

Those beautiful childhood days



Sadhona Debi Chatterji with Aadhira, one of her great-grandchildren

Sadhona Debi Chatterji was born in October 1931 in Calcutta, to Hari Prasad and Subarna Bannerjee. She did her matriculation, and got married to Birendra Kumar Chatterji in June 1948. She has a son and a daughter. Her husband, like her father, was in the Imperial Bank of India, which later became the State Bank of India. Her husband retired as Chairman UCO Bank in 1984, and passed away in 1989.

She has had a tremendous interest in national and world affairs, with her own opinions on many issues. She is an avid reader. She has been a popular and well-loved person among the family and a very large circle of friends. Even at the age of 85 and ailing, she gets phone calls from all over the world.

These days, when I sit alone, all by myself, I often think of my childhood.

What a beautiful childhood I had. So happy, so full of love, fun and so peaceful.



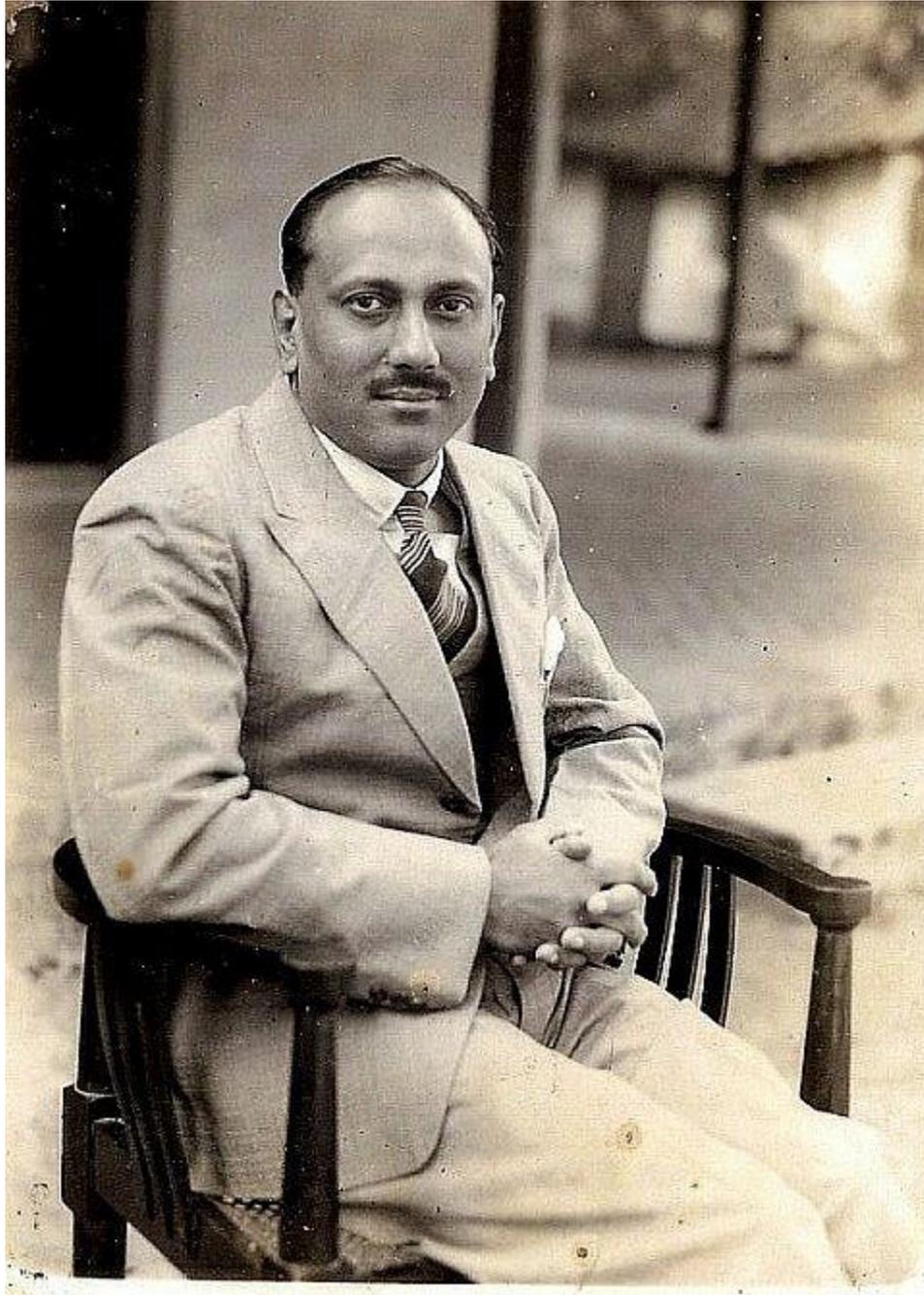
Sadhona. Late 1930s

Now that my *bhaiya*, my brother, and my best childhood friend has gone, I do not know with whom to share my memories. Jhunu (my youngest sister) was born much later, she was not there in my early childhood, and Bunu and Chotu (my other sisters) were both too young to remember.



L to R: Bunu (Sumana), Sadhona, *bhaiya* (Ashish Bannerjee) and Chotu (Suparna). Early 1940s.

The other days, when Shekhar (my son-in-law) and Rina (my daughter) were watching a tennis match on TV, I remembered my Babun, my beloved father.



Hari Prasad Bannerjee (Sadhona's father) called Babun. Early 1940s.

In the 1940s, when we were in Lyallpur (now Faisalabad), he used to play tennis regularly. However busy he might be, every day at four o'clock, after he had his cup of tea at the bank (which Madan Singh, our cook-cum-bearer used to take to the bank), he used to drive down to the club to play tennis. I remember this very well, because quite often I used to walk down to the bank with Madan Singh with Babun's tea and go to the club with him to watch him play. After his game, Babun used to drop me at home, and go back to his office again.

Much later, when we were in Patna, we had a tennis court in our house's compound.

Almost every evening, some of Babun's friends, (such as the district collector, who used to live next door, Justice Sinha and few others) used to drop in to play tennis. I remember, after the game, Ma used to serve tea on the lawn, with her homemade cake and sometimes either hot samosas or chicken sandwiches, which were all made at home by the very efficient Muslim bearer we had. Those were the days.

One more thing I remember about my Babun.

He was a good bridge player, and used to like playing it on weekends. He had taught my mother to play it. I remember those Sunday afternoons, when the card table was brought into the drawing room, one of those square tables with green tops, and my parents with some of their friends used to play bridge.

Those days were so different from now, that at times it makes me think if it was really a part of my life.

Even in 1947, just before I got married, when we were in Delhi, Babun used to go to Chelmsford Club regularly to play tennis. He was a member of that club.

After that, gradually his health broke down. He had a heart problem and high blood pressure. He stopped playing tennis on doctor's advice. But as long as it was physically possible, he used to drive his Chevrolet to South Club in Calcutta to watch tennis.

Babun, the most wonderful man and the best father. May his soul rest in peace.

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