

MIND
Sreemoyee Bhattacharya
(From Boston, Massachusetts)

A lot has been said about the mind,
Numerous works of science and sages far and wide
Explored the vagaries and captured the nuances to set control
Yet the true potential is still left untold, unless one practices hard
To let the mystery unfold.
Perhaps the urge to live like a king,
To reach the pinnacle of truth and sing
Conquer and believe in the change within
Seldom perturbed by self-doubt and pain, we all think
Why does life feel like a game?
Winning or losing seems to be a matter of destiny.
A long while later, the realization dawns upon us
Pleasure and despair are both a state of mind to reckon.
We all wander through darkness for a few moments in our life
Till the strength of mind persuades us
To tap our feet into the world of light.

ODE TO YOU
Sreemoyee Bhattacharya
(From Boston, Massachusetts)

You cry the loudest when you come into the world,
You are loved the most when you set your feet under the sun.
You are everything to a pair of weary eyes and shaken bones,
Your achievements and talents count and are rejoiced the most.
Each time you fall, you find courage to rise above and beyond
Every song you sing has the rhythm and scent of your roots so strong
You are the centre you are the end,
Perhaps each day is longer to see your luminous face.
You are all, without you a null.
My heart swells with pride when you show compassion
And hold my quivering hand to comfort
Your little eyes confide in me and never do they lie
My child, just to have you with me is a blessing
To take me through years that come by.

A VIEW TO REMEMBER

Upasana Bagchi

Close your eyes and inhale a lungful of air
Today you will witness a matchless stare
A glance that will mesmerize your mind
And release it from the distressing bind

With a free mind, enjoy the view
Describe what you see in this world of hue
Far away from the busy city traffic
Stands the lush beauty magnifique

The landscape paints the eyes green
With bountiful ocean of plants serene
In your majestic emerald tapestry
Million shades of green I se

Thy rocky mountains stand tall and erect
Juggling and balancing the boulders resurrect
Whistling winds bruise thy rocky surfaces
Grating and sculpting them into myriad faces

The white waterfalls sashay from the mountains
Gods shower their blessings through these fountains
The waterfalls cascade into the riveting river
Only to bring life to the land azure

The sun shines from amidst the floating white cloud
Lighting up the green panorama in angles profound
When the soft breeze combs through the meadow
The gentle plants lean and sway in the distant shadow

Mother Nature caresses her little darlings
Pampering their imploring with tender embraces
And when they yearn for her even more
She blows the tempest all the way to the shore

Slowly as I close my eyes, ebony hue cloaks my vision
My eye sees black but my mind is draped with the green curtain
As I walk away from the grassy velveteen
I promise to return again to the land of my dreams.

OH SO WONDERFUL

Durba Pramanik

Oh so wonderful rainbow
Shines even brighter than snow
Oh so wonderful rainbow
Easy to draw and show

Oh so wonderful dove
Shows the sign of peace and love
Oh so wonderful dove
Please show peace and please show love

Oh so wonderful trees
Gives us fresh air and breeze
Oh so wonderful trees
Do not destroy them please

Oh so wonderful cloud
When it rains gives us thunder so loud
Oh so wonderful cloud
Please don't make noise and please don't shout

Oh so wonderful, oh so wonderful
They are always wonderful and they will be always wonderful.

JAKE THE BAKER

Durba Pramanik

Jake the baker
Baked a cake
The cake Jake baked
Began to shake.
Jake ate his cake
So it wouldn't break
And now Jake has a tummy ache.

B.A. PASS

Upasana Bagchi

The dream of every parent is to see their child do well for themselves in life. Now the definition of “doing well” is subjective. Each parent sees their child as “doing well” from different perspectives. For some, it may be getting a good job, while for others getting a good pay package and for many others, it may be doing something meaningful in life. The bottom line in all of this is that you have to study hard and be the best. Since there can be only one best, everyone is pitted against each other to prove their mettle. The initial excitement of the challenge only holds the attention of those people at the top of the pyramid. The others feel like they are rats in the “rat-race”, so they try to either rig the game or change the game.

In India, the tradition of producing engineers and doctors seem to be the common norm. Like an heirloom, a person not only inherits their family surname but also the inherent aspiration of having a doctor or an engineer in the family. We have all seen it very evidently in cinematographic works like 3 Idiots. By shattering the imposed shackles of the society on the individual expression of life choices and thinking out of the box can we discover new worlds of happiness. Now the tale of my life also starts with a “Once Upon A Time...”

Once upon a time, there was a Princess in a distant kingdom called Bangalore. Her life was going on the right track when suddenly she decided to study Arts. Can you imagine the blasphemy?!? Being a B.A. pass in the world of engineers and doctors. The loving King and the doting Queen were very happy and proud to hear this decision of the Princess. But the whole kingdom was distraught with this announcement of the King that the Princess was to pursue B.A. (Bachelor of Arts) in the most prestigious college.

Everybody exclaimed in disbelief and then followed an awkward bouquet of expressions. The courtroom reverberated as if with echoes of “Arts?”, “Arts!”, “B.A.!", “B.A.?”. Some tried to hide their awe in their smiles and congratulated the King and the Princess. Some others failed to conceal their feelings and asked the Princess “Why?” Then followed a trail of unanswerable questions from everywhere. “What happened?”, “What went wrong?”, “Your marks are pretty good... good rank... but why?”, “Why would a bright student from science stream like you willingly take up Arts?”, etc.

The Princess was initially confused at these reactions. But with her family’s encouraging love and support, the Princess was ever so ecstatic and elated to go on this new quest of knowledge that it did not matter to her at all what others thought about it. Although she was apprehensive of treading the uncharted territories of a completely new world, she was excited to find out what lies ahead on the path she had chosen. She knew that this journey would change her and her life forever. She believed in her heart that Fate would find her one day and she will find the key that unlocks her destiny. She knew her

life would be iconoclastic from now on. Instead of being caged into the rigid frames of norm, she was ready for the journey of discovery of her uniqueness.

So she merrily embarked on her journey with an inquiring mind, a gleeful heart and a spring in her step. She had no difficulty in finding her way for she knew she could choose what she wanted. On her way, she chanced upon a beautiful enchanted garden full of blooming flowers. She was delighted to see the vibrant flowers in a thousand hues adorning the garden. Many of the flowers were new to the Princess that she did not even know they existed.

As she explored the garden, she came across a golden grilled gate. It had three strange-looking locks. She was curious as to where the gate must open into. She found a stone plaque above the gate that read.

*“Stop! Stop, Traveller! Stop!
No One Shall Enter The Golden Gates Of Wisdom,
The Key To The Gates Lies Amidst The Blooming Blossom.
You Shall Choose Three Flowers Of Your Liking,
And You Will Find The Open Gates Inviting.
Once You Enter, The World You Can See,
With Eyes Anew That Will Set You Free.”*

She was quick to decipher that she had to choose any three flowers from the enchanted garden around her. She looked around and wondered which flowers she should pick. She first walked up to the white lilies and plucked one. The first lock opened and the plaque read :

*“You Have Chosen The White Lilies,
The Subject It Represents Is English.
Reading The Works Of Writers Renowned,
Explore The People And Land From World Around.”*

The Princess was delighted that finally she would find something that would satisfy her cravings for art and culture. Next she walked to a shrub of roses and picked the red rose that appealed to her the most. The second lock gaped open. The plaque displayed:

*“You Have Chosen The Red Rose,
Psychology Will Answer The Questions You Pose.
Like The Petals You Explore The Sweetness Of Life,
With The Thorns You Revisit The Contentions Rife.”*

She was excited that finally she can now understand the life we all lead and how we can understand ourselves better. The third flower she chose was a blooming lotus. The last of the three locks released the bounds.

*“You Have Chosen At Last The Pink Lotus,
In Sociology You Find Thinkers Famous.”*

*Cultures And Societies It Strives To Explain,
The Knowledge You Seek You Shall Stand To Gain.”*

The Princess was proud of her choices. The golden gates parted from the centre to clear the way. The plaque now read :

*“Welcome Princess To The Gates Of Wisdom,
You Have Chosen Better Than You Can Fathom.
You May Now Enter A World Concealed,
To Rediscover The Knowledge Destined.”*

As she ventured forth confidently through the golden gate of wisdom on her journey into the new found land, she was ready to undergo the metamorphosis and become her true self. Years rolled by. Then three summers later, out came the butterfly from the cocoon. The Princess had changed, the World had changed, and her way of looking at the World had changed. It was different and definitely felt better. She made her way back to the kingdom humming the tunes of “March On Christites , March On, With Heads Held High And Hearts So Strong...”

She was received and welcomed by the entire kingdom. As they interacted with the Princess and she participated in the discussions about the welfare of the Kingdom, people were amazed to see how well-versed she seemed. She now had sound foundations, simple logic and a deep understanding of the way the World worked. She had justly proved to everyone how her once condemned choice became something the entire Kingdom could be proud of. The courtiers admitted their mistake and the B.A. pass Princess brought prosperity to her Kingdom.

FROM NOSTALGIA TO NEW FOUND LAND

Prottoy Bagchi

Nowadays, short trips out of the city on long weekends have become very common. So common that all the major destinations in and around Bangalore have already been stricken out of the bucket list. Like most families, we too were on a quest to find a road less travelled. Although, we have been in Bangalore for over 20 years, we were surprised to discover such a wonderful place in NAMMA KARNATAKA. Lush green vegetation, flooding falls, dams, hills, playful weather, sea like strong winds, less tourists – a perfect place for a weekend getaway – GOKAK.

Gokak is located about 70 km from Belagavi (formerly known as Belgaum) in Karnataka and the cosiest way to get there is by train. For those who prefer to hit the road, the 550 km journey would be quite an experience given the soothing monsoon weather. We chose to travel by train firstly, for ease of travel and secondly, we had an opportunity to travel by train after 12 years. Rani Chennamma Express gets you there overnight. This train is mostly expected to be overbooked during weekends and holidays. So if you are planning to go there, make sure you book the ticket betimes.

As we entered Bangalore City Station, the sound of announcements, the flocking people, the toiling coolies, the weighing machine, the stalls, the luggage stacks and everything reminded us of the old times. The station has glammed up a lot now, making my memories seem black & white. I was excited and proud to know that the station has an escalator down the overbridge. The train was at the platform but our train of excitement was racing everywhere, which knew not any platform.

When we entered into the train after a customary check of our names on the seat chart, I was welcomed by a gust of nostalgia which helped cool down some streams of sweat caused by some “coolie-giri”. Sitting on our designated seat, I looked around and memories of my childhood train journeys flashed by. Running around the entire place, climbing up and down the berths, jumping from berth to berth, swinging on the sidebars – this was pretty much my schedule when on a train ride. Hard to accept, but I am a grown up now and this 5’11” man does not fit the same way as my 10 year old body could fit.

As the train started making its way to our destination, it was time to relive another train-time memory of the good old days – Luchi-Torkari for dinner. I would say all Bengali’s are destined with the love for luchis. Next up on our schedule was making our beds for the night. Throughout my childhood, our Dad used to make our beds, but this time I took up the lead. It shows a natural transition – the little boy has now become a man.

We woke up with a picturesque scene of the sun rise. I owe the chance to cherish this scenery to the vendor who woke us up with shouts of “Chai garam chai”. As the morning sun lit up the surroundings, all we could see is miles and miles of agricultural land and not a soul in sight. Such beautiful crop arrangements – a rare sight to city-breds like us. So much variety of crops and it was fun to play guess-the-crop. As we appreciated the efforts of the farmers, we had stoking stomachs already, which was soothed by some Idly-Vada and Upma. I missed the usual bread-omelette but with so much of vegetation around its better to keep it veg.

Finally our destination arrived – Gokak Road. The train was to stop at the station only for 2 minutes. Being out of practice, we were a little over-panicked and we started strategizing how best we can plan our exit in order to take the least possible time. Much to our surprise, after setting foot on the station comfortably, we were left with 110 seconds to spare. As we got off from the train, I looked around and was reminded of Sholay when Jai-Veeru arrives in Ramgarh station. However, there was no Basanti waiting outside for us, but instead we had asked the hotel to arrange for a cab to pick us up from the station. Speaking of Basanti, the driver's name was Basant which I pointed out to the rest of my family in very pure Bengali so as to not raise any suspicion.

The distance from the station Gokak Road to our hotel in Gokak was about 15 kms. It was a village road but, trust me, smooth as butter, unlike the roads of the “city” Bangalore. Driving through the villages was a different experience – small houses, government school, small kirana stores were some sights we only get to watch in movies. But one very noticeable thing I can't help but mention, there were lots and lots of pigs running around. We reached our resort which was pretty much in the prime location of the town and was well decorated. It was much better than what we had expected and given the price point, I would say, it was highly economic. It had a nice restaurant which serves veg., non veg. and beyond.

Gokak has a history dating back to 1853. You would be surprised to know Gokak houses one of India's oldest hydroelectric power-plant. The place also is famous for its cotton mills. It was once the largest manufacturer and exporter of yarn.

We freshened up and took a cab to our first spot, Godchinamalaki Falls. Godchinamalaki Falls was about a 20 km drive from our resort. It is situated on the river Markandeya and it is known for its picturesque step-wise arrangement of the falls. The falls was so full with water and we were lucky to spot a rainbow in the mist. I have seen rainbows near falls in movies and I thought they were animated but watching a real one that too at such a low height was a “Gerua” moment come true.

The river Markandeya later goes on to join Ghataprabha River and just 6 km away from Gokak forms the Gokak Falls. But before we make our way to the falls, there is another mark of lost history. The Mahalingeshwara Temple was built way back in 1153 AD in the Chalukyan era. The temple was humble in stature but the architecture was exquisite and the intricate carvings on the temple walls spoke volumes about the skilled craftsmanship of those times. Surprisingly, this temple faces the north which is unusual for a Shiva temple but if it is that way it is for a reason – which in this case is unknown though.

With divine blessings of the Lord, we made our way to witness another spectacle of Gokak, often referred to as “Karnataka's Niagara”. The water of the Ghataprabha River gushes out of the Gokak Falls from a 171 ft high cliff with humungous force. It is simply a photographer's paradise and an ideal shooting spot right next to the water flowing. Along the breadth of the falls is a hanging bridge which was built way back in 1907. When on the bridge you can have a top view of the falls.

Water, water, everywhere..., but such elegant force of water is only seen during the monsoon months of July, August and September. Post October, it is just a humble stream draining out the monsoon leftovers. So if you plan a visit, restrict that to the aforementioned 3 months. Talking about monsoon, the weather is very funny there. One

moment there is a scorching sun; then suddenly it grows dark and cloudy; next we have some stormy winds accompanied by mischievous rain; then it clears out after a while with a mild sunlight and then it gets bright and sunny again. The funny thing is the entire cycle happens in less than an hour and in every hour. Also there is a constant supply of sweet winds so you won't miss Bangalore too much.

After a long day of travel, spending time at the falls, photography and lung-full of fresh unpolluted breathing, we retired to our resort for the day. The evening was pretty laid back. Just T.V. and chatty family time. We ordered some chai-pakode for the evening and then after a stereotypical dinner menu, we made our way into the world of our dreams. The next morning was pleasant just like a monsoon morning in Bangalore. We went for a morning walk just to explore the town. A humble town, I must say, but has everything one would require. People here have simple lives unspoiled by the money-craving city lifestyle. After a wholesome breakfast, we went to another attraction of this place – the Hidkal Dam. The Hidkal Dam is around 25 kms from Gokak – a very enjoyable drive with long stretches of farmland guarding the road on both sides with occasional hillocks. As we reached Hidkal Dam, we were welcome by a splash of rain. This time it was heavy and lasted for about 20 minutes. As the rain subsided, we went into the bank of the dam's catchment area and another observation point. A beautiful sight! Miles and miles of just milky white water; as far as you can see you cannot spot any sight of land. The water body forms patches of dark and light as the rays of the sun hoodwink the otherwise cloudy sky. Simply breath taking! And talking of breath, it was very windy. It can literally blow you off (yeah! I mean it). You can also get your hair dressed by the blowing winds.

There is another dam called Dhupdal Dam which was built in 1883 on the river Ghataprabha. It has a hydroelectric power generating unit and the catchment area of this dam is also endless. At the bank of the catchment area, are a beautiful and well maintained garden and a fishing spot as well. Apart from this there is a Yogi Kolla temple. But due to a crunch on time we couldn't visit the temple. Another reason being, to reach the temple you need to climb about 900 steps. It reminds me of Shah Rukh Khan in Chennai Express – "Where is the temple?"

This was truly a weekend well spent and very economical with high value for money. Wish this trip never ends as I fell in love with the cool breeze, ever-changing weather, beautiful scenery, sound of the water gushing from the falls, smooth roads, stress-free lifestyle and actually everything. But the world I left behind is waiting for me on the other side of the train ride. When life gets busy, a weekend trip is cherished but like it or not after every Sunday comes a Monday and life goes on as we chase new challenges and adventures with renewed energy, a refreshed mind and a rejuvenated spirit.

ANECDOTES ON DR.APJ ABDUL KALAM

Sounak Dasgupta

(Age: 10 years)

Reading or listening success stories of greatest personalities stimulates motivational enzymes within us and we all wish to emulate them on path of success. Exactly with this aim I am writing few anecdotes of Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, popularly known as the “People’s President” and the “Missile Man of India”, who has carved niche in his own way and have become icon of millions.

Abul Pakeer Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam was the 11th president of India and has always been known for his knowledge and kindness.

Here are some real-life incidents that shows how inspiring the man has been.

1. Once during a hectic project, one of his co-scientist asked Dr. Kalam’s permission to leave early from office as he had promised to take his kids to an exhibition. However, engrossed with work he realized that it was very late. Guilty for having disappointed his kids, he went back home and found his kids were not there. His wife told him that his manager Dr. Kalam came and took the children to the exhibition. So the boss took the lead and saved a father from being guilty in front of his kids.

2. While he was working on a project with DRDO (Defense Research and Development Organization), he asked the team, what would they do to ensure security around a certain building. The team lead suggested: “Broken glass on the walls.” The former president was quick to turn down the suggestion and said, “The birds cannot perch on the wall. Think of something else.” A politician who thought about birds as much as he did about people.

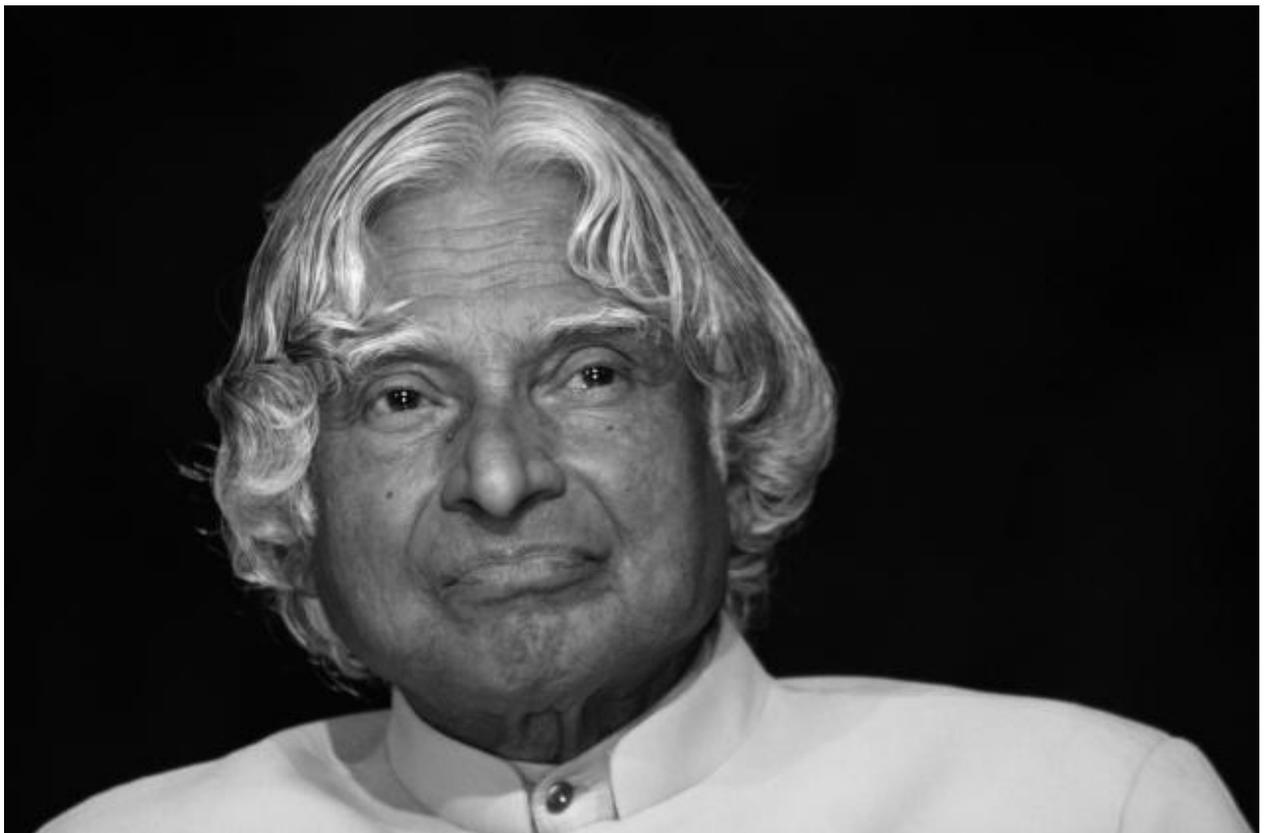
3. Right after Dr. Kalam was elected as the President, he attended an event at Kerala. With the power vested in him, he could have invited any two people as the presidential guest. Guess who he called? A road- side cobbler and the owner of a very small hotel, both of whom he spent significant time and was close during his stay in Kerala. No other politician can do this, can they?

4. Once he refused to sit on a chair reserved for him as it was bigger than the chairs of other significant guests.

5. As humble and generous this man was, President Kalam is known to sign his own thank you cards. One instance is when a class 6 child Naman Narain, drew a sketch of Dr.Kalam and send it to the President. To his surprise, the President sent him a thank you card, with a short handwritten message and personalized with his signature.

Dr. Kalam is by all means a miracle man and a short description about him would be too difficult to justify this legendary persona. Such a remarkable man was the pride of our nation. His soul has rest in peace, but his words, actions and kind deeds would always be ignited within us.

I would like to conclude by one of his quotes. **“IF YOU WANT TO SHINE LIKE A SUN, FIRST BURN LIKE A SUN.”**



Expectations...Expectations and...Expectations

Khushi Pal

(Age: 13 years)

Our world today starts with expectations and ends with expectations. The best example is the very fact that “you all who are reading this essay expect it to be a good piece of writing”. But in reality it might not be as good as your expectations, so what will be the result of your expectations? DISSAPOINTMENT, so we may put it in the form of this equation:

REALITY \neq EXPECTATION \longrightarrow DISSAPOINTMENT

Now when we all know how disappointing can disappointment be, then why do you even have any expectation then there will be no expectation, no reality and no disappointment. All we are going to have is a fact, the fact which is universal and cannot be changed.

We all watch movies, the actors in the movie, the costume, plot and the songs raise our expectations. We think that the movie is extremely good. But when you spent nearly 1000 bucks and watch the movie, you come out of the theatre disappointed and turn into zombies, sulking for spending so much for disappointment.

Currently the example for your disappointment would be my essay, with your mind boggling that what crap is this about reality, expectation, disappointment. But believe me or not it's a universal fact with expectations comes reality and disappointment.

So a good mantra is to keep you away from disappointment

NO EXPECTATIONS --- NO REALITY --- NO DISSAPOINTMENT
