



CHOWRONGEE

75th
Independence day

2022



21st Annual Magazine

The Bengali Association of Greater Sacramento, California

India 75th Independence day Quiz

(Answers on page 73)

- Which one is the biggest National Park in India by area?
 - Namdapha National Park
 - Hemis National Park
 - Sundarbans National Park
 - Bandipur National Park
- In which year was the capital of India shifted from Calcutta to Delhi?
 - 1918
 - 1907
 - 1911
 - 1916
- Which one is the longest rail tunnel in India?
 - Karbude
 - Karwar
 - Pir Panjal
 - Khowai
- What was the code name of the first nuclear tests conducted by India on May 18, 1974?
 - Operation Vijay
 - Operation Shakti
 - Smiling Buddha
 - Operation Ashwamedh
- What was India's first satellite?
 - INSAT
 - Aryabhata
 - Bhaskara
 - Rohini
- Who was the first Indian to be a member of British Parliament?
 - Jamshedji Tata
 - Raja Ram Mohan Roy
 - Surendranath Banerjee
 - Dadabhai Naoroji
- Which is the highest waterfall in India?
 - Kunchikal Falls
 - Barehipani Falls
 - Jog Falls
 - Kynrem Falls
- When was India's first metro launched?
 - 1984
 - 1990
 - 1992
 - 1995
- Who is the metro man of India?
 - C. Rangarajan
 - E. Muralidharan
 - E. Sreedharan
 - Sundar Pichai
- Which is the first national park in India?
 - Kaziranga
 - Sunderban
 - Gir
 - Ranthambore
 - Jim Corbett
- Which is the longest river bridge over a single river in India?
 - Vikramshila Setu
 - Godavari Bridge
 - Mahatma Gandhi Setu
 - Howrah Bridge
 - Dhola-Sadiya Bridge/ Bhupen Hazarika Bridge
- Who is the "Birdman of India"?
 - Humayun Kabir
 - Salim Ali
 - Biswamoy Biswas
 - Neerja Chopra
- Satyameva Jayate was adopted from:
 - Mundak Upanishad
 - Samaveda
 - Yajurveda
 - Prashna Upanishad
- Who is the Father of the Indian Space Program? Who was the first Director of Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)?
 - C. V. Raman
 - Vikram Sarabhai
 - M. G. K. Menon
 - A. P. J. Abdul Kalam
- Name India's first indigenous aircraft carrier.
 - Viraat
 - Vikrant
 - Viral
 - Vishal
- Name India's first planned city post-independence.
 - Chandigarh
 - Durgapur
 - Gandhinagar
 - Mohali
- Rivu, Rijuda, Rudra are fictional characters created by which Bengali author?
 - Sunil Gangopadhyay
 - Buddhadeb Guha
 - Tarashankar Bandopadhyay
 - Sharadindu Bandyopadhyay
- Doctor's day is celebrated in memory of?
 - Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy
 - Dr. Devi Sethi
 - Dr. I. K. Gujral
 - Dr. Manmohan Singh
 - Dr. Mammen Chandy
- First Bengali movie to win the best feature film national award is:
 - Pather Panchali
 - Kabuliwala
 - Sagar Sangamey
 - Apur Sansar
- What do the following sites have in common in West Bengal?
 - Sundarbans National Park
 - Mountain Railways of India

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Happy 75th Independence Day



সম্পাদকীয়

Editorial

উৎসবের হাত ধরে চৌরঙ্গী এবছর ২১ তম বর্ষে পদার্পণ করলো। গত বছর পর্যন্ত করোনা বিধিনিষেধ অবলম্বন করে আমাদের পূজোর সকল ব্যবস্থাপনা করতে হয়েছিল। সম্পূর্ণ না হলেও, এবছর আমরা আরো খানিকটা স্বাভাবিক জায়গায় পৌঁছতে পেরেছি, প্রাণ খুলে একে অপরের সাথে মেলামেশা করতে সংকোচ বোধ করছি না। আন্তর্জাতিক যাতায়াতে নিষেধাজ্ঞার জন্য ২০ তম বছরে আমরা কোনো বহির্ভূত কলাকৌশলীদের আমন্ত্রণ জানাতে পারিনি, তাই ২১ তম শারোদোৎসবে আমাদের বিশেষ সস্তার থাকছে 'দোহার' এর লোকসংগীতের আসর। আশা করি যে স্যাক্রামেন্টো অঞ্চলের সংস্কৃতিপ্রিয় বাঙালিদের এই অনুষ্ঠানটি উপভোগ্য প্রতীক্ষনীয় হবে। রসে-বসে বাঙালির আগে বার 'পাত পেড়ে খাওয়া' হয়নি বলে পূজোর আনন্দের বেশ খানিকটা ফাঁক থেকে গিয়েছিলো, আশা করছি এবছর আর সেই আক্ষেপ করতে হবে না।

এবছর আমাদের সম্পাদক দলে দুজন নতুন সদস্য যোগদান করেছেন - অয়ন্তিকা ভট্টাচার্য্য এবং দেবরূপ ঘোষ। চৌরঙ্গীর সম্পাদকমণ্ডলীর পক্ষ থেকে দুজনকেই স্বাগত জানাই। তাদের নবীন চিন্তাধারা আগামী দিনে চৌরঙ্গীকে আরো পরিপূর্ণ করে তুলবে - এই আশা রাখছি। ভবিষ্যতে আমরা এই দলে আরো নতুন মুখ দেখার প্রত্যাশী থাকলাম।

করোনা মহামারীর উত্তরপর্বেও উৎসবের নবীন সদস্যরা সারা বছর ধরে বিভিন্ন দাতব্য কর্মে লিপ্ত থেকেছে। উৎসব মূলত একটা সমাজসেবী সংগঠন - তাদের কার্যকলাপে এটা আরো সুদৃঢ়ভাবে প্রতিস্থাপিত হয়েছে। স্বেচ্ছাসেবী কর্মসূচির একটি ধারাবিবরণী 'বিবিধ' অনুচ্ছেদে সংযোজিত রয়েছে, উৎসুক পাঠকদের জিজ্ঞাসা প্রশমিতার্থে।

বিগত বছরে আমরা অনেক সৃজনশীল বাঙালি প্রতিভাকে হারিয়েছি। সন্ধ্যা মুখোপাধ্যায়, বাপ্পি লাহিড়ী, তরুণ মজুমদার, নারায়ণ দেবনাথ ..., এবং আরো অনেকে আছেন। আমাদের অনেকেরই হাঁদা-ভোঁদা, নন্টে-ফন্টে বা বাঁটুল দি হেট ছাড়া গরমকালের দুপুরগুলো কাটতে চাইতো না, 'শ্রীমান পৃথ্বীরাজ বা দাদার কীর্তি' গুলো আজও স্মৃতিতে অমলিন থেকে গেছে, 'I am a disco dancer' চালিয়ে নাচ না হলে পূজোর বিসর্জনের ষোলোকলা পূর্ণই হতো না। এঁদের কীর্তিমান চিরন্তন এবং আগামী প্রজন্মের দিকচিহ্ন হয়ে রয়ে গেলো।

জন্মভূমির স্বাধীনতার ৭৫ বর্ষপূর্তি উপলক্ষে চৌরঙ্গীর সম্পাদকমণ্ডলীর পক্ষ থেকে সকলকে জানাই অভিনন্দন। চৌরঙ্গী ২০২২ এর সকল যোগদানকারীদের অনেক ধন্যবাদ, তাদের হাত ধরেই চৌরঙ্গী আজ বর্তমান মানদণ্ড অর্জন করতে পেরেছে। আগামী দিনে উৎসব ও বাঙালি সম্প্রদায় স্বপ্রচেষ্টায় চৌরঙ্গীর এই ক্রমবর্ধিষ্ণু ইতিহাসটাকে আরো সুদৃঢ় ও সমৃদ্ধ করুক, এটাই কাম্য। সকলকে শারদোৎসবের আন্তরিক শুভেচ্ছা নিবেদন করে শেষ করছি -

নমস্কারান্তে -
মৈনাক বঙ্গ

Chowrongee is embarking on its 21st anniversary alongside Utsav. Till last year, we were under the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) regulations to overcome the COVID-19 crisis. With the number of current active COVID-19 cases drastically down, we are in a more comfortable zone to organize a community gathering. All of us are less hesitant to mingle and enjoy companionship. Last year, due to international travel restrictions, we couldn't stage external artists as part of our cultural celebration. This year we plan to host a popular Bengali folk band – Dohar. We hope the Bengali community will savor this musical fiesta and will make it an event to cherish. Last year we had to resort to packaged food distribution to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, hopefully we shall be sitting together at the dinner table to enjoy some wonderful camaraderie this time.

Chowrongee editorial committee is delighted to welcome our newest members – Ayantika Bhattacharya and Debrup Ghosh. We are sure that their talents, ideas, and thoughts will take Chowrongee to new heights. We also hope to see more new faces on our team down the road.

Several charitable activities were undertaken by the Utsav Youth Volunteer team last year. That Utsav is a charitable organization has been reinforced by its efforts and presence within the community. A detailed article describing different projects executed by the team has been included in the 'Miscellaneous' section; interested readers are encouraged to read it for details.

We lost quite a few Bengali legends last year. Sandhya Mukherjee, Bappi Lahiri, Tarun Majumdar, Narayan Debnath ... and many more. How fondly we enjoyed the gags for Handa-Bhonda, Bantul the Great or Nonte-Fonte, movies like 'Sriman Prithwiraj' or 'Dadar Kirti' are timeless, and the pujo procession in the 80s and 90s would not be complete without a street dance of 'I am a disco dancer'. Their creations are time immemorial and a benchmark for generations to follow.

As we commemorate 75 years of India's independence, we send our heartfelt congratulations to all of you. We also thank all the contributors of Chowrongee, whose efforts have kept the magazine alive and thriving since its inception. We hope our community will leave no stones unturned to enrich it even further in the years to come. On behalf of the Literary Committee of Chowrongee, I wish you all a very happy Durga Pujo 2022.

With Best Compliments,
Mainak Banga

Literary Committee

**Anupam Mitra
Ayantika Bhattacharya
Biswanath Mukherjee
Debrup Ghosh
Manas Ray
Rajat Saha
Rashmi Nandi
Somen Nandi
Tanima Bhadra
Mainak Banga (Editor)**

Cover designed by **Santana Das and Ayantika Bhattacharya**

Since 2008, Chowrongee is online and can be accessed at <https://www.utsavsac.org/copy-of-magazine>

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Utsav Committee Members

Governing Body Members (GBM):

Somen Nandi (President and Cultural Lead)
Anima Kumar (Vice President/Treasurer)
Rajat Saha (Public Relations)
Mainak Banga (Food and Literary Lead)
Saurajit Ghosh (Website Lead)

Community Council Members (CCM) and Election Committee:

Adi Choudri
Biswanath Mukherjee
Joydeep Ray

Literary Committee:

Mainak Banga (Editor)
Anupam Mitra
Ayantika Bhattacharya
Biswanath Mukherjee
Debrup Ghosh
Manas Ray
Rajat Saha
Rashmi Nandi
Somen Nandi
Tanima Bhadra

Cultural Committee:

Somen Nandi (Lead)
Ananya Nandi
Manas Ray
Pubasha Das
Rajat Chakravarty
Suvra Mukherjee
Torsa Ghosal

Puja Committee:

Anima Kumar (Lead)
Mitra Choudri
Paramita Bhattacharya
Rupa Chowdhury
Santana Das
Seema Chanda
Soma Nayak

Registration Committee:

Somen Nandi (Lead)
Adi Choudri
Debrup Ghosh
Prodosh Chakraborty
Sharod Nandi
Subhra Gima

Website Committee:

Saurajit Ghosh (Lead)
Saumen Dey
Siddhartha Dey
Snehungsu Guha

Utsav Youth Committee Members:

Hem Sarkar
Manjula Dey
Manomita Patra
Rupa Chowdhury (Lead)
Sangita Biswas (Lead)
Snigdha Banerjee
Suchanda Majumdar
Trina Ghosh

Utsav Youth Member Participants:

Aayan Banerjee
Aayush Ghosh
Aditya Sarkar
Ashna Nayak
Esha Banerjee
Eshani Majumdar
Nirvik Basuroy
Samriddhi Majumdar
Shriya Banerjee
Siddhartha Dey
Siddharth (Neil) Ray
Sonia Sarkar
Srija Bhowmik
Suhaan Devavarapu

Food Committee:

Mainak Banga (Lead)
Arun Chowdhury
Barun Bandyopadhyay
Joy Mukherjee
Koushik Das
Nirupom Basuroy
Prodosh Chakraborty
Shomeek Paul
Shyamal Roy
Subrata Dutta
Sudeep Sarkar
Tanima Bhadra

Welcome Committee

Mitra Choudri (Lead) - Folsom
Rashmi Nandi – Natomas
Sanchita Dey (Soma) – Elk Grove
Sharmila Mallick – Roseville/Rocklin
Supriya Mukherjee – Davis
Suvra Mukherjee – El-Dorado Hills

Message from the Utsav Boardroom

Dear Utsav Families and Friends,

It is my great honor and immense pleasure to write for the annual magazine of Utsav, Chowrongee. Another year has passed; Utsav has grown and evolved over the last twenty-one years. Let's take a moment to acknowledge the commitments from all of you, your enthusiasm and hard work; you have remained focused on helping others, promoting a culture of fellow feeling, caring for your community, and advocating for the people who need help. Your work is important and impactful, and I am deeply appreciative of the generosity of our sponsors, donors, members, and volunteers and your continued support.

I am incredibly grateful to Utsav youth volunteers and the guiding adult volunteers for your community service - your passion knows no bounds. I'm constantly awed by your grit, willingness to rise to any challenge, and dedication to serve through the myriad programs under Utsav's umbrella. I am proud of the coordinators and the parents as well; they are the torchbearers guiding the youngsters to take the charitable activities of Utsav to the next level. Please keep up your good work. This is the first time in Utsav's history that Youth Volunteers, along with Utsav's adults, raised over \$16,000 (in 2021) and \$5000 (till August 2022), for a total of over \$21,000 (2021-22) solely for charitable causes. We are thankful to all the donors, volunteers, and you - what a great way to celebrate Utsav's 20th and 21st year of existence. Please stay tuned for upcoming charitable activities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have updated their COVID-19 guidance, and screening tests are no longer recommended in general community settings; still, be safe and be well; take your own precautionary measures to be healthy. I can't imagine the pain and heartache of those affected in California's recent unprecedented

heat emergency and wildfires; there are many opportunities for you to open your arms and stand by them to transform the feel and ethos of our community during this recovery. Please show your kindness and compassion.

Now, it is the time of the year to enjoy Sharodotsav with your friends, family, and loved ones. Our volunteers have worked diligently for months to put up a great show, from the worship to cultural programs to the variety of food items in every meal and, last but not the least, to this magazine. They all deserve a big round of applause. We can't thank our sponsors and members enough; you make a difference.

We pay our tribute to the Late Kalika Prasad Bhattacharya, the founder of DOHAR band. His untimely passing has left a void in the music world, but we are looking forward to his team's concert; they exemplify the spirit of carrying on his vision and values - kudos to the entire group.

This is the first time in Utsav history that Youth Volunteers along with Utsav adults raised over \$16,000 (in 2021) and \$5,000 (till August 2022), that's totalling over \$21,000 (2021-22) Shubho Sharodiya wishes to everyone! Let's continue our friendship and collaboration for many more years.

Sincerely,

Somen Nandi

President, Utsav 2021-22

Governing Body Members (GBM):

Somen Nandi, President

Anima Kumar, Vice President and Treasurer

Rajat Saha, Public Relations

Mainak Banga, Food and Literary Lead

Saurajit Ghosh, Website Lead

Utsav Accounts (July 2021 – July 2022)*

Revenues	Individual Amount	Total
Balance saving from 2020-2021 (Excl \$2,115 from Savings)	\$6,369	
Membership Fees (Sharodotsav 2021)	\$38,265	
Membership Fees (Bani Bandana 2022)	\$150	
	Total Revenue	\$44,784
Standing Expenses		
Utsav Website Renewal	\$22	
Insurance for 2021-2022	\$749	
Gold River Storage Rental Fee (2021 - 22)	\$1,540	
Tax Preparation & Submission Fees	\$25	
		\$2,336
Sharodotsav 2021		
Hall Rental (Orangevale Community Center)	\$7,313	
Magazine Printing & Mailing	\$1,389	
Transport & Set-up	\$750	
STL (Rentals)	\$1,354	
Drama Props Rental	\$1,569	
Kitchen Help	\$1,100	
Priest Officiation (\$201 – member sponsored)	\$0	
Sound & Audio (Suresh Kumar) & Dhak Purchase	\$3,840	
Camera & Electronics Rental	\$642	
Banners & Supplies (Home Depot)	\$2,190	
Food and Misc. supplies	\$12,862	
Pujo Proshad Expense	\$504	
Cultural Program (Supplies for Props)	\$175	
Photo booth for 20 th year	\$115	
Charity	\$1,500	
		\$35,303
Bani Bandana 2022		
Hall Rental (Folsom City Hall)	\$1,070	
Transport and Set Up	\$270	
Kitchen Help	\$610	
Donations (Vedanta Society)	\$300	
Food & Supplies	\$1,803	
Pujo Prosad	\$202	
Total Expenses		\$4,255
Basanta Utsav and Bengali New Year 2022		\$793
Annual General Meeting-cum-Picnic 2022		\$730
	Total Expenses	\$43,417
	Net Balance	\$1,367
	2021-2022	

* To be Audited

This is the first time in Utsav history that Youth Volunteers along with Utsav adults raised over \$16,000 (in 2021) and \$5,000 (till August 2022), that's totalling over \$21,000 (2021-22)



Tentative Program Schedule* for 21st Sharodotsav, 2022

Friday, September 30, 2022

Registration	05:00 PM onwards
Sharodotsav (Shoshthi, Bodhon and Aarati)	06:00 PM – 06:45 PM
Cultural Program (“Agomoni” song and Dance)	07:00 PM – 07:30 PM
Dinner	07:30 PM – 08:30 PM
DOHAR (North Indian Folk Band)	08:30 PM – 11:00 PM

Saturday, October 1, 2022

Registration	09:00 AM onwards
Sharodotsav (Saptami and Mahashtami)	09:30 AM – 11:30 AM
Aarati and Pushpanjali	11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Prasad	12:30 PM – 01:00 PM
Lunch	01:00 PM – 02:30 PM
Break	03:00 PM – 05:30 PM
Shondhi Pujo and Aarati	05:30 PM – 06:30 PM
Cultural Program (Theme Dance by Kids)	06:40 PM – 06:45 PM
Tribute to the recently passed away Legends	06:50 PM – 08:00 PM
Utsav Annual Award Ceremony	08:00 PM – 08:20 PM
Dinner	08:20 PM – 09:15 PM
Bengali Drama	09:15 PM – 10:30 PM

Sunday, October 2, 2022

Registration	09:30 AM onwards
Sharodotsav (Nabami and Dashami)	10:00 AM – 11:30 AM
Aarati and Pushpanjali	11:30 AM – 12:00 PM
Bishorjon, Shantir Jol, Dhunuchi Dance, and Sindur Khela	12:00 PM – 12:30 PM
Prasad	12:30 PM – 01:00 PM
Lunch	01:00 PM – 02:30 PM
Cultural Program (performance by Utsav members)	02:30 PM – 03:15 PM
Bengali Adda and Quiz	03:15 PM – 04:15 PM
Vote of Thanks	04:15 PM – 04:30 PM
Snacks and Wrap-up	04:30 PM – 06:00 PM

*Subject to change

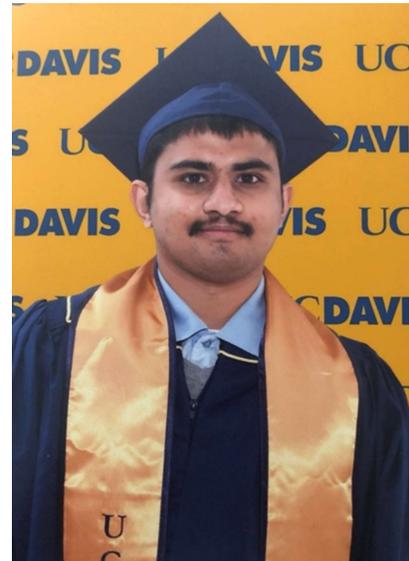
Community News

Khounish Sharma graduated Summa Cum Laude from University of Southern California (USC) in May 2022 with dual Bachelors degrees in Human Biology and Economics. He joined FTI Consulting's Center of Healthcare Economics and Policy as an Economic Consultant before pursuing a career in Medicine. His passion for healthcare led him to become the President of USC KDSAP (Kidney Disease Screening and Awareness Program); he will be representing the California chapter in September 2022 in Boston as part of the National Coordination Committee. He was also actively involved in cancer research at the Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. He is the eldest son of Ashru Kana and Dr. Kingshuk Sharma.



Shimika Basuroy, daughter of Nirupom Basuroy and Sudeshna Ghosh, graduated Cum Laude from the University of California, San Diego, with a Bachelor of Science in Cognitive Science (specializing in Design and Interaction). She is now employed at Scripps Research Institute, San Diego as a User Experience Researcher.

Sunoy Nandi, son of Rashmi and Somen Nandi, graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of California, Davis, in June 2022, with a major in Mathematics and minor in Economics. We wish him all success in the future ahead.



Archita Bhattacharya graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science. We wish her the best in her future endeavors.



Anish Adoni, son of Subhra Chakraborty and Anand Adoni, graduated from the University of California, Berkeley, in December 2021 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences. Anish is working as a Software Engineer at Two Sigma Securities in New York City.

Chandreyi (Zini) has graduated from Oakridge High School and is now attending Georgia Institute of Technology with a major in Computer Science. We wish her all success for her undergraduate studies and beyond.



Sneha Banerjee graduated with a B.S. in Neurobiology, Physiology and Behavior from the University of California, Davis.

Siddharth Ray (popularly known as Neil), son of Joydeep Ray and Dipanjali Banerjee, had his sacred thread ceremony (Upanayana) on June 10, 2022, in Folsom, CA. The ceremony was officiated by Pandit Harekrishna Mohapatra of Shiva Vishnu Temple, Livermore. It was well attended by friends and family, as well as viewed by family members in India via webcast.



Utsav Award Winners (2003-2021)

Utsav gratefully acknowledges the winners of Utsav Awards in past years!

Cultural Award

2003: Somen Nandi
2004: Shyamal Chattaraj
2005: Nabanita Sen
2006: Shashwati Roy
2007: Sharmila Mukherjee
2008: Marvel Gima
2009: Joydeep Roy
2010: Mala Paul
2011: Tuhina Ghosal and Sanjib Sarkar
2012: Ajay Joshi
2013: Bipasha Chowdhury and Rajat Saha
2014: Joydeep Ray and Snehangsu Guha
2015: Sanhita Bandyopadhyay
2016: Tanushree Ganguly
2017: Suvra Mukherjee
2018: Manas Ray
2019: Tanusree Ganguly
2020: Poulami Chatterjee and Rittwika Ghoshal
2021: Joya Banerjee

Literary (and Educational) Award

2003: Arijit Chatterjee
2004: Arun Das
2005: Dilip Roychowdhury
2006: Rashmi Nandi and Pat Chatterjee
2007: Santana Das
2008: Manas Ray
2009: Rashmi Nandi
2010: Manas Ray
2011: Tapati Bhowmik
2012: Prodyot Bhattacharya
2013: Avishek Nag
2014: Shimika Basuroy
2015: Manju Roychowdhury
2016: Barin Kumar
2017: Tapati Ray
2018: Najmus Saquib
2019: Nirvik Basuroy
2020: Siddhartha Dey
2021: Mahika Chowdhury

Fundraising Award

2003: Udayan Chanda
2004: Deb Saha
2005: Anita Ghoshal
2006: Somen Nandi
2007: Deb Saha
2008: Anima Kumar
2009: Ajay Joshi
2010: Deb Saha

2011: Anima Kumar
2012: Deb Saha
2013: Joy Mukherjee
2014: Udayan Chanda
2016: Marvel Gima
2017: Sanjib Nayak
2018: Pradeep Devavarapu
2019: Shyamal Roy
2020: Subir Sarkar

Outstanding Volunteer Award

2003: Suvayu Bose
2004: Shashwati Roy and Mala Paul
2005: Santana Das
2006: Joy Mukherjee
2007: Seema Chanda
2008: Rupa Chowdhury and Koushik Das
2009: Subir Sarkar
2010: Anima Kumar and Rashmi Nandi
2011: Koushik Das and Arun Chowdhury
2012: Biswanath Mukherjee
2013: Mitra Choudri and Pulak Chowdhury
2014: Subir Sarkar
2015: Shomeek Paul
2016: Prodosh Chakraborty
2017: Sangita Biswas
2018: Adi Choudri
2019: Mainak Banga and Saumen Dey
2020: Biswanath Mukherjee and Shomeek Paul
2021: Poulami Chatterjee and Sandipan Samaddar

Outstanding Youth Volunteer Award

(This award was initiated in 2004)

2004: Joey Chakraborty
2005: Mohana Roy
2006: Natasha Choudri
2007: Aninda Chowdhury
2008: Robby Chakraborty
2009: Arunav Sarkar
2010: Rudrani Ghosh
2011: Sunoy Nandi and Sharod Nandi
2012: Sunoy Nandi and Sharod Nandi
2013: Neel Chanda
2014: Avishek Umesh Jadhav
2015: Ayan Chowdhury
2018: Ena Nayak and Sayak Datta
2019: Siddharth (Neil) Ray
2020: Dayita Biswas
2021: Esha Banerjee

আঁকিবুকি

Drawings

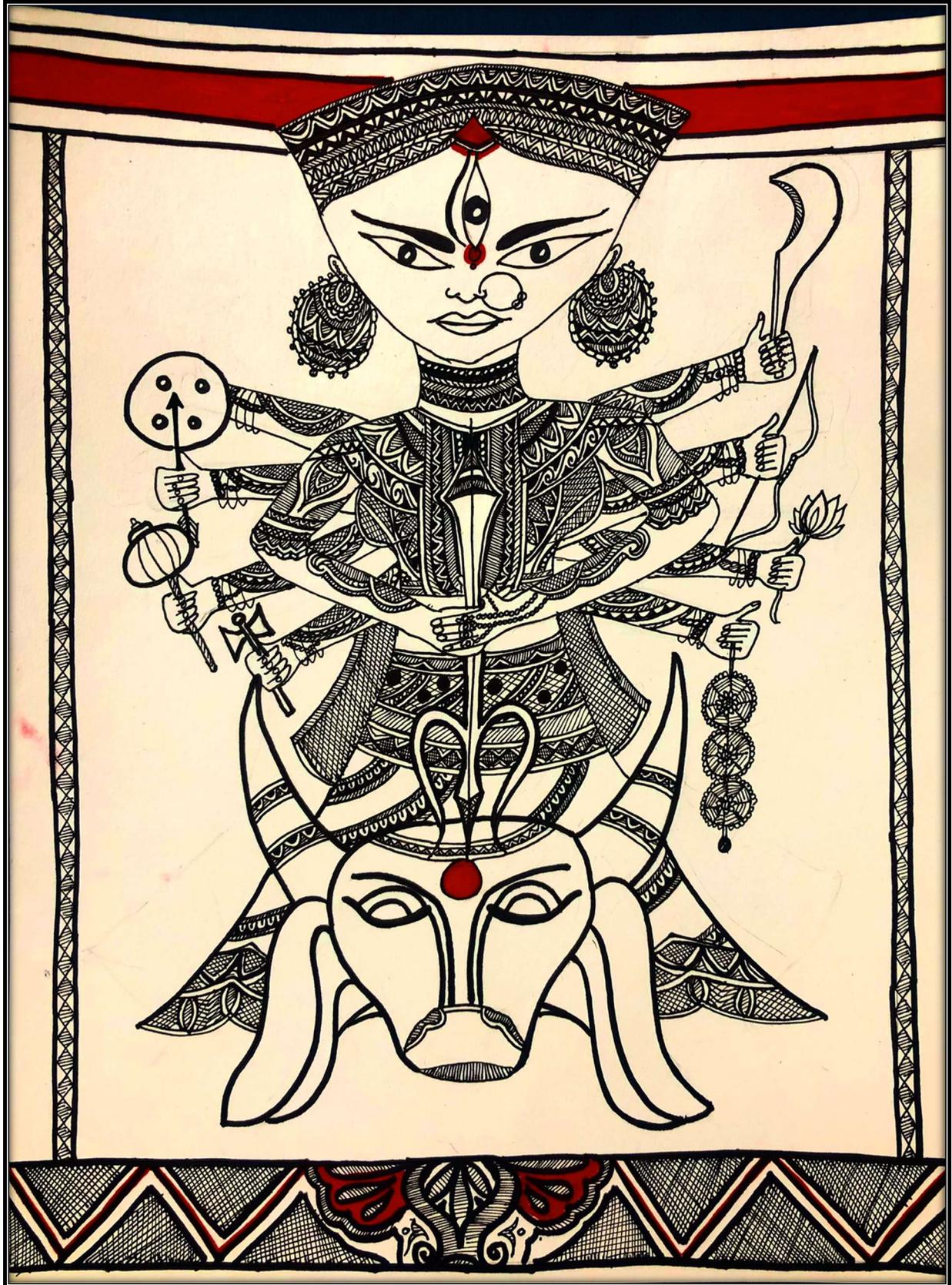




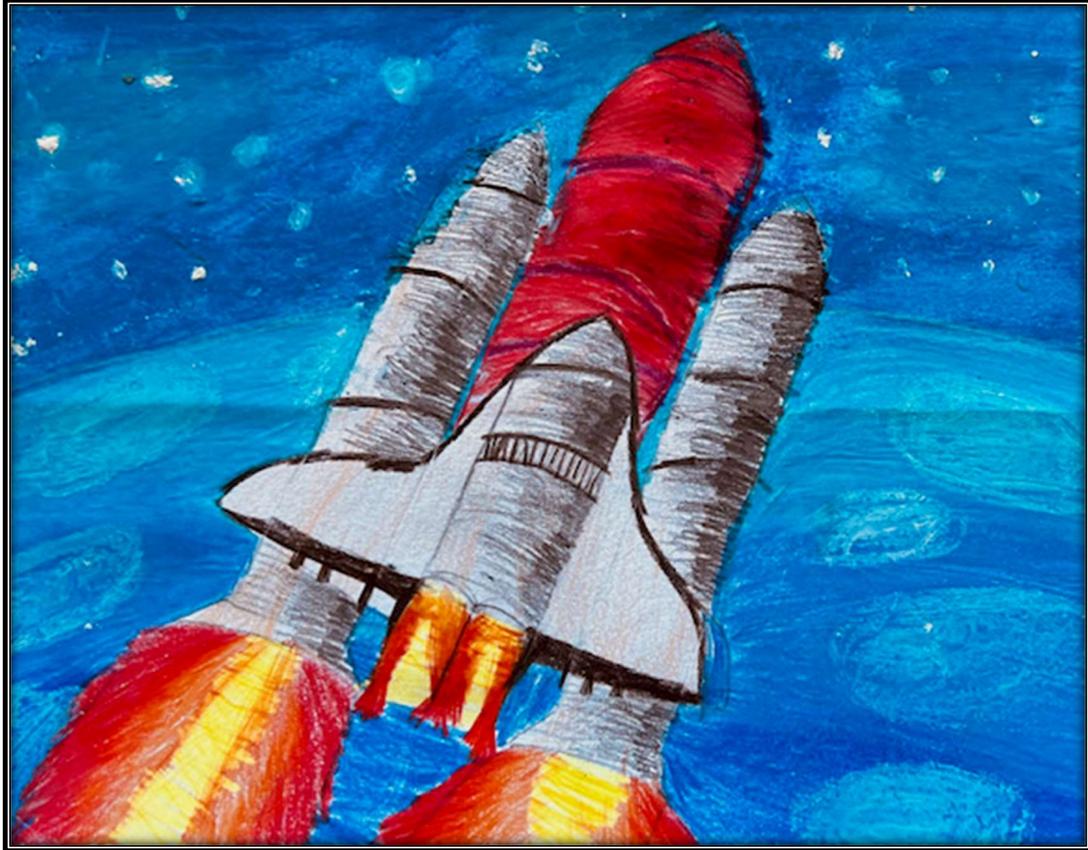
“Winter Holiday” by Ayantika Bhattacharya, an IT analyst at the State of California



“মেঘ বলেছে যাবো যাবো” by Ayantika Bhattacharya, an IT analyst at the State of California



"Madhubani blend of Durgotsav" by Gaurav Jha, Faculty at Montana State University, Bozeman



“Above the World” by Rishan Dey (3rd grader)



“Still Life” by Rishan Dey (3rd grader)



“Epitome of Strength” by Amrita Chakraborty (graduate student in Transportation Science at UC Davis, CA)



“শারদ শুভেচ্ছা” by Avighna Bhattacharyya (3rd grader)



“Graduation Lei” by Esha Banerjee (10th grader)



“Draco Constellation” by Shriya Banerjee (6th grader)



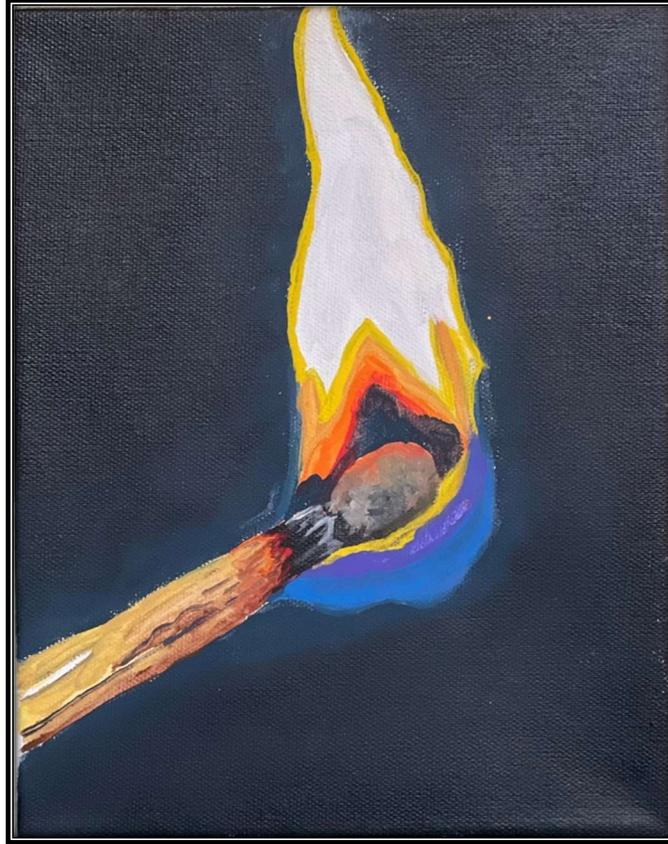
“Rainbow Princess” by Ileana Saha (2nd Grader)



"Evening by the Waterfall" by Toushini Banga (3^d grader)



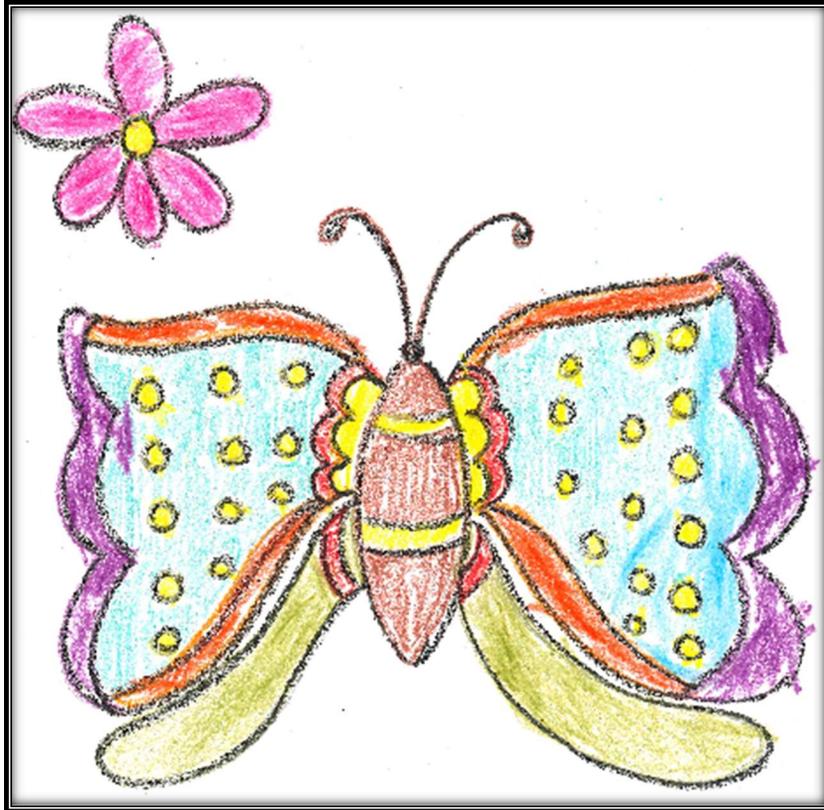
"Cardboard Loom Weaving on Twig" by Aayan Banerjee (4th grader)



“Flame” by ***Evani Paul*** (10th grader)



“Humming Bird” by ***Evani Paul*** (10th grader)



***"Butterfly"** by Anaisa Mitra (Pre-Kindergarten)*



***"Baby Dino"** by Vivan Mayukh Chowdhury (1st grader)*

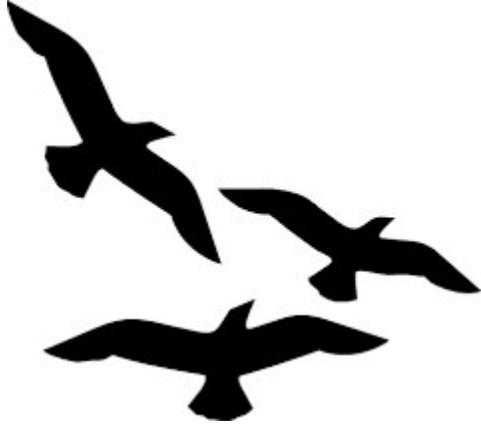


"Landscape" by Srija Bhowmik (12th grader)



"It's a Magical World" by Srija Bhowmik (12th grader)

পদ্য
Poetry



ঐকতান

কিচির মিচির করে তিতির
আয়না দেখে ময়না
টিয়ার গায়ে নামাবলি
কাঠবিড়ালি দিচ্ছে উঁকি
প্যাঁচা বলে হুতোম হুতোম
পায়রা করে বকম বকম।

জোনাকি জুলে সারারাত
চামেলী এলো রাতারাতি
হাসনাহেনা ধরে বায়না
গাইবে সে রাগ সাহানা
টিকটিকি ডন বৈঠক করে
ব্যাঙাটির ল্যাজটি পরে খসে
শালিক দিয়ে শিস
চাঁদ কে করে কুর্নিশ।

স্বপ্নের ঘোড়া চড়ল খোকা
জানে না সে যাবে কোথা।
রাস্তা না পেয়ে খুঁজে
এলো সে ফিরে মায়ের কাছে।
বলে এবার গল্প শোনা
মা বললো এক যে ছিল রাজা
রাজার স্বপ্ন দেখতে দেখতে
খোকা পড়ল ঘুমিয়ে।

তারার নীচে

মাটির শয়্যা গৃহহারা মুক্ত মানুষ বস্ত্রহীন দেহে তারার আচ্ছাদন।
সর্বহারার শান্তি-মাখা নিদ্রালু চোখ
একাকিত্বের দৃঢ় আলিঙ্গনে আবদ্ধ
বিঁবিঁর ডাকে রাত মাতোয়ারা
কাঁচের লণ্ঠনে ভীড় করে পোকারা
পাগল কোকিলের আকুল গানে
স্মৃতির শ্রোত আবেগে ভাসে।
নীলাভ স্থলপদ্ম হিমালয়ের কোলে
দূরে কোথাও মন্দিরের ঘন্টা বাজে।

ডঃ তপতী রায়, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত এনাস্কেসিওলজিস্ট, বাংলা ও ইংরেজি দুটি ভাষায়
লেখালেখি করেন, নিউক্যাসল, ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া নিবাসী।

রবির বাঁধন

তোমার সুরে তুমিও রঙিন, লাগিয়েছ রঙ নানান মনে;
তোমার প্রেমের রাগ রাগিণী, তোমার মতোই বুঝতে জানে।
তোমায় মাপতে ফিতে ফুরোয়, তবু আঁতেলদের লড়াই জমে
রাতারাতি;

তাই দুঃখসুখের সাত সাগরে, তোমার সাথে একলা মাতি।
বাঁশি থেকে বাঁশিওয়ালা, জেনেছি শুধু সঞ্চয়িতার সম্মোহনে!
আবার জেলের মতো জাল বিছিয়েছ গল্পগুচ্ছের গুণ্ডধনে;
ছয় ঋতুর দাপাদপি তোমার কথায় জীবন্ত হয়;
এক গ্রীষ্ম গরম মেশে, দু-এক পশলা ভালোবাসায়।
কাশ- শিউলির কথোপকথন শারদ প্রাতের আঙিনাতে,
আড্ডা জমে তুঙ্গে ওঠে, হিমেল রাতের শেষ বেলাতে।
শীত সন্ধ্যের হালকা আমেজ, গুনগুনিয়ে সুর আর তালে;
ফাগুনের তুলি প্রেম এঁকেছে, আবীর ধোঁয়ার শিমূল ফুলে
তোমায় চিনি মনের মতো, শান্ত থেকে ভানুসিংহের গর্জনে
জীবন-মৃত্যু পায়ের ভৃত্য, ফিরে ফিরে আসে রবীন্দ্রনাথের উদযাপনে।
তোমায় স্মরণ করি নাতো, বাঁচছি সময় তোমার সাথে!
বহু সংসারে তুমিই ঠাকুর, বাঁধছ জীবন একতারাতে ॥



পৌলোমী চ্যাটার্জী, ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া, ডেভিস-এর ডিপার্টমেন্ট
অফ মাইক্রোবায়োলজি ও মলিক্যুলার জেনেটিক্স এ পোস্ট-ডক্টরাল ফেলো।

শীতের ছুটি

সোনালী রোদে জাগছে আমার শহর
নতুন দিনের খবর নিয়ে আসে
সার দিয়ে প্লেন আসছে যাচ্ছে কত
নতুন গুড়ের গন্ধ হাওয়ায় ভাসে।

শীতের দিনে রঙ-বেরঙের সাজ
ছুটির আমেজ— মত্ত আমি তুমি
বোলপুরেতে কবিগুরুর গান
এই আয়োজন সোনার চেয়েও দামী।

এরই মাঝে বিয়ে বাড়ির ধুম
আলোর ভিড়ে কাটলো শীতের রাত
কড়াইগুঁটির কচুরি, আলুর দম
আর ফিশ ফ্রাই করল বাজিমাত।

অন্য চোখে আমার কলকাতা
জোড়াসাঁকো আর জাদুঘরের পথে
কলেজ স্ট্রীট তেপ্তা মেটায় যত
পুরনো বই, আর ডাব শরবতে।

ছুটির শেষে এবার ফেরার পালা
পেলাম অনেক— ফিরছি সেটাই জেনে
নাই বা হল বইমেলাতে যাওয়া
আগামী হোক খুশীরই রেশ টেনে।

সময়িতা ভট্টাচার্যী, ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ডেভিস, ক্যালিফোর্নিয়ার চতুর্থ বর্ষীয়
স্নাতক। গত বছর থেকে উনি উৎসবের সাথে যুক্ত।

পুজোর ভিড়

শরতের শুরুতে,
দেবী পক্ষের বিশেষ দিন গুলো আসে।
সেদিনের হাওয়া-বাতাসে,
কাশ ফুল এদিক-ওদিক দোলে।

কুমারটুলি থেকে অনেক ভিড় পেরিয়ে,
মূর্তি গুলো পৌঁছলো অবশেষে।
প্রত্যেক রাস্তা ঠাসা ভিড়ে।
College Square ঢাকা আলোতে।

একডালিয়াতে শাঁখ বাজছে।
বাবুঘাটে কলা বউ স্নান হচ্ছে।
Salt Lake-এ ঢাক বাজছে।
বাগবাজারে মা দুর্গাকে স্বাগত জানানো হচ্ছে।

প্যাড্ডেলে সবাই পুষ্পাঞ্জলি দিচ্ছে
মা দুর্গার পায়ের নিচে।
কেউ হাতে ধনুচি নিয়ে
সন্ধি পুজোয় খুশিতে নাচে।

দশমীর সন্ধ্যের ভিড়ে,
রাস্তায় ঢাক আর কাঁসরের আওয়াজে,
লোকেরা নেচে গেয়ে,
বলে, “বলো দুর্গা মায় কি”।

নির্ভীক বসুরায় Folsom High School-এর একাদশ শ্রেণীর ছাত্র।



বিদ্যাপীঠের তরুলতা

নরম রৌদ্রের রঙিন এক শীতের দুপুরে
হাজির হয়েছিলেম বিদ্যাপীঠ দেওঘরে,
দিগন্ত বিস্তৃত মঠে
নন্দন পাহাড়ের পাদদেশে এক আনন্দ নিকেতনে।

ডাক এলো মহারাজের সন্নিকটে!
মনে ভাবি, একি বাস তোমার রাজন?
মুন্ডিত মস্তক, গেরুয়া বস্ত্র আর খড়ম যুগল চরণ!
তারপর কত কথা - কি খাই, কি পড়ি?
কে প্রিয়- পতৌদি না চুনী?
আচ্ছা বাবা, সাত সকালে উঠতে পারো?
গলকম্বলের ইংরেজি বল?
"এ" প্লাস "বি" হোল স্কোয়ার কি?
আরো কতকি?

একদিন ডাকঘর থেকে এল জীবনের সেই ডাক,
এল সেই শ্রেষ্ঠ পুরস্কার, একটি ছোট্ট পোস্টকার্ড।
বাবার আনন্দ অশ্রু আর মায়ের অবিরাম চোখের জলে,
দিনের পর দিন, রাতের পর রাত আলোচনার পরে,
পিতা মাতা দিলেন সঁপে শুদ্ধসত্তানন্দজির চরণতলে,
শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ-মা সারদার পাদ পদে।

হাড়কাঁপানো শীতে হিম শীতল জলে স্নান,
গ্রীষ্মের প্রখর রোদে বিজলি পাখা বিহিন ধাম,

তাও কেটেছে দিন আনন্দে,
আমবাগানের কাঁচা আমের স্বাদে,
খেলার মাঠে, শৈশবের কলরবে।

খেলা, খেলা আর খেলার মাঝে,
লালন করলে তুমি,
পালন করলে তুমি,
কাঁচা বয়সের কোমল মনে দিলে পূর্ণতা,
সময়ের সাথে দিলে স্বয়ম্ভরতা,
যৌবনের শক্তি আর জীবনের জয়গানে,
পাঠালে বিদ্যাপীঠ থেকে বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাপ্তনে,

ছাত্র থেকে ছত্রধর-
আমরা আজ বিশ্বের বিদ্যামন্দিরে।

তোমার তরুলতায়, তোমার তরুছায়ায়,
মুগ্ধ এই জীবন হে বিদ্যাপীঠ জননী,
বহুজন হিতায়, বহুজন সুখায় অমৃত বাহিনী।

ডঃ শিবপ্রসাদ রায়চৌধুরী, ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া, ডেভিস এর
শারীরিক চিকিৎসা বিভাগে কর্মরত। উনি রামকৃষ্ণ মিশন দেওঘর এর
প্রাক্তন ছাত্র। ২০২২ এ স্কুলটি শতবর্ষে পদার্পণ করলো। মুহূর্তটি
উদযাপনার্থে এই কবিতাটি সংযোজন করা হলো।



Ramkrishna Mission, Deoghar, Jharkhand

What the Dhaak?

When the northern world likes to celebrate fall
Us Bengalis answer to a different call
Of a Queen, adorned in gold and red
And four other idols to complete the spread

The daily Durga is forgotten for a couple of weeks
The housewife, the daughter, the solace she seeks
Much easier to discuss that new saree in vogue
Than address patriarchy over *khichuri* and *bhog*

Raising kids and cooking has to please a
Talented soul, in a trap, called the H4 visa
A car, a house - the American dream isn't so phony
For that annual pic taken of the lady's *agomoni*

An invitation goes out - "Please dance and donate
There's pujo and programs for three days straight.
Don't worry about your skill level or age
Just dress traditionally, and we will put you on stage!"

As is with these emails, on deaf ears it falls
The *shilpis* are waiting for their personalized calls
"Please perform for us, don't be so hard to please
Isn't it why you paid that pricey sponsorship fees?"

A few calls and meetings later, a schedule is decked
With the handful of items we've come to expect
Dhunuchi, *natok*, *songeet* - no need to try for more
Than to go beyond our roots of Ray and Tagore

Kids need a nudge to our culture that's so good
So, let's have them do an item number from Bollywood
Maybe speak some Bangla for the weekly audition
And amassing extracurriculars for college admission

The *protimas* are decked with pomp and flair
And elaborate meals are prepared with care
Amidst the *dhol* and *kanshor*, the mic is passed
For prayers to the priest we still find by caste

Anjali and *sindur khela* is the devotion we need
To take countless selfies for that Facebook feed
In clothes that step out only annually from the rack
With "friends" who do *PNPC* behind our back

The curtains are raised, we see *shilpis* abound
With whatever's left working on lights and sound
The audience clapped anyway, to nobody's surprise
"Pada'r pujo toh, this was bound to arise!"

Yet we *bideshis* love our pujo with splendor and pride
And lots of negative things have their positive side
if you'd find yourself saying - "This poem is so bad!"
I'll say - "Read the other stuff, or use it as a mouse pad!"

Rajat Chakravarty works as a machine learning and AI consultant for several Fortune 500 companies. Much like his work in creating things so that humans aren't needed, he dabbles in writing poems that no one should read.

Destination Life

Came out of the dark womb -cave
in to the well-lit cold world
first breath instilled precious life
prophecies on the wall
all became true in the end.

Story of the Night

For whom does the night mourn?
Is it for the sun's sojourn?
A lost precious day
True love lost its way
Flowers that dried
Animals that died
Trees that decayed
Humans that passed away.
The nightly ghosts and ghoulies
Perform an impromptu gala dance
Create shadows in the dark
The night hugs the moon and stars
and waits for the beloved sun to return.

Dr. Tapati Ray is a retired anesthesiologist. She has a great passion for poetry and literature, both in English and Bengali. She lives in Newcastle, CA. Recently she published a book of her poems called "Poetic Reflections". It is available via Amazon:

https://www.amazon.com/dp/1953710700/ref=cm_sw_r_em_api_glt_fabc_3QPMPBRNM5GVM5E86TEA

প্রবন্ধ *Articles*



চিমটি ঘড়ি

রেণু বললো - দিদি তোমার চিমটি ঘড়িটা বেশ দিব্য হয়েছে।

চিমটি ঘড়ি? সেটা আবার কি রে?

আমি খানিকক্ষণ বোকার মতো ওর দিকে তাকিয়ে রইলাম, তারপর ফের জিজ্ঞেস করলাম - চিমটি ঘড়ি কি রে? কোনোদিন তো এমন নাম শুনিনি!

হ্যাঁ গো - এই তো তোমার হাতের ঘড়িটা।

তাও আমি হ্যাঁ, আমার হতবাক মূর্তি দেখে রেণু বলে - তুমি বুঝি টিভি তে দেখো না চিমটি ঘড়ির বিজ্ঞাপন?

নাহ তো!

এমন সময় পাশের ঘর থেকে আমার ভাইয়ের আওয়াজ এলো - ওরে ও HMT ঘড়ির কথা বলছে।

হে ঈশ্বর!

আমার বোধোদয় হলো এতক্ষণে ... Hindustan Machine Tools সংক্ষেপে HMT কোম্পানির ঘড়ি আমাদের ছোটবেলায় খুব বিখ্যাত ছিল, সেই সদ্য কেনা আমার ঘড়ি নিয়ে এতো কাণ্ড।

এবার লজ্জা পেয়ে বলে রেণু - বুঝেছো তো আমি কি বলতে চাইছি?

অবশ্যই বুঝছি - মাথা নেড়ে সায় দিই।

বলাইবাহুল্য - রেণু আমাদের বাড়িতে সাহায্য করতো কাজে আর নানারকম অপভ্রংশ শব্দ ছিল ওর ভাণ্ডারে।

রেণুর দিদি গীতাও কিছু কম যায় না, যেমন সে কোনোদিন রসগোল্লাকে রসগোল্লা বলে ডাকেনি, সবসময় জলের মিষ্টি ডাকতো, আমরা খুব হাসাহাসি করতাম এই নিয়ে কিন্তু এখন যখন ডায়াবেটিক সন্দেহ, রসগোল্লা, পান্ডিয়া ইত্যাদি মিষ্টি দেখি তখন মনে পরে গীতার কথা আর ভাবি সত্যি ও দূরদর্শী ছিল, চিনি-বিহীন মিষ্টি কে আর কি বলা যায় - জলের মিষ্টিই তো!

সেই রেণু অথবা ফুলরেণু কে নিয়েই আজকের এই গল্প।

চিমটি ঘড়ি শোনার পর থেকেই আমাদের মা উদ্যোগ নিয়ে লেগে পড়লেন রেণু কে অক্ষরজ্ঞানে পরিচিত করতে, স্লেট চক এবং বর্ণপরিচয় নিয়ে দুপুরবেলা কাটে রেণুর, আমাদের ভাইবোনেরও প্রচণ্ড উৎসাহ, নিজেদের পড়াগুলো শিকেয় তুলে রেণুর উন্নতিসাধনে লেগে পড়লাম - আমাদের পরীক্ষা যে নাকের ডগায় - সেসব কোনো হুঁশই নেই!

মা সকাল বিকেল রেণুকে কাজের ফাঁকে ফাঁকে লেখাপড়া শেখাচ্ছেন, সঙ্গে সঙ্গে যেন আমাদেরও রেণুর ওপর মাস্টারির নেশা চেপে বসলো।

একদিন দেখা গেলো রেণু হাতের কাছে একটা পেন্সিল পেয়ে বাড়ির দেওয়ালে দিব্যি সুন্দর গোট গোট আ আ ই ঈ লিখে ভরিয়ে ফেলেছে - সর্বনাশ আমরা স্কুল থেকে ফিরে ওই অবস্থা দেখে তো আমাদের চক্ষু চড়কগাছ। মা-বাবা বাড়ি ফেরার আগে কোনো ভাবে মুছে ফেলা কি সম্ভব? কি ভাবে রেণুকে বকুনি থেকে বাঁচাবো সেই আমাদের চিন্তা! রেণু কিন্তু খুব গর্বিত নিজের কলাকুশলী তে, তার বিন্দুমাত্র দৃকপাত নেই।

ভালোই শিখছে বাংলা ও একটু একটু ইংরেজি পড়তে ও লিখতে কিন্তু তারপর যা হয় রেণুর বিয়ে হয়ে গেলো, মা বাবার কোনো ওজর আপত্তিই কানে তুললো না রেণুর বাবা। রেণু অবশ্য শ্বশুর বাড়ি যাবার সময় ট্যাঁকে করে বর্ণপরিচয়, ছোটদের কবিতার বই দু চারখানা, ওর খাতা পেন্সিল সব গুছিয়ে নিয়ে গেলো।

এরমধ্যে বেশ ক'বছর পেরিয়ে গেছে - আমার স্কুল জীবন শেষ - তখন কলেজে পড়ি - এক রোববার সকালে ছোট বাচ্চাদের গলার আওয়াজে ঘুমটা ভেঙে গেলো, উঠে এসে দেখি এক দিদি আর তার ভাই ঘুরঘুর করছে, সামনের ব্যালকনিতে দাঁড়িয়ে নিচের রাস্তা দেখছে ও নিজেদের মধ্যে গুরুগম্ভীর আলোচনা করছে - কে এরা - কোথেকে এলো? মা কেও দেখতে পাচ্ছি না ধরেপাশে, হঠাৎ পেছন ফিরতেই দেখি রেণু আমার জন্য হাতে এক কাপ চা নিয়ে দাঁড়িয়ে - ওমা - রেণু - তুই কোথেকে এলি - এরা তোর ছেলেমেয়ে?

হ্যাঁ গো দিদি - রেণুর যেন অন্য রূপ ...

এতদূর অন্ধ পড়ে নিশ্চয়ই ভাবছেন এবার গল্পের সেই চিরাচরিত মোড় ঘুরে যাবে - রেণুর বর ছেড়ে চলে গেছে, রেণু ছেলেমেয়ে নিয়ে অকূলপাথারে পড়েছে - না, একদমই না - রেণু দিব্যি সংসার করছে, নিজে সন্তোবেলার বয়স্ক শিক্ষা কেন্দ্রে গিয়ে লেখাপড়া শিখেছে, সারাদিন একটা স্কুলে শিক্ষকদের সাহায্যকারীর কাজ করে, ছেলেমেয়েকেও স্কুলে ভর্তি করেছে, এমন কি ওর স্বামীকেও রেণু অব্যাহতি দেয়নি, তাকে পড়াগুলো শিখিয়ে স্কুল পাশ করিয়ে একটা অফিসের কাজে ঢুকিয়ে দিয়েছে। ধন্য মেয়ে।

- হ্যাঁ রে গীতার কি খবর? আর তোর ছোট ভাইবোনেরা?

দিদি - সবাই কে লেখাপড়া শেখাচ্ছি - রেণুর মুখে বিজয়ীর হাসি।

জলের স্রোতের মতো সময় বয়ে গেছে, ৩০ বছর পেরিয়ে গেছে, মাস দুয়েক আগে কলকাতা গেছিলাম - আবার দেখা হলো রেণুর সঙ্গে, খবর পেয়ে দেখা করতে এসেছিলো, সঙ্গে মেয়ে, জামাই ও নাতনি; মেয়ে একটি স্কুলে পড়ায়, জামাই সরকারি চাকরি করে, ছেলে ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং পড়েছে, শুধু রেণুর কর্তা আজ আর ইহলোকে নেই। রেণু আমার মন প্রাণ গর্বে ভরে দিলো, তার মুখে শুধু একটা কথাই ঘুরেফিরে শুনে গেলাম - দিদি তোমাদের জন্যই আজ আমি উঠে দাঁড়াতে পেরেছি, আমার মায়ের কথায় চোখের জল আর মানে না রেণুর, তবে আমার জন্য যে আরো বড় চমক অপেক্ষা করছে সে কে জানত !

রেণু বললো দিদি একদিন তোমার আমাকে সময় দিতেই হবে এক জায়গায় নিয়ে যাবো - কথা দিচ্ছি তোমার ভালো লাগবে। বললাম বেশ যাবো।

পরের শনিবার ভোরবেলা আমরা বেরিয়ে পড়লাম, রেণু বললো আমরা যাচ্ছি আমডাঙ্গা - গেলে তোমার অন্যরকম লাগবে - দেখো। প্রায় ঘণ্টা খানেক লাগলো পৌঁছতে - কি সুন্দর চারদিকে সবুজ ধানের ক্ষেত, মেঠো রাস্তা ধরে সাইকেল, রিক্সা যাচ্ছে, ছোট ছোট ছেলে মেয়েরাও হেঁটে হেঁটে স্কুলে যাচ্ছে, আজ বোধহয় হাট বার, কিছু মানুষজন সেদিকেও ছুটছে। একটা বিশাল গেটের সামনে গাড়ি কে দাঁড়াতে বললো রেণু - আমি তো হাঁ করে দেখছি আর ভাবছি এ কোথায় এলাম? গেটের ওপর বড় সাইনবোর্ডে লেখা "আলো", গেট খুলে ঢুকতেই ৪-৫ জন মহিলা এগিয়ে এলেন আমাদের সাদর অভ্যর্থনা করতে, ভেতরে বিশাল ক্যাম্পাস, একটু দূরে সবুজ ঘাসের মাঠও দেখতে পাচ্ছি এবং অনেক ছোট ও কয়েকজন একটু বড় বাচ্চারাও খেলাধুলো করছে। এপাশে ওপাশে অনেক একতলা টানা ছোট ছোট ঘর - আমি অবাক বিস্ময়ে দেখে যাচ্ছি ও অনুধাবন করার চেষ্টা করছি। এরমধ্যে চঞ্চলা দিদিমনি

নিজের পরিচয় দিয়ে বললেন উনি এখানকার দায়িত্বে তবে সবাই আমাকে চেনেন শুধু রেণুর সুবাদে না আমাদের মায়ের কল্যাণেও।

তাই? কিন্তু আমি তো এর কিছুই জানিনা।

রেণু বলে ওঠে দিদি - জেঠিমা কে আমি এখানে নিয়ে এসেছিলাম একদিন - জেঠিমার এতো ভালো লেগে যায় যে জেঠিমা প্রায়ই আসতেন আর আমাকে একটা কাজ দিয়ে গেছেন। কানে শুনতে অসুবিধে কিংবা কথা বলতে যারা অপারগ তাদের জন্য এই আশ্রম বা স্কুল। জেঠিমা আমাদের ছেড়ে চলে যাবার আগে ওনার পেনশনের মোটা অংকের টাকা আশ্রমের জন্য দিয়ে গেছেন এবং আমাকে বলে গেছেন - যে ছাত্র-ছাত্রীরা ক্লাস টেনের বোর্ডের পরীক্ষায় সফল হবে ওদের কে প্রত্যেকের জন্য একটা করে ঘড়ি কিনে দিতে। রেণু বলতে থাকে ও আমি শুনতে থাকি - রেণু এখন এখানেই সবসময় থাকে ও নিজের বাকি জীবনটা এই আশ্রমেই কাটাতে চায়।

আমি বাক্যহারা। চোখের জল আর বাঁধ মানে না আমার, সবারই অশ্রুসিক্ত চোখ আর বিনম্র শ্রদ্ধায় মাথা নত।

আবারও গর্বে আমার মনটা ভরে উঠলো, বললাম - রেণু তুই ঠিক পারবি মায়ের দেওয়া এই দ্বয়িত্ব পালন করতে। ভগবান তোর মঙ্গল করুন। আমাকে জড়িয়ে ধরে রেণু।

চোখ মুছে বলি - পারলে চিমটি ঘড়ি কিনে দিস ওদেরকে যদি এখনও পাওয়া যায়!

রশ্মি নন্দী, ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া গভর্নমেন্টে কর্মরত, ছোটগল্প লিখতে ও পড়তে ভালোবাসেন।



সার্বজনীন

সকাল সকাল। বাইরেটা বকবক করছে। কদিন ধরে চলা নিম্নচাপ-টাপের ধাক্কা কাটিয়ে তেড়ে রোদ উঠেছে। তাপটাও খুব বেশি। বারান্দা থেকে দেখলাম মাঠে বাঁশ ফেলা। পুজোর তোড়জোড় এখনও আকাশে নেই শরতের মেঘের আনাগোনা। মনেও বাজছে না আগমনী সুর। অথচ এবারে তো বিশাল ব্যাপার। একদিকে দু-তিন বছরের লকডাউন-কোভিড পেরিয়ে এবারে বোধহয় নিয়মের বাঁধন আলগা দিয়ে পুজো করা যাবে। অন্যদিকে দুর্গাপুজোকে ইউনেস্কোর "Intangible Cultural Heritage" আখ্যা দেওয়ায় সরকারি ও অন্যান্য বিভিন্ন স্তরে প্রচুর শোরগোল চলছে। তবুও আমার মন ছেয়ে আছে গত বছরের পুজোর ঘটনাগুলিতে।

আচ্ছা, দুর্গাপুজো তো "সার্বজনীন বা সর্বজনীন!" কিন্তু সত্যি কি তাই? আসলে আমরা যে জায়গাটায় থাকি সেটা একটা মিশ্র এলাকা। আমাদের হাউসিং এর উত্তর-পশ্চিম দিকে রয়েছে মুসলিম বস্তি যা দ্রুত ক্রমবর্ধমান। আমাদের দুর্গাপুজোয় ওরা খুব বেশি অংশ নেয় না। এখনকার লোকজনও তা চায় না বলেই আমার মনে হয়। বস্তি থেকে ছোটো ছোটো ছেলেপিলেরা কখনও সখনও আসে। তাও প্রসাদ টসাদ নেওয়ার খুব একটা ভিড় হয় না। তার ওপাশে রয়েছে একটি আদিবাসী উপজাতি এলাকা। এরা সব ইটভাটায় কাজ করবে বলে বিভিন্ন জায়গা থেকে এসে এখানেই রয়ে গেছে। যদিও এখানে সাঁওতাল বসতি বলে এলাকাটা পরিচিত। কিন্তু এরা সবাই সাঁওতাল নয়- গুঁরাও, মুন্ডা আরও অন্যান্যরাও আছে। এরা অন্ত্যজ বলে মারাংবুরু সহ এদের অন্যান্য দেব-দেবীদেরও অত কৌলিন্য নেই, সেইজন্যই হোক কিংবা এরা নিজেদের হিন্দু মনে করে বলেই হোক, এরা পুজোয় চলে আসে।

আর আছে দক্ষিণ দিকে গঙ্গার খাল ঘেঁষে বিরাট খ্রিস্টান পাড়া। এদের প্রায় সবাই গরিমাদীপু আদি খ্রিস্টানদের মত নয়। দুই-তিন পুরুষ বা চার পুরুষের খ্রিস্টান। যেভাবে বাংলার তথা ভারতের নিম্নশ্রেণীর লোকজন বৌদ্ধধর্ম বা ইসলাম নিয়েছিল এটাও প্রায় সেই প্রক্রিয়া। কিন্তু খ্রিস্টান তো বটে। এলাকায় বড় চার্চ আছে। এখনকার ছেলেমেয়েরা বিভিন্ন জেলার খ্রিস্টান বোর্ডিং স্কুলগুলোতে পড়ার সুযোগ পায়। হয়ত বা আরও কিছু সুযোগ সুবিধাও পায়। এদের খোল করতাল বাজিয়ে "জয় যীশু, জয় যীশু" বলে বিভিন্ন শোভাযাত্রা (যেমন-বড়দিন, অন্ত্যেষ্টি বা অন্যান্য পরবে) আমি দেখেছি। আমার কানে সেটা "হরে কৃষ্ণ হরে কৃষ্ণ, কৃষ্ণ কৃষ্ণ হরে হরে"র মতোই শুনিয়েছে। একেই হয়ত বলে "Acculturation"। এরা দুর্গাপুজোয় আসে না। খ্রিস্টানিটির দেমাক আছে। তবে এরা সবাই (নানান সম্প্রদায় বা সামাজিক অর্থনৈতিক স্তরভেদে বিভিন্ন অবস্থানে থেকেও) মূল ধর্মীয় অনুষ্ঠানে অংশ না নিলেও (বা না নিতে দেওয়া হলেও) দুর্গাপুজো উপলক্ষে বিভিন্ন অনুদান যেমন-শাড়ি, কবুল বিতরণ ইত্যাদি সবেতেই অনুদান গ্রহণ করে। আলোকমালায় সাজানো শহর বা শহরতলির রাজপথে বা অলিগলিতে ভিড়ে পা মেলায়। সবক্ষেত্রে ব্যতিক্রম অবশ্যই আছে। মিত্রতার যেমন অনেক গল্প বা ঘটনা আছে, বৈরিতারও আছে। এবং দুটোই সত্যি।

যাইহোক, গতবারে বাড়ি বাড়ি অষ্টমীর ভোগ বিলি করবার সময় খ্রিস্টান পাড়ার নমিতার বরের ভ্যানটা নেওয়া হয়েছিল, ওটা একটু কম ভাড়ায় পাওয়া যায় বলে। সারাদিন বাড়ি বাড়ি ভোগ বিলির পর সন্ধ্যের মুখে ভ্যানওয়ালাকে পয়সাকড়ি মিটিয়ে দেওয়া হল। যাওয়ার সময় ওর প্রাপ্য ভোগটাও নিতে বলা হল। ও চলে গেল, বলল ভোগটা পরে নিয়ে যাবে। রাতের দিকে ওর বউ এল আমার কাছে। বলল হাতে একদম পয়সা নেই, ছেলেমেয়েগুলো কিছু খায়নি, ওদের বাবা সন্ধ্য থেকে নাকি বাড়ি আসেনি। কোথায় তাড়ি খেয়ে উল্টে পড়ে আছে। ওদের বাবার খাবারটা দিতে পারবে? আমি বললাম দেখ ছেলেরা কোথায় রেখেছে, ক্লাবে বা পুজোর বেদিতে হবে, ওদের থেকে নিয়ে নে। ও মুখ কাঁচুমাচু করে দাঁড়িয়ে রইল। তারপর বলল, আমি ওখানে যাব না, তুমি ওদের একটু দিতে বলে দাওনা। আমি যা বোঝার বুঝলাম। বললাম, আমার বাড়িতে খিচুড়ি তরকারি আছে, নিয়ে যা। ইচ্ছে করে চেপে গোলাম ওটাও ভোগেরই। কারণ-ওর বীরপুঙ্গব স্বামী তাড়ির নেশায় এবং খ্রিস্টানিটির দেমাকে এই ভোগ আনার অপরাধে নমিতাকে না পেটায়। আগে শুনেছিলাম, নমিতারা তিন বোন। ওর বাবা হিন্দু ছুতোর মিস্ত্রি ছিল। মৃত্যুশয্যায় পয়সার অভাবে নমিতাকে খ্রিস্টানঘরে বিয়ে দিয়ে দেয়। তার মানে নমিতা এক পুরুষের খ্রিস্টান, তাও বিয়ের সূত্রে। সেইজন্যই হয়ত সংস্কারের গোঁড়ামি এখনও দানা বাঁধেনি। অথবা বাচ্চাদের ক্ষিদে মায়ের কাছে ধর্মের অন্য মানে আনে। আমি ইচ্ছে করেই আড়াল রাখলাম, একটু মিথ্যের আড়াল বা এড়িয়ে গিয়ে স্বস্তির আড়াল। নিশ্চয়ই আমি আমার ধর্মচ্যুত হলাম না? নমিতাও চলে গেল। মায়ের ধর্ম না অন্য কোনো ধর্মের তাগিদে বাচ্চাদের খাওয়া তে গেল কে জানে?



আরতি সেন, রবীন্দ্রনগর কলকাতা নিবাসী, অবসরপ্রাপ্ত শিক্ষিকা। উনি সমাজসেবা এবং সাহিত্যচর্চায় রুচি রাখেন। উনি উৎসবসদস্য পুবাশা দাসের মা।

যোদ্ধা

আবার পূজো এসে গেল। এবার আমি নিজে থেকেই লিখছি। ভাবছি এই কথা গুলো না বললে একটা জীবন অসম্পূর্ণ থেকে যাবে।

অবিভক্ত বাংলার ছোট্ট শহর। স্কুল, কলেজ, ব্যাঙ্ক, ট্যাঙ্ক কোনো কিছুই অভাব নেই। কবির ভাষায় বলতে গেলে,

"সকালে যেতাম পাঠশালাতে
পথে পথে ঝগড়া করে, পরস্পরে
গুরু মশাই বসলে এসে, মাচার পড়ে
ভয়ে ভয়ে একই সুরে পড়ে যেতাম পড়া
দেশ বিদেশের গল্প শুনে
মনের কোনে উঁকি দিতো
সুখী গাঁয়ের ছবি
আহা মোর মনে পড়ে"

শহরের সবচেয়ে বড় আকর্ষণ টাউন হল। মোটামুটি প্রতি শনি রবিবারে থিয়েটার জলসা লেগেই থাকতো। অনেক সময় ঢাকা কলকাতা থেকেও আর্টিস্ট আসতো। তখন এতো ভিড় হতো যে টিকিট পাওয়া যেত না।

যার কথা আজ বলতে বসেছি, তিনি আমার লালদি। তখন আমি ক্লাস ফোরে পড়ি। গরমের দিন সকালের স্কুল। স্কুলে যাওয়ার পথে দেখি, লালদি তার বন্ধুদের সাথে আগে আগে স্কুলে যাচ্ছে। লালদি আমাদের শহরের ষ্টার। ওনার নাচ দেখতে টাউন হল ফুল। আমি ভাবছি - ঠিক ঠিকই লালদি কে দেখছি তো? আমি তাড়াতাড়ি হেঁটে এগিয়ে গেলাম - একটু কাছের থেকে দেখবো বলে।

এমনি করে দিন চলছিল - হঠাৎ শুনলাম বন্ধু যাবে একটা নাচের দল। উস্তাদ আলী আকবর খানের ভাইপো আর আমাদের শহরের নাচের মাস্টার ট্রুপ তৈরী করছেন - তাতে আছেন লালদি। উনি তখন ক্লাস এইটে। চলে গেলেন বন্ধু - পরিবারের থেকে দূরে।

আস্তে আস্তে আমিও স্কুলে ক্লাস টেনে উঠে গেলাম। তখন হঠাৎ শুনি লালদি ফিরে এসেছেন। ট্রুপ ভেঙে গেছে। তবে তত দিনে লালদির চীন রাশিয়া ঘোরা হয়ে গেছে।

তখন বাংলাদেশ হয় নি - পূর্ব পাকিস্তান। লালদি এসে বাড়িতেই পড়াশুনো শুরু করে দিলেন আর সঙ্গে সেতার শিখতে শুরু করলেন। ঠিক সময়ে ম্যাট্রিক এবং আই.এ., বি.এ. খুব ভালো রেজাল্ট করে পাশ করলেন। তার পর কলকাতা চলে এলেন। ভালো গভর্নমেন্ট চাকরি ও পেয়ে গেলেন।

লালদি আর ওনার বোন একটা ছোট বাড়ি ভাড়া করে থাকতে শুরু করলেন। আমাকে ও আমার বাচ্চাকে নিয়ে ওদের বাড়িতে রেখেছিলেন। আমার মেয়ের জন্য সুন্দর ছোট ছোট ফ্রক বানিয়ে দিয়ে ছিলেন। কত আদর যত্ন পেয়েছিলাম।

ছোট বোনের এক জনের সাথে আলাপ - বিয়ে দিলেন লালদি ও আত্মীয়স্বজনরা। এবার ঠিক করলেন আত্মীয়স্বজনরা লালদির বিয়ে দেবে। বিয়ে হলো, কিন্তু ছেলেটি শারীরিক ভাবে অসুস্থ - বিয়ে টিকলো না। লালদি ফিরে এলেন। তার পর আবার শুভাকাঙ্ক্ষীরা দ্বিতীয় বিয়ে ঠিক করলো। ওনার কপাল এমনি যে এবার লোক টি দুশ্চরিত্র - তার আরেকটা পরিবার আছে। লালদি আর বিয়ে করবেন না ঠিক করলেন। ছোট বোন সেটা মানতে রাজি না। ওর বরের এক দূর সম্পর্কের দাদার সাথে বিয়ের সম্বন্ধ করলো।

এবার বিয়েটা ভালো হলো। দুজনের গভর্নমেন্ট চাকরি - আনন্দের সংসার চলছিল। একটি মেয়ে হলো। লালদির মা ও ওদের সাথে থাকতে শুরু করলেন - নাতনি কে দেখা শোনা করার জন্য। হঠাৎ শুনি ক্যাম্পারে লালদির বর মারা গেছেন। মেয়ের বয়স তখন নয়। লালদি কে কিন্তু অভিযোগ করতে শুনি নি। মা ও মেয়ে নিয়ে, চাকরি করে চালিয়ে গেলেন লালদি। দেখতে দেখতে মেয়ে বড় হয়ে গেল।

কিন্তু আবার ভাগ্য ওনার বাধ সাধলো। মেয়ে মা কে না জানিয়ে বিয়ে করে বসলো, স্কুল ফাইনাল না দিয়ে। বিয়ের তিন বছর পর জামাই মারা গেলো। লালদি মেয়েকে নিজের কাছে এনে রাখলেন, স্কুল ফাইনাল পাশ করালেন। মেয়ে বাবার গভর্নমেন্ট চাকরিও পেলো। ভালই চলছিল। মেয়ে আবার দ্বিতীয়বার বিয়ে করলো। ছেলেটার লালদির প্রপার্টির ওপর নজর। মেয়েকে রীতিমতো অত্যাচার করে। লালদি মেয়ে কে ফিরিয়ে আনলেন। পরে শোনা গেলো, ছেলেটা ড্রাগসও নিতো - আর সেই কারণেই মারা যায়। লালদি মেয়ের আবার বিয়ে দিলো। হিন্ত্রি রিপোর্ট হচ্ছে। এবার বিয়েটা বেশ ভালো হলো। জামাই লালদিকে খুব শ্রদ্ধা করে। লালদি জামাই নিয়ে খুব খুশি। জামাই ও মেয়ে কে গাড়ি কিনে দিলেন। একটি ফুটফুটে নাতনি হলো। বাড়ি তে গেলে একটি সুখী পরিবার দেখতে পেতাম। মা-মেয়ে দুজনই লোক জন পছন্দ করে। আদর আপ্যায়নের শেষ নেই। খুব ভালো লাগতো দেখে।

গত মাসে খবর পেলাম লালদির মেয়ে হসপিটালে ভর্তি - ক্যান্সার, লাষ্ট স্টেজ। দু মাসের মধ্যে সব শেষ। নাতনিটার বয়স সাত বছর। ভাবি লালদির কথা। বুকে পেসমেকার - এই বয়সে এই কষ্ট কি ভাবে কাটিয়ে উঠবেন। আবার ভাবি - নাতনির মুখ চেয়ে হয়তো এটাও সহ্য করে নেবেন।

ওদের একটু সুখ দিয়ো ভগবান।

শিখা ভদ্র গত পাঁচ বছর ধরে ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া তে আছেন। ওনার একাডেমিক ডিগ্রীর সাথে আর একটি বিশেষ ডিগ্রী আছে, MOTT - মাদার অফ তনিমা এন্ড তনয়।

আমার চোখে দেখা কিছু গুরুত্বপূর্ণ তথ্য ১৪২৯

ছেলের কাছে কিছুদিন থাকবো বলে ক্যালিফোর্নিয়ার ফেয়ারফিল্ডে এলাম। প্লেন থেকে নামার পর বেরিয়ে দেখি ছেলে ও বৌমা দুজনেই উপস্থিত, খুব খুশি হলাম কারণ প্রায় চার বছর পর ওদের সঙ্গে দেখা। এর মধ্যে ওরা যেতে পারেনি, না আমরা ওদের সাথে দেখা করতে পারছিলাম, তাই গিল্লির সেবা নিবৃত্তি হতেই আমরা ঠিক করে ফেললাম যে এবার ওদের কাছে বেড়াতে যাবো। সানফ্রান্সিস্কো থেকে ঘন্টা খানেক কিংবা ঘন্টা দেড়েকের মধ্যেই আমরা বাড়ি পৌঁছলাম ফেয়ারফিল্ডে।

ক্যালিফোর্নিয়াতে এর আগে এসেছি মুম্বাই থেকে ট্যুরে মাত্র দিন দশেকের জন্য, তখন ছেলে সদ্য ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ সাদার্ন ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া থেকে ওর মাস্টার্সের লেখাপড়া শেষ করে একটি নতুন কোম্পানিতে চাকরি শুরু করেছে, থাকতো মিলপিটাসে, ট্যুরিস্ট দলকে অনুরোধ করে ফেরার আগের দিন রাতে ওর মিলপিটাসের বাড়িতে কিছু সময়ের জন্য যেতে পেরেছিলাম, তারপর ওদের বিয়ের পর এই প্রথমবার আসলাম।

আসলে মানুষের জীবনটা অনেকটা পাখির মতো, যখন যেখানে, তখন সেখানে আনন্দে থাকো। ফেয়ারফিল্ডের কমিউনিটি লেক এবং গার্ডেন আমাদের খুব মুগ্ধ করেছে। যেদিন থেকে এসেছি সেদিন থেকে এই লেক হয়ে উঠেছে আমাদের জীবনের এক অবিচ্ছেদ্য অঙ্গ, প্রতিদিন সকাল-বিকেল লেকের চারদিক হেঁটে আসি। আরেকটা বিশেষত্ব হলো ফেয়ারফিল্ডের হাওয়া, সারা দিন রাত কখনো জোরে বা কখনো আস্তে হাওয়া সবসময়ই বইছে, প্রথম প্রথম একটু অসুবিধে হতো, কিন্তু এখন অভ্যস্ত হয়ে পড়েছি এই আবহাওয়ার সঙ্গে। আমার সব থেকে ভালো লাগে এখানকার কমিউনিটি গার্ডেন যেটা কিনা ফেয়ারফিল্ডে ওয়ান-লেক কমিউনিটির অনবদ্য সৃষ্টি। যে মহিলা এই বাগান দেখাশোনা করেন, চোখে না দেখলে বিশ্বাস করা যেত না ওনার হাতের গুণ। একেকটি ফুলগাছ তাঁর হাতের ছোঁয়ায় নতুন প্রাণ পেয়ে নতুন ভাবে জেগে ওঠে। মানুষের হাতের ছোঁয়ায় যে জাদু আছে তা এই বাগানে এলে বোঝা যায়।

কত প্রজাপতি, মৌমাছি, হামিং বার্ড ঘুরতে থাকে, আনন্দে নাচতে থাকে তা অকল্পনীয়। গাছে নিয়মিত জলসিঞ্চনের জন্য ইররিগেশন ড্রিপ সিস্টেমের ব্যবস্থা, মাটি কেনা, বীজ কেনা, গ্রীন হাউসে গাছেদের বড় করা, গাছ-পাতা থেকে সার তৈরি করা - সব কিছু সামলাচ্ছেন উনি একা হাতে। দেখার এবং শেখার মতো যত্ন করেন বাগানের। আমরা আসার পর ভলেন্টিয়ার হয়ে বাগানের কিছু কাজে হাত লাগাই। বাগানের ফুল-ফল নিয়মিত কমিউনিটির সদস্যদের বিনামূল্যে দেওয়া হয়। সপ্তাহে অন্তত দু-তিন দিন বিভিন্ন তর-তরকারী, যেমন বিনস, বেগুন, ভিভি, টম্যাটো, কাঁচা লঙ্কা এবং ফলের মধ্যে মেলন, ক্যান্টালুপ ইত্যাদি দেওয়া হয়। এছাড়া শসা, লেবু তো আছেই বাগানের। এতো বিভিন্ন ধরণের লঙ্কা আমার চোখে পড়েনি আগে কোথাও। আর এসব অর্গানিক সার দিয়ে তৈরী হচ্ছে, কোনো রাসায়নিক সার ব্যবহার হয়না। এই বাগান থাকায় কমিউনিটির ছোট-ছোট ছেলে মেয়েরা তাদের আত্মীয় পরিজনদের সঙ্গে নিয়মিত আসে ও হেঁটে কোলাহলে বাগানটি মুখরিত করে রাখে। এদেশের জনসাধারণের পরিবেশ দূষণ এবং প্রকৃতি সংরক্ষণের ব্যাপারে সচেতনতা দেখে আমরা অভিভূত। গাছ-পালা লাগানো হয় জলবায়ুর কথা মাথায় রেখে এবং ফার্ম হাউসগুলির সঙ্গে সঙ্গে সজি বাজার যেভাবে

যুক্ত তা শুধু পরিবহনের খরচা কমায় না, গ্রাহকরাও উপকৃত হয় এবং সতেজ টাটকা সজি ও ফল কিনতে পারে। এখানকার চাষ পদ্ধতি এবং উৎপাদন ক্ষমতাও শেখার মতো, স্থানীয় ল্যারিস সজি ও ফল মার্কেট, পেডিগ্রি মার্কেট এদের মধ্যে অন্যতম। এই দোকানগুলির বিক্রির সব ফসল নিজেদের ক্ষেত থেকে উৎপন্ন হয়। কি পাওয়া যায়না এখানে - ভিভি, সিম, লাউ, কুমড়া, বিনস, ফুলকপি, বাঁধাকপি, কচু এবং আরো কতো কি! নানারকমের ফলও পাওয়া যায় যেমন কলা, মেলন, লেবু, কমলা লেবু, শসা, পিচ, প্লাম আরো অনেক কিছু। ক্যালিফোর্নিয়ায় তাজা এবং শুকনো ফল দুই-ই প্রচুর উৎপাদন হয়, এখানকার কাঠবাদাম বা আমন্ডস তো জগৎ বিখ্যাত।

আমরা কাছেপিঠে বেশ কিছু জায়গাও ঘুরেছি, যার মধ্যে ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া, ডেভিস (সংক্ষেপে ইউ সি ডেভিস) আমাদের মন যেমন আকৃষ্ট করেছে অপরূপ আরবেরটামের শান্ত নিরিবিলা পরিবেশ, তেমনি ইউনিভার্সিটি ক্যাম্পাসের একধারে বড় বড় গাছ এবং অন্য দিকে মনোরম জলাশয় ভূমি। ডেভিসের আশপাশে অনন্ত বিস্তৃত মাঠ এবং নানান ফসলের ক্ষেত খুব দৃষ্টিনন্দন ও মনকে আচ্ছন্ন করে রাখে।

এছাড়া স্যাক্রামেন্টো এবং ফলসমেও বেড়াতে গেছি, ভীষন সুন্দর। আমাদের ফলসম লেকও বেড়ানো হয়ে গেলো অনেকটা দৈববশতঃ। হঠাৎ জানতে পারলাম স্যাক্রামেন্টোতে দুর্গাপূজা হয়, সংগঠনটির নাম উৎসব। এর মধ্যে একদিন ছিল উৎসবের বার্ষিক সাধারণ মিটিং এবং পিকনিক। ছেলে-বৌমার আগ্রহে আমরাও ওদের সাথে উৎসবের মেজাজে যোগ দিলাম। এবং সত্যি বলতে কি আমরা ওনাদের আপ্যায়নে অভিভূত। উৎসবের প্রেসিডেন্ট মহাশয় এবং ওনার অর্ধাঙ্গিনীর সহায় অভ্যর্থনা ও আতিথেয়তা আমাদের মুগ্ধ করেছে। ঠিক মত আমরা খাবার খাচ্ছি কিনা সেদিকে লক্ষ্য রাখছিলেন সমিতির অনেকে। যে কয়েকজনের সঙ্গে পরিচয় হলো তাঁদের আন্তরিকতা আমাদের মনে চিরস্থায়ী হয়ে থাকবে। এনারা অনেকে ইউ সি ডেভিসের সঙ্গে যুক্ত। প্রেসিডেন্ট মহাশয়ের সহধর্মিণী এবং আরেক জন সক্রিয় সদস্য, পৌলমী, বারবার পুজোতে আসতে এবং সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠানে অংশ গ্রহণ করতে অনুরোধ করেছেন। বেশ কিছু পরিবার নিয়ে এনাদের এই সংস্থান। বেশির ভাগ অল্প বয়স্ক, যারা তাদের ভবিষ্যৎ নির্ধারণের জন্য সুদূর ভারতবর্ষ থেকে এসেছে, তাদের জন্য রইলো আমাদের আন্তরিক শুভ কামনা। অনেকে এখানকার বসবাসকারী অনেকদিন ধরে। আর কিছু বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠদের সঙ্গেও আলাপ হলো, যাঁরা ছেলেমেয়েদের অবলম্বন করে এসেছেন। যেমন গাছ কে শেকড় সমেত উঠিয়ে আনা হয়, তাঁরা শারীরিকভাবে এখানে আছেন ঠিকই কিন্তু মন পড়ে আছে ভারতবর্ষে কিংবা বাংলাদেশে। এনাদের সবাইকে জানাই আন্তরিক অভিনন্দন ও শারদীয় দুর্গোৎসবের অনেক শুভেচ্ছা, ভালোবাসা ও বড়দের শ্রদ্ধা এবং নমস্কার। ভালো থাকুন, সুস্থ থাকুন -এইভাবে আমাদের সংস্কৃতি অক্ষয় হোক। ভারতীয় কৃষ্টি, সভ্যতা ও ঐতিহ্যের ধারা প্রবাহিত হোক প্রজন্ম থেকে প্রজন্ম। রবীন্দ্রনাথ, নজরুল, নেতাজীর দেশ, শ্রীরামকৃষ্ণ, সারদা মা ও বিবেকানন্দের এই বাংলা বেঁচে থাকুক তার চিন্তা ও চেতনা নিয়ে।

ইন্দ্রজিৎ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায় - ভারতীয় রেলের কর্মরত ছিলেন, এখন অবসরপ্রাপ্ত, মুম্বাই থেকে এসেছেন পুত্র ভাস্কর ও পুত্রবধূ মৌমতনুর কাছে ফেয়ারফিল্ডে।

অনুবন্ধন

আমি আগে জীবন নিয়ে এতো ভাবতাম না বা বলা ভালো সময় পেতাম না, কাজ-কর্মের ব্যস্ততা পেছন ফিরে দেখার মোটেও অবকাশ দিত না। কোভিড এসে আমাদের নতুন করে ভাবতে শিখিয়েছে। আজ আমার এক প্রিয় বান্ধবীর জীবন নিয়ে লিখতে বসেছি যা বর্তমানে খুব প্রাসঙ্গিক, এই লেখা আমাদের জীবন এবং পারিবারিক সম্পর্কের মূল্যায়ন নিয়ে।

যার কথা লিখছি সে শ্রাবন্তী অ্যালেন, ওর স্বামী মাইকেল অ্যালেন। শ্রাবন্তী এদেশে পড়তে এসেছিল এবং সেই সূত্রেই মাইকেলের সঙ্গে আলাপ, দুজনের দুজনকে ভালো লেগে যায় এবং পরবর্তীকালে ওরা বিবাহবন্ধনে আবদ্ধ হয়। শ্রাবন্তী ও আমি একসঙ্গে কাজ করতাম, সেখান থেকেই গড়ে ওঠে আমাদের বন্ধুত্ব, গত কুড়ি বছর ধরে আমাদের এই বন্ধন যেন অটুট। ওদের একমাত্র মেয়ে বহি, ডাক্তারির ছাত্রী, প্রায় শেষের পর্যায়ে ওর পড়াশুনো, ও আমার ছেলের ছোটবেলার সাথী, যাকে বলা যায় “diaper friends”.

বেশ কিছুদিন ধরে দেখছি বহি যেন একটু অন্যমনস্ক, জিজ্ঞেস করলে বলে ওর মা কে নিয়ে ও বিশেষ চিন্তিত ও খানিকটা বিচলিতও; ওর মা ওর বাবাকে বিয়ে করার পর থেকেই মায়ের পরিবারের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ ছিল হয়ে যায় দুর্ভাগ্যবশত। শ্রাবন্তী অনেকবার চেষ্টা করেছে ওর দাদা রক্তিম ব্যানার্জীর সঙ্গে সম্পর্ক ফিরিয়ে আনার, ফোন করেছে, চিঠি লিখেছে, কিন্তু কোনো উত্তর পায়নি। ইদানিং বহি দেখে প্রায়ই ওর মা খুব উদাসীন এবং মানসিক যন্ত্রনায় ভীষণ কষ্ট পাচ্ছে। একদিন বহি সরাসরি তার মাকে জিজ্ঞেস করে বসে, শ্রাবন্তী বলে সে তার ছোটবেলা, দেশ, বাড়ি, পরিবারের সবার অভাব প্রতি মুহূর্তে অনুভব করছে। প্রতিদিন ডায়েরি লেখে শ্রাবন্তী, বহি কে বলে যদি ভবিষ্যতে কোনোদিন আমার কিছু হয়ে যায় তো দাদাভাই বা তোর মামুকে এই ডায়েরিটা পাঠিয়ে দিবি, এটা শুধু আমার দাদাভাই রক্তিম ব্যানার্জীর জন্যই লেখা।

এসব শোনার পর বহি তার মামুর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করতে চায়। আমি ওকে ওর মামুর ফোন নম্বর ও ঠিকানার ব্যবস্থা করে দিই, এবং বলি যে মামুর সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করে তোমার মায়ের সঙ্গে কথা বলিয়ে দিও তাহলে হয়তো দুজনের মধ্যে আবার পুরোনো সম্পর্ক ফিরে আসবে। বহি এক রবিবার সকালে ওর মামুকে ফোন করে, পায় না, ঠিক তার দুদিন পরে রক্তিম ফোন করে তখন ওরা দুজন দুজনকে নিজেদের পরিচয় দেয় ও ওদের মধ্যে অনেকক্ষণ কথাবার্তা হয়। বহি মামুকে জানায় সে তার মায়ের লেখা একটা ডায়েরি পাঠিয়েছে। ওদের কুশল সংবাদ জানতে চায় রক্তিম, শ্রাবন্তী কেমন আছে এমনকি মাইকেল কেমন আছে? বলে সে তার বোনকে দেখার জন্য আকূল হয়ে আছে, ওদের মধ্যে তিরিশ বছর ধরে কথা নেই! ব্যবহারের জন্য অত্যন্ত অনুতপ্ত ও ক্ষমাপ্রার্থী, আগের সম্পর্ক ফিরে পেতে চায় যদিও অনেক মূল্যবান সময় বয়ে গেছে। বহি জানতে পারে ইতিমধ্যে ওর দাদু ও দিদাও এই পৃথিবী ছেড়ে চলে গেছেন। শ্রাবন্তী ওর বাবার দুঃসংবাদ পেয়েছিলো কিন্তু মায়ের খবরটা জানতো না, কাজেই বহির কাছেও সেটা অজানা ছিল। এই খবরটা মা কে কি করে দেবে ভেবে পায়না, মনে মনে চিন্তা করে যদি ওর মামুকে এদেশে কোনোভাবে আনানো যেত তাহলে মা কে একটা চমক উপহার দেওয়া যেতে পারে, কিন্তু এখন তো সারা পৃথিবীতে যা পরিস্থিতি চলছে, সে নিরুপায়।

বহি তার মামুর সঙ্গে মাঝেমাঝেই কথা বলে ফোনে অথবা ভিডিওতে! ইতিমধ্যে রক্তিমের হাতে সেই ডায়েরি ও কিছু ফটো পৌঁছয় এবং সে জানতে পারে শ্রাবন্তী অনেকবার যোগাযোগ স্থাপনের চেষ্টা করেছিল মা, বাবা ও দাদার সঙ্গে ফোন আর চিঠির মাধ্যমে, কিন্তু সফল হয়নি। হিন্দু ব্রাহ্মণ রক্ষণশীল পরিবারের মেয়ে শ্রাবন্তী, ওর অন্য জাতি ও ধর্মের বিয়ে মেনে নিতে পারেননি বাবা-মা, ফলে সম্পর্ক ছিল হয়ে যায়! ঘটনাচক্রে, রক্তিমের স্ত্রী, মামন, একটু অন্য ধরনের মানসিকতার, নানান অছিলায় সে শ্রাবন্তীর ফোন আসলেও পরিবারের সবার কাছে সে কথা প্রকাশ করতো না বা ওর লেখা চিঠি বাজেয়াপ্ত করে ফেলতো, তাই শ্রাবন্তীর খবর কোনোদিনই তার বাবা, মা ও দাদার কানে পৌঁছয়নি। বোনের ওপর দাদার রাগ, দুঃখ, অভিমান বেড়েই চলেছিল, সৃষ্টি করে দূরত্ব।

ডায়েরি পরে সব ঘটনা অবগত হয় এবং বাড়িতে ওর স্ত্রীর লুকিয়ে রাখা বোনের চিঠি গুলো রক্তিম খুঁজে পায় সময়ে, জানতে পারে যে শ্রাবন্তী তার বাড়ি, ওর নিজের হাতে লাগানো ফুল গাছ, বাড়ির প্রত্যেকটা জায়গা, ওদের ছোটবেলার সব কিছুর অভাব কতখানি বোধ করছে। জানতো না কেন বোন বাবা মারা যাবার পরও দেশে যেতে পারেনি, যেদিন প্লেন ছিল শ্রাবন্তীর সেদিন এয়ারপোর্টে যাবার পথে ওর বিরাট গাড়ি এন্সলিডেন্ট হয়, ফলে ওকে তিন মাস হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসাধীন থাকতে হয়েছিল। সব ঘটনা জানিয়ে দাদাকে বোন চিঠি লিখেছিলো কিন্তু সে তো তার হাতে আর পৌঁছয়নি। এইসব ঘটনা দু ভাই-বোনকে আরো দূরে করে দেয়। দিনে দিনে শ্রাবন্তী মানসিক অসুস্থতার কবলে পড়ে। নিজের কৃতকর্মের জন্য অনুশোচনায় ভুগতে থাকে রক্তিম।

বহি কিন্তু ওর মামুকে ওর মায়ের সঙ্গে কথা বলতে দেয়নি, বলে ওর মা এখন আর কাজ করতে পারেনা, কিছু কিছু সমাজসেবা মূলক কাজ করে, মানসিকভাবে বিদ্ধস্ত, যদি সম্ভব হয়, তুমি একবার এদেশে এসো মামু, আমি তোমার জন্য টিকিট পাঠাব। পুরোনো স্মৃতি ও রাগ মনের মধ্যে রেখো না, মাকে একটা উপহার দিতে চাই মেয়ে হিসেবে - তোমার উপস্থিতি। শ্রাবন্তী বেশ কয়েকবার দাদার জন্য টিকিট বুকিং করার চেষ্টা করেছিল কিন্তু উত্তর না পেয়ে আর এগিয়ে যেতে পারেনি, অনেক কষ্ট করে ও অনেক টাকা খরচের চিন্তা করে ও ব্যবস্থা করতো, মাইনের একটা মোটা অংশ বেরিয়ে গেলেও ...

শ্রাবন্তীর বৌদি ওদের দু ভাই-বোনের মধ্যে একটা বিভেদ বা দেওয়াল তুলে দেবার আশ্রয় চেষ্টা করেছিল। তবে সত্যের জয় আটকানো যায় না! এই ঘটনাটা কোভিডকালে আমার মনে খুব দাগ কেটেছে - এমন হয়তো আমাদের কারোর জীবনে ঘটেছে বা ঘটতেও পারে, জীবন খুব স্বল্পমেয়াদি, আমার সবার কাছে অনুরোধ, আমরা যেন সবাই সচেতন থাকি। আপনাদের কাছে প্রশ্ন - রক্তিম কি আসতে পারবে ও দু ভাই-বোন এ কি আবার পুরোনো সম্পর্ক স্থাপন হবে? হয়তো আপনাদের মতামত আমাকে নতুন কিছু ভাবতে ও লিখতে অনুপ্রেরণা যোগাবে।

শ্রীপর্ণা ভৌমিক, এক্স গ্রোভ নিবাসী, শখের রান্না, সামাজিকতা ও অবসর সময়ে লিখতে ভালোবাসেন।



Vedanta Society OF SACRAMENTO

1337 Mission Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608, Phone: (916) 489-5137
Email: society@vedantasacto.org, website: www.vedantasacto.org

Swami Prapannananda: Minister and Teacher
Swami Ishadhyanananda: Assistant Minister

The Society was started in 1949 and made a branch of Ramakrishna Math, Belur Math, India, in 1952.

Activities at a Glance:

- Daily **worship** and group **meditation** in the chapel, and **vesper service** on Sundays.
- **Sunday Lectures, Wednesday classes** on Vedanta scriptures, **Friday classes** on Vedanta scriptures, **Saturday classes** on the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda, and also **interviews** to students and spiritual aspirants.
- **Lectures** outside the Society.
- **Celebration** of the birthdays of Sri Ramakrishna, Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi, and Swami Vivekananda, and also a few other **festivals**.
- **Spiritual Retreats.**
- A **library**, a reading room, and a **bookshop**.
- The **Santodyan** (Garden of Saints), a beautiful 4-acre retreat located behind the Society, is extensively used by the devotees.

Bookstore:

Our bookstore has a good selection of Vedanta, Ramakrishna, and Vivekananda literature; and books about the lives and teachings of saints in all major spiritual traditions. CDs and DVDs of classical music and spiritual topics are also available, as well as incense and burners, and a small selection of spiritual art objects. Please visit our website to view the catalog of books.

Bookstore Timings: Wednesday: 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., **Thursday:** 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., **Saturday:** 12:00 to 2:00 p.m., **Sunday:** 12:00 to 2:00 p.m.

Telephone: 916-489-2116; E-mail: vedantabookstore@zoho.com.

Our services are in-person now, only for the vaccinated people. Their schedule and other details are available in the Upcoming Events section at www.vedantasacto.org

Our **bookstore** is now open only on Saturdays, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

If you wish to get updates about the upcoming events, please visit vedantasacto.org, scroll down to the bottom, and subscribe to our monthly **newsletter**.

Chasing Waterfalls 2022

In May 2022, we had the opportunity to explore the magical country of Iceland. We had very high expectations from the trip, given we had read and heard about the beautiful landscapes, stunning waterfalls, warm thermal pools, glaciers, and of course volcanoes!!! Iceland is roughly the same size as the US state of Kentucky, with a population of about 340,000; it is only 60% of Sacramento or my hometown Durgapur. Although Iceland is small, it does pack a big punch, as there is so much natural beauty that you could spend a lifetime exploring the island.



Seljalandsfoss Waterfall

After arriving at Keflavik International Airport, which is where most international visitors to Iceland arrive, we spent the day in the capital Reykjavik, exploring the usual tourist hotspots like Hallgrímskirkja, The Sun Voyager, and The Harpa Conference center. We also enjoyed two must-haves in Iceland - Icelandic Fish & Chips as well as Icelandic lamb soup. Most people who visit Iceland do the Ring Road Tour. After picking up our rental car, we started our journey anti-clockwise around the Island. Our first stop was the Seljalandsfoss Waterfall, where you can also go behind the waterfall, but of course, be prepared to get drenched! This waterfall was the background of Gerua song from Dilwale - SRK, and Kajol's supposed comeback movie (P.S: This author likes sarcasm). Next, we explored Skógafoss Waterfall, once again featured in Dilwale. This is a majestic waterfall, measuring 60 meters and a width of 25 meters, ranking in our Top-3

waterfalls in Iceland. When you start seeing the waterfall from the ring road, it looks very much like a painting, ever so beautiful and mesmerizing.



Skógafoss Waterfall

The next day, our first stop was the Dyrhólaey Lighthouse Viewpoint. Dyrhólaey translates to "the hill island with the door hole". It is one of the best places to view puffins in Iceland. From this viewpoint you have breathtaking views in all directions. To the north, you see the Mýrdalsjökull glacier, to the east you will see the beautiful black lava sea stacks Reynisdrangar, and to the west, you can view the endless black coastline. About 10 minutes from Dyrhólaey is Reynisfjara Black Sand Beach, one of the most famous black sand beaches in the world. For Game of Thrones nerds, it is the beach at Eastwatch by the sea where the men in the night's watch are guarding the wall. Our last stop of the day was Jökulsárlón Glacier Lagoon and Diamond Beach. Words cannot describe the experience of viewing magnificent 400-foot glaciers about 1500 years old silently drifting into the lake, and slowly melting away into the lake on their way to finally meeting the Atlantic Ocean. For movie nerds, this is where the Liam Neeson and Christian Bale sword fighting scene was shot in Batman Begins. At Jökulsárlón, we also realized Davis/Sacramento is a global community, as we ran into Selim Bhai and Lata Bhabhi, two generous and humble members of the Bengali community.

The next day was a lot of driving across the Eastern Fjords of Iceland. On our way, we saw hundreds of natural waterfalls, while we headed to Dettifoss, Europe's most powerful waterfall. I would rank Dettifoss as one of my Top-3 favorites in Iceland, although it was quite a drive away from the Ring Road. While Dettifoss is more powerful, Selfoss which is about a 10-minute walk from Dettifoss is the prettier waterfall. We spent the night in the Dimmuborgir/Myvatn area - another area that was heavily featured in Game of Thrones, before heading off the next morning to Godafoss - 'Waterfall of the Gods. Godafoss presents a semi-circular arc with an amazing background that presents exciting photo opportunities.



Diamond Beach

Finally, we headed off to the Golden Circle featuring four attractions: Þingvellir National Park, Kerid Crater, Strokkur Geysir, and Gullfoss. Gullfoss sums up my Top-3 waterfalls in Iceland, as it presents both grace and power. We were also lucky to visit the Geysir, which has lent its name to geysers all around the world. Although it closed after an earthquake a few years back, we were able to view the Strokkur Geysir which is currently active, blasting water to heights of around twenty meters every five minutes. Our last stop of the day was the Blue Lagoon, Iceland's most famous thermal bath. The Blue Lagoon uses geothermal seawater to provide you with the relaxation and rejuvenation that you deserve after your road trip, and it was the best way to end our road trip with this transformational spa journey.

In summary, Iceland is a magical country with magical waterfalls, black sand beaches, and glaciers. There is something for everyone to do in Iceland, whether you are a casual traveler, avid photographer, or motivated hiker. I know I will go back to explore again, and I hope you do the same.

Debrup Ghosh has been a resident of Davis for the past three years. Currently, he is aspiring to become a better landscape photographer, soccer coach, and chef.



Gullfoss Waterfall

Faded STOP Sign and Its Fading Magic

They seemed almost magical – the stop signs. Bright red metal octagons with the word STOP painted on them could make cars stop seemed unbelievable to me, especially with no one around to watch and enforce. And not only little passenger cars but big eighteen-wheelers that could crush an oncoming sedan like a bug.

When I came to the USA, about 30 years ago, as a graduate student, I don't remember seeing a stop sign in India. There were traffic lights, but most major intersections were controlled by traffic police using hand signals. If you violated any traffic law at the intersection, they were there to dole out a ticket or take a bribe and look the other way, depending on their mood. At smaller intersections, where there were no policemen, the drivers made their own rules, with larger and faster vehicles claiming an unfair advantage. So, the concept of stopping at an intersection when there are no other cars and no police watching seemed very alien and even foolish. As I settled down in the new country, and as days and months passed and initial excitement and bewilderment faded, it slowly dawned on me that the magic of red stop signs symbolizes the strength and the inner essence of the American democracy. The magic seems to be slowly fading.

The stop sign was born in 1915 in Detroit to provide much-needed order to fast-growing automobile traffic, which in those days had to share the roads with horse-drawn carriages and pedestrians. Since then, the stop sign has evolved in shape, size, and color until the standardization of the now familiar red-white octagonal sign in 1954. We may not realize it, but significant efforts by private citizens and State Highway Officials (AASHO, now AASHTO) went into standardizing all traffic signs we see and follow today, including the stop sign.

The birth and development of the stop sign essentially embody the democratic process in action. The all-familiar process goes something like this - the citizens of the country/state/city

elect a government, the elected government identifies and recognizes the needs of the citizens, the government allocates necessary resources to understand the problem, and if needed, enacts a law to address the problem. The citizenry agrees to abide by the law, even when it causes minor inconvenience to some. Everyone knows the law, everyone stops at the STOP sign, and everyone goes home safe. The process also requires that the citizens provide the government with sufficient resources to research and evaluate the problem and also enact and implement the law. To stick to my STOP sign example, the local government responsible for the installation and maintenance of stop signs needs financial resources to do so. A functioning democracy also requires a feeling of citizenry, common courtesy, and the willingness to abide by not only written laws but unwritten ones as well – like waving the other driver through the intersection when you are not sure who arrived at the intersection first.

Like STOP signs, national and local newspapers, local libraries, and post offices are some obvious symbols of a functioning government and democracy. I used to go to a small post office manned by a solitary old gentleman. He would engage in polite conversation as he processed mail and customer orders. During one of my visits, he informed me that the post office was slated to be closed and he would move to a larger facility further away. As I was driving out of the post office parking lot, I noticed that the stop sign at the end of the driveway had completely faded, with the word "STOP" barely legible. It was such a sad sight to see the bright red-white octagon reduced almost to a useless piece of sheet metal - like a Greek god fallen from grace, a hero whose glory days are behind him. Through the faded stop sign and post office closure, I could see the recent decline of the government and democracy in my adopted country, where I had spent more than half of my life. Like the faded stop sign at the street corner, the stop signs in our social and political

spheres that hold the system together are fading as well. With the erosion of the norms, we see the denial of a hearing for Justice Garland, the pushing of Justice Barrett through the confirmation process in a hurried manner, the overturning of Roe v. Wade, and a sitting President sending an angry mob to the seat of democracy.

Like most of our democratic institutions, the stop signs by themselves do not have any intrinsic power. It is us, we the people, who give them the power. It is not solely for fear of punishment that most of us stop at the STOP signs; it is our willingness to follow the laws and norms, our sense of responsibility towards our fellow citizens, and our democratic values that are so entrenched. The functioning of our democratic institutions also depends on our trust in our government - trust that our government would do the right thing for us.

Although Americans have always maintained a healthy skepticism of the government, the recent erosion of trust, in my opinion, started a little over 21 years ago when the most powerful

man in the government uttered the words “... government is not the solution to our problem; government is the problem.” While those words were taken out of their context in the speech, their wide use has been successful in planting mistrust of the government in our collective psyche. That seed of mistrust has grown and is now bearing fruits like “don’t trust the media,” “don’t trust the elite,” “don’t trust the vaccine,” and the scariest of all, “don’t trust the election results.”

Trust is a necessary ingredient for a functioning democracy – be it trust in our government, in our system, or our trust in each other. The official motto of the United States is In God We Trust. What good is trust in God if we don’t trust our neighbors, fellow citizens, and our system?

***Debanik Chaudhuri** is a civil engineer by profession. He lives in Rocklin with his wife Shampa and their younger son, Dipon. In his spare time, he plays the sarod, cooks, enjoys a glass of good wine, and likes to engage in stimulating adda. This is his first attempt to write a non-technical article.*



Cosumnes Power Plant of SMUD

Following the closure and subsequent dismantling of Rancho Seco nuclear generating power plant, as mandated by a popular vote starting in 1990, Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD), the owner of the plant, was looking for replacement power. When operating at full power, Rancho Seco was producing over 800 MW. That became feasible when SMUD decided to build the Cosumnes Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) power plant near Rancho Seco to make use of Rancho Seco switchyard. This 530 MW CCGT plant went into operation in 2006.

In 2019, SMUD upgraded the capacity of the plant by an additional 15 percent or 76 MW with a total of 606 MW by modifying the gas turbines, steam turbine, and associated equipment.

In the following section, I would like to explain why SMUD chose CCGT plant for the replacement power.

The most common type of gas-fired power plant is CCGT plant because of its high efficiency and because it can be used as a large-size power plant. The other types are single cycle gas turbine and reciprocating internal combustion engine.

In a simple cycle gas turbine, also known as open-cycle gas turbine (OCGT), hot gas drives a gas turbine to generate electricity. This type of plant is relatively cheap to build and can start very quickly, but due to its lower efficiency, it is used for a few hours a day as a peaking unit. Reciprocating internal combustion engine or simply reciprocating engine tend to be under 20 MW, so it is much smaller than other types of natural gas-fired electricity generator and is typically used for emergency power or to balance variable renewable energy such as wind and solar.

CCGT power plants consist of simple cycle gas turbines which use Brayton cycle, followed by a heat recovery steam generator and a steam turbine which use Rankine cycle. The most common configuration is two gas turbines supporting one steam turbine. They are significantly more efficient than single cycle plants and achieve efficiencies up to 55 percent and dispatch time around half an hour. This provides more flexibility to the utility from a power operational standpoint. Nuclear power plants are not that efficient with the efficiency typically around 33 percent. Also dispatch time typically is around several hours at least.

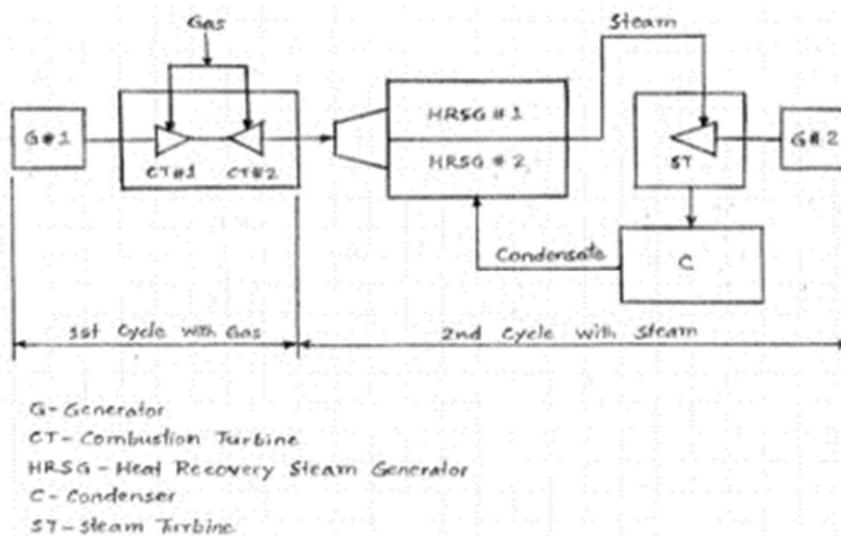


Exhibit 1. A Simplified Block Diagram of a Typical CCGT Plant.

Sizes of CCGT plants are getting bigger. CCGT plants are combustion turbines and steam turbines that operate in groups, commonly referred to as power blocks. Since 2014, the average size of a natural gas-fired combined cycle power block has increased significantly. The average combined cycle power block installed between 2002 and 2014 is about 500 MW. After 2014, power block capacity increased, reaching an average of 820 MW in 2017. Power blocks have increased in size as the performance of combined cycle units has continued to improve, and current and projected natural gas prices and supply provide a competitive advantage for the combined cycle

technology. The most common configuration involves two combustion turbines supporting one steam turbine as shown in Exhibit 1.

References:

1. SMUD HiLines, April, 2019
2. Google, March, 2021

Barin Kumar is a resident of Sacramento for 36 years. He is an electrical and nuclear engineer, who worked for Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) at Rancho Seco Nuclear Generating Station and SMUD Power Distribution for many years.

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Fukushima Nuclear Accident and Safety Analysis

Introduction: On March 11, 2011, an extreme natural event at the Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station, 155 miles northeast of Tokyo, set in motion a sequence of events that led to meltdowns of three of its six reactors. Unlike the nuclear accident of Three Mile Island (TMI), USA, in 1979 and Chernobyl, Ukraine (formerly in USSR) in 1986, this accident was caused by a 9.0 magnitude earthquake followed by a monstrous 46 feet high wave of tsunami.

The nuclear accident in TMI occurred due to equipment malfunction coupled with operator error following a routine shutdown of the reactor that led to a partial meltdown of the core, but radiation was contained because of reactor pressure vessel and containment surrounding the vessel.

The nuclear disaster in Chernobyl happened due to a series of operator errors, while testing for loss of offsite power, a design basis event, to demonstrate the operability of the reactor under such condition that led to the explosion

of the reactor and widespread release of radiation as there was no reactor vessel or containment.

A brief description of Fukushima Dai-ichi nuclear power station: This coastal plant is located at an elevation of 33 feet above sea level. It is a six-unit plant, all equipped with Boiling Water Reactors (BWRs) made by General Electric of USA. Each unit has dedicated Reactor Building to house the BWR and Turbine Building to house turbine-generator set for generating electricity.

The direct-cycle BWR nuclear system of each unit is a steam generation and steam utilization system consisting of a nuclear core located inside a reactor vessel and a conventional turbine-generator and feedwater supply system. Water is circulated through the reactor core, producing saturated steam, which is separated from recirculation water, dried in the top of the vessel, and directed to the steam turbine generator.

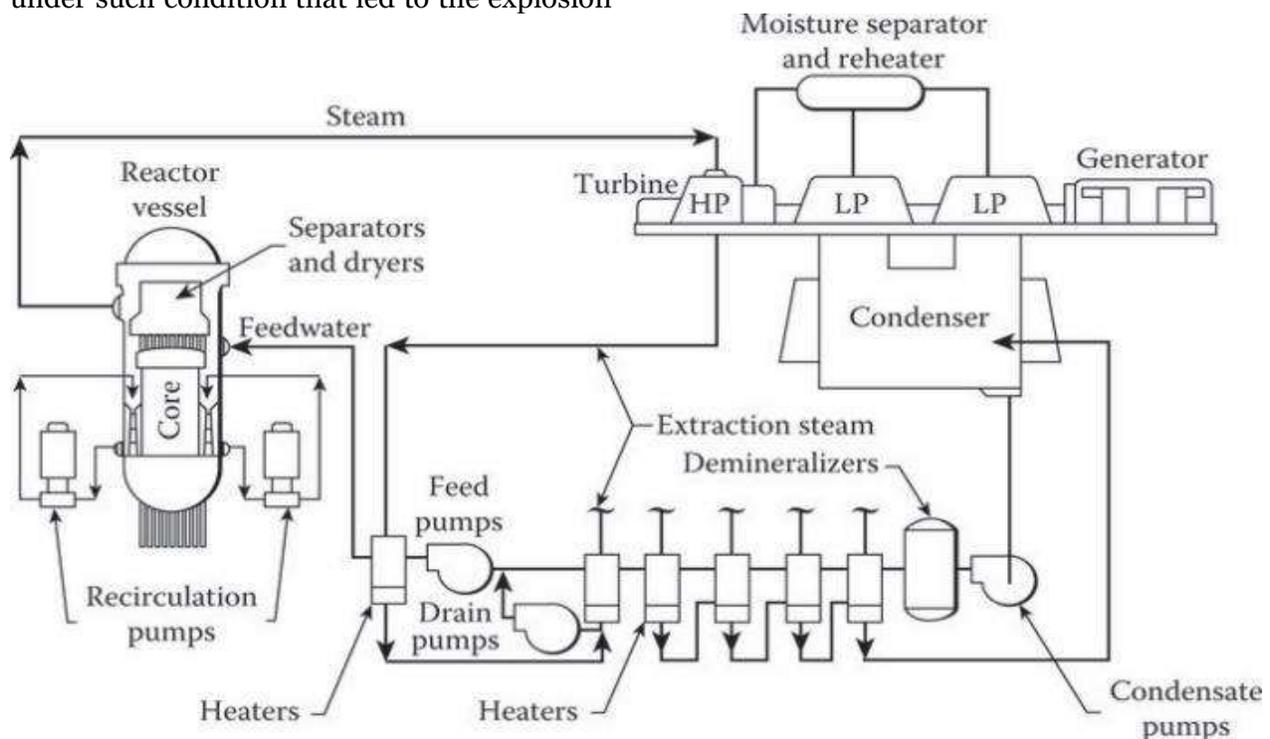


Figure 1: Direct Cycle Reactor System by General Electric.

The control rod assembly of each unit, located at the bottom of the reactor vessel, includes a hydraulic system to drive the control rods into the core from the bottom for maintaining the reactivity of reactor as required. Figure 1 shows a typical direct cycle BWR system. The plant has 12 diesel generators, two for each unit, for emergency cooling following shutdown of reactors to remove decay heat. They are located in the basement of turbine and reactor building excepting one diesel generator which is on the first floor of a building near unit 6.

One special safety feature of BWR is that it has a backup cooling system, called an isolation condenser (IC), which can start automatically following shutdown of the reactor. This system does not need electric power to cycle steam through a cold-water tank on a higher floor and the resulting water drops back to the pressure vessel.

The plant was built and operational since early 1970 when the oldest unit #1 was installed. The other five units were added later to make a six-unit complex nuclear power plant.

Chronology of the accident: *At 2:46 pm on March 11, 2011*, a huge earthquake shook the plant and alarms sounded. Within 5 seconds, control rods thirsted upwards into the three operating reactors flawlessly and stopped the fission reactions. The other three of the six reactors were down for scheduled maintenance. Within 10 seconds, the plant's emergency power system of all six diesel generators, two for each unit, were kicked in and running to send cooling water to the three operating reactors.

At 3:27 pm, 41 minutes later, the first tsunami wave surged into the plant. The water height of the wave was measured by a tidal gauge as 13 feet above normal.

At 3:35 pm, eight minutes later, another set of much higher tsunami wave rolled in and obliterated the gauge. It smashed into the heat-removal systems and submerged power panels that controlled the operation of pumps, valves, and other equipment. Six of the 12 diesel

generators shuddered to a halt as floodwater inundated them. Five other generators were inoperative when their power distribution panels were drenched. Only one diesel generator along with the power distribution panel on the first floor of a building near unit 6 was operational. That saved reactor 5 and reactor 6, and did not cause serious damage.

In the control room, the operators had to respond to the emergency without working instruments, as the floodwaters had even knocked out the control room batteries, the power source of last resort. The station now faced a cataclysmic scenario that nuclear power plant operators have long feared but never experienced: a Complete Station Blackout.

At 4:36 pm, Tokyo Electric Power Co. (TEPCO) officially informed the Japanese government about the increasingly dire situation at reactor 1. For this reactor, the company declared that it could not confirm if any water was injected into the reactor core. The core was getting hotter without any cooling and water level was dropping. This is because of the operator's shutdown of the backup cooling system IC for this reactor, which started automatically after shutdown, before the tsunami as the core was cooling too quickly to avoid stress on the steel walls of the pressure vessel. With no electric power, valve of IC could not be reopened. The situation was better for reactor 2 and reactor 3, and idled reactors 4, 5, and 6 did not pose an immediate threat.

At around 9 pm, operators finally plugged the car batteries they had collected into the instrument panels and got the value from water level gauges in reactor 1. It was little less than 2 feet above the top of the fuel assembly. Though it was far below the normal safety level but was enough to assure the operators that no fuel has melted yet.

But TEPCO's later analysis found that the gauges were wrong. The water level was all the way below the bottom of the uranium fuel rods shortly before operators checked the gauges, leaving the reactor core completely uncovered. Exposed fuel rods got overheated. As the

temperature passed 1300-degree C, the zirconium cladding of fuel rod began to react with steam inside the vessel, producing highly explosive hydrogen gas.

At 9:51 pm, entry to unit 1 reactor building was prohibited as the radiation level rose around the plant. It was a right and wise decision because the fuel meltdown had already begun. In BWR-type reactors used at Fukushima, the control rods thrust up into the pressure vessel from below, and the housings around each control rod's entry point were essentially weak spots. When the melted fuel began to pool at the bottom of the pressure vessel, it likely melted through those vulnerable seams.

TEPCO's later analysis found that the pressure vessel was damaged around 11 pm, allowing highly-radioactive water and gases to leak into the primary containment vessel.

As March 11 turned into March 12, TEPCO instructed the operators that they must bring down the pressure by venting the containment vessel. In order to vent the radioactive gases to the atmosphere, the residents around the plant must be evacuated first.

The government was planning an evacuation order for residents living within 6-mile radius of the plant and the process of evacuation of residents was not expected to be completed before the next morning.

That night, the desperate struggle to contain the peril at reactor 1 diverged into three tasks and to get ready for action as soon as the evacuation was complete. First group was preparing to vent the primary containment vessel. The second group was getting ready to receive incoming power supply trucks to supply electricity to restart the pumps and reestablish steady water circulation through the pressure vessel. The third group was focusing on short-term plan to cool the core using fire trucks, which could inject water from emergency tanks into the cooling system of the reactor.

TEPCO's later analysis found that, at around 12:30 am on March 12, the reactor 1 core

transformed into molten sludge. The melted mixture of uranium, zirconium, and other metals had oozed to the bottom of the reactor pressure vessel, where it was gradually eating through the steel.

At 9:03 am on March 12, the message came that the last group of buses evacuating residents had departed and workers set out for the reactor building to open the valves that would allow gas to flow out of the primary containment vessel. They entered the reactor building and began a long, dark trek around the primary containment vessel, guided only by flashlight beams and handheld dosimeters. In normal conditions, an employee's radiation limit is 50 millisieverts (msv), but in an emergency it is 100 msv. After covering about half the distance to the valve, they were close to half of the limit, so they turned back and returned to the control room at 9:30 am. Over the next few hours, the operators scrambled to find another way to open the valves. They used a crane truck to haul a portable air compressor, the kind typically used at a construction site, to the crucial location of the valves. The vent crew switched the compressor on to open the valve.

At 2:54 pm, the workers responsible for cooling the core using fire trucks were ready. With freshwater supply running short, as ordered by TEPCO, fire truck crews injected seawater into the pressure vessel through the fire protection line. Under normal conditions, saltwater is never allowed in a reactor pressure vessel because it would corrode the vessel's protective steel walls and leave a mineral residue on the fuel rods. The decision was an admission that saving the reactor was no longer an option and that the operators could only hope to prevent a wide-scale disaster.

At 3:30 pm, the workers could complete laying cables to the power control panel assembly after working all morning and into the afternoon. Current flowed from a power supply truck to the panel which was ready to switch on the pumps for a backup cooling system inside the reactor 1 building. Freshwater was flowing into the pressure vessel, a crucial step toward stabilizing the reactor.

By that time, it seemed that venting had worked and that the worst was over. The pressure had dropped significantly in unit 1's primary containment vessel, suggesting that the valves had opened and that gases had rushed to the ventilation stack near the reactor building. But actually, leaks from the vent lines had added even more hydrogen to the gas collected below the ceiling of unit 1's outer building and it was ready to blow.

At 3:36 pm, a spark flashed in the darkness of the reactor building, and hydrogen gas ignited. With a roar, the top of the reactor 1 building exploded. The roof shattered, the walls splintered, and fragments of building material flew through the air. It was Fukushima's first radioactive ruin. It would not be the last. The battle to contain the catastrophe during the first 24 hours was lost, and the explosions would keep coming.

The failure of reactor 1 made efforts to stabilize the other reactors exponentially more difficult. At reactors 2 and 3, emergency cooling systems functioned for several days and then it failed for reactor 3 on March 13. Soon reactor 3 followed the example of reactor 1. Leaking gas collected at the top of the building, and it exploded on the morning of March 14.

On the morning of March 15, some explosive noise resonated inside unit 2 reactor building. On the same day, an explosion tore the roof off reactor building 4. The spent fuel rods stored in the spent fuel pools in reactors 4, 5, and 6 were covered with water throughout the accident event and never posed a threat.

Cold shutdown and challenges: By the end of April 2011, the Japanese government and TEPCO jointly unveiled their plan to bring the damaged reactors of Fukushima plant to a cold shutdown and gain control of the release of radioactive materials by mid-January 2012. The plan included to address and mitigate the following massive challenges:

- Fuel rod meltdowns in reactors 1, 2, and 3 due to loss of cooling systems following the March 11 earthquake and tsunami.

- Severe damage to the upper levels of reactor buildings 1, 3, and 4 and slight damage to reactor building 2, stemming from hydrogen explosions.
- High levels of radiation and contaminated rubble, making working conditions hazardous and difficult.
- Thousands of metric tons of contaminated water accumulating on the site and leaking out of reactors.

As defined by TEPCO, cold shutdown means to achieve and maintain a temperature of less than 100-degree C at the bottom of the reactor pressure vessel, the vessel containing fuel rods, which itself is enclosed in a protective containment vessel.

TEPCO initiated the process of reducing radioactive emissions and bring down the core temperatures of reactors 1, 2, and 3 with two steps.

In step one, new cooling system was installed by July 2011 which had begun injecting water from the bottom into all three damaged reactors. In addition to cooling, the system also decontaminated the water accumulating in the basements of reactor and turbine building caused by injected water coming into contact with molten fuel in the pressure vessels. This combined filtration and decontamination technology was developed by TEPCO with the help from the French nuclear giant Areva and U.S. nuclear waste management company Curion.

In step two, TEPCO installed core spray lines at the beginning of September 2011 to cool reactors from above. By late September 2011, as a result of injecting water to cool reactors from the top as well as from the bottom, the temperatures in all three reactors had dropped below 100-degree C for the first time since the accident. As of September 29, 2011, the temperatures were 77.5-degree C, 99.7-degree C and 78.7-degree C, respectively.

Despite these positive developments, nuclear experts point out that achieving a cold shutdown does not make the troubled plant

completely safe, given that spent fuel continues to generate heat for years after use. And upon achieving a cold shutdown, TEPCO had to take a new series of challenges. These include where injected water is escaping, stopping those leaks, dealing with accumulated contaminated water, removing and storing thousands of spent fuel rods from the pools in reactors 1, 2, 3, and 4, and then figuring out a way to remove the melted fuel. The last task could take a decade or more, according to experts.

Lessons learned: The following is the list of safety lessons learned from the accident.

- Emergency diesel generators should be installed at high elevations or in watertight chambers. Out of 12 generators of the complex, only one generator of unit 6 was on the first floor of a building near unit 6 and the rest were in the basement.
- If the cooling system like IC is intended to operate without power, ensure that all its components can be manipulated without power. IC of reactor 1 started automatically after shutdown following the earthquake but was turned off before the tsunami as it was cooling the core too fast which could stress the steel walls of the pressure vessel. With power out after the tsunami, the valve should be able to reopen without power.
- Keep power trucks turned on or very close to the power plant. Eleven power supply trucks, outfitted with high-voltage dynamos, were stored 155 miles away from the plant site.
- Install independent and secure battery system to power critical instruments during emergencies. The floodwaters knocked out control room batteries, and there was no power to respond to the emergency created by the earthquake followed by the tsunami.
- Install power-free catalytic hydrogen re-combiners (devices that turn dangerous hydrogen gas back into steam) at the top of the reactor building where the gas would most likely collect. There was no power-free

catalytic hydrogen re-combiner in the plant.

- Install power-free filters on vent lines to remove radioactive materials that would not harm nearby residents. There was no power-free filter on vent lines in the plant. Had there been such device, the radioactive materials would have been filtered as they were accumulating and there would have been no need to evacuate the residents.

A comparison of calamities in TMI, Chernobyl, and Fukushima nuclear accidents: Nearly 32 years after TMI and 25 years after Chernobyl, the Fukushima crisis became the only other civilian nuclear accident to warrant the highest possible rating of 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale (INES). The scale judges the severity of nuclear events by their impact on people and the environment.

By contrast, TMI rated 5 on the INES. The scale is logarithmic, meaning the U. S. event was roughly 1/100th as serious. While Fukushima and Chernobyl received equally high ratings, it is not obvious they were equivalent in severity.

When the reactor exploded at Chernobyl, there were 600 workers at the plant. Two died immediately as a result of the explosion, and of the 134 who acquired acute radiation sickness, 28 died within weeks. The lack of containment vessel around the reactor and a graphite fire that burned for 10 days led to radiation spreading high and wide.

By contrast, no deaths have resulted from the radiation released from the Fukushima accident, although 3 workers died in mishaps. The amount of Iodine-131 equivalent radiation released was about 1/7th the amount dispersed in Chernobyl.

A comparison of these three nuclear accidents shows key differences in calamities of the following categories:

Radiation released (petabequerels):

- TMI – 0.062
- Fukushima – 770

- Chernobyl – 5,200 (*becquerel - unit of radioactivity equal to one disintegration per second*)

Evacuation zone:

- TMI – 8 miles (advisory)
- Fukushima – 12 miles (mandatory)
- Chernobyl – 20 miles

People evacuated:

- TMI – Pregnant women and pre-school-age children within 5 miles; 140,000 estimated within 20 miles (voluntary)
- Fukushima – 80,000 (mandatory)
- Chernobyl – 116,000 in 1986 and another 230,000 in subsequent years

Deaths resulting from nuclear accident:

- TMI – 0
- Fukushima – 3; all from mishaps, not radiation
- Chernobyl – 30; 15,000 to 25,000 by International Atomic Energy Agency; 985,000 estimated by a Russian study

Remarks from the author: There are currently 93 commercial operating light water nuclear power reactors [62 Pressurized Water Reactors (PWRs) and 31 Boiling Water Reactors (BWRs)] in power plants around USA which generate 20% of our nation's electricity usage. Also, 14 new reactors with Combined Construction and Operation License (COL) are in various stages of construction and start-up in the country.

So an obvious question - Can Fukushima type or any other type of nuclear accident happen on U.S. nuclear reactors in future? The answer is 'Very Unlikely' and the reasons are:

- None of the 93 operating reactors in the US are located on an island similar to Dai-chi nuclear power station, Fukushima, Japan.
- All U.S. nuclear power plants located near a large natural source of water such as river, lake, ocean, etc. are required to demonstrate that such plants could shut

down safely when they are hit with earthquake and tsunami at the same time. These are known as 'Fukushima Initiatives' by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC).

- Fukushima reactor design was inadequate to respond and shutdown safely when the operating reactors of the nuclear power station was struck by earthquake followed by tsunami on March 11, 2011.
- We have NRC to oversee, monitor, and regulate nuclear power reactor safety in USA. Each nuclear reactor licensee has to operate its plant safely under all possible scenarios in order to maintain its operating license given by the NRC.
- To oversee, monitor, and regulate Fukushima reactors, there was no entity like our NRC in Japan. The Japanese government and Tokyo Electric Power Co (TEPCO) were operating the nuclear plant jointly. In a situation like this, compromising safety of the plant for reasons other than safety is possible.

Since the Three Mile Island (TMI), PA, nuclear accident in 1979, where partial core meltdown occurred, NRC issued a myriad of rules, regulations, and standards to prevent such accidents from happening in the future, which has been nuclear industry standard not only for USA but for all reactor owners of the rest of the world.

References:

1. *IEEE Spectrum, November 2011 issue.*
2. *NRC website: nrc.gov/reactors.*
3. *Chernobyl Nuclear Disaster and Safety Analysis, Chowrongee 2021 issue.*

Barin Kumar is a resident of Sacramento for 36 years. He is an electrical and nuclear engineer, who worked for Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) at Rancho Seco Nuclear Generating Station and SMUD Power Distribution for many years.

Sacramento – The Birthplace of the AC Grid – World’s First Generation, Transmission and Distribution of AC

Starting in the late 1800s, Thomas Edison, an inventor and a businessman developed direct current (DC) to provide power locally to facilities. DC runs continuously in one direction, like a battery or a fuel cell. DC is generated and distributed locally as it cannot be transmitted over a long distance because of significant line loss. As a matter of fact, Edison was the main contributor for promoting DC, and those days electricity distribution was a short-range business, driven by nearby DC generators. Because of this, DC was the standard in USA during the early years of electricity usage.

The problem of DC is that it cannot be easily converted to higher and lower voltages, and cannot go long distance because of significant loss. Nicola Tesla, a scientist and an inventor, solved this problem with the invention of alternating current (AC) which reverses direction a certain number of times per second. In USA, it is 60 times (or 60 Hertz (Hz)). It can be converted to different voltages relatively easily using a transformer, and this way losses can be minimized for transmitting current over long distance with high voltage. Tesla had the support of George Westinghouse, a businessman, for this effort.

Edison, not wanting to lose royalties he was drawing from his DC patents, began a campaign to discredit AC. He spread misinformation saying that AC was more dangerous, even going so far as to publicly electrocute stray animals using AC to prove his point. That is how the ‘War of the Currents: AC vs. DC Power’ started those days between Edison and Tesla.

General Electric, founded by Thomas Edison in 1892, was selling DC power using Edison’s patent for localized electrification of events such as World’s Fair. That changed in 1895. On July 13, 1895, the Folsom Powerhouse in Sacramento, California, became the first

facility to transmit high-voltage AC over long-distance transmission lines using hydroelectric power. It brought electricity to Sacramento over a 22-mile-long transmission line using newly-invented AC generators by General Electric, recently-invented high voltage transformer by Stanley Transformer, and hydro turbine invented by John B McCormick. The facility generated three-phase 60 Hz AC electricity which is the standard in the USA today, and supplied power to Sacramento businesses such as Buffalo Brewing, as well as the California State Capital Building and the city’s streetcars.

On the 126th anniversary of the achievement, on July 13, 2021, the Folsom Powerhouse was commemorated with an IEEE Milestone. The IEEE Sacramento Valley Section sponsored the nomination. The dedication ceremony is on the facility’s Facebook page.

Administered by the IEEE History Center and supported by donors, the Milestone program recognizes outstanding technical development around the world.

Stepping into electricity distribution from logging industry

Horatio Gates Livermore moved from Maine to California in 1850 during the Gold Rush in pursuit of riches, according to the history of Folsom and the Facility, which is now a State Historic Park. After 12 years of mining gold, however, Livermore became more interested in building a logging business and sawmill. He sought to use water wheels powered by the 30-mile-long stretch of the American River to operate sawmills and other industrial plants in the Folsom area. The river runs from the Sierra Nevada mountains to downtown Sacramento, where it connects to the Sacramento River.

In 1862, he and his sons, Horatio Putnam and Charles Edward, bought Natoma Water and

Mining, in Sacramento, to turn the dream into reality. The company owned a network of dams, ditches, and reservoirs that supplied water to the numerous gold mines located around the American River, according to the facility's website.

In the mid-1860s, the company started construction on a dam in the town of Folsom to provide a pond that would store the logs cut in the higher foothills before they were sent down the river to the sawmill.

The company faced several challenges, including finding affordable labor, which delayed construction for many years. After Livermore died in 1892, his sons were able to complete the project by hiring inmates at the San Quentin prison.

The brothers saw a business opportunity larger than just generating power for the sawmills - they set their sights on providing power to Sacramento with the help of a new technology using hydroelectric power.

Bringing AC Electricity to Sacramento

The two brothers built the first as well as one of the largest electric power plants in the world using AC generators. The Folsom Powerhouse main building contained four 750 kilowatt generators. Each generator was 8.5 feet tall and weighed more than 25 metric tons. The generators manufactured by General Electric in Schenectady, N.Y. were the largest three-phase generator constructed at the time, according to the 1895 report in the *Electrical Journal*.

A 1.8-mile-long canal parallel to the American River, completed in 1893, provided waterpower to the generators through four dual turbines invented by John B. McCormick. The turbines were powered by river water flowed through four 79-foot long penstocks with gates to regulate the flow and could be closed to turn off the water.

The output voltage of the generators was increased from 800 volts to 11,000 volts by

recently-invented Stanley Transformers. Because of the high voltage of 11,000 volts, the electricity could be sent to long distance of 22 miles without much line loss to Sacramento. This transmission system was developed by Louis Bell, chief engineer of the power transmission department of General Electric.

11,000 volts transmission line was terminated in a substation in downtown Sacramento where it was stepped down to a lower voltage using a step-down transformer for distribution of electricity in Sacramento downtown area. This substation site is presently owned by Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) known as 'Substation A' and was built in 1895.

The electric power system was provided with two small DC generators as backup in case of failure of AC generators.

Horatio Putnam, Charles Edward, and Albert Gallatin, a partner in Huntington Hopkins Hardware, formed the Folsom Water Power Co. It supplied water to Sacramento Electric Power and Light, which these three men founded in 1892.

On July 13, 1895, with two AC generators in operation, AC electricity was successfully transmitted over 22 miles of un-insulated copper wire to Sacramento.

The facility was acquired in 1902 by California Gas and Electric, headquartered in San Francisco, and three years later became part of Pacific Gas and Electric.

The Folsom Powerhouse provided electricity to Sacramento for nearly five decades. In 1952, PG&E donated the powerhouse to California, according to an article about the facility on PG&E's blog. The original Folsom dam was removed to make way for a larger dam, and the facility was designated a state historic park.

The Milestone plaque is displayed at the Folsom Powerhouse State Historic Park. The plaque reads:

Folsom was one of the earliest electrical plants to generate three-phase alternating current, and the first using three-phase 60 hertz. On 13th July, 1895, General Electric generators began transmitting electricity 22 miles to Sacramento at 11,000 volts, powering businesses, streetcars, and California's capitol. The plant demonstrated advantages of three-phase 60 hertz long-distance transmission, which became standard, and promoted nationwide development of affordable hydropower.

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1. IEEE Spectrum, December 2021 issue
2. War of the Currents: AC vs. DC Power, Google, November 18, 2014

Barin Kumar is a resident of Sacramento for 36 years. He is an electrical and nuclear engineer, who worked for Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) at Rancho Seco Nuclear Generating Station and SMUD Power Distribution for many years.



The Folsom Powerhouse in California was the first facility to send high-voltage alternating current over long-distance transmission lines. It brought electricity to Sacramento over a 35-kilometer-long distribution line using newly invented AC generators and hydroelectric power.

The Mask

Fay Mellark's eyes were fixed on the clock, eagerly glancing at the time. Only a few months ago, she had moved to Granite City, and she had already developed a reputation as a weirdo. With her cropped red hair and her thick glasses, she could easily be seen as a nerd, but not only did she have unfortunate looks, she always wore a gray mask. Day in and day out, that piece of gray fabric always covered her little face, even when eating. No one else wore a mask, and when someone asked her why, she'd shrug her shoulders and walk away, giving her the reputation of a freak. Now, whenever Fay took a seat somewhere, people would slowly inch away from her, sometimes so far that they'd fall out of their chairs. The only person who seemed to tolerate her was her dear friend Fiona, a popular girl with the humanity to hang out with her.

Briiiiing! The bell rang for lunch.

Five minutes later, Fay and Fiona sat down at their usual spot on the low wall surrounding the gym.

"Fay, why'd you wear the mask?" Fiona asked.

Fay picked at the chipped pink nail polish on her pinkie. "Cause."

"Cause what? That isn't an answer, you know."

Fay looked down at her friend's shoes and began to study her friend from top to bottom. Pink Vans. Shaved legs. Shorts the exact same color of her nails. She didn't dare look up anymore, for those blue eyes would lock in with hers the next moment.

"I know you don't want to see my face, but I want to see yours," Fiona suddenly said after a minute of silence.

"I don't want you to see it."

"Why?"

Fay sighed. "Covid."

Seriously? Fiona rolled her eyes. Last October, the CDC had given full approval for the vaccine for children under 12, and within a month, at least 200 sixth graders had gotten the first shot. By April, the WHO had announced that worldwide Covid cases had become zero, and everything was fine. Now, businesses were reopening, people were going to restaurants, and it seemed like the world had finally gone back to normal. When the CDC said masks were no longer needed, districts nationwide lifted the mask mandate. Fay was now the only one who even wore one.

"But there's literally ZERO Covid cases. ZERO!" Fiona made the "o" sign with her hands.

"I don't care," Fay shot back with a harshness Fiona had never heard before. "It's not safe." She flung herself away from her and wrapped her flannel jacket around herself.

Silence.

"Fay, you know that it's safe, isn't it?"

She didn't reply.

"Do your parents tell you to wear it?"

"No," Fay replied.

"Then see? You can take off your mask for once. Unless..." Fiona's voice trailed off. "Do you have a facial deformity? I won't run away from you."

"No."

"Are you going to?"

"Fine! I'll do it!" Fay whipped around and faced her popular friend. "When do you want me to do it? The count of three?"

Fiona, obviously delighted at the thought of seeing her new friend, immediately agreed. Maybe she looks really pretty underneath that mask, like a princess, Fiona thought. “Three, two, one...”

Fay ripped off her mask as Fiona gasped.

Underneath the mask was nothing. Literally nothing. She didn’t seem to have a mouth or a nose or cheeks or even flesh underneath it. Instead, there was blackness, like the night sky. However, after blinking a few times, Fiona realized it was the night sky. There were colorful clusters of pink and purple space matter and stars, but it soon seemed to surround a black hole. Fiona may have been hallucinating, but she felt the gravitational pull of it.

Fiona managed to stutter out, “Wh-what???”

Fay laughed. “Silly earthling. You can’t even handle taking a little look at the galaxy, can you?” It seemed when Fay ripped off her mask, her voice had changed as well to a cold, robotic voice.

Fiona cringed, and she gripped the wall. The pull was even stronger now.

“You, dear Fiona, were too narcissistic to ask me where I moved from. Well, I came from the planet Zorgel. Zorgel was such a beautiful planet, more beautiful than your puny earth-minded brains can imagine.”

The pull kept tugging her in, and Fiona had to crawl into a bear hug to keep her ground.

“Then one day, our dear home was destroyed by another rival of ours, so now we need a new one. And that’s earth. Now I suppose there won’t be humans anymore. That’s what we do back home. We get rid of things we don’t need.”

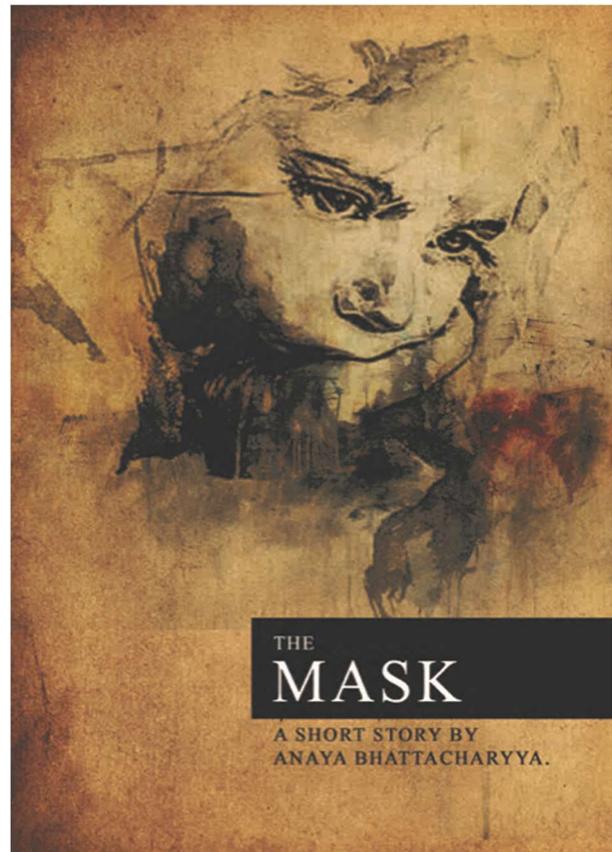
Fiona’s hands curled around the bricks of the wall with all her might.

“Well, I guess it’s goodbye now. Goodbye.”

Zap! Fiona was lifted into the air! Her fingers were slowly losing grip on the brick.

Three fingers on. Two fingers on. One finger on....

And Fiona was sucked into the portal as Fay began reaching for her mask.



Anaya Bhattacharyya is a 7th grader in Folsom, CA.

A Road Trip

As a family, we were planning to do a trip for Spring Break because we knew that it was coming. My parents have been in the US for over 18 years, but in these years, we didn't really go on any "real" road trips, so this year, we finally planned to go on a road trip. We wanted to visit wonderful national parks and some iconic canyons. While we were planning, some friends wanted us to visit their places, so we decided to add those to our road trip. This was going to be a very exciting road trip for us.

After the plan was made, we packed up a lot of supplies for the trip, including clothes, books, movies, snacks, and a lot of stuff. We were quite excited to go on the trip and were waiting for Spring Break to arrive, but we planned all that in March, so it was a long time before Spring Break could arrive. Since we were going to different states, there would be really long drives. We packed movies and a DVD and Blu-ray player to watch those movies.

We did plan all of that beforehand and we made it final that we are going as per plan, but something unfortunate happened. A week before April, I felt a bad pain in a tooth that was chipped way back in November 2021 while playing "catch catch". It hurt so bad and I felt so bad that we almost had to cancel the trip. After a dental appointment, we figured we only needed to do a few changes. Per my dentist's advice, we canceled going to Bryce Canyon because it is at a high altitude and the tooth pain would get worse if we went up that high. We could still do the trip, except the Bryce Canyon part was canceled and we postponed our start date (originally April 14) to April 15.

Finally, the day came, and we started our trip on April 15, our first destination was Riverside at our friend's house. To get to Riverside, we had to do a very long drive, so it would take us till nighttime to get there. We took a lunch break on the way. We ate at McDonalds and the food was good. When we got there, we had too much fun staying the night there. That night Rishan and Joshil wouldn't go to bed as they

loved playing laser tag. It was after midnight when we went to bed. Mom and dad were in a nostalgic mood with Piyush uncle and Bindiya aunty while talking about Sacramento. I was so happy for them. We saw them after a long 5 years. We played pool over there. Uncle taught us how to play pool. It was an interesting game. It was so great to see that Joshil had learned a lot of trick shots.

The next day, we headed out to go to Chandler, Arizona, where another friend of ours lives. Before leaving, aunty packed hash brown sandwiches, lots of snacks, and chocolates for lunch to eat on the way. When we were on our way to Chandler, we watched some movies we had packed. The one I liked was the Home Alone movie. On our way, though, when we were on I-10 near Palm Springs, we got into a sandstorm that whipped at our car, flinging dust at it. It was over 20 minutes and we got really scared. We crossed the Colorado River and saw lots of cacti. We were thrilled that we drove into Arizona. We took a short break to feel the air in Arizona. We reached our friend's house in Chandler that evening. We had great fun there. Jyoti uncle and dad cooked chicken on the BBQ grill. It was very yummy. I had great fun with Jishnu, and Rishan had a great time with Sai. Rishan and Sai had one thing in common - Beyblade and they played like crazy and did a lot of unseen stunts with Beyblades. Jishnu is a bookworm and he showed me a number of books that he enjoys reading. The next day, we left their house and went on a journey to the Grand Canyon. Our journey to nature just got started!

It was a few hours drive to go from Chandler to the Grand Canyon. When we got there, it was a majestic view. This was my first time visiting the Grand Canyon and I realized why it's called "GRAND". I was awestruck by the vastness of the canyon, almost speechless. We got a great view of the canyon from the Vista Pointe. We sat on a canyon rock. It was quite close to the edge. We sat there quite a while and I felt chills in my body as I was sitting on a rock which is

millions of years old! We started discussing the origin of the earth and the universe. Not only was it a deep canyon, it was also very broad. We did a small hike and visited many viewpoints. We saw many peaks and I could not believe that only a river with the help of wind has made so many artistic curves and peaks.



After a very nice glimpse of the canyon, we took a two-and-a-half-hour drive to the small but beautiful city of canyons, Page. We stayed there for three days to stay submerged in nature. We found several good restaurants for dinner. It was a bit late when we reached the city Page from the Grand Canyon. We took away Mexican food and ate in our hotel room. It was delicious and we enjoyed it a lot - I love good food! But my mind kept going to how majestic our Lake Powell boat tour would be. Rishan and I were super excited and could not wait to see the morning sun.



The next morning, we woke up, had an awesome breakfast at the hotel, and went to a

boat station for the Lake Powell trip. We scheduled a time for the trip and when the boat arrived, we climbed onto it. There were other passengers, too, and we got to see a map of what Lake Powell looked like. It looked like a set of neurons. Lake Powell is what also eroded another canyon called Antelope Canyon. The tour guide told us that the water level decreased because of drought. He also mentioned that seven states and Mexico get water from the Colorado River, and this drought is impacting all these states very badly. There were lots of objects carved from the erosion of the water. It was spectacular that a lot of cool shapes were carved from just water erosion.



After the boat trip, we went back to the hotel to prepare for a hiking trip down the lower part of Antelope Canyon. We went to a place called Ken's Antelope Canyon Tours, and a tour guide, not named Ken, led us down to the lower part of Antelope Canyon. Every 10 years, a storm hovers above Antelope Canyon, causing a flash flood. The latest one so far happened in 2013. We had to go down steps to reach the bottom of the lower canyon. It was underground! When we finally reached the bottom of the canyon, we could see smooth textures on the walls of the canyon. It was very beautiful. It is difficult to imagine that a flash flood through the canyons could make this awesome canyon. We hiked and took photos to reveal mind-blowing illusions! There was a shark, a seahorse, and the woman in the wind carved into these underground caverns. There was another shape where there was an opening in such a

way that it looked much like a sunset. The colors were beautiful as well: red, dark brown, maroon, all kinds of colors! When we got out of the canyon, it looked like the entire canyon was just a crack in the ground.

That evening, we went to see the Horseshoe Bend. The Horseshoe Bend was the Colorado River, bent around a cliff to make it look like a horseshoe. It was beautiful! There was also a rock stacking area where we could stack small rocks to build a rock tower. We stacked some rocks and made a tower with a small rock on the bottom and a smaller rock on the top. People say if we go back 100 years later, this rock stack would still be there! That same night, we went to a fancy restaurant, named Sunset 89. There, we ate some scrumptious dinner. It was delicious, and we enjoyed it.



The next day, we took a tour of the Upper Antelope Canyon, just a cavern above ground. While the Lower Antelope Canyon looked like a crack in the ground, the Upper Antelope Canyon was an above-ground canyon. When we went inside, it was much brighter than the Lower Antelope Canyon. In that part, there were also some objects carved from erosion just like the Lower Canyon, like a heart, a crack, and a light beam. We took photos of the objects carved from the natural process of erosion, and then we finally got out of the cavern. It was very windy. That was why there was sand falling when we were inside the upper canyon. The wind almost blew my hat away, but I caught it.

Later, we went back to our hotel and relaxed after our long hike.



Towards the evening, we packed up all of our stuff to go to Utah. While we drove, we watched some movies on our double DVD/Blu-ray player. We hit the Arizona/Utah border three times. We hit the border up north once towards the beginning when we were near Lone Rock. We were in Utah. It was very windy. We stopped to see the rock, and the car door flew open when we opened it because of the wind. It was almost impossible to close the door. We got driving again, and then we hit the border again down south, this time taking us back to Arizona. We had to drive a lot to get back to Utah. Our next hotel was in La Verkin in Utah. We got dinner from a Peruvian restaurant and took it to our hotel room. Our room was on the first floor, and as we ate and slept, I thought of our upcoming hike at Zion National Park.

The next day, we went to Zion, a national park that is at the bottom of a canyon eroded by a river called the Virgin River. Our first stop was Stop 9, the Temple of Sinawava. There was a hiking point where we could go down to the Virgin River. Down at the Virgin River, we took off our socks and shoes. We then set foot on the rocks that were in the water. When our feet touched the water, it was super-duper cold, but we later got used to it. We threw small stones at

a very large stone. One of the stones was big enough to break when it hit the large stone. We got out of the water, and then went to the main part of Zion National Park. On our way, we saw a big lone rock and saw two people attempting to climb that rock, which is very dangerous! We then completed a Zion Ranger Handbook and took an oath to be a junior park ranger. We then took a bus back to the stop where we had parked our car in Springdale. We ate dinner at a Thai restaurant and the food was very delicious with Zion mountains as our backdrop. We went back to our hotel, and Rishan and I discussed the Dinosaur museum we were going to visit the next day.



The next day, we ate breakfast and then packed up our stuff to go to Las Vegas. Before going to Las Vegas, we made a stop at the St. George Dinosaur Museum. There was stuff that had to do with dinosaurs in the early days, like fossils, track marks, etc. There were some videos of dinosaur features and some discovered ground features that lead to the thought of dinosaurs. There was a ground feature where we could see small footprints, large footprints, raindrops, and mud cracks (cracks that happened when the ground dried up). There was a lab where scientists cleaned the fossils to get the dirt out so that the shape stays there. We said goodbye to dinosaurs and hit the road again. On the way, daddy asked if we wanted to visit the Valley of Fire. We happily agreed. Then, we made our way to the Valley of Fire State Park. It was a very sandy area, and we saw a rock that was shaped like an elephant, known as Elephant Rock. We took a lot of photos at Elephant Rock, and we took a few rocks as something to remember the trip. It was quite crazy and fascinating that nature carved an elephant

from a big rock. We did an amazing three-mile hike over there. We eventually reached an area that had very wavy sand. We went almost 100 ft down and walked through high mountains standing very narrowly. It was scary and we were almost lost. It took us almost three hours to find our way out. We later came to know that the area was once the bottom of an ocean. That was our last hike of the trip, and we headed to the bustling city of Las Vegas!

On our way to Las Vegas, we watched movies on our DVD/Blu-ray player, and we came into a large city with a lot of buildings and casinos. We stayed at Flamingo Hotel with a casino on the first floor, and our room was on the 27th floor. It was a city-view room. We could see the Hotel Bellagio, Ceasar's Palace, and a couple of other casinos from the big hotel window. Our friend, Lipi Masi, who lived there, came to visit us with her family. Then, we went out to get dinner at an Indian restaurant. The food was delicious, and I couldn't stop myself from eating until I was full. After that, we left for the hotel, and when we reached, our friends had to go back home.

When we went back into our room, we saw the dancing fountains of Bellagio from above. They were breathtaking, and we recorded them on video so that we could see them later. There were so many people on the road that night. Nice to see that Las Vegas never sleeps at night. Then, we slept, and I was thinking that we had so much fun during our super amazing trip, and it was our first road trip ever! But it was over now, and that was where our journey ended. When we left for home the next day, we could not stop thinking about our amazing journey to some spectacular state and national parks, and some iconic canyons. We also got to see some of our old friends before beginning our journey to the iconic canyons, state, and national parks. It was an amazing journey, and I just know that there will be another journey just like this.

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Our Family Trip to Hawaii

Oahu isn't called the Gathering Place for nothing. With nearly 4.7 million visitors annually, this island is the most visited of the Hawaiian chain, known for the bustling city of Honolulu, its historic monument where the Japanese bombed the United States, and their world-famous beaches such as Waikiki and North Shore.

And yet, Oahu still has so much to offer. From its rich Polynesian culture to the beautiful nature surrounding it, this island has hundreds of hidden treasures in store for tourists.

This summer, my family was fortunate enough to enjoy a 10 day vacation on the shores of Waikiki, Honolulu, where we interacted with the local culture, road-tripped to amazing sites, and found an escape from the modern day stress of the Mainland.

Exploring Honolulu (Days 1, 2, and 3)

After a 5-hour flight across the Pacific Ocean, my parents and I reached the airport on July 10th. With Hawaiian music ringing in our ears, we waited for a long forty minutes before our luggage came tumbling down the carousel and we walked outside in search of a taxi.

When we arrived in Honolulu, I was quite surprised. Instead of a perfect, touristy paradise, it had more of an urban setting. The streets were lined with homeless camps, tall skyscrapers, and tiny mom-and-pop shops. Once settled into our roomy hotel room at Hilton's Grand Waikikian, we set out to explore the beach. One part of it had a gigantic lagoon, about 8 feet deep and with a small island in the middle. We even saw aqua bikes! As we walked around the lagoon, our eyes feasted upon the wide expanse of Waikiki Beach, flooded with tourists, but a deep blue ocean for as far as the eye can see.

During the 19th century, Waikiki was a wetland area considered a playground for royalty, until the 1920's, when the government made the Ala

Wai Canal for future development, draining the wetland entirely. Translating to "sprouting waters" in Hawaiian, this beach attracts 72,000 tourists any given day, making up around 42% of the state's tourist revenue, about 2 billion dollars!

For the next two days, we spent the majority of our time on Waikiki's white sand beach. During the evening, we took the chance to explore Honolulu's bustling nightlife. My parents were pleasantly surprised at how safe it was to take a late-night stroll, like Tokyo. For the entire night, hundreds of shops are open, leaving the city illuminated throughout the night. One of our favorite places to go were the local farmer's markets. Unlike the Mainland, the majority of Hawaii's food is local, such as the Ahi and Mahi Mahi fish, the pineapples, and even the watermelons!

On the 12th, we booked a tour of Iolani Palace, the last home of the royal Hawaiian family before Hawaii was taken over by the United States in 1898. The only palace on U.S. soil, it was built in 1882 by King Kalakaua, the last king of Hawaii. After his death, the palace was inhabited by Queen Lilioukalani, his sister and successor, until 1893, when she was overthrown. The palace was then used as the capitol of Hawaii until 1969. Although the palace is quite small by Indian standards (look at Victoria Memorial), it's just as grand. The royal family was quite influenced by Western culture, from a gigantic table of delicate china cups, to their study, with Western books and maps. Despite this, they somehow integrated their original Hawaiian culture with their new one, like their coronation ceremony. After our audio tour, we took an Uber home and retired, once again, to the beach.

Beyond Waikiki (Days 4, 5 and 6)

The next day, on July 13, my mom's birthday, we traveled to the North Shore, where we got to see more of Hawaii's attractions. Before we

started, we went to the airport to pick up our rental convertible car.

Even just with the car, we all had the time of our lives when the top was down. Hair whipping in our faces, we arrived at the Halona Blowhole Lookout, known for its gigantic blowholes (of course) and its beautiful view. We were supposed to visit the tiny cove that was there, but since we were all wearing fancy shoes, we weren't able to.

After a few more hours of driving, we reached the Polynesian Cultural Center, Hawaii's #1 visitor attraction, a park that brings the spirit of Polynesia to life through its six island villages, Samoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Tonga, Tahiti, Hawaii, and Fiji. When we first stepped in, I was instantly reminded of a Disneyland theme park, with colorful food trucks, signs, and little shops selling pui necklaces and leis. Before we visited the villages, we went on a tour to see Laie and the temple.

On the tour, we were guided by two teenage nuns from the church, who told us about the history of the Center. The Mormons had started missions in Polynesia from as early as 1884, and by 1865, they had purchased 6,000 acres of land that made up Laie. Soon, the temple began attracting more and more Polynesians, and by the 1920s, the Mormons had successfully spread their message throughout all of Polynesia. By 1921, McKay Foyer envisioned a new school for higher education along with the recently-built temple, and in 1955, Brigham Young University opened. Around the time of McKay's visit, Matthew Crowley finished his first round of missionary service in New Zealand, where he fell in love with the Maori people and the Polynesian islands. He had a hope to see the Polynesians each have a little village in Laie. In the late 1940's, the church members hosted a "hukilau" - a fishing festival and a luau feast - as a fundraiser. This attracted busloads of visitors in the 1950's, where the collegers performed in a standing-room crowd. In 1963, the Polynesian Center finally opened, with the college students still working here.

After the tour, we visited the village of Samoa, where we got to try fire dancing (not with actual fire) and see villagers climb coconut trees. Then, we went to the theater to see "Ha: Breath of Life", a presentation about all six islands. It was incredible, seeing the students do the native dances and see their life play out before our eyes. However, the highlight of the show was definitely the fire dancing. They turned and twisted and flipped and nearly burned themselves with their fire sticks, but they always seemed to catch it. By the time the show ended, it was nearly 9:30 pm.

The next day, my parents and I woke up extremely early for a very sentimental visit to the national monument of Pearl Harbor. Although we planned to arrive at 7:00 am, we ended up arriving at 10:00 am. Even then, the memorial was bursting with visitors! After squeezing through the tourists into the open-air monument, we lined up to see the U.S.S. Arizona, the ship that still entombed 900 soldiers that were unable to be recovered after it sank in 9 minutes. However, like many other attractions, there was a gigantic line. When we asked the park ranger how long it would take, he told us the average wait time for someone who didn't have tickets was 3-4 hours! In the end, me and my dad decided to do the audio tour while my mom waited in line (we were more of the history geeks, anyway). After walking around for a bit, we looked at the exhibits. The first one was about the relationship between the United States and Japan before the attack, which was already strained because of their rivalry for the Chinese market and Asian resources. The second, though, was about the actual attack, from remnants of a soldier's clothing to a gigantic piece of the U.S.S. Arizona. Something I remember was that the pictures of the bloodied and burnt soldiers really affected me, and the attack suddenly seemed much more serious.

Throughout the day, my parents kept switching out places in line between themselves while we surveyed the museums. We didn't even get to eat a proper lunch! All we had were some chips and a few coconut cookies. Towards the end of our three-hour wait, my dad and I visited the

U.S.S. Bowfin, a submarine that went on nine patrols throughout the Pacific from 1943 to 1945. The submarine was definitely my favorite part of the tour, especially because of the gold machinery, which reminded me a lot of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea. After a long wait, we finally visited the U.S.S. Arizona Memorial. The memorial itself was made in 1961 under the guidance of architect Alfred Pries. The depression in the middle of the structure signifies the low America went through after the attack, and the uptake symbolizes new victory. Although we were told to treat the memorial with respect by not taking photographs, the other tourists were proudly flouting the rules by snapping pictures every five seconds. According to my parents, I was the only one who was taking the memorial seriously!

Once we stepped off the boat, we rushed to catch the bus to the U.S.S. Missouri, the last battleship commissioned by the United States. When we arrived at the ship, it was clear that my dad was in “Disneyland.” For the entire thirty minutes of the tour, he was talking animatedly about the history of the ship and what happened where. After the tour, we visited the Pearl Harbor Aviation Museum, where my dad had even more fun. There, we saw the actual Japanese bomber planes used in the attack, the American planes used to fight them, and even a base that was actually attacked. In fact, this was the last stop Amelia Earhart made before she disappeared into the Pacific Ocean.

On Friday, we headed back to the Polynesian Center with one of our free three-day passes. There, we delved even more into the Polynesian culture, visiting the villages of Samoa, Aotearoa (New Zealand), Tonga, Tahiti, Hawaii, and Fiji. One interesting mannerism about Samoa was that the men were the ones who cooked and cleaned. In their culture, they’re never allowed to see a woman cry, and with the ashes from the fire, the men began cooking to prevent it. The Maori people (Aotearoa) were more martial, from the famous Haka to their everyday life. Tonga wasn’t very interesting despite the fact that it was the only island that hadn’t been

invaded by foreigners, but we thoroughly enjoyed Tahiti’s dancing (well, at least I thought it was funny when my dad had to knock his knees back and forth!) Sadly, by the time we made it to Hawaii and Fiji, the islands were closing up for the day. At home, we hit the bed immediately, exhausted from the day’s activities.



End of Our Trip (Days 7, 8, 9, and 10)

With most of the things on our wish list accomplished, we decided to take things slow on Saturday with a short trip to the Aloha Meet and Greet Stadium Sweep Marketplace, a flea market with great deals. Upon arriving, we filled our bags with trinkets of all sorts. I even found two premade wristbands with my name on it! For the rest of the day, we stayed on the beach, splashing in the waves and having fun.

Sunday, though, was the day we set out to Waimea Falls, but we found out midway that the road was closed. We had to turn back and drive for another hour! However, we did get the chance to drive along the coastline and past the Dole Plantation, Pupukea, and Haleiwa. (As

they say, “We went there, we just didn’t get down!”) Finally, we arrived at Waimea, even though it was only two hours before closing. There, we saw peacocks and a native Hawaiian village. Although we didn’t get much time there, we still had a great time, and we decided to end the day with a trip to Sunset Beach, known for its beautiful sunset and gigantic waves.

On Monday, we visited Diamond Peak, a dormant volcano and military fort looking over Waikiki’s shore, notorious for its terribly long and difficult hike, which we soon experienced. After climbing up an extremely long trail winding around the volcano, we clambered up 99 steps to the military fort, where we climbed up even more steps! Although the views were spectacular, after our hike, we were sore and achy from walking all day.

For the next few days, however, we weren’t able to do much, because my dad suddenly fell sick. While my mom and I would shop around town, dad would be sitting in the hotel room. The last

day was really memorable for me, though, because something completely unexpected happened. While I was swimming (and almost drowning) in the ocean, a man suddenly gave me a gigantic floatie. I had been asking for one for the past few days, so it was a complete coincidence that I got one. For my last evening at the beach, I rode waves wholeheartedly while my mom took pictures of me laughing and smiling, a perfect summary of our trip.

Conclusion

Ah, vacation. The one thing that we all want to continue forever, but it never does. Hawaii was probably one of my most memorable trips, especially with trips like these being a rarity on the Mainland. Although our trip ended with three positive tests from our at-home kits, we still had the time of our lives.

Mahalo (thank you) for reading!

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Magical Trip to Rajasthan

This summer I visited my homeland India. It was the longest I ever stayed in India and was special for various reasons. I was able to spend a week in Visakhapatnam with my grandparents, moved into a new home in Mumbai, and got a chance to experience the Indian monsoon first hand. But, my most favorite part of this trip was an unexpected visit to Jodhpur and Jaisalmer in Rajasthan.

When I think of India, a few things come to mind. It is the land of the maharajas, novelty, delicious food, warm hospitality, lots of temples, and beautiful architecture. These are things that I have read in books and seen in movies, but to be able to experience royalty firsthand when we stayed at the Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur made this trip even more memorable. Another great experience was our trip to Suryagarh - Jaisalmer located in the far north-western corner of India. It is a remote town that used to be the former medieval trading center used by the silk-route travelers centuries ago. Located in the Thar desert, this trip gave me a glimpse into the old world of ancient India, desert life, and the colorful Rajasthani culture.



I remember we planned the trip hastily, so I was a little skeptical about how this trip would turn out. We left early in the morning, and took a direct flight from Mumbai to Jodhpur which took about an hour and half. We landed in Jodhpur airport at about 11 o'clock, and then a



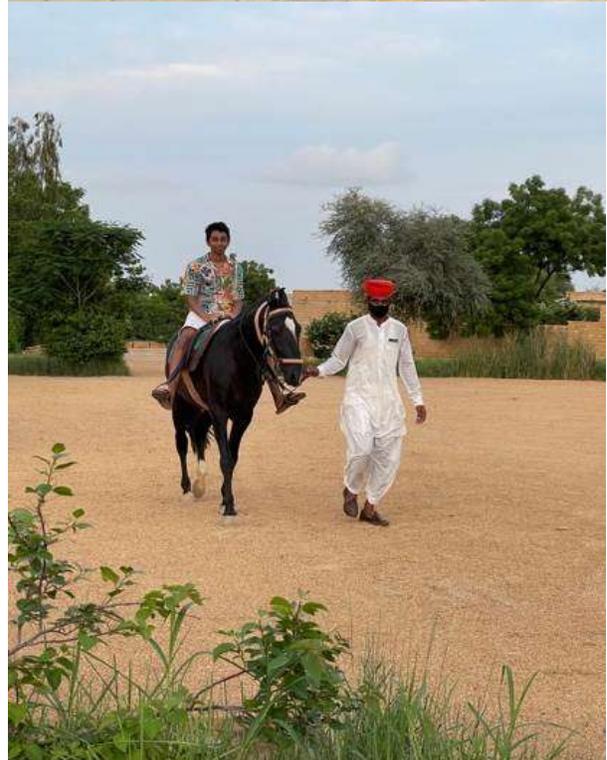
six-minute cab ride took us to the lap of royalty which was Umaid Bhawan Palace. This palace was built in 1943 by Maharaja Umaid Singh and was the last royal building to ever be constructed on Indian soil. For those who do not know what's special about this place, most recently Nick Jonas and Priyanka Chopra got married here, and the Indian Royal family still lives in the palace. When we entered the premises, we were given a royal welcome. Men played trumpets, drums were rolled, and rose petals were scattered on the red carpet to usher us into the magnificent palace. It was quite an experience! We were then swiftly taken by the hotel manager to the palace lobby where they welcomed us with a variety of refreshers. Right above us was this massive dome, and I was awestruck by its beauty and architecture. While we waited in the lobby, a group of performers played a variety of traditional Rajasthani music. We took a tour of the palace and were in awe of its sheer size and beauty. We were then ushered to our historical suite located at one of the many corners of the palace.



The suite stretched out pretty far, consisting of three rooms and a large bathroom (with heated bathroom tiles!!). After we made ourselves comfortable, we headed to the restaurant to have lunch. The special part about this restaurant was that you could basically order anything like garlic bread, mishti doi to laal maas (which is a Rajasthani mutton delicacy). What stood out was the servers' warm hospitality and their interest to try to know us personally. Later in the day, we explored the exteriors of the palace which consisted of beautifully curated gardens. We got to see a few peacocks, visited the maharajas stable, and

walked around acres and acres of lush green grass.

The next day, we woke up and went to the royal car museum which is a part of the palace. Here we could see all the cars the royal family used over the century. We saw some extremely old Rolls-Royces and other vintage brands. Then we headed to the palace museum that showcased how the palace was built, the royals who stayed there, and various artifacts that belonged to the palace. Incidentally I was feeling a bit under the weather that day, so I stayed back in the room while my parents stepped out to explore the city of Jodhpur.



In the evening, I decided to order in-room dining as I did not have the energy to step out. Little did I know that I would be treated like a prince in the palace - quite unlike in the US where hospitality is not necessarily over the top unless you are visiting a Michelin-star restaurant. My food came with a personalized server. The experience felt like I was eating at a proper 5-star restaurant while sitting in the comfort of my own room. The food was absolutely delicious and clearly helped me feel better the next day.

The car ride to Jaisalmer took about 5 hours, thankfully the roads were great so it didn't feel that long. We managed to go sand-dune bashing on a SUV at the Thar Desert for about an hour after we reached Jaisalmer. Then we checked-in to the hotel called Suryagarh. It was a beautiful hotel with an open courtyard in the middle and it had a great restaurant as well. They did well in carefully preserving the traditions of the old world and mixing them with modern amenities. Our suite was decked up in colorful Rajasthani decor and stately furniture and also came with a private pool. In the evening, we enjoyed a cultural program performed by the locals, and my mom even took part in it.

The next day we went out and explored the Golden city of Jaisalmer. We visited a few Jain temples, and our guide took us through the old city of Jaisalmer and showed us the military and prison that was built when the royals ruled India. People actually live in these military quarters which is really shocking because many tourists come around that place. Imagine a whole bunch of tourists just coming around your house and taking pictures. Personally, I

would not let that slide. We walked through the city of Jaisalmer, while my mom shopped for silver jewelry. After that, we visited the traditional Rajasthani homes called the Havelis.

By mid-afternoon, the temperature was soaring and we headed back to our hotel. I decided to get a foot massage which really helped ease my leg pain. In the evening, mom and I explored the hotel and its farm animals. There were three beautiful horses named Bhijli, Akash, and Badal. We also played with the hotel manager's golden retriever named Gabbar. At night, my parents went for a special Thar Desert dinner, which was inspired by the celebratory feast of the silk-route travelers under the starry skies while I enjoyed some delicious pizza that I ordered in my hotel room while catching up on my favorite YouTube videos

From the royal treatment we received at Umaid Bhawan Palace in Jodhpur to staying at Suryagarh in Jaisalmer, where they preserved the ancient architecture so well, my experience was truly out of the world. Rajasthan truly lived up to its name. I had a chance to explore beautiful Indian architecture, eat delicious food, and enjoy some warm hospitality. Everything about this trip was cranked up to 11. For anyone wanting to visit India, these two destinations should be on your must-see list.

Suhaan Devavarapu is a Freshman at Granite Bay High School. He is passionate about playing the guitar, loves sports and travelling, and enjoys spending time with his dog Joyce.

I Have Removed My Chain

“Mummy, why do you wear these ornaments at home all the time? Aren’t they itchy sometimes?”

“Well Shona, I have to, for the well-being of everyone I love. You see this iron bangle on my left forearm? It wards off any negativity creeping into my marriage with your Dad, keeps it strong, protecting our union. The chain I wear around my neck is for the well-being of my children. It protects them from any potential harm. These *polas* are for...”

As I listened to a litany of armaments meant to keep everyone else safe, I was awestruck and filled with admiration for my Mother and all other women carrying the weight and responsibility of protecting all of mankind!!! She reminded me of Ma Durga! Every human is born from a woman. So women were just handed this huge responsibility just by merit of being female. Just part and parcel of being a woman! Wow!

Did they ever feel tired? What if they didn’t want this responsibility? Did they have a say in the matter? Why not?

Hmmmm...

I started observing things as I grew up; things didn’t quite add up.

Men died in combat, heroes, with their wives widowed, bangles still on, yet separated forever. Was the bangle not powerful enough?

Countless children fall sick, suffer and die, with Mothers watching tragically, helplessly - twisting the chains adorning their necks around their fingers, till they are bruised, urging the chains to do their jobs. I am sure they tried their best, prayed as sincerely as they could. What went wrong?

And I also watched as a woman lost her memory, her self-awareness, her identity, still wearing her amulets of protection for others all

the time. What good are those symbols of protection my Lady, if you don’t remember who you are protecting, and from what, or even who you are? Who failed to protect you from losing yourself?

Should all these women be blamed for all that could not be protected from harm?

Can you blame someone who doesn’t have the power to block everything that is happening around her, suffering losses herself, watching in powerless anguish?

Slowly, steadily a thought trickled into my mind, and started taking root, and sprouted tiny branches, as I opened my mind to things happening around me, to me... that maybe... maybe... life just happens... keeps happening in its own time and pace, no matter what I do, or don’t. No matter how hard I try to prevent something, stop it, hasten it, or make it happen, what will be will be. Life will move on.

Life will keep moving along its own path.

I can take credit for trying, but nothing else, not for what is happening, or will happen. Events will unfold whether I choose to fetter myself in bangles, chains, or any other culture or society decreed ritual, or choose to wear nothing at all.

I can choose to feel angry or upset when things don’t go the way I was trying to manipulate them by weighing myself down, raving and ranting at the injustice of it all when I fail.

Or, I could do everything in my power for what I feel is right and watch curiously as it turns around to fit the direction of motion decided by the Universe around me; like a child floating a paper boat in a stream and watching it float away/get stuck/sink with avid curiosity. I choose the paper, make the boat, let it float, and that’s where I have to let go.

I have power over my own actions and reactions, but none whatsoever over the consequences of my actions.

I am like a dew drop sitting precariously on a leaf of one of the innumerable trees next to the highway of life, watching life flow by me, knowing subconsciously that one day I will evaporate, or fall off this leaf, and cease to exist, or maybe life will cease to exist to me.

But till then, I can probably do as I please, believe what I want, ignore what seems illogical to me, and do what brings my current being peace and joy. For I, the little dewdrop on a leaf am transient too, and I can choose to do what

feels right and choose to be happy or unhappy as I watch eternal life unfold its glorious wings and fly around me till I cease to exist.

I choose to remove my chain and choose to be happy.

Dr. Shampa Sarkar is a graduate of R. G. Kar Medical College, Kolkata, India. She is a psychiatrist and moved to Northern California five years ago.



Ripped Pages from the Rockies and Arches Diaries

Riding the Steamboat (Pulak Chowdhury)

The all-wheel-drive SUV got airborne for a second and landed on a puddle, generated by a flash stream of rainwater running across the dirt road; Mahika from the back seat screamed, “DADDY, GO SLOW!” I was like, “It is not my fault, the road beneath is bumpy and bruised by mudslides that happened during the previous night’s torrential rain.” It was still drizzling, and Soma was talking my ear off, “Maybe, we should go back, this is an awful decision to go on this very high-grade dirt road with no phone signal and with two kids. We may get stuck!” I was also beginning to doubt my decision!

This was a decision made hastily to spice up our yearly road trip in the Colorado Rockies. We did not have phone signal for the past hour, and did not see anyone or any car for the past 45 minutes. I had done some of these treacherous car rides in previous hiking trips, but for the kids and Soma, it was a new experience. Should we go back? The only thing I knew was that I must see the Steamboat Rock on a horseshoe bend that looked so amazing in that landscape picture at the Quarry Visitor Center of the Dinosaur National Monument.

We had left Sacramento four days ago and were just in the early part of the 12-day-long road trip; we still needed to cover about 2,000 miles and a few national parks and monuments in Utah, Colorado, and Arizona. It was a lazy Monday morning on July 26, 2021. When we woke up, we were thinking about a rather slow day. It was planned to be Vivan’s day, all about dinosaurs – visiting the dinosaur national monument and quarry, touching the dinosaur fossils, posing with dinosaurs, entertaining Vivan with more dinosaurs, statues and fossils alike. Luckily, when we finished everything, it was just past noon. We needed to be somewhere with a cellphone connection at exactly 5 pm to book our entry pass to the Rocky Mountain National Park for the next day. So, we still had five more hours to explore!

That is when the Steamboat panorama caught my eye. I asked around about the panorama, and one park ranger told me, “It is called the Steamboat Rock on a horseshoe bend of Green River, and you should get permission from the Canyon Visitor Center to go there.” That visitor center was about 30 minutes away, and it was on our way to Denver. So, I proposed, “Let’s go there and decide if and when we get permission.”



Treacherous Trail

When we reached the Canyon Visitor Center on State Route 40 near Utah-Colorado border, cellphone signal was available. I thought if we came back to the visitor center by 5 pm, we would be fine! It was already 1 pm, so we have 4 hours to visit the Steamboat Rock and come back, if we got permission. The park ranger said, “It rained real bad last night; the steep-descent gravel-y road is full of loose rocks and maybe flooded with mountain streams in a few places. Will let you go only if you have an ALL-WHEEL-DRIVE!” Bingo! We had one!

I was ecstatic to get permission, but Soma and the kids were not sure. One-way trip to the rock was about 90 minutes. If we started right at that moment, we would only get 30 minutes to spend near the Steamboat Rock and the horseshoe bend. Was it worth it? I tried convincing them, “Even if we did not spend much time near the rock, the ride would be an

adventurous one with 10%-grade gravel-y road with lots of stream crossing. Will you not enjoy

that?" Finally, they gave in, and we started; it read 1.15 pm on the clock!



Grand View of Steamboat Rock

First hour of the drive was alright – barren mountainous road with occasional sights of oncoming cars and a few cows with no sights of manmade disasters (i.e., structures, buildings, etc.), and obviously no cellphone signal. Only thing that was distracting was when the car tires hit occasional cattle guards on the road and made jarring sounds. Then, we took a sharp right turn and started descending on a winding gravel road. Road might be a misnomer for this; trail might be more appropriate. I told everyone, “Let’s buckle up – 30 minutes of immense roller-coaster ride coming our way with sharp turns and sudden descents.” We were about to go down 3000 feet in the next 10 miles, at a speed of 20 miles an hour max.

Every stream we were crossing, Soma was yelling, “Car might get stuck as water might be very deep.” Every turn we were making, Mahika was screaming, “We might roll over.” Vivan was so awestruck that he almost became silent. I was thinking, this might be too much of an adventure on a single day, out of nowhere with no knowledge of the terrain, and not being sure on how to call for help, if needed.

I lost track of time and distance as I was too focused on the road and making cautious decisions while navigating the terrains. With every obstacle we overcame, Mahika was asking, “Are we there yet?” Finally, we

descended upon a dust bowl, a small non-picturesque valley with surrounding high mountains. There was no sight of Steamboat Rock. I was a bit underwhelmed by the dust and smell; one sign read “Echo Park Campground, 0.1 miles.” I vaguely remembered the name, a primitive campground with no facilities near our destination. So, I screamed, “We are here. Let’s get out and find the rock.”

As I came out of the car, my hiking shoes got half-drowned in the dust; I almost lost my footing. After managing to stand upright, I was inquisitively looking around and suddenly saw a corny, old guy with thick glasses coming toward us with his dog. Not sure how old he was, may be ninety or more! The dog was also old with only one eye. I was not sure what to expect, so I gently asked, “can you please direct us toward the river?” He said, “We are also heading to the river.” So, we followed. After a very short distance through the bushes and hedges, VOILA! There stood the Steamboat Rock, on the horseshoe bend of the mighty Green River.

It was a majestic view with a massive rock looking down, standing tall on the other bank of the river, looking like a steamboat with a giant sail coming towards us. Millions of years of carving and etching by the Green River created a grand view, that is worth every bit of trouble and uncertainty that we endured

during the past two hours. It also reminded me of our insignificance, how miniscule we human beings are compared to the grandeur of the universe! While enjoying sublime nature, I continued conversations with the old fella, found out he used to live in Paradise - already (in)famous for wildfire - 30 years ago, and currently lived in Southwest Colorado. He suggested that we drive through the valleys of Southwest Colorado to find other hidden natural gems, A.K.A., non-touristy, non-crowded, and my kind of places! I knew right away that I needed to heed his advice.

While gazing at the surrounding mountains, the horseshoe bend, and the majestic rock, I contemplated - Nature is always calling us, and sometimes we got to listen! Fortunately, we did that this time, and nature did not disappoint. Amazing nature, beautiful United States of America!

Touching the Clouds (Mahika Adishree Chowdhury)

“Vivan, do you think that we can touch the clouds from here?” I asked my little brother. We were on a gondola on the way to the village on the top of the mountain. As you read in the first part, we were on a long road trip through the Rocky Mountains. My dad can say otherwise, but my favorite place during this trip was Telluride.



From the top of a mountain

Telluride is a town in Colorado with a population of about 2,500 people. The part of the town that we went to had three sections which were divided by the forests, and it was a long way from one section to another. The way

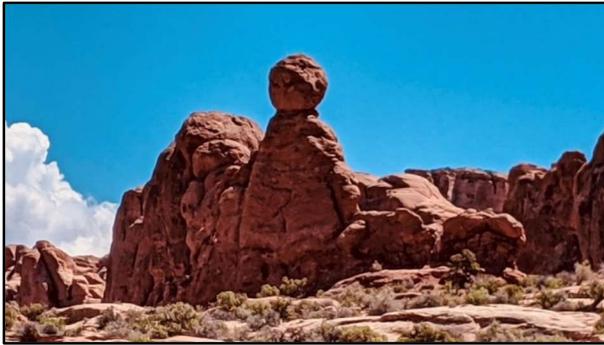
to get from one part to another was a gondola ride! The best part was that the gondola ride was free, so we could take as many rides as possible. It was scary at first, and Vivan was shocked, but after a while, it got much better.

In my opinion, the first section of the town did not have much to do; it was mainly rental homes and some regular homes. The second section was a village, and it was more fun. It had different activities such as the spider jump, and there was also a ski lift. We decided to get lunch before we did any activities, so we went to the third section first. It was a place with restaurants, and there was a market too. The market was like a Nugget. It had a deli where my dad ordered food, while my mom and I looked for souvenirs. We had a delicious lunch, and we were ready for some activities. My mom promised me that I could go on the spider jump after lunch. Once we got the tokens for the spider jump, we had to wait in the line forever. Vivan also wanted to go on the spider jump, so we were both getting impatient. I ended up going first, it was terrifying even if it was only five minutes. Vivan had a different experience; he had so much fun he did not want to get off, but in the end, he did. After that, we took a few more gondola rides, and my dad and I bought a snow cone. When we got to the car, we poured some mango juice inside the snow cone to make a mango-flavored snow cone, which made it even better. That, in a nutshell, is our great Telluride experience. You should definitely visit Telluride!



Gondola Ride and Cozy Town Reaching the Arches (Sanchita Dey)

Going to the Arches National Park was on my bucket list for a while. Last July (2021), we decided to take a road trip to take a break, and refresh the kids' minds before a new school year. I expressed my wish to Pulak, and as he does normally, he planned for a fabulous road trip to many of the places we wanted to go for a while. My wish was to visit Arches, our (Pulak and mine) wish was for Colorado, Vivan's wish was to see Dinosaurs, and all Mahika wanted was to stay in different hotels and have good foods other than mom's cooking.



Mom holding kid's hands?

So, we took off one day and started our long road trip. After Salt Lake City, Dinosaur National Monument, and magnificent Colorado, it was time to go the Arches National Park. We reached Moab on July 30 around 6 pm. I was so excited that I was ready to go immediately, but my kids were tired and wanted to take a break from car ride. We talked to the front desk people of the hotel, and they said to go early to see the Delicate Arch. I was prepared that night, packing the suitcase, filling up the water bottle, etc. as we would leave the hotel in the morning. In the early morning, we had a quick breakfast and packed a breakfast for Vivan and put him in the car while he was still asleep in his pajamas. We reached the entrance gate of the park, but there was no security because it was too early in the morning. We drove past the gate and started to see other. From the moment we entered the park, I wanted to stop at every spot, it was so beautiful. The landscape was mesmerizing, and the light of early sun made the color of the structures stunning. We stopped at some

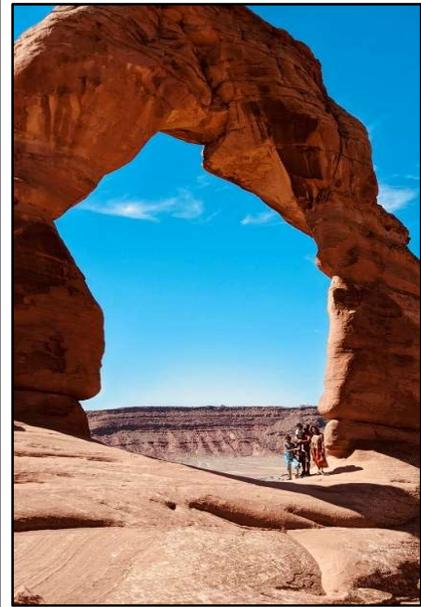
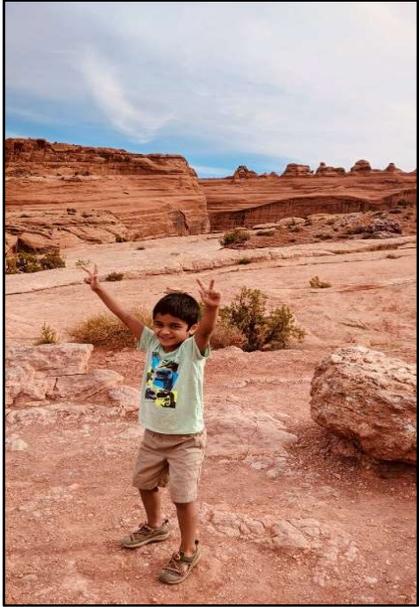
vista/viewpoints, took photos, and enjoyed the nice calm weather of early morning. In the meantime, Vivan woke up, had his breakfast, and I wrapped him in my scarf because he kept saying, "I'm cold, Mommy."

Then, we followed the signs and drove toward the Delicate Arch. Till then, we had no clear idea how to reach there. We saw, at one point, a sign showing "Parking is FULL". We were like "What was this fuss for?" We drove past that area, went to the vista point to see the Delicate Arch. From that vista point, all we saw was a small arch because it was far away. I was so disappointed. I could see signs of people close to the Arch and asked Pulak, "How do they go there?" Pulak said "Oh I think that the parking lot showing FULL sign is where you can park and hike close to the Arch. It is a tough hike. Do you want to do that? If you want, I can drop you guys there, drive back, park the car here and walk 1.5 miles back to join you." Mahika and I thought it would be way too much for him. I said, "Let's go all together. If we find a spot, then you do not have to come back." Luckily, we found a parking spot and we took a water bottle and started walking towards the trail. Vivan started to complain, and Mahika expressed her disagreement of why we had to do this because she admitted that she was very lazy. Pulak took Vivan on his shoulders; his plan was to hike all the way up there with Vivan on his shoulders. I thought for a minute; then asked Pulak to put Vivan down. I asked Vivan to hold my hand and started talking about his book. He loves reading books. We talked about some of his books, Minnie's Alphabet Brunch, Micky's Talent Show, Zoo Animals, Finding Nemo, and about our recent trip to a farm where he could pat and feed horses. So, Vivan hiked the whole path holding my hands. It was a 3-mile-round-trip hike to Delicate Arch with a 480 feet elevation change. It was not the elevation or the distance, but weather conditions (summer heat and winter ice) that someone needs to consider before making the hike. That is the reason visitors do the hike early in the morning on summer days to avoid the scorching heat.

First part of the hike was difficult because of high elevation change, but chatting with Vivan

made it enjoyable, and the view was amazing. During the second part of the hike, the view was phenomenal, and at some portions, the trail was very narrow, we had to cross ledges. At the end of the trail, after crossing the narrow path on the mountain ridge, we found the BEAUTY, the most beautiful and largest free-standing Arch of the Arches National Park. We did it! Vivan got very quiet when we reached there. We stood in a line to take photos, he sat with me quietly, curiously looking around. I thought

he was also mesmerized like his mom with the beauty of the Delicate Arch. It was so fabulous, and again I felt the charisma of the creator – Mother Nature. It was way bigger than I imagined, but the color is the exact color I dreamed about. The red color of the amazing architecture always reminds me of the Bangla song “Rangamatir pothe lo, ... eka boshe thaki.” It is hard to say what is more fascinating— the grand view of the red structure, or the thought that nature is the ultimate architect.



Delicate Arch from far away, on the trail to Delicate Arch and under the Delicate Arch

The light opening beneath the arch is 46 feet high and 32 feet wide. According to the National Parks Service website, it has had more than a few names in its history, from the colorful (“Cowboy’s Chaps,” “Old Maid’s Bloomers”) to the prosaic (“Salt Wash Arch”). The term “Delicate” first appeared in a January 1934 article about the Arches National Monument Scientific Expedition, which described it as “the most delicately chiseled arch in the entire area.”

After the photo sessions, we sat quietly and enjoyed the view and had little snacks. Then, it was time to go back. My mind is fulfilled with joy and tranquility. On the way back, it was getting warmer, and we had to ration water as we carried only one water bottle. We talked about how many icecream scoops the kids (Vivan and Mahika) would like to have after we

get to the visitor center. The number we heard was getting bigger and bigger as we were finishing the hike. We promised both that they could buy books of their choices from the visitor center.

Eventually, we reached the parking lot, and just half an hour before that, Vivan drank the last drop of water from the water bottle. It was his first long hike. I thought he enjoyed it, like his parents. Mahika did not complain much; although she did not like the idea of hiking initially, she was very happy after getting all the books and souvenirs from the visitor center.

Pulak Chowdhury and Sanchita Dey, longtime Utsav members, live in Elk Grove with their kids, Mahika (Grade 6) and Vivan (Grade 1).

The Alley

Mira stood in front of the little blue house with its faded walls and flat roof. A narrow alley lay next to the house, unpaved, dusty. It was just another house, in a row of houses with small front yards separated by low concrete walls. The steps leading from the verandah to the front yard had chipped, patches of cement evidence that attempts had been made to blend the new with the old. Someone had carefully teased a creeper to clamber up a wooden trellis; the creeper lay on the roof, abundant green leaves unfurled, photosynthesizing. Many moons ago, Mira's grandmother used to stand in this verandah and nudge *chaal-kumro* vines up to the roof.

A different family lived here now, yet the verandah, garden, alley all beckoned to Mira, claiming her as their own. After all these years, the pull was still elemental, a dull ache that started under her left breast and ended with a sharp tug at her navel.

They had spent many afternoons here, her brother and she - swapping stories, chasing iridescent dragonflies, playing make-belief. Afternoons filled with games, now long forgotten. She could still hear her brother's laugh floating out to her, his childish voice insistent, "Didi, Didi."

Two little girls were playing hopscotch in the alley, jumping from square to square etched into the dry earth. The pattern was familiar to Mira; she had played many games of *Kith-kith* right here. One of the girls looked up at Mira curiously; Mira waved at her. The girl smiled shyly and looked away quickly.

Mira's thoughts drifted back through time – what was it, a couple of decades now?

At ten in the morning, the air was already shimmering on the asphalt – a foretaste of temperatures to follow. Nine-year-old Mira stood on the verandah, watching the teenagers

who had gathered to play cricket in the alley. Sweat glistening on their eager faces and shirts plastered to their backs, they concentrated on setting the wickets. The heat was no deterrent on this first day of vacation; later in the season, better sense would prevail.

The alley bridged the main street and a wide unpaved back alley. An open gutter, lined with cement, ran along the side of the alley. The drain roiled with rainwater during the monsoons - that day, just dust and a few dry leaves adorned its base. The main street was used by the *babus* in their cars and scooters; the maids used the back alley, often gathering for a chat between chores. A cow and half a dozen chickens, owned by the Bakshis, also roamed the back alley.

Theirs was an industrial township where farm animals and fowl were forbidden. That did not deter the Bakshis; they let out their cow and chickens at sunrise, herding them back at dusk. They shared fresh eggs and milk with neighbors.

Some afternoons, if you followed the sound of excited voices, you might see the cow with one end of a dress in her mouth, the other end still on the clothesline, and a maid swearing as she attempted to free the garment. Yet so compelling was the lure and goodwill of free milk and eggs, no one reported the Bakshis.

In early spring, for an entire week, the children took over the alley for Saraswati puja. Most in their mid-teens, they congregated after school to construct the *pandal*, using bamboo and rough twine made from coconut husks. Later, they would drape a luxurious cream cloth with a gold border over the structure, string lights along the entry, and the abode would be "almost ready" for the Goddess.

Mira would watch them build the *pandal*, peering out of her bedroom window well past midnight, longing to be part of the elite group. She watched them hide behind the *pandal* and

smoke - a single cigarette passed from scissored fingers to lips, a deep puff, and on to the next set of outstretched fingers and another set of lips. Watching this secret ritual made her feel like she was a member of the group; she belonged.

Abhishek was Mira's favorite. A *para* legend, he consistently sent the cricket ball outside the perimeter of the park. He never failed to yell out a greeting to Mira or ruffle her hair when he walked past, arrogant in his teenage swagger. Unknown to him, she had decided she was going to marry him. Then last Saraswati puja, she saw Abhishek with Keka, chatting behind the *pandal*. A subdued Mira refused dinner that night, much to her mother's vexation; she went to bed early and did not watch the final decorations go up.

Today, the cricket game in progress held Mira's undivided attention.

The alley was the perfect size for a cricket pitch, the front yards of surrounding homes making up the cricket field. Typically, they would have played in the community park, but the older teenagers had commandeered it that day. Mira sat astride the wall in their yard, her legs dangling, a perfect view of the pitch. She was too young to play, but she lent her vocal support, copying the cries and gestures of the older children.

The game started well, the batting team amassing fours and sixes quickly. The air ruptured with "Howzzat" at frequent intervals. Now, in the sixth over, the game had slowed after the second batsman struck out. Mira's mother had already brought out *aam pora sharbat* for the group. The concoction was supposed to protect against the heat.

Mira's attention was waning - she climbed off her perch and stood at the front of the alley. Her gaze searched out Abhishek leaning on a neighbor's gate. Automatically her eyes went to the bowler - Keka. Keka and the runner stood with their backs to the back alley. Mira saw the Bakshis' cow turn the corner from the back alley. The cow's horns were enormous, curving

into wickedly-pointed tips - heat rising off the horns.

Unnoticed, the beast was lumbering threateningly towards the pitch.

Mira watched in fascination as it approached, refusing to yell out a warning, her imagination running amuck in anticipation. She was silent as the beast walked up behind Keka, stayed quiet when Keka stepped back in preparation to build momentum for the ball, and froze when Keka backed into it.

The beast, surprised at the unexpected intrusion, swung its head, hooking Keka's dress in its horns, inadvertently trapping Keka between their pointed tips. It jerked its head to remove the unwanted weight and flung Keka high. Keka flew seven feet through the air and landed with an ominous thud, a limp ragdoll. The sound reverberated in the alley, echoing off the walls of houses. Someone cried out in anguish, but Mira's eyes gleamed as she watched the ground under Keka's head turn damp with blood.

The beast, free of the immediate threat, continued to advance. Mira stepped back, carefully maintaining a safe distance, her eyes peeled unwaveringly on the beast. Suddenly she found herself sprawled on the ground, her left leg wedged in the gutter, a full eighteen inches below her right.

A chorus of "Mira" pierced her ears minutes before she was surrounded by children. Through the donut hole of concerned faces above her, she saw a lone, wispy cloud float across the sky. With one palm braced against the dry dirt, she quickly pushed herself off the ground. Her knees and thighs were bruised, angry streaks of blood bright against the scratches. She straightened her dress; it had ripped where it caught between her body and the ground. Ma will be angry, she thought in dismay, her eyes shut tightly, as she brushed the dirt off her knees.

When she opened her eyes, she saw the cow standing a few feet from the bowler's wicket; it

had stopped in surprise at the flurry of agitation. Mira guiltily searched the ground where she had last seen Keka; it was dry, a uniform dusty brown, with no sign of Keka.

The children continued to fuss over her. Through the haze in her eyes, she saw Keka bent over near her leg. "Hush, don't cry Mira, hush" she said while wiping the blood streaks on her knees. Abhishek stood in the circle around her.

Mira shrugged off their concern, straightened her spine, and held up her head. The game resumed; she stayed by the wall, dazed, humiliated, blinking away tears, one eye on the cow, another firmly on Keka.

The cow sat tamely, its mouth moving in contemplation, its ear twitching occasionally to flick an invisible fly, its horns harmless. Had she really imagined everything - in such vividness? She must have, for Keka was standing by the pitch, hunched, positioned to snap up the ball as it ricocheted off the bat.

The sun crept along the sky; the game was almost over. Mira watched Grandmother

Bakshi turn into the alley, her gait uneven from years of arthritis, hands clutched around a bundle of hay. "Karma, Karma," Mira heard her call to the cow.

Mira came back to the present with a jolt. She had kept the incident secret all these years – shameful, dark, safe.

Because exactly a year after the game, Keka had been gored by a cow while visiting a temple with her mother. She had barely survived, needing stitches along the back of her head, where it had hit the dirt road. Onlookers reported that the ground under Keka's head had turned red.

Over the years, similar events had dogged Mira, but this here was ground zero.

***Tanima Bhadra** is a graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, and has spent most of her career in computer chip design. She is currently pursuing her interests in business and investments. She divides her time between Newcastle and Southern Oregon.*

Answers to India 75th Independence day Quiz

1. Hemis National Park
2. 1911
3. Pir Panjal
4. Smiling Buddha
5. Aryabhatta
6. Dadabhai Naoroji
7. Kunchikal Falls
8. 1984
9. E. Sreedharan
10. Jim Corbett
11. Dhola-Sadiya Bridge/Bhupen Hazarika Bridge
12. Salim Ali
13. Mundak Upanishad
14. Vikram Sarabhai
15. Vikrant
16. Chandigarh
17. Buddhadeb Guha
18. Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy
19. Pather Panchali
20. UNESCO World Heritage Sites

Mammogram: Is It Really Needed in an Asymptomatic Woman?

As a sequel to last year's write-up on screening colonoscopy, this year I am explaining the usefulness of another screening test to detect breast cancer in women – a mammogram. I hope this brief write-up will help the audience to understand the purpose of this screening test, and they will consider taking advantage of this screening test. Let us begin.

What is a screening test?

As the name suggests, a “screening test” detects a health abnormality at an early stage of the disease when there are no symptoms present. The main objective of a screening test is early detection of a disease, so that clinicians can intervene in the disease at its infancy and STOP the disease progression. The implementation of this screening test in the western world helped to detect different cancers at a much earlier stage compared to resource-poor countries, which in turn decreased death rates from different cancers. Breast cancer is a good example in this regard. The recommendation for all screening tests is provided by U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF).

A mammogram is a screening test to detect breast cancer at its early stage so that appropriate treatment can be offered to the patient to stop its progression, and in some cases the disease can be removed completely. A large study has shown that women who received periodic screening mammogram have dramatic reduction (~40%) in breast cancer-related death within 10 years and a substantial reduction (~25%) in the rate of advanced

breast cancer compared to those who did not receive screening mammogram.

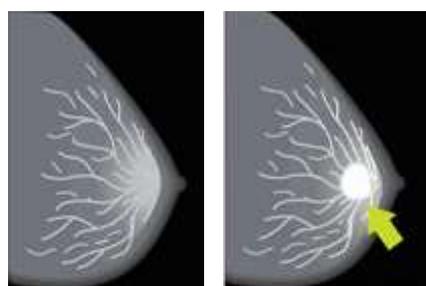
What is a mammogram?

The word ‘mammary’ means breast or milk secreting organ. Mammography (procedure) or mammogram (report) is the process of taking images of breast (mammary) using X-rays. It is a specialized X-ray designed for breast only and uses less radiation compared to conventional X-rays. This procedure is not painful but may cause a little uneasiness for some, but the benefits of detecting something serious in its early stage outweigh the minimal discomfort.



What does a mammogram detect?

Abnormality in the breast can be detected by mammography. “Abnormality” does not necessarily mean cancer. The abnormalities exist in a range from benign (non-cancer) to malignant (cancer). If the abnormality is concerning for cancer, clinicians recommend doing a biopsy of the abnormal area to make a confirmed diagnosis. Pathologists see the biopsied tissue under a microscope and make the final diagnosis (benign or cancer).



Normal

Abnormal

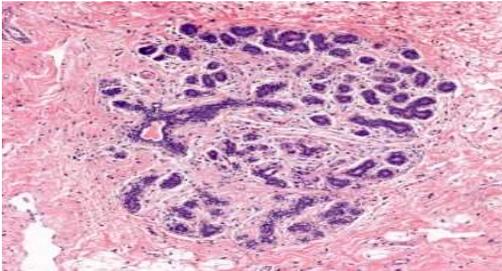


Biopsy

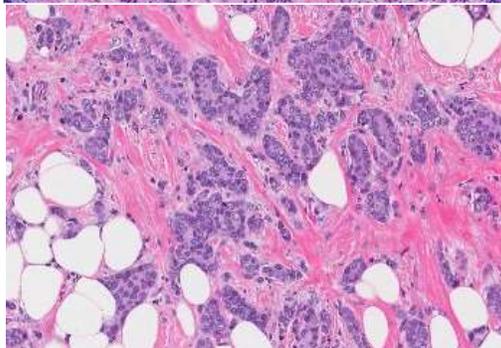
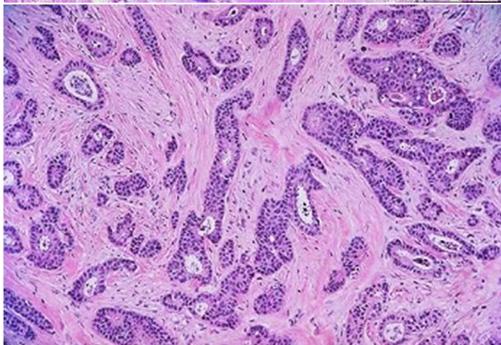
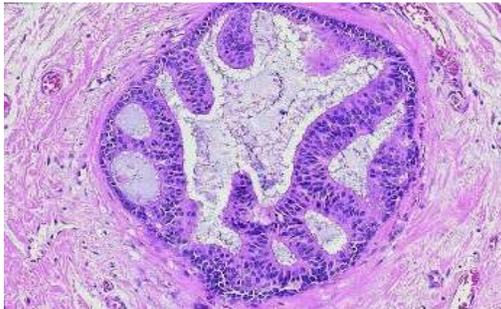


What does the cancer look like under microscope?

Breast cancers have multiple subtypes based on the morphology/architecture seen under microscope. In the simplest term, cancer cells look more complex (bigger, darker, haphazardly arranged, crowded etc.) when compared to normal/benign cells.



Normal



Cancer

When to start mammography?

Per the guideline from USPSTF, women aged 50 to 74 years old and at average risk for breast cancer should get a mammogram every 2 years. Women aged between 40 to 49 years old should talk to their doctor about when to start and how often to get a mammogram. If risk factors of breast cancer (family history, genetic susceptibility, obesity, hormonal therapy, etc.) exist, a mammogram can be considered at an earlier age based on discussions with your physician.

I am doing self-breast examination (SBE), do I still need to go for a mammogram?

Monthly SBE is a good way to notice any change which can be seen or felt during the examination. It is important, but it does not replace the need for screening mammography.

Key facts about breast cancer:

1. second-most common cancer in women.
2. ~1 in 8 U.S. women (~13%) has a chance of developing invasive breast cancer over the course of her lifetime.
3. Most diagnosed cancer in American women, the prediction is ~30% of all newly diagnosed cancers in women will be breast cancer.
4. One of the few cancers which has a very good outcome (survival rate) if detected in its early stage, emphasizing the utility of screening mammogram.

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Addicted to Your Screen?

A lot of parents must be wondering why kids are so hooked on tech. Searches for device addiction have gotten worse in the past five years, as have searches for social media addiction. Surprisingly, phone addiction and social media addiction are similar, especially for young teens who probably aren't playing word games on their phones, they're on social media. And according to a growing number of studies, it's looking like more and more kids and teens are getting too addicted. What is even more concerning is the fact that this addiction could lead to some mental health problems.

If one day we were all to give up our phones, most teens/people wouldn't know what to do with their free time. We have been so addicted to our phones that it has become our life. Scrolling through Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and more has been our life. Forty-eight percent of people use their phones 3-5 hours a day scrolling through social media and believing in anything they see. That is wasting 544 hours a year or 42,432 hours of an average life span.

However, not all social media is mind-controlling and bad. You can find some useful and resourceful stuff on the web and learn many great things. But spending more than 4+ hours a day on social media is addictive and is something to get rid of. Remember you only have one life, and one life is enough if you live it well.

Sanjoli Ray is a 6th grader in Folsom, CA.



Recipe Of Vegetable Chicken

Ingredients: 1 lb boneless chicken, 1 medium bell pepper, half carrot, half medium onion, 2 florets of cauliflower, green beans, chopped ginger, chopped garlic, 1 tablespoon garlic paste, 1 tablespoon ginger paste, 2 tablespoons tomato puree, soya sauce, black pepper, salt, sugar, 3 tablespoons white oil, 2 tablespoons corn flour, ¼ cup milk, 1 large egg and 1 egg white.

Preparation Time: 30 minutes

Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Process: First dice the chicken and all the vegetables. Then, marinate the chicken with soy sauce, garlic paste, ginger paste, salt, pinch of sugar, black pepper, red pepper, tomato puree, one egg and one tablespoon cornflower for an hour. The next steps are:

- Heat a pan with 2 tablespoons of oil and add all the marinated chicken to it.
- Cook the chicken, with the lid on, for 10 mins. If needed add some water. After that, take the chicken out of the pan.
- Add one tablespoon of oil to the pan. Throw in chopped ginger and garlic and toss for 2/3 seconds.
- Add all the diced vegetables and sauté for 3/4 minutes. Add onion and sauté all of them for one more minute.
- Add adequate salt (as per your taste) and the half-cooked chicken. Toss for two more minutes.
- Add water and let it boil for ten minutes.
- In the meantime, pour milk into a bowl; add corn flour, egg-whites and beat them.
- After ten minutes, add the mixture to the pan and boil for a few more seconds.
- Turn off the stove and cover the vegetable chicken for five minutes.
- Finally, serve the chicken with fried rice / chow mein or have it as a stew. Always serve hot.

What Is in a Logo?

The summer in Kolkata is hot and humid. The streets remain almost empty in the afternoons. People avoid outdoor activities. On such a hot and humid afternoon in May 1897, around 40 people gathered at the house of Balaram Bose in the Bagbazar area of North Kolkata. Swami Vivekananda, who had returned from the West just a few months ago, convened a meeting of the monastic and lay devotees of Sri Ramakrishna. It was Friday, May 1, 1897. Swamiji was staying at Balaram Bose's house at that time.

Swamiji gave a short talk inspiring the assembled devotees to form an organization. He said that after having traveled different parts of the world, it was his firm conviction that "no good thing can be done without organization." That is what he saw in the West, the power of organization. He urged the group to form an Association, which would be "named after him, in whose name, indeed, we have embraced the monastic life, with whom as your Ideal in life you all toil on the field of work from your station in family life." Swamiji, of course, was referring to Sri Ramakrishna. The meeting ended at that: the name of the proposed organization was not decided yet, nor was its objective. Swamiji was throwing some ideas.

After that meeting, Swamiji had to confront some of the devotees, including his monastic brothers, who had doubts about the need for an organization and whether it would be in line with Sri Ramakrishna's ideals. Swamiji convinced them all, and they got onboard.

They met again at the same place after five days on Wednesday, May 5. They decided that the name of the organization be "Ramakrishna Mission." They discussed, among other things, its object, mission, method of work, work in India, and work outside India. Swami Vivekananda was elected its General President.

It is important, for our purpose, to look closely at the object of the organization: It had a two-fold objective: "(i) To propagate the principles

propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and illustrated in his own life for the benefit of humanity, and (ii) to help humankind in the practical application of those principles to their spiritual, intellectual, and physical needs."

Four Yogas

Now, the question is: What are the "principles propounded by Sri Ramakrishna and illustrated in his own life"? Sri Ramakrishna illustrated many spiritual principles in his life: He demonstrated that it is possible to realize God, that God-realization is the ultimate purpose of human life, and that all religions are different paths to reach the same goal, and so on. Among these principles, which ones were Swamiji referring to? Alternatively, which ones were uppermost in his mind? Most importantly, what were the spiritual principles that the members of the organization should aspire to?

Swamiji rarely spoke publicly about Sri Ramakrishna in the West. He, however, gave two talks on Sri Ramakrishna in 1896, one in New York and the other in London. These two talks were clubbed and published as "My Master" in the Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda. In that lecture, he says that "A man may be intellectual, or devotional, or mystic, or active; the various religions represent one or the other of these types. Yet it is possible to combine all the four in one man, and this is what future humanity is going to do. That was his (Sri Ramakrishna's) idea." (Emphasis added). Let us note that Swamiji thought that a combination of four yogas would be "what future humanity is going to do", and "that was Sri Ramakrishna's idea."

We notice the same emphasis on combining four yogas in the guiding principles for the monks that Swamiji framed in 1898. The monastery was then situated in Nilambar Babu's Garden House in Belur (Belur Math was yet to come up). Swamiji, while forming the rules to guide the life of the monks, emphasized

that "the object of this Math is to form characters combining Jnana, Bhakti, Yoga, and Karma."

Then, in January 1900, during his second visit to the United States, Swamiji gave two talks on Universal Religion in Universalist Church, Pasadena, Southern California. In these two talks, Swamiji spoke about a future religion that would be universal in its scope, acceptable to all, and resonate with all. Swamiji tells his audience that the closest ideal of a universal religion is a combination of four yogas which "will be the ideal of the nearest approach to a universal religion. Would to God that all men were so constituted that in their minds all these elements of philosophy, mysticism, emotion, and of work were equally present in full! That is the ideal, my ideal of a perfect man... To become harmoniously balanced in all these four directions is my ideal of religion." (Emphasis added)

Thus, we see that, according to Swami Vivekananda, who understood Sri Ramakrishna the best, Sri Ramakrishna's idea of religion was the integration of the four yogas. According to Swamiji, this should also be the guiding principle of the life of the monks who are at the core of the Ramakrishna Mission. Furthermore, according to him, that was his ideal of religion, and that is what the future humanity is going to do. Indeed, the integration of four yogas lies at the heart of the Ramakrishna Movement.

The Logo

That is what the logo of the Ramakrishna Mission symbolizes. Swami Gambhirananda, in his book History of the Ramakrishna Math and Mission, observes that "After the Math and the Mission had their men, money, programme, rules and actual work, another thing that caught Swamiji's attention was to devise an emblem that would tell the public at a glance of the ideas behind the twin institutions and also remind the Math and Mission members of the goal they were called upon to attain. The emblem, in short, was to

depict Shri Ramakrishna's message in a visual form". (Emphasis added)



The Logo of Ramakrishna Mission

That visual representation, the logo, came into existence casually one July morning in 1900 in New York during Swamiji's second visit to the United States. "At that time, the Vedanta Society of New York was definitely established and occupied a modest house in Fifty-eighth Street," writes Laura Glenn (later Sister Devamata), "... the Swami was sitting at the breakfast table one morning when the printer arrived. He said he was making a circular for the Society and wished to have an emblem to go on it. Could the Swami suggest something? Swamiji took the envelope from a letter he had just received, tore it open, and on the clean inner surface drew the waves, the Swan, the lotus, and the sun circled by a serpent... He threw the bit of paper with the design on it across the table and said, 'Draw it to scale.' Henry van Hagen, the printer, was an able draftsman as well as a printer. He converted the rough sketch into a finished drawing."

Swamiji's instantaneous logo drawing suggests that the integration of four yogas as the ideal of Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission was sitting at the back of his mind for a long time. It only needed an urgency to express.

Soon after designing the logo, he wrote to Josephine MacLeod on July 24, 1900, explaining, for the first time, the ideas behind the logo: "The sun = Knowledge. The stormy

water = Work. The lotus = Love. The serpent = Yoga. The swan = the Self. The Motto = May the Swan (the Supreme Self) send us that. How do you like it?"

Swami Vivekananda explains the symbolism of the logo in more detail to artist Ranadaprasad Das Gupta, at Belur Math in 1901, after his return to India: "The wavy waters in the picture are symbolic of Karma; the lotus, of Bhakti; and the rising-sun, of Jnana; the encircling serpent is indicative of Yoga and the awakened Kundalini Shakti, while the Swan in the picture stands for the Paramatman (Supreme Self). Therefore, the idea of the picture is that, by the union of Karma, Jnana, Bhakti, and Yoga, the vision of the Paramatman is obtained."

The logo also has an inscription at its bottom: tanno hamsaḥ pracodayāt, "May the Paramatman, Supreme Self, [symbolized by] the Swan (hamsa), awaken our [higher] understanding." Let us not forget that this inscription is part of a longer mantra called paramahamsa gāyatrī: om hamsāya vidmahe, paramahamsāya dhīmahi, tanno hamsaḥ pracodayāt. "We know the Hamsa to be identical with Paramatman. Knowing thus, we meditate on the Paramahamsa, the supreme Swan, which is none other than the Paramatman. May that Swan direct us to the supreme goal."

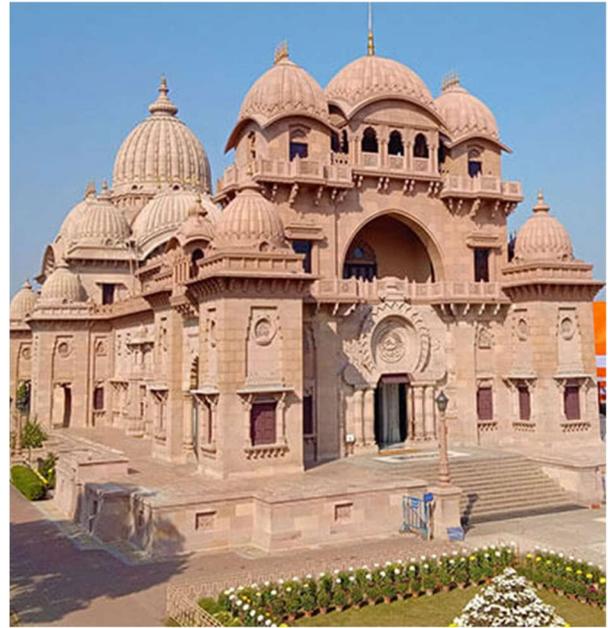
Interestingly, the people of then Calcutta knew Sri Ramakrishna by the name "Paramahamsa" because he was initiated into the Paramahamsa class of Sannyasins, monks. In fact, he was more popular by the name "Paramahamsadev" than by Sri Ramakrishna. Does the Great Swan of the logo, then, represent Sri Ramakrishna? Was it in Swamiji's mind when he drew the logo?

Who can tell!

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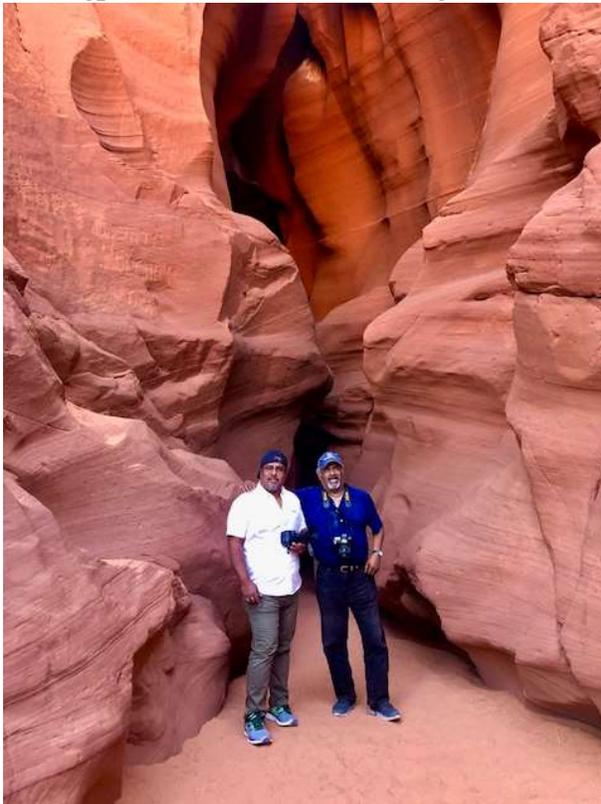
Swami Ishadhyanananda is Assistant Minister of the Vedanta Society of Sacramento, CA.



A Journey to the Canyons

Due to significant geological phenomena over millions of years, America has some of the most awesome canyons in the west – they are a photographer’s paradise.

So, when my IIT Kharagpur friend Subhajit “Bhoba” Roy Chowdhry (not related) called me from Bangkok wanting to go for a road trip through the canyon lands, I was all for it and ready to go. Bhoba came into Sacramento, and after a round of parties with many IIT Kharagpur friends, it was time to go.



Subhajit and me

We took the flight from Sacramento to Salt Lake City, where our rental 4-wheel drive SUV was waiting. Without delay, we started to go across Utah for our first stop at Moab. Utah has some of the best roads, so the drive was long but pleasant. After checking into our hotel, we went straight to Arches National Park to do some photography in the dusk light; the great

arches silhouetted against brilliant stars made it a beautiful subject to capture. Although technically difficult, we applied our camera’s long exposure capabilities to create some memorable photographs.

The next morning after breakfast, we set out for our next destination - Monument Valley NP. There is just one hotel inside this National Park run by the Native Americans. All rooms in the hotel face the sunrise to allow great photography of the towering buttes silhouetted against the rising Sun.



Sunrise Monument Valley

After our great photography session in the morning, we set out for Page, Arizona, to visit the Antelope slot canyon. Over centuries a river has cut through the mountains to create the slot canyons. This is a must-visit destination for photographers to capture the fantastic light and shade play inside the canyon.

After a great dinner and restful stay at Kanab, it was time to leave early in the morning for Zion National Park and then onto Bryce National Park.

We photographed Bryce at sunset as well as sunrise. The rock formations offer great

opportunities for creating compositions in the camera.



Shimmering rocks – Antelope Canyon

From Bryce, it was an easy drive back to Salt Lake City airport and a flight back to Sacramento. The beauty of the canyons will always stay in our memories and in the photographs we captured.

Shyamal Roy was born in Old Delhi in India and is a graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur. He studied photography under various masters in Paris, France, and attended the Nikon School of Photography.



Bryce Canyon

33G Notebook: Chongqing, China

33G is a travel notebook... penned by the author for Chowrongee since 2005. This edition of 33G Notebook covers Chongqing, which the author was fortunate to visit with his wife in 2016.

Chongqing (pronounced Chong-shing) is a mid-size city in southwestern China. While most (first-time) travelers to China visit Beijing or Shanghai, Chongqing is the first city which my wife Supriya visited in China. It was hosting the Chinacom conference in September 2016, where I was invited to be a Plenary Speaker by Professor Nigh-Hai Bai of Chongqing University of Posts and Telecom. Ning-Hai was a visiting researcher in my lab at UC Davis for a year in the past.

Chongqing has many similarities with San Francisco, according to the locals. It has hilly terrain, with significant water bodies; and it is home to many leading Information Technology (IT) companies such as IBM, Honeywell, Deloitte, among others.

Chongqing is located at the confluence where the Jialing River dumps its waters into the Yangtze, a river which has fascinated me from high-school geography. The Yangtze flows very fast here. You might have heard of the Three Gorges, which are downstream on the Yangtze, and enjoyed by tourists on riverboat cruises. Their beauty, history, and geography are captured in the Three Gorges Museum in Chongqing, which we got a chance to visit.

Chongqing is in Sichuan Province, whose bigger and more famous city is Chengdu, home of the pandas. The Sichuan cuisine is very hot and spicy, with hot pot being a major dish; but my host Ning-Hai wouldn't let me try it because of its spiciness. During our weeklong visit, Ning-Hai took us sightseeing to several interesting places.

Dazu Caves

Dazu Caves are located about 100 km west of Chongqing. Our Chinese tour guide, "Daisy," showed us various Chinese religious sculptures and carvings at this UNESCO World Heritage Site. The carvings date back to the 7th century AD, showing the influence of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist beliefs. I was particularly fascinated by the Bodhisattva and Amitabha rock carvings of Buddha's incarnations... to see these Indian names I am familiar with in the middle of rural China!

A museum at Dazu Caves showed how the art of rock carvings traveled over the centuries, from Elephanta, Ajanta, and Ellora Caves (in India) to Bamiyan Caves (in Afghanistan) to various other locations in China. A huge Buddha sculpture used to exist at the Bamiyan Caves... but, sadly, "before" and "after" photos showed how the Taliban destroyed the famous Buddha.

Wulong

The Wulong Karst National Geology Park was the site for another day trip. Located about 170 km east of Chongqing, it is also a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site. Our tour guide this time had a more-interesting name, "Zero". Walking through the large park, one can enjoy several karst landscapes – gorges, natural bridges, caves, and underground streams. The park's three karst environments, each formed separately, are awe-inspiring. (Karst is a type of landscape where the dissolution of the bedrock creates sinkholes, sinking streams, caves, etc.).

Wulong is particularly famous for shooting of the film *Transformers*. After an early dinner, we enjoyed an outdoor, holographic light-and-sound show on Wulong's history.

Tailpiece

The end of any wonderful trip makes one a bit sad. But our sadness was shortlived, as our

next stop on this trip was Kolkata... to enjoy Durga Puja in the City of Joy after many, many years!



Fast-Flowing Yangtze River, and a Cruise Ship.



An Ancient Village at Wulong Park.



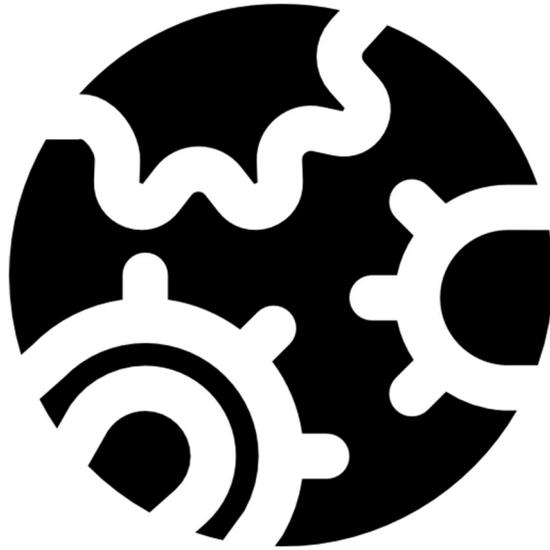
Is that a sword? (With Ning-Hai Bao at Wulong.)



Stone Carving in Dazu Caves.

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বিবিধ
Miscellaneous



ব্যাকরণ-বিভ্রাট

[বাংলা ব্যাকরণ ও বাঞ্চারা নিয়ে কিছু ভাবনা, কিছু প্রশ্ন]

১. অকারাদি বিপরীতার্থক শব্দ

বিশেষ্য, বিশেষ্যের বিশেষণ কিংবা ক্রিয়াবিশেষণের আগে 'অ-' (অথবা শব্দটি নিজে স্বরবর্ণ দিয়ে শুরু হ'লে 'অন') ভাগটি জুড়ে দিয়ে তার বিপরীতার্থক শব্দ গড়ার রীতি সংস্কৃতে ও সেইসূত্রে বাংলাতেও আছে – এই শব্দগুলি হয় নঞতৎপুরুষ নয়ত নঞার্থক বহুব্রীহি সমাস-নিষ্পন্ন); অধিকাংশ ক্ষেত্রেই মূল শব্দ ও তার এই অকারাদি বিপরীতার্থক শব্দ উভয়ের ব্যবহারই চোখে পড়ে। যেমন, কাজ-অকাজ (বিশেষ্য), গভীর-অগভীর (বিশেষণ), দূরে-অদূরে (ক্রিয়াবিশেষণ) ইত্যাদি। তবে সব শব্দের এইধরনের বিপরীতের প্রয়োগ দেখা যায় না আর সেটি খুবই স্বাভাবিক -- কোন প্রাণী বিড়াল না হলে বা কোন বিড়াল বিড়ালের মত আচরণ না করলে তাকে 'অবিড়াল' বলা ব্যাকরণসম্মত (ও যুক্তিসঙ্গত) হতে পারে, তবুও কাউকে বলতে শুনি নি (শুধু 'অমানুষ'ই শুনেছি); 'বৃদ্ধ' বলতে আপত্তি থাকলে 'বয়স্ক', 'বয়োজ্যেষ্ঠ', 'বর্ষীয়ান', 'প্রবীণ' ইত্যাদি বলা হয়, কেউ 'অতরুণ' বলে না; কোন ঘটনার পূর্বাভাস পাওয়া গেলে বলা হয় না যে সেটা 'অহঠাৎ' ঘটেছে।

কিন্তু খেয়াল করেছেন কি -- বাংলায় এমনটা আকছার হয়ে থাকে যে, মূল শব্দটা তেমন পাত্তা পায় না অথচ তার অকারাদি বিপরীতার্থক শব্দের বাজার সরগরম? খেয়াল করে না থাকলে এখন করুন, কয়েকটা উদাহরণ দিচ্ছি।

সাদাসিধে মানুষকে আমরা 'অমায়িক' বলি তো? তাই বলে কারো কৌটিল্য-কাপট্যের প্রমাণ পেলে কি তাকে 'মায়িক' বলবেন? নাকি সমুদ্র অগাধ, তাই হাঁটুজলের 'ছোট নদী'-টাকে 'গাধ' -- কিংবা 'নদী' ক্রীলিঙ্গ বলে 'গাধা' -- বলবেন? [সংস্কৃতে 'গাধ' শব্দটি 'অগভীর জলমগ্ন স্থান' এই বিশেষ্য রূপে ও 'অগভীর' এই বিশেষণ রূপেও ব্যবহৃত হয়।

আবার ধরুন ঘোষবাবুর ছেলে ডাক্তারি বা ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং বা ম্যানেজমেন্ট পাশ করলে তিনি কিন্তু কখনই বলবেন না, "আমার ছেলেটা একটা আস্ত পদার্থ!"

'আবিল' শব্দের অর্থ কলুষিত, অপবিত্র ইত্যাদি -- আমরা কিন্তু নির্মল অর্থে 'অনাবিল' কথাটি ব্যবহার করে থাকি (যেমন -- একটি কুকুরছানা কে আদর করে যে আনন্দ হয়, তাকে আমরা অনাবিল আনন্দ বলতে পারি) কিন্তু তার বিপরীত অর্থে 'আবিল' কথাটি ব্যবহার করি না (যেমন -- সেই কুকুরছানাটির উপর অত্যাচার করে কেউ যদি আনন্দ পায়, সেই আনন্দটিকে পৈশাচিক বা বিকৃত বললেও সচরাচর আবিল বলি না)।

একইভাবে 'অবদ্য' বলতে নিন্দনীয়, দোষযুক্ত বোঝায়, তবে আমরা কেবল কোনকিছুর ভূয়সী প্রশংসাই করে থাকি 'অনবদ্য হয়েছে' ইত্যাদি বলে।

আর সবশেষে ভাবুন যে, আমি নেটফ্লিক্সে কোন শিশুতোষ কার্টুন ফিল্ম দেখছি, এমন সময় আমার কোন (কাল্পনিক) বন্ধু ফোন করে বাইরে কোথাও একসঙ্গে আনন্দ করতে যাওয়ার প্রস্তাব দিল, আর আমি তাকে "না রে! এখন হবে না -- আমি ল্যাপটপে অত্যন্ত শীল একটি ছায়াছবি দেখছি!" বলে প্রত্যাখ্যান করলাম -- সেই বন্ধু কি আমার কথা আক্ষরিক অর্থে গ্রহণ করবে নাকি সেটিকে আমার অপকর্মের শ্লেষাত্মক স্বীকারোক্তি ধরে নিয়ে মুখ টিপে হাসবে? (বস্তুত 'অশীল', 'অশীলতা', 'শীলতাহানি' প্রভৃতি নেতিবাচক শব্দে ছাড়া 'শীল'-কে বাংলায় পাওয়া যায় কি?)

এই ব্যাপারটি আপনারও অভূত লেগে থাকলে, আর অন্য কোন উদাহরণ জানা থাকলে বা মাথায় এলে অবশ্যই জানাবেন -- আমি অবাধিত হব না!

২. যিনি দেন করেন তিনি '-দ'

মেঘ জল দেয় বলে আমরা যখন মেঘকে 'জলদ' বলে থাকি, তখন যিনি বল দেন তাঁকে 'বলদ' কেন বলা যাবে না? প্রয়োগের উদাহরণ: ধরুন আপনি কর্মক্ষেত্রে এতটাই উন্নতি করেছেন যে আপনার জন্য একটি সংবর্ধনা-সভার আয়োজন করা হয়েছে, আপনাকে বক্তৃতাও দিতে হবে সেখানে। পরিবারের উদ্দেশ্যে ধন্যবাদ জানানোর সময়ে আপনি আবেগমথিত কণ্ঠে বলতেই পারেন, "আজ এই জায়গায় পৌঁছানোর জন্য যে মানসিক বলের প্রয়োজন হয়, তা আমি আমার স্বামীর কাছ থেকেই পেয়েছি -- (প্রথম সারিতে উপবিষ্ট স্বামীর দিকে অশ্রুসজল দৃষ্টিপাত ক'রে) আমার স্বামীই আমার সবচেয়ে বড় বলদ!"

৩. চার চর

নদীতে পলি পড়ে পড়ে ছোট দ্বীপের মত যে ঈষৎ উন্নত ভূমিখণ্ড তৈরি হয়, তাকে বাংলায় 'চড়া' বা 'চর' বলে; আবার স্থানবাচক বা কালবাচক শব্দের পরে 'চর' বসলে 'ভ্রমণকারী/বিচরণকারী' বোঝায়, যেমন জলচর, বনচর, নিশাচর ইত্যাদি। তাহলে যে বা যা চড়ায় ঘুরে বেড়ায়, তাকে 'চরচর' কেন বলা যাবে না?

সেখানেই থেমে থাকা কেন? একজন গুপ্তচর যদি জলাভূমি, নদীতীর প্রভৃতি স্থানে ঘটমান ঘটনাবলীর উপর নজর রাখার উদ্দেশ্যে কোন উদ্ভিদ-সমাকীর্ণ চড়াকে গা-ঢাকা দেওয়ার কাজে ব্যবহার করেন, তাঁকে 'চরচরচর' বলা উচিত কি-না?

আর পাঁচজন হয়ত এখানে এসেই ক্ষান্ত দেবে, কিন্তু আমিও যদি তাই করি, তাহলে আমার এতদিনের সংস্কৃতচর্চা যে বৃথা হবে! সংস্কৃতে 'ভূতপূর্ব' অর্থে বিশেষ্য বা বিশেষণের পরে 'চর' অংশটি বসে (এটি ইংরেজি ex- শব্দাংশের সমার্থক); যেমন ধরুন, 'অধ্যাপকচর' মানে প্রাক্তন অধ্যাপক, 'আচ্যচর' মানে যে আগে বড়লোক ছিল। এই নিয়ম বাংলায় লাগাতে যদি বিশেষ্য আপত্তি না থাকে, তাহলে উপরিউক্ত গুপ্তচরবাবু অবসর নেওয়ার পর হয়ে যাবেন একজন 'চরচরচরচর'!

আজকের চরচরচরচরচা এখানেই সমাপ্ত হোক!

৪. দ্বিত

বাংলায় আভাস বোঝাতে প্রায়ই শব্দের দ্বিত ব্যবহৃত হয়। যেমন ধরুন 'কুকুরটাকে বাঘ-বাঘ দেখতে': এতে কিন্তু বোঝাচ্ছে না যে কুকুরটিকে দুটি বাঘের সমান দেখতে (কিংবা একটি বাঘেরও সমান দেখতে), বরং এটাই বোঝাচ্ছে যে প্রাণীটির কুকুরত্ব অবিসংবাদিত হলেও তার মধ্যে কিছু-কিছু ব্যাঘ্রসুলভ বৈশিষ্ট্যও দৃশ্যমান। আবার ধরুন 'গা বমি-বমি করা' বা 'জুর-জুর ভাব' বলতে যথাক্রমে বমি ও জুরের পূর্বাভাসই বোঝায়, আধিক্য নয়।

এই রীতির যৌক্তিকতা নিয়ে যতই প্রশ্ন তোলা যাক না কেন, এতদিন ধরে চলে আসছে (এবং বিশেষ কেউ এই নিয়ে মাথা ঘামাচ্ছে বলে মনে হয় না) যখন, তখন সামাজিক বিবর্তনের সঙ্গে তাল মিলিয়ে নতুন নতুন ক্ষেত্রে এর প্রয়োগ করতে ক্ষতি কি? উদাহরণ: আপনাকে আপনার প্রণয়ীর সঙ্গে কোন চৈনিক ভোজনালয়ে বসে নির্বিবাদে সচিঙ্গত ভূষ্টভক্ত ভক্ষণ করতে দেখার পর কোন অতিকৌতুহলী মাঝবয়সী কাকিমা/মাসিমা/কাকাবাবু গল্পচ্ছলে যদি জিজ্ঞেস করেন, 'ও কি তোমার বর?', তবে আপনি লাজুক হাসি হেসে উত্তর দিতেই পারেন, 'নাঃ! বর-বর।

৫. সম্বন্ধসূচক উত্তরপদ

বাংলা-সহ বেশ কিছু ভারতীয় ভাষায় মানুষের নামের শেষে এমন কিছু শব্দ বা শব্দাংশ জুড়ে দেওয়ার চল আছে, যা বক্তার সঙ্গে নির্দিষ্ট ব্যক্তির পারিবারিক বা সামাজিক সম্পর্কের সূচক। যথা, অগ্রজস্থানীয় ব্যক্তির নামের পরে 'দা'/দি', খুল্লতাতস্থানীয় পুরুষের নামের পরে 'কাকু', কন্যস্থানীয় নামের পরে 'মা' ইত্যাদি (অবশ্য দেবদেবীর উল্লেখ বা সম্বোধনের ক্ষেত্রে 'বাবা' ও 'মা' নামের আগেই স্থান পায়, কিন্তু সে-সব দুর্ভাগ্য অধ্যাত্মিক তত্ত্ব আজ থাক)। কখনো খেয়াল করেছেন কি যে, বাংলায় এমন বেশ কয়েকটি নাম আছে, যা এই রীতির সংসর্গে শ্রোতার মনকে সংশয়ের ঘূর্ণাবর্তে নিষ্ক্ষেপ করতে পারে? কেউ কেউ যে করেছেন তা আমি জানি, কিন্তু আরও অনেকের এই গুরুতর সমস্যা সম্পর্কে অবহিত হওয়া আশু প্রয়োজন বলে মনে করি।

আমি নিষ্ঠাবান শাক্তবাড়ির ছেলে, তাই প্রথমেই মা তুলি। "শ্যামা-মা কি আমার কালো রে?" – এই বিখ্যাত শ্যামাসঙ্গীতটি প্রথমবার শুনে আমার মনে হয়েছিল যে, গায়িকা পূর্ববঙ্গীয় টানে (অর্থাৎ অনভিজ্ঞ পশ্চিমবঙ্গীয়রা সমগ্র পূর্ববঙ্গে যে একটিমাত্র উচ্চারণের ধারা আছে বলে কল্পনা করে নিয়ে নিজেদের শ্রেষ্ঠত্ব বিষয়ে সুনিশ্চিত হন, সেই ধারার অনুবর্তন করে) 'সে'-র উচ্চারণ 'স্যা' করছেন, আর তাঁর 'সে মামা'র গাত্রবর্ণ বিষয়ে জনমত তলব করছেন। ভেবেছিলাম কি আশ্চর্য! আপনার কোন মামা কালো কোন মামা ধলো তা আপনি জানেন না? দৃষ্টিশক্তি যদি নাও থাকে, নিজের আত্মীয়দের জিজ্ঞেস করে নিলেই তো হয়! দূরদর্শনে এসে, এত দরদ দিয়ে গেয়ে-গেয়ে, নিজের উচ্চারণ-সৌষ্ঠব ও বোধশক্তি দুয়েরই অভাব এভাবে রাষ্ট্র করার কোন মানে হয়? বলাই বাহুল্য যে, শেষমেশ বোকাটা আমিই বনলুম। কিন্তু এই ভুল-বোঝার দায় কি আমার একার?

তারপর ধরুন 'অণিমা' নামটি – এটি বাংলার একটি সুপ্রচলিত নাম। এবার ধরুন অণিমাদেবীর বর্ষীয়ান জ্যাঠামশাই, যাঁর সেবাশুশ্রূষা অণিমাদেবীই করে থাকেন, কোন এক বিশেষ প্রয়োজনে তাঁর ভাইঝিকে 'অণিমা-মা! অণিমা-মা!' বলে ডাকছেন। আপনার তো মনে হতেই পারে যে, আসন্ন মৃত্যুর আবেশে ছন্মতি বৃদ্ধ তাঁর এমন এক লোকান্তরিত মামাকেই উচ্চরবে আহ্বান করছেন, যাঁর ডাকনাম ছিল 'অণি'। আর আপনার মন যদি কুসংস্কারাচ্ছন্ন হয়, তবে বুড়োমানুষকে মরা মানুষের নাম ধরে ডাকতে শুনে আপনার কতরকম প্রতিক্রিয়াই না হতে পারে, বলুন দেখি!

মায়ের পরে এবারের বোনের পালা। ধরুন আপনি আপনার মেয়ের একটু সেকলে একটা নাম রাখলেন – শারদী। সেই মেয়ে বড় হলে তাকে বয়ঃকনিষ্ঠরা যখন 'শারদীদি! শারদীদি!' বলে ডাকবে, তখন কোন তৃতীয় ব্যক্তি তার নাম না জানলে ভাবতে পারেন যে, তাকে কোন-একটি কাজ সেের ফেলার সনির্বন্ধ অনুরোধ ('সার দিদি!') বারবার জানানো হচ্ছে – প্রকারান্তরে তার দীর্ঘসূত্রতার বিরুদ্ধেই ধ্বনিত হচ্ছে মৃদু প্রতিবাদ! একেলে নাম রেখে পার পাবেন ভাবছেন? 'আনিয়া-দি! আনিয়া-দি!' শুনলে কেউ আপনার মেয়ের সম্পর্কে খারাপ কিছু ভাববে না হয়ত, তবে সম্বোধকের প্রতি বিরূপ হয়ে উঠতে তো পারে – মনে করতে পারে যে, কাউকে কোন প্রয়োজনীয় বস্তু এনে দেয় বলে সেই ব্যক্তির অহংকার হয়েছে, আর তার 'আনিয়া দিই!' চিৎকার সেই অহংকারেরই চক্কানিনাদ!

আমাদের দেশে, যেখানে প্রত্যেক নারীকে দেবীর আসনে অধিষ্ঠিত করা হয়, সেখানে প্রাণভরে বিষোদ্যকার করতে হলে কেবলমাত্র নারীদের (উদ্দিষ্ট ব্যক্তি পুরুষ হলে তাঁর আত্মীয়দের, আর নারী হলে আত্মীয়দের সঙ্গে তাঁকেও) লাঞ্ছিত করেই ক্ষান্ত হওয়ার সুপ্রাচীন প্রথা চলে আসছে বটে; কিন্তু আমি যেহেতু নিজের প্রগতিশীলতা ও মানসিক উদার্যকে সপ্রমাণ করতে চাই, সেহেতু এবার বাংলা পুরুষ-নামের দিকেও অভিযোগের তীর তাক করব। এই প্রসঙ্গে সবার আগে অবশ্যই রামনাম মাথায় আসে – তবে 'রামদা'-কাটারির তত্ত্ব অনেকের কাছে আগেই ধরা দিয়েছে বলেই জানি, তাই এটিকে আমার স্বকীয় উপলব্ধি বলে দাবি করতে পারি না। এই শ্রেণীরই আরেকটি নাম হল 'অনাদি'। আমার এক স্বপীয় মেসোমশাইয়ের এই নাম ছিল, মা কোন এক পারিবারিক আড্ডায় 'অনাদিদা এই, অনাদিদা তাই' বলে স্মৃতিচারণা করছিলেন; অনেকক্ষণ শোনার পর আমার এক ভাগ্নে জিজ্ঞেস করেছিল, 'কোন দিদা?' কিন্তু আমার মতে সে সম্পূর্ণ নির্দোষ।

এখন পর্যন্ত এই কটি উদাহরণই আমার চেতনার মর্মমূলক নাড়া দিয়েছে। এমন আরো কত চোরকাঁটা যে আমাদের সাধের বাংলাভাষার পুষ্পমালধে গা ঢাকা দিয়ে রয়েছে, তা কে বলতে পারে? হয়ত একদিন লঘুগুরুজ্ঞান বিসর্জন দিয়ে ইংরেজিভাষীদের মত আমরাও সর্বক্ষেত্রে সকলের ভালো নামটুকুই ব্যবহার করব (নিজের বাবার কথা বলতে হলেও তাঁরা অনেকসময় 'মাই ফাদার' ইত্যাদি না বলে সরাসরি বাবার নামোল্লেখ করেন, আর পিতামহীসমা অধ্যাপিকাও প্রথম পরিচয়েই তাঁকে 'জুডি-সম্বোধনের আজ্ঞা দিয়ে নবাগত 'সংস্কারী' ছাত্রকে ধর্মসংকটে ফেলে দেন)। কিন্তু যতদিন তা না হচ্ছে, পাঠকদা ও পাঠিকাদিদের শ্রীচরণে ততদিন এই নাম-সমস্যা সম্পর্কে সজাগ থাকার মিনতি জানিয়ে আমার এই অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ জনশিক্ষামূলক প্রবন্ধ শেষ করছি।

৬. '-ইক'

বিজ্ঞান যাঁদের অধ্যয়ন-অধ্যাপনা-গবেষণা প্রভৃতির বিষয়, তাঁদের আমরা বৈজ্ঞানিক বলি।

সাহিত্য-রচনায় পারদর্শী যিনি, তিনি সাহিত্যিক – বিশেষত উপন্যাস লিখে ছাপালে তিনি ঔপন্যাসিক।

সংবাদ আহরণ ও উপস্থাপন যাঁর পেশা, তিনি সাংবাদিক।

কিন্তু যিনি মালা গাঁথেন, তাঁকে আমরা 'মালিক' বলি না।

যিনি বিয়ের তত্ত্ব সাজান, তাঁকেও 'তাত্ত্বিক' বলি না।

যিনি আমসত্ত্ব বানান, তাঁকেও 'সাত্ত্বিক' বলি না।

যিনি পাঠশালা, পাহুশালা, যজ্ঞশালা, অশ্বশালা, হস্তিশালা প্রভৃতি পরিকল্পনা বা নির্মাণ করেন, তাঁকেও 'শালিক' বলি না।

কেন এই বৈষম্য?

৭. '-এল' প্রত্যয় ফেল

বিশেষ্য থেকে বিশেষণ (বা অন্য বিশেষ্য পদ) উৎপত্তির ব্যাখ্যা দেওয়ার জন্য বাংলা ব্যাকরণে যে-কটি প্রত্যয় স্বীকৃত হয়েছে, '-এল' তাদের অন্যতম ('-ওয়ালা' শব্দাংশটিকে অথবা সংস্কৃত '-ল' শব্দাংশটিকে এর উৎস বলে মনে করেন পণ্ডিতরা)। এই প্রত্যয়-নিষ্পন্ন একাধিক শব্দের সঙ্গে আপনি হয়ত নিজের অজান্তেই সুপরিচিত।

যে চোর সিঁদে (/সিঁধ) কেটে ঘরে ঢোকে, তাকে আমরা 'সিঁদেল' (/সিঁধেল) চোর বলি না? আর যে গরু দুধ দেয়, তাকে 'দুধেল গাই' বলা হয় শুনে থাকবেন। তেমনি 'হিম' থেকে 'হিমেল' অর্থাৎ শীতল ('হিমেল হাওয়া'); 'ফুল' থেকে 'ফুলেল', যার অর্থ পুষ্পসুলভ-গন্ধবিশিষ্ট ('ফুলেল তেল') অথবা পুষ্পময় ('ফুলেল ফাগুন' – কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম)।

এবার কিছুক্ষণের জন্য '-এল' ফেলে 'আঁতে ঘা লাগার/দেওয়ার' কথা ভাবুন, যার অর্থ আত্মসম্মানে অথবা মর্মস্থানে (বাক্যদ্বারা) আহত হওয়া/আঘাত হানা। এই বাধারার 'আঁত' কথাটি কেউ বলেন এসেছে সংস্কৃত 'অত্র' শব্দ থেকে (আক্ষরিক অর্থ 'নাড়িভুঁড়ি', যার সম্প্রসারণ করলে 'অভ্যন্তরস্থ স্পর্শকাতর স্থান' এইরকম একটি আলংকারিক অর্থ দাঁড় করানো যেতে পারে), আবার কেউ বলেন 'আত্মা' থেকে এসেছে। সে যা হোক, এটা তো মানতে হবে যে যার যা নেই তাকে তাতে ঘা দেওয়া অসম্ভব; একজন মানুষকে তো ফুলকোয়, কানকোয় বা লেজায় আঘাত করা যায় না, কারণ তার সেই অবয়বগুলি অবিদ্যমান।

অতএব কারো কথায়-কথায় আঁতে ঘা লাগলে বুঝতে হবে যে তার আঁত জিনিসটি ভালরকম রয়েছে। তাহলে কথায়-কথায় যার আঁতে ঘা লাগে, তাকে 'আঁতেল' কেন বলা যাবে না?

৮. Dysphemism

কোন অপ্ৰীতিকর বিষয়বস্তু কোমলতর পদ বা পদসমষ্টির দ্বারা প্রকাশ করাকে ইংরেজিতে যেমন euphemism বলে, তার বিপরীত প্রক্রিয়াকে বলে dysphemism। বাংলা ভাষায় প্রথমটির উদাহরণ 'কৃষ্ণপ্রাণি' (=মৃত্যু), 'মায়ের দয়া/কৃপা' (=বসন্তরোগ) ইত্যাদি;

দ্বিতীয়টির উদাহরণের তালিকাও খুব-একটা ছোট নয়: অক্লা পাওয়া (=মৃত্যু), গতর (=দেহ), ভাতার (=স্বামী), ধুমসো (=মোটো) – ঈষৎ শ্রুতিকটু থেকে শুরু করে একান্ত অকথা এমন কতই না চমৎকার শব্দ ও শব্দসমষ্টি এই তালিকার অন্তর্ভুক্ত!

বলাই বাহুল্য যে, শিষ্টভাষায় dysphemism-এর চেয়ে euphemism-কেই বেশি দেখা অথবা শোনা যায়, এমন-কি এমন সব ক্ষেত্রেও euphemism ব্যবহারের চল আছে যেখানে ভাব বা ভাষার কোন নিকৃষ্টতা আদৌ নেই। আর বাংলাভাষীরা তো euphemism গড়ার একটা সহজ-সরল পন্থা বহুদিন আগেই আবিষ্কার করে ফেলেছে: ইংরেজি অনুবাদ। গেঁটে বাতকে arthritis, rheumatism ইত্যাদি বললে সেটা হঠাৎ বড়লোকি ব্যারাম হয়ে যায়; উকিলের চেয়ে advocate-এর আইনব্যবসায় পারদর্শিতা বেশি; আর নিজের বৈবাহিক সম্পর্ক নিয়ে কথা বলায় যে মহাপাপ আছে, তার লঘুকরণ হয় স্বামীকে husband আর স্ত্রীকে wife বলার মাধ্যমে।

কিন্তু দুঃখের বিষয়, dysphemism গড়ার তেমন কোন সহজ বা জনপ্রিয় পদ্ধতি নেই, থাকলেও আমার জানা নেই। অথচ গায়ের ঝাল ঝেড়ে মন হালকা করার মত অত্যন্ত গুরুত্বপূর্ণ উদ্দেশ্য সাধনের ক্ষেত্রে dysphemism বা সে-জাতীয় কটুকথার যে একটি বড় অবদান রয়েছে, সেটা তো না মেনে উপায় নেই! তাই বাংলার সুপ্রচলিত শব্দগুলির সমপর্যায়ের dysphemism রচনার গুরুদায়িত্ব আমি নিজের কাঁধে তুলে নিয়েছি।

শুরু করা যাক পদ্মাফুল দিয়ে। বাংলায় তথা প্রাচ্যের অন্যান্য বহু অঞ্চলে পদ্মের সাংস্কৃতিক গুরুত্বের কথা সুবিদিত। পদ্মা পাঁকে ফোটে – এই বৈশিষ্ট্যের ভিত্তিতে সংস্কৃতে ফুলটির বহু কাব্যিক নাম রচনা করা হয়েছে, যার মধ্যে অন্তত একটি বাংলায় বহুল প্রচলিত – নামগুলি হল পঙ্কজ, পঙ্করুহ, পঙ্কজনানু, পঙ্করুহ প্রভৃতি। পাঁক ফুঁড়ে ওঠে বলে পদ্মকে 'পাঁকফোঁড়' বলা চলে ('ভুঁইফোঁড়' দ্রষ্টব্য) – আর শব্দটি শ্রুতিকটুও বটে, অতএব এটিকে পদ্মের dysphemism হিসাবে স্বীকৃতি দিতে কারও আপত্তি থাকা উচিত নয়।

আপনি হয়ত বলবেন, 'পদ্মা' শব্দটির dysphemism-উদ্ভাবন পণ্ডিতমাত্র, এর কোন উপযোগিতাই নেই। তাই যদি বলেন তো আমিও আপনার বিরুদ্ধে পাল্টা অভিযোগ করব কল্পনাশক্তিহীনতার। ধরুন, আপনার কোন অপ্ৰিয়পাত্রের চেহারাটি নিখুঁত সুন্দর, পদ্মের সঙ্গে তার মুখের তুলনা দেওয়া আদৌ অভ্যুক্তি নয়; কিন্তু সে-কথা স্বীকার করতে আপনার হাড়পিঁপ্তি জ্বলে যায়। এবার যদি কেউ আপনার কাছে জানতে চায় সেই ব্যক্তিকে কেমন দেখতে আর আপনি মিথ্যাও বলতে চান না, আবার গায়ের ঝালও ঝাড়তে চান, তাহলে একই ঢিলে দুই পাখি মারতে পারেন এই বলে: "তার চোপাটা পাঁকফোঁড়পানা!"

৯. ধ্বনিপরিবর্তন

তৎসম শব্দ থেকে খাঁটি বাংলা শব্দ গঠনের ক্ষেত্রে বেশ কিছু সুবিদিত ধ্বনিতত্ত্বের নিয়ম কার্যকর হয়।

যেমন, নাসিককীভবনের মাধ্যমে পাই 'বন্ধন' থেকে 'বাঁধন', 'রন্ধন' থেকে 'রাঁধন' ইত্যাদি।

আবার ধ্বনিলোপের (বস্তুত, শব্দের আদিস্থিত যুক্তাক্ষরের আদিব্যঞ্জন লোপের) মাধ্যমে আসে 'স্পর্শ' থেকে 'পরশ' (এখানে অবশ্য স্বরভক্তিও আছে), 'স্পষ্ট' থেকে 'পষ্ট' ইত্যাদি।

কিন্তু এই দুই নিয়ম একত্রে খাটিয়ে 'স্পন্দন' থেকে 'পাঁদন' পাওয়া যায় না।

কেন এই বৈষম্য?

প্রয়োগের উদাহরণ: আপনাকে দেখলেই আমার আঁতরের পাঁদন বেড়ে যায়!

[‘আঁতর’ মানে অন্তর সেটা আশা করি না বললেও চলত।

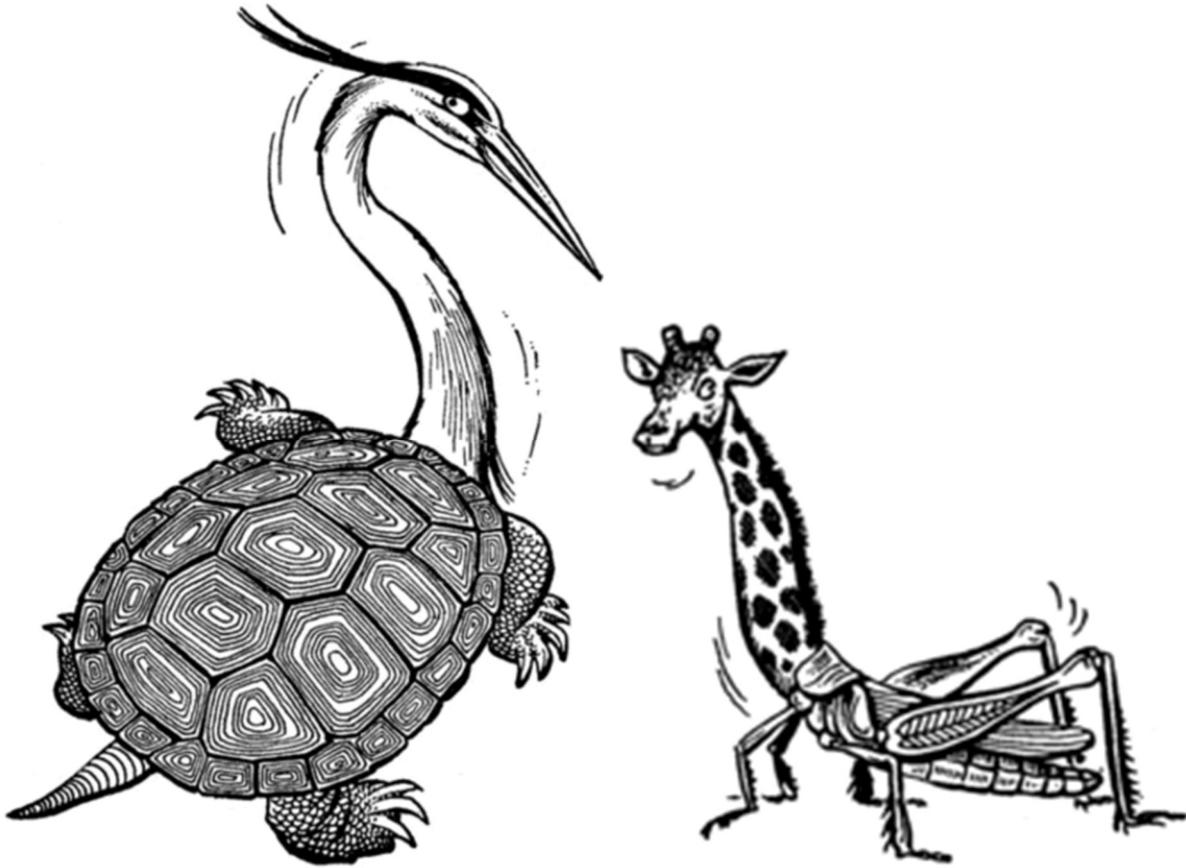
১০. আইবুড়ো নয়

যার বিয়ে হয়ে গেছে, তাকে আমরা বিবাহিত/বিবাহিতা বলি তো? কিন্তু বিবাহিতের এক প্রতিশব্দ আছে যা আমরা সচরাচর ব্যবহার করি না: ব্যুঢ়।

এই ব্যুঢ়-রই বিপরীতার্থক শব্দ অব্যুঢ়, যা থেকে সুপ্রচলিত আইবুড়ো কথাটি এসেছে। আইবুড়ো-ভাতের পোশাকি নাম 'অব্যুঢ়ান্ন', শুনে থাকবেন।

কিন্তু আমি বিবাহিত অর্থে 'ব্যুঢ়' শব্দটির ব্যাপকতর ব্যবহারের ডাক দিতে চাই। যেমন ধরুন, "অধিকাংশ হিন্দুস্থানি পুরুষ পঁচিশ বছরের মধ্যেই ব্যুঢ় হয়ে যায়", কিংবা বিয়েবাড়িতে কবজি ডুবিয়ে খেয়ে-দেয়ে ফিরে আসার সময় কনের বাবাকে বলা যেতে পারে, "আপনার মেয়ে ব্যুঢ় হয়েছে দেখে আমি ভারি খুশি হয়েছি।"

লেখক যাদবপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের বৈদ্যতিন ও দূরসংযোগ-সংক্রান্ত প্রকৌশল বিভাগের স্নাতক। তারপর মার্কিন যুক্তরাষ্ট্রের সেন্ট লুইস-স্থিত ওয়াশিংটন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে পরিগণক-বিজ্ঞানে পি.এইচ.ডি. উপাধি অর্জন করে, সিঙ্গাপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে আড়াই বছর অতিবাহিত করার পর বর্তমানে মিশিগান বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে সহকারী গবেষকরূপে কর্মরত।



Glimpses of Utsav Youth Group Activities

In 2009, Utsav's youth volunteer group was formed by Dr. Mitra Choudri to do charitable deeds. Since then, the youth group has held fundraisers, raised awareness, organized clothing drives, and other youth initiatives. These activities help develop positive experiences, social skills, and volunteering opportunities among the youth. In recent years, Dr. Sangita Biswas and Mrs. Rupa Chowdhury have been leading the youth group's activities. In 2021-2022, the Utsav youth group donated to "Project Breathe", ran a donation drive for Afghan refugees, hosted lunch for women and child residents of St. John's Program for Real Change, and donated essentials to Ukrainian Refugees through the House of Bread and World Relief Organization. Recently, the Utsav Youth Volunteer group held A Musical Evening, a concert fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. The event was a great success with more than 250 spectators at the Folsom City Hall. It raised several thousands of US dollars for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. From the money raised, Utsav Youth Volunteers pledged to donate \$364 for Prasad during Durga Puja.

Project Breathe

In March 2021, India was hit hard by COVID-19's second wave and the health system infrastructure crumbled. There was a lack of resources in India during this time. The Utsav Youth Group helped address the issue by raising money for a charity called Project Breathe, which bought oxygen concentrators and, breathing stations, and funded COVID-19 response initiatives for hospitals in rural parts of India. One oxygen concentrator which could serve around 10 patients at a time costs around \$500. The need for these medical supplies was high, and Utsav stepped up to help.

Utsav's Youth Volunteers contributed to the effort by initiating a graduation-lei fundraiser to raise funds and awareness in the Sacramento community. For this fundraiser, individuals would hand-weave and decorate personalized

leis. They came in the color of the graduate's school to add to the school spirit! Through our (Youth Volunteers) fundraiser, we raised \$1,450. We sold 72 leis to 50 different families in three weeks. The money went through Project Breathe and was used to install oxygen concentrators in the suburbs of West Bengal in India. Many families were able to get this access to critical support, thanks to Utsav's contributions which totaled \$15,000.

For details, please visit:

<https://www.utsavsac.org/utsav-charity-project-breathe>



Youth Volunteers:

- Esha Banerjee (Lead)
- Dayita Biswas
- Shriya Banerjee
- Siddhartha Dey
- Rishan Dey

Adult Volunteers:

- Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)
- Rupa Chowdhury (Coordinator)
- Snigdha Banerjee
- Poulami Chatterjee
- Manjula Dey

Afghan Donation Drive

In August 2021, the United States anticipated welcoming 75,000 Afghan Refugees evacuated under humanitarian parole. Over 5,000 refugees were expected to come to the Sacramento area. The San Juan Unified School District welcomed Afghan students and their families. They set up new programs to collect donations for these Afghan families.

Utsav's Youth Group set up a donation drive to help San Juan Unified support the incoming refugees. This drive aimed to collect essentials and clothing to help with resettlement. Utsav's Youth Group and adult members generously donated to this cause. During Utsav's 20th anniversary celebration of Durga Puja, we promoted the drive and had a drop-off donation box. In addition, during Juliette Gordon Low's Birthday (the founder of Girl Scouts), girl scouts from Troop #1290 made donations, which were given to the San Juan Unified School District to distribute to members of the Afghan community affected by the crisis. We hope this effort will allow hundreds of refugees to feel more at home in Sacramento. The drive was concluded on October 31, 2021, because we had amassed a surplus of donations. On that day, the youth volunteers gathered to celebrate the success!



Youth Volunteers:

- *Esha Banerjee (Lead)*
- *Sonia Sarkar*
- *Aayan Banerjee*
- *Shriya Banerjee*
- *Siddhartha Dey*

- *Rishan Dey*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)*
- *Rupa Chowdhury (Coordinator)*
- *Poulami Chatterjee*
- *Mitra Choudri*
- *Adi Choudri*
- *Santana Das*
- *Rashmi Nandi*
- *Somen Nandi*
- *Hem Sarkar*
- *Manjula Dey*
- *Snigdha Banerjee*

Holiday Donation to St. John's Program for Real Change

St John's Program for Real Change supports formerly homeless women to break the cycle and build a new life for themselves and their children. The Program provides the essential tools to change the trajectory of their lives through a comprehensive residential program!

On January 8, 2022, Utsav Youth Group Volunteers, under guidance of adult members, visited St. John's Shelter to support families by donating \$500 and bringing cookies, chocolates, and fruits! A portion of the money was raised through the sale of Utsav T-shirts during Durga Puja 2021. Volunteers also received an orientation and tour of the facility.

Youth Volunteers:

- *Esha Banerjee*
- *Sonia Sarkar*
- *Shriya Banerjee*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)*
- *Mitra Choudri*
- *Somen Nandi*
- *Sanjib Sarkar*
- *Sharod Nandi*
- *Sunoy Nandi*
- *Brandon Mathew*
- *Tanima Bhadra*



Donation to Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services

Utsav donated \$1,000 to Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services on November 24, 2021, to help families during Thanksgiving.



Arts and Craft Fair

To raise funds for incoming initiatives, such as hosting a lunch for St. John's Program for Real Change and support for Ukrainian refugees, we repeated the graduation-lei fundraiser which was used for Project Breath in 2021. This year, Utsav's Youth Volunteers held several meetings in which they produced leis and made promotion plans. Thanks to the hard work of all

the volunteers, \$1,902 was raised and 102 leis were sold to families all around Sacramento.

Utsav Youth Volunteers had a booth during the Arts and Crafts Fair to fundraise for St. John's Program for Real Change and provide aid for the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. It was held on May 14, 2022, at North Natomas Regional Park, Sacramento. Our booth advertised and sold graduation leis created by youth and adult volunteers. Volunteers also sold artwork from India created by Pala Khastagir and hand-painted pots by Santana Das.

The fair was attended by many Utsav members and the Natomas community. Money raised at the fair (\$467), in addition to that raised during the graduation-lei fundraiser, will be used to help incoming Ukrainian families and host a lunch at St. John's Program for Real Change.

Youth Volunteers:

- Esha Banerjee (Lead)
- Sonia Sarkar
- Shriya Banerjee
- Aayan Banerjee
- Siddhartha Dey
- Rishan Dey
- Aayush Ghosh
- Srija Bhowmik
- Evani Paul
- Siddharth Ray
- Sanjoli Ray
- Sarthak Dutta
- Semely Ghosh

Adult Volunteers:

- Rupa Chowdhury (Coordinator)
- Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)
- Snigdha Banerjee
- Hem Sarkar
- Santana Das
- Trina Ghosh
- Manomita Patra
- Poulami Chatterjee
- Manjula Dey
- Pala Khastagir



St John's Program for Real Change Lunch Service

The St. John's Program for Real Change lunch service is another successful event that Utsav Youth Group participated in. St. John's is a program supporting women and children who are combating abuse, homelessness, and poverty. The program uses a rehabilitative system, offering a variety of services such as therapy and counseling to help families get back on their feet.

On June 25, 2022, volunteers at this event donated groceries and collectively made lunch for approximately 75 people. Food such as salad, chicken, fruit, and cupcakes were served. Snigdha Banerjee donated the salad kit, while Hem Sarkar and Manomita Patra, donated the fruits. The provision of these types of lunches and dinners everyday can be difficult; however, the event has provided financial relief and helped St. John's provide food for many people.



Youth Volunteers:

- *Sonia Sarkar (Lead)*
- *Esha Banerjee (Lead)*
- *Shriya Banerjee*
- *Aayan Banerjee*
- *Aayush Ghosh*
- *Siddhartha Dey*
- *Nirvik Basuroy*
- *Samriddhi Majumdar*
- *Eshani Majumdar*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)*
- *Snigdha Banerjee*
- *Hem Sarkar*
- *Trina Ghosh*
- *Manomita Patra*
- *Saumen Dey*
- *Suchanda Majumdar*
- *Sudeshna Basuroy*

World Relief Donation

The Utsav Youth Group also raised numerous donations for World Relief Sacramento. The organization is committed to helping refugees. Volunteers collected and bought various necessities such as toiletries and bedding and organized a drop off on July 16, 2022. At World Relief Sacramento, volunteers received a brief overview of how refugees set up their lives once they reach Sacramento. The Youth Group was successful in bringing a large amount of donations that were used to welcome refugees and aid them in starting their new lives.



Youth Coordinators:

- *Esha Banerjee*
- *Shriya Banerjee*
- *Aayan Banerjee*
- *Siddharth Ray*
- *Srija Bhowmik*
- *Evani Paul*
- *Nirvik Basuroy*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)*
- *Snigdha Banerjee*
- *Joydeep Ray*
- *Manomita Patra*

House of Bread Donation

The House of Bread Church is another organization committed to aiding refugees, especially ones escaping the war in Ukraine. Many people who attend the church have family and friends who are refugees, so the organization aims to raise donations for those who can settle in the United States. Volunteers collected necessities for this event on July 22, 2022, to donate to incoming refugees. Church leaders educated the volunteers on what refugees escaping the war face, and how they can settle in a new country. A large amount of donations was collected during this event which is now used for refugees coming with limited supplies from Ukraine.

Youth Volunteers:

- *Esha Banerjee (Lead)*
- *Aayush Ghosh (Lead)*
- *Siddhartha Dey (Lead)*
- *Sonia Sarkar*
- *Shriya Banerjee*
- *Aayan Banerjee*
- *Nirvik Basuroy*
- *Samriddhi Majumdar*
- *Anaisha Mitra*
- *Eshani Majumdar*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Rupa Chowdhury (Coordinator)*
- *Snigdha Banerjee*
- *Hem Sarkar*

- *Trina Ghosh*
- *Manomita Patra*
- *Manjula Dey*
- *Suchanda Majumdar*
- *Sudeshna Basuroy*



Musical Evening:

Utsav Youth Volunteers organized and participated in was “A Musical Evening”, which was a concert fundraiser for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. It was hosted on August 14, 2022, at Folsom City Hall.

This event included a special performance by Pandit Binay Pathak from Sohini Music Academy, along with many other talented performers presenting various acts.

There was a spectacular show of Indian classical dance performances, as well as songs sung in English, Hindi, and Bengali. Various musical instruments such as the piano, guitar, and sitar were played by youth artists.

Youth Volunteers:

- *Samriddhi Majumdar (Organizer and Lead)*
- *Sonia Sarkar*
- *Esha Banerjee*
- *Srija Bhowmik*
- *Aayush Ghosh*
- *Nirvik Basuroy*
- *Shriya Banerjee*
- *Aayan Banerjee*

Adult Volunteers:

- *Sangita Biswas (Coordinator)*
- *Snigdha Banerjee*

- *Hem Sarkar*
- *Trina Ghosh*
- *Manomita Patra*
- *Suchanda Majumdar*
- *Sudeshna Basuroy*

Performers included Pt. Binay Pathak, Samridhi Mazumdar, Shohini Chakrobarty, Srija Bhowmik, Nirvik Basuroy, Suhaan Devavarapu, Urshita, Ikshita, Ayigiri Nandini, Ria Vallurupalli, Rayna Vallurupalli, Rewa Vallurupalli, and various other artists.

This is the first time in Utsav history that Youth Volunteers along with Utsav adults raised over \$16,000 (in 2021) and \$5,000 (till August

2022), that's totalling over \$21,000 (2021-22) solely for charitable causes. We are thankful to all the donors, volunteers, and you. Please stay tuned for upcoming charitable activities.

Esha Banerjee is a resident of Natomas, California, and a sophomore attending Mira Loma High School. She is an active volunteer in the Utsav Youth Group, leading and participating in several initiatives.

Sonia Sarkar is currently a senior at Oak Ridge High School, located in El Dorado Hills, California. She participates in and leads various volunteering events in the Utsav Youth Group and outside of it as well.



Brief History of Utsav

“Utsav is a nonprofit, charitable organization promoting Indian/Bengali culture in Sacramento Valley. Utsav was founded in 2002, with one goal: creating a positive and enjoyable experience of friendship, happiness, charity, and harmony via our Indian/Bengali heritage. Although Utsav is predominantly a Bengali organization so far, we want to reach other communities as well. Membership in Utsav is not limited to any particular race, religion, color, or ethnic origin. Utsav believes in inclusion and in working together for the community.”

A Chronicle of the Utsav Bengali Diaspora

In the late 1970s / early 1980s, long before Utsav was formed, there were only a handful of Bengalis in the Sacramento / Davis area. Some of them who (along with their families) went on to become active Utsav members with unwavering support include Prodyot and Srilekha Bhattacharya, Satya and Pat Chatterjee, Subhrendu Kar, among others.

The mid-to-late 1980s saw the arrivals of the families of Barin and Anima Kumar, Biswanath and Supriya Mukherjee, Adi and Mitra Choudri, among others, to expand the Utsav Bengali Diaspora.

Before Utsav, these Bengali families would host Saraswati Puja annually by rotation in their homes. This Puja would be performed by the Head Swami from Vedanta Temple (1337 Mission Ave., Carmichael, CA), viz. Swamis Sradhhananda and Pramathananda in the past; and later by Swami Prapannananda, who continues to perform Utsav's Saraswati Puja to this date. For Durga Puja, these Bengalis would travel to Bay Area for Prabasi's Puja (which was then the only Durga Puja in Bay Area); later, Sanskriti started its Durga Puja, and today there are a dozen or so Durga Pujas in Bay Area. The Vedanta Temple, which was started in the late 1950s, also served as a meeting place of the Bengalis to celebrate various events in the Vedanta calendar.

The late 1990s, particularly due to the IT industry boom and Y2K issues, saw a huge expansion in our region's Bengali diaspora. The sheer weight of our community – with the old timers joining hands with the relatively-new arrivals (such as Deb Saha, Udayan Chanda, Somen Nandi, and Joy Mukherjee who went on to become Utsav Presidents) – dictated that we get organized with objectives stated above.

In July 2002, Utsav was officially formed. We celebrated our first Sharodotsav in October 2002,

with our dear friend Ramen Chakraborti as priest. Even before Utsav (as well as afterwards), Ramenda and Archana Boudi would travel to the various Bengali homes to conduct Satyanarayan Puja and other events as well as officiate Bengali weddings in our community. Participation in Sharodotsav 2002 was outstanding, and the joy was boundless. With time, the Utsav tree has expanded, the bonds among families have grown deeper, and the baton of responsibility has transferred to other able hands.

Utsav members include nearly 100 families, from which several individuals are elected every two years to serve as officers. (For the first few years, our elections were held annually.) So far, many of our members have ably served our organization with the leadership of our following Presidents:

- 2003: Arijit Chattopadhyay
- 2004: Udayan Chanda
- 2005: Mitra Choudri
- 2006: Biswanath Mukherjee
- 2007: Dipankar Chattopadhyay
- 2008: Deb Saha
- 2009: Adi Choudri
- 2010: Sharmila Mukherjee
- 2011-12: Joy Mukherjee
- 2013-14: Ajay Joshi
- 2015-16: Sanjib Nayak
- 2017-18: Rajat Saha
- 2019-20: Joydeep Ray
- 2021-22: Somen Nandi

Our Community Activities

We organize several annual events: Sharodotsav; Bosontotsav; Festival of color (Holi), Annual General Meeting (AGM) + Picnic; etc. Our events enjoy strong participation from our children and their friends. Our next generation – for whom exposure to Indian/Bengali culture is invaluable – is very active in our youth programs, charitable activities, cultural events, literary activities, and prayer for global peace. It is gratifying to note that many of our young members, even after going to college, still come back for our community events and look forward to attending them.

Examples of our activities include:

- High-quality production of our Annual Magazine, **Chowrongee** (please visit our

website for archives), thanks to Past and Present Editors: Dilip Roychowdhury, Arun Das, Rashmi Nandi, Manas Ray, Avishek Nag, Rajat Saha, and Mainak Banga.

- Cultural Program productions, as part of different local and international charities, Sharodotsav, Bosontotsav, Anandamela, India Day, North American Bengali Conference (NABC), Bay Area Natya Mela (Drama/Play Shows), California State Fair.
- Promotion of Indian music and culture by showcasing the work of external artists. Our Past Sharodotsav External Artists include the following famous performers:
 - **Mala Ganguly (2002)**
 - **Lopamudra Mitra (2003)**
 - **Antara Chowdhury (2003)**
 - **Bhoomi (2004)**
 - **Rezwana Chowdhury Banya (2004)**
 - **Somdatta Basu (2005)**
 - **Utpalendu Chowdhury (2005)**
 - **Nachiketa (2006)**
 - **Sougata Ganguli (Sarod) (2006)**
 - **Jojo (2007 and 2016)**
 - **Anup Ghoshal (2007)**
 - **Raghab Chatterjee (2008)**
 - **Suchismita Das (2008)**
 - **Shubhomita (2009)**
 - **Arnab Chakrabarty (2009)**
 - **Kaya (2010)**
 - **Tanusree Shankar and Troup (2011)**
 - **Aneek Dhar and Anwasha (2011)**
 - **Parnava (2013)**
 - **Cactus (2016)**
 - **Abanti (2016)**
 - **Kinjal (2017)**
 - **Madhubanti and Dipayan (2018)**
 - **Sourendro and Soumyojit (2019)**
 - **Omkara (2019)**
 - **Dohar (2022)**

Youth / Charitable Activities

Utsav has organized several youth activities over the years; some highlights follow:

- In 2009-10, Dr. Mitra Choudri initiated a youth volunteer group, led by Utsav kids. They organized clothes drive and served a

meal at St. John's Shelter, performed Spring Cleaning at Vedanta Center, and raised funds for Haiti Disaster.

- Later, Rupa Chowdhury led youth activities over many years; in recent years, Sangita Biswas has been leading our youth activities, such as Walk4Literacy, serving food at Saint John's Program for Real Change, etc.
- In December 2015, Utsav Youth Group volunteers (Aditya Chowdhury, Ayanta Chowdhury, Debanshu Das, Sharon Sarkar, and Neha Joshi) participated in the KVIE Public Television fundraising event during their pledge drive, attending the phone bank, accepting donations, etc. The group gave over 60 hours of their time in support of PBS and public television, and helped raise over \$6,500.
- Recently, Utsav's youth volunteers, Sayak Datta, Ena Nayak, and Dayita Biswas, led fundraising efforts for the flood victims of Texas and Kolkata.
- In 2018, Sayak Datta led a fundraising program for the Sankara Eye Foundation.
- In 2021, Utsav Youth Group raised over \$1,400 by making and selling leis for High School Graduation and donated that money to the noble effort of "Project Breathe" to help the victims of COVID-19 in rural India.
- Utsav Youth Volunteers sold over 50 T-shirts during Sharodotsav 2020, and along with matching fund from Utsav donated \$1000 to Sacramento Food Bank on November 24, 2021.
- Utsav Youth Group, with adult guidance, donated \$500 along with some food items to St. John's Program for Real Change on January 8, 2022, in Sacramento.
- Utsav Youth Volunteers participated in a fundraising event (Arts and Crafts Fair) to support St. John's Program for Real Change and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. It was held on May 14, 2022, at North Natomas Regional Park, Sacramento.
- On June 25, 2022, Utsav Youth Volunteers, along with adult members, served a five-course lunch to 70 boarders of St. John's Program, which was highly appreciated by the boarders.
- Utsav Youth Volunteers organized a Musical Evening to support Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation on August 14, 2022, at Folsom City Hall. The event included a

special performance by Pandit Binay Pathak from Sohini Music Academy.

- This is the first time in Utsav history that Youth Volunteers along with Utsav adults raised over \$16,000 (in 2021) and \$5,000 (till August 2022), totalling over \$21,000 (2021-22) solely for charitable causes.
- Please visit [this link](#) for more information on Utsav Youth Activities.

Other Selected Charitable Activities

- **Transfusion** (November 2005; Producer: Mala Paul; Keynote Speaker: Dr. Ernie Bodai): Fundraiser for donating \$5,000 to Cancer Foundation of India.
- For St. John's Shelter, **Qawwali and Ghazal Night** by Sukhawat Ali Khan and Ensemble (December 2019).
- **The R. D. Burman Era**, featuring leading Bollywood musicians (October 2020); Utsav effort led by Suman Biswas, Subir Sarkar, and others, donating over \$7,000 to struggling artists due to COVID-19.
- **Project Breathe**: Utsav joined hands, led by Bay Area Prabasi (BAP), with a few other organizations during April-June 2021, and raised over \$12,000 (+ \$3,000 directly donated by several Utsav members to BAP) to provide oxygen concentrators, medical kits, food, ambulatory services, etc. to the COVID-19 victims in rural India.
- **5K Charity Run (Oct. 3-10, 2021)**: Several Utsav members participated in this run and donated to various local charities.

Drama Productions and Other Cultural Activities

- **Public Servant** (written by Gautam Roy): drama directed by Somen Nandi at Utsav Sharodotsav in October 2002 and at Bay Area Natyamela in May 2005.
- Our participation in **23rd Annual North American Bengali Conference (NABC)** (Bongo Sammelan), Long Beach, CA, July 2003: Staged Drama **Bifole Mulyo Ferot** (written by Samir Dasgupta, directed by Somen Nandi); and Children's Dance Program production by Mala Paul. The same drama was staged at a Utsav event in October 2003.

- **Jampati** (Shruti Natok) (written by Sanjib Chattopadhyay): performed during Bosontosav, directed by Somen Nandi, February 2004.
- **Obak Jolpan** (written by Sukumar Roy): performed by an all-female cast under the direction of Sharmila Mukherjee, October 2006.
- **Panchatantra**: Kids drama performance directed by Sharmila Mukherjee, October 2007
- **Babuder Dalkukure** (written by Manoj Mitra): performed at Bay Area Natyamela, June 2006 and during a Utsav event in October 2006, directed by Somen Nandi.
- **Apaharan** (Sruti Natak) (written by Baidyanath Mukhopadhyay): performed at Bay Area Natyamela, directed by Somen Nandi, June 2007.
- Our participation in **29th Annual North American Bengali Conference (NABC)**, San Jose, CA, July 2009: Dance Program (Production: Shashwati Roy and Mala Paul); and Drama **Hoitey Sabdhan** (directed by Joydeep Ray). The same drama was staged during a Utsav event in February 2009.
- **Ramayan**: performed by Utsav children, directed by Dr. Ajay Joshi, October 2009.
- **Chalo Kolkata**: a musical drama written by Manas Ray and directed by Mala Paul, October 2010.
- **Bir Purush** (written by Rabindra Nath Tagore): a children's drama directed by Paramita Ghosh, October 2010.
- **Halud Himu Kalo Rab**: A drama based on Humayun Ahmed's novel, directed by Manas Ray, October 2012.
- **100 Years of Bollywood**: A music and dance program directed by Nupur Joshi, October 2013.
- **Dance Pe Chance**: A comedy-drama directed by Joydeep Ray, October 2014.
- **Bengal Renaissance**: Revival of Bengal's musical past and its depiction in the modern world. Directed by Mala Paul, Script by Abhishek Roy, October 2014.
- **Naacher Taale Pujo Pandale**: Directed by Mala Paul and Manas Ray, October 2015.

- Our participation in **37th Annual North American Bengali Conference (NABC)**, Santa Clara, CA, July 2017: **Occupy Wal-Mart**, original script by Nobel Laureate Dario Fo, modified by Manas Ray, and directed by Somen Nandi; performed during Utsav Sharodotsav in October 2017 as well.
- **Live from Banglaville**: a comedy-drama written and directed by Joydeep Ray, October 2018.
- **Talent**: an original short film by Chandril Bhattacharya; script modified by Manas Ray and directed by Somen Nandi, October 2019.
- **Megh**: original play by Utpal Datta. Directed by Rajat Saha, October 2021.
- **Topa Masterer Bagan**: written by Mohit Ray. Directed by Rajat Saha and Manas Ray, October 2022.
- Other plays such as **Mamago** (written by Sukumar Ray), **Makuda Chole Gelen** (written by Gautam Roy), and **Hum Do Hamara Do** (written by Amal Roy) have been staged under the direction of Somen Nandi in various cultural community programs.

Information for this writeup is gathered from the past several years with the objective to help new and future members who are expected to take forward and improve the Utsav legacy of 21 years.



*Celebrating 21st year
(2002-2022)*

Srilekha Bhattacharya

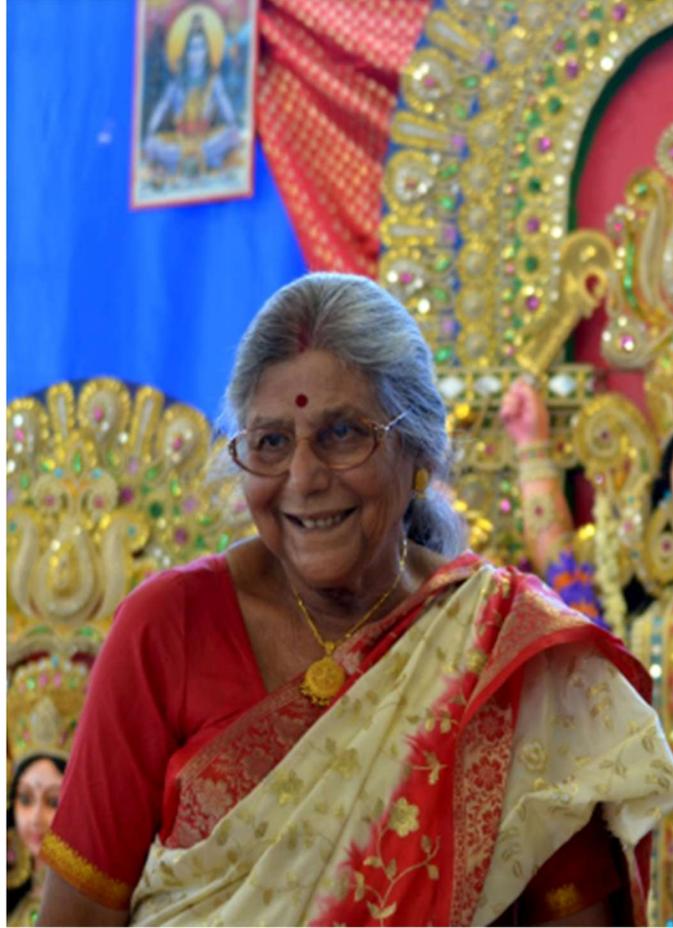


Srilekha (Roy) Bhattacharya – loving and devoted wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and aunt – passed away on October 20, 2021, in Davis, California. Srilekha was born on May 9, 1938, in Calcutta (Kolkata), India. She received a B.Sc. in Chemistry from Scottish Church College and an M.Sc. in Biochemistry from the University of Calcutta, Ballygunge Science College campus. She and her husband, Prof. Prodyot Kumar Bhattacharya, emigrated to the U.S. in 1966, settling in Tucson, Arizona. In 1980, they moved to Davis, California.

Srilekha enjoyed cooking, gardening, birdwatching, and in her earlier life, knitting and crocheting. She had a melodious singing voice and taught her daughters Rabindra Sangeet and other Bengali songs. She and her husband were married for 54 years and traveled the world together.

Srilekha is survived by her two daughters, Suparna Jain and Aparna Anderson; her four grandchildren, Arjun Jain, Anjali Jain, Anil Anderson, and Mira Anderson; her sisters, Suchandra Sen and Sudeshna Ganguly; and many cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Archana Chakrabarti



With deep sorrow and heavy hearts, we mourn the sudden loss of Mrs. Archana Chakrabarti, who was an integral part of the Utsav family since “Day 1”. Archana-di, as she was well known to most of us, is survived by her husband, Mr. Ramen Chakrabarti, many relatives, and innumerable friends all around the world. She left for her heavenly abode on June 3, 2022.

Her amiable and cheerful personality is engraved in our hearts, and she will always remain alive among us. Although Ramen-da

conducted Utsav worships (pujo) many times, Archana-di was the backbone and the pillar behind the scene. She was a silent worker with a wealth of knowledge, and taught many of us the nitty-gritties of pujo and in such a humble way! Besides this, she had a career over three decades as a San Francisco Library Technical Assistant.

Her funeral was arranged on June 14, 2022. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, limited friends and families were able to attend the event in person.

2022 Durga Pujo Sponsors and Volunteers

Durga Puja main priest:
Biswanath Mukherjee

Puja Mandap backdrop creation and decoration
New backdrop and flowers donors: ***Santana and Koushik Das***
Decorations: ***Rupa Chowdhury, Anima Kumar, Santana Das, Mala Paul, Dipanjana Sen, Sharmila Mallick, and Mitra Choudri***

Garlands for idols
Alodipa Dutta, Dipanjali Banerjee, Namrata Dey, Paramita Das, Sanchita Auddy, Sharmila Mukherjee, Soma Nayak, and others

Pujo flowers
Shashwati Roy and Seema Chanda

Naru preparation
Anindita Pal, Jaya Mukherjee, Manjula Dey, Momtanu Chakraborty, Paramita Das, Sangita Biswas, Satabdi Mukherjee, Sreeparna Bhaumik, Subhra Chakraborty, Suchanda Majumdar, Sudeshna Basuroy, Sunanda Banerjee, and Tanima Bhadra

Bhog preparation
Dipanjali Banerjee, Mitra Choudri, Paramita Bhattacharya, Riya Bose, and Shashwati Roy

Prasad items
Alodipa Dutta, Dipanjana Sen, Kana Sharma, Lily Sarkar, Rupa Chowdhury, Sanchita Auddy, Sanhita Bandyopadhyay, Seema Chanda, Shampa Chaudhury, Subhra Chakraborty, Subhra Gima, and Shashwati Roy

Sweets (Saturday and Sunday)
Shomeek Paul and Madhupa (Chatterjee)

Playing Dhak and Ghanta:
Sanjib Sarkar, Koushik Das, and Udayan Chanda

Fish (Sunday)
Pradeep Devevarapu and Sanhita (Bandyopadhyay)

Food Volunteer (In addition to Food Committee)
Subhankar Mukherjee, Sanchita Auddy, Anindita Paul, Brandon Matthew, Sanjib Sarkar, Dipanjana Sen, Roop Ghosh, Tanujay Saha, and others.

Saturday Lunch Sponsor (Partial)
Virender Yadav, Realtor, REEBroker Group

Utsav Sponsor Members (2022-23)

Platinum Plus Sponsors (contribution: \$2000 and above)

Banga, Mainak, and Pubasha (Das)

Chanda, Udayan, and Seema

Gima, Subhra

Kumar, Barin, and Anima

Mathew, Brandon, and Tanima (Bhadra)

Nandi, Somen, and Rashmi

Sen, Shankha, and Dipanjana

Platinum Sponsors (contribution: \$1200 and above)

Chakraborty, Prodosh, and Mita

Choudri, Adi, and Mitra

Devavarapu, Pradeep, and Sanhita (Bandyopadhyay)

Kriplani, Indru, and Pramila

Mukherjee, Biswanath, and Supriya

Paul, Shomeek, and Madhupa (Chatterjee)

Sarkar, Sanjib, and Hem

Sharma, Kingshuk and Ashrukana

Gold Sponsors (contribution: \$600 and above)

Bhattacharya, Anirban, and Sanchita (Auddy)

Das, Koushik, and Santana

Ghosh, Saurajit, and Shruthi

Joshi, Ajay, and Nupur

Mukherjee, Arun, and Sharmila

Nayak, Sanjib, and Soma

Ray, Joydeep, and Dipanjali (Banerjee)

Ray, Manas, and Shashwati (Roy)

Saha, Rajat, and Ananya (Nandi)

Ghosh, Debrup, and Debapriya (Chakraborty)

Silver Sponsors (contribution: \$400 and above)

Adoni, Anand, and Subhra (Chakraborty)

Banerjee, Amit, and Snigdha (Ghosh)

Basuroy, Nirupom, and Sudeshna

Bhattacharya, Anirban, and Paramita (Chakraborty)

Bhattacharyya, Avijit, and Ayantika

Chatterjee, Satya, and Pat

Chowdhury, Arun, and Rupa

Chowdhury, Shyamal, and Bipasha

Mukherjee, Joy, and Suvra

Sarkar, Sudeep and Suman

Utsav Membership Roster

*Adoni, Anand, Subhra (Chakraborty), Anish, and Aisha

*Banga, Mainak, Pubasha, Toushini, and Soumini

Bandyopadhyay, Barun, Sunanda, Sneha, and Hiya

*Bandyopadhyay Bhaskar, and Momtanu

*Banerjee, Amit, Snigdha (Ghosh), Esha, Shriya, and Aayan

*Basu, Shantanu, Rina, and Dhiya

- Basuroy, Nirupam, Sudeshna, Shimika, and Nirvik
 *Bej, Aritra, and Sukonya
- *Bhattacharya, Anirban, Paramita (Chakraborty), Archita, and Zini
- *Bhattacharya, Anirban, Sanchita (Auddy), and Anaya
- *Bhattacharya, Avijit, Ayantika, and Avighna
- *Bhaumik, Bhaskar, Sreeparna, and Aritra
- *Bhaumik, Niladri, Manomita, and Srija
 Bhowmick, Rana and Family
- *Biswas, Debabrata, Sangita, Dhruba and Dayita
- *Biswas, Priyam and Family
 Biswas, Shina
- *Bose, Riya
- *Botu, Surya Teja
 Burman, Prabir and Family
- *Chakraborty, Amrita
- *Chakraborty, Prodosh, Mita, Joey, and Robby
- *Chakravarty, Rajat and Torsa (Ghosal)
 Chakraborty, Shyama and Susan (Powers)
- *Chakraborty, Sneha
- *Chanda, Udayan, Seema, Neel, and Natasha
 Chatterjee, Madhura and Mahesh
 Chatterjee, Satya and Pat
 Chaudhuri, Debanik and Shampa
- *Choudri, Adi, Mitra, Neil, Minal, and Natasha
- *Chowdhury, Arun, Rupa, Ayananta, and Aditya
- *Chowdhury, Pulak, Sanchita (Dey), and Mahika Adishree, Vivan Mayukh
 Chowdhury, Shyamal, Bipasha, Sudip, and Anindya
 Das, Kaushik
- *Das, Koushik, Santana, and Debanshu
 Das, Modan, Shilpi, Neil, and Raj
- *Das, Soukhin, and Oindree (Basu)
- *Das, Tanmoy, Anindita, and Anmoy
 Datta, Jyotirmoy, Namita, Srijon, and Orjon
 Datta, Sandipan and Behnaz Hekmat
- *Datta, Subrata, Alodipa, Sayak, and Sarthak
- *Devavarapu, Pradeep, Sanhita (Bandyopadhyay), and Suhaan
 Dey, Saumen, Manjula, Siddhartha, and Rishaan
- *Ganguly, Somnath, Tanushree, Shoyoma, and Sudhit
 Ghosh, Anjan, Trina and Aayush
- *Ghosh, Debashis and Subhadra (Mishtu) Sengupta
- *Ghosh, Debrup and Debapriya (Chakraborty)
- *Ghosh, Roop and Riya Bose
- *Ghosh, Saurajit, Shruthi, and Shristi
 Ghosh, Sumanta, Paramita, Sumita, and Shayan
 Ghoshal, Chaitali, Rittwika, and Anusha
- *Ghoshal, Dipok, and Shilpi (Chakraborty)
 Ghoshal, Surajit, Tuhina, Tuli, and Tithi
- *Gima, Subhra
 Guha, Deeptarghya
 Guha, Snehungsu and Tanusree (Dasgupta)
 Joshi, Ajay, Nupur, Neha, and Veer

Jadhav, Umesh and Poonam
 *Jhunjhunwala, Aditya
 *Karmakar, Anindya
 *Kriplani, Indru and Pramila
 *Kumar, Barin, Anima, and Soma
 *Kumari, Ankita
 Majumder, Arijit and Srijita
 *Majumdar, Abhigyan
 *Majumdar, Suchanda, Samriddhi, and Eshani
 Majumdar, Tapas and Saptarshi
 Mallick, Soummya, Sharmila, and Family
 *Mathew, Brandon, Bhadra, Shikha, and Tanima
 *Mitra, Anupam, Ananya, and Anaisha
 *Mitra, Subhaditya
 *Mukherjee, Arun, Sharmila, and Family
 *Mukherjee, Biswanath, Supriya, and Family
 *Mukherjee, Joy, Suvra, Rinita, and Ronit
 Mukherjee, Kokonad, Shatabdi, and Family
 *Mukherjee, Subhankar, Jaya, and Abhirup
 *Mullins, Mala P., Shane, and Evani Paul
 *Nandi, Somen, Rashmi, Sunoy, and Sharod
 *Nayak, Sanjib, Soma, Ena, and Ashna
 Padihari, Prasanna and Aishwarya
 *Paul, Debashis
 *Paul, Prakash, Monika, Rai, and Raya
 *Paul, Shomeek, Madhupa, and Evani
 Paul, Subrata, Soma, Dipto, and Sreeja
 *Ray, Joydeep, Dipanjali (Banerjee), Siddharth, and Sanjoli
 *Ray, Manas and Shashwati (Roy)
 *Ray, Tapati
 *Reddy, Fnu Gutta Puravi
 *Roy, Shyamal
 *Roy, Souvik
 Saha, Deb, Nina Shetty, Rohan, and Ishaan
 *Saha, Rajat, Ananya, Ileana, and Ivaan
 *Saha, Subir, Seema (Chowdhury), Shopneil, and Spriha
 *Sahoo, Subhadeep
 *Saletore, Yogesh and Mohana (Roy)
 Samaddar, Sandipan and Poulami (Chatterjee)
 *Sarkar, Shampa
 *Sarkar, Sanjib, Hem, Arunava, and Sonia
 Sarkar, Subir, Lily, Sahana, and Sharon
 *Sarkar, Sudeep, Suman, Aditya, and Aryav
 *Sen, Shankha, and Dipanjana
 *Sharma, Kingshuk, Ashrukana, Khounish, and Eashaan
 Singh, Vishal
 Syam, Paramita, Mia, Krish, and Kiaan
 Verma, Ravi and Barnali (Roy Choudhury)

** Denotes membership renewed for 2022-23 during press time. Our apologies if the information has any inaccuracy; please drop us an email at utsavpr@gmail.com with corrections.*



নিবেদিত নাটক

তপা মাস্তানের বাগান



শনিবার
Oct 1
@ 9pm

রচনা
মোহিত রায়

পরিচালনা
মানস রায়
রজত সাহা

আবহ সঙ্গীত
মেহাংশু গুহ

ORANGEVALE COMMUNITY CENTER
6826 HAZEL AVE, ORANGEVALE, CA 95662
www.utsavsac.org



Utsav's 21st Durga Puja

DOHAR Bengal's most popular folk band

Place: Orangevale Community Center, 6826 Hazel Ave, Orangevale, CA 95662

Date: Friday, September 30, 2022

Time: 8:30 PM

Price: Members are free

Non-members - \$25/person

Seats are limited, contact utsavpr@gmail.com to reserve

