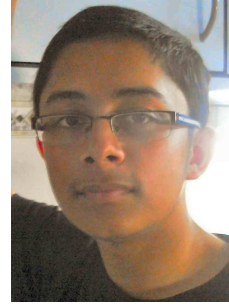


A Narrative Sketch of My Grandpa

- Abhishek Ghosh



A few days back, my grand-father (I call him “Dadu”) and I were talking about how things were when the sky was bluer and the clouds more free.

My grandfather comes from a humble family in Comilla - a hamlet in Bangladesh. He spent a childhood mostly in poverty and relative isolation from the power-play of the British Raj. His father managed to send him to a small school where the only language taught was Urdu. In his leisure time, which seemed to me to be significantly long for a boy of his age, he loved to fly kites and play football (soccer in North America). He shares his amusing experiences at the village football matches where the players would sweat it out for a medal made of cellophane!

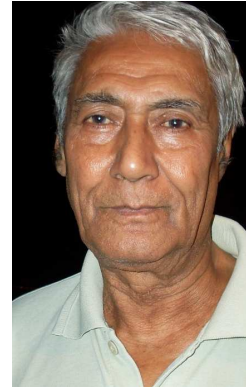
Every year, the village was transformed into little islets as the flood rushed in during the rainy season. The only way out was to make one's way in! The children would conveniently undress, bundle their clothes to carry on their heads and wade across to the other side. But the adolescents wouldn't dare do it and were in a fix as to how to cross over to the other side!

As the years passed by, my grandfather had to face the 'Matriculation Exam', one of the dreaded hurdles to cross. What would have been a milestone for a well-educated, affluent boy, was a nightmare for an inadequately prepared student. Grandpa, unfortunately, did not fare very well. All the aspirations of his hopeful father who expected him to outshine the others were dashed. My grandpa started to acutely smart under the reprimands of his father. "It was a very complex feeling," my grandpa said with a lump in his throat. He had immense respect for the dreams of a poor father, but wasn't he expecting too much from a boy who hadn't even been to a decent school? However, after years of being an average student, he was finally able to get admission into the most prestigious Bengal Engineering College in Kolkata (previously known as Calcutta).

One day, he was asked to show an American gentleman around the city of Kolkata. Although my grandpa was not feeling too well at the time, he refused to turn the visitor away and did his best. He even made a cutout of Kolkata and gifted it to the gentleman, who was much impressed. It was grandpa's own efforts and this visitor's gratitude that helped grandpa win a scholarship to a university in America. Luck seemed to finally smile upon him.

In the U.S.A, he was absolutely taken aback by the sophisticated lifestyle. He had never seen such engineering marvels as he had encountered in the States. Gradually, he became accustomed to the way of life there, and became an architect, helping design cities.

Thus, 'Dadu' concluded his story and promised to share more with me in times to come. He always tells me that it is amazing for him to see how I connect to the world by laboriously typing on a computer in a closed, locked up room. The sun streamed into the room and I was left wondering how a simple village-boy managed to rise up in life and live a decently comfortable life. The simple charm of village life, with all its happy times, dark moments and funny instances, will always stay with me.



My "Dadu":
Photographer Abhishek
Ghosh