

Words, Images and You

DoubleSpeak Magazine

A literary magazine, a window,
a voice and probably a bit
more...

Issue - June 2021
<https://dsmag.in/>



DoubleSpeak Magazine

Words, Images and You

A free online magazine



website: <https://dsmag.in/>

email: doublespeakmag@gmail.com

Lead Editor (Prose and Poetry) - **Sumedha Mukherjee**

Lead Editor (Photography) - **Shamin Kulkarni**

IT Support - **Rajdeep Paul**

Social Media Coordinator - **Maitreyi Kulkarni**

Founder and Managing Editor - **Arpan Krishna Deb**

About DoubleSpeak

Doublespeak is a literary magazine. This could have been all that we wanted here to be shown and yet there are a few things that appeared important to share. There are many digital spaces where literary materials ranging from poems, prose, research articles, letters, opinions and discourses can be published. Doublespeak doesn't come with a promise to be very different from a few of them. This magazine would try and publish all sorts of literary pieces from creators who could be famous or not so famous. In a time when almost anything passes as a literary piece owing to a democratic snowball of like, share/re-share and promote buttons, Doublespeak aims to marry the joy of reading with learning a logical manner to critique them at the same time. We offer a forum where the readers can directly write letters to the authors, expressing their views on any piece and we expect a mutual learning process to ensue thereon. Doublespeak also provides a space for images, photographs to be precise, where one can express the abstraction through a process of mere documentation.

Along with independent writing and photography, Doublespeak offers a unique space where collaborative processes can find a meaningful context. There are people who need a voice because they can't find their own and there are artists who need the fodder from those muted or gagged voices to express in the most significant language of art. Doublespeak aims to bring these two groups together with an aim to substantiate the therapeutic nature of words and images.

Doublespeak is a magazine which is free, we don't have money and we don't ask for it either. We have an excellent team of editors who have agreed to work together because they find joy in doing it, at least that's what they say. The editors do not care about anything but the truth that is there in the words and images of the content. Doublespeak is not loyal to any idea or group of people except for the polity of free-expression that is not choked by the discriminatory tools of the society. The readers might be provoked, offended, overwhelmed, irritated with the contents of the magazines, but they will not be subjected to mindless profanity and nugatory exclamations of idle minds. We believe in celebrating art that is manifestation of the mind, in which our species takes an extruding pride, through careful observations of the norms of aesthetics, with a conscious intent of going beyond.

Read Doublespeak, write for us and if you find it helping you becoming a stronger and more humane self of yours, our job is done.

Preface to the second issue

When a deep desire turns into a somewhat successful hobby, then I believe it brings a kind of joy which is only evident in abstract expressions, like a poem or an inexplicable gesture. The second issue of DoubleSpeak deserves such a gesture. This issue brings to you a host of new authors and photographers (even painters) in each section. We have an extraordinary range of contributors for this issue - from a sixteen year old writing a suspense thriller, a septuagenarian old English professor, a psychological counselor, a painter (who is an advocate as well), a practising sociologist to even a condensed matter physicist. Such a fabric, somewhat surreally, reiterates my commentary on the first issue's preface, when I so ambitiously liked this magazine to a probable mirror of the human kind.

It is true that there are some lines which are being blurred between the categories as some of the mini-albums might have been placed in a photo-story and a photo-story could have well been an essay in the first place. But DoubleSpeak magazine wants to bring the contributors vision to the readers. If the author or the artist wishes to see a piece in a certain category, the editorial team accepts that thought and publishes the same in that original spirit. The readers are encouraged to comment on such categorisation and write letters to us with their views.

Most authors and artists appreciate a communicating audience (readers) and although I presume these interesting works are reaching quite a number of interested readers, yet we are in wanting of the feedback that might help the rookies who are trying to find their mark in writing, capturing photos and even creating an art piece from their scrambled pieces of thoughts. Hence I urge all readers to write to us with your views of the pieces being published here. We are aware that all of them are not of a standard which can be celebrated everywhere, but like our contributors we are eager to improve.

I sincerely hope that this issue will find more interested readers and I wish as we move on we will gather more artists and readers in our cohort. As always I remain thankful to my team and the ever-encouraging friends. Without them this would have remained a dream.

Arpan Krishna Deb
Founder and Managing Editor

Contents

1	Poems	4
1.1	<i>The Sunday Bhoni</i> : Anupam Barve	4
1.2	<i>End of day's play</i> : Anupam Barve	6
1.3	<i>Prismatic love</i> : Abhishek Soman	8
1.4	<i>The road</i> : Debbie Ghosh	9
1.5	<i>The body torn</i> : Subhashim Goswami	10
1.6	<i>In the light of the ear</i> : Subhashim Goswami	10
1.7	<i>Snippets from a pandemic</i> : Meera Krishnan	11
1.8	<i>Two Haibun</i> : Anannya Dasgupta	16
1.9	<i>Those were the days</i> : Anindya Sundar Paul	18
1.10	<i>Pentad of Haiku</i> : Ishan Gupta	19
2	Fiction	20
2.1	<i>Moving on</i> : Jayeshree Mitra Paul	20
2.2	<i>A turn to ashes</i> : Arjun Kumar	22
3	Essays	36
3.1	<i>The Garden of Eden</i> : Sambit Roychowdhury	36
3.2	<i>Let go, but how?</i> : Rutika Deshmukh	38
3.3	<i>Helping children cope with 'Big-Feelings'</i> : Prachi Srivastava	40
3.4	<i>Heathrow</i> : Isha Pungaliya	42
3.5	<i>Frequently asked questions</i> : Sanil M. Neelakandan	44
4	Translation	45
4.1	<i>Translation of Anita Agnihotri's poem: A Song for the Scavenger Women</i> (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta	45
4.2	<i>Translation of Kunwar Narayan's poem: Description of the disappeared</i> (Hindi to English): Supurna Dasgupta	47
5	Photography	49
5.1	<i>Baby-sitting</i> : Purna Mukherjee	49
5.2	<i>Internment</i> : Romit Gangopadhyay	51
5.3	<i>River</i> : Shamashish Sengupta	53
6	Photo-stories	56
6.1	<i>Not all s(heroes) wear capes, some medicate themselves</i> : Gayatri Kotbagi	56
6.2	<i>Identity and Multitude</i> : Rohan Rathod	58
7	Collaborative Works	61
7.1	<i>Have you tried mental floss</i> : Tarush Kumar and Prachi Srivastava	61
8	Letters	64
8.1	<i>Letter to the editor</i> : Pramit Sinha	64
8.2	<i>Letter to the editor</i> : Subhashim Goswami	65

1 Poems

1.1 *The Sunday Bhoni*: Anupam Barve

My throat's hurting
From switching between
Breathing
The filthy
Urban industrial particulates
And
Air-conditioned cars,
Lounges and classrooms.
I squint on a gulp
Of my own salty mucous
As my car
(The bubble incubating me
From the harsh world outside)
Stops at the traffic lights.
I see her notice me
An early catch
On Sunday morning.
She springs up
From the footpath
Probably being prodded
By her mother
Who has now mastered
Her multitasking skills
Spotting likely donors
Between two lice
In another little one's hair.
Sunday morning's a good time
For guilt-laden alms.
The kid looks so much
Like the one on
Sunday Times'
Children's benefit full-pager, no?
She runs over to the car
The circus ring around her.
And is about to start her gig
When our eyes meet.
And she stretches into a smile
As sweet as could be.
Had all our smiles
Been as true and heartfelt

As this little one's.
How old is she?
Young enough
To be my daughter
Yet old enough
To make friends with.
'Give me something
It's Sunday!'
She winces from beyond
The windowpane separating us.
'I don't have anything darling'
I motion.
'Come on'
She mimes expressively
'There gotta be something.'
I fish out
A couple of rupee coins
Reluctantly.
Careful
Not to give away
The Danish coin
With tiny hearts engraved on it
That a friend's daughter
A charm
As little as this one
Has given me
As a token of love
Last year.
I roll the glass down
Enough
For two fingers to slip out
But not too low
You don't want
The warm filth to gush in.
And then our fingers touch
Momentarily.
The coins tinkle down
On her palm
And she bestows upon me
Yet another glorious smile
And hops away in glee
Her face beaming with joy.
She's beaten the other ones to
The Sunday Bhoni.
The lights turn green

And we drive off
I squint again
The throat's hurting.

1.2 *End of day's play: Anupam Barve*

From the 12th floor back room window
of the dreary hotel in Fulham
where we met
I saw plane after plane after plane
sink into Heathrow;
as the Sun sank in right behind them
announcing evening, dusk and night
one after the other
(like timebells before a theatre show)
splashing a beautiful spectrum of yellow gloom
across the West London scape
and finally calling it a day,
unlike those sinking birds-
minute hands of London eternity,
the Sun at least knows when to stop!

I was in unison with the Sun
for my constant remembrance
of all the 'only if's from my past,
our past, everyone's past
(only to be then carefully
folded up and hid in dark corners,
conveniently on stand-by for gloomier evenings)
would have never stopped
just like those sinking planes, bloody planes!

Only if
Only if what?

As I take his leave
and walk to the station
to slide back into my life
weekly groceries, special cornflakes
and caramel custards
this life which I have borrowed
for the time being

I ask myself a thousand questions
Only if, only if, only if.
It had taken the excavator six days
to uproot the almond tree in Sharada Sadan
he said, coldly
Swasti goes next month.
All of it.
A barrage of questions hit me
Answers to which are fading
as quickly as my roots are,
dissolving into oblivion.
I see an old tavern,
Next to a kebab shop, a glass paned showroom
and a mammoth shopping centre.
I take a deep breath. . .
It starts getting darker
The night's falling down on me.
The planes still sink down,
all around me, endlessly,
winking at me through the dark.
Stupid planes. What do they know?

Anupam is an independent film-maker whose films have been screened in many national and international film festivals, including the NYIFF. He is an eccentric fan of the game of cricket, owns a vintage type-writer, loves his close group of friends and is currently a faculty member in FTII (Pune).

1.3 *Prismatic love*: Abhishek Soman

In the prismatic waters
I swim with abandon
As liquid of the skies
Propose a toast
Call it a name, but
They never told me why?
For the waters were seamless
With no bounds for love

Bubbles of metamorphosis
Rattle up to the brim
As gentle as they merge
With the prismatic seam
The ripples echo loud
The hearts breathe around
As mine as with yours
It's the love that surrounds

Cast in the liquids
That flow without a form
No start or any stops
Infatuations overcast
For the old ones will be told
Without envy or remorse
Why curtail the flow
When we can be loved
Not only in one way
But certainly in many more...

*An Architect by Education, with Masters in Advanced Architecture from the Institute of Advanced Architecture of Catalonia (IAAC), Barcelona, **Abhishek** is an ex-dancer, writer and an aspiring filmmaker. Poetry has been a way for him to express observed and experienced emotions. As a queer individual putting his intimate voice out there via written words and getting a warm acceptance for the same has been cathartic for years. He loves to connect with different minds that bring forth their personality with collaborative conversations.*

1.4 *The road*: Debbie Ghosh

With each passing day I learn something new,
Lessons are many, but days are few.
It's the journey which matters the most
Neither the starting point, nor the winning post.

Stumbling over the rocks I learn
How to stay strong and stern
Walking beneath the vast blue sky
I learn to let my soul fly high.

The trees teach me to remember my roots
No matter how tall I stand, or how far I spread my shoots
Forgetting their woes, the little birds keep singing day long
They teach me "happiness" – life's ultimate theme song.

The flowers teach me how to smile
Staying wilted and drooping is not worthwhile.
From the sea I learn to calm my mind
Leaving all my worries behind.

Difficulties and good times; nothing lasts long
They keep coming and going all along.
The road is steep at times, at times its easy
The weather is sunny sometimes, sometimes breezy.

I realize nothing is a waste
Both happiness and sorrow, you must taste.
This life is nothing but the road,
Which you must walk before you leave for your abode.

Debbie is a full time Auditor and Risk Consultant with a leading Big 4 organisation. However, she uses arts as a reflection of her inner state in the forms of music composition, poetry or painting. She believes that balancing your time between passion and profession brings in the much required sanctity of self.

1.5 *The body torn*: Subhashim Goswami

If the Nation is a body
Am wondering what blood, vein and nerves would outrage be bound by
What vestiges of waste would the body hold
When the gut wants to reject all tissues, membranes and cells
That holds the façade of this body together.

1.6 *In the light of the ear*: Subhashim Goswami

In the light of the ear
In kissing your earlobes
Lies the expanse of the northern lights
Although the light emanates
In the deepest trench of my gut
With its own peculiar rhythm, which only I know
When I kiss your earlobes

Subhashim is a sociologist and a practising theatre artist. His main interests comprise the fundamental questions of research methodology, ethnography. Alongside he is intrigued by the constructs of the visual world, how is it expressed in writing and the essential merger of art and research.

1.7 *Snippets from a pandemic: Meera Krishnan*

Ballad of a Indian migrant worker

People are sitting on the floor
Glued to the television
When Gangadhar walks in through the door
To understand the prime minister's vision

"Lockdown effective from tonight"
His friends and children panic
"We do have supplies at home, right?"
Gangadhar says, "no need to get so dramatic"

Now there's a huge crowd outside his home
Some men light up beedeers
The children are running around yet worn
Gangadhar looks at the ladies

They seem to be mumbling
They are running out of daal and rice
But the people's stomachs are grumbling
All there's running in their stomachs are mice

Gangadhar picks up his phone
Tries to call a friend
Is he now on his own?
Will there ever be an end?

The phone gives a message
Of corona virus safety
Gangadhar doesn't find a job he can arrange
He's grasping with the reality

Do I see outside a celebration?
Didn't the PM ask us to stay indoors?
But what is this frustration?
We don't know what to eat anymore!

My wife is crying
She's been with me since I was 17
My two children are suffering
All they are becoming is lean

Oh God, what a life of living in the cage,
In the mercy of others
Let's go to the bus stop and go to our village
At home at least, I have my lonesome mother

What will she do in this mess?
She is blind and old
She will caress my hair
And I will rid her of her cold

Alas, there is no bus at the bus stop
Every mode of transport is blocked
At least in my hometown, there is a flourishing wheat crop
In the city, we are but locked

Sharada, let's start walking
I know it's a long haul
But I am right besides you, we will be talking
And we will have a ball

Have you got the children's books?
They can read in breaks
Don't worry about people's looks
That is something we need to forsake

My friends and foes, walk straight and upright
This march is important
It's time to show our collective might
And the cruel city is something to abandon

Let's look ahead and never look behind
This is a place that has given us wealth
But surely didn't make us kind
And full of health

The village won't be this large
Nor will it have the big lights
But the milk and vegetables will be top notch
And the children can fly some kites

All these years of hard work
No savings in my pocket
My boss was just a jerk
Who would treat me like his puppet

Let's walk ahead
Sharada, you take one bag and I will take another
All our life's belongings are here except our bed
But at least we are together.

WFH

Work from home
Where's my comb ?
Got to look nice
Got to cook some rice

So what if I like rhymes?
In the world, there are nastier crimes
Spinach in my teeth
My PPT has got to look neat

Listen, open the curtains
Break the pattern
It's been days
And I've just been in a daze

Let me make myself some coffee
I've to also pay my daughter's fee
She's using her phone too much
And I don't know what to make for lunch.

I have to clean the house
But the day is just making me drowse
Staring outside the window is a must
But from where do I even begin cleaning this dust?!

My alarm rings
But my heart sinks When will we get out?
We just need two vaccine shots...

Delivery boy

A few years ago there came an app
Delivery at your doorstep they said
You could order with a snap

They needed delivery boys
They gave us scooties and phones
I learned about bok choys
And about muffins and scones

The pandemic hit hard
Our pockets were emptying fast
I'd travel from Borivali to Khar
To make sure that money would last

It all began in school
I was told to become an engineer
In those days it was cool
And I'd study when exams would near

I couldn't get into college
The expense was too high
We somehow had to manage
But I could never wear a tie

I got a job right after
It was in a photocopy shop
I had to clean all the clutter
And sweep and mop

Now I deliver food in homes
I sometimes pretend to be lost
I do like my time alone
It comes at a huge cost

The food has to remain hot
But sometimes cold too
I have to give this a shot
Because I need the money too.

So I mask up and leave each morning
Clean, sanitize and dry my hands

Even when the sun isn't shining
I got to obey the command

Delivery on time is our guarantee
But when the guy in Flat 212 got a fever
they said it was from me.

***Meera** is a writer, translator and educator who works out of anywhere, thanks to the current online mode. She is actively involved in engaging with people in education, writing projects and artistic ventures. With an M.Phil in French and Francophone Studies from JNU, New Delhi, she loves to explore various methods in writing and language pedagogy. She recently co-wrote and co-produced her short film "How was the Date?" under her production company "Mostly Harmless Productions" and runs a translation and subtitling venture "Sabtext.film".*

1.8 *Two Haibun*: Anannya Dasgupta

Note from the author: A haibun is a genre of Japanese writing that combines prose and either one or more than one haiku. Unlike haiku, haibun also appears with a title.

The Truth in Half-Lights

One time, chatting late on the balcony about this and that, we noticed a bright orange light between the palm leaves as dusk dimmed into the night. Street lamp, we said, throwing a shade on its distracting glare.

distilling perfume –
our time
in breakable jars

Then it rose higher, whiter and cast the bay in its sheen. Silly us. It was the moon all along.

swallowing
the penumbra –
laughing doves

Point of Crossing

A mahant at the Kumbh-mela in a TV interview: we are all going to die sooner or later, that's no reason to stop doing what we are meant to do while alive. The bathing in the Ganga will continue as planned. Those who get sick with the virus will get treated or ascend to heaven for having taken the holy dip. Lakhs of mask-less pilgrims continue to gather in close proximity in Haridwar.

the old mara river
wildebeest jump in –
sound of death

God is in-charge at the Kumbh, and the government everywhere else, a cop in Delhi told my friend who was pulled over for driving mask-less while alone in the car and had offered Kumbh as irony. The cop didn't ticket the violation.

in endless
savannah grasslands
an occasional acacia tree

Visit my shore before this lunatic world ends, I told two different friends today.

grazing
on sunsets –
giraffes

Anannya is a poet and artist who lives in Chennai. Her haiku, haibun and haiga can be found in Failed Haiku, Right Hand Pointing and Sonic Boom. She is also the director of the Centre for Writing and Pedagogy at Krea university.

1.9 *Those were the days: Anindya Sundar Paul*

Those were the days
When we were carefree
Those were the days
To climb up a tree.

Not a care for the world
Not a scare of a thing
Not a rope tying down
Not a pull from a string.

Time went by like a flutter
Of the eyelids
But the fragrance remained
Like a vase full of orchids.

We left behind a lot to ponder
Our faults and flaws, and a blunder,
Things we never apologised for
Things that triggered many a war.

Friendships made, as friends parted
Some still around, some departed.
As one saga reaches its end
A new story therein started.

Looking back in retrospect
There are no regrets.
Only burnt stubs remain
Of life's cigarettes.

Anindya is a writer, critique, translator and an enthusiast in building up community programmes with adults and children alike. Besides his literary activities, he is a prolific singer whose recent musings are with experimental acapella.

1.10 *Pentad of Haiku: Ishan Gupta*

The screens of quarantine.

Working withing teams,
Time may zoom past unnoticed.
A year without meets.

When summer beings...

Nights shockingly cool,
Temperate days are arid.
Pleasant September.

How many tries to get it right?

Lost love lived long lies;
Temporal traumatic times.
Mistakes maketh men.

Circle of life.

Goodwill is meagre,
Rust gathers on rested knees
Earnings turn to ash.

Haven of treasured past.

Those precious moments,
Photos burn, pics get deleted.
Memory's my safe.

Ishan is a fervid thinker, aspiring policy-practitioner and researcher, semi-professional singer-songwriter and a mechanical engineer on paper. He is currently stuck between expectations and ambitions.

2 Fiction

2.1 *Moving on:* Jayeshree Mitra Paul

I was never a person who brought hope and consolation to the bed-ridden. So, where others visited the sick and forlorn and expressed misery and satisfaction at the end of the day, I felt nothing. If there was work to be done, it was —. Thus my time passed through the years, unremarkably...

... Till I was asked to visit someone from long ago. She was the one who had helped bring me up when my mother was distracted with the grief of my elusive father's sudden death. It flashes in my memory that mother was trying to feed me watery, lukewarm rice with milk and the vile tasting would not go down my gullet. "Na, na, Maa", I wailed, as she looked at me blankly and just sat on the floor, the food dripping from her fingers and my mouth. And then, *Dima* glided in. Wiping my mouth, she took me up and carried me outside to show me how a red-bottomed *tuntuni* was singing and swinging away on a high branch. Later in the afternoon, we three had hot *khichuri*.

It was a journey along forgotten ways. The countryside was green with unseasonal rains even with the advent of winter. *Dima's* place looked smaller than I remembered, but then, I was looking through eyes thirty years older. She lay, frail and tiny, on a cot. Her eyes focussed. The woman attending her told me to say something, and keep talking. "She does respond, though rarely." I started with asking if she remembered how she told me that the apple was from heavenly orchards and our own guava was a return gift. And then, her eyes lit up. "*Dalim*" – she clearly articulated through the years of rheumy throat. Her mouth opened and shut intermittently, as if she wanted to be fed. The attendant looked embarrassed. "She never usually asks to eat anything, but today..." Something needed to be done, and by me. "Wait, there was a *dalim* tree near our place, I recall. If I can't find anything, the station's quite close, I'll get it from the fruit stall. Don't worry."

I couldn't find the pomegranate tree just then. I raced to the station, found quite a few pomegranates there at the fruit vendor's and took them all. Then I started back, and old memories of short-cuts came rushing through the bushes and scrub. Heaping over a low hedge and passing a flowering shoe-flower tree, I heard the monotonous cooing of the turtle-doves. Maybe I had paused as I saw the tranquil pond and marvelled at the beautiful velvet hyacinths. Suddenly someone rose from the pool, looked at the sun, then at me, stared, and stared. It was as if his eyes were hypnotised by what he saw.

"No, please! I'm sorry. I never really meant to. I forgot you didn't know how to swim. Please forgive me –" And he took a step back, slipped! Then hit the back of his head on the last step and fell into the water.

I raised an alarm and some village people came running. But nothing could be done. There was a young boy on a nearby guava tree who had seen what happened, so the police and the villagers had no doubt about the truth of what I told them. The fact that I didn't jump into the pool was because of the reason that I didn't know how to swim. Neither did my father. Which was why he died, drowning in the village pond on a late summer day.

Dalimbabu's post-mortem report was a confirmation of what I'd reported. The surprising thing was that it seems that *Dalimbabu* had appropriated all of my father's property as his widow and son's caretaker, and now it was to come back to me.

But it let me go back to *Dima* and her '*dalim*'. I returned with the pomegranates to her house, but she was sleeping. She never spoke after that single word. "*Dalim*", and passed away some days later. Her '*kheror khata*' or household notebook, left to me, had many recipes for the palate and maladies, and a single entry on the second-last page, folded, "*Dalim* knew, yet pushed him in. How can I? I'll be mum, then the *khoka* and his mum can be safe. Still..."

I'm handing over the land to the local authorities for various welfare activities and obviously, left and right, political parties are all eager to take me in. It seems that I am embarking on a strange journey. But I am telling you all this, readers, because it seems a very unreal episode in my humdrum life. And the strangest thing about this stranger journey is that it begins with a word.

Jayshree Mitra Paul is a retired professor of English, Kanchrapara College. She has been a vegetarian by choice for four decades and a practising agnostic.

2.2 *A turn to ashes: Arjun Kumar*

Sergeant Schaffhausen blew a ring of smoke, a cigar clutched between his index and middle fingers. He was hunched over a computer and was wearing headphones.

"The Crown Jewels," he murmured. "Very interesting, Adrian." He spoke with a strong German accent—and combined with his rather intimidating stature, it made him seem all the more dangerous.

"It's the perfect heist, Wilhelm—and our most ambitious one, too. And with your presence behind the scenes, we'll be sure to—"

The doors flew open and two senior army officials burst into the room, with guns in their hands, pointed at Wilhelm. Caught in the act, the sergeant quickly disconnected the call and slung the headphones around his neck.

"Wilhelm Schaffhausen, you are under arrest!" cried the older of the two. He had grey hair, and his hairline had shrunk years ago.

"Major Hoffman, this isn't what it seems like—" Wilhelm began, but he was interrupted by the other officer.

"Then why do you have a map of Europe, with museums and jewellery stores marked on it?" Captain Schindler inquired sceptically.

"I can explain—"

"There will be no need for that, Sergeant," Hoffman said firmly. "We'd received a tip about an army officer assisting the Pink Panthers. Turns out the tip was legit."

"Their name is surprisingly cringe-worthy for a jewel thief network; especially one as infamous as theirs," Schindler observed.

"That is what Interpol calls us." Wilhelm grimaced. "And we took it in our stride." He grinned. "And as you were engrossed in your observations, officers, I kept myself busy by wiping the hard drive. All the information incriminating my comrades... it's all gone."

The major grabbed him by the collar and cuffed him. "You're going to Switzerland, you son of a bitch. You helped your pals rob a Graff in Zurich, and now you're getting extradited to Obre—and they're gonna make you talk, trust me."

"Ooh, Switzerland." Wilhelm clicked his tongue. "I bet you would've loved to go there with your wife... or mistress."

Hoffman punched the strapping young man on his nose and moments later, a few drops of blood stained his face. "That'll teach you to shut the fuck up."

The prisoner opened his eyes. Everything was dark and blurry. He rubbed his eyes and mumbled, "Where am I?"

A middle-aged man acknowledged the prisoner with a nod of his head. He was in his sixties and had a wrinkled—though handsome—face and silver hair. "Wilhelm Schaffhausen, a decorated Army sergeant. . ." He offered the man a slight smile. "You have some very. . . questionable acquaintances, Mr Schaffhausen."

Wilhelm observed the man—he was an immaculate dresser, with a navy-blue suit and a crimson neck-tie. "That's a nice suit there, sir. A Stuart Hughes?"

"Answer my question, my friend." Another attempt at a smile. "We can chat later."

"But you did not ask me a question, Mr. . ."

"Simon Howards," he replied and showed Wilhelm a badge. "Interpol."

"Ah."

"Tell me everything you know about the Pink Panthers." He lost his smile. "We know you have assisted them in many an operation."

"Forgive me, Agent Howards." Wilhelm's expression seemed indifferent. "I'm afraid I cannot betray my friends."

"If you don't, you will rot in prison for the rest of your life. Swiss prisons are not easy places to live in, young man."

"A German army post isn't, either." Wilhelm grinned.

"I'm going to make this very simple, Wilhelm." He glared at him. "Talk—and have a chance for a lenient sentence—or keep mum and remain imprisoned."

Wilhelm just grinned at Simon.

"Take him away," the older man muttered. "He won't talk. . . let him rot in your prison then."

A guard wordlessly beckoned Wilhelm to get up and led him out of the inter-

rogation room.

The cell was dark and cold, with a tiny window high up on the wall.

“Solitary confinement.” He snorted. “They’re just giving me a chance to plan an escape.”

He began pacing about the tiny cell, his footsteps echoing across the hallway outside.

“But I don’t need to plan an escape at all...” He breathed a soft laugh. “My friends already have that covered.”

The cell was pitch black; it was one in the morning, and even the warden was asleep. He stopped as he heard the door to his cell creak open.

“Don’t you, Adrian?” Wilhelm turned and grinned as a stocky man smiled at him, a dim flashlight in his left hand—and a machine gun in his right.

“Let’s go home, old friend.” Adrian Albrecht grinned wildly. He handed him the firearm and led him out of the cell.

And then the alarms began blaring.

Wilhelm grinned as he saw a bullet hole through the warden’s head. “Shame,” he gasped while running, “you should’ve let me do the honours.”

“Where’s the fun in that?” his friend replied and cackled as they gunned down a group of policemen, who fell like rag-dolls.

The two men slowed down.

“Where are the other cops?” Wilhelm inquired.

“They are”—Adrian grinned manically—“otherwise occupied.”

It was only then that Wilhelm heard gunfire in the distance.

“How much time until they get out?” Olivera Ćirković shouted amid the continuous

firing of bullets.

"They should be out in a minute or two, Ćirković," a bald, muscular man replied. "I'm running out of ammo!"

"Shit," she muttered as she shot an officer down with the revolver in her left hand; her right was busy shooting other officers with a submachine gun.

"I'm out," the towering figure in his fifties said. "Give me yours."

"No way, Milan," she purred. "The SMG's mine... you can have my revolver."

Milan grumbled as he fired a shot at an officer who had been running towards them. "Where are Wilhelm and Adrian?"

"They're busy taking the cops down at the north end," she replied. Olivera was a gorgeous, curvaceous woman, but she had a heart of ice—she took great pleasure in killing people.

"I see they have arms of their own," Milan observed.

"Shut up, Poparic," she sneered and wore her sunglasses. "Wilhelm and Adrian are out there." She pointed at the two strapping men sprinting over dead bodies while shooting any stray officers near them.

"When we get out of here," Milan professed, "do you think we should make Wilhelm a more"—a slight smile—"permanent member?"

"He is strong, agile... talented at killing, as well," she replied, watching the ex-army officer fire a round of bullets at a fallen policeman who wasn't "properly" dead. "I say we make him a proper Panther, not some behind-the-scenes guy."

Milan ignored her and extended his hand to Wilhelm. "Let's go home, old friend."

Adrian grinned as he was helped up the wall by Olivera. "Irony, Poparic. That's exactly what I told him in his cell."

"You're both right," Wilhelm said softly as he noticed a van parked on the other side of the wall. "Let's go home."

The getaway van had arrived just in time—the criminals had been running out of ammunition and backup from the Interpol was on its way.

"Where is Schaffhausen?" Simon Howards roared an hour later—as he pulled a policeman by the collar. "Where is he?"

"They escaped, Lieutenant," the cop wheezed and the Interpol agent let him go.

"They have vanished without a trace, Monsieur Howards." Another agent—this one donning an overcoat and a black homburg—approached them.

"Then we fucking find them, Lieutenant Favreau," he said firmly through gritted teeth, and walked forward brashly, pushing the Frenchman away.

"But, Monsieur, they would've gotten away by now—"

"Oh, what do you know, Jacques?" Howards rolled his eyes. "It's been two weeks since you've been promoted, while I've been a Lieutenant for two years now." He chuckled.

Jacques Favreau stopped in his tracks. "Simon, I've earned my position here. Talk to me like that again and you'll end up with a terrible bruise on the side of your face."

Simon turned and took a step forward—and another, and another, until he was right in front of his colleague. "We'll see who ends up with a bruise, Jacques." He grinned. "Just not now, eh? We've got some jewel thieves to catch."

He trudged forward, giving a reproachful grin to his colleague.

The Pink Panthers' hideout was a group of interconnected suites in a five-star hotel in Zurich. "Hiding in plain sight," Wilhelm mused. "Very clever indeed."

"The manager of this hotel happens to be a friend of mine," Olivera explained.

Wilhelm chuckled. "You never fail to intrigue me, Olivera Ćirković."

Wilhelm found himself in the balcony of his suite later that night. He took his cell phone and dialled a number. A brief ring, and then: "Hello?"

"Karl, it's me."

"Wilhelm?"

"I'm on the run with my friends... my number will keep changing; we're trying to

remain untraceable.”

“I heard about what happened to you...” Karl said. “Why, Wilhelm? You were a decorated officer; why did you have to get involved with these thieves?”

Wilhelm grimaced. “Oh, for heaven’s sake, don’t give me this shit, Karl...” His lips parted in a hellish grin. “Besides, you aren’t all that innocent either.”

Static.

“I’m sure the FBI would love to know an agent of theirs is also working with terrorists.”

“I’m undercover, Wilhelm,” Karl snarled. “I’m on a covert mission to apprehend the mysterious leader of the Revolutionaries and you know that.”

“At least I’m not a traitorous, two-timing bastard.” Wilhelm let out a low laugh.

“You know what, Wilhelm? I’ve had enough of this,” Karl barked. “There are rumours circulating about the Revolutionaries heading to London.”

“Funny,” Wilhelm mused, “so are we.”

Adrian knocked on Wilhelm’s door a few hours later.

“It’s open,” Wilhelm called out. Olivera had returned to her suite a half-hour ago.

The door opened with a creak and his friend took a step toward him. “Pack your bags, my friend. We’re heading to London tomorrow!”

Milan appeared behind him. “You are a valuable asset to the team, Wilhelm.” He had a jagged smile, which made it seem perpetually malicious. “We could use your skills to a greater extent—you don’t need to remain restricted to a behind-the-scenes job...”

“I—I would love to work alongside you,” Wilhelm replied.

“Well, what’s left to say then? Olivera had voted to rope you in during the breakout itself, and I shall follow suit now.” Milan extended his right hand. “I vote in favour of the motion.”

“I vote in favour of the motion, too.” Adrian extended his hand to meet his su-

perior's.

Wilhelm placed his palm on both of theirs and Milan announced triumphantly: "Welcome to the team, fellow Panther."

It was midnight and the sky was pitch-black. The guard had been patrolling the Jewel House when he'd been ambushed by two men. Another guard had attempted to help him, but it was too late.

The mysterious strangers had killed the guards and taken their uniforms for themselves to wear.

"Adrian and I are stationed in the tower," Milan Poparic whispered. "Are you ready?"

"Yes, we are," Olivera replied over the walkie-talkie.

"Listen to me, you have exactly three minutes to break into the Tower, steal the Crown, replace it with the fake in your backpack, and get away from the scene," Adrian said. "Milan and I have adopted the guise of Tower Guards and we've temporarily disabled the security system in place, but for only three minutes."

"My grapple is ready." Wilhelm fired it at a window high up. He turned and offered a hand to Olivera.

"No thank you," she purred. "I've got my own." She fired hers and they zipped up together.

"Get onto me," Wilhelm said, as Olivera made herself steady on his shoulders and began carving a hole in the glass window by rotating a glass-cutter.

"Hurry up," he grunted. "We're hanging eighty-eight feet above the ground..."

"And it's done." She whistled as she put her hand through the hole and opened the window from the handle inside.

The thieving pair slipped into the Tower of London, completely undetected in the dead of night.

Simon Howards and Jacques Favreau marched into the Tower. Before the guard

outside could say anything, they flashed their ID cards at him and rushed inside. They had received intel that the Pink Panthers' next big heist would involve the Crown Jewels themselves, and they wasted no time in heading to London.

Jacques cocked his pistol in the central hallway. "Shall we split up?"

Simon nodded begrudgingly. He couldn't wait to get the Frenchman out of his way... and he would.

Right about now...

Wilhelm and Olivera nimbly tiptoed toward the glass case that held...

"The Crown," Olivera whispered, her eyes wide. "It—it's even more beautiful in person..."

"And it will be ours in precisely a minute." Wilhelm grinned as he took the counterfeit crown out of his backpack.

She carved another hole in the glass...

To Wilhelm, it seemed as if time had slowed to a crawl. He bent down and placed the false crown in place of the real one, which Olivera had swiped with stupendous subtlety.

She wrapped the Imperial Crown in a piece of velvet cloth and they began running toward the windows.

"Excellent," Milan uttered. "There's a speedboat waiting for you in the River Thames."

Just as they fired their grapples at a wall opposite the Tower, a gunshot echoed across the hall.

"I'll admit, Miss Ćirković and Mr Schaffhausen," Simon Howards proclaimed, "that was a jolly good show right there!"

Wilhelm pulled out a revolver and aimed it at the Interpol agent. "Stay back!"

"The artful entry, the finesse of the bait-and-switch... that was bloody marvelous," he went on, ignoring the cat-burglar. "I'll give you credit for the heist of the century, Wilhelm and Olivera!"

Olivera laid the Crown carefully on the ground and took her shotgun. "One more step and you're dead."

"Ah, but you misunderstand my intentions, my dear," he said suavely. "I am not here to arrest you. In fact, I've hacked and indefinitely disabled every single security measure in this tower to give us time to talk."

"An Interpol chap has cornered Wilhelm and Olivera," Milan Poparic whispered.

"What do we do now?" Adrian Albrecht raised a brow.

"I'll try my hand at helping them out." He clicked his tongue and hefted a machine gun against his arm. "Go and look for any other agents that might be lurking about."

Adrian nodded and the two criminals parted ways.

Adrian was walking past the broom closet when he heard a strange noise.

Thud.

He paused.

Again, thud.

He stared at the closet for a moment, knocked at the door once and said, "Your Highness? This isn't the bathroom—"

The next noise was definitely that of a kick against a door. He heard strained grunts next. "Sounds like someone's been tied up in there..." He tried opening the door—it was locked. "Stand back," he called out and cocked his gun.

He fired a shot at the lock and the door creaked aside, revealing a strapping middle-aged man lying on the ground with his hands and legs tied up; a strip of duct tape against his lips sealed them shut, effectively rendering him voiceless.

Adrian pulled the duct tape off roughly and the captive man groaned rather loudly. "Shut up," Adrian hissed as he used a knife to cut through the rope on his hands and legs. "Now tell me"—he placed his pistol against the man's chest—"who are you?"

Simon Howards straightened his suit as he said, "Karl says hello."

Wilhelm froze.

"Yes, I know, Wilhelm," he continued, "Special Agent Karl Schaffhausen had infiltrated the Revolutionaries in an attempt to extract intel, but..." He let out a low laugh.

"But?" Olivera stepped forward.

"He admitted the truth to the mysterious leader of the Revolutionaries." He began pacing about the room. "Let me tell you a story."

"Is my brother alive?" Wilhelm demanded.

"Patience is a virtue, Wilhelm," he said amid a chuckle. "The Revolutionaries were formed on the fourteenth day of July in the year of our Lord 1789...it was a time of great political upheaval."

"The storming of the Bastille," Olivera murmured. "It was the Revolutionaries who had triggered the French Revolution..."

"Indeed, young lady," he replied. "Maximillian Robespierre was the first leader of the Revolutionaries, and ever since, this group has been committed to ousting the hypocrites and bigots in various monarchies, democracies and bureaucracies—to restore order to the world. They believe in a world devoid of rules and regulations except those decreed by them. When poor Karl understood the truth—the whole truth—he swore his loyalty to the Revolutionaries and he is currently a spy placed within the FBI."

"So...he just became a Revolutionary?" Wilhelm raised his brows.

"Well, and there was one other truth that the leader had revealed to him...one that made Karl forever indebted to the mystifying John Doe of our story."

"But how do you know so much about the Revolutionaries...about my brother's allegiances?" Wilhelm said quizzically.

Simon's lips parted to reveal a set of perfectly arranged white teeth. "Because I am the man in the shadows...I am the enigmatic leader of the Revolutionaries."

And at that exact moment, a bullet whizzed past Simon's arm and ricocheted against the wall. All heads in the room turned to see Milan Poparic, his gun still smoking. "Step away from my friends."

"Ah, I was expecting you, Mr Poparic." He motioned for the man to stand beside Wilhelm and Olivera.

Wilhelm whispered, "He's a bad guy too, Milan, don't worry."

Ignoring them, Simon went on, "And were you not an assassin when you were young?"

"I was."

"Very well." He turned to Wilhelm. "I would like to know you better, young lad... I have been tracking your every movement for a long while, for I see great potential in you. Are you, by any chance, the son of the late Senator Schaffhausen?"

"I—Yes, I am," he stammered, reminded of a horrid memory of a dark childhood.

"Your loving parents were shot dead, point blank... before your very eyes... and Karl's."

Wilhelm's eyes grew wide as he realized the big secret that Simon had revealed to his brother.

"Mr Poparic, why don't you address the elephant in the room?" Simon grinned.

Milan's face sank as he uttered the words that were destined to change Wilhelm's life forever: "It was me, Wilhelm. I had killed your parents twenty years ago."

A deathly silence filled the room, defiled only by Simon's triumphant grin.

"Who—who ordered you to do it?" Wilhelm said at last.

The older man had dropped to his knees sobbing. "A rival senator," he whimpered, "who was jealous of Schaffhausen's popularity."

"This man," Simon said, "took away your home, your family... your childhood. Whom would you rather swear your loyalty to—the man who killed your parents, or the man who revealed the former's identity?"

Wilhelm gripped his revolver tightly and turned to Milan. "Did you ever plan on telling me this?"

The other man merely hung his head in shame.

"I suppose you know my answer then, Mr Howards," Wilhelm said coldly as he fired a shot at his former partner's temple. As Milan Poparic collapsed to the

ground, Wilhelm held Olivera's hand. "Will you join us? It's entirely up to you."

"I will, but only part-time. I still like shiny things." She grinned.

"Forget about the Crown, Wilhelm," Simon said. "It belongs here. It does not befit a Revolutionary to manhandle historic artefacts." The young man nodded and kept the Crown aside. "You've just been drafted into a revolution, Wilhelm Schaffhausen and Olivera Ćirković."

And just like that, the three figures disappeared into the night.

Jacques Favreau pinned the jewel thief against the wall. "Where are your friends?"

Adrian Albrecht gasped and said, "I have no idea!" He groaned as the French agent gripped his neck tighter. "I swear to God—I don't know where the others are! Milan and I had split up because your friend had cornered Wilhelm and Olivera."

Jacques grunted, "He's no friend of mine." After Adrian had untied him, the Lieutenant had engaged in a scuffle with him, snatched his gun away and emerged as the fight's apparent victor.

"What did he do?"

"He'd knocked me out and tied me up. He was the leader of the Revolutionaries, a dreaded group of terrorists—a mysterious personality the Interpol has been trying to apprehend for years." He sighed. "He was right under our very noses all this time..."

"I can lead you to the top of the tower, where the Crown was kept," Adrian wheezed. "But I fear it might be too late—"

"Shut up and come with me," he said through gritted teeth.

Jacques found the Crown lying on the ground, the replica safe inside the case of the original one. "Why didn't they take the Crown with them?" he murmured. "And why did they kill this man?"

Adrian rolled his eyes, struggling with the cuffs tightly clasped around his wrists. "Perhaps Wilhelm and Olivera were traitors, too...to us, that is. Perhaps they betrayed Milan, left the Crown for Interpol to find, and left with that Revolutionary fellow."

"And I will catch them all one day." Jacques stared into the distance ahead.

It was a sunny Wednesday morning. A group of songbirds were chirping outside, in Simon Howards's lawn.

A knock on the front door scared the birds away. Simon opened it and smiled warmly. "Ah, I was expecting you."

"Good morning, Mr Howards," Wilhelm Schaffhausen said solemnly.

"Today marks the fifth anniversary of your joining the Revolutionaries." He popped open a bottle of champagne and filled the younger man a glass. "Let's drink to it, eh?"

"Of course." Wilhelm grinned.

"You have learned well over these past five years, young man." He smiled. "I made you my protégé—my second in command—because I saw immense potential in you."

"It was an honour to have you as a mentor, sir."

"Would you like to hear something funny?" He chuckled. "Before I met you, I used to believe that you couldn't trust anybody—that everybody was after my blood, my power, and my riches."

"I used to believe the opposite." Wilhelm sighed. "I had trusted Milan, only to have him stab me in the back. You can't trust anyone in this barbaric world, Simon."

"And yet I trust you." The old man took a piece of parchment out of the inner pocket of his jacket. "In fact, I trust you enough to bequeath my position, my money, and this house to you—when my time passes."

Wilhelm smiled and replied, "You are far too kind, Mr Howards."

"Oh, nothing of the sort, young lad!" He took a pen and signed it. "I wished to sign this will before your eyes."

Wilhelm grinned. "I say we celebrate this announcement with a hug."

"Of course, my boy." Simon left the will on his table and approached the young Revolutionary.

Alas, the leader of the Revolutionaries did not see the knife in his protégé's hand as he embraced him.

Arjun is a sixteen-year-old student from Siruseri. Having started as a writer in Grade 9 he has to his name his debut novel – “Lukewarm”, with 1.3K readers on Wattpad. his writing genre includes dark, gothic poetry when he is not writing about jewel heists and murders. He dreams to see the “Lukewarm” series being adapted into a movie or TV series one day.

3 Essays

3.1 *The Garden of Eden: Sambit Roychowdhury*

I vividly remember my first glimpse of the Eden Gardens' turf. A short flight of stairs up to the entrance of the lower block just left of the Club House, and there it was – a huge expanse of lush green with the player manning the far boundary barely visible, and the excited buzz of a sea of humanity all around. This was 1998, the final of the Independence Cup and India was not even in it. But it was an important match for the ground and for the Kolkata cricket aficionado. The city felt compelled to support the then World Champions Sri Lanka against the other finalists Pakistan, and somehow repent for what had transpired couple of years ago in those same grounds during the World Cup semi-final. My father's cousin, a member for life of the Cricket Association of Bengal, a cricket tragic who has not missed a single international at Eden, was initiating me to the Eden experience. He was there during the India vs. Sri Lanka match, and had left the ground in frustration before others started to express theirs and plastic bottles started to rain down on the turf.

Within a year of my first trip to Eden the crowd will riot again, on the final day of the Test match against Pakistan with India staring at certain defeat, seething from the perceived injustice they had witnessed the previous day when Shoaib Akhtar blocked Sachin Tendulkar's path and caused him to be run out. Kolkata Police will execute a ham-handed evacuation job, and the last ten balls of the Test will be played in front of empty stands. This was by no stretch of the imagination the first time Kolkata Police and Eden spectators had a run-in, and my father was present in Eden during the most infamous one. It was actually my father who had initiated his aforementioned cousin to Eden, and was himself quite popular with his fellow spectators for witticisms like "*David Allen elen, ar gelen*" (David Allen came, and left – 4th Test, 1961-1962).

My father was there on New Year's Day 1967, the second day of the Test match between India and Garry Sobers-led West Indies. He told me the story – overcrowded stands thanks to many more tickets sold than there was space for, people spilling onto the turf, Police *lathi-charging* with one elderly gentleman badly beaten, someone in the crowd standing up and shouting "Shall we accept this barbarity?", and within moments the shamianas were on fire. He had two very distinct memories from that day – the pain in his eyes exposed to tear gas worsening when trying to find shelter under the rickety stands, and when running outside away from the grounds seeing a tall dark figure run past him – possibly Wes Hall. The Test was to resume in a couple of days thanks to an intervention by the great Frank Worrell, but questions remain to this day as to how all the raw material for arson were so close at hand. Kolkata is a city of passions, and those same passions running free is what makes the lows of Eden, and its many highs, so ... biblical.

In 1864 Eden Gardens became the first officially built ground for the game of cricket in India, taking its name from the park within which it was situated. But the real story of Eden started in 1934, when it hosted India's second ever official home Test (against Douglas Jardine's England), after rightly yielding the honour of hosting India's first ever Test to the Bombay Gymkhana ground, home to the Quadrangular. Since then, Eden has hosted 42 Test matches. It soon became a place of pilgrimage for visiting teams, a place for them to come and test their mettle in front of a crowd that could be intimidating and appreciating at the same time, unless of course they decided to run riot! In 2019-2020, Eden would host India's first pink ball (Day/Night) Test.

Eden Gardens shied away from hosting One Day Internationals till 1987 when the World cup came to India. Eden underwent a renovation and its seating capacity jumped from 40,000 to an intimidating 100,000. Since then Eden has hosted 30 ODIs, including the first World Cup final to be played outside Lords' in 1987 and the previously mentioned World Cup semi-final, and not counting the 1997 Women's World Cup final. In a shameful chapter in BCCI's history, internal board politics forced Eden Gardens out of the picture during India's 2011 World Cup winning run at home. Though the renovation forced upon the grounds because of the 2011 World Cup now ensures that spectators have access to world-class facilities and proper seats instead of concrete slabs, at the cost of a reduced seating capacity of 68,000. Eden has even hosted seven Twenty20 Internationals since 2011, including the 2016 World Twenty20 final, and not counting the Women's World Twenty20 final the same year. With the readers' permission though, I will exclude the garish IPL matches that have taken place since 2007 from the Eden story.

The passionate and vociferous crowd at Eden Gardens were the catalyst behind some of the most fascinating moments in Indian cricket. The Eden atmosphere was very much responsible for the greatest Test match ever played, when in 2001 a Very Very Special batsman rallied the Indians to take on the invincible Australians. And who can forget the sight of thousands of improvised torches in the stands after the India won the Hero Cup final in 1993? The crowd has never been shy about letting the powers that be know exactly how they feel, whether booing the home team and Greg Chappell in 2005, or barricading the selectors in 1946 with "No Mushtaq, No Test". For Bengalis though Eden's greatest moment came in 1977 and had nothing to do with cricket. On a pitch made slippery by overnight rains, New York Cosmos took the field against Mohun Bagan, and Pele played in our garden of Eden.

***Sambit** is an Astronomer by profession. Passionate about (subaltern) history, art (including movies), and cricket, he likes to read, roam, and satiate the senses.*

3.2 *Let go, but how?: Rutika Deshmukh*

In today's life, the biggest lesson we need to learn is to "let go", said Professor Shaikh in the first lecture of our college. I didn't realise it's important in that lecture. Maybe because when I was 18, the world was too naive for me and my dreams were the only thing that mattered to me. But when life gave me the reality check I realised how important that lesson was. With many ups and downs in my life I got this wise advice of 'let go a little bit to be happy', but the hilarious part was no one told me how.

How to let go when our heart is still holding on that one person, that one relation, on that one dream. No one ever told me how to let go when every time my mind told me to let it go but my heart kept saying one last try. People say letting go is an art but no one ever taught how to be an artist of letting go.

But after being through a lot I realised, In life, answers of some questions are hidden in experiences of life and finally I found my answer of how to let go.

I found two keys to let go:

Acceptance – The first key is acceptance. Sometimes our heart is too scared to accept what it already knows. Because only our heart knows how much effort we've put in that relationship, friendship or dream. Our heart knows how much something means to us, so it keeps holding on no matter how bad it hurts. But at some point we have to accept the fact. The earlier it's the less pain there will be. So accept the fact which is right in front of you but your heart is too scared to accept. Acceptance needs courage that we all have deep in our heart.

Forgive – After we accept the things, sometimes we hold grudge, guilt, sadness, anger in our heart. Grudge against the people. Guilt for not being able to fulfill our own dreams. We find it very hard to forgive people despite what the circumstances were and it becomes worse when we feel it easy to forgive the whole world but ourselves. The other key to let go is to forgive. Forgive your relations, forgive yourself. We need to understand we can't move forward carrying such a heavy baggage of grudge, guilt and Sorrow. We move happily only when our heart is not heavy and that is possible only when we forgive.

The art of letting go is never easy. But holding on to something just because we're too scared to accept the reality is certainly more painful. Indeed it hurts to let go that we've been holding on so long but it's always better than an eternal pain. The pain of letting go is momentary but the pain of holding on could be for life time. In our life we come to many choices and decisions. But it's not hard to find what is worth holding on to and what is worth letting go. Because to be happy it's never too late to let go.

***Rutika** is currently pursuing her graduation in mass media, who loves to keep moving through the questions of life. She has taken up the pen to share her questions with the readers, hoping to find the answers through an anticipated conversation.*

3.3 *Helping children cope with 'Big-Feelings': Prachi Srivastava*

We like to see happy children but like adults, children also feel other emotions such as sadness, anger, frustration, jealousy etc. Unfortunately, when children's emotions come into action and each day these emotions grow and become big, **we start calling our children as 'Problematic'.**

If a child cries for too long or at the drop of a hat, we label him as a 'cry baby'.

If a child throws things or screams, we label him as a 'cranky child'.

If a child refuses to follow instructions, he becomes an 'ill-mannered' child in the eyes of everyone.

If a child does not want to try out a new thing, he is called a 'fearful' child.
The list can go forever...

When these children grow up and become adults, they get new but similar labels such as 'emotional', 'aggressive', 'defiant' and 'panicky' etc. It is surprising that we conveniently accept these labels when we become adults and we often say "Now, we don't have the time to go back into our childhood and undo what happened to us" or "Now we are fine the way we are but we don't want our kids to face the same problems as we did, we want them to become happy people and not problematic". If this is what we want for our children then **we have to start listening to them and understand the reasons behind their tears, anger and fear.**

There is a difference between listening to children and suppressing their voices. Some people quiet their children by giving them gadgets, toys, food or providing a baby sitter and some people would shut their children's voices by emotional drama; they would show anger and the child would get frightened to speak up or some adults would start crying in front of their children and give them guilt for a lifetime where **they start believing that they should not express their emotions as it makes other people sad or angry.**

1. **Do not label the child, simply label the child's feelings** – Instead of saying "Stop crying over small things", define the child's emotions and say "You are feeling sad because..." This simple way of communication teaches children to identify their own emotions and they learn to express them well. Remember, a problem well stated is a problem half solved!

2. **Pick up opportunities to talk to children about their feelings** – Do not drop the matter by saying "Oh he'll be fine in a few days". Tell your children some feelings come & go easily and some may stick with us for too long and become big. You can help them revisit the moments where they coped with a feeling quickly so that they

know they have the capability to cope with their emotions. However, with certain episodes, some feelings stay on a little longer and fade away as children talk about it which helps them move towards healthy coping. Remember, tough times don't last, but tough people do!

3. No Feelings are not good or bad – Allow children to experience all sorts of emotions such as feeling defeated, jealous, joyful, greedy, hurtful, regretful etc. When you give labels to feelings as good or bad, the child starts to give those labels to himself and starts to think that he must be a bad person to feel angry or defeated and he must be a good person just because he is always happy. Help your children find healthy means to cope with different emotions. Remember, all feelings are okay but all behaviour is not okay!

4. Teach your children to give closure to the day – We have to give closure to each and every episode or emotion before going to bed. It is the end of the day and so to the feeling. If your child wants to forgive someone, talk to someone to resolve a problem or he is being impatient, whatever the feeling your child is experiencing, try and talk about it and help him give closure to it so that he can start a fresh day next morning. Remember, to heal a wound you have to stop touching it!

5. Be a role model – Your children would see your actions and would use the same problem solving strategies when they are feeling stuck. If you can identify your own emotions, talk about them with your family, give closure to your feelings and not carry them the other day or many days after the episode has occurred then your children too would learn the same. After all, children are great imitators so give them some great things to imitate!

6. Seek help from a professional – Visiting a psychologist can be difficult because of various reasons, such as, parents might feel that their issues would get highlighted, there is a social taboo about visiting a counsellor or it could simply be a state of denial where a parent might think that his/her child can never have any problems where s/he has to see a mental health professional. So, to make your life easy I would like to tell you that the children who visit me regularly have given me a simple name, they call me a 'feeling teacher' because no one has to suffer in silence when they can talk and feel understood in a safe place.

I hope these few simple steps and important reminders would help you in preventing from making small feelings big and break the web of big feelings.

Prachi is a practising psychologist, her main focus being in working with children and adolescents. Trained in the Greenspan's Floor Time Approach and Arts-Based Therapies from WCCL Foundation (Pune), she remains intrigued in learning and applying the Cognitive hypnotherapy. More information about her work could be found at stapoo.in. This article is re-published in DoubleSpeak with the author's permission..

3.4 *Heathrow: Isha Pungaliya*

So much more than an airport in London. So many of us are transitioning here. We are waiting to change, to move, to be somewhere else. A space between varied times, connecting all of time; a stagnant space, floating amongst cultures and time zones. Its abstractness makes it exist everywhere (&) at the same time because like every important airport, Heathrow is closer to the cities it connects than its home city, London.

Airports are enchanting spaces; not to be confused for magical in nature but to be understood as magical in effect. In nature they in fact are very real and grounded with their codes of conduct – uniform and global. Precisely this international uniformity of processes and behaviors at airports lends to their enchanting effect. The display of commonality, wordless and understood by all travelers and workers as if a universal spirit has bewitched us.



The sameness oftentimes disorients. Rendering meaningless the differences of names. There exists in truth only one airport with different entries, simply different gates. Get in from the north, and its Heathrow, get in from the southeast, its Sydney Kingsford Smith. You are then directed to a 4D theatre that you believe is an aircraft and exit after many hours in the same place. You depart through your preferred gate and there you are... in Amsterdam or else in Chennai.



But why not then extend our dive into these impressions inspired by the timeless, space-less building to its logical end? The idea that distinct gates as physical structures might be required to exit in distinct spaces is redundant at this point. One building that can pose as many needs only one gate that poses as several exits and entries. It is therefore the same gate. This one gate opens in parallel worlds. It opens to the multiverse of different possibilities and different realities. In a certain sense, everyone is there, outside, in the moment in which I left them behind, and in which I meet them anew. Everyone outside that gate, is in the same spot, waiting for me, for us, all those fortunate to be inside the airport.

Only inside, on this side, in this structure of sameness do we exist as different beings unlike those waiting outside in the spot, overlapped. Here there are no overlaps of time or space as there is only a single time and a single space. In the identical world of all airports we are truly, individuals.

*A filmmaker, actor, director, writer and trainer, **Isha** is passionately involved with a variety of film and theatre projects. With a Masters in Media and Cultural Studies from TISS, Mumbai, and a Diploma in Film Direction from LV Prasad Film and TV Academy, Chennai, she is interested in exploring formal, narrative and thematic factors and strategies that challenge conventional, formulaic and normative practices in cinema as well as theatre.*

3.5 *Frequently asked questions: Sanil M. Neelakandan*

Most of us are facing such questions. Our forefathers too faced such questions. Such questions are waiting for our coming generations. Surely these questions transcend generations and hence time. And for generations we have had the answers to those very questions. The problem I have seen though that the interviewers (if I may call them) do not have the patience to hear out our answers. As we get ready with our answers, hoping to make some meaning we see that the questions are opaque in their nature. Our answers cannot pierce into their thick-skinned lives. We know the intentions and ideology that nurture such questions. We are being stereotyped as reactionary identity politics mongers who question the high grounds of progressive politics. As in typical, "human" interactions, they do ask "What is your name?" This is just a probe for the next one though. Once we have answered, giving only your first name we will find them asking again, "What is your surname?" If the surname is not revealing the caste to which we belong or in another scenario where we have refused to share the surname, they will introduce themselves by saying "We are Brahmins, Kayasths, Kshatriyas. . ." with a striking sense of pride and confidence.

Our silence will provoke them to share their concern for their country. They will further ask "Don't you think reservation is the breeding grounds for caste? What about the elites among Dalits who take benefits of reservation? What about those who genuinely deserve those reservations? What do you think about scrapping reservation? What about a modern society where everything is supposedly to work on merit and not on the basis of caste (reservation they mean)?" Through the barrage of these questions some other ones are found gingerly circling the main ones. "What about those people who rose above the caste image and leave the benefits of reservations?" There are certain sections among us though who remain silent to the nation's problem by not projecting the severe issues of caste discrimination. "Why don't we work hard to answer such questions?"

Some of us are cynical about answering to such questions and may say that those people who ask such questions suffer from an apparently incurable wound, inflicted upon them by the age old practices of caste-ism. As we move through the generations, giving in to the ultra-modern idea of a society, we find these questions being transformed into new avatars. In all probabilities they are to revive themselves and come back in new formats and with sophisticated vocabulary. Surely, our answers will remain disturbing to the cause, that's what I hope and believe.

Sanil is an independent researcher based in New Delhi, India. He received his Ph.D. and M.Phil. in Sociology from the Centre for the Study of Social Systems, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He has published his works in quite a few international and national journals. Sociological/Social Theory, Historical sociology, Sociology of Education and Science & Technology Studies are his main spheres of interest.

4 Translation

4.1 Translation of Anita Agnihotri's poem: A Song for the Scavenger Women (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta

কাগজকুড়ানিদের জন্যে গাথা

আমার মতো তুমিও যদি চুমুক দিতে
আয়না-ভাঙা পারার মতো বিবের কাপে
তুমিও দেখতে কুঁচকে যাচ্ছে রোদের কাঁথা
ছিটকে উঠছে রক্তমাখা ছিন্ন হাওয়াই
তুমিও দেখতে জীবন ঠোঁটে রুচছে না আর
হাড়ে মধ্যে শীতের ছুরি, পায়ের নীচে
কনকনে রাত, দিনের বেলা জুড়িয়ে বরফ
রোদ ও আকাশ সঙ্গে তাদের অট্টহাসি

সবচে বড় শ্রেণীশত্রু কারা : কাগজকুড়ানিরাই
বলেন নাগর : গুলিবারন্দ বরাত দেওয়া হয়নি বলে
লাঠি এবং রক্ষীদলেই চালাতে হয়। রাত্রে তারা
স্তব্ধ শহর শাসন করে : উড়ালপুলের বিবকোটরে।

যদিও মানা উড়ালপুলে পদারোহণ
কুড়ানিরাই ছড়িয়ে পড়ে সদলবলে : এবং করে সমাজদূষণ
ফেলে দেওয়া আবর্জনা বাছতে বসে, চ্যাঁদের আলোয়
শুকায়ে তাদের, খাদ্যবস্তু থাকলে সঁটে কামড়িয়ে খায়
এখন তারা শক্ত। শীতল। মৃতদেহে। শহর আকাশ
দিন পনোরে বর্বেছে শীত, রৌদ্রবিহীন
স্বাভাবিকের অনেক নীচে দুমড়ানো শীত, এসব
কাগজকুড়ানিদের ধ্বংস হেতু : সমাজদূষণ

বন্ধ করো, শীতের চেয়ে ক্ষিপ্র কে আর? সমাজবন্ধু!
মাথার উপর ছাত না থাকা ভবঘুরে!

A note from the translator:

Epigraph is mine, taken from T S Eliot's poem.

**A complete digression from the original, but echoes the epigraph as well as my reading.*

Song for the Scavenger Women

"The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots."*

If you too, like me, could sip
The poison chalice of mirror-cracking mercury
You too, would see the quilt of sunshine crumpling
And the tattered bloodied pieces of sandals
You too, finding life insipid at last would feel
Winter beneath your bones, morning snows,
Laughter echoing through the embrace of the sun and sky.

Who're the greatest class-enemy? The scavenger women
Says the collector: less ammunition means only ill-equipped
Guards for us all. In the night they rule over this quiet city
Their regime in the poison-chambers of the flyovers.

Though pedestrians are forbidden on the flyover,
These women spread, together, and contaminate
Sorting discarded disgusting debris, drying them by
The moon, and finding the sporadic morsel in there,
They eat. Now they are stiff and cold. Dead. The city sky
Has rained winter for a fortnight, the sunless winter
Is much below the normal, only and only to
Destroy scavenger women. Pollutants and contaminants

Must be killed: most resolute Winter. Oh, you philanthrope!
These ancient women**, a homeless, roofless kind.

4.2 *Translation of Kunwar Narayan's poem: Description of the disappeared (Hindi to English): Supurna Dasgupta*

लापता का हुलिया

रंग गेहुँआ ढंग खेतिहार
उसके माथे पर चोट का निशान
कद पांच फुट से काम नहीं
ऐसी बात करता कि उसे कोई गम नहीं
तुतलाता है
उम्र पूछो तो हजारों साल से कुछ ज़्यादा
बतलाता है
देखने में पागल सा लगता है
कई बार ऊँचाइयों से गिरकर
टूट चूका है
इसलिए देखने पर जुड़ा हुआ लगेगा
हिंदुस्तान के नक्शे की तरह।

Description of the Disappeared

Wheatish complexion, rural manners
And a mark of injury on his brows
Not shorter than five feet
Speaks as though he knows no pain nor any defeat
He stammers
When asked about his age, over a thousand
He clamors.
He looks somewhat insane
And many times from heights he has fallen
And broken
And so, when observed closely he looks glued together
Like the map of Hindustan.

Supurna Dasgupta is a PhD scholar at the University of Chicago in the department of South Asian Languages and Civilizations. In her spare time, she translates, embroiders, makes wishful travel plans, and teaches imaginary courses.

5 Photography

5.1 *Baby-sitting*: Purna Mukherjee

My mother was babysitting that day. The little model in the album loves her “mani” so dearly. Mani plays “khyalna bati”, “doctor-doctor” with her with utmost patience. In the first two photos mani is feeding her. In the third photo she is pretending to be a “rat”, taught by her grandfather – “chotomoni”. In the fourth one, she is enjoying a scribbling exercise on her body while mani is watching news. I sometimes feel every day we are weaving memories – good, bad and ordinary. All of them are precious. The more mundane it is, more valuable it becomes. Because, in the course of time this so called mundane things keep changing without a proper farewell.



Eating exercise



Resting - eating



Rat



Scribble

Purna is a teacher by profession, but an artist at heart. She finds love in spending times with her camera, drawing cartoons, animation figures, abstract art pieces and illustrating children's books. She values her carefully found moments of apparent indolence and has stored diaries full of amusing memoirs.

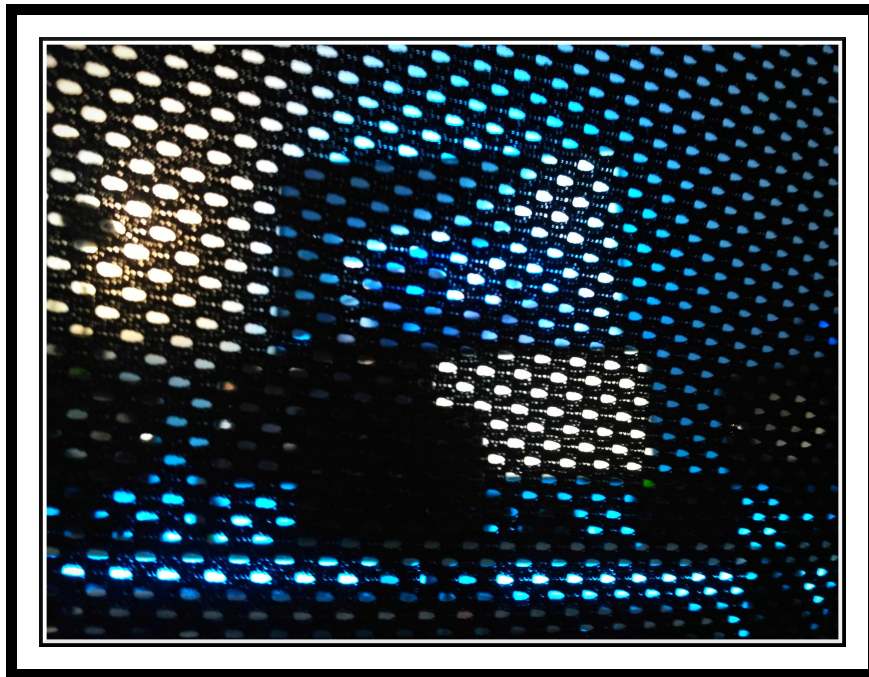
5.2 *Internment:* Romit Gangopadhyay



They have incited violence



Dissect



Grilled and checkered

This mini-album captures three disconnected moments of internment. The moods are different, the texture of each photo, subject and tone and compositional idea are different as well. Yet the photographer sees the idea of being confined to a space or an idea in each of the frames.

Romit is a professional cinematographer working in the Indian film industry. A theatre enthusiast, he, along with his troop-mates of 4th Bell Theatres, has produced a number plays on stage and online. He loves good food, good friends, a healthy adda and of course films.

5.3 *River:* Shamashish Sengupta

Human civilisations are shaped by rivers. In Bengal, as in several other parts of the world, the river is the source of livelihood of numerous people. It is the centre of their beliefs and an integral part of religion. Shamashish collects here a few photographs from West Bengal and Bangladesh.



Morning ablutions in Ganga



Immersion of the mother goddess



Boats on their way back - Shilaidaha



Banks of the Padma - Goalanda



Workmen on the riverbank - Shilaidaha

Shamashish is a scientist by profession. Apart from physics, his interests spread wider than the rivers he has captured in this mini-album, ranging from a utopian dictatorial rule to literature, music, sports and cinema.

6 Photo-stories

6.1 *Not all s(heroes) wear capes, some medicate themselves:* Gayatri Kotbagi



Not all s(heroes) wear capes, some medicate themselves

About two years ago, when I first sought an appointment with my psychiatrist, I used a lot of jargon from the field. Why wouldn't I? I was Dr Gayatri Kotbagi, PhD psychology, and who wouldn't want to show off. I had excerpts from textbooks, research article references, anecdotes from cases that I had handled in the past. I had the vocabulary and I thought heck I know how the mind works. But in the first few therapy sessions, my therapist kept insisting that I keep all those hats and weapons outside the clinic. It took me a while to realise that I didn't have to prove anything to anyone. That I don't have to be Dr Gayatri Kotbagi to show that I know

psychology. I was just a patient and the best thing that I could do was to dive into the process with no safety nets. To fix myself, I had to wear the hat of a patient and trust my psychiatrist and my psychologist to take care of me (yes, not treat me, but take care of me).

I was explained that this was like some long-distance open water swimming event. That the seas were going to be choppy. That I know how to swim, but probably not in open waters.

The psychiatrist prescribed medication. "You are being put on Serlift 50mg for 15 months, Gayatri. This is your life jacket. There will be days when you just won't manage to swim across. This will help you keep afloat. Just as a life jacket needs to be tailored to your size and weight, you will have to communicate with me about your tailoring needs."

The psychologist on the other hand during one of my first therapy sessions introduced himself as an open water swimming coach. "All right. I see you know how to swim. I see that you've also been a competitive swimmer (a reference to my PhD in psychology) but we have to swim across the English Channel now. Let's see how we can get you to cross it with the least amount of trouble." I understood that I couldn't have been a psychologist and a patient at the same time. That I had to give up on one of those labels, put my hands up, and ask for help. And retrospectively thinking, that for me was the first step in this journey towards self-love.

Gayatri is a PhD in psychology. She is not only a practising psychologist but an expert by lived experiences. A staunch believer that there is no mental health without social justice, she finds love in boxing, music, food and cinema.

6.2 *Identity and Multitude*: Rohan Rathod



Shoulders// Watercolour on A2 size cold pressed paper

While it is not for the artist to explain an artwork as he deals in ambiguities and complications as opposed to complexities, I present this painting as a double layered artwork wherein censorship is employed to create a possibility of multiple valid interpretations. The viewer is invited to imagine the censored sections as a viewer does in the context of censorship in movies or a news report. Whatever works for the viewer, not to mention a general tendency of a voyeur's gaze to charge whatever he sees with a sexual charge.



Come undone// Watercolour on A2 size cold pressed paper

This painting is about the absences. Remember the times somebody said an incomplete sentence and it drove you to pull all your hair out with frustration figuring out the complete form of the sentence. This is that painting for you, wherein the viewers are invited to fill in the blanks and all possibilities of completion remain alive for all eternity.



Birds // Watercolour on A2 size cold pressed paper

This painting features the multiplicity of a women being in the sense that it's a spectrum of positions, particular positions as opposed to the masculine generalising. The contrasting position of the modern and the traditional are unified to suggest another contrast of restraint and the lack of it. It's an important painting on how we relate to the Western notions of erotic love and the excesses associated with it in the Indian context.

***Rohan** is a lawyer by profession but an artist at heart. He paints on various media, from parchment, canvas and even T-shirts.*

7 Collaborative Works

7.1 *Have you tried mental floss: Tarush Kumar and Prachi Srivastava*

A note from the editor: This collaborative piece is one unique example of an introspective journey that is being taken on by a professional counsellor and her counselee. The journey has never been easy, but it never brought despair in the partnership. On the contrary as we read through their time, being together in it, we see snippets of time that shows us the rewards of the road they have taken. This collaboration brings out one of the primary responses of the humankind, i.e. holding hands as we walk along and learn to see things together in a different light.

Nowadays, awareness of mental health is on an increase, yet people have their reservations to visit a psychologist or any other mental health expert. This is probably because of the following reasons –

1. “I am not weak, I can cope on my own”
2. “People who have a problem visit a psychologist, I am fine. I am just a little depressed! I am just a little stressed! I have just a little anger issues”...
3. “I can take help from youtube and other social media sites”
4. “I know myself better than a stranger psychologist”
5. “Parents won’t allow me to visit a psychologist”
6. “What would anyone think of me, if they will know that I visit a psychologist”
7. “No one can understand me, I have online friends who relate to my problem so I take help from them”

The list may go on.

The current article has brought a perspective of a young boy who started visiting a counsellor at an age where he was introduced to the counsellor as a play teacher. However, from my 12 years of experience in this field, I can confidently say that children as young as 3 years old know that counselling is not a regular play session. This is why my 5 year old visitor gave me a name of a “Feeling Teacher” because in our sessions we talked only about feelings. In simple terms, counselling is a process that provides space and climate to a child where he can explore his world of feelings, identify and understand those feelings which are bothering him and learn ways to build positive feelings strong. Counselling leaves that little person feeling light and unburdened. This is observed by his family, teachers and friends too as the child’s academic performance, family relations and confidence amongst peer group enhances.

While the process of counselling sounds interesting and promising but there are

many hurdles to it.

“Many students don’t understand why people visit a therapist but the ones who visit a therapist know the importance of it and find it helpful” shared Tarush Kumar of class 12th.

“Therapy has helped me cope up with my life and gave me the energy to stay motivated to achieve my goals and stay happy”, emphasized Tarush.

As most students depend on their parents to reach out to a therapist, they struggle in preparing their parents about it. “More than just dependency on parents, students themselves are not aware of how to take help or from where to take help therefore they don’t know how to explain to parents about the kind of help they need” explained Tarush.

While brainstorming on ideas on how to bridge the gap between counsellor and students, Tarush and I realized the need for schools to have their own mental health programs for parents and students so that it becomes easy for students to reach out to a therapist. School counsellors should visit the classes regularly and inform students about their role and how to reach out to them. There should be ways where students can mail the counsellor informing them about their problems in a confidential manner. “I view my counsellor as a friend with whom I can talk about various issues of my social life and this helps me learn many things about myself and the social world. We practice skills and doing so I also become independent in creating my own creative set of problem solving skills”, shared Tarush.

“I am not undermining the role of friends here. I discuss my problems with my friends too. But my friends cannot directly deal with the problem. They can just provide comfort ensuring that I and other friends feel better but the problem remains as it is and sometimes after repeatedly talking to friends, students reach a point where they stop caring about the problem. Therefore, meeting a therapist for prolonged problems becomes essential”, stressed Tarush

Besides physical friends, most teens have friends on social media which sometimes isolates them from their physical world and real life friends. However, Tarush is of a different opinion. He said “That’s not worthwhile. You cannot trust these online groups. They might be using your information with others too. There is also a chance of unhealthy dependency on these groups/people who may disappear at their own will, leaving you feeling abandoned and frustrated. A school counsellor/therapist is a stable person who is there with you and you can fall back on this person who would not abruptly discontinue and ensure consistent confidential support. Online people may not be trustworthy no matter how much they may claim to understand you or sound like you and sympathise with you”.

Therefore, students who fall into online traps need to take a break from social

media support groups/online friends and move out of such groups before they feel the dependency has taken place. Start forming physical groups and find real people to talk to– be school friends or family.

“People on social media may flare up your issues by making you revolt against your parents/friends/teachers and they may deviate you from your academic goals, personal goals, etc. They may manipulate you during using your vulnerable information and before you would know, you are already dependent and begin to blindly trust them”, recognized Tarush.

So, how does one decide if s/he has to meet a counsellor –

when you are feeling low and experiencing intense emotions and family and friends are not able to comfort you and you find yourself getting more and more glued to online support system which is making you more and more dull and reducing your energy and making you stick to your pit like a comfort zone. This is an indication that you take a quick mental floss!

There are some things which you don't want to share with the friends, it could be about them or you might be confused if they can understand your point of view so you must meet a counsellor.

Sometimes parents take it personally and feel that you are hiding it from parents and they may discourage you from meeting a therapist, they may want you to talk to them – there are lots of things that you can't tell your closest people. You need to discuss it with someone to gain emotional control and sort out your own thoughts. Your therapist may prepare you on how to talk about your personal confusions with your closest people.

Feel free and confident in meeting a therapist. Trust the process, it's worth visiting a therapist.

***Tarush** is a high school student who is an aspiring game developer. He uses his free-time playing video-games, watching films and drawing. His main goal in life is to become a master entertainer as he deeply feels that keeping others happy brings him happiness.*

***Prachi** is a practising psychologist, her main focus being in working with children and adolescents. Trained in the Greenspan's Floor Time Approach and Arts-Based Therapies from WCCL Foundation (Pune), she remains intrigued in learning and applying the Cognitive hypnotherapy. More information about her work could be found at stapoo.in. This article is re-published in DoubleSpeak with the author's permission.*

8 Letters

8.1 *Letter to the editor: Pramit Sinha*

As I read through the story, by Pillai (issue-March-2021) I realised it was fragmented. It is supposed to be a murder-mystery-romance but things happen too suddenly and there are no explanations about why they happened. Even till the end, one doesn't know for example where the dead body came from, or why Eshan felt he needed Nathan specifically to get rid of the body, nor why Nathan wanted to help Eshan, except perhaps because both of them were close friends. Having said that, one must be really fond of another person to go so far as to help destroy evidence of a murder! Yet he was casually making out with someone else at a party thrown by someone who held so much importance for him.

Then there is a larger set of questions: Why did they have to cover up and dispose off the corpse in the first place? How high were the students to not be able to figure out that a human corpse was being lit up? Does Sam call out to everyone before or after the corpse is set ablaze? A burning corpse with a sulphurous smell doesn't knock awareness into anyone who had gathered around the fire? How do the boys manage to move the body without being spotted by anyone? Finally, as the story closes, Eshan seems to indicate there are going to be more bodies to hide, is the reader to realize at this point that Eshan was the original killer? If so, why did he not know he had a link with the body they burnt?

The story leaves too many questions unanswered. Perhaps the writer could fill in some of these gaps considering the unity of plot and action, which would make this story an exciting read.

***Pramit** is an English Teacher in an International School in NCR. He loves literature, cinema and the idea of critical analysis of academic and literary works. In this letter he raises a few constructive questions about Sanjana Pillai's story 'The Dead Man's Bonfire'.*

8.2 Letter to the editor: Subhashim Goswami

Dear Editor,

Double Speak is finally such a good pun, it keeps subversion alive and makes me hopeful of reinvigorating the power of the word. It keeps me alive to possibilities of what thoughts strung together in the good ole' format of words and images can do. Words that sometimes rhyme, sometimes contradict, present new ideas or else just transports me back to my own personal space of refuge. I am writing these words in response to the format of your magazine which in its range pegs a perfect cohesion of thought. I would hesitate to call your magazine eclectic as I think it is a carefully crafted format that works in the most unexpected of ways. I must confess I have not read the first issue in its entirety but a magazine that brings together fiction prose, poems, essays and stories woven through images takes me back to places and smells and sights that one has so sorely missed, especially in the last one year of tacitly accepted isolation.

Congratulations on such a great job done.

I must say I am eagerly waiting for what the future has in store from your end in the next issues.

In Solidarity,
Subhashim

Subhashim is a sociologist and a practising theatre artist. His main interests comprise the fundamental questions of research methodology, ethnography. Alongside he is intrigued by the constructs of the visual world, how is it expressed in writing and the essential merger of art and research. DoubleSpeak is grateful that he chose us to publish his poems for the first time.