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Letter from the Vice Chancellor

I warmly congratulate the Department of English and Modern European Languages for the launch of a new online magazine, *Rhetorica Quarterly*, that marks the beginning of a new literary endeavour by the faculty and students of the department. Initiated under the guidance of the Head of Department Professor Ranu Uniyal, I am sure the magazine will prove an effective and innovative platform for showcasing the creative talents of the students in its forthcoming pages.

As a literary and academic activity, the effort made in this respect remains worth appreciating. I hope this new magazine also initiates a new vigour amongst the students and inspires many budding writers to reach out to a larger reading audience. Being launched in the centennial year of our university, the magazine launch also adds on to our celebration of the one hundred years in 2020. I once again congratulate the Head of Department as well as the entire editorial board of *Rhetorica Quarterly* for successfully compiling their inaugural issue, and extend to them my warm wishes for their forthcoming issues.



(Prof. Alok Kumar Rai)

From the Chair

I am delighted to introduce the inaugural issue of *Rhetorica Quarterly*, an online literary endeavour of the students of the Department of English and Modern European Languages. 2020 is the Centennial year of the University of Lucknow and will also go down in history as a Pandemic year. It is commendable that the students of the Department have come together on one platform through this literary initiative.

Literature has always played a significant role in society. It becomes our comfort and ally in stressful situations. The journal is of the students and for the students. The various sections bring together the aspirations, anxiety and dreams of our young students. These students are the backbone of the Department. They are also our hope for the future. As Head and Advisory Editor my task was to inspire and encourage them to work as a team. I was thrilled to see the variety of thought and engagement with life and I am very grateful to all the contributors for sending in their work. A large number of foreign students from the Department responded to our call with great enthusiasm. The Board of Editors and their co-members must be applauded for their amazing entrepreneurial skills, a mix of creative energy and hard work in putting together the entire issue.

Our honourable Vice Chancellor Prof. Alok Kumar Rai deserves our special thanks for being an inspiration and guide to all of us.

We dedicate this issue to Late Mrs. Mohini Mangalik (1925-2020) – our beloved teacher – an icon of grace and unconditional love. I know her blessings are with each one of us associated with the Department.

I hope these bright and vivacious young minds with their power of seeing, the ability to empathize and their remarkable sensitivity will bring a smile on your face and move your hearts.

I can assure you this is just a beginning and the journey will make significant strides in future.

The inaugural theme-free issue is now in your hands.

Happy Reading.

Stay Safe and Stay Blessed.

Ranu Uniyal

Professor and Head,

Department of English and Modern European Languages,

University of Lucknow.



Dedicated to
Mrs. Mohini Mangalik
(1925-2020)



MRS. MOHINI MANGALIK (1925-2020)

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Letter from the Editor

On behalf of the editorial board of *Rhetorica Quarterly*, it gives me great pleasure to present before you our first literary issue that has been brought into shape in the summer of 2020. Conceived, coordinated and compiled in our 'quarantined post Covid-19 outbreak scenario', our inaugural literary issue offers an innovative compilation of the works by a range of richly diverse talents in their most contemporary flavours.

At the onset, we would like to express our foremost and sincere gratitude towards our Head of Department, Professor Ranu Uniyal, for the conception of this idea and her sustained guidance throughout the completion of this project. It is primarily owing to her encouragement, motivation and literary vision that the members of the editorial board have been collectively working as a team to give shape to this issue.

As literary frames providing structural foundations to both visual and verbal creativity, we divide this inaugural issue into four major sections at large. In the first section, we bring before you eight pieces of creative '**Non-Fiction**' that touch upon some very interesting aspects of our notions of everyday life transitioning across perspectives. The second section presents a selection of seven works of '**Fiction**' written in varied styles. The third section offers an extensive range of '**Poetry**' that demonstrates the rhythmic encapsulations of manifold poetic personas. Lastly, we add on a '**Photography**' section that displays the images captured by some finely observant enthusiasts. We warmly thank each one of our contributors for their submissions that enabled us to formulate this inaugural issue.

And while literature continues to remain one of the best modes for capturing and immortalising the human fancies across diverse formats, we as scholars and students at the Department of English and Modern European Languages warmly initiate this new literary endeavour for both the readers and writers alike. We hope to connect, compile and virtually collate as many writers as possible in the future issues to sustain our outreach as a scholarly inventive platform.

Once again, my heartfelt gratitude to all our contributors who made this inaugural issue diversely creative by sending us their works in abundance, and extending to us their kind support and cooperation throughout the editorial process. We hope to see many of you again in our future issues and, at the same time keenly look forward to bringing out new and innovative voices in our forthcoming virtual folios.

With warm regards,
Amrita Sharma,
Poetry Editor,
Editorial Board,
Rhetorica Quarterly.




NON FICTION

*“ Writing non-fiction is more like sculpture,
a matter of shaping the reasearch into the finished thing.”*

- Joan Didion -





A JOURNEY ACROSS THE LANES OF KOLKATA: POPULAR BENGALI STREET FOODS

Among the cities in India, popular for their staggering street foods, obviously the names of Mumbai, Kolkata, New Delhi, Hyderabad and Lucknow would be mentioned first. But surpassing all other places, it is Kolkata that has been regarded as the best street food hub of India, according to the survey 'Taste of Travel' mentioned in a report of the Times of India. Bengalis are generally known to be connoisseurs of good food but it is not only machh-vaat (fish and rice) or rosogolla (rasgullas), as most people think, that defines Bengali cuisine. To talk only of street foods, Kolkata does possess a rich variety of delectable food items. Any person, who has ever been to Kolkata, even if he or she is from a culture other than Bengali, can never ignore its charm and singularity. Kolkata, one of the oldest cities of India, has witnessed many ups

and downs through the course of history and accommodated several cultures and has been the birthplace of modern literary and artistic thoughts. Kolkata is not regarded as "cultural capital" of India for no reason. Whereas, some of its culinary practices are very much specific to Bengali culture, some of them had been adopted from other traditions but through the course of time have intermixed with Bengali culture losing the genesis. As the essay is aimed at introducing the readers to the authentic street foods of Kolkata, I will not be talking about the well-known roadside foods like panipuri (better known as fuchka in Kolkata), chowmein, momos etc that are common not only in the streets of Kolkata but any other cities in India. Rather, I want to take the readers on a journey through the streets of the "City of Joy" and acquaint them with typical Bengali street foods that are no

less important part of what forms the very essence of Kolkata.

When someone says Bengali food, what is likely to come to the mind is Fish. Indeed, fish is an indispensable part of Bengali food habit though there are a good number of vegetarians as well. So the first food item to be talked about can be Fish Fry, a very well-known snack of Kolkata that was once popularised by Kolkata's celebrated "cabins" or small restaurants with private chambers. It is not strictly a street food now as it has gradually made its entry to the kitchens of expensive restaurants as well. Fish fry is not to be confused with fried fish. It is totally different from what it may seem by its name. Fish Fry of Kolkata is made with marinated fillets of Bhetki fish or any other boneless fish that has to be dipped in mixture of beaten eggs and flour, thoroughly coated with breadcrumbs and deep-fried in hot oil. Another item, very much similar to the previous kind is Fish Kobiraji that is also made with fish fillets but its originality lies in the unique coating of mesh.

Apart from fishes, there are plenty of interesting veg items as well that may be more appealing to the readers outside Bengal who are perhaps not much familiar with fish products. Tele-Bhaja is such an item which is a very popular street food of not only Kolkata

but remotest villages of Bengal. In Bengali, "Tele-Bhaja" simply means "fried with oil". In Bengali culture Tele-Bhaja refers to snacks, generally with Besan (gram flour) coating that are deep-fried in oil. It includes Aalur Chop, a type of bread pakoda made with mashed potatoes flavoured with spices, coated with besan and deep fried in abundant oil, Beguni, made in similar process of besan-coat and deep frying with thinly sliced brinjals marinated with spices, Peyaji or onion pakoda, Fuluri which are fluffy yet crunchy small balls made simply of besan and seasonings. These are traditional Bengali Tele-Bhaja but any other "Chop" that is Bengali name for pakoda may fall under this group. Devil or Dimer Chop is another mouth-watering street food of Kolkata that can be said to act as a link between Tele-Bhaja and non-veg Cutlets that are very much popular in Kolkata. Dimer Chop or Devil is made with boiled egg, cut into halves or quarters that are first covered with mixture of mashed potatoes, onion, garlic, spices etc and coated with breadcrumbs after being dipped in the concoction of beaten eggs and flour and deep-fried. The origin of the name "Devil" may lie in its gigantic size.

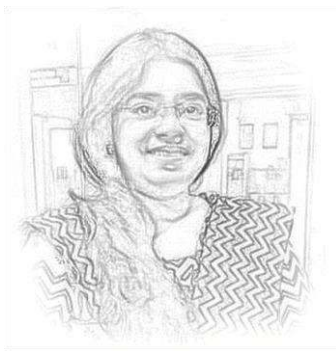
To talk of popular Bengali street foods other than fried snacks, Jhal-Muri and Aloo Kabli are the first to come to mind.

Whereas jhalmuri is made with puffed rice and various tidbits like bhujia, onions, exotic spices and herbs etc, Aloo Kabli is a tangy quick snack made with chopped boiled potatoes tossed in tamarind and spices. Churmur, another popular street item is made with mashed potatoes and similar tidbits like Jhal-Muri but its distinguishing ingredient is papri or crushed fuchka. Another name which can be added to this category is Ghoti-Gorom that is basically salted bhujia or chanachur mixed with onion, spices but it is aamda, a very sour fruit that is its main ingredient and responsible for the tangy flavour.

There are many popular street side foods in Kolkata like Moglai-Porota or

Mughlai Paratha, Kathi Roll, Egg Roll that may not have originated in Bengal but have been so widely adopted and modified in Bengali culture that they carry the phrase “Kolkata style” with their names while being prepared outside West Bengal. To conclude, it can fairly be said that just as Kolkata is unimaginable without the places like the Victoria Memorial, Indian Museum, Marble Palace, St. Paul’s Cathedral, Nandan, Academy of Fine Arts, the street vendors selling these street foods outside these places or in the lanes and alleys of Kolkata are equally part and parcel of the city and the composite Bengali Culture. They together form the very soul of Kolkata.

~ Suswagata Chowdhury




She has completed her master’s degree in English literature from Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata and is currently working as a research scholar in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her area of research includes Diaspora Studies and South Asian Literature.





MADE IN CHINA



‘Made in China’, a phrase used derisively to highlight a lack of quality, has a mysterious contagion merit. Besides the pervasive allurements the label carries, the embossed phrase now hosts a new product (Covid) that nurtures its expansionist ‘virology’. Its DNA is slowly mutating causing both an ingrown and an outgrown spread.

Big Brother, Remember! ‘The tagliners are hardliners’. A wakeup call for those who were busy flexing their atomic muscles, oblivious that the third generation of warring strategy has already arrived in the market.

The novel ‘Coronavirus’ might be a game changer in the business of investment. For the seller does not simply seem to cost you with money for his product. Rather there is more that has claimed worth its invention.

The lives of men across the globe, is just to satisfy his initial share of profit. The gastronomic delight is yet to occur.

Whether, a calculated preparation or an accident in the Wuhan Laboratory, scientists and economists might take years to prove the much speculated conviction of linking the outbreak of Covid -19 to China’s new economic headway. Indeed it is farsighted!

As for now, China has emerged as the real Marxist educator, reminding the mankind of how the economic structure of society (Base and Superstructure) truly can mandate a serious verdict, as and when directed - ‘Lockdown’ and ‘Quarantine’, are such phenomenon whose delivery is at the doorstep of every nation caught in the maze of financial jugglery.

Experts seem to claim that a China dominated Asian order might be in the loop, for those who want to gain some sense of this

unprecedented situation. However what leads our fear to a high end, is its effect across the Asianic quarters, exposing the Capitalist world to a novel state of vulnerability. A state in which, antigen and fiscal vaccines, appear as a double challenge to the economically wounded nations.

Will it retaliate with an adage of “an eye for an eye”? After all, hitting the bull in its eye cannot go for a miss! Should the world give up hope of ever returning to a virus free

world? Is virus the new bomb, and pandemic a ceaseless norm?

If proved true, ‘Made in China’ will become a phrase of fiscal suspicion for posterity to stake an investment. However the ability to sustain even without it, seems to look quite a rare possibility. In such a scenario, ‘wearing the Gauntlet’, will be the last option for future dealings with China.

~ Sadaf Bano



She is a research scholar in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her works have previously been published in GNOSIS and GANDHI e-journal (Sponsored by Gandhi Research Foundation & Bombay Sarvodaya Mandal). Her area of research includes French social theory, Political philosophy, Literary Theory and Criticism.



WHEN A *SHAYAR* TRENDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

With the social media platforms turning to the most potent modes of transmitting information that ranges from personal criticism to cultural objectifications, it is perhaps also turning to the most potent medium for assessing the popularity of cultural intake regarding the diverse aspects of contemporary life. With the literary/poetic communities also exhibiting a significantly large presence on the social media, the virtual coalitions concerning art forms across material borders remains a rapidly growing phenomenon.

With Urdu '*shayari*' as an art form having long been cultivated through the '*mushaira* culture' that has evolved in the Indian subcontinent in the past centuries, it is the growing presence of the contemporary '*shayars*' on the social media that is giving a far

wider recognition to a new generation of *shayars* today.

But as the social media remains flooded with innumerable 'posts' on *shayari* by a number of shayars, it is only a few who succeed in gaining widespread popularity across these platforms. Tehzeeb Hafi, a *shayar* from Pakistan, perhaps remains a popular example to be cited in this context. With videos of Hafi reading *shayari* becoming extremely popular on platforms like Facebook and YouTube, the *shayar* remains notable for attracting audiences from both the Urdu and the non-Urdu speaking communities. With Hafi's popular '*ghazals*' and '*nazms*' capturing the romantic nuances that form a part of our everyday encounters with life in the most simplistic Urdu lexicon, he has certainly become one of the most popular contemporary *shayars* today.

So when a 'shayar', as Tehzeeb Hafi, gets 'trending' on the social media, it becomes exotically attractive for the non-Urdu speakers whose presence on the social media perhaps remains the most probable way of ever encountering a virtual 'mushaira' by sheer matter of the 'hashtag' that is trending now. And while it is the most popular shayars that one would usually first come across on social media, they certainly also remain notable for popularising this old art form that they seemed to have integrated very well with the changing times. But nevertheless while Hafi as a shayar undoubtedly remains very popular, this article is probably for those who might not have come across any such trending video, and would still prefer to read of such a shayar

in print. And if you have not heard or read Hafi before, the following lines that form a part of a popular ghazal by Tehzeeb Hafi, might provide you a glimpse into the works of a Urdu shayar who trends on the social media today:

Mai sukhan mein hoon us jagah ki jahan

Saans lena bhi shayari hai mujhe

Mai kehkagaz ki ek kashti hoon

Pehli barish hi aakhiri hai mujhe

I reside in the bliss of a world

Where my breaths are poetry for me

I am a barque carved out of a paper

The first showers are the last ones for me

(Tehzeeb Hafi, translated by Amrita Sharma).

~ Amrita Sharma

She is a Lucknow based writer currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English from the University of Lucknow. Her works have previously been published in Borderless, Café Dissensus Everyday, Muse India, New Academia, GNOSIS, Dialogue, The Criterion, Episteme and Ashvamegh. Her area of research includes avant-garde poetics and innovative writings in the cyber space.



FIRE ~ WORKS

A FILMIC REPRESENTATION

F*ire*, a movie set in 1996 remains a captivating portrayal of everything unexpected in the world of an orthodox Delhi family that follows and watches *Ramayana* every day. A joint family comprising two brothers Ashok and Jatin, their wives Radha and the newlywed bride, Sita, an old handicapped Beeji and the house help- Mundu. Their lives revolve around the food takeout service and the video-tape store run alongside by the two brothers. Though technically, the food takeout was run & maintained by Radha and later joined by Sita, as by custom, the credit goes to the man of the house.

I find myself lucky to be writing this in the era of women-centric roles and movies empowering women and the LGBTQ community. But for the year 1996, *Fire*, as a movie stands much before its time and becomes path-breaking in many aspects.

No, it's not that the LGBTQ community didn't exist back then, that women

wouldn't feel for each other back then but the fight of this same-sex couple, that too women like Radha and Sita, is worth all the attention and love. Every scene in the movie brings happiness and love and is more empowering than expected. The movie gives you a simplified narrative of alternative sexuality and patriarchy in India. I am thankful to Deepa Mehta for introducing Radha and Sita in our world.

The notion of an 'ideal *Babu*' for the world back then and even today is a woman who cares for every little thing possible in the household and has held the home together as a family for years. Ashok – the 'Saint' who took the oath of celibacy over a decade ago under the guidance of a Guruji (whose ashram and even personal problems are financially taken care of by Ashok, himself) is the mister here. Sadly, Radha has accepted this life as reality & destiny. She takes care of the bedridden, Beeji like a child with utmost dedication – from bathing to cleaning to feeding, the responsibility seems

decided. Radha is often hurled with taunts of not being able to give birth to a child casually, in every possible conversation, which was just normal for the era it is based in. It is kind of pre-decided by the society (read men) that a woman who may not be medically able to give birth, may not have desires or feelings. When Radha says this, you see the pain and anguish in her eyes.

We get the taste of Radha's character only through Sita. This woman filled with life and revolt. Radha comforts Sita in the joint family filled with traditional patriarchal values. It breaks me to see Radha's situation. Desires are not considered an option for women, here. Ashok uses Radha's existence for testing his celibacy abilities for years. And no, these are not considered a favor, like it really should be, but is considered her duty – as a wife. Radha gains the courage to ask the hard question – "How does it help me, Ashok?"

Being in the era when for a woman, to even think about herself, her wishes and desires

was regarded a sin, Radha dares to think about herself and eventually, voices her feelings. Mostly, we catch Radha staring in oblivion, but her eyes are empty and hollow – yet filled with pain. But there is a paradigm shift in Radha's behaviour once she finds her other half – in Sita.

I would like to conclude this attempt to describe the movie by the following lines that, for me as a woman and a viewer, capture the beautifully narrated essence of this filmic representation:

I am thankful to destiny for bringing Sita in Radha's life

I am thankful to Sita for being herself,

I am thankful that Radha had the determination to embrace the flames of fire

Fire of desire

Fire of grit


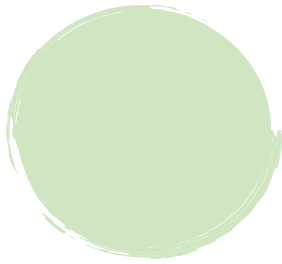
And, Fire of love.

~ Chitra Bajpai



Chitra Bajpai is a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. A creative writer by her interest and a researcher by her passion, her doctoral thesis focuses on the issue of water and its sustained ecology represented across the diverse art mediums.





UNDERSTANDING THE “COLD WIND” AND “WORDSWORTH”

Cold, harsh wind was in full mood to freeze me. It's like she was trying to punish all those poets through me who praised Westerlies of Northern and Southern Hemisphere, who helped many traders to facilitate their trades and Monsoonal winds of India, who brings happiness in the form of droplets for millions and neglected her “cold beauty”, which was indeed beautiful. Nature provides her with this nature, she can't help it. It's not her fault that she's harsh and cold and that's why I can completely understand her anger. And honestly, I am thankful for her anger. Because as soon as my mind stopped feeling my organs, the spectacle in front of me became more and more clear and I think that's why it is easy to recollect this moment, because that spectacle was the only

thing which was present in my conscious state of being.

I witnessed the contrast of subtlety and beauty of the Mist, dancing with the Cold Wind in joy, celebrating the winters of the North and reflecting the very nature of Nature. The same mist without the Cold Wind reflects an unpleasant silence and inspires various kinds of moods of the poets and writers, mostly related to sorrow and depression. The Cold Wind without Mist also loses the attraction. I am not questioning their individual beauty. It's just like that they add more to each other and complete each other.

I was amazed by the fact that we can witness “beauty” in such an unexpected place and in such an unexpected way, and now when I think about Wordsworth writing

“Upon Westminster Bridge”. I find him innocent. He also found “beauty” in an unexpected place and in an unexpected way.

~ Abhinav Shukla



The writer is a student of University of Lucknow currently pursuing BA (hons.) in English. His work of poetry and prose are inspired by the romantic ideals of John Keats. He hopes to carve out his thoughts as a lens for people to see a different world through his stories.





WHY WE'RE ALL SO ANXIOUS ?

Jacques Lacan, in his tenth seminar, termed anxiety as, “The sensation of the desire of the other”. The idea of Lacan is that our anxiety gets triggered when we fear the outcome of a situation, when we don’t know what we are for the other person and when we doubt ourselves and carry around the feeling of not being enough.

Sigmund Freud too, way before Lacan, gave theories on anxiety. In the first two phases, he termed anxiety as, “Anxiety arises from accumulated tension “and “Anxiety arises out of libido by the process of repression “. Freud in his theories, mentioned that anxiety is majorly concerned with the libido and unfulfilled sexual desires. But, in the late 1920’s, Freud introduced his third theory and stated that, “The ego is the actual seat of anxiety “.

A 2017 report of mental illness in India states that every one in seven Indians suffers from depression and anxiety, making it almost fourteen million people in India who have at least one mental disorder. Wherein, Indian children and adolescents are the most severely affected by anxiety. Anxiety comes in different forms, including, generalized anxiety disorder, specific phobias, panic disorders and more.

Competition can be termed as one of the main reasons for increasing anxiety in youngsters. There is competition in almost everything that we do these days, everyone wants to surpass the other person. People have lost the feeling of being content with what they have achieved, for example, if someone scores a second rank in their exams, they still feel sad for not coming first and this

leads to them getting anxious and panicking before their exams.

Parents too pressurize their children to an extent where they start having unrealistic expectations from their children and get angry wherever their child fails to achieve them. This leads to a huge communication gap between the two. Thus, a healthy environment at home is very important for a child to have a healthy mind. When we talk about anxiety, it is not something new, it's something that almost everyone goes through. Be it the anxiety

before the release of your results or during a nail biting match, we feel it quite often. But the problem arises when this anxiety turns into a disorder. Anxiety that's strong enough to cause problems in your daily activities, is when it becomes a problem. And a lot of people don't even realize it. Thus, the first step towards curbing anxiety disorder is to acknowledge it and talk about it. Because in a country like ours where mental illness is still a taboo, it's really important for topics like these to become dining table discussions.

~ Simran Chandra



She is pursuing her Masters in the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She loves to sing, read and play video games in free time. Obsessed with the colours in the sky and a firm believer in the philosophy of Carpe Diem.



UNEMPLOYMENT, THE SILENT KILLER !

Have you ever thought that you have got things together? That you know how bright your future is?

That was me five years ago. I was certain that I had everything under control; I could smell my future and could even see how luxurious my life was going to be. Had I known, that it is not everything in life that goes according to our plans, maybe, just maybe I could have played my cards right.

It is indeed every graduate's dream to get a well-paying and a classy job after a hard and difficult tertiary life; I was no exception of course. Growing up in a rural area, my life was not very simple at all, it was even difficult to eat a proper balanced meal, it was my dream to get a job as soon as I graduated, the aim being to help out in our family. I could see how difficult it was for my parents to put food on the table for us so I grew up with this enthusiasm to work very hard and be the best educated daughter.

They say that life is just a bowl of cherries; I could see and feel that my life was a roller coaster ride. Things are going well in my tertiary while pursuing my bachelor's degree, I worked hard, got good grades and definitely expecting a job afterwards, but life turned out not to always be fun and games. The year 2014 was the beginning of it all, I had expected to get a job from the same school where I did my teaching practice. I could not find even a single reason why I could not get hired there because I knew I was the best. Much to my disappointment, I could not find a job for five years and believe me I did not cease to apply everywhere. Psychologically and emotionally, I suffered. However, financially I could not complain, not even a single bit. My issue was the fact that I had my qualification at hand but it was useless and left me in a painful and difficult situation. I was at my lowest point and I could not wish even my worst enemy to be in my shoes. Life was indeed showing me flames!

Gradually I became someone I was not, a jealous and an embittered soul towards everyone who got a job; I failed to understand why I could not find a job yet I was qualified. I lost hope and ended up convincing myself that maybe I took a wrong career. Every day was a disaster for me, the pain of going out with qualifications and being told that there is no position was a nightmare. I experienced anxiety, told myself that maybe I was not good enough. The most painful thing would be people asking this question “you haven’t got a job till now?” That was the worst question ever and I hated it.

Not only was it difficult for me but for my parents as well, the fact that they wanted me to live a better life than they were killing them inside; they had thought well for me. They were then the laughing stock of the whole village, people were so jealous and they knew that if I

got a job, things would not be the same at home. Seeing me going up and down with the brown envelope with my credentials in it was the joy to their hearts.

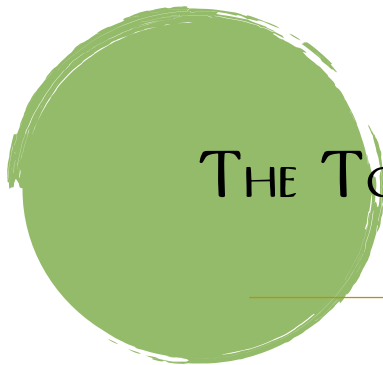
If I knew then what I know now that God Almighty has plans for me, I could not have not wasted my time, money, energy and other resources in applying for a job. I have seen that God works in mysterious ways, beyond the human understanding. I cried, suffered, humiliated, laughed at but all those did not stop me from hustling, I never gave up and I did not quit. I knew deep in my heart that I was indeed destined for greatness. I did not know how but I knew that something greater was coming. In 2018 I received amazing news that I will pursue my Masters degree in India, I never thought in my entire life that I could board a plane, let alone study abroad. What a blessing!

~ Khoboso Makhabane



She is an MA English student at the Department of English and Modern European Languages in University of Lucknow. She was born and raised in Lesotho which is found in the southern part of Africa. She completed her Bachelor's degree in English language and literature from National university of Lesotho in 2014. She is a soft-hearted woman who adapts to any situation that she comes across. A strong, fearless and African queen who never gives up.





THE TOMATOEY LIPSTICK

Friend X: Your lipstick is always on! Are you that desperate to attract?

Me: Man, I don't attract, I attack!

My immediate and proximal friends, acquaintances and those who only afford to set eyes on me on a daily basis have a common question as to why I always colour my lips, 90% of the time with red. Given the fact that humans are thinkers, some have devised answers for this question. Needless to say, they are all wrong! For the mere reason that they have not come up close and personal with me as yet, and it is only I who has not only a better answer but the correct one also.

Their topmost answer is that I want to attract men, ha-ha! Some say without it I might be ugly, some say that I am faking myself, and some are of the view that maybe I have a lips problem so I use lipstick to conceal it. In my home country (Lesotho), yes, people found me weird to be always putting it on. Back then I

was even using a gloss, so later when maturity took over; I resorted to lipsticks because glosses are for girls and lipsticks are for women. I did not apply the gloss to wet or just soften my lips, I ensured that it sparkled, whether in the sun or in the shade; and people got used to it.

Moving to India in July 2019, things took another turn. Everybody in my circle kept on marveling at the way I do things. Given the high temperatures here that make me swim in sweat; one would think I would do away with my lipstick. Some people would raise eyebrows when I go out of my chamber to a place in the neighbourhood with my lipstick on. I apply it every day, indoors or not and regardless of the weather. I wear my tomatoey lipstick in the early mornings after taking a bath just before breakfast. Even if I happen to take a nap during the day, I do not wipe it off. I have used it for so long that I do not mess up the pillow or anything around and when I eat, it does not mess up the spoon, and the spoon vice versa, I make sure of that.

With this tomatoeuy lipstick, I attack hopelessness. I feel like when my lips are not

coloured, I am drowning in the pool of no hope, it is a symbol of my womanhood; yes! it gives me that sense of femininity, I feel good when it's on, and when I feel good I do good. I feel like this is me being in charge, nobody is dictating where, when and how I should apply it. I am allowing nobody to bully me into doing away with it for their own reasons, only because I do what I want to do, not what other people want me to do to help them do what they want to do!

Others feel like putting on my lipstick is faking my identity as an "African", then who said being African is not taking care for one's self? Well, if not doing what I do makes one a true African, then let me be! For I am tired of tip-toeing around ifs and if-nots, maybes and maybe-nots; not knowing what I want, yet knowing what I don't want. This is me doing what I want: putting on my tomatoey lipstick half the time.

When I talk of hopelessness, one tells me that hope comes from within, not from some external factors like stupid lipsticks. I

know what I mean. For six consecutive long years I was stuck with hopelessness, my confidence so low that it still hurts. I did not read about it in books, I know what it means not to be bold enough to look at myself in the mirror because I could not give anything to the world, and the world could not give me anything either.

Yes this is internal, remember that what is planted in the mind is manifested in life. This is the manifestation of what is going on in my mind. I use my lipstick as a weapon against this hopelessness and low self-esteem; because I have learnt that a woman with low self-confidence cannot apply lipstick or wear stilettos. This is me warring against everything that may want to drag me down or backwards. There is this silly mentality that a woman who wears lipstick is a harlot, heck! I was not present in the meeting where the idea was invented, even when it is implemented, I don't want to be part of the equation. I will stick to my tomatoey lipstick!

~ Pontso Kane

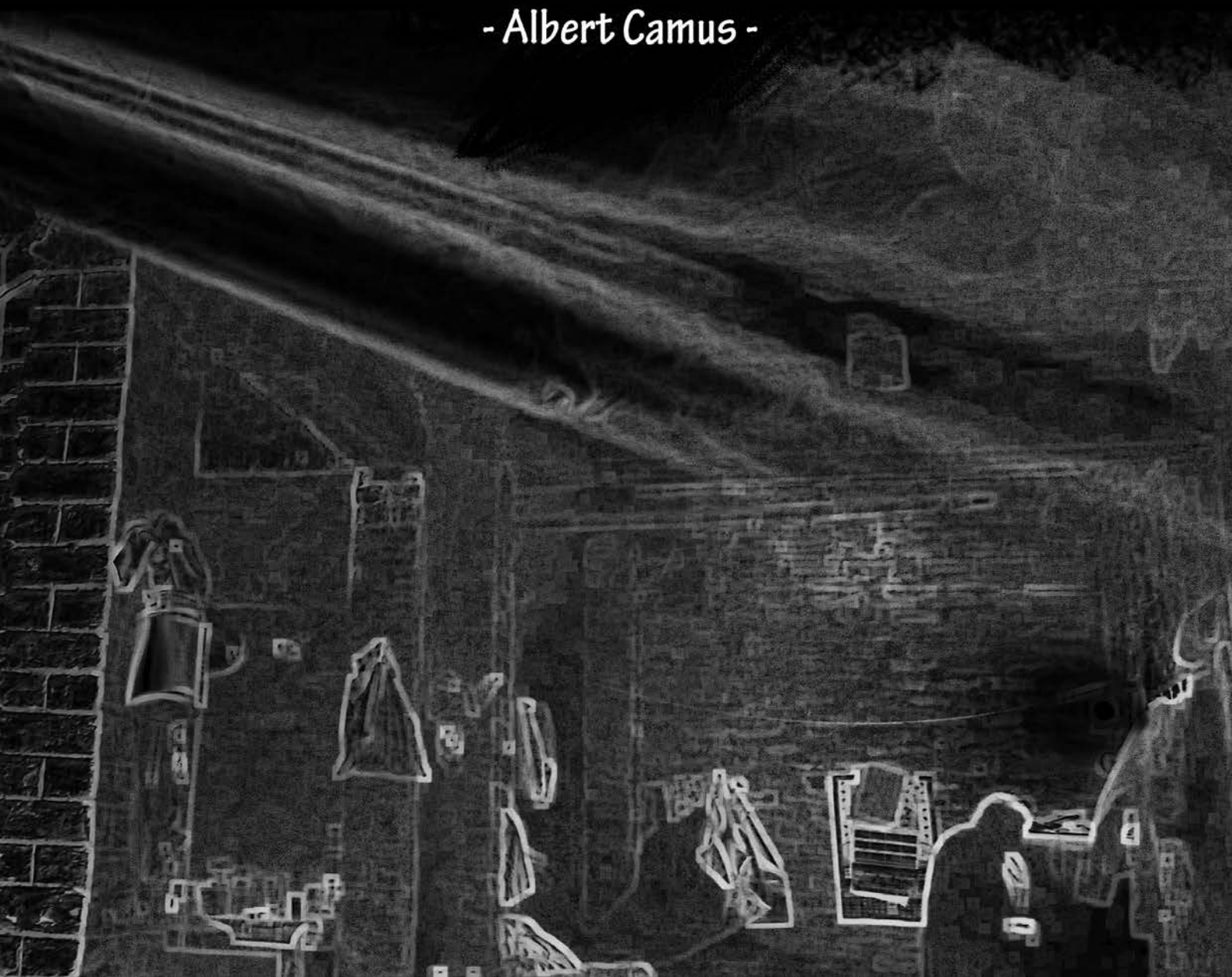
She is a Lesotho national with a Bachelor of Education from the National University of Lesotho (NUL), currently pursuing her Masters in English at the Department of English and Modern European Languages. She is a lady who emancipated herself from the claws of silence, too obsessed with competition. She competes today with her own self to be better than she was yesterday.



FICTION

"Fiction is a lie through which we tell the truth."

- Albert Camus -



CONGREGATION OF GHOSTS



The moon shines brightly as I wake up and I think about how I shall pass the dark village to face the beautifully formidable forest. Today I think I will succeed, I will reach the end of the village without anyone noticing. Today is another story night. I like this secret meeting. The congregation of ghosts meets every night in the nearby woods but they tell wonderful stories of horror. This is a secret no one should ever know. Today is the red moon and today the stories will be more special. The window is open and the wind that enters whispers something cold and exciting. I move towards the door cautiously till I reach the open. The night is shrouded brilliantly with darkness and uncertainty. It is absurd that people are afraid of ghosts, when people are much scarier. Maybe ghosts are scary because they were once people or because ghosts come into existence when a human dies once but people die every day. The village is fast asleep like a graveyard, whose inhabitants must be

wandering in the lands of the unknown of which they will remember nothing when they wake up. The giant trees sway musically with the wind in accordance to an inaudible tune. But when you move closer to the woods you can hear it ringing in the towers of your mind. I move quietly and reach the clearing. The place is cleaner than the path near to the village, and it turns like an undisturbed snake moving easily into a determined zigzag. I hide behind the heavy bushes dressed in starlight and sneak on the gathering. They say villages created border deities to guard their borders against ghosts who are forever waiting at the entrance of the villages. But the cities do not need deities because the cities are filled with ghosts and they call it citizens. I wait for what seems like days and then the congregation gathers, which is announced by the sound of tiny bells and a death like stillness in the environment. Suddenly a cat screams as it brushes past me to get lost in the arms of roaming darkness and night. The ghosts start

a slow murmur as I turn my attention back to the dark figures huddling around in somewhat unceremonious manner looking too intently into the center, less out of interest more of a habit. They wait for all the ghosts to arrive and whisper a story each day of death. The finale marks the entry of the one who died in the story and they go together towards the giant tree and disappear. Today is the last day of the storytelling and today a terrible soul shall arrive. Sometimes the ghosts cannot find the way and they are summoned by the tallest ghost when he sings a weird tune. The story begins and the ghosts settle down. Incidentally, it's the turn of the round ghost opposite me. The ghost begins- "Today's story is about the girl who doesn't know... She lived in a little hamlet with lots of other little kids. But this child was never accepted within their group so one day she met a ghost and made a friend out of this ghost. This ghost was a tall boy who used to take the little girl to the forest to play with the animals and listen to the stories of the congregation of ghosts. But one day the other kids got to know about this secret of the strange, quiet girl and they decided to get rid of her once and for all. One day when the kids invited her to play with them near the forest. The little girl asked the ghost not to appear

that day. The sad ghost went away into the forest and disappeared. The little girl was so happy to be accepted in a group that she forgot all about the ghost and wonderful stories of the congregation of the ghosts. The little kid was unassuming and blind with childish happiness. The other kids slowly moved towards the forest where they had planned a trick to play on the little kid. They decided to let her fall into a pit while playing so that she knew she will never belong with them. But unfortunately the little kid falls asleep and they are in dismay. But one kid suggests they could push her anyway and no one would ever know. The little kid still lies in the pit but no one knows she is dead, not even the poor kid who wanders in the village and the forest as if she were alive..."

The story ends and I feel a chill sweep my body or maybe it was the cold breeze of the night. The moon gets heavier in the gloomy sky which throws dews for the ones who couldn't cry when they died. The tall ghost stands up in ritual and uncovers his face. The fat ghost continues, "Did you know what happened to her ghost? The ghost became the head of the congregation and waits for the little girl to come back to him."

The other ghosts gasp in surprise as the tall ghost stands up and moves away from

the group. The ghost stands ominously and looks ahead. We all wait for the little girl ghost but she never arrives. The ghosts grow restless as the fat ghost remarks “the kid doesn’t know, but she will come anyway.” I am tired and I sit down but I am too excited to see the girl to go back home. The ghosts wait for what seems an interminable amount of time. The tall ghost has uncovered his face but he is turned away so it is impossible for me to see his face. I stand up and walk to the other side of the clearing where he is facing but somehow his face is still not visible. I move closer and stop. Maybe I will find out what a real ghost looks like before the little girl ghost arrives. I move quietly towards the


ghost determined to see his face. I gather more courage and keep moving until the ghosts are able to see me. I decide there is no going back. There is a stirring amongst the ghosts as they all stand up and I look back to see if the little girl ghost has arrived but I see no one. I look at the ghost as his face seems a little clearer and I keep moving forward. The tall ghost has a kind face with a beautiful skin that is so thin that it becomes difficult to make out the nose, mouth and other features. The tall ghost smiles as I get ready to turn back. He speaks and I drop dead in my tracks “welcome my little ghost, I waited so long to meet you. It’s time to go back child.”

~ Sushmita Pandey

She is pursuing Masters in English Literature from the University of Lucknow. She enjoys reading and collecting books whenever she can. A rigorous painting session is enough to brighten her blues. Writing poems and short stories is something she always enjoy. Sitting in solitude with a sketchbook is a day well spent.



AGED



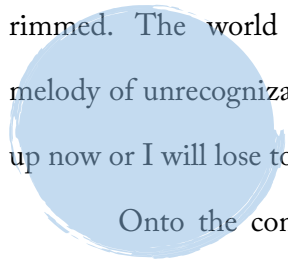
The sky is overcast. I sit here and watch in silence the quandary of the creatures around me. Destitute.

Moss laden. Ignorant. Their eyelids droop. I sit amongst these destitute, the poverty ridden, the absolutes of the city. The corner where no one comes in to walk. This place is miserable.

The world is suddenly warm. And oppressive. It reminds me of the day the angel arrived and Pelayo and Elisenda drove away crabs and their baby was ill. Now I must look. Here comes a fragment of a distant memory. It disappears into a dark narrow lane. Very few people go there with the morbid curiosity of being with an inanimate thing. But later some fall in love. Only the addicts see loveless. But the women here are always cruel. They are lifeless. They won't love you. They won't comfort you. They may pretend to. You're slave for life. Now look at June. She's

so perverse. Her transparent form so aroused. She's a woman you'd fall in love with and yet she stands with the prostitutes in the fact that she won't love you back. That is the tragedy of a thousand lines of poetry and a million words of praise. They won't get them to love you.

It starts to rain and the acorns from the gigantic tree fall upon the roofs. The wind and the crashing waves of acorns create a dense and crushing music. Eyes dimmed, tear rimmed. The world is now a grotesque melody of unrecognizable shapes. I must get up now or I will lose to madness.



Onto the concrete pavement. This madness has plagued all. Everyone without exception. Ever since time was accounted for or even when in some drowsy mornings or smeared evenings time was lost. Everything is now corrupt. Only half of what it used to be. There has been unspeakable degradation.

Looking the future in the face, I see the vanishing of people, of a collective force. There will be no more spontaneity. It will all be forced, plastic. Only in the dull reproductions of their original forms will their essences survive. It will be a novelty, a specialty to enjoy the real. Everything is unreal, artificial. The tragedy of humans will be the ignorance of ever having had something which was not a replication. But surely, you must have known it once. Something entirely human and pure. Surely, as one goes about their day they must for a moment pause and feel that something real must have once existed. Surely they'll feel in the dull beatings of their artificial hearts, once something must have come as naturally to man as leaves falling in autumn. I pity that man and it is for that man I toil. To impart, to give what has been once beautiful, ethereal. Now lost. I pause. On the concrete pavement the concrete bug lives out its life. I feel my madness corrupted too. This madness of mine, I feel it slipping through my fingers, smoothly, coldly, like water. This madness. What am I without it? The only way I sense the world is through this madness of mine. I.....I see an acquaintance. A thin young man

in an old coat. I walk up fast to him. Tap the shoulder and he turns around. Faceless. I ask, "Do I give the impression of being mad?" "Not at all. You look quite at peace", he says. "Thank you".

I resume my walk on the pavement. Am I not mad? Was it all a lie? Why then do I see a cobbled street in place of the concrete pavement? Paris. It no longer rains. A beautiful Parisian morning. I might as well have crossed paths with Anaïs Nin. Cloudy. Beautiful. Foggy. Chilly. Everything. Everything. These Belle de Jours. Drying their hair mid- morning. A whole day in Paris. Splendid. A cafe opens its doors and flips the sign. The aroma of freshly brewed coffee, baked bread, coffee with cream, ice with cream, creamy soufflé, cozy bug ridden places. I must go in. Norwegian wood furniture all dark and brown with a huge table in between and mismatched chairs. Heads drawn close together, eyes on the ash tray and a solitary cigarette dangling from a pair of lips. We discuss the ideal pleasures of life. Hands wander beneath a warm velvet dress. The world would soon end but today, I have no knowledge of it. The conversation gets lost in the flames of the fireplace. The steam from

the hot pot mingles with the cold February air and drifts under my hair. Sweet music. But it is only to give company to these women, scantily clad, serving us good food. Money. What is not to be had with money? A door opens slightly and sweet incense hits my nostrils, cigar smoke, beautiful melancholy German music. Breakfast is over. Coffee arrives. Books. Obscenity is a topic in fashion. What is obscene? Is us, a group of scoundrel writers eating, drinking watching girls perform acrobatics obscene? I'll say what is obscene. To suppress is obscene. To pervert and destroy and erase the original is obscene. In this hollow world, where one is so different from the other, what can we do? What can we do but share? Share the beauty. Share. Give. Lose. First in beauty in first in might. Lest we die unbloomed. Lest it all be in vain. Compress a thousand feelings in a few words. Capture the essence with the exactest delivery that can ever be. Listen to a word and be moved to the point of tears. Art demands extremes. You must feel the extreme before you can give the extreme and for that you must make the extreme. The air inside is nauseating now. I feel the transparent form brush past me. I look. Our eyes meet. Pools

of brown liquid. I am engulfed. The curtain lifts. Velvet. The beautiful frame beckons me. I enter.

Time is lost. This is one of those drowsy mornings. The bed is unkempt. From the other room I hear the sweet voice of Lucienne Boyer as it is beaten around, rejected by the other conversers whose muffled murmurs fill the building. The voice drifts around. Unsure of itself. I close the door and inspect the figure lying in front of me. Now here I understand the dilemma of God. I know what it is and why it is the way it is. To create, to breathe life into something is beautiful. Beauty is might and might entails responsibility. We are slaves to irresponsible gods. Souls damned for eternity bound by false promises to paradise. That is what we do. To people. To ourselves. We are rotten. Untaken. Undone. Never the full glory of Seraphims and just short of Archangels ruined. What is man? Here she lay in front of me. A creation of my own. I refuse ownership. Where will she go? What of the hurt that came to be while I reveled in my creation? In the process of being God? I have a pavement to return to.

This place. Again the destitute. The destructive. The aged. The incurable. Look into the core of this place's beating hurt heart. Injured. I don't see any hope here. As I said, these really are the incurable. The untreated. The untreatable. I do not see anything beyond the show though. This is crazy, hungry world. There is no hope here. Artistic License? For what? To distort? To pervert? These are perversions this age is prone to. Kill your darlings. Murder your passions. Make them hang by a noose. Tight

around the neck. And slowly squeeze the life out it. Little by little. See the life trickle out. There wasn't much to begin with. The thin figure of the acquaintance again. Running towards me like a madam. Stops and throws his coats onto the pavement. And he dances over it like death in delight. The fog covers the dancing mind, it is gone now. The fog. Yet sunshine refuses to arrive. It is all black. Dark. Ashen. Treated with fire. Let it go now Stephen. It is of the past and you, you are of nowhere.

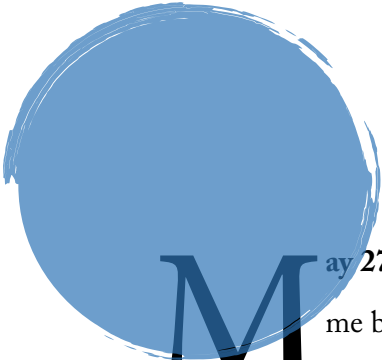
~ Shourya Tamta



She spends her time gardening, walking, bird watching and enjoying nature. She is rather fond of collecting books, watching films and listening to violin renditions by Jascha Heifetz.



DIARY ENTRIES



May 27. Midnight. He grabbed me by my hair today. Punched me in the face. My body is paining. My chest is pounding. He snatched my son from me and kicked me out of the house. It is so dark here in mother-in-law's house. The candle's flame is flickering with the wind. My blouse is wet. Milk's oozing. I want to feed my child. He might be hungry.

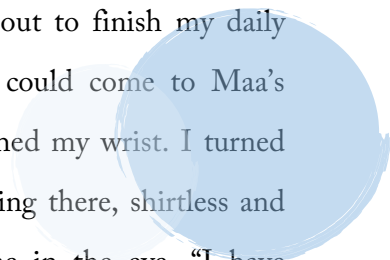
It is not the first time he has beaten me. It is the story of every other day since I have been married. But today I feel cheated. My son. Oh! I have to muffle my burst or Maa will wake up. Before slipping into slumber she told me that I don't have to go to my husband again. She will make me marry his younger brother, Sooraj, who lives here with Maa.

May 28. Probably 2:00 a.m. I went to see my baby today while my husband was at the lottery shop. The elder sister-in-law allowed me to feed him. But she said she won't allow

me in again because she'll get beaten by elder brother-in-law if he comes to know. He held a fistful of my cloth in his little palms while drinking milk. As I gave him to her, he struggled to hold on, cried as much as he could. I walked out and heard his screams fading behind me.

May 29. Night. My husband has two bothers and a sister. One brother lives with him and the other two siblings live here with Maa. The twenty-two years old Kirti is learning embroidery. They say she's good.

I have to keep writing. Only these pages hear what I have to say. Suraj is a fruit vendor. I didn't know he had eyes upon me until today. I was about to finish my daily chores and before I could come to Maa's room, someone clutched my wrist. I turned and found him standing there, shirtless and drunk. He looked me in the eye, "I have desired you since I first saw you", and my heart skipped a beat while he continued,



“What can Bhaiya possibly offer you? Slangs? Slaps? He even has taken your baby from you. What will you do now? Come to my room and I’ll show you a MAN’s love.” Bolts of current passed through me. I gave him a push and looked back into his eyes, “Don’t think of me as a fragile woman Sooraj. I am weak only when it comes to my husband and my son. I am way too resilient for your spirit.”

May 30. I turn to these pages only when I am sad. But today I don’t know how I feel. “Why don’t you learn something new or get some work?” Kirti was helping me in the kitchen when she said this. “Work! What can I do? I am just 5th pass. I can’t return to my parents or work against the desire of my husband.” “Forget about your husband”, she yelled, “What has he offered you besides pain and torture? Marriage is not only for one to balance. It takes two to build a family. Why does his desires matter to you if he doesn’t think of your desires? Don’t be a fool Romila Bhabhi. Life is too long to live in uncertainty. One of my friends’ mother works as a sweeper in a school. I’ll take you to talk to her today.”

And then we went to her friend’s mother and I got the job of sweeping in a school. After returning I went to the kitchen to cook lunch for them but my head whirled and suddenly, I threw up. Maa stared at me

for a while and spoke, “You’re pregnant.” I looked at her and she continued, “What will you do now without your husband? I know of a way he will come and take you back with him.” I smiled at the thought of returning to my baby. And then she spread the news that I was going to marry Sooraj.

April 26. Dear diary, you are still here. It’s been a year we talked. I don’t know where to begin. My whole world has turned upside down. Everyone here says I am insane. The course of my insanity began when the news of my marriage to Sooraj reached my husband. He came the very next day. I was cleaning rice in my room when I heard him shouting at the threshold, “Amma, where’s Romila? “She’s not here. What do you want?” “I’ve come to take her.” “No, she won’t go with you.” “Amma, Munna cries without her. He won’t let me sleep at night. If not for me, then for the baby’s sake, let her come. I know she’s inside.” And I heard footsteps approaching and then a bang on my door, “Romila!” he shouted, “open.” I was trembling. I slowly put the rice plate aside and lifted the latch. He was there, carrying my baby. “Pack up and come, there’s a rickshaw standing outside”, he said without any remorse in his eyes. Just as I was about to leave, I turned back I saw Kirti’s watery eyes and then I turned to Maa, “You

have made no less mistakes in life. You made me marry your drunkard of a son. It was you who initiated the ruin of my life. You should have asked your son if he was ready to marry or not.” Her blank eyes had no answer.

It was peaceful for many months after I returned. I didn't want him to help me during pregnancy, it was enough that he stayed away. I was in the eighth month when one day I was in the bathroom and I slipped on the floor. My belly vibrated in a shock. Jerk after jerk. My protruding belly felt as if it would burst. Elder sister-in-law came rushing in and they took me to the hospital. I don't remember what happened after that. I just remember that the baby was born still. It was a girl. My baby died even before I could hold her in my hands. That little angel came into my life only for eight months.

I have no remembrance of what happened to me after that. They say that I became insane. I wandered with bare feet and open hair, here and there, at night, or in the broad daylight. They say my husband used to catch me when I ran from the house at midnight. I blathered, now and then, something about finding my daughter.

And, here I am. Writing my heart out. My husband, to my astonishment, has brought me from insanity to sanity. Elder sister-in-law says that the way he took care

me resembled a mother's care for her sick child, I lay beside him and he told me stories, brought flowers every day. He did more for me than I needed, but never allowed his eyes to meet mine. Always looked here and there while talking to me. After all this time, there is an unrest in him.

17 July. Noon. Buzzing insects. While I write these lines, Neem shadows are swinging on these pages. I always had the habit of writing only when I was gloomy. But I feel I should change that. Last night, I came to know that I'm pregnant. Today, in the morning my husband lifted me in his arms, oh! He lifted me in his arms! Kissed me all over my face and hugged me tight. “Stop all this and tell me what happened.” I chuckled.

“Romila, Romila I am so happy today.” “That I can see, but why?” “Guess what, I've got the job of a watchman at a government office! Soon this poverty will end. Soon I will be doing a government job!”, he took my hand and continued, “This new child is lucky for us. O my lovely lady I love you so much.”

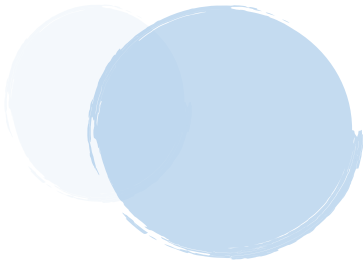
I Love You – these words are rare in marriage. Some people live a life of lie and innumerable compromises in the name of marriage. Marriage is not a child's play. It's not about 'getting together with a person and

if it doesn't work out get out'. It's not that easy. It's about being friends first and spouses later. It's about sharing the hopes, the joys, the things that matter, the pain, the sorrow.

Everything is shared equally. After so much time I saw repentance and love in his eyes. I choose to give him a second chance. I hope this lasts.

~ Kumar Sawan

He is born and brought up in Lucknow. He is currently pursuing his Masters in English Literature from University of Lucknow. He can be contacted on his Instagram handle @imsawan_k or his Twitter handle @thekumarsawan.



THE WRONG CALL

Another misery took place, which wasn't something unusual or something to be surprised about.

Like every regular night, Brianne woke up forcefully pushing herself, breathing hard with her fists clenched tight. She felt that heaviness - an excruciating pain in her chest. It took her a minute to gather herself and then she sighed. She lifted her head. The clock read quarter past four. "This has to come to an end now." She whispered to herself removing the sheet she had covered herself in. Suddenly the phone rang that moved her from inside. She wasn't surprised, though. It was something that she had become used to. But this certainty wasn't something that should have been happening at all, too. "This has to come to an end, for God's sake, it does!" Then grabbed the phone and held it to her ear. An intense urge arose at times to finish things off but she chose to be patient and heard the guy speak, "It was your fault. You'll pay with your life. Mark my words my dear, it'll be soon when you die!"

She clenched her teeth in frustration and rolled her eyes and hung up the phone with great anger. She hated that deep voice threatening her every single night.

We all meet unexpected turns, so did Brianne. It took her a number of days, several nights to overcome this fear. There were times when she didn't even want to get out of bed. It wasn't easy to face the world. There even came a time when she gave up all hope and started believing that she'll never be able to live her life in a normal way like any other person. And after all of this, patience wasn't simple to collect. She had to do something about this now. She moved out of bed and went to drink a glass of water. She just couldn't refrain thinking about these difficult days that never seemed to end. But now she was clear. She had to get rid of this chaotic phase she was going through since very, very long time.

Suddenly she heard a sound. Someone had broken into her house. It came from the drawing room in front, for sure. "Oh

dear!" She murmured worriedly. A sudden shiver ran down her spine. "All this time they threatened me on the phone and now they're in my house." She opened her bedroom's door and peeked, but there was no sign of anyone. She quietly kept her feet on the wooden floor and moved towards the corridor to reach the staircases. "Stop!" A voice warned her from behind. She was prepared. She didn't reveal how terribly scared she was and turned around somehow and said, "Why are you even after me? It wasn't my fault. You can't keep doing this to me. Your sister was not a good citizen. She was charged for a double homicide. I just did my job."

"She was my sister, goddammit! She'll be dead by the end of this month because of you. Stop saying that otherwise I swear to God, you won't be able to sit down and breathe in peace for the rest of your life. You are the only one who's responsible for everything that's happening to you" then he sat down and burst into tears with both of his hands covering his face. The way he sobbed made Brianne feel guilty. A guilt that made her feel so small and ashamed of herself at times. The work of a policewoman wasn't as easy as it seemed. She moved towards him. Put her hand on his shoulder. Just a simple reassurance and a kind gesture it was- "Come, tell me about her. Everything you know. But you've to remember something. She had

killed the Smiths. They have a year old left behind. There is no way I can save her. She wasn't normal."

The man lifted his head and shoved Brianne away. Her head hit the table. Some pictures that were kept, fell down. "Who on earth are you to call my sister abnormal? She's the only one I have. There must be a reason." He stopped yelling at her. "She is my sister, lady. She is my sister!" Brianne on the other hand, somehow managed to get to her feet. She felt she saw stars for a minute. This time, a little strict, she approached the fellow and said, "Look, you need to get this straight. There's nothing I can do about it. She was a murderer. Strict actions had to be taken against her. She's no one to go against the law."

"You'll pay for this! I swear to god, you'll pay for this." He exclaimed and went away slamming the door as hard as her could. Brianne stood there in astonishment and couldn't stop wondering for a while. Her whole life was in a mess. Moments arrive when one can't decipher what to do- Blame ourselves or simply go with the flow. Maybe this is life.

A year passed somehow and Brianne had enough of everything from everywhere. She took out her coat hanging behind the door, closed the door to go out for a walk. It

was the Christmas week. The atmosphere was cheerful. People were happy. Most of them busy shopping for kids, themselves and others. It felt nice. It made Brianne, for the very first time, feel... Fresh. Different. And most importantly, she was happy after a very long time. Unfortunately, when fate and time shake hands, even the best of us are not spared. Passing the street in the afternoon, among all of that Christmas hullabaloo, suddenly there was a sound. A gun shot. Somewhere out of the blue. People ran for

their lives. The moment Brianne turned around, a bullet touched her head and there she fell unconscious on the ground. Her eyes felt heavy and she couldn't feel her feet. A black figure appeared amidst the chaos of the crowd. She recognized that guy. Seems that the revenge she'd been running from all these years was following her all this time. Her kindness towards the world would cost her life. She was no more on earth. The justice was done to the wrong.

~ Nivedita Kholia




She is fond of everything that brings out her creative side. You'd find her playing video games, watching shows other than that. She loves reading fiction and has a good number of books since she was a kid. Apart from that, she's always up for good conversations and having a fun time with her few close people.





ON THE EDGE OF A NIGHTMARE



“You are flawed in every way,
you’ve burned down every
path you’ve ever walked on

and you delude yourself you’ve done it to
protect the ones you love, you live a lie, you
want to be a saviour to all, don’t you? Save
yourself first”

“You say all that, but guess what, I’m not the
one sitting on a chair, all tied up with a gun
against my forehead.”

“Your demons won’t let you live, they will
eat you up alive.”

“So be it, I can live with a tainted
conscience, but I cannot live with you still
walking on this earth.”

A sigh and a tired laugh escaped from her
lips, “you were all I had, you know? My
family. You were the only one ever.”

“...and you decided to sell me off”, I
interjected.

“It wasn’t like I had a choice, why would I
do that to my own daughter?”

“...because, I am not your daughter.”

“But aren’t you someone’s daughter, just like
I am someone’s sister, a-a daughter. Won’t
you help a woman out, aren’t you all about
that?”

“You should’ve started out with this, instead
of calling me delusional and flawed, oh and
maybe before selling me off or all those
children off to the sharks.”

An anguished cry rang through the empty
room, and a feeble “please” escaped out of
her mouth.

“Please- please, if only you would’ve been an
obedient child, I wouldn’t have done it, you
know it, my love, why - why would I
knowingly hurt you?”

“Well, maybe because I am not your
daughter, you picked me from the foster care

for the money”, my voice got louder as the sentence ended.

“Now look at me, look at what you’ve made me, every single one of those deaths, they are not on me. They are on you now.”

“Sweetie, let me - let me just help you, if you think you’ll go to jail for all of it, you won’t, just let me go and I will help you, I - I know people who can help cover up all of this.”

“Not everything comes at a cost, and you know what, you should be happy that I’m sparing you from an agonising death. Like you used to say, “look at the brighter side of it, sacrifice yourself for the grand scheme they have you,” so now, you sacrifice yourself for the grand scheme.”

“What good would it do? I - I could help you, I will make you an offer you cannot refuse, just let me”

“...okay Vito Corleone, you're really annoying me right now.”

I hold my stance, prepare myself, close my eyes,

“Please - Please, no don't do I-.”

BANG. 1.

“You're a psychopath.” You’re one raspy breath away...

BANG. 2.

“A psychopath who is trying to make a difference.”

Breathe. Breathe. Breathe.

I still hear breathing, “oh my god, just die alrea-“

BANG.

The adrenaline masked the pain, but the wind was knocked out of me. The impact made me fall to the ground. The pool of blood on the other side of the room was proof enough that my demon was dead. What was oozing out of me was my solace, hopefully I had made a difference.

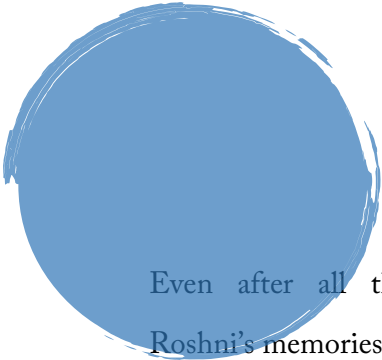
~ Devyani Ganguly



She is studying in B.A. (hons) fourth semester. If not for books, she would’ve lived for flowers, from clicking pictures of them to reading near them, to placing them in books till they left their mark.



DIARY



Even after all these years have passed Roshni's memories are still fresh in my heart.

She was always good at studies. Uncle was proud of her. Teachers always praised her for her dedication and hard work. That year she topped in her Graduation. I was really happy and not at all surprised to know this. I always felt motivated by everything she said or did. We were best friends and shared every single thought with each other. There was no secret between us. Our frequencies always matched. Whatever I liked she loved that too, and I never liked anything she didn't like. She wanted to become a teacher and I wanted to be a writer. For her dreams she worked really hard. But life is all about surprises. One never knows where one's destiny is. We planned to do everything together but there was something else for us in store. Life planned something completely different for us.

Sunny was our classmate. He was a brilliant student. We were very good friends.

He shared his feeling with me. But neither he nor I could ever tell Roshni, that he loved her madly. I always asked him why didn't he talk to Roshni about it. After all, she was supposed to know what the whole class knew about her and Sunny. But Sunny always avoided answering my questions. It was later, I came to know that he had some responsibilities which didn't allow him to do so and he also wanted to secure a job first before proposing, which was fair enough. But now I feel that we should never leave anything for tomorrows, these so called tomorrows never come usually. We are nobody to plan anything and there is always somebody else whose plans are capable of destroying all of ours.

One day I heard Uncle talking about Roshni's marriage with the son of his friend. I was panicked to know this and tried to contact Sunny but he was not in touch with us after we were done with our Graduation. I

went to see Roshni. She did not know anything about it and was shocked to know that her father had fixed her marriage without asking her. But... I don't know why we were so surprised about it. This is exactly what happens with girls like us in our society. We usually do not have much to do with our lives. Getting married and having children, taking care of husband and in-laws and always take care of the name of the families; these are the few designated tasks for us. Roshni was lucky that she could at least complete her degree peacefully. She was now an educated and a trained 'bride material', anyone would easily approve. She was eighteen then and this was the age for marriage legally if not emotionally. Didn't Rita, the girl in our class, get engaged when she was just seventeen and she was married before she completed her graduation. Anjali, too, got married immediately after completing her B.A. By twenty she was the mother of twin daughters. So it was not at all an alien thing, at least for us.

Roshni was upset, less because she was getting married and more for not being able to study further. She always loved books more than anything else. She used to call her books her treasure which she would carry with her always, wherever life would take her. She was scared to talk about it with her father.

Although he was a loving father still there was something stern about his decisions and thus no one in the family ever questioned him. Roshni's mother would always talk carefully before him. One afternoon Roshni mustered up some courage to talk to her mother. "Maa I don't want to get married" she said in a very soft but assertive voice. Her mother could sense a sort of stubbornness which she had never heard in her daughter's voice before. She looked at her with eyes wide open and said almost whispering, "Is there a boy who is asking you to do this? Why don't you understand beta you are our responsibility and we won't be able to die peacefully without marrying you off properly." Without waiting for Roshni's reply she continued, "He is a nice boy and your father knows his father. They are ready to accept you with little dowry. Who would do that these days? You know that your father is an honest man and we do not have enough savings." Roshni tried to speak again, "It isn't about any boy. I know that father does not have a lot of money for my marriage but it is something else." Before she could tell what it was the mother interrupted again, 'Every girl is made for marriage. There are two most important things in a girl's life: getting married and taking her family forward. Only this completes us.' Roshni didn't say anything

further. She knew that there was no use of talking to her because she would not understand. Roshni kept looking down, engrossed in her thoughts of how she was going to handle it all.

The same night her father approached Roshni. He took her to the ice-cream parlor because Roshni loved ice creams. Uncle was trying to talk to Roshni, to understand what she thinks about his decision. This was a chance for Roshni to tell him what she wanted. She hesitated a bit but thought that if she hesitated now then she would never be able to talk. She closed her eyes and blurted out with intensity, 'I want to study further Papa'. Uncle was amazed to see her young daughter confronting him with such conviction. He had been a loving father and never ever mistreated Roshni for being a girl.

'Why didn't you tell me all this before?'

'I thought you wouldn't listen, murmured Roshni. 'May I ask you something Papa?'

'Yes, of course', said uncle.

'Why are you marrying me off so soon Papa? I don't want to leave you'.

Uncle's eyes welled up. He looked at the other side, wiped his face and paid for the ice cream. 'This is how the world works beta',

said uncle with a little heavier voice. 'Your mother came to me, my mother came to my father and now it is your turn to go to your home beta. Aren't you happy about it?' he spoke further. "Isn't your home mine Papa?" asked Roshni innocently.

'Of course! it is, my daughter, it is your house too and would always be yours'.

'Then why do I need to go to somebody else's house?' she thought she would ask, but something stopped her. She could sense that the conversation was not going anywhere. She knew that her father wouldn't be convinced on this topic for her reasons. All of a sudden, she grew up. She couldn't change her father's ideas about her marriage but changed herself immediately. She understood that her loving father is forced to do it. This is what social pressure is, something that is heavier than the heaviest thing in the world. That is how she had read in her school book. She didn't understand it then.

Roshni got married the following month. Before she was married, we met in a Coffee shop, where we would spend hours together, chatting, and gossiping about the girls of our class during our college days. I knew that we were meeting for the last time perhaps, so I took a gift for her with me. I gave her a 'Diary'. That was what perhaps she

needed the most. Her eyes wanted to cry. She tried to hold herself for a while but she couldn't. She started sobbing heavily in seconds. I hugged her and tried to show her the positive side of the situation which even I couldn't see at all then. The last words she said were, 'Only you understand me Richa, no one else does. I would be so alone without you. How would I find someone like you again?' I whispered into her ears, 'I gave you this Diary who would be your best friend in my absence. You can say anything to it. Do you remember The Diary of Anne Frank? You might write a history someday like

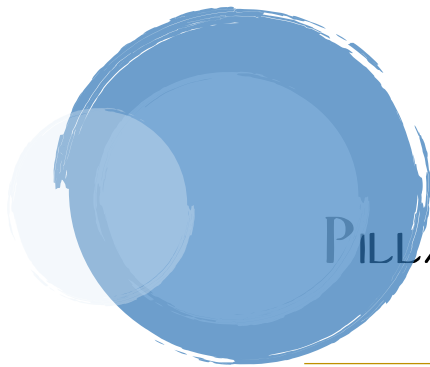
Anne.' She smiled a bit and felt a little lighter after crying. She went home after we finished. She marched straight into her room and closed the door. She opened a suitcase and stuffed all her books and everything else, she cherished in her life including her dreams, hopes and wishes, into it. She wiped her tears for the last time and immediately went to bed. Something broke inside her that day and since it didn't have any voice so no one could ever hear that. But I did and it still echoes in my mind and pricks my brain until tears flow out of my eyes.

~ Ekta Gupta

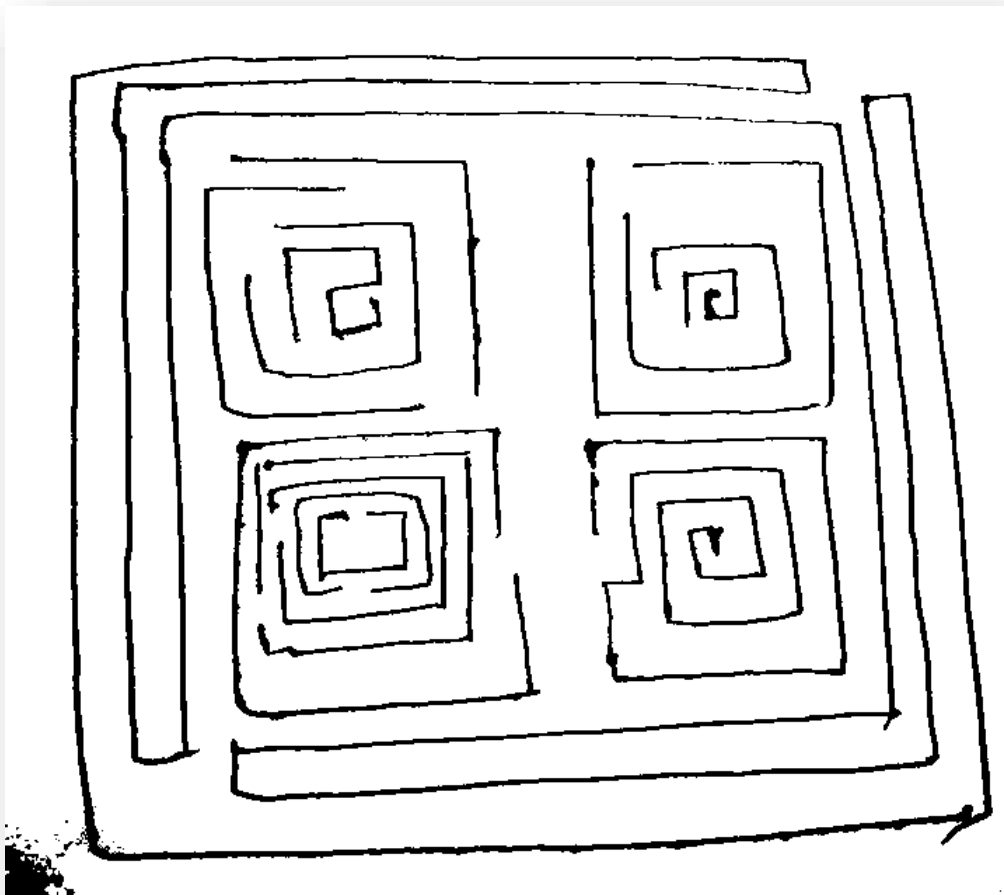
Ms. Ekta Gupta is a PhD candidate at the Department of English & MEL, Lucknow University. Her Primary Research Areas are Gender Studies, Post-Colonial Literature and Literary Theories. She is currently working on Women's issues in the SAARC countries collectively. She has also received internationally reputed Fulbright Scholarship and taught at the University of Montana, the USA (2018-2019).



Picture Story



PILLARS OF IDENTITY



I haven't seen this society for more than twenty years of my life but I have known it; from the lens of Althusser's and

Woolf's of the world; from the view of Gandhi's and Lincoln's of the society, in tales of my own grandmother weeping for her lost

sister across the border, in stories and struggles of my mother on being a daughter and raising another. I haven't seen a lot of this world but from what I see within the confinement of these pillars that surround me, kindly allow me to share, if the spaces between the pillars of my identity and yours allow my voice to reach out to you.

I cannot imagine myself being born a certain way or looking adorable in my pink floss world, but from what I can imagine, is several imaginary walls closing in on me with every passing second. So, from the moment I stepped into the world, or possibly even before, I was a Muslim, a girl child, and then came the name after a long web search of "Muslim baby girls name starting with A". At the risk of sounding too pessimistic, allow me to introduce you to my first identity, 'Anam Seraj', a name that tells you a thousand different ways of holding a thousand different opinions you have of me before we shake our hands. However, I wish things would have stopped there, but they don't. Do they? So, beyond these walls, are more walls closing in. The walls of my state, culture, nationality, skin, race, caste, profession, and moments into our first conversation, I have an entire set of pre conceived notions and prejudices about the entire set of identities you represent, based on which, you and I can measure up

each other's words and label each other with invisible sticky notes on our head. So, no matter what stories you have been or what struggles you have faced, or how much you defy the value system you are supposed to represent, your identity can trap you in this mesh of over generalization that closes in, on each one of us.

I am not unaware of the fact that social identities were created for mere convenience of the society or to represent our biological constitution but it fails to serve its purpose the moment it inhibits a man to show his emotions or a woman to choose her freedom. It fails to be of positive consequence, the moment a liberal young Brahmin feels caged in his own privilege or an educated Dalit is dictated terms on who he is or isn't supposed to be.

Every social movement begins the moment when a person decides to break these walls of identity or find a way out. However, often once we step out of a door, we stumble on another wall and get lost. The idea of liberation and the motive of every social movement should not end at breaking a wall, rather it's where it should begin from. The idea, is to not just break walls for ourselves but for everyone who is strangled and suffocated. Every attempt at liberation is a failure when

we break one wall to create another at its place.

Every society works on a blueprint of creating victims and villains where every person on the opposite side of the wall becomes a villain and everyone inside, a victim. The idea of liberation must not focus on making an oppressor, oppressed. It is to create no oppressor at all and in this process of revolution, it is important to target values

and systems but not individuals; to recognize people as ordinary humans with personal struggles and individual morals because in the end, we are all fighting battles, some greater than the other. Because in the end, the world is a maze and we keep looking for a door until we die.

Although, how would I know? I'm just an undergrad student with meagre experience and that would be my identity for now.

~ Anam Seraj



A student of University of Lucknow, currently pursuing BA (Hons.) in English. She has worked as a writer/blogger for ED times, and has been a freelance speech writer for renowned personalities. Her short story, titled '*Canteen Tea with Kishori Bhaiya*' has been published in the book 'People Called Lucknow' by People Place Project. Remaining largely affected by the social and political life around her, she aspires to contribute to the society beyond being a "keyboard warrior" which, in her own words, is her specialty.



POETRY

“Poetry is thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.”

- Thomas Gray -



OH, THE SYMPHONY OF LIFE!

Like a river running,
Amid the prickly mountains,
And soothing as the fresh breeze,
Amidst the loo ridden summer days.
You withstood the boulders,
The fiery storms,
And wet seasons,
Life has thrown your way.

For I am beholding you!
Since the day,
You embarked upon,
Seeking a name for yourself,
A name of course!
Fairly off-course.

From an identity in flux,
To sign it out in the skies.
From the lack of space,
You asked for,
Remember?
In Woolf?
To the vast Space,
You conquered today.
From the agony of bearing,

Not just one...
But myriad knittings,
Often silenced or,
Preferably untold,
Beautifully hidden within,
To the unravelling of,
Your jigsawed soul.
Each fabric of which,
Showering the fire tamed within.

O Women!
Yet you are, a symphony,
Tender and passionate,
A eulogy,
Mesmerizing life since eternity.
Possessing the affection,
The Virgin mother held.
The nurturer, the bearer
Of the seeds,
Of continuity.
An embodiment of fortitude,
Of endurance...
I cherish every thread of you,
O Epitome of sustenance

~ Mamta Dorbi



She is a research scholar, who is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English, from the University of Lucknow. A budding writer, whose various pieces of creative writing, have been published on various e-platforms, including the 'My Space' section of Muse India. Her area of research includes post gendered subjectivity in contemporary science fiction.

IF I SAY I EXIST

I think all day long
If I say I exist am I wrong?
We killed the sky, we burned the sun but who won?
I spilled my heart and drank your songs
I think today
If I become the roads will you become the way?
If I melt the night and rip the stars will it make you stay?
I think now
If I pray with my blood will the sky run out of clouds?
If I keep running will I outrun my doubts?
I lost my head in an extinguished love and my heart in a coma
Memories knock on my dead door covered in trauma
I laughed till my face was numb but they say I am a loner
I think year after year
I blew the candles and wished to disappear
We bought a carnivore and named him teddy bear
If I drown in my acrylics will I see it clear?
You said look for me in the moon, I just look at the sky and scream "Where?"

~ Sushmita Pandey



She is a budding poet and writer currently pursuing her Masters in English from the University of Lucknow. A believer in words and a creative writer by her passion, she aspires to continue her explorations and research in both literature and creative media.

MY FREEDOM

I've been fighting a long battle,
Now I feel like a gladiator,
Stiffened my spirit harder than a steel metal,
To protect the voice against any dictator.

Uh! Higher liberty turned to be a lower one,
Sold to warlords and oppressors,
Fooled, clowned but I still have to run,
To prove the self among all blusters.

Those wretched eyes! Once stood like real
men,
Ran quicker than a dirty little mice.
I apologize not, I mean to offend,
To roll the thought like a pair of dice.

Fool! I might have lost this round,
But my war is not over yet,
You cannot stop me to make a sound,
To achieve the goal, everything is set.

Adios to the heaven of hypocrisy,
Cursed forever! No! It's been a policy.

~ Mohammed Hejash



He is a lecturer of English at Albayda University in Yemen, and a research scholar in the Department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Lucknow.

MARIANA

Someone eager and strange comes and stays,
But common beauty will not be there
All heads contain the same brain,
Mariana will always be the same.

Dark, deep, silent,
A life of solitude, longing,
Even the sun never sees her,
But life must go on.

Just like two sides of coin,
I was a Tony on my own story,
But a Thanos on someone else's
Why do I think I'm a hero yet others don't?
It depends on how you see it.
Don't worry, she is fine
Mariana is happy and blessed.

~ Andri Maulana



He is an arts lover and an activist of rural education in his village in Indonesia. He focuses on English education and development and its implementation. He is also a sport enthusiast and a music addict. Currently, he is pursuing M.A. English in the Department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Lucknow.

ASPIRATIONS ACROSS AGES

I am a kid of five,
I want to be a doctor in my life.
I'll be helping poor and needy,
I'll never be greedy.

I am a girl in my teens,
I want not only to be a businesswoman but also beautiful and lean.
I will be opulent,
When it will come to help poor and needy, I'll not be reluctant.

Now I am a woman of thirty,
I feel as if was I naïve and had no clarity.
Reading literature, I met life.
My personal experience and the author's expression were sharp as knife.

I learnt there are different definitions of success.
So confess your mistakes, address your flaws, suppress your desires
And put in the best of you for making progress.

~ Garima Yadav



She is a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. An aspiring writer and poet, she is currently pursuing her research in the area of gender identity across the literary realm.

QUIETUSES COLLECTIVE

dreams, are passage to instant deaths.
it is different to be in the arms of morpheus
but to be drugged by the clever cravings
of this transfixing hour. to be in the middle
of making, of a strong latte. or a weak poem.
a red blood and a white tear. a purple mard
or yellow awakening. it all happens in the
middle of anatomy that the universe is. the
conspiracy that begins from navel of a womb
ends in the navel of a planet. ends in the
midnight. the perfect moonlight French
kisses
the imperfect idea of dawn. it is 3. 3am,
darling.
home, walks into my soul. and trespasses
fearlessly, just like those lean cigarettes did.
just like that ghazal on that old, 80s,
walkman
of my maternal grandma. just like that black,
black, black autumn, blooming within,
against
my permission, the submission of fragrance.
meditation, purgation, suffocation,
altogether!
ah! good heavens, this made me so happy...

the soul of Mir Anees lingers in the
bookshelf,

dusty. he scolds brutally. abuses my lips.
curses the clothe of virtuality. the *Masnavi*
of
Rumi bemoans the fate of its existence in
my happiness today! such a gruesome fall
of the stature of my own conscience. such a
gloom on my smiling countenance. I
breathe,
I breathe in, the emptiness of this essence
that fills you all. that makes your skin. and I
annihilate everything, that belongs to me, or
at least seems to be. dreams-to-be are barely
helping. the stapling of the right earlobe to
the
left earlobe, makes me feel close to my grave.
remember me, madam grief ? your pen pal...

cuffs are not shining. the only star-like
button
of this pale, blue shirt I wear is rebellious.
the
fabric smells of newspapers. stuffed with
voids,
silenced noise of execrated nothings. rubbing
my palms continuously over the walls of an
old ruined skin of a red-marble statue here,
in
my city. I hope for a space to sneak in. I'm

the
spacelessness. dictionarically, the
nothingness.
I seek for a monument of delusion. or a
dargaah
of myth. or a chronicler who documents
nemesis.
I want to be the pages, the quills, the inks.
the
everythings of the most wretched poetess in
flesh and blood. I want to make love with
such
terrible pain that even the tombs of
yesteryears'
beloveds may sing on the top of their lungs.



may
pray for my muse. may curse the gods of
earth.
may dance to the point of perdition of
quiddity of
our lives. of our poems, of our stories, of our
acts.

I want to write 'poetry' on her ankle and
make it
my masterpiece. I want to touch her feet, for
she blessed me with the happiness of my
muse,
death.

~ Abhijeet Singh



He is a scholar, composing poems almost every day, pursuing Master's in English Literature from the University of Lucknow. Recently got published in *We the Isolationists Series* by renowned writer and chronicler Mayank Austen Soofi aka *the delhiwalla*. Keeps Camus on bedside and Rumi on chest and Plath in head.



A SPOONFUL TAMARIND RICE

Jumping off the car, Rafiq rushed inside Dodi,
a traveller's paradise.
On their way to meet grandparents in Ujjain,
Abba enjoined him not to hurry alongside.
Muting Ammi's safe directions,
Rafiq hopped the little water craters of tyres, vehicles.
Unaware of muddy pants and shoes,
He passed by a semi naked kid smiling profuse.
Washing hands, teasing sister, Rafiq's eyes scrolled through menu banners.
Chewing guava given by Uncle Tewari,
he wondered what should he try.
"CholaBatura", 'PavBhaji', and 'Biryani', 'Nay!', roared his jocular heart.
'Why not try that South Indian Puliodarai Tamarind Rice!'.
Unable to decide, Rafiq greased Abba to pack both Batura,
and order full meal tamarind rice.
Cautious Ammi put forward a condition outright.
He must not leave his food unfinished, and mind his taste's limit.
Rafiq sniggered that his s-t-o-m-a-c-h was attacked by cyber mice.
Animated grins, playing with forks and cellar,
He savoured his food; nobody must bother alright.
But as he enjoyed, he felt his belly beeped thrice.
He could eat no more, hence, threw tantrums for a dessert course.
His Ammi felt disappointed, tried finishing his meal,
Muttered, 'What a bore.'
Abba fidgeted instructing Rafiq, to discard the leftover across.
The waiter tried, but Abba held his hand, sharing the silent disdain.
Rafiq unabashed, jingled to discard it himself anyways!
At the dustbin, the semi-naked kid came in,

Rushing back for dessert, Rafiq did not notice.
Waiting for the bill, Ammi showed Rafiq.
The thin, young kid had picked the paper plate with utmost bliss.
He kept dragging the plastic spoon,
as each grain was collected soon.
He relished a spoonful tamarind rice,
that Rafiq had dumped himself assuming, to obey, it is nice.
While the kid's hungry eyes ambushed the leftover,
A tear escaped Ammi's eyes deep down soul's reef to layover.
Rafiq was sharp and quick, yet he turned numb in a fit.
A spoonful tamarind rice,
How could he care so less? His nerves became ice.
The toggling games, frolic videos hovered across his brain in shame,
for wasting what he must always save, it was a matter of shame.
Rafiq, an innocent contrite, with eyes down,
mumbled his lunch time rhyme,
'God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food.'
His heart pumped fast, he picked the packed 'Batura',
And stepped up, sweating, walked slowly in faint aura.
With guilt lagging behind, he bit his lips to delay crying.
Standing behind the wise kid, Rafiq touched his muddy skin.
Giving Uncle Tewari's guavas, handed him the Batura box,
The kid whispered as Rafiq felt akin.
He went back to his parents, humming the lunch prayer.
His soul repeated the words, 'let-us-thank-Him-for-our-food'.
Back on their journey, Rafiq sat quiet.
The incident had truly turned him stoic.
Promising he would only tell Daadi about that day.
His Abba cleared throat,
'I hope you learned never to waste what farmers grow for us with pain.'
'And, I learned from you to share in joy, well, what did the kid say?'
Breaking the promise, Rafiq softly replied that his mice was sorry.
'And Abba, the kid thanked upright, that is his favourite but served seldom'.
A spoonful tamarind rice.

Keywords:

Dodi- A famous highway restaurant, NH 86, Dewas, Bhopal- Indore road.

'CholaBatura'- Northern Punjab food dish of spicy chickpeas gravy and fried fine flour bread.

'PavBhaji'- Originated in Maharashtra, it is a dish of a thick vegetable curry served with a soft bread roll

'Biryani'- Indian subcontinental Mughals' cuisine of mixing curry with boiled chicken, semi-cooked rice.

'Puliyodarai'- Puliyogare" or simply "Kokum Rice" or "Tamarind Rice" is a delicious recipe in the South Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu.

~ Vishakha Sen



She is a creative writer and a poetess. A recipient of the prestigious JNMF 2018 doctoral scholarship, her poems have been featured at VTS Contest, West Coast Tagore Festival 2016, Richmond, Canada, Lucknow Society, 'Kavya-Sangoshthi' Youth Eve, Lucknow. Her short stories and poems have been published in *The Elusive Genre*, YkingPbl. 2016, journals like Muse India, Purakala, Gnosis etc. Her academic research areas are IndianPsychoanalysis, Cultural Studies in media, films, Postcolonial Literature, and Indian Theatre.

NATURE MELODY

Under that lush piny forest,
I ever composed the melody of reveries,
For being witness of the happiness,
The fruit of unity in this universe,
As you plant the seeds of peace.

The mossy soil is still brown now.
The sound of morning dew is still heard too.
They still promise to feed the realm,
To change the brown to be colourful,
For growing harmony tone of life.

Please, keep smiling, dearest nature,
With your instruments of rainbow and flower,
As your smile becomes energy,
For the eternal joy of comfy tomorrow,
Warbling the peace song for our world.

~ Aksendro Maximilian



Aksendro Maximilian is a Ph.D. scholar at the English & M.E.L. Department, Lucknow University. He is an Assistant Professor at the English Language Education Department, STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. He completed his Bachelor and Master degree in English Language Education. His works (poems, book, and research journal articles) have been published in national and international publications. He is also editor-in-chief of JETA: Journal of English Teaching and Applied Linguistic (<http://jurnal.stkipgribl.ac.id/index.php/jeta>).

POLE STAR

One evening, perhaps a random one,
While taking a stroll across my terrace,
I was trying to recollect my thoughts.
And instantly the pole star caught my
attention.
Mesmerized by its beauty and light
I started introspecting.
And to my amazement,
I started comparing my life with the pole
star.
I do believe in vibrations.
The kind of vibrations you give to the
universe,
The same come back to you.
While solemnly watching the Pole star,
I was trying to fetch positive vibrations.
I felt a sense of serenity,
Which turned therapeutic in nature.
My mind for a moment had forgotten,

All anxieties and stress.
I was lost in the enchanting beauty of it.
I think the pole star had cast a spell on me,
in those moments.
Because in those moments of serene
calmness,
my consciousness had isolated itself from all
the worldly affairs.
I felt complete, fulfilled and at peace.

I must say that the pole star never gets tired
of being awake all night.
It remains there, unwithered by seasons,
keeps glowing, never twinkles, remains
constant and tears the darkness of the sky.

From that day, the bright light of the pole
star has become a source of undying
inspiration for me.

~ Saumya Srivastava

She is a Ph.D. Scholar at the Department of English and M.E.L.,
University of Lucknow. A creative writer and an academic researcher, her
area of interests include Disability Studies and Indian writings in English.



NOTHINGNESS

Hey there! I feel nothing.
I don't feel the pretty butterflies giggling
around me,
I don't feel the sturdy dogs howling beside
me,
I don't feel the enchantment when someone
passes across me
There is no excitement of youth's tosses
And I am not sad anymore for anyone's
losses.
I wonder what has happened to me,
I wonder if this is alright to be.

The scent of the flowers,
The gleam of the cars,
The child's innocent laugh,
The heartbeat's monsoon graph
Its numb
It might be dumb
But I am here standing alone.
Staring at the wall continuously
Painting my own canvas on it..
A deep dark nothing.
Watching the fan rotating and wondering if
it was me
Flowing like a circular wave
Senselessly.

There is no one around

Just my thoughts surround
Embedded in my heart
Are dreams which had part
They haunt me know, they'll kill me soon
Hidden in my smile I got this eerie of
gloom.
To feel everything is a curse they say
But to feel nothing might end up your day.
To protect the voice against any dictator.

Caged is my mind
Caged is my heart
All my senses feel caged so far.
All I feel is being caged in a bar.

O dear inner self !
Thou thoughts are like braided hair
Entanged, intertwined
And full of despair
What they mean to say you know not
You dont even have the will to fight
you're so caught.
Just waiting to find a bulb
Maybe just a flickering one
Which shall symbolize thy heart. Indecisive,
unsure, incapable of being truly admired...
But just for the sake of love and duty,
You keep on limbering, trying ;
To enlighten the deafening blinding

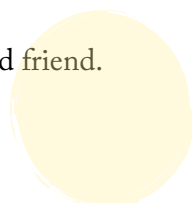
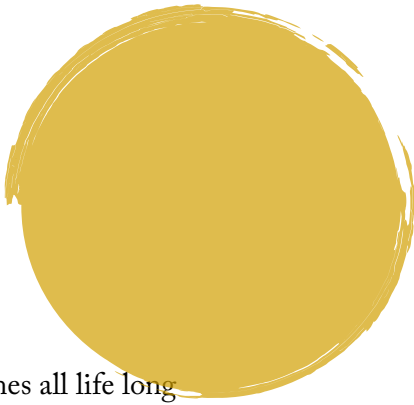
darkness
Which haunts
Which taunts
And leaves me
In this sub urban murkiness.
Ohh this unfathomable nothingness
That entirely fills me up.
What irony!

~ Akanksha Pandey



She is a student of B.A. (Hons) in English at the University of Lucknow. While in her final year of graduation, she primarily holds a keen interest in literature and music. She began composing poetry at the age of 13 and aspires to continue with her creative writing endeavors.

HOME



We build homes all life long
From the moment we are set into existence.
Planted in the warmth of a mother's womb,
We make it our habitat, our abode.
Upon birth, we are bestowed with a home,
Or, a home is thrust upon us,
A set of people to call ours, for better or worse.
And a roof over our head- our own, or rented, but ours to call.
We build homes infinite, we build homes within homes.
Those corner spots unfrequented by the hustle of a mundane life,
And where only stolen, private moments of our childhood live.
Others would make homes on playgrounds,
But, I would crouch in a corner with my dolls, and a million rags
That I wanted to sew into Barbie-esque clothes.
So I built my home on the porch- me, my dolls, and my childhood friend.
In adolescence, I built my home in my T.V.
Away from my books, and teachers
Who would chide us for not solving math sums,
And not memorising History lessons,
Or, for leaving at home our cloth-and-needle for the home-science lessons.
I built a home in a faraway dreamland, with magical pencils, trap doors.
I also built my home in my painting files
Which were later torn apart,
And sold off along with other scraps, and junk discarded upon being useless.
As relations failed, and houses lost,
I can't help but feel how we abandon each other,
Like I discarded first my dolls, and then my paintings.
I wonder if homes, new homes,
Could ever give you the same old feel.

For how freely do birds make their nests anew
Not feeling homesick, or adrift.
Now, being lost in the third decade of my being,
I decided to return to my forgotten home in me.
I cleared cobwebs of fear, scrubbed guilt off the floors,
And I painted hope on the walls.
At times it haunts,
But is habitable, nonetheless.
Of other regrets I may have,
Only finding the one true home took me way too long.

~ Roopam Mishra



Roopam Mishra is a Research Scholar at the Department of English, and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her area of interest is contemporary Indian theatre.

THE VOICE OF THE SURVIVOR

The crowd around me,
Seems to be in an over-bustling noise.
My tears have no place in my lover's heart,
For I am a girl, is it a sin?
Or I have an opinion, is a greater sin.

I am a human being,
With a brain and a heart of my own.
Having the tenacity to speak, I cannot rule.
For the society is accustomed to rule me.

With the frailty of petals,
I have the firmness of thorns too.
Till when are you going to bind me.
I will abandon myself from these shackles,
And rise in my quest to fly high..

The body might be destroyed,
The face might change,
The voice may change its tune.
But the spirit will remain the same.
In acquiring the freedom to fly high.

The burning sensation which I felt,
Has its imprints forever on my heart and soul.
When my voice couldn't be heard,
And my tears couldn't be traced.
I still long for a communion,
When I don't have to succumb to my fate.

Being so helpless, I can only ask for help.
For if you have a heart to cry with me.
Stand still and listen to my heart's mourning,
How my world with lights,
Changed into the scariest hell.

You can't give my life back,
Nor my wounds would ever heal,
Help me with a penny each,
So that I get some solace in getting my confinements back.

Being a girl is what I what I have to pay for,
Do you think it is justified?
Is it such a crime to speak your own mind?
Hold my hand and let me suppress "the oppressive".

~ Shruti Mishra



She is a scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Lucknow. She is passionate about writing poetry. She has also done an extensive work in translating poetry. Her poetry has also been published in few online journals and newspapers. She is currently working on publishing her own collection of poems.

IN THE SAME BOAT!?

I am standing at my balcony looking at the quiet roads,
Sipping my tea,
With Mama beside me, tending to her flowers.

She's walking beside her father,
On the gravelly roads,
They have been walking on since days,
Her father says they are going home,
She has no idea what he means,
All she knows is the home she knew was left far behind.

"Father, how's it?"
"it looks delicious my child ",
"I know right, it looks the same as they serve in restaurants, WAIT, WAIT!! Let me post a picture on social media".

"Amma, where is Baba going so late at night?"
"He's going to buy some vegetables and then sell them in the morning ",
"But Amma, won't he go to his work tomorrow, besides he doesn't sell vegetables, Kaka does."
"For some time he will, otherwise what will we eat!?"

He's stuck in here,
What choice does he have?
The world is fighting a pandemic,
And here he is trapped within his own home,
The raised voices, the spiteful words coming from the other room,
Making him exhausted and helpless with every passing moment.

~ Nikita Yadav



She is a research scholar at Department of English And Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. A poet and a researcher, her area of interest include feminist discourse and psychoanalytical approach towards maternal thinking.

31 WOMAN

She was a pearl and pearl is precious
The days she lived are so horrified
So she is a pearl she never realized
She makes everything fit,
But pays every time fine;
Heinous health
Tortured time
Defamed days
Scornful sight
Scary eyes
Numbed night
People are like hawks;
She never realized.
She is a woman;
She always felt.

Envious eyes have always an eye
Being a '31 woman' all the time.
Hit the hay
And hands down
A harsh hallow,
Who pumps in peril.
A dumb speaker with muffled voice
A deaf listener with a triggered tone,
She is a pearl,
a priceless light.
She is a void,
She always realized.
She is a pearl,
Yet, she never realized.

~ Anuradha Singh



She is an aspiring poet who often writes poems about God, Life, Nature, Neutrality and contemporary issues. She is a Research Scholar at University of Lucknow. She has written many poems and short stories and two of her poems, '**Maa**' and '**Neither Venom nor Nectar**' are published in an anthology *True Love*. She is interested in creative writing and believes to make her identity in this field.

DISEASED LIFE

Curable are not your diseases anymore!
Obscurity is the offing, but you're divagat'd into strife
Robber is your king but you won't speak
Other planets-your new endeavor
Nothing says the poor but curses the life!
Awaiting Godot's arrival, here 'chaos' is at peak.

Pestilence looms, you play'd with Nature-the only healer
Lying, lust, lost-'Luciferian' is your living
Earth ruination, now devil is your divine
Absurd your words, deeds are destroyer
Silenc'd like never before why your old fool King?
Excessive in your pride, wish'd to snatch the sunshine.

Gateways new opened for gentry, already at ease
Only innocents endlessly suffers, whenever there's a tragedy breeze!

~ Mehar Jahan Bushra



She is currently pursuing her Ph.D. (English) from the University of Lucknow. Her area of research includes postmodern fiction and narrative construction of reality. She has a deep interest in the upsurging concepts like history as fiction and memory studies in literature.

VICISSITUDES OF LIFE

Your heaviest burden may one day
Appear to be as light as feathers.
You would have become
Stronger than you are today.
The ghost of your past,
Will stop haunting you soon.
Memories fade away
Just like scars do.
Even the tattoos get lighter
As time goes by.
The wounds from years ago,
Will heal themselves in the future.

Deep feelings of yesterday,
May turn into fleeting thoughts.
Some emotions are shallow pools,
They fail to reach your heart.
As you walk on that road,
More depth adds on to your soul.
Your likes, dislikes, tolerance
They keep changing.
Just like how you change
With each passing moment.
Nothing stops for another
Not you, not me, no one.

~ Prachi Kholia



Prachi Kholia is currently pursuing her Masters in English from the University of Lucknow. With a curiosity for everything ranging from science fiction to ancient history, she is a budding poet with a passionate love for reading.

WALL OF BRICKS



Is that a wall?
With cemented bricks,
fencing and all?

Oh look! pairs of eyes,
Under Hooded winks,
Like hidden spies.

Who walks there?
Uncertain steps,
Heavy with despair.

Let's tread on!
Those uncharted territories,
Of mournful song.

Did you hear?
A Splash on the snow,
A ring in the air...

Shadowing the sunshine,
A motionless mound,
Thumped Near the line.

A heap on the ground.
Retreating steps,
And Stillness of the sound.

Will it ever rain again?
To cleanse the soul,
Of that dead terrain?

Shall we go near?
Out of fun, curiosity,
Or never-ending fear...

Is that a wall?
Spectator of the miseries,
And still standing tall.

~ Maziah Shaaz



She is a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. A self-confessed gourmand and culinary enthusiast, she's a Potterhead through and through. She likes reading fiction, specially the classics and enjoys psychological thrillers. She is currently working on her thesis on Cultural Readings of Menstruation, aiming to promote a sustainable form of living.

IDENTITY

I forget how to remember,
The path that I pass,
The rules that I obey,
The air that I smell,
I forget now,
I am blind and deaf,
Living with an empty heart,
Should I leave it?
Should I go through?

When what I see is only grey,
When what I hear is only buzzes,
Those who claim to be the highest ones,
Those who claim to be the right ones,
Forget about the core of life,

Forget about the love,
Forget about sins,
I, the part of people who live under their
power, feeling dumb,
Saying silent words,
Shouting silent sounds,
Should I leave it?
Should I go through?

I forget,
I forget my dignity,
I forget my life,
To go nowhere,
To hear nonsense,
What I remember is only my name

~ Galuh Dwi Ajeng



She is a Ph.D. scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She was born in Surakarta, Indonesia, She is an Assistant Professor in the English Language Education Department. STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung, Indonesia. She completed her Bachelor and Master degree in English Language Education. Her works (poems, book and research journal articles) have been published in national and international publications.

THE MOMENT I START WRITING SOMETHING

On a day of summer near my door
I got an idea to convey my core
I picked up my pen, and a paper blank
to portray ideas from my think tank
I wing my way beyond the blue to the black
night
I searched for an idea that gives warmth to
the frostbite
after an hour, a day and a week
bootless strain an idea peek
I rushed out and write a lot
amid of eyes to the blind spot
contemplated beneath the tree
Shakes to Worth, Emerson to Lee
lonely hours, I have nothing
just a paper and, words trapped in

cold as corpse, silent as feeling
words are hollow without a meaning
soon I learnt a lesson
poetry is freedom that carries a notion
notion of love or the notion of pain
The notion of true self in a disdain
The freedom of choosing an any
thought
The freedom of writing on scratch to
dot
moment I learn, I began to write
A complicated feeling of black and
white
pursuit of an idea, The chord of everything
The Moment I start writing
something

~ Gajendra Dwivedi



He is a graduation student at the University of Lucknow. An aspiring poet, he loves to write poetry on everyday life events.

HERE'S THE END THAT'S JUST BEGUN

How did you imagine
The apocalypse would be
When one day everything
Will be crushed indeed
You thought it would be
Another war which
Most of us will fight
While some of us would
Still won't be able to
decide
Whether or not to take a
part
In this any-way suicide
Turns out
That was not the case
There wasn't a war
And no one was in daze
The crisis however
Was setting the stage
For the end

Of this scientific age
It all started
With a pandemic
With everyone trying
To find alchemic
Incidents kept on
Taking place
One after another
But were differentiated
From every other
Things which should be
Considered as calamity
Were taken lightly and
Ignored at extremity
While the pandemic
Was on its roll call
People were suffering
With nothing to stall
Natural disasters were
Given a cold shoulder

In front of a news
As big as a boulder
But that didn't lessen
The 'amphan's' impact
Or other incidents
Which for a fact
Destroyed and distract
The lives of commoners
In this world abstract
But that is not a
Matter of concern
For it doesn't matter
How many lives
Are now captured in urn
One could conclude
With this herein
Here's the end
That's just begun

~ Parul Saxena



Parul Saxena is pursuing Masters in English Literature from the University of Lucknow. She started penning down her thoughts under the pen name Kehkasha, about three and a half years ago. So far she had been a part of seven anthologies in both English and Hindi languages; out of those she had compiled three which are entitled as- Haze, Aporia and Ye Pal bhiGuzarjayega.

LIFE

Life is like a mystery,
Full of unsolved questions,
They can see the present and the past,
But have no idea about the future game,
For all are not the foretellers,
Nor are they magicians,
So far life is purely a mystery.

Life is like a journey,
With a meaningful goal,
It is a difficult one,
Only the best among all,
Reach to its zenith.

Life is like a tragedy,
No one knows what's next,
But struggle for the best among all,
The fortune of man continues,
And only the real struggle,

Gets a happy ending.

Life is like the subject Chemistry,
Full of elements and reactions ,
And life is a tough subject,
Passing this subject is a difficult task.
For students therefore,
Life should be hard work and moral values,
These qualities in a student,
Make his life a meaningful,
And a successful one.

~ Shashank Yadav



He is a B. A. (Hons.) Economics student at the University of Lucknow.
He re-creates himself through his verses and is a lover of words.

BEFORE YOU DIE

Yeah! Remember the time, before you die
Your parents restless break the night
So that you could walk in a fairy land
In the midnight how silence is placed
But your little sound made them awake.

Before you die, cast a glance on past
They hold your little finger and
Made you walk to start your journey
How they being a part of your life
Tried to make you laugh and smile.

Before you die, think how they teach you
What the being is.
Do you know their sacrifices?
Let you know the gods after God on earth
Yes! It is they, it is they who love you the
most, who wiped off your tears.

Before you die, be a part of them
Who made you to know the differences
Good and evil and taught to react
Teachers who told you to lean before them
It's a time to think once, know once.
Now to know the moments, before you die
Which are the pleasures of your being a
human
Your relation with the society and the
people
Your colleagues, friend, relative, classmates

And everyone else who helped to make your
life.

Before you die, reminisce all the festivals,
rituals

The enthusiasm and the freed how you
celebrated

How they taught you the values and
importance of your existence

And all the dates of vintages you attend.

Know the divine attributes before you die
Somewhere in you the humanism mercy
The fear of God who prohibit you from
becoming inhuman

If you die being failure of life and relations
Or it be the human which is dying in you.

Think once or twice before you die
You make you dead in different ways
You call it suicide if you harm your body
It be a suicide of your goods if you murder
rape exploit loot abuse and deceive someone.

Let you know the history before you die
The chronicle of your goodness

The sensitive part of life which you ever
lived

The sources which made you civilized

Before you go to be a barbarian and cruel.

Before you die, sit calmly and think
You're the best creation of God
And the ones before you also are like you.

Why do you go to death or kill yourself?
For a single moment, don't die, don't die.

~ Kamlesh Krishna



He is a research scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. He started to write poems in his early teens. He likes to write on nature, social issues and humanity. He is also working on a novel that will be published soon.

VALENTINE'S WEEK

I picked up a book of prose
Between pages was a dry rose
It reminded me of the relationship
And led me to an unwanted trip
Trip to bring her back and close
On Rose day, with a dry rose

The whole night flew away
Thinking of the perfect way
The day to propose finally came
But fate again played the Game
I saw her with someone else
And my heart shattered like shells

These are chocolates you loved
I loved them because you loved
So I bought a jar of them

But what should I now do with them
Why don't you have some
It's the day of chocolates please come

Teddy, Teddy tell my Miss
Tell her how much I miss
I miss the care and smile she holds
The dream of mine in her eyes I adore
Teddy, Teddy its day of thee
So she may listen to thee
What promises should I make
What words will you take
Should I take those seven vows
Will that help to bring us close
Words are of what use to thee
Not in words have faith in me

All my happiness on your will
Once again with pleasure fill
Shadow of sorrows surrounds me
Put your arms around me
Let me melt in you the same way
As you melted in me the past hug day

Do you remember our first kiss
When unconsciously met our lips
Still those memories give me chills

And my heart with pleasure fills
Give me back that heavenly bliss
On this lovely day of kiss

I decided to try one last time
On the day of Valentine
I met and asked her to come back
I was numbed when she replied back
I lost her of my foolishness once more
She said "I was single an hour before"

~ Shivam Singh

He is a scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Apart from writing he has been associated with some other art forms including dance, mimicry and acting which are close to his heart. He is completely dedicated towards writing and is currently working on a Hindi collection which is a sort of revival of Harivansh Rai Bachchan's Madhushala.



LILACS *(inspired by Wuthering Heights)*

Lilac flower fields,
Dusty summer breeze,
A growing heart ache
for number three.
The taboo, the haunting,
Yet inevitable
part of me.
My eyes search,
In corners where you,
Forever seem to be.

But honey, can't you
Smell blood and smoke,

The whiskey in my bones?
The desire, the death,
My dying winter breath,
But honey, the game's over.
Can't you see?
Come out of the corners,
Come lay the lilac wreath,
On all that now remains,
Of me and my purple-veined
Frosty summer death.

~ Mini Sinha



She is a Master's student at the department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She is an occasional scribbler of words, to try to figure out herself one day at a time. She ardently loves works of Murakami, Buwowski and Plath among many other favourites.

MY TRIBUTE TO GRANDMA

My heart is weeping for you.
Your smile was everything for me.
I want to see you alive again.
Why have you left me without your smile?

Oh Almighty! Why have you made this tradition?
One has to take birth and die.
Why aren't you creating us with an immortal nectar?
Oh Almighty! Return my grandma.



~ Vishwa Bhushan

He is a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. His area of research includes Eco-criticism and contemporary **Indian fiction**.

BREATH.

when I see myself in a mirror
a rose withers
somewhere
on the alleyway
leading to your grave.
my skin swells
and it bursts itself
into a thousand pieces
lying rumped
all over the floor.
clouds, look as though,

they'll come and hug me
so, they rain and rain
till that bird flies
towards the garden cemetery.

amidst all this,
I forgot to breathe.

did you know
withered roses smell
a lot like dead bodies?



~ Apurva Singh

She is a graduation student at the University of Lucknow. A sleepy head with a thing for art, politics, street food, cosy little cafés, sunsets and never ending friendships, she likes to spend her time in composing verses.

WHERE LIES THE SORROW

Where lies the happiness,
Where lies the sorrow?
Beautiful vision,
Lies in tomorrow.

Enjoy the bounty,
Enjoy the scene
Never repeats,
The time in being.

Fire in forest,
Fire in mankind!
Who's responsible?
Blame and be blind!

I see tulips,
I see roses!

Butterflies can't even
Cry in woes!

Catch the squirrels
Quarrelling mates,
Do you see their
Love or hate?

Beauty of the sunset
And of moon,
If not yet, you will,
See it soon.

Smiles did I see,
All that I borrow
Tell me frankly, my friend,
Where lies the sorrow?

~ Satyam Singh

He is a student at the University of Lucknow. He is an enthusiastic and well observant person. He likes to write articles. His major interests are painting and calligraphy.



Poetry in Translation

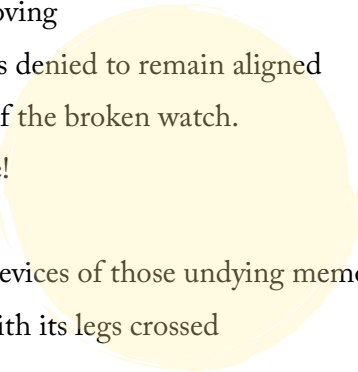


THE TIME OF THE BROKEN WATCH

By Anamika

There was a souvenir
In a small basket
There lay the broken watch
Like a broken promise!

The bridges kept rising
And the rivers kept roving
The stranded portions denied to remain aligned
Just like the needles of the broken watch.
Those strands of time!
Are not mere things
But in between the crevices of those undying memories
Meditating silently with its legs crossed



Like that of a Dryad
Between two trees!

A MESSENGER

By Anamika

Another dusty day

Picked up its course
On a tumbling cycle
In front of my house!

There are no more letters-

The pigeon-hole is empty
They too might be building
A new house
Somewhere else, in another world!

(Translated by Shruti Mishra)

About the Poet: Anamika (born 1961) is a prominent contemporary Indian poet, social worker and novelist writing in Hindi and a critic writing in English. She has eight collections of poetry, five novels and four works of criticism to her credit. Currently, she is Reader at the Department of English in Satyawati College, University of Delhi. The translated poems are from her collection named "Doob Dhaan", which talks about the predicament of women in society

~ Shruti Mishra

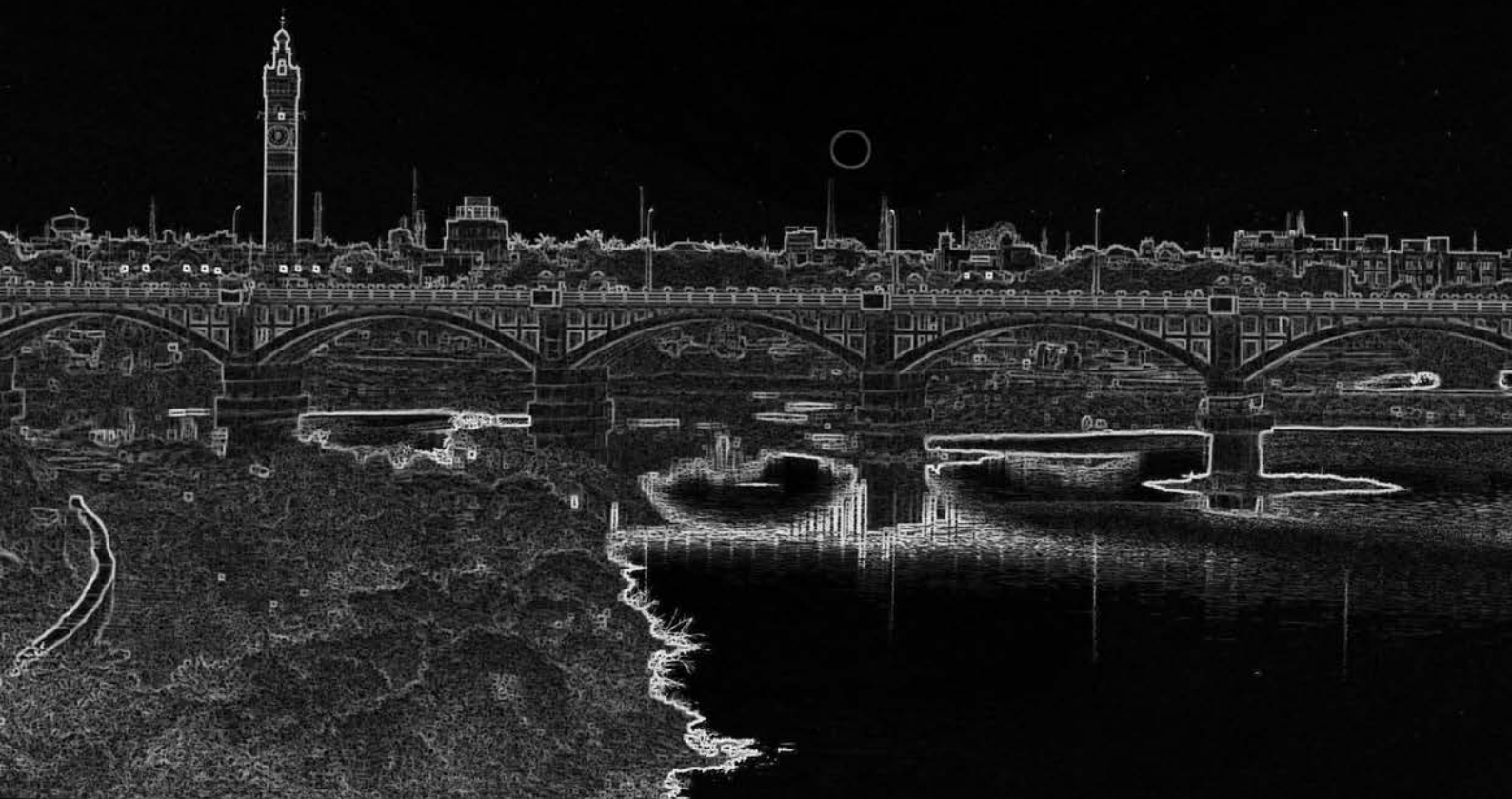


She is a scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Lucknow. She is passionate about writing poetry. She has also done an extensive work in translating poetry. Her poetry has also been published in few online journals and newspapers. She is currently working on publishing her own collection of poems.

PHOTOGRAPHY

*“Photography takes an instant out of time.
altering life by holding it still.”*

- Dorothea Lange -

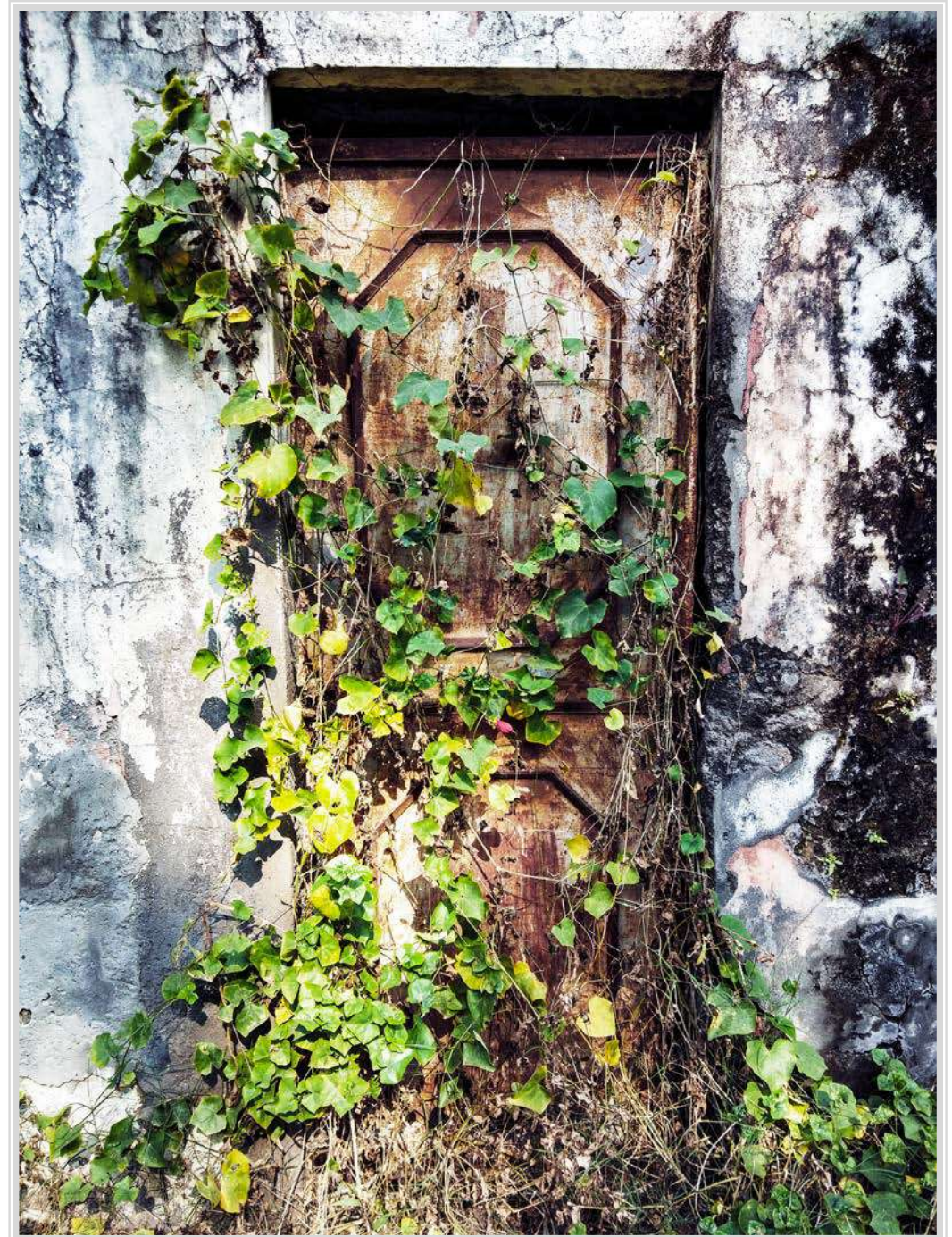
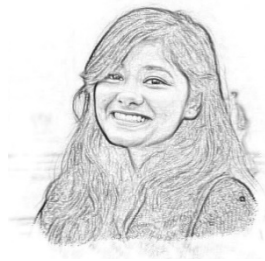


THE LOST DOOR

And then there are our deepest desires, locked behind the doors of our hearts. Trying to break through, trying to get fulfilled. But being entangled in the maze of fear, they remain locked away till eternity.

~ Simran Chandra

She loves to sing, read and play video games in free time. Obsessed with the colours in the sky and a firm believer in the philosophy of Carpe Diem.



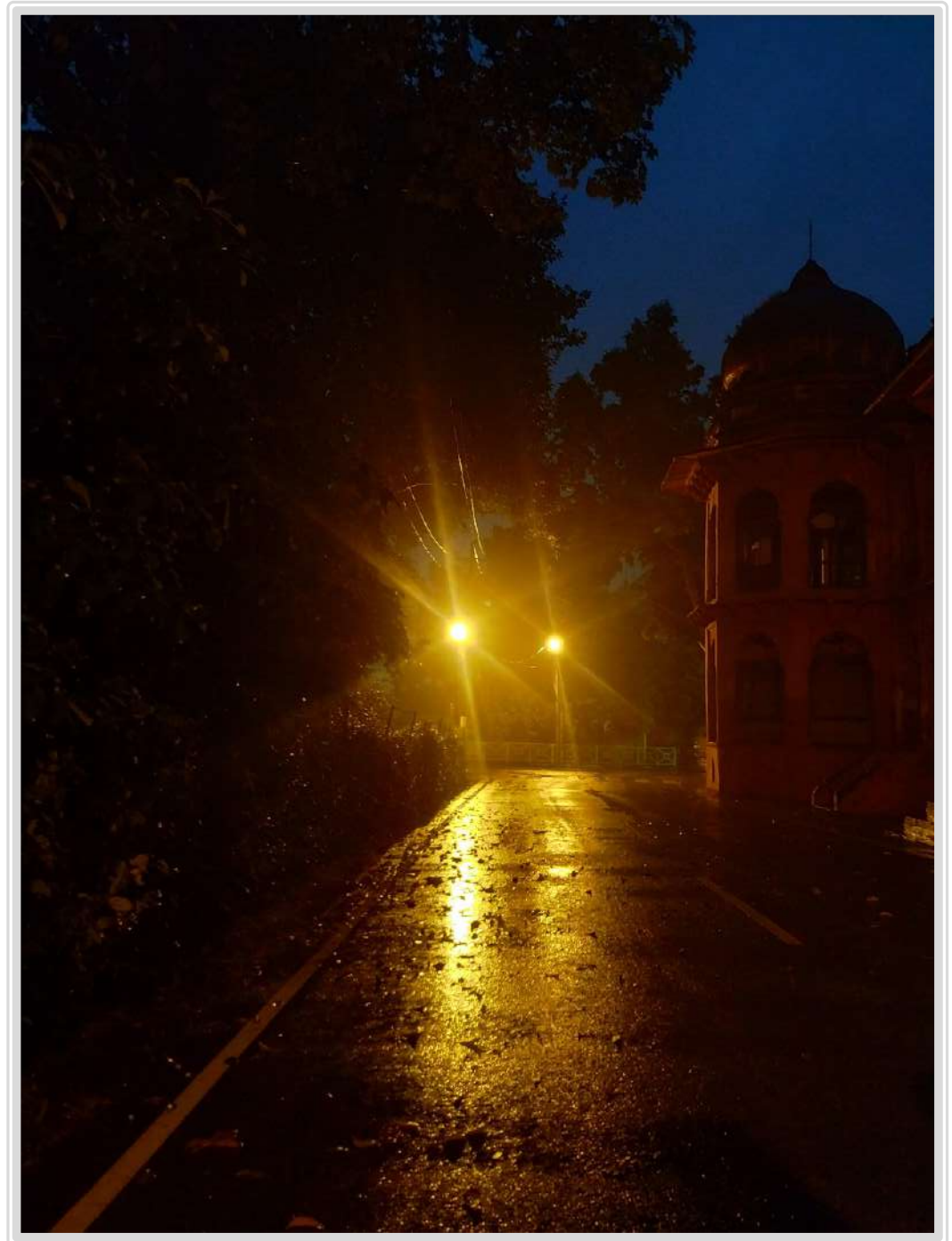
SHAAM~E~AWADH

A rainy winter evening in the campus, a sight to relish after a cup of ginger spiked tea, a safe heaven for a hosteller, the road leading to the beautiful *Laal Baradari*.

~ Mini Sinha



A minimalist, as the name probably suggests. Trying to seek joy in the little details of everyday life. Slightly social, seeks refuge in books, travelling and animal welfare.



REFLECTION

"Beautiful sunsets need cloudy skies."

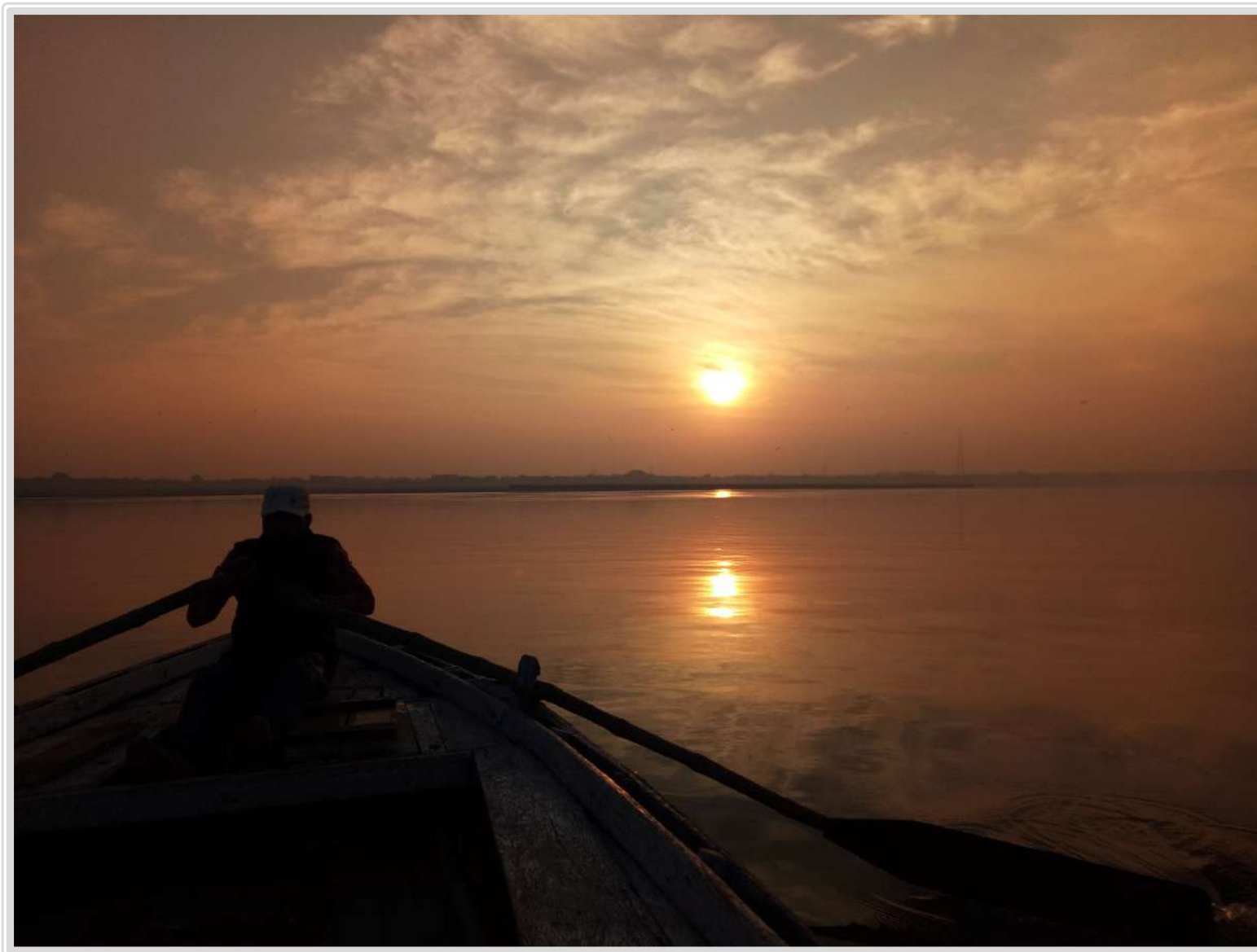
-Paolo Coelho

~ Richa Kushwaha



A nerd who loves stargazing
and binge watching retro
flicks.





SUNSET

Sunset doesn't symbolize "the end" rather it gives us a chance to slow down and introspect so that we can have a brighter tomorrow. The Sun always sets to rise again. In the same way, whenever a person fails/falls there's always a chance to rise again and begin with a fresh approach

~ Navneet Prakash



Exuberant in spirit, jovial by heart.



BADSHAH BAGH ~ Lucknow chronicler Yogesh Praveen told TOI that Lal Baradari was the only red stone building in the Nawabi era (which is also a mosque). It was known as Badshah Bagh in the 19th century. The foundation of the building was laid by Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider Shah in 1814 and it was completed by his son Naseeruddin Haider Shah in 1820.

~ Ravish Fatima

I am curious about life (but it won't kill me). Apart from this I like to delve into Urdu poetry and develop a taste for the finest of everything. In the words of Despin Sparks, "Photography is a story, I fail to put into words."





XVI BOATS

Wearing gore, as the skies await dark hours, what is it that soothes the spirits?

The fish in the boat or the boat in the sea.

~ Ashutosh Agarwal

Photography is as vital as life blood for me. The change of lens is not merely mechanical, it affords me the insight to penetrate deeper truths.

Challenges and adventurous trips are all I live for.





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The Department extends an invitation to all of its alumni students to become an active part of 'Department of English and Modern European Languages Alumni Association' by sending in the duly filled registration form enclosed with this invitation. We look forward to your active response and enthusiastic participation in this initiative.

Alumni can submit either a hardcopy or a softcopy along with a passport size photograph. It can be mailed to departmentofenglishlu@gmail.com