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Class-XII

English

Vistas

Chapter-3

Journey to the End of the Earth

Part - 1



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continent : महाद्वीप
Equator : भूमध्य रेखा
ecospheres: पर्यावरणीय मंडल





EARLY this year, I found myself aboard a Russian research vessel — the Akademik Shokalskiy — heading towards the coldest, driest, windiest continent in the world: Antarctica. My journey began 13.09 degrees north of the Equator in Madras, and involved crossing nine time zones, six checkpoints, three bodies of water, and at least as many ecospheres.

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expansive : विशाल
relief: आराम
profound : बहुत अधिक



By the time I actually set foot on the Antarctic continent I had been travelling over 100 hours in combination of a car, an aeroplane and a ship; so, my first emotion on facing Antarctica's expansive white landscape and uninterrupted blue horizon was relief, followed up with an immediate and profound wonder.

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immensity: बहुत विशाल
isolation: एकान्त, वीरान

Wonder at its immensity, its isolation, but mainly at how there could ever have been a time when India and Antarctica were part of the same landmass.

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Part of History

amalgamated : जुड़ा हुआ

flora and fauna: पेड़-पौधे और जानवर



Six hundred and fifty million years ago, a giant amalgamated southern supercontinent — Gondwana — did indeed exist, centred roughly around the present-day Antarctica. Things were quite different then: humans hadn't arrived on the global scene, and the climate was much warmer, hosting a huge variety of flora and fauna.

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thrived: विकास होना
wiped out: खत्म होना
separate : अलग होना



For 500 million years Gondwana thrived, but around the time when the dinosaurs were wiped out and the age of the mammals got under way, the landmass was forced to separate into countries, shaping the globe much as we know it today.

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grasp : जानकारी
significance : महत्व
evolution : विकास





To visit Antarctica now is to be a part of that history; to get a grasp of where we've come from and where we could possibly be heading. It's to understand the significance of Cordilleran folds and pre-Cambrian granite shields; ozone and carbon; evolution and extinction.

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jamming : फंस जाना / हिल न पाना

buckle : जोड़ना

crust : बाहरी भाग

frigid: बहुत ठंडा

desolate: वीरान



When you think about all that can happen in a million years, it can get pretty mind-boggling. Imagine: India pushing northwards, jamming against Asia to buckle its crust and form the Himalayas; South America drifting off to join North America, opening up the Drake Passage to create a cold circumpolar current, keeping Antarctica frigid, desolate, and at the bottom of the world.

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prospect : विचार

For a sun-worshipping South Indian like myself, two weeks in a place where 90 percent of the Earth's total ice volumes are stored is a chilling prospect (not just for circulatory and metabolic functions, but also for the imagination).

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devoid of: किसी के बिना
microscopic : बहुत छोटा
midges : कीट–पंतगें
mites : छोटे कीड़े





It's like walking into a giant ping-pong ball devoid of any human markers — no trees, billboards, buildings. You lose all earthly sense of perspective and time here. The visual scale ranges from the microscopic to the mighty: midges and mites to blue whales and icebergs as big as countries (the largest recorded was the size of Belgium).

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surreal : अविश्वसनीय
austral : दक्षिण से संबंधित
ubiquitous : हर जगह फैला हुआ
avalanche : बर्फ के पहाड़ गिरना
consecrates : पवित्र बनाना
immersion : विसर्जन

Days go on and on and on in surreal 24-hour austral summer light, and a ubiquitous silence, interrupted only by the occasional avalanche or calving ice sheet, consecrates the place. It's an immersion that will force you to place yourself in the context of the earth's geological history. And for humans, the prognosis isn't good.

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Human Impact

paltry : कम/छोटा
ruckus: हलचल
etching : निशान
dominance : नियत्रंण

Human civilisations have been around for a paltry 12,000 years — barely a few seconds on the geological clock. In that short amount of time, we've managed to create quite a ruckus, etching our dominance over Nature with our villages, towns, cities, megacities.

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rapid : तेजी से
unmitigated : कम न होने वाली
fossil : ईंधन

The rapid increase of human populations has left us battling with other species for limited resources, and the unmitigated burning of fossil fuels has now created a blanket of carbon dioxide around the world, which is slowly but surely increasing the average global temperature.