

Editorial Note

The Publication Committee of NMIMS Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai is proud to present the eleventh edition of SOLink. This edition, SOLink adopts a new form, and the Committee is proud to present the debut edition of SOLink as a literary magazine; itemising and documenting the literary, artistic, and creative inclinations of our contributors.

Taking inspiration from the contemporary world, the eleventh edition of SOLink is influenced by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and global turmoil caused thereby. To that end, the contributions to SOLink seek to continually identify a silver lining to the dark cloud of COVID-19. Such contributions are in form of articles, short stories, poetry, haiku, narrative photography, album, book, and movie reviews, artwork, and wordscapes. To add contemporary relevance, this edition compiles an itemised documentation of global affairs in the year of 2020-21 in its 'timeline' section.

Ultimately, laying the groundwork for a thriving and a qualitative (...quite literally) culture of incisive writing is a deeply rooted cause for anyone who believes that the concept is laudable. With SOLink, we hope to fuel this cause by igniting interest in literary and artistic affirmation and articulation within our law school as well as the growing circle of students and individuals with whom we are connected.

Thus, the Committee is pleased to re-inaugurate SOLink as a literary magazine, and we hope that you enjoy this edition.

Warmest Regards,
The Publication Committee
2020-2021

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Articles & Short Stories

Riot Prevention Measures amidst a Pandemic

Devansh Dev, BBA, Batch of 2024, NMIMS Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai.

The riots that have been taking place across the globe are both a new and an old phenomena. While COVID-19 might be new to mankind, pandemics, epidemics, and aftermaths of infectious diseases have always been there. One of the major challenges that are being faced by world leaders is to determine measures to control the spread of the virus, while facing the impossibility of controlling millions of individuals worldwide. Every hierarchy of government is contributing and pondering over ways to curb the spread.

It should not come as a surprise when humans don't respond well to forced lockdowns. History is filled with examples proclaiming that with imprisonment comes feelings of fear, frustration, or helplessness. These emotions are generally aggravated by the sentiments that the vulnerable are taken advantage of. A study shows that adrenaline and stress hormones like cortisol tend to kick in an acute stress response (hyperarousal). This is what leads to a fight or flight [1] response that we generally hear of.

Considering the fact that the days are over when humans used to live the life of cavepeople, the 21st century provides more grave issues to which the humans react. Lack of trust in authority, geographic proximity to others in a similar situation, and a shared purpose and intensity are the most prominent ones. This validates the point that riots aren't generally as mindless as they are projected.

How Riots are Predictable during Lockdown -

Starting off with Italy, a never happened before containment decree [2] was signed there and the details got leaked before the announcement somehow. The result included thousands of Italians packing their essentials and fleeing from the country, probably carrying the virus with them. Furthermore, the same announcement caused riots to break out in the prisons and multiple prisons became a victim of the same resulting in loss of lives. [3] The same was observed in various other countries as well.

Unprecedented riots carried on for four days in the West Point Neighbourhood of the Liberian Capital of Monrovia during the Ebola Virus outbreak in 2014-15. [4] During the same time, a government official was escorted out of the zone which caused major unrest am-

ongst the community which led to outrage via violence thus claiming more lives combined with Ebola.

Going back further in time, we recall the Russian Plague which took over Moscow when the city was quarantined, resulting in many deaths including the murder of the Archbishop in the 18th Century. [5] The cholera pandemic caused no less than 7 riots around the globe in the 1800s [6] just because of the disconnect between the government and the public. Wisconsin saw many protests during the smallpox isolation in the 1900s, [7] while the same was experienced by Mexico during the H1N1 (swine flu) outbreak in 2009. [8] As the examples go on and on, how can we expect that the humans of 2020 would behave any differently than their predecessors?

Recently, riots broke out when a Black person, namely George Floyd, was killed by a white cop on duty in Minneapolis. A similar incident, which can be compared to this was in Philadelphia during late September of 1918, when a huge parade was to be organised to raise money for the war effort. Several doctors urged and opposed the parade in order to prevent casualties due to the pandemic which had then just started from the military bases and spread onto the general public. The same influenza took the lives of almost 100 people on the first day of the parade and after that, the numbers just rose. Similarly, during the recent protests in the US, most of the police officers did wear face shields and masks while the protesters didn't. They were in the form of a huge crowd, breaking all the norms of social distancing, engaging in pushing each other, and stumbling over one another. Over the period of two weeks, the people infected during the riots started to show symptoms and spread the virus to other people as well. The results weren't as devastating as the 1918 pandemic but were demotivating.

Let's talk about the red flags raised by President Trump's behaviour during the pandemic in the US. He refused to wear a mask and showed no urging for social distancing at the press conferences held at the White House. He also urged the red states to reopen as soon as possible, even before it was considered safe. He also supported the armed citizens at Michigan who attacked a statehouse, just because they couldn't accept

their liberty being restricted in any manner. While a real leader would have enforced all bits and pieces of precautionary measures no matter how inconvenient they might be just because they were in the best interest of everyone, he side-lined all the advice given by the scientists and took the pandemic as a joke.

Without any kind of support or gesture from the people's representative, the angry protestors found it way too easy to forget all about the pandemic and didn't take precautions.

Even in India, the measures taken by the Government don't seem to be promising. There is substantially more the government must do by method of: one, alleviation; two, scaling up the healthcare framework to deal with a surge of Covid-19 patients as India seems to enter the phase of network spread; and three, remaking the debilitated economy, especially the casual area, after the scourge. India doesn't have the lower limit, which means around a million beds at intensive care units (ICUs), to embrace a methodology of allowing the virus to spread and rewarding that 5% of those tainted who might require ventilators at ICUs, while the remainder of the populace get what disease transmission specialists call group resistance.

Nor does India have the innovative or hierarchical ability to forcefully test each individual who shows Covid-19-like side effects, quarantine each and every individual who tests positive, follow every one of their contacts, test all of them, quarantine the individuals who test positive, follow their contacts, etc., to emulate Taiwan, Singapore, or South Korea. That leaves each sound individual disengaging themselves at home as the main other option.

Be that as it may, this lockdown carries huge wraps of the economy to a pounding stop, murdering the livelihoods of by far most of India's laborers working endlessly in the casual economy. Furthermore, individuals who live in ghettos and exile camps, for example, the mob casualties in Northeast Delhi, don't have the advantage of social distancing. Alongside early notification for the lockdown, the government ought to have reported measures to give help to these defenseless individuals. The least the government could have done was to run exceptional trains for vagrants to get back before the lockdown started.

Presently, the Centre has asked state governments to give the voyaging transients food and asylum. A few states are following up on the mandate and in any event, offering transport. However, this isn't finished without

the move of cash to the records of vagrant laborers. By what method should this be possible?

Transferring the message via Digital Media –

Airtel was in the dock sometime prior to opening installment bank accounts for its customers without their say as such. Using this technological ability, each telephone administrator, regardless of whether it as of now has a banking permit or not, can be asked to open bank accounts for each client. They can distinguish the poor from their normal income per client. Telephone proprietors that have moved across state limits can be organized and cash can be moved to these accounts. Being liberal, allotment of Rs. 2,000 in any case can occur, with a message to impart the assets to their companions without a telephone or with telephones that have not been energized. Supplementing ads during the telecast of the Ramayan serial, WhatsApp and the radio can be used to get the message out to passing migrants.

Money can be rushed to bank mitras (banking journalists) along the vagrant courses, recognized by geotracking the migrants' telephones. Money can be promptly moved to all Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme laborers, without sitting tight for them to work. Turning up for physical work was planned as a component of self-determination by poor people. Since that determination has been accomplished and since work is absurd during lockdown, essentially moving the give to their bank accounts and twofolding the ex-gratia payments declared for ladies Jan Dhan account holders and pensioners might be the way out.

Each political party should prepare its participants to create volunteers for circulating food parcels and getting the message out on cash moves. Ex-servicemen can be called upon to shape troops and watches to accomplish the work, wearing veils. For that, veils must be secured. Utilizing the elegance time frame offered by the lockdown, we should prepare for the health-related crisis that will emerge. More than 8,000 factories are delivering defensive veils in China. Indian articles of clothing creators need to reorient their creation lines to make veils and defensive suits. Synthetic enterprises should produce the materials expected to make texture for making clinical outfits. Designing products creators should produce ventilators. The government ought to resolve to purchase everything that is made, if standards are met. Abbot is accounted for to have come out with a SARS-CoV-2 infection testing unit that gives an outcome in a



short time. Obligatory licenses can be issued and circulated to Indian organizations in each area to mass produce this testing pack in India.

The world's fourth biggest tele-medication administrator is an Indian organization called Glocal Hospitals, which has tie-ups with a few state governments. Its tele-counselling can benefit anyone through telephone or home PC and during the Covid-19 crisis, the organization has postponed all charges to spare the specialist's expenses. The government could take care of everything. Glocal has additionally planned a testing community and an ICU ward that utilizes ultraviolet light to accomplish 99.9% sanitization of the office, to forestall clinical work force or individuals seeking tests/treatment from getting the sickness. Shut schools or different spaces can be converted into fixed test places and stopgap ICUs. As a program of financial recuperation, after the wellbeing crisis has passed, a thousand new hospitals each with an ICU, in open private organization can be assembled. Covid-19 won't be the last pandemic to hit the nation. Regardless, India needs to expand its healthcare foundation.

One thousand courtrooms can be assembled and decided through an enrolled all-India legal help. The new towns under development can be completed. The tele-medication and the distance learning experience of this episode can be influenced to scale up healthcare and instruction.

Where is the cash to be originated from? Huge sums can be raised from abroad: loaning rates are bargain basement. The dollar, as the place of refuge money, is colossally exaggerated. This brings down the cash hazard premium impressively, if the cash is raised at this point. RBI can launch a vivacious Indian security showcase by legitimately buying corporate securities by the ton. The security market can be utilized to distribute capital productively. Cash can be printed, used for huge scope ventures, and development will deliver the produce expected to forestall the demand created from transforming into overabundant demand. India's prospects are many. What is required is the will to act.

And yet, despite the fact that this wellbeing emergency mirrors our country's political, social, and community foundation, this plague has no thought for ethical quality. Individuals partying in a pool may live while those fighting police mercilessness may bite the dust. Individuals who diligently adhered to the standards of social distancing may become ill, while the individuals who ridiculed them joyfully toast their companions in a jam-packed bar. There is no equitable rationale here.

There is no equity in who can inhale simply and who can't inhale by any means.

Endnotes –

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Monetizing Fear of Missing Out: A Take On Social Media's Business Model



other spectrum, body dysmorphia, self-image issues, addictions to name a few. This bubble that we're in is taking us away from issues that require our urgent attention, climate change for instance. We've become zombies, our opinions now prone to anyone who can pay for what social media will show us next and it is concerning because we spend 10 hours of our day on our phones. There is a need for the big tech companies to respect our attention and minimize these manipulations that are so embedded in their esurient race to make profit.

Social media can make anything trend, most importantly and the worst of all, fake news. A piece of fake news on social media spreads like wildfire. It spreads 6 times faster than real news.

Imagine that for a second, a world where no one knows what is fake and what is real but only what is trending. Now, take a look at the negative side of this. Anyone who wants to spread fake news and use that to their advantage and make even 5% of the 3.80 billion people believe in it, can create absolute havoc.

Take the example of the current situation. There are insane amounts of fake news available on the coronavirus. Some even believed Whatsapp messages that said eating Chinese food would give you coronavirus. On 15th April, 2020, thousands of migrant workers assembled at a railway station because of one piece of fake news that told them they would get to go home. We emerged from chaos and we're going right back into it. Governments can be destabilized with this technology, civil wars can be started, democracy can be hacked and the entire fabric of society can crumble.

I'm not here to tell you that we should ban social media. There are two sides of every coin. Social media has brought benefits to society. We can even go as far to say that social media might have been the reason that we survived this pandemic. It has made e-learning and working from home possible and a multitude of knowledge now available online. Maybe the reason you are reading this article is also only due to the fact that you found it online.

Having said that, we can't reverse the fact that it has made us into constantly insecure and vulnerable human beings that function on numbers. Numbers of likes, followers, and viewers. Nor can we reverse the fact that artificial intelligence and machine learning is evolving at a rate faster than that of the human brain. The day when it passes human strengths might not be here yet, but the

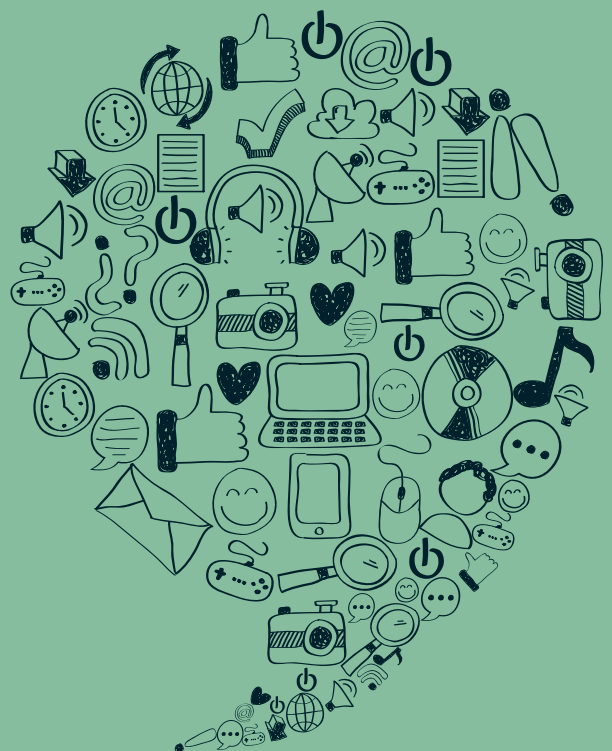
day when it has learned how to take advantage of human weaknesses is certainly here.

What once seemed like a utopian promise of connection to anyone far away has been divulged to burn through our data and attention and emotional stability for profit. But it doesn't need to be this way. In the short term, there needs to be better governance and better laws about how data is collected and advertisements are shown. We can also enact data taxes, to make sure companies have a financial incentive to stop collecting as much data as is being collected by them.

In the long term though, this won't be enough. We need to imagine a better internet. An internet that doesn't make us think that it's do-or-die if we don't answer an email or a notification or check our phone every 10 minutes.

This isn't something we can change as individuals but it can be something we can ask for from institutions that design the entire array of products that monetize our vulnerabilities and time. Better design in user interfaces to make sure we're putting temptations away when we're trying to accomplish goals. How about one digest of notifications at a time instead of one notification in every 2 minutes that wastes user time? It is a giant shift, but wasn't social media as we see it today a giant shift too?

In case you still think that this isn't an immediate need for our society, I have checked my phone at least 15 times while writing this article, and you probably have checked your phone or at least thought of it while reading this article.



Bird set Free

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The weight of her body sank into the soft bed, her head lay on the pillow, begging for sleep. Time seemed to slip through her fingers. Her eyes focused on the warm yellow of her ceiling, her ears an unwilling witness to the dialogue in the kitchen. Turning over she burrowed her face, inhaling the wonderful odour of her sheets and praying the noise away. She focused on the soft creaking of the fan. The not-so-distant voices were getting closer. Clenching her jaw, she shut her eyes and prayed harder. His heavy footsteps moved away from the door. A breath of relief followed by a wince as she heard the softer steps that dragged behind. Seems like they were moving the “argument” to the living room. No sleep tonight.

The sun poked through the curtains. She lay drowning in exhaustion, with a spot of gratefulness for not being summoned and guilt for not helping her mother. Amma walked into the room, Sakhi turned away. She didn't want to look at her face. She knew how the conversation would go, she knew already where the bruises on her face would sit. The new ones would seat themselves right over the faded ones, never quite healing. It was their routine.

“I'm so tired of this, nowhere to go, and absolutely nothing I can do about it.”

Sakhi hated the casual tone, the indifference. It was insufferably simple to her. “Just leave Him, Amma? I don't understand why this can't just be over? Let's just run away.”

The sigh of ‘you-wouldn't-understand’ came next. “Sakhi you know we can't just leave.”

“But why not? What are we staying for? To take turns being his punching bag?”

Another sigh. “Go where? How will we live? Whose house? And who will feed either of us?” Amma's curls were already a flattened mess, not that they ever were neat. In fact, Sakhi couldn't remember the last time any of them had fixed up their hair. She was thankful for the pandemic in that aspect, it took off the burden of having to keep up appearances.

“I don't know Amma, we'll figure it out! Is this the alternative? I can't. I can't keep doing this. And you take the brunt of it, how do you want to stay?”

“You know I don't want to but we don't have a choice!”, Amma's voice got jumpier and her face began to flush. Her light skin had been one of two reasons Sakhi's grandmother approved of their marriage. That and the dowry.

“He keeps taking your money, I get it, start a secret account? Even if we aren't leaving now, what about later? Are we going to live like this forever? Don't tell me that's your plan.” Here come her own tears, she hates this part. Early morning crying gives day-long headaches.

“There is no plan- I don't know Sakhi, I really don't!”

There came Amma's tears, just beginning to drop, her face beet-red. How Sakhi wished she could bring a stop to all of this. What she wouldn't do for them not to have to cry another day. She held up her hand to wipe Amma's tear. Sakhi and her mother were distinct in many ways her lanky and angular face, brown skin, straight hair, hot-headedness and lack of patience all differed from Amma's lovely round face paired with equally round, gentle eyes, ever calm and abundant reserves of patience, Sakhi evidently took after her father.

“Vaishhhh! Vaishali! Come quickly my shoulder hurts”, Amma's eyes shut in apprehension, Sakhi's stomach lurched.

“Coming! Time for you to get up as well”, she directed to Sakhi. It was almost fascinating to see her mother switch roles like that, one second she was the distressed wife who wanted to leave her husband and the next she was a wonderfully subservient, perfect wife. Her eyes eerily calm as she walked to go rub his stupid back.

“Well about time I get up too”, she thought. She was going to bury herself in work and forget about her house. Online college was disappointing, she wasn't going to be moving away anytime soon. The thought was immediately washed over by guilt, she hated that she was running away, she didn't want to leave her mother alone in his grasp, but she also couldn't take it anymore. The acrylic white floor was a crisp cold, her leg hairs tingling. She turned left past the door frame. She made sure to avoid brushing past the splintered wood around the handle, its woody brown expanse interrupted by peeling paint, baring its pale underneath. She turned left towards her bathroom and was greeted by the astounding stench of His room. She couldn't even pretend to call it their room. The stale alcohol combined with his terrible breath was disgusting to behold. It was a stench that greeted her most days, she never could get used to it, she felt the burning bile rise in her throat.

She stepped in and picked up her toothbrush. His bed creaked and she began brushing quickly, his feet dragged slowly, coming closer and closer. Her looming gloom was joined by dread and fear, He came up to her and held out His toothbrush. She promptly dumped some toothpaste, avoiding his keen gaze.

“Good Morning”, he smiled. “Morning”, she huffed back, this was what she hated the most, this unsettling friendliness, the pretence of how everything was perfectly fine. The facade would melt away the second she didn’t comply, it was best to... humor Him.

“Want to watch a movie? I’m making lunch today”, He sounded so excited. Once again she was struck by everyone’s ability to switch characters so quick. “No thanks, lots of work due this week, I best catch up”, in the most neutral tone she could muster, she could see him in her peripheral, the smell making her retch. She had to decide between gagging or brushing her teeth. Choosing the latter, she finished up and got out of there. Boy did she hate Sundays.

The rest of the day was spent cooped up in her room with her laptop, interrupted by the unfortunate event that is lunch, complete with awkward pauses, terrible jokes and all-rounded silence from the rest of the family. Sakhi kept her head bowed, trying to escape the room and into her head but always brought back by the clinking of ice. It irked her more than anything, it scared her more than anything. He was already passed out by four. The respite was short-lived.

Sakhi found herself awake yet again, the sheets less clean, the odour was barely there anymore. She’d have to find another distraction. His voice kept getting louder and hers pitifully tiny. It was going to be one of those days. The creaking fan wasn’t doing much, she needed more. She switched on her phone, flinching at the sudden illumination. The time flashed 2:30, she sighed and opened up the music app. Her fingers flew on their own, swiping to the playlist that always lulled her to bed. Her head flopped onto the pillow, ears focused on the music. The slow buzz in her head lulling her to sleep. Perhaps she would actually sleep tonight.

crash

Been a while since he’d broken a plate.

thump clatter

Been a while since... he dropped the knife stand? okay, that one was new. Odd.

THUMP

She scrambled out of bed, “Oh no, Maa’s fallen, Maa’s fallen, it’s finally happened, oh no, oh no.” She shivered outside her blanket, her lavender heart print shorts weren’t doing much.

She pulled at the door and was immediately blinded by the light. She walked toward the kitchen anyway, palm on eyes, too impatient to wait for her eyes to catch up. She slipped and fell quite abruptly in something warm and wet. Her shorts were now uncomfortable warm and clingy. Looking down, she sat in a pool of red and she reeled, struggling to stand. It clung to her thighs, a slow trickle making its way down.

Closing her eyes she wondered if she’d gone mad and it was a sensory illusion of some kind. She hoped it was. The alternative would be that Amma was hurt. *Amma*. Her eyes darted around to look for the source. He lay right there, prostrate, facing her, eyes shut. A trickle of blood from the wound on his head and a pool surrounding his middle.

The backdoor creaked open behind her and she almost fell a second time. She looked around as Amma walked in with her butcher knife. She stopped in the doorway, like a deer in headlights. Sakhi shivered at the draught brought in by the open door. The tap running in the distance. “Why did you wash the knife?”, Sakhi’s mouth moving of her own accord.

“What?”

“Why did you wash the knife? Why was that the first thing you did?”

“Oh no I just did? I’m not sure why. I wanted it clean before it kept it back, didn’t want it to stain my stand.” she said, as she slipped a smaller knife, that Sakhi hadn’t noticed, back into the stand.

“Wait so what’s the meat cleaver for?”

“.....”

“Just tell me.”

“To cut up the body?”

“....why are you doing that?”

“I figured it’d be better to bury pieces around with my plants.”

“No, let’s just burn it”

“I thought about it but that’d bring unwanted attention.”

“Fine let’s cut it up and then burn it, one by one”

The pair stayed up all night covering their tracks. The morning Sakhi woke up to the sound of her mother singing a hymn, she had a beautiful voice and she sang completely lost in the words of the prayer. The events of last night horrified Sakhi but it was the first time in weeks that she had slept so well. She peered out her window at the chirping birds. They had no idea what the future held for them. They’d figure something out.

Who Am I ?

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Who are you? HE ASKS

Who am I?

I'm a bit hard to describe, really hard, I've got this little thing, nothing like a big thing, well it's umm biggeshh, but it's not huge, well, it's not tiny either, it's, it's just a thing, but how to tell you about it, Oh, you want to know who I am, well ...here's who I am!

I am someone who wakes up to a bright sunny Monday morning. Sitting on the fusty, old, maple wood bench of my backyard, I'm listening to the rustling of the dark green mango leaves, feeling the bright sun kissing my face, my eyes shining bright, I've beautiful eyes by the way, skimming through Dan Brown's novel, enjoying my hazelnut coffee, gulping down the chocolate chip pancakes I just made, everything's perfect you see, I can see some golden Orioles chirping and resting in the mango groves, some squirrels chattering and purring at a distance, moving back and forth into the leaf nests and deep dark cavities of the mango tree.... beautiful Monday morning feels, people. Nothing could be better than this. I'm enjoying nature's lullaby.

(cell phone rings)

Suddenly a notification on my phone breaks the peaceful silence and I realise it's 9:30 in the morning and I'm late for work, (not again)

I grab my laptop and specs from the table, work like crazy, it's a big day, I have a presentation scheduled at 11, it's 10:40, I'm all psyched, Kundan gets me my go to coffee order, my boss, she's proud of me because i ace my presentation, the clients are impressed, everyone's congratulating me, there are people celebrating my victory in the background but, but here's where the problem starts.....

A deafening silence follows. Something gloomy, something dark just kicks in, the wholesome smile on my face suddenly vanishes, this eccentric drive gradually overpowers my mind, my heart feels heavy, as if someone's put a 20 kg weight on my chest, I can't breathe, my fingers go numb, I grab my bag and head straight towards home, voices of people are faintly audible now, they're calling me back.....

(wait, don't go, goooooo, no don't go, I said just leave, oh boy, inner voice rumbling)

And in no time, I'm at home. I'm scrolling through the notifications (cell phone chimes)

Texts received from colleagues: "congratulations, why did you leave suddenly, hey, are you okay, amazing presentation dude".

I realise that the glistening in my eyes has vanished, as if someone's doused the fire they carry, a fire to thrive, to strive, to succeed, to learn, to grow.

I decide to sleep it off, but I can't seem to do that either. Maybe because I'm starving, yes, yes, that is it, I'm just starving, it's nothing big, (inner voice says) I order my favorite Italian red sauce pasta,

"Your order will be delivered in 30 minutes" (The text on the cellphone)

30 minutes, well I can wait for 30 minutes. "Just listen to some jazz honey and you'll be fine" (inner voice says again), damn, the music isn't helping either, it's coming again, the dark pitch, it's coming again,

Doorbell rings

"Ma'am, here's your order. Have a nice day".

Pause

I've been staring at my pasta for the past 45 minutes, 15 seconds, the delicious red sauce pasta, I'd been craving for but I can't seem to have it. I'm not hungry anymore.

"Stop being so panicky Vrinda, you're just hungry, have the pasta, you're not sad" (inner voice says, constant battling)

Wait! hey shut up, inner me! stop deluding me. I'm distressed, I'm afraid, I'm dejected, I'm, I'm lonely, should I call someone? But no one will understand because this feeling's ineffable, it's, it's hard to describe. Forget it, I'll just have my pasta. (Vrinda says)

So, you see this is who I am, I'm just exceptionally normal, but my feelings aren't, they're jittery, sometimes spooky, sometimes stressy, but people, it's normal to live in an overwhelming emotional bubble like this, I just tend to mess things up sometimes okay, but I still am myself, an unimaginably, extraordinarily ordinary self.

Umm, well, that's who I am, exceptionally normal.

I ANSWER...



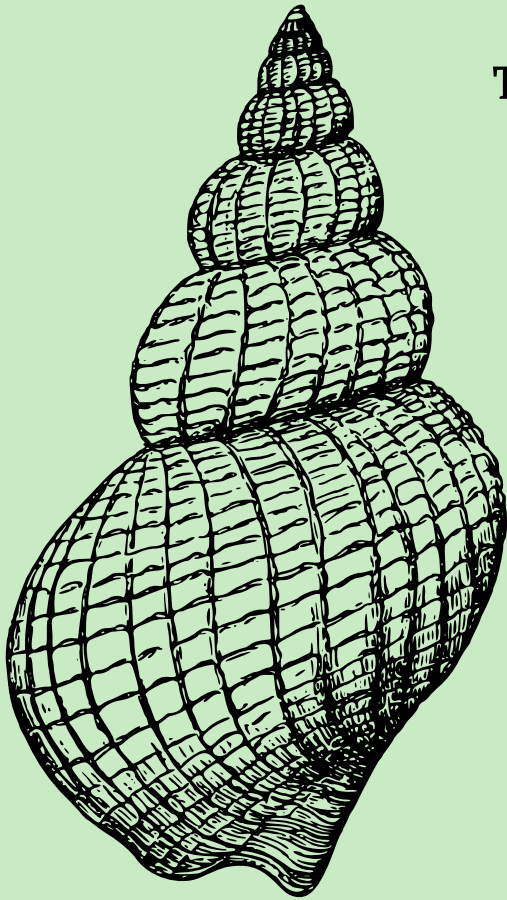
SOMETHING HIDDEN

By Amrita Gijare

Is there something to hide?

Facades are breathtakingly majestic, while they cover the structure
within.

Is there something to hide?



Tears are happy and smiles are grim.

Shimmering tapestries

conceal dark doors

Is there something to hide?

Seemingly amicable curves

above the chin

Yet the dead eyes, and

the averted feet

Stop the heart before the leap,

Is there something to hide?

Not once, but many times,

Not just here but everywhere,

There's elation: finding a face that's real; or at least until the masks
fall off;

Weep and weep some more, except to see, alas! Even that was a simulation.

There's a lot hidden; But why?

The tale that comics tell, never is overdressed, bejewelled and in a golden veil

It is but something naked as naked can be
A flashlight, the dark door never before sees

Why not? In a world of facades with no real structure within,
Truth is the only joke; at least a real joke.

A heart aches, why is a lot hidden?

But there is solace, however doubtful its utility maybe;

For the box also had hope; So what,
if it was part of Zeus's treachery?

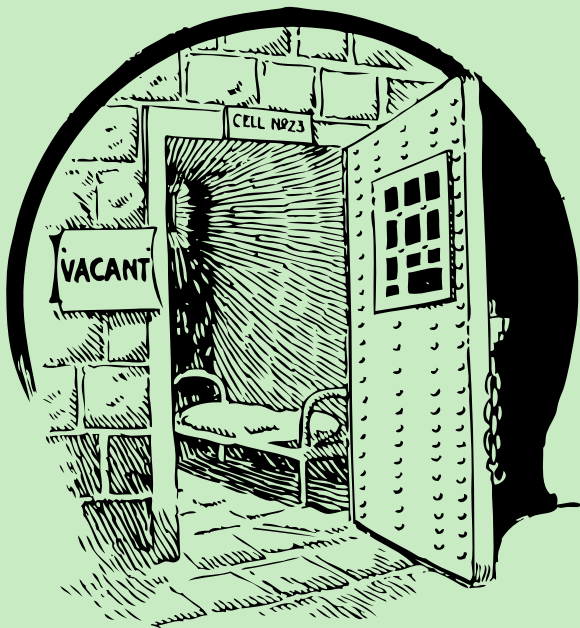
At least it is now known – it was
the shadow that was dead; the
eye was alive and blazing within.

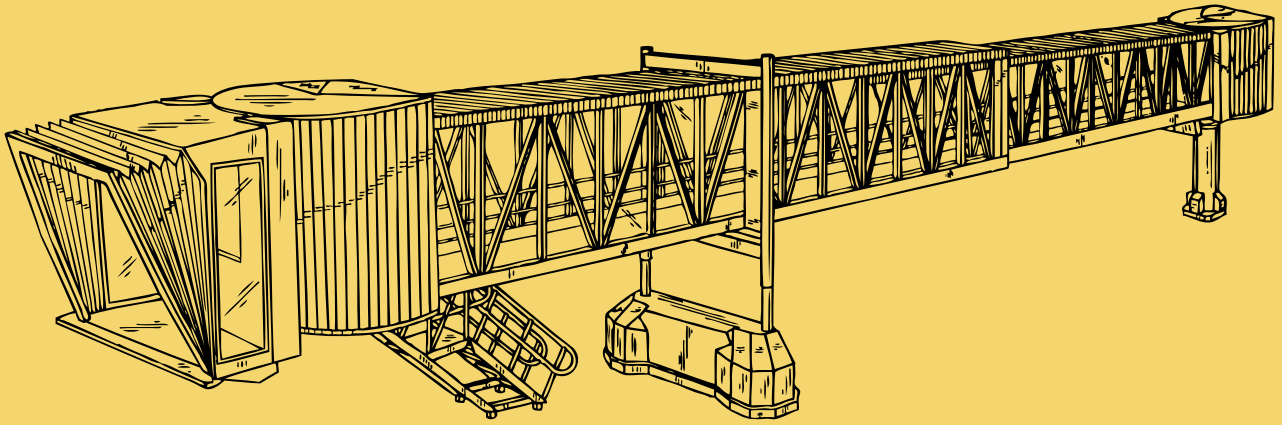
And perhaps that shadow, was of a
treacherous world, with the false
facades of the hurting true?

The deadness was perhaps the crocodile
membrane – evolved to protect, yet ended up pricking.

For it gave a blurred vision, a half-life.

It's a boon and a curse, that a lot has to be hidden.





Invisible Quotes

By Bhargavi G. Iyer

The lethargy of facile techniques,
Like the ease of helicopters to escalate peaks;
With a click and a tap and a job well done,
Scorned sanctions eclipse mendacious streaks.

But no one reads between the lines,
Or apprehends impostors among the dotes;
The counterfeit continually shines,
Obfuscating the invisible quotes.

Sentiments and speculations imposed by right,
No individual owns an original insight;
Each thought dragooned by that of another,
Influences melding into a social plight.

The incitement that subdues dissent,
Cannot be enumerated in votes;
For words can be thrust, stolen, or lent,
Behind the veil of invisible quotes.

All those words unsaid, remain,
Locked away, conjectured in vain;
As occurrences, bonds and emotions wither,
Mouldering into mere rue and disdain.

And sorrow rehashes into neglect,
As bridges collapse into moats;
Unspoken silences introspect,
The infinitude of invisible quotes.

The solitude of acceptance is broken,
When myriad aspirations are awoken;
The verisimilitude of ennui is dispelled,
When one receives inspiration's token.

Creativity and motivation soar,
And every purpose persistently promotes;
The magnum opus to be augmented more,
Protected by invisible quotes.





Raiding the Waves

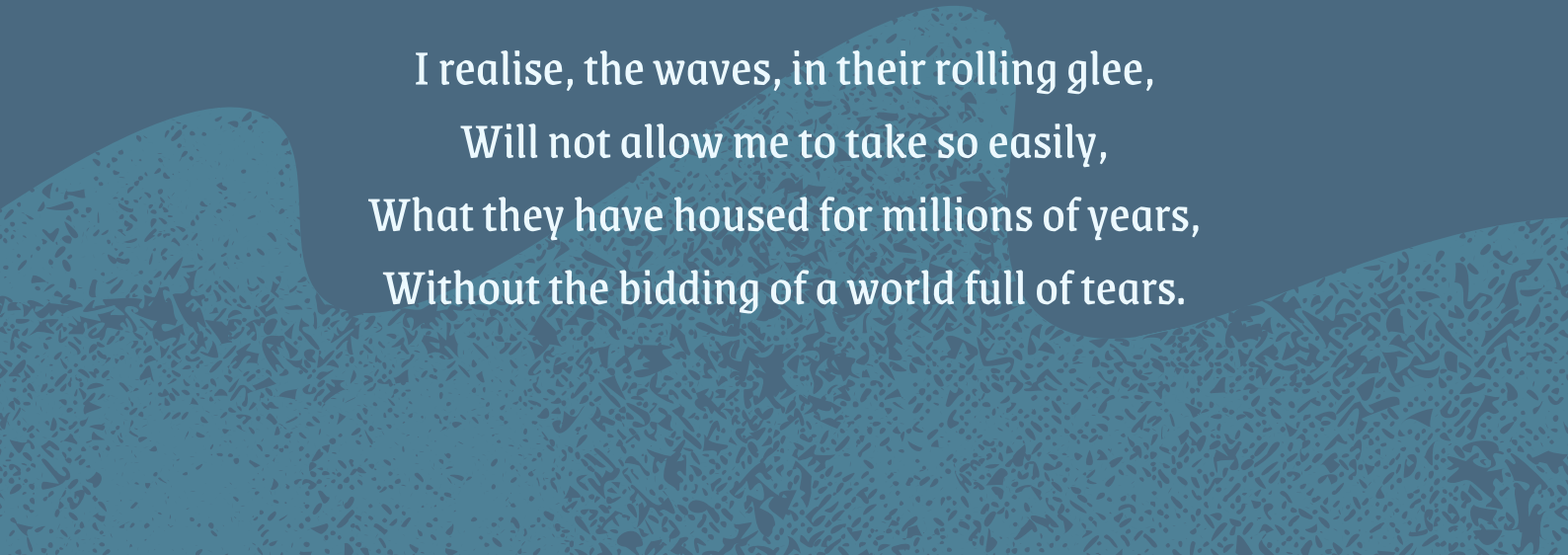
By Bhargavi G. Iyer

I see a copper coloured glow,
As salty, moistened warm winds blow,
And the southern sun shines from the west,
As waves forget the horizon's tempest.

I reach out below, trying to grab with my hand,
But the tides never heed my command.
Coming at me with white artillery rage,
Wiping out, me, and the sea bed's image.

The anxiety of getting wet, more than just my feet,
Makes me make a hasty retreat.
I flee back to the shore where my fortresses stand,
Not frail just because they're made of sand.

I realise, the waves, in their rolling glee,
Will not allow me to take so easily,
What they have housed for millions of years,
Without the bidding of a world full of tears.



I observe and prepare, this game plan of mine,
Strategically positioned on the treasury line,
And as it roams, then forth, now back,
I launch, to deal my wrestle, and attack.

But not so fast, as the waves return,
Now that's a lesson I newly learn.
The speed and power of the tide,
And my chances of acquiring what lies inside.
Next time, it ebbs, I plunge my wrist,
Deep into the transparent mist,
Before the tide could know of this theft,
I stash it in my treasure trove, the sea bereft.

The trinket that my fingers hold,
To me, is worth far more than gold.
Its twisty staircase, flat and thin,
Leads up to an open door within.



Where, once upon a time, lived one,
Now weathered by the sea and sun,
The shell lies empty, echoing the sea,
Who was its guardian for a near eternity.

I gather seven gems as such,
Smooth, porous, or sharp to touch,
Each, of a different colour and style,
Each struggle spent laughing, uniquely worthwhile.

Now, drenched in sandy water from head to toe,
I'm called, it's finally time to go.
My purse, holding every secret treasure,
That has supplied me with immeasurable pleasure.
Irrespective of adventures anyone braves,
None can derive pleasure as much as raiding the waves.



Sunlight Filtered by the Cloud

By Bhargavi G. Iyer

As though full of invisible dirt,
Or poison, to fitter substance, convert,
The purest of all alone allowed,
In sunlight, filtered by the cloud.

The heat hit by a boomerang,
Ran back to where its nation sang,
A hymn to ward off light aloud,
To sunlight, filtered by the cloud.

The sunsets hiding in the sea,
And cotton cloth, though just partly,
The red becomes a solemn shroud,
For sunlight, filtered by the cloud.

Even before those pallors peek,
And sharp at dawn, the poultry shriek,
Awakens abstracts of a sleeping crowd,
To sunlight, filtered by the cloud.

Barren lands suffering from fever,
Cured by a wondrous white web weaver,
Basking, drenched in a moment, proud,
Of sunlight, filtered by the cloud.

Not All Men

By Khushi Saboo

You say “not all men”,
But why do ALL women remain
oppressed?

You think we try to usurp your power,
But it's really just an effort to overcome
the deep-rooted patriarchy.

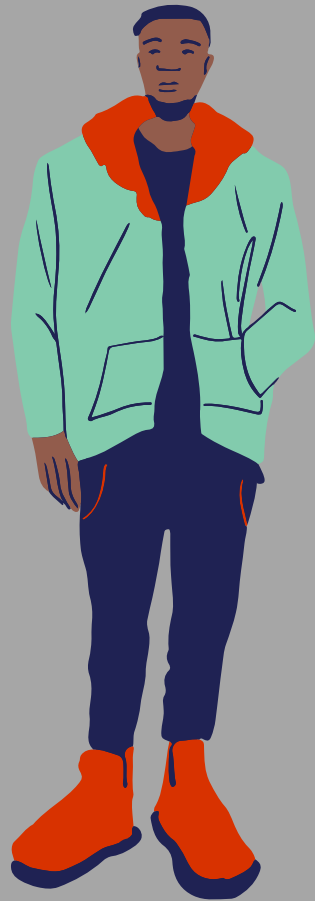
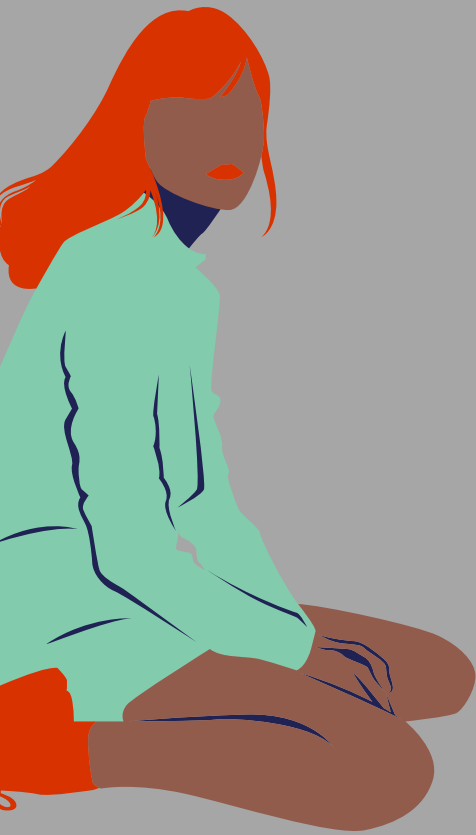
It's not about “her” deserving a higher
rank,

It's about giving her the very choice.
Don't tell her to stay in or cover herself,
Learn to inculcate basic human decency
yourself.

Remember when you glorify yourself for
doing the bare minimum,
“She” was always expected to know it
all.

Pussy for weakness, balls for courage,
That's not how it was meant to be.
This is not about who deserves the
power: he or she?

It's about simply letting her be.



To This World of Humanity

By Muskan Bansal

Humanity is dead
You may often hear
Our sacred mother earth
Is now full of hatred and fear!

Evil seeds had been planted long ago
When all the believers died
And the non-believers survived
Where some became winners
And others continued on the path of being
the one

The talk, here, is not about race
But about the fight on sin
The talk is not about good or bad
But about Humanity,





Hatred heated by a human cannon
Humanity is lost
In the heap of arguments
And had forgotten
What it means to live,
But as Humanity we don't have hope!

Separated by the outdated prejudice,
Ruled by greed,
And handicapped by ignorance
To scream and fight and hit back
Is everything left
And everyone is in it to win it,

But is the opposite true?
Or is humanity really dead?
As they once said
Humanity is a state of being human,
A choice to be made, honesty,
A community, you and me,
And a humble history!



My Charming Lady

By Paulami Naik



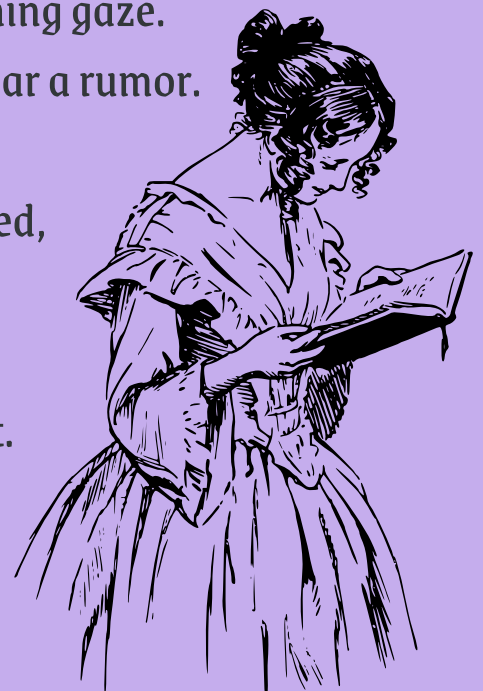
My charming lady, you inspire me to write.
How I love the way you hide, seize and prey,
Invading my mind all day and throughout the night,
Always dreaming, hoping, I'll be the next one you
betray.

If I may compare you to a jury so just,
You are more lively, more deadly, most cunning,
Your riotous heat toasts the light frolics of August,
But to endure wintertime feels unbecoming.

How do I love you? Let me count the ways.
I love your confidence, your beauty, defiance and
humor,

My days go by thinking of your stunning gaze.
But I know my love for you is nothing bar a rumor.

Now I must abscond, unrequited,
with a heavy heart,
For this fancy will die in my
head whilst we remain apart.





SOC 'EYE' TY

By Vrinda Tiwari

You like the curves of her body
You like the tone of her skin,
You're obsessed with fair colour
For you, brown would never win.
Her body deludes you

Did you ever strive to get through her heart?
Weren't you aware of the saying 'Appearances are deceptive'
You'll know when you watch people like Brienne of Tarth
Comments, Pronouncements made on her body right
Body shaming for you is such a delight,
HEY, RUMOUR HAS IT, as they say, are swords drawn on her
personal life.

Judgements are made upon her past,
Go get a life people because her present is done right.
You can't wear that dress
That skirt is too short
Oh! Those hot pants look like lingerie
Soc 'eye' ty! Would you please stop the mockery?
Brown or podgy, skinny or stout
It's her life and you have no right to mouth off on it, no doubt,
Indeed! it's her life and you have no right to mouth off on it, no
doubt.

I am ephemeral.

(I AM RAIN, I AM LIFE)

By Sushmita Das

I am ephemeral.
I have spent my whole lifetime,
Hoping;
To break free of this mortality,
Hoping;
for a taste of ambrosia,
a brush of immortality.
But,
What's written
will come to pass.
I fell,
Like the angels before me
Spiralling down,
No hope left.
I fell,
Suddenly
There's green around,
It's beauty if there was ever,
beauty in this harsh world.
And I,
am to nurture it.
I am Ephemeral.
But also,
I am life.

FROM YOUR EYE TO YOU

By Aria Sheth

When you let me gaze at the beautiful sky
When you allow me to spot that little girl begging on the
streets

The way you let me admire your body in the mirror
The times you let me stare into the darkness of the night.

The words 'aesthetic' and 'resplendent' fall short of meaning.

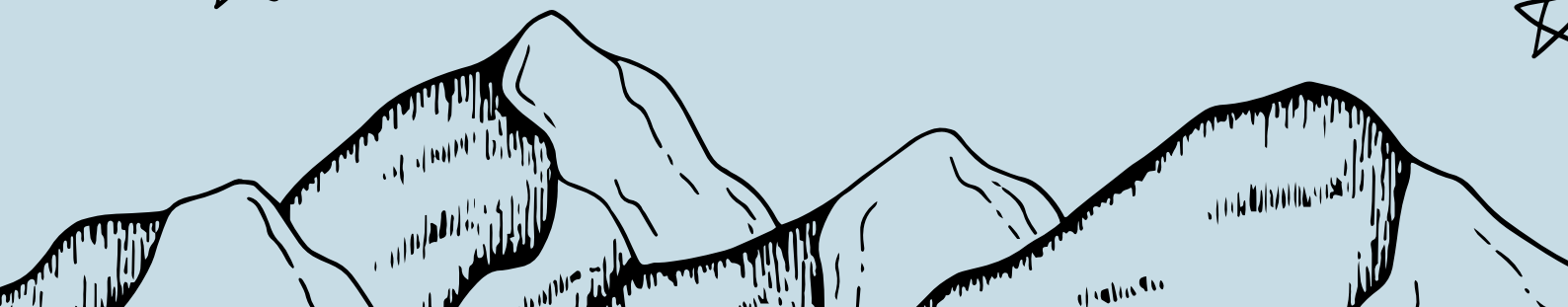
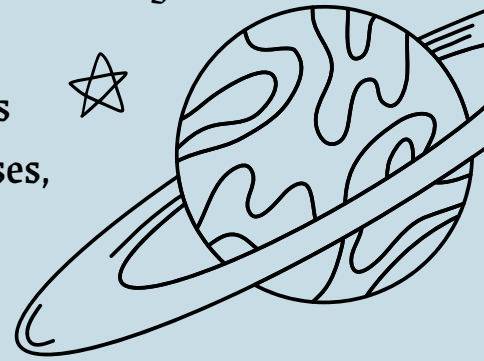
You protect me with those round frames
& accessorize me with your shiny sunglasses,
You beautify me with mascara
and sometimes, you just let me be.

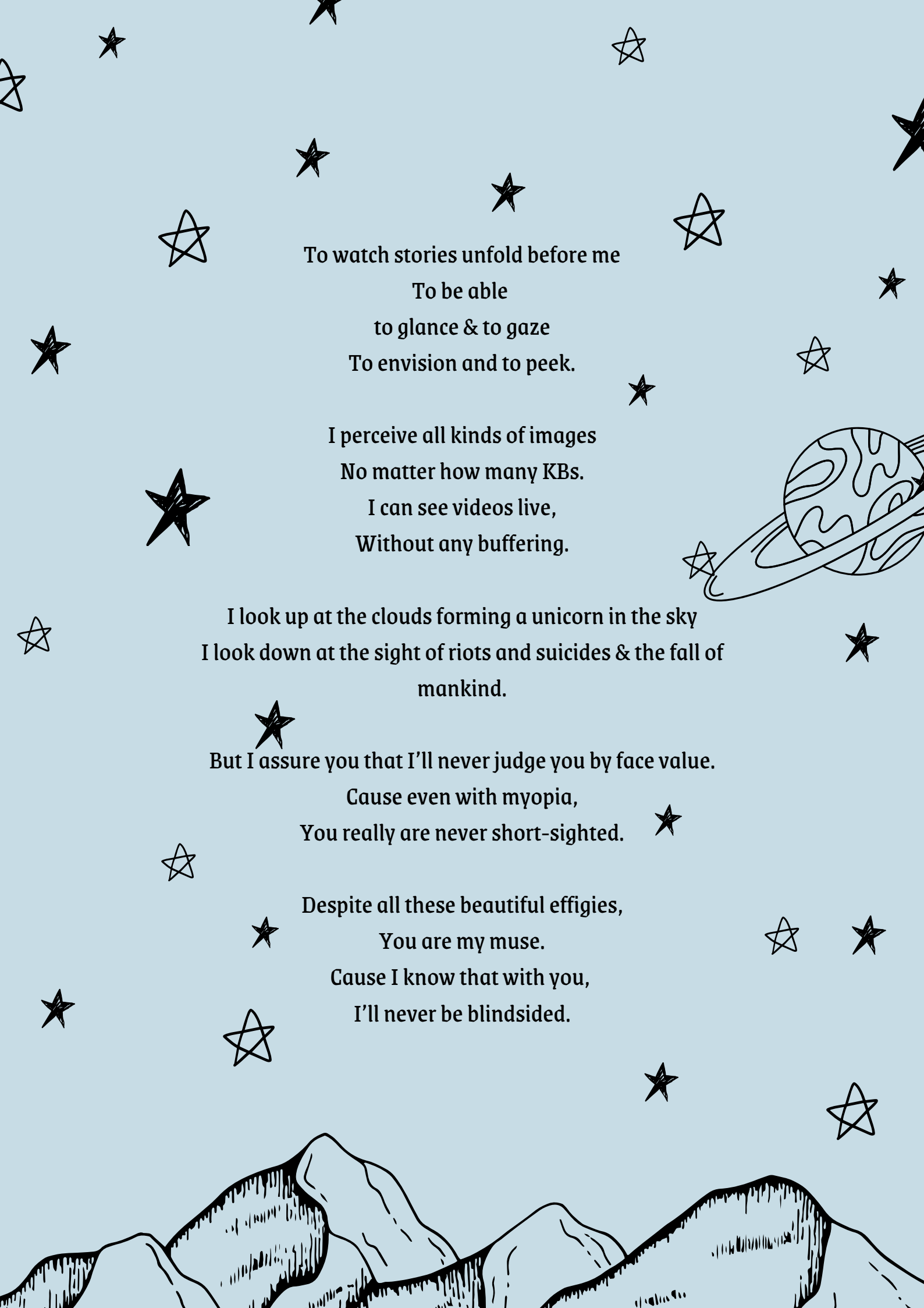
And
Eye consider myself so fortunate
To be seeing the giant airplanes rocketing towards me through
your window

To see that tiny beam of light through the door's keyhole.

To witness the convergence of two streams between
mountains

To see the sun emerge majestically through the horizon.
To witness the extravagance of the constellations forming.





To watch stories unfold before me
To be able
to glance & to gaze
To envision and to peek.

I perceive all kinds of images
No matter how many KBs.
I can see videos live,
Without any buffering.

I look up at the clouds forming a unicorn in the sky
I look down at the sight of riots and suicides & the fall of
mankind.

But I assure you that I'll never judge you by face value.
Cause even with myopia,
You really are never short-sighted.

Despite all these beautiful effigies,
You are my muse.
Cause I know that with you,
I'll never be blindsided.

THE ANONYMOUS COLLATERAL

By Aria Sheth

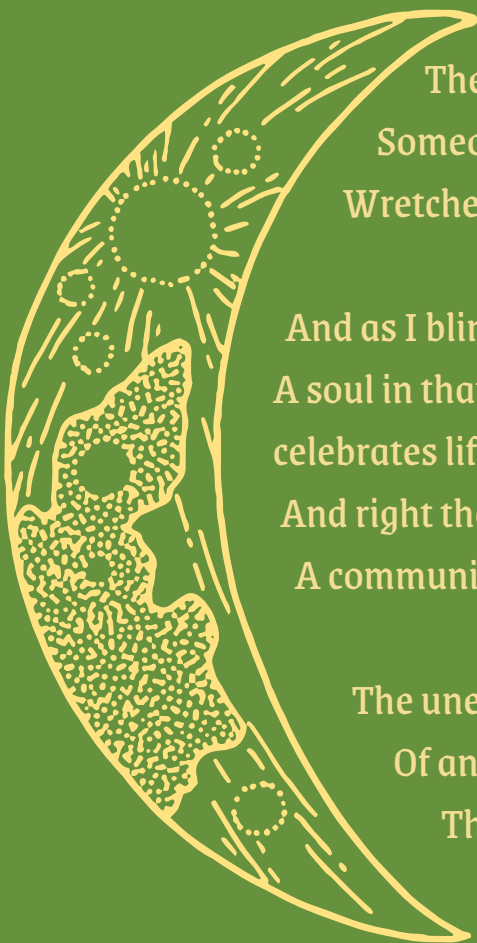
I often ponder over
The existence of another me
In a parallel universe,
A world I cannot see

Somewhere out there.
There is a content life form
Someone out there,
Wretched and forlorn.

And as I blink,
A soul in that world
celebrates life
And right there exists,
A community full of strife.

The unending possibilities
Of an infinite universe
The little bubbles of infinity
Among us who converse.

And yet those creatures
Think of us analogously
Our thoughts synced
Altogether vermicularly.



SELCOUTH

By Aria Sheth

The tiny, shimmering leaves,
When the wind blows,
Flutter like marvellous butterflies,
With their brilliant orange and green glow.

These butterflies reflect the sunlight,
The sunlight announcing the arrival of spring.
And the wind is unpredictable
Yet the birds, they joyfully sing.

'Tis the season that marks
The blooming of vibrant flowers.
But as I shift my gaze momentarily,
The wind seems to lose its power.

The alternating fluttering & stillness
Of the leaves, it intrigues me.
And despite the chaotic roads and bridges,
This queer scene fills my heart with glee.



वतन-ए-हिन्द

By Vrinda Tiwari

इस वतन-ए-हिन्द में मची तबाही की कहानी है ये
शाही इख्तियारत की खिदमत कर रहे ए हिंदुस्तान के हामील
इन हुकुमकारों की बेईमानी की कहानी है ये
हिन्दू मुस्लिम सिख ईसाई मज़हब के नाम पर हुए बटवारे से डर मत ऐ दोस्त
इन दलालों की तो कमाई है ये
लोकतंत्र तो एक मुखौटा है साहब



इन पाक नेताओं द्वारा लायी गयी तानाशाही है ये
मंदिर में अल्लाह और मज़जीद में राम
कभी नहीं
सांप्रदायिकता के नाम पर की जा रही धर्मों की नीलामी है ये
राम बाबरी कश्मीर जामिया इन मुद्दों से गुमराह ना होना
इन जिम्मेदारों की ही तो मेहेरबानी है ये
आज़ादी आज़ादी, इन नारों में छिपी राजनीती के फेर में ना फसना ओ राही
तख़्त के ज़ुल्मोंषितम से लड़ते हुए आज हर हिंदुस्तानी की ज़बानी है ये
हां इस वतन-ए-हिन्द में मची तबाही की कहानी है ये
शंख की आवाज़ पर उठती और अज़ान की आवाज़ पर घर में रौशनी देती हुई वो माँ
इन नेताओं के लिए सबसे बड़ी गलती है ये
हां इस वतन-ए-हिन्द में मची तबाही की कहानी है ये

IKSHAYEIN

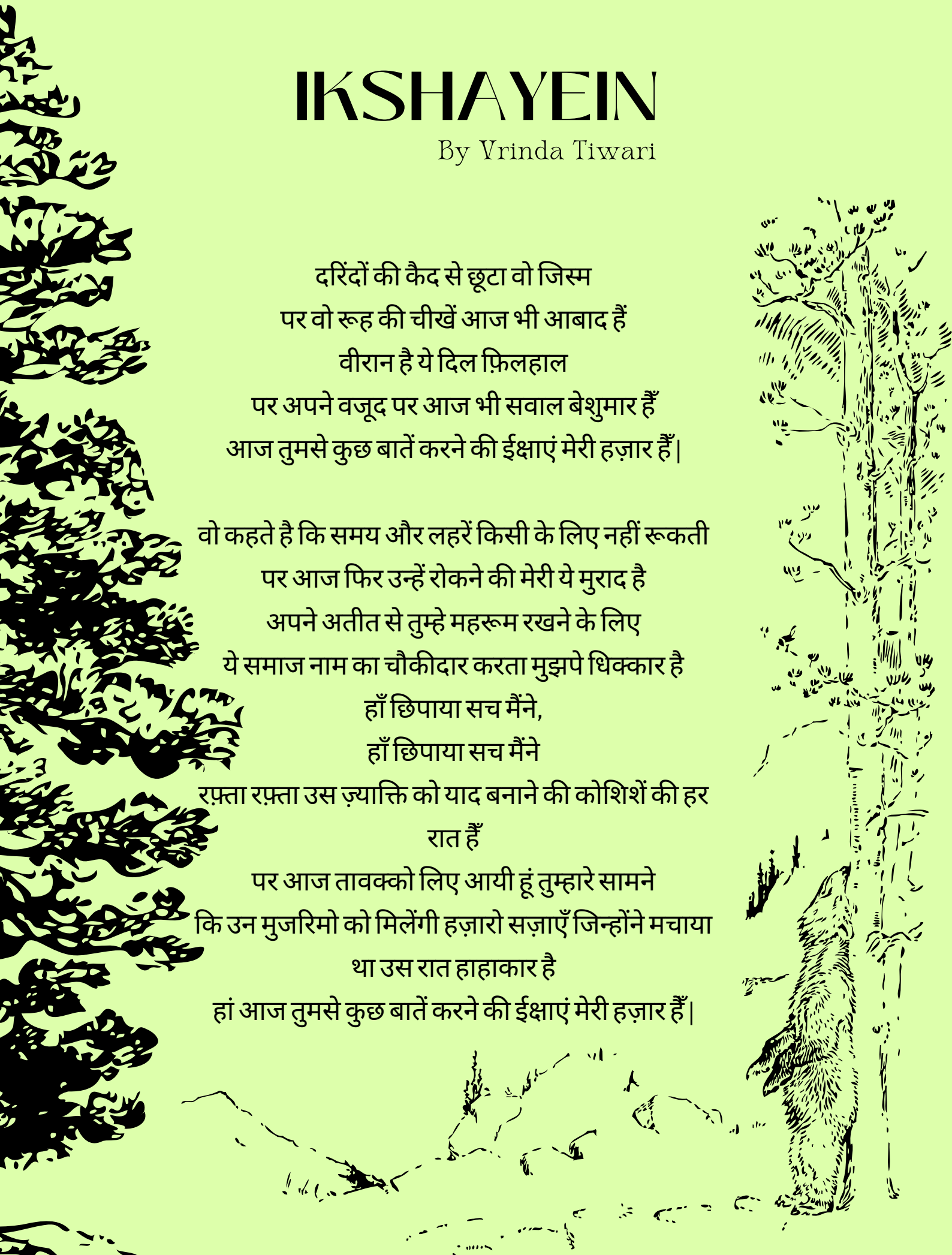
By Vrinda Tiwari

दरिंदों की कैद से छूटा वो जिस्म
पर वो रूह की चीखें आज भी आबाद हैं
वीरान है ये दिल फ़िलहाल
पर अपने वजूद पर आज भी सवाल बेशुमार हैं
आज तुमसे कुछ बातें करने की ईक्षाएं मेरी हज़ार हैं।

वो कहते हैं कि समय और लहरें किसी के लिए नहीं रूकती
पर आज फिर उन्हें रोकने की मेरी ये मुराद है
अपने अतीत से तुम्हें महरूम रखने के लिए
ये समाज नाम का चौकीदार करता मुझपे धिक्कार है
हाँ छिपाया सच मैंने,
हाँ छिपाया सच मैंने

रफ़ता रफ़ता उस ज़्याक्ति को याद बनाने की कोशिशें की हर
रात हैं

पर आज तावक्को लिए आयी हूं तुम्हारे सामने
कि उन मुजरिमो को मिलेंगी हज़ारो सज़ाएँ जिन्होंने मचाया
था उस रात हाहाकार है
हां आज तुमसे कुछ बातें करने की ईक्षाएं मेरी हज़ार हैं।



उस हवस, उस तालाब को मिटाने के लिए एक ज़िंदा लाश बना दिया
था मुझे

मेरी आत्मा को नोंचने की कोशिशों की सैकड़ों बार हैं
आज सीता नहीं, आज सतयुग की सीता नहीं,
रज़िया बनकर आयी हूं तुम्हे अतीत से वाकिफ़ करवाने की पिंजरे में
कैद होकर, उस अर्श को चूमने के सपने टूटे कड़ियों बार हैं,
हां आज तुमसे कुछ बातें करने की इक्षाएं मेरी हज़ार हैं।

ऐसे क्या देख रहें हो
ऐ मेरे दोस्त, इस तरह ना देख
पाख से नापाक की संज्ञा देनी तो बहुत ही आसान है
उस लड़की के साथ खड़े होकर इस ज़ुल्म का डटकर सामना करना
इस जिस्म से रूह तक की रक्षा करने वाला ही दुनिया का सबसे बड़ा
पहरेदार है
हां आज तुमसे कुछ बातें करने की इक्षाएं मेरी हज़ार हैं
तुमसे कुछ बातें करने की इक्षाएं मेरी हज़ार हैं।



भीड़ में अकेला

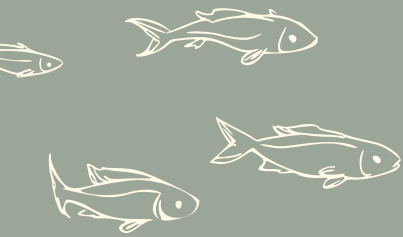
By Sakshi Sri

तू बीज था उस पेड़ का,
जिसे ना खोया जा सकता था, ना बोया जा सकता था।
पर बो दिया उसने, बो दिया उसने...
आखिर अशक था तू उसका
इसलिए बो दिया उसने।
पर तेरे बोते ही मानो बगीचे में तबाही सी मच गई, तूफान सा
आ गया।
सब जड़ से निकाल फेंकना चाहते थे तूझको, तू हो गया था
इस कदर बर्बाद।
मैं भी वहां ताज्जुब खड़ी तेरी बेशर्मी देखती रही,
मन ने बस एक ही सवाल दोहराया,
किस मिट्टी का बना है रे तू, इतनी ज़िल्लतों बाद भी यूं खड़ा है रे
तू।
तभी मेरी नज़र उस पेड़ पड़ी, जिसने तूझे बोया था,
उसकी आंखों से मानो आंसुओं का समंदर बह रहा हो,
बहे भी क्यों न, अरे बहे भी क्यों न...
नर नारियों वाले समाज में तूझे जन्म दिया था उसने, एक
किन्नर को जन्म दिया था उसने।
पर आज तू सारी बाधाओं को तोड़कर खड़ा हो गया है,
आज तू बड़ा हो गया है,
और माँ, माँ तेरी बूढ़ी...
आज हंस रही उसकी बूढ़ी आँखें,
मानो खिल्ली उड़ा रहीं हों समाज की,
अरे उड़ाए भी क्यों न,
उसका बच्चा अफ़सर जो बन गया है।।



बरसात की आवाज़ मुझे याद नहीं

By Bhargavi G. Iyer

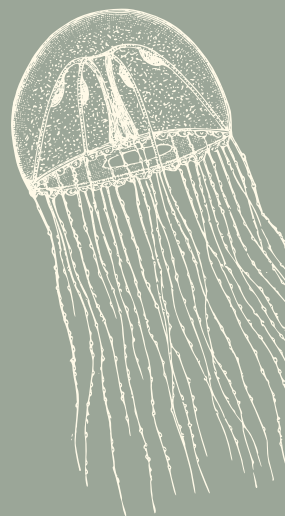
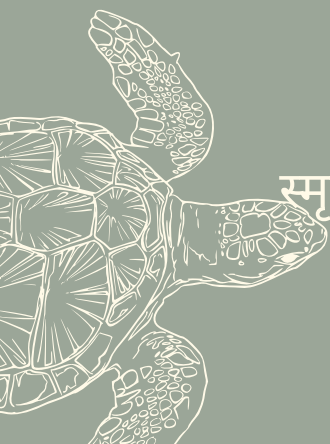


कई बादल गुज़र चुके हैं ।
नदियां, झरने, सब रुके हैं ।
मिट्टी में दरारें पड़ने लगी हैं,
जग में सारे जग सूखे हैं ।
मौसम की मुस्कानों का अब मोर से संवाद नहीं,
प्यासे मन की है पुकार । बरसात की आवाज़ मुझे याद नहीं ।

टपकते छत से पानी चखते,
घर में आधी छत्री न रखते ।
पहली बारिश की प्रतीक्षा में भीगे,
सड़कों में कागज़-नावों के संग तैर सकते ।
ऋतुओं की चाहतों की तरह, ये बूंदें अब आज़ाद नहीं,
सन्नाटों के शोर में फँसी, बरसात की आवाज़ मुझे याद नहीं ।

जब मिश्रित होता है रेत और जल,
चमक उठता है हर ताज महल ।
पानी में अमीर स्थान हो समृद्ध,
रौशनी से भरा रहता है हर कल ।
किसी और के लोभ में डूबे, ये मोती अब आबाद नहीं,
लुटेरों की घंटी गूंजे । बरसात की आवाज़ मुझे याद नहीं ।

हवा चले सीटी बजाकर,
बिजली बजे गर्जन सजाकर,
छाता खुलने की ध्वनि भी न भूली,
कांपते मेघ के पीछे, खामोश छिपा दिवाकर ।
पर इस सच्चे दिल को, इतना भी आशीर्वाद नहीं,
स्मृति के संघर्ष के बावजूद, बरसात की आवाज़ मुझे याद नहीं ।



मेरे जूतों की पुकार

By Bhargavi G. Iyer

माना कि जब जुहू की मिट्टी से भर जाते,
मैंने उन्हें खूब धोया-पीटा है।
लोकल ट्रेन की भीड़ में घुसते-घुसाते,
भागते-चढ़ते, प्लैटफॉर्म पे घसीटा है।

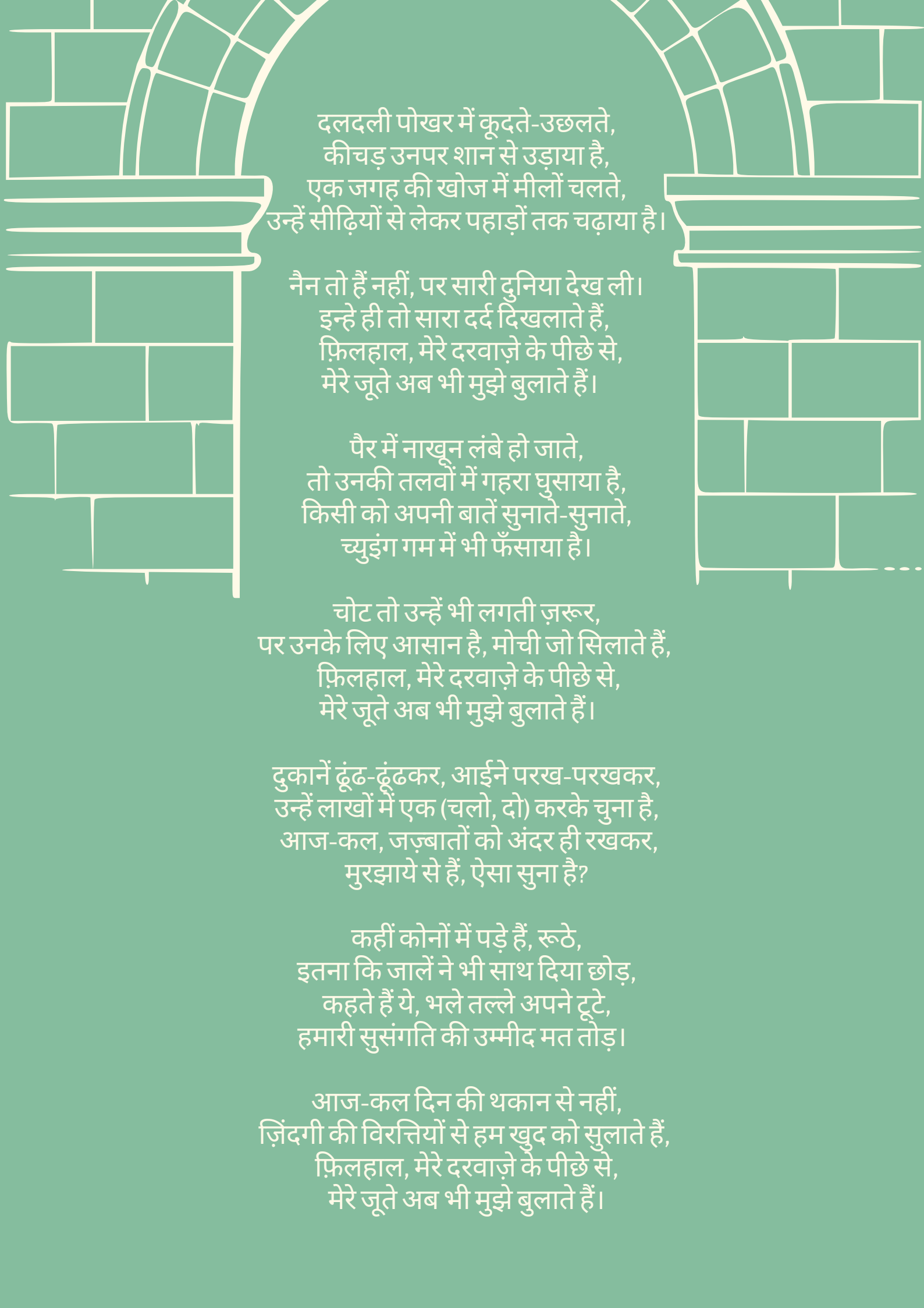
अब सड़कों की खुशबू उनसे महकती है,
तो प्याज़ की तरह रुलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।

किसी असभ्य गवार को, उतारकर,
उसका दूसरा चेहरा भी दिखाया है,
अपने हाथों में सँवारकर,
किसी कीड़े को सबक भी सिखाया है।

कभी गुस्से या निराशा में पटकते,
तो कभी नाचते सुर में ताल मिलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।

हरी, सूखी, गीली, पीली,
सारे किस्म के घास चराए हैं,
चर्खी-झूले की ऊंचाई से ढीली,
तब किसी के सर पे भी गिराए हैं।

पर्यटन की टोली ने ठुकरा दिया,
तो इनके संगत से काम चलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।



दलदली पोखर में कूदते-उछलते,
कीचड़ उनपर शान से उड़ाया है,
एक जगह की खोज में मीलों चलते,
उन्हें सीढ़ियों से लेकर पहाड़ों तक चढ़ाया है।

नैन तो हैं नहीं, पर सारी दुनिया देख ली।
इन्हे ही तो सारा दर्द दिखलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।

पैर में नाखून लंबे हो जाते,
तो उनकी तलवों में गहरा घुसाया है,
किसी को अपनी बातें सुनाते-सुनाते,
च्युड़ंग गम में भी फँसाया है।

चोट तो उन्हें भी लगती ज़रूर,
पर उनके लिए आसान है, मोची जो सिलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।

दुकानें ढूँढ़-ढूँढ़कर, आईने परख-परखकर,
उन्हें लाखों में एक (चलो, दो) करके चुना है,
आज-कल, जज़्बातों को अंदर ही रखकर,
मुरझाये से हैं, ऐसा सुना है?

कहीं कोनों में पड़े हैं, रूठे,
इतना कि जालें ने भी साथ दिया छोड़,
कहते हैं ये, भले तल्ले अपने टूटे,
हमारी सुसंगति की उम्मीद मत तोड़।

आज-कल दिन की थकान से नहीं,
ज़िंदगी की विरक्तियों से हम खुद को सुलाते हैं,
फ़िलहाल, मेरे दरवाज़े के पीछे से,
मेरे जूते अब भी मुझे बुलाते हैं।

Haiku Jam

POISON OF PROCRASTINATION

Amruta Gijare

Never ending night
Sweet poison of delusion
Procrastination



I CAN'T COUNT SYLLABLES

Ghazal Bhootra

Haiku haiku ha
Haiku haiku haiku ha
Haiku haiku ha



PEBBLE

Paulami Naik

Soulful timberland
A black pebble, decaying
Before a white sky.





PHOTO GRAPHY



GATEWAYS & GETAWAYS

*By Shubham AP Mohapatra**

Shakespeare's setting of "Wherefore art thou Romeo?" - the window, is a testimonial to the fact that doorways and windows are the entry point to feelings. The 4 pictures attempt to show the progression of a person's feelings with an entry of a stranger.

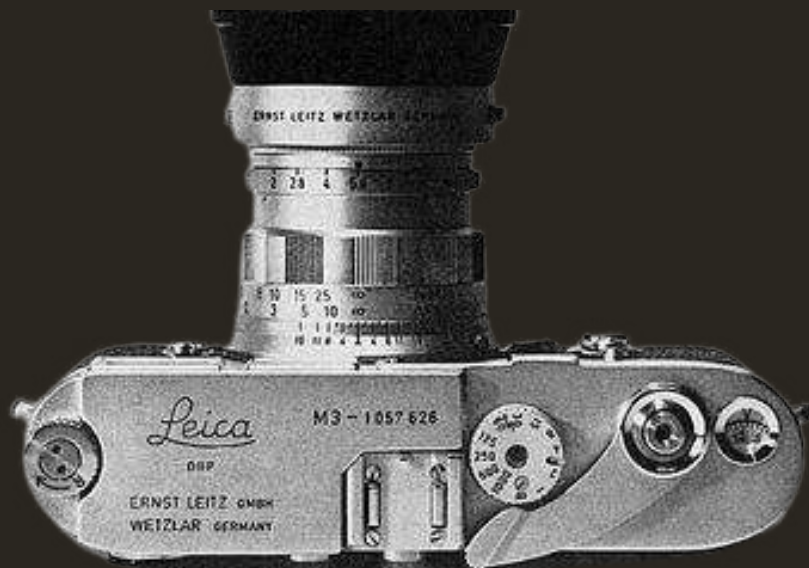




Photo I – ‘Welcome’

The doors though closed are not latched, giving the sign that the resident is ready to let someone in to ignite a getaway.

Photo II – 'Refreshments'

The stranger comes in, unfurls the feelings that they bring with them, and makes the resident's place their own.





Photo III – ‘Confluence’

Starting to find respite in the breaths of the stranger, the resident now gradually opens up – one window at a time to let the air in.

Photo IV – ‘Goodbye’

The stranger and the resident mix every shade of feelings and end up with the color black leading to the stranger leaving, leaving the resident in monochrome.



**Shubham AP Mohapatra is a Second-year student of law at NMIMS Kirit P. Mehta School of Law. In moments where he is not working for an impending submission to college, he can be found filling his phone gallery with pictures of his vicinity.*



MUMBAI X VINCENT VAN GOGH

By Rishikant Patra







A Whiff of Bombay



A day in the life of Dhobi Ghat, the 125-year-old open laundromat of Bombay.





By Shashank Pandav



Postcards From Spain

By Ghazal Bhootra





Album Reviews



EVERMORE

MELODRAMA

KECAK

SAWAYAMA

BE

K-12

WOMEN IN MUSIC
PART III

FINE LINE

Melodrama by Lorde

Reviewed by Anuraag Asiwal, BA, Batch of 2023, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Melodrama by Lorde, or what the author of this review affectionately likes to refer to as the True Winner of the Album of the Year for the year 2018, is the closest an artist can come to sonic poetry. New Zealand singer Lorde's follow up to her critically lauded, Grammy winning and commercially successful album – *Pure Heroine* – was already one of the most anticipated albums of the year, but what *Melodrama* has done for music cannot be understated. While the album does not strike one immediately as one of the greatest pieces of music, this author is going to try his hardest to give the album the due praise it deserves.

With the piano playing when *Green Light*, the first track on the album, begins, you already know that you are in for a ride on an emotional rollercoaster that you cannot get off of, neither do you want to. With her haunting voice, which touches your very soul, coupled with her lyrics so specific to a situation, that they almost seem to manifest a visual representation of it; Lorde does what she does best – take you on her journey through pain and rebirth. While *Green Light* is about the short period after breaking up with someone and giving yourself the permission to move on (the eponymous *Green Light*), the next song on the album *Sober* speaks about being disillusioned in a relationship and *Homemade Dynamite* speaks about the conversation made at parties which is empty and hollow. As for *The Louvre* (a personal favorite of the author), the song is about how at the height of happiness in relationships, couples firmly believe in the permanence of love and how their love should indeed be admired as a great work of art and should be hung up – you guessed it – in The Louvre for the world to see; for it to be immortalized. After this comes one of the most heartbreaking songs of the 21st Century, *Liability*. The song hurts like a dagger through the heart, because it is indeed about such a relatable emotion – not feeling like one is good enough. It does end on a much more hopeful note, since the singer ends up relying on herself as that is the only relationship that she feels that has not messed up until now.

Hard Feelings/Loveless, grants listeners a little reprieve from the emotionally complex and exhausting journey she has taken us on, by giving us two songs in one. While *Hard Feelings* is somber and melancholic, by talking about the emotions one feels right after a breakup, *Loveless* is a commentary on how our 'L-o-v-e-l-e-s-s generation' tries to keep ourselves together through heartbreak. *Sober II (Melodrama)*, takes a look at the relationship when the party is over, as it seems to get over just as it began (like most fun parties do). Then comes *Writer in the Dark*, a song that gives me goosebumps simply thinking of the lyrics. The song literally begins with the singer finding out that her love is leaving her for someone else. However, she plainly warns him that he will indeed rue the day he kissed a writer in the dark, as she can now, through her art, immortalize their love but also the pain he caused her. What makes the song even more devastating is that she confesses to loving him and promises to do so until her breathing stops. The seemingly upbeat *Supercut*, is anything but, as the singer sits down and reminisces through the moments of her relationship, but a much more idealistic version than a realistic one. The reprise of the most devastating track *Liability (Reprise)* cuts twice by re-eliciting the pain caused by the first one, where the singer ends up realizing maybe – just maybe – this, this painful experience that we call life (along with the melodrama it brings), is its own kind of party. What might be considered as one of the best final tracks on an album, *Perfect Places* is the perfect conclusion to this album about being in love and falling out of it, and filling the space left in one by this experience through revelry and flashy distractions. She recognizes the fleeting sense of relief that parties and the company of others may provide to the chronic emptiness she feels, while recognizing that this relief, just like every other party, will end. The song ends with a question with an expletive in it which basically asks – What are perfect places anyway? By not answering this question, she lets us determine what our own version of such a perfect place could be. It ends on a hopeful note, making us realize that while she feels like this at the moment, she will not feel like this forever. She will grow and grow up.

The album composed with synthesizers and electronic beats coupled with the haunting piano melodies, which painfully relatable as it is, is instrumental in creating the perfect storm of emotion that the album embodies. Lorde delivers once again, in her sophomore album, a track-list that can essentially become the soundtrack of this Loveless Generation, as she so affectionately calls us.



Fine Line by Harry Styles

Reviewed by Khushi Saboo, BBA D, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Harry Styles winning the Best Pop Solo Performance Award at the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards has come as no surprise for all the "Watermelon Sugar" fans. Fine Line is the kind of album that makes you think of fruit salads and summertime. The songs on the album are all essentially about his breakup with now ex-girlfriend Camille Rowe, a French American model. However, I think the songs can have various meanings that fans can connect to and not just be restricted to the whole "breakup album" stereotype.

The music transports me into one of Styles' iconic high waisted, suspender, silk shirt outfits, and it's no longer snowing, and I'm singing to the fish in the "Adore You" music video. In "Light Up," which features a choir singing for us all to step into the light, Styles adds a touch of soul. The drums' rhythm and the dreamy bridge transport you to a cloudy space before the song ends, snapping you back to earth. "Canyon Moon" is a lighthearted, seemingly country melody that warms my spirit, while "Watermelon Sugar" is a great summer smoothie of rock and pop. On the record, there's a song to make you feel like an ultimate dancing queen ("Golden"), sleep softly in your sad boy hours ("Falling"), or just feel damn good ("She").

I won't judge you if you drive around campus with that personal summer album blasting in your car.

The fifth song in the album, "Cherry," has a Beatles-like feel to it. One of my many favourites is "To Be So Lonely." Musically, it's very different from his other songs, with an unusual guitar vibrato sound and a catchy chorus melody. "Sunflower, Vol. 6" is a more upbeat song on the album if you're looking for one. It has a Hawaiian Luau vibe to it, with a hint of soft rock thrown in for good measure. Aside from the fact that it's fun and groovy, I think the best part of this song is near the end, when Styles just sings a bunch of random noises.

"Treat People With Kindness" is arguably one of the best songs on the record. The musical direction Styles and his team chose for this track is one of the most interesting aspects of the song that sets it apart from the majority of the album's tracks. Sadly, "Fine Line" is the album's final track. It returns to the softer, sadder sounds heard throughout the album, but surprisingly has an inspiring tone near the end. It's a fitting end to such an emotional album.

The song sets you in the "Strawberry lipstick state of mind" - "Adore You" and it definitely "Tastes like strawberries on a summer evenin'" and it sounds just like a song - "Watermelon Sugar".





K-12 by Melanie Martinez



Reviewed by Kinjal Bhardwaj, BBA, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Melanie Martinez, an indie, creative, storytelling artist released her second album 'K-12' in 2019. From her half-dyed hair, to unique style choices, to creating songs in a story format through creative words and visuals; it was assumed that she would have a skyrocketing career after being discovered on The Voice. Not only did she release a 13-track album, but she also directed, starred in, and wrote a one-and-a-half-hour film with stunning visuals and a complex storyline to go with all the newly released songs. The album has more powerful messages and visual effects compared to 'Cry Baby', her debut album, and introduces the music industry to new sounds and choreography. The artist's musical comeback shares a very similar sound and style to that of 'Cry Baby'. Electronic pop mixed with haunting vocals and deep messages are prominently featured in both of her works, thus establishing a niche of her own.

In this album, one can recognize and hear more maturity and vulnerability in her voice, which leads the way to the second part of her story. In the film, Martinez creates a storyline by having us follow her character 'Crybaby' (an updated and adapted character from Martinez's first album) as she enrolls in school. For those unfamiliar with this world's protagonist, Cry Baby is Martinez's alter-ego: a traumatized, insecure girl with a family full of flaws but one that tries to conceal them to all strangers, and hence leaving Cry Baby with a sense of fakeness in her own life. This helps us give a more graphic view into how twisted is Cry Baby's life, the society she lives in, and her own mind.

The school theme connects all of the tracks together perfectly, expressing Martinez's opinion on how schools treat their students, social life for students, and overall stress to fit in with your peers.

The morals are represented in the film throughout: Crybaby experiencing control by teachers, discovering teacher-student abuse, helping a friend through bulimia, along with facing many other issues that are typically considered uncomfortable. 'K-12' shall reign as lyrically strong for young, developing girls and all still currently in school systems. Something that calls the author's attention about her music is how lighthearted and even childish it seems to be, especially considering the darkness of the subjects she touches. The track titles, the innocent tunes proper of child lullabies, and even Martinez's own light and sweet voice helps to deceive the listener, and hides the depth 'K-12' actually has.

"Shooting at the angels while claiming you're the good guy," and "By the separation in this place that you've created," certainly are two of my favorite lyrics from this album, and both belong to the third track, 'The Principal'. Another one of my personal picks 'Show and Tell' touches upon authority figures misusing their power and taking advantage of the people under their authority with lines like, "Art don't sell until you've wrecked every authority." 'Show and Tell' also talks about being made to pretend to go with certain gender stereotypes and to act the way the public wants you to, as do songs like 'Strawberry Shortcake' and 'Drama Club'. 'Orange Juice', one of the most popular songs of the album, is about eating disorders, and 'Nurse's Office' talks about harassment, whereas 'Highschool Sweethearts' offers the sweetness of love. Martinez certainly doesn't shy away from difficult topics, and she is not afraid to talk about anything.

All in all, 'K-12' is very well put together and successfully gets across its numerous messages to the audience. Martinez has definitely made her audience feel understood, assuring them that surviving school is surviving life.

Evermore by Taylor Swift

Reviewed by Amruta Gijare, BA A, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Taylor Swift, the ultimate enchantress, released *Evermore*, a chamber rock, folk-pop (We already melt here) album, that opened straight atop “Billboard 200”, crowning the already queen, Taylor, as the only woman in America with 8 consecutive #1 debuts.

A twin of the earlier *Folklore*, a cocktail of dreamy, impressionist backgrounds, *Evermore*, not unlike the sister, satiates a deep thirst, and yet somehow makes you long for more. The serene music ties itself deeply within one, while Taylor goes on to weave tales of love, life, pain and heartbreak, enveloping you in a cocoon, cut off from the world; out of which you emerge grounded and more in-touch with your inner self.

The plain magic that generally accompanies Taylor’s music ensured her breaking the Guinness World Record for the “Shortest Gap Between Two Number-one Albums by a Female Artist” after ‘*Evermore*’ (about time folks!).

The first track *Willow*, pulls you right in. It expresses the onset of love: the intrigue, playfulness, and desire – all toyed and teased with a guitar. This track is a dance in itself. Further, sliding with a smooth piano into *Champagne Problems*, a tale of a relationship that ends nascently, like a prematurely popped bottle of champagne.

Up next, with hymn-like music crossed with upbeat pop, *Gold Rush* portrays painfully holding back the desperate want of a that one perfect person we almost worship (hymn-like music justified), knowing it to be a “sinking ship”, and avoid the ‘gold-rush’. Relate much? *’Tis the Damn Season* then takes you to the reunion brought by the holiday season, where an old flame is rekindled while revisiting a road left behind; whereas *Dorothea* shows the other perspective of a similar setting: A person ‘left behind’ reminiscences the old days, and wonders if the ‘friend’ thinks of him, now that she has moved to a shinier life. While both tracks have nostalgic guitars, the latter has a slower country-like music and accent.

Taking a melancholic turn, a piano tune in *Tolerate it* sends you into the agony and anguish of a neglected dutiful lover, who is taken for granted.

Happiness (ironically) is about a lover in an intolerable relationship, and the agony of the wasted years. There can be happiness, only after it ends. Keeping up with unsatisfying relationships, Ivy portrays a scandalous and painful tale of a married woman who cannot let go of her lover. Electric guitar, banjo and drums bring out her will to continue with the status quo.

Further, in *Coney Island*, where a seemingly great relationship comes to an unexpected end. Dusk-like imagery whilst the relationship is culminating, with indie-folk and alternative rock, gives you the chills (tip: Keep tissues around). In contradiction, *Cowboy like me* is the commencement of an extremely unexpected love story: Two deceptive tricksters who used “love” as a game, ultimately succumb to it. Same feathers folks.

Taylor swiftly turns the gears in *No Body, No Crime* to bring about an engaging murder mystery (wait, what?!). With compelling scenes of wailing sirens, drums, and quite the accent, the tale of a murder and infidelity set in the country grips you tight.

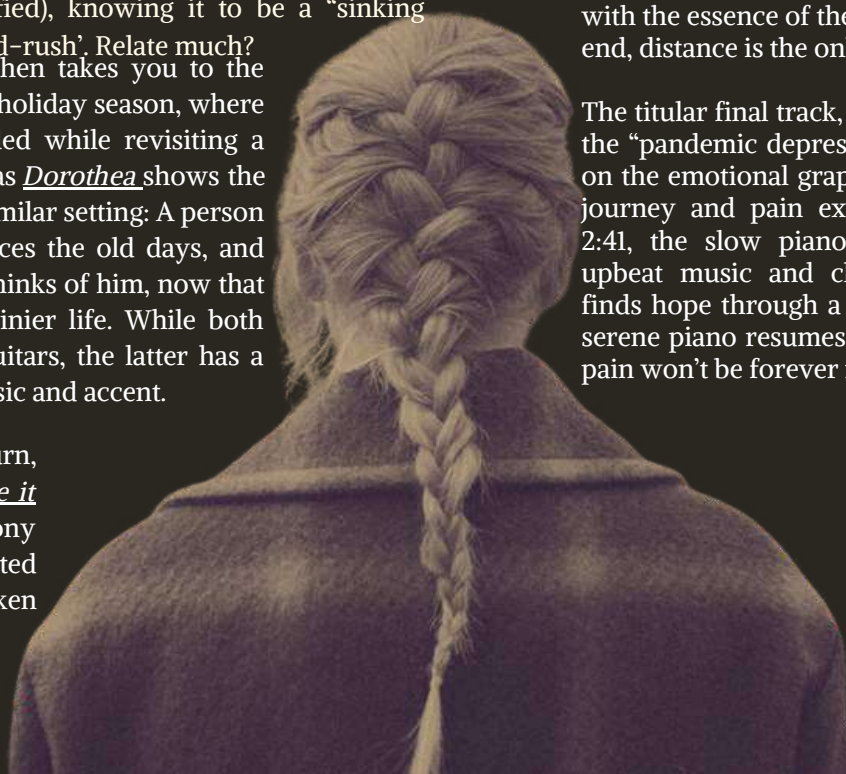
Moving on, the upbeat *Long Story Short* is a retrospective track from the desperate bad times of the fall, and traces the learning curve of the narrator to a mature transformation (ALERT: your antidote for those blue days is here.)

Track no. 13, *Marjorie*, with a soulful piano, is an ode to Swift’s late grandmother. It is imbedded with pearls of wisdom, likely by her grandma, brilliantly brought forth through a split voice in those verses.

With “stripped down” versions of certain instruments, especially drums, the penultimate track, *Closure*, has curious music, possibly to go with the essence of the song: even with the erratic end, distance is the only closure.

The titular final track, *Evermore*, popularly called the “pandemic depression anthem”, is a ‘v’ curve on the emotional graph. It captures the torturous journey and pain extending for ‘evermore’. At 2:41, the slow piano is suddenly replaced by upbeat music and chorus where the narrator finds hope through a ‘friend’, and from 3:44, the serene piano resumes, with the serenade that the pain won’t be forever more.

The album is a reflection of life: an emotional rollercoaster full of pain and happiness, despair and hope, chaos and order; that leaves you humbled and cathartic about the power and beauty of being human.



WOMEN IN MUSIC PT. III BY HAIM

Reviewed by Ghazal Bhootra, BBA C, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Quite underrated for the first female rock band ever to be nominated for the Grammy's album of the year, Haim's new album might be their best one yet. Brave and bold, yet delivered with such calmness, the Haim sisters have delved deep into their LA upbringing which explains the way the songs incorporate sounds like blazing horns, ocean waves, alarms, dining in delis and voicemails at 3 am. They have gone and above and beyond in their sonic experiments with saxophones and congas in addition to their usual style, and it paid off.

The dark path taken in their third album comes from all three sisters facing depression, with lead singer and guitarist Danielle's boyfriend (Ariel Rechtshaid, producer on the album) having been diagnosed with testicular cancer and Danielle being diagnosed with depression due to the same. Keyboardist Alana Haim's best friend was killed in a car accident. Bassist Este Haim, struggling with her type 1 diabetes, was also prescribed antidepressants. The trio decided to write about those experiences candidly while calling out the misogyny of the music industry. The album still has a light at the end of the tunnel and feels hopeful, reminding us that it gets better. A tongue in cheek title, *Women in Music Pt. III*, that appeared to Danielle Haim in a dream, befits this beautiful album which references dreams quite a few times.

The album starts with "*Los Angeles*", a song about the love-hate relationship with one's city. Ablaze with horns, deli sounds and saxophones giving the happy vibe of the city but the lyrics seem to despair over feeling displaced while not being appeased by any other place in the world. "*The Steps*", their guitar-driven lead single, is an angst-y anthem with great drumming, echoes the sentiment felt by a lot of women in the lines "And every day I wake up and I make money for myself/And though we share a bed, you know that I don't need your help/Do you understand? /You don't understand me, baby".

"*Man from the Magazine*", nodding to the style of Joni Mitchell, very directly addresses the misogyny in the music industry, where the sisters sing about sexist questions from male journalists and patronising stances of men in instrument shops. The artists have also called for more female engineers and producers in the industry in the past which feels correct because Danielle does a splendid job in the production of this album.

Songs "*I Know Alone*", "*Up from a Dream*" and "*I've Been Down*" are about sentiments that everyone went through in lockdown, even though the songs were written before. Call it clairvoyance, but the lyrics "Sleeping through the day and I dream the same", "Days get slow/Like counting cell towers on the road", "I'm waking up at night, tick-tock, killing time" and "Trying to get myself through this/And I've been watching too much TV" almost felt like thoughts that went through one's head while doom-scrolling at home being put into words.

"*Gasoline*" and "*3 AM*" and accompanying versions featuring Taylor Swift and Thundercat, were probably the famous ones on the album, and for good reason. The two songs are unabashed in their approach towards wrecked sexual relationships, a relief from the usually hidden references in songs by female artists. "3 AM", a funk song, is also a great experiment musically, with a voice mail written into the whole song instead of just at the start or end.



"*Now I'm in It*", "*All That Ever Mattered*" and "*FUBT*" are probably my top three songs on the album. "Now I'm in It" is a crying-in-the-club number with its high tempo while the lyrics are actually about a downward spiral. The lyricist, Danielle drags the listener into her fogged up brain and talks about what it's like to blame yourself and not be on good terms with your decisions. "*All that Ever Mattered*" is a chaotic number with its distorted screams that felt therapeutic to the listener as well as the band. "*FUBT*" is the antithesis of tempo-heavy "*The Steps*", with the same guitar-driven style but grimmer and where the lyrics are more vulnerable than ever. The guitar solo at the end is one of the best I ever heard from the band and therefore, my favourite moment on the album.

"*Don't Wanna*", "*Another Try*", "*Leaning on You*" and "*Hallelujah*" offer much-needed respite along with the rather gloomy songs on the rest of the album. "*Don't Wanna*" and "*Another Try*" seem like sister songs that talk about not wanting to give up on a relationship and trying one last time to make it work. The latter of the songs has one of the best Haim bridges, with the conga drums coupled with trumpets that leave you wanting more. "*Leaning on you*" and "*Hallelujah*" delves into the relationship between the three sisters. Alana describes it as songs that offer hugs from the other two sisters when one feels down or goes through a crisis, which all three of them brought to the studio while making the album.

"*Summer Girl*" is the perfect bookend to the album, tying the shoestring back to loving the city of "*Los Angeles*" and the robust saxophones from the first song. It talks about being relief to a person in distress. The song feels like the sunshine of summer and positive energy perfectly suiting the title.

All in all, the album has the signature Haim-ness, but pushed up a notch. The album feels like they're singing right next to you and therefore, the more relatable in their three records. "Women in music", the Haim sisters full of their flaws but accepting it in this album, never lose the momentum and hope while navigating new and sombre territories. While desperately waiting to see what the LA girls come up with next, this record is definitely going to be spinning on repeat for me.

Sawayama by Rina Sawayama

Reviewed by Shubham AP Mohapatra, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Elton John's favourite album of 2020, Sawayama stands to be a beautiful melting pot of varied genres. The futuristic stance of Rina in the Album Cover juxtaposed with the warm sepia-like tone of the picture, reminiscent of the early 2000s, is accurate imagery of the eclecticism that Rina created in this Album.

Entering the album with the track 'Dynasty' is rather grim but hopeful. The song conveys the Sawayama 'dynasty' to be a bearer of the 'darkness of the world' that is passed down as lineage from one generation to another. The song hints at the lurking sadness to be linked to familial issues (fighting about money and his infidelity), which the Sawayama 'dynasty' suppresses and hides in the presence of leading a happy life. However, Rina chooses to 'break the chain', use her voice and break out of the 'family lie' in pretence of happiness. The song sonically too captures the rebellion as the music turns from ominous to upbeat with fast-paced drum beats and an electronic guitar solo. The song serves as a window to the captivating nu-metal genre that the album so beautifully captures.

Next in the album, arguably the most famous off of the same is titled 'XS' (homophone with 'excess'). Rina transcends her Political Science degree from Cambridge to her music in this satire of the present Capitalistic Society. The metal drop right at the beginning of the song takes the listener aback just as how Rina means to portray the nature of Capitalism, the price we pay for our consumerism is unbelievable and should shock everyone. The song is a sonic call for people to have the epiphany to stray away from their need of wanting more as the Planet has already reached its brim in terms of holding as much as it can. Succeeding this is the track 'ST#U!', which addresses the racial microaggressions that she has been subjected to on account of being a Brit – Japanese residing in the UK. It is interesting to note that the song is of the genre rock metal which successfully portrays the irritation and the anger she feels at those who portray her to be negative for being upset at them being tone-deaf.

The electro-pop track, 'Comme Des Garçons (Like the Boys)', represents the fragile ego residing in every man ('Excuse my ego, can't go incognito') and the prevalence of toxic masculinity which forces men to perennially show themselves to be 'confident' (It's just another day to pretend).

Rina, through the song, notes how a man's confidence is ephemeral (Comme des garçons, I'm so confident) and assures

vocally as to how it is normal to shed away from this performative confidence.

'Akasaka Sad' pommels us back to the first song where Rina falls down the hole of sadness and the hereditary nature of the same. Akasaka refers to the hotel Rina chooses to stay over every time she visits Tokyo in the hope that the distance from her broken family would help her feel free. However the same never pan out the way she wants it to and she thus realizes that depression knows no geography and follows you around.

Next on track 'Paradisyn' is a bubble gum pop reminiscence of the best time of her life i.e., her childhood. The song right off the back begins with noises from the arcade games and the lyrics are essentially nostalgic tales from her childhood. 'Love Me 4 Me' translates exactly what the title suggests, Rina's path to self-love. The song is also her reassuring herself that she need not be unsure of her music and this is her telling herself that she needs to do it, that she can, and that she will be helping all those who pursue music after her. Through 'Bad Friend,' Sawayama thinks of the best times she had with her best friend and blames herself for falling out of the same. Though the reason for the fall out is not entirely on her as she is not sure of the reason. However, she feels awful that she no longer has a clue about where a former close friend of hers stands at life today. She wanted to translate the feeling to her chorus, wanted the chorus to feel like the rug was pulled from under your feet, that moment at the top of the rollercoaster when your stomach drops, which she beautifully achieves.

The interlude reflects her climate grief which can be traced back to 'XS'. She displays her disappointment at the world and how she wishes to leave the same and rehabilitate on Mars. Further, she concludes as to how climate reversal almost seems impossible but it cannot be given up on. 'Who's Gonna Save U Now' is a stadium rock song, inspired by the cathartic feeling of performing on the stage in front of a large crowd. The song is an epistolary to her detractors who constantly brought her down in her pursuit of success. With her cathartic chorus – 'Who's gonna save you now', she is referring to how the detractors are still stuck where they began while she has risen to the top. Next in line, 'Tokyo Love Hotel', is about the fetishization of the Japanese Culture. Rina talks of her frustration of not being able to represent her culture without feeling original as the same has been reproduced over and over again by people who do not respect the Japanese culture but are merely drawn to the aesthetics of it. (Use you for one night and then away they go.) The song is an attempt for people to realize that with fascination comes the responsibility to respect. The penultimate song of the album, 'Chosen Family', is about people from different walks of life finding respite away from their home and creating their own chosen family wherein they cohabit in a safe space with people who have faced similar social rejections. The song while can be generalized to all forms of rejections can very well be pointed out to the familial rejections of their queer members as Rina herself identifies as pansexual. The finale of her path to making her own dynasty in the first track comes with 'Snakeskin', which talks about how Rina as an artist has poured her life, every intimate recalling into her music and shed it like a snakeskin as a form of closure only for her listeners to consume it. Her path to breaking out of her familial despair concludes as she paves the way to her success with this album.

As mentioned before, the album channels Rina's eclecticism, not only in the varied genres but also in the messages that each track holds. It is interesting to observe that the genre coinciding with each track is very intentional and works in perfect coordination for the listeners to feel the emotions that Rina felt while penning down her music. This debut album of Rina only keeps the listener wondering about the sonic masterpieces coming our way from her in the future.



BE BY BTS

Reviewed by Nikita Kaushik, BA B, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

You can't help but root for BTS and their sincerity and compassion towards the world. The global domination of BTS has shown remarkable consistency; even in the year of

chaos, BTS is a spark of pure joy amidst the mess. *BE*, their new album, devotes an entire three-minute skit to celebrate the rise of their first all-English single, *Dynamite*, to the top of the Billboard charts. By the time the album was released, its first single had already reached the top of the US charts, making BTS the first Korean group to do so.

Such level of fame did not come without pitfalls. As a band that prizes authenticity, BTS didn't shy away from addressing the tolls of mega-stardom and personal growth. They've used their platform to address philosophical ideas such as the Jungian concept of the soul, (*Map of Soul: Persona*) a Herman Hesse bildungsroman (*Wings*). In 'Be', BTS fixates on life in quarantine. In a year where the tasks of just getting through the day have taken on a new intensity, BTS take the opportunity to comfort their listeners.

"The entire year was stolen," Jimin says melancholily in '*Fly to My Room*' before the group lolls about lying in bed with bloated stomachs, takeout containers, and the constant blare of TV. Frustration, melancholy, and grief are evident in these songs but it's their accuracy and simplicity that make them enthralling. Suga wonders in '*Blue & Gray*' if "the hazy shadow that swallows me up" alludes to depression and anxiety. "I just want to be happier," they cry as their voices reduce to desperate rasps over fragile strings.

The album's title track, '*Life Goes On*', is a prayer to push past 2020. BTS focuses on trivialities from the blur of days in quarantine: "On my pillow, on my table," they sing, "yeah, life goes on". In the past, BTS did use their songs to convey feel-good messages; here, they build hope in real-time.

I kept this song on repeat while churning through

my daily routine of powering through deadlines, checking emails, and grooming my dogs.

I wasn't surprised to, yet again, find comfort in their music during these difficult times, although I got teary-eyed on the third or fourth play.

That intricate balance of confessions and solace dissipates later in the album. RM, the group's leader, shared his concerns about 'Life Goes On' sounding "bland" and other parts of the song compensating for it. The next track, '*Dis-ease*', shuffles over an easy-going hip-hop beat; breezy and infectious, but lacks the aggression seen in harder-edged juggernauts of past songs like '*UGH!*' and '*Cypher Pt. 3*'. This was followed by a 80s' groovy vibe of '*Telepathy*'. Jin, a BTS member, mentioned that 'Telepathy' is a song about "ARMY" (fandom name) during a global press conference. The original Korean title for this song is "점시" which means 'for a moment'. BTS shares the same desire as ARMY and imagines, just for a moment, that it is with us again.

With siren-like blare and twitchy drumsticks, the neon-drenched '*Stay*' meanders into middling EDM. This track is all about making a connection with someone that goes deeper than seeing them every single day. It concludes with a reverb that glides into the throbby beats of '*Dynamite*,' a song that achieves smooth proficiency on its own; a jumble of funk and handclaps and incredibly palatable one-liners. It goes without saying that '*Dynamite*' serves as a remembrance of BTS' world domination, but the group sees it as a gift for us. "We call this our own recharge project, and we hope that it will be able to recharge your own batteries, even if only for a moment. That's arguably the best part of BTS—the impression that they genuinely want to root for you as well," RM said.

That's arguably the best part of BTS, you get the sense that they earnestly want to root for you, too.

Kecak From Bali

Reviewed by Shushrut Devadiga, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

Hidden amongst the binaries of codes that constitute music on Spotify, hides a gem of ancient traditions endemic to the tourist hotspot of Bali. This performance, which sounds foreign to the ears and yet so pleasing, retells a myth as old as the human civilization from a land thousands of kilometers away from these tropical isles. This is Kecak, a form of Balinese Hindu Performance retreading the Ramayana.

I first encountered Kecak on a random monsoon day, when my eyes' attention was caught by a peculiar YouTube Recommendation. It was a clip from the monumental American documentary, Baraka, depicting a large group of men sitting in large, concentric groups of circles dancing and chanting in complete unison, an impressive display of human ingenuity. I was both puzzled and intrigued and those ominous chants, which was drilled into my head, replaying it obsessively during different activities. The continuous search for this elusive music led me to scores of YouTube links of commercialized performances tailored to the needs of aloof tourists attending for their superficial interests in this primordial culture.

This led to my discovery of this album on Spotify, simply titled "Kecak from Bali". I was quite intrigued by the presence of such an obscure miscellany of indigenous music that would only have a tiny niche audience, but thankfully it was present. A combination of binary codes preserving this lore, unblemished from the need to make it suitable for the western market.

A Kecak performance is led by a chorus of men, representing the Varna Army who fought in the Ramayana, continuously intoning "Cak!" or "Keh-Chak" in polyrhythmic sound, producing a dramatic wall of sound narration against which the play is performed. It's led by a soloist who effortlessly conducts this concentric mass of humanity, directing the different notes of this complex recital along.

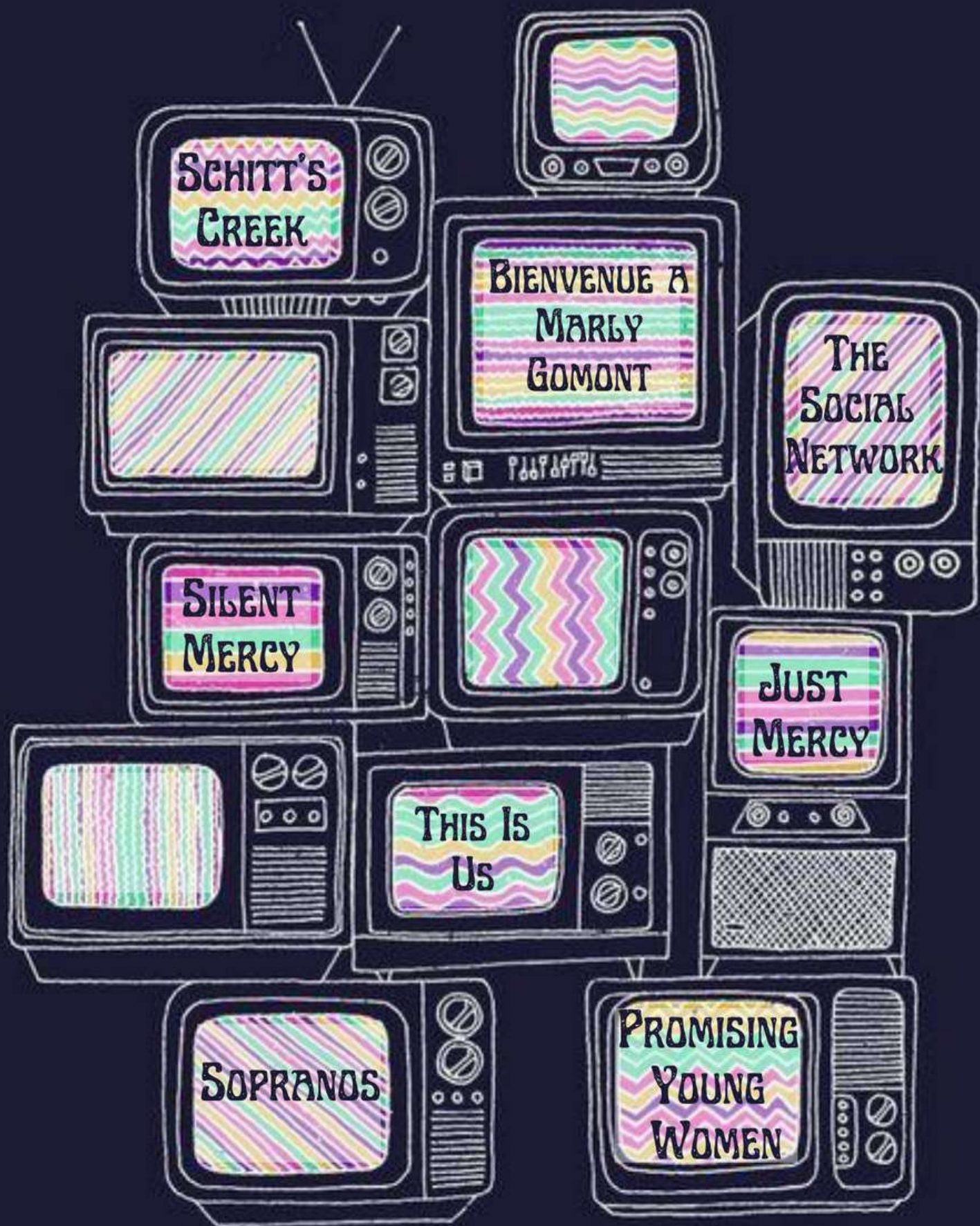
The Soloist also narrates the play, combining the beautiful strains of his melodious recital with the rhythmic cacophony of these symbolic monkeys. Another layer of complexity is added by the sonorous oration of actors incarnated as the figures of the Ramayana, each adding a unique blend to the music. This shortened version of the Hindu epic is divided into different scenes, something that the album skillfully includes by segregating each scene as different songs of this collection. Each of these songs is accompanied by the pulsing cries of the chorus but is differentiated by the unique narrative beats and individual actor's performances.

A pertinent question you may have is that why am I absolutely obsessed with arguably distant music from a far-flung land. I have a deep love of learning about different cultures and a somewhat uncanny obsession with traditions from around the world, often directing me to different forms of plays, dances and music. However, this particular piece of music has been stuffed in my head for its singularly unique effect on my mind. Watching this piece of Balinese art for the first time on YouTube provided me with an untypically tantric peace, something I have rarely achieved. This album encapsulates everything that I love about the Kecak, that unique blend of uniform chants gracefully assimilating with the dulcet inflexions of the narrative. Though I don't think this is everyone's cup of tea, I do believe that you should give this unique album a try.

Source:

- <https://www.indonesia.travel/in/en/destinations/bali-nusa-tenggara/ubud/kecak-dance>
- <https://www.diving-indo.com/blogs/kecak-dance/>





CLOSING CREDITS

Just Mercy

Reviewed by Rakesh Nambiar (Ph.D.), Assist. Prof. (English), Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

Bryan, a Harvard law intern is sent to meet a death row convict informing him of a postponement. The convict lives another day and bonds with the intern. Right at this moment, the convict is shockingly handled by a white guard – reminiscent of the George Floyd episode. Racial violence is introduced pretty soon here. This biographical legal drama, set in 1989, directed by Destin Cretton in 2019 starring Michael Jordan (no! not the basketball star), Brie Larson and Jamie Foxx, received positive reviews and good box-office collections. Jordan pulls-off his character as a puzzled-yet-resolute young lawyer, on-reel, though he looks too old to play Bryan Stevenson, the man who did this for real.

Bryan decides to offer legal aid to the poor in Alabama after his graduation. His mother is upset knowing fully well where he is leading and that she may not see him again. The next scene shows Bryan's trip to Alabama with a Lynyrd Skynyrd Southern rock as background score "Sweet Home Alabama", culturally boasting racial harmony and a poster of town's fame – Harper Lee's text *To Kill a Mockingbird*, hiding its tainted history. Jordan does a good job playing a befuddled "agent of change" shockingly deprived of any agency to help. His trial begins when he decides to meet death row inmates. Upon entering the prison, he is asked to strip naked and spread his legs, despite the rules. Why? What do you get from it? His moist eyes ask, so do we. At this time, we give up on any hope of law beyond rule books, but not Bryan. He meets the convicts one by one, and all except Walter, played by Jamie Foxx, open-up to him. He is not the only lawyer, they say, who gave them hope. Walter, however, has lost hope from the Alabama justice system.

Bryan, unlike Atticus Finch, is not white, but merely equipped with ideals, a Harvard degree, and a partner – Eva Ansley, coordinating for his Equal Justice Initiative. Brie is given a short supporting role as Eva, enacted too stiffly. This initiative has upset the Alabama narrative. Both Bryan and Eva receive threats and get shadowed. The unseen becomes apparent – white people and privilege. The question is not just about race but a predatory social system affirmed by the community.



A system that wrestles down any attempt to discover or argue the truth. It targets the body as the site of truth to be tortured down till the tongue rises to confess a lie implicating a black man. Ralph, a convicted white felon, gets a taste of torture to implicate Walter in Ronda Morrison's murder. The killer of the white woman is out there somewhere and the case remains unsolved. Who is to blame? Walter, of course, since he is a perfect victim of power, hate and lacks agency of representation. But he can rejoice because he is not alone; others too are pushed towards death row. And it is just a matter of time for the state apparatus to seek cold retribution from blacks. His cellmate's pre-trial plea is rejected and is electrocuted. Who's next?

Lee's text is resurrected in the film giving a metaphoric parallel - Tom Robinson and Walter McMillian - both rumoured to be in love with a white woman, earns the ire of the white community and justice system. Likewise, the black women are shown in collectives, grieving at the misfortune of their men and black identity. Their solidarity ironically captures the pathos of abandoning any hope of justice in Alabama. Exclusion is deeply entrenched in the Alabama justice system. Walter's family, Ralph and all the poor victims connected with the case poignantly speak through fearful gazes escaping the truth. Law is constituted asymmetrically for blacks: testimony, eye-witness and evidence is given only by the whites are recorded. The textbook case of a system conspiring to imprison its fears - an identity with colour. Fear is the invisible yet apparent narrative here. The courts and establishment populated with white community siding with a "black-therefore-criminal" psychosis expose deep fracture in communal harmony.

Criminal intimidation is normalized and modern power structures have antecedents with the past. The poor victims living as slaves have no recourse of emancipation, but the mercy of the powerful and morally upright. Mercy seasons justice, Shakespeare would say, as it droppeth like the gentle rain from heaven. Should justice be discharged only by the merciful? One needs to follow the law to discharge justice because equitable justice is mercy. These discourses are not provinces of the poor, but the educated. Hence it becomes our responsibility to verify truths, stand against unjust power structures and denaturalize feudal subjugation. The film exposes hard truths that one must dare watch to prevent denial of systemic oppression and gain intuitive clues to be cognitive of oppressive systems anywhere around us. Emancipation is not just to fight biased narratives but investigate and embrace truths that question our confirmation biases. For the poor - what are they asking - nothing, just mercy!

Bryan withstood the cruel system, shouldered his responsibility towards the community and co-opted others in his fight. Knowing fully well that he cannot win this fight alone, he came on television and marshalled Walter's case. A subtle clue by the filmmaker - expose what they are trying to hide. This spectacular bio-drama, another addition to the list of the fighting-all-odds-and-holding-on-till-the-end narrative is available on Amazon Prime. Disclaimer: The author is not holding any shares of Amazon ;)



The Sopranos

Reviewed by Vidyut Iyer, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

It's been 14 years since HBO's iconic series 'The Sopranos' came to an end. The Sopranos is indubitably the paradigm-shifting tv show that irrevocably changed the structure of television shows for the better. Created by David Chase, The Sopranos expatiates on the life of New Jersey mob boss Anthony Soprano and his battle with depression, as he attempts to balance his family life with his role as the boss of the Soprano family.

At first glance, the Sopranos seems like an extension of any Martin Scorsese mob film. The characters are memorable and nearly all of them speak in the quintessential Italian American New Jersey accent. The protagonist, Tony Soprano is indubitably the show's most memorable character and possibly the most

loved anti-hero in television history. Throughout the show, Tony Soprano faces a series of panic attacks and furtively visits his therapist, Dr Jennifer Melfi. Tony Soprano ranges from a meek, empathetic father to a livid, vindictive mafioso who belligerently

bludgeons anyone who infuriates him. Tony Soprano also portrays a run off the mill American dad at times. He's jingoistic, he hosts family barbecues and he's a history buff who fervently supports the United States.

Played by the late James Gandolfini, Tony Soprano is a man who defies the conventional nature of a protagonist. He's not completely callous and nearly everything he does is for his family. The grassroots of Tony's depression can be traced back to his relationship with his mother. His mother, Olivia Soprano was a pessimist and an abusive mother.

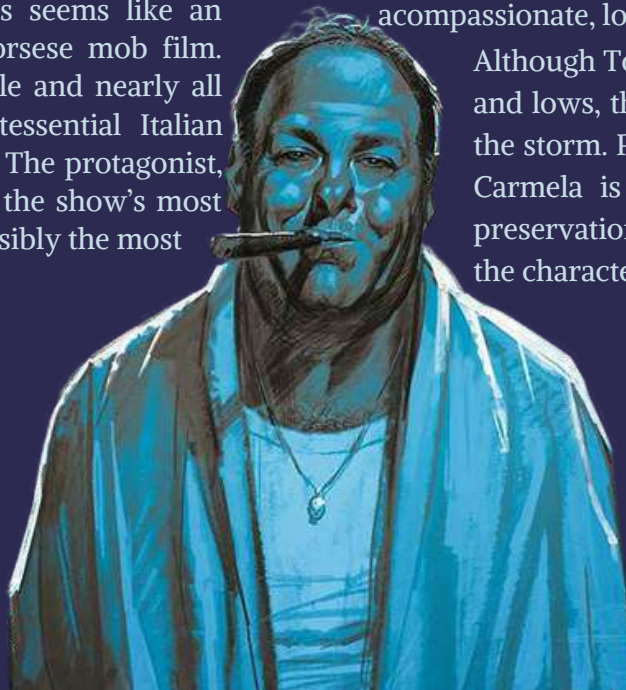
Tony ardently expressed his contempt and hatred for her, mainly because she sucked the joy out of the lives of the Soprano children – Tony, Janice and Barbara. Tony's relationship with his immediate family is pretty normal. Both his wife and children are aware of the fact that Tony is part of the Mafia and throughout the series, we see how Tony's profession manifests itself in the lives of his children. His wife, Carmela Soprano, is a compassionate, loving mother and supportive.

Although Tony and Carmela have had their highs and lows, they have always managed to weather the storm. Played by the phenomenal Edie Falco, Carmela is also jingoistic and believes in the preservation of her Italian heritage, much like all the characters in the show.

Perhaps the most important relationship in the show is that of Tony Soprano and Jennifer Melfi. "Throughout the series, we have seen how Dr Melfi changes Tony's outlook and attempts to eradicate his prejudices. Whenever Tony is in a quagmire, whether personal or professional, he seeks Jennifer

Melfi's advice. Dr Melfi is the one who helped Tony discern the genesis of his depression. Without Tony Soprano, there would be no Walter White." ~ Vince Gilligan, creator of Breaking Bad.

The release of the Sopranos is incontrovertibly the most pivotal moment in television history. It introduced the multitudes to the best of worlds – A soap opera, combined with nerve-racking drama.



A Silent Voice.

Reviewed by Shubham AP Mohapatra, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

With the main running theme of the plot being redemption, A Silent Voice follows the life of Shoya Ishida whose plotline begins with his intention to commit suicide. However, changing his decision at the end moment, Shoya reminisces of his elementary school days which form the basis of the predicaments he faces today.

Shoya Ishida, a teenager who knows no other language to communicate with others other than bullying finds his next victim – the newly admitted Shoko Nishimiya, a deaf girl. Shoko does not make her disability a debilitating factor in her life or at least tries hard to not make it so. She is cheerful to have joined a new school and is excited to make new friends through her notebook as the replacement of normative vocal communication. However, her optimistic expectations were set to fail. Her classmates soon began to view communicating with her as an inconvenience and started ignoring her. The ignorance was added with the constant bullying she was subject to by Shoya, of which his friends were witnesses, to the extent of having her bleeding due to her hearing aids being yanked by him. When brought to the notice of school, Shoya was viewed as the sole bully of Shoko despite the presence of his friends as accomplices. Shoko transfers to another school and Shoya is left to be an outcast, the fate he had originally bestowed upon Shoko.

This brings us to the second part of the story, the realization that there are two deaf characters in the plotline – Shoko and Shoya.

As mentioned before, Shoya knew no other language other than bullying in elementary school and years later in high school, he has isolated himself from the people around him, not looking directly at anybody and often covering his ears to drown out the noise around him.

His isolation or his deafness is visually portrayed through blue crosses across the faces of everyone around him. It was this isolation that pushed him to decide to commit suicide however, changed his mind to close one last loose end before committing the same – Apologising Shoko. The movie hits a happier pace once Shoya meets Shoko, and apologises through sign language. It is from here when another realization hits the viewers – Shoya, a traditionally antagonistic character has been portrayed as a protagonist in the movie. Shoya goes out of the way to ensure he can provide Shoko with the happiness that he had stripped from her in childhood and in doing so, he simultaneously begins to make new friends the visual representation of which has been made by the peeling off of the blue crosses that are present on the faces of the people around him.

The movie successfully transcends the emotions felt by each character on the screen to the viewers wherein the viewers can share the tears shed by Shoya at the end of the story wherein all the blue crosses peel off – symbolic of him having successfully made redemption and have broken free from his deafness, much like Shoko who now has people who no longer view her disability as an obstacle.



This Is Us

Reviewed by Virali Joisher, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

In a country like India where family is considered to be the most important social institution and love for families is put on a pedestal, I can't help but snarl at the irony that most of the television shows produced in our country, or at least the mainstream daily soaps, are developed around the crux of how vicious, manipulative, and scheming families are. While art is a medium where to each its own, I believe the lack of television shows depicting families in a real, positive and most importantly in a non-exacerbated light is something that worries me. This is exactly why I couldn't resist falling in love with the American show, *This is Us*, produced by NBC. Ironically, America which is usually criticised for its individualistic zeitgeist has given birth to this phenomenal work of art that celebrates family like never before. With an unprecedented depiction of the several echelons of emotions, each episode of the show is power-packed with the same which have not been explored hitherto by other television works.

I can't help but relentlessly admire the immaculate writing of *This is Us*; and the life that it breathes into its characters by delicately adorning them with just the perfect proportion of strengths and shortcomings. Each character is layered with nuances of human emotions, and the mind-blowing actors do their job effortlessly. A piece on *This is Us* cannot be written without mentioning the protagonist of the show, Jack Pearson, who paradoxically, is the life of this show despite his gut-wrenching demise.

Jack Pearson is played by Milo Ventigmalia whose acting prowess is beyond excellence, and Ventigmalia has proven that he is in the business for the long run. Jack Pearson has undoubtedly become my favourite artist and one can't hold themselves back from gushing all over him. Mandy Moore, who plays his better half, Rebecca Pearson, compliments him beautifully. However, it is Sterling Brown, who is an absolute revelation and has come to a close second after Ventigmalia with his outstanding performance.

Brown plays the prodigal Pearson son with utmost sincerity and his scenes involving anxiety attacks are an acting master class in itself. The other two Pearson children, Kate, played by Chrissy Metz, and Kevin, played by Justin Hartley are also a delight on-screen with performances to watch out for. The show explores the evolution of these characters throughout different ages. The Pearson family is iconic indeed; and the way they navigate through highs and lows of life including mental disorders, deaths, miscarriages, handicapped children, alcoholism, adoption, and racism creates a benchmark.

The show has given me the gift of feeling grateful for family; and kindling gratitude for the priceless moments with your cherished ones, because life is too short to take the people you love for granted. So fasten your seatbelts and embark on this crazy rollercoaster ride of emotions, because if not the mesmerizing screenplay, then the fantastic sound score will make you cry, with satisfaction, of course!



Bienvenue à Marly-Gomont

Reviewed by Kshitij Kasi, BBA D, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

Racial Prejudice; the unspoken form of racism that plagues us today, can be demeaning and difficult in more ways than one. French Director Julien Rambaldi's movie 'The African Doctor' can be deemed to be a testimony as it manages to perfectly depict prejudice comically, yet manages to contrive its point. The story of Dr Zanktoko, who is an orphan himself, in lieu of a better life for his family, chooses to turn down an

opportunity to work for his Dictator-President in Zaire (Congo) and decides to practice in Marly-Gomont, a small town north of Paris. His initially elated family is soon disheartened, facing great distrust and are almost shunned by the townsfolk, who go to the extent of avoiding medical aid by virtue of the Doctor's skin colour. Rambaldi's work perfectly captures the state of vulnerability and ostracization that racism brings with it due to preconceived

notions of race. Although wrong, the inability of the minority to vocalize their concerns, despite being called names that are deeply offensive and otherwise derogatory, frustrates them.

Being the only Africans in the village, the family finds it difficult to find acceptance in people who stereotyped the dark-skinned family as 'voodoo practitioners', 'Gorillas' and 'Blackies' who indulge in Un-French practices and are not to be trusted. Rambaldi's work also documents the frustration of individuals and their hunger for acceptance. The otherwise teetotaler Dr Zanktoko goes to the extent of playing drunk darts with the villagers, compromising his ideals

just to make 'friends'. He also hurls away from his 'noisy' African family to show the locals that he is one of them is the essence of desperation and hunger to assimilate in the otherwise closed and conservative village, yet it is this same desperation that helps the doctor. The story begins to take a political twist when the Doctor understands that he is part of a larger political game between two village rivals, who create a divide between the village, where the doctor and his family find themselves in a village, they started calling home.

Yet, it is their perseverance and constant support to the community that made them become one among the 'Français' and gain celebrity-like status in the village. On the note of perseverance, 'The African Doctor' resonates with the message that with the right amount of grit and determination, one can move rocks and change the impossible to possible while making some friend on the way and dropping one's sobriety.



Schitt's Creek

Reviewed by Arya Shahir, BBA D, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

Schitt's Creek is a series that portrays the rapid shift of a family from a lavish lifestyle in Upper Manhattan to that of just another towns person. It humorously depicts the journey from the family's initial rejection of their newfound fate to them embracing and making the best of the easy-going, community-based town. Characters, their dispositions and their backstories are of the essence here, at Schitt's Creek. Throughout the series, we learn to go beyond our initial judgement of this rather snobbish family. No characters are deemed to be morally superior and each person's imperfections are depicted in an extremely bittersweet yet humane manner. The family's virtues are also showcased through their constant lookout to do something to better their own financial or social standing. Johnny Rose, the father and businessman, tries to implement multiple business ideas and ends up taking partial control of the motel they stay in as well as expanding the same. His struggle to prove value is shown as he tries to provide financial stability to the family. Alexis, the "spoilt" daughter ends up going to college, taking up a job and having multiple whirlwind romances. David, the son who complained about everything in the town, ranging from its lack of sophisticated taste to the general state of



things, opens up an apothecary with his lover. David's coming out as pansexual is recognised as one of the most natural and accurate representations in media of the same. Moira, the mother with no traditional maternal instincts, is possibly one of the most unapologetic and self-assured characters on television. She becomes a part of the town's choir as well as council through sheer confidence and charm. The community and locations shown in this town prove crucial to the plot, what with the Rose family going to the Schitt family for the smallest of inconveniences and the local diner for most, if not all of their meals. Special, sweet sequences such as Patrick singing his to-be wedding song to David at their store opening and Alexis having her long-distance date at the diner shows the special significance that each location holds. This series also proves as a sweet sigh of relief for LGBTQ+ people around the world looking for a show that perfectly encapsulates what an accepting society looks like without tokenising the struggle of the queer characters. In conclusion, this show is a must-watch for all families looking for a heart-warming series.



Promising Young Woman

Reviewed by Anuraag Asiwal, BA, Batch of 2023, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

The opening scene of *Promising Young Woman* may be a very clever flip on the well-established cliché of seeing scantily-clad women dancing sensually to thumping techno music. But writer-director, Emerald Fennell, cleverly subverts this, by showing middle-aged men gyrating to Charli XCX's *Boys*. From the get-go, the film challenges the notions of what one might expect from a film like this. Fennell shows our lead heroine, Cassandra (Carey Mulligan), exactly how predatory men prefer to view their prey – helpless damsels in distress, looking for a “good guy” to take care of them. The quotes around the term “good guy” will become apparent as we read further. One of her first “students”, cause I feel victim is too kind and sympathetic a word for the men in this movie, is taught his lesson, who is a self-proclaimed “good guy” when he takes an inebriated (or so he thinks), Cassandra, out of the club and offers to drop her home. Instead, he invites him over to his place and begins plying her further with alcohol. When she states she wants to lie down, he gets into bed with her and tries to take advantage of her drunkenness, all the while she asks him “What are you doing?”, slurring her words. At the end of this, she sits upright, revealing herself to not be drunk but stone-cold sober, shocking him.

If you think this is the twist in the tale, you are in for one of the bumpiest and exhilarating rides that cinema and strong filmmaking has to offer. Cassandra, plays the titular promising young woman, a promising medical student who dropped out of college when her best friend, Nina, is date-raped by a fellow student, and as usually is the case, who manages to go scot-free. From the look of it, she pledges to scare men straight, who similarly take advantage of women by subjecting them to grey-area rape and sexual violence, in their drunken state.

She pretends to be drunk, has a well-intentioned man come over and offers his chivalrous services and subsequently tries to take advantage of her believing her to be drunk and easier to manipulate and get into bed. It is at this moment, that she reveals herself to not be drunk. On finding out that Nina's rapist is getting married, he goes on a tirade to get revenge from all those that not only was actively involved in her rape like her rapist Al Monroe (Chris Lowell) but also, those that severe complicit in creating an environment of forgiveness and doubt surrounding his actions and the testimony made by Nina owing to her being drunk at the time. It would be a great disservice to all those reading this review to spoil the ending, or even hint at the same. It is one that must be watched by everyone and spoiled by none.

The film, in itself, is a genuine masterwork, especially considering that this is Fennell's first time directing a film. The film not only has something to say but has employed the most effective way to say it, through the most visceral media at our disposal as a society – film. This piece of work will have you on the edge of your seat cheering one moment and howling in anger the next, which just goes to show just how effective it is in its evocation of a response. A timely portrait of our society, regardless of nationality, one which incentivizes and supports rape culture, has been represented, questioned and

demolished in its own tiny, quotidian manner, which shows revenge in a manner that has never been seen on screen before. It makes us question our morals and check our blind spots when it comes to ourselves and those we believe to be “good guys”. With perfect casting, incredible writing and phenomenal acting by Mulligan and masterful directing, the film manages to get under your skin and stay there long after the credits have rolled away.





The Social Network

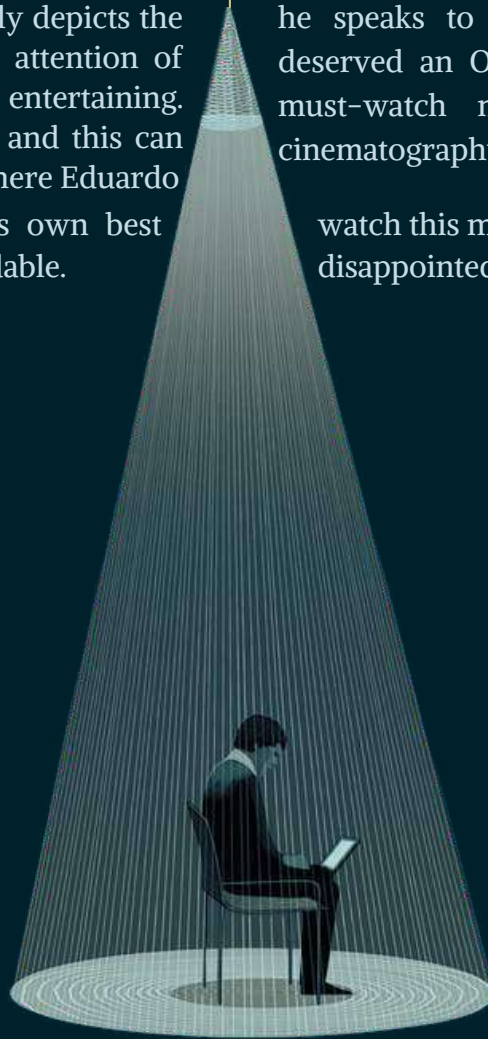


Reviewed by Akanksha Mishra, BBA F, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

Rarely one comes across such a fine movie that deserves all the hype surrounding it. David Fincher, a creative genius, blessed us with one of his finest works ever – The Social Network. Ten years later this movie still stands as one of the best films in modern cinema. While the movie has been criticized to twist the facts for entertainment purposes, the audience still loves this masterpiece. And who could blame them, this movie has everything. This movie is about a normal Harvard educated guy (Mark Zuckerberg portrayed by Jesse Eisenberg) who goes on to invent one of the world's most-used apps – Facebook. This drama highlights friendships and betrayal. Mark finds himself in legal trouble after suits have been filed against him by two parties, the first one being the Winklevoss twins (portrayed by Armie Hammer) from whom he allegedly stole the idea and the second one being his own best friend Eduardo Saverin (portrayed by Andrew Garfield). The viewers should keep in mind that the facts of the story have been highly dramatized in the name of creative liberty. The story in itself is compelling. The cinematography in this film is one of the best ones I've ever seen. The movie perfectly depicts the intensity of depositions grabbing the attention of the viewers. The dialogues are quite entertaining. Aaron Sorkin does an impressive job and this can especially be seen during the climax where Eduardo realizes that he was betrayed by his own best friend Mark. The direction is commendable.

Quentin Tarantino recently praised this film and David Fincher's directing skills. He termed it as the best movie of this decade. If this wasn't enough the movie has great performances that should have won Oscars – especially the portrayal of Mark Zuckerberg by Jesse Eisenberg and that of Eduardo Saverin by Andrew Garfield. Justin Timberlake of Sean Parker. He brings out the shrewdness of the character and is so convincing that one does find his character obnoxious. Andrew Garfield, an extremely likeable actor, does a fantastic job in portraying the talented yet underrated actor, does a highly commendable job in portraying the role of Eduardo Saverin. He is sweet, charming and entertaining and knocks one's socks off in the climax scene with his dialogue delivery. The climax scene was one of the major reasons for this film to be such a big hit. Jesse Eisenberg, another talented yet underrated actor, does an amazing job in portraying Mark that viewers may for a moment think that it is Mark himself. From nailing the way he speaks to the way he reacts, Jesse surely deserved an Oscar for this role. In all this is a must-watch movie. People who aren't into cinematography, acting, screenwriting should

watch this masterpiece. In general, you won't be disappointed and will have a great experience





Banker To The Poor by Mohammad Yunus & Alan Jolis

Reviewed by Karishma Maheshwari, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

Banker To The Poor is Mohammad Yunus' memoir of how he decided to work with the world's poor to eradicate poverty. In the book, he traces the economic relationship between rich and poor through an intellectual and spiritual journey that he takes with his colleagues to found Grameen.

In 1974, while Muhammad Yunus was teaching economics in Bangladesh, the country was ravaged by famine. Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world. At one point of time after the country's independence, 90% of the population lived below the poverty line. While he taught abstract economic theories to students at the university, he became increasingly uncomfortable with the condition of the poor of his country struggling for a square meal. Yunus realized his economic education was incomplete. To complete it, he went to local villages to "learn from the poor" about what they actually needed rather than what a textbook said they should have. The answer was credit. Yunus invented the system of microcredit where he began issuing micro loans to extremely impoverished families living in the rural regions of Bangladesh. Literally known as "Banker to the Poor", Professor Muhammad Yunus later established the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh in 1983, fueled by the belief that credit is a fundamental human right. His objective was to help poor people escape from poverty by providing loans on terms suitable to them and by teaching them a few sound financial principles so they could help themselves.

We have a lot to learn from the Banker to the poor. You will only get tangible solutions to the biggest problems in the world when you work WITH the stakeholders to create solutions rather than thinking and innovating solutions for them without involving them. Only when Yunus spent time with the people of the villages did he discern the real problems that keep the poor people poor in the first place.

What is most revolutionary about Professor Yunus' ideas is his attitude toward the poor. He regards their survival in very difficult circumstances as proof that they are smart enough to do better, if only they are given a little working capital. He rejects the idea of many do-gooder organizations that the poor must be remade by some specialized job training - supplied by those same organizations, naturally.

Not that the poor don't need basic assistance, since some cannot read or use numbers well enough to keep track of their simple bookkeeping. But the emphasis is on moving the process forward. It is the embodiment of the maxim - teach a person to fish and there will be a lifetime of food.

The fact that the majority of the borrowers at Grameen were women because they were much more responsible with their money and also the subjects in greater need, as compared to their male counterparts was fascinating and empowering to learn. Historically, women have always suffered more than men because of the systems that are never able to support them or be in their favour and with the microlending system, a lot of women got a new ray of hope and belief in themselves that they could achieve much more than what the society prescribes and decides for them. If we come to think of it, this credit system also boosts the local economy of a region, thus promoting self sustaining economies and environmental sustainability.

It shows that this book had a little for everyone. Microlending is a concept that ought to be more politically correct and acceptable than other types of loans. Since microloans take little or no government involvement and become self-supporting in a very short time, it may please the conservatives. Liberals, with their idea of an egalitarian society would like it because it actually improves the lives of the hardcore poor. Feminists value women's empowerment and when they see change happening in countries where women for centuries have been subjugated by customs like severe veiling for traveling in public, it is a win for them. For environmentalists, the emphasis on small-scale development is a pleasant change from the large, often environmentally destructive engineering projects that the World Bank has long promoted. If you want to learn how to make the world a more equitable place, are ardent about the eradication of poverty, passionate about social and collaborative entrepreneurship, women empowerment and aim to make an egalitarian society, then you would enjoy the read. Students or professionals who are interested in economics, banking, development, social change, and entrepreneurship should read this book.

A Thousand Splendid Suns by Khaleid Hosseini

Reviewed by Sushmita Das, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law Mumbai

Hosseini's first novel, *The Kite Runner* has definitely set a benchmark and has readers filled with many more expectations for the second one, *The Thousand Splendid Suns* and after reading it I wanted only one thing: I wanted a real cry. It is one of the books that really motivates you to draw your heart out and roar like a child.

The main storyline seemed to fulfil my conditions. It was organized in Afghanistan from the 1960s to the 1990s, from Soviet occupation to Taliban rule, following the lives of two women in their marriages and in their war-torn country. It takes us forward to domestic violence, the explanations of the war and the openness and the enormous scale of oppression of Afghan women, I am satisfied- yes (even had tears in my eyes).

And so would you but not for the reasons you can expect. The book includes much more than the above. The novel is divided into two narratives, the first being Mariam when she was nine years old, living on the outskirts of Herat with her grieving mother, expecting a visit once a week from her wealthy father. Called "harami", an illegitimate child, Mariam faces a lot of discrimination and not only blames her father's family, but also from her mother herself. Hosseini introduces a naïve child towards whom you'll feel very sympathetic, and would be overwhelmed by holding the pages. Later in the story, Mariam finds a void in her father's love and after her mother's suicide, she is forced to marry a man over 20, and she, only 15 years old.

You would feel your heart torn and shattered into pieces, have tears filled in your eyes. But Hosseini is not finished.

Rasheed is a kind man, though old in his own way and shy, but all things are considered Mariam's life. Until a miscarriage. And then a few more miscarriages.

You'd see Mariam being tortured again and the domestic violence that she suffers through will make you weep for her again.

Then comes the second story - Laila. An innocent little girl with a sweet boyfriend, a war-torn family and her brothers are stolen away from her. An orphan, saddened by her love, Laila agrees to marry Rasheed. The stories of these two wives will make you face the fear of the great power of love in times of despair.

Throughout the novel Hosseini sets out details about the situation in Afghanistan but only then does he participate in the story. However, he assures us that there will be no driving force in the novel - that is the two women's voice. They both try to make a living, trying to find happiness in the dark. They both have a glimmer of hope in their eyes as they embark on their great journey.

Hosseini's writing is easy, and that's all it takes, the difference in the difficult situations of Mariam and Laila.

In the end you will be left not only with tears, but with fire lit up inside. Above all it is a matter of hope and health, the heroism that comes with love and the inevitable conflict that comes with life. Encouragingly, outstanding, every man and woman should read this story.



Sex Cells: The Medical Market for Eggs and Sperm

by Dr Rene Almeling

Reviewed by Soumya Singh, BA LLB (Hons.) Student

A short yet crisp book which deals with a unique perspective on the sub-unit of the reproductive market – the medical market for eggs and sperm.

Let's start with the most remarkable part about the book, the title, which is an interesting wordplay. It depicts how sex cells constitute the market, and the sex (cells) – in fact – 'sells'!

The massive demand and the extensive market is discussed in the book, along with some twist in gender narratives observed by the author – the same can be split in 3 parts, though, all comprehensively discussed in the book.

A. Perspectives of the Donors

Based on Dr. Rene's research, female donors when asked about their experience, express that they feel great. They think of their act as 'helping' others have their own family. Whereas when the male donors were talked to, post donation, they often felt 'lack of respect' and as if they were just being *used* and being milked of a resource.

It is intriguing to observe how on one hand this process is flipping the gender narrative by making men feel like 'objects' and the women having an air of respect and control and on the other hand, it again reinforces a certain narrative of how it is all about 'work' and labour for men and about the caregiving and warm nature of the women.

B. Comparison in the pay scale

There is a huge difference in payment for a vial of sperm to a man and an egg of a woman.

The reasons are largely vested in the procedure and the scientific methods involved for extraction and collection of the egg and sperm.

Male donors just have to collect their sperms in a cup at a sperm bank, whereas female donors have to go through a surgical procedure to get their egg removed for donation – the procedure, risks, etc. involved are clear grounds for pay/costs disparity.

It is interesting to note, and imperative to point out, that there seems to be a reversal in the default narrative of wages/payments to men and women. Here women are being paid more than the men for the 'same' task performed (i.e. providing their gamete).

C. Usage of Literature

In the book, Dr. Rene has made a very interesting concept of calling sperm donation institutes 'banks' – "sperm banks" whereas egg donation institutes as 'agencies' – "egg agencies". She explains the reason, based on her field-research. Sperm donors make a deposition and their work is done however when male donors were interviewed regarding their feelings about the possibility of their 'kid' being around in the world, they often have a sense of attachment and consider themselves the biological 'father' of the child.

The women when asked about their feelings on the donation, have said that they merely consider themselves as 'agents' in providing others the opportunity to start and have their own family. The female donors do not (generally) associate themselves as the mother of the child in any way whatsoever.

This also highlights a different gender narrative than the usual. The women have no feelings of the maternal bond but the male donors can be seen experiencing the bond of 'fatherhood'.

The book concludes by summing up these observations; it's safe to say it's been a refreshing and a challenging read to further analyse the interrelated concepts of gender, sex, and ethics.

Embers of Thought

-By Rishiraj Pargaonkar, BBA D, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

The absconding beauty of a post-literature novel, the beguiling world of dystopia; Fahrenheit 451 portrays the world of authority and control. It was a pleasure to burn. The opening lines portray the anguish the writer feels from the extinction of critical thought, the incineration of knowledge with giant screens to stare at for eternity. This book is based on a near-future version of America where books are outlawed. Guy Montag, the protagonist, is a fireman whose job is to destroy the most illegal of commodities, the source of all discord and unhappiness, the printed book. He never questions his menial task of destroying books and igniting a plethora of books.

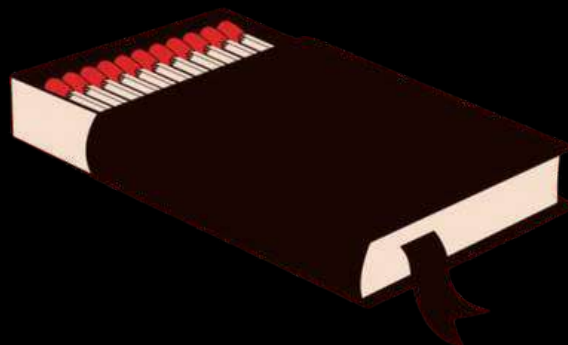
Ray Bradbury named it Fahrenheit 451 as he believed it is the temperature at which paper catches fire and burns. The novel was written during the McCarthy era of American politics, and Bradbury was concerned about the Communist witch-hunts that were common at the time and the stupefying effect they had on the American cultural scene. The author unveils the plot in almost a cadencing manner, he creates vivid imagery in your head with the verbose description of the most intricate details; something as trivial as a page going up in flame, the author successfully paints a picture in the reader's head.

Montag broods over his mundane and dreary life and enters a state of abyss questioning everything in his life where emptiness engulfs him and he swims in the agnostic feeling of unfulfillment. Montag has a wife, Mildred, who is obsessed with this virtual prison and spends her day staring at this giant virtual screen where the characters act as a metaphor for family.

As the virtual world becomes more dominant, owning printed books is construed as acts of rebellion; nobody can trace it, alter it, or hack it. The characters when they first encounter a book befuddles them and it feels very foreign and alien to them. The books feel like water in a vast digital desert to them. Bradbury was writing about the dangers of television, he feared that this virtual world would relinquish critical thought. This book is an exemplary work of indictment of censorship policies enforced on individuals everywhere in this world.

The characters in this book reveal how we wanted the world to be this way, we wanted entertainment to replace reading and thinking, how we vote for political and economic systems to fulfill our hedonism more than thoughtful introspection. Watching the books burn was an ethereal experience for the 'firemen'. The hiss of incinerating pages sounded like the final gasps of hundreds of dying souls. The more books they burned, the more hypnotic it became — a mesmerizing spectacle of pages curling and embers dancing into the void.

Montag thinks about an epoch where people didn't live in fear. He starts stealing books from his job and hides them. The books become a threat to everything in his life; trying to satisfy his answers through books puts his life at peril.



The Ambulance Chases Big Dreams

Reviewed by Kshitij K. Viswanath, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law Mumbai

John Ray Grisham Jr., popularly called John Grisham, is a lawyer by profession and a writer by passion. The fusion of the two incites a feeling of thrill when you read it with the intensity that the feeling lingers months after your first reading. The book in question is a blend of ambition, street thinking and hope, yet is confined to the restrictions of reality, that can be related among most of us as it captures the frustration of a professional in its essence. Hope supersedes all the monotony of life in general with everything falling in place in the end.

Through the reading, one can capture the essence of the legal profession in its entirety, with some lawyers making it big, while others struggle to make ends meet, haggling for business as though it is a cut throat business, with no ethics and plain materialism. The book also captures more general problems such as alcoholism, poverty, failed relationships and professional burnouts which are an everyday sight, not differentiating on the basis of profession or class. However, the startling resemblance to reality is the exploitation of the poor and their vulnerability; false promises and battles too big to fight are centric to this book.

The book also brings about a feeling of dedication and loyalty towards one's career and the justice that one does in his practice. In the humdrum of evil and self-centred voices, one can hear that goodness and righteousness is still living and beating. The idea of good friendships, loyal dogs and an angry receptionist are all inclusive in this package offered by the author, lightening the contents of the book, making it a delight to read.

False alliances, personal enmity and lawsuits are the addition to the thrill that this book offers with people using means, both legal and illegal to achieve what they want to, eerily resembling the life on the streets.

The book also depicts the spirit of bringing change to one's life and making a difference, one moment at a time. It also shows us the risk one takes in life and the fear in doing so, yet there are vast benefits if one overcomes fear for a minute.

The concept of ethics binds the entire book together and makes you question whether the lawyers indulge in dirty business out of choice or by force, and the stories of the characters put that into perspective, with a picture into their past, their dreams and their expectations, all which collapsed and a choice had to be made. The pragmatic stayed pragmatic and the optimistic stayed optimistic, believing in their opinions till the end, regardless which way it swayed.

The essence of '5 minutes of fame' also is very well pictured here as when cornered, the channelled desperation baffled all those observing, giving a glimmer of hope once again.

Yet, the text is one of realism with no flowery bits in between, making it an absolute delight to read as it provides a change from the conventional legal fiction, which does not accurately depict the idea of the real world, rather just glorifies the profession.

Personally, 'The Litigators' is a book I would recommend to all those interested to look into the legal field and what lies beyond the well-dressed lawyers and the million-dollar lawsuits. The larger reality includes lawyers advertising divorce settlements and haggling over the commission that they would earn on clearing a dead man's will, which is essential to understand. The fact that the writer is an attorney as well as a writer is very evident, almost as though it was him recalling his personal experiences, rather than it being a piece of fiction. In my opinion, 'The Litigators' is a piece that is a must read.



Why I am a Hindu by Shashi Tharoor

Reviewed by Yash Sinha, BBA D, Batch of 2024, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai.

Why I am a Hindu is a book which consists of two sections as the author sees it, the first section very much talks about Hinduism and its brief history. The belief in the religion and the epics of the religion, also the various changes and customs which have been followed. It highlights various ideas of Hinduism, for example how a belief in God is not a compulsion as compared to other religions. The writer touches on the ideas of many Indian gods and their multiple Puranic stories and also on how they are united by the supreme Brahman's principle. He stresses that Hinduism has no doctrinal absolutism, which makes it such a happily liberal religion. He impresses upon his reader that Hinduism is – and can only be – experienced and interpreted subjectively, using this lovely metaphor: “Hindu thought is like a vast library in which no book ever goes out of print; even if the religious ideas a specific volume contains have not been read, enunciated or followed in centuries, the book remains available to be dipped into, to be revised and reprinted with new annotations or a new commentary whenever a reader feels the need for it...”. The author familiarizes us with the kind of Hinduism with which he was born and provides an outline of religion along with a sprinkling of anecdotes. The second chapter, entitled "The Hindu Way," discusses traditional Hindu concepts such as paramatma, brahman, dharma, maya, mukti, varna, ashrama, and yugas. The chapter provides a comprehensive but concise view of Hinduism and could be a good starting point for anyone interested in learning more about this religion. The third chapter, entitled "Questioning Hindu Customs," explores the stubborn territories of caste, superstition, and "godmen". The author claims that this inherently unjust sorting social system, an irrational reliance on gurus, and excessive faith in signs and omens are not only embedded in the Hindu tradition, but are also the unfortunate corollary of a weak and directionless society.

The author profiles some of the greatest religious personalities in the fourth and last chapter of section one, called "Great Souls of Hinduism," which either made questions or transformed religion. From the wise Vyasa, Yagnavalkya and Patanjali to Mahavir Jain and Gautama Buddha; from Adi Shankaracharya and Ramanuja to the saints of Bhakti; from Kabir, Nanak and Mirabai to Raja Ram Mohun Roy and Osho, the writer tells the stories in the context of many of India's major religions.

The book's second part is called "Political Hinduism." This is where the meticulous context-building of Tharoor becomes particularly useful through the history of Hinduism. He begins to build his case with the notion of secularism, which when seen through Western political theory's lens becomes a moot point. Tharoor compares this with Hindutva's theory as initially suggested by VD Savarkar and perpetuated by his RSS predecessors and successors such as MS Golwalkar and Deendayal Upadhyay. The author explains the Hindutva policy brand of the BJP as being based on a victim-turned-avenger complex, a narrative of failure and loss, and resentment of the Muslim community.

In my opinion the book gives a deep knowledge of Hinduism as a religion and not as Dharma, I believe there is a greater need for today's generation to understand the idea of Dharma. This concept is missing in this book in detail, the idea of Dharma has never been about rights like the method of religion. It has always been about duties and this civilizational land of Bharat has always been the land of seekers. It is not restricted to a single book, god or set of principles and this is the very reason that Bharat is very diverse in nature.



Becoming by Michelle Obama

Reviewed By Aarushi Khandelwal, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law, Mumbai

“Now I think it’s one of the most useless questions an adult can ask a child– What do you want to be when you grow up? As if growing up is finite. As if at some point you become something and that’s the end.”
–Michelle Obama, *Becoming*

Becoming is the memoir of former United States first lady Michelle Obama, published back in 2018. It talks about the overall personality formation, life at the White House, charity work, motherhood and other crucial as well as trivial aspects of Michelle Obama. Michelle Obama has arisen as one of the most famous and convincing ladies of our period. She made the most inviting and inclusive White House ever, setting up herself as an amazing advocate for ladies and young ladies around the planet, drastically changing the manners in which that families seek after better and more dynamic lives, and remaining with her husband as he drove America through a portion of its most nerve-racking minutes.

With unerring genuineness and energetic mind, she represents her victories and her failure, both public and private, revealing to her full story as she has lived it – in her own words and on her own terms. Michelle Obama portrays her biography, from her childhood in South Side Chicago, to her schooling at Princeton and Harvard, to meeting and wedding President Barack Obama. She further portrays the Obamas' eight years in the White House, disclosing how she figured out how to shuffle bringing up kids with issues of state, while likewise keeping her brand name self-control and composure during challenging times.

This would be a galvanizing read for everyone, especially the budding sprouts of our society because it tells us how to deal with our own imperfections, the one flaw which we try to hide and despise.

In the book, Michelle Obama herself vocalises her own flaws as she admits how she organised her time as a young professional with the precision of a ‘tight and airless piece of origami’ until Barack came ‘like a wind that threatened to unsettle everything.’ The next lesson to learn is building an unshattered self-confidence.

It’s the best to block everything which risks your confidence, this doesn’t mean becoming over-confident and losing the vision of practicality. Michelle’s advice concerning developing self-confidence, it is all about your mindset and believing in yourself first. The third take away from the book which is recommended, find a career you love. Reconnoitre, consider, question, solve each and every potential opportunity or direction of the area/niche which interests you and follow it.

Follow your own passion, pursue it, don’t let your career become a burden of your life and just a source of earning. It has to be a line of profession/art/field which interests you and doesn’t exhaust you. In her memoir, a work of profound reflection and hypnotizing narrating, Michelle Obama welcomes readers into her reality, chronicling the encounters that have formed her – from her adolescence on the South Side of Chicago to her years as a chief adjusting the requests of parenthood and work, to her time spent at the world's most renowned location.

I value the book’s scrupulousness and legitimacy, as Michelle Obama opens up about her hesitancy about Barack running for office, their fertility issues and her poise. It feels like you are having an extended 1:1 tête-à-tête with the lady herself because of the genuineness of the book which makes it an easy read.

Legal Eagles: Stories of The Top Seven Indian Lawyers by Indu Bhan

Reviewed by Aria Sheth, BBA, Batch of 2025, Kirit P. Mehta School of Law

'Legal Eagles' by Indu Bhan is a seven-chapter book discussing the lives of seven of the most outstanding Indian lawyers, namely Harish Salve, Mukul Rohatgi, Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Arvind Datar, Aryama Sundaram, Prashant Bhushan, and Rohinton Nariman. This book examines each of these luminaries' triumphs, failures, journey to success, and the landmark courtroom cases that they have fought. The book also delves into personal details of each of these lawyers' lives by alluding to their childhood, their role models, and the reason why they decided to pursue law as a career. The author of this book, Indu Bhan is a senior legal reporter associated with the Financial Express. The transition adopted by her to explore each of the lawyers' lives is smooth and distinct.

Additionally, at the end of every chapter, a detailed explanation is provided of some of the landmark cases in which these personalities have played a significant role.

For instance, at the end of the chapter based on Harish Salve's life, the author reviews the details of the famous Vodafone tax case, its impact, and the winning arguments of the case. Similarly, other cases such as the 2G spectrum scam are analyzed comprehensively, proving informational for law students and providing a fresh take on each case for those who may already be aware of it. This book also discusses the work ethics, professionalism, and the daily routine of the seven lawyers, which largely contributes to their success.

This book is an inspiring read for young and aspiring lawyers as well as practising lawyers. It proves to be an informative and thought-provoking read for law students. Thus, 'Legal Eagles' is recommended to all those fascinated by the subject of law in addition to those who aspire to be pioneers in the field.



Art by Shazil Imam, @shazildraws

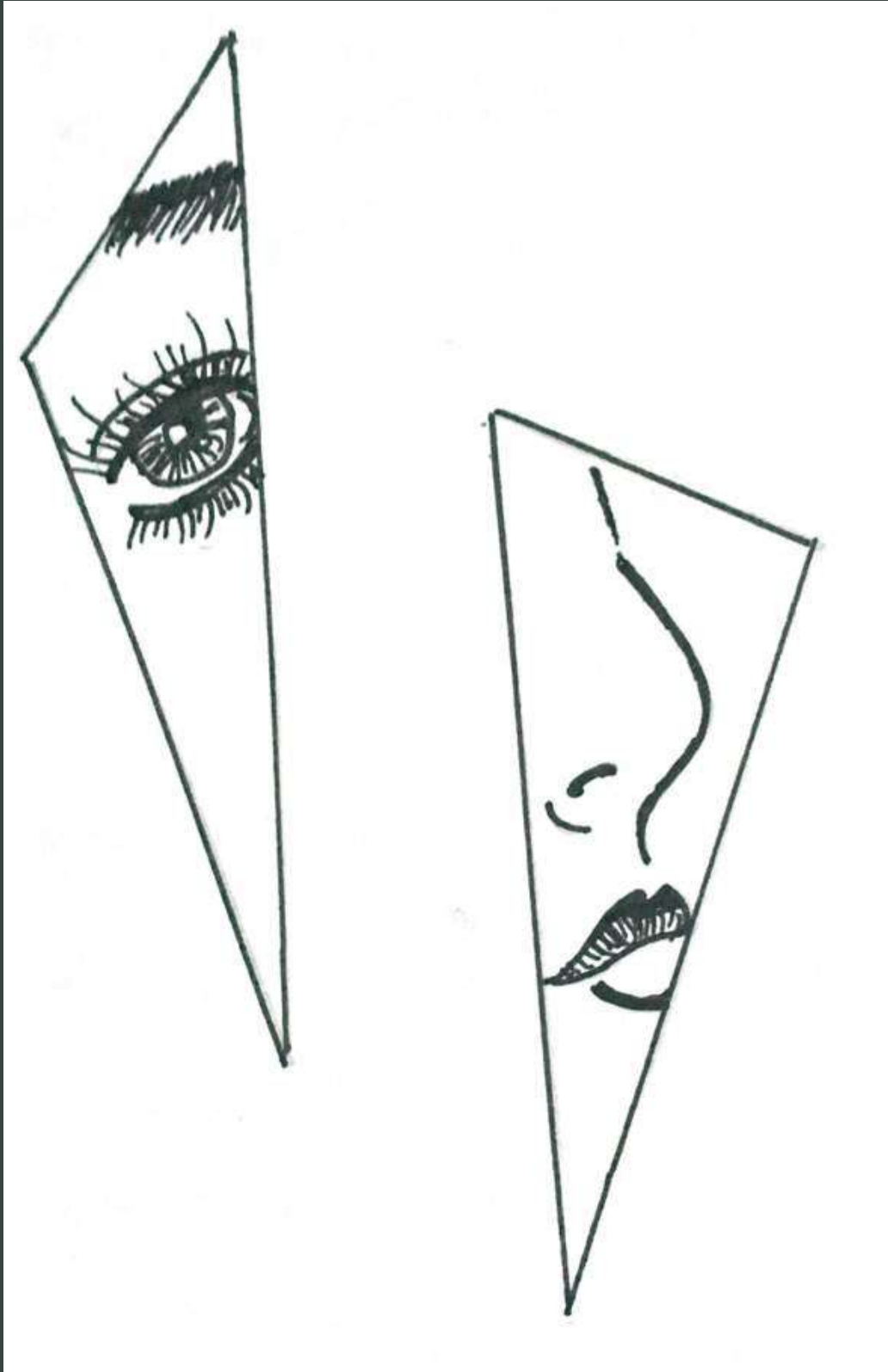


Angie McMahon in blue and red, overlapping lines, 2019.

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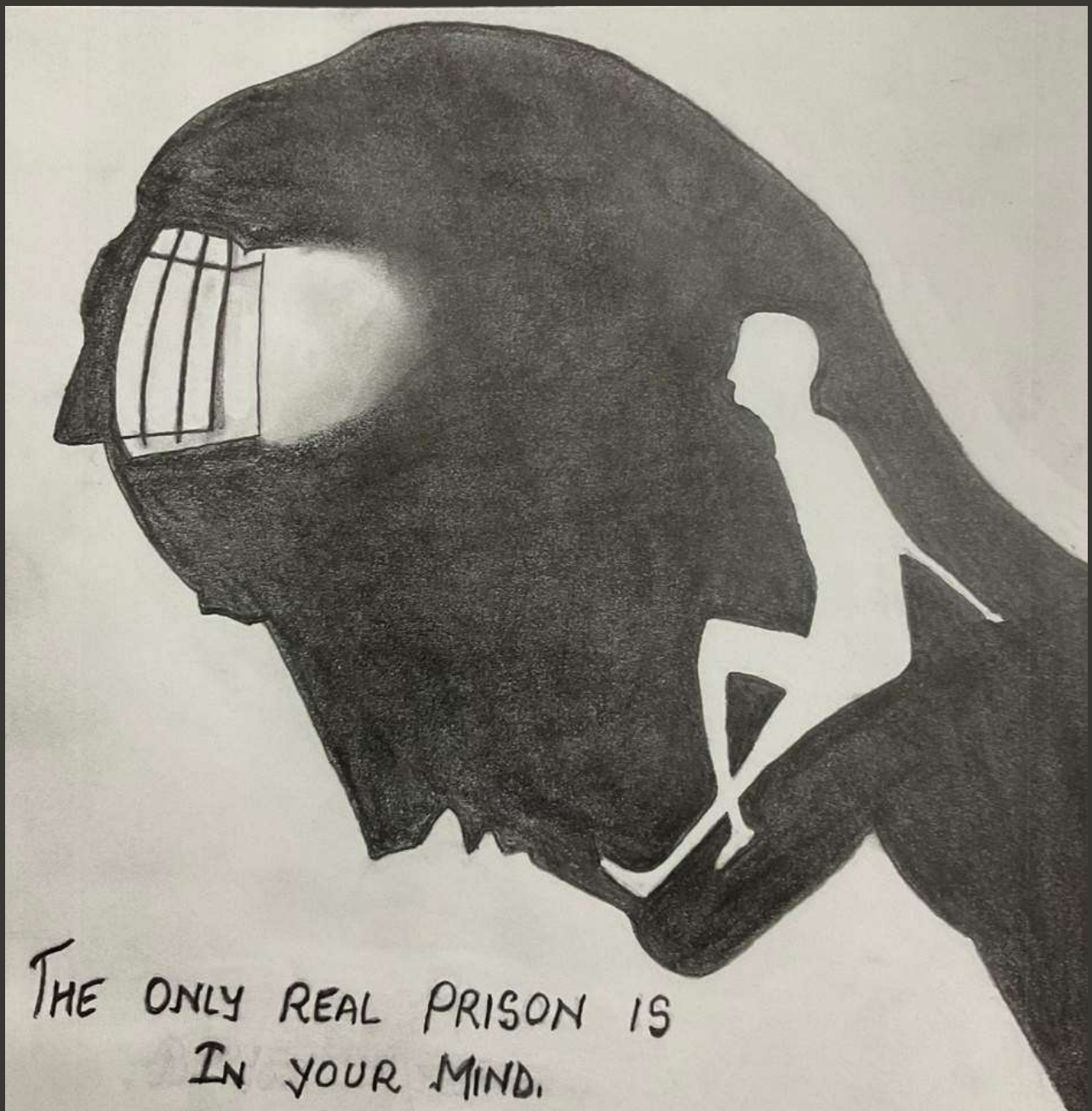


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Shards

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THE ONLY REAL PRISON IS
IN YOUR MIND.

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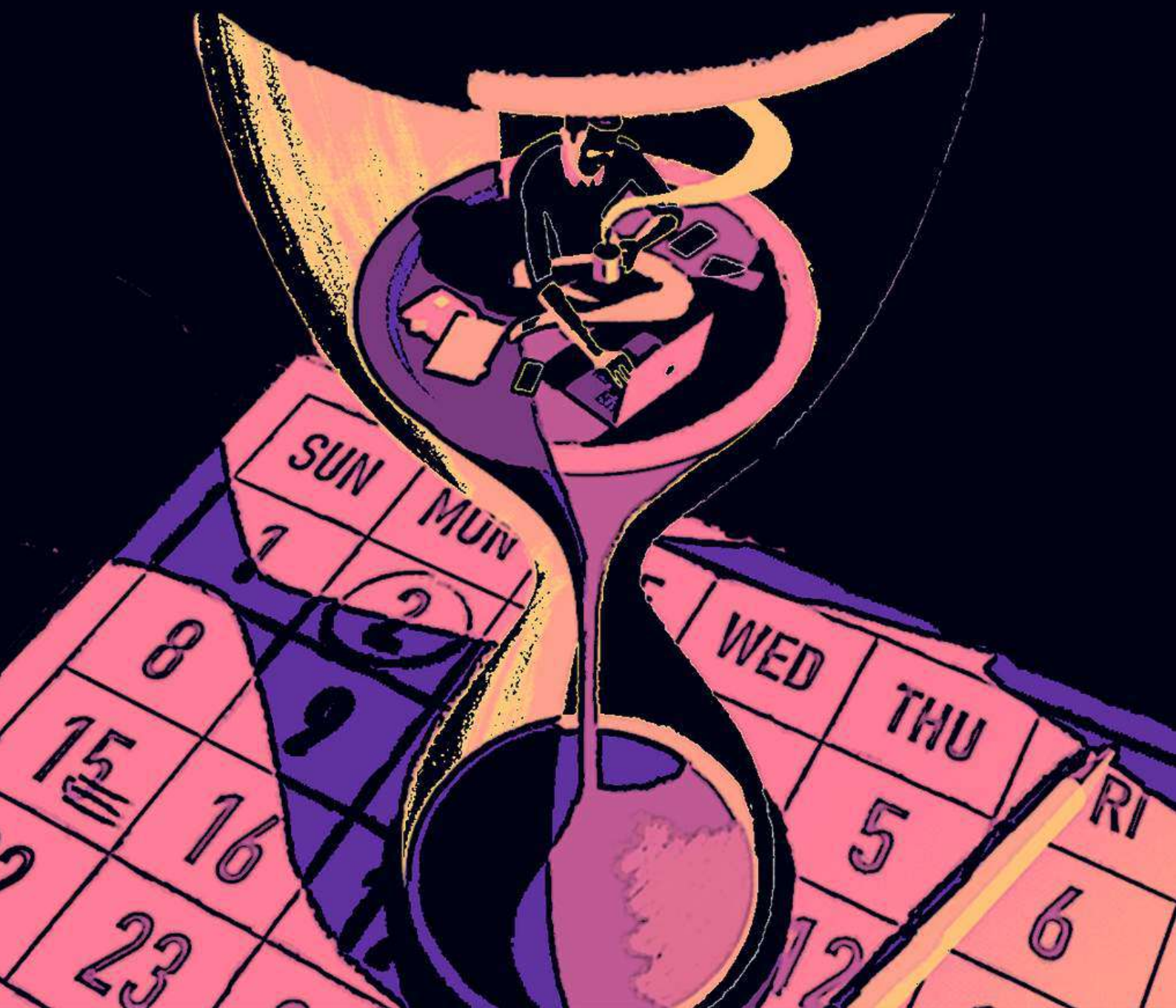
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By Muskan Bansal, Batch of 2024

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By Ghazal Bhootra, Batch of 2024

TIMELINE



Mission Abort

An Overview of the Reproductive Rights of Women Across the Globe

Over the centuries, women have always been seen as inferior beings in most cultures around the world. They were largely confined to their homes and barely had any substantial rights. After several movements and protests during the last few decades, the overall situation of women in today's world has greatly improved, but gender inequality is still clearly visible. Over the decades, women have fought to get basic human rights for themselves, and yet some of the basic rights that women are still fighting for are reproductive rights. Reproductive rights not only include a woman's right to get an abortion but also include free access to reproductive healthcare pre and post maternity. Most countries and religions today are largely based on patriarchal beliefs and condemn abortion.

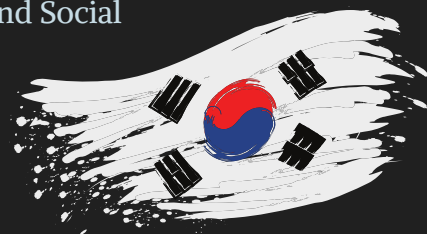
The Center for Reproductive Rights¹ classifies countries into five categories based on the legality of abortion in these countries. The first category consists of countries where abortion is prohibited altogether by law, the laws in these countries do not permit abortion under any circumstances, including when the woman's life or health is at risk. 26 countries across the globe fall within this category. Some countries which fall under this category include Iraq, the Philippines, Egypt, Madagascar, and Mauritania. 90 million (5%) women of reproductive age live in countries that prohibit abortion altogether. The second category includes countries where abortion is permitted to save a woman's life, the laws of these countries permit abortion only when the woman's life is at risk. 39 countries fall within this category. Some countries that fall within this category include Afghanistan, Indonesia, Myanmar, Iran, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. 359 million (22%) women of reproductive age live in the countries that fall under this category. The third category includes countries that permit abortion to preserve health, the laws of these countries permit abortion on the basis of health or therapeutic grounds. 56 countries fall within this category, 25 of these countries explicitly permit abortion to preserve a woman's mental health. A few countries which fall under this category include Poland, Pakistan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Peru, Columbia, Ecuador, and Bolivia. 237 million

(14%) women of reproductive age live in the countries that fall under this category. The fourth category includes countries that permit abortion on broad social or economic grounds, the laws in these countries are mostly interpreted liberally to permit abortion under a broad range of circumstances, these countries often consider a woman's actual or reasonably foreseeable environment and her social or economic circumstances in considering the potential impact of pregnancy and childbearing. 14 countries fall under this category, these include India, Japan, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zambia, Great Britain, and Finland. 386 million (23%) women of reproductive age live in the countries which fall under this category. The fifth and final category comprises of those countries which permit abortion on request (Gestational Limits Vary), the most common gestational limit for countries in this category is 12 weeks. 67 countries fall in this category, the countries that fall in this category include the USA, Canada, Greenland, Cuba, Guyana, Spain, France, Turkey, Russia, China, Nepal, Vietnam, and Australia. 590 million (36%) women of reproductive age live in countries that fall in this category.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS THE GLOBE

1. South Korea

On 11th April 2019, the Constitutional Court² ruled that the ban on abortion was unconstitutional and that the lawmakers should alter the legislation by 31st December 2020. Seven out of nine Judges ruled that banning abortion was unconstitutional and six votes were necessary to lift the ban. Prior to this, women who had had abortions in South Korea could face up to one year in prison and a fine of up to two million won (1,780 USD), and the doctors or healthcare workers who aided such illegal abortions could be put in jail for up to two years. Prosecutions for the said abortions were rare but did happen. 75% of women aged 15-44 considered the law unfair according to a survey by the Korea Institute for Health and Social



Affairs, about 20% of the respondents revealed that they had an abortion even though it was illegal. Abortion was criminalized in South Korea in 1953, exemptions were granted in cases involving rape, incest, and genetic disability. As the years passed, the law appeared to contradict other government policies, social norms, and technological advances. For example, during the early 60s, the government launched a campaign to reduce the number of children per household in an effort to control the size of the population. Traditionally, South Korean couples preferred a male heir and hence would keep having children till they had a male child. The new policy along with the ban on abortion left them with no other alternative. This subsequently led to the rise of the illegal abortion industry, and many practitioners who carried out these illegal abortions were not trained and qualified enough to carry out such procedures.

The South Korean government³ announced a new proposal, under which, abortion would be banned after 14 weeks except in the case of a sex crime, if the mother's health is at risk, or if the fetus displays signs of severe birth defects; in these cases abortion could be allowed for up to 24 weeks. The use of the drug mifepristone was allowed for performing abortions. However, this proposal drew sharp criticism from both sides. The women's rights group argued that the law still focused on punishing women rather than focusing on how to safely provide access to this procedure. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Korea issued a statement saying that all children must be protected "from the very moment of conception". However, the proposal still remains to be voted on and implemented.

2. Kenya

On 12th June 2019⁴, the High Court of Kenya ruled that abortion would remain illegal. A five-judge bench ruled out this judgement. The Kenyan High Court had ruled that abortion would continue to remain illegal in the country but will only be permissible if the mother's life is at risk. The court also ruled that safe abortion which is procured within the confines of law can be done by permitted medical health practitioners. The ruling judge, George Odunga J., elucidated in regards how mother's health be defined, said that the court will rely upon medical descriptions



that state it is the social, mental, and physical state. Hence, abortion is permitted where the health of a mother is at risk as determined by a trained medical practitioner. He further added that the courts will rely upon the Health Act to describe who is a trained medical practitioner.



3. Poland

On 22nd October 2020⁵, the Constitutional Tribunal, consisting mainly of judges appointed by the ruling party, declared the law authorizing abortions for malformed fetuses to be unconstitutional, effectively banning most of the small number of legal abortions that were carried out in the country. The 1993 law that allowed abortion in cases of severe and irreversible fetal abnormalities was ruled unconstitutional. After this ruling was passed, the government stalled for a while to bring this ban into effect due to the widespread protests that were happening across the nation. But soon the government announced that the near-total abortion ban will be enforced from 27th January 2020. After this, abortions will only be permitted in cases of rape, incest, or when the mother's life is at risk due to the pregnancy.

Poland already had some of Europe's strictest abortion laws, about 1,000 legal terminations are performed in Poland each year, around 2,00,000 women have abortions illegally or go abroad for the procedure. Poland's conservative government has strong relations with the country's powerful Catholic Church. The court justifies its ruling on the grounds that 'an unborn child is a human being' and therefore it deserves protection under Poland's constitution which ensures the right to life. People who support this ban often say that the judgement is a great step towards the realization of human rights of all human beings and that there would be no discrimination against children who were sick and disabled. People who oppose this ban condemn this judgment as it denies women the basic right to choose what is right for themselves. However, this ban is stiff in effect.

4. India

The discussion⁶ on the need for an abortion law in India started in the 60s. The government set up the Shantilal Shah Committee to evaluate whether it was necessary to have an abortion law. During that time

, abortions were strictly illegal under Section 312 of the IPC, and 'causing miscarriage' of a woman was a crime punishable with imprisonment up to three years and/or a fine. The Committee analyzed the legal, medical and socio-cultural aspects of abortion and recommended the legalization of abortion and a law on comprehensive abortion care. These recommendations eventually led to the passing of the MTP Act, 1971, which only allows for medical termination of pregnancies. However, even after the MTP Act was introduced it did not nullify the penal provisions, 'causing miscarriages' still is penalized and the punishment remains the same. The MTP act doesn't use the word abortion and instead chose the phrase 'medical termination of pregnancy', this is because the term is aimed to ensure that the abortion



laws in the country aren't framed to grant a choice to women to undergo safe abortions, but rather provides procedures to protect doctors against prosecution for conducting abortions. In contrast to the proposal of the Shantilal Shah Committee for a comprehensive abortion care for women, the MTP Act only has a few protections for women and more provisions for the protection of doctors conducting medical terminations. Section 3 of the MTP gives doctors the power to decide whether a woman should have an abortion or not and the woman has no autonomy.

Even after landmark cases such as *Suchita Srivastava v. Chandigarh Admin*⁷ and *Devika Biswas v. Union of India*,⁸ the Supreme Court held a woman's reproductive autonomy to be part of her fundamental right to privacy, and has said that the decision to have a child or not shall be hers alone, free from any state intervention. However, there are no changes in the MTP to give effect to these judgements.

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020, proposes to increase the upper limit in applying for abortions to 24 weeks, but there are no provisions in this amendment that address the issue of granting autonomy to women to make decisions about their bodies. The bill was passed in Lok Sabha but the Rajya Sabha has not approved the bill yet.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, women should have complete autonomy over their bodies. Women should not only have the right to abortion but also a comprehensive

set of reproductive rights including access to reproductive healthcare for free or at subsidized rates, pre and post maternal care, comprehensive reproductive counseling, and laws that help pregnant women working in organizations. No one's opinion on a woman's choice to have an abortion should matter apart from hers. 24 weeks is an ideal time period after which abortion should be discouraged as the fetus begins to develop human consciousness at this point and hence has the fundamental right to life. At this stage, an abortion would also compromise the health of the mother. Laws made for protecting the reproductive rights of women must primarily focus on the woman's free will and health, and be free of all social and religious prejudices. All the rights that women enjoy today are something that women couldn't even imagine a century ago, but still, it is evident that we have a long way to go.

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WOMEN CANDIDATES AND ELECTIONS

THE LATENT ELEMENT OF INDIAN ELECTIONS: WOMEN

Someone's privilege may be another person's hard-earned right.

After more than 7 decades of independence, India remains colonised by a ghost of gender inequality which continues to haunt the credibility of Indian electoral politics, by constantly questioning its inclusivity. Although we proudly acclaim the adoption of Universal Franchise at the time of Independence, it cannot be ignored that participation of females in politics declined after Independence. The political participation of women remained circumscribed by social norms, because of which their political involvement and electoral participation were influenced by 'familial connections' rather than by their own interest in active participation in politics.

After years of struggle when citizens of India wrote their constitution, we have been acting oblivious to the elephant in the room: under-representation of women as political leaders.

Out of total Members in the Lower house of Parliament, less than 15% are women, which is much lower than the envisioned representation of 33%.

Issues in reaching the target can be owed to the political-will of parties. Besides that, there are various other factors that hinder women candidates from fighting in the political arena:-

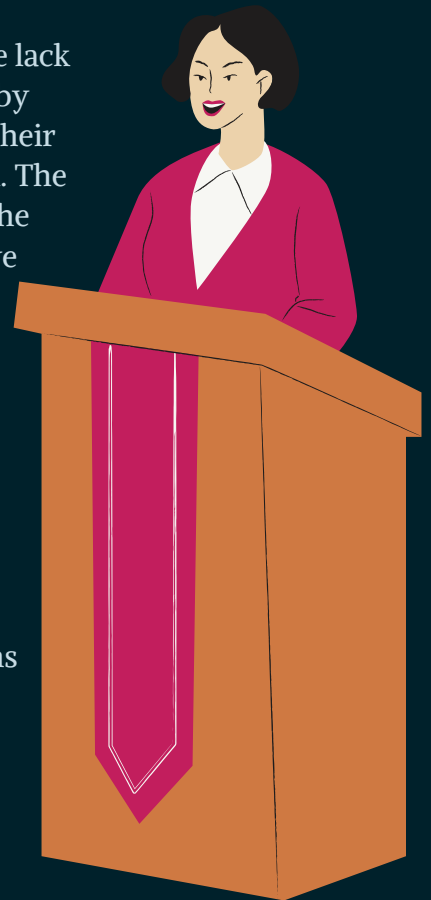
1. Ideological factors: Political parties might hold a misconception about the winnability of women candidates: However, it has been observed that people do not vote merely on the basis of the candidates who stood up, but due to the satisfactory work-record, or a convincing manifesto of the party. Besides, it is noteworthy that, statistically, women have a larger percentage of wins than their male counterparts in general elections. Political parties also hold unfavourable ideologies against nominating women candidates. This may be to avoid changing the male-dominant structure of the parties. 2. Political factors: It is to be noted that even a third of the total election tickets of a party are not given to women, due to which they face a state of stagnation at entry-level itself. It is also because of this issue, that women candidates do not get the requisite political and financial support for election campaigning.

3. Historical factors: Women form almost half of the Indian population, and yet more male, than female candidates stand up for elections. It is known that women have been through systemic discrimination and oppression (which is prevalent even today), such incidents are known to have serious repercussions. This factor has led women to nurture feelings of 'self-doubt' in performing roles of leadership, due to which the full potential of candidacy of women in elections, can yet not be gauged.

The continuing hindrances in expanding women's role in electoral politics- highlight the lack of active steps taken by political leaders, for their better representation. The laxity in addressing the issues hint at an active tolerance of many social barriers subduing women's representation in the legislature. Political leaders and citizens together can fight this toxic tolerance through constructive changes in legislations and ideologies.

WOMEN VOTERS AND ELECTORAL POLITICS

Women are a popular target group of political parties, when it comes to campaigning for elections and there are different approaches with which parties address this section of the voters. Some of these approaches have managed to muster a lot of criticism too. Some political leaders, while addressing women for campaigning purposes, make a mistake of becoming monomaniacs upon 'women's safety', overlooking so many other issues that equally concern these women. Such an ideology ignores the fact that the female voters are an equal counterpart, that also cares about job creation, electricity or water supply, infrastructure, education, etc.



Women care about Beti Bachao Aandolan as much as they care about corruption free india.

The Ujjwala scheme concerns them, as much as the subjects of MSMEs or digital connectivity.

It is important for electoral candidates to make sure that- if gender does come into discussion, it must not seem as a dominant attribute while addressing the women populace. Because their issues are not circumscribed within the bounds of their gender.

Critical analysis of gender-specific campaigning:-

There exists criticism of studying women's role in politics as a separate issue. The critics note that because of such narrow notions, elections end up pivoting around topics like gender, caste, faith etc., thereby promoting 'identity politics'. They argue that- any women-centric campaigning will jeopardize the credibility of election campaigning, because of its identity-biased approach. Instead, identity-neutral or gender-neutral promises shall be preferred.

In support of their arguments, the critics note that while addressing the female voters, political contenders unintentionally instate gender bias in the population as well as in their own ideologies.

This may have resulted from unnecessary feminising or masculinising of gender neutral subjects like domestic work, urban/rural safety, etc.



Women's security is not seen in action, as much as it is seen being guaranteed every few years. Yet it remains the only focus of many candidates when it comes to addressing the gender. Even if matters have to be gender-centric, issues like gender equality in job opportunities, menstrual health are rarely taken up during campaigning. Implementation of some of the Directive Principles of State Policy like relief during maternity period, or topics like equal pay for equal work, are not as much discussed during these elections. The reasons for such a selective approach of campaigners cannot be established in a strict sense. The other side of the argument of a gender-based approach during elections, justifies the need for such an approach. The proponents of such a method argue that in India, identity politics in case of gender

(atleast), can be said to be a necessary evil. It is argued that how much ever its need is denied, this type of politics is needed by the population.

In support of the argument, it is said that this approach focuses on issues that may not be addressed well, in the absence of such a campaign.

For instance, during campaigning of Bihar elections, a free cycle programme for schoolgirls was launched by Nitish Kumar. Other initiatives include a 50% quota for women in panchayat and municipal bodies. In his second term, he introduced a financial assistance scheme for Class XII girl students and 50% reservation for women in government jobs.

Hence, it shall not be forgotten that, it was because of this type of campaigning that the turnout of female voters has been 59.7% compared to 54.6% of male voters in the Bihar 2020 assembly elections, and the trend of higher women voter turnout has been witnessed in the state for more than a decade.

A high voter turn-out is just the first win for democracy. The following wins will depend upon the positive implementation of the promises that these voters relied on. It is also noteworthy that the votes of these women will be consistent only on the pretext of a satisfactory performance of these parties in governance.

Finally, the proponents of the method conclude that just because of a negative tag on 'identity politics', electoral contenders shall not hesitate from applying it and making a constructive use of it in formulating developmental policies.

CONCLUSION

The number of women MPs elected in Lok Sabha were the highest ever in number, as compared to the previous years of Indian democracy. But the question is, should we proudly acclaim, that after 72 years of independence, the highest India could reach is - 78 women Members of Parliament in Lok Sabha?

It is high time we realised that women candidates need political support to rise, and that may not happen without an overt recognition of the situation, by the existing political leaders. It is time that India stopped passively promoting gender inequality, by ignoring the obvious social barriers that restrain women from empowering as political leaders.

Lastly, with larger women voter turn-out, India shall celebrate a larger representation of population, and not that of a gender. India shall continue to strengthen its electoral process through conducting awareness programmes among people about their rights and privileges.

THE LOCUST ATTACK

The year 2020 was a ride into the most frightening haunted house of all times. As the year started with the outburst of the Corona virus pandemic with places shut down due to the country wide lockdown and the economy dropping steadily. The Agriculture sector being the major source of income for the country had also seen a downfall because of the same, and the danger further increased when the country faced the desert locust attack. What exactly are these desert locusts?

These desert locust (*Schistocerca gregaria*) is a species of locusts who look like grasshoppers but are much bigger in size. Unlike grasshoppers, who when increase in numbers, don't pose much danger to us, but when these locusts increase in number, they change their behaviour, appearances and habit. They have the capacity to roughly consume its own weight of fresh food per day which is two grams every day and a very small part of an average swarm which is about one tonne of them can eat the same amount of food one day as about 2,500 people or 25 camels or 10 elephants. Desert locusts are mainly found in Africa, through Arabia and West Asia, extending into parts of South Asia.

Ironically, these locusts, which are known to destroy the crops and eat our food, are eaten as food themselves in some parts of the world. Like Cambodia where a peanut is stuffed inside one and added some oil and salt to taste and grilled. It is also eaten in parts of Uganda, where the legs and wings of these locusts are removed and fried with chopped onions, with adding some curry powder. Desert locusts are also served as food in parts of Philippines, where it is cooked in adobe style, which is with vinegar, bay leaf, whole black pepper and garlic in soy sauce.

These desert locusts can cover hundreds of kilometres in one day and can fly at a speed of 16-19 kmph and of course specialise in destroying large hectares of crop fields. The locusts have more chances of breeding during the monsoon season. And they are known to form after cyclones cause heavy rainfall in Oman's deserts, conducive to desert locust breeding. In the last decade, cyclones in the Indian Ocean have become more frequent, leading to more chances of desert locust breeding.¹

The population that these locusts possessed when they entered India was 80 Crores! And not only this, but they can multiply themselves five times in just a month. Making it almost impossible for the farmers to protect their land(s) of crop. The condition further worsened because of the season which was a big factor in the role of increasing their population.

They flew from Africa and followed the route from there to Yemen to Iran to Pakistan, where it affected almost 60 districts in all provinces and created a havoc and the worst locust attack in 27 years. These locusts entered India through Pakistan in the month of May and largely effected the crops of the states like Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Delhi, Haryana and the western parts of Uttar Pradesh.

Globally, Kenya reported its worst locust outbreak in 70 years, while Ethiopia and Somalia are called it the worst in 25 years. Whereas, this was the worst attack in the last 27 years in India. Even the United Nations stated that there was a severe risk to Indian agriculture because of these attacks even before their arrival. Usually, we face locust attacks every year in the month of July to October but this year, it arrived much early with a bigger population and risk.

¹ Arvind Indulekha, what are desert locusts and why are they so devastating? The Economic Times, May 2020

As per the reports, it was estimated that nearly five lakh hectares of crops spread over Rajasthan had been destroyed. And even 17 districts of Uttar Pradesh along with 16 out of 52 districts in Gujarat being affected, making them the most affected states.

Civic workers sprayed gallons of insecticides and farmers beat “thalis” and played loud music to drive away swarms of locusts but almost nothing seemed impossible. The United Nation’s Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has recommended the use of *Metarhizium anisopliae* which is a type of fungus which can kill locusts by growing inside their bodies. It is cheaper than other methods, more effective and also easy to store.

The statistics of various states show and prove that the state of Punjab and Uttar Pradesh have come out to be the most prepared and strong against fighting this locusts attack, with Uttar Pradesh issuing directions beforehand to the various districts and establishing and forming various control rooms to

track the movements of the locusts and to stop them from destroying the crop fields. The Uttar Pradesh government also conducted overnight operations to clear the swarms of locusts in various districts. Even the Punjab government established control rooms at various districts. The government had sanctioned a sum of Rs 1 crore for containing these locusts.

The other state did take some initiative but better infrastructure and planning could have been done,

Also, The Central government is to be blamed as well on not taking proper precautions beforehand to avoid the destructions to much extent. India was already warned by the United Nations about the attack and was evident of the fact on how dangerous the group of swarms had been to the other countries. The government could have taken some more precautionary steps to have avoided the destruction in a better manner. And instead of using loud music or banging on “thalis” some better ways and proper pre planning could be used on time. Maybe it’s high time to learn that “a stitch on time saves nine”. This idiom also should be kept in mind by all of us around the globe. It’s high time we realise that the environment is getting depleted at such high rate and how important it is for us to be aware and take necessary steps to save the environment. The growing global warming and pollution has resulted in the rise in number of cyclones which in return resulted in the increase in chances of these locusts breeding and the destruction of our food crops and environment as well. The growing pollution is not only affecting the environment but is also possessing danger towards our agriculture. Be it the low level of rainfall during the monsoons or the anytime rains during any other seasons, the year wise streak of draughts or the growing cyclones. It’s high time for us to be aware of our situation and stop taking advantage of our mother earth.



GameStop

Investments in the stock markets are subject to a myriad of market risks that arise out of the uncertainty of how the players in the market would react. Investors in the Stock market can be classified into two categories: Retail Investors and Institutional Investors, Retail Investors are individuals who trade equities in a personal capacity, Institutional Investors refer to corporations, who may or may not use public deposits, deal in equities and have deep pockets. Institutional investors have larger funds, highly skilled personnel, and access to information that may not be available for retail investors, hence, institutional investors are involved in high volume trades. The word 'Elephants' is often used to refer to institutional investors who have the power to sway the market prices to their advantage. Generally, Retail Investors do not have control over the market prices and carry out low volume trades. The Stock Market is very turbulent, people with years of experience with dealing in equities cannot quite predict the exact future, and the tables can turn at any instant. One of the most recent yet remarkable incidents that shook Wall Street was the GameStop Incident.

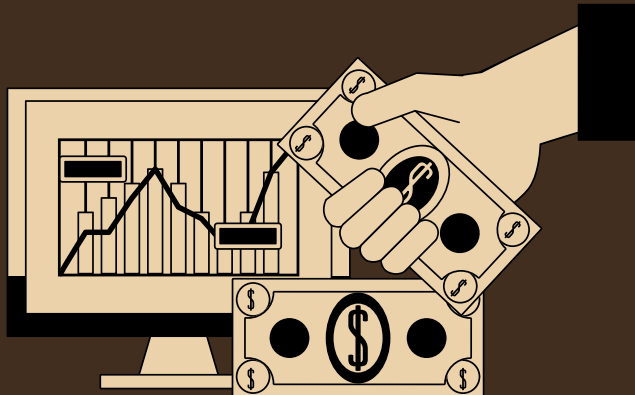
Trading in the stock market is not only confined to the purchase and sale of shares, people can make by making bets on the price of a particular stock, this is known as

Shorting. Shorting refers to the borrowing of a particular number of shares and then selling these borrowed shares with a promise to buy these shares back and return them. When Traders speculate a fall in the price of a stock, they go short, which means they borrow and sell these and sell these shares at a higher price and buy them back later as the price falls, hence the difference is the profit earned by them.

To illustrate how shorting works, read this example, assume that you borrow an orange from your friend and promise him/her to return an orange at the end of the day, in the morning the market price of an orange is Rs 5 per piece, you sell the orange at the prevailing market price speculating a fall in the price, in the evening your prediction proves to be accurate and the price of an orange falls to Rs 2 per piece, at this price you buy an orange and return it back to your friend, thus making a profit of Rs 3 in the transaction. In a real-life scenario, the lender of the shares charges a certain commission on the borrowed stock. In this way, one can earn money even at falling prices. This also comes with its own set of risks, the GameStop fiasco being a prime example.

GameStop is an American video game retailer, Investors speculated the prices stock price of GameStop was gonna decline as fewer people were buying video games in a physical store during the pandemic and there was a rapid shift in purchasing games online as a few variants of the new generation of gaming consoles did not offer a CD drive. Many Hedge Funds had placed their bets on GameStop. A Reddit forum named "wallstreetbets", that had more than four million people in it, were speculated a high volume short trade, tips were passed on the group, Elon Musk

also sent out a tweet encouraging people to buy the stock, and people began buying shares and consequentially the demand surged due to which the prices shot up. On 13th January one share of GameStop was priced at \$31.40, the price increased to \$ 39.12, and on 27th January the stock was at its all-time high closing price at \$ 347.51! All the hedge funds who had shorted their



prices, and hence, lost bilstocks believing that the prices would fall had to buy these shares at high lions of dollars. Everyone was flabbergasted seeing this situation, it was all over the media that how amateur investors had outwitted the pro players of Wall Street. People say that this was an experiment carried out to see the influence of internet communications over the markets, popular threads on Reddit called this as a payback to the big money companies for causing the 2008 financial crash, and some call this as an act of “modern-day Robin Hoods” as a lot of people who gained money donated it for charitable causes.

Robinhood, a popular trading app among millennials in the US, received serious backlash as it decided to freeze certain shares thereby actively preventing investors from buying GameStop shares. The company cited “market volatility” as a reason for their move. Investors could only sell their shares, later the company also placed a maximum limit of 500 shares for buying these shares. The company explained it was required to keep a substantial amount of money on hand in order to process all the trades happening through its clearinghouse, which is the part of the company that sends shares and money back and forth to other clearinghouses to complete trades. Investors became indignant as restrictions were imposed on them whereas Hedge funds traded shares as usual. Following this GameStop is facing nearly 50 lawsuits.

Hence, the GameStop fiasco serves as a perfect example of market risks involved in the stock market as Wall Street traders with years of expertise were outwitted by amateur investors. It shows that the Stock Market can be uncertain and anything can happen at any instant.

Analysis of the GameStop Incident -

The financial investors who sent stocks of GameStop and a few different organizations to beforehand unbelievable statures depended



on a Reddit-based discussion as a platform highlight talk about exchanging systems, egg each other on and move as one to press mutual funds that had shorted stocks. Regulators are analyzing whether any of their movement was illicit. In any case, regardless of whether it was, the online media stage bears little danger from its clients' action, on account of a shield from claims known as Section 230 - which Congress passed to supersede a court choice in a claim brought against the financier firm highlighted in the 2013 Martin Scorsese blockbuster "The Wolf of Wall Street." That provision of the 1996 Communications Decency¹ Act is as of now under investigation in Washington from Republicans, who fight it has permitted online media firms to victimize traditionalists, and from Democrats, who say the organizations have taken cover behind its securities instead of get serious about perilous conduct. The Securities and Exchange Commission is exploring whether anybody may have overstepped the law, for instance by misleading raise the cost of GameStop shares, just to sell their own offers in a supposed siphon and-dump plot. “Reddit’s site-wide policies prohibit posting illegal content or soliciting or facilitating illegal transactions,” said a Reddit spokeswoman in an email. “We will review and cooperate with valid law enforcement investigations or actions as needed.”

In the event that regulators locate that a few clients went excessively far, Section 230 would generally protect Reddit from risk. That has some online media experts inquiring as to whether Section 230 damages monetary business sectors. Some say it's impossible a gently directed discussion, for example, Reddit would even exist without Section 230, not to mention permit such a hypothesis and stock advancement that saw GameStop shares rise 1,700% very quickly. Without the act, “platforms would have to become more responsible -- almost overnight,” said Dipayan Ghosh, a former Facebook Inc. official and a White House technology policy adviser in the Obama administration. “And that wouldn’t be a bad thing,” said Ghosh, who is now a fellow at Harvard Kennedy School’s Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy. Reddit has lobbied Congress, including the

House Energy & Commerce Committee that oversees tech policy, in support of keeping Section 230 intact, according to a person familiar with its efforts. Reddit has only been lobbying for about four years, relying on outside lobbyists. It spent about \$200,000 a year in the past three years and \$60,000 in 2017, its first year, according to its disclosures.

In an unexpected contort, Section 230 itself was made to some extent as a reaction to obscure stock plans. In 1995, the financier established by Jordan Belfort, who was played by Leonardo DiCaprio in the film, "The Wolf of Wall Street," sued a mysterious online release board banner for trashing Belfort's firm. The claim incorporated a now-dead web access supplier, Prodigy, as a litigant since it facilitated the discussion. The adjudicator decided that Prodigy could be expected to take responsibility for its clients' substance since it had effectively tried to direct the discussion, here and there by bringing down posts. Expecting that the decision would provoke incipient stages to dodge obligation by leaving up all substance, legislators proposed what at last became Section 230 out of a law that meant to control obscene material on the web. The Reddit resistance emerged from a conjunction of the online media upheaval achieved by Section 230, fiercely well known applications that permit free stock exchanges, a large number of pandemic-exhausted retail financial backers and long-rotting abhorrence toward Wall Street top dogs.

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Corona: The Crown That Ruled The World In 2020

Karishma Maheshwari

A butterfly flapped its wing somewhere, and caused chaos everywhere.

It was in December 2019, when a deadly virus was first reported to cause a respiratory problem in humans, in 'Wuhan', a city in China. Identified as Novel Coronavirus, its genetic links were soon traced to the SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) outbreak of 2003, hence the crown-shaped virus was named SARS-CoV-2. The disease caused by it was officially named 'COVID-19' (Coronavirus Disease-2019). This novel Coronavirus was quick to spread past China, in Asian countries, and then well beyond the continent. Finally, the World Health Organisation (WHO), declared COVID-19 to be a Pandemic, alerting all countries to take the requisite measures to contain the spread.

This article makes an attempt at summing-up the year 2020 (in no particular chronology) w.r.t. COVID-19, the terror of which, continues to haunt the world in 2021, at the time when this article is being written.

RISING COVID-19 CASES

While the world casually scrolled through the news of the few cases of 'viral Pneumonia of unknown cause' at Wuhan, in Hubei province of China, Coronavirus with its deadly nature, silently spread across the globe. Amid the first reported death due to the virus in Thailand, studies began to be conducted and WHO reported that the outbreak was being caused by a novel Coronavirus. Multiple countries started confirming their first few COVID-19 cases, of which most of the cases could be linked to Wuhan. India also confirmed its first such case of Novel Coronavirus, on January 30, 2020.

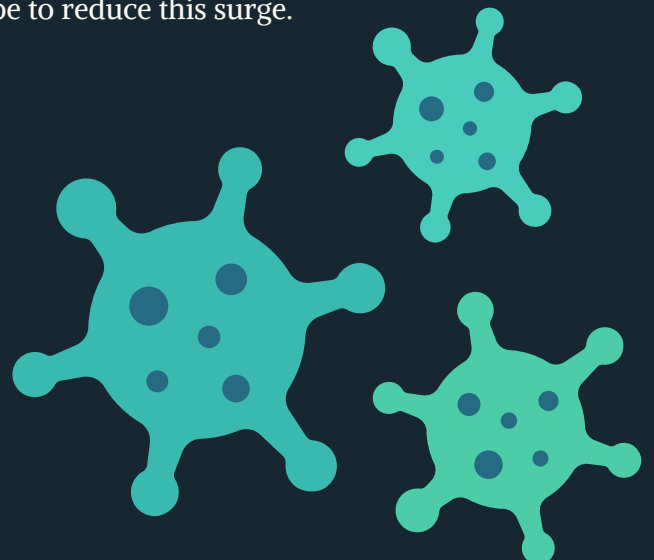
The first few cases of SARS-CoV-2 soon escalated to become more than the country's medical infrastructure could handle. In that need of hour, many ad-hoc medical facilities were set up, including in stadiums, hotels, trains, etc. meanwhile proper infrastructure was being arranged. As the number of cases soared, countries resorted to international travel restrictions to limit the outbreak among their citizens. Amid travel restrictions, closing

down of educational institutes, and rising death toll, many countries or states also declared a state of emergency. New guidelines were introduced by many countries and by WHO, w.r.t. new social etiquettes to be followed among the public.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

The world saw new public gathering guidelines being released by WHO and most countries, specifying the expected etiquettes to be followed by people in public. India also released such guidelines, and made it reach the masses through the means of caller tune of mobile phones, from radios, etc. This was done with the aim that the information reached to as many people as possible. India took measures ranging from initiating a country-wide caller tune emphasizing on the necessary hygiene etiquettes, and social distancing norms of "do gaj doori". In the meantime, India also launched its own contact-tracing application, Aarogya Setu, which alerted the user about the COVID status of the other app users around them, with the aim to reduce the chances of contracting the virus. The app also garnered negative media attention for its allegedly weak software that breached the privacy of the users. Other measures such as awareness about the use of facemasks was also done through the same means. While Venezuela became the first country to ensure mandatory use of face masks, many other countries followed, and made it a compulsion.

But it was soon realised that mere social distancing rules did not stop the cases from surging, countries had to give in and impose state and nationwide lockdowns in a hope to reduce this surge.



LOCKDOWN

Lockdown, as restrictive as it may sound, the term rapidly became popular worldwide, as governments made its social-distancing norms stricter. The advanced type of social distancing was called lockdown. Countries found social-distancing norms to be ineffective in populated regions, hence brought in legal guidelines mandating everyone to stay at home. Since lockdown demanded closing the whole country's functions, including most businesses and services, authorities were aware of the potential problems connected to the lockdown rules. But in many places, the governments failed to ensure smooth transition into lockdown and the largely vulnerable sections had to face the consequences of it. For instance, in an attempt to realise the full potential of social distancing, India stopped its domestic transportation amid the nationwide lockdown. This, henceforth, caused much turbulence in the lives of the country's migrant workers who did not have a fixed source of income and proper shelter in the cities they had immigrated into. The government was soon alerted by the state of affairs, and it took myriad measures with the aim of relieving the plight of the migrant workers. The Railway Ministry on May 1 resumed passenger movement through Shramik Special Trains. This facility was used by more than 58 lakh migrants. Around 41 lakh migrants were also transported through roadways. Other provisions such as affordable

housing, financial aid (by some states), and food and medical facilities were also extended to the migrants. Not only governments, but also many concerned citizens provided for the migrants' needs. But the provisions did not reach them universally. Many such vulnerable communities continued to suffer during this strenuous lockdown period. While there were many challenges, India still decided to extend its nationwide lockdown to curtail the rate of

COVID-19 cases, before easing these restrictions in the latter half of 2020. Besides India, there were many other countries which opted for a nationwide lockdown, by shutting all non-essential businesses. Economic problems ranging from soaring unemployment rates, to negative GDP growth, were seen as an after-effect of the lockdown, though such a situation was not limited to India. In fact, except China, all the major economies saw a negative GDP growth rate as a severe impact of the pandemic. Such an economic slowdown across the globe, brought in the need of reopening the country's economy.

The new social distancing requirements were made stronger, by authorities laying down the exact number of people allowed to be gathered in one place at a time. This made it more convenient to safely unlock the countries, out of their precautionary lockdowns. In the backdrop of these challenges, firms and industries also suffered a huge set-back in the lockdown period; however, corporates devised new ways of continuing the work even during the lockdown.

WORK FROM HOME: A New Normal?

Even during the daunting COVID-19 crisis, the world did not stop evolving. With lockdown in force, families connected through video conferencing applications, work spaces shifted to the couch of the employees' living rooms. Rather than shutting down the work, many companies moulded their work to fit in the online work atmosphere. Video conferencing applications saw a surge in their stock value, and became more important than ever. While some companies could resort to this mode of working, many industries continued to face the drawback of lockdown, due to their indispensable requirement of presence of the workmen. This also led to mass layoffs, and surge in unemployment rates. Worst hit were the employees of the industries like aviation, restaurants, hospitality, industrial manufacturing units, micro small and medium

enterprises, to name a few. The situation was slightly pacified with the gradual lifting of lockdown restrictions.

While for some work-from-home was not a possibility, others saw it as a blessing in guise. This flexible system of working does not only give a worker the extra time and money saved out of their travel needs, but also garners the extra family-time one can enjoy while working

from home. Moreover, not just for employees, this system has turned out to be profitable even for the employers, who saved up on their costs, and in return received even higher productivity from their employees. Various companies are considering switching to the Remote/Work from home, in the near future. Some companies whose nature of work was realised to be apt for remote/home operations, have taken a lesson from 2020, and decided to permanently work remotely.



Companies like Skillshare, Spotify, Facebook, Infosys, Twitter, TCS, are some of the few companies either considering to opt, or have already opted for remote working, for most of their employees. This being done, many predict that the future offices would be virtually shifted to the homes of the respective employees, involving minimal carbon-footprint, owing to the cut on their daily travel requirements. This would also save space in the cities for firms that indispensably require office-presence of their employees.

While the whole world tried to shift itself to a virtual mode of working, social interactions through social media portals spiked up like never before. With most of the world working from the confines of their homes away from the physical reality, false news found an easy way inside these homes. This was another major challenge amidst the pandemic.

CONTAINING THE VIRAL MISINFORMATION

The expansive outreach developed by social media, comes with its own caveats, concerning the validity of the information passed on as true. Mass media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, Whatsapp, etc. are usually the platter of fake news surrounding any major event. The quantum of false facts on social media, becomes multifold during disasters and situations of chaos, in this case it was during a Pandemic. The most disturbing part of this, was the source of such misinformation during the pandemic. Shockingly, politicians, including but not limited to, Donald Trump, were one of the most surprising fake news bearers.

Exaggerated reactions of people to the news of Lockdown, also caused problems like people hoarding unnecessary amounts of house supplies, thus causing situations of scarcity in the already low-producing market. False news about vaccines, the virus, and healthcare in general, led the World Health Organisation to responsibly acknowledge this trend. Apart from naming the infamous disease, COVID-19, the organisation was wise to coin another word called, “Infodemic”, signalling the need to contain the equally dangerous contagion- false news.

CONCLUSION

The world, in the year 2020, has seen an unprecedented period in the grip of the novel Coronavirus. With new types of restrictions on movement and gatherings, the world has cooperated to its fullest, in limiting the spread of the contagion. While managing to curb the effect of SARS-CoV-2, countries faced lots of economic and social issues, ranging from negative GDP growth, economic crisis, to seeing the plight of the most vulnerable sections.

Despite these challenges, the world has been constantly trying to regain its previous momentum, through being innovative in managing firms remotely. The new concept of Work From Home (WFH), has transformed the corporate world. With many firms realising their full potential even with the purely online mode, many have decided to switch to this remote-working mode permanently. While some industries still faced challenges in coping with the effects of lockdown, since such an online work platform could not work-out for the nature of their work.

While the world was physically disconnected, the internet kept everyone pulled together. But this did not come without its first-world challenges. With lack of information about the novel virus, and the already confusing state of affairs, social media platforms were misused to cause an “infodemic”, amidst the ongoing pandemic.

The year 2020 has had a unique impact on different groups of society. It was a rollercoaster ride for the medical fraternity as well. With so many positive and negative aspects of the same event, the world has only evolved together, by fighting together against the deadly wave of the disease, and now finally walking on the path of victory over the virus.

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Mind the Gap

The coronavirus pandemic sneaked up and unmasked and exacerbated the asymmetry present in our education system. The pandemic hit hard each and every life in the country in various way. The effect of pandemic on various institution, organization, sectors and administration bears both long-term and short-term implications. The one major hit in this pandemic was taken by the students across the world. The immediate steps for prevention, even much before the central government-imposed lockdown, was state ordering to close the educational institution under its jurisdiction. UNESCO estimates that around 1.86 billion of children in 186 countries have been affected by the pandemic. The education across each and every level suffered a hit from the pandemic and disproportionate affect were observed. The article is divided into three broad heads – The shift to digital learning in school and colleges, Assessment in online learning, the effect on entrances and other such eligibility test and then conclude with key takeaways as we move to a transition year where the educational institution have started re-opening.

Shift to Digital learning – The rejoicement to get indefinite vacation in the month of March was rather short-lived. The surging cases and expedient stringency on lockdown hurried the education institutions to online platforms for conducting class. The private schools and few government institutes of higher education began to disseminate education via platforms like Zoom and Google Meet. The government schools soon followed the lead. The shift to a digital mode of learning which when actually happened in the higher strata of society who had access to internet and devices to have a lecture on, raised concerns of well being and mental health of the child who is being to exposed the screen for such a long period of time. On the flipside very few government schools actually followed through or took seriously their duty to educate children amidst pandemic.

The students enrolled in the education institute who started to run their programmes digitally were often more than not had a privileged background to support this mode of learning. The lack of access to infrastructure needed for digital learning drove various student to suicide.

The students snuggling up in their blankets while online classes ran in the background might have not known that various other students like them, somehow surviving the pandemic were being left behind and no idea what to do about it. The digital divide has been stark and its effect will soon be seen in this transition year.

Assessment examination in Online education the sudden halt in the day to day to life particularly hit the educational institution. Students in the college had time or rather a privilege to wait for further clarification however pupil in their final year of education whether school or college were worst affected. This transitory phase was fraught of conflicting and confusing guidelines or course of action coming from various authorities. Lack of clarity for prolonged time was a question mark on future of pupils who had planned to enter into professional arena or applied to foreign universities for further studies. The COVID cases in continuous rise, the probability of conducting any exams getting bleak, UGC came up with guidelines for Universities to conduct examinations for granting degree to final year students. This move received massive uproar and various petition were filed against UGC, Ministry of Human Resource and Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The expert committee constituted by the University Grants commission submitted guidelines to conduct examination for final year examination by 31st of June. This move was submitted to be extremely arbitrary, whimsical and detrimental to the health and safety of the students as well as violative of fundamental rights of lakhs of students. The state governments cited

lack of transport, education centres becoming health centres or quarantine centres and logistical difficulties that might be faced by the students.

The legal contentions that were specifically pointed out were if, State's Disaster Management Authority in exercise of jurisdiction under Disaster Management Act, 2005 can take a decision not to hold examination disregarding the direction in the UGC guidelines and award degrees based on previous semester or international assessment. The technicalities of the UGC guideline such as "consultation" "co-ordination and determination of high standards" and ground of non-compliance under sec. 12 of UGC act of 1956.

The court adjudicated that ample latitude was given to universities and college to conduct online, offline or hybrid tests. The court opined that guidelines have some statutory force and cannot be ruled out by the universities by terming them statutory and advisory. The court ruled there has been no violation of fundamental right as the principle of intelligible differentia has been applied and proper guidelines for conducting exams in view of health and well-being of students and staff. The court giving paramount importance to maintaining "high standards in higher education" upheld the guideline muffling the concerns from all around the country.

After much ado the authorities finally conducted JEE, NEET and other such entrance exams this was done in offline scenario with restriction however, since most of the time the effect of lockdown disproportionately on ability and preparedness of student to give the examination. PILs were not entertained regarding these examinations and one entered were disposed of by giving vague directions to the government.

Key Takeaways for the upcoming year – As various states have started to re-opening their institutes the effect of all of this is a learning gap between what students would have typically learned and what they have actually learned. While the full impact of this will be revealed in the forthcoming months, it is safe to say that it

will be especially severe in college-bound students who are losing out on learning aspects critical to making a successful transition to post-secondary education. The demand for extending the school year have gone to deaf ears as various Boards of education have released their date-sheet of board examination.

The school should emphasize on extending this school year and make sure that they demarcate a particular period as a transition period to bring students at par with each other.

Conclusion – The outbreak exposed the inherent shortcomings of education system. The effect around the country are varying with socio-economic and other factors. The implementation of entrance examination, the plan to go ahead with boards examination shows the relentlessness of the education system to pause and to not leave students behind. The only hope is the proper planned curriculum in this year of online-offline transition.

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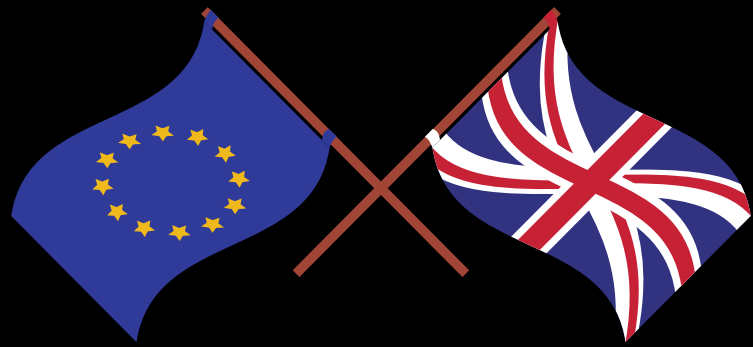
The World's Grandest Exit- Brexit

After Months, rather years of negotiations, deals both failed and successful, the world's dirtiest divorce has finally come to an end. Effective from the 31st of December 2020, the United Kingdom ceased to be a member of the European Union. This was a move, behind which there was great controversy, debate and critique, finally concluding with the 2020 deal.

However, to better understand the reasons of why the theoretically simple process of leaving a Union of Countries was more complex than it seems, convoluted in numerous resignations of Prime Ministers, failed negotiations and frustrated people. The answer to these questions, although complex, can broadly be identified as the Movement between the Irelands, Free trade and the employment of people.

The United Kingdom till the 90s saw widespread Irish Separationist insurgencies in Northern Ireland, claiming the Isles of Ireland were for the Irish and the British must leave. However, the process of both Ireland and the United Kingdom joining the European Union essentially meant that both countries would be part of one single unit, free to travel across borders, work in each other's countries and freely trade goods as well. This 'soft border' stole the Irish Revolutionary Armies' (IRA) narrative that the Irish people were divided by boundaries.

Secondly, the free trade agreement between the United Kingdom and the rest of the European Union meant that both goods and people could freely move across the continent and this would help British Goods and services could be marketed in fellow European Countries without paying tariffs and Finally, the ageing British Population quickly needed replacement for its workforce and talent, which the free movement of people allowed to be filled.



However, this status quo changed when Europe as a whole saw a change in its socio-economic structure. On the onset of the 21st century, the European Economy was hard-hit by the recession, with states like Greece, Spain and Italy having failing economies, which had to be bailed out of debt by their richer brother neighbors, including the United Kingdom. This, coupled with the fact that EU funds were being used to facilitate Refugees and other such elements from the conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, etc. created a sense of conservative-protectionist attitude among many citizens, who felt that Britain belonged to the Britons and her wealth belonged to her alone. This sentiment eventually led to the 2014 referendum, leading to the United Kingdom leaving the Union. However, it wasn't the sweetest deal available to the Lawmakers, both on part of the EU and the UK. They would be faced with questions and issues which required deliberation and unique solutions to solve the same. One of those issues would be the Irish Border, which would once again rise to be a point of controversy. With the UK leaving the EU, all borders that the EU shares with non-members would be subject to Customs and Passports checks, restricting the movement of individuals between these zones. With Ireland still being a member of the EU, the shared border would then be defined as a 'Hard Border', allowing for the narrative of the Irishman being

separated by boundaries to resurface once again. Another issue would be the employment of numerous people and the economic aspect of customs and tariffs. The UK largely depended on mainland Europe for its Fish and Chips and a hard border would prevent free movement of these goods to move from one country to another. The United Kingdom also has a large diaspora residing in the EU, working around the continent. However, effective from 31st December 2020, these British Citizens lost the right to live and work in the EU, causing great confusion and loss of income.

To tackle the same, the UK and EU proposed numerous solutions such as creating a common customs union and free work passes among others, but in vain. The EU argued that the UK could not have best of both worlds and must concede with respect to the demands.

Yet with negotiations and re-negotiations, the two parties agreed on common terms, which included certain shared rules and standards on workers' rights and social and economic regulations between their countries.

An important provision in the deal would be that Northern Ireland would follow many EU rules and regulations in order to avoid Border Hardening with the Republic of Ireland, essentially meaning that checks on goods coming in from mainland UK would have greater checks while entering Northern Ireland.

The effect of these trade policies may also be beneficial for the UK, although it is to ascertain the same. With leaving the EU, the UK now has complete autonomy in setting free trade agreements with countries such as the US, New

Zealand and Australia, with which the EU has no such agreement. Although it may seem that an agreement has been reached between the two parties, this is far from the reality. The identical nature of the rules mutually set is not cast in stone, rather can change at any given instance, which makes the deal a powdered keg ready to explode. A slightest dispute on part of any party would essentially mean that tariffs would be imposed, leading to an imbalance in the deal that stands as is on the table. However, when we see Brexit through the events of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic has taken a toll and has impacted the entire process as well. The port of Calais and Dover, through which 90% of the trade between the EU and UK takes place will be sealed off, effectively shutting the mainland off from the Island country. This includes the territory of Gibraltar, which largely depends on Spain for its food, water and other infrastructure. The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the EU taking effective measures to seal its borders and restrict the entry of people and goods, including essential material for the UK including food material and other such elements, which have to be imported. This essentially poses a threat of food shortages and other such issues which may affect the British nation as a whole.

Thus, to conclude, we can say that the Brexit is not a term that only refers to the legal and economic turmoil, but also led to a sort of cultural and social renaissance. The Brexit has etched itself as one of the most significant moments in British history, with novels, plays, murals, scriptures, plays and video games being made in memory of the same.



Uttarakhand Glacier Burst

When a tranquil morning turned into tragedy

Another gigantic misfortune struck Uttarakhand on February 7, 2021 when an ice sheet burst occurred in Chamoli locale of the state. An enormous piece of Nanda Devi glacial mass severed on a cold winter morning of February and fell into a stream, setting off a torrential “Glacial lake outburst flood” (GLOF) in Dhauli Ganga, Rishi Ganga and Alaknanda waterways. More than 150 individuals were dreaded missing after the blaze flood. This is a second huge blow for the Himalayan state after the Kedarnath Tragedy in the year 2013.

NTPC's Tapovan-Vishnugad hydel venture and Rishi Ganga Hydel Project are the two hydro electric projects that were completely moved & totally washed away alongside five bridges and scores of houses after the waters came gushing in.

What is GLOF? “When glaciers break off, the space underneath them develops into a glacial lake filled with water. The breaking off of the glacial lake is termed as Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) or glacial outburst. The glacial outburst occur when the water level of lake rises or when the glacier retreats.” The occurrence of GLOF is very uncommon. Quakes, erosion, volcanic ejections, work of water pressure or a torrential slide of hefty snow can make the ice sheets or glaciers burst. The glacial mass upheaval can likewise occur after the removal of an enormous water pocket in an icy lake when a nearby icy mass retreats into it.

The reason behind the debacle is as yet being found out, even as a few specialists and analysts have pointed towards the formative activities, asserting that they are hurting the ecology of Uttarakhand. A few specialists additionally link this misfortune to climate change and an earth-wide temperature boost. High temperatures and less snowfall can prompt expansion in dissolving icy masses, causing frigid lake water to ascend past the levels.

A recent report distributed in the Science Advances journal had cautioned that the Himalayan icy masses are dissolving at a disturbing pace and the 2013 Kedarnath-like misfortune may happen once more. The investigation had cautioned that icy masses of the Himalayas have been dissolving twice as quickly since the start of this century because of the environmental

change.

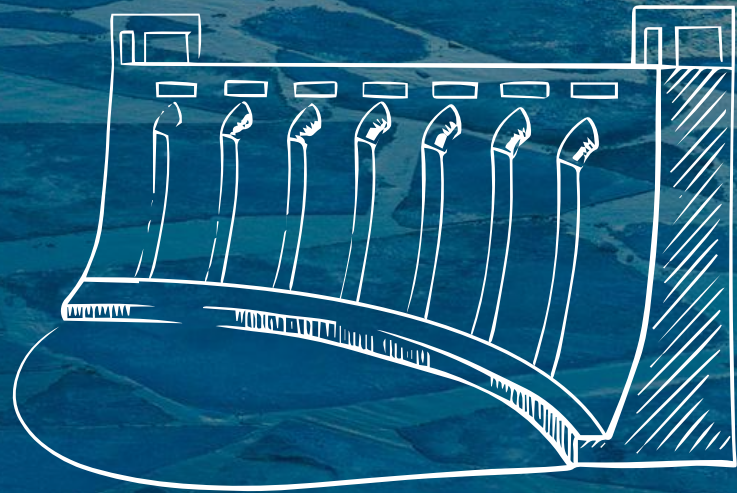
The examination depended on satellite perceptions of 40 years across India, Nepal, Bhutan and China. The examination showed that glacial masses have been losing half of their ice each year and the development of chilly lakes had expanded by half since 2000. The development of expanded number of cold lakes represent an existential danger to Himalayan glacial masses and the waterways moving from close to them. The causes indicated by certain reports, the flooding may have been brought about by a segment of the Nanda Devi ice sheet severing from the beginning 7 February, delivering the water caught behind the ice, and causing an icy lake upheaval flood. Different reports have recommended that satellite pictures infer that an avalanche may have set off the events. On 8 February 2021, The Times, London, revealed that a flood was brought about by a bit of glacial mass being torn away and causing an avalanche. In satellite pictures, a 0.5 mi (0.80 km) scar is obvious on the slants of Nanda Ghunti, a 20,700 ft (6,300 m) top on the southwestern edge of the Nanda Devi safe-haven, a mass of mountains encompassing the Nanda Devi massif . As indicated by an article in Scientific American, 12 February 2021, information from Planet Labs was deciphered by Dan Shugar, a geomorphologist at the College of Calgary, to recommend that a hanging ice sheet "15 football fields long and five across" had isolated from a mountain and plunged into the Ronti Stray, a feeder of the Rishiganga .

As per BBC News, five researchers from the “Wadia Institute of Himalayan Topography”, Dehradun, India flew over the site in a helicopter, took photos, and accumulated other information; they consider the hanging glacial mass that broke and dove into the Rishiganga bowl, to have been connected to an auxiliary pinnacle, Raunthi, 5,600m (18,372ft), just beneath Nanda Ghunti .As indicated by Dr. Kalachand Sain, head of the Wadia Organization, manmade climate change is the main consideration in the fast freezing and defrosting of ice that causes glacial mass to fracture

As indicated by The New York Times, researchers had cautioned the Public authority of India for a long time that the Himalayas had been warming at a

hazardously high rate and the district's biological system had gotten excessively actually presented to the perils of improvement projects .Dr. Ravi Chopra, the overseer of People's Science Institute in Uttarakhand and an individual from a logical board of trustees delegated by India's High Court in 2014, had exhorted against building dams in the par glacial zone, for example waterway valleys in which the floor is higher than 7,000 feet, however the Public authority of India dismissed their objections.As indicated by Dr. Chopra, both the hydro-electric force projects that were washed away in the flood were developed in this zone. As per another board of trustees drove by Dr. Chopra and designated by India's High Court in 2020, per the New York Times, the Public authority of India had assembled 500 miles of expressway—much 33 feet wide—in the slopes of Uttarakhand to improve ways to deal with Hindu sanctuaries in the high Himalayas, abrogating the counsel of its own experts, The headman of Reni, the town most unfavorably influenced by the flood wherein the 13-megawatt Rishiganga hydropower project was washed away, expressed that the town inhabitants expected that the impacting of the stones during the hydropower dam's development would welcome on hazardous landslides."We used to hear impacting and see the stones move," he said. "At the point when this task was under development, half of our town slid. We mentioned to be moved from here to somewhere else. The public authority said they would do it, yet it never happened."

This event led numerous towns to be cleared prior as authorities purged two dams farther down the waterway to prevent the floodwaters from arriving at towns of Haridwar and Rishikesh. Two C-130J Super Hercules with 3 groups of Public Calamity Reaction Power (NDRF) have been conveyed in the salvage mission. As indicated by the chief general of the NDRF, the salvage endeavors could take up to 2 days. Crisis teams figured out how to safeguard 16 laborers who had been caught inside a passage. Another 35 to 40 laborers are believed to be caught in a second tunnel. At the Tapovan Vishnugad Hydropower undertaking site which is being worked by the NTPC 5 km (3.1 mi) downstream, rescuers have been endeavoring to give in their manner into a passage to safeguard in any event 30 authorities who were



supposed to be trapped.

An enormous rescue has been on since 7 February night to save almost 40 individuals known to be caught inside a passage, after the glacier burst in morning."Suffocation due to suffocating" was the reason for death of the nine individuals whose bodies were recuperated from the passage at NTPC's hydropower project site in Tapovan zone of Uttarakhand's Chamoli region and they would have kicked the bucket inside thirty minutes after slush entered the passage, as indicated by the locale's Central Clinical Official Dr G S Rana. During the posthumous of six bodies recuperated from the passage seven days after the blaze flood, specialists have discovered water and mud inside the lungs and stomach of the deceased.

As the death toll rises to 56 and over 150 are declared missing this entire episode led to the chief minister of Uttarakhand to announce 4 Lakh compensation for the relatives of the deceased. An ex gratia payment of 2 Lakhs & Rs. 50,000 was announced by Prime Minister Modi for the kin of the deceased & the injured respectively.

AUSTRALIA WILDFIRE

Aarushi Khandelwal

"When you are good at despising little things, you are likely to throw away the tiny match stick that has the potential of putting the entire forest on fire! Little things do carry heavy potentials!"

-Israelmore Ayivor, Daily Drive 365

Australia faced a catastrophic beginning to its fire season in the latter part of 2019, and things worsened quickly before rainfall in February 2020 contained many of the worst fires. Researchers reported that human-caused climate change made south-eastern Australia's distressing wildfires during 2019-2020 at least 30 percent more likely to occur.

Van Oldenburg commented that climate simulations tend to underrate the severity of such heatwaves, suggesting that climate change may be blamed for even more of the region's high fire risk. "We put the lower boundary at 30 percent, but it could well be much, much more," he said. "Australia is, more than any other, a fire continent," writes ecologist and historian Stephen Pyne in his book "World Fire." But scientists have long warned that a warming climate could mean more severe fires, more often. Now there are concerns that even a fire continent will struggle to recover from the scale and severity of recent events.

NSW RFS tweeted, "In what has been a very traumatic, exhausting, and anxious bush fire season so far, for the first time this season all bush and grass fires in NSW are now contained. It has taken a lot of work by firefighters, emergency services, and communities to get to this point. #nswrfs."

WHERE ARE THE FIRES?

There have been fires in each Australian state, yet New South Wales has been the hardest hit. Blasts have torn through bushland, lush regions, and public parks like the Blue Mountains. A portion of Australia's biggest urban areas has likewise been

influenced, including Melbourne and Sydney—where flames have harmed homes in the external rural areas and thick tufts of smoke have covered the metropolitan place. Before December, the smoke was so terrible in Sydney that air quality was estimated multiple times the "unsafe" level. The flames range in the region from little bursts—confined structures or part of an area—to monstrous fiery blazes that possess whole hectares of land. Some beginnings are contained surprisingly fast; however, the greatest bursts had consumed quite a long time. State and government specialists had been attempting to contain the huge burstseven with firefighting help from different nations, including the United States. This has been exacerbated by constant warmth and dry spell, and many highlight environmental change as a factor making catastrophic events go from awful to more terrible. The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) had announced a highly sensitive situation as enormous bushfires rage south of Canberra.

WHAT HAS AUSTRALIA DONE ABOUT IT?

As the entire world is talking about the Australian bushfire fiasco, the state and government experts in Australia have made an honest effort to end the calamity. Out of individuals announced dead, many incorporate firemen and dynamic volunteers taking a chance with their lives to soak the dangerous flares. Over 2000 firemen were grinding away in NSW alone. The government had used military help like cruisers for firefighting while subsequently putting forth departure attempts. In any case, the public authority has been under intense analysis as individuals say that it is 'shifting responsibility elsewhere' on environmental change. Accusing the incidental variables like the land the board as opposed to assuming liability for the flames isn't reasonable to general society.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO FAR?

Many flames ejected in New South Wales, Australia, provoking the public authority to pronounce a highly sensitive situation in November 2019. Flames quickly spread across all states to turn out to be the absolute generally wrecking on record. A zone about the size of South Korea, generally 25.5 million sections of land, has consumed. In any event, 33 individuals were dead, including at any rate three volunteer firemen, and more have disappeared. Around 3,000 homes have been annihilated or harmed. As blasts escalated in the days paving the way to New Year's Eve, a great many individuals who empty looked for cover on seashores across New South Wales and Victoria. Summer stretches out from December to February in Australia, with fire season commonly cresting in late January or early February. By January tenth, another round of monstrous clearings started across the hardest-hit locales of the southeast because of risky breezes fanning the flames. More than 1 billion warm-blooded creatures, birds, and reptiles probably lost their lives in the bursts, as indicated by one gauge from the University of Sydney. Around 25,000 koalas were dreaded dead on Kangaroo Island. 8,000 koalas, 33% of the multitude of koalas in New South Wales, are expected to have died, and around 30% of the koalas' living space has additionally been cleared out. The obliteration just adds to existing pressing factors on Australia's special environments. The landmass is home to 244 species that are not found elsewhere. The district additionally has the most noteworthy pace of local warm-blooded animals getting terminated in recent years. The Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment distributed elite on February eleventh of the 113 creature species, including the platypus, that most direly need assistance following the flames.

WHAT IS CAUSING THE FIRES?

Numerous Australians are posing that very inquiry – however, the science is confounded. Every year there is a fire season during the Australian summer, with blistering, dry climate making it simple for bursts to begin and spread. Normal causes are at fault more often, dislike lightning strikes in dry season influenced backwoods. Dry lightning was answerable for lighting various fires in Victoria's East Gippsland area in late December, which at that point voyaged over 20 kilometers (12.4 miles) in only five hours, as indicated by state office Victoria Emergency. An environment activity fight in Sydney, Australia, on January 10, 2020. The flames have been more terrible than expected. Even though Australia has consistently had bushfires, this season has been more terrible than expected. The measure of land influenced the nation over – above 10 million hectares – is currently tantamount to England's territory zone of 13 million hectares. People are time censured for lighting the fires, yet they are likewise frequently started by normal causes, like lightning striking dry vegetation. NSW police have charged at any rate 24 individuals with purposely beginning bushfires, and have made a lawful move against 183 individuals for fire-related offenses since November, as indicated by a police articulation. Whenever fires have begun, different territories are in danger, with coals passed up the breeze making blasts spread to new regions. Shrubbery fires themselves can likewise drive rainstorms, expanding the danger of lightning strikes and further flames. Australia's deadliest bushfire calamity was "Dark Saturday" in February 2009, when about 180 individuals kicked the bucket in Victoria. Researchers have since a long time ago cautioned that a more sweltering, drier environment will add to flames getting more regular and more serious. Numerous pieces of Australia have been in dry spell conditions, some for quite a long time, which has made it simpler for the flames to spread and develop.



THE IMPACTS OF BUSHFIRE:

The harms covered record of the Australian bushfire are major. The flames have crushed huge towns and private properties in the terrain area. Likewise, New South Wales, which is the country's most thickly populated state, has endured the best primary and monetary harms. The NSW alone has around 4.9 million hectares of land consuming in the calamity. Ongoing reports say that a large portion of a billion creatures stands influenced by the flames, including birds, reptiles, bugs, and warm-blooded animals. Biologists say that various creatures are probably going to get wiped out. The fire has cleared out colossal quantities of district explicit species that live in more specialty conditions having lower populaces. Australian bushfire study has uncovered that the rapidly spreading fire is far deadlier than the California bushfire, which collected amazing worldwide media inclusion before 2019. The purported 'uber fire' has arrived at a crisis level. The effect of the environmental emergency on Australia won't be contained in the district just likewise it will enormously affect a worldwide scale.

CONCLUSION

The bushfires in Australia are an endless story of misfortune and record-setting minutes. The delightful landmass country Australia has for quite some time been appreciated for its astonishing biodiversity, with numerous species just found in the area and no place else on the planet. A significant number of these species are likewise industrially significant. Researchers dread a quick loss of biodiversity in Australia because numerous species are endemic to the landmass. Numerous species consider Australia their lone home, making the danger to their natural surroundings especially troubling. The nation is additionally a pioneer in marine items and in 2015, Australia's fish creation added up to 246,100 tons. For a country so vigorously subjected to fisheries, this is terrible information for Australian fish items like clams, scavengers, abalone, and scallops which depend on their calcium-inferred shells to ensure them. Environmental change likewise impacts the sea

severally. In particular, expanded ocean level (and ensuing flooding), expanded sea temperatures, and expanded sea acidity. The sea is a tremendous carbon sink, which means it retains a significant part of the carbon dioxide (around 33%) delivered by consuming petroleum derivatives, deforestation, land-use changes, and concrete assembling (in addition to other things). Another large wellspring of carbon in the environment is Wildfire. What it truly comes down to is the way that Australia is encountering the two of its most sweltering and driest years on record. While it probably won't be promptly obvious, in the normal world nothing occurs in separation. While the flames are tearing across the mainland, the marine assets and biological systems of Australia will be influenced too additionally fires have started long-haul Global Impacts which will be capable around the world. Also, researchers have since a long time ago cautioned that a warming environment could mean more extreme flames, all the more frequently. This is a difficult time for all, if not managed at the earliest will lead to environmental havoc and a colossal wreck which will be irreversible.

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REVERSING TIME



THE PUBLICATION COMMITTEE X THE ABSTRACT ROOM

THE WHITE ROOM

Siddharth Chhadwa, Winner

(Trigger Warning)

The room felt cold inside, even without any windows it was a weird temperature that went inside. Maybe it was because all the room was white, the walls, the ceiling, and even the marble on the floor. Tara was weeping as she sat there with a scarred face after Ved brought her in forcefully and locked the door from the inside, the only way in or out of the white room.

The only purpose of the room was for Ved to calm himself, maybe that is why he chose to keep it hidden in his house and only the two were aware of it. But this time, Tara was inside as if for a mistake she made from which Ved brought her in after they got home from a dinner party with their friends.

Tara was just examining the room, the only furniture that the room has been with were two chairs and a table filled with some tools. Ved came in after locking and sat in front of her looking in her eyes and asked.

"You could not speak to me about whatever problems you were facing between us?"

Tara replied with some hesitation "Ved, I tried you were always trying to ignore the problems and you were not even talking to me about it after I told you."

"So since when is this exactly going on and when was the last time you told me about it?"

"I have been telling you about it for the last 6 months, and last year we also had this discussion."

"Ok, so tell me TARA! WHAT IS THE PROBLEM EXACTLY?" he screamed.

Tara saw his face and stared at it for a few seconds, as she knew what could happen if she failed to give an answer he would be satisfied with. She could not answer in time.

Meanwhile, Ved picked up a screwdriver from the table and came close to Tara, held her left hand's little finger, and pierced it through. Tara screamed in pain as he twisted the screwdriver inside her finger and he could hear the bone crack and blood spurt to the floor, it fascinated him as the blood started dropping on the floor and it created a beautiful pattern. He frowned and asked again.

Ved gives her a cold stare. He gets up and reaches into his pocket and pulls out a packet of cigarettes, then he sits and offers her one while his eyes are still fixated on the blood dripping on the floor from her finger. She denies her lights one for himself and takes a drag as he speaks "So basically you have been fooling me all this time and now you are telling me I am the bad guy here because you did not get what you wanted, and you couldn't tell me as I would hurt you. So what do we do now? You have got yourself here and now THIS IS WHAT I HAVE TO DO!"

Ved takes the cigarette bud still lit and presses it on her finger hard enough to leave a mark that stops the blood flowing out, and he slaps her hard, hard enough to make her unconscious. Tara is woken up with a terrorizing pain in her left hand as felt her finger's bone getting pulled by small pliers as if someone was pulling an extra part of a thread from a piece of clothing. He plucks her nails out and just lets her feel every bit of the pain inflicted on her body. As soon as felt unconscious again Ved used a different pain to wake her up again and again. He gets a scalpel and cuts her finger off. New patterns of blood have formed, the blood spatters are going on the table, on the wall and the art is being created by Ved, he appreciates himself as he looks at her with all the love in his eyes.

Ved asked her as he is looking at all the blood, "Are you sure that you don't want to be with such an artist, look what a masterpiece I have created with just one finger of yours, what do you think will happen if I start using my other tools as well." He picks up the tiny finger and continues, "I think I will keep this little tiny finger as an award I got for all the hard work and my talent that I have displayed today." He laughs and looks at her. Tara starts getting drowsy after all the continuous blood loss, and she is about to say something but her body does not allow it as she is drained out by all of her screamings and her voice is lost. She takes a glance at the blood near her legs and just in a wave of shock he passes out again as she was trying to say. "I-I d...do...don't lo..."

Ved lights another cigarette he is looking at Tara. With each drag, he wonders what would be going inside her head right now.

lo..."

Ved lights another cigarette he is looking at Tara. With each drag, he wonders what would be going inside her head right now. He acknowledges her beauty, she has a bruise on her left cheek from the slap, her eyes filled with tears and smudged mascara which was supposed to be waterproof, he looks at her hair that was cut short, just how he liked it, some loose strands flying across her face, and he tries to put it behind her ears. As he does that his eyes go to her neck which had been hiding a bruise from the straightening machine which she got while using it in the evening before going for dinner. She was wearing a black off-shoulder dress with white flower designs on it. She had waxed her legs just a day before the dinner, so they looked shiny and smooth. He just ran his finger on them. She was wearing a pair of red stilettos, and he noticed that her lipstick too was almost the same shade, and he realized that after a while all of them looked more or less like her own bloodstains from the floor. As he finished his cigarette he threw the bud on the floor beside her blood and put it off by his leg. He went in front of her and let out the smoke on her face as Tara woke up with a cough.

Ved gave an unusual grin, it made her uncomfortable. And she started thinking about what new pain was going to be felt by her body now. Ved knelt on his toes on the right side of Tara taking care as not to step in the blood, and he looked at her and asked,

"How do you do that? Looking so amazingly mesmerizing! Now after you told me, I found out about your feelings today and I finally realized how aesthetic you look every time you put so much effort into yourself. I am so sorry to make you feel disgusted about your attire and the way you always were. Would you give me another chance? Would you let me prove to you how wrong you are and how I can change everything? I know we have done this twice before but this is the last time, I am begging for your forgiveness."

He pauses for a brief moment as a tear comes out of his left eye and continues, "Tara I have always been loyal to you, and it was just that once it happened as we were on a DAMN BREAK! And I—"

Tara lets out a disgusted sigh and interrupts him. "I do not care what you do to me, I always knew the kind of animal you were! It is just that I had no idea that underneath all of there was a monster unleashed now. If you want to torture me to death you can go ahead! I DO NOT GIVE A DAMN ABOUT YOU OR THIS STUPID RELATIONSHIP!"

Ved's tolerance had been lost now, he picked up a hammer from the table and hit Tara as hard as he could on the head as she fell on the floor but he did not stop there. Some of her hair got stuck on the hammer, Ved continued until he heard a loud crack of her skull breaking. And was about to open her head with the hammer when he heard someone calling him.

Tara came back to the living room holding a set of keys and asking, "VED, where did you keep them the last time you used it and which room are you talking about again?"

Ved's chain of thoughts are interrupted by her, and he answers "LOVE, it is THE WHITE ROOM."



Ishita Joshi, Runner-Up

She was pregnant? I cannot believe this. I remember her telling me that she thought it was time, but I never really saw a kid to somehow magically mend our marriage. Just days after my mother's demise, this is the last thing I would've on my mind. For most of the time it was Andy. You know, I tried. I tried not to turn like my father. Someone who did not respect women, even his own wife, and always used to be with some girl or the other. But after a time I realised, a kid is always the reflection of his parents. No matter how hard he tries. He will always end up being the same sack of garbage he thought he would never be. And so it turned out to be. I became my father. Amy and I lost touch just days after I got laid off and shifted to Missouri after hearing my mother's deteriorating health. With Amy, Margo, and I being with her, I really thought we could save her. But my worst fear had come true. My mother died and with her, the last shred of our happy marriage. And so I thought, maybe it's time for a divorce. Maybe it is time to finally let go of that excruciating pain of solving stupid puzzles for anniversary presents for years.

A part of me was relieved when I heard that Amy was gone. That part only focussed on the cons of the marriage and never the pros. It only showed me how toxic my life had become with my wife being the sole income earner and me being debt-buried by her money. This part never imagined a happy life with Amy and a child. And slowly, as the news channels proceeded with dragging my name in the mud and convicting me of murdering my wife, this part of me started to dominate my other part. The part that imagined a happy family with two kids having picnic at the Sawyer beach. After Detective Boney gave me this earth-shattering news, I was completely numb. I didn't want to move my body or think anything. I didn't want to think about Amy with our child wandering somewhere in the dark alone.

I didn't want to think about the reputation of The Bar going down. I didn't want to think about my in-laws who already see me as their daughter's murderer. And most importantly, I didn't want to think about Andy. About how much I love her. About how much I've missed her around me. About how I would do anything to be with her. About how I lost by just 3 hours to file for divorce and propose to her with the ring in the pocket of my jacket. I am pregnant. Or am I? I guess the answer to that is probably all over the news channels around the USA. It was not that hard to stage a crime without actually ever committing a crime. Would you believe that the sweet innocent perfect 'Amazing Amy' strategically staged a murder and framed her own perfect and princely husband? I don't think so. But you would believe the murder of an innocent pregnant wife by her cruel husband who was having an affair and just got to know about his wife's pregnancy. I saw her right outside The Bar.

I thought it to be a romantic gesture to surprise Nick where we had our first date. But instead I saw a girl right outside The Bar with Nick, hand in hand walking in the sugar storm. He leaned in to her and for a moment, I saw our first date. I saw the smile on his face and his hands on my cheek. I saw it all, except it was with her. His teenage mistress. So I decided to gift him a little surprise on our fifth and last anniversary. For when he finds out my plan of staging my murder by him, I would've been long gone. And so will his reputation. Only after that will I accept my justice served. Since Amy Elliot Dunne is dead for people, there will be no divorce and I can finally live my life away from Nick, being Nancy Truman. Being my own self and not the cool girl I made myself to be with him. I can finally be liberated of my own self, of my own perfect image created in the eyes of people and my parents by 'Amazing Amy'. I can finally be my own flawed, bruised, not-so-perfect self. I am finally free and it feels great.



The Inception of Shutter Street

By Devansh Dev, Runner-Up

We see Dom Cobb, a character played by Leonardo DiCaprio, like a thief in 'Inception' having a rare ability to tap into people's subconscious through their dreams and familiarize themselves with their secrets. The story beautifully portrays how this boon transits to his bane, and he loses everything he loves even though he becomes a big shot in that world. He is furthermore asked to do an impossible task, i.e., to plant an idea in someone's mind during which he learns the nits and bits of his personality; he slowly becomes more self-aware. It is impressive how the plot unfolds; we see an equally powerful enemy trying to sabotage the mission as well as different layers of dreams that are tapped into.

However, what if all this is just a trippy dream of Jordan Belfort, another character played by Leonardo DiCaprio, as a broker in 'The Wolf of Wall Street?' We have to acknowledge the plot when he feels that working at a Wall Street Brokerage firm has got to be it, that he has found his calling. However, the Recession happens, and the stock market stoops to a significant low, which costs him his job, causing him to move to a small-town selling penny stock at Long Island, where he feels that this was an end to his life and struggles to find any passion towards his job. This moment is precisely when he has the

dream aforementioned, where he actually lost everything but is still a big shot, and he gains insights about himself and his capabilities. That, That part of his life...that part right there, he finds his calling. That is when he starts to think of even the sale of penny stocks as a painful thing. He finally realizes that his life does not end there, and that there is much more that he can do. He moved on to build a vast empire that defrauded investors out of millions and, in turn, made him wealthy enough to gain attention from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Securities and Exchange Commission, ultimately leading to his downfall alongside his company, Stratton Oakmont and his associate partners. The downfall of a company as big as his proved to be an eye-opener for many and the event of the decade.

Nonetheless, the craziest part was that what if this whole situation was just one of the crazy hallucinations of Teddy Daniels, another character played by Leonardo DiCaprio, who is a patient at a mental asylum after suffering much grief in his life and who had lost his senses in 'The Shutter Island.' Imagine Chuck Aule, a character played by Mark Ruffalo in 'The Shutter Island,' replacing Donnie Azoff, a character played by Jonah Hill in 'The Wolf of Wall Street' and so forth. It is strange that even though all these storylines deal with different aspects and styles of storytelling, they prove to be so similar that their trilogy would have been something we would have enjoyed.



CONSPIRACY THEORIES



Sanjay Gandhi's death and its possible relation to Swami Dharendra Brahmachari.

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Sanjay Gandhi was the son of Indira Gandhi (Prime Minister of India from 1966-77 and 1980-84). Ever since his childhood, he was groomed for a political role by Indira Gandhi; presumably to succeed his mother's term. During the 1970s, Sanjay Gandhi gained substantial political power soon after the Emergency was announced by the Indira Gandhi government in 1975. He became Indira Gandhi's principal advisor and managed several affairs in her cabinet. He took executive decisions on her behalf, recruited new members to the Congress, and began to garner loyal following from the people. He stood for elections in 1977 but didn't end up winning. However, he stood for the general elections once again in 1980 and won. He was subsequently appointed as the secretary general of Congress. He died later that year in a plane crash. The cause of the death was said to be loss of control over a new aircraft that he was flying (as a novice pilot) while performing an aerobatic maneuver.



The second party to this story is Swami Dharendra Brahmachari, who was a Yogi from Bihar. He taught Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister, and was appointed as a yogic mentor to Indira Gandhi. He ran ashrams in New Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir. Over time, Swami Dharendra became a close aide to Indira Gandhi, especially during her term as the Prime Minister. He became a trustee and a counsellor to Indira Gandhi and went on to become greatly politically influential in the mid-70s. It is important to note that it was around this time, in 1975, when Sanjay Gandhi was gaining immense political power in his party and in the country. While they were not publicly known to have any kind of relationship when Sanjay was alive, Swami Dharendra organized the funeral arrangement of Sanjay Gandhi a day after his death and defended some of his political decisions after he passed away. However, the Swami's political power only grew after Sanjay Gandhi's death. He allegedly became Indira Gandhi's confidant, privy to household as well as political matters, possibly influencing many of the decisions she made.



Sanjay Gandhi's mysterious death just a few months after his success in the general elections in 1980 and the parallel advancement of Swami Dharendra's political power makes one hypothesize a rather bold conspiracy theory: Swami Dharendra had something to do with Sanjay Gandhi's untimely death. On a related note, it has been alleged by some that Indira Gandhi could have been involved in a conspiracy to kill Sanjay Gandhi so as to delegate power to Swami Dharendra due to the nature of their relationship. While neither can be definitively ascertained, it is an interesting take on a controversial and complicated period in Independent India's political history. What do you think?



Is the Earth really flat?

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A variety of ancient civilizations assumed that the World was flat because they simply knew no better. But today, despite decades of evidence to prove the contrary, some people still claim that the World is flat. We know more about the curvature of the Planet than almost any other topic in the field of physical science. There are so many experiments, findings and demonstrations that have shown the Earth's curve time and again. The Earth's atmosphere, with various layers of air bending light in

interesting ways, can play funny tricks on our eyes. This phenomenon, a side effect of the curvature of the Earth, is not a sure-fire guarantee of the curve of our world, but it's a start. There's also another trick that you can play. If you live in a particularly flat place, you can see stars all the way down to the horizon, but no more (because the Earth is in your way). But if you go up, say, to the top of a mountain, you'll get a better perspective,

and you'll see stars further down than you would have seen before.

The Planet moves between the sun and the moon during a lunar eclipse, causing the Earth to cast its shadow on the moon. No matter where you are on the earth, no matter the timing of the eclipse, the shadow is always, always a circle. The only way to cast a circular shadow is if the thing casting the shadow- in this case, the Earth is a globe.

And that's not to mention the numerous images taken of Earth by astronauts from hundreds of different countries, space programs and private organizations orbiting satellites and eyewitness testimonials.

Then what is this controversy really about? Lack of trust in our scientists and scientific experiments? Or the inability of flat-earththers to prove that the earth *isn't* round? Some models indicate that a wall of ice in the

oceans covers the edges of the Planet. Others say that our flat earth and its atmosphere are encased in a massive, hemispheric globe of snow from which nothing will fall off the edges. Many flat-earththers assume that the Sun travels in circles around the North Pole, with its light acting as a spotlight, to account for night and day. In particular, the Internet and YouTube videos have sparked Flat-Earth theories.

Flat-earththers claim images of the globe are photoshopped; GPS systems are rigged to

make airplane pilots think that while they are flying in circles over a disk, they are flying in straight lines around a sphere. The reason for the concealment of the true shape of the Earth by world governments has not been determined, but flat-earththers assume it is possibly financial. Nonetheless, the flat earth conspiracy remains to be one of the most discussed, analyzed, researched and controversial conspiracies of all times.



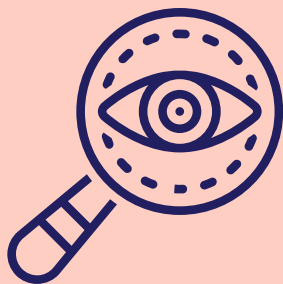
The Black Dahlia

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On January 15, 1947, the remains of 22-year-old Elizabeth Short, commonly known as “The Black Dahlia,” was discovered by Betty Bersinger on a morning stroll on the block of 3800 Norton Avenue, LA. The body was cut in half and was so pale, thoroughly drained of blood that Bersinger mistook it for a mannequin at first. The body was cut with such surgical precision that there was no trauma to internal organs or bones. Short’s face had also been cut from her mouth towards her ears, forming an ever-present and haunting smile. Additionally, there was no blood that was found on the ground, indicating that the body was moved there after she was murdered. Nine days after the discovery of Short’s body, an envelope was received by The Examiner, addressed in horrific fashion using cut out letters clipped from movie ads. It read:

“Los Angeles Examiner and other Los Angeles papers, here is Dahlia’s belongings, letter to follow.”

As promised, the envelope contained Short’s social security card, birth certificate, snapshots, and an old address book with some pages missing. Gasoline was rubbed on the contents to remove any fingerprints. Before arriving in LA, Elizabeth spent time in San Diego with a man named Robert Manely, who drove her and checked into the Biltmore Hotel in Downtown LA. Many reports state that this was the last place where Short was seen alive. Others say that after Manley left, the guy who dropped her off, Short headed to a nearby ‘Crown Grill Bar’, which stands today as Club Galaxy, also claimed to be the last place where Short was seen alive. Although this case has been unsolved for over 75 years, there are no shortages of interesting suspects.



The first suspect was Robert Manley, the guy who dropped her off at the Biltmore hotel. However, not only did he return to San Diego almost a week before her body was discovered, but he also passed a polygraph test. It was worth noting that in 1954, he was committed to a mental hospital due to hearing voices in his head. However, he also managed to pass the sodium pentothal test or “truth serum” test.



The second suspect was Army corporal Joseph Dumais, who claimed to be blackout drunk with Elizabeth in San Francisco, a few days before her murder. When asked if he thought he could have killed her, he replied yes. However, the evidence showed that he was in his military base a day before her death.

The final suspect was George Hodel. He had a house in LA at that time, which had a secret room that was off limits. George’s son, Steve Hodel, who was five at the time of the murder, later became a police investigator and served for 17 years. After retiring from the force, he became convinced that his father had killed the “Black Dahlia” and made a very compelling case. George was brilliant and studied surgery in medical school and also ran LA county’s venereal disease clinic, which would be the place where he could have disembowelled and mutilated Elizabeth Short’s body. Despite being busy as a doctor, he also had a hectic private life as a bachelor, having 11 children from 5 different women.

Additionally, Steve Hodel also found pictures of a woman who appeared to be Elizabeth Short in his father’s photo album. However, when the pictures were examined by a forensic artist, he claimed that he was

85% sure that it was not Elizabeth in the pictures. However, in 2014, another forensic artist claimed that it was a 90–95% match. However, like other tests, these results were inconclusive.

Steve also claimed that the Black Dahlia murderer's handwriting was eerily similar to his own father's. However, when examined by experts, they were received with mixed results ranging from probable to inconclusive. Another fact to be noted was that George Hodel was accused of sexually assaulting his own daughter; however, he was found not guilty.

The police officers did get suspicious of George at some point and planted listening devices in his home where he was heard saying, "Supposing I did kill the Black Dahlia, they couldn't prove it now. They can't talk to my secretary anymore because she is dead." Additionally, he was caught saying, "This is the best payoff I've seen between law enforcement agencies and I'd like to get a connection made in the DA's office."

George's son also tracked down the LAPD case files that contained a female witness who mentioned that George and Elizabeth knew each other. We also have to remember that the LAPD was notoriously corrupt around that time, which would explain why the case was dropped even when George was emerging as a clear prime suspect. This fact could also explain why the physical evidence from the case magically disappeared, leading us to believe that George had paid the LAPD off the case. It could've also been a classic case of police incompetence; we will never know for sure. In 2012, the ever-vigilant Steve Hodel returned to his childhood home with a police dog that indicated the scent of human remains. Soil samples were taken and were positive for human remains as well. While this doesn't conclude that George was, in fact, the Black Dahlia murderer as Short was not buried, one can conclude that George was perhaps not a stranger to murder. However, the LAPD remained reluctant to reopen the case. This made it seem as though they were still trying to keep it covered and, therefore, unsolved.

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The invisible shackles of the most beautifully planned city in India - Chandigarh

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All things are great and beautiful in the city of Chandigarh. The beautiful grids of the city merit for it being called one of the best planned cities in the country of India. A gift to India by Le Corbusier, his architectural genius brought to life the grid plan in India. While at face value this appears to be a boon by the virtue of the grid plan to be accredited as one of the most systematic urban development strategies, [1] a little back reading to both the purpose of origination of the grid plan and into the life of Corbusier hints at the possibility of the city planning of Chandigarh to be a bane.

History of Grids -

A look into the usage of grids in ancient Rome reveals the authoritarian imposition the city planning imposed on its citizens. The Romans established Castra or military centers. These Castras were equivalent to our modern-day grids. They were designed to be standard in design as standardized stationing of military camps allows of the authoritarian to station the soldier anywhere in the town with the sense of familiarity. [2] The existence of a uniform grid planning allowed for the ruler to establish easier surveillance of the residents. The towns would consist of north to south road and an east to west road at the intersection of which all the important public structures were stationed. [3]

A striking similarity exists in the city of Chandigarh wherein all the public buildings are stationed at the heart of the city - The Capitol Complex. [4]

History of Corbusier -

Corbusier's political views were the heart of the controversies surrounding him. He is known to have contributed pieces about urban development to the fascist journals *Plans*, *Prélude* and *L'Homme Réel*. [5] Also mired with anti-Semitism, Corbusier had a political affiliation with the French fascist party of *Le Faisceau*, which commissioned him to be the city planner of the city of Marseille, after its Jewish population had been forcefully removed. [6]

An endorser of fascism implementing a town planning system having a history of authoritarianism cannot be brushed away as mere coincidence. Much less attention has been given to the residential areas of Chandigarh and all that lay beyond the Capitol complex. [7] It is safe to assume that this set of facts has not gone unnoticed by the people in power throughout the years. A chilling conclusion can be possibly drawn by looking closely at the map of Chandigarh. There seems to be an uncanny concentration of hospitals only towards one end of the city - the end that is considerably far from the heart of the city from which the residential neighborhoods spanned out, hinting at the possibility of the regulation of access to healthcare at the hands of the government.

Endnotes -

- [1] See *The Law And Economics Of Street Layouts: How A Grid Pattern Benefits A Downtown* by Robert C. Ellickson, *Alabama Law Review*, Vol. 64:3 pg 471 to 483.
- [2] Higgins, Hannah (2009) *The Grid Book*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press. p.60.
- [3] *Id.*
- [4] Journel, Guillemette Morel (2015). *Le Corbusier- Construire la Vie Moderne* (in French). Editions du Patrimoine: Centre des Monument Nationaux. Pg.182.
- [5] Brott, Simone (8 December 2017). "[The Le Corbusier Scandal, or, was Le Corbusier a Fascist?](#)". *Fascism*. 6 (2): 196-227.
- [6] *Id.*
- [7] *Town Planning in Postcolonial India, 1947-1965: Chandigarh Re-Examined*, Annapurna Shaw, Pages 857-878, 16 May 2013, *Urban Geography*, Volume 30, Issue 8.

Diary of Inspector Alok Patil, Mumbai Police

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Date: 14th November 2020

Tonight, I led 5 officers in a raid on a derelict and crumbling apartment in *Byculla*. Half an hour ago, we received a complaint from a hawker who had passed by the building which contained the apartment, claiming that he had heard the repeated shrieks of a woman. After breaking open the door, we came upon a shocking scene that I think, will be forever etched in all of our memories. In front of us stood around 15 naked cultists, swirling fanatically around a body. The body of a young adolescent girl, hideously disfigured. Her head, upper limbs, and torso, had been flayed and these sections of this human graft were placed upon a burning pyre. Her face, still dripping with blood, was worn by the head cultist, who sang some hideous chant in an unknown language. We had recovered some items from the grisly scene, the strangest amongst them was a strange leather-bound book, "Necronomicon". In it were a collection of gibberish words written in a musty red ink. The head cultist, after having been interrogated, explained that they were attempting to resurrect a God, who they called "Our Lord – the Flayed One". He stated that he was one of the "Old Ones", a set of primordial deities who had lived from time immemorial that currently were in a deep slumber. On the way back to the station, one of the *hawaldars* fainted.

Date: 17th November 2020

We had sent the book to be evaluated by an expert, who we hoped could explain its origins and purpose. Today, I had been invited over by him to discuss the same. Dr Santiketan, a prominent professor and historian, said that the book probably dates back to the 10th-11th century and is purported to be written by an infamous Arab occultist by the name of Al-Ahazred. Originally called the "Kitab-al-Azif", meaning the book of the Death, many copies are held by various occult groups throughout the world, who try to use it to summon the "Old Ones". The occultists believe that resurrecting these gods would give them power that has been present since the dawn of humanity. Dr Santiketan stated that he discovered this book and the cult during his trip to Kathmandu for a guest lecture at the state university. The local police had solicited his help when they discovered a group indulging in the same rituals as indulged in by the one encountered by me. He mentioned that the purpose of this terrible ritual seemed to be an attempt to revive the Old Ones, especially the one

colloquially known as "Our Lord – the Flayed One". The professor also warned me to be careful, stating that these occultists have friends in high places and mentioned how the Kathmandu Police Department's investigation was squashed by the government.



Date: 24th November 2020

Today, our station had received a surprise visit from the DCP, Robert Faria. He had asked to see me in private, so I took him to my office and closed the door. Once inside, he ordered me to stop the probe, stating that it is the CM's order. I was completely shocked by the absurdity of this command and asked him if he was joking. With a stern face, he ordered me to stop the case and furnished an angry email from the Chief Minister, demanding an immediate halt to this investigation. He warned that both my job and my life is on the line. He then asked me to hand over the evidence and to release the prisoners stating that not enough evidence was found to incriminate them. He then told me to find a scapegoat and stated that this conversation must not leave the room. Once I reached home, I resolved to investigate this matter in secret.

Date: 1st December 2020

During my investigation, I managed to gain access to several newspaper articles, buried into secrecy by the editorial boards and the government about the cult. These reports were scattered all over South Asia in cities like Delhi, Kanpur, Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Mysore, Cochin, Dhaka, Chittagong, Kathmandu, Thimphu, Kandy, Colombo, Lahore, Karachi, and Kabul,

to list a few. They all had similar practices of sacrificing the flayed skin of a young human to their terrifying 'Flayed Lord'. But why did they do this? And why do the governments all around the subcontinent seem to protect these hideous criminals? God only knows.

Date: 3rd December 2020

I decided to visit the Professor, to enlist his help in my clandestine investigation. Initially, he refused, but I somehow managed to convince him. I had brought the copy of the Necronomicon that I was supposed to give to the DCP the next day. All night, we both attempted to decipher and transcribe what was written in this accursed book to understand what was the purpose of

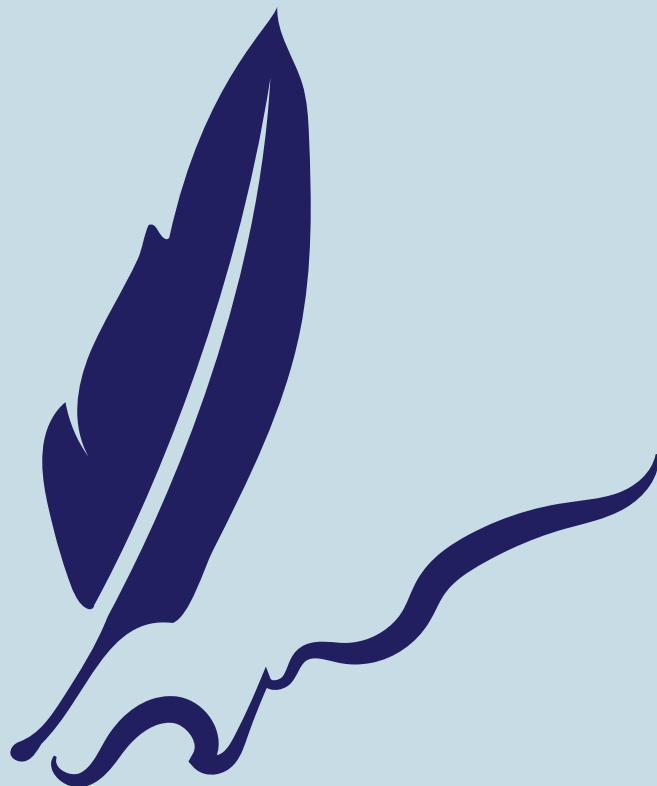
the books. As we went through each page, deciphering the jumbled Arabic into understandable sentences, we learnt more about the Old Ones, the numerous spells and the powers they granted. It seems that these cursed gods had been alive since the very birth of the universe and had commanded the early humans to worship them until their cult died down and was replaced by the plethora of pantheons that form the basis of today's religions. Thousands of years later, these beings would start communicating with the learned Arabic Scholar Al-Hazred, who soon went mad after writing the Book of the Death. Though there were various Gods mentioned, we were confused about why the cult of the flayed gods was being found all over South Asia. But then we got our answer. We learned that the Flayed God granted incredible psychic power to his worshipers, including the power to influence people's minds to do their bidding. Upon learning this, I developed a theory, which if true, would be petrifying. What if our power-hungry leaders sought this power, to maintain control and force us to do what they wanted? The Professor dismissed it immediately, refusing to believe that anyone could be that savage.

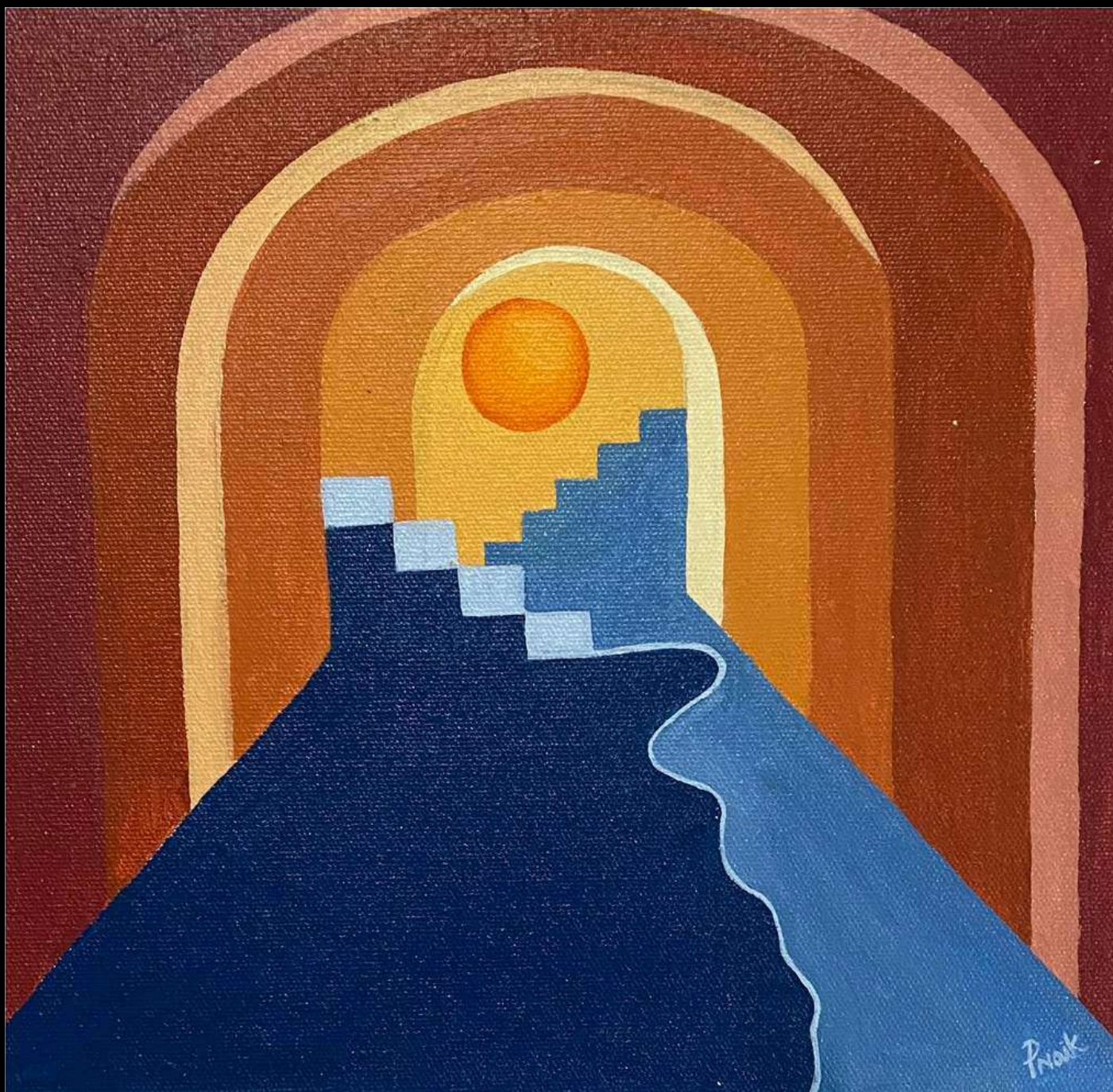
Date: 7th December 2020

I don't have much time. Santiketan has sold me out and I can hear the police banging at my door. I shall be compiling all my evidence and hiding it somewhere, for someone to read. I still hope that none of this is true, the cult, the things are written in this book, and especially my theories. But by the looks of it, everything seems to point in the other direction. God, why have you brought this misery upon me? I can hear them ramming the door now. My time has come. If you find these manuscripts, you...

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