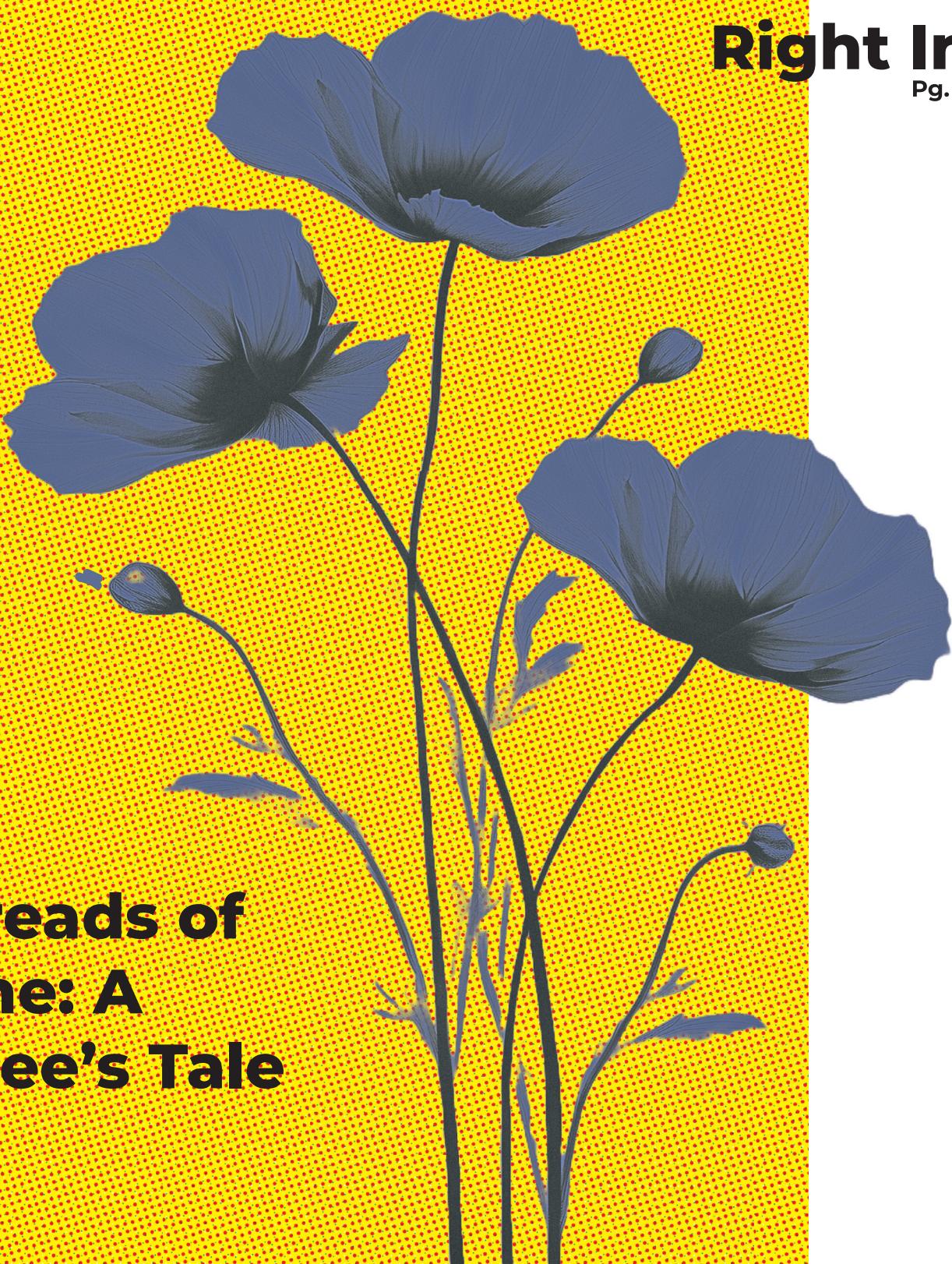


# MÉLANGE

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Dear Readers,  
Welcome to the third edition of Mélange!

This magazine is a piece of articulation, introspection, and expression of diverse thoughts, perspectives, and stories, which together celebrate the journey of life. Each turn of the page invites you to reflect on the varied and dynamic routes we all travel and tackle in this tug-of-war of trial and error.

'Phases,' the theme of this edition, stems from the idea that life is a series of phases, a symphony of experiences that shape and mould us into the individuals we become. Much like how the moon waxes and wanes, our lives ebb and flow through different stages, each with its own unique flavour and challenges. We have immersed and nurtured the same spirit in this magazine, layering it with a wider context in terms of history, politics, society, literature, and more.

As we take you on a voyage through several periods, we hope to fulfil both your curiosity and cravings with our finely crafted articles, poems, images, and designs. From gaining insights about the Vedic period to navigating the new norm and world order of the modern day, we aspire to offer a cohesive take on the ever-evolving and changing nature of the universe. Alongside, we have some heartwarming nostalgic tales, taking one and all to their never-racking first few days of college and concluding the arch with an overwhelming overview of college life and how it transforms one person to become a better version of themselves.

While travelling through this bandwagon of past, present, and future, we will take a closer look at how the understanding of art has digressed over time and how the evolution in the portrayal of female characters in literature has taken new leaps and bounds. Alongside, there is a corner that sheds light on the forever struggle between these phases with the change in approach towards summer days and the transition of life from childhood to adolescence and further adulthood to old age.

So, as you leaf through this magazine, we encourage you to embrace all experiences of life as they truly complete and shape you. Towards the end, it is not the destination that matters most but the journey itself—the winding path that leads us ever onward through the phases of life.

Regards,  
Raj Darji,  
Editor-in-chief, Mélange

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# EDITOR'S NOTE

# कला

By Prathamesh Manish Magare

ऐसे पड़े ज़मीन पर लहू,  
जैसे कल की बरसा हो आदम के ज़माने की।  
ठोके हैं दिल के सितार को पत्थरों से,  
कि धुन निकले कोई नई सी।  
झांझ बजे हैं कानों में जैसे झरनों की झार झाराहत हो कोई।  
संगीत बने उधवस,  
और आत्मा बजाये मृदंग।  
ये कला है।

यहाँ मुर्दे भी चीखते हैं मृत्यु नाच,  
यहाँ ताड़व करे हैं सारे मर्जीर।  
गायक के गले मैं विराजे हैं सुर सारे,  
ये थी कथा एक काल की मरे।  
एक था वो ज़माना जिसमें कला का दरजा सबसे ऊपर था,  
रंगमंच की किलकारी से ज्यादा श्रोताओं में एक शोर था।  
और हर बार कला का सुमिरन खुद कला से घनघोर था।

आधुनिक होड़ में मेरा दीपक तो जला,  
पर इस रोशनी के आग में दिन का अँधेरा होगया।  
दिखती है जो प्रकाश तुम्हें उसकी दर्बलता में दिखाती है,  
कला से ज्यादा कलाकार की गरिमा में तुम्हें बताती है।

काला के इस युग में,  
युग ही कही खोया,  
कला की करदी राख सभी ने,  
कली का कलयुग होया।  
तुम कला के नाम पर अहं का नाच करते हो,  
मैरे उज्ज्वल प्रकाश में अपनी गंदी दिदा भरते हो।

ना दिखे वेदना लिखक की,  
उपहास करे हैं सबका।  
जैसे तुम्हीं ने लिखे हैं लेख सभी  
तुम्हीं में बड़े सत्य सबका।  
मुर्दे जला के समझ को अपने कबतक जिंदा रखोगे?  
हर दर पर आती हूं मैं कबतक मुझको तुम खोजोगे।

मैं कला हूं  
मैंने देखा हूं  
मैंने दिखाया है।  
हर सूर्य को निकलते हुए,  
उसकी रोशनी के गीत बनते हुए,  
मुझ में सब कुछ सारा है।

पर क्या मुझे जानते हो तुम?

मैं कोयल की किलकारी मैं हूं  
मैं मरते मुर्दों की गलानि मैं हूं।  
मैं थी इस संसार के सुजन मैं,  
मैं थी पृथ्वी की जलती तुपन मैं।  
मैंने देखा है आँखों से आँखों को बदलते हुए,

# कला

मैंने परखा है जीवों को मानवों में ढलते हुए।  
मैंने दिये शब्द,  
मैंने दिये आराध्य,  
मैं बनी साधना,  
मैं - मैं हूं,  
मुझ में सब सारा है,  
और मुझसे है सारे।

जब मानव ने सिखा था चलना,  
या जब मोर ने सिखाया रिझाना,  
मैं थी उस नाच में  
मैं थी प्रेम प्रकाश में।  
कलाकार की स्मृति में मैं हूं  
शेक्सपियर के सानेटस में भी,  
गीता के क्षोकों में मैं हूं,  
अनगिनत गीतों में भी।

जीवन का सत्य भी मैं,  
अभिन्न मृत्यु का प्रपंच भी मैं,  
जीवन का जीवन भी मैं।  
मैं - मैं हूं,  
मुझ में सब सारा है,  
और मुझसे है सारे।

कह चुकी सब मैं अपने बारे मैं,  
सुन चुके तुम बखान ये मेरा।  
ये कोई आज की बात नहीं,  
है ये सदियों का पहरा।

जिंदा थी मैं तब भी,  
और आज भी साँसे लेती हूं।  
अपने ही ज्ञान सुरंग में,  
आज भी सिमट कर बैठी हूं।

दिया हैं पथ इस जीवन को मैंने,  
और खुद जीवन भी मैं हूं।  
अब जान गए यदि तुम मुझे तो ना पूछो मेरे ठिकाने को।  
मैं तुम्हारे लहू में उबलू,  
मैं तुम्हारे लेखों में निखरू,  
मैं तुम्हारे अशकों में बहू,  
मैं तुम्हारे हृदय की वेदनाओं में धड़कू।

अगर ना मैं होती तो तुम क्या होते?  
रोज सूर्यों को देख कौनसी गरिमा रोते?  
या फिर आदम से काल मैं जाना है तुम्हें?  
या कलियुग मैं कलि की उपज है तुझमें,  
मेरे होने से पड़े फर्क कभी  
तो रहती हूं मैं यहीं,  
यदि मैं न रहूँ क्या जीलोंगे तुम?  
यदि मैं न रहूँ क्या रहलोंगे तुम?

# Visions of VEDIC INDIA

By Anushka Chavan

## The Vedic Era

Approximately ranging from 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, the Vedic Era was an important period in Indian history. This period, which bears the name of the Vedic sacred texts, represents the early phases of Indian Civilisation. It established the foundation for many facets of modern Indian religion, culture, and society. Though much remains lost in the mists of time, literary texts, archaeological finds, and scholarly research provide insights into the intriguing world of the Vedic people.

## Sociopolitical Structures in Vedic Society

A hierarchical system comprising four distinct social classes known as *Varnas*—*Brahmins*, who were priests and scholars; *Kshatriyas*, who were warriors and rulers; *Vaishyas*, who were merchants and landowners; and *Shudras*, who were labourers and artisans—described the sociopolitical structures of Vedic society. The ideas of *Karma* (actions and consequences) and *Dharma* (duty) preserved the rigidity of social roles. The majority of governance was decentralised, with kings and tribal chieftains in charge of smaller areas referred to as *Janapadas*. The *Sabha* and *Samiti* assemblies were regarded as important for governance and decision-making. Furthermore, the institution of sacrificial rituals and the idea of *rajas*, or kingly power, strengthened social cohesiveness and political authority.

## Vedic Religion and Rituals

Vedic religion, rooted in ancient Indian scriptures known as

the Vedas, centres on the worship of various deities such as *Indra*, *Agni*, and *Varuna*. Rituals play a pivotal role, including fire sacrifices (*Yajnas*) performed by priests (*Brahmins*) to invoke gods' blessings and maintain cosmic order. These rituals involved intricate hymns and offerings. They were precisely conducted to uphold *dharma* (cosmic law) and ensure prosperity. Vedic society's social structure and values were deeply intertwined with these rituals, fostering a sense of duty, purity, and cosmic harmony. The Vedas served as a guide for spiritual practice, philosophical contemplation, and ethical conduct in Vedic life.

## Economic Systems in Vedic India

In Vedic India, the economic system was primarily Agrarian, with agriculture serving as the backbone of the society. Land ownership was significant, with land divided among various social classes, including priests, warriors, traders, and labourers. Trade and commerce flourished alongside river valleys, facilitating the exchange of goods such as grains, textiles, and pottery. Barter system prevailed initially, later evolving into a monetary economy with the introduction of coins. Guilds (*Shrenis*) played a crucial role in organising trade and craft production. Wealth was also accumulated through cattle, which held symbolic and economic value. Overall, the economy of Vedic India was diverse and interconnected, fostering social and economic stability.

## Literature and Philosophy in the Vedic Age

The Vedic Age was marked by a rich tradition of oral

literature, primarily composed in Sanskrit. The Rigveda, the oldest Vedic text, contains hymns dedicated to deities, offering insights into early Hindu cosmology and religious beliefs. Philosophical thought emerged in texts like the Upanishads, exploring concepts of *Brahman* (universal soul) and *Atman* (individual soul), laying the foundation for later Hindu philosophical schools. The pursuit of truth (*Rita*) and moral conduct (*Dharma*) were central themes, influencing societal norms and ethical principles. Vedic literature and philosophy provided a framework for spiritual inquiry, shaping the intellectual landscape of ancient India.

## Role of Women in Vedic Society

In Vedic society, women occupied varied roles, largely delineated by their familial and social status. While some women held positions of authority as queens, priestesses, or poets, most were primarily tasked with domestic duties such as managing households, bearing children, and supporting their husbands' endeavours. The concept of "*Pativrata*", devotion to one's husband, was emphasised, reflecting patriarchal norms. Despite limitations, women contributed to rituals and religious practices, albeit with restrictions. Over time, societal changes and emerging texts like the Upanishads provided avenues for philosophical inquiry and challenged traditional gender roles, laying the groundwork for shifts in women's status in later periods.

## Technology and Science in Vedic Times

In Vedic times, technological advancements were prevalent, primarily in agricultural practices and urban planning. Sophisticated irrigation systems were developed for harnessing the power of rivers like the Indus and Ganges for agriculture. Cities like Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa showcased remarkable urban planning, with advanced drainage systems and well-organised streets. Metallurgy flourished, evidenced by the crafting of bronze and copper tools. Astronomical knowledge emerged, reflected in the precision of Vedic rituals and the development of

calendars based on celestial movements. While lacking modern scientific methodologies, Vedic society exhibited a deep understanding of nature's rhythms and a commitment to applying technological innovations for societal advancement.

## Vedic Influence on Modern Indian Culture

The influence of Vedic culture on modern Indian society is profound and enduring. Vedic texts continue to inspire spiritual practices, rituals, and philosophical thought, shaping the foundation of Hinduism. Concepts such as *Karma*, *Dharma*, and *Yoga* permeate daily life and guide moral conduct. Traditional arts like classical music, dance, and architecture bear the imprint of Vedic aesthetics and symbolism. Festivals like Diwali and Holi celebrate Vedic legends and deities, fostering cultural cohesion. Additionally, the reverence for nature and the belief in cosmic harmony remain integral to Indian ethos. Overall, Vedic influence continues to resonate across various facets of contemporary Indian culture.

## Decline and Transformation of Vedic Civilisation

The decline of Vedic culture coincided with socio-political changes, including the rise of new philosophical movements and the emergence of large-scale empires. The Vedic period gradually gave way to the Classical period, marked by the ascendance of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, which offered alternative spiritual paths and challenged Vedic orthodoxy. Socioeconomic shifts, urbanisation, and foreign invasions also contributed to the transformation of Vedic society. However, aspects of Vedic culture persisted, assimilating into the fabric of Indian Civilisation and influencing subsequent religious, philosophical, and artistic developments. Thus, while Vedic culture evolved and declined, its legacy remains integral to the cultural tapestry of India.

# Pages of Progress: Representation of Women in Literature Through Ages

By Yashvi Jain

## Introduction

Peeping through the pages of literature one will observe the spectrum of angles on how women have been portrayed throughout different ages. From being tread to male dominance further evolving into the complex depiction of the present circumstances, the portrayal of women in literature has varied with different literature periods. Often, the portrayal of women has the environs of the author as a cradle. The way they saw the world was the way women used to bleed on ink.

Their vision became characters who became an integral part of literature. It became an attribute serving as an interpretation, identification, and representation that showed the style, role, and rank of many individuals in society. Until recently, the majority of published writers were men, and the portrayal of women in literature was inevitably one-sided. However, the contribution of women to oral culture – in folk songs, stories, and nursery rhymes – should not be underestimated because its tradition eventually fed into written culture.

Through the lens of literature, these are literary periods that provide important commentary on the multifaceted depictions of women, exploring how societal norms, cultural shifts, and the voices of authors have shaped and reshaped female characters throughout history.

## Women in Literature of Middle Age

In the mediaeval period of English literature, spanning from the 12th to the 15th century, women were depicted with various identities, though often characterised as second-class citizens and objects of commodification. Writers like Chaucer, Malory, and William Langland explored the suppression of women in their works, where the central theme revolved around women's roles as virgins, mothers, witches, or tricksters.

The concept of the "virgin" portrayed women as pure and virtuous, often guiding heroes on their path. Mothers were hailed for their protectiveness, drawing inspiration from the figure of Mother Mary and not the Virgin Mary. Witches, both white and black, were depicted with power and knowledge, reflecting societal fears of women with intelligence and autonomy. However, women were widely considered inferior to men, and denied rights and opportunities, leading to the emergence of societal roles like prostitutes.

Despite societal constraints, mediaeval literature occasionally featured trickster women who outsmarted men and challenged societal norms, as seen in Chaucer's "The Wife of Bath's Tale." However, on the larger level, women in mediaeval literature were found to be subservient to men, and their voices were often suppressed by society.

## Women in Literature of the Victorian Period

The Victorian age of English literature, spanning from 1837 to 1901 during Queen Victoria's reign, saw the emergence of renowned writers like Charles Dickens, the Bronte sisters, and George Eliot. This era was characterised by the intersection of religion, science, technology, and economics, shaping English society and influencing literary themes. Women's endurance and suffering were prevalent themes in Victorian literature, reflecting societal values that often suppressed women and relegated them to the role of property or naive figures striving for societal acceptance.

Writers like Dickens portrayed women of different social classes, often idealising them as angelic figures symbolising hope and optimism, as seen in characters like Amy Dorrit in "Little Dorrit." Thomas Hardy took a more realistic approach, depicting women with instinct and impulse, as exemplified by Susan in "The Mayor of Casterbridge." Meanwhile, the Bronte sisters explored themes of female independence, though their characters faced challenges in achieving psychological and financial autonomy. Overall, literature from the Victorian era offered a rich tapestry of female characters navigating the complexities of societal expectations and striving for agency in a patriarchal world.



## Portrayal of Women in Modern Literature

In the modern era, literature has accepted the responsibility of empowering women, fueled by movements for equality. Postmodern works, particularly feminist literature, emphasise the need for socio-economic change and autonomy for women. While some texts effectively address gender equality, others still depict violence against women.

For example, "World's Wife" sheds light on issues like marital rape and domestic violence, echoing historical struggles. Despite bold representations, equal gender representation remains a challenge, highlighting the ongoing fight for women's rights and equality. These literary works serve as powerful reminders of the obstacles hindering social progress and urge readers to confront gender inequality head-on.

Writers like Virginia Woolf, Toni Morrison, and Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have challenged traditional gender stereotypes and explored themes of female empowerment, identity, and agency. From the defiant Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone with the Wind" to the resilient Offred in "The Handmaid's Tale," female characters have emerged as complex, dynamic individuals with their voices and narratives. Through their portrayal of women's experiences and struggles, contemporary writers play a vital role in shaping discussions on gender empowerment and societal change.

## Conclusion

The evolution of women characters in literature is clear as day. A walk down to the memory lane; from Dickens to Woolf, the portrayal of women has changed from being feeble to fierce. Literature has established the fact that women have encountered stereotypes, challenged conventions, and navigated complex societal expectations. By delving into the narratives, themes, and imagery woven into literary works, we gained insights into the lived experiences of women across time and culture, shedding light on issues of identity, power, and social justice.

# Once Upon A Star!

By Payal Navarkar

When I was a kid, my family and I used to visit my grandma's house in the countryside. Oh! What a magical time it was. My cousin and I would put our mattresses on the terrace and lay down stargazing, counting them all. Back then, counting the stars was so difficult because there were just too many, and trust me as I say this. But when I went there recently, I could easily count the stars on my fingertips. Most of them were invisible against the overhead glare from city lights. At best, there was only a hint of brightness to see a cosmic tapestry of a billion stars dimmed to near-nothingness by bright street lamps and storefronts. This celestial phenomenon has a name: Light Pollution.

It's the result of human-generated illumination cast up into the heavens, causing the sky itself to glow and washing out our view of the stars. Astronomers have long lamented this situation, but it's not just stargazers who suffer. Light pollution affects the well-being of many living beings—plants, animals, and even us humans. More than 80 per cent of humanity now grapples with this celestial theft. For most of us, the stars are, in essence, going out. And each year, it gets worse!

But how much worse, exactly? That's where the real adventure begins. Scientists, like cosmic detectives, have been on the case. They have measured light pollution from space, but orbiting satellites don't see light the same way our eyes do. So, they turned to a brilliantly simple detection method: human beings. Yes, we're the ones who look up and wonder. Researchers led by light-pollution aficionado Christopher Kyba decided to tap into our collective stargazing experiences. They used data from *Globe at Night*, a citizen science project that lets regular folks measure light pollution.

Here's how it works: Volunteers are handed star charts—like cosmic treasure maps—showing different levels of visible stars. One chart displays only the brightest stars, while the next includes somewhat fainter ones, and so on, down to the faintest stars visible to the naked eye under ideal conditions. Participants then gaze skyward and compare the faintest stars they can see with the ones on the charts. It's like a cosmic game of "spot the star." Kyba's team analysed an astonishing amount of data from over 50,000

citizen scientists worldwide who sampled their local sky brightness between 2011 and 2022. The results? Prepare to be starstruck.

Globally, light pollution has been on the rise, increasing by an average of 9.6 per cent each year during the study period. Imagine the night sky getting brighter by that much! Europe saw a more modest annual increase of 6.5 per cent, while North America experienced a more dazzling surge of 10.4 per cent. Thankfully, it has been approximately 2.2 per cent in India as of records in 2017. It's as if the stars themselves are trying to send us a message: "Hey, remember us?"

So, what's causing this celestial glow-up? Let's blame it on the usual suspects:

**LED Lights:** Those older outdoor light bulbs emitting redder light have been replaced with brighter blue LEDs. Blue light scatters more easily in the atmosphere, and Earth-observing satellites' detectors are less sensitive to it.

**Urbanisation:** As cities sprawl, so does artificial lighting, drowning out the natural darkness.

**Poorly Designed Fixtures:** Inefficient or poorly shielded fixtures allow light to escape upward, contributing to the sky's glow.

The night sky is vanishing before our eyes. In the next 18-year period, it could become four times brighter. But fear not! There's hope for dark skies. Efforts to combat light pollution include:-

**Use of shielded outdoor lighting:** A shielded fixture is one where the complete lighting unit is constructed such that the light emitted by the fixture projects only below the horizontal plane. This form of outdoor lighting fixture shields the light source to minimise glare and help prevent light pollution.

**Promoting dark-sky reserves:** We must create more dark-sky preserve (DSP) areas, which usually surround a park or observatory that are free of artificial light pollution. The purpose of a dark sky preserve is generally to promote astronomy, and increasing their numbers will help reduce light pollution.

**Raising awareness:** It's time people start noticing and contemplating on this issue. They should try to learn and help in spreading awareness about the importance of preserving natural darkness.

So, next time you look up, remember that the stars are still there, even if they are hidden behind the glow of our own creation.

# PHASES SHAPE YOU

By Aleena Chopdar

## How Phases Shape Your Personality?

Remember when you failed an exam, and everyone around you started looking at you differently, including you as well? You had self-doubt, rousing insecurities and a sense of failure. But it was just a phase of your life, right? Still, the impact it had on you has, somewhere or the other, become a part of your character and how you perceive people and yourself. Phases are a temporary yet very significant part of every individual's life. It is a stage in a process of change or development, as life is a journey filled with changes in which we develop as an individual. It has unique stages, each leaving an unforgettable impact on our characters. From childhood innocence to the intricacies of maturity, these stages shape, form, and refine who we are. Each passing phase of life gives you something which stays forever, whether in terms of habits, memories or traumas in some cases.

## The Tender Innocence

Childhood is the most innocent phase of our life, where we absorb experiences and teachings like a sponge and imitate whatever we see around us. How you were raised as a kid in your childhood will have a definite impact on your life, choices and character. Early experiences play crucial roles in shaping personality traits such as trust, autonomy, and resilience. Positive reinforcement and nurturing environments foster confidence and a sense of security, while adversity can lead to insecurity and anxiety. For example, kids who have seen their parents fighting or being toxic with each other in childhood generally don't believe in the concept of marriage, love and happily ever after. An unusual day with a stranger in your childhood can lead to anxious behaviour and panic attacks for a lifetime.

## The Challenging Havoc

Then comes the period of adolescence, a phase of exploring the world, people and yourselves. Hormonal changes, societal expectations, and academic pressures contribute to the complexity of this phase. Adolescents deal with issues, including self-discovery, peer pressure, and developing their morals and beliefs. One starts transforming into a responsible individual as the person leaves their carefree childhood behind. One's phase of getting constantly bullied in their teenage can lead them to have an underconfident life. On the other hand, one receiving all the good guidance and encouragement to be on the stage can make them a super confident individual. Adolescence majorly shapes the beliefs and identity of an individual.

## The Phase of Wisdom

Then comes the phase of retrospection, where one analyses the phases that have nurtured them. We get the chance to look back on the fabric of our lives as we age—the victories, the disappointments, and everything in between. A growing sense of knowledge, acceptance, and thankfulness defines this stage. We take comfort in the passing of time, acquire perspective, and treasure the times that truly matter by drawing on the reservoir of experiences amassed throughout the years. Embracing the uncertain future, appreciating the present, and coming to terms with the past phases are all important aspects of the old age period.

Phases come and go in life, but what stays are the lessons one learns from them, the memories made during those phases, and sometimes trauma stays throughout our lives. Still, there is beauty in every phase. You might find one phase very bitter at a point, but the way it polishes you as a person is something you will realise later. Overall, the character and personality of a person are an amalgamation of the phases, situations and circumstances they have been through. Though, isn't it surprising that something so temporary, like a phase, has such a huge impact on the way we live and the person we grow into?

## The Moment of Truth

Adulting and adulthood both are tough, right? As you go through a bundle of emotions, changes and feelings. Adulthood teaches you the most about the realities of life, as up till now, you were living in this bubble. And suddenly, you are independent to make your own decisions and career choices and face the outcomes of your mistakes. This phase is marked by striving for success, establishing intimate relationships, and pursuing personal goals. If you have a very successful and happy love life in your adulthood phase, you will feel love is the most beautiful feeling in this world. However, if you go through major family turmoil in this phase, you will believe that even family is not constant in our lives. The way you feel and live this phase will shape your beliefs about a particular process or relationship for the rest of your life.



# Misfit Right In'

By Samriddhi Mehta

*It is often said - the only constant is change. The saying also applies to our evolving professional surroundings as we move forward in life, i.e., school, college, workplace, etc. From experience and hearsay, I can safely state that the initial days of entering a new environment are always tricky, especially when you know no one.*

*Sometimes, you may go through a series of phases before you find your place there.*



## First Day

My heart raced with anticipation as I stood in front of the off-white painted door. Murmurs of conversations behind it left several new faces and voices in my imagination. Both nervousness and excitement tingled through my fingertips as they reached the door.

"You can do this." I blew a breath of air out before pushing it open. The two seconds of confidence went down the drain when the door stopped midway, causing a voice to ring out: "Ow."

My eyes widened. I quickly slipped through the small crack of the entrance to find two girls standing near the switchboard, one rubbing her elbow. I let out an apology. Their expressions softened to a smile upon noticing me, and they nodded their heads in reassurance. Some relief made its way back. I turned to the class only to walk into the door first, hitting my shoulder. I pursed my lips into an embarrassed smile and scouted empty benches without meeting anyone's eyes. Clumsiness was not the first trait I wanted to be known by.

I shuffled towards the back of the class. Somehow, everyone had already found people to converse with, leaving me to myself, my phone and the empty desk in front of me. "That's fine", I told myself, "Not everyone found their friends on the first day." (Right?)

Taking out the pdf of the book I was reading, I looked up to check if the professor was in yet - they were not. However, the girls from earlier were walking towards me. With a smile, they settled on the desk in front of me and turned back.

"Hi."



## Easing In

Dear Diary,

It has been three days since I have been hanging out with the girls I found on the first day. We were joined by two guys who arrived yesterday. While we had been talking about our college and course initially, the conversation had wandered to which of our interests brought us to the media department. It seems like each of them is a movie enthusiast here. I am, too, but it's as if we watch completely different things.

They talk about Nolan films as if they were an entire thing, and I haven't even watched Interstellar, to begin with. Mai mere Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham aur Chupke Chupke leke kidhar jau?

I didn't try to contribute to that conversation. What if they realised my disinterest? I feared they would rather make friends with people who shared their interests. And the book lying in my bag remained there till I left college.

As everyone was moving among classmates to find their suitable group, I wondered if I would be the one left without anyone. I could try not to bring up genres I liked and lean towards their likings to be more involved. Maybe I should watch Interstellar?

## Withdrawal

'Today, I'll talk to more people.' I decided as I entered the building. Just because I found classmates I could interact with doesn't mean I can't branch out more. As more people arrived and waited for the lift, conversation stirred up.

"Hey, is that iPhone 14?" One girl asked the other.

"Yeah, just got it a month ago. Which one do you have?" She asked. I looked at my One Plus and sighed internally. There goes my attempt to start a conversation.

"13 pro." They turned to me. "What about you?"

My back straightened at the attention, and my lips curled into a restricted smile. I raised my phone, "One Plus user here." Politely, they returned to their conversation about Apple and iOS vs. Android as I backed into a corner. I tapped my feet, waiting for the elevator to hurry up. Keeping my earphones on, I texted my supposed friends to check where they were and settled on an empty bench. "I should probably let go of my attempts and stay in the background", I thought, "I probably won't be able to connect with them owing to our lack of common interests."

## Glimmer of Hope

Dear Diary,

It has been a little over a month, and the group I found in the first week is mostly still intact. One of the girls bonded better with other people, so she stuck with them. We do wave and greet each other when we meet, though.

Others have also branched out more. Now, we are a group of seven people. Two of them are readers like

myself. Until then, I had almost made peace with sticking in the background. Despite them being more into mysteries and thrillers, I am able to connect with them. Surprisingly, I got a few good recommendations to try a different genre, too! It looks like diverse interests are not so bad after all.

Even with others, I noticed most of us had different things we liked to talk about. And, usually, only two or three of us connected on a single topic. The rest just listened in. I realised it was important to be open to others' interests, even if they didn't match mine. Maybe fitting in was more related to me than to others.

Tomorrow, all seven of us will go to watch a play - something none of us have tried before. I hope that's fun. Cheers to new experiences and better bonding.



## Settling In

I tapped my feet against the bus floor, waiting for the signal to turn green. The class had begun five minutes ago. Living nearest to the college compared to my friends, I still ended up being the last person to reach.

Initially, I thought it could annoy them since they had to wait for me despite arriving early. I tried to be punctual. Alas, getting stuck in crowds, missing transport, or forgetting keys made my attempts vain. Luckily, it became our internal joke. All of our quirks did. Even now, I could see two of my friends waiting as I departed the bus. They waved for me to hurry, and we rushed through the stairs, hoping to be allowed in. I tripped once on the way, eliciting a laugh since we were used to that, too.

I had come to peace with the fact that I didn't have to be similar to my friends to fit in. I just had to be myself and let them be themselves too, without judgement!



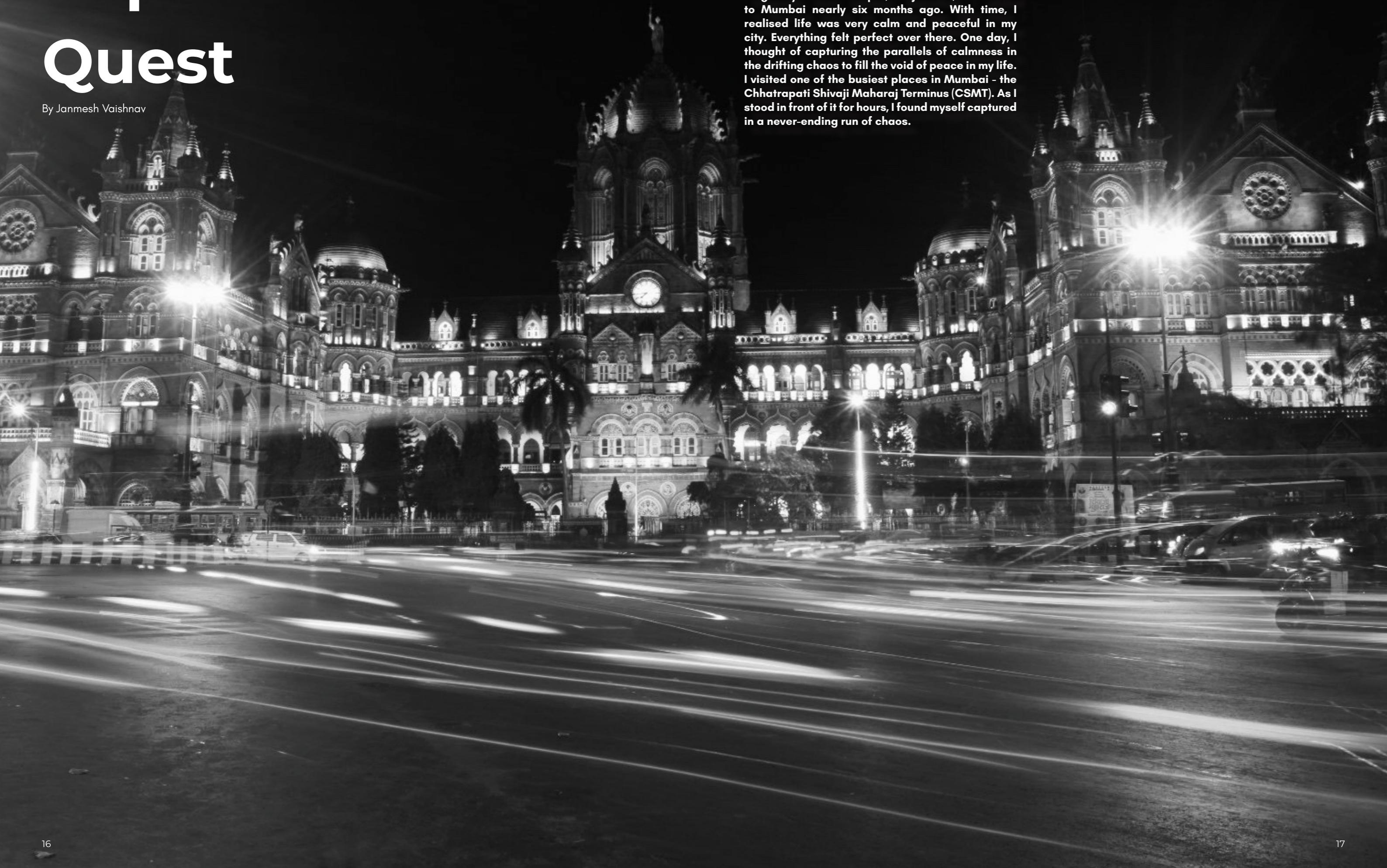
Be True  
to Yourself



# Captured In Quest

By Janmesh Vaishnav

Originally from Udaipur, Rajasthan, I shifted to Mumbai nearly six months ago. With time, I realised life was very calm and peaceful in my city. Everything felt perfect over there. One day, I thought of capturing the parallels of calmness in the drifting chaos to fill the void of peace in my life. I visited one of the busiest places in Mumbai - the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Terminus (CSMT). As I stood in front of it for hours, I found myself captured in a never-ending run of chaos.



# The Last Supper

By Shaikh Jasmeen Ara

## Taking it all in one last time before *life* gets to us

9th September, 2021. Do not diss me if I got the date wrong, but as far as I remember, that was the first day I got introduced to what we later named "Batch of 2024." Shy, timid, anxious and in front of a laptop, I sat for the orientation like a lot of us, unaware that along the way, we all will forget that it is going to be more than just a degree.

So, shall we go down the memory lane *one last time*?

Most of our first year was filled with random interactions, attempts at making friends on the Discord server or filling the void of offline college life by doing things like a mock talk show, awards night, playing Among Us every night and celebrating Halloween on Google meet (I still think Tasneem and I had the best idea back then when we decided to dress up as each other).

I remember the first day of offline college when a majority of non-Bombay people came to college. Questions about each other's perceived heights and the tightest of hugs were exchanged as if everyone was meeting a long-lost friend. Thereafter, began the ritual of hanging out somewhere new in big groups, with more people added each time (I am sure Saachi has a picture from every single time).

In the blink of an eye, we moved to second year – it was time to take it seriously, eh? Whether you did or not was a personal venture of yours. We took up internships of any and every kind, trying to pin down what we liked and what we did not. While in college, friendships solidified as we formed clans that occupied certain benches in specific locations of Room 202 (Don't pretend as if you don't know what I am talking about!).

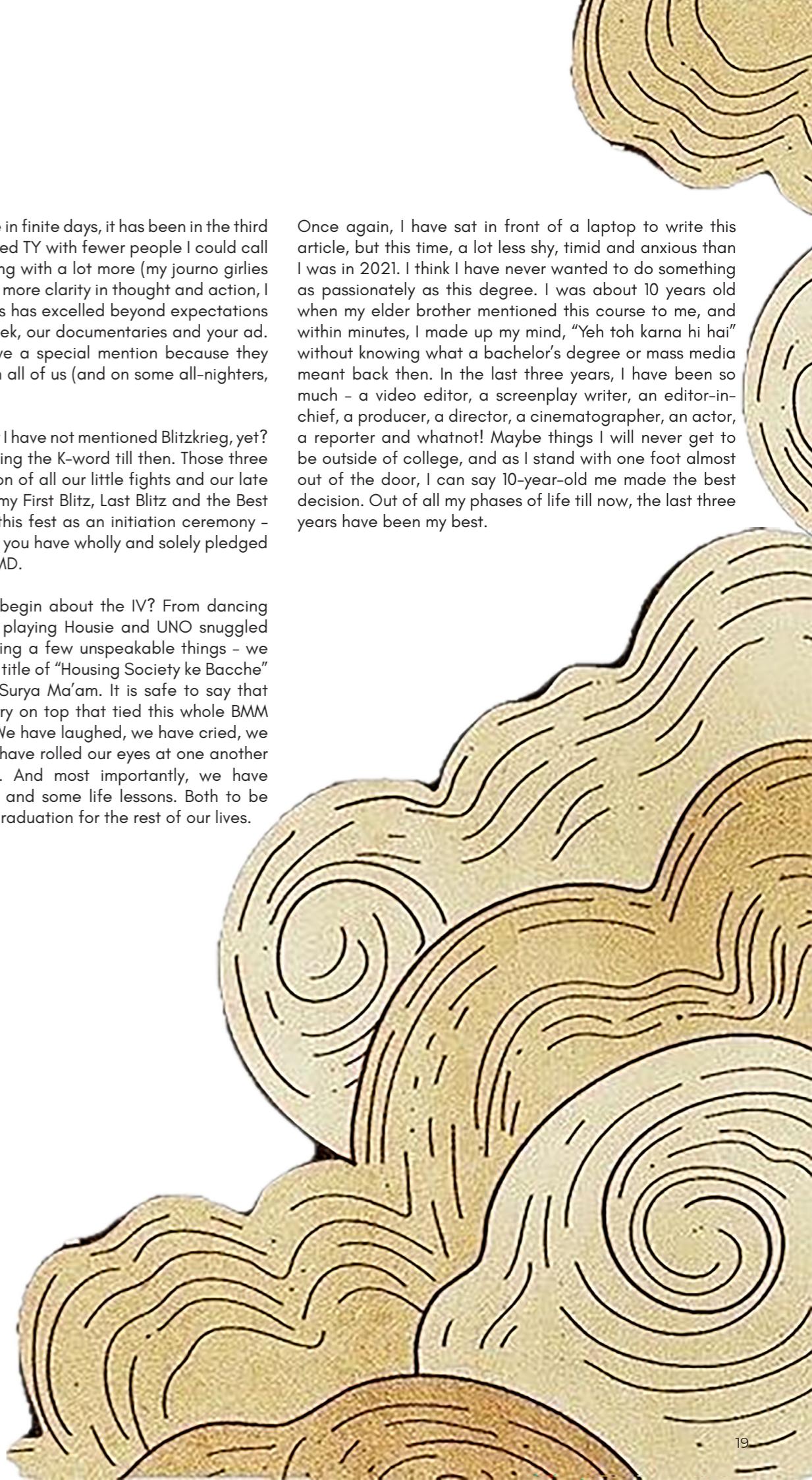
A make-or-break situation for friendships knocked on our doors with the Creative Writing paper's filmmaking project. If I have not overshared with you enough in these years, let me tell you that personally for me it was a break situation; And from what I have heard and not heard, many had the opposite experience. But I am guessing there was this "break situation" for all of us at some point, and now, there is no sense in brooding over it.

If I have lived an infinite in finite days, it has been in the third year of college. I entered TY with fewer people I could call friends, and I am leaving with a lot more (my journo girlies aka the "dailies"). With more clarity in thought and action, I am sure each one of us has excelled beyond expectations this year. The news week, our documentaries and your ad. design projects deserve a special mention because they brought out the best in all of us (and on some all-nighters, the worst as well).

Are you wondering why I have not mentioned Blitzkrieg, yet? Because I was busy doing the K-word till then. Those three days were a culmination of all our little fights and our late nights. For me, it was my First Blitz, Last Blitz and the Best Blitz! I like to think of this fest as an initiation ceremony – once you have done it, you have wholly and solely pledged your alliance to the MMD.

And where do I even begin about the IV? From dancing in the "cooler bus" to playing Housie and UNO snuggled in a big blanket to doing a few unspeakable things – we now officially have the title of "Housing Society ke Bacche" given by our beloved Surya Ma'am. It is safe to say that this year was the cherry on top that tied this whole BMM experience together. We have laughed, we have cried, we have danced, and we have rolled our eyes at one another and with each other. And most importantly, we have learnt – so many skills and some life lessons. Both to be remembered beyond graduation for the rest of our lives.

Once again, I have sat in front of a laptop to write this article, but this time, a lot less shy, timid and anxious than I was in 2021. I think I have never wanted to do something as passionately as this degree. I was about 10 years old when my elder brother mentioned this course to me, and within minutes, I made up my mind, "Yeh toh karna hi hai" without knowing what a bachelor's degree or mass media meant back then. In the last three years, I have been so much – a video editor, a screenplay writer, an editor-in-chief, a producer, a director, a cinematographer, an actor, a reporter and whatnot! Maybe things I will never get to be outside of college, and as I stand with one foot almost out of the door, I can say 10-year-old me made the best decision. Out of all my phases of life till now, the last three years have been my best.



# Threads of Time: A Saree's Tale

By Anushka Chavan

## अबूब और नहीं

By Jaswant Singh

हमेशा डरती धूधट में रहती,  
जुर्म हीरेशा सही वो ।  
बंदी बेड़िया हाथों में,  
फिर भी आजाद खुद को कहती वो ।  
मारता जब पति दो थप्पड़ उसके गालों पर,  
इसे ही अपना धर्म समझाकर चुपचाप अकेली रोती वो ।  
टूट गया हो जिसका बदन,  
अब मरना सीना एक समान,  
ऐसी हालत में सपने कैसे देखे वो?  
प्रयोग होते स्त्री पर नियम सारे मर्दों के,  
चार दीवारों के अंदर धूट धूट कर बस रहती वो ।  
सब कुछ उससे छीन लिया,  
छीन ली उसके पैदा होने की खुशी को,  
फिर कैसे खुश रहती वो?  
आप सब ने भी देखी होगी उस दौर की ऐसी नारी को!

अब डरती नहीं वो लड़ती है,  
जींस पैट पहन के चलती है,  
तोड़ दिए सारे बंधन,  
अब किसी से नहीं वह डरती है।  
आजादी उसको प्यारी है किसी से भी लङ्घ सकती है,  
नियम बनाए जो मर्दों ने उन नियमों पर ना चलती है,  
हँसती है खेलती है जो मन में आए करती है,  
खोल के अपने पख अभी खुले आसमान में उड़ती है।  
हर बात पर सर झूका के हामी भरने का दौर गया,  
अब नजरे मिला के गलत को गलत कहने का साहस रकती है,  
ना किसी से कम ना किसी से ज्यादा,  
बस पुरुषों के समान जीने का अधिकार चाहती है।  
आप सब ने भी देखी होगी इस दौर की नारी को!

In ancient lands, where stories bloom,  
The saree found its sacred room.  
A garment steeped in tradition's hold,  
Through history's pages, it boldly strolled.

From old whispers of rivers wide,  
To grandeur seen in Mughal stride.  
With threads of heritage, colours bright,  
In patterns woven, culture's delight.

In courts of kings and streets so plain,  
The saree is adorned in sun and rain.  
A symbol of grace in every way,  
Through all life's highs and every day.

Through times of change, it held its place,  
A symbol of strength in every race.  
From looms of old to factories new,  
Its journey echoed, tried and true.

In modern days, it's still in style,  
On runways and streets, mile by mile.  
From high fashion to everyday shows,  
The saree's charm continues to grow.

In olden phases and new ones too,  
The saree's tale is forever true.  
A timeless garment with history's vow,  
In every pleat, its legacy, we avow.

# Aurangabad's Own Dastarkhwan

By Delara Kavina

If you ever run into someone who knows me well, they will undoubtedly tell you about all the times I have rejected the idea of making a living in the heritage city of Aurangabad, not to be mistaken for being an unlivable landscape, but for the lack of prospects in this fast paced world. However, moving to a metropolitan city has given me a lot of perspective and profound respect for the city I left behind.

Aurangabad (now Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar) is like that forgotten blanket which is ignored for several months and only remembered when feeling cold or at times, lonely. Every time I visit home, I am engulfed in this warm blanket that soon becomes hot enough to survive in. This bitter-sweet relationship with the city is what makes it so special.

As and when Mumbai and its 'charms' snatch me away from the peaceful passivity of Aurangabad, I feel the dire need to run back home, get into my pajamas and have comfort delivered to my doorstep in different attributes and styles from a classic tandoor.

Tangdi kebabs, for one, have always felt like reuniting with an old lover while a luscious leg piece of tandoori chicken brings out a wave of dopamine like the one at the prospect of 60% off deals on Zomato. When I sleep into such comfort, it's a love story like no other. Every reunion with the heritage city has an overwhelming effect that lasts long enough in stories that I take back to college. Visiting the old town roads for the beauty of the food culture that it proudly pronounces its own is a little heritage walk in its own way.

It is true when people say that if you want to experience a city for what it is — unpolished and often uncanny, you must dirty your feet in the pool and let the idea of luxury or even the bare minimum take a back seat.

As children, my brother and I awaited the period of Iftar that added a lot of life to the fork lanes of old Aurangabad. From haleem to naan khaliya, every delight had its own tale to perform on our palates.

'Buddhi lane', known to be a food enthusiast's paradise (and every car driver's nightmare), is one of the many places to experience the essence of the old town.

On a recent trip back home, my father and I visited these lanes that consisted of endless bakeries making the best naan-khatai, mavajalebis, roat and the infamous Karachi biscuits.

After driving around for roughly twenty minutes, we crossed a little bakery down the old town road that had every corner

laced with a variety of different breads. I was intrigued by the products the New Modern Bakery sold. Buns, long breads, laadi pav, sheermal, khaari toast, cream rolls and the list goes on. The workspace consisted of a large double deck- oven (also called a bhatti) which further gave way to a work station where the dough for the breads were made and put into large oven trays to be baked.

The bakery workers, with eminent skill and efficiency, worked for hours on end amidst the heat that I could barely stand for more than a mere fifteen minutes.

As conversations toppled, the owners informed us about how the workplace was currently run by the third-generation of the lineage. The bakery has also been an active functioning space ever since British rule, they said.

On returning back to my car seat, I sank deep into it and kept thinking of how different life treats you when the things that have always existed are left unseen and unheard. Every human being is a story. With stretched cheeks and countless wrinkles, the hawkers of Buddhi Lane will always bring out the best of Aurangabad.

Driving down those lanes, wondering of all the times I was ignorant of the chawls that made every head turn, the site of their manda-gosht or the hawks of true businessmen working in dark, dingy kitchens making the best biryani known to mankind will be stuck deep into my memory.

Manda is made by mixing whole and refined wheat and flattening it on the top-side of a kadhai. Next up, was the place I had never known existed. Although their food reached our home through an efficient means of delivery (thank you, dad) I had never stepped into this place. However, when I did, Islami Hotel at Delhi Gate came as no surprise.

It has a corner kitchen with four to five heavy vessels cooking the most succulent meat on wood and charcoal, and a cylindrical bhatti that had an opening at the top that made the most delicious naans.

It was surprisingly disappointing to not have known of places that made naan-khaliya in Mumbai and so, I always make sure to have my share of justice at this little place that dealt in only five dishes namely naan, khaliya, paya, kheema and biryani.

If there is anything roadside that I ever have to eat without thinking of tummy issues, it would probably be at Tawakkal. At its heart, the owner of the little cart has been serving the best seekh kebabs in town for years. It has been no less than the perfect appetizer for the family or at times, a peaceful resolution to 'what's for dinner' conversations.

The beauty in writing about the city could only rise above the act of defining it, and its worthiness, when compared to the metropolitan landscape that I presently call home. It is something we as humans often do when we experience change.

Eighteen years in Aurangabad have taught me one lesson — the love for food need not come from a three course meal or air conditioned seating. It comes from within, in the smiles of the bawarchis, in the glow of the fire that curates the perfect culinary experience, and in the hearts of every individual who loves to cook and serve as much as their patrons love to eat.



# Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai?

By Payal Navarkar

One fine day, while looking into the evolution between and Anuv Jain, a strange thought crossed my mind. Apes evolved the ability to become emotionally attached to one another. We didn't evolve big fangs, huge claws or insane gorilla strength. Instead, we developed the ability to emotionally bond into communities and families, and before one could guess, humanity dominated the planet. This emotional attachment would eventually come to be known as "Love", whose evolution today has produced a bevy of independent singers, who from some corner in Mumbai would make millions writing cheesy songs about it.

For most of human history, romantic love was looked upon as some sort of sickness. And if you think about it, it's not hard to figure out why: romantic love causes people (especially young people) to do some stupid shit (trust me). One time, when I was 17, I saved my pocket money to buy a gift for that one boy in my class, only for him to say 'thank you' (A VERY DRY THANK YOU) and return home just as single when we first met. What a bummer! As I chose the bus ride back home, it took me to the fantasy world of emotions, reckoning the idea of love. The most random thought came to my mind then - how has feeling so pure as love transitioned from 'love letters' wrapped in ribbons to now 'no strings attached'?

It's been a long walk to get to the point where we read an article about the evolution of a feeling called 'LOVE'.

“यह उन् दिनों की बात है;  
जब इश्क सच्चा हुआ करता था;  
जब इश्क में पड़ना अच्छा हुआ करता था ।”  
-यह उन् दिनों की बात है  
(TV series)

In the not-so-distant past, love was a slow burn. Communication was deliberate and thoughtful, with each word chosen with care. In that age of chivalry and grace, gestures spoke volumes, and every glance held a story waiting to be told. Holding hands for the first time has butterflies in your stomach. Saying I Love You for the first time made you blush like cherries. Courting was an art, a dance of souls intertwined in the tapestry of tradition and reverence. Words, crafted with the finesse of a master artisan, flowed like streams of honeyed nectar, painting portraits of devotion upon the canvas of hearts.

Love letters, penned with quill and ink, traversed vast distances to reach the beloved's heart, carrying with them the essence of longing and devotion. Oh, how the air was perfumed with the fragrance of roses and the sweet melody of serenades! Thus, in the era of old-school romance, love was not merely a fleeting fancy



but a timeless journey where hearts found solace in the beauty of connection and the purity of affection. It was a chapter written in the annals of time, where the essence of love bloomed eternal, like a fragrant rose in the garden of the soul. But guess what? One day, these love birds found an easy way to stay in their own nests and send their love signals.

With the dawn of the digital age, social media became the stage for modern romance, where relationships are curated and displayed for the world to see. In this era of digital romance, love blossomed amid the pixels and screens, where hearts connected through ethereal streams. Social media became the enchanted garden where lovers wandered, weaving tales of affection with every click and tap. Yet, amidst the glow of virtual affection, shadows lurked in the corners of this digital realm. The pressure to present a picture-perfect relationship for the world to witness overshadowed the authenticity of a genuine connection. Couples have caught themselves in a web of comparison, seeking validation through likes and comments rather than the depth of their bond.

Ah, and how can I forget the moment when I read the term - 'Hook Up'. It was supposedly first mentioned in some old New York Times newspaper in 1993. Yes, that's when the world got introduced to this bizarre word (or some modern apocalypse). It did not stand for romantic involvement but as a verb, to 'get some' or 'make out'. I remember times when one of my close friends used to say, 'We are more than friends but not in a romantic relationship'. I was always speechless when I used to hear her say this. Then, I got to know from someone that they have named this confusion and fear of commitment as 'situationship'.

Today's relationships often dance on the edge of commitment, navigating the blurry lines between casual intimacy and emotional detachment. This modern circus of love, while liberating in some ways, also casts shadows of uncertainty and instability. Maybe it means that you want to be available to the world outside, but you don't wish to leave that one person secretly. Or maybe it means you want all of them but truly none of them. Connections are forged with a swipe or a click, opening up a world of possibilities but also presenting challenges in forming deep, meaningful bonds now. The emphasis on instant gratification and fleeting encounters started to overshadow the deeper, more profound aspects of love, leading to a sense of emptiness or disillusionment.

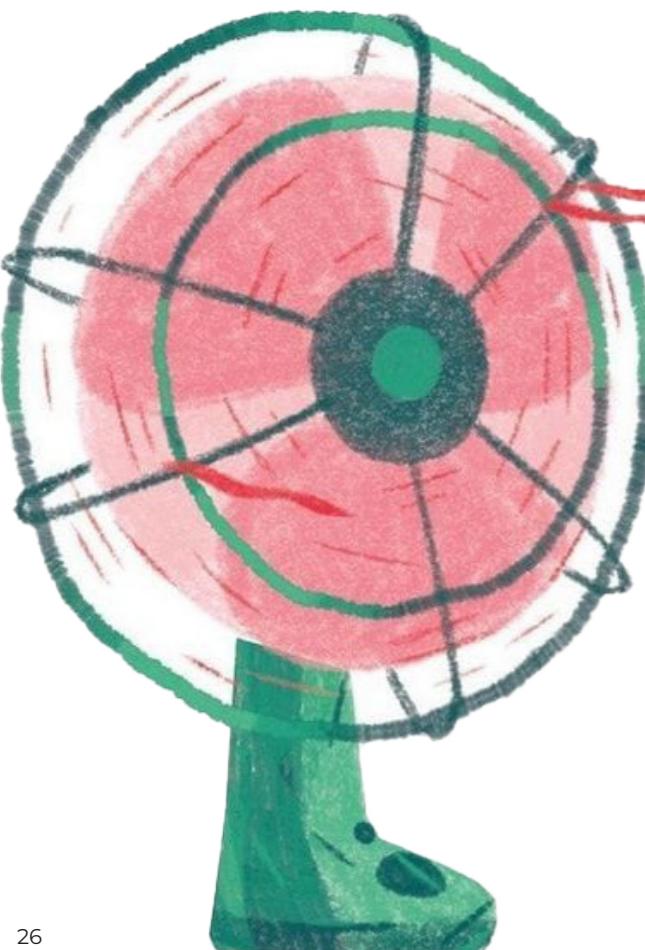
Maybe the world finds it more comfortable to live in this current trend of hook-ups and situationships. But there are still some old souls out there. They search for solace in those old-school romantics where love is a deep and real concept. These people get hurt when they go through a heartbreak and do not start looking for an immediate other partner. Maybe they find themselves out of trend today but still want to live in that phase and not lose that realness of love.

# 100 Days of Summer

By Raj Darji

Nourished in the warmth of golden shine, summer days offer a breezy phase of mellow slowdown. As the sun stretches its radiant fingers across the landscape, we find ourselves immersed in the fleeting magic of the season. It carries a gentle sense of stillness and ease where the world, in a way, stops and finds comfort within the walls of their house. At the same time, it serves as the perfect opportunity for people to travel and explore newer places under the shadow of a clear blue sky. For me, thinking about summer brings back many beautiful memories of my school days.

Throughout the year, I used to crave for the long and joyous summer break to arrive because it used to break the monotone nature of life and provide a liberating feeling from the constraints of time and unreasonably unnecessary tasks. With no lectures, no homework and nothing to worry about, I had all the time to myself in



this world to sincerely waste. However, in my early years, I had to learn maths tables ( $2 \times 1 = 3$ ) because of my parents, which I hated from the deepest and darkest corner of my heart. Thankfully, they got tired and left me on my own once I kind of knew them till twenty ( $20 \times 1 = 30$ ).

The most fun period of my summer break was around the Fifth, Sixth and Seventh standard of my schooling. During this period of two months, I used to voluntarily wake up at 6 or 7 in the morning every day to play cricket with friends. It has resulted in quite a few friendly debates with my parents as I was never this prompt for school. Nevertheless, I always found a gateway from these peculiar situations with my friends arriving (most of the time) at the doorstep, which was a perfect segue for me to run and come back nonchalantly after a few hours as if there was no argument happening.

Mysteriously, my fate has some strong connection with banters. While I would try to avoid them at home, they generously followed me on the field, where we played against each other with extreme passion. Our matches were an interesting mix of verbal spats, ethical cheating, arrangements of necessary equipment (i.e. a bat, a ball and a wooden block to be our stump) and the formation of newer rules in the Book of Gully Cricket, among a hundred other stuff nowhere associated to the actual game. Even after spending close to three or four hours on the ground, we would hardly finish two matches of five overs of underarm cricket.

In addition to already existing and unending chaos, we also managed to get involved in arguments with people from neighbouring societies over the ruckus we tend to create. I genuinely wish we were more mindful and sensible because it was mostly our fault. Still, we used to fight with others to prove ourselves right. At times, we even managed to get in some serious trouble. Thankfully, we found an escape most of the time, and when things completely slipped out of our hands, we just played on a different ground for a few days. Today, when I look back at those fights, I miss the carelessness, abandonment and freedom to do whatever we wanted since it flew with time and disappeared.

After the Eighth standard, the concept of summer vacation changed rather drastically because they were consumed by the (unnecessary) preparation for the Ninth standard and SSC Board Examination. Even though the classes started

early, the portion was entirely out of place with no signs of its completion when the exams approached closer. This period was followed by another dull phase of two years as the world was taken aback by the COVID-19 pandemic. While we all had the time, none of us could meet because of the lockdown and by the time the situation got better, we were supposed to take our HSC Board Examination. Moreover, most of my friends were appearing for JEE, NEET, CPT and other similar competitive exams, making it difficult for us to break the loop.

Knowingly or unknowingly, we all moved ahead and entered degree college. The unhinged approach towards life gradually evolved and welcomed a sense of responsibility. Pursuing a bachelor's degree in Mass Media has its own share of positives and negatives, much like everything else. Constantly evolving, emphasises heavily on skills and hard to survive are among the few things usually associated with the media industry. Therefore, there is a slight inclination to do certification programs, train under industry professionals and gain experience from internships alongside academics to build a strong CV and Portfolio to increase the chances of being recruited.

To be honest, I am running the same race and trying my best to tick as many boxes as possible. While the nostalgia of school days is really endearing and fulfilling, I am searching for an internship for the upcoming summer vacation because it is probably something the future demands. I know it will take a majority of my time, which makes me slightly unsure. Still, it feels like the right step at this juncture. Though I always wanted to steer away from the worldly race, here I am part of it, guilty as charged. This situation makes me resonate even more with this ghazal by Mirza Ghalib Sahab:

“कोई उम्मीद बर नहीं आती,  
कोई सूरत नज़र नहीं आती |

मौत का एक दिन मुअद्यन है,  
नींद क्यों रात भर नहीं आती |

आगे आती थी हाल-ए-दिल पर हसी,  
अब किसी बात पर नहीं आती |

हम वहाँ हैं जहाँ से हम को भी,  
कुछ हमारी खबर नहीं आती |”



# Navigating the New Norm: The Surge of Wars in the 21st Century

By Arshita Peshen

It's strange how I, a random stranger in the grand scheme of things, get to comment about the world and the humanitarian crisis we are facing as a society whilst in the comfort of my bed, whereas the kids in Gaza don't! It's hard to grapple with the reality of navigating this complex landscape of the 21st century, with the ominous cloud of prolonged conflicts and war continuing to cast its long shadow over societies worldwide. From the protracted civil war in Syria to the simmering tensions in the South China Sea, the map of the world remains marked by the scars of violence. Each conflict, with its unique blend of grievances and motives, serves as a stark reminder of our collective inability to surpass the cycle of aggression and violence.

According to the armed conflict report from the International Institute for Strategic Studies, there were around 183 regional conflicts around the globe in 2023, the highest figure in the past three decades. This figure should be more than enough to stop people in their tracks and look around to see the downfall of humanity in front of them. The sheer scale and frequency of these wars demand not just attention but introspection, urging us to confront the root causes of this and acknowledge the menacing world we call home.

The societal effects of prolonged conflicts are manifold and far-reaching, inflicting untold suffering on millions of innocent lives. Beyond the actual casualties and destruction on land, wars breed a culture of fear and mistrust, eroding and corrupting the very fabric of society. Communities stand torn apart, families displaced, and livelihoods shattered.

leaving behind a generation haunted by trauma and loss. The scars of war run deep, seeping into every aspect of life and obstructing the possibility of healing and peace.

Furthermore, the economic toll of warfare is astounding, draining resources that could otherwise be invested in education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The opportunity cost of conflict is immense, robbing nations of their potential development and continuing the cycles of poverty and instability. Scarce resources are diverted towards military expenditures, heightening inequalities and increasing the gap between the privileged few and the marginalised many. In war-torn regions, economic development becomes a distant dream, and all that remains is the hope to wake up to normalcy again.

Yet perhaps the most insidious impact of warfare is the loss of humanity among us. In the fog of conflict, perpetrators and victims alike are dehumanised and reduced to mere pawns in a geopolitical chess game. Empathy is replaced by indifference, and compassion is drowned out by the racket of violence. In such a world, the pursuit of peace becomes an act of defiance, challenging the narratives of power and dominance. One can only hope

we undertake this journey to reestablish the cornerstone of humanity-peace. It's not to say that we will come out unscathed through this treacherous phase but to hope and dare is all one can do - for the sake of our future and the future of humanity.



# Of Phasing Through Time

By Mariyam Qureshi

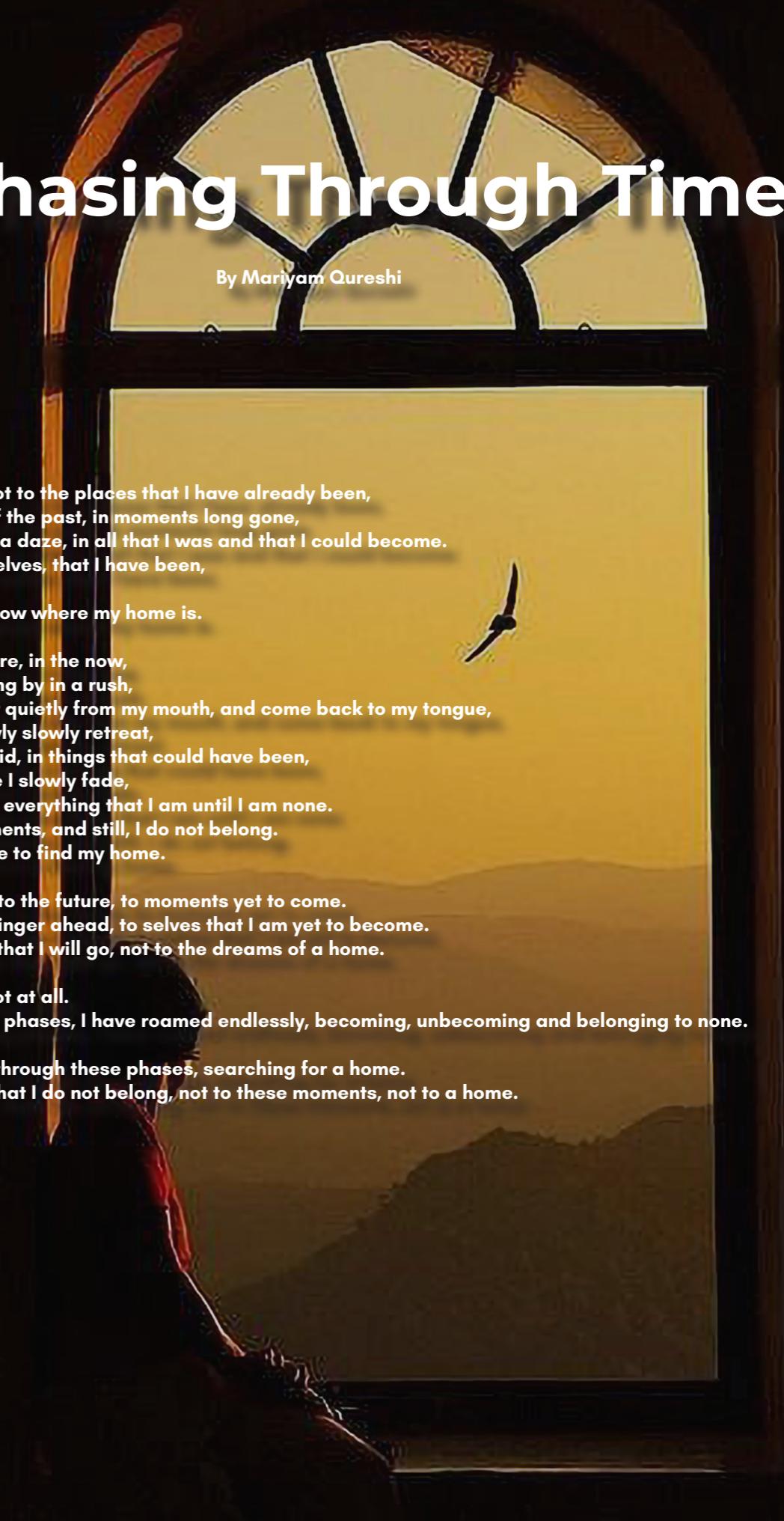
**I do not belong, not to the places that I have already been,  
Not in moments of the past, in moments long gone,  
In chances lost in a daze, in all that I was and that I could become.  
Not to the many selves, that I have been,  
I do not belong,  
And I still don't know where my home is.**

**I do not belong here, in the now,  
In moments fleeting by in a rush,  
In words that drift quietly from my mouth, and come back to my tongue,  
In gazes that slowly slowly retreat,  
In things left unsaid, in things that could have been,  
In moments where I slowly fade,  
When I unbecome everything that I am until I am none.  
I am in these moments, and still, I do not belong.  
I don't know where to find my home.**

**I belong not even to the future, to moments yet to come.  
To moments that linger ahead, to selves that I am yet to become.  
Not to the places that I will go, not to the dreams of a home.**

**I do not belong, not at all.  
In these changing phases, I have roamed endlessly, becoming, unbecoming and belonging to none.**

**I have wandered through these phases, searching for a home.  
And I know now, that I do not belong, not to these moments, not to a home.**



# An Abode

By Harsh Jain

The stage becomes a unique abode when you are on it and performing your art. The energy, the freedom and the chills it gives to your spine is an experience hard to define in words. As a performer myself, capturing this moment was a surreal feeling. It is so fulfilling to see how the stage not only allows performers to showcase their skills but also gives an audience to discover their expression. However, it certainly takes a lot for a person to step on the stage as an artist and spread the magic of their art, which remains hidden under the lights.





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