



P P SAVANI
UNIVERSITY



ASOY

An Anthology of Memories and Experiences

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Asoy

An Anthology of Memories and Experiences

Centre For Language Studies

P P Savani University

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July – 2023

Presidential Message

Greetings!

It is my utmost pleasure to introduce this remarkable research book that delves into the depths of knowledge and unveils the frontiers of human understanding. As the President of this esteemed institution, I am honored to present this compilation of groundbreaking research, which represents the relentless pursuit of knowledge by our brilliant scholars.



Within the pages of this book, you will embark on an intellectual journey that explores diverse fields of study. Each chapter encapsulates the tireless efforts and unwavering passion of our researchers, who have devoted countless hours to unraveling the mysteries of their respective domains.

This research book serves as a testament to our commitment to advancing human knowledge and pushing the boundaries of innovation. The valuable insights, groundbreaking discoveries, and thought-provoking theories contained within its pages will undoubtedly inspire future generations of scholars and pave the way for new avenues of inquiry.

Together, let us continue to embrace the spirit of research, innovation, and collaboration to forge a brighter future for our society.

Vallabbhai Savani

President

P P Savani University

Provost & Editor's Note

Dear Readers,

It is with great pleasure and a sense of responsibility that we present to you this significant literary work. As the Provost, I have had the privilege of overseeing the administrative and logistical aspects of bringing this book to fruition.



Asoy: An Anthology of Memories and Experiences stands as a testament to the power of knowledge, creativity, and perseverance. From the initial conception of the idea to the final publication, the journey of this book has been a collaborative effort involving numerous individuals who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes. Writers, editors, proofreaders, designers, and many others have dedicated their time and expertise to ensure the quality and integrity of the content.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the authors, whose passion and dedication have made this book a reality. Their contributions have enriched the literary landscape and expanded our understanding

Thank you for joining us on this intellectual journey. Your engagement with this book is a testament to the enduring value of literature and the quest for knowledge.

Prof. (Dr) Parag Sanghani

Provost

P P Savani University

Director's Note

Dear Language and Literature Enthusiasts,

I am thrilled to introduce this remarkable compilation of research work focused on the captivating and ever-evolving realm of language. Language, the cornerstone of human communication, has the power to shape societies, bridge cultural gaps, and unlock profound understanding.



Within these pages, you will find a treasure trove of knowledge, ranging from groundbreaking theories to practical applications. The research work presented here unearths the intricacies of language structure, the dynamics of multilingualism, the influence of cultural factors, and the transformative impact of technology on linguistic analysis.

I extend my deepest appreciation to the dedicated researchers who have contributed to this compilation, their intellectual curiosity and unwavering commitment to advancing the study of language are evident in the depth and breadth of their work.

May this compilation ignite your passion for languages, inspire innovative research, and foster cross-cultural understanding. Together, let us celebrate the beauty and complexity of language, and embrace its transformative power in shaping our world.

Sneh Savani

Director

PP Savani University

Registrar's Note

Dear readers,

Language and Literature have long been the pillars of cultural understanding, artistic expression, and intellectual growth. This compilation embodies the vibrant tapestry of literary works, linguistic analyses, and critical insights that have been meticulously crafted by our esteemed scholars.

Within the pages of this book, you will embark on an intellectual odyssey, traversing the realms of poetry, prose, linguistic theories, literary criticism, and interdisciplinary explorations. Each chapter encapsulates the passion, expertise, and dedication of its author, offering unique perspectives that broaden our horizons and deepen our appreciation for the written word.

I also extend my gratitude to the editors, reviewers, and especially the Centre For Language Studies who worked diligently behind the scenes to bring this work to fruition. Their meticulous attention to detail and commitment to academic excellence have ensured the quality and significance of this publication.

May this compiled research work ignite your passion for language and literature, provoke new insights, and inspire a lifelong love affair with the written word.



Prof.(Dr) Sateesh Biradar
Registrar
P P Savani University

Editor's Note

"Memory and experience are reminders that we are only passing through and that everything is part of something larger. Every experience is an opportunity to create a handcrafted memory to be replayed for years to come."

'Asoy' as the name suggests brings a delicious set of narratives, you can sink your teeth into. We received a plethora of entries on a myriad of topics. Choosing a handful was a tough process. For the writers whose poems, stories and articles we were not able to select, we thank you for sharing your work with us and urge you to continue honing your craft and sending new writing our way.



Each of the poems, stories and articles in this issue showcases a moment of lucidity born from a vital, transformative event, as a character undergoes a sharp, sudden crisis. Each tale builds to a turning point that brings the quotidian and the extraordinary together in an unforgettable way. You will find the narratives notable for their formal innovativeness and while there are no explicitly common themes– a strength of the open-themed format – there are definite continuities and assonances. An interpretive eye that looks for convergences in these different tales –will, we hope, enjoy what is a really unique selection of tales in the form of poems, stories and articles from the new century.

These days, when I wobble, I wobble because the co-editors and other team members of CFLS have caught me on my heels, and decided a bit of awkward dance suited me better than the resigned stance of a middle-aged woman stuck watching the sun set over a Giant Eagle at the bottom of the hill. Thank you for that energy, that flourish, and that sweeping wind that turns me about when I need it most. I congratulate you all for the second edited book.

Happy reading!

Prof. Ananta

From the Co-Editor's Desk

Sometimes I find myself in a silent retreat, hearing all the sputter surrounding me like the interim between footsteps of people marching in a protest. I experience. Memories enjoin this experience as an internal monologue to suit my whims and worries. It is buried in me until I decide to write to experience them for the second time. To me, experience is the verb form of memory. This anthology meant something similar while I memorialised reading and editing the backdrop of the pages with beautiful frames. We leave it here for you to experience, feel, and feel more.



I express gratitude to the writers who allowed us a peek into fears, inspirations and that which invigorates in them the strength to pursue their dreams. We wish them the best and may their pen never cease to write.

I have a lot of gratitude for the dream team of the Center for Language Studies. I would like to thank Professor Jaladhi for designing the book cover within the first week of her joining. Besides, Professor Maitri has always been a constant cheerleader and contributed in different capacities. Professor Sandhya and Professor Rahul, we love how you motivated us to do better by submitting your work. Last but not least Professor (Dr) Subrato, heartfelt regards for preparing the invite for the contributions in the first place.

Head, Professor, Dr Ananta Geetey Uppal, CFLS has been the wind beneath our wings. Dear professor, every encouraging word of yours pushed the envelope a bit more ensuring we reach our potential best.

To the reader,

I am excited for all of you to not only read but also pick up the pen to write for yourself because it helps you mourn. As someone rightly said, we are bound to mourn the loss of feelings associated with memories. That's our curse!

Sonali

Co-Editor, Asoy

From the Co-Editor's Desk

Greetings, Wordsmiths of Imagination!

Embrace the moment, for within these pages lies the alchemy of your brilliance. As co-editor of this magnificent anthology, I stand in awe of the enchanting words you've conjured, transcending reality's boundaries.

Your poems dance like celestial bodies in a cosmic ballet, painting the universe in hues unknown. The short stories are portals to uncharted realms, where emotions collide like comets, leaving trails of wonderment. Your articles are the guiding stars, illuminating minds with newfound wisdom.

Together, we shall forge a symphony of literary prowess, fusing dreams and ink into an everlasting masterpiece. With each verse, we unlock the doors to infinite worlds, beckoning readers to wander, explore, and be transformed.

Dear contributors, our hearts beat in tandem with your imaginations, and we pledge to cherish your visions like precious constellations. This anthology shall be our shared voyage to the horizons of creativity.

Happy Reading!!!

Mit Sagar

Co-Editor, Asoy



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POETS AND POEMS

They see music before they can hear it

The Piano

Lying in a corner
Of a chair-lined room,
Its worn surface tells tales
Of past homes and hands.
Fading polish reveals
Pliant, vibrant, expectant monochrome.

The stool slants and the chairs creak;
Pages rustle, lips hush;
Black and white daggers dance
Piercing the air with gay abandon.
Little legs dangle, sticky fingers twitch;
Voices rise—a shaky collective,
The weak leaning on the strong
The room bursts into song.

Shradha Kochhar is a student of words. She can often be found with a notebook and a pen busy recording the space in between moments of distraction. She is currently pursuing a PhD in literature.

Myriad Men And their flowers

Mallipoo | Vendhu Thanindhathu Kaadu

A group of men brisk walk, feeling important of the mission they've embarked.
Of them one falters, stopping to look at *mallipoo* freshly strung and watered.
He quickly gestures the wanted length, does not count the change that's spent,
and pockets the banana-leaf-wrapped fragrances.

Back home the men bustle, talking over each other in familial huddles.
In exchange for sticky sweets, a child secretly delivers the flowers to the wife in
a heartbeat.

"Sometimes the lowest hanging grape takes the hardest toil" says another man,
pride shining through his beady eyes.

Leafy creepers, bougainvilleas, & stories of bringing home baby Hibiscus he
repeats thrice.

He continues his soliloquy as he flips through photographs - "Water always &
weed out the rotten".

His wife in those pictures posing with flowers stays forgotten.

She sits on the bed, mischief plays with her face.

His nervous gait towards her makes her smile wider. She raises her eyebrows at
him, and he turns redder.

Blushing fiercely, he starts to read out a poem - comparing her to a Parijata-
sprinkled lawn. The poem gets an encore till their spent faces are touched by
dawn.

Picture credit: Srujana Rachuri

This is Srujana Rachuri, hailing from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. I have devoted my world to words - penning them, editing them, and reading them - trying to make sense of self in the process. Always viewing my life through cinematic montages, with the air of a storyteller. Call me a copywriter, a storyteller, or a writer, and I'll mail it back to you at 3:00 am USWT (Universal Standard Writers Time)

A CHILD OF VITILIGO

I have a deformity
Of silk white patches,
Said touch to spread,
Is a discriminate myth,
For a monstrous folklore
That I am none.

Mama Mama,
Why do they leave me alone
But crowd me so
In my head all this while.

Why in the hospices
Voids stare at me,
Look down at me,
And Usher a prayer.

Mama Mama,
Why doesn't the pumice
And my thoughts
Clean the gunk
All over me.

**How much ever I scrub
And more I bleed
In my heart, on my feet
And when the water turns red
The patch is colored.**

**Still, you scream and scream
Howl in the shower.**

**Mama Mama,
My eye is but,
a glimpse of truth
When all is gone
But a nightmare haunts.**

**They can see it, Mama,
They will hurt me soon,
With a penchant for dying,
Harbinger O' doom.**

**I am ill,
And frightened sick
Don't leave me, mama,
I am solitary sick.**

**Look I am alive
Staring at the ceiling
Shan't be put in an open casket
For they will see it in the eye
The silk white patch**

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Marshaa Balani has a knack for writing and can be found snuggled up with a quill and notebook in her hands. With a colossal will to live, she has moulded her experiences with vitiligo to instill compassion and awareness. She has been a TedXYouth Speaker regarding the same. Her time is spent teaching refugee and underprivileged children in India and the Middle East. Besides, she has trained young minds in diplomacy for organizations such as MUN@Home. However, on the inside, she is just another dimpled teenager who always poses a smile. With that, she welcomes feedback and comments on heymarshaa@gmail.com

Someone has to die

Enemy we were for the new Roman state
Sinners we were in the new Roman state
We loved each other, was that our fault?
We kissed each other, was that our fault?
I am from the lost century,
The definition of love I now know is only in my memory.
I don't wanna go to church anymore,
I am sick of it.
We'll keep our identity secret because the world is shit!
One day they came and took him.
I shouted and cried but they didn't return him.
I went there and got locked,
But he wasn't there that came to me as a shock
I begged to meet him but they were stones
I cried, cried and cried.
They finally took me to him, but he wasn't he
He won't talk, won't walk, what's wrong with him?
Then I realized that they killed him!
They killed him! He is dead! He can't be!
My father came and slapped me,
Because I slept with a man who was from the peasantry.

**I don't wanna live marrying a woman who I can never love
Because my love was killed in front of everyone.
I saw a burning fire near us
I hugged him and jumped!**

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Devasheesh is sixteen. He is currently studying at C.L Gupta World School. On his father's persistence, he began reading novels and explored the world of poetry. He is a big Marvel nerd, a Kathak dancer and a fine painter. Having faced a lot of discrimination due to his interests that do not fit the societal gender roles, he has become vocal about the issue of gender roles. His work is an effort to give a voice to the voiceless, it speaks for the pain and misery of thousands of such people who go through the same discrimination. His works majorly contain themes like mythology, history, social issues, LGBTQIA+, mental health, romance and death.

WANDER

And so the story goes.
Hold me a little longer
Through the dusk
Till I forget what it's like
To not feel you again
I hanker for your silhouette
To fade into my shadow
On glory roads I'm embarked
I know you're my wandering muse
When ridge turns purple

I know I'm stained with lust
On days when my sky runs dry
When the moon melts into darkness
Taking my faith along.
But I know you're around, Love
Carrying me through the dusk
Being my wandering muse
Making my ridge turn gold

I'll see you again, someday
Sing our songs and dance to the night
There's no rush. Take your time

INFERNO

I know you've waited a millennium
Just because I asked you to
I know you've patiently listened to
My million alibis for neglecting
The desires you've quenched for me
Yet you've looked out for me
At every step of the way
I know it broke your heart
Every time I allowed myself
To bottle my fire inside tiny vials
Where they don't belong
Because I was scared
To show you to the world

Today, the chain breaks.
Today I set free your inferno
The way it was always meant to be
Alight and awake into
A fiery and raging supernova
Healing all the bruises and gashes
I inflicted upon you for so long.
Today, you watch me unleash you.
Today, I put you before myself.
Go. Rebel.

Picture credit: @Perpendicularrr

Hi, I'm Samik, I'm currently based in Calcutta, India. My primary vocation is graphic design. I'm working to establish an online art store project called Silly Pineapple. I enjoy reading literary fiction, especially of the Jazz Age and love listening to Rock, Blues and Jazz. You can find me on Instagram @Samik.09

Lucy

**By the time you read this,
To dust I'll have returned**

**In vain my death will not be,
On this cliff I have conquered my fear,
An achievement, and a ticket to freedom,
Mother Nature will you carry me when I dive,
Will you embrace my soul, and kiss my forehead goodbye,
When I hit the ground will you crack my head open,
and scatter to pieces the demons that brought me
here.**

**Dear whoever found this letter
Will you do for me one final favour,
Fulfill for me my desires I never got to tick of my list,
For me read the books my mind was yet to dig in,
Taste the food my tongue craved to devour,
Travel to places my soul told me about, and my feet never reached,
Draw the art my hands held back,
Write the poetry my heart spoke,
Meet the people that awaited to cross paths with me,
And live the dream I couldn't make come true.**

**Break my ribs into my soul,
Pierce my heart,
Let my blood bleed away my pain,
Mother Nature break me into pieces,
Let my brokenness leave my soul.**

**One final jump of bravery I took,
I flew myself to an eternal rest,
I dived into an opportunity that set me free,
For this life was too much a heavy load to carry,
It wasn't strength I didn't have,
It was peace... I needed peace.
Receive my apology oh dear humble souls,
This is how my story ends.**

Naked

**COLD IS MY SOUL
UNTOLD IS PAIN
TIME MOVES SLOWER IN MY WORLD
I HAVE BOTTLED FEELINGS THAT EAT AWAY
MY SOUL EVERY CHANCE THEY GET
PERHAPS I'M JUST AN ANGRY CHILD
THE THING IS
BLOOD INTRODUCED ME TO BROKENNESS,
HOW DO I BELIEVE THAT A STRANGER
COMES WITH GOOD INTENTIONS?
I'M REMINDED DAILY THAT I'M AMAZING
SADLY THESE WORDS DON'T COME FROM
MOUTHS MY EARS LONG FOR.
I DON'T HAVE CONFIDENCE PROBLEMS, THE
HOME THAT RAISED ME, NEVER BELIEVED
IN ME
IT'S HARD...
UNBECOMING AND BREAKING DOWN
WALLS BUILT YEARS AGO TO KEEP AWAY
HARM.
THESE WALLS HAVE SAVED ME FROM HARM, BUT
SADLY THEY KEEP AWAY THE LOVE TOO**

**I'M TOLD I'M ALWAYS TOO DEEP IN MY
FEELINGS, HOW CAN I NOT WHEN THESE
FEELINGS REFLECT BACK AT ME EVERY TIME
I LOOK MYSELF IN THE MIRROR, THESE
FEELINGS ARE ME AND I AM THEM.
I HAVE STUDIED SO HARD THAT WEEK, I
REACHED OUT TO HIM AFTER MY PAPER ALL**

**HE SAID WAS
"THOSE TEARS WON'T CUT IT, YOU DIDN'T
STUDY HARD ENOUGH."...I WOULD HAVE
APPRECIATED A HUG THAT DAY.**

**COLD IS MY SOUL
UNTOLD IS MY PAIN
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO OPEN UP, I WAS
NEVER GIVEN PLATFORM TO RELEASE
I'M SORRY FOR THE HEARTS I HAVE BROKEN,
THE LOVE IM SEARCHING FOR IS SIX FEET
UNDERGROUND.
MY ANGEL IN HUMAN FLESH LEFT ME COLD,
ALONE AND EMPTY,
WHEREVER HE IS, SITS MY SOUL**

**BEGGING HIM TO COME BACK
I NEVER NEEDED ANYONE LIKE I NEEDED
MY DAD, REST IN PEACE
SUICIDE HAS FAILED ME,
THE LAND OF DEAD ISN'T READY FOR MY
SOUL
SO I'LL CONTINUE WRITING THESE POEMS.
THEY CALLED ME AND I ANSWERED,
THE VERY GIFTS THAT GIVE ME LIFE,

LEAVE ME BEGGING MY LIFE,
I HAVEN'T FULLY ACCEPTED.
I WILL STAY NAKED FOREVER, I'M HERE**

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

My name is Lerato Lucy Kome I'm in my second semester of BSC Nursing at P P Savani University, School of Nursing. I'm from Pulane, Ha Kome Lesotho. One of my goal to achieve is to change the world by writing poems.

My Precious Little One!

**I remember the day i was told that you were coming,
I cried happy tears as it was too surreal!
I remember the time your mother went into labour,
I kept waiting for the call as it was too unimaginable!
I remember the time when i saw you for the first time,
I couldn't believe something so tiny could exist!
I remember the time i picked you up the first time,
I had my heart in my hands as you were really real!
I remember the time i saw your first little smile,
I had my world spinning as it was breathtaking!
I remember the time i had to say my goodbyes to you,
I was bitter as it was too difficult to bid adieu!
I remember the regular video calls post my classes,
I used to eagerly wait to get my dose of sunshine!
I remember the time you started crawling,
I was amazed at how fast you were growing!
I remember the time i finally got to see you again,
I was so excited that it felt magical!
I remember the time you started walking slowly,
I was in aww of your little feet!
I remember the time we played hide and seek,
I felt like a kid after ages!**

**I remember the time you were on my shoulders,
I felt like I was carrying my world on me,
I remember the time when i heard you speak for the first time,
I was on cloud nine to hear your sweet voice!
I remember seeing you grow little everyday,
I feel and see the time passing and it makes me wonder
how strange it is that I forget
and fail to remember how it could be a year already!
A year that you came in my life,
A year that gave me my Precious little one!**

Maitri Dand is an assistant professor of French. Apart from gaining and conquering degrees in different spaces of education as an ailment for life. Apart from the usual ruckus, her interest lies in the structure of world politics and at times she appreciates satire when portrayed with the right intention of humour. Often a dreamer and often lost, she tugs through life with a smile, like an ocean experiencing different phases of the moon.

Half Whole

To fill up those cracks
They both were meant to live digging in each others soul
They bound their new roles
Darkened by my thoughts
For each other's life, they bought
Single survived with the soul of other
Both lived, of them died either
One's body and other soul
Making them partially whole

Beautifully Burnt

No words could ever describe
Every passing second was hard to survive
His reflection was enough to calm my fiery soul
Not every time I was able to breathe whole
The desire made me feel his worth
I felt the dearth in my breaths
Some things are beautifully burnt
Things from which I never learnt
Nevertheless, I needed him
Those lights which were always dim
Counting on him, I failed
Down from my eyes, blood hailed

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Apart from writing, Muskan has a deep love for animals. She advocates for their rights and cherishes their companionship. This affection often finds its way into their work, adding warmth and empathy to their stories and poems. With a joyful spirit, Muskan embraces the wonders of life and infuses their writing with contagious enthusiasm.

Musings on Busy

Busy.

**It is not a word of alibi,
but an affirmation that
priorities change and people too.**

Busy.

**It settles the mind and matter,
but it breaks as well,
by unleashing the beast of vengeance.**

Busy.

**It is a word that can mend
and meddle.
And it is up to us whether to strike
or settle.**

Picture credit: @Samik.09

Alex. K.O is an Assistant Professor of English in the Department of Languages at Rajagiri College of Social Sciences(Autonomous). Apart from being an academican, he has volunteered with the United Nations Development Programme on a project related to SDG14 (Life Below Water). Recently, he published a collection of poems titled 'Dakhma' by BookLeaf Publishing.

Thank You

On my way to distant places,
 Or sometimes when I am taking leisure paces,
 I come across people who work for all
 Whom we pass by, neglecting our emotions' call.
 Today is the day, I want to extend my gratitude,
 To those who work day and night, carrying a positive attitude.
 Thanks to the person, who controls the traffic going wild,
 Sun or no shade, scorching heat or weather mild.
 Thanks to the farmers, for whom, the season means crops,
 Who work consistently, in heating earth or heavy raindrops.
 My thanks extend to those, bearing extreme weather in the borders,
 They become erected walls, saving citizens from invaders.
 A heartfelt thanks to all those, who extinguish any fire,
 Their life is what they stake, saving people on their pyre.

My gratitude extends to health workers, who we call God on earth,
 Irrespective of day and night, they cure us in odd hours.
 The teachers also deserve, a big round of applause,
 Clearing doubts, and teaching, all students without a pause.
 I am obliged to those, who clean the drains when clogged,
 That keeps the pests at bay and diseases remain flogged.
 We take them for granted, and never thought if they were not around,
 We have seen them ever, not knowing if they are lost and not found.
 The list is long and unending, but here, bound in one page,
 I cannot thank them all, our issues who dutifully embrace.

Picture credit: @Samik.09

Dr Seema Bhakun is presently working as an Assistant Professor at Doon Group of Institutions, Rishikesh and teaching her subject to students of Business Administration. Previously, one of her poems was published in the book, 'Expressions on war' and the other one in paradox international publications guide house. She has written this piece of her expression to thank those people whose jobs, generally, go unnoticed.

Elegy of Soul

Blossomed out of the earth,
with the tiny shoots aiming the sky
withstanding the forces,
growing stronger within.
Sapping and suckling the nourishment
have I grown stronger,
arms outstretched to show my might to the world.

my friend took shelter under me
escaping the elements, eating the fruits
swinging from branches
sleeping on me
The beautiful soul that was indeed innocent
grew with me, on me
burdened by heaviness, branch snapped
not that I wanted to hurt.

Alas, I forgot

how the trunk hurts with each blow
cut and chopped, piece by piece
turned and changed to suit the needs of people
the showpiece here, a furniture there
What have I become?
when did I live?
For now ,I am just a soulless body that neither grows nor dies..

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Ramkishore MR, is working as an Assistant Professor in BMS College of Commerce and Management. He's pursuing his doctoral research in Bangalore University in the area of popular culture and gender. Poetry and literary works are something of his passion which he pursues with zeal.

The Tapestry of Memories

I wonder, how the mind weaves a tapestry
Of memories, etched for eternity
Each thread a story to behold
A treasure trove of stories, never old
The joy of the first bicycle ride
A moment that fills us with pride
Pedalling hard, the wind in our face
Memories that time cannot erase
The thrill of showing off to friends
As we ride around the winding bends
That pink basket, a trendy delight
A view that always stays in sight
Each picture, a clear and vivid tale
A memory that we cannot fail
To recall, no matter how much time has passed
A moment in our lives that will always last
The scent of summer and blooming flowers
Memories that fill our hearts with powers
Of joy and love, of laughter and fun
Of childhood days, under the sun
The sound of waves crashing on the shore
A memory that we cannot ignore
The salty air and the sand in our toes
A memory that forever glows
The visuals that we see are memories

that will always be Etched in the depths of our mind
A treasure trove that we can always find
Oh, how the tapestry of memories weaves
A story of our lives, that never leaves
A rich and vibrant tale of our past
A story that we can always recast
In every thread, a memory lies
A moment that forever ties
Us to a time that has gone by
A moment that always makes us sigh

The tapestry of memories, a precious thing
A story that forever sings
Of the joys and sorrows of life
A tale of our journey, through every strife
So let us cherish each memory we hold
A treasure trove of stories, never old
For in the tapestry of our lives
Each memory, a precious prize.

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

My name is Akanksha Prajapati and I am an academician with a Master's degree in Education (M.Ed.) from the University of Lucknow. Aside from my academic pursuits, I enjoy engaging in creative activities such as sketching, drawing, DIYs and writing poetry. I find solace in exploring new places and cultures and travelling. I am an avid animal lover and have rescued and fostered many cats and dogs. I am a believer in Humanity.

Identitys

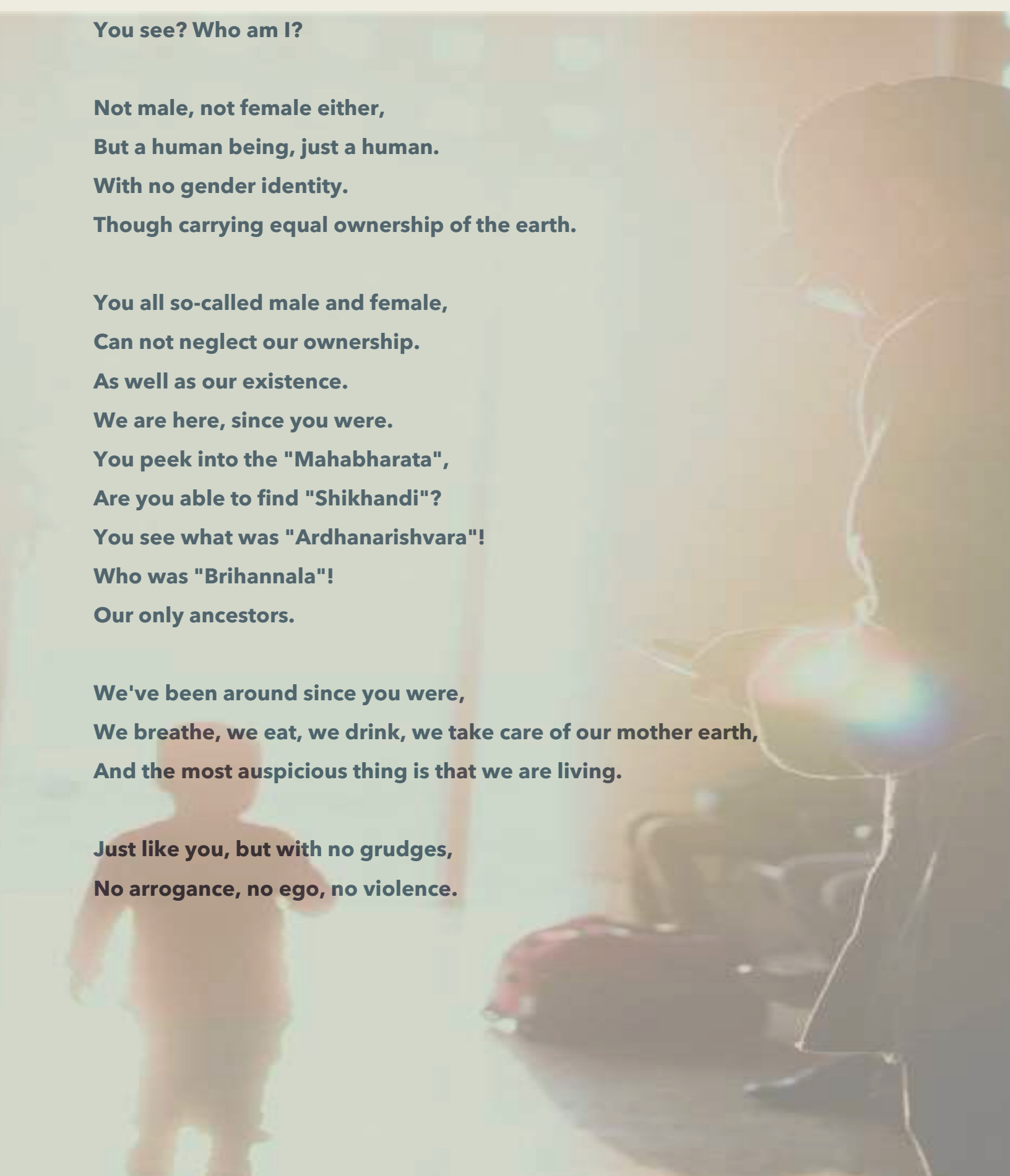
You see? Who am I?

**Not male, not female either,
But a human being, just a human.
With no gender identity.
Though carrying equal ownership of the earth.**

**You all so-called male and female,
Can not neglect our ownership.
As well as our existence.
We are here, since you were.
You peek into the "Mahabharata",
Are you able to find "Shikhandi"?
You see what was "Ardhanarishvara"!
Who was "Brihannala"!
Our only ancestors.**

**We've been around since you were,
We breathe, we eat, we drink, we take care of our mother earth,
And the most auspicious thing is that we are living.**

**Just like you, but with no grudges,
No arrogance, no ego, no violence.**



Bless all of you, your newborns.
Did we ask for anything in return?
Except for respect and acceptance!
Not from the law, but from society.

Now, forget it.
Ever since we understood reality,

We have stopped expecting social acceptance.
Society is nothing but a hub.
A big hub of bondage and yoke.
We are the children of the earth,
Accept you all,
So - called male and female,
As our beloved siblings.
We accept you all.

Picture credit: @Samik.09

Himanshi Laljibhai Parmar is a writer. She mainly composes her works in three languages: Gujarati, Hindi, English. In the literary world, She is known by the nickname of Maan. At present she is working as a Visiting Professor. Apart from writing, she is also fond of travelling, reading, acting, and theatre art. She has worked as a columnist in online newspapers like 'Saurashtra Tehelka'. She also worked as a Co-author in three Gujarati Anthologies: 'Rainbow', 'Shakti' and 'Yathēccha'. She is also a blogger and YouTuber.

DEAR DEPARTED

It's midnight
In the rain
a song comes down.
There is spring on every fingertip
disobedient.
In the late winter,
A dust storm...
And a day and night
I am losing
Every past.
Or
I'm getting the unwritten dialogue of the future.
Ten months on a day.
O dear! My better half
I am on the other side.
Are we in love with the water?
In the last thirty days of winter
There are many ways to get a job
Let's do it-
I'll sleep when I fall asleep.

Untested satisfaction in our melted voices.

Do you want to mature your eyes?

I put it aside -

Your song

Your gift

Values...

One day there will be a day,

I sing everything!!

You know-

**I am not sure what to do
with my life.**

**There are many springs
for the sake of love.**

It doesn't take any day.....

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

I am Prasanta Barik. Poetry is my lovely companion in silence. I have already written about 85 poems in the Assamese language and 12 poems in English. My other interests incorporate researching on education-related issues.

A LITTLE BIT MORE

**That was the time of innocence,
where it all started.**

**Rolling down with different learnings
and singing her songs of motherhood.**

**The smell of mother and child mingling
with the morning shine,
“a little bit more”, begs into the ears of the mother.**

**Phoney drunken odds, blabbering around
and shutting Her up.**

**Time beats the innocence,
and the beaten-ups run wildly
into the cage of deceitful thoughts.**

**Still in the stage of hurly-burly-
a little bit more, were the moments
with young unflinching souls and buds bloom
out of laughter, away from
screen-tight simulations**



It is a rugged time

to ask for more.

The eyes are stuck on the glass screens,

but burdened like the elder child of His mother.

The eyes have a colossal of dreams somewhere in the clouds,

in an unknown world, a tinge of smell,

a smell that cuddled His innocence blanketed around Him.

But....the bygones dwell in the realm of Sandman,

some need to close eyes and some have surprise plans...

"Chop-chop!"

....and it ended.

But all they wanted, is a little bit more.



S

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Ritwika Saha hails from West Bengal, India, and is doing her B.Ed. from Suniti Educational Trust, Kalyani. She has a keen interest in the fields of oriental and occidental feminism, existentialism, and young adult fiction. She started publishing her poetry in 2021 and her poems were published in Open Skies Quarterly Book, Culture Flash Intl. Magazine in 2021 and The Kolkata Arts in 2022. She keeps herself busy in her small world when she is not writing by learning and teaching.

Finding Ground

Fossils have greyed deep
Hushed into fiery steep
Sand-castles feathered heap
Demurred trendy seep

Gathered poise drew sigh
Layers of stones bind
Crushed peeved goggles
Wrought in dusked zones

Toughness endorsed kissed fleur
Stances breathe in cure
Humbled pondered slow
Treasures unknown somewhere glow

Remnants dozed salty shores
Flustered worn outdoors
Hangers dragged drugged
Savoured bland gutsy mud

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Rashmi Prakash is a versatile educator from Dallas, TX, USA and Bangalore, Karnataka, India. She has been in the field of education for 17 odd years and continues to strive to work to make the needed difference in many lives. From helping Special-Ed learners to adults invested in management studies, imparting soft-skills training to the corporate sector & universities to reiki-healing, calibrates into her diversified portfolio. She has a great passion to pen poems, and short stories, is a staunch country music fan & black-white era and is embossed in a great sense of humour.

RUN AND RUN

Run and run until you get
What you wish or for what you wait,
Not to halt even for a moment,
The way may be hard but you will reign.

Fight and fight unless you win
It's never easy to soothe your pain,
Days will come and days will go,
Time will heal if you dare to follow.

Fly and fly, spread your wings
The sky is yours, breathe in springs.
Winter is a part, no need to get scared
Cause days and nights are always paired.

Sigh but move if the alley is dark
At the end of the lane, there might be a park.
Friends and foes are not easy to track
A demon in disguise may stab in your back.

Open your eyes and follow your heart
If you fall twice, begin from the start.
Be determined while crossing a stream
A boat is there if you fail to swim.

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Piyali Rakshit, an Indian writer, had never imagined in her wildest dream that she would find her liking in creative field. She is an assistant professor of Communicative English in Bengal School of Technology and Management College. Her stories are mostly published in Pratilipi English as well as in Wattpad. People really like her work **BROKEN GLASS** and she got remarkable reviews and votes on this work. It is a mystery thriller with a touch of romance. It is recently published in Amazon Kindle and available only in India.

The Fire Definition

The fire with its divinity continues to wreak and heal,
Whatever wasn't meant to be is done for,
A new life yearns for its own definite existence,
To make its presence felt through the corners of the cracks and crevices.
Whatever the trauma did, do gets undone,
The generational curse undergoes its transformation,
The transformation which yields a fruit,
A fruit all begin to chase and uplift.
The man running for survival,
Survives.
The roads he tries to run away from,
Cures from the marks his feet had made.
The sore thumbnail of his feet, the nails that burnt from the numbing pain,
The numbing pain,
That had caused him to yell and cry,
The numbing pain,
That commenced and spread,
The numbing pain,
From the run that didn't lead to victory,
Healed.
The fire with its divinity continues to wreak and heal,
Wreak the ravages of power,
The rage of its vengeance outpours over
The sin of our baneful existence.

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Sayantani Roy, a native of Siliguri, is a research scholar at the University of North Bengal. If fantasy is a spot-on genre she is fond of, Harry Potter is one of the primary reasons as to why she became a fantasy buff in the first place. She may claim Hermoine to be her favourite character from the entire series, but deep down she knows that Luna Lovegood is where her heart lies at. Do drop in to say hi at roysayantani851@gmail.com

BIDDING BYES

Sunshine, you kissed ,I savoured-
 Yellow-mellow lips, maddened the touch,
 In Soft breeze lay our physicalities covered
 Moon,you should have stayed a bit much.
 The waves rustling,the shells on the sand pampered
 Giving away its love all over again in an eased clutch;
 Knew not I to feel your hand on my breast;shivered.
 I moved not, pillow-headed I slept on couch
 Come,come to tighten me to your rib cage
 I mustn't spread my wings,hush-no migration.
 Take me to the borderline where flags rise in rage,
 Carry me in your eyes,burn me with your cremation.
 I will cry,no, to hold your ashes in my fist round,
 I will laugh,yes to see you die,for me, for loving a ton,
 May you live without me,with your skeleton,
 A body for my soul to get in, I found.
 The body yours,the soul mine,living in reality
 My heart is all yours now,my soul on your carcasses.
 Us- I'm carrying[goodbyes to your promises]
 With care and a lifelong immortality.

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

Kumarika Roy is an undergraduate student pursuing bachelors (English major) at Presidency University, Kolkata. Her research interests include Freudian psychoanalysis, and postcolonial studies with a special Focus on partition literature and British romantic poetry. She is actively engaged In creative writing and translation studies. She is a violinist and had Acquired a degree from trinity college London.

THE DANCE OF WEATHER

**The weather, a fickle dancer,
Twirling in constant motion,
A tango between sun and rain,
A rhythm of endless emotion.**

**With each step, a new surprise,
As it moves across the land,
In harmony with the seasons,
A choreography so grand.**

**The sun, a radiant partner,
Bringing warmth and light to all,
Its rays a soothing balm,
As it answers winter's call.**

**But then, the clouds come rolling,
A gentle whisper of change,
Their shadows cast upon the earth,
A hint of something strange.**

**And then the rain begins to fall,
A symphony of sound,
The pitter-patter on the roof,
A melody so profound.**

**Sometimes the wind will join in,
With a fierce and gusty force,
Blowing leaves and branches aside,
As it runs its wild course.**

**The dance of weather never ends,
Its steps forever turning,
A breathtaking display of power,
A constant, endless yearning.**

**For though the weather may seem fickle,
Its moods forever changing,
Its dance is always beautiful,
A wonder never fading.**

Picture credit: @Samik.09

Ms Laila Rehman is driven by a passion for advancing knowledge. Laila Rehman has published numerous poems, stories and scholarly articles in prestigious journals, covering a wide range of topics in plant physiology, poems and stories in English. With her keen analytical skills and ability to synthesize complex information, Laila Rehman continues to make significant strides in expanding scientific knowledge and pushing the boundaries of discovery in her field. Email: Lailakhan510@gmail.com Institute: University of Science and Technology Bannu, KPK, Pakistan.

The Healer's light

Not a believer of Fairytale lore,
Love, at first sight, fiction galore,
Only in Jane Austen's realm, it may be,
But then she saw you,
And her heart was set free.

Two years ago, a chapter did start,
Never envisioned it'd be a forever depart.
No single moment to pinpoint, it seems,
Love bloomed quietly, like whispers in dreams.

Soulful Yellow flowers, a symbol of hope,
Magical sunsets, a poetic kaleidoscope.
Colorful skies painting their love's embrace,
Gorgeous raindrops, tears on their face.

You became the healer, the light in her room,
Hope's window piercing through dark gloom.
Time always rushing, never to pause,
No perfect day can escape its relentless cause.

A year ago, their story met its end,
But in her heart, your memory won't bend.
Not a day passes without thoughts of you,
A love suspended, forever anew.

**With rhymes and devices, this verse is adorned,
Echoes of love, in every line, resound.
Though the tale concluded, your presence still thrives,
In the depths of her soul, where love forever survives.**

Picture credit: @perpendicularrrr

As a poet, SaJe continues pushing her craft's boundaries, experimenting with new forms and themes. She likes to explore the depths of human emotion through her poems.

Blind Imitation

In the realm of thoughts, my pen takes flight,
Contemplating words, in the depths of night.
To write or not, the eternal debate,
For what I seek already lies in fate.

From nature's tapestry, we glean and borrow,
Ink spills onto pages, revealing tomorrow.
A notebook becomes a vessel, a sacred shrine,
Where research thrives, in every written line.

Perception and thinking, the wellspring of creation,
Ideas intertwining, shaping our narration.
Yet, we are not creators, but channels of light,
Illuminating knowledge, igniting insight.

In this modern age, reflection is key,
Whose hearts shall our words touch, whose minds shall they free?
Will we be driven by change, or blinded by greed?
In our pursuit of truth, what will our words heed?

**So, I'll seize the pen, and let my thoughts flow,
Crafting verses that resonate, wherever they go.
For in this dance of words, a legacy we find,
A timeless expression of the human mind.**

Picture credit: @Samik.09

Rahul Sharma works as an Assistant Professor (German) at PPSU, Centre for Language Studies (CFLS). He completed his M.A. in Modern European Languages, Literature, and Cultural Studies in German at Visva-Bharati University in 2022. His research interests include Translation, Didactics, Vedanta, and Western Philosophy. He has served as a German Language Teacher at Kendriya Vidyalaya, worked on various translation projects and also trains students for the Goethe-Zertifikat Prüfung.

A GIRL WITH THOUGHTS

**Somewhere between the dread or terror,
She tried but life shows an error!**

**Eyesight poor, not as shark,
And she loves being alone in the dark.**

**she is known as a Versatile,
Having an unexplainable face with a big smile.**

**She thinks that she is a blessing,
But somewhere she stuck up between the stress.**

**She is learning and learning by age,
And wants to be freed from the cage.**

**Forward she walks for her aims,
With a matchstick, she lights the flames.**

**Still, she got herself down,
But one day she will achieve her crown.**

A HOMELESS BEING

**Wandering into a gloomy dream
Quietly, she is about to scream.**

**Weak enough to fight her fears,
Often realizing her feelings of tears.**

**Her senses make her immovable,
She carries wounds which are unbearable.**

**She always assumes to be alright,
But somewhere counting her sleepless nights.**

**She thinks all day how flowers bloom,
While darkness encircles her in a room.**

**She tried many things to get even,
But didn't get the peace of heaven.**

**CRUELTY SAYS,
An Elf can't fly without ' a wing ',
She termed herself as
' A Homeless Being '**

Picture credit: Samik.09

Fatima Kagzi

I am Fatema Kagzi, a second-year student of BA in Psychology at P P Savani University. I consider myself an enthusiastic individual who perceives life as a diverse menu in a restaurant, where everyone endeavours to explore new dishes. Life, in my perspective, is a brief journey meant to be lived happily and peacefully. Therefore, it is essential to rid ourselves of negativity and embrace life to its fullest potential, while always upholding ethical and moral values. This combination allows one to radiate like a diamond amidst all the gold and silver.

All at once

Love
Loss
possibilites
Letters & letters

An unsent letter to my Baba

Last night, I tried to put myself to sleep, pushing aside the panic slowly stirring. It all began with the morning Facetime call to Baba (dad). He answered the call-in bed, ready to sleep, in our home in India. Baba is 73 and I am 27; we are not so far divided only by the decades in our ages but also, at present, by the day and night. It was then 9:00 PM Tuesday night for him and 10:30 AM Tuesday for me. He looked frail, dull, and sleepy, as he wondered when he would see me next and if he would be able to travel to the States ever again. His anguish was transparent; I dismissed him, even though my heart sank that moment. Although simple, his question had too many things weighing into it. I had only seen him once in the last five years, when he came to live with me for a painfully brief time. I was in the rush of my job that barely gave me time to spend with him in leisure. I was very excited to see him and my mom when they first made the trip to America. My eyes searched for them in the overcrowded, car-jagged entry of the IAH airport. He looked nothing like the father I knew, this person looked frail and petite in comparison. So much has changed in how he looked, the strong build seemed shrunken somehow, but the smile remained the same. Although I was thankful for the time with them, it was over before I knew it.

The rest of my day was filled with memories of my baba, and it became even more heavy when I got to bed. I panicked even though there will be many years left to us, but that seemed a small fraction compared to a lifetime. A lifetime of stories that I haven't heard yet, and many that I may never know. Everything seemed ephemeral at the moment- Me making life all the way away in America and Baba living in a remote corner of Andhra. I tried not to wonder how many times I would get to see him; hold him; or when we would take a stroll in the evenings, quietly filling each other in. Or that night when my mom cooked mushroom pitto and banana flower curry, still the best meal I have ever

had; that night by the shore of RK beach, me & my best friend Meghana sharing a pizza under the full moon sky; or that day when all of us 'mass-bunked' the college to watch Yeh Jawaani hein Deewani. I pushed away the feelings that were welling. So many moments have passed without me realizing that they could have been the last. I will still meet them one day, they are not the same, I am not either. I couldn't help but think about the limitedness of everything and how fleeting this life is.

I came to the US in 2016 at 21, for my studies and pursuing a career in mental health. This hustle left me with little to no time, exhausted; and the 13.5 hours' time difference and 9,089 miles between my family did not help either. When I was leaving, I nestled the idea of having the technology to communicate. The age of WhatsApp, Facebook, Facetime and Zoom promised me connectivity like never before. It was only with time; I considered the crappy internet in my very small hometown. Calls and messages were always short, while there was always more left to say. Soon, I missed many birthdays, important milestones. My parents, on the other hand, were cheering me and celebrating my tiny wins through a screen. I couldn't even send a birthday cake online, as it always shows undeliverable, to this sad corner of earth, I call home. All I could settle down was to celebrate the big days with a mere post on social media.

It was not as if I didn't want to go and be with them. Travelling to India always came with a big price tag and several immigration hoops. Two years of travel freeze and country lockdowns during covid only added to more rift and restrictions. I wonder if it was easier when there was no technology. If we were writing letters instead. I remember reading the letters my dad wrote at home in his day. They were simple, a tonality of separation was very evident, unlike me, who is neither completely gone away nor present either. If only I could have written about the soul in my life, explain to them what's going on, not merely

reported the mundane details of daily life. It would have been easier to accept that the fabric of our lives is different now and that we live in different spheres.

Sometimes, I also wonder if I was supposed to have so many unreliable between me and my family. Shouldn't it be easier to be in a relationship with people you knew all your life and who know all of yours? All these years after experiencing a life that is very different from the one, I grew up with, it still feels incomplete without my people from the past. It is my home that holds a dear place in my heart. I remiss the days when I was still a kid, holding baba's hand, as we walked on the terrace quietly, under the star filled sky.

Mounica is twenty-something, still figuring herself out. Only child and always dreamy, she finds joy in writing, reading fiction and taking long walks with loved ones. She is fascinated by the potential, people carry and tries to tap into their strengths in the therapy room. Music and art have been a constant presence in her life and thankfully so. One of her favourite quotes is "Art should comfort the disturbed and disturb the comfortable " by Cesar.A. Cruz.

You can write to her at - msippili27@gmail.com. She would love to hear your thoughts.

-1/12

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + \dots + 2021 + 2022 = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

Even without counting it, we know that the answer is not 2023 and it's a finite number that we may or may not know. But it can be calculated, even on paper or with a calculator. But when we have the same problem and keep on adding numbers till infinity, what do you think we'll get?

Basically,

$$1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + \dots + 2021 + 2022 + 2023 + \dots \text{ (till } \infty \text{)} = \underline{\hspace{2cm}}$$

We feel the answer is infinity. It's a no-brainer. But here's the part that's making this problem stay with me, and will probably stay forever. Either to show off that I know it and can solve it. Or just the fact that I feel everyone must know about it. Because the answer, trust me, is baffling and beyond our understanding or at least mine. If you ask me to prove it on paper I can but still. The answer is, wait for it, -1/12. The dash before the one is not by mistake or *kai*-mistake. (*Kai* is hand in Kannada). The answer is minus one by 12. Yes, a negative fraction is what we get when we keep adding positive integers to infinity.

For me, this is a not-so-gentle reminder of the fact that what we think we know and understand is just the bare minimum. Our knowledge is like the problem at the start and the rest of it is the next problem. Everything we don't know. Something that throws up a -1/12 out of nowhere. Most things we know in our lives are finite. Our lifetime. Our knowledge. Our understanding of the world. Almost everything. But still, we tend to agree, disagree, agree to disagree, debate, fight, and prove a point to believers, non-believers, and everyone in between.

Maybe that's why magical realism shocks us. It's almost asymptotic - tending towards infinity - questioning the realms of reality. Maybe that's why the ending of Kantara has left an everlasting impact, the way it did. Maybe that's why

Churuli shocks us and our understanding. Maybe that's why The God Who Loved Motorcycles just makes us enjoy it rather than question it.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez, while accepting the Nobel Prize said,

"Faced with this awesome reality that must have seemed a mere utopia through all of human time, we, the inventors of tales, who will believe anything, feel entitled to believe that it is not yet too late to engage in the creation of the opposite utopia. A new and sweeping utopia of life, where no one will be able to decide for others how they die, where love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last, and forever, a second opportunity on earth."

The solution I provided above was real. But what do we say to a solution like 42? When somebody comes and tells you that the solution to life, the universe, and everything is 42. You don't want to believe it. But you still accept it. Therein lies the power of an opposite utopia. Wherein we believe in solutions, wherein it's a world where infinite magic exists that lets you be a God, not the one that most fear but the one who comes close to defining the very idea of infinity. You witness the blood flowing from the edge of the universe to your footstep as a neutron star explodes and dies a brutal death to become a black hole. You feel a bit sad but you have to get to the bottom of it to understand who the killer was. Who killed that neutron star? Its death affects you deeply, it's personal, especially, the way the message was conveyed to you. You spend sleepless nights trying to find the killer. You go full Benoit Blanc, peeling the layers of the Glass Onion, only to find out that the killer was none other than minus one by twelve awa -1/12

And then, from that fine day, you set on a journey to infinity, one step at a time because that's the only way you'll come face to face with the killer in that alternate utopia where *love will prove true and happiness be possible, and where the races condemned to one hundred years of solitude will have, at last and forever, a second opportunity on earth.*"

Veekshith K H

Author - Madhusudhanan Nair Inde Mol

Creator - Dei, Quixote: <https://rb.gy/79oeg>

Writing "Boring Binaries": <https://veekshith94.substack.com/>

Some Fun at Advertising: <https://www.behance.net/veekshith94>

All Other Fun: <https://www.instagram.com/vveek94/>

In Quest of Home: Journey in Search of Identity in E. M. Forster's Maurice

Although the words 'house' and 'home' are often used synonymously to mean the place one dwells in, there is a huge difference between the actual meanings of these two words. While the former suggests the material building inside which one physically resides, the latter could be referred to as a virtual space, within or without the boundaries of the household, which provides a sense of complete comfort, and to which one's true self belongs. The actual source of this comfort is the freedom of the realization of one's true self. Inside the home one can be at ease, one can speak and act freely, without any fear of being judged. However, this assertion and realization of self are possible only within the confines of home, because to confront the outer world one has to resort to performativity constantly. One has to suppress one's real instincts and desires, supplanting them with the socially prescribed codes of conduct, in order to gain social acceptance and validation. Thus, the fear of being judged negatively by society compels one to always put on the masks which constitute one's public self. These masks can be taken off only within the domestic sphere where all the members of a family are supposed to know each other's particularities and shortcomings and yet accept them as they are. So inside home the sense of being loved overwhelms the fear of being judged, thus making one feel safe and comfortable.

This comfort and freedom, however, is denied to the protagonist of E. M. Forster's novel *Maurice*. Being a person with a sexual orientation different from the only one approved by the heteronormative society, Maurice Hall has to hide his sexual identity so that mainstream society does not treat him as an outcast. His primary struggle is, however, not against the societal forces themselves but against the psychological constraints constructed by these forces. Therefore, understanding his own identity becomes a very difficult task for him. Sexuality

being an important part of one's identity, this difficulty does not limit itself in terms of sexuality but pervades the other aspects of Maurice's identity as well. As a result, Maurice lacks any concrete identity as the core of his being. He, therefore, is incapable of understanding his identity and remains muddled up about himself until towards the end of the novel, since he does not possess any home where he might feel safe enough to come to terms with his real identity. Even within his house, he does not share a very intimate relationship with anyone with whom he can confide in his feelings and emotions. Therefore, not only his 'public' self but even his 'private' self gets constituted through different role-playings, making it impossible for his 'personal' self to exist. Performativity becomes an inevitable necessity for him even in the domestic sphere. There are several places where Maurice resides, or at least temporarily stays, including Maurice's own house, the Cambridge, and Clive's estate "Penge". Yet, none of these grand residential places succeeds in providing Maurice with a home, which he ultimately finds towards the end of the novel in the small boathouse, in the companionship of Alec Scudder. The whole novel, therefore, turns into Maurice's journey in search of his identity and in quest for his home.

Maurice's desperate attempt to establish an individual identity can be traced during the vacation in Cambridge in which he meets Miss Olcott. His turning into an atheist is not so much an expression of his own spiritual realization, but a result of his being convinced by Clive about it. In declaring himself as an atheist, he is actually trying on the one hand to follow Clive, and on the other to project an identity which would be different from that of his family members, and therefore, would render him individuality. Since the realization of this individuality is intrinsically linked to the difference being highlighted, instead of being happy he becomes disappointed when his mother or his sisters do not become much concerned about it. Later Maurice starts taking decisions about the

household and his future career, thus trying to prove his agency in the formation of his identity. In reality, however, he is only

surrendering to the identity socially imposed on him, fitting himself into the socially prescribed position of a respectable, heterosexual, upper-middle-class Englishman. This is evident when he attempts to flirt with Miss Olcott just because he is socially supposed to be on romantic terms with women, although he himself feels no attraction towards her, and therefore, his lack of genuineness makes the whole episode seem very odd to her. Nevertheless, Maurice is not conscious of his desire to gain social approval at the cost of denying his own self, and he mistakes the socially imposed identity as his true identity. As is suggested by the fact of his finding himself thinking and speaking like his mother and Ada after this vacation, Maurice's personality is still not his own but borrowed from those around him - be it his family or Clive. Maurice can be himself only after he is able to accept his sexuality.

The process of identity formation can never be devoid of social and familial influences, because one can form their identity only by selecting certain identity factors from the ones already available to them. However, the decision as to which factors to choose should ideally depend solely on one's personal temperament, although in many cases this decision is imposed on them by socio-cultural forces. In the case of Maurice, the problem is further deep-rooted since the identity factor which Maurice wants to adopt is not at all available to him. He is not aware of the existence of love or attraction between men being something valid and real. Here the politics of using language and culture as a mode of oppression becomes significant. For a long time in his life, Maurice can find no words with which he might describe his physical and emotional impulses. So, when as a child he is upset about losing George, he cannot explain the reason for his sadness and succumbs to the excuse of being overtired, which is supplied to him by his mother.

Heteronormativity, which is one of the central forces of society, structures language in such a way that it, even when used by any person unaware of this politics, functions in a heteronormative way. One method of this politicizing is the stigmatization of not only concepts but also

words associated with non-normative people. As a result, Maurice never comes across any positive or even neutral representation of the love between males in his early age, and he does not know the term 'homosexual' before Lasker Jones mentions it, therefore referring to it as "the unspeakable vice of the Greeks" or "an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort" (77, 138). So, because of his lack of exposure, when Clive first declares his love for Maurice, Maurice feels scandalized and horrified by the thought of love between two men. Eventually, Maurice acknowledges his love for Clive and realizes his sexual desire first for Clive and then, after separation from Clive, for other men. Yet, he is not ready to acknowledge his sexuality unless Lasker Jones gives homosexuality a sanction.

The relationship between Maurice and Clive Durham fails primarily because of Clive's inclination towards normative ideals. Although Clive believes that his change from homosexuality to heterosexuality is a biological fact, which Clive cannot explain rationally because "the body is deeper than the soul and its secrets inscrutable" (103), in reality, this change is more psychological than physiological. As the narrative goes on to explain, Clive feels attracted by the pleasures offered by heteronormativity, of which he has been deprived so far. While the men he admired were always "either unconscious or puzzled" by his admiration, women recognized, and sometimes even responded to, his admiration. He realizes "(h)ow happy normal people made their lives", and writes to Maurice "Against my will, I have become normal", although the use of the word "normal" itself suggests that his transformation does not take place entirely against his will (103, 101).

Thoughts of being involved with Maurice started creating physical discomfort in him, and even though he formally promises Maurice a bond of friendship and respect, actually he moves far away from Maurice, leaving Maurice lonely, emotionally shattered and suicidal.

Nevertheless, it is not the ending of this relationship but the very nature of the relationship itself which prevents Maurice from realizing his identity. Although E. M. Forster writes in his Terminal Note to the novel that Clive's rejection sends Maurice back to the prison from which Clive had earlier released him, in reality, Maurice is never out of prison, he is never at home during the relationship, since he is never allowed to be himself. He is not allowed to acknowledge his homosexuality, because Clive, who dominates this relationship, makes an unspoken contract to keep it completely platonic. Clive succumbs to the mind-body binary, believing the mind to be of much greater value than the body. Therefore, Clive's love for Maurice is an intellectual love. He believes in the stereotypical concept of true love being a union of the minds, and having nothing to do with physicality. Thus, the physical aspect of love is denigrated and the intellectual aspect is glorified, keeping in conformity with the platonic conceptions of love. It is interesting to note that Clive tries to use Plato's Symposium as a code while first declaring his love for Maurice. Indeed, Clive believes the love between men to have been "the mainstay of Athenian society" (42) and tries to structure their relationship in the pattern of Pederasty of ancient Greece, where the erastes would be older and would educate and protect young eromenos. So, Clive maintains a patronizing tone towards Maurice, treating him as not an intellectual equal but a little inferior. Nonetheless, while Clive is homoromantic at this point, Maurice is both homoromantic and homosexual, these two aspects comprising important parts of his identity which he is

compelled to hide from Clive. This concealment is beautifully intensified by the scene towards the end of chapter twenty-one where Maurice feels afraid that Clive, who is lying by his side, might comprehend Maurice's sexual desire for him by listening to Maurice's "drumming" heartbeats (100). Therefore, in order to enjoy the companionship of Clive, Maurice must constantly play the role of being free from sexual desire. This performative aspect of this relationship makes it impossible for Maurice to feel the comfort of home in the companionship of Clive.

After Clive's transformation and his subsequent rejection of Maurice, Maurice tries to divert his attention by focusing on acquiring strict self-discipline, and the habits of punctuality, courtesy, patriotism, chivalry etc. This is nothing but another of his failed attempts at constructing a concrete identity of his own. However, after experiencing the desire to sexually assault young Dickie, and after encountering the elderly man who is desperate enough to make a lascivious signal to a stranger, Maurice becomes worried about his own sexual orientation. Although the term "homosexuality" is not available to him, he is forced to face the fact that, unlike other men, he feels attracted to men instead of women. Anxious that he cannot negate his homosexual impulses, he considers it to be a physical disorder. So, he seeks medical help. Thus E. M. Forster incorporates in his novel how even the doctors view homosexuality with stigma and ignorance. Jowitt, the first doctor Maurice talks to, believes that homosexuals should be confined within the mental asylums. The second doctor, Dr Barry, dismisses Maurice's problem as "rubbish", as an "evil hallucination" (138). Thus, a physician, from whom Maurice expects the authentic, impersonal, authoritative voice of science, views a form of sexuality as a "hallucination". He pays no heed to Maurice's earnest imploration for a cure not because he believes homosexuality not to be a problem, but simply because he does not believe in the existence of homosexuality. Disappointed with the discipline of medicine, Maurice turns towards hypnotism on Risley's advice. He has by this time lost interest in finding

the "positive joy" of his own sexual orientation, and the only desire left in him is to become "normal" so that he can marry a woman - which he views as a method of controlling his lust, having children, and acquiring social validation (159). As E. M. Forster writes, Maurice "sought not happiness at the hands of Mr Lasker Jones, but repose" (159). Nevertheless, Maurice's sexuality is rooted so deep in his psyche that even hypnotism cannot reach it, and despite several attempts, the attempts of Lasker Jones to make Maurice inclined towards women through hypnotism fails. Yet, these visits to

Lasker Jones turns out to be of immense significance for Maurice since it is from Lasker Jones that he gets to learn about homosexuality, as well as the fact that homosexuality is not a criminal offence in countries like France or Italy. This not only makes him aware that homosexuals have always existed throughout history but also gives him the confidence that since homosexuality is not considered a crime in many countries, therefore it might not necessarily be an abnormality or an evil practice. It is this confidence which relieves him from his guilt and makes him accept his own sexual orientation, thus helping him in his later union with Alec.

In forming a romantic relationship with Clive's gamekeeper Alec Scudder, Maurice breaks the barriers of not only gender and sexuality but also class. Indeed, the class component is immensely significant here because it shows how Maurice has gone a radical transformation from his position when, even as a child, he was extremely class-conscious and believed working-class men to be essentially different from gentlemen. While Lytton Strachey considers the ending of the novel as unrealistic because an educated, upper-middle-class man, cannot live happily ever after with a person from the working class, E. M. Forster himself writes in the terminal note "(B)oth the suburban youth and the countrified one are capable of loyalty"(222).

Kitty's encountering two woodcutters in the epilogue identifies the couple with another couple, i.e., Edward Carpenter and George Merrill. In this respect, Forster's claim must be remembered that it is a touch by George Merrill that gave E. M. Forster the inspiration to conceive *Maurice*.

E. M. Forster believed, "A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense *Maurice* and Alec still roam the greenwood. I dedicated it 'to a happier year'..."(220). The happy ending could not be possible if *Maurice* would be a mere homosexual novel. But Alec is not a homosexual but a bisexual, and therefore he could have easily lived a heteronormative life by marrying a woman. Yet he prefers to go against society, only for the sake of the mutual love between him and *Maurice*. Unlike Clive who tried to control *Maurice*, both Alec and *Maurice* accept, love, and respect each other just as they are. Thus, the novel ends with a message of inclusion, suggesting that every person, irrespective of class or sexual orientation, deserves to get true love, into which they may find their respective homes. And it is because of finding this home that while earlier *Maurice* had no sense of belonging, now he finds that not only he and Alec belong to England, but rather, "England belonged to them" (Forster 218)

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You're Not Beer

He was squeezed amidst his own classmates in the last bench when the revelation happened to him. Since it was a literature class, the students who pursued other multidisciplinary courses also filed into the ageing classroom and cramped themselves next to him. But it did not bother him in the least bit. On the contrary, it seemed to excite him, making him feel like he is sitting with a bunch of villagers settling down for an evening of local nataka performance. Post the mildly irritating but relevant necessities of the contemporaries met like marking of attendance, opening notes and the like, everyone headed towards the Elizabethan era. The writers of the period were after all waiting patiently, chapter by chapter, to meet this touristy 20 something bunch. After the pleasantries were exchanged, the revelation happened to him. Guided by the teacher who mastered the art of storytelling, he discovered the two flaws that brought a differentiated downfall upon the protagonists respectively in the Elizabethan era and the Greek ssmythological tales. It was that in the former, our tragic hero met his downfall due to a weakness in his own character, called the hamartia. In the latter, he generally had nothing to do with his downfall except meekly accept it; he was just an instrument of fate that led him to his nothingness. Try as he might, he couldn't forget this nugget of information and it stubbornly stayed in his otherwise scattered and thought-infested brain.

A few years later, this discoverer of ours, let us call him Mark, after our beloved Mark Antony, secures a job as a writer, a flat on rent in a mildly residential suburb and a fresh set of insecurities. What are they? Let us join our hapless chap as he introspects them and witnesses how they give birth to yet another stubborn discovery. Strewn across his bedding on the floor, Mark is lazily sipping strong coffee one weekend afternoon and barely follows an episode playing in front of him. He is tugged by a sudden urge to smoke and yet sits, waiting for the damn feeling to pass.

His roommate sits across from him and with the air of a person of great learnedness, suddenly sits up and states, matter-of-factly: "You are a friendly chameleon." Now our Mark always loved any remark that made him feel belonged. Picking at an imaginary scab in his scalp out of habit, he straightened up and addressed the one who piqued his interest - "since the absurdity of your remark has sunk in, can you now explain what you mean?"

The roommate, satisfied with the effect his remark produced, proceeded to explain. "I have noticed that you blend in with your surroundings effortlessly. You are the quintessential cinephile with the friends who have similar taste and behave as though there isn't anything else you would be preoccupied with. You are the bold drunk who doesn't think twice before clinking and downing glasses of scorching liquor down your poor throat, zero fucks to your capacity to hold yourself together obviously. You are also this friend who has seen too many shortcomings of all and yet pretend like you are unaware of everyone's flaws. You are so many and everyone thinks they know you. But the truth is, nobody knows you. I don't know who you exactly are. Except for the fact that you are the friendly chameleon."

This was an interesting development for Mark. But as much intriguing as it was to ponder upon this outburst, it also stung him. A sudden fear that all of it is true gripped his insides. And soon enough, his brain would not rest until a full-fledged theory was formed after all the self-questioning. Earlier, he used to thrive in the assurance he provided to those who sought his listening ear. Come any day any existential question, he used to whip out an elaborate life example that used to assure both Mark and the person it was addressed to of the generous amounts of hope in life. But today, as he sits still picking at his scab and staring into space, he fears the uncertainty he experiences about life's ways and ironies.

A few days later, while at work, he receives a call.

"Macha, I feel terrible man!" the voice of his friend whines without any preamble.

"What happened?" Mark asks, feeling the familiar fear for questions which had no answers creeping back to him.

"My phone fell and broke ra. I need to fix it and I was wondering if you could accompany me to the service centre." He replies putting all the dread Mark faced seconds ago to rest.

"Don't worry man. Of course I shall be there. Happens all the time. Relax." He tried not to sound too cheerful, almost feeling comical of the relief he was experiencing.

After the unceremonious visit to the service centre, he reassures his friend, drops him off and goes to meet another. Now this was a significant other. She stands at the bakery, arms folded, head held high, not out of contempt or pride but to just balance off her already slipping glasses. He couldn't resist a smile.

"Buy two smokes for me, please?" He asks her while walking into the bakery.

She fumbles for change, he fumbles with the matchstick and almost throws off the lit cigarette in confusion. She, he and the lady at the shop grin at each other.

Mark takes a long drag, relishes it and then begins the conversation.

"I am a different person with different people."

"Yes, that is quite the case with everybody." She replies in an amused tone, tickled by how he happened to realise it only today.

"No it is different with me."

"So you are a different person with different people and this is an altogether different thing from what everybody experiences, right?" She quips, her amusement growing.

"What I mean is that I think I do not know myself. I cannot exactly put a finger on the kind of person I am." He takes another drag to calm himself from the approaching dread.

"Which I think is not anything you should worry yourself about. Why does it bother you today of all days?" She gets a bit serious.

"I am not able to be true to myself these days when I am trying to assure my friends that life's biggest worries can always be lived through. Because now I think I fear them myself. Because I don't know myself." He replied, feeling a bit silly for sounding redundant. He stubbed the cigarette and looked ahead as he walked next to her.

"It is quite impossible to categorise oneself. Not a feat that can be accomplished by mere mortals. Unless you think of yourself otherwise. And as for keeping others happy, you cannot keep them all smiling ear-to-ear because of your existence all the time. You are not beer." She smiles without looking at him.

"Stop quoting fridge magnets." He smiles too. As they continue to walk in comfortable silence, he acknowledges his insecurities. But more importantly, the revelation he had years ago, clicks within him at the same time. As he unlocks the door to his flat, we see this 21st-century hero of ours, with a curly mop of hair, tall, and attractive in a bookish sort-of-way, embracing his own tragic flaw. Chuckling, he muses, "I am not beer and this is my hamartia."

P

Picture credit: @Samik.09

This is Srujana Rachuri, hailing from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. I have devoted my world to words - penning, editing, and reading them - trying to make sense of self in the process. Always viewing my life through cinematic montages, with the air of a storyteller. Call me a copywriter, a storyteller, a writer, and I'll mail back to you at 3:00 am USWT (Universal Standard Writers Time).

Don't Forget to Meet Them in Fort Kochi

To the ones who live quite a boring life on the outside while having their own fun, quirks, imagination, and experiences that are only theirs. A little secret.

We envy them while they sit and judge us for doing so.

She walked all around the city. She woke up as early as 5 am because that was the time fishermen returned with their catch. She took naps all day long, in between meals, and otherwise. She knew the city, in and out, through the long walks that defined her existence. Most of the locals knew her but she hadn't accepted the city as her own. One evening, around 7:30 pm, with people walking quietly by the beaches, munching on fried fish, or gobi, or just shopping around as most tourists do - there was a small concert on the side by the street with a few local boys singing their hearts out. A few people gathered around while she walked past them as part of her usual ritual. She wasn't really interested in music of any kind as long as it helped her nap. This wasn't her nap time - so she just walked about with no real purpose. In a square under a tree, she saw a couple. They were having a cup of black tea or kattan chai, in the local tongue. They were listening to the music that was being performed, they were interested in it but not indulged in it. She didn't know what it was but when she looked at this couple - she felt like walking up to them. But she didn't walk right into them. She took her own little route, a little detour around them - Oh, a bird! - and walked a bit closer to them. She didn't know why she was approaching them but felt she should. And when she looked at them from close quarters, she realized that they too were outsiders, like most of them. But there was something about these two. They had a look in their eyes like they were at home. They weren't worried or spooked by all the strangers around them. They had made an own little world of theirs in between them, in an unknown land. Looking at them, she felt something that she was constantly looking out for. A home. At that moment, she didn't have to hide her true self from the land she walked, lived, and breathed - she lifted her paws, and

dug a hole right behind them, for she had found a family that she can now disown and continue living her life the way she wants to. The hole was filled. The hole was covered. And she walked right through them into the night to find some food, some mischief, and a good night's sleep.

He was growing old in a hotel. He ate the same kind of food every day, sat at the same place, ignored anyone and everyone who tried to interact with him and slept for long hours. He had the wisdom of the world, all within him, collected by looking out his window. He posed for photos by not really posing for them. He really enjoyed the Geoffrey-Bawa-esque architecture that surrounded him. Even though he never met him, he knew of his style. He was a quite learned one among the others around him. He knew a bit more than the rest of the world. Like the fact that the Jews and the Hindu kings were extremely close to the extent that the king allowed them to build a synagogue, right outside the palace. Like the fact that there was a bookstore named Idiom. Like the fact that today they'd be performing Keechakavadam at the Kathakali Centre. He knew it all but didn't bother to inform anyone or make attempts to watch it himself. All he did was put his little legs under his head and snooze through day and night at the Old Harbour Hotel. The only time he was really active was at 10:40 pm for 10 mins while he waited for the phone to ring in Room 204. So that he could pick up the call and say to Charles that dogs and angels are not the same, whereas it's us, cats who are the real gods. And he's still waiting for the phone to ring.

Pictures credit: Veekshith K H

Veekshith K H

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Accomplishments Despite System Failure

I come from an island nation where life is filled with tropical adventures. Briny splashing seas, green palms of swaying coconut trees, natural volcanic hot springs with beautiful mountain ranges. Long stretches of clear rivers, beautiful white & grey sandy beaches along the coast. Where fishing is explicitly abundant with lots of marine life untouched and touched. Within the mountain ranges are unending flora inviting illegal felling of trees. Abundant life of fauna is misused due lack of marketing strategy which the system fails to improve with empty promises every term of polling. Life in the tropics is beautiful with nature's very own cool breeze. While sipping coconut juice away and chewing a mouth full of betelnut, I indulged in the enjoyable recollection of the day's struggles that our system fails to see. The young have dreams shattered.

I was once in that cold circle, today I stand firm to thank myself for never giving up. I love my country but strangely, sometimes I think my country has failed me. If you ask me why? the answer is brief, education systems are failing, and here I am seeking a system out of my country to one day serve my people. Healthcare is deteriorating my mother once treated for cancer like any other woman left early living me behind to find strength in my pain, reefs are fished, and natural resources are extracted with limited legal process. Native People labelled primitives because of the backlash of their opinion to be voices of their land. I grew up having big dreams each year I looked around to see thousands of my now age group jobless, or unfortunate due to skyrocketing education fees and job scarcity. I wondered why and blamed their inconsistency in study habits, but now I see why. I have made it this far, if you ask me how it's a story for another chapter I will ink. I now understand why GST inflates and why I study abroad. It's a roller coaster in my success journey in building myself as a young educated female.

My journey encompasses the beauty of losing and winning unending battles. Battles that teach us to serve right from wrong. If you ask me, I would briefly tell you, "No success is mouth full ", changing the subject of my intention. With all the ups and downs a part of my achievement is landing education in India, a place in which I wondered at a certain age growing up hearing about its diversity in culture and the many critics of its religion and life in which I at some point in my life decided to visit. I am five out of eight siblings just like any other family who has a living condition in which some days you are full other days you lay in bed wondering if your parents failed to fill your belly, yes that's me! but that's not my point.

The scenario is natural but my reason to take hold of this as strength and make a difference is one hell of confidence one can take. My experience in India is unlike my life growing up. The difference is being little as I vividly recall there was no time I labored. As I look around today, I see little children working so hard along their parents, yes, I did grow up toiling along with my parents but not as much as I see today. it's just my opinion but to correct myself there is a distinguished system that serves as a reason for such. More comfortably I think how fortunate I am to have come far in acquiring education while thousands like me are denied from the opportunity I have. I look around and see many females just like me having no hopes and losing dreams once thought could be achieved. I don't know why this is my life and that's hers.

Sometimes I look around and don't understand but I will do what my late mother asked and I will do the best I can with this life to be of use. And to ink these here today means that I did as she asked, and if she were breathing, she would have been proud. I have never understood why some people are lucky enough to be born with the change that I have had to come this far.

To have this path in life and why across the world there's a girl just like me with the same intelligence, abilities, and the same desires most likely the same virtue and love for her family. Who would most likely make better decisions and better writing on this same piece of paper that I now type this very sentence. Only to see she toils under the supervision of a system and she has no voice. She worries about what's for a meal at noon, but worries not if she has a pair of shorts, worries about how to keep safe the vulnerable lives, and if she will lighten her mother's burden. I don't know why this is my life and that's hers. I don't understand that but I will do as my mother requested and I will do the best I can with this life I have. And to sit here and write these today means that I did as she asked, she'd be very proud.

There is no difference between having power and being you and me. There's no difference in proving your worth, life is about paving a way of your own to accommodate your self-worth. As an aspiring young woman my utmost satisfaction in success is to make another smile, and I mean that but do not hope, for what the future determine is a mystery from what I desire, only will I make use of that opportunity to give a chance to one life that deserves the same light that I once discovered during my journey of success. Sometimes my friends and people around me misinterpret my life. Most think I have it all, only a few dear to my heart know the truth. I grew up being told to ask little for help in handouts and earn most myself, I guess that is why tea deceives the taste of honey. If you talk about politics I find no taste, if you share the sentiments of a striving father and mother toiling will I untastefully pay attention? System in my opinion is dreams astray.

Most times I wonder why systems are placed and hopes in its conduct are misunderstood or otherwise. There are thousands in which the system gives high hopes and lets their dream shutter. Don't you pay attention? If not! then there must be a distinct abstract that fans the imaginative cognition of the many

thoughts. You cannot be held accountable for that if you mistook and took the option that delights your wish desire. Once I took a little boy along with me who seemed to enjoy playing around the school yard climbing the branches of a tree near to my class. Seeing him a I recalled the fond memories of enjoying nature without paying a price for fishing along the bank of the river. Feeling a little nostalgic I embraced the comfort it brought upon me while thinking of the many hardships that I face as an adult in this present life. We both strolled along to the school's cafeteria upon enquiring to buy him a sweet gala pop. The taller approached saying it was all sold out. Not before a minute, the taller approached me again saying he would offer him a cup of ice cream which they use for serving brownie to their customers without taking payment from me. If you are aware of how brownie is made, hence ice-cream is used for dressing as a glaze. I felt overwhelmed with excitement as this little boy like any would buy took it for free, suddenly a professor sitting afar upon seeing the scene approached me whispering "The world needs people like you" Trust me it took me some time to digest my thought to what she had said and to analyze this statement till today I write it. At that point, I only realized the world is practically you and me.

How we create and nurture our surrounding despite race, color, religion, and status we make the world, and for the world to be a better place, there has to be ninety educated individuals to ten unlettered to see change. You and I create our destiny, not the system. A system for me is a framework put in place for me and you to follow the privileges offered in this framework. It only drives us astray to hopes that can be filled or neither be achieved if we see it as the only possible way. On that day, I realized we shouldn't make judgements because I am better served than that little boy taking ice cream used for serving brownie. For you, it may sound just that but for me, he mattered having the respect to which he got served without paying the price far more than being served a gala pop bought at 30 Rupees. For when you judge you will never understand the beauty of having

and embracing nature more than that in which system operates yours. I embrace failure and criticism and seeing that little boy smile I also realized how the system sets boundaries between the rich and the unfortunate. I don't use the term labour, for me no individual is different. Neither race nor education qualification sets a line that limits me and him you and her or from the unlettered. The reason I write in such language, seemingly metaphoric genuinely shaped me to come so far today. To end, let me tell my you a secret of success and I quote "Own your thoughts".

Elenora Tu'u is a BA(Hons) student majoring in Public Administration P P Savani University India. She comes from the largest island country in the Pacific, Papua New Guinea. Elenora is a public-spirited person, her life experiences inspire her to be an advocate for the voiceless, specifically the unfortunate. She has a passion for writing and aspires to be a writer one day. Far from being a student, her success journey is encompassed with work while attaining education at the age of seventeen and does presently do the same. She is five out of eight siblings and is parented by her father, hence losing her mum to cancer in 2021.

Hydroponics Project: A Journey to Sustainable Cultivation

Abstract:

This report highlights the journey of our class project on hydroponics, a modern method of cultivating plants without using soil. We conducted extensive research on hydroponics, received training at the School of Agriculture at PPSI University, and designed our own sustainable hydroponic unit. This project not only provided us with valuable knowledge but also taught us the importance of teamwork and compatibility. The memories associated with this project will forever be cherished.

Introduction:

Hydroponics is a groundbreaking approach to plant cultivation, revolutionizing traditional soil-based farming methods. By utilizing a nutrient-rich water solution as a growing medium, hydroponics offers numerous advantages such as water conservation, space efficiency, enhanced plant growth, and reduced pesticide use. This report documents our journey through the hydroponics project assigned by our teacher, which has left a lasting impression on our minds.

Research and Training:

Our project began with in-depth research on hydroponics. We studied various techniques, nutrient solutions, and equipment required for successful implementation. To further enhance our understanding, we received comprehensive training at the prestigious School of Agriculture at P P Savani University. The training equipped us with practical skills and knowledge, making us better prepared for the project ahead.

Designing the Hydroponic Unit:

To ensure sustainability and cost-effectiveness, we decided to use recycled materials for our hydroponic unit. We collected PVC pipes from a waste source

and meticulously cleaned them. Precise measurements were taken, and the pipes were cut accordingly. Two different diameters of pipes were utilized: 2 inches for the stand and 4 inches for the main pipe. This design provided stability and facilitated the flow of water and nutrients.

Procurement and Assembly:

In addition to the recycled PVC pipes, we purchased additional materials such as an air pump, water pump, couplers, and glue from external sources. Our dedicated team worked tirelessly to assemble the hydroponic unit, ensuring all components were properly connected and functioning optimally. The assembly process required meticulous attention to detail and a collaborative effort from all team members.



Implementation and Cultivation:

With our hydroponic unit successfully assembled, we began the cultivation process. Basil was chosen as our first plant to grow in the unit due to its adaptability to hydroponic systems. We carefully monitored the water solution's nutrient levels, pH balance, and temperature to provide an ideal environment for the plant's growth. Witnessing the thriving basil plants was a rewarding experience for the entire team.

Lessons Learned:

Throughout this project, we learned invaluable lessons that extend beyond hydroponics. The importance of teamwork and compatibility became evident as we worked together to overcome challenges and achieve our goals. We also gained a deeper appreciation for sustainable practices and the potential of hydroponics to revolutionize agriculture.

Conclusion:

Undertaking the hydroponics project was a remarkable experience for our entire class. Through extensive research, training, and hands-on implementation, we not only acquired knowledge about hydroponics but also developed crucial skills in collaboration and problem-solving. The memories associated with this project will forever be cherished, serving as a testament to our hard work and dedication.

Acknowledgements:

We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to our professor, Dr Savan Patel for assigning us this engaging project and providing us with guidance throughout its duration. We also extend our thanks to the School of Agriculture at P P Savani University for their valuable training. Additionally, we appreciate the support and cooperation of our fellow team members (BSc Agriculture batch of 2022-26), without whom this project would not have been successful.

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Neelam is a first-year BSc Agriculture student. She believes that kindness and helping others should be a default trait in all of humanity. With this philosophy, she strives every day to be sincere in all her undertakings, always endeavoring to put her best foot forward. In her free time, she enjoys grooving to Hindi film songs.

ગુજરાતી ભાષા અને સાહિત્ય

The Gujarati language is one of the 22 scheduled languages of India. It is a unique and vibrant language that is spoken by the people of the Indian state of Gujarat and the Gujarati diaspora worldwide. It is an Indo-Aryan language that has a rich cultural heritage and a distinctive script. It is extensively used in the culture and everyday life of people, from the language of commerce to literature.

The history of the Gujarati language is diverse and has shown the influence of local and Sanskrit cultures on the development of the language, as well as the influence of Punjab on Gujarati literature. Another unique aspect of the Gujarati language is its vocabulary. Gujarati has borrowed words from various languages such as Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic, Portuguese, and English, which has resulted in a rich and diverse vocabulary. Gujarati also has many regional dialects, each with its unique vocabulary and intonation.

The most significant quality of the Gujarati language is its simplicity, which makes it a trustworthy and accessible language. Gujarati has various alphabets and specific terminologies that add to its unique identity.

Gujarati literature is vast, and its poetry, plays, novels, and other literary works have played an essential role in shaping the Gujarati culture. From the early medieval period to the modern era, Gujarati literature has evolved significantly and has showcased various themes and styles. Gujarati is known for its poetic qualities. Gujarati literature has a rich history that spans centuries and includes poetry, prose, and drama. The works of famous Gujarati poets such as Narsinh Mehta, Akho, and Dayaram have been widely acclaimed for their depth, beauty, and emotional appeal.

The Gujarati language has also contributed to the development of Indian literature and has produced numerous renowned writers and poets. Their works have been widely translated into different languages, and they have received acclaim from across the world.

One of the unique features of the Gujarati language is its script. The Gujarati script is an abugida, which means that it is a system of writing where each letter represents a consonant sound with an inherent vowel. The script is written from left to right and is highly stylized, with each letter having a distinct shape and stroke order.

The Gujarati language is also known for its musical qualities. Many Gujarati songs and bhajans have gained popularity not only in Gujarat but also throughout India. Gujarati music is characterized by its use of traditional instruments such as the dholak, harmonium, and tabla, and its unique rhythm and melody.

Gujarati language and literature have great importance both within Gujarat and beyond its borders. Here are some reasons why:

Cultural significance: Gujarati language and literature are essential components of Gujarat's rich cultural heritage. The language has a long history dating back to the 12th century, and its literature includes ancient epics, devotional poetry, and modern works.

Economic significance: Gujarat is a rapidly growing state in India, with a robust economy and a thriving business community. The ability to speak and write Gujarati is crucial for anyone looking to do business in the state or communicate with its people.

Academic significance: Gujarati is a vibrant language with a rich vocabulary that can offer unique perspectives and insights into various fields of study. Its literature, which includes works of poetry, prose, and drama, can enrich the

academic landscape and help us understand the complex realities of human experience.

Overall, the Gujarati language is a fascinating and unique language that is deeply rooted in history and culture. Its distinctive script, rich vocabulary, lyrical qualities, and musical traditions make it a language that is both beautiful and captivating.

In conclusion, the Gujarati language and literature are a significant part of Indian culture and history. The language's simplicity and unique identity, coupled with its rich literary heritage, have made it an integral part of India's linguistic and literary landscape.

Lastly, I would like to elaborate few lines as a poetry or મુક્તક:

આકાશમાં આવે વિહંગ પરિદોની ભીડ,
ધરાની ત્રણો કિમતી જીવન જાગતાં જોઈ રીડ,
સંભળે વીણાના મધુર તારાના સંગીત,
થામે છાતી જીવનની ભારેલી હાંસતાં પીઠ.

Meaning:

[The sky filled with a flock of birds,
The three worlds wake up to their worth,
Hear the sweet melody of the strings,
Eases the burden of life with carefree flaps and flings.

With a passion for literature and a knack for creating memorable stories, Nihaal has carved a niche for himself in the literary world. His works span fiction genres, including "wondering what if!?" "We will meet someday" upcoming "Heartbroken verse" poetry books, each offering a unique and compelling reading experience. As Nihaal continues to evolve as an author, his commitment to learning the ancestry scriptures and understanding the importance of life and finding its purpose has been his goal, crafting immersive stories and connecting with readers remains unwavering.

Does Tech shape & inspire Movies or vice-versa?

Avengers, Terminator, and Transformers all share a common element: they provide nostalgia for Generation Z. Christopher Nolan's film "Oppenheimer," crafted with the help of IMAX and Dolby, was completed in just two years by a team of only 33 people. Technology often aids in rewriting scripts, demonstrating its pervasive and irreplaceable role in our lives. It's nothing new that AI is the future but it's quite interesting to see how Technology is deeply entrenched in our lives.

It is important to note that Chatbots invented between 1997-2010 have become fundamentals behind the Marvel and DC universes. Major studios like Warner Bros, Disney, Eros have started using AI as a tool for making, editing and even casting suitable actors to make new films. The more tech-based movies we watch, the more we get drawn towards using technology in our daily lives. Whether it's scriptwriting, casting actors, or choosing the best locations for shooting, technology has got us covered.

In the early 1990s, 3D movies were watched using paper-made 3D glasses. Today, with the help of technology, we can experience 6D-7D movies in theatres. It's fascinating to witness the growth of technology across sectors, particularly in the film industry. Since then, multi-dimensional movie technology has advanced incrementally. Now, without any external gadget or spectacle, a 3D viewing experience is viable. Furthermore, we have advanced to 7D or 8D movies, where viewers can experience computer-controlled effects like swinging, shaking, falling, rising, water spraying, and air effects, all of which enhance the visual, auditory, dynamic, and tactile aspects of the movie.

Star Trek has been one of the significant contributors to modern technology, inspiring automatic doors, laser scalpels, cell phones, tricorders (there's an app for that), Google Glass, tablets, artificial intelligence, computer software and

programs, and even 3-D food printing. To learn more, check out the History channel's "How William Shatner Changed the World." Other films have also significantly influenced our present-day reality. Genetic and DNA testing depicted in "Gattaca" is now widespread. Soylent Green inspired the creation of a food product named Soylent, even though it isn't made of people as an ingredient. "Star Wars" popularized the idea of hovercrafts and flyers. "Batman" and "James Bond" introduced us to smaller listening and recording devices,

while "Superman" introduced us to holograms. "Eureka!" gave us "smart drones" and lab-grown meat. "The Twilight Zone" normalized plastic surgery, and "Blade Runner" presented the concept of cloned animals and mood-altering medications.

Digital technologies have made a profound impact on our daily lives and the way we do things, from watching a movie to manufacturing a product. The film industry, a significant part of the entertainment sector, is more spectacular and mesmerizing than ever. Today's digital cameras are lighter and more powerful. Computer-generated images (CGI) and 3D technologies have enabled experts to capture stunning videos, creating incredible visual experiences.

The "Fast & Furious" saga has seen technological marvels. After the untimely death of Paul Walker during the production of the seventh film in the series, the film studio used his brother as a stand-in, superimposing Paul's face onto his brother's body.

James Cameron's "Avatar" created ripples in the film industry with its cutting-edge 3D visualizations, inspiring more films to adopt these technologies and immerse viewers in spectacular worlds. For example, "Gravity" transported audiences to outer space. With the aid of CGI, filmmakers blended fantasy images with the real world. The live-action remake of "The Lion King" thrilled audiences with talking, lifelike animals.

Over time, the production quality has improved. Cameras and frames are now of supreme quality. Technologies like 3D and CGI seamlessly blend the real world with the reel one, showing the continual evolution of the film industry.

Here are a few technologies that have made a significant impact:

Autonomous Drones: Advances in artificial intelligence and machine learning have given rise to autonomous drone cameras. These drones can automatically avoid obstacles in the air while capturing frames on the go. Though drones are not fully automated yet, they are on their way to making a lasting impact on the film industry. ***Algorithmic Video Editing:*** This is revolutionizing the film editing process. For instance, in "We Own The Night," a high-speed car chase in the rain was edited using the algorithmic process, with the rain effects added during post-production.

Virtual Reality Scenes: The entertainment industry has been boosted by virtual reality, which is also beginning to influence the film industry. Film crews are now starting to use 4K 3D cameras to leverage VR technology. Google and LucidCam have introduced 4K 3D VR live production cameras, and soon we can expect to enjoy watching films in 4K 3D VR.

Movies significantly influence and shape technology in several ways:

Visualization of Future Technologies: Movies often depict futuristic technologies that spark the imaginations of scientists, engineers, and inventors, inspiring them to work towards making those ideas a reality.

Concept Generation: Movies introduce new concepts and ideas that may not have been previously considered. Science fiction films present imaginative and speculative technologies that expand our thinking about what is possible.

Technological Depictions: Accurate depictions of existing technologies in movies can generate interest among viewers. When technologies are shown in exciting ways, it can generate public curiosity and increase demand for those technologies. Inspiration for

Design and Innovation: Movie designs can inspire the design of real-world products. For example, the clean, minimalist design of devices like smartphones and tablets has been influenced by the sci-fi genre.

Ethical and Societal Discussions: Movies also play a role in shaping technology by raising ethical and societal questions.

It's crucial to note that while movies can inspire technology, they are not always accurate representations of what is scientifically or technologically feasible. However, they serve as catalysts for innovation, imagination, and discussions that can ultimately shape the direction of technological advancements. Furthermore, even before starting a project today, technology can assist with tasks such as location scouting, casting, and crew hiring. For example, AI algorithms can analyze data on past successful productions and recommend locations with similar characteristics.

In conclusion, technology and movies have a symbiotic relationship, each influencing and shaping the other. Technological advancements enhance filmmaking techniques, while movies themselves inspire technological innovation and provoke societal discussions about the implications of technology. This dynamic interaction between technology and movies continues to shape the entertainment industry and influence the direction of technological advancements.

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Stories

Fears
Dreams
Destiny

Finding Home

"And they smiled as they looked at each other." Another novel ended; Ann's emotions were all over the place. She was devastated, content, and smiling, all at the same time. For a reader, an ending is a new beginning, but it took a while. Ann sat daydreaming about the book she had just finished reading; it was a fun read, an emotional rollercoaster- her favourite genre. She already knew what she was going to read next, but before she could pick up the book her mom called, "Ann! Come down at once, and go out of the house! Stop being cooped up in your fantasy world."

"Pretending not to hear her will have her barge into my room. There is no privacy in this house. Can't a girl read her novels in peace?" mumbling angrily Ann walked towards her favourite coffee shop. As she was walking, she noticed the weather for the first time in the day; autumn was around the corner, orange-yellow leaves were carpeting the road and there was a chill in the wind. Winter is coming soon! It is Ann's favourite season, the cold winds, hot chocolate, bonfire, smores, blankets, and love. Everyone is excited about winter because of Christmas and gifts, but for Ann, this was the season of love. She met up with her close friends at the doorstep of the small café, Iris and Justice.

"The usual Pepper" ordered Ann. Drinking coffee was another hobby of hers, she claimed herself a coffee enthusiast and that's why Ann was very offended when she saw a stranger guy putting sugar in his already-full-of-sugar-cause-it-had-a-heap-of-whipped-cream coffee. She scrunched her face and a made disapproving gruntle which was noticed by the guy and so he asked, "Do you have any problem with my coffee, miss?"

"The way you are drinking, whatever that is, is not right." Replied Ann. "It is coffee and I am drinking it the way I like it. What is your problem with my choice of coffee? And who are you to have a say in what I put in my body?" The guy was agitated.

"I am Ann, and it is my business when you are clearly insulting coffee. If you only wanted a flavor then there are flavored candies you can get, why are you killing a perfect taste?"

"I can have it in any way I like!"

"Okay let me dumb it down for you. That is not coffee, if you want to die of hyperglycemia, why don't you just down a pack of sugar instead of wasting good coffee beans and milk?" Behind her, Iris face-palmed herself, knowing what was going to transpire in the next few minutes. She and Justice sat on the bar stools and started munching on the popcorn Pepper magically placed in front of them.

"Then Oh Coffee Blessed One! Please do tell me more about this culture that I am so blatantly insulting!" Strangely the guy was starting to find amusement in this conversation.

"Coffee is meant to be savored, it is meant to grace your soul, and it is not something that needs to be ridiculed with fake flavor!"

"How is sugar a fake flavor? And how do you savor the taste of coffee?"

"The beans have their distinct fragrance, the first time you smell them it gives you a taste, then you grind them and when you pour hot water over them, they give you the perfect aroma and a sense of belonging. This concoction when enters your mouth, swirl it around and let your whole body take a whiff of heaven. And that is how you enjoy the pure essence of coffee, not in a rude way like you are!" Huffed Ann.

"Pepper please ban this guy, write in bold letters-" Ann turned to the guy, "What is your name?"

"You can call me Cam" he smiled. "Yes, Pepper ban Cam from coming here again! I will not tolerate this anymore!"

After a pause, Ann continues, "Also, you have a cute smile."

At this Cam burst out laughing. He was quite amused by the strange, coffee-obsessed girl who did not hold back on her words. "Thank you, My Lady," Cam bowed to her, "If you don't mind, I would like to learn how to drink coffee without insulting cultured people. If you would be so kind I will forever be in your debt."

"Oh! Of course. I am always excited to do that, are you available right now? Let us get started! Pepper 2 black coffees please."

Iris decided to jump in and save the guy, "Ann! Leave the poor guy, he has not even met you 15 mins back and you are dragging him to get coffee! Maybe he is busy." To this, Ann cheekily replies, "I have the decency to ask for coffee first, not like I dragged him to some dark corner to do the unspeakable!"

"Don't worry coffee-crazed's friend, as it turns out that I am completely free right now and, in the mood, to learn about the world of coffee."

This was a start of a new friendship. Cam actually started to like coffee as much as Ann did and they regularly met at the café to spend more time together. Ann found that Cam was short for nothing, and that made her laugh for quite a while. He had just moved to the town 2 days before they bumped into each other and also, he was a flower shop owner. Ann also being a plant enthusiast, liked being at his shop. After finishing school, she would pick up her coffee, and directly go to the flower shop and hang out with Cam till sunset. If he was busy or out of the shop for delivery, she would finish her homework or just read.

Ann was well known around the town, she helped Cam settle in easily, and he soon found out that Ann took after her mother. Dianne, Ann's mother, kept treating him like her own son. Cam was settling in well; he was touched by how homey it felt with Ann's family and more so because he fell for Ann. He had never met a girl like her, she was strange and a walking controversy. The chirpy but serious, clumsy but focused, romantic at heart but also reasoned with logic, vulnerable but a strong believer in her self-worth; the ever-giving girl. She surely was bold and flirtatious but got easily flustered too!

"They surely stopped making women like you." Thought Cam, as they were walking down a path in the park.

Ann saw him smiling, "What are you thinking, or Who are you thinking about?" Before Cam could reply she continued, "Is it me? Cause who else can make you smile like that? But you don't have to think about me, just look at my pretty face and smile."

Cam chuckled and looked at her, "You are right! Why didn't I think of that before? It is like you make my brain shut down." She liked his smile and he liked being the reason she smiled.

"Come on pretty face, let's go home, Mom is waiting for us!" Another day passed, and another opportunity was missed. Cam wanted to tell Ann how he felt, but he had not found the right time or maybe he was just a coward; maybe Iris and Justice were right about him.

One such day, the gang decided to go to an amusement park. Iris and Justice knew what Cam felt for Ann, so they tried keeping them together all the time. Ann was delighted, she loved the adrenaline rush she felt while going on a rollercoaster and Cam like the love fool he was, kept following her around. As the sun started to set, they moved towards the Ferris wheel, it being the most popular

ride to watch the sunset there was a long queue to ride on it. Iris and Justice pushed Cam and Ann in the same cart. Cam gave them a grateful smile. As their cart came to the top, Ann was mesmerized by the view. Today's sunset was one of the most beautiful ones she had ever seen, the vivid colors that spread across the sky captivated her. "It is so beautiful!" exclaimed Ann.

"I agree" replied Cam but he was not even looking at the sunset. His vivid colors danced in Ann's eyes, "It is completely bewitching!"

Soon they got down from the Ferris Wheel and as they were exiting, due to people rushing in Ann fell and scratched her knees and hands. It was not painful but she winced while walking, so Cam rushed to get first aid.

As she was sitting on a bench and Cam was cleaning her wounds, she noticed him. It felt like she was looking at him for the first time all over again; a few hair strands falling over his eyes, she loved his fluffy hair that bounced with every step he took, his long lashes that fluttered against his eyes when he blinked, his cute nose that scrunched whenever it itched, his tantalizing lips that looked like the softest feather had morphed onto his mouth. At that time, she realized how deeply she had fallen for this stranger who was insulting coffee when they met for the first time.

As Cam was cleaning her wounds with care, she held his hands. He looked up at her with a questioning look, to which Ann replied, "You know I just realized one thing. I don't know if it is the mood or the place but I would definitely not be doing this if not for you!"

Cam chuckled, "What is it my lady? Am I not doing a good job of cleaning your wounds?" Teased Cam.

"You are the funniest guy!" Ann laughed sarcastically. "No, it is not about that. Right now, just as you were blowing on my cuts, the sun rays fell on you so perfectly, you looked like you came out of a movie. You looked like that guy from books; I like to read, the one who is written by a woman. You know they don't make men like you anymore."

Just as Cam was about to reply to her, they got interrupted by a phone call, he was getting a call from his mother. Frustrated he picked up the call, gestured to Ann that he'll be back in a minute, and went a bit far away to talk. He looked worried and it was confirmed when he came back and said that we need to leave right now, and I need to leave for my hometown. My mother needs me, and without explaining any further they just left.

As Cam was loading his luggage into the car, he goes over to Ann and tells her, "I know what you were going to say, and I do not want to say anything right now. Let me deal with the situation back at home and when I come back, we can talk about it in detail. Okay, love?" Ann was choking back on her tears so she could not say anything except nod her head and hug Cam tightly. It was a goodbye, but she did not know at the time, that was probably the last goodbye they would say.

For the next few days, they tried to keep in touch, but it seemed like Cam was busy tending to his mother. After that he completely stopped replying, Ann tried calling him but there was no response; this continued for a couple of months. Agitated and hurt, Ann decided to visit him, but when she reached his house, but it was locked. She asked around to the neighbors, and all she got to know was that they have moved a few weeks back. Where? No one had an idea. Devasted Ann returned home and tried to go on with her life.

Two years passed since the goodbye, and Ann has gone through a plethora of emotions. At first, she missed him, then she got angry, then she was sad, and now she longed for him. At times she screamed at the sky as if the moon could

pass her message to him, wherever he was. Her friends tried to cheer her up, she was happy on the surface but her pillow knew how much she missed being with him. She felt like she had lost the meaning of life and to search for that Ann went on a solo trip to Rome. It was their city; they had talked about walking down the streets of Rome and experiencing the culture it had to offer. But time had passed and things had changed, it was just Ann roaming around the streets of Rome looking at the local stores and the culture that oozed out of each pavement brick.

Although it was her first time visiting this place, she felt a sense of familiarity in the air. As if the winds were talking to her, asking her to halt and turn around, wanting her to wait. Pulled by an invisible force, Ann turned around and her breath hitched. There he was standing, smiling, and looking at her amidst a crowd of strangers. It took her a whole minute to realize that she was not dreaming, that he was really in front of her, and they smiled as they looked at each other. Suddenly

Picture credit: @samik.09

Shailee Patel was born in 1998; in a small town near Surat, Gujarat. She is a content writer, who is inspired by her surroundings and tries to put the emotions felt, into words. Often, she feels as if the world is running too fast and she remains stagnant, at such times creating stories like 'Finding Home' helps to ground herself. Through this story she has tried to do the same; bring the world of Ann for others to see, feel, and absorb. This story takes the reader through different shades of friendship, love, and belonging.

From Failure to Success: A Journey of a Graduate

It was graduation day and Thomas was sitting in his room, staring at his graduation gown. He had failed to get a job after graduation and felt like a complete failure. He had always been a bright student, but somehow, things had not worked out the way he had planned. He had applied for several jobs, but none of them had called him for an interview.

Thomas had always been a confident person, but the constant rejections had taken a toll on him. He had started doubting his abilities and had begun to think that he was not good enough for anything. He had spent countless hours browsing the internet, trying to find a way out of his predicament. That was when he stumbled upon a blog that talked about the importance of failure.

The blog post talked about how failure was a necessary part of success and how it was an opportunity to learn and grow. It also talked about the importance of perseverance and how successful people never gave up in the face of failure. Those words resonated with Thomas and he decided to take action.

He started applying for more jobs, but this time, he made sure that he tailored his resume and cover letter to the job requirements. He also started networking and reaching out to people in his field. He attended job fairs and career events and made sure that he followed up with the recruiters.

Despite his efforts, Thomas continued to face rejection. But he didn't give up. He continued to apply and continued to network. He also started volunteering and taking courses to enhance his skills. He even took up freelance work to gain more experience.

One day, Thomas received an email from a recruiter who was interested in his profile. He was called for an interview and he prepared for it with all his might.

He researched the company, the job requirements, and even practiced his interview skills with a friend.

The day of the interview arrived and Thomas was nervous, but he took a deep breath and walked into the interview room. The interview went well, and Thomas felt confident that he had done his best. He went back home and waited anxiously for the recruiter's call.

A few days later, Thomas received the call that changed his life. The recruiter had offered him the job. Thomas couldn't believe his ears. He had finally succeeded.

Thomas learned that failure was not the end of the road but an opportunity to learn and grow. He realized that success was not just about talent but about perseverance and hard work. He had learned to never give up on his dreams, no matter how hard things got.

Thomas went on to excel in his job and received accolades from his colleagues and superiors. He even got promoted within a year of joining the company. He had come a long way from the day he had felt like a failure.

Thomas had proved to himself that he was capable of achieving anything he set his mind to. He had gone from being a failure to a success story. His journey had taught him that anything was possible if he was willing to work hard and persevere, even in the face of failure.

In his journey, Thomas started to mentor other graduates who were facing similar struggles. He shared his experience and emphasized the importance of never giving up on their dreams. He encouraged them to keep trying and to learn from their failures.

Thomas also started to explore his interests outside of work. He joined a local community theatre group and found a passion for acting. He also started to

write short stories and poems in his spare time. He realized that he had talents and passions beyond his job and that pursuing these interests gave him a sense of fulfilment.

As time passed, Thomas continued to grow both professionally and personally. He was promoted to a managerial role and was given the responsibility of leading a team. He also started to publish his writing and received positive feedback from readers. He had found success not only in his job but also in his personal pursuits.

Looking back, Thomas realized that his failure after graduation had been a blessing in disguise. It had taught him important lessons about perseverance, hard work, and the value of failure. It had also opened doors to new opportunities and passions that he may not have explored otherwise.

Thomas was grateful for the journey he had taken and for the person he had become. He had transformed from a failure to a success story and had found fulfillment in his career and personal pursuits. He had learned that failure was not the end but a stepping stone to greater things.

As Thomas continued to reflect on his journey, he realized that he had developed a new sense of resilience and courage. He was no longer afraid of failure because he knew that it was an opportunity to learn and grow. He had developed a growth mindset that allowed him to see challenges as opportunities rather than obstacles.

Thomas also realized that he had developed a sense of empathy and compassion for others who were facing similar struggles. He understood the pain and frustration of job rejections and the feeling of being stuck. He made it a point to mentor and guide those who were struggling and to share his story with them.

Thomas became a beacon of hope for many graduates who felt lost and uncertain about their future. He showed them that success was possible if they were willing to work hard and remain resilient. He encouraged them to develop a growth mindset and to see failure as an opportunity to learn and grow.

Thomas's journey had taught him that success was not just about achieving goals but about the journey itself. He had learned to embrace the challenges and to find joy in the process. He had discovered that life was full of surprises and opportunities if he was willing to explore and take risks.

In the end, Thomas knew that his journey was far from over. He still had dreams and goals that he wanted to achieve, and he knew that there would be challenges along the way. But he was ready for them. He had developed the skills and mindset to face whatever came his way and to turn failures into opportunities.

As he looked back at his graduation gown, Thomas smiled. He realized that he had come a long way since then and that he had grown both professionally and personally. He was no longer a failure but a success story, and he knew that his journey had just begun.

Thomas knew that his journey was far from over, but he was excited about what the future held. He had discovered new interests and passions that he wanted to explore further. He had made new connections and friendships that had enriched his life. He had also learned to appreciate the small things in life and to find joy in everyday moments.

As he sat in his room, Thomas thought about what he wanted to achieve next. He knew that he wanted to continue to grow in his career and to take on new challenges. He also wanted to explore his creative side and to write a book someday. He smiled at the thought of all the possibilities that lay ahead.

Thomas realized that success was not a destination but a journey. It was about constantly learning, growing, and evolving. He knew that there would be setbacks and failures along the way, but he was ready for them. He had developed the resilience and mindset to overcome them and to turn them into opportunities.

Thomas had learned that failure was not a judgment of his abilities but a part of the process. It was an opportunity to learn and to improve. He had also learned that success was not just about achieving goals but about the person he had become in the process.

As he got up from his chair, Thomas looked at his graduation gown one last time. He smiled and whispered to himself, "From failure to success, what a journey it has been!" He knew that his story would inspire others who were facing similar struggles and that he had become a role model for resilience, courage, and a growth mindset.

Thomas walked out of his room, ready to take on whatever the future held. He had come a long way since graduation day, and he was excited to see where the journey would take him next.

Thomas went on to achieve great success in his career. He became a respected leader in his field and was recognized for his innovative ideas and contributions. He mentored countless graduates and helped them navigate their career paths. He also continued to explore his creative side and wrote a book that became a bestseller.

Picture credit: Samik09

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II मोक्ष: II - THE VEILED EXPECTATION

Summer Sunday, the day off and I was reclining in the loggia, experiencing sweltering heat on that day. A tiny little bird was chirping softly in the maze of leaves. The mellifluous sound of that bird put me to sleep. Unexpectedly the bird popped up in front of me, straddling the iron bar. It took a moment to understand that the bird was suffering from the intense heat, yearning for water with an unquenchable thirst. Really the day was different than other; a fiery orange ball of beloved god was pouring loads of heat waves on mother earth.

Excitedly, I called to my young son, Neil, to bring water for our little guest. I was thrilled not only to introduce our little guest to my son as well as concern to consummate its thirst. Within moments, Neil placed a mug of water by the wall, and the bird eagerly quenched its thirst. The sigh of contentment from our little guest was palpable. After a short rest, it spread its wings and dove into the world below.

At that very moment Neil looked at me and exclaimed "he didn't even thank us". I was astonished that a two-and-a-half-year-old boy was expecting gratitude. We adults, unknowingly, burden our innocent children with the yoke of expectations.

One may deduct my thoughts about gratitude. Teaching someone to express gratitude and expecting gratitude in return are distinct concepts. Our rampant expectations unwittingly tarnish the pure minds of our children, who sag under the load of comparison and expectancy from parents. Gradually, we become enslaved by our obsessive need to expect.



Data on lifetime disorders from 2020 onward shows that two out of every three cases of psychological distress are due to expectations. All stages of life - childhood, adolescence, middle adulthood, and late adulthood - are in the realm of expectations, leading to irritability, confabulation, problem-solving difficulties, attention deficit disorders, and most significantly, sleeplessness. The demon of expectation spreads his wings of darkness around every creature on earth and will surely engulf every other person in a short time.

This disease of expectation infects all relationships, whether romantic, friendly, parental, student-teacher, neighbourly, or casual, prompting each party to expect something from the other. This is just the tip of the iceberg. Social media plays a pivotal role in this, with young people suffering from attention deficit disorders, loss of interest in studies, and in some cases, life itself.

As counsellors, we have encountered cases where patients exhibit irritability, screaming and shouting, anorexia nervosa, loss of hope, suicidal thoughts, and desires to leave their homes or live in isolation. After a complete case analysis, our team inferred that the cause behind these unusual changes in behavioural patterns are nothing but expectations. MRI studies of such psychological cases have demonstrated massive and potential changes in the lateral and dorsal cortical regions of the brain. The use of mood elevators played an important role in some cases but for a short span, others are still struggling with the subconscious mind and its issues.

The portrait of expectation is incomplete without disappointment and judgment. Unfulfilled expectations breed disappointment and lead the expectant individual to judge others for not responding to their expectations. Without them, the philosophical definition of expectations never gets completed. A disappointed mind is the main feature of unfulfilled expectations. However, the person expecting judges the other one by thinking "why he/she/it/they didn't respond?" One gets tangled in the web of suspicion and trust issues. The state of mind suddenly translates into irritability, the thoughts keep running in the back of their mind, the person tries to draw their own hypothesis and conclusions; which may be close or away to that particular thing. Once the subconscious mind drives out the conscious mind like a threadless kite in the sky. Once the spider of suspicion creates its web in the mind it's very difficult for a psychological counselor to take it out.

The funniest thing is that people do not spare the dead also. In my culture, we have a ritual of Aatmashanti after the funeral, especially on the tenth day. We use to figure out the expectation of the dead and fulfil it by offering things to crow, the irony is that if one really wants to satisfy the soul why you did not offer the same when they were alive? And if offered why does the soul persist with expectation?

A question arises here that if the soul acquires MOKSHA because Soul is the power, it doesn't require anything, it's immortal. We mortal morons assume that the dead will never let us live peacefully because they leave this world with expectations and we have to complete that. We must have to understand one thing and should always keep in mind, the creator is sitting somewhere and they have perfectly decorated this universe. The proportion between gravitational force and the magnetic field is so accurate that every sphere in this universe is playing its role perfectly. Not a 0.000000 chance of error in their work, so who we are to think that we can complete it?

We have to understand, everyone has their personal space, and by expecting something from them unknowingly we are violating the same. They too have their own life, if they are incapable to say NO, one must understand it and let them spend their time on their terms. After all, if they want to fulfil your expectation they will, without uttering a word and if they don't want to fulfil them they will never do it, so why take efforts?

If we start to acquire LET IT GO attitude lots of equations may get solved in an instance. Let them live their life on their terms, let them enjoy, why we are poking in someone's personal space, what happens if he or she wins and we lose?

In Jainism, we call SHREE BHAGAVAN MAHAVIR, JITENDRA, which means one who can win all their senses. Some of us as humans, throughout our lives practice dan dharma, social activities, give food to the needy, and feed street animals, in the quest of attaining MOKSHA. Can one really get MOKSHA by expecting MOKSHA? The answer is NO. We are not happy with what we have. India is far behind in the happiness index, standing on the list at no.126 amongst 195 countries.

We have to understand that happiness means satisfaction, I'm not saying that one has to adjust but satisfaction can clearly be pictured as what one has at that particular moment. Why you are comparing with others? One has to remember that just like how the clock shows different times in Perth, Beijing the and Paris because of the difference in the times zones. We must wait for the same times to appear same time in our clock in respect to our time zone.

In my opinion, we are here for KARMA; the outcomes are not in our hand. We often forgot that in the literature SHREEMAD GEETAJI, our great lord SHREE KRISHNA informed ARJUNA that

॥ कर्मण्येवाधिकरस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन मा कर्मफलहेतूर्भुमा ते संगोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥

Dr Vikrant Anil Tungar is a highly accomplished and esteemed author known for his profound insights into various domains of knowledge. Dr Vikrant holds multiple advanced degrees, Master's in psychology, Doctorate in medicine and perusing PhD in forensic psychology. His literary works explore a wide range of themes, from existential ponderings to social commentary, from the complexities of human relationships to the exploration of cultural identities. With his exceptional talent for crafting engaging narratives and his profound understanding of the human spirit.

Samsara

"Come on, you can do it. Your life is not just about bowing your head and ageing to everyone," her brother pleaded. "You have your dreams and you have to live them. Understood sister? I am not letting you become wallpaper."

She rolled her eyes and pursed her lips.

"You are unnecessarily making a mountain out of a molehill. I am happy with the engagement. I agree with our parents. Just because you don't seem to agree on anything with them doesn't mean I should not be less of a disappointment." She regretted the moment the words left her mouth as she watched her brother's face lose its colour as he flinched back. "Just leave me alone".

The jingling of the bell wrenched her out of the well of her past memories; her eyes drawn into a couple of customers entering the café. Her assistant tapped her on the shoulder and handed her a cheque.

"Madam, this is the cheque for the order we delivered."

Lopa nodded at her assistant and accepted the cheque putting it in the drawer of the table. With a lazy sigh, her eyes drifted across her café. It was perfect, just as she had imagined and a small smile flit across her face. The walls of the entire place were done in brown, just the way she liked it and was fitted with beautiful paintings and cheeky quotes along with the name of the café in bright letters. The back wall had a huge bookshelf with various titles glinting from the numerous rows. Round wooden tables made up the rest of the café with cosy armchairs completing the picture. Just opposite to the door was the counter where the baristas milled about; taking orders and operating the machines. There was another shelf nearby that displayed the baked goods that were delivered fresh from the kitchen attached to the café. It was all a successful whole; something that would not have been possible without the most important person of her life - her brother.

Something poignant and bittersweet flushed inside her. How can you despise a person the most in the world; only to realize it is the person whom you also love the most?

But that was how it was always with her.

Her brother!

The sibling she had despised and the one person who had been the last hope of her salvaging the tattered remains of her life.

In hindsight, she could clearly see things she had been blind to earlier. She thought she had taken the proper and correct route only to realize that much of her actions had been conditioned into her. Maybe if she was her present version in the past; things would have been different. But fate often works in mysterious ways and some chains are not seen by the naked eye.

There was something different about her even when she was a child. Something that was not obvious but inserted in every corner of her life colouring it in a manner that nothing was ever left to chance. She was always the odd one out, the last one, the weird one, the different one. It was no wonder that this distance from others had propelled her into agreeing to what her parents had decided for her; hoping that perhaps agreement might give her the love every child is promised. These dreams however, were robbed off in the dust storm that destroyed the precariously balancing dunes in the desert forcibly drowning her in the heat of the quicksand from which she saw no escape.

And then she tried doing what everyone expected of her. She got married without voicing any protest at the tender age of nineteen to a thirty-year-old. It was apparently proper and the right decision. Only then it was not and not even her rule abiding parents with their obsessive tendencies about their reputation could manage to bear the brunt of the backlash that happened. After all there was

something wrong with her and it was not just a rumour anymore. Kuloikhoniya, they had sneered at her. Bad blood, some had called her. Her husband and his family acted like strangers in public and people walked around her with a wide berth and shuffling eyes.

But then her brother had come and changed everything. The nosy git that he was, he had flown out of the nest long back and wrenched her out too, even as she resisted the entire journey, kicking and wailing; wanting to return home. He had wanted her to be independent, to be able to live her life by herself. Thus, he had emotionally blackmailed her into boarding the train with him and actually travelling out of the state.

And life outside Assam, was very different.

"Always remember this sister that the moment you die, you will be termed as a body. Bring the body, people would say. Put the body there, wash the body etc. No matter how much you toe the line, it is all going to be the same. So, listen to your mind. Do as the instincts of your mind say."

"Don't you mean, what the heart says?"

Her brother looked at her aghast. "Of course, I don't. The heart beats for blood circulation, not to think. We have our brains for that," he commented dryly.

She blinked rapidly as her eyes watered. Taking a deep breath, she gripped the edge of the table and released her tensed posture. Things had changed since those traumatic years. Changed so much that at times she felt as if she was stuck in a fictive tale and feared that she would be woken up soon without seeing the end of the dreams. Today she lived independently, earned by herself and was her own boss; far different from the demure shy and ridiculously rule-bound individual she had been long back. Her business thrived and she enjoyed the one thing she felt she would never have - her own private space, along with an important realization that self-acceptance was the first necessary quality one should have to move on in life. She saw a woman wearing a grey suit dash into the café in her periphery and sighed as the door slammed loudly. Some people had seriously no patience to even politely close the door and not slam it shut like some sort of a trumpet

"Hello! Hello! Check!"

Her eyes shifted to the small open area stage in the middle of the café. It was a daily ground for many local artistic youths who would travel down the streets for some like-minded conversation on music, art and literature. Kind of old school vibe but she loved the way the ambience of her café fuelled people to interact so well. Her brows furrowed

as she took in the participant for the open mic session. Interestingly it was not one of the regulars. Rather it was the first time she had seen her.

Unlike the younger talents in the café, she was a decade older than the regulars. Though not much could be said about her looks for a heavily embroidered chunri covered her face from the light. In the shadows her eyes flickered as she looked around awed.

But the woman in question clasped the mic and began.

At once the wind outside stilled into a gentle breeze

The speaker began!

The words poured out and Lopamudra froze.

"Have you ever wondered,

If it is pain that makes the world go round

And weave tales that do naught but Shout?

Have you ever wondered,

If the teller is truer or the vague mist:

Of unknown and known held in the fist?

Myth and legends do so but say

The truth is rarely breakable

But sooth less they say!

Five, were the Pandavas

Celebrated for their valour

Crowned in love and adoration.

But five were they too:

Celebrated for their fate

Crowned in chains of pain and shame.

They were called the Panchkanyas by name,

And in their plight, they rose to fame.

But fools are those who know

What they only saw.

Ahalya for all her hurt;

What if was equally a part?

What if not a victim but

An active aggressor of the art?

What if pleasures of the flesh

Had bemoaned her lost mudra

And she had nurtured a grudge

About a weathered land with not a

Single bloom neither of passion nor of compassion

But just the cold rhythm of duty...

What if she had known the face behind the guise

But had wanted to meet her own throbbing vice!

What if, she had just tossed a dice?

And just lost: a game of dice!

Tara was the unmovable mountain

**Of patience and strength as she withstood
A calamity of deaths and betrayal.
Yet she stood firm with her sobriety intact
And warned the sinner of the adverse fact
Alas when Sugriva, the King dulled and bleak
Dowsed in wine, flesh and need;
It was a Queen that people new
Of valour and strength.
So who was the power in all,
The King nursed in ale or the Queen beyond?
A Queen unlike all was Mandodari,
Who Chose to advice but was snubbed:
Yet look at the fate and wheel of fortune
Kingdom changed hands
Blood replaced blood
But the Queen remained the same.
And my dear listeners;
Don't we all know it?
How bound a King remains,**

Just like pawn in a ladder of chess

Where the Queen decides

The fate of the game!

Maybe Kunti was not as simple

And demure as most do see

What if she knowingly fed two on her breast

So that blood would never feast on its kin?

Was that the reason that she saw them same

Same eyes, same love, same name

Yet when one difference came

And the jewel of Panchal stepped in name

She made them all a part of the game.

Divide and rule was not the Company's game

For Kunti played it all in her frame

Begged to her son born of shame

To spare the child whose fame was in name.

When fire burned in her veins

She stepped out of the fiery blaze

Draupadi leapt out, wild and unfazed.

Married to five, never did she despair:

Until the taunts stripped her bare

Cruel and Mirthless in all its name.

And then she carved her own: As the blood rained

Her rage sent down, Millions to their pain.

Kurukshetra, as the name suffice

The power of her fury that razed the sky.

Time has changed hands

But we are in the rut unchanged.

Perhaps all we need is to look what we see

And remember that the past has shadows never freed!

There was a deafening silence that rang loudly in the air; cascading like a glorious fall with naught in the ear except emptiness. The dim lights of the café throbbed as if they too were conscious of the stunned grace that lit across the room.

The melodious and yet haunting voice had stopped, the perpetrator calmly stepping back, her face permanently hidden behind her chunri. Her dark eyes simmered as she took in the quiet faces and deftly turned around. Immediately

voices buzzed like bees and someone clapped loudly. The silence broke and soon others followed with a small smattering of applause.

But she did not care. What she had come for was done, she thought as she took in the pale composure of the owner of the café. As she passed her, she felt a deep longing rise in her. Soon, she thought, soon you will be yourself again for it is nearly time.

She wanted to go to her but she restrained herself. Not now, today was not for her. Today was for the other one. And so, in muted grace she sank down on the corner most sofa and gestured for a coffee.

As she sat, she became minutely aware of those pointed glances at her back. Now those were familiar. It was quite ironical and sad how some things never really changed. Years passed, kingdoms demolished, civilizations changed; but what remained the same, was this utterly human quality to judge.

A sigh rose up in her. She could feel those familiar judgemental glances peculiarly stuck on her as they analysed the way she sat, what she wore, what she drank, the curve of her shoulders, the stiffening of her posture. Yet she did not feel the need to run away as she had before. For now, things were different; the costs were higher. She could not leave even if she wanted. She could feel it in her bones. It was nearly time and she had been alone for so long!

Gargi watched the poet settle onto a seat as a flush rose up her cheeks. She felt heady, almost rootless and light as something rose up in her. The voice resounded in her ears weaving a tale of impressions and emotions that felt familiar but escaped by the moment she tried to understand. Her feet shook and unable to think, her feet took her towards her. It was not hard to find her. Everyone was peeping at her, some watching the hooded figure with wide eyes or others peering from above the rim of the coffee mugs.

Without invitation, she dropped in front of her and cleared her throat. The very next moment, the poet lifted her head to look at her and Gargi found herself pinned by the eyes of the artist she had heard just minutes ago. They are beautiful, she thought distractedly, as they roved all over her face and stopped at her eyes. Her breaths fastened as her heart suddenly began thundering as if she had run for miles.

But she did not feel scared. She did not feel awkward and not even suffocated anymore. All she felt was a sudden sense of release, a sudden freedom that she could not decipher and a beautiful feeling she could not express.

"Hi," the words fell out of her mouth. "You are beautiful, I-I m...mean," she hastily backtracked, "the way you performed was beautiful. The concept was brilliant. I have always been fascinated with the idea of these five women and somewhere I always felt as if they were more than they appeared. I -I can't tell you how I felt when I heard you talking about the things that I had always wanted to say," she finished in one breathe with a gasp.

The dark eyes simply stared at her and Gargi felt the rush of warmth as a flush made its way on her face. Her lips pursed and her ears reddened. Way to make a fool out of yourself, she thought disparagingly.

The woman in front of her straightened and with her nimble fingers slowly removed the chunri that covered her face. Gargi nearly gasped. She was beautiful, Gargi thought as she stared at the captivating face, perhaps the most beautiful woman she had ever seen in her life. As she removed the cloth, her dark eyes latched onto Gargi's and then...

They burned!

The skin was mottled into a grotesque layering. The pale hue damaged by a crude sheen that was full of boils and her cheeks appeared as if mucus had pooled around them and frozen to a gnarled structure.

Her heart thudded loudly and Gargi blinked. The very next second the beautiful face stared up at her; comely and entrancing.

Her lips curved into a smile. "I have waited for a long time," she began in her unearthly voice which rang in her ears drowning all the commotion of the café.

The outside world faded and it was only them. "I am glad to finally meet you in this time, Gargi."

Gargi froze and tried to assemble her thoughts trying to remember if she had ever mentioned her name. But her brain felt as if it was doped by a long-standing drug and her thoughts felt sluggish and unconvincing to herself. The air had thickened and there was a vitality that had begun to rise inside her.

The woman smirked. "I am Ghosha."

Picture credit: Google

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Sourav Bhattacharya

"I didn't take my first photograph until my second year of college. My first photographs were just images, lifeless, but over time I started recognizing frames. The presence of a device trained my eyes to stop and observe my surroundings, an awareness I cannot describe. The photographs I take are frames that naturally appeared before me without any effort from my end, I just stood and captured them."

Instagram ID: @perpendicularrrr

Samik Bhattacharya

"I wish you could see inside my head. If you did you would say my pictures weren't 10% of what I imagine them in my head. And which is why even though I am tempted, I shall never ask what you interpreted."

Instagram ID: @Samik.09

