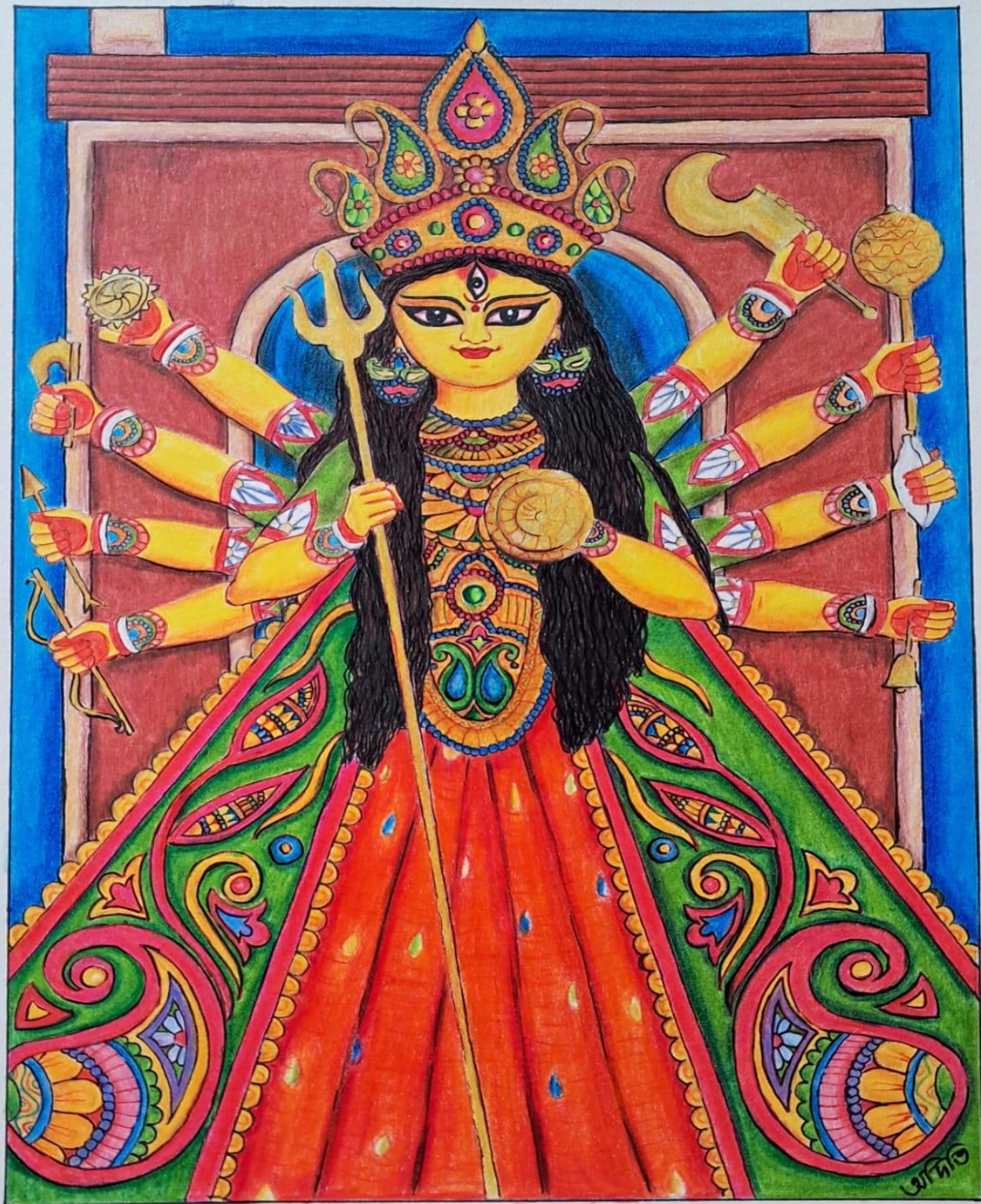


# সুখিৰজাঈ



## সম্পাদকীয় কলমে

"আনন্দময়ীর আগমনে, আনন্দ গিয়েছে দেশ ছেয়ে"...

শরতের আকাশ, নীল মেঘের সাথে শিউলির গন্ধ, সুদূর পানে ভেসে আসা ঢাকের আওয়াজ,- জানান দেয় উৎসবের মরসুম, শারদীয়া এসে গেছে। দুর্গাপূজা কবে আর ভৌগোলিক সীমানা মেনেছে? আমরাও তাই সকলে মিলে উৎসাহে উদ্দীপনায় হাজির প্রবাসে- বাঙালির চিরকালীন এই ঐতিহ্য নিয়ে।

পুজোর গন্ধে পুজোসংখ্যার ছোঁয়া তো থাকবেই বাঙালির মননে যে সুপ্ত সৃষ্টিসত্তা, পুজোর মহড়ায় সে উঁকি মারবে না, তা অসম্ভব। ছেলেবেলার চিরসার্থী সেই আনন্দমেলা-দেশ বা শুকতারা'কে পেরিয়ে প্রবাসী পুজোয় আমাদের নিবেদন "কুমিরডাঙা"। "Gainesville Bengali Association" এর ঐকান্তিক প্রচেষ্টায় "কুমিরডাঙা" পত্রিকার এই দ্বিতীয় সংস্করণ; কিছুটা ভাবনায় আর অনেকটা ভালোবাসায়।

উৎসবের এই দিনগুলো রঙিন হোক বিশ্বব্যাপী বাঙালির। সারাবছর আনন্দে কাটুক সবার, সাথে থাকুক প্রেম-ভালোবাসা আর হাতে থাকুক "কুমিরডাঙা"- এই আকাঙ্ক্ষা নিয়েই সবাইকে জানাই শারদ-শুভেচ্ছা।

ইতি,

সাধারণ সম্পাদক,

অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী

পরাগ দাশ

সহযোগিতায়,

রিমঝিম ব্যানার্জী-বাতিস্ত

প্রচ্ছদ,

অদिति মাইতি

## President's Message

Welcome to GNV-BNG's 2024 Durga Puja.

When summer comes to an end, kids are back in school, and the temperature drops a few degrees, we start to think about Durga Puja. I'm happy to say that we have finally reached that time of year.

Every year, Gainesville Bengali Association has been bringing Durga Pujo to our community. On this auspicious occasion, we meet and pray to Goddess Durga to bless us and to remove all the obstacles from our path. We teach the next generation our traditions. We also try to make our student community feel at home, as many of them may have moved to the US recently, leaving their friends and family behind.

This year we are excited to be back with our magazine Kumirdanga, after four years. This magazine was originally launched in 2019. Thank you to everyone in the Magazine Committee for putting this together and to all the members for sending their articles, stories, poems and artwork. Also, our sincere thanks to all the advertisers and donors. This is a great way to showcase our talent and give our next generation a platform to express their thoughts.

In 2023, we celebrated Saraswati Puja, Holi, Nabo Borsho, and Fresher's Welcome. We also gave back to the community by donating holiday gifts to Peaceful Paths. Not only are these occasions fun, but they also bring us together and make us feel at home. I am grateful to have a community like ours where we can be ourselves and thrive. Thank you all for making this happen throughout the year.

On behalf of the Executive Committee, I want to convey my sincere appreciation and gratitude to all the volunteers, without whom none of this would have been possible.

Thank you to all our donors who always support our activities and believe in us.

Furthermore, I would like to mention that we are a transparent community, so please reach out to us if you have any questions/suggestions/feedback etc.

Wishing you and your family Sarodiya Shubhechha.

**Mekhala Chakraborty**

**President,**

**Gainesville Bengali Association**

**Board members (2024-2025):**

**President: Mekhala Chakraborty**

**Vice President: Rajendra Mitra**

**Secretary: Baibhab Chatterjee**

**Treasurer: Carlos Batist**

**Student President: Sroyon Sengupta**

**Student Vice President: Shayak Biswas**

**Trustees: Indraneel Bhattacharya, Malay Ghosh**

**Executive Committee Members: Swarnali Raha, Upasana Gayen, Antara Banerjee, Adrija Mukherjee, Rimjhim Banerjee Batist**

## কলমে

ভাবুক (অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী)

পরিযায়ী মন (পরাগ দাশ)

বিচার (স্বরূপ ভুঁইয়া)

শান্তির আরাধনা (সজীব ঘোষ)

ঝড়ের পূর্বভাস (পরাগ দাশ)

খুনসুটির দিন (অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী)

Inside Scoop about my Bengali Family Names (Tanuka Bhunia)

Dreamer (Swarnabha Roy)

Cracking of EMA (Anik Chattopadhyay)

Hopeless Romantic (Antara Banerjee)

A Journey Through Time: Hampi, India with Prama (Prama Jati)

Smash that Ankh (Anik Chattopadhyay)

## তুলির টানে

Kuntala Dey

Rishita Bhunia

Satyanath Howladar

Upasana Gayen

Antara Das

Rishma Manna

Kattayani Sarkar

Shajib Ghosh



## ভাবুক অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী

বাস্তবতা থেকে অনেক দূরে,  
যেখানে হয় আজগুবিদের ভীড়-  
সেখানেই কল্পনাদের বিচরণ।

আমিও গিয়েছিলাম একদিন,  
যাওয়ার কারণ স্পষ্ট নয়,  
বাস্তবসম্মত? নয় একদমই।  
তবু যাওয়া তোমায় দেখার আশায়।

কিন্তু দেখা হল না,  
কিছু ভয়াবহ সত্য নিয়ে  
ফিরে এলাম বাস্তবে।

এখন আর যাইনা এপথ ছেড়ে,  
যদি জীবনের চাওয়া-পাওয়া ভীড় করে,  
প্রশ্ন করে;  
যেমনটা করে এসেছে আজীবন।

## পরিযায়ী মন পরাগ দাশ

দেওয়ার মতো কিছুই নেই বাকি  
মুমূর্ষু মনকে সান্ত্বনাটুকু ছাড়া,  
একদিন, দুইদিন- বহুদিন  
কেটে গেছে;-  
জোছনার আলোয় মুখ দেখি-  
এখনও হয়তো বা খুঁজে পাই কিছু,  
হন্যে হয়ে খুঁজি-  
পরিযায়ী পাখি এক পরিশ্রান্ত দেহে  
মনে এসে বসে!



Kuntala Dey

বিচার  
স্বরূপ ভুঁইয়া

ধর্মাবতার  
আমি বিচার চাই না  
আপনার এই প্রশস্ত দরবারে  
আমি এসেছি  
অন্য এক দাবি নিয়ে  
চোখ মেলে দেখুন  
আলুথালু বেশ ছেড়ে  
কেমন পুজোর সাজে  
আমি এসেছি  
বাবার হাতে বোনা  
নতুন পোশাক  
আর মায়ের স্নেহ-মাথা  
কুন্দ ফুলের মালায় সেজে  
শরতের এই শুভ্র সকালে  
কি মিষ্টি দেখাচ্ছে না আমায়?

প্রতিবারের মতো  
কলকাতার জমজমাট উৎসব ছেড়ে  
আমি ছুটে যাইনি  
আমাদের গাঁয়ের বিবর্ণ পুজোয়  
সেই যেখানে  
মরা নদীর চরে  
শিউলি বেছানো মেঠো পথে  
কাশ ফুলের ভিড়ে  
আমার পুজোর ছুটি কাটে  
অনন্য আমেজে।  
বিশ্বাস করুন  
আমার কানে  
এখনো সেই আগমনীর ডাক  
আমার প্রাণে

সেই ঢাকের মাতাল শব্দ  
সেই শিহরণ, তবু  
সব ছেড়ে  
আজ আমি ছুটে এসেছি  
আপনার দরবারে।

ধর্মাবতার  
আমি বিচার চাইতে আসিনি

চোখ মেলে দেখুন  
কত মানুষ এসেছে আমার সাথে  
বৃদ্ধা, যুবা, নারী, শিশু  
গরিব, বড়োলোক  
শহর গ্রাম মাঠ ঘাট বিল ছাড়িয়ে  
সব কাজ ফেলে  
এসেছে মানুষ।

চাষী এসেছে মাঠের কাজ বাকিরেখে  
জেলে এসেছে জাল গুটিয়ে  
অফিসের কর্মচারী এসেছে  
দপ্তরের কাজ ফেলে রেখে  
ছাত্র এসেছে পড়া শেষ না করে  
ডাক্তার পুলিশ শিল্পী লেখক  
সবাই ছুটে এসেছে এক ডাকে  
আপনার দরবারে।

ধর্মাবতার  
ভালো করে  
একটিবার তাকিয়ে দেখুন  
এই সব মানুষের দিকে।  
এদের মুখ মলিন, কিন্তু  
চিবুক শক্ত

শিরদাঁড়া সোজা  
আর হাতে চাবুক  
যে চাবুক মেরে  
এরা অমানুষকে  
মানুষ করতে জানে।

যা কিছু অন্ধকার  
যা কিছু অসুন্দর  
যা কিছু আদিম  
তাদের সম্পূর্ণ নির্মূল করুক  
এই চাবুকের নির্মম আঘাতে

ধর্মান্তর  
আমি বিচার চাই না  
এই চাবুকটাই আমি চাই।

ধর্মান্তর  
আমি বিচার চাই না  
আমি ফিরতে চাই সেই নতুন পৃথিবীতে  
আমার প্রিয় পূজোর উৎসবে  
এক হাতে শিউলির সাজি  
অনন্য হাতে চাবুক নিয়ে।

আর চাই  
এই চাবুক হাতে জন্ম হোক  
ঘরে ঘরে  
হাজার দুর্গার  
আর সেই রক্ত-মাংসের দুর্গারা  
সমবেত সংকল্পে

ধর্মান্তর  
এই হোক আপনার  
শেষ দরবার।



## শান্তির আরাধনা

### সজীব ঘোষ

ভক্ত বলে- মা গো, প্রতিবছর আসো তুমি, আলো ছড়িয়ে পুজোর ঘরে,  
তবু কেন পৃথিবী নিমজ্জিত- অশান্তি আর অন্ধকারে?  
অভয়া আজও লাঞ্চিত হয়, কেন কাঁদে তিলোত্তমা?  
তোমার ছোঁয়া পেয়েও কেন, কাটে না দুঃখ, কমে না ব্যথা?  
প্রতিমা ভাঙে, মন্দির পোড়ে, ছড়ায় বিষাদের সুর,  
তোমার আগমনেও কেন, সুখ মরীচিকা, থাকে বহুদূর?  
দোলায় এলে দুর্যোগ আর ঘোড়ায় গেলে যুদ্ধের ভয়,  
তবে কি শান্তি অধরাই রবে, মা?- মন যে বড় উতলা রয়।

মা বলেন- ওরে বোকা, বুঝলি নে আজও, আমি তো আসি ভালোবাসার ঝর্ণা হয়ে,  
তোদের হৃদয়েই যে লুকিয়ে শান্তির বীজ- তারে আলোর মুখ দেখাতে,  
দোলায় নয়, ঘোটকে নয়; মড়ক লেগেছে মনে- একটি বার দেখ চেয়ে,  
দেখবি- আস্থার সূর্যোদয় হয়ে, আমিই রয়েছি প্রতিটি প্রাণের মাঝে।

অন্তরে আমায় প্রতিষ্ঠা যদি করিস, একে অপরকে যদি বাঁধিস মায়াডোরে,  
দুঃখ-জরা-কষ্ট-ব্যথা যত- ফুল হয়ে, যজ্ঞের ছাই হয়ে- মিলবে গঙ্গানীরে।  
আজ থেকে পণ করিস যদি - ষড়রিপু করবি বশ, দিবি মনের অসুর বিসর্জন,  
তাতেই মিলবে সুখ-শান্তি, তাতেই মন্দির, তাতেই ঘট- তাতেই আমার আবাহন।



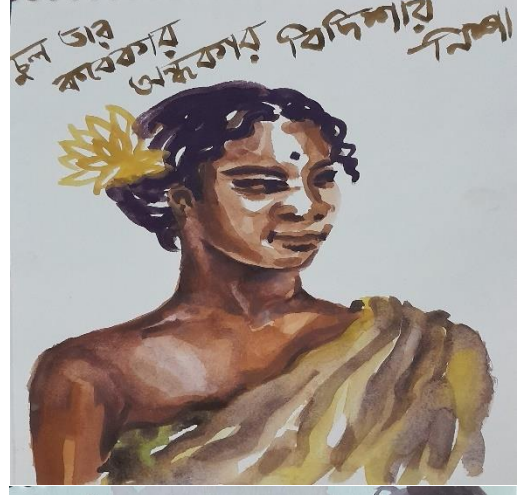


## ঝড়ের পূর্বাভাস পরাগ দাশ

গতরাতে আভাস দিয়েছে ঝড়!  
ব্যস্ততর হয়ে উঠেছে মানুষ-পথ মিলেমিশে-  
ঝড়ের প্রস্তুতির দীর্ঘ মহড়া লেগেছে  
শহরজুড়ে,- রক্তিম আকাশ  
মুহূর্তে বদলের হুমকি দিচ্ছে!  
প্রথমবার দরজায় কড়া নেড়ে  
এমন চঞ্চলতাই দেখিয়েছিলে তুমি-  
সে বহুকাল আগের কথা!

এখন প্রবল ঝড় বইছে!  
পথের দুইধারে নির্জনতা হামাগুড়ি দিচ্ছে;  
আকাশ রঙ বদলেছে,  
বদলেছে তোমার দীর্ঘ চঞ্চলতা  
চমকপ্রদভাবে;-

আর বেশি বলার মতো মুখ্য উপস্থিতি  
আমার ছিল না জানি!  
সবাই ঝড়কে মনে রাখে,- পূর্বাভাস  
সেখানে গৌণমাত্র।



Antara Das



Satyanath Howladar

খুনসুটির দিন  
অন্তরা ব্যানার্জী

ক্লান্ত দিনের স্নিগ্ধ হাওয়া, খুনসুটিরা,  
বারবার দিচ্ছে ধরা আমার মনে।  
ধোঁয়া ওঠা চায়ের কাপে আলতো আলাপ,  
মান-অভিমান ভাঙ্গা-গড়া ক্ষণে ক্ষণে।

এই যে তোমার বুঝে শুনে এড়িয়ে যাওয়া,  
পালিয়ে থাকা অতীতকে আঁকড়ে ধরে।  
সবকিছু মেনে নিয়ে আমার এ মন,  
হয়েছে বাঁধা তোমার সাথে মনের ডোরে।

তোমার ডাকে সাড়া দিয়ে থাকছি পাশে,  
হারাচ্ছি খেই তোমার চোখের গভীরতায়।  
ভাবছি তোমায় এনে দেব আকাশকুসুম,  
পেরিয়ে বাধা হাসি মুখে অবলীলায়।



Satyanath Howladar





Antara Das



Antara Das

## Inside Scoop about my Bengali Family Names

### Tanuka Bhunia

My mom, Anamika Roy, comes from a royal family in Bengal. My great grandparents from my mom's side had a lot of land and gold in their possession. My great grandpa was known to be a good hunter, and he used to go hunting a lot with his sons. Typically, when your daughter gets married in India, the bride's parents are supposed to give gold jewelry to their daughter. So, when their daughters got married off, my great grandparents gave some of their gold to them. Before my great grandfather died, he distributed the remaining gold to his sons. In Indian cultures, there is a celebration called Durga Puja. This celebration marks the victory of Goddess Durga over the demon king Mahishasura. The festival celebrates removing the darkness/evil and restoring light and happiness. It is a four-day celebration, and it includes many rituals, prayers, dances, and food (called prasad). After the Durga Puja took place, my great grandparents used to give away food to all the villagers and donated what they could. They were able to donate because of all the riches they had. My great grandpa was seen as a king in the villagers' eyes.

On the other hand, my dad, Swarup Bhunia, comes from a long line of farmers. He grew up in a very remote village in Medinipur, which is a district in the state of West Bengal, India. Villagers there mostly work in agriculture; they grow rice, mustard seeds, lentils, and occasionally oca. Most people in the village have the same last name, which is Bhunia, which is why the village developed the nickname "Bhunias-Para". Long ago, there were many landlords in that area. These were not your typical landlords, who leased houses or apartments, instead they rented land to farmers, so they could grow crops. These farmers had to rent land because they were too poor to buy their own. Also, if they rented land, they could rent in a new area every year, so they didn't have to reuse the same soil that didn't have any nutrients in it. Our great, great, great grandparents owned a lot of farming land, and they were one of the many landlords that leased land to farmers. So, the surname Bhunia means landlords. That is how I inherited this last name. Over time, our family began to sell land to the farmers at a nominal price or give it away to them. My grandfather still owned a lot of land; so, when he died, he divided all the remaining land among his three sons. He also had three daughters but because of tradition, he only gave land to his male descendants. Most of the land my uncles inherited, is now being leased again, and some of it is sold or given away to the poor farmers. To this day, when I go back to my dad's village, I see rice and mustard being grown on our lands.

While I'm happy about my royal heritage, I'm also proud to say that I come from a line of hardworking landlords, who worked with farmers.



Satyanath Howladar



## Dreamer

**Swarnabha Roy**

Not every day such thoughts come to mind,  
Yet sometimes, in moments sublime,  
I yearn for freedom, freedom from the daily grind.

Off to distant lands, where shores meet the sea,  
Beneath the sunset's golden decree;  
Amidst lush foliage, the mighty redwood tree,  
Dancing daffodils, full of life and energy;  
Snowy mountains, their peaks kiss the sky,  
Under the stars, countless nights to lie,  
On green grasslands roam vigorous forces,  
Hooves pounding earth in rhythmic courses.

A dreamer trapped in this worldly embrace,  
Longing for moments where realities efface,  
Like a diver in the ocean vast, not knowing what  
challenges nature might hurl, yet  
Seeking rare treasures, a luminescent pearl.  
Amidst chaos, simple joys light the way,  
While in their flurry, the dark shadows play;  
Life's bouquet, diverse blooms in one vase,  
Smiling through it all, cherishing each phase!



Upasana Gayen



Shajib Ghosh



## **Cracking of EMA**

### **Anik Chattopadhyay**

It was quite hectic in office today. To Alps it was rather annoying. Someone raised an unexpected defect on his code; some senior folk gave him a good talking for a minor mistake committed long back; and then the server went down and hence the day's job remained unfinished. Basically, it was a day so critically jinxed that if he could anticipate some ten things might go wrong, all of them did. To add insult to the injury India lost the semifinal against West Indies.

In a bitter disposition like this, one naturally resorts to the soothing companionship of EMA, something that has assumed the role of our best buddy in this twenty second century, a real boon of technology. Alps did not waste much time after coming back from office- freshened up, had a bowl full of hot soupy noodles and directly logged into the virtual reality platform of EMA. As usual, after answering a set of preliminary questions seeking out information about his day's experience, like- 'when did u get up', 'what did u have in lunch or breakfast', 'what all did happen throughout the day and how u felt about them- sad, happy, angry or disgusting'... blah-blah, he was waiting for his tour-mate (who would be the virtual reality based human companion presented by EMA, and who would listen to his blabbering, would take him to nice places, show him some interesting incident, would preach him some gyan, or maybe sing for him- essentially pampering him in all possible ways). Alps has always tried to figure out how EMA selects these tour-mates. So far, he has met around five different guys, each seemingly as charming and cool and knowledgeable as the others. Often, he would be so enchanted by the tour-mates that he would be yearning to meet him in the next day's session, only to be swept away by the friendliness of the new mate. And as a matter of fact, all along he has encountered only charming guys as tour-mates. But today, much to his surprise, the companion was differently charming rather attractive. She was exactly how Alps could imagine: she was wearing a sky-blue halter neck top and a white fitting capri, her long hair was tied in a ponytail, her eyes had a certain glow, but the best part was her smile. There wasn't anything akin to 'love at first sight', but he felt differently for sure! As the nametag above her head suggested, she was called Alisha, 22 years of age.

As intriguing and enchanting each of the prior sessions with EMA have been, by now Alps kind of had gotten hang of the flow. After the initial phase of exchange of pleasantries, the conversation naturally drifted towards the mainstream discussion on Alps' experience of the day. This is especially the part where Alps tends to pour his heart out- surprisingly enough here he seems to speak more effusively, free from all bounds of dignity, shyness, timidity or any kind of self-conscious retreat for that matter, than he probably would do with any of his real buddies. No exception was made against Alisha when he went on ceaselessly:

"Bloody everyone reused the same code, and all their defects were happily closed, and when it came to mine that duffer Rajesh found the flaw and reopened the defect. Now I only had to take the pain of fixing it for everyone, not to mention the frustration of bearing the taunting and foolish remarks of Rajesh. Is this mere coincidence? And then, after I was done cleaning all that crap and went on to work on the current feature, the server went down. I could not even start on it. Now I have no idea what update to give tomorrow. This is going to be embarrassing."

Honestly speaking, Alps would go on whining about his frustration at workplace for hours on end if it was not for Alisha's attempt to pacify him. She came up with a very delightful suggestion:

"Okay, looks like you have had enough of it. Now it's time to get over it. Let me take you to some nice place. I was planning for a tour to the film city. Have you ever been there?"

Well, it's not that Alps could not see anything like this to be coming up, these days he would rather be longingly waiting for such virtual tours, but it took him a bit to respond: "hmm... I don't remember if I had in my childhood. But yeah, at this point you can literally take me anywhere on this planet or outside for a change."

EMA gets one teleported in almost no time. In the wink of an eye the entrance of Ramoji film city was visible. People from all age groups were flocking together. They were all clad in their best holiday clothes,

perfectly in congruence with the delicate sunshine emanating from a happiest vernal sky. There was so much of gleefulness all over this place, unwary of the real-world climate, its happenings and sentiments that to a skeptical mind this could certainly strike as a fearsome deception of reality. However, for Alps this seemed to be a wonderful place: full of gardens so immaculately covered with green carpet, calm lakes with crystal water, one hillock or two, visible at a distance, and in middle of all these laid a host of dazzling statues and array of lofty constructions, housing the recipe for success of modern Indian cinema. In a nutshell, this place looked like a perfect collage of natural and man-made beauties- a miniature version of the larger world, extracting only a few selectively chosen items in it. Inside the film city again it was a bit hurried: there were those red buses that took the tourists from one viewpoint to another. They would get down from the bus, spend some time roaming about those picturesque structures, enjoy a show or a street performance, or go for some ride, and again get into another red bus to move to the next viewpoint. Alps had never thought that he would take so much of interest in childish stuff like those in his life. But literally his eyes remained wide open when in the Ramoji Film Magic he witnessed the entire filming of Basanti driving her tanga (horse driven carriage) from the legendary film 'Sholay', all improvised with commonplace static objects in a confined room. Or when there was an ear-splitting gunshot or a fake bomb blast in the Stunt Show, he would flinch and reach out to hold Alisha's arm, only to find out that the tactile sensation in EMA's virtual reality platform was not developed enough to give him any assurance

In the middle of tour, the duo went inside the food court where a busy crowd was queuing up to grab a quick lunch. Alps had his real dinner sometime back and was not hungry. So, he settled with a glass of water for he knew that's only thing EMA could give him to have for real. They choose a table, a bit cornered but providing a bit of privacy. The sickness due to his real day's chores would have gone in the back of his mind, but Alps could not help his habitual complaining tone in the lunch table:

"It's crazy idea to cover up entire city in a day. If we had spent a little more time in the street show, we could miss the stunt show. It's already 3pm and we must visit the adventure park, see the airport, watch that 'spirit of ramoji'... don't know what all will be left out, and finally the closing ceremony starts by 6pm. This is going to be hasty".

This time Alisha extended her arm for Alam's, who would otherwise feel a certain tingling sensation, had there been no technical limitations. Anyway, she went on to say:

"Relax mate. We will cover as much as we can. But don't you love this?"

"Can't deny that."

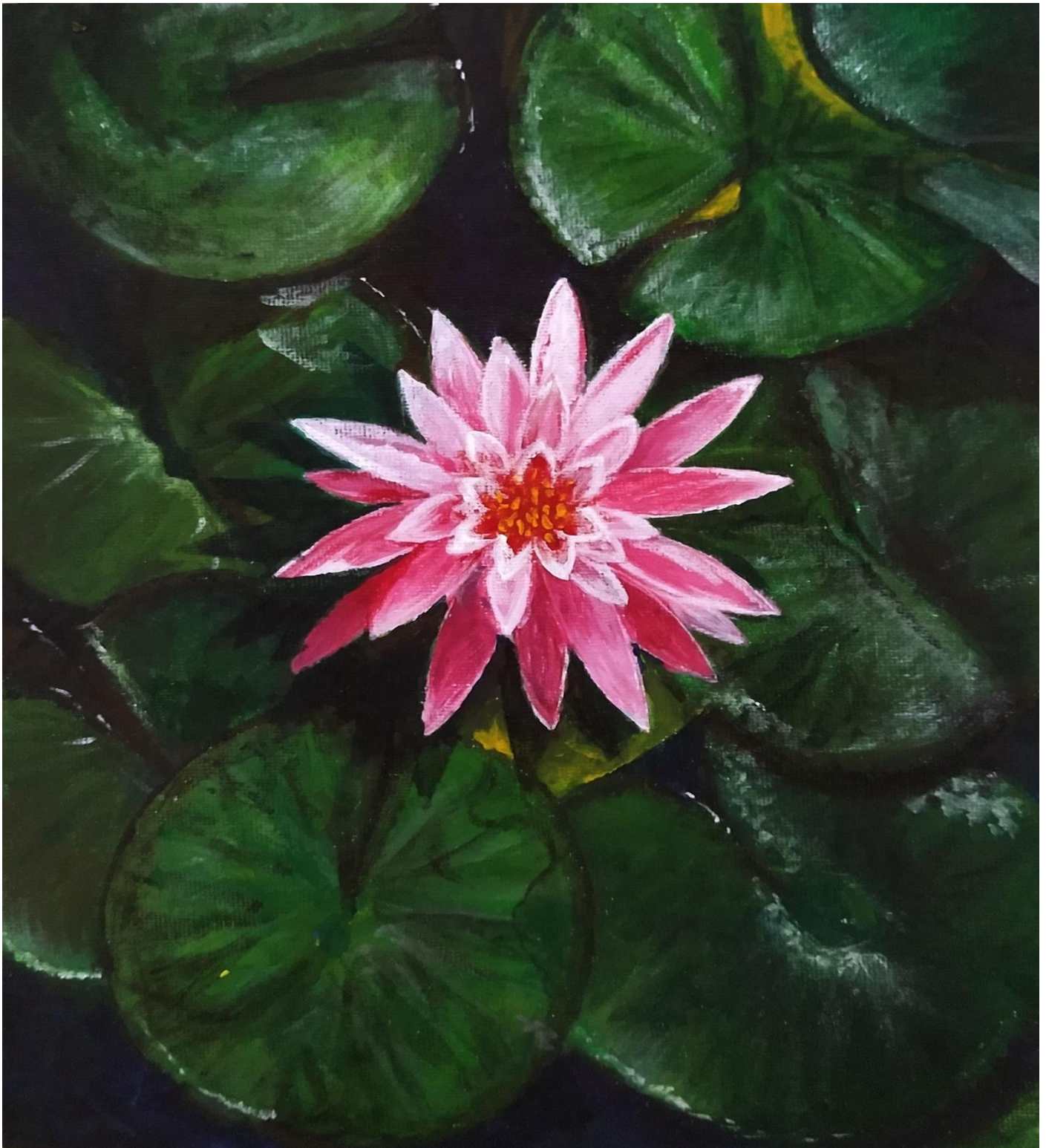
"You know what. When we were hurrying for those buses, I had this thought in mind. I felt it's more like life. It's like a film city full of exciting turns awaiting us with its own surprises. Probably we are only stupid enough that we get so entangled in one corner, taking it so seriously that we weaken ourselves and can't see a way out. There is no fun in overdoing anything, being stuck at one place. Rather we can take it in a sporty way; get the essence out of things and be quick enough to catch the next bus lest we miss the next show, for all we know there is a host them waiting for us. Perhaps, that's how we can add most of what we trying to accumulate by the end of the day."

Alps had the half-filled glass in his hand, waiting for the next sip. Only after the pause from Alisha he could break his stillness and calmly said, "The next bus starts in another two minutes. And we have a lot to cover."

The remaining of tour went on pretty much at the same briskness of joyful adventure as before, until it drew towards the end- to the famous carnival parade. This came as the most hilarious event of the entire tour. It seemed like the entire place had become so alive at the sudden realization of an ensuing departing, that it wanted to make every moment count, at the cusp of this fleeting time tried to gift them with the best ceremony of the day. There were those clowns frolicking and amusingly gesturing at them. There were beautiful 'narthakis' (dancers), carrying the air of heavenly angels, waving at them. Even Santa Claus joined the party riding on his reindeer driven carriage. Alps was taken aback at the grandeur of the event. He was rather a bit lost in the exuberance of joy when came the princess in her gorgeous chariot. She was draped in white frock with butterfly wings at the back, wore a sparkling crown on her head and had a star in her hand. She put up a stifled smile on her face and waved generously at a crowd, frantically trying to draw

her attention. Alps also waved at the princess, and he continued to do so until he suddenly became conscious of Alisha's presence and looked at her. She was just smiling.

[to be continued]



Satyanath Howladar



**Hopeless Romantic**  
**Antara Banerjee**

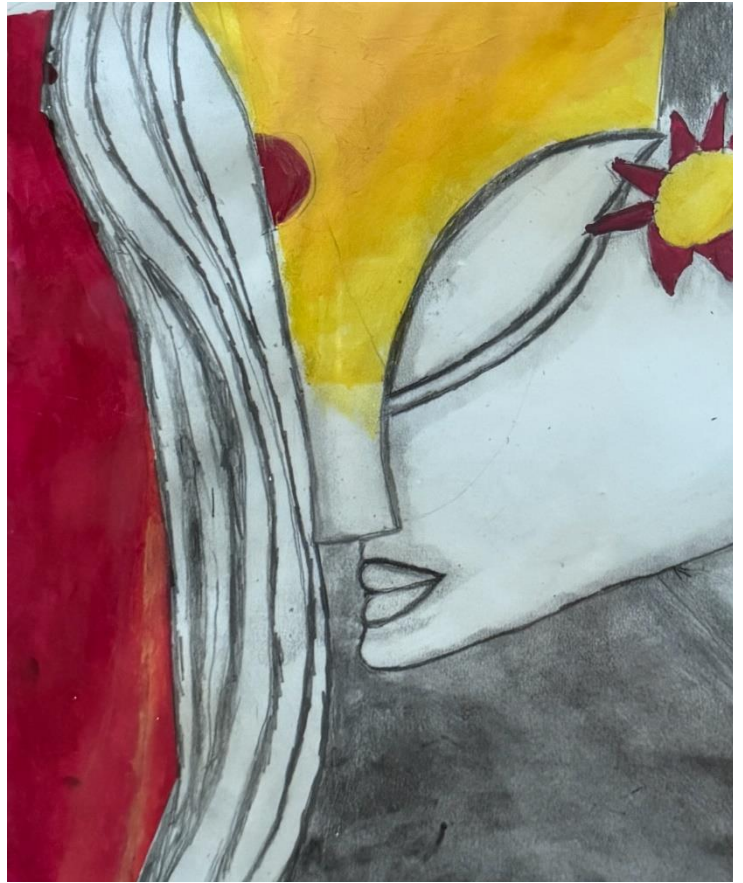
These days aren't less than strange  
Reason of that is unknown to me.  
All the gloominess fading away  
Sky getting brighter, Moon is shining.

Breeze of Summer feels so fresh,  
Seems like Spring is still in here.  
Surrounded by Lily and Daffodils,  
Feels like romance is in the air.

I started dreaming of tea-coffee dates,  
Where we pour our all heart out.  
This may help us to let go  
Past trauma, unlove, scars and doubts.

Collecting memories from those days,  
Narrating how I'm finally healed.  
Monsoon appears as you came,  
Love story started in a sunflower Field.

None of these will happen in life,  
I just dream and laugh at me.  
Questioning all of the time myself,  
A hopeless romantic at its peak.



Leo



Satyanath Howladar



## A Journey Through Time: Hampi, India with Prama

**Prama Jati**

I visited Hampi eight years ago, but the blend of history and mythology left such a lasting impression that the stories remain vivid in my mind. Each site in Hampi felt like a chapter from a historical epic. Hampi is a journey back in time, yet it pulses with life - a place where history speaks through every rock and temple. I left not only with memories of ancient monuments but with a sense of awe for the brilliance of the past and a deeper appreciation for India's rich cultural heritage. Below, I have tried to share some of those moments with you, although in no way it does justice to the beauty of the place when you experience it first-hand.

Hampi, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is a captivating destination located on the bank of the Tungabhadra River in Karnataka, India. Known for its breathtaking landscape of boulder-strewn hills and ancient ruins, Hampi was once the thriving capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, established in 1336, one of the most powerful and prosperous empires in Indian history. It's a place where history and mythology intertwine, revealing how one of India's wealthiest cities and the world's second largest, was left in ruins after the invasion of 1565 and transformed into the quiet village it is today.

The name Hampi derives from Pampa, the ancient name of the Tungabhadra River. According to legend, Pampa, the reincarnation of Sati as Brahma's daughter, married Lord Shiva (also known as Lord Virupaksha) here. During the ceremony, it is said that the gold showered by Gods and Goddesses from heaven, covering the nearby hill, hence the name Hemakuta Hill (meaning "heap of gold"). It's no wonder that many temples in Hampi, including the main temple, are dedicated to Lord Shiva! Also, Chakratirtha is a site on the riverbank where Lord Vishnu received the Sudarshan Chakra from Lord Shiva as a boon.



Hemakuta Hill, surrounded by tall stone walls and home to several temples, is one of the best spots in Hampi to witness both sunrise and sunset, just a 15-minute climb to the top.



## Let's Explore the Ruins...

UNESCO describes Hampi as an "austere, grandiose site", with over 1,600 surviving relics spread across 4,100 hectares (16 square miles) from the last great Hindu kingdom in South India. These include "forts, riverside features, royal and sacred complexes, temples, shrines, pillared halls, mandapas, memorial structures, water structures, and others".

### Virupaksha Temple:

Dedicated to Lord Shiva, this temple is one of the few still in active worship and serves as both a spiritual center and an architectural masterpiece. Its towering gopuram (gateway tower) is visible from afar and sets the tone for exploring Hampi's sacred sites. Notably, the structure below the gopuram shows Islamic influence with its pointed arch design.



### Vitthala Temple:

Famed for its iconic stone chariot and exquisite stone carvings depicting Vishnu and his other forms, Vitthala represents the Krishna aspect of Lord Vishnu. The stone chariot, which houses an image of Garuda, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, is intricately carved and stands as one of Hampi's most recognizable symbols. The temple's Musical Pillars, which produce musical notes when tapped, showcase the incredible craftsmanship of the artisans who built this architectural wonder centuries ago. Due to the temple's delicate condition, visitors must park about a mile away and either walk or take a shuttle to the site.





### Royal Enclosure:

Once home to the Vijayanagara kings and queens, the Royal Enclosure housed around 45 buildings, including the Durbar Hall for public meetings and an underground chamber for secret discussions. Its architecture reflects the Vijayanagara style with Islamic influences, visible in the watchtowers, elephant stables, and Lotus Mahal. While only the palace foundations remain, several notable structures still standing include:

**Lotus Mahal:** A delicate palace with Indo-Islamic architecture in the Zanana Enclosure, it features flawlessly symmetrical lotus-shaped arches and intricate designs, showcasing Hampi's cultural diversity.

**Elephant's Stable and Guard's Quarter:** A short walk from the Zanana Enclosure, the Elephant Stable, which once sheltered the royal elephants of the Vijayanagara Empire, is one of the few structures that survived the invasion. It features eleven large domed chambers, each capable of housing two elephants, with interconnected arches.

**Mahanavami Dibba:** The most majestic structure in the area, this platform was used during the Navaratri festival, with the Dussehra procession starting here.

**Stepped Tank and Queen's Bath:** The Stepped Tank is one of the most beautiful structures in this area, while the Queen's Bath was once a royal bathing chamber.

**Hazararama Temple:** Dedicated to Lord Rama, this temple is adorned with meticulously detailed carvings from the Ramayana and Krishna Lila, including scenes like Rama breaking the bow during Svayamvara, the battle between Bali and Sugriva, Maricha the deer appearing to Sita, Hanuman meeting Sita in Ashoka Vana, and the war between Rama and Ravana and many more. Three empty slots on the pedestal likely once held statues of Rama, Lakshmana, and Sita. Like many temples in Hampi, it was vandalized and the sanctum sanctorum defaced.





### Hampi Bazaar:

Across from the Virupaksha Temple lies the historic Hampi Bazaar, stretching about 650 meters. Once a bustling commercial hub, it now offers shade and rest for travelers, with part of it serving as a museum and another section as the local police station.

At the end of the bazaar stands the massive Monolith Nandi (Bull), facing Virupaksha Temple.



### Achyutraya & Varaha Temple:

At the top of a hill, just a short hike from the Nandi statue, the remnants of these once grand structures can still be seen. Since most of the temples had their gopurams constructed from brick rather than granite, they were easily destroyed along with the deities, leaving only the curved pillars intact.



### Monolith Sculptures:

**Lakshmi Narasimha:** This 6.7-m-tall sculpture is the largest in Hampi. Narasimha, the lion-faced incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is seated in a yoga position on the coil of a seven-headed snake Sesha, whose heads form a hood above him. Originally, the statue featured Goddess Lakshmi seated on his lap, all carved from a single piece of granite, but it was heavily damaged during the fall of Vijayanagara.

**Siva Linga:** Next to the Lakshmi Narasimha Temple is the Badavaalinga Temple, featuring a 3m tall Shiva Linga, whose base is submerged in water. It's still an active place of worship.

**Sasivekalu Ganesha:** About 500 meters away is the 2.4m tall Sasivekalu Ganesha, seated in a 16-pillared mandapa on Hemakuta Hill. Like Lakshmi Narasimha, it was vandalized but restored with a broken tusk in its lower right arm, symbolizing the writing of the Mahabharata.

Another nearby monolith of Ganesha is known as Kadalekalu Ganesha.





Let's explore a few places where history meets mythology...

You know, Hampi is also Kishkindha, the monkey-kingdom of Ramayana!

Matanga Hill:

It marks the natural boundary of the historic capital city and is the best spot to watch the sunset today! According to Hindu mythology, Matanga Hill was the home of Rishi Matanga. Sugriva hid from his brother, the monkey king Bali, on this hill, as Bali could not climb it due to the Rishi's curse. Later, after Rama killed Bali, Sugriva was crowned by Rama as the ruler of Kishkindha at the Kodandarama temple.



Sugriva's Cave: It is believed that Sita dropped her jewels from Ravana's chariot when she saw Sugriva on the ground near this cave, and later, Sugriva gave the jewels to Rama.

Rishimukha Hill and Yantrodhara Anjaneya Temple: It is believed to be the place where Rama, Lakshman and Hanuman first met.

Anjeyanadri: On the other side of the Tungabhadra River, this hilltop is the birthplace of Lord Hanuman, known as Anjaneya (means 'son of Anjana'). Be prepared to climb 575 steps to reach the Anjaneya Temple at the hilltop.

Bali's Cave and Fort, Anegundi: It is believed to be the site where the battle between Bali and Mayavi occurred while Sugriva stood guard outside.

Chintamani Temple, Anegundi: The temple complex also contains the cave where Rama and Sugriva planned their strategy to defeat Bali. It is located near the spot where Rama shot the arrow that killed Bali.

Let's explore a natural wonder...

Sanapur Lake:

Sanapur Lake, on the other side of the river, created by an irrigation reservoir, is a fantastic excursion point from Hampi. Surrounded by stunning boulder hills, the area has a unique charm. Local villagers also offer fun coracle rides on the lake.





All the photos above are snapped on my camera to capture the essence of Hampi as I experienced it. I hope they help bring the beauty and history of this incredible place to life as you read this!

#### Travel Wiki:

**Best time to visit:** October to March, when the weather is cooler.

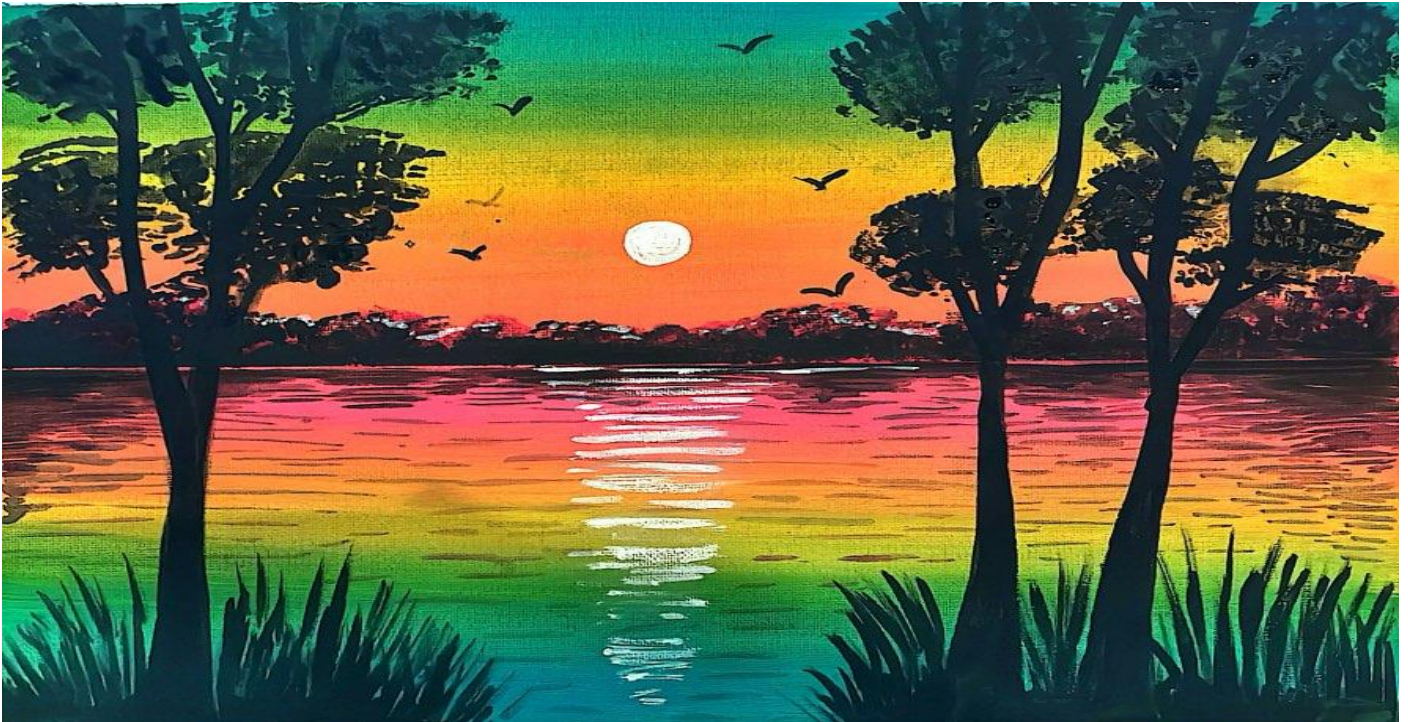
**Transportation:** Hampi is best explored on foot, by bicycle or by renting a scooty. Auto-rickshaws are also available for hire.

**Stay:** Minimalistic guesthouses and cafés line the narrow lanes of Hippiie Island, offering both local flavors and food that caters to the international travelers who are drawn here, not just for the history, but also for the energy of the place. If this isn't for you, several resorts are available nearby and in Hospet.

**How to Reach:** Hampi is almost equidistant from the Bangalore, Hyderabad, and Goa International airports. Vidyanagar is the nearest domestic airport. Hampi is well-connected by government (preferably KSRTC) and private buses and trains, with Hospet being the nearest railway station, just 8 miles away.



Have more time? Explore the Tungabhadra Dam (6 miles from Hospet/15 miles from Hampi) - India's largest stone masonry dam and one of the only two non-cement dams in the country; Badami (~85 miles from Hampi) – the capital city of the Chalukya dynasty (540-757 CE) and Aihole (~22 miles from Badami) – a UNESCO world heritage site from the early Chalukya period; Bijapur (~75 miles from Badami) – known for its historical monuments from Adil Shahi dynasty.



Kattayani Sarkar



## Smash that Ankh

Anik Chattopadhyay

I hold my breath,  
Mustering all my strength  
As shaky those limbs are,  
Upon my wounds blood that smear(s)  
Demented, I'm all struggling to stay there.

What nasty narco is it?  
Or a whim so darn rigid?  
Ruthless me, cutting in my vein  
Naive kids bearing the infernal pain  
I think I tend to lose my vision, my brain!

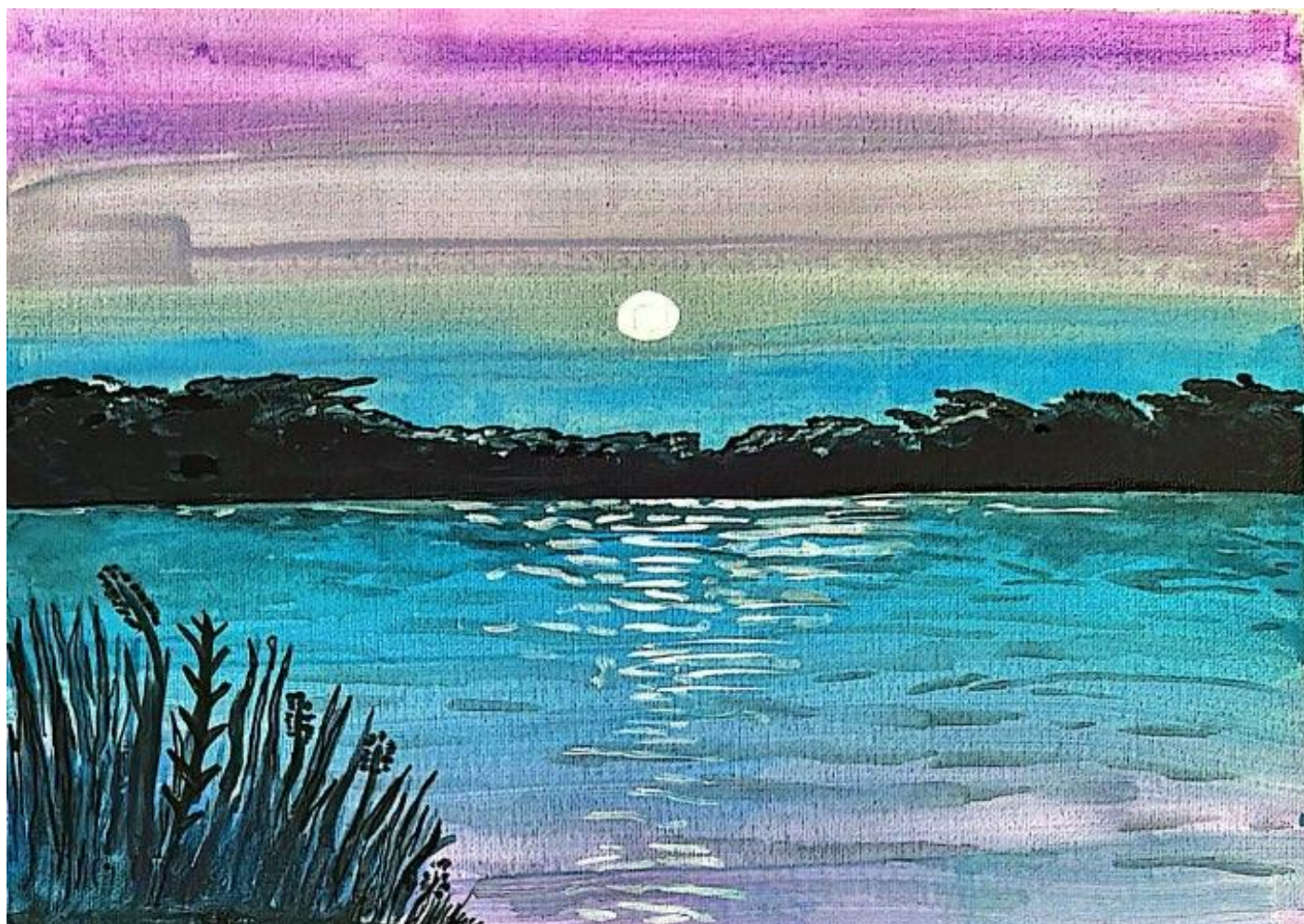
Lashed all over the morbid parts  
For those savage attacks on the hearts  
Inflict lingering trauma, for in the squalor  
Of death lay my child amid extreme horror  
I wish I knew their name, birth or maybe their color.

Yet, I stretch out my arms for you  
Onto the sky keep breathing life for you  
Forever I will keep moving with my dodgy flank  
That's the best you have left me with, to be frank  
Or wait... you can stop it all: you can smash that  
Ankh!



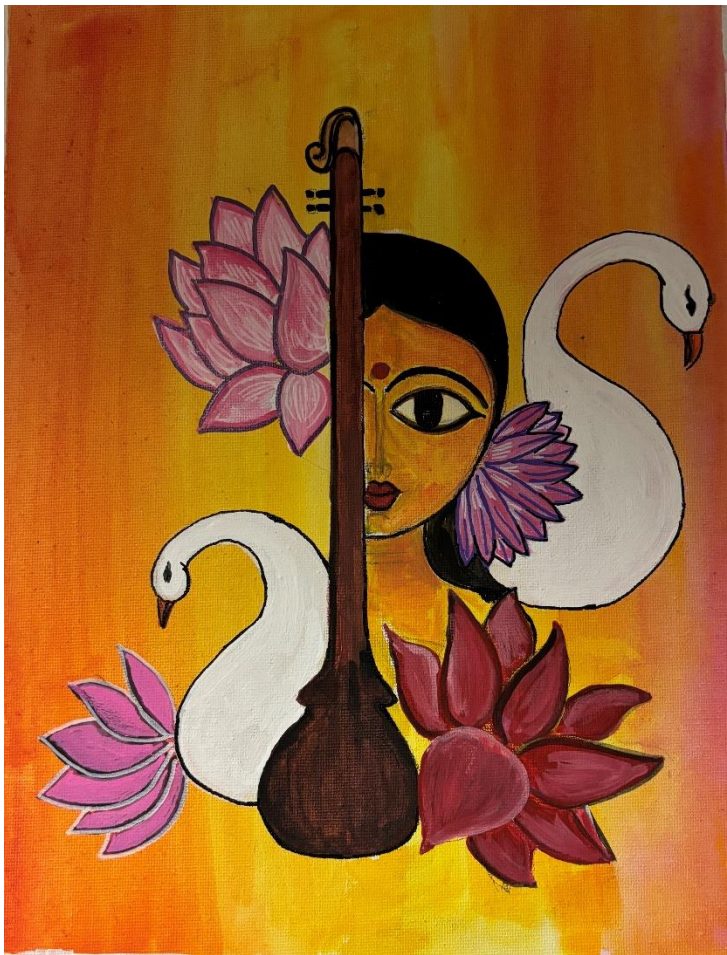
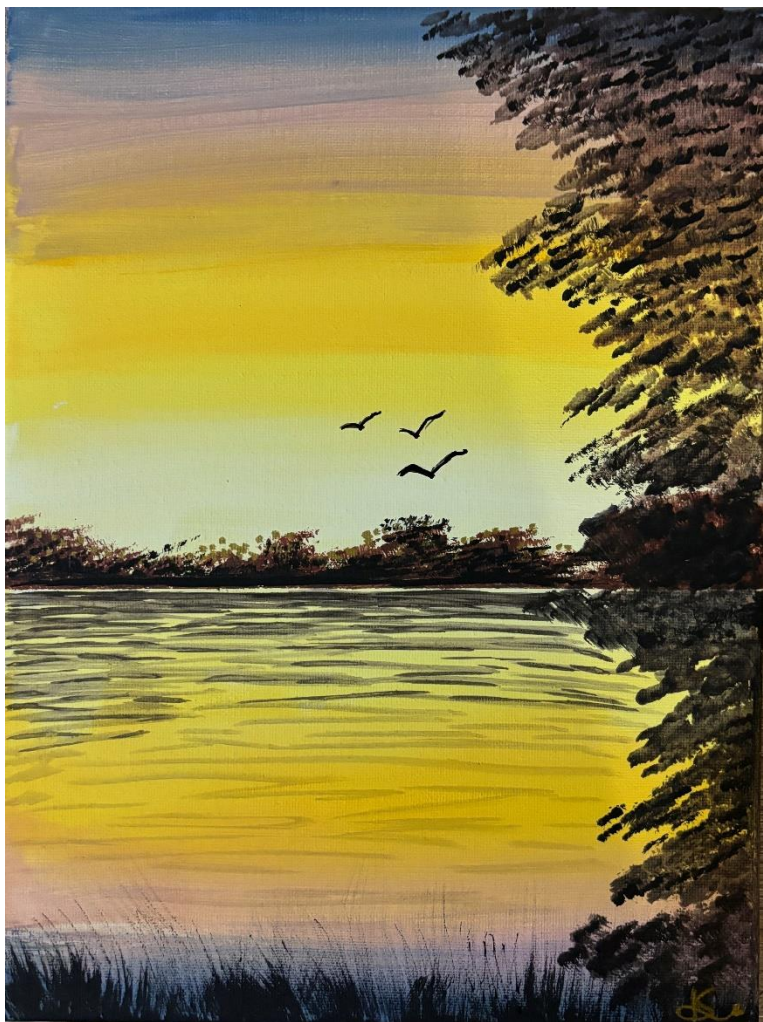
Kattayani Sarkar





Kattayani Sarkar





Kattayani Sarkar





kattayani Sarkar





Rishma Manna