

RISING STARS

Gopi Gain Bagha Bain

A Fairytale Adored Even by Adults

by Trisna

GOPINATH, a simple, kind hearted boy, from Amloki, is very fond of music. He imagines himself to be a good singer and in spite of his father's warning he asks for a Tanpura from one of Amloki's renowned musicians. For this instrument, he pressed the singer's feet, cleaned his home of rats, ran small errands for him, and finally when he got his dream Tanpura the village men wanted to hear him sing. And thus began Gopi tales. He was a poor singer, had no basic idea of Sa. Re. Ga. Ma. Knowing this the men made fun of him. They gave Gopi the impression that the king would love his raghs, instead the king threw him out of the kingdom on a donkey. Sad, beaten Gopi heads for the jungle where he meets Bagha, also thrown out of his village Bortoki, for similar reasons.

Thus begins the famous story of 'Gopi Gain Bagha Bain', one of Satyajit Ray's remarkable creation.

Films, which had been made by Satyajit Ray, were, without doubt, magnificent but they were not the kind which children would enjoy. However, 'Gopi Gain Bagha Bain' is an exception, as even today, almost thirty years after its making, kids as well as adults find it entertaining. In Calcutta cinema halls, this movie went on for 100 weeks continuously and till now no other movie was commercially more successful than this... not even 'Sholay' or 'Jurassic Park'!

The kingdom of Halla, shown in the movie, is only a picture of the state of India in the years 1965 and 1966. The hunger, the torments the injustice, all combined in one yet it was an entertaining plot. In Halla, even during famine, the farmers were forced to pay their revenues. As a result of this, all the people suffered a great deal: strikes, protests, deaths all this inspired Satyajit Ray, to make this unique movie, on the hunger, blended with laughter.

This movie, based on real-life incidents, has a fairy tale plot. When Gopi and Bagha lost their self esteem and faith in themselves, when they had no place to go, they met the 'King of Ghost' on the jungle who gave them three boons. They could eat anything and visit any place just by clapping each other's hands and wearing special shoes and they could sing and play the drum like they have always wanted to. With these powers Gopi and Bagha had no problems and they were very happy. Now they began their journey to different kingdoms, in search of fun and adventure but instead they became involved in their state affairs as well.

Halla a kingdom of barren and frightening landscape has

an evil minister who has an evil magician friend 'Borfi'. But the king of Halla is a timid, child-like king, who makes motifs out of paper and like children waits for choot! a break. This king is drugged by the evil minister and Borfi, the

But when they come to Halla they saw that the farmers were in poor condition and there were no food and there was famine and of course taxes were collected from these poor farmers by force. Moreover the minister's evil

but they were only normal Rajasthan 'nagras' on which coloured leather pieces had been stuck. But they surely did not look so ordinary did they? Then Borfi's unforgettable hat — who would believe that it took nothing more than a piece of cloth and two ping-pong balls? All simple items were represented with added glamour and attraction. No doubt the direction and plan of this film was excellent.

'Gopi Gain Bagha Bain' can be called a musical film in which the ghost sings, processions were carried out through singing, soldiers advanced towards struggle singing and even the king sings songs — the movie was built on a musical carpet. It is difficult to imagine Gopi and Bagha without their musical instruments. Music was their power and it was with the help of it that they had succeeded in the end.



Borfi, the evil magician of Halla.

Courtesy—Shananda

minister's right hand. They make the king a blood hungry, war crazy man. King of Halla declares war on King of Shundi, who is his brother. The King of Shundi who is kind and loves music, met Gopi and Bagha in his court, so mesmerised was he with their songs that they became his close friends. He told them about the war which he feared to lose. Gopi and Bagha assured him that they would do anything to stop this war. The king through touched by their gesture, decided to give his daughter's hand in marriage to one of them, if they could stop the war.

magic with Borfi's help is on the king and the soldiers. Hungry soldiers hypnotised by Borfi regain their lost strength to fight again. Gopi and Bagha with their magical power and talents helped the situation in both the kingdoms. And finally each wins a princess as their bride. Comical and yet serious, the plot of this film depicted famine and injustice.

Not only did Ray design the three kingdoms, he also designed the dresses, the set's floor plan, the motifs on the windows and on top of the doors. Take for instance, Gopi and Bagha's amazing shoes! They looked so very unusual



The King of Ghost, summoning Gopi and Bagha.

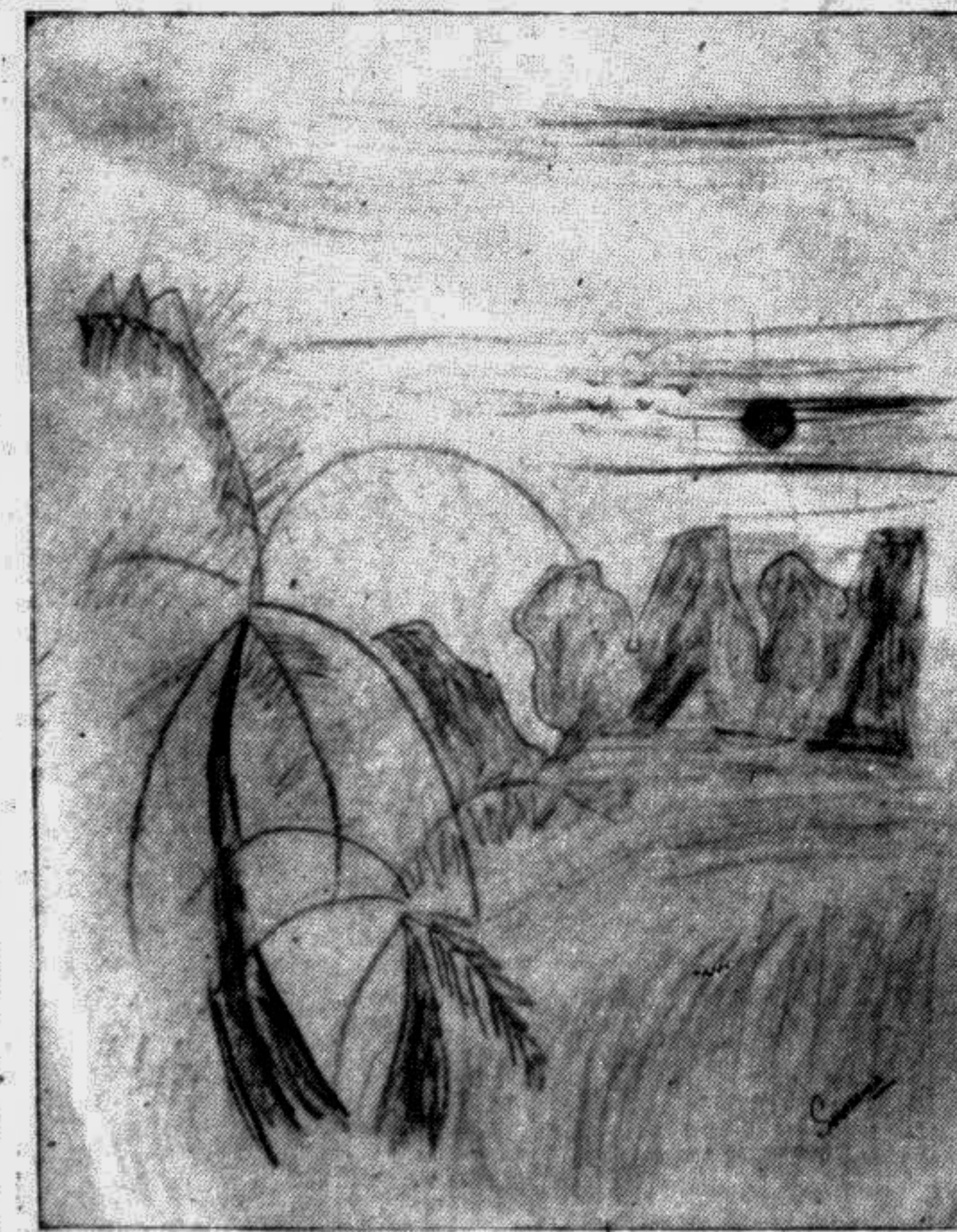
Courtesy—Shananda

Head Over Heels

by Farhana Yusuf

ones that day. As for Sasha, she was more than lucky. It is a miracle that she is alive the weather being very very cold,

she had her thick gloves on and when she fell, she grabbed the elevator cable and slid down. She landed hard but



It all started when Sasha got hungry. The nineteen year old student was on her way to her brother's sixth floor office hoping to treat him to a nice meal. "He's turned out to be a workaholic," she muttered to herself as she entered the office building. "He eats, sleeps and even breathes work. He needs a break and I'm just the one who can give it." Saying this she lifted the receiver to put a call to him to let him know that she's waiting downstairs but on second thoughts decided to go personally and surprise him.

She usually prefers the stairs because it's a good exercise but to save time then, she summoned the elevator. That seemed to be the turning point of her life. When the elevator door opened, she stepped in to pull the string on the light bulb. And fell. There was no elevator just a black void.

Over at City Hospital, the call came in: 'a young lady falls down elevator shaft.' The on-duty intern had a very hectic day and desperately needed a break. So, he begged a colleague, Greg Gerrard, 29 to take that ambulance run. Tall and handsome with dark hair and dark eyes, Greg did not find the task intimidating. Mentally he prepared himself to see the pathetic sight of a girl lying and distractedly mumbled, "Where was she looking when stepped into that elevator?"

But you never know when fortune smiles on you and they both happened to be the lucky

not as hard as in a free fall.

It was Greg Gerrard who really fell. Head over heels. When he got there, "She was sitting on those stairs," he recalls. "Her hair was dishevelled, her hands were greasy and burned. But all I could see were her lovely face and those bright blue eyes." (He also noticed no wedding ring.)

Before releasing her, he noted her address. And two days later, being romantically unattached despite his mother's best efforts, he phoned to inquire if he might call on her. And she said the most amazing thing, "yes, why not?"

They had a most wonderful relationship — long walks and shared gazes, inexpensive dinners and light conversations. One day he blurted out, "How about marrying me?" "What," she replied, somewhat taken a back.

One thing led to another and here they are 35 years later sitting in their living room, showing off photos of their sons, daughters and grandchildren and reminiscing.

Sasha never forgot about the meal she owed to her brother and after their wedding. She treated him to a big meal.

She recently re-read the stacks of letters they sent across the oceans when Greg often left for different countries on assignments. "He said he missed me very much."

"I still do when we're apart," he says, taking her hand and giving it an affectionate squeeze. "And I still love that girl I met on those stairs."

Professor Shonku and the Ghost

by Satyajit Ray

Translated by Adeb Z Mahmud

G10th April HOSTS: planchet, telepathy, clairvoyance — all of these, to my belief, will one day be explained by science. From many of my friends, I have often heard their own personal experiences of the supernatural; so I've never been able to take the matter lightly.

I myself have never had any such experience. I've been hypnotized by a Chinese magician, fought with an invisible rival but so far I've never had the fortune (or misfortune) of encountering a dead person.

It was probably because of this lack of experience that my urge to actually meet a ghost was getting stronger and I was thinking of a scientific way to arrange such a meeting.

Of course, in this case, chemical reactions or machines could not be used — what was needed here was concentration. Not any ordinary spirit would do. That's why I had to be completely absorbed in meditation. I wanted to bring the spirits of certain dead people into my room.

scription of the machine in my notebook so I'm not writing about that in the diary. Let me just say that it consists of a metal helmet and two wires leading out of the helmet. The wires are connected to two copper bars dipped in a special solution made by me. The main ingredient of the solution is the juice taken from the roots of some trees growing near a cremation ground where they get plenty of smoke.

When this solution is heated, it emits a green fume and swirls into smoke which takes the size of an average man. The ghost is supposed to appear in this smoke.

I tested the device for the first time this morning. I won't say that I was successful cent per cent and the reason I wasn't was because of my lack of concentration. Just before I came into my laboratory, I saw my cat, Newton, kill a cockroach with one blow of its paw. I should have guessed what was going to happen — after I slipped on the helmet, all I could think about was the lifeless body of that dead cockroach.

That's probably why, after five minutes, I clearly saw a giant cockroach in the green smoke waving its antennae and staring straight at me. The ghost of the cockroach stayed for about a minute and then it disappeared. It was no use trying any more today.

I'll have to try tomorrow morning again. Today I'll do some mental exercise so that I can concentrate properly tomorrow.

11th April Unbelievable.

For three and a half minutes today, I talked with my deceased friend British scientist Archibald Ackroyd. Ackroyd had been killed in Norway some years ago. Today the same Ackroyd appeared in my swirling green mist.

After thinking about Ackroyd for about five minutes, the first thing to appear in the smoke was a human skeleton whose right hand was extended towards me. Then suddenly, I saw a pair of gold rimmed spectacles on its eyes. At once I recognised Ackroyd's bifocal glasses. After the glasses appeared Ackroyd's favourite Briar pipe between the teeth. Then the chained pocket watch just below the ribs — this watch was also known to me. I realised that the characteristics by which I remembered Ackroyd most were becoming visible first.

Then all of a sudden, the skeleton spoke out —

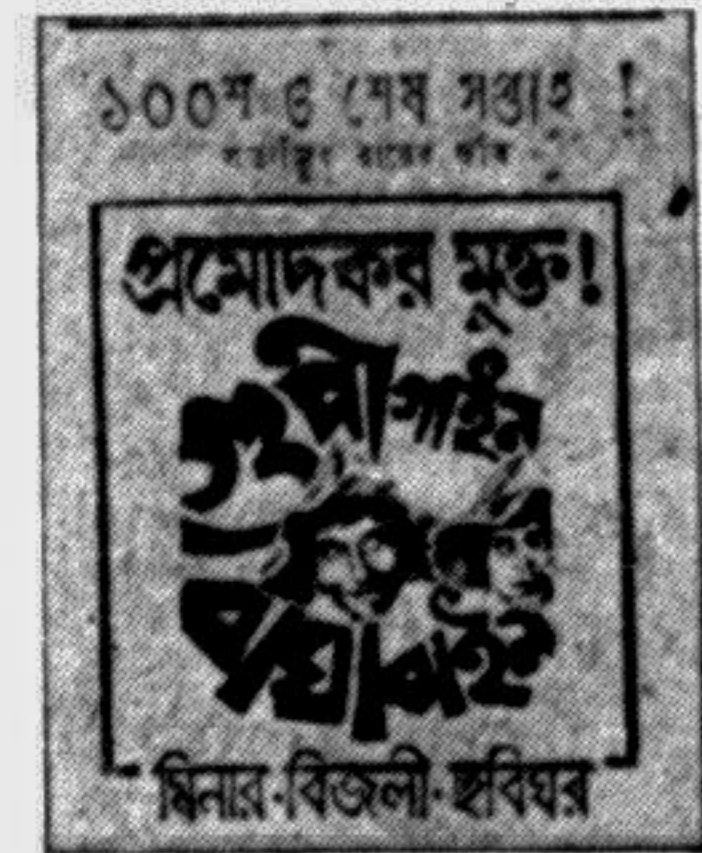
"Hello, Shonku!"

I recognised Ackroyd's voice at once. And along with the voice, the complete replica of Archibald Ackroyd, clad in his tweed suit, began to form inside the smoke. There was that same childish smile on his lips, the bunch of greying hair on his forehead. He was wear-

ing a mackintosh with a muffler around his neck and gloves on his hands.

He seemed so real that I had nearly reached out my hand to shake his but I got hold of myself at the last moment. Shaking hands would not be possible — what I was seeing was not Ackroyd's solid body; it was just a kind of hologram floating in the air. But the voice of this hologram was astonishingly clear. Before I could say anything, Ackroyd started to talk in his heavy, soothing voice. I've been observing your work. I notice everything you do. You have made your nation proud, Shonku.

My throat was parched in excitement. What do you think



Courtesy—Shananda

about my Neospectroscope? I managed to ask.

You've been able to see me. You don't need my comments, Ackroyd smiled from the green mist. You yourself know that you've been successful. Here, we are beyond comments. In our world, there is no need for mental reactions like your's. Happiness, sorrow, thoughts — none of these have any meaning here.

I was completely mesmerised by Ackroyd's spirit and thinking what to do next when suddenly, with a strange smile, Ackroyd disappeared like a bubble. Then I saw the swirling smoke advancing towards me and I knew that I was losing consciousness.

When I came to, I found my servant, Prohlad, sprinkling water on my face.

You're sitting in this heat with that iron cap on your head? And at your age too...

I took off the helmet. I was feeling quite worn out. It was the effect of too much concentration. But Ackroyd's spirit was here today in my laboratory and he had spoken to me, there was no mistake about that. My research and work had been at least partially successful. My Neospectroscope is really a magnificent invention, even if I say so myself.

I could not allow myself to be discouraged by a little languor — I told myself, I will make another attempt tomorrow. I want to get to know some historical characters and talk with them.

12th April

I was hoping to have a chat with Shiraj-ud-Doula today but

my neighbour, Abinash Chatterjee, ruined all my plans.

I had just finished my morning coffee when he showed up without any warning. I have serious doubts whether anyone as unscientific as Mr Abinash exists in this world. He should have been born in the ice age. He seems awkward in the twentieth century. Apathy, at my success and contempt, at my failures seem to be the only things I ever received from him.

He came into my living room and sat down on the sofa with a thud. What were you doing around the riverside?

Around the riverside? Of course sometimes, during my morning walks, I like to visit the place but I haven't been there for the last twenty days. In fact, I haven't been out of my house.

Which day are you referring to? I asked him.

Today, my man, today. Less than an hour ago. I tried to call you but you didn't seem to pay any notice.

How can that be? I haven't been out of my house.

Mr Abinash burst out laughing.

Have you had some kind of mental derangement? Why are you denying that you went out? You'll sound more suspicious if you do that. Your five feet two inches height, your bald head, your beard... who else in Girdih has those features?

I could not control my surprise or anger. Who did he think he was? Calling me a liar. Me — Trilokeshor Shonku? It's true that I've sometimes withheld information about my experiments from some over-eager scientists but why would I want to hide such a trifling matter, as going out for a walk, from an insignificant man like Mr Abinash?

I wasn't the only one, Mr Abinash went on. Ramlochan Banerjee also saw you — not by the river; in the orchard behind Mr judge's house. That was after I saw you. He just told me. You can go and ask him if you like.

I remained silent. The man was not only lying himself but was also accusing another senior gentleman of lying. I could not figure out the reason behind this hoax.

Prohlad brought coffee for Mr Abinash and he suddenly asked Prohlad, 'Say Pellad, was your master home all the day or did he go out?'

He was working late last night in his laboratory and you think he would go out again so early this morning again. He was home all right.

Here, I should make something quite clear. After tomorrow morning I never entered my laboratory. I am never in my lab unless I have work there. Yesterday my job was to practice concentration and that's exactly what I did — in my bedroom. I had my dinner and went to bed by nine and I got up today, as usual, at five am. Yet Prohlad would swear that I had been working in my laboratory.

To be continued

THE MISSING MACHINE

By Sharier



DR PILLI?

YES? IS THAT YOU, AVIK? YOU GOT THE LETTER? THE CONFERENCE BEGINS MONDAY. THIS YEAR WE HAVE GOT A SURPRISE COMING FROM OUR NATIONAL PROFESSOR.

...YES, DR GENJAM, THE 'ER-BALD ONE WILL PRESENT A REVOLUTIONARY INNOVATION... HEH, HEH... YES, A HAIR RAISING ONE!

COME IN KNOCK

DR JAMRUL, A SCIENTIST, APPEARS

I SAY, WHERE IS THE WISE GUY?

OHO, HERE IS MY OPPORTUNIST FRIEND, OK BY JAMRUL!

To be continued