# न्यासरीसा भाराज्य



Year 2000

### THE Hongkong Bengali Association

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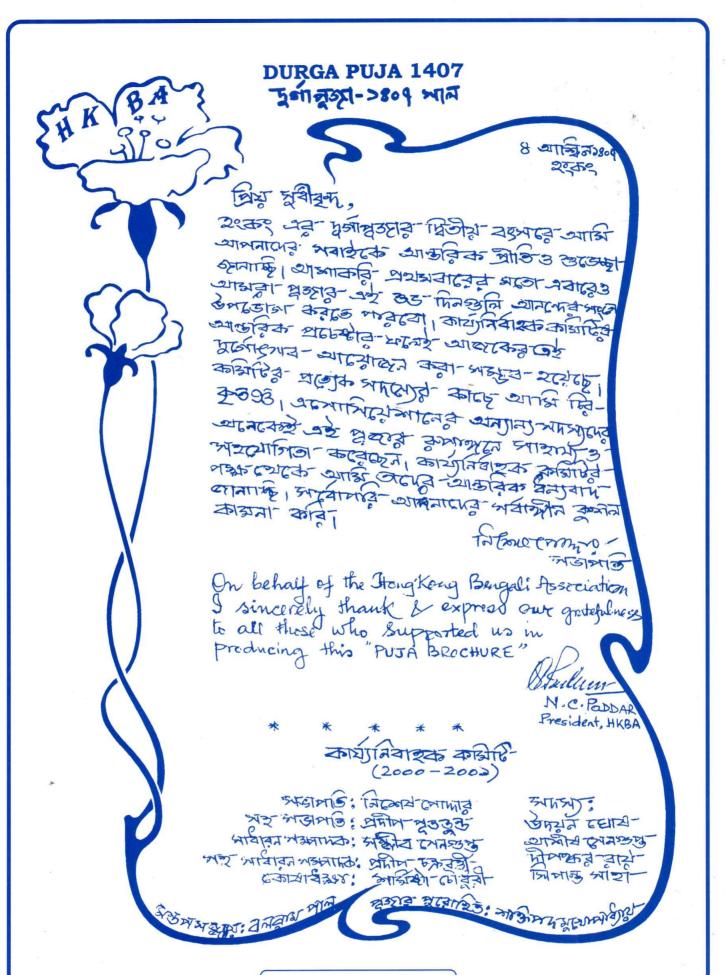
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SARASWATI PUJA



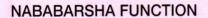
**FANCY DRESS: DURGA PUJA** 



NABABARSHA FUNCTION



**DURGA PUJA** 





WINTER PICNIC

		The Hong Kong B	Sengali Association		
R	eceipts and	Payments Accoun	nt for the period ended 22.2.2000		
		(Period of the cu	rrent Committee)		
Receipts	HKD	Amount	Payments	HKD	Amount
		HKD			HKD
, v , , š,					
Funds handed over by the		12022	Saraswati Puja Expenses:		
previous Committee			1999		
			Expenses-Puja, Cultural and		
Membership Fees Collection:			Community Dinner	6387	
1999-2000	4500		Donation to Temple	3000	9387
2000-2001	5650	10150	2000		
			Expenses-Puja, Cultural and		4
Saraswati Puja Collection:			Community Dinner	7553	
1999			Donation to Temple	2000	9553
Members' Subscriptions	6240				
Pranami/Donations	967	7207	Bengali New Year's function		
2000			at India Club:		
Members' Subscriptions	10850		Dinner and Celebrations	10500	
Pranami/Donations	949	11799	Cultural Expenses	516	11016
Turiarii/ Boriations	0.10				
Bengali New Year's function			Durga Puja Expenses:		
at India Club:			Idol	2835	
Members' Subscriptions		13416	Purohit including travel	5385	
WICHIBOTS CUBSCIPTIONS		10110	Puja, Bhog, Community		
Picnic on 9.1.2000			Lunch-Dinner Expenses	34461	42681
Surplus therefrom		840	Editori Birilor Expenses	01101	12001
Surpius trieferiorii		040	Bijoya Sammelani Expenses		10330
Durga Puja Collection:			Dijoya Garrinelani Expenses		10000
Members' Subscriptions	64579	1	Subscription for Life Membership		
Advertisements	21000		of HKBA to Hindu Temple		6000
Pranami/Donations	7964		OF FIRMA TO FIIII du Temple	-	0000
	4102	97645	Fees paid for Society search		26
Sponsorships received	4102	37043	rees paid for Society Seafor		20
Collection from Members for			Purchase of Hi-Fi system and		2910
Orissa disaster		8751	Microphones	1	2310
Urissa disaster		0/31	Micropriories		
			Payment to Oxfam for Orissa		10000
,					10000
			disaster		
			For all hallows are stated to be set		50007
			Fund balance remaining in hand		59927
		404000	Tatal		161830
Total		161830	Total		101830

			engali Association		
	HKD	Balance Sheet as at 22.02.2000			
Liabilities		Amount	Assets	HKD	Amount
		HKD			HKD
Members'Fund:			Life Membership of Hindu		
Opening Balance	12022		Temple		6000
Add:	ILOLL		Tompto		
Membership fees collected for:			Hi Fi System(JVC)		2910
1999-2000	4500				
2000-2001	5650	22172	Bank Deposit		59927
General Fund:					
Surplus from:					
Saraswati Puja-1999	-2180				
Saraswati Puja-2000	2246				
Bengali New Year function	2400				
Durga Puja	54964				
Picnic	840				
	58270				9
Less:					
Bijoya sammelani Expenses	-10330				
Fees for society search	-26				
Contribution by HKBA towards					
Orissa disaster	-1249	46665			
Total		68837	Total		68837



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#### An Ode to Bangla Mishti

An Ode to Bangla Mishti

O mishti who is soft and round your virtues are divine
You're pressed and folded lovingly in intricate design
And now you're called a shondesh as in your heart your bear
A sweetly chiseled message for everyone to share.
Your forms are in profusion, your versatility great
From shards of caramel coconut to kheer landscapes ornate.
When in viscous syrup, your graceful self you steep
There comes a roshogolla bliss that is both warm and deep.
And then you're chhana jilepi, a golden crispy coil
Delicately succulent and fried in searing oil.
As saffron and cardamom, dusted on sheets of cream
You're also known as rabri, an aromatic dream.
As Joynogorer moa you are smooth and round and white
Stuffed with raisins and almonds, taste buds do you excite.
And during poush shonkranti in the winter solstice cold
You're peethe, as a mass of kheer in sweet potato rolled.
Not just on plates have you appeared but in history books too
The kings and queens and Viceroys all once feasted on you.
Legendary Behoola, a dancer celebrated,
Was also a skilled mishti maker, very higly rated.
In those days when food was art and people had the time
They'd spend all day cooking you up in flavours all sublime.
Today the love for you has changed in style but not in measure
With people only making you in days of rest and leisure.
May you be munched forever; to you I make this toast
The aspect of my culture I identify with most.

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#### Ma Durga On A Strange Land

Hi. I am Teidipto Bose and I have been living in Hong Kong for Being a Bengali living abroad. I have realized some interesting facts. Bengalis, as a linguistic group, are certainly more intellectually oriented- perceived as culturally alive and dynamic. Bengalis are famed as scientists, doctors, administrators, artists, saints, litterateurs, nationalists etc. etc.. An unending scroll of hallowed names over centuries makes us proud to be Bengalis and prouder still to carry on their great tradition.

But Bengalis as great businessmen, tycoons & entrepreneurs?! Not many, I trust. From spirit of Thakur Ramakrishna's "Mati Taka', Swami Vivekananda's 'service before self and more recently from land of 'comrades', I wonder, how Bengalis have fitted in a ultra-materialistic world of HK, where a 'sweet dream' must mean dreaming of hitting a mark-six and a 'nightmare' means seeing your shares nose-dive on Hang Seng.

Do we miss our very own Bengal - more so, Calcutta? Maybe, yes....The lazy Sunday evenings on Maidan greenery....the Metro....maybe, misti doi & sandesh at K.C.Das & Ganguram ......Do you miss Victoria..?A Rabindra or Nazrul sandhya at Academy or Rabindra Sadan?\_You are never too old for an unending 'Adda' with old chums..... How was a quick 'Mughlai' at Esplanade or grab of tasty mudi'in between a Mrinal Sen show at Nandan ... Do you miss a chaotic traffic in Esplanade East or . a bandh called by SUCI.? These are days when we plan for queuing at Ekdalia, Mudiali or Md.Ali Park maybe at late nights... Or may be ,you are wondering about Calcutta minibuses being driven by so many Schumachers racing for life.

Yes, Bengalis love all these. ... When back in Calcutta, I took all these as part of a routinely dull life. I never imagined that I would be nostalgic about them here. At HK, at Park-n-shop & Marks & Spencers what you get is bar-coded shopping & metallic smiles. Unlike a Gariahat shopping where repartees with shopkeepers are always free, wider smile by a counter girl at HK plazas means not a warm heart. It may rather mean a better pay packet.

I believe Bengalis have a unique cultural identity to be proud of It is very natural to all of us and is in our genes or genomes however you name it. Now that willy-nilly, we all have made the SAR our home, we miss the cultural chaos dearly.

Now, that we have 'a real thing' right here, at Happy Valley Mandir for the 2nd year, we are grateful to our very own Devi Durga, firstly..., For all of us, quarter globe away from our roots, this Durga Puja is an occasion to renew our bondage. Our thanks are to them all who spent lot of their time ('time is money' -in Hong Kong) in successfully creating this atmosphere.

Despite our hectic schedules, we tend not to miss a day of this special occasion. We are blessed to have left behind all our stress & strain for few days in a light of warmth and holiness. As I said, it is the inherited reverence for the Goddess, the religious undertone as also the social angle in form of much awaited getting-together,

Bengalis are notoriously sentimental and strong believers in human values as also in human relations. Many of us here today may not know each other, but thru' this Puja, we have made it a closer & friendlier world for all of us here. We compare notes of how good HK has been to us meanwhile, how was Calcutta on our last visit home, etc. Adults among us part with more of visiting cards & kids & young ones like us return to our routine with more friends and with phone nos. for our diaries.

Yes, certainly we part with pleasant memories. As the Durga Puja finally comes to a melancholic closure, memories go back to our years in India, where we had been celebrating Puja with close family members and friends. Now that the typical 'Bengali spirit' has taken off among all of us at Hong Kong last year there is no reason why this can not continue for ever, of course, with blessings of Ma Durga... See you next year!

-TEJDIPTO BOSE

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#### Confession of a Killer

#### ..... ASHIS SANYAL

"Cheers", said I, even before Arun could lift his glass. Arun has just joined the main Branch after a long stay in a rural branch, Bangriposhi, in deep forests of Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar. It indeed needed celebration.

It was a cosy bar I preferred in Bhubaneswar. But Arun seemed to a bit morose. Yes, he appeared to be happy and relieved to have been out of those hilly jungles, now out in the capital city, full of lights. At the same time, he appeared to be brooding over something; his mind appeared to be somewhere else, where I could not reach him.

People around us were noisily discussing the brutal murder of the day before, news of which was flashed in all local papers that day. The culprit was caught almost red handed.

With a deep sigh Arun lifted his eyes, still far removed from the madding crowd around, and said softly, "What would be the punishment for the murderer?". I said "said" not "asked", since it appeared to be a soliloquy, he was still within his cocoon, talking to himself. Nevertheless, I hazarded a guess, "Would be hanged probably."

He stared at me with dreamy eyes, barely audible, he said, "What would happen to me then?" "Why, what is bothering you?" I retorted, slightly irritated, the conversation was spoiling my sundowner. "I too have killed a MAN. No, I've done worse." he declared solemnly. The way he uttered the word "man", it seemed he meant not a particular man, but the entire humanity.

Now, that seemed interesting!

Dear readers, like many other mortals, I too like skeletons in cupboards, hidden scandals, rather enjoy them.

Made myself more comfortable, sought the bearer, asked for two double pegs and declared my claim over the whole truth, nothing but the truth.

First two glasses had already softened him a bit, he started, "You know Bangriposhi, the gateway to the tourist heaven, Simlipal forest, a giant one at that with area of more than 5000 sq.km., covering almost half of two districts, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar, entirely hilly terrain. It is a semitown, has a post office, forest office, bank, a research centre of Central Silk Board and even a small railway station. [Sorry for the interruption – Bangriposhi – Baripada narrow gauge railway service still runs as part of the conditions of joining of Mayurbhanj State to the Republic of India after independence ] Howrah-Bombay National highway number-6 passes through the town. Howrah-Madras NH-5 misses the town by only about 12 km."

It was getting a bit monotonous, I was losing patience. "Ok, ok, when would you come to the skeleton proper?" "Please bear with me, I'm sorry, but let me reconstruct the crime scene first." Arun seemed to be in better mood. Time for another pair of double pegs.

He continued, "The branch has two motor cycles, a Bullet and a Rajdoot, to cover the service area of 30 km radius, that is around 3000 sq. km., half of that across Budhabalanga river – miles and miles of deep jungles and hills. As you know, the entire area beyond the river is out of reach for six months a year."

[Dear reader, pardon again – you know the river as 'Buribalam' – on the bank of which Bagha Jatin gave his life in the outskirts of Balasore town]

Enough was enough, I did inform him, where was the murder proper?

Arun calmed down wee bit, "As Manager of the Branch, it was my duty to keep the loan documents of around 2500 borrowers alive. From mid May till mid-June every morning I rode the bullet to those god-forsaken places to meet my borrowers. It happened one of those days..."

I was in ecstatic state, the skeleton was about to tumble out of the cupboard. It did call for another pair of doubles.

Arun continued, "I went to the village of Majhi Munda. He had been financed for goat rearing, the scoundrel did not repay a simple paise for years. My mission was to collect some repayment and get his signature on the loan renewal document, the bullet's sidebasket full of blank renewal documents, revenue stamps, stamp pad etc. Reached the village, asked for Majhi Munda. A group of six seven tribals were whiling away their time on a fallen tree trunk. They shook their heads, "Majhi Munda? He is no more." "When did he die?" "No, we are not sure, may be six months, seven months, who remembers?" I walked further on, leaving the motorcycle on the road. Met an old man who could at least point out the direction where Majhi Munda was last seen. No, he did not know whether Majhi Munda was dead or still alive.

At least I got a direction. Crossed a hillock, and reached a barren land, size of a football field awash with scorching sun. On the far side of the field, under a lone Neem tree, something appeared to be moving. Yes, there was a woman of indeterminate age, covered in a torn cloth that once was a cheap saree, a skeletal baby hanging from her breast, she weaving a bamboo mat.

Yours truly stood before her and asked for the man. She raised her vacant eyes – by the way – have you ever seen an abandoned coal pit – bottomless, with no hope, no promise? Her eyes were more vacant than those coal pits – pointed to the distance with her chin."

Arun was already slurring and I was getting bored.

He continued after a couple of sips, "Eureka, I have at last found him, or rather his abode, a thatched structure a yard high and of two yards length, covered with bamboo mat. With all my authority I asked him out, - pay the debt or face the consequences.

A skeleton tried to crawl out of the structure, coughing noisily. The entire structure stank, stank of disease, TB, Cancer, god knows what. Or was it the incurable disease, poverty? Abject poverty? His violent coughs seemed to revolt against the body housing him. Personified persecution from the days of Spartacus, nay, the dark womb of history. There lay a man, unable to sustain himself, let alone his family, already dead to his neighbours, forgotten. The world did not want him, a man afraid to meet the sun. I stopped him and turned to the woman. What about their children? Yes, they had a son, about 12 year, who left them about a few weeks back, she was not sure, in search of food, unable to bear the hunger. She stayed back, after all the semi-dead man was her husband, notwithstanding the underfed toddler rummaging the breast of the hungrier mother.

But then, I was on a mission possible. Asked her name, asked for her left hand and put her thumb impression on the document I was carrying. I got the thumb impression of the legal heir of Majhi Munda on my document. The woman, careless of the world acquiesced with her inert left upper limb, she had nothing to loose.

I got my renewal document and turned back."

I maintained my patience and asked, "So, what is eating you, what did you do wrong?"

Arun gave me a pathetic look, "Don't you see, what a scum I was? To his neighbours, to his society, he was just a dead man. The world was dead for him. But what did I do? I erased the man's existence from the only record where he mattered, the bank's books. I killed him only because I knew he was alive. His crime – refusal to die. I removed his existence from the face of the earth?"

By this time Arun was openly weeping and the drunks around us looked at him with loathsome eyes.

Dear patient readers, you and me, who never saw poverty at close range, who never slept on footpaths, who never lived in bus stands and railway platforms of cities the way millions of refugees do during wars, who were not born, lived and died in trash, who never slept hungry, would not understand what wrong Arun had done and what was tormenting him.

Neither did I. But I still do not know why my whiskey tasted salty that night.

...000...

P.S. An all-weather bridge has since been built across the river. Civilisation has encroached the land of Majhi Munda. His children no longer eat saal seeds. These are whisked away by MNCs to make saal seed butter for the chocolate my children eat, leaving Munda's children to starve peacefully – now throughout the year.

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#### The Hypnotist

#### .....PRADEEP CHAKRABORTY

"Bolo Durga Mai Kiiii, Jai". "Bolo George Town Barwari Kiiii, Jai", chanted the hundreds of people inside the George Town Puja Pandal in Allahabad, gathered there for the Maha Ashtami Aaroti.

Kanai, now 8, was among the people enjoying the Aaroti. Wow, look at those men playing the Dhak! What rhythm, what flair, and best of all, exceptional skill. And how the Dhakis danced as they played the Dhak. "Maa, I too want to play the Dhak like them," Kanai asked his mother. "Shona, you are still quite young. I think the Dhak will be quite heavy and unmanageable for you," his mother replied. "Grow up a little more, then I think you should be able to give it a try," she added.

Kanai wondered whether the Dhak was really too heavy. Just this morning, one of the Dhakis had allowed him to play the Dhak for a few minutes. Of course, the Dhak was upright, but so what. I managed to play it all right! Okay, I can wait. But I will definitely play the Dhak and dance in front of Ma Durga. I'll play it continuously for four hours in a row.

"Kanu, don't you want watch the magic show? Let's walk over to the auditorium. We must get the front seats," he heard his mother speaking softly to him. "The Aaroti is nearly over, and the show will begin in half an hour."

Kanai was a very sharp boy, and always stood among the first three in class. "Ma, that gentleman's a hypnotist, not a magician! He will make people look at his eyes and make them fall asleep. Then he'll make them do all sorts of things," Kanai responded.

"And by the way, these hypnotists are frauds," he added.

"Naa Shona, don't speak ill of others. Such men go around doing shows during Durga Puja. It's their livelihood," Kanai's mother replied, as both entered the auditorium.

"Look Ma, there's the hypnotist," shouted an excited Kanai. Before his mother could stop him, he raced up to the stage, climbed up and went right up to the hypnotist.

"Sir, are you the hypnotist?" The man turned around. "Yes, young man. That's correct."

"Sir, how can you hypnotize people? Only Mandrake can do that in comics. I do not believe in it at all," Kanai exclaimed.

"Baba, we do magic shows. It is my job to entertain. Say, would you like to volunteer for a session?"

At this point, Kanai heard his mother call him, "Shona, what are you doing there? Get down and do not disturb others."

"Yes, sir, I will volunteer, but I do not believe in magic and hypnotism," Kanai remarked as he started to climb down the stage.

The show started. The hypnotist first showed some tricks of the hand. After a while, he started his hypnotism show. He called a couple of volunteers on stage. Each volunteer was "hypnotized" by reading a "Mantra" written on a piece of paper. The hypnotist made people recall theirs past lives, and even had them narrate some of their experiences from the past. It was real entertaining stuff.

"Well, this guy is real. I thought, they only knew how to do tricks," wondered Kanai.

Suddenly, he heard someone nudging him. Ma was saying, "Shona, the Bhadralok is requesting me to allow you to go up on stage. Would you like to go up?"

"Ooh, OK, if it's not a problem with you," Kanai said. So up he went on to the stage.

"Hello, young man, how are you today? Welcome to my show," the hypnotist proclaimed. After brief introductions, he said, "Kanai, now I will hypnotize you. You will fall asleep, and do exactly as told."

He handed Kanai a piece of paper with the "Mantra" written. "Please read it carefully, and recite it three times silently," the hypnotist requested.

Kanai did so. And as the enthralled audience watched, the hypnotist made Kanai do various things while he was in a trance. To others, it seemed as though Kanai was sleepwalking and doing the activities, as ordered by the hypnotist.

Suddenly, the hypnotist snapped his fingers and shouted: "Now you are out of the trance, Kanai. Welcome back."

Everyone applauded as Kanai walked off the stage.

The show over, Kanai walked back home with Ma. She asked, "Shona, did you enjoy the experience?"

"Oh yes, quite enjoyable."

"Tell me, do you remember the "Mantra"? It must be something unique," she added.

"Unique! Yes, Ma, I remember the Mantra," Kanai replied.

"Ma, the hypnotist gave me a piece of paper and asked me to read it thrice, silently. The words were: "You are a very nice person. Please, I have a family to feed. Kindly do as you are told, otherwise, I will be disgraced and my family will have to go without a meal." Can you believe it? He probably did this with the others too, and nobody said a word," Kanai said.

"Ma, I hope Maa Durga takes care of him and his family, so he does not have to do these shows. He does not have a job, probably. I hope his dreams are realized," Kanai added as an afterthought.

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#### HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN HONG KONG

#### DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA ABOUT IT?

#### ---- Dr. Udayan Ghosh (CMC)

I was thinking of participating in a more active way in our "Durga Puja" souvenir with a contribution. I thought it might be of use to all our members if I write a few words about "HEALTH CARE IN HK". I believe it is my responsibility, being a doctor and working in a hospital for long time, to share my knowledge with our members and give some idea about how the Hong Kong Medical System works. I guess few members are aware of the full picture. Here at HK two medical sectors work close together. In the private sector you go to private clinic to see the doctor and pay for. The payment will be made personally by you, or by your office if covered by employment contact or through health insurance cover if provided to you. The other sector, run by the Hosptial Authority (HA), is a government subsidised health care system. You can go to any hospital under HA either in A & E department (in case of emergency) or in the general out patient department (OPD). The OPD is actually a clinic run by the hospital doctors. The OPD runs every day from 9 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. with breaks at 1 to 2 p.m. and again at 5 to 6 p.m. Specialist clinics are also run every day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. You need a referral letter for specialist clinic which you may avail from your general practitioner, or from A & E department or from general clinic. All public hospitals under HA charge you for general clinic about HK\$38 inclusive of-investigation charges, doctor fees and medicines for 1 to 2 weeks. On a similar basis, specialist clinics (Surgery, Medicine, Gynae and Obs, Eye, ENT, Dermatology) charge HK\$44. If you are admitted to the hospital the daily charge is HK\$68 inclusive of all investigation and operation charges. You should, however, remember that there might be long waiting lists. In case you can not wait and/or if you can afford to pay the private doctor fees, you can always visit a private clinic where you will get special care. Private consultation charge is high in HK. Operation charge is also high compared to hospital fees. However, if you need to visit a HA hospital, you should be a HK ID cardholder. The medical care in any HA hospital at HK is high and compares well with any western country; some areas could be even better. Please remember that dental care in HK is totally private. Some hospitals provide basic dental treatment.

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4. CARITAS MEDICAL CENTRE (CMC)	MING OI-	27467911
5. KWONG WAH HOSPITAL (KWH)	KWONG WAH-	23322311
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Thus, Caritas Hospital is Ming Oi Yee Yuin and Princess Margaret Hospital is Ma Kali Yee Yuin.

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