



Bengali Association of Greater Chicago -Community Newsletter

সমাজ সংবাদ

Volume 37 Issue 1

PRESIDENT'S LETTER



On behalf of BAGC-2012 Executive Committee, I wish you all a very happy and prosperous new year!! I just cannot believe how fast another year flew by and how we have stepped into a brand new year!! I still remember the day when we were going to attend our first BAGC event at Jain temple, last year and now we are at the brink of the same first event, Saraswati Puja!! Well, this year it will be held at our favorite venue, Streamwood High School on January 28th, the Basant Panchami day as per Bengali Ponjika. Our heartfelt prayer to the goddess of learning – “Asato Maa Sadgamaya Tamaso Maa Jyotirgamaya” (Please lead us from falsehood to truth, unreal to real and darkness to light).

Organizing the first event, Saraswati Puja, is always challenging for an Executive Committee, the daunting task of getting a venue for a specific day, packaging a flamboyant cultural program and catering an impeccable selection of vegetarian food to our beloved community members are just some of the highlights of many tasks. Moreover, these tasks are required to be accomplished within a month, when the team members are still getting acquainted with each other. Unquestionably, I consider myself immensely fortunate to have an excellent team. They have already positioned themselves in their bases and started managing the assigned activities in a professional manner.

In the history of BAGC, 2011 will always be remembered as a milestone year for us. We got our own home, Banga Bhavan, our tangible footprint in Chicago-land. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our special project team, BBC for turning a dream into reality. Please come forward and donate generously to Banga Bhavan.

This year, BAGC and the Art Institute of Chicago will celebrate Rabindranath Tagore's 150th birth anniversary by bringing an exhibition, *The Last Harvest: The Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore* to Chicago. The exhibition will be on view at The Art Institute of Chicago from 29 January - 15 April 2012. There is no bigger cultural icon in India and Bangladesh than Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). A renowned novelist, poet, musician, and philosopher—the first non-European to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1913—Tagore is responsible for shaping the modern Indian identity. While perhaps lesser known, his paintings also demonstrate his profound cultural impact. Sixty-one of these impressive works, drawn from three collections in India, come together in this exhibition and offer a glimpse into the visionary mind of this influential thinker. This event will be co-organized by the National Gallery of Modern Art, New Delhi, the Ministry of Culture of the Government of India and Bengali Association of Greater Chicago. This is the first major traveling exhibition from India to be exhibited at the Art Institute.

We, the 2012 BAGC EC team, cordially invite your active participation and constructive suggestions for further improvement. We will make 2012 a successful year with your support.



Shikha Chakrabarti

NEXT EVENT: SARASWATI PUJA - STREAMWOOD HIGH SCHOOL - JAN 28, 2012

Letter from the Editors

As we launch our first newsletter for the year, we wish BAGC members a very happy 2012. We hope that the year will be a happy and healthy one for everyone and another successful year for our BAGC.

This is the first time we have been editors of the newsletter so we hope you'll bear with us as we learn the ropes. We welcome your comments and suggestions on how we can make the newsletter better. We also need your participation so the newsletter can truly reflect the broad cross-section of our community. Please contact us if you would like to write articles for the newsletter and let us know of all the awards, accomplishments and good news our members have to share so we can feature them here.

Our first event is Saraswati Puja and so we dedicate this issue to the most important members of our community: our youth and the students. This issue is predominantly in English for our youth members to enjoy. The cover art 'Om Saraswati Namah' painted by Mrs. Shikha Chakrabarti exclusively for our BAGC newsletter represents Ma Saraswati as the vessel of creativity and knowledge. From Her springs forth the stems, leaves and buds which burst open as lotus flowers, spreading the beauty of music and art and the light of knowledge throughout the world. Looking forward to seeing you all at Saraswati Puja!

Neela Dasgupta, Ranajoy Ganguli, Shreya Bardhan

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BAGC PROGRAMS
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Saraswati Puja Rates

MEMBER

Adult 30

Self Supporting Student 20

Children (6-18years) 15

NON-MEMBER

Adult 35

Self Supporting Student 30

Children (6-18years) 20

GFP & Children under 5 Free

-DISCLAIMER-

Articles in *Samaj Sambad* are obtained from individual members. The editors are not responsible for the content of these articles. The opinions expressed in these articles are solely those of the contributors and are not necessarily representative of BAGC.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

New BAGC Members

Saikat and Sheila Dey are proud parents of Ayan, born on Dec 29. He weighed 9.5lbs and joins sisters, Soha and Aeva.

Suraj and Visha Sengupta announce the birth of their son, Sarav born on December 27. Congratulations to grandparents, Sudipta and Mithu Sengupta!

Avishek and Bobbie Sengupta announce the birth of their daughter, Asha born on November 18. Congratulations to grandparents, Amalendu and Bijoya Sengupta!

Annaprasan

Indranil and Tonnistha Roychoudhury celebrated their daughter, Tuhi's annaprasan on Dec 4.

Biswaroop Bhattacharya and Dibyava Ghosh celebrated their son, Arko's annaprasan on Dec 24.

Rebecca and Bishwaprasad Nath of Lisle, celebrated the annaprasan of their granddaughter Sumina, daughter of Indrani and Ron Hausen.

Prasanta and Sreeti Ghose celebrated the annaprasan of their granddaughter Anjali, daughter of Shouvik and Erin Biswas on January 7.

Upanayan

Pratik and Mahua Chakraborty celebrated their sons', Praneet and Preetish's, Thread Ceremony in Kolkata on Dec 26.

Graduation

Pia Bose, daughter of Gokul and Deblina Bose, graduated from Northwestern University majoring in English literature, International Studies and Marketing.

Special Achievements

Aditya Dewanjee, son of Bikram and Arpita Dewanjee, earned a perfect score on the ACT exams.

Rishi Sriram, son of Sriram and Reena Sriram is a National Merit Semi Finalist.

Brinda Gupta, daughter of Abhijit and Suparna Gupta was selected to present her research at the American Junior Academy of Science in Vancouver.

Silver Anniversary

Congratulations to Pradip & Srabani Majumdar and Asok & Subhra Gangopadhyay on their 25th anniversary.

SARASWATI PUJA SCHEDULE

Registration starts

10:00AM

Puja

10:30 AM

Anjali and Hathe Khori**

12:30 PM

Prasad

1:30 PM

Biswarjan

1:30 PM

**** Please bring your own slate and chalk or notebook with pencil for Hathey Khari**

Lunch (Children)

1:00 PM

Lunch (Adult)

1:30 PM

(No Lunch will be served after 3:30 PM)

Snacks

4:00 PM

Cultural Program Part 1

5:30 PM

Elo Re Basanto Elo-Naach Re Mon Naach

Sa Re Ga Ma Pa – Kids from Bangla School “Kisholoy”

Monsoons/Shrabon Oi Ashe – Indian Classical Musical Ensemble

Torai Bandha Ghorar Dim

CHAI-TOWN – a musical sensation

Dinner (Children)

7:30 PM

Dinner (Adult)

8:00 PM

Cultural Program Part 2

9:45 PM

A tribute to Bhupen Hazarika by Parthasarathi Mukhopadhyay

CULTURAL PROGRAM SARASWATI PUJA 2012

Elo Re Basanto Elo—Naach Re Mon Naach – Directed by Dipika Chaudhuri: We will start with an invocation of the Goddess Saraswati uniting the three forms of Indian classical dance – *Bharatnatyam, Odissi and Kathak*. As we celebrate the grace and beauty of Ma Saraswati and the advent of Spring, our hearts are soaring, our feet are tapping and our excitement knows no bound. Flowers are blooming, bees are buzzing; there is magic everywhere and romance in the air. Join us as we celebrate Ma Saraswati and the beauty of spring through the medium of dance.

Torai Bandha Ghorar Dim – directed by Saumen Chattopadhyay: Sukumar Roy's literary works, especially "Abol Tabol", manifest the childhood in every Bengali irrespective of age. A group of our children will present a recitation collage of "Abol Tabol" from their land of imagination in rhythmic order with music and dipping of boundless joy – be prepared for a journey to your childhood!

Sa Re Ga Ma Pa – Kids from Bangla School "Kisholoy" (Teacher – Sudeshna Chakraborty): Listen to our youngest members – it will be f-a-n-t-a-s-t-i-c!

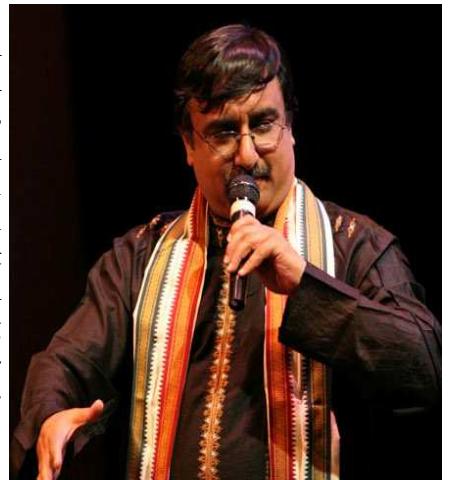
Monsoons/Shrabon Oi Ashe – Indian Classical Musical Ensemble – Directed by Subhasis Mukherjee: This composition is based on *Raag Desh*, which inherently brings out the joy of life that is often pictured as the rejuvenation of nature during the monsoons in India. The composition's framework highlights Rabindranath Tagore's genius in applying Desh Raag in many of his songs. The finale reminds us of our roots through Bankim Chandra's "Vande Mataram", which is also based on this Raag. Please listen to our young musicians (primarily trained in western classical genre) as they explore the world of Indian Classical Music through comparison and appreciation.

Guest Artists

CHAI-TOWN – a musical sensation: A group of young men from the University of Illinois came together with their love for music – they wanted to show how two seemingly different cultures can fuse together to produce something great – this vision has grown into *Chai-Town A Cappella*. As one of the country's premiere Hindi-English A cappella (singing without independent instrumental accompaniment) groups, Chai-Town performed all over US from New York to California and across the Midwest. In 2012, Chai-Town will be reaching its 10th anniversary and putting out their 3rd studio album. PLEASE visit www.chaitown.org for more information.



A tribute to Bhupen Hazarika by Parthasarathi Mukhopadhyay: Parthasarathi is the founder and Director of "Bharatiya Kala Kendra", NJ; he is also the chief trainer of vocal music section. His dedication for spreading Indian music among residents of USA is well known in the Tri-state area and earned him a special position among Indian musicians in USA. With his melodious voice and strong hold on different aspects of music his domain of performance includes almost every-style; starting from North-Indian Classical, Light Classical to Ghazal, Bhajan and Modern Songs. Parthasarathi will present a bouquet of nostalgic melodies composed by Dr. Bhupen Hazarika (1926–2011), an award-winning musical genius (lyricist, musician, singer, poet and film-maker) from Assam. Dr. Hazarika had contributed to the Indian film industry for 72 years as a singer and composer. His songs, written and sung mainly in the Assamese language by himself, are marked by humanity and universal brotherhood; and have been translated and sung in many languages, most notable in Bengali, and Hindi. It will be a tribute to Bhupen Hazarika through music.





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GE-30471(a) (11/04)



Recently Released in Kolkata

By Neela Dasgupta

Just a year after Autograph, director Srijit Mukherji brings us, **Baishe Srabon**, a crime thriller about a serial killer on the loose in Kolkata, leaving cryptic poems with the victims. Prosenjit Chatterjee excels in the role of the suspended police detective who is enlisted to solve the case. Gautam Ghose takes off his director's hat to put in an endearing performance as an eccentric poet. Soumik Halder's cinematography and Ananda Adhya's art direction are noteworthy. [Language Warning]

Gosain Baganer Bhoot After 32 years this Shirshendu Mukhopadhyay classic children's tale comes to the big screen. Is there anything worse than getting 13/100 on a math test? Probably not for poor Burun (played by Dedipya Ganguly). Reprimanded and shunned by his family, he heads to the forbidden Gosain Bagan where he meets Nidhiram, a ghost (played by Kanchan Mallick). Nidhiram fails to scare Burum who is in a very bad mood, so the 200 year old ghost tries to win the boy's approval by helping him with his problems. Audiences spoiled by the elaborate fantasy worlds created by movies like the Harry Potter series may find the special effects a bit lame but Nitish Roy deserves credit for bringing this treasure to life and creating a world for young children to enjoy. The relationship between Burun and his grandfather Ram Kabiraj (Victor Banerjee) is charming. Chandrabindoo's music, particularly Ek je chhilo Burun, is a highlight.

On 23rd December, 2011, director Sandip Ray released his latest Feluda movie, **Royal Bengal Rahasya**. It stars Sabyasachi, Shaheb 'Topshe' Bhattacharya and Bibhu 'Jatayu' Bhattacharya as the famous crime solving trio, and they are joined by Biplob Chatterjee, Basudeb Mukherji, Debesh Roy Chowdhury, Paran Bandopadhyay, Sanjib Sarkar and Bhaswar Chatterjee. Feluda arrives in the forest of the Dooars at the invitation of a zamindar, who is a shikari and wildlife writer but Feluda has to solve a riddle that hints at treasure as well as deal with a Royal Bengal tiger! How will it end? See it to find out.

Chaplin directed by Anindo Banerjee, screenplay by Padmanava Dasgupta and starring Rudranil Ghosh, Srijit Mukherjee, Mir, Rachita and Sohom, is not about Charlie Chaplin. It is the story of a Bangshi Das, a man who performs Chaplin impersonations at birthday parties and his heart wrenching drive to be a loving father to his seven-year-old son, Nimua. The father and son escape the harsh realities of their slum to laugh in a fantasy world of make believe. Nimua dreams of having a birthday party like the ones his father performs at but keeps it to himself. Rudraneel and Shoham are convincing as Bangshi and Nimua and bring out the spectrum of the father-son relationship from the tragic to the triumphant. Cinematography by Soumik Haldar is exemplary.

MEMORIES IN MARCH

Review by Ranajoy Ganguli

Cast : Rituparno Ghosh, Deepti Naval, Raima Sen.

Direction : Sanjoy Nag



Memories in March is the directorial debut of Sanjoy Nag and is not just about the relationship between unconventional lovers, but also looks at the suffering and pain that a mother goes through when her son suddenly dies in an accident.

A few days after the fateful day, a bigger shock awaits her when she comes to know that her son had an affair with his boss. Suddenly, she discovers chapters in her son's life that she didn't know or didn't get time to explore amid her jet setting career .

The movie is predominantly about the bonding between a mother and the deceased son's love and how they unite in grief. Initially reluctant to accept the situation, she comes to terms with the harsh realities of life. It is a bold venture to bring pent up emotions in Indian psyche out of the closet and also to accept one's choices. Rituparno and Deepti do a good job in their respective characterizations. Raima's presence was largely that of supporting (read cosmetic) without much of real acting. The music from Debojyoti Mishra is brilliant. He breaks the norm of a Bengali film by appropriately applying Brajabuli and Hindi as the lyrics. Excellent singing from Subhamita Banerjee and Kailash Kher.

RANJANA AMI AR ASHBO NA

Review By Indrani Mondal

Ranjana Ami Ar Ashbo Na is not simply a story of a popstar being born. It paints a rare, vibrant picture of the neo-renaissance in modern Bengali music in the late nineties, when song writers instead of allowing their verses to be sung by popular artists of the time, took it upon themselves to croon or belt out their own compositions with the help of a few musical instruments like guitar, keyboard & percussion. This gave birth to band music with realistic, down to earth lyrics and intense rock influenced beats. At the helm of this resurgence of Bangla Gaan were stalwarts like Kabir Suman and Anjan Dutt both of whom have acted in the movie with Dutt being the director as well. Maybe for that reason and no less because Dutt is a seasoned actor, Abinash, the aging, whimsical song writer & band singer brings so much credibility to his volatile personality. Kabir Suman too does a marvelous job as a talented singer in search of a different path for redemption and happiness.

But what is even more fascinating to watch is how Dutt, the director, interweaves social and personal notes with strong stokes and subtle strains throughout the movie. It is hard to believe, for example, that well into the 21st century, a director dares to say in so many words, that 'middle class Bengalis don't expect anything special from their women' and we the viewers care to listen. But his views never sound didactic or appear as withering critiques. They remain comments rendered with such exasperation and agony that they engender the ring of global truths in any middle class society.

The film talks about the trials & tribulations budding creative artists face. But when the artist is a young woman the odds are more, the stakes higher. It goes to Dutt's credit that he not only highlights the problems but in his own way also shows how talent can go above & beyond good and reach excellence irrespective of gender. In so doing he once again adds layers to his treatment of this off beat movie with musings on language, expression, history, environment , age, sex and self which though not flawless have courage and candor that are endearing and truly attractive.

Dutt believes that every worthy artist has a distinct lens that unravels a new shade revealing a hitherto ignored angle of perception. Thus Tagore, the poet of all seasons, talks of light and eternal life in his songs, says Dutt, while another budding modern song writer and singer Nachiketa talks of pain & relentless burning, whereas Anjan Dutt (he himself) disarmingly admits the loss of glory in love and hence retreat, in his popular number 'Ranjana Ami Ar Ashbo na', which as we know, is also the title of this movie. But then, Mr. Dutt, there are many kinds of loving and, I for one would like to think that the title of the movie, inspite of saying "Ranjana Ami Ar Ashbo Na" actually means just the opposite, Ami Esheshi, Ami Achi, Ami Thakbo, I'm here to

stay, now and forever, maybe not conventionally, but surely in spirit, to inspire and rejuvenate. If that is not the glory of love, I don't know what is.

ICCHE

Review by Ranajoy Ganguli

"Icche" is about a paranoid mother who goes to any extreme to endeavor that her son secures no less than the very best position in every "race" of life. She wakes him up from sleep to revise his lessons or asks him to repeat all the answers he had written in the exam the moment he walks out of school. She even tries to control her son's personal life and creates problems in his relationships. In times when parents are as obsessed, if not more, with their child's career as their own, "Icche" comes as a wake-up call.

Mamata's (mother's) character is a complex one - vulnerable yet possessive, loving yet vindictive. She is pathologically possessive of her son and tries to live out her suppressed desires vicariously through her son. Sohini did a fantastic role as a mother who lives in a world filled with trophies and extrinsic success stories of her son, to such an extent, that she is completely oblivious to the son's evolution as a human being. She fits the role with her overweight and unkempt looks, because she has never paid attention to herself. She never had the time to sing with her harmonium for decades. A real Kafkaesque story where one would pity the existential crisis of a mother who slowly loses her son in her obsession to create a winning race horse out of him. A really contemporary problem in the modern Indian metro cities, where it is a challenge for many parents to remain insular to the rat race around. In spite of their good intentions, they alienate themselves from their children. The music direction is average at best and the background scores portend what kind of situation is about to come up next in an obvious manner.



NOTES ON A DHYANA MANTRA OF SRI SARASVATI

By Robert D. Evans

Most formal pujas have two distinct categories: internal puja (antaryaga/manasapuja) and external puja (bahiryaga). The internal puja consists of preparations, purification rituals, mantra recitation, and meditations by the main performer of the puja, most often the priest. The main part of manasapuja is the meditational visualization (dhyana) of Thakur in the mind or heart of the performer of the puja. The external puja consists of sixteen or more items or services (upacara) offered to the icon (vigraha) of Thakur. These offerings and the sequence in which they are presented are based on the traditional way of greeting and honoring royalty or important guests. The location of the external puja is the “outside” social world shared by Thakur, the priest, and all who have darsana of the event. The external puja is the part of the worship that most people observe and participate in, especially accepting the food (naivedya) after it has been offered to Thakur. In every puja that I have studied, the internal puja precedes the external puja.

Each Thakur may have many dhyana mantras of different lengths. Most dhyana mantras consist of one Sanskrit verse; but some Thakurs like Ma Daksina Kali and Ma Chinnamasta have long dhyana mantras. Regardless of the size, dhyana mantras are used by the primary performer of the internal puja to visualize the form, attributes, and qualities of Thakur. In most cases, there is a direct correspondence between the description of Thakur in the dhyana mantra and the attributes of the icon (vigraha) being worshipped.

Bhattasali in his Iconography of Buddhist and Brahmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum refers to ten dhyana mantras which describe the divine form and attributes of Sri Sarasvati. Among these mantras, there is one dhyana mantra which has gained wide-spread acceptance and use. It is cited in the Purohita Darpanas and in panjikas. This dhyana and my translation are given below.

om taruna-shakalam indor bibhratI shubhra-kAntih
kuca-bharana-mitA~NgI saMniShanna sitavje |
nija-kara-kamalodyos lekhanI-pustaka-shrIH
sakala-vibhava-siddhyai pAtu vAg-devatA nah ||

Om. She wears a crescent moon. She has a radiant, luminous beauty. She has a well-developed, beautiful figure. She is seated in a white lotus. She is auspicious, holding a pen and manuscript in her two lotus-like hands. For attaining wealth and prosperity, may the Goddess of Speech help us.

There are several interesting features of this dhyana mantra. Firstly, Ma Sarasvati is depicted as wearing a crescent moon. Usually a crescent moon on the head or crown is an iconographic feature of Saiva and Sakta deities, such as Bhuvanesvari, Tripurasundari, Bhairavi, etc. Secondly, this mantra describes Sri Sarasvati has having two hands, which is a uniquely Bengali conception. Although old stone four-armed vigrahas of Sri Sarasvati have been recovered from tanks and villages in Bengal, it is the two-armed form that is most commonly worshiped at Sarasvati Puja and at Durga Puja. Thirdly, Sri Sarasvati's divine attributes of knowledge, art, and literature are represented by the pen and manuscript (punthi) that she holds in her hands. Punthis are loose-leaf, handwritten texts that were copied on homemade “country” paper or palm leaves. They were held together with boards on the top and bottom, tied with twine. Punthis were the primary way that written knowledge was transmitted and stored before the British introduced the movable type printing press with Bengali fonts in the late 1700s. Fourthly, there is no mention of a vina, which is the defining attribute of Ma Sarasvati. Finally, there is no mention of Sri Sarasvati's vahana, the swan (hamsa).

This dhyana mantra may be found in Krishnananda Agamavagisa's Brihat Tantra Sara, in the section dealing with the worship of Vagisvari. A contemporary of Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu (AD 1486-1533), Krishnananda lived in the Navadvip area along with many other luminaries of Sanskrit learning such as Raghunatha Siromani (Nyaya), Raghunandana Bhattacharyya (Dharma Sastra), etc. In compiling the Tantra Sara, Krishnananda was systematizing pre-existing practices. So, we may safely say, that this dhyana mantra has been used for the worship of Sarasvati in the Bengal cultural area for over 500 years. This dhyana mantra may be traced even further back to the Sarada Tilaka Tantra, attributed to Lakshmana Desika, who is thought to have lived in the eleventh century AD. Although this text was widely used by Krishnananda, Raghunandana, and followers of Mahaprabhu in the sixteenth century, it was possibly written outside of the Bengal cultural area. My hunch is that the text may have originated in the Tantric traditions of Kashmir.

This little essay touches the surface of the meanings, practices, and history of only one part of the worship of Ma Sarasvati. We can only wonder about how many more things we could discover if we took the time and made the effort to look into the religious phenomena that we ordinarily take for granted.

BANGA BHAVAN - Our Future

By Malabika Palit

A major milestone in BAGC history was achieved in 2011 with the opening of Banga Bhavan on August 27th, 2011. This is testimony to the generosity and volunteer efforts of all BAGC members. Banga Bhavan is quickly becoming a hive of activity. We have movies, rehearsals, committee meetings and of course the weekly Pujas, happening there on a regular basis. Bangla classes are held every Saturday. The growing interest of the community is helping to bring the true vision of Banga Bhavan into focus, a religious, and cultural and heritage center.

Fresh new carpeting in the community area has provided warmth to the premises. When members attend the various events there is a palpable sense of happiness and ownership. The premises are always left in spic and span condition each time.

Banga Bhavan is envisioned as a vibrant center for our religious and cultural activities. With this in mind there are plans for Movie Nights, Musical Evenings and Literary Events. Singing and dance classes are planned for the future. Tutoring in Math and English will be starting shortly. A number of volunteer activities are also in the works. We are partnering with the Humanitarian Project to assist the underprivileged families in Kane and Du Page Counties. There will be food drives, coat drives and toy drives as well as requests for school supplies at the start of the school year. We are looking for volunteers for these projects; all BAGC youth and any other interested persons are requested to participate. The Humanitarian Project will give a Volunteer Certificate to all participants. We will also have a Health Fair on the premises in summer.

The Community Hall is ready to be rented out, it can accommodate 150 people. Anyone interested in renting the space is welcome to call Sandeep Chaudhuri or Malabika Palit for information.



The Many Worlds of Rabindranath Tagore – A Perspective

By Bakul Banerjee

On October 27 to 28, 2011, University of Chicago organized an international conference titled “The Many Worlds of Rabindranath Tagore.” I was fortunate to attend the first day of the two-day conference and could listen to presentations of scholars from many countries shedding lights on Tagore’s contributions to modern Indian philosophy and literature. Throughout the day, speakers explored how Tagore interacted with and influenced both physical and intellectual worlds of his time.

The day began with Mukta Datta Tomar, Consul General of India in Chicago, offering thoughtful and personal remarks. In her inaugural address, Professor Martha Nussbaum explored Tagore’s views on pluralism and social justice using philosophical contexts from works of John Stuart Mill. She used Tagore’s remarkable lecture series titled “The Religion of Man” as the centerpiece of her talk. She concluded her lecture with discussions on the closeness Tagore felt with Bauls of Bengal, a sect that embraced the concept of individual love, but rejected traditional Hindu tenets, including renunciation. Professor Kunal Chakrabarty continued the discussion about how Rabindranath dug deep to expose the roots of historical conflicts and resulting injustices associated with Indian social structures. Professor Udaya Kumar led us to the physical world of South India, particularly to Kerala, giving us a glimpse of how authors from Kerala were influenced directly and indirectly by Tagore. Some of Tagore’s poems and musical dramas certainly contributed to the initiation of Dalit (untouchable) movement of modern India.

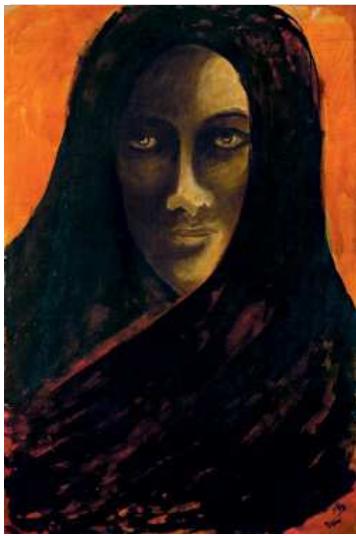
In the afternoon, Tagore’s interactions with intellectuals outside of Bengal became the general theme. Professor France Bhattacharya presented an account of Tagore’s complicated relationship with his French friends, particularly with the orientalist Sylvan Levi. She also explored Tagore’s relationship with celebrated author Andre Gide, the French translator of Gitanjali. Later, Professor Yin Xi’nan from Sichuan University made a detailed presentation about similar uneven Chinese receptions to Tagore, concluding that the relationship, which was not always positive, was probably colored by the political situations of China of the time. The keynote lecture of the day, titled “Tagore and Bengali Muslim”, was given by Professor Anisuzzaman of Dhaka University.

From time to time Bengalis, settled outside of Bengal, have to face some criticisms for their utter devotion to Rabindranath Tagore. Every April, as another Tagore birthday approaches, I feel like hanging his picture on my walls. Instead, before going to work in the morning, I read a random selection of his poems. Later, I open the thick volume of works by my favorite poet Jibanananda Das reading few more poems. This is my way of celebrating Tagore and his profound influence on my life. He inspired me to appreciate all poets with universal appeal. However, it is not easy to keep up with the awareness of his contributions to modern Indian thought, not just poetry. Attending the conference was like returning to the spiritual home of my childhood. It is time for me to re-read his seminal work, “The Religion of Man”.

The Last Harvest: The Paintings of Rabindranath Tagore

January 28-April 15, 2012
Gallery 50

The Art Institute of Chicago



Without formal training, Tagore began painting in his 60’s combining techniques from different cultures and opening new horizons in the use of line and color. In his poetry, he searched for enlightenment and peace but in his paintings he seemed to explore mystery and darkness. He remarked, "People often ask me about the meaning of my pictures. I remain silent even as my pictures are. It is for them to express and not to explain." He showed his paintings in exhibitions in many countries because he felt that unlike his songs and poems, his paintings were for the whole world to appreciate.

FOODIE FAVORITES - our top 10 favorite restaurants in Chicagoland

La Tasca Tapas Restaurant

25 W. Davis Street, Arlington Heights

One of our favorite Tapas places. We suggest grilled lamb chops and beef tenderloin. The sun dried dates baked with bacon is a must.

Kinzie Chophouse

400 North Wells Street, Chicago

Great wine list and not as expensive as Smith and Wollensky. Nice ambience and great food.

Park Grill

1 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago

If you are visiting Millennium Park, Art Institute or the Theater district, this is the place to treat yourself to a nice dinner or lunch. Parking is also convenient in underground Grant Park garage.

Bucadebeppo

A national chain with 4 locations in Chicago

Authentic Italian food also served family style. Very delicious.

Wildfire

A 'Let us entertain you restaurant" with branches in Schaumburg, Chicago, Lincolnshire, Oakbrook and

Glenview

An all time favorite. Great martinis, seafood and steaks.

alt Thai

40 S. Arlington Heights Rd, Arlington Heights

A very elegant place for good Thai food. Lunch menu starting at \$7, is a treat

Philly G's

1252 East US Highway 45, Vernon Hills

A neighborhood jewel! You will love the pasta and veal dishes.

Bob Chinn's Crab House

393 South Milwaukee Ave, Wheeling

If you want to have fresh seafood this is the place for it... Crabs, Lobsters, and Mai-Tai; it is heaven!

Reza's Restaurant

branches in Chicago and Oakbrook

Authentic Persian food. Mouth watering kabob's with dill rice is a must, also try the lamb shank and the Sunday brunch.

Walker Brothers,

6 locations including Arlington Heights, Lincolnshire

Kids love the breakfast with chocolate chip pancakes. A fun place for adda after early morning golf.

By Chittarupa and Amitava Ghosh

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MEMBERS' VIEWS: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CREATIVE ARTS

In 1994, some of the oldest cave paintings were found in the cave of Chauvet (Vallon-Pont-d'Arc, France). The grotto was adorned with painting and engravings made 31,000 years ago. It is amazing that while many of the animals painted there have disappeared from the earth, the paintings have survived. The ancient artists used a large shell as a palette and ocher and charcoal to paint. At a time when daily survival was uncertain, something inside mankind wanted to create, wanted to capture, wanted to understand and express through art. This "something" is what we can worship as Saraswati. As children, we imagine her as a beautiful Goddess, playing a bina and bestowing Her blessings. We put our books at Her feet and hope She'll help us out with the next exam. Our goals are usually short term. However, She is much more than that. She is the personification of knowledge and the creative arts, which can accompany us well beyond our student years. BAGC members share how the creative arts have impacted their lives and how they keep this spirit of creativity alive. ~ND

White Light by Taposhi Jarvis

One might say that I have always been drawn to Ma Saraswati, the goddess of arts and literature. She rides on a swan holding a lute and a book. She is the river goddess who inspires flow of thoughts, words and imagination. As a dancer, teacher, and choreographer, I look to the goddess of light for guidance every day.

As written in the Varaha Puran, when the three noble Lords came together to fight the great demons, a beautiful maiden, Shakti, appeared before them. Since all three gods desired her, Brahma commanded that she divide herself into three parts according to her colors. The black goddess, Parvati, became Shiva's partner. She came to be known as Devi, the radiant one. The auspicious red goddess, Lakshmi, was taken by Vishnu. Her cornucopia pours riches onto merchants and householders who pray for good fortune. And the snow white Saraswati, Brahma took as his wife. She is the muse to all artists. With Devi known simply as "the goddess", Lakshmi and Saraswati are found to be jealous of one another. Thus, the artist who loves the muse, Saraswati, may invoke anger in Lakshmi and therefore has to live without material wealth.

This is something I knew and accepted when I chose to study dance. At a time when every first generation Indian was expected to study medicine or engineering, I chose the arts. It wasn't easy standing by when all but one or two community members asked my Dad, "How can you allow your daughter to waste your money this way?" My thought was, I could easily change majors being at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), if dance didn't work out. Or, I could go back to school much later in life and make a career change altogether. I didn't want to have regrets when I looked back. I had to take the opportunity that was presented to me. I was accepted to the Dance Department by audition, having no formal training. I was awarded scholarships and completed a dance performance degree. Then I went back a year later to pursue a graduate degree for teaching dance.

Today I'm still teaching dance, and earlier this fall, I performed with my daughter, at the Dance Chicago Festival. She's a beautiful dancer and in a recent interview she said, "Dance is passion, dedication and discipline." We obviously share our love for dance. My son, on the other hand, feels that way about music. As an aspiring singer-songwriter, he wrote an essay last year entitled "Music Is My Religion."

I have always imagined a beautiful white light from Ma Saraswati surrounding me with love, peace, and protection. And I, in turn, immersed my son and daughter in this light. Now, one might say, they radiate the beauty of this white light into the world.

Too Old to Rock'n Roll , Too Young to die.... by Sumit Roy (Naperville)

so said Ian Anderson, the famous flautist of the '70s rock band Jethro Tull. Who? What? Whoa - Flute and Rock 'n Roll? Sacrilege!

For old, dyed-in-the-wool rockers like myself, this is a normal reaction - from my kids' generation, from my Beyonce and hip hop loving colleagues and from other ignoramus who think American Idol and X-Factor are creating and fostering true musical talent. I single out Ian Anderson for no other reason other than like many other rock icons of his era, he was on the bleeding edge of music - innovating his way into the heart and soul of kids like me who were enthralled by his sound, creativity and vision - something that I feel is lacking in today's music. 'There you go again Dad', my kids will say - 'why do you think that your dinosaur era music is better than the stuff we are listening to?' Good point! And so let me get off my high horse about which era of music is better and talk about why music was so important to me in my youth and why I choose to make it an active part of my life even today.

As a teenager growing up in '70s India, we were encouraged to listen to Rabindra Sangeet - my parents frowned upon Bollywood music (referred to in those days as 'Hindi' music). And the Beatles were simply a subversive culture that was about to brainwash our pure minds with evil thoughts. So I phased myself into the evil 'Western' music slowly and gently with the Ventures, Shadows, Cliff Richards, Englebert Humperdinck, Tom Jones and Elvis Presley. My parents didn't protest too loudly as they probably secretly enjoyed the music as well.

And then one day, a friend gave me an album by a band called Deep Purple. It was called Machine Head and had on it a catchy guitar riff that every aspiring guitarist in the world since then has learnt to play - Smoke on the Water. My head simply exploded. This was my religious revelation - Hai Ram! Hallelujah! Holy Jesus! Whatever!....I had seen the light. Nothing else mattered - this was going to be my life! I was not content with simply listening to the music. I had to make music and I had to have a guitar I told my parents. . I have to say this about them - in those days when this kind of music was frowned on - once they got over their shock, they actually supported me. From that day forward, I have not looked back. India was not a place where you could buy a decent guitar so I made my own by taking my aunt's slide guitar (it is still referred to as a Hawaiian guitar in India) and hacking the bridge so I could make it into a 'Spanish' guitar. As I grew older, I found more and more kids my age that had also been struck by this revelation. There was no internet and very little exposure to the outside world. Whatever music we could get our hands on - either from the local music store (with its government controlled selection) or from hippie tourists - we gladly exchanged or invited friends over to listen. This was a truly remarkable period in the history of music - young people all over Europe and the US were pushing the thresholds of music - each band had its own unique identity and writing style and the sky was the limit. Come on - who would have thought to play flute in a hard core rock band? The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple, were at the top of their careers...and then came Queen - an English band fronted by an Indian boy from Mumbai. It didn't matter which band we listened to - the amount of variety and talent was astounding. The wide palette of music that these bands created allowed all of us to zero in on our particular flavor of rock and those bands that we chose to follow back then, still influence me heavily in the kind of music that I love to listen to and play today.

And then I formed my first rock band. It wasn't easy to be a rock musician in India. We had loads of talent readily available but getting good guitars and amplifiers was impossible. There was virtually no equipment available that a rock band needed. Importing anything meant an automatic 320% customs duty which put it out of reach for almost all aspiring musicians. That basically meant we had to build our own. I drew out my first guitar to scale on a piece of cardboard, took it to a local guitar maker (he built terrible guitars) and asked him to build me just the body and the neck. Then I roped in a buddy of mine (an electronics whiz kid about to join IIT) to build all the electronics. Thus was my first guitar born. We had no access to sheet music - we picked everything up by ear - wearing out those cassette tapes and vinyl records by playing them over and over again - trying to pick up the chords and lyrics. 'Eh! What did he just say?' Other memories of trying to garner good equipment to play on include the time I almost got electrocuted from a faulty handmade guitar amplifier that was leaking a fatal dose of 220 Volts of AC into my guitar.

But I survived and spent the best years of my youth playing in various bands and locations all over the country. I met some fantastic musicians and made so many good friends. And all we talked about was the music. Now, I can finally afford the finest guitars and amplifiers but I can never get those days or that camaraderie back. As a music lover, I am rarely content to simply listen - I want to make music. When I go to a concert, the only thought that enters my mind is what a fantastic way to live your life - you get to expose your soul to thousands of people who are now connected to you in that brief span in time through what you have created. We may not all achieve fame - you don't have to be famous as Green Day or Muse or back in my day, the Beatles or Led Zeppelin or Queen - you just have to be happy playing music and making other people happy listening to you. Whether you are simply playing the piano or violin in front of friends and family or performing in front of thousands, you need to keep playing and keep making music. If you are creating your own music, you are sharing the emotions of your soul with others. If you are playing someone else's music, you are doing it because the music inspires you and you want to put your own emotional stamp on it

Like most other musicians of my age, I am not looking to be Mr. Rock Star but what I am very sure about is that music is always going to be part of my life and hopefully my children's lives as well. I am really proud of the fact that both my children love and play music and I hope it will continue to nourish them throughout their life. To all of you reading this article, I want to make sure you understand this is not about listening to rock music but about listening to music -any music - whatever you fancy - and keeping it always in your life.

As for me - I am and always will be a rock'n roller -

our breed never dies. Long live Rock'n Roll.



Why Art is Important for Kids and Adults too!

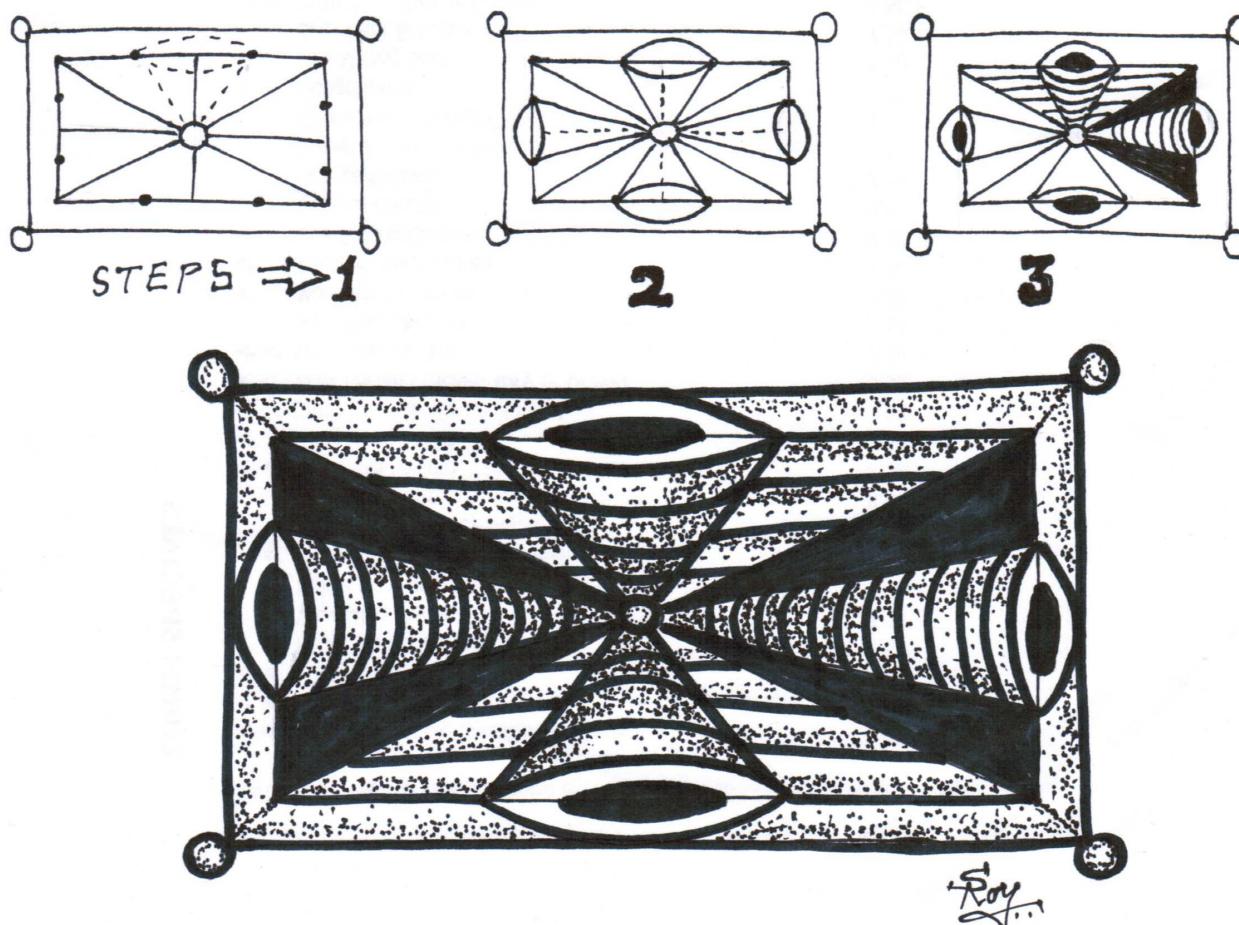
By Sumit Roy (Bartlett)

I cannot tell how old I was when I started drawing and painting. I did not know the meaning of "passion" or "art from the right side of the brain" but I knew at that time that I could spend hour after hour happily with the arts. I would be busy drawing all my favorite pictures, coloring layer after layer, stacking finished pictures in every nook and cranny. I never ever felt tired or bored when my allotted time involved art. I am sure that is true for most of our kids when they are engrossed in drawing, painting, sculpture, music or dance.

Art is a very powerful medium for children to develop their full potential and it strengthens problem solving and critical thinking skills. It has been proved that art helps to improve overall academic achievement. Art promotes self esteem, stimulates perception, openness in thinking and facilitates emotional intelligence. It also teaches children real life skills such as working cooperatively with others, articulating and implementing their vision and above all, thinking "outside the box". And finally of course, there is the element of joy, fun, passion, creative fulfillment and a sense of personal satisfaction in creating art. What a POWERFUL MEDIUM!

Lastly, I would like to add that "art can be a stress buster". Why not try this abstract drawing below? Just grab a piece of paper and a pencil (color pencils or markers can be used) and follow the step by step instructions. First, draw a rectangular box with a frame of about 6X4 inches, divide and mark to draw four cones, just like in step 1. In step 2, erase the middle lines of cones, shown in dotted lines and draw ovals for bases, In step 3, draw all horizontal and curve lines and finish the project with solid color and dots as shown in the picture. Follow the pattern and concentration of the dots to make this drawing look three dimensional.

You are done! Look at your drawing. You can feel happy and proud and above all you have spent some stress-free time. And that is what art is for - making your life pleasant. So enjoy and keep drawing!



How to Make the Most of Your Years in High School

Looking back at my high school years, I would recommend all current or incoming students to utilize the four years and make the most of it.

Get involved in various activities. You will learn how to juggle school and extra-curricular activities. This will improve your time management skills and you will also discover where your interests lie.

Get work experience. Whether it is during the school year or a summer job, work experience is very important as it will help you to learn how to function in a professional environment. Additionally, it will help you to enhance your communication and technical skills.

Finally, get involved in a leadership role. Any role that involves organizing and supervising will help you to develop the critical leadership skills needed to succeed in life and make positive contributions to your community.

By Ishani Gooptu

You will be surrounded by a lot of different people in high school. Stay true to yourself! Don't compare yourself to others because envy is a waste of time. Life is too short to waste time hating anyone because no one should be in charge of your happiness except you.

Soon enough you'll be attending club fairs. Student Council? Tennis? Scholastic Bowl? Math team? Band? Indian Student Association? Don't overdo it! Choose a couple and become involved with them. Do activities because you truly love them. You'll meet several of your best friends through clubs.

During course selection, you might be tempted to drop orchestra, band, and choir classes so you can take another high level science course. I believe that you should stick to your fine arts (or sports) because it means that you are well-rounded and dedicated to something. Take challenging humanities courses as well because they teach you important communication skills.

Lastly, smile and laugh more in high school! High school teachers will want to know you personally. They become your friends too (as weird as that may sound). You have to realize that teachers aren't out to destroy you, but to help you become a better person.

I found myself in high school. I met my best friends, took wonderful classes, didn't stress out, and met extremely influential teachers. As a result, I'm comfortable with who I am.

By Brinda Gupta

Independence and self-reliance is key in surviving high school. Instead of teachers always assigning and directing students, we have to take it upon ourselves to do well in school. And to do this requires motivation. If we are not motivated to consistently keep up with our class, then struggles and poor grades are likely to result.

Another thing that is important is maintaining a strong relationship with our counselors. They can help to solve our problems whether it is an academic issue or a personal one, our counselors are always there to help us. So don't be afraid to come in one day during the year to get to know your counselor. They will even write college recommendation letters for you!

Lastly, making good friends is another tip for success. Finding a good influence is very important, because it impacts your attitude in a positive way. Also, it raises one's self-esteem. This can all be done by starting with yourself and being kind and caring to others. If you do that, people are more likely to follow suit and create a positive environment.

My advice would be to stay a step ahead in your studies, take care of problems quickly and maintain a good relationship with those around you. These are the keys to high school success. And lastly, don't put too much pressure on yourself. If you do, you'll be stressed out and unable to work at your full potential

By: Neel Bardhan

ঢাক্সটো সুজা অমরা থুব লিয়া, তাৰ
চাখ ঢাক্সী অহ সুজা কেণ, অমুমুৰ
কিবগজো গেও ঢাক্সটো সুজা হয়, আৰি
অমুৰ নাট এন্দোচিনাম, কিউ অৰি
কল বগাতাচ্য ক্ষুপ্তো সুজা লিয়া
থুব জোনতে চাই, এন্দু বগাতাচ্য ক্ষু
প্তো এই পুজু হয়, কেৱাল
জাবাদিন চাখ ঢাক্সীৰা কি এন্দুৱ,
মিৰখুম অনুষ্ঠান হয়, এই ক্ষু
কিয়ে আৰি ক্যানতে চাই, মেৰি
এই বছুৱ কলবগাতাচ্য সুজা দেখাব
তাই অমুৰ থুব শুজু কষ্ট,



Sharanya Maulik, 5 years
Gingerbread House

শ্রাণী মুকুট



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বাসায়নিক পর্দাথ থেকে ফটোকারামায়নির
পর্দাথ কর বা উপকারি হত পাই।
ফটোকারি অনেক রকম আকার হয়।
ফটোকারি গোড়ে অনেক রকম বাসায়নিক
পর্দাথ থেকে। অনেক রকম ফটোকারি লোকদের
ধূমী করা মাটির তলীয় ধানিতে ফটোক
পাওয়া যায়। কি করি ফটোক হয়। আমিতা
জানতে চাই। আমি ফটোকারি আকার
স্বল্পে জানতে চাই। আমার একম ফটোক
স্বল্পন আছে। সুন্দরী কিছুকেও বানা
বলেরা কিছু ফটোক বৃক্ষ ও চকচকে
এবং কিছু ফটোক অবৃক্ষ ও অনুজ্ঞালা
- অঙ্গুল পাল

“প্রশ্ন”

প্রশ্ন পার্কেজ প্রশ্ন:
নিউচিফ: শার্পেন আওয়াজ কি
কান্ত নিউচিফ হ্যু?
জেগো: বিষাণুগো কি করে যোগু
লাগে?
জাতুপু চুম: হ্যুম জাতু হুত
যোগে চলে?
গাছ ধূমা: চিংগে কি করে
টেস লাগায?
সুপিট্যুংকত হুত, ঠিনডা না
গুম? অয়ন দাম
(৪_{১০}) AYAN DAS

আমার নাম ৭৫৫৫ পরি।
চিঙেগা দেখাসি আমার প্রিয় দল।
আমি বড় হয়ে চিকাটী
বেয়াসের কোম্পানির ব্যাক হবো।
আমি অনেক টাচ্চাত্তি
ফিল্ট পেল করবো। আমার
পেঁচাকের বড় হও কমলা,
কানো ও সাদা। আমি
জুপাখোল কিটবো

Gaurav Pal



Race car Driver

শিরোনাম/Caption

Ayan Das, 8 yrs

নাম/বয়স

New Year's bells are ringing in our ears and we are filled with hope of a new beginning. When we say, 'I am going to be the best that I can be', do we? Maybe we have intentions of being healthier, wealthier, more disciplined, kinder, more relaxed and happier at the beginning of the year. In all likelihood, it won't be long before we hit bumps along the way to our path to self improvement. And then what? The smallest of obstacle can deter our efforts and we find ourselves slipping into our old poor habits. Let 2012 be different. Let us take charge of our health, our single most important wealth!

Believe in miracles: This year is different! Our foremost realization is we need to treat our bodies with utmost respect, care and love. The old cliché, "our body is our temple" will be our mantra. Our bodies give back to us what we give to it. We abuse it, it will deteriorate. We nourish it, it will prosper. We are not going to talk ourselves out of good health this year. If we falter, we will restart. In 2012, we shall prevail.

Baby Steps: Whether you are 15 or 60, you can begin your journey today. Consider it rebirth. Often we make the mistake of lofty goal setting on New Year's to exercise vigorously. To avoid disappointment, begin with baby steps: for instance, if you have never been active, begin with 1 day of an exercise regimen. Every week we add on an extra day. If too ambitious a program, we start with one day a week and add on an extra day every month. It is not how much, but how well and how consistent and committed we are.

Eat mindfully: Feed your body well. Let this be the year you forget about fad diets and learn to listen to your inner wisdom. Eat healthfully with whole grains, veggies, lean out your meals, avoid sweets and fatty processed foods. The Indian diet is perfect, filled with legumes, vegetables, grain, and lean protein such as fish. It's simply perfect. Go back to the basics of simple ingredients; simple tastes full of flavor to satisfy your cravings. Shop, prepare, and plan smartly in terms of your and your family's diet with the mantra "my body is my temple". Remember: If it came out of your freezer, in a cardboard box, it cannot be the first choice for your meal. If it is white in color, stay away. Refined sugar, white rice, white bread are empty. Substitute your sugar with Agave, honey or just go without it. Become a label reader of your foods. Know your salt, sugar, saturated fat intakes. It's easier to burn off higher calories than rid the effects of excess salt and sugar in your body. Think as you eat.

Middle Ground: When it comes to your health, tread the middle ground. Moderation. Eat everything, just be mindful of eating. Slow down and savor your foods. Avoid foods on the go, in your car, while running to work. Sit and eat. Eat only when hungry not because you are bored or stressed or out of habit. Separate the biological urge of hunger from the physical sensation. If you are simply bored, don't rummage the pantry or office coffee room. Hydrate yourself with water, savor a mint and engage yourself otherwise. Enjoy smaller mini meals throughout the day. 5 meals a day is what the gurus say and each meal not bigger than the size of your palm. This enables your metabolism and digestion to work their magic. And finally it is okay to succumb to your cravings of a sweet treat once in a while. Indulge yourself here and there - just not everywhere.

Pump it Up: Hefts of scientific evidence show that fitter people are less likely to suffer from heart disease, diabetes, obesity, and certain cancers. Studies correlate cardiovascular activity with enhanced cognitive function, sharper focus, and possible protection against memory loss that comes with aging. And if you need more, a fitter heart increases your ability to move through your day with vigor, vitality and alertness. All things do look brighter and more beautiful when the heart is healthy and pumping blood efficiently - and hence driving oxygen to all your muscles so they thrive. Whether you need to bust a move at your next party or run after your little ones or climb your front steps with an arm of groceries, cardiovascular training is your answer. Find your "thing" and get that heart rate pumping. Intensity, duration and frequency - we all have to find our balance in these three areas of cardiovascular training. How much? How long? How often?

Relax: Finally breathe! Carve out a peaceful moment and de-stress, unload and unwind. Activity (workout) is one of the best ways to decompress as it keeps you engaged and in the moment, worry free, prevents the mind from wandering all over helping you stay focused with mind and eyes set on a current goal. But when the exercise is done, take time in your day be it simply as little as 10 minutes or longer to reflect, draw your attention inward and discover your day. Take time to breathe! Live the life you love. Make 2012 a year of radiant possibilities!

We, the youth of the fine establishment known as BAGC, have been asked to voice our esteemed voices in an article. Said article must juxtapose the traditional views of Indian society with those contemporary ideals embodied by modern America and today's youth, commonly known as Generation Y, the Harry Potter era, and (somewhat less commonly) Bieber fever. This challenge we accept with great enthusiasm. That last nickname, not so much.

Of course, before beginning this behemoth of a task, we must first define what these ideals truly are. Very easily can we categorize "traditional" ideas into the die-hard followers of Kishore da, dressed in a salwar or kurta and destined toward medicine or engineering in preparation for an arranged marriage leading to happily ever after. It is no harder to classify today's teenagers as the avid Kanye fans, decked in hoodies and skinny jeans aspiring towards a multitude of careers, restricted only by the interests that manifest in our school years. While both may be partially true, they reveal only small facets of what these concepts of "traditional" or "contemporary" really mean. Are every mom or dad looking to make their children doctors? Of course not. Does the hip-hop music emanating from teenagers' rooms echo the ideas we choose to follow? Not even close.

Trying to unveil these underlying meanings, we're forced to accept that the generation gap must be caused by something more fundamental. And it is -- a large part of the conventional modes of thinking arose due to a more community-oriented mindset, whereas today, we're propelled in a largely individualistic direction. From the early years, before introducing respect, discipline, or tradition, American schools teach their students to ask "why?" With the stress placed on individual exploration and discovery, we start questioning our world and society before we start accepting it. In contrast to the obedience expected traditionally, we question the instructions of our parents, or argue with them. Very often is this interpreted as talking back or disrespect. In many cases, it is, and for this we apologize profusely. Upsetting you hurts us just as much as it hurts you; the raging emotions may mask it then, but it's true. For the vast majority of the time, though, we mean no disrespect. Spurred on by the inquisitive nature expected of us, we tend to resist tradition for the sake of tradition. That said, when we understand the ideas behind going to pujas and temples, we approach them with renewed vigor and deepened appreciation.

This same inclination toward exploration

manifests itself in that great tension in every bangla household -- the teenage relationship. Seeing our classmates dating each other and seeing the fairly liberal attitude American parents and teachers hold toward dating, it's hard for us to grasp exactly why it's an issue of such huge importance. With the divorce rate close to 50% and celebrities' marriages sometimes ending within a month (that short? really?), it's not hard to see why parents are afraid for our futures. But honestly, the Kardashians aren't our role models. Immersed in a society in which relationships at a young age are significant methods of self-discovery, we find relationships to be, again, a method for us to discover our individuality. We know that parents fear a lack of maturity or understanding on our parts, but Indian children are raised in households that value respect and culture above all else. Coming from these backgrounds, we assure you that we won't forget our heritage or the ideas we were raised with. Contrary to popular belief, we want you involved and encouraging our means to self-growth, knowing fully well that these methods may be very different from the ones you're accustomed to. The rap and hip-hop is hardly different; the vulgarity isn't what attracts us. Rather, it's the uniqueness of the songs and the artists. The music is our reflection of the individuality and self-awareness we expect to discover ourselves. All we ask is that you keep that in mind when trying to understand exactly why we like such ridiculous music.

In return for your understanding, we'll keep our end of the bargain. We'll embrace the culture, tradition, and language gladly, just with our own twist to it. Because that's what the gap between the traditional and the contemporary means to us -- growing up on the other side of the world, we need to embrace Indian culture not as something we're told to follow, but as an integral part of our everyday lives. And without a doubt, we will, because we want to appreciate our heritage just as much as you want us to. With most of our relatives living where the Indian store isn't an anomaly, the love and affection of the extended Bengali community has given us the family we're lacking. Call us anything you want, we are, first and foremost, the youth of BAGC.

Actually, scratch that. Call us anything you want, just not Bieber fever.

By: Rishi Sriram, Priyanka Bose, Dwaipayan (Rik) Basu, Deep Chatterjee, Annesha (Ria) Banerjee, and Shreya Bardhan



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