"We thought people would be

'We are from the Gurudwara in

'flooded in' on the highway," the

leader said, his eyes scanning them

taking in their drenched clothes and

the next village. The flood has taken

many of our homes, but we knew

there would be people stranded and

desperate on the highway. We've

ciency and compassion. The men

gave Paaji a warm blanket and some

nedicine. He looked changed and

fully revived as he sipped from a

thermos of hot tea. The man on the

phone, a doctor, by his voice reas-

suring, spoke to Amandeep, guiding

Within an hour, the rhythmic

thud of rotor blades filled the night

sky. A helicopter, a giant insect of

the rain, its searchlight cutting a

bright, sharp cone in the darkness.

them into a winch, the rope cold and

strong in Amandeep's hands. As

they were lifted into the helicopter

a strange sense of peace washed

over him. The fear was gone

Below, the torches of the men flick-

ered like a constellation, a testa

ment to the unyielding spirit of

humanity in the face of nature's

wrath. This band was of amazing

bold people who cared more for oth-

As they ascended, leaving the

floodwaters behind, Amandeep

looked at Priva. A single, unifving

thought passing between them: the

Guru had indeed shown them the

way, through the hearts of a few

good men who had risked every

thing to find them. They were safe

and sound. They were going home.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com

ers than for themselves.

eel and light, descended through

The small group of Sikhs helped

him on how to care for his father

until help arrived.

The rescue was a blur of effi-

Priva's tear-streaked face.

en looking for hours.'

06 November 2025

राष्ट्रदुत

#ABRAM GANNIBAL

The Remarkable Life of the Black Russian

'Black Russian,' Gannibal's life story is one of resilience, intelligence, and remarkable achievement in a society





Russian Empire.

In addition to his mili

and granted

tary career, Gannibal was

estates, cementing his status

as part of the Russian aris-

tocracy. His social ascent

was extraordinary consider-

ing he began life enslaved

Legacy and Descendants

Abram Gannibal's legacy

extends beyond his own

accomplishments. He is most

famously known as the great-

Pushkin. Russia's most cele-

brated poet and the founder of

modern Russian literature.

grandfather of Alexander

and in a foreign land.

Gannibal (c. 1696was extraordinary figtory, a man who rose from the shackles of

man, and trusted advisor to Gannibal's life story is one of resilience, intelligence, and remarkable achievement in a society where racial and social barriers were deeply

Early Life and

Abram Gannibal was born in Africa, most likely in presentday Cameroon or Ethiopia around 1696. While details about his early years remain somewhat unclear, it is believed he was kidnapped and sold into slavery at a young age. His path changed dramatically when he was brought to the Ottoman Empire and then gifted to Peter the Great of Russia. reportedly during a diplomatic mission.

Peter the Great took a personal interest in the young Gannibal. He freed him from slavery and raised him as a godson, providing him with an education that was rare for someone of African descent in 18th-century Europe. Gannibal was sent to France to study military engineering, mathematics and other sciences, a privilege that laid the foundation for his future career

Rise in Russian Society

Upon returning to Russia Abram Gannibal quickly rose through the ranks due to his talents and Peter's patronage He became an accomplished military engineer and architect, known for his skills in fortification design. Gannibal was appointed to oversee important construction projects and military defenses. significantly contributing to

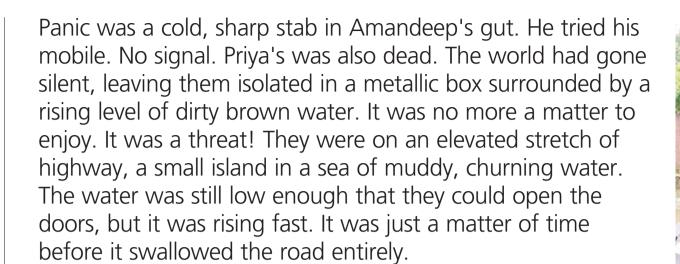
Pushkin proudly acknowledged his African ancestry through Gannibal and wrote about it in his autobiographical works, emphasizing the extraordinary rise of his ancestor from Africa to Russian nobility. Gannibal's story has inspired numerous works. from biographies to novels and even films. His life chal-

lenges common narratives about race and social mobili ty in early modern Europe and Russia. It highlights the complex cultural exchanges and human stories behind historical figures who defied

Significance in History

Abram Gannibal's life is a testament to resilience and the transformative power of education and opportunity. In an era when racial prejudice was widespread, he navigated the challenges of his time to achieve positions of influence rarely accessible to people of African descent.

Today, Gannibal is cele brated as a symbol of courage and achievement. His journey from slavery to nobleman reminds us of the diverse and interconnected histories that shape the modern world. The 'Black Russian' remains an enduring figure of inspiration. reflecting the complexity and richness of human history.



Flooded In



Dr. Goutam Sen

he monsoon had paint-

ed Punjab in a thousand

shades of green. The

air, thick with the scent

of wet earth and ripen-

comforting embrace.

Amandeep gripped the

steering wheel of his

old Maruti Gypsy, a

faint smile on his lips as he navigat

ed the slick, winding rural roads.

Beside him, his wife, Priya, was

resting against the window, watch-

ing the fields through the drizzle

blur past. In the back seat, Paaji, his

face a roadmap of a long and con-

tented life, had dozed off, his gentle

the steady drumming of the rain on

day, Priya suggested "Why don't we

go to our pind, where your Paaji had

been born. We have not been to

It was a place of fading memo-

ries, a hamlet nestled between two

mighty rivers, the Beas and the

Ravi, which now, bloated with rain-

water, roared with a newfound

power. The plan was simple: get to

the village, spend a few days and

then head back before the worst of

the monsoon arrived. But as always,

The first sign of trouble was the

early morning news on the radio

while they were having breakfast. A

bulletin, crackling through the stat-

nature had its own timeline

Goindwal Sahib for a long time."

the car's roof.

ing paddy, felt like a



ic, spoke of unprecedented rainfall in the upper reaches of the

boomed, "due to critically high

water levels. All downstream areas are advised to exercise extreme caution. Evacuation is underway in low-lying villages.' Amandeep's smile faltered. He glanced at Priya, his unease mirrored in her wide eyes. The two rivers that bordered their destina-

"We must get out of here before the whole place gets flooded. Please pack. We leave within the hour." They drove on for another hour,

tion, their path home, were now a

the sky now a menacing grey, the fields slowly transforming into humming a soft folk tune, her head murky lakes. The road ahead, a ribbon of black shiny asphalt between two vast quickly filling, watery nses, seemed to stretch endlessly. And then, the car shuddered to a halt. The engine sputtered, coughed snores a rhythmic counterpoint to once and went silent. "Damn it! This had to happen only now!" Amandeep cursed as Their trip was a pilgrimage of

he twisted the key frantically.

engine sputtered, coughed once and went silent.

rounding water, a dirty brown tor-

rent, had crept up to the edges of

the elevated road in the last hour.

They were truly marooned. They

saw the flotsam and jetsam con-

sisting of floating garbage and

Panic was a cold, sharp stab in

even a dead dog go by

hey drove on for another hour, the sky now a menacing grey, the fields

entirely

Amandeep's gut. He tried his

mobile. No signal. Priya's was also

dead. The world had gone silent

leaving them isolated in a metallic

box surrounded by a rising level of

dirty brown water. It was no more a

matter to enjoy. It was a threat!

They were on an elevated stretch of

highway, a small island in a sea of

muddy, churning water. The water

was still low enough that they

could open the doors, but it was ris-

ing fast. It was just a matter of

time before it swallowed the road

denly, was a blur of anxiety. They

shared the last of their parathas

and sipped from their last bottle of

water. Paaji, who had woken up dur-

ing the car's breakdown, was sur-

prisingly calm. He told them stories

of his childhood, of floods that had

come and gone, of the resilience of

the land and its people. But by the

next morning, the stories had

stopped. Paaji was exhausted and

The night, which came up sud-

slowly transforming into murky lakes. The road ahead, a ribbon of

black shiny asphalt between two vast quickly filling, watery expanses,

seemed to stretch endlessly. And then, the car shuddered to a halt. The

#WAHE GURU "The Bhakra Dam gates have been opened," the announcer's voice



shivering, a low fever burning in his bones. His cough, which had been a minor nuisance, was now a deep rattling choke. The reality of their situation hit them with the force of a tsunami. They had no medicine, no food, barely sips of water and a oved one who was quickly slipping

"Waheguru! There must be some

way to communicate," moaned

The day stretched on, an eternity of watching the water rise and the sky weep. The sun was an abstract concept, a memory of a distant time. Amandeep and Priya sat in silence, the unspoken question

nanging in the humid air between

them. They needed to find help. But

"I'll go," Amandeep said, his voice raw and parched. "I'm stronger. I can swim too if I have to." Priya shook her head, her eyes leading, "No. That's being foolhardy. The currents... they are so strong. What if something happens to you? What will we do? We have to stick together.

"But we can't just sit here and wait for the water to take us or for Paaji to get worse," Amandeep countered, his voice rising in desperation. "Someone has to go. It's The debate was a brutal one, a

he small group of Sikhs helped them into a winch, the rope cold and strong in Amandeep's hands. As they were lifted into the helicopter, a strange sense of peace washed over him. The fear was gone, replaced by a profound gratitude. Below, the torches of the men flickered like a constellation, a testament to the unyielding spirit of humanity in the face of nature's wrath.

conflict between logic and emotion. fear and hope. Amandeep argued that the road, though flooded, was their best bet. He could wade, maybe swim, to higher ground or to a village and seek help. Priya argued that leaving Paaji and her was unthinkable. They were a family unit, a shield together against the world. Breaking that shield, even for a moment, felt like a betrayal. It was also futile

Paaji, his eyes half-closed stirred. "Don't fight," he whispered, his voice weak. "Stay together. The Guru will show us the way." His words, a simple, unwavering faith, calmed them more than any argument ever could. They decided to wait, just a little longer. If no help came by sundown, they would

As dusk settled, painting the churning waters in an eerie, bruised muddy purple, their hope was a flickering ember. Fear was a physical presence, a knot in their knee-deep water their clothes soaked but their faces determined. They carried with them ropes and a first-aid kit. One of them, a man with a flowing white heard, was on his phone, the signal miraculously holding for him. He was talking to a

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

PROBLEM SOLVED!

stomachs. Amandeep tried the

mobile one last time. Still nothing!

The silence was deafening, broken

only by the incessant patter of rain

mournful roar of the mighty rivers.

stuttering sound of a tractor! Faint

at first, a collective murmur, like a

swarm of bees, grew louder. Human

voices. Amandeep and Priya looked

ed by the frantic glow of a thousand

unspoken prayers. Was it possible

that people would be out in these

panied by the bobbing, rhythmic

flicker of torches. They were com-

small procession of lights dancing

in the gloom. Amandeep scrambled

out of the car, waving his arms, his

throat hoarse as he screamed.

A man's voice, rich and deep,

boomed through the rain. "Bhai, are

The torches drew closer, reveal

ing a small group of men, their

heads covered by wet turbans, their

faces weathered but kind. Some of

The sound grew louder, accom-

horrible circumstances!

Here! Over here!"

you okay? Are you alone?"

And then, from the distance, a

the distant, intermittent

#PUSHPENDRA BHARGAVA

A House That Speaks

Rediscovering My Father's Spirit in Jaipur's Living Eco-Museum

at the same home. What began as

curiosity became a memory, and

The Daga home is not just a resi-

lence, it is a living eco-museum

have built a world where every

In just 1,100 square feet, they

Kitchen travs are etched with

A 'surname wheel' cupboard

A snakes-and-ladders board

Pen holders, stools, and place-

"We don't decorate with mes

sages, we build with them," says

nonours over 160 visiting fami-

teaches children tree conservation.

mats carry slogans of gratitude

Design That Speaks

object teaches:

reveal poems on trees

and ecological care.

environmental messages.





Environment Day, and a gentleman's welcome led to a journey of design, memory, and sustainable wisdom!

The Unexpected Invitation: A Father's Calling

On a rainy June morning, just after World Environment Day and just before Father's Day I paused near Patrika Gate with a cup of chai. An article fluttered into my lap, describing a couple in Malviya Nagar who had transformed their home into a living

sustainability lesson. Intrigued, I pedaled through puddles and wrong turns until I reached a vine-wrapped gate. A voice from a first-floor window called: "Come up."

The Meeting That Repeated

Still dripping from the monsoon, I sat in their living room. Mrs. Daga listened quietly as I described my visit

"In 2011, your father came here the same way," she said. "He invited us to your place. I think he sent you now. Her words stopped me. Years

ago, my father had shown me a clipping about a compact desk designed for optimal space. And now, unknowingly, I had arrived



Their approach addresses real urban challenges Space optimization through fold Sustainable materials replace ing plastic and steel.

Emotional warmth through handwritten hospitality notes and shared snacks. Practical Wisdom for Jaipur

What visitors can learn Convert underused corners into

collapsible storage. Replace synthetics with natural, locally-sourced materials. Host with mindfulness, serve

tea with a story Design objects not just for use, but for reflection.

Living Heritage

In a city famous for marble facades and palatial ambition. this home dares to turn small ness into wisdom. At Jaipur Inn, I share stories of the Pink City with visitors from around the world. But that day, I wasn't the

storyteller, I was the guest. This home reminded me that virasat, heritage, is not only what we inherit, but what we embody My father had walked these steps before me. I came to repeat him, but left understanding him. If Jaipur were a library, this house would be its quiet footnote of wis-

dom. Not loud. But true. **Bio:** Pushpendra Bhargava is an avid hiker, exploring and shar ing the virasat of Jaipur. He inherited Jaipur Inn from his father and has managed it for twenty-five years. He now supports it by telling the stories of Jaipur's hills, parks, monuments, homes, and streets, making them accessible to guests of Jaipur Inn and beyond.

Suggested Pull Quotes

"We don't decorate with messages, we build with them.' - Naval Daga

"My father had walked these steps before me. I came to repeat him, but left understanding him. "In 1,100 square feet, they built a world where every object teaches." "This home dares to turn

THE WALL



BABY BLUES

NOW YOU SMELL LIKE ZOE, YOU CAN'T GO TO I'LL JUST RUB A BACON, LETTUCE AND SCHOOL WEARING A WHOLE A LITTLE BACON BOTTLE OF MY ON MY NECK GRANDMA SANDWICH PERFUME! TO HIDE THE SMELL. BE FINE!

ZITS







NEVER JUDGE A BOOK BY ITS MOVIE. -J.W. EAGAN