



Impact Statement

Srida Mishra, Grade 9

***From Mock to Power*, 2026**

Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 28 inches

Monta Vista High School, Cupertino, CA

Unsung Hero: Kadambini Ganguly

Being an Indian American from an immigrant family has its challenges, but while being that as well as a woman is at another level. In the current society, immigrant families are looked down upon as well as females are still fighting for gender equality. I, personally, have dealt with both sides of the problem. In this art competition, I wanted to do what I haven't embarked on before, to show what it is like to be ME. I wanted to paint someone that I could relate to on a personal level as a woman, an Indian, and as an immigrant. When I stumbled across Kadambini Ganguly, she had not only checked all the boxes on my expectations but also proved to be an inspirational figure who stepped outside of society's gender-stereotyped rules and gave history a new name.

In India, especially during that time, girls were looked down upon, treated more like machines and trophies rather than humans with feelings and thoughts. Men collected wives like cards, having many at a time and bragged about the values. It was during this time that Ganguly stood up and fought against everything that branded her inside the box of standards set for women at the time. She, however, had not only faced traditional expectations during her climb to success, but also faced direct racism by everyone, including Indians. They mocked her, belittled her, even trusted English nurses and doctors over her, their own blood. However, even after the hurtful words were hurled at her from all directions and media outlets, Ganguly fought for her dignity with justice. It was highlighted during the time a newspaper wrote against her, speaking ill and using foul words to describe her. Instead of weeping, Ganguly sued the newspaper, causing the editor to pay Rs. 100 as well as a sentence for 6 months. Ganguly, however, realizing that she won't be respected until she gets education, goes to England to pursue further in the path of medicine. By getting the Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians in Edinburgh, the Licentiate of the Royal College of Surgeons in Glasgow, and the Graduate of the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons, she was more than qualified compared to the other doctors that the public trusted more because of their race. After all, she was the first Indian woman to practice western medicine.

While I was working on my piece, I wanted to integrate the key aspects about the life Ganguly had accomplished. I started off at the top right corner, where there is a painting of a structure, which is in fact the Old Calcutta College that she went to, being one of the first women to pass the very tough entrance exam and attend the college. This marks the first step of her breaking boundaries. Transitioning to the background on the entire left half of the canvas, the old Triple Certificate, showcasing her historical achievement of practicing western medicine, something

that has never been done for Indian women. This is what rewrote history. At the bottom right corner, there is a group of women standing, protesting the unjust laws set for them. This was another activity that Ganguly was in, proudly advocating for women, their health, and their birth right. She was able to slow down the rate of dowry in marriage as well as increase the age of marriage, from 10 years old to 12 years old. As insane as it is, child marriage was a huge aspect during the time. Famous leaders, like Mahatma Gandhi, were in child marriage, because that is what society thought was the right thing to do, ignoring the negative psychological impacts that it has. Ganguly was able to put the problem into the spotlight, highlighting the absurd reality. At last, there is a picture of Ganguly treating a pregnant lady, marking her career after receiving her education, how she pushed through even with all the backlash and was able to accomplish plenty.

Painting this art piece made me really think about the situations and laws that I am taking for granted. How I am given free education, how I can be independent, how I am able to be my own person. The society that Ganguly had grown up in is not suited for me, but more than that, it was people like Ganguly who made the world the way it is today. They fixed many of the major flaws in the environment, taming and tailoring so that it is its best for future generations. Without such strong people, this whole world would have been in shackles. Truly, it is thanks to them for the world becoming the way it is now.