

Celebrating
SUPRIYA ROY

2028

In memory of
Supriya Roy

13th August, 1944 – 28th March, 2023

Cover art by Nisar Hossain

A collection of memories and tributes

Bibliography - The Works of Supriya Roy

Compiled by Asis Hazra

Adi Roy

Mehal Roy

Tatini Biswas

Santosankar Dasgupta

Reshmi Roy

Smita Gupta

Indrani Basu

Sudipta Dhruva

Ranjeeta Basu

Proma Roy

Samiran Nandy (*Bengali*)

Samiran Nandy (*English Translation*)

Swati Ghosh (*Bengali*)

Swati Ghosh (*English Translation*)

A collection of memories and tributes

Sabujkoli Sen (*Bengali*)

Sabujkoli Sen (*English Translation*)

Uma Das Gupta

Shailesh Parekh

Kalpana Dasgupta

Kumkum Bhattacharya

Sukanta Chaudhuri (*Bengali*)

Sukanta Chaudhuri (*English Translation*)

Manjusri Sen

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Martin Kämpchen

Goutam Bhattacharya (*Bengali*)

Goutam Bhattacharya (*English Translation*)

Sourajit Roy

Acknowledgments



Works of Supriya Roy

A Bibliography

Compiled by Asis Hazra

Note: This bibliography is a work in progress. We are actively seeking to locate and archive a significant number of older works that remain undiscovered due to the extensive volume of materials involved. As we continue to find and catalog these pieces, this bibliography will be regularly updated and expanded.

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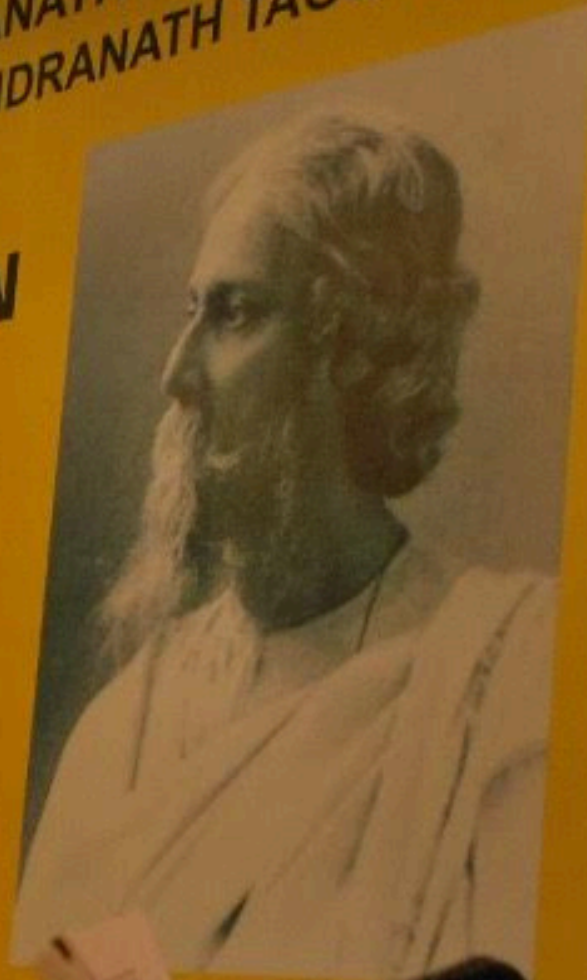
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NGÀY SINH CỦA RABINDRANATH TAGORE
BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF RABINDRANATH TAGORE

UỘC ĐỜI VÀ DI SẢN
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MINAR ON
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Supriya and Abhijit Roy



For My Thamma

Adi Roy

Thamma frequently wrote letters to me. In one of her letters to me on my 18th birthday in 2022, she began with an excerpt from *Desiderata*, “Go placidly amid the noise and haste and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible without surrender, be on good terms with all persons. Speak your truth quietly and clearly, and listen to others, even the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story...”

Thamma’s strength lay in her resilience, in her ability to navigate even the cruellest of crises with a calm and steady mind. Throughout her life, she endured some extremely difficult and challenging times, yet it was her honesty, integrity, and rare gift for bringing comfort and balance to those around her that set her apart. No matter how turbulent the moment, she ensured that everyone in her care remained safe, supported, and at peace.

Thamma has a large family and circle of friends and colleagues who have always looked up to her, turned to her for guidance on matters large and small. From steering the most unique and puzzling encounters at her work, discussing the strangest problems mathematics has to offer with her oldest grandson, analysing the trickiest of readings with her granddaughter, and dissecting modern politics and design theory with her youngest grandson, to the care and attention she brought to the stories and lives of those around her, with fields and subjects being as diverse as they come, Thamma was a polymath who brought her genius and understanding to all that came her way.

This book is a tribute to that genius, the most sincere and endless source of kindness and care, a person who had a unique ability to make everything seem easy, one who made everyone feel at home no matter how many oceans away she was from her own.

It is no easy task to capture Thamma in so few words. Her presence defies the confines of mere text, yet, as many voices in this book affirm, perhaps this is the most faithful way to honour a life that wove itself into countless memories and lives. She was a writer, an archivist, a librarian, a scholar, a mentor, a guide, and, above all, a soul whose nurture, gentleness, and spirit shaped the lives of those around her. Even now, she continues to inspire and strengthen all who were fortunate to know her.

Sometime back in January in 2020, my grandmother, my Thamma, was scheduled to fly in from Bombay to Delhi, to stay with us for a while in Gurgaon. I had only heard of a disease spreading fast across China and a few places overseas over the news and social media. Since Thamma was going to travel soon, I wasted no time in warning her. With a mask and extra precautions, she reached Gurgaon safely.

We ended up spending two whole consecutive years (2020 and 2021, and the beginning of 2022), sharing a room and keeping each other company all day.

We always had a tradition of sharing a room whenever she visited. Ever since my grandfather passed away in 2014, Thamma came to live with us in Gurgaon for long durations, frequently visiting Santiniketan, Kolkata, Noida, and Mumbai from there. Being together during the pandemic was a blessing.



Thamma and Adi in Santiniketan.

Thamma's embrace was always one of compassion and understanding, with a deep capacity for patience and tolerance. She became a pillar for all around her, holding and safeguarding countless secrets as everyone's go-to confidant, easing people's pains and worries, while going out of her way to ensure her family was always comfortable. However, she rarely shared her own troubles with others.

An eminent Tagore Scholar, as one would come to read throughout this book, she served as an archivist and librarian at Rabindra Bhavana, Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, for over three decades, while authoring over 10 books, countless articles, and curating exhibitions and talks across the world. She possessed a rare gift of balance between academic and intellectual knowledge with a deep emotional, spiritual, and empathetic understanding of the world around her.

Thamma cared deeply about her family's touch with culture. At a younger age, when her three sons were children, she lived with them in Santiniketan working, while my grandfather, her husband, worked in Kolkata a couple of hours away, visiting a few days a week. While he would visit on the weekends, she would often take her sons to Kolkata on some other days. It was during these visits that she would regularly take them to various museums, monuments, and historical sites, showering them with books and creative material. She took them to similar places in Delhi and Mumbai, ensuring her sons had such experiences.

Thamma, here, was also committed to ensuring the same for her grandchildren, introducing us to Enid Blyton, Shakespeare, the Mahabharata and such. The Mahabharata was one thing she introduced many to. Always carrying it with her on her Kindle, she frequently read it out to a number of people, from her family in Kolkata, Mumbai to Delhi, everyone would sit around and carefully listen to her narrate these tales.



Supriya with her daughter-in-law, Anamika (Adi's mother), 2022.

Her mother, Lila Basu, as she would often tell me, introduced her to the world of literature, exposing her to the works of Richmal Crompton, Enid Blyton, the Bronte sisters, Mrs. Henry Wood, P.G. Wodehouse and more. Her first ever novel was Emma by Jane Austen. Her father, Jyotikanta Basu, was a well-known soil scientist, having worked with various governments and international organisations, he served as the Director of Soil Conservation in the Government of India, as well as with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization.

“My mother was a serious person, very generous and compassionate, but strict in bringing us up. She was not the mushy, sentimental mother most people have. Both my parents emphasized education and did everything to encourage us in our studies, without a sense of competitiveness. They instilled in us the quality of truthfulness. We never dared to speak an untruth — that was strictly taboo”, a quote from Thamma for an interview I conducted for a school project in September 2015.

Thamma was born on the 13th of August 1944, in the small town of Sholapur (Solapur) in Maharashtra, while her father was working there. Throughout her life, she travelled extensively for work and leisure, touching almost every continent. Having lived in Santiniketan, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune, Delhi, Noida, Gurgaon, Faridabad, and briefly in the United States and Sudan, she was a bird with many nests.

She led a life of incredible achievements and rare experiences, which she hardly ever shared due to her modesty. From having met every single Indian Prime Minister personally since Independence, getting her book launched by the Prime Minister of Japan, to spending an entire afternoon with the 14th Dalai Lama talking about Tagore and Buddha, her life wasn't without its many adventures.



Thamma and Adi in Ramgarh, Uttarakhand. (2017)

Dedicating her life to academia, she never sought fame or prominence. She never pursued a Ph.D., but helped countless get theirs. She was the one-stop Tagore encyclopaedia in Santiniketan many relied upon and travelled borders to visit. Her knowledge and understanding were rare, just like her willingness to help without hesitation.

She led a happy life, surrounded by her family and loved ones. There was never a moment when she was not optimistic. Even during her final days when she was hospitalized, she spoke of reuniting with her parents and my grandfather, never losing hope.

During the pandemic, her health started deteriorating visibly. Her breathing problems escalated, and she was suffering. Despite such pain, her priority was her family, while simultaneously writing and publishing an entire book.

She became the one individual I was closest to — she was my confidant, and I was her's.

In her life, she had one dream of living under one roof with her entire family, one which is scattered across the world. While this may not have come true, she spent her last days surrounded by them and all her loved ones, eventually passing away on the 28th of March, at around 11PM.

Just like throughout her life, facing many hardships, she was smiling and happy, until the end.

The legacy she left behind, will live on.





She now lives through all of us — her family, her loved ones, everyone she met and influenced. The stories she passed on, her memories engraved, her intellect and ideas preserved, and her guidance that shaped many. She now lives through us, with us, looking over everyone, just like when she did when she was with us physically.

As we launch this book on her 81st birthday (13th August 2025), it is my sincere hope that this book presents and maintains a living archive to her incredible life and impact, and I am deeply grateful to all who have contributed towards this project, and will in the coming days. We will keep updating this space with newer memories, growing this already expansive collection of essays and memories.

Thamma's memories and stories are what unite us all, she is the glue that binds many, and her legacy is one that must live on.

Thamma is evermore.





Singapore (2016)

Thamma

Mehal Roy

Thammi,

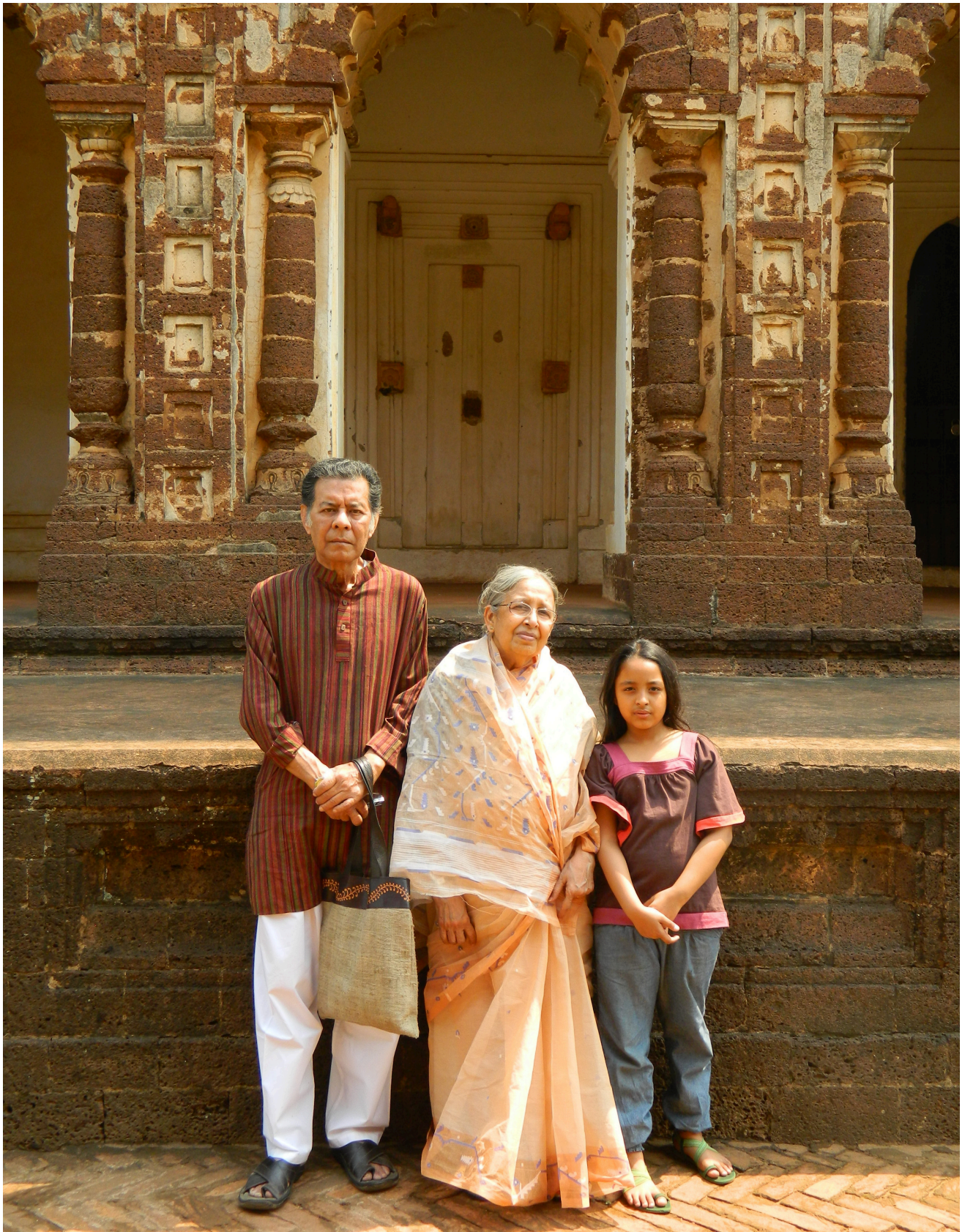
Once, during a particularly late night discussion with a friend, they said: A montage is simply life, but with time sucked out of it.

And I realise now, writing in remembrance of a person feels achingly similar.

When I think of you Thamma, I remember this almost-antique, worn out white nightie with tiny blue patterns on it. I remember that one night when I asked you to wear my rather funky earrings and proceed to laugh for half an hour. I remember Vermeer's painting at your doorstep. I remember the cheese you got me from Mauritius, the one with the cow, that I could never find since. And I remember the book where a couple of friends were planning a picnic. Gosh, how I loved that book.

Here, I am trying to make a career out of my love for people and stories. And my love of stories, I get from four crucial people in my life- Maa, Baba, Buchka and you. When people ask me of my interest in people, I proudly say, I get it from my grandmothers-my Dimma and my Thamma.

So, let me begin by thanking you. For all things accounted for, even more for those that remain unsaid.



Supriya Roy with Abhijit Roy and Mehal Roy. (Bishnupur, 2012)

Thank you for writing letters to a nine year old me, and correcting the grammar in mine. Thank you for supporting my unreasonable habits, as well as the reasonable ones. For encouraging my passionate hoarding, for instilling in me a love for stationary and fancy chocolates. For introducing Elvis and Hitchcock, Anne Frank and Atticus. For reading books to a twelve year old that were ‘meant for adults’.

Thank you for my words, Thammi. Thank you for making me dream.

I won’t pretend to have seen eye to eye with you on everything, or not having our fair share of fights.

Bablu Pishi once said that we shared a very ‘adult’ relationship. I think that’s true. And adult relationships I think, are like glass onions- complex, translucent.

I seem to understand you more now. All your silent sacrifices that went unnoticed, I try to think of them now.

You know, I’ve never been one to believe in a ‘God’ per se. For me, people play the biggest role in my life and faith. Thus, in moments of sorrow and solitude, I often speak to Dadu. Now I speak to you too. I speak to all whom I love, ones I can no longer reach for, over the telephone.

I wish for the letter to be much longer, I wish to say so much more. But that is only between you and me. So I’ll end with this.

I once had a dream; I was swimming in the sea with turtles (funny, as you know



Supriya Roy with Banalata Roy and Mehal Roy.

I'm not an animal person). All the pain washed away with the waves, and it brought with it love, only love.

For a while, everything was alright.

I would like to believe that is what happens to a person when they die in their physical form. They swim in the sea, a sea where turtles swim. There is no pain any longer, for a lifetime is enough to bear the pain that comes from loving and being loved. There are no chains, no weight, no lightness either. Only love.

My words fail to articulate that feeling, but I hope it for you. And I hope it for Dadu.

Thammi, the void is gone.

Love,
Kunku.







Supriya and Abhijit Roy with their sons Sourajit, Jonojit, and Shubho, joined by their daughters-in-law Reshmi and Chandana. Supriya holds her grandson, Hrit, in her arms. (1998)

Thamma

Tatini Biswas

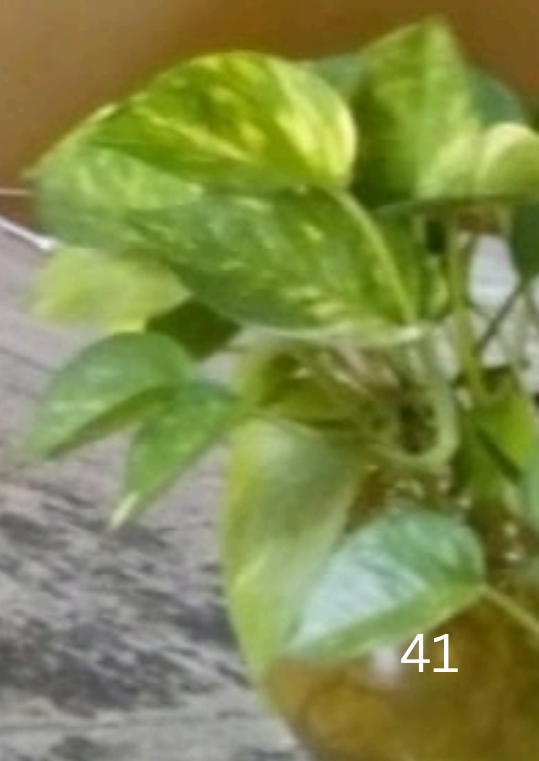
Remembering Thamma through the act of writing is perhaps the best way to remember her. Most likely this is how Thamma would have wanted us to rekindle her memories, commemorate her life, and disseminate her legacy in her absence. But writing about Thamma seemed daunting at first. After all, she was the indisputable expert in the family in this domain. From a renowned Tagore scholar to our sincere family historian, from an endearing cook-book author to an ardent memoirist - Thamma effortlessly played so many different roles as a writer and unfailingly excelled in all of them. Hence, my initial nervousness seemed somewhat justified. But who would have thought words would overflow seamlessly while writing about Thamma and the experience would almost be as therapeutic as having a heart-to-heart with her!

I first met Thamma on a bright early-Autumn morning in 2017. She became a favourite at the first sight. My inhibition began to fade as soon as Thamma descended from the bedroom in a soothing cotton night-gown, enlivening the surroundings with her unmatched feel-good aura and a bright reassuring smile. She did most of the talking while I listened with undivided attention. And I felt as though I could listen to her forever! Such was her charm. Such was the power of her storytelling. The morning went by a little too quickly but it marked



the forging of a beautiful connection that I was going to cherish evermore. Ever since that day, countless of my mornings rolled into afternoons, and afternoons spilled into evenings chatting and laughing with her, either in-person or over phone, devouring her stories, and simply taking delight in her company. Not a single conversation was forced, not one laughter faked. In the course of a few months, Thamma became my confidante - and I hers. She treated me as her own, albeit being the latest addition to the family, and was quite keen on getting me introduced to her kindred. Even those who lived far away became familiar faces on account of her amusing anecdotes.

Despite numerous professional accolades, Thamma was entrenched in her love for the family. She was extremely proud of her sons - Babu Jethu, Kaku, and Buchka - and looked absolutely delighted whenever she spoke of their childhood. Reshmi mashi, Mithu mashi, and Anamika di seemed more like her own daughters than daughters-in-law. She was incredibly doting and generous towards the four of us - Adi, Kunku, Hrit, and me - showering us with endless love, support, and counsel, pampering us with the nicest of souvenirs after every travel, getting us the most enticing birthday presents every year, and what not! Nothing mattered to her more than seeing us happy. Every now and then, her unconditional affection manifested in different shapes and forms. To give one small example, shortly before Hrit and I departed for Scotland, Thamma had prepared a hand-written cookbook with quick, easy recipes despite finding it physically painful to write. It was her way of making sure we had some sort of a guide to fall back on whenever we needed to. Such was the extent of her



thoughtfulness.

Thamma's aura resembled the warm afternoon sun in winter and do we bask in her warmth even to this day. Thamma was capable of a kind of love that lives on and on - a rarity that came to her quite naturally. Whenever I reminisce about that tenderness, I feel her essence within me.





Thamma and Dadu with Hrit.



Supriya and Abhijit Roy with their family in Darjeeling.

From Left: The Roy Family — Abhijit Roy with Adi, Sourajit, Jonojit, Reshmi, Hrit, Mehal, Anamika, Chandana and Supriya. (The photograph was taken by Shubho).



With the Princess of Karangasem, Bali

A Life Shaped by Visionaries: Remembering Supriya-di

Santosankar Dasgupta

She was a remarkable soul who chose an austere life despite an affluent upbringing. Embracing adversity with a smile, she made the best of her circumstances without complaining. Her ability to adapt to a more modest lifestyle serves as an inspiration.

She was deeply influenced by the two visionaries of modern India and the world, Rabindranath and Sri Aurobindo, living out their teachings and silently influencing others.

Dedicating her life to protecting Tagore's legacy, she strongly advocated for digitizing Rabindra-Bhavana's holdings and creating annotations and metadata for posterity. She continued to update her notes even in retirement which may one day be published. Her passing leaves a significant void at Rabindra-Bhavana, where she was the last custodian from a bygone era.

Her life exemplifies resilience, dedication, and the pursuit of knowledge, leaving a lasting impact on those who knew her and on the preservation of a precious strand of India's cultural heritage.





Maa

Reshmi Roy

I've known Maa for most of my life.

To the world, she was my mother-in-law, but our bond ran much deeper than that. She was a friend first and foremost.

I remember how we wandered around Park Street aimlessly, like teenage friends indulging in window shopping. It would often turn into a shopping spree. She would buy wrapping papers, colourful ribbons, tiny trinket boxes and an array of unusual stationery. It didn't serve any practical purpose per se, but it always made her happy.

And sometimes, she would opt for chocolates as breakfast, rather than a boring meal.

It is one of the things that fascinated me the most. The stark contrast between her calm, composed persona and her inner child who found happiness in the little things of life.

That is what made her, her.

She loved being pampered, and every small gesture of love would invariably light up her face. Her unwavering conviction in those she

loved, and those who loved her was something worth admiring.

And she was a dreamer. We would often joke about her unrealistic, impossible world of imaginations. Something that persisted, even in her last days. This wild world of dreams and dreamers is what binds us to this day. She was, indeed, the anchor of our family.

Now, I realise, that is what made her hopeful and positive, through the best and worst of times. It was her inner strength-a strength rooted in a sense of 'ananda'. A deep, unshakable joy, one similar to a child's.

This remarkable ability to embrace life, while gracefully navigating through it all is perhaps my favourite thing about her.





Supriya and Abhijit with their daughters-in-law,
Reshmi, Chandana, and Anamika.

Ninimashi

Smita Gupta

Ninimashi was just 13 years old, studying at Delhi's Convent of Jesus and Mary, when I was born in that city in 1957. Consequently, my first home was the government flat in Shan Nagar – since then renamed as Bharati Nagar – in which my grandparents lived with their two youngest children, Shibumama and Ninimashi. Rubumama was already working for Air India in Bombay.

Baba was posted in Bangalore at the time, and Ma had come to Delhi for my birth. I remained there for the first three months with my mother. And that is how Ninimashi became an integral part of my life from the day I was born; she was my aunt and elder sister rolled into one. (Ma, after all, was just 11 years older than Ninimashi.)

Over the years, that bond grew stronger, even though we lived in different cities – except when we visited each other or in the last few years of her life when she lived with her son, Buchun, and his family first in Gurgaon and then in Faridabad, both approximately an hour and a half from where I lived. Over the years, we spent holidays at each other's homes. After Ma had a heart bypass operation in 2006, Ninimashi came and stayed a few months with us, ensuring that I could continue to work without worrying about Ma. And till 2013, without fail, Ninimashi and Putuk Mesho would visit us before the onset of winter and spend about two months with us in NOIDA.



Supriya Roy with Smita Gupta in 1958.

Ma and I looked forward to those annual visits eagerly – one year, I even braved it and drove Ma, Mashi and Mesho to Nahan in Himachal Pradesh. The tourist guide book had described the area as one of “gentle rolling hills” when in fact the last part of the journey was harrowing, all narrow roads and sharp curves, with nothing gentle about it! Thanks to Mesho, who sat next to me, guiding me, I managed the journey and brought everyone back safe!

In 2022, in the middle of the Covid pandemic, Ninimashi came to stay with Ma and me for almost eight months – between April and November. In the Covid years, she could not leave the Delhi-NCR region for the more salubrious climes of either Mumbai, Ahmedabad or Santiniketan, and this exacerbated her lung problems. So when she came to stay with us, at Baby’s (Aparajita) suggestion, we put her on a diet recommended by the nutritionist Luke Coutinho – and Ma and I, too, went on it! I like to think the diet helped her. She had great strength of mind and would not lapse from it at all.

But what I remember most about those eight months is the almost non-stop conversations we had about everything under the sun – Santiniketan and Rabindranath of course, her life, her beloved sons and their families, particularly her grandchildren -- she was so proud of Hrit’s, Kunku’s and Adi’s accomplishments, scholastic and otherwise. I was working on a book – putting together a collection of Parliament speeches from Independence to the present day – and though all the speeches are on the internet, I often ran into difficulties, accessing and downloading speeches. Ninimashi, who was so much more proficient both with computers and archival research, was of immense help.



Supriya Roy with her elder sister, Shubha Gupta, in Amsterdam.

What was amazing for me was her discipline – as she continued to assemble all the notes that she had made on Tagore together, every day. Ninimashi, with a little help from me, were about to embark on a book on the Tagores of Jorasanko for Juggernaut – but her deteriorating ill-health intervened.

Those eight months will remain forever etched in my memory – as Ma, Mashi and I sat and chatted non-stop. For Ma, too, having the daily company of her treasured little sister was a source of immense joy. They would talk about their shared childhood, their parents, their brothers and all their crazy exploits. I wish I had recorded those conversations – because, clearly, there was something very special about that childhood, and Dadu and Dimma, who complemented each so perfectly. Ninimashi's guiding star was clearly Dimma, whom she resembled.

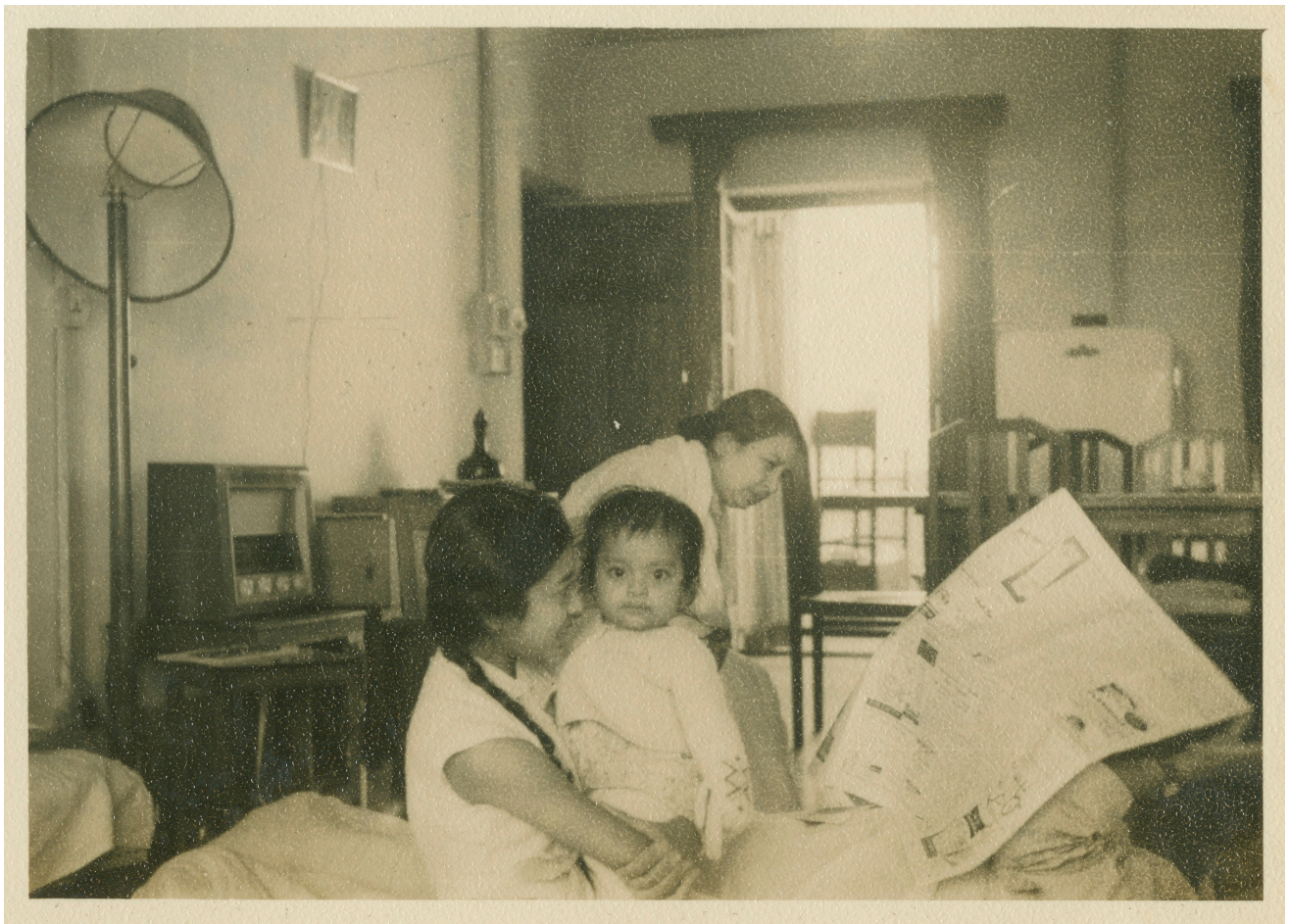
As children, we looked forward to her visits. Her gifts were always thoughtful – I remember two books she gave me as a pre-teen, which I still remember vividly. The first was Jean Webster's "Daddy Longlegs", written in 1912, an epistolary novel that follows the protagonist, Jerusha "Judy" Abbott, as she leaves an orphanage and is sent to college by a benefactor whom she has never seen. The second was "The Diary of a Young Girl", generally referred to as "The Diary of Anne Frank", the English translation of a diary kept by Anne Frank, a Jewish-Dutch teenaged girl, during the two years she spent hiding with her family during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands. The family was finally apprehended in 1944, and Anne Frank died of concentration camp in 1945.

Since then, trends in children's books have changed and very few teenagers in the generations after mine will have read Daddy-Longlegs – though it remained popular for three quarters of a century. But “Anne Frank” will always remain a classic, appealing not just to little girls but resonating with anyone who cares about civil rights.

If proximity made it possible for us to get to know each other well, it was also Ninimashi's distinctive personality that made her such an important part of my life.

She was not just an archivist by profession but it was a part of her character and being. Her capacity for story telling – and I don't mean just the “coloured” versions of the sort of stuff that the good people in Santiniketan got up to – and ability to link different bits of information made her a riveting conversationalist. Not just I, but my generation of cousins all listened to her with great attention; the stories as important as the friendly advice she gave us. She had the family sense of humour – and that added to our enjoyment, her ability to see the funnier side of a life that was not always so easy.

Nininmashi's accomplishments were many but she carried them lightly. She worked in Rabindra-Bhavana, the Tagore Memorial Museum, Archives and Research Centre of Visva-Bharati as Librarian and Archivist for three decades. She was also the Content Writer in the Multimedia Project on Tagore. In the years she spent at Rabindra-Bhavana, there wasn't a Tagore scholar – possibly in the world --who did not benefit from her knowledge; in the years she spent at Visva-Bharati, there wasn't a Vice Chancellor who did not



Supriya Roy with Smita Gupta, and her parents,
Jyotikanta and Lila Basu.

benefit from her advice – in fact, she was the ghostwriter for many of the speeches that they delivered on important occasions. When successive Prime Ministers felt the need to quote Tagore, the call from the Prime Minister’s Office in South Block would invariably be put through to her office. And when there was a special visitor at Visva-Bharati – politicians, academics, governors or others, everyone from Gopal Gandhi to Nitish Kumar – it was Ninimashi who was their guide in Santiniketan – a one woman repository of information on Tagore. She edited Tagore’s travel diaries; she created travelling exhibitions for the ICCR and she prepared the Permanent Photograph Gallery on the life of Rabindranath for the Rabindranath Tagore Institute in Mauritius. And there were the many books on Tagore she wrote or edited.

Her accomplishments were only too real, but she made them sound ordinary, partly because of her nature, and partly because she enjoyed herself so much studying Tagore that she did not understand the importance and significance of the work she was doing.







Supriya Roy with Indrani Basu and Shubha Gupta.

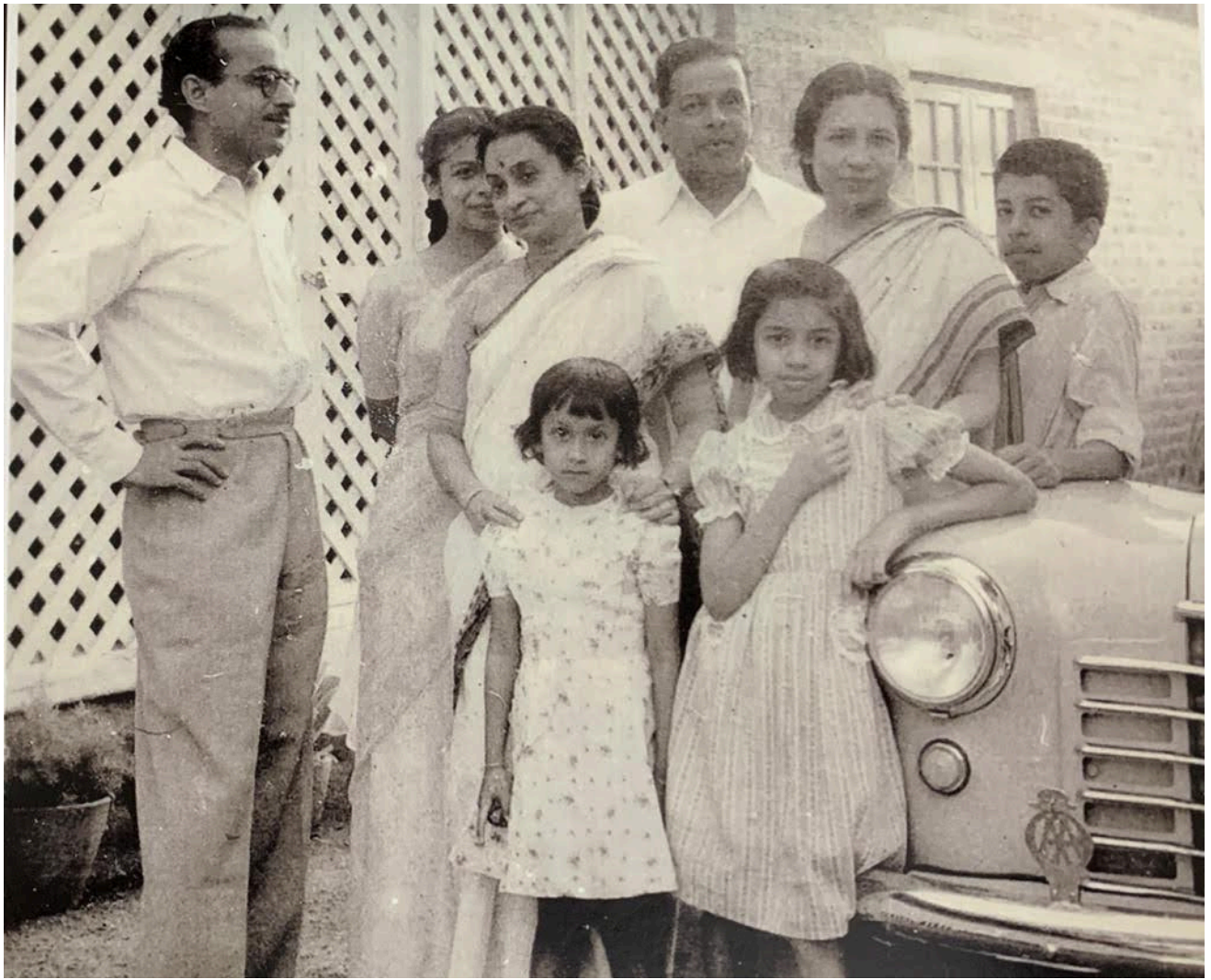
Nini

Indrani Basu

I really don't know how to start writing about my feelings for Nini. I can't find the proper words to express my thoughts. When I first got married, and went to their house, she was maybe 13/14 years old and a beautiful young girl. She came to Mumbai after graduating from Jadavpur University and stayed with her mother and us. She was doing her Masters in Library Sciences.

We became very close. She did jobs here as a librarian in different schools. She got married here to Putuk. He was also a very nice, caring, loving person with a great sense of humor. They went back to Santiniketan after the wedding and came back to Mumbai for some job after Babu (Sourajit) was born. Later, Baby (Jonojit) was born here.

We had so much during those years, that it will take many pages to describe them. One incident I must mention is, I used to learn hairstyling and making different kinds of buns. I used to try with Nini's hair every morning when she went to college, and many students asked her which parlour she went to early in the morning. In later years, we became very good friends. I loved her and she told me that when she came here, she felt as if she has come to her parent's house (Baper Bari).



I always admired her knowledge about Rabindranath Tagore. She was an authority on Tagore and wrote so many books on different aspects of Tagore's work, including the famous book on his art, which I think I suddenly saw in one of the museums in New York.

She became my guide, philosopher, and a very good friend. I could discuss anything and everything with her.

Nini, I miss you a lot. I love and admire you.





Supriya Roy's mother, Lila Basu.



Supriya Roy with her siblings, Rathikant Basu and Shubha Gupta.



Nini

Sudipta Dhruva

It's taken me a while to be able to get down to writing about Nini. Somehow life is still strange without her. Even today, when I do something, achieve something, learn something, read something, think of a new idea, agonise about something, the first person I think about is her. And then I realise she is no longer here in person. Strange, a world without her.

Some of my first happy memories are of her. Sitting on the balcony of our Anand villa apartment watching cars, since a lot of film stars used to drive down Linking Road to reach their houses in Juhu and we would look out for them. Or creating mock meals with my friend Tutul especially for her when we role played us as adult homemakers. Or sneaking chips into the house and starting the Hungry People's Club since she always knew exactly what would make me smile or laugh with joy.

She always knew what I needed, a joke, a story, some sweets or a good meal.

As I grew older, she became my confidante. No judgement, no negativity, just acceptance and genuine empathy and interest. There was nothing I could not share with her. No secret too private, no deed too naughty, no thought too silly.



At University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur (2011)

And then she make my biggest cheerleader. When I worked with children in conflict with the law, she bought flower pots for them at the end of the program. If there were stories, I was writing, she would do my editing. If there were schools I was reaching out to, she would reach out to all her contacts.

If I needed a jury member for a writing competition, she would read each story and give me her feedback. When I got my first book of poems published, she was the first one who insisted on buying it from Amazon.

There are three things about her that really stand out for me and that I try and make a part of my life as well.

The first is that she always had time for all her loved ones and the list of loved ones was large. But I have never heard her putting off a conversation. That always made all of us feel like we were so special to her. I thought I was her favourite until I realised that a lot of us actually thought that. That was her magic and I hope some of it rubbed off on me.

The second is a conversation about being a grandmother. She said that she did not want to be the grandmother who would be remembered for her amazing cooking but wanted to be the one to introduce her grandchildren to Tagore, Shakespeare and Dickens, to great authors, amazing art, and to stories that define us, our family stories. And that what she did and inspired me to be that type of grandmother too.



Supriya Roy in Mauritius (2007)

And the last but not the least, she was always open to new ideas, saw the humour in everything, non-judgemental and came from a space of compassion and love in all her decisions and actions. I hope I can imbibe those qualities too.

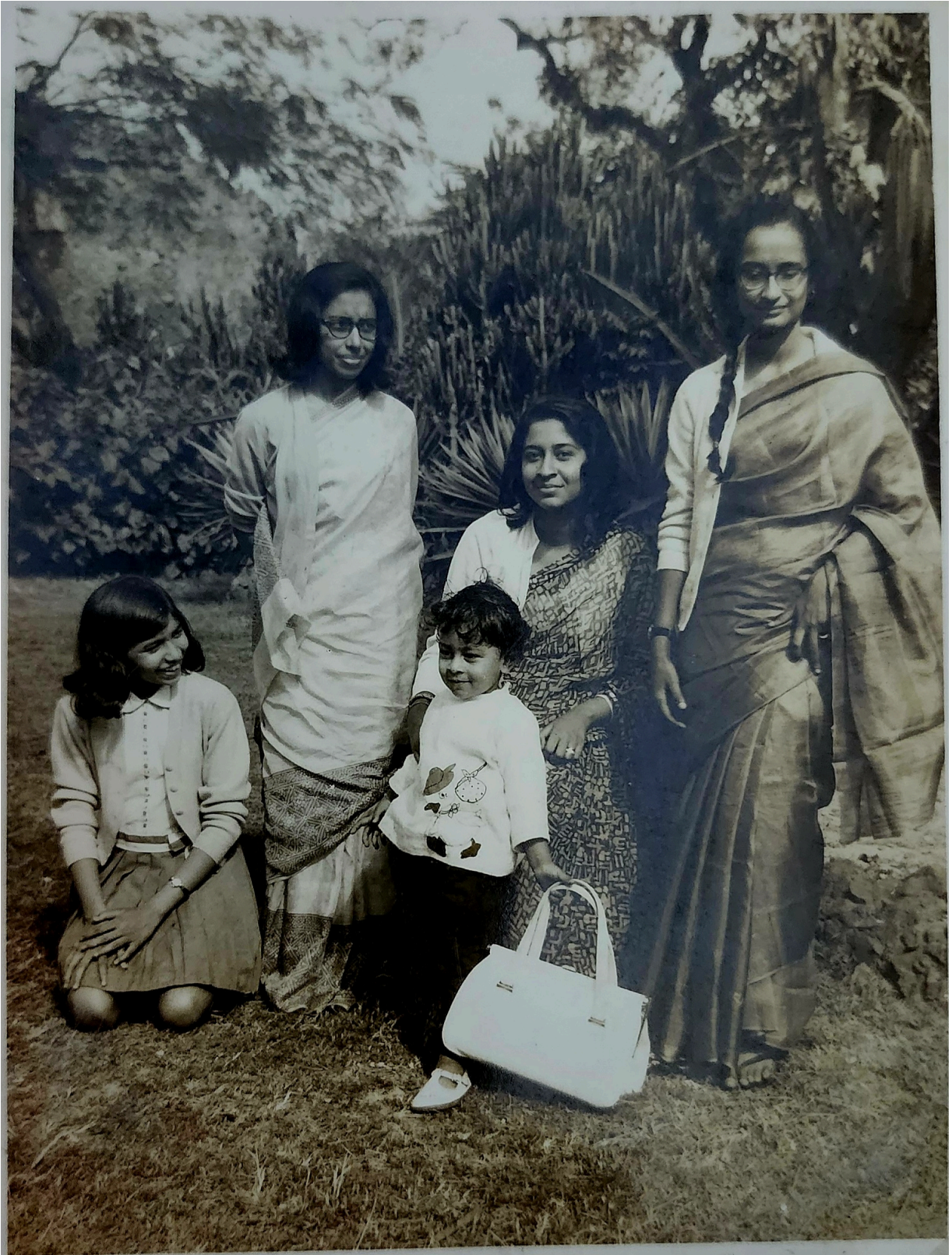
She is one of my heroes, always was, and always will be.







Supriya Roy with Indrani Basu, Sudipta Dhruva, Ranjeeta Basu and Surojit Guha (Mumbai)



From Surojit Guha

Ninipishi

Ranjeeta Basu

Ninipishi has been one of my chief inspirations in my academic life and in my personal one. She would always ask me about my work and be genuinely interested in what I was doing. When I had the opportunity to write a book, she gave me invaluable advice. She told me to make sure that the book was about real people not just theoretical ideas which many Economics books tend to be. She was also very observant about people. I would often call her our very own Miss Marple. She loved a good mystery.

But most of all I loved her mischievous smile and engagement with life. She always listened generously with an open heart and an open mind and encouraged me to be the best I could be while accepting me as I am. I am so blessed and proud to be her niece.



Supriya Roy with her siblings, Shubha Gupta, Satikant Basu, and Rathikant Basu.



Mauritius (2007)



Nini-kakima

Proma Roy

My earliest recollections of Nini-kakima date back to when I was around four years old.

She epitomised elegance, beauty, and eloquence in my life, and I held her in wide-eyed adoration. Every word she spoke, every smile she shared, every step she took exuded grace, leaving me in awe. Clad in immaculately crisp saris, she carried out even the most mundane tasks with a refinement that left a deep impression on me. As I grew older, I came to realise that beneath her almost ethereal, whimsical exterior lay a person of immense strength and profound groundedness. Despite her delicate demeanour, she possessed extraordinary resilience and a gentle yet indomitable spirit.

In our family's reminiscences of childhood, Nini-kakima occupies a central place as one of its chief architects.

One particularly cherished memory revolves around a home production of Ramayana, directed by Putuk-kaka and Nini-kakima . At the age of five, I assumed the role of Sita, assigned no lines but tasked with being a mere prop amidst the more demanding roles taken on by my talented siblings and cousins. Initially resigned to my silent role, I was unexpectedly thrilled when Nini-kakima allowed me

to drape her wedding Odhna, like a Sari, around my petite frame during the dress rehearsal. Woven from brilliant Fuchsia silk with a delicate zari trim, the garment made me feel not just glamorous, but deeply honoured to have been entrusted with it.

As I later pursued a career in design, my enduring fascination with that particular shade of pink found its way into my work time and again.

Nini-kakima nurtured and established family traditions that we wholeheartedly embraced until the responsibilities of adulthood scattered us across the globe.

New Year's Eve meant gathering around a crackling bonfire, where a succulent chicken roasted on a spit. Favourite dishes were prepared with care, and at midnight, we eagerly savoured the feast.

Christmas unfolded as a cozy candlelit affair around the tree, interspersed with playful Halloween pranks for amusement. Long before Tim Burton conceived "The Nightmare Before Christmas," our festivities featured the occasional appearance of the ghost of Tagore in lieu of Santa, bearing handcrafted toys from the local mela.

Years later, I would stand outside the glass temple in Shantiniketan, listening to Nini-kakima read passages from the Bible on Christmas Eve, a tradition to which she was often invited. Her serene voice narrating the nativity tale brought back so many memories, evoking a sense of comfort, nostalgia, and even a melancholic longing for the past.



Nini-kakima's roles as researcher, historian, and librarian infused our conversations with captivating stories about our family and heritage, igniting in us a curiosity about our roots and lineage. She passed this on to my son, Ryu, albeit indirectly, and from a distance, by gifting him a meticulously curated stack of books from South Asia. From Ruskin Bond and Satyajit Ray to the epic Mahabharata, Ryu has immersed himself in these literary treasures, eagerly exploring the landscapes and characters they depict, and importantly, asking many questions about them.

Another cherished memory stems from our family's participation in Anando Mela, where we honoured our Japanese ancestry through the Akatombo shop. Each of us contributed arts, crafts, homemade delicacies, and fruits from our orchards, and was voted the best and most successful stall in the Mela. This early entrepreneurial venture instilled in many of us the confidence to pursue livelihoods through the creative expression of our talents and passions.

To be candid, these colourful and joyous days I recount were also marked by struggles for our families. Yet, it was these moments of creativity and happiness that illuminated our lives, shaping our collective story and memories into ones of enduring happiness.

For this, I am profoundly grateful to certain individuals.

Nini-kakima, you were foremost among them. I share my heartfelt gratitude for the love, the joy, and the stories that have enriched our lives, and for bestowing upon us a childhood that continues to inspire.



Bali, Indonesia (2017)



Nini.

Rana Mukherji

It was in 1952, when the Delhi family descended into Calcutta for the wedding of Choto pishi (Bacchu). They came, consisting of Bara pishi (Lila), Mona Didi, Shibu & Nini & stayed with us at 2B Bholanath Pal Lane. This was the first time that we cousins met up.

Myself & Shibu were both about 9 yrs old & Nini was 2 and 1/2 yrs younger.

Shibu was smart, suave, sober, grownup & had a book Oliver Twist with him at all times, whereas we brothers were rather wild - climbing up windows, sliding down stair-rails, playing pranks & were prone to reading comics. We became a source of instant comparison with Shibu by the elders. Sibling rivalry ensured & Shibu was flashing his Oliver Twist at us at all times, until we realised that Shibu could not read Bengali. Thereafter, we started flashing a Sarat Chandra in front of him, not that we had the ability to read it.

But Nini was so cute & loving & being the only girl cousin that we had met until then, became our instant favourite & a constant object of our affections & cuddles. It was one morning, getting out of bed, I went into the drawing room with the family sitting around the room, with Nini in the middle. I rushed to her & picked her up to give her a cuddle, whenpring.....a button from my half-



pant went flying & my pants came down. I dumped her on the floor, pulled up my pants & flew out of the room while everyone pretended to look the other way. This was the most embarrassing incident of my life till then.

Next, I recall meeting her and Shibu, when we went to Delhi during Rubu dada's wedding. By then she was a young lady & Shibu & us became instant friends with the earlier sibling rivalry all forgotten. They took us around Delhi & we really had a great time.

Later, just before I was to leave for the U.K., Nini dropped in to introduce her fiancé Photukda to me. Next time we met she was a married women.





Supriya Roy with Adi (2016)



Singapore (2013)

সুপ্রিয়াদি

সমীরণ নন্দী

সুপ্রিয়াদির সম্পর্কে লিখতে গিয়ে মনে পড়ছে বিশ্বভারতীর, রবীন্দ্রভবনে কাজে যোগ দেওয়ার প্রথম দিনের কথা। বেশ অল্প বয়সেই বিশ্বভারতীতে চাকরি পেয়েছিলাম! কাজে যোগ দিতে আসি ১৯৭৮ সালের আগস্ট মাসে। অফিসের নিয়ম কানুন কিছুই জানতাম না। রবীন্দ্রভবনে যে আধিকারিকের কাছে আমাকে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়েছিল, তিনিও সাহায্য করছিলেন না! এদিকে কী করে একটা সরকারি চিঠি লিখতে হয় তাও তখন জানতাম না, এক অসহায় পরিস্থিতি! এদিকে রবীন্দ্রভবনের কাউকে তখন চিনি না, চিনি না বিশ্বভারতী বা শান্তিনিকেতনের কাউকেই। অসহায় ভাবে ইতিউতি ঘুরছি, বুঝতে পারছি না কার কাছে গিয়ে একটু জিজ্ঞাসা করবো। তখন রবীন্দ্রভবনের 'বিচিত্রা' বাড়ির একতলা বা দোতলা অন্য রকম ছিল। ছিলনা এখনকার মত এত চাপাচাপা, দরজার আগল। বিচিত্রার বড় হল ঘর থেকে দূরে লাইব্রেরি পর্যন্ত দেখা যেত, মাঝে শুধু একটা কাঁচের দরজা। সেই দরজা ভেদ করে দূরে একটা টেবিলে একজন মহিলাকে দেখলাম মাথা নিচু করে কাজ করছেন। কী মনে হতে পারে পারে ওই দিকেই এগিয়ে গেলাম, সোজা টেবিলের সামনে জড়সড় হয়ে দাঁড়াতেই মুখ তুলে তাকালেন। শান্ত একজন, যাকে দেখে মনে ভরসা এলো। জিজ্ঞাসা করলেন কী চাই। সামনের চেয়ারে বসতে বললেন, বসেই আরও একটু নিশ্চিত হলাম, এতক্ষণ রবীন্দ্রভবনে কেউ বসতে বলার সৌজন্যটুকুও দেখাননি! তখনও পর্যন্ত তাই বিশ্বভারতীতে প্রথম দিনের অভিজ্ঞতা সুখের ছিল না।

সামনের চেয়ারে বসে একটু থিতু হয়ে সংক্ষেপে আমার সমস্যার কথা বললাম। সমস্ত কথা মন দিয়ে শুনে আমাকে একটা চিঠি লিখে দিলেন। বললেন ঐ চিঠিটা একটা হাতে লিখে কপি করে অফিসে জমা দিতে, আর একটা কার্বন কপি অফিস থেকে রিসিভ করিয়ে নিজের কাছে রাখতে। এটা সেই ছেচল্লিশ বছর আগের ঘটনা। তখন না ছিল এখনকার মত কম্পিউটার, না ছিল জেরক্স। কোনও কিছু হয় হাতে লেখা নয়তো টাইপরাইটারে টাইপ করা। কপি রাখতে হলে কার্বন কপি। এখন সেগুলো স্বপ্নের মত মনে হয়।

প্রথম দিনের সেই ভরসার জায়গাটা আজীবন থেকে গেল।

শিক্ষিত, শান্ত, সুভদ্র, সুন্দরী ও আভিজাত্যপূর্ণ এই মানুষটির কাছে আমার ঋণের শেষ নেই। প্রথম দিনের মত, জীবনের অনেক সমস্যায় নির্দিধায় সুপ্রিয়াদিকে কাছে পেয়েছি। অফিসের সম্পর্কের বাইরে সুপ্রিয়াদি ছিলেন আমার বন্ধু, অভিভাবক, দিদি, পারিবারিক হিতৈষী, আমাদের ছেলেমেয়েদের প্রিয় পিসিমনি। একটা সহজ অনাবিল সম্পর্ক, যা সবার ভাগ্যে জোটে না।

শিক্ষিত, শান্ত, সুভদ্র, সুন্দরী ও অভিজাত, এই যে এত বিশেষণ মানুষটির সম্পর্কে লিখলাম সেটার পিছনে আছে সুপ্রিয়াদির এক অসাধারণ পারিবারিক পরিচয়, যা পরে আস্তে আস্তে জেনেছি। সুপ্রিয়াদি আমার সহকর্মি ছিলেন। গুঁর সাথে দীর্ঘদিন কাজ করার সুবাদে খুব কাছ থেকে দেখেছি। রবীন্দ্রভবনে উনি ছিলেন লাইব্রেরিয়ান। রবীন্দ্রভবন লাইব্রেরির একটা বিশেষত্ব হচ্ছে এটা অন্য লাইব্রেরির মত না, রবীন্দ্রনাথ সংক্রান্ত বই এবং রবীন্দ্রনাথ ব্যবহৃত বইপত্রের সংগ্রহ নিয়েই এই লাইব্রেরি। স্বভাবতই সাধারণ লাইব্রেরির মত এর পরিচালন ব্যবস্থা ছিল না। বই ক্যাটালগিং এর জন্য একটু প্রথা বহির্ভূত ভাবেই ক্যাটালগিং ব্যবস্থা গড়ে উঠেছে, যেটা সুপ্রিয়াদি গড়ে তুলেছিলেন।

লাইব্রেরি পরিচালনার ক্ষেত্রে সুপ্রিয়াদির দক্ষতা সত্যিই প্রশংসনীয়। তিনি লাইব্রেরির সংগ্রহশালা সুষ্ঠুভাবে গড়ে তোলেন এবং দেশি বিদেশি পাঠকদের চাহিদা মেটাতে পারতেন। তার পরিকল্পনা ও বাস্তবায়ন ক্ষমতা লাইব্রেরির সেবার মান উন্নত করে এবং পাঠকদের সন্তুষ্টি বৃদ্ধি করে। নতুন বই ও পত্র-পত্রিকা সংগ্রহ, ইলেকট্রনিক রিসোর্স ব্যবস্থাপনা, এবং গবেষকদের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য সরবরাহ করা তার দৈনন্দিন কাজের অংশ ছিল। লাইব্রেরির ডিজিটাইজেশন প্রক্রিয়ায় তিনি অত্যন্ত গুরুত্ব দেন এবং বিভিন্ন সফটওয়্যার ও ডাটাবেস ব্যবহারের মাধ্যমে লাইব্রেরির উন্নতি করেছিলেন। এর জন্য বিশ্বভারতীতে যখন প্রথম কম্পিউটারের ট্রেনিং শুরু হয়, যেটা প্রায় আটত্রিশ বছর আগে, উনি সেই প্রথম দলেই ছিলেন ট্রেনিং নেওয়ার জন্য। যেটা আমার কাছে বেশ বিস্ময়কর ছিল।

সহকর্মীদের সাথে সুপ্রিয়াদির সম্পর্ক অত্যন্ত হৃদয়তাপূর্ণ ও সহযোগিতামূলক ছিল। তিনি সবসময় সহকর্মীদের সাথে মিলেমিশে কাজ করতেন এবং যেকোনো সমস্যা সমাধান সহজাত দক্ষতার সাথে করতে পারতেন। তার বুদ্ধিমত্তা ও সহর্মিতার জন্য সহকর্মীদের মধ্যে অত্যন্ত জনপ্রিয় ছিলেন। সুপ্রিয়াদিকে কাজের

ক্ষেত্রে একজন সত্যিকারের দলনেত্রী বলতে পারি। আমি দেখেছি, রবীন্দ্র ভবনে যখন কোনও আন্তর্জাতিক মানের সেমিনার হয়েছে, উনি সবাই কে নিয়ে কী চমৎকার ভাবে সেই সব অনুষ্ঠান সামলেছেন। অধ্যক্ষ যারা থাকতেন তারাও ওঁর উপরে খুব নির্ভর করতেন।

সুপ্রিয়াদির বুদ্ধিমত্তা এবং সহমর্মিতা তার ব্যক্তিত্বের অন্যতম গুরুত্বপূর্ণ দিক ছিল। মনে পড়ছে একটা ভয়ংকর সময়ের কথা। যখন রবীন্দ্রভবন থেকে নোবেল প্রাইজ চুরি হলো। কী অসম্ভব একটা পরিস্থিতি! স্থায়ী অধ্যক্ষ নেই, প্রায় সব চাপটাই উনি ঠান্ডা মাথায় একাই সামলেছিলেন আমাদের নিয়ে।

পড়াশোনায় সুপ্রিয়াদির ব্যাপ্তি ছিল অনন্য। তিনি নিজের জ্ঞানকে প্রতিনিয়ত সমৃদ্ধ করার জন্য বিভিন্ন বই ও গবেষণা পত্রপড়তেন। তার পড়াশোনার প্রতি অনুরাগ ও আগ্রহ তাকে একজন প্রকৃত শিক্ষিত ব্যক্তিত্বে পরিণত করেছিল। বিভিন্ন বিষয় সম্পর্কে গভীর জ্ঞান ছিল। যে কোনও বিষয়ে তার কাছে জানতে গেলে কখনও নিরাশ হয়ে ফিরে আসিনি। আরও একটা না বললেই না। সেটা হচ্ছে ওঁর ইংরেজি ভাষায় লেখার দক্ষতা। এত প্রাঞ্জল ভাবে ইংরেজি লিখতেন যা অনেকের মধ্যেই দেখি নি। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের বিষয়েও সুপ্রিয়াদির জ্ঞান ছিল অসাধারণ। তাঁর লেখায় রবীন্দ্রনাথের ভাবনা ও দর্শনের গভীরতা স্পষ্টভাবে বোঝা যায়। এছাড়াও যে টুকু বুঝেছি, শ্রী অরবিন্দের প্রতিও তাঁর শ্রদ্ধা ছিল অপারিসীম। রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের বিষয়ে তাঁর আগ্রহ ছিল। আমি ব্যক্তিগত ভাবে বিভিন্ন সময়ে তাঁর সাথে কথাবার্তার সময়ে এই জ্ঞান খানিকটা হলেও পেয়েছি, যেটা সত্যিই আমাকে অনেক সমৃদ্ধ করেছে।

আগেই বলেছি, সুপ্রিয়াদি আমাদের একজন অত্যন্ত কাছের পারিবারিক বন্ধু ও হিতৈষী ছিলেন। কত সময়ে কত ভাবে যে তাঁর সাহায্য পেয়েছি সে কথা আজ শ্রদ্ধার সাথে স্মরণ করি। ছোট ছোট কত কথা মনে পড়ছে। সেগুলো সব তো আর লেখা যায় না! একবারের কথা বলি, সেবার আমাদের বাড়ি নিয়ে খুব সমস্যা হয়েছিল। যে বাড়িতে ভাড়া থাকতাম, সেখান থেকে আমাদের চলে যেতে হবে, কিন্তু উপযুক্ত বাড়ি খুঁজে পাচ্ছি না। সুপ্রিয়াদিকে গিয়ে বললাম সমস্যার কথা। সুপ্রিয়াদি শান্তকে (শান্তশঙ্কর দাসগুপ্ত) বলে একটা বাড়ির ব্যবস্থা করে দিলেন। আমাদের যখন প্রথম সন্তান আসবে, তখনও তাঁর সহমর্মিতা দেখেছিলাম। আমাদের পারিবারিক একটা ট্যাবু আছে, সন্তান জন্মের আগে তার জন্য কোনও জামাকাপড় কেনা বা বানানো

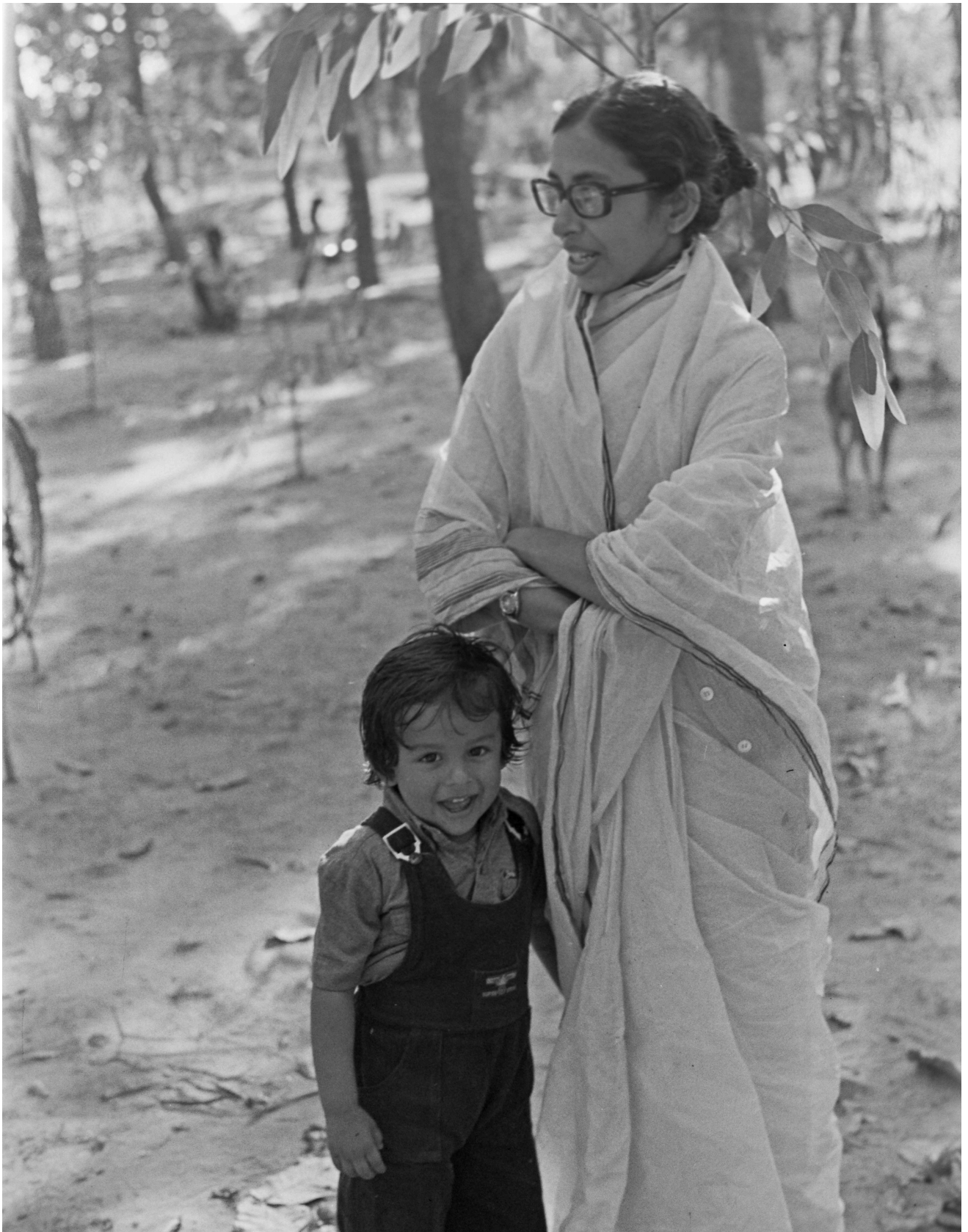
যাবে না! সুপ্রিয়াদি সেটা জানতে পেরে আমাদের প্রথম সন্তানের জন্য সমস্ত জামাকাপড়ের ব্যবস্থা করেছিলেন, কী চমৎকার ছোট্ট একটা সোয়েটার নিজের হাতে বুনে রেখেছিলেন। এগুলো হয়তো সাধারণ ভাবে তত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ না অনেকের কাছে। কিন্তু এগুলো মনে আসেই, বুঝতে পারা যায় কতটা ভালবাসতেন আমাদের।

সুপ্রিয়াদির কথা বলবো আর পুটুকদার কথা বলবো না তা তো হয় না। পুটুকদাও আমাদের ভালবাসতেন খুব। আসলে পুটুকদা মানুষজন ভালবাসতেন। সবার সাথে আনন্দে বাস করতে ভালবাসতেন। খেতে আর খাওয়াতেও ভালবাসতেন। মনে আছে, আমরা বেশ কয়েকবার কোপাই নদীর পাড়ে রাতে পিকনিক করতে গেছি। কোপাই এর ব্রীজ তখন সবে তৈরী হয়েছে, সেই ব্রীজে কোনও কোনও চাঁদনী রাতে আমরা সবাই মিলে হৈ হৈ করে পিকনিক করতে যেতাম। বাবু, বেবী, বুচুন, পুটুকদা, সুপ্রিয়াদি আর আমরা তিনজন। একটা অপূর্ব আনন্দের দিন ছিল সে সব! পুটুকদার ছুটির দিনে শান্তিনিকেতনে এসে, রাজুর রিক্সায় পুটুকদা ও সুপ্রিয়াদি ঘুরতে বেরোতেন। শান্তিনিকেতনে সে এক পরিচিত দৃশ্য ছিল। খুব সুন্দর একটা রোমান্টিক জুটি! কই এখন আর তেমন কোন এমন দম্পতি দেখি না যারা এমন ভাবে এমনি এমনি বেড়াতে যান!

গ্রীষ্মের নানা ফুলের গন্ধ ছড়ানো বিকেল, বা বর্ষার খোয়াই ধোয়া লাল জল বয়ে যাওয়া রাস্তা অথবা শীতের ল্লান জ্যেৎস্না মাখা শান্তিনিকেতনে দূরে চলে যাওয়া রিক্সার শব্দে চমকে হয়তো তাকিয়ে ভাবি ওই তো ওই রিক্সায় সুপ্রিয়াদি আর পুটুকদা চলেছেন। ভুল ভাঙ্গে! জানি আর কোনও দিন ওদের দেখতে পাবো না!

স্মৃতির ভীড় করে আসে। মানুষ চলে যায়, কিন্তু টুকরো টুকরো স্মৃতির সুবাস তার রেশ রেখে যায়!





Supriya Roy with her younger son, Shubho

Supriyadi

Samiran Nandy

Translation

Writing about Supriyadi brings back memories of the day I first joined Rabindra-Bhavana in August 1978. I was quite young when I got the job at Visva-Bharati. I knew nothing about official rules. The officer I was taken to at Rabindra Bhavana was not particularly helpful. At that time, I didn't even know how to write an official letter. It was an utterly helpless situation! I knew no one at Rabindra Bhavana or at Visva-Bharati or in Santiniketan. I was wandering around helplessly, not knowing whom to approach for a little guidance.

Back then, the first and second floors of Rabindra Bhavana's 'Bichitra' house were different. It wasn't as cramped as it is now, there were no door latches. From the big hall of Bichitra, you could see all the way up to the library, separated by a glass door. Through that door, I saw a woman working at a distant table with her head down. On a whim, I slowly walked towards her and stood timidly in front of the table. She looked up. I could tell how composed she was and I felt hopeful just by looking at her. She wanted to know what I needed. She asked me to sit on the chair in front of her, and I felt a little more at ease, as no one at Rabindra Bhavan had shown the courtesy of offering a seat until then! Up until that point, my first day's experience at Visva-Bharati was not pleasant.

After sitting down in the chair, I briefly explained my problem. She listened attentively and wrote a letter for me. She told me to handwrite a copy of that letter and submit it to the office, and keep a carbon copy received from the office for myself. This was forty-six years ago. There were no computers or Xerox machines like today. Everything was either handwritten or typed on a typewriter. If you wanted a copy, it had to be a carbon copy. Now these things seem like a dream.

Supriyadi remained a pillar of trust ever since the first day. I owe an endless debt to this educated, calm, polite, beautiful, and dignified woman. Just like the first day, I have found Supriyadi by my side through life's ups and downs. Transcending our professional relations, Supriyadi became my friend, guardian, elder sister, family-friend and well-wisher, and the beloved "Pishimoni" (aunt) to our children. It was a simple, unadulterated relationship that not everyone is fortunate to have.

The educated, calm, polite, beautiful, and dignified person I have described is backed by an extraordinary family background of which I gradually became aware. Supriyadi was my colleague. I have seen her up close due to working with her for a long time. She was the librarian at Rabindra Bhavana. The specialty of the Rabindra Bhavan library is that it is not like any other libraries; it consists of books related to Rabindranath Tagore and books used by him. Naturally, its management was different from a regular library. The cataloguing system was developed in a slightly unconventional way, which Supriyadi had established.

Supriyadi's skill in managing the library was truly commendable. She organized the library's collection efficiently and met the needs of both local and international readers. Her planning and implementation prowess improved the quality of library services and increased reader satisfaction. Her daily tasks included acquiring new books and periodicals, managing electronic resources, and providing necessary information to researchers. She emphasized the library's digitization process and improved it using various software and databases. When computer training first began at Visva-Bharati about thirty-nine years ago, she was among the first group to receive that, which was quite surprising to me.

Supriyadi was very friendly and cooperative towards her colleagues. She always worked harmoniously with us and could solve any problem with innate skills. She was very popular among her colleagues for her intelligence and compassion. I can say that Supriyadi was a true team leader at work. I have seen how wonderfully she managed international seminars at Rabindra Bhavan involving everyone. The principals who were there also relied heavily on her.

Supriyadi's intelligence and compassion were significant aspects of her personality. I remember the terrible time when the Nobel Prize was stolen from Rabindra Bhavana. What an awful situation it was! There was no permanent director, and she handled almost all the pressure calmly with us.

Supriyadi had an exceptional breadth of knowledge. She continually enriched her knowledge by reading various books and research

papers. Her passion and interest in studies made her a truly educated person. She had deep knowledge of various subjects.

Whenever I asked her something, I never returned disappointed. Another thing I must mention is her proficiency in writing English. She wrote English so fluently, which I rarely saw in others. Supriyadi's knowledge of Rabindranath Tagore was extraordinary. Her writings clearly reflected the depth of Tagore's thoughts and philosophy. I also realized that she had immense respect for Sri Aurobindo. She had an interest in Rathindranath Tagore. Personally, during various conversations with her, I gained some of this knowledge, which truly enriched me.

As I mentioned earlier, Supriyadi was a very close family friend and well-wisher. I remember with respect the countless ways she helped us. Many small things come to mind. I can't write them all! Let me share one instance; we had a significant problem with our house once. We had to leave the rented house we were living in, but we couldn't find a suitable house. I told Supriyadi about the problem. Supriyadi arranged a house for us through Santo (Santosankar Dasgupta).

When our first child was about to be born, I also saw her compassion. Our family has a taboo that no clothes or items can be bought or made for the child before its birth! Knowing this, Supriyadi arranged all the clothes for our first child and knitted a beautiful little sweater herself. These things might not seem very important to many, but they come to mind, and we realize how much she loved us.

It would be incomplete to talk about Supriyadi without mentioning Putukda. Putukda loved us very much, too. Actually, Putukda loved people. He loved living joyfully with everyone. He loved to eat and feed others. I remember several times we went for a picnic on the banks of Kopai River at night. Back then, the Kopai bridge was newly built, and on some moonlit nights, we would all go for a picnic there. Babu, Baby, Buchun, Putukda, Supriyadi, and the three of us. Those were days of immense joy! During Putukda's holidays, he would come to Santiniketan and go for rides on Raju's rickshaw with Supriyadi. It was a familiar sight in Santiniketan. A beautiful romantic couple! I don't see such couples anymore who go out like that just for the sake of it!

Amidst the scent of various summer flowers filling the evening air, or the red water-washed road during the monsoon, or the dim moonlight of winter in Santiniketan, the sound of a rickshaw going far away makes me wonder if it is Supriyadi and Putukda. I realize it's not! I know I will never see them again!

Memories crowd in. People leave, but the fragments of memories leave their fragrance behind!



সুপ্রিয়া দি

স্বাতী ঘোষ

আমি তখন কলেজে ।

১৯৮৩-৮৪ সাল । বি. এ. তে আমার স্পেশাল পেপার টেগোর ইন ইংলিশ । ডিসারটেশন লিখতে হবে । কিছু জানি না, কি বিষয়ে লিখবো, কি পড়বো, কোথা থেকে শুরু করবো । আন্দাজে একদিন রবীন্দ্র ভবনে গেলাম । উত্তরায়ণ সম্পর্কে মনে খুব ভালোবাসা জন্মিয়ে গিয়েছিল । এত দর্শনার্থীর ভিড় তো ছিলই না, শান্তিনিকেতনের মানুষও কম থাকতেন । যারা কাজ করতেন তাঁরাই থাকতেন, গবেষকরা থাকতেন । শান্ত, নিরিবিলি, সুন্দর জায়গা । উপর তলায় পাঠাগারের ভিতরে একটি ছোট ঘরে বসতেন সুপ্রিয়া দি । চারিদিকে বইয়ের মাঝখানে গুঁর টেবিল চেয়ার ছিল । আমাকে কেউ বলে দিলেন সুপ্রিয়া দির সঙ্গে দেখা করতে । গেলাম । প্রথম দর্শনেই মুগ্ধ হলাম । মনে হলো বইয়ের সঙ্গে মিলেমিশে বসে আছেন । সামান্য হাসি, প্রসন্ন দৃষ্টি, মৃদু কণ্ঠস্বর । মার্জিত, অভিজাত, বুদ্ধিদীপ্ত । ভয়ে ভয়ে আর্জি জানালাম, কারণ কিছু জানি না । উনি কিন্তু একেবারে বুঝতেই দিলেন না আমি কিছু জানি না । চমৎকার আমাকে পথ দেখিয়েছিলেন এবং চাবিকাঠিটি ধরিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন । দোতলার বারান্দায় মস্ত শিরীষের ছায়ায় পুরনো কাঠের অসাধারণ নীচু আসবাব এ বসে পড়াশুনা করতে করতে ভাবতাম, কোনোদিন চাকরি করলে যেন এখানেই করি, সুপ্রিয়া দির মতন । এর পর সুপ্রিয়া দির সঙ্গে কোনো প্রত্যক্ষ যোগ আমার আর ছিল না বহু দিন ।

কিন্তু অপ্রত্যক্ষ ভাবে সুপ্রিয়া দি আমার মনে জায়গা করে নিচ্ছিলেন । সুপ্রিয়াদি প্রসঙ্গে প্রশংসার কথা শুনতাম নুকাই এর কাছে । তার থেকে এক অন্য সুপ্রিয়াদির কথা জানতে শুরু করেছিলাম । সংসারের ঘূর্ণাবর্তে ঝড়ের মুখে শান্ত, স্থিরপ্রতিজ্ঞ, অবিচল, নিষ্ঠাবান । রান্নার গুনগান ও শুনেছিলাম । পুটুকদা ও সুপ্রিয়াদির অপত্য স্নেহ ছিল নুকাই এর ওপর । অনেক গুঁঠাপড়ার সাক্ষী এবং নীরব সহচর ছিল ও । যাই হোক, ধীরে ধীরে জেনে গেছি সুপ্রিয়াদি কে, শান্তিনিকেতনে কোন পরিবারের

সদস্য। এই পর্বে সুপ্রিয়া দি কে আমি চিনি সঁজুতি তে, শান্তিনিকেতনের অনুষ্ঠান বাড়িতে অথবা অনুষ্ঠানে। ব্যক্তিগত সুপ্রিয়া দি। প্রায় সব জায়গাতেই পুটুকদার পাশে। মনে আছে প্রতিদিন বিকেলবেলায় দুজনকে দেখতাম রিকশায় বেড়াতে বেরোতেন। ওঁদের প্রেম খুব আশ্বস্তকারী লাগতো। আমার বড় হয়ে ওঠার একটা বড় অংশ ছিল বাংলার বাইরে। পরিবেশ ছিল ব্রিটিশদের ছেড়ে যাওয়া কিছুটা জীবনযাত্রা, বাড়িঘর, আসবাবপত্র, খাওয়া দাওয়া। মিশনারী ইংরেজি মাধ্যম স্কুলে পড়াশুনা। শান্তিনিকেতনের বাঙালি কৃষ্টিতে আমার নিজেকে পাওয়া একটু বিলম্বিত অধ্যায়। সুপ্রিয়াদির জীবন এর রেখাটির সঙ্গে আলগা মিল ছিল বলে কিনা জানি না আমাদের অনুচ্চারিত এক সখ্য তৈরি হয়ে গেল। দেখা হলেই মনে হতো আমার আপন। ব্যাপারটা পারস্পরিক ছিল। সে কথা উনি বলতেন।

তার বেশ কিছু বছর পরে রবীন্দ্র ভবনে বিভিন্ন প্রজেক্ট এ কাজ করার সুবাদে সুপ্রিয়াদির সঙ্গে দিনের অনেকটা সময় কাটতো। এই সময় সুপ্রিয়াদিকে কাছ থেকে দেখেছি একজন নিবিষ্ট কর্মী রূপে, কার্যালয়ের অভিভাবক রূপে, রবীন্দ্রনাথের প্রতি অগাধ শ্রদ্ধাশীল সত্যনিষ্ঠ গবেষক রূপে। রবীন্দ্র ভবনে উনি কাজ শিখেছিলেন শ্রেষ্ঠ পণ্ডিত দের কাছে। তার সঙ্গে প্রাঞ্জল ইংরেজি জ্ঞান ছিল ওঁর বিশেষ গুণ। হাতের লেখা ছিল ভাষা জ্ঞানের মতোই ঝরঝরে, পরিষ্কার, সোজা। স্বাভাবিকভাবে সুপ্রিয়াদির কাজের মান ছিল উঁচু। ভবনে অনেক সময়েই স্থায়ী কান্ডারী থাকতেন না কেউ। সুপ্রিয়াদি ছিলেন বলে কখনো কারও মনে হয় নি কোনো কাজ আটকে আছে। কিন্তু তা বলে উনি কখনোই নিজেকে অধিকর্তা মনে করতেন না, অধিকর্তার মতন ব্যবহারও করতেন না। মনে হয় না অধিকর্তা হবার উচ্চাকাঙ্ক্ষাও পোষণ করতেন। কাজ করতেন রবীন্দ্রনাথ ও বিভাগকে ভালোবেসে। হাতে ধরে কাজ শিখিয়েছেন নানা ভাবে। আবার করেও দিয়েছেন অনেকের অনেক কাজ। কোনো আপত্তি বিরক্তি ছিল না। নোবেল পুরস্কার চুরি হলো যখন, তখনও ভবনে কোনো ডিরেক্টর ছিলেন না। পিছনে পিছনে পুলিশ এলো, গোয়েন্দা এলো, সিবিআই এলো। কতদিন পর্যন্ত পরিবেশ ছিল থমথমে, সন্দেহকলিষ্ট। সবার মনের মধ্যে কোথাও না কোথাও আশ্বাস এর আচ্ছাদন ছিলেন সুপ্রিয়াদি। পরিবারের সংকটে যেমন হয়, তেমনি বেঁধে বেঁধে থেকেছি, দুঃসময় কেটে গেছে। আলোকচিত্র বিভাগে ছিলাম বলে

প্রায়ই নানা দরকারে ডেকে পাঠাতেন। আলোচনা করতেন, জানতে চাইতেন, এমন কি আমার বিবেচনার উপর কাজ ছেড়ে দিতেন। ভবন ছেড়ে যাবার পরেও ছবির ব্যাপারে নির্ভর করতেন আমার উপর। আগলে রেখেছেন ছোট রাজনীতি থেকে। পাশে দাঁড়িয়েছেন সব সময়। সে সব দিনের কথা ভোলার নয়।

ভবনে কাজ ছাড়াও জীবন ছিল। আমরা দু একজন তখন ক্রিকেটে সৌরভ ভক্ত ছিলাম। সুপ্রিয়াদি, লছমি, আমি, স্বপনদা। খেলার জন্য আমাদের আশা আশঙ্কা নিয়ে আড্ডা হতো অনেক। যেখানেই বেড়াতে যেতেন উপহার পেতাম নিশ্চয়ই। সবই ভালোবাসা ও রুচির গুণে অমূল্য। খাওয়া দাওয়া হতো কখনো। সুপ্রিয়াদি স্বেচ্ছায় নিরামিষ খেতেন। সুপ্রিয়াদির সাজ ছিল মার্জিত, স্বতন্ত্র, সুন্দর। পরিচ্ছন্ন ও বিন্যস্ত থাকতেন পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ ভাবে। স্বল্পতে সুন্দর ছিল ওঁর মন্ত্র। আই প্যাড এ ওঁর আঙ্গুলের নিখুঁত চলন মনে পড়ে। সবুজকলিদি যখন এলেন তখন শাড়ি নিয়ে গল্পের আমাদের আলাদা দল হলো। শরীর, সুস্থতা নিয়েও সুপরামর্শ দিতেন খুব। বাড়ি গিয়েও কত গল্প করেছি।

সুপ্রিয়াদির আশিতম জন্ম দিনে শ্রদ্ধায়, কৃতজ্ঞতায় ও ভালোবাসায় ওঁকে স্মরণ করছি। নিঃশর্ত ভালোবাসায় উনি আমাকে ধনী করেছিলেন।





Vichitra, Rabindra-Bhavana



Bruges, Belgium

Supriyadi

Swati Ghosh

Translation

I was in college when I first met Supriyadi. It was 1983-'84. My special paper in B. A. was 'Tagore in English'. We were directed to write a dissertation paper. I had no clue what to write, what books to study and refer to and how to choose from the ocean which is Tagore. I decided to visit Rabindra Bhavana library to begin with. By that time, I was already in love with Uttarayan complex which, at that time was a serene tranquil, beautiful haven in Santiniketan. Somebody advised me to meet Supriyadi and speak with her. I went up to her quite nervous. Of course, I did not know her and had heard nothing about her before. I was instantly overwhelmed on first seeing her. She sat in a small room inside the library. Her table chair was surrounded by books and books on all walls. She seemed to be an integrated part of the entire visual. Slight smile on her lips, pleasant eyes, soft voice. She looked sober, dignified, and intelligent. I placed my case before her. She spoke reassuringly, never for once hinting that I did not know anything. It was a wonderful conversation and she enabled me to regain my composure, confidence to write my dissertation. As I sat at the readers' corner on the open terrace of the library shaded with the giant siris tree, I was filled with wellness and vouched that day, that when I pass out and start working it will be Rabindra Bhavana like Supriyadi. After that meeting, I did not have direct contact with her for a long time.

But she was carving a place for herself in my heart indirectly. I used to hear words of praise about her from my husband Nukai. This was another Supriyadi who was steady, calm, dedicated and unperturbed in face of the gravest crises that rocked her household. I also heard praises of her culinary skills. Putukda and Supriyadi had a soft corner for Nukai because he was a witness and silent companion to some downs of their life. Anyway, in the meanwhile I had come to know who Supriyadi was, to which family she belonged in Santiniketan, unlike my first encounter with her. My contacts with her would be at Senjuti (a stall hosted by ex-students of Santiniketan in Poush Mela), some official or private ceremony. I always saw her beside Putukda, soft and demure.

I remember both of them taking a slow rickshaw ride every evening after her office ended. Their love seemed so reassuring. A big phase of my growing up years was outside Bengal in an environment that included a part colonial lifestyle, convent education, sprawling bungalows etc etc. My Bengali roots came back to me a little late in life in Santiniketan. Loosely, somewhere her life arc maybe matched mine and we struck an immediate camaraderie. It was mutual. She also felt the same.

Few years later, I got to come in close proximity with her because I worked for various projects in Rabindra Bhavana. I saw her as a professional with a golden heart. She was a dedicated worker, a guardian, a profuse Tagore admirer and loyalist and a good Samaritan. She had learnt her work from the best minds of the time. Added to that was her mastery over English language.

Her handwriting was neat, precise, straight and steady just like her English. Obviously, her standards were high. Often at Rabindra Bhavana, there would be no steady director at the helm. But nothing got stuck because of her presence. Delegates, meetings, exhibitions, finances she could hold an umbrella on all. But she never thought she was the head, never behaved like one and perhaps never had ambitions to be one.

She gave her all for her love of Tagore and the department. She again taught us to work effectively, often doing the work of others. But we never saw her objecting or resisting.

When the Nobel Prize disastrously got stolen from the museum, we were without director. Following on the heels of disaster was the slew of police, detectives, sniffer dogs and CBI. For months, we were exposed to the atmosphere that changed to a suspicious and grim cloud hanging overhead. Supriyadi was there as a reassuring cushion in our minds. Like a family faced with a crisis we held on to one another and crossed over.

She had the vision to do the foundational work for documentation of museum possessions and I worked in the photo archives. She depended on me for photos to be put up for exhibitions, for publications and others and would call me up even after I left. She relied on my discretion and thereby made me responsible and committed. She sheltered me from petty politics and stood rock solid by me through all ups and downs. I can never forget her selfless support.

But there was life in our world beyond work. We were a small group, ardent fan of Sourav Ganguly's cricket team. Supriyadi, Lachhmi, Swapanda and I shared our hopes and anxieties for our team. Wherever she went, she never forgot to bring back for us gifts of love. In taste and memories, they are priceless. We had our refreshment occasions also, some birthday, some promotion, a farewell now and then. Supriyadi was a vegetarian by choice. I remember the movement of her dainty fingers over meals and keypads.

Her dress sense was impeccable, subtle and minimal. Fo her, less was beautiful. When Sabujkolidi joined we became a group of saree lovers. She was always ready with health, and medical tips too. I have my fondest memories with her spanned over a long time.

On her eightieth birthday I remember her with respect, gratitude, and love. She had enriched me with her choicest affection.



সুপ্রিয়াদি

সবুজকলি সেন

সুপ্রিয়াদির কথা মনে হলেই প্রথম যে শব্দটি মনে আসে তা হল মাধুর্য। তাঁর চেহারা, তাঁর ব্যবহার তাঁর পাট ভাঙা সুন্দর পাড়ের সাদা খোলের তাঁতের শাড়িতে তাঁর হাসিতে মাধুর্য সুরুচির শ্যামলিমা উৎসারিত হত। শান্তিনিকেতনে কেটেছে সুপ্রিয়াদির ছাত্রী জীবন, কর্মজীবন এবং সংসার জীবনও। কর্মজীবনের সবটাই রবীন্দ্রভবনে। এক সময়ে রবীন্দ্রভবন বললেই লোকে সুপ্রিয়াদিকে মনে করতেন। অথচ এই সুপ্রিয়াদির সঙ্গে আলাপ পরিচয় আমার শান্তিনিকেতনে আসার প্রায় ৩৩ / ৩৪ বছর পরে হয়েছিল। দর্শন বিভাগের অধ্যাপক ছিলেন রীনা রায়। সুপ্রিয়াদির জা। তাঁর কাছে শুনতাম ‘নিনি’র কথা। ‘নিনি’ সুপ্রিয়াদির ডাক নাম এবং শান্তিনিকেতনে তিনি নিনিদি, নিনি কাকিমা বলেই পরিচিত ছিলেন অনেকের কাছে। সঠিক অর্থে তাঁর সঙ্গে আমার প্রথম আলাপ হল ২০০৪-এর শেষে। তখন রবীন্দ্রভবনে এক ভয়ঙ্কর অবস্থা। নোবেল প্রাইজটি চুরি হয়ে গেছে। সি বি আই তদন্ত শুরু হয়েছে। আবার নতুন করে মিউজিয়ামটি খুলে দেওয়া হয়েছে দর্শকদের জন্য। সেই সময় বিশ্বভারতী কর্তৃপক্ষ আমাকে পাঠান রবীন্দ্রভবনে কার্যনির্বাহী অধ্যক্ষ হিসেবে। বেশ চিন্তাই হচ্ছিল রবীন্দ্রভবন সম্বন্ধে নানা কথা প্রচারিত ছিল ক্যাম্পাসে। কিন্তু আমি তার কিছু দেখতে পেলাম না। তিনবছর বেশ আনন্দেই কেটে গেল। তার অনেকটাই সুপ্রিয়াদির জন্য। দেখেছিলাম কি নিরভিমান, নিরহংকারী ছিলেন। মায়ের পিতামহ ছিলেন শশিপদ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। পিতামহী রাজকুমারী বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়। যাঁরা ঊনবিংশ শতকের নবজাগরণ সম্বন্ধে সামান্য ওয়াকিবহাল আছেন তাদের কাছে এই নাম দুটি খুবই পরিচিত। ‘ভারত শ্রমজীবী’ পত্রিকার প্রকাশক, নারী শিক্ষার প্রচারে অগ্রনী, শ্রমিক আন্দোলনের পথিকৃৎ ছিলেন শশিপদ। তাঁর স্ত্রী রাজকুমারী ছিলেন শশিপদের বিদ্যালয়ের প্রথম ছাত্রী। বেলুড়ের কাছে অনাথা বিধবাদের জন্য একটি আশ্রমও করেছিলেন শশিপদ। এবং জ্ঞানদানন্দিনী দেবী নয় তারও আগে ১৮৭১ সালে হিন্দু কুলীন ব্রাহ্মণ কন্যা রাজকুমারী হিন্দু সমাজপতিদের রক্তচক্ষু উপেক্ষা করে প্রথম বাঙালী নারী ইংল্যান্ডে যান পড়াশুনা করতে। ফিরে এসে স্বামীর স্কুলে নারী শিক্ষার প্রসারে যোগ দেন। পরে তাঁরা ব্রাহ্ম হন একদিন কথা প্রসঙ্গে বলেছিলেন শশিপদের কথা।

তাঁর মা শিক্ষিতা ও প্রগতিশীল মনের মানুষ ছিলেন। এইসব গুণগুলি সুপ্রিয়াদির মধ্যে ছিল। নিজে ছিলেন ব্রাহ্ম পরিবারের কন্যা – বিবাহ করলেন যাকে অভিজিৎ রায় – পুটুকদাই বলতাম সবাই – তাঁর মা বৌদ্ধধর্মের। পুত্রবধু ইসলাম ধর্মের। আত্মীয় স্বজন খ্রীষ্ট ধর্মেরও ছিলেন – এক সর্বধর্মসমন্বয়ের বাড়ি ছিল তাঁর। অথচ পূজায় প্রসাদেও বিশ্বাস ও ভক্তি ছিল দেখেছি। এ এক বিরাট গুণ।

রবীন্দ্রভবন লাইব্রেরীর প্রধান ছিলেন সুপ্রিয়াদি। রবীন্দ্র বিষয়ে চলমান তথ্য ভান্ডার। যে কোন বিষয়ে তথ্য দিয়ে সাহায্য করেছেন বহু লোক প্রতিষ্ঠা রবীন্দ্র গবেষককে যঁারা অনেক সময়েই ন্যূনতম স্বীকৃতিও দেননি। সে নিয়েও ছিল না কোন অনুযোগ। অথচ যে কোন সময়ে দিন বা রাত্রি তথ্য দেবার জন্য সদা প্রস্তুত থাকতেন সুপ্রিয়াদি। রবীন্দ্রভবন লাইব্রেরী, আর্কাইভে কি কোথায় আছে তা ছিল তাঁর পুঙ্খানুপুঙ্খ রূপে জানা। কাজও করেছেন প্রচুর। রথীন্দ্রনাথের ডায়েরীর সম্পাদনা, জাপান ভ্রমণের অনুবাদ, পারস্য ভ্রমণ, জাভা ভ্রমণের অনুবাদ। প্রতিমাদেবী সম্বন্ধে লেখা, আর যা করেছেন নিজের নাম যশ প্রতিষ্ঠার কথা না ভেবে বিভিন্ন গবেষণা ও লেখার বিষয়ে অন্যদের সন্ধান দেওয়া ও তথ্য দেওয়া।

কবে যে বন্ধুত্ব হয়ে গেল জানিনা। অসমবয়সী হয়ে যে বন্ধুত্ব হয় না তা তো নয়। তখনই তিনি কর্মজীবনে অবসর নিয়েছিলেন কিন্তু বিশ্বভারতী কর্তৃপক্ষ তাঁর অসামান্য অবদানের কথা স্মরণে রেখে তাঁকে ঐ পদেই বহাল করেছেন। সুপ্রিয়াদির সঙ্গে সবসময় একটি শান্তিনিকেতনী বোলা থাকত। তার মধ্যে থাকত একটি কি দুটি বই। রবীন্দ্রভবনে মাল্টিমিডিয়ায় তিনি বসতেন তখন এবং সামনে একটি বই খোলা। এছাড়া তাঁকে ভাবাই যায়না।

প্রতিদিন দুপুরে লাঞ্চ আওয়ার-এর পর কিছুক্ষণ এবং ছুটির পর আমাদের গল্প হত। সঙ্গে থাকতেন সুশোভন অধিকারী, দিলীপ হাজরা, আশিস হাজরা, কখনও কখনও শান্তশঙ্কর দাশগুপ্ত ও কখনও বা স্বাতী ঘোষ। নানা ধরনের আলোচনা, গল্প হত। পুরোন রবীন্দ্রভবনকে জানতাম, দেখতাম ওঁদের চোখ দিয়ে। তখনও প্রায় সি বি আই আধিকারিকদের আগমন হচ্ছে। সুপ্রিয়াদিদের প্রথম ধাক্কাটা সামলাতে হয়েছিল। সুপ্রিয়াদিকে আমি বলতাম ‘মুশকিল আসান’। সবার সমস্যার সমাধানে উৎসাহী।

কখনও কখনও দুজনে নিজেদের কথা বলতাম। তিনি বলতেন কিভাবে তিনি মানুষ করেছেন তাঁর ছেলেদের। কি কি মূল্যবোধ তাঁদের মধ্যে গড়ে তুলেছেন শুনতাম। তাঁর তিনটি পুত্রই আর সকলের থেকে আলাদা। সংসারে তখন তিন পুত্রবধূ এসে গেছে। তখন কুমকু আর ঋক ছোট। তিন পুত্রবধূ সম্পর্কে কোন বিরূপ মন্তব্য কখনও শুনিনি। যার যেটি গুণ সবসময়ে সেটি বলতেন। গৃহস্থালীতে বেশি ভরসা করতেন মিঠুকে আর সবদিক থেকে ভরসা ছিল রেশমীর ওপরে অনেকটা বন্ধুর মত। অনামিকা তখন একেবারে নতুন। তিনটিই যেন আপন কন্যা। নাতি, নাতির জন্য বুকভরা ভালবাসা, মমতা।

সুপ্রিয়াদির সঙ্গে সব থেকে ভাল সময় কাটিয়ে ছিলাম বিদেশ ভ্রমণগুলোতে। এ ভ্রমণ প্রমোদ ভ্রমণ ছিল না। প্রথম যাত্রা মরিশাসে। সেখানে রবীন্দ্রভবন তথা বিশ্বভারতীকে একটি ‘রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুর গ্যালারি’ করার অনুরোধ জানান সে দেশের সরকার। ২০০৭ সালে প্রথমে যান সুপ্রিয়াদি ও সুশোভন অধিকারী। তাঁদের যাবার ১৫ দিন পর গরমের ছুটি হলে আমিও যাই। ভারত মহামানবের তীরে ঐ ছোট ‘নীলের কোলে শ্যামল সে দ্বীপ প্রবাল দিয়ে ঘেরা’ – আমাদের বেশ সুন্দর একটি মাস (দুবারে যাই) কাজে ও কাজের পর আনন্দে গল্পে কেটেছিল। সেখানেও ব্যবহারের মাধুর্যে, কর্ম কুশলতায় সুচিতা রামাদীন, অরবিন্দ বিশ্বেশ্বর, বিশাল লক্ষণ, রীতা বিশ্বনাথ, বিদুলা সকলেরই ‘সুপ্রিয়াদি’ হয়ে উঠেছিলেন।

দ্বিতীয় এক সঙ্গে বিদেশ যাত্রা ইন্দোনেশিয়ায় ২০১৭ সালে। রবীন্দ্রনাথের ইন্দোনেশিয়া যাত্রার নব্বই বছর পূর্তিতে সে দেশের সরকার ICCR কে এদেশের একটি প্রতিনিধি দল পাঠাবার আমন্ত্রণ জানায়। সুপ্রিয়াদি ICCR-এর বেশ কিছু রবীন্দ্রনাথ সংক্রান্ত প্রদর্শনী তৈরী করে দিয়েছিলেন যা বিভিন্ন দেশে প্রশংসিত হয়েছিল। ICCR থেকে সুপ্রিয়াদির সঙ্গে delegation সদস্য কারা হবেন যোগাযোগ করেন। শ্রী প্রণত নামের একজন কালচারাল অ্যাটাশে আসেন রতনকুঠিতে মিটিং-এ। তখন আমি Director of Studies এককথায় শ্রীনিকেতনের ডিরেক্টর। সুপ্রিয়াদি, কলাভবন মিউজিয়াম-এর সুশোভন অধিকারী,

পাঠভবনের ব্রতীন চট্টোপাধ্যায় ও শ্রীলেখা চট্টোপাধ্যায়, আমি ও বিশ্বভারতীর ইতিহাসের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী নেদারল্যান্ডবাসী ভাস্বতী ভট্টাচার্য এই ছজন ইন্দোনেশিয়া যাই। আমাদের টীম লিডার তৎকালীন হরিদ্বারের সাংসদ এবং পরে তিনি কেন্দ্রীয় সরকারের শিক্ষামন্ত্রী হয়েছিলেন রমেশচন্দ্র পোখরিয়ালা। সঙ্গে তাঁর সচিবও ছিলেন। ইন্দোনেশিয়াতে যোগ জার্কাতা যাকে রবীন্দ্রনাথ বলেছেন যজ্ঞকর্তা সেখানে পৌঁছোলাম। গেলাম সেই তামাম শিশোয়া বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে। এর প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ‘কি হাজার দেওয়ানতারা’ (Ki Hadjar Dewantara) রবীন্দ্র অনুরাগী ছিলেন এবং ডাচ শাসকদের প্রচলিত শিক্ষাব্যবস্থার বিপরীতে জাভার নিজস্ব সংস্কৃতি ও শিক্ষার শিক্ষা দেবার উদ্দেশ্যে শান্তিনিকেতনের মত একটি প্রতিষ্ঠান গড়ে তোলেন। সেখানে সুপ্রিয়াদি একটি সুন্দর বক্তব্য রাখেন। আমাদের দলের নেতা রমেশচন্দ্র পোখরিয়ালেরও সুপ্রিয়াদি হয়ে যান তিনি ঐ কদিনেই। যে সময়ের কথা বলছি তখন সুপ্রিয়াদির বয়স হয়েছে কিন্তু সেই বয়সেও তাঁর উৎসাহ, কর্মক্ষমতা আমাদের বিস্মিত করত। সব কিছুকে খোলা মনে গ্রহণ করার এক অদ্ভুত ক্ষমতা ছিল তাঁর। যখন শ্রীনিকেতনে ছিলাম তখন আবারও প্রয়োজন হত সুপ্রিয়াদির। শ্রীনিকেতন তথ্য, শ্রীনিকেতন ফাইল ইত্যাদি নিয়ে। এ সময়েই উনিও রবীন্দ্রভবন থেকে বরাবরের মত ছুটি নেন। ছেলেরা ওদের সেই রবীন্দ্রনাথ ঠাকুরের আমলে বাড়িটি সংস্কার করে ও সুপ্রিয়াদির জন্য একটি সুন্দর Study room করে দেয়। সামনেটা কাঁচের লম্বা জানালা। দেখা যায় — লালমাটির রাস্তা — গোয়েঙ্গা, বিড়লা হস্টলের সামনের রাস্তা। আর সবুজে সবুজ গাছের সারি। বেশ ছিলেন এখানে — তারপর চলে গেলেন পুটুকদা। সেই ছাত্রজীবন থেকে বন্ধুত্ব। সংসার যাপন — সেই বন্ধু চলে গেলেন। সুপ্রিয়াদিও চলে গেলেন দিল্লী। যোগাযোগ ছিল ফোনে। খুব খুশি হতেন তবে শান্তিনিকেতনের জন্য কষ্ট হতো বুঝতাম।

নিজের প্রতিষ্ঠানকে এত ভালবাসা, প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বার্থ রক্ষা, নিজের সম্পত্তির মত রক্ষা করা (যার জন্য অনেকের কাছে অপিয় হতেন) খুব কম দেখা যায়।

এই অত্যন্ত বুদ্ধিমতী, রবীন্দ্রগবেষক ও আক্ষরিক অর্থে প্রকৃত অভিজাত, নিরহঙ্কারি সুপ্রিয়াদির চলে যাওয়ায় আমার মনে শান্তিনিকেতনের যে আলোর মালাটি ছিল তার মধ্যে একটি আলো নিভে গেল।



Supriyadi

Sabujkoli Sen

Translation

Whenever I think of Supriyadi, the first word that comes to my mind is elegance. A refined gentleness emanated from her face, her smile, her mannerisms, and the crispness of her freshly unfolded white cotton saris. Supriyadi's existence revolved around Santiniketan spanning her undergraduate years, professional career, and family life. Professionally, she was based entirely at Rabindra Bhavana. There was a time when Supriyadi was synonymous with Rabindra Bhavana. However, my first acquaintance with her occurred almost 33/34 years after my arrival at Santiniketan. Reena Roy, one of the professors at the Philosophy department, was Supriyadi's sister-in-law. I used to hear stories of 'Nini' from her. Supriyadi's nickname was 'Nini.' Many people at Santiniketan knew her as Nini di or Nini kakima. My formal introduction to Supriyadi took place towards the end of 2004. At that time, Rabindra Bhavana was facing a precarious situation.

The Nobel Prize was stolen. The CBI investigation had commenced. The museum was reopened for the visitors. At that time, Visva Bharati administration appointed me as the managing director of Rabindra Bhavana. I was quite anxious as much talk about Rabindra Bhavana was in circulation on campus. However, I did not experience anything unpleasant. Three years passed joyfully - much of it solely because of Supriyadi.

I observed how composed and unassuming she was. Her mother's grandparents were Shasipada Banerjee and Rajkumari Bandopadhyay. Those of us familiar with the early 19th-century renaissance in Bengal are well-acquainted with these two names. Shasipada, the publisher of the periodical named 'Bharat Shramajibi', was a pioneer in promoting women's education, and a pathfinder of the labour movement. His wife, Rajkumari, was the first female student of Shashipada's school. They also established an ashram for orphaned widows near Belur. And even before Jnanadanandini Devi, in 1871, Kulin Brahmin girl Rajkumari went to England for higher education disregarding the disdain of the Hindu upper-class society. Upon her return, she contributed to the expansion of women's education in her husband's school. Later, they both converted to Brahmoism. One day, Shashipada's story came up in our discussions.

Supriyadi's mother was an educated and progressive woman. Supriyadi bore these qualities in her. She had been born into a Brahmo family but was married to Abhijit Roy — endearingly known as Putuk da by many — whose mother was Buddhist. Her daughter-in-law belongs to the Islamic faith. Supriyadi had Christian relatives, too. It was a household of religious harmony. And yet, I have seen her faith and devotion in prayers and offerings. This is a commendable quality.

Supriyadi was the head of the Rabindra Bhavana Library — a walking repository of knowledge and information. She helped many established Tagore scholars academically, but sadly, her

contribution often went unacknowledged. However, she didn't mind that either. She was always ready to share her wisdom with others. Supriyadi knew every nook and cranny of Rabindra Bhavana Library and archives. Her oeuvre includes the edited diary of Rathindranath, the translation of Japan visit, Paris visit, translation of Java visit, and works on Pratima Devi. Many a times she would provide others with information, and engage in various research topics without thinking about establishing her name and personal fame.

I don't know when we became friends. It's not that intergenerational friendships are unlikely. She had then just retired from her professional role, but the Visva Bharati administration retained Supriyadi in that position considering all her extraordinary contributions. Supriyadi always carried a long-length Santiniketani bag with one or two books inside. She sat with a book open before her in the multimedia room at Rabindra Bhavana which served as her office.

We used to chat every afternoon after lunch and work. Sushobhan Adhikari, Dilip Hazra, Asis Hazra, Santosankar Dasgupta, or Swati Ghosh would join us at times. We engaged in various discussions and shared different stories. I got to know the old Rabindra Bhavana through their eyes. CBI officials were coming still. Supriyadi was the first person to deal with the blow. I used to call Supriyadi 'Mushkil Asan' (trouble-shooter). She was eager to solve everyone's problems.

Occasionally, we talked about ourselves. Supriyadi would say how she raised her sons and what values she instilled in them. All three of them are remarkable.

By then, her three daughters-in-law had also joined the family. Kunku (Mehal) and Hrit were young. I never heard any negative remarks about the daughters-in-law. She always mentioned the good qualities they possessed. She relied on Mithu domestically and trusted Reshmi like a confidante. Anamika was still very new at that time. All three seemed like her own daughters. Love and affection overflowed for the grandchildren. I spent the best times with Supriyadi during our travels abroad. The trips were not meant for leisure.

Mauritius was our first destination. Visva-Bharati was requested to construct 'Rabindranath Tagore Gallery' by the Mauritian Government. Even in Mauritius, with the usual charm of her pleasing manners and deftness of work, she became the endearing 'Supriyadi' to Surendra Ramadin, Arbinda Bisweshwar, Vishal Lakshman, Rita Biswanath, and Bidula.

Secondly, we went to Indonesia in 2017. On the completion of ninety years of Rabindranath's Indonesia visit, the government of Indonesia invited ICCR to send a delegation to that country. Supriyadi had prepared several exhibitions on Rabindranath for ICCR, which were praised in various countries. ICCR contacted Supriyadi to finalize the delegation members. A cultural attaché named Sri Pranat came to meet us at Ratankuthi. At that time, I was the Director of Studies at Sriniketan. Supriyadi, Subhoshon Adhikari from Kala Bhavana Museum, Bratin Chatterjee and Srilekha Chatterjee of Patha Bhavana,

along with me and former along with me and former Visva Bharati student Bhaswati Bhattacharya, went to Indonesia. Our team leader was former Haridwar MP and later Union Education Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal. His secretary also went with us. We arrived at Yoga Jakarta. We visited all the universities there. The founder of the institution 'Ki Hadjar Dewantara' was a Rabindranath enthusiast and established an institution like Santiniketan with the aim of providing education based on his own culture and education, contrary to the prevalent Dutch colonial education system.

Supriyadi delivered a fascinating talk there. Even at that age, her enthusiasm and efficiency amazed us. She had an amazing ability to accept everything with an open mind. Once again, during my Sriniketan days, we needed Supriyadi for Sriniketan files. At that time, Supriyadi permanently retired from Rabindra Bhavana. Her sons renovated their old house built during the Tagorean era and constructed a beautiful study room for Supriyadi. The high glass windows in the front overlooked the Lal Mati (Red Earth) road going past Goenka and Birla hostels; its sides strewn with rows of green trees. Everything was going well until Putukda's demise- Supriyadi's doting companion from the university days. Supriyadi moved base to Delhi. We stayed connected over phone. She was happy but I could sense her yearnings for Santiniketan.

Nurturing profound love for one's own institution, and protecting its interests like personal property (for which she garnered the dismay of some), are rare qualities. A bright light of Santiniketan got extinguished with the passing of our extremely intelligent, humble, refined, renowned Tagore researcher Supriyadi.



Lecture in Indonesia

Supriya Roy

Uma Das Gupta

Supriya Roy was an extraordinary Librarian whom I came to know at Rabindra-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati, from the mid- 1970s.

I am not sure whether she had a "designation" as Librarian. Those may have been the last years of the Santiniketan 'way of life' when people lived and worked with love and respect for the institution and the community without expecting rewards for themselves. Supriya was certainly one of them.

Her in-laws belonged to Santiniketan's pristine history and Supriya fitted in beautifully from within herself.

Supriya gradually became well known for her knowledge of the Rabindra-Bhavana Library, for her very helpful service to the readers, and with time she became a Tagore scholar with a penchant for curating exhibitions on Tagore's life and his works.

Personally I miss Supriya as we had kept in touch even after she retired from Rabindra- Bhavana and I left Santiniketan for Calcutta in 1984. We felt like friends and we continued to share information on our beloved subject of inquiry. She used to write to me to say she looked forward to my books and I continued to depend on her for authentic information.



Supriya Roy with her sister, Shubha Gupta

Supriya Roy

My Introduction to and Mentor at Santiniketan

Shailesh Parekh

Little did I realise twenty years ago, when I approached, albeit with some hesitation, a petite lady draped in a white saree, who was sitting at her desk, with a bearded gentleman, again dressed in white, on the other side of the desk, that over the next several years both of them were going to be my friends and guides in my pursuit of Tagore and his literature.

The year was 2004. In the month of March, with a desire to participate in the celebration of Holi – dolpurnima – at Santiniketan, Vandana and I had gone to Santiniketan. The famous Tagore scholar and translator, William Radice, had given my introduction to Supriya Roy, Librarian at Rabindra Bhavana. Apart from this, I knew nothing about Visva Bharati or Rabindra Bhavana nor did I know a soul in that area when we alighted from Santiniketan Express on the platform of Bolpur railway station.

We had booked a room for ourselves at the Purba Palli guesthouse of Visva Bharati, but finding the accommodation far too spartan, we had parked ourselves at ‘Kalo Pakhi’ in Jambuni – a private residence belonging to the family of my cousin, Millie Mitra.

When I called on Supriya Roy – whom I came to address as Supriyadi – I learned that at that time she was holding the charge of Director (Acting), Rabindra Bhavana. In our very first meeting she was gracious enough to help me secure VIP pass for the functions commencing the following day and to assign various persons to show us around the Uttarayan complex as well as to guide Vandana in shopping.

Incidentally, the gentleman in white, seated on the other side of her desk was Swapan Majumdar, who later came to Ahmedabad, to deliver a lecture at Gandhi Ashram in 2009 and helped publish my book, ‘Tagore and Poetry, Chicago’, and invite me to deliver a lecture at a Santiniketan seminar among other things.

Supriyadi introduced me to Indrani Ghosh, who was then in charge of the museum at Jorasanko. It was due to this introduction that we were given a special tour of the Jorasanko museum. It was Indrani, who insisted that I must meet the famous poet and Tagore scholar, par excellence, Sankha Ghosh and set up my first appointment with him.

She was the one who introduced me to ‘Rabijibani’ – the finest biography of Tagore – and to its author, Prasanta Kumar Paul, whom I had casually met at Subarnarekha in 2004. Actually, Supriyadi was a mutual friend who negotiated many a communication between Prasantada and myself before we met each other again at his residence in 2006, when Niranjana Bhagat, Sugna, Vandana and myself were on a Tagore pilgrimage in Bengal and Bangladesh. It was



2006: L to R: Vandana, Supriyadi, Prasant Kumar Paul, Sugna, Niranjn Bhagat



At the residence of Supriyadi for dinner in 2006

during this visit that she had invited all of us to a sumptuous dinner at her residence in Santiniketan.

Over the years, Supriyadi and I became good friends in our own pursuit of Tagore thoughts and literature. She was always a great source of information for me. She was always forthright and idealist in her opinions in all our discussions on topics varying from Tagore, his legacy and his ideals, affairs at Visva Bharati and Rabindra Bhavana, human relationships, world affairs etc. With her background of years of Tagore studies at Rabindra Bhavana, she had a wealth of information at her beck and call and she was willing to share the same with everyone. In book after book, I have read her name in 'Acknowledgements' by authors around the world.

Through her I had also met her sister in Delhi and her brother, who had finally settled in Gandhinagar/Ahmedabad. I could notice a strong bond between the siblings and a soft corner both of them had for 'Nini'. We had met not only in Santiniketan, but also in Delhi and Ahmedabad. Her sister's daughter, Smita, had worked with my sister, Angana, who also lived in Delhi. This gave us an opportunity to meet in Delhi. Her brother had moved to Gandhinagar and she would visit us in Ahmedabad, when she would visit her brother in Gandhinagar. She had delivered a couple of lectures at Ravindra Bhavan, Ahmedabad – an informal group without an account or address, which deliberated on Tagore thoughts and literature, once a month.

In my Tagore explorations, I have not met a more helpful person than Supriyadi and her departure has left me without a friend who was always there to correct me and encourage me.



M. H. TRENCHARD (1800-1880) PRESIDENT OF THE DISTRICT
THIS STONE WAS LAID BY MRS. M. HOOD TRENCHARD
ON THE 25TH OF AUGUST 1880
TRUSTEES
MRS. M. HOOD TRENCHARD
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Zeeland, the Netherlands

Remembering Supriya Roy

Kalpana Dasgupta

When Adi Roy sent me an invite to write a short write-up for a book which will be published in memory of Supriya Roy, his grandmother, I was really surprised. I knew Supriya as a roommate in Jadavpur University women's hostel. We stayed together for a short while in the mid sixties. We both were students at the postgraduate level. Supriya was in the Department of Comparative Literature, doing her Masters. I was a student of the new Department of Library Science. I was a student of the first batch in the postgraduate course of the Department of Library Science set up in the year 1964.

We met very rarely after we parted ways from Jadavpur. I met her in Santiniketan where she lived. I was working in Delhi and visited Santiniketan infrequently to see my sister. I remember to have visited her home in Santiniketan once.

Supriya and I were very different personalities. I was a die-hard probashi Bangali, brought up in Bihar and a postgraduate from Patna University. Supriya on the other hand was a full-fledged Bangali. She was a quiet and sober person, very different from my talkative self. But we were happy in each other's company as roommates. She was steeped into literature and a very well read person. We occasionally did discuss literature because she was very familiar with the Bangla

literary world whereas I was more into English and Hindi literature. We enjoyed our stay at the hostel with girls from different places and backgrounds. Of course, I was the known 'Khotta' among the girls because I was from Bihar.

We both did well in life in different situations and places. I was not aware that Supriya was given the honour of Tagore Scholar. I am very glad and proud, that I knew her. I will always remember her as a person whose company would be sought after by many. I was lucky to have been her roommate in our student days which are golden years in everyone's life.

Thank you Adi for giving me this opportunity to express my feelings about Supriya.

May her soul rest in peace.



Remembering Supriya Roy

Kumkum Bhattacharya

Supriya Roy, aka, Supriya di/ Nini di was one of those persons who never sought the limelight, but quietly and surely continued to do her work. Needless to say, that her work centred around Rabindranath Tagore. She was completely at-home in Rabindra Bhavana where she was involved with many aspects of the museum, archival collection and mainly of the library. Her contribution to the curation of the Rabindra Bhavana Museum on materials arranged along time-line, travels, his writings, awards and accolades, significant persons and individuals who worked with Tagore on his various programmes and projects , the letters and correspondences of Tagore and received by him as well as the evolution of Visva-Bharati from the nucleus of the Brahmacharyashram, later Patha-Bhavana, was immense and important. Along with her assigned tasks she devoted her energies to research related to Tagore's travels in Asia, Indonesia and Europe. Three very important and evocative books in English – *Letters from a Sojourner in Europe*, *Letters from Persia and Iran* and *Letters from Java* were crafted under her editorial supervision. Hese books are the first of their kind to be translated into English. She was involved in the preparation of the *Catalogue-in-progress* of the archival collection in Rabindra Bhavana that provides firm support for any Tagore research. She was also involved in the entire digitization of Rabindra Bhavana collection as well as the manuscripts under possession of Visva-Bharati, the management of which lay with Rabindra Bhavana for many years.

Supriya di was invited by the Government of Mauritius to help set up the Tagore Memorial and to prepare a curated permanent exhibition. During the Tagore sesquicentennial anniversary Supriya di was invited to many national and international conferences speaking on Tagore's relationship with the eastern countries of the world. She wanted to compile a comprehensive thematic Tagore companion – unfortunately that project remained incomplete. After her retirement she edited the diary of Rathindranath Tagore giving us insight into the troubled relationship between Rathindranath and Visva-Bharati.

On a personal note, I first heard of Supriya di/ Nini di being referred to as the First Lady by the passengers (my husband was one of them) who went every Monday morning to Kolkata by the Viswabharati (Railway spelling) Fast Passenger. I used to wonder why she was thus called when my husband explained that Supriya di's husband, Putuk da was the acknowledged President of this large group and logically Supriya di was the First Lady. I was very eager to meet this imposing figure to find a kind, soft-spoken, clad always in Tangail sarees, a person who I slowly discovered as a minefield of information and knowledge. She encouraged me to ask her, what many would consider, irrelevant questions and she also tolerated my irreverent remarks that I was wary of mentioning to anyone else. Her immense reading of Tagore and other literature impressed me no end. I gradually uncovered the range of her work and interests and would often dip into the reservoir and rely on her as my 'sounding-board'. Like Pulin Behari Sen, in many ways, Supriya Roy remained always behind the scenes of the grandeur of Rabindra Bhavana treasures.

Nini di was graceful, had a quiet dignity and appeared completely at ease with her life, her family and her profession. Putuk da and Nini di on their weekend rickshaw rides painted a romantic picture of a marriage based on friendship and mutual love. Nini di met the downs of life with stoicism while enjoying every moment with her close-knit family that included those the couple had taken under their wing. I salute Nini di as being one-of-a-kind scholar and valued mentor.





সুপ্রিয়াদির স্মৃতি

সুকান্ত চৌধুরী

সুপ্রিয়াদি পেশায় ছিলেন গ্রন্থাগারিক। একজন সার্থক গ্রন্থাগারিক শুধু বইয়ের দেখভাল করেন না বা সেগুলি পাঠককে সরবরাহ করেন না। পাঠক যে চর্চা বা অনুসন্ধান করছে, সেটা বুঝতে চেষ্টা করেন এবং সেইমত তার সহমর্মী সহায়ক হয়ে ওঠেন। এই ভূমিকা পালনের জন্য দরকার মানবিক সংযোগের ক্ষমতা এবং এক ধরনের বৌদ্ধিক কল্পনাশক্তি, যার দ্বারা গ্রন্থাগারিক নানা ধরনের পঠনপাঠন ও গবেষণার শরিক হতে পারেন, প্রত্যেকটি সম্বন্ধে একটা ধারণা করে পাঠক বা গবেষককে নিঃশব্দে নেপথ্য থেকে সঠিক পথ নির্দেশ করে দেন।

আমার সৌভাগ্য, সুপ্রিয়াদি নিজে যে যে বিষয়ে উৎসুক ছিলেন তারই কতগুলি নিয়ে আমার খানিক অনুসন্ধান করতে হয়, ফলে আদানপ্রদানটা ছিল আলাদা করেই ফলপ্রসূ। বিশেষভাবে বলার মত রবীন্দ্রজীবন ও সাহিত্যের কিছু কিছু দিক নিয়ে – যেমন তাঁর ভ্রমণ ও ভ্রমণসাহিত্য – সুপ্রিয়াদির অনুপুঙ্খ তথ্যজ্ঞান, চিত্রের মত গোটা ব্যাপারটা মেলে ধরার ক্ষমতা। নিজের নির্দিষ্ট গবেষণাটুকু একটা বৃহত্তর প্রেক্ষিতে দেখতে বারবার সাহায্য পেয়েছি তাঁর কাছ থেকে।

বহু গ্রন্থাগারিকের প্রবণতা থাকে পাঠকের হাতে বই তুলে দেওয়া নয়, পাঠকের কাছ থেকে বই আগলে রাখা, আটকে রাখার। সুপ্রিয়াদি ছিলেন এ বিষয়ে দৃষ্টান্তমূলক ব্যতিক্রম: সেই দৃষ্টান্ত ক’জন অনুসরণ করেছেন বলতে পারি না অবশ্য। আর মুগ্ধ করেছিল প্রবীণ বয়সেও নতুন প্রযুক্তি সম্বন্ধে তাঁর উদার আগ্রহ, পঠনপাঠন ও পাঠসামগ্রী সরবরাহে কম্পিউটারের সদ্ব্যবহারে তাঁর অদম্য প্রচেষ্টা।

সুপ্রিয়াদি তাঁর জ্ঞানভাণ্ডার থেকে যেমন অকৃপণ বিতরণ করতেন, তাঁর মধুর সৌহার্দ্যপূর্ণ আচরণে তেমনি আশ্বস্ত করতেন সেই সামগ্রীর ব্যবহারে। তার সংযোগে আসা ছিল একাধারে বৌদ্ধিক ও মানবিক প্রাপ্তি। গত কয়েক বছরে যোগাযোগ কমে এসেছিল। সেটা একেবারে ছিন্ন হওয়ায় একটা সম্বল হারালাম।

Remembering Supriya-di

Sukanta Chaudhuri

Translation

Supriya-di was a librarian by profession. A true librarian does not only look after books and supply them to readers. She tries to understand what the reader is working on, and becomes the latter's empathic fellow-worker. To perform this role, a librarian needs the capacity to connect with others as well as a kind of conceptual imagination that allows her to engage with all kinds of study and research, form an idea of each, and discreetly set the reader or researcher on the right track.

It was my good fortune that some of my research interests were Supriya-di's as well, so that our interaction was especially productive. In particular, from the fruits of her own detailed research, she gave me sustained support in investigating Rabindranath's travels and travel literature.

Many librarians deem it their duty not to provide readers with books but rather to block access. Supriya-di was a shining exception to this depressing trend: I do not know how many people she inspired to follow her. I also admired her enthusiasm for new technology even in her mature years: in particular, her informed interest in computers for both research and librarianship.

Just as she gave freely of her scholarship, she extended a relaxed, reassuring courtesy to every scholar she met. Interaction with her was both an intellectual and a human reward. I had sadly little contact with her over the last few years. Now that the very possibility has vanished, I feel a deep sense of loss.





Hanoi, Vietnam (2011)



At Uttarayana during her student days

Nini

Manjusri Sen

As I sit down to write a few thoughts about Nini (known as Supriya di to others), I really don't know where to begin. I sorely miss the physical presence of our dear beloved Nini. Words are futile to express what I feel. She was a unique person with malice towards none and goodwill for all. She had the rare quality of extending a helping hand to those who needed it.

One of my cherished memories dates back to the year 1961 when I joined Visva Bharati University as an undergraduate. Nini too, had joined in the same year. From the very first meeting we got along like a house on fire. She was my soulmate, my confidante. From that day to her last days we were always in touch, though we did not meet so often. She being the erudite one pursuing her career in Rabindra Bhavan, going on to become a celebrity in her own field.

But whenever we did meet it was as if the intervening years were never there. It was a comforting feeling to be with her. We shared our sorrows and joys. She had such a wonderful sense of humour. Incidentally I had got married a few years before Nini. At that time she used to regale me with her letters captioned as "Santiniketan Journal" and had me in splits. That was our Nini.

The petite person that she was had the lion's courage, and a wealth of wisdom in her. I am sure she must have been an inspiration to her family, colleagues, and friends. Amidst life's inevitable trials and tribulations, she exuded a sense of calm and serenity, and always had a smiling face. I would like to remember her that way.

Nini's ever smiling face is deeply etched in my mind. I end with these words:

Maha biswe bileen hoye gechhe ninir atma. Ekbon sudhu muktir anondo.





Ninimashi

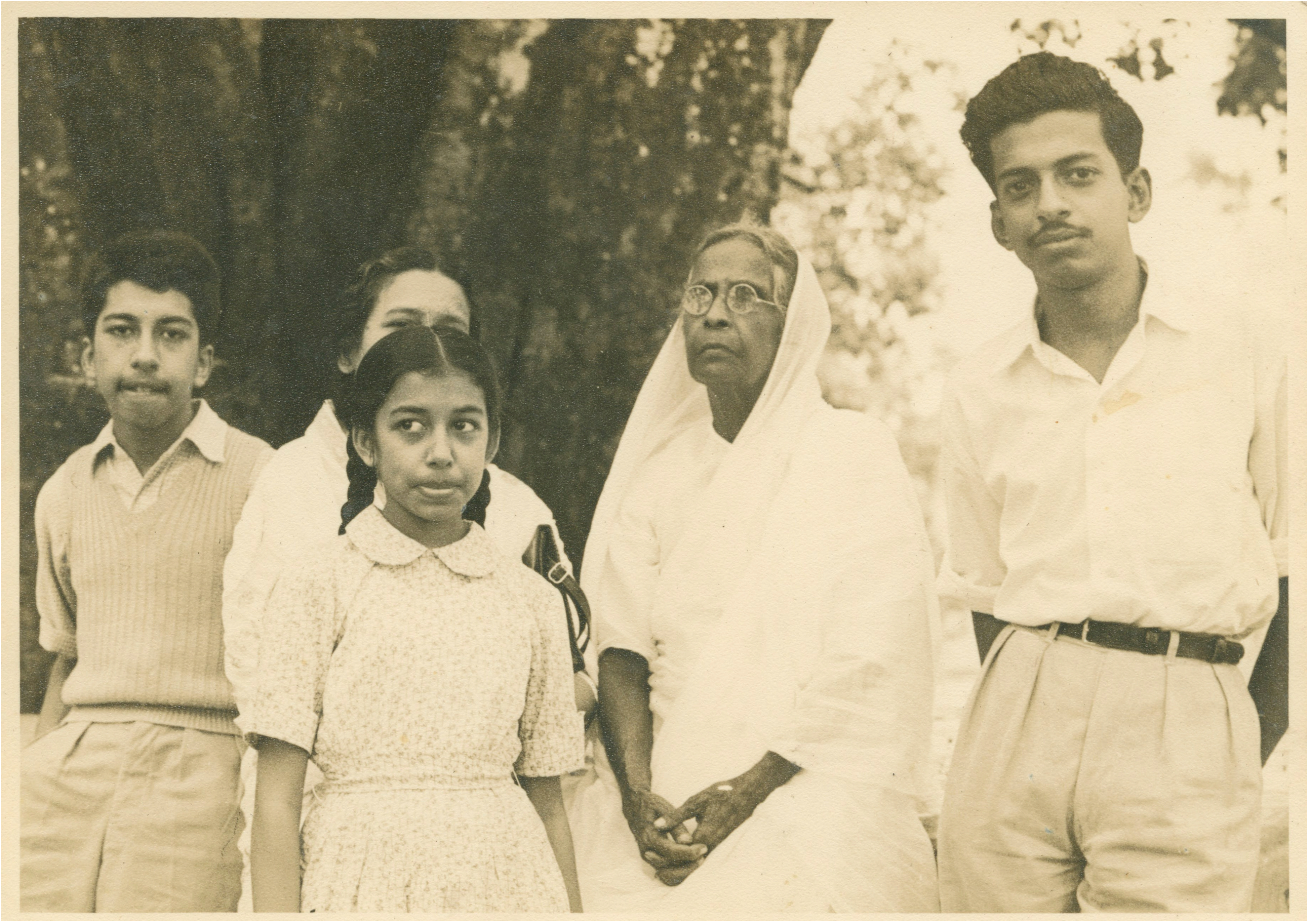
Anusree Bonnerjee

A gentle, kind, very serene person with an infectious smile and laughter, I have always been quite fascinated by Ninimashi's enthusiasm to help one and all in whatever ways possible for her. And all this with a smile! I especially remember a very lovely time spent with her in the year 2000 when she curated a photographic exhibition on Tagore's life for my mother's music school, Shahana that was celebrating 25 years of its foundation. She pretty much single handedly put up the exhibition as a meticulously done, interesting display. She had also played a very important role in bringing a whole set of Tagore original paintings to be exhibited here in Mumbai, NGMA, for a 10 days exhibition as part of the same celebrations. The interesting thing was that this sort of exhibit was happening after a gap of 48 years in Bombay and Ninimashi played a pivotal role in facilitating the process through and with Vishwa Bharati, Santiniketan. Will always remain grateful to her for making this mammoth task come alive. Her "Upasonas", prayer services, on various occasions, with her wonderful command over both Bangla and English languages, were always very insightful and serene. My mother Indrani Acharya— Pupsidi to her— has always had very warm, special love and care for her cousins "Monadi", "Rubuda", "Shibu" and "Nini" and vice versa and they all made it a point to meet whenever possible. My deepest respect and reverence remains forever for Ninimashi.



A visit to our home in the most nearest past - Ninimashi with Indranimamima and my Ma whom she called Pupsidi.

- Anusree Bonnerjee





Supriya Roy *in memoriam*

Martin Kämpchen

In early 1980, I began to live in Santiniketan. I joined the Department of Philosophy and Religion of Visva-Bharati to research for a Ph.D. This done, I started to work at Rabindra Bhavan as a Research Scholar. This was around the year 1987. My aim was to gather information on Rabindranath Tagore's relationship with German intellectuals and to study the genesis of the poet's reception, his rising recognition in Germany. The archive of Rabindra-Bhavan was the one and only place which could shed light on this issue. I became a daily visitor of Rabindra-Bhavan and met Supriya di very frequently.

Her door was always open. She refused entry to none. Even if one or two visitors had already engaged her in her office, she looked up and nodded as a sign that I was welcome to enter. She asked me to sit down and explain my query. She had always time to listen and to find a solution to my research problems. She never showed haste or the slightest aversion to my multiple questions. Many of my books on Tagore and Germany which emerged over the decades have profited from Supriya di's inputs. And in many of them her name appears in the acknowledgement list. The last book in which I acknowledged having profited from her enormous knowledge was "Indo-German Exchanges in Education. Rabindranath Tagore Meets

Paul and Edith Geheeb” (2020). She answered my questions from Bombay where she then lived in retirement.

Often, I discussed my personal difficulties as well. I knew I could confide in her. Whatever I said would remain between the two of us. Supriya di was so unassuming, humble and quiet that I realised only late that she was a published scholar, too. Then only I acquired her books published by Karigar.

My only regret is that I could not meet her more often after her retirement. Once or twice I was invited to her home; I briefly met her family. But our conversations about Rabindranath could not be revived. Even then, in retrospect I realise that she was one of the very few persons in Santiniketan who took a lively and constructive interest in my research and translation work. I remember her with deep gratitude.





সুপ্রিয়াদি

গৌতম ভট্টাচার্য

বিশ্বভারতীতে পাঠভবনে যোগদানের দুবছর পর থেকেই আমি রবীন্দ্রভবনের নিয়মিত পাঠক। বস্তুত যেদিন প্রথম রবীন্দ্রনাথের নিজের লেখা চিঠিপত্রের ফাইল আমার সামনে পেলাম, সেই লেখা একটু ছুঁয়েই আমার সমস্ত শরীর এক বিস্ময়ের ছোঁয়ায় কেঁপে উঠল। এর আগে কখনো তেমন অভিজ্ঞতা হয়নি আমার। রবীন্দ্রভবন লাইব্রেরীতে হাসিমুখে সমস্ত দায়দায়িত্ব সামলাতেন যিনি তাঁর নাম সুপ্রিয়াদি।

আমি যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের তুলনামূলক সাহিত্য বিভাগের ছাত্র। সুপ্রিয়াদিও সেই বিভাগের প্রাক্তন ছাত্রী। আমাদের থেকে দুবছরের সিনিয়র। রবীন্দ্র ভবনে বেশিরভাগ সময় যাঁরা দায়িত্বে ছিলেন তাঁরা অনেকেই যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের মাস্টারমশাই।

এর মধ্যে মনে পড়ছে কবি নরেশ গুহকে। তুলনামূলক সাহিত্যের প্রাক্তন প্রধান। ফলত আমি এবং সুপ্রিয়াদি দুজনেই তাঁর ছাত্রছাত্রী। বিশ্বভারতীর রবীন্দ্রভবনে তখন ‘কনকরডেন্স’ প্রকল্পের কাজ সব শুরু হয়েছে।

বর্ণানুক্রমিক শব্দ নির্বাচন করে কোনো কবি কাব্য বা তাঁর লেখায় কোথায় কোথায় সেই শব্দ ব্যবহার করেছেন তার প্রস্তুতি। যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের সহায়তায় বিশ্বভারতী যৌথভাবে সে প্রকল্প শুরু করলো। আমরা দুজনেই সেই প্রকল্পে অন্তর্ভুক্ত হলাম। বেশ কিছু নতুন লোক এলো সেই প্রকল্পে। কম্পিউটার জানা ড. নাথ এলেন কলকাতা থেকে। এখানে ভবতোষ দত্ত, দীপঙ্কর চট্টোপাধ্যায় সম্পাদকীয় সদস্য হলেন। তখন সবে বিশ্বভারতীতে কম্পিউটার সেন্টার শুরু হয়েছে- সেখান থেকে এলেন শান্তশঙ্কর। আমার আর সুপ্রিয়াদির কাজ হলো এডিটোরিয়াল পলিসি গুলো মান্য করে বিভিন্ন স্কলারদের দিয়ে সেই কাজ করানো। সেই সময় বিশ্বভারতীতে

এলেন রাজীব গান্ধী। রবীন্দ্র ভবনে তাঁর বিশেষ ভিজিট। তিনি কম্পিউটারে কী কাজ হচ্ছে তা দেখার আগ্রহ প্রকাশ করলেন। আমরা সবাই সেখানে হাজির। রাজীব গান্ধীকে কম্পিউটার দিয়ে সব বুঝিয়ে দিচ্ছিলেন ড. নাথ। রাজীব গান্ধী তার চেয়ারের পিছনে দাঁড়িয়ে একটু ঝুঁকে সব দেখছিলেন এবং বেশ সন্তুষ্ট হয়ে ফিরে গেলেন।

এর কিছুদিনের মধ্যেই ড.নাথ বিশ্বভারতী ছেড়ে অন্যত্র স্থায়ী কাজ পেয়ে চলে যাবেন স্থির করলেন। সুপ্রিয়াদি, আমি, প্রকল্পের আরো কয়েকজন ডা. গুহর কাছে গিয়ে সবটা বললাম। ড. গুহ বললেন, বিশ্বভারতী ছেড়ে চলে যাবেন, জীবনে সে কখনো ভাবতে পেরেছিল তার এক গজের মধ্যে রাজীব গান্ধী! আমরা চুপ করে সবাই বেরিয়ে এলাম। তারপর থেকে এই কথাটা নিয়ে আমাদের মধ্যে খুব মজা হত- এক গজের মধ্যে রাজীব গান্ধী।

আমি আর সুপ্রিয়াদি দীর্ঘদিন বিশ্বভারতী নিউজের এডিটর ছিলাম। বিশ্বভারতীতে বেশিরভাগ প্রতিবেদনই ইংরেজিতে থাকত। আমার কাজ ছিল বিভিন্ন ভবনে গিয়ে সেসব সংগ্রহ করে আনা, আর কোনো কোনো বিষয়ে বাংলা লেখা সংগ্রহ। ফলত মূল কাজটা সুপ্রিয়াদিকেই করতে হতো। আশ্চর্য দখল ছিল সুপ্রিয়াদির ইংরেজিতে। অনেকেই তাঁর প্রশংসা করেছেন। রবীন্দ্র ভবন থেকে প্রকাশিত বেশ কিছু গ্রন্থের তিনি অনুবাদক ছিলেন। পাঠভবনের শতবর্ষে যে স্মরণিকা প্রকাশিত হয়েছিল তার মূল বাংলা লেখাটা আমার ছিল কিন্তু সেই লেখার ইংরেজি অনুবাদ করেছিলেন সুপ্রিয়াদি। তাঁর অনুবাদে সেই লেখাই এক স্বতন্ত্র রচনা হয়ে উঠেছিল।

কে.জি. সুব্রামণ্যমের আঁকা সুন্দর প্রচ্ছদ সমেত তাঁর রচিত গ্রন্থ ‘Makers of a Mission 1901-1941’ - রবীন্দ্র ভবন থেকে প্রকাশিত বহু ব্যবহৃত বইয়ের মধ্যে বিশেষ উল্লেখযোগ্য একটি গ্রন্থ। এছাড়াও তাঁর রচিত গ্রন্থের সংখ্যা আরো বেশ কিছু।

Supriyadi

Goutam Bhattacharya

Translation

Two years after joining Patha Bhavana at Visva-Bharati, I became a regular reader at Rabindra Bhavana. In fact, the first day I got hold of a file containing Rabindranath's own letters, my entire body trembled with wonder at the mere touch of his writings. I had never experienced anything like it before. The person who managed everything with a smile at the Rabindra Bhavana library was named Supriyadi.

I was a student at the Comparative Literature Department at Jadavpur University. Supriyadi is also an alumna of the same department, two years our senior. Many of those in charge at Rabindra Bhavana were teachers from Jadavpur University. I remember poet Naresh Guha, the former head of Comparative Literature. As a result, both Supriyadi and I were his students. At that time, the 'Concordance' project had just started at Rabindra Bhavana, which involved preparing an alphabetical selection of words to identify where those words were used in the poet's works. Visva-Bharati and Jadavpur University jointly initiated this project. Both of us were involved in it. Many new people joined the project, including Dr. Nath, who came from Kolkata and knew how to use computers. Here, Bhavatosh Dutta and Dipankar Chattopadhyay became editorial members. At that time, the computer center had just started at Visva-Bharati—Santosankar came from there.

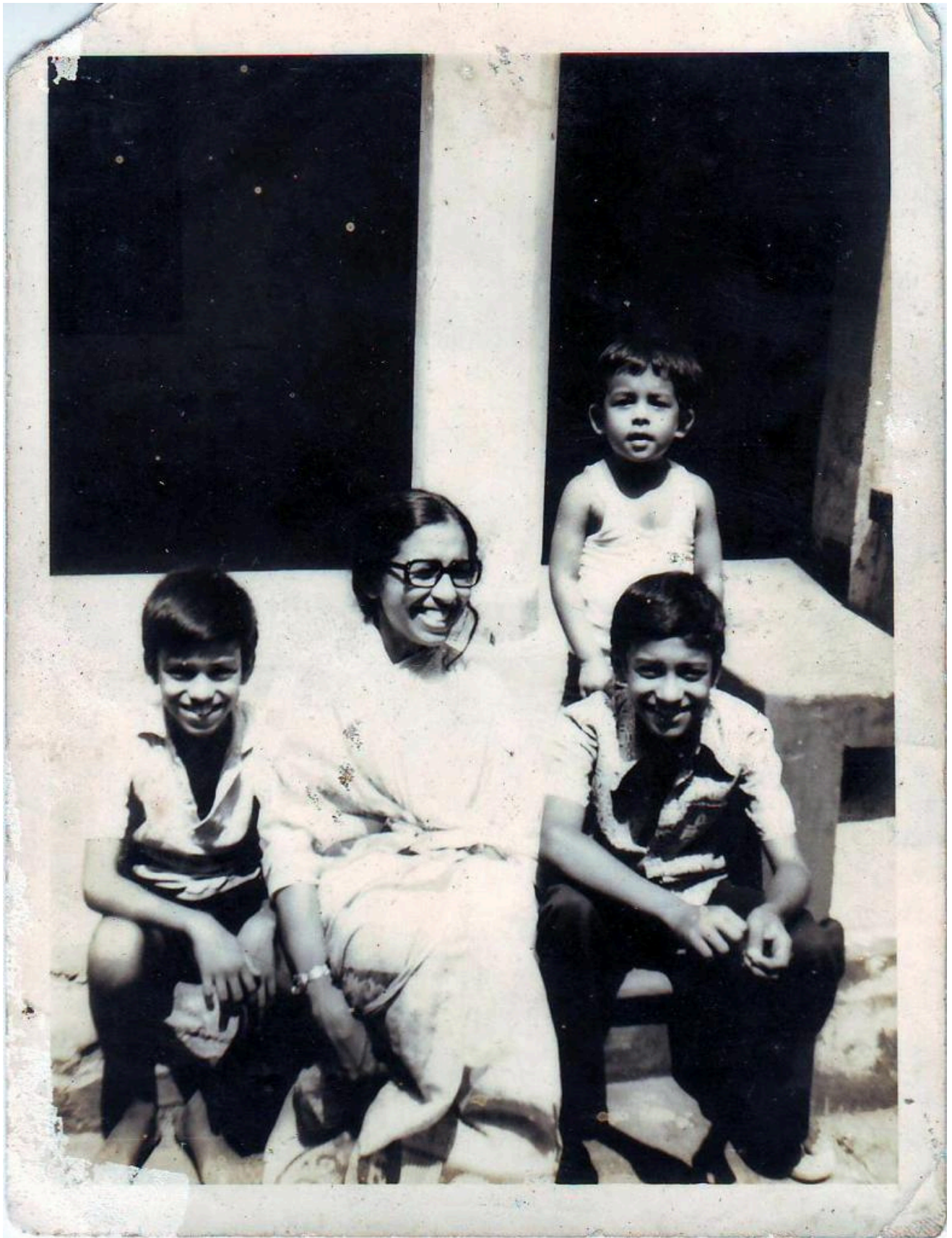
Supriyadi and my job was to follow the editorial policies and get the work done by various scholars.

During this time, Rajiv Gandhi visited Visva-Bharati. He showed particular interest in seeing the work being done on computers at Rabindra Bhavana. We were all present there. Dr. Nath was explaining everything to Rajiv Gandhi on the computer.

Rajiv Gandhi stood behind his chair, leaning slightly, observing everything, and left quite satisfied. Shortly afterward, Dr. Nath decided to leave Visva-Bharati for a permanent job elsewhere. Supriyadi, I, and a few others from the project went to Dr. Guha to tell him everything. Dr. Guha said he could never have imagined Rajiv Gandhi within a yard of him! We all quietly left. After that, this became a bit of an inside joke among us—within a yard of Rajiv Gandhi.

Supriyadi and I were long-time editors of Visva-Bharati News. Most of the reports at Visva-Bharati were in English. My job was to collect these from various departments and occasionally gather Bengali writings on certain topics. Consequently, Supriyadi had to do the main work. Supriyadi had an astonishing command of English. Many praised her for it. She was the translator of several books published from Rabindra Bhavana. On the centenary of Patha Bhavana, a commemorative volume was published. I wrote the original Bengali piece, but the English translation was done by Supriyadi. Her translation turned it into a distinct composition.

With a beautiful cover designed by K.G. Subramanyam, her book ‘Makers of a Mission 1901-1941’ is one of the most notable and widely used books published from Rabindra Bhavana. Besides this, she authored several other books.



With her three sons.

Maa

Sourajit Roy

My mother used to give lessons in various ways, as I remember. Some I followed, and some I did not. In fact, more often than not, I learnt a lot, simply by observing her. She remained calm and steady, continuing to do what was necessary irrespective of the circumstance.

When my brothers and I were in university, each one of us had a different lunch time. I remember Maa, coming home at 1:30PM every day and asking us if we were ready for lunch. She would put three plates on the table, and a fourth one for herself and eat alone.

I guess what I'm trying to say is - she was the anchor. The anchor to our crazy family, the balance to our disorganised lifestyle. If it hadn't been for her, our bohemian family would have lost its ground and been washed away.

Many such stories flood my mind, which becomes almost impossible to articulate. But I would like to share one last lesson that I learnt from her.

When my daughter was fourteen, Maa started reading the Mahabharata to her. It was written by a scholar from Pondicherry.

This fat book of over 600 pages was written from two perspectives—that of Arjun and Ashwatthama. It was also a time where I was going through a rough patch. I barely had the focus and patience required to read books.

As Maa narrated the book, I would overhear from my study table and for some reason the character of Ashwatthama struck me: his character, charisma, vengeance, and insanity. I immediately visualised a bearded man, dressed in linen, in an almost ascetic-like appearance. He was strong and polite, and perhaps the only Nirvan person in the book. A character with a noble heart and a destiny intertwined with his insanity, for reasons we still don't fully understand.

The book ends, she leaves for Gurgaon and covid strikes our lives like a thunder we weren't expecting. During lockdown, she expressed her desire to come to Kolkata and Santiniketan, but her deteriorating health did not allow that. As I began missing her, I asked her to read Ashwatthama's portions from the book over call. We had extensive discussions about his character and the book.

Once covid was under control, I visited Delhi a couple of times to meet her at my brother's place. I remember this one time towards the end I was in the metro and realised that Gurgaon, also known as Gurugram was the place where Ashwatthama grew up and spent his lifetime.

Acknowledgements

We offer our sincere gratitude to all who have contributed to this book in memory of Supriya Roy, our Thamma. Your time, your words, your photographs, and your heartfelt memories have together created a lasting tribute to her life and the love she inspired. Each shared story, image, and reflection has added depth and warmth to this remembrance.

This book is intended to be a living archive. We will continue to update it with more memories, tributes, essays, and photographs as they are shared with us. In doing so, we hope to preserve not only the memory of Thamma, but also the spirit of the bonds she formed and the lives she touched.

To everyone who has taken part in this work, we extend our deepest thanks.



Celebrating
SUPRIYA ROY