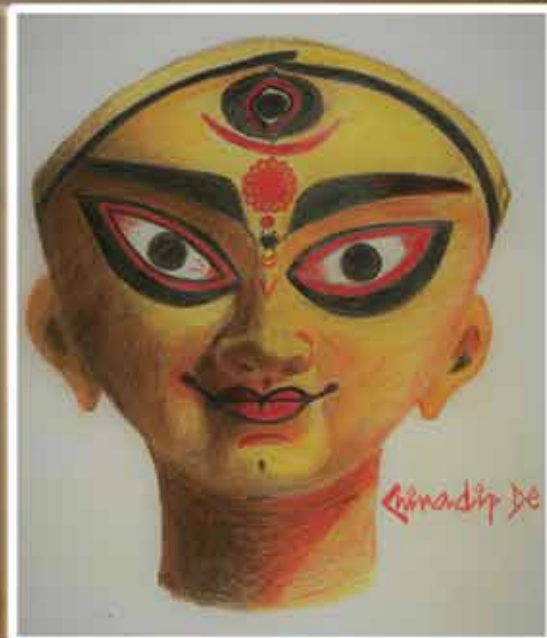
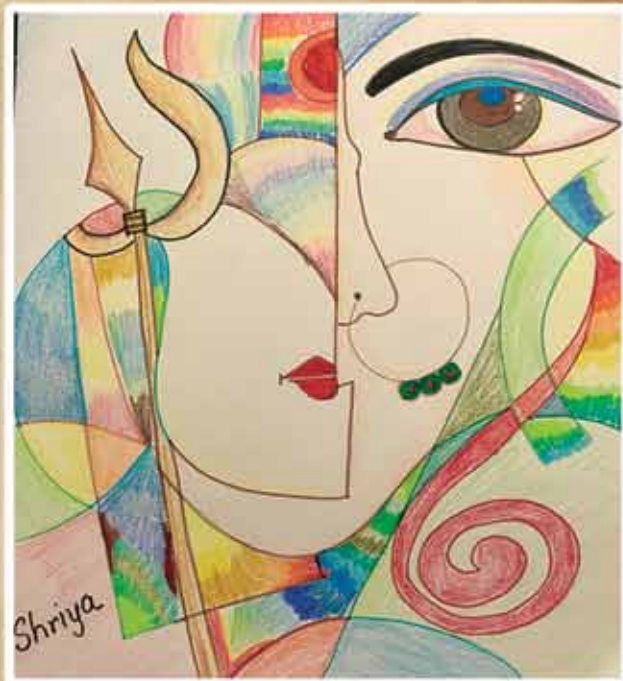




The Hong Kong Bengali Association

Durga Puja 2018

20 Years





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With ship repair as its main business HRDD has been devoting to high value-added products such as cruise vessel upgrading and docking, including "Costa Atlantic" in 2015, followed by "Glory of the Sea" & "Costa Serena"; bulbous bow renewal, turnkey solution for BWTS retrofit, turnkey solution for EGCS retrofit, LPG/LNG maintenance, FSRU re-gasification unit modules for LNG "Heegh Gallant", etc.

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For the later business of LNG business, after years efforts and preparations, HRDD has been audited by the leading LNG membrane Technology service and supplier Gaztransport & Technigaz (GTT) in France. Furthermore, for offering more professional services, HRDD has established the cooperative agreements with the LNG specialized companies such as GABADI from Spain. Under the co-operations with all the LNG specialized companies, HRDD is capable to carry out docking /repairs and conversion for LNG carriers from now on.



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Contents

4	Message from President
6	Message from Vice President
8	HKBA Executive Committee 2017 - 2018
9	Special Acknowledgements
10	Durga Puja 2017 Program Schedule
	Travelogues & Tales
13	- African Safari
53	- Our trip to France & Italy
17	- The Foothills of Kilimanjaro
20	- The faces from Namtso
22	- Trip to the top of the world – Leh, Ladakh
	Essays & Musings
28	- The Wisdom of the Sages
32	- Rahman
36	- Logitica - The brain behind the brain
40	- Foot-Bong
43	- Dadas of Calcutta
	Verses
47	- Kopotota
49	- Pujo Manei
51	- Meyeta
53	- My holiday
56	- Puzzle Game
	HKBA in Pictures
68	- Durga Puja 2017
80	- Bijoya Shonmiloni 2017 at MASK
81	- Rabindra Jayanti at Indian Consulate 2017-18
82	- Art Corner
104	- HKBA 20 years - Magazine covers from the past

Message from President

Greetings from the President....

Durga, the goddess of power and strength, also identified as Adi Parashakti, Devi, Shakti, Bhavani, Parvati and by numerous other names, is perhaps the most important goddess of the Hindus. She is a fierce form of Devi in Hindu mythology, the warrior goddess, the bringer of peace and prosperity, the protector of the good. Her icon shows her in battle, yet her face is calm and serene, because she acts out of necessity as a protective mother of universe, for the love of the good, for liberation of those who depend on her, and to mark the beginning of soul's journey to creative freedom.

On behalf of the Hong Kong Bengali Association, it is my immense pleasure in cordially inviting you to participate in making this 20th year Maha puja a grand success. Today the entire world is full of problems which are basically due to severe deterioration of humanity amongst us. But we must not forget, as individuals we may achieve something but as a coordinated team we can achieve great deal more. So on this auspicious occasion let us promise to ourselves that we would eliminate the evil forces within and welcome the lights in our lives. As an individual, everyone can make a difference by doing so. This will build up our morale / thoughts and we can be more focused on what life is all about. We must know, "Being able to contribute in some way to the happiness of others through some work or in some other capacity brings joy and fulfilment in life". All of us should carry forward this wonderful thought in our practical life to bring smiles on the faces of so many people around.

My sincere thanks to all the members, patrons, volunteers, stage performers and above all the EC members and the advisors hard work, commitment and devotion to make this Maha Puja a grand success.

We together pray to Goddess Ma Durga, to give us courage, perseverance and serenity to eliminate all satanic forces within to make this world a better place. No matter what the circumstances may be, good should always prevail over bad, light should remove darkness and this is only possible if we can enlighten ourselves with good thoughts. So, let's come forward and enjoy the greatest festival.

Wishing you, your families, friends and relatives, and your beloved ones a very happy Durga Puja.

*Warm regards,
Prasenjit Sen*

Best Puja Wishes from

HRIDI INTERNATIONAL LIMITED



Message from Vice President

A Happy Sharodutsav to all.

We are now in the 20th year of The Hong Kong Bengali Association (HKBA) Durga Puja celebrations. Let us first and foremost congratulate all those who have put in their efforts to achieve this eventful milestone.

Right from inception by a few members in forming the HKBA and organizing a puja in a small scale at the Happy Valley temple to the point today wherein it is being celebrated in a pandal (one of the few Probashi Pujo worldwide to be in an open air pandal), it has been a long and eventful journey. To start an ethnic organization in a foreign country is never an easy task. It requires a lot of effort, dedication and perseverance of the few who decide to put in that extra effort, after the usual office grind and after fulfilling one's own professional and personal obligations. And after all it is all done for a selfless cause! Let me salute the club founders for their great efforts.

Also, a special salute to all the former members of the HKBA in continuing the tradition and the present members for the event this year. They all deserve equal praise for their great efforts.

Today the Hong Kong Bengali Association Durga Puja is a much talked about mega occasion among the Indian community in Hong Kong thanks to all above.

This year in addition to Bengalis, some of our other Fellow Indians who have a strong affinity towards the Bengali culture and had expressed a strong desire to be a part of the celebration, have also been included and we warmly welcome them into the Bengali fold.

As it is commonly said, change is the only constant in life. Every organization needs to be dynamic and must keep evolving. We have seen a lot of change in HKBA too and today the Durga Puja is being celebrated in a real Pandal with participation of drummers (Dhakis), Cooks and Priest (Purohit) being brought in from Sonar Bangla and Ma Durga's aarti being conducted with real Pradip instead of artificial electric lights. There are very few places outside India where the Puja is being celebrated in such a grand scale. The enthusiasm and participation in the event has been overwhelming and we as members of HKBA are blessed by Ma Durga to be able to conduct and be a part of this event. I am sure there will be many more changes for the better as we move towards our Silver jubilee celebration.

There is scope for further improvement in fund collection and we request more members to come forward in future for raising funds, and contributing financially as well as in making this event even more grand.

May Ma Durga bless us all for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous future.

Alok Roy

Vice President
The Hong Kong Bengali Association

Best Puja Wishes from

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Special Acknowledgements

The Hong Kong Bengali Association wishes to express its heart-felt thanks to all friends, supporters, sponsors and well-wishers for the help they have rendered to the cause of our Association. For this year's Durga Puja, we especially acknowledge the contributions of the following persons:

Indian Recreation Club Committee and staff member
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Durga Puja 2018 Program Schedule

Venue:
INDIAN RECREATION CLUB, 63 CAROLINE HILL ROAD,
Sookunpoo Valley, Causeway Bay, HONG KONG
Tel: (852) 2576 6583 (Office)

15th Oct Monday - Sashthi

1800 - 1930 Hrs Bodhan /Sandha Arati

16th Oct Tuesday - Saptami

0930 Hrs - 1230 Hrs Maha Saptami Pujo

1800 - 1930 Hrs Sandha Arati

17th Oct Wednesday - Asthami

0930 -1230 Hrs Maha Ashtami Pujo

1433 -1521 Hrs Sandhi Pujo

1800 - 1930 Hrs Sandha Arati

18th Oct Thursday - Nabomi

0930 -1100 Hrs Maha Nabomi Pujo

1800 - 1930 Hrs Sandha Arati

19th Oct Friday - Dashami

0930 -1100 Hrs Maha Dasomi Pujo / Bisorjan

1700 - 1900 Hrs Boron / Sindur Khela / Santi Jal

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African Safari

Arnab Sengupta

Well what can one expect in an African safari? Hasn't National Geographic shown all that is there to see? Animals in the wild and not behind the cage? Migration of the wildebeest? Sky pink with the fleet of flamingos? Sleeping in tents with sounds of the animals – almost at breathing distance away? Being hosted by the Masai Tribe in their village? Lioness on a hunt while the cubs wait under the shade of tree waiting for the fresh farm to plate lunch (none of these preservatives or reliance on the global supply chain management and all that)?

Well... yes. All that and more that a gang of 8 adults and 6 young adults were able to soak in during a week we spent in Tanzania traveling through various reserves (including one in the crater of a volcano).

Rather than watching animals from behind the bars of a cage in a zoo, this was a unique experience where we were immersed in the animals' territory. In the Serengeti, we witnessed the animals interact in their natural habitat without any human intervention. We were able to watch from a close distance as a pride of lionesses chased a deer, zebras grazed together and hundreds of wildebeest crossed a river to migrate.

None of the stories we read and documentaries we watched could have prepared us for what we were privileged to see. All those were true but there was lot more to Africa than what a tourist guidebook and documentaries and the stories one read.

It is about what Africa can offer as learning to the world. It's about cohabitation of humans and animals and lack of arrogance of the homo sapiens' god like superiority (mostly based ability to destroy at a touch of a button). Where ever we went – we were reminded that we humans don't own this planet – we share with other creatures. In one of the interesting lines the guides told us before we entered a reserve – that we are going in as guests in the home of animals and we should behave as guests in someone else's house. We have been conditioned in many parts of world to treat anything outside the immediate space we occupy as a big garbage and throw and dump everything in what we perceive as "outside" our "home". But what if the whole space is the "home"? And what if it's the home we are visiting as guests? We were to pack everything including leftover food and trash we generate and carry in the vehicles only to be disposed in designated place. In one of the interesting discussion with the guides – we asked would there be a distinction between degradable and non-bio degradables – like banana skins or eaten apple cores? We were reminded that what if animal

consumes them and becomes infected by the germs that we are passing through them? One never thinks what we humans can pass onto to animals – only what animals can infect us with!

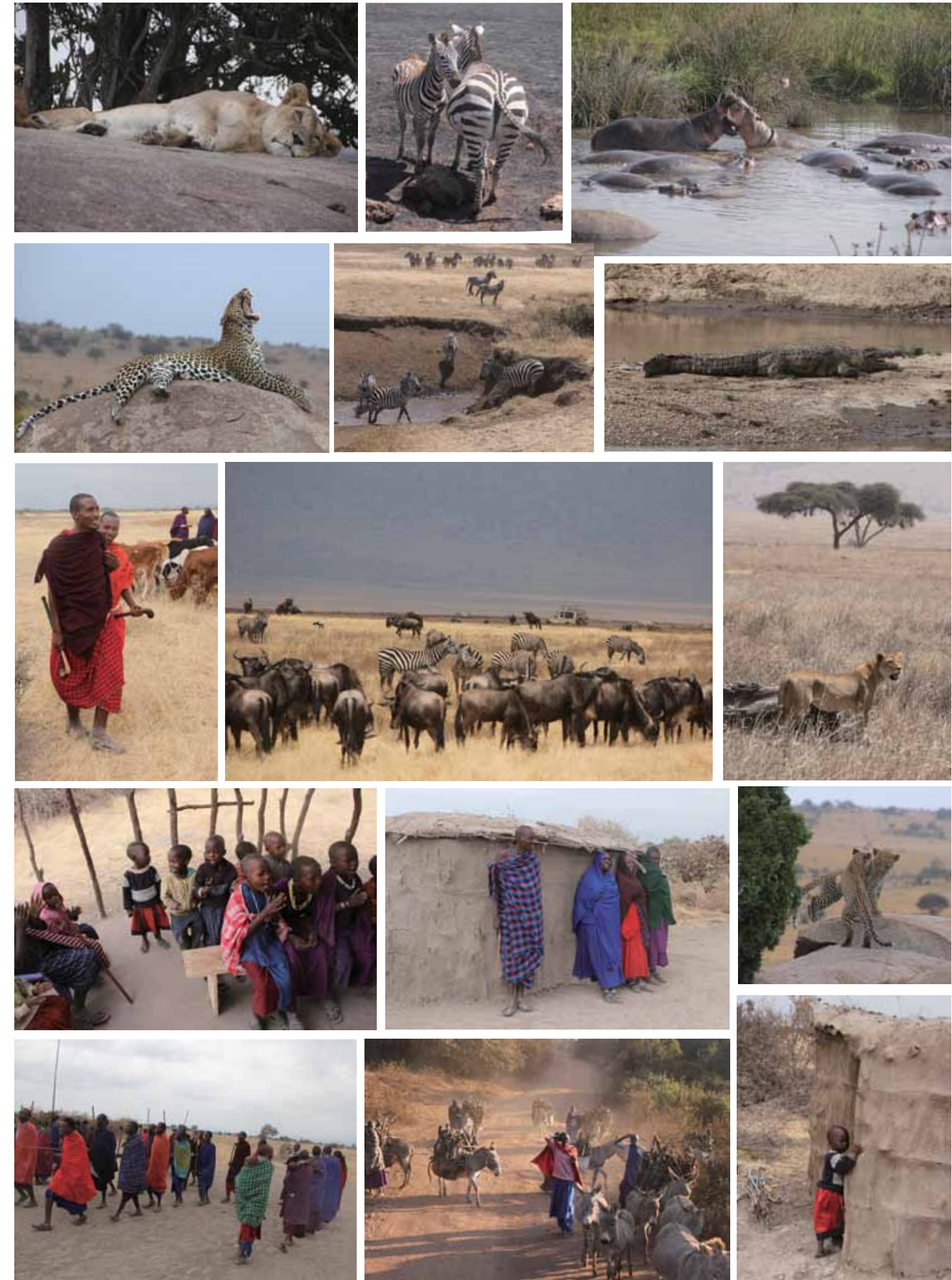
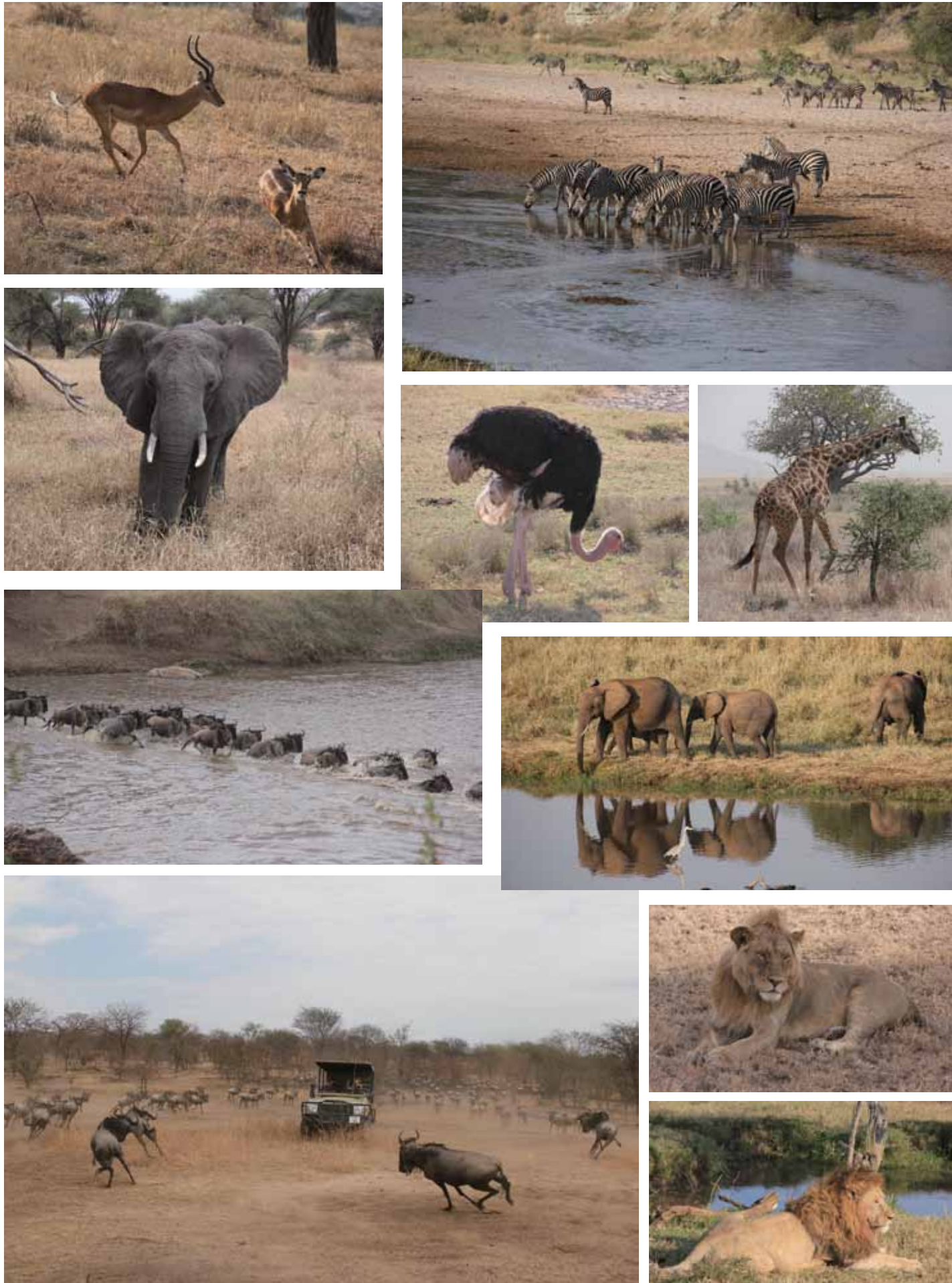
We expected to see poverty – and many of us having spent some of our time in India have been exposed to it. In our minds we associated the idea of poverty with what the media often depicts, the dirt and filth, the crime, the unhappiness that comes with that. Yes- there was poverty but there wasn't the sheer nakedness of it. People were poor but they were not dirty, or unhealthy. And surely not unhappy. It wasn't in-your-face either. And unlike in many poor parts of world – there wasn't one or two super rich flashing their expensive cars and watches to remind them of their poverty – there was no shiny Antilia towering over the slums of Mumbai.

The world can teach them many things but they did know of one thing – how to make do with less. How to make every resources stretch that extra bit. And none are better example of that than the Masai village home we visited. Being nomadic cattle herders – they would build huts made of whatever they can find in nature – twigs, bushes, skin of animals, etc. Just about enough to fit and provide shelter for the family members. There is no absence of land – or materials to build a bigger house, (none of those land supply, government policies and builder lobbies as we all are so well aware close to home). So why wouldn't they build a bigger and slightly more comfortable home? As we entered one by one to see some of their huts, even one seemed too many. They asked us, what is the point of building a bigger than what they need? Especially since they won't be here forever and would soon break up this camp and move to another place?

Well – now that is a thought.

After having spent a week creating memories to last a lifetime – we all landed in Hong Kong late at night and made our way back through the bright neon lights of Hong Kong – the contrast could not have been more stark. Especially when we walked through the underground walk-alator connecting the Hong Kong station to the Central station under the 88 storied skyscraper IFC. And the advertisements across the wall of that more than 100m stretch were of a product that was consumerism at its best – a dual toned lipstick. Well.. what is wrong with single toned lipstick one wonders. But hey what does a man know of lipsticks. But could not help wonder how far the two worlds are and wonder which one offers the answers plaguing the current generations.

Photographs by Arnab Sengupta





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The Foothills of Kilimanjaro

Anirban Ray Choudhury

“Jambo! Jambo bwana! / Habari gani? Mzuri sana! / Wageni, mwakaribishwa! / Kilimanjaro? Hakuna Matata!”

-The Jambo Song, East Africa

It was a dream long persisting.

It was a desire long cherished.

And, it was real, at last.

Stepping off the pavement outside the tiny airport at Kilimanjaro to be greeted by Miyah, our guide and soon to be friend and philosopher, I inhaled the dusky air of this town and softly whispered to myself “TIA”. Committed to memory in some darkened cinema theatre over a decade back, in a much darker context of blood diamonds and gun runners, TIA, This Is Africa, brought with it now a wholly new meaning, a whole new purpose. Yes, in Kilimanjaro, This Is Africa.

The converted Toyota Landcruiser could seat six apart from the driver; with only the three of us there was abundant room to stretch our legs, cramped as they were after almost a day of non-stop flying. I mentally thanked Anisha for choosing a private tour - the extra space was much needed, for it would be a three hour drive to Kambi ya Tembo, our first camp on the foothills of the Kili.

The contrast with Hong Kong, the city that I now call home and am deeply in love with, was evident from the moment we settled into the vehicle. The sky was following us as we drove through the small towns and villages, mingling with the horizon stretching out in the distance; a sight never to be seen amid the towering concrete of Hong Kong. The palpable sense of warmth in the air, the embracing, enveloping warmth brought closer perhaps the only sublime truth worth caring for – one of life itself. That, and the vibrant hues of garmented Masai tribesmen, even as the duller colour of roasted corn-on-the-cob on sale on the roadside carried me back to my small town childhood.

It was dark by the time we reached Kambi-ya-Tembo, the last bit of narrow path through the acacia and grass peppered with a few sightings of wild hare and hyena, holding promises of things to come. The camp was in pitch darkness, and silent. Very different from what we were expecting in this busy tourist season, until the camp manager told us that we were to be the only occupants for our two nights there. The last big batch of tourists had left just that morning, and the next one was not expected for another couple of days. Anisha looked at me and in the starlit darkness her smile said it all – that this vacation must have been scripted by the Gods.

Dinner was a slow, unhurried affair of bread, soup, rice and a local stew, flavoured with copious amounts of wine that the manager poured into our glasses. The conversation was immersive as Miyah told us about himself and his family. Part Chagga, Miyah professed no special allegiance towards any tribe, dispelling our notions of tight tribal hierarchy in the Dark Continent. Science and economics are catching up he said, with social and tribal boundaries obviously disappearing. Is it for the better? I did not ask, Miyah offered no answer.

Sleep was easy, sleep was difficult. Hitting the bed at nine is too early for city dwellers like us, and we were worried if we could actually get some rest. But rushing through multiple time zones fatigues the body, and the mind is soon discouraged from its escapades by the sounds of hooves and heavier steps outside the tent. My son stopped whispering, clutching on to my arm across the narrow space between the cots, realisation dawning that silence meant safety as we quietly listened to the hyenas in the distance. And soon they fell silent too, as slumber overcame our tired minds.

I am a late riser. Even at the best of times, early to bed does not ever translate to early to rise for me. It was therefore a surprise when I checked the time on my phone in the morning, wide awake, at five thirty. As I rinsed my face in cold water I could hear someone walking towards the tent in the semi darkness. “Jambo Jambo”, called out the young man with a tea flask on a tray. “Si Jambo” I replied as he sat the tray down on the table outside the tent, “Did you hear the animals last night? There were some giraffes passing through.”

“Some”, I replied, busy assembling my camera for the sunrise and the blue-green-flaming orange superb starlings that were hopping about near my feet.

At breakfast, Miyah laid out the plan for the day. We were to hike to the base camp of Shira, the oldest of the three peaks of Kilimanjaro, taking the Lemosho route with a brief stop at the Londorrossi gate to obtain our permits. A drive 12 kilometres up north would take us to the starting point, at a high altitude of around 2200

metres. At that height the air thins out considerably making breathing difficult, and the temperature drops too. "Layer, de-layer and layer" Miyah reminded us, referring to our jackets and sweaters, to listen to our bodies for wearing or taking them off through the trek.

The sky was slightly misty as we drove past the Londorissi gate and snaked into higher ground. We went by the some corn fields before slowly spiralling up into thicker, vividly greener coniferous vegetation; strikingly different from the acacia laden grassland that we had encountered so far. There was an all pervading silence except for the occasional vehicle going by, "Jambo" and "Si Jambo" exchanged through rolled down windows; and the teetering monkeys and chirping superb starlings cheering us on as we drove past the moss laden trees.

A half hour's drive through the scenic route took us to the base of the Shira Plateau. As Anisha and I disembarked we beamed at each other, for across the plateau lay the saddle shaped twin peaks of Kibo and Mawenzi, mist laden, the occasional silvery glimpse of the snow at the top shining through. Yes, we both thought, we had finally done it. From Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's "Chander Pahar", to Ernest Hemingway's "Snows of Kilimanjaro", we had yearned since childhood to be where the peaks stood, and here they towered in their entire glory, majestic, mystical, mysterious. Looking over at Konko, busy with his camera, I wondered for a brief moment if being in Kilimanjaro's presence today will spoil the tales for him when he finally gets around to reading them, but was reassured by his sudden proclamation, "I really love this country".

As we busied ourselves with sorting out food and water, Miyah talked about the history of Mount Kilimanjaro. The only free-standing mountain in the world, Kilimanjaro came into being during the formation of the Great Rift Valley some three million years ago. A testament to the constant changes taking place below the surface, the Great Rift Valley is a site of the most recent of landmass splits. The shifting of tectonic plates caused tremendous volcanic activity, giving rise first to Shira, and subsequently to Kibo and Mawenzi, forming the three peaks of Kilimanjaro that have romanced writers and adventurers for ages.

The volcanic origins of Kilimanjaro became evident from the moment we set foot on the Shira plateau – the land beneath our feet was a ragged, rugged terrain of fossilised lava. Walking across the land called for caution; millennia of rain and winds had rounded away the once sharp, jagged edges but a wrong step could still mean a severe twist of the ankle. Our guide often hailed "pole pole", reminding us to take it slow. In the absence of loose soil there was very little foliage beyond some shrubs sneaking out from under beds of rock, serving perhaps as gentle reminders to the adage of life finding a way.

The air had thinned out noticeably by the time we were halfway through, with each breath requiring more effort than the previous one as we struggled to keep pace with our guide. Konko was finding it particularly difficult, his mood gradually altering from jubilation to weariness, but he gamely carried on, in between more and more frequent breaks for water. As did we – distinctly different from city pavements, the eight kilometre uphill trail to Shira1 was adamantly testing our resolve. The three gorges that suddenly trenched in along the trail offered some illusive respite as we made our way down, only to be challenged yet again by narrow paths with minimal footholds on the way up. And the cold, biting breeze did little to help except hurry us along in search of the warmth of the camp.

After almost three hours of sweating, de-layering, and layering up again we could finally see the colourful tents of Shira1 in the distance. Konko gave a wry smile as we tried to egg him on for the last stretch before a well deserved rest. He complained that rest or no rest, we would still have to walk back. With no answer to offer, we concentrated on traversing the last gorge that would take us to the campsite. The path upward was narrow and particularly testing, and I struggled for footholds, not looking up, focusing only on my hands and feet to maintain equilibrium. And just when my legs felt like they would take no more, with one last step I was back on flat land.

I looked at the empty space ahead, littered with makeshift camps, mentally thanking the Gods with an "Asante sana." We had done it. We had dreamed about this for ages, and finally, we had done it. Not the peak, not yet, but we had touched the feet of the mighty Kilimanjaro. And in Bengali tradition, that brings a blessing.

A raven squawked overhead, as if in assent.

Yes, there would be a time to return. Someday, soon perhaps, the three of us would tackle the peak. But for now, it was a milestone reached, however small, and time to start thinking about the adventures awaiting us in the days to follow, across the wild plains of Serengeti. For Africa is a continent of many mysteries, many adventures, and many fantasies - a place that is never about too little or too much but only about the mischievous intoxication of mellowed, unfettered passion.



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The faces from Namtso

Photographs by Raja Mahanta

Namtso, the salt water lake, situated at 15,470 ft above the sea level, is the largest lake in Tibet Autonomous Region of China. The air is extremely thin here and taking ten steps feels like climbing a small hillock.

It was around 220 km drive from Lhasa. En Route the lake, we crossed, La-Ghengla pass, one of the highest mountain-pass, situated at 17,028 ft above the sea level.

The below portraits were captured during our Tibetan adventure in the Spring of 2016.



My blog <https://rajamahanta-photos.blog/2017/05/15/travel-blog-on-tibet-namtso-lake/#more-2183>

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Trip to the top of the world – Leh, Ladakh

Sudeshna Das and Sunirmal K Das



It was summer holidays and we decided to explore our India. A lot of deliberation left us to opt for one of the most enchanting destination in India - Ladakh! Yes, the high-altitude desert and a plateau. Nature's handiwork makes the place even more surreal. Even the Indian Film industry has time and again been drawn to this location and created some enchanting scenes.

This land has an amazing culture and the most diverse and beautiful landscape of various geographical terrains. There's something mystical about the place especially with its lineage of Buddhism, its Tibetan history and most importantly the nomadic culture that most people live by.

We started our journey by flying into Leh from Delhi. While landing, the first glimpse of the snow-capped magnificent mountains resembled a huge 'Black-Forest cake'. Usually when you fly in, one day just goes into acclimatization, which is an essential part of the itinerary.

Ours was a 9-day trip, and it is very difficult to put in words the experience of that week and few days in Ladakh - the land of scenic beauty, rustic charm and nature at its best. Nevertheless, we will try to pen down our experience of Ladakh as best as we can along *with a bit of a photo essay that tells you all.*

The mountainscapes, desert landscapes and riverscapes altogether is a photographer's delight. You end up losing track of time once you start clicking....



When we think of Ladakh, we picture just a barren landscape. But, Ladakh is a highland enclosed between mountain ranges layered in various hues of red, brown, green and grey with large crystal blue water bodies and some lush green patches of vegetation along the valleys formed by the perennial streams.

While travelling to various places we came across varied landscapes, quaint villages and stunning views. The locals of this place are people with a quiet demeanour and an air of contentment around them. There were surprises in store for us at every bend. The rare phenomenon of Magnetic Hill left us astonished. The hill possesses magnetic properties that can pull cars uphill and compel passing aircrafts to increase altitude in order to escape the magnetic interference. The natural geyser in the midst of nowhere or the cute and playful marmots running around their burrows. Even the Gurdwara Pathar Saheb in Leh, maintained by the Indian Army, has a story attached to it. There is patriotism all around.

The Indus river, the Zaskar river, the Shyok river or some other mountain streams were our constant companion on the way. The confluence of the Indus and the Zaskar rivers is a rare sight. One can clearly differentiate between the two waters from a distance.

October to May is the time when the blue colour of water mesmerises the onlookers.



It is a bit difficult to get acclimatized to the high altitude of 6,000 meters and above. But, once you reach one of these historical mountain passes which once upon a time used to be the trade routes between India and China and get the bird's eye view of the distant valleys and remote villages tucked amidst the Trans-Himalayan ranges, you forget all your hardship. Some of the notable mountain passes are the Khardung La, Tanglang La, Chang La, and are also the highest motorable roads of the world.



Leh also has its past documented in the time withstanding palaces which housed their kings and rulers. The 17th century Leh Palace is one of the tallest buildings of its time with nine stories.

Shey Palace located in a hillock in Shey was the summer capital of Ladakh. It houses a monastery in which Buddha statue is three stories tall. Only the top floor is now open to the visitors.



Shey Palace built of mud and wood

While in Leh, one cannot miss out on the ancient monasteries of this wondrous land. We came to know that there is a monastery or gumpa at every village. The artistic decor, ancient manuscripts and antiques like statues, stupas, thangkas and murals left us amazed at the skill of our ancestors. Some of the notable Buddhist monasteries and gompas in the Leh region are the Hemis monastery, Alchi monastery, Thiksey monastery, Spituk monastery, Diskit monastery, Likir monastery and Lamayuru monastery.



Diskit Monastery in lap of mountain



32 metre statue of Maitreya Buddha



Artwork from Alchi Monastery built between 958 and 1055 AD

Just imagine a life without technology, civilization and infrastructure! You get an experience of just that when you visit the sparkling blue Pangong Tso (Lake) or the Tso Moriri. Here you step into the wide-open space of nature and the basic amenities that we city breed are accustomed to becomes a luxury. The surroundings of these lakes appeared to be one of the most peaceful and obviously beautiful places on this

planet. The changing colour of the water is beyond explanation. Here you stand imagining that across the waters lie the mountains of an even more isolated and mystic land.



Mirror image in Pangong Tso



Tso Moriri



How about spending a part of your life at the Hunder Sand Dunes? The Hunder desert is a geographical marvel with the huge mountain as its backdrop and the ice cold Shyok river flowing through it. We never imagined seeing a desert and a river coexisting. The dunes are homes to the Bactrian camels which are double humped.

There is an abundance of activities that can be enjoyed in Leh like Zaskar

River Rafting, Camel Safari in Nubra valley, Desert Biking, Camping & Trekking and more.



Double Hump Camel Ride in Hunder Desert



Camping in Pangong Tso

There is much to see, much to cherish and much to bring back from a trip to Ladakh. We got memories unlimited.....





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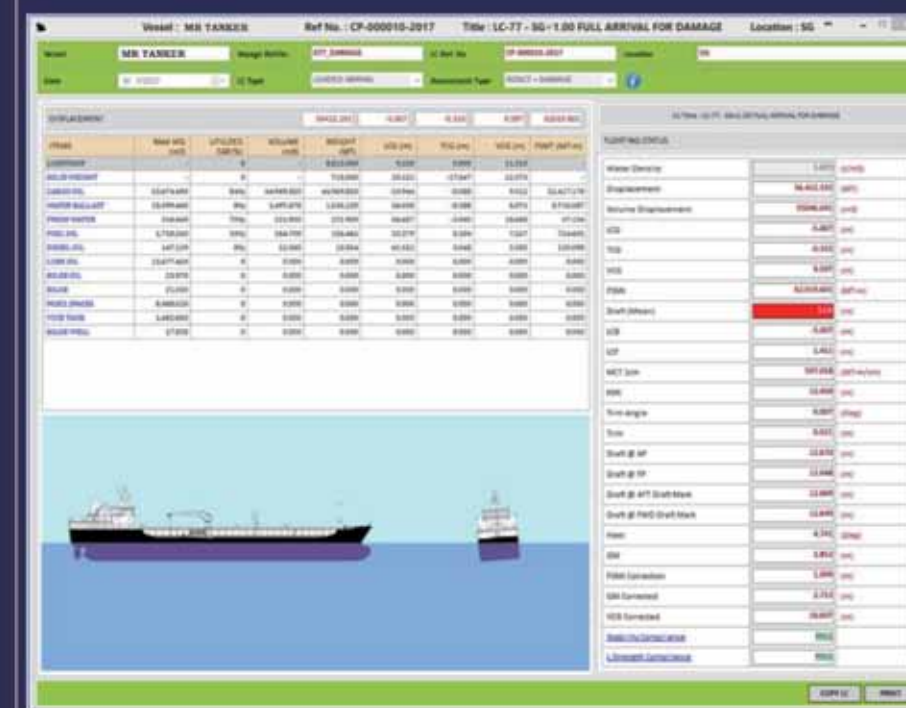
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The Wisdom of the Sages

Dr. Subid Das

“Isn’t it a bit too ridiculous, Uncle, the way our politicians keep on harping how Hinduism is steeped in science?”, asked Abhro, clearly irritated with what he had just read in the news.

Abhro, now a young lad is a constant reminder to me how fast time has been passing by. I have literally seen him from the day he was born, and every time I see him, which is five or six times a year, I find he has grown up and matured even more. A bright, enthusiastic pleasant boy who has just stepped into high school, it is always a pleasure to converse with him. But mostly our conversations, so far had been about sports, India’s performance in cricket or the latest in the Premier League. But this was the first time I was hearing him make a remark about politicians or politics.

“Sure, some of them do go over the top now and then. Just seem to get a bit too carried away in their zeal to spread the message of Hinduism. But does that really bother you? Why?”

“Well, I have no problems as long as they stick to facts, talk about Hinduism, the greatness of the religion, or its philosophy. But why make an absurd claim that it is steeped in science? I mean, where is the connection? Religion and science are poles apart.”

“Well, you can’t deny that some of the greatest scientific inventions and discoveries have originated in ancient India, can you?”, I replied, rather provocatively, to engage him further in this exchange, which I was clearly beginning to enjoy.

“Yes, yes, I know. I am not contesting ancient India’s contributions to science, mathematics or medicine. Even Albert Einstein has acknowledged ancient India’s influence on mathematics. I know Aryabhata was the first to come up with the concept and symbol of zero. Perhaps the decimal system, too, originated in India. Aryabhata also contributed enormously to the knowledge of astronomy. I have read somewhere that amongst the finds in Harappan excavations, they have dug up rulers made of ivory that had very accurate calibrations of $1 \frac{3}{8}$ of an inch. And that the treatise written by Sushruta was considered the bible of medical knowledge during his time. But all that is a part of ancient India. Every civilization that is ancient has made such contributions. Egyptians, Chinese, Mesopotamians, Greek, Romans, all of them. Every place and period, wherever and whenever a civilization flourished, there were advances in sciences and arts. But why do our politicians always try to give this a religious spin? Why do they, even when they go to inaugurate international scientific meetings make such bizarre and ludicrous claims that seem to suggest that all science originated from Hinduism? It must be so embarrassing for the scientists. After all, the greatest thrust in science, the large majority of discoveries and inventions have come from the western world, haven’t they?”, exclaimed Abhro, rather indignantly.

I was quite impressed with young Abhro’s knowledge of ancient India as well as how well he kept himself abreast of current affairs. I didn’t realize our youngsters these days had any appetite for delving into all that, considering the time they need to devote to their day to day studies, homework, classwork, the unavoidable infatuation with computer games and the inevitable addiction to entrapments of social media. But then, I know Abhro plays soccer on a regular basis, and in this day and age that, at least to me, does make him somewhat different. “So, what you are saying is that Hinduism has not really contributed to scientific knowledge or behavior at all. Are you sure?”, I asked.

“Ancient Indian Civilization, YES. Plenty. Hinduism, as such, NO. I can’t think of anything. Nor any other religion for that matter,” pat came Abhro’s reply. “Hmmm. Okay, may I ask you what is the traditional Hindu form of greeting others?” I asked him, certain he would know the answer.

“Why, with a ‘Namaste’, of course,” Abhro replied, sounding somewhat perplexed, no doubt at the sudden deviation from the topic that we had been discussing.

“Yes, of course, ‘Namaste’. And may I ask, what does ‘Namaste’ mean?” I persevered. “Well, I don’t know exactly what it means, but it is a traditional way of greeting in which we bring our two hands together and also bow our head as a sign of respect, especially if the other person is senior,” answered Abhro.

“You are quite right. It is indeed a form of respectful greeting or salutation in Hindu custom. The word is derived from Sanskrit, and is a combination of the words Namah that means ‘bow’ or ‘obeisance’, and the pronoun te that means ‘to you’. When combined, that is, in its sandhi form, it becomes Namaste which literally means ‘bowing to you’,” I elaborated.

“Oh, okay, but what does it have to do with...,” interrupted the lad rather impatiently before I had quite finished. With a look of slight admonishment, I resumed my homily, not letting his interjection stop me. “In Hinduism it also has a deeper, more significant spiritual meaning. You may know that in Hinduism there is the concept of the soul, or atman which is a part of the divine, or the Creator, and that exists in each one of us. So Namaste in a spiritual sense really means that ‘I bow to the divine in you’. In other words, ‘the divine in me bows to the divine in you’”.

Okay, Subid Uncle, thanks for telling me about the deeper significance of Namaste, but I still do not understand what that has to do with science. Surely, you are not telling me that the soul is a scientific concept?” retorted Abhro, barely able to contain his irritation.

“Well no, that is not what I am trying to tell you. I have no intention of getting into any sort of debate with you about divinity or the existence of a Creator or God. It wouldn’t be scientific at all as there is absolutely no proof of His existence. Having said that though, there is some wisdom in what the 18th century English poet, William Cowper, had said. ‘The absence of proof is not the proof of absence’.”

“Uncle, alright, but what about science and Hinduism? Isn’t that what we were discussing?” came Abhro’s sharp rejoinder. He would rather have been elsewhere than be dragged further in this pointless discussion.

“Ah yes, indeed! Let me not digress any more. Abhro, you have been in Hong Kong all your young life. Surely, you have heard of various types of flu, like Avian flu, Swine flu, H5N1, H1N1, etc, etc, haven’t you?”

“Yes, of course, I have. Sometimes our schools close due to these cases of flu and we get an extra holiday,” replied Abhro with a smile. “But again, what is the connection?”

“And why do you think schools close at such times?” I asked him.

“To try and prevent the spread of the infection.”

“Brilliant as usual, young man. And what precautions does the government’s health department ask students and teachers to follow?”

“To cover our nose and mouth while coughing or sneezing. To wear a mask if required. To stay away from school if one is having symptoms of cough, cold or fever,” replied the bright lad.

“Excellent, Abhro. What else? Any other measure that is very important?”

Abhro thought a while, really loving this challenge now. “Oh, yes, I remember they emphasized that we must wash our hands often, especially if we come in physical contact with others who may have been sick,” replied this smart boy who had clearly paid attention to all the advice that the school must have provided.

“Absolutely splendid, Abhro. The reason why hand washing is important is because physical contact is one very important way through which the germs spread from person to person. So if we touch others and our hands are contaminated with germs, we can easily pass the germs onto others, and this way the cycle of infection continues and soon a large number of people get infected. In the western world, in fact, in most societies, the commonest form of greeting is by shaking of hands whereby there is very close contact between the palms and fingers of the hands of the two persons greeting each other. Now you tell me, Abhro, could you think of a worse way than the hand shake for spreading infections like flu? Who knows what the other person’s hand may have been in contact with earlier?”

“Yes, I remember shaking hands is something we tried to avoid during the last episode of flu. I heard people were really scared to shake hands during SARS. Is that true, Uncle?”

“Indeed, it was a very scary period. SARS was a very dangerous illness and caused quite a number of deaths. The safest precautions were wearing masks and repeated hand washing, and most importantly, avoiding unnecessary physical contact.”

“I see,” responded Abhro somewhat contemplatively.

“Do you see then that the Namaste is really a much better way of greeting others, even purely from a scientific perspective? No need for touching others, yet most polite and courteous.”

“Yes, I think I do,” muttered Abhro. “So, would you agree now that this very basic Hindu norm has enormous scientific implications?”

“Okay, I will give you that one, Uncle,” replied the ever chivalrous Abhro.

“I am glad I could give you another perspective of Hinduism. There are actually lots of such examples, but we shall talk about those another day. Off you go now for your soccer match, Abhro.”

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Rahman

Debasis Roy Mahapatra

I grew up in a Railway colony in Kharagpur, a small town 110 kilometres west of Kolkata on the eastern side of India. In our quarters we had a wooden sofa set – a set of three, two single seaters and one double seater, may be triple if the persons sitting on it were of slim build. Railway men those days were not paid very well and in that middle-class neighbourhood that sofa set was a stylish piece of furniture. Most other households had foldable chairs and stools.

After years of use, the polish on the wooden sofa set had worn out. We were looking for someone to put a fresh coat of varnish on them. My father checked with the furniture shop in the local market to see if they provided that service. The owner said he knows one guy who does polishing work. He promised to inform that person when he visited the shop.

A few days later a short man with a broad smile came to see us. His name was Rahman. A bush of thick curly hair adorned his head. He had a stout build with an unshaven sunburnt face which made him look darker than he really was. He was the polishing man.

A price was agreed, and Rahman was ready to start right away.

It was mid-morning, and there was still time for a quick breakfast. Ma asked if he had breakfast, to which Rahman said he usually did not eat breakfast. She realised that he was too poor to afford breakfast. She told him that she would make a cup of tea for him, a common courtesy in a Bengali household. He should begin his work after taking tea.

As she went about making tea for him, she gave him a large dish of puffed rice with a lump of jaggery for breakfast. He gladly accepted that and started eating sitting on the doorsteps of the veranda.

My father, being a man of few words, asked him where he lived. “Bhabanipur” he said. It was the locality north of where we lived, at the other end of the field behind our quarters. That was the beginning of the private area outside the railway properties of Kharagpur township, and a compound wall, about 5 or 6 feet high, separated the two areas.

The contrast between the railway property and the private area was very distinct. The part of the road in the railway area that led to the private area was broad and well maintained. But as soon as the road entered

the private area, its condition became very miserable. It was a very congested area. Two and three storey brick houses lined the narrow street. The houses on both sides stood right beside it without leaving an inch of space. Hidden behind these buildings were the small houses and the slums - brick houses, mud houses and a variety of shacks. Narrow unpaved pathways snarled through these houses. A person not living in those areas could easily be lost in that maze. Most people living in these areas were Muslims. That was Bhabanipur where Rahman lived.

After finishing his dish of puffed rice, he drank a glass of water, took his tea and was ready to begin his work.

His tool box was a small bundle wrapped in a piece of cloth. He opened the knots and took out his primitive tools and polishing materials – few pieces of sand papers, colour powders, scraps of old pieces of cloth to apply the polish and a few other titbits. The work began.

I think it was a Sunday because we all were at home. We helped him to take the sofas out to the shade under the neem tree in front of our quarters. He began cleaning them with sand papers, put a coat of paint, let the paint dry under the sun and then polish them with varnish.

The day rolled on. When it was time for lunch, Ma asked Rahman to wash his hands and get ready for lunch. Though it was not a common practice, nor was it expected, to offer food to a worker, Ma had cooked an extra meal for Rahman. A Hindu should not eat his or her own meal without feeding a guest at home. Our family followed those ethics.

My mother was a very kind-hearted person. She usually cooked an extra meal for lunch, because quite often someone or other from our village or from her parents’ village would drop by in mid morning on their way to the district headquarters at the nearby town Medinipur. The purpose of these visits was to have some rest, take a bath and eat some lunch before proceeding to the district headquarters to attend to some errands – perhaps to attend a court case regarding a land dispute or pay some tax or submit an application to the district magistrate. Making an extra meal half way through her cooking was too much trouble, so she cooked an extra meal.

But that was not the only reason. The guests did not come every day. On those days she would give the

meal to the part time maid who worked at our home. Sometimes the maid would eat the meal at our home, some other times she would take it home, perhaps to share it with her children. We were poor, but they were even poorer.

Rahman gladly accepted Ma’s invitation for lunch and followed her instructions.

We did not have a dining table at home those days. We sat on straw seats on the floor and ate food using our hands. But as per the norms of the time, he could not eat with us in the same space. He was a Muslim and therefore eating with him was not appropriate for us.

A separate seat was arranged for Rahman on the veranda.

Ma served the same food for all of us. Rahman relished his meal to the last drop, as if he had not had such a satisfactory meal in a while. When he finished, his stainless-steel plate was gleaming clean.

Social customs required that the plates on which a Muslim ate not be put with our own stack of plates. Rahman was aware of this social etiquette. When we all finished our meals, Rahman picked up his plate and the glass, went around the block of quarters to the back door and asked Ma to give him some water to wash his plate. When done with the washing he brought them back to the veranda and carried a bit of water in the glass with which he mopped the place where he had his meal. This was a barefaced display of the social custom of Hindu-Muslim segregation, but at the same time it also showed that there was plenty of kindness and harmony in the society.

Rahman maintained a relationship with our family for a long time after that. Sometimes he would appear at our home in the afternoon, greet my mother with a Namaskar and sit quietly on the steps of the veranda. Suspecting that he was unable to secure any work that day and probably had not eaten anything yet, Ma would offer him some food, whatever she could afford from her meagre kitchen – a square meal if he was lucky, or some puffed rice and a lump of jaggery or a few rotis with vegetables – whatever was readily available. Rahman would quietly eat his food, clean his dish, thank Ma with his characteristic broad smile and take leave from her. She would always tell him to come again.

A few years later my dad was allotted a bigger quarters which was further away in the town. We moved in due course. Rahman found out from the neighbours where we had gone and collected our address from them. He came to see us, but his visits became less frequent from then on.

Time moved on. I grew up, left home for my job to a faraway city on the other end of India. I did not see Rahman after that.

A few years later Ma passed away. I came home for her final rites. Inviting relatives and neighbours to attend that event was a social custom. Meals were prepared for the guests. After attending to all the religious activities, I went to meet the guests to exchange a few words with them.

Who was there standing outside the gate? Rahman! I went to him and invited him to come in. He hesitated a little and then obliged. He had learnt from someone that Ma had passed away and somehow managed to find out the date of her final rites. He came to pay his respects to her. I was so moved. I took him to the Puja place where we had kept a photo of her on a high seat. He bowed his head for a few minutes in silence and greeted the departed soul with a Namaskar.

I arranged a place for him to sit down for a meal. He ate in silence, picked up the banana leaf on which he ate and dropped it in the bin outside. He wished us well and left.

We lived in that quarters for quite a few years after that. My father and sisters told me that Rahman never came again.

As the day’s activities wore on, I was thinking about Ma. Having grown up in a remote village in rural India, she was burdened with the baggage of religious dogmas and the social customs that had evolved over millennia. But at the core of her heart she valued humanity more than social constructs and was liberal enough to welcome Rahman in her household, feed him when he was hungry and always invite him to come back again, despite his different religious faith. This was my India, an India where the culture of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” - “The world is a family” - was practised for thousands of years. I was and am proud of this India.

End

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Logitica - The brain behind the brain

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The world is now very rapidly changing in ways that are eliminating the need for jobs that require repetitive tasks. This is of course due to the advancements in technology and automation. In fact, robots are now widely being used in assembly plants this trend will only continue. However, jobs that require thinking and analysis will still need to be done by intelligent human beings. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the future belongs to the thinkers. Even now more industries are turning to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). People working in these fields are poised to solve the world's most serious problems, like cybersecurity, machine learning, and global warming, etc. These challenges require people with advanced analytical and logical thinking, which anyone can start developing by mastering the concepts of Logitica.

Whether your future plans involve designing self-driving vehicles, algorithms in machine learning, developing the next big app or video game or working in artificial intelligence, you will need highly developed analytical and logical thinking skills. *Logitica* can help produce a quantum leap in learning by stimulating the individual's logical and analytical thinking.

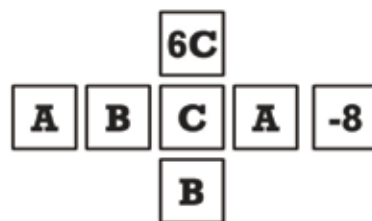
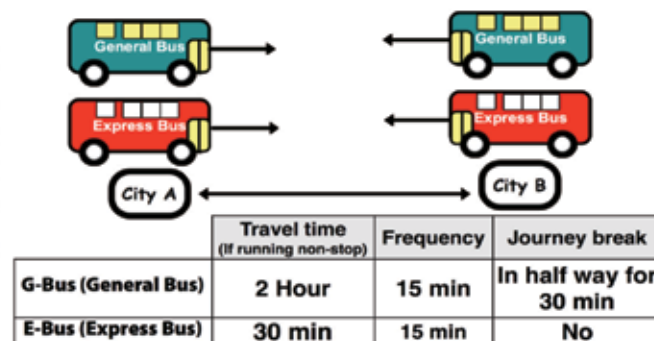
Logitica stimulates brainpower and can be termed, "*The Brain behind the brain.*" The concepts of *Logitica* are designed to enhance an individual's problem-solving skills by explaining the thought processes involved in solving unfamiliar types of problems. *Logitica* offers a unique combination of logical, analytical and mathematical problems, focusing on iterative learning of the fundamental concepts. This specialized area of learning is something parents should get their children involved to help them develop their God-given cognitive abilities to better prepare them for the challenges ahead. In times to come, *Logitica* will evolve as a subject in the school's curriculum with an aim to improve logical and analytical thinking of the students since these skills cannot be learned through memorization, which is exactly how many subjects are currently being taught in school.

Quite a lot of research is still progressing on the subject of *Logitica*, and we have listed below a few sample problems from *Logitica* in this article:

i. General and Express bus:

There are two types of buses, general (G) bus and express (E) bus traveling between two cities: City-A and City-B. Buses start from both City at 7:00 AM in the morning. Can you find out how many buses BE-900 would meet during its journey coming from the opposite direction? Here BE-900 is the Express Bus starting at 9:00 from City-B.

Note: G-Bus means General Bus, E-Bus means Express Bus.



ii. Average cell:

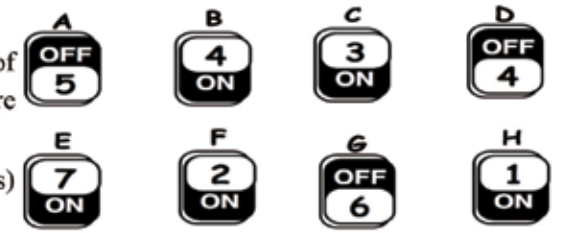
In the problem here, any cell that has more than once cell around it (above, below, left, right), is an average cell and the value of this cell is average of its adjacent cells.

Find the value of each cell.

iii. Timer switch:

Find the time interval during which the maximum number of switches would be ON. The initial states of each of the switches are shown here.

Note that switches will flip periodically with duration (in seconds) mentioned on the switch.



iv. Messed up equations:

Equation #	Incorrect Digits	Correct Digits
1	78 ÷ 6	12
2	14 ÷ 3	14
3	50 ÷ 9	8
4	6 ÷ 5	4
5	5 ÷ 2	2

In the set of equations shown here, the digits of the left-hand side (shown in red) may possibly be wrong. Can you find the correct digits for each equation such that equations are satisfied?

Rules-1: Arithmetic operative symbols (division, multiplication, addition, subtraction) are correct.

Rules-2: Only digits of the numbers shown in the left side of equations may be messed up. The Numbers displayed on the right side are correct.

Rules-3: Some digits may be mapped to itself. This means some digits may very well be correct.

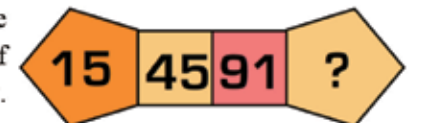
Contact the author for more explanation and further details.

v. Wisgo Tile:

Find the missing number in this problem.

The author created *Wisgo* problems to stimulate both the left and right sides of the brain. In general, the left brain is related to the numerical and analytical part of our thinking while the right brain is associated with creativity, art, and new ideas.

The author believes that the questions in *Wisgo Family* are designed to stimulate both sides of the brain, thus assisting in its overall development of the brain.



Why do we need Logitica?

Knowledge can be categorized in two ways: **true knowledge** and **memorized knowledge**. We can visualize memorized knowledge using a typical learning session, as detailed below:

- An instructor comes into a classroom full of students and writes a problem out on the blackboard along with the solution. The whole class simply copies the problem and its solution, both in their brains and in their notebooks.
- Where is the **creativity**? What are the students learning here? The solution might be the result of years of research and analysis, which is impossible to learn in the time it takes to copy it off the blackboard. How could we possibly gain the same level of understanding without doing the rigorous work required to come up with the formula or solution ourselves?

The situation above may not apply in every case, in every classroom or with every student. However, conceptually this scenario is familiar to many students because it is very similar to what occurs in a lot of classrooms. This method of teaching results in what I call "Learning by memorized knowledge" and has the following traits:

- We only learn about the problems we are already familiar with. We also learn how to solve these problems in a certain pre-defined way.

- Generally, we rarely think about alternative ways of solving a problem. This is why when we're faced with an unfamiliar problem; we struggle to solve it in the only ways we've memorized, never trying to analyze it logically to come up with the solution.
- Furthermore, we keep forgetting the concepts we've memorized as we continue to try to memorize new ones.

But, is there a better alternative to learning by memorized knowledge? This is where *Logitica* comes into the picture and will evolve as a new subject in times to come. It is a unique combination of logical, analytical and mathematical problems specifically designed to improve thinking ability, which leads to the overall development of the brain. *Logitica* builds the *true knowledge* because it develops what humans are born with, the capacity for analytical and logical thinking. *True knowledge* cannot be acquired through memorization; it is developed iteratively and continuously, which is what *Logitica* exemplifies. *Logitica* helps build the logic that solves the problem. Memorizing solutions will never help anyone develop their analytical thinking skills. This is what building true knowledge requires. *Logitica* teaches us how to approach problems that are totally unfamiliar to us, which is what we face in our lives and careers, and the processes used to find solutions. In summary, *Logitica* is a *journey* to build the true knowledge. A journey, taken many times by creators and inventors in the past while solving unknown problems, is now accessible to an *inquisitive and passionate mind through the innovation* of *Logitica*: The Brain behind the brain.

Logitica can broadly be divided into the following modules:

Numerical

This module contains problems requiring analysis on numbers and arithmetical operations like Number Pyramid, Box Number, Number sequence and Cross Numbers, etc. This is a very interesting module, which encourages students to develop their out-of-the-box thinking skills.

Analytical

This module contains pictorial related problems like Lost Ant, Marbles in the Box, and Brick Wall etc. For students learning simple and quadratic equations, some of these problems can be modified to teach these subjects in a more interesting and engaging manner. The problems in this module focus on the analysis of each problem as the methods for solving them are not deterministic.

Logical

This module focuses on developing the ability to design a strategy for solving problems in a **Worst- Case-Scenario**. We first need to learn how to define the Worst-Case-Scenario. Once that's accomplished, we need to devise a strategy for determining the minimum number of trials required to achieve the objective stated in the problem.

Path and routing

This module contains problems that focus on finding the route or path taken by a moving object. Analyzing and solving problems like this can help solve problems related to scheduling and the allocating of resources. This module also contains a special section based on the famous 18th Century problem, **Seven Bridges of Königsberg** that was solved by the brilliant mathematician **Euler**, and laid the foundation for **Graph Theory and Topology**.

About the author: Neelabh Kumar is a thinker and working in a large financial firm. He is currently on the *top 100 list of pi ranking*, having memorized the first 1500 digits of π . *Logitica* is the result of his years spent researching logical thinking, learning, the active brain, lazy brain, and prime brain. He also created the unique Wisgo family of puzzles that are designed to stimulate both sides of the brain: the left and right brain. One of his Wisgo puzzles (Wisgo Grid) now has a patent pending in Hong Kong. Neelabh is currently writing a book called *Logitica: The Brain behind the Brain* and also teaches a course on logical thinking to students from several countries.

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Facebook group : <https://www.facebook.com/groups/logitica/>

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Before usage of Octamar™ BT-25



After 4 months use of Octamar™ BT-25

Foot-Bong

Sudeep Sengupta

It was a lazy saturday morning and I woke up late as usual, after the world cup match which finished at 4 AM! First look at my mobile gave me a shock - 103 WhatsApp messages, and all on World cup 2018! I started reading those casually and very soon realized that even though we call ourselves 'Probashi Bangali', our love and passion for the game of football is still as good as, or even better than, any other 'bong' living in the bengali heartland. Discussions on WhatsApp were informative, passionate and at times hilarious. Soon someone suggested, given that we are so enthusiastic about football, 'how about starting to play the game?' There are very few Bengalis who have not played football in their childhood but my first thought straightaway was, no, he can't be serious. 'Fitness' and 'Sports' have been concepts alien to most of us for at least the last 10-15 years of our lives. Also football is not an easy game to play.



To my utter surprise, within minutes I could see some 18-20 people raising their hands, showing keen interest to start playing. Wow!

The next thing I remember, we had booked the local football ground. Funds were collected, we were buying our boots, guards and other equipment, and most importantly, the football. So it went, and we had our first game on 23rd June 18. As expected the feeling was ecstatic but the body ache that day and for next few days did keep us grounded for while – reminding us of our age, shape and the level of fitness we were at. In spite of that, it was a unanimous decision to carry on, and we did carry on since then.



Recently we completed 100 days of football in Tung Chung, which was celebrated with a wonderful party organized by our newly formed club HKBUFC – Hong Kong Bong United Football Club. We now have 26 active Bong members / players from Tung Chung and all over HK, from very diverse age groups ranging from the fresh teens to nearly 50! From once a week games, we now play at least twice a week, and with the kind of enthusiasm witnessed so far, daily games no longer seem far-fetched!

This is not just playing football for fun. We do socialize, and have heated debates on East Bengal and Mohun Bagan, Brazil and Argentina. We are also encouraging our next generation to

pick up the mantle of keeping this quintessentially Bong sport alive. There are plans afoot to venture into organizing / running / participating in amateur tournaments with local football clubs, and to that end, the process to apply for a formal registration of the club with the Hong Kong government is already in motion. Once that is granted, we shall be a step closer to formalize our vision.

We are well and truly on a journey now; with baby steps, but the ball is rolling (pun intended)!

Hong Kong Bongs interested in this beautiful game can reach out to hkbufc@gmail.com or leave a message at HKBUFC facebook page (search for @hkbufc). We will ensure no stones are unturned to bring out the footballer in you!

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Dadas of Calcutta

Chiradip De

The term “Dada” or “Da” in India is synonymous with Bengalis. Any Bengali irrespective of his age can be addressed as “Da” (“Di” for females) by friends and acquaintances. Example: Legendary singer Kishore Kumar was and will be addressed as Kishore Da by people aged 9 to 90 years. The term “Da” evokes respect of age, knowledge or position but can be an indicator of fear factor too. In my locality for example, the biggest musclemans or “mostan”, Mr. Poddo Lochan Kormokar, is respectfully addressed as “Poda Da” by all and sundry. But this article is not about the mere salutation of Da/Di to a Bengali.

This article is about the “Da”s of Calcutta, i.e. the few indomitable characters who were truly universal Bengali Dada s. These immortal souls rose from the pages of fiction to become legends of Calcutta on their own right. These “Da”s have overshadowed their creators in terms of popularity and charisma. It won’t be wrong to say that few generations of Bengalis have been greatly influenced by their stories. Yet post 90’s these legends seem to have gradually faded out from the mind space of average Bengali kids. The older generations nostalgically remembers them though, with a tinge of sadness. This write-up intends to help remind the Bengalis in Hong Kong about **four** fictional characters from the past and open the gates of the amazing treasure trove of Bangla comic literature to their kids.

The most famous fictional “Da”, among four, the ever young “Feluda”, despite being 80 years old now, is still immensely popular thanks to “Tollywood” film industry which churns a film or two on Feluda’s adventures every year. But if I may ask- Have you heard about “Brojo Da” and his “Gulpo”? nine out of ten (adults included) may scratch their heads. Brojo Da is one of the fictional gang of four “Da”s that I am going to talk about today. It is better to start with the concept of “Gulpo” which may cast some light on the character of Brojo da. Gulpo is a combination of “Gul” (the highly refined Bengali art of “playing” with the truth) and “Golpo” (a story). The ability to generate unadulterated “Gul” or exaggerated stories with a straight face, is what binds three Dada’s out of four. The other quality is their sense of humor and creativity. Brojo da, by profession was (or is) a middle-aged departmental clerk in an office in Calcutta, but his imaginations were never restricted by his mundane job. Brojo da in his “Gulpo”s could be anybody from an Everest mountaineer to a sword fighter. He narrated stories on everything from evolution of mankind to World Wars, to discovery of America, as if he were there in person. His ardent fans were his office colleagues and neighbors who though aware of his imaginary cocktails, were fascinated by his narrative skills and creativity. Brojo da thus could get away by claiming to hit a sixer at a cricket match so high that the ball turns into a satellite spinning around the earth. In the same match he spins a “leg break” so fast that the ball breaks the leg of the batsman! Thereafter, he narrates how he bowled other spin types like “heart break” and “head break”!

On face of it Brojo da s stories appears to be just comic nonsense but a deeper understanding of the society back then would reveal that Brojo da like characters did exist. They were representative of ordinary middleclass Bengalis, in colloquial term “chaposha”, who lead a sedentary life and had a 9 to 5 job. They, in many ways carried the tradition of the clerical cadre which the English people so effectively created to run their government before independence of India. Many of these “chaposha” s had aspirations in life but did not have the dynamism to break through the glass barrier. Also, the career opportunities available back then were quite limited as compared to now. India was a closed economy. The hidden aspiration of “chaposha” Bengalis were one of the reasons why Brojoda like characters existed among them. Somebody who could bring in world of extraordinary feats to their doorsteps. Somebody who could read out their own hidden wishes of being a superhuman who was powerful and famous.

The fictional Dada who was the youngest of the lot (in terms of age of the character), and most funny, ruled “Potoldanga” area in Calcutta (which is between Amherst Street and Harrison Road near Sealdah) with his gang, was called Tenida. Tenida aka “Bhojohori Mukherjee”, was (or is) my personal favorite. Tanida had all the qualities of a back bencher. He failed in school exams religiously, and was proud about it. His stories would put the best adventures of humankind to shame. Tenida’s voracious appetite would made him disappear a table full of Bengali delicacies in seconds, making him a much-feared guest at any invitation. He would devour 10 singara s & half kilo of jilipi s and feel hungry again after 30 minutes! Tenida, and his gang including narrator of his stories Pelaram, assembled for their daily “adda” on the “rowak” (or external seating areas) of one of the houses in Potoldanga . Pelaram, the boy with a weak stomach, was the stupidest of the lot and academically as “talented” as Tenida. Kyabla, though his name suggests otherwise, was the cleverest, bravest, youngest and the brightest student among them (often offering solution to his hapless friends at the hour of



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need). And then there was Habul, the coolest of the lot with heavy East Bengal accent (Tenida called him “Dhakai Bangal”) which added rib tickling humor to their already hilarious conversations. Habul would not be scared or bothered, even if kidnapped by bad people, as long as they gave him a pot full of rosogollas to eat and a place to sleep! The gang’s victory cry was Tenida shouting “Di La Grandi Mephistopheles” and the rest of them responding “yak yak”. (Tenida claimed this to be a French slogan).

Tenida, with all his false bravado and concocted stories, was a simpleton at heart, always ready to help others with a smile. The three boys were fully aware of Tenida’s fantastic “Gul”s but still loved him dearly and were ready to jump into the stupidest possible adventure at the suggestion of their leader which were guaranteed to be a laugh riot. In one of his famous stories named “camouflage” Tenida narrated how he as a colonel in World War II escapes from the clutches of death, when he and his dog gets caught by Japanese troops while picking mangos from a tree in forest. The story must be read to experience the fun, but in summary he tricks the smart Japanese troops by camouflaging his dog as him, and himself camouflaging as a dog. He walks in all four limbs beside his dog which is dressed as the colonel! Japanese catches the dog thinking it is the colonel, and the camouflaged dog (Tenida) escapes.

“Tenida” was created by Narayan Gangopadhyay who is of the literary greats of Bengal. Narayan was himself a brilliant student, a gold medalist from Calcutta University, and a legendary literature teacher. It seems odd that a serious teacher like Narayan could conceive a character like Tenida. But Tenida was symbolic of the fun-loving dada s of the “para” (local colony) culture in Calcutta those days, who would be a popular figure among the younger kids of the of the para. The national pastime of Bengalis, “adda” in the para s would be centered around these dadas. These dada s with their gang would often be a common utility for all para residents, helping everybody in hours of crisis. The whole para acted as one big household. Narayan, who actually was a resident of Potoldanga , had keen eye and sense of humor which was enough to pick up elements from his surroundings to create a legend like Tenida. This year is the is the birth centenary of Narayan Gangopadhyay, the literary giant.

Though Brojoda and Tenida both had superlative skills in “Gul” but were not the pioneers in the field. The original one and only “Da” who made “Gulbaji” a refined literary art was Ghonada. Ghonada s stories were revolved around four young men who shared a mess accommodation in No. 72, Banamali Naskar Lane in Calcutta .These four men were Shibu, Shishir, Gour and Sudhir (the narrator). Ghanada , a middle-aged boarder in the mess would often be so kind to attend the “adda” of the above quartet , and share “stories” from his own life. Ghonada would never brag, but state in a matter of fact manner as to how he has travelled from Andes mountain range to Sakhalin Island in Russia, to even in Moon, from the time of Sepoy Mutiny to Napoleon’s rule. Ghonada point was that he was behind every major event in the history. The four men in the stories know fully well about the fertile imagination of Ghonada, yet they are enamored by his amazing narration skills. They would try to trick or plead Ghanada in a variety of ingenious ways to force out his stock of unique stories that range from science-fiction, action/adventure to historical conspiracies. In most of his stories, Ghanada himself was(is) the hero who travels all-round the globe to tackle sinister bad-guys and international conspiracies.

Ghonada was created by the celebrated Bengali author Premendra Mitra and first appeared in story books in the year 1945. The unique feature in Ghonada s stories is that the events narrated by him are real and there is an element of learning in each of his stories. To quote from Wikipedia- “Premendra Mitra had said that he decided to start the Ghanada series to educate children and teenagers on various lesser-known facts and topics of science, history and geography. “”The mystery, thrill and surprise- whatever I fell myself in the world of science; to test whether I can share the flavour to the readers, I have sent Ghanada to the stage with a mixture of humor (...নিজে যা কিছু অনুভব করি বিজ্ঞানের জগতের সেই রহস্য রোমাঞ্চ বিস্ময়ের স্বাদ পাঠকদেরও কিছু দিতে পারি কিনা দেখবার জন্যেই একটু কৌতুকের সুর মিশিয়ে ঘনাদাকে আসরে নামানো।)””. In every tale of Ghanada, the details of a topic related to Physics, Chemistry, Botany or Zoology is discussed in the form of a story, and the incident occurs at a place of certain historical or geographical importance.”

And then there was (or is) Feluda! The youngest of the fictional dadas of Calcutta (in terms of year of first appearance), but the most popular, most charismatic “Da”. Feluda is a no-nonsense person with an international aura. Feluda first appeared in the pages of Sandesh (a magazine published and edited by Satyajit Ray), in the year 1965. In terms of personality, Feluda cannot be more different from the other three dadas. Feluda is sharp, well-read, does not fake his

stories, is rather understated, and physically very fit. He does not waste his time idling around, but loves to keep himself engaged when he is not travelling across India and abroad in pursuit of the bad guy. Feluda however, is at heart a true Bengali, more specifically a Calcutta bred “sondesh loving” Bengali. What is common between Feluda and Ghonada (the oldest of the dadas) is that their adventures enable the readers to learn something new. The difference is that Ghonada educates the reader by way of humour and unrealistic feats, and Feluda does the same through crime and suspense thrillers. Satyajit Ray was an extremely well-read person, and had travelled across the world. He must have felt a need to broaden the mindset of average “chaposha” bengalis from the narrow bylanes of Kolkata into national and international arena. Feluda has performed that duty quietly for 25 years, through teaching his brother Topshe , and correcting hilarious mistakes made by friend Lalmohan babu. His admonishments to Lalmohan babu is considered by many critics as Ray’s sermon to average Bengalis to look and think beyond the rigors of daily life. Feluda’s character could have been partly inspired by Sherlock Holmes by Conon Doyle, of who Ray was a fan. If 221B Baker Street ,London, is famous worldwide as the address of the “guru” of all detectives, 21 Rajani Sen Road is no less famous among Bengalis as the address of Feluda. But Feluda was not deadpan serious like Holmes, rather his stories provided lessons on history, geography, science, arts and logical and creative thinking all with a liberal spread of humor. Ray also created another legendary character Professor Shonku , but Shonku was not exactly a “Dada” and was based in Giridih, not in Calcutta.

Feluda adventures came to an end with the demise of Ray in year 1991. Ghonada’s creator had passed away few years earlier. Tenida’s creator had an untimely demise in the early 70’s otherwise there would have been many more hilarious stories of his famous character. Famous journalist and author, Gour Kishore Ghosh, the creator of Brojoda also passed away in the year 2000. These iconic characters have now ceased to exist, but their escapades have entertained generations of Bengalis. Their stories not only provide fun, knowledge and entertainment but also glimpses of the City of Joy for almost five decades since the time of independence. Therefore, in a way these stories are important from a social studies point of view. Young NRI Bengali boys and girls who are curious about how their father/mother’s or even grandfather/grandmother’s teenage days were like could pick up a Tendida or Brojoda story, and next thing they will realize that they cannot put the book down. Off course they will have to brush-up their Bengali, if not learn the language from scratch! Hope my article about Dadas of Calcutta will induce few readers to read their stories afresh.



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কপটতা

বলরাম চন্দ্র পাল

জানেন আমি বর্ণবাদের শিকার |
প্রতিবাদী মনটা কে তাই, সুযোগ পেলেই হাতড়ে বেড়াই |
যত্রতত্র ঘৃণার চোখে, অবজ্ঞাকে সরিয়ে রেখে,
এড়িয়ে চলি ব্যাধির সমান বর্ণবাদের বিকার |
জানেন আমি বর্ণবাদের শিকার ||

কিন্তু বর্ণবাদ কি অমানবিক শুধু বর্ণের জোরে?
জাতিবাদের যাঁতাকলে, অন্ধকারের অন্তাচলে,
গভীর মনের অন্তরালে, জাতিবাদের ঘোরে |
তাই বর্ণবাদ নয় অমানবিক শুধু বর্ণের জোরে ||

ধর্মবাদের বিশ্বাসে আজ ধর্ম কোথায় খুঁজি?
মানবমনের মানবতা, ভাতৃবোধের সরলতা,
সরিয়ে রেখে সবকিছু আজ নিজের আখের বুঝি |
তাই ধর্মবাদের প্রতিবাদে, জাতিবাদের ছায়াতলে, অধর্মকেই পূজি ||

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সংসারে আজ আমরা সবাই সমান অপরাধী |
তোমার ধর্ম হিন্যমনা, আমার ধর্ম সর্বজনা,
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কপটচারী মনটা যে তাই, বর্ণবাদের প্রতিবাদে শুধুই গগনভেদী ||

কালো তালিকা কেবল কালো, শ্বেতপত্র ভীষণ ভালো |
কালো সাদার সংজ্ঞাটাকে সর্বক্ষেত্রে জানি |
কিন্তু বর্ণবাদের কথা এলে, কালো সাদার বিভেদ পেলে,
প্রতিবাদী মনটা নিয়ে ঘৃণার রেখা টানি ||

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পূজো মানেই আইন ভাঙতে লাগে না কোন ফাইন!

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পূজো মানেই পুলিশ মামার পাহারা সারা রাত!
পূজো মানেই ট্যাক্সি ওয়ালার বাচ্চার বই কেনা,
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পূজো মানেই নতুন প্রেমের প্রথম কদমফুল,
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ছেলেটার একটু বয়স বেশি, তাতে কি আর এসে গেলো

মেয়েটা বললো নিজের পায়ে দাঁড়াই আগে, বিয়ে দিও না এখন
বাবা বোঝায় মেয়েদের নাকি বয়স বাড়লে, সুপাত্র জোটে না তখন
আমরা তোর ভালো বুঝি মা, দেখিস তুই ভালো থাকবি
স্বামী সংসার নিয়ে সময় কাটবে, মাঝে মাঝে আমাদের কাছে কিন্তু আসবি

পছন্দ বা অপছন্দ কি আসে যায় তাতে
সব ঠিক আছে তো ? খুশি তো তুই ? বাবার প্রশ্ন, মেয়ের বিয়ের রাতে
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ওদের সম্ভ্রান্ত পরিবার, দাবি নেই কোন, চায়নি কোন জিনিস

ওদের পরিবার সেকলে নয়, নেই কোন বাদবিচার
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বাবার শরীরটা কেমন আছে, সারল তোমার জ্বর ?
বাবাকে বলো রোজ আর তেমন ফোন করা যায়না
এ বাড়ির কাজের মেয়েটা আসেনা আর, তাই সময় তেমন হয়না

মেয়েদের সব ইচ্ছেগুলো হয়না তো তেমন দামি
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Our trip to France & Italy

Shreya Ray

First, we went to Paris where we saw the fireworks of Bastille Day behind the Eiffel tower. It was super crowded and we got completely squashed by the crowd. The world cup finals was a day away and we regretted the plan of coming at that time. Even though our plans were disturbed, we managed to cover the most famous sights like the Arc de Triomphe; the Palais De Royale, and Louvre, albeit with the disturbing queues.

We then went to Nice where we spent most of the evenings in the Promenade Des Anglais beach. We visited Monaco, Cannes, and the village of Ed in tour groups, where we had lot of fun; and we also got to stand on the red carpet in Cannes. In Nice, we visited the Alps early in the morning in a special small train, and had great time taking in the freshness of the air and its beautiful scenery.

We then made our way to Venice by train and arrived to see a waterbus waiting for us outside the train station. Venice doesn't have any roads so we travelled mostly by foot and on boats. We went to the famous business center, Rialto and took a lot of photos on the bridges and in front of the short buildings standing on water.

We took a short one-night trip to Florence where we visited its famous museums and cathedrals and we also learnt a lot about Michelangelo. We saw his most famous work, David and took in its every detail. Lastly, we took a short train to Pisa and saw the Leaning Tower of Pisa!

Finally, we went to Rome where we explored the ancient buildings and houses and we went into the Colosseum where the gladiators and animals used to fight. We also saw historic cathedrals that were made many centuries back in BCs. We also visited the Vatican, and saw the beautiful museum with a large collection. Overall, we had a really fun time this summer.

My holiday

Shuchi Ray

It was my holiday
so I went to France,
When I reached there
I wanted to dance.

In Paris the shimmering
Lights of the Eiffel I saw,
It looks so nice I thought
As I watched in awe.

The beautiful sight I saw
In Nice when I reached,
Was of the shining sea
right next to the beach.

Next we arrived in Venice
where we saw mostly water,
And as we walked down the Streets
It got hotter and hotter.

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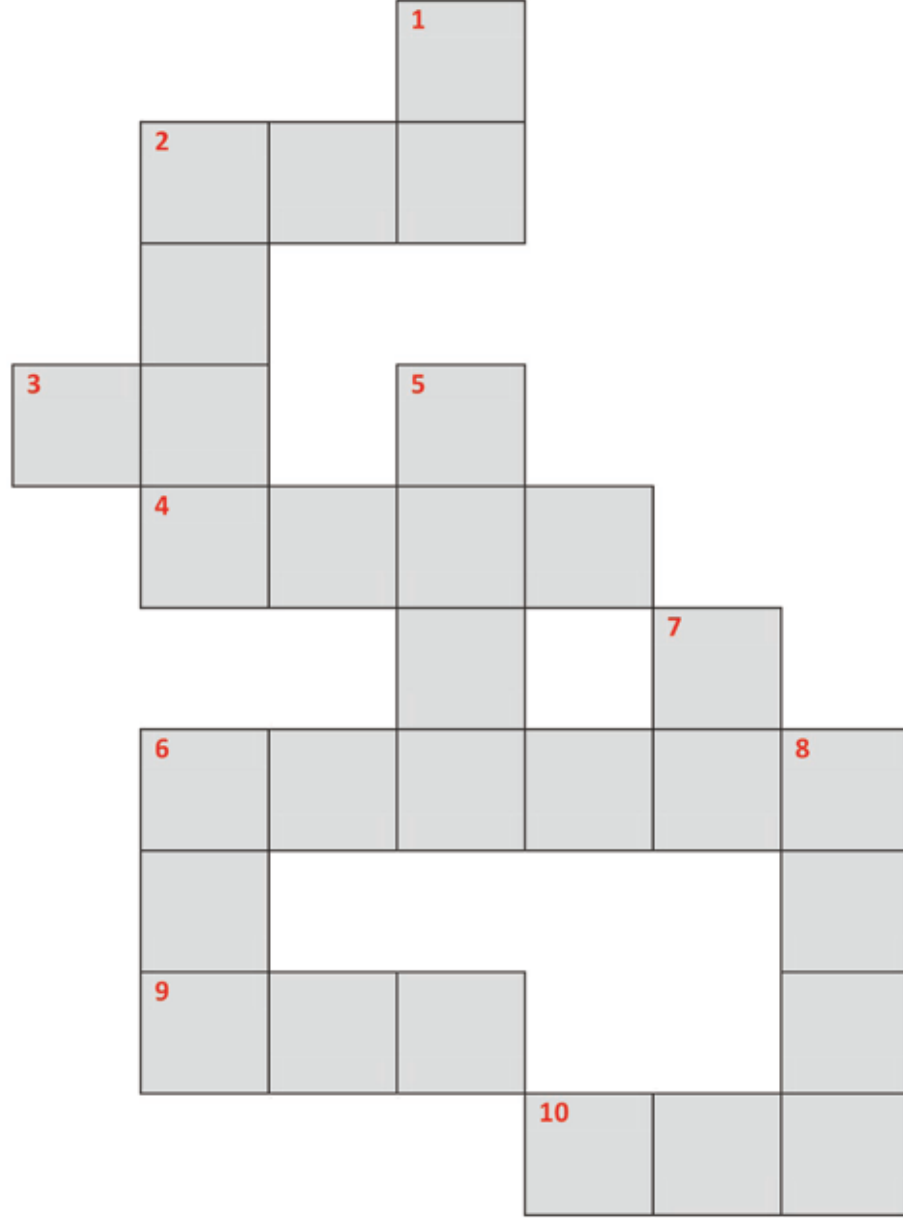
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1. রোগা আর লম্বা ॥
2. খালিচোখে দেখা যায় না ॥
5. পেটে থাকলে বিদ্যে, কেউ বলে না এ মিথ্যে ॥
6. সোনা ॥
7. রোগা মোটা বেঁটে লম্বা সব আকারে পাবে, আমাকে হারিয়ে ফেললে ছায়া কোথায় যাবে ॥
8. বানরের শোভা পায় মানুষের নয়, বড়োবেশি করলে তবে সত্যি লাগে ভয় ॥

পাশাপাশি

2. এক কথায় "একি হেরিলাম নয়নাভিরাম" ॥
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4. নন্দন কাজ তার, নাটকের অধিকার ॥
6. আমার ঝোলায় একটা হাতি আছে.....তুমি দেখবে?
- 9 উল্টো করে দাঁড় করালে সোজা থেকে যাই, পূজোর সময় জামা প্যান্ট সবই এই চাই ॥
- 10 ভাগ্যটা একদম খুলে যাবে খাস, হাতে যদি পেয়ে যাই এইখানা তাস ॥

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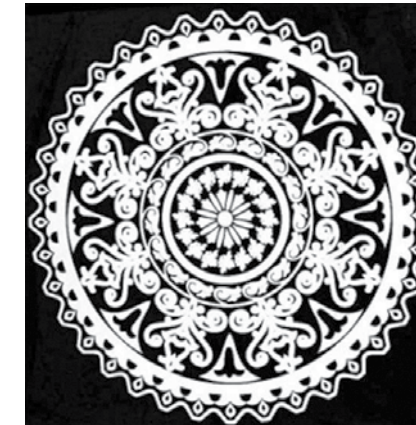
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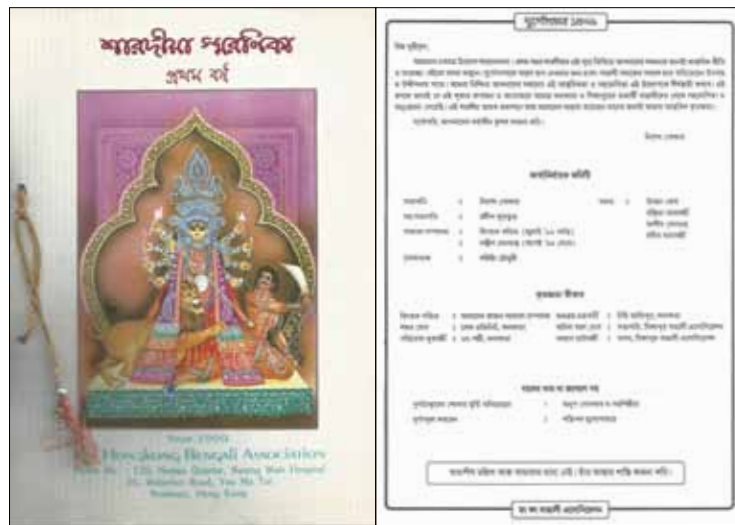
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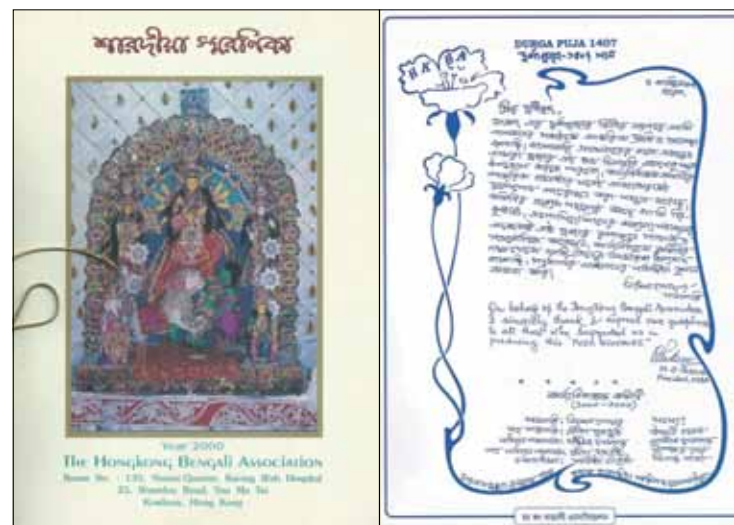
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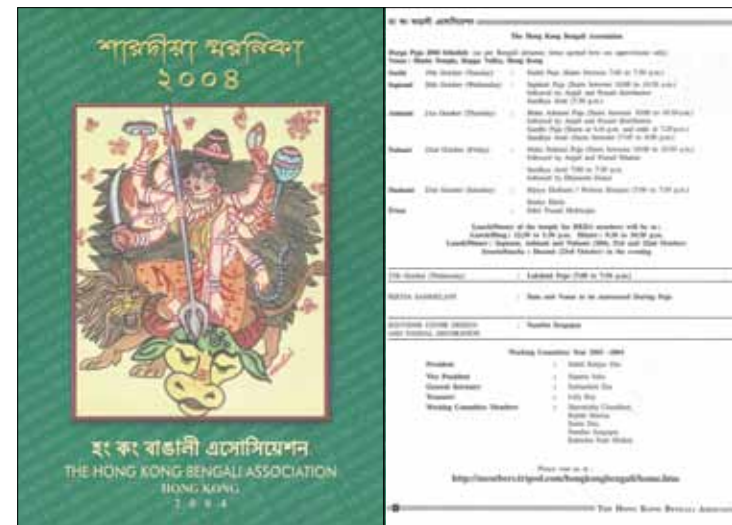
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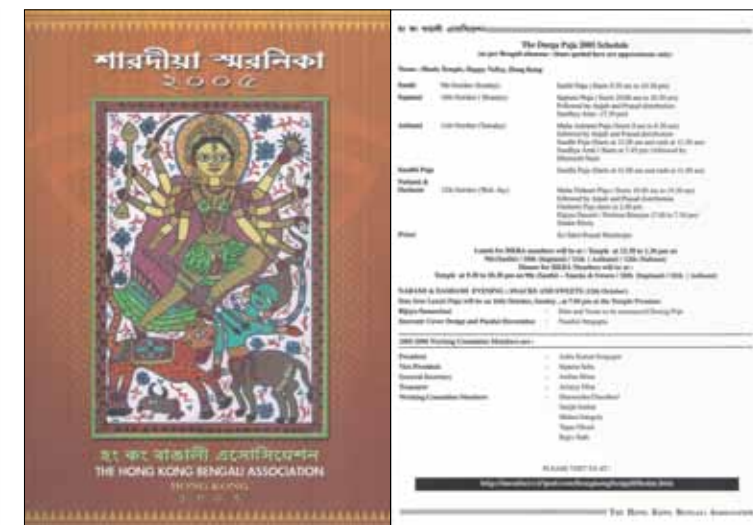
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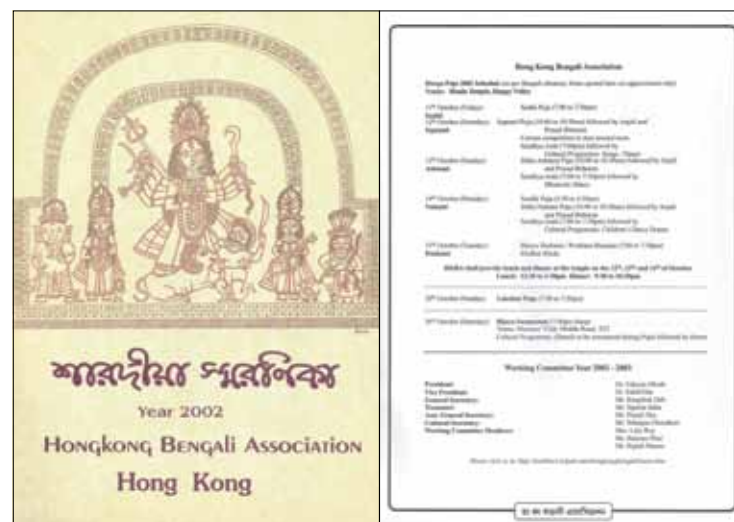
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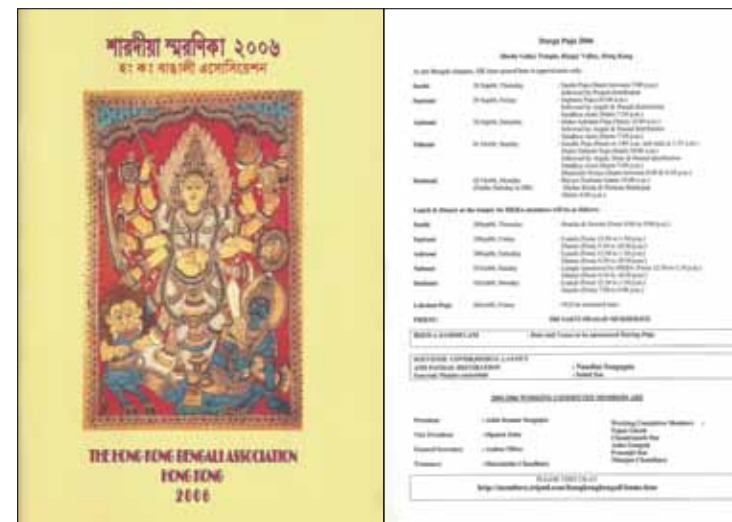
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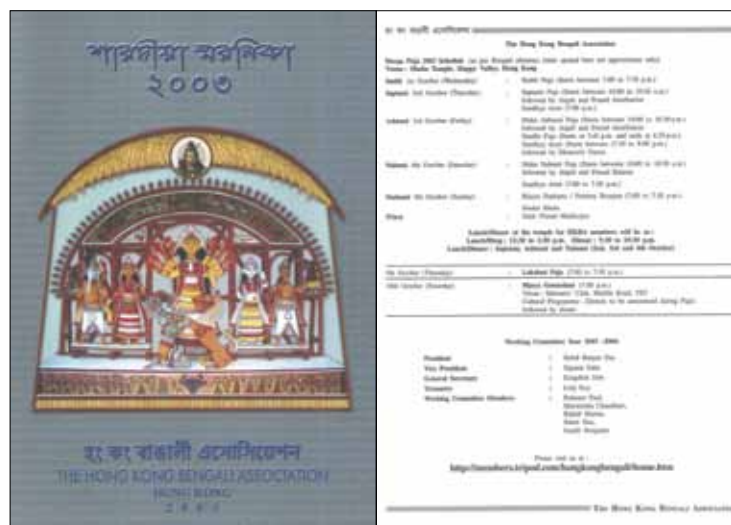
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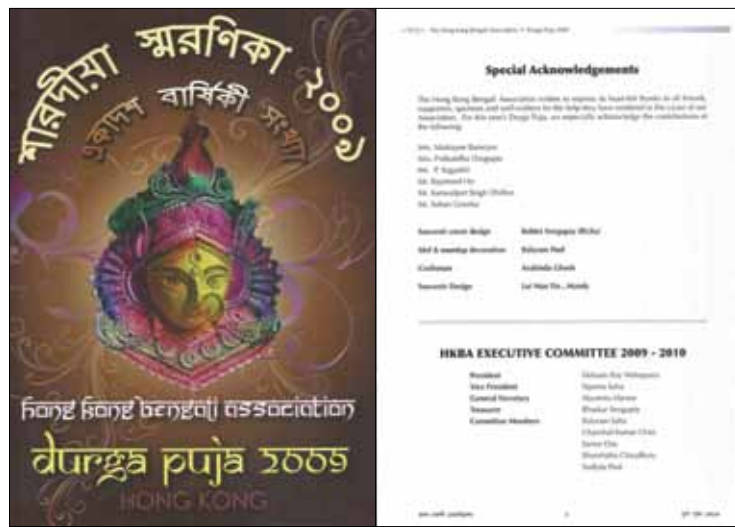
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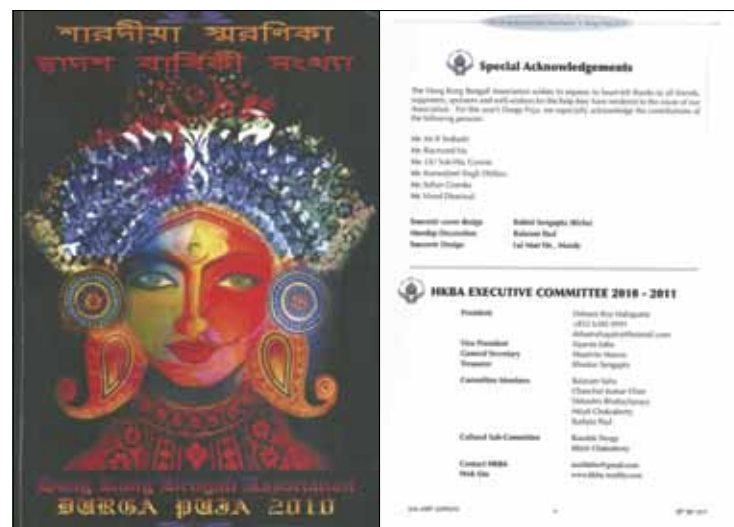
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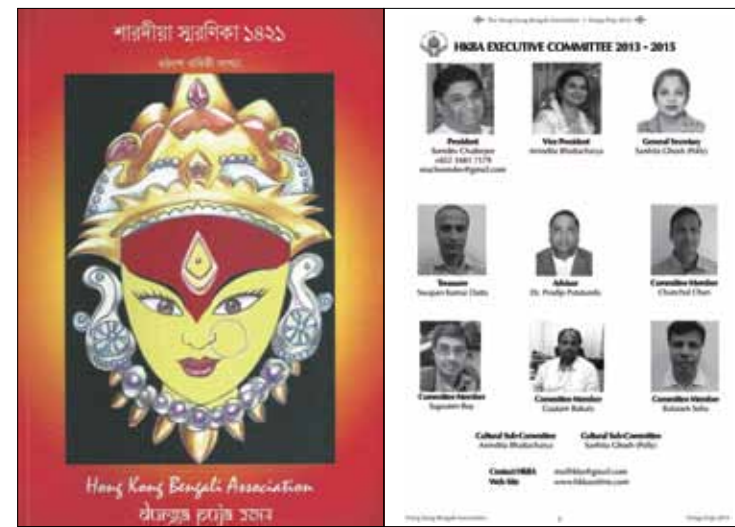
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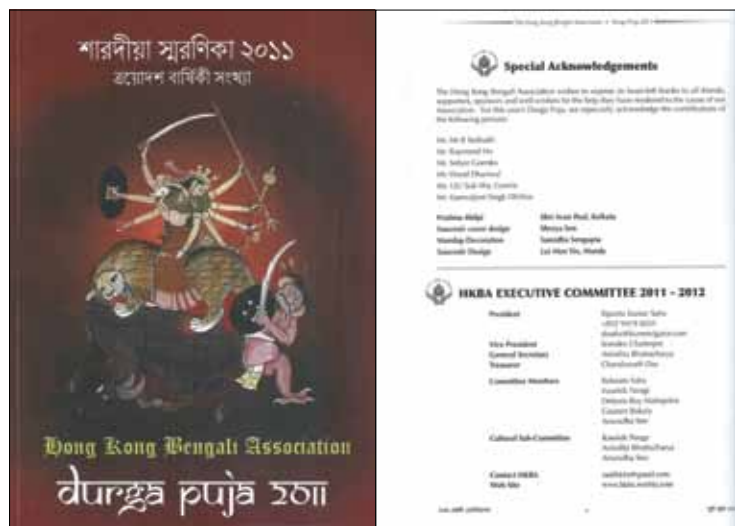
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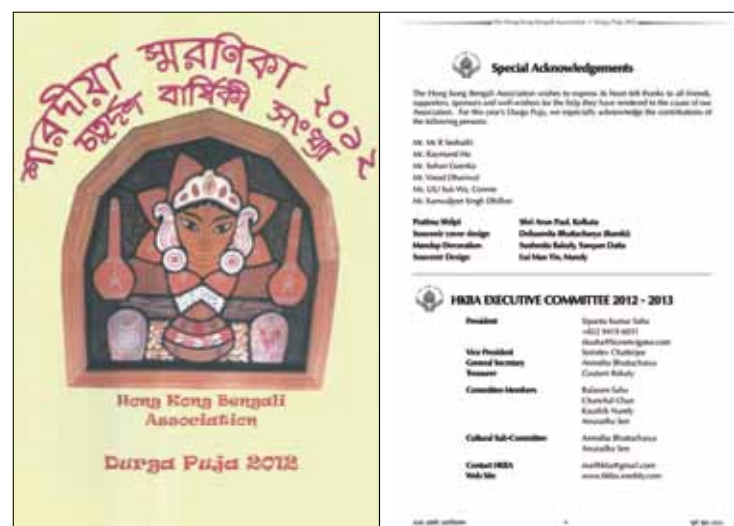
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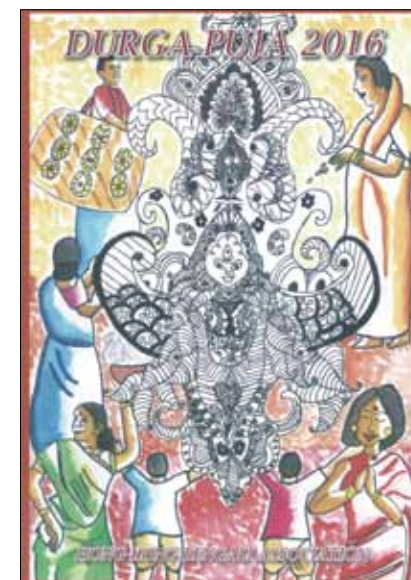
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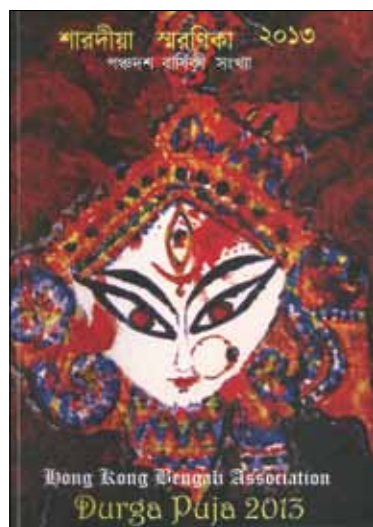
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