

Bou Dekha (Seeing the bride)



**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.

Editors' note: This story was originally hand written in Bengali in 2010.

This is a story of a *Bou Dekha* (seeing the new bride) party of a long time ago. I had forgotten about it till one day recently Kalpana di (older “sister”) reminded me about it on the phone.

It was July or August of 1948, just after my wedding. My mother-in-law had invited all her friends in Allahabad that evening over tea for seeing the new bride – me. The friends all came, many with their daughters and daughters-in-law.

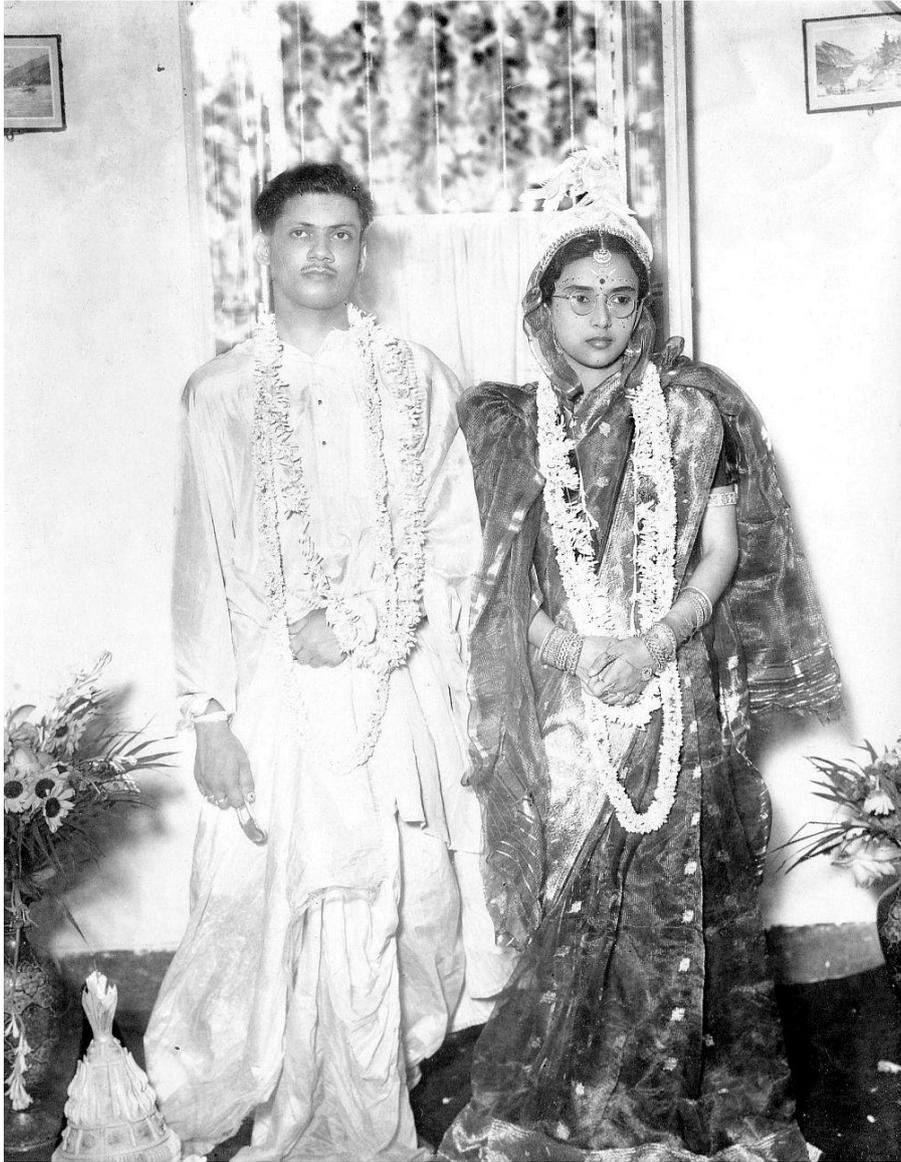
Kalpana di was also there along with her mother-in-law. Kalpana di herself was almost a new bride. She had been married just a year or two earlier to one of my husband’s closest friends from school in Allahabad.

Almost sixty-two years have passed since that day. Almost no one who could have remembered that evening is with us today. Talking to Kalpana di brought back memories of many things one had forgotten.

There were *jalebis* and *sondesh* and *rosogolla*. There were hot *samosas* and other snacks that I do not remember now. There was lemonade and tea. The evening passed with so much chatter and singing and laughter. Even thinking about it makes me happy.

On top of that, I had two rupees coming to me from each of the invited *mashimas* (aunts) as the *mukh dekha* (seeing the face) gift.

Today, only the beautiful memory remains of that evening. Everything else has been lost. The man who held me by the hand, and took me to that house has himself gone twenty-one years ago. I cannot find him anywhere.



Wedding of Birendra Kumar Chatterji (left) and Sadhona Chatterji, 1948.

Still, with God's blessings, I live with so many happy memories because he was in my life, and I thank the almighty again and again.

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