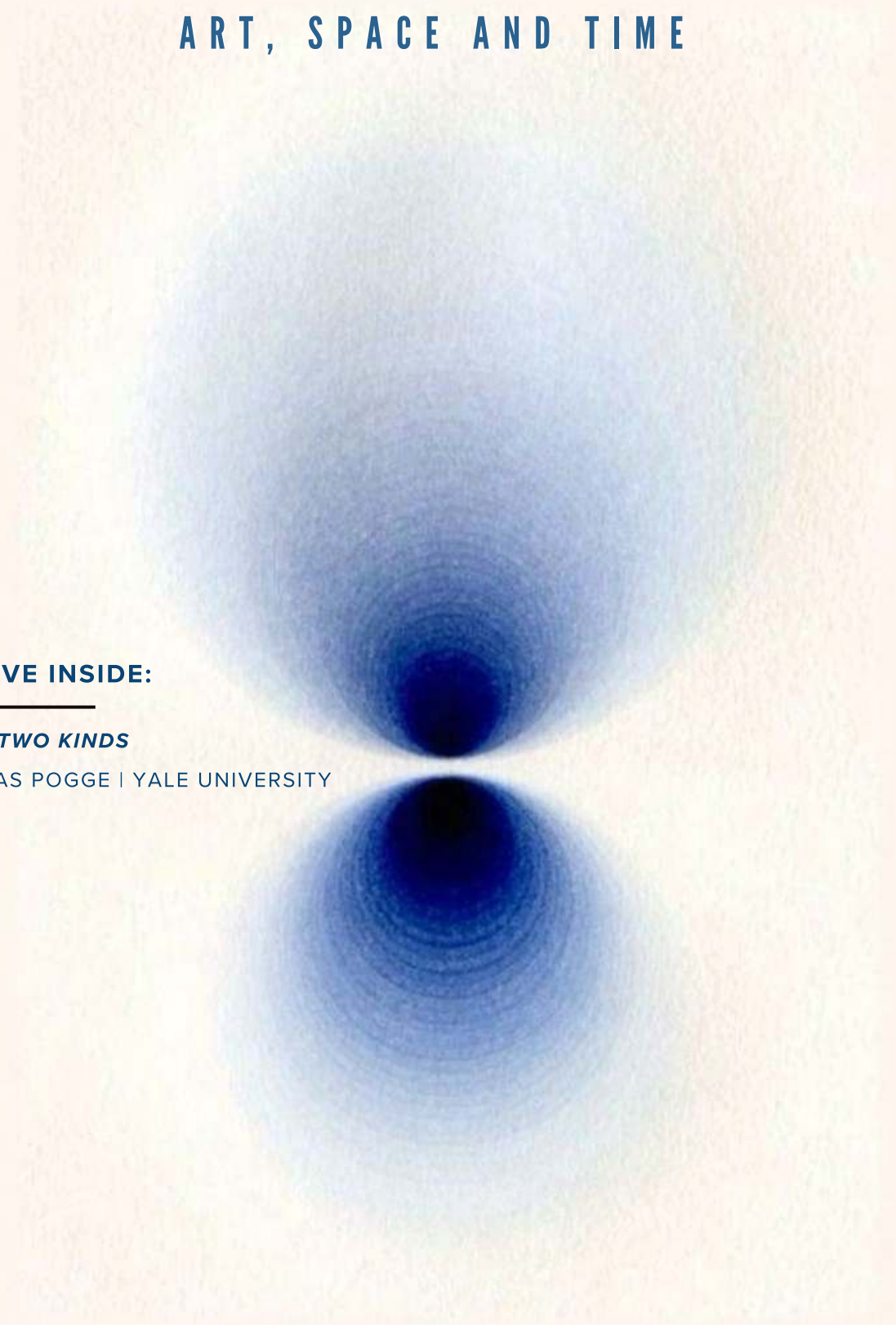
EPISTEME

ART, SPACE AND TIME



EXCLUSIVE INSIDE:

WORK OF TWO KINDS

DR. THOMAS POGGE | YALE UNIVERSITY

A DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE MAGAZINE

2026 EDITION

ART SPACE AND TIME

Copyright disclaimer: Episteme JMI does not claim to own any Photographs published in this issue.

FOREWORD



Prof. Bulbul Dhar James.
Head Of the Department Of Political Science

As the Head of the Department of Political Science with three Masters Programmes – Human Rights and Duties Education, Political Science and Public Administration, I am honoured to present this creative, inclusive and 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 evocative unveiling of self-expression and lateral thinking – The Epistēmē. Education as a learning process is not just about the destination but the journey itself.

And we see the journey's of so many students unfolding in the creative expressions in the *Episteme*. This year's theme is The Political Canvas: Art, Space and Time. I look at Space as the central lens through which Political Canvas is being deconstructed consciously, subconsciously, and unconsciously through the artistic creative compositions in this year's *Episteme*. Space is a three-dimensional continuum containing positions and directions is of fundamental importance to an understanding of the physical universe. *Isaac Newton* viewed space as absolute, existing permanently and independently of whether there was any matter in it. In contrast space was a collection of relations between objects, given by their distance and direction from one another according to, other natural philosophers, notably *Gottfried Leibniz,* thought that space was in fact a collection of relations between objects, given by their distance and direction from one another. Philosophically, space is implicit in the "khora" of *Socrates,* the *Timaeus of Plato* the *topos* (i.e. place) in *Physics* of Aristotle or the "geometrical conception of place" as "space *qua* extension" in the *Discourse on Place* (*Qawl fi al-Makan*) of the 11th-century Arab polymath *Alhazen*. In the Renaissance era *Descartes* in the rationalist tradition, sought a mechanical, metaphysical explanation foundation for his theories about matter and motion as a counter to the Aristotelian natural laws. Known for his *"cogito ergo sum"* (I think therefore I am), or the idea that we can only be certain of the fact that we can doubt, and therefore think and therefore exist. For Rene Descartes, there was a clear distinction between the body and mind, which is referred to as the Cartesian dualism. Based on Greek mathematician Euclid's mathematical system of Geometry based on axioms and proofs, Cartesian space was Euclidean in structure—infinite, uniform and flat. From the 18th century, George Berkeley's refutation of "visibility of spatial depth" to Kant's experience of "space" - a subjective "pure *a priori* form of intuition", amongst others Space is elusive yet explicit.

FOREWORD

Episteme 2026 explores the very multidimensional spaces- dynamic, dismantling, navigating, negotiating, subverting, adopt intersectional approaches, aiming to expose the relationship (between patriarchy and other axes of oppression like racism, classism, ableism, etc) in order to envision alternative, inclusive spatial configurations of social relations. As Thomas Mann suggests, however trivial or unrelated something may seem, it is ultimately intertwined with the realm of politics. The contents of this year's Episteme, will provoke you to explore the intricate intersections of emotion, ideology, spaces and human experience. The articles that are dismantling, navigating, negotiating gender and spaces include Vaishali Mann's – 'Not a Room of One's Own: Politics of Convenient Absence Versus Compulsory Presence, Nandini Chaudhary's 'A Women's Space', to Eishita Tiwari 's evocative reflections of books by Ismat Chughtai, Behrouz Boochani, Khaled Hosseini, Cathy Caruth, Manto amongst others, in her article 'The afterlife of home', to Shagun Tomar's 'A classroom of crossroads: why Delhi schools need intersectional sensitisation?', Sethunya Marang Motutwane's 'Reclaiming the Frame: Black Women, Cinema, and Power' looks at spaces to restore dignity, complexity, and authenticity to the stories being told about Black women and African life.

Within these pages, you will also find the Political Canvas deconstructed through Art, Space and Time in Suhail Iqball's 'Learning Governance without Governing: The Paradox of our Educational Institutions', Md Shahnawaz Hussain in 'In another time, in another space: a swaraj inquiry into the state', 'Benches of Power: Time, Waiting and the State' by Muzammil Imam, Aman Jha's journey from time as an external measure to time as something lived, remembered, and actively created, Kanan Sharma's 'A peek into the Past' "imagining" a re-painted political canvas with boundaries a little more blurred, Ritika Mishra's poetic prose – Viyog on the package deal that is life; Rohan Sharma's 'Preliminary Steps Toward Walking in the City' understanding of how bodies, power, mobility, and urban structures intersect in today's cities, Sachin Kumar's 'Afwaho se pare meri Jamia Yatra', an experiential narrative of the Realization or the feeling that is Jamia and Maskat's evocative short story 'Return to Sender'.

Food not just for thought is the intent of Sahib Zada Sheikh Aanif's 'Winter in a Bowl: The Warm Heart of Kashmiri Harisa'- giving a complete step by step recipe of Harisa "a thick, smooth, porridge-like dish made mainly from mutton (or lamb), rice or rice flour, and mild Kashmiri spices, cooked till the meat completely blends into a paste" and with the heart warming message - "endure with dignity: not by hardening, but by becoming tender"!

The poems by *Mohammad Zaid Abdullah Khan, Anupama, Mohammad Shadman Qurashi, Shoeba Khan, Mohd. Umair Khan, Nabil Ahmad, Alok Raj* and drawings, paintings and photographs on life's images and inspirations by *Jigyasa Atreya, Ritika, Vaishali, Tooba, Abhishek, Rutba, Brajendra Singh Parihar, Maskat, Khandoker Taasin, Soumya Dutta* take the magazine to another level of artistic expression.

FOREWORD

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.

We may have come to the nostalgic moments of handing over the baton of *Episteme*, by the current batches to successive ones, celebrating the dialectic, embracing complexity and diversity and dialogue, but the Jamia, Department of Political Science connect will always remain irrespective of the space and time. Huge CONGRATULATIONS in this celebration of the unique strengths and talents. All the very best to the new editorial team for continuing this dynamic endeavour.

Love and Blessings,



Prof. Bulbul Dhar James
Head Of the Department Of Political Science
Jamia Millia Islamia

22nd April 2026



CONVENOR'S NOTE



Dr. Krishna Swamy Dara
Convenor, Episteme Magazine

It is a privilege to present Episteme 2026, the annual magazine of the Department of Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia. This edition, centered on the theme "The Political Canvas: Art, Space, and Time" reflects the department's continued commitment to fostering critical inquiry, interdisciplinary engagement, and creative expression among its students.

The theme invites us to consider the multiple ways in which political life extends beyond formal institutions and manifests within cultural practices, spatial arrangements, and historical consciousness. By bringing together art, space, and time as interconnected dimensions, this volume encourages a broader understanding of politics: one that is attentive to everyday experiences, diverse perspectives, and evolving contexts.

The contributions in this issue ranging from analytical essays to creative writing and visual work demonstrate the depth and diversity of student engagement. They reflect an awareness of contemporary social realities while also drawing on theoretical insights and lived experiences. Together, they offer a space for dialogue that bridges academic inquiry and creative exploration.

As an academic institution, it is important that we continue to create platforms that encourage thoughtful expression while remaining attentive to the responsibilities that come with it. Episteme serves as one such platform, enabling students to articulate ideas, question assumptions, and engage constructively with pressing issues.

It is a privilege to present Episteme 2026, the annual magazine of the Department of Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia. This edition, centered on the theme "The Political Canvas: Art, Space, and Time" reflects the department's continued commitment to fostering critical inquiry, interdisciplinary engagement, and creative expression among its students.

The theme invites us to consider the multiple ways in which political life extends beyond formal institutions and manifests within cultural practices, spatial arrangements, and historical consciousness. By bringing together art, space, and time as interconnected dimensions, this volume encourages a broader understanding of politics: one that is attentive to everyday experiences, diverse perspectives, and evolving contexts.

CONVENOR'S NOTE

I would like to extend my appreciation to the Editorial Board for their dedication, diligence, and collaborative effort in bringing out this edition. I would specifically like to thank Aman Kumar Jha, Eishita Tiwari and Kanan Sharma who have energetically worked towards the successful completion of this project. A special thanks to Maskat for being part of this project.

I invite readers to engage with this volume in the spirit in which it has been conceived—with openness, reflection, and a willingness to engage with diverse viewpoints.

With best wishes,
Dr. Krishna Swamy Dara



Convenor,
Episteme 2026
Department of Political Science
Jamia Millia Islamia



EDITORS' NOTE

Dear Readers,

Welcome to Episteme 2026, the annual magazine of the Department of Political Science at Jamia Millia Islamia. This year's theme, "The Political Canvas: Art, Space, and Time," begins with a simple proposition: politics unfolds in what we create, where we exist, and how we remember. Art has long been understood as a site of resistance. Yet this issue asks us to look more closely at the conditions under which art emerges. Who is allowed to make art, and who is denied the means, space, or legitimacy to do so? Who defines what counts as "art," and how do those definitions include some voices while excluding others? Can art meaningfully challenge the structures that shape it, or is it always, in some ways, constrained by them?

To think about art is also to think of space. As Sara Ahmed reminds us, spaces are shaped by histories of inclusion and exclusion. Some bodies move through them with ease; others are made to shrink. A space does not need to change in its material form to be experienced differently; it is always already saturated with expectations about who belongs and who does not.

We experience and encounter both art and space in time. Time laced with history, memory and situatedness. This brings us to what Edward Said describes as the "Permission to Narrate". The power to tell a story is also the power to shape what is remembered as truth. Whose histories are preserved, and whose are displaced or rewritten? What does it mean to remember in the face of erasure, or to inherit a past that has already been curated by structures of power? Who, ultimately, is permitted to narrate or even to remember?

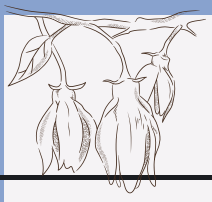
Art, space, and time are deeply intertwined with politics, and this year's issue sits at precisely that intersection. The works that follow engage the questions raised by this theme in diverse ways. Some celebrate art's radical possibilities; others make visible the exclusions and constraints that shape it. Together, they remind us that politics is lived, felt, and continuously negotiated in everyday life.

We invite you to read, to question, to reflect, to sit with and to carry these conversations beyond these pages.

With art, across space and time,

Aman Kumar Jha; Eishita Tiwari; Kanan Sharma; Rohan Sharma; Alok Raj; Mohd. Umair Khan; Maskat

Editorial Board,
Episteme 2026



WORK OF TWO KINDS

DR. THOMAS POGGE
LEITNER PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS
YALE UNIVERSITY | UNITED STATES

Human beings meet their needs and pursue their ends through work — their own work and that of others. The labor of mothers, peasants, builders, factory and transport workers, doctors and nurses, educators and researchers, artists and entertainers, engineers, and planners. Such productive labor provides goods and services that, directly or indirectly, satisfy human needs and desires.

Then there is predatory labor, labor that does not provide such goods or services but rather appropriates the fruits of the productive work of others. This includes much of the labor of burglars and warriors, slave holders and arms dealers, priests and nobles, speculators, investors, and wealth managers, lawyers and accountants, politicians and lobbyists. To be sure, such work can be quite valuable, as when one group of warriors or lawyers fiercely protects your body, property, or rights from another such group. Still, this isn't a reason for wanting such predatory labor to exist at all.

As humankind becomes more productive, an ever-larger share of the fruits of productive labor can sustainably be appropriated by predatory labor. Insofar as this can happen, it usually does happen, because professionals in predation tend to do better in the competition over the social product than those who produce it. This is so for two systematic reasons.

First, predatory workers are much better trained and prepared for such competition because redistribution is central to their professional expertise. For tax lawyers, speculators, or lobbyists, it is the essence of their job to bend the distribution of wealth or political influence in favor of themselves or their paying clients. Peasants, builders, teachers, physicians, and engineers, by contrast, are not trained for, or professionally occupied with, such redistribution but rather with producing food, care, learning, buildings, tools, or machines. This first reason makes it likely that predatory labor wins superior rewards within most social systems.

Such superior rewards, in turn, bring the second reason into play: by promising superior rewards, predatory labor attracts a disproportional share of the most creative and energetic people. The brightest young minds then dream of being a priest rather than peasant, banker rather than engineer, lawyer rather than doctor, investor rather than inventor, politician rather than artist. To be sure, some bright young minds will still want to be teachers, artists, or scientists even if they could earn much more on Mumbai's Dalal Street or Delhi's Khan Market.[1] But most will

[1] Dalal Street is the symbolic center of India's financial capital Mumbai, analogous to Wall Street in New York City. Broadly analogous to K-Street in Washington DC, Khan Market in Delhi, India's political capital, is the site where much lobbying is conducted, seeking to influence politicians and so-called civil servants.

"sell out" and thereby contribute their superior talents to further increase the capacity of predatory labor to capture large and increasing shares of the social product.

This tendency for the best and the brightest to drift toward predatory labor is supported by several familiar phenomena of moral psychology. There is the common thought that one's own predatory labor "makes no difference" because any harm it does would otherwise be done by someone else. There is the popular sucker exemption according to which one should not be morally required to disadvantage oneself vis-à-vis others through moral self-restraint ("others are doing it, so why can't I?"). Once one has taken on a predatory labor role, one's commitment is further reinforced by peer pressures in one's social environment and by the self-blinkering thought that one "is merely doing one's job." Additional reinforcement comes from the fact that those who engage in predatory labor tend to use their strong social position to promote a societal ethos that makes income and wealth, regardless of their source, the foremost basis of social recognition: the worth of persons is indicated by how much they are worth, how much they "make" or own. Because their predatory labor can hardly be presented as admirable, they favor a culture where respect and attributions of success are based on income, wealth, and spending. Such a culture is then further entrenched through a human psychological tendency that has been extensively researched under the heading the belief in a just world: our judgments of the moral character and conduct of people are significantly affected by clearly morally irrelevant information about their wellbeing: when people are doing well, we are drawn to think that they are good people; when they are doing poorly, we assume that they must be deserving this on account of some flaws in their conduct or character.[2]

We have seen how, as societies become richer, they come to be increasingly dominated by those who do predatory work and increasingly permeated by a culture that assigns social worth on the basis of money. How dangerous and destructive these two trends are, becomes apparent when we reflect on how deeply the values, understandings, and emotions of persons are shaped by their professional roles and interests and on how dramatically the interests associated with many predatory-labor roles diverge from any plausible conception of the common good. Eager to increase their profits and influence, military contractors and arms dealers are longing for tensions and arms races, for hostilities and wars as conditions in which their business can thrive — and they work hard to promote such conditions. To be sure, they do not want an all-out nuclear war that would destroy life on this planet. But they do labor toward a world on the brink of war, a world of high distrust in which trillions are spent on soldiers, war games, and weapons of mass destruction. Such a world comes with a lot of low-level violence and continuous small risks of serious devastation. But military contractors and arms dealers perceive these costs and risks as acceptable and present them as necessary for national security.[3]

[2] The locus classicus is Melvin J. Lerner, The Belief in a Just World. A Fundamental Delusion. New York: Plenum Press 1980.
[3] Some introductory information about arms industry lobbying in the United States, Europe, and India can be found, respectively, at https://www.opensecrets.org/industries/lobbying?ind=D, https://transparency-register.europa.eu/index_en, and in The Wire.

The professional interest of politicians also gravitates toward hostility and tension. When ordinary citizens perceive their country to be threatened by nasty rivals, they feel insecure and tend to follow and support their political leaders. This tendency to "rally around the flag" can be exploited especially by the executive branch of government which gains status against the other branches whenever there is war or a heightened danger of violence. Even if the top officials of the executive branch and the armed forces would not benefit from a bloody shooting war, they nonetheless understand that their own political power is enhanced by widespread vivid awareness that such a war is a real possibility. Damaged political leaders are often sorely tempted to lead their country to the brink of war to save or enhance their position, something that can be done openly or also by stealth or misinformation (creating the false appearance that our country has been wronged or threatened or attacked by others). And the aggressive postures associated with being on the brink of war then make actual war and violence substantially more likely.[4]

Speculators make money on big swings in markets, so they have a professional interest in instability. This interest is initially passive: speculators try to sniff out especially volatile markets and then build positions in such markets in the direction in which they expect the next big move to occur. Once such a position has been built, the interest becomes more active as speculators are then inclined to look for ways to *make* their chosen market more volatile and to trigger a major market move in their own favor. This can be done through rumors, for example, or through clandestine or tacit collaborations designed to move markets. Through such machinations, full-time professional speculators and traders can most easily fleece amateur market participants, such as farmers who sell futures contracts to reduce their market risk or retail investors who own stocks to fund their future retirement. Big market moves involve massive redistributions from the amateurs to the professionals, as amply documented in records of trading desk profits. Some such market swings seem to have no comprehensible external reasons — just some professionals finding it in their interest to rock the boat, often in teamwork. In other cases, such external reasons do exist — the COVID-19 pandemic for instance — but even there the professionals are seeking to exacerbate profitable volatility, thereby destabilizing markets and often causing severe losses to less savvy market participants. Such unsophisticated participants can include whole states, as exemplified in the currency markets whose volume is a staggering 30 times larger than gross world product.[5] Among the countries whose currencies have been devastated by speculative attacks in recent decades, causing vast disruptions and impoverishment to their populations, are India (1991), Mexico (1994), Thailand (1997, with Indonesia, South Korea, Laos, Malaysia and the Philippines also dragged in), Russia (1998 and 2014), Ecuador (1998–9),

---

[4] The seminal essay on this subject is John Mueller, "Presidential Popularity from Truman to Johnson," *American Political Science Review* 64:1 (1970), pp. 18–34. For a later, expanded and more empirical treatment, see Dieuwertje Kuijpers, "Rally around All the Flags: The Effect of Military Casualties on Incumbent Popularity in Ten Countries 1990–2014," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 15:3 (2019), pp. 392–412.

[5] The currency markets have annual turnover of about USD 3,500 trillion (lakh crore). The value of all goods and services produced worldwide presently sums to about USD 120 trillion per year.

Argentina (1999–2002), Brazil (1999, 2020, 2024), Turkey (2001 and 2018–24), Uruguay (2002), Ghana (2022), Egypt (2022–24), Pakistan (2022–24), and Nigeria (2023–24).[6]

As a final example, tax lawyers and accountants have a professional interest that the tax environment be highly complex and ever-changing. Pursuing this shared interest, they have been promoting a world with a huge diversity of complex and frequently revised national tax regimes which afford rich individuals and corporations endless opportunities for tax evasion and tax abuse. To exploit these opportunities, a huge global industry has sprung up of tax havens, secrecy jurisdictions, letterbox companies, fake trusts, and anonymous accounts, along with an army of shady lawyers, accountants, lobbyists, financial advisors, and other facilitators. This netherworld of global finance is estimated to manage wealth in the amount of USD 30-50 trillion (lakh crore), equivalent to about 8-12% of all household wealth worldwide or 1/4 to 1/2 of the world's annual product.[7] As amply revealed – by LuxLeaks (2014), Panama Papers (2015), Bahamas-List (2016), Paradise Papers (2017), Pandora Papers (2021), Cayman Leak (2024), etc. – this sophisticated infrastructure facilitates not merely massive tax abuse, but also crimes of many other kinds such as illegal trade in persons, drugs and weapons, international terrorism, subverting democracy, bribery, embezzlement, acquisition of natural resources far below fair value, and the money laundering associated with all such activities. In these ways, the global haven industry massively aggravates national and global inequalities and greatly impedes the development of poor countries by enabling multinational corporations, autocrats, corrupt politicians and officials, millionaires, and criminals to drain them of capital and tax revenues. The Washington NGO Global Financial Integrity estimates that such transnational financial crimes generate revenues of about USD 12.30 to 16.21 trillion (lakh crore) annually (10% to 14% of gross world product), with the lower-income countries losing the most in relative terms.[8] The global haven industry also serves to store an immense amount of hidden wealth that can be deployed for nefarious purposes, such as corrupting the procedures and officers of states and corporations.

---

[6] For general introduction, see https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences-and-law/economics-business-and-labor/money-banking-and-investment/speculation. A more detailed analysis is provided by Marco Di Maggio, "Market Turmoil and Destabilizing Speculation," *Columbia Business School Research Paper* No. 13–80 (August 1, 2016), available at https://ssrn.com/abstract=2353133, and in Ryan Banerjee, Lena Boneva, Gabor Pinter and Vladyslav Sushko: "Monetary policy transmission to exchange rates: the role of currency carry trades," Bank for International Settlements 2026, available at https://www.bis.org/publ/bisbull124.pdf. On the important special case of food markets, see Venegas, M.d.R.; Feregrino, J.; Lay, N.; Espinosa-Cristia, J.F. "Food Financialization: Impact of Derivatives and Index Funds on Agri-Food Market Volatility." *International Journal of Financial Studies* 12 (2024) 121–49. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijfs12040121.

[7] See https://financialtransparency.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/FTC_infographic_20170202_Eng.pdf for a brief introduction. A credible estimate of USD 24–36 trillion is provided by James Henry, "Let's Tax Anonymous Wealth! A Modest Proposal to Reduce Inequality, Attack Organized Crime, Aid Developing Countries, and Raise Badly Needed Revenue from the World's Wealthiest Tax Dodgers, Kleptocrats, and Felons," in Thomas Pogge and Krishen Mehta, eds., *Global Tax Fairness*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 2016, pp. 48 and 79. For reasons Henry gives (p. 79), the estimate by Zucman seems too low/restrictive. See Gabriel Zucman, *The Hidden Wealth of Nations*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press 2015. Aggregate global household wealth is estimated at USD 512 trillion at the end of 2025. See UBS, *Global Wealth Report 2025*, at https://www.ubs.com/global/en/wealthmanagement/insights/global-wealth-report.html.

[8] Global Financial Integrity: *Shadow Figures: the data of transnational crime*, GFI, Washington D.C., October 2025. Available at https://gfintegrity.org/report/shadow-figures/.

Summing up. This brief paper supports two main conclusions:

1. While the role-specific interests of productive work tend to be reasonably well-aligned with the long-term collective interest of humankind in stable peace, prosperity and ecological balance, the role-specific interests of predatory labor often dramatically diverge from that common interest and are also much more short-term.

2. The governance institutions that determine social organization and infrastructure on all levels — global, regional, national, and subnational — are heavily dominated by people in predatory-labor roles, who constitute a minority of human beings but wield a large and increasing preponderance of political power.

These two points help explain and predict increasing economic, social, and political inequality with associated persistence of severe poverty, as well as increasing instability with the associated grave dangers of highly destructive wars and ecological disasters.

Our fate is not sealed. But, to change it, great concerted efforts are required on the part of the majority in productive labor. As a first step, we must put away the belief that those who govern us are "sitting in the same boat" and are pursuing a vision of humanity's future that is broadly aligned with our values and ideals. For the most part, these people have no vision for humanity's future at all, but a myopic obsession with amassing wealth and power in competition with one another. This becomes apparent when one looks beneath the thin veneer of staged professionalism to behold the stunning incompetence of those in power, illustrated by the response to COVID-19, for instance, or by the 20-year U.S. occupation of Afghanistan, which wasted a mind-blowing USD 2.26 trillion (lakh crore).[9] The next steps then involve the fight for democratizing politics and against entrenched systemic injustices — tasks I have written about elsewhere.

---

[9] See detailed study by Brown University's Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/figures/2021/human-and-budgetary-costs-date-us-war-afghanistan-2001-2021. This amount is USD 18,400 per U.S. household and could have paid for half the worldwide cost of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, intended to eradicate severe poverty by 2030. See Jeffrey Sachs et al., SDG Costing and Financing for Low-Income Developing Countries, New York, Sustainable Development Solutions Network 2019, at https://sdgfinancing.unsdsn.org/static/files/sdg-costing-and-finance-for-LIDCS.pdf.

CONTENTS

ARTICLES, SHORT STORIES & RECIPES
PAGES: 1-64





POEMS & GHAZALS
PAGES: 65-77



PAINTINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS
PAGES: 78-91

IN THIS ISSUE

1 NOT A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: POLITICS OF CONVENIENT ABSENCE VERSUS COMPULSORY PRESENCE
Vaishali Mann

2 PRELIMINARY STEPS TOWARDS WALKING IN THE CITY
Rohan Sharma

3 *CITIES* THE CITY DOES NOT SEE: SPATIALITY AND ITS UNEASY TRANSITIONS
Yusra Khan

4 THE AFTERLIFE OF HOME
Eishita Tiwari

5 अफवाहों से परे: मेरी जामिया यात्रा
Sachin Kumar

6 A WOMAN'S SPACE
Nandini Chaudhary

7 A CLASSROOM OF CROSSROADS: WHY DELHI SCHOOLS NEED INTERSECTIONAL SENSITISATION?
Shagun Tomar

8 IN ANOTHER TIME, IN ANOTHER SPACE: A SWARAJ INQUIRY INTO THE STATE
Md Shahnawaz Hussain

9 TIME, AND EXPERIENCE
Aman Kumar Jha

10 BENCHES OF POWER: TIME, WAITING AND THE STATE
Muzammil Imam

11 A PEEK INTO THE PAST
Kanan Sharma

12 वियोग
Ritika Mishra

13 RETURN TO SENDER
Maskat

14 RECLAIMING THE FRAME: BLACK WOMEN, CINEMA, AND POWER
Sethunya Marang Motoutwane

15 LEARNING GOVERNANCE WITHOUT GOVERNING: THE PARADOX OF OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
Suhail Iqball

16 WINTER IN A BOWL: THE WARM HEART OF KASHMIRI HARISA
Sahib Zada Sheikh Aanif

17 LABELLING PEOPLE
Mohammad Zaid Abdullah Khan

18 युद्ध-रीति
Anupama

19 BETWEEN HOME AND HORIZON
Shoeba Khan

20 A PROMISE KEPT IN SILENCE
Mohammad Shadman Qurashi

21 GHAZAL
Mohd. Umair Khan

22 GHAZAL
Nabil Ahmad

23 GHAZAL
Alok Raj

24 TARANA
Anupama

25 COLLECTION OF ARTWORKS
Jigyasa Atreya

26 FRIDA KAHLO
Ritika Mishra

27 CAT UNDER THE UMBRELLA
Vaishali Mann

28 HANDMADE MAP OF PALESTINE
Tooba



29 A PAINTING
Abhishek

30 KASHMIR'S GOODBYE SKY
Rutba Khan

31 WINDOWS OF WAITING
Brajendra Singh Parihar

32 COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS
Maskat

33 STREETS OF KOLKATA
Khandoker Taasin

34 ST. CATHEDRAL'S CHURCH
Soumya Dutta

35 PHOTO SERIES
Eishita Tiwari





ARTICLES, SHORT STORIES & RECIPES

PAGES: 1-64

2026.

1 NOT A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN: POLITICS OF CONVENIENT ABSENCE VERSUS COMPULSORY PRESENCE

Vaishali Mann PhD, 3rd Year

The critique of feminist movement has a long history. It is a history that stands justified for its exclusion of marginalized women from its mainstream space. The classical feminists have always spoken from a positionality of privilege and that is an undeniable truth. For me, the understanding of the same came through my reading of what is regarded as a seminal text in the feminist literature- Betty Friedan's 'The Feminine Mystique.' I was blown away by the text for its well researched arguments and a thorough discussion of what Friedan referred to as a 'problem that has no name'. In her analysis of the mystique and her criticism of functionalist approach put forward by Talcott Parsons, she has tried to look at the existential suffocation of middle class housewives in US. Her subject of analysis was a woman who had a choice- the choice to be a housewife, who had the time to feel bored, trapped and psychologically empty. Towards the end of my reading, this text became one that deeply made me question the privilege of choice. Though her critique stands solid when it comes to critiquing the position of women in society, it falls weak in the face of her choice of subject that does not cater to the various intersections a woman is forced to stand between. The Friedan feminist group does not align with what different women across the spectrum faces. Here lies a politics of convenient absence- the privilege to not be pressurized to occupy public spaces all the time and still having a choice between a private space and public space. Virginia Woolf's woman has a room of one's own- it is a woman who needs a space and financial freedom to not let anything stifle with her creative imagination. She is a woman with a choice to withdraw from the world and not be crushed under the weight of survival and the labor it demands. This also reminds me of Indian movie 'Mrs.' which, when came on our screens, was so well appreciated for its display and critique ofpatriarchy. There is a scene in the movie I can never forget.

When the protagonist is on her periods and not allowed to go into kitchen, she though frustrated by these age old traditions that she is forced to live with, sits on her bed and watches dance videos on her phone as her periods also become her saving grace to not be burdened by household chores while a Dalit woman who is her house help going through the same situation as the protagonist is, does all her work. She doesn't make an effort to not put her labor on Dalit woman. This is the convenient absence I am referring to. This convenient absence does not work in a vacuum. There is parallel, a compulsory presence that is exhibited along with it. Dalit women, black women never had this choice to remain absent in some spaces. While bourgeois feminism framed housework as oppression, such women were always working- at homes, in public spaces. There always has remained a survival labor to be performed by these women. Bell Hooks in her seminal work 'Ain't I a woman?' has attacked white woman's victimhood while also remaining racially privileged. Similarly, upper caste women have displayed the same privilege and have maintained their hierarchy over lower caste women while questioning hierarchy of men. Audre Lorde famous dictum 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house' reflects how true equality can never be sought by being in the position of privilege in terms of choice that the system provides and never aiming for its complete annihilation. It captures the convenient absentee's dilemma. Any feminism that has refused to take into consideration the politics of difference is a failed feminism. The most phenomenal work I have come across and one of my absolute favorite is 'Scenes of Subjection' by black feminist scholar Saidiya Hartmann, who has directly attacked the notion of sympathy that is reflected by the privileged towards those who face violence. For her, the sympathy or the ability to say that one feels the pain of the most marginalized by 'imagining themselves in their shoes' is itself nothing but a blatant display of violence where the gaze is shifted from those who suffer violence to those who imagine themselves to be in situation. For her, a subject who faces violence is reduced and replaced by a new subject. She further critiques the public spaces where black women remain a victim of white gaze. Similarly,

Dalit women who have no choice but to work on the fields or in houses of the upper caste men are constantly victims of this painful violence. The gaze then becomes a weapon to assault and reduce the other to the category of 'nothing'. These women have no free choice to be absent from spaces. Even if they are victims or subject of sympathy, the violence persists both ways. It cannot be denied by any argument. These women have faced and continue to face the violence of compulsory presence. For them, there is no 'room of one's own'. For them, there is a violent labor that is to be performed- a violence that they are made to live, a violence with no escape.



PRELIMINARY STEPS TOWARDS WALKING IN THE CITY

Rohan Sharma M.A. Political Science, 1st Year

When thinking about Cities, it is paramount to understand that they are not merely physical arrangements of buildings and roads; they are living canvases where power, memory, movement, and meaning are continuously negotiated. Streets, pavements, malls, and everyday routes become sites where political life unfolds, not always through grand acts of protest or representation, but through ordinary practices of inhabiting space and moving through time. Drawing on Michel de Certeau's 1980 essay titled “Walking in the City", this essay approaches urban movement as a form of everyday expression that inscribes meaning onto space, while remaining entangled in larger structures of power, spectacle, and mediation. By situating walking at the intersection of art, space, and temporality, the essay explores how the seemingly mundane act of moving through the city can reveal both the possibilities of resistance and the limits imposed by contemporary urban and capitalist landscapes.

To begin with, let us look at Certeau’s essay, which treads the threshold between poetics and semiotics. Beginning with a gaze downward upon New York City from atop the World Trade Centre unveils the gratifications of beholding the urban expanse below. He professes that ascent to the pinnacle of this edifice is tantamount to liberation from the metropolis's clasp, offering a voyeuristic delight in observing its panorama from afar. Yet, true comprehension of quotidian existence necessitates descent into the obscure abyss where throngs ebb and flow; therein lies the ‘truth’ of everyday life, according to him. A city only exists because of the presence of its inhabitants. The common urban artisans are the walkers who animate its spaces with each step, infusing vitality into its very fabric. These pedestrians, traversing its streets, inscribe the urban 'text' through their movements, yet remain unable to decipher its entirety. Certeau's significant contribution to cultural studies lies in his examination of everyday life as comprised of intricate arrays of practices, notably emphasising praxis as a mode of expression.

Central to Certeau's argument regarding the enunciative quality of praxis is the assertion that space and place are not passive or impartial elements within the constructed milieu; rather, they necessitate activation through the 'rhetorical' engagements of users and transient individuals.

At this point, I must highlight that instead of reading this essay as what cities are, I think it's better understood as what they could be. Certeau is not writing a manual of what the city is, his essay, which is part of his larger project titled “The Practice of Everyday Life”, exudes a remarkable idealism: daily endeavours are portrayed not as estranged from, nor blindly complicit with, the prevailing status quo, but rather as actively invigorating for the individual and the urban environment alike. The book's French title, L'invention du quotidien, meaning "the invention of the everyday," encapsulates this cautionary and forward-looking stance, unlike its English counterpart. The vision it presents is truly inspiring. De Certeau's endeavour serves to emancipate us from the prevailing notion that everyday life is synonymous with alienation, a notion that has held sway throughout much of this century. While it is crucial not to succumb to the dominant paradigm, it is equally imperative, as de Certeau adeptly avoids, not to regress to the mid-nineteenth-century fallacy, still peddled by commercial interests, that daily conduct can effortlessly align with official norms, whether economic, political, or otherwise. Furthermore, it is essential not to extricate life from its ensnaring circumstances, its entanglements rooted not only in a multifaceted present but also in a murky past, laden with coercively felt yet dimly perceived legacies. In this regard, de Certeau's stance is somewhat ambiguous, as the old tactics and strategies he alludes to are not explicitly delineated in their application to specific situations. Consequently, they all appear to the reader's imagination, and the readers might do with them whatever they deem appropriate. His city does not lead him towards conformity; rather, it provides countless options for deviation. His inspiration is the city, and he employs a number of rhetorical devices to further his goals. These devices include deceptions and evasions of compliance, a collection of actions that de Certeau labels “tactics”.

The tactics employed by ordinary individuals, their "multiform, resistant, tricky, and stubborn procedures," emerge as more potent than the panoptic gaze of the state, as Foucault would say. One aspect that I think could perhaps add more to his essay is to look at the question of why people move around in the first place, or rather, what happens to them when they move around. It can be argued that the time spent doing movement has been replaced by advertisements. The nineteenth-century city, with its pedestrian-focused streets, offered concise and narrow pathways between residences and shops, where consumption occurred, and the markets and factories where labour was performed. The linear narratives propagated in print, outlining reasons for work (such as improving one's home, consuming, and being seen consuming at a variety of shops), directed the imagination in straightforward, step-by-step trajectories. It is more difficult to understand one's goals in a megacity of the twentieth century because daily requirements and desires that guide production and consumption are no longer represented within easily navigable time and space constraints. Desires and needs are broadcast like a tribal chant from vehicle radios, phones, and billboards along the roadway. This continuous chant seems unending; the representation of everyday needs and desires appears to envelop everyone, regardless of their location, in an uninterrupted cycle of yearning and lack. The process no longer requires many steps: order what you desire, on credit, from wherever you may be. In today's world, consumers are constantly en route to various destinations (work, leisure, home, market), leading to a perpetual state of distraction from their immediate surroundings by the demands of their next tasks. This state of distraction forms the backdrop of the advertiser's strategy. The consciences seized by the "society of spectacle," which blurs the distinction between utility and commodity values to the point of equating them (Jean Baudrillard's "simulation"), prove to be rife with inconsistencies. As quickly as sheepish consumption due to media overload in daily environments, indifference sets in. Abstract models, the star, the hero, become more alluring and deceptively effective as interpersonal and group interactions become less common and addresses of self to machine—the hair dryer, word processor, smartphones—and self to self—the mirror, the sleepless

night of stress — become more common. After all, who knows what's really going on behind the façade of style, and who wants to? Thus, style diverts our attention from our diversion. We find that continuity is more essential to us than knowing how the system operates or even having a say in the matter. As far as each of these domains interests me, a subject with limited consciousness, connections, and hence restricted needs and aspirations, style, my paradigms, fits the big with the tiny. It may be said that, as citizens of a new and rapidly evolving century, we have witnessed the recession and lengthy fall of the pedestrian city, one that has not yet reached the point of utter extinction. The world of the walker has been retreating as a result of events coming from several angles, such as the expansion of suburbs and increasingly ruburbs (rural suburbs), the pervasiveness of cars, and the continuous loss of public areas. Over the years, cities have been designed more and more for commercial advertising, impersonal driving, and private consumption rather than for public disclosure, political engagement, and human strolling. What we have in place of this is the shopping mall, a fully privatized and somewhat stripped-down version of the ancient and deeply political Greek agora or "town square," have brought back the act of walking to the suburbs and outskirts of many small towns, albeit now entirely within indoor spaces. They invert the world of the walker. The traditional sidewalk is effectively rolled up and reimagined within a purely commercial sphere of exchange, mostly devoid of residences, the natural environment, and spaces of public gathering and display. A significant portion of urban walking, however, persists within buildings themselves, within what could be called the "second story world" (third, fourth, fifth stories, and so on) on both vertical and horizontal planes. This includes movement across interior spaces and navigating up and down stairs between floors, akin to the intricate movements within a grand ant farm. It is crucial to stay mindful of the troubling vanishings and surprising resurgences of walking in its diverse forms. Within the urban stroll, there flows an unceasing procession of "information," moving past and through us, much of it imbued with cultural coding far more than in rural or wild settings.

This flow resembles the triggers and prompts delivered by a scent that transports us to memories of distant locales, forming mnemonic knots within the body. These knots spark a dynamic interaction with and archival remembrance of the spaces we traverse on our walks. Through walking, the act becomes the very journey, which constantly unveils. Walking loosens, untangles, and sets free the essence of a place within itself. When this connection wanes, it is often because pace overtakes and replaces place. The ground is not simply replaced with each new step, but it is displaced/erased, removed, or forgotten. Without engaging in regular walks, places are bypassed and erased. In this process, we risk topoclasm, the alienation of place, and the birth of non-places: locations devoid of vitality. The apolitical walkers of today are not walking alone; they are always with a companion (mobile phones) that allows them a retreat within a private space in the public sphere. This is seen most evidently in shopping malls and squares, wherein you are stuck in a cycle of consumption and production (through constant updating of feeds on social media sites). The reliance on machines represents a broader shift and loss of walking. In such instances, we may walk (or simply stand) in a place without truly moving through it, actively and physically inhabiting it. We walk upon machines that transport and carry us, sometimes seeming less alive than our own creations in the process. The driver of an automobile could be seen as a kind of cybernetic organism or cyborg, enclosed within a heavy metal shell and connected to numerous micro-machines within the larger vehicle. As Jean Baudrillard remarks regarding J.G. Ballard's novel, Crash, "Technology is only ever grasped in the (automobile) accident, which is to say in the violence inflicted upon technology itself and upon the body. They are one and the same: any impact, any blow, any collision—all the metallurgy of the accident can be deciphered in the semiurgy of the body." (Baudrillard, 1994) There are so many other instances that come to mind that highlight the interplay between power, walking, the text and rhetoric as a strategy to perhaps reclaim the streets?

Let us now examine some proposed limitations to what we have discussed so far.

While de Certeau's framework is illuminating, it does have limitations when it comes to offering critical analysis and proposing avenues of resistance for the walker. Overall, its approach is more poetic than political, with a tendency to reinstate excessively stark contrasts between a literal and metaphorical up and down, between theory and practice, and between the social realm on the macroscopic level and the personal realm on the microscopic level. Still, there are benefits to adopting walking as a primary means of getting a "bottom-up" awareness of the city. Morris (2006), taking this thread forward, highlights the overreliance of the notion of resistance that has been put forward in Certeau's essay and has been quietly accepted in the whole of cultural studies. He argues, following Bennett (1998), that the uncritical embrace of the notion of resistance has led cultural studies to become a field focused on "tracking down resistances" and, upon discovering them, aligning with their cause. However, this is not a plea to discard Certeau's valuable legacy that offers critical insights. Instead, as Bennett suggests, it is important to recognise that Certeau's concept of resistance "has real limits which need to be respected" (1998, p. 168). Morris, taking this thread, states that the most important limitation of Certeau is present in his opposition between 'the official' and 'the everyday', which leads to the rigid division between strategies and tactics. Walking practices in society don't neatly fit into a simple "us versus them" model, as suggested by Certeau's framework. Examples (that Morris uses), like "alternative" maps, such as a "Gay and Lesbian Melbourne" map, challenge this dichotomy. These maps highlight safe areas for same-sex couples to walk hand-in-hand, a political act against heteronormative behaviour. However, the fact that these "resistant" spaces have been mapped by commercial entities suggests a more complex power dynamic that isn't strictly compliant or resistant. Labelling all counter-official acts as practices of resistance oversimplifies the term and overlooks important distinctions between social groups. It also fails to acknowledge how the anti-establishment actions of street walkers are influenced by various intermediary or civic institutions, each with unique relationships to the dominant culture. If we examine how civic forms of culture shape everyday actions, the act of

"queering" the street, as discussed in the first example, isn't solely an act of unbridled resistance. Instead, it is structured and takes form through its interaction with official, heterosexual culture, as well as through the influence of gay and lesbian community groups and businesses with their alternative mappings of urban space. So are we really breaking free from the order, or just following a different order? This is just one problem that can be looked more into Certeau's argument; there are other problems as well, such as the homogenization of the "common people" or the "everyday man" that doesn't take into account the differences between them, be it class or other hierarchies and how that works with existing power structures. Another possible issue that Certeau, in my opinion, doesn't give enough attention to could be the complicity in domination or hegemonic power. These are, however, larger issues to look into and hence outside the scope of this essay. Going forward, perhaps cultural studies analyses should aim to create a more robust and multi-dimensional understanding of how bodies, power, mobility, and urban structures intersect in today's cities. However, this approach should not be merely a "labelling exercise" of identifying power and resistance. Instead, it should strive to map the varying "textures" and "effectivities" of the different power dynamics being examined.

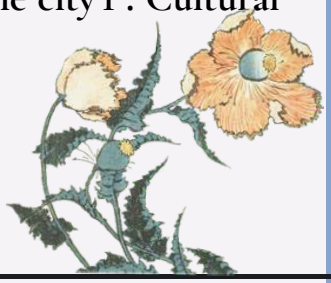
References

de Certeau, M. (1984). Walking in the city. In The practice of everyday life (S. Rendall, Trans., pp. 91–110). University of California Press. (Original work published 1980)

Baudrillard, J. (1994). Simulacra and Simulation (S. F. Glaser, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.

Morris, B. (2004). What we talk about when we talk about 'walking in the city'1 . Cultural Studies, 18(5), 675–697. https://doi.org/10.1080/0950238042000260351

Bennett, T. (1998). Culture: A Reformer's Science. Allen an
d Unwin.



3 *CITIES* THE CITY DOES NOT SEE: SPATIALITY AND ITS UNEASY TRANSITIONS

Yusra Khan M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

"City air makes one free." Weber wrote in *The City (1921)*, giving the urban its appeal: anonymity, autonomy, a space to make and unmake yourself ad-infinitum. The urban individual is energized through the centrifugal forces of commerce, steeled through the impersonal relations he encounters, and ends up absorbing the rational and contractual way of life the city embodies.

As the story goes, the turn towards modern statehood starting from the sixteenth century onwards, broke the fusion between the political and the socio-cultural. The split led to a pseudo-democratic space that could serve as a weak bulwark against state power. It symbolized the unshackling of the tribal, the mysterious, and the irrational. Instrumental rationality and purpose-driven communal life is what we are left with. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre writes, "Nothing disappears completely... In space, what came earlier continues to underpin what follows..." Far from being neutral geographical spaces, cities also reflect this hybrid nature of being and becoming a spatial entity.

Weber and his compatriots tell us that moving away from the royal and feudal, the urban became the seed–bed of the ideal of self-governance; a semi-autonomous zone where markets, private property, entrepreneurship, constitutional discourse, print culture and associational life thrived. No allegiance to the king, no fealty to the lord; here, market rationality reigned supreme. Weber is writing about the European city in the twentieth century, amid a massive surge in urbanization in Germany. Why must we cling to this 100-page text as a way of understanding the social coexistence of city life, one might ask? As it turns out, reality has a surprising amount of detail.

Sushmita Pati's *Properties of Rent* unravels some of these Eurocentric claims that dominated urban studies under the halo of rigid definitions of the urban and rural. Empirically mapping spatiality provides new ways of thinking about

these categories, that are often not tightly bounded, but rather, continuums. Tracing the histories of how a city makes and unmakes itself – is, in many ways, training to unshackle oneself from being held hostage by static thinking, and being closer to the complexity of contemporary social life. Pati argues in her book, how kinship ties, far from being immaterial in the realm of city life, are central organizing principles for economic relations. Taking the lens of ground rent, she highlights how the Jaat community transitioned from farming to real estate rentiers amid Delhi's expansion. She focuses on Shahpur Jat and Munirka, two prominent urban villages in Delhi that have transitioned from rural holdings to high-density, rent-seeking economies. The former is classified as a chic, bohemian space lined with high-end designer boutiques, street art, dining places, concept stores; a close cousin of Hauz Khas village. Munirka on the other hand, functions as a hub of cheap accommodation, attracting students, young professionals, and migrants. Once an agricultural area with sprawling mansions and farming infrastructure, only a few remnants of its past remain. Both come under *Lal Dora* jurisdiction and are hence exempt from most MCD construction and commercial by-laws. This administrative grey area makes room for a spatiality that is co-constructed by the merging tides of tradition and modernity.

Pati traces the way land acquisitions started in the 1950s, to arrangements under the Delhi Master Plan, and the acceleration of urbanization that created 'collateral damage' through rural dispossession. Losing their vast landholdings at a pittance in service of nation-building through rapid urbanization, Jaats were able to rely on 'bhaichara' or brotherhood as a basis for extracting rent from migrants and cultivating informal economies. Familial networks, *khap panchayats*, idiosyncratic notions of masculinity, all form nodes around which rent extraction was centralized, reinforcing communal ties and enabling control over rental properties, through exclusion of outsiders, while responding to anxieties of demographic changes, land loss, cultural dilution, and competition from Dalits and OBCs.

"It would be a mistake to believe that contemporary neoliberal order works to produce only a particular kind of rational utilitarian subject." Pati writes, as she unpacks the concept of 'bhaichara' as a moral mobilizing force that pushes back against our idea of what city-spaces end up enabling: an individuality that reckons with tribalistic impulses, an entrepreneurial spirit that embodies bourgeois autonomy, and faith in a Weberian legal-rational authority. Rather, the development of these urban villages showcase how spatiality is constructed through community solidarity of a specific kind – shaped through rural displacement, gentrification, historical value claims of belonging to a chivalrous clan of warrior-farmers. It is in trying to navigate through the ambiguities of the state's evolving legalities, that the construction of such localities, throws up new ideas of thinking about the rural-urban divide. Jaats harbour the hurt of dispossession, and channelize it towards sharpening identity around valour, land-holding prestige, and a pride that stems from old grievances.

Pati rightly points out that the nature of capitalism can best be understood as 'situated or localized'. Where grand theories often fall apart, scaling down could help understand how property rights, rent, community ties, development plans, intersect with each other. These villages complicate our understanding of development as linear, as they "are neither entirely dispossessed nor are they waiting to be gobbled up by real estate pressures." Far from being a sharp, uninterrupted story of urbanization, the city of Delhi continues to live with 'irregular' and 'illegal' forms of capital formation, absorbing the tensions of development. To deal with this complexity, we must free our thinking from unnecessary dichotomies and engage with concepts without being confined by them.

Cities are not just brick and mortar. They are also flesh and bone. We love them and we hate them. If we stay with them long enough, they make and unmake us in ways that mirror the story of their own unravelling.



4 THE AFTERLIFE OF HOME

Eishita Tiwari M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

A scar does not disappear once the wound has healed. It learns to live in the body. Home, for those who leave or are forced away, survives in the same way. For them, it is a mark that memory refuses to erase. This piece asks a stubborn question: How does 'home' continue to live materially and ideationally after it has been torn down? I write this essay in fragments on purpose. If the afterlife of home is itself a collage stitched from memory, epigraphs, and borrowed phrases, then the essay will be too. The reader here is not being let into a single chronological story because there is no single story to tell; these fragments are how memory and displacement are enacted. I argue that bookshops, markets, cafes, writers, scholars of forced migration, and conferences stage an afterlife of home. They do not merely recall loss, but they also perform belonging and moral repair. Read them as deliberate shards, which, when placed side by side, outline a moral and ethnographic argument.

Nirmal Verma offers a poignant reflection on the relationship between place and belonging in his book *Antim Aranya*. He writes:

"जिन स्थानों में हम रहते हैं, अगर वे न रहें... तो उनमें रहने वाले प्राणी, वह तुम्हारे माँ-बाप ही क्यों न हों... बेगाने हो जाते हैं... जैसे उनकी पहचान भी कहीं ईंटों के मलबे में दब जाती हो..."

"If the places where we live cease to exist... then the beings living in them, even if they are your parents ... become strangers... as if their identity too gets buried under the debris of bricks..."

Verma's reflection remained with me more than a literary thought; it was an experience I had not yet lived, but would later understand through stories of distant and fractured homes. I did not grow up with the understanding of the language of exile. As a teenager in mainland India, my world was shaped by familiar landscapes and the assumption that home was a stable entity. Six years

ago, a friend handed me two books, *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. What followed was an encounter with the afterlife of home and the way places continue to shelter people long after they have been destroyed or left unrecognisable. This encounter occurred at an age when reading is more about absorbing, and stories do not remain on the page but rearrange one's inner world.

This is a testament to the fact that adolescence is a moment of increased receptivity. Louise Rosenblatt reminds us that reading is not a passive consumption but a lived reality in *The Reader, the Text, the Poem* (1978). Hence, in Hosseini's novels, Amir's guilt- ridden Kabul and Mariam's capacity for endurance under Taliban rule stopped being distant stories. Literature worked as what Rudine Sims Bishop calls a "sliding glass door," in her essay 'Mirrors, Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors' (1990). It allowed entry into lives shaped by war, migration, patriarchy, and loss, and it eventually shaped the trajectory that I took in my own life.

It is no secret that we are shaped by what we read and watch, where and with whom we spend our time, and the kind of lifestyle we lead. We are made up of bits and pieces of art, places, books, lectures, and conversations. It is from these fragments that I wish to build this piece of writing.

Years later, these early experiences with the meaning of home, migration, and loss resurfaced during an ethnographic fieldwork at Faqir Chand and Bahrisons in Delhi. At Faqir Chand, books were piled high on both sides of the interior, leaving a narrow aisle to walk through. At the entrance, an Amrita Pritam line, *Mai tenu phir milangi,* caught my eye. On being asked about the vintage- tinted interior, the owner replied that it was meant to preserve the shop's old- world charm and its legacy.

In another corner of the shop, tote bags hung with the line: "Established amidst Hindoostan's Peshawar in 1931. Relocated to the heart of post- Partition Delhi

in 1951." The spelling "Hindoostan" struck me with a sense of historical distance. For someone born decades after Partition, these words carry a weight I can only attempt to imagine.

At Bahrisons, a placard read: "Who are we to say who is Hindu, who is Muslim, when there is Ram in Ramzan and Ali in Diwali." Migration here is narrated as endurance. It gestures towards the trauma of partition and serves as a warning against communal divisions. Such spaces function as what Pierre Nora terms *lieux de memoire* (sites of memory) in his essay 'Between Memory and History' (1989). These are the sites where history survives not through monuments but through everyday objects, gestures, and encounters.

These places are not only reservoirs of memories but also act as places of everyday interaction in urban settings. Anthropologists and urban sociologists describe food and markets as "boundary-breaching practices". They enable everyday forms of coexistence. Afghan restaurants and cafes in Delhi, in this sense, are not merely sites of nostalgia but active spaces of social negotiations that soften structural marginality.

These urban practices may create provisional belonging, but they cannot completely resolve the existential dislocation that accompanies exile. "Jahan koyi apna dafn na hua ho... woh jagah apni nahin hua karti." A place does not become one's own until someone beloved is buried there. Annie Zaidi, in *Bread, Cement, and Cactus*, transcribes this line from a literary festival. Home here takes the shape of the afterlife through loss. Warsan Shire writes that no one leaves home unless home becomes the mouth of a shark. Partition, civil wars, military coups, and insurgencies displace populations, break family ties and disturb temporal continuity. It leaves people struggling for belonging.

Anwesha Ghosh captures this condition in *Identity and Marginality in India*. Shri Narendra Singh, an Afghan refugee in India, tells that whenever they went to Afghanistan, they were told they had returned from their own country.

While in India, they were asked when they would go back. Neither considered as Afghan nor Indian, he described this situation as heartbreaking. Legal terms can make displacement seem orderly, but in reality, it is complicated. In India, where there is no binding national refugee law, the principle of non-refoulement exists more as an aspiration and everyday hospitality can clash with administrative uncertainty.

Migration is always imagined as fleeing from danger to safety. Literature complicates this narrative by showing migration as living with what stays behind, such as grief, violence, and unequal power. The home one leaves does not disappear; it acquires an afterlife.

Guilt is linked with migration in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*. Amir leaves Afghanistan as a child during the Soviet invasion. America offers safety, education, and distance from war. However, his escape is from a childhood betrayal he cannot undo. When he says, "I became what I am today at the age of twelve," the novel shows how moral failure can fix identity more permanently than geography can. A common refugee's hope is voiced when Baba dreams of America as "a place to bury my memories." Exile, however, sharpens guilt rather than erasing it. Migration is reimagined as an ethical return when Rahim Khan tells Amir, "There is a way to be good again."

Patriarchy is linked with migration in *A Thousand Splendid Suns*. Women are displaced without crossing borders. Mariam is taken away from her mother's hut, from childhood, from dignity, and finally from life itself. Her mother, Nana, warns her: "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's accusing finger always finds a woman. Always." The home becomes a site of exile where honour, obedience, and silence are harshly enforced. Hosseini shows how women become refugees within their own homes. Feminist scholars such as Nira Yuval- Davis, have argued that women are positioned as symbolic bearers of cultures, making the home itself a site where displacement and discipline are reproduced.

For Saadat Hasan Manto, the afterlife of home is more brutal. In *Toba Tek Singh*, the madness of Bishan Singh becomes the most lucid response to a world reorganised by borders. On being asked whether he belongs to Pakistan or Hindustan, he responds with gibberish, "Upar di gurgur di annexe di be-dhiyana di mung di daal of the lantern." This statement refuses any kind of imposed coherence. Manto finally places him on an unnamed piece of land between two nations, which was claimed by neither. Cathy Caruth, in her work *Unclaimed Experience* (1996), points out that extreme violence often resists coherent narration. It pushes survivors to express themselves through repetition or silence.

In stories like *Thanda Gosht* and *Khol Do*, female bodies become the places where violence perpetuates. Sakina's automatic response to the command "open it" shows a self stripped of agency. Her father's cry, "She's alive!" is heartbreaking because it shows how unbearable existence has become.

Ismat Chughtai's "Jadein" presents a subtle resistance through the character of Amma, who is an elderly woman and cannot comprehend why she must leave her home. Chughtai here portrays migration as literal uprooting. Amma clings to her house like a banyan tree, rooted in familiar soil. She fears that her children will wither elsewhere. Borders mean little to her compared to land, habit, and neighbourly bonds. The afterlife of home here survives through care rather than the nation.

Contemporary non-fiction insists on reading migration as a prolonged ethical and affective condition. In *No Friend But the Mountains*, Behrouz Boochani writes from within detention to show how exile is lived through repetition of days, memories, and gestures. In this scenario, the routine becomes the last remaining architecture of the home.

These questions of how people understand loss and displacement resurfaced during a roundtable on Publishing for the Young: Challenges and Rewards at

the India International Centre in November 2025. The session on children and conflict brought together scholars and writers working across psychology and literature. Surabhika Maheshwari described how adolescents turn to books like *The Kite Runner* and *Maus* to understand global crises. She outlined how conflict narratives help young readers to navigate immorality, privilege, and vulnerability. For her, "Conflict... is very importantly intra-psychic," making books crucial spaces for young readers to navigate emotions.

Deepa Agarwal highlighted the scarcity of Indian children's literature on conflict, while Shibani Phukan reflected on growing up in Assam amid everyday anxieties, such as "should we send the child to school today?" The books she read gave escape but not representation, shaped by political unrest. She asked a crucial question: "Is the child actually being reflected?" pointing to the persistent underrepresentation of children's trauma.

In the end, the story of home and migration forms a complex weave. Home does not vanish. It returns in books handed to us at the right age, in old bookshops that hold names that we never lived, and in stories that teach us how to sit with loss. The afterlife of home is not about going back; it is learning how to live with what cannot be undone.



अफवाहों से परे : मेरी जामिया यात्रा

Sachin Kumar M.A. Public Administration, 2nd Year

किसी भी संस्थान को समझने से पहले उसके बारे में बनी धारणाएँ हमारे मन में जगह बना लेती हैं। कुछ धारणाएँ अनुभव से जन्म लेती हैं, तो कुछ अफवाहों से। जामिया मिल्लिया इस्लामिया भी एक ऐसा ही नाम है, जिसे जानने से पहले ही समाज ने कई खाँचों में बाँट दिया है। मेरी जामिया यात्रा भी इन्हीं अफवाहों से शुरू हुई थी—लेकिन उसका अंत अनुभव, आत्मविश्वास और इंसानियत पर हुआ।

मैंने अपनी स्नातक की पढ़ाई दिल्ली विश्वविद्यालय से की थी। वहाँ का वातावरण, मित्र, शिक्षण प्रणाली—सब जाना-पहचाना था। जब मैंने अपने मित्रों को बताया कि मैं पोस्ट ग्रेजुएशन जामिया से करना चाहता हूँ, तो प्रतिक्रियाएँ चौंकाने वाली थीं।
किसी ने कहा—"वहाँ का माहौल ठीक नहीं है।"
किसी ने चेताया—"जामिया में हिन्दू सुरक्षित नहीं हैं।"
तो किसी ने यह भी जोड़ दिया—"खबरों में जो दिखता है, वही सच है।"

मित्रों की बातों से ज़्यादा चिंता परिवार की थी। घर वालों ने समझाया कि किसी और विश्वविद्यालय से मास्टर कर लेना बेहतर होगा। उनकी चिंता स्वाभाविक थी, क्योंकि वे भी वही सुन और देख रहे थे, जो समाज और मीडिया दिखा रहा था।

इन्हीं आशंकाओं के बीच मेरे एक प्रोफेसर की बात ने मेरी सोच को नई दिशा दी। उन्होंने कहा, "जामिया सिर्फ एक विश्वविद्यालय नहीं, एक विचारधारा है। इसे स्थापित करने वालों का विश्वास था कि एक बेहतर राष्ट्र का निर्माण शिक्षित और जागरूक समाज से ही संभव है।"
उन्होंने मौलाना अबुल कलाम आज़ाद, डॉ. भीमराव आंबेडकर जैसे महान विचारकों का उल्लेख किया, जिनकी सोच समानता, शिक्षा और सामाजिक न्याय पर आधारित थी।

यहीं से मैंने तय किया कि मैं अफवाहों के आधार पर नहीं, बल्कि अपने अनुभव के आधार पर जामिया को समझूँगा।

जब मैं पहली बार जामिया पहुँचा, तो मन में डर था—इससे इनकार नहीं किया जा सकता। नया परिसर, नया माहौल और नई पहचान। आज भी मुझे अपना पहला दिन स्पष्ट रूप से याद है। मैं कक्षा में सबसे पीछे वाली बेंच पर चुपचाप बैठा था। यह पहली बार था जब मैं मुस्लिम छात्रों के बीच बैठा था। मन में संकोच था, लेकिन किसी की आँखों में परायापन नहीं था।

धीरे-धीरे बातचीत शुरू हुई। मेरा पहला दोस्त बना सुहैल इक़बाल, जो कश्मीर से था। उसकी भाषा, उसकी शालीनता और उसका दृष्टिकोण मेरे लिए बिल्कुल नया अनुभव था। इसके बाद मेरी दोस्ती मोहम्मद अली से हुई, जो लद्दाख से था। उसकी सरलता और खुलेपन ने मेरे मन से डर की आख़िरी परत भी हटा दी।

उस दिन मुझे यह समझ आया कि डर जगह या लोगों से नहीं, अज्ञान से पैदा होता है।

जामिया का छात्र जीवन आसान नहीं था। हॉस्टल की समस्याएँ थीं, सीमित संसाधन थे, और दिल्ली जैसे महानगर में रहना अपने आप में एक संघर्ष है। लेकिन इन्हीं परिस्थितियों में दोस्ती गहरी होती है, आत्मनिर्भरता आती है और जीवन को देखने का नज़रिया बदलता है।

कक्षा का वातावरण विचारोत्तेजक था। यहाँ केवल पाठ्यक्रम पूरा करने पर ज़ोर नहीं दिया जाता, बल्कि सवाल पूछने, तर्क करने और असहमति व्यक्त करने की स्वतंत्रता दी जाती है। प्रोफेसर छात्रों की बात सुनते हैं और विचारों को सम्मान मिलता है। यही वह शिक्षा है, जो व्यक्ति को केवल नौकरी के लिए नहीं, बल्कि समाज के लिए तैयार करती है।

एक छात्र के रूप में मेरा अनुभव अत्यंत सकारात्मक रहा। यह सच है कि हर विश्वविद्यालय की अपनी समस्याएँ होती हैं, लेकिन जामिया को केवल समस्याओं या सुर्खियों के आधार पर आँकना उसके साथ अन्याय है। यहाँ विविधता केवल दिखती नहीं, बल्कि जी जाती है।

मेरे लिए जामिया का सबसे सुंदर अनुभव रमज़ान के दिन रहे। मेरे कई मित्र रोज़ा रखते थे और हम उनके साथ इफ़्तार के लिए उनके घर जाते थे। वहाँ उनके परिवार हमें इस तरह अपनाते थे कि यह एहसास ही नहीं होता था कि हम अलग-अलग धर्मों से हैं। एक ही मेज़ पर बैठकर खाना, बातचीत और हँसी—यह सब इंसानियत का सबसे सच्चा रूप था।

इन पलों ने मुझे सिखाया कि भारत की असली ताक़त उसकी विविधता और आपसी सम्मान में है। जामिया ने इस सच्चाई को किताबों से ज़्यादा जीवन में उतारकर दिखाया। आज जब मैं अपनी जामिया यात्रा को देखता हूँ, तो महसूस करता हूँ कि यह सिर्फ एक शैक्षणिक सफर नहीं था, बल्कि एक वैचारिक और मानवीय यात्रा थी। यहाँ आकर मैंने सीखा कि संस्थानों को अफवाहों से नहीं, अनुभवों से समझा जाना चाहिए।
जामिया मिल्लिया इस्लामिया केवल एक विश्वविद्यालय नहीं, बल्कि एक एहसास है—जहाँ शिक्षा, संवेदना और सह-अस्तित्व साथ-साथ चलते हैं।मेरी जामिया यात्रा इस बात का प्रमाण है कि सच्चाई अक्सर सुर्खियों से परे होती है।

6 A WOMAN'S SPACE

Nandini Chaudhary M.A. Human Rights, 1st Year

"You take up too much space" is something rarely ever told to a woman. However, it is implied in rather subtle insinuation, multiple times and the camouflaged spatial misogyny hides well under the hoax of "femininity".

Interestingly, it becomes a social practice to teach women to take up the smaller spaces, reinforced at every step, until it is an unquestionable pattern of how society ought to be. One must understand that these patterns are carefully stitched together from the patches of manners, compliments, friendly advice, etc.

Whether being told to sound softer but also not be gullible, or to be easy-going but at the same time know your boundaries, be emotionally mature but not emotional or you are hysterical, have a smile but don't insinuate flirting, so on and so forth. Women are directed rather than flowing into their natural space. From a very young age, they've been taught to fit into the ideal mould, bend to the convenience of what seems to be the perfect idea of femininity. It is baffling how it starts to affect girls, taking up less space in themselves as individuals, and turning older to be women who "naturally" take up less space in the world.

It is extremely necessary to understand that what seems to be the idea of discipline is rather a reinforcing practice of teaching girls and women to fold and shrink so they take up less space. Whether we talk about bodily ideas or the idea of autonomy, shrinking becomes natural to young girls. In fact, the very idea of having a set standard globally over the looks of an ideal woman is a great example of how little autonomy women have in acquiring the space in the world on their own terms, pace and preference. Women are somehow judged on their pitch, too. A loud, confident woman is aggressive and difficult. A firm, idealistic woman is dominant and a "man-eater". So they become softer, quieter. They spend their lives to fit into the ideal woman's image. Because how dare a woman step out of her allotted space?

Unlearning the art of shrinking, that is so deeply embedded in women, is hard but not impossible. The guilt needs to die, because taking up your space does not jeopardize another's.



7 A CLASSROOM OF CROSSROADS: WHY DELHI SCHOOLS NEED INTERSECTIONAL SENSITISATION?

Shagun Tomar M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

As a Teach For India volunteer at Sarvodaya Co-Ed Secondary School, Munirka Village, Delhi. What was initially a basic placement, a lesson plan, a worksheet set, and the hum of the classroom evolved into a daily exercise of paying attention to the small wins, the unseen burdens children bore, and the subtle ways the outside world informed every word of their learning.

The days were punctuated by small triumphs, a child pronouncing "cat" aloud for the first time, another drawing out the letters of "bat" and smiling with assurance. Those were not small moments; they were proof that learning can happen, incrementally and quietly, when someone is there with you and has faith you can learn. The broader topography of difference was that many of the children could not read with understanding. Some could not write simple words. These were not gaps in schooling; they were stitched into children's lives by poverty, fractured homes, and the simple fact that school hours are not a given when your house floods and your family's day is spent saving what they can.

When it rained, half the class didn't show up because their houses, not the streets, were flooded. This was a reminder that learning is fragile when survival takes precedence. Not every child had a smartphone; online learning was an abstract concept without sense if you couldn't plug in. These material conditions dictated attendance, attention, and possibility. They instilled the reality that empathy in teaching must be pragmatic. Comprehending a child's life situation is as important as comprehending their reading level.

The classroom also reflected social notions that children learn at home. One day, in a lesson on opposites, when asked, "What's the opposite of a doctor?" Instinctively, a student replied, "Nurse." The answer was denser, heavier than the words; it meant that to him, the very concept of a woman doctor was invisible. On another day, a girl cried when the teacher asked her to sit beside a

boy, which she assumed was a punishment. The teacher was perplexed at first; then she realised that her response stemmed from rules learned at home, from a community where certain small moments are policed, where girls learn to be quiet, and boys learn to look away.

I employed break time as a quiet ethnography. The nicknames, the slurs, the laughter often had an edge: caste-tinged insults, gendered jokes, casual words like "besharam" hurled at girls who dared to speak up. It was observed how a thoughtless remark could shrink a child's readiness to raise a hand, how sustained teasing could solidify into internalised boundaries. This is socialisation in the making a process that forms aspiration and self-worth much more than a lesson ever could.

Games became the bridge to sustain that patience, word games, riddles, and small math puzzles that turned silence into laughter and hesitation into participation. The Delhi government's happiness curriculum echoed through those moments, learning became joy, and joy became memory. In break times, the same games would spill into the playground. In one such instance, a group of boys often hoarded board games, saying "Abhi ladkiya nahi," when the girls asked for a turn. Their tone was not cruel, just rehearsed, a small reflection of the hierarchies they absorbed outside school. The teacher had to step in, not to scold, but to show that sharing itself was part of the lesson. Sometimes the biggest classroom happens beyond the blackboard.

On Sundays, the nearby market would come alive with rows of stalls, the smell of pakoras, the clatter of metal toys. For the children, the Sunday market was not just leisure; a new pencil or eraser bought with saved coins was an act of pride. One of my students, a quiet girl who loved to draw, waited for her brother's salary each week so she could buy a drawing book. Her brother, barely out of school himself, made sure to set aside a few rupees for her. These were not transactions; they were gestures of belief.

The Midday Meal Scheme worked on similar principles, food as faith, nourishment as equality. The smell of dal and rice drifting through the corridor meant more than calories; it meant that no child would learn to be hungry that day. The meal was often an incentive for attendance, but more than that, it gave structure to the day, a small promise that someone cared. Amid these routines, school was also a stage for cultural expression. Annual functions and assembly days were filled with folk songs, regional dances, and small performances that carried home into school. When children performed in their mother tongues — Bhojpuri, Haryanvi, Rajasthani the classroom expanded to fit their worlds. It wasn't merely performance; it was self-recognition.

Family, too, was inseparable from learning. Siblings often became co-teachers, older ones checking homework, explaining concepts, even walking younger ones to school. A student who usually struggled to form words excelled in a grammar worksheet. Curious, I nudged him to explain his answers, and he smiled sheepishly and said, "Bhaiya aur Didi ne kar diya." His siblings, both in higher classes, had helped him. That moment was tender and instructive. It showed me that learning in these communities was a collective act, not an individual achievement. Parents, many of whom worked as domestic helpers, carried their own versions of care, sometimes harsh, but rooted in fear. They believed in discipline as safety. At parent-teacher meetings, parents said "Maar lo agar zarurat ho," or "Padhai mein dhyan nahi to kaam karo." It was not cruelty; it was anxiety, the worry that if education failed, their children's futures would collapse into the same cycles of labour and exhaustion. Their love was fierce, but it carried the grammar of survival. They spent much of their salaries on tuition didis, desperate to give their children an advantage they never had. Visiting their homes, cramped rooms that still held books with pride, made me see how much schooling meant to them. Home visits revealed the architecture of aspiration: shared beds, makeshift desks, parents counting coins to buy notebooks. Community engagement wasn't an "extra" part of teaching; it was the core of understanding why children sometimes came late, why homework went unfinished, and why attention wavered after lunch. Inside the classroom,

there were forty children, each with a different story, a different rhythm. Their moral reasoning always amazed me during one reading comprehension exercise on Bambi. When the story concluded, "If you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all," they didn't just memorise it. They discussed it, questioned it. "Didi, agar bura bolne se kisi ka bachcha paye toh?" one child asked if speaking harshly could save someone, would it still be wrong? Their understanding wasn't rote; it was alive, moral, searching. But learning often ran up against material limits. We were sometimes asked to hold remedial sessions for struggling students, yet there was no dedicated space. On good days, we'd sit in the corridor, the sound of classes humming behind us. On rainy days, those sessions were cancelled entirely. The lack of space taught us creativity, but it also taught us inequality, the way education depends not just on teachers and children, but on rooms, roofs, and dry floors.

Intersectionality is simple and urgent; our students don't live in discrete boxes. Their lives are an intricate tapestry of caste and class, gender and language, ability and family background. A poor, marginalised caste girl is going to have a compounded set of expectations and limitations, fewer resources to study, more careful policing in the home, and more biting ridicule at school. Addressing any one of those burdens in isolation misses the whole child. The intersection of caste, class, and gender creates distinct obstacles that a one-size-fits-all solution cannot reach.



8 IN ANOTHER TIME, IN ANOTHER SPACE: A SWARAJ INQUIRY INTO THE STATE

Md Shahnawaz Hussain M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

Charkha and the Pistol

This article is a hypothetical reconstruction, but its central claim is concrete: the assassination of Gandhi must be read also as a collision of two rival imaginations of the State. The *charkha* stands for Gandhi's Swaraj a culture-oriented, decentralised, moral politics rooted in self-rule and non-violence. The *pistol* stands for Godse's vision a modern, Western-style, strong nation-state that privileges authority, uniformity, and coercion to secure national unity.

Written in the spirit of *Hind Swaraj*, the article stages a brief Swaraj-style inquiry: an editor's questions and Gandhi's answers on the nature of the State, violence, and modernity. This is followed by a plain reconstruction of Godse's political imagination — not to praise it, but to understand why a rigid, statist answer seemed necessary to him. The final section offers a time-and-space analysis that juxtaposes the two visions and shows how their philosophical distance made Gandhi, not merely a politician but an emblem of an alternative polity, a target.

This article is written as a tribute to Gandhi's moral political vision and as an attempt to clarify one important strand in the wider debate about nationalism, modernity, and political violence in India.

Editor and Reader

Reader: "Bapu, before we turn to your ideas in Swaraj, allow me to begin elsewhere. In our country today, there is a rising group of nationalists who imagine India as a European-style nation-state — one culture, one will, one territory. They speak of cultural uniformity, strong central authority, and the need to discipline minorities into a single national identity. Some even argue that such a state can be built by cooperating with the colonial structure itself.

What do you make of this Europeanised, ethno-majoritarian nationalism? Is this the path for India, or is it a departure from her civilizational soul?"

Editor: "You ask me about those nationalists who speak of one culture, one will, and one nation. They want India to resemble the modern European State. My friend, such a dream is dangerous, for it asks living cultures to shrink themselves to fit a single mould. When the State decides what culture should be, it begins by praising uniformity and ends by punishing difference. This project, though wrapped in the language of nationalism, carries an ethnocidal spirit. Ethnocide is not the killing of men; it is the killing of their ways of life. Their speech, their customs, their dress, their memories are slowly removed until only one pattern survives. This may suit Europe, but it is false to the soul of India. For us, culture has never been one thing. There are many ways of being Hindu, many ways of being Muslim, many ways of being Indian. Our civilization grew not by destroying differences, but by sheltering them. The ethnomajoritarian says he is saving the nation. In truth, he is shrinking it. A State that demands sameness becomes blind to the richness of its people. When politics tries to manufacture culture, culture hides underground. The State must protect moral life, not command it. Our unity will come from mutual respect, not uniformity."

Reader: "One of the strongest critics of your ideas has been Nathuram Godse. In his defence and in the pages of *Why I Killed Gandhi*, he repeatedly argued that your insistence on non-violence, your emphasis on Hindu–Muslim unity, and your appeal to ancient Indian tolerance have weakened the Hindu community. Godse claims that your ideals made Hindus politically timid and prevented them from asserting themselves as a nation. How do you answer this charge?"

Editor: "You say that there are some who accuse me of weakening the Hindu community. If you read their writings carefully, you will see that the Hinduism they defend is not the Hinduism that shaped this land for thousands of years. It is a new invention—hard, uniform, militant, and anxious—born more from the

modern European nation-state than from our own civilisational soil. What Shri Godse calls Hindu strength is, in truth, only the strength of exclusion. He imagines the nation as "one people, one culture, one will," and believes that anything which questions this uniformity becomes dangerous. In such a vision, diversity is a threat, and the State becomes the supreme authority that must mould all into a single pattern. I cannot accept this, for it goes against both my conscience and the ancient Indian tradition. The Hinduism I know—practised not in books but in homes, temples, festivals, and villages—is plural. It has never demanded that all men think alike, worship alike, or speak alike. Our civilisation grew through contact, not conquest; through absorption, not erasure; through friendship, not fear. I have often spoken of Sarva Dharma Sambhava—equal regard for all faiths. This was not my invention; it is the natural teaching of India's long religious life. To treat difference as a danger is to commit violence against our own heritage. When a nation begins to imagine that only one culture must dominate, it steps onto the path of ethnocide—the deliberate ending of another's way of life. Such an idea is wholly foreign to Hindu civilisation. True Hinduism is not afraid of plurality; it is nourished by it. Shri Godse feared me because I refused to place the State above society. He believed that political power must shape culture, and he thought my insistence on humility, decentralisation, and mutual respect would weaken the modern nation-state. But I have never believed that civilisation rests on the power of the State. Civilisation rests on the character of its people. Politics, to me, is only a tool to protect the moral and cultural life of the community—not to crush or engineer it."

Reader: "Bapu, allow me to push this discussion a little further. Suppose in the future the Indian State—knowingly or unknowingly—begins to validate an ethno-majoritarian idea of the nation. A nation imagined around one culture, one will, one religion, and one political identity, very similar to the European nation-state model that thinkers like Godse admired. If such a model becomes the accepted grammar of our public life, what kind of future will it create for India."

Editor: "My friend, if India ever begins to imagine herself through the narrow idea of one culture, one religion, one identity, then she will not move towards Swaraj but towards a dangerous form of domination. A nation built on an ethno-majoritarian model, like the one admired by Godse, will inevitably produce intolerance. And once intolerance settles into public life, society becomes divided in its heart before it divides in its streets. Such a model creates the belief that political power naturally belongs to one community. This will make minorities insecure, make the majority arrogant, and turn everyday differences into bitter conflicts. In that atmosphere, even extreme ideas—like imagining a religiously uniform "Akhand Bharat"—will appear attractive to some. But these are not visions of unity; they are expressions of fear and control. Ethno-majoritarian nationalism does not strengthen a country; it weakens it from within. It prepares the ground for communal clashes, identity-based violence, street-level confrontations, and endless cycles of retaliation. Stone-pelting, loudspeaker disputes, religious anger, and social hostility are all symptoms of a nation that has lost its moral compass. Remember: a nation that demands sameness will always produce division. India has survived and flourished because she allows many languages, many faiths, and many ways of life to exist together. The moment we replace this pluralism with a single definition of who truly belongs, we begin to shrink the very idea of India. Swaraj cannot be built on fear. It can only grow where every community feels equal, safe, and respected. If India chooses the path of majoritarian nationalism, her future will not be freer—it will be more fractured."

Interpretive Note

Nathuram Godse was not just an angry individual. He represented a certain ideological mindset. In his statement to the court, he said that Gandhi had become "greater than the nation" and that Gandhi's sympathy toward Muslims was weakening India. Godse believed that India must be shaped by one dominant culture, mainly Hindu, and that this was the only way to "protect" the country. On the surface, this sounds like a defence of Hinduism, but in truth,

the model he admired was very similar to rigid European-style nationalism — uniform, majoritarian, and intolerant of differences.

This attitude was never part of India's deeper cultural spirit. Indian traditions—from Ekam Sat (truth is one, the wise call it by many name), sulh-i-kul in the Mughal period to Gandhi's own principle of sarva-dharma-sambhava—teach harmony between religions, not fear or domination. Gandhi believed India's strength came from its plurality, from the fact that many communities lived together with dignity. Godse rejected this openness; he saw diversity as a threat.

This ideological clash explains why Gandhi was targeted while other leaders who talked about secularism or harmony were not attacked. Gandhi did not merely preach tolerance he embodied it, lived it, and insisted that the nation must follow it. For a mind shaped by rigid nationalism, Gandhi's message of compassion appeared dangerous, even "anti-national."

In reality, Gandhi was defending the true idea of India: a country where unity grows from respect, not from forcing everyone into one identity.



TIME, AND EXPERIENCE

Aman Kumar Jha M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

If we all look back at our lives, the moments that come to our memory are never the longest ones, but the ones lived fully. A week spent learning something new, travelling, or having a deep conversation with someone you love feels timeless. However, weeks lost to routine or doom scrolling end in nothing. The clock moves in the same way in both the cases, but not the time we experience. What is time? Is it something objective or is it something linked to our consciousness and experience? Let's get on a journey from time as an external measure to time as something lived, remembered, and actively created.

Being a science student in higher secondary, my first serious interaction with 'Time' happened via Classical Physics. It was straightforward. For someone like Isaac Newton, time existed independently regardless of events, emotions, or observers. It was absolute and measurable. This concept still controls our lives. For example, clocks, schedules, deadlines, and productivity all rely on Newtonian time. Though Newton explains how time passes, he fails to account for how time is felt.

However, with time, we were introduced to Modern Physics, where the uniform nature of time was abandoned. According to Albert Einstein's theory of relativity, time is woven with space into a single fabric called 'space-time'. There are two interesting phenomena that I want to mention. Since time depends on motion and gravity, the first is that time ticks slower on a fast-moving object. For example, a clock in a fast-moving spaceship ticks slower relative to a point stationary on Earth. This phenomenon of 'time dilation' has been proved via experiments. The other phenomenon is that gravity curves space-time, that is, it slows down time in a strong gravitational field. So, a clock ticks slower near the Earth when compared to space. The aim of describing such scientific explanations of time is to show that even at the most objective levels of physics, time is not fixed.

Now since we know that time 'bends' in the universe, let us see how it reacts to human consciousness and experiences. My shift from 'Science' in higher secondary to Political Science in graduation and post-graduation introduced me to Immanuel Kant. Kant considered time as a precondition for experience. It allows us to arrange or order our sensations into 'before' and 'after', and time is not something felt but it is the mental construct to make all experience possible. Kant, for me, is the turn inward and creates a bridge between scientific time and a more subjective, experiential view of time.

Another German philosopher Martin Heidegger links time and existence, making humans temporal beings. The most interesting feature I found in his idea was the continuity of time, that is, how the past, present, and future act together. The past lives in memory and the future pulls us toward goals and opportunities. There is an urgency due to our finitude, and time matters because life ends. However, death is not a limitation on our life, it gives life and time its true meaning. We know someday time will run out and thus it makes more sense to live intentionally.

Henri Bergson clearly distinguishes between clock time and lived time. He termed it 'duration'. Duration is the continuous flow of past and present and is not divisible into seconds or minutes. So, memory is not data stored in the past but seeps into the present by shaping how each moment is felt. Thus, a life is measured by how richly years are lived and not by how many years pass. This philosophical insight resonates with our lived experience. A single meaningful conversation stays alive with us throughout life compared to just drifting through routine.

Our time on earth is limited, that is, objective time is fixed. However, we have agency over experienced time. Here I propose the idea of 'Active Living' which emphasizes on making the moment dense and crystallizing experiences in memory. It doesn't mean a busy, productive or hectic routine, it involves

engaging deeply with people, places, and ideas, and working to raise your capacity and potential. It includes choosing ordinary moments and making them special by awareness of our finitude. This could expand our experienced time. Some examples are noticing trees while walking, asking questions to our grandparents, laughing with friends, and many more. Rather than letting time pass, a life with many memories, feels longer and fuller. Here I want to clarify that in no way I'm hinting at pleasure seeking and always seeking happiness. Negative experiences are very crucial and central to Active Living. They are important because they disrupt our routine, and more importantly it increases our self understanding and awareness that's why negative experiences should never be dismissed as lost time. Thus, time doesn't expand by adding more hours but by filling the limited hours with memories and experiences.



10 BENCHES OF POWER: TIME, WAITING AND THE STATE

Muzammil Imam M.A. Public Administration, 2nd Year

"She came every morning, and no one noticed until she stopped."

In the capital, benches are never placed randomly. They are placed deliberately close enough to see power yet distant enough to never interrupt it. Not near the gates where decisions are made not far enough to disappear from view but positioned precisely for waiting. Nothing about it asks for attention. And yet for years, it carried a life suspended between hope and procedure.

This story too belongs to a bench. The bench outside the ministry looks the same as always with an iron frame painted government green, wooden slats worn smooth by years of use. This particular bench stands outside the old administrative block bears no plaque, no name. No one remembers when it was installed. It exists in that uncertain category that serve without being acknowledged. It faces the building at a slight angle as if trained not to look directly at authority. Every morning, ministers walk pass it. Their movement is quick and practiced. Security clears the way. Conversations pause. Pedestrians step aside. Power moves vertically upwards, uninterrupted.

The bench remains still observing silently unnoticed, disciplined by repetition. Over time, the bench learns patterns which footsteps slowdown, which never do. It learns the difference between waiting by choice and waiting because there is no alternative. Protesters come too, though only briefly. They sit to retie their shoelaces, to catch their breath, to regroup after shouting slogans. Their presence is temporary never treated as ownership. The police tolerate them only as long as rest does not begin to look like staying.

But every morning, almost at the same hour, a woman used to sit there. She arrived before the city was fully awake, when the air still belonged to those without appointments. She carried no placards and wore no slogans. Only a file, thick and uneven, its papers swollen by humidity and waiting.

The file had aged badly: corners bent, staples rusted, ink faded into a pale blue that could not be erased but longer can be read clearly. She sat upright, not in protest, not in resignation. But in an anticipation that had survived disappointment long enough to become quiet. No one never asked her name. She was never registered as a petitioner but only tolerated as a presence. Clerks walked past without noticing her. Journalists passed without interest. The bench became the only place that received her consistently. Time moved differently around her.

In the capital, time accelerates for those in power. Meetings begin late but end decisively. Deadlines bend. Files move when they have to. For others, time grow heavy stretching days into years, turning procedure into punishment. Her file had already travelled through offices she could no longer name. Each stamp suggested progress, each signature passed responsibility along. The file was never rejected. It was simply never completed, the most efficient form of political erasure.

Years passed. Governments changed. Slogans were replaced. Portraits inside the ministry were rearranged according to electoral results. The bench remained the same, absorbing monsoons, winters and the weight of waiting bodies. The woman grew older. Her hair turned grey. Her hands began to tremble not only because of age but because of repetition: opening the file, checking the same pages, folding it back again day after day.

Hope did not disappear all at once. It slowly wore away. Some days she spoke softly to no one in particular. On other days she remained silent for hours; Silence too is a language learned in political spaces.

Then one morning, she did not come. The bench noticed first; used to her weight, her posture, her quiet endurance. It felt the absence differently. Absence has its own presence that can not be described but can be felt. Days passed. No one asked where she had gone. No register recorded her departure. Her story left the system quietly as it had entered it.

People continued to sit there. Protesters rested. Security guards leaned for a moment and moved on. But something had changed. The bench no longer held a body but it held memory; Memory does not announce itself, it settles quietly, the way dust does unnoticed, until someone finally looks closely enough.

This is how political spaces accumulate meaning not through monuments, but through repetition and loss. Benches of power exist everywhere; outside courts, where families sit clutching folded documents that decide their futures more decisively than any constitution. Outside hospitals, where waiting rooms turn time into a cruel hierarchy, separating those who will be seen from those who must keep waiting. On university campuses, where some benches become spaces of debate and dissent, while others quietly signal who belongs and who does not. Outside police stations, where people sit rehearsing their answers, learning silence before they are ever questioned. Outside government offices, where benches become the last resting place of hope before procedure takes over. These benches witness moments when power is most visible not in speeches or laws but in delay, uncertainty and waiting without assurance.

These benches are archives. They record what official history leaves out. Power prefers vertical; architecture towers, podiums, stages. Benches are horizontal. They do not raise anyone above others. They do not command. They simply endure.

That endurance is political. Benches show how bodies are treated differently, who sits comfortably, who sits anxiously, who is told to move along, and who is allowed to wait limit. They remember footsteps that never slow, voices raised in protest and lowered by exhaustion, files that never reach their destination, people who leave without closure. Politics often presents itself as a movement, change, reform and progress. But benches remind us that much of political life is spent waiting. Waiting is not passive. It is imposed.

To wait without end is to be placed outside political time. The woman understood this. She did not ask for attention. She asked for recognition, for an acknowledgment that her time mattered. She never received it.

The bench remains. Most days, it is just furniture again. But if you sit long enough and look closely enough, you might feel it, the trace of presence, the politics of absence.

Benches do not vote.

They do not protest.

They do not legislate.

They only witness. And sometimes, witnessing is the most honest political act of all.



A PEEK INTO THE PAST

Kanan Sharma M.A. Public Administration, 2nd Year

There was a time when the Indian State did not constantly remind its citizens who they were supposed to be.

Religion existed, certainly and in its most beautiful forms. Faith was practiced, rituals were performed, festivals were celebrated. But all this was done somewhat quietly, organically, without the anxious need for validation from the State. Most of us were happily a part of each other's celebrations without the fear of being ousted from or being criticised by the so-called champions of our faith. For many, secularism was felt and lived without the need to be defended in words. It thrived in shared streets, mixed neighbourhoods, overlapping cultures, and an unspoken understanding that belief was personal, not political.

The State, undoubtedly, intervened in certain areas like personal laws and communal tensions, indeed, existed. But, in my observation and memory of the past, the language of governance did not emphasise, and place at the forefront, identity in the manner that it appears to do today. And this maintenance of principled distance in most areas seemed to act as a stabilising force in a deeply plural society.

In the early decades after Independence, India was deeply conscious of its diversity. The trauma of Partition was fresh, and perhaps that is why the founding imagination of the republic emphasised fraternity over uniformity. The Constitution did not ask citizens to dissolve their identities; it asked them to coexist. Unity was explicitly propagated as unity in diversity, a phrase I grew up writing about but feel it fading today.

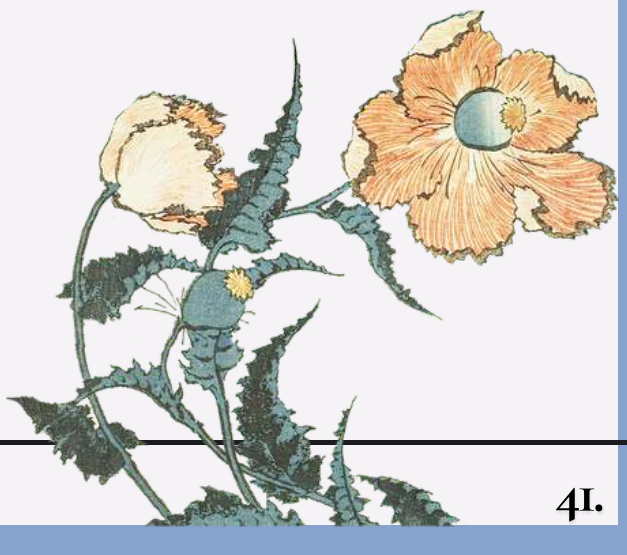
We live in a time when identities are no longer quietly lived but loudly performed. Belief systems that were once intimate and personal, have now become public markers of loyalty. Citizens are increasingly being addressed not as individuals, but as categories.

The Indian State was never meant to be a custodian of faith. Its role was not to validate belief, but to protect the freedom to believe, or not believe. Spirituality, culture, and tradition are essential to human life, but they do not concern the State in the same way roads, education, healthcare, and justice do. When the State steps into the realm of belief, it disturbs a space that thrives only in autonomy. Present politics increasingly seems to operate by reminding people of who they are before asking what they need. Developmental questions concerning education, employment, inequality, health are often overshadowed by symbolic battles over identity.

What must be noted, however, is that this is not a call to abandon culture or belief. It is a call to return them to where they belong- to the personal, the social, the voluntary.

The State must strive to create conditions where differences do not become divisions, where diversity does not require defence, and where unity is nurtured. Fraternity cannot be manufactured through slogans; it grows when people are allowed to exist without constant scrutiny of their identities.

A peek into the past reminds me of another way State and politics once existed. And whether this shift from the past is a temporary transition or structural transformation of the Indian political culture is a question to be answered in the years to come. I can only hope that this political canvas can be re-painted with boundaries a little more blurred and faded symbolising the essence of co-existence and fraternity.



12 वियोग

Ritika Mishra M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

यह कहानी शायद खो देने की कहानी है।
शायद इंतज़ार की।
शायद उन लोगों की, जो ज़िंदगी में बस थोड़ी देर के लिए आते हैं —
और फिर हमेशा के लिए रह जाते हैं।

करीब छह साल पहले, कोटा स्टेशन के पास एक छोटे से मेडिकल स्टोर के बाहर, बारिश की भीनी-भीनी खुशबू से भरा हुआ एक दिन था। आसमान धुंधला था, सड़क पर कीचड़ और पानी के छोटे-छोटे गड्ढे थे, और लोग अपनी-अपनी दौड़ में भीगे हुए थे।

वहीं, भीड़ के बीच, एक छोटी सी लड़की खड़ी थी। उसके हाथ में हवा मिठाई थी गुलाबी बादल जैसी, पतली सी लकड़ी पर लिपटी हुई।
वो मुझे देख रही थी।
पहले तो बस देख रही थी।
फिर हल्का सा मुस्कुराई।

उस मुस्कान में न शर्म थी, न झिझक —सिर्फ आदत थी लोगों को देखने की,
शायद समझने की कि कौन खरीदेगा और कौन बस गुजर जाएगा।

मैं रुक गई।

“तुम्हारा नाम क्या है?” मैंने पूछा।

“मालविका,” उसने कहा।
फिर थोड़ा रुककर, जैसे कोई राज़ बता रही हो, धीरे से बोली —
“घर वाले मालवी बुलाते हैं।”

वो लगभग सात या आठ साल की होगी।
बाल हल्के से गीले, पैरों में घिसे हुए चप्पल, कपड़े साफ थे पर पुराने।

उसने बताया कि उसकी माँ और दो बहनें लोहे का काम करती हैं।

“मैं छोटी हूँ न,” उसने कहा,
“इसलिए बैंक के पास वाली सड़क पर हवा मिठाई बेचती हूँ।”

उसने ये बात बिना किसी शिकायत के कही।
जैसे यही दुनिया का सीधा सा नियम हो।

मैं उससे और बात करना चाहती थी।
पूछना चाहती थी कि वो स्कूल जाती है या नहीं।
उसे क्या पसंद है।
क्या उसे बारिश अच्छी लगती है या सिर्फ परेशानी देती है।

पर मेरी ट्रेन का वक्त हो रहा था।

बेचैनी और जल्दी के बीच मैंने उससे कहा,
“मैं कल सुबह 11 बजे यहीं मिलने आऊंगी।”

उसने सिर्फ हाँ में सिर हिलाया
जैसे वादे उसकी ज़िंदगी में रोज आते और रोज टूट जाते हों।

अगले दिन इतनी तेज़ बारिश हुई कि शहर धुल सा गया।
मैं खिड़की के पास खड़ी थी, और बारिश की धार देखकर दिल घबरा रहा था।

मालवी का क्या हुआ होगा?
क्या वो भी भीग रही होगी?
क्या उसकी हवा मिठाई गल गई होगी?
क्या उसने मेरा इंतज़ार किया होगा?

मैं नहीं जा पाई।

दूसरे दिन भी बारिश।
तीसरे दिन जब मैं भागती हुई उस जगह पहुँची —
वो वहाँ नहीं थी।

न बैंक के पास।
न मेडिकल स्टोर के बाहर।
न सिग्नल के किनारे।

मैं कई दिन वहाँ जाती रही।
हर छोटी लड़की को दूर से देखकर दिल धड़कता —
शायद ये वही हो।

पर मालवी फिर कभी नहीं मिली।

वो पहली इंसान थी जिसे मैं जानती नहीं थी,
फिर भी मिलते ही खो दिया।

दूसरी बार "खो देने" का मतलब समझ आया —
जब मैंने अपनी माँ को खोया।

केदारनाथ सिंह लिखते हैं:
"मैं जा रही हूँ," उसने कहा।
"जाओ," मैंने उत्तर दिया —
यह जानते हुए कि जाना दुनिया की सबसे खौफनाक क्रिया है।

जाना।
बिछड़ना।
खाली हो जाना।

पर ये होता कब है?
जब इंसान चला जाता है,
या जब उसकी आवाज़ याद आनी बंद हो जाती है?

दुख क्या करता है?
क्या वो धीरे-धीरे कम होता है,
या हम उसके साथ जीना सीख लेते हैं?
या फिर हम खुद धीरे-धीरे कम हो जाते हैं?

कभी-कभी लगता है सब कुछ भ्रम है —
मिलना भी, बिछड़ना भी।

फिर किसी पुरानी चीज़ की खुशबू आती है,
और सारी दार्शनिक बातें टूट जाती हैं।

माँ के जाने के बाद
जब मैंने काफी समय बाद फिर से कैनवास उठाया,
तो हाथ हल्का सा काँप रहा था।

रंग सामने थे,
पर सोच बिखर रही थी।

मैं गाने चला कर बैठ गई —
शायद सुर सोच को जोड़ दें।

तब याद आए — अंकित चड्ढा।

एक युवा दास्तानगो, जिनकी आवाज़ मैंने महफ़िल में कभी सामने बैठकर नहीं सुनी,
पर इंटरनेट पर उनकी कई दास्तानें सुनी थीं।

उनकी आवाज़ में एक अजीब सी रोशनी थी —
जैसे कहानी सुनाते वक्त वो खुद उस दुनिया में घुस जाते हों।

सुना था, उन्हें पानी से बहुत लगाव था।
एक दिन वो किसी नदी के किनारे गए।
पानी की तरफ बढ़े।
और फिर पानी में समा गए।

मैं उनकी किसी महफ़िल में नहीं गई थी जब वो ज़िंदा थे।
पर उनके जाने के बाद, उनके दोस्त हिमांशु की महफ़िल में जाने का मौका मिला।

महफ़िल लाजवाब थी।

दास्तानगोई ज़बरदस्त।
लोग तालियाँ बजा रहे थे।

फिर भी —
बीच-बीच में लगता रहा, कोई कमी है।
जैसे कहानी पूरी है,
पर आवाज़ अधूरी।

तब पहली बार दिल ने पूछा —
क्या वाक़ई कला और कलाकार अलग होते हैं?

अगर अंकित नहीं रहे,
तो क्या उनकी कहानियाँ भी धीरे-धीरे चुप हो जाएँगी?

या हर बार जब कोई उनकी रिकॉर्डिंग सुनेगा,
वो फिर से ज़िंदा हो जाएँगे?

यह सवाल नया नहीं।

स्वदेश दीपक बार-बार अंधेरों से लड़ते रहे।
खुद को जलाया, भागे, टूटते रहे —
और एक दिन बस ग़ायब हो गए।
जैसे ज़िंदगी की किताब से उनका नाम किसी ने मिटा दिया हो।

पाकिस्तान के शायर अनीस मोइन ने अपने सुसाइड नोट में लिखा
कि उनकी मौत की वजह कुछ और नहीं,
बल्कि "ज़िंदगी की यकसानीयत" थी —
ज़िंदगी का एक सा, बेरंग, बे-एहसास हो जाना।

वर्जीनिया वुल्फ ने अपने ओवरकोट की जेबों में पत्थर भरे,
और पानी में उतर गईं।
उन्होंने लिखा था कि वो फिर से उस अंधेरे में नहीं जाना चाहतीं
जहाँ से मुश्किल से निकली थीं।

ये सब लोग —
लफ़्ज़ों के जादूगर, कहानियों के रखवाले —
दर्द के सामने इतने अकेले क्यों पड़ गए?

और फिर एक और सवाल —
अगर वो नहीं बचे,
तो उनका लिखा कैसे बच गया?

या क्या सच में बच गया?

कभी लगता है मालवी, माँ, अंकित, वुल्फ —
सब एक ही रेशम के धागे से जुड़े हैं।

ज़िंदगी के रास्ते पर मिलते हुए लोग,
जो हमें कुछ दे जाते हैं —
एक मुस्कान, एक आवाज़, एक कहानी —
और फिर चले जाते हैं।

पर क्या वो सच में चले जाते हैं?

मालवी जब भी हवा मिठाई देखती हूँ,
या किसी छोटी लड़की को भीड़ में आवाज़ लगाते देखती हूँ —
वो वापस आ जाती है।

माँ जब भी किसी पुरानी रेसिपी की खुशबू आती है —
वापस आ जाती हैं।

अंकित जब भी कहीं से दास्तानगोई की लय सुनाई देती है —
वापस आ जाते हैं।

तो फिर जाना क्या है?

शायद शरीर का रुक जाना।

पर यादें? आवाज़ें? प्रेरणा?
वो कहाँ जाती हैं?

शायद कहीं नहीं।
शायद हम ही उनका घर बन जाते हैं।

और शायद इसी लिए दुख इतना गहरा होता है —
क्योंकि खोकर भी हम पूरी तरह खो नहीं पाते।

कभी-कभी सोचती हूँ,
अगर उस दिन बारिश न होती,
मैं मालवी से मिल लेती —
तो क्या बदल जाता?

शायद कुछ नहीं।
शायद सब कुछ।

पर ज़िंदगी "अगर" पर नहीं चलती।
वो बस चलती रहती है —
लोगों को मिलाती, जोड़ती, तोड़ती हुई।

और हम?

हम बस इतना कर सकते हैं —
जो मिल जाए, उसे थोड़ी देर और देख लें
जो चला जाए, उसे थोड़ी देर और याद कर लें
और जो दर्द बचे —
उसे कभी-कभी रंगों में,
लफ़्ज़ों में,
कहानियों में उतार दें।

शायद इसी का नाम जीना है।
और शायद इसी का नाम —
ना पूरी तरह खोना।



13 RETURN TO SENDER

Maskat

School emptied early that day, the bell was swallowed by shouting somewhere beyond the school walls. By the time she hurried to the road, her eyes started watering which meant tear gas had already thinned the air, and an older man was pulling her by the wrist, telling her to go home, *quickly*, don't look back. Others, boys, ran toward the guns. She wasn't a boy. It made no sense, she could still *run*? She walked briskly and kept her head down until the turn near the green wall.

The wall was green then. Or it had been green. Now it was uneven, half-dark, half-smeared and black paint dragged across words. The sentence was still legible in places, surfacing stubbornly through the paint. "*Bol ki lab azaad hain tere*" (*Speak! for your lips are yet free*), not fully erased. Though, subsequent lines were smeared over, naturally, to clarify any misunderstandings the verse might have caused. She stood there. Longer than she should have. The wall felt watchful, as if it knew what had been written on it and what had been done to it in response. She stared back at it. Nay, she only looked, memorising the shape of the letters that remained as she walked back. Was the wall really green? Had it ever been green? Why did she think it was green?

Months passed. Curfew settled in, as was usual after such clashes. Roads emptied. School disappeared and there was silence. When things were declared "normal" again, she returned along the same route, her bag felt heavier than she remembered, her body out of practice with movement. Trailing her hand along the wall, she looked at it.

The wall was blank. Clean. Bare. Exposed. *Green?*

Later that day she came home dishevelled and pulled a notebook from her bag. "*I must write to it,*" she mumbled and pulled the notebook closer, pressing the sheets flat. Her pen dragged on the paper with a will of its own.



Dear Wall,
Are you well...? You must be. You interrupt movement, you hide the world beyond. You make it impossible to breathe, y-you... you trap us in.
How do you so easily change sides, without ever moving? This morning you were blank again. And when you are blank, oh you are suffocating. Your surface is too clean, too smooth, so silent. In those moments, you do not feel like a wall so much. You loom. Unbearably. When nothing is written on you, you seem to close in on me, narrowing the air, pushing the sky closer to my face. Your clean concrete soars, soars high and it confines. I feel akin to an ant caught in clear glass.
You simply stand there, clean and certain, as though nothing was ever written on you. As though nothing ever needed to be. You might not be glass but I know what you hide. Each day I walk past it. Camps, watchtowers, death in uniform, unreturned bodied in graves without names. You do not hide these things very well. You only slow the seeing.
Today, you are blank. Tomorrow, you may not be. Today you stand tall, tomorrow you might not. And I will keep returning to mark the time in between.

With regards,
from within.

She ripped the page off the notebook, crumpled up the paper and put it in her bag. The next day she woke up earlier than usual and went off to school. She placed the crumpled paper in the soil under the wall before anyone would notice and hurried away. What would they think of her clandestine companion? What *do* they think of her clandestine companion? Some days these walls were covered in misspelled slogans and verses of revolutionary poets remembered imperfectly. Other days they were smeared clean again. These walls were no friends of hers. Yet... ever present.

Many curfews passed before she wrote to her strange, omnipresent companion again. Classes ran late that day to compensate for all the missed hours, nothing erupted, there was no screaming, no sudden commotion, everything seemed as



normal as it could get. Just the usual heavy air and deafening silence blanketed the streets. She walked the same route home, thinking about homework she hadn't started. And then she looked up, to her right.

The wall had been painted.

And it had not been painted in a hurry. Not the usual hasty graffiti that filled her heart with something sudden and fierce. It was painted deliberately by someone, someone permitted to sign their name in the corner. A wide stretch of blue sky opened across it. Mountains and trees in neat, disciplined lines. The paint was fresh enough to shine. She stopped again, the way she always does. She stood there and looked at those unfamiliar mountains in the afternoon light. Her heart sank. She *ran* home.

Rummaging through her bag. *What was she looking for?* The notebook. She opened it in angry haste, jaw clenched, already aching. The room was quiet. Her pen scratched against the paper.

Dear Wall,

Someone has painted you a landscape.

They have painted snow-clad mountains and gentle trees on you. I stood in front of you and tried to recognise the mountains. I could not. The real ones are not like this. The real ones are uneven. The real ones are unreachable. The real ones are concealed behind you. I could not recognise you. They made you so beautiful. You please the unassuming eye and nothing is more treacherous.
When you were blank, at least I could hope. When misspelled words and subversive murals appeared on you, you felt lower, you almost felt humane. For a moment, just for a moment, traces remained of memories that survived countless erasures. Perhaps that is why you are watched so closely. Why your surface is patrolled more obsessively than the earth beneath it.

Now, you wear those snow clad mountains, that bewitching landscape and you pretend. How carefully, oh how cruelly you pretend. Each added colour makes you harder to bear.
I stood there as I felt myself plunge, somewhere beneath it all. It is deceitful to say I could not breathe under the weight, for I was breathing, seeing those colourful mountains and breathing. But what do I do with this undying feeling of suffocation? I feel as though all the air in my lungs, air everywhere, has been swallowed up and swallowed whole. There is no air, only something smouldering, that tightens with each breath.
I had to run away before I drowned in that obscene colour. Do you remember, you were green once? Nanu Abba says, there was a time you did not even exist. Just the mountains, mountains you now hide.
But we remember and we will remember for you. And that memory, yours and ours, is not as easy to smear away or paint over as they believe.

With love,
from within.

This time, she folded the paper. She put it neatly in her notebook and waited. She went to school early the next morning in hopes of not encountering people while she buried the letter under the wall.

But... armed soldiers were stationed in front of it. She quickly slipped the letter in the back pocket of her bag. Upon returning from school she saw the uniformed troops had not moved.

"Tomorrow then" she thought, lowering her head, moving past the soldiers and past the wall, without looking at either. She kept walking, restlessly patting the pocket of the bag where the letter was imprisoned and where it continued to live. For that tomorrow never came.

14 RECLAIMING THE FRAME: BLACK WOMEN, CINEMA, AND POWER

Sethunya Marang Motoutwane M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

In the homesteads, mothers used to sit around the fire with their children and narrate folklore, usually fictional, to warn and guide children in their ways of life. Storytelling has always been part of African cultures, told by women in songs and poetry as well. There is certainly a shortage of female directors on the African continent, and an even narrower space for Black female film creators. Even in Hollywood, there are fewer opportunities for Black directors, with only a few female creators gaining traction in the past ten years, such as Shonda Rhimes and Ava DuVernay.

It is still an ongoing struggle for female directors in Southern Africa to go mainstream. One of the early female producers was Desiree Markgraaff, who was part of the production of Yizo Yizo, which can be found on Netflix, an intense TV drama following teens in the townships. Even with all the challenges that Markgraaff faced as a female producer, there were still very few Black female film creators. White female directors had to pave the way for Black female directors such as Nosipho Dumisa, who has become a pioneer in the industry, with her stellar work like *Blood and Water*, *Unseen*, and recently *Bad Influencer*, which can all be found on Netflix.

Botswana has a small film industry, but has produced Lesedi Mpothwe, who created *Botshelo Jo.*

Mamohato Askew is another trailblazer in the South African television series industry, directing *Inimba*, *Scandal*, *Isiphetho*, and *DiepCity*, which have kept millions of viewers glued to their seats every evening.

Another enticing film is *Happiness Is a Four-Letter Word*, which is a rom-com that follows three Black women, offering a light-hearted and different flavour to productions by Black creators. Mmabatho Montsho is at the forefront of this work.

Godisamang Khunou, an emerging force, champions African feminism and validates Black women's experiences by addressing gender-based violence and societal norms in *The Sharp End of a Knife, Black Women and Sex.*

The majority of the funding for the African film industry comes from America, while Africa comes second. This poses a problem for the continent and creates a conflict of interest. It also shows a bigger problem: the lack of funding and investment for the arts in general. Currency fluctuations also play a role in the progression of the film industry, especially for those involved in collaborations within the African continent. These collaborations are important in outsourcing distribution services, which is another major hindrance for the film industry, as there are not enough channels for filmmakers to enter global markets.

Drawing inspiration from Hollywood and Bollywood, Nigeria has also developed its own film industry, known as Nollywood, which is currently the highest-grossing film industry on the continent. Nollywood has spread throughout the world.

Fun fact: only 20% of Africa's film revenue comes from Africa. Meanwhile, 80% of imported movies come from Hollywood and Bollywood.

There is also a lack of strong women's narratives in film roles, along with sexual harassment and a shortage of skilled production crews. A study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Lora-Mungai & Pimenta, 2021) confirmed this by pointing out that gender disparities exist in the film and audio-visual industry throughout the African continent, with Central Africa exhibiting the most significant gap, where 98% of practitioners estimate that the ratio of women in the sector is less than 10%. In Eastern and Western Africa, 50% of practitioners believe that the proportion of women in the field is less than 10%. South Africa is no exception; from its inception, males have dominated the South African film industry.

Black women are also confronted by the realities of intersectionality; there are different hills to climb before being afforded the same basic opportunities as everyone else. "SWIFT's Zoe Ramushu acknowledged the plight of Black women in the industry as an 'intersectional issue' that needs to be dealt with as such. Although we are fighting for the same thing as women, we have to understand that women are not starting from the same point. There are different struggles for women."

Studies have shown that women are often underrepresented in key creative positions such as directors, producers, and writers, which subsequently affects the types of stories being told and the opportunities available for female actors (Khadilkar et al., 2022; Lee & Raesch, 2015).

This underrepresentation is compounded by a culture of sexism and harassment that many women in the industry experience, discouraging their continued participation and advancement. Furthermore, the lack of mentorship and networking opportunities for women exacerbates these issues, making it difficult for them to gain the necessary support and visibility to succeed in a highly competitive environment (Brannon Donoghue, 2023).

Nepotism seems to be another prevailing problem for Black female creators, as acquiring jobs is mainly reserved for people with connections and relationships within the industry.

The TV industry often depicts Black women as conniving and evil witches who are always scheming, and Black people as barbaric, violent, and uncivilised. Many of the lead roles given to women are often shaped in this way in shows such as *The River*, *Umkhokha*, and *Uzalo*.

Although one might argue that it is just television, these roles reinforce negative stereotypes in the way Black people are represented.

African women have always been storytellers, long before cinema arrived as a formal medium. What is happening now is not the beginning of their voice, but the continuation of it in a new form. Despite structural barriers such as underfunding, exclusion, sexism, and limited access to opportunities, Black female creators across the continent are still pushing forward and reshaping the screen on their own terms. In reclaiming cinema, they are not only demanding space within the industry, but also restoring dignity, complexity, and authenticity to the stories being told about Black women and African life.



15 LEARNING GOVERNANCE WITHOUT GOVERNING: THE PARADOX OF OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Suhail Iqball M.A. Public Administration, 2nd Year

Introduction:

Educational institutions are meant to be the intellectual and moral backbone of a nation. Every society entrusts its schools, colleges, and universities with the task of shaping not only skilled professionals but thinking citizens—future philosophers, scientists, policymakers, teachers, and leaders. These institutions are expected to cultivate competence, ethics, discipline, creativity, and social responsibility. They are not merely places where degrees are awarded; they are supposed to be living laboratories of the values they teach. When we speak of education, therefore, we speak not only of syllabi and examinations but of the kind of society we hope to build. Yet a troubling contradiction has emerged: the very institutions that teach ideals of efficiency, rationality, transparency, and morality increasingly fail to reflect these principles in their own functioning.

Inside classrooms, students are taught about scientific management, organizational behavior, ethics, good governance, accountability, and institutional efficiency. They are told how modern organizations should function—how hierarchy should be rational, how communication should be open, how procedures should serve people rather than dominate them, and how merit should determine opportunity. However, the moment students step out of the classroom and enter the institutional machinery of their own college or university, they often encounter the opposite reality. They face rigid formalism, arbitrary authority, opaque processes, and a culture where rules seem designed not to serve learning but to protect administrative power. This gap between what is taught and what is practiced is not a small inconsistency; it is a structural contradiction that undermines the moral credibility of education itself.

Formalities in Formalism

A simple personal experience makes this paradox visible. Needing a signature on a document, one walks into an office that is physically just beside the classroom.

Logically, this should be the most efficient route. But instead of processing the request, the office assistant insists that the student must exit the building, go around, and approach through a specific window. The reason is not efficiency or necessity, but control. The door represents direct access, while the window represents bureaucratic power. Through the window, the assistant decides when to open, whom to entertain, and how to exercise authority. What should have been a simple administrative task becomes a symbolic ritual of subordination. This is not just red tape; it is institutionalized dominance. It teaches students, silently but powerfully, that access is not based on reason or service, but on submission to arbitrary procedure.

What makes this experience more disturbing is that the same student might be learning in class about Taylor's scientific management, Weber's rational bureaucracy, or modern theories of organizational efficiency. According to these theories, institutions exist to minimize waste, reduce unnecessary steps, and serve human goals. Yet the institution itself violates these principles daily. The result is a kind of intellectual betrayal: knowledge is taught as if it were universal truth, while its real-world application is ignored or even contradicted by those responsible for implementing it. Students are left wondering whether the theories they learn have any meaning beyond examinations. This is how education loses its ethical authority.

Knowledge Delivery

This contradiction is not merely procedural; it is deeply moral. When institutions fail to practice what they preach, they teach students a dangerous lesson: that ideals are optional and power is everything. The message students absorb is that efficiency, transparency, and fairness are things to write about, not things to live by. Over time, this produces cynicism. Students stop believing in reform, merit, and institutional integrity. They learn instead how to navigate power, cultivate connections, and survive in a system that rewards compliance more than competence. This is how corruption is normalized—not always through bribes, but through everyday practices that disconnect rules from justice and authority from accountability.

The problem becomes even more serious when we look at hiring, promotion, and academic politics. In many departments, it is not knowledge, teaching ability, or research quality that determines success, but proximity to power. Those with connections feel secure even when their performance is poor, while those without connections feel insecure regardless of their merit. This destroys the moral economy of education. When students see that influence matters more than intellect, they stop aspiring to excellence and start aspiring to proximity. Education becomes a network game rather than a merit system. The institution then no longer produces independent thinkers; it produces compliant survivors.

This institutional hypocrisy also damages the quality of learning. Teachers who are not held accountable for their teaching do not feel compelled to improve. Administrators who are never evaluated for efficiency have no incentive to reduce delays or confusion. Students become trapped in a system that talks endlessly about excellence while practicing mediocrity. The very idea of professionalism collapses when institutions themselves are unprofessional in their conduct. Education becomes ritual rather than transformation.

The deeper tragedy is that these institutions are supposed to be the places where society learns how to govern itself. Universities and colleges are miniature societies. They have rules, authorities, procedures, conflicts, and responsibilities. If these mini-societies cannot demonstrate fairness, rationality, and ethical governance, how can we expect the larger society to do so? When educational institutions fail to govern themselves properly, they produce graduates who have never seen good governance in action. They may know its theory, but they have never experienced its reality.

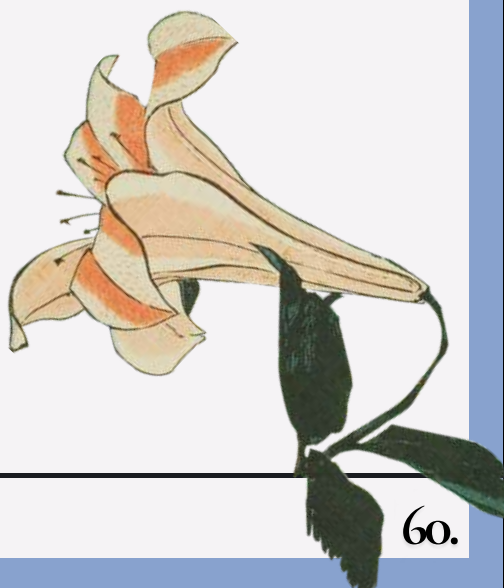
Conclusion

This gap between knowledge and practice creates a psychological split in students. On one hand, they are taught ideals; on the other, they live in institutions that contradict those ideals. Over time, many students resolve this tension by rejecting the ideals rather than the institution. They begin to believe

that ethics, transparency, and efficiency are naïve concepts, unsuitable for the "real world." This is one of the most destructive outcomes of institutional hypocrisy. It turns education from a force of moral development into a training ground for opportunism.

Yet this situation is not inevitable. Institutions can change if they choose to take their own teachings seriously. If transparency is taught, it must be practiced. If efficiency is praised, it must be implemented. If merit is valued, it must be protected. The first step is recognizing that administration is not a mechanical function but a moral one. Every file, every signature, every decision sends a message about what the institution truly values. When procedures serve people, institutions educate by example. When procedures dominate people, institutions educate in fear and obedience.

Ultimately, the greatest failure of our educational institutions is not the lack of resources or even the lack of infrastructure. It is the failure to embody their own philosophy. They speak the language of enlightenment but practice the logic of control. They teach freedom of thought but operate through rigid hierarchy. They celebrate merit but reward loyalty. Until this contradiction is resolved, education will remain a hollow promise—rich in theory, poor in truth. And a society that learns values from institutions that do not practice them will always struggle to build a just and rational future.



16 WINTER IN A BOWL: THE WARM HEART OF KASHMIRI HARISA

Sahib Zada Sheikh Aanif M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

You arrive in the Valley with the first real bite of winter, like an old friend who knows exactly how cold the bones can feel here. You do not speak loudly; you sit quietly in a copper pot, letting your warmth rise in gentle waves, promising that no matter how hard the chillai kalan (core winter days) gets, there will always be one corner of the morning that is safe and soft. You are the colour of dawn clouds over the Jhelum, muted yet glowing, a humble bowl that hides the labour of an entire night. Behind your silk-like texture are hands that refuse to rest: stirring, pounding, checking the fire, listening to the slow surrender of meat and rice until both forget their separate identities and become one soothing, velvety whole. You are patience turned into taste, love turned into food.

On the tongue, you arrive slowly. First the gentle warmth, then the quiet perfume of fennel, cardamom and clove, and finally that deep, comforting note of mutton that feels less like flavour and more like memory. Each bite carries the echo of crackling kangris, misted windows, sleepy eyes, and the soft rustle of pherans as the family gathers around the dastarkhwan. Bread tears in tender pieces just for you, and even nun chai tastes different when you are on the table. You are more than breakfast. You are winter's reassurance that life still has sweetness, that people still wake before Fajr (Morning prayer) to stand in smoky lanes of Srinagar, hands in pockets, waiting for a turn at the harisa-wan (Shop). You turn strangers in a queue into quiet companions, all breathing out fog, all holding the same simple wish: to carry home a little pot of warmth for those they love. In every home where you are served, you bind generations together as the elders remember the taste from wood-fired cellars and ancestral neighbourhoods; children learn to associate you with holidays, laughter, and the rare days when everyone wakes early without complaint. A spoonful fed from one hand to another becomes a language of its own—of care, worry, pride, and love.

Your essence is not a loud spice or fiery heat, instead it is your softness, and depth—the way grief softens with time, the way love matures into a quiet

presence. You are Kashmir teaching itself, every winter, how to endure with dignity: not by hardening, but by becoming tender.

Dear harisa: thank you for being more than a dish; from being the warmth in numb fingers, the comfort in tired hearts to the unbroken thread that ties so many Kashmiri mornings to one another. In a world that keeps changing its pace and its face, you remain the same—slow, patient, generous—reminding everyone that sometimes, the greatest luxury is simply a hot bowl shared with the ones who matter.

Ingredients required:

Harisa is a thick, smooth, porridge-like dish made mainly from mutton (or lamb), rice or rice flour, and mild Kashmiri spices, cooked till the meat completely blends into a paste. It is traditionally eaten piping hot at breakfast in winter, usually with local breads such as girda or kander czout, often topped with hot mustard oil, ghee, kebabs or methi maaz(chopped mutton and methi).

- Mutton or lamb with bone (preferably rib/shoulder).
- 1 kg short-grain rice or rice flour.
- Garlic, cloves (6–10).
- Crushed Onions for boiling and for frying (at least 2–3 large).
- Whole spices: fennel seeds, cinnamon, green and black cardamom, cloves, black peppercorns and salt according to taste.
- Mustard oil or ghee and milk(about 1 cup), optional but common for richness

Note: Quantities can be adjusted, but the essence is: more meat, less rice, mild but aromatic spices, plenty of oil/ghee for finishing and most importantly patience.

Methods of its preparation:

Step 1 –

- Wash the mutton pieces (keep bones on; remove only excess fat if you like).
- Put meat in a deep, thick-bottomed pot; add enough water to cover it generously.
- Add crushed garlic, sliced onions/shallots, and whole spices (fennel, cardamoms, cloves, cinnamon, peppercorns), plus salt.
- Bring to a boil, skim any scum, then cover and simmer on low heat until the meat is very soft and falling off the bone (roughly 1–1.5 hours if slow-cooked; less in a pressure cooker). The stock should be fragrant and slightly thick; do not throw it away, it will form the base of the harisa.

Step 2 –

- Once the meat is very tender, take the pot off the heat and let it cool slightly and carefully remove the bones and visible whole spices (cinnamon sticks, cardamom shells, cloves etc.).
- Keep all the meat and the cooking liquid in the pot; this mixture will be worked into a paste later. At this stage you have a rich mutton stock with soft meat ready for "gass dyun" (intense stirring).

Step 3 –

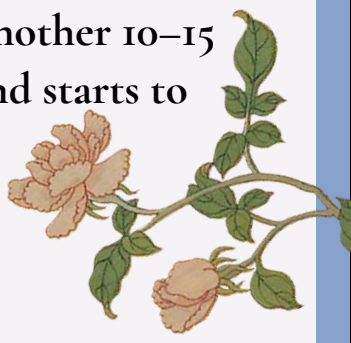
- If using whole rice: rinse and parboil it separately in water until very soft, then lightly mash it and if using rice flour: mix the flour with cold water to make a smooth, lump-free paste.
- Return the meat pot to a very low flame. Gradually add the rice or rice paste into the meat-stock mixture while stirring continuously so it does not form lumps. The rice acts as a binder, giving harisa its smooth, porridge-like body. Step 4 – Mash, grind and stir (the key step)

- Using a strong wooden spoon, pestle, or masher, start mashing the meat and rice together. Keep the flame low and stir in a circular, pressing motion so that the meat fibers break completely and merge with the rice. Continue this process patiently for 30–45 minutes (or more, depending on quantity) until no distinct pieces of meat remain.

The mixture is thick, smooth and elastic, almost like a meat "rabri". Adjust thickness by adding a little of the reserved stock or hot water if it becomes too stiff. This slow, continuous stirring is what gives traditional harisa its characteristic silky texture.

Step 5 –

- Once the mixture is almost smooth, add warm milk (if using) in small amounts, stirring it in so the texture remains even.
- In a separate pan, heat mustard oil or other oil (and a spoon of ghee if you like). Fry thinly sliced onions until very dark golden/brown. Pour some of this hot oil (with some of the fried onions) over the harisa and mix it in; keep the rest for serving and continue to cook on low heat another 10–15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the harisa looks glossy and starts to leave the sides of the pan.



Step 6 –

- The flavor should be mild, meaty and aromatic rather than spicy. Serve the harisa very hot, topped with: A spoon of the hot oil/ghee from the fried onions,some of the crispy fried onions. Optional: pieces of seekh kebab or methi maaz on top.

"Harisa is not just the last dish that comes out of the pot; it is the last word of a long conversation between fire, patience and care. After all the boiling, deboning, mashing and stirring, what remains in the vessel is more than meat and rice—it is the quiet proof that time and love can transform the simplest ingredients into something that feels like home itself."



POEMS & GHAZALS

PAGES: 65-77

2026.

17 LABELLING PEOPLE

Mohammad Zaid Abdullah Khan M.A. Political Science, 1st Year

It's clever how fast the night changes
Songs long lost in a playlist revisit you
As if there lives in them a shadow lurking
A memory they thought you outgrew

You claim to know who you are
I 'identify' as an 'xyz' you say out loud
But then you cross paths with a fellow xyz
And, alas, you are no longer so proud

Neocons, Liberals, or Commies
Or any other label under the sun
Is convenience disguised as intellect
Most people are in it just for fun

Maybe choosing a side feels great
It awakens in you a tribal instinct
The kick of being a part of something great
Or maybe just a desire to look distinct

You carry the tag of being someone
Carrying likes, comments, and reposts on your back
Just to look back and think to yourself
Was I really convinced or just excited to attack?

Can your stand on an issue define who you are?
'Do you condemn Hamas?' an anchor shouts out loud
Why can't we accept that humans suck
Our practicality dons rationality's shroud

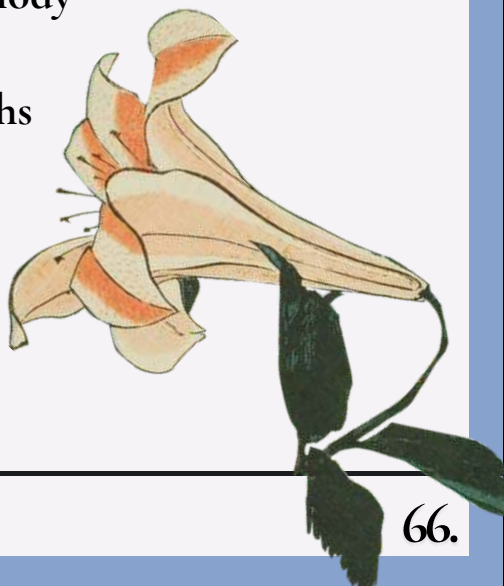
Our leaders are not really sympathisers
Most of them are not in a position to sympathise
Yet in a naive belief that the world cares
We educate, agitate, and organise

Yet in shared moments of hope
When labels fall to the ground
You look up to a political rival
In times when empathy abounds

We the People means We the Imperfect
We, the wretched of the earth
Banished from the heavens
And the halls of royalty
Dare to dream against reality
Dare to question the cruelty
Just to escape the fragility
Of our shared constructed civility

Identities are not frozen in time
Neither are the labels we flout daily
But identity is a song in an old playlist
While labels are a legacy without melody

Soulless, and sour to the very depths
These labels are the new chains
We may have a lot to lose today
But what we must lose remains



18 युद्ध-रीति

Anupama PhD, 1st Year

आदि व्याधि चीर युगांतर, परांतक युद्ध-रीति इह मही
कपोल-कल्पना डारी, यह युद्ध-रीति नहीं रुकने वाली
रीतिकाल से अनन्तकाले, प्राण आहूत डारी - महाशून्य
शनैः शनैः समय-चक्र उदित विक्राल महाप्रलय, महाशंका होय
तीर बाण शूल बीती बात, अणु-जैव मिसाइल इह काल की ठाठ
समरभूमि नित समान गात, टकरावे सम्राट लई सम्राट
अगणीय समान जन मानुस रुधिर, वसुधा-रति चीरता
करुण दृश्य होई सम गोधूलिधारी, रक्त-रंजित वीरता
संग्राम-प्रतिफल, विजित उदय, पराजित अस्त, महाप्रपंच
प्रत्यंचा पर ममता और करुणा, हुआ मानवता का अंत
जड़-जोरू-जमीन की जड़ पर, होय घृणा-वृक्ष विशाल
खल बैरी रक्तपिपासू बने मूढ़, नियति में चले महाकाल
विनय वेदना थरथराती, अधमता दंभ भरती थिरकती
समझौता संधि बात-चीत, के पथ पर चले विवेकी
वसुधैव कुटुंबकम् गूढ़ सूत्र, प्रीति कर, विजित संसारा
समृद्धि शांति पैठ बिठावे, जही रश्मि करै, इही मन आसा

“युद्ध-रीति” युद्ध को एक दीर्घकालिक सभ्यतागत प्रक्रिया के रूप में प्रस्तुत करती है। कविता यह संकेत करती है कि युद्ध की प्रकृति समय के साथ रूपांतरित होती रही है, प्राचीन अस्त्र-शस्त्रों से लेकर आधुनिक अणु एवं जैविक हथियारों तक परंतु उसका मूल तत्त्व, अर्थात् सत्ता, वर्चस्व और संसाधनों के लिए संघर्ष, अपरिवर्तित बना हुआ है।

कविता में युद्ध को केवल रणभूमि तक सीमित न मानकर उसे राजनीतिक सत्ता-संघर्ष, साम्राज्यवादी प्रतिस्पर्धा और मानव आकांक्षाओं की हिंसक परिणति के रूप में देखा गया है। विजेता-पराजित का द्वैत, रक्तरंजित वीरता और असंख्य सामान्य जनों की बलि, युद्ध की संरचनात्मक अमानवीयता को उजागर करते हैं। यहाँ युद्ध किसी नैतिक गौरव का नहीं, बल्कि मानवता के क्षरण और करुणा के लोप का प्रतीक बनकर उभरता है।

कविता की विशेषता यह है कि यह निराशावाद में ठहरती नहीं, बल्कि अंततः विवेक, संवाद, संधि और "वसुधैव कुटुंबकम्" जैसे सार्वभौमिक मानवीय मूल्यों की ओर पाठक को उन्मुख करती है। इस प्रकार "युद्ध-रीति" विनाश और करुणा के बीच से शांति, समृद्धि और वैश्विक सह-अस्तित्व की आकांक्षा को स्वर देती है।

इस प्रकार, कविता समकालीन अंतरराष्ट्रीय राजनीति में युद्ध, तकनीक और मानव मूल्यों के बीच बढ़ते तनाव को संवेदनशील काव्यात्मक भाषा में अभिव्यक्त करती है और युद्ध को एक अपरिहार्य नियति नहीं, बल्कि विवेकपूर्ण राजनीतिक विकल्पों से नियंत्रित की जा सकने वाली प्रक्रिया के रूप में देखती है।

- अनुपमा

डॉक्टोरल शोधार्थी (पीएच.डी.)
राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग,
जामिया मिल्लिया इस्लामिया (JMI)

एवं

वरिष्ठ अनुवाद अधिकारी,
प्रवर्तन निदेशालय (ED),
वित्त मंत्रालय (MoF),
भारत सरकार (GoI)



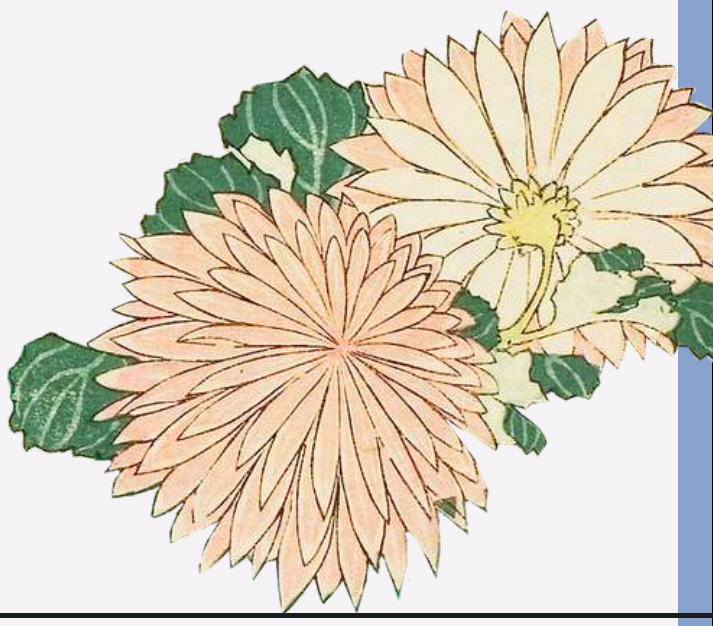
Shoeba Khan M.A. Political Science, 1st Year

I stepped outside the door
The door to my safe haven,
made out of bricks and walls with familiar echoes,
A bag full of reminiscence in one hand,
And a suitcase full of dreams in another.
As I turned around to take the last sight until next time ,
I saw my Dadu standing in the doorway
I didn't realise until then
The wrinkles on his face spoke the tales of his time.
A huge succouring smile,
And his eyes shining with pride
Or it was the held back tears for the period of goodbye.
Like an icy touch on a winter night,
The bitter-sweet realisation passed by me.

My mother's caressing hands
Won't be my escape anymore.
My Abba's reassurance will be over a call .
Awful days won't be turned around
With the aroma of my favourite dishes.
The warm morning hugs
soon to be turned into video call wishes.
The memory is a little hazy,
With all the tears welled in my eyes.

My dreams have always been bigger than my fears,
As I turned my back to my hometown.
My comfort,my refuge.
The childhood room and innumerable memories,
Left behind for a new life to be unraveled.

Four months down the line,
Still no place like home
Still no love like my mom's.
Life has a way of turning around,
Home is a place of vacation now,
The endless train journeys, back and forth.
The shortlived vacations made me realise
the walls aren't my home,
It's the beating hearts and the smiling faces Of my family.
My comfort,my refuge
The forgotten lanes of my school
And all of my childhood.
I fear if I would ever be able to fit in or maybe I never want to!



20 A PROMISE KEPT IN SILENCE

Mohammad Shadman Qurashi M.A. Political Science, 1st Year

I'll meet you again in Kashmir, at peace,
When the long night of terror has passed.
We'll still be young beneath the Chinar's shade,
While Jhelum's waves shadow echoes of the past.

Our grief will rest where the blossoms fall,
And winter will fill us with hope and will.
As Dal Lake turns young again in spring,
Summer will witness our youth and suffering.

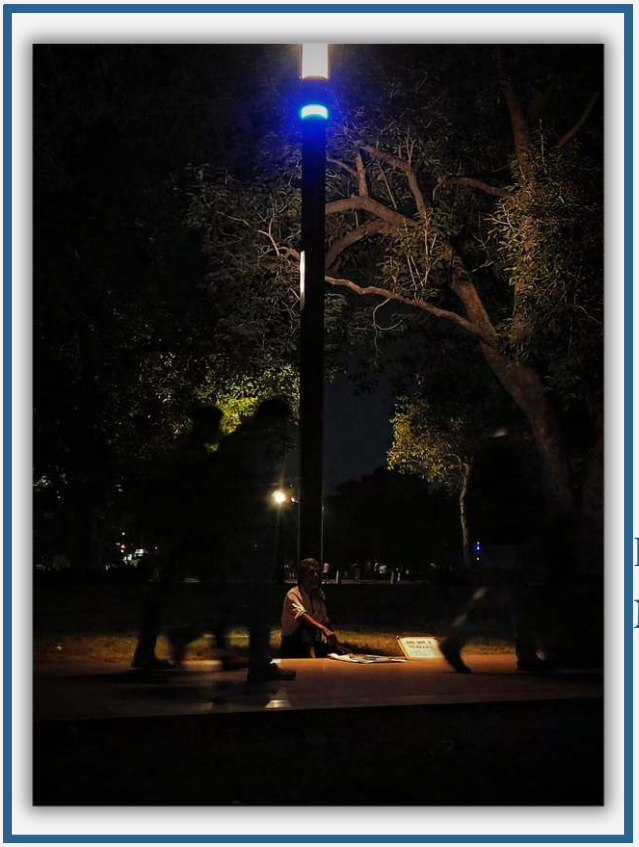
No fear of untoward dawns, no wail of sirens,
We stroll the narrow alleys of Downtown.
Mothers at ease, watching their children play,
As worries loosen their grip, and turmoil ends.

Your eyes borrow light from the waking horizon,
The winter morning breeze whispers your name.
They taught Wular how to stay calm and still,
And valleys fall silent to hear you breathe.

I keep your name unspoken, until then,
Resting between uncertainty and hope.
If we meet again, it will not need words
If we don't, let silence remember us.

21 GHAZAL

Mohd. Umair Khan M.A. Human Rights, 2nd Year



Photograph by:
Mohd Umair Khan

فٹ پاتھ کے چراغ کو کیا خبر تھی یار
کتنے چہرے گزر گئے، کوئی ٹھہرا ہی نہیں۔

یہ شہر نیند میں ہے، مگر جاگتی ہیں آنکھیں
کوئی خواب ہے جو دل سے ابھی اترا ہی نہیں۔

قدم قدم پہ خاموشی، صداؤں کا ہجوم
کوئی بولتا ہے دل سے مگر سنا ہی نہیں۔

چراغ جلتے رہے، ہوا چلتی رہی رات بھر
محبتوں کا دیا شاید ابھی بجھا ہی نہیں۔

میں خود کو ڈھونڈنے نکلا تھا شہر غم میں
سبھی ملے مگر وہ چہرا ملا ہی نہیں۔

Nabil Ahmad M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year



خواب آنکھوں میں نہ تعبیر علیگڑھ والی
کھل گئ جب سے وہ زنجیر علیگڑھ والی

لاکھ محلوں میں رہوں یاد بہت آتی ہے
ایک کمرے کی وہ جاگیر علیگڑھ والی

یہ بھی ممکن ہے کہ پہچان نہ پاو مجھکو
ساتھ لے آؤں گا تصویر علیگڑھ والی

قبل پڑھنے کے تجسس سا جگا دیتی تھی
در میں اٹکی ہوئ تحریر علیگڑھ والی
قیمتی کپ ہیں نفاست بھی ہے لیکن
اب کہاں چاے میں تاثیر علیگڑھ والی

Khwab aankhon mein na, taabeer Aligarh wali
Khul gayi jab se woh zanjeer Aligarh wali

Laakh mahalon mein rahoon, yaad bahut aati hai
Ek kamre ki woh jaageer Aligarh wali

Yeh bhi mumkin hai ke pehchaan na pao mujhko
Saath le aaunga tasveer Aligarh wali

Qabl padhne ke tajassus sa jaga deti thi
Dar mein atki hui tehreer Aligarh wali

Qeemti cup hain, nafaasat bhi hai lekin
Ab kahan chaaye mein taseer Aligarh wali



Alok Raj M.A. Public Administration, 2nd Year

चुप न रहिए आप बस अपना झूट बोलिए,
कर लें हम भरोसा कुछ ऐसा झूट बोलिए,

कल मिलेंगे हम यक़ीनन ही शाम को वही,
छोड़ कर ये सब हमें ताज़ा झूट बोलिए।

आप मेरी हैं ये मैं कह रहा हूं आपसे,
मैं तेरी हूं आप भी आधा झूट बोलिए।

तीन तक की ग़लतियाँ तो ख़ुदा भी छोड़ दे,
आप सोचिये नहीं तीजा झूट बोलिए।

दोस्त, ज़ान या मोहब्बत तो ठीक है पर अब,
हो सके तो आज का चौथा झूट बोलिए।

यूं तो जानता हूं सब आपके भी बारे में,
फिर भी आप अपने हिस्से का झूट बोलिए।

मुझको याद आएगा खेल ये शुरू से फिर,
जाते जाते आप बस पहला झूट बोलिए।

मुस्कुराना है हमें जानते हुए भी सब,
आप से हो पाए तो थोड़ा झूट बोलिए।

लग रही थी ख़ूब वो झूट बोलते हुए,
मैंने भी सो कह दिया अगला झूट बोलिए।

अब तलक हुआ है जब फ़ायदा ही आपका,
फ़ायदा ही होगा रोज़ाना झूट बोलिए।

'गीत' जैसे और भी झांसे में होंगे फिर,
आप पहले से बस इक पुख़्ता झूट बोलिए।



Anupama PhD, 1st Year

तराना-ए-जामिया

दयारे-शौक़ मेरा, दयारे-शौक़ मेरा
शहरे-आरजू मेरा, शहरे-आरजू मेरा

हुए थे आ के यहीं खेमाज़न वो दीवाने
उठे थे सुनके जो आवाज़े-रहबराने-वतन
यहीं से शौक़ की वे रब्तियों को रब्त मिला
इसी ने होश को बख़्शा जुनूं का पैराहन
यहीं से लाला-ए-सहरा को ये सुराग मिला
कि दिल के दाग को किस तरह रखते हैं रौशन

दयारे-शौक़ मेरा, शहरे-आरजू मेरा
यह अहले-शौक़ की बस्ती ये सरफिरों का दयार
यहाँ की सुबह निराली, यहाँ की शाम नई
यहाँ के रस्मो-रहे-मयकशी जुदा सबसे
यहाँ के जाम नये तरहे-रक्से-जाम नई
यहाँ पे तिश्ना लबी मयकशी का हासिल है
ये बज़्मे-दिल है, यहाँ की सलाए-आम नहीं

दयारे-शौक़ मेरा, शहरे-आरजू मेरा
यहाँ पे शम्मे-हिदायत है सिर्फ़ अपना ज़मीर
ना यहाँ पे किब्ला-ए-ईमान काबा-ए-दिल है
सफ़र है दीन यहाँ, कुफ़ है क़याम यहाँ
यहाँ पे राह-रवी खुद हुसूले-मंज़िल है
शनावरी का तक़ाज़ा है नौ-ब-नौ तूफ़ां
कनारे-मौज में आसूदगीए-साहिल है

दयारे-शौक़ मेरा, शहरे-आरजू मेरा

अनुवाद - तराना

मेरे सपनों का ये आंगन, मेरे सपनों का ये आंगन।
मेरी आशाओं का दर्पण, मेरी आशाओं का दर्पण।।

यहां आए गगन को नापने वाले परों के लोग,
वतन की राह में निकले वतन की चाह वाले लोग,

यहां बिखड़े हुए सपनों को लय में पिरोया गया,
यहीं संकल्प से सज्जित हुआ है चेतन-मन,

यहां मुरझाई कलियों को पता ये बात चली,
कि, कैसे महकते हैं शूल से लिपटे हुए उपवन।।

मेरे सपनों का ये आंगन, मेरी आशाओं का दर्पण।।

धुनि लोगों की ये धरती, मलंगों का अखाड़ा है,
यहां की सांझ है न्यारी, यहां का भोर प्यारा है,

ये है मधुशाला इसमें आने के विधान अलग,
यहां मधु भी नई और मधु के काम अलग,

ये वो मधुशाला है जो प्यास बढ़ा देती है,
ये हियनगरी है, करती है सभी का अभिनंदन।।

मेरे सपनों का ये आंगन, मेरी आशाओं का दर्पण।।

यहां बस आत्मा ही रास्ता दिखाती है,
और यही आदमी को आदमी बनाती है,

यहां रुक जाना ही है अंत, और चलना ही है जीवन,
यहां पथिक ही स्वयं साध्य भी है, है वही साधन,

यहां माझी को परखती है नित नई झंझा,
और तट पर बाहें करती हैं स्नेहिल आलिंगन ।।

मेरे सपनों का ये आंगन, मेरी आशाओं का दर्पण।।

- चन्द्र प्रकाश मिश्र एवं अनुपमा

चन्द्र प्रकाश मिश्र,
वरिष्ठ अनुवाद अधिकारी।
प्रवर्तन निदेशालय, मुख्यालय, नई दिल्ली।

और,

अनुपमा,
वरिष्ठ अनुवाद अधिकारी,
प्रवर्तन निदेशालय, मुख्यालय, नई दिल्ली। एवं
डॉक्टरेट रिसर्च स्कॉलर,
राजनीति विज्ञान विभाग,
जामिया मिल्लिया
इस्लामिया।





PAINTINGS & PHOTOGRAPHS

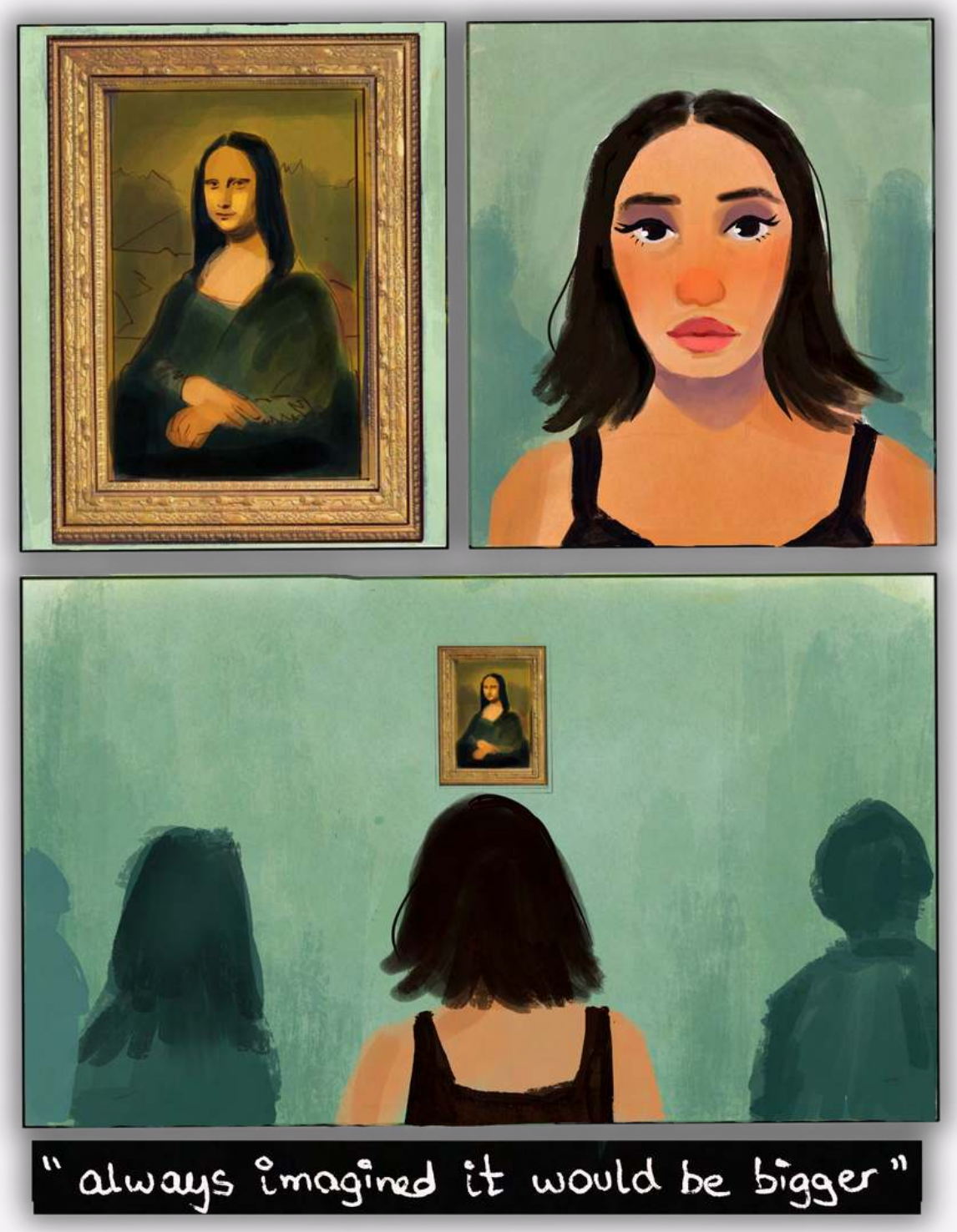
PAGES: 78-91

2026.

25 ALWAYS IMAGINED IT WOULD BE BIGGER

Jigyasa Atreya

M. A. Political Science, 2nd Year



THE FLYOVER AT DUSK

Jigyasa Atreya M. A. Political Science, 2nd Year



The unremarkable places that mark us most.

FROM HANDS, THE WORLD EMERGES

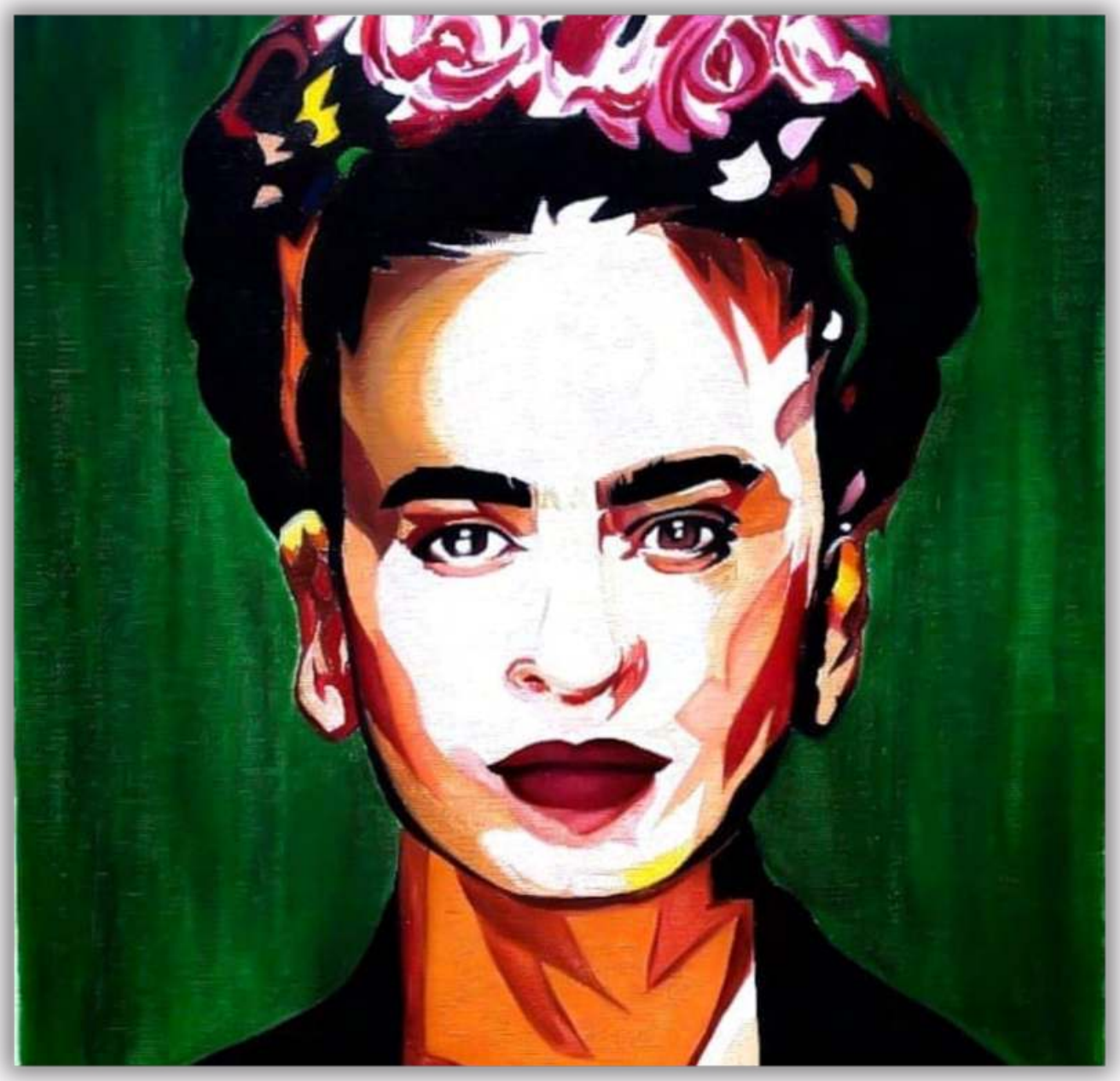
Jigyasa Atreya M. A. Political Science, 2nd Year



From hands, the world emerges.

26 FRIDA KAHLO

Ritika Mishra M. A. Political Science, 2nd Year



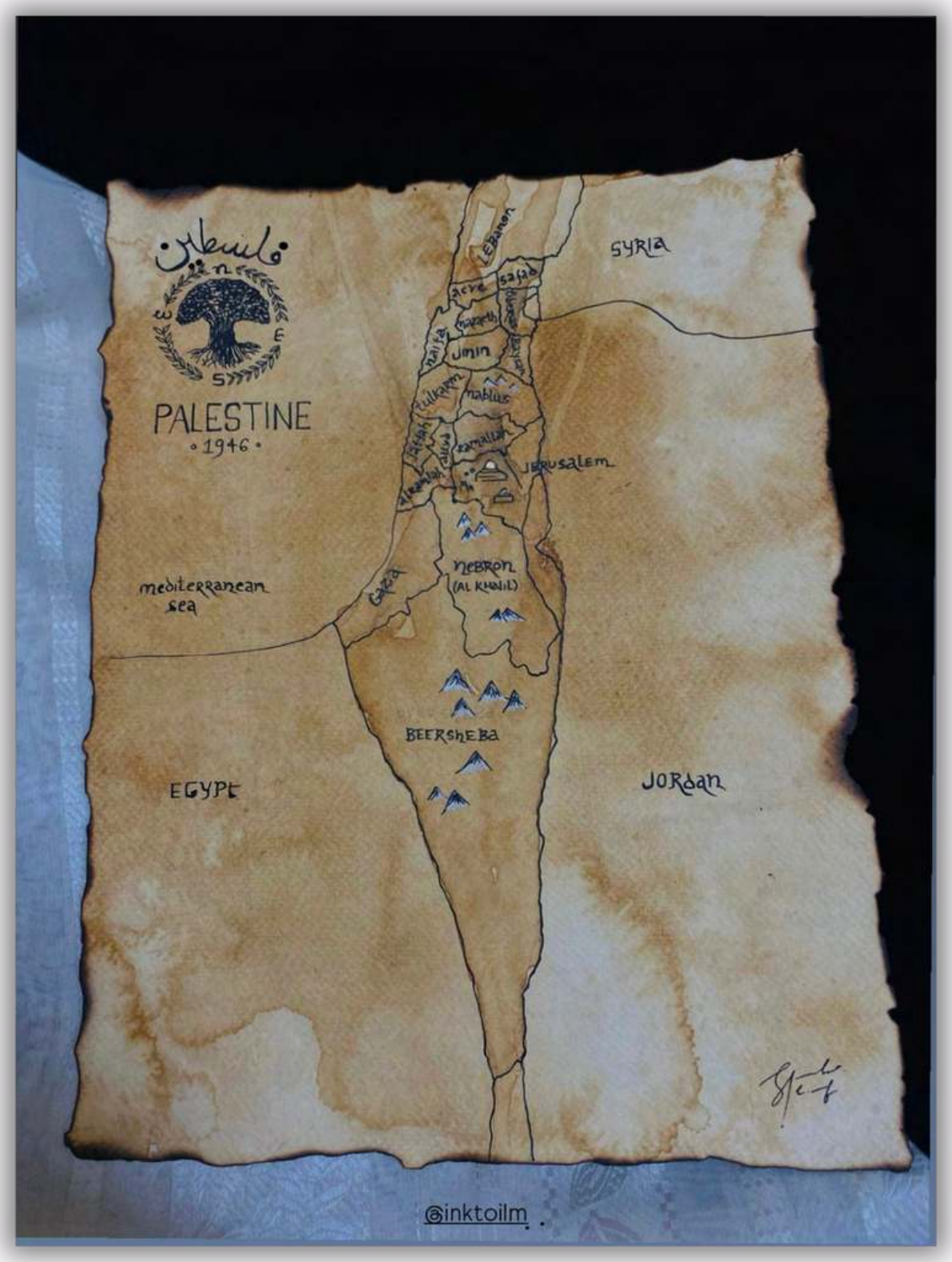
Vaishali Mann

PhD, 3rd Year



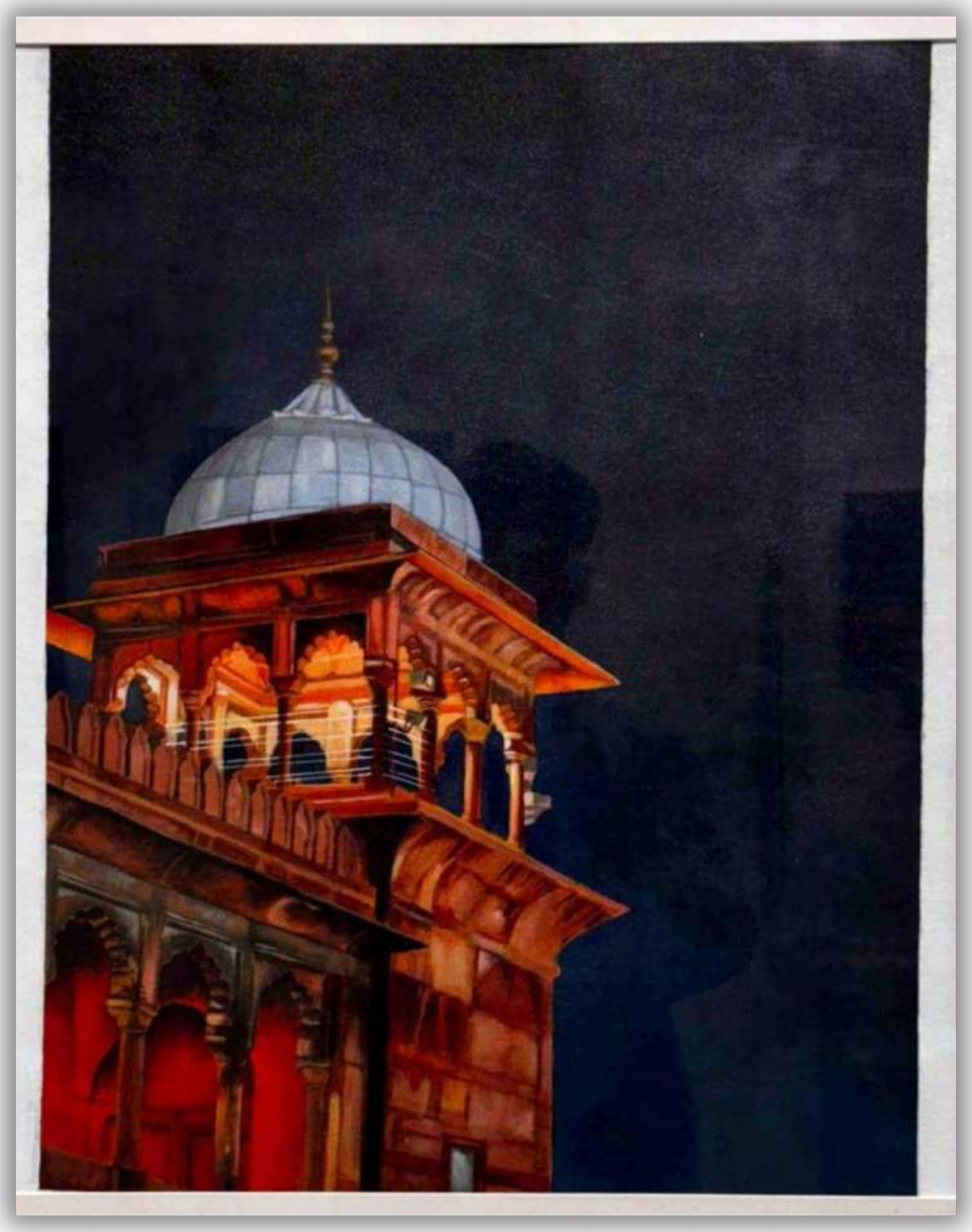
Tooba

M.A. Human Rights, 1st year



Abhishek

B.Arch, Faculty of Architecture and Ekistics, 3rd Year



Rutba Khan

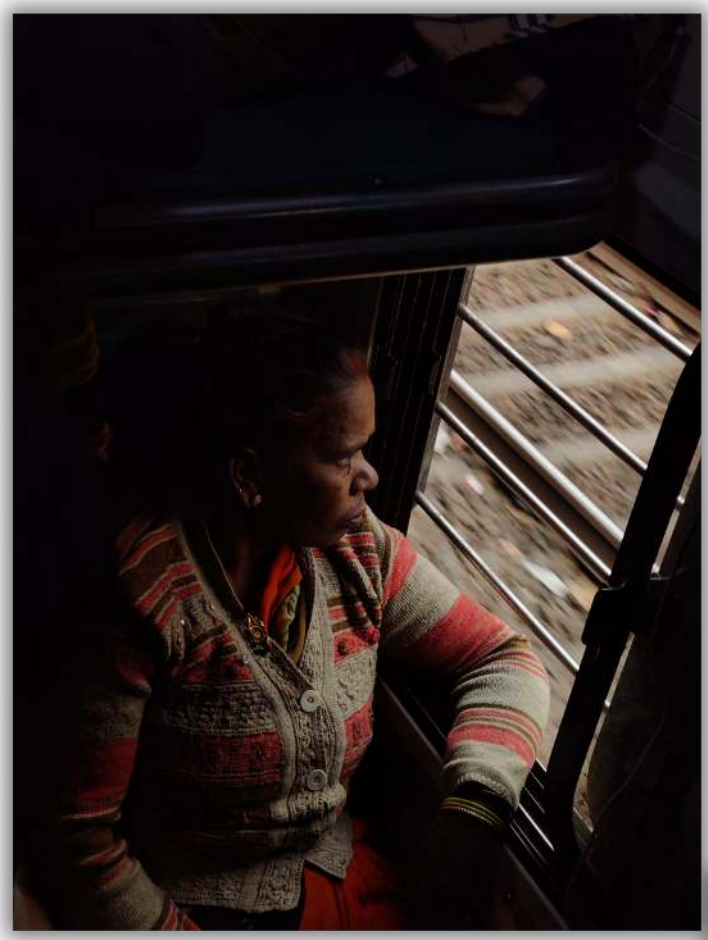
B.A. Hons, Political Science, 2nd Year

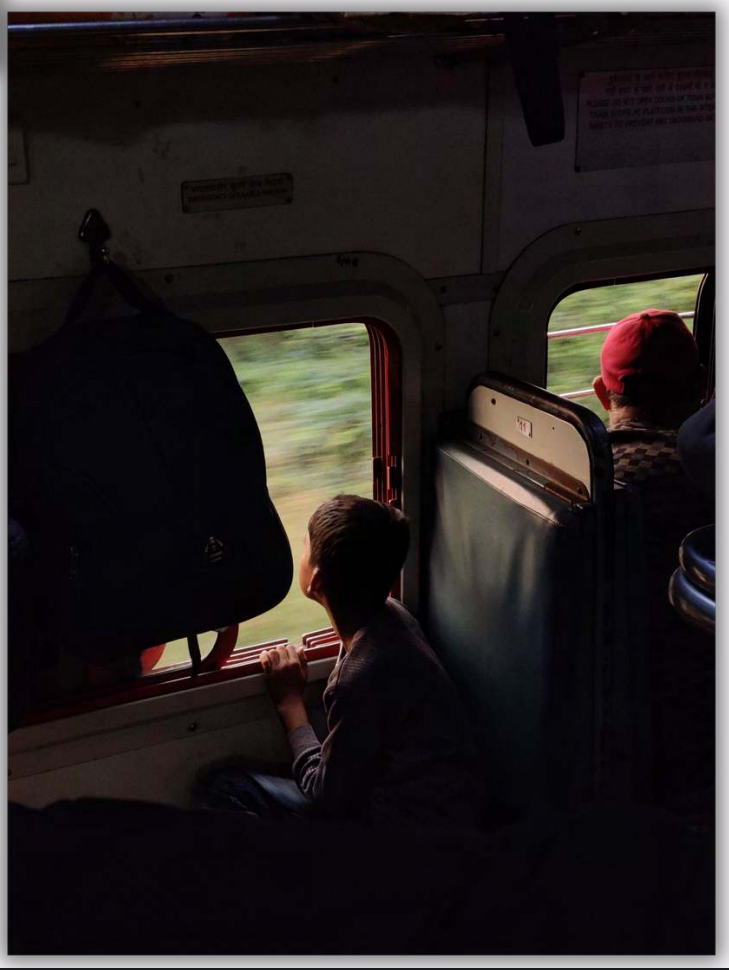


It was the end of July 2024. I decided to take a stroll along Dal Lake. I vividly remember the moment I captured this photograph on my phone. The sky, the water, the shikara— no doubt they all looked surreal, but it wasn't something I hadn't seen before. I have witnessed a bunch of moments like these since my childhood, but despite this fact, there was still something that felt different in my heart. I was supposed to move to another city the next day, which is to say, I was leaving my hometown. Up until that evening, I suppose I wasn't giving it much thought, but right there, as I was walking on the pavement, and to my left was this huge lake stretched out as far as my eyes could see, this feeling began to settle in me. To me, the lake was echoing, "You are moving out, child." And I remember I stopped and sat by the Dal shore and switched my phone off. Because I wanted to remember that moment, be present in it thoroughly. My moment. I have tucked its memory in the back pocket of my heart, and whenever I miss my home, I recall that scene; one could say I almost teleport into the past, feel the air of Kashmir hugging me, telling me, "It is going to be alright."

Brajendra Singh Parihar

M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

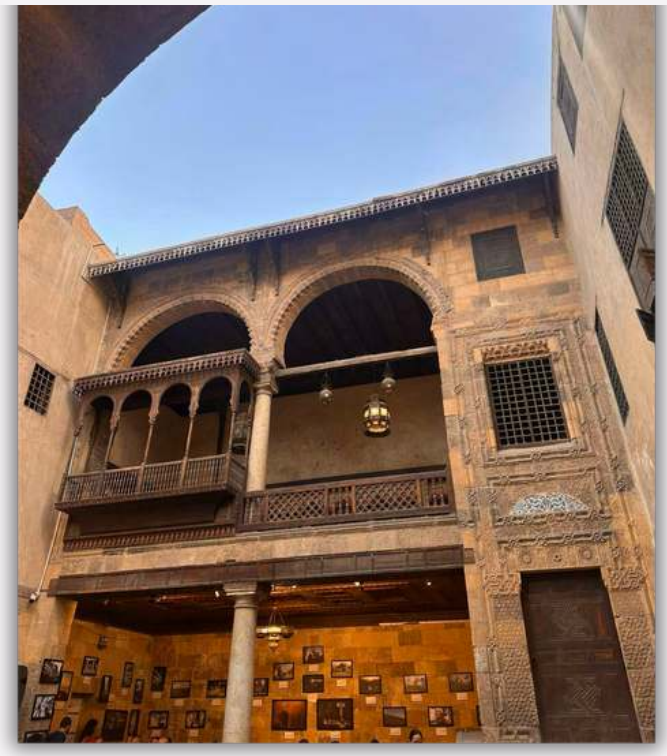




Maskat



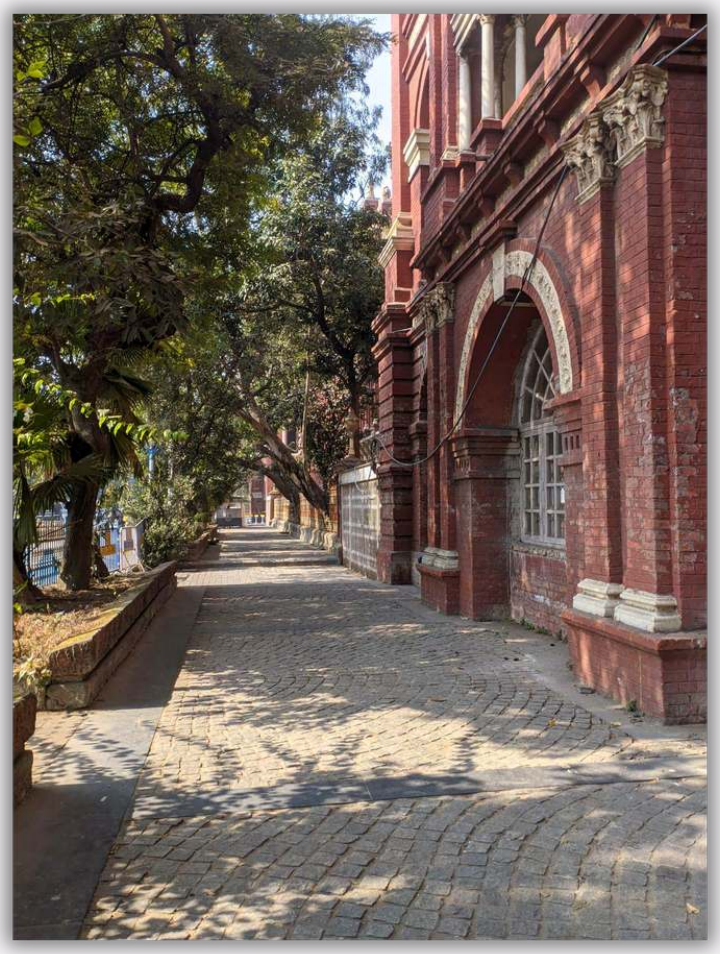


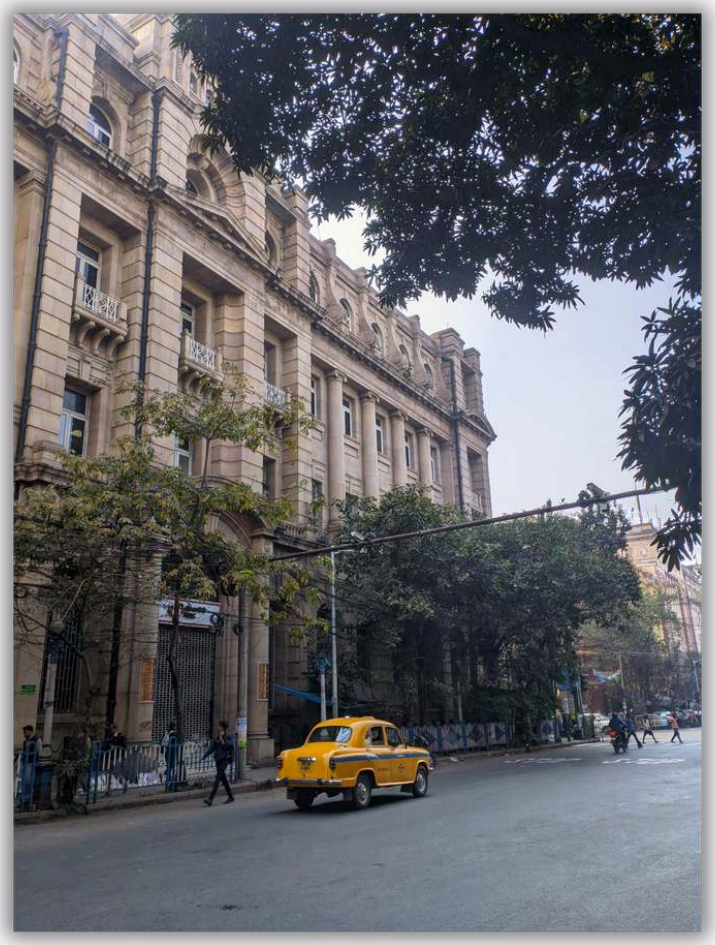




Khandoker Taasin

M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year





34

ST. CATHEDRAL'S CHURCH

Soumya Dutta

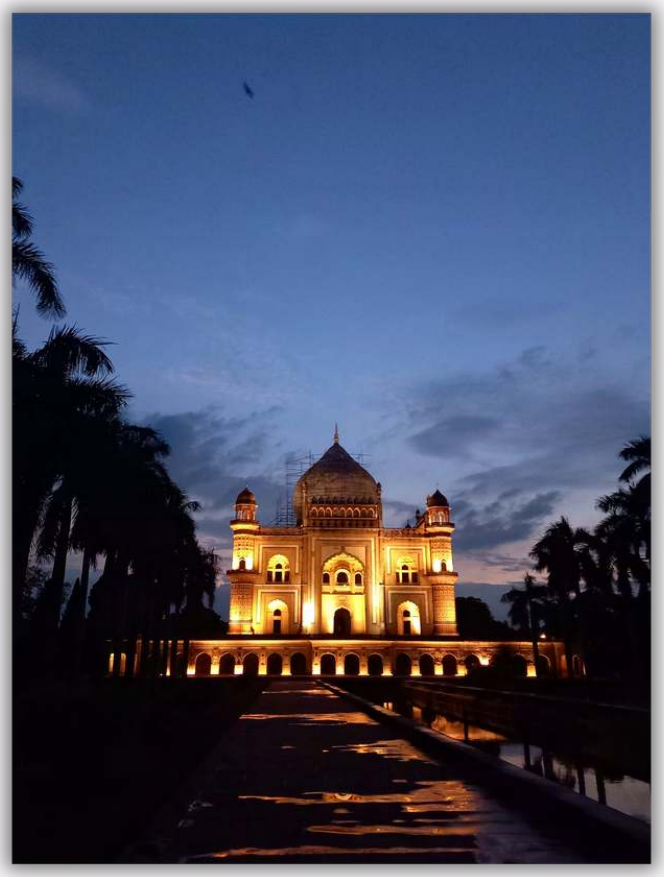
M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year

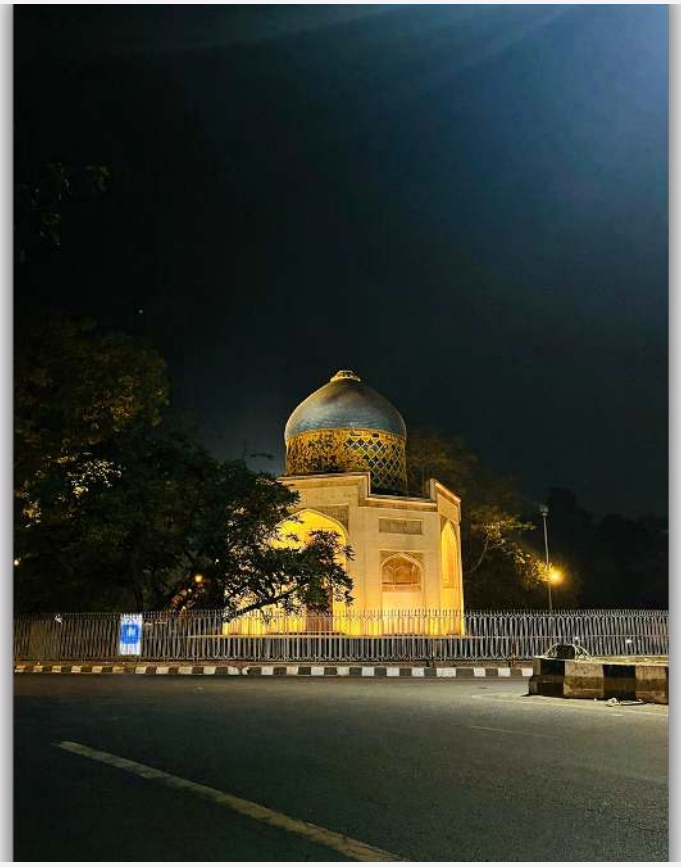


Eishita Tiwari

M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year





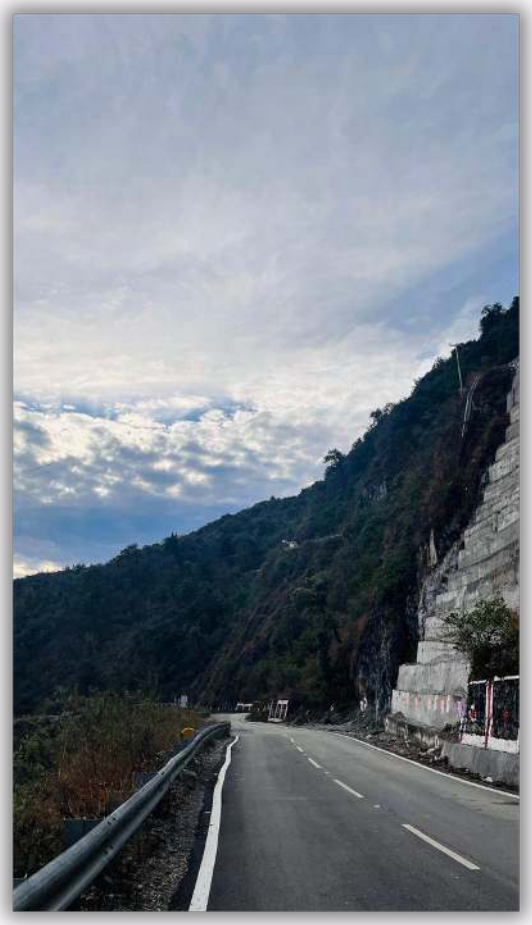


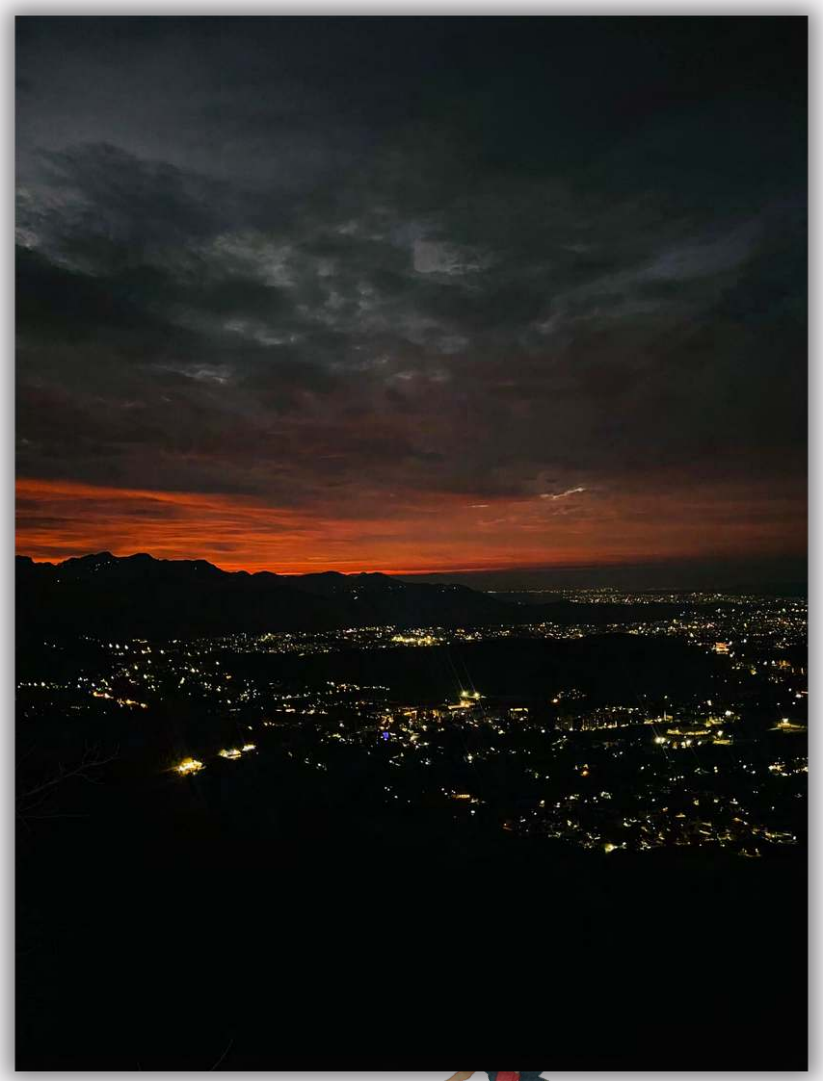


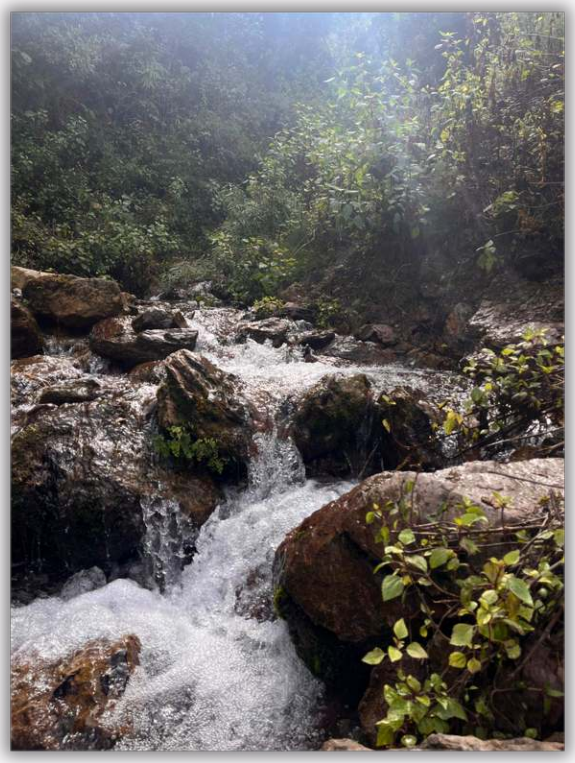
WHAT THE MOUNTAINS REMEMBER

Eishita Tiwari

M.A. Political Science, 2nd Year







NOTE OF THANKS

HEAD OF THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE:

DR. BULBUL DHAR JAMES

CONVENOR, EPISTEME 2026 :

DR. KRISHNA SWAMY DARA

BOARD OF EDITORS:

AMAN KUMAR JHA; EISHITA TIWARI; KANAN SHARMA; ROHAN SHARMA; ALOK RAJ; MOHD. UMAIR KHAN; MASKAT

MAGAZINE DESIGN:

MASKAT; ROHAN SHARMA; EISHITA TIWARI

AND TO ALL THE CONTRIBUTORS FOR REIMAGINING THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S ISSUE THROUGH THEIR VALUABLE AND CREATIVE SUBMISSIONS. THANK YOU FOR HELPING MAKE EPISTEME 2026 A SUCCESS.

EDITORIAL BOARD:

This issue began with Hans Zimmer's *Cornfield Chase* playing in my mind, the feeling that time and space are never truly separate. Perhaps art, too, belongs in that constellation: as memory, and expression.

— Eishita Tiwari

There's never an end to how creative homo sapiens could be, and Episteme is a testimony of that.

— Kanan Sharma

Very few things in my life have reached a logical conclusion; Episteme is one of them.

— Aman Kumar Jha

I came in knowing Gramsci. I left knowing that "final draft" is a bourgeois myth.

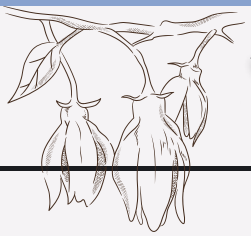
— Rohan Sharma

I find my voice, then mercilessly edit it.

"And now, I crawl back into the safe haven of my delusions. Until you pull me back to earth by violent force, I will continue to live through art that stirs my soul and sparks revolutions."

(Guess how many edits?)

— Maskat



YOUR SPACE



ART SPACE AND TIME

Copyright disclaimer: Episteme JMI does not claim to own any Photographs used in this issue.

ART SPACE AND TIME

Copyright disclaimer: Episteme JMI does not claim to own any Photographs used in this issue.

ابسٹیم

2026