

‘চর্চা’ সম্পাদক শ্রী সুশান্ত বিশ্বাসের সাথে কিছু কথোপকথন



Please tell us something about you, your work and expertise.

I introduce myself as a follower of *Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa Dev*, and an initiated disciple of *Swami Ranganathananda Ji Maharaj*, a former President of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur Math, West Bengal.

English literature, Public Relations and Advertising were the fields of study in my academic pursuits. I also find interest in Bengali and Hindi literature. Tagore’s *Geetobitan* is my favourite book. I got some training in *Rabindrasangeet* and Indian classical music.

I started my professional career in a reputed advertising agency of *Kolkata*; at the same time, I was contracted to read the daily news for *Doordarshan Kendra, Kolkata* for nine years. From then on, I also started making documentary films on various subjects and acted in a few tele-films under the direction of some well-known directors. Acting in group theatres was my passion, and I visited Bangladesh along with a cultural delegation. Later on, I served a private television channel as the News Co-coordinator for three years. Presently I’m an independent professional Translator, Writer and Documentary film-maker. I think now I should stop beating my own drum, since a Jack of so many trades – such as I – would always have a never-ending stream of information to provide.



Why CHARCHA?

For a long time, I felt that though Bengali literature is a very rich one but it still lacks good translation-based literary works. Except for a good number of translations from English and French literature, there have been no sustained efforts towards rendering good writings of different Indian languages and dialects into Bengali. I am of the opinion that rendering or translation is the only means by which we can associate with the literatures of various cultures of the Indian sub-continent and the rest of the world. Cinema has its own cinematic language, but to know about the cultural traditions, the society, and the people of any state or country we have to study its literature. And it is only translation that can bring the tunes of different languages and dialects to our own literature, and enrich it day by day. So I thought of CHARCHA, where literature and language loving people will do *charcha* (practice) with various languages and enrich the Bengali literature.

What makes CHARCHA unique?

CHARCHA is the Bengali webzine pioneer of its kind. It “exclusively deals with the rendering of different Indian and foreign languages and dialects to get associated with various cultures of the World...” I think that this catch phrase of CHARCHA speaks about its uniqueness. Although there are very good webzines in Bengali, the exclusive dealing with Bengali renderings has made CHARCHA the pioneer of its kind. As you have seen, besides the rendering of foreign languages like English, French, Germany, CHARCHA has also published the renderings of Nepali, the language of a neighbouring country, as well as Hindi, Oriya, Punjabi, Urdu, and even Alchiki, the dialect of the tribal people, *Santhalis*.

Last but not the least, I should mention that in the *Suchipatro* (contents) page of CHARCHA we regularly carry a message on social awareness. We consider that while dealing with language, literature and culture, it is our moral duty to make our readers aware about the social problems, and appeal to them to take part in social activities.

How often do you publish CHARCHA?

We have planned to publish online four issues of CHARCHA per year at a regular interval of three months between issues. CHARCHA was launched in April 2008, the second issue has been put up online in July 2008 and there will be two more issues in October 2008 and January 2009 for the first year.

Two more things that I want to add in this context are that the works published in CHARCHA are put online in the Portable Document Format (PDF) for clarity and also to give the readers direct access to the articles which they may save. Secondly, we strictly follow the spelling guidelines as prescribed by the *Paschimanga Bangla Academy*.

Who writes in CHARCHA?

In short, whoever loves CHARCHA. People from different professional fields, such as teachers, government officials, banking officials, research scientists, students, engineers, editors of webzines and print magazines like *Sonajhuri* and *Prayas*, and lastly, professional translators like me... All are contributing their love’s labour... And we hope to have the literary contributions of our “Editor Friends” and their associates from various well-known webzines including *Palki*, *Vinnomat*, *Kaurab*, *Natun Kobita*, *Karnika* and so on, and also from serious people of different fields. CHARCHA believes in Tagore’s maxim, “*Dibe aar Nibe, Milaabe, Milibe, Jaabe Na Phire...*” (Thou shall give and take, mix and commingle, and not return).

How difficult is it to collect translated articles from another language?

I had my doubts, indeed, about getting Bengali renderings of literary works from other languages. The Bengalis in general, with their rich heritage of Tagore and Ray, are born

poets and film-directors... They don't even require any practice or training in those creative arts... Thank God that they have spared Swami Vivekananda at least! Fortunately enough, I have got a good number of contributors in CHARCHA who are serious about their studies and writings. We initially launched CHARCHA with the literary contributions of eight contributors, and the second issue is enriched with the literary and artistic contributions of twelve selected contributors. Generally, in CHARCHA we do not reject any submitted work, but in order to maintain the standard of the webzine, sometimes we have to refuse some of those which are not at all up to the mark.

I still receive mails with attachments of 'creative' Bengali poems, complaining about why we don't publish original works, since 'the art of rendering has no creativity'. I only feel pity for those so-called upstart Bengali poets, who take refuge in the name of free verse with their awful spellings and inappropriate use of words and who bother the least to study any kind of good literature.

Why did you choose online publication instead of printed media?

First, to reach the Bengali loving readers all over the world; and secondly, to get out of the clutch of the Bengali printers. And I also believe that, like audio-visual media, a webzine has more power than a print magazine in the field of communications. CHARCHA is currently online at www.charchaonubad.org for reading.

To honour the demand of our respected readers, CHARCHA has been made online with a new look at a new web-link in its own name (as above) in the middle of October 2008. For the convenience of offline reading and for keeping each issue of CHARCHA in a personal collection, the entire issue is now available in a single PDF. The reader will get easy access to any issue of the webzine from the homepage directly with a single click.

What is the goal for CHARCHA in future?

CHARCHA plans to go beyond the boundary of a literary webzine. It welcomes Bengali renderings of articles on different subjects, like science, economics, sociology, mathematics *et cetera*, including their innumerable streams.

CHARCHA hopes to conduct various seminars on Translation through video-conferences in order to have interactions with the people all over the world.

CHARCHA dreams that a group of translation-based litterateurs and a group of serious readers will come out of this endeavour, which will definitely enrich the Bengali language and literature.

Who are your supporting team members for CHARCHA Magazine?

Mrs. Jharna Biswas is the Associate Editor of CHARCHA. Once a teacher, and a regular reader and writer of webzines, Mrs. Biswas is now pursuing an Adobe web 2.0 application course. She manages the production jobs for the webzine.

Our site is designed and maintained by Mr. Soumya Shankar Ghosal, a Business Administration Professional working closely with Information Technology and Business. Mrs. Ivy Chatterjee, a banking official and well-known writer of webzines, Mrs. Moushumi Biswas, an examiner of the Central Board of Secondary Education and a teacher of Hindi literature, and two enthusiastic young students, Mr. Soham Sarkar and Mr. Swayam Sarkar, support us in various ways without any direct involvement in the editorial jobs.

The regular and strong emotional supports from Mr. Ankan Basu, geologist and Editor, *Palki*, Dr. Kausik Datta, Infectious Disease researcher at the Johns Hopkins University, and Mr. Rahul Guha, Editor, *Vinnobasar*, enrich the endeavour of CHARCHA.

What is your idea about the number of CHARCHA readers?

I think, at present our readership is around five thousand all over the world.

I am overwhelmed to know that not only the editors of some leading Bengali Webzines have appreciated our efforts, but *Palki* of CalcuttaGlobalChat.net fame has honoured us as their 'First Affiliated Magazine' and *Vinnobasar* of *Vinnomat* fame has made us their partner of '*Onubaad Charcha*' (the rendering practice); this is not only unprecedented, but historical too, in the world of webzines. Again, *Sonajhuri* and *Natun Kobita* both bear our link in their webzines as 'the companions'. These friendly gestures on the part of these reputed webzines are undoubtedly increasing our readership day by day.