



32nd Annual Durga Puja 2025
Greater Richmond Bengali Association

Featured Artist



This year , we are thrilled to have Pousali Banerjee, as our featured artist for the Saturday evening, a visionary talent whose music transcends all boundaries.

Pousali Banerjee is a singer cum actress who hails from Kolkata, West Bengal. With her unique style of music she has captivated audiences both locally and internationally. Join us for a memorable musical extravaganza on Saturday 27 th September.

Event Schedule

Saturday, Sep 27

10am	Durga Puja
12pm	Anjali & Prasad
12:30pm	Lunch
2:30pm	Sindoor Khela
5-5:45pm	Snacks
6pm	Evening Program
8:30pm	Dinner

Sunday, Sep 28

10am	Lakshmi Puja
11am	Anjali & Prasad
11:30pm	Cultural Program by local talents
1:30pm	Lunch

Dear Members and Friends,

We are thrilled to share that the Greater Richmond Bengali Association is celebrating its 32nd Durga Puja this year! This auspicious two-day celebration continues to be the heart of our organization—a time when we all come together to honor our traditions, our faith, and most importantly, each other. What started as a small group of Bengalis in the Richmond area has blossomed into a vibrant and inclusive community. Through the years, we've created countless memories, celebrated our traditions, and built lasting connections.

This year, Ma Durga arrives on an elephant, a symbol of peace, strength, and prosperity. And she's coming to GRBA with a graceful new look, adorned in radiant golden decor, to shower us all with her blessings. With her gentle smile and divine grace, she brings the promise of joy, abundance, and togetherness. As we prepare to welcome her with open hearts, let us come together to celebrate this sacred time with love, devotion, and unity.

Our valued members, sponsors, volunteers, and well-wishers have once again poured in their time, love, and effort to make this auspicious weekend truly special. We've had so many joyful moments this past year—from Saraswati Puja, to our much-loved Annual Picnic. Through it all, we've grown stronger as a community. Our GRBA Gives Back team has also been hard at work, organizing monthly initiatives to support those in need—locally and globally. We're especially proud of our younger members, whose kindness and generosity continue to inspire us all. As parents, we understand the significance of sharing our cultural heritage with our children. It brings us immense joy to witness them grow up with values of love, respect, and unity.

To our sponsors, vendors, local businesses, and every single member of our community—thank you. Your support, love, and encouragement mean the world to us. A warm welcome to all our new members—we're so grateful you've joined the GRBA family and jumped in to help with open hearts.

Thank you, everyone, for making GRBA what it is - a home away from home, filled with joy, culture, connection, and love. Let the lights shine a little brighter, the hearts grow warmer, and the spirit of Durga Puja fill our GRBA family with happiness and hope. Ma is coming home—let's welcome her with love!

Warm regards,
President & Executive Board

THANK YOU

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THANK YOU

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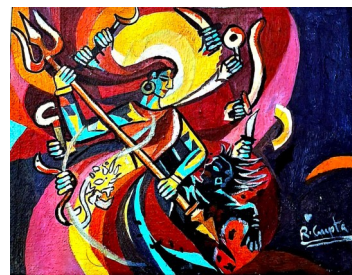
Sataroopa Banerjee &

Riya Dutta

Philanthropy

Poulomi Ray

cover art by:
Ruchita Gupta
India



Brochure Design By:
Riya Dutta

Brochure Printing By:
Keith Fabry

In Honored Memory.....



Shri Sanjan Ray

GRRBA Hall Of Fame 2009

Sanjan Ray was born in 1936, the youngest in a family of six brothers and one sister. From an early age, his love for learning shone brightly. His thirst for knowledge and sharp intellect stayed with him throughout his life. In 1970, he married Ms. Shikha Ray, and together they shared 55 years of love, partnership, and devotion. Their bond was an inspiration to all who knew them. In

1978, they moved to Richmond, where he became an integral part of the Greater Richmond Bengali Association. His home was always open, his heart generous. He welcomed friends and newcomers alike, embodying kindness, warmth, and a strong spirit of community. His giving nature and unwavering willingness to support others left a lasting mark on everyone around him.

His passing is deeply felt, but his memory will continue to live in the hearts of his family, friends, and community.

Sanjan Ray (Sanjan Mesho), will forever hold a special place in our hearts and in our shared memories.

from

The Greater Richmond Bengali Association

I came to know Sanjan Ray in 1980. From the very beginning, it was clear that he was not only an incredibly intelligent man, but one of deep kindness and generosity. His abode became a kind of unofficial guest house, a refuge for anyone who needed a place to use. It could be a student or his friend from India. He helped a friend to come to the states, helped him with an engineering job and be his house guest as well.

He gave off himself without hesitation and in doing so, he became a pillar in the lives of many. Today we honor not just the mind of a mathematician, but the heart of a truly selfless man. His legacy lives on in every person he helped and life he touched. Rest in peace, Sanjan. You will never be forgotten.

from

A Dear Friend

এসো মা দুর্গা বসো ঘরে...





GRBA Gives Back

GRBA Philanthropy Committee

New year, new beginnings, and renewed efforts – but one thing that remains unwavering is GRBA’s commitment to the community. In 2025, GRBA continued to stand as a pillar of service, support, and connection, giving back to the people who make our community strong. From championing local initiatives to creating opportunities that uplift families, GRBA has stayed true to its mission: ensuring that progress is shared, and no one is left behind.

Here’s a closer look at our contributions to various organizations throughout the year:

- ◆ **Donation drive for ‘Girls for a Change’ and ‘Sincerely, people with periods’**

GRBA collaborated with 2 new organizations to support women’s health. In June we conducted a donation drive for ‘Girls for a Change’ which is an organization that serves young girls who have limited access to resources. They teach life skills, have school lessons etc. This was done in collaboration with a local non profit organization ‘Sincerely, people with periods’. GBRA members came together to donate women/s hygiene products and spent time decorating the period pouches that were donated to the non profit. We also extended a monetary donation of \$400.

- ◆ **Henrico Community Food Bank**

Hunger affects nearly every neighborhood in Henrico, and GRBA members are committed to making a difference. This year, we contributed \$300 worth of non-perishable food items, providing essential groceries for those in need. In addition to food donations, our members collectively donated \$200 in monetary support, helping to further the mission of the food bank

to feed local families.

- ◆ **Chesterfield Food Bank (CFB)**

Food insecurity continues to be a daily challenge for many, and GRBA partnered with the Chesterfield Food Bank to help make a difference. In addition to raising awareness, we contributed \$200 to support CFB’s efforts to deliver nutritious meals across Chesterfield County. This is part of our ongoing initiative to fight hunger and ensure fewer families go without food.

- ◆ **FeedMore**

FeedMore’s programs play a critical role in addressing hunger among children, students, and families in underserved areas. GRBA members gave not only monetary contributions but also their time, helping strengthen FeedMore’s mission to provide essential meals to our region’s most vulnerable neighbors.

- ◆ **Salvation Army**

In 2025, GRBA volunteers prepared and distributed more than 200 sandwiches, along with fruit and snacks, to the Salvation Army through our initiative called Sandwich Seva. Conducted several times throughout the year, this effort has been a true labor of love. Thanks to the dedication of our members and their families, we’ve been able to share nourishment, comfort, and hope with those who need it most.

- ◆ **GRBA Walk for Children International**

Our annual walk this year was conducted on Sept 6th, where members of GRBA came together to support this cherished tradition, allowing us to raise funds to support Kankanika Khanra, a young girl from Kolkata, India. Since 2017, GRBA has sponsored Kankanika, and we

successfully raised \$420, covering her educational and living expenses for another year. Kankanika, now a teenager, continues to thrive thanks to the support from our community, and we are proud to be a part of her journey toward a brighter future.

♦ **Housing Families First (HFF)**

Since 2019, GRBA has partnered with Housing Families First to support families seeking safe, stable housing. In 2025, our members served hot dinners to 75 individuals, offering not just food but also dignity and comfort. The HFF team expressed heartfelt gratitude, noting that these meals provided a sense of normalcy and hope during difficult times.

♦ **Special Olympics**

This year, GRBA extended a monetary donation to the participants to support the Special Olympics in Richmond.

♦ **Advocate for the Ageing**

This year during Saraswati Puja event, GRBA kids participated in a Card making activity, these cards were sent to Advocate for Ageing organization

♦ **Anthem Lemonade Stand for Children's Hospital**

Supporting children's health is a key priority for GRBA, and this year, we donated \$200 to the Anthem Lemonade Stand initiative, which benefits local children's hospitals. This contribution will help provide essential care and medical services to children in need.

Overall Impact

Across 2025, GRBA members invested hundreds of volunteer hours—from packaging meals and preparing sandwiches to organizing fundraisers and donation drives. Together, we contributed numerous meals and extended monetary and in-kind support that touched the lives of individuals who needed the support.

This impact was possible only because of the generosity, unity, and compassion of our community. Thank you to every member who shared time, resources, and energy with us this year. Together, we've made a real difference—and we look forward to continuing this journey of giving back in the years ahead.

If you want to be a part of our Philanthropic endeavor, reach out to us at volunteer@mygrba.org



Thank you for supporting GRBA philanthropy..



Donation drive for 'Girls for a Change' and



GRBA Walk for Children International



Donation drive for 'Girls for a Change' and

Behind The Scenes 2025.....



দুর্গা পূজোর একাল সেকাল



তড়িৎ দত্ত

বড় কোনও কাজের আগে থেকেই প্রস্তুতিপর্ব শুরু হয়। তাকে বলে সলতে পাকানো। প্রদীপ জ্বালবার আগে জুৎসই একটা সলতে পাকাতে পারলে প্রদীপের শিখাটা হবে নিখুঁত। যে জ্বলতে থাকবে, থমকে যাবে না জ্বালানির অভাবে। দুর্গাপূজোর সলতে পাকানো শুরুই হয় পূজোর কয়েক মাস আগে থেকেই। বর্তমান প্রজন্মের দুর্গা পূজো এক পাশে সরিয়ে রেখে ছোটবেলার কথা ভাবলে..... --না তার আগে বলি এখন যারা প্রবীণতর, প্রবীণতম মানে চল্লিশের দশকে জন্মেছেন – তারা তো এক বিশেষ প্রজাতি। তারা লক্ষ, হ্যারিকেন দেখেছেন, তার সাথে দেখেছেন এখনকার আলোর উজ্জ্বলতা। গরুর গাড়িও দেখেছেন আবার আকাশ, ভূতল, সাগরে, যানবাহনের কেরাতিও। সিনেমার নির্বাক থেকে সবাক, টরেটস্কা হয়ে টেলিফোন বুথ পার করে মোবাইল যুগ, ক্যালকুলেটর পার করে কম্পিউটার হয়ে একেবারে এ আই। তার মানে এই প্রজাতি বিবর্তনের সাক্ষী শুধু নয়, উপভোক্তাও বটে। সঙ্গে দুর্গা পূজোর সেকাল একাল হয়ে পূজোর থিমের জগতে প্রবেশ করে একেবারে থিমথিমথিম। তাই তেই ব্যাপার। শহর থেকে আধা শহর গঞ্জ, গ্রামে, এক পূজো শেষ-- একদল মানুষ ঘুরে বেড়াচ্ছে দেশ দেশান্তরে, থিমের খোঁজে- নতুন থিম, নতুন থিম!! চমক চমক!! প্রতিযোগিতার প্রথম হওয়ার দৌড় শুরু। ঠাকুর পূজো না থিমের পূজো, মা দুগ্গাই জানেন। পাঠশালার কাঁঠাল গাছ তলায় লাইন করে দাঁড়িয়ে সুর করে দুয়ের ঘরের নামতা দুই একে দুই, দুই দুগুনে চার বলার ফাঁকে আড়চোখে দেখতাম জমিদারের ঠাকুরদালানের বারান্দায় বিশু জ্যাঠা মালকোচা মারা ধুতি পরে তার ওপর আঁটোসাঁটো করে গামছা জড়ানো-- খড়ের কাঠামোর গায়ে তাল করে রাখা মাটি খেবড়ে খেবড়ে দুর্গা প্রতিমা গড়ছে। রোজ একটু একটু করে দুর্গা, অসুর, সিংহ, লক্ষ্মী, সরস্বতী, গণেশ, কার্তিক চেহারা পাচ্ছে। পাঠশালা ছুটি হলেও আরো অনেকটা সময় দালানের সামনে দল বেঁধে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকতাম-- পূজো আসছে সলতে পাকানো চলছে। ঠাকুরগড়ার

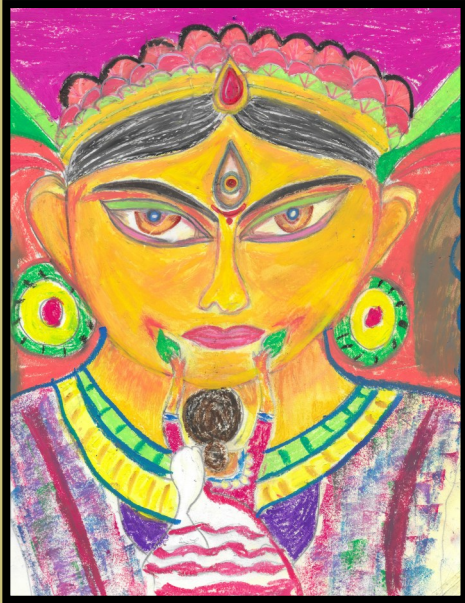
শেষ দিকে এসে প্রায় যখন প্রতিমা বানানো শেষ, একপোচ রং করা হয়ে গিয়েছে, ঠাকুরদালানের সামনেটা কাপড় দিয়ে ঢেকে দিতো। যাওয়া আসার পথে আর বিশু জ্যাঠার ঠাকুর গড়া দেখতে পেতাম না-- তবে কখনো সখনো ঢাকা তুলে উঁকি মেরে দেখতাম কতটা হল। মুন্ডুগুলো রোদে শুকাতো। তারপর বসিয়ে দেওয়ার পরেও কেমন যেন প্রতিমাটা ভাল লাগতো না। একদিন বেলা বারোটায় ছুটির পরে পর্দাটা তুলে উঁকি দিতেই দেখি- মাটির প্রতিমা কেমন মা দুর্গা হয়ে গেছেন। চোখ আঁকা হয়ে গেলেই মাটির প্রতিমা হয়ে যায় মা দুর্গা। আরো আদর করে বলতে হয় 'দুগ্গা ঠাকুর'। তারপর ঝকঝক ডাকের সাজ, একচালা ঠাকুর। সৈন্য সামন্ত সহ অসুর, সিংহের পরাক্রম-- আকাশে, বাতাসে আগমনীর সুর, শিউলির হলুদ বোঁটায় চকচকে শিশির, কাশফুলের দোলানি। হাত জোড় করে দাঁড়িয়ে বলতে হবে মা দুর্গা, তুমি দুর্গাতিনাশিনী। মন্ডপে মন্ডপে দুগ্গা আর দোকানের সামনে বিজ্ঞাপন 'পূজোয় চাই নতুন জুতো-বাটা'। একটা নতুন জামা আর একটা জুতো, পূজোর আনন্দ আর ধরে না। ঠাকুর দেখতে বেরিয়ে নতুন জুতোর ফোসকা! সে তো উপরি পাওনা তুলো গুঁজে খুঁড়িয়ে খুঁড়িয়ে চলা! দুগ্গা ঠাকুর যে ডাকছে। এখন সবাই যাকে বলে প্যান্ডেল হপিং। আর বিশেষ প্রজাতির প্রবীণরা বলে টিভিতেই তো দেখে নিয়েছি অনেকগুলো ঠাকুর। দেখারও বিবর্তন হয়েছে। সেকালে উত্তর বাংলার চা বাগানে ঠাকুর দেখার চল ছিল, ট্রাকে করে চেপে একবাগান থেকে আর এক বাগানে পূজো দেখতে যাওয়া। এক পূজো থেকে আর এক পূজোর দূরত্ব তো তিন চার মাইল। আর ঘন অন্ধকার রাস্তা। ট্রাকের পাঠাতনে শতরঞ্জি পেতে মেয়ে বউরা বসত। তিন-চারটে ঠাকুর আর

কোথাও মেলা বসলে ঘুরে ঘুরে বেড়ানো। তাতেই পূজোর আনন্দ উপচে পড়ত। সেই সময় তেরপল দিয়ে ছাউনি বানিয়ে তার তলায় মাটির বেদীতে দুর্গা

ঠাকুর -এটাই তো পুজোর প্যাণ্ডেল । মেট্রোশহরে, শহরে, আধা- শহরে, মফস্বলে গাঁয়েগঞ্জে , সব জায়গাতেই ও প্যাণ্ডেল শিল্পীর বিশেষ মর্যাদা আর ঠাকুর গড়ার শিল্পী তো এখন সেকেভারি। মেট্রো শহরের ঐতিহ্যশালী পুজোগুলোর মন্ডপসজ্জার সলতে পাকানো শুরু হয়েছে তো তিন মাস আগে থেকেই লোক চক্ষুর অন্তরালে পর্দা টাঙিয়ে। মাহেন্দ্রক্ষণে উদ্বোধন হবে। পাঁচজনের চোখ তো ছানা বড়া হবে। আর ঠাকুরের মুখ তো মন্ডপের বাইরে দাঁড়িয়ে মোবাইল ফোনে দেখাই যাবে। আর টিপ করে টিপে দিলেই ছবিও হয়ে যাবে। দুর্গাপুজোর উৎসব এখন আন্তর্জাতিক। যেখানেই দু চার ঘর ভারতীয় সেখানেই দুর্গাপুজো। প্রকৃতপক্ষে দেশের মাটি ছেড়ে থাকলেও এই উৎসবের মাঝে দেশের মাটির সোদা গন্ধ বুক ভরে টেনে নেওয়া। থিমের বাহাদুরি নেই,আলোর

হাজার কেরামতি নেই,প্রতিমা, সে ফাইবারের হোক, মাটির হোক, শোলার হোক,কিছু এসে যায় না। তিথি মেনে পুজো করতেই হবে তেমন নয়। কোন ছুটির দিন দেখে, একসাথে জড়ো হয়ে পুজো আর তার সাথে আনন্দ ছল্লোড়, গান নাচ খাওয়া দাওয়া -গলা ছেড়ে বলা 'ও আমার দেশের মাটি'। পুজো আসে, পুজো যায়।বছর পার হয়।আবার পরের বছরের জন্য সলতে পাকানো শুরু হয়। মনের মনি কোঠায় স্মৃতির পাতায় লেখা থাকে সেই সুন্দর ছবি। বেঁচে থাকার অনন্ত আনন্দের উৎস- দুর্গা দুর্গতিনাশিনী নমস্তস্যৈ নমস্তস্যৈ নমঃ নমঃ

-----সমাপ্ত-----



Drawing by
Aarav Chaudhury (age 7)



Drawing by
Anshita Bhattacharya (age 11)

Robotics and me..



Siddhanth Das (5th Grade)

David Heildbringer once quoted that “Curiosity and teamwork reach farther than one’s own capacity.” My name is Siddhanth Das, and I am overjoyed to be able to put my writing in the GRBA Brochure for this year’s Durga Puja. I would like to center this writing on my experience within my Robotics team, specifically being nominated for the State Championship.

In the weeks leading up to the competition, our team transformed from a group of curious minds into a tightly knit unit of innovators. Every afternoon after school, we gathered in our robotics classroom, a small local establishment, to refine our design and troubleshoot our code. We were a small team, especially after we had to let a few people go, and we had no experience, having been there for only the first year. The game was simple: pick up balls and throw them into goals. Half the game relied on our robot, and the other half required our team to work together with another team. There were two types of games. Autonomous, being a game where our team had to code the robot to do a specific program and skills, which relied on our teammates’ skills to control the bot. That’s when disaster struck. After qualifications ended, a few months before the state championship, we were confident. We learned not to get cocky after that. A week before the state championship, our entire autonomous code broke apart. The robot malfunctioned, spinning in random directions and picking up balls that never existed. We had to scrap all our autonomous code and restart from scratch. With only one meetup

left to rewrite all of our robots’ coding, we knew we wouldn’t be able to make it. Somehow, though, we did it. We completely rewrote our robot’s code. Everything was good. Nothing bad could happen anymore... right?

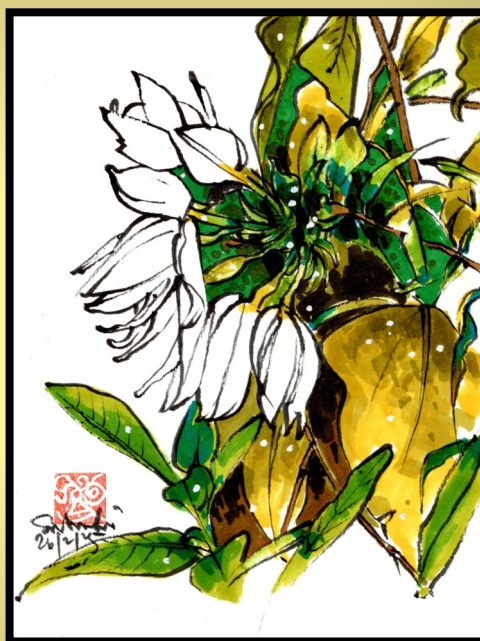
After a long drive to our competition venue, we immediately started practicing. At least, that’s what we had planned. But that’s when it struck, our code was never there. We use a computer and code to plan where the robot will go and the actions it will do. After that, we would use a cable to download that into the robot’s main brain. I was the one who was in charge of the autonomous code. While the others fixed the mechanical flaws of the robot, I worked on the code. Once I was finished, I was overjoyed. I showed all my teammates, closed the computer, and headed home. That was our last meeting before the competition. That’s where I made the mistake. I forgot to download the code. All the progress I made on the code was wiped out. This meant we had to somehow qualify for the national championship without any autonomous code, fully relying on the drivers’ skill.

The competition progressed in an eventful manner. We had very low expectations and almost thought we would be wiped out in every match. But as the games progressed, we saw that the other robots were not doing so great either. They were out of batteries, falling apart, or simply not working as expected. Our confidence was up, and we were driving way better than when we were practicing. Sadly, even after our best efforts, we had to be con-

tent with a judges' award, because our robot print for the next year. My team and I are eagerly looking forward to the next season. it was unique.

It wasn't the result we wanted, but it gave us something more important: a starting point for growth. We learnt many valuable lessons, such as always double-checking critical steps. A simple oversight—like not downloading the code—can erase weeks of work. Always plan for unexpected events, breakdowns, and other events that are out of our control. Never underestimate yourself. In the end, although the outcome was less than ideal, even our setback gave us a blue-

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Art by Subrata

GRBA Juniors...



উজ্জ্বল মুখোপাধ্যায়

বেশি দুঃখ পেলে আমি
দুঃখ মেখে খাই ভাত
স্বপ্ন সুখের সঙ্গ পেলে
সুখ মিশিয়ে কাটাই রাত,
রোদন বেদন যখন তখন
প্রাতরাশ বা জল ভাত
এক চিলতে মন খারাপের
পাই না ঘাত প্রতিঘাত,
উৎফুল্ল চায়ের কাপে
চিনি মিশিয়ে চা পান
অতি দুঃখের সময় কাটে
কয়েক পাত্র সুরা পান,
মান আছে না সম্মানের
ধার ধারি না এখন আর
মান অভিমান শিকেয় তুলে
জীবনটা তাই বেহায়ার।
রাত্রে যদি ঘুম না আসে
আঁকড়ে ধরে পাশ বালিশ
গিল্লি যদি থাকেন পাশে
যাই ভুলে যাই সব নালিশ,
পেলাম কত দিলাম কত
কে রাখে তার হিসাব
আত্মহারা তাই বুঝি না
লোকসান না করি লাভ



Drawing by Esha
Chakraborty (age 8)

See To Be!

Promita Banerjee Nag

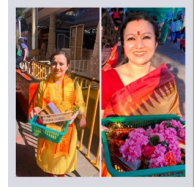
Femina... I'm sure you must have furtively rifled through its pages in your school library or on the roadside bookstands, not once but umpteen times during your adolescence. Its glossy pages were as much an invitation to your teen years as the glamorous women who adorned them. And if you were someone like me, the magazines must have accompanied you in your early adulthood with only a significant shift in the content preference. Yesterday, a friend shared the cover page of Femina August 2025 issue in a group, and all I can say is that I was overwhelmed, to say the least. To me, it vociferously spoke of Freedom! Women's freedom from the shackles of the preconceived notions of beauty, boldness and behavior. In fact, the English magazine had always stood out for its offbeat outlook but this particular cover seemed phenomenal.

The August 2025 cover pays an impressive tribute to 'Women Warriors'. The ten Women officers of the Indian Army, from Colonels to Lance Naiks, who are on the page, in my opinion, spell out a freedom that perhaps took rather too long to achieve. No longer is it the face of an actor or a model in nude shades or novel silhouettes, flaunting attire and attitude. It is a powerful presentation of grit and glamour through the coming together of distinguished Indian women officers in their olive-green uniforms and black boots. And that indeed boasts of a latitude in embracing a more inclusive and intentional image of a Woman. Freedom sure is in accepting that a Woman is not only about

looks and lifestyle but also equally about brain and brawn. Women have been shattering the glass ceilings since ages but this shift in narrative will project an unexplored side of the gender – the charm that lies in courage and the relatability that exudes from the rawness of the real. And, now, more than ever before, such an emancipated portrayal of women needs to emerge for the upcoming generations to espouse underbracing the words of Lucy Maude Montgomery..."We must have ideals and try to live up to them, even if we never quite succeed. Life would be a sorry business without them. With them it's grand and great." So, SHE needs to be free from how society perceives her and even how she is accustomed to see herself. She has to be free from the regressive notions of fairness and prettiness and reject any relationship that leads to abuse and alienation. She has to hold there ins of her own life and resolve to turn her own fairytale into reality. She has to be resolute enough to become a force to reckon with. She has to stand up to be counted and



wear her preferences with passion and panchache. She has to be herself before others make a beautiful bonsai of her. She is the princess and the warrior, the mother and the martyr, the champion and the cause!



I often come across an advertisement in one of



the city's leading newspapers these days. It's not a usual one. The woman flaunting the jewelry wears a close-cropped hair, which certainly speaks of choice and candor over curb and constraints. Today, we may not be wrong to assert that beauty lies in the perspective of the participant. And, therefore, we have models with Down Syndrome, with vitiligo, with conditions causing hair loss, with wrinkles and white hair, with dusky skin and plus-sized bodies and of course, with non-binary identities. For the first time in more than 75 years of freedom, a woman is free to live her "Self" by smashing the stereotypes and celebrating her own version of beauty. But while I bask in the buoyancy of the change that pertains to the visual beholding of the woman, doubt and despair keep burgeoning in my mind about her limitations, even at this moment. Women have been subject to mindless violence and appalling brutality since ages and last year was no exception. Rather, in 2024 the entire nation was left bruised and bleeding to see her women exposed to such abominable experiences. True that it challenged the existence of Her Being but then it also carved the way for rigorous reforms and remarkable resilience. Here, however, I must abashedly admit that while there is no guarantee of the safety and security of a girl even when I write this down, yet every change is worth it. No matter how small it seems, it will have a seminal impact in the days to come. It is no longer equality but equity that every woman demands and "My courage always rises at every attempt to intimi-

date me." (Jane Austen) After all, SHE is the Devi, whom we endearingly call our Mother and also the Mahishasura Mardini, who exterminates the evil and fortifies fairness in every field.

Having invoked the Devi, let us remind ourselves that there is a Durga in each one of us. May the image of the 'Women Warriors' arouse within us a unique and uncompromising form of Maa Durga – the Katyayani Devi or the Warrior Goddess. The sixth manifestation of Durga, she is venerated for her vision and her valour as she rides a lion and holds her fourth hand in the 'Abhaya mudra'. Armored with a sword and symbols of power, she is the fiercest form of the Devi and the one created to vanquish the demon. She represents wrath, a necessary evil, which arises when Adharma (injustice) abounds and inhumanity reigns.

And it is precisely then that every She experiences the free will to manifest 'Her' and restore righteousness and reflection in a society that is destined for evolution and empathy.

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Canadian Rocks

Advaith Roy (6th Grade)

We began the trip at the Dulles Airport near Washington, D.C, and after landing at the Minneapolis-Saint Paul airport we took the connecting flight to Calgary, Canada. The next day, we drove to Banff national park, and covered Cave & Basin, Norquay Lookout, Vermillion Lake, the Banff sign, and the Banff Gondola. The Gondola takes you up Sulphur Mountain which has a great 15 minute trail with scenic views of surrounding peaks. We had dinner at Boston Pizza (despite the name it is Canadian) in the Banff downtown and had some poutine as well, a Canadian dish with fries, gravy, and cheese curds.

Day 3 we woke up early (2:30 a.m) for a sunrise tour at Moraine Lake. It was a 1 hour drive but well worth it, and we watched as the first rays hit the Valley of the Ten Peaks behind the beautifully blue lake. On the same tour we went to Lake Louise, an icon of the park, and walked along the shore. After reaching our hotel, we visited Two Jack Lake and Lake Minnewanka, both very underrated lakes, and did an Open Top Bus Tour. We ate at Banff downtown again at Block Kitchen, and had dessert at Beavers Tail, which was similar to Elephant Ears. After we had the Beavers Tail it started to rain suddenly, so we wore rain jackets and headed to the Hoodoo viewpoint in front of Bow River. We started day 4 with a brunch at Tooloulou's and hiked the Lower Canyon Falls at Johnston Canyon. Next, we drove to Emerald Lake (which was in Yoho national park in British Columbia) and canoeing there was no

doubt a top 3 highlight of the trip. After Emerald Falls, we covered some smaller locations like Takkakkaw Falls, Natural Bridge, and also the Golden Skybridge, a tall suspension bridge over the Kicking Horse river.

The trip was officially half over at this point, and on day 5 we drove to Jasper National Park along Icefield Parkway, a very scenic drive. Along the way we stopped at Bow Lake, Peyto Lake (wolf shaped,) Mistaya Canyon, and many viewpoints. We reached Jasper relatively late so we ate dinner at the Mad Grizzly and finished the day at Patricia Lake, Pyramid Lake, and Lake Annette and Edith. The second day of Jasper included walking to Jasper Downtown, the Old Fort Point Trail, a boat tour on Maligne Lake which took us to Spirit Island, Medicine Lake, and we came back and had dinner downtown.

Our final part of the trip was the Sunwapta Falls and Icefield adventure. We drove down near the border of Jasper and Banff and stopped at Athabasca Falls, Tanguy Creek Falls, Bridal Veil Falls, Goat and Glacier Viewpoint, and then we checked in at our hotel near Sunwapta Falls. It was just a 10 minute walk from our hotel, and we took some pictures and did the lower falls trail. The 8th day we went to the Saskatchewan River Crossing and then made it to our Icefield Adventures booking. We were able to walk on the glacier and even drink glacier water. Then we came back and did the Icefield skywalk, which was a glass bridge over the Athabasca river and glacier (the glacier we



walked on.)

Finally, we drove to Calgary the next day, and we climbed the Calgary Tower and went to Stephen Avenue walk with a huge mall and some shopping. Although we arrived after the Calgary Rodeo, there were still some leftover decorations from the festivities. We also saw the hand, and the Olympic park (which was being repurposed.) After checking in the hotel,

we spent some time at the Rec Room, which was a huge arcade. On the final day, we drove to the Calgary airport and took our final flight home.

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Carrying This Tradition Forward

Drona Saha (6th Grade)

During my early childhood, my mom raved to me about this spectacular holiday called Durga puja which predominantly is celebrated in West Bengal. This joyous celebration extending over 10 days is something that all Bengalis look forward to. As my mom recalls, during this time the streets of Kolkata would be illuminated with decorative themed lights; people would decorate puja structures known as pandal with arts and crafts, friends and family would exchange gifts; locals from all around the city would come together and gather to pray to the Goddess Durga.

As an American, I have never experienced Durga puja in Kolkata, so all the excitement I feel is through the stories that I have heard from my mom while growing up. Though, I feel that there is a big difference between the way we celebrate this puja here vs people celebrating back in India, to me this is as special as Christmas and being a Bengali, I take immense pride to be part of this celebration.

To me Durga Puja is all about meeting with my friends and playing with them all day, participating in our cultural programs in the evening and enjoying a study break for two days. Not to mention that the long rehearsal hours for our cultural performance is something that I always look forward to. I feel that this celebration has now become an integral part of my childhood which I will always look forward to celebrating with my family and friends.

I think that people here are trying their best to make this puja as close to the celebration as in

India. However, I believe that it is also my responsibility to carry forward this tradition making this celebration a part of our American culture. Because according to my mom this is how generations carry forward traditions to keep them alive through years after years.

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Drawing by
Ruchita Gupta

My Dogs' Life

Driya Saha (7 Years)

Hi, my name is Driya and I am 7 years old. I am in 2nd grade and my favorite teacher is Mrs. Letson.

I have two exciting and energetic dogs in my house. Their name is Dream and Catcher. Dream is 2 years old and Catcher is 1 year old.

Now I am going to tell you about all the funny things that they do. One time Catcher did a very bad job. He peed on Dream in the night and my dad had to bath Dream. Also, today Catcher took my Unicorn blanket to the backyard.

Do you even know how much trouble Catcher makes ? For example, he ran away in a stormy night. Me and my brother had to run

after him to bring him home. He made my mom's favorite mirror fall on the wooden floor and then he chewed our pillows. It is a lot of work to clean his mess but we still love him.

Do you know why do you need a dog ? Because they are funny, they make you run all day, they cheer you up all the time. So, even if Catcher and Dream are two crazy dogs I love them a lot and they make me happy.

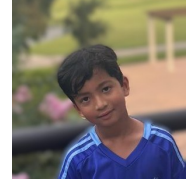
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GRBA 2024...



Soccer Is My Favorite Sport



Araav Chakraborty (3rd Grade)

Everyone has their own game they love. Soccer is my favorite sport because it is beautiful. The skills and moves are very complicated making the sport so unique. Skills are tricky in soccer to learn some like a rainbow or elastico. Tricks in soccer are hard to learn but when you learn them they look beautiful.

Additionally, I picked up soccer by memorizing useful skills and learning them. By watching soccer games, I practiced the moves that I wanted to memorize in my house.

After I learn the moves, I use them against my friends. Eventually I got really good and I got into a soccer team. This is how I picked up soccer.

Concurrently, I watched a total of two soccer games, one in Philadelphia and the other in Barcelona. In Philadelphia, union scored the first 3 goals of the game which made the score 3-0. Then 26 minutes later, Taylor and Suarez scored a goal making the score 3-2. Finally, in the 87th minute, Messi scored a free kick making the end score 3-3. In the Barca game, the first two goals were scored by Lewandowski and Pepé, making the score 1-1. And then Jaul Koundé which made the score 2-1 with Barca winning.

The soccer games were an amazing experience because I got so close to the

players at the beginning because we got to see the soccer players practicing before the

game. I saw all of my favorite soccer players like Lionel Messi and Lewandowski. In

both games the players played really beautifully with their talent and skill. I have had a great time enjoying the players play soccer so skillfully that I was so impressed.

Specifically, I would like to go to more soccer games in the future.

Ultimately, I like Messi because he has the most trophies and records in soccer

history. Messi technically has won every trophy because in 2006 he scored an amazing goal which would have won the puskas but the puskas was not invented then. Messi is my idol because he is the best soccer player and a great human being.

-----END-----

Accepting Imperfections

Soumil Choudhury (Age 11)

A little crack, a tiny tear,
Shows that something's been somewhere.
Perfection isn't the way to go,
It's okay to let it show.

In every mark and every bend,
Is where you learn and grow, my friend.
So don't be upset if things go wrong
In every flaw, you still belong.

A bump, a bruise, a little scar,
Can show you just how strong you are.
Each time you fall or make mistakes,
You learn, and what you make
Is something new, a better you,
Nobody knows just what you've been through.

So wear those rips with pride, you see,
They make you who you're meant to be.



Drawing By
Sohini Choudhury, Grade 2nd, Age 7

ভেজাপাতা

হিল্লোল ভট্টাচার্য



আমি যে কতটা উদাসীন,
তোমার বিষয়ে আদতে নিরাসক্ত, স্থিতপ্রজ্ঞ ধীবরের
মতো
প্রমাণ করেই ফেলেছিলাম প্রায়—
প্রতিপাদ্যের শেষধাপ
কালি মুছে দিয়ে গেল অকালবর্ষায়

বুকের ভেতর জল আছড়ে পড়েছে বিপদসীমায়
আমি পুরস্কার ফেলে আসি স্টেজে
আর অভিনয় পারি না !
ভেসে যাচ্ছে শহর, পুড়ে যাচ্ছে প্রতিটি ফোঁটায়
ধুয়ে যাচ্ছে তোমার গাঢ় জ্যোৎস্নার টিপ
আগল উপড়ে উপড়ে আমি হেঁটে আসি
প্রায় বলে ফেলি কানেকানে—
“মেঘ রাগে বেঁধেছি তোমায় আর
ডাকনাম রেখেছি অন্ত্যমিলে!”

যা বলার জন্য ভাষা সৃষ্টি হয়েছিল
শুধু তা না বলতে দেওয়ার জন্য কেন যে একটা
গোটা সভ্যতা গড়ে উঠল—!

A Day

Ridha Banerjee(4th Grade)



A dark starry night,
closed eyes, bring dreams to our lives.
Mom, kissing good night!
Birds chirping with glee,
sun shimmering on the pond
Nature at its best.
“Ding dong!” Doorbell rings,
“Can you come with me today?”
Friends hug, cheer, and play!
Sky is burning bright,
we see that before dark night,
Close eyes and sleep tight.
A dark starry night,
closed eyes, bring dreams to our lives.
Mom, kissing good night!

About haikus

The haiku was invented in Japan, in the 17th century, by Masaoka Shiki. It is a five-syllable sentence, then a seven-syllable sentence, then five again. Here is a famous haiku by Matsuo Basho

An old silent pond
A frog jumps into the pond
“Splash!” Silence again.

How I got into Archery

Aishani Biswas(4th Grade)



I first became interested in archery when my mom told me about Deepika Kumari, a famous archer from India. She told me how Deepika worked hard to become one of the best in the world. I thought to myself, *I want to be like her one day.* When I told my mom, she smiled and said, “Let’s get you started.”

A few days later, she scheduled my first lesson with Coach Marcy Rees. Coach Marcy is one of the kindest people I have ever met. She made me feel welcome and excited to learn.

At the beginning, I was scared the bowstring might hit my arm. I had seen pictures of archers with red marks, and I thought it would hurt a lot. But Coach Marcy had a fun idea. She tied colorful balloons to the target and told me to try to pop them. The first time I heard the loud “pop,” I forgot all about my fear. Shooting balloons was so much fun that I just wanted to keep going.

After months of practice, I entered my first tournament. I had several competitors, and one of them was a girl named Kelsey Koko. We became friends right away. While waiting for the awards, we played tag in the field. Then our names were called. Kelsey got second place, and I got first. Standing on the mini podium that day with my medal made me feel proud and happy.

All the tournaments I have joined have been exciting. At the Virginia state championship, they even gave out popsicles to the archers! I



am the current Virginia outdoor state champion in my age category. My favorite tournament so far has been the Indoor Nationals in February this year. It was in Harrisonburg, far from my home in Henrico County, so the trip felt like an adventure. The best part was that it was indoors, so we did not have to shoot in the hot sun. I ranked 11th in my age category (under-13) in the nation. That day, I also won a pair of earrings shaped like archery targets. I still keep them as a special memory.

Coach Marcy’s store and archery range are in Goochland County. She also has her own team called Virginia JOAD, which stands for Virginia Junior Olympic Archery Development. I am proud to be part of it. Being on the team means I get to train with other archers, learn new skills, and keep improving.

Archery is more than just a sport to me. It has taught me patience, focus, and determination. The sound of my arrow hitting the X is the best feeling in the world. My Dadu (grandfather), who was once a soccer player, always says, “I

wish I could see you in the Olympics one day.” -----End-----
I carry his dream in my heart. Every arrow
I shoot is like taking one more step toward my
dream of becoming an archer like Deepika
Kumari.
And to think, it all started with a story my mom
told me.



contd

Indus Valley the most advanced civilizations?

Brinda Mitra

The Indus Valley civilization was based in the Indian subcontinent and was recently discovered in the last century. While historians can not put an exact date on when the civilization existed, its mature period was from 2500 BCE-1700 BCE, but there are artifacts that date back to 7000 BCE. The people of the Indus River Valley Civilization during this time managed to build a working drainage system and perfected the irrigation system used in Mesopotamia because of the violent floods occurring within the region. The Indus Valley was the most advanced civilizations of all ancient civilizations with an established trading system, advanced engineering, and used intuitive farming techniques to flourish for centuries.

The Indus Valley had a complex trading system that was not only used within the states but also outside with Mesopotamian cities. Some of the products traded were precious stones, timber, carnelian beads, pearls and much more. This trade was not only limited to neighboring states and empires but reached as far as Mesopotamia, Karnataka, Oman and Central Asia. While some can argue that the other civilizations of the time also had trading systems in place, most of these places didn't have the range of land and raw resources that the Indus Valley had. The Indus valley also has the earliest form of woven cotton textiles which wasn't common in ancient Egypt until the first century AD. These raw and manufactured materials were necessary for many other ancient civilizations of the time and helped the Indus Valley gain a strong influence among their

neighbors.

Another factor of how advanced the Indus Valley was is in the engineering of their cities. One of the most well known cities is Mohenjo Daro and in the city's structure it had a grid street plan with houses that had flushable toilets, a sewer system and were connected to the city's drainage system. These technological advancements were way ahead of the Egyptian sewer system which did not include flush toilets and indoor toilets were a sign of wealth unlike the Indus Valley where everyone had an indoor toilet. They also invented the earliest form of air conditioning by using wind catchers to supply cool air inside houses and also featured garbage chutes that would all be directed to a communal garbage bin. This technology also points to the idea that the Indus Valley had a strong government that worked efficiently in the individual cities and as a whole civilization.

The main factor that sets the Indus Valley apart from the other ancient civilizations is its farming techniques that used the catastrophic floods to its advantage. The average rainfall in India today during the monsoon season is 80- 200 inches of rain in the span of a few months (T.N. Krishnamurti). This amount of rainfall can lead to dangerously high floods especially since many other cities and towns were built on the banks of the Indus river. However the Indus people used these floods to their advantage by redirecting them into irrigation systems and canals that helped produce wheat, barley, peas and many other crops. While both ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia

had canals in their farmlands they faced little rain which one could argue that they had better farming but with the influx of rain the Indus people showed how to not kill their crops with the flooding.

The Indus Valley is a civilization that has been unearthed greatly but still holds many mysteries that have yet to be uncovered. There is currently a 1 million dollar reward to the person who can crack the writing system used by the Indus people and excavations continue to this day on the secrets of this civilization. Along with these unknown factors the Indus Valley has made some of the most technological advancements in a variety of fields that I have not talked about out of any other ancient civilization and is the most advanced ancient civilization.

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Drawing by
Ruchita Gupta

The Memeverse

Ridhaan Chatterjee (5th Grade)



Tom was just a normal kid. Actually, he might not have seemed normal to everyone else. He loved to do math, encouraged the teacher to give them more homework, and studied instead of playing recess. He was the biggest nerd in the entire school. That being said, it was also surprising to him that he had a decent friend circle.

Nothing really interesting other than learning had happened in school until one day. Tom was putting some library books in his locker when someone tapped his shoulder. Tom felt like something was off, like there was something disrupting the air. When he turned around, there was someone standing there who looked exactly like him! He was wearing the same clothes, backpack, and even had the same books that he had checked out. The weird thing was that Tom had never seen him before.

Wait. How is that possible! There's only one copy of each book in the library because of funding!

Tom still got that weird feeling from him.

Suddenly, his look alike introduced himself and said, "I'm Tom Twinkleberry. You can call me Tom 2. That's your name too, right?"

That, in fact, was Tom's name. Before Tom could ask questions, Tom 2 walked away, but. He whispered for Tom to follow him. They

walked down the crowded halls of the school, eventually reaching the basement door. Things had changed so quickly that Tom didn't realize that they were going down to the basement. Tom felt that weird feeling again, but stronger.

"This," Tom 2 said, "is the memeverse portal. We're currently in memeverse #12,654. In memeverse 1, there's a key that frees us from your control."

"Control?" Tom asked.

"You are the original Tom. The good, bad, minor, or major decisions you make affects all 1,000 alternates. I freed myself using a medal shaped like a Coke in an abandoned Burger King. The key for ultimate freedom is located in a tundra in the carrot-pocalypse. The planet is overrun by man-eating demons shaped like insect carrots. They can only hear, not see. We get the key, and get out, got it?"

"Yes," Tom said. "But why do you need me?"

"The original has to acquire the key and eat it for it to work."

"Gross, but I'll do it."

They both looked at the portal, and jumped in. Tom fell and fell and fell until he crashed into deep snow and ice. He looked around and saw a flat plain of snow except for a large, thin lump

in the ground.

“Oww!,” Tom and Tom 2 said at the same time.

A quiet hissing came from somewhere around the lump in the snow. Both Toms got up and shivered. Suddenly, the snow started moving, and something rose from the snow. The hissing sound became a roaring.

“What is that?” Tom 2 asked.

Tom was shocked.

“Spinosaurus Aegyptiacus,” Tom replied in shock.

The creature was white and covered in feathers. It was 25 feet tall with a long jaw. It looked at them and started charging. It opened its long jaws and barely missed, biting the air instead. Tom tripped and fell. The Spinosaurus dug underground.

Out of nowhere, a walking grape and watermelon slice started attacking the spino. The spino came out of the snow and grabbed the watermelon. The grape tried to keep attacking it, but the Spinosaurus threw the watermelon all the way out of view. The grape broke a rock on the spino’s head.

“Let’s get out of here while it’s distracted!” Tom shouted.

They ran onto a small island, which looked safe. They saw something that looked like a blue carrot insect covered in ice swimming up. It broke through the ice and landed on the frozen lake. It blasted out a chilling air forming ice out of its mouth. It charged at them and they moved out of the way. It smashed into the

rocks and imploded. In its place, was a key.

“It’s the key,” Tom 2 said. “Well, eat it.”

“What?” Tom asked.

“You heard me,” Tom 2 said. “Eat it.”

Tom put it in his mouth.

This actually tastes like candy!

“I’ll re-summon the portal,” Tom 2 said.

They both walked through the portals and returned to their memeverse.

One year had passed, and Tom 2 had regularly visited Tom. Tom had visited more Toms, all the way to the 100th one. Their lives were nothing like his, so he guessed that the key worked. Tom couldn’t explain why he disappeared in the middle of school, but it was brushed off pretty quickly. The portal in the basement was known only by Tom. One thing Tom learned is that he probably should not walk into random multi-dimensional portals with clones of himself from another memeverse.

-----END-----



Atanu Saha

They say Iceland is a land of fire and ice—agree, along with many who had the privilege to visit this majestic land, so I'll try not to belabor this fact anymore. What I do want to talk about is the mesmerizing and unparalleled experience of exploring this land in an RV.

That's right, the good old recreational vehicle. Packed with the family, few essentials, absolutely no RV experience and an earnest effort pretending to know what I was getting myself into. Never the less, the immersive experience is nothing comparable and I'd do it again if opportune.

The vehicle becomes your mobile sanctuary, carrying your family from roaring waterfalls to silent volcanic plains, always with the promise of waking up somewhere extraordinary.

There are few places on Earth where the road feels like an unbroken invitation to wonder, but Iceland is one of them. Its very geography—shaped by molten lava, carved by glaciers, and softened by moss—demands that you take the long way around.

From my limited experience I'd say the key to gaining any sliver of confidence is meticulous planning but be mindful not to get too engrossed and overwhelm yourself.

Here are few basics to consider

- Pace your self and avoid rushing, in short, don't jump into an RV right soon as you land. Give your self at least a day to get acquainted.
- A well-reviewed reputable rental place even if it means digging a bit deeper into

your pockets. The roadside/vehicle break down that they are trying to upsell you will be your peace of mind.

- Pick your overnight locations along with campgrounds and land marks, the upside is most camp grounds are next to popular land marks. Be picky on your selections as you are looking for immersive experience and not just a been-there-done that bragging right.
- Make smart choices on what you carry into the country as there are well stocked grocery stores. Do plan on preparing a meal or two in your RV or the common kitchen on camp ground.
- Lastly, bring along your adventurous spirit and expect not everything to go according to plan. In my case it few occasions turned out better than I planned.

The itinerary

There is a certain poetry to tracing Iceland's lonely highways, where asphalt ribbons through a landscape sculpted by fire and frozen in time. Traveling by RV here is not merely a mode of transport, it is a slow surrender to the island's rhythms.

Each bend reveals a new canvas: glaciers shimmering under muted skies, black-sand deserts stretching into the stance, moss-clad lava fields whispering of ancient eruptions. The journey becomes as much about the quiet moments—an unplanned stop to cook lunch by a

river, or the hush of midnight sun filtering through the windshield—as it is about the dramatic destinations.

In this land of extremes, the RV offers both shelter and intimacy, allowing the traveler to dwell where beauty lingers.

Iceland greets you the moment you land in Keflavík—not just with its crisp air and volcanic scent, but with the promise of landscapes unlike anywhere else on Earth. We picked up our RV here, our home on wheels for the days ahead, and rolled straight toward the coast where our first stop, Hafnarberg Sea Cliffs, awaited. Standing on those rugged edges, with the Atlantic pounding below and seabirds tracing the wind, we felt the country's untamed spirit for the first time.

A short drive away, Gunnuhver Hot Springs reminded us that Iceland's heart beats with fire. Steam hissed from bubbling mud pools, the ground alive with geothermal energy—a stark contrast to the cool sea air from earlier in the day. From here, our RV carried us along the southern coast, where the legendary Seljalandsfoss came into view. Walking behind this waterfall, framed by its shimmering curtain, was like stepping into a hidden chamber of light and spray.

Just down the road, Skógafoss roared with elemental power. Its cascading wall of water and frequent rainbows seemed almost too cinematic to be real. We pressed onward to the dramatic Víkurfjara Black Sand Beach, where basalt stacks rose from the waves like ancient sentinels and the wind carried whispers of Viking legends.

The journey eastward brought us to the jewel-like expanse of Jökulsárlón, a glacier la-

goon where icebergs drifted in a slow, silent dance. Across the road, Diamond Beach glittered with crystal-like ice washed ashore, catching the sunlight in thousands of cold sparks. We camped nearby that night, lulled to sleep by the distant crack and groan of shifting ice.

Heading north, our route wound toward Mývatn, a volcanic lake surrounded by surreal landscapes of lava fields and geothermal springs. The air was rich with the scent of sulfur and the chatter of birdlife. From there, we boarded a small boat to Puffin Island, where the bright-beaked birds darted through the air in cheerful chaos—nature's comedians against a backdrop of sea and sky.

Our final leg brought us full circle to Reykjavík, Iceland's lively capital. After days of wild solitude, the city's colorful streets, cozy cafés, and harbor views offered a different kind of charm. We returned the RV with miles of memories, each one tied to a place where the road had slowed, and the land had spoken.

As much as we enjoyed exploring the land along with all its unique features, the journey in our RV was equally memorable. To begin with, a bit of grown-up manipulation convinced the kids to think their electronic devices were not allowed in this country, which definitely bumped up the family quality time. My favorite memories were the long peaceful scenic drive late into the night of never dark summer as the kids slept peacefully and the unique campground experiences where we met many locals who are as wonderful and hospitable.

Finally, our RV rolled back toward Reykjavík, the kids playing in their bed with pebbles and heads full of puffin sightings, I realized Iceland

had given us more than just a road trip—it had given us a moving, ever-changing adventure. From chasing waterfalls to tiptoeing on black sand, from adventurous hikes on scenic elevations to falling asleep under the midnight sun, every mile had been a new adventure stitched into our family’s story. And while the wheels will stop turning soon, the journey—

those laughs, surprises, and wide-eyed “wow” moments—will keep traveling with us forever.

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Failure as a Catalyst: Learning from Life's setback

Aarihaan Ghosh

Since I failed my first attempt for the taekwondo black belt test, I had a shadow of self-doubt following me wherever I went. Recalling standing in front of the audience with a hint of shame because I was unable to break the three boards with a flying sidekick haunted me for weeks. My teachers and friends tried to encourage me, but I was frightened in my heart at having to sit for the test again. A second failure was nearly too much to endure.

I trained more rigorously than ever before for three months. I would drive directly to the dojang from school on some days and train flying sidekicks. My master gave me individualized drills to build up my skill and body, and I would tape tapes of masters pulling off the move flawlessly. But whenever I thought about the boards, my stomach would twist in fear.

On the day of the retest, I was shaking as I strapped my belt on. My heart was pounding in my chest as I stepped out onto the mat. Sparring and forms flew by in a blur, but I did my best to focus on staying calm. Then it was board breaking—the part I shoved off on in fear.

I breathed in deeply and plunged into the first attempt. The boards remained stationary. I tried again, using all my training, but nothing. In my third try, I was getting angry, but I was not going to quit. I remembered the hours that passed by, the sweat and effort I had committed. On my fourth try, I lunged forward, mustering all of my energy and focus. My foot came down on the boards firmly, and much to my

surprise, they split from my kick.

Relief flooded over me, along with pride. I had done it this time. Not only did I break the boards, but I broke my fear too. That was a lesson learned that self-belief and determination can overcome any obstacle in my path. On that day I learned the hardships of what it was like to fail. Failure is often seen as a dead end, however in reality it is one of the greatest and honest teachers anyone will ever have. Failure is not something that makes people weak, but instead improves them. You have to be brave and fight back, and use perseverance to overcome obstacles. Failure is always hard, but if you put in the hard work and will power then you can smash your goals!

-----End-----



My summer adventures: Summer of 2025

Aaryan Pal (Grade 4th)

Super excited, first my family and I got ready to go to Yellowstone National Park. We packed our bags and slept well overnight. The next day, we finished packing, and took a shower and ate lunch and breakfast. We said bye to my grandma and left for our evening flight. We went to Richmond airport. Then we checked in and went through security. We proceeded to the gate. We were going from Richmond to Chicago, and then, from Chicago to Bozeman. We were joined by my Grandpa at Chicago. After reaching Bozeman, that we went to get a rental car and drove to an airport hotel for the night.

The next day, we drove 90 minutes to Mammoth hot springs. After that we went to Norris. When we were driving to the cottage we saw several animals (wildlife). The next day, we woke up very early to see bison and other wildlife at Lamar Valley. We even saw a bison crossing the road! For lunch we ate yummy local nachos and burgers. After lunch we stopped at a water fall.

The next day, after lunch and went to Grand Teton. It was getting late so we ate dinner and went to our cottage at the Jackson Lake. Early morning next day we went rafting on Snake river around Grand Teton. We found wild moose and bald eagles. Later that day in afternoon we went kayaking at the Jackson Lake. The water really got rough at times. My didi (elder sister) and mom shared a kayak, while dad and myself were in another. The next day we drove back to Yellowstone and visited the Old Faithful and the Grand Pris-

matic. Magnificent, exquisite and lustrous!!!

Overall, I had a fantastic week visiting Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks.

For me, the best part was waiting and watching Old Faithful erupt. This was one of the most memorable vacations I ever had!

-----End-----



QRBA 2024...







Women Infotech Foundation & Innovation (WiFi)

Inspiring Limitless Possibilities at **Wi-Fi NPO**, we are dedicated to empowering young girls and women across the diverse work streams. We foster an inclusive environment where they can excel and contribute meaningfully. Our non-profit organization provides support and opportunities that enable women to overcome life challenges and achieve their full potential. Our Programs include aspects of Empowerment, Mentorship, Health & Wellness, Exclusive Scholarships, Training & Workshops along with Community building, enabling them to pursue their academic aspirations and achieve their goals.

JOIN US: We are looking for MENTORS who can provide their time and knowledge to support and guide young talent. Contact wifinp.org@gmail.com

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