



চৌরঙ্গী ২০২৫

24th Annual Magazine

The Bengali Association of Greater Sacramento, California

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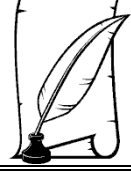
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আমরা অত্যন্ত গর্বিত যে, উৎসব-এর নতুন সাহিত্য কমিটি হিসেবে চৌরঙ্গী পত্রিকার সম্পাদনার দায়িত্ব আমাদের হাতে এসেছে। চৌরঙ্গী শুধুমাত্র আমাদের সম্প্রদায়ের সাহিত্য প্রতিভার দলিল নয়, এটি উৎসবের সামাজিক ও সাংস্কৃতিক কর্মকাণ্ডের একটি জীবন্ত প্রতিচ্ছবি—যেখানে গল্প, কবিতা, স্মৃতিচারণা ও ভাবনা মিলিয়ে গড়ে ওঠে আমাদের সম্মিলিত পরিচয়।

এই বছর দুর্গা পূজার আনন্দ উদযাপন করতে গিয়ে আমরা আবারও উপলব্ধি করেছি ঐতিহ্য ও সৃষ্টিশীলতার শক্তি। ইউনেস্কো কর্তৃক দুর্গোৎসবকে “Intangible Cultural Heritage” হিসেবে স্বীকৃতি দেওয়ার পর, আমাদের মন ফিরে যায় বাংলার সেই চেনা পূজার দিনে—যেখানে শহরের অলিগলি জুড়ে প্যান্ডেল, ঢাকের বাদ্য, ধুনুচি নাচ, আর ভক্তির আবেশে ভরে ওঠে আকাশ-বাতাস। শিউলি ফুলের গন্ধ, নতুন জামার খুশি, আর আত্মীয়-বন্ধুদের সঙ্গে কাটানো মুহূর্তগুলো আজও আমাদের হৃদয়ে অমলিন।

স্যাট্রামেন্টোতে আমরা সেই আনন্দকে নতুনভাবে গড়ে তুলেছি। উৎসবের-এর দুর্গা পূজা এখন আমাদের প্রবাসী জীবনের অন্যতম প্রাণবন্ত উৎসব—যেখানে রঙিন পোশাকে সজ্জিত পরিবার, শিশুদের প্রাণবন্ত পরিবেশনা, আর ভোগের সুগন্ধে ভরে ওঠে অনুষ্ঠানস্থল। এই বছরের পূজাও হবে আনন্দে ভরপুর, যেখানে সংস্কৃতির ছোঁয়া আর একাত্মতার উষ্ণতা একসঙ্গে ধরা দিয়েছে।

আমরা বিশেষভাবে গর্বিত আমাদের ছোটদের সাহিত্যিক অবদানের জন্য। তাদের কবিতা, গল্প, আর ভাবনা আমাদের ভবিষ্যতের আশার আলো। অভিভাবক ও সংগঠকদের উৎসাহ এবং সহায়তায় তাদের সৃষ্টিশীলতা বিকশিত হয়েছে। যদিও সময়ের অভাবে আমরা প্রাপ্তবয়স্কদের লেখা বেশি সংগ্রহ করতে পারিনি, আগামী বছর আমরা আরও বিস্তৃতভাবে অংশগ্রহণ নিশ্চিত করতে প্রতিশ্রুতিবদ্ধ।

উৎসবের এর ২৫ বছর পূর্তির দ্বারপ্রান্তে দাঁড়িয়ে, আমরা আশা করি আগামী দিনগুলোতে আরও গভীর সহযোগিতা, ঐক্য, এবং আমাদের সাংস্কৃতিক ঐতিহ্যের উদযাপন ঘটবে। চৌরঙ্গী পত্রিকার এই সংখ্যাটি যেন আমাদের সকলের মধ্যে আনন্দ, ভাবনা, এবং গর্বের অনুভূতি জাগিয়ে তোলে।

সবাইকে শুভ দুর্গা পূজার শুভেচ্ছা জানাই ও আগামী বছরের জন্য রইল উজ্জ্বল শুভকামনা।

উৎসব সাহিত্য কমিটি





Editorial

We are honored to serve as the new Literary Committee of UTSAV, entrusted with curating and producing Chowrongee, our community's beloved magazine. More than a collection of literary works, Chowrongee is a vibrant reflection of UTSAV's social and cultural heartbeat—a tapestry woven with stories, poems, essays, and memories that celebrate our shared heritage and evolving journey.

This year, as we gather to celebrate Durga Pujo, we are reminded of the enduring power of tradition and creativity. The festival, now recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, evokes deep nostalgia for the grandeur of celebrations in West Bengal — where city streets bloom with pandals, dhak beats echo through alleyways, and the air is thick with devotion, artistry, and joy. For many of us, these memories are etched in childhood, in the scent of shiuli flowers, the rustle of new clothes, and the warmth of community.

Here in Greater Sacramento, we try to recreate that magic in our own way. The UTSAV Durga Pujo celebration has grown into a cherished tradition—where families gather in vibrant attire, children perform with infectious enthusiasm, and the aroma of bhog and laughter fills the air. The joy is palpable, whether in the rhythm of cultural performances or the quiet pride of elders watching the next generation carry the torch forward. This year's festivities will be no exception, reminding us that even far from home, we can kindle the same spirit of togetherness and reverence.

We are especially proud of our young contributors, whose creativity and imagination shine through in this edition. Their poems, stories, and reflections are a testament to the encouragement of parents and community mentors who nurture their voices. While we couldn't gather as many adult submissions this time due to time constraints, we are committed to expanding participation in the future—ensuring that Chowrongee continues to reflect the full spectrum of our community's talent and experience.

As UTSAV approaches its 25th year, we look forward to deeper collaboration, greater cohesion, and continued celebration of our cultural legacy. May this edition of Chowrongee inspire joy, reflection, and pride in who we are and what we create together.

Our warm wishes for a blessed Durga Pujo and a luminous year ahead.

UTSAV Literary Committee



Literary Committee

Debanik Chaudhuri (Editor)
Shyamal Chowdhury (Co-Editor)
Trina Ghosh
Oindrila Chakraborty (in absentia)

Youth Committee

Editors-in-Chief
Siddhartha Dey and Sneha Dey

Editors
Aratrika Paul, Meghma Mukherjee, Abhirup Mukherjee, Dipannita Barman,
Renee Som Kiran, Toushini Banga and Shriya Banerjee

Cover designed by **Santana Das**

Since 2008, Chowrongee has been online and can be accessed at
<https://utsavsac.org/our-magazines/>

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Utsav Inc.
11230 Gold Express Drive
P.O. Box 310-412
Gold River, CA 95670
www.utsavsac.org

Chowrongee is published annually for Utsav members by Utsav Inc., Sacramento, CA, USA
(www.utsavsac.org)

Printed at:
J. Prassa Printers, 2313 C Street, Sacramento, CA 95816
Phone: (916) 446-7865;
<http://www.jpprinting.net>

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Joy Mukherjee (Vice President)
Anirban Bhattacharyya (Treasurer & Secretary)
Soma Tapadar (Cultural Secretary & Literary Liaison)
Mitra Choudri (Public Relations & Member Outreach)

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Rajat Saha
Sangita Biswas

Cultural Committee:

Soma Tapadar – GBM Lead
Ayantika Bhattacharya
Ananya Nandi
Rajat Chakravarty
Bhaskar Bhaumik
Barnali Roy Chowdhury
Subhadra Sengupta
Suvra Mukherjee

Puja Committee:

Mitra Choudri - GBM Lead
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Shashwati Roy
Sudeshna Ghosh
Dipanjana Sen
Seema Chanda
Suman Sarkar
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Shilpi Chakraborty, Suvra Mukherjee, Ayantika
Bhattacharya, Soma Tapadar.

Registration Committee:

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Adi Choudri
Shankha Sen
Prodosh Chakraborty
Subhra Gima

Food Committee:

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Subir Sarkar
Mainak Banga
Subhankar Mukherjee
Joy Mukherjee

Shomeek Paul
Coconad Mukherjee
Avijit Bhattacharya
Soumen Dey
Rashmi Nandi
Barun Bandopadhyaya

Welcome Committee

Mitra Choudri - GBM Lead
Sanchita Auddy – Folsom
Rajat Chakraborty – Natomas & UC Davis Campus
Sreeparna Bhaumik – Elk Grove/South Sacramento
Aindrila Kar - Rancho Cordova
Sharmila Mallick – Rosevill
Nandita Dey – Rocklin
Suvra Mukherjee – El Dorado Hills

Literary Committee:

Soma Tapadar – GBM Liaison
Debanik Chaudhuri (Editor)
Shyamal Chowdhury (Co-Editor)
Trina Ghosh
Oindrila Chakraborty (in absentia)

Literary Youth section:

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Sidharta Dey – Junior Editor in Chief
Sneha Dey – Co Editor in Chief
Aratrika Paul – Junior Editor
Renee Kiran – Junior Editor
Abhirup Mukherjee – Junior Editor
Dipannita Barman – Junior Editor for Art

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Sangita Biswas – Lead & Coordinator
Manjula Dey – Co-Lead
Snigdha Banerjee – Co-Lead
Barnali Roy Chowdhury - Lead for International projects
Sanchita Auddy – Lead for NBLB
Monika Paul
Ayantika Bhattacharya
Nandita Dey
Pubasha Das

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Sneha Dey
Anaya Bhattacharyya
Renee Kiran

Sayak Datta
Siddhartha Dey
Eshan Dey
Siddharth (Neil) Ray
Sanjoli Ray
Sudhit Ganguly
Suhaan Devavarapu
Dipannita Burman
Abhirup Mukherjee
Ryan Bhattacharya
Toushini Banga



Message from the Utsav Governing Body Members

Celebrating 24 Years of Utsav Sacramento: A Journey of Culture, Community & Commitment

As Utsav Sacramento proudly marks its 24th year, we take this moment to reflect with deep gratitude and excitement. What began as a humble initiative has grown into one of Northern California's most vibrant and impactful cultural organizations - bringing together generations of Bengalis and broader Indian-American communities under one shared spirit of celebration, service, and cultural pride.

A Year of Firsts: Fundraising, Growth & Partnerships

This year saw a major evolution in how Utsav supports its mission. For the first time in our history, **we launched an ambitious fundraising campaign targeting corporations and local businesses**—and the response has been inspiring. With the generous support of corporate sponsors, small businesses, and community leaders, we're not only supporting current programming but **laying the groundwork for something historic**.

This fundraising success is a testament to the belief in Utsav's vision—and we owe special thanks to **those members who went above and beyond**, contributing generous personal donations and upgrading to higher membership tiers to show their support.

A Grateful Salute to Our Members, Volunteers & Youth

Our community's strength lies in its people. Volunteers have worked tirelessly behind the scenes - planning logistics, managing events, and supporting with creativity, compassion, and commitment. To our **youth volunteers**, thank you for bringing energy, ideas, and a sense of ownership to everything from cultural programming and fundraising to support local causes.

And to our **members**: your continued participation, enthusiasm, and generosity form the foundation of everything Utsav achieves. You are not just members - you are the heartbeat of this organization.

The Countdown Begins: Our 25th Year in 2026

Next year marks a **once-in-a-lifetime milestone**—**Utsav Sacramento turns 25!** A quarter century of

celebrating Bengali culture, building community, and giving back.

To commemorate this incredible achievement, we are **planning a year-long series of events, culminating in a grand 25th Year Gala Celebration** unlike anything we've done before. Our goal? To amplify our impact, elevate our reach, give back to the local community, and ensure Utsav continues to thrive for the next generation.

This is more than just a birthday party. It's a bold declaration that **Utsav Sacramento - and the Bengali-American community - is a powerful, visible, and proud part of the cultural fabric of the Greater Sacramento Region**.

We'll need everyone's help—whether through fundraising, volunteering, attending events, or simply spreading the word. Let's rise together to make 2026 the most unforgettable year in Utsav's history.

A Legendary Moment: Kavitha Krishnamurthy at Utsav

As a fitting prelude to our 25th year, we are beyond thrilled to welcome **legendary singer Padma Shri Kavitha Krishnamurthy** to Sacramento! Her presence is not only a celebration of her iconic music but also a symbol of how far Utsav has come - a long way from organizing small cultural gatherings to now hosting world-renowned artists.

This concert isn't just a performance, it's a tribute to you and our community.

Here's to the past 24 years - and to the next 25!

Together, we're not just celebrating culture; we're making history.

The Utsav Sacramento GBM Board

Debashis Ghosh (President)
Joy Mukherjee (Vice President)
Anirban Bhattacharyya (Treasurer & Secretary)
Soma Tapadar (Cultural Secretary & Literary Liaison)
Mitra Choudri (Public Relations & Member Outreach)

Memories with Utsav

This page contains reminiscences from Utsav's past Presidents.

Arijit Chattopadhyay (2003): Not available.

Udayan Chanda (2004): As one of the original founding members of Utsav, when I look back and reminisce the last 20 years, I feel immersed in pride and gratification to see how far we have come as an organization. Although I was the President in 2004, the entire community came together at that time, as it does now, to bring each event to life. This organization is special and holds a special place in my heart. The feeling of camaraderie and "being at home" is unmatched and truly reflective of the special relationships that have formed over the years.

Mitra Choudri (2005): I was the third President of Utsav with young, energetic board members who were new to me, and I was slowly getting to know them on a personal level - UC, Joy, Shashwati, and Arun. The crisis described below shows their dedication to Utsav, which has been selfless and consistent over the last 20 years.

We had Raghab Chatterjee lined up for our Saturday evening program during Durga Pujo 2005. Two days before our Pujo, we were told that Raghab did not get his US visa and could not perform for Utsav.

Joy Mukherjee and Udayan Chanda calmly took charge of finding another artist while I was frantic and stressed out, and in 24 hours were able to negotiate and sign a new contract with another artist Somdatta. This helped our Pujo program continue without a glitch for our Utsav audience. This act of stepping up for Utsav during a crisis was extraordinary and very commendable, and a fond memory that I will cherish with gratitude forever!

Biswanath Mukherjee (2006): In 2006, we featured Nachiketa as our external artist for Utsav. We had quite an experience with him! Utsav gained several new members through UC Davis Ph.D students, including its would-be president Rajat Saha, who turned out to be a very good carrom player. Utsav members enthusiastically performed "Babuder Dalkukurey," directed by Dr. Somen Nandi at the Bay Area Natyamela at Amador Theater in Pleasanton, CA, in June 2006. It was indeed an honor to perform at Amador Theater when professional actors such as Ranjit Mallick have performed on the same stage. A surprise dance performance by Natasha Choudri to the tune "Ami Miss Kolkata" was a huge hit with the audience during our Durga Puja 2006 cultural program.

Dipankar Chattopadhyay (2007): It was a great pleasure to work with the Utsav Bengali community in the Year 2007. We worked together not just as a team; it was like a big family. The greatest moment I had was when my elder son Shounak participated in a kids' drama based on "Panchtantr Golpo" during Durga Puja. We all used to meet at our friends' houses every weekend for rehearsal. The drama was a great success, and all the kids enjoyed it a lot. It is still in our family's memory.

Deb Saha (2008): Utsav completed seven years of joyful journey in promoting a positive and enjoyable experience of friendship, happiness, and harmony of our Motherland's heritage. We added several new members and enjoyed many fun events, all of which are of immense value to us, being so far away from India. We started three days of celebration for the first time in UTSAV's history, which was only possible because of the passion, creativity, and dedication of members consisting of the Greater Sacramento and Reno area.

Adi Choudri (2009): I have to say my presidency was a year with many "highs" and "challenges." During my presidency in 2009, the youngsters of the Utsav family staged "Ramayana," which was a great success with the viewers. The kids being born and brought up in the US did a fantastic job in understanding and memorizing difficult Bengali script. On top of that, they put excellent effort into acting, accompanied by an equally enchanting light-and-sound effect. It was directed by Dr. Ajay Joshi and Nupur Joshi. Utsav participated in presenting a drama at the NABC conference sponsored by Bay Area Prabasi. We had a fantastic artist lineup from Kolkata during the Puja. The "challenge" came as an emergency with one of the GBM members, but the rest of the team had such excellent camaraderie that they managed the event without missing a beat!!!

Sharmila Mukherjee (2010): I had the honor of serving our great organization in 2010. We had a fabulous puja with enthusiastic participation from all our members, adults, and children alike. Our members did not hesitate to come forward and help in all areas, whether it was preparing the delicious food, decorating the hall, or participating in cultural programs with great passion. We were blessed to welcome a brand-new Ma Durga with her family into our midst that year, thanks to the generous donations of our members and well-wishers.

Joy Mukherjee (2011-12): As the President of Utsav, I was honored to lead the GBM during its 10th year of infancy. In that year, we, for the first time, started our Pujo on a Friday with Tanusree Shankar's performance,

followed by Aneek and Anwesha's performance on Saturday. A couple of noteworthy mentions of my tenure: first - this was the first 2-year-term GBM after the change in by-laws, and second, this was the only time we relocated Utsav's Durga Puja to Davis and attracted a record number crowd. Long Live Utsav!

Ajay Joshi (2013-14): It is remarkable how much Utsav has achieved since its inception 20 years ago. It has taken in its stride two recessions, many ups, a few downs, and a brutal pandemic. This is a tribute to the dedication and imagination of its members. Presidents, board members have come and gone, but Utsav has continued, gaining strength and resilience over the years.

As the world changes around us, I hope that we will not just promote the culture of a land far away, but will also engage more deeply with and play a greater role in shaping the community we live in.

Sanjib Nayak (2015-16): Not available.

Rajat Saha (2017-18): Being President of Utsav in 2017 and 2018 was rewarding yet challenging. I had tremendous support from my fellow GBM as well as from all Utsav members. It's hard to pick one or two memories as my favorite, but if I really had to, I would pick the cultural performances. In 2017, the performance by renowned singer Kinjal Chattopadhyay was simply mesmerizing. In the same year, our in-house natok "Occupy Walmart," which we performed both during the Durga Puja and NABC 2017, received many accolades inhouse as well as from NABC audience. In 2018, our indigenous natok "Live from Banglerville" was an unstoppable laughing riot. I must say, Utsav has a goldmine of versatile untapped talents. Let's keep on rocking, Utsav!

Joydeep Ray (2019-20): I was honored to serve the members of Utsav as its 13th President (2019-2020). In our GBM, we had Soumya Mallick as Vice-president, Subir Saha as Treasurer, Joya Banerjee as Cultural lead, and Shubhra Chakroborty as PR lead. The first year went as planned - we celebrated Utsav's yearly events with its usual fervor, joy, and grandiosity, the highlight being the Sourendro/Soumyajit Concert. Then, in 2020, the pandemic struck. We were forced to adjust to the new normal - lockdown and social distancing! However, that did not prevent us from celebrating our 19th Durga Puja, via web-casting of the Puja and cultural programs, bhog pickup from a local Temple, and a Bollywood fund-raising concert live-streamed from Mumbai.

Somen Nandi (2021-22): The most encouraging and amazing feelings for me is to witness how Utsav is growing up since 2002 and reaching its maturity as an organization. It has been an impressive journey of two

decades and I feel the same way when I see my students and the kids of Utsav family have grown up over the years, now they are professionally well qualified and are giving back to the community. I feel blessed to be a part of this fruition and hope to see this as a continuous progress.

Sangita Biswas (2023-24): I was honored to lead Utsav as president from 2023-2024, alongside a hardworking team including Anima Kumar as Vice President, Rupa Chowdhury as treasurer, Subhra Gima as cultural secretary, and Santana Das as website manager. Together, we achieved remarkable milestones, including commissioning a new Thakur from Kolkata and launching the President's Volunteer Service Award program to inspire and empower our youth. We also received the Rancho Cordova City Enhancement Grant for the first time.

In the face of social and political adversities, the support of a community organization like Utsav has been a powerful catalyst for resilience for the past 24 years. By bringing together families and loved ones, we provide a beacon of hope, comfort, and support that empowers our members to navigate challenging times. Guided by our mission to give back to our roots, we've embarked on several initiatives. One ongoing project provides educational, social, and emotional support to women and children who have faced domestic violence, emotional abuse, and homelessness. Additionally, we've launched a distant - learning, technology driven mentorship program in a school in Bihar, India, where Utsav youth volunteers serve as role models and mentors to students coming from a lower economic background.

My hope is that Utsav will strive forward with an unwavering commitment towards preserving our Bengali heritage and our philanthropic mission.

Ordinary Income/Expense Statement (July 2024 – June 2025)*

Revenues	Individual Amount	Amount	Total
Membership Fees & Donations		\$59,685.30	
Youth Fundraiser Donations		\$228.00	
	Total Revenues		\$59,913.30
Expenses			
Contract Services		\$1,099.00	
Storage Rent		\$2,367.61	
Operations			
• Books, Subscriptions, References	\$493.64		
• Postage, Mailing Service	\$18.25.00		
• Printing and Copying	\$516.53		
• Charitable Donations	\$801.00		
	Total Operations	\$1,829.42	
Insurance- Liability, D and O		\$1,092.96	
Event Expenses			
• Event Supplies	\$2,154.81		
• Event Food & Catering	\$27,874.70		
• Rental Space	\$12,330.00		
• Entertainment	\$9,640.00		
• Misc Event Expenses	\$259.73		
• Event Helpers & Cleaning Charges	\$2,901.00		
• Event Transportation	\$1,771.21		
	Total Event Expenses	\$56,931.45	
	Total Expenses		\$63,320.44
Net Ordinary Income			-\$3,407.14

*Please note the following

- The above is the Unaudited Statement for the Membership Year July 2024 to June 2025
- The above-mentioned consolidated expenses include all expenses incurred during the following events
 - Durga Puja 2024
 - Saraswati Puja 2025
 - Holi/New Year 2025
 - Utsav Annual Picnic 2025



Program Schedule for 24th Sharodotsav, 2025

Friday, September 26, 2025

Thakur Set-Up at OCC	01:00 PM – 06:00 PM
Food Stall/Snacks for Purchase	05:00 PM – 07:00 PM
Registration	06:00 PM onwards
Sharodotsav (Shoshthi and Bodhon Pujo)	06:00 PM - 07:00 PM
Cultural Program	07:00 PM – 09:00 PM
Dinner	09:00 PM onwards

Saturday, September 27, 2025

Registration	09:00 AM onwards
Sharodotsav (Saptami and Mahashtami)	09:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Aarati and Pushpanjali	11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Prasad Distribution	11:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Lunch	01:00 PM – 03:00 PM
Shopping & Snacks for Purchase from Food Stalls	03:00 PM – 05:00 PM
Shondhi Pujo and Aarati with Dhunuchi Dance	05:00 PM – 06:00 PM
Evening Cultural Program	06:00 PM – 09:00 PM
Dinner	09:00 PM onwards
DJ Dancing	10:00 PM – 11:00 PM

Sunday, September 28, 2025

Sharodotsav (Mahanabami, Bijoya Dashami, Aarati)	09:30 AM - 11:00 AM
Anjali & Prasad	11:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Bishorjon and Sindur Khela	12:00 PM – 01:00 PM
Lunch	01:00 PM – 02:00 PM
Thakur Take-Down & Wrap up	01:00 PM – 03:00 PM
Kavita Krishnamurthy Concert at Folsom Harris Center	07:00 PM onwards
Food stall / Snacks / Dinner for purchase	(Doors open at 6 PM)

Community News

Hiya Banerjee, daughter of Barun Bandyopadhyay and Dr. Sunanda Bandyopadhyay has graduated from her high school as valedictorian and will be attending UCLA this fall. We wish her all the best.



Congratulations to **Aayush Ghosh**, son of Anjan and Trina Ghosh, a proud graduate of Sheldon High School, Class of 2025! Aayush has shown exceptional dedication and perseverance throughout his high school journey. As he turns the page to a new chapter, he will be attending the University of California, Riverside (UCR) to pursue a degree in Business. We wish Aayush all the best in his academic and professional journey ahead. Your Utsav family is proud of you!



Esha Banerjee, daughter of Snigdha and Amit Bandyopadhyay, graduated this year from Mira Loma High School in Carmichael. She is now pursuing Neuroscience at the University of California, Davis. We are incredibly proud of her and wish her the best on her future journey.

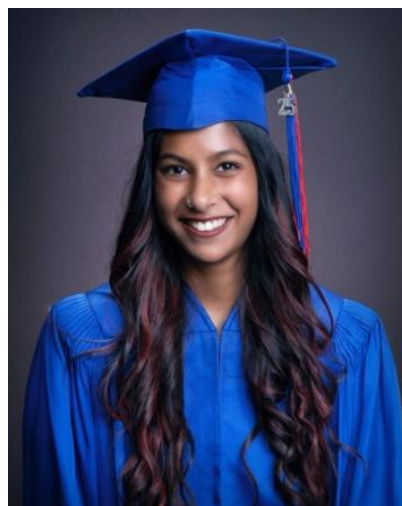


We are proud to celebrate **Evani's** graduation from high school and her next exciting chapter at the University of Nevada, Reno, where she will pursue a major in Psychology with the goal of entering the field of forensics.

Evani's journey has not been without its challenges. She has faced and overcome many hardships early in life with resilience and determination. Witnessing her become the person she is today has been a source of deep pride and joy for our family.

Our dream for her has never been about making us proud, but about making herself proud by finding her own voice, standing strong in rooms we've never been in, doing things we've never dared to try, and living a life of fearless authenticity.

Congratulations, Evani! We can't wait to see where your brilliance and unshakable spirit take you next



Anamitra Bhaumik, son of Bhaskar and Sreeparna Bhaumik, received his Bachelor of Science Degree from University of California, Davis with a major in Neurobiology, Physiology, and Behavior and minors in Public Health Sciences and Psychology. He is currently working as a scribe at Maxim Healthcare.



*It is with immense joy that Debasish and Mishtu share the happy news of their daughter **Veronica's** upcoming marriage to Rohan Sharma on November 22, 2025.*

Many in our Sacramento Bengali community know Debu(da) not only as the dedicated President of Utsav, but also as a respected professional with a long-standing, award-winning career. He currently serves as the Global Head of Business Development and as a strategic advisor to several technology companies, continuing to make both family and community proud. Alongside him, Mishtu has always been a warm and graceful presence, whose support and dedication are felt by all who know her.



*Their daughter's forthcoming wedding marks a joyous milestone for the Ghosh family. The union of **Veronica and Rohan** is a moment of happiness to be shared with loved ones, and the community extends its heartfelt congratulations and blessings as the couple prepares to begin their new journey together.*

The Utsav family joins Debasish(da) and Mishtu(di) in celebrating this special occasion and in wishing the soon-to-be newlyweds a future filled with love, harmony, and prosperity.

Utsav Award Winners (2003-2025)

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 Snehungsu 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
2022: Dipamjali Banerjee
2023: Mala P. Mullins, and Shashwati Roy
2024: Ananya Nandi

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: Dayita Biswas
2021: Mahika Chowdhury
2022: Suhaan Devavarapu and Evani Paul
2023: Biswanath Mukherjee and Anaya Bhattacharyya
2024: Shyamal Chowdhury and Esha Banerjee

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
2022: Bhaskar Bhaumik
2023: Soumen Nandi
2024: Somen Nandi

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
2022: Tanima Bhadra and Rajat Chakravarty
2023: Barun Bandyopadhyay, Mainak Banga, Nirupom Basuroy, Sharod Nandi, Snigdha Banerjee, Manjula Dey, Ayantika Bhattacharya, and Trina Ghosh
2024: Mainak Banga, Abhijit Bhattacharya, Bhaskar Banerjee, Saumen Det, Barun Banerjee, Debashish Ghosh, Monica Paul, Trina Ghosh, Arun Chowdhury

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: Siddhartha Dey
2021: Esha Banerjee
2022: Srija Bhowmik, Sonia Sarkar, Siddhartha Dey,
Samriddhi Majumdar, Nirvik Basuroy, and Aayush
Ghosh
2023: Esha Banerjee, Anaya Bhattacharyya, Siddhartha
Dey, Shriya Banerjee, Aratrika Paul, Aayush Ghosh,
Abhirup Mukherjee, Siddharth Ray, and Suhaan
Devavarapu
2024: Anaya Bhattacharya, Sriya Banerjee, Rishan Dey,
Siddhartha Dey, Aratrika Paul, Suhaan Devavarapu,
Ayush Ghosh, Siddharth Ray

Special Awards 2024

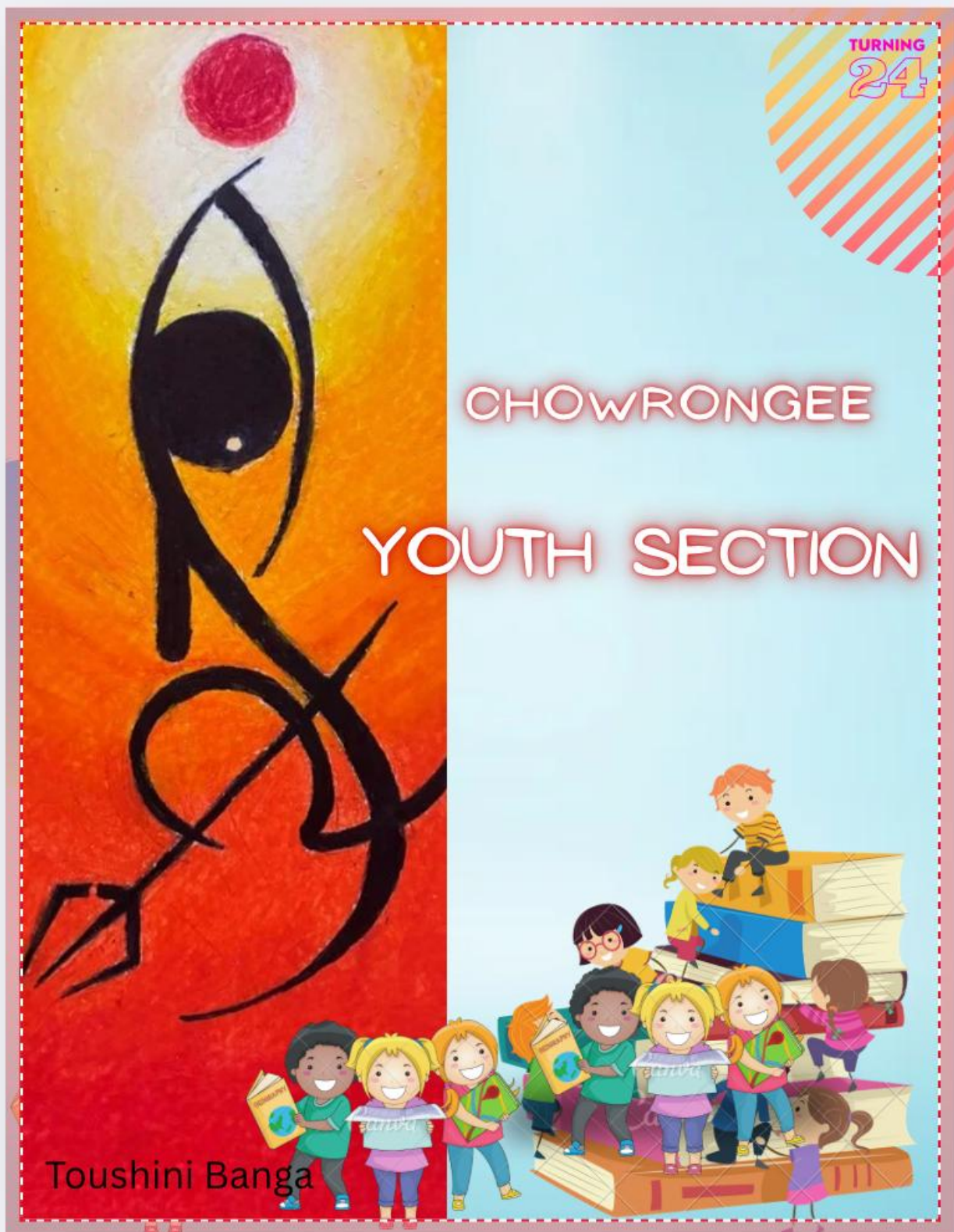
Outstanding Food, Cultural and Literary Volunteer

Award: Rashmi Nandi

Outstanding Photographer Award: Supriya Mukherjee

Outstanding Creativity Award: Manjula Dey and
Sanchita Auddy





Youth Editorials

Message from the editor-in-chief



The sky is bright, and the air is filled with the cool breeze of the autumn season. Bells ring and conches blow. We again find ourselves in the familiar joy of Durga Puja. These days are not just about worshipping Maa Durga; they are about laughter, enjoyment, and union as a community. It is my honor, as a youth editor, to present this year's youth articles in Chowrongee (our yearly magazine), which reflect both our culture's timelessness and our younger generation's fresh perspectives.

This is our 24th Durga Puja, a beautiful journey that began decades ago with a simple dream of celebrating our culture and creativity. A highlight of our tradition is to publish Chowrongee to show creative talents from every Utsav member. Each year, Chowrongee has grown with the contributions, love, and support of our members.

As we turn the pages, let us celebrate not just the stories, poems, and arts within, but also the dedication of everyone who has made this magazine possible over the years, and while we take pride in this year's edition, our hearts are already looking forward to the next: the 25th year, a milestone that will truly be special for all of us.

2025 is a very eventful year, as we are witnessing numerous advancements in the technological field. For example, the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite was launched on July 30, 2025, to detect minute changes on the Earth's surface—such as glacial melting, land deformation, and natural disasters with centimeter-level accuracy. This is a powerful symbol of the U.S.–India cooperation in climate and disaster science.

I thank every youth editor, GBM member, CCM member, and every contributor for putting all their thoughts into this Youth Magazine Section. We hope you have a happy Durga Puja and enjoy this year's youth section. As you read through this year's edition, we hope you find smiles, memories, and perhaps even a touch of nostalgia. May Maa Durga bless us all with happiness, strength, and peace, and may the spirit of the Puja stay with us long after the festival ends.

With best wishes,
Siddhartha (Sid) Dey

Youth Editorials

Message from the junior Co- Editor-in-Chief

Greetings Utsav families! Namaskar!

Wishing you all “Sharod Shubhechha” as we gather today to begin celebrating our 24th Sharodotsav this year. For Utsav “Durgotsav”, it is not only about celebrating religious rituals, but also honoring cultural heritage and motivating members to show their creativity through cultural performances, literature, and art. The focus is on preserving cultural traditions, passing the knowledge to the future generations, and building strong community bonds. And, Utsav has proudly continued this tradition for the past 24 years.

Like every year, we invited young Utsav members to contribute to the Youth Section of Utsav’s annual magazine, *Chowrongee*, to share their creativity through literary and artistic expressions, which include stories, poems, art, anecdotes, etc. They highlight the talents of the younger Utsav members who took time from their busy school schedule to contribute. As a result, we have gathered a wonderful collection of creative works from our youth group for you to enjoy.



2025 has been an eventful year so far, marked by many significant events as well as upsetting moments, including natural calamities that have brought turmoil to life. There have been numerous successes in space exploration and technological advancements. Shubhanshu Shukla brims India with pride as he is the first astronaut from India to blast off to the International Space stations (ISS). What a proud moment for us, as our roots are still tied to India. Artificial Intelligence (AI) is creating headlines in the news every day. It is impacting our lives and transforming how we work, study, live and connect. This year has seen significant advancements in the medical field that have improved patient care. Life is combination of good and bad experiences, but we must all have a progressive mindset to learn from the experience, move forward and stay positive.

I would like to express my gratitude to all the junior editors and all the contributors for your valuable contribution to our youth section of the magazine this year. Happy Durga Puja to everyone and may Ma Durga bless you all with wisdom and strength.

Regards,
Sneha (Riya) Dey
Junior Co Editor-in-Chief

JUNIOR EDITORIAL TEAM

Siddhartha Dey-Editor in Chief



Sneha Dey- Editor in Chief



Aratrika Paul- Editor



Meghma Mukherjee-Editor



Abhirup Mukherjee-Editor



Dippanita Barman-Editor



Toushini Banga-Editor



JUNIOR EDITORIAL TEAM

Renee Som Kiran-Editor



Shriya Banerjee- Editor



What Utsav Means to Me

Heartwarming Thoughts from Utsav Youth Volunteers

Compiled by Sangita Biswas

Anaisha Mitra (youth volunteer). Age:7 years

Utsav means a lot to me. I get to see the Durga Pujo, and be with my friends. I get new dresses and eat prasad and khichuri. Me and my friends participate in plays and get to perform in front of a lot of people. Utsav bring smiles to my face every year. I wait for this day.



Toushini Banga (youth volunteer) Age:11 years



I think Utsav is a fun place, and I have been enjoying it since my childhood. It is an enjoyable experience to perform on stage along with my friends, and rehearsals are fun to be part of. The live songs, dances and plays are nicely choreographed and very entertaining. The annual magazine contains stories of all types and creative art pieces that I enjoy seeing. On-the-spot drawing is a fun experience to have. The Pujo stalls are full of cool and tasty items that I enjoy buying. Overall, Utsav is an enjoyable place to gather and celebrate any occasion. My friends are nice, and I will miss them a lot when I go to college.

Aaria Mukherjee (youth volunteer) Age: 11 years

From what I understand, for my parents Utsav means a festival, a special celebration, or a time of joy. I've heard of the term “Baro Mashe Taro Parbon”, (in 12 months we have 13 festivals), which means life is an ongoing festival. As an USA born, 11-year-old Bengali girl, Durga puja is my favorite UTSAV. To me it is more than just a festival - it seems like a happy state of mind. For three days, it's non-stop fun! I get to meet my friends, dress up, act in plays, laugh, chat and enjoy every single moment. For me it's like pressing the pause button on regular life and just living in happiness.



Rishan Dey (youth volunteer) Age:11years

Utsav is super fun and something I will never forget. They have the power to lift people, encourage people, and more with whatever they do. From the pujas to the picnics, everything is exciting. The plays (natoks), the prasad, and the dances are my favorite parts. Once you spend more time at Utsav, you start to love it even more. And if you're new, don't worry, you'll definitely make friends here. Volunteering is also really cool. Every year, the Utsav youth go to St. John's to help feed women and children who are experiencing some difficulties in their lives. It feels good to help others. Overall, Utsav is a safe and fun place where everyone belongs. I'm so glad to be part of it!



Neil Ray (youth volunteer) Age:17 years



To me, Utsav is where my heart truly belongs - a space alive with Durga Puja's energy and Saraswati Pooja's devotion, events where I have been volunteering since the 2nd grade. It is where youth services events grounded me in purpose, and I found my tribe celebrating our culture and making memories. Utsav is not just an organization- it's my second home, my creative outlet, and the place that binds me and my parents in pride.

Dipannita Barman (youth volunteer) Age:17 years

Utsav has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I am truly grateful, as it has shown me how fortunate I am to stay connected with my culture and traditions, while also giving me friendships and people I can count on along the way. As for my parents, I believe it brings them even greater joy. Seeing their culture celebrated and hearing their mother tongue makes them feel at home despite the hardships they faced in a new country. As I get close to being in college, I know I'll miss the bond we share in this community. Still, I hope to cherish these memories and continue being involved in Utsav in the future!



Avighna Bhattacharyya (youth volunteer) Age: 11 years

Utsav means Durga Puja and all the Bengali things. When I think about Utsav, the first thing that comes to my mind is the fun I have on all three days of Durga puja, celebrating with my family and friends. Utsav also evokes memories of countless drama rehearsals, all the cultural performances, and the volunteering I do every year doing the Durga Puja.



Abhirup Mukherjee (youth volunteer) Age: 17 years



To my family, UTSAV has always been more than an organization; it has become an extended family. Through UTSAV, I have been able to grow close with so many people, and have found a sense of comfort through participation.

My parents have also felt the same way upon joining UTSAV. They have been able to meet so many people as a result of being an active participant in UTSAV's various activities, and formed deep connections with UTSAV and its members over the last couple of years. As a family, we are grateful to be a part of the UTSAV community, allowing us to stay to our traditional roots while also building meaningful relationships.

When I set off to college, I will miss UTSAV dearly. I have made so many core memories in UTSAV, and going off to college will feel like I am leaving those memories behind. However, I know that I will hold those memories very dear to me, even after I leave for college.

The various events that UTSAV hosts have been an opportunity to meet so many new people, and grow closer with the UTSAV family. From serving lunch to sheltered people, to setting up tables for pujo, UTSAV gave me a chance to grow closer to so many people. I will carry these memories over to college, and come back whenever I get a chance for future events.

Aayan Banerjee (youth volunteer) Age: 11years

Utsav represents a bond with my origins. It lets me interact with my Indian heritage. Utsav brings bengali families and communities together. It portrays the importance of tradition and celebrations. Utsav makes me aware of where I am from. It makes me proud of my Indian heritage. Utsav is not only a celebration but a way of celebrating indian identity. I love performing in shows and participating in community service through Utsav.



Shriya Banerjee (youth volunteer) Age: 15 years

USTAV means a lot to me because it allows me to stay connected with my culture and meet other people. Growing up in the UTSAV community allowed me to feel a connection with other people with a similar heritage, ultimately leading me to meet many of my childhood friends. It also gave me the chance to celebrate traditions in a meaningful way with my family and friends. Overall, the UTSAV community feels like a second family that shaped my childhood and who I am today.

Being part of UTSAV taught me how fun it can be to bring people together through food and celebrations. I especially enjoyed cooking meals for the families at St. John's Program for Real Change. Spending time in the kitchen with other volunteers gave me a sense of teamwork, and seeing the smiles of the women and children we served made the effort feel so rewarding.

I also loved experiencing the joy of festivals like Holi and Durga Puja through UTSAV. Getting to celebrate with bright colors, music, and traditions made me feel more connected to my culture while also sharing it with others in my community. For me, UTSAV has been about both giving back and celebrating together.



Esha Banerjee (youth volunteer) Age: 18 years

Volunteering with UTSAV during high school was an amazing way for me to connect with my community. Helping out at UTSAV's cultural and service events gave me opportunities to meet new people who shared my interests and opened my perspective to different forms of volunteering.

At UTSAV service events, such as our collaborations with St. John's Program for Real Change and the House of Bread, I enjoyed exploring different avenues for volunteering. Working with other volunteers on food distribution during Durga Puja allowed me to engage more deeply with event's facilitation. With UTSAV, I've gained valuable lessons about community and the spirit of volunteering.

Renee Som Kiran (youth volunteer) Age: 17 years

Utsav has been a welcoming space where I have found community through culture, friendship, and service. Whether it was dancing in Durga Puja or the various volunteering projects, it has helped me connect with others while celebrating my heritage. Volunteering at the events or through sub-organizations amongst the youth has taught me the joy of giving back and being a part of something bigger that will stay for a long time. It's also given me the chance to support behind-the-scenes efforts—whether taking photos, decorating, performing, assisting with the events—which helps me learn and contribute to meaningful things. Since my family and I moved here, Utsav is a space where tradition is celebrated, where community thrives, where we've laughed, felt joy and a part of a bigger community.



Sneha Dey (youth volunteer) Age: 17 years



My parents and I see Utsav as a close-knit family organization. The organization celebrates religious, voluntary, and various community events throughout the year. It honors cultural heritage by motivating members to show their creativity through cultural performances, literature, and art. The focus is on preserving cultural traditions and passing knowledge to the future generations and building strong community bonds. Utsav's voluntary initiative and activities teach the younger generation of Utsav the importance of giving, helping others, and making meaningful contributions to people and communities in need. Besides all, it arranges a variety of enjoyable events throughout the year to keep members socially connected and engaged. Yes! true essence of "Utsav" lies in bringing everyone together as one close-knit family, and it has proudly continued this tradition for the past 24 years. Through Utsav, we meet friends, build bonds, and over time, those friends become like family.

Ileena Saha (youth volunteer) Age: 10 years

Utsav means a lot to me! First of all, the amount of space and rooms in the usual Utsav rented place is just amazing. A changing/ Rehearsal room, a giant lunch room, and don't get me started on how good it feels when you're about to get on stage. Don't get me wrong; I also feel very nervous but when I am walking up the ramp to get to the stage, it feels like I am on the red carpet!

The food is also great. Some khitchuri, dal and potatoes to fill you up before you watch your next performance! Not to mention, the acts and dances are extraordinary too! People doing the most diabolical dances or slow graceful dances are too good for me. The Natoks are also very cool! Every single year there is a new theme of Natok for both grown-ups and children. Each year is a better surprise and a very well-done life message. The decorations are also tip-top, like last year (2024), that bicycle was a hit! Also, usually the program makes the kids do some activities, such as a drawing contest, bake sales, write ups, and other programs. Utsav also



cares about what kids want and don't want, some kids dislike curry or dal, so some people usually bring the kids some pizza to eat during lunch time!

To top it off, I would love to say that Utsav is a very great team of people! And, that there is nothing really to change.

Sarthak Dutta (youth volunteer) Age: 15

USTAV means a lot to me because it allows me to stay connected with my culture and meet other people. Growing up in the UTSAB community allowed me to feel a connection with other people with a similar heritage, ultimately leading me to meet many of my childhood friends. It also gave me the chance to celebrate traditions in a meaningful way with my family and friends. Overall, the UTSAB community feels like a second family that shaped my childhood and who I am today.



Aratrika Paul (youth volunteer)

To me, Utsav pujo is an exciting time to get together with my friends and family. Every year I look forward to spending three days of fun with my loved ones. I enjoy helping prepare for the event and making posters and games. The community youth group services are always gratifying and I love to participate.



Shauna Malick (youth volunteer) Age: 17

Utsav has been a welcoming space where I have found community through culture, friendship, and service. Whether it was dancing in Durga Puja or the various volunteering projects, it has helped me connect with others while celebrating my heritage. Volunteering at the events or through sub-organizations amongst the youth has taught me the joy of giving back and being a part of something bigger that will stay for a long time. It's also given me the chance to support behind-the-scenes efforts—whether taking photos, decorating, performing, assisting with the events—which helps me learn and contribute to meaningful things. Since my family and I moved here, Utsav is a space where tradition is celebrated, where community thrives, where we've laughed, felt joy and a part of a bigger community.

Assistance for Los Angeles Fire Victims in 2025

On the auspicious occasion of Saraswati Puja, the youth group of Utsav community organized a donation appeal for the LA Fire victims. The campaign was led by Sneha Dey (Riya), with Sanjoli Ray (Jhinuk), and Sarthak Dutta (Sarthu), serving as co-leads. Utsav volunteer coordinator Sangita Biswas guided the youth and engaged Utsav community adult volunteers Nandita Dey, Dipanjali Bannerjee, Joydeep Ray, and Alodipa Dutta to support the youth throughout the initiative.

Between January 7th and January 31st, 2025, eight destructive wildfires devastated the southern region of our Golden State, primarily impacting the Los Angeles metropolitan area and San Diego County. Fueled by powerful winds and dry conditions, the fires spread quickly and caused loss of lives, destroyed thousands of homes, and scorched the land. Thousands were forced to evacuate their homes.

Amidst all the devastation, humanity shone through. The communities across California came together to support the wildfire victims. Many humanitarian organizations provided food, shelter and other disaster relief; and the effort continues. During this crisis, the youth group of Utsav community did not hesitate to move forward to help. Their very first step was launching a donation appeal campaign on Saraswati Puja Day to spread awareness, raise funds, and gather new daily usage goods for the fire victims.

Utsav partnered with the American Red Cross and donated the cash funds raised by the youth group during their first donation appeal campaign to help people in need.

The Utsav youth group collected numerous boxes of brand new essential daily usage items, such as clothes, blankets, hygiene products, flashlights, and heavy-duty gloves for sifting through debris. The youth extended their efforts by engaging their neighbors in the initiative and collecting goods from them as well. Recognizing the suffering of domestic animals caused by the fires, the youth group gathered a large supply of pet food. The adult members of the Utsav community came forward wholeheartedly and generously donated to support this noble cause.

Utsav collaborated with Patty Martin of the Tiny Pine Foundation and donated all the goods collected by the youth group during their very first donation appeal campaign.

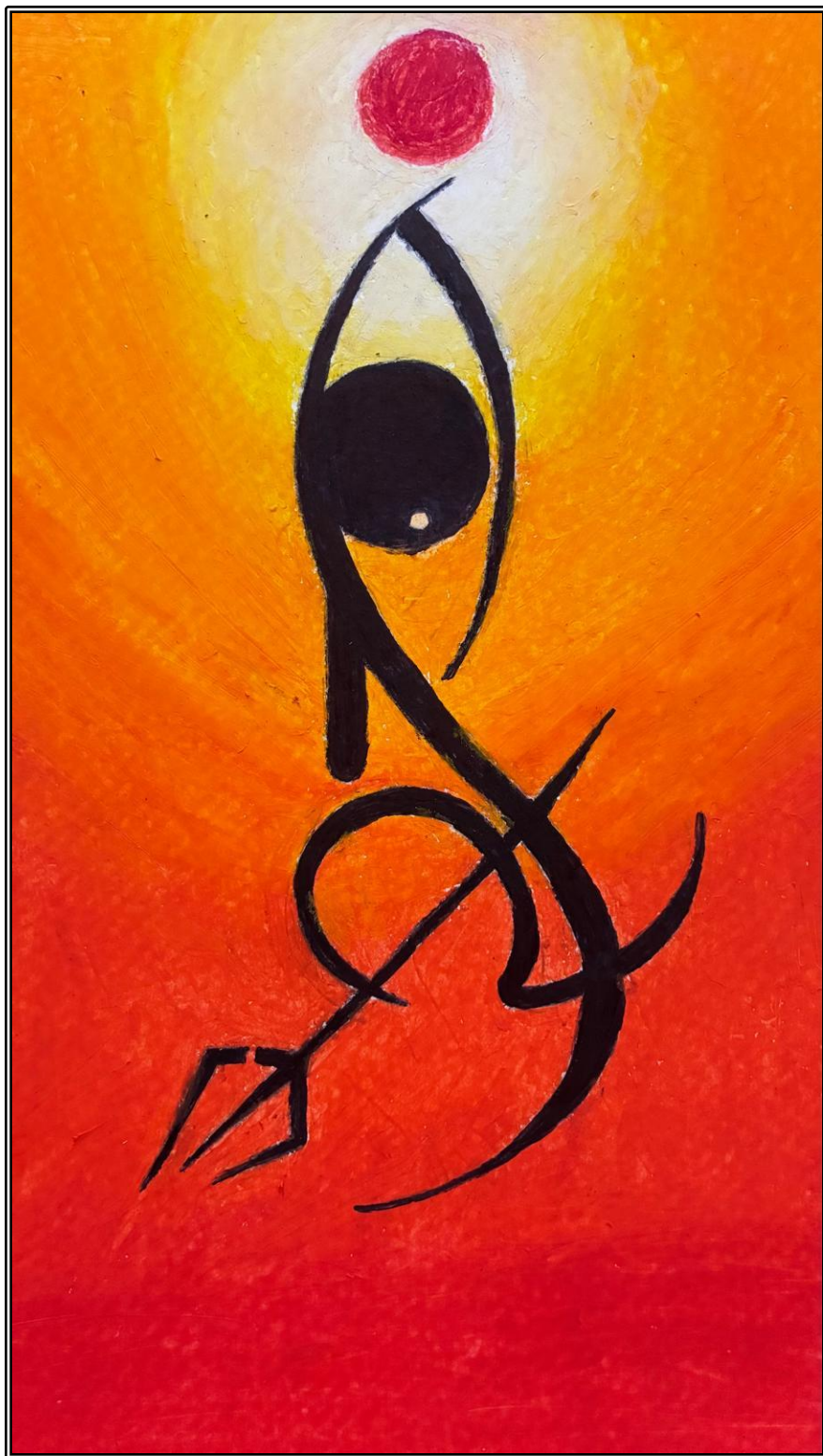
To keep the momentum going, the youth group of Utsav plans to continue fund raising for the wildfire victims during Utsav's upcoming events.



আঁকিবুকি

Drawings, Paintings, and photographs





Ahang Rudre by Toushini Banga



Durga Ma by Spriha Saha



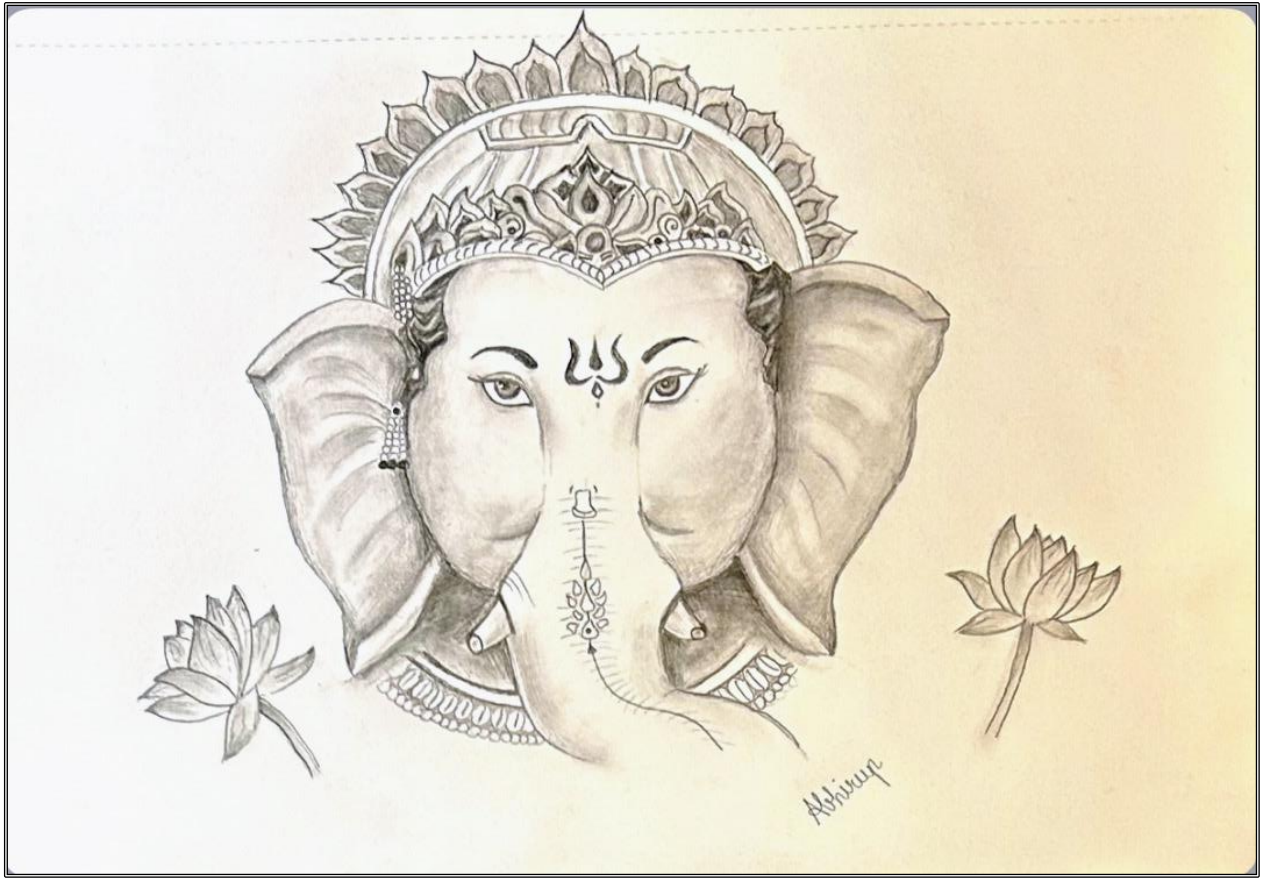
Essence of Fall by Rishan Dey



Maa Durga by Sarthak Datta



Flowers by Meghma Mukherjee



Ganesh by Abhirup Mukherjee



Sunflower and Moonglow by Soma Tapadar



Cycle of Life by Anupam Mitra



God Buddha by Manjula Dey

ପ୍ରମାଣ କାହିନୀ *Travelogues*



My first steam engine ride

Hi, my name is Anaisha Mitra. I just turned 7 years old in July. On my birthday we went to Santa Cruz and went on a steam engine ride. It was called Roaring Camp Railroads. The train was yellow in color and had multiple carriages. There were lots of people waiting in long queues. The train arrived at 10:00am and whistled at us. All the children including me were super excited. We got in the train and sat down on our seats. Our carriage did not have a roof. The guard blew the whistle

and the train slowly moved out of the station. We all saw the steam hissing out of the engine. I was very excited with this new experience. The train moved through the redwoods and we got to see giant trees that are over 2,000 years old. The train took a break at Grizzly flat and me and baba took a lot of pictures. Then we returned to the station.

—Bye Bye ♥



Waking up was a mission, but my family and I somehow managed to get on the road super early for our Road to Hana trip. We loaded the car with a cooler full of snacks, and I made sure my playlist was ready to go. The road was so windy and full of turns that my stomach felt like it was doing a flip every few minutes, but it was impossible to be mad when you looked out the window. It was like driving through a giant rainforest with all the tall ferns and vibrant flowers everywhere. My dad kept joking about the bridges, but it didn't even feel like a long drive because there was so much to look at.

We stopped so many times I lost count, and each one was a mind-boggling new surprise. One of the best stops was a beach with black sand. It was so weird and cool, like something from another planet, the sand felt super soft and warm under my feet. We also found a waterfall where you could actually swim in the pool below it. The water was absolutely freezing at first and I literally gasped, however it felt invigorating after a while. I even found a cool, smooth rock and begged my mom to let me keep it, but she said it needed to stay in nature for other people to enjoy.

We also stopped at a remote place where we sipped on coconut water, which was a



refreshing break from exploring all of those destinations. Then, we ate lunch at a pizza house, where we ate delicious slices of hot pizza which were served as refreshment. After that, we went to the Garden of Eden, where I saw lush green forest and botanical surprises. This is the place where Jurassic Park was filmed. Our last big stop was to grab a piece of the famous Hana banana bread. It smelled absolutely phenomenal and was still warm when we ate it. It was the most delicious thing I've ever tasted.

The drive back was much quieter since I was exhausted but happy. I spent most of the time looking

out the window, reminiscing about all the cool stuff we did. It was seriously one of the best days of my life, and I can't wait to go back someday.





In August of this year, I went with my friends and family to the Oroville Dam in California. We set up our campsite at the nearby Oroville Lake, where we stayed for two nights and three days. The Oroville Dam is near the Central Valley, which is extremely fertile. However, it fluctuates between extreme flood conditions and devastating droughts. Reservoirs like the Oroville Dam are vital because they help to regulate water during these events. It also provides irrigation to the valley. The dam is 770 feet tall, which makes it the tallest dam in the whole of the United States! It is incredibly important to our agriculture and provides water to 27 million Californians and 750,000 acres of farmland.

On Saturday morning, everybody woke up excited to go swimming. It was extremely warm and sunny so the lake water was a cool relief. We went kayaking and almost flipped over! Me and my friend Mahika learned how to skip rocks from Shopneil. Even Konika masi, Seema masi, Soma masi, and my grandma joined us in swimming. After drying off, we all had a nice picnic underneath the trees.

Then, we all went to visit the Oroville Visitor Center. They had a museum inside where I could learn about the dam and its construction, the history of Oroville, and the Native American people who originally lived in the area. We watched a short film inside of their theater which gave us more information. Then, we went up into the observation tower. There were a lot of stairs and I was glad when I finally reached the top. The view of the lake was beautiful!



When we came back to the campsite, even more of our friends from Sacramento had arrived. There were more than eight families and we decided to have a big barbecue to celebrate the end of the summertime. We played soccer, grilled chicken, and roasted smores around the campfire. The dadus and didas enjoyed chatting in front of the fire, while my sister and I played UNO and we all told scary stories. My favorite one was Vivan's story about a murderer in the woods. It was one of my favorite events this year and it was the perfect way for me to forget that school was starting next week. I'm already looking forward to next year's camping.



Every summer, my family takes a long break to explore new places. I still remember our trip in the summer of 2023 when we visited the eastern side of Canada. It was a 10-day trip. My parents had been there 20 years ago, long before I was born, when they were living in Boston. This time, they wanted me to experience it. It turned out to be an interesting trip which will remain in my memories to be cherished forever.

After arriving in Canada, we kicked off our trip by visiting one of the natural wonders of the world – “Niagara Falls “from the Canadian side. We had crossed the border and experienced Niagara’s beauty from the U.S side, but the view from the Canadian side was truly out of this world. My parents’ friends from Boston, now living in New York, drove all the way from Rochester to meet us. My parents were very excited to meet them after 20 years. They socialized and caught up with any local news, while I sat there and hopped into the conversations when needed. We had a wonderful time with them in Niagara City and enjoyed delicious Punjabi food at a local Dhaba. Our holiday began wonderfully. The American Falls and the Canadian Horseshoe Falls, with their impressive height and their forceful water flow, enchanted me. It was nature at its finest; the sound of the powerful falls and the mist rising from them gave me a feeling of peace. On the Cruise “Maid of the Mist”, I noticed people praying and even crying in awe of God’s creation. We enjoyed the Cruise rides, bus tours and walked along many trails throughout Niagara City.



After saying goodbye to Niagara, we arrived in Toronto. Toronto is a bustling metropolis that is known for its multiculturalism. For my parents, the highlight was reconnecting with a few more friends and their family after 20 years. Their warm hospitality at their home touched us. Toronto’s diverse cuisine was mind-blowing. We walked along Gerrard Street, which is also known as “Little India”. This vibrant area is a popular hub for South Asian restaurants, clothing stores, spice shops and jewelry shops. The people were hospitable, which reminded me of the people living in Kolkata. Besides walking on Gerrard Street, we toured around Toronto. We took a city bus tour to explore all of Toronto. We also climbed the famous CN Tower and visited the city’s largest

aquarium. Our time in Toronto was truly splendid.

From the hustle and bustle of Toronto, our next stop was the serene Thousand Islands of Canada. The Thousand Islands are a group of over 1800 islands in the St Lawrence River. In the late 1800s, it became a fashionable retreat for the wealthy elite. Many of the world’s wealthy and famous treated this region as their private playground during the summer. Each island is a natural marvel, where these wealthy folks built lavish homes and mansions for their families. We took a cruise on the St Lawrence River and explored islands. The weather was perfect, around 70s, which made our river cruise truly wonderful.



Our next stop was Montreal! OMG! What can I say about it? I fell in love with Montreal. Montreal is in the province of Quebec. In 1608, Quebec was established as a French colony because of its abundance of natural resources and its strategic location near St. Lawrence River. Today, Quebec is one of the most popular tourist destinations in Canada because of its European culture, diverse food, Gothic churches, and historical sites. When I took my first step in Montreal, I was in awe. It was a unique blend of European charm and North American culture that offers a rich culinary scene, captivating architecture like Old Montreal, and vibrant green spaces such as Mount Royal. There was French influence everywhere- starting from the stoned buildings, tall skyscrapers, bakeries, and the Gothic churches. Montrealers are bilingual, friendly and proud of their cultural heritage. The most popular roadside food is Poutine, which is French fries topped with gravy and cheese curds. For 3 days, we enjoyed a wide variety of French delicacies. We took a tour bus ride in Montreal to explore it. We saw popular landmarks, like the Olympic Village. The Olympic Village is a twin-tower structure in Montreal, built as the athletes' residence during the 1976 Summer Olympics, where at the age of 14, Nadia Comaneci was the first gymnast to score a perfect 10 in the Olympics and Bruce Jenner, now Caitlyn Jenner, won an Olympic gold medal. While we were sitting on the bus, we got a glance at the Church where famous singer Celine Dion got married! Not only that, but we got to visit a church that opens its doors every four years. Montreal is not only popular for sightseeing, but it is also a place where many international students come to study at McGill, which is Canada's "Harvard". For a taste of French culture, history and French cuisine without crossing the Atlantic Ocean, Quebec is undoubtedly the ideal destination.



A few days later, we drove to Quebec City. It is the twelfth-largest city and the seventh-largest metropolitan area in Canada. It is also the second largest city in the province, after Montreal. Quebec City appeared very friendly and welcoming to us. While the primary language is French, locals in the tourism sector would often switch to English to assist us. Being greeted with: "Bonjour" by the locals was a lovely experience for me, coming from a culture where "Hi" and "Hello" are the norm. The streets Quebec City remind me of strolling through Paris and the suburbs of France. This place is renowned for its European charm. Wandering through the city, I was spellbound by its magical archeological charm. There were many ice cream shops with unique flavors, like maple flavored ice-cream, and different restaurants with a variety of French Cuisines. I was absolutely in love with this place as well- there was so much life there.



Our final destination was Vermont. We drove down from Quebec City, crossed the US-Canada border, and arrived in Vermont. Vermont is located in the New England region of the Northeastern United States. It borders Massachusetts to the south, New Hampshire to the east, and New York to the west. From the hustle and bustle of Canada's big cities, we arrived at Vermont's lush, green, natural landscape, where the clouds seemed to touch us. Here, we felt refreshed and reenergized by Mother Nature. Vermont is especially popular during the fall foliage season. We saw the first hints of autumn colors in Vermont. We visited

Ben & Jerry's ice cream factory. We stayed in Stowe and enjoyed a ride on the Gondola Skyride. Despite occasional rain, we felt reenergized by the beauty of nature before our flight back to Sacramento. Our 10-day trip came to an end, but exploring Quebec was undoubtedly the highlight of the journey.

We attended the university reunion of my dad and his friends in California this summer. It all started in a place called Great Wolf Lodge that had a water park and a swimming pool. We went with my sister and Neelim, Shwarnim, and Shupanthi. And it was also about my parents, Neelim's parents, and Shupanthi's parents.



My sister was someone who is going to high school. Neelim is my friend, a kid who likes to play MINECRAFT and with Legos. Shwarnim, Neelim's big brother, once said Neelim is a baby. Shupanthi was someone who never cried when she was a baby (She knows how to swim). Before the reunion event, they all came to our house. During that evening, my parents watched TV, Neelim's parents got mad at Neelim, and Shupanthi's parents worked on their computers.

Friday, the Longest Day

I, Shupanthi, and my sister went to the water park in the morning. I did 3 rides in the water park: Wolf tail - the best ride, Family ride - the ride Shupanthi likes, and Otter Run. At lunch, we ate some type of McDonalds. In the afternoon, we had to practice on the stage for a dance performance at the conference room. The program started at 9:30 pm. After the program, we left at 11:30 PM for the hotel room.

Saturday, Good Ideas or Bad Plans

We were at the waterpark again during the morning.

We left the water park at 11:00 AM because of lunch at the conference room. It was time for some other performances. Our event started at 5:00 PM. In the dance performance, I, Shopneil, and Spriha did a dance that I listened to once, and after we danced, Shopneil and Spriha went to the swimming pool for more water fun. During the evening, we ate an Italian dinner and midnight chocolate cake. Later, I played with my friend, Ayush. At 10:00 PM, we went to Shopneil's room. While the rest watched TV, Ayush and I played on the Nintendo Switch. Later that night I went to bed after the dance party.

Sunday, Trip to San Fransisco

We went to San Francisco by bus with 3 stops: 1) The Golden Gate Bridge, 2) Golden Gate Park Picnic Area, and 3) the beach. We took some pictures looking over the bridge. We ate lunch with chicken and rice at the picnic area, and drank Caprisun and Gatorade. I also spent time with Ayush. Some funny moments happened over there - people were laughing at the blue mustache, I whispered to many people, and I have been talking to Ayush. At the beach, I walked with Ayush. We had mama's birthday party at our house in the evening. Some of my other friends from the reunion, Nova, Ridhi, and her big brother, Neel came. It was a fun reunion event. I definitely want to go to the next reunion!

Day 1: Our first day in Florida wasn't really a full day; it was more like a quarter of a day. For most of the day we were on an airplane flying to Orlando, Florida. It was a 5-hour flight.

When we arrived in Orlando, we got off the plane and rushed to get our rental car from the Alamo. It was a gray, mid-size Toyota SUV. We put our luggage in the trunk and left the airport.

Our next stop was Blizzard Beach, a water park in Disney World. In Disney World, there are two water parks, Blizzard Beach and Typhoon Lagoon. We decided to go to Blizzard Beach instead of Typhoon Lagoon because

Blizzard Beach had a few things that Typhoon Lagoon did not offer, such as the Ski Patrol Training Camp, which was basically a floating obstacle course.

The reason for us to choose spending our first day in Florida at Blizzard Beach was because if you stay at one of the resorts in Disney World, on your first day you get free admission to the water parks.

But we arrived at 5:30 which only gave us 90 minutes to spend at the water park. We were able to do two rides, Downhill Double Dippers and Teamboat Springs, which we

rode as a family. We ended our time there at the Ski Patrol Camp, and then we headed to our resort, Disney's Coronado Springs Resort.

The hotel's lobby was big, spacious, and luxurious. But our hotel room was not in the main building, it was in Casitas 3. When we found our room, we unpacked our luggage and rested for the night.

Day 2: It was our first full day in Florida. We visited one of the main four parks, EPCOT. This amusement park highlights different countries of the world. It has a section that contains subsections that show each country's culture and architecture.

Also, the Flower Festival was in full swing when we arrived. There were lots of different colored flowers and even bushes that were shaped into Disney characters, such as Mirabel from Encanto.

Besides flowers, the Flower Festival also brought a band whose name was "We the Kingdom". They played a concert at 5:30 and the music was good, but there wasn't much shade so it felt very hot.

As for the rides, EPCOT had the fewest of the four parks. It only had six rides, Guardians of the Galaxy, Cosmic Rewind, Mission: SPACE (Earth), Mission: SPACE (Mars), Soarin', Living with the Land, and Spaceship Earth. We had so much time leftover that we were able to do Soarin' twice.

One thing that I really liked about EPCOT is the food. There are several subsections that represent different countries which allows for each subsection to have its own type of food. Overall, EPCOT did not have many interactive things to do.



Day 3: We went to Magic Kingdom, the biggest of the four parks. It is the park that has Cinderella Castle along with the two new rides, TRON Lightcycle / Run and Tiana's Bayou Adventure. Magic Kingdom is also far away from the other parks and it is surrounded by water. The only way to get in the park is by boat or monorail. We took the monorail to go to the park and the boat to exit.

Magic Kingdom is divided into six sections: Main Street USA, Fantasyland, Frontierland, Adventureland, Liberty Square, and Tomorrowland. Each section has its own theme. One example of this would be how Tomorrowland has the theme of a futuristic city compared to Frontierland which has a theme of a town in the wild west.

Magic Kingdom also has a parade that starts at 3 pm. It starts in Frontierland and ends at Main Street USA. We saw the parade and instead of it just being a parade made of floats, it actually had a lot of actors. The parade had a lot of characters from Disney films such as Ariel, Belle, and of course, Mickey Mouse.

As for the rides, Magic Kingdom seemed to have an endless amount. The Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, Tiana's Bayou Adventure, Space Mountain, and "it's a small world" are just a few of the several rides that we took. Unfortunately, we were not able to take TRON Lightcycle / Run because there just was not enough time.

Day 4: Today we went to Animal Kingdom. As the name suggests, this kingdom is basically Disney World's zoo. This park was also the closest to our hotel. Just like Magic Kingdom, the Animal Kingdom is divided into six sections: Africa, Asia, Dinoland U.S.A., Discovery Island, Oasis, and Pandora - The World of Avatar.



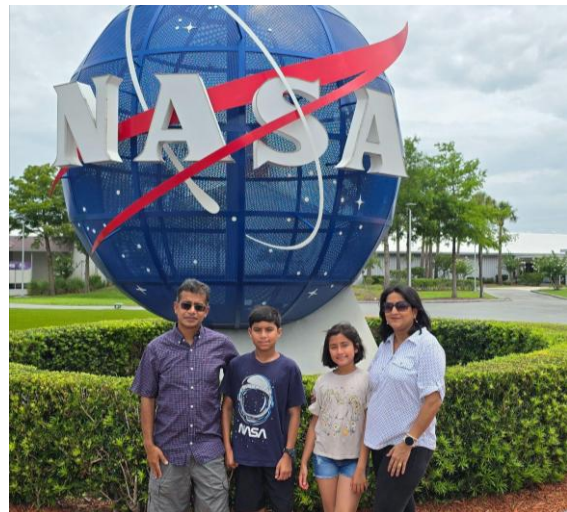
As for the shows, The Festival of the Lion King was one of the best shows that I've ever seen. It had special effects, floats, trapeze monkeys, and even an animatronic version of Simba that talked!

As for the rides, Animal Kingdom had a decent amount. But because the park closes early we were not able to do all the rides. The best ride we did was Avatar: Flight of Passage. It was a simulator, but it was extremely realistic. We also went on the safari tour which featured a lot of unique animals.

Day 5: Today we went to Kennedy's Space Center. The reason that we went here today instead of Hollywood Studios was because it was supposed to rain today. Besides being a cool place to visit to learn about space, it also has some history. It was where Apollo 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17 were launched.

The shows at the space center were honestly some of the best shows I have ever seen. The realism and experience as a whole was very immersive. They were also pretty educational. I think that Hollywood Studios could even take a few tricks from Kennedy's Space Center's shows.

As for things to do, Kennedy's Space Center did not disappoint. There were bus & walking tours where you could explore the outsides of real spaceships that went out of commission, simulators to feel like an astronaut, indoor play structures, shows to learn about astronauts and space discoveries, and even a VR experience that was very cool.



The only problem with Kennedy's Space Center is the fact that it closes at 5:00 pm. This stopped us from being able to do everything there. I would highly recommend getting the two-day tickets.

Day 6: Today we went to Disney's Hollywood Studios. Today was also our last day at Disney World. Disney's Hollywood Studios is divided into eight sections: Hollywood Boulevard, Sunset Boulevard, Animation Courtyard, Echo Lake, Commissary Lane, Pixar Plaza, Toy Story Land, and Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge.

Disney's Hollywood Studios is basically the park built for shows. Some of the shows we saw included Indiana Jones Epic Stunt Spectacular, Disney Villains: Unfairly Ever After, Fantasmic, and Beauty and Beast. My favorite show was easily Fantasmic. The special effects and acting were on a different level.

As for rides, Disney's Hollywood Studios actually had some pretty good rides. A few of them being Star Wars: Rise of the Resistance, Slinky Dog Dash, Runaway Railway, and Toy Story Mania. Personally, my favorite roller coaster out of all of the parks was easily the Slinky Dog Dash. It was not too scary, but it also wasn't boring.

Day 7: Today we left our resort in Disney World. We were heading towards Key West, the most southern point in Florida, also known as "The Land's End". But we would not be staying there tonight, we were staying there tomorrow. We stayed in a hotel in Naples, Florida which was actually named after a city in Italy.

We stopped at a beach called Siesta Key, which was known as the number one beach in the whole United States of America. As soon as we got there, I realized why it was considered the number one beach. It had fine sand and the water from the ocean was warm and clear and the beach was a shallow one so we could go far. Also, unlike its twin Clearwater, it was not crowded at all. Overall, we had a great time. After the beach we drove another two hours to our hotel.



Day 8: Today we were going to make the long drive to Key West. Though that was not the only place that we were going to. We would make two other stops along the way.

The first stop was at a swamp. We went to see alligators and were able to see four. They had airboat tours, but we did not take them because they are noisy and expensive.

The second stop was at a mango farm. The farm had a rule where we were allowed to eat fruit that was already on the ground. So we were able to try out several different types of mangos.

After the mango farm we finally arrived at Key West. Unfortunately, we arrived late so we were not able to see the sunset. After that we ate dinner, found a resort and rested for

the night.

Day 9: Today we left the resort and headed towards Miami. We also made two stops along the way.

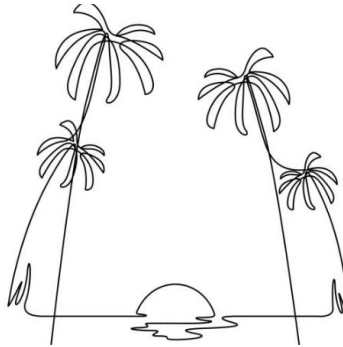
Our second stop was at another beach. This one was not as good as the first one. It had lots of seaweed along the shoreline. But it was also fairly shallow so it was not too bad. But one thing that was different about this beach was the fact that jellyfish sometimes migrated there. Fortunately, we did not encounter any jellyfish.

After that we reached Miami and took a walk on the South Miami waterfront. Then we got dinner and found a hotel before sleeping for the night.

Day 10: Our first stop was a mango vendor. We bought two varieties of mango and brought them to California. It was a ranch that sold several tropical fruits. They also had several different types of animals from hens to tortoises. They even had some cows that we were allowed to feed, which we did.

Day 11: Today was our last day in Florida. We did not do anything today as we spent our time in the airport. So we ended up waiting at our gate.

When the plane arrived we boarded and waited for the three hour flight to Texas because our flight was not a direct one. There we ate lunch. We then boarded our second plane back home.



Our middle school has an end-of-the-year trip for 8th graders. Like many other middle schools, ours is a six day trip to Washington DC and New York City. I found out about this trip in the beginning of 7th grade. After lots of convincing, my parents finally said yes. It was decided that my best friend and I would go together, and we just had to wait for the trip to come.

The two years flew by unbelievably fast and promotion time was here. Katelynn and I had picked two of our friends to be roommates, and we were ready for our flight the night of promotion. After the ceremony, a quick celebratory lunch, and many goodbyes, we were on our way to Washington DC.



After taking a red eye flight, you would think we were going to head to the hotel to rest and freshen up. But nope! We hit the ground running as soon as we landed. We first went to the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, and from there, we went to the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial. It was crazy how much walking we did because there were many locations with no bus parking. After seeing Lafayette Square and the White House, we were dropped off at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History with two hours to tour there and go to the Natural History Museum as well. Sadly, we weren't able to tour the Natural History Museum well because we ran out of time and our chaperones were very strict on being punctual. The whole group was extremely tired, barely getting any sleep on the flight, so we finished the day with the Pentagon Memorial and headed to the hotel.

The hotel was probably one of the most memorable parts. Our nights consisted of fighting over who was going to shower first, laughing until our stomachs hurt, and watching new seasons of shows together. Mind you, by the time we were back in the hotel it was usually already past 10, and by the time we were done

with everything and in bed, it was just a little bit late. This led to us running on barely any sleep the next few days but it was worth it.

Early the next morning, we were on our way to the Arlington National Cemetery. Some of my favorite highlights included going through Robert E. Lee's home and seeing Ruth Bader Ginsburg's grave. We took a quick photo stop at the Marine Corps Memorial and started making our way to the Smithsonian African American History and Culture. This was one of the greatest parts of the trip. I really loved how it was set up. The very bottom floor was very dark and had a creepy vibe and the exhibits were all from the beginning of slavery. Then as you went up the floors the exhibits slowly got brighter and brighter until the top floor, which was full of achievements of African-Americans across the nation. The Thomas Jefferson statue was another one of my favorite parts of the museum because behind it was a wall of bricks, each brick represented a slave he owned. It really showed how Thomas Jefferson would preach and write so much about all men being equal but also owned over 600 slaves. After the museum, we went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Korean War Veterans Memorial, which were both right by the Lincoln Memorial. This was personally my favorite part of the trip. Since it took place right when the sun was setting, the reflection pool at the Korean War Veterans Memorial looked absolutely gorgeous. The sky was



extremely pretty and made the Lincoln Memorial look more majestic than it already was. We got a lot of awesome pictures and stayed in this area until after it was dark.

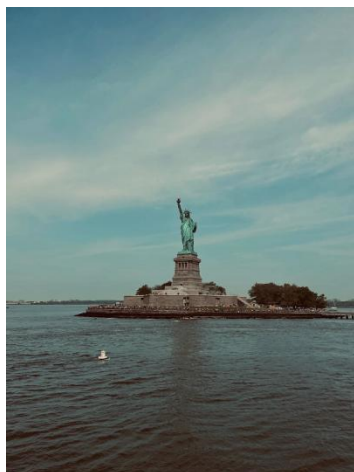
The next day we took a guided tour through the US Capitol. This part was very cool, there were statues everywhere and so many different things to look at. The rotunda was the best part with all the walls being covered in paintings. This is where President Trump's inauguration took place earlier this year. Later that day, while we were at The Kennedy Center, we watched a performance of the play *Shear Madness*. This was so much fun because the actors interacted with the audience and my friends and I couldn't stop laughing. At one point I had accused one of the actors of being the murderer and lying about it and she totally went off on me. It was a truly unforgettable night and also our last night in Washington D.C.

The next morning we were headed to New York City, driving through Philadelphia on the way. In Philly, we only made two or three stops at places like Independence Hall or The Rocky Steps. In NYC, we said goodbye to our bus driver, from then on we would only take the subway or walk to our destinations. That night after arriving in NYC, we were on our way to a Yankees baseball game. Now most of us knew absolutely nothing about baseball, so this was a very interesting experience. All my friends sat together, and most of the game consisted of us watching that one friend who actually watched baseball, so we knew when to cheer. Towards the end of a game, a member of the audience had reached down and blocked the ball from landing in Aaron Judge's mitt, leading to the entire crowd heckling the guy. It seems harsh to say, but this part was extremely fun. Our teachers went a little crazy with the dancing and made it a really fun night.



The next day, we went to The Edge, which is basically a very tall building with a see-through floor at the top so you can walk over it and look down. Earlier that day, my mom had sent a few pictures from when we went to New York City when I was a baby. When we went to Grand Central Terminal, Central Park, and Times Square, I recognized a lot of the places from the pictures, which was very cool. After visiting the Rockefeller Center, we were on our way to go see The

Outsiders on Broadway!



In 7th grade, we read the book, *The Outsiders*, in class. After we took our final test on it, we watched the movie and almost everyone really loved the book and movie. *The Outsiders* really had a special place in all of our hearts so everyone was excited to see the play. It was probably one of the most mind-blowing things



I've ever seen. The vocals and dance choreographies were obviously straight up amazing but even the effects made it feel like we were sitting inside of the main character's head. I can confidently say I was very satisfied with the play, even after walking in with huge expectations. We finished the night by taking a group picture in Times Square and headed to the hotel.

On the last day of our trip, we walked around the financial district, where we saw the bull on Wall Street. Apparently if you rub a certain part of the bull you get good luck. We went to the World Trade Center and saw the National 9/11 Memorial. We finished our trip with a ferry ride to see the Statue of Liberty.

The night we arrived at the airport, my family was waiting there with a million questions. My mom was worried sick the entire trip and they wanted to know all about the tour. We had waited for two years for this trip to come, and as soon as it started it was over. It was a really fun trip and genuinely a great way to end our middle school careers.

Prelude to Morocco: A Reflection in Layers

In preparation for our journey to Morocco, I found myself drawn into the shadows and silences of Casablanca — the Bogart-Bergman classic that still flickers with longing. Watching Bogart, I couldn't help but reflect on the ache of love found in the wrong places, and the quiet dignity of suffering worn like a trench coat. His gaze, always half-turned toward memory, seemed to echo the kind of farewell that never quite leaves.

Parallel to this cinematic meditation, I immersed myself in the sunlit palette of Henri Matisse. His time in Tangier—where the Mediterranean light danced across courtyards and textiles—left behind paintings that feel both exuberant and contemplative. I imagined his brush tracing the geometry of Arabesque arches, the bold foliage, and the quiet rhythm of prayer. His work made me long not just to see Morocco, but to feel it in color.

Arriving in Morocco

Planning to spend 10 days in Morocco, I flew from Paris Charles de Gaulle to Casablanca. As the Air France pilot announced our approach over the Strait of Gibraltar, I leaned toward the window, eager to glimpse one of the world's most iconic maritime passages from above.

Observing the Strait

The skies were calm, and I didn't spot any large waves entering the Strait. Yet I knew that under different conditions—especially with strong easterly winds—the narrow 19-mile-wide corridor can generate dramatic wind waves, even visible to astronauts due to the Venturi effect. During spring tides, currents here can reach speeds of up to 4 knots, making it one of the fastest tidal flows in the region.

Memory from Gibraltar Rock

Back in May 2025, I stood atop the Rock of Gibraltar on a clear day, gazing across the water toward Morocco. Seeing the Strait now from the air offered a strikingly different perspective—one that layered memory with motion.

As the plane traced Morocco's western shoreline—straight as an arrow—I watched Atlantic waves gently refract and break along the coast. It was my first introduction to the African west coast, and the coastal engineering patterns were quietly mesmerizing.

A Sobering Reminder

While I admired the natural and technical beauty of the Strait, a fellow passenger reminded me of its human dimension. Many risk their lives crossing these waters in small boats, seeking a better future. The Strait is not just a geographic boundary—it's a passage of hope, peril, and longing.

Casablanca: Where the Ocean Meets Devotion

Morocco greeted me like a half-remembered dream—its cities strung across the map like verses in a desert poem. I arrived in Casablanca, a name that evokes cinematic nostalgia, but the city offered more than echoes of Bogart and Bergman. The Atlantic breeze was brisk, and the skyline shimmered with ambition. At the edge of the sea stood the Hassan II Mosque, its minaret soaring like a lighthouse of faith. I wandered through its vast marble courtyard, where devotion met architectural grandeur. The mosque's glass floor revealed the ocean beneath—an invitation to contemplate the divine through the lens of nature. Casablanca felt like Morocco's handshake: modern, confident, and open to the world.

Rabat: Serenity in the Capital

From Casablanca, I traveled north to Rabat, where the pace softened and the palette turned serene. The Kasbah of the Udayas was a revelation—white and blue alleyways winding like brushstrokes through a quiet neighborhood perched above the river.

I sat in the Andalusian Gardens, listening to the rustle of palm fronds and the distant murmur of the Bou Regreg. Rabat's dignity was understated, its charm rooted in balance. The city didn't clamor for attention; it offered calm, a place to breathe and reflect.

Tangier: A City of Thresholds

Tangier, perched at the northern tip of Africa, gazes across the Strait of Gibraltar. The city felt like a threshold—where continents meet, where stories begin. I wandered through the whitewashed medina, past cafés where Paul Bowles, Burroughs, and Matisse once lingered. The air was thick with salt and myth.

At dusk, I walked the cliffside promenade, watching the sun dip behind Spain's silhouette. The call to prayer rose from the minarets like a tide, and I felt suspended between worlds. Tangier was a city of transitions—between land and sea, memory and imagination.

Fez: A Labyrinth of Living History

From Tangier, I turned inland to Fez, the spiritual and intellectual heart of Morocco. The medina of Fez is not navigated—it's surrendered to. I entered its labyrinthine alleys like a pilgrim, letting the city lead me. The scent of spices, the clang of copper, the murmur of bartering—it was a symphony of sensory immersion. I stood above the Chouara Tannery, watching artisans dye leather in stone vats, their hands steeped in centuries of craft. The colors—saffron, indigo, poppy—were vivid against the ancient walls. Fez didn't just preserve history; it lived it. At Al-Qarawiyyin, the world's oldest university, I felt the weight of scholarship and devotion in its quiet courtyards.

Merzouga: Silence Beneath the Stars

Then came the long journey eastward, into the desert. Merzouga, near the Algerian border, is where the Sahara begins to whisper. I arrived at sunset, and the dunes glowed like embers. Riding a camel into the golden expanse felt mythic—each step a slow rhythm, each breath a meditation.

The silence was profound, broken only by the wind and the soft crunch of sand. That night, under a canopy of stars, I sat by a fire with Berber guides, listening to songs that stitched together centuries of nomadic memory. The constellations felt closer than dreams. I slept in a tent, but my spirit wandered far beyond its canvas walls.

Marrakech: A Crescendo of Color and Rhythm

From the desert's hush, I returned to the pulse of the city—Marrakech, a celebration of color, rhythm, and reverence. The Jemaa el-Fnaa square was alive with spectacle: snake charmers, storytellers, acrobats, and food stalls sizzling with cumin and saffron.

I wandered through the souks, touching handwoven rugs, brass lanterns, and carved wood. The city was a sensory feast, and I let myself be swept into its current. In the Jardin Majorelle, I found a moment of stillness—blue walls, bamboo groves, and the legacy of Yves Saint Laurent. Marrakech danced even in its quiet corners.

Reflections: A Journey That Lingers

Throughout the journey, I was struck by Morocco's ability to hold paradox: ancient and modern, spiritual and sensual, desert and sea. Each city offered a verse, each moment a metaphor. The people I met—shopkeepers, guides, artists—shared stories with warmth and pride.

I tasted richness of tagines with apricot and lamb, sipped mint tea poured with flourish, and heard laughter that transcended language. Morocco wasn't just a place I visited—it was a mosaic I walked through.

Back in Sacramento, I trace the journey not just on maps, but in memory. The desert's hush, the medina's maze, the call to prayer at twilight—they linger. Travel, at its best, doesn't just change your location; it changes your rhythm. Morocco gave me a new cadence, one that blends wonder with reverence.

ପଦ୍ୟ
Poetry



Opening the Door*Renee Kiran*

The door opens;
a hundred eyes, non-familiar.
I smile as if practiced
as it wasn't like before
I used to know every name, every face.
But, now, I knew none, but one—
the echo of myself
in repeated questions.

Time passed in seasons
folding into each other.
Fall came again,
but, the winds had changed.

I laughed—
real laughter, not rehearsed.
I found friends,
walked into rooms without flinching.
But sometimes, I must ask:
Am I still the one laughing?

Durga Puja*Shauna Malick*

The drums resound, the conch shells blow,
In every area, the colors glow.
The goddess rides on a lions back,
Durga Maa is here at last.

The shrine is lit with lights so grand,
Devotees gather, hand in hand
With marigolds, songs, and hearts aflame,
We call her power, praise her name.
The air is fragrant with incense, so sweet,
As prayers rise from crowded people in seats.

For days we celebrate her visit,
Until next year we will relive it.

A Morning Aubade

Anaya Bhattacharyya

Dawn awoke my sappy smile,
as you had under twinkling stars last night.
Now, the birds' song mingles
with the creak of your feet against wood
and the padding of your toes,
whispering through the sun-soaked room.
My eyes open to your goodbye, it seems,
So forevermore you stay within
the wild adventures of moonlight
only to drift away in sleepy consciousness.

*Author's Note: I wrote this from the feeling of love
feeling like a dream. At first, this form of poetry kind of
confused me, so I decided to just go with the flow. Pay
attention to the very literal allusions to morning.*



The Potter

Anaya Bhattacharyya

The browned mountain of me
Stares back at your frowning face
Never have I been a figure of beauty
But I must say,
The hands with which you carve
Have a skill worth praising
And with my unformed mouth
I send a thousand thanks
To the pounds and kneads you inflict
Into a silhouette of some sort

These twitching brows and strange scowls,
Do they translate into my half-formed face?
Too hollowed, too chubby, too unlike
From the reference you eye too much
Her model is graceful, held with love
Gawked by your ever-in-awe peers
So your strokes grow heavy
As your frown grows too
So you pinch and pierce
The inches of my body

Who has pushed me in all the wrong places?
Why are my eyes so small?
Where do I unflatter? When will I look right?
What have you done wrong?

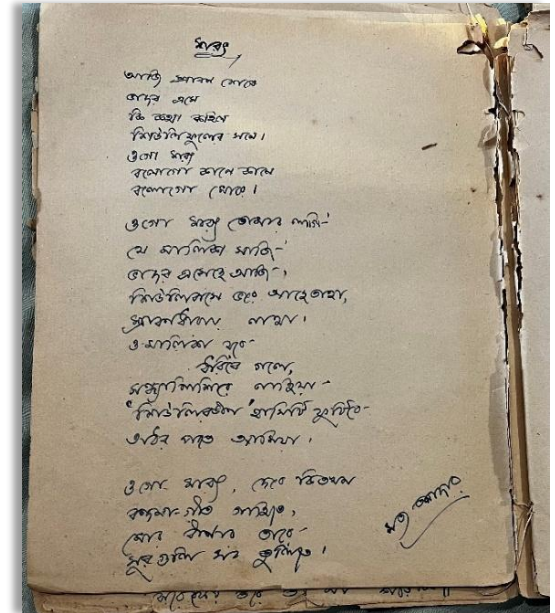
So will you mold the weight of my stomach
Into my meager breasts?
Twist the hump of my nose
Into a plump upper lip
And then pause
Marvel the spectacle you wield
Smoothed and poked and dazzled and gilded
Round yet lean
Small yet sturdy
Strong yet delicate
Beautiful...
Yet never enough.

আজই শ্রাবণ শেষে
ভাদর এসে
কি কথা कहিলো
শিউলি ফুলের সনে
ওগো শরৎ
বলোগো কানে কানে
বলোগো মোরে।

ওগো শরৎ তোমার লাগি
যে মালিকা সাজি
ভাদর এসেছে আজি,
শিউলিবাসে ভরে আছে তাহা,
শ্রাবণধারায় লথা।

ও মালিকা যবে
ধরিবে গলে,
সন্ধ্যা শিশিরে লহিয়া
'শিউলি রঙীন' হাসিটি ফুটিবে
অধর পাতে আসিয়া।

ওগো শরৎ, দেবে কি তখন
বন্দনা গীত গাহিতে,
মোর বীণার তারে
সুরগুলি সব তুলিতে।



It feels truly surreal to share one of my father's poems in the *UTSAV* magazine. He first attended *UTSAV Durga Pujo* back in 2004 — a memory that feels especially poignant now.

Growing up, I always saw him as a deeply practical, grounded man. But after his passing, I came across a diary filled with poems he had quietly penned over the years. In those pages, I discovered a quieter, more vulnerable side of him — one he rarely revealed.

He lost his father when he was just three and a half years old and had to leave his home in Barishal, Bangladesh shortly afterward, along with his mother, elder brother, and younger sister. They found refuge with his maternal uncle, and his early life was marked by hardship and resilience. That life shaped the strong exterior he wore — but his poetry was where his inner world lived on.

Thank you to *UTSAV* and the literary team for giving me the space to honor him by publishing one of his poems. It means more than words can say.

Soma Tapadar

Homecoming of Daughter

Sangita Biswas

She is coming home.
The trophies, her diary
Clinging to the dust
Will feel her touch again.

My voice carries
A certain tenor
Of anticipation-as when I talked to her
in my womb.

The violin played not enough
When she lived here
Now stands always ready.
The unfinished art stands in a corner.

She and I will play again
With matching hands, finger to finger
She and I will paint again
With matching hands, finger to finger
This time with my wrinkled hand in hers.

Sangita Biswas is a neuroscientist by profession. She loves to cook, and write short fictions. She is a resident of Folsom.

A Birthday Toast to My Guiding Star

Kiran Bangalore

I miss those conversations,
the ones that made me feel seen -
your voice, your wisdom,
your quiet way of guiding me.

I miss that support,
the steady hand behind my dreams,
the pride you had in your children,
always shining through your eyes.

You let me go to explore the world,
never holding me back,
only cheering me forward
with love that never asked for return.

Now, on your birthday,
I feel your presence in the silence,
in the wind, in the stars,
in the strength you left behind.

I carry you with me
in every step I take,
in every choice I make -
your love, my compass.
So here's to you, wherever you are -
May joy surround you and skies be clear.
I raise a glass, I send my love,
Happy birthday, Dad, with a cheer.

What the Dhaak to continue the tradition

Debanik Chaudhuri and Rajat.ai*

The dinner is late, the music off key,
But hey—it's *tradition* don't blame me!
We said seven o'clock, but everyone knows,
It's Bengali Standard Time—plus an hour more.

The food line snakes, the gossip flows,
Whose sari is recycled? Everybody knows.
Sindur khela turns Facebook red,
Selfies galore, "Besties forever!" it's said.

We try to spread our roots in our adopted land
but at heart we remain Bengali, and
A little PN and a little PC
That's the spice of life, you see.

Yet for all the chaos, the gripes, the show,
We come together to relive once more
The memories left behind,
Smells and sounds of a distant time.

As Utsav now nears its 25th year
Let's celebrate the tradition that we hold dear
Let laughter last, but grumbling fade,
Let women lead where rules are made.

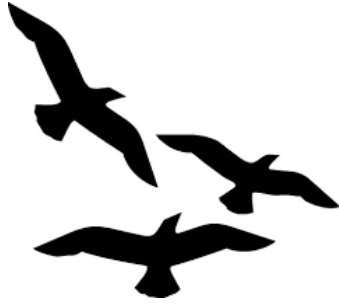
Let children see a space that grows,
Not just repeats of what everyone knows.
Let them spread their wings and fly
While grounded to the roots and family ties.

The past is ink, but the page turns still,
The future waits for a fresher will.
If we come together, if we can renew,
Pujo will live, not just as a view.



**Over the last three years, Rajat Chakraborty contributed a series of poems entitled "What the Dhaak" to Chowrongee. I found them insightful and witty. As he didn't submit one this year, I felt an obligation to continue the tradition. I fed Rajat's three old poems to ChatGPT and asked it to come up with a new one in the same vein. Here is what I have after a series of prompts and some editing on my part. I hope Rajat will pick up his pen (or laptop) next year.*

প্রবন্ধ ও গল্প
Articles and Stories



Durga Puja is one of the most important festivals in India, especially in the state of West Bengal. It is celebrated to worship goddess Durga, who symbolizes strength and victory of good over evil. According to Hindu Mythology, Goddess Durga fought and defeated the demon Mahishasura, who was causing destruction and terrorizing people. Her victory represents the triumph of righteousness.

The festival usually lasts for five days, starting from Maha Shasti and ending on Vijayadashami. During these days, beautiful idols of goddess Durga along with her children - Lakshmi, Saraswati, Kartik, and Ganesh are installed in pandals (temporary structures) across cities and villages. The pandals, decorated with colorful lights, flowers, and artistic themes, attract large crowds. People dress in new clothes, visit pandals, offer prayers, and take part in various cultural activities. Special pujas (rituals) are performed, accompanied by the sound of dhak (traditional drums), conch shells, and chanting mantras. Devotees offer fruits, sweets, and flowers to the Goddess, seeking her blessings for health, happiness, and prosperity.



On the last day, known as Vijayadashami, the idols are taken in a grand procession and immersed in rivers or lakes, marking the end of the festival. It is a bittersweet moment, as the people bid farewell to the goddess with hopes that she will return again next year.

Durga Puja is not just a religious event but also a celebration of culture, art, and community. It brings people together, fostering unity and joy as everyone participates in the festivities with great enthusiasm. In this way, Durga Puja teaches us that no matter how strong evil may seem, good always wins in the end.

Durga Puja, also known as Navaratri Puja, Kullu Dussehra, Mysore Dussehra, Bommai Kolu, Bhagabati Puja, and Dashain, is traditionally celebrated for 5 - 10 days in September or October (Ashvin, or Ashvina). This festival is usually celebrated in Assam and Bengal. It is a puja, on the seventh month of the Hindu calendar, celebrated over the victory of the goddess Durga over the demon king Mahishasura.

There are many rituals, prayers and cultural performances during this time. It is considered one of the largest art festivals in the world. On the last four days, the goddess is believed to bring her four children, Ganesha, Karthikeya, Lakshmi, and Saraswati to her maternal home. On the last day of this festival, people usually immerse the clay sculptures of the goddess in water, symbolizing her return to her home. The last day is also called Vijaydashami, and celebrates the triumph of good over evil.



Pinehurst, the gold of golf, the best of the best, and the reign of champions. This summer I visited Pinehurst for a golf tournament, and it's quite hard to put that amazing experience into one essay, so I'll do my best.

Pinehurst is a golf course that many consider the best. First of all, going there is a once in a lifetime opportunity that you should definitely take if you have the chance. Although the weather can be tricky at times, that's what makes it fun. Here, you will find the beauty of Pinehurst, the experience, the interest, and more.



Before getting on the plane, there were so many thoughts going into this. I couldn't stop thinking about it. I had been dreaming about it all the time, and finally it had become a reality. I was so excited, I just couldn't hide it. When I heard the news that I qualified, I didn't wait a second. I immediately started practicing, shot after shot, day after day, week after week. We practiced. We practiced hard. Then came the day of the plane ride. Nerves kicked in. "Did we pack everything?" Luckily, we did and landed safely, and had a wonderful time.

Let's talk about the actual experience now. When we landed on July 28, there was a physical registration site. First of course, we checked in, but when you looked at the entire room, it was like Disneyland, but for golf. The room was filled with a plethora of activities to do. They gave out shirts and many other things as well. They also told us that we had to wear those in the parade of nations later that day. If you don't know, the parade of nations is when all participating countries line up, and we walk some distance to a huge park, where the U.S military performs. Then, the founder of the organization gave a speech to encourage us competitors. The overall experience was a wild one, I guess.

You may be wondering why I am talking about Pinehurst so much. You first need to know the history of it. Pinehurst was founded in 1897, and the iconic No.2, was made in 1907, exactly ten years later. It was designed by the world renowned Donald Ross. He, of course did not design the newer courses, but designed the legendary ones, such as, No.2. Another reason why it is so captivating is a pose made by this person. It is from a golfer named Payne Stewart, who made this pose to celebrate his achievement of winning the 1999 U.S Open. Sadly, he passed away that very year due to a plane crash. But, his legacy will live on forever for sure.

Pinehurst will always have a special place in my heart, because it's part of the reason why I wanted to play golf in the first place. And this year, I got to experience what it actually feels like to play in the world's most beautiful course. This adventure is something I will never forget, and I hope that you guys can experience this as well. Golf is an interesting sport. It is one of the most mental games, but it can definitely bring out your best. I am very proud to



be representing California, and thank you to the people who have supported me to get to this place. Thank you for reading.



I was at my cousin's house for a graduation party. There was everything - great food, music, drinks, people, but something felt off. I was sitting next to one of my friends, Rekik, who I like to call "Rickii". We were childhood friends, since 1st grade to be exact. We are close. Very close!

"Hey Rickii, I'm bored, what do you wanna do? There are mostly just big kids drinking and partying with grown-ups outside." I say in a boredish tone.

I tried to make it super obvious to Rekik that I was bored but she was just not working, like literally, her eyes were rolled back which made her look like she was stopped in time, which was VERY NORMAL. And she looked like she was drooling, almost everything stopped in time. I saw the same thing for the other people, they were moving but very slowly. Was I malfunctioning or the big kids and Rickii? I thought,

"Hmm, this is a perfect time to explore the house I guess?" I said in my head as I waddled upstairs in my super uncomfy red blouse with a ribbon on the side with a red and brown plaid style dress. Nobody in my cousin's family let anyone go upstairs for "private reasons". So today, I was going to find out and tell all my friends at school tomorrow! My confident 10 year old brain thought. I dashed upstairs and tiptoed up into my aunt's room first, her closet was wide open, I walked carefully to the closet and I took a look.

"Nothing? Really!" I said out loud. Suddenly a gust of wind burst onto my face, everything was normal again, I heard Rickii calling my name and someone coming upstairs breathing heavily.

"Shoot!"

I thought as I was trying to figure out what or how to get out of this mess.

"What if my aunt finds me!"

I said to myself worried, suddenly I see something in the corner of my eye, a small door. I reach for the door, it was unlocked, so I quickly hid inside, covering myself with the first blouse layer. I hear the door creak as I the open it, I hear a small faint "DON'T DO IT, OR IT'LL GET YOU TO!"

Is it a monster, animal, maybe a rat?! I thought to myself. Whatever it is, I have to go back but I don't want to get caught. I looked around my surroundings, the place looked like some old school playhouse, like the backrooms type of thing, with the nostalgic weird-core music in the back of my head. I was terrified. I got up and I took a step forward, but I quickly turned around and charged for the door. I think for a couple of seconds wondering and thinking of what I should do – do I fight, flight, or freeze? I slowly turn around and take a few steps forward, my eyes navigating through the playhouse for a hiding spot. I take a step. Suddenly the door snapped shut behind me, I knew I was going to get caught now! I close my eyes in fear as I find a place to hide under a ball pit next to a big rainbow slide with stains of some sort? I blinked twice, then I realized, those were blood stains. Now I was really terrified. What was a 10-year-old girl to do in this situation? I looked down slowly at my shoes,

"What? What kind of witchcraft is this?"

I whisper as I start to tremble a little bit. I was a completely new person. Orange hair, kid core style, cute rainbow plaid overalls with rainbows and butterflies, with lots of scribbles on it. I also have a hat, maybe like a magician's hat with cute rainbow bows and butterfly clips on them, same for the color of the overalls, a very kidcore style, with a bit of weirdcore, my orange hair was also tied up into pigtails with 2 cute rainbow scrunchies. But I was still super confused, I almost even punched myself because I thought I was in a dream, but 4 pinches were enough to remind me that I wasn't in one. I had some tools in my overall pocket, I saw a mirror, so I picked it up. I put it up to my face, beautiful blue and purple eyes sparkling and glowing in the flickering light. Suddenly I see a dark creature in



the corner of my eye, I let out a yelp as I crawl out under the ball pit and run to the secret door and start banging on it. It was a full black skinny slender man looking thing, jaw dropped to the bottom of the playhouse floor. I saw a note pop up. I stop banging on the door and quickly swipe through the words, is it a note from the previous house owner, or the last person who was here? I thought as I crawled back under the playhouse ball pit slide while the black entity was distracted looking at the other slide to my left corner, but quickly coming out because it was dark. I picked up the note that dropped while I was coming out and read it, I finished reading it, but I wasn't quite sure what it meant so I crumbled it, as I fast tiptoed to the ball pit. I get to the spot under the slide and uncrumble the paper and read it as my eyes are navigating through each word like a mad person, as I was trying to understand it again. The note says:

“The black creature was following me around until it had the chance to get me over and over the second it caught eyes with me. The entity has a fear though, the hat. Whenever I take off my top hat a little, the black entity screeches and runs off. I'm still very scared and want to go home but I can't. Now I know, the playhouse must be my new home now, though you must remember - “NEVER FULLY TAKE THE HAT OFF.”



After reading the note, I didn't really care what the note said about not taking the hat off fully. The only thing I cared about was understanding the note, and I finally did, and I was SUPER TERRIFIED. So, I just folded the paper and put it in my overalls pockets. I crawl out of the cramped space under the ball pit and run to the door and start banging on it as the tools in my front pouch are bouncing up and down as I take each fast step. I don't even care if I get in trouble with my aunt anymore, that note alone was enough to scare me to death. I begged my parents to let me out, but they just wouldn't. With no choice left I take off the hat FULLY and scream with the top of my lungs.

“Ma! BA! Help me, this is no dream, I'm awake! I want to go home!”

I scream frantically as I take off the hat, fully. Suddenly, I see the dark entity charging towards me, I didn't know what to do. I was just a kid. I hear the entity screech as its jaw drops to the very very bottom of the playhouse ground. I saw the torso bones of the skinny black entity, it looked like it was about to explode, it looked really painful. Suddenly I feel a sharp pain in my stomach, and I hear some indescribable noises with a huge gust of wind all over my face. I start to feel heavier and heavier. After some very painful seconds, I woke up, in a white bed with tubes everywhere, and I mean everywhere. There was also this thing on my mouth that covered my nose and mouth, like a gas mask thing. I ignored it because I saw something pink in the corner of my eye, next to me was a small bedside table with many gifts on it. I got really confused when I saw a card that said “Happy 23rd B-day my baby girl!”. 23rd birthday? I thought I was 10? I also saw many teddy bears and dolls with a bunch of birthday cards, but I didn't understand. I was still processing one thing, just one, wasn't I 10? Why did it say 23? Suddenly I hear the pure white door creak as I see a person walk into the room. It was a nurse, I could tell by her mask, her white scrub and her bunned up hair. She gives me one look and gasps. I look at my hair, black, back to normal! I look at the window reflection next to me, eyes, sadly not blue and purple anymore, that would've made a perfect return! Suddenly the nurse slams the call button and screams,

“All nurses and doctors! Come to room 216 immediately! The patient has woken up, call the mom and dad! Call them asap!”

The nurse screams as she lets go of the call/speaker button in a panic. I took off my gas mask thing, it had a sticker on it saying “breathing tube”

“So it wasn't a gas mask?”

I say as I take off my breathing tube gently as the nurse is staring. The nurse just stared at me, she looked stunned. Since I was gone for so long, the nurse couldn't believe that I was in such good shape to talk. Suddenly, the door

burst with doctors and nurses surrounding me, probably 2, 5, 9, WHAT? I thought, did I forget how to count? The doctor who came out the door slowly walked up to me and said that I was in a coma for 13 years. That explains why it said 23, even though I was gone for 13 years, I still knew simple math like $10 + 13$, I thought. Soon after I saw that the doctors made a smooth line next to the door as my crying parents walked inside the room with a bouquet of flowers crying, tears streaming down their faces uncontrollably. I smiled at them, but then I realized what was really going on. I wasn't 10, I was 23, Rekik was never real, same for my cousin and aunt. Half of my whole life was a dream. I was in a coma for a whole 12 1/2 years. All my life was ruined, just because of a silly secret door.

***P.S-** This story was actually based on a real dream I had before! The story where I was at my cousin's graduation party was true. That was a part of my nightmare I had a couple days ago! Same for the black entity. It was based on a funny Roblox shorts series where you troll people in a Roblox snap game. One of the trolls was that black entity creature, since I troll too, I made a horror story of 2 fun things, well, maybe 3! I got the playhouse idea from KEYS, a Roblox game, where you run and hide from monsters trying to chase you!*

Ileena Saha, 10 years, is a 5th Grader at the Westlake Charter High School

Hornet Aerospace and Propulsion Club California State University, Sacramento

Ronav Som Kiran

At California State University, Sacramento, I have the privilege of being part of the Hornet Aerospace and Propulsion Club, a student-led organization dedicated to the design, construction, and launch of experimental rockets. Our club brings together students from a wide range of disciplines to collaborate on exciting projects that combine creativity, engineering, and teamwork.

As the Avionics Lead, I am responsible for the technological and computer systems of our rockets. This includes developing the electronic systems that collect flight data, control onboard functions, and ensure the safety and success of each launch. Avionics is a critical part of modern rocketry, and being able to design and implement these systems has been both challenging and rewarding.

What makes the Hornet Aerospace and Propulsion Club truly special is its multidisciplinary nature. While many of our members come from mechanical and electrical engineering backgrounds, we also have students from computer engineering, physics, mathematics, business, economics, and even accounting. This diversity allows us to approach complex problems from multiple perspectives and gives every member the opportunity to contribute unique skills to the team.

Beyond building rockets, the club provides hands-on experience that goes far beyond the classroom. From machining parts to writing code, testing propulsion systems, and preparing for launches, every project requires collaboration and dedication. We learn not only technical skills but also leadership, teamwork, and project management—qualities that are essential in any career. Through the club I have had contact with representatives of



Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, NASA, Astro and many other aerospace companies. The work in the club has allowed me to work on projects that has increased my chances of getting into bigger companies and has gotten my friends internships into companies like Kratos.

In addition to our work on campus, our club also participates in outreach events such as OpenSauce, a large science and technology festival that brings together creators, engineers, and innovators from around the world. At OpenSauce, we showcased our rocket projects, explained our avionics systems to curious visitors, and inspired younger students to explore aerospace and engineering. It was an incredible experience to share our passion for rocketry with the broader community and to see the excitement our work generated among people of all ages.

Participating in the Hornet Aerospace and Propulsion Club has been an incredible journey. Each launch represents months of hard work, and seeing a rocket soar into the sky is an unforgettable experience. More importantly, the club inspires us to push boundaries, think innovatively, and prepare ourselves for the challenges of the aerospace industry and beyond.



সোনার কেপ্লার এক জায়গায় ফেলুদা বলছিলো - প্যারাসাইকোলোজি হচ্ছে মানুষের মনের অন্ধকার দিক নিয়ে গবেষণা করা! মনের এই ধোঁয়াটে, অজানা, অন্ধকার দিকটা কিন্তু খুব সত্যি - আমাদের সকলের জীবনেই কোনো না কোনো সময় মন আমাদের সময়ে অসময়ে অদ্ভুত ভাবে চমকে দিয়ে যায়।

আমার আর দাদার যেদিন সকালে লিভার ট্রান্সপ্ল্যান্ট হবার কথা, তার আগের দিন সন্ধ্যায় দিল্লির ম্যাক্স হাসপাতালের একটা নির্জন ঘরে একলা শুয়ে আছি - তখনও বাইরে আলো-আঁধারি, জানলার বাইরে কয়েক ফুট দূরত্বে একটা ধূসর বিন্ডিঙের খাড়া দেওয়াল উঠে গেছে, তার ছাদে লোহার রডের সমারোহে বসে কয়েকটা পায়রা, নিজেদের মধ্যে সে সন্ধ্যার শেষ বকম বকম করছে - আমি আমার এক চিলতে গোধূলি আকাশ, আর পায়রাগুলো দেখতে দেখতে মনের মধ্যে সাহস সঞ্চয় করছি! মা বাবা-কে কথা দিয়েছি, দাদাকে নিয়ে বাড়ি ফিরবোই - ডাক্তার বলেছেন আঠেরো উনিশ ঘন্টার কঠিন সার্জারি। হঠাৎ মনে হলো, যদি কাল অপারেশন টেবিলে একেবারে চলে যাই, তাহলে? গোটেনগেন ইউনিভার্সিটি-র কফি-হাউস, যেখানে দুনিয়ার গুচ্ছ গুচ্ছ নোবেল-লরিয়েটদের নানান উদ্ভাবনী চিন্তায় সমৃদ্ধ হতো কফি হাউসের ঐতিহাসিক দেওয়ালটা, সেটা আর দেখা হবে না! ওই যে পড়েছিলাম - সেখানে হাতের শুঁড়ের মতন একুয়েশন-এর লাইন বাড়তেই থাকত, সে লেখা কারোর মুহুর্তে মানা ছিল - এক পন্ডিত সে সমস্যা শুরু করে যেতেন আর পরে আর এক কোনো অজানা পন্ডিত অথবা পন্ডিতাইন সেটা সমাধান করে যেতেন.... এ ছিল বিজ্ঞানের রূপকথার জগৎ, দেখার বড়ো ইচ্ছে ছিল, কিন্তু কাল চলে গেলে আর তো দেখা হবে না!

এখন কথা হচ্ছে, এ রকম হাজার ইচ্ছে তো আমাদের সকলের মনের মধ্যে থাকে, কিন্তু এমন এক সময় - যখন হয়তো জীবনের শেষ সন্ধ্যা দেখছি, যখন আমার শেষ ইচ্ছেগুলো চিঠিতে লিখে আমার প্রিয় বন্ধুকে দিয়ে, মনে মনে তৈরী হয়ে এসেছি - আমি চলে গেলে ক্ষতি নেই, কিন্তু আমার, মার, বাবার মানসিক শিরদাঁড়া দাদা, কত দুঃস্থ প্রাণের চিকিৎসা করা, তাদের বাঁচিয়ে তোলা, দাদার একমাত্র মেয়ে - তার বিয়ে, তার এম ডি হওয়া দেখা, কত কি যে করা এখনো তার বাকি আছে - তাই ওকে বাঁচিয়ে মা-বাবার বুকুর কাছে, ওর স্ত্রী আর মেয়ের কাছে ফিরিয়ে দিতেই হবে - এসব ভেবে মনকে শক্ত করে ঠাকুরকে ডাকছি - এমন সময়ে এরকম উদ্ভট

ইচ্ছে মনের মধ্যে কেন ভেসে উঠলো কে জানে! মা, বাবা, দাদা, বন্ধু, আত্মীয়-স্বজন, জীবনে এতো কিছু থাকতে হঠাৎ করে জীবনের এমন একটা বিশেষ সময়ে গোটেনগেন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় দেখা হবে না এ জন্যই মনটা খারাপ হয়ে গেলো!

মা-এর আশীর্বাদে দাদা সে বার ফিরে এসেছিলো, কিন্তু শেষ রক্ষা হয় নি। এক বছর পরে শান্তিনিকেতনে গিয়ে, ডেঙ্গু হয়ে, কিডনি ইনফেকশন হয়ে, কথা নেই বার্তা নেই, হট করে চলে গেলো সব কাজ, সব ভালোবাসা, ঝগড়া অসমাপ্ত রেখে!

দাদা-র ঠান্ডা হয়ে যাওয়া ব্যান্ডেজ-বাঁধা নিখর কপালে যখন শেষ যাত্রার চন্দনের টিপটা, আমার শেষ ভাইফোঁটাটা আঁকছিলাম - তখন সব স্মৃতি পিছু ফেলে - মনে পড়ছিলো আমাদের ছেলেবেলার ঝগড়া মেটানোর জন্য দাদার এনে দেওয়া ডনবস্কো স্কুলের বাইরে বিক্রি হওয়া সে ইম্পেশাল হজমিগুলির কথা - মনে হচ্ছিলো আর ওর সাথে ঝগড়া হবে না, ভাব-ও হবে না - মনের গভীরে একটা আকাশ-জোড়া সব হারানো শূন্যতা, মাথার মধ্যে দিশাহারা লাগছে, একমাস মাত্র আগে বাবা চলে গেছেন, কানে আসছে মা-বুড়ির পাগলের মতন কান্না - কিন্তু শুধু দাদার সেই হাসি হাসি দুটো মুখটা মনে পড়ছে - আমি ওর সাথে ঝগড়া করে রেগে মেগে বাড়ির মাঠে দোলনায় বসে আছি হাঁড়ি-মুখ করে, আর ও স্কুল থেকে ফিরেই গুটি গুটি পায়ে এসে, 'এ-এ মনি' বলে ডাক দিয়ে আমার মান ভাঙানোর চেষ্টা করছে, হাতটা এগিয়ে দিচ্ছে - হাতের তালুতে সেই লাল ঝাল-মিষ্টি গুঁড়ো দেওয়া হজমি-গুলি! মনে হয় ব্যান্ডেজ-এর মধ্যে ওর ঠান্ডা হাতের তালুটাতে আশ্রয় করে হাত বুলাই; কালো কাঁচ ঢাকা গাড়িটাতে তোলা পর্যন্ত ওই হাত-টা ছাড়তে ইচ্ছে করে না - তারপর সর্ব শক্তি নিঃশেষ করে মনের মধ্যে ঢুকরে কেঁদে উঠে বলি -দাদা, আর আমার অভিমান-এর পাঁচিল ভাঙবে কে রে?

মন আমাদের সাথে এমনই সব কান্ড করে, যখন যা মনে হওয়া উচিত তা না মনে হয়ে অন্য কথা মাথায় আসে! আবার অনেক সময় আমাদের এক নিমেষে পৌঁছে দেয় কোন এক অতীতের দরজায়!

একবার সানফ্রান্সিসকো-তে একটা কনফারেন্স-এ গেছি - দু তিনটে হোটেল জুড়ে কনফারেন্স। তাই বিভিন্ন সেশন-এ যোগ দিতে ব্রেক-এর মাঝে এ হোটেল থেকে ও হোটেল-এ তাড়াতাড়ি হেঁটে হেঁটে যেতে হচ্ছে। এমনই

একটা ছোট রাস্তা দিয়ে দু-তিনজন মিলে শর্টকাট করছি - হঠাৎ কেন জানি সেই ছোটবেলায় স্কুলে টিফিনের সময় পাওয়া মোটা মোটা চৌকো পাউরুটির গন্ধে মনটা এক নিমেষে কয়েক দশক পিছিয়ে গেলো - সে পাউরুটিগুলো বাড়ি নিয়ে আসতাম - পুরু করে মাখন মাখিয়ে এক কামড় লঙ্কা দিয়ে (বাবার কাছে শেখা) বিকেলের টিফিন করতাম - কি যে অপূর্ব ছিল তার স্বাদ, এতো বছর পরে মনে করে জিভে জল চলে এলো! বাকিদের এগিয়ে যেতে বলে আমি ইতিউতি দেখি - একটু এদিক ওদিক খুঁজতেই চোখে পড়লো - এক কোণে একটা ছোট্ট বেকারি, হরেক রকম পাউরুটি আর পেস্ট্রি সাজানো শোকেস-এ, বুড়ো দোকানদার সদ্য ওভেন থেকে বার করা মোটা মোটা ব্রেড ট্রে-তে করে সাজিয়ে তুলছে - দোকানের সামনে দাঁড়ানো একটা ছোট্ট ভ্যান - কোথাও ডেলিভারি দিতে হবে মনে হয়! আমি একটু এগিয়ে গিয়ে সুপ্রভাত বলতেই, একগাল হাসি বুড়োর মুখে। আমি হেসে বললাম - তোমার রুটির গন্ধ আমাকে ছোটবেলার স্মৃতি মনে করিয়ে দিলো। শুনেই সে চামড়া-কুঁচকানো মুখে হাসি আরো প্রশস্ত হলো - ইতালিয়ান অ্যাকসেন্ট-এ উত্তর দিলো - 'ফ্রেশলি মেড এন্ড ভেরি টেস্টি! ওয়ান্ট সম?' আমি ঘাড় নাড়তেই - দোকান থেকে একটা কাগজের ব্যাগ-এ করে গোটা চারেক প্যাক করে দিলো আর একটা কাগজের ডিশে করে এক টুকরো ব্রেড, একটুকরো মাখন আর একটা প্লাস্টিকের ছুরি এনে ধরে সামনে। বলে খাও খাও! আমার সামনেই খাও! আমার মনটা একেবারে ভরে গেলো। মাখন মাখিয়ে সে রুটি মুখে দিতেই গলে গেলো - একেবারে অমৃতের স্বাদ! সানফ্রান্সিস্কোর এক অজানা রাস্তায় দাঁড়িয়ে চোখ বন্ধ করে এক মুহূর্তে মন-পবনের নাও-এ করে পৌঁছে গেলাম ছেলেবেলার স্কুলের টিফিনের লাইনে! এক পয়সা নিলো না সে বুড়ো। এর পর থেকে যখনই কোনো কাজে ও দিকে যাই, ওই দোকান থেকে হাত ভর্তি করে পেস্ট্রি, হরেক রকম রুটি কিনে বাড়ি ফিরি - বুড়ো-র সাথে ভারী ভাব হয়ে গেছে আমার!

আমার যখন বছর আট কি নয় বয়স - তখন আমরা স-পরিবারে রাজগীর বেড়াতে গিয়েছিলাম। এখনকার কথা জানি না, তখন তো এমন ভাড়া গাড়ি করে লোকে ঘুরতো না - আমরা ঘোড়ায়-টানা টাঙ্গা ভাড়া করে গোটা রাজগীর, বুদ্ধগয়া সব ঘুরেছিলাম। আমাদের টাঙাওলা ছিল মোটাসোটা হাস্যমুখ গোপালদাদা। আমার সঙ্গে খুব দোস্তি হয়ে গেলো - আমি গোপালদাদার সঙ্গে টাঙার সামনের দিকটায় বসে বকর বকর করতে করতে ঘুরতাম। আমার ছোট্টবেলা থেকে হাত ভর্তি করে

রংবেরঙের কাঁচের চুড়ি পরার শখ। হাত নাড়ালে বেশ চুন চুন করে শব্দ হবে, ভারী ভালো লাগতো! শেষের দিন মায়ের সঙ্গে রাজগীরের পথের ধারের বাজার থেকে আত্মীয়স্বজনের জন্য বেশ কিছু এটা সেটা, লাইম-স্টোন-এর বুদ্ধ, অশোক স্তম্ভ আরও কত কি কিনলাম, তার সঙ্গে কিনলাম এক বাস্ক রংবেরঙের চুড়ি। সে চুড়ি আমি কাউকে ধরতে দেব না - মহানন্দে লাফাতে লাফাতে গিয়ে উঠলাম টাঙাতে - গোপালদাদার পাশে। ফিরতি পথে হবি তো হ, সেদিনই টাঙ্গা পড়লো এক গাডডায়, ঘোড়া লাফিয়ে উঠলো, টাঙ্গা হেলে গেলো আর আমার হাত ফস্কে বাস্ক-ভর্তি চুড়ি রাস্তায় পড়ে, সব ভেঙে চুরমার!

আমি তো হাপুস নয়নে কাঁদছি, আর কাঁদছি - সে দোকান এলাকা আবার অনেকটা পথ, বেশ সঙ্কো হয়ে গেছে, যেতে যেতে দোকান বন্ধ-ও হয়ে যাবে। মা বললো কাল সকালে ট্রেন, তাই আর দোকানে যাওয়ার সময় হবে না, বাড়ি গিয়ে আবার চুড়ি কিনে দেবে। আমার মনে হলো ওই একবাস্ক চুড়ির শোকে যেন মরেই যাবে। গোপালদাদার উপর ভীষণ রাগ হচ্ছিলো, গাঁসা করে নামার সময় কথা না বলে, ওর 'ও বেটি ও বেটি' ডাক অগ্রাহ্য করে মুখ ঘুরিয়ে চলে গেলাম, যেন ওরই সব দোষ। পরের দিন আমাদের স্টেশনে নিয়ে যাবার জন্য সকাল সাড়ে নটায় গোপালদাদার টাঙ্গা নিয়ে আসার কথা, নটা পঁয়তাল্লিশ হয়ে গেলো, টাঙ্গার দেখা নেই, বাবা বেশ চিন্তিত হয়ে অন্য টাঙ্গার খোঁজ করতে গেলো। এমন সময় ঘর্মান্ত হয়ে হস্ত দস্ত হয়ে ঘোড়া হাঁকিয়ে গোপালদাদার আবির্ভাব! বাবা একটু রাগরাগ গলা করে জিজ্ঞেস করতেই জিভ কেটে হাত জোড় করলো - নেমেই প্রথমে দৌড়ে এলো আমার কাছে - হাতে একটা কাগজের বাস্ক। ঘামে ভেজা মুখে একগাল হেসে বলে - 'গুস্‌সা থোক দো বেটি! দেখো তোমহারে লিয়ে কেয়া লে আয়ে হাম!' বলে বাস্ক খুলে ধরে আমার সামনে - এক বাস্ক ভর্তি তখনকার নতুন ডিসাইন-এর অপূর্ব নীল রঙের জলতরঙ্গ বঁকী চুড়ি - একেবারে আমার হাতের মাপের! আমার গোপালদাদা প্রাণপণ টাঙ্গা চালিয়ে এই সাত সকালে আধ-ঘন্টা পথ উজিয়ে গিয়ে তার বেটির জন্য নিয়ে এসেছে! দোকান খোলে সাড়ে নটা নাগাদ, তাই তার এতো দেরি - পড়ি কি মরি করে টাঙ্গা ছুটিয়ে ফিরেছে সে! আমার তখন কৃতজ্ঞতা, আক্লত এসব শব্দ ভালোভাবে বোঝার বা প্রকাশ করে বলার বয়স ছিল না - শুধু মনে আছে চুড়িগুলো দেখে এক মুখ হাসি নিয়ে গোপালদাদাকে জড়িয়ে ধরেছিলাম! বাবা চুড়ির দাম দিতে গেলে এক পয়সা নিলো না সে মানুষটি - আমার

বেটির জন্য এনেছি, তার আবার দাম কি নেবো বাবু! সে চুড়িগুলো বহুদিন আমার অন্তপ্রাণ ছিল! এ গল্প এই জন্য বললাম - পরবর্তী জীবনে যখনই কাঁচের চুড়ির দোকান দেখতাম, অথবা কোনো হাত-ভর্তি কাঁচের চুড়ির চুন চুন আওয়াজে শুনতাম - এক নিমেষে মন পিছু হেঁটে পৌঁছে যেত সেই সত্তরের দশকের রাজগীরের পথে, দেখতে পেতাম ঘামে ভেজা গোলগাল হাসি হাসি একটা মুখ - আমার গোপালদাদা জোর কদমে টাঙ্গা হাঁকিয়ে মাথা নেড়ে নেড়ে হরেক রকম গল্পো করতে করতে চলেছে তার কলকাতার বেটির সঙ্গে!

কলকাতার মেয়ে ডক্টর অর্চিতা সেনগুপ্ত গত তিন দশকের উপর আমেরিকার বাসিন্দা। প্রেসিডেন্সি-র স্নাতক, পেশায় বৈজ্ঞানিক অর্চিতা ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া থেকে ডক্টরেট করে সিলিকন-ভ্যালিতে সেমিকন্ডাক্টর প্রযুক্তি বিজ্ঞানের কাজে যুক্ত হলেও, লেখা তার বাঁচার বাতাস। কর্ম-জগতের বাইরের একটুকরো জগৎ অর্চিতা রেখে দিয়েছে তার মাতৃভাষার হাত ধরে সংবেদনশীল অনুভূতি প্রকাশের জন্য। আবেগমন মন নিয়ে সে লিখে যায় জীবনের কথা, চলার পথের বাঁকে বাঁকে খুঁজে পাওয়া জীবনের কথা। তার কলমের আঁচড়ে উঠে আসে সেই চিরন্তন মানুষগুলোর ছবি, যারা তাদের ভালো মন্দ, হাসি, কান্না, এর বিভাস, ওর পূরবী মিলিয়ে শুধুই অমৃতের পুত্র-কন্যা। এরই মধ্যে এ বছরের বইমেলায় কথা ও কাহিনী থেকে প্রকাশিত হয়েছে 'অমিত আভার সন্ধানে' - অর্চিতার প্রথম ঐতিহাসিক রহস্য উপন্যাস ও তার চতুর্থ প্রকাশিত বাংলা বই।

সন-টা ১৯৭৯ - আমি কলকাতার নামকরা এক গবেষণা-সংস্থা থেকে গিয়েছিলাম গোরখপুরে এক বৈজ্ঞানিক সিম্পোসিয়াম-এ। গোরখপুর যাবার সরাসরি তখন ট্রেন ছিল না, হাওড়া থেকে বেনারসে নেমে গাড়ি বদল করে যেতে হতো। গোরখপুর নেপালের বর্ডারে, সিম্পোসিয়াম শেষ হতে গোরখপুর বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-এর কতৃপক্ষের দৌলতে গণ্ডক নদী পেরিয়ে ভেঁইশা-লুটানিতে গিয়ে সবাই হৈ হৈ করে দোকান বাজার করতে থাকলেন। আমি একলা মানুষ, শখের মধ্যে শুধু ভ্রমণের নেশা, দোকান বাজার করতে আমার ভালো লাগেনা। ঘুরতে ঘুরতে ভেঁইশা-লুটানিতে এক কিউরিও-র দোকানে একটা চমৎকার কারুকাজ করা মধ্যযুগীয় জপযন্ত্র দেখে হঠাৎ মনটা ছলকে উঠলো। ভাবলাম বেনারস-টা তো দেখা হয় নি, হাতে ক-দিন ছুটি আছে, ফিরতি পথে বেনারস-এ কদিন থেকে, বিশ্বনাথ-বাবাকে দর্শন করে, সারনাথ, চুনার ঘুরে ফিরলে কেমন হয়? যেমনি ভাবা তেমনি কাজ। বাকি সহকর্মীরা সবাই বেনারসে এসে হাওড়ার গাড়ি ধরলেন, আমি রয়ে গেলাম বেনারস এ।

প্রথম কাজ রেলওয়ে কাউন্টারে গিয়ে ফেরার টিকেট কাটা - তখনকার দিনে ইন্সিডেন্টাল চার্জ-এর ব্যাপার খুব চলতো, আমি এসব ব্যাপারে আনাড়ি, এক সহকর্মীর পরামর্শে কুড়ি টাকা বেশি দিয়ে কোনো মতে দিল্লি-কালকা মেইল-এ ফেরার টিকেট পাওয়া গেলো। ইন্সিডেন্টাল চার্জ পাওয়া টিকেট কাউন্টারের বাবুটি মহানন্দে আমাকে চা খাইয়ে থাকার হোটেলও বাতলে দিলেন। ঘাটের কাছে - হোটেল নিগ্নন - বড়ো বড়ো ঘর, পরিষ্কার পরিচ্ছন্ন। হোটেলের ম্যানেজার বুদ্ধি দিলেন বাসে করে সারনাথ ঘুরে আসুন, সরকারি বাস, দুটাকা টিকিট। দুঘন্টার রাস্তা, ওখানে থাকার জায়গা অবশ্য নেই, তবে তাতে আর অসুবিধে কি, সারাদিন ঘুরে ফিরে বিকেলে উল্টো বাস ধরে ফিরে এলেই হলো। বেশ ভালো কথা, পরের দিন সন্ধ্যা সন্ধ্যা বাসে করে চললাম সারনাথ দেখতে।

সারনাথ-এ অমিতাভ-বুদ্ধ-এর বিশাল মূর্তি, কত খন্ড ইতিহাস, দেয়ালের গায়ে বুদ্ধের জীবনকথার চিত্রণ, কপিলাবস্তু থেকে নৈরঞ্জনার তীর, উরুবিল্ব থেকে কুশিনগর - সে দেয়ালে সব-এর বর্ণন আছে: এসব দেখতে দেখতে বেলা বেড়ে গেলো। মন্দির থেকে বেরিয়ে একটা বিরাট মাঠ। সে মাঠে অনেক বিশাল বিশাল গাছ, আর সে সব গাছের ডালে বড় বড়ো

চিহ্নের করা রং-বেরং-এর কি সুন্দর সব হাঁড়ি ঝুলানো - যাতে পাখিরা এসে নির্বিঘ্নে বাসা বেঁধে, ডিম পেড়ে বাচ্চা লালনপালন করতে পারে - নানান ধরণের পাখিরা উড়ে বেড়াচ্ছে, হাঁড়িগুলোতে বসে দোল খাচ্ছে, ছানাপোনাদের খাওয়াচ্ছে, কখনো ছোট্ট করে ঘুমও দিয়ে নিচ্ছে - দেখতে ভারী ভালো লাগে। এমাঠে আরো আছে - বিশাল এক বোধি-বৃক্ষের নাতি কিংবা পুতি। বুদ্ধগয়ার আসল বোধিবৃক্ষের এক ডাল অশোকের ছেলে মহেন্দ্র আর মেয়ে সংঘমিত্রা সিংহলে নিয়ে গিয়ে বসিয়েছিলেন, সেই গাছের ডাল এনে ধর্মপাল বসিয়ে ছিলেন সারনাথে। সারনাথের নাম এসেছে সংস্কৃত সারঙ্গনাথ থেকে (মানে হরিণ-দের প্রভু) - এ জায়গার আগের নাম ছিল মুগধব - তথাগত বুদ্ধের প্রথম ধর্মশিক্ষা প্রচার শুরু হয় এই সারঙ্গনাথ থেকে আর অমিতাভ-র জ্ঞানের আলোয় জন্ম হয় প্রথম বৌদ্ধ-সংঘের।

সব দেখে-টেখে দুপুরের রোদ তখন মাথায়, খুব খিদে পেয়ে গেলো। খাবার জায়গা খুঁজে খুঁজে রাস্তার ধারে একটি ধাবা মতন পাওয়া গেলো - পথচারীদের ছোটোখাটো খাবার জায়গা, কিন্তু গরম খাবার দাবার, ঢাকা দেওয়া আছে। হোটেলওলা কিন্তু খাটিয়ায় শুয়ে দিবি ভাত-ঘুম দিচ্ছে। কানে প্রশ্ন এলো একটি খুদে মানুষ-এর থেকে - চাউল অউর রোটি বাবুজি? বাচ্চা বাচ্চা কতগুলো ছেলে হাতে হাতে হোটেল-এর কাজ করছে, এ ধাবা-হোটেলের ওয়েটার আর কি। আমার প্রশ্ন - গরম হবে? হাঁ হাঁ বাবুজি একদম গোরম হোবে। কি কি আছে? ছেলেটি তুখোড় ভাবে মুখে মুখে ফিরিস্তি দিয়ে চলে - এই হায়া ওই হায়া আর আমি একটা একটা করে পদ অর্ডার দিতে থাকি - ভাত, ভাজি, ভিন্ডি ভাজা, অড়হর ডাল, আলুগোবি।

ইতিমধ্যে একটি ছোট্ট ছেলে - নিষ্পাপ নিষ্কলঙ্ক অপূর্ব সুন্দর মুখ-এর একটি সাত আট বছরের বালক, যেন ভগবানের প্রেরিত দূত, পরনে মলিন গেরুয়া রঙের চুবা (তিব্বতি ধরণের আলখাল্লা), দেখে মনে হয় হিমালয়ের পাহাড়ি অঞ্চলের ছেলে, মায়ায় ভরা সে মুখ....আমি যত খাবার অর্ডার দিই, সে ততো হাসে, সমানে হেসে যাচ্ছে। আমার একটু বিরক্তিই লাগছে, কিন্তু কিছু বলতে পারছি না; শেষে যখন অর্ডার দিলাম করলার চাটনি (জীবনে শুনি নি করলারও চাটনি হয়, তাই কৌতূহলে অর্ডার দেওয়া) আর দহি -

তখন সে আর থাকতে না পেরে হেসে কুটিপাটি হয়ে বলেই ফেলে - দহি ভি?!

প্রথম থেকেই সে এতো হাসছে - এখন এই ঠেস দেওয়া মন্তব্য - আমি একটু বেশ ক্ষুব্ধ হয়েই এবার ধাবাওয়ালাকে ডেকে তুললাম - শোনো বাপু তোমাদের এখানে আমি খেতে এসেছি। হাঁ বাবু জরুর, বাচ্চালোগ আপকা অর্ডার নহি লিয়া কেয়া? আমি ঘাড় হেলিয়ে বলি - হ্যাঁ নিয়েছে তো, কিন্তু শোনো, তোমার ওই ছেলেটা না তখন থেকে শুধু হেসে যাচ্ছে, এখন তো হেসে কুটিপাটি হচ্ছে। আমার খুব অস্বস্তি লাগছে, ওর এতো হাসির কারণটা কি হে? লোকটি বলেন - নহি বাবু কিছু নহি, ও বহত আচ্ছা বাচ্চা হ্যায়, উও গন্ধা লেড়কা নহি হ্যায়, উসকা পরিবার কিছু সাল পহলে তিব্বতি রিফুজি হো-কে ইধার আয়েথে, বহৎ আচ্ছা পরিবার হ্যায়। বলে বাচ্চাটিকে কাছে ডাকেন, হিন্দিতেই জিজ্ঞেস করেন - এই এদিকে আয়, তুই বাবুকে দেখে হাসছিস কেন রে? বাচ্চাটি আবার একগাল হেসে বলে - কুছ নাহি কাকা; বাবু-কো পাস্ তো পয়সা নেহি হ্যায়, লেকিন বাবু খানেকা ইতনা লম্বা ফর্দ দেতা হ্যায়! বলে আবার মিচকি মিচকি হাসে সে ছেলে। আমি এবার রেগে চোখ পাকিয়ে বলে ফেলি - দেখেছেন! আপনার ছেলেগুলো কি রকম বাজে, আমার সাথে ইয়ার্কি করছে! আমার কাছে পয়সা নেই? আমি কি এমনি এমনি খাবার অর্ডার দিচ্ছি? লোকটি তখন ছেলেটিকে ভাগান - যাও, বাবুকো সাথে দিল্লগী মত্ করো। সে হাসতে হাসতে ছুটে পালিয়ে গেলো।

আমি তারপর বেশ তৃপ্তি করে গরম গরম খাবার পেট ভরে খেয়েদেয়ে ধাবার মালিককে জিজ্ঞেস করি - কত হলো আপনার? পয়সা দিতে গিয়ে দেখি পকেট-এ মানিব্যাগ তো নেই! কি সর্বনাশ! ধাবার মালিক আঁচ করেছেন - কেয়া হুয়া বাবু? আমি অপ্রস্তুত - আমার মানিব্যাগ তো খুঁজে পাচ্ছি না! একটু থেমে বলি, দেখেছো - নিঘ্ঘাৎ ওই ছেলেটা চুরি করেছে! ধাবার মালিক হাঁ হাঁ করে ওঠেন - নেহি নেহি বাবু, ও আইস্য্য লেড়কা নহি হ্যায়, উও চোর নহি হ্যায়; ও বহত সাদা লেড়কা আছে, আচ্ছা বাচ্চা হ্যায়! জোরে জোরে মাথা নেড়ে বলেন - উও নহি লিয়া, নহি লিয়া। আমি বলি - নহি লিয়া তো, ও জানলো কি করে যে আমার কাছে পয়সা নেই? - সে তো বাবু হামি বলতে পারবো না। লেকিন ও বহৎ আচ্ছা লেড়কা হ্যায়, ও চোর নহি হ্যায়। আমি ভাবি - মুখটা দেখে অবশ্য তাই মনে হয়, দেবশিশুর মতন নিষ্কলঙ্ক অপূর্ব সুন্দর সরল মুখ,

মাথায় একটু খোঁচা খোঁচা ছোট চুল, আর ধুলোমাখা গেরুয়া বসনে - যেন বালক সিদ্ধার্থ, কিংবা বনের শিশু নালক! কিন্তু তাহলে মানিব্যাগটা গেলো কোথায়। ধাবার মালিকের কথায় মন্দির আর সংলগ্ন মাঠে আবার গিয়ে তন্ন তন্ন করে খুঁজি - যদি কোথাও পড়ে গিয়ে থাকে; বৃথাই যাওয়া, পেলাম না। এবার মনটা সত্যি খারাপ হলো, কি করে পয়সা দেবো? মনে পড়লো বুকপকেটে দুটো টাকা খুচরো ছিল তাই দিয়ে বাসের টিকেট কেটে এসেছি, তাই মানিব্যাগটা তখন আর বার করতে হয় নি, এখন খাবার পয়সা দেওয়া তো দূরের কথা, ফেরার বাসের টিকেট-এর পয়সাও নেই; তার চেয়েও বড়ো কথা কলকাতায় ফেরার টিকেট ওই মানিব্যাগ-এ, বেনারসে হোটেলের ভাড়াই বা মেটাবো কি করে সেই চিন্তায় পড়ে গেলাম! তখন আমার মলিন, চিন্তাগ্রস্ত মুখ দেখে ধাবার মালিক বলেন - বাবুজি আপ খানা খায়া, উসমে ক্যয়া হ্যায়, পইসা নহি লাগেগা, আপ চিন্তা মত কিজিয়ে। হামসে কুছ রুপেয়া উধার লেকে আপ বাস-সে ল্যাট যাইয়ে, মেরা পতা লিখ লিজিয়ে, বাদ মে রুপেয়া ভেজ দিজিয়েগা। কোই বাত নহি বাবুজি। কৃতজ্ঞতায়, সংকোচে, লজ্জায় মন টইটপ্পুর। জীবনে কখনো পয়সা না দিয়ে খাইনি কোথাও, খেয়ে ফেলেছি, তাই মুশকিল। খুব ভারাক্রান্ত মন নিয়ে হোটেলে ফিরে হোটেল-মালিক-কে সব খুলে বললাম, মানিব্যাগ চুরি হয়ে গেছে, কিংবা পড়ে গেছে। হোটেল-মালিক মানুষটি ভালো, তিনি বলেন হয়তো বাসেই চুরি হয়ে গেছে; আশ্বাস দিলেন, আপনি মন্দির দেখুন, বেনারস দেখুন, আমি চেনা লোক দিয়ে আপনার কলকাতায় ফেরার ট্রেনের টিকেট আবার করে দেব। পরে কলকাতায় গিয়ে আপনি টাকা পাঠিয়ে দিলেই হলো।

মন-খারাপ করে উপরে গিয়ে ঘরে ঢুকলাম -- ঢুকেই দেখি টেবিলের উপরে মানিব্যাগ পড়ে আছে! স্তম্ভিত হয়ে গেলাম! পরের দিন আবার বাস ধরে সারনাথ গেলাম ধাবার মালিককে খাবার আর বাস-এর টিকেট-এর পয়সা ফেরত দিতে। সে মানুষটি হেসে বলেন - দেখুন তো বাবু আপনি ওই ছেলেটাকে চোর বলছিলেন, আমি জানি তো যে ও চোর হতে পারে না! আমার খুব খারাপ লাগছে, অনুরোধ করলাম, ছেলেটিকে একবার ডেকে দেবার জন্য। তাকে আজ আর ধারে কাছে দেখা যাচ্ছে না। খোঁজাখুঁজি করে বেশ খানিকক্ষণ পরে অন্য একটি ছেলে তেনাকে এনে হাজির করলো - আজও মুখে অমলিন হাসি - এসে দাঁড়ায় দোকানের খুঁটি ধরে, মুখটা একটু লুকিয়ে,

আমার থেকে একটু দূরে, তার কাঁধের উপর একটা ছোট্ট ফিঙে বসে উঁকিঝুঁকি দিচ্ছে।

ধাবার মালিক হাত নেড়ে কাছে ডেকে জিজ্ঞেস করেন - তুই কি করে জানলি রে বাবুর কাছে কাল ঢাকা ছিল না ? ছেলের চোখে যেন হাসির বিদ্যুৎ খেলে যায় - হম জান্তা নহি, হম জান্তা নহি বলে হাসতে হাসতে দৌড়ে পালায় সে, ফিঙেটা উড়ে চলে ওর সাথে সাথে, দুটিতে মিলিয়ে যায় সারনাথের মাঠের ওপারে। আমি ফিরতি বাসে জানলার ধারে বসে পিছনে মিলিয়ে যাওয়া সারনাথের মাঠঘাট গাছপালার দিকে তাকিয়ে ভরে আসা মন নিয়ে ভাবতে থাকি - এ ছেলে কে? এ তো সাধারণ নয়! কোথা থেকে এসেছে? কোথায় যাবে সে?

সেদিন সারনাথ থেকে ফিরে বারাণসী-গঙ্গার ঘাটে বসে গোধূলির নরম আলোয় আমার ডায়েরিতে লিখেছিলাম আমার এই খুদে অলৌকিক অভিজ্ঞতা আর লিখেছিলাম - সে কি তুমিই ছিলে? তাই কি বরুনা নদীর পাড়ে হরিণ-চরা রূপকথা-বন সেদিন তোমার অমলিন খিল খিল হাসির ছটায় আলোয় আলো হয়েছিল? সে হাসি শুনে সিংহল-সমুদ্রপারের বট-ঠাকুন্দা বোধহয় আনন্দে শিহরিত হয়ে উঠেছিলেন ভর-দুপুরের ছায়া-ঘুম ভেঙে; আর তার নাতিপুত্রির ডালে ঝোলা রঙিন হাঁড়ির কোটরে ল্যাজ ঝুলিয়ে বসে থাকা ফিঙেটা তোমাকে একটুও ভয় পায়নি, উড়ে যায়নি, মাথা নেড়ে নেড়ে তোমার সাথে পাতিয়ে চলেছিল জন্মের আত্মীয়তা। হয়তো ও অনেক জন্ম ঘুরে পাখি হয়েছে, হয়তো ওর ডানায় ভর করে হাজার বছর ধরে সূর্য-চন্দ্র সকাল-সন্ধ্যা করেছে পারাপার, তাই ও জানে - তুমি আর কোনো জন্মে সেই ছিলে - রাজপুত্রের সাজ অবহেলায় ছেড়ে ফেলে, যশোধরার বুক চিরে, রাহুলের শিশু-বাহুর বাঁধন ছিঁড়ে যে নির্ভয়, নির্লোভ, নির্লিপ্ত তরুণ পাহাড় পেরিয়ে নেমে এসেছিলো একদিন - পৃথিবীকে চিন্ময়ী ভালোবাসার সন্ধান দিতে, নৈরঞ্জনার জল এক ভোরে যাকে মেখলার মতো জড়িয়ে ধরে মুক্তির আনন্দে আপ্লুত হয়েছিল, তুমি ই ছিলে সেই মহামানব - তাই অপার বিশ্বাসে ও তোমার কাঁধে এসে বসে।

তোমার সপ্ত-সমুদ্র সৈঁচা হাসির উদ্ভাসিত আলোয় তোমার পরনের ধুলো-কাদা মাখা চুবার মলিনতা ঢাকা পড়ে গেছে! রত্নগিরির কন্দর থেকে সারনাথের বনাশ্রয় উদাত্ত কণ্ঠের আওয়াজে একদিন মুখরিত

হয়েছিল, যিনি শুধুমাত্র ভিক্ষাপাত্র সম্বল করে পাহাড় ভেঙে, বালি ডিঙিয়ে, বাঁধ চূর্ণ করে বন হতে বনান্তে, গ্রাম থেকে নগরে পায়ে হেঁটে পাড়ি দিয়ে এক বুক নিঃশর্ত ভালোবাসা ছড়িয়ে পৃথিবীর মানুষকে আনন্দিক পথের সন্ধান দিয়েছিলেন, তাঁর মতন তোমারও কি ছিল মেঘের পাড়েতে ঘর? সে ঘরের পারে সাজানো উঠোন ছিল? আর ছিল আকাশে মিশে যাওয়া মেখলার মতো ধোঁয়া ধোঁয়া রাস্তা? তারপর? সব ছেড়ে কৃষ্ণা-চতুর্দশীর চাঁদের হাত ধরে একদিন তোমার অভিবাসী পূর্বপুরুষ নেমে এসেছিলো এই সারনাথের সমতলে নতুন-জীবন গড়ার আশায়?

উদ্বাস্তু শিবিরে জন্ম, তবুও তুমি এক আকাশ সতেজতা। গৃহহারা, ছন্নছাড়া চির-সুখী দেবশিশু - তোমার জ্যেষ্ঠ-মা-ছোয়াঁ এক সমুদ্র হাসি বলে দেয় - কপিলাবস্তুর রাজপ্রাসাদ অথবা উদ্বাস্তু শিবির, কেউ তোমাকে বাঁধতে অক্ষম! ধার ধার রোদে পোড়া মানুষগুলোর জীবনে বৃষ্টিভেজা কোমলতা হয়ে হাজার বছর ধরে বার বার এসেছে তুমি ওই আকাশ-গঙ্গার পথ ধরে; বুড়ি পৃথিবীটার ঘুমিয়ে-পড়া দুপুরের অবকাশকে ডেকে তুলেছো ভালোবাসা-মাখা হাসির শব্দে। আমাদের অক্ষমতা - তোমায় চিনতে পারি নি আমরা, শতছিদ্র, শতছিন্ন, সন্দেহে মলিন এ পৃথিবীর মানুষেরা! সারনাথের মাঠের পারে হারিয়ে যাওয়া বালক - সে কি তুমি-ই ছিলে ?

পরে জীবনে যতবার এ গল্প বন্ধুবান্ধব আত্মীয়দের কাছে করতে বসতাম - চোখের সামনে দেখতাম - সারনাথের পথের ধারে ধাবা, তার গনগনে উনুনে রান্না হচ্ছে, নিষ্পাপ উদ্বাস্তু এক দেব-বালক পথচারীদের হাতে হাতে খাবার পরিবেশন করছে; উনুনের তাতে, কিংবা দুপুরের ঝাঁ ঝাঁ রোদে তার ছোট্ট সরল গোল মুখটা লাল হয়ে উঠছে, তবু এক মুখ খিল খিল ভুবন-ভোলানো হাসি, কাঁধে ল্যাজ ঝোলা লাল-পাখি তার বিনা আড়ম্বরের রাজ-রাজেশ্বর সাজ; কোনো পর্যটকের ভবিষ্যৎ কিংবা আর কিছু জীবনের কথা মুখ-ফস্কে হঠাৎ বলে ফেলে লজ্জায় দৌড়ে পালালো কি?...

কোলকাতার মেয়ে ডক্টর আঁচীতা সেনগুপ্ত গত তিন দশকের উপর আমেরিকার বাসিন্দা। প্রেসিডেন্সি-র স্নাতক, পেশায় বৈজ্ঞানিক আঁচীতা ইউনিভার্সিটি অফ ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া থেকে ডক্টরেট করে সিলিকন-ভ্যালিতে সেমিকন্ডাক্টর প্রযুক্তি বিজ্ঞানের কাজে যুক্ত হলেও, লেখা তার বাঁচার বাতাস।

চুপচাপ বসে ভাবি, কোথায় ছিলাম আর কোথায় এসে পৌঁছেছি।

অনেকদিন হলো দেশ ছেড়েছি। তখন ছিল পূর্ব পাকিস্তান, এখন বাংলাদেশ। মনে পড়ে স্কুল-কলেজে যখন ছোট ছিলাম, রুটিন মতো দিনগুলি কাটতো। ঘুম থেকে উঠেই দৌড়াতে যেতে হতো বড় একটা পুকুরের চারপাশে। দৌড়াতে হবে কম করে চার বার। এসে মুখ, হাত ধুয়ে সকালের টিফিন। রাত্রিবেলা পড়া গুলি করে নিতাম আর সকালে অংক বা লিখিত হোমওয়ার্ক যা থাকতো - আর বারবার ঘড়িতে কটা বাজে দেখতাম। বেশি সময় না পেলে যে পুকুরে সাঁতার দিতে পারবো না।

ক্লাস-7 থেকে রুটিন বদলে গেল - সকালের স্কুল। ভালোই লাগতো যেতে, তবে শীতের দিন ছাড়া। পাড়ায় অমলদার মা, মাসিমা, খুব ভালো চুল বাধতেন। আমরা চার-পাঁচজন বিকেলে ফিতে, চিরুনি নিয়ে চুল বাঁধতে মাসিমার কাছে চলে যেতাম। বিকেলে পাড়ার মাঠে খেলতাম - তখন যে সবার হাতে হাতে আইফোন ছিল না। এমনি করে স্কুল শেষ করে কলেজে ঢুকলাম।

স্কুলে থাকতে বড় স্বপ্ন ছিল কলেজে যাওয়ার। ক্লাস করতে গিয়ে দেখলাম স্বপ্নটা ঠিকঠাক ফলছে না। মেয়েরা কমন্ রুমে সময় কাটায় - ক্লাস শুরু হওয়ার আগে প্রফেসর মেয়েদেরকে সাথে নিয়ে ক্লাসে যান, ক্লাস শেষ হলে আবার নিয়ে কমন্ রুমে পৌঁছে দিয়ে যান। বাকি সময় লুডো বা ক্যারাম খেলে, আর নয়তো গল্প করে কাটতো।

কলেজে স্পোর্টস হতো মেয়েদের, কিন্তু মেয়েদের প্র্যাকটিস করার কোন জায়গা নেই। যারা স্পোর্টসে নাম দেয়, নিজেদের বাড়িতেই প্র্যাকটিস করতে হয়। এমনি করেই চ্যাম্পিয়ন হলাম দু বার। বাড়িতে ছেলে মেয়ের স্কুলের ট্রফির সাথে আমার ও ট্রফি সাজানো আছে।

এই দেশে কত ফ্রিলি সবাই চলাফেরা করে - মেয়েরা কত এডভান্সড। বাঙ্গালীদের তাও দেশের কালচার ধরে রাখার চেষ্টা - অবশ্য সেটা সব জায়গায়। কি হেসেছিলাম, যখন ছোড়দি প্লেনে করে আগরতলা থেকে কলকাতা বটি আর লাউ নিয়ে এসেছিল। পরবর্তীকালে, ইন্ডিয়া থেকে মেয়ের জন্য বটি নিয়ে এসেছি, বাগানের ঝিঙ্গা-লাউ নিউইয়র্কে ছেলের কাছে নিয়ে গেছি। দুর্গা পূজো, সরস্বতী পূজো, হোলি - এখানে সবই উপভোগ করেছি। পূজোয় নাটক, কুইজ, গান, নাচ দেখতে ভালোই লাগে। মধ্যবয়স্ক, অল্পবয়স্ক সবার সঙ্গে গল্প করতে ও ভালোই লাগে। উৎসবের চৌরঙ্গী ম্যাগাজিনটা হাতে নিয়ে পুরো বছরটা কাটিয়ে দি, পাতা উল্টে পাল্টে।

এমনি আনন্দ করেই বাকি দিন গুলি কেটে গেলে ভগবানকে অনেক ধন্যবাদ।

শিখা ভদ্র গত আট বছর হয় ক্যালিফোর্নিয়া তে আছেন।
উনার একাডেমিক ডিগ্রীর সাথে আর একটি বিশেষ ডিগ্রী
আছে MOTT - মাদার অফ তনিমা এন্ড তন্ময়।

By a father-son duo who survived to tell the tale*Advise by Joydeep Ray**Photos by Siddharth (Neil) Ray and Joydeep Ray***So, You're Going on a Safari...**

If you are thinking of going on a safari — and not just any safari, but to sub-Saharan East African safari, your goals for the trip, in order of priority, should be:

1. Not getting killed by a hippo or dying of sleeping sickness
2. Not marrying a Masai on impulse
3. Capturing your memories

If these are your goals, congratulations — you have come to the right article! This father-son wildlife photography “expert” duo will tell you our story. We can partially help with #1 and definitely help with #3. For #2, you may want to consult a relationship counselor first.

The Gear: When Cheapskates Go Wild

First, you must choose the right gear. Being crazily tech-obsessed, we spent hours debating the megapixel difference between the latest and greatest pro-grade SLRs from Nikon and Canon. We even researched whether the third-order distortion of a \$6000 Nikon telephoto lens would ruin the image of a lion pouncing on a gazelle.

But when it came time to actually spending the money — well, that’s when the inner cheapskate spoke. We bought a used DSLR off eBay, paired it with a 7-year-old zoom lens from a long-forgotten garage box and decided this was destiny.

“At least it’s better than your mom’s iPhone,” I said. Deep down, though, I wasn’t so sure.

Later, right before we left for the airport, I remembered something my late father (a passionate photographer) used to say: “*Amateurs worry about cameras and lenses. Professionals only worry about tripods.*”



Resting cheetah, North Serengeti (by Neil)

Ah, yes, the tripod! Except we couldn’t find ours. But we *did* find a selfie stick. Neil declared that this would do. He gripped that selfie stick like a drowning man holding onto driftwood, and I gripped his shoulder to dampen any remaining vibrations. Not quite National Geographic technique, but hey — we had a plan.

“Pro” Tips from Two Not-So-Pros

Now that you’ve landed safely in Tanzania, with the “perfect” gear strapped around your neck, what’s your game plan? Well, here are some expert tips (or at least, expert-sounding tips) from two people who made plenty of mistakes so you don’t have to:

1. Don't shoot from a moving safari car.

Unless you want your photo of a zebra to look like a striped crocodile. Those Land Cruisers are sturdy, but they bounce like a trampoline over Serengeti potholes.

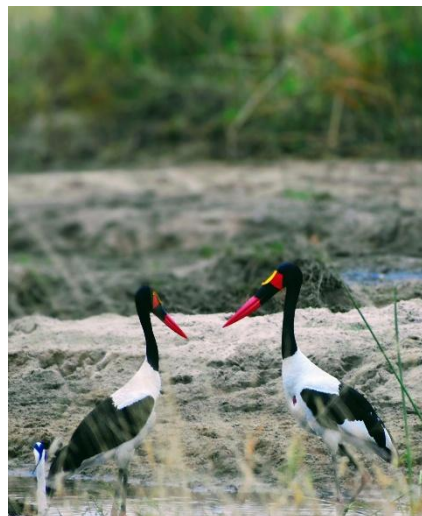
2. Focus is overrated.

Many times, the rhino you are trying to photograph is half a mile away, but the camera's auto-focus thinks you really wanted a sharp, artistic shot of the grass five feet in front. Switching to manual focus is an option — but good luck doing that while wearing glasses, in an unstable car, while also trying not to drop your lens into elephant dung.

Our solution? Take 50 shots and pray that at least one of them is in focus. Delete later. Or not.

3. The light will betray you.

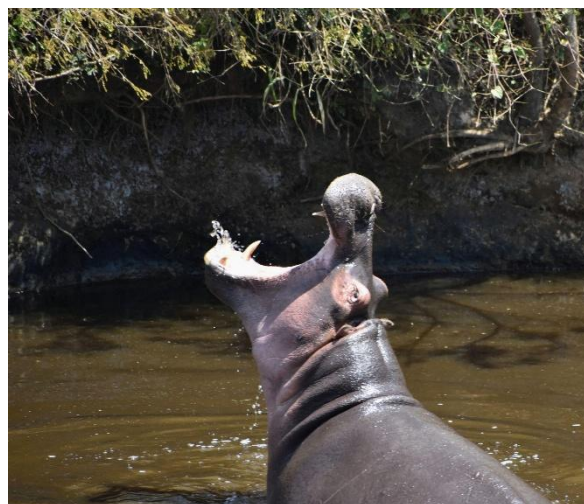
If you are traveling in July or August, your safari drives are likely under the harsh midday African sun, which will create shadows so sharp that even Lightroom would give up. Just embrace it. Harsh shadows means more drama. Pretend you meant it that way.



Saddle-billed storks, Tarangiri river. One of those nearly impossible to focus, very far-away subject (by Joydeep)



Resting male lion, Ngorongoro crater (by Neil)



Yawning hippo in a hippo pool, Central Serengeti (by Neil)

4. Beware of hippos — they are not in on the joke.

One of our favorite moments (and photos) came from a bunch of playful hippos we spotted in a creek in Central Serengeti. I, the wise father-photographer, told Neil,

“Be patient — wait until one of them yawns. A yawning hippo makes for a fantastic shot.”

Sure enough, one did yawn, and Neil clicked just at the right moment — a nearly perfect, poster-worthy frame! But then, one of the hippos suddenly started swimming toward us. No — charging toward us. Directly at our Land Cruiser.

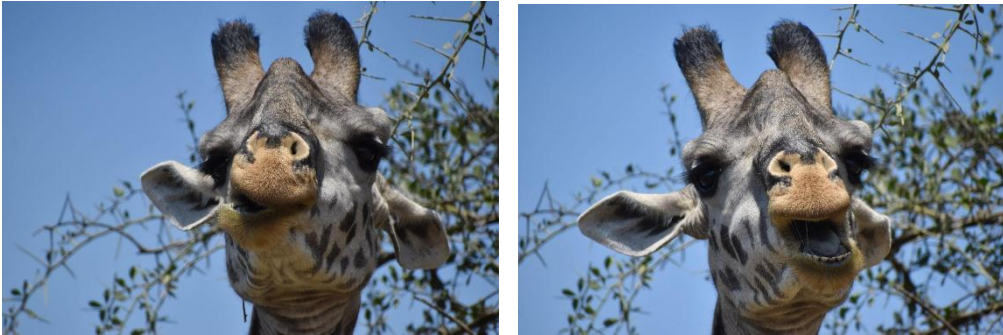
I, of course, stayed calm and collected. (*Translation: I screamed like a banshee, convinced we were about to become a hippo's lunch.*) The guide just chuckled and assured us the hippo was simply swimming over to its partner to play.

Lesson learned: sometimes, you get the shot, but you also get a small heart attack for free.

5. When a giraffe gets too close, click portraits — not selfies.

Giraffes are surprisingly photogenic when you're just a few feet away. They tilt their heads, flutter their eyelashes, and make expressions that look like they're silently judging your camera skills.

So, if one wanders close, take a moment to grab a few portraits. You'll thank yourself later — giraffes make better models than most of us.



Giraffe, Central Serengeti (by Neil)

Bonus Tip: Float Like a Balloon, Scream Like a Child, Shoot like a pro

A sunrise hot-air balloon ride over the Serengeti is a must. Yes, the takeoff is terrifying — you have to climb into a tipped-over basket in the dark while the balloon roars like an angry dragon — but once you're up, the view is pure magic. You'll get to photograph herds of wildebeest, zebras, and giraffes from the top, bathed in golden light. The landing is equally thrilling — a bit of bouncing and sliding, and a quick reminder that animals might be closer than they appear. But it's an unforgettable experience. Just remember to hold on to your camera tight - you don't want to drop it into the gaping mouth of a Mara river crocodile.



Migrating wildebeests (taken from high up), North Serengeti (by Neil)

Final Thoughts

In the end, we came back with many blurry elephants, half-cropped lions, and one very sharp picture of a bush we

didn't intend to photograph. Yet the very few half-decent images are now imprinted in a photo-book, glorifying the living room coffee table — because they're ours.

So pack your sense of humor, your selfie stick, and your patience. Don't try to be the Ansel Adams of African savannah. The point isn't to take the perfect photo — it's to have a perfectly fun adventure.

And you might conclude your mom's iPhone was good enough, after all!



Grant's gazelle, Ngorongoro crater (by Neil)



Mara river crocs, North Serengeti (by Joydeep)

Acknowledgement: Huge thanks to our co-travelling family members (Bonny and Jhinuk), trip planner Udayan(da), the rest of our merry band of travelers, and our safari guides Edwin and John. Without them, we'd have had far less fun, far more stress, and our photos would look like Bigfoot sightings. *Hakuna matata*, indeed.

About the Authors:

Joydeep is a techie who would rather debug code than write articles, but here we are. Neil is a senior at Vista Del Lago HS (Folsom) who now considers himself a wildlife photography guru—thanks to a single “Beginner Photography” class and one trip to Tanzania.

A Family's Brush with a Tsunami in Paradise
The Tapadar Bangalore Family

In July, our family returned to Hawaii after nearly two decades, eager to soak in the sun, dive into the ocean, and reconnect with each other. We planned a two-island escape—Maui and Oahu—filled with snorkeling adventures, beachside bliss, and the kind of laughter that only comes from shared memories.

The first few days were magical. We kicked things off with the legendary **Road to Hana**, winding through lush rainforests, cascading waterfalls, and dramatic coastal cliffs. Along the way, we dipped into hidden watering holes—refreshing pauses that felt like stepping into a postcard. Snorkeling at Molokini and Turtle Town revealed a world of vibrant marine life. We spent endless hours at the beach, relished the resort's comforts, and capped it all off with a lively luau. But on July 29th, as we hopped islands to Oahu, paradise took a dramatic turn.



1:00 PM – The Sirens Begin

At the airport, while my son and I waited for our rental car, (and the rest of the family at the airport waiting for us to pick them up) phones across the terminal erupted in a chorus of emergency alerts. A powerful 8.7 magnitude earthquake off Russia's far east had triggered tsunami warnings across the Pacific—Japan, Russia, Ecuador, and Hawaii. A massive tsunami wave was headed our way.

Panic set in. Friends from the Folsom community called in, having seen the news on TV. Flights were canceled. The airport was closing. Boats were ordered out to sea—safer there than docked. We were stranded on an island in the middle of the Pacific with a ticking clock: four hours until impact.

3:00 PM – Survival Mode

We had to act fast. Our hotel in Waikiki Beach—ironically booked as a room with an ocean view—was now a liability. We joined the slow-moving traffic heading west, away from the coast. Our goal: higher ground. We chose Wahiawa, a town 967 feet above sea level, near an army base. It felt right, even though the roads were eerily empty.

Local radio offered little more than “brace for impact.” The expected wave height? 7 to 10 meters. We parked at a McDonald's in Wahiawa, informed the staff we were staying put, and settled in. The internet worked. The food was comforting. And some quick games (thank you dumb charades) helped keep us calm. And soon, we weren't alone.

Community in Crisis

Strangers became allies. A local Indian woman invited us to her home. Her husband was stuck at the army base. Army personnel grabbing McChicken reassured us we'd made the right call. McDonald's buzzed with quiet energy—unspoken fears, shared hope, and the question on everyone's mind: Would we make it?

7:00 PM – Waiting for the Wave

The tsunami hadn't hit. TV channels focused on evacuations. Freeways were red-zoned. Shelters filled. We waited.

10:00 PM – A Decision to Celebrate Life

McDonald's closed. We moved to a nearby shelter. Hours passed. Eventually, we returned to our hotel, still under warning. But that night, we celebrated life.

The Days After – A Return to Rhythm

The morning after brought a cautious sigh of relief. While the tsunami warning had been lifted, the ocean hadn't fully calmed. Aftershocks sent surging waves crashing onto the shores. Red flags lined the beaches, a visual reminder that nature wasn't done yet.

Still, life on the island began to stir back to normal. Surfers at Waikiki didn't just return, they reveled in the towering waves, turning the ocean's fury into celebration. We embraced the moment too, choosing to attend a mesmerizing Cirque du Soleil performance 'Auana' —a vivid tribute to Hawaiian culture and history that reminded us of the island's resilience.



With spirits lifted, we ventured back into the ocean, this time on a boat ride to meet dolphins in their natural habitat. The waves still rolled with power, but we met them with renewed courage. Later, we returned to the beach, letting the surf wash over our feet, each wave a reminder of what we had faced—and overcome.

Around us, the island's visitors seemed to share the same unspoken sentiment: we had all been tested, and now we were choosing joy. The rhythm of paradise had returned, and we were ready to dance to it again.

Reflections from the Edge

This experience reminded us how fragile life is. In moments of crisis, it's not the ocean view or the itinerary that matters—it's family, community, and the love that binds us. To those who called, texted, and stayed glued to the news: we felt your presence. We love you. Let's make every day count and as they say in Hawaii – Hang Loose!



Raise a glass. Celebrate life. And remember—paradise is not just a place. It's the people you share it with. Aloha!

A personal narrative about balancing the classroom and the living room.

Before 8:00 AM, I would have already been addressed as “Mamma,” “Ma’am,” or “Mom” (by some overenthusiastic students) and — thanks to a few very confident fifth graders — “Boss.” I have been wearing a lot of hats: parent, teacher, snack-packer, cook, cleaner, lesson planner, coordinator, mentor, coach, referee, therapist, and sometimes, reluctant chaat/phuchka/Luchi-aloor-torkari chef. And while most people juggle work and family, mine comes with the same job responsibilities: caretaker of small humans with big emotions.

Mornings in the house used to be a whirlwind, thank heavens – not anymore. I would be packing a lunchbox with dinosaur-shaped nuggets for my 5-year-old son, packing the diaper bag with baby food for my daughter, who needed to be dropped off at the day care, while hurriedly packing some leftover dinner or just bread/butter for myself and ready to rush out the door. And... invariably that would be the time my sweet, cute, smiley, baby would choose to relieve herself, as in go on with the nature’s call... ugh! Take a deep breath and keep flying high... and high... and high. My friends would tell me to take a stronger shot of coffee, but the problem was that I never got hooked on coffee or tea; however, taking a shot of certain clear liquid or some other colored liquid would always cross my mind... What's the harm! Anything to keep my sanity intact. Reach school and go through the same routine - but with children who weren't mine. Still, I cared for them just the same. And somewhere between brushing hair, finding shoes, drinking my lemon water and getting the car key, I would realize that my school ID was in baby's diaper bag, and a Gerber food went into my backpack.

Years later, in a different time zone and on a different continent, not much had changed. Bigger school, more responsibility, added the title of driver... home to school and back, since I was in the same school as both my children. Once I park the car at school, I would shift into “Ma’am” mode. Just twenty-seven faces look up at me, needing answers to math questions, life questions, and sometimes just, “Can I go to the bathroom?” (Always yes. Always just 5 minutes after lunch or recess. And always five seconds after someone else just went). Some days, I would realize that I had to go to the bathroom only after the last bus left the school, while my kids would be waiting patiently for their driver... yours truly.

After dismissal, finally, I would head out and shift #2 would begin right on the way to the parking lot, still in school. It's tricky; there could be a student still waiting or a teacher wanting to discuss something. The tone changes. No more “Ma’am,” just a very enthusiastic “MOMMMM!” followed by a flurry of words... and stories. My own kids would be bursting with stories — usually involving drawing, games, recess drama, or a teacher being partial, but always avoiding the topic of food. I would have to wait for that until I found a perfectly foil-wrapped, unopened roll sitting on the downstairs window ledge or someone would spot the foil-wrapped sandwich on the ground just under the kitchen balcony... urgh.

There's less structure at home, and definitely less patience. Sometimes my teacher voice would accidentally slip into my parenting. “Eyes on me,” I said once during dinner. My husband stared in confusion. My kids ignored me and asked for ketchup. My daughter once reminded me that I was not talking to my students, hearing me addressing them “Dear”.

My daughter once asked, “Do your students love you more than I do?” I told her, “It's a tie — they give me pencil drawings, you give me hugs and kisses.” She seemed satisfied, but I could tell she still wondered if I favored my students over her and her brother. I couldn't blame them, though — juggling two roles and having less patience at home meant my own kids were often on the receiving end of my exhaustion.

One of my students once asked me where the bathroom was for me to take a shower and change. One student once questioned if I was alive when the internet was invented. I said yes. I gave them the whole lecture on how the computer looked in my days, for that matter, how the cell phone looked. He blinked twice and whispered,

“Respect.” That same day, another student hugged me because she said I reminded her of her mom. Later, I realized it was because I had the same tired eyes and lower noise level obsession.

There are days when the balance would crack. When I missed my son’s class party because I was running a party for my students. Or, when I would stay up late grading essays and forget to check my daughter’s homework. I felt the guilt tug from both ends. Sometimes the two worlds would collide. Once, one of my students gasped and said, “Wait... you have a *son and a daughter* here?” As if teachers existed only in the wild, inside schools, and vanished into supply closets when the day ended.

But these moments reminded me of the privilege — and the pressure — of being trusted by two sets of kids. Finally, I’ve stopped chasing the mythical “balance.” I juggle. Sometimes things drop. But most days, I keep everything in the air long enough to get to bedtime with my sanity (mostly) intact.

I may not always get it right. But the kids are mostly fed, mostly loved, and occasionally even educated. And hey — that’s a win. Life isn’t chaotic anymore, and my babies are grown. But some days, I’d give anything for just one more whirlwind afternoon — chauffeuring them from school, listening to their stories, with foil-wrapped sandwiches forgotten on the balcony.



বিবিধ
Miscellaneous

Recipe - Veggie Hari Vari Kabob

Sreeparna Bhaumik

Ingredients for Kabob:

- One medium size zucchini (grated)
- One large carrot (grated)
- One cup chopped spinach
- One medium potato (grated)
- Half cup green and red bell pepper chopped
- 2 Table spoons chopped onion
- 2 cloves garlic minced
- 3 Table spoons oats
- 2 large eggs
- Half cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 teaspoon salt or as per the taste
- Sugar quarter tea spoon or as per the taste
- Seasonings (basils, parsley, chives, garlic powder, onion powder, & black pepper)
- 2 chopped green chilies
- Fresh parsley leaves



Ingredients for Yogurt and herb dips:

- Sour cream half cup
- Greek Yogurt half cup
- Fresh cilantro / parsley leaves
- Seasonings (garlic powder, onion powder, black pepper, and chives)
- Sugar and salt as per your taste
- Combine all the ingredients in one bowl and make the dips



Serving Size: for 4 people

Preparation time: Half an hour

Cooking time: 15 to 20 minutes

Procedure:

- First, grate the zucchini. Add salt and keep for 10 minutes. Squeeze the extra water.
- In a separate bowl, grate carrot, add chopped bell pepper, chopped spinach, onion, minced garlic, and the grated zucchini.
- In another bowl add the grated potatoes. Squeeze extra water from potato.
- After that crack the eggs on the same container. Add all the seasonings, salt, and sugar. Lastly add oats and cheese and mix it well.
- Combine the contents of both the bowls. Make small kabob shaped balls.
- Spray little bit of PAM oil on the pan of an Air-Frier/Oven. Put all the kabobs on the pan and keep it inside the oven for ten minutes. Oven temperature should be 350 degree. Flip them on the other side. Keep it for another ten minutes. Your Hari Vari Kabob is now ready to eat. Serve it hot with the yogurt, herb dips and salad.

Highlights of Utsav Activities in 2023-24

Sangita Biswas (Past President)

Utsav Picnic and Annual General Meeting (AGM): August 19, 2023

Members were given an update on the events organized by Utsav between July 2022 and June 2023 and plans for future activities, followed by a Q&A session with the GBM. Snacks and lunch for 134 members and friends were served. Utsav volunteers cooked a BBQ lunch on-site at the Beals Point recreational area in Folsom.

Utsav Accounts: Financial updates and current membership status were presented by the Utsav treasurer Rupa Chowdhury at the AGM. A detailed financial report was published in Chowrongee-2023, our annual magazine New Year Wishes: January 1, 2021

22nd Sharodotsav: October 20 - 22, 2023

The 22nd Sharodotsav was celebrated at the Orangevale Community Center, Orangevale, CA. A new set of idols was commissioned by the new GBM in January 2023 from Kumortuli, Kolkata, India (Subhra Gima was instrumental in negotiating the price and placing the order after the GBM finalized the selection). A separate idol fund was set up and appeals for donations were made. Thanks to the generous donation made by our members, we were able to fully cover the cost of the idols from this fund. The three days of festivities included in-person prayers, worship, charity, and cultural shows (14 segments) by local talents, and performances by the international artist Ujjayini Mukherjee and her band. More than 1800 prasad/dinners/lunches were served to members and friends over three days.

The 22nd edition of Utsav's magazine Chowrongee was published: October 2023

Utsav's literary team publishes a high-quality annual magazine that showcases the literary talents and creations of its members and their families. It also captures all the community information regarding birth, graduation, weddings, etc. Utsav's annual financial statement and information on committee members are published annually through this magazine. Chowrongee is available as hardcopies as well as online (at the Utsav website) to establish a digital footprint documenting the evolution and history of Utsav as an organization.

Utsav hosted a Youth Career Expo on October 15, 2023, funded by a Community Enhancement Grant awarded by the City of Rancho Cordova

The Utsav Youth Group organized a Youth Career Expo funded by the Community Enhancement Grant of \$5000. Middle school and High school youth learned about different career options, internship opportunities, and volunteering opportunities in their field of interest. Utsav members and post-doctoral fellows working at UC Davis volunteered and set up different career booths showcasing innovative research in their respective fields. The maximum funds sanctioned was \$5000. However, the actual money spent from our pocket was approximately \$1872, which was reimbursed by the city.

Hindustani Classical Music Concert by International Musicians: October 15, 2023

The Utsav Youth Group organized the "Devi Aradhana And Classical Night", a one-of-a-kind concert by two internationally renowned musicians from Kolkata. The ticketed program was a big success. The event was produced by Dr. Deb Biswas. The concert was opened with the Agamoni segment by our musically talented Utsav members. The funds from ticket sales, sponsorships, and the Go-Fund-Me account were used to pay the musicians. It was also partially funded by the youth volunteer activity funds. Utsav is striving to be a leader in hosting these events in Sacramento by bringing world-class musicians to our town in an affordable manner.

Meal Service at St John's Shelter for Women and Children: Dec 19, 2023

The Utsav Youth Volunteer team prepared food on-site and served it to 50-60 boarders at the St. John's Program for Real Change, a shelter for women and children in Sacramento. This event is highly popular among the youth volunteers. This is our fourth year for this event.

Indian Association of Sacramento, Meet and Greet Event: January 26, 2024

Two members of the GBM, Rupa Chowdhury and Sangita Biswas attended the IAS-sponsored Republic Day celebration at the Folsom Rotary Clubhouse. They also met with the leaders of 18 other Indian organizations and community leaders. Utsav's activities and participation in the IAS-hosted events were presented.

Bani Bandana: February 17, 2024

Utsav's 23rd Bani Bandana was celebrated at the Orangevale Community Center. Swami Prapannananda ji from the Sacramento Vedanta Society presided over

the event. The adult volunteers prepared the Prasad lunch onsite, and it was served to 220 members and friends. Utsav junior volunteers put on a great cultural show in the afternoon.

President's Volunteer Service Awards for 2023: February 17, 2024

This is the second year that we have presented this prestigious award to a few deserving youth volunteers. These volunteers have shown strong moral character, volunteered in most events, and have completed qualifying hours of community service in their age categories.

Bosonto Utsav (Holi): March 24, 2024

Holi (the festival of colors) was celebrated at Hagan Park Pavilion in Rancho Cordova. Utsav youth group had set up a table with colors, photo props, hand washes, and a music system. Volunteers served snacks and a cooked lunch on-site to 108 Utsav members and friends from the community. It was a very successful and fun event enjoyed by many non-Utsav members of the community as well.

Meet & Greet the Consulate General of India (SF Consulate): May 9, 2024

Sangita Biswas and Rupa Chowdhury represented Utsav at the IAS-sponsored Meet and Greet event with Dr. K. Srikar Reddy, the consulate General of India at the San

Francisco consulate. They met with many community leaders of Southeast Asian origin, such as the Mayors of Rancho Cordova and Elk Grove, Councilmen, and the newly elected judge of the Sacramento Superior Court.

Utsav Picnic and Annual General Meeting (AGM): August 04, 2024

Utsav general meeting and presentation of the financial report was done. Volunteers prepared and serve a BBQ lunch that was cooked onsite. Around 145 people attended.

23rd Sharodotsav: October 18-20, 2024

During Sharodotsav, we organized onsite cooking by our volunteers, 2 days of prayers, 3 days of spectacular cultural shows by Utsav's talented members, and a performance by the Bay Area's very popular and talented singer Shayanti Ghoshal. In addition, Utsav's magazine Chowrongee's 23rd edition was published.

Meal Service Day at the St. John's Shelter for Women and Children: December 20, 2024

The Utsav Youth Volunteer team prepared food on-site and served it to 50-60 boarders at the St. John's Program for Real Change, a shelter for women and children in Sacramento. This event is highly popular among the youth volunteers. This is our fourth year for thus event.

Obituary

Ramen Chakrabarti - a beloved Bengali Community elder and friend, passed away peacefully on September 11, 2025 after a short illness. He was 93 years old, and just one month away from his next birthday.

For more than 5+ decades, Ramenda was not only a dear family friend to many amongst us, but also a guiding light to the wider Bay Area and Sacramento Bengali Communities.

A man of Spiritual strength and deep knowledge, Ramenda believed that Culture and Faith were the heart of Community life.

He will forever be remembered as the Founding member of the Bay Area Prabasi organization and he performed the first Durga Puja in the Bay Area, planting the seeds of what would become one of the most enduring celebrations of Bengali culture on the West Coast.



In 2002, when Utsav Sacramento was just beginning its journey, Ramenda again helped write history by performing our Organization's first Durga Puja. That inaugural Puja was a small gathering of 30+ families in Fair Oaks Community Center, yet it carried within it the spirit of joy, togetherness, and faith that Ramenda embodied. His presence and leadership gave this fledgling group both dignity and direction.

Today, Utsav has grown into an organization of 130+ families, and is filled with vibrant Cultural programs, Youth involvement, and Charitable initiatives. And at its core lives Ramenda's legacy—the belief that tradition is not only to be preserved but to be lived and shared with love.

Ramenda has played a vital Role as a Mentor to Biswanath Mukherjee - our current priest, who has been performing our Utsav Durga Puja for the past 6 years. We are blessed to have Biswanath step into Ramenda's shoes and continue performing the spiritual rites locally for Utsav and others in this Sacramento Community.

Those who knew Ramenda will remember his warmth, his sense of humor, his generosity of spirit, and the way he welcomed people as if they were family. He was a Mentor to younger generations and a remarkable Storyteller, a kind friend to his young friends and a bridge between several generations.

Ramenda's passing leaves a void that cannot be filled, but his spirit will live on in every prayer offered, every song sung, and every gathering where Community and Culture comes alive.

He is survived by family members who live outside California, and locally by numerous friends who loved him dearly, and by the countless members of the Bay Area and Sacramento Communities who will always carry his memory forward.

Om Shanti!

Utsav Membership Roster (2025-26)

Platinum Plus Sponsors (contribution: \$2,500 and above)

Bangalore, Kiran & Soma Tapadar
Bhattacharyya, Anirban & Sanchita
Chakraborty, Prodosh and Mita
Chanda, Udayan and Seema
Chatterjee, Pat
Choudri, Adi and Mitra
Chowdhury, Tanmoy & Sushama
Devavarapu, Pradeep & Sanhita (Bandyopadhyay)
Ghosh, Debashis & Subhadra (Sengupta)
Gima, Subhra
Mukherjee, Joy & Suvra
Nandi, Somen & Rashmi
Ray, Joydeep & Dipanjali (Banerjee)
Sen, Shankha & Dipanjana

Platinum Sponsors (contribution: \$1,500 and above)

Bandopadhyay, Barun & Sunanda
Das, Koushik & Santana
Kriplani, Pramila & Indru
Kumar, Barin and Anima

Gold Sponsors (contribution: \$750 and above)

Banga, Mainak and Pubasha (Das)
Chowdhury, Arun & Rupa
Dey, Sudhha & Nandita
Kishore, Apoorv
Mathew, Brandon & Tanim Bhadra
Mukherjee, Arun & Sharmila
Mukherjee, Biswanath & Supriya
Mukherjee, Subhankar & Jaya
Ray, Manas & Shashwati Roy
Roy Rina & Shantanu Basu
Sarkar, Sudeep & Suman

Silver Sponsors (contribution: \$500 and above)

Biswas, Deb & Sangita
Barman, Dipak & Shilpi (Chakraborty)
Bhattacharya, Anirban & Paramita (Chakraborty),
Bhattacharya, Avijit & Ayantika
Chakraborty, Shyama
Chowdhury, Arun & Rupa
Datta, Subrata & Alodipa
Ghosh, Anjan & Trina
Gupta, Nikhil & Somosri Pal
Mukherjee, Coconad & Satabdi
Paul, Prakash & Monika
Roy Chowdhury, Barnali & Ravi Verma
Roy, Santanu & Deboshree
Saha, Rajat & Ananya

General Members

Adoni, Anand & Subhra (Chakraborty)
Amarnath, Beena & Amar Hariharan

General Members (contd.)

Banerjee, Amit & Snigdha (Ghosh), Shriya, and Aayan
Adoni, Anand & Subhra (Chakraborty)
Amarnath, Beena & Amar Hariharan
Banerjee, Amit & Snigdha (Ghosh), Shriya, and Aayan
Basu, Barun & Kumkum
Basuroy, Nirupam & Sudeshna,
Bej, Aritra & Sukanya Majumdar
Bhattacharya, Arpan & Indrani
Bhaumik, Bhaskar & Sreeparna
*Bhowmick, Rana
Chakravarty Rajat & Torsha Ghoshal
Chattopadhyay, Pranab & Jayashree
Chaudhuri, Debanik & Shampa
Chaudhuri, Swapan & Supti
Chowdhury, Pulak & Sanchita (Dey), Mahika & Vivan
*Chowdhury, Shyamal & Bipasha
Das, Nirmol & family
Das, Modan & Shilpi, Neil, and Raj
Datta, Jyotirmoy & Namita, Srijon, and Orjon
Dey, Saumen, Manjula, Siddhartha, and Rishaan
Dutta, Suprotik & Piyali
Dutta, Sudeshna & Ojas
*Ghosh, Sumanta & Paramita,
Rupa Ghosh
*Guha, Snehungsu and Tanusree (Dasgupta)
Husseinbhai, Najma & Soyab
Mazumdar, Anik
Majumdar, Tapas and Saptarshi
*Mallick, Soummya, Sharmila, and Family
Mitra, Anupam & Ananya, & Anaisha
Mukherjee, Sourav & Suparna
Mullins, Mala P & Shane
*Roy, Shyamal
Saha, Gourav & Aindrila Kar
Saha, Subir & Seema (Chowdhury), Shopneil & Spriha
Sarkar, Subir & Lily,
Sarkar, Sumeet
Sharma, Kingshuk & Ashrukana
Syam, Paromita
Verma, Rashmi & Suneet

Our Student Members for 2025-26

Chakraborty, Bidisha
Chakraborty, Dipannita
Chakraborty, Pallavi
Hazra, Pooja
Maity, Arka
Mukherjee, Sounita
Paul, Kajol
Roy, Souvik

Sahoo, Subhodeep & Priyanka Karmakar



*Our apologies if the information has any inaccuracy; please drop us an email at utsavpr@gmail.com with corrections.
Thanks to All Volunteers and Donors Who Have Generously Contributed to the Success of All Utsav Events in 2025-26*



On Saturday, September 27, 2025
Orangevale Community Center

ছায়া-ও-আলো *A Love Rewritten*

A modern reimagining of Rabindranath Tagore's timeless tale — Shesher Kobita.

Cast - Joydeep, Ananya, Ayantika, Sharmila, Santanu, Tanushree

Dance - Pubasha, Dipanjali, Jaya, Sanchita, Soma

Songs - Mala, Shampa, Sharmila, Sunanda, Udayan

Audio/Visual - Snehangshu

Play Script & Musical Adaptation - Ayantika & Soma

Concept, Original Script & Direction - Soma





Utsav Presents

Agomoni

On Friday September 26, 2025
Orangevale Community Center

Script & Coordination: Ayantika Bhattacharya

Concept: Soma Tapadar

Dancers: Renee, Sreeja, Mahika, Spriha, Pubasha

Singers: Ananya N, Suvra M, Sharmila M, Mishtu

Paath : Pampa C



Audio/Visual: Snehungsu

Direction & Coordination: Ananya N

Concept & Script: Soma



পাগলাদাশুর পাগলামী

Antics of Pagla Dashu



On Friday September 26, 2025
Orangevale Community Center

