

**Words, Images and You**

# **DoubleSpeak Magazine**

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

**Issue - March 2021**  
**<https://dsmag.in/>**



# DoubleSpeak Magazine

*Words, Images and You*

**A free online magazine**



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## *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 first issue*

Now that I am to write this preface for the first ever printable issue of DoubleSpeak Magazine, I am trying to pretend that I just found a lovely first-letter-sake between two words. The first letter of two words, Magazine and Mirror, as literate people can see is M. Since interpretation and to be precise varied and obtuse interpretations are quite the order of the time, I would say there is a delightful observation one can make here. A magazine is supposed to give you an image of the people we have become. It must, to an agreeable certainty, reflect our happiness, anguish, anger, emotional and sexual frustrations, surreal and logical ideas and even prophecies. The first issue of DoubleSpeak doesn't come with such a towering aspiration but all the pieces will actually show us how different we are and yet we remain the same at the core – responsive and reactive to acknowledgment, malice, love and empathy.

The contributors were encouraged to use this platform akin to an open-mic for stand-up comedians. They wrote what they thought were shareable and print-worthy. They expect the readers to give them careful feedback so that they can improve on the same work or even argue to engage in a literary discourse, essentially Socratic in nature.

The first issue couldn't have been published without the unconditional support of my friends and acquaintances. They responded to my repeated requests and asked their friends and family to write or send photographs for me. My own friends kept encouraging me throughout and never let me feel that the task at hand was impossible or even insignificant. I am grateful to my friends but who isn't?

DoubleSpeak will remain an online platform and only one issue will be online for a period of three months and then the next issue will replace it. These downloadable copies of each issue are made with a view of archiving them for readers and contributors to look back at the previous issues, if the need or urge arises.

I hope DoubleSpeak will become a clean and shining mirror and may be one day we will be able to see a complete image of what we have become or what we will be in that mirror.

*Arpan Krishna Deb*  
*Founder and Managing Editor*



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# 1 Poems

## 1.1 *I am wearing an omen:* Akhil Katyal

**I am wearing an omen**  
cut like solitaire on a ring.

I am reading thumbs  
left over by photocopiers.

I am telling the city  
I will need cradling.

I am asking icecaps  
not to melt so soon.

I am memorising  
my word like elephants.

I a learning the roots  
*of bereaved. To be robbed.*

I am building a shrine  
to the saint of long distance.

I am being born again  
a stray dog, loyal to strangers.

You were beautiful  
lie ground pepper evenings.

Like a long neck  
before slaughter.

You'd ask "Why can't you  
stop the rain for me?"

You who crossed all rivers,  
who singed even water.

## 1.2 *and now when my days blacken...: Akhil Katyal*

And now when my days blacken like metal and the bones  
inside my chest triple I bend in places I did not know  
were secret stashes of dignity I find two skies made  
only of fear and one made of memory someone  
hands me a map like a child I begin to find  
my room I live these days like a falling  
every hour a word disappears and  
anchors rust in mariana trench  
things go away from me like  
people when I sit up on  
my bed late nights it  
is as if language  
has not been  
invented  
yet

*Akhil Katyal is a Assistant Professor, School of Culture and Creative Expressions, Ambedkar University. He is a poet and a translator who works out of Delhi. He has published three books of poems – Like Blood on the Bitten Tongue: Delhi Poems, How Many Countries Does the Indus Cross and Night Charge Extra.*



### 1.3 *Collage of Haiku: Ishan Gupta*

#### **Woes of a working associate**

1. My fingers ache  
As they oscillate among  
Letters, numbers, backspace
2. The difference between  
Squirrels and me:  
I don't like earning peanuts.

#### **Bare necessities**

3. My fingers ache  
As they oscillate among  
Letters, numbers, backspace
4. The difference between  
Squirrels and me:  
I don't like earning peanuts.

*Ishan Gupta 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.*

## 1.4 *Strands*: Sombuddha Majumder

lick your copper plate clean  
toothpick from your home's neem  
twirl your moustache upwards  
and tell me why they can't dream

suck on every fat teat  
bathe in milk and haldi  
but when she asks for her share  
kick her in the belly

honour stains your dhoti  
vermillion and vibhuti  
dripping down your front that  
dirty blood of purity

*Shombuddha is a radical poet who wishes poetry was taught differently in school. He writes all manners of things. Other works of his self-coined anti-poetry can be found at @crapowski on Instagram.*

## 2 Fiction

### 2.1 *Furniture for the Descendants of Homo Erectus: Anannya Dasgupta*

The advantages of living in an apartment complex of this sort are several and the chief among them is anonymity even as you have the satisfaction of actually living among hundreds and hundreds of people. You might, for instance, sit on a bench in the garden reading a book, (am I the only one to do so anymore?) as mothers and *ayahs* mind toddlers by the swing set, men flex their lawn tennis muscles in caged tennis courts, a group of old women knit and shoot the breeze on the benches on one side, and a group of retired old men guffaw on the other, and all this while solitary runners in full running gear, ear phones included, jog along the periphery of the garden and no one seems to notice that you are there beyond the presence that indicates that the seat on the bench is taken. What sort of apartment complex is this, you might still ask?

Well, if you haven't already figured, these are the tall futuristic looking towers scraping the sky with penthouses on the 17th floor. Where I live there are about 24 of these towers in all, in sets of 8 towers arranged in three different circles with gardens and recreational areas, including courts for ball games and a swimming pool built inside each of the three circles of towers. The sort, just to stay on point, that in addition also affords two parking spots each per apartment, a community center, pharmacy, ATM, restaurants, beauty salon and even a nursery school with day care – all inside the apartment complex.

No one calls these places to live housing societies any more. The advertising billboards on the Expressway that shout the real estate boom at the top of their lungs call this sort of apartment complex a township. But the billboard I read today, the one on an enclosed new construction, that takes the beehive to the bonnet called it, wait for it – a smart sub-city. And the way they have gone about it they mean for you to never have to leave this complex-township-of-a-smart-sub-city ever; they mean for you to have nothing you need to go out for ever again once you have gotten in, or so it would seem. This one, by the way, in which I have found advantageous living, is called Paradiso. These circles of towering habitation, I would have never thought might have something to do with Dante's journey from inferno to heaven. For the same reason I couldn't have known that I'd meet my Beatrice here, quite by chance, but I am getting ahead of myself.

I have lived in Paradiso for four years now on the 12th floor of tower 21. On my floor among the three neighbors are first of all Auntynextdoor and her daughter who I barely see. Auntynextdoor used to be an athlete as a young woman. She played in the state level women's kabaddi team. She has a fighting attitude. She



was diagnosed with a cancerous growth in her jaw a few years ago; though she sees doctors, she has basically decided to fight it on her own, muttering *kabbadi-kabbadi* and refusing to let go of her breath, holding ground in her body against the cancer.

Across the hallway from us is a newlymarried couple Shruti&Shreyas who married for love; and, next to them a middle-aged couple DeanOfHisCollege and his Mrs. who I first met in the elevator soon after I moved into the building. After they checked me out from head to toe, he said, "I am the Dean at my College; this is my Mrs." "Are you married?" the Mrs. asked me in a tone that one might have otherwise said, welcome-to-the-neighborhood. Needless to say, I don't know very much more about them.

Shurti&Shreyas, on the other hand, are much more genial. They were the last to move in. I actually did say welcome-to-the-neighborhood to them on the day they organized a big *havan*, decorated the corridor in marigold and later filled it with the sacred *havan* smoke. Shruti works from home. She is a content writer. She works on commissions to produce text for websites and handbooks for various companies. She keeps her home just so. We chitchat in the corridor if we run into each other. Shreyas is a chartered accountant in a firm. He goes to the gym in the evenings; he has a premium membership to get his SUV a deluxe detail every Sunday in the parking lot that he supervises. Also, he doesn't let Shruti go out of the apartment complex alone. "It is not safe," he says. Every Diwali they deck up in their wedding finery and pay me and other neighbors a visit. They bring me a box of sweets or dry fruits. For the last two years I keep one box of sweets ready to be given to them in return.

I led you into this story with anonymity, didn't I? Well other than these neighbors I don't really know anyone else; there are some who I am sure see me repeatedly as I see them but we have never exchanged anything other than polite nods. Besides my anonymity is also owing to the type I am slotted to be. Let me give you an example. I am waiting for the elevator when I see an elderly lady walking into the foyer from the back gardens. The poor lady trips and falls. I rush to help her. She is nursing her knee but is otherwise ok. I hold her hand and help her to the elevator. "Which floor," I ask? To which she replies "12." "Ah, you are Shruti's mother," I exclaim, "she told me you were going to visit." "Ah," says the lady "and you are the-woman-who-lives-alone." Of all the things that can be said about me, I think, this is the one that is easiest to grasp. The house helps too, and for sure the guards as well, I know, refer to me as Didiwholivesalone. This is my claim to anonymity. I wear the invisibility shield of living alone. It is like an unanswerable argument that when you meet you just leave alone and back off. There can't be much more to know about me, no business of mine is interesting unless there are men visiting me. I don't get that many visitors – male, female or families of malefemales. Over the last four years any curiosity anyone might have had in me has been put to rest.

I took my alone shield rather too literally I suppose and figured there was still

so much to read, write, watch, explore in the world and make peace with in myself to bother with people. Besides, after my fulltime job as a furniture designer and accomplishing all chores as it takes to run a house that keeps the body and soul together, there simply isn't that much more time in a full day. I had secretly started to marvel at how people managed their days to be themselves when their space and their time was choc-a-bloc with people other than themselves.

In the time I spend in the common areas of the apartment complex – the bench on the garden where I go down with a book on the weekend; the gym where I work out sometimes and run into Shreyas; the swimming pool where I go at times when the least number of people are present; the yoga class I attended before it dissolved or the supermarket in the community center – I don't get a sense that those who walked around *without* the anonymity shield, those who had the signed pass to show themselves *as they* are and live their lives publicly, lived a life less anonymous than mine. They might not think so; they make their presence felt in RWA matters and RWA whatsapp groups; they know they have a signed pass to not be anonymous, but they seem not to know what to do with their visibility in light any more than me.

It brought me a little consolation, I must say, in the form of a glimmer of comprehension. I like to comprehend, to understand, to have a narrative for the little patterns of repetition that emerge in an otherwise totally chaotic universe. Chaos is not a theory. It is real. I have the greatest respect for ways in which things and lives self-organize in chaos and unpredictability – ant communities, bees, murmuration of swallows – I am a sucker for those. I am a sucker also for how so many of us live in this apartment complex, this Paradiso of the descendants of the Homo Erectus, impressed and intimidated by the structures we inhabit feeling mostly terribly alone.

My ticket to manage chaos is that I make miniature furniture in my spare time. I draw them out to the finest details, then I use cardboard, scissors and glue to replicate all the three dimensions under a large magnifying glass. It is painstaking work, and to most perhaps also entirely without any utility. Since everything is scaled to reflect the numerousness and the magnitude of the universe itself, it would seem that anything that is built is built to embody the magnificence of rising out of the earth with the sole purpose of touching the sky. In silent protest I am a building a stronghold to preserve the small – in things, in perspective. I delight in the details and completeness of things that one might miss if one didn't look carefully. I make furniture where the miniature human, a human who has had a chance to stay small and alone can sit down, feet up, look out the balcony and just be. I make furniture for the descendants of the Homo Erectus who take the call to be close to the ground.

When I do that sometimes, sit down on my chair in the balcony to admire the expanse – dystopic industrial smoke stacks beyond the ripe wheatfields, Auntynextdoor, if she is out also, watering her plants or drinking her tea or also admiring the great expanse, will usually end up chatting a bit. "*Bahar gaye the?*" she will

ask if I was away and our time on the balcony happens not to have coincided for a few days. "How are your parents, they must be happy you visited them." The good thing about Auntynextdoor is that she usually asks the kind of questions that she can answer herself. Then we talk about how cold or hot or rainy it's been. How well my plants are doing or hers, and lately we have always talked of the smog. "It is out to kill us," she says as her eyes narrow to pierce the air and I can see her lips mouth *kabaddi-kabaddi-kabaddi*. She is a fine example, this Autynextdoor, of how the little person can grit her teeth on a little piece of reality and refuse to let it pass for another. Lock down on it, really hunker down and sit on it and even time will stop moving. I was thinking of this, of the immobile geographies caught in our jaws that is, and if I have to be perfectly honest feeling a little trapped in the choice of reality I had hunkered down on when I met my Beatrice.

I was reading on the garden bench, when she plonks next to me. She has an alone shield, I can see from the corner of my eye, only that she has carelessly flung it aside. She has it by her side, and I can see that it drags along behind her wherever she goes. She does not care for it much. She has the air about her of one who not just has the signed pass to wear the sun on her forehead but she might even be the one to hand those passes out, or worse yet, to stop them from being handed out. I know I am supposed to intently keep reading, all guards up; but it was no more in the hands of Dante's soul to hold out in the face of all that light blazing from Beatrice's face than was in mine if I were to actually find my way around Paradiso instead of continuing my blind groping of the landscape. So instead of looking in my book, I look at her. I know instantly then that there are some peaks too perilous to attempt to ascend without a map, directions in addition to it, and the able guidance of a Sherpa.

My Beatrice is small statured (expected) and loud voiced (unexpected). She is talking loudly on her cellphone. She is browbeating some lowlife to get some work done that needed to have been done urgently day before yesterday by someone else. She has only swooped in to save somebody else's day, somebody tall I bet. She finishes with the conversation, turns to me, eyes-flashing-and-everything, and says, "tea?" She must have been aware of me staring at her. I say "yes" and get up to follow her for she, almost without waiting for an answer, has jumped off the bench and is striding ahead of me, for she knows, having come this far that I will follow. I try to keep up with her but keep falling behind as she walks through the Paradiso pathways and gardens and over fake Japanese garden bridges, past real fruit trees, badminton courts and parking lots, cutting across the circle of towers one-by-one to reach the foyer of tower 1.

It is like I have never traversed the made up urban-sub-city-of-an apartment-complex of Paradiso before. *Why is there no water under the bridge in the Japanese garden? It doesn't look like the water dried out; it looks like they never meant for it to be there. Why have a bridge when it doesn't bridge anything?* When I caught up to be in her hearing-range I think I heard her say, "that's the crack in the screen; those of us who know how to read it know that this reality is made up. It's not real. You



have always known it, but now you really know. You are not alone.” But I could be imagining that. We reach her apartment; it is number 1 on the first floor, of course.

She leads me into her very sparse but supremely aesthetic apartment. Low wooden furniture, jute mats, black round cushions, an arrangement of bamboo fronds on one corner of the wall by the bay windows. Just standing there taking in the dojo like living room makes me feel like an elegant piece of sashimi plated on gorgeous ceramic platter with calligraphy in wasabi and soy sauce on the side. She goes into the kitchen and boils lemon grass, adds *tulsi*, some other things go in too that I am unable to tell. I am standing at the doorway. I look down the hall; at the end in one of the corners is a low and wide circular wooden table that I am instantly drawn to.

I walk over to it and kneel down to delight in the feast of tiny things laid out on it. A set of blue glazed pots lined in order of decreasing size, the tallest is barely an inch and that is the largest thing on that table. There is a tiny-town complete with little houses, cars, water tanks, a school, a bank and a shopping centre. There are no people in it though. There is an exquisite tea set. A corn on the cob sits next to a dice. Potted flower plants. A perfect metal replica of a humming bird. A pair of clogs. A broomstick. A burger. A plate of enchiladas. The New York City skyline made of wooden blocks. A train line with an engine and five bogies set on tracks. A stack of books with the lines for the pages so finely drawn that you would be hard pressed to believe that the pages couldn't be turned or read. Glass bottles in blue and green barely half an inch tall. A globe with a golden metal stand to hold it. Ceramic dogs and wooden parrots. I could go on because the more I looked, the more number of things seemed to appear on the table of tiny detailed things. It seemed as though everything beautiful in the world was being materialized to fit my imagination as it expanded and made room for more. This universe of found things had a place for everything next to something and if someone switched them around, they'd still be home.

“Found my treasure trove I see,” she was standing behind me with two steaming mugs on a bamboo tray. As I got up, I noticed the walls around the niche – they were stacked from ceiling to floor in books. I got up and followed her back to the living room and sat down on the cushion, not quite matching the ease and posture of her sitting down. Hugging my mug, I sipped the delicious concoction. “I noticed you have no furniture on your table of tiny things” I said, taking charge of the conversation that had yet to start. “Didn't find any that fit,” she replied looking at me with curiosity. “I think I have the perfect gift for you,” and added rather more bashfully “that I have made myself.” And so the evening went – chatting and drinking more cups of that chai-thing. In the largeness of the universe there was still a small corner to belong that was not the inside of my head alone. There are many advantages of living in an apartment of this sort because it fits in more per slice of square feet per apartment of the universe's interrupted and overlapped realities. All you really need is the code to switch off some and tune into others and for now, by chance, there is a Beatrice.

And really the title of this story should have been How a Diminutive and Lonesome Descendant of the Neanderthal Female Who is a Social Misfit Learns to Make a Friend. But you get why I didn't change it to this, don't you?

*Anannya Dasgupta is a writer and artist who lives in Chennai. She also teaches literature and writing at Krea University where she directs the Centre for Writing and Pedagogy. Her popular book of poems is called: Between Sure Places.*

## 2.2 *So then I threw away the keys: Ishna Pungaliya*

It had happened and she had gone with it. Scientists and activists had given deadlines: first to save the whole earth and when that seemed impossible, to save as much and as many as seemed practical. We had disregarded everything for luxuries.

I was inside the Bank Tower at the IT Park, in my cubicle, opening an account for someone. My cubicle was next to the glass window-wall. She was in my view at that exact moment. It was closing time and she had come to pick me up. I saw her and smiled. She couldn't have seen me since the glass was tinted. I have wished a million times that her last image hadn't been of blue glass with the possibility of her lover behind it; another ten million times that she had waited in the car.

There was a sudden gust of wind that spread an extreme heat through the streets and cities and nations. Temperatures rose to above eighty degrees Celsius. Body temperatures had risen along with the air and the one's on streets had imploded. I saw her fall with the wind. It was obvious to me that she would get up. Then I noticed the security guard, also fallen.

We were kept locked in the building for a while. Every news channel had a different story determined by money and politics. Only two things mattered to me; one, this was the end of life as we knew it and two, I was alone.

The ice age began at night. The hot wind had enveloped the globe in a dust cloud and temperatures fell in a few hours to below zero. Everyone wanted to go home. My home was lying down there, sinking in the snow that had started falling at 3 AM. I realized that the home made by us, two women in love, was all that was left of us. I had to save it. I realized I hadn't cried even yet, and that was strange given how much I loved her. I had however peed my pants without noticing.

Suddenly I was feeling trapped. When I slipped out through the back entrance, desperate to go home, the cold hit me in my chest near my heart, which had already weakened from the grief. I realized my pants were wet. I remembered, when we had gone to Russia she had dropped beer on my pants. I kept teasing her that my legs would be frost bitten by the time we reached the hotel, and they'd have to cut them off. She had cried. I went to the spot where her corpse lay. Her head and torso had been buried, but the protruding ledge above protected her legs. I stripped out of my pants in total sanity and lay them on her legs. I was avoiding frostbite and looking at her snow covered facial area as I took my house keys from the pants.

There was hardly anyone on the streets as I walked home, shivering through the snow. I passed the café that she and I had gone to everyday before we built our home. It was a small outdoor space surrounded by trees. From the outside it was impossible to know that a restaurant hid in the canopy and the creepers. The



creepers had intertwined as limbs in the form of warmth and depth. If the owner was dead, her faith in the trees must have left her with her dying breath.

I turned the corner and saw an immense pile of snow where my house stood. I had to rush. I was not sure our house could take the burden of that snow. I moved as fast as I could, my feet sinking in the snow. I didn't know what I was going to save but I thought there must be so much; clothes, gadgets, vessels, anything that could keep her alive in me. I reached the pile of snow completely out of breath but still strong. In a moment I started digging with a ferocity that would have scared her if she had seen me. I had nothing but my bare hands but the snow gave way easily. I dug across hoping to get to the door but it only started feeling strange after an hour when behind me I could see a tunnel as long as half the house. I went on digging because I assumed my depth perception must be strained. In fact I pushed harder, dug with anger and in another hour, there I was, on the other side. I had dug through the snow. This could only mean one of two things, the house had already been crushed to the bottom or that I had hallucinated my entire relationship. I collapsed.

Was I mad or was our house that weak? The horror of either possibility made me tear up for the first time. I got up because I was feeling cold; my bare thighs were turning blue. I started walking back, unable to decide what to do with my self. And then, just as I was feeling wretched, I saw it; an old lamp, where we had once kissed. That kiss was neither our first nor our last. It was only significant because it was the most beautiful kiss. Maybe the moment of beauty had come too soon. Incidentally, the shirt I wore now was the shirt I wore then. This realisation burnt my skin despite the cold. I took it off and threw it on the lamp-post. It was a lonely flag up there so I saluted it. In any case I was probably not mad.

I turned around wondering if I go back to the office, would I reach before the cold gets me. I began walking. She was dead but finally I saw that I was desperate to live. The sanity earlier had come from the future and I was in the present.

First I smelled it, only then did I see it: smoke. The warmth of it touched me. I looked for clues frantically and in a few moments I saw the café of leaves and canopy. I hadn't realised earlier that the café was the only standing structure free of snow. When I stood at the entrance, what I saw confused me. The café was no different than usual. In fact the setting and the smell even pushed me towards nostalgia. But the people puzzled me the most. Young and old occupied tables nonchalantly; as if the world had not just been destroyed. These people seemed to have no awareness of the apocalypse. Children ran around tables while their parents shouted at them, lovers had drowned in each other's eyes, old men and women read day old news papers. "Come in, don't stand there shivering" said a waiter. As I walked in I saw what I had missed, bags. Everyone was carrying belongings. I was almost naked but no one looked at me strangely as I walked in. I was given a blanket to cover myself and a table at which to sit. So, we were the

oblivious ones, those of us who had died. "I'll get you something to eat", it was the same waiter. "You are lucky to be here. Not everyone is. Stay now..." He said and left.

I had been clutching at something in the palm of my hand. The pressure of it hurt. I opened my palm and saw it there. I looked at it for a few moments wondering what I was going to do with it. I realized slowly that there was nothing I could do, so then I threw away the keys.

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*Her short and documentary films: In the Wake of The Hill (2013), Dwaraka (2014), Landmass (2016), The Oran (2017) and Kaya (2018) engage with a wide range of concerns related to self and the other, identity, gender, power etc. She is a co-founder of the English theatre group, The Drama Queens, Pune, and as an actor and director has been actively involved in all its productions.*

### 2.3 *The deadman's bonfire: Sanjana Pillai*

Eshan was nervous about his party. Should he decorate the place or leave it as it is? Should he dress up or not? All these questions drove him mad. After a lot of thought, he decided to focus his energy on decorating the place. He went to open the cupboard to look for some tape when it fell out. He gaped at what fell out of the cupboard for nearly fifteen minutes, in absolute stupor and disbelief. When he gathered himself and realized what had happened, he just ran to the next room as if he was being chased by someone.

Eshan was in a state of absolute panic, his palms were sweaty and he was not able to think clearly. "Who was that person?" "What was he doing in the mansion?" "What if the dead body was the owner of the mansion", These were some of the questions that kept playing in his head. Eshan did not know what to do. Then his logical mind took over and he went into the room to check whether the person was actually dead or had just fainted. The man was about 6 feet tall and was well dressed. There were no signs of any violence on his person. Just how did he die, thought Eshan. He had to start decorating the house for the party. So, he stuffed the body into the cupboard and rushed back to get things done.

Eshan was graduating in a couple of days and was throwing a party to celebrate with his friends. He had rented this massive mansion for a day and it was worth a fortune. For the next four hours, Eshan was fraught between the dead body and the party. Every ten minutes he would go check on it, as though that man would come alive and escape any moment.

Hours of checking on the dead body and decorating the enormous mansion really drained Eshan. Around six that evening, when the doorbell rang, Eshan was still busy getting things ready for the party. Wondering who had turned up so early, he grumpily went to the door. It was Nathan. "I'm here to help you," he said with a smile. "How much can you possibly do all by yourself." Holding forward a single rose that had a long, slender stalk, he bowed dramatically. "Congratulations. For now, you can stop being jealous," he sneered. Eshan knew that the emphatic 'all by yourself' was an innocent comment made in jest, but it still bothered him. "Tell me Eshan why did you decide to have your farewell party on a spooky house on a haunted hill", said Nathan. "I don't want to hear your taunts Nathan, just shut up and help me decorate", retorted Eshan. Nathan for some reason always brought out the argumentative side in Eshan. Eshan thought to himself that if Nathan found out about the body, he wouldn't keep it to himself. Nathan, might actually publish it in the college paper. Eshan could see the headlines flash in front of his eyes, "Dead body found in Eshan Walia's Graduation Party: Was he the cold-blooded murdered?". Shaking his head in fear that it might actually happen, Eshan thought to confide in Nathan. Gradually, more people started arriving making it difficult for Eshan to locate Nathan. Moreover, this mansion had twenty rooms and he could

be in any one of them. What if he found the body and is avoiding me on purpose? thought Eshan to himself. With a thousand thoughts racing in his mind, Eshan was in a hurry to find Nathan. On finally finding Nathan, Eshan wasn't able to control himself "NATHAN! COME QUICK! I NEED YOU HERE!", he screamed thus interrupting Nathan's making out session. Nathan glared at him and marched his way towards Eshan and said "Walia, this better be important, else I will punch you in the gut!". "Chill Nathan, it is important why else would I interrupt your ridiculous make out session?", said Eshan. "Ughhh okay fine, what is it?", said Nathan irritated. Eshan dragged Nathan towards the cupboard and asked him to open it. Nathan opened it grudgingly, when the body fell out. Within seconds, Nathan ran from the scene and hid in the washroom. Eshan knew this would happen. Nathan pretended to be the coolest guy in college, but in reality, not as much. "Nathan, please open the door. Give me a chance to explain", Eshan pleaded knocking on the bathroom door. "OH, MY DEAR GOD Walia! It looks like a bloody horror scene up there!!!", screamed Nathan while breathing heavily into his palms.

Nathan stepped out in sometime giving Eshan the dirtiest look he had ever received. Eshan took Nathan to a room and explained the entire situation to him. Nathan heard the entire story with a suspicious look on his face the whole time. However, after a lot of deliberation Nathan finally believed Eshan. Both the boys, went to the scene of the crime. They opened the door and plop fell the body. They both looked at each other with a glance that said "What do we do now?". "Eshan, Listen I know you have no experience in this field, so let me handle it. We should hide him or We should confront the owner. Either one. Your choice", said Nathan.

"'You have no experience in this field', really Nathan? And what you just murder people and hide their dead bodies on a daily basis. Listen to me, for this to work you need to get off your high horse. Understand?" said Eshan furiously. Nathan responded by rolling his eyes and making a disgruntled sound. It was around 10 and people were refusing to leave. Both the boys, grabbed as many cloth bags and tapes as they could find and a lighter. Using nearly all the cloth bags they had found and emptying the roll of five tapes, they had completely covered the body. They went out through the back door and into the garden. The plan went smoothly, besides that time when the body slipped out of Nathan's hand and rolled into the garden. Their plan was nearly complete, but unfortunately fate was not kind to them. They were rolling the body to the garden to set it on fire. When, they heard the words they dreaded hearing. "Hey Everyone! Come out! There is a bonfire going on!!!", yelled Sam ecstatically. Everyone gathered around and they immediately set the body on fire. Soon, the charring flesh was emitting a sulphurous odour which made the crowd scrunch their noses in disgust. Due to the smell, most people left pretty quickly. It was surprising how no one really questioned them about the smell, but then again, they were all way too high to be apprehensive. They all looked white washed and the mansion's backyard looked like it was filled with a paranormal presence. Eshan and Nathan knew it was time to drive everyone out. Most people left without a second nudge. Sam however was persistent on staying. As they

were physically pushing him out of the house, he said "What are the both of you hiding? Did you both kill someone and are getting rid of the body?". On hearing this, Nathan and Eshan's body's tightened. Their faces looked as pale as a ghost. "What!? No, you are so funny Sam!", said Eshan laughing nervously. Sam looked at Eshan and Nathan and broke into a laughter. It felt like Sam had taken forever to leave. Finally, after he left. Eshan made a cup of coffee for the both of them. "God! What a crazy night!", said Eshan. "Walia, you really are a quirky guy. I mean I know you are smart but you do have a very secretive side to you.", replied Nathan. Eshan just smiled at him. A cup in their hands, sitting in the veranda and just admiring the beautiful night sky. It was the perfect end to a crazy, hectic, nerve wrecking evening.

Eshan thought to himself that maybe he should shoot his shot. What's the worst that could happen? Nathan would reject him but at least he knew that he tried. "Nathan thank you for tonight. I wouldn't have been able to do it without your help", said Eshan. "Anytime Esh", Eshan was taken aback by this term of endearment. Swallowing a huge gulp of air, Eshan decided it was either now or never. So, as the whole world fell asleep, Eshan leaned in to kiss Nathan. Nathan leaned in too and it was the most beautiful kiss they could have experienced. Nathan was so happy. He had the biggest, goofiest smile on his face as the kiss ended. Eshan smiled at Nathan and clasped Nathan's face in his hand and kissed him on the forehead. It felt like an explosion of fireworks were behind them. They both did not get off to a great start but they sure did have a fantastic ending.

Nathan and Eshan entered college the day of their graduation and couldn't take their eyes off each other. As they both walked towards the foyer; Eshan pulled Nathan next to him and said "Hey Nate, seems to me you are good at hiding bodies. You know, in the future, we may have to hide more bodies. Maybe you would like join me? Think about it. We would make a splendid team!". Nathan couldn't comprehend what Eshan had just said to him. Nathan turned back to see Eshan. Eshan returned that look with a wink and sly smile across his face.

*Sanjana is an aspiring psychologist. An avid reader and writer, she aspires to fill this world with her words. The 19 year old lady has her own blog page called Awishfulmind. She is also a theatre enthusiast, dancer and a cynophilist.*

### 3 Essays

#### 3.1 *Critically re-reading a Classic: Yeats' Leda and the Swan*: Kanica Soni

##### **Leda and the Swan**

William Butler Yeats

A sudden blow: the great wings beating still  
Above the staggering girl, her thighs caressed  
By the dark webs, her nape caught in his bill,  
He holds her helpless breast upon his breast.

How can those terrified vague fingers push  
The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?  
And how can body, laid in that white rush,  
But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?

A shudder in the loins engenders there  
The broken wall, the burning roof and tower  
And Agamemnon dead.  
Being so caught up,  
So mastered by the brute blood of the air,  
Did she put on his knowledge with his power  
Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?

Leda and the Swan is an artfully written poem that uses Greek mythology to catapult the reader's thought into thematic concerns like indifference, power and exploitation. In my reading, I found that the narrative and the issues it addresses are pertinent in making this a timeless piece. Yeats manipulates the form of a Petrarchan sonnet with tedious control and inserts anomalies that compliment a nuanced and underlying desire to break free from the bind of destiny and fate, as presented by the story of Leda and the Swan.

In the poem, the destiny and fate of Leda seem sealed and inevitable at the hands of an otherwise majestic creature, the Swan. I found the idea of a powerful Godlike figure embodied by a Swan intriguing, as it brought to mind the tale of 'The Ugly Duckling.' The accompanying expectation is that the swan shall be virtuous and exemplary. In the context of this poem, however, one finds the Swan play the role of a rapacious God, whose excesses are perceived as avenues for human beings to learn from. As such one wonders about the legitimacy that might emerge from the

idea of ennoblement through suffering.

Moving to the poem, it is interesting to note that while the poem is titled *Leda and the Swan*, the characters are addressed using only pronouns; this places the audience right in the middle of the action. The opening line, landing a sudden and shocking blow conjuring an image of violence juxtaposed with the sublime vision of 'great wings', which oxymoronically are 'beating still.' Thus transferring to the audience a heightened sense of awareness, where each instant and memory is enhanced, similar to memories inundated with violence, fright or passion. Written primarily in the iambic pentameter, the slant rhyme of duh and g add to the rugged and brutal scene in this case. The use of the definite article 'the' to describe the entities, 'the staggering girl', 'the dark webs' and 'the great wings' impresses a bystanders' role on the reader. The second line of this first quatrain deploys 11 syllables, an anomaly placing particular emphasis on Leda's helplessness as she is overpowered by the ruthless passion of the Swan. The picture painted communicates domination over Leda by the great Swan, as he caresses her on one end and pins her down on the other. The use of synecdoche ('dark webs' and 'his bill') to describe the will of the Swan over a 'helpless' Leda, intuitively communicates the power 'the staggering girl' eventually succumbs to. Moreover, the erotic diction used to describe Leda's body, paired with scenes of violence and subjugation in this quatrain, works to contrast the beauty and brutality. The semantic choice of using adjectives like 'staggering' over words of judgment, which appear only later, furthers the intent of maintaining a certain distance between the poem's events and the audience. Additionally, the alliterative line: 'He holds her helpless breast upon his breast' emphasizes a sense of right and will.

The second quatrain is composed of two rhetorical questions that perpetuate the vision of violence and bring to mind the question of fate and how under oppression, we may come to accept our struggle as destiny. In which case, does one have a choice? The transferred epithet used aptly captures Leda's frame of mind as the poet questions if her 'terrified vague fingers' can push away the passion imposed upon her. And eventually, if she has any other choice but to give in, 'loosening her thighs.' Further implying that the heightened senses aroused by the act leave Leda no choice but to feel it in its entirety.

Yeats describes the conclusion of the act as a 'shudder in the loins' followed by images of destruction in the final sestet. The visual imagery uses strong symbols – wall – that has been broken down and the burning roof to allude to the break in the hymen and the phallic symbol of the 'tower' to represent the conquest if one may call it that. Such diction euphemistically conveys the horrifying sentiment, and the imagery draws intense emotional responses from the audience. As is typical of Petrarchan sonnets, 'Leda and the Swan' also tackles the theme of passion and love, albeit in an unexpected manner, highlighting the hypocrisy in it. In addition to the enjambment, Yeats breaks the concluding sestet into two. The break signifies a shift as the initial tercet forges forward, describing the rape and the sudden end

of it along with Agamemnon's death, while the latter concludes the sonnet with another rhetorical question. The narrator wonders if, in that 'brute' moment, Leda had a moment of clarity to know how she was part of a bigger plan. When taking a closer look at the structure, one notices that the second line of each quatrain moves away from the convention of the iambic pentameter and uses an anapest as does the last line. The break in rhythm underlines Leda's helplessness, her giving in and finally, the fall of the 'wall' as she lies in 'that white rush.' The last line leaves us with the question of whether or not Leda was able to gain certain insight before she plunged back into the abyss of the ordinary, let go by the 'indifferent beak.'

Man has an innate drive to break free from binding ideals as reflected in the structure and versification of the poem. Yeats is able to reflect the spirit of such contrasting ideas within the structure of a tightly knit Petrarchan sonnet with deliberate anomalies beautifully portraying the binding force of the Swan juxtaposed with resistance by Leda.

In the concluding lines, Yeats uses the words 'indifferent' and 'brute' that indicate an attitude and tonal judgment of the Swan's actions as menacing. The alliteration 'brute blood' reinforces the force with which Leda bends to the will of Zeus. And amid that menace emerges the rhetorical question that makes the reader wonder if the subjugated are expected to understand and accept their predicament without protest or if they have the choice to fight.

The rhyme scheme draws attention to itself as it follows the pattern of abab cdcd efg efg. The slant rhyme used in conjunction with the steady iambic pentameter highlights the irony embedded in the use of convention and structure. Generally used to express romantic notions of love, here, the sonnet form captures the violent act of rape.

The choice of words such as 'blow', 'beating', 'caught', 'strange', 'mastered', 'power', 'indifferent', and 'drop' all point towards the adversarial positions men and women have taken up in the struggle for equality. Therefore, the subject matter, as controversial as it is, is very relevant today. The poem parallels the Greek myth, and of this rape is born Helen, who then begins the Trojan War and causes Troy's downfall and the death of Agamemnon. While the initial reference remains relevant in understanding convention and meaning, the form and structure enhance its meaning, bringing out other concerns, such as exploitation and even the Christian idea of sin and punishment.

Yeats attempts to conceptualize the abstract of an all-knowing persona into a graceful, concrete, identifiable figure. Through this, one can explore the dichotomy in nature as reflected in the language that juxtaposes words indicating antithetical ideas; and the 'choices' we make, if they really are choices, in the sonnet the poets explores the possibility of Leda having the choice to give in to the passion and possibly gain 'knowledge' in return as well towards the end, through the rhetorical



question in the concluding couplet.

No doubt such ideas are philosophical; man's concept of God (specify), a being known to be merciful, who watches sadness and struggle plague man with indifference. As mortal beings we tend to rationalize what we don't fully understand. The Christian doctrine justifies struggle as tests that purify our soul and prepare us for redemption. But can one justify the struggles of some people over others applying this principle and did Leda gain ennoblement through hardship are worthy questions.

Inspired from the Dantesque ideas of the co-mingling of the divine and profane, Yeats breaks convention here as well by pitting Leda against the character of the Swan in an erotically charged, passionate and yet oppressive encounter. This allows for several interpretations ranging from oppressive political regimes and their indifference to the cause of the weaker sections, economic models of socialism and capitalism, the feminist struggle and philosophical threads that explore how such cataclysmic events can bring change and forge a new path forward or how violence births violence.

*Kanica is trained in psychology and currently teaches English to high school students. She uses her opportunities of creative expression through both leisurely musings and professional needs.*

### 3.2 *Satyajit Ray's Devi: When the realist met the goddess: Nildeep Paul*

The mythological is a genre that is inscribed into the originary myth of Indian cinema itself. Indian cinema, as far as it's known, began its journey from the desire of Dadashaheb Phalke to see Indian mythical figures onscreen – which led to the production of *Raja Harishchandra* (1913), arguably the first Indian film to be made. Since then, the mythical has enjoyed considerable success amongst viewing audiences in various parts of India, across different times and covering a wide range of mythic subjects in their representation. In this essay, I aim to look at Satyajit Ray's *Devi* (1960), to understand what happened when a director whose realist credentials are set in stone, decided to confront the mythic in his cinema.

Satyajit Ray, just like Phalke who is the progenitor of the mythological film, is a figure embedded in the second myth of the birth of Indian cinema. With the release of his film *Pather Panchali*, Ray is often credited to have announced the arrival of Indian cinema at the world stage as well as have started the tradition of realism in Indian cinema.

According to historian Rochona Majumdar, the aspiration of realist filmmakers was to have Indian cinema to be judged not according to the standards of Indian cinema, but according to a 'universal' standard of quality, and being able to stand its ground when compared to works by great Western masters. This setting themselves up against an industry determined a rational critical outlook for these filmmakers. This criticality was borne out of, on one hand the intellectual culture of the film societies and its disappointment with the quality of cinema produced in India so far. But on the other hand, it was also a split in consciousness, one that belonged equally to the legacy of European rational thinking as well as an 'Indianness' of their look – the desire to live up to the standards set up by Europe flowing up against the inclination to produce an image of the 'real India' that was hidden behind the spectacle of the mainstream cinema. This particular emphasis on the 'Indianness' of the look is what will bring these filmmakers into contact with various socio-political realities. But these realities, having deep-rooted histories and practices associated with them would not yield readily to an utterly Eurocentric 'look'. This gives rise to a fascinating tableau of cinematic strategies employed by various filmmakers, where the European realist vision that they aspired towards would undergo various metamorphoses upon entering into uncharted territories.

This is especially significant when read in the context of Ray's film. In Ray's film the marital bliss of Umaprasad (Soumitra Chatterjee) and Doyamoyee (Sharmila Tagore) is shattered when Umaprasad's aging zamindar father Kalikinkar (Chhabi Biswas) dreams that Doyamoyee is the incarnation of the Goddess Durga/Kali and installs her as a living deity to be worshipped by the villagers and him.

There are a few key differences between the popular aesthetic of the mythological and Ray's approach. The mythological genre is characterised by its extreme frontality – in which the plethora of divine figures are shot in a straight camera angle, meant to emulate seeing the gods in a temple, as a kind of 'darshan'. The mythologicals often sought to conflate the cinemagoer with the devotee, aiming for the same deep emotional connection. Ray on the other hand employs a reverse strategy. His film begins with shots of the Durga idol's face – except the shots are static and identifies the idol as an idol with this staticity. But when shooting Doyamoyee as living deity he chooses a moving shot – a zoom out from her figure to reveal her as the centre of a throng of worshippers and ritual paraphernalia. The frontality is also replaced by the more realist 45 degree angle, seeing the goddess slightly askew, not letting the mythic power take over. Frontality and extreme close-ups are reserved for the human characters instead.

The body politics of Ray's film is equally complex. Here too we see a reversal – from the tradition of gods coming alive in the typical mythological film, Doyamoyee who is a living breathing woman is rendered almost immobile, an object of worship, a stone idol herself.

Yet in Ray's realism, we also see an uncanniness permeate itself. When Umaprasad returns to find his nephew dead, he goes to Doya's room to find her completely unhinged. Doya keeps repeating that they need to go away, from which the film abruptly cuts to her disappearing into the mist through a field. The entire scene is shot in an overexposed format letting an unearthly light wash over the scene. Ray decided to shoot the scene in that manner despite the protestations of his cinematographer and it definitely does not fit into the decorum of his realist cinema language.

We can see that when Ray takes his story into its climax – the point in which Doya's psyche and body have completely transformed to the point that she really does resemble Kali at this stage, he lets his realist language get superseded to create a liminal zone between the real and supernatural. Ray's Kali does not destroy the oppressors, but in a way annihilates herself, thus completing the tragic trajectory of Ray's narrative.

So why does Ray so uncharacteristically sacrifice his realist language for this particular scene, when throughout he makes every effort to distinguish his film from a mythological? For the same reason that the mythological tries to turn spectator into a devotee, Ray has to, if only for a single scene, give in to that language, to convey to us the true anguish of Doyamoyee. In the scene in which Kalikinkar claims for the first time that she is a goddess, Doyamoyee, confused and nearly paralysed with anxiety, turns away towards the wall. She wishes not to be seen, not to face such a sordid reality which ultimately culminates in her final vanishing act. The living idol escapes the prison of the temple – and Ray's decision to shoot the

scene in such an unearthly light, takes the viewer into that heightened emotional state, much like the fervour of the devotee. Only this time we are witness not to the goddess's appearance, but her disappearance, her refusal to give us a 'darshan'.

*Nildeep Paul is a cinema and literature enthusiast, who holds an MA in English Literature from Jadavpur University and an MA in Film Studies from Ambedkar University Delhi. He is currently the Project Manager at the Indian Cinema Heritage Foundation, working on the digital project Cinemaazi.*

## 4 Translation

### 4.1 *Translation of Shakti Chattopadhyay's Poem: The Cat* (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta

#### বিড়াল

সুখের অত্যন্ত কাছে বসে আছে অসুস্থ বিড়াল  
পশমের অন্তর্গত হয়ে বসে আছে অসুস্থ বিড়াল  
খুব কাছে বসে আছে হিতব্রতী অসুস্থ বিড়াল  
কাছে বসে আছে কিছু পাবে বলে, অমরতা পাবে।  
কাছে পেয়ে রাখা শক্ত, ঢাকা শক্ত চাদরে কাঁথায়  
ঢাকা শক্ত ঘরে বাইরে, ঢাকা শক্ত অসুখে-সম্মোহে  
সুখের অত্যন্ত কাছে বসে আছে অসুখী বিড়াল।।

#### The Cat

Very close to happiness sits the unwell cat  
Inside wool and silk lives the sick cat  
Very, very near lies the well-meaning sick cat.  
Waiting nigh to get something, immortality,  
Not easy to hold on to, nor easy to cover with a sheet.  
Not easy to keep hidden at home or outside,  
Not easy to hold secret in disease and delusion.  
Just next to happiness rests the sick cat.

#### 4.2 Translation of Saroj Dutta's poem: *Revolution reveries of the middle-class* (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta

##### মধ্যবিত্তের বিপ্লব-বিলাস

বৈশাখের মধ্যদিনে অগ্নিদাহে মূর্ছাতুর আমি  
চাহি জল, চাহি ছায়া, চাহি বৃষ্টিধারা  
সকলি আনিবে যবে মহামেঘ কালবৈশাখীর  
পাতার কুটিরে আমি উৎকণ্ঠায় হব দিশাহারা।

##### Revolution Reveries of the middle-class

I faint in the fire of the summer mid-day attack  
Parched for water, craving shade, awaiting drenching showers:  
And when the northwesterly brings them all with its clouds,  
Anxious, I'll be anchor-less in my thatched leafy shack.

*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.*

### 4.3 *Translation of Juan José Millás's prose: Prologue of The Eye to the Keyhole* (Spanish to English): Gokulananda Nandan

#### Prólogo El álbum familiar

Todo el mundo tiene una cámara de fotos, pero no todo el mundo tiene mirada. La desproporción entre la abundancia de los objetivos y la escasez de las miradas constituye uno de los misterios más grandes de nuestra época (claro, que también hay más bolígrafos que escritores propiamente dichos). Te asomas a un acontecimiento cualquiera – un incendio, un accidente de automóvil, un concierto de rock – y descubre a miles de personas sacando fotografías con sus teléfonos móviles. El móvil se usa ya más para fotografiar sucesos que para hablar con la esposa. Como el mecanismo de hablar se encuentra tan cerca del de fotografiar, a veces se cruzan los cables y nos salen conversaciones en blanco y negro o fotografías susurradas.

– Mira, ésta es mi perra en el momento mismo de parir. Tuvo siete cachorros.

De cada nacimiento, de cada catástrofe, de cada cumpleaños, hay cientos de testimonios gráficos, pero al final sólo uno de ellos, con suerte, es elegido como icono de una época, de un suceso, de un espectáculo. ¿Por qué? Porque entre todos los fotógrafos espontáneos sólo uno supo mirar, sólo uno supo fotografiar las luces o las sombras, sólo uno acertó con el <> con el punto de vista.

El fotógrafo de domingo es bueno para las fotografías del álbum familiar. La fotografía de álbum es una especialidad rara, cultivada en la soledad del cuarto de estar. El autor de esta clase de fotos pasa tanto tiempo disparando su máquina como seleccionando y ordenando del material resultante. Tiene algo de coleccionista de sellos. No busca la posterioridad, sino el placer inmediato de ordenar la vida, la realidad, el árbol genealógico. El tiempo mejora la obra de este artista anónimo. Basta acudir a los mercadillos de antigüedades para darse cuenta. En esos tenderetes encuentras con frecuencia fotografías antiguas de grupos familiares, y casi todos son estupendas. ¿Por qué? Porque el tiempo ha llenado de sentido la mirada de los retratados, que siempre nos dicen algo (generalmente, algo transcendental) desde emulsión química en la que han quedado petrificados.

Todos los abuelos de las fotografías antiguas son nuestros abuelos. Todas las madres de las fotografías antiguas son nuestras madres. Todos los cuartos de estar son nuestro cuarto de estar. Todos los daguerrotipos son nuestro daguerrotipo. La gente que anda con los móviles por ahí, sacando instantáneas de las inundaciones o de los terremotos debería conservar sus energías para retratar a sus hijos, a sus cuñados, a sus yernos, o a sus perras en el momento de parir. Es relativamente fácil fotografiar un incendio, pero enormemente complicado retratar a una suegra. La imagen del incendio se perderá, pero la de la suegra permanecerá, durante

generaciones, en el álbum familiar.

Gran parte de las fotografías seleccionadas para este libro, incluida la de la cubierta, tienen la virtud de que, sin dejar de ser profesionales y de referirse a asuntos públicos, irradian un halo de fotografía familiar, de representaciones íntima. Parecen escenas captadas a través del ojo de una cerradura, lo que constituye una singularidad sorprendente. Cierran un ojo, asómense y verán.

### **Prologue of The Eye to the Keyhole** **The family album**

Everyone has a camera, but not an eye. The disproportion between the abundance of camera lenses and the rarity of eyes is one of the greatest mysteries of our time (of course, there are also more scribblers than actual writers). You look at any event – a fire, a car accident, a rock concert – and discover thousands of people taking pictures with their mobile phones. The mobile is used more to take photographs of events than to speak with wife. As a device for talking, it is so close to that of photographing, sometimes the cables get cross-connected, and we get to hear conversations in black and white, or muttered images.

– Look, this is my dog at the moment of giving birth. She had seven cubs.

Of each birth, of each catastrophe, of each birthday, there are hundreds of graphic testimonies, but in the end only one of them, fortuitously, is chosen as the icon of an era, of an event, of a spectacle. Why? Because among all the spontaneous photographers only one knew how to see through, only one knew how to photograph the lights or the shadows, only one was right with the “placement of camera”, with the Point of View.

The Sunday photographer is good for family album pictures. Album photography is a rare specialty, cultivated in the solitude of the living room. The creator of this kind of photos spends as much time in photo shooting as he does in selecting and arranging the final products. He has traits of a stamp collector. He doesn't wait on the posterity of life, but immediate pleasure to arrange the life, the reality, the genealogical tree. As time passes by, the work of this anonymous artist gets popularity. It would be sufficient to go to the antique markets to experience it. You often find old photos of family groups on those market stalls, and most of them are great. Why? Because with time, the colours of the photos get impregnated with meaning. These photos – emerged from the chemical emulsion in which they had been petrified – always tell us something (generally something transcendental).

All grandparents in old photographs are our grandparents, all mothers in the old photographs are our mothers, all living rooms are our living room. All daguerreotypes are our daguerreotype. People who walk around with mobile phones



taking snapshots of floods or earthquakes should conserve their energy to take pictures of their children, their brothers-in-law, their sons-in-law, or their dogs at the time of giving birth. It is relatively facile to photograph a fire, but enormously complicated to click a mother-in-law. The image of fire loses its meaning, but the one of mother-in-law will remain there, for generations, in the family album.

Most of the photographs selected for this book – including the cover – radiate an aura of family photography of intimate representations despite not being professionally shot or related to public issues. They look like scenes captured through a keyhole, which constitutes a surprising uniqueness. Close an eye, peep in, and see.

***Gokul** is a high-school teacher of Spanish. Carrying a diverse fabric of training from his alma mater, Visva-Bharati, Gokul's hobbies range from playing Sitar to studying investigative journalism. He is one of the few twitter-enthusiasts who is not bothered about the trolls.*

## 5 Photography

### 5.1 *Spring in the city: Soumen Mandal*









Spring is finally here in this beautiful city I call home. To many, spring is beautiful flowers, new leaves, pleasant sunshine and some more perhaps, but to me it is all about the new colours after a long slumber. Most of us go to gardens, parks or well-kept nurseries to see the beauty that is spring, flowers of one colour or one kind in endless rows, structured spaces, species matched to give a multitude of visual effects. However, in our rush towards those well structured explosion of colours we ignore the real spring. Cared by none but nature herself, when the time comes there is spring for everyone to see. The lonely tree at the corner of a building which gets sheared every now and then, the flowery weed amongst the trampled grass, or the flock of bulbs waiting all winter to spring. Here is a glimpse of what I call spring.

*Soumen Mandal is an experimental Physicist working at the Cardiff University. He currently resides in the city of Cardiff, UK. He has been an avid photographer who loves to capture the humour and uniqueness in the things around. He captured these images strolling in the city centre to get a sense of wild spring.*

5.2 *Density - A form, a mode of expression, survival may be:* Sandip De









To a Physicist, density is perhaps best recognised as mass per unit volume, a measure of how closely the tinier particles of matter are stacked to give strength and other characteristics to a material. But beyond the scope of Science, the word density finds a new meaning may be. In our environment, livelihood, stacking up things for a purpose or without any creates a density of forms and matter. That density often describes the different ideas of our expressions, endeavours and most of all survival.

*Sandip De is a trained Computational Physicist whose musings with his camera aim to capture the uniqueness of city-life, nature and the interdependence of the two. Currently he is working as a Research Scientist at BASF, Heidelberg. His interests are diverse ranging from macro-photography, to aerial videography. He has won several photography awards and his photographs are published in different journals, National Geographic being one of the eminent ones.*



### 5.3 *Alone or Lonely:* Shuvajit Ghosh



*Photo 1:* The lonely tree on the Bakkhali sea shore reminds us about the presence of many such trees there, which might have been destroyed by mankind or may have been gulped by the progressive sea.



*Photo 2:* : A lonely canine was seen enjoying the beauty of the ocean sitting on the shore.





*Photo 3: Little Andaman is one of the remotest islands of Andaman. It is situated at the southern end of the Andaman archipelago. It covers an area of 707sq km with barely less than 20,000 residents. The island is full of deserted pristine beaches and creeks full of crocodiles. The bridges on those creeks are made with sharp elevation to avoid crocodiles climbing up. The lonely rider was crossing one such bridge on the creek alone during a cloudy afternoon.*

*Shuvajit is a frequent trekker who loves hiking through the perilous mountain paths. From time to time he does care to visit the shores of the ocean and click unusual photos of nature and her components. He is a bank employee and an aspiring vlogger.*

## 6 Photo-stories

### 6.1 *Lost in Communication: Tapati Chowdhury*

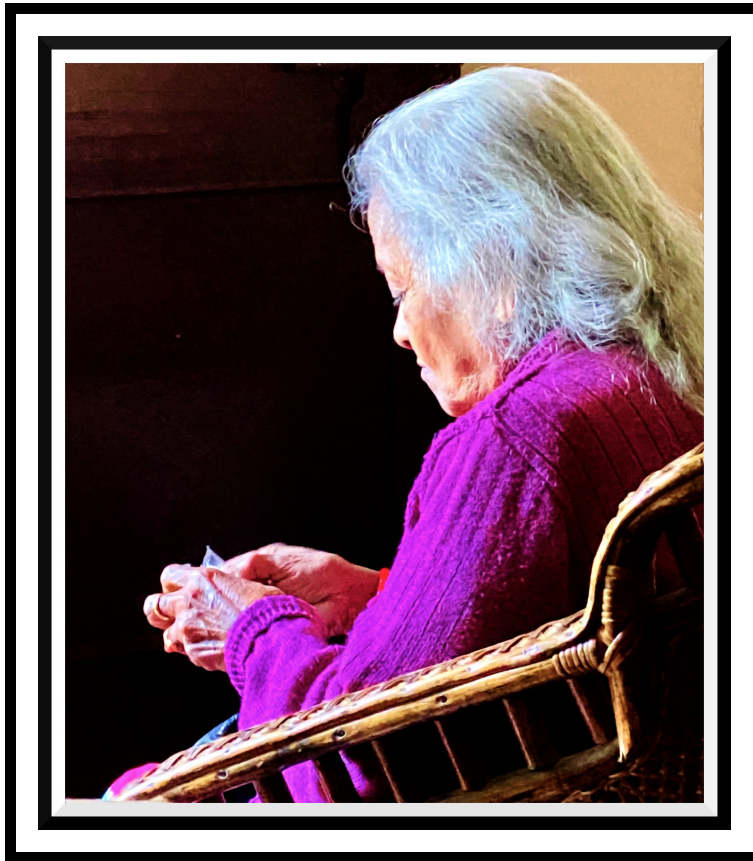


A Hand, a head, and a doll, three of them are busy in a tireless game. As you can see, none of them are ready to listen to each other and react accordingly. It began when three of them started playing a game. They all agreed that head and hand will catch the doll. It was all fine for a while. The doll was constantly running around and rest of the two were chasing after with a desire to catch her. This game suited

all of them but then the head and the hand started taking their role very seriously. They thought they must accomplish the job of capturing the doll. Maybe they were feeling tired of running around but instead of communicating that to the doll they promptly made a cage and imprisoned the doll within. The doll thought it was part of the game, so she laughed. When the hand and the head saw her laughter through the cage, they felt uneasy and thought the doll was wicked and they should not let her go free. Obviously, the doll got tired of this addition of the cage in their game. She started crying, begging, and laughing without knowing what would work. Since then, they are seeing and communicating with each other through the mediation of the cage. Probably the cage is now in control and they are lost in this never-ending miscommunication.

*Tapati is teaching in School of Art and Architecture, Jindal Univerisity, Sonapat. A trained artist in various media, she is interested in telling stories through her practice of art. She loves exploring different media and the consequent possibility of displaying her art.*

## 6.2 *The U-turn journey: Devika Raghav*



The New Year's Eve had been hectic, with all the single-handed shopping, sanitising, cleaning, chopping, cooking, and a whole gamut of endless affairs...

One could read the rising protest in Anjali's voice, 'Mumma what do you think you are doing?!' It was, after all, only the two of us but I wanted to see off the old and bring in the new with oomph! I needed the severity and the anxiety laced days to be now coated with warmth and some sense of preserve. And anyway, this is what I wanted. So I dismissed the patronising look with a charming smile only to find her go away in a huff!

These moments are special; these days this was my only chant. Soon she leaves for college. Where, when, how I didn't have answers to so many of the queries. As the evening approached, tiptoeing around this tiny refuge, we both smiled in sync with the day's happy outcome. The fairy lights hung gingerly from the stout Swarn-Champa tree gradually extending onto the railing and coming to a halt in an awkward stop. Looking carefully at where it ended, reminded me of myself in the present scenario. Odd, awkward, unkempt, and extremely frayed, in an almost humorous way; it too kept flickering and settling in as we brushed past its branches setting up a cosy corner for dinner.

All organised with appointed duties to the inanimate objects in my mind; I took out the soundbar and plonked in the corner finally.

Still groggy from a late night and deep in an awakened stupor, I could hear beautiful shehnai playing somewhat close-by. "It's the rested mind playing tricks I suppose" the prompt sleepy protest came from me. "The music wafting in at 5:30 am must be from the Dhakshineswar Temple", was yet another resonance of logic! And then, as if on having found the reasoning utterly unsatisfactory; I got up to listen. . .

"Ma, please shut off the soundbar; you forgot to switch it off last night I think", came Anjali's voice. So, there you have it; it was the (Akashvani) All India Radio playing the shehnai, ushering in a gorgeous misty morning of a brand New year 2021!

Realisation strikes home, when you appreciate the fact that having turned half a century recently was after all, well in progression. These days' simple images conjure up such precious memories from the past. I call it – the journey of U-turns!

I say so because the journey has a lot of pit stop reminisces.

I am mostly reminded of my grandparents, both maternal n paternal. Instances from my daily chores and how I explain life to Anjali, remind me of my childhood days. Especially when it comes to my Dadubhai (maternal grandfather); how stark the silver was of his mane against the deep copper of his skin. The way each eye would be caught in a mesh of fine crinkles as he would laugh heartily at his grandchildren's jokes. He, Rabi-da, was famed for his generosity and warmth. I see that warmth in my mother of 80; soft-spoken, quietly reticent in her ways, with the same stark wispy silver crowning her head.

Today morning with the shehnai still playing in the background, I picked up the pullover and smiled. Gently resting on the red were wisps of silver. Like Ma's sweater. The lingering few strands. Today I didn't grumble, I just looked at them and came to an understanding of life's cycle. How the U-turn is supposed to be played out. One day, in all probability, Anjali will look at a sweater and gingerly pluck out the white strays. She too will have the same smile lighting up her eyes while she watches a young one in deep slumber impervious of the goings-on.

*Devika is a freelance writer who loves delving into poetry and documents her travel sprees through photo journalism. Presently working out of Madhya Pradesh (Bhopal) she is a complete foodie and loves picking up conversations at any given pretext with fellow travellers. She believes getting to know a destination is in the journey – to and from! And hence she keeps exchanging notes about life and finds that living remains the key ingredient in all that. A complete nomad at heart, she religiously believes in imperfections.*



### 6.3 *Images, feelings and an imperative touchdown: Hargun Gujral*



The living imposter: the chaos beneath is real and yet the calm is what one needs to deliver.



Despair: the day when life seems unfair. You live with an empty chair.



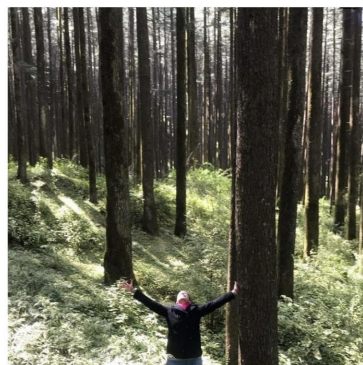
Lonely: loss is cruel. And yet to experience it every other day whether or not the person ceases to exist, physically.



Safe Places: Where is home they ask?  
Where flowers bloom and can rest in peace.  
Where the unrested mind and the heart can  
without any pretense slowly find some solace  
in the layers of the bedspread and sheets,  
where life slowly unfolds, catches its natural  
glow, where love resides, not in a rushed,  
hasty way but in the needs that one wishes  
to meet of oneself and the other in a  
comforting way. Where is the home they  
ask, where one grows, almost in an organic  
manner, without a nudge to be something or  
someone in any way.



The therapist's fatigue: in the gloom  
of an unending day, a young adult  
asks, "what keeps you going?" 'You  
look at the flower right next to you, it's  
stayed strong for 10 whole days,  
without willing or refusing to spread  
the last ounce of its fragrance that it's  
got.



The fire fighter: on the joy of  
letting free, of tears trickling  
down and yet owning the  
vulnerable as the biggest  
strength of me.



Silence: your words have power, but wait until you experience what silence can do.



Hope: and on a bright sunny day, someone mustered up the courage to finally express their love to whom they have cared for all this while, only to realise she had been writing poems for that someone as well.



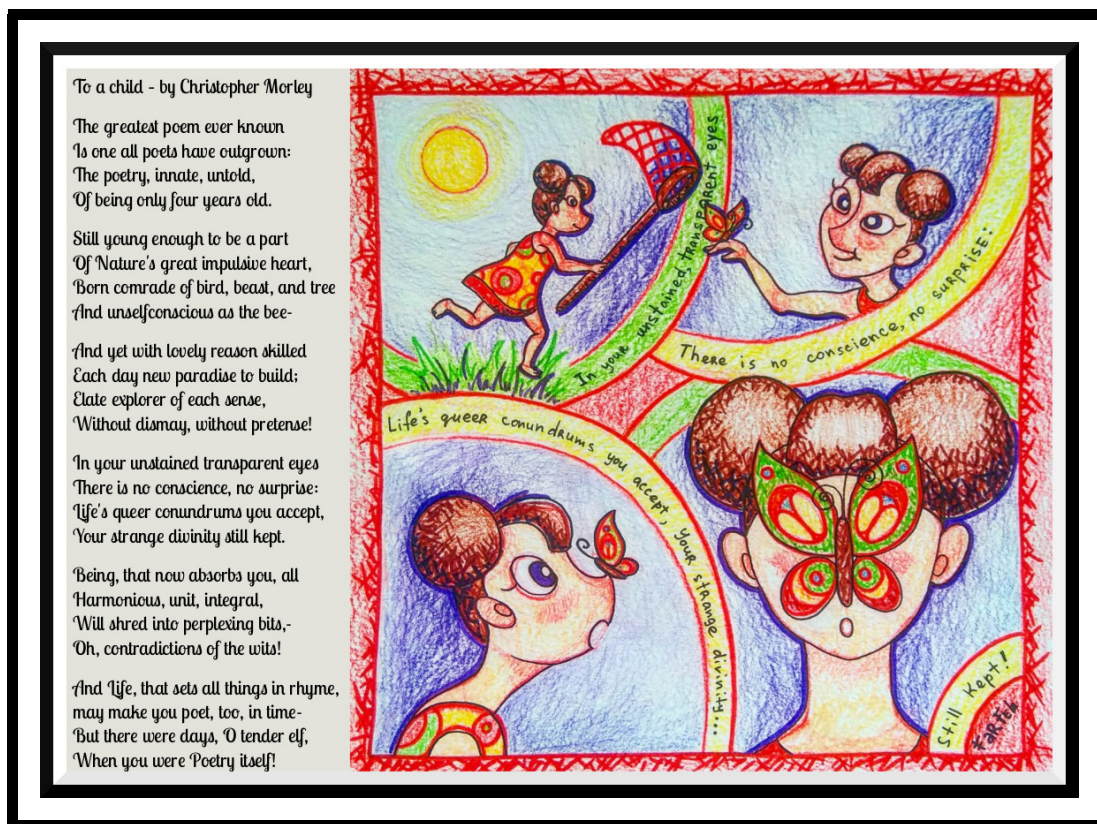
Peace: fleeting and momentary. Addictive and yet always worth chasing.



**Hargun** is a professional Counselling Psychologist and Expressive Arts Based Therapist , who mostly works with school students. Between her sessions with the different thoughts and expressions of those young minds, she loves to keep a book to gather her thoughts and express them through a story made with images.

## 7 Collaborative Works

### 7.1 *To see the world through the eyes of a child...: Anna Farfel and Stefanie Fasora*



*This collaboration piece is unique in its conception. Anna and Stefanie are two friends who are geographically distanced by over five thousand kilometres. They fancied the depths and unworded connection of their friendship to create something abstract from a poem and a possible piece of painting. The fragments and consequent constraints of the age we live in could not pose any unsurpassable challenge to them as they could share the feelings of the poem over the huge geographical separation, as if one is reading it and other painting the words and intonations of the reader's voice on a canvas.*

*Anna, the artist: "The part of the poem that I put in this picture was the part, that I could understand not only with my brain, but also with my heart. When I was a child I wasn't afraid of life yet, I was curious about everything, there was no disgust, no judgement for creatures of nature. After time took me through the unavoidable tumultuous experiences of life, I became more cautious of life, of people to be precise. And I learned that the majority of society sees insects and molluscs as something disgusting. That's how I was raised! So when I came to Germany to volunteer on a farm, I could find an instantaneous connection with nature again and I found that curious and ever-amazed girl, I used to be. And after I read that*

poem I finally really realised that I am also a part of nature. I felt that I am life, like every species on earth is a part of life and they are all connected to me and every other form! Everything was so crystal clear to me at that moment! I suddenly imagined how great it would feel, if the soft wings of a butterfly would touch my cheeks. My hand basically started drawing this picture all by itself and I felt an inexplicable connection with the universe, at that very moment. This curiosity, awe, inspiration and connection is still in me and I am 30 years old. I woke up to a dawn knowing how important it is to see the world through the eyes of a child again!"

*Stefanie:* "Since Anna lives in Siberia and I live in Germany, I sent her the poem online and wondered, if she was inspired by it, to draw a picture, so we can submit it to DoubleSpeak. I know that once Anna is inspired, she produces amazing pictures at an astonishing pace! The same thing happened when we were creating our book "Change your perspective, change your life". At that time I had sent her the chapters and she could summarise them in one amazing picture. Thank you, Anna, for bringing colours back in our lives!"

*Anna Farfel is an artist from, Russia. She also communicates through her instagram account – insightout2020. Stefanie Fasora is a Mindset Mentor from Germany. She is an expert in Latte Art as well. You can catch her on youtube- Steffi Fasora.*

## 8 Letters

### 8.1 *Letter from the founder of DoubleSpeak* : Arpan Krishna Deb

Dear Readers

It is quite surreal today to write a letter in this format to all the readers of DoubleSpeak. However dramatic it might sound, I must admit that being someone who loves writing letters I find it quite thrilling at the moment. Having a magazine to publish was a long held dream, perhaps stemming from those endless days and nights of cramming on Bengali magazines, looking for an interesting story, a crossword, an article about my favourite sportsperson etc. A joke persists even today that a failed author or an artist so to say, becomes a publisher to have that joy of creation, somewhat, second-hand. That joke doesn't bother me much as I am fortunate to have enough friends who lovingly indulge in my otherwise incompetence in any creative medium.

DoubleSpeak is a simple magazine which I want to reach many readers across the world and with the digital web growing denser and larger everyday, I don't think it's an improbable wish at all. As you read through the magazine, while enjoying the mindful works of the contributors, I request you to critique the works as well, albeit in a manner that bears the signs of our civilised minds. Write letters directly to our authors with what you liked, what you didn't like and why you felt the way you felt while moving through the creative pieces. DoubleSpeak would publish those letters in consequent editions, creating a space for a dialogue of perspectives, ideas and analysis. However cliché it might sound, we might as well admit that offering a point of view in public has become a nuisance of sorts with our newly found tricks of trolling and mindless comments. DoubleSpeak musn't and shouldn't become a space like that and I believe the onus is as much on you as it is on us.

This letter cannot be of any meaning unless I speak a bit about myself. I am a school teacher by profession, who started his career as a Scientist. It is my good fortune that the people I came across in life, never let me sink in to the stereotypical idea of exclusivity of spaces between Science and Arts. And hence my interest in arts grew as I kept reading whatever came my way (I remember reading from paper bags made out of old newspapers, when I was in school), watched films of all possible kinds and also could manage to develop some understanding of the magnificent world of music.

On a daily basis I interact with young minds, try and force the ideas of Science and Mathematics in their mostly unwilling heads and yet at the end of the day I find them longing for stories. The stories of life, people, art, science and everything capture those minds like nothing else. The abstraction of colours, words, music do

not fail to reach those growing minds, however obscure the means might appear to old people like me. I feel everyday the need of reading something striking to store in me which I can go back and share with my children in school. It makes me happy. I believe that urge somehow compounded with my desire of publishing a magazine brought me to find DoubleSpeak.

I am immensely grateful to my team, who never got angry with my persuading phone-calls and of course to the contributors who did everything possible to keep the first edition come out on time. I am quite certain that every person I have known in this life so far must have influenced me, inspired me to seek that beautiful idea of art and creativity in things around us. May be this magazine will keep that spirit up among all of you. Looking forward to hear from you about how DoubleSpeak is doing in each edition.

Warm regards  
Arpan Krishna Deb  
Founder – DoubleSpeak