

SANSKRITI 2025

Samhita Cultural Association of Arizona



Contents

From the Editor's Desk | Shabarni Basu- 1

President's Message | Biswajit Saha- 2

EC Members & Leads- 3

‘Durgo’ tinashini

দেবী আগমনের আনন্দলোক | সৌম্যদেব
সরকার- 4

আমার চোখে পূজার আলো | শর্মিষ্ঠা ভট্টাচার্য
গুপ্ত- 7

A little girl's loving message to her mother |
Babu Raman K- 8

স্মৃতির আড়ালে লুকিয়ে থাকা শৈশবের পূজো |
রাজশ্রী ব্যানার্জী- 10

‘Chotoder’ Golpo

Sonoran Desert Sunset Saga |
Nabyanshaa Biswas- 12

Top 5 Places to Experience in Japan |
Manasvi Pathak-13

Mystery Death | Prisha Dhiman- 15

The Magical Map | Srinika Das- 16

‘Bhromon’ Pipashu

Egypt - The Gift of the Nile |
Abhirupa Layek- 18

Riding with the Iron Butt: Conquering the
Saddle Sore 1000 and Bun Burner 1500 |
Abir Deb- 22

Lemon Shrimp Pasta with a Side of Big
Changes | Swati Ghosh- 24

Steps Through Time: Hiking the Grand
Canyon Rim2Rim2Rim | Satadru Das- 26

Sea Breeze, Sunsets & a Sweet Escape: My
Maiden Voyage | Malini Sharma- 29

A weekend gateway to Prescott | Sharmistha
Ganguly Bhattacharyya- 31

Flower Dome: A Living Canvas in the Heart
of Singapore | Dilip Chakrabarty- 33

‘Kobi’ Sabha

জিহাদ | আলী বাবা- 34

ভুলভুলইয়া ভোলাবাবু | রঞ্জনা মুখার্জী- 35

দেবমানব | প্রণব মিশ্র- 35

‘Chhobi’ Ghor

Landscapes | Soumyajit & Kritika- 36

‘Rong’ Chonge

Kids' paintings by Aabir, Ishani, Mohanraj,
Adhrit, Srinika, Adwik, Prisha- 37-41.

Nature painting | Sharmistha Ganguly
Bhattacharyya- 42

Sailing into Sun | Sunit Dhiman- 42

Offering eyes of Maa Durga | Anindita Roy
Biswas- 43

Lord Jagannath | Smita Panda- 43

Samhita Events at a Glance- 44



From the Editor's Desk

Shabarni Basu

It is with immense pride and gratitude; I present to you Samhita Sharadiya Magazine '*Sanskriti 2025*'. This year, the magazine has received an unprecedented number of submissions, each reflecting the creativity, passion, and commitment of our vibrant community. The magazine belongs to each one of you and your effort towards making it richer!

The sheer diversity of contributions- from thoughtful essays and inspiring travelogues to evocative short stories, soulful poetry, and striking works of art- has truly enriched these pages. Every submission is a testament to the immense talent and cultural spirit that bind us together.

I extend my heartfelt appreciation to all our contributors. Your willingness to share your voices, experiences, and creativity has made this year's magazine not just publication, but a celebration of our collective expression.

I am deeply thankful to the Executive Committee for their constant support and encouragement, and to our President, Biswajit Saha, whose vision and guidance have been invaluable in bringing this edition to life.

A special word of gratitude goes to Anirban Bhattacharya, Esha Bhattacharya, and Babu Raman K, whose unwavering support, constructive guidance, and invaluable insights have made this editorial journey possible for the last two years. I would also take this opportunity to acknowledge Soumyadev Sarkar for his creative input and innovative suggestions in designing the magazine layouts and overall look.

May '*Sanskriti 2025*' continues to serve as a reflection of our shared creativity and as a lasting reminder of the strength of our community. As you turn the pages of *Samhita 2025*, I hope you find joy, inspiration, and a sense of connection with our community and the world at large. This magazine is for all of us, and because of all of us. Happy reading!

President's Message



Samhita Cultural Association of Arizona (AZ Samhita) cordially invites you and your family to join us in celebrating **Durga Puja 2025**.

Durga Puja is a time to honor *Shakti*—the divine feminine power—celebrated across India with great devotion and joy. For us, it is a deeply cherished festival where *Shakti* is worshipped as **Ma Durga**, the embodiment of strength and the eternal victory of Good over Evil.

This year is especially meaningful, as we welcome our **first new Ma Durga idol from India**. Our heartfelt thanks to the New Idol & Fundraising Team for their dedication and support. A special note of gratitude to **Soumyadev Sarkar and his family**, who helped make this possible, coordinating efforts both in India and here in Phoenix.

Samhita continues to honor its commitment to community service with donations to **Sewa International, Feed My Starving Children, and St. Mary's Food Bank**, supporting Arizona residents in need. We look forward to continuing this tradition with more contributions to non-profit organizations throughout the year.

As a proud multicultural organization, Samhita aims to host a variety of culturally diverse events beyond Durga Puja and Saraswati Puja. We welcome your suggestions and feedback to help us create more meaningful experiences for our members and community. Please feel free to reach out to the Executive Committee with your ideas.

None of this would be possible without **your presence, generosity, and support**—from our patrons, annual members, and sponsors. A large portion of Puja ticket proceeds goes toward helping those in need, ensuring our celebrations also bring hope to others.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I sincerely pray to **Ma Durga** for her blessings upon you and your loved ones. May she fulfill your wishes, bring positivity, and inspire new beginnings. We look forward to celebrating this joyous occasion together and carrying forward our mission of making a positive impact in the community.

💎 **Wishing you all a Happy Durga Puja and Dussehra!** 💎

Stay safe and may Ma Durga bless us all.

Warm regards,

Biswajit Saha

On behalf of the Executive Committee

EC Members and Leads



Biswajit Saha
President



Babu Raman K
Treasurer



Kathakoli Sengupta
General Secretary



Abir Deb
General Secretary



Esha Bhattacharya
Cultural Secretary



Rachna Nath
Puja Secretary



Sandip Chattopadhyay
Food Secretary



Mamta Ojha
Decoration Lead



Sumanta Das
Logistics Secretary

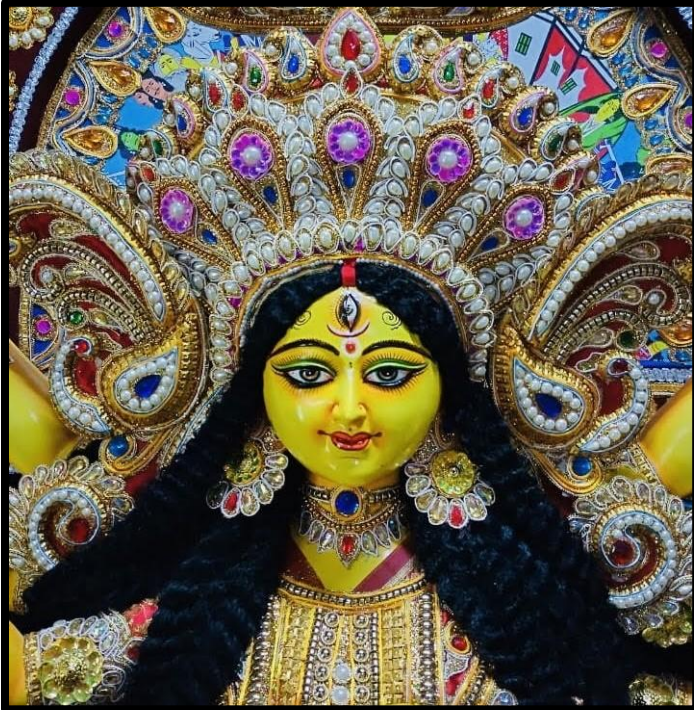


Soumyadev Sarkar
Social Media & Photography

দেবী আগমনের আনন্দলোক সৌম্যদেব সরকার

মার্কণ্ডেয় পুরাণে কথিত আছে, দুর্গার স্বশুরবাড়ি কৈলাসে। হিমালয়ের কন্যা তিনি। তবে কলিযুগের দুর্গার পিত্রালয় আর কৈলাস নয়, বরং কলকাতার কুমোরটুলি। আনুমানিক সপ্তদশ থেকে অষ্টাদশ শতাব্দীতে, যখন ব্রিটিশ ইস্ট ইন্ডিয়া কোম্পানির রমরমা, সেই সময়ে গঙ্গার ঘাটে কয়েক ঘর কুমোরদের নিয়ে গড়ে উঠেছিল এক ছোট বসতি। বসতি ও 'টুলি' সমার্থক শব্দ, তাই নাম হয়েছিল কুমোরটুলি। তারপর গঙ্গার বুকে বয়ে গেছে অজস্র জলধারা। আজ সেই ক্ষুদ্র বসতিই পরিণত হয়েছে মহার্ঘ শিল্পক্ষেত্রে যেইখানে প্রতি বছর গড়ে ওঠে হাজার হাজার দুর্গা প্রতিমা। শুধু কলকাতাতেই নয়, কুমোরটুলির প্রতিমা আজ পাড়ি দেয় দেশের নানা প্রান্তে, এমনকি বিদেশেও। কুমোরটুলিতে "ট্র্যাডিশনাল" প্রতিমা নির্মাণের শতবর্ষী ঐতিহ্য আজও জীবিত। সেই ঐতিহ্যকে অন্য উচ্চতায় তুলে ধরেছিলেন রামকিঙ্কর বেইজ, নন্দলাল বসু, রামানন্দ বন্দ্যোপাধ্যায়, যামিনী রায় প্রমুখ খ্যাতনামা শিল্পীরা। তাঁরা কুমোরটুলির গণ্ডির বাইরের ভাস্কর বা চিত্রশিল্পী। কুমোরটুলির কারিগররা দেবীকে গড়ে তুলেছেন পৌরাণিক নিদর্শন মেনে, আর রামকিঙ্কর বাবুরা মাটির প্রতিমাকে আধুনিক ভাস্কর্যের রূপ দিয়ে দেবীকে নতুন ব্যাখ্যা দিয়েছেন। দুই ধারাই আসলে একই মাটির ভাষা, একটি ধারাবাহিকতার, অন্যটি সৃষ্টিশীল ভাঙনের। এই দুই প্রান্ত মিলেই বাংলার দুর্গারূপের পূর্ণতা।

ছবি ১: সমহিতার ২০২৫-এর নতুন দুর্গা প্রতিমা



এইবার তবে চলে আসা যাক অ্যারিজোনায়। সমহিতার উদ্দেশ্য যে এইবার পূজোয় আসবেন একেবারে নতুন দুর্গা প্রতিমা (ছবি ১)। ২০২৪ সালের শেষ দিক থেকেই শুরু হয়েছিল খোঁজখবর। সেই দায়িত্ব এসে পড়ে এই লেখকের উপরেও। প্রসঙ্গত, লেখকের ভিটেও কুমোরটুলি সংলগ্ন; কৈশোর থেকে যৌবন, বড় হয়ে ওঠা সেই অলিগলিতেই। দুর্গার আতুরঘরের প্রতিটি ইট, প্রতিটি পথচিহ্ন যেন তার অতি পরিচিত। তাই, সুযোগটা হাতছাড়া করার কোনো প্রশ্নই ওঠেনি। সেই পরিচিত এক গলির ভিতরেই শিল্পী প্রশান্ত পালের শিল্পালয়। প্রশান্ত পাল—ফাইবারগ্লাস প্রতিমাশিল্পে এক অদ্বিতীয় নাম। তাঁর প্রতিমা ইতিপূর্বে পৌঁছেছে অস্ট্রেলিয়া,

জার্মানি, ব্রিটেন, আমেরিকা-সহ নানা দেশে। তাই তাঁর চেয়ে যোগ্য শিল্পী আর কে হতে পারেন! প্রতিমা মূলত হয় দুই রকমের, মাটি ও ফাইবারগ্লাসের। মাটির প্রতিমায় প্রথমে বাঁশ ও খড় দিয়ে কাঠামো তৈরি হয়, তারপর গঙ্গার মাটি দিয়ে দেওয়া হয় প্রলেপ। শুকিয়ে গেলে রঙের আয়োজন, আর সবশেষে গয়না-অস্ত্রে সজ্জিত হন দেবী। অপরদিকে ফাইবারগ্লাস প্রতিমার প্রক্রিয়া ভিন্ন।

প্রথমে গড়া হয় ক্লে মডেল, তারপরে সেই মডেলের ছাঁচে প্লাস্টার অফ প্যারিস দিয়ে তৈরি হয় মোন্ড। মোন্ডের ভিতরে বিশেষ জেল-এর আস্তরণ দিয়ে ফাইবারগ্লাস ও রেজিন প্রয়োগ করা হয়। শেষে ডিমোন্ড ও অ্যাসেসবলি করে সম্পূর্ণ রূপে উদ্ভাসিত হন মা। ফাইবারগ্লাস প্রতিমা দীর্ঘস্থায়ী এবং তুলনায় হালকা। সেই কারণে সমহিতার নতুন প্রতিমা ফাইবারগ্লাসের। ২০২৫-এর জানুয়ারি মাস থেকে শুরু হয়েছিল প্রতিমার কাজ। দুই মাস ধরে তিল তিল করে দুর্গাকে প্রাণ দিয়েছেন প্রশান্ত। হল চক্ষুদান (ছবি ২)। সমাপ্তি ঘটলো মার্চ মাসে।



ছবি ২: সমহিতার নতুন দুর্গা প্রতিমা: রূপসাধনার দিনলিপি ও চক্ষুদান

পঞ্জিকা মতে এই বছর দেবীর গজে আগমন। তবে সমহিতার মা দুর্গা এসেছেন জলপথে। সাত সমুদ্র পার হয়ে ১১ই মে লস অ্যাঞ্জেলেসের তীরে ভিড়ল সেই জাহাজ। ইমিগ্রেশনে কোনো সমস্যা হয়নি, কারণ ঠাকুরের আবার ভিসা লাগে নাকি! সপ্তাহ খানেক পর মা পৌঁছলেন সমহিতার স্টোরেজে। সঙ্গে ছিলেন লক্ষ্মী, সরস্বতী, কার্তিক, গণেশ এবং তাঁদের বাহনরা। আর মহিষাসুর? তাঁকে ভুলে গেলে তো চলবে না, তবে যুদ্ধ হবে কার সাথে! প্রতিমার রূপে মা এখানে স্নিগ্ধ, হাসিমুখশ্রী।

মনে পড়ে যায় সত্যজিৎ রায়ের *জয় বাবা ফেলুনাথ* ছবিতে ফেলুদার সেই কালজয়ী উক্তি— “পরশু তো ষষ্ঠী, আপনার কাজ পরশুর মধ্যে শেষ হবে?”। কিন্তু সমহিতার পুজোয় এইবার তেমন কোনো সংশয় নেই। মা ইতিমধ্যেই সন্তানদের নিয়ে সাজুগুজু করে এক্কেবারে প্রস্তুত। আজ মহালয়ার দিনে আপনি যখন এই লেখা পড়ছেন, তখন আর মাত্র কয়েক দিনের অপেক্ষা। আগামী শুক্রবার (সেপ্টেম্বর ২৬) সায়াহে উন্মোচিত হবে সদ্যনতুন প্রতিমা। থাকবেন আপনি, থাকবেন সমহিতার প্রতিটি সদস্য। এই মহেন্দ্রক্ষণের সাক্ষী হবেন আপনি। ঘরের মেয়েকে বরণ করে নেওয়া হবে ধুমধাম করে। সুবিধে একটাই—এই দুর্গার কৈলাস কিংবা কুমোরটুলিতে আর ফিরে যাওয়া সম্ভব নয়, কারণ সে অনেক দূর। তাই তাঁর স্থায়ী আবাস হবে ফিনিক্সে। অন্তত আরও এক দশক সমহিতার ঘর আলো করে থাকবেন তিনি।



Portrayal of Devi by Artist Samar Majumdar

Over the first months of 2025, Pal guided the transformation from clay model to fiberglass form, culminating in the ritual *Chokkhu Daan*, the symbolic “opening of the eyes.” According to the almanac, tradition foretells Durga’s arrival this year on an elephant. On the contrary, Samhita’s idol arrived on a freighter. On May 11, after a transoceanic journey, the vessel bearing the goddess and her companions docked at Los Angeles. Soon after, the idols reached Phoenix. On Friday, September 26, the new idol will be unveiled.

PS: The back cover of this magazine features an adaptation of Satyajit Ray’s iconic poster for his 1960 film *Devi*. The image powerfully reflects the duality of woman and goddess at the heart of the film. As Samhita continues to champion women’s empowerment, this choice felt especially meaningful and fitting.

****Readers are encouraged to explore the full article in Bengali to experience the true essence; however, for those who prefer English, an excerpt is provided below.**

The Joy of New Devi’s Arrival
In Hindu mythology, the *Markandeya Purana* situates Durga’s home in the icy heights of Kailash. Yet, in modern times, her lineage is traced to Kolkata’s Kumartuli, the historic potters’ quarter that has grown from a riverside settlement into the epicenter of idol-making. From these narrow lanes, Durga idols now travel across India and to communities worldwide.

For Samhita, this year marks the arrival of a new Durga idol from Kumartuli. The work was entrusted to Prashanta Pal, an acclaimed artist whose fiberglass idols had been to Europe, Australia, and US.

আমার চোখে পূজার আলো শর্মিষ্ঠা ভট্টাচার্য গুপ্ত

কোনো এক বন্ধু মোরে সুধায়,
সখি, পূজো এবার কেমন হবে?
আমি বলি—
দারুণ হবে, প্রাণের জনের সঙ্গে সখি,
আবার নাকি দেখা হবে!

শিউলি ফুলের গন্ধ মাথা
সোনালি এক সকাল হবে,
শরৎ ঋতুর প্রাণ জুড়নো
হিমেল হাওয়ার পরশ হবে।

মায়ের হাতের মিষ্টিগুলোর
অমৃতময় স্বাদের আবার স্মরণ হবে,
মা হারানোর ব্যথা আবার
বুকের মাঝে প্রবল হবে।

তাক দুমাদুম ঢাকের তালে,
বুকের কণ্ঠ লুকিয়ে যাবে,
ধুনুচির ওই ধোঁয়াটে আলোয়,
চোখের জল ছুপিয়ে যাবে।

নতুন শাড়ির গন্ধ মেখে
আবাহনীর গান হবে,
মায়ের পায়ে সমর্পণের
আকাঙ্ক্ষা টা প্রবল হবে।

মেয়ের মুখে মা ডাক শুনে,
প্রাণটা আবার জুড়িয়ে যাবে।
অষ্টমীর ওই মায়াবী আলোয়
জীবনসাথীর সঙ্গে সখি,
আবার শুভদৃষ্টি হবে।

তাক দুমাদুম ঢাকের তালে, হৃৎ-স্পন্দনের
মিলন হবে।

Puja Vibes by Sarmistha

Bhattacharya Gupta 

Kono ek bandhu more sudhai, Sakhi, pujo
Ebar kemon hobe?
Ami boli, Darun hobe, praner joner songe
sakhi, abar naki dekha hobe!

Shiuli phooler gandho makha sonali ek sokal
hobe, Sharat ritur pran jurono himel hawar
parosh rabe!

Mayer haather mishiti gulor, amritomay
swader abar smaran hobe.
Maa haranor byatha abar buker maajhe
prabal hobe!

Tak duma dum dhaker taale, buker kasto
lukie jaabe.
Dhunuchir oi dhoyante aloy, chokher jaal
chupiye jaabe.

Notun sarrer gandho mekhe abahonir gaan
hobe,
Mayer paye samarpaner, akansha ta probol
hobe!

Meye'r mukhe Maa daak shune,
Pran ta abar jurie jaabe!
Ashtami'r oi mayabi aloy, jeeban saathi'r
songe Sakhi, abar Subho Drishti hobe!

Tak duma dum, dhaker taale, hrit spander
milan hobe!
Sakhi, satti boli, monta bole, pujo Ebar
Darun hobe!

A little girl's loving message to her mother

Babu – a seeker

Maa Maa,

Today felt so special Maa. When I sat for **Kanya Puja**, dressed up in my little chunni, with the tilak on my forehead and the aarti flame glowing, I felt something so pure in my heart. Everyone was smiling at me with so much respect and love, and I realized it's all because of you.

Thank you, Maa, for making me feel like a little goddess today. When I sat with the other girls, I felt like I was part of something important. You washed my feet with so much gentleness; felt just like the Goddess Durga is welcomed. Then you placed Sindur and rice on my forehead and tied the red thread around my wrist. At that moment, I didn't just feel like a child—I felt like I was a blessing.



The thali with the glowing diya, the flowers, the sound of mantras, and the sweet fragrance of incense all made me feel so special. The way you carefully helped me get ready, explained the meaning of each ritual, and told me why we are honored as kanya during this puja—it made me feel proud to be your daughter. I felt strong, blessed, and loved all at once.

Oh, and the sweets and gifts were yummy but what touched me most was the way you looked at me—with so much love. That's the biggest blessing for me Maa. I'll always carry this day in my heart, and I'll always carry your love with me.

I love you, Mom. ❤️

Footnote:

Implication and deeper meaning of Kanya Puja during Durga Puja:

Spiritual Implication

- Embodiment of the Goddess:
Hinduism teaches, little girls (*kanyas*) are seen as living embodiments of **Maa Durga** in her purest form. By worshipping them, it symbolizes worshipping the Goddess herself.
 - Celebration of Shakti (Feminine Power):
It acknowledges that divine energy (*Shakti*) resides in women and girls, honoring the feminine as a source of strength, wisdom, and creation.
 - Purity and Innocence:
Girls, especially before puberty, are considered pure and untouched by worldly influences. Their innocence represents the untainted form of Devi's power.
-

Cultural & Social Implication:

- Respect for Women:
Reinforcing the idea that women deserve honor, respect, and equality in society. Worshipping young girls teaches people to value femineity at home and in the world.
 - Nurturing Tradition:
Washing the feet, feeding, and gifting little girls cultivates humility, gratitude, and the recognition that there is divinity present in living beings all around us.
 - Passing knowledge to Next Generation:
Children who participate in or witness Kanya Puja grow up learning that women are to be revered and respected.
-

Personal Implication for the author:

- Performing Kanya Puja, we seek Durga Maa's blessings for protection, prosperity, and peace. We expect Maa to understand us and bless us with love and happiness.
 - The Author seeks forgiveness for any disrespect shown knowingly or unknowingly towards women.
-

To put it all together:

Kanya Puja during Durga Puja is not just a mere ritual—it's a spiritual reminder that there is divinity in every female and they deserve respect, that equals to worshipping the Goddess herself.

“Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu, Kanya Rupena Samsthita,
Namastasyai, Namastasyai, Namastasyai Namah.”

স্মৃতির আড়ালে লুকিয়ে থাকা শৈশবের পূজো রাজশ্রী ব্যানার্জী

দুর্গাপূজো মানেই বাঙালির সেরা উৎসব – এটা আর নতুন কি কথা। কিন্তু আমার কাছে কিংবা যারা নিজের বাড়িতে অথবা নিকট আত্মীয়ের বাড়িতে পূজো দেখেছে, তাদের কাছে অনুভূতিটা একটু আলাদা। মহালয়ার পরের দিন অর্থাৎ প্রতিপদ থেকেই নিয়মমতো পূজো শুরু হয়। কিন্তু আমরা অধিকাংশ মানুষই পঞ্চমী অথবা ষষ্ঠীর দিন থেকেই পূজোর প্রথম দিন বলে পালন করি। আমাদের বাড়িতে পূজোর প্রথম আবহ আমরা অনেক আগে থেকেই উপভোগ করতে শুরু করি। জন্মাষ্টমীর পরের দিন অর্থাৎ নন্দোৎসবের দিন আমাদের বাড়িতে হয় কাঠামো পূজো। বলতে গেলে সেই দিনই পূজোর বাদ্য বেজে ওঠে মনের মধ্যে। বাড়িতে বেশ কিছু তোড়জোড়ও শুরু হয়ে যায়।



হাওড়ার ব্যানার্জী বাড়ির ৮৫তম বর্ষের পূজো

মহালয়ার বেশ কিছুদিন আগেই বাড়ির ছেলেরা মিলে কুমোরপাড়া থেকে নিয়ে আসে ঠাকুরের মূর্তি, যার অনেকটাই তৈরি হয় বাড়ির মধ্যেই। যেদিন মূর্তি গড়ার কারিগররা আসেন, সেই দিনটা ছোট থেকে বড়— আমাদের সকলের জন্যই ভীষণ আনন্দের। একটু একটু করে গড়ে তোলেন মা দুর্গা আর তাঁর ছেলে-মেয়েদের প্রতিটি মূর্তি। প্রথমে খড়ের মূর্তিতে মাটি লাগানো থেকে শুরু করে ঠাকুরের আঙুল লাগানো, মুখ গড়া, রঙ করা—সবই ধাপে ধাপে এগোয়। আর মহালয়ার দিন ঠাকুরের চোখ আঁকা, শাড়ি পরানো, অস্ত্র লাগানো—সবই যেন আজও ছবির মতো ভেসে ওঠে মনে।

নিজের দেশ থেকে এত দূরে থেকে গভীরভাবে ফিরে যেতে ইচ্ছে করে ছোটবেলার সেই দিনগুলিতে। মন খারাপ না করে বরং তোমাদের সঙ্গে পুজোর আরও কিছু মুহূর্ত ভাগ করে নি। মহালয়ার পরের দিন থেকেই বাড়িতে শুরু হয় চণ্ডীপাঠ। পুজো এসে হাজির একেবারে দোরগোড়ায়। কাজের ঠেলায় অস্থির বাড়ির মা-কাকিমারা। পঞ্জিকার সময় অনুযায়ী কোনো বছর হয়তো বোধন হয় পঞ্চমী অথবা ষষ্ঠীর দিন সন্ধ্যাবেলা। আর মজা শুরু হয় সেই দিন থেকেই। বাড়ির ঠাকুরদালানে সবাই মিলে একসাথে আড্ডা দেওয়া, কার কটা জামা হলো—তা নিয়ে গল্প, আর কত কী! ঢাকিরাও হাজির হয় সেই দিনেই। বাড়ির পরিবেশটাই যেন সম্পূর্ণ রূপে বদলে যায়। চারিদিকে আলো, ঝাড়বাতি, ঘণ্টার আওয়াজ, ঢাকের ধ্বনি—যার জন্য সারাবছর অপেক্ষা করে থাকা সেই দিনটা এসে সামনে দাঁড়ায়।



পরের দিন সকালে চোখ খুলতে না খুলতেই বারান্দা দিয়ে দেখি পুরোহিতমশাই এসেছেন তন্ত্রধারককে নিয়ে। শুরু হয়ে গেছে সপ্তমীর প্রথম ধাপের পুজো—কলাবউ স্নান,ঘটস্থাপনা,চক্ষুদান আর প্রাণপ্রতিষ্ঠা।তারপর ধীরে ধীরে এগোতে থাকে একের পর এক পুজোর নিয়মাবলি। সপ্তমীর

পুজো অনেক সময় ধরে চলে বলে পুষ্পাঞ্জলি হতেও দেরি হয়। কিন্তু মনে থাকা আনন্দ আর উত্তেজনা মিলিয়ে পুষ্পাঞ্জলির জন্য উপোস করে থাকতে বিশেষ কষ্ট বোধ হয় না। এভাবেই বেলা গড়াতে গড়াতে আসে দুপুর আর ভোগ খাওয়ার পালা। বাড়ির মা-কাকিমাদের হাতে রান্না করা মা দুর্গার ভোগ যেন সত্যিই অমৃতের থেকে কোনো অংশে কম নয়। ভোগ খাওয়ার পর সবাই মিলে বাড়ির বাগানে আড্ডা, হাসি-গান—সত্যিই আর ফিরে পাইনা।সন্ধ্যাবেলার আরতি, ঢাকের আওয়াজ আর সেই ধূপ-ধুনোর গন্ধ—আজও ভীষণ মিস করি। এভাবেই কেটে যেত চারটে দিন। অষ্টমীর কুমারী পুজো, সন্ধিপুজো কিংবা নবমীর বলি, ধুনো পোড়ানো, হোম—আজ দেখতে ইচ্ছে করলেও ফেসবুক ছাড়া আর কোনভাবেই উপভোগ করতে পারিনা বাড়ির পুজোর সেই দিনগুলো। এখন এখানে পুজো দেখতে যাই, বন্ধু-বান্ধবের সঙ্গে আড্ডাও হয়, কিন্তু কোথায় যেন কিছু হারিয়ে গেছে, কোথায় যেন কিছু খুঁজতে চেষ্টা করছি—কিন্তু খুঁজে পাচ্ছি না।



Sonoran Desert Sunset Saga

Nabyanshaa Biswas | Age-10



"The sand glows gold on this desert tonight, not a footprint to be seen". I am Queen Sarya, leader of the Maura tribe. King Roumi sits next to me on a chariot pulled by seven coyotes. We were born in the Sonoran Desert, and we will proudly defend our tribe. Mali, my pet wolf curled up on my lap while my other pet Roral, a rattlesnake, slithers near King Roumi's feet. Our advisors are back home preparing dinner. Mirai, my daughter, is sitting in between us.

The nights in the Sonoran Desert are enchanting. It is quite interesting that desert nights are so cold, and desert days are so hot. It is quite a pleasure to explore on a desert night. Also, since the days are hot, all the animals come out and roam at night. The few that come out during the day still hunt at night. The moon smiles at me, radiating happiness and light, filling the sky with joy. The owls stare at me with their fixed yellow eyes as though saying, "Who are you?" Mirai squirms in her seat, longing to get up and observe the rows of the coyotes' silent feet thumping against the ground, sending sand flying into the air, creating a dirt cloud around us.

King Roumi's eyes scan the cacti as though any wild animal might be lurking in the shadows. Squirrels scurry and scuttle into their holes as our chariot skids to a stop. Mirai and King Roumi hop out and open the trapdoor that leads to our hidden palace. I sigh and hop out, climbing into the pathway, motioning to the soldiers to lead the coyotes into the dank passage. Mirai tugs on my arm and runs into the palace made of dried sod and dirt. Manna and Saura, my advisors, welcome me and offer a meal made of corn, squash, and beans. Some women are grinding corn for dinner, and the men are sharpening their tools and weapons. The older kids are helping their parents, and the little kids are being put to sleep by Leili, one of the oldest children.

Parents, about how everything is perfect and how we live in peace and harmony with the desert! I whisk Mirai off to Leili and tuck her in safe and sound. I helped the other women as a leader should help her people. An hour passes, and the women slowly leave to go to sleep, and the men pass up. I desire to go outside and count the stars; so, I slip away from the hustle and bustle of bedtime.

I sigh in pleasure outside, basking in the moonlight forming constellations and patterns. I soon realize that just being in the majestic aura of the Sonoran Desert can make you lose track of time. I spot Roumi, standing behind me, also gazing at the stars. When I catch his eye, a grin breaks out on his face, and he joins me on the sand, placing a hand around my shoulder, reminding me that a night in the Sonoran desert is one of the most spectacular displays ever, ranging from the animals playing hide and seek to the silent and gigantic Saguaro! (Painting by **Nabyanshaa Biswas**).

Top 5 Places to Experience in Japan

Manasvi Pathak | Age- 13

This year, over spring break I went to Japan. Going to Japan has been my dream for so long, so I was so excited to finally visit! It's so interesting to see how different Japan is than the USA. Though I visited many places and experienced many cool things, I would like to share my favorite, personal, top 5!



5: Mount Fuji

Mount Fuji is one of the most popular and iconic mountains in the world. I was extremely excited to see it, but it is ridiculously hard to spot. In many angles, you can see the rough image of it, but it's not truly clear. Despite that, the entire Mount Fuji area is exceptionally beautiful and has many temples and shrines around it. I even went on a boat ride and was able to view the mountain a little closer. It was also freezing!

4: Tokyo Character Street

This place was amazing! Tokyo Character Street, found inside Tokyo Train station, is filled with over 30 super colorful and exciting stores, each dedicated to a Japanese character/ cartoon. I got to see and buy items themed by some of my favorite characters such as Miffy, Rilakkuma, Chiikawa, Mofasand, and many others! I could spend so long walking through this street! There were also many themed cafes that had the cutest pastries and beverages.



3: Trying Kimono (Fushimi Inari Taisha)



One of my favorite experiences in Japan was trying on a kimono, Japan's traditional wear. The process to get the kimono on was long and tedious, but the result was worth it! It was also quite surprising to see how many layers and steps putting on a kimono has. They even did my hair, added accessories, gave me a purse, and did my makeup. After my family and I got the kimono on, we took pictures around Fushimi Inari Taisha temple, and they turned out so pretty. But walking around in a kimono is not for the weak.

2: Nara Deer Park



This park holds over 1,400 deer! There is also a Buddhist temple remarkably close to it that is unbelievably beautiful called Tōdai-ji. The best part is that you can feed the deer little crackers. The deer are very friendly and even bow to you. Bowing is particularly important culture in Japan, so it's very incredible to see the deer do it too! Aside from the deer, there are lots of little shops near the park. I got THE BEST ice cream there! It was

vanilla butter flavored and tasted way better than it sounds. (called CREMIA ice cream if you are curious)

1: Harajuku (Shibuya)

Harajuku and Shibuya THE are shopping spots. You can buy anything there, from fashion to stationery to anything matcha related. There is also the absolute best food! I could spend so many hours just walking around and shopping there (which I did). I also ate this fruit sandwiches called sandos at a café there, and I enjoyed them a lot! I love the fashion there as well, it's very modern and luxury while being effortless and casual at the same time. I also really liked comparing 100-yen stores (Japanese dollar stores) to dollar tree. The difference in the quality of the items is insane! Overall, this place was my favorite, especially since I am obsessed with shopping! (the main reason I wanted to visit Japan 😊)

Conclusion

Japan is a must visit country. Its rich culture, endless sightseeing, and shopping will keep you so busy and positively entertained, you won't have time to fully process the fact that you're there! It's so beautiful too. The best part is comparing it to home sweet home here in America. It's crazy to see how clean and quiet it is there. Anyway, these were my top 5 out of the countless places I visited in Japan. And once you visit too, I can't wait to hear yours!

Mystery Death

Prisha Dhiman | Age-16

Three days had passed before they found the body. The arrow was sticking out of her chest at an odd angle as if someone had tried to pull it out but then decided against it. Her eyes were blank and staring into space. The girl had eyes, blacker than an abyss, bottomless pits of tar, terrifying. I wonder who she had been and how she had ended up dead with an arrow (an arrow of all things!) sticking out of her chest.

The girl was leaning up against a tree as if she were sitting under a tree in a forest and would get up and go on her way at any moment. She seemed to be young, maybe in her 20s? That thought brought me to the realization of how fragile life is. One moment you're completely fine, and then the next you could be dead. She was taken too soon. Her brown and matted hair was spread around her shoulders and the bark of the tree, which was rough like sandpaper and a dark, golden brown. There was hair matted to her forehead and sticky with red blood, which was now a color like coffee. The blood, which must have been a brilliant crimson red, is a garish burgundy-brown color and is flaking off her shirt. The shirt was dirty with soil and stained with blood. The arrow was protruding from the center of her chest, halfway in. The shaft was made of sturdy wood and decorated with feathers that were fluttering red and white in the slight breeze.

How odd. She's been shot with an arrow. This is obviously a murder, but who uses arrows anymore? And where's the bow? Surely whoever committed this horrendous crime wasn't running around with a bow. It must be hidden. If I can find that bow, I can conduct a procedure to check the fingerprints and find a match. I could capture the murderer and bring justice to this poor girl. When those unassuming campers stumbled upon this horrid scene, they alerted us at once. Strange considering there hadn't been a missing person's report. No family is desperately looking for their daughter or sister. No friends contacted the authorities to file a report on their missing friend. Nothing. Complete radio silence from the rest of the town while this body rotted here in the middle of the woods.

That's the moment when my radio buzzes. My colleagues have found another body farther out in these woods. A young man's body. They say he's also been dead for about the same time as the girl. There must be a connection. Quickly, I extricate the arrow as gently as I can. My hands are covered with latex gloves, thicker than a horse's skin and a matte blackish gray. I am careful not to disturb the rest of the evidence. The forensic team is coming soon to remove the body and study it for potential signs of a struggle or other injuries.

Just as I am putting the arrow shaft into a clear bag for examination, I hear footsteps behind me. The slightest sound of branches snapping like bones and leaves crunching as a large pair of feet drags in the dirt. The sound has made me tense, and suddenly I feel a shiver go through my body. It's not one of my colleagues; they wouldn't sneak behind me. The footsteps cease and I'm taut as a bowstring; whoever it is, is behind me now. Before I could turn around, there was a wet thump. The arrow was protruding through my abdomen.

The Magical Map

Srinika Das | Age-11



Mary hurled through the air like a torpedo trying to get hold of her broom. Mary shouted, “You will never get your hands on the fruit!” What Mary felt next was something heavy hit her head like a rock and then everything went black.



“Mary!” called her nanny, “Your breakfast is ready!” Mary quickly brushed her frizzly, red hair and ran down the stairs.

“What kept you waiting?” asked Mary’s great grandmother in that old kind voice of hers. “Nothing much,” replied Mary as she plopped down on the chair. Mary immediately devoured the jam and toast. “Not so fast dear,” Great grandmother cautioned.

“Sorry,” replied Mary, “Can I go out into the woods? It is such a fine day today.”

Great grandmother replied, “But don’t forget your lunch basket.”

“I won’t!” replied Mary as she ran out of the door.

“Be back by sunset!” great grandmother shouted but Mary was already out the door. Mary was jumping in joy as she hurried down the hill and headed straight for the woods.

Mary strolled through the woods finding squirrels in their trees, singing with the birds, and chasing after a deer in delight. It so happened that she was chasing a deer when she bumped into a tree and right in front of the tree was a map.

“What is this curious looking map?” Mary looked at it but could not make out a single thing she saw on it. It was like a series of twisted and strange symbols. Mary glanced at the symbols for a long time and suddenly it started to make sense. Mary could not help herself but said the phrase, “Reset the timeline!”

Next thing Mary saw was a huge glow as she felt her skin tingle. “Why.....where did this portal come from?!” The next thing she knows is that she is standing on a ship at sea. “Where am I!” screamed Mary.

“Will you cut it out?!” Captain Crook shouts. Mary turns around to see a red-haired man with silver teeth and a hook in place of a hand. “Not like your hair is on fire!” the captain continued to yell.

“Wh-wh-o are you?” Mary stammered as the Captain stepped closer.

“I am Captain Crook. Greatest captain of the nine seas!” he exclaimed. Greatest is a bit of a stretch, thought Mary.

“Well,” Captain Crook continued, “don’t just stand there. Take a look around my magnificent ship!” Better than nothing, Mary thought. Captain Crook kept going on and on about so many things that Mary just tuned out.

She glanced over the side of the ship and saw something but wasn’t sure what, so she went to take a closer look. “Is that a siren?!” Mary shrieked.

“Not just one, but a whole bunch of them!” shouted Captain Crook while signaling his men. Mary felt a loud thump against the ship.

“Ahhhhh!!!” Mary screamed as she ran to the other side of the ship.

“Don’t be afraid!” shouted Captain Crook as he steered the ship.

All of a sudden, the map flew out of Mary’s hand and went above the sea. A storm started brewing and Mary heard thunder. Lightning strikes started coming out of the sky and hitting the water.

“They are going away!” the crew cheered.

“Wh-wh-what just happened?” Mary stammered.

“The map of the Timeline.” Captain Crook said. Mary whirled around and saw Captain Crook smiling.

“What?” asked Mary.

“That map holds the information on resetting the timeline” clarified Captain Crook looking at Mary’s confused face, “Basically that map holds information that could change everything we know about magic, life, and discovery.”

“So, it changes the timeline by knowledge? Right?” inquired Mary.

“That’s right.” replied the captain while taking out a small bottle.

“What’s that?” asked Mary.

“It is a small bottle. I was given a task by the celestials to give the bearer of the map this.” he said as he gave her the bottle.

“Thanks.” Mary muttered as she took out the map. “Bye! I will always be grateful to you Captain Crook and your crew.” replied Mary. She recited those familiar but odd symbols and faded away.

The next thing Mary knew, she was standing in front of a huge tree. “I have to climb that huge tree!” Mary grumbled. She started to climb when she heard “Well, well what are you doing here?” a strange voice said. Mary turned around and saw a ginormous squirrel.

“Who are you?” Mary asked.

"I am Pippin, and may I ask who you are?"

"I am Mary, and I am trying to reach the top of this tree," she said.

"Ohhhh you are that prodigy from the Institute of Magic. It was said that you were lost," Pippin said.

"Excuse me but I do not know any magic. Frankly, I did not know magic existed," she declared.

"Do you not remember?" he asked.

"I am afraid so," replied Mary who was still confused about everything.

"Well, I am pretty sure that the council will explain everything," he announced and then scurried away.

Mary saw an image in her brain of a group of people who were chasing something and shouting and everything went into a blur. Mary woke up on the branch not knowing what happened "What just happened?" she said. Mary got up and said to herself, "Sitting around won't fix anything." She got up and continued up the tree.

"Just breathe and don't look down," Mary said as she continued to climb up the tree. That's when she saw a huge bird radiating a bright orangish-yellow glow. The bird opened its mouth as if it was trying to tell her something. At that moment Mary understood every word the bird had spoken. She responded back somehow, and it almost seemed like the bird was smiling. Then the bird plucked out a feather, dropped it on the ground and flew away. The map flew into Mary's hand and a new line of symbols appeared that Mary translated into *you found all the pieces*. "I did it, I found all the pieces!" Mary exclaimed. The next second a bright glow happened, and she was gone.

Mary found herself in a forest. It had these weird and beautiful creatures and plants. The map started to glow and flew away. "Where are you going?!" Mary called as she ran after it. The map led Mary to this mystical lake.

"What am I supposed to do here?" Mary asked herself as she stared at the things she had collected over this journey. Maybe I have to put the fruit in the water, she wondered. Mary immediately got another flash of memories where she saw herself in a gown like a graduate and a fruit. Something felt oddly familiar about that fruit and then she saw an explosion and she saw the girl take the fruit and fly out. There were people and a lot of them chasing after her.

Mary jumped up shivering in fright. What was that, Mary wondered as she got to her feet. The map flew out of her hands, and it started to glow as if saying words. During those few seconds Mary heard a wave of gibberish go through her mind which she surprisingly understood. She got out the feather, fruit, and the bottle which she had obtained from her adventure. She unscrolled the map and she was about to cast the spell when she heard something.

"Hold it right there!" Counselor Emery said aloud as his voice boomed throughout the forest. Behind him was a group of at least thirty people. The map reacted instantly, taking Mary to the center of the lake. Mary felt something take over her mind, but she could not control it. Her entire body radiated this bright glow. The feather and fruit all went inside the bottle and the map started to glow too.

"Destroy this fruit!!" she chanted as the whole counsel watched in awe. Everything inside the bottle turned into a liquid and everything exploded into a display of fireworks. Mary woke up to a lot of people standing around her. She got up and asked, "What happened?"

"A good thing," replied Dr. Harlem.

"What??" Mary inquired.

"You were a prodigy at a prestigious school of magic," Madam Marvel explained as she continued, "The day your class was graduating we performed an experiment on a student with that extremely rare fruit."

"That corrupted the student and endangered the whole school. Luckily, we were able to stop but we got too corrupt and wanted to do it again. You interfered and ran away with the fruit," said Counselor Emery.

"We chased after you, but you managed to escape," said Monk Gandar.

"And managed to lose your memory while you were at it," chuckled Dr. Harlem. Everyone turned and gave him a glare. "Sorry," he mumbled sheepishly.

"When you destroyed the fruit, it broke the trance," Madam Marvel declared.

"Madam Marvel can heal you," Counsellor Emery said.

"Okay," Mary said. Madam Marvel stepped closer to Mary and emitted a bright radiance.

"There you go dearie," Madam Marvel said.

"Thank you, madam. I remember now," Mary responded with great confidence.

"Well, let's give you the proper recognition you need," Dr. Harlem announced.

"That indeed," the Counselor replied.

Mary's stomach was in knots as she reached the pedestal. Her grandmother waved from the stands. Apparently, she was a former teacher at the academy before she took in Mary to make sure she was safe. Mary gave her speech and was met with applause from everyone.



It was the evening when Mary reached the huge plain. She was still in her gown from the celebration in the morning. She lay down on the ground as she gazed up at the beautiful sunset sky. Life was going great but what else would she encounter?

Egypt - The Gift of the Nile

Abhirupa Layek | Photos by Satadru Das

Egypt is like a mystery novel. The cradle of ancient civilization, every nook and corner is filled with magic. This year Satadru and I decided to take our family for Egyptian sojourn – a weeklong holiday diving into 4000 years of history.

Our journey began in the bustling metropolis of Cairo where we explored Islamic Cairo and Coptic Cairo. At the center of Cairo is the sprawling Citadel of Saladin built in the 12th CE with a beautiful mosque dominating the skyline from where we got an expansive view till the pyramids of Giza. Islamic Cairo is full of medieval buildings, dusty by-lanes, tombs, fortifications with arched doorways and lively souks. Our visit to the Khan Al Khalili souk was an exotic experience - the sights, sounds and smell transporting us to the Middle Ages - shops selling perfumes, antiques, spices, colorful scarves, Egyptian papyrus prints - the shopkeepers calling out to us in Arabic.

Christianity came to Egypt almost at its inception, several centuries before Islam. The Egyptian Christians were called Copts and spoke the Coptic language a derivative of the ancient Egyptian language. We visited the hanging church - the centerpiece of Coptic Cairo which has a beautiful blend of early Christian paintings and high vaults and Islamic motifs and murals.



On our second day in Cairo, we visited the Pyramids of Giza. Built around 2500 BC over 100 years, it is the oldest of the ancient Wonders of the World and the only one still standing. The Egyptians strongly believed in afterlife and the Pharaohs would build pyramids for themselves to “live” after death. The Giza necropolis houses the pyramids of pharaohs of the 4th Dynasty- Khufu, Khafre, Menkaure, the Sphinx of Khafre and the mortuary temple of Khufu where mummification would be carried out.

Sphinx, Giza Necropolis

The step pyramid of Saqara belonging to King Djoser (3rd dynasty) was the first attempt at a pyramid, built by stacking mastabas (platforms) one on top of another whereas his son Sneferu, after multiple attempts finally achieved the first perfect pyramid - the Red Pyramid at Dashur. Our highlight of the day was entering the Red Pyramid - crouching inside a 3ft x 4ft x 200 ft dark tunnel smelling of mold and formaldehyde, 30 degrees downwards and then up again several steps where the sarcophagus would have rested.

The scale and symmetry of the pyramids make one wonder how in the earliest timelines of human civilization, with limited tools and amenities such humongous workforce organization and perfect stone quarrying, polishing, transport down the river, assembly and engineering was possible.

From Cairo we flew south to Luxor. The intermediate dynasty of pharaohs moved the capital upstream the Nile to Thebes, where modern day Luxor is located. Instead of pyramids, they built tombs carved inside the red sandstone cliffs on the West Bank of the Nile, called the Valley of the Kings. These tombs were exquisitely decorated with hieroglyphs and paintings from the king's life and would be filled with the king's earthly treasures with his mummy. The tombs got robbed over time, so when in 1922 Howard Carter and his team found the first intact tomb - of King Tutankhamun - along with vast amounts of gold, it threw the western world into a frenzy. Several people in the team died following the discovery which gave rise to the story of the curse of the pharaoh.

What left us in amazement as we explored the tombs Ramses III, IV, IX and King Tut is how well preserved the carvings and colors were even after 4000 years.



Tutankhamun's tomb

Hieroglyphics in the Valley of the Kings

We also visited the temple of Hatshepsut, the first female pharaoh of Egypt and the Karnak and Luxor temples - again awestruck at the huge obelisks and pillars created so many centuries ago. For a week we were steeped in the stories of the Egyptian gods Amun Ra, Isis, Osiris, Horus, Anubis et al.



Nile at Luxor



Karnak Temple, Luxor

Our next stop was the city of Aswan. The Nile is the central character in Egypt's story. Every year it would rain in the highlands of Ethiopia which would cause floods in Egypt and deposit huge amounts of fertile silt. The ancient Egyptians built their cities, temples and canals on its banks and used the river to transport huge blocks of sandstone and granite all the way from Aswan to Cairo. This continued until the building of the Aswan Dam in 1902 and High Dam in 1960s. The creation of the dams and the resultant Nasser Lake engulfed a lot of these ancient temples - the Abu Simbel temples and Philae temple in Aswan. Until UNESCO came to the rescue and relocated the temples, piece by piece as is, to higher grounds - a massive achievement in conservation and engineering.

From Aswan, we drove 3 hours through sandy Sahara to Abu Simbel where on the banks of Lake Nasser the four massive rock cut statues of Ramses-II stared down at us. This was Ramses' proclamation of power over the Nubians, and he also built the nearby temple dedicated to Nefertari, his favorite queen. The interior of the temple is a cave with more statues of Ramses and other Egyptian gods; every inch of the walls filled with intricate paintings.



Ramses Temple, Abul Simbel

We explored the Nile River and Aswan dam on Felucca rides, motorboats and cruises and spent our evenings in the colorful souks.



The last leg of our holiday was in the Northern city of Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast. This was the place from where the Roman's invaded Egypt and the place from where Roman influence spread to the rest of the Kingdom. It is the city famous for being the capital of Egypt's last pharaoh – Cleopatra and for the now lost ancient wonders – the lighthouse of Alexandria and Ptolemy's library. We visited the citadel of Qaitbay, the catacombs of Kom El Shoqafa and the modern library of Alexandria.

Felluca on the Nile

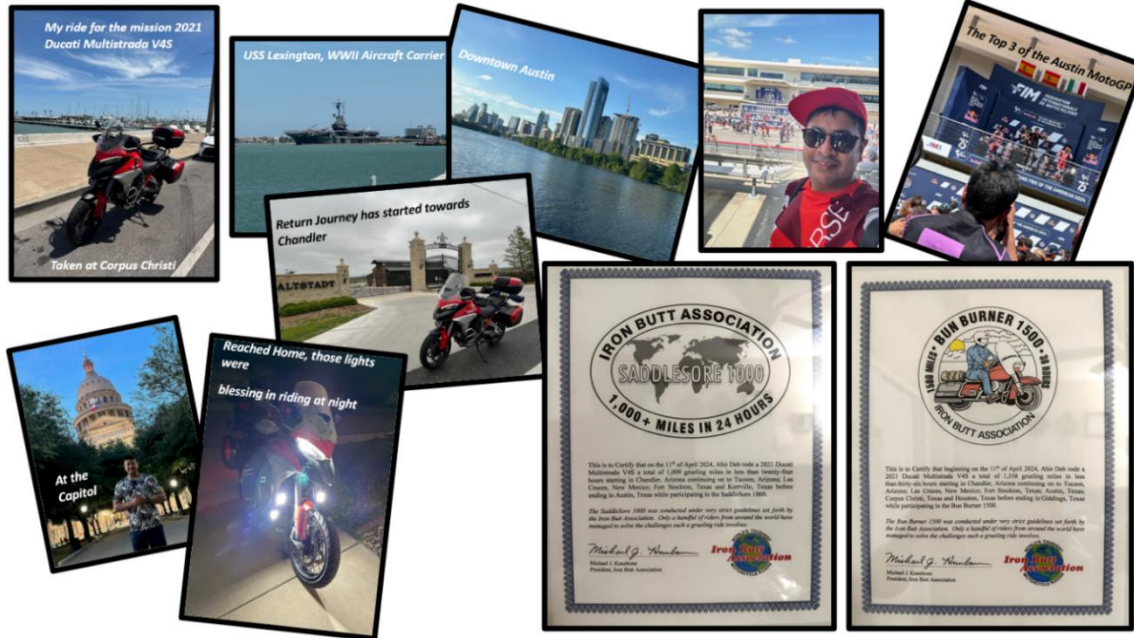
After bidding farewell to our parents who flew back to India, Satadru and I spent the rest of our last day in Giza, exploring the pyramids once again – going inside the pyramid of Khufu and exploring the necropolis at sundown on camelback.

We went back home with a treasure trove of memories and rich experiences and filled with the dreams of visiting the marvelous Egypt again.



Saharae Shihoron

Riding with the Iron Butt: Conquering the Saddle Sore 1000 and Bun Burner 1500



Abir Deb

The World's Toughest Riders

The Iron Butt Association (IBA) is not your typical motorcycle club. Founded in the 1980s, it has grown into a worldwide community of endurance riders who push the boundaries of human stamina and machine reliability. Known as

the “World’s Toughest Riders,” members earn that title by completing documented long-distance challenges.

The association offers a wide variety of rides: the **Saddle Sore 1000** (1,000 miles in under 24 hours), the **Bun Burner 1500** (1,500 miles in under 36 hours), the **50CC Quest** (coast-to-coast in 50 hours), and the jaw-dropping **Ultimate Coast to Coast** from Key West, Florida, to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska in just 30 days. Each challenge must be carefully logged with receipts, odometer photos, and witness forms, making completion as much about discipline and planning as it is about endurance.

A Challenge Meets an Event

On April 11, 2024, I set out to earn my spot in this elite group. The timing was perfect—Austin, Texas was hosting the MotoGP at Circuit of the Americas, and I decided to combine the trip with two IBA challenges: the **Saddle Sore 1000** and **Bun Burner 1500**. My machine of choice was a **2021 Ducati Multistrada V4S**, a sport-touring motorcycle built for distance. The upright riding posture reduced strain on my arms and back, while the bike’s weight and stability provided confidence against crosswinds, which I knew I would face across the Southwest deserts. The bike was also fully prepped for night riding, equipped with auxiliary lights pumping out more than 10,000 lumens—turning pitch-black backroads into daylight.

The Saddle Sore 1000

I started from Chandler, Arizona, around 8 a.m. on a clear morning. To meet IBA requirements, every fuel stop requires a receipt and odometer photo.

- **Stop 1: Chandler, AZ** – Documentation and a full tank to begin the ride.
- **Stop 2: Tucson, AZ** – Quick refuel and snack.
- **Stop 3: Lordsburg, NM** – Hydrated against the heat.
- **Stop 4: Las Cruces, NM** – Strong crosswinds made this the toughest stretch so far. Took a longer break for lunch and rest.
- **Stop 5: Van Horn, TX** – Entering Texas felt like a milestone, though the vastness of the state soon became clear.
- **Stop 6: Fort Stockton, TX** – Short refuel.

- **Stop 7: Ozona, TX** – Dinner stop before heading into the dark backroads.
- **Stop 8: Kerrville, TX** – Roughly 100 miles left to go.
- **Final Stop: Shell Lamar, Austin, TX** – At nearly 19 hours of riding, I had covered over 1,000 miles and completed the **Saddle Sore 1000**.

Exhausted, I headed to my friend's home in Austin to sleep. But my journey wasn't over yet.

The Bun Burner 1500

After nine hours of rest, I saddled up again to tackle the additional 500 miles required for the **Bun Burner 1500**.

- **Stop 9: Pleasanton, TX** – Quick refuel.
- **Stop 10: Corpus Christi, TX** – Took in some seaside views.
- **Stop 11: Edna, TX** – Another short stop.
- **Stop 12: Houston, TX (Wilcrest)** – A highlight of the day was dining at **Aga**, a renowned Pakistani/Indian restaurant. I enjoyed some food there and packed the rest to save time.
- **Stop 13: Chappell Hill, TX** – By now I had hit the 1,500-mile mark, but to account for any odometer discrepancies, I continued riding.
- **Stop 14: Giddings, TX** – Here, my 36-hour clock ended. I had officially completed **Bun Burner 1500**.

That night, I stayed at another friend's home and enjoyed a warm meal, celebrating the achievement before the excitement of MotoGP weekend.

The Thrill of MotoGP

Saturday brought the much-anticipated highlight: **the MotoGP at Circuit of the Americas (COTA)**. Riding to the track with a group of fellow Ducati owners amplified the sense of occasion.

The scale of COTA was breathtaking. From the moment I heard the MotoGP motorcycles screaming down the straights at nearly 200 mph, goosebumps shot down my spine. The energy of the crowd, the smell of fuel and rubber, and the sight of riders leaning impossibly low into corners made for an unforgettable experience. I cheered on Marc Márquez, who was debuting with Ducati that year. Though he didn't win, the excitement of overtaking and battles on track was thrilling.

The day wasn't just about watching; I even joined in outdoor karting at the venue, finishing in the top five in three races. Combined with food, beer, and exploring Austin's nightlife, it was the perfect reward after two days of endurance riding.

The Road Home

After soaking in Austin for another day, it was time to ride home. The return trip mirrored my outbound route but in reverse, completed in about 18 hours. The satisfaction of knowing I had completed two major IBA challenges in a single trip made the long journey feel easier.

Weeks later, the Iron Butt Association officially verified my ride after their rigorous review of receipts, logs, and documentation. Holding that certificate in my hand, I felt proud to be recognized as one of the "World's Toughest Riders."

What's Next

Completing the Saddle Sore 1000 and Bun Burner 1500 was a dream fulfilled, but IBA riders are always looking for the next horizon. For me, the **Ultimate Coast to Coast** beckons. Riding from Key West, Florida, to Prudhoe Bay, Alaska within 30 days is an odyssey that would test both man and machine like nothing else.

Until then, I'll carry with me the lessons of this ride: discipline, endurance, and the knowledge that sometimes the toughest roads lead to the most unforgettable memories.

Lemon Shrimp Pasta with a Side of Big Changes

Swati Ghosh



“I want to eat the pasta you make with shrimp.” That was my teenager’s answer when I asked what she wanted for dinner when we reached our cabin on the last day of August. September 1st will be a big day for all of us—our firstborn is moving into her college dorm to start the next chapter of her life. As a mom, I am feeling happy and sad at the same time (and maybe a little panicked whether I taught her all the things she needs to know to be self-sufficient?).

We just drove 2,600+ miles for this drop-off—five days of road trip sandwiches and snacks that I don’t want to see again anytime soon. And now, here we are in a cabin in the Vermont woods with limited ingredients, trying to make the pasta she is craving.

So, I peeked into my “kitchen” box I had packed from Phoenix. Let’s just say all the ingredients and spices in that box were 90% geared toward quick Indian meals like khichdi, Rajma or chole. But—hey! —tucked inside was a packet of linguine pasta, a jar of grated Italian cheese blend (Parmesan, Romano, Asiago—the holy trinity), garlic powder, and red chili powder. Did I subconsciously know this moment was coming?

Even better, I found I had thrown in the last jars of marinated artichokes and olives that I had. The cabin had dried Italian herbs and kali mirchi aka pepper. Now all I needed were two non-negotiables: fresh shrimp and lemon. Without those, it’s just...garlic noodles with attitude.

Cue Google: the local co-op is only 10 minutes away and still open for another 30 minutes. Dad got the mission briefing and sped off to secure the non-negotiable goods. Meanwhile, I turned the cabin kitchen into a temporary trattoria.

Honestly, after five days of car snacks and roadside “meh,” this homemade carb-loader felt like a Michelin-starred event. Simple, fresh, and soul-satisfying—the perfect sendoff meal before college life begins.

Lemon Shrimp Pasta (Cabin Edition)

Ingredients (serves 3–4):

1 lb fresh shrimp, peeled and deveined
8 oz linguine pasta
3 tbsp olive oil
3–4 garlic cloves (or 2 - 3 tsp garlic powder when fresh garlic is not available)
1 lemon (zest + juice)
1 tsp red chili flakes (or powder)
½ cup marinated artichokes & olives (optional but fabulous)
½ cup grated Italian cheese blend
Salt and black pepper to taste
Fresh parsley or Italian seasoning for garnish

Method:

1. Marinate the cleaned and deveined shrimp with salt, garlic powder, and some red chilli powder for _____ minutes.
2. Cook linguine pasta al dente according to package directions. Drain but save aside about ½ cup of pasta water. Toss the drained pasta with a drizzle of olive oil, garlic powder, Italian seasoning, salt, and red chili flakes and set aside
3. In a large pan, heat some olive oil. Add garlic and sauté until it's fragrant— basically to the point where the smell escapes the pan, drifts down the hallway, and suddenly the whole family is in the kitchen asking what you are making and how soon they get to eat.
4. Add the marinated shrimp and cook for about 2–3 minutes per side, or until they turn pink and look _____ too _____ pretty _____ to _____ ignore.
5. Toss in the artichokes and halved olives, then invite the pasta back to the party. Add lemon zest and juice. I usually skip the pasta water because we like the pasta bright and lemony, but if you are not into bold citrus statements, splash a little pasta water to mellow it down.
6. Finish with a generous amount of cheese and a sprinkle of fresh parsley (or dried Italian seasoning. Serve immediately—preferably to hungry teenagers who are about to move out and make you all sentimental.

As we twirled our forks around the steaming pasta that night, I realized this meal was more than dinner—it was lemon shrimp pasta served with a side of big changes. A simple dish, yes, but layered with comfort, love, and the bittersweet zest of letting go.

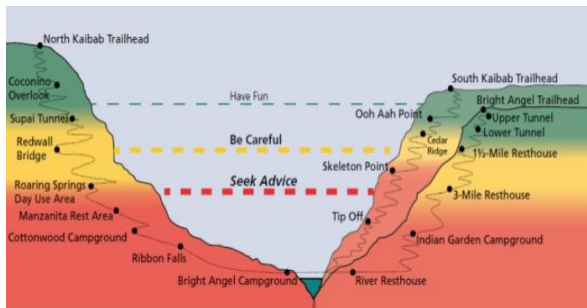
Maybe, just maybe, when she is eating pasta in her dorm cafeteria, she will remember this bowl made in a little Vermont cabin, the flavors of home that came with her as she took her big leap into adulthood.   

No photo of the lemon shrimp pasta—because in the middle of cooking, eating, and packing for the next day, grabbing the camera was the last thing on my mind. Instead, here is a picture (at the start of the story) from the welcome event for the Class of 2029—a reminder of new beginnings and the adventure that's just getting started.

Steps Through Time: Hiking the Grand Canyon Rim2Rim2Rim

Satadru Das

Hiking the Grand Canyon Rim to Rim (R2R2R) -South-North-North-South in a single day covering 45+ miles over 20,000 feet of elevation change has been a dream for me for a very long time. I first learnt that such a feat was even humanly possible a few years back when I read about Jim Walmsley (ultra trail running specialist) running the entire route back and forth. Since then, the idea had been quietly growing in my and this year, I finally geared up to embark on this adventure over the Memorial Day Long weekend.



Elevation profiles from NPS.

Majestic Grand Canyon, never tired of exploring it on foot

Taking on a single-day R2R2R hike requires meticulous planning and dedication to training. I spent a lot of time studying the experiences of other hikers to understand the immense physical and mental strength this journey demands and decide on my approach. My training was intense and deliberate, focusing on strength conditioning, long-distance running, back-to-back hikes exceeding 20 miles while paying close attention to nutrition, hydration, and recovery. Since this was going to be a solo hike for most parts, the fact that there would be no one to rely on if something went wrong pushed me harder, mentally and physically, and fully prepared for the challenges.



Start from south Kaibab Trail at 11.00PM

Abhirupa had planned to accompany me from South Rim to the river from where she would go back up to South Rim on her own. We began our hike at 11:00 PM from the South Kaibab Trailhead, under pitch-black skies and very high wind speeds with the aid of headlamps. It was our first time experiencing the Grand Canyon under a blanket of stars and we could feel the vast unknown even more. The trail was fully exposed drops quickly, with switchbacks carved into the canyon walls. It's hard on knees and joints, especially during descent. There are no potable water sources until the bottom—making hydration planning critical. The known stops like Ooh Aah Point and Skeleton Point emerged from the shadows, their silhouettes haunting and beautiful. The descent



Tip Off – A steep 1.5 down to Colorado river from this point

felt like a journey inward—into silence, solitude, and self-awareness.

We reached Phantom Ranch in the dark around 3:00 AM. From there, our paths diverged, as Abhirupa waited till dawn before she started her journey back up.

I began my solo journey, leaving Phantom Ranch at around 3:30 AM and heading toward the North Kaibab Trail. This was the loneliest stretch. No lights, no voices. Just the sound of my breath and the crunch of gravel in absolute darkness, it was just me and the Canyon in complete solitude until I encountered first human at Cottonwood Campground around 6:00 AM.

I took a short 15-minute break before continuing to Manzanita Campground (at 4,200 ft) to refill water. Then came the grueling climb up the brutal switchbacks and after four more hours I was at the North Rim trailhead (8,240 ft) at 11:00 AM.



Surreal Views on my way to North Rim

There, I saw people celebrating their triumphant Rim-to-Rim hikes—but for me, the real challenge was just beginning. I sat on a rock, changed socks, and ate my lunch. The sun was up now, warming the pine-scented air. I felt proud of getting this far but the thought that I was just halfway through and I still had to go back felt even more daunting. This was the first real mental wall. The temptation to rest for some more time was strong but I knew the longer I waited, the harder it would be to start again.



Reached the North Rim at 11:00 AM after 12 grueling hours from the South Rim, halfway through the R2R2R journey

The return trip was a mental and physical grind. Temperatures in the inner canyon soared past 90–100°F. Every single mile demanded hydration, fuel, and laser-sharp focus. This is where my training and smart nutritional choices truly paid off, keeping me strong and steady. After a 40-minute break at the North Rim, I began the return journey toward the South Rim. By 5:30 PM, I had descended 18 rugged miles and arrived back at Phantom Ranch. After a quick water and food break, I pushed myself up the steep South Kaibab Trail once more. As the sun dipped low, the canyon turned gold and crimson. The beauty was overwhelming. I paused often—not just to rest, but to take it in. I was in a different headspace. I thought about how far I’d come—not just today, but in life. The canyon had tested me, broken me down, and built me back up.



Just after sunset, I began the ascent from Tip-Off. The light was fading fast, and by the time I reached Ooh Aah Point it had turned fully dark. As I climbed, I saw several hikers in distress—completely exhausted, lying on the side of the trail. I couldn’t offer much help even though I wished to. It was a stark reminder of how unforgiving the canyon can be—and how gently it has held me every time I’ve visited.



Abhirupa on her solo return journey back to the south rim from Phantom Ranch

At last, I saw the lights at the head of the South Kaibab trail – I had made it back! After a few celebratory pictures I called Abhirupa to fetch me with the car. I had been apprehensive if she had completed safely as there was no cellular network inside the canyon – she assured me she had and was very happy that I was also back.

While coming back up from Colorado river she had taken the steep South Kaibab Trail to the Tip-Off point, then navigated the Tonto Trail to connect with the Bright Angel Trail from Indian Garden. With that detour due to trail closures, she completed an impressive 22-mile Rim-to-River-to-Rim hike up Bright Angel—on her own.

Abhirupa and I have hiked the canyon multiple times now. Each time, the canyon embraced us with warmth and grace, and we felt protected by the canyon. There is a quiet strength in that feeling, a sense that nothing can harm me when I’m within canyons walls. This was, without a doubt, one of the hardest things I’ve ever done—and one of the most fulfilling, no medals, just the Canyon and the life force inside that kept me going.

Sea Breeze, Sunsets & a Sweet Escape: My Maiden Voyage

Malini Sharma



Thinking of going on your first ever cruise??!! A word of advice – do not watch Poop Cruise on Netflix, it will put you off cruising forever 😊 These past few years friends and acquaintances around me have been extolling the virtues of cruising: endless food, fun activities, relaxing by the pool with exotic drinks etc.

I resisted peer pressure for a long time, could never see the appeal of being in a floating city, surrounded by a ton of unknown people, with nowhere to escape. However, it is difficult to stay firm in the face of family pressure, and I had to give in. So, we booked a Carnival Cruise for 5 days to Ensenada and Cabo, Mexico during spring break 2025.

Once I was committed to the trip, excitement built up. I pored over cruise vlogs that offered advice on what to pack, what to do on the ship, what to avoid, and quizzed friends on their experiences. When the embarkation day arrived, I felt quite prepared. Based on watching glamorous movie scenes, I expected to glide up the gangplank, feeling like a star but the reality was different. It took almost 2 hours to board the ship; there were so many people. A note to self: steer clear of cruises during peak holiday season—everyone and their extended families are sailing with you.



The cabins assigned to us were a delight. I would highly recommend booking cabins with a balcony, the view and extra space make a huge difference to your sailing experience. The balcony quickly became my personal slice of paradise—just me, the sea breeze, and the romance between the waves and the sky.

One of the undeniable perks of cruising? The food—glorious, abundant, and always within arm's reach. From all-you-can-eat buffets to specialty stations dishing out burgers, burritos, pasta, and pizza, it's a nonstop parade of indulgence. And when you're ready to trade flip-flops for finesse, the formal dining rooms serve up elegance with a side of silverware sparkle. There are high-end restaurants too, that you can enjoy, of course you pay extra for the privilege.

There was a lot to see and do on the cruise – comedy shows, musicals, themed dance nights, karaoke competitions. My daughters had a blast singing at the karaoke event. And as I mentioned earlier, a cruise ship is basically a floating city, so you can melt your stress away at the massage parlor, get a hairdo for the evening formal event or indulge in retail therapy.



Our first trip ashore was to Cabo. We took a boat out to see the famous Arch of Cabo San Lucas, which is a dramatic, granite rock formation rising out of the sea, separating the Pacific Ocean from the Sea of Cortez. An interesting tidbit from our tour guide – the rock formation splits a beach into two - Lovers Beach on the Sea of Cortez side, where the waters are calm and Divorce Beach on the Pacific Ocean side, where the waves crash against the rocks – nature’s metaphor for the duality of life!!



Our boat took us further into the Pacific Ocean and suddenly – WHALES!! It was thrilling to view the majestic creatures of the sea. Back on land we walked into town, away from the touristy areas, looking for food and stumbled upon a colorful, cute joint with awesome seafood and the best margaritas.

Back on the ship we sailed for a day and night till our next port of call – Ensenada, a small town in Baja California. We took a tour bus into the interior to visit the famous blow hole, La Bufadora. It is quite a drive

and when we arrived there, it was disappointing, not as awesome as we were led to believe.

The path leading up to the blow hole is full of vendors selling everything from food, drinks, jewelry, bags, shoes and all sorts of knick-knacks. We ate, shopped and headed back to the city. We had time to kill before boarding the ship, so we walked around the city. It was interesting to see that parts of it had been gentrified, with fancy cafes, bakeries and restaurants. Ensenada being close to California, people just cross over the border to visit.

On our final night aboard, we settled in for our last fancy dinner, expecting a delicious meal as usual—but what we didn’t expect was the crew breaking into a heartfelt serenade. To the familiar tune of *Leaving on a Jet Plane*, they cleverly swapped out the lyrics to suit our nautical ride.



Throughout the cruise, I carried a quiet, nagging fear—yes, that infamous Poop Cruise reference. The documentary hadn’t been released yet, so I was spared the trauma of watching it, but I’d already read enough horror stories to know that paradise at sea can turn into purgatory. So, when disembarkation day arrived seemingly without any mishap, I quietly exhaled a sigh of relief. But alas!! I sighed too soon- just as we were nearing the Los Angeles port, the bathrooms ran dry - no tap water, no flushing. I was in disbelief – my greatest fear came true. Luckily, it was fixed quickly, crisis averted, and we got to end the cruise not with a fiasco but “flush” with happy feelings!!

A weekend gateway to Prescott

Sharmistha Ganguly Bhattacharyya



We decided to take a weekend trip to Prescott just to cool off and beat the summer heat. We started on a Friday late afternoon and drove a few miles as the dinner time was approaching, we decided to stop at an Italian pizza place named Ray's Pizza in the township of Anthem. It was quite crowded. Some were sitting and enjoying

their TGIF dinner, others were just picking up a few boxes of pizza balancing on their palm. It seemed like quite a popular joint in the neighborhood. We sat down and ordered our pizzas; it took quite a while for the waitress to bring out our order as it was Friday night. It was possibly the best pizza I had in this country. As we lived in the east coast there were a big Italian community residing both in New York and New Jersey and the quality of NY city pizza was to die for, but Ray's could easily compete with them. After a satisfying meal we decided to resume our journey to Prescott. While driving, Mr. Sun was setting on the western sky bidding goodbye for the day while hueing the entire sky with orange and red color. By the time we reached Prescott township, it was getting dark. The log cabin that we have reserved for the weekend was in the middle of the wilderness. We had to drive through the dirt road, there were no streetlights, it was a bumpy ride. Outside was pitch black and scary. The owner of the cabin told us to look for string lights that were our landmark and finally we reached our cabin. We were happy and relieved to see our cabin in the middle of nowhere as a traveler feels joy seeing an oasis in the middle of the desert. As we got out of the car and lugged our luggage inside, we heard crickets chirping all around. We decided to settle down for the night. Next morning, as the early sun was rising there was a cool breeze all around. I stepped outside to see the rows of pine trees standing and the rays of morning sun on their leaves glittering like anything. The quietness of the entire place was engulfing effect on me. Nature had a weird

way of communicating with me, the language was called silence. Right across from our cabin there was another two-story cabin and to get there one had to climb a long set of rocky stairs then ultimately ended up on a porch where a table and a couple of chairs were kept. We had planned to visit a nearby lake, but I declined the offer and stayed back to look out of the big glass windows. The big, tall pine trees along with some baby pines were all swaying in the wind. The serenity of the place wrapped me up like a blanket. It was the perfect place for meditating, and I tried for some time to calm my inner beings. It was a type of place where Yogi could be one with nature. We played a couple of game of corn hole to create our appetite That night we had Barbeque for dinner and ate out on a picnic bench. That was a lot of fun having dinner in the wilderness while listening to the soothing sound of the wind chiming in the background. But that peaceful environment did not last for long as an angry bee smelled our food and decided to sit on our food and chase us inside our cabin. After dinner we decided to play card games that were fun. Next day we woke up a bit early to leave for home. I wasn't ready to part away yet, wanted to stay one more day with nature. With heavy heart I had to say goodbye to the log cabin and wished to come back again sometimes sooner than later.



Flower Dome: A Living Canvas in the Heart of Singapore

Dilip Chakrabarty

On my recent visit to Singapore, I explored the Flower Dome at Gardens by the Bay in Marina Bay — the world's largest column-free glass greenhouse, a Guinness World Record holder. This immense conservatory spans three acres, blending innovative architecture with stunning displays of flora from across the globe. Its climate-controlled environment recreates the cool, dry conditions of the Mediterranean and other semi-arid regions, making it possible to house diverse plant species under one roof. A stroll through the Flower Dome feels like entering a horticultural gallery, where every bloom and landscape is carefully curated from distant corners of the earth.

The collections evolve with the seasons. I noticed how this year's summer displays contrasted with my visit last winter, when poinsettias filled the space with festive color. Themed gardens and seasonal showcases — whether tulips in spring, succulents and baobabs from desert landscapes, or floral festivals tied to cultural moments — transform the conservatory into a living canvas of color and form. For both nature lovers and photographers, the Flower Dome is a sanctuary of wonder. It remains one of my favorite places in Singapore, a space that feels endlessly refreshing with each visit.

The Flower Dome is more than a conservatory — it is a celebration of nature's artistry and human ingenuity, a place where every visit feels new.



জিহাদ

আলী বাবা



আজ খুব হৈচৈ শুরু,
আমার ভাইজান কাকে যেন কি বলেছে।
নাকি ভাইজানকে কেউ কিছু বলেছে?
অথবা অন্য কেউ কাউকে কিছু বলেছে।
কিংবা কেউই কাউকে কিছু বলেনি।

আম্মি আর ভাবীকে দখতে বসতে দেখলাম।
সন্ধ্যে হয়ে গেলো খাওয়া দাওয়া তেমন হয়নি।
আব্বু ফিরেই, কোথায় বেরিয়ে গেলো আবার।
অনেক অনেক রাতে বিছানায় শুয়ে শুয়ে
শুনেছিলাম।
রফিক চাচা এসেছে।
আরো অনেকে কারা যেন কথা বলছে, সব
বুঝিনি
তবে শুনেছি, জিহাদ হবে।
বড় জিহাদ।
আমরা আর তারা, ওরা আর আমরা।
আবার সকাল হলো,
আজান এর সুর টা আজ একটু অন্য রকম
লাগলো।
ওদের পুজোর ঘন্টাটাও যেন একটু বেশি
জোরে বাজলো।
ওই সবাই এসে পড়েছে জিহাদ হবে তো।
ওই যে ওদের আর আমাদের বাড়ির মাঝে
পাঁচিলে একটা ভাঙ্গা,

ওই যেটা দিয়ে আম্মি, পিসি কে বিরিয়ানি
দেয়,

আর ওই পিসি আমাকে পায়ের দেয়,
সবাই ওটা দিয়ে ছড়মুড় করে ঢুকে গেলো।

ওটাই কি তাহলে জান্নাত যাওয়ার রাস্তা।

ওই তো বাড়ির দাদু বসেছিল, এখন কি ঘুমিয়ে
পড়ল?

পিসি কোথায়? পায়ের বানাচ্ছে?

রক্ত গরম, যুদ্ধ জিহাদ খেলা,

বেশ খেলা, আম্মিও খেলব

জান্নাত এর রাস্তায় শামিল হলাম।

কেমন ধোঁয়া কেমন ধুলো আর লাল চিটচিটে
রক্ত

জল দিয়ে ধুলেও যাচ্ছে না

ইমাম বুড়ো আব্দুল সাহেব, মাথা নেড়ে
বলেছিল ও দাগ আর কোনো দিন যাবে না।

এখন বেলা শেষ।

বাকি সবাই গভীর ঘুমে

আম্মি একাই জেগে আছি, আর কেউ নেই,

খেতে বসেছি নামাজ এর পরে।

কিন্তু, মুখে বিরিয়ানি তুলতে পারছি না,

হাতের ওই আঁশটে গন্ধটা, মুখের কাছে
আনতে পারছি না।

গাটা গুলিয়ে আসছে

হে আল্লাহ, আমাকে ক্ষমা করো।

ভুলভুলইয়া ভোলাবাবু রঞ্জনা মুখার্জী

ভুল ভুলইয়া ভোলা বাবু যাচ্ছে সব ভুলে,
সারাদিন খুঁজতে থাকে চশমা মাথায় তুলে।
এই রাখছে, এই ভুলছে, খোঁজাই এখন কাজ,
মিস্টার খোঁজ নামটি গিনি দিয়েছে তাই আজ।

ঘর ভর্তি কাগজ কলম প্রয়োজন নাকি অতি,
দরকারে সে পায় না কিছুই খোঁজে আঁতিপাঁতি।
কোনো কিছু ফেলতে গেলেই বলে, 'ফেলো
আমাকে';
গিনিমার ভারী জ্বালা, পড়েছে সে বিপাকে।

খুঁজে কিছু না পেলেই তখন গিনিমাকে ডাকে,
গিনিমা কি আর করে, খোঁজে দিকে দিকে।
নামটি সবার যায় সে ভুলে, পারে না রাখতে
মনে,
মনে করতে নামটি তখন সুধায় জনে জনে।

নিজের ভুলে গিনিমার ওপর তোলেন
সিংহনাদ,
জন্মমাস, সনের কথা নাহয় দিলাম আমি বাদ।
সকাল সন্ধ্যা ভোলাবাবু ভুলভুলইয়াতে ঘোরে,
তবে ভুল করেও গিনিমাকে পারে না থাকতে
ছেড়ে।

চশমাটাকে মাথায় নিয়ে খোঁজে চারিধারে,
কিছু না কিছু খুঁজতে সে থাকে বারে বারে।
একাকীত্বের দুঃখটাকে পারে না শুধু ভুলতে,
সবাইকে নিয়ে আজও সে চায় যে বেঁচে
থাকতে।।

দেবমানব প্রণব মিশ্র

ফল নয়, ফুল নয়,
বস্ত্র নয়, বর্ণ নয়,
কোনো বাহারি আয়োজন নয়—
শুধু অন্তরের নীরবতা কেন নেমে আসে?

পল্লববত প্রাণের কণ্ঠে
হয়তো সুর, হয়তো প্রতিধ্বনি,
কেনই বা অনন্ত কলরবের ভিড়ে
অতল নিস্তন্ধতার খোঁজ করি আমরা?

বিদ্যুতের ঝলক, প্রবাহমান জনপথ—
কোলাহল স্তব্ধ হলে
বন-অরণ্যের আশ্রয় হয়
প্রাণের শান্তি ও দীর্ঘকালের আনন্দ।

কোথাও বা পাথরের গায়ে
জড়জীবনের অচেতন ধ্বনি,
সরীসৃপের গতি,
অতীতের গোপন কেতন উড়ে যায়।

ঝর্ণাধারার রাত্রি,
বনপাহাড়ের নিরস্ত্র নীল রাত্রি
ধীরে ধীরে দীর্ঘ হয়,
চন্দ্রালোকে নেমে আসে স্নিগ্ধতা।

কত দূরের দুঃখ-তরঙ্গ ভেসে আসে,
কাজল-জ্যোৎস্নায় ভিজে ওঠে প্রাণ।
অন্যর ধ্বনি জমে থাকে
অসীম অন্তরালে—
প্রতিধ্বনির ভেতর
জেগে ওঠে নতুন দিনের বাণী।



SOUMYAJIT
AND
KRITIKA

MT. HOOD,
LAKE TRILLIUM,
OREGON

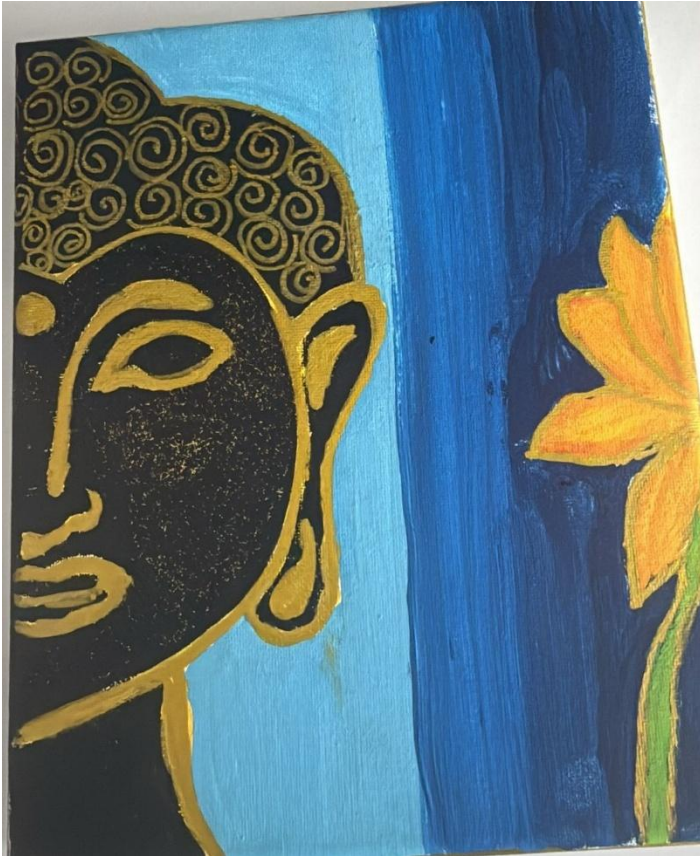
HAYSTACK ROCK,
CANNON BEACH



MULTNOMAH FALLS,
OREGON



BAYSIDE, MIAMI



Artist: Aabir Banerjee, Age- 10



Artist: Ishani Banerjee, Age-5

“Everything you can imagine is real” — Pablo Picasso

Lone Wolf Under the Moon



Artist: Mohanraj, Age-9

Painting of a Ghast from Minecraft



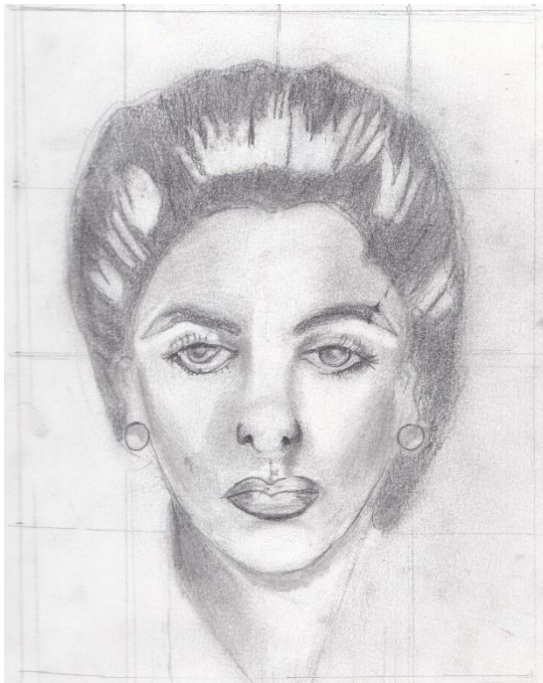
Artist: Adhrit Singh, Age-10



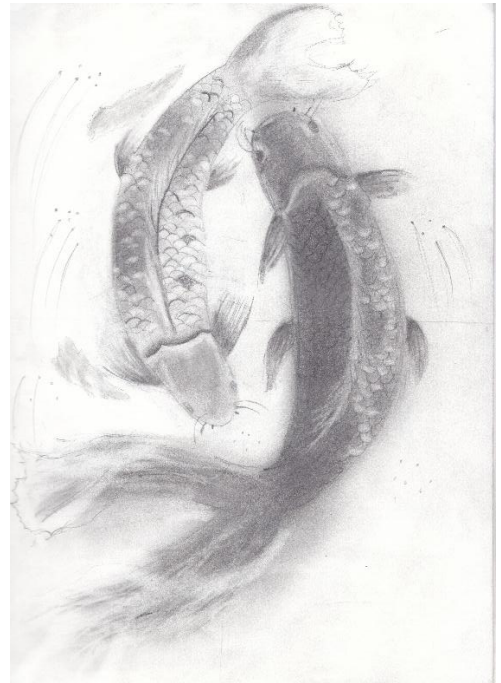
Pencil on Paper

“A painter should begin every canvas with a wash of black, because all things in nature are dark except where exposed by the light” — Leonardo da Vinci

A woman



Yin and Yang



Artist: Srinika Das, Age-11

“या देवी सर्वभूतेषु शक्तिरूपेण संस्थिता।” (The Goddess who resides in all beings as energy.)



Artist: Adwik Datta, Age-10

“I dream my painting, and I paint my dream” — Vincent Willem van Gogh



Medusa



Vampire Lips

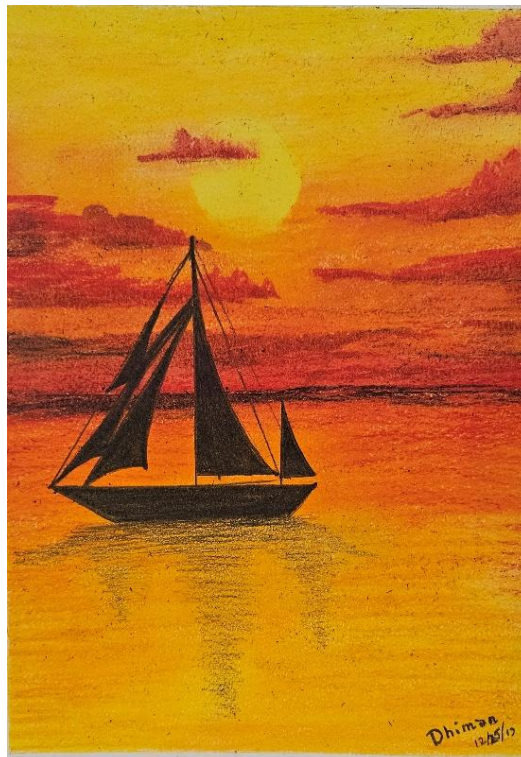
Artist: Prisha Dhiman, Age-16



Painting by Sharmistha Ganguly Bhattacharyya



Sailing into Sun by Sunit Dhiman



✍ Offering eyes of Maa Durga by Anindita Roy Biswas



✍ Lord Jagannath by Smita Panda



Samhita Events at a Glance

Saraswati Puja '25



Annual Picnic '25



Durga Puja '24

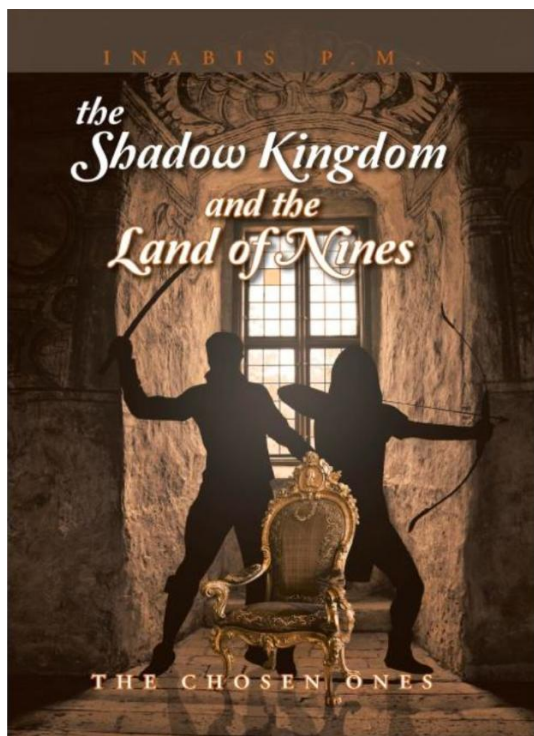


Holiday Party '24



Feed My Starving Children' 25





A thrilling ride into an unknown kingdom, this book by Inabis PM has recently been featured in LA BOOK FESTIVAL.

The book is available online via XLIBRIS, Amazon, Barnes and Noble, Walmart, Apple books, Goodreads, Abebook, Kobo, KINDLE, Scribd etc.

Author Webpage: Inabisp.m.com

Author email:

Inabisp.m@gmail.com

Make an Impact: Samhita identified 4 causes. You can donate directly to any of them using the QR codes below. For donations to Samhita, you can Zelle/PayPal to treasurer@azsamhita.org

- **Central Arizona Animal Rescue**
gofund.me/bd211f2c



Scan to donate



- **Singleton Moms**
gofund.me/80066cf4



- **Si se Puede Foundation**
gofund.me/4f3e8933



- **Save The Family**
gofund.me/5f0a131d





দেবী দুর্গা

azsamhita.org