A DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE MAGAZINE



EPISTEME

LOVE
POLITICS &
BEYOND

2025 ISSUE

LOVE POLITICS AND BEYOND

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FOREWORD

AS THE HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE WITH THREE MASTERS PROGRAMMES - HUMAN RIGHTS AND DUTIES EDUCATION, POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, I FEEL HONOURED TO PRESENT THIS CREATIVE, INCLUSIVE AND AH SO PROVOCATIVE AN INITIATIVE, CROSS CUTTING DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES - EPISTEME. I WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE THE EXTRAORDINARY VOICES OF STUDENTS AND THE TEAM OF CONTRIBUTORS, EDITORS, PHOTOGRAPHERS, DESIGNERS AND MANY OTHERS WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED IN MYRIAD WAYS TO THIS COMPOSITE PLATFORM OF SELF-EXPRESSION AND LATERAL THINKING. HANDING OVER THE BATON BY THE CURRENT TEAM TO SUCCESSIVE TEAMS, EMBRACING COMPLEXITY AND CELEBRATING DIALOGUE EPISTEME IS INDEED A LABOUR OF LOVE.

AT THAT NOTE IS I WOULD LIKE TO INTRODUCE YOU TO THIS YEAR'S THEME - LOVE, POLITICS, AND BEYOND. IT WILL PROVOKE YOU TO EXPLORE THE INTRICATE INTERSECTIONS OF EMOTION, IDEOLOGY, AND THE POLITICS OF LOVE AND HUMAN EXPERIENCE. AS THOMAS MANN SUGGESTS, HOWEVER TRIVIAL OR UNRELATED SOMETHING MAY SEEM, IT IS ULTIMATELY INTERTWINED WITH THE REALM OF POLITICS. WITHIN THESE PAGES, YOU WILL FIND VAISHALI MANN'S ESSAY ON THE INTRINSIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LOVE AND JUSTICE, TO TEHMI SHAFI BHAT AND SAJID MUSHTAQ ON FAIZ AHMED FAIZ - "RAQIB SE" ADDRESSED BY A MAN TO ANOTHER, WHO WAS IN LOVE WITH THE SAME WOMAN!, IRTIQA NADEEM'S PROPOSITION OF LOVE AS A TRANSACTION, AND ULTIMATELY LIBERATION, RAFIA PARVEEN ON IQBAL, MASKAT DECONSTRUCTING OSCAR WILDE, SPINOZA, BERGER, WOOLF AMONGST OTHERS PUTS FORTH A COMPELLING ARGUMENT FOR LOVE AS FREEDOM TO BE ONE SELF WITH GAY ABANDON, SAATVIK SUDAN'S VIEWS ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF LOVE AND THE NEED FOR IT TO BE EMANCIPATORY, TAITREYI BISWAS'S ARTICLE ON BHARATNATYAM, TO LIFE IN STILL PICTURES BY AALIMA KHAN AMONGST SO MANY OTHER CREATIVE PIECES - FINALLY ENDING WITH A VERY HOPEFUL - "JUST LIKE FLOWERS YOU WILL BLOSSOM IF YOU TAKE TIME TO WATER YOURSELF"!



FOREWORD

THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S EPISTEME IS SATIRICAL AND DELVES INTO THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF HUMAN SELF-AWARENESS, IN THE WAY JONATHAN SWIFT DEFINED SATIRE AS "A SORT OF GLASS, WHEREIN BEHOLDERS DO GENERALLY DISCOVER EVERYBODY'S FACE BUT THEIR OWN". THE "GLASS" SWIFT REFERS TO IS A METAPHORICAL MIRROR, AN INSTRUMENT THAT POSSESSES THE POTENTIAL TO REFLECT THE VIEWER'S OWN VISAGE. YET, SATIRE'S AUDIENCE REMAINS LARGELY OBLIVIOUS TO THEIR OWN REFLECTION, CONVINCED THAT THE RIDICULED FAULTS RESIDE ELSEWHERE. THE CREATIVE PIECES REMIND US THAT LOVE AND POLITICS ARE NOT OPPOSING FORCES BUT INTERCONNECTED THREADS THAT SHAPE OUR COLLECTIVE JOURNEY. WHETHER IN THE REALM OF RELATIONSHIPS, GOVERNANCE, SOCIAL JUSTICE, OR IDENTITY, THE ARTICLES AND ARTWORKS IN THIS ISSUE INVITE READERS TO QUESTION THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL — AND TO IMAGINE WHAT LIES BEYOND.

I INVITE YOU TO READ AND APPLAUD THE COURAGE OF ITS CONTRIBUTORS QUESTIONING, DECONSTRUCTING AND REIMAGINING SPACES. THEIR WORDS AND IDEAS ARE A TESTAMENT TO THE VIVACITY OF OUR STUDENTS— ONE THAT EMBRACES COMPLEXITY AND CELEBRATES DIALOGUE. THEIR VOICES, PERSPECTIVES, AND IDEAS REMIND US THAT EDUCATION EXTENDS FAR BEYOND THE CLASSROOM — IT IS A SHARED JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND INNOVATION. AS YOU TURN THESE PAGES, MAY YOU BE MOVED TO THINK MORE DEEPLY, TO FEEL MORE OPENLY, AND TO ENGAGE MORE FULLY WITH THE WORLD AROUND YOU. FOR IN UNDERSTANDING LOVE AND POLITICS, AND EVERYTHING BEYOND, WE COME CLOSER TO UNDERSTANDING OURSELVES.

HERE'S A HUGE CONGRATULATONS AND WISHING ALL THE VERY BEST TO THE NEW EDITORIAL TEAM FOR CONTINUING THIS DYNAMIC ENDEAVOUR.

PROF. BULBUL DHAR JAMES
HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT

CONVENER'S NOTE



IT IS WITH IMMENSE PLEASURE AND A DEEP SENSE OF FULFILMENT THAT I PRESENT TO YOU THE 2025 EDITION OF EPISTEME, THE ANNUAL MAGAZINE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE. TRUE TO THE SPIRIT OF ITS NAME—EPISTEME, MEANING KNOWLEDGE OR UNDERSTANDING—THIS MAGAZINE SEEKS TO CULTIVATE A SPACE FOR INTELLECTUAL REFLECTION, CRITICAL DIALOGUE, AND CREATIVE EXPRESSION. IT FUNCTIONS NOT MERELY AS A PUBLICATION, BUT AS A LIVING ARCHIVE OF THE MANY VOICES, EXPERIENCES, AND PERSPECTIVES THAT ANIMATE OUR DEPARTMENT.

THIS YEAR'S THEME, "LOVE, POLITICS AND BEYOND" MAY AT FIRST APPEAR UNCONVENTIONAL. HOWEVER, A CLOSER AND MORE NUANCED ENGAGEMENT REVEALS THE PROFOUND SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN THE TWO. LOVE AND POLITICS INTERSECT IN THE MOST UNEXPECTED OF PLACES—THROUGH CARE, SOLIDARITY, RESISTANCE, INTIMACY, AND ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY. THE ESSAYS, REFLECTIONS, AND CREATIVE WORKS IN THIS EDITION TRAVERSE A SPECTRUM OF CONCERNS, DRAWING FROM THEORY, LIVED EXPERIENCE, AND IMAGINATIVE EXPLORATION. THEY NOT ONLY REFLECT ACADEMIC RIGOUR BUT ALSO THE PASSIONATE ENGAGEMENT OF OUR STUDENTS WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE WORLD THEY INHABIT.

THE SUCCESSFUL REVIVAL OF EPISTEME AFTER A PERIOD OF DORMANCY IS A TESTAMENT TO THE UNWAVERING DEDICATION OF OUR STUDENT COMMUNITY AND THE CONSISTENT SUPPORT OF THE DEPARTMENT'S LEADERSHIP.

CONVENER'S NOTE



I WISH TO EXTEND MY HEARTFELT GRATITUDE TO PROFESSOR BULBUL DHAR-JAMES, THE CURRENT HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT, WHOSE GENEROSITY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT HAVE MADE THIS ENDEAVOUR POSSIBLE.

THIS EDITION STANDS AS A MIRROR TO THE ETHOS OF OUR DEPARTMENT—THOUGHTFUL, DIVERSE, CRITICAL, AND DEEPLY ENGAGED. I HOPE IT OFFERS ITS READERS NOT ONLY INSIGHT AND INSPIRATION, BUT ALSO THE QUIET JOY OF ENCOUNTERING INTELLECTUAL COMPANIONSHIP ACROSS ITS PAGES.

I WOULD LIKE TO EXPRESS MY SINCERE APPRECIATION TO THE EDITORIAL TEAM: MASKAT AYOUB, SHIMAILA MUSHTAQ, SUNAT, TAITREYI, TOIBA MALIK, MUBASHSHARA, AND YASH R. EACH OF THEM HAS BROUGHT TO THE PROCESS A UNIQUE ENERGY AND COMMITMENT. A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS IS OWED TO MASKAT, WHOSE TIRELESS EFFORTS AND ARTISTIC VISION WERE INSTRUMENTAL IN SHAPING THE FINAL FORM OF THIS PUBLICATION. HER ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND AESTHETIC SENSIBILITY GAVE LIFE AND COHERENCE TO THIS ISSUE.

IN RECOGNITION OF THEIR INVALUABLE CONTRIBUTIONS, I EXTEND MY DEEPEST GRATITUDE TO THE ENTIRE EDITORIAL TEAM, WHOSE COLLECTIVE LABOUR HAS CULMINATED IN THIS REMARKABLE EDITION OF EPISTEME.

WARM REGARDS,

DR. KRISHNA SWAMY DARA

CONVENER, EPISTEME

NOTE FROM EDITORS



DEAR READERS,

WELCOME TO THIS YEAR'S ISSUE OF EPISTEME, AN ANNUAL MAGAZINE BY THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE OF JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA.

AS ARDENT ADMIRERS OF ART AND ITS BOUNDLESS CAPACITY TO PROVOKE THOUGHT AND INSPIRE CHANGE, WE ARE THRILLED TO PRESENT A COLLECTION THAT REIMAGINES LOVE AND POLITICS THROUGH THE MOST CREATIVE AND RADICAL LENSES. THE THEME OF EPISTEME EDITION 2025, 'LOVE, POLITICS, AND BEYOND,' INVITES A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE COMPLEXITIES OF LOVE THROUGH A POLITICAL LENS AND A RETHINKING OF LOVE AS NOT ONLY A PERSONAL SENTIMENT BUT ALSO AS AN EMANCIPATORY EXPERIENCE THAT HAS THE CAPABILITY TO SUBVERT AND DECONSTRUCT OPPRESSIVE STRUCTURES. LOVE, LIKE POLITICS, IS INHERENTLY DISRUPTIVE. IT CHALLENGES NORMS, QUESTIONS AUTHORITY, AND ASKS US TO SEE THE WORLD DIFFERENTLY. WE HOPE THIS ISSUE OF EPISTEME FORCES YOU TO SEE NEW POSSIBILITIES EMERGE WHEN WE EMBRACE LOVE NOT JUST AS A MERE FEELING TO BE LOOKED DOWN UPON OR ELEVATED TO A HEAVENLY STANDARD BUT AS AN EXTREMELY POLITICAL, RADICAL AND FREEING ACT. IN A WORLD GOVERNED BY STRICT HIERARCHIES OF CASTE, CLASS, GENDER, DISABILITY, RACE AND MORE, LOVE IS A POLITICS OF RESISTANCE AGAINST OPPRESSION.



NOTE FROM EDITORS

THRUOUGH LOVE ARTICULATED AS CARE, SOLIDARITY, AND PLEASURE, WE CAN RESIST STRUCTURAL INJUSTICES AND REAPPROPRIATE PUBLIC SPACES TO RENDER THEM INCLUSIVE AND EQUAL. THIS EDITION ASKS AUTHORS AND READERS TO CONSIDER THE ARTICULATIONS OF LOVE IN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL LIFE, FROM PERSONAL HISTORY AND REPORTAGE TO MASS ACTION AND SEE LOVE BEYOND ITS RESTRICTIVE DEFINITIONS.

AS YOU TURN THESE PAGES, WE HOPE YOU FEEL INSPIRED BY THE BOLD VOICES THAT DARE TO DREAM BEYOND CONVENTIONAL NARRATIVES. LET THIS EDITION BE A REMINDER THAT POLITICS IS NOT CONFINED TO PARLIAMENTS OR PROTESTS, IT LIVES IN OUR RELATIONSHIPS, OUR SOCIETIES, OUR ART, OUR COMMUNITIES. AND LOVE? LOVE IS SOLIDARITY, RESISTANCE, EMPATHY, AND AN UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE. WE HOPE TO INITIATE A DISCOURSE THAT QUESTIONS THE ETHOS OF ANTI-LOVE AND IMAGINES A FUTURE OF JUSTICE AND MERCY.

IN CREATIVITY AND SOLIDARITY
WITH LOVE,

MASKAT AYOUB; YASH R. GAJMAL; TAITREYI BISWAS; SUNNAT;
TOIBA MALIK; SHIMAILA MUSHTAQ; MUBASHSHARA MEHFOOZ

EDITORIAL BOARD, EPISTEME 2025.

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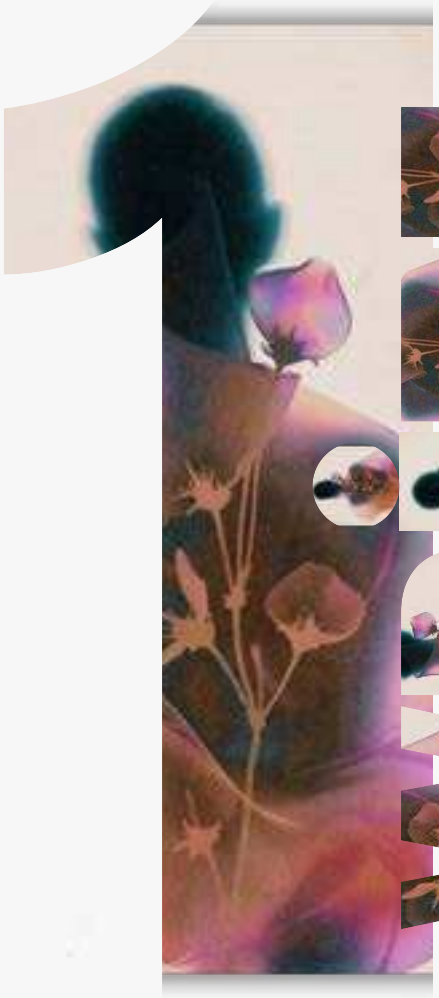
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Situating Justice In The Heart

"There can be no love without justice." - Bell Hooks.



- Vaishali Mann [PhD 2nd Year]

Love is often viewed by majority of us in very restricted ways and so is the concept of justice. Love is often seen as an emotion that can be experienced by one at a deeper personal level and can stir romantic feelings in one. Similarly, justice is regarded to be as a foremost feature of only the legal institutions or frameworks - something that is confined to spaces like courts, police stations, laws, punishments and is accorded a very institutional character. This is where the problem lies. Through our entire lives, whether it is through the medium of our experiences at a personal level or what is taught to us in schools and colleges in the form of pre-defined curriculums, the two very important ideas of our times- love and justice are portrayed as different separated categories existing in isolation. Both appearing very distinct from one another.



One at a higher closed private level and other at the public level only existing in the form of rigid, inflexible institutions. Material things can always be organized in separate categories but not ideas. Ideas are always overlapping, mingling with each other, one having a strong and undeniable effect on another and so is the case with love and justice.

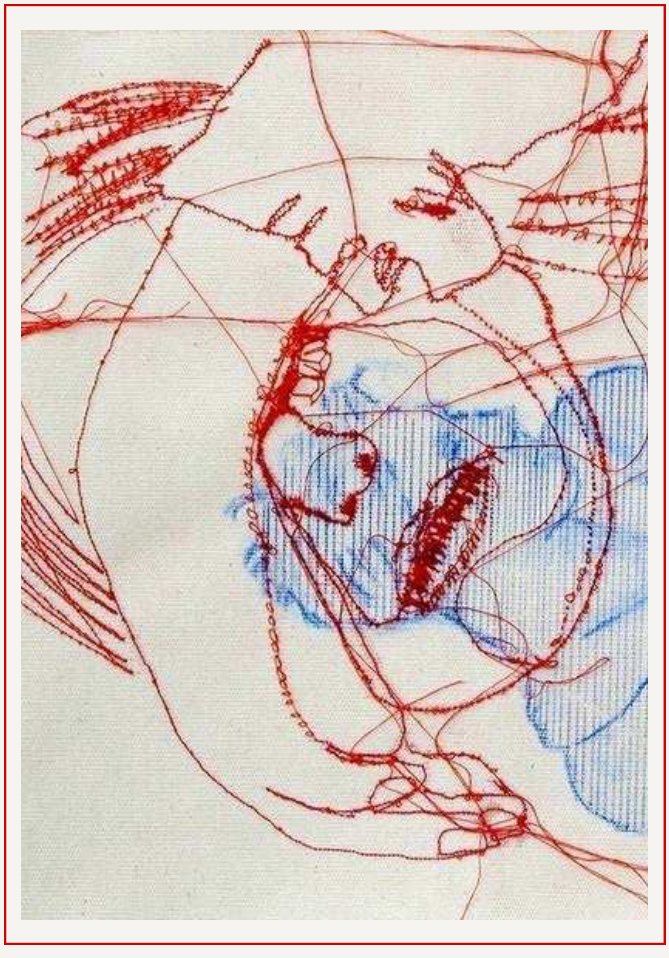
The idea of love can never be apolitical. Love is not merely a sentiment. It is a political act. An act rooted in the very notion of justice. Love is a force that questions the ideas of domination i.e. love is anti domination. Thinkers like Mahatma Gandhi in their call for justice and freedom have used the idea of love as a force to alter or completely change the hearts and minds of the oppressor towards the one they have oppressed, in order to create a more equitable society. This onus to use love as a medium of changing the enemy lies on the oppressed and downtrodden in the Gandhian scheme of justice. However, we need to be careful that this again presents a very narrow view of love and justice and concepts like such does injustice to the very idea of love and justice. When I say love is political, I do not completely reject the idea of making efforts of changing people around you but I do question using love as a subtle soft tool in a failed attempt to establish the egalitarian view of society without challenging the very ideas and structures of domination and oppression that create such a society in the first place. In my view, love is never subtle but always revolutionary in nature. Love is a revolutionary force that should always seek to completely destroy the ideas, the structures and the societal orders that perpetuate any sort of domination in any way. To question and dismantle the very existence of injustice is love. If we keep questioning the existence of such structures and keep striving to annihilate it, the need to change hearts of those who engage in an act of injustice is not needed then. The relationship between love and justice can be seen through a different lens as well. Preserving one's identity and culture can also be regarded as love i.e. love can be self preservation. But it is important to note that only those orders and cultures deserves to be preserved that have justice as their core foundation. The marginalized communities around the world have used the idea of love in this way.

In repressive structures and institutions that have focused on demeaning and degrading people, loving one and one's community and culture can be an act of resistance. According to Audre Lorde, love is radical in nature. Lorde mentions the importance of love especially in the context of women, people of color and LGBTQ+ communities when she says "Love is not self indulgence but self preservation- An act of political warfare."

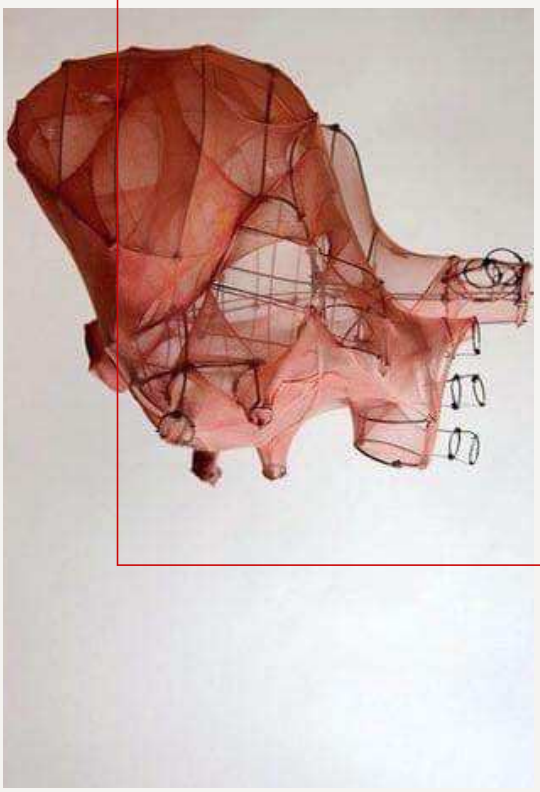
Love is always transformative in nature. Love, whether it is political or personal (Simone De Beauvoir puts it - 'Personal is Political') can upend repressive systems, change regressive societal norms and can promote empathy and justice. In her book 'All About Love: New Visions', Bell Hooks regards love as a powerful force to question the oppressive social systems like racism, patriarchy and capitalism. She writes- "The moment we chose love is the moment we begin to move against domination, against oppression, to act in ways that liberate ourselves and others." For Hooks, love is a continuous commitment to justice. Love is crucial as a foundation of just and thriving communities as only such communities are capable of promoting justice, empathy and ethics of care. According to her, respect and care for others are important components of justice thereby making love as an active rather than a passive force. Similarly, for Cornel West, "Justice is what love looks like in public." Love, more than being a personal emotion must be a moral dimension shaping policies and actions in society. In the 'Art of Loving', Erich Fromm again emphasizes the importance of the inevitable link between both the concepts. According to Fromm, sincere love fosters equality and human dignity which makes oppression and dominance impossible.

Some early communitarians like Michael Sandel employ the very idea of justice in their understanding of the relationship between justice and the community. According to Sandel, principles of justice are not required in a 'true community'.

Communitarians believe that an increased need for justice in any society reflects the decay of moral conditions in that very society. Where the feelings of mutual love and respect exist, justice is really not required. Sandel gives an example of family as a social institution where justice is not needed much because of existence of bonds of love. This notion however can be misleading, viewing justice and love as two completely distinct unrelated forces acting in isolation. Sandel's view has been criticized by Will Kymlicka who believes that justice does not diminish the role of love in any public or private institutions. Instead justice is an ideal upon which love rests. It is the very foundation of loving relationships. Justice ensures that the relationships are not corrupted by any oppression and domination.



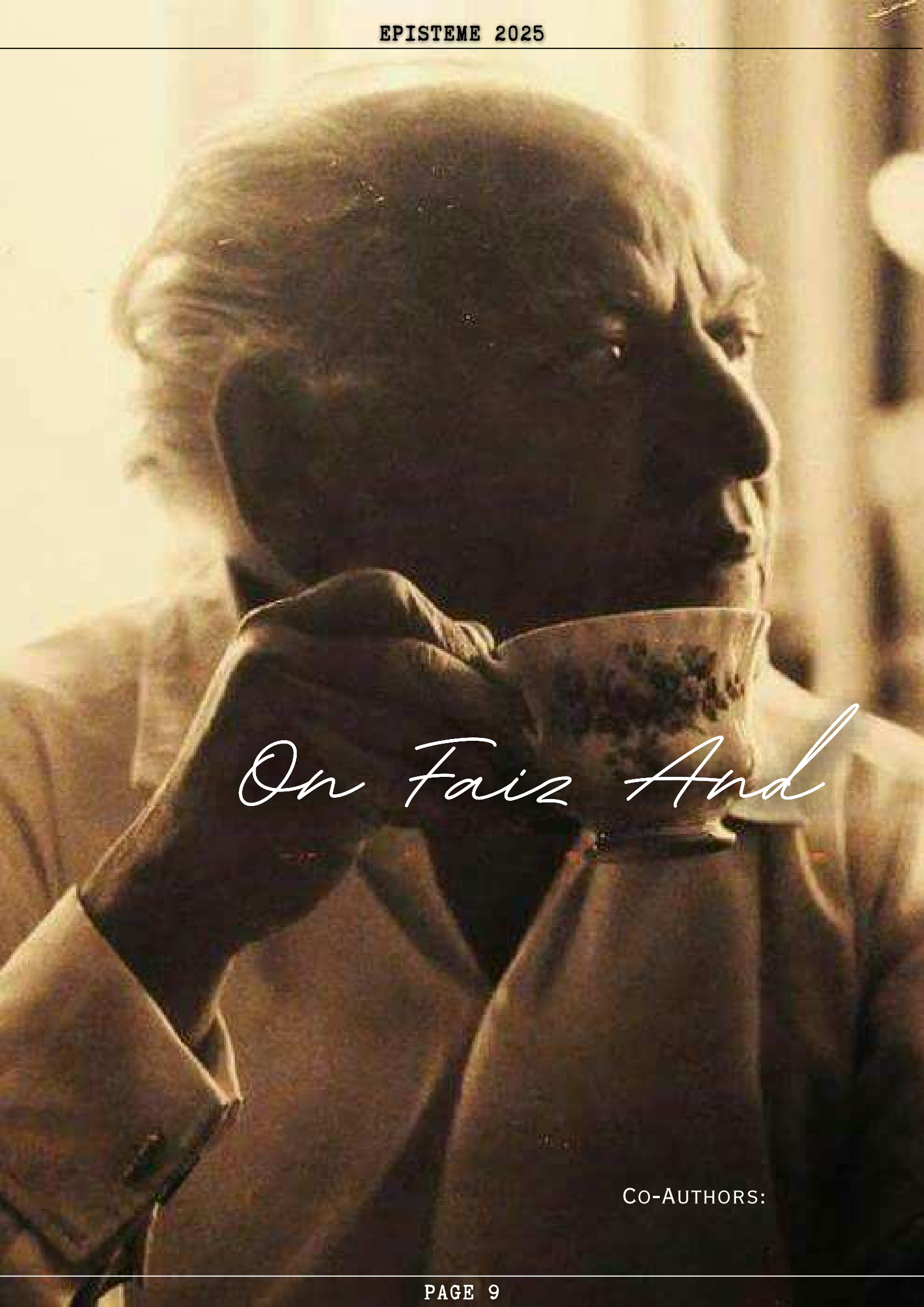
Feminists have long explored the idea of relationship between love and justice. In her seminal work 'In A Different Voice', Carol Gilligan presents an idea of 'Ethics of Care' as opposed to crude notions of justice where she states that importance of interpersonal relationships, emotions and caring for other individuals should also be given as much importance as justice and rights which is often viewed as mal dominated virtues. The danger again with this understanding is the divorce it draws between love and justice. Critics argue that Gilligan accords too much importance to care giving at the expense of justice and it reinforces the idea of women as care-givers and men as care-receivers in the society.



The understanding of emotions like love and care is then revitalized by scholars like Maurice Hamington who puts into forefront the idea of 'Revolutionary Care' where he establishes a link between justice and care by expanding its scope to larger questions of social and political dimensions. He brings care ethics into the very discussions on social justice. For him, care is not simply a set of emotions. Rather it is an act based of justice that can challenge oppressive systems. Care is definitely about relationships as Gilligan emphasizes but it is also about challenging the societal norms and structures. It requires us to be critical toward the existing institutions and policies that supports the idea of domination, exploitation and rests on the notions of 'othering' (Us versus them).



Summing up, the relationship between love and justice is a very intrinsic one. Justice is a framework required to guarantee love- that the idea of love do not remain limited to intimate relationships. Justice makes sure that love transcends interpersonal ties to create a more equitable and an egalitarian society while love humanizes justice by making sure that it empathetic and most importantly inclusive. If one places justice in the heart, domination has to end.



On Faiz And

Co-Authors:



Love

- Tehmi Shafi Bhat
- Sajid Mushtaq

Love, in its popular or contemporary sense, is an umbrella term that encompasses a plurality of human feelings or attitudes towards fellow beings. Still, this essay is concerned with the most evident meaning the term espouses: romantic love. In this sense, it is largely seen as a private affair between two individuals (two heterosexual individuals to be more precise), an affair involving feelings of intimacy, passion, and commitment. The most evident relationship in which love manifests itself in this sense of the term is marriage. What this view however does is that it strips love of any social and political role apart from ensuring the survival of the human species through procreation. This however has been criticized of late, mostly by Marxist thinkers. According to them this idea of love as connected to marriage is a capitalist invention. It works in tandem with other capitalist machinations to further the process of alienation. Love according to them is a deeply social and political phenomenon that can contribute to developing a progressive consciousness, which in turn becomes an important tool to fight capitalist domination. However, this conception of love is inadequate in itself. It strips love of its important components like intimacy and romance. It makes romantic/consummate love subservient to society's larger interests, i.e., class love. This universalization of love rather than acting as a bulwark against domination becomes a tool of the oppressor. These approaches lead to a dichotomy between romantic love and class love or love as a tool of domination and love as anti-domination. The question however is, "Is this dichotomy a suitable way of looking at the concept of love? Or does it obfuscate more than it clarifies about the nature of love?". We argue that the latter is the case because one can simultaneously be in a romantic relationship with a person and develop a class consciousness or love in some contexts can be used to perpetuate domination while in others, it can act as anti-domination. To illustrate such a point, we analyze Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poem "Raqeeb se" or "To the Rival."

Faiz Ahmad Faiz was a Pakistani poet and author of Urdu and Punjabi literature. He was one of the most celebrated, popular, and influential Urdu writers of his time, and his works and ideas remain widely influential in Pakistan and beyond. Apart from being a poet and an author, he was also a staunch socialist very active in the politics of Pakistan. When residing in Sialkot, he fell in love with a girl who happened to be his neighbor. One day, on his return from college, he found out that the girl had left the city. It is said that years later when he revisited Sialkot as a famous man, he happened to meet the same girl who was also visiting the city along with her husband. Popular account goes that she asked Faiz to take note of her husband (She said, "Mera shauhar kitna khoobsurat hai" (how beautiful my husband is)). This became the inspiration for "Raqeeb se", in which Faiz addresses her husband as his rival In Love.

The poem opens with the following verses:

> aa ki vābasta haiñ us husn kī yādeñ tujh se
> jis ne is dil ko parī-ḳhāna banā rakkhā thā
> jis kī ulfat meñ bhulā rakkhī thī duniyā ham ne
> dahr ko dahr kā afsāna banā rakkhā thā

In these lines Faiz calls out his rival, saying, there are memories linked with you, memories that had turned his heart into a fairy-house. The memories Faiz is talking about are of the girl whom he fell in love with years ago. He goes on to say that in her love, he had forgotten the world and had turned it into a fiction of a world.

At another place, Faiz says:

> tū ne dekhī hai vo peshānī vo ruḳhsār vo hoñT
> zindagī jin ke tasavvur meñ luTā dī ham ne
> tujh pe uTThī haiñ vo khoī huī sāhir āñkheñ
> tujh ko ma.alūm hai kyuuñ umr gañvā dī ham ne

In these lines, Faiz reminds his rival of having seen such things as that girl's forehead, her face, and her lips, things in whose contemplation he had squandered his existence. He says that her eyes are the reason of him having wasted his life. When we look at these verses, it is very evident that Faiz is talking about romantic love only. Things like having turned ones heart into a fairy house, squandering one's existence and wasting one's life because one is in love with a girl, all point to love in its popular sense. This is exactly the type of love Marxists take to be a capitalist invention that serves to reproduce capitalism itself. It is precisely this form of love that makes people, in this case Faiz, forget the world and divert attention from the larger interests of society. In other words, the argument goes, as long as people take love to be an attraction between two people, it hinders the development of a progressive consciousness necessary to bring about important changes in the prevailing social structure. But how true is this claim? Does love really hinder the development of a progressive consciousness? In the hope for some answers, we now turn to the latter part of Faiz's poem.

Some of the relevant verses are:

> ham pe mushtarka haiñ ehsān ġham-e-ulfat ke
> itne ehsān ki ginvā.ūñ to ginvā na sakūñ
> ham ne is ishq meñ kyā khoyā hai kyā sīkhā ha
> juz tire aur ko samjhā.ūñ to samjhā na sakūñ
>
> ājizī sīkhī ġharīboñ kī himāyat sīkhī
> yās-o-hirmān ke dukh-dard ke ma.anī sīkhe
> zer-dastoñ ke masā.ib ko samajhnā sīkhā
> sard aahoñ ke ruḳh-e-zard ke ma.anī sīkhe
>
> jab kahīñ baiTh ke rote haiñ vo bekas jin ke
> ashk āñkhoñ meñ bilakte hue so jaate haiñ
> nā-tavānoñ ke nivāloñ pe jhapaTte haiñ uqaab
> baazū tole hue mañDlāte hue aate haiñ
>
> jab kabhī biktā hai bāzār meñ mazdūr kā gosht
> shāh-rāhoñ pe ġharīboñ kā lahū bahtā hai
> aag sī siine meñ rah rah ke ubaltī hai na pūchh
> apne dil par mujhe qaabū hī nahīñ rahtā hai

One does not have to be a literary critic to discern that even though the object of discussion in these verses remains the same i.e., love, the feelings that it espouses differ radically from those that the earlier verses pointed to. Faiz brings our attention to the uncountable favours that love bestowed on him. While he talks about the losses he encountered in the venture of his love, he is quick to point out what he gained or learned from it. But what are those favours and what is it that he learned? Faiz says that he learned helplessness and the protection of the poor. He got to know the meaning of despair and the suffering around him. It was love that made him understand the problems of the poor and downtrodden. He became familiar with the exploitation of the weak at the hands of the stronger which is captured by the imagery of eagles pouncing on the morsels of the feeble ones. This is an implicit jibe at the capitalist exploitation prevalent in the society. This becomes explicit in the next verse where he says that in the name of labor, it is a workman's flesh that is sold in the market and that it is the blood of the poor that fuels the so-called developmental projects of capitalism. All this, Faiz says, causes a fire to mount in his breast and he begins to lose control over his heart.

What is clear from the poem is that love for Faiz transcends the narrow dichotomies such as romantic-class love and love as domination-anti-domination. It is therefore futile to reduce love to a private affair between two individuals as the capitalist conception of love does. On the other hand, it doesn't serve us well to strip love of its romantic component to make it a tool for social progress as the Marxist approach does. "Raqeeb se" serves as a bridge between the two ways of looking at love. In other words, one can be in a romantic relationship with a person and simultaneously develop a progressive or class consciousness. In our view, this could be a more comprehensive way of looking at love and shaping it as a tool of anti-domination.



Photograph: Faiz Ahmad Faiz & Alys Faiz



Curated the perfe

– Irtiqa Nadeem
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year.

We live in a theatre of Lies, each act a deception-to play and to be played. We endlessly perform each performance a desperate mimic of authenticity in a world where reality succumbs to the relentless commodification of our truest connections into objects of transaction and spectacle, polished, packaged, and paraded for consumption. In this market, we are not creators but servants, compelled to shape our craft and our very selves to suit the faceless collective, whose demands dictate not only what we produce but who we are allowed to become. This commercialisation of emotion has destroyed the idea of love for us, now we are too busy romanticising the idea of love than actually being in love, and it's no surprise that we fail in real life when it doesn't match that idealised version we had constructed over the years. The abundance of Romance Novels, Poetry, Movies feed this idea that this is how it should be and anything less dramatic and grand than this ain't right. But we tend to overlook the fact that these are fictional, a set up, not actually based in reality, then we have random people on internet making us insecure about our own relationships.

We should be able to say how WE feel rather than repeating the words some stranger put in our mouth, This advocacy for "if he wanted to, he would never settle for less" or classifying people into "Red Flags" and "Green Flags" is plain absurd, for you can't expect the other person to know everything without communicating with them. We are constantly bombarded with those picture perfect images of "people in love" and of couples following trends everywhere that makes one want to do the same, but that made me wonder, Do we actually want that? or Do we simply want to show off to the world that we are loved?

And that brought up another question, "Is love ACTIVE or PASSIVE? Is love a state that exists independently and is waiting for us to fall into? or Does it require our participation to bring about? Is our conception of love grounded in anything real? or Are we comparing our relationships to hyperreal love?" unfortunately, most of us look at love from a passive point of. view, we care more about being loved than loving someone. we don't want to put efforts and expect to fall in love like they do in fairytales, naturally, in the most subtle way possible.

Connections and mirage of tion.

I'd like You when
You like me in the way that I
like.



curated connections and the mirage of perfection.

me.

ASTO 100113

Phrases like “Love will come to you when you will least expect it.” fuels this passive outlook and eventually we focus on becoming as Loveable as possible rather than being Loving just for the sake of it. In his book “THE ART OF LOVING” ERICH FROMM argues that modern dating is like modern capitalism. To participate in the dating world is to place yourself in the dating market and this strategical exchange doesn’t really treat people as people but turn them into commodities in the personality market. Which is simply sad. Eventually, Hyper reality, passivity and Capitalism distorts our idea of love for we start to look at it from a consumerist lens. Together these elements create an idea of love that is far fetched from reality and ultimately lead to unfulfilling relationships for people start chasing an idealized notion of love rather than building something original and authentic.



There’s a quote from BOJACK HORSEMAN that fits really well here and it goes like:
“All I know about being good, I learned from TV. And in TV, flawed characters are constantly showing people they care with these surprising grand gestures. And I think part of me still believes that’s what love is. But in real life, the big gestures aren’t enough. You need to be consistent, you need to be dependably good. You can’t just screw everything up and then take a boat out into the ocean to save your best friend, or solve a mystery, and fly to Kansas. You need to do it everyday which is so… hard.”



SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR, a renowned French feminist and existential writer, saw the Ambiguity of love as a gateway to exploitation.

She wrote:

“Boys generally speaking were encouraged to have projects for their lives- to see love as part of life, not all of it, and to believe that success was possible in more than one part at once. Girls by contrast- were encouraged to see love as life itself and to believe that to succeed at other things might make them less loveable.” This dissonance between Romantic expectations leads to conflict.

As JOHN BERGER puts it in his book, ‘Ways of seeing’ - “Men act and Women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed is female. Thus she turns herself into an object of vision: a sight.”

Ultimately, BEAUVOIR discourages us from looking at love like it will be our key to salvation.



LOVE AS LIBERATION.

When our self-being is alienated, the journey of our self-actualization also becomes alienated. The route of this alienation is found within modernity. Our self-being gets polluted by the modern world, where no one can alienate themselves from this environment. It is important to understand the discourse of love in this context on how it can change through time. The understanding of love has changed from the past, and now a new way has been perceived regarding intimacy in a more glamorized way. The journey of love is also reshaped in this environment, where pre-designed love becomes a common phenomenon in which every young mind indulges through watching, reading and expression. Redefining love is not necessarily for the sake of love; it is due to our need to understand the human nature of love as liberation rather than control. When Love becomes a tool to explore other people's unexplored journeys, to know someone else without knowing ourselves, then love becomes a tool to control, and it ends in disappointment.

Love as a journey of self-transformation

Knowing our self-being is a way to understand self-actualization, and it is part of our journey of love. But we, on the other hand, become more interested in knowing each other, and because of this, our love starts from falsity and,finally, ends on false desire. The journey of self-transformation starts when our journey of self-actualization starts. Love allows us to explore our unexplored life, where we rediscover ourselves for the sake of love. Our journey becomes a new way to redesign our thoughts, but it's all within the frame of our self-actualization. If we ignore this aspect, our journey of love gets lost in our desires.

Love as Reflection

Love must be reflected in our thoughts and actions. It is not specifically for someone; it is for everyone within the world and beyond it. Love of desire means a desired love for existence, but love as reflection, that is, an open love for all, from humans to animals, without any desire; a love where you don't need to exchange love, like as we are always needy for it.





- Safiurrahman Nabeel
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

If we want to reflect love, we need to get on the journey of self-actualization and then self-purification to reflect our love to our loved ones and for all.

Love as Liberation

Why do we need liberation in love? We need to see love as liberation because it is beyond the politics of desire; the politics of desire is shaped by our consciousness where colour, race, etc. matter.

But if we get liberated from all these things, we get to find our natural spirit of love beyond our desires. And in this love, where love becomes pure, without any constructed politics of religion, caste, colour, or race, our love is for liberation. It is a journey of self-actualization, self-purification, and lastly, self-liberation. It is a lifelong journey; it can't be explored in days. True love is freedom, encouragement, and liberation.



Conclusion

Love becomes a tool for liberation from desire to choice, where we do not need to achieve someone based on our desired love; our love is liberation!

A Year Spent at Noida

– Aamir Habib
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year.







This monumental dreadful place turns convalescent in its features and shows signs of positive cure only rarely. I tend to follow its metallic obstinacy that draws certain dismayed peculiar pathos in my heart as I go for a walk after a heavy rain that swept off the dust and clouds, leaving behind a clear sky with panoramic greenery and moderately chill evening followed by joyous moods of the residents. In this wide assemblage of abstractly placed cubes, one might occasionally find life swaying in the form of toddlers on their little bikes, little puppies to the most ferocious looking dogs tied with colourful belts of all kinds, held tightly in the hands of the owners with their feet following their pets' trodden path as long as their patience allow. My eye globes shift focus from these puerilities to the relieved sigh of workers at a sealed site who toiled off blood and sweat in what seemed to be interminable heatwaves amidst new records of peak summers, but this sigh is forgotten as it comes and they engage in labour yet again with the idea of making meagre money and feeding their family anchored in their minds. The outlandish cars pace up across the wet, black roads, either heading to or returning back from somewhere, and the gentle protrusion of sunrays briefly halt before dusk falls upon this town, an isolatory demeanour to take shape yet again which is less voluble in terms of human connection and highly equipped in material wealth. I return back with a drab face as the guard unfastens the gate and greets me with a smile, I smile in my turn, shake his hand, then repose in the lair which is my home now, and I become one of them.

A Casual Contemplation Of The Past.

– Aamir Habib
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year.



"to be,
or not to be?"

I miss the days of my freshness, when I lived the life of a sybarite, reveling in what I would buy with the coins that were cylindrically assembled, clattering merrily in my palm, as my thoughts wandered around all the daydreams of innocent sorts. The tragedy of life subdues the kind of trifles that were of utmost amusement in the bygone days! The loneliness of metropolitan life is clinging to me like bees succumbing to their honeycomb, and this pinching shard has been agitating me, taking away the slightest virtue of my existence, which showed up only rarely so, in my hometown, where my familiar lineaments seem alive and doing when I think of them, leaving me nostalgic for the past I have lived, which breathes within my Conscience and my small, silly little existence! The notoriety of the town and the throng of crotchety folks only seem too naïve and an undercurrent of magnanimity flows in my heart as I think of the ruckus they created in bright afternoons.

A Chaotic Potpourri Called Life.



– Toiba Malik
BA (Honours)
Political Science 3rd Year.

Every December, when the new year is around the corner, we begin to contemplate the past and set ambitious goals for our future, crafting elaborate New Year's resolutions as if this time, we'll finally conquer the world - or at least, the huge laundry pile. For me, the act of planning - writing grand to-do lists, mapping out the perfect year, even color-coding goals - has always been half the joy. Admittedly, the other half is watching those plans crumble like an overbaked cookie. But failure never deters me. Each morning, I rise with the zeal of a first-time politician, convinced today will be different. I even tried going digital once, thinking I'd save paper and channel my inner tech-savvy minimalist. Spoiler alert: it was a disaster. There's something about physically writing in a notebook that feels grounding - like wielding Excalibur, except instead of battling dragons, you're scheduling your study sessions. So I returned to my trusty notebook, my eternal partner in failed ambitions.

"What kind of resolutions do you make?" you might ask. The answer: all kinds. My lists are a mishmash of aspirations - learning Arabic, reading more books, and eating healthy. Somewhere in that ambitious lineup, I carefully placed "learn to cook." This wasn't a pledge to become a Michelin-starred chef overnight; I simply aimed to try one new dish every month. A modest goal, but in college, where survival often hinges on instant noodles, even modest goals can feel Herculean. Predictably, I failed at most of my resolutions. Arabic remains as mysterious as ever, my healthy eating journey is littered with pizza crumbs, and my bookshelf is mocking me with unread novels. But luckily, I did manage to conquer one resolution - learning to cook. To be fair, this wasn't much of a challenge like learning Arabic; I was always fascinated by the world of spices and flavors, much more than I was like with words. My culinary journey began with a humble Middle Eastern dish, shakshuka, which is essentially a breakfast dish of poached eggs

cooked in a tomato and pepper sauce. Simple enough, right? But as the months rolled by, I realized my triumph wasn't in exotic dishes but in the everyday. I moved from shakshuka to mastering dal, lentil curry, and even bottle gourd sabzi—the unsung heroes of our South Asian kitchens. Yet, there were moments of brilliance, of true culinary fireworks. Take Eid ul-Adha, for instance. Stuck in the suffocating summers of Delhi during my 4th semester exams, I decided to recreate a piece of home. Yakhni, a Kashmiri yogurt-based mutton dish, was my Everest. Cooking it felt like stepping into the breezy meadows and mountains of Kashmir. It felt as if I was teleported back home, to the small village I come from, and it almost made Delhi bearable. My next venture, marcxewangan korme (red chilli mutton curry), was less about nostalgia and more about flair. This fiery dish, made with dried Kashmiri chillies and mustard oil, was my attempt to impress my family. And impress I did. Oh, and I make the roundest makki ki rotis. Just putting that out there, in case anyone is keeping score.

The holy grail of my year as a chef in training, however, was mastering Kashmiri harisse, a slow-cooked lamb porridge that requires unyielding effort and an unshakable will. My arms were numb for three days, but the sheer joy of recreating this beloved winter dish was worth it. (Side note: I also made shami kebabs that day, but let's be real - they're too basic to deserve more than a footnote.) My journey through cooking has led me to places I have never visited in real life. I had a charming yet fiery visit to Korea in my kitchen, making Korean rice cakes coated in a spicy-sweet gochujang sauce, called Tteokbokki. A dish of contrasts - comforting yet fiery - it mirrored my cooking journey: chaotic but rewarding. My baking experiments were equally adventurous. Fluffy cinnamon rolls were a triumph, pairing perfectly with fall evenings, but my chocolate chip cookies? A tragic tale best forgotten. So, here I am almost at the end of the year. My resolutions may have unraveled like overcooked noodles, but somewhere between burnt cookies and perfect rotis, I found a rhythm. I didn't just learn to cook; I learned to celebrate the messy, the unexpected, and the small victories that make life delicious. And isn't that the best resolution of all?

resolution
revolution
reloveution



life is short,
go after what you love.

A shared admiration: My Father's Love for Iqbal

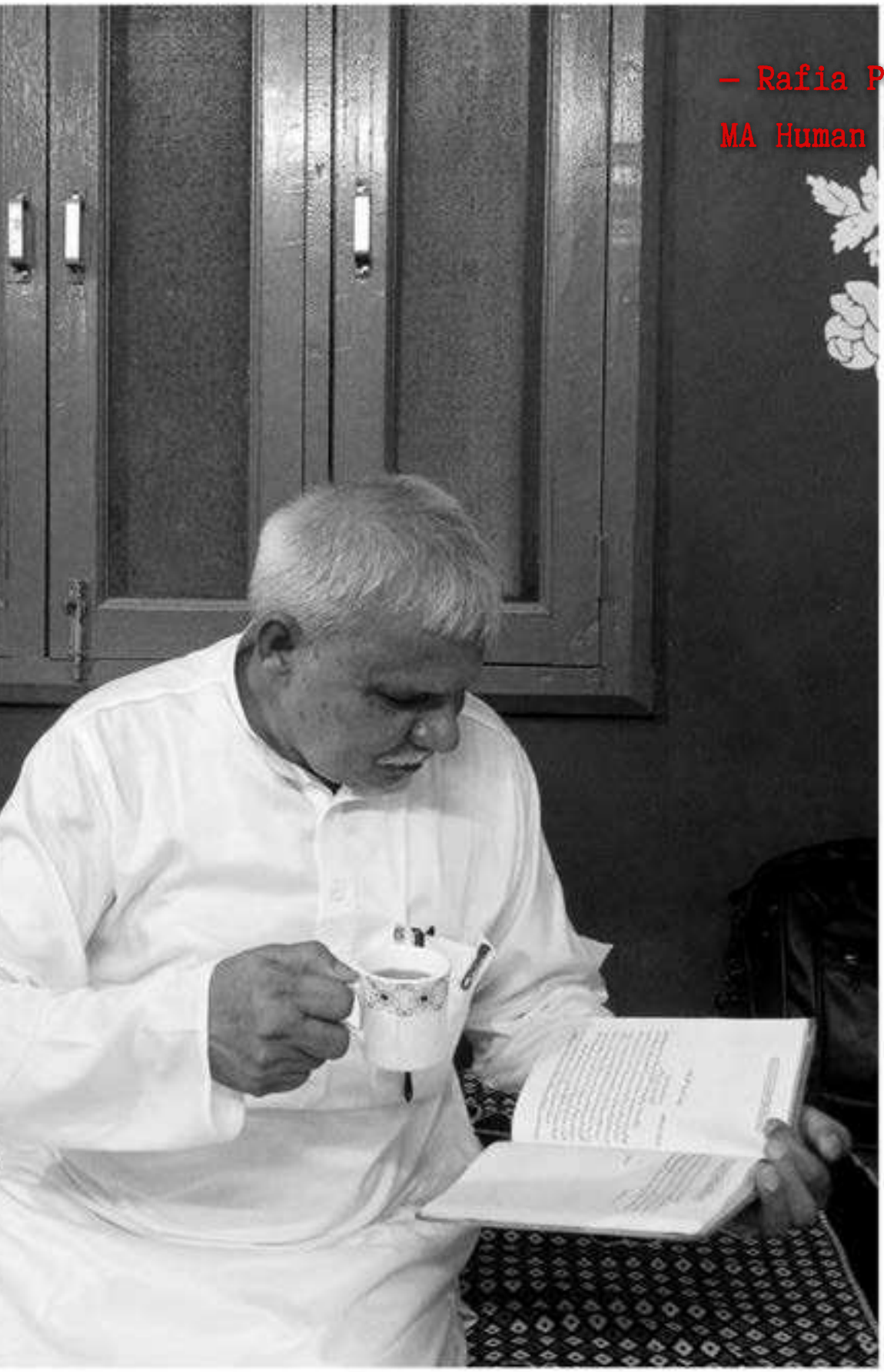


As a political philosopher, I first encountered Sir Allama Muhammad Iqbal in the second year of my BA (Hons.) in Political Science. It was during the COVID-I9 pandemic, and we were caged indoors. Both professors and students witnessed a new way of teaching and learning, respectively. We had classes via Google Meet, and materials were shared via WhatsApp groups and Google Classroom. There weremerely few lectures that grabbed my attention. One of them was the lectures by Dr. Krishna Swamy Dara. He taught a paper named "Modern Indian Political Thought." His classes were always something to look forward to, and his lectures were highly engaging and thought-provoking. I remember how my friends and I used to have face-timings to discuss the topics he covered in the class.

It was during one of these lectures that Dr. Dara mentioned Allama Iqbal, describing him as one of the two most highly qualified intellectuals in the subcontinent, alongside Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. This piqued my interest, and I found myself wanting to learn more about Iqbal as a political philosopher. The lecture on Iqbal was delivered on a fine spring day in 2022. I was curious to attend the class, but it was only after the lecture that my curiosity turned into a quest. Dr. Dara's insights into Iqbal's life and works left me with more questions than answers, and I found myself eager to explore Iqbal's poetry and philosophy in greater depth. Until then, I had known Iqbal as a brilliant poet, but I had never truly understood him. I had heard about him, but I had never listened to him. I appreciated him, but I had never truly admired him.

My father, Muhammad Muzaffar Alam,introduced me to Iqbal's poetry, but it was only now that I began to appreciate him more as a philosopher than a poet. Poetry, to him, was a medium to express his vision. As I delved deeper into Iqbal's works, I found myself engaging in long hours of debate and discussion with my father. We would discuss and debate Iqbal's philosophy, especially on his concept of khudi (selfhood / individuality) and how it is beyond the concepts given by the Western philosophers. For my father, Iqbal's poetry is not just a passion but a guidance. Growing up, I remember my father's reverence for Iqbal's works, which he considered sacred. His love for Iqbal's poetry was contagious, and it wasn't long before I found myself drawn to the poet's philosophy. As I sat down with my father to discuss his journey with Iqbal's poetry, the room was filled with the beautiful nostalgia. The memories of his childhood, the stories of his college times and the countless days he spent devouring Iqbal's works all came flooding back.

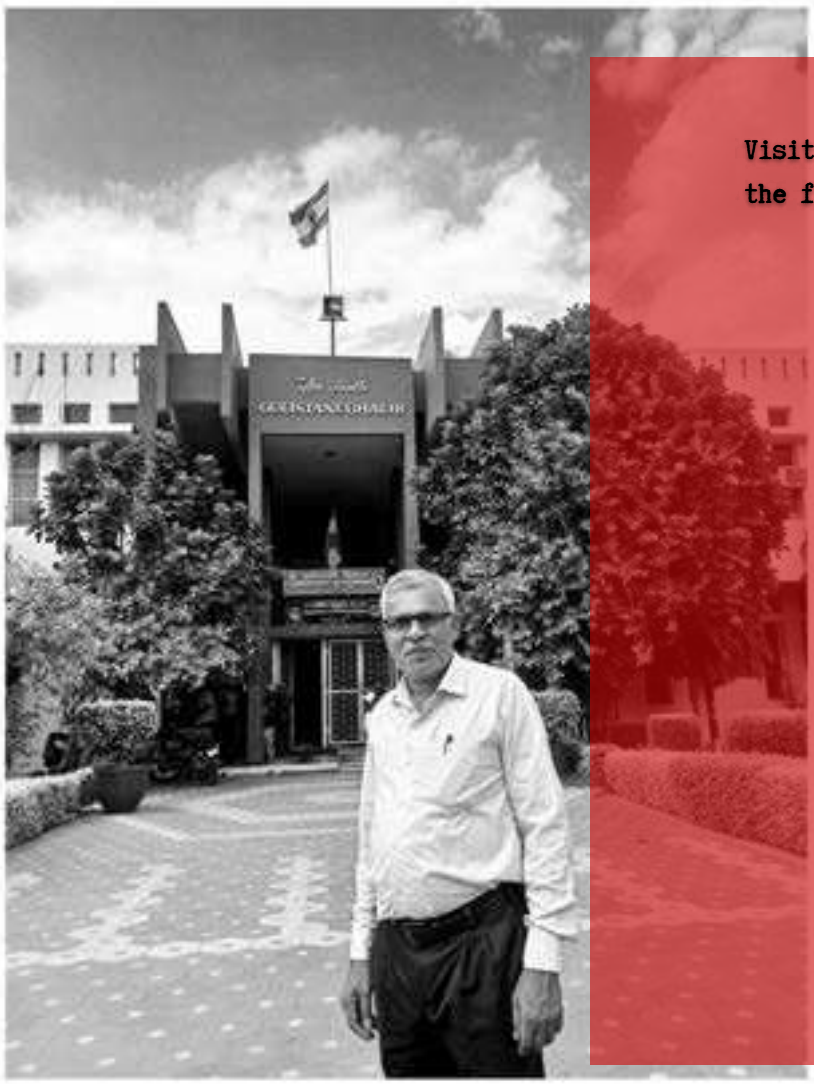
I asked him, "When did you discover Iqbal? Who introduced you to his work? And how did you fall in love with him?" He continued, "I become a lover of Iqbal in the first year of my graduation when I was officially introduced to his work in my syllabus. What devoted my interest to him more than any other poet is that his works resonated with the teachings of the Quran and Hadith. As far as I remember, my father, Muhammad Shafi Ahmed,imprinted his words in my heart. My father used to recite his poems. Before knowing about him as a poet or philosopher, I was introduced to his evocative



– Rafia Perween
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

Captured on 24 July 2024

Photograph of my father reading Iqbal in urdu, with his favourite beverage, a cup of tea.



Visiting the department of Political science for the first time

Photographed on 17 August, 2022

and visionary lines. I'm thankful to my father that he gifted his love for Iqbal into my heart. And since then, I intend to transfer the love of Iqbal to the hearts of my children the way my father did with me." The image of my father's father reciting Iqbal's poetry was ethereal, and I could almost hear the sound of his voice echoing through the years. I was curious to know more about my father's engagement with Iqbal's works, so I asked, "Have you read his original works? Have you bought his books from the market?" My father nodded enthusiastically. "Yes, definitely, I have read a lot, but never enough." He continued, "Reading him is a journey, not a destiny. A true admirer of Iqbal is in a journey when he reads him; Iqbal drags you into the world of Religion, Politics, philosophy, psychology, poetry, history, under one umbrella, beneath the domain of God."

He shared with me the names of some of the books he has read, including Bal-e-Jibril, Bang-e-Dara, and Zarb-e-Kaleem. "Zarb-e-Kaleem is the book I lent from a friend-client, Dr. Mehdi Hassan," he recalled. "On a visit to his house, I found the book there. I asked him to lend me for a few days, and in the next meeting, I returned his book back." Iqbal's poetry has a way of resonating deeply with those who read him, I asked my father, "Do you resonate with his life? Is there anything that you both share?" My father smiled, reflecting on the connections he felt with Iqbal. "Iqbal and I happened to be Advocates, the lover moustache and above all, the follower of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)." I couldn't stop smiling and looking at him with love.

As our conversation drew to a close, I asked my father, "Is there anyone else who had the same devotion in Iqbal's poetry?"

He nodded, reminiscing about his friend Maulawi Rehmatullah. “I had this person who used to talk about Iqbal. Those were beautiful days, spending evenings with a cup of tea and Iqbal poems.” I saw how in his eyes a form of grief. I didn’t wish to know more about his friend since I was curious about Iqbal and my father’s journey in discovering his works.

The bond between my father and Iqbal’s poetry is strong, and I was eager to know more. “Which poem of Iqbal's is dearest to your heart?” I asked. My father’s face lit up with a warm smile. “There are a lot;how can I name one? Iqbal is dearest to the heart, and if I have been asked to read one poet in the world, I would choose Iqbal.” However, he did mention that his favourite advice to give to his children is from Iqbal’s poem “Javed-ke-Naam.”

Dayār-e-ishq meñ apnā maqām paidā kar
Nayā zamāna na.e sub.h o shaam paidā kar
ḳhudā agar dil-e-fitrat-shanās de tujh ko
sukūt-e-lāla-o-gul se kalām paidā kar
uThā na shīshagarān-e-farañg ke ehsāñ
sifāl-e-hind se miinā o jaam paidā kar
maiñ shāḳh-e-tāk huuñ merī ġhazal hai merā samar
mire samar se mai-e-lāla-fām paidā kar
mirā tarīq amīrī nahīñ faqīrī hai
ḳhudī na bech ġharībī meñ naam paidā kar

Moreover, I asked my father, “What is your dire wish to read?Is there any book I can gift you? He thought for a moment before responding, “I have a desire to read his original Persian works. I have a little knowledge of Persian letters. If I get the opportunity in life to improve my Persian, I would be morethan happy to read him in Persian.” We shared eye contact, and as he drew closer, he said,” Become a Shaheen and the mother of Mard-e-Momin. These words, inspired by Iqbal’s poetry, reflect my father’s desire for future generations to embody the values of faith, courage, and resilience.

We concluded the conversation and undoubtedly claimed thatIqbal is not merely a poet-philosopher but the speaker of the truth, in the most pragmatic, philosophical and poetic dialects. We both sang:

tū shāhīñ hai parvāz hai kaam terā
Tire sāmne āsmāñ aur bhī hai
Isi roz o shab meñ ulajh kar na rah jā
Ki tere zamān o makāñ aur bhī haiñ
Sitāroñ se aage jahāñ aur bhī haiñ
Abhī ishq ke imtihāñ aur bhī haiñ



– Maskat
BA (Honours)
Political Science
3rd Year

My Mind is a Spirit That Haunts itself.

I have taken out excerpts from my journal so if this doesn't have a coherent flow that is because my mind rarely understands or thinks coherently. Frankly speaking it's a bit unnerving to let a reader analyse the thought that goes behind a piece of writing. I am reminded of Oscar Wilde's "I will not bare my soul to their shallow prying eyes. My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in this thing, too much of myself " for anything we create reveals a part of us and it is daunting to have the courage to surrender it to public examination. While putting the piece together I realized in addition to my musings about love, I am also establishing how seemingly harmless social behaviors like rumors/gossip mongering can constitute a form of social violence. The rumors create a constant state of hypervigilance and self-doubt and force people to isolate themselves socially. Such false narratives threaten one's sense of self and the persistence of rumors creates a form of ongoing, invisible assault on the person's mental health as well as erodes their social credibility through systemic marginalization.

Why is it that women and their perceived sexuality are majorly the targets of such gossip and are even sometimes asked to take it as a compliment that people are so interested in their lives? I keep asking myself these questions, it gets exhausting, and the contradictions (better known as hypocrisy) infuriate me. If something is hypocritical, point it out, how hard can it be? If one wants privacy for oneself, one ought to want it for everyone, if one desires equality for oneself one is bound to desire it for everyone.

As Spinoza puts it in Ethics Part IV:

> "A man who is led by reason, so far as he is considered as such, desires nothing for himself which he does not desire for the rest of mankind."

People say to women "It's because you're desirable that they talk about you, look at the bright side" as if it is supposed to be a compliment that they expend so much energy to constantly try to demean you or assassinate your character. 'Because you dress so radically it is bound to attract attention' So, one's superficial appearance and their self-expression elicit an unwarranted moral indictment and they should predict the value judgments? One ought to revel in the praise of their intrusiveness? They say "When people like something and it's not reciprocated they get bitter and start punishing the object of their desire" but what if one does not want to be the object of their desire and consequently, their bitterness? What if one does not want to be an object at all? What if one desires equality, justice and freedom as a human being?

I don't agree with John Berger either when he says "A woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself... she turns herself into an object -- and most particularly an object of vision: a sight" I think women are forced to survey themselves because of constant social scrutiny, I think women are not 'turning' themselves into a 'sight' but it's the gaze that is perceiving them as such, women just want to breathe and not be told how they did even that wrong. The hypervigilance of their actions or lack thereof, how they must do this to be emancipated but doing that enslaves them.

I imagine woman screaming on the top of their lungs loud enough for outer space to hear her:

> I can think for myself, decide for myself, act for myself and believe it or not I know how to breathe. I want to be forgotten, irrelevant, non-existent, invisible, because being perceived and judged for existing is suffocating.

I think I've never found a movie that can compare to Malena in depiction of this isolation and suffocation of being a woman. I see so much of my own life and other womens' reflected through this movie, though there are radical differences in certain aspects, for one, I am not as beautiful as Monica Bellucci who portrays Malena and second, our life is not fiction (unless Descartes was right about the deceitful demon), I am also not married (will never be) yet what she went through in the movie is what women are subject to everyday in reality. Like Malena experiences the weight of being gossiped about without provocation, leading to increasing isolation as a form of self-protection, I am so afraid of people, I have so much fear of what they are capable of. I distance myself from social spaces, gatherings, social media platforms, anywhere I can be looked at long enough to take up space in their heads because I am afraid when they see me they will think about me which would lead to being a topic for degrading conversations or as Virginia Woolf puts it "The eyes of others our prisons; their thoughts our cages"

It's especially cruel because Malena hadn't done anything to deserve this treatment. A woman simply existing isn't a crime or an invitation for harassment, is it? It's devastating and genuinely harmful to have innocent interactions or meaningful friendships twisted and sexualized by others. I fail to comprehend it, it eludes me and it bothers me. It's particularly oppressive because a woman is forced to be clear about her boundaries from a very young age yet the boundaries get unjustly and forcibly encroached upon, violated with love.



I am not seeking romantic or sexual connections, I simply want to exist, learn, and create meaning of the absurd. The fact that others project their assumptions onto one and create false narratives is a violation of one's right to simply be (or not to be).

I think people commit said social violence because of their need for power or control over the other, the need to feel important, and to exercise dominance without being held responsible. According to Psychologists Ashton James and Tracy "If our self-concept and status is secure, we have less need to feel superior, and we express less prejudice" But when you are the target, understanding why, does not make it any less painful. Having your existence poisoned by rumors is agonising. This kind of persistent social violence can leave one feeling speechless and exhausted, it creates a particularly devastating form of forced isolation. Imagine (don't if you are a woman for you have lived this) being a bird trapped in a cage of other people's malicious stories, where any movement toward connection is immediately twisted into something it's not, rendering you incapable of ever flying again, limiting you, out of sheer terror of how far out of reach you might go if not controlled. Social Violence is just as harmful as physical violence, neuroimaging studies by researchers like Eisenberger and Lieberman (2004), and Williams and Nida (20II) makes it clear that the brain circuitry involved in processing physical pain and social pain overlap considerably.

So when we think we're doing no harm by joking around, we need to rethink. No one wants to be constantly evaluated and have every action scrutinized by everyone. Living is already hard enough without having people to add to your suffering meaninglessly. There's already a constant static in my mind, so much noise, so many thoughts overanalyzing every little thing I do without everyone else analysing it too. I want to give away as little of myself as I can. I want to retain everything that makes me no matter what anyone has to say about it even if it makes me a persona non grata. I have heard so many women say they want to just stop existing, not in a suicidal way but just stop being visible to others, like a ghost and live freely. When it comes to me though, I'd say Art really does make up for some of the shortcomings of this world and helps us express what we thought couldn't possibly be expressed. It doesn't isolate you or discriminate, it doesn't disorient you or overwhelm you, you can experience freedom through art.

I digress but Like that one The Smiths song lyric 'I want to live and I want to love' I want to live and see the world and write and make art and listen to music and love myself. I want to stop being so closed off and afraid of love. I'm scared of being suffocated in love. I am afraid of becoming the very thing that I hate. I am afraid of becoming the father who loves his daughter to the point of suffocation or being a daughter who gives up her freedom in love of her father, I am afraid of being someone who accepts oppression of others and their own in love of their religion, I am terrified of being a nation that violates rights in love of their superficial identity, I am afraid of committing social violence in love of my vanity or ignorance, I am afraid of loving an identity and becoming rancid towards the other.

I am afraid of what it does to people and how it makes them hate. Love is not hate, that is a flawed concept of love if it incites hate. Love is radical, love is insanity, love is free, love is freedom, love is resistance, love is a revolution, love lets you be, love gives you the the space to be and to grow and to love, love shouldn't feel like a cage, quite the opposite in fact, it shouldn't scare you, it should free you. I want to love differently. Why can't love be equality? Why can't love be freedom? Why can't love be justice? I want to be as mystified by love as Shakespeare or Ghalib and I want to fail at decoding it. I want to create my equivalent of revolutionary poems that have love in every fibre of them as Faiz Ahmad Faiz did. I want to defy social norms, I want to rebel against my father, I want to dream, I want to live in a forest, I want to take walks out on snowy nights, on mountains, in cities or deserted highways whenever I want. I want to lie down in an open field and look at the starry night sky listening to music or sit near a brook with my feet in the water and stare at the blue cloudy sunlit sky for hours while I hear the stream flow carelessly, I want to watch people sing around a campfire on a cold windy night, I want to paint in sunflower fields, I want to get drenched in the rain and bury my face in the snow and write about it all on misty days. There was a quote along the lines "If you cannot find a book that you want to read, write it" I'd say if you cannot find the person that you would love, be that person. I want to be that person and love myself and despite everything, I want to hope more than I fear.



Burden Of Love: The Political Economy Of Love.



- Saatvik Sudan
MA Political Science
Ist Year

The notion of love differs according to each individual; it is something in modern times that everyone has a say on and at the same time does not have a say on. In 'Symposium', by Plato, Socrates recalls Diotima and her conception of love, where the love starts from physical beauty and, in its final stage, takes up the form of love of the soul. Aristotle viewed love under the lens of Philia and defined love within its context by giving it somewhat an altruistic sense. Similarly, with the advent of medical science, love was brought into the empirical and analytical sphere of life. In this sphere, neuroscientists tried to view love as a result of biochemical reactions, where the energy and infatuations experienced by people in love are a result of inflating levels of phenylethylamine (PEA), a compound that gives a mix of dopamine and adrenaline hits, in layman's terms. These conceptions become important when love does not remain an isolated phenomenon; rather, it becomes a commodity under capitalism. In cultural production, 'Love is presented as a phenomenon where the person you are in love with is extremely expensive (not in monetary terms but rather as a possession), and the quantification starts coming into play. Ironically, this quantification also works in case the person becomes invaluable in the later stages, and this production is undoubtedly driven by market forces that have taken into account all the factors and philosophers from Plato to Foucault and even the biological origins.

David Fernbach, in his article 'Towards a Marxist Theory of Gay Liberation', calls the nuclear family an 'invention of capitalism' and considers it the only way in which the working class could reproduce itself. This tells how homosexuality goes against the production channels under capitalism, but this was the scenario in the earlier stages of capitalism; today, with the change in the nature of relations and modes of production, we see an altogether different approach of capitalism towards homosexuality. It becomes a celebrated phenomenon during pride months, as it acts as a source to channel supernormal profits. This shows the dynamic nature of capitalist machinery and how it runs deep into the social sphere of our lives.



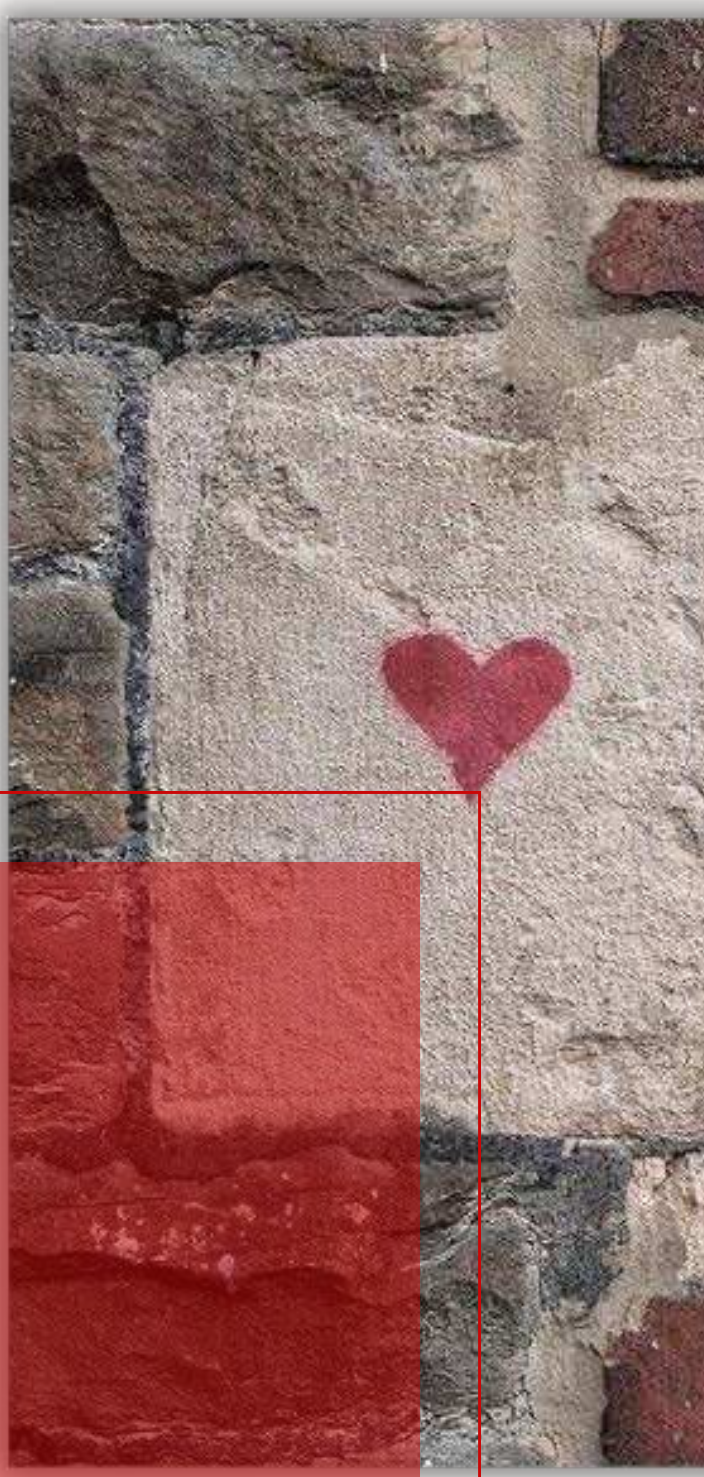
Standards of Production

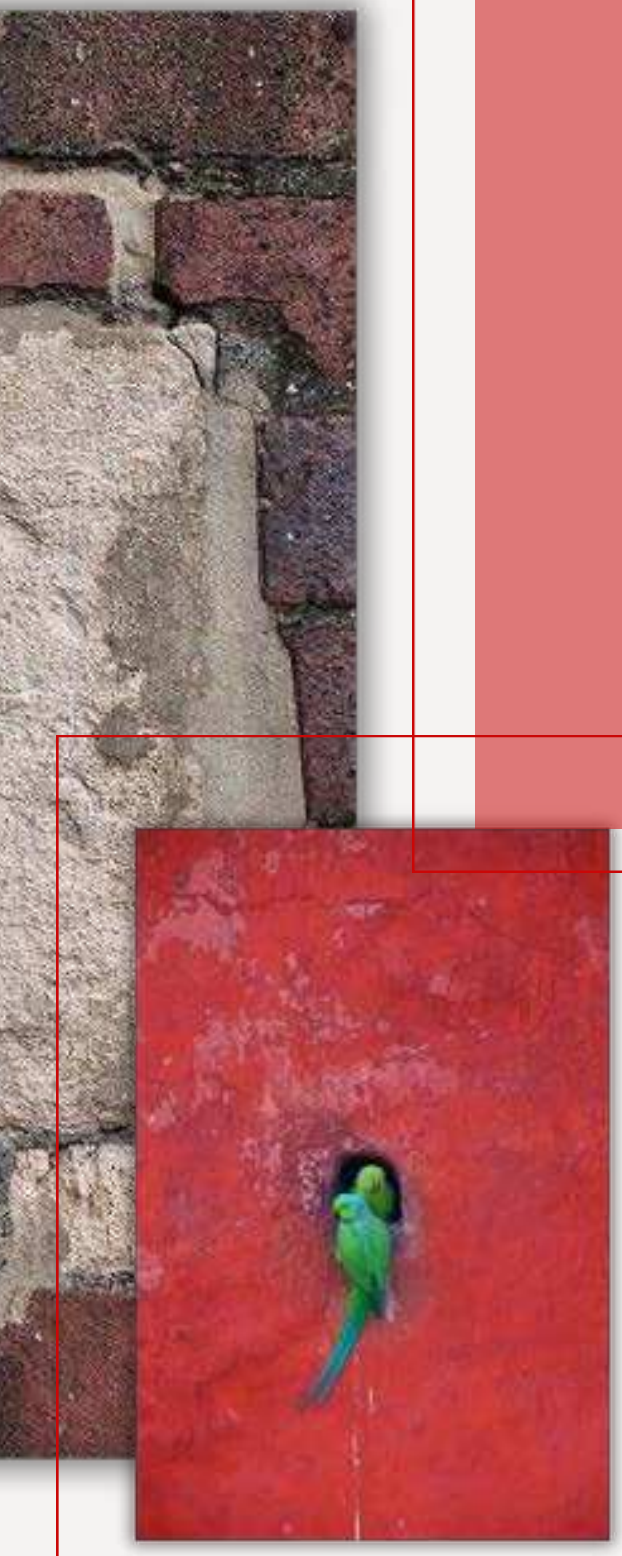
The entry of capital into the social sphere and the world where alienation looms over a larger population, masses try to find their escape, and in this new mode of capitalist production with the rise of fast dating culture and social media apps, this alienation is channelised in the form of another alienation thwat provides relief from alienation in the form of validation and the quest for likes and right swipes. The algorithms of these apps are designed in such a way that they create a hypothetical chase for likes and swipes, which in turn reduces the humans to mere commodities in which there is a hierarchy for certain body types and specific skin colours, and the liberation from these standards is also sold by providing special options for political inclinations. Cupid became an important part of the love economy and helped in the spread of capitalist love; his arrows not only became an indicator on dating apps but also a direct link to shopping sites that provide ideal gifts for the not-so-idealistic notion of love. Thereby paving the way for a popular culture that makes people act in a certain way in order to reach their hedonic ends. Another important aspect of fast-dating culture is that it idealises a certain type of romantic love and intimacy. This, in turn, sets up standards that are too unrealistic to meet. This creates a correlation where a new alienation is designed to help masses get out of the former, but this also forms a chain of such phenomena that'll keep on coming in new forms in order to facilitate capitalist production.

Marriage and Labour

Marriages have traditionally been an alliance between equals. The romanticised notion that love has no boundaries does not work in this arena. Romantic love might have no boundaries, but it is not necessary that it will culminate in marriage. There is a filtration process before marriage; this filtration involves layers such as caste, religion, class, etc. Certain people might be able to transcend it, but in most of the cases, the process of filtration takes away the essence of love out of marriage and reduces it to a mere transactional ceremony where an alliance is formed between clans, tribes and certain classes. The power imbalance in the nature of marriage also gives rise to the debate about 'gendered labour' in marriage; the domestic labour tasks performed majorly by women in a marriage mostly remain neglected.

This is evident from the fact that domestic help is excluded from the estimation of GDP. In the case of India, only independent sources estimate the value of domestic help at around 3.5 lacs per homemaker per year. Also, the unpaid domestic work amounts to I3% of the global gross domestic product. The SBI Ecowrap report released in 2023 shows domestic work of women amounts to 7.5% of total GDP, and women on average spent 7.2 hours per day on household work. Nancy Falborein her book, 'The Rise and Decline of Patriarchal systems: An intersectional political economy' points out that "Neoclassical economists sometimes argue that women derive sufficient subjective satisfaction from their job choices - a kind of psychic income - to fully compensate them for lower wages" this situation that she points out is worsened by the rise of Neo-liberal economies around the globe, where women are not just remain out of the work force due to their occupancy with household work but their entry into the workforce at any point of time is taken up as a new entrant into the field, thereby completely neglecting their experience for care giving, this also opens up the dimension of Care labour, Nancy Fraser in her article "Contradictions of Capital and Care" tries to identify a major contradiction within capitalism where it relies on free riding to sustain the workforce but at the same time also paying lower wages to the workers. Care labour is not just limited to marriage but also in romantic relationships; especially in heterosexual relationships, we see a feminised version of care labour where a woman in a relationship is considered to take up care roles. This situation gets worse in a marriage where the emotional care becomes central to a woman's being, and this is where the notion of 'free riding' comes into play and care labour goes underpaid and in most cases unpaid.





Love is not just an apolitical act. The apolitical nature got attached from time to time under different power setups to keep people within their personal sphere and limit them from developing a collective conscience. In the world before us, the platonic nature of love is lost, and the only platonic love we see is between state and capitalism or sometimes between 'deep state' and capitalism, as both of them have a spiritual connection. In these times of despair around us, the only thing that keeps us going is the conception of love as solidarity and fraternity. Love can penetrate the layers of intersectionality but only when it is taken up as a collective act against the socially constructed notions. In our quest for ideal love, we play in the sphere of capitalism, where love is restricted to ownership and control, but love in its truest form can be an emancipatory force.

Beyond The Steps.

- Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights 2nd Year



Photograph: Taitreyi in "Devi Stuti", it depicts the contrast of two major roles the Devi plays: mother of this earth and a warrior.

My journey with Bharatanatyam began as an act of love. As a child, I was mesmerised by the precision of its movements, the sharp angles of the mudras, and the fluidity of its stories. With its demanding devotion, practice, and an almost act of sacred surrender, the dance felt like a discipline. Yet, as I grew into it, I realized that beneath its aesthetic beauty lay layers of power and privilege. Bharatnatyam, or for that matter any Classical art form, is a site where the politics of body, history and status unfold.

One of the turning points in my life with Bharatanatyam was when I was rehearsing to dance a piece on Nataraja, the cosmic dancer. Nataraja's dance represents the cycles of creation and destruction, the fine balance of life and the universe. My teacher, an upper-caste woman celebrated in the dance community, described the piece as a meditative act of devotion. Yet, as I practiced, I became acutely aware of how much of this 'meditation' demanded a militarization of the body as well as the mind. Myteacher remarked, 'A dancer dances 24/7, not only with the body but also with the mind.' Bharatanatyam requires extraordinary discipline. The araimandi stance, where the knees are bent and the body is lowered, must be held with precision, the torso upright but not rigid. Each movement must follow a codified grammar, emphasizing sharpness and symmetry. I felt my body being molded, disciplined, and shaped into the preferences of Bharatnatyam'ssavarna ideals. My teacher would constantly correct me with such remarks as, 'Keep your body straight, don't slouch, it is inelegant' or 'Relax your face, your expressions should be subtle, not loud.' These instructions, though presented as technical corrections, indicate an unstated preference for upper-caste Brahminical aesthetics - restrained, controlled, and graceful. There was an unspoken ideal that the dancer's body should reflect a refined, contained femininity;

adhering to the so-called purity associated with Brahminical traditions. This principle was given a boost in the larger structure of Bharatantyam. The famous dancers were usually of lean figures, sharp noses and fair skin color - characteristics that are typically associated with high caste Brahmin women. In contrast, dancers from marginalized communities were either relegated to peripheral roles or erased. Their movements were seen as 'too earthy' or 'too raw', qualities that were celebrated in folk dances but deemed inappropriate for the classical spectrum. This fixation on the Brahminical body intersected with the dance's history.

Bharatanatyam was once performed by the devdasis- women dedicated to temple service. Their performances and bodies were exploited in the name of spiritual and artistic labour. During the colonial rule, this lineage was vilified, and Bharatnatyam was appropriated by upper-caste families. The dance was rebranded as a symbol of cultural nationalism and molded into a 'respectable' art form that aligned with Brahminical norms. The obsessive focus on women's bodies in Bharatanatyam is rooted in the intersection of patriarchal, caste-related, and cultural forces. Patriarchy is key to relocating women's bodies as markers of morality and tradition, holding them up for observation and control. In Bharatanatyam, this is expressed through the demanding expectation that the female dancers not only uphold and internalize the ideals of purity and fineness,but also do so in the context of the larger societal narratives of "ideal" womanhood. Additionally, Bharatanatyam's codified grammar is an instrument of regulation, prescribing how a dancer's body must move, express, and appear. This fixation with perfection and control is not only for artistic accuracy but is intricately linked to upholding social rankings. The classical art tradition tends to be a machinery for the reproduction of caste and gender rankings, hence casting women's bodies as being integral to these systems. I couldn't stop thinking about the history as I rehearsed the Nataraja piece. How could I perform a dance about balance and cosmic harmony when the form itself was so deeply unbalanced? Bharatanatyam is now transformed into a site of exclusion wherein the stages are dominated by upper-caste dancers and its rules enforce a rigid grammar that prioritises conformity over creativity. Even the act of dancing felt like a militarisation of my body. My movements had to flow with exactitude, my facial expressions were to be only those that grew from my deeply cared-for mind, and my manner was to be disciplined to illustrate a connotation that was rooted in ideal upper-caste cultural norms. It was the reflection of my body as if it were nothing but a mere mould that was transformed into a vessel for someone else to visualize their own idea of divinity. Yet, despite everything, I keep coming back to Bharatanatyam. There is a paradoxical sense of liberation I feel within its restraint, a sense of freedom that is possibly fleeting, qualified, or partial but is still extremely meaningful. Dancing allows me to move my body to rhythms that are sensed to be ancient, virtually eternal, connecting me to a tradition that extends beyond my own lifetime. I stand on the stage, as I represent the countless stories that the dance tells; tales of gods and mortals, and universal powers, and in this smallness, I realize my minute existence in the universe. And yet, this smallness is not breeding despair but is filling me with a feeling of belongingness. The dance establishes a link for me with something infinitely bigger, a line of stories, emotions, and histories which extend beyond time. Handling Bharatanatyam's unjust history places me in a position ofcontinuous quandary. I find myself questioning why I continue to love something that bears such a thick history of exclusion and erasure. Perhaps it's because I have not yet unravelled the "why" of this love yet. Dancing allows me moments of connection, of belonging to something larger, but these moments are always accompanied by questions that I'm still working to answer.

The paradox of Bharatanatyam is in its intrinsic control, a control which is both liberating and infinitely problematic, and the paradox is what appeals to me most. Its strict forms, the perfection required by each movement, the steadfast devotion to tradition, all of which represent a kind of regressive discipline that, paradoxically, feels like just what I need. In my frequently disordered life, in which everything is chaotic and fleeting, this dance is something solid, immovable, and nearly timeless. But I try not to be blind to the unease that this control creates. The origins of Bharatanatyam are caught up in histories of exclusion, hierarchies, and erasure. Its control is not just about the discipline and technique; it carries the weight of a past where voices were silenced, bodies were objectified, and identities were erased. And yet, this same control, the very thing I should resist, offers me a sense of belonging, a feeling of being 'sorted' in a way that nothing else has. The irony gets thicker when I think about how much I want this control despite its flawed origins. Maybe because Bharatanatyamrequires submission that I am made to feel useful. The control it yields is different from the purposelessness of my daily existence. This ordered control, so deeply ingrained in a history of segregation, is for me a paradoxical landscape of freedom, a means to organize my mind, settle my body, and connect with something greater than my own life.







Photograph: Taitreyi in Kamala Lochan which literally translates to lotus shaped eyes of Krishna and depicts pieces from Mahabharata around it.

Although it might seem naive, even strangely, I have come to understand that I have constructed much of my self around Bharatanatyam and my continued questioning of this tradition. The dance is not merely an art form to me, it has become the cornerstone of how I perceive myself and the world. The discipline it imposes, the intensity it requires, and the stories it conveys have conditioned how I move through life, yet I cannot help but think that this basis is too thin, too rooted in something external. Rather than giving myself the room to know who I am and forge my qualities, it has been simpler, almost instinctual, to absorb the qualities that the dance itself holds. This comfort is reassuring, yet it also unsettles me. Being able to rely on the dance's structure is easier, like a shortcut to self, but at the expense of authentic self-knowledge. The parameters of the dance control my thoughts, my reactions, and even my values in a way that feels stifling when I pause to consider. While it gives me a sense of stability and purpose, I sometimes worry that I am hiding behind its structure, shying away from the uncertainty and vulnerability of venturing out of it to discover who I could be outside of it.Surrendering the comfort that Bharatanatyam provides is akin to diving into the unknown, away from the security I have held onto for so long.

Love, Contradictions And Becoming.



- Mohammad Ahzam Qureshi
BA (Honours) Political Science
2nd Year

'Love, Contradictions, and Becoming,' i.e., 'Dialectics of Love,' is an interesting topic, isn't it? So, what's dialectics? The same old thesis, antithesis, and synthesis? Yes, we all know about that; nothing new. But why am I trying to connect this boring stuff to something so exciting as love? Well, boredom can put you in some really unforeseen circumstances, like me writing this article. But boredom actually has a bright side; it makes you value the exciting times you had, because obviously, you won't have an idea of excitement if you never got bored at some point; you won't truly appreciate or understand the real world if you have not spent an eternity without touching grass. These contradictions help us to understand the true nature of matter; this is the source behind all of our common sense, logic, rationality, reasson, or whatever you want to call it.

Now what makes the dialectics of love interesting? Arguably, the word 'love' is what makes it interesting to us; it makes almost anything seem interesting to us, whether it is some terrifying horror movie, an animal documentary, or even the theme of this magazine. Is it because of stories, movies, and poetry about some failed lovers, or the vastness and complexity of this term, or the human desire to get something they can't quite get that makes it so fascinating to us? There are no right answers, but of course we have some conspiracy theories and assumptions about it that we see in movies and literature. Now these conspiracy theories and assumptions, with time, evolve. Imagine how a caveman would describe love. "Confused Unga banga"? Yes! Sharing food, shelter, and protecting each other against animals? Also, a yes! And if we move forward in the time of Shakespeare, he

describes love as:

> Love is a smoke raised with the fume of sighs;
> Being purged, a fire sparkling in a lover's eyes;
> Being vex'd, a sea nourished with lovers' tears:
> What is it else? a madness most discreet,
> A choking gall and a preserving sweet."

It sounds so confusing to me; love is confusing. Even though love sounds like an exaggerated hypothetical concept created by the human mind, the beauty of love is that you can connect and apply it to nearly anything you can think of. I am applying it to dialectics because these contradictions may give us the power to reason, but not every time can we get a definite result from it, which is very similar to the poem of Shakespeare above. "Genuine tragedies in the world are not conflicts between right and wrong. They are conflicts between two rights." Now how can you even choose? Maybe we don't have to choose, like Hegel says in his Philosophy of Right. "The conception and its existence are two sides, distinct yet united, like soul and body. The body is the same as the soul, and yet the two can be named independently. A soul without a body would not be a living thing, and vice versa. Thus, the visible existence of the conception is its body, just as the body obeys the soul that produces it." Phew! Heavy stuff; let me try to explain it as I understand it.

There's this quote I found somewhere a while ago: فجأة كبرنا... كيف كبرنا.

It translates as, Suddenly we grew... how did we grow?

When I was sixteen, life was at least 150 degrees different from how it is now, so were my sources of happiness, my definitions of joy, grief, and friendships, my conception about family & friends, and the way I perceived the outer world outside my comfort zone. It is amazing how my thinking has evolved in all these years, and when I try to track down the sources behind this quantitative shift I had, it all came down to the people I've met, the information I've consumed from the internet and social media, and the books & articles I came across. Now these people I've met or ones who posted on the internet and the authors of those articles and books all have their own set of beliefs and ideas, which were directly or indirectly shared with me, eventually leading to the shift.

Now, in other terms, we can say that I had some form of thesis, which was then contradicted with an antithesis, which gave birth to a synthesis. A few cycles, and I'm here, with my idea of love shifting at least 170 degrees. Now these cycles of self-actualization and self-realization will bring me closer to the absolute every time.

Now imagine this cycle of dialectics going on from the beginning of human history, the collective minds of billions of people around us, people who were here before us, constantly as a whole, as a collective Geist, as a spirit moving from finite to infinite, from phenomena to noumena, from nothingness to Absolute, i.e., God.

Hegel, in his book "The Phenomenology of Spirit," talks about the master-slave dialectic, and if we try to see it through the lens of Lacanian psychoanalysis, we can get some really interesting contradictions on love.

Let's go back to the Unga-banga age, where two free men, A and B, who saw each other's consciousness as a threat over their monopoly on their own consciousness, started fighting each other to death. Both of the men know that this fight will end with the death of one of them. Now in this situation, one of them will choose life and another one will choose death. The man who cared for his life will plead and beg the man who risked his life more to stop fighting, else he can die. In this situation, the man who was willing to die will have the luxury to put some certain conditions on the one who cared for his life. These conditions will now make B a slave and A his master.

Now, B has lost the monopoly over his consciousness to A; he will act according to A and will try to please him with all of his efforts, just to keep their contract intact. A major part of his recognition and self-realization will depend on his master. But on the other hand, everything B does will just have no effect on A, because he knows that B is doing this just because he has power over him.

This self-realization is important according to Hegel because it creates the interaction between social reality and an individual; it is inherently at the heart of freedom. The most classical example of this master-slave dialectics can be seen in the marriages of a patriarchal society; here, the same cycle is taking place, the fight for the monopoly on the consciousness of the other. Both parties know that if this fight continues, it will result in the metaphorical death of their relationship, their marriage. Now generally in most of the cases what happens is the wife is more willing to save the relationship and the husband is generally ready to risk it more; of course, this is influenced by their political and socio-economic conditions. Now as we know, the one who gives up first has to follow the conditions of the other party and hence becomes the slave of these conditions. We can apply the same logic to the power dynamics in relationships, where the one who gives in first, or expresses his feelings first, has a natural disadvantage as the other party now has the luxury to put some conditions in order to accept the proposal. Now one becomes a giver, another one a receiver, one a slave, and another one their metaphorical master. One person will put a lot of effort into the other because a significant part of his/her recognition or self-realization will depend on the master, and in this process, this person tends to change himself into someone his master likes; he has this choice of being himself vs. being loved, and he chooses the latter part. Soon the master will realize that the other person is not some other being with his own consciousness anymore; they have a monopoly of consciousness over them, and now that person is just like their clone; it's like they're talking to themselves. And hence, any efforts by the slave will have no effect on the master because they can't get the self-realization from them anymore, and soon, they'll just leave in search of self-realization, in search of love.





When someone wants to be loved, and they like someone, what they actually focus on is the characteristic or the trait of someone that makes them lovable. Now, they might think that they love the person, but they actually love that trait of that person even more than the person himself, as Lacan said, "I love you, but, because inexplicably I love in you something more than you—the objet petit a—I mutilate you." And when eventually, they get what they want, they're not quite satisfied because there's a surplus in what they thought they were going to get and what they actually got. This leads to frustration and disappointment that metaphorically mutilates the other person and sometimes, themselves too. The classical example is Son trying to be like his father, which he can never be.

I remember that news from when I was younger; some student from Kerala had filed a case against their parents because they brought him to life without his permission. At that time, I just laughed it off, but to think about it now, maybe I get him. Well, not the part where he accused his parents, though. In my opinion, it's obvious to think about why God even created us, what our purpose is, and what was even the need to create these ungrateful beings even when he already had his obedient angels. Now why are we the rebels and angels always obedient? Because we have the choice to refute his existence, that free will that angels don't get to experience, and the last time an angel tried that, he was expelled from the heavens. And this sums up why God loves humans more than angels, because obviously it's easier to have faith in God when you're in heaven, rather than suffering here on earth.

Thanks to our good guy Hegel, we can now explain this quite long story in short philosophical terms, as we know that through the process of dialectics, we're reaching the absolute, i.e., God. And the need for self-realization or recognition is why God created humans with free will. I hope we use ours to love and live to the fullest despite how contradictory it is.



- Ayesha Khan
MA Public Administration
2nd Year

People I Find Boring.

At one point, I was surrounded by a vibrant variety of personalities in the busy field of Jamia. I found myself surrounded by people deeply immersed in their studies. Their dedication was admirable—always buried in books, discussing future career paths, and preparing for what lay ahead. Yet, amid this seriousness, something seemed missing. These pupils looked older than their years because of their careful planning and serious appearance. However, I sensed a problem. Although their passion is admirable, it seems as though they had lost the ability to appreciate the moment. I respect ambition, but I believe life is about more than just academic achievements. Reality is unpredictable, and no amount of planning can fully prepare us for its twists. Real Growth comes not just from knowledge but from experiences—those spontaneous moments that shape our identity, values, and resilience. But something did not feel right to me.

Even though I respect their commitment, it seemed like they had lost the ability to appreciate the here and now. There are more important things in life than grades, degrees, or career achievements. Because life is erratic, sometimes no amount of planning can protect us from its unexpected turns. In my opinion, real-world circumstances call for adaptability, fortitude, and fast thinking, qualities that frequently stem from a variety of life experiences rather than merely academic knowledge. We must pause to acknowledge our accomplishments and reflect on our skills and potential. I could not help but think that these folks were losing out on life's richness, which extends beyond their academic success and potential employment. I was annoyed when I got back to my hostel room and saw that my roommates, Kulsoom and Aashiya had recognized the pattern. "Oh, here comes Aisha, always ready to go on a trip while your classmates are busy

getting buried in their studies!" they remark, laughing and making fun of me every time. They always make light-hearted but cynical jokes. "You're the one that constantly gets excited about trips and parties, but they never do, do they?" Even if I secretly didn't comprehend it, I would laugh with them. Aashiya laughs and asks, "Why is that? Perhaps They're afraid to live a little." They are unaware that the experiences they have on these journeys are just as significant as the degrees they are pursuing. Kulsoom would nod in agreement, adding, “It is like they have forgotten that we are only here for a short time. What is the point if you do not enjoy the journey along the way?” I sigh feeling the truth in their words. Yes, I cared about my future, but I also wanted to experience life now. But the trips never happened. My classmates always found reasons to stay behind, missing out on the laughter, the stories, and the shared experiences that would have come with those journeys. For me, this was not just about missing a trip, it was about a mindset I could not quite relate to, one was living in the present seemed less important than planning for a distant future. Journeys create enduring memories that are full of excitement and adventure. Beyond academic success, these activities provide a sense of purpose and joy that enhances emotional well-being. The connections, giggles, and experiences create a "memory lane" that can be replayed later, strengthening resilience and emotional strength.

I believe that waiting for the "right time" is not the purpose of life; rather, it is happening. Now, in every unplanned moment, I seize. My remark highlights a typical paradox that arises when studying for competitive tests. Passing these exams can, on the one hand, result in a steady, prestigious government position and, of course, financial security, but candidates must also prioritize peace of mind.

Their passion for passing the exam makes them rich, but they ignore the amusement enjoyment, and memory lane they could develop because these are some of the things that could help them become wiser.

It is critical to strike a balance between the kind of love that will improve them in their unique ways and the years they spent reading just books, which calls for proof of their existence in the form of proof and depiction. For me, success is far more than just passing an exam; it is about the satisfaction that comes from being surrounded by love and laughter, which makes life amazing.

My thoughts on Faiz Ahmad Faiz's poetry, Kuch Ishq Kiya, Kuch Kaam Kiya, and how my viewpoint changed are profound. Faiz Ahmed Faiz is renowned for his poetry's ability to blend political and personal feelings, giving voice to the oppressed and alienated while also expressing resistance, liberation, and human dignity in addition to love. His skill is in capturing the complexities of life, portraying the hardships of his day but striking an emotional connection with readers now. He demonstrates a profound yet approachable command of words.

However, at first, I thought that work (Kaam) and love (Ishq) were two separate forces that couldn't exist at the same time. Many people believe that pursuing love diverts attention. from work, and vice versa. It frequently seems that the mental focus needed for a job and the Emotional needs of love are incompatible. It's not always simple to balance work (kaam) and love (ishq), but I think that in this harsh world, they don't have to.

Perhaps they can enhance one another at the appropriate times, adding depth and significance to life. Through this poem, one may understand the love and work perspective.





“kuchh Ishq kiyā kuchh kaam kiyā
vo log bahut ḳhush-qismat the
jo ishq ko kaam samajhte the
Yā kaam se āshiqī karte the.
ham jīte-jī masrūf rahe
kuchh ishq kiyā kuchh kaam kiyā
kaam ishq ke aaḌe aatā rahā
aur ishq se kaam ulajhtā rahā
phir āḳhir tang aa kar ham ne
donoñ ko adhūrā chhoḌ diyā.”

It is about embracing both with all of your heart, not about giving up one for the other. This viewpoint is evidence of my development and demonstrates how, with the correct strategy, both Ishq and Kaam can result in a happy and balanced life. People who I find boring include not only those in my class but also those who may develop without engaging with the true meaning of life. I have grown to understand that it is all about mental strength and finding balance. Academic knowledge makes one sophisticated, but the depth and true meaning of love can only be found through various life struggles that will reveal your inner strength in finding a balance between life and love.

For me, Memory Lane is not just about nostalgia; it is about building a foundation of happiness that can lift you in the future, reminding you that there is always light, joy, and connection to be found. I would like to use the following phrase to finish off my note. The American poet and novelist Charles Bukowski once said,

"My dear, find what you love and let it kill you."

Tribute to Innocent Blood.

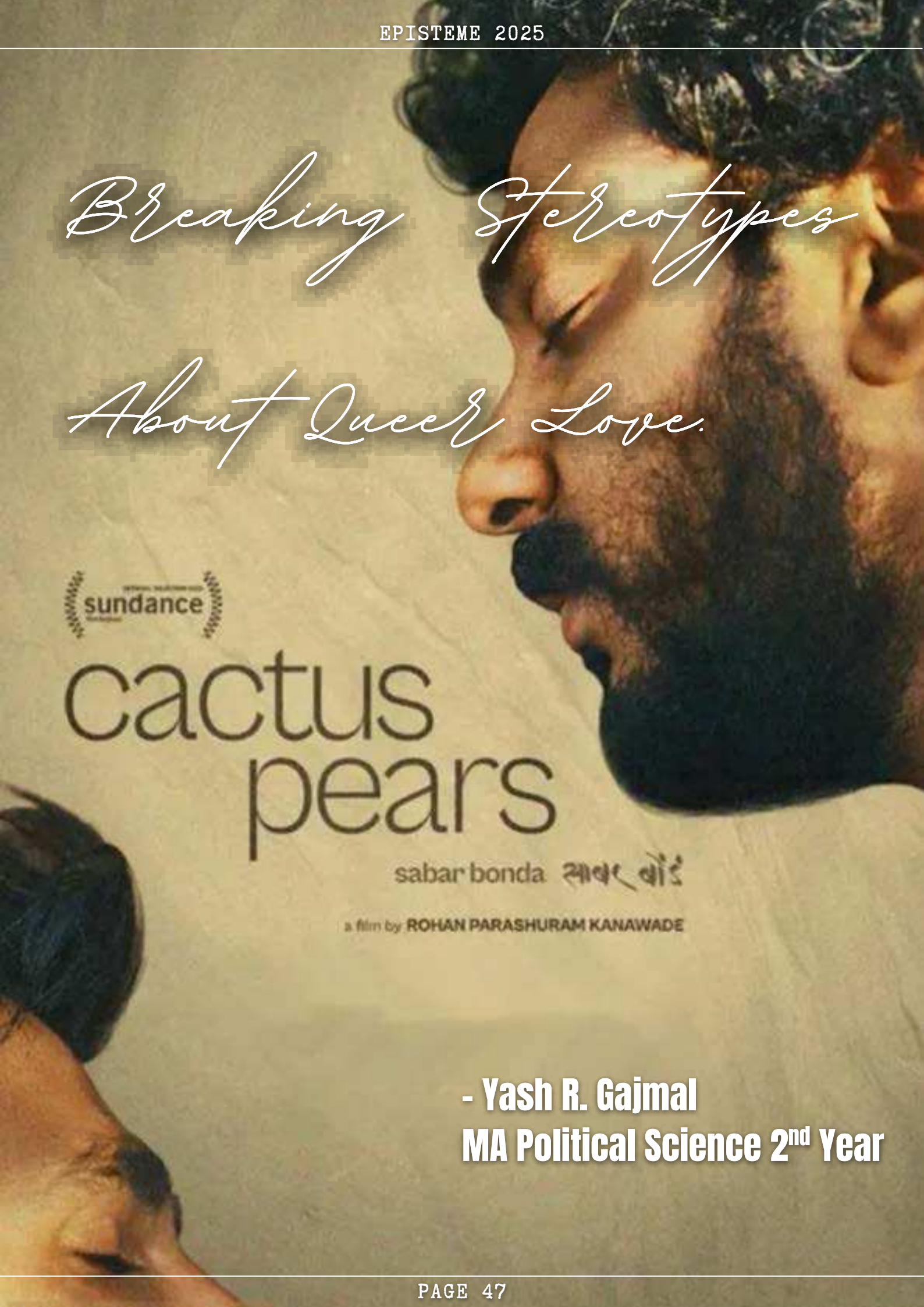
- Mohd Azhar Abbas
BA (Honours) Political Science
2nd Year



The sky is red, the children cries. And what do they get? Bread?
No! Their parents feed them lies.
"There will come a hero, certainly."
Is what they're being fed. But who really knows that the heroes are all dead.

The gones are searched for in the crumbs, that once used to be their shack. Can't find nothing, but the blood of the unborn shed.
The demons don't know mercy & they hold no step. They play with the dead, burn the kids and rape the rest.
The city has fallen, yet the mother searches for the son she has lost.
"What is the loss to us?" Ask the mother, what does it cost.
The kids question the merciless, "what are our sins?"
The demons do answer them, but with what?
With guns and with broken limbs

Breaking Stereotypes About Queer Love.



- Yash R. Gajmal
MA Political Science 2nd Year

Grief and love tenderly come together in debutant Rohan Parshuram Kanawade's Sabar Bonda, the first-ever Marathi film and India's only entry at Sundance this year.

Breaking away from the Western notions of queer love stories, Rohan Kanawade finds his gaze in Sabar Bonda (Cactus Pears), the only Indian Film at the Sundance Film Festival this year held in Utah from January 23 to February 2. Part autobiographical, part fiction, the film traces the tender love story of two young men in a Maharashtrian village. Hailing from a modest background, Anand, a young, educated, city-bred gay man, returns to his ancestral village to mourn the loss of his father and perform certain rituals for the satisfaction of his mother.

During the mourning period, he develops a tender bond with a school friend he has left behind. If grief brings vulnerability, love provides him strength to survive the seemingly homophobic surroundings; much like cactus pears' despite being found in harsh and arid surroundings.

Sabar Bonda is inspired by Rohan's experience in his ancestral village near Shirdi in 2016, Born and brought up in Mumbai, he says, it was his first visit to the village in 10 years. "When I last went there, I was in the 10th standard and even then, there was talk of getting me married. I didn't want to get into that conversation. So, I stopped going there. When my father passed away, I had no escape because my mother wanted to meet relatives and conduct rituals. I knew that once I go there the topic of marriage will come up again because all my cousins had got married." Instead of thinking about his loss, Rohan says he was concerned about what questions would be put to him. "At that time, I started thinking what if I had a friend over here who knew about me? Instead of grieving my loss, I would have sneaked out with him and stayed away from this pressure," reflects Rohan. The stayed with him and later he reimagined that whole experience and made it a journey for the central protagonist.

The son of a driver, Rohan says he did not face any struggle in coming out and has used hisexperience in shaping the story of Anand and his friend, Balya. "My father didn't complete his schooling and my mother is uneducated but they immediately accepted my sexuality when I shared it with them. There was no drama. Wisdom doesn't come with education, My father said he would not like to destroy the life of any girl by pushing me into marriage. I could see the love my parents had for me was greater than any social pressure. We do see the struggle of people in coming out, but that's not the only truth." Parental support, he adds, is also the reason that Anand yearns for home because he sees it as a safe space. However, he does not come out to his relatives because that might ruin his mother's relationship with them. On Balya hailing from a different social and academic strata, Rohan says, that during his stay, he discovered that farmers in the region stay single for a long period because most women seek city-based prospects. He wondered what would happen if someone used the situation to stay unmarried.

The screening at Sundance means a lot to Rohan because he says he always wanted his films to be showcased at the big international film festivals. His earlier efforts were thwarted because of the lack of interest of producers. He states, "I was told the Marathi audience was not ready for this experience. I wrote the film for my happiness and the response has come as a validation. I hope Sundance selection encourages Marathi producers to be brave and back more independent films."



غزل

- Mubashshara Mehfooz
MA Political Science I[st] Year

زمانے کی طرح جیتے ہیں پر وہ ڈھب نہیں ہوتا
اداکاری تو کرتے ہیں مگر کرتب نہیں ہوتا

یوں ہر اِک لفظ اپنے آپ میں معنی کا حامل ہے
مگر دیکھیں تو ہر اِک بات کا مطلب نہیں ہوتا

یہ دنیا ہے مسلسل گردشیں اس کا مقدّر ہیں
بہت کچھ ہو رہا ہوتا ہے کچھ بھی جب نہیں ہوتا

تری آواز میں نرمی تو اب بھی ہے مگر جاناں
تری باتوں میں وہ بے ساختہ پن اپ نہیں ہوتا

وہ دکھ ہی ہے جو آخر کار سب کو ایک کرتا ہے
دیارِ آہ و زاری کا کوئی منصب نہیں ہوتا

ग़ज़ल

- Mubashshara Mehfooz
MA Political Science I[st] Year

ज़माने की तरह जीते हैं पर वो ढब नहीं होता
अदाकारी तो करते हैं मगर करतब नहीं होता

यूं हर इक लफ़्ज़ अपने आप में मा'नी का हामिल है
मगर देखें तो हर इक बात का मतलब नहीं होता

यह दुनिया है मुसलसल गर्दिशें इस का मुक़द्दर हैं
बहुत कुछ हो रहा होता है कुछ भी जब नहीं होता

तेरी आवाज़ में नर्मी तो अब भी मगर जानां
तेरी बातों में वो बेसाख़्ता पन अब नहीं होता

वो दुख ही है जो आख़िर कार सब को एक करता है
दयार-ए-आह-ओ-ज़ारी में कोई मनसब नहीं होता

Wails Of Hope.

- Sunnat
MA Political Science
2nd Year



Every city- bloodied or broken, deserted or thriving with life, once that was or that is– has a love story that is a chink in the cynical armour donned by the non-believers.

The story of Zoon– the poet and queen of Kashmir– enshrined in the hearts of the Kashmiris as Habba Khatoon (Habbé Khotun), is my reason for ricocheting between being besotted with and haunted by the fleeting belief in love. There are a few questions, the answers to which will rid me of this disposition of indecision. The only person who can answer is her beloved husband and the king of Kashmir, Yusuf Shah Chakh.

He was summoned by the Emperor, Jalal-ud-din Akbar, to his court, from where he never returned. The accounts of history referring to his visit are distorted and the truth remains elusive. The cravenous difference between the accounts is enough to bewilder the reader. Some say that he was brutalised and slaughtered, while others say that he was given a new life– a province and a new wife.

The depravity of his presence turned the queen of Kashmir into a wandering ascetic. With my heart full of the warp and weft of dread and hope, I would ask him; While she withered away on the roads, did her beloved wither away in a dungeon or did he blossom with the love of another? Did he mourn her with every breath he took while his eyes were gouged out or did his eyes meet with those of another? If he did die, did he do it thinking of his wife's voice that had entranced him the first time he heard it or if he did start a new life, how did he not hear her sing for him, till her last breath, to come back to her?

A Painter

– Amir Habib
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year

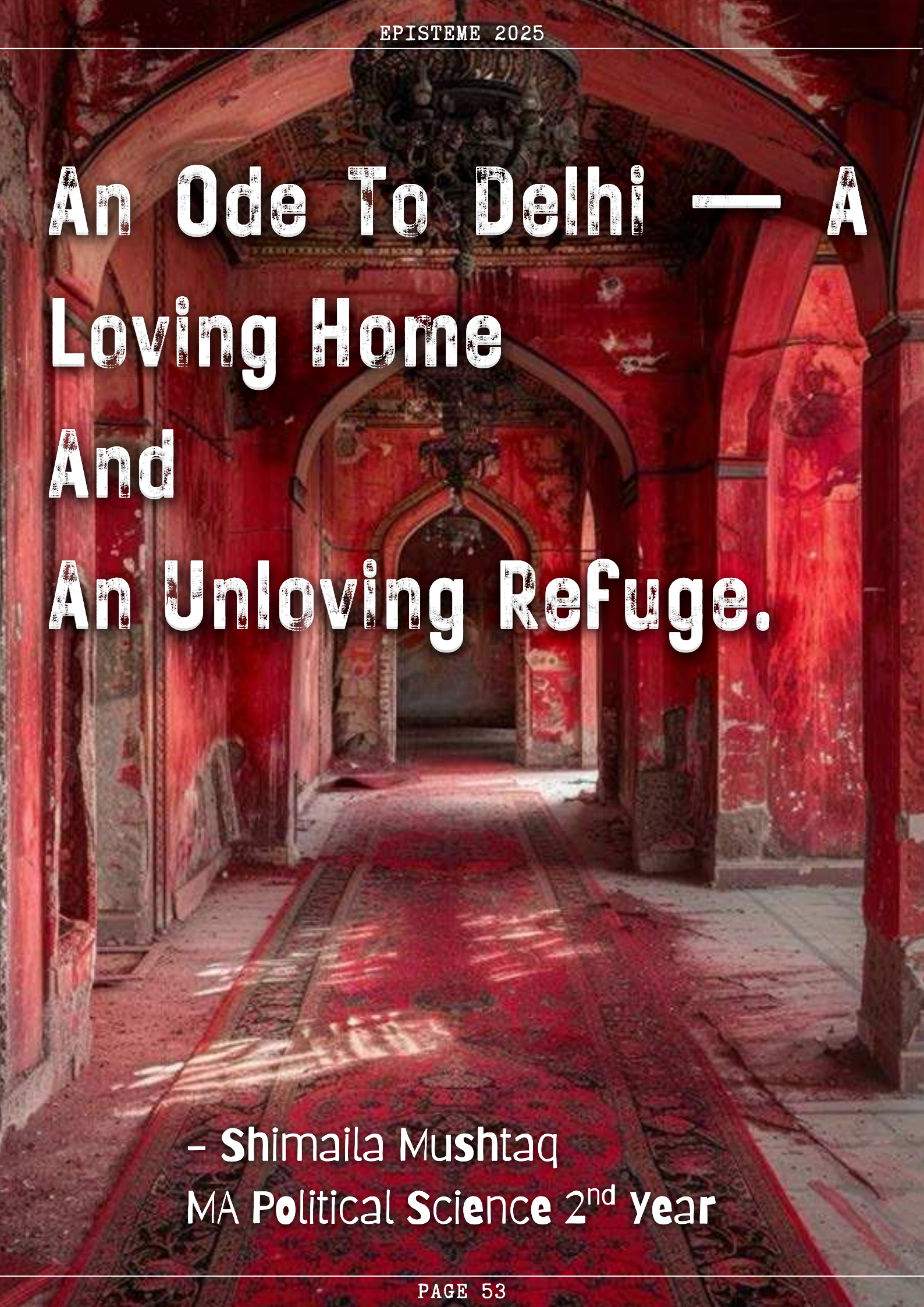


Not so long after she left, Intezar started visiting the nearby park and spent most of his time there, since being at home felt unbearable and restless. The park felt quiet and isolated that noon, away from the city's perpetual muddle. He strolled for a while and sat under one of the gazebos located in the remote corner of the park, its top covered with a heft of wilderness, lurking through the posts giving it a slightly peculiar look from the rest. The clouds hovered above and it was darker than usual, the winds rolled up and carried the dry leaves along, fanning his face as they did, and it was then as he turned his face away in agitation to another direction he saw a man painting on his canvas at a little distance from the gazebo. By appearance, the painter seemed to be in his thirties with a greying beard, a small belly bulging out, a frowned face, probably trying to catch the precision of the scenery. He was wearing a straw hat, a paint splashed olive green shirt and pants of the same colour folded at the bottom. Intezar looked around and saw that there wasn't anybody except them in the vicinity, or perhaps in the whole park that noon. A lightning sparked and then its noise echoed through the park, hinting about the proceeding calamity which was about to pour down at any moment.

The painter seemed to be tizzy about the weather and fastened his fingers across the canvas, while Intezar followed his eyes that seemed to stare in his direction back and forth. The rain started sprinkling gradually and the painter seemed clearly frustrated at the situation. He folded his wooden easel, bundled up the brushes, held up the canvas under his arm and started walking hurriedly towards the gazebo.

Intezar felt like saying something as he sat in front of him. "Do you come here often to paint?" he asked. "For ten years!", the painter replied as his eyes wandered around idly. It started to rain torrentially by then and they both sat for a long time until Intezar asked if he could take a look at his painting. The painter rotated his canvas and he saw a painting of the gazebo with all its wilderness, but it missed one thing, Intezar! "I am bad at drawing human figures!", the painter exclaimed in visible distress to the perplexed but still at ease face of Intezar. The rain stopped after sometime and they both left the gazebo without exchanging much more than brief smiles and valedictory waves.

Months later, Intezar went to attend a local exhibition around the city, where he noticed a painting titled 'The Last Painting'. He recognised the painting at once, the gazebo covered with wilderness, but with a black patch that resembled a human figure facing away holding a gun to his temple about to shoot himself!



An Ode To Delhi — A Loving Home And An Unloving Refuge.

– Shimaila Mushtaq
MA Political Science 2nd Year

A few years ago, I arrived in Delhi for my undergradand have had the chance to live in two very different places of the city. North Campus and Okhla, both full of life, but in radically different ways. Over the years I've made many fond memories in this city that I will probably cherish for a lifetime. So, no doubt Delhi for me is synonymous with freedom and opportunities and many of my friends and acquaintances from undergrad and postgrad would agree. But of course, for countless others the city represents fear, exclusion, marginalization, homesickness, and hopelessness. I left home because this city had more to offer. It came with the promise of better days and a brighter future but for many the decision to move to Delhi was less a choice and more an act of desperation. Here I can't help but think of the first verse of a poem by Warsan Shire, that my English professor from my first semester in college read out to us one day.

No one leaves home
unless Home is the mouth of a shark

While the heart-wrenching poem is for the refugees who move countries to escape the violence back home, these lines also resonate with those who had to leave their home for a city hostile to them because what they called home could no longer sustain them and their family.

University campuses are known to be places where people often express anger at the injustice that plagues our societies and dare to dream and yearn for a future filled with love and hope. And yet just a 5-minute walk away from the Jamia Millia's campus, one comes face to face with some of the most unloving parts of the city: the pavements where the homeless live and the slums. This is the irony of this city, where people like me can find solace in the company of like-minded people, and not far away others battle its fangs. Last semester I read "The Right to be Counted" by Sanjeev Routray, a riveting ethnographic account of the struggles of the urban poor in Delhi toclaim space; a reminder that this city does not welcome all with open arms. This is the duality of our beloved cities and Delhi is no exception. Globally cities are embracing hostile architecture that, under the facade of preventing loitering or vandalism, aspires to keep away homeless people. Examples include sectioned benches one can't sleep on and concrete spikes under flyovers to prevent people from sitting/sleeping. Other everyday forms of exclusion and humiliation include delivery personnel and domestic workers not being allowed to use the elevators in many residential colonies of Delhi. While I must acknowledge the positive role this cityhas played in my life, it has also been a brutal reminder that no city loves its women the way it loves its men. Despite all the safety protocols of the apps providing cab services, travelling at night alone is a nightmare, and so is a crowded metro.

Thinking about Delhi beyond my own experience ofgrowth, friendships and a lot of love has forced me to see the unloving parts of the city and its unloved dwellers. Following is a detailed review of the book 'Right to be counted' by Sanjeev Routray, a book for those interested in understanding Delhi better.

> "
> THE RIGHT TOBE COUNTED
> BY SANJEEV ROUTRAY
> Stanford University Press, 2022,
> pp- 332, ₹5I9
> "

The liberal standpoint on state, laws and citizenship is challenged every day on the streets of cities in the Global South as illustrated by the thorough scholarship produced by scholars of urban studies, political science , sociology , anthropology , environmental science and others whose work evades categorization. Sanjeev Routray, through 'The RightTo Be Counted' makes an important contribution to this body of scholarship by putting forth insights embedded in his expertise as a sociologist-anthropologist and critical urbanist. Routray has chronicled the citizenship struggles of the urban poor in Delhi through an ethnography based on twenty-five months of research from November 2009-August 20II and June-September 20I7 of three sites in Delhi namely Gautampur Jhuggi-Jhoppri settlement,

Sitapur transit camp and Azadpur resettlement colony, interviews with members of planning institutions and RWA Members (of Lakshmi colony - a middle class neighbourhood) and archival research of various state and other documents that he sees as sites of knowledge production. Here focus is specifically on the aspect of citizenship dealing with rights and entitlements., Routray primarily focuses on how the urban poor entrench themselves in cities, build localities, and secure or attempt to secure various amenities like electricity connections, portable water supply, cremation/burial grounds etc, highlighting their anxieties ,motivations, sufferings and nature of interactions with the state . For the rural migrants to Delhi, it means going from migrants to residents and from residents to citizens but as revealed by 'The Right To Be counted' this transition is not linear and homogenous nor easy as for some it ends up in a dismal journey back to their village or worse, in death due to institutional neglect from contaminated water, proximity to toxic sludge or a heatstroke while participating in a Rasta Roko (block the road) demonstration. Despite the struggles the poor persist and collectively engage in tactics and counter tactics called Rann-nitis in the book through which their citizenship struggles are forged. A good chunk of the book is dedicated to the description and assessment of these Rann-nitis, simultaneously deconstructing the state , its presence in the lives of the urban poor and the rationalities guiding its agencies. The Rann-nitis show ample diversity ranging from the role of intermediaries to counter-tactics of enumeration and from filing cases in the courts to protests on the streets and even a funeral procession of the Sarkar (government). Through a sustained focus on the political agency of the urban poor, Routray refuses to see them as passive victims of state neglect or passive beneficiaries of state welfarist policies/activist intervention. Routray while building upon Partha Chatterjee's concept of political society, goes beyond his distinction between citizen and population, where the latter is more than an enumerable category subject to state governmentality. Though a description of the tactics of counter-enumeration, self-surveys, auto-archiving, collection of documents etc the poor assert the right to be counted making the calculative governmentality of the state a site where the urban poor fight their battles for substantive citizenship. The interaction of the urban poor with the judiciary illustrates the uneven nature of judicial intervention not only across cases but within cases as well, as was the case for the residents of Gautam Nagar. For the residents of Sitapuri Transit camp, the judiciary represented neo-liberal sentiments of city planning and an alliance with middle-class interests, while for the residents of Gautam Nagar it represented a site of negotiation with the state even as it is, for strong reasons, widely seen as a demolition machine. The case of Sitapuri transit camp shows how projects of locality building result in rife class conflicts and how the urban middle-class has managed to weaponize public interest litigations against the urban poor through an understanding of the 'public' that excludes city dwellers who are not property holders. Power dynamics and inequitable distribution ofcapital are recurring themes in the book. Dominant control through language is one manifestation of it highlighted in the book . For his research the author interviewed the planners and members of middle-class RWA in English or a mix of English and Hindi but for the urban poor English remains inaccessible and so the interactions took place in Hindi. As Routray argues this language barrier hinders the access of the urban poor to the state for at higher levels in bureaucracy English remains the language of everyday use. Hence the urban poor's access to the state is limited to the lower levels. Similarly, even when they attend court hearings linguistic limitations exclude them from truly being part of the process.

Nonetheless the urban poor face this exclusion through various Rann-nitis like intermediaries (especially Samaj Sevaks with cultural capital) who know English. In one of the vignettes used by the author he recalls how while returning from

the courts they asked him to translate the happenings of the proceeding and disagreed over interpretation. Also, Routray's ethnographic study reveals that auto-archival for e.g. in the form of saving relevant newspaper clippings is a Rann-niti employed by the illiterate urban poor as well. The book while primarily dealing with the category of the 'urban poor' does not overlook the internal diversity and unequal distribution of power within the settlements of the urban poor. So, while one sees a more cosmopolitan life and increased political agency on part of the oppressed caste in cities heightening upper-caste anxieties, a certain degree of spatial segregation persists in the form of caste specific gall is and in the division of labour in Pradhan-politics as well as a preference for certain intermediaries by the doubly marginalized . Similarly, Muslims face every day islamophobia exacerbated by the unholy trinity of CAA-NRC-NPR. Regardless the urban poor come together through tenuous solidarities to oppose demolitions and demand citizenship entitlements. An example from the book of such solidarities is when the Muslim residents of the Sitapuri Transit camp used their intra-community ties to strengthen the resistance against demolitions. However, while disparities in resource allocation, targeted police violence and variation in access to bureaucracy for the doubly marginalised finds mention in the book, a detailed picture of the same is not painted. Interestingly one of the pictures in the book shows a Delhi Jal Board water tanker with 'OM', sacred to Hinduism, painted on it. The author has not commented on this occurrence. Routray has however highlighted the need for an ethnographic study to deconstruct how the doubly marginalized navigate the bureaucracy, bringing an important research gap to the attention of the reader. Routray's compelling analysis situates the citizenship struggles in the context of the evolution of the planning policies of Delhi. While highlighting the similarities and differences in the three master plans for Delhi and the inconsistencies in their implementation, Routray builds upon the work of Sudipta Kaviraj Sudipta Kaviraj claiming that the 'passive revolution' initiated in post-colonial India and reflected in the first Master Plan has turned out to be a failure especially considering the conjuncture of theEmergency under Indira Gandhi. He also argues that the consequent Master Plans of Delhi are centred around capital accumulation and mark an ideological shift of sorts. This temporal analysis of the trajectory of state led urban planning is complemented with an analysis of the dynamics between different state agencies that reveals contradictory or varying interests and motivations. In Delhi the DDA working under the centre and DUSIB working under the state government represent different intentions and plans creating impediments in implementation of the policies. Do these differences, while obstructing policy implementations, also lead to fissures that can be used as grounds for negotiations by the urban poor as opposed to cities where the centre is not as directly involved and if this particular conjuncture has worked in favour of or against the interest of the urban poor in Delhi is an opportunity for further research. Nonetheless the conjunctural analysis highlights the unpredictability of protracted citizenship struggles in the face of a heterogenous state marked by informality i.e. selective following of its own rules and plans. Hence Routray is not unrealistically optimistic about the outcomes of the citizenship struggles.

The book demonstrates how in a clientelist democracy like India, the urban poor use their electoral strength to secure citizenship entitlements despite the NGOs and activists suggesting abstention from the same. Interestingly the book also highlights how the middle-class like the RWA members of Lakshmi colony, resent vote-bank politics seeing it as working against their interest while hoping to benefit from participatory programmes like Bhagidari that promote middle-class interests, create a platform for the middle-class to police nearby low-income neighbourhoods through its emphasis on anti-encroachment and often exclude the urban poor from their purview for they are primarily targeted at property holders and

and taxpayers or a certain class. Since owning property isan obvious disqualifier for eligibility for resettlement these channels remain inaccessible to the urban poor and hence patron-client relationships remain central to their numerical citizenship struggles and fight for the right to be counted. The Rann-niti of intermediary politics is in fact an extension of patronage politics where the Pradhans, Samaj-Sevaksand Sarkari-Karamchari's use their political, cultural and bureaucratic capital respectively to secure differential treatment. Hence intermediary politics in intimately linked to the numerical struggle for citizenship .While a description of a meeting of the urban poor including the Pradhans with the Sitapuri transit camp Councillor involving a seating arrangement reflecting power disparity between the residents , Pradhan and the Councillor and ending with the residents touching the feet of the Councillor reminds one of a king back in the day attending to the concerns of his subjects, Routray while acknowledging this nonetheless argues that this is a practical strategy or a Rann-niti to find solutions by the urban poor. Hence giving them agency even in a situation where usually it would be considered otherwise. The book does not paint a black and white picture of the intermediaries for it also describes how the intermediaries appropriate disproportionate share of resources for themselves, evade accountability, engage in money laundering activities and create exclusions.

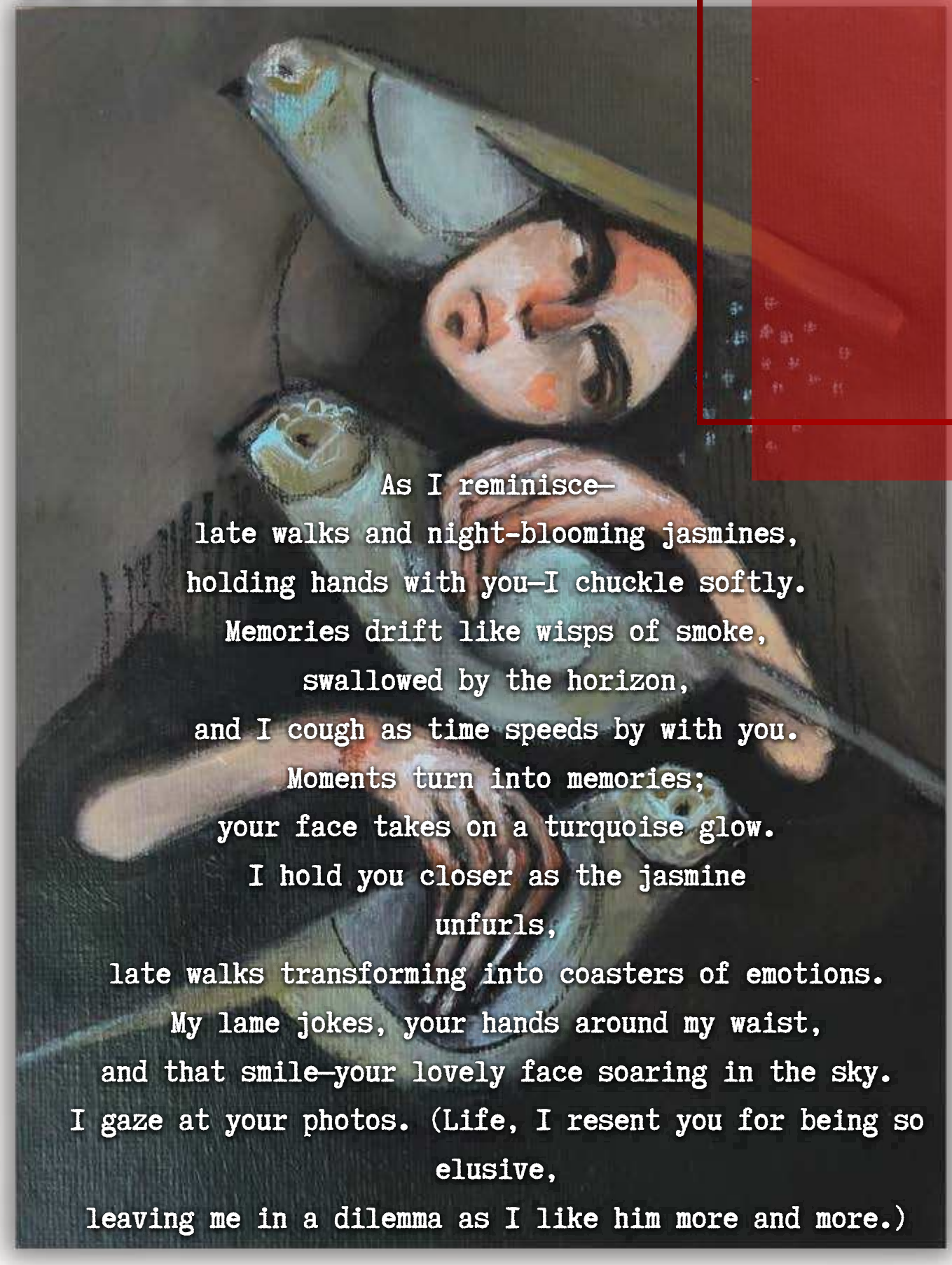
Routray's ethnographic research has thrown up important insights about the role of women in the Rann-nitis of urban poor particularly as Pradhans. Women Pradhans face character assassination and their increased importance and earnings exacerbate the crisis of masculinity fuelled by economic disenfranchisement. Male Pradhans also try to reinforce the public-private binary by claiming their work to be Vikas (development related) and the work of the women Pradhans as gharelu (work related to domestic problems). Despite all these additional challenges womenPradhans seem to play a very important role in addressing women specific issues. Sometimes this increased interest in the lives ofwomen can turn into moral policing of the womenbased on patriarchal values. The presence of women in Pradhan politics but not as much as Samaj-Sevaks and Sarkari-Karamcharis is an interesting insight of the ethnography, delving into the reasons of which can provide important insights about the women's access to various kinds of capitalin these settlements and the underlying reasons for the same.

While the author has engaged in a conjectural analysis located in the temporal and contextual history of post-colonial India and planning policies ofDelhi and taken up cases from just one city , he maintains that his theoretical arguments hold for other cities not just in India but the Global South because of the presence of similar patterns of calculative rationality/ governmentality of the state involving surveillance and enumeration in these cities. Use of the Foucauldian concept of calculative governmentality and the numerical citizenship struggles in response to it is indeed a novel framework to look at citizenship struggles comparatively. Since throughout the book the author engages with literature on urban studies especially subaltern urbanism, it is a very insightful read for scholars and readers interested in the field and also for the ones seeking to understand Delhi beyond their own experiences.



Mirror Of Her Heart.

- Madhavaditya Singh
BA (Honours)
Political Science I[st] Year



As I reminisce—
late walks and night-blooming jasmines,
holding hands with you—I chuckle softly.
Memories drift like wisps of smoke,
swallowed by the horizon,
and I cough as time speeds by with you.
Moments turn into memories;
your face takes on a turquoise glow.
I hold you closer as the jasmine
unfurls,
late walks transforming into coasters of emotions.
My lame jokes, your hands around my waist,
and that smile—your lovely face soaring in the sky.
I gaze at your photos. (Life, I resent you for being so
elusive,
leaving me in a dilemma as I like him more and more.)

आशा : अपने भीतर लौटती

- Ritika Mishra
MA Political Science I[st] Year

माँ से जब कहा कि अपनी एक bucket list बनाओ, तब बड़ी मिन्नतों के बाद उन्होंने लिखा, जिसमें से पहला था 'मेरी बेटियाँ हमेशा साथ रहें ' l आख़िर कोई कैसे अपने को भूलकर किसी और को जी सकता है l 13 बरस तक मैंने माँ को माँ की तरह ही देखा और समझा, फिर एक बार सोचा कि वो माँ होने से अलग भी हो सकती हैं और तब पता चला कि उनका पसंदीदा रंग लाल नहीं सफ़ेद है, उन्हें गुरु दत्त की फिल्में पसन्द हैं, बचपन में अपने भाई को ग़लती से हंसिया से चोट पहुँचा देना उन्हें आज भी खलता है, अपने बाबा को आज भी बहुत याद करती हैं, शाम के समय जब रोटी बना के बैठी अपने पिता का इंतज़ार करतीं तो बहुत रोतीं l यह कहानियाँ वो पहले नहीं बताती थीं, क्योंकि पहले किसी ने पूछा नहीं सो उन्हें अब दिलचस्पी भी नहीं रही थी l

Simone Beauvoir अपनी किताब A Very Easy Death में लिखती हैं, "It was unbearable to watch her body, once so familiar and strong, betrayed by disease. In those moments she was both my mother and a stranger". डॉक्टर ने हमें कहा कि " अपनी माँ की बीमारी के लिए आप लोग अपने को गिल्ट मत दीजियेगा, Metastatis बीमारी ही ऐसी है, देर से पता चलती है "l मैनें हमेशा अपनी माँ को बीमार ही देखा, 3 सीज़ेरियन औपरेशन के बाद शरीर क्या हो जाता होगा ये सोचना भयानक है 27 मार्च 2023 को माँ की मौत हुई, 3 मार्च को अमोनिया बढ़ने की वजह से उन्हें चीज़ें भूलने लगी थीं l जब भी उठतीं उन्हें लगता कि वो अस्पताल में नहीं, घर में हैं और चिंता करतीं खाना बनाने की, अपने बच्चों से बात करने की, अपनी माँ की तबियत की l 4 मार्च को उन्हें कुछ भी और कोई भी याद नहीं था, ना घर, ना अस्पताल, और ना ही उनके बच्चे l बस था तो चेहरे पर अजीब सी मुस्कान और चुप्पी l

मैं उन्हें आशा पाठक, ननका, कहकर चिढ़ाती तो बहुत चिढ़ती थीं, झेंप जाती थीं l यह उनका पुराना नाम था, उनके पिता से जुड़ा, जिन्हें 20 saal की उमर में ही खो चुकी थीं , जिनकी मौत पर जा भी नहीं पायी थीं l लेकिन अब जबकी उन्हें अपना माँ होना तक याद नहीं है, मुझे लगा था कि वो खुद को फिर से खोज लेंगी l अब भी यही लगता है की वो किसी लम्बी छुट्टी पर गयी हैं, वापिस आ जायेंगी l कुमार अम्बुज अपनी कविता में कहते हैं

माँ घर में आई है लेकिन वह अतिथि है
उसके पास उसके हज़ारों बाक़ी रह गए काम हैं

उसके पास उसका अपना घर है
जिसे लंबे समय तक नहीं छोड़ा जा सकता सूना

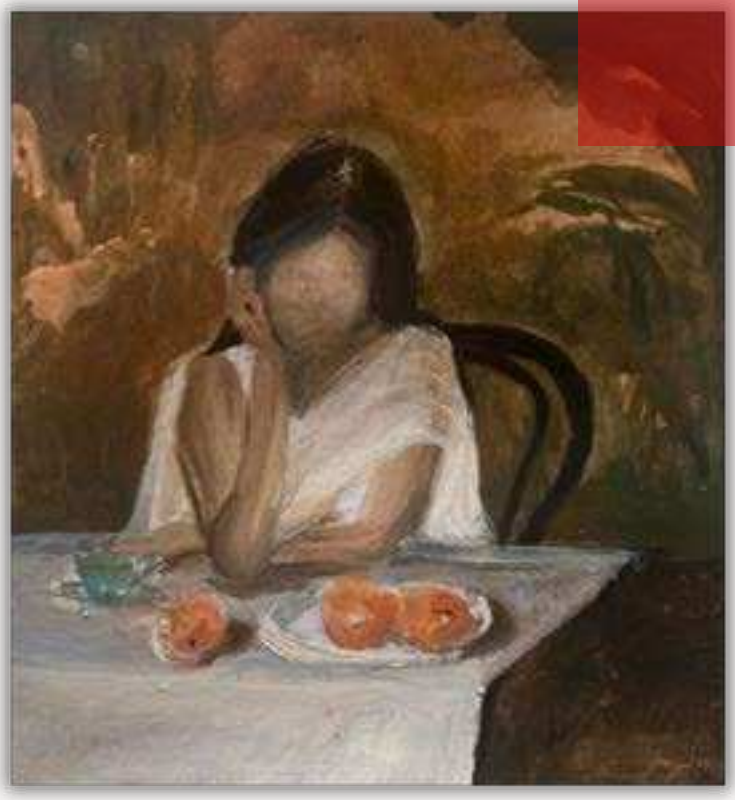
जो भरा हुआ है बीते हुए समय से
माँ धीरे-धीरे चली गई है इतनी दूर

कि उसके सबसे स्मरणीय और चमकदार रूप के लिए
लौटना होता है कई साल पहले के वक़्त में

मैं चाहूँ तो भी नहीं रोक सकता माँ को जाने से
भूल चुका हूँ मैं हठ करना

दूर-दूर तक नहीं बची रह गई है मुझमें अबोधता
धीरे-धीरे मैं ख़ुद चला आया हूँ माँ से इतनी दूर

कि मेरे घर में अब
माँ एक अतिथि है।



मैंने बहुत कोशिश की माँ को सिर्फ आशा की तरह देखने की लेकिन असल में शायद दोनों अभिन्न अंग हैं एक दूसरे के l



Bard And The Sun

- Mohd Azhar Abbas
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year

Since, the sun that once used to shimmer like a blessing to the world,
had tarnished and vanished into the clouds of nothingness

Soon that it happened, not only the gods but the devils cried
"Oh sun, be back to your glory" They said, and tried and tried

Thy sun was still gloomed by the thoughts of old and future fried
Mere bards like me could do nothing, but visit thy sun's shrine

"Oh sun, be back to your glory" The bard grine
BUT OH! The sun was back. Shining like a luminous on her prime

Guess who the sun was? Was it the summer's
wind?
Or was it the one who was bright, yet unhinged?

No. The bard said. She was his lover and the cringed
The bard to the sun was very glued, and clinged

For, the sun to the bard. The bard to the sun.... Was nothing.
But, a road that connects both's happiness like a bridge.
For, "the sun was in its glory again, luminous and unhinged"



Crossing Boundaries: A Choice of The Heart

- Mohd Aadil Hassan
BA (Honours)
Political Science 2nd Year

On July 3I, 2023, the small town of Mewat found itself engulfed in chaos as riots erupted between the Hindu and Muslim communities. Unbeknownst to the residents, this violence was not a spontaneous outburst but a calculated conspiracy by the government, designed to divert attention from their impending elections. The streets, once vibrant with life, transformed into battlegrounds of anger and fear.

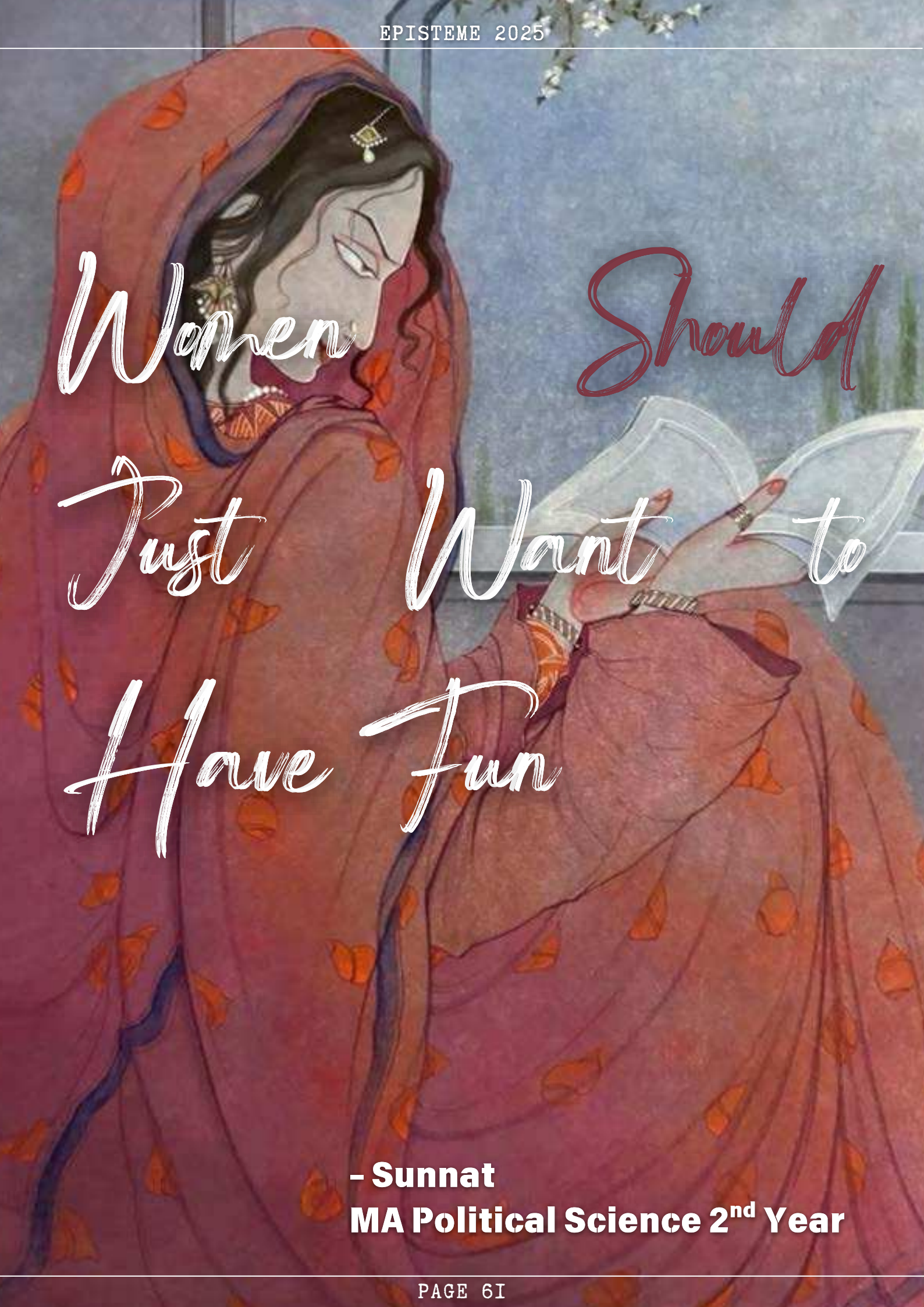
Hasan, a young man deeply in love with Zubia, watched the turmoil unfold from a distance. His feelings for her had always been one-sided; he admired her from afar but never had the courage to confess his love. Zubia, a good girl with a warm heart, had unknowingly captured his affection during their time in school, but he never managed to express what he felt. Now, as chaos erupted around him, he was swept up in a tide of anger and confusion.

As the riots intensified, Hasan felt a mixture of fear and anger brewing within him. He joined the rioters, his face concealed by a cloth mask. The adrenaline surged as he shouted alongside others, convinced he was fighting for justice. "We must fight for our rights!" he cried, losing sight of the true reason behind the conflict. Little did he know that the government officials were watching from a distance, pleased with the distraction they had created. In the midst of the chaos, Hasan suddenly spotted Zubia. She was moving through the streets, her expression filled with concern and fear. In that moment, he felt a surge of conflicting emotions—love and protectiveness battled against the chaos surrounding him. Would she be safe? He couldn't reach out to her; the internet was down, and the police were arresting boys in the city. Driven by his feelings, Hasan began to head toward her house, his heart racing. When he arrived, he knocked on the door, hoping to find her safe. As the door swung open, Zubia's family stood there, their faces a mix of confusion and fear.

"Who are you? What do you want?" Zubia's mother asked, her voice trembling.

As Zubia stepped forward, her eyes widened in recognition. “Hasan? What are you doing here?”
Hasan felt his heart sink as she realised he was part of the rioters outside. “How could you? After everything?” she shouted, her voice filled with pain and disappointment.
“I never wanted this! I got swept up in the chaos!” Hasan pleaded, but his words felt on deaf ears.
“You're just adding to the hatred !” Zubia yelled, tears glistening in her eyes.
The weight of her disappointment pressed heavily onHasan's heart. He had never wanted to hurt her; he thought he was fighting for something meaningful. Yet, her words pierced through him, igniting a deep sense of guilt.
As the violence outside escalated, a group of rioters charged toward Zubia's house. In that moment, Hasan's instincts kicked in. Despite her anger, he felt a primal urge to protect her. Blocking her from the door, he prepared to face the danger head-on.
“I won't let them hurt you!” Hasan declared, determination coursing through him.
Zubia stared at him, a mixture of shock and fear in her eyes. In that instant, she realized that beneath his mask, he was still the boy who had admired her from afar.
As he entered the house, Hasan suddenly noticed the symbols of Hindu culture decorating the walls. Confusion washed over him. “Zubia, you... you're Hindu?” he stammered, realization dawning on him. The name that had always felt so familiar now felt heavy with meaning. He had admired her from a distance, oblivious to the cultural boundaries that had seemed insurmountable.
Zubia's expression shifted to one of pain and frustration. “Yes, Hasan. And that shouldn't matter! Love doesn't recognize religion or caste. It transcends all that!”
In that moment of truth, Hasan understood the profound significance of her words. His unrequited love for Zubia was never about religion; it was about the connection they shared, the humanity they both possessed.
As the mob advanced, Hasan took a deep breath, his heart pounding. “Love is greater than all of this...” he whispered to himself, feeling a sense of clarity wash over him.
He looked into Zubia's eyes, seeing fear and uncertainty but also a glimmer of hope. In that moment, he chose love over the chaos surrounding him. In a moment of courage, he confronted the intruders, ready to protect her at any cost. As he battled against the odds, he felt a newfound purpose rising within him. The guilt that had consumed him began to fade, replaced by a sense of redemption.
But in the fierce struggle, Hasan was struck by a brutal blow. He fell to the ground, blood staining the dirt beneath him. As Zubia rushed to his side, tears streaming down her face, she grasped his hand tightly.
“Hasan, no! You can't leave me!” she cried, her voice breaking.
With his last breath, he managed a faint smile, the weight of guilt finally lifted from his heart. “I chose love...” he whispered, knowing he had made the right choice—one that transcended hatred and division.
In that moment, he realized he had found his purpose in protecting the one he loved, even if she never knew the depths of his feelings.
As the dust settled and the chaos faded, Hasan's sacrifice would leave a mark on the world. In a time torn apart by conflict, he had discovered that true strength lies in love and humanity. The government's scheme to divide communities had failed, for in the end, love bridged the chasms created by hatred. Hasan's legacy would inspire others to choose compassion over division, forging a path toward understanding and unity.



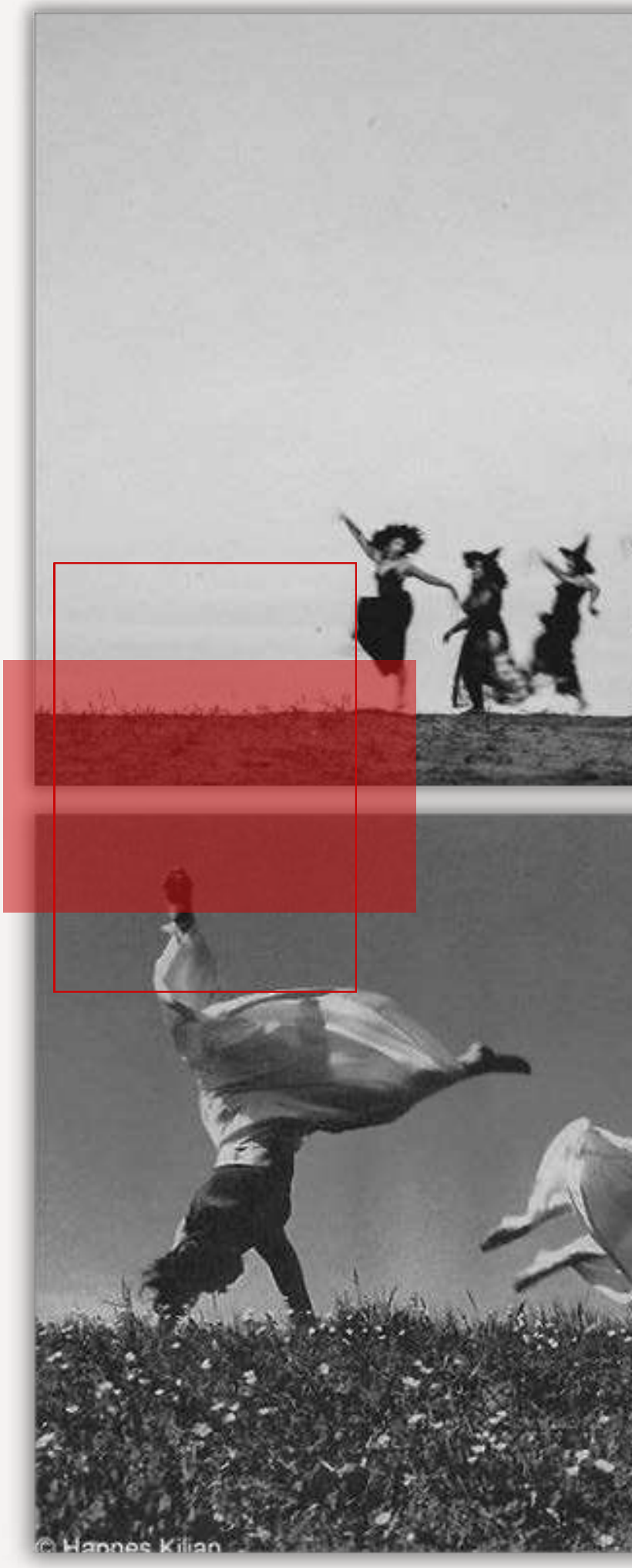


Women Should Just Want to Have Fun

- Sunnat
MA Political Science 2nd Year

Any woman who dares to transgress into public space, is invariably met with a lengthy inquisition that demands a series of acceptable reasons and a definite purpose. The absence of either is an eye sore for a society that sees women as commuters in public space- going from one private place to another- and never as occupiers of that space. For women, access to public space is conditional at best and at worst, this access becomes the primary reason that is used to victim blame in case of an act of violence against them, be it sexual or not. Asking questions about the victims attire, companionship, time is nothing but a checklist that establishes that the woman was present in that space for the 'right reasons' and within the acceptable social boundaries.

One idea that disrupts this rigid set of conditions that are to be met for 'respectful' presence of a woman in public places is Fun; doing something just because it gives you pleasure and happiness and not because a goal needs to be fulfilled or a purpose needs to be met. As a society, the idea of women just having Fun in a public space has been rendered unnecessary, as if there is no need for such a thing to exist. The idea of women having Fun in public spaces is almost unfathomable; loitering around, just taking in public spaces, chattering away mindlessly while they walk hand in hand in the streets or having heated philosophical and political discussions just around the corner. These acts are subtle revolutions that have the potential to turn the society, as we know of it now, on its head. So radical is the idea of women occupying public places for fun that instead of using the usual binary of good and bad, the society simply refuses to acknowledge its existence. The idea of 'public' is that of a space which is public in its potential accessibility to all sections of the society, irrespective of the hierarchy of class, caste and gender; primarily focusing on streets, bazaars, parks and transportation. It does not include spaces like malls, cafes, or other recreational spaces that appear to be 'public' but in reality are privatised.





Neoliberalisation has created privatised recreational spaces that are increasingly being represented as the 'new' public spaces and this has created an illusion of access, making it imperative to distinguish them from 'real' public spaces. This illusion of access, where women roam around freely in malls, or sit inside cafes, puts forth the narrative that women do have some 'safe' spaces in public that can be used for leisure and they should use those spaces and not demand for more. This reinforces the 'safety discourse' that gives importance to the safety of women even if that means regulating, restricting and even policing a woman's everyday life. This is not to say that women are not vulnerable and that their safety should be neglected, but to argue that a woman should not have to trade off her access to public space for safety. Keeping a woman 'safe' goes hand in hand with instilling into her a sense of fear that makes it easier to control her. This fear, coupled with the threat of violence in public spaces becomes a regulatory mechanism to exclude women and minorities from public spaces. Further, the respectability and paternal protectionism associated with this notion of safety does not leave much scope for women to go out seeking leisure and pleasure, as it perceives a perpetual threat of violence for women in public spaces. I despise the idea of a 'safe woman'; with hunched up shoulders, and a crouched back. She is only 'safe' when she blends in and ever 'safer' if nobody can tell that she is a woman. She is supposed to give way to men while she walks down a two way street and sit with her legs held tightly in a rickshaw, next to a man who is spread out as if he is sitting in the comfort of his own home. The presence of this woman as an occupier of space is not registered by a man, either she should be there as a part of 'his' space or she shouldn't be there at all. For men, the public space becomes the extension of their own sphere, where a woman always negotiates one thing or the other for her mere presence.

And this safety is not just hers to look out for, it belongs to all those who associate their izzat with her. A woman is taken to be the bearer of

of 'honour', and her existence becomes secondary to it. Everything she does needs to manufacture respectability, including her presence in public spaces. Her physical safety takes a back seat, and the safety of this honour becomes central; a woman might be beaten or robbed but the worst that fate can bestow her with is being raped. Being raped takes away that 'honour' from a woman, thus sexual safety takes precedence over the other forms. This is not to belittle the victims of rape, but to ask that when we say that we are keeping our women safe by increasing the surveillance it policing their everyday life, especially when they go out, what do we really mean, what exactly is it that we are protecting.

Because, women face sexual violence at private places as well, they get raped when they're at home, in school, at work; then why is it that we have associated this threat to her safety exclusively with public places. Society has made this threat of violence against women an inherent part of public spaces. Thus, if her presence in public spaces doesn't fulfil a purpose, it just becomes an unnecessary risk.

Women have the right to take chosen risks in public spaces without this sword of 'safety' dangling over their necks. They should be able to experience the thrill that comes with taking risks; they should be able to occupy public spaces just because they want to have fun. Being able to have fun in the city you belong to is the essence of being a citizen. A citizen should be able to access any public space just because they want to, and when women are denied this, we take away a part of this belongingness. Yes, women need to be safe, but that safety should not come at the cost of fun. As lightly as this term is taken, the psychological and emotional implications of access/ denial to just having fun impact a person's well being and social development. The idea of having fun in public spaces is not a new one, as children we are encouraged to do so. However, the difference comes as puberty hits; for men, the sphere of access increases and for women, unfortunately, it decreases.

I used to love swimming, it was what made me happy, but I had to give it up because where I come from, there is no place for me to swim. Swimming is a basic life skill and yet no one thought that women need it as well, just for survival, if not fun. The thought that women might want to swim or like to swim was never important enough, while for men, every lake was accessible. Almost all the women I know have had one hobby that they had to let go because as they grew up, there was just no safe place for them.

As a woman, I can't help but wonder, why did we never get used to the idea of women just wanting to have fun. We want our women to prosper; to be educated, to work, to be independent, but why do we not put as much stress on letting them have fun. This deprivation is violence to me, it's not just a denial of pleasure but it constricts their humanity. It withholds them from the simple joys of exploring their own self and their surroundings. Having to give up something you loved doing just is not just a personal loss, it's a systematic failure to see women as full citizens. Women need to reclaim fun in a society that is shaken to its core on seeing them laughing loudly on the street. We need to not have a purpose; unplanned walks, unhurried presence, lingering around the corners and just being.

Fun is not Frivolous, it is unapologetically Feminist





2 RECIPES



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Maskat

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Channa Chugni: A Bihari Delicacy 75
MD Amjad Ali



– Maskat
BA (Honours)
Political Science 3rd Year.

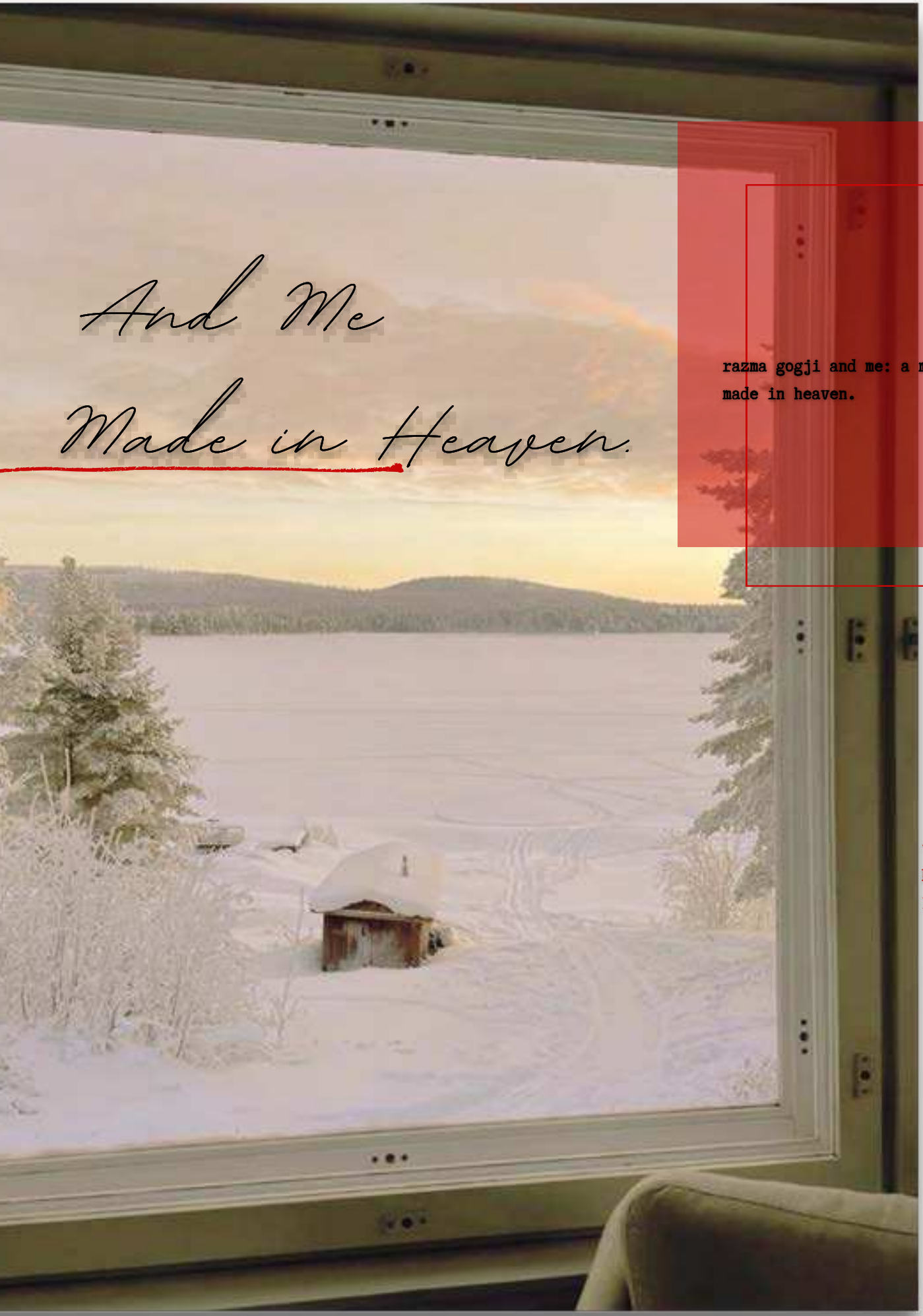
Razma Gogji
A Match

As winter sets in and snow covers everything in sight, the wazwan marriage season winds down. That's when Kashmiris turn to my all-time favourite winter dish, razma ti gogji, a humble comfort food I dare say stands toe-to-toe with the glorious mighty wazwan (in my personal opinion). I mean, the great Kashmiri love affair with gogji is so intense that we named a city after it called Gogji Bagh (garden of turnips). Well, I still remember the first time it consciously hit me-how delicious the razma gogji rice tastes, and I'd prefer it over home-cooked non-veg any day (I said home-cooked because nothing can beat wazwan goshtab yakhni and methi maaz except maybe my grandmother's food, but I consider her a professional Michelin-star chef, so that doesn't count). It was when I went to my maternal aunt's place, and she was teaching my cousin how to make it; I was the professional taster. I hardly remember what she taught her, but I remember so vividly when I ate the rice and looked out the kitchen window, it was still lightly snowing, but there was a yellow-clouded, sunny light reflecting on the blanket of snow that had covered the landscape overnight. The backdrop and the razma gogji rice were an otherworldly, deadly combination. I have never looked back since; I fell madly in love with Razma Gogji rice and recently learned the recipe from multiple sources (including my mother, grandmother, and YouTube). Sometimes my grandmother swaps in naddur (lotus stem) for the gogji (turnip), but that's a flavour for another day. Today belongs solely to Razma Gogji.

I realised it tastes heavenly no matter who cooks it until they keep it simple and follow the steps. Below is the recipe for those who want to try making it (you can imagine the snowy weather while eating it too).

Ingredients Required (can be reworked according to the portion size needed):

Red kidney beans/Razma: 2 cups;
Turnip/Gogji - 4 pieces;
Kashmiri Red Chilli Powder: 2 ½ spoons;
Salt - 2 spoons (or according to taste);
Bay Leaves - 2n (optional);
Black Cardamom - In (optional);
Ver (Kashmiri spice blend);
Mustard Oil;
Water.



And Me Made in Heaven.

razma gogji and me: a match made in heaven.

the great kashmiri love affair.

Cooking Instructions:

Step I: Wash the kidney beans thoroughly and put them aside for a while (like a neglected, often overlooked child).

Step 2: Wash the turnips and peel them lightly, then cut them into four equal (no inequalities) pieces and wash them again.

Step 3: Now transfer the kidney beans into a pressure cooker and pour enough water to submerge them completely; the water needs to have its own layer above the surface the beans create. Add one spoon of salt, close the lid properly, and pressure cook till 3-4 whistles. (We pressure the razma gogji into tasting amazing.)

Step 4: While the beans are cooking, prepare ½ cup of mustard oil in a pan and heat it until the oil starts to give off smoke. Add bay leaves and one black cardamom and fry it (these are optional since the flavor of the dish is very prominent on its own; it doesn't need too many spices, and I like it without the extra spices, so my mother removes the bay leaves and black cardamom from the oil after frying them; this is just an extra step you can do to make the task more tedious).

Step 5: When the bay leaves and black cardamom are fried well, you can either remove the spices or add the turnip slices to it directly and fry on medium heat. Lightly toss and sauté the turnips until they turn light gold/yellow.

Step 6: Add I spoon of salt to the turnips and 2 tablespoons of Kashmiri red chilli powder, a pinch of ver spice mix, and ½ cup of water; mix until the turnip slices are coated in the spices and water evaporates. Then add another ½ cup of water, put a lid on it, and let it simmer on low heat. (Keep checking on it in between and give it a little whirl here and there to ensure the turnips don't get too attached to the pan and hurt themselves.) Turn off the heat in 5-7 minutes once the turnips are slightly softer.





Keep in mind we don't want them to dissolve in the rajma later on, so they mustn't be too soft.

Step 7: Once the beans are pressure cooked, wait for the cooker to cool down and the pressure to release, open the lid, and check on the beans (you're doing okay in there, buddy?). Take one bean, check if it squishes in your fingers. If yes, then take a cup of beans out of the cooker, put it aside, and take the pan with turnips and pour all the contents into the pressure cooker. If the beans are not perfectly squishy and soft, pressure cook them again, then follow the process above.

Step 8: Turn the flame to medium heat and lightly fold the beans and turnips together until mixed. Then take the cup of beans that was put aside and mash the beans using a spoon, then put the mashed beans into the razma gogji gravy and stir it all together, ensuring you don't break the turnip slices. If the water content seems less, you can pour more water into it. Let it cook for 10-20 minutes depending on how much gravy there is.

Step 9: Time to taste it; I suggest getting a bowl full of rice and eating it Kashmiri style (bean there, love that).



Hopefully now my unhinged love letter to Razma Gogji in the beginning will make complete sense to you.



Paanta Bhaat - The Sleeping Rice.

- Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

As a kid, summer holidays meant just one thing: packing our bags and heading to Didun er baari in Kolkata.

It was no big house, but it possessed its own silent beauty. A two-storeyed structure with moss growing on the damp, cracked walls, green wooden windows with peeling paint at the edges, and an old swing creaking interminably on the verandah. The floors within were painted a deep red oxide, cool and even to bare feet, no matter how relentlessly hot the days became outside. The entire house had a certain smell, an amalgam of old wood, incense smoke winding its way lazily upwards, and something more loamy - the scent of things fermenting, pickling, quietly ripening somewhere in the dark recesses of the kitchen.

Mornings were never quiet. The city itself drew breath within the house. The far-away ring of trams on Shyambazar, the rattleof a milkman's bike on the lane, the ululation of calls from hawkers selling fresh fish, "Maachh nao, boro maachh!", and the dozy waft of a Hemanta Mukhopadhyay song drifted in from some neighbour's radio. Occasionally, the ringing crash of temple bells would slice through the thick morning air, blending with the acrid scent of coal stoves from the tea stalls down thestreet.

Kolkata was never still, not even at dawn, and that sound seemed as much a part of the house as Didun's presence.

One thing that never changed, regardless of the year, was the still ritual of making Paanta Bhaat.

Each night after dinner, when para's streetlights hummed under acloud of moths and air was filled with the combined aromas of shiuli flowers and smouldering mosquito coils, Didun would collect the remaining rice of the day. She would pour the whitebhaat, still warm from being cooked, into a big aluminium bowl. From the matir sura placed in a corner, she would fill cool, boiled water until the rice was fully covered. Then she would puta plain steel thala over the bowl, not closed, but just lying lightly on top, and leave it beside the open window where the night air, thick and warm, could caress it.

"Thaanda hawa te ektu ghumobe," she uttered once, near to herself, her bangles softly jingling as she settled the plate. The rice, like us, had to rest under the dense Kolkata night.

By early morning, before the sun could properly take over theverandah and make the floors warm under our feet, the paanta bhaat would be set. The rice grains would get soft and disintegrate slightly, the water would go cloudy, and a subtle sour, earthy aroma would waft when she removed the plate, not biting, but with that kind of life only achieved gradually, overnight.

Breakfast at Didun's place was a leisurely, unhurried process. She would serve a plate to Dadu first, blending his paanta bhaat slowly with mustard oil and salt, and always providing him witha liberal serving of shutki maachh bhaja. The fragrance of thefried dried fish would overpower the entire house, pungent and obdurate, hanging in the air long after it had been cooked. Dadu would sit out on the verandah, lazily fanning himself with a haath paakha, sorting through his food with a practised hand.

For me, little and indulged, yet, Didun had other plans. I was given my favourite foods: a tidy pyramid of alu shedho, mashed flat with a sprinkle of salt and one drop of mustard oil, and a serving of pyaaji, the onion fritters golden and crispy. She would add a small amount of paanta to my plate as well, gently pressing it with her fingers so some water would drain off, so that it was not too much liquid for my preference.



Even then, I was hard to please. I would huff and sulk, I would cross my arms and go stomping off around the barandah, loudlydemanding, "Ami aikhono breakfast korte chaina!" I did not wish to take breakfast in the morning, particularly not bhaat, dripping wet. On occasion, I would even attempt to sulk myself out of it.

Didun would never argue. She would just smile, sit me down on the cold stone steps, and with the serene patience only she possessed, she would open a gondhoraj lebu. The thick, emerald green skin would crack open under her blade, and in that moment, the entire house would be filled with its unmistakable scent – pungent, floral, as bright as morning light itself. She'd drizzle a bit of the juice over the paanta bhaat, the citrus sting reviving my senses more than anything else had.

I would almost forget, reaching out without thinking, my fingers stealing into the plate, nibbling at the rice, combining it with themashed potatoes and onion crisps, each mouthful a little dishevelled and just right. And at times when I was lucky, I would have a dollop of buffalo ghee – golden and rich – and it would dissolve into everything, making it all the better.

There were no fancy meals, no formal tables laid out. We woulddine on the floor or the steps of the verandah, plates held on our laps, observing the city outside slowly waking up and stretching under the golden, heavy sun.

I did not know at the time, naturally, that paanta bhaat was abody tonic. That fermented rice was teeming with good bacteria, ideal for digestion, when the damp air made everything else too heavy. To me, it was simply one of the easy, lazy mornings at Didun's house, one of the long, languid days when the greatestconcern was whether the power would go off during the afternoon nap.

And now, all these years later, like a proper Bangali, I cannot possibly get through a day without rice. The same child who used to throw tantrums at the mere mention of breakfast now silently yearns for that same comfort, that same humble plate of bhaat and alu shedho, that same pungent whiff of gondhoraj in the air.





In so many ways, the slow, deliberate action of preparing paantabhaat felt foreign to me as a kid growing up in Delhi. Eating rice for breakfast seemed almost unnatural in a city where breakfast was stuffed parathas, toast, or at best poha – quick, utilitarian meals for a life always on the move. Being a probashi Bangali (a Bengali who lives outside the region of Bengal), I had unconsciously imbibed these North Indian norms, where fermented rice was 'old' or 'forgotten', something to be thrown away, not relished. I had to unlearn that rush, that perpetual hunger for speed and novelty. In Didun er baari, paanta bhaattaught me something Delhi never did: that good things take time. That fermentation-like love, like belonging, requires stillness, patience, a slowness that contemporary life has little room for. The cold rice, slowly fermenting through the night, waking withthe sun, reflected the manner in which

Kolkata itself moved, not rushed, not boisterous, but slow, full of quiet insistence. A life sewn together not by the nervous tick of clocks but by routine, odours, forgotten melodies, and the gentle magic of waiting.



Channa Chugni : A Bihari Delicacy

MD Amjad Ali
BA (Honours)
Political Science Ist Year

As a Bihari kid who grew up savoring the delightful flavours of home-cooked meals, Chana Ghugni holds a special place in my heart. This dish is a staple in many Bihari households and embodies the warmth and comfort of home. Made from spiced black chickpeas, it is perfect as a snack or a hearty meal when paired with rice or bread. Today, I'm excited to share with you my cherished recipe for Chana Ghugni, so you too can experience this delicious dish!

Ingredients

- I cup black chickpeas (Kala Chana)
- I medium onion, finely chopped
- 2 medium tomatoes, chopped
- 2-3 green chilies, slit (adjust to taste)
- I tablespoon ginger-garlic paste
- I teaspoon cumin seeds (jeera)
- I teaspoon mustard seeds (rai)
- I teaspoon turmeric powder (haldi)
- I teaspoon red chili powder (adjust to taste)
- I teaspoon coriander powder (dhania)
- I teaspoon garam masala
- Salt to taste
- Fresh coriander leaves, chopped (for garnish)
- 2 tablespoons oil (mustard oil is preferred for authentic flavor)
- Water as needed

Instructions:

Step I: Prepping the Chickpeas

Start by soaking the black chickpeas in water for at least 6-8 hours or overnight. This softens them and cuts down cooking time. Once soaked, drain and rinse the chickpeas.

Step 2: Cooking the Chickpeas

In a pressure cooker, add the soaked chickpeas along with enough water (about 2-3 cups). Pressure cook for around 4-5 whistles or until they are tender. They should hold their shape but be soft enough to mash slightly. Once cooked, set them aside.

Step 3: Preparing the Masala

In a large pan, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the cumin seeds and mustard seeds. Allow them to splutter and release their aroma. Next, add the finely chopped onions and sauté until they are golden brown.

Step 4: Flavouring the Base

Add the ginger-garlic paste and slit green chilies to the pan. Sauté for a couple of minutes until the raw smell disappears. Then, add the chopped tomatoes and cook until they become soft and mushy.

Step 5: Mixing Spices

Sprinkle in the turmeric powder, red chili powder, coriander powder, and salt. Stir well and let the mixture cook for 3-4 minutes, allowing the oil to separate from the masala.

Step 6: Combining Chickpeas and Masala

Add the cooked chickpeas to the pan, along with some water to achieve your desired consistency. Stir to combine and let it simmer for 10-15 minutes, allowing the chickpeas to absorb the flavours of the spices. Adjust salt and spices to taste.

Step 7: Finishing Touches

Just before serving, sprinkle the garam masala and give it a final stir. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves for a burst of freshness.

Serving Suggestions:

Chana Ghugni can be enjoyed in various ways. Serve it hot with steamed rice, pooris, or even as a standalone snack with onion and lemon wedges on the side. It can also be a great filling for wraps or parathas for a satisfying meal.

Personal Reflection:

Growing up in Bihar, Chana Ghugni was not just a dish; it was a shared experience at family gatherings, a comforting meal on chilly evenings, and a beloved treat that brought friends together. I hope this recipe helps you recreate that warmth in your own kitchen. Enjoy cooking, and share it with loved ones—because food is best enjoyed together



Bihari Channa Chugni

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Photo Journal: Squirrels In Jamia Campus.





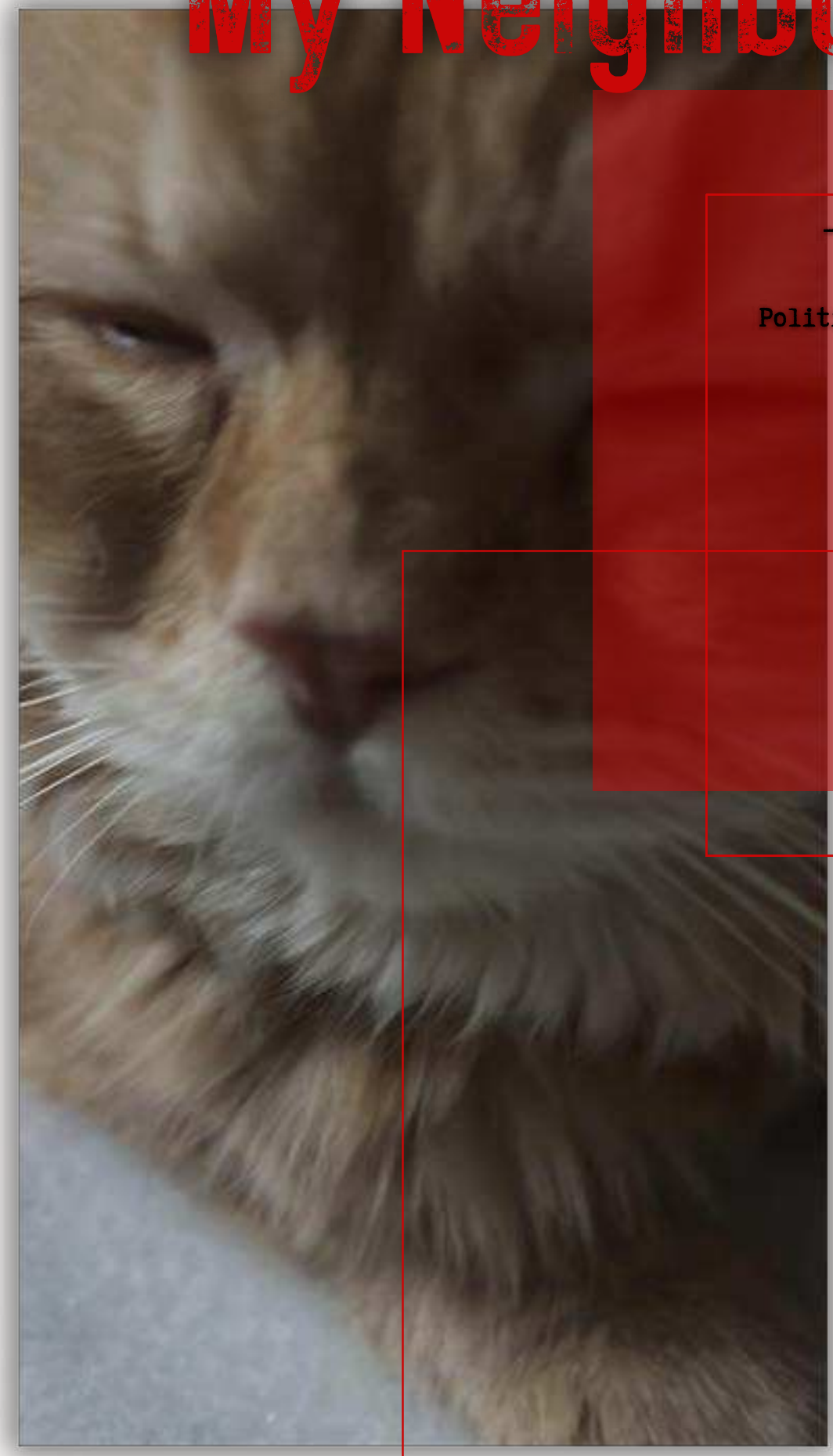






– Yash R. Gajmal
MA Political Science 2nd Year

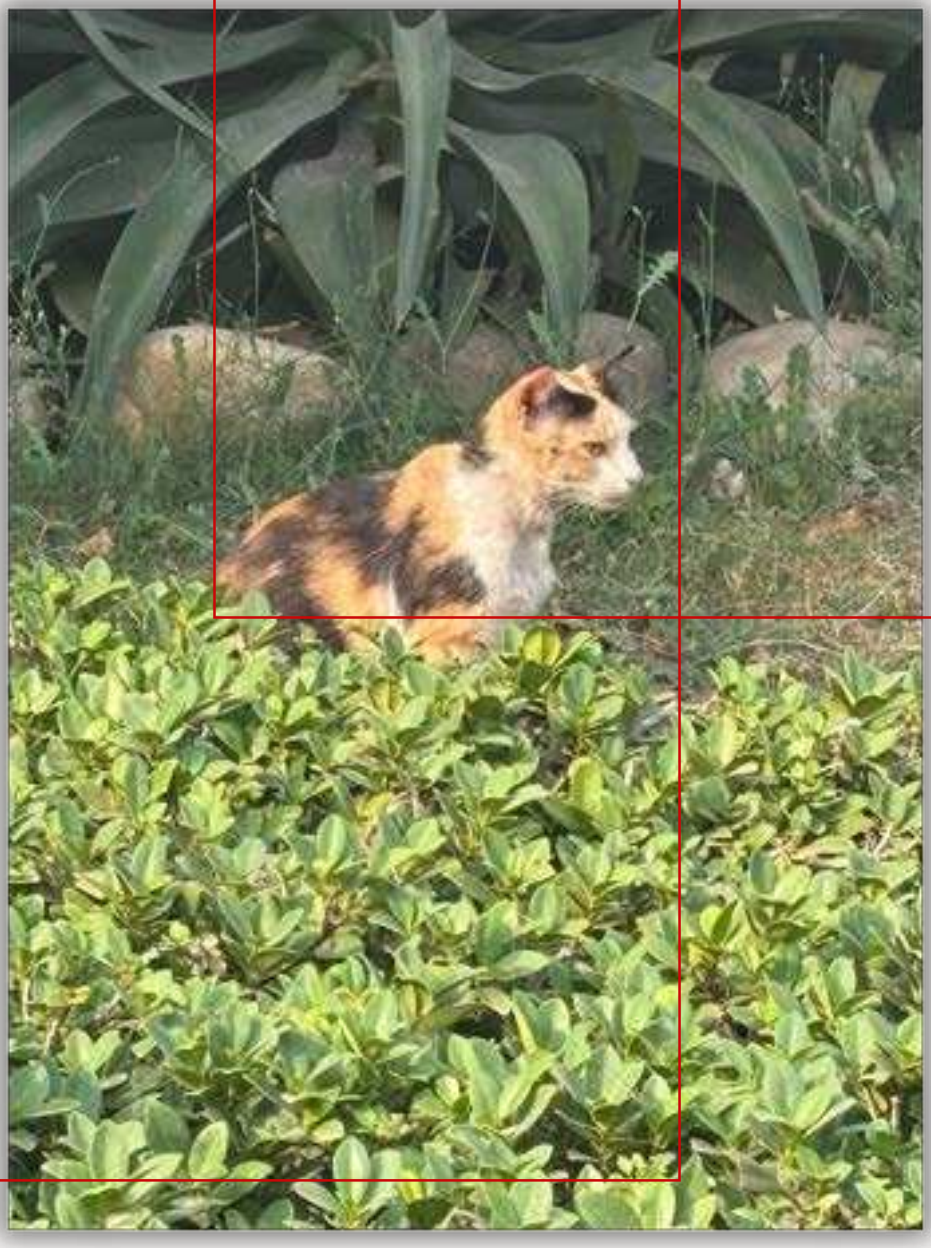
My Neighbours



– Nabiha Faitima
BA (Honours)
Political Science Ist Year









Life in Stills

– Aalima Khan
BA (Honours)
Political Science Ist Year









Life in stills.

Three Photographs: Gulistan e Ghalib

– Umme Kulsum
BA (Honours) Political Science
3rd Year





“Resilience always thrives under a Ray of Hope”



ہوئی مدت کہ 'غالب' مر گیا، پر یاد آتا ہے

وہ ہر ایک بات پہ کہنا کہ یوں ہوتا تو کیا ہوتا -

Photo Feature

— Anonymous



When I saw roses dried up yet full of colour, dead yet full of life I thought; flowers lie there, fragile and unyielding yet beautiful as if waiting for a verdict that will never come; their mere presence presses against the edges of my being yet in solitude, waiting for love that will never come



Painting A Wall

– Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

Captured

– Maskat
BA (Honours)
Political Science 3rd Year



hum hain?
ki hum nahi.

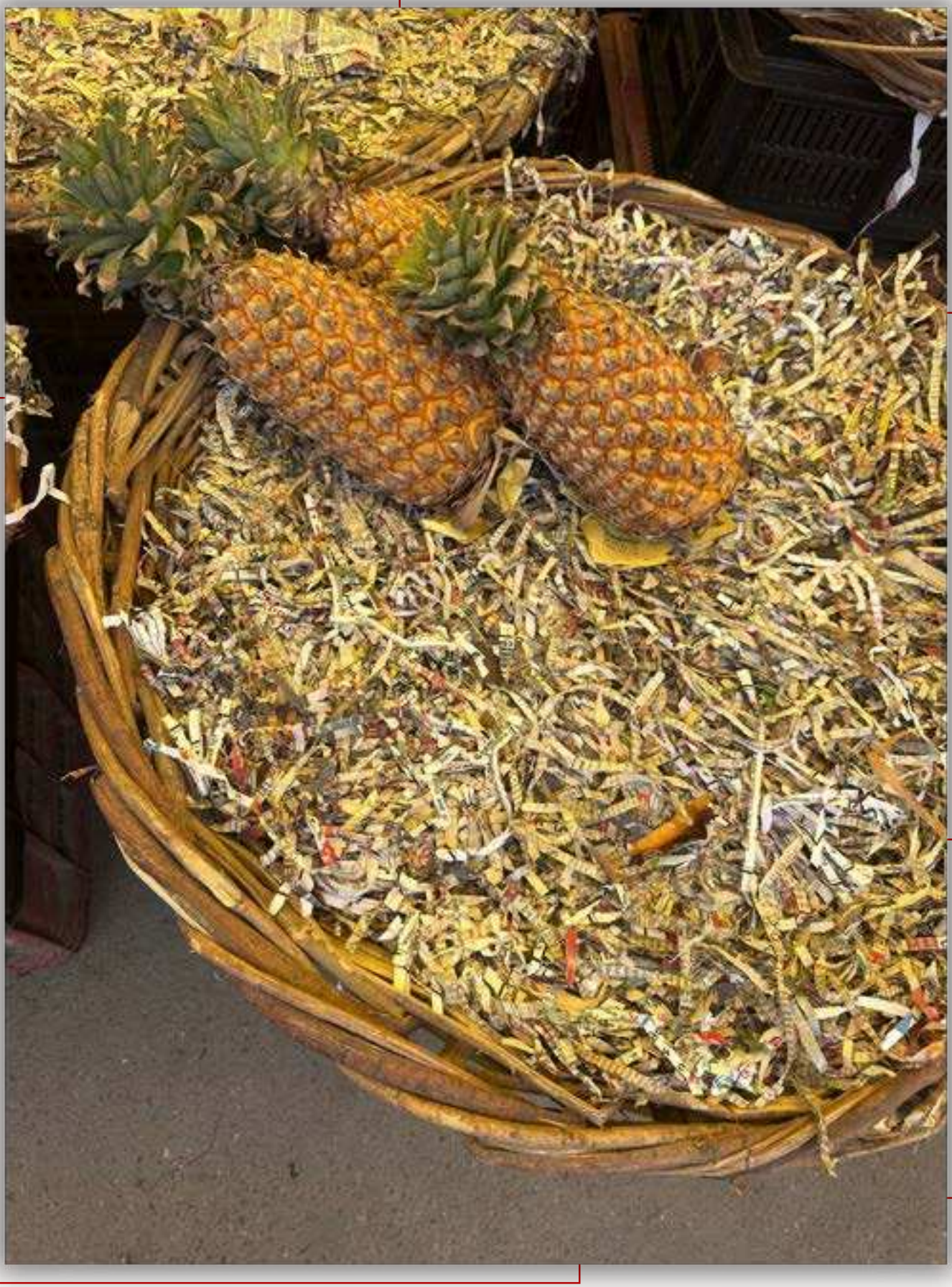
to be
or
not to be?
that is the
question.

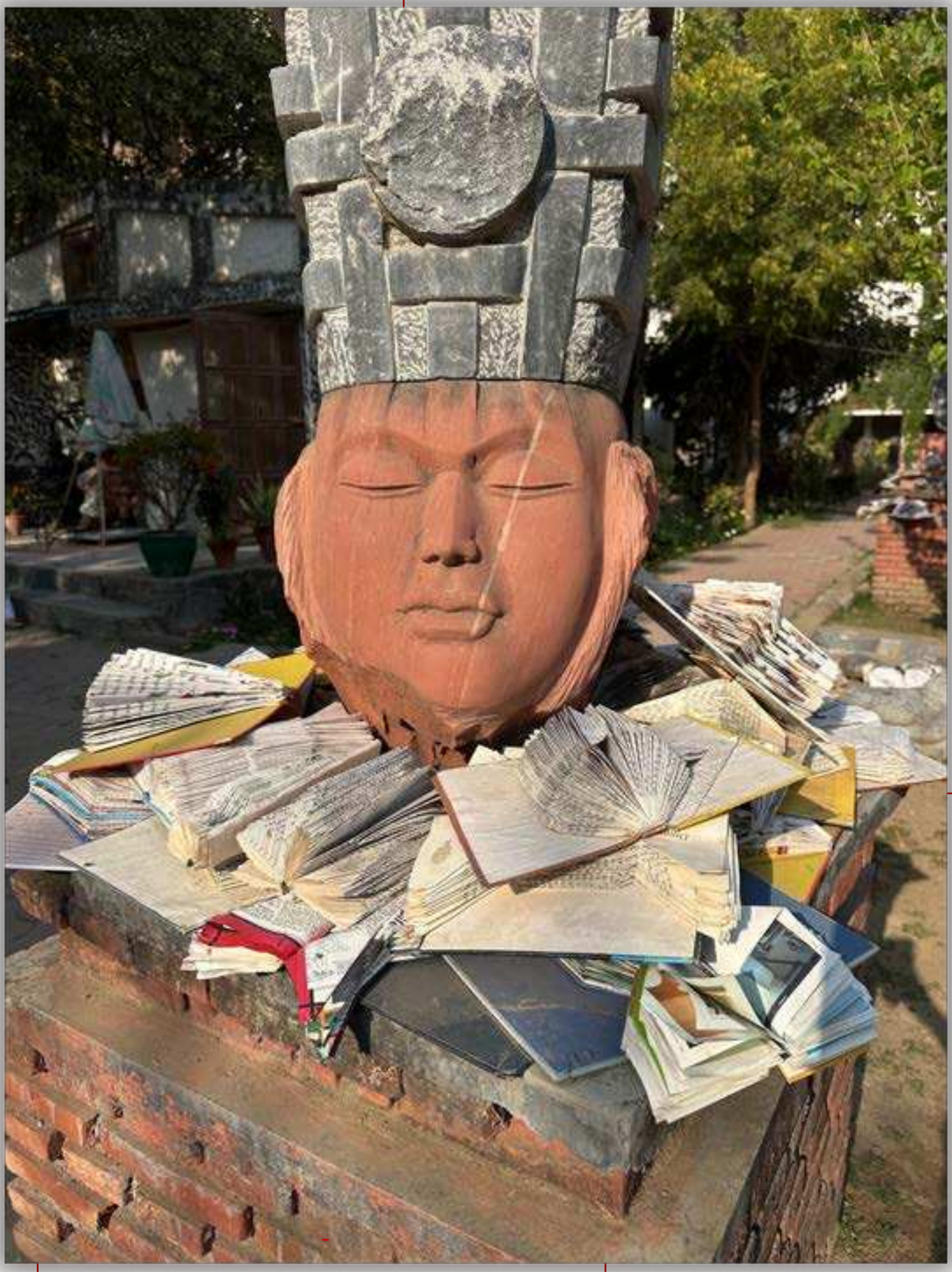


- what's in a name?
what's in a name?
a rose by any other name
a rose by any other name
would smell just as sweet.
would smell just as sweet.

The Holy Trinity

— Anonymous





photograph: jawless
sculpture

4 PAINTINGS





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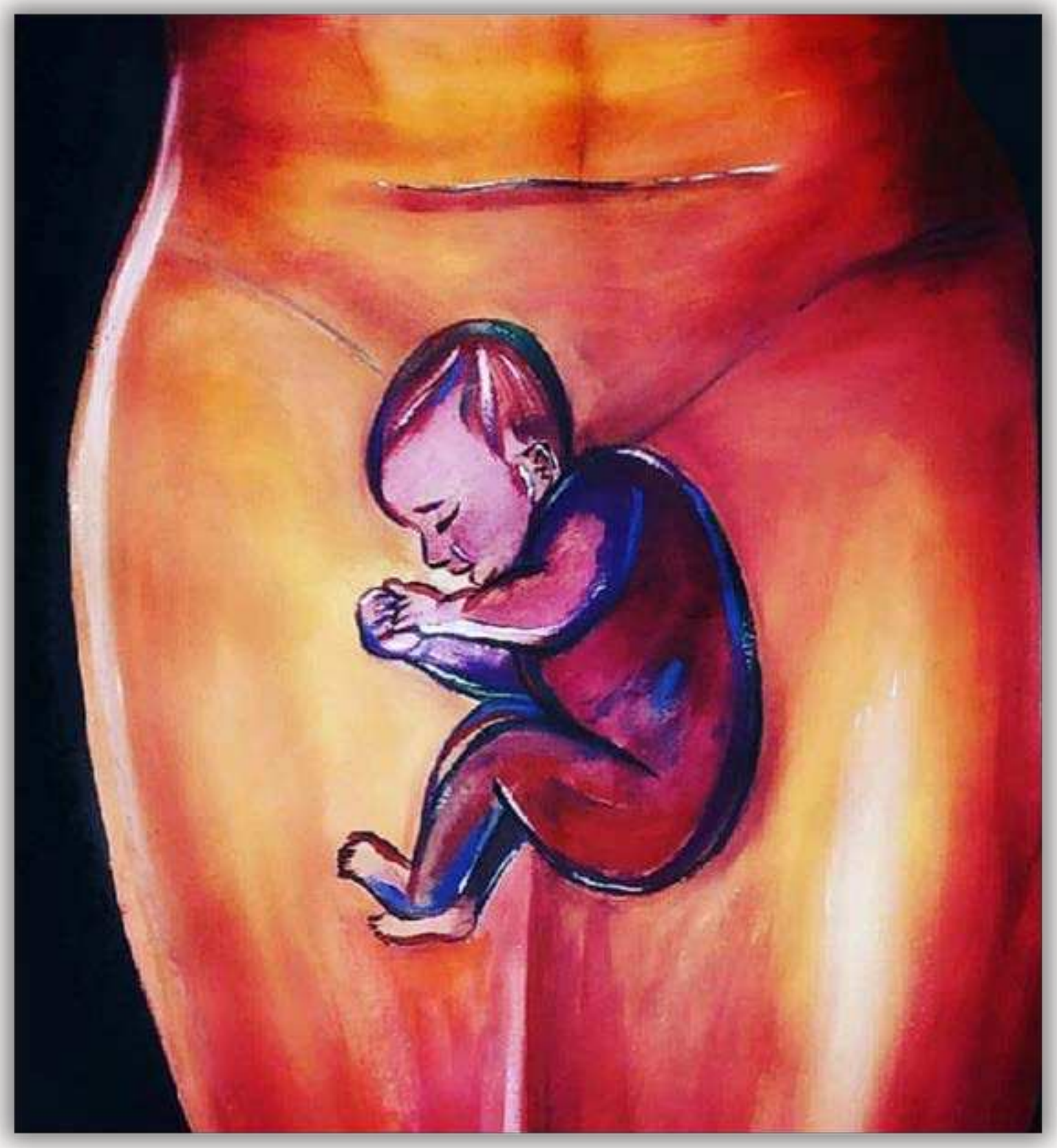
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Hokusai in Love I03
Vaishali Mann

The Feminine Crescent I04
Vaishali Mann

A Home of Warmth; Hearty Bouquet. I05
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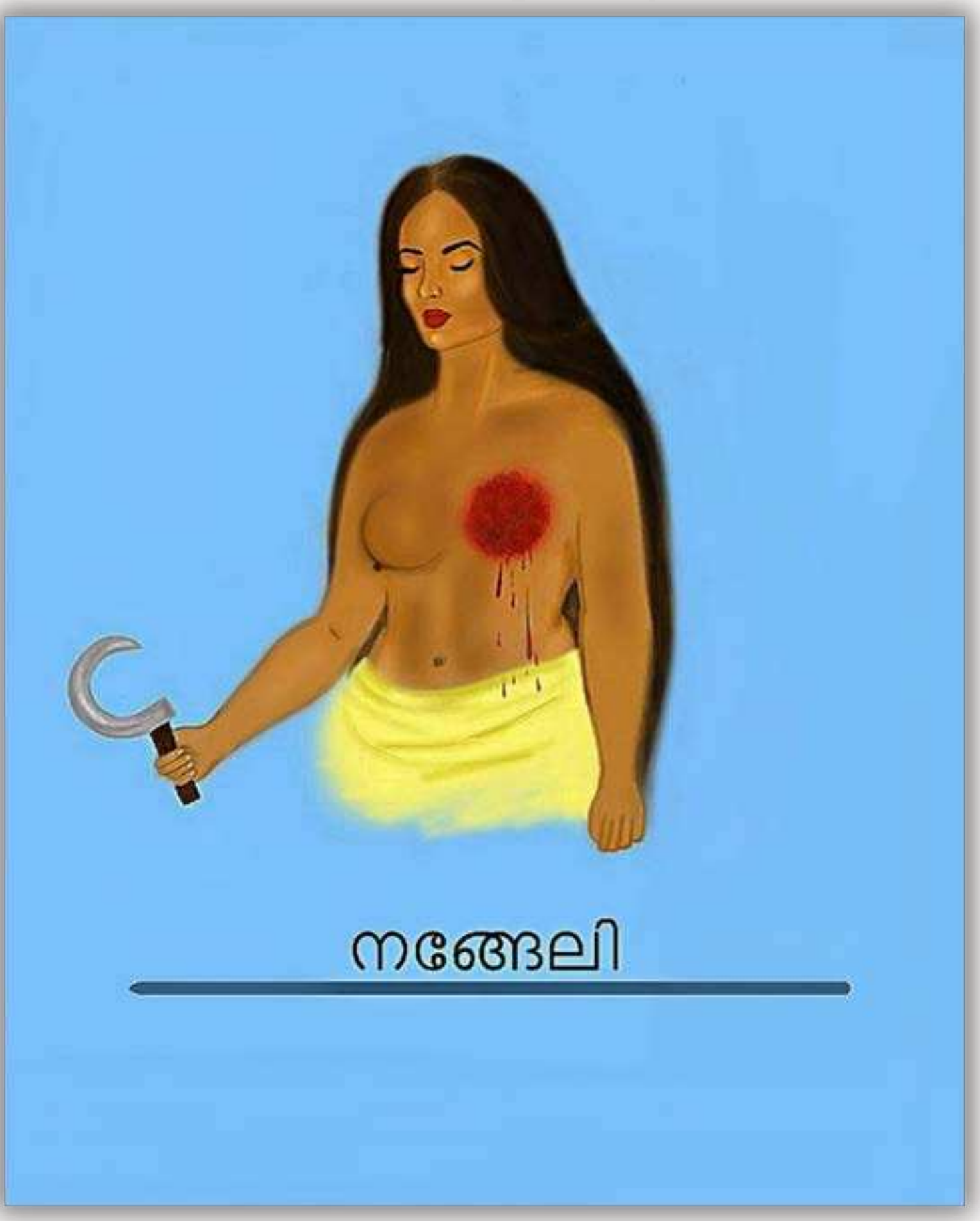


Motherhood and the Labor mythos.

– Ritika Mishra
MA Political Science
Ist Year

The Cost of Dignity

– Ritika Mishra
MA Political Science
I[st] Year





The Many Faces Of Love

– Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

And Scene

– Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights 2nd Year

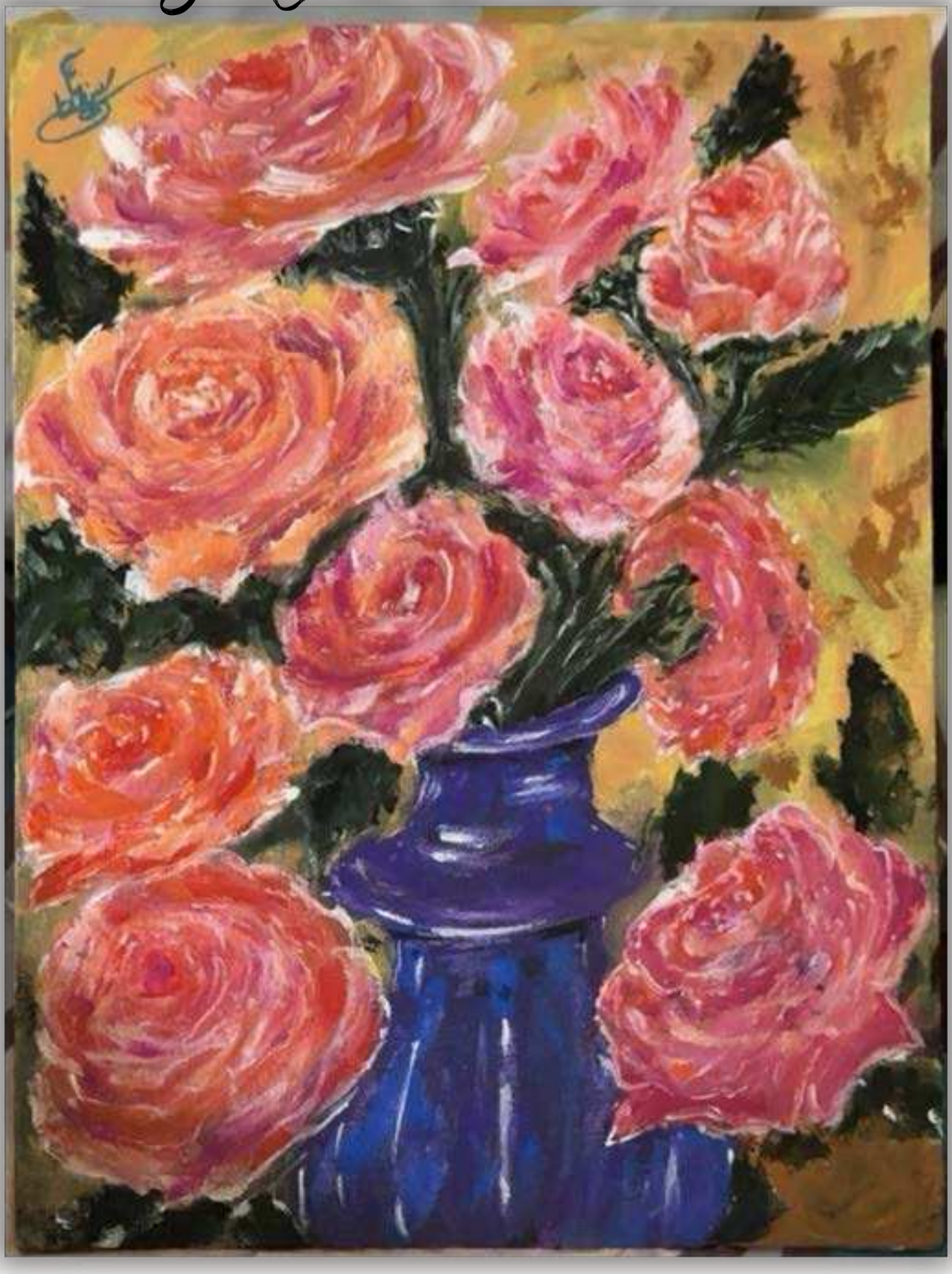


two paintings :

Roselution

rose/lution

- Maskat
BA (Honours)
Political Science 3rd Year





"I perhaps owe having become
a painter to flowers"
- Claude Monet

Starry Night

- Taitreyi Biswas
MA Human Rights
2nd Year



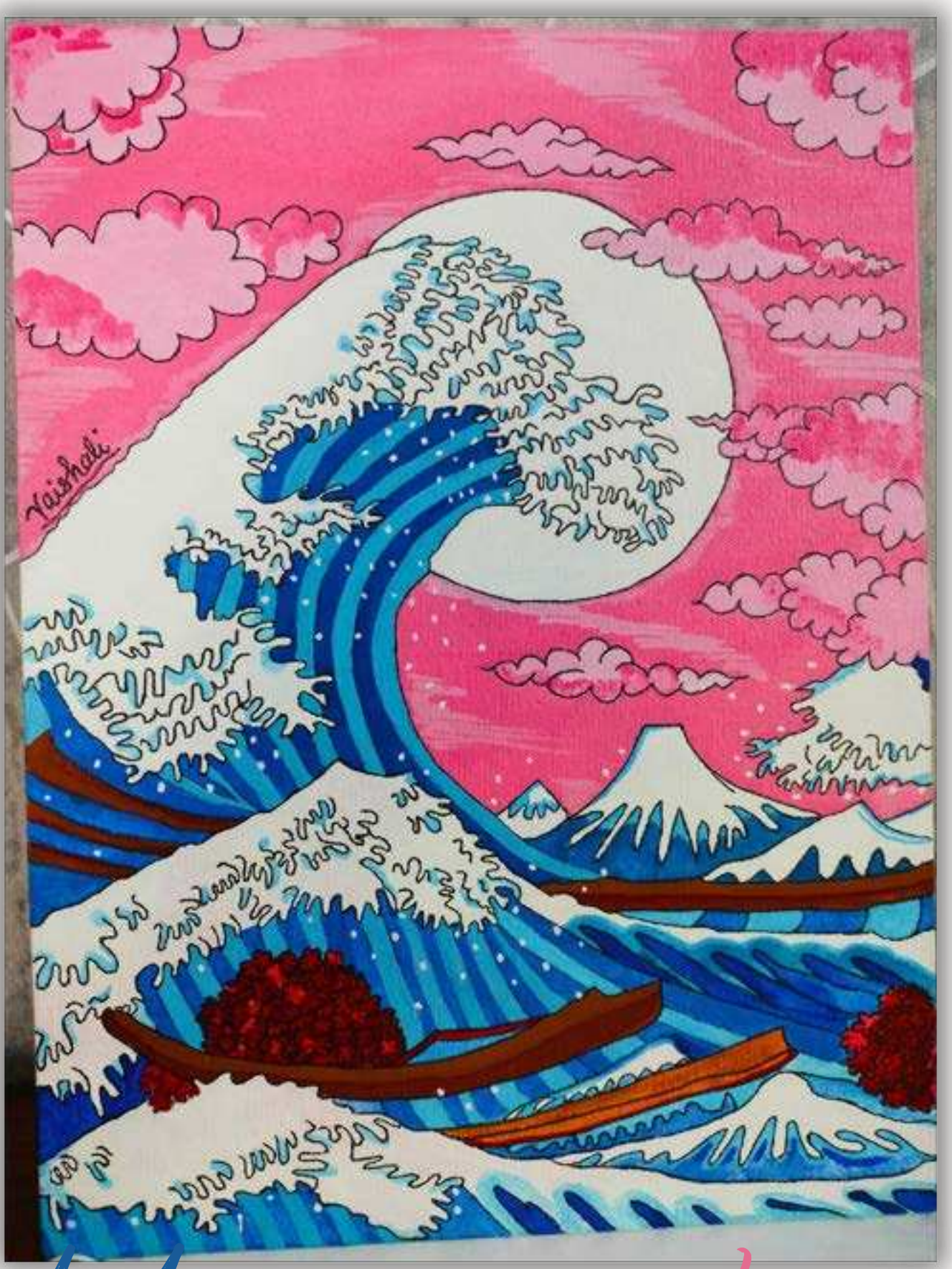
"There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."
- Van Gogh

"There is nothing more truly artistic than to love people."
- Van Gogh

Strawberries Are Blue

- Maskat
BA (Honours)Political Science
3rd Year





Hokusai in Love.

- Vaishali Mann
Phd 2nd Year

The Feminine Crescent

- Vaishali Mann
Phd 2nd Year



A Home of Warmth

- Vaishali Mann
Phd 2nd Year



A Hearty Bouquet.

- Vaishali Mann
Phd 2nd Year



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LOVE POLITICS AND BEYOND

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