

Bengali Cultural Society of South Jersey
(A Non-Profit Organization)

সংস্কৃতি

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From the Editor

Happy belated New Year. We are at a time again when people promise to make some type of improvement in their lives. A chance to start over and find hidden inspirations that were lost during the last year. If you are like me, the inspiration didn't last long, and you have already broken your resolution and are back to the same lifestyle that you vowed to improve. I broke mine on January 2nd. Something about waking up earlier to go running in the morning. But, for all of us resolution breakers, here are some new year's quotes to hopefully make you feel better about falling back into your old self.

For the older crowd, and definitely how I feel on New Year's Day:

'Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you're forced to.' Bill Vaughan

For those trying to shed a couple of pounds:

'Now there are more overweight people in America than average-weight people. So overweight people are now average... which means, you have met your New Year's resolution.' Jay Leno

I hope this applies to me:

'May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions!' Joey Adams

Why I shouldn't have made any resolutions:

'I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me.' Anais Nin

For the smart and realistic ones:

'Many years ago I resolved never to bother with New Year's resolutions, and I've stuck with it ever since.' David Beard

And finally a couple of quotes for most of us:

'Many people look forward to the New Year for a new start on old habits.' Anonymous

'New year, same goal.' Joe King

Whether you have kept, broken or not made any resolutions, I do hope 2011 is going really well for everyone and wish happiness for everyone.

We will be having our first event of the new year, the annual Saraswati puja, this Saturday, February 5th. The puja will be held at Shawnee High School at 600 Tabernacle Road, Medford, NJ 08055. The puja will start at 11:00am.

In the meantime, try to stay as warm as possible. As always, if anyone would like to send me any ideas, stories or announcements for any future newsletters, then please e-mail them to me at editor@bcssj.org.

I hope to see everyone at the puja.

Executive Committee (2010-2012)

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Announcements

Congratulations on the Birth of

- Devapriyo and Ankhi Ganguly had a baby girl named Aaleya Ganguly on January 16, 2011. (1)
- Dia Ganguly and Ashton Hawk had a baby boy named Milan Ashton Hawk on January 21, 2011. (2)



(1)



(2)

Condolences to

- Sheila Sengupta on the passing of her sister, Aparajita Mondol.

Local Events and Activities

Not too many events and activities going on now. Maybe it's better to stay inside and be warm for another couple months.

- Philadelphia Museum of Art: Monumental "Miniatures": Large-scale Paintings from India. The so-called "miniature" paintings of India, like their Persian counterparts, were made in sets to illustrate stories and were intended to be viewed at a close distance, usually by one person at a time. In some cases, however, Indian "miniatures" were produced on a grand scale, making them especially well suited for certain devotional rituals and group activities such as storytelling. The exhibition is ongoing through April 2011. www.philamuseum.org
- Metropolitan Museum of Art: Gandhara, Mathura, Andhra and Gupta Sculpture. These galleries explore the South Asian emergence of Buddhist and Hindu sculptural traditions between the second century B.C. and the eighth century A.D. More than one hundred sixty works from the permanent collection are juxtaposed to trace the range of stylistic and iconographic developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India during a period that witnessed great ideological ferment and international exchange. www.metmuseum.org
- Another reminder for this year's Banga Sammelan. The celebration is scheduled to be held from July 1st to July 3rd, 2011 at the Baltimore Convention Center in Baltimore, MD. All information can be found at www.nabc2011.net. Facebook and Twitter pages are also available for the event at the following addresses: www.facebook.com/pages/North-American-Bengali-Conference-2011/132853913414382 and twitter.com/nabc2011.

Ghanashyam Adhikari Runs the Great Wall Half-Marathon

While many of us wish that one day we could just visit the Great Wall of China, Ghanashyam (Sam) Adhikari, not only visited that Wonder of the World, but also participated in a half marathon, running through a portion of the wall itself, last May 15th, 2010. Below is an account of race day in the words of Ghanashyam Adhikari, himself.

The D-DAY SATURDAY 15, 2010 – It was a cool morning (50 deg F) as we set out whooping and cheering across the start lines as if following 13.1 miles / 26.2 miles (Marathon) were going to be a stroll in a park.

Exactly at 7:30 am Starter's Gun went off and indeed right away the whoops and cheers soon dissipated in favors of puffs and pants as the first 3 miles of the course took us up a constant upward slope to the foot of the Great Wall. The Elevation difference from the start is 500 ft. (Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2) This section is a very steep paved serpentine mountain road with many curves and bends. Most of the runners including me started walking after making a few attempts to run the stretch and realizing not to overtax our strength. It took me 45 min to reach the foot of the Wall. At the end of this stretch we saw the sign “ Entrance to the Wall “. We were in serious business now .

My only strategy for the stairs [of the wall] was to walk the steep sections – both up and down. There was bottlenecks at the narrow steep sections where single file was a must. I was happy to see those bottlenecks as I could catch my breath and rest my legs. After an hour of climbing , reaching at a height of 1600 ft and covering 2581 steps, I came down on to the flat ground to the paved Beijing Highway.

This highway stretch of 2 miles is paved and we all had to pay careful attention to any traffic. There were cars, trucks, tractors and bikes..

At the end of the highway, we were directed to a dirt road of mile long of loose gravels and stone chips running along right next to an irrigation canal. When the cars were passing by even at low speeds , dusts still were stirred up.

We left this road and took a sharp 90 deg. left turn to go to the villages of Duanzhuang with uneven dirt road with bricks and stones sticking out inviting every step to be tripped and fall flat on your face. We ran along the narrow alley with houses and doorways on both sides. Sometimes an occasional chicken or duck darted out the doorways. We had to climb a little path that the village residents use when they go to work in the fields. This path is very narrow and stony with single file access. All the village residents and the kids stood outside to cheer the runners. The kids offered their hands and it was “ High- Fives “ all round. I didn’t remember how many kids I greeted. This was great fun and a good distraction. After running two miles criss- crossing through the villages, we came out of the village and on to the Beijing Highway but this in opposite direction towards the Yin Yang Square.

We were approaching the finishing area with two miles to go. Finally, I came so close to the town and the Square that I could hear the loud speakers announcing the names of the finishers and the faint roar of the crowds. They were right around the corner – almost. At last, I entered the Yin Yang Square, I heard my name and I crossed the finish line.

3 hrs 33 min 53 sec -- It took a little bit longer than what I expected but I found comfort in knowing that I met the challenge and I just crossed the finish line of the GREAT WALL HALF-MARATHON. If I were a reporter and I was writing about Sam Adhikari , My headlines would have been “ GREAT WALL OF CHINA BOWS TO 69 YEAR OLD SAM ADHIKARI TWICE IN A SPAN OF TWO DAYS “ (5182 TOTAL STEPS ON THE WALL LIFTED HIM ALMOST TO THE DOORSTEP OF THE HEAVEN).

MAO ZEDONG once said “ He who has not climbed the Great Wall is not a true man “ MAO likely never anticipated the scene on May 15, 2010 when more than 2500 athletes from 53 countries not only climbed but ran the GREAT WALL OF CHINA MARATHON / HALF-MARATHON. For most people just seeing the GREAT WALL OF CHINA is a big deal but for a few hours one day a year people can actually run over 2000 years of history on a portion of the Wall.



An Evening with Rabindranath – Arupa Ganguly

The year 2011 marks the 150th birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore – one of the greatest bastions of Bengali literature. He was a poet, a lyricist, a musician, a dance choreographer – novelist, a writer, a thinker, a philosopher – a painter and above all – a humanist.

In response to popular demand, the executive committee decided to celebrate this important occasion. Under the overall direction of Susmita Guha-Roy – better known as Babli, BCS organized an evening with Rabindranath – ‘Rabndra Sandhya.’

The legacy of Tagore is so enormous that it is impossible to capture all aspects of him in one evening. They did the best they could. The programs were many - and involved many individuals – the number of on-stage participants was 65.

It was a successful program starting with the opening ceremony with placing of candle-lights in front of an original life size painting of Tagore by our very own Kalyanda (Kalyan Niyogi). The national anthems of two continents always send shivers down the spine and did so that evening too. The program was conducted by our wonderful emcee Anamitra (Bubu) Basu whose mastery of Bangla introductions mixed in with English captured every one’s attention.

The reminiscences of Tagore by Tapan Basu (Dadabhai) were enlightening and personal. The slide show by Ziauddin Ahmed set the temporal background for the evening. Chorus songs directed by Sheila Sen Gupta reflected many different moods of Rabindranath and set the tone for the evening.

The many facets of love as revealed by Rabindra sangeet were presented under the direction of Sudeshna Jana – a heart-warming musical soiree that resonated with many. Side by side the dance program choreographed by Sanghamitra Saha, Krishna Benegal, and, Swapna Ghosh captured many aspects of “Monsoon” in Rabindra sangeet. It was another wonderful production.

Rabindra Nath – the philosopher – envisioned emancipation of women from behind the doors of tradition. His thinking was in synchrony with the ideas presented by Ibsen in his play “A Doll’s House” and was reflected in his creation of “Mrinalini” in “Streer Patro”. Mithu Basu’s transition to “Mejo Bou” was superb and memorable.

Finally, the humanism of Rabindra Nath was presented as an excerpt from “Rakto Karabi” and enacted by Swapan Sen and Susmita. Zafar Billah took this event to a higher level by his superb melodious songs.

Considering how busy every one’s schedule is, special thanks are due to every one of the participants - on stage and behind the stage – for putting together a memorable evening to honor Rabindra Nath Tagore – about 150 years after his birth and 10,000 miles away from Bengal.



Durga Puja 2010

We had a very successful Durga Puja this year. There was a large turnout, and everyone seemed to have a great time with the food and festivities.



Kolkata Khobor

Bengali films catching on in USA and Canada

The success of Hindi movies in overseas markets has encouraged a US-based firm, Databazaar Media Ventures, to offer Bengali films in the USA and Canada.

"We are the only company that is offering distribution facility for Bengali films in USA and Canadian market in all the channels," Databazaar CEO Mr Oney Seal said over the phone from USA.

"This also allows the simultaneous launch of Bengali films in India and USA, which was not possible earlier. Non-resident Bengali film lovers had to wait for a few months or watch the same on pirated disks," he said.

Databazaar produces and retails Bengali movie DVDs at a cost of USD 4.99 to counter pirated discs of the films.

'China would love to be the theme country in Kolkata Book Fair'

China would love to be the theme country in Kolkata Book Fair in near future, said consulate general of China,

Mr Zhang Li Zhong, while inaugurating the Chinese pavilion at Kolkata book fair today where he introduced the School of Chinese Language.

He said that Chinese Premier, Mr Wen Jiabao, has emphasised on close cooperation in the fields of education, business, culture and personal relationship.

He maintained that this year is set as the "Year of Exchanges".

"We are going to have more exchanges of young people between China and India, as both sides emphasise the need for harmonious relationship between the two countries," he said.

Bangla Movies

Bedini

Starring - Rituparna Sengupta, Indraneil Sengupta, Rajesh Sharma and Rimjhim Gupta

Directed by Anjan Das, Bedini is based on a controversial work of Tarasankar Bandopadhyay, one of the best post-Tagorean litterateurs in Bengal.

Bedini means a female gypsy. Bedini is about Radhika, a dusky but sensual beauty. She lives with Shambhu, an itinerant snake charmer who wanders from place to place with his 'show' where he plays on the dholak and Radhika shows her tricks with the snakes or wan-



Above - Rituparna Sengupta in Bedini

ders from door to door to sell off her magic potions for a paltry fee.

Bedini could be interesting to some because it offers an alternative look into the lives and lifestyles of people we might not necessarily know.

Egaro-The Eleven

Starring: Monu Mukherjee, Shankar Chakraborty, Rajat Ganguly, Biswajit Chakraborty, Tulika Basu

Directed by Aron Roy, Egaro celebrates the centenary of the historical football match between Mohan Bagan and East Yorkshire Regiment for the IFA Shield where Mohan Bagan snatched the shield on 29th July 1911 during a time when India was under British Rule.

The film explores a parallel theme of an underground revolution brimming underneath following the Partition of Bengal in 1905 and the hanging of Khudiram Bose for attempting to kill the Magistrate of Calcutta Presidency in 1908.

Definitely worth a watch.

Below- Movie still from Egaro—The Eleven



Sports

India Chooses 15 Member Squad for 2011 Cricket World Cup

Leg spinner Piyush Chawla was the surprise inclusion while young batsman Rohit Sharma and speedster S Sreesanth were on Monday dropped from India's 15-member squad for the upcoming cricket World Cup to be held in the sub-continent from February 19.

Tamil Nadu spinner Ravichandran Ashwin, who is also a useful batsman, was also named in the squad.

India's major concern ahead of the team selection was the injuries to four key players - Sachin Tendulkar, Virender Sehwag, Gautam Gambhir and pacer Praveen Kumar - but the selectors decided to include them, expecting all four to be fit in time for the high-profile tournament.

Apart from inclusion of Chawla, who last played a ODI match in 2008, there were no major surprises in the squad to be captained by Mahendra Singh Dhoni and Virender Sehwag as his deputy.

The squad has six batsmen, four pacers, three spinners, one all rounder in Yusuf Pathan and a wicket keeper in captain Dhoni.

The 15 man squad will be Mahendra Singh Dhoni (capt/wk), Virender Sehwag, Sachin Tendulkar, Gautam Gambhir, Virat Kohli, Yuvraj Singh, Suresh Raina, Harbhajan Singh, Zaheer Khan, Munaf Patel, Praveen Kumar, Yusuf Pathan, Piyush Chawla, R Ashwin, Ashish Nehra.



Kids Corner

Here is a picture of Saraswati Thakur for you to color.



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P. O. Box 307
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SANSKRITI
(A Quarterly Newsletter)



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We are on the web

www.bcssj.org

Upcoming Events



SARASWATI PUJA

Saturday, February 5th at the Shawnee High School
600 Tabernacle Road, Medford, NJ 08055

DIRECTIONS

1. From North Jersey / New York: NJ TPK South – Exit 7 – US 206 South, go about 20 miles - turn right on Medford Lakes Road (CR 532), this road becomes Tabernacle Rd after 1.5 miles. The School is on the left.
2. From I-295 South: I-295 South - exit 36A - Rt 73 South, go about 3.6 miles – Rt 70 East, go about 5.5 miles – right on N. Main St (CR 541), go 2.3 miles – continue on Dixontown Rd (CR 541) – first left on Tabernacle Rd, go 1.6 miles. The School is on the right.
3. From BEN FRANKLIN BRIDGE: Take Ben Franklin Bridge to Rt 70 East – Follow as in 2 above.
4. From DELAWARE / SOUTH: I-295 N – exit 36A – Rt 73 South – Follow as in 2 above.