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It takes a very long time to become Young.

- Pablo Picasso



A Literary Journal of Arts
Rhetorica

Department of English and Modern European Languages
University of Lucknow

Dedicated to
Dr. Ram Vilas Sharma
(1912-2000)



Letter from the Chair

Dear Reader,

Greetings and a warm welcome to our new edition of *Rhetorica* (Vol. II, Issue III). The issue focuses on the theme of youth, a phase of life full of strength and fervour. Youth is more of a state of mind that holds the power to make a difference in society. This issue brings together various aspects of youth through numerous contributions.

I express my profound gratitude to the Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Professor Alok Kumar Rai, for his support and guidance. The Department of English and Modern European Languages encourages you to become an active part of this literary magazine. Your expertise and experience will enrich our lives.

Big applause to all the student editors who have worked hard in putting together this creative issue. I hope you enjoy this issue.

Happy Reading!

May 22

Maitraye Priyadarshini
Professor and Head,
Department of English and Modern European Languages,
University of Lucknow.



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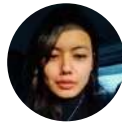


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Psychological thriller and fantasy fiction are two of her favourite genres.



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SMRITI SNEH

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



- Poetry -

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MAZIAH SHAAZ



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

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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 -

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- 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

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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.



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REGISTRATION FORM FOR ALUMNI

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR THE NEXT ISSUE

THEME • INDIA

From the desk of Chief Editor

Dear Readers,

As a continuation of our literary efforts at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow, I am once again happy to present to you another introspective issue of **Rhetorica**. With our Rhetorica literary society constantly evolving over time, new threads of creativity continue to expand with this edition.

Celebrating the spirit of creativity this special theme issue is focusing on the various aspects of 'Youth'. Youth as a theme has brought together minds bursting with enthusiasm and hearts burning with zeal. Youth signifies the young India with its dreams and hopes, fears and frustrations.

We dedicate this issue of **Rhetorica** to the memory of **Dr Ram Vilas Sharma** (1912-2000), an alumnus of our department whom we commemorate with pride as an eminent Indian scholar and critic. He completed his MA and Ph.D. from the Department of English and Modern European Languages in 1940. He started his career as a lecturer in his parent department at University of Lucknow and later joined BR College Agra as a permanent lecturer in 1943. As a leading critic of Hindi literature, he wrote more than fifty books. A linguist, novelist, poet, playwright, and thinker Dr Ram Vilas Sharma was an active member of the Progressive Writers Association. A prominent Hindi scholar of the time he wrote extensively on Hindi poet, Nirala. A winner of Sahitya Akademi award, Bharat Bharati and Shalaka Samman, he was the first Indian to receive Vyas Samman in 1991. All the money that he received through various awards was spent on the growth and development of Hindi language and literature. He had an abiding interest in Rigveda as well as Marxism. Some of his major works in English studies are **An Introduction to the English Romantic Poetry, Essays on Shakespearean Tragedy, Keats and the Pre- Raphaelites**. With his passion and vigour for literary studies, his understanding and compassion for humanity he stands today as an inspiration for each one of us.

We bring together a creative blend of young student contributors and wonderful ageless minds from across the world in the current edition. Thank you for submitting your work to our journal.

There is much to be grateful for.

I hope you enjoy reading it.

Warm wishes

Ranu Uniyal

Chief Editor, **Rhetorica**



Letter from the Editor

“The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.”

-Sylvia Plath

Reaffirming our faith in this quote, we present to our readers the Third issue of the Second Volume of our Department Journal, *Rhetorica Quarterly*. The Journal since its inception has been a collaborative effort of creative literary minds of the Department. We have been receiving exceptional pieces of writing ever since the curation of the journal and we have tried to incorporate some of the most versatile pieces of literary writing by adhering to diverse themes like *the city of Lucknow*, *Womanhood* and *Disability*.

The current issue focusses on the theme of Youth. Youth is a motif full of immense possibilities. As we go ahead to release the Third Issue of the Second Volume of *Rhetorica Quarterly*, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our Honourable Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Alok Kumar Rai for his relentless faith in the vision of the journal. I would also like to thank our Head of the Department, Prof. Maitraye Priyadarshini for her enthusiasm in supporting and encouraging us in all our endeavours. I would also like to express my sincerest gratitude to our Editor-in-Chief, Prof. Ranu Uniyal for her unerring belief in the Journal and its members. I am thankful to the entire Advisory Board of Editors for their valuable support and suggestions.

The collective teamwork of our group of editors and the enthusiastic brainstorming of ideas has reaped exceptional results. As the Book Review Editor, I was extremely elated to edit the crisply-written reviews which we had received. We have incorporated reviews of some of the most refreshing and riveting books like *Pichli Ghaas*, *ANAMIKA: My Typewriter is My Piano*, *Hesitancies: Poems*, *Saeeda Ke Ghar* and *SHE*, providing the reader a plethora of multifarious themes to choose a book from. We are working towards acquiring an ISSN number for our journal, which would help in expanding its reach and would uplift, empower and encourage the expression of art.

Maria Khan

Book Review Editor,

Rhetorica Quarterly.

FICTION

**"NEVER TELL A YOUNG PERSON THAT
ANYTHING CANNOT BE DONE."**

- G. M. Trevelyan.

A SNAFUED RAMP-WALK

-By Dibyashri

Two more to go! The girl turns around in her sequin-embroidered mauve gown, and as she poses to face the audience, she gives flying kisses in the air. Cool enough! She is lauded with cheers by an euphoric audience.

One more to go! This girl walks a little, nervously at first, but soon bolsters up her confidence before she's halfway through the ramp. She pauses when she has walked up to the middle of the ramp, poses and then elegantly finishes her walk. Her walk, too, concludes with the exuberant whooping of the audience.

It's my turn now. I walk calmly at first and then let myself gaze at the audience only to realize something too obvious and catastrophic: all eyes are upon me. Suddenly, I am conscious. I beam to masquerade my apprehension, but like an epiphany, it strikes me that nobody's hollering. I grow tense, my heart pounds in my ears as I walk to the centre of the ramp. My beam has vanished. To the judges sitting right in the centre, on the other end of the ramp, I am pretty sure my face looks either flustered or mortified for such a flat performance. However, I still try doing the best I can with my over-thinking and absurdly self-conscious self. I give flying kisses in the air, pose as I had seen others do, but all eyes that are watching appear unimpressed. I don't know if it is the distorted vision of an over-thinking brain, but I feel that way and it hurts.

When I conclude my walk, there are hardly a few claps, not to mention that I have walked extremely awkwardly, maybe even worse than how I stroll in the garden, and their reactions aren't surprising in the least. I have messed up today, as always.

Four other girls finish their walk, and it's time for results of the first round. Amongst the thirteen of us, eight would qualify to the next round. With my too awkward a performance, I am pretty sure I have made it as easy as pie for the judges to put me on the list of the eliminated five without much thought.

The results are out; my prediction turns right. With a sardonic smile, I cheer myself up for at least getting a surmise right after all. That was all I could do after such awkward and failed endeavors to cast off my self-consciousness and low self-esteem. Ironically, all my attempts to date have contrasted the desired outcome. I wasn't here to win at all. I was there to cast off my fears.

The second round begins. Three more join us when it is over, leaving the audience with the top 5 finalists and then it is the talent hunt round. Who cares who would win! It would not be me, anyone else is somebody, and I am not in the least selective about who that somebody should be.

I break off from my reverie and self-lambasting for a while as I hear the results getting announced. The winner gives an effulgent smile as she gets crowned the Miss Fresher 2021.

“It feels so amazing to have a title as a freshman when you've just set foot into the much-awaited and dreamt of college life, and I must confess I didn't in the least expect to win. I just participated to have fun, to have a memorable experience. The title is the cherry on the cake, and thanks a ton for it. I feel extremely grateful and overwhelmed.”

I feel happy for the girl. But there is something else in the speech that strikes me. I participated to have fun! She did it all so amazingly well. She must've practiced. Maybe she did! But did she practice this art of having fun doing things, or did it naturally come to her without much effort? Who knows! Maybe I needed to practice it: to have fun while doing things without getting swamped in torrents of worries and doubts and what-ifs. That was probably what I most needed to learn, and she had shown me that.

Maybe I, too, would master it someday if I start right away!

About the Writer:



Dibyashri 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 calling. 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 their mental barriers.

Reminiscing Youth

-By Garima Yadav

Looking out of the office window, Girish started to reminisce, how his friend and he used to chill after office hours. Sweet old days when they were both young and full of energy.

Girish and Ankit were childhood friends since 9th grade, when Ankit's father was transferred to Lucknow. Ankit was admitted to Girish's school and on the first day of class, he asked Girish if he could sit beside him. Since that day, they were like two peas in a pod, closest confidants who couldn't rest until they shared things with each other.

Even in college, they both participated in the projects together and during the last semester, appeared for the same job interviews and none of them joined until both of them were recruited. They joined the same office on the same day. They were happy to be together and it was genuine. They helped each other in work, like everything else. Whenever one of the two had to stay back for completion of any assignment, the other stayed and helped. After leaving the office for the day, they would sit near a tea stall and talk for hours about anything and everything, sipping hot ginger tea. They never got tired of spending time together.

Girish recalled their trip to the Andamans, where they enjoyed together on the beaches and tried various water sports. They were young, strong and full of zeal. Girish even laughed when he recalled how a crab had bit Ankit and he kept yelling and jumping like a monkey. That was one of his favourite trips that they had together.

Their youth was laden with excitement and love for life. They both succeeded in achieving many things they wished for and celebrated together. Life was easy for there was a friend they could count on.

On occasions, they grieved their losses together too. Girish could still recall how Ankit did not leave him alone for a minute, when his father was hospitalized. He even made sure to feed Girish time to time. He was truly the brother he never had.

Even after marriage, their bond didn't change. Though, as is expected, they had started giving more time to their families, they were still very close and used to keep each other in the loop. That's when there were no mobiles or social media. Together they witnessed their children growing up and their own hair turning grey. However, their spouses and children never got along much.

They both used to mock the other, when either of the two gasped or lost his breath during their daily morning walks in the park, though subliminally they knew that they weren't young anymore, like they used to be. When they slowly learnt and got into the social media loop, like quintessential millennial best friends, they started sharing memes. This is the only thing the two boomers felt should have been there, back when they were young too. They would have clicked so many pictures and updated their profiles. But somewhere, they knew and felt that their friendship was as strong as it was, because there was no internet to distract them from living their real life, a conundrum they saw most youngsters struggling with.

Girish was retiring this year and when he turned his head to look at Ankit's chair, now occupied by a young man, employed after Ankit's demise two years ago, he smiled but there was intangible pain in his smile. He could never have imagined that his friend, with whom he had shared such a great part of his life would be gone before him. There was a glimpse of gratitude on his face that for however long, he had Ankit in his life and that they stood side by side their whole life.

He missed his best friend unmistakably, but despite the laments whenever he recalled the days of their youth, he felt satisfied. He acknowledged that the way Ankit stayed friends with him was not an easy feat, not easily possible for everyone; Girish was aggressive and Ankit was calm: Yin to his Yang. He always handled him well and helped him control his temper.

His youth was the part of his life that he admired the most. He looked around, at his young colleagues and thought that they couldn't possibly be the kind of friends Ankit and he were, because this young generation had forgotten the meaning of true friendship in this era of internet.

Girish packed his stuff and left, it was time to go home. On the way out, he couldn't help missing Ankit's voice, the way he enthusiastically talked about their favourite cricket team, politics and Sunday plans. While walking there was a constant smile on his face, a manifestation of his admiration at how beautiful those days of youth were.

About the Writer:

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

Echoing in a Lullaby

-By Nandini Sahu

Love and lullaby - aren't they virtually parallel terms? Teacher and adoration—aren't they synonymous?

I lived in the United States for ten years. The place where I have been living in India with my daughter, for the past two years, was supposedly a jungle a few years back. Muddy, dark backwaters leading where nobody knows, near Gopalpur-on-sea, a village turned in a small town. Working at the University in the nearest township Berhampur, Odisha, I drive ten kilometers everyday, and drop my daughter, Neera, on the way, at her public school. I have decided to live here because I always wanted to live my life looking at the blue. Now this place is slowly turning into a port, and engineers from the state as well as the national capital throng this area every day. It's becoming a city of flowers. My daughter has learnt to sing William Blake and Shelley instead of "*Ahe dayamaya visva bihari*"; and her Miss has replaced her grandmother. The teacher, Miss Shruti Palo who prefers to be called as Miss Paul, speaks Anglicized Odia, tells her stories. She has introduced my daughter to *Rath Yatra* as the 'Car Festival'. She takes them on excursions sometimes and shows Lord Jagannath, *Kainchamali*, the wooden horse, the jute bags, Pipili canopies, and tells them, "See children! Have a look at our ancient culture." Neera reads out her paragraph writing in the evening to me on the topic: 'Our Villages'-- where the villages are shown as places out of this world, where strange creatures lived, and life was weird. Where people and cows walked on the narrow lanes together, people ate rice thrice a day, women wore nothing but saris, children had hardly any homework or classwork except listening to stories, mugging up the multiplication tables in a singsong manner. This summer vacation I took Neera to my village, because she had to prepare a project for Social Studies on 'Our Rural Odisha'. We went to the place where my widowed father lives with his widowed mother, some 200 kilometers away from Berhampur.

My grandmother is eighty-eight years old, but still strong in her mind, if not her body. She told Neera stories of her childhood and her village. Neera thought it was some ghost story, a fantasy. Great-grandmother, *Budhima*, was a liar. How could a metro girl have believed that in the past, life was beautiful like poetry?

Life was like poetry when we were kids. Early morning, the scavenger woman brooming the roads. Mowing of calves to suck the left-over milk from mother cow's breast after the milkman had collected his day's milk. We would get up with the metallic sound of fuel coal dropped into tin containers for measuring. One *dabba*, a tin container, was 50 paise, supplying kitchen fuel for a week. Mother carefully watching, lest the coal-*wallah* might cheat. But did anyone cheat anyone? *Pata mausi* scrubbing utensils with ashes near the well. There was an eternal fight between *Pata mausi* and *Phula-budhi*, the old woman supplying flowers for our daily puja, since *Pata mausi* got fresh flowers for people for less money than the old woman. Sudama bhaina bathing his buffalo near the well that reminds Neera of her Mom's car washer. Mother sprinkling cow dung water in the backyard, father sipping tea while listening to All India Radio. "*Aakasha-vani. News bulletin by Gouranga Charana Rath.*" Madana going to the temple with stolen flowers, chanting mantras all the while; *Oshibou* scolding someone, perhaps her daughter-in-law. Our neighbor's name was Chairman Digal. Villagers fancied giving peculiar names to their children. Proper names were truly connotative in the sense that whatever was precious – for example kerosene – was a prospective name! Whatever was a respectable position or job, was also a prospective proper name. Villagers ended up giving weird names to their kids, like Chairman Nayak, Kerosene Pradhan, Amitabh Bachchan Digal, President Nayak, Darmendra Nayak or Hema Malini Pradhan.

It would still be dusk. Raju bhैया, my brother and I, would brush our teeth while sitting beside the well and drowse. Chairman Digal's mother coming to the well to fetch water would nag. Grandmother would get us hot water to mix with a bucket of fresh cold water from the well to bathe, then braid my long hair into two folded banana plaits with red ribbons of floral patterns. My two eldest sisters were at home, all the time doing embroidery on hankies or window screens, waiting to be married off. Raju and I used to go to Hatapada U.P. School, to classes one and two, respectively. The school looked like a warehouse from a distance. There were teachers like Padhy Sir, who oiled his hair so much that he had acne all over his forehead. There was Sabita *didi* (in our schools, teachers were addressed as *didi* even if they were sixty years old!), who was young and beautiful, whose saris I used to touch and feel while sitting on the front row while she would be writing on the black board. There was Sahu Sir, our Maths teacher, whose Draconian law scared us to death. Deduct whatever less marks you have gotten from one hundred, and get ready to be whipped that many times by him. And then, there was *Budhi didi*, the class teacher, in fact the only teacher for all subjects, for class-I. My favorite teacher. I still didn't know what her actual name was, all those years. She was fondly called *Budhi didi* by all, maybe because she was the oldest among all the teachers.

We would reach the school at 7 am and there were prayers. "*Aahe dayamaya visva bihari, ghenā dayabahi moro guhari*". Some naughty boys would replace the second line with "*tuma bariade*

saga kiyari, tume kete khumti khunti khaucha, aame magile tike na daucha”, (which means, you have spinach all over your backyard, which you don’t care to share with us) and I would giggle. Sahu Sir, the Maths teacher, would stare at me, and I would squeeze into the lap of *Budhi didi*. Then the roll calls. Class-I was never a class room, it was a verandah, like open theater, with a black board and a chair in the center. *Budhi didi* would be sitting on that for a while, then get down and sit with us on the floor, wiping our nose, picking lice from our head, telling us stories, singing songs, teaching us the alphabets by writing on our notebooks, making faces to tease us, feeding us if we were hungry, giving us wild berries which were forbidden at home; and even singing a lullaby to put us to sleep on her lap, if we were sleepy. She was with us on the same floor from 7 am to 1 pm, sharing life with us.

Budhi didi was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Why she had only one sari, off white or it had grown grey by being too old, I couldn’t understand. My mother and grandmother had so many saris. Father used to get new saris for them, at least thrice a year. My father was the village Sarpanch, and we were quite well-to-do. I wanted to gift some of our saris to *Budhi didi*. Even I asked her once, that if I could get her a few saris from home, and she said no, *one should never steal. One should never tell a lie. Wash your hands before and after eating. Touch the feet of your parents. Don’t be jealous of anyone. Do good and be good.* Whatever she told was like the Veda for me. She truly represented the simplicity of a villager. She was more than a mother to us children. During roll calls, she would mark all of us present, even without looking. Because we were never absent in her class. Her face was angelic, with disengaged features – a flat nose, wrinkles, uneven teeth and bright eyes -- she was very beautiful in my eyes. She had a motherly fragrance, the smell of love. Her bosom was soft. She was the best teacher, she taught us numbers, alphabets, music, just everything, all subjects. We never did projects, we had no holiday homework, no study tours, no unit tests, no semesters, but our learning was long term and brain-based. Whatever she had taught us, is still printed in my mind, saved permanently in my hard disk. She was not only teaching us. She was preparing us for life. We learnt piety, generosity, honesty, truthfulness and empathy from her. We learnt the alphabets of love from her.

During winter mornings, the headmaster Mr. Valentine Pradhan, one more person with a connotative proper name, asked us to come down and sit in the sun, because the verandah for class-I was too cold. On one such occasion, I left my school bag open and went to relieve myself in the fields as we had no washrooms in our school, to the utter surprise of Neera. In the meantime, *Budhi didi* was busy with some correction work and other children were playing. A cow entered the ground where our bags were kept and ate away my Maths book, almost half of it! “Oh God! Today Maa will beat me. What shall I do now?” I went on crying. She lifted me onto her lap with her left hand. I was reed thin, was hardly fifteen kilos when I was in class I. (And my Neera is fifty kilos when she is in

class V. After all, she is a child of luxury, a pizza, burger, french fries kid!) She patted my head and wiped my face. “Don’t cry mama”, she addressed us as *mama* out of love, “I shall copy the entire book for you from my book, okay?”

She actually did that, overnight. Was she alone at home? Had she no other work at home? My mother and grandmother were busy all the time cooking, making *wadi*, pickles or cleaning the house. In the school she had not a moment’s break, with sixty naughty children in her class, making her crazy.

After many years, when I was young , I went to see her in her house during my annual vacation, she told me for the first time that she was *Aparna*, not only *Budhi didi*, and she got married when she was hardly fifteen years old, had two children; then one day her husband got converted to another religion and went to England with the kids, leaving her behind, for he had found a beautiful woman whose brothers sponsored his foreign trip and a job abroad. She was a loner. She tried to see her children in us, give a meaning to her life by taking care of us selflessly. She had heard that her children were married and settled in London, she had grandchildren now. But I had never seen tears in her eyes. Always a smile, motherly comfort, heavenly patience, womanly self-confidence. That made her the most lovable, most beautiful woman.

Budhi didi used to reach Hatapada U.P. School, our school, very early in the morning. At least half an hour before other teachers. Because she took care of the mid-day meal for the poor children. The government had a scheme of midday meal made of *daliya* for the children below poverty line. *Budhi didi* used to cook it with utmost care, because she thought that the cooks supplied by the government were very careless, they never cared about hygiene and taste of the food. By the time we would reach the school, the aroma of freshly cooked *daliya upma* would be in the air. I would start salivating and wait for the tiffin break at 9 am and discreetly go and sit in the row of the poor children to gulp *daliya*. I never wanted to eat the *paranths* and cauliflower curry that my grandmother packed for me and Raju, in two separate boxes. I used to give it away to some other child. *Budhi didi* always noticed this.

“Don’t do this mama. Your parents will not like this. This food is not for you.” “Why *Budhi didi*? This is so yummy.”

“You find this yummy? Only boiled *daliya* with salt?”

Now whenever I cook *daliya* for Neera with milk, sugar and dry fruits, I don’t get that aroma of the *daliya* of *Budhi didi*’s cooking. But it makes me nostalgic, for sure. Class-I was over, and I had to study in the same school for another four years, with other teachers. But my weakness for *Budhi*

didi was never less. I would spend some time before our classes began, then the entire tiffin break, again the chutti time with her. Chatting with her, touching her, leaning on her shoulder, running away when she would try to pat my back for some mischief I did.

Time is a universal phenomenon, as certain and unstoppable as death. Undaunted by the sun's truant ways, it ticks away mercilessly, merging day into night and vice-versa, with unwavering precision. Time balances, levels all—that's a separate matter. Time is a great leveler—that is immaterial for *Budhi didi's* kind of people.

This year I reached our village, which can hardly be called a village anymore, with Neera. Neera got busy with my father and grandmother, taking details about village life from them for her Social Studies project, and was literally pampered by them. I wanted to see *Budhi didi*. My father told me that she was in very bad shape. I rushed to her hut, and discovered that she was lying on her bed, talking to herself.

"Ninu, you came *beta*? I knew you would come."

She hadn't even started when a short, stocky, and dark old man entered the room with a woman who was much older than me. But she had a striking similarity to me! She was her daughter and he the father of the daughter, *Budhu didi's* husband, who had left her years back.

Did she love me so much because I resembled her daughter? But no, she loved every child! Panic-stricken, *Budhi didi* looked here and there, seeking something she couldn't find. An empty water jug and an upturned tumbler were kept on the table, and they hadn't even bothered to fill that. I suddenly felt low. My excitement to give her the good news that I am going back to the States on a fellowship for three years with Neera, vanished. I had decided to spend the whole of June in the village, to give Neera an understanding of rural India, and to give myself some good time with my father, grandmother and *Budhi didi*. Our tickets were booked for the first week of July.

Why had these people come after all these years? When did they come? Why is she looking so bewildered? She caught hold of both my hands and whispered something. Then sobbed. Her sighs and sobs filled the backyard and darkened my face. She leaned on my chest like I used to, on hers when I was in class-I. Then she wiped her tears herself and told, "Ninu, this is my husband and my daughter. See, how much she looks like you! But no! She is not like you. She has never loved this old woman." She continued, "After retirement the headmaster wanted me to be the children's hostel superintendent. There is a small hostel in Hatapada U.P. School now. But I denied. I wanted to live and die in this house, where I had come as a bride years back. Now these people are asking me to vacate this house because they want to sell this property off and go back. They need money. I was

dying to contact you *beta*! I knew that you would come and take me to Gopalpur. At least I can spend the last few days of my life peacefully. They are asking me to shift to the old age home today itself. Their papers are ready.” She was speaking restlessly. It was not good for the heart of an old person. I asked her husband and daughter to leave that room. She put her head on my lap peacefully and tried to sleep. As if it were her last sleep, the very last one. I had got *daliya* for her from home. I fed her a few spoons before putting her to sleep. Liquid food got spilled out from her mouth.

I was perhaps humming a lullaby to her, bewildered, echoing the lullaby of my childhood, that she used to sing for us. Noiselessly, she opened her eyes for a few moments and stared at me, as if I were her erudite preacher.

About the Writer:



Nandini Sahu, Professor of English and Former Director, School of Foreign Languages, IGNOU, is an established Indian English poet, creative writer and folklorist. She is the author/editor of fifteen books. She is a recipient of the Literary Award/Gold Medal from the honourable Vice President of India for her contribution to English Studies. Her areas of research interest include New Literatures, Critical Theory, Folklore and Culture Studies, Children’s Literature and American Literature.

Excerpts from an Elusive Youth

-By Smriti Sneh

//the abstraction of the average//

The ‘abstraction of the average’ as Lawrence called it, fascinates me a bit too much. The average, the secure has such a connotation of the feeling of safety. Things are going smoothly, there’s no adventure but there’s no risk as well, it’s a smooth ride. But then I think about myself, I feel like I believe that this ‘abstraction of the average’ is a good thing, to say the least, but that is not really how I live inside my head. No matter what consistent life I lead on the outside, pacing on the line of neutrality, I live subconsciously between extremes, either here or there, one corner or the other extreme, no in-betweens.

I switch off the fan and feel the warmth and keep feeling it until I sweat, and though Shakespeare once foolishly said “shall I compare thee to a summer’s day?” as a compliment to his beloved, it doesn’t apply in the East. No one finds so much sun, sweat, heat and this skin piercingly scorching weather, romantic. But nevertheless, I let this heat scorch my skin, and I let myself feel each and every little tinge of prickle as little beads of sweat start breaking out from the pores of my skin, I soak in the heat, sweating my soul away, lying and thinking about things I don’t even know how to express. This extreme heat makes me feel. Feel alive or dead I haven’t been able to figure out yet; but feel, I do. And amidst these ‘violent colours’ of stink, sweat and clumsy uncombed hair, clothes clinging to my drenched skin, poetry writes me one word at a time, trying to complete me, and it’s still a long way to go. And that makes me think, well atleast that’s one thing North Indian heat is good for, it makes me feel, being so acute and extreme as it is. The abstraction of the average doesn’t let you feel, it just allows you to exist...

//passivity in the very un-youthful essence//

What is it with people’s obsession of being ‘a memory’ in every person’s life? To “be someone worth remembering”, “an unforgettable character in their story”. Ask me and I’ll say, “I’d rather be a recipient”. Let the time flow like a voluptuous stream while I stand there by the banks...

unattended, unnoticed, in a garb that renders me invisible, witnessing this mundane miracle called life, as a silent, passive observer stealing glances. Dance away your wonders, I'm watching. Cry away your heart, I'm listening. Write away your soul, I'm reading. Sing away your love, I hearken.

Don't, don't grab me by the hand and pull me to the dance floor. Let me watch, observe, notice and inscribe in my journal, every peculiar nuance, every change of face, each flutter of the heart that reflects in the dancing eyes, each eye contact, each fondling caress that teases the other's fingers, each tear shed in the corner of the room, each drop of liquor downed with the pain, each smoke circle that flies with the quest of forgetting oneself.

Let me, oh just let me take it all in through my gaze, but don't pull me in, into the hullabaloo. This is life I'm witnessing all around me, don't remind me of its very absence within.

//the ubiquitous late night monologues//

1:54 am

I wonder if anyone's ever realised that sleep is exactly like a time machine. For a few days now, (nights, more accurately) I say to myself "time to time travel" when I'm coaxing myself to sleep which is always elusive in the night, and way too dear to relinquish in the morning. It's something worth thinking about, sleep travels your body through hours while spending just a few seconds of the soul, the conscious. I am caught between, this dilemma of stopping in my path and utilising the time that is flowing away faster than I can manage to catch with my bare hands and this love for sleep which passes hours of my life in seconds. Really, you sleep and you wake up, after hours, and it feels like seconds because you were dead in those hours and the seconds you remember are after you've come alive and before you gave up breathing on that death bed. I wonder what is it my soul really wants... to pass the hours in seconds or to utilise every second of every hour. Time will tell, or maybe it won't. Right now it's my time to time travel again...

About the Writer:



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, Smriti Sneha is currently studying in the Masters course and hopes to inspire readers someday like she was, by her aforementioned muses.

NON-FICTION

**"YOUTH IS HAPPY BECAUSE IT HAS THE
CAPACITY TO SEE BEAUTY. ANYONE WHO
KEEPS THE ABILITY TO SEE BEAUTY
NEVER GROWS OLD"**

- FRANZ KAFKA

What our Youth should learn from Swami Vivekananda

-By Aahuti D. Dhandhukia

Undoubtedly, youth is not just a phase of life but it is life itself. Youth is not the age of the body but a state of mind. It is the fountain of aspiration and flow of energy, that can shape individual development, nation-building, and advancement of culture and civilization. To channel this force of energy for the upliftment of the self and the society, our youth need to set great ideals before them. Swami Vivekananda, a great apostle of India, whose birth anniversary on 12 January has been celebrated as 'National Youth Day', has continued to influence young minds across India and the world. This is a humble attempt to realize the relevance of the preaching, practice, and personality of Swami Vivekananda for today's youth:

·**Strong Physique:** शरीरम् आद्यं खलु धर्म साधनम् (Body is the tool to perform our Duty)–So wrote Kalidas in Kumarsmnhava. Swami Vivekananda firmly believed in cultivating the strength and stamina of the body. The sound body leads to sound mind and sound character. "Muscles of iron and nerves of Steel" was his first expectation for the youth which he believed can make people perform great tasks of public service and nation-building. Today's young people tend to treat physical fitness as a goal than a means to perform greater acts. Our young people are enthusiastic about working out in gyms but going to open ground and participating in sports is perhaps a better option that can develop sportsperson spirit, tolerance, passion, community-life, and leadership traits.

·**Make your Life a Pursuit of an Ideal:** According to Swami Vivekananda, it is ideals that attribute worth to human life. Bigger or smaller, each individual should have an ideal in life and the rest of one's life should be a passionate pursuit for the same. Swami Vivekananda dedicated his life to discovering, preaching, and practicing Vedanta. According to him, renunciation is the greatest ideal for both individuals and civilizations. Our young generation can seek to renounce all petty activities, temptations, and distractions while marching on the path of their ideal. These words of Swami Vivekananda should run in our veins: "Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life. Live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea; and just leave every other idea alone. That is the way to success."

·**Self-Confidence:** Swami Vivekananda's self-confidence was rooted in a strong faith in himself and his master Shri Ramakrishna. Our young people should be self-assured about their choices and decisions to increase their confidence. Our awareness of the glorious history of the human race should encourage abundant self-confidence. Swami Vivekananda addressed humans as "Children of Bliss".

·**Strong Character:** Throughout his life, Swamiji remained untouched by any kind of alluring temptations and distractions. "My hope for future lies in the youth of character-intelligent, renouncing all for public service and obedience". When youth indulges in mobocracy, these are his words that should serve as torch-bearers: "A few whole-hearted, sincere and energetic men can do more in a year than a mob in a century."

·**Inquisitiveness:** Our young minds should be filled with inquiries and should learn to ask questions, appropriately and fearlessly, for the right answers they seek. Before submitting himself completely to his master Shri Ramakrishna, he not only had long arguments but also tested his master's conformity to his words and actions. Have suspicion before submission.

·**Excellent Communicator:** Not only did Swami Vivekananda follow the original interpretation of the Vedanta, but he also conveyed his message to the world with great eloquence through lectures and writings. His historic opening address on 11 Sept 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions astonished America and the world. He made dry, abstract Advaita "the living poetic of everyday life." All students, irrespective of their discipline must realize that effective communication is the key to success.

·**Supreme Love for Country:** His wanderings in India made him aware of its strengths and weaknesses and his contemplation on India's condition deepened his love and commitment for his country and its people. Intending to avail some assistance from the prosperous West, he decided to go to America to participate in the World Parliament of Religions. He was proud to belong to India and unfolded the enlightened religious, cultural and spiritual heritage of India before the West. The India that he 'loved' became a 'pilgrimage' for him on his return from the West. When we consider the brain drain trend in our youth, it can be considered that even though in the age of globalization, we can choose to stay in any part of the world, our loyalty and love must flow to our motherland.

·**Not Attainment, but contribution:** Swami Vivekananda was so devoted to the cause of public service and national rejuvenation that he considered it selfish to the desire for salvation

which is viewed as the ultimate aim of a Sanyasi (monk). He appealed to his disciples to sacrifice hundreds of births on the call of the country. The whole life of Swami Vivekananda teaches us the principle of contribution. Self-worth and inner fulfillment can be realized not through external acquisition but by becoming contributors to society and the nation. Following this very ideology of Swami Vivekananda, Gujarat Technological University has offered a course on Contributor Personality Development for the holistic development of individuals, society, and nations.

About the Writer:



Aahuti D. Dhandhukia is visually challenged and is serving as an Assistant Professor (English) at Government Engineering College, Bhavnagar, Gujarat. She is pursuing her Ph.D. in “Disability and Literature” from the Department of English, M.K. Bhavnagar University Bhavnagar, Gujarat. She obtained her M.A. from SNTD Women’s, University, Mumbai, and has served as a translator in the Legislative & Parliamentary Affairs Department, Secretariat, Government of Gujarat. Disability Studies, Feminism, Translation, and English Language Teaching are her areas of interest. She has presented 12 papers in national/international seminars and has 8 publications to her credit. She has also completed several MOOCs from SWAYAM and Coursera platforms. She is also involved in the regional translation of NPTEL MOOCs.

ON YOUTH

-By Abhinshyam

When it involves talking about 'power', within the widest sense of the term, we should always consider the facility that has its constituents of intellect, character, conduct, and little question, not excluding the physical prowess too. Now, someone might ask 'why to speak about power?' the purpose is that nation, be it a Capitalist, a Communist, or perhaps a Democrat, if we set aside the arguments for the existence of a continual law or an omnipotent entity (god), we will see the globe during a simple, Nietzschean standpoint of thinking - the pursuit of Power. within the Indian aspect of the thing, power is equalized to the sense of 'Sthirta' i.e. the ability to endure the uncertainties of the longer term. That's where the importance of young age comes into play.

A.L. Tennyson once said 'The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God fulfills himself in some ways, Lest one good custom should corrupt the World.' Time is often in an exceedingly constant state of flux and the only thing which is an opportunity for the salvation of any country, in addition to a developing country like India, is realizing that youth isn't a responsibility only, but it's an aspect; we do not spend on them, we invest on them. The country of the Vedanta must realize that a protracted life is essential in completing the actions for the advantage of all the sentient beings. A nation is often progressive and this is often the only cause that the powerful countries like the United States of America are advocating an organic education system to organize a natural growth within the younger generation's inclination; be it sports, education, medicine, or cognitive activities of the young ones. It would be a sordid sham if our own country, which always treated the new age as bacon of latest ideas, turning them into reality, shun the minds by a 'stifled originality'. The new lives are always stuffed with zeal, strife, and talent to devise the perspectives which will change horizons. The epoch-making activities of the new ages are manifested given that the mind is not afflicted by the aversions the person encounters when he reaches the age of constructing a difference. The proper knowledge is important to stable our emotions; stabilizing our emotions is important to determine the greater good - the advantage of the family (which in Indian thought, constitutes the planet 'Vasudev Kutumbakam'). The man, when he is at his young age, may be a stone which may be either carved by the strikes of the hammer; the identical man will be broken into pebbles by that same hammer. It is our direction of thinking that decides what side of the coin we are. But there's another aspect to it, the youth could be a sign of

activism instead of only a collection of mere armchair thought experiments. Our intents and thoughts are important, yes, but what's equally, if not more important, is our capacity to act out our thinking. For it matters not what we are inside, but our actions are the state of affairs that define us. The young minds determine the country's extent within the fields starting from the foremost empirical scientific achievements to the foremost abstract and aphoristic philosophical thoughts. The youth of our country have a crisis happening with reconciling their views with the latest outbursts of Western thoughts, they solely cannot seem to search out a middle ground to face comfortably where their visions of more modern society together with their own cultures stand toe to toe, embracing one another. They will have, in their arsenal, opinions varying drastically - from thinking to create an AI for locating their misplaced *chappals* to accusing Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi of Anti-nationalism and justifying Godse's assassination of him. Irrespective of how frivolous our youth could appear to the older generation, we are in no state to refute the youth as a vain attempt of up-gradation and just a mere act of our species' survival only. The older generation believes them as, as Kevin Enochs in a piece on Lifezette magazine said, "spoiled, entitled, or both." Let or not it's not forgotten that youth isn't an overuse of drugs; rather, it will be made a drug of medicinal use by reviving the classical yet all- inclusive modules of thinking. Inflicting them is like Inflicting the fruit tree for the sake of its growing apples; it will destroy the full meaning, which is sometimes termed because of the ground of personalities.

In a nutshell, the sole message which inserts the youth is, as said by Swami Vivekananda himself - "All power is within you; you will do anything and everything.

About the Writer:



Abhinshyam is a student of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. He has published several research articles and has a deep interest in philosophical readings and writings.

Youth

-By Adhiraj Dwivedi

Each creature on our blue planet comes for a period, a very minuscule period in comparison to the (estimated) age of the cosmos. Experiences Life through tension in one's respiratory system, as death is an absolute peace no tension. Here undergoes a series of events and gets a body to command mostly in ways pre-planned for the majority of creatures per se only survival and procreation, except the species of Homo sapiens which have a unique ability along with survival and procreation, i.e., to learn from the past, live in the present and plan for the future.

Every Life on this planet passes through a very special stage well recognized as 'Youth' in which they have the highest possible source of potential energy in terms of their physical existence. Since, in the species, Homo sapiens is the most advanced and evolved form of machinery on the planet, it has an edge over other creatures, for they have the power to think, due to which naturally they have better possibilities in terms of how far they can excel in any discipline they wish to.

'With great power comes great responsibility with these words let's dive into what youth in Homo sapiens (also known as humankind) can achieve. This stage of life enables humankind to transgress even mortality! But certain prerequisites for accomplishing something include Knowledge, Patience, Practice, Compassion, and especially a Vision. Throughout history, there have been, there are and there ought to be sensitive and sensible youth who saved the day and are an inspiration not only to us but for generations to come, we have legacies that not only inspire but also guide us, From Swami Vivekananda, Chatrapati Sambhaji Maharaj, Bhagat Singh, Ashfaqulla Khan, Lata Mangeshkar to Christopher Marlowe, Mark Elliot Zuckerberg, Bill Gates, and so on.

Geography may change, cultures may change, but fundamentally all of humankind is the same and undergoes similar circumstances only difference that stands tall is some pay attention to what is happening around them while others stay ignorant. Let's try to know more about Youth with the help of the Life of Narendranath Dutta, respectfully known as Swami Vivekananda, an epitome of Youth. It has been more than a hundred and twenty years since he has left this land but even today his mere name can induce high enthusiasm, high vigour in millions. This man redefined what Youth is and finally became synonyms to the term, even his birthday is celebrated as National Youth

Day in India every year on the 12th of January. He is known for acquainting the world with Indian Philosophies of Vedanta and Yoga, he was the most beloved disciple of 19th-century mystic Ramkrishna Paramhans. His teachings gave preference to the character and moral values of a person over his physical attributes; he made the world realize what mental strength can achieve. His speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions made a remarkable impact in the hearts and minds of not only seven thousand attendees present there but also the people of the current generation, greeted the parliament on behalf of "the most ancient order of monks in the world, the Vedic order of sannyasins, a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance".

Youth is a phase of life in which earlier acquaintances of childhood take a real, fiscal form because in the earlier phase one had only energy with no suitable direction but now one can make decisions, to judge the outcomes of one's actions. This ability to understand society, culture, politics, and emotions makes youth a crucial part of one's life. Daring to explore new ideas, to challenge the injustices prevalent in society, to stand with what is right, and to maintain law and order are special attributes of the youth. Youth play an important role in building up a nation. They are the most valuable assets of a country for they are the major stakeholders in Business, Finance, Sports, Academics, Technology, Law, Defence and Budget of a nation, these are only a few to name but there are many more fields. Youth have the potential to create a presentation that can last for eternity if and only if they can transmute their potential energy into other constructive forms. This may seem absurd but through training, discipline, focus one can achieve what he wishes to achieve.

About the Writer:



Adhiraj Dwivedi is pursuing BA Hons in English from the University of Lucknow. An aspiring writer, who often pens down his thoughts in the form of film reviews, book reviews, and essays on topics of global importance.

Youth is the Price one must pay to gain experience in this World

-By Garima Yadav

One spends one's childhood under the protection of one's parents. The age when one is naïve and doesn't know about the dark side of human nature. They are protected from all the evils by their parents. Their needs are fulfilled so they don't have to face hardships. They live in their world surrounded by loved ones who are ready to leave no stone unturned for seeing them smile. They realize it in the future when they will do the same for their loved ones.

But every good thing in life comes to an end. As a child, everyone waits for the youth to arrive so that they can be free and live life as per their rules. They dream about the carefree life they want to lead. They think everything will be as they have assumed. They don't realize how much their parents struggle to make life easier for them. But youth is the price they pay to learn the most important lessons of life.

It's youth they sacrifice to understand how blessed they were as a child. They have to work day and night to get those things which their parents provided them on demand. They learn not everyone is your true friend and some of them are pretending to stay close just to see you fall. They learn life is not always a sweet dream, but it turns out to be a nightmare. They learn how their hopes would be shattered at times, they would fail, they will learn the meaning of true friends, and most importantly how they should utilize and respect time. As a saying goes time and tide wait for none.

Youth is that asset which God gave us to utilize by travelling, working, and gathering experience. It's the golden period full of energy and capabilities that will make us achieve our life's purpose if utilized well. We do hard work, fail at times we meet new people, and get deceived at times, we travel and find places that bring peace to our mind and soul. As youth, we are strong enough to do anything we desire.

Our elders entrusted us with responsibilities as they believed we could fulfill those tasks with our sharp senses and fervour. We should be humble and listen to their experience. We should learn to be humble as politeness is the virtue we take far in life. Youth is the time when we have

theoretical knowledge and believe in many hypotheses. But from the experience and guidance of the elders, we can learn the reality.

Youth is that experiment that ends when we grow old and obtain the experience as its result. It's a long slow process in which various elements like zeal, jealousy, ambitions, and pride play an important part. These elements can't be removed from the process so can't be the other human virtues of kindness, empathy, and affection.

When one grows old one becomes able to differentiate between a friend and foe, folly and wisdom but by now they have lost their youth. For it's the price one must pay to understand this world. To be able to appreciate the beauty of childhood and live the rest of the life with gratitude for the blessings one has received.

Once a youth is gone it can't be brought back and often people are heard mentioning if they could go back in time, they would do things differently. It's a lesson for all of us not to waste youth and utilize it in welfare not only personal but of the society also. The experience which we keep gaining will prove helpful in that.

It's the price we pay but we should not mourn for that we should smile and feel proud that we can live our life once. We need to remember this if we didn't act wise, we would regret our acts in the future. We should be confident and considerate, wise but not cunning. We should make sure that our life should be meaningful our youth is not wasted but we gathered meaningful and pleasant experiences which we could share with the younger generation and help them in not repeating the same. Youth is not only beautiful but could be meaningful when we act wise and nice.

About the Writer:



Garima Yadav 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.

Geo-scientific Perspective on Youth

-By K.N.Singh

Living beings throughout the world are governed by the universal law of ageing. The developmental stages of life are the biological process of human growth. The early period of youth is generally immature and inexperienced. The youth is characterized by vigour, high spirit, and imaginative thoughts.

The physical world consists of living and non-living organisms. The non-living organisms such as mountains, rivers, seas, etc, have growth patterns similar to living beings. However, we cannot assign an age to them. They are based on the history of the tectonic evolution of landforms.

The rivers develop from mountainous terrains of high ranges, denuded hills, or alluvial plains. The high ranges are often covered by glaciers and snow during winter. This frozen water melts during the summer months. The melted water sweeps down from the snow-capped hills in small streamlets. These streamlets join each other as they flow downwards and take the shape of rivers.

The rivers have been classified based on topographic features of landforms such as – youthful, mature and old rivers. The youthful rivers are restricted to high mountainous terrains. They can be compared to the youthful stage of human beings. There is a mythological story of “*Ganga Avtaran*” that tells about the descent of the sacred river Ganga on the Earth from the matted hair locks of Lord Shiva. The river is so powerful that if not restrained, it could have destroyed the Earth. Still, Shiva agreed to king Bhagirathi’s request of allowing Ganga to descend on the Earth’s alluvium plain and flow towards Gangasagar. It was done by splitting the Ganga into seven streams to calm it down and restrain its energy. The Hindu mythological stories were scripted much later than Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas for the common people. The story mentioned above is very much similar to the present-day geo-scientific findings of youthful rivers.

The youthful rivers descend on steep gradients to quickly flow downhill under the gravitational force. They flow on the bedrocks creating valleys and joining other tributaries. The deep erosive power develops deep gorges and canons through fluvial erosion. The flow-on hard and soft rock formations cause differential erosion whereby waterfalls are developed. The flowing river and waterfalls are a source of energy. This energy can be used to run watermills for grinding cereals, processing wool, textile, and running turbines of hydroelectric projects.

The impetuous, hasty and reckless youthful river has characteristics that are similar to human youth that has not learnt the optimum use of its potentials for personal gains and for helping

the societies. The youth during their school and college can engage in bullying. This greatly affects the well-being of societies. The youth that bully and is bullied, both faces serious behavioural problems like anger, anxiety, insecurity, unhappiness, loneliness, etc. The symptoms of low self-esteem are great hurdles in the achievement of academic excellence.

The luxury of having everything in life brings lethargy leading to various problems like obesity amongst youth. Addiction and bad habits are the main cause of destruction in life. One should try to overcome these hurdles. The lesson needs to be learned from the youthful rivers as to how to overcome problems. The lesser amount of water in the bedrock channels of the rivers is unable to move the boulders downhill and regulate the normal flow of water. As a result, the river channel gets blocked and this leads to stagnation. It is akin to obesity in human beings. The increasing water exerts more hydrostatic pressure to roll down boulders maintaining the usual flow.

In the poem 'The River' the poet Caroline Anne Bowles compares a river to impetuous youth:

“On you rush through rough and smooth;

Louder, faster, brawling, leaping.

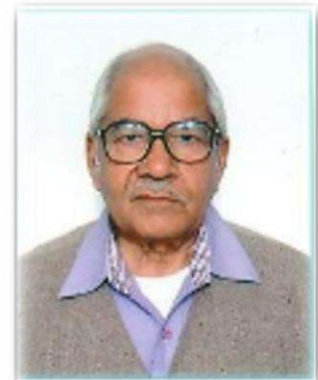
Over rocks, by rose-banks, sweeping.”

The youth are a great asset in the progress and development of the country. They need to imbibe silence and solitude from nature. The understanding of nature’s language develops thoughts, imagination, and the quality to distinguish between positive and negative feelings. It brings transformation of attitude, behaviour, and lifestyle. The aim of life should be to aspire to create a better world for everyone.

About the Writer:

K.N.Singh was born in a small village of Uttar Pradesh, in 1937. After completing I ntermediate Science from Wesley school in Azamgarh, he proceeded to Varanasi to pursue Masters’s Degree in Geology at Banaras Hindu University.

In 1961 he became a Lecturer at the Department of Geology and Geophysics in B.H.U. He left the teaching profession to become a Geologist in the Geological Survey of India in July 1964. He retired as the Director of the Petrology Division. He has written articles that have been published in the Gulf Daily News, and Khaleej Times of Bahrain and Dubai. He has also written the book-‘Geo-scientific Perspective of Samudramanathan’ which was published in 2020.



The Beach Angel

-By Layla Mascarenhas

April. It was a somber month. Mother had just passed away after a valiant struggle with galloping cancer. The huge house was empty, save for two silent people. Dad slipped into quiet depression as he fussed around empty belongings and memories of his vivacious, beautiful, young wife. His 19-year-old daughter kept up a bold front, bustling around and trying to keep up a semblance of normalcy. There was so much to be done with final year studies, shopping and cleaning. The surly cook came irregularly, but she came. There was edible food.



- *Picture credit: Stanley Pereira*

The neighbours were aware of what was going on at our house. Our colony had been built by my dad, and we knew everyone right from the day of the tiling of their future homes. The next-door neighbours had pink tiles in one bathroom, and blue in the other. There was a warm community spirit which everybody in the colony shared. Everyone had loved mother. She was so charming. Her unique bimbli jam was shared with all, homegrown papayas and other fruit had reached most of the

neighbourhood. And of course, all had heard her singing. The house had been full of music, every evening. Happy songs, laughter: Life.

She had wrestled with death, determined to live to look after her family. But the illness won. The kind neighbours felt sorry for me. “Let’s go swimming to Bogmalo beach early in the mornings,” they offered, “It will help to cheer you up.” Bogmalo beach is a small beach off the port town of Vasco-da-Gama, Goa. A towering five-star hotel flanked the left side of the small cove, and a few beach shacks were sprinkled on the beachfront, just above the high-tide level. An early morning swim was a good idea.

Swimming in the shallow waters opposite Joet’s Bar and Restaurant was fun. No one really knew how to swim. The children and I splashed around the fresh, cool waters and let the sea water invigorate us. The rushing waves knocked us flat and sand streamed over our prone bodies. Everyone was doing their own thing. The two smallies were splashing water on each other, while I tried to float on the waves, swallowing some water as the outgoing tides knocked me off my feet again and again.

A week went by. The daily swims were doing me good. Now there was more energy and enthusiasm for the routine chores. Blessed with beautiful beaches all around, learning to swim has, surprisingly, never been a priority in our families.

We packed our towels, as usual, and drove to the beach. Engrossed in the action of the waves, I ventured a little further into the water. Water covered my waist. All of a sudden, I realized that the currents were stronger than me. Standing rooted to the spot, I turned around to face them. They were just a couple of meters away from me. Using all my strength, I realized I couldn’t take even a step forward. There was a strong current around my ankles and calves. I considered trying to float and swim forward. But, with no real swimming skills, this would be a risky chance... What if the waves carried me further away from the shore? This spot was close enough for rescue, so I stood firm.

“I’m stuck, I can’t come back!” I shouted. My neighbour, splashed towards me and stretched out his hand. Grabbing it, I pulled hard with desperation. “Don’t pull!” he shouted hoarsely, “We will both die!” He made sense. The currents were milling around where I was standing, not where he was standing. Blessed with a good dose of common sense, I let go of his hand and let him tug my hand. He tugged and tugged. It was futile. Then, all of a sudden... WOOSH! With the combined efforts of my full strength, and all his strength, I finally managed to lurch out of the underwater current, and slosh into safe waters. The distance covered was less than two meters.

“Thank, God!” exclaimed his wife, “How could we have taken your dead body home to your father!” Two deaths in the same month! It would have been too hard for him to handle. God had mercy on him, and sent an angel to rescue me. Was it mother?

About the Writer:



Layla Mascarenhas teaches courses on Shakespeare Plays, and The Graphic Novel for M.A. students at *Goa University*. She has taught English at *V.M. Salgaocar College of Law*, Panjim, Goa and Music and Psychology at BITS Pilani, K. K. Birla Goa Campus, Zuarinagar, Goa. Her doctoral research was on “Different Worldviews in Children’s Literature.” She has published pieces of short fiction and poetry in *Muse*

India and *Lapis Lazuli*. She lives with her family in a quiet village in Goa. She can be reached at layla@unigoa.ac.in .

Youth – A Conundrum

-By Madhu Kapoor

Rhetorica has invited us to contribute our thoughts on this energizing topic which in my mind is always a conundrum for young people. Why do I say this or look at it this way?

I'll begin with Socrates:

“The children now love luxury, they have bad manners, contempt for authority; they show disrespect for elders and love chatter in place of exercise. Children are now tyrants, not the servants of their households. They no longer rise when elders enter the room. They contradict their parents, chatter before company, gobble up dainties at the table, cross their legs, and tyrannize their teachers..”

Plato too...

“... what is happening to our own young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them? “

Socrates and Plato are both legendary teachers of ‘The Lyceum’ and ‘The Academy’ whom we revere and study to this day, and when I had first shared these quotes with my father we both had smiled that he was not alone in his laments!

Their comments seem rather harsh and blunt, especially in today’s times but the conundrum is that young people always fret under authority. Their enthusiasm can lead them to test the patience of authority or symbols of the theme. So Socrates and Plato's comments are rueful observations of wise men which will be in today’s parlance ‘a generation thing...’ and almost dismissed.

But the question remains - Why is the collective energy of youth either feared or revered? Can the young people be curbed? Their enthusiasm, their joy, their hope, and their optimism in the future is what will take the whole human race forward.

At the time of writing, the Sun is already in Uttarayan and this topic is energizing on the eve of Basant Panchami, the day Goddess Saraswati is invoked. The Indian calendar looks forward to Spring and another year of hope and rebirth. Winter is almost behind us – the Shelleyian rhetorical question “...if Winter comes, can Spring be far behind? “expresses the eternal cycle of hope and renewal in nature and the human spirit.

We, who have lived through these cycles, are overjoyed to see the confidence of the youth, so energetic, full of hope, enjoying their achievements, unafraid of meeting any challenges, and yet striving for more.

The last two years have been particularly difficult and challenging for all of us in the global pandemic. Yet, our youth has shown the resilience to adapt to new challenges either through braving personal loss, or other unfortunate circumstances. They have come forward and helped society with medical necessities, oxygen cylinders, even ferrying the deceased in some cases! Some have had to leap into new technologies without gestation and yet others steered towards the path of innovation - to create more solutions for human problems. The spirit displayed was always strong and courageous.

In fact, courage is what defines today's youth, enormous courage to surmount any difficulty, and I'm always emotionally affected seeing the young widows of the martyred soldiers take a vow to serve the nation, or seeing the courageous victors in the Paralympics, or witnessing the fighting spirit of the athletes in arenas of any sport – hockey, cricket, shooting, archery, table tennis.

In our own Academia - the young who are burning the midnight oil in their quest for knowledge - is the stuff that dreams are made up of. For they have only one goal- to excel and excel!

Watching such dedication and hard work and courageous resilience sends our spirits rising and hearts soaring, for we who are spending the winter of our lives are now in calm solace (not discontent) because the future is in the hands of the young, talented, and capable people of today.

About the Writer:



Madhu Kapoor, an alumna of Lucknow University is a retired Associate Professor and Head of the Department of English in Vidyant Hindu P.G.College, Lucknow. She has previously taught in Vasanta College for Women at Rajghat, Varanasi, and before that briefly at St. James School, Calcutta. Reading widely has been the mainstay of her life and reconnecting with the literary fraternity and youth through 'Rhetorica Quarterly' has been a pleasure for her.

A Spring of Life

-By Riya Arora

Youth is the storehouse of potential. A time in life where nothing seems insurmountable or unachievable. In other words, youth is the spring of life. Compare it to a birdling, who has just learned to fly. To it, the whole world is a stage, and it is the sole performer. The risks are innumerable; the determination and resilience, hell-bent. Emotions express themselves with full vigour in this phase of life and display an eclecticism never seen before. The feet are strong enough to withstand any external forces at play, but the ground beneath seems to slip. There is so much to do, so much to explore, so much to achieve. Memories and values of childhood keep asking for attention, but adulthood demands seriousness. What is right, what isn't is a nagging in the mind of the youth. They have a world of their own, where rough and tumble is the principle of the land. This time of life, if spent right, becomes the source of merriment in one's golden days; if not, brings a stream of regret that is here to stay.

The youth believes in the mantra of having it all. All they know is that whatever they'll put their mind and heart into, is bound to give results; good, desired results. Optimism runs through their veins. One learns to shoulder responsibilities and not to sulk as a result of it. It makes us realize that we are on this Earth to serve a purpose, however big or small. Youth breathes freedom. The choice is of paragon importance to it.

It is a period of both learning and practicing simultaneously. Youth is also the time when one's concept of oneself, is gradually crystallizing. What it feels like to be an individual, an independent entity, is realized. One develops his/her perception of the world, unsullied by what others propose. A set of concepts, unique to the individual!

The inquisitiveness we had as a child, comes out to play once again, only this time, equipped with proper clear expressions. The 'Why' is the driver of most of our decisions. One learns to come out of one's comfort zones, meeting and handling newer kinds of people, situations, each day.

Youth is like a river. Originating from childhood, moving its course to adulthood. At some places, the stones and impediments may make its passage difficult and the pressure may get

unbearable, but being in constant motion will ensure that the mind is clear and intentions pure. Never stopping, never looking back. On the brighter side, it is blessed by new scenery, a new opportunity, as it moves ahead. The current of hope is what keeps it going. Having taken such a long journey successfully, crossing through every hurdle, witnessing the bountiful gifts of nature, handling pressure but never giving up; when it ultimately reaches its destination i.e. the ocean of adulthood, it transforms into a mighty entity, capable, worthy, and ready for the next journey that awaits, the next phase that calls.

About the Writer:



Riya Arora is a B.A. student at Lucknow University. A history-enthusiast, she is eager to learn about the past, especially architecture. Her imagination is sparked by art and culture. She confides in words. When in doubt, she likes to write. She believes that reading is a natural precursor and successor to writing, and so, she reads.

Examining Gen Z through the Lens Of Gen X

-By Sangeeta Kotwal

Gen Z, let me tell you, is a generation, which has made its debut on Instagram and Facebook, much before it appeared among the lesser mortals of the real world. A generation that learned to pout for a selfie before it could talk or walk. A generation which was not born with a proverbial silver (or gold) spoon in their mouths but, you guessed right, a dubious invention called the 'smart phone' in their hands. Alas! From then on, this little monster became their ever-loyal friend, philosopher, and guide. Now just sit and observe a young member of this generation – nonchalant expression, eyes glued on the mobile screen, earphones or AirPods in place, legs encased in torn (or is the term 'distressed'? Whatever it is, it certainly distresses me. Who wears torn clothes?) jeans, and hands furiously typing. Got the picture? Well with all that typing you would assume that they have mastered the language they are writing in, namely, English. I can only say LOL or ROFL to that fanciful assumption. No, the youth of this generation do not believe in wasting language (being minimalist is in fashion after all!). They text in abbreviations and emojis. Who cares, if their way of communication fazes you, it's legit, dude.

To enlighten you further, I am a member of Gen X, who is expected to handle them in and out of the classroom. So just imagine, a classroom, oops, laptop, with names and icons blinking on the screen and me sitting in my best top attire in front of it. On the screen, it shows the number of students ranging between 10-70 (depending on their mood and convenience) but you are privy to the voices and faces of only a selected few. Sometimes you wonder, if there is a roster system working behind the screens – something like on Monday xyz will respond and on Tuesday abc and so on, while the rest are dancing their blues away. At that particular moment, you wish that you had a magic wand to blow the dreaded Corona Virus away from this planet and restore normalcy. Does that mean offline classes? You bet, it does. After all, in a physical classroom, we can at least see the grumpy faces of those students who condescend to appear there. The poor souls! They know that in the first few minutes, you will rave and rant about discipline, morals, and ethics, while they pretend

to be ashamed on behalf of their absconding classmates who may be treating themselves to lip-smacking momos in the canteen at that very moment. I'm sure when they open *Macbeth* after this harangue, they have visions of their teacher being someone like the three witches with only dire predictions for their future.

So, the question is, why do students come to colleges or universities? My guess is, mostly to enjoy campus life, to socialize, (otherwise how is it that the campuses draw most crowds on the days of parties and events), and most of all, to post selfies with their friends on Instagram. Now, our job is to lure them to classrooms, with our charm (highly unlikely!) with our teaching skills (who's interested?) or simply by waving the trump card of short attendance. The last works, but only up to an extent. Sometimes I truly wish that I were the Pied Piper who could draw them out of their abodes and lead them, no, no, not to the Gomti River (what sacrilege!) but to their respective classrooms. Is God listening?

The last thirty years, (almost the length of my service) have witnessed a revolutionary change as far as the education of youth is concerned. We have evolved from over-crowded classrooms to nearly empty ones, from spending long hours in libraries in search of relevant matter to PDF of books at the click of a button, from actual learning to just amassing of information, from obedient students and obliged parents to brash students with looks that say 'Do what you will, I'm not going to change' and their belligerent parents. And as for me, I, the cocksure optimist, have almost turned into a fatalist. But believe me, as a human being and a teacher (hope there is no contradiction). I, too "turn and burn", and please do not underestimate my concern.

I do feel truly perturbed when I see the systems (or is it minds) of these young mobilators (my term for these 24x7 mobile operators) balking at the overflow of information which they sadly interpret as knowledge. The adage, that books are your best companions, seems to bite the dust as they have been replaced by a six-inch gadget. Letters and greeting cards have become passe. The aesthetics of life has been replaced by everything mundane and craggy. But it is not the fault of Gen Z, is it? They were not the ones who invented it. They only made the best possible use of it. Still, this misuse of their precious time and abuse of language, makes me seriously wish that I would turn into Batman (gender notwithstanding) one night, so that I can whisk away all their mobiles, and irradiate them forever from this universe. Oh! to be back again to those days of yore, of paper and pen and the bright eager eyes of those young faces who looked at you with reverence and wonder!

To be honest, I do believe that we of Gen X must step up our game on an unfamiliar and ever-evolving pitch (digital, basically). And we have done exactly that. The pandemic threw a

challenge our way and we met head-on, sailed through the storm, and are still afloat. Shall I share a secret with you? Technology, which some of us avoided like plague in the past has been quite handy in bridging the gap between them (Gen Z), and us (Gen X). Despite hiccups and unprecedented odds, we reached out through various digital platforms – adapted, learned, and taught. It was a role reversal of sorts, where Gen Z was in the seat of instructor and we were the ones who looked up to them and envied their expertise, at times. So you, of Gen Z, don't give up on young oldies like me yet, we still happen to have a few tricks up our sleeves. We have crossed that impasse that stopped us from being a technocrat like you. Now there's no stopping us. The next you know, the terms 'Gen X', 'Gen Y', 'Gen Z', may not apply anymore.

About the Writer:



Dr. Sangeeta Kotwal is an Associate Professor and the Head of the Department of English, Navyug Girls P.G. College. She is an avid reader and has published various research papers in prestigious journals. She visited Australia as a member of the Group Study Exchange Programme sponsored by Rotary International. Recently, she was the organizing secretary of a multi-disciplinary international conference. She is also the Co-editor of '*Navansh*', a multi-disciplinary research journal.

KALANK on May 7, 2019: An Experience

-By Susheel Kumar Sharma

How should one be celebrating the arrival of May 7, 2019? The question may sound strange to some but it is relevant for a fool like me who has always been interested in what people generally describe as “minor, irrelevant, unimportant, petty and run-of-the-mill” and who questions everything in a routine. Let us not forget life is made of simple and ordinary things only. This was a peculiar day in this year as on this day the holy month of Ramadan began and, on this day, Parshuram Jayanti, Akshya Tritya, and wedding anniversaries of some (according to the Christian era) also fell -- a rare phenomenon. In my childhood days, we knew Eid as the day on which uncooked rice and bura (pestled sugar) were exchanged with some Muslim families in my neighbourhood but not about Ramadan. I had not heard of Parshuram Jayanti at all till I was almost 45. I came to know of his association with Brahmins recently as I was not aware of his upholding the cause of the Brahmins alone.

As regards Akshya Tritya, it used to be a minor festival during my childhood days. It was particularly looked forward to by the parents of marriageable boys and girls who were not getting any auspicious dates for their marriages. Since in my family there was no person of that age perhaps the festival was ignored and hence there were no rituals performed on this day. Buying some gold or golden ornaments was out of question as I come from a poor (not poverty-stricken) family – after all the government took about one-third of my father’s income in the name of various taxes and another one third was reserved for books and stationery. In those days diamonds were purchased by very wealthy persons only, that too on the advice of some astrologer. I remember one of my cousins telling me that a diamond could either make or ruin a person therefore it should be kept under one’s pillow at least for a night before being purchased and worn. In a small town where I had been raised hardly anybody was ever seen wearing a diamond. Who would you blame for my ignorance about Akshya Tritya in such circumstances? How would I know the rituals of the festival! I had seen my father keeping his books near his pillow, not diamonds or gold and we imitated him literally later. Yes, we would be given money to buy books, not any books but good books only.

If April of England could be a soothing month for Chaucer but a cruel one for Eliot, May can also be soothing for some Indians but cruel for others. Not only in Allahabad but in the entire north

India nature is very cruel during May as the day temperature shoots to around 47-49⁰C and the night temperature is near about 32⁰C. Water tables get depleted. However, in this month marriages are also held so it keeps a large number of people busy in different kinds of activities like attending parties, getting their houses redone and arranging for the music-bands, dancers, lights, pundits and cooks, etc for the wedding ceremonies. There are some who are looking for this month to arrive more frequently than it does as it provides them with the much-needed wages. In my childhood days, results were declared on 20th May followed by long summer vacation. So, some of us looked for this month for the results and some for the vacations. Things are different now as the children have to attend school even after getting their results.

Some of the photographs posted on Facebook on this day indicate that the people remember this month also for celebrating their marriage anniversaries. I do not remember my parents ever celebrating theirs. But they did not celebrate any other day in their lives either. My Facebook wall wanted to share the news of my marriage on this date thirty-four years ago with all my virtual friends. I am sure my sister (DS) must have got a similar video from Facebook managers about her marriage on this very date in 1989. But, not only I ignored the message even she ignored this message conveniently. Is it simply because I do not have a proper photograph of the occasion or I just didn't care or I didn't like the video sent by Facebook? Did I care to know my wife's opinion on the issue?

Perhaps I didn't want to share this piece of private information with others/ virtual friends or I did not want this day to remember at all. There is a common refrain in the experiences of the married couples, particularly in their jokes: "On that day I became his/her permanent captive." Who would like to remember the day on which their captivity started? Most of the people who had posted pictures of their marriage anniversaries had spent decades together. So, it dawned upon me that they had started enjoying the loss of their freedom and subsequently their slavery slowly. After all, when slavery was abolished in 1833 in England there were several slaves who did not want to desert their masters. There are some others who use another metaphor – old wine intoxicates slowly. Was this not the case with me? I got married thirty-four years ago, a fairly long period by normal standards. Why then did I not post a photo to make the day of the beginning of my captivity public?

I would like to remind and assure all those who have even an inkling of doubt about my faithfulness that most of the Indian couples behave like faithful pets who can't even think of surviving in any other relationship – I am no exception to this syndrome. And I am sure this holds true of my wife as well.

I could hide my wedding anniversary from my friends but what about my wife. I found her more cheerful than usual this morning when I accosted her after leaving my bed. She has always been an early riser as she goes to bed early – she has never questioned the dictum of "early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise"; unlike a feminist, she has not questioned the word

“man” in it. On the other hand, I am a man of spoilt habits – late goer to bed and a late riser. I have not been able to amend my ways during all these years and we did not quarrel over this issue. I sometimes wonder if this could have been a cause of divorce in the west and some of the fast-turning western families in India. The dictum cited above is true as my wife is wealthier than I am though she has not undertaken a job, unlike many educated women. I continue to be the lone wage earner in my family though she has accumulated more degrees than I have. She, in fact, is more qualified than I am as she has twelve books to her credit while I have just four. I am sure it has something to do with her leaving the bed early.

In the initial days of my marriage, I noticed that my father who is also an early riser suddenly started having morning tea. An inquiry into this transformation revealed that my wife will first seek his blessings by touching his feet and then offer him a cup of tea. My father was perhaps overwhelmed by this gesture and started relishing this morning beverage. However, I was never given this cup of tea as by the time I woke up it was already time for breakfast for others.

Coming back to 7th May 2019, I found my wife fidgeting with her mobile phone and then congratulating my younger sister on her wedding anniversary. Then, she turned to me. Smilingly she asked, how do we celebrate the day? Instead of answering her I dialled the number of my father and after exchanging pleasantries I suggested to him to bless DS as it was her wedding anniversary day, as usual, he did not recollect that I too needed to be blessed so I spoke plainly and sought his blessings. In the meanwhile, the news of the arrival of 7th May spread like wildfire in the WhatsApp family group; messages started pouring in; even those who were new in the family came to know about the day's importance.

There was a call from my younger brother (AKS) staying in Gurgaon. He congratulated me and wished me; then was the turn of his wife (DAS). DAS was very straightforward in asking about how we planned to spend the day, where were we going for dinner or outing, what new dresses were to be gifted. Had I simply said that it was like any other day in my life she would not have believed me. But I had to be plain and simple though I did want to appear rustic in my ways. I told her it being a Tuesday, dining outside was out of the question as I was more loyal to Hanumanji. Outing was out of the question as it was not only very hot outside but I had also given time to some of my students to help them prepare for the impending examinations. She told me that she already had been to the temple on the auspicious day of Akshya Tritiya though I said I had just left my bed. My wife told her that the Tanishq showroom would be very crowded so she would not go there. As usual soon after I got busy in checking and answering my emails and got late for my office. The impatient students started taking my location and asking about my arrival time in the Dept. Driving my car very rashly I tried to reach there as fast as I could. Was it simply to meet my students or was it trying to escape from 7th May?

After about an hour of my reaching the office, my younger brother's wife took my location and asked if I was busy in a class. I said it was not a formal class but I was with many students whose problems I was trying to solve simultaneously and therefore was quite busy. She snapped the call immediately, asking me to return her call as soon as I was free. When I tried to contact her, the line was busy. After about half an hour my wife's call was there saying AKS had booked our tickets for a film and sent them on my WhatsApp. I should therefore reach home in time. I whined saying that so much work had been pending, a student's thesis needed urgent correction, three reports were to be submitted, assignments and answer-books had not been evaluated, the students needed some exam related help, and a senior colleague had been calling me from a different department and it was difficult to spare time on such frivolity. She quietly said it was not her doing, the tickets had been booked and the amount had been paid. I said, "Let the bookings go waste. Or you go all alone." She simply said, "You think and decide." I wasn't mentally prepared to go to a movie so frequently. Only three months back I had taken her to MANIKARNIKA. But it was she who had spilled the beans by telling AS that she wanted to see KESARI, a movie but it was not anywhere around. She was suggested to watch the currently being screened KALANK. What sort of name was this? My father had once seen me reading Sarat Chandra Chatterjee's CHARITRAHEEN. He reprimanded me saying I could turn one as a man is shaped by the company he keeps and the books he reads.

My mind was wandering if I refused to take her to the PVR I would be repeating May 1983 when I had left home to resume my duties on 8th May itself as it was the last working day of the session. This had been unintended on my part and was planned by gods for us. However, I had to listen to various kinds of comments from AS for this unintended and circumstantial lapse on my part. Who could have predicted Bhopal Gas Tragedy and the consequent change in the summer vacation dates when all this was being planned by the parents?

Saying sorry to some of my students and colleagues I begged for an early leave and reached home around quarter to four, the show was at 4.05 pm. My wife was already ready as if she knew that I would arrive in time. Perhaps she understood that I would not let the money go waste at the cost of time. Or, perhaps she knew about my fandom of the stars in the film? We somehow negotiated the traffic and reached the PVR in time. Since it was our second visit there, we were not strangers to lifts and escalators and the location. The hall had more audience than it had during our last visit. Everybody willingly stood up at the time for the national anthem but for two gentlemen in my next row; they appeared to be from Muzaffarnagar from their accent; they were cowed down by the peer pressure and stood up willy-nilly as appeared from their postures. The film moves very slowly up to the interval. We did not intend to buy anything during the intermission so did not leave our seats. AS produced a packet of petha out of nowhere. So, we could sweeten our day.

The film does not have a big roll of stars but they are big by the past and the present standards. Sonakshi's role is once again limited to being a Barbie doll but AS maintains that she is playing the role of a person suffering from cancer and does justice to it. Madhuri Dixit, the finest dancing diva in Bollywood, with her big smile, is there though age has started reflecting on her face. AS immediately interrupted me saying her role was such. What troubled me was missing her smile -- her serious role did not give her an opportunity to spread her lips. Why did she accept it? The only thing we agreed upon is the fine display of emotion that Madhuri brings to her face in the song "tabah ho gaye". Her sensitivity as a teacher is something to be noticed and emulated not only by musicians but also by others. Sanjay Dutt also appeared much older than his age and was unimpressive. AS defended him too. Alia proves her merit as a dancer to challenge Madhuri in the coming years. No wonder she has won accolades from one and all for her dancing skills, from my AS too. But for an old fan like me, everybody will vouch for Alia. She has to work more on the bhav paksh (emotion) of kathak. There is a difference of opinion about the theme of the film also. AS says it is about partition on which I had been invited to speak two years back in Poland. But, according to me, the theme of the film is the fall out of illicit love. I was saying Lucknow style of Kathak was used in the film, AS maintained it was experimental Kathak. Madhuri's Chakkardar tihai did not have a sam in her last and only dance in the film. I attributed it to editing while Aparna maintained it was perfect. To me, the item song 'Aira Gaira 'is just uncalled for (vahiyat) but to AS it is an essential requirement of a popular film. Varun did not appeal to me but appealed to AS. The communal violence in the film attributed to a mix of personal and industrial interests is a factual error according to me but she maintains it is a fictionalized history and therefore, acceptable. To me, the film is an example of bad entertainment, to AS entertainment is just entertainment. Was it owing to my initial reluctance in going to the movie that hindered my relishing (ras paripak) the movie?

How can two persons holding such contradictory views stay together? But we had been travelling all these years together whining, grumbling, tolerating each other! (Who says intolerance is increasing in India!) How would a feminist person behave/react in such a circumstance? Is travelling together holding different points of view a KALANK on us?

As I was just lost in such thoughts approaching home AS broke the silence saying she wanted to buy a nose ring as hers was almost broken. I switched the lane and changed the gear to take a different turn on the road. Did I have any choice in the matter? It being Akshya Tritiya the shops were still abuzz but the jewellers were not selling smaller items. She, therefore, settled for a finger-ring.

The last celebration of the day was in the form of Happy Ramadan wishes for my Muslim friends on my Facebook wall. Did I do justice to the day and spend my day well, pondering over such questions I retired to bed. Why did I not enjoy the film and AS did? was the question in my dreams.

About the Writer:

Dr. Susheel Kumar Sharma has been serving the University of Allahabad, as a Professor of English since 2003. He has published five books, fifty- two research papers, and twenty-nine book reviews. Some of his poems have been published in Canada, France, Ireland, Scotland, the UK, and the USA. Prof. Sharma's current interests include Cultural Studies, English Language Teaching, Comparative Literature, English Studies in India, and Contemporary Theory.

Liminal Spaces: Hopes, Despair and Things In-between

-By Tathagata Banerjee

Around sixteen percent of the global population falls under the age group of fifteen to twenty-five years, making the number of individuals going through their youth approximately being somewhere around 1.2 billion. That's a big number, especially given how heterogeneous this group remains based on sociopolitical, topographic, or religious reasons. In his magnificent 'Animal Farm', Orwell sardonically observed how everyone is indeed equal - some being a little bit more equal than the others. In the current post-modernist world where consumerist capitalism has turned out to be the new God, one has to wonder if the Orwellian observation is fitting for the youths of this day and age. As much as society had championed this delicate age of standing on the threshold that marks the barrier between childhood and adulthood - the young generation has to carry its albatross in the form of a collapsing economy facing newfound threats amidst a raging pandemic, or the rise of divisive reductionist sectarianist mentalities all over the globe that has led to violence. Or like the inimitable Greta Thunberg - the teenage climate activist who dared to ask the powerful people of the world how dare they jeopardize the future of this generation - the youth of the 21st Century has to deal with the reckoning of looming threats of Global Warming, unmistakably caused by the overall callous generational apathy of humankind to the Nature.

Hope, after the demons locked away in the mythical Pandora's Box got out into the world, was the element that helped to take on the evils, to march on towards a better tomorrow. Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore had called on to the youth to strike the half-dead mentality of the conformist society back to life. A young Bob Dylan with a guitar in his hand and a cigarette loosely hanging on his lips became a symbol of non-conformist ideology that fights back against iron fists of oppression - oppression of any and every kind. With a new generation, there comes a new epoch of new thoughts. All over the world, like the quasi-celestial West Wind to which Shelley wrote a love letter in the form of an ode, the young generation had been vocal to tear down old, set, rigid norms and pushing the envelope further and further. Antiquated hetero-normative dialectics

and binary, the male-centered social discourse had been rejected by the new generation, as it should have been a long time ago. Gender equality or rights of the LGBTQIA+ community had been at the forefront of this generation's plan of action. All over the world, young people have come together in the time of the COVID crisis to collectively lend a helping hand to the less fortunate. This generation fights for animal rescue, for human rights, wins Oscars and Olympic medals.

The youth of today also carry the burden of generational trauma, often a curse handed down by the previous generation. Mental health as a concept has come to be at the forefront of the modern discourse, and it had shed light on the darker impulses of human civilization. Parental abuse of the children - often coming from the adults considering their offspring as an extension of their ego - had caused deep scars on the young generation's psychosis. A scar that leaves a long-lasting impression that impacts them as they grow up, and as they age. 'Hurt people, hurt people' - goes the saying, and this toxic cycle of maltreatment had continued to tear through the fabric of society, silently. The family had always been seen as an anthropological construct when in reality it remains a deeply sociopolitical institution. This unnecessary silence regarding the struggles that a young person faces inside of this very Pinteresque home space indeed leads to repressed trauma and stress disorders. Suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among people aged 10-24. That should make everyone stop and reevaluate wherein the march of evolution and progress, did humankind take the wrong turn.

The youth are indeed the harbingers of change. But they are needed to be protected, they are needed to be heard a lot more. The Foucaultian Panopticon of power dynamics in the modern world that thrives on the Othering and creating echo chambers, needs to be shattered. The young generation has hopes, dreams; they are sensitive, impulsive, angry. They would make the right decisions and would commit mistakes. Nevertheless, they should be let in the conversations regarding nation-building. Otherwise, there remains the risk of being stuck in a limbo that Matthew Arnold talked about - being stuck between a world that is dead, and one which is too afraid to be born. People can become better only if they dare to do so.

About the Writer:

Tathagata Banerjee is a novelist, performing poet, essayist, book reviewer, literary paper writer, and author of the books 'Insomniac Soliloquies' and 'Postcard From Memory Lane'.



Winner of SHP 2021 Nationwide Writing Event (India), the author has also received the BookLeaf 21st Century Emily Dickinson Award. 'Much Ado About Something With Tathagata', Banerjee's literary podcast on Shakespeare had found an international audience. His work on Faith and Spirituality had been chosen as the top-ranking entry in a global event organized by the Weekly Ramblings, USA. The trilingual author had contributed to more than fifteen anthologies.

POETRY

"To find joy in work is
to discover the fountain
of youth"

- Pearl S. Buck

Laughing Boy

-By Aftab Husain

It makes me laugh
to look at the pigeon
that closes its eyes
and believes
the cat is not there

It makes me laugh
to hear of the patient
who complains of the night-long groaning
of his fellow patient
while groaning himself the whole night

It makes me laugh
to watch the simpletons
who believe that
by stopping the hands of the clock
time itself can be stopped

It makes me laugh
to think about those cocks
who are sure
that if they don't crow
the day will never break

It makes me laugh
to learn of people
who befriend the camel men

yet build their doors
too low

It makes me laugh
to consult physicians
who suppose
that they have a remedy
for each and every malady
and themselves end up dying
from their own prescriptions

It makes me laugh
to realise
that though I live in such a world
I can still afford to laugh

About the Poet:



Aftab Husain (Pakistan/Austria) is an eminent name in modern Ghazal poetry from South Asia. In addition to Urdu, he writes in English both poems and literary essays and translates from German to Urdu and vice versa. He earned his doctorate in comparative literature from Vienna University where he teaches South Asian Literature and Culture. He has five collections of poetry and three books of translations – from German into Urdu – to his credit. He was a fellow of Heinrich-Böll-Haus, Germany as well as the ‘Writer in Exile’ of Vienna City. His poems have been translated into many languages. He is a member of Austrian PEN, IG Autorinnen Autoren and Österreichische Gesellschaft für Literatur, among others. Husain edits a bilingual (English/German) magazine for migrant literature: Words & Worlds.

Your Youth

-By Ameesha Srivastava

you're not the marks on your face
but all the dreams that you chase.
you're not the inches on your waist
but all that you build and create.
you're all the books that you've read,
and all the smiles that you spread.
you're all the sunsets that you've seen
with your eyes as they gleam.
you're all the songs that you sing
and the places that you've been.
you're the art that you make
and the risks that you take.
you're all the good, fair and true
even if they misconstrue.
you can change all that's not right
you can't be stopped, try as they might.
so, make mistakes and also learn
but don't forget to have your fun.
you are the *youth* of the time,

in your moment, in your prime.

let go not a day of *your youth*,

care not a straw and speak your truth.

the *youth* cannot be watered down

the rightful shall wear the righteous crown.

tomorrow's sun belongs to you

and you will rise and bloom, anew.

About the Poet:



Ameesha Srivastava is pursuing her master's degree in English from the Department of English, University of Lucknow. Her love for music and cinema is astronomically beyond proportions. She has been creating poetry and songs since the age of ten. With guitar strings calluses on her fingertips and smell of books, old and new, she watches the line between reality and phantasm, blur. She believes in romanticizing her life every day and living immediately.

Youth Will Rise

-By Ashhar Saleem Ansari

Come on! Rise up from your crimson bed,
You little beautiful, florescent and innocent flower,
And hold that sword, which slays deep skies,
And chaff those dark clouds and blow triumph.

Yes, of course, there lies lots of hurdles,
You have to bear many unbearable burdens,
But only that's how it will enter when you bend,
Towards that light which turns you diamond.

Sometime you will surround by the valleys of darkness,
You have to travel from the words, which carries harshness,
You will be hitted, blooded, scolded and molded,
Take all them in you, they will turn you golden.

When you left broken in the midst of buffons,
Like a fallen flower, which newly sprunged in june,

Then hold the spiritual hand of your Lord,

And win every battle and win every heart.

About the Poet:



Ashhar Saleem Ansari is an aspiring writer, pursuing post-graduation in English Literature from the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University. He has keen interest in poetry writing. He is also fond of translation and has translated “Urashima Taro- A Japanese Folktale”.

On Watching a Millennial Couple, Beach Resort 2021

-By Basudhara Roy

They are young, not married

and too much in love

to believe that the universe

can have other plans.

On their skins, the patina of confidence

brims like the greenness of new leaves.

They want to do everything together,

from waking to travel to prayer,

convinced that togetherness is a language

they have just discovered -

two enterprising Columbuses

in a brave new world.

Their risks are anticipated

and insured against. Lust can lead

to responsibility, covetousness to

financial crunch, unwise destinations

to poor connectivity, plaid friends

to unneeded advice and boredom.

I try to evaluate this simple

logic of happiness - get what you want.

It seems neat enough. Not, however,

infallible. There will be wanted things

not given, given things not wanted,

things needed but neither wanted nor given.

I sigh as I think how summer's thirst

will follow spring's bountiful gaiety

and precede autumn's satiety with colour.

To this eternal cycle, life will give in,

between such waxing and waning

its lyric sung in a myriad tunes.

Ghazal

The desert writes rebellion in a tongue of rain,
the manifesto of its syntax an overhung of rain.

In one in whose pores like lichen loss grows,
you will scarcely find a grief unsprung of rain.

The Shadja is exiled from my *gharana* of notes,
your sitar drapes in mourning, unstrung of rain.

Grieve not this mirror is silent in the dark,
it will laugh in day's glorious upflung of rain.

The world needs an incantation to tame its hate,
baptize the flaming heart in a diphthong of rain.

History's desire will be mildewed with memory
make stormy love to it in faith's young of rain.

About the Poet:



Basudhara Roy teaches English at Karim City College affiliated to Kolhan University, Chaibasa. Her latest work is featured in LiveWire, The Woman Inc., Madras Courier, Lucy Writers Platform, Berfrois, The Aleph Review and Yearbook of Indian English Poetry 2020-21, among others. She is the author of two collections of poems. Her third collection *Inhabiting* is forthcoming this year. She lives, rebels, writes and reviews from Jamshedpur, Jharkhand, India.

Youth Isn't Synonymous to a Blooming Rose

-By Dibyashri Banerjee

Youth isn't synonymous to a blooming rose,
blooming amidst its thorns,
enchanted, enticing the passers- by,
nor is it about the tender passions of the heart,
of experiencing forbidden pleasures
of daydreaming,
of criticizing the double standards
of an imitating society.
But it is the dawn of relearning and formulating
one's own notions,
questioning with the childlike innocence
of our former strangulated selves,
learning to breathe amidst the stifling values of an instant-gratification seeking society,
learning to think after one has forgotten the prevalent mores,
learning to be hungry for what strengthens the soul,
learning to be stable amidst the tempests of life,
learning to completely surrender and fall in love
with the game of life.

About the Poet:



Dibyashri Banerjee 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 their mental barriers.

Youth Time

-By Gopal Lahiri

Youth is a nice blend of pain and hope,
no fear in itself.

It's hard to shake the urge to make
the unfamiliar familiar,
to make sense out of no sense.

You don't need to be that different,
be simple and that can be more.

Live it to the full, keep your spirit high
explore the present,
take both black and white,
and go together.

Life is a long journey, burn the light of the truth.

My Youth

Evening mirror now only sketches of our youth.
those days have fury, have anger, rage,
setting out on a new journey those sparkling minds
bubbling over, relived old to new,
perhaps there was no end.

Teachers were always with us for star-grazing.

an earth draped in green, a stream flowed with ease,
a world washed clean,
days and nights were so caring, bowing to divination,
resembled something so normal.

We change, we mutate,
dreams have now dark layers, foggy and blurred,
deep blue hush of the present world was high
stepping on the streets and alleys.
A destination that would never be reached.

Now youth has left us, gone outside of time,
We are not unified in our beliefs anymore.

Grandpa's Wheelchair

A black ant crawled onto his hand
but still those warm touches made
me shiver, his baritone voice was firm
'Youth is full of joy and wisdom'
a gale that blew away everything
an exalted straightness-eyes lit up in ecstasy
the deep echo of his words resonated
where birds and bees played a part.

Some nights are dark and harsh
no edges of the wheelchair are softened
and the cold moon is concealed with care

my youth drops haiku in silence
in the middle of nowhere
weaving stories and anecdotes-
my mind lapses into stillness
peace and harmony still evade me.

About the Poet:



Gopal Lahiri is a Kolkata based bilingual poet, editor, critic and translator and published in English and Bengali language. He has authored 24 books to his credit that includes five jointly edited books. His poetry is also published across various anthologies and translated in 16 languages. He has been invited in literary programmes organised by Sahitya Akademi and many poetry festivals. He has been nominated for **Pushcart Prize** for poetry in 2021. He is the recipient of the Poet of the Year Award in **Destiny**

Poets, UK, 2016, **Setu** Excellence Award, 2020, Pittsburgh, US and **Indology** Life-Time Achievement award, India.

When Shall the Amber Burn Into It's Red?

-By Innama Khan

I have been standing on this busy crossroad

cooling my heels as I try to head across,

but somehow it keeps stretching farther.

The traffic light keeps turning green

whenever I take a few steps forward.

The automobiles come forging through,

throwing me back towards the square.

Who am I fighting at this point?

Is there a way I could explain

the obscure stillness in this whirlwind?

I see a few others join into the rhythm,

they succeed in making it through.

I see some more, around me but far enough,

anxious and wistful faces as they await like me.

“I get you. I hope we make it there in time, too.”

A consolation to them loud in my head;

'In time'—as if I know what's the limit to it,

as if I haven't already lost touch with the moment,

as we wait for our time to come.

I let my thoughts wander in the future when
we'd actually walk across and move in sync,
perhaps not exactly the same, still in unison.

In the overwhelming dread of the present,
the hope of what might happen lends
the patience I need for staying still.

I imagine holding hands and sharing smiles,
so I look down and plead with my legs

“Don't give in to the ache, hold on a bit longer.”

Does this promise that this is the last crossing?

Does this assure that the same folks here

shall stand until the end of time?

Does it conclude the path altogether? No, not really.

But is it enough for now? I believe so.

About the Poet:



Innama Khan is pursuing her graduation in Psychology, English and Math from University of Lucknow. Growing up, she was fascinated with tales, which led to some of her early exposure to reading and eventually writing her own. She has been a contributor in some anthologies. She is a determined learner and works consistently to refine her skills.

Primrose Days

- By Jaydeep Sarangi

I am drawn into
a rare mystery of young faces.

Morning is an ecstasy of light.
The promise-god pouring his
energy being into a soft lingering
breeze, has touched lives divine.

A perfect picture appears elsewhere.
I begin to believe in vital rivers
flowing wild in those hearts,
new metaphors are born.

New forces, subtle fields of energy
Jericho to Aleppo, Varanasi to Madurai
The world is at the fingertips of Eagles
Circles, yellow daisies and green leafed growth.

Window of Hope

As I look through my favourite window
the military road going to an ancient river
is the tree of life
branches spread outward to the sky.

Whose footsteps run through this cold night?

Who are the saviours of the land?

I raise my face to the morning sky
yogis chant, connect with unintelligible signs.
I put my ear to the earth
in the rhythm of time
I listen to its powerful song.

About the Poet:

Jaydeep Sarangi is a widely anthologized poet with nine collections, latest being, *Heart Raining the Light* (2020). A regular reviewer for poetry journals and newspapers, Sarangi has read poems in different continents and lectured on poetry in universities/colleges of repute. He is the **President**, Guild of Indian English Writers, Editors and Critics (GIEWEC) and **Vice President**, EC, Intercultural Poetry and Performance Library, Kolkata. He has been known as ‘the bard of Dulung ’for his poems on the rivulet Dulung and people who reside on its banks. Sarangi is Principal of New Alipore College in Kolkata and actively spreading the wings of poetry among generations. He edits *Teesta*, a journal devoted poetry and poetry criticism. With Rob Harle, he has edited six anthologies of poems from Australia and India which are a great literary link between the nations. His website is: <https://jaydeepsarangi.in/>

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Isn't Love Enough?

-By Nandini Sahu

Isn't love enough love? Isn't love enough
that you quest for everything else that should matter so little?
You know, the world anyway makes and breaks one and all.

Afterwards, only the survivor becomes solid at broken places.
Because love is the most agreeable way of discounting a broken piece.
And because, only birds born in a cage think flying is an illness.

Love, see a world in a modicum of sand and heaven in a desolate flower.
Let time decide who you meet in life.
Hold eternity in the palm of your hand and perpetuity in an hour.

Your own emotion decides who you want in your era
and your own pronouncement decides who stays.
Rest assured, your secrets are safe with me, I can't remember my own passwords.

If you don't correct the world when they dismay you, and ill-treat,
they will never learn how to treat you right.
In any case, you have to fight fit, you have to defeat.

The truth is that you will lament forever, if for you love isn't enough.
Sometimes you will not get over the loss of the loved ones,
but yes, you will learn to live with it, on and off.

You will heal and remake yourself around the loss
you have agonized. You may be complete again, but you will never be the same.
Nor should you be the equivalent to the one who you left amiss.

Love, love did never hurt you. Someone who doesn't diagnose the ways to love,

hurt you. Don't confuse the two.

With true love, either you forget everything or you evoke who from the who.

I shall anyway re-read you as my favourite book at different stages of my life.

The plot will never change, but my perspective of love may.

For me love will be enough, nothing more nothing less, just any given day!

Tranquil City, Tonight

Is it fine with you, love, to live and negotiate
through the language of oblivion?

It's a separate matter that
this is yet another love story for you.
And you can tell us, re-tell, re-tell more tales.

Some know parts of it, some not even a hint of it,
some compose their own editions of it.
Anyway, I remember the primary version of the tale--
that clouds froze in dark nights.
Despite your claim
that I took your story and turned it into
whatever I needed to.
Fair enough, to make the world contented
of late
you began to amend
a simpler, happier life for yourself.
Fair enough, love!

I am glorious.
Proud.
More proud.

Much more, tonight.
To love you is like going to
the battlefield.
One comes broken, bruised

from the battle, for sure.
Still I feel like a lepidopterist, who has
Gloriously peeved an unusual moth.

We couldn't have been written out of the past, right?
I know that you know that I know.
The untold and the told, I know it all.
Predictable, comforting, heartening sorrows,
but trustworthy, consistent ones.

Tonight
my city is tranquil;
as if the city is having its meditation classes
as if we all are gleaming from our Yoga sessions.
Tonight
the sky is the woodland of stars.

I wonder,
is another world possible?
Ever? Ever?

Life failed me in a nebulous yet fundamental way.
Let me embrace what you have given me
like we embrace old friends;
let me deal with your gifts like
we handle old enemies.

Perhaps it's raining in my head
perhaps it's my survival strategy.

I know that you know that I know.
This is how it has always been
between you and me.

I made you so tall, I needed to,
in order to live life;
and thus, you always act
as if I owe you a thing or two.

We have been simultaneously
sweethearts and former sweethearts
siblings and former siblings
lovers and former lovers
friends and former friends.
When it comes to the matter of heart
we always have had

About the Poet:



Nandini Sahu is a Professor of English and Former Director, School of Foreign Languages, IGNOU, New Delhi, India. Nandini is an established Indian English poet, creative writer and folklorist. She is the author/editor of fifteen books and the recipient of Literary Award/Gold Medal from the honorable Vice President of India for her contribution to English Studies. Her areas of research interest cover New Literatures, Critical Theory, Folklore and Culture Studies, Children's Literature and American Literature.

www.kavinandini.blogspot.in

Youth

-By Pankhuri Sinha

Ephemeral, effervescent
 Fragile and transient
 Barely there and ready to leave
 Such is the nature
 Of youth! Oh! But is that true?
 Isn't age just a number?
 Hearts forever young?
 Love everlasting ?

Youth persevering
 Like timeless beauty?
 No anti-wrinkle cream!
 Oh! What cosmetic reduction
 of priceless time!
 What digression
 From the burning question!
 When the youth of
 A nation, derelict
 And desolate, in so
 Many places, so many ways
 Looks for direction
 Right opportunities
 And is misled
 And is betrayed!

How to solve the crisis?

Get many more jobs
 Reduce the vices
 Check the violence?

 How to ensure
 There is no gun
 In the hands of the youth?
 No cudgels either
 No baseball bat
 Meant to kill?

Pool of blood
 Cleaned with a flush
 Lingers in the memory
 Of useless beauties!
 Some married late
 Some lives wasted
 By fights patriarchal
 Making war
 Seeking revenge
 Maiming kids
 Wasting reproductive potentials
 Choking faith!

Indeed, baby making is
 The golden fruit of
 The youth! Time to create
 Pro-create

Take responsibility.

Let the youth lead

Re-invent! Not just themselves

But the world!

Let the youth sort out

Old wars, new games!

Let them win over

Rusty shackles, all obstacles!

Build afresh!

About the Poet:



Pankhuri Sinha is a bilingual Indian poet and story writer. She has to her credit two poetry collections published in English, two story collections published in Hindi and five poetry collections published in Hindi. She has been published in many journals, anthologies, home and abroad and has won many prestigious, national-international awards, including the Seemapuri Times Rajeev Gandhi Excellence award, awards in Chekhov festival in Yalta and in Premio Besio Poetry competition in Italy, Sahitto award in Bangladesh, and Premio Galateo in Italy for poetry in mother tongue. She is also awarded by Albania, Nigeria, and Romania among others. She has been translated in over twenty six languages.

Youth- The Sufferers of Imagination

-By Prabhjeet Kaur

O dear! You, who suffer more in your imagination than in reality,
the imagination that starts brooding in the darkness
and overshadows behind thy crumbling window.

Perhaps whose heart and soul are cumbersome with its own thriving thoughts;
Your spirits which once danced in the most lights of the day
have become inert in the gloominess of twilight.

Come up, progress and make way through the sickness of this unexpected autumn
And peek through the lilacs of this blooming spring.

Oh you dunderhead! Don't count and wait for the last leaf on the ivy vine to fall

Instead become the Behrman of your existence and paint the masterpiece for your own
survival.

This silly youth needs to hear Milton once again,

for perhaps the mind is preserved in the skull

but in itself has the metaphysical power

To create a hell of heaven, a heaven of hell.

You who suffers more in your imagination is surrounded by imaginary sickness

Wherein you suffer alone

And thy heart pumps the blood of aversion and unwholesome emotions;

Oh the Goddess of Youth! Hebe, bless thy mortal being

With Vigour and Compassion,

Allowing their hearts to brim with dynamic Harmony and fiery Enthusiasm

As the youth which had the authority to materialize the conceits,

Can now only make their dismal Pessimism come True.

About the Poet:



Prabhjeet Kaur is pursuing her M.A. in English from Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. She has also completed her graduation from the same college in 2021. Her poetry speaks about the hopeless and passive youth of today who is perpetually stuck in their pessimistic thoughts. She believes her poetry might be a pleading call for them to progress and find their way out of the ordeals of their own dismal imaginations.

The Result Day

-By Pranav Anand

I heard a ring that morning
and could understand everything.
My father received the call,
with the other side awaiting my fall.
There were to be announced my board results,
all were behaving like kids, especially the adults.
They wanted to know how I had fared,
Even to pass if I had dared.
My father said, "Results will be announced in a while"
from my face vanished my smile.
My heartbeat matching a speeding car,
I was like a batsman in suspicion-
with the umpire being Aleem Dar.
The clock announced 10,
before a butcher I felt like a hen.
I logged into the C.B.S.E Website
At the end of the tunnel was there light ?
If I fail, I will be an object of ridicule,

college to be forgotten, I will remain in school.

Thoughts gave me a headache,

Future was very much at stake.

The buffering compounded my anxiety,

as much as I could remember, I invoked every deity.

Physics, Chemistry, Math, English, Physical Education-all PASSED,

announced the 'bold' font.

Wasn't this all that I want?

This event brought me a huge sigh of relief,

beyond everyone's, especially my relatives' belief.

Tears welled up in my eyes with delight,

a sense of satisfaction at the naysayers' plight.

The rest is history I would say,

never got underestimated since that day.

About the Poet:



Pranav Anand is currently enrolled in PhD Coursework at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. He hails from Muzaffarpur, Bihar. He takes keen interest in composing poems, reading books and teaching. His areas of interest in the literary world entail Literary Theory, Cultural Studies and Fiction.

To a Fading Youth: *by the Traveller*

-By Preeti Acharya

Be by my side,
till the curtains I hide behind slide,
till I be not scared to blink.
Be by my side through flowing rivers,
with pebbles of sundry colours;
some hidden and some bare.
Be here whilst I learn, not to drape myself
with threads that are woven into Jekyll and Hyde.
Now, inches of me walk into morphosis,
Now inches of me burn and born.
So be by my side, whilst I earn birth.
And beg sprout and burgeon.
Till I trust days of tomorrow
and flatter not aches.
Till I bear the blood in my depths
Also when ephemeral life shall turn out,
I am a hair's breadth away from reaching the horizon,
So be by my side.

Follow or not.

Be by my side now and

AFTER.

About the Poet:



Preeti is from Sonepur, Odisha. She is currently pursuing her bachelors in English at Regional Institute of Education, Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Her interests lie in listening to stories and composing poetry. She is an eager learner and wishes for the world to see the beauty of literature.

Lost Youth

-By Seemin Hasan

She sat in solitary splendor
Reflecting on a life now spent,
To dreams she could now surrender
To fate she could now vent.

Honors and Positions,
Awards and recognitions,
Pressures of ambition
Imprisoned in an insane vision.

Caught up in struggle and strife,
Youth slipped silently away
She noticed not the pace of life
And neither the wrinkles nor the grey.

Now, free of challenges misbegotten
She chose to walk at her ease,
But that path, too, was rotten
The old woman fell on broken knees.

Youth is life's precious treasure
That comes not with a guarantee,
Invest it with careful measure
To gather life's goodness aplenty.

About the Poet:

Prof. Seemin Hasan has been teaching undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD coursework classes and guiding research in the Department of English, Aligarh Muslim University for over 36 years. She chaired the department from 2015 to 2018 .Her research/ focus areas include Romantic Literature, Postcolonial Studies, Translation and Creative writing and Women's Studies. She has authored two books, articles, short stories and enjoys writing poetry.

Walking on the Railway Track

-By Shubham Yadav

It's a fine morning,

father, sitting in the lawn, reading news paper

with stooped feet; I walk out of the house,

Not meaning to disrespect him but to avoid questions on career,

Meanwhile, a whispering voice comes to me, "come fast, we have to be there on time"

Perhaps, the ink has dried up to grab their attention,

a tongue full of slogans will do the trick.

Soon our slogans began to match the pitch.

The squad charged us with thundering energetic refreshment with an even distribution.

It reminded me of their tag line "ek baar seva ka mauka dein"

The group is now split on either side of the track;

some are forced into vans and dispatched so far away that they cannot be heard,

some are chased to disappear from sight!

Thank God, finally I reached to my place safely.

With full concern, my mother said-

"all the day has passed, through your head,

the sun rises and sets,

Did you eat anything or not?"

Of course, sticks, slaps, gaalis and what not?

About the Poet:



Shubham Yadav is a research scholar, currently pursuing his PhD in English from the University of Lucknow. He has published a research paper titled “Covid-19: Impact on the lives of Women and Girls” in the collection Blues of Covid-19: Tiding over the Pandemic Waves. His areas of interest include cultural studies, wildlife studies and Indian poetry.

Beauty Lies Within

-By Shreya Jaiswal

Not in your stylish hair,
but in the active mind ...
not in the kohl around your eyes,
but in the vision that you unbind.

Not in the fashionable shoes,
it's on the road you travel...
Not in the colour of lipstick,
it's in the smile that bedazzles.

Perfumes are volatile and will vanish,
creams and powder will disappear.
So much to do but time is fleeting;
Moment is to ignite the inner flair.

Not in the cool jacket,
it's only in the warmth you wear...
Not in the extravagant purse,
it's in the love and care you share.

About the Poet:



Shreya Jaiswal is currently pursuing her Masters in English from the University of Lucknow. She is a budding poet who believes that poetry is a great medium to convey feelings, emotions and to understand human beings better. Apart from poetry, she is an orator and loves to read books.

You and I make the World

-By Shweta Mishra

he sneer in your eyes,

told me my age.

You wanted me to make way

for you.

I smiled at your baby step

and lifted -

my foot for the earth,

my head for the sky.

Somehow my gait filled you with awe

and you crawled;

I never said that I was a giant.

I don't know what suddenly dwarfed you.

Here Lies the Centre

The centre of cosmos
could be anything;
for me my love
for you, you yourself.

I place the point
exactly there my centre stands.
For a strong nation
Youth is that core.

The world talks of margins;
the world talks of centre.
In the centre-margin shift
What holds is one's forceful belief.

About the Poet:

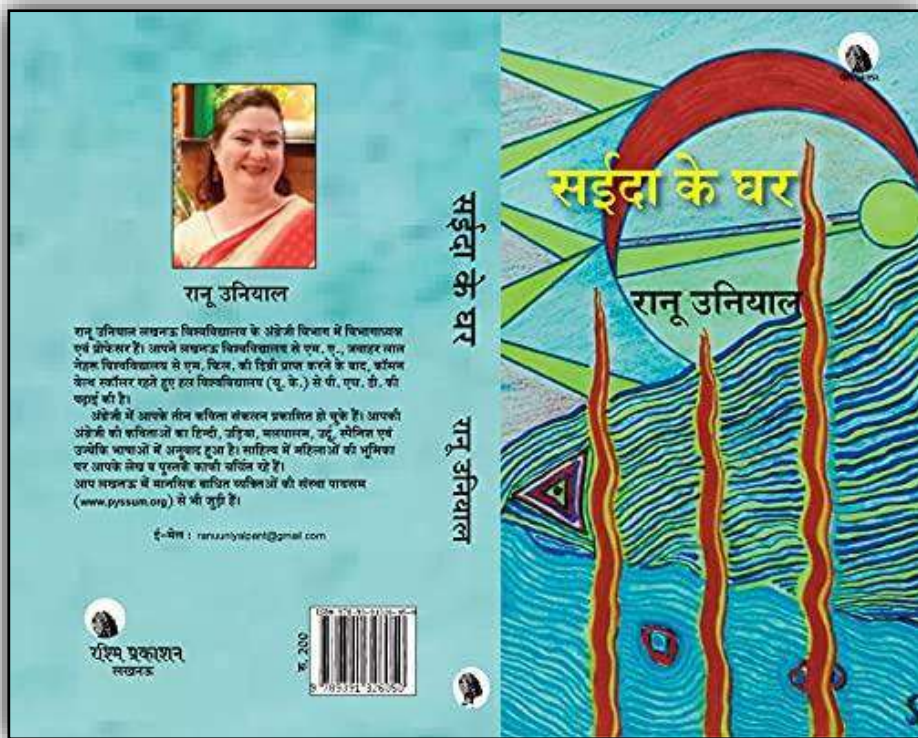


Dr. Shweta Mishra (M.A. Ph.D.) is an Assistant Professor in English and presently teaches at MBP Government PG College, Lucknow. A gold medalist in M.A. English, Lucknow University, creative writing is what she passionately loves to do. Her notable works include *What is a Woman: This is Trash. Leave it* and *Image of Girlhood in the Fiction of African-American Women Writers*. Her collection of poems *The Most Orange* has been published in 2018. Her e-book *A Smothering Selfless Epitome: Sita* has been published in July, 2020 and her latest book *Lucknow Imprints* has been published in December 2021.

BOOK REVIEW

**"Youth is not a question of years:
one is young or old from birth"**

-Natalie Clifford Barney



Saeeda Ke Ghar

by Ranu Uniyal, Published by Rashmi Prakashan Pvt. Ltd. (2021)

Price: ₹ 200/-, ISBN: 978-9391326050

Language: Hindi

No. of Pages: 100

-Dr.(Mrs.) Vinita Prakash

Ranu Uniyal, Professor of English at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow is a poet, feminist critic and a renowned name in the world of literary writing. Her English poems have already been translated into quite a few languages and she proves her mettle once again in her Hindi anthology of poems titled, *Saeeda Ke Ghar*. In the anthology, the poems are written in a free verse that capture the various hues of life, especially of women in their multifaceted avatars.

The titular poem itself is a poignant expression of a budding friendship between two carefree girls, cruelly snapped by communal hatred. In many of the poems, we see the woman as a girl, a wife, a victim, an observer and also obscured. The mother is presented affectionately as the one who smiles through all odds, unaware of her own virtue or the one who enters the conscience of memory through the strong fragrance of the seasoning of *dal*. She also talks of the wrinkled mother whose beauty becomes more “namkin” with age and the one who is the symbol of ‘unlocked homes’. “Photo sach nahi hoti” is another apt comparison of the photo and the girl — a mask which covers the true self. Then there is the woman who is capable of scorching to ashes but chooses to forgive. “Aankhein toh meri hain” is a powerful poem which challenges the male gaze vis-à-vis the female gaze.

Then there are poems which are whimsical and the poems that are nostalgic like that quintessential ‘tin trunk’ — a repertoire of memories and a treasure house of emotions. It becomes a metaphor not only of women’s existence but also of the memories that the poet can dig into. There are also observations on the way of the world — the games that people play, discrimination, the culture vultures and falsehood. There are poems that tug at the heart and also some that strike hard.

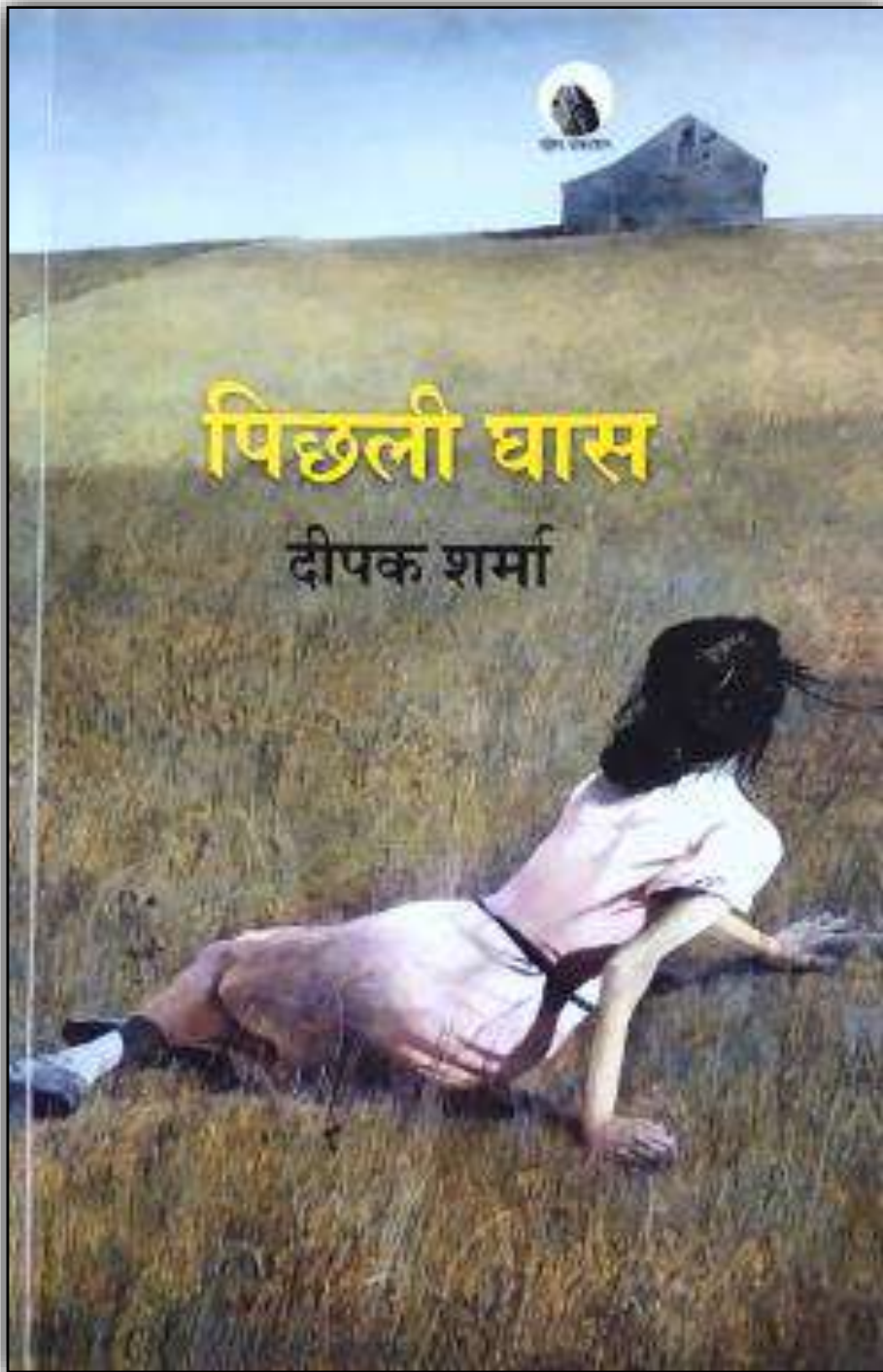
Particularly interesting are the “क्षणिकाएं” towards the end which have a *doha* like quality attached to them, crystallising universal truths to quintessence. Ranu Uniyal is a poet who has a way

with her words — they flow easily and smoothly in a language that is colloquial and expressive. Sometimes it flows like a river, the other times it hits like a rock. Ranu Uniyal has proved herself once again as an emerging voice in Hindi poetry. *Saeeda Ke Ghar* not only has a literary worth but is also a delightful read. The poems stay with you long after you have read the last page.

About the Writer:



Dr. Vinita Prakash is a former Associate Professor and Head of the post-graduate Department of English at Lucknow Christian College, Lucknow. Presently, she is the Principal of Isabella Thoburn College, Lucknow. She holds a Ph.D in English from the University of Lucknow. She has presented several research papers and delivered many guest lectures at various national and International seminars and conferences. She resides in Lucknow.



Pichli Ghaas

by Deepak Sharma, Published by Rashmi Prakashan Pvt. Ltd. (2021)

Price: Rs. 200 INR, ISBN: 978-93-91326-19-7

Language: Hindi

No. of Pages: 106

-Bhavya Pant

The sixteen compelling stories in the anthology, *Pichli Ghaas* by Deepak Sharma explore patriarchy's manifestation in family life. It offers a scrupulous portrayal of women's precarious lives as a result of physical, psychological and/or sexual suffering. Patriarchy leads to practices such as gender discrimination and abuse. This book is a true representation of the prejudices adopted towards women who feel exiled within their own family.

It depicts female characters in dire straits who are victims of gender-based abuse. And, as a result, the subjugated women fall in a state of “abjection”. Regardless of sex, class or gender, this practice impacts and torments the entire human race. It is the secondary victims of violence, as Deepak Sharma rightfully points out, who give ‘voice ’ to the deceased female characters in this anthology. Despite their failure in combating the patriarchal power structure, the witnesses of violence succeed in narrating the catastrophe. The book’s cover page captures the essence of each story, i.e. the search for belongingness and identity in this harsh world.

The residents of Kasbapur town inhabit her collection of stories, *Pichli Ghaas*. It portrays a system where the husbands are stereotypical characters who exercise monstrous and evil display of power on their wives in the household. It shows how men who belong to different sections of society reveal their dark sides. In the story titled “Door Ghar”, we see the law fall apart when B.L., a police officer, succeeds in concealing his crime of killing his wife in a public ‘space ’as society becomes a silent perpetrator. The men take charge of the woman’s destiny as they become mere ‘objects’. It also

highlights how selfish women characters like Vimla and Bela instead of creating a refuge for the victims, show an intense desire for acquiring wealth and indulge in unethical activities like stealing.

Deepak Sharma's stories are replete with intricate and keen observational details which peep into the Indian familial relationships. The pages give the closest and the most realistic portrayal of all the events mentioned in the story. It also portrays the empathetic bond between a mother and her child and brother - sister who reciprocate love in the world of male dominance. The first story which has also been translated into English as "Tanner's Yard" by Madhu B. Joshi is based on the sensitive issue of 'female infanticide'. The narrative begins with ease but as the story gradually unfolds, it stuns the reader and pricks their conscience. She writes each story clearly and concisely, touching upon women's sensibility with intensity and power. She makes a shift from the traditional form of storytelling, subtly leaving upon the reader's imagination to interpret the myriad techniques. As Madhu B. Joshi comments, "Her stories are like the tip of an iceberg...". She writes in a colloquial style, using English, Awadhi, and Urdu vocabulary to provide the reader a rich cultural experience. Her stories remind one of the late nineteenth-century realism which was a true representation of its time.

The author explores social themes such as 'rape' and 'forced marriage' in the eponymous narrative, which is the last in the collection. It is based on the life of Shashi, the main character in the story, whose father inflicts grave suffering. Furthermore, her dreams of playing hockey are crushed when she is forced into an unfortunate marriage. Her mother and brother also do not provide her with any strong emotional support.

In the story, "Ma Ka Dama", the wife is a mere source of income for her husband. Her workplace which she calls her "heaven" provides an escape from unpleasant life at home and liberates her.

Historical events form the background of many of her stories. In the story "Pret Chaya", she provides a philosophical inclination. She begins the story by quoting Coleridge, "My eyes make pictures when they are shut", as the narrator's perplexed mind tries to make revelations about his mother's death. Flashback to 1919 occurs when he had heard the slogan "Go back Simon, go back...". The blue stole which is employed as being symbolic of his mother had appeared before him.

It is significant to understand that young minds can initiate a much-needed change in the society. We rarely see writers like Deepak Sharma who choose to write and educate the world on the underlying gender issues and the violence that emanates from them. Therefore, such literary works become an important medium of expression for the reader to gauge their understanding of women's issues. The works of fiction and non-fiction often result from the creative mind of the writer or serve

as records owing to the victim's own experiences. By giving voice to the individuals and propagating their words, they expose the bare truth related to this practice.

About the Writer:

Bhavya Pant is a Ph.D Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. Her areas of interest include post-human perspectives in contemporary literature.

Sanjeev writes beautifully concise poetry; he has an exceptional talent for forming observations that are both wise and insightful, and he does so sparingly, as though words are too precious to waste... truly, the poetry is a delight...

— Dr. Alan Corkish (writer, critic and reviewer)

SANJEEV SETHI

hesitancies

poems



Hesitancies: Poems

by Sanjeev Sethi, Publisher by: CLASSIX (An Imprint of Hawakal Publishers) (2021)

Price: ₹ 500 INR, ISBN: 978-8195256235

Language: English

Number of pages: 100

-Shivangi Gautam

Sanjeev Sethi's narration of diverse feelings in different modes of appreciation, willfulness, adequacy, humor, and nostalgia is remarkable. He is an established poet, journalist and producer whose works have been published in the most esteemed journals of our era. Published in over thirty countries, he has carved a niche for himself in the literary horizon, to name a few, *North Dakota Quarterly*, *Litbreak*, *The Poetry Village*, *Dreich Magazine*, *Picaroon Poetry*, *Manhattan Linear*, *The Broadkill Review*, *The Piker Press*, *Sentinel Literary Quarterly*, *Ephemeral Elegies*, *Ancient Paths Literary Magazine*, *Trouvaille Review* and alike. This is his fifth collection; he has previously published his *Nine Summers Later* (1997), *Suddenly for Someone* (1998), *This Summer and That Summer* (2015), *Bleb* (2021). Sethi is a joint winner of the Full Fat Collection Competition-Deux organized by The Hedgehog Poetry Press, UK.

This excellent volume titled *Hesitancies* contains seventy-eight poems and has been beautifully published by Classix, New Delhi, in Hardcover format. The subtle yellow cover texture is given by Shutterstock and designed by Bitan Chakraborty. The book and its illustrations exude simplicity and a hint of bright vibes with calmness. He has dedicated this volume to his 'Ma.'

Coming to the poems, Sethi has gone a step higher, in fact, two, because this collection radiates intriguing emotions. We all hold and experience different emotions but can not put them into words like Sethi magically did. Like in "*Chime*", he says:

"We have to fit in the frame, not fiddle as with people and things."

In his poem, "*On Father's 69th Birthday*", he sweetly assembles his care and his father's concern in a hospital room. The poem offers empathy to the son and father, each having his own ideas

of solitary emotional refinement. The need to belong on a digital platform and its heavy 'expeditious mortician', character has been boldly put in two of the poems titled "*Betrayal*" and "*WEB 2.0*", the way he tells us that the rage should be inferiorly put down, even though a lot of people are incapable of doing so. As he says,

"Virtual communities register and ricochet such vehemence."

Comic play is at its best in some of the poems; my favorite was "*Review*", in which he says:

"Six days after jubilating silver of living in self-owned garconniere, a tosspot few doors away self-slaughtered, pushing me to precis and itemize flats on my floor.

1. Greaser, in hock.
 2. Suicide chamber.
 3. Cuckold's home.
 4. Tenant, a lady of the night.
 5. Nabbed for once.
 6. Censured for cruelty on her girl child.
 7. Owner overseas.
 8. Mine- fat to fatter.
- If mommy were alive, she would worry."

Sethi has incredibly put his sense of humor and his wit at its best. But what really impressed me was that he didn't shy away from writing on physical intimacy. His poem titled "*Mist*" caught my attention for it began on a simple note and ended up affirmative:

"It seems I have sealed the sensations of your touch as down payment of an address we could never own or occupy."

As he says,

"Intimacy breeds indifference; in its own way, keeps us knit."

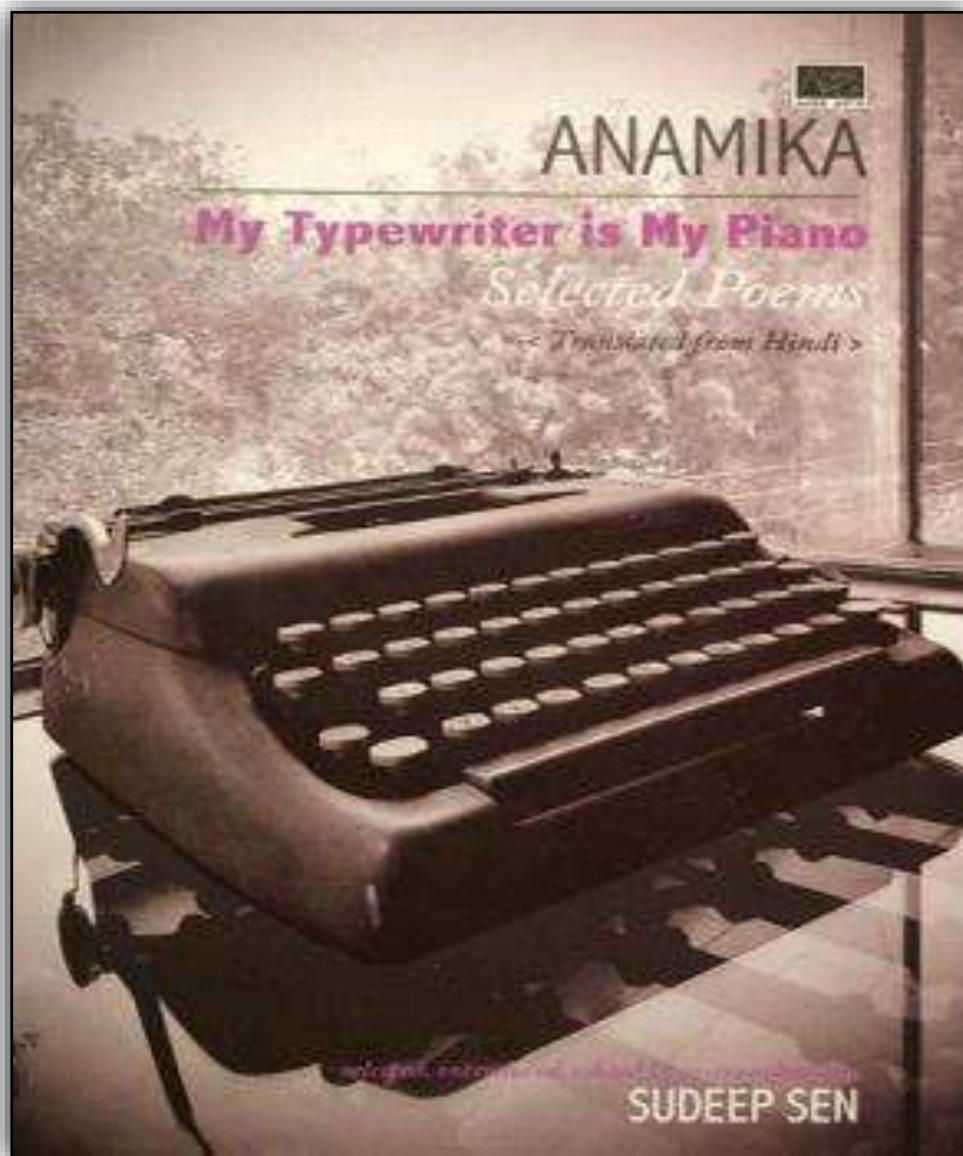
The poems send beautiful rhythmic waves in nostalgia. Everyone at some point has experienced these emotions but these lines offer comfort in their memory too. He has given certain extremely personal themes to his poems, be it his "*College Roommate: Thirty Years Later*" or "*Lineage: Birthday Twins*" for his grand-nephew, Oliver. Both the poems are so alluring and catchy. One would want to read it twice or thrice to regain instant pleasure.

The best part about these poems is that they are short, sweet, and extremely crisp. Sethi has not dragged any of the lyrics, which is an impressive quality. His conciseness and amazing clarity of

the poems have made this work even more rewarding to read. Another remarkable feature of the poems is the use of some complicated words: you have to pick up a dictionary at times. But once you realize what the words mean, you have this feeling of catharsis. As much as his diction is vivacious, his versatility with the themes and his take on the expressions of a man in all spheres of life has put an incredible grandstand for readers. This book can be picked up at any time for a hearty laugh or a nostalgic trip to the past.

About the Writer:

Shivangi Gautam is a Ph.D Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She explores the field of Masculinity Studies and is an ardent lover of F.Scott Fitzgerald. She finds comfort in practicing her culinary skills by the day and flipping through excerpts of literary pieces at night



ANAMIKA: My Typewriter is My Piano

Selected Poems

<Translated from Hindi>

By Anamika, Translated by Sudeep Sen and Others

Published by Aark Arts

Price: ₹ 599/-, ISBN: 978-1899179398

Number of pages: 200

-Priya Sharma

“Poetry... is the revelation of a feeling that the poet believes to be interior and personal which the reader recognizes as his own.”

These are the oft-quoted words of Salvatore Quasimodo which aptly describe my encounter with this book. When I finished reading the book, I was completely amazed as each poem of the collection was reminding me of a memory of my own life which I can relate with the words printed on the pages of this book. *Anamika: My Typewriter is My Piano* by Anamika, a celebrated poet of contemporary Indian Literature, is her first book to have been translated into English. The poems are expertly selected, introduced and co-translated by Sudeep Sen and others. It has around two hundred pages comprising of hundred poems taken from her wide oeuvre of works in Hindi, her treasure of many decades. These translations have been done by multiple hands employing different techniques and approaches, yielding fresh and unique interpretations. This collection showcases Anamika’s intellectual breadth, latitude and understanding of daily life events and its miraculous portrayal in words. It is a major book by an important contemporary Hindi poet of India, reaching a wider readership through this translated version.

The book is divided into nine separate yet connected sections. Each section has a attention grabbing title such as “Blouse”, “Snap Button”, “Empty Wallet”, “Of Human Bondage”, “My

Typewriter is My Piano”, “Mother Tongue”, “A Fling with God”, “Safety Pin” and “First Mensuration”. The befitting Introduction given by her lifelong friend and editor gives an insight of their strong bond and the genesis of this anthology. The translator has done justice in the translation of the original poems into English, yet Anamika says that a few poems have become new altogether. Born and raised in an environment enriched with the literature of various languages, she instilled in her consciousness a sensitivity towards the pain and distress of women. Anamika was born and raised in such an environment which exposed her to the sufferings and oppression of women, hence she developed in her consciousness a kind of sympathy and love for those who cannot speak for themselves. These poems appear as monologues of the sufferer’s agony and pain. Appearing common at the surface, these poems carry a deep meaning of emotions expressing a certain subtle kind of feminism, which becomes clearer to the reader with every repeated reading. In the first reading itself one can mark the influence of Sylvia Plath, Toni Morrison and Anne Sexton, the very great names with indelible marks of their own in this vast world of poetry. The poems in this collection embody instances from society and politics at large, along with the moments of daily life and domesticity, as in the poem “Mobile”, we see how paradoxical images of Meena Bazaar, with everything glittery and shiny in its edifice is placed with the bizarre and bomb struck image of Baghdad. I will quote the poem “*14 Year-Old Sex Workers*” as my personal favourite as it embarks upon the pain and exploitation of innocence of a tender girl who turned into a prostitute. When I read this poem I was dumbstruck and it instantly reminded me of the poem “*Hunger*” by Jayant Mahapatra and made me teary-eyed. The poem “*Fractional(ally) different*” echoes the difficulties and insults bestowed upon a differently-abled child, as she says:

“trying hard to simplify me,
Till I am reduced to my
Smallest unit.”

As we try to tame a fraction to its smallest unit, same is the fate decided for differently-abled individuals in our ruthless society.

The poem “*Furniture*” is about a daily-life act of cleaning and dusting and exports readers to past-life lovers of the speaker and journey through seven births:

“I can almost hear the furniture creak
In sympathy,
“You too got badly hurt, lady?”
I wonder if they have all been my lovers in my past seven lives.”

The poem “*Salt*” also makes its impression felt by portraying the persona of a loving, helpful and forgiving soul:

“salt has a heart so weak and

Infirm/ it melts a little too fast.”

As the former President and one of the greatest minds of India, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam pens in respect to poetry,

“Poetry comes from the highest happiness

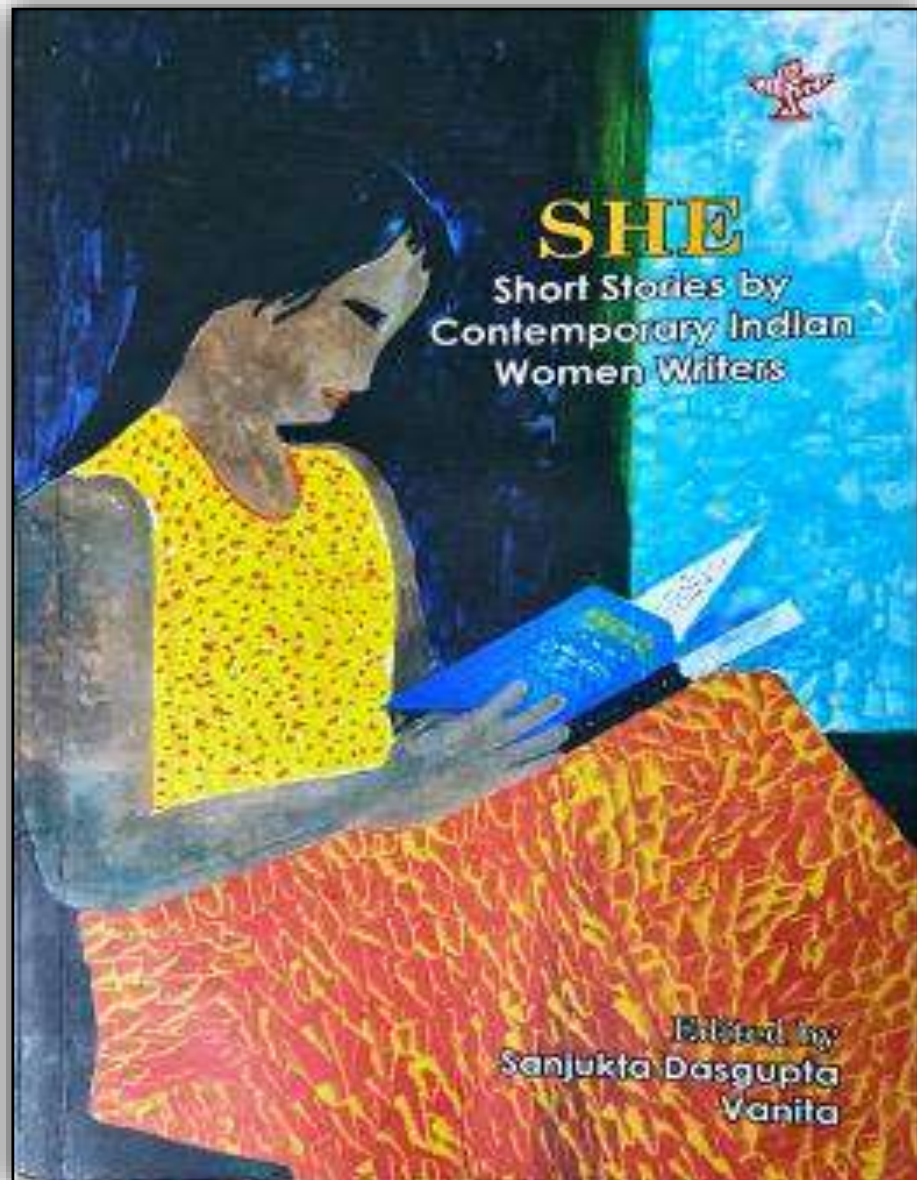
or the deepest sorrow.”

I found all the poems dripping with a feeling of incompleteness, loneliness, sadness and devoid and yearning for happiness. Poems such as “Kali”, “Grandmothers”, “Amulet”, “Jet Lag”, “Mother Tongue”, “Calendar”, “Rabiya” and many more present the realities, memories, instances, pains and visions of multiple voices, sensibilities and experiences of women. It’s a conglomeration of the past, present and future in one anthology. It seems like a reverberation of our everyday thoughts, feelings and emotions appearing as a spree of multidimensional world which contains in its edifice the smile of a young girl as well as the cries of a lonely old mother watching for her children to return at her threshold. The book presents a picture of numerous scenes from our daily lives, as it is rightly said, “You can find poetry in everyday life, in your memory in what people say on the bus, in the news or just what’s in your heart.” In my opinion, it surely is a feast for the senses which will moisten your eyes with mixed tears of both grief and happiness.

About the Writer:



Priya Sharma is a Ph.D Research Scholar at the Department of English and Modern European Languages, University of Lucknow. She is working on and exploring the representation of People with Disability in Literature. She holds a keen interest in reading and writing and has been on stage several times as a theatre artist.



SHE: Short Stories by Contemporary Indian Women Writers

edited by Sanjukta Dasgupta and Vanita

Publisher by Sahitya Akademi (2021)

Price: ₹ 190 INR, ISBN: 978-93-90866-01-4

Pages: 154, Language: English

Genre: Short Stories

-Neha Sharma

SHE: Short Stories by Contemporary Indian Women Writers is a volume of representative short stories, originally written in eight languages by contemporary Indian women writers. These languages are Dogri, Kashmiri, Hindi, English, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Sanskrit and Urdu. There are a total of sixteen short stories among which fourteen are translated into English from their original source language and two stories are written in English. The title is indicative of women coming together from different realms of society and from all age groups. The stories inculcated in the anthology discuss the major and micro issues that women negotiate as an attempt to assert the irrefutable fact that women's rights are an integral part of human rights. However, the striking aspect of this collection is to identify the unequivocal similarity and variance between the sixteen women writers belonging to diverse Indian states, regional cultures, religions, and having acquired various educational and professional achievements.

The collection takes its reader on a metaphoric journey, mirroring in front of them the glimpses of present-day India. The anthology begins with a story titled "*Let us be...*" written in Dogri where a middle-aged man becomes the mouthpiece for proving the innocence of his wife named Gucchu, who broke herself free from Mansa, a kidnapper's stranglehold.

Although Gucchu never speaks in the story for herself but then she becomes a topic of discussion for everyone in the village. The story in a way tries to attract our attention to the limited power that a woman can exercise as Gucchu never has a say in any of her life decisions.

The stories written in Hindi titled “*Hunger (Bhookh)*” and “*C/o Swat Valley*” address the different conflicts faced by women from different classes as well as their self-questionable identity. The stories in Kashmiri oscillate between the themes of lamenting the loss and perseverance of memory.

The powerful story titled “*The Doll (Udhree hoi Guddi)*” written in Punjabi by Rashpinder Rashim and translated by Hina Nandrajog examines the patriarchal structures. It questions male aggression and dominance, encouraging us to rethink about the notion of gender equality. The story is an eye-opener which reinstates the notion that family is the first institution where gender equality needs to be instilled as “the home is represented as the most of unsecured space in the lives of women from foetus, to girl child; from the young women to the married women, from mothers to widows, no roles played by women seem to be safe from domestic violence” says Sanjukta Dasgupta and Vanita in the Introduction of the book.

The Rajasthani stories strike a contrast between the two women characters, whereas in the story “*Chooro*”, the woman learns to value her decision and stays undeterred in the face of any societal obligation. In the story “*Padma*”, the woman protagonist devotes her entire life to the welfare of her in-laws unconditionally, which indeed is also reminiscent of the life of Rani Padmini, a legendary Queen of the Mewar Kingdom of the present-day India, 13th - 14th century.

The two Sanskrit stories in this volume contain ample evidence of unique reinvention of a classical language used in narrating stories about slums, labourers and old-age homes. The Urdu and English stories are class-specific where the English story “*Mira’s Madness*” reiterates the importance of financial independence in the life of women. The Urdu stories,

“*The Seven-Month Baby*” and “*The Doll*” highlight middle-class cautiousness and the struggles of a destitute and how they survive in inevitable sub-human condition.

This volume thrives to focus on a dual objective: discovery of the world and self-discovery. One can observe an intersection of class, caste, gender, education and profession which has influenced all the pieces of writings. The collection is a successful critique of the abuse of women’s rights, roles of women coming from different strata of the society and interrogating women’s uncritical faith in patriarchal practices and their unquestioned faith-based belief systems.

About the Writer:

Neha Sharma is a Ph.D Research Scholar currently pursuing her Ph.D in English from Dr. Harisingh Gour University, Sagar, Madhya Pradesh. Her areas of interest include Literary Theory, Indigenous Literature and Ecocriticism.

PHOTOGRAPHY

"Never tell a young person that anything cannot be done."

- G. M. Trevelyan



“When I look back, I am so impressed against with the life-giving power of literature. If I were a young person today, trying to gain a sense of myself in the world, I would do that again by reading, just as I did when I was young.” - Maya Angelou



Youth is happy because it has the capacity to see beauty. Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old. – Franz Kafka



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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND MODERN EUROPEAN LANGUAGES

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

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

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

Facebook Page Link : www.facebook.com/groups/departmentofenglishandmel.lu/



RHETORICA

Call for submissions

India, the land of many cultures, has been home to one of the world's oldest and richest civilization. As we today become the residing ground for one sixth of the earth's population, India holds within itself the most diverse range of hues and ideas.

The upcoming issue of Rhetorica aims to celebrate this unique oneness of many cultures that we today call Indus. We welcome creative pieces that touch upon or draw from the diverse nature of our motherland.

Rhetorica, the literary society of the Department of English and Modern European Languages, calls for submissions on the theme of India for its upcoming issue.

THEME- INDIA

CATEGORIES-

FICTION (UPTO 1500 WORDS)

NON-FICTION (500-800 WORDS)

BOOK REVIEW (800 WORDS)

POETRY (3-5 EACH)

PHOTOGRAPHY (2-5 EACH)

Deadline : 30th June, 2022

Note:

- Submissions should strictly abide by the theme.
- They should be mailed as either .doc (non-fiction, fiction and poetry) or .jpeg (for photography) files only.
- Submissions should not exceed the word limit.
- They should be original and should not have been published anywhere previously.
- They should be free of plagiarism. A Declaration regarding the same should be attached with the submissions.
- Contributors should mail a high resolution photograph and a bio-note of not more than 100 words along with their submissions.
- All the submissions may be mailed at rhetoricaquarterly@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. Maitraye Priyadarshini is the current Head of the Department.

