



# বাটায়ন

Batayan

Sulfilment









*Batayan*



বাণায়ন

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Editor – Jill Charles





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## Photo Credit

**Front Cover : London Court in the Perth City Centre.**  
It's a small street lined with buildings designed in a mock-Elizabethan style.



**Aheli Guha** studied law at the University of Western Australia. She is currently working for the Australian Federal Government. She has travelled to many countries around the world and picked up a love for photography on the way. Her other passion is music. She plays the violin and viola. She also directs and arranges music for the Anandadhara WA Youth Ensemble. She dabbles in arts and crafts like knitting and painting. She has been learning Kathak for the last few years.

## Front Inside Cover : Fall in Michigan



**Tanim Basu** is a senior Statistician at the University of Michigan. Her mind is always crunching numbers but a stream of Art runs deep inside that she inherited from her artist dad.

## Title Page : Partly Frozen Lake



**Saumen Chattopadhyay** is an avid outdoor enthusiast and enjoys hiking, trekking, and photography. He also takes part in recitation, drama, mind science, Native American flute and Indian classical music. Saumen is an entrepreneur in the field of investment research and portfolio management. He lives in Chicago.

## Back Cover : St. Kilda – Sun set



**Krishnakoli Bose Banerjee** lives in Melbourne Calacian in her heart & soul. Professionally Cloud Solution Architect. Her analytical left brain is always being challenged by her creative right brain with music, painting, poetry, photography.... yet to find the winner...

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Our heartfelt thanks to all our contributors and readers for overwhelming support and response.

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## *Editorial*

Winter approaches slowly. The oak and maple trees are bare, shivering in the wind under a white cloudy sky. Soon the snow will fall. The Chicago markets feature Christmas trees and wreaths with the evergreen scent in the air. The days are shorter and darker. I walk out of work in the evening to see the green and red lights on the Chicago skyscrapers. Winter has its own beauty with frosted windows, icicles and snow covering the bare trees and roofs. The winter season is both an ending and a beginning with Christmas and New Year.

I hope you enjoy the English pieces in this issue including Amanita Sen's — *At a Memorial in Berlin*, David Nekimken's — *Shoot for the Stars, the Message Will Be Sent*, and Kathy Power's — *The Ballad of Chance the Snapper* and a few special pieces of Australia. This time we got some exotic recipes which readers will be enjoying.

**Jill Charles**  
English Editor



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## Sunanda Bose

### Rainbow Memories

You sit there  
Pristine and fragile  
Holding my memories  
In your translucent fingers  
Like the last autumn leaves  
Holding on to the strong, majestic tree.

You burst out singing  
When I play your favorite raga  
Suddenly I see the young girl on a stage  
Singing for luminaries.  
I see the white silk saree with black border  
Draped elegantly around your petit form  
Your resolute fingers moving effortless  
On the reeds of your beloved Harmonium.

Each note is a kaleidoscope of rainbow colors  
From the time with you as I listen to your  
Velvet voice overwhelming me.

You hold me in your bosom  
Your eyes glimmering with teardrops  
Like Dewalee Diyaas.  
You whisper my name again and again  
I hear all the voices from the past calling my name  
I smell the Marigold you hold in your palm  
And whisper in your ear-  
I shall be back.

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**Sunanda Sinha Bose** — Currently lives in Chicago, US. Poetry is her passion but she has also written some short stories, travelogues etc. She is the founder of a literary group called Unmesh in Chicago. She has been leading the Unmesh sessions for more than two decades. Her poems have been featured in various little magazines published in the US. She also has other talents besides writing like playing Sitar and dancing.

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## CITY

Balarka Banerjee

This city is littered with broken hearts  
Sitting hunched over on the pavement  
Screaming, pleading quietly into the phone  
3% battery don't let it die  
Don't let me cry  
Don't let it die  
Before I  
Can send my heartfelt of love across

Sitting on the buses fighting off tears  
Looking through the window  
At the strange world outside the glass  
And the stranger inside it  
Why did it all come to this  
When did we stray so far  
How did we get so old?

Walking the streets  
Between the sheets  
Of rain and jackets

Prophesying doom  
For all those faking happy  
Laying at home  
Warm in the screen-glow  
Everyone's gone out  
But there's nowhere to go  
Killing the thirst  
By feeding the hunger

Flittering across the ether  
All those buzzes and beeps  
Blue ticks that go unanswered  
Voicemail that goes unheard  
That Instagram quote that does not get a like  
From the only person it was written for.

The city air gets heavier with sighs  
The city that watches you be lonely  
But never leaves you alone



**Balarka Banerjee** — Balarka is a Molecular Biologist by profession and an executive in a Biotech company. Besides science his other passions are Drama — writing, acting, directing — Poetry and Art. He likes good cinema and music. He is a foodie and a good cook. No wonder he enjoys writing about his experiences and interests.





Amanita Sen

## At a Memorial in Berlin

One of the charms of the city of Berlin, where I visited a year back, is in its concurrent presence of the old, war-ravaged structures with the newly-built modern ones. In letting these bombed buildings, churches, stay in their unreformed look, Germany gives a glimpse of the tragic truth of war to its newer generations. It is a lesson on war for all of us, for the tourists from other countries, who have not luckily faced yet, the calamity of a fallen bomb from the airspace. The sight of those once architectural beauties holding the tragic footprints of war is bound to encroach one's mental space, stir it in places that remained unperturbed so far. For me, however dramatic it might sound, it was revisiting the concepts of existentialism, nihilism, mortality, justice, God... I instantly knew, this visit to Berlin will not be easy for the mind.

The sun was almost on our head that August morning when we entered the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. Walking inside the maze of box-like structures resembling coffins, my friends and I were playing a game, the experience of which I have shared in a poem, at the end of this write-up.

With almost no sunlight making its way there, the idea of the maze is to give the person visiting the place, a glimpse of the minds of the people inside the concentration camps. How while walking in the darkness we felt claustrophobic and direly in need for air, freedom!

We went to see the exhibition of the photographs of those years of Nazi rule. Right at the gate, we saw a quote emboldened which said that if this has happened in history, there is a chance that it will happen again. Written by Primo Levi, one of the few Holocaust survivors, this rudely brought for us the fear of another brutal war.

The photographs, as expected, were a close and personal view of the cruelty led by the SS group on the Jews. In one particular photo, a Rabbi was forcefully tonsured by the military who are seen laughing at him. The indignation in the eyes of the Jew at the torture, is hard to ignore.

There are excerpts of letters from the people in the camps, written to their families. Most of the letters speak of hope of being united with their loved ones again. Some simply speak of their wishes like having fresh bread and milk.

After a while I sought for some fresh air outside. The eyes went blurry making it difficult for me to read. I found that my friend was in a similar state. Some overwhelming experiences are benumbing and for quite some time words failed us. It was a grim dusk greeting us outside the hall, when we set back for the hotel.

Man's search for meaning

Walking inside the maze  
of the coffin-like structures  
at The Memorial to Murdered  
Jews of Europe, we played  
a game of blurting out,  
in a word, what came to our minds.

Sam said, "Hope",  
Nilu said, "Anarchy",  
I - "Death".  
And we came up with



"Fear", "Rage", "Fate",  
"Desolation",  
"Disillusionment"....

Just when the lights  
broke upon us, it came  
to my mind-

that word,  
thwarting imminent deaths,  
with its beauty, grace,  
attributing purpose  
to seeming-lives;  
love!

Can't remember if I said that!

---

Two volumes of **Amanita Sen's** poetry collections that have been published so far are "Candle in my dream" and "What I don't tell you". Amanita's poems have been published in various print and online journals in India and abroad. She is a mental-health professional and lives in Kolkata.

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## David Nekimken

### Shoot for the Stars, the Message Will Be Sent

At one meeting of my men's group in 2010 we shared a dream of ours that appeared out of reach. When it was my turn I declared, "I want to address the General Assembly of the United Nations about peace." The dream had been probably dormant for some time. It just needed to be declared aloud. I was urged to come to the next meeting with what I would say. At the next meeting I read my speech. One man who doubted peace was innate in humanity said, "I don't believe what you say is likely to happen. I am glad that there are people like you. Keep expressing your beliefs." I felt grateful and affirmed.

I really believed that I wanted to fulfill my dream. What I had to say about peace, few if any of the world leaders would ever have heard. I also felt that it was more a fantasy than a dream. Who am I to address the United Nations! I had to have a plan. I would start slowly, addressing family and friends. Then places like Toastmasters and writing groups. Next leaping to address the City Council. Then the state legislature. A leap to address a joint session of Congress. I finally would be ready to address the U.N. Well, it didn't happen. I never advanced further than family and friends. There were always excuses, always just too big, too daunting. Yet it persisted.

Years later in early 2015 I had a conversation with a 5Rythm dancer, Linda. I told her my dream and my plan and my inaction. She related a story about a young woman who wrote to the Royal Family to be a nanny for the young princesses and princes. The young woman was surprised when her request was granted! Linda then said, "Just go for it. Send your request to the Secretary General. You might be surprised."

Two weeks after our conversation I did some research. I found the address for the Secretary General. The website had a warning. For security measures, all incoming mail is chemically treated. The letter could be destroyed. I decided to take my chances. I mailed my request with the text of my speech included. I pondered the different outcomes. My request could be granted. I could be invited to a private audience with the Secretary General. I could receive a personal reply. I could be notified that my letter was received. Or, none of the above.

Two weeks after sending the letter I received a reply, in an official U.N. envelope, on official U.N. stationery. It was from the team that screens his mail and sends replies (if not from the Secretary himself). They mentioned that the Secretary was unable to send a personal response. Nevertheless, it was clear that they had read the letter and the text of my speech: *We are very grateful for your words of encouragement [for the U.N.] and the support to establish peace .... We sympathize with the efforts of people like you who never abandon your work towards peace.*

This outcome is very satisfying. There still could other outcomes awaiting me. My letter may have been archived. At the very least, my peace vibrations are present in the world. Just the act of sending the letter is a real accomplishment. I am considering sending the same request and speech text to the current Secretary General.



**David Nekimken** — David is a senior citizen who has been a poet most of his life, with poems published in a few publications. He has a self-published book of poems *Anything and Everything Goes*. He is a grandfather with three wonderful grandchildren. He currently lives in a housing co-op in Hyde Park.



## Jill Charles

### Book Review: Daredevils by Shawn Vesta

Daredevils follows the lives of two teenagers in Idaho and Nevada in the 1970s. Both Loretta and Jason grow up in Mormon communities, but their lives take vastly different directions. Jason lives a quiet life caring for the cows on his family's farm and driving to school. Loretta gets caught sneaking out to see a non-Mormon boyfriend and her parents arrange a marriage for her – as a second wife to a much older man. The Mormon church abandoned polygamy when Utah became a state in 1896, but some fringe Mormon groups continued to practice it.

Jason idolizes stuntman Evel Knievel and feels thrilled when his grandpa surprises him with a trip to see Evel jump a river gorge near their home. Jason wishes for a more exciting life and shares his boredom with his friend Boyd, a teenager with a hard-drinking mother and unknown Native American father.

Loretta loves the children in her husband Dean's family but resents being controlled by Dean and his wife Ruth and isolated from the rest of the world in their small community. She dreams of escape and a life of independence.

Author Shawn Vestal tells the story from multiple points of view, including Evel Knievel's speeches to “an adoring nation.” Everyone in the story takes risks from small to life-changing. Some of the history in the book is based on true events, including a government raid on a polygamous community in the 1950s and Evel Knievel's stunts. The story makes us question what makes a “daredevil”: bravery or foolishness in the face of danger.



**Jill Charles** — Jill grew up in Spokane, Washington and majored in Creative Writing at Seattle University. In 2007 she moved to Chicago where she writes poetry and fiction and lives in the Albany Park neighborhood. Her career includes nonprofit, academic and legal office work. Jill is co-editor of Batayan, a bilingual literary magazine in Bengali and English. She performs her poetry at open mic nights at The Heartland Café and Royal Coffee. Jill is one of the Chicago Writing Alliance workshop facilitators at Bezazian Library in Uptown. Read her jazz age novel, *Marlene's Piano*, available from Booklocker.com.





## Jayanti Bandyopadhyay and Yogita Miharia

### Costume Brings Early Twentieth Century Bengal to Life in Setu's Production

SETU, Stage Ensemble Theatre Unit (a 501 c3 organization [www.setu.us](http://www.setu.us)), recently completed eight sold-out shows in April and May (2019) at the Mosesian Center for the Arts with the first English adaptation play of one of the most popular novels in India, *Devdas*. The novelist, Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, never imagined that this romantic tragedy would become his most adapted novel for films in many languages in India. Now SETU has brought *Devdas* to an international audience in New England with Subrata Das' English adaptation of the script and direction. *Devdas*, a period piece from 100 years ago situated in Bengal in India, depicted the unique social hierarchy of the region through storytelling. A key component to project this lifestyle on stage is to integrally relate the characters of the play through costume. Thus, designing appropriate costumes is at the core of this production.

From the embryo formation phase of presenting *Devdas*, Jayanti Bandyopadhyay (co-founder of SETU with Subrata Das) understood that for costume to be an embedded part of this play, at least three themes must be present: 1) the authenticity of the costume depicting the era along with make-up and stage design, 2) a buy-in of costume by the actors, 3) and a meeting of the minds between the director and the costume designer/director. The audience would need to feel like a fly on the wall as the actors would appear to have come alive from the pages of the play.

**Authenticity:** As they were brought up in Bengal, both Jayanti and Subrata had access to primary data regarding what men and women wore in villages even 100 years ago. They grew up watching their parents and grandparents wearing the dhotis, kurtas and saris wrapped the typical *aatpoure* (ordinary) way made with simple cotton fabric of several varieties even in the later half of the twentieth century. The adapted play emphasized the stark contrast between the aristocrats and the commoners. The *babus* (aristocrats) wore dhotis made with fine muslin-type cotton fabric with ornate borders with fine pleats flowing all the way to their ankles. The commoners wore plainer ones, much higher between their knees and ankles for ease of movement in doing hard labor. *Babus* wore fine full-sleeve kurtas mostly white in color while servants would wear half kurtas referred to as *fotuas* made with coarse fabric in various colors. The aristocrats would wrap around a scarf made of fine cotton or silk (*uttariyas*) when going out and commoners would most likely have a *gamchha* (a checkered coarse cotton towel) on their shoulder or around their head. When *Babus* visited *kothas* or prostitutes' houses, they would wear their fine clothes with jasmine flower garlands wrapped around their wrists to lighten their moods.

Similarly, among women, the status difference had to be apparent on stage. While equipped with ample primary research data, exploring into the reason for the *aatpoure* style of wearing the sari revealed interesting facts. This style calls for wrapping the sari in an anti-clockwise fashion without pleats that leaves no exposed area of the body. The modern universal way of wrapping the six-yard material gives much opportunity to show the waist and the back. Women in villages of Bengal did not wear blouses or petticoats as they did not step outside the house reflecting a typical patriarchal society. The women from enlightened families such as the Tagores (Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's family) introduced the blouse and the petticoat and the modern wrapping style as they began to step out of the house (saris in wikipedia.org) an intriguing fact indeed regarding an evolutionary step toward women's emancipation.

Continuing with the status difference, *Devdas*' mother Harimoti as an aristocrat landlord's wife, would wear richer saris with wider red borders and a lot of gold jewelry as opposed to Parvati's mother from a much lower status wearing a simpler cotton sari and just a simple gold chain. Parvati's widowed grandmother, as all widows of all ages, must wear an all-white sari with no jewelry other than a tulsi-beaded necklace depicting spirituality and no make-up. However, when Harimoti becomes a widow, her sari could be, albeit white or cream, of finer quality with silk fabric. Married women would have their hair parted in the middle with sindur and wear red and white bangles termed as *shakha* and *pola*.

The courtesans needed attention in designing their *mujra*-style outfits and jewelry with help from the lead choreographer, Vasudha Kudrimoti.

The children, studying in a village school set outdoors in a hot climate, would typically wear light clothing as in boys with dhotis with bare chests and girls with simple cotton saris without blouses. A compromise had to be made in letting the boys wear white undershirts on stage per their request. Wearing a simple saffron cotton sari as a Baul girl, Sachi Badola enthralled the audience with her rendition of a Baul song in Bengali with her beautiful trained voice.



The costumes had to be brought directly from Kolkata from those small shops still carrying the appropriate clothing and imitation gold jewelry from the era. Jayanti benefitted from consulting with her friends in Kolkata, particularly Banani and Sovanlal Dasgupta, Saswati Chowdhury, and Nandita Guha Thakurta. Many of her friends in New England happily shared the treasures hidden in their own closets. Jayanti decided to use the red puffed half-sleeve blouse style for all women (except for widows) as a signature for SETU's *Devdas* as red is also the color of purity in India and a sign of power. The whole process became as though planning for one's own daughter's wedding.

**The buy-in:** Yogita Miharia, an actor, described how she and other actors evolved from the experience. In the beginning, the entire cast was excited as well as nervous and hesitant about the unfamiliar way of wearing Bengali style saris or dhotis. As they practiced and perfected, that feeling of fear changed to a sense of empowerment as the costumes and direction not only helped them get ready for the stage but helped them get into the characters. With all of them having no real knowledge of that era and very few being familiar with the Bengali culture, the costumes were a vehicle to transport them into that place. With a mix of poor and rich characters in the story, the clothes were the most effective way to show to the audience how unbalanced the social structure was; rich people wearing jewelry and finery whereas the poorest ones such as the Baul women had not even a blouse under their saris. Some were reminded of their grandparents whereas some remembered their own wedding. Details like the “topor and mukut” and ululating for the wedding were the much-needed authentic touches that made the wedding scene so real, noted one actor. Every costume molded the body language of the actors naturally to help them fit in the role. For the child actors, this was the most unique experience as all of them had never worn a sari or dhoti. The young girls said that the sari made them truly feel like a village belle from 100 years ago.

All the female actors enjoyed indulging in Bengali saris, silks and jewelry. All actors, male and female, agreed that the costumes, the movements, and enjoying the lost 'floor' culture were the true essence of the play! All actors emphasized how the characters ate sitting, talking, and studying on the floor.

**Meeting of the minds:** One example of how the director's vision coincided with the costume and make-up directors', the lead choreographer's, the stage designer's and the light and sound team's visions was in enacting the wedding scene on stage. While dancers wearing bright colored-cotton saris entertained with a haldi dance and the wedding was happening on stage, the grandmother in stark white stood prominently lit in one corner crying as she was not allowed to participate. SETU experimenting with alternative theater had actors playing multiple roles in the same show. The make-up director, Susmita Ghosh, had to work her magic in transforming an actor portraying an aristocrat landlord into a bullock-cart driver in ten minutes.

Audience members expressed appreciation of the costumes: one of them said that every outfit seemed very customized to the role, another said that the costumes enhanced the emotions being portrayed by the actors. A simple white sari effectively conveyed the sadness in the mourning scene. Another theater enthusiast said that the costumes and sets transported her to Bengal in the early 1900s. Yet another viewer said that it was not just about the costumes, it was about the cohesion between the costumes and make-up, the stage (built with all organic materials), and the direction a definition of a good production team indeed.



Dr. Jayanti Bandyopadhyay is a Professor of Accounting and the Graduate Program Coordinator at the Bertolon School of Business at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts.

Jayanti co-founded SETU (Stage Ensemble Theatre Unit), a not-for-profit English theatre group portraying Indian origin plays in English in Boston, Massachusetts, with Dr. Subrata Das in 2003. She has performed for SETU since 2003 in roles such as Sarita (Kamala), Jahanara (Shah Jahan), Kunti in the short film directed by Dr. Subrata Das. She scripted and directed a short play “The Back Door” for SETU. She designed the costume for *Devdas* depicting the early twentieth century period in Bengal. She was born in Kolkata, India, emigrated to the United States in 1972 with her parents. She currently lives in Boston with her husband, Gautam.





## Samrat Bose

### Distant Roll

*(Almost seventy years after independence, farmers in many parts of rural India are still at the mercy of the elements. There have been numerous cases of farmer suicides which have been little more than political fuel for the opposition regardless of the political ideology. India continues to develop in a few parameters and of course, the more affluent continue in either an eternal struggle to eke a living or are plainly oblivious in the midst of counting profit.)*

Thakur: Landlord

Mohalla: Community

Chacha: Uncle

Maaaa: Mother

The sounds of drums could be heard from far away.

Nilesh grabbed his daughter and made his way to the riverbank. It was getting late and unless he could get water home, there would be no cooking. The drought meant that his once fertile field had dried up. Cracks in the soil devoured whatever little water could be sprinkled on it. The crops had died out months ago and there was little to sell, therefore. The village pond and tube well had dried up too and this river, a good thirty-minute walk from his home, was what kept his family going. The village money lender had been kind to Nilesh. He had opted to wait for the time when Nilesh could afford to pay him back. Not only that, he had offered Nilesh's wife Arati a job in his house too. Arati was of two minds but Nilesh had no hesitation. It would be a source of income after all and the sixty-eight-year-old *thakur* was like a father figure anyway. Most of his days were spent in worship and the rest in business. The work was simple. Arati had to assist the *thakur* while he worshipped and thereafter had to do some household chores. With the money that came in, Nilesh could, over months, repay his debts to the local grocery shop. Things were difficult but Nilesh could dream a little. Maybe one day, he would dream of re-starting his daughter's education too.

"This water is dirty," said little Kamla, all of a wise seven-year-old. "Should we really take this?"

"Oh we can treat this all right," replied Nilesh, as he busied himself filling the larger bucket. "All we have to do is to let it settle in our biggest pot, then the dirt will settle. We can then transfer the clean water to the other pots."

It did not take very long to fill the two buckets and the pot. Nilesh did not want Kamla to come with him all the way, for balancing the two buckets on his cycle with Kamla and her little pot had a certain risk to it. But he could not afford to keep her alone at home while

Arati was at work. On their way back, they talked about this and that and of the drumbeats. "Must be some festivity going on," he replied to a question from Kamla. "There is always something or the other going on in the *thakur mohalla*."

Arati had returned by the time Nilesh had reached home. That was a pleasant surprise, for she never did quite return before sunset. She had already busied herself in the kitchen.

"This is a surprise," said Nilesh, pouring the water into the big pot. Arati did not reply; she had perhaps not heard Nilesh over the din of the cooking. Nilesh stepped up and sat beside Arati. Arati was almost taken aback. She jumped with a start and dislodged the utensil beside her.

"Careful," she said, "don't startle me that way."

"I did not realise you never heard me," said Nilesh, wiping his hand. "Is food almost ready? This trek in the heat really saps all energy out of me."

Nilesh was about to leave but he stopped short. His eyes fell on Arati's arm. There was a fresh burn on it. He grasped her arm just as she tried to cover it up. "You should be more careful," he said, looking straight at Arati. Arati simply turned her gaze down and nodded.

The next morning, Nilesh woke up to grey clouds on the horizon. They were more black than grey and as he stepped out of his house, he saw several folks staring at the spectacle.

"What's on offer, *chacha*?" he shouted to the bearded man he knew from his childhood. Rahim *chacha* ran his fingers through his white tresses. "I don't like the black," he said. "Looks like a storm brewing."

If it was really a storm, it was perhaps not too surprising. The nor'wester, or *Kalbaisakhi* as it is known in these parts, always heralds summers. But with the weather like it had been lately, winter ran straight into summer with spring missing out somewhere in between. The drums rolled on as usual, though. Nilesch did not quite expect any storm therefore and this was something that held his awe. Perhaps the omens were good after all. Maybe the weather gods were being appeased after all by the festivities by the *thakurs*. They were, after all, benefactors by social norm.

Nilesch looked around, searching for Kamla. Arati had left for work as usual before he had even woken up. She had left some hot water for his tea and some puffed rice in an earthen bowl. Nilesch gratefully made the tea and started to munch on the puffed rice. His eyes looked at the distant clouds again. They seemed nearer now, and heavily pregnant. He thought about what it would mean to have a steady rainfall once again. The fields would be soaked well and perhaps he could get a good crop after all. There was no hope of reviving the early crop but with some fertilisers, well, it may just be possible to recover something after all. He began to hum a tune. He smiled a little as his tune blended somewhat with the drums in the background.

Just then, the drums stopped. Nilesch was jerked out of his near reverie. He looked at his watch. It was now getting late. Kamla was nowhere to be seen, so calling out for her, he proceeded towards his cycle. His daughter was nowhere to be seen, so he decided she might have gone playing. He now felt a little guilty for having called her. The little girl also needed to play, not just work all the time. She did her bit in the house and Nilesch remained careful that she did not miss out on her childhood. He put the buckets on both sides of the handle and rode on.

As he neared the river, Nilesch felt a drop of water touch his cheek. He looked up at the sky. There was no blue to be seen; the black cloud had almost covered it all. He felt a few drops of rain on his arms and then, with almost no warning at all, the rains came. It poured down incessantly on him as he alighted from his cycle and stood by the river, not knowing from where to

gather the water. He allowed himself this moment of helplessness of thought, driven by an abundance that he scarcely experienced. He knelt beside the river, watching the rush of the current. It was as if it had been dead all along, just like him and had been suddenly been brought to life. He watched the water flow from upstream carrying across an exhibition of debris. It was all there. Paper, straw, some odd plastic items, a plastic bangle just like the one he had given Arati last year, pieces of cloth. There were strands of hair, long stuck somewhere and freed recently even as the long hair made every attempt to cling on to something in its eternal journey.

He was about to fill a bucket when he noticed a girl running towards him. It was Kamla.

The seven-year-old was crying incessantly as she rushed towards him. Panic struck Nilesch. During these sudden bursts of rain, snakes have been known to creep out of their burrows. He dropped the bucket and rushed towards her. As she came near, Kamla cried out "Maaaa, Maaaa" and pointed in the direction from which she had come.

He looked up and saw a few villagers coming towards him. Many more were standing still some distance upstream. Nilesch ran toward the crowd. Some held him back as he fought his way to the centre.

Arati lay on the river bank, half-submerged. Her throat was slit, her clothes dishevelled, her hair flung open. Her outstretched arms showed more than it ever did; shorn of her bangles, of which a few broken pieces lay around, the burn mark was all the more evident.

Nilesch gave a cry and then dropped by her side, clutching his daughter. He looked around at faces, equally vacant. There were some mutterings in hushed voices from two or three people standing a little away. He tried to ask some incoherent question, but was drowned out by the rain that fell in large drops, hurting him. It gained momentum till all he could hear was the steady, hard, piercing rain as it forced itself inside the earth. Somewhere in the distance, there was a clap of thunder.

Somewhere in the distance, the drums had started to play again.



**Samrat Bose** — A curious study in contrasts, Samrat pursues pixels, paintbrushes, prose and poetry. Influenced by the surrealist and cubist art movements, he finds his inspiration in the random micro-moments of the macrocosm. He is someone in pursuit of an unknown mission, dabbling here and there and hoping he never finds it, for that would end this wonderful journey.

## On the Strait and Narrow

The Torres Strait lies between the Northern most tip of mainland Australia and the Southern coast of Papua New Guinea. It has 247 Islands, 17 of these are inhabited by about 4000 people, and more reefs than people. Siting between the Western Pacific and the Arafura Sea, it can have 6 tides a day, and is one of the most notoriously hazardous stretches of navigable water anywhere in the world. It is part of Australia, and its people make up one of the two broader groups of Indigenous Australians. One group, the Torres Strait Islanders, the other mainland Aboriginal people. An easy way to think of the these two groups is analogous to French and German people. French and German people are very different, linguistically and culturally, but both French and German people are European. The same can be said to be true of the Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people of Australia. Both groups are Indigenous Australians; both are very different from each other.

Western history records that the Spanish Navigator Luis Vaez de **Torres** first mapped the Strait t named after him in 1606. Lt James Cook R.N. erroneously and illegally laid claim to the whole East Coast of “New South Wales” now Australia in 1770. Claiming it Terra Nullius, land belonging t no one. Since proven to be a legal myth courtesy of the Mabo Ruling, a Murray Islander with his own constellation named after him, that established the Native Title Act, 1993. Deposed Captain Bligh of the HMS Bounty rowed though the Torres Straits, from Tahiti to East Timor after his crew under Fletcher Christian mutinied. No small feat of tyranny followed by an incredible feat of seamanship, navigation and survival. “The Straits” have been inhabited for around 70,000 years since the ice age land bridge existed between Papua New Guinea and Australia.



Robert Mast

There are five separate languages spoken in the Straits. Each of these groups have their stories to explain the seasons and the land scape and their history. These stories represent a means of gathering food, predicting weather and seasons explaining when a food supply will be available, or why it's not, and when, how to conduct yourself, and how **not** to be a bad person. Village life may have its consequences...

Robert Mast is a Badu Island Man, a custodian of the some of the Stories of Badu and the Western Torres Straits. More to follow...

John Knight









## Robert Mast

### The Legend of Sesoré

Sesoré is a small bird similar to a Rufous Fantail with an orange top side, a black chest and white underbelly. It lives alone in Eastern and Northern Australia including the Western Torres Strait. This is the traditional account of how the bird came to be according to Badu Island Lore, and it is the centrepiece shown in the print.

Sesoré was an orphaned teenager who lived alone on Badu Island. He would hunt on the low tide with his spear to feed himself, as this was not only easy hunting but the limit of his skills, as his parents had only died a few years beforehand. The fish spear is called the Dagulal or *Kluk in Kala Lagaw Ya*, the Indigenous language of Badu Island. The animals which were hunted by Sesoré can be seen under the house in the middle of the print coming out from the Dugulal.

One day while out hunting, he noticed the seagrass had been eaten by something leaving tracks and he did not know what it was.

Traditional Torres Strait Islander burial rites involved placing the body on a platform or *Sara* high above the ground, with offerings on one end and a small fire at the rear. When only the bones remain, these are placed in a cave for sacred purposes and safe keeping.

Needing to know what was eating the seagrass, Sesoré went to the cave where his parents bones were kept, taking only the skulls back to his house. He placed each of them on either side of his head before he went to sleep. During the night both his parents appeared to him in a dream, and told him that a Dugong or Dungal was eating the seagrass. They went on to show him where to find a large tree on the island where they had left him a harpoon, or *Whap*, and a rope or *Umoo*, the dart or *Kuiur*. They told him how to hunt the Dugong using a platform built over water called a *Niath*. This dream is shown in the top left-hand corner of the print, and the platform immediately above the dugong at the bottom of the print. As this was the first dream where his parents had visited him since they had died, Sesoré found it hard to believe. His curiosity eventually forced him to visit the tree his parents had shown him in the dream, where to his amazement, he found all the Dugong hunting tools he had seen in the dream. So that day, he stopped hunting the low tide animals and started hunting Dugong.

Sesoré was so successful at hunting the Dugong, that he never again hunted on the low tide. In the middle of the print below the bird, is Sesoré's house. Inside the house hangs an abundance of Dugong meat, prepared and preserved using traditional salting and sun dried techniques. The neighbouring villages noticed Sesoré had not been hunting on the low tide and came to investigate. On approaching the orphan's house, they changed into dogs so as not to raise his suspicions. When he saw the dogs he threw some Dugong meat to them, and they ate it and ran back to the village. The villagers could not understand how Sesoré managed to have so much Dugong meat, as Dugong was normally only caught by chance when they became stranded on the beach or in the lagoon.

The next day the villagers return to Sesoré's house in greater numbers.

When they arrived at dusk, once more changing into dogs, Sesoré threw some meat to one of the dogs. He noticed that there was something not quite right with the dogs eyes. He shot it with his bow and arrow and all the other dogs scattered. The dog died on the spot and turned back into a man. Sesoré on seeing this, knew the villagers would return for revenge.

That night he returned to the cave where his parents bones were. Again, taking only the skulls, returned to his house, placed one on either side of his head and went to sleep.

His parents came to him in a dream as before, but this time told him that he should change into a little bird. This dream can be seen in the top right of the print. Upon waking, not understanding why, Sesoré did not do this



immediately. He waited at the door at his house until the villagers came close. At the last moment, when there was no option, he turned into the bird as his parents told him in the dream. The villagers attempted to kill him with their clubs or *Gabagabal*. As a bird, Seseré jumped from head to head of each warrior. The warriors in their effort to kill the bird, were killing each other, and not touching the bird at all. When half their number had been killed by their own hand, they retreated to the village in fear, with the first death unavenged and in need of a new plan.

They decided to call in the *Dthogai* or devil woman.

These can be seen in the lower right corner of the print approaching Seseré's door with deadly intent.

These powerful spirits can appear in any shape or size but often appear as women with oversized earlobes that hang to their feet. When a *Dthogai* sleeps, one ear is rolled and used as a pillow while the other is used as a blanket. Their breasts hang down to their knees. To have children, they will bewitch men, and appear to them as beautiful youthful maidens. Having slept with a *Dthogai* the unsuspecting man usually awakes miles from home, disorientated thinking the experience was a dream.

When *Dthogai* approached Seseré's home, again in the shape of the bird, he jumped from head to head of the *Dthogai* and again their attempts to kill him only kills themselves. The remaining *Dthogai*, like the men, retreated thinking he was beyond even their spiritual power, and let him alone in peace.

Throughout this print, there are various animals. At the bottom is a pregnant Dugong. The markings on the Dugong show the traditional way of butchering the meat. Every part is used including the intestines, the bones and the tusks. The bones are usually turned into tools and sometimes into harpoon darts or *Kuiur*, and other uses include pendants or *Dibadib*. Above the Dugong is a *Whap* and *Umoo*. Above the butt of the *Whap*, is an outrigger canoe or *Gul*.

This is why the bird we call Seseré lives alone, jumps around and does not stand still and why we hunt Dugong the way we do.

This print was made entirely by hand. Carved from lino and transferred to paper by Robert Mast. It is an authentic piece of Contemporary Indigenous Australian Art and constitutes part of the culture of Badu Island and the Western Torres Strait Islands.





Souvik Dutta

**Vaishampayan & Yajnavalkya**

On 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018, Netflix launched Wild Wild Country, a Netflix documentary on the life of Rajneesh Osho which instantly started trending on social media and eventually became a huge hit. On November 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, Netflix launched a documentary Bikram – Yoga, Guru, Predator and is also trending on social media.

I have am a teacher of Vedic sciences and my classes are in-person or on-line in the US. I have been teaching for 14 years now and there have been a few things that I always mention in my classes which I think needs to be spoken about in wider circles. All Vedic sciences are inter-connected and it is no person's copyright. In fact, the complete Vedic philosophy is a role-based philosophy and not a person-based concept. Let me elaborate on that. Every yuga (cycle of time) has its own Saptarishis, Manu, Indra, Brahma, including Vyasa. Indra is a position like Brahma, Rudra, and Vishnu. Now, let us visit the most controversial of all topics – Guru.

गुशब्दस्त्वन्धकारः स्यात् रुशब्दस्तन्निरोधकः ।

guśabdstvandhakārah syāt ruśabdstannirodhakah |

अन्धकारनिरोधित्वात् गुरुरित्यभिधीयते ॥ १६ ॥

andhakāranirodhitvāt gururityabhidhīyate || 16||

The syllable “Gu” in Guru stands for darkness and ignorance (adhakara). The syllable “Ru” signifies the eradication of darkness or ignorance. Thus, who-so-ever has the ability to eradicate darkness and thereby bring light into one's life should be called a Guru.

~ Advaya Taraka Upanishad, Śukla-Yajurveda, Verses 15,16

Guru is a role. Anyone at any time can perform this role. It is an impersonal concept. The wisdom passed on by a Guru is not his own, he/she is just a messenger of the wisdom of Purush and Prakriti passed on to humanity by the Rishis. When performing the role, when eradicating the darkness in an individual, he/she performs a role; a function based on his/her karma. However, when the role is performed, he/she can go back to being a normal person with samskaras and karmic boundaries.

When I generally say to this in classes, some students comment or feel that this is a new concept, invented by new-age Gurus to safeguard the Guru community from the recent revelations of the ugliness of Guru-business. This is far from the truth.

Let me start by talking a tiny bit about myself. I had acute asthma from the age of four. I have studied and practiced Yoga from that tender age in the same place Bikram studied yoga - Ghosh College of Yoga in Kolkata, India, established by Bishnu Charan Ghosh, brother of Yogananda. I can also say with utmost certainty that thousands of students from the same institute who are now Yoga teachers around the world are anything like Bikram. In fact, the knowledge that Bikram shared, his method of 26 + 2 (26 asanas and 2 pranayama) is also not his but taught widely in the college. All the knowledge is pure, unadulterated but not a copyright of any individual. In fact, it is also not the invention of Bishnu Charan Ghosh, it is an extraction of Ashtanga Yoga, which stems from Patanjali's work and if you wish to go further it stems from Shiva and source of Tantra given in Atharva Veda.

Now, let us visit the concept of the person who plays the role of the Guru. The definition of Guru, which I have quoted in this article, is from Yajurveda so let us take that as an example. Vedas are timeless wisdom, this is now widely accepted. Veda was orally transmitted as Shruti and Smriti, this is also common knowledge. However, even if the written script is to be taken as evidence alone, Yajur Veda based on the earliest scripted evidence available is dated to 1200 BCE even by most conservative skeptics.



Rishi Vaishampayan has the direct sishya of Veda Vyasa. Vaishampayan had taken the responsibility of creating Yajur Veda and had divided it into 27 chapters. He had taught Yajur Veda to his shishyas. Among all his shishyas the most brilliant and able was Yajnavalkya.

Due to a curse Vaishampayan incurred from his Guru Veda Vyasa, Vaishampayan accidentally killed his own nephew while his nephew was sleeping. His was a grave offense as it incurred the sin of Brahmahatya (killing of a Brahmin).

Vaishampayan had to do severe penance for this and he as a Guru, asked his disciples to perform the necessary penance for seven days to expiate his sin. Yajnavalkya, being truthful and brilliant strongly suggested that he alone could perform the kriya faster and relieve his Guru of the sins.

Vaishampayan misinterpreted Yajnavalkya straightforward suggestion as a tone disparaging of his other disciples. An angry Vaisampayana asked Yajnavalkya to give back all he had learned from him and go away from the ashrama. Accepting the instructions, Yajnavalkya threw up the Yajurveda he had learned from Vyasa in the form of black vomit stained with blood. As the Vedas are sacrosanct, Vaisampayana did not want the vomit to hit the ground and asked the other disciples to take the form of partridges (tittiri) and eat it up. These pupils in the form of the tittiri birds swallowed up the Vedas as they came out of Yajnavalkya's mouth. Since tittiri birds ate up the Yajurveda as taught by Vyasa, this version of Yajurveda came to be known as Taittiriya. As it came out in the form of black vomit, it also came to be known as Krishna (black) Yajurveda.

Yajnavalkya decided never to have a human being as his Guru again. He worshiped Aditya (the Sun God) strenuously in order to get back the possession of the knowledge of Yajurveda. Aditya, in turn, asked Yajnavalkya first to get worship and please Devi Saraswati. Yajnavalkya performed great tapasya to please Saraswati and composed a beautiful stuti for Her. Saraswati, finally blessed Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya then requested Aditya to teach him even the parts of the Yajurveda that were not known to even his Guru, Vaishampayana.

Aditya took the form of a horse (Vaja-roopa) and taught Yajnavalkya Yajurveda. While the Krishna Yajur Veda that Vaishampayana had taught him had the Samhita and Brahmana portions jumbled together, the Yajur Veda that Aditya taught him had the Samhita clearly separated. As this version of Yajurveda was revealed by Aditya, it is called the Shukla Yajurveda. Since Aditya taught it to Yajnavalkya in the form of a Vaja (horse), this branch of the Shukla Yajur Veda is also called Vajasaneyaka.

Guru as a role and the person who plays the role of the Guru are two different entities. Had Vaishampayan being a deva, He could perhaps interpret the honest intentions of Yajnavalkya instead of interpreting it as pride. However, Vaishampayan was a human being composed of his own samskaras and karmic conditioning.

Did Aditya really come from the heavens to teach Yajnavalkya or was it a way of saying that it was the Aditya (light) within his own self that revealed Yajur Veda to him? Did the students of Vaishampayan really transform to birds to eat put the vomited Yajur Veda from Yajnavalkya or was it a poetic way of expressing that the rest of the students memorized the verses recited by Yajnavalkya before he left the ashram of his Guru?

It is said that Yajnavalkya in turn too became a Guru. In fact, his most meritorious students were women - Gargi & Maitreyi. He encouraged debates with his students. It was this Yajnavalkya who clearly defined who a Guru was in Shukla Yajur Veda for the first time.

Once we realize that Guru can be anyone and instead of “following” the person Guru, we “test” & eventually “accept” what the Guru has to offer, I think, this will be the greatest reward to the true Gurus of this world. That will be the true homage to the selfless sacrifices and teachings of Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Yogananda.

May the Yajnavalkya in us awaken!



## Kathy Power

### The Ballad of Chance the Snapper

Chance the Snapper a/k/a Frank Lloyd Bite a/k/a Ruth Gator Ginsburg a/k/a Lori Bitefoot a/k/a Croc Obama took leisurely swims on the west side of Chicago in a humble park lagoon, the nicest park in the city for an alligator. Chicagoans spotted him on July 9, 2019.

A punkish reptile, he wanted to be left alone and have the folks get out of his neighborhood. He's been here, just waiting for someone to find him. Chance, a true Chicagoan, exchanged words with CPD spokesman Anthony Gugliemi who vowed to capture him.

A cause for great fanfare, the people of Chicago, particularly Alligator Bob, constantly looked for him. Venues opened, "Swim with our new alligator." Swim with him, wrestle him, a kid-friendly event. Kids can feed the alligator bunnies at 3 PM. Meet and greet Chance with children \$50; meet, greet, and leave without your children \$125. People wanted to sneak into the Humboldt Park Lagoon and pet the gator. He couldn't be caught without a little silence and peace.

Someone said, "whoever released this gator is going to heaven for all the joy they gifted" in the City of Big Shoulders. Carl Sandburg would have loved it. The Park District hated it. Frank Robb from Florida captured him on July 16, 2019. As he was carted away, Chance the Snapper was heard to mutter, "See you later alligator, when I'm bigger and will swim with the children."

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**Kathy Powers** — I am a civil rights activist and developed my passions from coping with bipolar disorder symptoms. I have a tagline: "Advocacy is my therapy." Through advocacy I have discovered truth and beauty in helping people and sharing art.

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Amit Rudra

## Let's Go to Kakadu



Was it the Dalai Lama who once said, 'We travel half-way 'round the globe, yet, we do not know our neighbours'? How true it is for us! Over three decades ago, after migrating from India to our beautiful city of Perth in Western Australia, we have been to many countries and cities all over the world. Yet, we have never been to either of our two neighbouring states - South Australia or Northern Territory (NT). So, when Jayant or Jay, our eldest, moved to Darwin a few months ago, we thought - 'What a great idea to visit Jay!' At the same time of being there with him, we could see a bit of the wonderful countryside around the place. Of course, in my heart of hearts I was hoping, and secretly yearning, to pay a visit to the famous Kakadu National Park. This world heritage listed park is in the Northern Territory and the warm, humid city of Darwin is the capital city of NT.

We had been itching for the day when we would set our feet on Darwin, but Jay had been insisting that it was still wet season over there and to wait till it was over towards the end of April. It seems the wet season is not ideal as Darwin has one of the most spectacular

light shows on its sky with numerous lightning strikes during such times. Look, our northern neighbouring state has only two seasons - wet and dry. During the wet season it gets drenched in rain, severe floods and with a really muggy weather severely hampering travel opportunities. However, the dry season that lasts for nearly five months in a year is the ideal time to visit Darwin and its surroundings. At last, the opportunity came when during the Easter break we had a golden chance when both of us had a week of common holidays. Although it was still mid-April, Jay agreed and acceded to our wish of visiting the northern tip of Australia. The weather was gradually improving there; and in spite of having a rain now and then there were more days with sunshine. So, we booked our tickets and organized our five-day stay at a beautiful bay side apartment for the two of us. Jay's shared apartment was just a 10 minutes' walk away from us.

It was a gorgeous sunny afternoon of Easter Thursday that we landed in with no sign of clouds, rains and thunder that battered it barely 20 hours earlier. It seemed to be a strange place as the colour of



the land was red and all around was full of red dirt. We caught a taxi from the small but very nice airport and it took us a mere 15 minutes to reach our apartment on level 5. On the way to our rented apartment, as usual, I struck up a wonderful conversation with our taxi driver Adriano. Adriano is originally from the Philippines and has settled in Darwin nearly four decades ago. Although it is in Australia Darwin never looks or feels like it. It has a warm and humid tropical climate and it rains like hell during the wet season. Unlike in Perth, you cannot risk going out without a good brawly, as you are to likely get drenched in a downpour. Its beautiful beaches are devoid of any humans swimming or frolicking in water - they are infested with jellyfish, other stingers and often with the deadly saltwater estuarine crocs. Yes - welcome to the *Crocodile Country*. Hence, our whole journey and story revolves around this deadly creature.

After resting for the rest of that afternoon and evening, the next day we left for the country on Good Friday to see the crocs. Jay took us to a place called *Wak Wak*<sup>1</sup> - a place 70 km east of Darwin and about an hour away, just off Arnhem Highway. For the tourists to see and be near the crocs, the Jumping Croc Cruise has two boats that cruise on the Adelaide River. Our boat's captain, Steve, was a lively and friendly person; and he informed us that salt-water crocodiles prefer to have their habitats near the estuaries. Crocs love the low mangroves due to their safety for hatching the eggs and for catching large animal prey. Wak Wak is around 80 km south from the confluence of Adelaide River and the Arafura Sea. It offers dense mangroves and especially the place around the spot where we were. The crocs are very adept at jumping up and out of water we had to be very cautious in not leaning over the side railings as this might be dangerous and could easily result in losing one's hands or getting one's head injured. In clear waters crocs can see their victims on the water surface from deep down. However, when the water is muddy they sense the vibrations and are very sensitive to ripples when an object hits the water. A few minutes into the cruise - and we met our first of the several male crocs - *Scary* was his name. Steve informed us that male crocs usually have a harem of ten to fifteen females. Obviously, they are fiercely territorial and any infiltration into their territory usually results in a violent clash amongst the males for

dominance. It's therefore common to find some of them missing one or more of their limbs. Scary, for example, had lost his right foreleg in one of such many battles. So, when Steve dangled a piece of lamb leg, one could tell his jump was somewhat unbalanced. Soon, we learnt the names other males - Agro, Jumpy (who we met soon) and Brutus, who lived a few kilometres upstream. Then, there were a few of the females that I remember - Amber, Holly, and Sneaky.



*Male croc Agro jumps spectacularly for the bait*

We caught up with Agro soon and our ensuing encounter with the huge male croc was so fascinating that all three of us would remember that incident, probably, forever. As Steve was teasing this five-metre monster and won't let him have his bait so easily, Agro lashed out huge gush of water on to the *port side*<sup>2</sup> of our boat swinging his enormous tail. Unluckily, or luckily for us, this was on our side of the boat and I was the one who got totally drenched and I quipped that I should get a full refund for providing entertainment to all the rest of 15 on-board. Steve chuckled; but soon rewarded me with the best ever shot that I ever took of a live beast so close to me. He dangled the bait on the port side again about 8 or 9 feet above the water - a height within comfortable striking distance of Agro. The monster leapt out of the river lunging at the bait and I was ready with my mobile shooting a few of those shots of Agro's spectacular leap. I was so excited that, in that process of taking the shots didn't ever realise that I was close, very close - so incredibly close - less than a yard away from this deadly monster. In the meantime, rest of the tourists onboard had quickly moved to the other, or *starboard side*, of our boat to the point of it tipping onto its side. However, they quickly returned to their respective places on-board.

<sup>1</sup>Wak is the name of the Crowman from Australian aboriginal *Dreamtime* stories

<sup>2</sup>*port side* in nautical terms, this is the left side of the boat facing the front and opposite to *starboard side*



Leaving the male crocs, Steve navigated the boat to the mangrove where one of the female crocs had buried her eggs. He reckoned she would quickly find our presence there and move to us to guard her eggs. However, we were not so lucky this time; and next, he showed us the numerous *whistling brown kites*. Like eagles, these kites have very sharp eyes and Steve soon proved this by chucking a few small pieces chicken meat around the boat. Wow! Wasn't that a spectacular show when from nowhere, dozens of brown kites swooped down and plucked those baits right from the surface of water before they could sink to the bottom?

Ten kilometres away and on our way back to Darwin; Jay deviated to a place called the Fogg Dam, which controls the flow from the Fogg Fall. This is a picturesque wetland and provides a kaleidoscope of numerous birds that nest here or visit the wetlands. Here, our cameras could capture birds like the black egret, heron and plover. An interesting but potentially dangerous episode transpired here. We got off Jay's car and as there was motor-able road on the dam, I took a step or two on the dam to see if I could walk to the other side. However, due to flooding from previous night's

downpour, somehow, I decided not to. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Walking back a few paces, there was a picture board with pictures of birds found there. Glancing back towards the dam, I noticed a board warning tourists about a large male croc that had recently been spotted there and that people should avoid walking in that area. To my horror, my wife, Rikta and Jay were still there - right on the dam itself, slowly ambling back to our car. I thought for a moment, "What should I do? Should I shout a warning to them? Or, should I be patient and let them slowly amble back to avoid panic?" I decided to do the latter; and luckily, the large croc was not seen or was feasting or resting somewhere else.

During the evening of Good Friday, we decided to visit the nearby Cullen Beach, only a stone's throw from our Cullen Bay Apartments - a bare 100 metres away. The beach was quite crowded with people waiting to watch the brilliant sunset. Along with the locals and tourists, we waited for Darwin's famous golden sunset. Luckily, the sky was quite clear and the sunset was stunning with golden sky. A splattering of clouds offered us a brilliant display as a couple of cargo ships slowly disappeared in the distant horizon and the golden sunset for the evening behind the mountains in a distance.

On Saturday, we left for the Litchfield Park. There were termite mounds and several wonderful falls to see there. Some of these we saw but others were not accessible due to seasonal flooding. Following is a list of what we saw - huge termite mounds, nearly 5 meters tall; Buley Rockhole - spa; Florence fall and the spectacular Tolmer falls. Another one, the Wangi falls was inaccessible due to flooding. Of these, Tolmer and Florence falls were splendid - pristine and truly picturesque.

On Sunday, we took a full two-hour drive to the world famous, UN heritage listed, Kakadu National Park - 250 km east of Darwin. While on our way we saw some dead wallabies on the roadside - possibly hit by vehicles and a snake or two smashed flat on the asphalt. Another scene, possibly unique so far, we saw was a black snake, a death adder, still wriggling on the road - moving sideways on the bitumen with six bikies, one with his right leg thrust wide in air indicating that something was going on. We found them revving up their engines to get the snake wriggle to one side of the highway and into the bush lining both sides of the road, in order to save it being mashed by



40 m high Tolmer falls, Litchfield National Park



the vehicles travelling at speed on the Arnhem Highway. Here, near the Jabiru uranium-mining town, we took an hour-long fixed wing flight tour of the park. It was just fantastic to see this ancient land of the Australian aboriginals. This 100 million year old land has lots of tales to tell and I am not sure if I can relate them all. So, here is a brief account of what little we came to learn, know and perceive of this incredible and what is considered spiritual land of the original owners of Australia. For here, reside the very ancient rock paintings - some of them over 40,000 years old - much older than the famed Spanish cave paintings that are dated to be only 25,000+ years (and lately, cave arts in Sulawesi, Indonesia have been dated to be around 35,000 years old).

At last, we reached Jabiru on the edge of Kakadu National Park. Jabiru is really a small town with a population just over a 1,000 people. Most of the town's population are or rather was connected to the Ranger uranium mining. As the demand for uranium steadily fell, there were talks of shutting the town. Here, Jay was about to give us a surprise treat. This turned out to be the best treat he would have ever given us. He had booked all three of us for a ride on a fixed winged aircraft tour of the fantastic, UN listed, Kakadu National Park. Kakadu is the largest Australian terrestrial national park and covers almost 20,000 square kilometres. At the rather small Jabiru airport, Jay got his voucher validated by Kakadu Air officials and we were asked to wait for our ride as we were about half an hour early. While waiting for our flight, I found a 30 year old indigenous man, James. James had some interesting tales to tell regarding crocs; for that was the job he specialized in. We got the tip that one

needs to be very careful with crocs for if you try to hit it, it may jump and lunge at you. In no time, as rest of our co-travellers arrived, all seven passengers were weighed along with our belongings that to carry on. This, we learnt was to balance the small aircraft for its flight, as when it tilts in the air, it's very important to have a good balance between both the sides - right and left. After a few minutes briefing, we soon got on the tarmac and got photographed under the wings of our small light aircraft - a GV-8 passenger plane. Our pilot, Will, was an experienced one with over 25 years of under the wing expertise on various types of aircraft. However, we had some scares as Will tried to rev up the aircraft engine. After two failed attempts, the French couple in front of us seemed to be a bit nervous and looked at each other. So, another time and this time, Will seemed to be a bit concerned. The young girl from Alice Springs and her grandma in front of the French couple now seem to be alarmed as well. Somehow, I was silently confident that we'd eventually get up in the air, and if by any chance the engine doesn't start we won't be flying anyway. I have been on such small gliders, if not smaller ones and know that once above the earth, they can float for a while, giving ample time to the pilot to find a reasonably safe landing spot. So, we kept our cool and lo and behold, another try at cranking up of the engine, and finally, Will made a dash along the short airstrip and got us up in the air cruising at 250 kmph. Besides on air safety issues, Will informed us (on our headphones) about various interesting cultural and historical aspects of Australian ancient aboriginals.

In a minute, we were high over the ancient 100 million year old Arnhem Land with Kakadu National Park alongside. The rocky plateau below us formed about 250 million years ago under the sea and it took another 100 million years for seas to recede and plants to grow. The land below saw its first inhabitants of Australia, the Aboriginals started moving in here some 60 thousand years ago. These areas are still sacred land belonging to the original inhabitants and some of the places are unexplored - undisturbed and untouched by the modern man. For this area of Arnhem Land is protected by the government as reserved area. In fact, to visit Kakadu by land one needs an entry permit. These Aboriginals have many ancient customs and remedies (and secrets) that modern humanity may not ever know. Realising the sanctity of these customs and culture of the ancient Aboriginals, the Australian



*A quick snap before our flight by Kakadu Air, Jabiru airport*



*Jim Jim Falls*

government has taken important steps to protect them from being spoiled by the so-called march of modernisation. For one may not know that many Aboriginal tribes, along with their unique cultures, perished when the Europeans brought many of the deadly modern diseases against which the isolated inhabitants of Australian island had no immunity. Who knows what ancient secrets some of these ancient cultures possess? Perhaps they may not ever need to our modern ways of life but in turn that may be a hindrance to their ways of life and their very survival. One needs to respect the Aboriginal culture of respecting mountain tops as sacred places reserved for their sacred spirits; rivers are holy and sacred as resting places of sacred serpents and other creatures. These are to be treated with respect and never to be dug up or disturbed or desecrated in anyway. From the air, Will showed us many pristine and picturesque waterfalls - Jim Jim Falls, Twin Falls, Double Falls. All of us



*Arnhem Land*

thoroughly enjoyed the superb views from above of other wetlands and rivers like the East Alligator and several other unknown rivulets and creeks; erosion



valley, dinosaur valley and a rock archway. Nearing the Jabiru Airport, we saw the Ranger Uranium Mine, which is likely to be closed in a few years' time. Finally, after an hour long flight, just before landing, we had a glimpse of the uniquely shaped Mercure Kakadu Hotel. Its beautiful crocodile shape can only be appreciated from above while in the air.

After a full five days' hectic visit of Darwin and surroundings, it was time to head home south to Perth. Kakadu will be ever etched in our memory and even after a year we still reminisce about those golden sunsets and ancient lands. If ever you are in Australia's northern part do not miss Kakadu and the ever present crocs surrounding its wetlands.



*Twin Falls*



*Fogg Dam Wildlife & Birds - A Black Egret*



**Amit Rudra** — Amit is an ex-IT professional from Delhi who now researches and lectures at Curtin University, Perth, Australia, on advanced IT areas like data warehousing, data mining, business intelligence and enterprise systems. He migrated to Australia over three decades ago – not for better sunshine, nor for its alluring beaches, but ultimately, to travel everywhere. Fortunately, for quite a few years, his university job required him to travel overseas – to countries around Australia, Africa, Europe and America. Of natural attractions, he is most lured by the smell of Sulphur from the volcanoes of Hawaii, Mauritius, Japan or Indonesia. It is therefore, no wonder that jungles and wildlife makes him go crazy – whether it's the Cu Chi tunnels in Vietnam or Kakadu National Park in Australia's north.



## C J Martello

### Italy as I Saw It

Having a Navy Commander as a son has some great inherent perks. The best of these perks is his being assigned to different duty stations including overseas. Fortunately, for me, my son and his wife have been assigned to duty in Naples, Italy for three years. Now that they are settled and in the middle of their tour it was time for a little vacation for me.

My daughter-in-law Heather met me at the bus depot in Naples and as soon as we started walking I managed to get hit by a van. Those crazy Neapolitans weren't to blame this time though. I was just careless and walked right in front of a van that was waiting for traffic and started to move forward, but stopped as soon as he touched me.

My introduction to Naples got better instantly as I was distracted by the crazy Naples drivers. Heather fit right in and kept right up with the craziness. When we arrived at their apartment, I was treated to a plate of antipasto and a glass of wine as a treat to take up to their rooftop view.

My first view is my most memorable of all I saw in my two weeks in Italy. Their rooftop view is a view across the Bay of Naples to Mount Vesuvius--a spectacular view.

My son James and his wife are extraordinary travelers and very adept at selecting sights and arranging lodging and ancillary services. We began my stay with a five minute drive, parking the car and then a fifteen minute downhill walk to the shoreline where our first stop was at Chalet Ciro for a five star gelato sandwiched between two "graffo" (a doughnut like food treat) followed by a six block long walk to the train station for a ride into downtown Naples. That's when I gladly realized my Italian vacation diet would be a big part of my memories and 100% different from my usual diet from my freezer fare.

We caught the train downtown where we walked around and through the crowds of tourists that are everywhere in Italy. Our first stop—a necessity by all accounts—was for a café. My son, the seasoned traveler, spared me the walking into every church—or I spared him—they are all equally medieval and beautiful. We strolled along



the narrow street markets and admired the occasional ancient wall fountain and historic buildings and shrines.

One of the best parts of being in Italy is seeing the variety of people from around the world as they are led by their tour guides with the ubiquitous extended flower held high above their heads. Watching the tourists be amazed by the beauty and antiquity that pops up at every corner turned is never tiring.

The beach at the coast where the tour buses stopped was loaded with sun worshippers on the only sand beach we saw. The coast is rocky and hilly and steep. The many hotels we saw were clinging to the hills as though they were hanging on for dear life. The narrow turning highway leading down to the Amalfi shoreline is crowded with cars parked on either side as parking is at a premium. This parking situation is what makes taking a bus ride to Amalfi such a wise idea.

When we returned from Amalfi, Positano, and Sorrento we headed back to Naples. The next day was when my son and I headed to Bologna via a rental SUV. My son had warned me that I'd be driving to and in Bologna so I made I made it a point to get an International Driver's License through AAA. Was it necessary . . . only if you get stopped by the Italian Police. If you don't have an international license, you face a minimum \$300 fine in addition to whatever ticket you get. Why take the gamble!

We toured the Hombre Asiago Cheese Dairy and the Maserati Museum all on the same grounds. The Maserati Company was forced to put 19 collectible cars up for auction in England but they were rescued prior to going to auction by Umberto Panini of the Panini Collectible sports stickers company. Umberto is the owner of the Hombre Asiago Cheese Dairy where the cars, along with a collection of antique motorcycles can be seen in their own museum.

My son and I were both extremely moved by our visit to the Luciano Pavarotti Home-Museum in Modena. There was a special feeling walking amongst Pavarotti's personal belongings and mementos. It was very impressive to see all of his awards and photos of him with celebrities we are all familiar with. It was well worth the visit which we combined with a tour and tasting of a local vineyard Anitco Castello.

My son and I parted company at Bologna train station after returning the rental SUV. I caught the





express train to Venice where I picked up my rental SUV for the drive north to Asiago. My cousin Claudio and his wife Mirca, from Trieste, were waiting to meet me. We had connected on Facebook and decided to do a genealogy visit to the towns my parents and his grandparents were from.

We shared many wonderful dinners and, of course, bottles of Italian wine. My cousins really know their food so I ended up benefiting by sampling a great variety of regional Italian cuisine. An interesting fact to note is that dogs are welcome in all dining establishments. As a matter of fact, we saw the same dog with its owner in a café, in a restaurant, and outside a hockey rink as we were leaving Asiago to head down to Bassano Del Grappa.

Asiago is in a beautiful mountainous region and basically has two seasons: hiking and skiing. The architecture of Asiago's buildings resembles that of a Swiss chalet setting. The stores are modern to accommodate the many sports-minded Europeans that spend their vacations relaxing in the mountain air.

My cousins and I visited the local cemeteries and found many ancient relatives representing our families and the trees and branches of our ancestry. It was a bonus feeling to walk the streets where my family, especially my parents, had walked and lived their lives.

After our two days in Asiago we headed down the 21 hairpin turns down the mountain to the town of Bassano del Grappa where my cousin had relatives on his father's side of the family. One of the outstanding memories I had, unique to my visit, was





the ability to enter into a few common homes of Italian citizens to see their personal decorative touches.

I felt privileged to glimpse their collections of personal items from the different stages of their lives and their children's lives. My cousin Claudio's Uncle Farruchio was a lively 89 year old who was working on one of his dozen antique Moto Guzzi Motorcycles. Fortunately for me, Uncle Farruchio decided we deserved to go to his former deli/bar combination for a shot of Di Nardi Grappa. It turns out that this grappa is the best in Italy and hard to find outside of the country.



We visited another couple that was friends of my cousins, Marella and Pietro Antonio who invited us in for a visit and to share some espresso and stories. Fortunately, for me throughout my trip, my Italian came back to me and I was able to take part in the discussions. I share an affinity with my cousin Claudio for the Alpini which are Italy's soldiers of Alps. Claudio spent a decade in the Alpini and it turned out that Pietro Antonio also had been an Alpini. Pietro Antonio disappeared for a moment and when he returned, he presented me with an Alpini baseball cap—quite the honor.

My cousins and I parted company as I made preparations to return my SUV to Venice before catching the morning train to Rome for my 10 a.m. flight back to Chicago. I had a couple of hours before my train out of Venice so I was able to take a walk along the canal, through St. Mark's Square, and to the tourist sight Liberia Acqua Alta.

Despite seeing the many photos, it is very hard for me to comprehend that everywhere I had been in Venice has been flooded. Once I heard the news and saw the photos, I immediately contacted my son to commiserate over the loss. I'm sure Venice will recover in time and to a certain extent.

For now though, I am fortunate to have photos and memories of a trip that means so much to me and suggest, in the future you might make a trip that will have such an impact upon your heart and your life.

**CJ Martello** is a Vietnam veteran and a retired accountant for the Illinois State Police, who grew up in Chicago's Roseland neighborhood in the late 1940s through the late 1960s. After decades of living on Chicago's North Side, he recently returned to his South Side roots and bought a historic row house in the Pullman neighborhood. He is a Pullman docent, does a one-man show, *George Pullman: The Man and his Model Town*, collects Roseland memorabilia for the eventual Roseland Rooms at Pullman's Hotel Florence, and is active in various online and in-person groups devoted to Roseland history, Italian-American heritage, and more. He has been writing the Petals from Roseland column since 2008 and is the author of the December release of the book "Petals from Roseland: Fond Memories of Chicago's Roseland, Pullman, and Kensington Neighborhoods" now available for preorder on Amazon.

## Sreeja Banerjee

### The Witch

Once upon a time there was a witch. She was 900 years old. Her hair looked like moss, hands like claws and she had brown stained teeth. Her breath smelled like mold, her hair like worms. Her voice sounded like sharp nails scraping on a black board. She lived in an old cracked shed that smelled like dead fish inside a dark forest. She slept there all year long. And only woke up on Halloween because she wanted to take all the kids' candy. Nobody knew why. Everyone feared her. When it was Halloween night she would say, "who woke me up? Oh it was, CANDY CANDY!" She kept screaming, "CANDY CANDY" in a loud raspy voice. She did not scare everyone.



A princess of Klamanoa named Lily was a thirteen-year-old girl. She had silky straight strawberry red hair. Her hair smelled like cinnamon, her breath like honey. She lived in a large golden palace with a lovely garden. It had lots of flowers and trees. Birds and butterflies were roosting there. In the courtyard, they had a pond with different varieties of swans, ducks, flamingoes. There was a county near the palace. It had five towns and a village in it. It looked like an island in a sea of trees. The witch lived in the south-east corner of the forest surrounding the county.

On Halloween, every house was lined with jack o lanterns of different shapes, sizes, colors, and faces. Some houses had giant spiders or cobwebs and even cauldrons filled to the brim with green slime. The dim street lights had an eerie glow. Dense fog hung in the air. There was a stillness that made it feel like it was a ghost town. Kids love Halloween. They like getting scared, dressing up, carving pumpkins and most of all trick-or-treating for candy. But here they got sad. Each year, the witch took away all of their favorite candies and sweet treats. So Lily's family tried to get back all the treats the witch stole. It worked (well most of the time). So when Lily walked into the forest and saw the witch. She thought, "I wish the witch would just leave. It's not fair for her to take the children's candy and only my family have to get back the candy". "Well, I will stay awake for three days for this year's fight. If I lose, I will leave forever and not come back. If I win then I will stay awake forever HA HA," the witch cackled.

"I must win for the children's sake," Lily said.

"Ha try," the witch boasted.

Lily knew magic but the witch knew some witchcraft. Every year they would fight magic versus witchcraft. Before Lily was born her mother fought with the witch and so did her mother and her mother and... you get the idea. It is their family legacy. This year it would be very interesting. They started fighting. The witch almost caught Lily. But she turned invisible. They kept doing stuff like that for an hour.

Suddenly the witch said, "glip glop drip drop Lily flop sleep".

Lily flopped on to the ground and fell asleep. Luckily she was cushioned by some autumn leaves. Lily woke



up and got on to her feet. She looked at her rainbow watch. It was one more minute till three full days. So she ran in search for the witch. She looked in the dark forest. It was pitch black. Lilly would not be able to see anything if there were no street lights. She walked in to the town called Rich town. She saw a blue flash of light and heard a rasp cackle near the Menutly's estate.

“That must be the witch” she said screaming so loud that everyone in Rich town heard her.

She heard “slam slam slam”.

She looked around. All of the doors in Rich town were closed.

“Is everyone scared of the witch?” she said under her breath but out loud in her mind.

She ran as fast as she could after the witch. As she was running she glanced back. Carefully she cupped her hand around her mouth and screamed at the top of her lungs “Help! Help! Bring anything shiny or bright, Help!”

“Why?” - asked the villagers in unison.

“Just do it quick” she said.

So, everyone, and I mean everyone, helped her. All the bright things reflected off and the witch got blind.

She said “I’ll get you for this”.

The light was so intense that she burned into ashes. POOF! suddenly the witch reappeared. She looked weak.

“I-I-I was j-just trying to h-h-help” -the witch stuttered.

“Help! Really, you helped so much” Lily said in a sarcastic voice.

“C-c-candy is b-b-b-bad you see” the witch tried to explain.

“What!” Lily said in a puzzled voice.

“I-I-I was saving all of y-y-your t-t-teeth” - the witch showed of her brown teeth.

You could tell, the witch was struggling because she fainted with a loud thud. Villagers began surrounding the witch. Her hand started twitching.

A villager in a blue and red fall jacket said “the witch has saved me a lot of work because you know, I’m a dentist... oh and she is right”. “Oh my GOD! that’s right, she has been saving our kids from gum pain and toothache.”

“maybe we should spare the witch”,

“ya”,

“Are we on an agreement?” Lily asked.

“Yes,” the villagers answered.

The witch woke up rubbing her eyes. Lily came and held her hand.

Lily: “Would you like to stay here?”

The witch said, “sure if I am safe from all harm”.

Lily: “Yes you are and we could be friends too if you leave a little bit of candy for the kids”.

The witch nodded. Lily started to walk away but she stopped and turned around and said “oh and don’t forget to brush your teeth”.



**Sreeja Banerjee** – She is a third grader upper elementary student. She lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA. She loves to gather facts, thoughts, and ideas from books and nature. Sreeja communicates pretty easily to others via her drawings and write ups. Her creations always have an imaginative twist with real life stories.





Rudrani Sanyal

**Quick Sand**

I dreamt that I met god  
I told him that happiness was a fraud.  
God's silence hurt me  
I said, "Happiness is a traitor, it likes to flee."  
God still remained silent and gave a radiant smile  
I felt it was extremely rude and vile

I said, "Happiness is rare  
And this is not fair."  
God still kept quiet  
I felt it was not right.  
I decided to make my point clear  
I said, "Pain brings tear  
Yet happiness does not appear.  
It is transient like a party gear.  
When pain rears its ugly head.  
Happiness fades."

God replied, "You are blinded, girl.  
Can you not see happiness's flag daily unfurl?  
You think happiness is rare and unfair  
As you fail to see good things happening around you everywhere  
Happiness is all around us  
Pain is a part of life, so don't make a fuss."

I again said, "God you are same as bliss.  
You are always amiss."  
God laughed at my plight  
Because he thought I lacked the transcendent sight.  
I still tried to win the debate

"You write our fate.  
And you give us more pain.  
And our tears are like incessant rain.  
Happiness is like quick sand.  
It never comes in our hand."

I continued, "Happiness less and pain excess  
You make our lives a mess."  
God said, "Only cowards depend on fate  
Understand it or it will be too late.  
Happiness and pain are balanced well  
And life is not a fairytale."



He continued, "Happiness is not eternal, so his pain.  
In this world, no one lives in vain.  
Pain comes so does pleasure  
They have their own weights and measure.  
Broaden your mind, and clear your vision.  
Small things will bring happiness and fun.  
Then life would not be dull and grey  
And then call me, and say what you may."

My dream broke, and he was gone  
And I felt sad that life would will forever be a monotone.  
I tried to broaden my mind and clear my sight  
And then I realized that little things have the capability to delight.  
I realized, pain and happiness are a part of life  
A measured amount of bliss and strife.

I discovered the secret of happiness  
And pain and dissatisfaction dissolved without trace  
I said to one and all  
That happiness is hidden in things small.  
I thanked god for opening my eyes  
And decided to never complain about cries  
God came again in my dream and blessed me  
He reminded me again its all about how we see.



**Rudrani Sanyal** is a class 9 student at Akshaya Sikhsayatan, Kolkata. From early age she has shown signs of being a very good wordsmith. One of her recent poems has also got published in Times Of India, Student's edition. Other than her studies she loves to spend time with family and she often scribbles her thoughts in her diary.

## Prameet Guha

### My Trip to Santiniketan

A few days ago, I came back from my trip to India. One of my favorite places that I went to during this trip is Bolpur, Santiniketan. I was waiting for this trip for a long time. Santiniketan is a huge outdoor school established by Rabindranath Tagore, who was a famous poet, artist, and author. He was a polymath.

When we went there, we checked into our hotel, Bhalobasha Residency. Then we went to Shanibarer Haat which is like an outdoor mall. There, we bought clothes, a souvenir pen, and some clay models. We also went to Deer Park. I was really excited to go there. I saw almost 50 spotted deer! They made funny noises. Some of them had really long antlers. Furthermore, we saw a house made almost entirely out of glass! This is called the Upasana Griha. I saw this before in a movie called *Posto*. What amazes me the most is that the house was still very clean and didn't have a single crack in the two centuries yet is made mostly of glass and mosaics.

In addition, we visited a museum about Rabindranath Tagore. The museum talked about the life of Rabindranath Tagore. The museum also displayed many things that he used throughout his life and books, paintings, and drawings he made in his life. My favorite things to see were the replica of the Nobel Prize that he won, a picture of him in Chicago, and one of his pictures with Albert Einstein. Attached to the museum were five other houses that he once lived in. He was one of the few people that had a car at his time and he also had very fancy furniture which made me think that he was from a very rich family.

Next, we went to Chhatimtala. This was like an outdoor school. All the classrooms are on a field under trees and the seats were made out of carved rocks. The school looked fun and I really want to study there. Then we went to Cheena

Bhavana. This place is like a huge outdoor auditorium. Once a year all the students of Santiniketan come to this auditorium and have a chance to perform on stage. This time the auditorium gets very crowded.



Lastly, we walked by Kala Bhavan. Kala Bhavan is an art school and gallery. Outside was some 3D projects called installation art. My favorite project was a huge brown igloo.

In summary, Santiniketan is a great place to visit. It was a memorable trip for me. I want to visit Santiniketan again.



**Prameet Guha**, 11 years — lives in Chicago. He loves reading, writing and drawing. His cartoon stories are specially to be mentioned.



## Jayanti Bandyopadhyay

### Making Shukto in a foreign land

In Bengal, Shukto (a healthy mixed vegetable dish with slightly bitter taste) is considered a special dish or should I say one of those that only experienced cooks like mothers, mothers-in-law, grandmothers are supposed to know how to make. There are different versions depending on the locality, especially between East (now Bangladesh) and West Bengal. Traditionally, this dish is served at the mid-day meal as the first dish before other vegetable and non-vegetarian dishes as Shukto is supposed to help cleanse the digestive system and increase appetite. The dish typically includes either bitter gourd or melon (picture included) or other bitter leaves to help the digestive system and protect against certain tropical diseases.

As I moved thousands of miles away from my birthplace and favorite city, Kolkata, my longing for Bengali music, literature and above all cooking grew stronger and stronger. The challenges of finding the exact ingredients had to be met with substitutes found in my new found land of residence. The process also gave me the freedom of mixing East and West Bengal recipes with my own creation (or concoction you might say). This recipe is from one of those experiments. The seeds I have used for favor are used in East Bengal cooking while the sauce for the Shukto is usually from the West Bengal version.

#### Ingredients:

1. Eggplant (one long Thai eggplant or other kinds are also ok)
2. Acorn Squash (half of a small one)
3. String Beans
4. Zucchini (one this is a substitute for a vegetable termed “Jhinga”)
5. One bitter gourd cut into thin round pieces as in the picture above (this is one ingredient that I have had to do without often as this is not available in regular grocery stores abroad). To bring the slightly bitter taste, I have used a larger portion of ginger paste.



*Bitter Gourd or Bitter Melon*



*Cut Vegetable pieces*



*Fried bitter gourd pieces*



*Ground poppy seed and mustard mixture with milk*



*Ginger paste*



*Celery seeds and brown mustard seeds*

6. One medium size red potato
7. Brown mustard seeds (white mustard seeds may be used)
8. Celery seeds (this is a substitute for “Radhuni” which is not easily available outside of India). I tried using sage or thyme or basil but when I found celery seeds, excitement engulfed me.
9. White Poppy seeds (black ones found in stores may be used but I have never used that kind)
10. Mustard powder (Coleman's brand is fine or Sunrise brand from India)
11. Ginger root paste (2½ teaspoons)
12. Lentil dried balls or Bori (optional)
13. Olive oil
14. Ghee or clarified butter
15. Salt

*Cooking Method:*

1. Cut all the vegetables in similar sizes (see picture).
2. Grind the poppy seeds (2 tablespoons) and mix with ground mustard and ½ cup milk to form a paste (picture included). Set aside.
3. In a large sauce pan (nonstick), heat two tablespoons olive oil and fry the lentil balls (bori) until brown. You can skip the bori if you do not have those. Take out and set aside for garnishing later.
4. Add the bitter gourd slices and fry until browned on both sides and then take out and set aside (see picture).
5. In the heated oil (one more tablespoon may have to be added), add ½ teaspoon of mustard seeds and 1 teaspoon of celery seeds the seeds will release distinctive fragrance when heated).
6. Add the cut potatoes first and sauté until lightly browned. Then add the cut squash and the beans and sauté together. Cut eggplants and zucchini should be added last.
7. Add salt to taste (two teaspoons or less). Add the ginger paste, cover and cook in medium heat for 3 minutes.





*Lentil balls (Bori)*



*Shukto*

8. Add the poppy seed and mustard paste (with milk) and stir well. If needed, add more milk but the mixture should not be soupy. Cover and cook in medium heat for 5 minutes. Check if potatoes are cooked. Now add the fried bitter gourd slices and mix.
  9. Add the fried lentil balls on top.
  10. Sprinkle ½ teaspoon of ghee on top.
- Shukto is ready and eat with basmati rice.



Dr. Jayanti Bandyopadhyay is a Professor of Accounting and the Graduate Program Coordinator at the Bertolon School of Business at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts. Her research interests include internationalization of accounting services, tax and international accounting issues, case studies, micro-financing, and measuring the impact of investment in bottom of the pyramid segments.

Jayanti co-founded SETU (Stage Ensemble Theatre Unit), a not-for-profit English theatre group portraying Indian origin plays in English in Boston, Massachusetts. She loves to write stories occasionally and is a passionate cook. She was born in Kolkata, India. She currently lives in Boston with her husband, Gautam. She has five grandchildren between the ages of 6 months to five years who are the fuel for her other passion in life.





## Urmi Chakraborty

### Recipes from India

Besides Writing, Painting, COOKING is my another passion which I inherited from my parents. My mother who learnt cooking from my grandmother, a great cook and my father, a retired Bank manager, take great interest in experimenting and innovating diversified tasty dishes of various places since they are also passionate in travelling and so, as I.

Whether it is Vegetarian or Non-vegetarian, Healthy or Rich, Bengali or Punjabi or South-Indian, Continental or Mughlai I love to learn all types of recipes and sheer by my interest, a lot of recipes are now in my basket. Whenever I find opportunity to invite my friends or relatives, I dare to experiment my recipes with their taste-buds. Their appreciations, inputs and exchange of my recipes with theirs enrich my diversified kitty of mouth-watering recipes. With the same hope of learning, I would like to take the opportunity in inviting your interest in my recipes. Your valuable inputs or comments are solicited.

#### CAULIFLOWER ROAST

##### INGREDIENTS

Cauliflower : Medium size  
Tomato : 5-6 pieces (big size)  
Ginger paste : 2 tsp  
Cumin : 1/4 tsp  
Cumin powder : 1/2 tsp  
Turmeric powder : 1/4 tsp  
Salt : 1/2 tsp



##### PREPARATION

- Put the whole cauliflower in a kadai (wok) on medium heat and add 2 glasses of water
- Cover the pan for 15-20 minutes till it becomes tender
- Drain the water and place the cauliflower on a plate
- Blend the tomatoes for a paste
- Heat 3 tsp of oil in a pan
- Add cumin and wait for few seconds till it sizzle
- Add tomato paste and stir for 10-15 minutes on low heat
- Add ginger paste, cumin powder, turmeric powder and salt to season
- Stir for 5-10 minutes and then cover the pan for another 5 minutes
- Score few cuts on the cauliflower so that the tomato paste goes inside it
- Pour the tomato gravy on the cauliflower
- Serve it hot with chapatti, bread

## LIME-DE-CABBAGE

### *Ingredients*

Cabbage : 1 (medium size)  
 Potato : 2 (medium size)  
 Mustard : 1/2 tsp  
 Lemon : 1 (small size)  
 Curry leaves : 1/4 cup  
 Salt : 1/2 tsp (As per taste)  
 Turmeric powder : 1/4 tsp  
 Green chilly : 2-3 pieces



### *Preparation*

- Cut the cabbage finely
- Cut the potato into small pieces
- Heat 4-6 tsp of oil in a pan
- Pour mustard and wait for few seconds till it sizzle
- Pour cabbage and potato
- Stir it for 15-20 minutes
- Add turmeric powder, green chilly, curry leaves and salt
- Stir it nicely for another 5-10 minutes
- Add lime juice to the cabbage
- Cover the pan for 5-10 minutes (keep in low heat)
- Serve it hot with chapatti / bread

## SABZI KARARA

### *Ingredients*

Cauliflower : 1 (small size)  
 Carrot : 2  
 Green peas : 1 cup  
 Sweet potato : 1  
 Beans : 6-8  
 Cabbage : 1 (small size)  
 Tomato : 1 (big size)  
 Cucumber : 1  
 Salt : 1 tsp  
 Turmeric powder : 1/2 tsp  
 Cumin seeds : 1/4 tsp  
 Cumin powder : 1/2 tsp





Green chilly : 4-5 pieces

Chat masala : 1/2 tsp

Garam masala : 1/4 tsp

### ***Preparation***

- Cut cauliflower, carrot, sweet potato, beans and cabbage into small pieces
- Heat 4-5 tsp of oil in a kadai (Wok)
- Add cumin seeds and wait for few seconds till it sizzle
- Pour all the vegetables and stir it well
- Add cumin powder, salt, turmeric powder and green chilly and mix it well
- Stir it properly for 10-15 minutes
- Add chat masala and tomato and stir again for 5-10 minutes
- Cover the kadai for 5-10 minutes till the vegetable becomes tender
- Sprinkle garam masala
- Garnish with tomato and cucumber
- Serve it hot with roti/paratha

## **MURG PASANDA**

### ***Ingredients***

Chicken : 500 grams

Potato : 1-2 (medium size)

Onion : 1 (finely chopped)

Capsicum : 1 (small size)

Cinnamon stick : 1 ½ inch piece

Cardamom : 2-3 pieces

Cloves : 4-5 pieces

Ginger : 1 tsp (finely grated)

Garlic : 3-4 cloves (finely chopped)

Turmeric powder : 1 tsp

Chilly powder : 1 tsp

Yoghurt : 3-4 tsp

Tomato puree : 1 tsp

Ground almonds : 2 tsp

Salt : 1 tsp

Garam masala : 1/4 tsp







### *Preparation*

- Cut chicken, potato and capsicum into small pieces
- Marinate the chicken with turmeric powder, chilly powder, salt, garlic, ginger, yoghurt, tomato puree and ground almonds and keep it in fridge for 5-6 hours
- Heat 5-6 tsp of oil in a kadai (wok)
- Add cardamom, cinnamon stick and cloves and wait for few seconds till it sizzle
- Add onion and potato and stir it for 5-10 minutes till the onion becomes golden brown and potato becomes tender
- Add marinated chicken and capsicum and stir for 5-10 minutes
- Cover the kadai for 10-15 minutes
- Sprinkle garam masala to finish
- Serve it hot with tandoori roti



**Urmi Chakraborty** presently lives in Sydney. She has a great passion for travelling and love to explore new places, avid reader of english novels. She wrote numerous hindi poems and english articles in facebook and different blogs. She is extremely happy to share her creation with Batayan's readers.







Nature's own canvas  
God's own country ....  
Masterpieces amass  
Sun & sea a bounty ....