

SHINING DIVAS OF 2020



Literoma Biography Panorama
Volume I



Shining Divas of 2020
Biography Panorama: Vol I



Copyright © Literoma Inc. 2020
All Rights Reserved by Respective Personnas.

ISBN: 978-93-90586-38-7

MRP: Rs. 399/-

Edited By: Swapna Peri

DISCLAIMER

“Shining Divas of 2020” is a collection of seven autobiographies (written in 3rd person), either self-written by the respective persona or by a narrator approved by the persona to write the biography on her behalf. Names, characters, personal experiences, life stories, academic credentials, relationships, job mentions, employment details, businesses, places, events and/or incidents mentioned in the book are all real and genuine to the best of respective persona’s knowledge.

The thoughts, poems, quotations, choice of continuous words, views, theories, postulates and/or recommendations expressed in this autobiography are entirely copyrighted by the respective persona. Best efforts have been made to avoid any act of Intellectual Property violation, infringement or plagiarism. However, if any intentional or unintentional violations of other’s Intellectual Properties are observed, the respective persona of the biography will solely be responsible for the consequences arising out of the violation.

The Literoma team/ Chief mentor/ narrator/ editor/ compiler/ proofreader/ cover & interior illustrator/ branding & promotion partners/ distributor/ printer/ publisher/ are not to be held responsible for any controversies arising out of the publication of her biography in this book.

First Published By Evincepub Publishing 2020

**SHINING
DIVAS
OF 2020**

Literoma Biography Panorama
Volume I

Cover Design by LITEROMA

Powered By

Literoma Inc.

*Your one stop solution for Author Branding, Book Publishing,
Creative Excellence, Book & Art Promotions.*

604, Loharuka Greens,
VIP Road, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue
Kolkata – 700052

Email: literoma.publishingservices@gmail.com

Blog: literomagroup.blogspot.com

Facebook: www.facebook.com/literomagroup

Book Store: <https://literoma.stores.instamojo.com/>

Ph: +91 93309 19306



ALAKANANDA PRAMANIK

The Journey: Memoir Of An Emerged Woman





CHAPTER 1

A Quote By Alakananda Pramanik That Describes Her

"I loved & lived, fell & died. When I rose, I stood taller & stronger."

Alakananda Pramanik is a bestselling author of 'Soul Stirrer', an anthology of stories based on real-life incidents that have received critical acclaim. One of the stories, 'Rupali' from her book has been made into a short film and is available on YouTube.

Alakananda has also co-authored books by Soulitaire, including 'Quoting Scribblers – An anthology of quotes', 'Harmonious Symphonies – An anthology of English poems', 'Kavyaroo – An anthology of Hindi poems', 'NANO – An anthology of micro tales' and Starwords India's 'Written on the Stars – An anthology of short stories'. She has been featured in Literoma's 'Audio Story & Poetry Book'. Her short stories have also been published in 'Calcutta 64 Stories'.

She has acted in a couple of short films, Bengali short film 'Sujog – The Opportunity' and Hindi short film 'Shakti – The Strength Within'.

In 2020, Alakananda was honoured with the 'AUTHOR ACHIEVER' Award in the Literoma Achiever Award 2020.

Born in a simple and well-educated family in Nagpur, Maharashtra, Alakananda grew up in a very family-oriented environment. Her Father, Mr Dwijendra Lal Halder, a voracious reader, taught Mechanical Engineering at an Engineering college. Her Mother, Mrs Rekha Halder, was a homemaker, who was very fashionable, talented, energetic and a multitasker. Alakananda has an older sister, Mrs Silky Adhikary residing in Kolkata and a younger sister, Mrs Piu Nath, living in Pune.

After graduation, Alakananda got married to Robin Andrew Pramanik, who was working in Tata Steel Ltd. They had a

daughter, Priyanka and son, Varun, who is now settled in the US. Always yearning to gain knowledge, Alakananda pursued an education in diverse fields. She did International Airlines Management and HR Management from prestigious Mumbai based institutions, and a Medical Transcription course and Computer Programming course from Kolkata. She worked in the International & domestic airline industry for almost a decade in Mumbai, before shifting base to Kolkata where she currently resides.

With over 35 years of work experience, Alakananda is currently a working professional in Credit Control of one of India's leading IT companies, Embee Software Pvt. Ltd., and Honorary Vice President – Strategic Communication at one of the top e-Learning Platforms, Soulaitaire. She is an extremely energetic, dynamic and inspiring lady, passionate about exploring new avenues in life with a 'Never say No' and 'Nothing is impossible' attitude.

Alakananda leads Soulaitaire, the e-learning platform from the frontline in Kolkata, West Bengal and has successfully conducted and hosted several Open Mic Events for storytellers/ writers/ poets/ musicians, including a Vegan Masterchef Event, Art & Pain – An emotional connection, and, organized and hosted a Wellness Workshop. Serving those in need selflessly comes naturally to her as she sincerely believes that 'Divinity resides in all beings, be kind to all'.

CHAPTER 2

Every Story Has A Beginning...

Alakananda's story starts in Nagpur, Maharashtra on the 24th day of August five decades ago. There was a mood of festivity in the air in spite of heavy downpour and thunderstorm raging that night. Braving the weather, Dwijendra Lal Halder, Alakananda's father, had to rush her mother, Rekha Halder, to a hospital as she had started her contractions.

They were new to Nagpur and knew no one. Upon reaching the hospital, he rushed in to meet the doctor for help. It was past 10 pm, the doctor refused to see his wife stating she will attend to her in the morning. He pleaded, but she refused to budge. The nurse called him aside and comforted him by promising to be by his wife's side in the absence of the doctor. She took Rekha to the labour room, while Mr Halder frantically turned the pages of Yellowpages to randomly select a name of someone who could be from their home state of Bengal, for help.

Anxiously he dialled a number waiting with bated breath for a voice on the other side of the phone. Time was ticking, and the intensity of the storm had increased. A sleepy voice answered the phone, but when they heard his dilemma, the kind family rushed to the hospital to help Mr Halder, both strangers to each other. As the clock ticked towards midnight, Rekha Halder delivered a bony baby girl in the hands of the nurse. When the baby cried in the hospital, making her presence felt to the world, the ringing bells the temples accompanied the baby's cry. Alakananda's birth coincided with Janmashthami.

CHAPTER 3

Childhood Days

The 2nd of the three daughters, Alakananda was the mischievous one, always up to something. She enjoyed climbing trees, cycling and taking risks. If she was not found in the house, her mother would be sure to find her on some branch in their garden. She was passionate about music, painting and reading novels & stories. As a child, she dreamed of becoming a pilot, playing the guitar and becoming a rockstar, but never thought of becoming an author though she had a knack for writing stories.

She completed her schooling from Mount Carmel School and high school from Dharampeth Science college in Nagpur, after completing her graduation from Delhi University.

Alakananda started kindergarten at the age of 3 at St. Joseph's Convent School for Girls, Nagpur. She enjoyed her two years at this school, vividly remembering the morning assemblies under the huge banyan tree and singing the school song. Though the classes would be held in the classrooms, sometimes the teacher would bring the students out in the open under a tree. There would be benches for students and teachers to sit out too, which always excited her. Hearing the birds chirp and listening to the teacher tell stories mesmerized her, taking her to her own little dreamland. Since the school was very far from home, Alakananda and her older sister, Silky, were shifted to Mount Carmel School, Nagpur, which was closer to their house.

When she was 6 years old, Alakananda's younger sister, Piu, was born. The entire household was busy with the new baby in the house. They lived in a beautiful bungalow with its own huge garden in the Engineering College campus, where her father worked. One day she decided to drive to her father's office in her blue toy car. While everyone was engrossed with the baby, Alakananda paddled her little blue car down the roads to the other end of the campus where the college buildings and her father's office was. On the way, several students from the college stopped her to ask where she was going to which she replied, 'To my Papa's office'. Once she reached, she parked her little car beside her father's car and walked in to surprise him. He was not only surprised but shocked to see her.

Alakananda attended Mount Carmel School, Nagpur till 10th grade. School days used to be fun, though she was more interested in the school library reading thrillers and participating in extracurricular activities. Once, when she was in Class V, her parents gifted her a big colouring box that had a variety of paints, colour pencils, paintbrushes, a colouring book, etc. She was very excited and wanted to flaunt it at school. That day she was the first one to sit in the car to be dropped to school. Upon reaching, she realized she was carrying only her paint box and her lunch box, and in her excitement, she forgot her school bag at home. Oh, dear! And all that she had to hear from her teachers was not funny.

Shining Divas of 2020

Memories of middle school with her best friend, Renuka Vaidya, are still etched in her mind. They were both Girl Guides who would study together, and go out for ice creams and ice lollies. There was a huge ground beside Renuka's house that would have exhibitions or circuses round the year. Admiring the trinkets in the stalls and watching the animals show their tricks were always fascinating. School picnics used to be great fun and Girls Guide trips and activities would be even more exciting. After the 10th grade, the two got admission in different colleges and Over the years went their own way till technology brought them together recently.

Alakananda spent two years of fun-filled high school days in Dharampeth Science College, Nagpur. The college was beside a huge garden and a lake named 'Ambazari'. Every monsoon the lake would swell and overflow almost flooding their college. Alakananda was more interested in Biology than in Physics or chemistry. Here she met her partner in pranks and best friend, Shubha Elkunchwar. In spite of coming from different backgrounds and schools, they had common interests and bonded well. They were both extremely talkative and share some hilarious memories.

CHAPTER 4 **To Iraq, The War And Back**

In 1979, Alakananda's father got a job as a Technical Expert at the University of Technology in Baghdad, Iraq. It was the first time they were travelling out of India, and they were very excited about this new endeavour. Her parents left for Baghdad along with her younger sister, Piu followed by Alakananda and her elder sister, Silky after their exams in May 1980. Baghdad was very fascinating with beautiful clean roads lined by date trees, red double-decker buses, orange & white cabs, and elegant silver Toyota cars. There were several supermarkets and cinema halls, most of them running Hindi movies, which was surprising to see that the Iraqis were fond of watching Hindi movies. The movie, 'Sholey', was running house

full. The people of Iraq were very warm, welcoming and affectionate. Most of the people were not fluent in English, hence talking to them was more with actions.

Alakananda attempted to pursue post-graduation in Baghdad, which turned out to be trying though she scored good marks in her Higher Secondary exams in India. The colleges in Baghdad required paper mark sheets with a stamp and inked signature, however, the mark sheets issued in India were computerized and not in compliance with the format needed in Baghdad. The colleges also required knowledge of Arabic, which was the medium of education there. Alakananda then opted for Commerce by correspondence from Delhi University against her will instead of pursuing further education in the sciences, though Commerce was not her area of interest. Her father, who was a very knowledgeable person, tutored her at home.

Alakananda was never a bookworm though she enjoyed reading thrillers & storybooks rather than study. For a year, she would walk down to the Indian Central School close by and volunteer to help the school office in typing work, cyclostyling question papers, engaging the students in some activities in the absence of teachers, help decorate the school during any school functions, etc. She was presented an Award of Appreciation by the school through the hands of the then Indian Ambassador to Iraq. In her mid-teens, Alakananda got her first paid job making 2000 Dinars monthly, at a European construction company having employees from all over the world, as a typist in the administration department, merely because she could speak English and use a typewriter.

The work culture and environment were friendly, and she enjoyed her new work. She made many friends at work and especially enjoyed conversing with the local staff in sign language as they couldn't speak English. Everyone in her office loved her teenage innocence and her curious questions. She learnt to greet people in different languages. Her never-ending curiosity and innocent questions would go on and on, which made people laugh and love her more. During the lunch break, she would attempt to teach

Shining Divas of 2020

Indian dance steps to the girls at work. She was the life of her office. Her aura was such that people would get drawn to her innocent laughter and simplicity.

As was expected, a Czech Engineer from her office grew fond of Alakananda. Soon she realized her feelings for him too, and they fell in love. Together they would go for drives, walk on the banks of river Tigris and meet for ice-cream on weekends.

That night, in September 1980 there was a television and radio announcement that Iraq had declared war on Iran. The war was over the waters of the Persian Gulf. Alakananda did not understand what war was like and why anyone would fight over water? Her father told her & her sisters' we may have to go back to India if the situation gets worse'. The moment the announcement was made, people rushed to the stores and soukhs to stock up the essentials, including candles and matchboxes. Within minutes the stores were empty. By evening electricity all over Baghdad was turned off and everything was in darkness. They had to draw their curtains shut and light candles in the house.

Early the next morning, when all were deep asleep, the first day of the decade long Iraq and Iran war started. Alakananda and her family were rudely woken up to the loud echo of air raid sirens all over Baghdad. Without realizing the danger, she and her sisters jumped out of bed and ran to their fifth-floor balcony looking up at the sky. Within minutes there were ear-shattering sounds of flocks of fighter aircraft flying low and spreading all across the morning sky, continuously firing from under their wings, a sight that she will never forget in her life. Her father pulled them indoors and strictly instructed them to run down the stairs to the basement for safety. The basement was chaotic with wailing and crying women and children. They could all come up to their home only after the all-clear siren was sounded. Thick black smoke was billowing far off in the horizon.

Everything changed in Baghdad overnight as the war started. The roads were flooded with soldiers. Local men and women were sent

to war due to which public buses were being driven by the people of Indian Subcontinent. Pickpocketing and eve-teasing started. Televisions and radios would only play Arabic patriotic songs. Local people were always worried and fearful for the lives of their near and dear ones at war. The evacuation had started. Several foreigners were fleeing the country, and their respective Embassies were helping them to do so. After some time, in spite of war, people started settling down to the situation. Offices, schools & colleges reopened though people would venture out always in fear that there would be air raids any moment. Bullet-ridden cars increased on the roads. For Alakananda, this was an entirely new experience.

War was raging, and her study material from India stopped reaching her. On inquiry, they were told that the postal service bags were stuck in Kuwait. However, in spite of lack of adequate study material, Alakananda had to appear for her exams at the Indian Embassy. It felt weird sitting alone in the corner of the 1st Secretaries room and writing her papers. The Embassy staff were very courteous. They would serve her delicious Indian snacks and tea quite often while she answered her papers.

Through the war, exam and work Alakananda & the tall, handsome Engineer's love grew steadily. There was a kind of magnetic pull between them, and she had started thinking a lot more of him. As days passed, their love blossomed in the backdrop of war. Both from two different foreign lands destined to meet in a war zone in another foreign land and fall in love. They were much in love, and they did not know what the future had in store for them. All they hoped was to remain united for life. But God had other plans for them. That evening, when she returned home from work, there was a heaviness in the air. Her parents looked worried and were waiting to break the news. Her dad had to undergo surgery, and the college had decided not to extend his contract, which meant they have to return to India. Alakananda's world came crashing around her.

Alakananda was at the end of her teens now. She had come to

Shining Divas of 2020

know from the Head of Admin at her office, who was an Englishman, that people of Commonwealth countries get visas on arrival at Heathrow. Since she was an Indian citizen, she was eligible. However, there was one catch, and that was her age. She was young, and there were chances of her not being allowed to enter the UK. But, this wouldn't deter her. She had this sudden urge and wave of stubbornness to be on English soil on her 20th birthday. She had saved enough funds from her salary and could afford travelling to Europe on her own. She did not want to burden her father for this. Her elder sister, Silky, decided to accompany her too. They got themselves flight tickets to Heathrow by British Airways for 100 Dinars each. Her parents and younger sister, Piu were proceeding to Kuwait for some time before leaving for India. To be on the safe side, her father got them a Kuwait visa and advised them that if they were refused entry in the United Kingdom, they could join him in Kuwait.

When it was time for her to leave, her love came to see her off at the airport with a heavy heart. He gave her a small parting gift; a cassette of Czech love songs and his message recorded in his own voice at the end "Darling, it is not possible to forget you because it will not be possible. I love you. We will meet, I promise."

Alakananda has held the cassette close to her heart ever since and heard his message infinite times. They used to exchange letters of love which would take more than a month to reach due to the ongoing war, but suddenly letters stopped coming. The fierce war was going on, and several places were destroyed, including the construction site where she met her first love. She still wonders whether he was there during the unfortunate moment.

The two girls were finally on their way to the United Kingdom by British Airways. At Heathrow, they got visa-on-arrival quite easily. It was the beginning of one of the best long holidays of her life. During their three months stay in the UK, her Uncle and Aunt went out of their way to take the girls around to different places in England & Wales. She had finally fulfilled her dreams of bringing in her 20th birthday in The UK & Europe. At the young age of 20

years, Alakananda and Silky went for a European tour on their own. Three months flew by, and it was time for the girls to return to India.

CHAPTER 5

Back To The Beloved Homeland

Soon after they reached India, Alakananda's parents got her elder sister, Silky married to her childhood love, Saibal Adhikary, and Silky moved in with her in-laws at Jamshedpur. Saibal was a man with a heart of gold. He was more like a brother to Alakananda & Piu.

Alakananda's next phase of life started in Patna. The family had to shift there since her father had joined a company as the Director. She had just completed her graduation. It was the early years of the computer era and learning computer languages like BASIC, FORTRAN, COBOL and computer programming was the new craze. She joined the Indian Institute of Computer Programming & Management to pursue a course on computer programming. After the course, the institute absorbed her as a Data Entry Operator. Within a few months, she got a job as a Programmer and Computer Lab Assistant at Indian Institute of Business Management, a well-known institute offering Masters in Business Management, Hotel Management and Computer Science.

It was the beginning of the new session. The latest batch of Computer Science students had started their practicals in the computer lab. Apart from programming to streamline the work processes in the office, Alakananda also had to oversee the students while they did their practicals. There were just a handful of girls in the institute, and the rest were all boys. She was the only female staff of the institute. Little did Alakananda know that the journey of her life so far was about to change. After a few months, she noticed that every morning when she reached the institute, the tea stalls outside the Institute gate would be crowded and similarly when it was time for her to leave. It made her feel extremely

uncomfortable, nervous and vulnerable too as she could feel several eyes on her.

One morning she noticed one of the computer students, Robin Andrew Pramanik waiting at the Institute gate when she alighted from the rickshaw. He greeted her and accompanied her up to the computer lab. Similarly, when it was time for her to leave, the same student was waiting to escort her back to the rickshaw. This went on for days and then months. In spite of several watchful eyes around, she started feeling safer with him about. That year, the institute bagged the project of programming for Handloom Expo in Patna. Alakananda was given the responsibility for programming, and Robin was to assist her at a stall in the exhibition ground. During this period of working together for the Expo, they became good friends. After work, Robin continued to accompany her safely to a rickshaw, but now they had started going to an Ice-cream parlour before she left. Those were fun moments spent together as every evening they enjoyed in the ice-cream parlour tasting different flavours and then would play a game of car race on the new PlayStation at the parlour. Since both of them were of the same age, they bonded well.

Robin would share stories of his brothers and little sister. Since his father, Mr Ajay Kr. Pramanik worked in Tata Steel, Noamundi, most parts of his life, Robin grew up in Noamundi. His father grew them up single-handedly and later remarried. Robin did his schooling from Loyola School in Jamshedpur, St. Mary's convent in Barbil and graduation from Ravenshaw College in Cuttack, Orissa. He was the Head Boy and Best Athlete in school. He was too close to his father and missed him tremendously. He had unending exciting stories of their life in the jungles around Noamundi and the several waterfalls, incidents with wild animals and ghosts, etc. He would talk a lot about his friend, Ranjit Singh Kamboj who was living in Barbil. They were the best of friends and had several hilarious incidents of their growing days. Alakananda was fascinated by his stories and jokingly named him 'Jungleboy'.

In the meantime, Alakananda's parents started responding to ads in the matrimonial columns of newspapers to look for a suitable groom for her. In fact, Robin, who had begun visiting them helped them post the letters too. The institute had closed down for summer holidays, and it was time for Robin to visit his family. Alakananda decided to spend time with her sister, Silky, who was now settled in Kolkata with her husband and little son, Gunjan.

Robin came to see her at the railway station, he gifted her a box of milk cakes, a bunch of cards and a letter in an envelope. Once the train left the station, she opened each card one by one and read the messages inside. The more she read, the more she missed him. The letter that he had written to her was his proposal to her to be his life partner. The initial few days in Kolkata were unbearable as she was missing Robin tremendously. Finally, she replied to him accepting his proposal. Within a week, he visited Kolkata with his father to introduce Alakananda. Her parents were informed too. They were hesitant and so was Robin's father, as he was still studying and did not have a job. Robin was determined to get a job as soon as he completed his studies, and Alakananda was determined to wait as she wanted no other person in her life. After appearing for several job interviews, Robin got a job as a Programmer in the Computer Division of Tata steel in November 1986.

CHAPTER 6

New Beginnings

Alakananda and Robin got married on the 4th day of February 1987 in Kolkata. It was a simple and memorable wedding with the near and dear ones to bless the couple. When they reached Noamundi from Kolkata, Robin carried her over the threshold into their bungalow. Her in-laws embraced her like their daughter.

Soon after the wedding, Robin joined his duties in Tata Steel, Jamshedpur and Alakananda stayed on with his family in Noamundi. They lived in a plush bungalow surrounded by a vast

garden that had colourful flower beds, several mango trees and other fruit trees. Natives from nearby villages worked for them as domestic helpers. Robin's parents went out of their way to make her feel comfortable. His little sister, Ayesha, who was six years old considered her as her playmate and wouldn't leave her side. Her mother-in-law became her friend.

During one of his weekend visits, Robin took Alakananda to his friend Ranjit's place in Barbil. Ranjit and his siblings took them for late-night Jeep drives to the Dhabas' on highways for tea. They visited the waterfalls at Murga Mandir & Pachhari, took picnics by the riverside and crossed the river, drove through Sukinda jungles, hills and valleys and went hiking. Alakananda had the best moments of her life as she was always fascinated by trees and nature.

After a few days of living at Noamundi, Robin took her to Jamshedpur, where he lived in the Officers Flatlet. Once again she didn't have to cook as the Flatlet had a mess and meals came from there. Alakananda was engulfed in her husband's care and love and was thoroughly pampered by him. Within a few months, Robin was transferred to Kolkata. Life in a metro city was different than that in Noamundi. They were gradually settling into a new life, setting up their little one-bedroom rented flat in Kolkata. For a short period, she joined a Computer Centre as an Instructor & Office-in-charge.

In 1989, on 14th April Alakananda was blessed with a beautiful baby girl who they named Priyanka. Within a year, Alakananda conceived again, and this time it was a complicated pregnancy. Doctors feared a miscarriage, but by God's grace, she delivered a healthy baby boy on the 9th day of February 1991 and named him Varun. In the same year, her elder sister Silky gave birth to a petite daughter, Ishani.

Robin was working hard to take care of his family, and Alakananda's world revolved around her children and husband. Over the years, Robin started rising on sheer account of his

dedication, determination & honesty at work. Priyanka started her schooling at St. John Diocesan Girls School and after a year Varun at St. James School. Both the children were brilliant in their studies. However, the teachers always had something to say about both the children, 'Priyanka is intelligent but very talkative and mischievous' and 'Varun's intelligence exceeds that of the children of his age'. Alakananda had already guessed the intelligence of her son when he had started reading fairy tales at the age of three. Sometimes she would find him sitting on top of the newspaper trying to read some section in it and pass comment as per his understanding. She was reliving her childhood through Priyanka's talkativeness and pranks. Priyanka however, possessed the sportsmanship and leadership qualities of Robin.

Alakananda started working as Marketing Manager in Embee Software Pvt. Ltd., a startup company owned by Robin's friend, Mr Sudhir Kothari. The children had barely settled down in school when Robin got transferred to Mumbai as Branch Manager of Tata Korf Maritime. Alakananda had hardly worked with Embee for two years but had to leave her job. Both children were admitted to Christ Church School in Mumbai. Priyanka and Varun excelled in school and achieved top ranks in class each year. As they started growing, they became class Prefects or Leaders year after year. Due to great responsibilities, Robin had to work late hours at work, and sometimes there would be a lot of travelling due to which he couldn't give much time to the family. Alakananda made sure she was present at all the school functions. Robin would attend when he was not travelling. Priyanka became the Head girl of the school, and a year later Varun became the Head Boy of the school. Priyanka excelled in sports and continuously got awarded with Gold/ Silver/ Bronze medals in the shot put, discus throw, long jump, high jump and relay. She also represented her school in football, throw ball and basketball tournaments. Varun would win prizes for quiz contests, impromptu storytelling, the game of Monopoly, etc. He created his own website at the age of thirteen.

Alakananda's world revolved around her children and husband. She couldn't think beyond them and their happiness. While her

Shining Divas of 2020

husband got busier with office work, her children excelled in school and got busy with extracurricular activities. In the meantime, Alakananda's younger sister, Piu got married to a highly educated PhD holder, Dr Niloy Kr. Nath and they had a baby boy, Nilanjan. On Piu's encouragement, Alakananda joined Trade Wings to study International Airlines Management. The course was interesting, and learning about world geography excited her.

While Alakananda was in the last leg of the course, she got the news of her beloved father's demise on the 17th day of November 1999 in Kolkata. He was bedridden and suffering from diabetes, hypertension and Parkinson's disease. Losing her father left a void in their family's life, though they would console themselves that he's been relieved of pain.

After completion of her course, she got a job at Speedwings, a wholly-owned subsidiary of British Airways in March 2000. The job entitled her and her family to free tickets by British Airways to any destination that the flight operates, four times a year, but subject to load. Those were the best working years of her life, and she made some amazing friends at work. On any long holiday, the friends would go for overnight picnics to different resorts or take a few days leave and holiday in Goa. Those were the best moments of her life, and even after 20 years of friendship they all still meet and cherish those happy fun-filled work-hard days. After a couple of years, Speedwings was undertaken by World Network Services (WNS).

In 2002, Alakananda and her family travelled to the UK, France, Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium by British Airways. Since she had travelled to the UK and Europe in her late teens, this holiday brought back pleasant memories. One of her fondest memories from this trip was visiting Greenwich Prime Meridian Line, 0 degrees Longitude and standing on both hemispheres of the earth at the same time. While working for British Airways, Alakananda often travelled to the UK whenever her heart desired.

In 2004, Alakananda lost her beloved mother to an unfortunate

incident, which left the family in shock. After working for six years in British Airways, Alakananda shifted to Customer Service for Virgin Atlantic within WNS for a year. The work was monotonous and uninteresting, and she did not enjoy it. She changed her job and joined Jetair Pvt. Ltd. as a Junior Manager in the Audit team. She was with Jetair Pvt. Ltd. for 4 years, and during this period she studied HR Management from Welingkar Institute of Management.

In the meantime, Robin's responsibilities increased. In addition to being the Regional Manager at Tata Korf Maritime, Mumbai he was given the responsibility to open a branch office in Shanghai, China and was posted there. The family would hardly see him as he was living in Shanghai, and when in India, he would be busy touring the company's different branches. Priyanka was in high school in Cathedral and John Connon School, Mumbai and a year later Varun got admission in The Bishop's School, Pune to complete high school.

During these critical periods of the children's adolescence years, Robin's physical presence was missed tremendously. He was busy working and providing for the family. Alakananda tried her best to fill up the gap, and the only best option was to have a one on one talk with each child as they stepped into their teens, explaining them the dos & don'ts and rights and wrongs. While she fulfilled her motherly duties, she also became their friend. Robin's conversation with the children boiled down to only need related. He hardly got time for friendly chats with them, though he would take the family out on drives, dinners and ice-creams, whenever he would visit home, which was once or twice a month when he would be in India.

Life became robotic. With the guidance of her school counsellor, Priyanka decided to pursue her education in the US after being introduced to the universities through her high school education fair and got admission at Texas Christian University, Fort Worth. Robin's decision for Priyanka's further studies in the US oscillated between yes and no as studying in the US was very expensive.

Shining Divas of 2020

Priyanka is a chip off the old block was determined to pursue further studies in the US and managed to get a scholarship. Alakananda could feel an unknown distance developing in her marital relationship. Smiles, love and chats had reduced with her husband, and it had started stressing her. He would be quiet and grumpy most of the time, and she would reason with herself that he was stressed with work. When Priyanka moved to the US, Alakananda accompanied her to help her settle in a foreign country. Leaving her baby alone in a new country broke her heart. Priyanka joined TCU as a Freshman in 2008 to pursue a Double Major in Psychology and Child Development.

Loneliness was killing Alakananda when she returned to India with the entire family separated, though connected virtually by technology. Robin was in China, Priyanka in the US, Varun in Pune and Alakananda in Mumbai. In 2009, Varun got admission at Texas Christian University on scholarship too, and the same year Robin got transferred to Kolkata. For a short time, Alakananda and Varun visited Shanghai, before Varun left for the US to pursue further studies in Broadcast Management and Strategic Communications. As always, both children excelled in their university. Priyanka's name was consistently in the Dean's List. Varun became a student leader and Resident Assistant of the hostel and got further benefits from the university.

CHAPTER 7 **From Mumbai To Kolkata**

Alakananda left her job at Jetair Pvt. Ltd. in Mumbai to shift to Kolkata due to Robin's transfer to TM International Logistics Ltd. as part of the Top Management. Robin had become silent and living in his own world, busy with work, providing for the family and spending long hours at work. With the children away and conversation reduced considerably at home, she started feeling restless and lonely. For a person who had been lively and energetic and working since the age of 17, it was tough to sit idle. As luck

would have it, in the year 2010 she got a job in Embee Software Pvt. Ltd. once again after almost two decades, but this time in Credit Control. Embee had grown leaps and bounds and had branches all over India. They were doing tremendously well and are currently one of the leading IT solution companies in our country.

2011 was the onset of a tsunami in her life. Something was not right. Alakananda couldn't place her finger on it. She could feel the void, the vacuum was growing. Who was she living within the house? Who was this stranger? Unknown shadow lurking around was haunting her, she was getting engulfed in a suffocating cloud that was squeezing her breath out. She would sit in the darkness wondering what is happening with her life, where did she go wrong, who is igniting the fire of rift in her life? The friendly couple she turned to for help, turned out to be friends in disguise. All of a sudden, she was caught in the whirlpool of depression, getting pulled deeper and deeper into it. Darkness was closing in on her, and she was choking for breath groping for a foothold, crying internally for help. She could hear her own screams echoing in her mind.

2012 was the hardest year of her life and remains a blank year till date. She was now completely engulfed by the swelling waves of the tsunami that hit her life. She continued going to work, but failed miserably in her duties, but her company had been kind and understanding. She was vulnerable and could not escape the molesting hands of a close relative, who was visiting them for a few days, which almost killed her internally further. She cried for help, but guns were trained on her with threats of dire consequences. All of a sudden, she was neck-deep in loans of all kinds, personal loan, education loan, gold loan, office loan, credit card bills, children's pocket money. She was gasping for breath and going through utmost grief, contemplating giving up her life, but for her children, she had to live. Every single person would call her aside and comment, 'look at your eyes. You look, ghostly?' While she was getting sucked deeper and deeper into depression, she started God hopping and found her anchor in Satya SaiBaba,

Shining Divas of 2020

Sairam and surrendered her life at his feet. She found unknown hands reaching her in the dark hole of depression. When she looked up, her dimming eyes could see a ray of light.

2013 saw the tsunami of her life start receding gradually. With the help of strangers, who became her friends and guide, she finally found the first rung of foothold leading to the light. She had started believing the predictions written in the Sunday newspapers under the Horoscope section. Once it was written to offer food grains to the Lord as offerings at the temples. But her newfound friend guided her to offer it to the homeless and needy instead. The blessings she received in return opened her eyes to the meaning of service to others. She had an epiphany and realized that divinity resides not in concrete enclosures, but in all living beings. Serving them selflessly was, in fact, serving God. Humanity is the religion, and that is the teaching of Sairam.

When she looked around, she found many people in physical or emotional pain. She started helping her colleagues at work with homoeopathy medicines for minor aches and pains, and it made her happy to see them get cured. She started extending her arms and shoulders to people who needed emotional support and care and seeing them smile made her happy. She realized every person around her loved her for who she was. She forgot her grief while bringing smiles on the faces of people who needed it. A friend helped her streamline her finances. She focused on closing her loans and started saving to fulfil her dream to get a house of her own. Once her savings began growing, she started setting aside a sum to help anyone who needed financial help. In the year 2015, she bought a small apartment, her dream house in Puttaparthi, Andhra Pradesh close to Satya Saibaba's Ashram, Prashanthi Nilayam. The world had started looking beautiful again. Every year she made it a point to pay her visits to Sairam to express her gratitude. Earlier, her family was her world, but now the world became her family.

Priyanka had graduated and started pursuing a Masters in Public Health from the University of North Texas. After completing her

Masters, Priyanka served at the Department of Family & Protective Services. She fell in love with a well-educated young man, Dr David Ko, who is a very knowledgeable, caring, loving and warm person. They got married and have an adorable son, Carson. David is not only an excellent husband & father but a compassionate Doctor and Health Warrior. He is a thorough gentleman coming from a humble family. David would go out of his way to make sure Alakananda and Robin were comfortable every time they visited the US.

Varun graduated and joined a social media company. After working & excelling at work for a couple of years in this company, he joined another company for better prospects. His dedication and intelligence did not go unnoticed, and soon he was promoted to the position of Manager. He fell in love with a beautiful, intelligent, wise and lovable girl, Jessica Marie Prichard, and got married to her. Jessica is an amazing girl who is not only an excellent wife & mother but a dedicated & efficient Manager at work too. Together they have three adorable children: a son, Andrew and two daughters, Guinevere and Alexandra. Jessica's words, 'I want to become a mother like you' is a compliment that Alakananda holds close to her heart. Alakananda couldn't have asked for more for her children's happiness. Both Priyanka & Varun were doing very well for themselves and well settled now with their families. Alakananda's sisters and children gave her tremendous mental support and stood by her like a rock.

Over the next few years, Alakananda came across several people from different walks of life, who started looking up to her as a mother. They started addressing her Mom, Mother Duck, Rockstar Mom, Supermom etc. They would reach out to her in happiness and in sadness. She would guide and counsel whoever was slipping into depression. She was there for each one of them selflessly. Sunny Viswakarma, a young boy with dreams of becoming a great musician, unknowingly lifted her spirits with his beautiful songs. He came across her path while they were travelling as co-passengers in a train. He filled up the physical void she felt for her children. He started calling her Rockstar Mom or Mother Duck.

Sunny made it possible for her to see the making of music at the studio and it interested her tremendously. She saw him make music from scratch and was witness to the tension & emotional wave he went through before its release. He featured her in his music video, 'Bikhrey' by Murli – The Band as an expression of his gratitude. Today he is living his dreams and is known as Sunnyboyz. Sunny's friends, Faisal Khan and Shamama Ansari would go out of their way to meet her when she was sick or reach out to her when they needed a shoulder, and she loved their calling her Mom.

Alakananda went for a photoshoot for an upcoming photographer, Joy Roy, who called her Mamma too. The experience of photoshoot excited her even more. She realized her potential in expressing various emotions in front of the camera, which came naturally to her. She had started loving every moment of all that she had started experiencing. Youngsters in the office wanted to call her Mamma, and every time they missed their mother, they would come to her. Soon the number of children started growing in her life and so was her love for all.

One day at work, Alakananda noticed a new co-worker who had joined as a content writer sitting at the desk beside hers. They connected instantly and soon the lady who introduced herself as Upalparna Dey started sharing her worries and concern with Alakananda, who unknowingly became her strength. She extended her motherly arms and embraced Upalparna as her daughter. Upalparna ignited the desire of writing in Alakananda. However, due to health issues, she left work after a month. That one month of bonding with Upalparna was a blessing in disguise and a turn in the road that led Alakananda to self-realization and a long, happy journey towards success from where she was.

CHAPTER 8

Sealdah Station And Beyond

Alakananda had dedicated herself to help a friend feed the children on the streets outside Sealdah Railway station, and provide

blankets and warm clothes to them. She always felt content & satisfied in serving those in need personally rather than join any organization. She was moved by the living conditions of the children and the poor. Every time they reached the station, the children would come running happily. They would spend hours with the children talking to them. Their life story made her emotional, which started pouring out through the pen, and she gradually started churning out short stories based on real-life incidents in her life and those close to her. Her stories and write-ups were published in 'Calcutta 64 Stories'. In the meantime, she started oil painting, finding solace in the beauty of colours on a white canvas.

2019 brought a pleasant twist in Alakananda's life, a year she finally started living her dreams. In the early month of 2019, Upalparna introduced her to Virat Tuli, Founder of an e-learning and writer's platform, Soulitaire. Virat's motto was to uplift & encourage aspiring writers and fresh talent, help them in achieving and living their dreams. Alakananda had dreams too; dreams to become a published author, a storyteller, a motivator and people's person. Virat held her hand virtually from across the country and helped her climb the first rung of success in her life. He started publishing her write-ups on the social media platforms along with the other several writers. The encouraging response on her write-ups by many encouraged her to write more. Soulitaire was a startup company, and many writers were coming on board. Amongst them were quite a few from Kolkata including Upalparna. Team Soulitaire Kolkata had their first meeting lead by Alakananda. They planned to organize their first ever Open Mic Event for storytellers and poets hosted by her in Kolkata, which turned out to be a grand success. She was overwhelmed with the adulation by the praises and appreciations received. The wheel started rolling, and Team Soulitaire Kolkata organized several open mic events after that for storytellers, poets, musicians and Event on Vegan Masterchef, Art & Pain – An emotional connection, Wellness workshops, etc. Though all the events were hosted by Alakananda, the success was attributed to teamwork. In November 2019, Alakananda joined the core team of Soulitaire as Vice President,

Strategic Initiative.

Age was just a number for her, and in spite of being fifty-seven years old, her passion for learning something new and trying new things never stopped. She acted in two short films, 'SUJOG – The Opportunity' (Bengali) and 'SHAKTI – The Strength Within' (Hindi), that was written, produced and directed by Sreoshi Bakshi, a versatile and talented member of Team Soulitaire Kolkata. Both the films highlight women empowered and were released on YouTube on Women's Day of 2019 & 2020. The films were very impactful and highly appreciated by all.

Alakananda's relentless hard work and dedication, coupled with her energy and passion had started leading her towards the fulfilment of her dreams and goals. People started noticing her. Within one year, she co-authored in five books.

There was no stopping her from reaching her goals, including the global pandemic. All of a sudden, in late March 2020 people were told to stay at home and not step out unless it is for essentials. The deadly Coved-19 virus originating in Wuhan, China was causing havoc all over the world. Where earlier people were pressed for time, now they had 24 hours handed to them. Work in the office changed to work from home. Alakananda pounced on the opportunity and worked towards making the most of the time, making sure that her duties towards her office were not hampered. She utilized the rest of the hours in completing her first solo book 'SOUL STIRRER', which was a collection of stories based on real-life incidents. Finally, her dream book was published by BooksClinic Publishing in mid-April 2020 on Amazon Worldwide, Goodreads and Google Books in association with Soulitaire. The book received critical acclaim and media coverage. She got busy with Author Interviews.

Within four months of the book release, a short film on one of the stories from her book, 'Rupali' was released by Soulitaire on YouTube. Since shooting had stopped due to the pandemic situation, the film was illustrated and created by Sambaran Sarkar

and Team with perfect sound, music and dialogues. Alakananda gave her voice to the film.

Alakananda got featured in the 'Audio Story & Poetry Book' by Literoma in August 2020 and honoured with the 'AUTHOR ACHIEVER' Award in Literoma Achiever Award 2020.

This was not the end of her dreams. There was more to be done, to Inspire and uplift people with her stories, especially when the pandemic situation was driving several people into depression. Alakananda was taken on-board Success Psyche by its Founder Pratham Wadhwa and co-Founder Virat Tuli, as an Expert and Storyteller who inspires people with her stories.

Alakananda was reborn in 2012. During her journey to success, she embraced her fear, apprehension and self-doubt, pushed past the struggles and obstacles that came her way and did all that was required to do to live her dreams. She believed in herself, her capabilities, her potential and believed that she could do it. Through the eight years journey of struggle and obstacles, her sisters and children stood by her like a rock, as well as the strength of love and support by Ranjit and his wife Paramjit Kaur, who are more than friends. She is thankful to all of them and her husband, Robin for allowing her to rediscover herself, and taking care of her health, safety and wellbeing. She definitely has a smile on her face when her family says, 'We are proud of her'.



We had launched our 'Biography of the Millennium' project at the beginning of the year 2020 with a vision to bring out the inspiring stories of women achievers, who have showed light to the world around by leading a life of example. They are all commoners with a big heart, brave soul and creative mind.

Here we present the first volume of 'Biography Panorama' series featuring seven Indian women of substance.

1. Prabha Goyal,
2. Alakananda Pramanik,
3. Usha Dalmia,
4. Ashwini U Nambiar,
5. Komal Gupta,
6. Sonia Sahijwani Saini
7. Dr. Visalakshi

That one aspect which binds them all is their saga of struggles, pains, fighting spirit and a never to give-up attitude leading to ultimate triumph in life.

~~~~~

## Literoma Biography Panorama Volume I

~~~~~

