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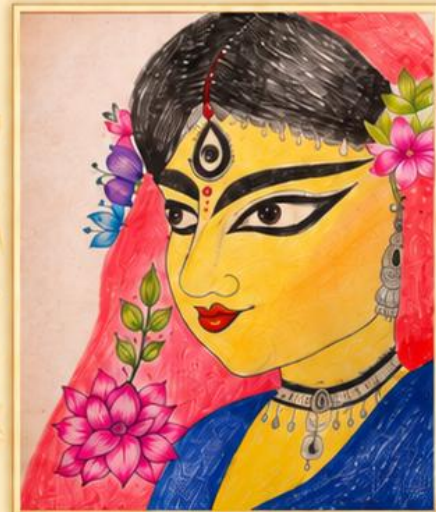
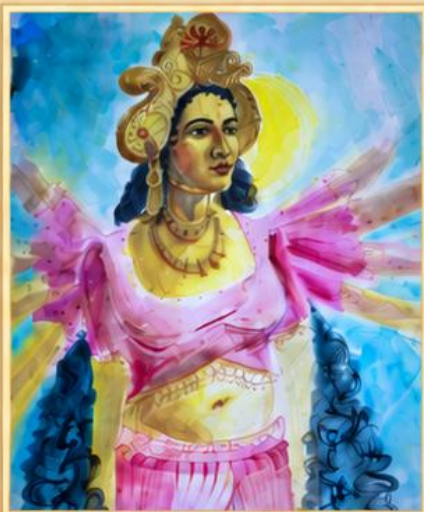
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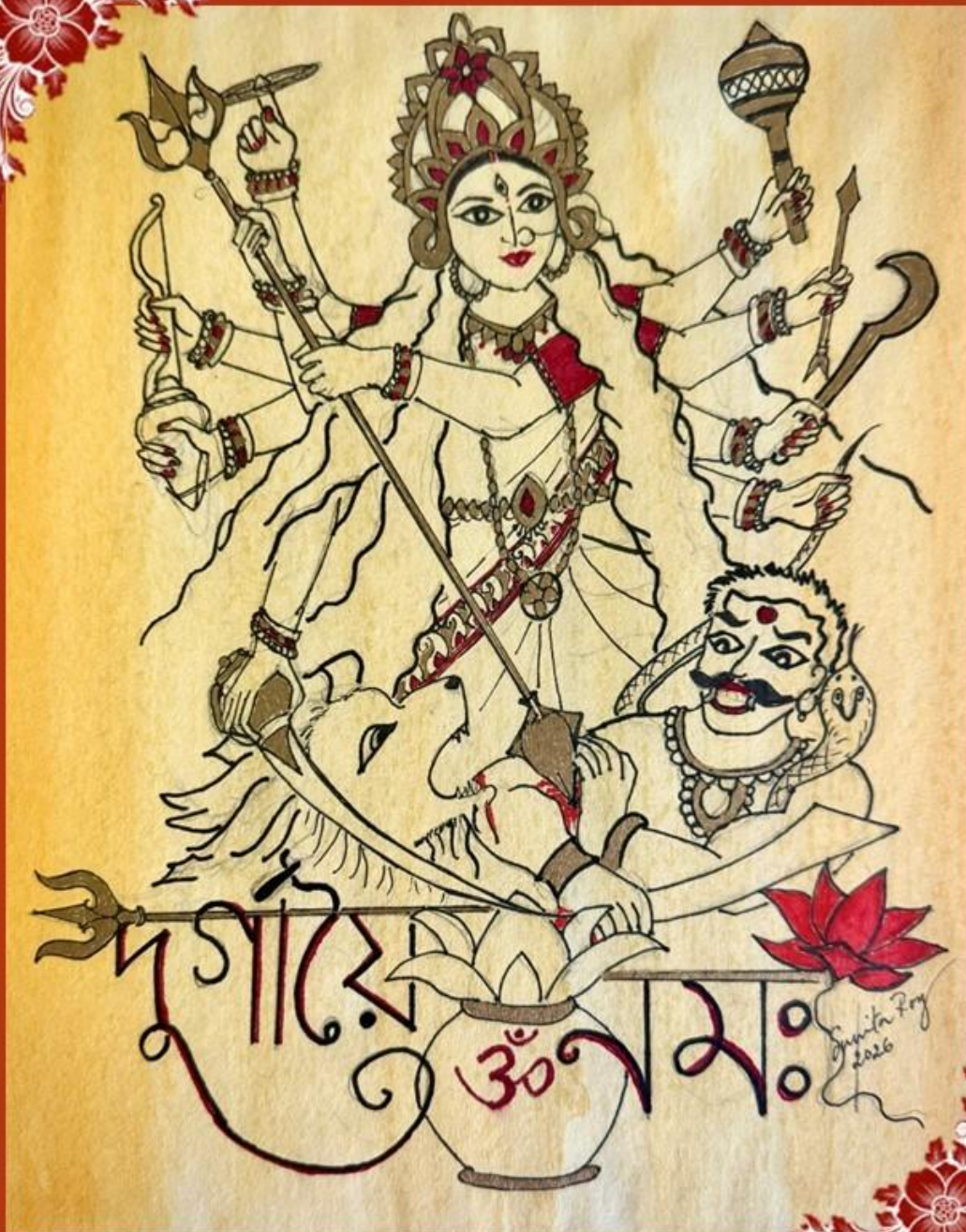
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Estd. 1974

Sharodiya
Aikotaan 2026



শারদীয়ার প্রীতি ও শুভেচ্ছা
Manjusri Roy & Family, Plymouth, MI



Illustrated by: Sumita Roy

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BICHITRA 2026-27 GOVERNING BODY

BOARD OF OFFICERS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President	Partha Sarathi Das	Assistant Secretary	Kapil Gupta
Vice President	Animesh Chowdhury	Treasurer	Tuhin Ray
Deputy President	Jhulan Chatterjee	Associate Treasurer	Anindya Roy
Secretary	Mitali Chaudhery	Assistant Treasurer	Animesh Das
Associate Secretary	Tanima Basu		

ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE

Principal Endower	Mousumi Majumdar
Associate Endower	Divyendu Banerjee
Assistant Endower	Sohini Sengupta

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Principal Educator	Rupali Mukherjee
Associate Educator	Sandip Gangapadhyay
Assistant Educator	Rinki Dutta

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Principal Advisor	Anirban Chandra
Senior Advisor	Sharmistha Sarkar
Junior Advisor	Probir Sil

PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

Principal Preserver	Madhuparna Rakshit
Senior Preserver	Susanta Sarkar
Junior Preserver	Sutapa Santra

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Principal Planner	Kripa Bandyopadhyay
Senior Planner	Sampada Banerji
Junior Planner	Samrat Kundu

AUDIT COMMITTEE

Principal Auditor	Sourav Paul
Senior Auditor	Diptak Bhattacharya
Junior Auditor	Soumyajit Malik

FROM THE PRESIDENT



Partha Sarathi Das

President, Bichitra 2026–27

I am Partha Sarathi Das, and I am honored to serve as the President of Bichitra for 2026–27.

My journey with Bichitra has taken many forms over the years. I have been part of the Secretary team, maintained our website, regularly supported email communications, participated in community service initiatives, served food during our major events, and had the privilege of emceeing programs featuring distinguished artists and guests from India. And when I am not doing any of those, you may occasionally find me on stage trying to make people laugh—whether playing a thief, a priest, or whatever role comes my way!

Having been part of the Bichitra family for more than ten years, I have had the privilege of watching our organization grow tremendously. From hosting prominent Indian and Bengali artists to showcasing local talent, organizing sporting events, celebrating festivals with new themes, and participating in volunteer initiatives, Bichitra continues to find new ways to bring people of all ages together.

At the heart of this journey are our volunteers. Much of what Bichitra accomplishes would simply not be possible without the dedication of those who quietly contribute their time, energy, ideas, and commitment year after year.

I am proud to be part of an organization whose vision goes beyond organizing events. Bichitra helps keep Bengali culture and traditions vibrant in Metro Detroit while serving the broader South Asian diaspora—keeping our community connected, engaged, entertained, and rooted in a shared sense of belonging. My hope is that we continue to grow that spirit, reach an even wider community, and create meaningful experiences for generations to come.



From the Durga Puja Chairperson

I have been part of Bichitra since I was a child and have seen the organization through many different periods, first as an observer and later as someone deeply involved in its work.

Over the last several years, I have worked my way through the organization, from the endowment committee to presidency, trying to fill some of the gaps and voids as they appeared—not necessarily because they belonged to me, but because they needed filling. My hope was fairly simple: to bring our community together more often, strengthen Bichitra's presence and reputation, and make our events something people would remember and look forward to.

I have also learned that organizations grow through continuity and consistency. A successful event is one thing; sustaining that effort year after year is another. It requires attending to details from start to finish, whether they involve artists, venues, logistics, food service, finances, hospitality, or the many small things that most people never see. Perhaps equally important is bringing more people into the organization so that the work, knowledge, and sense of community continue beyond any one person.

The results have been encouraging. Our membership has indeed grown; that growth belongs to Bichitra and to everyone who has contributed to it—quietly or visibly, in large ways and small.

Closest to my heart has been cultivating our Path Bhavan. Enriching our next generation of children with our culture and language has been both a meaningful experience and a source of pride to me. My hope is that this school will continue to thrive and grow.

Having spent most of my life around this organization, I know that Bichitra will continue to change, as it should. Every generation inherits something, adds something of its own, and eventually passes it forward.

I sincerely look forward to seeing more members carry that torch—bringing new ideas, taking ownership, and helping Bichitra continue to grow while preserving what has always mattered most: bringing people together.

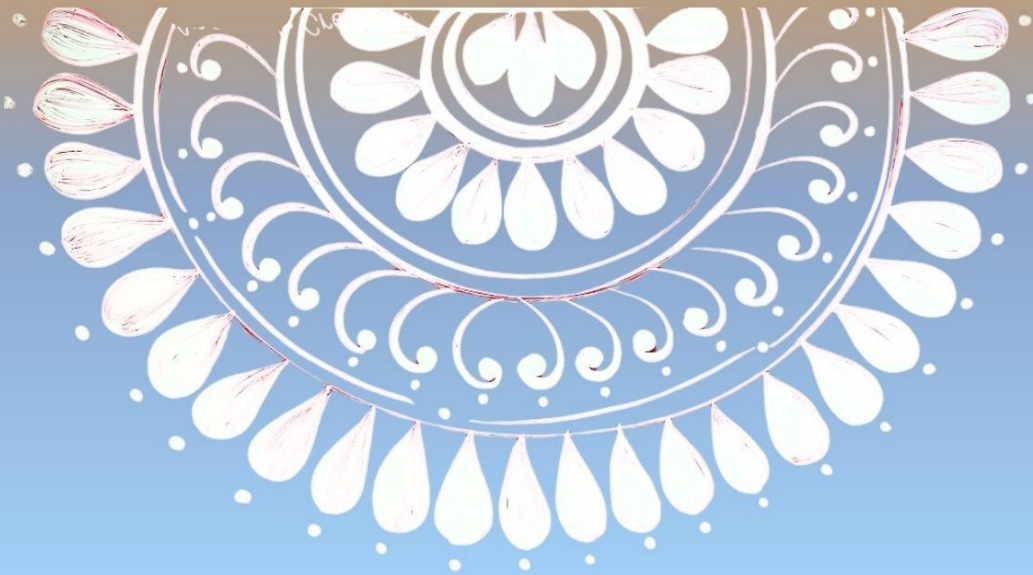
**Shubho Durga Puja
Anindya Roy**



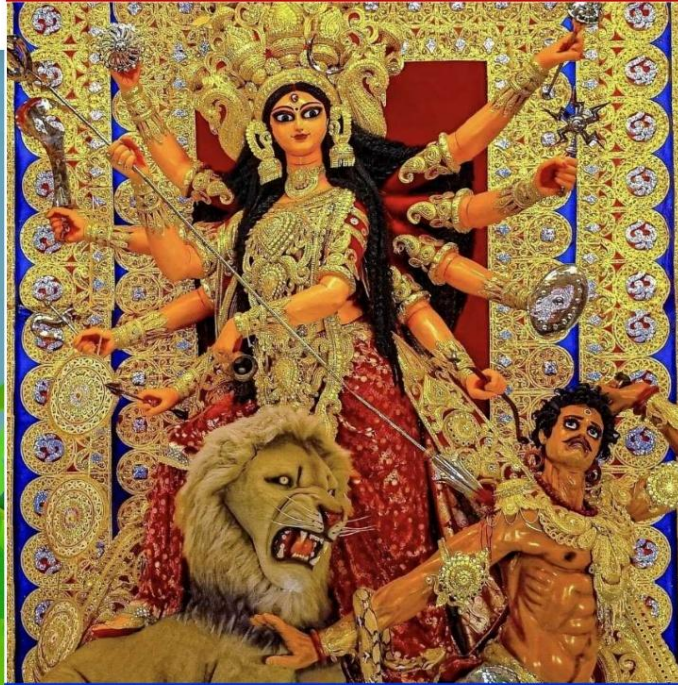
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Manoranjan & Sutapa Santra and Family



Happy Durgapuja



From the Chakraborty's of Tucson, Arizona



শুভ শারদীয়া

From Deanna-Zohanna (DZ) & Family

Happy Durgapuja



From the Mitra Family



Ma Durga's blessings to all

*From the extended Ghosh family
Runa-di, Ruby, Larry,
Ravi, Rebecca, Cayden, Cristian
Gigi, Partha and Jayanta*



MARK & RIA's
Dancing Jodi

*FROM OUR RHYTHM TO YOURS — PARTNERS IN DANCE,
 FITNESS, + CELEBRATION*

EVENT PERFORMERS + CROWD ENERGIZERS

- High-energy Bollywood & Western duet dance shows
- Interactive crowd-leading that gets everyone on the dance floor

DANCE LESSONS + CHOREOGRAPHY

- Fun & stress-free Wedding Couple First Dance prep
- Sangeet dance routines made easy & fun

FAMILY DANCE FITNESS CLASSES

- Bollywood & Latin-inspired workouts
- Fitness that feels like a party — for all ages!

We're partners in life and in dance — bringing rhythm, joy, and unforgettable memories to every stage, class, and celebration.

CONTACT:

- ☎ 832-704-8663 (Ria Wenske)
- ☎ 313-213-5796 (Mark Wenske)
- ✉ markwenskeis@gmail.com




Bichitra Picnic

GOVERNING BODY MEMBERS CAN HELP YOU GET CONNECTED WITH THE COMMUNITY

Sharmistha Sarkar – Senior Advisor



Throughout my 18-year association with Bichitra, I've served in various roles, including Treasurer, Planner, President, and most recently, Senior Advisor, allowing me to gain diverse experiences and perspectives, each role teaching me valuable skills and insights on managing a non-profit organization. But beyond the learnings, Bichitra has become more than just an organization to me; it's my extended family. Being away from home, I've found a sense of belonging and community within Bichitra, and the bonds I've formed over the years have made it feel like a second home.

Rupali Mukherjee – Principal Educator



My journey with Bichitra began in 2021, when I, along with my husband and son, attended the summer picnic. Since then, I've had the joy of participating in many cultural events—be it Bahurupi's dramas, fashion shows, or dance performances.

Being part of the Governing Body of this wonderful organization fills me with pride. Over the years I have had the opportunity to organize volunteer activities, Saraswati puja events as well as Christmas events for Bichitra.

I hope Bichitra continues to grow and flourish, giving Bengalis here more opportunities to celebrate our rich heritage together.

Animesh Das – Assistant Treasurer



I am Animesh Das. I am honored to serve as the Assistant Treasurer and a member of its Governing Body

Bichitra serves as a bridge that connects me with many respected Bengali families across Michigan. I have always wanted my children to stay connected to our rich Bengali culture, which can be challenging after living outside India for many years. Bichitra helps fill that gap, and Durga Puja, in particular, provides a wonderful opportunity for my family to enjoy cultural programs, Bengali cuisine, and the chance to wear traditional Bengali attire. I enjoy volunteering and helps me feel like an active part of the community.

SuSanta Sarkar – Senior Preserver



SuSanta Sarkar, Senior Preserver, has been part of Bichitra since 1981. He and his wife Shipra, in earlier time, volunteered for puja and cooking. After retirement, he plays a lot of tennis and pickle ball, reads whatever takes his fancy, and tries to follow his passion for performing arts. He is blessed with two sons, one daughter-in-law, two grand children, one grand dog, one grand cat, and a wife.

Sourav Paul – Principal Auditor



I have connected with Bichitra for the past 4 years. It has helped me and my family to connect to our Bengali roots in the USA and gave my daughter the opportunity to cherish our rich heritage far away from home. I am fortunate to be part of our theater group Bahurupi which gave my wife and me a chance to explore a hidden enthusiasm for acting in addition to my involvement in playing league cricket. In the past 4 years I have seen so many new people becoming a member and as always, bring additional value to the table. From being an outsider coming to see Durga Pujo to becoming a committee member, gives me the opportunity to be more involved with the organization and give back to the community. I hope to see more people joining Bichitra and make it grow along the line.

Mitali Chaudhery – Secretary



My name is Mitali Chaudhery. I have grown up with Bichitra, and many of my fondest memories come from preparing for Durga Puja through dance, music, and volunteering. From the early Bengali organization Mitali in Ann Arbor to decades with Bichitra, I watched my father serve as President, my mother make hundreds of rasgullas and host rehearsals, and later served as Secretary myself. Surrounded by Mashis, Meshos, Kakis, and Kakus, Bichitra became an extended family that strengthened my identity and deepened my love for Bengali culture. I am grateful to share that heritage with the next generation in Michigan today.

Jhulan Chatterjee – Deputy President



I am Jhulan Chatterjee, a Bichitra volunteer, community enthusiast, and believer in the connections that make every celebration meaningful.

I try to contribute wherever I am needed, supporting events and bringing people together. Over the years, I've learned that the smallest efforts often create the warmest memories and help transform Bichitra's celebrations into experiences we all cherish.

I envision a Bichitra that feels welcoming to everyone, where traditions remain strong and new ideas have room to grow. I hope we build lasting connections, inspire our children, celebrate our diversity, and continue creating a true community now and always.

Sutapa Santra – Junior Preserver



For the past 22 years, Bichitra has been a very special part of my life. It is much more than an organization to me—it has become my second home.

Over these years, I have had the opportunity to be involved, contribute, learn, make wonderful memories, and, most importantly, enjoy countless moments of fun and togetherness with so many amazing people.

When I look back, I feel grateful for every experience, every friendship, every celebration, and every challenge that has been part of this journey. Bichitra has given me a sense of belonging and many memories that I will always cherish.

I have been involved in the past, I am involved today, and I hope to continue being involved in the future. Bichitra will always have a special place in my heart.

Soumyajit Malik – Junior Auditor



My journey with Bichitra began in 2018 with Saraswati Puja, and what started as a celebration has blossomed into a cherished bond with a community that feels like family. Honored to serve as Junior Auditor on this year's Governing Body, I treasure Bichitra's beautiful way of bringing Bengal's traditions, warmth, and festive spirit closer to our hearts, even miles away from home.

As a Technology Architect at Ford, I specialize in AI and Multi-Cloud Platforms. Beyond technology, my greatest joy lies in the precious moments I share with my family and two little princesses.

I look forward to contributing to Bichitra's continued growth and creating memories that bring us closer. To me, Bichitra is more than a community—it is the heart of Bengal, beating beautifully in our lives, far from home.

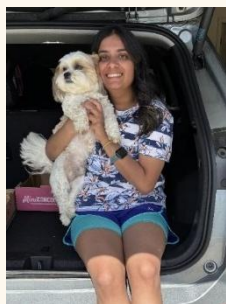
Tanima Basu – Associate Secretary



My name is Tanima Basu, and I have had the privilege of serving the Bengali community for the past years. I am deeply passionate about preserving and sharing our rich traditions and culture, ensuring they are passed onto the next generation.

Volunteering gives me immense satisfaction, as it allows me to give back to the community that has shaped me. Engaging in cultural events, educational programs, and charitable initiatives, I enjoy fostering connections and enhancing cultural awareness. My commitment is to continue building bridges across generations, nurturing a sense of identity, pride, and unity within our community.

Kripa Bandyopadhyay – Principal Planner



Youngest member of the Bichitra Governing Body.

I have an MS in Management from Walsh.

I grew up within the Bichitra Community and attended Troy Path Bhavan. I'm crazy about dogs and have a teddy bear canine named ChomChom.

Animesh Chowdhury – Vice President



In unity we find strength, in tradition we find purpose.

Bichitra Durga Pujo has always filled me with joy and a deep sense of connection. Over the years, my involvement has grown, inspired by my love for Bengali traditions and warmth of the Bichitra family.

It's especially heartening to see my son embrace our culture, language, and food with equal enthusiasm. Thanks to Path Bhavan, he truly enjoys his Bangla classes and related activities. On this Shubho Sharadiya, let's unite in the spirit of compassion and work together to nurture a brighter, cleaner, and more harmonious world for future generations.

Kapil Gupta – Assistant Secretary



I'm Kapil Gupta and I feel extremely honored to serve as a Governing Body Member once again in the year 2026-27. I am fortunate enough to be associated with Bichitra since last 7+ years and extremely happy to have attended several cultural and festive events that Bichitra organized in these years. Today, I cherish every moment I have spent with Bichitra - from the planning meetings and late-night preparations, the challenges, and the overwhelming support from each one of Bichitra members. Being part of this journey fills me with immense pride, and I look forward to many more years of growing together as one united family.

My family enjoys attending the events that Bichitra organizes throughout the year, as they give us the opportunity to experience the rich cultural and festive moments that we miss from home in Kolkata. These celebrations have become an integral part of our lives, helping us stay connected to our heritage and community.

Divyendu Banerjee – Associate Endower



Finding Our North Star in Michigan: Our Journey with Bichitra

When my family joined me here in 2019, we longed for the familiar joy of Durga Pujo. Our search led us to Bichitra, which quickly became our home away from home. More than just an organization, it is a family that supports and uplifts us.

This incredible community spirit inspired my desire to serve, first as Assistant Treasurer (2024) and now in my new role as Associate Endower (2026-27) on the Endowment Committee. It is a privilege to contribute to our shared future.

Wishing you and your loved ones a prosperous and happy Pujo season! Shubho Bijoya!

Sohini Sengupta – Assistant Endower



Married for 20 years to my postgraduate sweetheart, Anirban, I am the proud mother of two vibrant boys, Aditya (8) and Sohan (14), who keep me grounded and inspired.

Living in Troy, I have been a Bichitra member for four years. Professionally, I bring 21 years of IT leadership, specializing in strategic problem-solving and driving innovation. Beyond my love for tech, I find my true spark in gardening, dancing, crafting, reading and family-time.

I envision Bichitra as an enduring, vibrant cultural hub that bridges generations through shared creativity, mutual support, and sustainable community growth. I believe life is best lived with curiosity, creativity, and joy.

Sandip Gangapadhyay – Associate Educator



I moved to Michigan in 2012 and have attended Durga Pujo at various places. However, the warmth and family-like welcome at Bichitra is unmatched. I have been part of Bichitra Durga Pujo for the past four years, and this is my second year on the governing body. I am drawn to Bichitra's nurturing of Bengali culture and its supportive community, which embraces both adults and children. I also love traveling and photography, and enjoy capturing moments at Bichitra's events and celebrations.

Anirban Chandra – Principal Advisor



Connected with Bichitra for the past 6 years. Connection to the Bengali roots for the entire family and making friends motivated me to join Bichitra.

I will always fondly cherish all the adda, fun and social interactions that Bichitra community has added to our lives.

Let's keep the community membership growing, have bigger and better events and work together to instill love and pride for our Bengali heritage in future generations.

Probir Sil – Junior Advisor



Involved with Bichitra for around 20 years. My reason to join the Bichitra community was more self-centered. I was desperately looking for a community that could give me the feeling of home away from home.

As time progressed, I and my family took it for granted that every year we will get to enjoy the festivities rooted in Bengali culture without knowing how things were managed, but we were happy that we could relive our back home days and were able to give our children some sense of what it means to have Bengali root.

With time, came the realization that this wonderful tradition cannot continue if we just enjoy from the sidelines. It depends on our active participation. It is now my turn to give back to the community that welcomed me with open hands and keep the ball rolling.

Sampada Banerji – Senior Planner



Bichitra has been an integral part of our family for over 20 years. Initially, most of my time was spent in the hallways during the Bichitra events keeping Anukul and Kyle busy. Bangla was still a new language/culture to me. Path Bhavan gave us new best friends. Weekly Friday classes allowed the boys to learn, and I could get my adda time. Bichitra became our extended family - bringing everyone together across all generations.

Over the years, I was fortunate to work with so many of you on various committees - learn the ropes of Governing Body from Satyenda and Pranabda. Excited to be a part of growing Bichitra as the young generation is taking the lead and introducing new concepts.

Samrat Kundu – Junior Planner



I'm Samrat Kundu. I'm 40 and live in Novi with my wife and 9 years old daughter. I'm a fun-loving person who enjoys meeting new people, talking, and building friendships. I'm always up for a good conversation or a laugh. I am staying Michigan for last 10 years.

I'm a big sports fan — cricket, football, and table tennis are my favorites. Professionally, I work at Magna International as a Test Lead. I'm currently assigned Junior Planner role in Bichitra. I enjoy helping wherever I can and I'm pretty good at resource management and keeping things organized.

In the coming years, I would love to see Bichitra organize more fun events, such as a Sports Day for all age groups, along with the annual picnic. Activities like these bring everyone together, create great memories, and strengthen our community spirit.

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**BICHITRA
DURGA PUJA**

A CELEBRATION
OF CULTURE
& COMMUNITY

BICHITRA DURGA PUJA WEEKEND

3-DAY PUJA SCHEDULE

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16

PUJA MELA

CULTURE • FUN • COMMUNITY



Art Competition
6:30 – 8:30 PM



**Rasagolla Eating
Competition**
7:00 PM



Garba Dance
7:30 – 8:30 PM



**Complimentary
Mehendi**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 17

10:00 AM | Puja
11:00 AM | Anjali
12:00 PM | Lunch
2:00 PM | Drama – “Subarna Golak”
by Bichitra’s Bahurupi
drama group
4:00 PM | Bichitra’s Dance Group
Performance
5:00 PM | Dhak Competition
6:00 PM | Aroti
7:00 PM | Dinner
8:00 PM | Program
Sa Re Ga Ma Pa winner
Ankita Bhattacharyya
Indian Idol Runner-Up
Subhadeep Das Chowdhury

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18

11:00 AM | Puja
Noon | Anjali
1:00 PM | Lunch
2:00 PM | Pujor Adda
4:30 PM | Prelude by Soumyajyoti
5:00 PM | Program: Sa Re Ga Ma Pa
Winner Padma Palash
6:30 PM | Arati & Sindur
7:00 PM | Dinner

CULTURAL PROGRAM - সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান

Oct 17- Saturday



Ankita Bhattacharyya is a Bengali singer who rose to prominence as the winner of Zee Bangla's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa 2018–19 season. Hailing from Gobardanga in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, she captivated audiences with her expressive voice and consistently strong performances, earning the show's "Performer of the Day" distinction 26 times. Her grand finale performance also drew praise from renowned singer Sukhwinder Singh.

Following her television success, Ankita expanded her recorded repertoire with songs including "Komola." Bringing youthful energy and warmth to Bengali music, she represents a new generation of performers connecting audiences with the joy and richness of Bengal's musical traditions.



Subhadeep Das Chowdhury is an Indian vocalist from Kolkata who earned national recognition as the first runner-up of Indian Idol Season 14, which concluded in March 2024. With a foundation in classical music, he brings expressive depth and versatility to his interpretations of Indian film songs. His performances showcase a combination of vocal agility, melodic sensitivity, and emotional intensity.

Bringing warmth and energy to his performances, he connects the richness of Indian musical traditions with the appeal of popular song. Expanding his career into Bollywood playback singing, Subhadeep lent his voice to "Ishq Jalakar – Karvaan" from Dhurandhar, adding a significant film credit to his achievements on the Indian Idol stage.

Oct 18- Sunday



Padma Palash Halder is a Bengali vocalist known for his soulful interpretations of kirtan and devotional music. He rose to prominence as joint winner of Zee Bangla's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa 2022–23 season. His performances brought Bengal's rich kirtan tradition to a wider television audience, showcasing the emotional depth and expressive storytelling at the heart of this musical heritage.

With a style rooted in devotion, Padma Palash brings warmth and spiritual resonance to the stage. His music offers audiences a connection to Bengal's cultural roots through the enduring beauty of devotional song.



Soumyajyoti Ghosh is an Indian flutist whose work encompasses live performances and contemporary Bengali music recordings. Bringing the distinctive voice of the bamboo flute to a variety of musical settings, he has contributed to projects associated with Rathijit Bhattacharjee, including "Baba" and Saptapadi—A Wedding Tale. His recording credits also include Bengali film music.

Through his performances and collaborations, Soumyajyoti connects the flute's timeless appeal with contemporary musical expression. His presence adds an instrumental dimension to vocal ensembles, celebrating the flute's capacity for melody, atmosphere, and emotion.

Oct 24- Bijoya



Jisshu Sengupta is a versatile Bengali actor and television presenter whose career spans Bengali and Hindi cinema. He first gained recognition for portraying Chaitanya Mahaprabhu in the television series Mahaprabhu. His collaborations with celebrated filmmaker Rituparno Ghosh—including Abohoman, Noukadubi, and Chitrangada—established his reputation for sensitive, nuanced performances.

His notable films include Jaatishwar, Rajkahini, and Ek Je Chhilo Raja, alongside Hindi productions such as Mardaani and Shakuntala Devi. Equally familiar to television audiences as the host of Zee Bangla's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, Jisshu brings warmth, charisma, and a strong connection with audiences to both screen and stage.



Kushal Paul is a singer, performer, and composer from Kolkata who achieved national recognition as the winner of Zee TV's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa in 2016. His musical journey also includes Zee Bangla's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa, connecting his beginnings in Bengali television with his subsequent success on a national platform. Through singing, live performance, and composition, Kushal has continued to develop his identity as a contemporary artist. His journey from Kolkata to a nationally televised championship reflects his dedication to music and the opportunities that introduced his talent to audiences across India.



Nov 7- Kali Bari Kali Puja

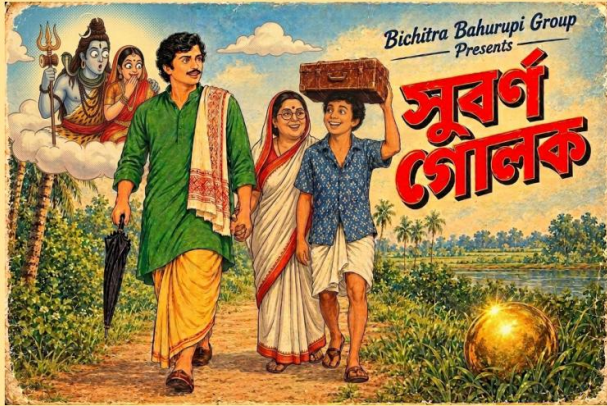


Trisha Chatterjee is an Indian playback singer and live performer whose repertoire spans film songs, contemporary melodies, and devotional music. She began learning music at the age of three under her mother's guidance and went on to earn a master's degree in Vocal Music from Rabindra Bharati University. Her television appearances include Zee Bangla's Sa Re Ga Ma Pa.

Trisha made her playback debut with "Ektu Khola Hawa" from Baranda and gained wider recognition with "Shudhu Tui" from Villain. Her other recordings include "Pora Mon" from Ke Tumi Nandini and "Jodi Brishti Hosh." Alongside her recording career, she has performed for audiences across India, Bangladesh, and the United States, bringing an expressive voice and vibrant stage presence to her concerts.

Bichitra Bahurupi Group Presents সুবর্ণ গোলক (The Golden Ball)

(Based on a Satirical Comedy Drama written in 1885 by Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay)



High atop Mount Kailash, Parbati playfully tosses down a mysterious golden ball gifted by Mahadeb—unaware of its hidden cursed power! Down on earth, Kaliprasanna, his mother, and his servant Rama travel to bring home Kaliprasanna's second wife, Kamalasundari. But village roads have a funny way of changing plans. Right in the middle of the path, Kaliprasanna finds the glittering ball and hands it over to Rama.

Big mistake!

The moment that magical ball changes hands, reality completely loses its mind! Secrets slip, minds scramble, and unexpected twists multiply faster than village gossip! One bizarre disaster unpredictably leads straight into the next, and suddenly, the whole family is caught in a web of absurd events that nobody could have ever anticipated! Even the gods watching with amused curiosity are on the edge of their seats—because when that golden ball starts changing hands, only God knows what happens next! This epic comedy-drama will keep you guessing, laughing, and gasping until the very end. Sit back, relax, and get ready to enjoy the ultimate comic madness!

Cast of Characters

Mahadeb – Animesh Chowdhury	Parboti – Priyanka Dey	Bhringi – Ashish Mitra
Kaliprasanna – Sandip Ganguly	Rama – Sourav Paul	Ramdin – Barun Saha
Uddhab – Mrinmoy Karmakar	Nilratan – Debangshu Majumdar	Aachamka Debi – Anasuya Sen
Taranga – Nabaneeta Paul	Mukherjee – Sudharanjan Bhattacharyya	Mashi – Shampa Bhattacharyya
Naya – Tanaya Bose Ganguly	Gobordhan – Abhishek Mukherjee	Brinda – Rupali Mukherjee
Karalasundari – Bidisha Das	Kamalasundari – Ishita Chakraborty	Banerjee – Arijit Dey

Make-up: Suparna De, Shubhadra Bandyopadhyay, Devlina Sur, Tanima Basu & Kripa Bandyopadhyay •
Music Director: Partha De (with music input from Arijit Mondal / Prasenjit Roy – KOLKATA) • **Music Coordinator:** Rajat Dey • **Stage, Microphone & Lighting Management:** Deb Bonnerjee, Pradipta Ghosh, Pijush Nandi, Arijit Ghosh & Debabrata Paul •
Prompters: Kankana Khatua & Soumi Sharma • **Background Poster:** Devlina Sur • **Directors of Photography and Videography:** Mahuya Mazumdar & Debasish Banerjee •
Graphics & Poster: Sandip Ganguly •

Script & Direction: Sudharanjan Bhattacharyya





BICHITRA DANCE GROUP PRESENTS Ek Poth, Onek Golpo · এক পথ, অনেক গল্প

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CREDITS

CHOREOGRAPHY

Jhulan Chatterjee & Sonantika Saha Malik

SCRIPT

Jhulan Chatterjee

NARRATORS

Tia Chaudhery & Jhulan Chatterjee

BOARD DECORATION

Sohini Sengupta

PERFORMERS

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Sathi Debnath | 10. Mousumi Majumdar |
| 2. Chandrani Sengupta | 11. Rinita Bose Mitra |
| 3. Sonali Das | 12. Sutapa Santra |
| 4. Sonia Saha | 13. Mitali Chakraborty |
| 5. Pronomita Banerjee | 14. Sumita Roy |
| 6. Sohini Sengupta | 15. Sampada Banerji |
| 7. Sonantika Saha Malik | 16. Jhulan Chatterjee |
| 8. Ria Wenske | 17. Tia Chaudhery |
| 9. Soma Dutta | |

Bichitra Durga Puja

শুক্রবার Friday Menu

October 16

Snacks

Jhal Muri
Tea

Dinner

Veg Hakka Noodles
Gobi Manchurian
Lamb Biryani
Vegetable Korma
Rice
Rosogolla
Kids: Pizza, Cookies

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Garba



Mehndi



Art
Competition



Rosogolla
Competition

শনিবার Saturday Menu October 17

Lunch

Khichuri 🌿 Beguni 🌿 Labra 🌿 Papad
Live Dosa Station 🌿 Tomato Chutney
Payesh 🌿

Kids: Pasta w/ Marinara and Alfredo Sauce, Madeleines

Snacks

Veggie Chops 🌿 Assorted Chips Bags 🌿 Coffee/Tea

Dinner

🌿 Jeera Rice	🌿 Naan
🌿 Dal Tadka	🌿 Poto Posto
🌿 Paneer Makhni	🌿 Rui Fish Curry
🌿 Butter Chicken	🌿 Tomato Chutney

🌿 Rasmalai 🌿

Kids: Chicken Fried Rice, Veg Spring Rolls, Veg Lo Mein Noodles

❧ Bichitra Durga Puja ❧

রবিবার Sunday Menu

October 18

Lunch

Lemon Rice ❧ Luchi (made on-site) ❧ Bhindi Masala
❧ Mixed Vegetable ❧ Cholar Daal
❧ Sandesh ❧

Kids: Mac & Cheese (Noodles & Company), Cupcakes

Snacks

Samosa ❧ Assorted Chips ❧ Tea

Dinner

❧ Veg Pulao ❧ Goat Curry
❧ Bengun Masala ❧ Fish Fry
❧ Daal Makhni ❧
❧ Chom Chom ❧

Kids: Qdoba Taco Bar, Brownies

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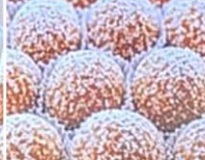
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HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATE

Ashni Desai

Parents: Atasi Bagchi & Sheel Desai

Graduated: Novi High School, 2026

Next: University of Michigan – Ann Arbor



EMERGING PROFESSIONAL

Sanchari (Ria) Basu

Parents: Partha Sarathi & Sumita Basu

School: Wayne State University, Mike Ilitch School of Business

Degree: MBA in Accounting

Graduation: December 2026



EMERGING PROFESSIONAL

Dr. Trisha Ray, MD

Parents: Suparna & Tuhin Ray

Graduated: Wayne State University School of Medicine

Residency: General Surgery, University of Virginia Medical Center, Charlottesville, VA

BIRTH ANNOUNCEMENTS

স্বাগতম · Welcome to the world



Aaradhya

(RADHA) BANERJEE

Name: Aaradhya Banerjee (Radha)

Date of Birth: January 26, 2026

Parents: Divyendu & Pronomita Banerjee

Didi: Pratyasha Banerjee



৫২ তম শারদোৎসব ১৪৩৩/২০২৬!

এবং বাৎসরিক "ঐকতান" র "১৩"-এ পা !

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

সম্পাদকীয়

ঢাকে পড়লো কাঠি । ওই দূর থেকে শোনা যায় ঢাকীদের বাজনা । আর কি মন মানে । সকালে ঘাসের ওপর শিশির । ঠান্ডা শীতল আমেজ । আকাশে পেজা তুলোর মতো নরম তুলতুলে মেঘেদের অবোধ বিচরণ আমাদের মনে করিয়ে দেয় যে শরৎ কাল এসে পড়েছে । প্রকৃতির নিয়মে শরৎ কাল আসে প্রতি বার । বাঙালির মহোৎসব দুর্গাপূজা এই শরতে । শিউলির গন্ধে বাগান ম ম করে । সকাল সকাল শিউলি তলায় গিয়ে ফুল তুলে নিয়ে আসা বাঙালির শরতের সকালের এক রোজকার অভ্যাস । সারা বছরের অপেক্ষা কবে আসবে পূজা । পূজা আসবে আসবে এই অনুভূতিটা বেশ আনন্দের । পূজা এসে গেলেই সব শেষ হয়ে যায় খুব তাড়াতাড়ি ।

ছোটবেলায় সকলের পূজা শুরু হতো নতুন জামা কাপড় কেনা কাটা থেকে । বাড়ি ঘর রং করানো । নতুন পর্দা - নতুন ঘর সাজানোর জিনিস । অনেক বাড়িতে আবার আসবাবপত্র এদিক থেকে ওদিক করার রেওয়াজ ছিল । জীবন এক ঘেয়ে যেন না হয়ে পড়ে । পুরানোর মধ্যে নতুনের খোঁজ ।

এক বছর অতিবাহিত কালের নিয়মে । মা দুর্গা আসছেন আমাদের মাঝে । তাই আমাদের বিচিত্রার ছয় তরুণ-তরুণী মায়ের ছবি এঁকেছে নিজেদের মতো করে । তারা যন্ত্র নিয়ে রং তুলি পেন্সিল ব্যবহার করে নিজের মনের মা দুর্গাকে রূপ দিয়েছে । তারা এখন মিডল ও হাই স্কুলে পড়ে । তাদের সারা জীবনের সম্পদ হিসেবে রয়ে যাবে এই কাজ । বিচিত্রা যে তাদের ছেলে মেয়েদের সুযোগ দিয়েছে সেটা ওদের অনুপ্রাণিত করবে নিজের কমিউনিটি করবে ।

অন্যান্য বছরের মতো আমাদের বাৎসরিক পত্রিকা ঐকতান এবারেও সকলের অবদানে সেজে উঠেছে । আমরা বেশ কিছু লেখা পেয়েছি আমাদের বিচিত্রার সেই গুরুজনদের থেকে যারা পঞ্চাশ বছরের আগে বীজ বপন করেছিলেন এই কমিউনিটির । আমরা ছোটদের পাতার জন্য অনেক আঁকা ও লেখা পেয়েছি । এবার বড়োরাও পিছিয়ে নেই - তাঁরা সময় মতো জমা দিয়েছেন আঁকা । কেউ মায়ের মুখ তো কেউ অন্য কিছু । বিচিত্রার সকলের উপস্থিতি এবার চোখে পড়বে ঐকতানে । তনিমা বসু যন্ত্র নিয়ে সব লেখা ও আঁকা জমা করে দিয়েছেন । মিতালী চৌধুরী অনেক পরিশ্রম করে সুন্দর কভার পেজ বানিয়েছে ছয়জনের আঁকা দিয়ে । সে আরো অনেক সুন্দর ক্লায়ার বানিয়ে ঐকতান কে সাজিয়েছে । সৌরভ পাল ও কৃপা বন্দোপাধ্যায় তহবিল সংগ্রহের তালিকা প্রকাশনার কাজ নিপুন ভাবে সামলেছে । শুভজিৎ সেনগুপ্ত গতবারের মতো এবারেও নীরবে সব আবদার মেনে সমস্ত লেখা, আঁকা, বিজ্ঞাপন সব কিছু দিয়ে মালা গাঁথছেন ।

আমাদের চেয়ারপার্সন অনিন্দ্য রায় ও প্রেসিডেন্ট পার্থ সারথি দাস আমাদের সাহায্যের হাত বাড়িয়ে দিয়েছেন । সকল গভর্নিং বডির সদস্যদের ও দুর্গা পূজার স্বেচ্ছা সেবকদের কাছে আমরা কৃতজ্ঞ । সকলের অক্লান্ত পরিশ্রম ও আর্থিক সাহায্য ছাড়া এত বড়ো উদ্যোগ সামলানো অতি দুষ্কর ।

শুভ শারদীয়ার প্রীতি ও শুভেচ্ছা সকলকে । গুরুজনদের জানাই সশ্রদ্ধ প্রণাম ।

নমস্কার ।

Thank you to everyone who contributed literary works, artwork, and photographs to *Aikotaan 2026*, Bichitra's annual magazine. It is always a pleasure to experience the richness of our community through your beautiful words and imagery. This year, six pieces were submitted by our young artists. Mitali Chaudhery designed this year's cover using their wonderful creations. Please see the inside pages to learn the names of these talented young artists, and join us in encouraging them to remain involved in our community. As always, the quality and diversity of all the submissions are deeply impressive.

Our sincere thanks go to Tanima Basu, Mitali Chaudhery, Kripa Bandyopadhyay, and Sourav Paul for their hard work and dedication. We are especially grateful to Sri Subhajit Sengupta for compiling the entire issue of *Aikotaan 2026*.

We also thank all the Governing Body members and Durga Puja 2026 volunteers for their invaluable support. Bichitra extends its heartfelt appreciation to our donors and sponsors for their generosity. Finally, we are grateful to Bichitra President Partha S. Das and Chairperson Anindya Roy for their unwavering support.

Subho Sharadiya!

পিছু ফিরে দেখা

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সত্যেন বসু

বি ই কলেজের হোস্টেল, জীবনের এক অবিস্মরণীয় অংশ। যারা সেই অনুষ্ঠানে অংশ গ্রহণ করেননি তাঁদের মধ্যে অনেকেই হয়তো অনুভব করতে পারবেন না। আর যারা সেই জীবন দর্শন করেছেন, তাঁদের কাছে ভালো মন্দ মিলিয়ে এক অপূর্ব মিশ্রণ।

ভোরবেলায় চটকলের মতো ঠোঁ পড়া, দুপুরে খাওয়ার পর বেলা একটার ক্লাসে টুলতে টুলতে লেকচার অনুধ্যান করা, ভ্যাম সাহেব ক্লাসে (যাঁর একটা কথাও বোঝা যেতনা) প্রশ্নের উত্তর মজাদার উত্তর দেওয়া, ক্লাস ফাঁকি দিয়ে অথবা রাতে চুপিচুপি সিনেমা দেখতে যাওয়া, সে এক অপূর্ব অভিজ্ঞতা। তার থেকেও শিহরণ জাগানো স্মৃতি ক্রিকেটে ইংল্যান্ডের বিরুদ্ধে ভারতের বিজয় সংবাদে ক্যাম্পাসের মধ্যে বাজি ফোটানোর পর প্রিন্সিপ্যাল এ সি রায়েবর কলেজ থেকে বার করে দেওয়ার ধমকানি, এ সব ভোলার নয়। অথচ যখন এডমিশন টেস্ট দিতে বা সেই এ সি রায়ে গোষ্ঠীর কাছে ভার্সাল ইন্টারভিউ দিতে এসেছিলাম, তখনতো এতো ভয় ছিলোনা। এখানে না পেলে অন্য কোথাও পাবো।

যাই হোক, যেদিন দাদার সঙ্গে ভয়ে ভয়ে ভর্তি হতে এলাম (বাঁকুড়ার ছেলে), সেদিনের কথা বলি। টাকা জমা দেওয়ার পরে পাঠিয়ে দিলো সাত নম্বর হোস্টেলে (অনেকটা সাত নম্বর কয়েদীর মতো)। দাদা ফিরে গেলে সাত নম্বর হোস্টেলের দুশো তিন নম্বর ঘরে চার নম্বর লোহার খাটে বিছানা পেতে শুয়েপড়ার কয়েক মিনিট পরেই উপলব্ধি করলাম ছারপোকারা অনেকদিন রক্তপান করতে পারেনি। আমার মতো ফার্স্ট ইয়ারের অন্যান্য রুমমেটদের জিজ্ঞাসা করে জানলাম হোস্টেলের কোনো এক ব্যারাক সার্ভেন্টকে দিয়ে হোস্টেল সুপারকে এপ্লিকেশন করতে হবে। দিলাম ঠুকে একটা। এই এক বিরাট ভুল। সেদিনের ক্লাস শেষ। পাশের ঘরের সেকেন্ড ইয়ারের এক দাদা এসে বললেন সন্ধ্যা বেলায় যেন আমরা (ফার্স্ট ইয়ারের ছেলেরা) সবাই এই ঘরেই থাকি, সুপার আসবেন দেখা করতে। সন্ধ্যার পর অন্ধকার হলে এক জন লোক এলেন, মাথায় টুপি, সঙ্গে আরো দুজন টুপিহীন। হটাৎ ঘরের আলো নিভে গেলো। একটি গলা শোনা গেলো এদিকে পর পর দাঁড়াও। আদেশ পালনের সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই তীব্র সাবান জলের পিচকারি চললো আমাদের খোলা চোখের ওপর, বন্ধ করার সুযোগ পাওয়ার আগেই। আলো জ্বলে উঠলো, আদেশ এলো দশ মিনিট বড়ো বড়ো করে চোখ খুলে রাখার পর বাথরুমে গিয়ে মুখ ধুয়ে এলেই দেখতে পাবে সব ছারপোকার হাওয়া। আমাদের চোখ তখন জ্বলছে। যাই হোক আদেশ মতো চোখ ধোবার সুযোগ পেয়েই বাথরুমে ছুটলাম।

ঘরে ফিরে দেখি, সেকেন্ড ইয়ারের ছেলেরা নেই। কেউ বোললো চল সুপারের কাছে যাই, আমাদের ভিক্তি দিয়ে এটা করেছে ওরা। আরেকজন বললো কিস্পু হবেনা বন্ধু, এরে কয় ড্যাগিং, ওই ছেলেরা এখন অন্য ব্যাচের কাছে। অন্যকেউ বললো, আসলে গত বছর ওরা যা যা খেয়েছেন, তা উসূল করলেন। অন্য একজন বললো, দেখলে না, একজনের চোখ কেমন জ্বলজ্বল করছিল। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে আরেকজন দেখলে কি করে? উত্তর, হেঃ হেঃ বাহব বা, আলো নেভার সঙ্গে সঙ্গেই চোখ বন্ধ।... এই হলো প্রথম দিনের অভিজ্ঞতা।

পরদিন থেকে ক্লাস আরম্ভ হয়ে গেলো। বেশ কয়েকদিন গেলো। এখন বাষট্টি বছর আগে, ভাবাই যায়না যে ফার্স্ট ইয়ারে তখন হতো চারটি সাবজেক্টের ক্লাস, ফিজিক্স, কেমিস্ট্রি, ম্যাথমেটিক্স আর ইংলিশ। প্রথম ক্লাস থেকে বেশ কিছুদিন পর্যন্ত প্রত্যেকটি শিক্ষকের একই ধমক, যে কোনো পরীক্ষায় ফেল করলেই কিন্তু ব্যাক পেতে হয়। (মানে হচ্ছে পরের বছর অন্যান্য সব সাবজেক্টের সঙ্গে ফেলকরা সাজেস্টেটরও পরীক্ষা দিয়ে পাস করার একটা সুযোগ দেওয়া হবে। যদি পেরিয়ে যায় তো বেঁচে গেলে, পরের বছরের জন্য তৈরী হও। তবে ফেল করলে রিপিট পেতে হয় (অর্থাৎ আরেক বছর ওই ক্লাসেই)। এর পরেও আরেকটি ফাঁদ আছে, তার নাম হলো সি এন আর মানে ক্যান নট রিপিট, অর্থাৎ এবার বাড়ি যাও তোমায় আর রাখতে পারলাম না। ভদ্র ভাষায় তোমাকে কলেজ থেকে তাড়ানো হলো। শিক্ষকদের এই কথাগুলো যেন ছাত্রছাত্রীদের মনে গেঁথে দেওয়া হয়। এরপর মাসিক পরীক্ষার জন্য তৈরী হওয়ার সময় আবার খোঁচা দেওয়া।

পরীক্ষার পর প্রত্যেক অভিভাবক চিঠি পাবেন। কেউ কেউ 'এ' চিঠি পেলেন লেখা, আপনার ছেলে/মেয়ে পাস করেছে, কিন্তু আরো ভালো করার উৎসাহ দাও, যাতে পরের পরীক্ষায় আরো ভালো করে, না করলে দুঃখের সম্ভাবনা। কিন্তু তাঁদের সংখ্যা কম। 'বি' চিঠির সংখ্যাধারী বেশি, তারা জানলেন, আপনার ছেলে/মেয়ে এই এই বিষয়ে অনুত্তীর্ণ। এরপর "ব্যাক", "রিপিট", "সি এন আর" শব্দগুলির ভাসা ভাসা ব্যাখ্যা। হৃদয়মাঝে ভীতি উদ্ভাবনের কৃত্রিম প্রচেষ্টা।

বছর শেষে দুঝোলা ব্যাক নিয়ে সেকেন্ড ইয়ারে উঠলাম। আলাপ হলো কয়েক জন রিপিটার ছেলেমেয়েদের সাথে। সকলের ঝোলায় বোঝা 'ইংরেজি' ও 'অংক'। সবাই বেশ বন্ধু হয়ে উঠলো। তাদের মধ্যে একজন কয়েকটি মাসতুতো মামাতো বোনদের নিয়ে হাজির হলো কলেজ দেখতে। একজন ছাত্র এগিয়ে গেলো বিশেষ ভাবে পরিচিত হাতে। কেউ প্রশ্ন করলো "তুই সমীরদার বোনদের পিছনে পড়লি কেন?"। সঙ্গে সঙ্গে উত্তর "ওনার বোন আমার স্ত্রী হতে পারেন"।

মেকানিক্যাল ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং প্রফেসর শান্তিজনবাবু বেশ অশান্তিতেই ফেললেন। ক্লাসে চুপচাপ পড়া শুনতে হবে, পরের ক্লাসে উত্তর দিতে হবে। নইলে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকো।

এরকম নানান আনন্দ ও দুঃখ মধুর দিন গুলোর সাথে আমরাও এগিয়ে চললাম।

অফিসিয়াল খেলারমাঠ স্পোর্টস এণ্ড আক্টিভিটি সেন্টার ওড়ালের নাম করতেই হয়। ফুটবল, ক্রিকেট সবই হতো। কপিটশন গেম আমাদের টিমও অন্য কলেজে গিয়ে খেলতো। ছাত্রদের নিয়ে যাওয়া হতো একটি 'মুড়িরটিন' বাসগাড়িতে, চেহারার সংগে অপূর্ব মিল।

দেখতে দেখতে আরো দুবছর কেটে গেলো। কনভোকেশনে উপস্থিত হলাম। ডিগ্রী সার্টিফিকেট পেলাম সেই সঙ্গে কলকাতা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উপাচার্যের ভাষণ ও একটি বাক্য। বি ই কলেজের পক্ষ থেকে ডক্টর বড়াল বললেন, "আই প্রেসেন্ট ইউ দি স্টুডেন্টস অফ বি ই কলেজ হু গ্র্যাজুয়েটেড উইথ সিভিল, মেকানিক্যাল, ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল, মেটালার্জি, মাইনিং, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ইন দি কারেন্ট ইয়ার"

উপাচার্য বললেন, "বাই দি অথরিটি ডেস্টেড ইন মি এজ ভাইস চ্যান্সেলর অফ দি ইউনিভার্সিটি, আই আডমিট ইউ টু দি ডিগ্রীস অফ সিভিল, মেকানিক্যাল, ইলেক্ট্রিক্যাল, মেটালার্জি, মাইনিং, ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং, এন্ড চার্জ ইউ দ্যাট এভার ইন ইওর লাইফ এন্ড কনভারসেশন শো ইওরসেল্ফ ওয়াদী অফ দি সেম "

মনে রাখার মতোই কথা। এবার চাকরি খোঁজার পালা। শেষ হলো বি ই কলেজের পালা।

ক্রমশঃ

এই প্রবাসে

অম্লান দত্ত

স্কুল লাইফে একটা সুনীল গাঙ্গুলির বই হাতে এসেছিলো যার নাম ছিল সুদূর ঝর্ণার জলে। বইটা ছিলো সুনীলের আমেরিকায় দিন কাটানোর সময়ের ডাইরি। বইটা পড়ে ভীষণ ভালো লাগা তৈরি হয়েছিল এই দেশটার সম্বন্ধে। তখনো তো বুঝি নি সুদূর আসলে কত দূর। তারপর প্রায় ২ দিন বিভিন্ন এয়ারপোর্টে কাটানোর পর যখন প্রথমবার এই দেশে আমি পৌঁছই অনেক বছর আগে, প্রথম দেখায় usa আমাকে চমকে দেয়। তখন একটু বুঝেছিলাম দেশটা বেশ দূর বটে কিন্তু তখনো বুঝি নি সুদূর বলতে ঠিক কত দূর।

অথচ বোঝা উচিত ছিল, যেমন দিদি যতদিন বেঁচে ছিলেন, মাঝে মাঝেই বাংলাদেশের গল্প করতেন, বলতেন "সব ছেড়ে আসার খুব কষ্ট দাদুভাই, আমি ভুলতে পারি না" অথচ বাংলাদেশ কত কাছে, টাকিতে একবার পিকনিক করতে যাওয়া হয়েছিল, জাস্ট একটা নিঃসঙ্গ নদী পেরোলেই ওপারের ভুখন্ড নাকি বাংলাদেশ। জীবনের বেশিরভাগটা এই দেশ কাটানো দিদির আক্ষেপের ওপারের খুব কাছের অথচ না পৌঁছনো দেশ এর নাম বাংলাদেশ। হয়তো এটাকে দূর বলে না, হয়তো সুদূর বলে।

সেদিক থেকে দেখতে গেলে ফেলে আসা ছোটবেলা সুদূর, হারিয়ে যাওয়া সাইকেল সুদূর, বিকেলবেলার মাঠ সুদূর, হারিয়ে ফেলা ডাকনামও সুদূর।

যাই হোক এই দেশে আসার প্রথম দিনগুলোয় আমি দূরত্ব বুঝেছি, সুদূরত্ব বুঝিনি। এক ফোন কল দূরে মা, উইকেন্ডের ফোন কল দূরে বন্ধু, প্রথম সুদূরত্ব বুঝলাম দুর্গা পূজোর আগে, সপ্তমীর দিন অফিস করতে করতে। বুঝলুম এখানে উইকেন্ডে পূজো হয়, পূজোর অপেক্ষাতে উইকেন্ডের দূরত্বও পেরোতে চাইছে না। এদিকে কলকাতায় হয়তো ভাসান। একটু একটু করে বুঝতে শিখলাম দূরত্ব মাইল ফলকে মাপা হয় না। আসল দূরত্ব মনের দূরত্ব, সাহচর্যের দূরত্ব, সঙ্গীহীনতার দূরত্ব। অঙ্ক ভুল শেখা হয়ে গেছে অথচ বয়স বেড়ে গেছে এতটা।

এরপর সময় ঝড়ের বেগে কাটে এই দেশে, দ্রুত বুড়ে হয়ে যেতে যেতে দেখলাম মানুষ ভারী সোশ্যাল প্রাণী। আমিও এক ভীড় থেকে ছিটকে আর এক ভীড়ে মানিয়ে নিছি, আমার বন্ধুরাও তাই। উইকেন্ডের কল এর দূরত্ব বাড়তে বাড়তে মাস, তারপর ৩ মাস, ৬ মাস, এখন বৎসরান্তে কোনো কোনো দিন, বুঝলাম এটাকে সুদূর বলে। যেই দূরত্ব চাইলে হয়তো অতিক্রম করা যায় কিন্তু সময় আর মন অন্য রকম হয়ে যায় বলে যে পথে আর হাঁটা হয় না সেটা তো সুদূরের পথই বটে।

যেদিন প্রথম এই দেশে বরফ দেখলাম, আন্তে আন্তে চোখের সামনে পুরো পৃথিবী পাল্টে গেলো সেটা তো চেনা পৃথিবী ছিল না, সেটা সেই সুদূরের স্বপ্নের দেশই ছিলো।

আমরা যারা দুর্গাপূজো দিয়ে বয়স মাপি নিজের বা পৃথিবীর, তাদের কাছে মাঝে মাঝে কলকাতার দুর্গা পূজোও দিদির চোখের বাংলাদেশের মতো।

খুব কাছের কিন্তু সুদূর ঝর্ণার জলের মতো, স্মৃতির মতো অমলিন ঝকঝকে আবার সুদূর পাহাড়ি পথের কুয়াশার মতো ঝাপসাও বটে।

“SHONAMON”

Sumita Chaudhery

In my youth, the happiest news for me was to know that my parents and I would be going to Kolkata. Since summer vacation was ideal to get away from Delhi’s ‘hellish’ heat, train travel to Kolkata, almost every year, became an ideal escape to visit my maternal grandparents and spend some time with various members of my extended family.

Every summer, the taxi ride to Dhakuria, to ‘Dadur Barhi,’ made for a dusty environment that required me to bring out my handkerchief to cover my nose and mouth. As the taxi entered through the gate, crackling over the red-brick pebbles, I could hear my Dadu’s sonorous voice coming from a paan-chewed red mouth, “Ora Eshe Giyeche!” Since the huge iron-gate entrance was kept open for the taxi to enter, I could see Dadu sitting on his basket-weave chair, smoking hukkah.

Within minutes I could see her coming out of the middle room, slightly hobbling, clutching her ‘aanchal’ to wipe her wet hands. Every time, with open arms, she waited to embrace me as I stepped up to the veranda. “Oh, my Shonamon,” she exclaimed, hugging me tightly, breathing heavily with some difficulty. Nothing else mattered to me now that I was in the arms of my golden heart, **my** Shonamon! My excitement knew no bounds! At that time, I was entirely unaware of the cause of her difficulties in breathing.

Wherever Shonamon went around the premise, I simply followed her around the inner veranda or played ball with my cousins in the large inner courtyard; this courtyard also served as an ideal location for wedding ceremonies of my maternal aunts and uncles. From the pond behind the house, ducks and their ducklings always found open entry for their daily tour of the veranda and the courtyard; they quacked along, conversing with each other and pausing occasionally to “chat” with whoever was watching them. Despite hobbling along for the management of the household and preparation of the meals for all of us, Shonamon made sure we had a daily supply of Daabs/green coconuts to keep our stomachs “cool.”

Shonamon’s attire was always a white cotton sari with a contrast color border, at least three inches or more in width, worn in Bengali style. Whenever I hugged her, I could smell the freshly washed and starched sari. Even the ducks followed her around on the veranda like a group of devoted ‘bhaktas,’ in and out of the rooms, following the scent of incense, occasionally pausing to observe Shonamon’s actions after her daily ‘puja.’

Especially on Thursday evenings, Shonamon’s special activity was to attend a prayer at a nearby temple within walking distance. A group of ‘kirtanias’ sang devotional songs there. For me this was a great opportunity to experience not only the way ‘kirtans’ are sung authentically but also to observe how the lyrics, rendered with appropriate emotion, brought tears among some devotees.

A year before I came to America, when I went to Kolkata with my parents to attend a cousin’s wedding at Dhakuria, Shonamon was aflutter, getting the house ready and making the arrangements for all the rituals and menus for all the relatives who would be coming from various distances to stay for several days. I knew that Shonamon would not have the time to rest herself, let alone spare her lap

for me to rest my head, especially with ten other children of my aunts and uncles desiring some attention.

The wedding Mandap was set up on the front lawn along with chairs and tables. The cooks hired for cooking and serving the meals were in the large courtyard in the center of the house where additional seating was also set up for guests. The house was abuzz with music during the day; and sleeping accommodations were set up every evening based on the cousins' whims and preferences. I could see that for Shonamon this arrangement caused some extra fatigue, which she never admitted, for, by nighttime, I heard her breathing with difficulty again and hobbling from room to room to check if everyone was comfortable.

On the day of the wedding, after overseeing the meal preparations with the extra cooks hired, Shonamon could hardly find the time to 'dress' herself; but she chose, as usual, a white cotton saree with a wide navy border which had a lotus pattern in cream color running through on both sides including the 'aanchal.' A simple long chain matched her oval gold earrings and bangles. She looked like a royal queen-mother whose grace and smile would, and did indeed, conquer all hearts. Her only goal—all the guests must be hosted properly [Atithi Deva Bhava]. Shonamon's house sounded and indeed became like a large humming bee-hive. On this trip, not once did I have the opportunity to lay my head on Shonamon's lap, to feel her soft strokes in my hair, and to smell her freshly starched saree!

Within a few months after returning from our last trip to Kolkata, we sailed for America because my father was posted for deputation through his service for government of India.

Within only a few months after we began our new life in America, thousands of miles away from Kolkata, we came to know that my Shonamon had fallen ill; except for her 'slight' fever and untreated asthma, no specific diagnosis was made regarding the nature of her illness. Then, arrived the telegram—after a few days of fever, my Shonamon was no more. Never again would I hear her gentle call, her softly spoken words when she hugged me, and the pitter-patter of her feet as she walked on the veranda, from room to room, announcing mealtime. She was no more a living part of my life! But her gentle face, voice, touch, and caring—indeed every quality of Hiranmoyee Ghosh—my Golden Heart—my Shonamon will be embedded in my memory forever.



মিষ্টি মন্ডা মিঠাই ...খাই খাই খাই

সুভদ্রা বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

মিষ্টি খেতে আমি বড়োই ভালোবাসি -সে দেশী হোক বা বিদেশী -সুস্বাদু হলেই হলো। প্রথমে আসি দুধ, দই ও আইসক্রিম, দুধ আমি রোজ খেতে রাজি আছি যদি সেটি জয়পুরের “লক্ষ্মী মিষ্টান্ন ভাণ্ডারের” মেওয়ায়ে ভরপুর দুধ হয়। দইয়ের শ্রেষ্ঠ স্বাদ আমি পেয়েছি তুর্কির বসফরাসের ধারে এশিয়া মাইনোরে ঘন মধু মাখানো দধি- আমার ধারণা আলেকসান্ডারের বাহিনী নির্ঘাত ওই খেয়ে তাগদ ও সাহস দুই পেয়েছিলো। আইসক্রিমে শ্রেষ্ঠ ইতালি যেখানে জিলাটো ও জলের দাম এক। তবে যদি নলেন গুড়ের আইসক্রিম চান তো কলকাতার “পাব্রাই কোম্পানির” আইসক্রিম পুরো ফাটাফাটি।

বাঙালী মিষ্টির তালিকায় আমার উত্তর বঙ্গের মিষ্টি বেশী পছন্দ, বেলাকোভার ক্ষীরে ভরা কানসারী চমচম, ফুলবাড়ির নরম তুলতুলে পান্তুয়া (স্থানীয় বাসিন্দারা বলে পানিতুয়া)। গরুমারা অভয়ারণ্যের বাইরে রয়েছে লাটাগুড়ি শহর যার কাঁচাগোল্লা মুখে দিলে গোলে যায়। রসগোল্লার সেরা হচ্ছে বারাসাত থেকে সাত সকালে বাড়িতে দিয়ে যাওয়া গরম গরম রসগোল্লা। আর মোয়ায় শ্রেষ্ঠ জয়নগরের মাটির ভাঁড়ের নরম পাকের মোয়া।

আমার প্রিয় অবাঙালী মিষ্টি হলো ওই বাদাম দুধের দোকানের রাজস্থানী ঘেয়োর, এছাড়া ব্যাঙ্গালোরের “কান্তি সুইটসের” দুধ হালুয়া। লাড্ডুতে এলাহাবাদের চউকের পুরানো দোকানের মতিচুরের লাড্ডুর জবাব নেই। শোনপাপড়ি সব চাইতে মুখরোচক হচ্ছে লন্ডনে শের্লক হোমসের বাড়ির কাছে “আম্বালা সুইটস” এ। আর বাকলাভাতে আমার মতে ইস্টানবুলের সুলতানমেত স্কয়ারের কাছে কোনো “শাটলা” দাঁড়াতে পারবেনা।

এবার আমি যাই ট্রেডমিলে.....পালাই পালাই পালাই



বাবার কথা

কুমকুম বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

আমার বাবাকে নিয়ে লিখতে অনুরোধ করেছে ইন্দ্রানী, কোথায় শুরু করবো তাই ভাবছি ।

বাবা বললেই মনে হয় সন্ধ্যাবেলা ৬টার মধ্যে খেলা সেরে বাড়ি ফিরে মুখ হাত ধুয়ে পড়তে বসা, রবিবারে ক্যাডসের জুতো সাবান দিয়ে ধুয়ে তাতে খড়ি লাগিয়ে সাদা করা । প্রতিদিন ভোরবেলায় (বাবার মতে, মেজবোনের মতে মধ্যরাত্ৰিতে) একঘণ্টা যোগ ব্যায়াম অভ্যাস করা - বাবা মানেই নিয়মানুবর্তিতা - বাবা মানে শাসন, কথা শোনা, একটু একটু ভয় । আবার কিন্তু বাবা মানেই কলেজ স্ট্রীটের বইপাড়ার থেকে পুরোনো বই, বাবা মানেই ছুটির দিনে গড়ের মাঠ যাওয়া, মনুমেন্টের মাথায় চড়া (২ বার চড়েছিলাম মনে আছে), চিড়িয়াখানা যাওয়া। মনে আছে মেট্রো সিনেমায় বাবার সঙ্গে গিয়ে ডিজনির কার্টুন সিনেমা দেখা -খুব মজা লেগেছিল ওয়ান হান্ড্রেড ওয়ান ডালমেশিয়ান দেখে ।

দিদি তখন আমেরিকায়, আলমায়রা কলেজে পড়ে, আমার বোধহয় বছর দশেক বয়স, নেদারল্যান্ড থেকে কাকা এনে দিলেন এক টেপ রেকর্ডার । কত কত সন্ধ্যা কেটেছে বাবা, মা , আমি আর মুনু - চারজনে মিলে দিদির জন্যে টেপ তৈরি করেছি । বাবা, মা দুজনেই কবিতা ভালো বাসতেন ভালো আবৃত্তিও করতেন - কচ ও দেবযানী (দুজনে একসাথে) ব্রাহ্মণ (মা) সোনার তরী (বাবা) গান ও হত - তাতে আমরা সবাই যোগ দিতাম । বাবার গলা ছিল শ্রুতিমধুর - সুর -ও ছিল মন্দ না - আর রবীন্দ্রসঙ্গীত আর শচীন কর্তার গানের ভান্ডার ছিল অফুরন্ত । ২০১৪ সালে আমার কাছে বেড়াতে এসে গানের খেলায় আমায় হারিয়ে দিয়েছেন ।

আমার ইঞ্জিনিয়ার বাবার সাহিত্য প্রীতি ছিল খুব । নিজে বই পড়তে ভালোবাসতেন, আমাদের কেও বই কিনে দিতেন প্রচুর - পুরোনো বই কিনে বাঁধিয়ে দিতেন এক দপ্তরীর কাছে ।

ছড়া লিখতেন সত্যি ভালো -বিশেষত ব্যঙ্গাত্মক ছড়া - তা সে রাজনীতি নিয়েই হোক আর বাঙালীর দৈনন্দিন জীবনযাত্রা নিয়েই হোক ।

কাজের থেকে অবসর নিয়ে বাবা আর মা এলেন ডেট্রয়েটে । দিদি আর দাদা দুজনেই কাছাকাছি থাকে - ডেট্রিয়েটের সাবার্বে । ওখানকার বাঙালী সমিতি বিচিত্রা -র সদস্য সবাই । জামাইবাবু জয়ন্তদা খুব নাটক ভালোবাসতেন ও নাটক করেন ও । দিদি বাংলা পাঠ্যবনে বাংলা পড়ায় । একেবারে বাবার মনোমত পরিবেশ । বাবা শুরু করলেন গল্প লেখা । বিচিত্রা পত্রিকায় ছাপার জন্য ।

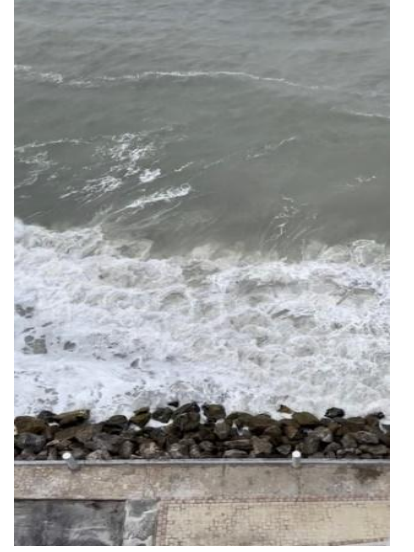
ক্রমশ

আমার ডায়েরির কিছু ছেঁড়া পাতার থেকে.....

মাধুরী হাজরা

জানুয়ারি ১৪, ২০২২ শুক্রবার, ক্লীয়ারওয়াটার বীচ, ফ্লোরিডা

বারান্দায় বসে আছি পিঠে রোদ্দুর নিয়ে। বাঁদিকে এবং পিছনে জলোচ্ছ্বাস। জল কল্লোল। খাঁড়ির (Clearwater Pass) জল এসে গড়িয়ে পড়ছে গাল্ফ অফ মেক্সিকোতে (Gulf of Mexico)। জলোচ্ছ্বাসের আবেগ কমে, বাড়ে জোয়ার-ভাটা অথবা হাওয়া কমা-বাড়ার সাথে সাথে। রাত-দিনের মধ্যেও জোয়ার ভাটার খেলা চলে। আমার পিঠের বাঁদিকে গাল্ফ অফ মেক্সিকো রোদ্দুরে ঝলমল করছে। সমুদ্রের থেকে মুখ ফিরিয়ে থাকার কারণ রোদের তাপ। সারাদিন বাইরে বারান্দায় বসে সমুদ্র দেখার একমাত্র অন্তরায় প্রচণ্ড হাওয়া, কখনো কখনো বা রৌদ্র আতপ। তখন আমার মত মানুষের পক্ষে এই হাঙ্কা নীল চেয়ার খানা, বারান্দার দরজা খুলে রেখে, সামনে ঘরের ভেতরে পেতে, বসে থাকাই প্রশস্ত।



জানুয়ারি ১৬, ২০২২ রবিবার, ক্লীয়ারওয়াটার বীচ, ফ্লোরিডা

জানুয়ারি ১৭, ২০২২ সোমবার, ক্লীয়ারওয়াটার বীচ, ফ্লোরিডা

শেষমেশ আবার বসা হলো। কতই যে বাধা.....

লিখব লিখব মনে মনে ভেবেই চলি। আমার হয়ত হাতে না লিখে নিজের গলায় রেকর্ড করে রাখাই উচিত। কী প্রচণ্ড হাওয়া উঠেছে গত কয়েকদিন ধরে। প্রচণ্ড ঝড় উঠেছে, টর্ণেডো হয়েছে, সমুদ্র সফেন চেউয়ে চেউয়ে উদ্বেল, আছড়ে আছড়ে পড়ছে সগর্জনে সমুদ্র সৈকতে বা পাড়ের ভাঙন আটকানোর জন্যে জমা করে রাখা পাথরের স্তরে স্তরে।

সে যে কী সুন্দর মোহনময় দৃশ্য সে কী করে বোঝাই। জলের রং মাটি মাটি। আকাশও মেঘাচ্ছন্ন - সাদা-সাদা, মাটি-মাটি মেঘ, অতি অল্পই নীলের বিস্তার। আকাশের রং জলে প্রতিফলিত হয় কি? না, জলের গভীরতার ওপর জলের রং নির্ভর করে? না কি সব মিলেমিশে একাকার!? এটা কি সত্যিই জলের রং, না ফুঁসে ফুঁসে ওঠা জলের ভেতরের বালি, মাটি সব ঘুলিয়ে ওঠা রং? জলের তো আসলে এখানে কোন রংই

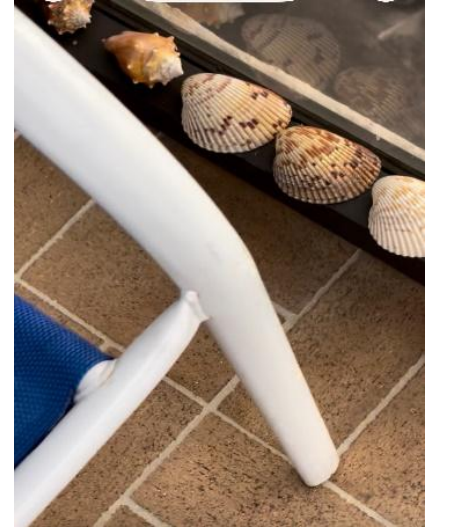
নেই। তাহলে হয় নির্মল জলের তলার মাটি/বালির রংটা দেখি, নাহলে জলের মধ্যেই ঘুলিয়ে ওঠা অন্য কিছুই রং দেখি, আর নাহলে আকাশের প্রতিবিম্বিত রংই দেখি। ওহ্ জলেই যে সারাদিনে কত রঙের আসা যাওয়া।

জানুয়ারি ২০, ২০২২ বৃহস্পতিবার, ক্লীয়ারওয়াটার বীচ, ফ্লোরিডা

.....বুধবার রাতে খেতে বসার আগে এই সময় নাগাদ বেরিয়ে ছিলাম বাইরে এক ঘণ্টা হাঁটবো বলে। গত সপ্তাহের ঝড় আর তার তাণ্ডব থেকে এখনও সৈকতের বালির ওপর রাশি রাশি, নানান ধরনের - মানে সত্যিই নানান ধরনের

জানুয়ারি ২১, ২০২২ শুক্রবার, ক্লীয়ারওয়াটার বীচ, ফ্লোরিডা

..... মানে সত্যিই নানা রঙের, আয়তনের, মাপের, বৈচিত্রের সব সামুদ্রিক প্রাণীর খোলস। বেশির ভাগই শুকনো। মনে হয় প্রাণীটি বহু দিনই দেহত্যাগ করেছিল। খালি খোলসটি জলের তলায় পড়েছিল। সমুদ্রের জলের আর ঝড়ের তাণ্ডবে তারা বেলাভূমিতে আছড়ে পড়েছে। খুবই কম সংখ্যক জ্যাস্ত প্রাণী দেখলাম। কয়েকটি মনে হলো হয়তো তখনও বেঁচে। জানি না তারা জলের বাইরে কতদিন বাঁচতে পারে। বাকিরা হয়তো আর বেঁচে নেই। কালো কালো ঝাঁঝির মধ্যে বিশাল বিশাল এইসব খোলসের বা ঝিনুকের সমাহার কয়েকটা জায়গায়। আর নাহলে অল্প বিস্তর চারিদিকেই ছড়ানো।



আর দেখলাম ছোটদের। বাচ্ছারা - শিশুরা কী নির্মল আনন্দে, রঙিন রঙিন কাপড় পরে, জলের মধ্যে ঘুরে ঘুরে, লাফিয়ে লাফিয়ে নেচে বেড়াচ্ছে। কী সুন্দর স্বর্গীয় সুস্বাদু। আমি আবার তাতেও ভয় পাচ্ছি। যদি চেউয়ে টেনে নিয়ে যায় কাউকে। তারপর সেটা মন থেকে ঝেড়ে ফেলতে হলো। ওদের সবাই এর আত্মীয় স্বজনেরা আশেপাশেই আছেন। আমার ওপর নাই ভুবনের ভার - ভেবে- ওদের আনন্দে আনন্দ করতে লাগলাম। অবশ্যই মনে মনেই। জলে নামার মতো কিছুই ব্যবস্থা নেই সাথে। দূর থেকে মনে মনেই ওদের আনন্দে অবগাহন করা - তাও তো ওদের মুখও দেখা যাচ্ছে না - ওরা সমুদ্রের দিকে ফিরে বেশির ভাগ সময়ই। আমি তো ওদের পিছনে।

কিন্তু কী আনন্দ, কী আনন্দ!

AIMING FOR THE SKY

*Indelible Memories of Sixty-Six Years
and the People Who Helped Shape My Life, My Achievements, and My Reach for the Sky*

A MEMOIR - EPISODE ONE

Jayanta Hazra

I had the privilege of attending a prestigious English-medium school in Calcutta. Growing up, I was surrounded by the love of my parents and siblings and, perhaps, was a little spoiled by being the darling of the family.

My father, however, never allowed that love to become an excuse for complacency.

He constantly encouraged me to set lofty goals and then work relentlessly toward achieving them. One piece of advice, in particular, became permanently etched in my mind:

“Aim for the sky, and you may at least reach the treetop. But if you aim only for the treetop, what happens if you fall short? You may crash to the ground.”

Those words have followed me throughout my life.

They became my mantra—sometimes inspiring me, sometimes challenging me, and occasionally haunting me whenever I was tempted to settle for what was comfortable rather than reach for what might be possible.

Little did I know how soon those words would be put to the test.

When Life Changed Without Warning

I entered engineering school in 1964, beginning what was then a five-year undergraduate program.

A year later, in 1965, while I was still in my second year, my father suddenly passed away in the prime of his career.

I was devastated.

The foundation beneath my feet seemed to disappear overnight. The man who had encouraged me to dream, who had challenged me to aim high, and whose presence had always made the future seem secure was suddenly gone.

I was ready to throw in the towel.

I seriously considered leaving engineering school altogether.

But somewhere beneath the grief, my father's voice remained.

Aim for the sky.

My mother and my elder sister—my Didi—refused to let me give up. Their unwavering encouragement, faith and support combined with that inner reminder of my father's expectations, slowly pushed me forward.

I stayed.

I worked.

And eventually, I graduated with academic credentials that would have made my father beam and be proud.

To me, graduation represented far more than receiving an engineering degree. It felt as though I had completed the first step in my quest for the sky.

But my family was not finished with me yet.

The Conspiracy to Send Me to America

Almost immediately, my mother and Didi began encouraging me to pursue graduate studies in the United States.

They recruited family friends into their campaign. Stories were told about people who had gone abroad for higher studies and built successful professional careers. Apparently, all of them were now examples of what I should be doing with my life.

Then my Head of Department joined the campaign.

He constantly encouraged me to pursue graduate studies at the University of Illinois, where his Ph.D. advisors were. There was an unwritten agreement to send one of his high potential students every year for further studies under his advisor.

Soon everyone seemed convinced that America was my destiny.

Everyone, that is, except me.

My younger brother enthusiastically offered to prepare and send all my applications.

That sounded like an excellent arrangement.

I figured that if I let him handle everything, I could get the proverbial monkey off my back. Everyone would be satisfied that I was “applying to America,” and perhaps they would finally leave me alone.

After surviving five grueling years of engineering school, I believed I had earned the right to do absolutely nothing for a while.

And that is precisely what I did.

For a few glorious months, I enjoyed being an unemployed engineer with apparently unlimited potential and absolutely no urgency to use it.

One of my maternal uncles, who was my Sejo Mama, watched this spectacle with increasing concern.

Apparently, he did not share my appreciation for leisure.

Here was his nephew, supposedly armed with excellent academic credentials and great potential, doing practically nothing and seemingly quite content about it.

He decided intervention was necessary.

One day, he practically dragged me to meet the Technical Director of GKW (a highly respected UK-based company in India with vertically integrated fastener manufacturing operations).

Suddenly, without having planned any of it, I found myself sitting through a grueling job interview.

To my surprise, I passed.

I was offered a position as a Graduate Management Trainee.

I did not know whether to celebrate or despair.

Everything had happened so quickly.

Still, there appeared to be one enormous advantage: America, I thought, was finally off the radar.

Or so I believed.

My First Taste of Industry

Working in industry opened an entirely new world for me.

There were new colleagues, new friendships, experienced senior people, real machines, real production problems, and the fascinating realization that engineering textbooks and engineering reality were not always on speaking terms.

I became increasingly interested in understanding not only the technical aspects of metalworking and

steelmaking, but also the management of industrial operations.

I began going beyond my assigned responsibilities simply because I wanted to understand how everything worked.

That curiosity caught the attention of the Technical Director, himself a Ph.D. from the University of Manchester.

He began giving me increasingly difficult technical problem-solving assignments and seemed quite pleased with my progress.

Rather than intimidating me, the challenges energized me.

For the first time, I could see a professional life unfolding before me. I began imagining a career in industry, advancement through the organization, perhaps eventually management leadership.

Life was settling comfortably into a groove.

Which, I would eventually learn, was usually the exact moment when my life decided to change direction.

The Letter

About a year into my job, sometime around early 1970, a letter arrived.

Remember, this was decades before internet, email, text messaging, or instant communication. Letters traveled at their own leisurely pace across oceans and continents.

I opened it casually.

And there, staring back at me from the page, was another life-changing event.

I had been offered a Graduate Research Assistantship in Metalworking in the Mechanical Engineering Department at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

America had returned.

And this time, America was no longer hypothetical.

For a while, I simply stared at the letter.

Then the debate began.

Should I go?

Should I stay?

I had just begun enjoying my job. I had new friends, professional responsibilities, recognition, and a future that finally seemed predictable.

Why disrupt everything again?

To go or not to go?

My own little version of Hamlet had begun to haunt me.

My mother, Didi, and younger brother, however, were ecstatic.

Their dream had finally materialized.

They were far more excited than I was capable of being.

I struggled with the thought of making another enormous change just when life had become comfortable.

And then, inevitably, my father's words returned.

Aim for the sky.

I thought of my mother's encouragement.

I thought of Didi's unwavering faith in me.

I thought of my brother patiently typing applications, preparing forms, mailing documents, and refusing to give up even when I had practically given up before beginning.

Could I allow all that love, sacrifice, and effort to disappear simply because I had become comfortable?

Gradually, my reluctance began turning into excitement.

I realized that gratitude alone would never repay what my family had done for me.

I would have to perform.

I would have to make their faith worthwhile.

And so I decided:

I was going to America.

“Touché”

There was one uncomfortable task left.

I had to tell my Technical Director.

I went into his office and explained that I had been accepted into graduate school in the United States and intended to leave GKW to continue my education.

He was stunned.

Then he tried to talk me out of what he apparently considered a completely crazy idea.

If graduate study was what I wanted, he argued, why go halfway around the world?

I could pursue graduate work right there in Calcutta. He would personally guide and mentor me through graduate studies at Calcutta University.

“What is the point of going to the USA?” he asked.

I hesitated.

Then I asked him a question.

“If staying here is the better path, why did you go to the University of Manchester instead of following the same advice you are giving me?”

He looked at me.

There was a moment of silence.

Then he smiled.

“Touché.”

He gave me his blessings.

And just like that, my first professional career in India ended almost as abruptly as it had begun.

America was becoming real.

Preparing for Another World

The next several months were consumed with paperwork, preparation, and orientation.

There were sessions at USIS on American culture and how foreign students should adapt.

We tried to familiarize ourselves with American accents, which sounded very different from the British English we had grown up hearing.

Then there was Buffalo weather.

Simply reading about Buffalo winters was enough to send shivers through me while I sat in the heat and humidity of Calcutta.

I attended an orientation seminar at the United States Information Service—USIS.

One of the guest speakers was the late Ananda Shankar, whom, many years later, I would have the privilege of knowing personally and calling a good friend.

But that is another story.

During the orientation, Ananda spoke about the cultural differences we might encounter and the importance of understanding how our customs might appear in an unfamiliar society.

He illustrated the point with a story that none of us forgot.

An Indian gentleman living in America had purchased a new car. Following the tradition of his family and community, he wanted to perform a puja before taking possession of the vehicle.

The automobile dealer, perhaps fascinated by the request, agreed.

The gentleman performed the ceremony right there in the showroom.

Everything apparently went beautifully.

Until the final ritual.

As part of the auspicious ceremony, he broke a coconut.

Unfortunately, he broke it on the fender of his brand-new car as part of the ritual.

The stunned salesman and manager could only watch in awe.

The gentleman nonchalantly drove away in his newly blessed—and newly damaged—automobile.

Those of us attending the orientation roared in laughter.

But beneath the humor was an important lesson.

Mind you this was 1970 -56 years ago.

Indians were still a very small minority in the United States and were mostly visible in major cities. In smaller communities, an Indian student could be something of a curiosity.

Cultural misunderstanding could travel in both directions.

I certainly had no plans to buy a car upon arriving in America, but Ananda's story stayed with me.

I needed to remain myself while also learning how to navigate a very different society, not necessarily aware of our culture.

I had no idea how quickly that lesson would be tested.

September 1, 1970

Before long, September 1, 1970 arrived.

Departure day.

The goodbyes were painful.

There was excitement, certainly, but it was mixed with fear, sadness, uncertainty, and the realization that I was leaving everything familiar behind.

Calcutta.

My mother.

My sister.

My brother.

My relatives

My friends.

My entire known world.

Nearly eight to nine thousand+ miles of uncertainty lay ahead of me.

I did not know when—or even whether—I would return permanently to the country of my birth.

And there was another small complication.

I had never flown before.

The closest I had come to air travel was watching airplanes take off and land at Dum Dum (now known as Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Airport) and occasionally looking up at Dakota airplanes passing over the Calcutta sky.

Now I was sitting inside a KLM aircraft preparing to cross continents and oceans.

It felt like something out of the Bengali fairy tales of my childhood:

Sat Sagar Aar Tero Nadir Pare—beyond seven seas and thirteen rivers.

As the airplane carried me farther from home, my mind became increasingly crowded.

Why am I doing this?

What is waiting for me?

Will I be able to handle it?

And perhaps the most frightening question:

What if I fail?

Then a very practical thought crossed my mind.

I spent 4732 INR ~ \$630 in 1970 on the airline ticket alone.

Failure was becoming financially very inconvenient.

As time zones changed, airports appeared and disappeared, Aircraft refueled. Luckily, I did not have to get out as Karachi, Cairo, Athens and Amsterdam were names announced on the PA system. The entire experience began feeling like a dream.

I was not quite twenty-three years old.

I had spent my entire life protected beneath the enormous umbrella of my family's love.

Now that umbrella was thousands and thousands of miles behind me.

I was alone.

And there was no predicting what would happen next.

America

Eventually, the plane landed in New York.

I stepped outside and entered another world.

For a fleeting moment, I almost wished there was some giant reverse button I could press that would send me straight back to Calcutta.

There wasn't.

Everything around me seemed different—the magnitude, the brightness and color of lights, the traffic, the styles of vehicles, the organization, the buildings, the roads, the sheer energy. It felt like I had stepped on to a different dream world.

Somehow, I managed to change airports and board another flight to Buffalo.

By the time I reached the place where I would spend my first night in a bed, I was physically exhausted and emotionally drained.

I fell asleep almost immediately.

I had no idea what awaited me the following morning.

“People Still Live in Trees?”

Fifty-six years later, when I search through the vast and sometimes unreliable storage system I call my memory, several moments from those first days in Buffalo remain astonishingly vivid.

One was a welcome party for international students hosted by the graduate student association.

The friendliness was comforting.

The free-flowing beer was surprising and welcoming.

I had come from an environment where social drinking was generally looked upon with mixed feelings, so this was one of my first cultural shocks.

Then I remembered Ananda Shankar's advice.

Blend in.

Don't stick out unnecessarily.

I decided to give cultural assimilation my very best effort.

At some point, an American senior student introduced himself and asked my name.

I gave him my full Indian name.

He tried once.

Then again.

On the third attempt, after I carefully broke the name into syllables, we both recognized defeat.

We negotiated a settlement.

From that day forward, I became:

Jay.

Fortunately, he did not shorten it further to simply “J.”

Another senior student approached.

Now armed with my newly acquired American-friendly name, I confidently announced:

“Hi! I'm Jay.”

This appeared to work beautifully.

We began talking.

“Where are you from?” he asked.

“India.”

“Where in India?”

“Calcutta.”

He paused.

“Where is Calcutta?”

I decided this was an excellent opportunity to educate him.

I began explaining Calcutta's history, geography, culture, size, and importance.

I was becoming quite pleased with my impromptu lecture when he interrupted with another question.

“I've heard that in Calcutta people still live in trees. Is that true?”

I froze.

For a second, I couldn't decide whether he was ignorant, insulting, or both.

My pride was wounded.

But rather than explode, something else took over.

“Yes,” I replied calmly. “We do. In fact, our family house is on top of a tree.”

He looked fascinated.

“Isn't it difficult climbing up and down all the time?”

“No problem,” I replied.

“We have escalators.”

That ended the geography lesson.

Whether from embarrassment, enlightenment, or the realization that he had crossed the boundary between curiosity and rudeness, he apologized profusely.

Inside, however, I was smiling.

Perhaps I could survive America after all.

Meeting Dr. Ram

The following day came my departmental orientation and my first meeting with my graduate adviser.

I was in for another surprise.

He was Indian by birth.

That, as I quickly discovered, was where the familiarity ended.

Judging from his name, I assumed he had originally come from South India.

When I entered his office, he was sitting with his feet up on the desk, smoking cigarettes as though cigarette production were about to be permanently discontinued.

He would finish one cigarette and use its burning end to light the next.

He shook my hand.

“You can call me Ram,” he said, “or Dr. Ram. Whatever suits you.”

I nearly swallowed my tongue.

I had grown up in India addressing teachers, professors, and senior people as Sir.

Now my professor was asking me to call him by an abbreviated version of his first name.

America was becoming stranger by the hour.

Dr. Ram looked me over with what seemed to me like the careful inspection of a rancher examining cattle at an auction.

My academic file sat on his desk.

Without even opening it, he began rattling off my fourth- and fifth-year undergraduate grades almost from memory.

Then he looked at me.

“The file tells me you're academically smart,” he said. “But that means nothing.”

I waited.

“I'll see how well you can use your brains.”

Wonderful.

Less than twenty-four hours in Buffalo and apparently my undergraduate education had already been declared irrelevant.

Before I could recover, Dr. Ram jumped out of his chair and marched me toward the machine shop and laboratory.

For me, it was fascinating.

There were lathes, machine tools, and equipment I had barely encountered during my undergraduate education.

I immediately began excitedly imagining everything I was going to learn.

Dr. Ram gathered the technicians.

“This fellow has just come from India,” he announced. “He's here for graduate studies. He has excellent academic credentials and will need to use this equipment.”

My confidence rose.

Then came the rest of the introduction.

“If he asks any of you for help, don't help him.”

My confidence crashed.

Had I heard correctly?

Dr. Ram quickly explained that he wanted me to learn how to use my hands. Academic knowledge was not enough. He expected me to become equally competent in theory and practice.

It sounded educational.

It did not feel educational.

And he was not finished.

The Microscope

Next, he led me to an air-conditioned laboratory and opened the door.

Inside stood a 1948-vintage transmission electron microscope.

Finally, I saw an opportunity to recover some dignity.

With perhaps more confidence than wisdom, I remarked that my undergraduate institution in India had possessed a latest model Hitachi transmission

electron microscope purchased through UNESCO funding.

What I conveniently neglected to mention was that students had never actually been permitted to touch it.

We were allowed to stand at the doorway, watch the professor operate the machine, and receive whatever data he chose to provide us.

But I was confident Dr. Ram would not know that.

He gave me a hawkish look.

Then he smiled

“Excellent,” he said.

He handed me a set of keys.

“Since you seem to be an expert in electron microscopy, this laboratory is now yours. You will maintain the microscope, align it, and operate it.”

My confidence disappeared again.

I stared at the ancient machine.

“But this equipment is archaic,” I protested.

Dr. Ram was unmoved.

He explained that he had no budget for a new microscope.

Therefore, I would write a proposal to the National Science Foundation requesting funding for a new Scanning Electron Microscope.

And then, naturally, I would use the new microscope for my graduate research.

With that, he smiled and walked away.

“See you tomorrow.”

I Need \$630

I stood alone in the laboratory.

It felt as though lightning had struck me.

What the hell had I gotten myself into?

I barely understood how things worked in this new university.

On my first day, I had already been told that the machine-shop technicians were forbidden from helping me.

Now I was responsible for a museum-piece electron microscope I did not know how to operate.

And somewhere between those responsibilities, I was apparently supposed to write a successful National

Science Foundation proposal to acquire sophisticated new equipment.

Twenty-four hours earlier, I had been frightened.

Now I was terrified.

I walked outside the building, sat on the steps, and cried.

Not dignified, perhaps.

But completely honest.

At some point, I became aware that another student had quietly come and sat beside me.

He asked what was wrong.

I told him.

And then, without the slightest thought as to whether my request made any logical sense, I asked:

“Can you lend me \$630?”

He stared at me.

“I need to buy an airline ticket back to Calcutta. I'll return the money as soon as I get home.”

Only afterward did the absurdities begin occurring to me.

Why would a complete stranger lend me \$630?

How would I repay him from India?

How would I even explain returning home almost immediately after leaving?

How would I face my family?

My friends?

What would everyone say?

I could already imagine the whispers.

He couldn't make it in America.

He came running home.

The stranger listened patiently.

Then he introduced himself.

He was a senior student involved with the India foreign student organization.

He had been walking past the building, noticed me sitting alone on the steps looking completely distraught, and decided to stop.

After listening to my story, he thought for a moment.

Then he made me an offer.

“Stay four weeks.”

I looked at him.

“Give it four weeks. Give it everything you've got. If, after four weeks, you still believe you don't belong here, I'll lend you the \$630 to go home.”

Four weeks.

That sounded survivable.

Then he slapped me on the back.

“Now let's go get some beer. That should cheer you up.”

Apparently, beer was becoming an important part of my American orientation.

But his advice made sense.

I decided I owed myself—and everyone who had believed in me—at least four honest weeks.

And somewhere during that conversation, something inside me changed.

Until then, I had been waiting for America to prove that I belonged.

Now I decided I would prove it myself.

I needed to become proactive.

I would learn.

I would adapt.

I would solve problems.

And eventually, I wanted the people around me not merely to accept me, but to trust me and perhaps even depend upon me when difficult problems arose.

The four weeks passed like a whirlwind.

I never asked for the \$630.

Aim for the Sky

And so began my life in America.

Through it all, my father's words remained somewhere in the background:

Aim for the sky.

The first year disappeared almost before I realized it.

I survived my first Buffalo winter—an accomplishment that, at the time, seemed nearly as significant as graduate school itself.

I learned to balance academics with new friendships, parties, research, unfamiliar machines, cultural adjustments, and the relentless demands and challenges of Dr. Ram.

The frightened young man who had once sat crying on the steps asking a stranger for \$630 was slowly disappearing.

Before long, I was helping welcome other Indian foreign students to Buffalo as an active member of the foreign student association.

I had arrived needing someone to help me survive.

Now I was helping others begin their own journey.

Looking back, perhaps that was one of the earliest lessons America taught me:

The moment that frightens you enough to make you want to run away may also be the moment that changes the direction of your entire life.

Had that senior student simply handed me \$630, my story might have ended very differently.

Instead, he gave me something far more valuable.

Four weeks.

Four weeks in which to discover that fear did not necessarily mean I was in the wrong place.

Four weeks in which to understand that being uncomfortable did not mean I was incapable.

Four weeks in which my father's voice could once again find its way through all the noise:

Aim for the sky.

I thought I had already made the biggest change of my life.

I was wrong.

Another chapter was quietly preparing itself—another person, another turning point, another completely unexpected direction.

But I had no inkling of that yet.

That milestone in my life is a story for another day.

AN EVENING DATE WITH NATURE

Tanima Basu, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

Each evening, just as the day begins to soften, I step outside for my quiet date with nature.

The world is never truly silent here. From the oak tree near our home, birds sing their morning and evening songs as if they are keeping time for the neighborhood. A blue jay flashes past me, bright blue and white against the gray sky, searching for his mate among the branches. I once learned that his feathers are not truly blue from pigment. The melanin in them is brown, but a special spongy layer of keratin and tiny air pockets scatters the light, creating that brilliant blue. Nature, I think, is the greatest artist—and also the cleverest magician.

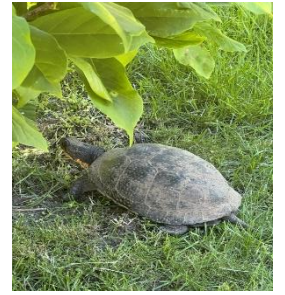


Farther away, a woodpecker rests after a long day of labor. His red head and neck glow like a small flame, his black back and white belly neat and bold against the tree trunk. Earlier, his drumming filled the winter air: rapid, rhythmic, and loud. On gloomy days, I welcome that sound. It feels like company.

Then comes the cardinal. Whenever I post a photo of one, my friend says, “Angels are visiting you.” Perhaps that is why I wait for northern cardinals with such hope. Their red feathers brighten the coldest winter day, and their clear whistled songs seem to carry warmth. I love knowing that the male cardinal’s famous red color comes from his diet. How amazing that what he eats becomes the beauty we admire.



One summer afternoon, while I was watering plants in the backyard, we noticed something black moving slowly across the ground. Curious, we approached and saw a mid-sized turtle. Her shell was muddy, and her head looked dry from the heat. I quickly grabbed a bowl of water, but by the time I returned, she had already traveled farther than I expected. Within half an hour, I lost track of her completely. Her deliberate pace seemed like wisdom, conserving energy for a long life.



In winter, when snow covers the field, one plant always catches my eye: winterberry. Its bright red berries shine against the white landscape like tiny lanterns. Small birds gather there and eat all day, as if enjoying a winter picnic. After a few hours, they lift into the sky and fly away, heading south from the north, following a map written in their wings.

When summer returns, wildflowers fill the land—white, yellow, blue, and lavender. They seem to smile when I walk by after a long working day. Bees hum from blossom to blossom. Butterflies float like painted thoughts. Hummingbirds visit our backyard, quick and shining.

We inherited a magnolia tree, and every early spring it gives us purple blooms. Sometimes snow falls gently on the petals, and the sight is almost too beautiful to describe. I learned that magnolia petals are edible, and that purple magnolias symbolize royalty, dignity, spirituality, and good fortune.

But this place belongs not only to flowers and birds. We live in the territory of deer, coyotes, rattlesnakes, and turkeys. Each morning, deer gather in our backyard to munch the grass. Sometimes they sit together in the sun as if they, too, are enjoying a peaceful family morning. When we speak, they lift their heads and listen. We look into each other's eyes for a moment—human and wild creature, neighbor and neighbor.

Here, nature does not visit us.

We live inside it.

And each evening, when the birds sing again and the light fades behind the trees, I feel grateful for this quiet agreement: we all share the same land, the same air, the same seasons. Side by side, we live in peace.



বিদায়, কালো ঘোড়া

দেব বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়

অক্টোবর ছুঁই ছুঁই । পাতায় ধরছে রং । ঢাকে পড়ছে কাঠি । এদিকে নিঃশব্দে উত্তর আমেরিকার দিগন্তে গভীর ডুব দিলো এক কালো ঘোড়া।

জুন থেকে অক্টোবর উত্তর গোলাৰ্ধে তারা দেখার মাস। কি আশ্চর্যজনক ভাবে সৌরমণ্ডল থেকে হাজার হাজার আলোকবর্ষ দূরের গ্রহ-নক্ষত্র, নীহারিকা, ছায়াপথ প্রায় খালি চোখেই ধরা সম্ভব। চাই শুধু আমাবস্যার মেঘহীন আকাশ। চাই শহর অনেক থেকে দূরে আলোকদূষণমুক্ত স্থান। চাই বাতাসে কম আর্দ্রতা । ভাগ্যে থাকলে এমন রাত সপ্তাহান্তেও আসে মাঝে মাঝে । এমন রাতে মিল্কিওয়ে ছায়াপথ তার সমহিমায় দক্ষিণ আকাশে জ্বলে ওঠে। রাত যত গভীর হতে থাকে তাকে দিগন্ত বরাবর সমকোণে স্থাপিত হতে দেখা যায়। ঠিক যেন ধূপ ধুনো মিশে যাচ্ছে উর্ধ্বাকাশে। আমাদের এই আশ্চর্য ছায়াপথ ৫৬০০০০ মাইল প্রতি ঘণ্টা বেগে বনবন করে এক চর্কি আতসবাজির মতো ঘুরে চলেছে। ব্যাস প্রায় এক লক্ষ আলোকবর্ষ। বেধ ৫০ আলোকবর্ষের মতো। তার গায়ে অলঙ্কারের মতো নড়েচরে জ্বলে আছে কোটি কোটি নক্ষত্র ও তাদের গ্রহ-উপগ্রহের সংসার । তাদের আলো ছড়িয়ে ছিটিয়ে যায় অসীম শূন্যে। আমাদের এই নীল গ্রহও তালে তাল মিলিয়ে সেই অসামান্য বেগে ছুটে চলেছে । ছায়াপথের মধ্যবিন্দুকে (গ্যালাক্টিক কোর) কেন্দ্র করে ১৫০০ আলোকবর্ষ দূরে ঘূর্ণিওমান সৌরমণ্ডলের এক পাক ঘুরে আসতে আমাদের আড়াইশো মিলিয়ন বছর লাগে। তার মানে আজ যেখানে আছি আমরা, ঠিক এই জায়গায় আমরা আগেও এসেছিলাম প্রায় ডাইনোসোর যুগের জন্মকালে।

এতকিছু না জেনেও, এমন তারাভরা রাতে আকাশের নিচে মাদুর পাতি। চিত হয়ে শুয়ে ফ্যালফ্যাল করে চেয়ে থাকি। নিজেকে কি তুচ্ছ লাগে। প্রশান্তিতে টুপ টুপ করে ঝরে পড়ে সহস্র অভিমান, অহংকার। হাঙ্কা হয়ে আকাশে ভেসে বেড়াই। সরল রেখারা তারায় তারায় মিলে গেলে জেগে ওঠে নানান চরিত্র। ওরা কথা বলে একটা দুটো। যতো বয়েস বাড়ে তারা হয়ে ওঠে বন্ধু।

এমনই এক বন্ধুর সাথে আলাপ করিয়ে দিই। তার নাম কালো ঘোড়া নীহারিকা। জুন মাস থেকে সেপ্টেম্বর তার দ্যাখা পাই। ১৩০০ আলোকবর্ষ দূরে এক হিলিয়াম গ্যাসের অন্ধকার সে, তবু এই অন্ধকার থেকে সে তারাদের জন্ম দিতে জানে। আমাকে সে নির্ভুল ভাবে চিনিয়ে দেয় মিল্কিওয়ে গ্যালাক্সির মধ্যবিন্দু বা "গ্যালাক্টিক কোরের" অবস্থান। জুন থেকে সেপ্টেম্বরে তাকে বহুবার দেখেছি রাতজাগা ভোরে। সেদিন আর খুঁজে পেলাম না । দিগন্তের ওপারে সে দিয়েছে মহাজাগতিক এক ছুট...



অগাস্ট মাসের মধ্যরাত্রে তোলা ছবি দুটি । সিলভার লেক, মিশিগান ২০২২ ও হেডল্যান্ডস ইন্টারন্যাশনাল ডার্ক পার্ক ২০২৬। প্রতি বছর জুন থেকে সেপ্টেম্বর কালো ঘোড়া নীহারিকা দেখা যায় দিগন্তে। ঠিক যেন টগবগে ছুটিস্ত ঘোড়া। আমাদের গ্যালাক্সির মধ্যবিন্দু সেখানেই।



TALES OF VARANASI GHATS

The oldest vibrant and holiest
Manikarnika Ghat



MANIKARNIKA GHAT: WHERE LIBERATION BEGINS WITH END OF LIFE

< a tiny tribute to my dearest Guardians, Mentors, Teachers, Community Leaders whom I will meet again someday>

MAITREYEE PAUL, Michigan



In the sacred geography of Indian Mythological mystics, Kashi or, Varanasi is one place where time seems to stand still, where it is told and realized that fire never sleeps and where humanity confronts its ultimate truth. Located on the banks of the Holy Ganga in Varanasi, **Manikarnika Ghat** is considered one of the holiest places in Hinduism. For centuries, this ghat has remained active 24x7, bearing silent testimony to the belief that the end of the body is the beginning of freedom for the Soul. This is not just a cremation ground; it is a living legend with a tune of philosophy. Death is not to be feared or hidden. It is accepted, witnessed and understood as a passage toward liberation. Another belief holds that Lord Shiva personally grants Moksha(Liberation) here by whispering the Tarak Mantra into the ears of the departing soul. This faith has drawn countless devotees to wish that their final rites be performed at this ghat, believing it frees them from the infinite cycle of birth and rebirth.

The story of Manikarnika is deeply rooted in Hindu mythology. One widely believed legend says that Lord Vishnu dug a sacred Kund here using his chakra while Lord Shiva watched over him. During this time, an earring of Goddess Parvati is believed to have fallen into the kund, giving the ghat its name. One day, while bathing there, Goddess Parvati's *karna-phool* (earring) slipped and fell into the kund. Shiva asked a nearby *Brahmin* to retrieve it, but the man, tempted by its value, secretly kept it. Enraged by this act, Shiva cursed him and declared, "You and your entire lineage will be the rulers of the *shamshan* (cremation ground)." Today, that lineage is known as the Dom Raja. And the Ghat's name derives from two Sanskrit words: Mani(jewel) and Karnika (earring).

Maa Parvati, unable to find her favorite earring, she cursed this ghat to stay on with everlasting death pyres. Since then, it is said, the Ghat has remained under the influence of eternal curse, bringing misfortune to those who interfere with its sacred rites and remains the holiest cremation ground in the abode of Lord Shiva. Kashi is believed to have two kings: one is Kashi Naresh (Bholenath- Lord Shiva), the Lord of the Lords, Devadidev Mahadev, the Ruler, and the other is the Dom Raja, the spiritual gatekeeper of the dead. The Dom Raja holds intense, ancient energy. They live at the edge of the cremation ground, where thousands of bodies pass by. Every funeral pyre begins with wood provided by the Doms, and the first five logs are always laid by them. The Kund is still intact, making it one of the holiest water bodies in the city.



Since I grew up in a family embedded into the mystics of Hindu scriptures, I inherently had a desire to take my Mother during her last years to Kashi but could not fulfill her goal..... so after losing Her, traveling nearly 800 kilometers from Delhi, I finally reached the religious capital of India.

The smog, the aroma, the hustle, the bustle, the sky everything felt so near and dear to heart although I lived 35 plus years over in Western Hemisphere by now.

It was the last day of Shivratri, a Hindu festival celebrated in honor of Lord Shiva, and the streets were bustling with devotees. Chants of Har Har Mahadev, the smoke, the smell, the color, the aroma, the very fine film of grey breeze rose above the smell of burning incense and the flicker of oil lamps, making the city feel truly alive with the typical Indian thing. Daughterly emotions ran deep, I could instantly feel a heaviness in my throat, and the weight of century-old rituals pressing down on my brain triggering a vow.

Making my way through old alleyways and crowded roads, I finally reached the sacred river Ganga. The riverfront steps — the ghats — were lined with pilgrims offering prayers to Lord Shiva. The river came alive with floating diyas and old wooden boats drifting past. In the distance, I could see the pyres — hundreds of them, prepared as the final resting place for hundreds of bodies, some already burning, some charred. Despite the celebrations around me, the sight of the pyres unsettled me as I moved through the crowd. A strange undercurrent, a brief tension, filled the air as I drew closer to Manikarnika Ghat. I felt alone.

Seeking solace, I decided to sit for a while at the very edge of the ghat. Watching the burning pyre, I couldn't help but feel the stark weight of mortality pressing down upon my brain. My parents are gone, no one to seek advice from, no one to scold me, no one to guide me ever again, even though I passed 6 long decades of humanity.

The river lapped softly at the shore, stretching out before me, silent and empty. That's when it happened — a faint, almost imperceptible rise and fall of the steps beneath me, as if the stairs themselves were breathing. A cold breeze gusted against my face. I turned sharply from the pyre to look at the dark, mist-shrouded river. Where had all the floating diyas gone? I checked my phone: 3:03 AM. How long had I been sitting there? As per the say, I didn't take any pictures, because pictures are prohibited for one own's sake of safety.

This felt wrong — very wrong. I had no memory of the past seven hours. How was that possible? Before I could finish the thought, it happened again!

The stones shifted, as if they had a pulse — like lungs taking shallow breaths. The hair on the back of my neck rose, and for the first time, I noticed some soft whispers. Faint at first, they sounded like the rustling of the

river, but as I listened, they grew more distinct, as though the river itself were speaking to me. The words felt ancient and incomprehensible, yet they filled me with a deep, primal fear — a fear that the very earth beneath me was alive. I stood to leave, but the stones beneath my feet rippled frantically, the whispers rising into a deafening chorus. My legs froze in place against my will, my body trembling as the air grew thick with an unnatural force. Then, in the depths of the river, I caught a glimpse of it — its eyes. Eyes that did not belong to this world. Its shape was so vast, so incomprehensible, that my mind refused to register its form. Its presence felt ancient, as though it had existed before the river, before the city itself.

My vision blurred, darkness creeping in at the edges as the whispers wrapped around my throat, suffocating me. My mind flashed back to the smoke from the burning pyres, twisting and rising into the night sky like a soul torn from this world. It haunted me now — the fleeting nature of it, the vanishing into the void. I realized, with sickening clarity, that this was how my life was going to end. Like smoke disappearing into nothingness.

I had accepted my fate when the stones beneath me shuddered once more — and something unexpected happened. The air crackled with energy behind me, as if something far older, something protective, had arrived. I couldn't see it, but could feel it. The eyes in the water flickered with what I could only describe as fear. And then, in an instant, everything was gone. Whatever had saved me had vanished. Whatever lived beneath the ghats had disappeared. I collapsed to the ground, no longer feeling the weight of the darkness or the suffocating grip of the whispers around my throat.

I scrambled up the steps and ran back toward the streets, my heart pounding, my body drenched in cold sweat. I do not really know how I came back, who forced me to run, how I was Ghat behind me now, but the unease lingered!

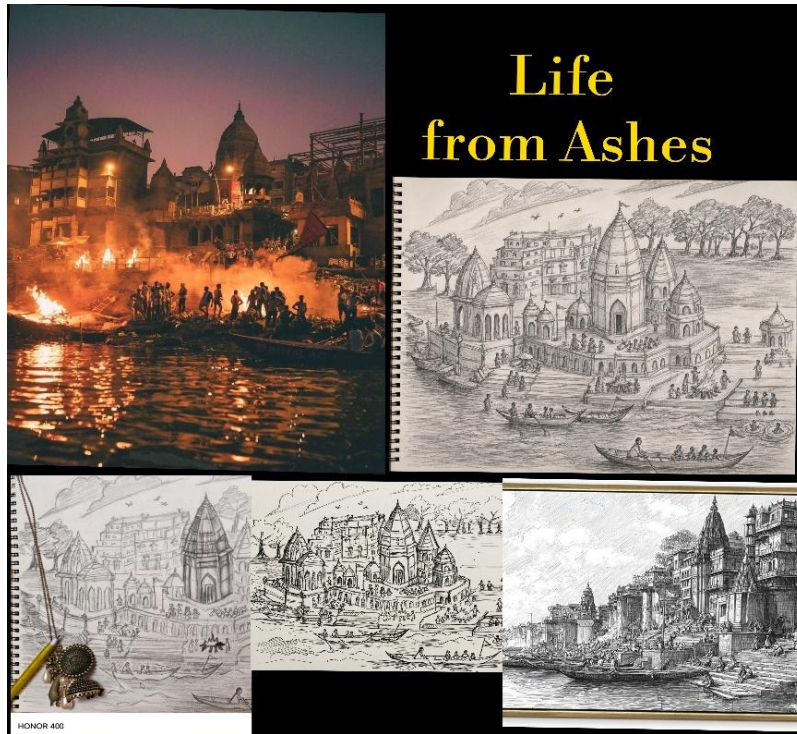
Even now at dusk in Michigan August, with all the fancy night lights turned on the deck, the flickers of the crickets chirping in my backyard woods, I sit here writing this in one of the quietest zone, the memories of the smoke, the eyes, and that strange, protective intervention continue to haunt me. From that night onward, every time I close my eyes, I see those eyes watching me, marking me. A constant coldness has settled into my bones, a reminder of the dread I felt that day. A part of me never truly left those ghats.

Later, even last year in Nov 2025, I traveled to NathDwara to see ShriNathji with my loving sister, another spot my Mother wished dearly to visit but couldn't... that night drive through HaldiGhati's winding and narrowest one lane mountain roads with zero visibility in deep desert fog, that is another story — of eerie divine intervention, and the strange, inexplicable fortress of safety net...only me and my sister could relate and also our Dearest DriverJi understood!

A peace that comes from sensing some mystery, some guidance, some divinity... one that I still cannot fully fathom!

With the closing note, I must say one of the most striking features of Manikarnika Ghat is the eternal funeral fire, known as the **Akhand Chita**. It is believed that this fire has been burning continuously for thousands of years. Every cremation fire at the ghat is lit from this sacred flame symbolizing the infinite continuity beyond time from a single Supersoul.

Why Manikarnika Ghat Matters, at least to me



Today In a world that often avoids conversations about death, Manikarnika Ghat stands as a reminder that no matter how much we boast or, wish to break the sky, acceptance brings peace. It teaches that liberation lies not in denial, but in understanding the cycle of existence. Kashi is believed to be the city where death loses its fear and Manikarnika is where that belief becomes visible. Here, flames rise, ashes return to the Ganga and souls are believed to find freedom. Not in silence, but in sacred continuity. I haven't understood life at all and never will. But one thing I know for sure I had and have this shiver, I understand the void, I understand uncanny existential guidance which happened many times with me...I would suggest at least once in your lifetime. Go to Manikarnika. Stand there. Breathe it in- I am sure it will change something inside one instead of chasing into mundane matters every moment.

P.S.

DON'T THINK I DIDN'T ENJOY THE MEWA AND MALAI, KALAKANND AND THE BENARASI...GOT THEM A WHOLE LOT TOO!!

THAT'S LIFE...WHILE ALIVE WORK HARD WITH ETHICS, ENJOY BUT MUST LEAVE A LEGACY!

HAR HAR MAHADEV!

SKETCHBOOK- GARGI SRIMANY (RESIDENT OF MUSCAT & KOLKATA, MY ADVISOR AND TRIP GUIDE)



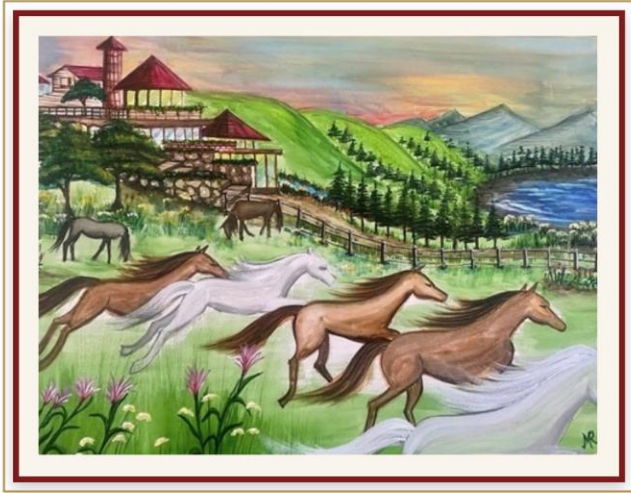
যা দেবী সৰ্বভূতেষু শক্তিরূপেণ সংস্থিতা ।
নমস্তস্যৈ নমস্তস্যৈ নমস্তস্যৈ নমো নমঃ ॥

To the Goddess who dwells in all beings as strength — we bow to Her, again and again.



চিত্রবীথি

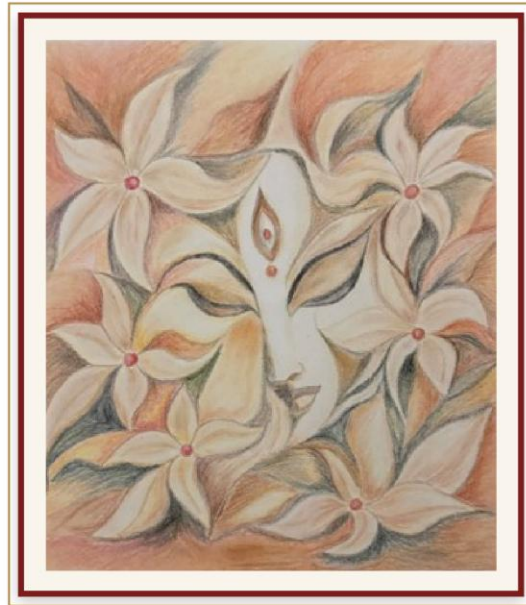
GALLERY · ARTWORK FROM OUR COMMUNITY



Madhuparna Rakshit



Watercolour – Upasana Bhattacharyya



Mitali Chaudhery



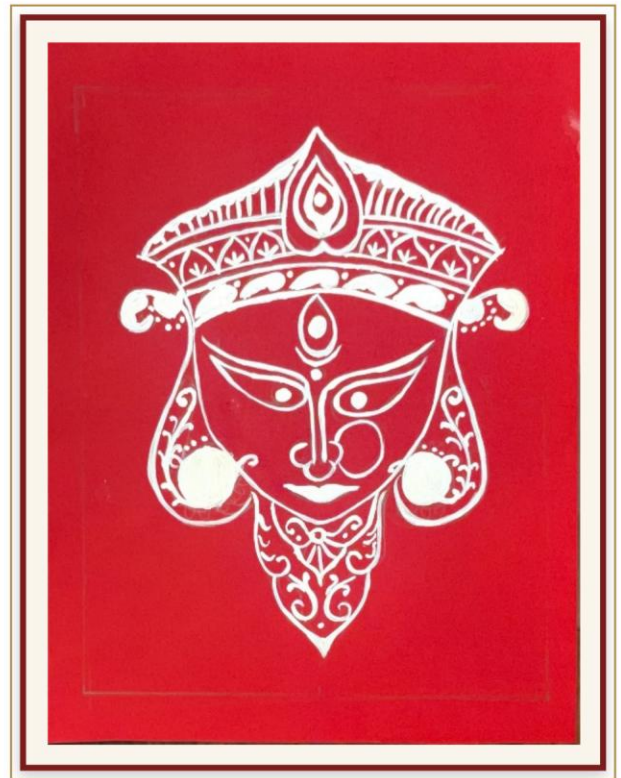
Tanaya Basu



Tanaya Basu



Pallavi Banerjee



Ma Durga – Chandrani Sengupta

ENDOWMENT AND COMMUNITY CHARITIES



**BICHITRA ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE
WISHES YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY DURGA
PUJA 2026**

BICHITRA ENDOWMENT COMMITTEE (BEC)

Our Mission: BEC helps less fortunate adults and kids in US and India by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors

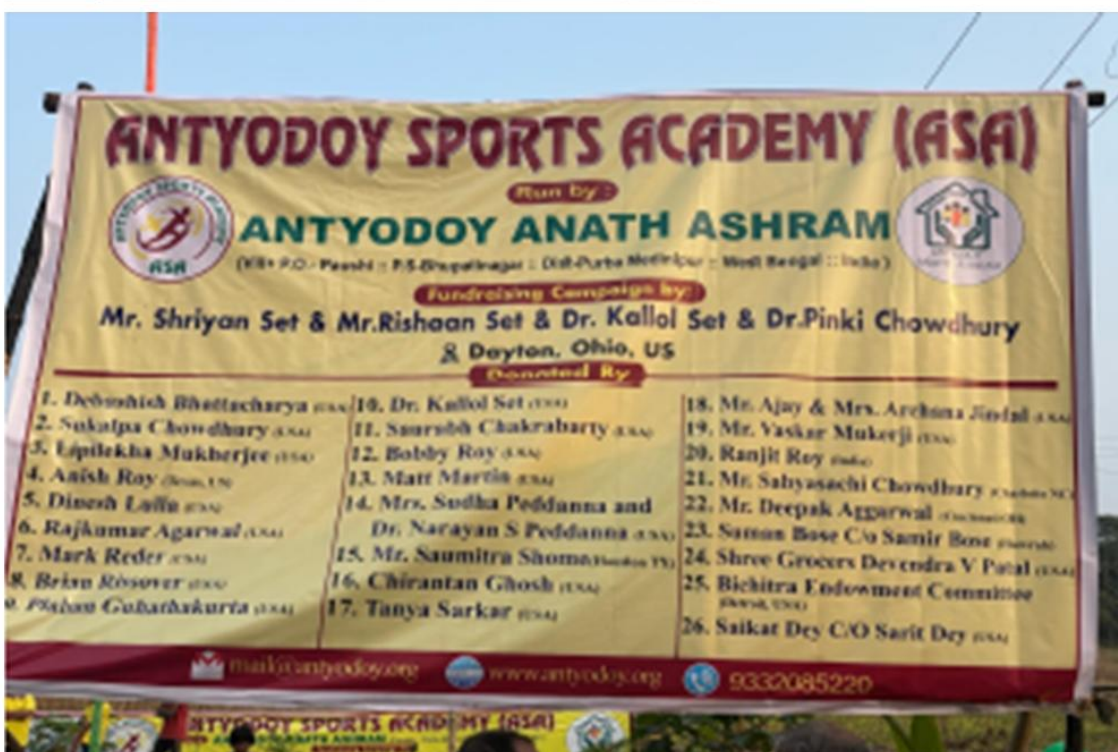
Our Story: Bichitra Social Service wing has started its journey in 1992 and since then working towards its goal by giving volunteering hours and raising fund to help others who are in need. So far BEC has donated more than \$160,000 to many noble causes and has helped various worthy organizations who are contributing to the total upliftment of humanity.

Our Goal for 2026-27: Increase donation channels; Raise more funds; Expand volunteer base.

Recent Donations (last 5 yrs)

- ✦ Detroit Rescue Mission Ministries (DRMM)
- ✦ Antyodoy Anath Ashram - Purba Medinipur WB
- ✦ Ramakrishna Mission Ashram Narendrapur
- ✦ Aranyer Alo (Bankura, India) – to help tribal kids by providing textbooks & laptops.
- ✦ Jeevansurya Hospital (Bankura, WB) for Orthopedic OT table
- ✦ KBDS - Rebuild a school in Deora Village (India)
- ✦ Covid19 Relief for Kolkata during second wave
- ✦ Grace Center of Hope, Detroit





PATH BHAVAN / BANGLA SCHOOL NEWS



Bichitra Path Bhavan Bangla School: Nurturing Language, Culture, and Community

Bichitra Path Bhavan provides a welcoming learning environment for children and adults to learn the Bangla language while developing a deeper appreciation for Bengali culture and traditions. Growing up in the United States, English naturally becomes the language of everyday life. Maintaining a connection with Bangla requires encouragement, practice, and a supportive community.

Bichitra Path Bhavan is proud of its scholars across a wide range of ages and grade levels.

NAME	GRADE	NAME	GRADE
Reyansh Dey	2	Alina Biernat	7
Emily McClellan	2	Oindrila Patra	7
Sohan Chandra	4	Pratyasha Banerjee	7
Aariya Roy	4	Aarushi Chatterjee	8
Adhrhit Sen Chowdhury	5	Ishana Das	8
Asher Biernat	5	Ava Biernat	9
Rahul Narula	5	Aditya Chandra	9
Adrika De	5	Shireen Paul	9
Saanvi Ganguly	6	Aakash Roy	9
Ethan McClellan	6	Rishi Narula	10
Avyaan Mukherjee	6	Nikhil Narula	11

One of the highlights has been the students' participation in a Bangla play during Durga Puja, October 2025. Preparing and performing the play gave them an opportunity to practice pronunciation, express themselves confidently in Bangla, and experience Bengali culture together. Another special event was the Bangla Spelling Bee during Saraswati Puja, January 2026, which helped the students demonstrate their growing Bangla vocabulary and spelling skills.

Whether you or your family member is beginning your journey with Bangla or building on what you already know, Bichitra Path Bhavan offers an engaging learning platform where you can learn Bangla together, form friendships, and take pride in your Bengali roots!



Classes: Every Sunday at 10:30 AM (on Zoom)



Registration: Open now

Please text 734-776-6569 for further information.



PATH BHAVAN STUDENTS IN ACTION

Top and middle: Bangla play, Durga Puja, October 2025 · Bottom: Bangla Spelling Bee, Saraswati Puja, January 2026



ছোটদের পাতা

Culture

Oindrila Patra

Culture. Culture gives people purpose in life. For many people that could be Chinese New Year, Eid, Christmas, or Hanukkah, but for Bengali people the excitement is Durga Puja. Sure, as Hindus we have many more pujas, but as Bengalis, Durga Puja is our purpose, and we strive to make our purpose successful. No matter where we are, our culture pulls us together. All thanks to Bichitra because even though we are way out of our place, they never fail to bring us together. So, as I tell how culture is very important, we can learn more about Durga Puja.

Imagine waking up and feeling the vibration of the drums and the smell of delicious food, but Durga Puja is not just music, food and fun. Durga Puja is an emotion for everyone. It all started with a not-so-great half-bull; half-human demon called Mahishasura. Mahishasura is a demon that believed the woman was not powerful at all; he was a big and mighty demon that was more powerful because God Agni gave it a beautiful blessing. Also meaning that this demon had to be killed by a woman. Mahishasura is a demon that wreaks havoc and creates much trouble that chased all the gods away from heaven. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva realized he had to be killed by a strong woman. This is where divine goddess Durga arrived. Lord Vishnu and Lord Shiva created a goddess out of many powers. They gave her a trident, a chakra, a lion, and bows and arrows. Goddess Durga and Mahishasura battled for ten days until finally pinning down Mahishasura with her trident and killing him on the tenth day. Then after Lord Rama awakens Goddess Durga before going to war with demon king Ravana. There, folks, is how Durga Puja started.

Durga Puja started in the late 1500s by wealthy people and soon evolved to celebrating Durga Puja with everyone. This festival lasts ten days, which are the last five days; Sasthi, Saptami, Ashtami, Navami and Dashami are celebrated grandly. Many months before artists start creating idols with clay. These artists are called Kumar Tuli artists, and they devote their heart and soul to creating these beautiful pandals. The sound of dhak on Ashtami awakens the morning as we start Pushpanjali. Pushpanjali makes the honouring of the god with mantras while holding flowers. Ashtami is the most powerful celebration. Along with Pushpanjali, we also celebrate Kumari Puja, Sandhi Puja and finally Dhunuchi Naach. Navami is known as the last celebration. On this day Maha Aarti is performed, ending the celebration. Dashami finally is a very emotional farewell. It's a bittersweet end to all of Durga Puja. On Dashami we end with sindhur khela, Aparijita puja and visarjan. Sindhur khela marks a long life and well-being as women drastically cover each other with sindhur to their faces and feet. Now comes the very most exciting part.

FOOD! Food and clothes and adda/reunion are a very big part of tradition. Of course, as Bengalis, we love food. Food is a very big part of us. This part gets us excited, so let's get right into it. Food is not just about eating; it's a feeling and a part of it we enjoy because we are all together. In Durga Puja food ranges from street food to delicious luxury eating. During Ashtami, Bengali people eat vegetarian food and allow no meat. Navami is when luxury starts. Navami is when Bengalis gather for a big feast and eat whatever they can until they are stuffed to their throats. Many foods can start with puchka, jhal muri, jelebi, and samosa and end with biryani, rice, curry, fried vegetables, and meat on Navami. Desserts can look like mishti doi, laddoo, jelepi, and gulab jamun. There is much more food, as Durga Puja varies with food. In Durga Puja you are expected to wear no clothes to resemble a new start. During Sindhur Khela, women are expected to wear white and red saris. No western wear is Durga Puja. People usually wear traditional Bengali clothes like kurtis, lehengas, kurtas and churidars.

Durga Puja consists of many things: food, clothes, rituals and history, but most of all the main matter is unity. For a Bengali, a Durga puja reminds them of home. Durga Puja teaches us that good always wins against evil and most importantly teaches us togetherness. As I said many times, Durga Puja is not just a celebration but also an emotion. Hope you learnt about Durga Puja!

A Week I Won't Forget: My Australian and Malaysian Adventure

Advika Poddar

Traveling to Malaysia and Australia had always seemed like one of those trips that would happen somewhere far in the future. From climbing the steps of Batu Caves in Malaysia, visiting Sydney Opera House to feeding kangaroos in Melbourne, almost every day brought something completely different.

Day 1

Our flight landed in Kuala Lumpur early in the day. As we traveled from the airport into the city, we stopped briefly at Istana Negara, the residence of the King of Malaysia, before continuing to Batu Caves.

Batu Caves was unique because its temple was inside a cave, and the only way to get there was by climbing 272 colorful steps. At the bottom stood a 137-foot-tall golden statue of Lord Murugan, along with a couple temples and a small pond.

The climb was, in the most descriptive way, grueling. The steps were crowded, the heat was unbearable, and they were pretty steep. Eventually, we made it to the mouth of the cave.

Water dripped from the ceiling as we descended inside. A colorful temple was located within the cave, along with several statues. Before leaving, we stopped at the gift shop and bought a miniature statue of the golden Lord Murugan. On the way down, we saw a couple of monkeys jumping on the railings.

Our next destination was the Petronas Towers. Inside was a mall, where we looked around before getting lunch. After some debating, we decided to eat authentic Malaysian food: fried black noodles served on a hot charcoal pan.



Day 2

After an eight-hour flight, we landed in Sydney with a boost of energy. Downtown was only about a fifteen-minute walk away from our hotel. As we walked, we noticed small differences between Australia and home, including the unusual sounds made by the pedestrian crossing signals.

We eventually stopped at a restaurant called The Grounds. It was so popular that the wait for a table was almost an hour, so we ordered avocado toast while we waited and explored nearby shops and bookstore.

Day 3

Next day we began with a tour of Sydney, meeting at the fountain in Hyde Park. The park was full of greenery and local birds, including Australian white ibises and noisy miners.

Our bus took us past the Royal Botanic Garden, Fort Denison, Kings Cross, and Woolloomooloo before stopping at the Gap Lookout. We saw beautiful ocean cliffs and learned about the area's history of shipwrecks. But the best surprise was in the water. About five dolphins were playing just beyond the cliffs, resurfacing every couple of minutes.

Our next stop was Bondi Beach. It had been several years since I had visited a beach, and I immediately understood why people loved them. The water was crystal clear, and the air smelled of seawater.



It was January 1st, and instead of watching the New Year's ball drop in Times Square on a laptop, I would be watching fireworks in front of the Sydney Opera House. As night fell, we sat on the grassy lawn and waited. Soon, the sky lit up with all sorts of colors. For twelve minutes, we stood there watching the fireworks above us in awe. Our time in Sydney was almost over.

Day 4

While going towards Sydney Airport, we visited Sydney Cricket Ground. After a two-hour flight, we landed in Melbourne. Waiting for us were our aunt, uncle, and cousins.

My dad was overjoyed to be reunited with his sister after a long time, while my sister and I met our Australian cousins for the first time. Bhoomika, my younger cousin, was about seven and seemed quite shy at first. That impression disappeared quickly as she began talking nonstop during the entire car ride. My older cousin, Atreya, was around seventeen.

Day 5

After some chatter about Bluey, we got into the car and drove along the Great Ocean Road towards Port Campbell Park.

The scenery was beautiful, with fields, cliffs, and the ocean passing by our windows. Eventually, we arrived at the Twelve Apostles. After a short walk, we reached the lookout and saw enormous limestone rock stacks rising from the ocean. Their warm orange and brown colors stood out against the endless blue. We later learned that the towers lose about two centimeters every year because of erosion. We then continued into Great Otway National Park. The ocean views were replaced by endless greenery, with native trees and ferns covering both sides of the road.



Eventually, we noticed a crowd gathering beneath some trees. We found up to four wild koalas, some sleeping and others staring down at the crowd. Everyone appreciated wildlife in its natural environment. Later we continued to Sandringham Beach. My

sister and Bhoomika searched for seashells while Atreya and I competed to see who could splash water farther.

Day 6

This was arguably the most exciting day so far. After breakfast, the entire family headed to Maru Koala and Animal Park. The park held many animals, including koalas, emus, dingoes, snakes, wombats, wallabies, peacocks, and an echidna. We first visited the dingoes while they were eating lunch and then saw the emus. I knew beforehand that they were huge, but seeing one in person was a completely different experience.

Then came the kangaroos. After getting our bowls of food and learning how to feed them safely, we entered a large, fenced field with a small stream running through it. Many kangaroos were lying under the shade, and one even had a joey in her pouch.

We carefully placed the food onto our flat palms and held it out for the kangaroos to eat. Their tongues were surprisingly wet, and the experience was somewhat like what I imagine feeding a pony would be like. The most unique part, though, was seeing two albino kangaroos. Both were completely white with reddish eyes.

Later we saw an echidna that wouldn't stop running around its enclosure and a wombat that immediately captured my heart with its adorable looks. We also saw some free-roaming peacocks on the way out.

We returned to downtown Melbourne. The city reminded me somewhat of New York, though it was quieter. Our next stop was the Melbourne Cricket Ground; we got to see a clear view of it from a standpoint inside the Melbourne Cricket Ground Museum. After lunch we walked around, tried the tram, visited some stores, and watched a street performer doing a magic show.



Day 7

The next day was our flight back. We packed everything up, said our goodbyes, and left for the airport. As I looked back on the trip, it was hard to believe how much we had experienced in only a week: caves, beaches, fireworks, dolphins, koalas, kangaroos, and cities I had never seen before. I wondered where in the world we would go next.



Hocking Hills – Where Serenity Meets Fun

Avyaan Mukherjee (11 years, 6th Grade)

Very few holiday getaways strike a balance quite like celebrating Independence Day in the lush sandstone gorges, visiting Old man's cave, admiring the beauty of Cedar falls and feeling the rush as you're hurtling down from 100ft in a zipline course made for the adventurous-this is about Hocking hills.

Hocking Hills is 4.5 hours from Southeast Michigan and I would suggest that the best place to stay there has to be a cabin in the woods.

We went to Hocking hills weekend of 4th July 2026, we were a group of 19 and we stayed in a luxury cabin called the Monroe in Logan. The luxury cabin had 3 floors. On the top floor, there were 2 bedrooms. On the first floor, there was a living room, master bedroom, kitchen and a dining room. In the basement, there were two triple decker beds, a gaming room with air hockey, hookey, foosball, speedball, an arcade machine with retro games, gaming consoles like sega genesis and playstation. On the first night, we had a dinner made on the grill, with BBQ chicken, roasted sweet potatoes and corn on the cob. We did end up staying up late since we watched the US vs Bosnia game of the FIFA World Cup and spent some time in the basement.

Next day we woke up at 9:00 am and had a quick breakfast. We had plans to go hiking for the whole day. Sounds fun, but it was really hard, the heat was up to 97 degrees Fahrenheit and hiking up steep slopes and narrow curves for 3 hours was hard. This hiking trail had the Rock House, which was a large cave with a 130 feet high cliff. It was much cooler than the temperature outside due to the shade. We took some pictures, climbed onto some big rocks, and went through a steep incline. After returning from the hike, we had lunch at a restaurant while watching the FIFA world cup match - Spain v Austria. Later, we went back for another hike to Ash Cave and saw a waterfall inside a cave but this was a short hike, only 0.5 miles. The view at the falls was amazing and we got soaking wet in the waterfall. We then went to a place called Grandma Faye's to get ice cream, since we spent a lot of time in the scorching heat, the place had really good souvenirs so we bought some of them on our way back. We arrived at our cabin, relaxed for some time, had pizza for dinner, and then some of our other friends joined us.

The next day we woke up at 8:00 AM. We had an exciting day planned ahead since we were going ziplining. We arrived at the zipline check in center and after a short training went for our zipline course, the Xtour, which was a course of 11-12 fast paced ziplines, with the final 4 being the fastest (zipping at the speed of 65mph), longest (1000 ft long), prettiest (view of the hocking river) and highest (100 feet high). When we completed the Xtour, some of us who were brave enough went to do the Superzip, which was all 4 of the Xtour ziplines combined into one. It was 100 feet high, going up to 75 mph, and a view of the Hocking River. We were in a special suit and were in a skydiving position while sliding down. The rush was one of the best rushes, and the height gave an incredible view of the hocking river. When we arrived back at the cabin, we had a kids' party in the basement gaming area with music, arcade games and hot dogs & corn on the cob for dinner.

Next day, we went hiking to a site called Old man's cave. This day was also America's 250th Birthday, aka 4th of July. We all wore 4th of July themed clothes that day. We completed the 1.5 mile long trail. In

the evening, we went to a 4th of July fireworks event called Thunder In the Valley and watched the incredible fireworks. After the fireworks, we headed to our hotel to relax. The hotel manager let us use the pool, despite the time being 10:00 PM. We had lots of fun in the pool for an hour or so, had dinner and then we headed to our rooms to have a good night's sleep.

The next day was our final day of the trip, we went to a place called Cedar falls with a short ½ mile trail to the falls. Cedar Falls had a shallow creek next to the falls where the kids played in the water. There were lone rocks too which you were allowed to play at and skip over. This was fun after a long hike.

Hocking hills is a really good vacation spot and it's not too far from Michigan. You should definitely go, it's fun for the kids and it's fun for adults as well. We did plan to do water tubing, but as the weather was really hot, the water level had gone down, so we saved this activity for our next trip.

Places and tips that I recommend to go to if you might want to go or are planning a trip to Hocking Hills. Skip very long hikes if you are coming with a large group and there are kids.

Places that I recommend going to if you might want to go or are planning a trip to Hocking Hills -

- Hocking Hills Zipline Tours With Super Zip Bundle
- Open Water Tubing
- Old Man's Cave-Hike 1 to 1.5 miles long.
- Ash Cave-Full Hike 0.5 to 0.6 miles
- Cedar Falls-Full Hike 0.5-mile loop
- Rock House-Full Hike 0.8 to 1.3 miles
- Grandma Faye's (Good Ice Cream & Souvenirs Place)
- You should definitely book a cabin in the woods for a better experience.



Brazil vs Haiti

Adhrit Sen Chowdhury

It was finally the day. The day for the soccer match. Our seats were C17 row 2. My family had packed all our bags and were ready to leave. We were going to Philadelphia which is ten hours away from our house. My family was going one day before the day so we can go as relaxed as we want. We will also stay in the hotel the day before the match and leave the next morning after the match. Anyway, we were just about to leave when we noticed, that, we did not have the remote to the garage! My mom had to then come from the front. We then started our long journey to Philadelphia. After two hours of driving my mom said, “let’s take a break.’ So, we find a place to stretch and we head on. We stop again after two hours and again then we keep going.

After a bunch of time,

we finally reach the hotel! It felt like forever. If we would have drove more, I would have busted. So, anyway, when we reached, we had no idea were to park the car. There was a place in the front, but it was full. We went to the back and we found a spot. We were so exhausted that we just parked there. We grabbed some of the essential stuff and we headed into the hotel. We went to the front desk to check in. We somehow got the closest room. We were not in the mood to fight for a different room because we were exhausted. I am a little fussy. We go in the room and have a look around. We have a fridge, a microwave, and a coffee maker. Our plan was to stay today, watch the match tomorrow, and then return the next day. So, anyway see you tomorrow.

Two minutes later

Okay. I am creeped out by this place. It is haunted. I anyway think I will not get any sleep because of this plane outside (we are next to a highway.)

The next morning

I am the happiest person in the world; I managed to get some sleep. I am so excited for the match! I have been to a warmup match, so I have a promising idea of what’s gonna happen. Like food!!! I wake up at around 8:30. a.m. We woke up a little early because the free breakfast is ending early. We go to the breakfast place as fast as we could because our plan was to visit one of my mom’s friends for a few hours. We got to my mom's friend house at around 12:00. At first, I was kind of skeptical because these were unknown people to me. I knew there was someone who would play with me. We first played chess. I started getting comfortable. We played badminton and a little soccer. I had loads of fun. After some time to go. I refused at first but said yes because I wanted to watch a little of the USA match before BRAZIL!

A little later

We reach the hotel just in time for the USA match. We watch it on the TV. I hope USA wins

Minutes later

The time flies by so fast. We dress up so we are ready for the match. I wait a wig and try to stand out so I can try to be on the big screen. When we reach, we will park in the XFINITY lot. Our gate to the place

that we were gonna sit was NW (northwest.) We had to walk a lot! On our way I saw this many blowup soccer match. It seemed fun so I entered the line I waited like twenty minutes in line because of how long it was. When we finally got to the front to my surprise there were grown-ups playing against my team. At first, we could not score any goals, and they scored like five goals. Then my team bounced back. We won the match and I even scored a goal. We grabbed some food (some meaning a bunch), and we headed to the place our seats were. We asked this person so we can find our seats. He said to go right. We met someone else and he said go left. So, we go left. After going left, we met someone else. He said to go up. So, we go up. Then another person said down. Now we are getting rage baited. Then finally we had to go up to find our seats. When we got to our seats, we finally got a chance to rest. Whew!!! We watch as the players warm up. Then the real stuff begins. First the Haiti national anthem, then Brazils. Then the game begins. At the sound of the whistle Brazil started off. In the stadium I see a lot, and I mean by lot of Haiti fans then I expected. There might be more Haiti fans than Brazil fans. But of course, go BRAZIL!!! Oh yes did you know that Brazil scored!!!!!! Let's go- I do not think it is a goal they are not celebrating. No!! It is not a goal!! Man, those referees are stubborn. They could have gave the goal. But it does not matter. I know Brazil will score.

Three minutes later

Oh yes! I love this! I love this! Brazil is finally ahead! Okay, at this rate Brazil will win eighty to zero. OMG, they are going again! Go for the goal! Score! Score! Yeahhhhhh! Brazil! Brazil! Let's go! Okay, I know I did not tell you but there is a crazed puma behind me, my back is wet and he keeps shouting 'Vini I love you' and 'that's my cousin playing out there, you, see?' I cannot say anything because he is older than me. Okay, enough talk'in... Brazil is winning two to zero baby. Let's go. I must calm down. Anyway, let us get on with th- oh my god. Brazil scored again. Brazil scored again. Brazil scored again! They really are bringing the jazz. Time for the ye- not again! Boooooooooooooo! I will report them to the police officers. Oh well at least it is another goal! Three zero! And just in time, the match is over!

After exiting the place

After we got out, I was super hungry. We headed to a place to buy me a hotdog, but they did not have any. I was sad but then one of them said I could have a remaining hotdog for free. It was such a wonderful act that we thank them a lot. Plus, that was the best experience I have ever had. After we got out, we could not find our car! Then suddenly, a light bulb pops in my head. We took a picture of the stadium from where we were! Were saved. Now we shall ask a person where to go.

Fifty minutes of searching

Whew! Finally! We found our car. And we know it is our car because of how messy it is. We sit for five minutes then we start going back to the hotel.

Back at the hotel

That was amazing but know that it is over it is time to go home the next day. The next morning, we eat breakfast and start going home. When we reach it will be time for the next party (which is that night)

The end

Our Relentless Efforts

Mihika Das, Grade 11, 16 years old

There is a particular satisfaction to battling alone through something difficult—whether it be the physics problems for summer homework on a topic yet to have been covered, or hopping back in a swimming pool after a year of not touching chlorinated water. You try three different times on the homework, trying to remember the concepts you learned two years ago, scraping the back of your memory for any other obscure tactics that haven't already been tested. Your muscles burn as you try to push forward with the movements that were once familiar a seemingly short time before.

And yet, through all the hard work, wondering when all the efforts will return for your benefit, you stumble upon the answer. Clicking the submit button, you can barely look at the screen, hoping a 10/10 pops up. It does. You find yourself naturally pushing water against your fingers instead of struggling against it, ripples of blue dancing along your vision.

People say the purpose of life is to do things, but what is there to do without suffering initially? That is the only way to live, and to live is to enjoy the mundane, the repetitive, the struggle.

As students like me once again sit through standardized tests, our scores mattering now more than ever to prove that we have more potential than an AI bot, we wonder where our future will end up. Will the all powerful AI take over our dream job? When will prices take a downturn? How are we kids, barely having lived through 20% of our lives, supposed to save our massive earth? Bring equality to all of this planet? All the while, we're expected to contribute to science, to save others on the verge of dying, to perform, paint, shoot rockets into the sky, settle cases. We are being led down a path we have no knowledge of how to tackle. Our only guide is first-hand experience.

Yet with seeming impending doom ahead of us, one could mold it into a path of struggle that will lead to a victorious finish. Perhaps the reason all of this has been thrown upon us is because previous generations have chosen to pass it onwards. To ignore the suffering. But nothing good comes from that.

We may be the new hope. We may toil all our lives, trying not to be richer, but to save humanity from the fates we have brought upon ourselves. We may not even see the fruits of our labor within our lifetime, sowing seeds yet to grow.

But because we suffered it will come. We must enjoy and weather the torment, the rain, because we know the work will lead us somewhere. Our efforts are the sacrifices for future advancements. We are like trees, little at first, and flourishing vividly at the end for hundreds of years. Problems will never disappear, but we will evolve.

That is the destiny of all life.



Cover Page Artwork



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Jay Banerjee, 11th Grade



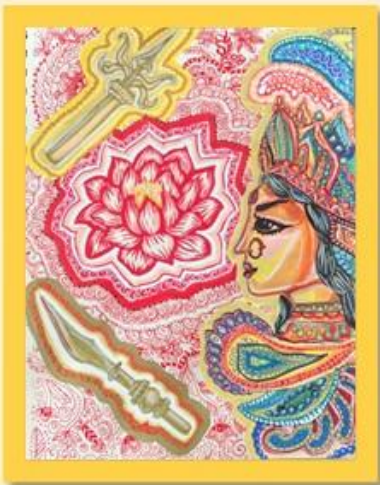
Ishana Das, 8th Grade



Irsia Ball, 9th Grade



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Annika Bhattacharyya Kahlon, 8th Grade

Children's Artwork



Teesta Banerjee, 5th Grade



Aarshia Kundu, 3rd Grade



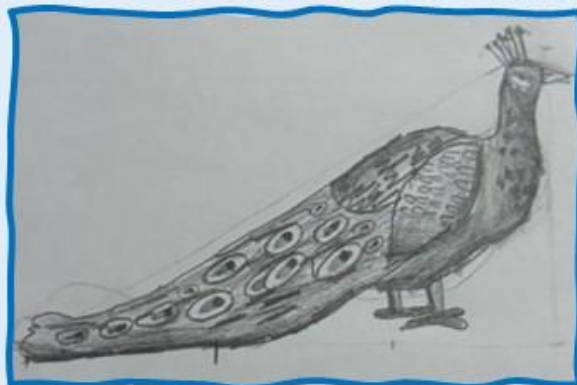
Devansh Maitra, 6th Grade



Devansh Maitra, 6th Grade



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Adhrit Sen Chowdhury, 5th Grade

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Sahana Bhattacharyya Kahlon, 6th Grade



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Aarshia Kundu, 3rd Grade



শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

IN LOVING MEMORY



Dr. Chitta Ranjan Dutta

"Amader Chittada" · passed away August 8, 2026

It is with profound sorrow that we announce the passing of Dr. Chitta Ranjan Dutta, "Amader Chittada," who left us peacefully on August 8, 2026, at 10:00 PM, at Henry Ford St. John Hospital in Detroit, Michigan.

Dr. Dutta is survived by his loving wife, Ila Dutta; daughter, Krishna Saunders (Dwayne); and son, Chinmoy Dutta.

He will forever be cherished in the hearts of his grandchildren, Allesandro and Prea (Clint), and his great-grandchildren, Delilah and Calvin, as well as his extended family, relatives, countless friends, and well-wishers.

Dr. Dutta touched the lives of many with his warmth, kindness, wisdom, and generous spirit.

Our respect and condolences are with the Dutta family during this difficult time.



Madhab Samanta

January 2, 1953 – May 19, 2026

Madhab Samanta, beloved husband, uncle, and friend, passed away peacefully on May 19, 2026. He was born on January 2, 1953, in Kashipur, Hooghly District, West Bengal, India.

Madhab completed his early education at Bahirkhand High School and went on to attend Belur College, where he graduated with Honors in Mathematics. He later earned his Master's degree in Mathematics from the University of Calcutta. Pursuing higher education abroad, Madhab moved to Canada and obtained a Master's degree in Computer Science from the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg.

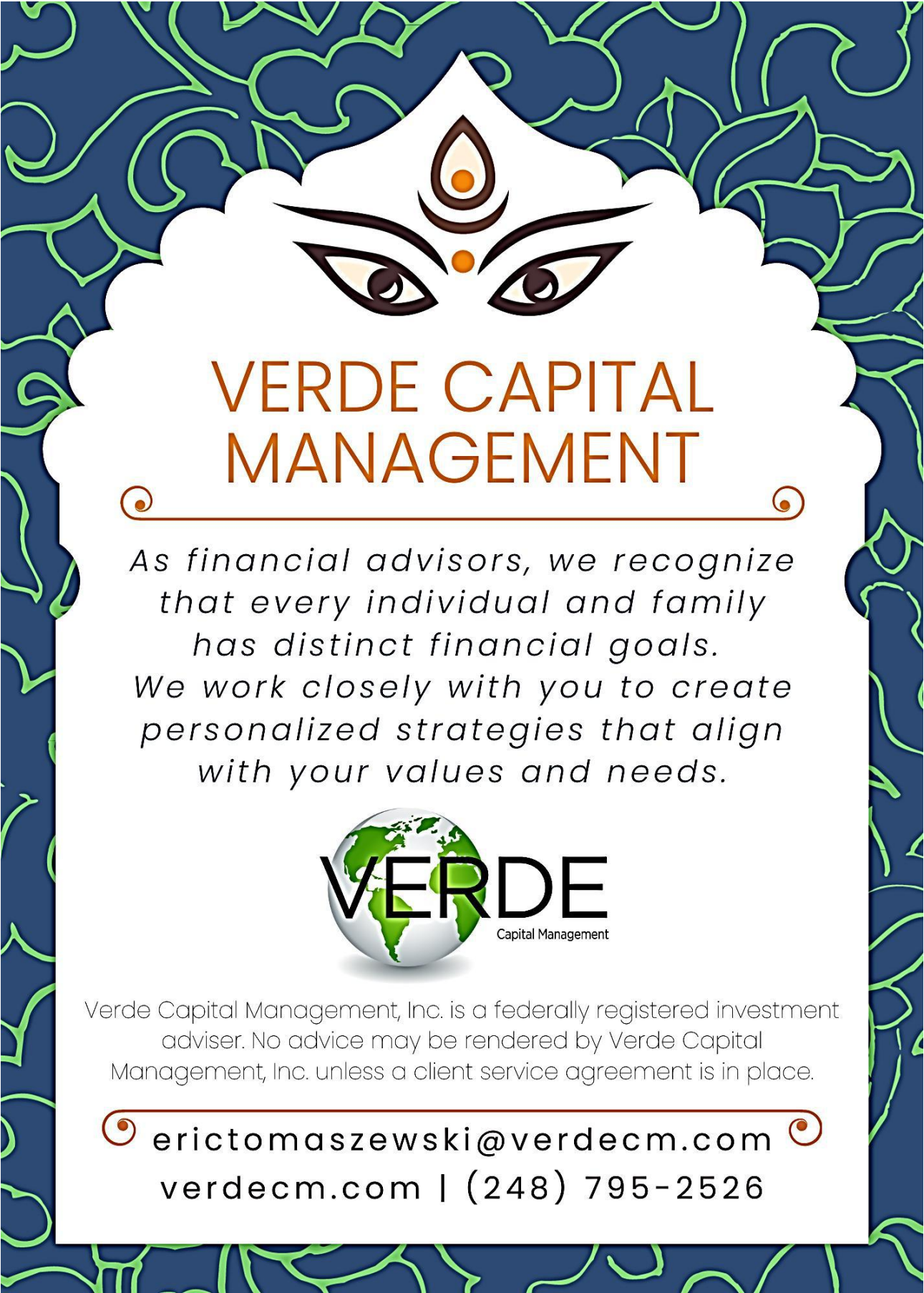
Madhab first worked in California as a teacher at a technical institute. In 1984, he returned to India and married the love of his life, Sibani. In 1986, he joined EDS (Electronic Data Systems), then a subsidiary of General Motors, which later became part of Hewlett Packard. Madhab and Sibani eventually settled in Troy, Michigan, where he built a life grounded in hard work, kindness, and community.

Madhab found joy in gardening, listening to music, watching television and movies, and following various sports, especially cricket and basketball. He also loved cooking and grilling and was never afraid to step into the kitchen to prepare delicious meals while warmly entertaining a house full of family and friends.

Deeply compassionate and generous, Madhab quietly supported several charitable causes, including St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Leukemia Research Foundation, and Susan G. Komen.

He will be remembered for his gentle nature, intellectual curiosity, dedication to education and family, generous hospitality, and the warmth he brought to everyone around him. His memory will remain forever in the hearts of all who knew and loved him.

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OUR JOURNEY ON STAGE



Shrimoti Bhoyonkori, 2013



Aadol Bodol, 2015



Jamai Sankat, 2016



Jamai Sankat, 2016(rehearsal)



Sajano Bagan, 2017



Jibonto statue, 2022



Madhureno Samapayet, 2025



Suborno Golok, 2026(rehearsal)

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