



Level 3

Dipa Karmakar - In Perfect Balance

Author: Sreelata Menon

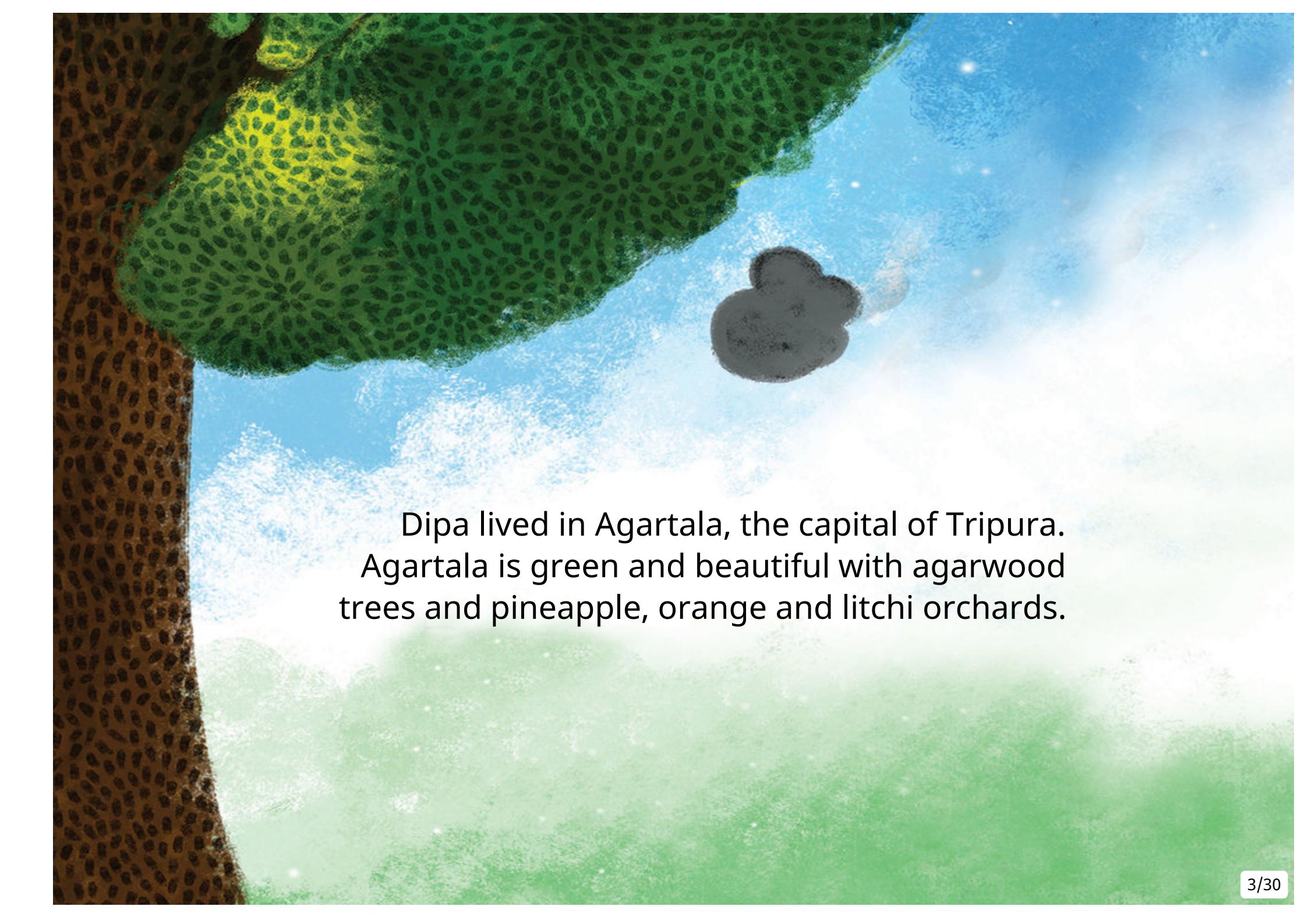
Illustrator: Sonal Gupta Vaswani



Dipa loved to jump.

She loved to climb
trees.

And most of all, she
loved to run and play
with her Puja Didi.



Dipa lived in Agartala, the capital of Tripura.
Agartala is green and beautiful with agarwood
trees and pineapple, orange and litchi orchards.



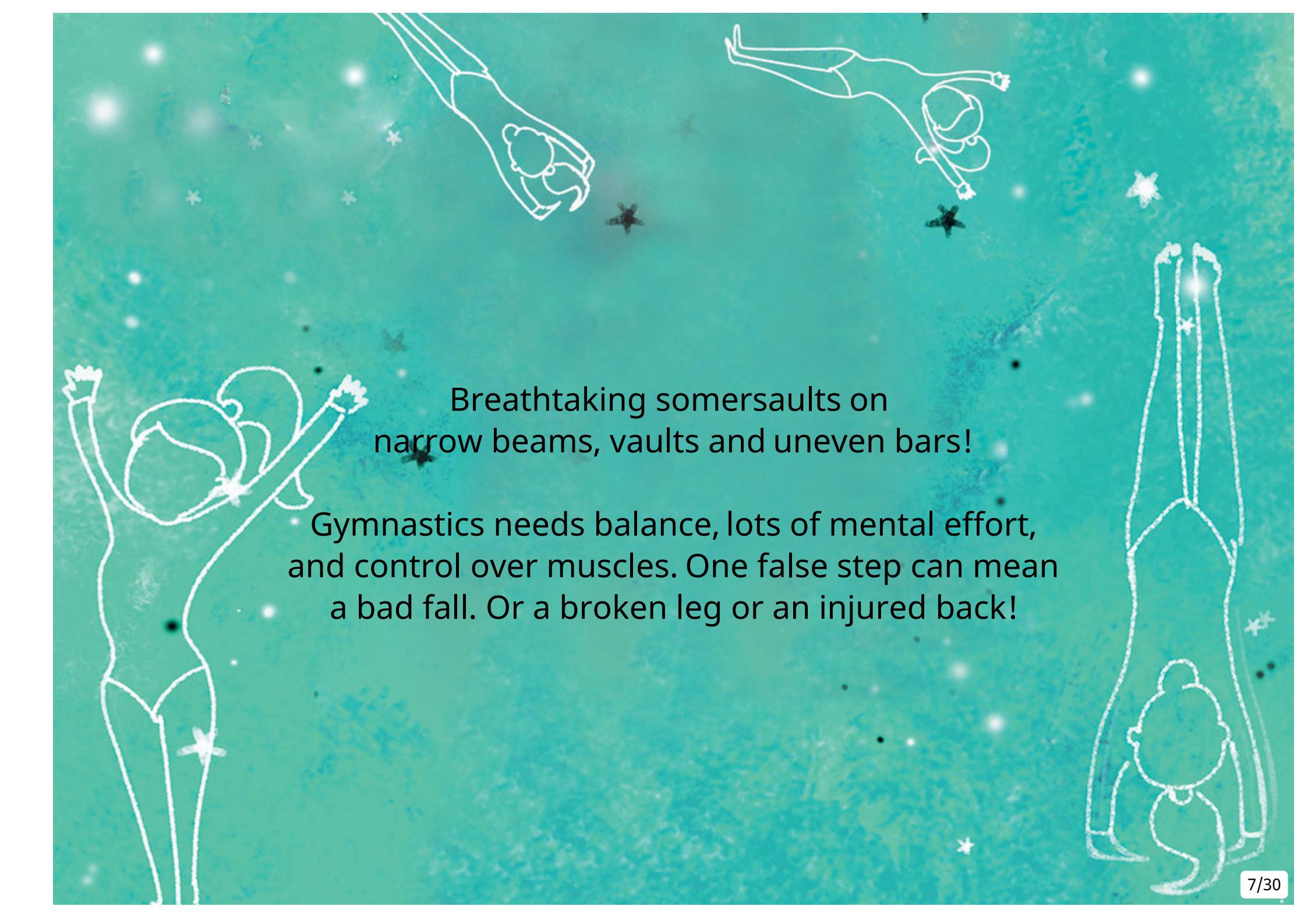
Her Baba was a national weightlifting champion. On most days, she went with him to the gymnasium, where he was a coach.



Ma and Baba wanted both their daughters to take up sports.
So, at the age of five, Dipa started training.



Gymnastics is a lot like acrobatics and aerobics.
Quick movements. Tumbling and soaring.
Fluid twists and turns.



Breathtaking somersaults on
narrow beams, vaults and uneven bars!

Gymnastics needs balance, lots of mental effort,
and control over muscles. One false step can mean
a bad fall. Or a broken leg or an injured back!

Dipa started training.

But she was so scared of falling, that she wouldn't
even
step onto the beams.

She threw tantrums and complained a lot.





Baba believed that she would get over her fear. He was right!



Wheeeee!

Dipa was cartwheeling.

Whoooosh!

She was sailing
through the air.

Baba and her coach
Soma Nandi were so
happy.



When Dipa turned nine, she participated in the balancing beam event in the 2002 Northeastern Games. And guess what? Dipa won the gold medal!

What a golden moment for her.

This win meant a lot to her and Baba. She was no longer a reluctant gymnast.

Dipa still had to work hard. She was flat-footed, which means that the soles of her feet didn't have the usual natural curve. Flat feet affect how a gymnast runs, and how she lands on her feet during jumps.

But Dipa had come so far — she decided she would not give up.





Her coach Soma Nandi introduced her to Guruji, Bishweswar Nandi, who took over her training.

Soon, she was doing special exercises that helped her feet develop an arch.



Gymnastics has never been popular in India.

It did not matter to Dipa that she did not have the best infrastructure or space to train in.



Guruji created equipment with scooter parts to serve as springboards.

Crash mats were piled on top of one another to become her vaulting platform, and seats from old cars became her landing space.



Dipa's days were busy!

Dipa ran. She jumped.

Twisted and turned.

She did rolls and stands on her head.

For eight hours a day.





Her bones ached
and her muscles
were painfully sore.

She was moody,
hungry and very tired.



Like most children, Dipa loved ice cream.
But she was put on a strict diet.



She sometimes had to live and train in a sports hostel, far from home. And on top of all of that, she had exams!

Did she mind working so hard? No, she did not!

All Dipa wanted was to win medals.
And become the best.





The years went by and Dipa won all the junior and national titles she competed in. However, she didn't win anything at the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

Ashish Kumar became the first Indian gymnast to win medals at that event — it was a proud moment for India.

Dipa was inspired by this win.
She was determined to do better.



Four years later, Dipa won the bronze at the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. And also at the 2015 Hiroshima Asian Gymnastics Championship.

It was so thrilling to stand on the winners' podium!



So far, Dipa had won 77 medals, and that included 67 gold ones!

But Guruji wanted her to make a mark in the international arena — she had to perfect something that hadn't been attempted by most gymnasts.

Something bold. And dangerous.



Guruji trained her to do the Produnova vault. It was named after the first woman who mastered it — Yelena Sergeyevna Produnova.

Only four other women in the world had landed this extremely dangerous manoeuvre.

In 2016, Dipa was 23 and she was ready to show her skills to the world at the Rio Olympics. The country waited eagerly to see her win a medal.

And she missed! She missed winning a medal by just 0.15 point.





But her performance left everyone awestruck.

As Dipa began training for the next Olympics, she also had a new plan up her sleeve. She wanted to create a new gymnastic manoeuvre.

When Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci met her, she said, “Good for India to have a role model in Dipa Karmakar... I hope kids look up to her and take up gymnastics because that is how we all started.”





Dipa continues to make India proud.

(Dipa with her coach Bishweswar Nandi)



Dipa Karmakar was born on August 9, 1993, in Agartala. She was the first Indian female gymnast to compete in the Olympics.

Dipa participated in the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio and is one of only five women to successfully land the dangerous Produnova vault. She was five when her father Dulal Karmakar, a national weightlifting champion, initiated her early training.

Soma Nandi was Dipa's first coach and then her training was taken over by Bishweswar Nandi, a national gymnastic champion. Dipa has been conferred the Khel Ratna award and is a Padma Shri recipient.



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Dipa Karmakar - In Perfect Balance (English)

Dipa Karmakar was the first Indian female gymnast to compete in the Olympic Games. In 2016, she finished fourth at the event held in Rio. She grew up in Tripura and began learning gymnastics at the age of five. Read about her journey from Agartala to Rio.

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.



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