more important for young people today than to continue your support of Scouting. Scouting is the best program and offers a truly life changing experience. Everyone who joins it takes something out with its endless knowledge.

Allowance for chores

By Ramyah Ponnudurai (Age:14)

Being part of family means working together to complete a task. If everyone in the family decides to go his or her own way, there is no point in calling that group of people a "family." It doesn't seem reasonable for a child to get paid for something that benefits the entire family. There are many ways that doing chores can be fun! Play music while doing your chores so the atmosphere is light and happy and not gloomy and tense. Ask your siblings to help you instead of doing it alone, so that you don't feel as if all the pressure is on you to complete the task.

Besides, doing these tasks, you learn how to fend

for yourself in the "real world." When you become a young adult and go out on your own, you don't want to be dependent on someone else to do your laundry or make a dinner for you, do you? Learning to do simple chores on your own, instead of begging others to do it for you, is good for your independence. Being independent is very essential to many youngsters these days; therefore, learning how to do basic housework is also equally important. So, it is not fair for any adult to pay you for your services in the family environment when in turn; these lessons are benefiting your future.

When you pitch in and com-

plete chores around the house, it allows more time for family bonding. Instead of letting mom or dad suffer the stress of grocery shopping on her own or shoveling snow by himself give them a hand so that these tasks will be completed in less the amount of time it would have taken them to do it on their own. Disliking it at first is completely understandable; but concentrating on all the free time that you will have after the hard work is finished, you will feel good about yourself. You will feel replenished and actually feel as though you deserved that break instead of sitting in front of the television all day long watching Tom and Jerry and Scooby-Doo. There are many things in life that are a lot more valuable than money, and family happens to be exactly that. So don't think of

doing chores as a job that has been forced upon you but an advantage that will be your strength later on.

The next time your parent or guardian asks you to help clear the garage, fold laundry, or rake leaves, don't moan and groan and say that you don't want to help, but instead own up to the challenge and help them out. Afterwards reward yourself for the accomplishment that you have achieved by making yourself an ice cream sundae or hanging out with friends. Not only will your parents feel impressed with you, but you will feel proud of yourself as well.

Prankster's Fate

By Anisha Ghosh (Age: 10)

"Yes, I finished my project!" Amy Lare squealed. She had to work on a science project at school about the law of gravity. Her excitement didn't last very long. She went into her guard mode, making sure that Joey Valteo, the school prankster, was not around. "The coast is clear" thought Amy, "I should go ask Mrs. Loia to see, if she can check my project now" and off she went. Joey was hiding behind a nearby table waiting for the perfect moment to prank her. Right behind his sneaky legs, was a one-quart milk jug full of filthy water from a polluted pond near his house.

He looked for a clear coast, and then made sure that Amy was still talking with the teacher. "Okay, no one is paying attention" he thought. He walked over to Amy's well prepared project and poured the dirt-filled water on the project. He was almost finished pouring the quart of polluted water, when he heard, "Joseph Valto! What in the world are you doing?" This was the voice of none other than, Mrs. Aponie, the Principal of Rowlinger Intermediate School. "Why would you do that to Ms. Lare's project? She worked very hard on that." Trying to think

of a lie, Joey said proudly, "Well....she called me a mean person that hurt me deeply." His words were spoken very quickly, and he stuttered and mumbled through it. Amy was now walking towards her table to show her teacher her wonderful project. When she saw what happened to her creation, her freckled face turned red, and her once relaxed hands turned into fists. She screamed and stomped her feet while Joey followed the Principal to her office. Mrs. Aponie sat down and sighed, "Ahhh, Joey, Joey, Joey, you have been here too many times. Your profile is probably one of the worst I've ever seen. You need to step up your game or you will be out of the running for a good future." Joey

snickered at the comment. "My life will be perfect, as long as I control it."

This was his motto, until his senior year in high school. Joe, as he liked to be called now, was trying to apply to colleges. He asked a teacher to send a recommendation letters to the colleges that he selected. The Admission Department was very impressed with his grades but when they saw his personal profile, they immediately rejected him. He might have been a good student but what he did in the past reflects on his present.

Ananda Mandir Membership Recognition

Ananda Mandir welcomes the following new Grand Patrons, Patrons and Life members:

Grand Patrons

Surya Dutta

Surajit and Sonia Sengupta

Patrons

Samar and Saswati Banerjee
Ardhendu and Malancha Ghosh

Lipi Ghosh

Life Members

Amit Kumar and Namrata Das

Rajesh and Polly Karmokar

Arun and Shubra Paul

Siddharthadev Roy

Soumen and Anasua Roy

Dibyendu and Srabanti Sarkar
Doris Duke Management Fund.

Obituary: Suhas Choudry

Mr. Suhas Choudry, a well-known member of our community, passed away in Kokata on March 10 after a long illness. Our sincere condolences go to his wife, Mrs. Dolly Choudry, and his other family members

Corruption—Its Roots and Remedies

By Himansu Mukherjee

The origin of corruption can be traced back to our desire to seek undue and illegal favor from a person or an organization concerned. Further, when a person or an organization is in distress, recourses to survive are taken which more often than not lead to corruption or they may be translated into corruption.

In earlier times, when life was simple and non-competitive, there was hardly any room for corruption in the society. But with the growth

and progress of human society, life became increasingly complicated; greed, attachment and jealousy towards fellow human beings were generated, and consequently crime and corruptions tarnished our lives.

Corruption in developing and underdeveloped countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America at government levels is more rampant than in the developed countries of Europe, Canada and USA. One might say that the lack of transparency and the attitude

of insensitivity to public pressure and criticism are basically the reasons behind corruption.

In developed countries, if any wrongdoing or scandal is reported against the government, it is, in most instances, immediately highlighted by the media, and the agents of the government, against whom disparaging charges are reported, have to face of public pressure to resign.

The Macmillan government in U.K. had to resign when some unsocial practices were reported against some

cabinet members of the government in 1950s. In 1970s, an explosive political corruption ruined President Richard Nixon in USA. He had to step down to avoid impeachment or to be pardoned by the newly anointed substitute President J. Ford for his involvement in the Watergate scandal.

In recent times, both India and China have made tremendous strides in economy and military, but numerous cases of scandal and corruption have been reported. In Communist China, none of the scandals and corruptions comes to the surface, and in India most of the cor-

ruptions are covered up. Bofors Gun Scandal in India during Rajib Gandhi's administration was not properly investigated, and it was finally covered up. Rajib Gandhi with his huge notoriety escaped stepping down. A shocking incident of corruption occurred in Bihar. The chief minister of Bihar, Lalooprosad Jadav was involved in a fodder scam in Bihar and was accused of money laundering. But he was off scot-free without virtually any punishment.

Another heart-breaking story of political corruption and

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Corruption— Its Roots and Remedies

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crime was the mass-killing of the poor peasants in Nandigram (West Bengal). The CPM government perpetrated the fatal and mournful event to grab the land of the poor peasants in the name of 'industrialization.' The government never repented nor stepped down for its heinous action.

Recently, corruption was reported in the central government of India headed by Monomohan Singh in New Delhi. India hosted the 2010 Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. An enormous amount of money was spent for this event. But a significant amount was laundered and many persons were involved in this money-laundering matter.

Another case of corruption was the asking for bribe by a Federal minister, also in India. A deputy minister asked Ratan Tata, head of the Tata group of companies, for a bribe of 150 million rupees to facilitate the operation of a local air line jointly with a for-

ign company. When the news became public, the deputy minister had to resign. Very recently, a glaring incident of corruption rocked the state of Maharashtra. The chief minister of Maharashtra was accused in a housing scandal in the Adarsa Housing Project in Mumbai. He has been asked to step down.

It is unfortunate that India with all its successes and glories has become a corruption-ridden country. When one opens an Indian newspaper, one will hardly miss the story of a scandal that happened or waiting to be crystallized in a scandalized form. According to a study conducted by Transparency International in India, 50% of the people had first-hand experience of paying bribes, small or large, or peddling influence to get a job in public office. A few years back, the Washing Post reported that 25% of Indian Parliament members faced criminal charges including human trafficking, immigration, rack-

eteering rape, and murder.

Illicit flight of money from India was steeped in secrecy. By doing so, an international watchdog pointed out that India had been drained of \$462 billion between 1948 and 2008.

Corruption at the corporate level has been reported in USA. ENRON, a big engineering conglomerate headquartered in Texas, was engaged in corruption-ridden practices. The top people in the company were accused of money laundering. The company faced bankruptcy; thousands lost their jobs and were thrown into helplessness resulting in poverty. Some of the corporate bosses were apprehended and brought to justice.

Individual corruptions are too numerous to mention, especially in less developed countries. In these countries, every year hundreds of people deceive the government by not filing income tax returns. If caught, punishment is not severe. But in developed countries, people hardly fail to file income tax returns. Any false return is punishable by law. Spiro Agnew, the vice-president of President Nixon's

administration was apprehended and imprisoned for three years for filing false income tax returns.

Malpractices on the part of those dealing with public funds are punishable by law. Martha Stewart and Bernie Madoff involved in insider trading were found guilty. They were apprehended and jailed.

Remedy: Individual corruptions originate from two sources--poverty and greed. A person stricken by poverty is unable to live a decent life. He gets depressed and disheartened and, as a result, takes recourse to corruption for survival. Poverty is a social malady. This malady should be cured by all means. The poor and the helpless should be educated and rehabilitated and thus corruption can be mitigated to some extent.

Corruptions triggered by greed and ill motivation cannot be remedied easily. A person driven by the desire to acquire money and position by unfair and illegal means should be given stern warning for his/her illegal conduct. In Saudi Arabia, a person in-

involved in corrupt practices is sometimes given capital punishment. Fear of capital punishment deters a person from corrupt practices.

The best way to avoid corruption in government or corporate offices is to maintain transparency at all levels. If appearance of any wrong doing or fraud in the government or corporate offices occurs, it should be immediately highlighted by the media, and the government or the corporate bosses should be brought to face the charges of corruptions and will have to step down under public pressure, criticism and resentment.

Every year 'Transparency International' is published by UNO in which it is found that the advanced countries such as Europe, USA, Canada and Japan occupy the top positions.

In conclusion, corruption is a social disease which should be diagnosed properly and treated accordingly. Our society should be purged of undesirable elements. However, corruption is so deep-rooted that it is going to be a daunting challenge to eliminate this social scourge completely.



Ananda Mandir

Temple of Worship & Cultural Center
285 Cedar Grove Lane, Somerset, NJ 08878. Phone: 732 878-9821



April 2011 - March 2012 Puja Schedules at Ananda Mandir

Month	Day	Puja Name
April	2 Saturday	Shyama Puja
	8 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	17 Sunday	Ground breaking and Satya Narayan Puja
May	2 Monday	Shyama Puja
	6 Friday	Akshaya Tritia
	13 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
June	1 Wednesday	Phalasharini Kali Puja
	10 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	11 Saturday	Dashahara Ganga Puja
July	3 Sunday	Rath Yatra
	8 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	9 Saturday	Bipad Tarini Puja
August	9-13 Tue-Sat	Jhulan Yatra
	12 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	13 Saturday	Satya Narayan Puja
September	1 Monday	Ganesh Chaturthi
	9 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	11 Sunday	Satya Narayan Puja
October	2-6 Sun-Thur	Durga Puja
	11 Tuesday	Kojagari Lakshmi Puja & Satya Narayan Puja
	14 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
November	1-5 Tue-Sat	Jagadhatri Puja
	10 Thursday	Rash Purnima
	11 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
December	4 Sunday	Satya Narayan Puja
	9 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	24 Saturday	Bakul Amabasya Shyama Puja
January	1 Sunday	Temple open whole day for Satya Narayan Puja
	8 Sunday	Satya Narayan Puja
	13 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
February	5 Sunday	Satya Narayan Puja
	10 Friday	Ananda Sandhya
	20 Monday	Maha Shiva Ratri
March	4 Sunday	Satya Narayan Puja
	8 Thursday	Dol Yatra
	9 Friday	Ananda Sandhya

Designed by: Sudhinda Saha