Fire and Grace

Kalpana Dutt Joshi

2013

Celebrating Kalpana Dutt Joshi
1913-1995

Cover Image:

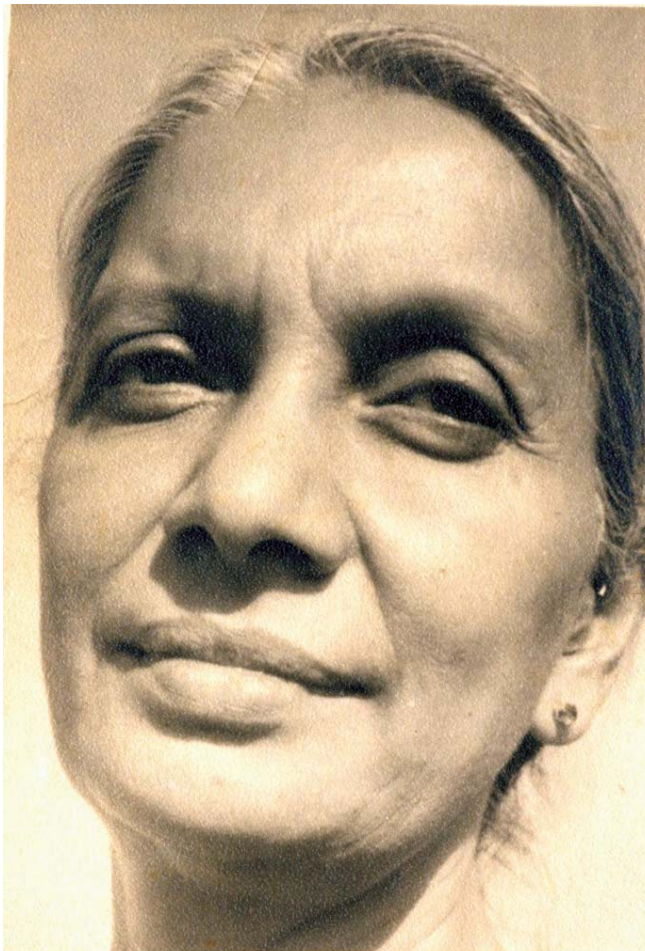
Portrait by Sunil Janah taken sometime in 1945
for the cover of Kalpana Dutt's book
Chittagong Armoury Raiders - Reminiscences
(People's Publishing House, Bombay, 1945)

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

CONCEPT AND DESIGN
Sundaresh and Malavika Karlekar
with Manini Chatterjee and Gargi Chakravartty
We are deeply grateful to Manini Chatterjee
and Gargi Chakravartty for their generosity with
resources and photographs.

Most photographs reproduced in this calendar were taken by
Sunil Janah, Govind Vidyarthi and Nemi Chand Jain

In later years



Fire and Grace - Kalpana Dutt Joshi

On April 18, 1930, in the growing climate of nationalist fervor in India, the famous Chittagong Armoury Raids , led by 'Masterda' Surjya Sen, took place, electrifying the youth of Bengal, and inspiring many of them to join the armed revolutionary stream as well. Women were no exception.

Although no woman took direct part in the raids, the failed insurrection that April weekend soon transformed itself into a prolonged insurgency and brought to the forefront two young girls whose names are indelibly linked with the Chittagong uprising. One was Pritilata Waddedar, who chose martyrdom in course of the struggle. The other was her close and dear friend, Kalpana Dutt.

Bright and vivacious, Kalpana was to become the 'bomb maker' for the Chittagong revolutionaries, before joining them underground as a comrade and activist, fleeing from home to home in the humble hamlets of Chittagong - a "fearsome terrorist" to the British but a beloved daughter for the villagers and townsfolk alike; Kalpana was already a legend by the time she was arrested in 1933. At the end of the trial of The Emperor vs Surjya Sen, Tarakeshwar Dastidar and Kalpana Dutt, the men were sent to the gallows. In view of her age and "having regard to her sex", Kalpana was given the 'lesser' sentence of transportation for life. She had just turned 20.

Kalpana was born on July 27, 1913 in Chittagong to a fairly affluent family. Her grandfather had been conferred the title of Rai Bahadur for his loyal services to the Raj; her father was a loyal government servant too. Growing up in a large joint family, Kalpana was a happy child and a good student who also dreamed of fighting for India's freedom "like Khudiram." After the Khastagir Girls High School in Chittagong, she joined the prestigious Bethune College in Calcutta to study science. Along with her classes in chemistry (which helped her later in making bombs), Kalpana also took lessons in *lathi* and swordplay at the gymnasium. With the massive police crackdown on all young men after the 1930 raids, she was an ideal recruit for Masterda and his beleaguered army and lived up to the faith they bestowed in her.

But Kalpana was much more than a fiery revolutionary. After coming out of jail in 1939 thanks to the campaign launched by Gandhi and Tagore, she joined the Communist Party of India. In 1943, she married the charismatic CPI general secretary P.C. Joshi, dividing her time between the party headquarters in Bombay and her field work in Chittagong. She gave birth to two sons, Suraj in 1946 and Chand in 1947. After independence and Partition, as Joshi fought his ideological battles within the Party, it was Kalpana who sustained the family in every way. She first worked at the Indian Statistical Institute set up by P.C. Mahalanobis in Calcutta and moved to Delhi in the early 1960s. Here, Kalpana became first a student, and then teacher of the Russian language. After retirement from the ISI, she worked as the director of the All India Institute of Russian Languages till the age of 75.

Her innate zest for life and generosity of spirit, deep attachment to family and indomitable will, made her a grand matriarch, a pillar of strength to all those who came within her expansive embrace. Shunning power, pelf and publicity of all kinds, preferring the comfort of strangers in crowded DTC buses, accepting the craziness of the world around her without judgment, Kalpana remained till the end a rare amalgam of fire and grace.

Manini Chatterjee

With husband P.C. Joshi

Kalpana as a student in the early 1930s

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

January 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 *New Year's Day*	2	3	4	◑ 5
6	7	8	9	10	11	● 12
13 *Makar Sankranti*	14 *Pongal*	15	16	17	18 *Guru Gobind Singh's Birthday*	◐ 19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Milad-Un-Nabi (Id-E-Milad) (Birthday of Prophet Mohammed)	26 Republic Day
○ 27	28	29	30	31		

December

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February

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Kalpana married the general secretary of the Communist Party of India P.C. Joshi at a simple Party wedding in 1943. The newly married couple on the terrace of the CPI headquarters in Bombay, 1943

Courtesy: Joshi Family

February 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 *Sri Panchami*	15 *Basanta Panchami*	16
17	18	19 *Shivaji Jayanti*	20	21	22	23
24	25 *Guru Ravidas's Birthday*	26	27	28		

January

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March

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`Good old days'

Young CPI wholetimers enjoying themselves at a picnic, Chembur Hills, Bombay, 1943.
`Standing left to right: `Prahlad, Achutan, Budha Rao, Govind Vidyarthi, Ambubhai, Khardikar, Rashid, Chittoprasad, Dr K.M. Ashraf, Dr Adhikari & Phadnavis. Sitting left to right: Kulsum Ashraf, Kalpanadi and Maniben with Bachu.
Photo: Sunil Janah'

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

March 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
31 *Easter Sunday*					1	2
3	4	◑ 5	6	7 *Swami Dayananda Saraswati Jayanti*	8	9
10 *Maha Shivratri*	11	● 12	13	14	15	16
17	18	◐ 19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26 *Holika Dahan*	○ 27 Holi	28	29 Good Friday	30

February

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28	29	30				

Kalpana reading in bed, possibly in Bombay, where she lived in the CPI commune. c. 1943-44

Courtesy: Joshi Family

April 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11 *Chaitra Sukladi/ Gudi Padava/ Ugadi/ Cheti Chand*	12	13 *Vaisakhi/ Vishu*
14 *Mesadi*	15 *Vaisakhadi (Bengal)/ Bahag Bihu (Assam)*	16	17	18	19 Ram Navmi	20
21	22	23	24 Mahavir Jayanti	25	26	27
28	29	30				

March

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26	27	28	29	30	31	

Kalpana with her first-born, Suraj, at Balraj Sahni's Juhu residence, Bombay, 1946

Courtesy: Joshi Family

May 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 *Guru Rabindranath's Birthday*	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24 *Hazarat Ali's Birthday*	25 Buddha Purnima
26	27	28	29	30	31	

April

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June

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Kalpana addressing a CPI election meeting in Calcutta during India's first general elections of 1952

Earlier, she was the CPI candidate in Chittagong for the provincial elections of 1946. She lost to Nellie Sengupta of the Indian National Congress.

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

June 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
30						1
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May

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July

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Kalpana in a contemplative mood

Place and date unknown.

Courtesy: Joshi Family

July 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	● 8	9	10 *Rath Yatra*	11	12	13
14	15	◐ 16	17	18	19	20
21	○ 22	23	24	25	26	27
28	◑ 29	30	31			

June

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August

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Kalpana with her two sons, Suraj (right) and Chand (left) Calcutta, 1949

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2 *Jamat-Ul-Vida*	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Idu'l Fitr	10
11	12	13	14	15 Independence Day	16	17
18 *Parsi New Year's Day*	19	20 *Raksha Bandhan*	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28 Janamashtami	29	30	31

August 2013

July

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September

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Kalpana (sitting, right) with P.C. Joshi (sitting, left). Standing behind them are Kalpana's two sisters, Chuni (left) and Ruby (right). In the centre is family friend Santimoy Ray. Front row: Gargi Ray (later Chakravartty), Suraj, and Chand
Calcutta, 1951

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	● 5	6	7
8	9 *Vinayaka Chaturthi/ Ganesh Chaturthi*	10	11	◐ 12	13	14
15	16 *Onam*	17	18	○ 19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	◑ 27	28
29	30					

September 2013

August

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October

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Kalpana threshing paddy with a group of villagers in Bengal, early 1960s

As a member of the Mahila Atma Raksha Samiti, she had been active in relief work in rural Chittagong after the 1943 Bengal famine. That experience came in useful when she worked with the Indian Statistical Institute in Calcutta and perhaps undertook occasional field surveys in Bengal villages.

Courtesy: Joshi Family

October 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday	3	4	● 5
6	7	8	9	10	11 *Dussehra (Maha Saptami)*	◐ 12 *Dussehra (Maha Ashtami)*
13 Dussehra *Maha Navmi*	14	15	16 Idu'l Zuha (Bakrid)	17	18 *Maharishi Valmiki's Birthday*	○ 19
20	21	22 *Karaka Chaturthi (Karva Chouth)*	23	24	25	26
◑ 27	28	29	30	31		

September

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November

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Kalpana (standing fifth from left) with a group of Russians in front of the Lenin Mausoleum at the Kremlin, Moscow, in the early 1980s

As Director of the All India Institute of Russian languages, she frequently visited the erstwhile Soviet Union where she had many friends.

Courtesy: Joshi Family

November 2013

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2 *Deepawali (South India)* *Naraka Chaturdasi*
● 3 Diwali (Deepavali) *Govardhan Puja*	4	5 *Bhai Duj*	6	7	8 *Pratihar Sashthi /* *Surya Sashthi (Chhat Puja)*	9
◐ 10	11	12	13	14 Muharram	15	16
○ 17 Guru Nanak's Birthday	18	19	20	21	22	23
24 *Guru Teg Bahadur's* *Martyrdom Day*	25	◑ 26	27	28	29	30

October

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December

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Kalpana with her first grandchild, Ishan, on her shoulders as P.C. Joshi looks on

Courtesy: Gargi Chakravartty

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	● 3	4	5	6	7
8	◐ 9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	○ 17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 *Christmas Eve*	◑ 25 Christmas Day	26	27	28
29	30	31				

December 2013

November

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January

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Cover Image

Inner Image

Inner Image(bottom)

January

February

March

April

May

June

July

August

September

October

November

December

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