

A Literary Journal of Arts

# Rhetorica

Quarterly



प्रोफेसर प्रेम सुमन शर्मा  
अधिष्ठाता  
Prof. Prem Suman Sharma  
Dean



कला संकाय  
लखनऊ विश्वविद्यालय  
लखनऊ-226007  
Faculty of Arts  
University of Lucknow  
Lucknow-226007




### MESSAGE

I congratulate the Department of English and Modern European Languages for their commendable efforts in creating *Rhetorica Quarterly*, a literary journal dedicated to the development of a creative and soulful corpus of works by some very driven, enthusiastic and colorful young minds. The Department has worked relentlessly in compiling rich and vibrant editions with engaging content each time.

The **Summer** edition of the journal has an open theme that has provided the opportunity to curate and compile diverse works incorporating different, relevant contemporary issues. I warmly appreciate and support the painstaking efforts and hard work that has gone into creating this well designed journal that aims at encouraging thinking, reading and writing in young, talented minds.

Gracious submissions from guest contributors have increased the depth and widened the reach of this journal which is a matter of pride for all of us. Once again, I congratulate the Head of the Department of English and Modern European Languages and her team members for their success and wish them good luck for all forthcoming editions.

September 9, 2021

  
(Prof. Prem Suman Sharma)

# *From the Chair*

As Rhetorica Quarterly completes its first volume with four issues, we move on to its second edition, I am both happy and hopeful of this literary journey that we started last year in the summer of 2020. Our initiative has drawn students to different themes, words that transcend new thoughts, ideas that are yet to take shape. This literary journal was created with the aim to inspire, preserve, archive, and encourage students by providing them a literary platform to showcase their creativity.

The editorial board was formulated with students that shared a passion for working with the contributors, and it is this spirit of literary enthusiasm that we carry forward with this first issue of our second volume. Our honourable Vice Chancellor, Prof. Alok Kumar Rai, has always been very supportive of our endeavour. Our Dean, Faculty of Arts, Prof. Prem Suman Sharma deserves special thanks for her warm wishes. Many thanks to all our contributors who responded to our call for submissions. We would like to thank our guest contributors Mrs Lakshmi Kannan, eminent poet, short story writer and a translator, Prof. Dhananjay Singh from Jawaharlal Nehru University, Ms Sarita Jenamani, poet and feminist from Austria, Dr. Nishi Pulugurtha and Dr. Rani Massey for their contribution.

The present issue is dedicated to Late Prof. Ashok Kumar, former Head of the Department who was much loved by his students and colleagues. Prof Ashok Kumar completed his graduation and post graduation from the Department of English and Modern European Languages in 1980. He joined the Department as Reader in Linguistics in 1991. Unfortunately, we lost him in 2013. We have fond memories of our association with him, an inspiring teacher, and a wonderful colleague. The Department pays a humble and heartfelt tribute to Prof Ashok Kumar.

I hope our readers will enjoy this issue which celebrates life with words. A no-theme issue is always exciting because one is free to create her own theme, play with ideas at her own pace. Celebrating the joy of reading, the support and love you gave to our first volume, and the blessings and good wishes of our loved ones, I once again joyously present the first issue of yet another volume of Rhetorica Quarterly!

Let ideas flow.

Prof. Ranu Uniyal,

Head of the Department,

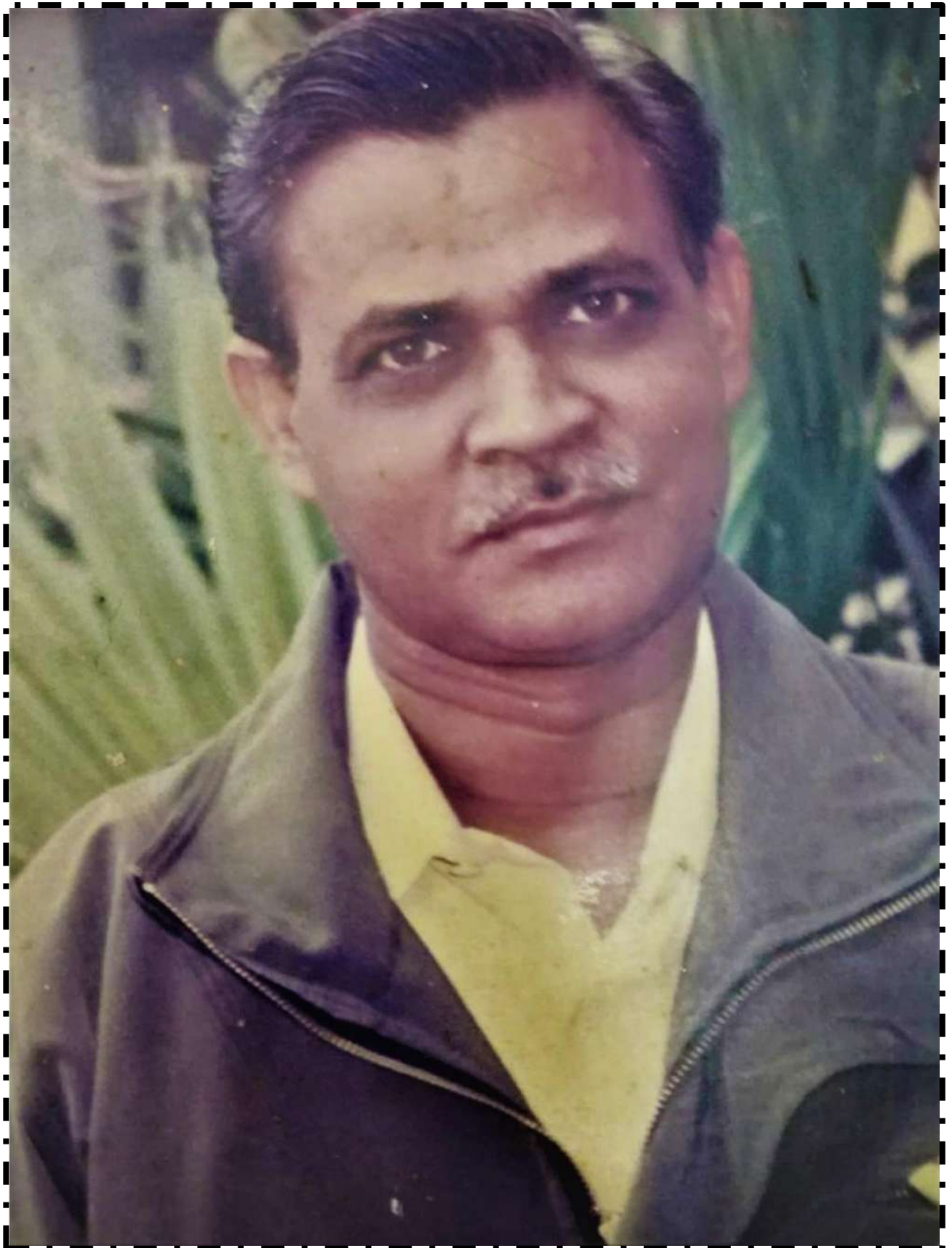
Department of English and Modern European Languages,

University of Lucknow.



Dedicated to  
Prof. Ashok Kumar  
(1957-2013)





Prof. Ashok Kumar

(1957-2013)

# IN THIS ISSUE

I Letter from the Editor

II Contributors

## NON FICTION

|                                       |    |  |
|---------------------------------------|----|--|
| <i>Dr. Rani Massey (Guest Writer)</i> | 1  | Lucknow Chapter (1935-37)                              |
| <i>Fateema Zaheer</i>                 | 5  | A Bride is like a Mannequin                            |
| <i>Prachi Kholia</i>                  | 8  | Home   |
| <i>Kaumudi Singh</i>                  | 11 | Role of a Teacher as a Mentor during Covid-19 Pandemic |
| <i>Dibyashri Banerjee</i>             | 14 | Roar of the Thunder                                    |

## BOOK REVIEW

|                              |    |  |
|------------------------------|----|--|
| <i>Saumya Srivastava</i>     | 18 | The Real and the Unreal and Other Poems          |
| <i>Amrita Sharma</i>         | 22 | Palabras de Sándalo / Sandalwood Words           |
| <i>Vedamini Vikram Singh</i> | 25 | Manottama: Narrative of a Sorrowful Wife         |
| <i>Yusuf Ayaz</i>            | 29 | Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English (2020-2021) |
| <i>Smriti Sneh</i>           | 33 | The Alchemy of Ageing: Poems by S.A. Hamid       |

## FICTION

|  |    |                             |
|--|----|-----------------------------|
| <i>Lakshmi Kannan (Guest Writer)</i>   | 37 | As Dapper as They make Them |
| <i>Dhananjay Singh (Guest Writer)</i>  | 42 | Goddess Corona              |
|  | 43 | The Garden She Left Behind  |
| <i>Nishi Pulugurtha (Guest Writer)</i> | 45 | The Matters of the Eye      |
| <i>Garima Yadav</i>                    | 49 | Bond                        |
| <i>Snigdha Singh</i>                   | 51 | The Familiar Stranger       |

## POETRY

|                                     |    |                            |
|-------------------------------------|----|----------------------------|
| <i>Sarita Jenamani (Guest Poet)</i> | 54 | A Fictive Life Foretold    |
|                                     | 55 | Being Bemused              |
|                                     | 56 | Home for Immigrants        |
| <i>Prithviyeet Sinha</i>            | 58 | Shanti: An Ekphrastic Poem |
| <i>Prachi Kholia</i>                | 60 | The Receding Wave          |

|                           |    |                              |
|---------------------------|----|------------------------------|
| <i>Akanksha Pandey</i>    | 61 | Vestigial                    |
| <i>Shivangi Tripathi</i>  | 64 | A Dream: Deferred and Killed |
| <i>Satyam Singh</i>       | 65 | Let's Run from this Halt     |
| <i>Shradha Gupta</i>      | 66 | Lines on Lucknow             |
| <i>Novi Yanti</i>         | 68 | Pinky Pink Shoes             |
| <i>Medha Malaviya</i>     | 69 | Women do not Need            |
| <i>Bhavya Pant</i>        | 70 | A Storm of Emotions          |
| <i>Bushra Fatima</i>      | 71 | Newborn Mother               |
| <i>Dibyashri Banerjee</i> | 73 | The Sorrow's Den             |
| <i>Ila Maurya</i>         | 75 | Snoozed                      |

## PHOTOGRAPHY

|                      |    |   |
|----------------------|----|---|
| <i>Kaumudi Singh</i> | 77 | Empty Streets                             |
|                      | 78 | Glorious Past                             |
| <i>Chitra Bajpai</i> | 79 | New Haven Harbour, CT, USA                |
|                      | 80 | Lighthouse Point Park, New Haven, CT, USA |
|                      | 81 | West Rock, New Haven, CT, USA             |

REGISTRATION FORM FOR ALUMNI

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

THEME ~ DISABILITY: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

Everyday living is all about appreciating simple joys of the nuanced life and it is actually a blessing to be able to feel the essence of this happiness. Collectively, we have been through a lot during the past one and a half years. The pandemic has hit us hard, but as they say, life fights harder. After every cold Winter there comes a warm and bright Summer that carries with itself hope and the spirit of rejuvenation. The human soul is known for its grit and resilience that tackles every odd under immense pressure and emerges stronger than before. That is the way of the world. That is how we, as human beings, are wired.

With this thought, I take immense pleasure in introducing the fifth issue of *Rhetorica Quarterly-A Journal of Arts, Vol. II, No. 1, Summer 2021*. The theme of this edition was kept open to invite a range of submissions in various genres of literature. It was the aim of the Rhetorica Society to let the contributors have a free and full reign on deciding the themes for their contributions. And as it happened, we have a wondrous collection of literary artefacts that has a universal appeal in style and form. As the Editor of the poetry section, I can truly vouch for the difficulty faced by my team in selecting poems from such a rich variety of submissions and hope it holds true for other editors as well. It is absolutely amazing to find this kind of sophistication and finesse in the creative works of the young talent whose artistic endeavours bear truthful testimony to the same. This is genuinely an honest tribute to all those who aspire to think, imagine and write their hearts out.

On behalf of the Head of the Department, Prof. Ranu Uniyal and all the Editors and Co-editors of the Rhetorica Society, I congratulate and send my sincere gratitude to each and every contributor who has given their precious thoughts and efforts selflessly, enriching this Journal and taking it a step further on the road to success.

With warm regards,  
Maziah Shaaz,  
Poetry Editor,  
Editorial Board,  
Rhetorica Society.



# CONTRIBUTORS

## - Non-Fiction -

---

### Editor

NIKITA YADAV



Her area of interest includes feminist discourse and the psychoanalytical approach towards maternal thinking.

### Co-Editors

CHEटना RAWAT

Psychological thriller and fantasy fiction are two of her favourite genres.



VEDAMINI VIKRAM

Her areas of interest include performance studies, indigenous literatures and travel literature.



## - Fiction -

---

### Editor

BHAVYA PANT



An enthusiastic learner and a research scholar. Her area of interest includes post-humanism in contemporary fiction.

### Co-Editors

YUSUF AYAZ

His research includes medical humanities and a clinical analysis of the portrayal of mental illness in modern and postmodern fiction.



SMRITI SNEH

With a hobby to romance the ghosts of past through her writing, she hopes to inspire her readers.



## - Poetry -

---

### Editor

MAZIAH SHAAZ



She is a gastronome and potterhead and enjoys watching psychological thrillers. Wishes to go on a solo trip.

### Co-Editors

SHIVANGI GAUTAM

Ardent lover of F. Scott Fitzgerald and generously fuelled by nature with a literary bent of mind.



AKANKSHA PANDEY

She follows her dreams and loves the unfathomable beauty of nature, trying to decipher the meanings of life.



## - Photography and Designing -

---

### Editor

ASHUTOSH AGARWAL



A freelance photographer. Earlier worked with *The Times of India* as content writer. Adventurer and a passionate trader.

### Co-Editors

CHITRA BAJPAI

A creative writer by her interest and a researcher by her passion, her doctoral thesis focuses across on the issue of sustained ecology in art.



ISHITA SINGH

Pursuing her Master's in English, with her love for literature and curiosity to learn more.





## **- Book Review -**

---

### **Editor**

**MARIA KHAN**



An enthusiastic learner, a budding writer and an academic trying to carve a niche for herself in the world of academia and literary imagination.

### **Co-Editors**

**PRIYANSHI AGARWAL**

She is a happy soul in the labyrinth world of academia with the special ability to look at life pragmatically.



**ARSHIYA PARVEEN**

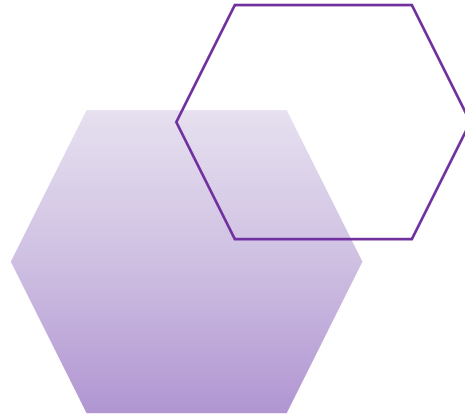
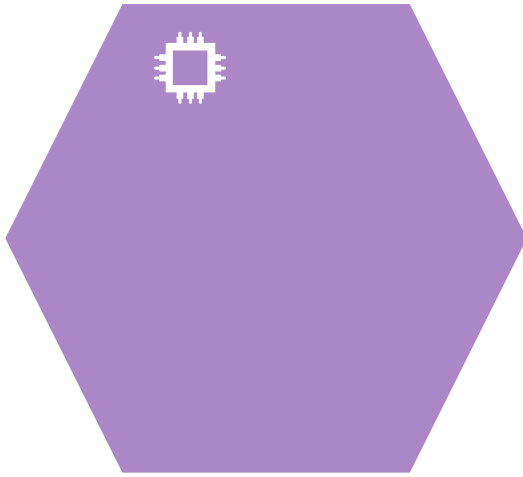
She is a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages. Her areas of interest include Historical, Environmental and Children's fiction.



# NON FICTION

*"A truth that's told with bad intent beats  
all the lies you can invent."*

*- William Blake -*



## LUCKNOW REVISITED

‘Stamp of the place, Spirit of the times’

- W.B. Griffin, the Architect

### LUCKNOW CHAPTER (1935~37)

As I reflect on this picture taken in 2012, I realize that sometimes in life, the seemingly less meaningful events gain momentum to become the most meaningful. It was a casual invitation to partake in the ceremony in which the Canberra Centenary delegation (Australia) visited the Nishatganj cemetery (Lucknow) to reconnect spiritually with the final homeland of the American architect W.B.Griffin, who had designed their city Canberra.

Earlier, an article “Time to Commemorate”, in The Hindustan Times

had also caught my attention in this context. All this spurred my curiosity to greater heights. It finally gravitated towards further investigation to unfold the saga of the architect, W.B.Griffin who dared to venture out to alien Eastern lands to prove his mettle in those times when ‘Globalization’ was unheard of. Through his work he chronicled the spirit of the times, in this context, Lucknow.

The architectural feats of Walter Burley Griffin, the famed American architect of the late 19th and early 20th century, had

come under the arc lights, especially with the Centenary Celebrations of Canberra, the Federal capital city of Australia, which he designed, after having won the Federal Capital Design Competition in 1912. He is acclaimed for his passionate foray into landscape architecture in three dynamically different continents- America (citizen), Australia and lastly India under the Colonial Rule. His journey culminated in further creativity in Lucknow (1935-37) before his untimely death here. He was followed by his talented wife and creative partner Marion Mahony (1936-37) who endeavored to ceaselessly support his projects.

Further, on garnering support on this topic, our Isabella Thoburn College Librarian offered to connect me to The Tagore Library (univ.) and its core team of librarians who were extremely gracious in locating the old files and documents concerning Griffin. In the volume, "History of Lucknow University", B. N. Puri stated that Griffin was commissioned to design the new library, but the project fell through.

However, the Griffins received many commissions: designed the temporary pavilions for the United Provinces Exhibition of Industry and Agriculture; Pioneer Press Building; Library for the Raja of

Mahmudabad for his rare collection of books and manuscripts and many private houses like Bir Bhan Bhatia House and a memorial to King George V- his only link to the British imperialism. Marion and Griffin produced more than 50 projects between November, 1935 and February, 1937.

As I ambled through the pathways of the University campus, I noticed the Students' Union Building that caught my breath on reminiscing. Griffin and Marion's insightful architectural design for the students' Union Building, University of Lucknow, was a perfect blend of form and function.

Interestingly, on my journey of unearthing more material, I read that Griffin captured precious moments in his letters; one such being in which he shared his appreciation of excellence and poise of the young women students on his visit to Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow.

India by now was bracing itself towards modernism, as well as freedom from the colonial shackles. The fresh new spirit enthused Griffin to free his designs from the colonial past by adapting to local specificity, rather than replicating the imperial style of the British architecture. This ingenuity

remained his legacy to the world of landscape architecture.

On the cultural scene, maintaining a *Zenana* may be cited as the efforts of the *Nawabs* to salvage the waning Mughal culture at this point in history. Ahmad Ali in *Twilight in Delhi* (1940), endorses the drastic political/social/cultural changes taking place in the first decade of the 20th century. This was the socio-cultural spirit and ethos which Griffin faced-adjusting to the expectations. He contributed to the designing of social space through his construction design of a *Zenana* for the *Raja* of Jahangirabad. His most significant patrons were the *Taluqdars* of Jahangirabad and Mahmudabad.

Under the *Nawabs*, Lucknow experienced a Renaissance that represented the last great flowering of the Indo-Islamic genius. The city whose skyline was dotted with 'domes and arches', was also by this time being given a face lift by Sir Harcourt Butler, the Lieutenant Governor who restored Lucknow as the capital of the United Province in 1920. The exhilarating spirit of the National Liberation struggle, and the impact of the Soviet Revolution in the 1930's inspired a cultural revival in the form of Progressive art and Literary

movement. It was into this unique old civilization which was gaining new heights of aspirations that Griffin stepped into. His arrival marked the beginning of a new chapter in Lucknow's urban evolution.

Behind the razzle dazzle of a new Lucknow skyline, tell-tale signs of life gone by remain lurking, to be further explored and conserved. The space Griffin shared/reflected is an inspiring testimony to the history and heritage of Lucknow.



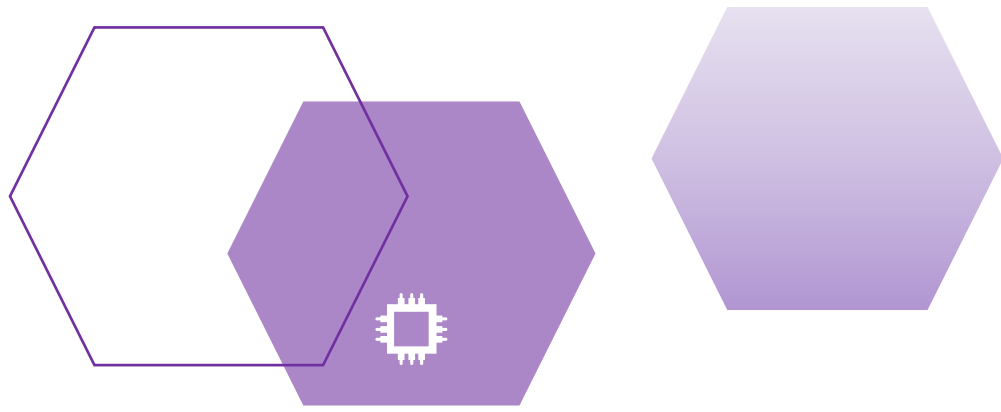


~ Dr. Rani Massey



Head of the Dept. Of English (Retd.), Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow, she has taught English Literature at the Undergraduate and Post-graduate levels. She also contributed towards the teaching of Women's Studies (Women, language and media)

She has to her credit, international publications on Women's Writings in the S.A.A.R.C Region and a Research Paper "Women and Resistance in Indo-Anglian Fiction", which culminated as a part of the text book: "Women's Studies in India: Some Contours.", published by Ewha Woman's University Press Korea. She completed a thought-provoking UGC Minor Project "Dynamics of Gender Related Issues: Contemporary Women's Writing in the SAARC Region". Her international research paper, entitled "Voicing the Devoiced" (Subaltern Lit.), has been published in the SAARC Journal 'Beyond Borders'. She has attended several international SAARC Festivals and served as Chair on the panel discussions. She can be reached at Email: [ranimassey@hotmail.com](mailto:ranimassey@hotmail.com)



## A BRIDE IS LIKE A MANNEQUIN

**W**e see more marriages than any other function throughout our lives. We dress well, go to the respective venue and meet our relatives, reminisce over moments we lived through and enjoy food while taking in all the ceremonies the night has to offer us. But it is rare that we notice the way a bride and a bridegroom are treated on the day they tie the knot. To put it simply, this treatment is sexist. It is as if a woman's main aim in life is to prepare for her wedding day. If she is lucky, her dad opens up a savings account when she turns eighteen and if she is not, her family starts looking for a boy who would open an account for her/both of them, because she really was his anyway, born to be given away to a man, whom she never knew, never saw but now he is her family and she, apparently his *amanat* (property).

A girl from the time she starts to develop consciousness, sees and hears about how a lady should behave, how she should

be prepared to leave and go to someone else's house, how she should not talk back, how she should wear clothes, how her father is burdened with a dowry that he cannot escape from, how it's such a responsibility to raise a girl child and other infinite rules and instructions. Whereas in the case of a boy, the parents are relieved. They apparently are proud of how it's a boy, not much responsibility, no dowry to be given (can take though), will be the *lakda-wala* and how the boy will be their savior in old age. A boy from the time he starts to develop consciousness, hears about how women should behave, how women should dress, how they should talk, react and behave, how his mother should always cover her head in front of elders and strangers, how the sisters should cover their bodies and how talking about periods is a shame. He grows up in an environment, where he sees the restrictions, the deadlines, the curfew being put on

women and he feels that he can do whatever he wants however he wants.

For some girls, marriage implies freedom, because they have constantly been told how they can do things after their marriages, when they go to their own house. For some girls, marriage is like a law that punishes them to move from one jail to another. For boys, there is nothing overwhelming about marriage, just the fact they will now have to share their room and bed.

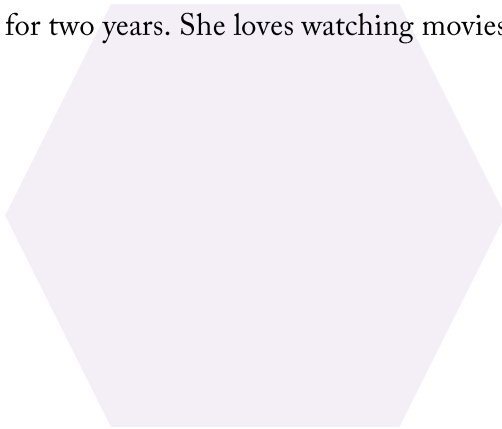
The treatment becomes highly sexist on the wedding day. The bridegroom after the *Pheras* or the *Nikah*, roams around like a free bird— meeting the guests, getting the well-wishes, clicking pictures, talking about politics and just casually eating around, like he would do any other day (except for the *pheras* or the *nikah*) while the bride has to behave in a standard way. The whole path and plan of how to act, to see, to smile is laid out to her by her married relatives, who as

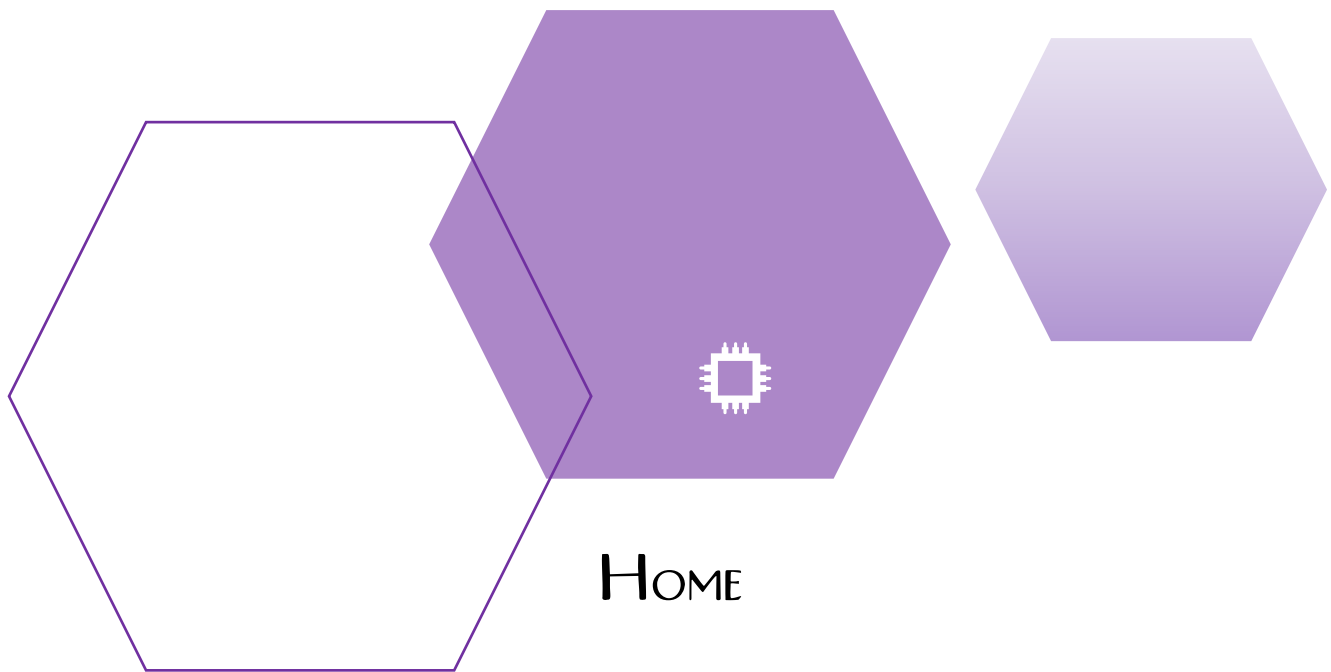
usual try to control her life. She is suggested to cry, to smile just a little, in balance, so that she is not seen to be too happy, to not (this is a tough one and extremely stupid) look directly into the camera and God forbid if she has looked at the camera and smiled too, then the aunties at the wedding will spread the word that she is way too cunning and what kind of a bride looks at the camera and smiles.

A perfect bride is the one who always looks down; walks while looking at the floor, never looks up, does not eat when she is on the stage and definitely does not talk. She is just supposed to sit there like a mannequin, for people to look at her and comment on her. While the word which is used to refer to the man (who is getting married) starts with the bride (bridegroom), leading the man into the abyss of togetherness and lifelong partnership; she is the one who is not even allowed to look up.

~ Fateema Zaheer

She is pursuing her Post-Graduation from Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her write-ups have been published in The Corona Blues and Project Intersectionality. She is freelancing for the UNDP India's initiative for Gender Equality for LGBTI livelihood and mitigating gender-based violence. She cannot start her day without a perfect cup of tea, is an animal lover and has worked for the National Service Scheme for two years. She loves watching movies and writing reviews and always carries a book with her.





**T**hat visit corrupted the perfect image in my head. I could no longer recall the simple beauty of my childhood home. That part of my life had been dismantled brick by brick. The depressing skeletons of the place, I saw, would haunt me for the rest of my life. The paint was almost non-existent at this point, the flooring was coming off, a thick layer of dust covered everything without exceptions, and I was horrified on seeing a few bricks missing from the porch pillar. It was as if the building had survived a hurricane. It looked abandoned, even though it wasn't. All I could think of was how she would keep everything in perfect order here, how every morning she would clean the whole

place, maintain her plants, and do the rest of the chores. The small garden that she kept would provide a little of everything for our small family; from tomatoes, gourd, and radishes to garlic, peas, and carrots. It was all gone now, just like the rose bushes. There was only a strong sense of regret left behind.

What was I expecting? It had been years since I was here.

Somehow this old city had always been calling me back into its arms, through dreams, recollections, and that woman's endless imploring. But of course, in my self-absorption, I never went. Had I known going back would corrode the memories too, it's safe to say, I might have not done it even now. She



was gone before I could make it. It was pointless anyhow.

The place was ruined, and my guilt was such that I decided to stay longer and make sure everything was taken care of. Everything that she cared about. All that I ignored till now. I cannot say what was there to 'take care of' exactly, but at least that's what I told myself at the time, leaving the rest for later. This was pointless too. But I was convinced that I am doing it for her, the last thing that I can.

When I had entered this familiar part of the city last night, the first thing I noticed was the fresh concrete overlaying the old brick road outside my family home, which threw me off at first. Everything else was the same, except for the little things here and there. The paint of the houses in the locality was all wrong, not what I remembered. It gave the colony a newness that I could not appreciate. On seeing this, a sudden urge to run towards home came onto me; but I was afraid of finding a stranger inside. The thought was repulsive enough to considerably decrease my pace. As I finally reached the house, I was transported to my childhood when I would come home after playing with my friends and was greeted with the smell of '*aaloo matar*', whose flavor became

richer every time I remembered it. I took in a deep breath in anticipation, unknowingly, but the smell of the evening meals that she used to prepare wasn't there. A sense of disconnect violently threw me back to the present.

I had found that the city, the roads, the stalls, the people, all had retained their soul through generations. In each '*aap*', which is unique to Lucknow, was the city I grew up in. That frivolous youth was coming back to me again, and I felt like a different person. I felt safe and at ease somehow. But then again, the little changes made it all feel like a nightmarish nonsensical dream. It was like an old lover playing on the heartstrings, pushing me away and then pulling me back into its arms. I was four and forty, all at once, going back and forth in time.

A lot had changed and yet, Lucknow was successful in preserving itself in small pockets around every corner, in its tea shops and bloated-looking old houses; the Mughal heritage and the colonial past were all right there. And every intersection was a memory for me. The streets that my tiny feet nervously walked on, holding on to my elder sister all those years ago, were there too but appeared smaller than I remember. There are many more vehicles, a lot more people, still, the city

had shrunk it seemed. It didn't feel enormously huge to drown me, yet the feeling was strangely uncomfortable in a way.

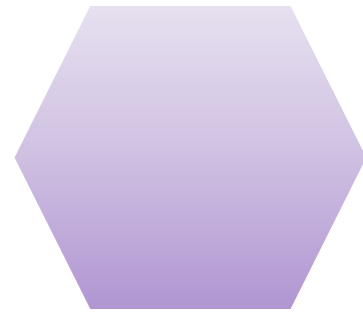
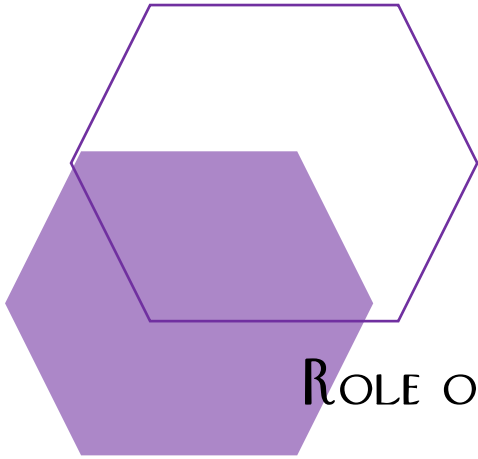
Or I was bigger now, it is probably that, yet the thought further dissociated me from my hometown. It told me that I don't belong here. If only I could tell her, it was never her that I was running away from. It was this feeling. This reminder of estrangement from the

soil that birthed me, not the woman. Then again, maybe I don't belong here anymore. But the smiling faces that I came across left me feeling otherwise. Even after so long, these people who were mere blur faces welcomed me as their own. They hugged me and cried for me. They shed tears I could not. I was not a stranger to them, I was the kid who came back home.

~ Prachi Kholia

She is a student of Lucknow University, currently pursuing her Master's in English. With a curiosity for everything ranging from Science-Fiction to Ancient History and passionate love for reading; she is obsessed with the stars and the emptiness they reside in.





## ROLE OF A TEACHER AS A MENTOR DURING COVID~19 PANDEMIC

*“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”*

— William Arthur Ward

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the education of at least 850 million students worldwide. It is during this crisis and trying times that students look up to their teachers and the University’s leadership for guidance and hope. The role of a teacher includes, but is no longer limited to a mere facilitator of education, they have to evolve and excel in the role of a mentor.

The role of a mentor is characterized by the investment of time, knowledge, and effort through a relationship of helping,

caring, sharing, and developing. All these are done to promote the protégé’s personal growth, knowledge, and skills. In that respect, mentoring has to go through different stages and processes for it to provide continued professional growth. These stages include the need to develop rapport, setting goals, and establishing the means of reaching these goals. The process of mentoring is akin to a ‘nurturing process’. Nurturing as a process involves providing guidance and advice. Mentoring is therefore expected to improve in teaching and learning, through personal and professional development, and to equip the students with the autonomy to judge, act and make

decisions that are informed in the best interest of those whom they are in the business to serve.

After the COVID-19 outbreak, as the Universities are being shut down, the classes hit the airwaves. It is in this spirit that e-mentoring programs find their relevance. For times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, which may not allow to easily meet with a mentor in person; e-mentoring provides an opportunity for regular meetings without physical barriers and these programs allow them an opportunity to connect with mentors and pursue goals that might have otherwise been unattainable. E-mentoring also creates the opportunity for the availability and accessibility of mentors who fill certain characteristics, such as sharing a similar skill, interest, or characteristic with a mentee.

There's an array of dares in the implementation of online teaching mechanisms, proper evaluative measures as well as result declaration. The first challenge was to understand and cater to the student's access to internet connectivity. Especially, the students, hailing from rural and backward areas, were expected to have a smartphone with 4G compatibility to enable streaming of the live teaching. Secondly,

students must have good internet connectivity even in urban areas to avoid buffering and lagging of the live stream, which happens when Internet connection speed is inadequate to accommodate the bandwidth load. Next, live-streaming focuses only on the theoretical teaching of subjects without the direct use of the laboratory, as technical education is more pragmatic, it's taxing to justify. Despite all this, the teaching fraternity confronted the glitches, ensured a dynamic mentor-mentee relationship, and emphatically made a grade in the educational sector by e-mentoring, coping up with e-learning and live teaching, making e-contents, and evolving a student-centric model of teaching in difficult times.

This truly validates the etymology of the work 'mentor' which comes straight from Greek mythology. During the ten-year Trojan War, Odysseus, the king of Ithaca, left his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus to lead his army. He placed Telemachus under the care of a guardian called Mentor, whose job was to protect and guide him. Athena, goddess of wisdom, in his guise restored the kingdom and ultimately lends meaning to the word 'mentor'. Modern-day teachers have

authenticated this story disguised as Athena, by managing protégé outcome.

As the world stands still, this pandemic has already created an epoch effect on mankind. People have started questioning the normative, and it wouldn't be a surprise if

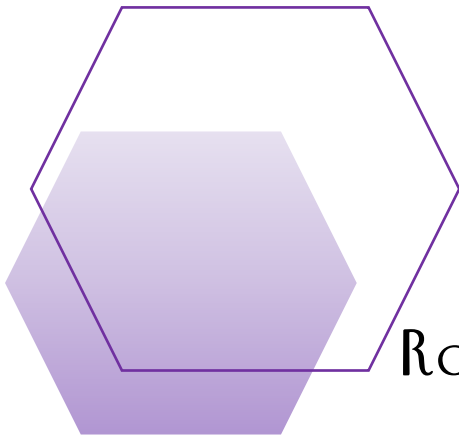
this pandemic creates a permanent impact on the modus operandi and techniques of how we learn and teach. The world will be a witness to greater usage of technology-based learning and teaching. The successful will be ones who will adapt to win, and not just to cope.

~ Kaumudi Singh

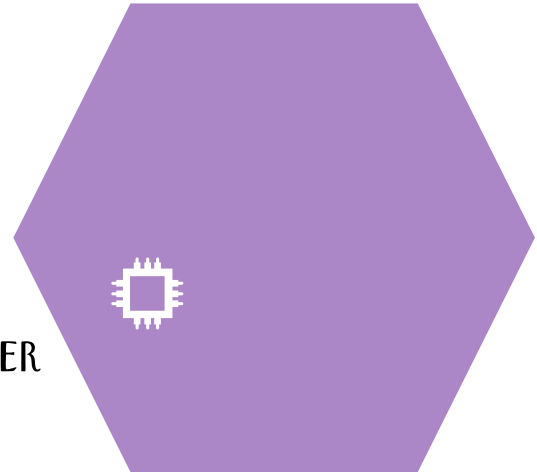
She is an alumna of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Presently, she is training budding engineers at Lucknow University's second campus. Her papers have been published in reputed International & National refereed journals. Kaumudi is a Bharatanatyam dancer recognized by former Governor Shri B.L. Joshi. Her areas of interest are Literary Theory & Criticism, Canadian Literature, Translation, and Diasporic writings.







## ROAR OF THE THUNDER



Usually, the lanes in this season are soggy due to periodic downpours. En route to my workplace, I course through a barren farm adjoined by shrubs and the sight of leaves bedecked with dewdrops, enthral me. So habitually, I would steal a glance from the car's windowpane of the rain-showered shrubs.

It was late in the evening and dusk was briskly engulfing the firmament when from the closed windowpane of my car, I spotted a troop of children playing around in the farm, with cautious steps to not destroy the paltry crop pattern. A second's sight at their hilarity shall always be etched in my memory.

These kids were palling around sundry ways to distract the chaser amongst them whose intent was to jump up on one of them and swap his place with him. It so happened that the chaser had almost

grabbed hold of another kid's shirt when being so engrossed in the purpose, he couldn't perceive the slick of the slush beneath him that wouldn't allow such haring motion. No sooner had he but touched his target's shirt that his feet lost balance and he tumbled down with the other boy right upon him. The others hurried to their aid, picked both of them up, and even though the distance I could see the quivering of the chaser kid's cadaverous body. The sudden thud with which he fell on the clay, he must have been bruised. The countenance of the just gleeful visages turned to one of fret. I was wondering if I should drop the boy at his home when instantly what he did took my breath away!

He stroked the shoulders of his peer whom he had successfully chased and doing so, burst into laughter, capering for victory with such childlike joy that only an unrestricted mind like his could derive.

Seeing him thus, his groupies were relieved and they all whopped at the high spirit and burst into guffaws afterwards. I watched them for a while, a part of me shared their joy, but another felt a jolt. I felt my body shudder. A series of emotions with a wave of memories, washed away the one moment of joy fortune had bestowed upon me. The memories soaked me up so much that by the time I was home, the entire impression of what I had seen through was still there, but the expression of liveliness and vivacity that my heart shared had faded away. I sat by the window ledge, on an armchair holding my mug of coffee, watching the rain and recollecting what caused that jolt.

The downpour a day before had moistened the school ground and made it quite slippery to walk. At lunch break, I was with my friends in the common room. Being an introvert, I was always the listener. Honestly, I never found any of their talks fascinating to add to, they were all mundane conversations like the grow-ups had. But being an over-conscious and sensitive kid, I couldn't bear the fact that I would be seen alone and gossiped as someone alone, scared, and behaved dumb. The other three in the group had decided to have a walk around the ground. I wasn't asked for an opinion and being the timid kid that I was, and knowing the outcome of

being left alone, I couldn't make my opposition heard. So I silently complied, preoccupied with my aim to look engrossed with them in deep conversation and like everyone, pretended to be casual and relaxed. It was just at the third step that my shoes lost grip of the ground and I fell prostrate upon the ground with my palms getting dug in clay. The sudden intensity of the fall didn't disturb me as much as the sound of laughs that I heard and though one of my groupies picked me compassionately, I could see the faces of others revealing scorn, giggling, and suppressing their laughter. For an instant, I was the center of attention for all the onlookers, and the ones that didn't laugh gave me pitiful glances and asked if I was hurt or suggested I be more careful.

What I felt back then even after all these years is so alive and so fresh in my memory that just the mere thought of it is enough to bring a downpour of self-loathing, this one incident had in a way, terribly brought something to my eye that the childhood I was desperately and incessantly trying to run away from. As if, something that moment I was trying to hide had in the worst way possible, something I was trying with all my might to disprove had only been proven by myself. I lambasted myself for acting so dumb, the laughs I heard ringed my ears for several

months, I never dared step out of the common room again in the rainy season.

A week passed by, I saw the children a couple of times playing their same old game in the fields. However, rain since that day hadn't been frequent at times when I was on my way through the roads. This evening, I was lucky!

The sky was crowded with black clouds by the time I had finished my work for the day. The rain was already bucketing down when I had turned to the roads on the other side of which was the field,. And there they were, the group of these ebullient, boisterous, and jocular kids playing to their soul's content. I stopped my car and instantly took off my black blazer and socks, and before the thoughts of how an adult ought to behave and what people might think of me could overpower and restrict my actions, I came out of my car and went to join these kids. They all noticed me approaching and I could read patches of curiosity and a tad of concern on their visages. All of them congregated awaiting my arrival.

At first, I passed them a serious, musing glance. The next second, relieving them, I beamed and urged them to let me be the chaser once. The cheer on their faces returned instantly and they profoundly accepted my request. So it went, for the

next hour, rain and thunder kept us company while we ran at each other, took shelter for a while when the rain had all of a sudden started pouring in torrents. At last, drenched and exhausted, dirty and laughing, we went to a nearby roadside *Dhaba* that the kids told me about. The steaming noodles instantly lit our faces for we all were famished. I dropped them at the colony where they lived. Most of them came from families that just made enough to live to make both ends meet. Their mothers thanked me cordially and one of them urged me to come to her house. I wasn't in a hurry, so I obliged. She was a tailor, her husband ran a grocery shop. She warmly offered me one of her kurta *pyjama* sets. I hesitated for a moment but she insisted that I should change for I was soaked from head to toe. After promising another visit to her and other ladies of the colony and some chocolates and candies for the kids, I took my leave.

The rain has turned to drizzle now as I sit by the windowsill, sipping coffee. Suddenly a flash of light in the sky catches my sight. The roar of thunder follows by in another moment; I smile as I trace the raindrops gliding through the glass panes of the window. The flash of lightning happens in an instant, it's the roar of it that scares us but when it comes, the lightning has already taken place. The roar trembles

our heart once and we get accustomed to feeling scared and keep away from the lightning. The thunder of what others might think, how will I be looked upon had so long caged me from showering in the rain of freedom, let the lightning of

embarrassing moments come now, I will be scared no more, I will embrace embarrassment as warmly as I embrace my dignity and reputation. Let the adults laugh at my childish, callous conduct, I would be grateful to laugh along.

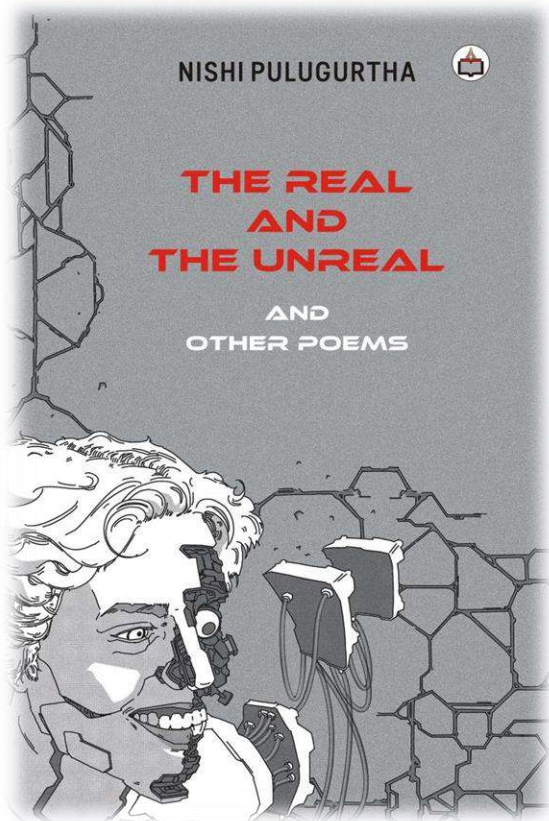
~ Dibyashri Banerjee

She aspires to hone her skills as a writer and poet. She believes in penning down heartfelt emotions. As a diffident kid since childhood, reading has been her constant companion for escaping loneliness, and has helped her find her inner call. She believes in introspecting and questioning the very grounds upon which people build their limiting beliefs. Most of her poems and stories focus on the theme of an individual surmounting his mental barriers.



## BOOK REVIEW

### THE REAL AND THE UNREAL AND OTHER POEMS



**Author** : Nishi Pulugurtha

**Publisher** : Authorspress

**Year** : 2020

**Pages** : 176

**Price** : ₹ 295/-

**ISBN** : 978-93-90459-53-7

**N**ishi Pulugurtha's anthology aptly defines the dialectical relationship between the 'real' and the 'unreal'. Each poem captures the real truth behind human existence. Poems intent to explore the functioning of the human mind and aim at deciphering the latent emotions hidden beneath the overt circumstances. Her ideas depicted in the poems range from concrete to abstract, from scientific to

philosophical, from urban to rural, from ancient to contemporary, from individual to different strata of society, from religion and spirituality to the void created in the absence of faith. Above all, it captures the true essence of Indianness and the nature-culture dichotomy gradually surfacing in the advancing world.

The foreword of the book, written by Sanjukta Dasgupta, aptly sets the tune of the anthology by concretely defining the various thematic concerns of the author, as she writes: "In fact, the poems stand out due to their descriptive brilliance and due to the sincere reflections on sights and sounds, feelings and emotions, sometimes resigned, sometimes transcendent...".

The anthology, *The Real and the Unreal and Other poems* is divided into two sections. The first fifty poems belong to the first part of the collection and the next ten poems appear under the title "Dementia Poems." The sheer range of ideas, poetic technique, symbols, imagery and expression makes the collection culturally appealing and in sync with the Indian ethos. The poems deal with the complex realities of the contemporary world. Many of her poems attempt to dismantle the existing cultural

binaries by voicing the opinions of the minority identities.

In her poem, "Revisiting" she attempts to make a stark commentary on the superstitions prevalent in India. Her work pricks the consciousness of the people because it dismantles the culturally fabricated notions. She intends to liberate people from the confines of superstition.

Colours employed in her nature poems are exuberant and jaunty. Pen-portraits of birds, trees, rivers etc. are vividly agile and convey a zest towards life. The poem, "Bitter Gourd" employs "Hues of green and brown." "Solitude" also employs vivid colours which aptly suits the theme of the poem. An illustration from the poem "Solitude" aptly conveys the significance of colours within an artistic framework:

"Violet flowers growing all over the hillside

The green so brown and crisp"

"The Locked Workplace" is another poem which on one hand depicts the feeling of claustrophobia for people who are stuck in a locked space and on the other hand it portrays a picture of those who are devoid of shelter. The following lines appropriately convey the idea:

"as we remain locked in  
at home  
when there are many on the roads  
trying to get home."

Nishi Pulugurtha's poems are her reflection to the happenings around. Her poem, "Life" aptly signifies her surreal thoughts which question the purpose of life and the inhibitions posed by the circumstances. She has a unique ability to link ordinary with the extraordinary. Her philosophical poems are grave, deep and are implicit in nature. The subtext of the poem can be interpreted in myriad ways. Patriarchal social set-ups are attacked in the poems "Independent Woman" and "My Son". The lines "They said girls should not be heard, they should be only seen" and "Am I just a womb?" depict the objectified state of a woman in societal space. "Hope" is another optimistic nature poem which re-energizes the reader with the soothing effect of rain.

Nishi Pulugurtha's charismatic ways of dealing with idiosyncrasies is explicitly visible in "Stuck Somewhere." In this piece she delves deep into the dilemmas, anxieties, motives and behaviour of beings. "The Real and the Unreal" is caught in a surrealistic web and is aesthetically appealing. She portrays an

ideological framework within which her consciousness works.

"Dementia Poems" distinctly traces the psychological trauma, troubling existences, variety of thoughts, homelessness, affection, quest for belongingness, binaries, dream vision, flashing ideas moving from one to another in a styled fashion and using a stream of consciousness. Obscurity of thought makes "Dementia Poems" heavily loaded with symbolic significance. Poems like "Home-1", "Home-2" and "Home-3" throw light on an individual's perception and experience. "Ma" is a vehement attack on subjugated identities.

Her poetic diction is very simple and can be easily understood by colloquial readers. Her thoughts are complex but her expression simple. The book ends with a short piece, "Noises" which calls attention to the continuous chatter of the mind which is disturbing but quite humane.

Nishi Pulugurtha's poetry depicts a perfect blend of the two different worlds. She amalgamates the material world which is scientifically advanced with the world of human realities where Man is a product of nature and is governed by instincts and emotions. By unifying these two polar opposite ideas, she paints a perfect picture of



Man. Her ability to unify binaries is remarkable. Her poems profess that ideas cannot originate in vacuum and human beings should refrain from labelling objects and stigmatising identities. A thought cannot be compartmentalized into the category of

right or wrong. She tries to explore the grey area within which human beings exist.

Conclusively, it was a really nice collection, albeit fairly lengthy, but what are 176 pages to a quiet afternoon beside a window, with a good cup of tea.

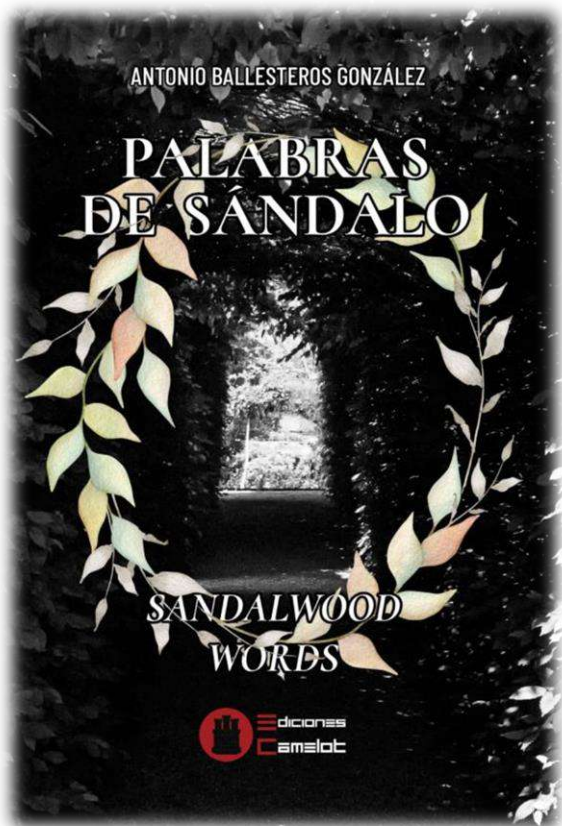
### ~ Saumya Srivastava

Saumya Srivastava is a PhD in English, a creative writer and an academic. Her area of interest lies in Contemporary Literary theory, Disability Studies and Indian Writing in English. She has several publications to her credit.





# PALABRAS DE SÁNDALO/ SANDALWOOD WORDS



Author : Antonio Ballesteros Gonzalez

Publisher : Ediciones Camelot

Year : 2020

Pages : 121

Price : € 14.25/-

ISBN : 978-84-121387-2-6

After *Manual de Madrugadas* and *Manual de Tardecera*, the third poetry collection titled *Palabras de sándalo/ Sandalwood Words* by Antonio Ballesteros Gonzalez compiles together the aesthetics of two languages in an oriental mould. *Palabras de sandalo* forms the first section of the book that contains one hundred

Haiku poems written in Spanish, while the second section, *Sandalwood Words* contains seventy-two English poems written in the same style.

As the book description reads, this collection offers an intense poetic journey for both Spanish and English readers in independent forms: “*Sandalwood Words/ Palabras de sándalo* are two independent poetry books written in two languages (English and Spanish) that maintain a dialogue between each other without the mediation of a direct translation. Both the texts are pervaded by the poetic inspiration of oriental forms, with the *haiku* as an essential exponent. The poet thus utilises the Japanese poetic form of a *haiku* throughout the collection, adapting a uniform frame with creative formations.

The diverse themes of love, beauty, nature, memory, loss and emotional polyphony run across the pages of *Sandalwood Words* to paint an engaging panorama of images cast in a world of evocative lyricism and sheer poetic joy. From the first English *haiku*, the poet sets the tone of a mystic joy that resonates across all the others that follow: “Yesterday’s flowers/  
Announcing your beautiful/ Presence this

morning.” The compact aphoristic form of a *haiku* blends beautifully with the musings that intertwine across a wide range of objectified sensations. The last English *haiku*, that contains the collection’s title, provides a perfect climax to this journey: “Lullabied by sighs, / Your lofty name is written/ In sandalwood words.”

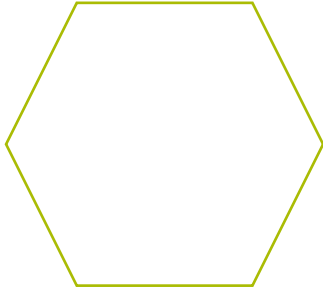
What remain an intricate part of the collection are the photographic contributions by Luz Sol that provide an added artful charm to the aesthetics of the collection. The photographs are placed between the poems in a black and white synchrony, and seem to provide visual windows to the range of projections provided by the *haiku* poems.

The book appears in hues of grey throughout, with the poetic images lending the charm of diverse shades to the verbal and visual canvas at large. The collection is a beautifully crafted, elegantly penned, and romantically enticing work that offers a journey across a multitude of emotions sketched within a poetic world. Overall, this poetry collection offers a delightful reading experience and is strongly recommended as an addition to the bookshelf of every poetry lover!

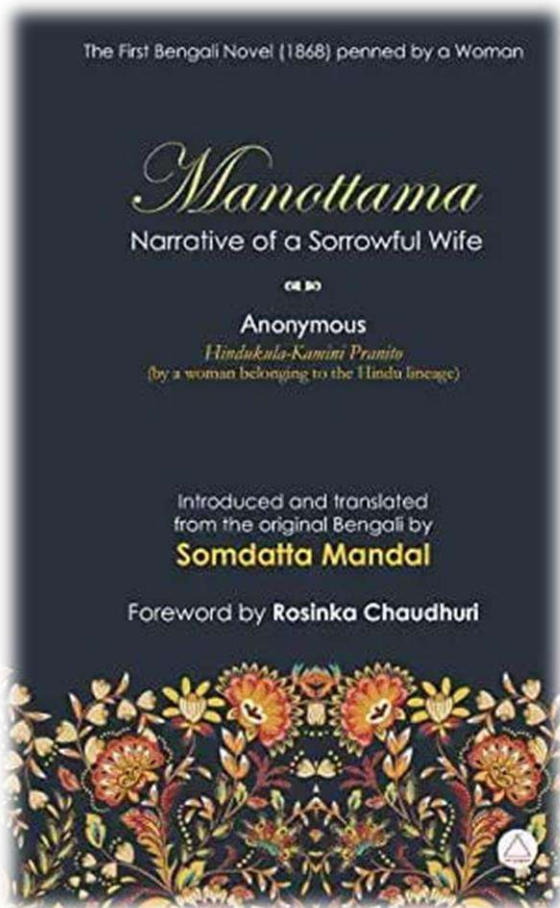
## ~ Amrita Sharma

Amrita Sharma is a Lucknow based writer currently pursuing her Ph.D. in English from the University of Lucknow. Her writings and reviews have previously been published in *Setu Bilingual*, *Earth Fire Water Wind: An Anthology of Poems*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *The Quiver Review*, *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *Café Dissensus Everyday*, *Confluence: South Asian Perspectives*, *Women's Web*, *Borderless Journal*, *Tell Me Your Story*, *Muse India*, *GNOSIS*, *Dialogue*, *The Criterion*, *Episteme* and *Ashvamegh*.





# MANOTTAMA: NARRATIVE OF A SORROWFUL WIFE



**Author** : Anonymous Hindukula  
– Kamini Pranito

**Translator** : Somdatta Mandal

**Publisher** : Shambhabi The Third Eye  
Imprint

**Pages** : 76

**Price** : ₹ 300/-

**ISBN** : 978-8194807780

**M***anottama* is a seventy-two page novel published in colonial India in 1868, written anonymously by an author who chose to identify herself/himself as a “Hindukula Kamini” or a woman belonging to the Hindu lineage. Due to lack of sufficient information on the text, and in spite of attempts at stylistic analyses, the gender and identity of the author are suspect. The text was written in colonial India and a copy was taken back to Britain as a part of the censorship protocol of

the time. The fact that it was ultimately unearthed in the archives of the British Library in London, several years later in 2010, presents an interesting example of how literature travels. It reflects the significance of the preservation of texts and the impact that missing narratives can have on the reconstruction of history. Published in 2021 in the form of a book, the text now opens up vistas of historical and literary knowledge, providing avenues for revisiting the form and aesthetics of literary creation in that time period.

On the very first page, the character Jadav, who the story is being narrated to, describes it as a “historical tale”. We get a sense that the novel self-consciously aims to tell the story of the times. Consequently, what follows is a personal story interwoven with historical, cultural and social insight—speaking of the role of society, role of friends, duties of men and women, Hindu customs, political tiffs, nature of Nationalism, the future of India, the impact of colonialism, etc.

Located against the background of the Bengal Renaissance, the book also describes the complexities of some of the progressive ideas of the movement, such as women’s education, widow remarriage and child marriage. It presents the movement as being far from unified and uncovers the

heterogeneity in the opinions of upper caste Bengali Hindus. What is special about this particular narrative is that the central subject is the complicated place of women in the rise of modernity in the nineteenth century Bengal, as contributors, sometimes opposers, beneficiaries as well as victims and that the observations are (in all likelihood) made by a woman herself. .

Irony and satire have been used as literary techniques throughout the novel to investigate what is right and what is wrong, to question stereotypes and to provoke the reader to think. Manottama, being an educated wife who advises Nilabrata (her husband) on how to manage economic resources to effectively run the household, receives aggressive backlash from him. Nilabrata, along with his friends, believes that these traits make her an immoral woman and that education is not an important prerequisite for household management which could be done just as successfully by uneducated women. In an ironical turn of events, Nilabrata decides to marry an uneducated woman, Bimalprabha who turns out to be far from a submissive, dutiful wife. The narrator gives a sense that she has no virtues, is extravagant, constantly bickers with Nilabrata and does not manage economic resources effectively. The narrator makes

satirical comments on Nilabrata, his sense of judgement and weakness of character: “This same Nilabrata had earlier been determined to not marry at all. Since he married the second time...he was almost acting according to her dictates, even sleeping and eating with her permission. Earlier the same person would utter ‘Shame on men who serve women’. Now it was no longer a crime to come under the dictates of this kind of a lady” (46). Thus, larger points related to education and morals are made using irony, satire and certain overarching traits of characters.

As the back cover of the recent edition indicates, the narrative “does not follow the western dictates” of narration. It incorporates a more Indian approach to storytelling. The text is highly intertextual in nature and includes meta narratives, analogies, digressions and self-consciously borrows from mythology and historical narratives. Parallels are drawn with literary, mythological and historical figures such as Draupadi, Savitri, Fullara, men of ancient *Bharatvarsha*, Bidya and Birsingha in order to find ideals and similarities with the current lives of the characters. Manottama acknowledges the benefits of common shared folk knowledge when she tells her father of the oral tales that a wandering *bhairabi* narrated to the village folk which serve as

ideals for her to follow. The text runs as a story within a story where two friends Madhav and Jadav are discussing the story of Manottama. The narrative also breaks off into digressions that pose as commentaries on the current state of affairs and how life should actually be lived. There is a lesson to be learnt or a moral attached to each episode. The voice of the narrator is present throughout, as a character in itself. The nature of the language therefore oscillates between being narrative, argumentative and conversational. The language, the inclusion of the narrator within the story and the predominant subjects in the story could, perhaps, also be strategies of catering to the interests of the targeted readers as the novel was originally published serially in a Bengali magazine.

While on the surface, the novel comes across as a story of a domestic situation made complicated with the increasing importance of education for women; a number of themes such as nationalism, factionalism, place of religion and customs, morality, social practices and gender roles, run as important undercurrents throughout the story, giving it depth. The republishing of *Manottama*, in the novel form in 2021 has made it available for widespread consumption. The rekindled academic interest that Rosinka Chaudhuri, Somdatta Mandal and Adrish Biswas have

initiated, has opened up opportunities for linguistic, feminist, formalistic and historical enquiry into a text that potentially holds

essential clues to a major part of the native literary and cultural fabric of colonial India.

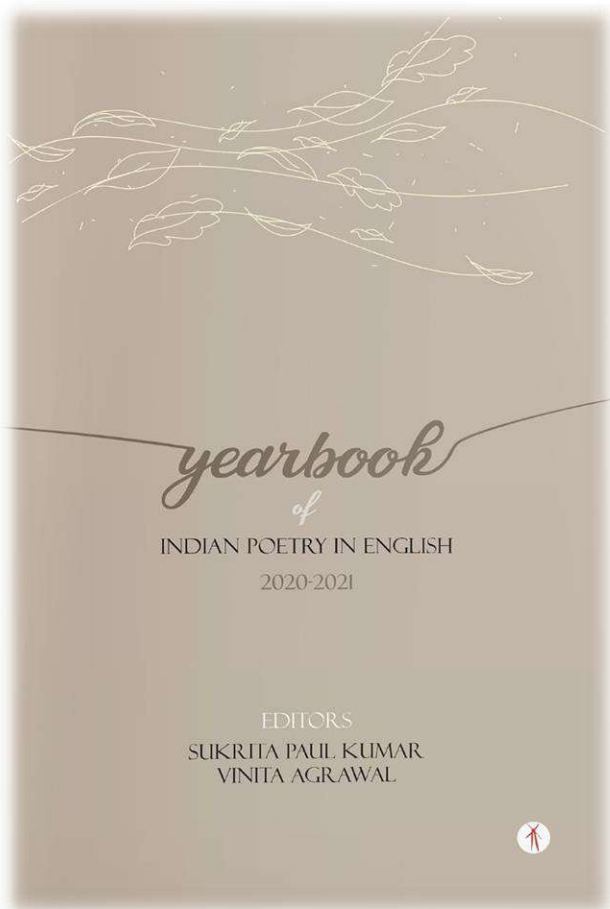
### ~ Vedamini Vikram Singh

Vedamini Vikram Singh is a Research Scholar currently pursuing her Ph.D in English from the University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include performance studies, indigenous literatures and travel literature.





# YEARBOOK OF INDIAN POETRY IN ENGLISH 2020~2021



**Editors** : Sukrita Paul Kumar

Vinita Agrawal

**Publisher** : Hawakal Publisher

**Year** : 2021

**Pages** : 262

**Price** : ₹ 600/-

**ISBN** : 978-8195240104

**T**he Indian canon of poetry in English has a long and diverse history since its appearance during the early postcolonial era. It has been recognized, located and established as a dominant poetic tradition in world literature. *The Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English 2020-2021* is not simply an assortment of select works of Indian English poetry but also, and



more importantly, a crucial step towards revitalizing and relocating the movement. If English was the colonizer's language of hegemony, Indian English through what Bill Ashcroft has called "abrogation" and "accommodation," became the medium of native response. Rather than a vestige of our colonial past, it ought to be seen as an instrument of decolonization. "Queen's English has had to shake off its imperial designs" remark the editors in the introduction addressed to the reader in order to metamorphose into "our English." The first-person plural possessive determiner betokens the local and home-made flavour of the collection.

The collection presents a riveting assortment of Indian Poetry, English in frame and *Hindustani* in soul. The *Yearbook* contains over hundred poems touching upon a wide spectrum of themes ranging from love, grief, politics and culture to memory, partition, displacement and identity by poets from all corners of the country. A common thread throughout the anthology is the Indian tang to the poems in terms of their turns of phrase, diction, rhythm and content. Take for instance, Kashiana Singh's "Pagri/Turbans" where the narrator's father's pagri and the daily routine of wrapping it, as

the poet herself puts it in the footnotes, turns into a symbol of "strength, empowerment, creativity and spiritual grounding". The poem demonstrates the physical as well as cultural, emotional and spiritual presence of the *pagri* in a Sikh household. The ritual of accoutering it, the narrator assists her father in, has been associated with the process of poetic creation. She writes:

"All my poems were born into  
The folds of my father's *pagri*  
One in each fold of his khaki –  
...I attempted to shape poems with  
my tongue, while my hands pulled,  
stretched, unbound all the 2 yards  
of cloth, my father's *pagri* –"

The *pagri* becomes the muse, an object of poetic inspiration. Kashiana Singh's poem features and celebrates the *Indianization* and indigenization of the creative process of poetic composition.

Poems like Smita Sahay's "Bombay: snapshots," Sufia Khatoon's "Video call to Karachi," Hemang Desai's "Clockwork" and Srilata K.'s "Guttan/Suffocation," amongst others, showcase utilization of the vernacular by incorporating words and expressions such

as “*tokri*,” “*kali-pilis*,” “*khalajaan*,” “*appas*,” “*darna mana hai*,” and “*ghuttan*.” The fluidity and harmony with which the poems switch between English and vernacular languages like Hindi and Urdu is demonstrative of how well English has been assimilated and absorbed within the Indian culture and literature. Ranu Uniyal’s poem, “English in me” provides a glimpse into the life of an English speaking Indian, highlighting the pitfalls that come their way with levity and subtle humor. Foregrounding the constant tug-of-war between being too English and not English enough for their “*desi*” and “English friends,” the narrator renders their bitter-sweet relationship with the language through a series of conflicts such as:

“English is the language  
I travel in mind, body and soul.  
English is all I could never be.  
English is all I will never be.”

The enormous scale and diversity of the *Yearbook* in terms of the form, content and setting of the poems is what makes it dynamic and a definite page turner for casual as well as critical reading. The anthology has everything to offer in terms of poetic style, rhyme, rhythm and structure with poems

composed in verse and poems such as “The last pair of Kolhapuri chappals in the known universe” by Mustansir Dalvi and “Love Story” by Dibyajyoti Sarma that have been written in prose. Smita Sahay’s “Bombay: snapshots” that has been framed like a photo reel presents a series of scenes from the streets of Bombay with meticulous use of imagery and language to evoke vivid pictures in the mind of the reader. Another poem that stands out by virtue of its ingenuity is Babita Marina Justin’s “Borderlines” that has been structured in such a way as to visually represent the map of India.

The editors mention having implemented a “blind reviewing” process in order to make “dispassionate and unbiased choices” while selecting poems which is duly reflected in the unwavering brilliance and allure of the collection. The *Yearbook* would deservedly bring more recognition and popularity to the published poets and it is symptomatic of how thriving, vibrant and electric the Indian English poetic tradition is. The inaugural edition of the *Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English 2020-2021* has set a standard, not only for the upcoming issues, but also for other anthologies of Indian English poetry that are to come in the future.

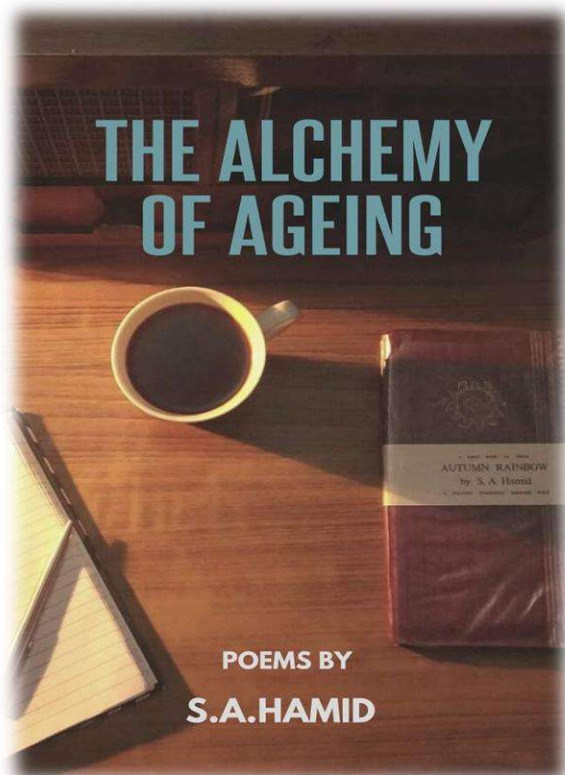
~ Yusuf Ayaz

Yusuf Ayaz is a PhD candidate at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. His doctoral research falls within the purview of medical humanities and involves a clinical analysis of the portrayal of mental illness in modern and postmodern fiction.



# THE ALCHEMY OF AGEING: POEMS BY S.A. HAMID

Publisher : Authoresspress  
Pages : 108  
Price : ₹ 295/-  
ISBN : 978-93-90588-96-1



A copy of *The Alchemy of Ageing* paired with a cup of black coffee, much like the front cover of the book flaunts, is a perfectly rich yet bitter, flavourful journey, especially for young readers who dread even the rarest thoughts of ageing, into the nuances of what it is like to age “if accepted gracefully”, in Hamid’s own words from the preface. S. A. Hamid is a retired Professor from the Department of English, Kumaun University Campus, Almora. Full of creativity and vigour, he finds ageing “enriching and stimulating, both sexually and intellectually”. S. A. Hamid’s way of

looking at life, as is projected through his poetry collection and preface, is one of an optimist, who believes “there is at least some degree of truth in the popular saying about every dark cloud having a silver lining”. Being an optimist does not make him an idealist, and he refuses to remain ignorant of the multitudinous vices and taboos that surround him, the society he lives in and the world in general, making it a point to critique the prevalent discrimination, dogma, patriarchy and marginalization.

Rich imagery paired with phenomenal wit and sarcasm is just the tip of the iceberg of the poetic array one finds in this anthology. The real treasure is their slice-of-life quality, that one and all, from any age-group whatsoever find themselves and their thoughts reflected in between these pages; be it exploring the shallow paradoxical nature of millennial love or something as deep as critiquing the varied aspects, both good and bad, of his religion from the stance of a non-dogmatic, open-minded person; to narrating what life has become in the post-covid scenario, Hamid has done it all in this book.

The act of writing poetry itself is sacred to Hamid, as he writes in his poem “Silence”:

“The only meditation

I have known  
results in poetry.”

He has reverently used the sanctified concepts of *Hijrat* and *Kerbala* as references and inspiration in his life and consequently, in the poems he has written describing those moments from his life. Poetry holds such an important place in Hamid’s life and heart, that he considers himself as a poetic entity as well: “Let me not be an unfinished poem.”

The theme of love is traversed by Hamid profusely, with numerous poems even eponymous of the feeling itself: “Cyber Love”, “Earthly Love”, “Honest Love”, and a *ghazal*, “In Love”. The readers find a deep longing for love filled with lamentation:

“The misty evening recalls old regrets  
passions unfulfilled, fantasies unrealized.  
Yes, the urge remains.”

Hamid’s views on love ranges from this romantic longing to practical sermonising:

“We will part before that  
When the body gives way.  
Honest love is real,  
Not true love.”

He doesn’t shy away from the darker recesses, i.e. the unsentimental physicality and loneliness of love too, with

poems like “Lust”, “Carnal Appetites”, “Lonely Hearts” and “You and I”. Hamid dares to step into a puddle of paradoxical juxtaposition, when he yearns for what his very heart has grown weary of, loneliness:

“In the arms of loneliness  
 I feel my ageing bones give way  
 To a strange yearning  
 For lonely relationships;”

Hamid makes it a point to reiterate his opinion on how love and passion are two completely alienable concepts and more often than not, are jumbled into one by the masses, as is evident in his *ghazal*,

“They emit heat of passion, caresses,  
 kisses, hugs  
 But after copulation, do they remain in  
 love?  
 Between men and women, it’s passion,  
 lust,  
 And they keep on believing they are in  
 love.”

There is a state of dual belongingness in his poems, first to Lucknow, his *janmabhumi* (birthplace) and second to Almora, his *karmabhumi* (plane of action). His migration from the former to the latter, the process of bracing himself for the change, and then in consequence having two places he should consider home, but not one that he can truly belong to, is an aspect that will resonate with a plethora of

readers who have migrated at least once in their respective lives, be it geographically or metaphorically, and have experienced alienation in one form or another. Hamid’s exploration of the concept of home is a self-reflective question in itself. Despite being from a feudal *nawabi* background, he doesn’t resonate with it, while being perfectly aware that he can’t get rid of his own ancestry, due to which he feels like a “stranger in (his) own city... So many memories, good and bad/ perhaps in equal measure”. The overpowering need to run away, more so spiritually than physically, from the concept of home one feels stifled by, is a very relatable sentiment in today’s world when everyone has felt traumatized at one point or the other in their lives, by their past. Hamid too, found a home away from the place which was thrust upon him as his supposed-to-be home:

“I built a shield  
 a home away from home  
 No ghosts of the past to haunt me”

Living in a place as sublime as the lap of Himalayas, a deep seated love for nature, its beauty finds a special place in Hamid’s poetry. Nature is used as a metaphor and muse in several of these poems.

*The Alchemy of Ageing* is as much a tongue-in-cheek commentary on post-

modern lifestyle and romance, (especially the turn of events due to Covid-19 and how it has affected each and every life), as it is a jarring attack on the hypocrisies of customs, traditions and religion. It is a sneak-peek into the mind of a profound man, who prefers having a vision of the world as a whole gigantic canvas, rather than choosing

to look at it through a tiny peephole of one's own narrow perspectives.

### ~ Smriti Sneh

In love with Woolf's words, Drabble's heart, Plath's soul and Murdoch's mind, her hobby is to romance the ghosts of past through her writing. A stark non-believer of 'happy endings' and 'the bigger scheme of things', she likes to leave her stories and poems open-ended, as life itself is. Pursuing the world of literature and academics, she is currently studying in the Masters course and hopes to inspire readers someday like she was, by her aforementioned muses.

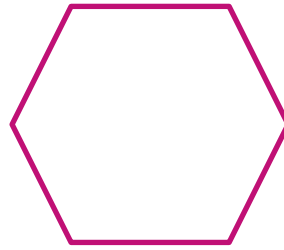
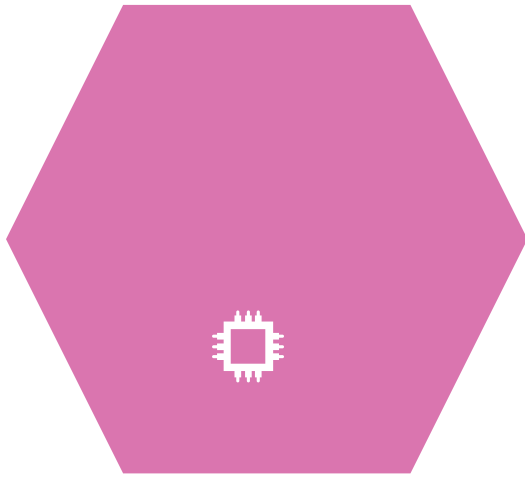


# F I C T I O N

*"Fiction is the truth inside the lie."*

*- Stephen King -*





## AS DAPPER AS THEY MAKE THEM

‘I found him unconscious, doctor,’ said Jayashree.  
‘When did you last talk to him?’

‘Hmm...perhaps forty-five minutes back. He was sitting on the front seat of our car, chatting with me normally as I drove. After a while, he didn’t talk much, so I kept glancing at him to see if he was alright. Then I saw that his head had slumped to one side. I parked the car at the first market place I could see. It looked like he was unconscious. I rushed him here.’

‘Good you came straight to the hospital instead of going home. He needs to be revived on an emergency basis. We’ll do that,’ said the doctor. ‘But we’ve to put him through some tests as well,’ he added, motioning to the retinue of junior doctors and nurses around him. They took Mohan away on a wheeled stretcher.

Jayashree answered the doctor’s rapid fire questions regarding Mohan’s case history. He noted them down and rushed out of the observation room.

Jayashree waited. A nurse who had lingered on to take something, told her ‘Madam, the tests may take long. You can have tea and snacks in our Food Court’.

When they wheeled him out, Mohan had looked like he was asleep. *Sleep*. It’s such an innocent word for Mohan, when viewed in the context of the ominous things that awaited him. Jayashree waited, wishing she had brought a book along. She made a mental note to always keep a couple of books in the car as she went out to the Food Court. The pervasive aroma of Costa Coffee escaped outside the glass door. What’s coffee without the aroma, she thought, watching the people around. *How many of them have husbands or members of the family who become unconscious without any warning? What robs Mohan of his consciousness when we’ve been regularly monitoring his sugar level along with tests for serum uric acid? Will he regain consciousness this time, or...?*

She took her coffee and sat at a table in a corner.

'It's good you brought him on time,' the doctor had said. Her thoughts unspooled with much gratitude to the young man because of whom she could drive up to the hospital 'on time', for the emergency treatment and the tests. Or else, who knows, Mohan may have got admitted to the ICU as a comatose patient, like so many times in the past. How dreadful those days were! The last time it happened, she had rushed him to another, smaller hospital.

What a morning it has been today! It had dawned like any other day, and turned into something extraordinary by this one person, this total stranger in the market place. He was a most unlikely person too that one could think of approaching for any kind of help. As soon as Jayashree realised that Mohan was unconscious, she had parked in the first market place she could see. She panicked, wanting to rush him to a good hospital. But to her utter shock, she found that the car wouldn't start. Shops had just been opened for the day. There were a few cars. She looked for the ones with drivers. Some of them had sauntered off to the *dhaba* nearby, frequented by drivers and shop keepers. She went to the *dhaba* and pleaded with two drivers that she had to rush her husband to the hospital, but couldn't start her car. 'Could you please check my car?' she begged. One man said, he'll come after tea. The other one said he'll come in a minute but lingered on, chatting with the men around him.

She looked around for another car with a driver. A whiff of a deodorant, or after-shave, or cologne, or whatever it was, floated by. It was a very pleasant, clean kind of smell, a cologne distinctly for men, she could tell. Perhaps it came from that handsome young man, dressed expensively in an impeccable cream colour suit, with a neck tie in a nice shade of blue, but she wasn't sure. He walked alongside the *dhaba* with a brown paper bag filled with freshly photocopied sheets of paper. Jayashree hoped that at least his driver would rush back, seeing his master. The young man went to his car, a huge, gleaming beauty, and sat behind the wheel.

Jayashree looked around despondently for other drivers. Wish I had more knowledge about how cars work, she cursed herself. She ran back to her car, took out a bottle of water and splashed a few drops on Mohan's face in the hope of reviving him. There was no response. She patted him dry with a towel.

She rolled up the window of the driver's seat. 'Mohan, Mohan!' she said, gently shaking him by the shoulder. She rested her head on the wheel and thought 'What next?' when she heard a knock on the window pane. It was that expensively dressed handsome young man. She rolled down the window. The cologne/deodorant/after-shave smelt so good, and somehow just right. *Right?* Yes! Because it was discreet and not in the face. Must get one like this for Mohan,

she thought irrelevantly as she looked at him inquiringly.

‘Madam,’ he said, ‘is that your husband? Is he ok?’ he asked.

‘No, I’m afraid not. He is unconscious. I’ve to rush him to the hospital at the earliest or else things could turn very serious. But I’ve trouble starting my car. Please, would you let your driver take a look at my car. I’m so sorry to...’

‘Will you open the bonnet please? I heard you asking the drivers in the *dhaba*.’

‘Thank you so much. I’ll open the bonnet. Could you call your driver please?’

‘I dodged the family driver and slipped out,’ he chuckled, revealing a clean set of teeth in a smile that was like a child’s. Spontaneous and guileless.

‘Oh! Then please take care. Your suit may get smudged.’

‘Please open the bonnet, Madam,’ he repeated, completely ignoring my words about his suit. I released the top of the bonnet.

She looked at Mohan and placed her hand under his nose. He seemed to be breathing normally. Then she got out of the car to see what could have gone wrong. The young man was bent over the tangled wires and machines. When he straightened up, his smile was at odds with his hands, dripping with black, greasy grime.

‘Oh dear!’ I cried out. ‘Please don’t let the grease stain your suit. It’s all cream and white.’

‘No worries. I was going to get some water from this *dhaba* anyway. Your radiator has got heated up. That happens with old cars. How old is your car, about five years?’

Jayashree gulped, embarrassed by his accurate guess. *Must sell it off soon and buy a new car. I’ve been having endless problems.* The man had already walked off towards the *dhaba*. He returned with a man who carried a bucket of water and a mug. He took a mug of water and poured it into the radiator. A furious gust of steam almost blew on his face.

‘Madam, please start the engine.’

Jayashree got into the car and turned the ignition key with a prayer. It sputtered, but started well enough.

The young man came near the window, his hands still dripping with black grease. ‘It’ll run now,’ he assured her. ‘Just remember one thing. Don’t turn off the engine anywhere, not even at a red light. Keep the engine idling all through, till you reach the hospital. And get the car checked once again, at the hospital. Good luck, Madam!’ The same smile, like a child’s.

‘Please wash your hands. I’m so worried that your suit may get stained,’ she said, getting out of the car to thank him.

She heard again the rich gurgle of his laughter. ‘Please don’t come out of the car. Look after him,’ he pointed, glancing at Mohan.

‘I can’t find enough words to thank you. You’ve come like a godsend.’

'Oh Madam, it doesn't matter if my suit gets smudged. I always feel happy to mess around with troublesome cars or SUVs.'

'Mess around?'

'Yes! Literally and symbolically. I did automobile engineering, you see. It's my passion. I went through some advance training too, when my parents sent me to England. I love cars, vehicles. And umm...I've come to like the smell of petrol, diesel and grime as I fix up engines,' he chuckled. Over the smell of the grease, his after shave/cologne/deodorant wafted delicately.

'You're a godsend...'

'Please don't thank,' he said. 'It has been an absolute pleasure and a joy to help you. Just remember to keep the engine idling till you reach the hospital. Never turn it off!'

He waved his, black and grimy hand, flashing a smile. His face caught the sun and glowed with a radiance that bounced off his skin, his complexion, and his ivory coloured expensive suit.

She smiled back as she reversed the car, got on to the main road and slowed a bit to wave at him. There he was, still standing on the same spot, showing a Thumbs up sign. His broad, unsullied smile of a child sat well on his adult body. Jayashree took one last look at that radiant figure and drove on.

Jayashree returned to the observation room. They had already brought him in. The doctor came in with his entourage.

'It's encephalopathy,' he declared.

'What?'

'Yes. His cognitive functions are severely impaired. The brain scan we took shows several dry patches. Haven't you noticed a change in the way he speaks, or behaves, or talks?' he asked.

She nodded silently. Of late, Mohan was getting forgetful and alarmingly disoriented. He couldn't complete his sentences. Today she got a definitive diagnosis for his condition.

'We won't admit him right away,' the doctor was saying. 'We've hope that he'll regain consciousness in a few minutes. Please wait as we observe him. Then you can take him home,' he said, gently patting Jayashree on the shoulder. 'Like I said, it's good you brought him to us on time.'

'Otherwise?' I asked.

'Sometimes a patient can slip into a coma.'

'Doctor, it happened several times! Two years back he went into a coma for about five days, imagine!'

He shook his head sideways. 'I noted all that in his case history. Jaundice, hepatic coma...But the findings are more serious now, going by the latest neurological report. So please be careful not to take him out anywhere too far from your home. You may not always be lucky to bring him to the hospital on time, like now,' he advised.

'Yes doctor. I'll remember. Thanks a lot.'

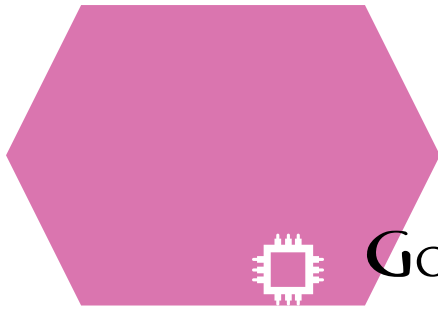
That face, like a child's, above the immaculate cream-coloured suit, the brown shoes shining with polish, the deodorant/after shave/cologne that wafted pleasantly above the greasy, grimy entrails of the car...Emerging from all those incongruous images was a young man with an

ardent wish to help. He looked so complete in his joy, fixing up an errant old car, helping a woman in distress. He stood till she started the car, got on to the main road, waving with a thumbs up sign, a luminous presence with the sunlight streaming on his face.

## ~ Lakshmi Kannan

Known by her Tamil pen-name "Kaaveri" she is a poet, novelist, short story writer, critic and translator. Among the twenty-seven books she has published till date, *The Glass Bead Curtain*, a novel (Vitasta, Delhi, 2016, 2020) and *Sipping the Jasmine Moon*, Poems (Authors Press, 2019) are her more recent ones. Her latest is *Wooden Cow* (Orient BlackSwan, Delhi, 2021), a translation of the Tamil novel by the iconic writer T. Janakiraman, released on 27 June, 2021 to mark his Birth Centenary. Lakshmi was a Resident Writer at the International Writing Program, Iowa, USA; a Charles Wallace Trust Writer at the University of Kent, Canterbury, UK; Fellow, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and a Resident Writer, Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi.





## GODDESS CORONA



The road was shining. The tar was melting, heating their naked feet, seeping into their cracked soles, under the scalding sun. Their dark children were turning maroon. They walked like cogs in the big wheel of labor time; a stultifying rhythm.

The factories in Mumbai had been closed. They had left their slum huts for good. In their hands, they carried empty cold drink bottles to store water.

“They look perfect for a cold drink ad prompt. Their soily and sweating necks moving up and down in unison, as their throats gulped the soft drink; and they saying in one voice: ahaa!” The journalist was excited about the sight.

“The poor never figure in these ads. Can they even afford cold drinks?” said the cameraman.

“Defamiliarization of a product has a marketing value!”

The cameraman took a few close-up shots; the TV journalist their addresses.

The group entered a city. Masked men with hosepipes waited beside a mini truck.

The travelers expected food in the truck and drinking water in the tank.

“Where are you all walking maskless to?”

“Home, Patna,” they said, and sat on their haunches.

“It’s eleven hundred kilometers more from here!” said the officer.

They crawled towards the truck like hungry pets.

“Move back; you bastards!”

The policemen flogged, and pushed them back.

They drank stomach full. There wasn’t any food, but plenty of bitter water. The officials let them go after sanitizing their bodies.

By evening, an old man in the caravan fell dead.

They cremated him. They erected a wooden plaque. On the plaque, they wrote with charcoal “Goddess Corona.”

## THE GARDEN SHE LEFT BEHIND

“What were her last words?” she asked, as she carried him on her back to the garden.

**T**he chairs waited to be picked up where his wife had left them, before she was rushed to the hospital by the neighbors; the third pair of chairs she had bought.

Orange was her son’s favorite color- a botanist, who loved cacti in particular.

“A cactus teaches you to be inward looking. It interiorizes into its stem the entire world outside it. That’s how to make the most of your adverse environment, and survive!”

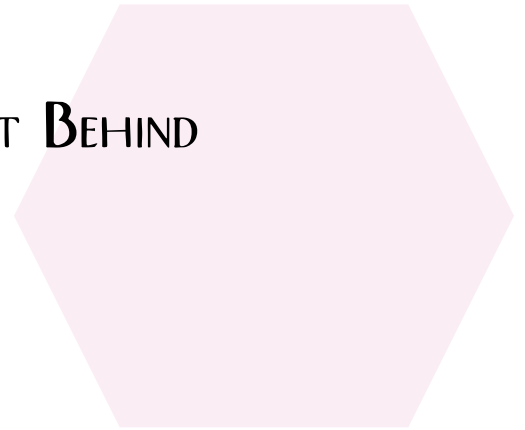
He told his mother when he brought them to create a small garden in the backyard.

He drowned in the river, saving school children. Their boat capsized in the Ganges. The school honored his parents.

They let her remarry, not before she had seen the garden grow the size of her husband in her mother-in-law’s heart.

The old woman planted whatever types of cacti she could find, and spent most of the day in the garden. Her disabled husband at the bedroom window.

Until she had the stroke.



## ~ Dhananjay Singh

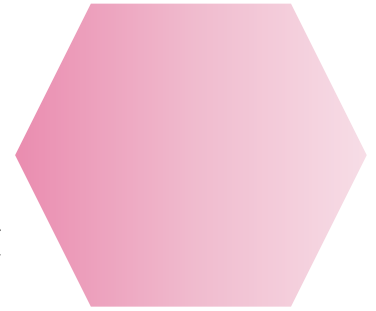
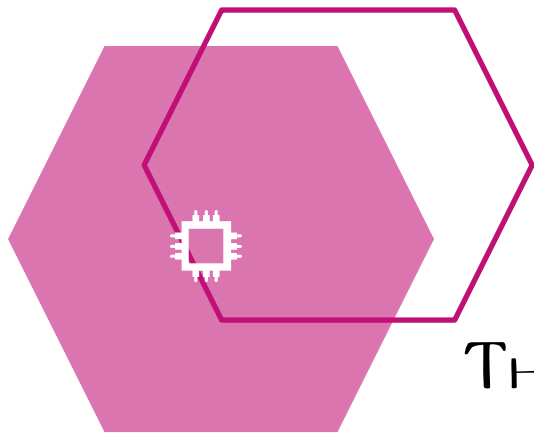


Dhananjay Singh is Professor at the Centre for English Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, where he teaches courses on comparative poetics, Indian aesthetics, Indian philosophy of language and theatre, South Asian Fiction, and Modern Irish literature. He is the author of *Fables in the Indian Narrative Tradition: An Analytical Study* (2011), and *The Poetics of Theatre in Early India* (2021, forthcoming). He was Visiting Professor at University of Bergamo, Italy in 2014; International Visiting Fellow at Grinnell College, Grinnell, IOWA, USA, in 2015; and Visiting Research Fellow at Trinity Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin in 2017. For his research on Seamus Heaney and Buddhist epistemology in a comparative framework, he was awarded Research Secondment by the European Union's Marie Curie International Research Exchange Scheme to the Project "Social Performance, Cultural Trauma and Reestablishing Solid Sovereignities (SPECTRESS)," at Trinity College Dublin in May-July 2017.

Prof. Singh's poems have appeared in literary journals *Muse India* and *South Asian Ensemble*. His debut short story "The Train and the Tunnel" was published in *The Bombay Review* in August 2020.







## THE MATTERS OF THE EYE

As I walked in that day, I noticed the dog sleeping under the receptionist's chair. Lido was a friendly dog. I had been here a couple of times before, she usually lazed under the chair, at times walked around in the room, snuggled against a pair of legs, enjoyed the petting she received. She didn't budge as I walked in the glass doors that mid-afternoon. My left eye had been irritating a lot for the past few days. It also kept on watering at times. I was worried and sought an early appointment. When the doctor diagnosed that it was a cataract in my right eye that needed immediate attention a few months ago, I had brushed it aside. I was just 54 and there was no way I could have one. It happens to people much older I had always known. I decided to seek a second opinion. This doctor had surely got it all wrong. Dada said so too. I went in for another check-up and it was the same diagnosis that stared at me from the prescription in my hand. This doctor had been curt in his announcement of it. Very

matter of fact too. Dada and I looked at each other.

So it had to be removed. I would now get a new lens that would replace the one that god had given me. I was scared. I was unsure. What if things go wrong? There surely must be something terribly wrong with me. Why else would I have a cataract blurring my vision at this age?

"How where you able to read or go about your work," the first doctor had asked me before he even spoke of it.

It was troubling me and that was why I was at the doctor's. I had not spoken about it to anyone, till then. Maybe it was a temporary issue that would be alright soon. I had no reason to think that but that is what had played on in my mind. When my colleagues heard of it some laughed at it, some were angry, some thought I was being foolish.

It did turn out to be true. My doubts were laid to rest and a decision had to be made about the appointment for the operation. I was jittery but then had to take

things in my stride. Ranjana would be there. My children were studying outside the city. Rinki was doing her masters at Bengaluru and Tublu was doing his engineering at Bhubaneswar. I didn't want to trouble them, they would be at a loss of how to handle things. I had always handled things, had always managed to, somehow. I had to. Anupam had never kept in touch with us. He moved away, just moved away. He did not even bother about the kids. They were eight and three then. Tublu did not make much sense of the separation and the divorce but Rinki did. I could see her retracting into her shell, she took a lot of time. I made sure that things remained as much normal as they could.

The operation went on well. I had been nervous for days. There was really no cause, but then there is always a fear lurking somewhere. Things turned out just fine. A couple of months later, there was a slight pain in the eye that had been operated on. I was worried that something might have gone wrong with it.

As I sat in the waiting room, alone, the past came back to me. Did I handle things well? Could they have been better worked out? I tried my best, but then was it enough. Lido had now snuggled up to me and she was sitting in front of me, almost into my saree. I

petted her and she snuggled closer. "Mrs. Tanima Bose," the receptionist announced loudly. As I tried to get up from the sofa, the magazine in my lap fell down and Lido jumped up. She moved away and walked about the room, stood in front of the glass door looking out onto the street.

"Wait, I will get the ball," I heard the assistant say as I began climbing the stairs.

Yes, there was a slight problem in my eye, the doctor said. Not a major issue and I needed to visit the doctor in his chamber for a small procedure that would solve the issue. He kept reassuring me that there was no cause for worry. As I boarded the cab to get back home, I must say I was worried in spite of all that his explanations and assurances.

There was just one bright thing and that was Rinki was coming home for a week. Her friend was tying the knot and she was coming to attend the wedding.

"Don't worry Ma, I will be with you on the day of the eye procedure."

That evening Rinki said when she had called up to talk. That was such a relief. Tublu didn't call much. He often said he would but he didn't. When I called him, he said he was busy and would call back later. That never happened. At times I felt terrible about it. And then after a long gap he would call and speak. That would, at times, be a long call.

But then I knew how it would end. At the end of it he would let me know that he needed some cash. He had incurred some unforeseen expenditure, he had gone out on a weekend trip with his friends. I had got used to this. It did make me sad, but then I felt that he was doing things that kept him happy.

Late night on Monday Rinki came home. As always, she had so much to tell me about the goings on in her life, her classes, her course, her friends, her teachers, life at the campus her heart break. She was excited about her friend's wedding and throughout the next day that was what she spoke about. She left for the wedding late afternoon, it would be late by the time she got back.

"Don't worry, Ma, I will not be alone. My friends will drop me home. You keep everything ready, we have the doctor's appointment tomorrow."

I smiled at her, she looked so radiant in the yellow silk saree. After she left I made two rotis for myself, there was a little potato capsicum curry in the fridge and a rosogolla too. I made a cup of tea for myself and decided to catch up on the television news. I sat down to have my dinner as the sarod played on.

I picked up the novel that I had been reading and didn't realize when I dozed off. The shrill sound of the bell woke me. I looked

at the clock on the wall in front, it was 1 am. That must be Rinki. I slowly got up and opened the door. There she was.

"Oh Ma, I am so tired," and walked into her room.

In ten minutes she was in bed. I went to bed and lay tossing and turning for quiet sometime. The bell woke me up again, this time I knew it was the milk man. It was 7 in the morning. I picked up the newspaper and made a cup of tea for myself. Rinki was still asleep. My appointment was at 12 noon, there was still time.

"Rinki, get up. It is 9 am, you need to get ready. Remember, we have the appointment today."

She was fast asleep. I needed someone to be there at the doctor's with me. I called out to her again, she turned and said, without even opening her eyes,

"Ma, I am very tired, I need to sleep."

I decided to give her some more time. We needed to be in the cab by 10.30 am, it was a long way off, almost the other end of town. I got ready and again went in to call her.

"I am too tired, I you nah. I need to sleep, I cannot go with you."

I didn't know how to react to that. One thing I knew she wouldn't go along. I had to do it on my own. But then, after the dilation of the pupils there would be some difficulty. I stood

for a while and then decided to give a call to the only other person I knew I could reach out to.

“Yes, Di, tell me,” I heard the sprightly, familiar tone at the other end.

Ranjana listened and was silent for a while. I knew she had prior commitments that morning but I knew she was the only one

who would help, the only one I could turn to, the only one who would agree in spite of everything.

“Don’t worry, Di. I will manage things. I will be at the clinic by the time you reach.”

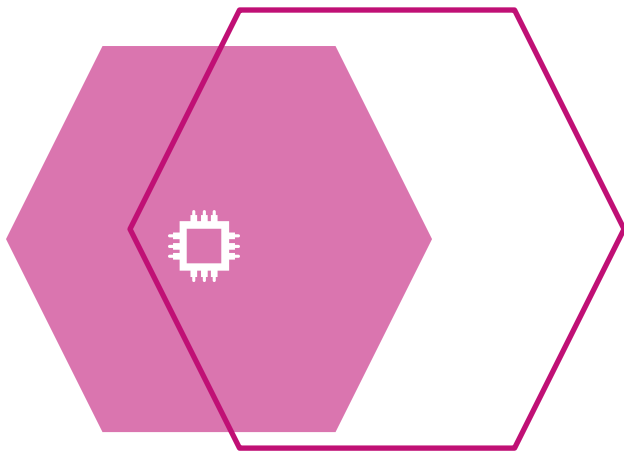
I knew I could take her for granted. My needs were important, after all.

## ~ Nishi Pulugurtha

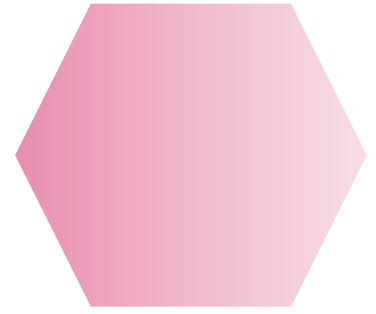


Nishi Pulugurtha is an academic and creative writer based in Kolkata. Her work has been published in various journals and magazines. Her publications include a monograph on *Derozio* (2010), a collection of essays on travel, *Out in the Open* (2019), an edited volume of essays on travel, *Across and Beyond* (2020) and a volume of poems, *The Real and the Unreal and Other Poems* (2020). Her recent book is a collection of short stories, *The Window Sill* (2021) and a second volume of poems is forthcoming.





## BOND



“My poor girl must hate me! I scolded her on her birthday, that too after being late for the cake cutting.

Boss has been giving me such a hard time. What if I lose my job? How will I look after my Cherry and my wife then? But never mind, these are problems in the long run, what should I do right now? How terribly she wept... my darling's face and nose were red, her eyes teary, she was panting! How pathetic I feel, for making her feel that way...”

Father, being unable to sleep, kept ruminating agitatedly in his bed. His boss had been relentless for some time now, asking him to perform irrelevant tasks. And despite knowing that this was an exploitation of the employees, that too during the pandemic, he couldn't switch jobs, the job market being what it was; several companies laying off their employees. He was well aware of the situation.

Father left the house in vexation, every morning. The tasks that his company had

assigned could be performed from home easily, but just because they were paid full salary, to juice it out the boss forced them to come to the office. Father was a hard worker. He was not annoyed because he had to go to the office. He had an experience of working overtime on several occasions. He was just scared of getting infected and bringing the disease home. Every time he returned home, Cherry used to come running to hug him, like she always had since she started walking. The stress of work, feeling of powerlessness, and concern for Cherry's health made him lose his calm and shout at Cherry that evening. She ran away crying and slept in her mother's arms. They didn't celebrate anything. Father was really upset and felt guilty.

Next morning, he woke up early and went to Cherry's room. He sat next to her bed and started stroking her hair. She woke up rubbing her eyes and smiled. She was happy to see her father. She hugged him. Father's eyes got moist. He smiled and showed the fairytale book that he had

bought for her. Cherry started reading it right away and enjoyed it a lot.

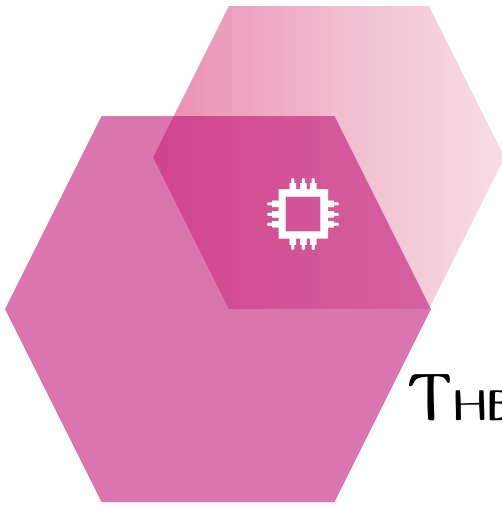
Father read the story to her and Cherry kept giggling every now and then. In all her innocence, she had forgotten about last night, as kids often do. She was happy to be in her father's arms. Father's heart warmed up by her adorable smile and he decided that he will never let his stress cause any pain to his darling Cherry.

He hoped that the pandemic would be over soon so that he could take his daughter and wife for an outing where they could enjoy, laugh and get rid of the stress and negativity together. But first he vowed to make sure to keep his family safe and happy at home, always.

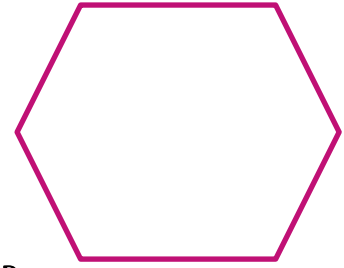
### ~ Garima Yadav

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





## THE FAMILIAR STRANGER



**C**an you riddle me this- *How much can a face inspire you to live?* It can be your parents, people close to your heart, your soulmate, your friends, or even an enemy. It can be anybody's face. But can they actually inspire you to live?

Let me take you back in time when one such face of a stranger became my reason to live another day, every day, for the rest of my life.

It was a brisk winter morning for me. Sleep had failed to catch up with my befuddled conscience the previous night. So, after patiently waiting for my eyes to drop, I gave up the struggle to fall into happy-go-lucky dreamland.

December chills are cruel to one's body, but as I stepped out of the comfort of my home, it embraced me in an albeit tight hug. It made my breathing go rampant. But I soldiered through. Even though the rawness of the winter air almost made me freeze, it was still better than the terrifying cogitation

my brain was involved in, in the confines of my heavy quilt.

I took a walk around my neighborhood, some roads familiar, some new. My attention was caught by the houses scattered around different lanes, their gardens bereft of any greenery and the human soul. It took me back in time to my younger self, much more outgoing and outspoken than I now was. My younger self, whose many friends lived in those houses and were not afraid to live as freely as I did. O, what time did to our souls! I was reminded of my lost self when my mind used to be free of the chaos that had now begun to meddle with my daily routine. I was free from the troubles of an adult's life. Back then, I couldn't wait to be a grown-up and be independent in all my might. But now I wished for a chance to go back a decade, just for an hour and play again with all those souls whom I did not remember anymore. Same friends whom I lost to age and time.

And in all my nostalgia and daydreaming, I walked past a huge black gate, behind which stood a house wherein lived a human wide-awake just like me. I stopped in my tracks and double-checked in all the fog if I was not dreaming. I soon concluded that it was indeed a human soul amidst all the barrenness around. She stared at me. I stared back. Time stilled. Then I did something which my younger version would have. I smiled at the stranger. And she smiled back, a smile so warm and fulfilling, which could chase away all the nightmares and fill one's heart with extreme joy.

She waved at me. I waved back. And then I traced my footsteps backwards to my home and finally let the physical exhaustion catch up to me.

A month passed and, my walk became a distant memory as reality hit me. Life punched me with full force, and even though I tried tackling it, my blows simply recoiled. Adulthood is difficult when it is fraught with responsibilities. It can be burdensome if one does not have anyone to share with.

After a couple of months, one day feeling sleepless at 3 in the morning, I decided to go for a walk on the same trail I went on before. It was not as cold, but the air felt crisp, and my vision blurred with fog. I

had partially expected to see the familiar smiling face again, and I did. She waved, and I halted in my steps. She gestured me to come inside. It felt strangely safe and warm. The guard opened the door, and let me tell you that I had never seen a dutiful nightguard like him before. He walked me up to the entrance of the house and went back to guard his post. Then the most unfamiliar sight greeted me. The stranger welcomed me to her home, flanked by two huge dogs and a portable oxygen tank trailing her.

It was not hard to guess that this beautifully haunting person was sick. She seemed to be in her late twenties, though it was hard to tell if the ageing was a doing of time or her illness. "Welcome to my home, Shanaya", she said.

The stranger knew me. Upon inquiry, I became aware that she had known my mother and was my senior by a few years. She offered her condolences to me. As my mother's memories were still raw, tears rolled down my cheeks. I asked her, "How come I don't remember you?" She told me that my mother had once nursed her wounds and offered her cookies when she had fallen off her bicycle near our gates. After that, she often came by our house with her parents, and sometimes, we used to play together. I felt nostalgic and emotional when I realized that



this stranger used to be my pillar of strength. I was too young, but how could I forget that smile. It had made me happy even then.

With time as I grew up, she went away for higher studies. And my memories of her faded as I got caught up in life. It had been years since I had felt the sort of comfort and warmth that my mother used to give me. You grow apart from your parents as you grow, those who don't are the lucky ones. They are the ones who are annoyingly happy even in the face of dread because they have the support of those closest to them. The kind of support not everyone can provide. I had felt the same warmth from this woman.

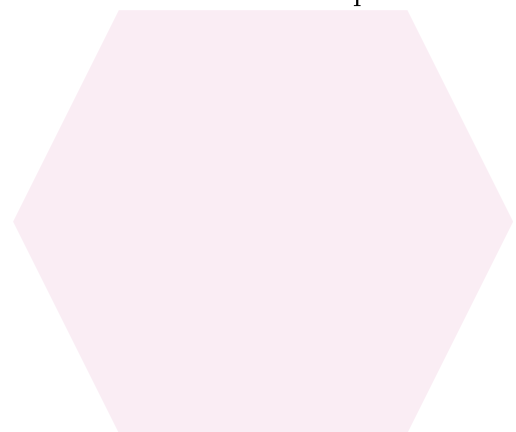
It was familiarity. When I was afraid of my demons that wouldn't let me sleep, this stranger of mine was battling something far more sinister. She gave me hope. Her struggle inspired me, and her smile just had me in awe of her even more.

The face of this stranger inspired me to live just another day, knowing that the worst will come to an end, and I will come out of it unscathed and a little less broken with an old friend by my side. And when the time comes, just her memory will be enough to keep me going. One day at a time, for the rest of my life.

~ Snigdha Singh



The writer is a student of modern European languages and is pursuing her Masters in English from the University of Lucknow. She is currently enrolled in the second semester and aspires to be a published author.



# P O E T R Y

*“If you cannot be a poet, be the poem.”*

*- David Carradine -*

# A FICTIVE LIFE FORETOLD



This is the way we live  
in the footprints  
of retreating soldiers  
in pure non-fiction

The moon - a nocturnal bird - perches  
on the blossomed branches of a Jamun tree  
watches the sisters  
whispering rollicking secrets  
in an unnamed courtyard  
in the warmth of a familiar humid night

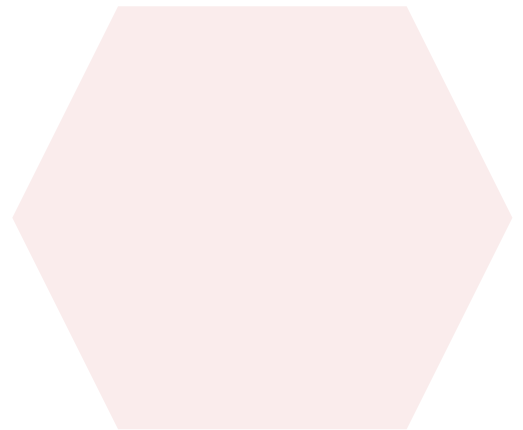
Let's not get hemmed in  
blindfolded in the face of happiness  
holding imprints  
of some reflecting memory

The life we lived  
has never existed perhaps  
we have been inhabiting  
the comfortable pores  
of some random broken wall

Let's learn to slip  
silently from these dark pores  
Let's master the art of leaving  
a fictive life foretold

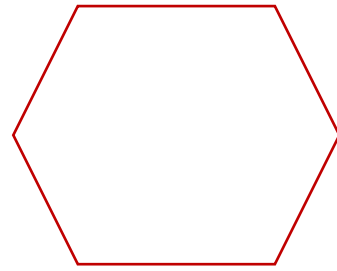
# BEING BEMUSED

I am scared of losing them  
that are meant to be lost  
and gather them  
in my gasp  
What was the colour  
of the trees  
which were chopped off  
while paving the way  
to the castle of your solitude  
Do not blame the world  
that stands  
just adjacent to you  
It is you  
who refuse  
to come out  
of your own labyrinth



# HOME FOR IMMIGRANTS

It was never an option for my mother  
to escape from her share of harsh summers  
She always preferred to look straight  
at the hungry eyes of seasons  
longing for a sky  
crowded with clouds of reveries  
and praying for endurance  
in her orchard and offspring



Clouds are like dreams, she used to say  
They are apparitions of your secluded desires  
In the fraction of a second, they disperse from your sky  
To descend as rain in some distant land as green as hope

Tearing the intricate meshwork of your inner equilibrium apart  
dreams of cumulonimbus clouds haunt you a whole life long  
Yet you dream  
Your dreams: your truth reflects in your sky  
that stretches beyond a nonchalance purview

Between dispersing clouds and vanishing dreams  
Between upstream-swimming days in immigration  
and in nocturnal hollowness  
a memory as pure as hunger rises inside me

A memory, not obscured by any greatness or glory  
The memory of a dreaming mother in her eternal home  
Immigrants never find a home  
They get stranded in no man's lands  
Everywhere  
Nowhere

They remain captured in bubbles of lost words  
and forgotten worlds in the abyss of feelings  
and abandoned somewhere between dreams  
of their dreaming mothers and epistemology of home

~ Sarita Jenamani



She is an Austria based poet of Indian origin, a literary translator, anthologist, editor of a bilingual magazine for migrant literature – Words & Worlds – a human rights activist, a feminist and general secretary of PEN International’s Austrian chapter. She has so far been published in three collections of poetry. English is the chief medium of her creative process. The other two languages she writes in are; Odia, her mother tongue and German. She uses these languages for the translation projects that she undertakes from time to time. Jenamani has translated Rose Ausländer, a leading Austrian poet, and an anthology of contemporary Austrian Poetry from German into Hindi and Odia respectively. She has received many literary fellowships in Germany and in Austria including those of the prestigious organizations of ‘Heinrich Böll Foundation’ and ‘Künstlerdorf Schöppingen’.

## SHANTI — AN EKPHRASTIC POEM

The ideas within this poem are based on the painting titled PEACE, by Marian Spore Bush (USA, 1938). The poet feels that the figure in the painting and the bird is reminiscent of Shiva and the myth of the bird as guardian of our soul in Indian iconography.

Oh Lord!  
Hey Ram!  
The New Age is truly upon us.  
Even Shiv has performed his last rites  
of his own volition.  
Relinquishing his arms  
and seeking ultimate liberation from his  
soul,  
He has let his visage  
float into the vast ocean.

Some say,  
it is only a drowning sculpture,  
a symbol of the world.  
But what does one make of the world  
left amongst us  
when the overseer,  
without performing his ferocious mythic  
dance  
or opening his endless tresses,  
has subsumed himself  
in a flash flood borne from his own tears?



Don't concentrate only on the calm on his  
face,  
it was always above principles of body and  
illusion.  
If one should look  
then look at the ultimate sacrifice.  
Look at the bird's pain  
as he beholds,  
on the Land of Gods,  
The Creator of the Universe

Lifeless.  
Dead.  
As if completely aloof from the circle  
of life and death.

\*\*

Some say he is Krishna  
He is Vishnu.  
He is Durga incarnate  
or another form of Kali.

Some say he is the son,  
the child  
caught in the whirlpool of the life stream  
that has left only his visage  
on this surface.

It's as if the earth is voluntarily asleep.  
And the universe has subsumed itself  
in this city of inclement dreams.

## ~ Prithvijeet Sinha

He is a post graduate in MPhil from the University of Lucknow, having launched his writing career by self-publishing on the worldwide community Wattpad since 2015 and on his WordPress blog An Awadh Boy's Panorama besides having his works published in several varied publications as Café Dissensus, The Medley, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Chamber Magazine, Live Wire, Dreich Magazine, Ekphrastic Review and in the children's anthology Nursery Rhymes and Children's Poems from around the World (AuthorsPress, February 2021). His life force resides in writing.





# THE RECEDING WAVE

Your royal blue robe, the gold details it boasts of  
Cascading down the high throne in the sky,  
Against the burning world behind you  
Creates a rather odd picture for grandeur.  
The aesthetics have become anesthetic  
As your abhorrent choices prove to be dull.  
Maybe you could borrow some new shades;  
Some from my silence, some from your ignorance.  
You look like a child rather than the great leader  
We both wish you to be; me more so out of necessity.  
But nonetheless, I hope the receding waves,  
Knock you off from the height of your lies.  
Never knew the promised Neverland  
Could get more dystopian than before

~ Prachi Kholia

She is a student of Lucknow University, currently pursuing her Masters in English. With a curiosity for everything ranging from Science-Fiction to Ancient History and a passionate love for reading, she is obsessed with the stars and the emptiness they reside in, often trying to weave stories through her poems.



# VESTIGIAL

I saw him  
Wilting day by day,  
Little by little.

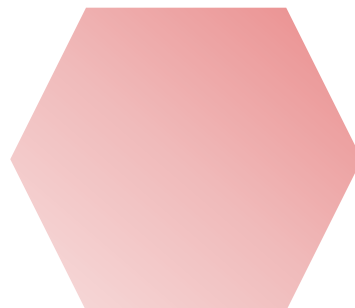
It was confusing how he hid his tears,  
One could never know about his fears.  
One day he was happy and the other day sad,  
Those who saw him thought he was mad.

But No!  
It was his inner battle.  
One day he felt that there was some hope,  
Next day he found it difficult to cope.  
One day he managed to rob a smile off,  
Next day he could not hold himself from scoff.

I saw him  
Trying harder each day,  
While failing to do so anyway.

He sank into a dark pit,  
But then, he climbed up the way which a little firefly lit.  
But, how many times?  
I have seen him wasting his primes.  
The abstract happiness of a win,  
Does not matter when fate does a spin.

How easy is it for people to judge,  
How easy it is for a depressed to smudge.  
He felt like Sisyphus often and frowned,  
One moment alright and the next drowned.



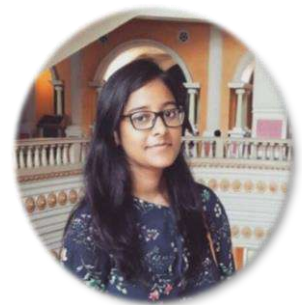
I saw him lose himself  
Inch by inch,  
Bit by bit.

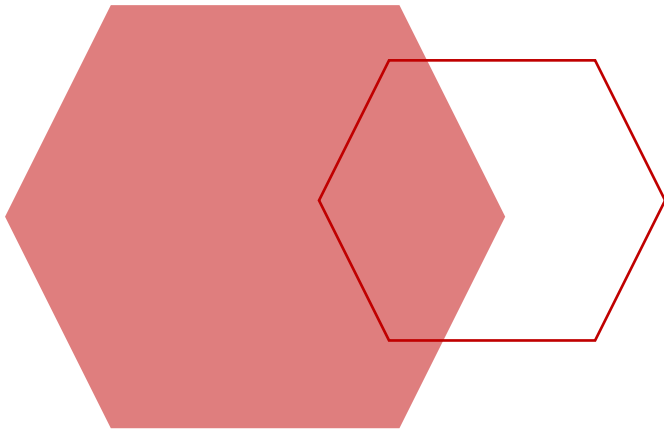
Now that he is gone,  
His friends and family regret.  
It is their fault they say;  
But life isn't a cassette

Had people noticed his distress earlier,  
The battle he fought alone would have been easier  
Now what remains of him in my hands is his vestigial,  
And we have in front of him his effigial.  
I am proud of him for giving a tough fight,  
Before he succumbed he at least tried.

~ Akanksha Pandey

She is an admirer of Literature. She follows her dreams and instincts and loves the unfathomable beauty of nature, the enchantment of books and music while trying to decipher the meaning of life and striving to prepare for unprecedented things thrown to her by God. She is currently pursuing her Masters in English Literature.





## A DREAM: DEFERRED AND KILLED

You see something; a thought passes by  
Thinking of it; you let out a sigh  
You crave it a little; it follows your way  
It grows within you; you let it stay  
Time passes-by; it's almost a routine  
You still long for it; you're still keen  
You wish to have it; efforts are none  
It's a mere yearning, in the encephalon  
You don't stride towards it; but hold it strong  
Trudging in sloth, you drag it along  
Bruised by your deeds, yet wheezing  
Striving to push you. Stirring. Stimulating.  
You're jittery; unable to decide  
Uncertainty intimidates you, indolence on your side  
You're still in love with it, but you let it die.  
Finished. Over - the apple of your eye.  
Lamenting, you will pass a day or two  
Pootling down the market on the third; you'll buy something new

Bragging of your valour someday, you will look back on its corpse  
Inculpating everyone, except you; you will end it on "perhaps".  
Next time you recall it and grieve  
Calling it a "DREAM", you couldn't achieve  
Just lay down straight, wait for the clock to strike twelve  
Don't run away. Face yourself. Nothing killed it- but you! For once, honestly delve.

~ Shivangi Tripathi

She is a Physicist, pursuing her Ph.D. degree at the Department of Physics, University of Lucknow on 'display devices'. She is a scholar by day and a writer by night. Being a native of Allahabad, she has acquired her Bachelors' and Masters' degree from University of Allahabad. In spite of being a science student, she has a keen interest in literature especially in poetry. She started writing by just penning down her thoughts at an early age as her hobby. She is pursuing her passion under the pen name 'nidhi'.



## LET'S RUN FROM THIS HALT

There are halts where you need to think!

Let's be laconic!

Does everything change with time?

Do people stay the same?

Does destiny drive you to doom?

This is all abstruse,

Do I have the same alacrity as before?

Do I have to believe in solipsism?

I think I have become

Stolid,

Is it the nadir of life?

Let people be mawkish,

Nothing to worry, hate

Love being only a philosophical entity

Stars will shine,

Expunge the gloomiest memories,

For which,

Never covet for cupidity,

You have dreams to chase,

Stars never stay, they lead

But for me this star,

illumination lost, puerile!

Never ever gonna shine again!

Let's wait at this halt,

Introspect!

Every cloud has a silver lining,

They say, I believed!

Let's cherish zenith!

Let's run from this halt!

He is pursuing masters in Political Science. He likes to write literary and socio-political articles. He has written a couple of poems in various magazines. He has also published articles in *New Times* magazine. He likes to teach children from the areas of slum and get in touch with the unprivileged sections of the society.

~ Satyam Singh




# LINES ON LUCKNOW

Miles away  
My city smiles  
With the sunset...  
The bazaars defeat  
Celestial moonlight...  
I could see the hazy light  
of crescent moon on the bosom  
of calm Gomati...  
Standing miles away...  
I feel myself drawn  
by festive ecstasy...  
The conch at Mankameshwar  
Echoes in my tranquillity.  
In my solitude  
I often hear the whispers,  
My city calls me.

Far from my land,  
I wander here in the alleys  
Of an unknown locality  
With unheard language...  
Tongues are sweet but  
Not sweeter I find as  
My hybrid sweet relish

Vagrant mind still  
Steals some moments,  
To roam with playmates  
Shouting in the alleys



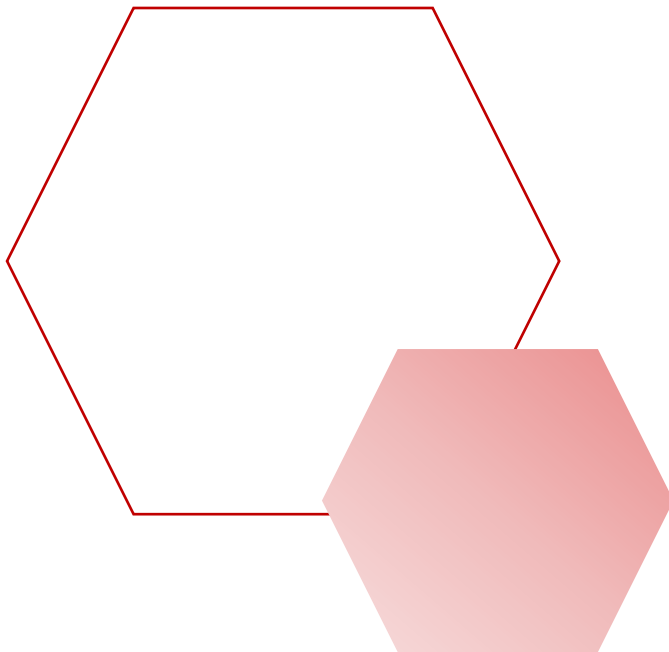
that nostalgia brings.  
Each door opening to  
The street crossing,  
Another then turning  
To east and west...  
No way but a green window  
never opening except  
on some special nights  
to see the crescent moon...  
Frequent Ganjing and  
A cultural feast...  
The threads on my  
embroidered chikan kurta  
Often weaves...  
The fading tales  
Of past  
In Chowk and Nakkhas  
The old ladies sitting  
In the yard stretching  
Sarees on frame  
Piercing the needle  
Taking it away ...  
Short white stiches  
Making it enliven  
In its own way...  
  
Miles away...  
My city breathes  
In lustre...

In harmony  
of twin cultures  
My body roams  
In your city

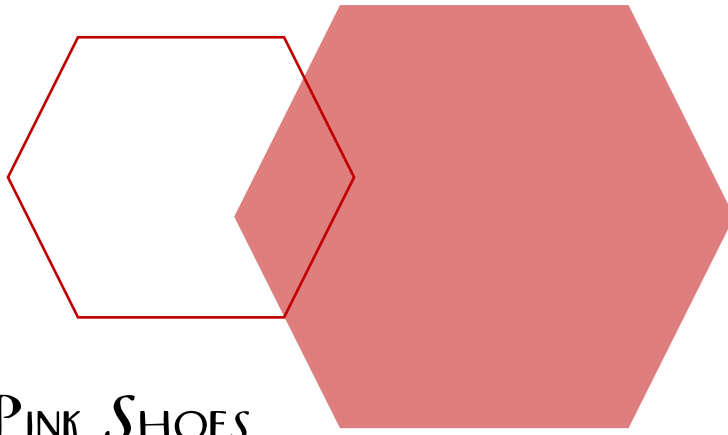
But my heart still  
dwells in the land  
Of my ancestors...

~ Shradha Gupta

She is a bilingual poet and writer from Lucknow. Shradha S. Sahu is her pen name. Many of her poems and articles are published in national and international anthologies and online journals. Her writings generally revolve around the gender disparity and social injustice. She is currently a Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European languages, University of Lucknow.







## PINKY PINK SHOES

A lone swan who used to fly,  
Once wished to be able to walk.  
She wanted more than just walking by  
But also to have someone to talk.

She never articulated what she wished for.  
Someday she came across an open door  
With an eagle in a silver armor.  
The eagle asked: “What’s your favorite  
color?”  
She named a color that shouldn’t exist

She then smiled ‘cause she couldn’t resist  
When a pair of snazzy shoes emerged,  
The eagle simply observed as she surged.

“What color is this?!”, She questioned.  
“The color you desired”, he answered.  
“Pink shoes for walking”, he added.  
“They are indeed pinky”, she muttered.

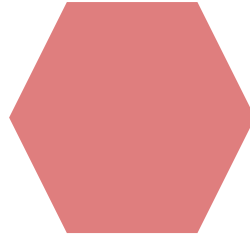
Pinky pink shoes!  
Said the swan and the eagle simultaneously.

~ Novi Yanti

She has completed her bachelor study in English Education back in her country, Indonesia, and is currently aiming to acquire her Master’s degree in English at the University of Lucknow. Aspiring to be a polyglot, she is exceptionally passionate about learning languages. She incorporates her hobby into a potential career as she is also working as a freelance translator for a rising Buddhist foundation in Indonesia.



# WOMEN DO NOT NEED



At 15 and in daze,  
young girls are taught of Keats and his praise  
Oh! How he writes of nature's beauty- the  
hills and billow  
backwaters, alley and munching mellow  
Alas there's one he writes to beauty  
of not nature but to a lady.  
She's cruel and callous, cold and vain,  
she ridicules the knight and passions ablaze.  
She's sad and he's weary; his love infinite.  
She leads him on and leaves him out.  
"Haggard and woe-begone", the Knight  
trails on.  
La Bella Dame Sans Merci, he calls her oft.  
She gets no voice, she has no name!

He falls in love with a faceless dame?

Women do see and know they more,  
of love and desire, pain and furore.  
She shelters the knight not make him sad,  
she loves him back, not a witch nor bad.  
The Dame is smart and not just pretty,  
the knight's a fool. It's no trickery.

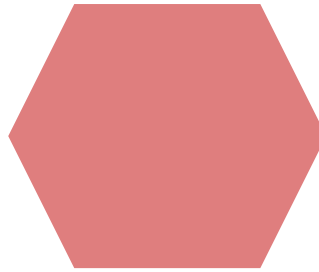
Women desire, women love,  
women find passion, women have a soul.  
Keats to Kant they find her reckless,  
they find her amorous, coquette at best.  
Young girls do not need to read of a Dame  
who has no voice, no face, or a name.

~ Medha Malaviya

She is a final year student of MA English Literature. A huge history buff with a penchant for traveling naturally makes her hometown a preferred city for her to reside in. She can be found reading new-age fiction more than any other genre. Her education and entertainment largely depend on Netflix series' and documentaries. Her writing style at best can be described as 'evolving'.



# A STORM OF EMOTIONS



Enclosed within these walls,  
uneasiness pervades.  
Thoughtfulness coalesces into one connected  
whole  
and like a road infused with sporadic turns,  
my mind incessantly squanders on past and  
future alone.  
Nothing absorbs readily  
as I imagine the gloomy turns waiting near.  
During the night,  
these mental loops intrude  
I look for a listening ear  
to unwrap the fear.

Darkness recedes,  
No longer I drown in the imaginary tide.  
This storm of emotions is just a tiny part,  
Of what I picked out of me.

Now I don't seek perfection,  
that clouds my hope.  
I wish to tread a blooming garden,  
which was once barren land.

~ Bhavya Pant

She has completed her Masters in English from Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. Presently, she is a research scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her research interests include post-human perspectives and contemporary literature.





## NEWBORN MOTHER

Knock knock! Who's there?  
Mrs. Stork Holy was waiting outside.  
High heels, beautiful neck,  
Dressed in white but black  
Gloves and of course  
Scarlet-Colour-Beak.  
Her lipstick was still  
on point, in spite of carrying  
The cocoon for long.  
It must have been expensive.

Mr. Kindler walks in glee,  
Held the cocoon and tipped  
Her with fish one or two.  
Mrs. Ellie Kindler is in bed,  
Waiting for the news to come.  
She seems irritated and  
less concentrated.  
Ellie holds the baby with  
Shivering hands, anxious eyes,  
Flickering smile but feeling  
Overwhelmed.

The baby is crying at its peak.  
Ellie is crying along with it.  
Kindler is away, doing his job.  
He's home, that doesn't  
look like one. Things are  
everywhere in a broken state  
along with humans.  
He enters the room,  
Submerged in black.  
The rocking chair is rocking by  
With a silhouetted figure.

Kindler picks them up,  
Plants a kiss on her forehead and  
His baby. Hugs them both. Turns  
On the light of the room  
and life. He makes it alright.  
Baby Blues. That's what it  
Is called. A mother is born.  
All you have to do  
Is scrape out the blues,  
And color it with beautiful hues.

She is an aesthetic nerd, wandering in the woods of words. She is an alumna of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She is a teacher and seeks solace in the written word.

~ Bushra Fatima



## THE SORROW'S DEN

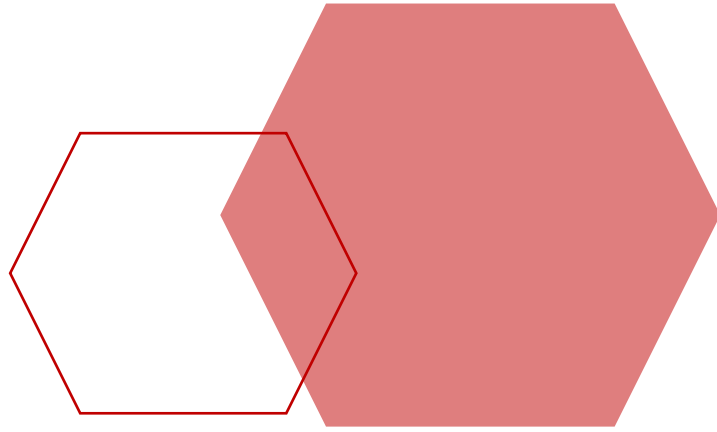
In the wrecked memories of despair and agony,  
And with the whirligig of gloom,  
When your heart is minced into a million pieces,  
And you want to approach the doom.  
When all happy memories fade by,  
What toils around mind is failures and words grating,  
When all you are left to is to remorse and cry,  
And be ending up in the same maze even after the hardest you try.  
When rivulets flow, you want in them to soak your pain  
Or when you see a stone, you want its rigidity at your heart,  
So that it is unaffected with drastic losses or a million-dollar gain,  
So that now for yourself you don't invite any other pain.  
When every breath feels infused with carbon monoxide,  
When all of your feelings get you into the same phase,  
When in your vision everyone else's life is driven out of craze;  
And yours is all melancholy left with no amaze.  
When all you see is people masking their faces as friends  
And bitching at your back about the stories you shared;  
When all they talk about is you being unsocial and out of trend

And for you there was none who cared.  
So if you think it's only your own story  
Well, let me tell you that it is not;  
It's just that I had my glory; I did not let my thoughts rot.  
So friend you and me, we will get through this sorrow's den,  
By finding our own passions; for me that was writing with a paper and pen.

~ Dibyashri Banerjee

She aspires to hone her skills as a writer and poet. She believes in penning down heartfelt emotions. As a diffident kid since childhood, reading has been her constant companion for escaping loneliness, and has helped her find her inner call. She believes in introspecting and questioning the very grounds upon which people build their limiting beliefs. Most of her poems and stories focus on the theme of an individual surmounting his mental barriers.





## SNOOZED

(Trigger warning: This poem deals with trauma and mental health issue)

Days passed and I haven't moved since

What time it is, do I know?

I do know how the leaves age though.

Wrinkled mother, old but upright,

Bearing children, then watching them die

Over

And over again.

Does she hurt? Maybe. Do I care? Maybe

not.

Days passed and I haven't moved since.

Staring out, into the pristine white abyss.

Catching sunshine onto my palm

The lazy rain rolling down the glass

Lucy, the bonsai, perished in the frost.

Cool breeze blows on my face,

Trying to shake me awake.

A dog curled up on the corner of my bed,

Gives a gentle wet nudge on my toes,

In another attempt to see how it goes.

Soaked in sweat, chills and dread.

An evening adorned with pink sky,

A mildly warm sun, a faint silver moon.

One barely clothed woman,

Bruised and abused.

Limply running, henna colored hands.

Hands covering what dignity she had left.

Eyes hollowed, chapped lips,

"I don't want to die"

Smartphones out, pictures were clicked.

The birds fell quiet

As the tires screeched

In the blink of an eye,

There was no woman, but a pool of red.

Days passed and I haven't left my room.

Mother brings me coffee,



Father buys me books,  
Friends get me chocolate,  
My dog fetches me toys.

A picture on my social media.

I am in it too.

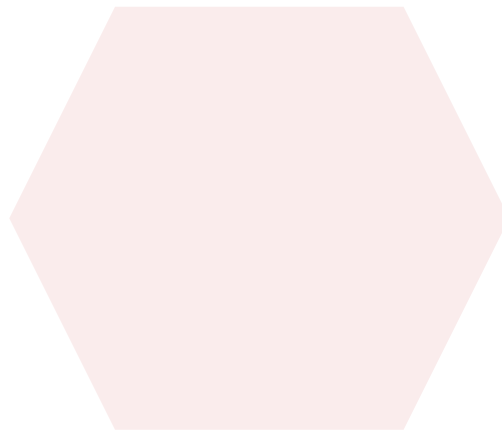
The road covered in red.

A voice in my head

"You deserved to die, this is what you get."

~ Ila Maurya

She is currently pursuing MA in English Literature from the Department of English Literature and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She is an aspiring poet and tries to weave the thread of her thoughts into words to create the fabric of poetry.



# PHOTOGRAPHY

*"The painter constructs, the photographer discloses."*

*- Susan Sontag -*

## EMPTY STREETS & GLORIOUS PAST • Kaumudi Singh

She is an alumna of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Presently, she is training budding engineers at Lucknow University's second campus. Her papers have been published in reputed International & National refereed Journals. Kaumudi is a Bharatnatyam dancer recognized by former Governor Shri B.L. Joshi. Her areas of interests are literary theory & criticism, Canadian Literature, Translation and Diasporic writings.



---

## Chitra Bajpai • AUTUMN MET WINTER AND OTHERS



She 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 diverse art mediums. The photos were taken during her visit to the USA on Fulbright Scholarship.

---



Empty streets, hustle free passes  
No whoops and hollers post the classes.  
Where's canteen chat and gossip gang,  
University was so different before the crisis.





Lovely edifice, lush green fields  
Arts quadrilateral and cadet's drum beats  
Glorious past and pastel walls,  
I wish to be a part till the curtain falls.





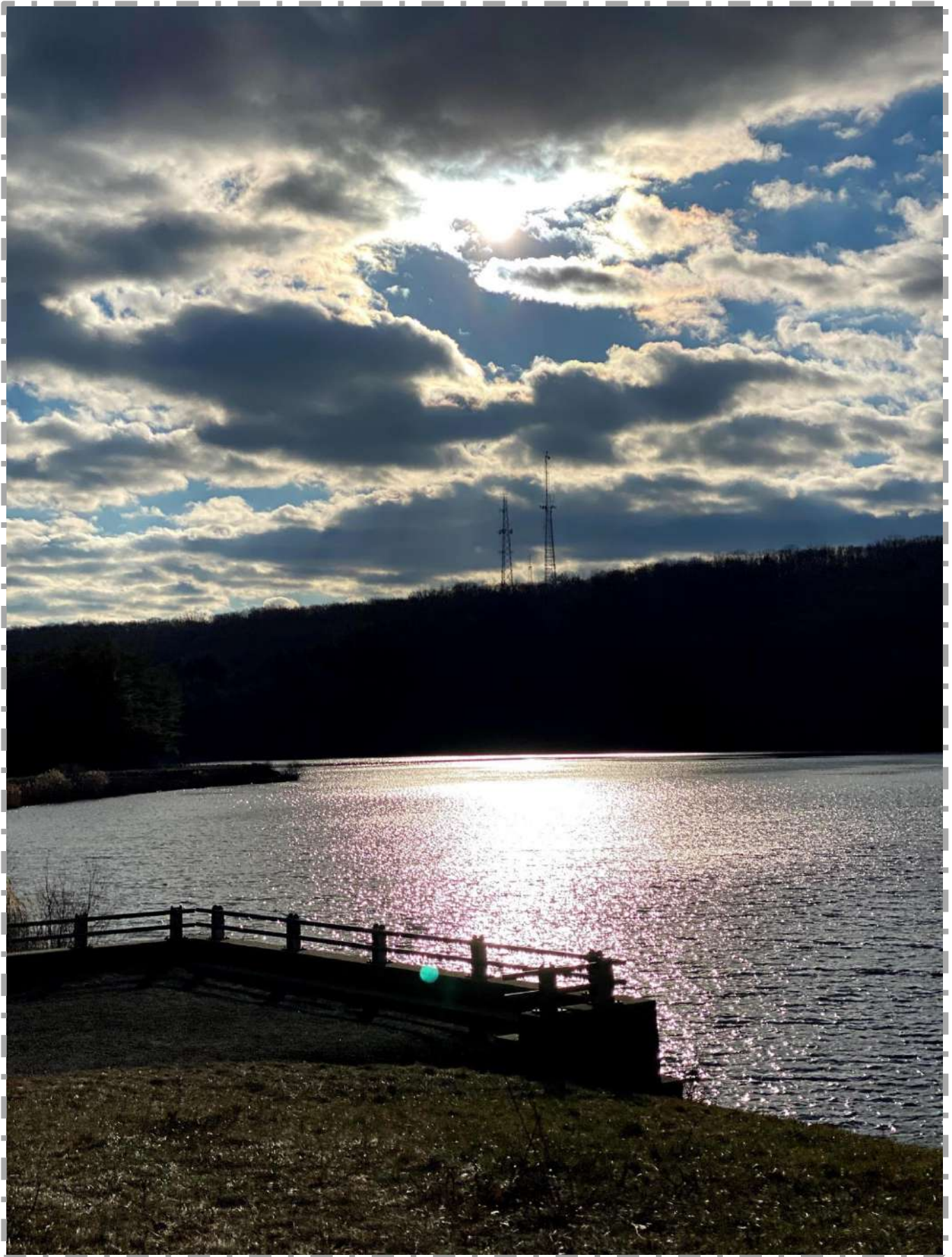
*Once autumn met winter on the bench under this tree, a green tree neat the deep blue ocean, the tree that now awaits the spring to be back.*





*This colossal tower, apart and alone, has met innumerable ocean waves and tells its story silently to the sky.*





*The shimmering sea bids farewell to the smiling daylight, with a promise to meet again tomorrow.*





## REGISTRATION FORM

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

UNIVERSITY OF LUCKNOW

Full Name : \_\_\_\_\_

Year of Passing : \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail ID : \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address : \_\_\_\_\_

Contact No. : \_\_\_\_\_

Current Affiliation : \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation : \_\_\_\_\_ (Govt./Pvt./NGO)

Signature : \_\_\_\_\_

*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](mailto:departmentofenglishlu@gmail.com)

Youtube Link : <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjJ3fNDYQO-gA5nwBKGNDcA>

Facebook Page Link : [www.facebook.com/groups/departmentofenglishandmel.lu/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/departmentofenglishandmel.lu/)



# **RHETORICA QUARTERLY**

## Call for submission

The body, that doesn't fit into the man-made mould of normative codes, is marginalized. For people with any disability the abnormal lies outside their discourse. For them, the world might be aberrant.

Rhetorica, the literary society of the Department of English and Modern European Languages calls for original and creative submissions on this theme for the Monsoon issue of the journal, Rhetorica Quarterly- A Literary Journal of Arts, Vol. 2, No. II, Monsoon, 2021.

### **THEME- DISABILITY: DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

#### **CATEGORIES-**

**FICTION (UPTO 1500 WORDS)**

**NON-FICTION (500-800 WORDS)**

**BOOK REVIEW (800 WORDS)**

**POETRY (3-5 EACH)**

**PHOTOGRAPHY (2-5 EACH)**

**Deadline : 10th October, 2021**

#### Note:

- The submission should strictly abide by the theme.
- It should be mailed as either .doc (non-fiction, fiction and poetry) or .jpeg (for photography) files only.
- Submissions should not exceed the word limit.
- The work should be original and not plagiarised or previously published elsewhere- the Declaration for the same should be attached with the submissions.
- Contributors are required to mail a higher resolution photograph and a bio-note of not more than 100 words along with their submissions.
- Submissions may be mailed at [departmentofenglishlu@gmail.com](mailto:departmentofenglishlu@gmail.com)

## A brief History:

*per aspera ad astra*

The Department of English and Modern European Languages was established in 1921, “aiming for blanket extensive knowledge to the researchers, post-graduates and under-graduates.” Headed with hard work and a zeal “to seek, to find and not to yield.” It has its mark till date. The courses are revised and updated every three years.

Over 200 research scholars have received their Doctorate degrees from the Department. The Department endeavours to enrich literary and language studies by teaching and guiding research in areas as British Literature, English Language Teaching, Stylistics and Discourse Analysis, American Literature, Contemporary Literature, New Literatures in English, Literature and Films, Australian Literature, Canadian Literature, Colonial and Post-Colonial Literature, Indian Writing in English, Literatures in Translation, Comparative Literature, Drama, Theatre Studies, Translation Studies, Cultural Studies, Gender Studies, Disability Studies and Creative Writing. Innovative courses to enhance student employability. Courses for general users of English have been developed as add-on courses in collaboration with others.

The Department also offers Advanced Diploma, Diploma and Proficiency courses in Russian, German and French. In the 1960s the study of Linguistics with special reference to English was introduced in the M.A. English Course and the first Language Lab with four booths was set up, including American Literature as its part too.

In 2020, the old English Literary Society of the Department of English and Modern European Languages has been revived and named ‘Rhetorica’ - a literary platform for students to participate in Dramatics, Debates, Creative Writing, and other academic activities. The year 2020, was also celebrated as the Centennial Year by the University.

Prof. Ranu Uniyal is the current Head of the Department.

