

Words, Images and You

DoubleSpeak Magazine

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

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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 third issue

The third issue of DoubleSpeak come at a time when most of the writers, who happen to be mostly in the field of education, find themselves swamped with work. Yet somehow the authors and artists responded with eagerness and kindness to the persuasion of the editor and contributed with some very interesting pieces of work. In terms of the number of published pieces this issue is much lighter than the previous ones but some of the pieces are unique in their character. Like the previous issues, this one as well, does not come with any thematic subject for the published pieces. The diversity of the content remains the most interesting aspect of our journey. We have one submission from Germany in this issue and it is an inspiring essay about strategies that would take an individual towards mental-wellness. We have professional writers and absolute amateurs sharing mini-albums and photo-stories.

Our poetry section has free verses, rhymes, photo-poems and some experimental forms as well. The fiction section has stories from two completely different genres: horror and personal experience. The essay section of this issue is very rich with essays about poets and emperors, travel, mental-wellness and motherhood.

In the translation section we have a touch of all emotions ranging from fear, hope, despair and even humour. We have published translations of great poets like Shakti Chattopadhyay and even Amir Khusro's old *Hindustani* riddles.

We are happy to share travel photographs of a religious visit and their impact on an artist's mind, history and culture of a place and even the call to a bohemian's heart in our photography and photo-story section. The diversity of the subject in this section is again something worth mentioning. The solitary letter from a writer, photographer, scientist friend of mine is the solitary piece in the letters section which is encouraging to the young writer of a previous issue.

It is imperative that we uphold the idea of DoubleSpeak which is to foster young artists and bring them to publish their works alongside the professionals and masters. The readers do have the responsibility of sharing their thoughts of these works. Your letters encourage our artists and your suggestions will improve the practice that DoubleSpeak so dearly carry in its heart. Hope you would enjoy this issue as well. Looking forward to hearing from you again.

Arpan Krishna Deb
Founder and Managing Editor

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1 Poems

1.1 *Burying a lover*: Alisha Nangia

It's 3 p.m. on a Tuesday.
I know exactly what you are doing.
Slender fingertips noodle along
the Old Grand,
recalling a
a melody caught between
the memory of July rain and
lithe bodies pressed against walls.
What was desire to you?
An anomaly, like me.

I throw a handful of dirt and the scene
flickers at the seams.

It's the first rain of August suddenly;
your figure silhouetted against the cloudy blue curtains,
gives me a sideward glance as
I lace my fingers with yours.
Words like 'us' and 'destiny' and 'love'
are ice cubes running down your spine.

The next fist of dirt is more forceful.
What a fool! What a fool again!

Then it becomes easier.
Every three-hour conversation, hastily stubbed cigarette,
tossed bedsheet and borrowed slippers,
and that tiny space between the window, secret haven of a midnight rendezvous-
is buried.

My fists quiver, fingers slacken,
broken nails, nicotine-tainted,
I bury you alive.
Like you did me.

A maniacal laugh.

My slender figure slumps forward, exhausted.
This will do. It has to.
The colours shift and settle,

and just before I start to get up,
there it is-
Moon River, playing on the Old Grand.
And all is lost again.

*Alisha is a high-school English teacher who believes that she writes because she cannot
unthink, unsay or unfeel stuff.*

1.2 *the nights here have an ochre glow*: Sombuddha Majumdar

the nights here have an ochre glow
neon signs, streetlights and bedrooms windows
cars dancing to the strobe of a traffic signal blinking yellow

we're surrounded by redwoods, banyans, sequoias, and pines
bustling with life inside but concrete, fossilised
all glass, not green, reaching just as fast for the sky

amongst the plastic, the providence, and the perverse
i embrace you deeply till my heart is ready to burst
praying that it all, especially us, can last for a million years

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

1.3 *Brokenness**: Paromita Goswami

She and her daughter came down from the Himalayas

And crossed the Atlantic

That broke her tiara, but her child was unharmed

Then a call came from Delhi for a new home
So they hopped on to an Air India flight

This time her daughter broke in half

As the doors of the Delhi apartment opened
To broken pieces and fallen tiara

A little voice whispered-

They break to make rainbows of their own
Away from mom-s, on their own
Riding on wings of fallen tiaras, and flying unicorns



1.4 *Breath*: Paromita Goswami

Breathe, the master said.

Can you
breathe in
the smog
of a Delhi November evening
the day after Diwali?

Or when your beloved promises
to have *kabiraji* from *Anadi Cabin*
to makeup for the *dhoka* he might miss
at your *shradh*?

Breath after breath
smooched away

Lightly-
With or without light

**kabiraji and dhoka are delicacies from Bengal; dhoka literally means fooled*

**Anadi Cabin is a café in Calcutta, the word Anadi mean eternal*

**Shradh means memorial after death*

Paromita Goswami teaches marketing, collects crystals, and loves solo-travelling.

1.5 *Do Gods exist?: Abhishek Soman*

Gods.

Do they exist?

Do they have ego?

Does God have the concept of identifying self?

How many Gods are there? One? A billion of them?

Do they own the people who believe in them?

Do they get angry if someone
doesn't believe in their existence?

Do they have emotions like us?

Are Gods greedy? For flowers, food or money?

Do Gods even need any of these?

Is God symbolic or materialistic?

How often do you talk to god?

Do you get reasonable answers after
talking, debating, arguing or fighting with them?

Do you try to justify yourself when
the answers don't align with your reality?

Or pretend to be God while our subconscious tells us stories?

Are Gods extinct human from the time of dinosaurs?

Perhaps the survivors and thus transformed
millions of years later into contemporary Gods?

When did forms of God get humanised?

Are they humans with extraordinarily categorical powers
That make them superior?

Who is your God?

Because God's do exist.

If they don't, we invent them,
try to find them in stories
or sometimes become one – ourselves.

Questions will keep branching out
as long as the hunger of our curious brains
isn't satisfied.

Which never does or ever will.

Answers will keep evolving,
not necessarily exploring the directions
we thought of.

When we become ancestors

Billions of souls cramped in one word

Some of us might become gods.

Probably even before human species transcends
to other planetary systems.

Since Homo Sapiens have claimed the throne

of the almighty species,
only a few can foresee and share the calendar
of the dystopian – micro and macro – scenarios.
But Sapiens also have the habit of not listening
Separation of hearing to listening
is only seen while in action – to do or not to do?
Is God watching these actions?
Or is he busy watching others?
Does he watch over everyone?
Or neither care nor bother?
Is God real?
Or is it None of the above?
I hope God answers these questions.
If not who will?

*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.*

1.6 *Today was different:* Rutika Deshmukh

I woke up with the hope of new beginning,
The rising sun was introducing me to the beauty of new day,
And the fading darkness was telling me to let go the wounds of yesterday,
Today was different. . . .

Even in the clamor of city, my mind felt peace,
The storm in my mind was quite and the refreshing cup of tea and book was enough
to make me smile
Today was different.

I've painted my soul with the colors of self- love,
And suddenly all my insecurities are going away,
All I can see is a beautiful me, with scars healing
Today was different –

The moon has arrived,
But my hope is still with me,
Today after a long time I was me,
I didn't have to put on any disguise
Today was different –

When I closed my eyes,
There are only dreams
Nightmares have disappeared
And all I can see is beautiful beginning
Finally I've won the battle with myself for me, within me
And at last I've met me
Today was different –

I'm not waiting for anyone
I've me and that's enough
Now ahead of time,
For me there is a new beginning
Everyday is blessing
Every moment is a gift
Today was different.

Rutika is currently pursuing her graduation in mass media. Loves writing, specially about the emotions we're too scare share, about the life one wants to embrace, about the lessons one's learning through the experiences of life. Through writing she's trying to find the answer of question – what is life.

1.7 *What can I do to help: Anannya Dasgupta*

As if a movie script, unfolding shot-by-shot are scenarios – different ways in which disaster comes unannounced. What if this, then what? What if that then when? What if it is not when but how?

in the hands
of a laughing child –
roulette

yanked back
to being a spectator
– gadget screens



Note: This poem was posted as a part of daily practice (riyaaz) on dailyriyaaz.blogspot.com, a blog which Anannya creates every year for the month of April to celebrate a month of poetry.

*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.*

2 Fiction

2.1 *A crushing fight: Nemo Gupto*

— *while one may encounter many defeats, one must not be defeated...*

—*Maya Angelou*

The light

A photograph hung, three quarters of the height, on the west-wall, scrimmed with a mosaic of arbitrary patterns of damp-spots. The window in the south-wall, the most coveted in Kolkata, brings in the morning and evening *Azaan* every day. Except for an *almirah* (ornamented with chiseled floral pattern around the engraved mirror of Belgian glass) a *pembroke* table with a matching *fauteuil* and a king sized *sleigh* the room has no furniture. Everything that could not find a place in or on any of these three found a corner in the room. *Kanai Karmokar* has been staying in this room since he came to the city from his ancestral village. The story which brought him to staying in this room, is a long one and we can keep it adrift for another time. The photograph which hung on the west-wall is of a window in a fort or a mosque may be. It shows a net hanging at a right angle to the window's plane. The dust and spider web, clasping on to the knots and the spaces in between, somehow captured an inverted image of the window. It appeared to him that there is another window hanging, lying flat on its back, except for that it's not the real one. *Kanai's* room has four ventilators right at the top of each wall. Two of them produce a somewhat eschereque mosaic of the of their filigree and diffused light creates slanting beams on the walls, with their lengths increasing as the sun moves through the day.

The view

Kanai sits at the window all day, looking at the dense, busy alley which houses almost a hundred people on both sides. The railway, which is within five to six metres from the edge of the alley, gets its schedule of local trains running up and down. *Kanai's* eyes would stay still on the asbestos trying to see them vibrate as the trains would speed through the tracks. Some trains slow down from time to time as *Kanai* gasps as he sees people, even children, jumping down from the train and walking in to the alley, avoiding walking back an extra mile or two from the actual station. There is a fence made out of crisscrossed barbed wire, cushioned with *Mehendi* shrubs on the inside lining, on the other side of the tracks. That fence extends till the tall water tank from where, *Kanai* assumes, it takes a right turn. There is a housing complex beyond that fence with tall towers and fancy curved balconies, where occasionally men and women come either to hang their wet clothes or casually stand to catch a look of the alley of small asbestos-laden huts. The hedge fence has inconspicuous openings at one or two places. The people of the alley, most certainly with the knowledge of the administration body of the

complex had made them for their convenience. For all the time, Kanai has known this place, he has never seen anyone objecting to those openings, made in the fence. Mostly women and some men would cross the tracks by foot and walk straight through those openings, presumably for work inside the complex, at least that's what Kanai thinks.

Kanai has observed some elderly women in the afternoon picking up leaves (or shoots may be) from those hedges and bring back to their huts. They would dry them in the sun and take them inside to do some more things which those dried leaves. In the evening he would see a bowl of green pastes (most probably from those leaves) being put in to neatly rolled cones of dried milk bags. Some young men and women would take those cones and small plastic stools and go away every evening to some place, to do what, Kanai has no idea. He has not left the room in a long time. He often waited longer in the nights to see them coming home talking about the food and *bakshish* in some party like things; those young boys and girls would mention the word *sangeet* a few times. Some other days he would hear those boys talking about how many *hands* they did near the plaza. He could never understand the context.

Often he would see a man, whom he waits for, walking down towards his building with another man and a girl. The men and the girls changed, although he now knows all the the different girls. They would be wearing bright coloured dresses, their lips and cheeks redder than normal, having an uncomfortable swag in their walks alongside those men and that man. These girls did not stay here, at least he never saw them in the morning. Few boys of that alley, hanging out near the tuck shop that sells *paan* and cigarette, often made strange sounds, somewhere between whistling and a mole's screech, while those girls passed by them. The man, whom he waits for, often made gestures to them with his hands and fingers, which caused a mini riot of laughter, but that would be all.

The fight

Kanai can hear the footsteps on the staircase, every time. He counts till eleven, six times, and then eighteen more and he knows now that they have reached the door. He waits inside the door, ready, his fists clenched hard. He wants to throw the first punch, take that man by surprise. If he knocks him out, the other man and the girl would not dare to stay there any more and then *Kanai* would have all the time do whatever he wants with the man. He has scores to settle with him.

Kanai hears the door's lock being turned, he is ready, wound up like a tiger, waiting to spring his punching fist out to the entering man. The door opens, the man reaches for the switch on the left wall and *Kanai*, with all his might, lands his punch on that man's cheek. His fist passes through the face of that man like it is made of air. Like a possessed man, *Kanai* keeps throwing his hands and fists towards that man but he cannot touch him, his hands moving in and out of that man's body like his body

is made of nothing but air. *Kanai* shouts, screams with agony, cursing that man with choicest expletives, but he cannot land a hand on him. He tires out eventually and leans on to the wall unable to believe, that it happened again. He sees the man leaving with some money that the other man gives him. He can now hear the steps receding away and in his mind the counts start backwards matching almost when they came.

He turns his gaze on the bed now as he gets ready for another bout of fight. The man and the woman undresses, passing innuendos. *Kanai* knows what's coming next, he has seen it many times before, yet he waits for them to get in bed for the obvious. The man uses all his animalish power to devour on the woman's body, ignoring all her requests which turns from pleading to an exasperating groaning. *Kanai* jumps on him from the back, trying to choke him from behind, but as always his hands pass through the man's body. *Kanai* jumps around him, throwing punches and kicks, shouting, panting in between to catch his breath, but he couldn't do a thing. After the act is done, the man gets up and leans on the headrest of the *sleigh* bed. *Kanai*, who has now retired to his *fauteuil* near the window, knows that the man will smoke a cigarette. The woman, after laying there bruised and ravaged for sometime, slowly cleans and gathers herself, dresses up and gets ready to leave. Mouthing those similar words, which he was at the beginning, the man walks out of the room with the woman.

Kanai knows, today as well, he failed. Sitting there beside the window, he watches the last local train slowing down to let the people of that alley jump out of it, as they would save a mile's walk from the station. He will try all of this again, the next time. He must win, someday he will. He is not yet dead, at least that's what he believes.

Nemo is out of job, because he thinks he is not doing what he should be. He has two major claims about himself – to have a never-ending list of stories from his life and a spectrum of interest that is unmatched.

2.2 A beautiful day (the day I watched my first porn film in India): Zai Apte

Editor's note: This is not a work of fiction but the narrative had acute semblance to that of a short story and hence although this piece was submitted as a personal essay, it is published in the fiction section.

My story takes place in the mid 2000s of India when mobile phones could only call people and send texts, when the internet was used to send emails, mostly, and was accessible to the chosen few. It was in those days of modern antiquity, I and my roommate decided to go on an adventure. We were in our late teens but had become adults in the eyes of the state. Thus, we could vote, drive a motorbike and a car. We could also get married and have sex or (better may be) have sex and forget about marriage but we needed to put in a lot of efforts to even imagine either of those possibilities. Instead of going for very lofty ambitions we aimed a little low and decided to watch a porn film. We wanted to see what all the fuss was about and whether or not it was worth getting married for. As hard it is to imagine today, porn was not available a click away. Also, it was legally banned. Like a connoisseur of the underground of films, one had to scamper in obscure lanes, one had to nurture a trusting relationship with the DVD shopkeeper. But even more importantly, one had to be a cis-man to buy porn. Others simply couldn't go to a DVD shop, look into the eye of the shopkeeper and ask for it. Since we had neither the time nor the will to go through the straightforward way, that is to become a man and then to nurture a bro-ship with the shopkeeper, we tried another way. If a lone woman can't access porn, we thought, at least a team can build the confidence, and we formed one! My roommate's friend invited us to a slumber party at her house since her parents were away. We all decided to make it spicier and watch our first ever blue film the same night. Since we were a team of 7 young women, braving the prospect of awkward conversation and judging eyes didn't seem impossible. We wore our usual clothes, armed ourselves with our backpacks and covered our faces with scarves as women in India usually do to protect their face from the sunburn. Although a face-covering scarf allows them to access intimacy in the public place without exposing their identities. They can hug their boyfriends on the motorbike and roam free as long as their face is covered. We bravely marched to the DVD shop but lost our confidence as soon as we heard, "how can I help you, madam?" from a young man with sincere looks. "We are just looking around..." said one of our bravest women. He relented and got busy with other customers. We rootled in the stacks of DVDs but didn't see our target. One of us finally went to a mysterious box in the corner and we smelled victory. She took few title-less DVDs with the blank cover and waved them in the air to celebrate her conquest. The busy man took notice of her gestures and almost ran towards her leaving everything behind. "That's not for you, madam!" he nearly shouted. "I can show you some interesting Hindi films." He hopelessly dangled a piece of carrot in front of her but she didn't even look up. "I am not looking for Hindi films," she muttered. "We have a good stock of Hollywood films too! Have you watched

Mission Impossible?" Our woman got enough of the charade. She finally looked up right in his eyes and said in her calm and firm voice, "this is exactly what we are looking for. Let us find the films on our own, please!" The abashed man dropped his shoulders and walked away. We all got relieved and picked a DVD. We quietly went to the counter, paid the money and walked out of the shop without saying a word to each other. Once a few feet away from the shop, we took our masks off and burst into laughter. We could not believe that we had done it. Of course, we quickly went home and made the screening preparations as though we were organising the Cannes festival within a few hours. "Am I wearing the right clothes?" one of us mused. One of us shook her, "Madam, you are only going to watch porn, not be part of one." Once the room was dark and curtains were drawn, we switched on the film and waited with the bated breath. We were like air-tight jars tightly shut to prevent spilling our excitement and potential embarrassment. We had instructed ourselves to behave well, no matter what emotions the film might stir. Finally, the film started. Two Indian people, a scrawny man and a curvaceous woman entered the room, (in the film, I mean) and they began to undress each other. We looked straight at the screen, with our eyes wide open and pretended that each one of us was alone. As the minutes passed, a loopy Bollywood song burst in the background as they stopped undressing and began to shower each other with talcum powder. Well, this was totally unexpected. Their talcum powder session went on forever. They were now powdered like red bean mochi balls but they did not proceed to expose their other parts. We realised that this was as good as it was going to get. We preferred to mask our disappointment for a while. "Maybe the final act is too brutal, hence the lengthy preparations..." we consoled ourselves. We finally gave up and forwarded the film to the end. The couple was still half-clad and caked in the talcum powder. They refused to reveal the secret of the final act. One of us got up and paused the film and finally exhaled the disappointment, "shit yaar! This is not the one we wanted to watch!" "I know..." Rest of us crooned in the chorus. "as if we have never seen half-naked men in Bollywood films!" another fumed. Our clucking and chucking was followed by brainstorming. We talked about going back to the shop and shouting at the man in the shop for letting us choose such a vapid film. Although we knew that we were not going to let him hand us a film anyway. It was our day to select our own fantasies. (So what our own fantasies turn out to be a foolery?) Plus, it was too late at night to go back. "The shop must have been closed by now" We muttered under our breath and accepted our defeat. We observed silence for a few minutes in our grief but we soon flocked the refrigerator to treat ourselves with ice-cream. As we gulped the cold and creamy lumps, we reckoned our milestone and an equally disheartening failure. We slept pretty soon, not without cracking jokes and giggling endlessly about our quixotic adventure though.

I was to wake up early the following morning and go to one of my high-school classmate's wedding. She had decided to get married as soon as the state allowed her. It was an arranged marriage. She used to be my classmate, a pal and someone for whom my high school sweetheart had dumped me a year ago. I made him

the hero of my life's film. We expressed our longing in a clandestine way since the small-town romances were always blown out to be scandalous. Our courtship involved longing stares and an occasional handshake, that's all! I moved to a big city to learn to earn my freedom, to make space for my desires including the ones which are not granted by the decree of marriage. Although without the luxury of mobiles and the internet, keeping in touch became hard. I naively believed that our time apart will someday be rewarded. One day I heard the news that he had got involved with my high school friend. I agonized when he unceremoniously dumped me I could not antagonise my friend for whom he dumped me. She had come to live in the same city where I moved. We kept in touch. A year later, she decided to get married to another man after getting dumped by my high-school sweetheart. She invited me to her wedding.

In the morning following the porn fiasco, the other six women at the slumber party woke up with me and fussed over me while I got ready for the wedding. The hostess of the slumber party lent me her best Saree and others meticulously did my hair. I went to the wedding, met old friends from school. My high-school sweetheart was not invited. The porn adventure of last night had evaporated from my mind. I spent the day with the bride, assisting her to change into a new Saree for each ritual. We both were dumped by the same man but it was not the shared pain that got us closer but the fact that he didn't matter to either of us by then.

The bride left with her husband in the evening. The farewell was emotional. I stayed back to help her parents to wrap up the festivities. I looked at the empty wedding hall with a heavy heart. The whole day I danced to the rhapsody around me. The re-shaped faces, simmering laughter, warm embraces, the re-openings of the black-box of high-school anecdotes that had got lost in the passage of time... everything simmered and bubbled on the surface of my mind. And the awkward porn couple from the previous night popped up. My lonely laughter sounded loud in the empty hall. I returned to our tiny apartment in the evening and found my roommate sulking. She was too bored to stay indoors. We went for a walk and strolled in a public park. It was strangely empty for a weekend. As we sat down and talked of the wedding, the truth that had been suppressed for many years popped up. One of my classmates from the school had accosted me at the wedding and had inquired about my well-being with a lot of concern in her eyes. I had assured her that I was okay. She exclaimed, "oh thank goodness! I had heard how heartbroken you were when he dumped you after winning the bet." The bet in question was placed between my sweetheart and his friends. He claimed that he could make me fall for him, others did not believe. Once he succeeded at his project, he moved on. I don't know how but those words had brushed past me. While talking to my roommate about it in the evening, the cinders of the terrible truth got blown back to life. I never knew that he had placed a bet to win me. Me and my roommate fell silent as we listened to the birds in the park hurriedly return to their perch. In the dwindling sunlight I saw everything sharp as if a myopic finally got their glasses and regained the view of the world they didn't even know existed. My romantic dream that I had incubated

for many years had ultimately tumbled down and broken open on a heated asphalt. . . . I had not looked back at the spilled yoke. That day I was forced to look at it.

There have been many more heartbreaks in love and many more disappointments in sex. The powder scene from my first porn film keeps reminding me that sex is messy and does not have a fixed destination. It can be ludicrous and unsightly but it is all okay as long as the people involved in it are enjoying it. I still do not know the final destination of my own desires. They travel on a slippery road and at times take a great fall. So far, they have managed to get up and walk again. Looking back at that day, I realise that a friend offering their best Saree to make you look pretty and invincible is an act of intimacy I sincerely desire even today. The shooting stars of the perfect romance and sex rarely appear on the horizon. They can also vanish even before one can take a pretty picture and store it. But when the night seems gloomy and the sky looks pale, even holding hands is plenty of intimacy.

Zai is a film-studies graduate who is pursuing a PhD candidate in California. loves poetry, adventure, travelling, being in nature and has been exploring different forms of writing, creative writing being one of them.

3 Essays

3.1 *Of poets and emperors: Sambit Roychowdhury*

*“Saaghi haadise sarv-o gol-o laaleh miravad / Vin bahs ba salase-ye ghassaleh miravad ...”**

O Cup-bearer, the tale of the cypress, the rose and the tulip is going on

And even after washing down three cups, this conversation is going on ...”

So starts a ghazal, the first line above penned by Ghiyasuddin Azam Shah, sultan of Bengal during the last decade of the fourteenth and first decade of the fifteenth century. His grandfather was the legendary Iliyas Shah, who originally came from Sistan in Persia, but managed to create an independent Bengal by rebelling against the Delhi Sultanate and uniting the provinces of Satgaon, Lakhnauti and Sonargaon by 1352 AD. Azam Shah continued his grandfather’s policy of creating a Bengali identity by running a sound administration through the involvement of the local populace, and rewarding local talent irrespective of religion. He was also a patron of scholars and poets: his court poet Shah Muhammad Sagir wrote the Bengali verse-story Yusuf-Zulekha, and Krittibas Ojha wrote the Bengali Ramayan during his reign. Azam Shah himself used to compose verses in Arabic and Farsi, and the above line was sent to a poet in Persia along with the finest Bengal muslin, and with two requests – to complete the ghazal, and to visit Bengal.

The poet in question was fast becoming a legend during his lifetime, and his fame has only grown with every passing century after his death. Shams ed-Din Mohammad Shirazi, better known by his nom-de-plume Hafez, is more than just a poet for Persian speakers of the world. His Divan, or collected works, are considered the pinnacle of Persian literature, and the most important book every Persian household possesses. His works are considered deeply spiritual, and Fal-e-Hafez or divinations with his works are often performed by Persians. A page of the Divan-e-Hafez is chosen at random to see what Hafez has to say about what is on the person’s mind, whether it be one’s situation in life, an intent, or even a wish. Hafeziyeh, his marble tomb in Shiraz surrounded by beautiful architecture and gardens that were refurbished in the early twentieth century during Reza Shah’s reign, is a place of pilgrimage. You will find many an Iranian couple sitting around the gardens, his Divan in their hands, his poetry on their lips.

Hafez did complete the ghazal and send it back to Azam Shah, in the process displaying a bit of the self-adulation:

“... Shakkar-shekan shavand hameh tutiyan-e-Hend / Zin ghand-e-Parsi ke be-Bangaleh miravad ...”

... The sweet taste will reach all the parrots (poets) of Hind from the Persian

sweet that is going to Bengal ...”

But he was probably too old to make the long and arduous trip. He ended the ghazal with a suitable expression of regret for not being able to take up the sultan’s invitation.

“... Hafez ze shogh-e majles-e Soltan Ghiyas-e-Din / Ghafel masho ke kaare to az naale miravad.

Hafez, do not ignore the lamentation that will engulf your life following the exhilaration due to the thought of being present in the assembly of the Soltan.”

In the early part of the twentieth century though, another aging poet could keep the invitation of another king. Only this time, the poet was Bengali and the king was the Shah of Iran.

Rabindranath Tagore’s place in Bengal’s history had already been cemented well before his demise in 1941. And as more time passes, he and his works are slowly, through both adulation and opposition, taking on a mythical status among Bengalis which is eerily reminiscent of Hafez’s status among Persians. It is exciting to wonder how Hafez’s philosophy might have seeped into Tagore’s consciousness, for Maharshi Debendranath, Tagore’s father, “was intoxicated with Hafiz’s (sic) verses”, and as a boy Tagore “often used to listen to his recitation of those poems”. Half a millennium separates these two poets and philosophers, so any fair comparison of the effects of their works on the speakers of their respective languages will have to wait a few centuries.

As for outside the Bengali speaking world, Tagore was much more in the news during his lifetime, and primarily because of his worldview. Tagore was a critic of the indiscriminate march of industrial civilization, batted for universal humanism even though he was both a staunch supporter of and an inspiration to India’s freedom fighters, and passionately believed in restarting the dialogue between Asian peoples that had been disrupted by the Western colonizers – no wonder he accepted Reza Shah’s invitation, and agreed to travel to Persia when he was seventy years old.

After wresting power from the last of the weak Qajar emperors, Reza Shah Pahlavi was on a quest to modernize Iran and re-affirm its ancient Aryan heritage. The reason for the 1932 invitation was ostensibly related to what Tagore himself noted: “In me they saw a poet, and that too an Eastern poet, an Indo-Aryan poet like themselves”. There was more to it of course. For starters, by openly inviting a long-standing critic of British colonialism, Reza Shah wanted to get one up on the perennial meddlers in Iran’s internal affairs. And so it happened that Tagore flew with KLM (thus avoiding flying British Airways) and after a multi-stop journey entered Persia through the southern port of Bushehr. Tagore has preserved the story of his travels in *Parosyo Jatri*. Every page of that book describes a time of

possibilities – the colonial powers were on the back foot, and an independent Asia was starting to assert itself. The second World War, the partition of India, CIA & MI6 engineered coups, the gory birth of Bangladesh, the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war ... all concerned were blissfully unaware of the tumultuous times that were just round the corner. But that stark reality is not the subject of this essay. Our story is about people who dream up thoughts that transcend reality.

Let us therefore follow Tagore to Shiraz and to Hafez's tomb, and describe what happened there as recorded by Tagore himself. Hafez's Divan was brought for him, and before opening it he made a wish – let India be free from the deathly hold of blind faith. His friends interpreted the ode chosen – Hafez stated in no uncertain terms that the doors of heaven will open, and all difficulties will melt away! Sitting beside Hafez's tomb, on that spring day, Tagore suddenly felt as if a bright pair of eyes were smiling at him from many springtimes ago. It was as if the two of them were long lost friends who had drank many a cup of wine together. Like Hafez before him, Tagore felt he too had managed to ignore the derisions of the orthodox, and escape on the free-flowing winds of joy. After a gap of who knows how many centuries, crossing the barrier between life and death, a traveller who Hafez knew intimately was sitting beside him.

** I thank Maryam Arabsalmani for the transliteration and interpretation of the lines, which involved hours of research and discussions with multiple people. Hafez is not easy to interpret, which adds to his charm!*

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 *The A(c)rt of dressin up: Hargun Gujral*

Its 9:58 PM on a Sunday evening. Dinner is all wrapped up and after a long gap and a terrifying time of having seen family, friends and people we may know suffer in the second wave, we finally are “ready” to go back to physical school, the next day.

The pressing concerns plague one’s mind- is it safe yet? What about the meals, the innumerable in person meetings, the insufferable long hours of wearing a mask or the use public restrooms... But one must be brave right? Staying home for this long isn’t normal either. But I don’t know if I have it in me to travel this far for work, manage both home and work and what about the energy levels that are at an all-time low? No... No it sure isn’t safe yet, to be out!

(One knows that this could have been the tipping point, if I had any longer stayed with it and if God forbid anyone around had tried to “rationalise” these “feelings”, then!)

Choosing not to meet anyone’s eye, one instead brews some chamomile tea and slips into the bedroom and chooses to open the closet instead. Placing the freshly folded laundry on one side and the crisped ironed ones onto the other, one starts to go over each garment one by one.

A thought passes and then another. So, is it going to be a *saree* tomorrow but that’s too much work for the first day! How about a pair of pants and a formal shirt? But I absolutely love this *kurta* and goes well with the new pair of silver earrings that I had gifted myself, the other day.

The mood sure sees a shift and a conscious effort is made to remove the few odd creases from the “chosen” *kurta* by ironing it and teaming it up with a matching dupatta.

One then makes a move to the next stop- the pair of earrings are taken out of the red velvet pouch they were safely placed in and a minute is spent in admiration of the craftsmanship!

In the head, a decision is already made with respect to the pair of *chappals* that will go best with it!

AND with this all done, one is suddenly somewhere secretly hoping to go back to work tomorrow but surely being cautious that admitting it out loud might just be too premature a decision to make right now!

While I happen to write about the above, I wonder how many a times I have jokingly said “whenever stressed, look well dressed!” in response to a compliment

I may have received in passing from a colleague at work!

So, is there a correlation? While for some, this may sound as a vain attempt at camouflaging your “real” feelings or a desperate attempt to only work on the “outside” of a person, I have a different take on the same.

As for me, this mindful practice as I may now see it, allows oneself to make conscious decisions of who I AM and becoming. These reflective moments, in which one is “present” somehow gives an opportunity to explore dimensions of one’s self and how best one wishes to express them.

As women, I wonder how many of us have the luxury to exercise self-love even till today. I wonder if we realise, it also stems from the many insecurities that we have lived with, that which are passed on from generations and time to time.

The insecurity of being a certain skin colour, a particular body type, an appropriate attire for our gender, our safety defined in relation to it, the body language, the work profile we choose, the “demeanour” with which we carry ourselves, the many gendered roles we are expected to live, the careers we tirelessly strive to build for ourselves, of being self-reliant financially, in the constant face of worrying about not losing it, someday?

I wonder, I only wonder then, if this very small art- this art of dressing up is an act of courage, of regaining power and finding an extension to oneself. An art of smashing some of these boxes that we from time to time are expected to fit in and yet at the same time not to look at it, just as a rebellious move but a celebration of who we are, consciously acknowledging and owning the insecurities that will creep in from time to time and yet fearlessly wearing it as a safe space – A HOME THAT WE EMBODY.

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.

3.3 The bay: Isha Pungaliya

Horse-shoe Bay: A terminal for Ferries; and according to Wikipedia the 3rd biggest terminal for British Columbia ferries. It is at the western tip of West Vancouver. Some would argue it is situated so extremely to the west that it practically is the east, courtesy the roundness of the world.

I visited Horse-Shoe Bay when I went visiting my family in Vancouver three years ago, when the world was mobile and viruses did not exist.

The following are observations I made two days after visiting the place while the memories were vivid. Today, as when I wrote the piece three years ago, it is retrospective. However, more so than that day. In the spectrum of retrospection if the moment-just-past stands at one extreme and three years at the other, I have travelled long, fading slowly, practically discarding the images from the day I visited the Bay.



Therefore, what I wrote two days post experience might be truer than if I attempt to recall that day, those moments today. Here therefore it is, the Bay, three years ago:

This is a post about an experience I had two days ago. I am not writing in the moment but upon reflection. One would think that at the point of experiencing there is only the experience, an inarticulate mass of visuals, sounds and feelings and if one writes at that very moment it would be a structure-less outburst, a process of pure description. But right now, two days later as I recall being at Horseshoe bay, there is no clarity either. Even today it is image upon image of beauty and boats. It is a sudden whole of a morning, a gist, an average.

There are of course distinct incidents of getting a bus, arriving, alighting, the first, second and third spots, where I stopped to take photographs. But these form a factual report at most. Even if a feeling were to be assigned to each of these spots or activities, it is somehow an abstraction. The average of the experience is molded to suite one particular instant; that is all. This gist is constituted of the colours, the incredulity at snow capped mountains surrounding a bay and most importantly, the sense of having been there; a memory of existing in that space for a certain amount of time. And then, time spent becomes meaningless because it can't be seen as a succession of events at the bay but rather a whole, a representative of the physical experience of its beauty; still and singular, without unit. Time becomes an object,

real and present in memory, accessible not as process but as material. It loses its most fundamental property, as it becomes itself timeless.



And Beauty? Beauty too in its turn is here a representative. Not of the experience, but of something rather moralistic, a measure of right and wrong. Here, where more or less everything is organised, at least seemingly, beauty for me, an outsider, is 'correctness'. The bay is clean, quiet and approachable to everybody. These, as I recall, unhappily, were my first three observations and momentarily satisfying. As the baseness of this definition of beauty dawned on me, I felt hopeless. A sensation of utter loss of standards, not just my own standards but of all, of the world even, gripped me. For isn't the world constantly mistaking propriety for beauty? After this kind of a realisation, there is usually nothing left. Nothing else but quiet observation; or rather, being there because there is nowhere else to go. That is when I think, the ripples on the water, the symmetry of the boats, the uneven snow-caps, the white hair of the old woman on the bench were seen as if for the first time; as if, all these came to life in that very moment of hopelessness. A newer, more inclusive sense of beauty emerged unforced and organically.



I wondered then if beauty still retained its role as representative for all these further nuanced objects and my action of their observation or were these object, in their very being, representing beauty?

*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. This is her second instalment of the 3-part travel essays.*

3.4 *Self-love – 5 easy tools to integrate into your everyday life: Stefani Fesora*

If I loved myself, I wouldn't be defensive, when someone criticises me.

If I loved myself, I wouldn't feel wrong, when someone makes a jokes on my account.

If I loved myself, I would be full of love and understanding for myself and others.

If I loved myself, I would look into the mirror and be happy, and therefore infect others with happiness, who would infect others with happiness until the entire population levels up on happiness.

I truly believe, that the root of most problems in our lives is a lack of self-love. But I also know, when I say to my partner or children: "You have to love me!" And they don't feel that, that's not going to happen, right? I don't think you can force someone to feel, what they don't feel.

So how can we generate that feeling? How can we accept and love ourselves?

I used to have a self-love-support group and I want to share the top 5 things:

1. Stop criticising yourself. Every time we hear criticism (especially when it comes from our inner voice) our subconscious mind logs in the evidence: "I'm not good enough."

And with enough evidence we build our belief about ourselves.

It took me quite a while until I actually heard the voice in my head, which criticises me. Because I was so used to it, that I really needed to pay attention and notice it. In order to shut it up, every time I hear it, I repeat the sentence, but I make it funny. For example, when I had to drag my heavy suitcase three flights up, the voice said: "you shouldn't have bought those 5 books in the charity shop!" (nag nag nag). So I repeated the sentence with a heavy German accent and I started laughing. I couldn't take this criticism seriously anymore and it lost it's grip.

And the limiting belief "I am not good enough." is not supported in evidence anymore. And it's time for a reality check. Maybe, meanwhile I am good enough. Did I ever double check since childhood, since this belief started? Since then I grew, I evolved, I learned, I improved. So clearly that belief is outdated for a long time now, I just forgot to update it, because I got used to the voice keeping me small!

2. Every morning I read positive affirmations, just to have new thoughts in my

head, to file new evidence in my subconscious mind.

"I am perfect, exactly as I am.", "I am worthy of love.", "everything I do, I see through the eyes of love.", "My empathy grows day by day." Start the habit of writing down sentences, that resonate with you. From lyrics, from books, from what people say. And keep repeating them.

3. Have you ever heard the sentence "Fake it until you make it"? The movie "Catch me if you can" is based on that amazing mental tool. I wrote an identity statement. And I also read this out loud every morning. At the beginning I thought that was really exaggerated, almost embarrassing. I thought, if that was my description, I would be the most amazing woman on earth. But isn't that exactly one of love's qualities. To see the best in people? Wasn't that the goal of all these exercises to love ourselves more? So let's fake it until we make it. Write down all the qualities you want to have or want to be, and read them day after day after day. After a month I found more and more evidence, that this is really me. Our subconscious mind is like google. It finds evidence for what you are looking for. If I say every day "oh I am so stupid!" of course it will find evidence every day of how stupid I am.

So just imagine what your subconscious mind can find if you say something like this every day:

I am an attractive, charismatic, empathetic, brave, tolerant, rich and happy visionary, power-woman and lover, who inspires and motivates the people around her. Everyone loves me and is grateful that I exist. I guide myself and others to success and an independent, happy lifestyle. I enjoy my abundant life and find the partner who supports me in being me. Because I am the best thing, that ever happened to me. Even if someone tells me I am doing something wrong, I immediately know my good intention and I am able to communicate friendly and clearly what I need and why I need it."

4. Develop a gratitude practice, for every little detail, that works in your life. Everything is there in our life at the same time. The things that work, and the things that don't. The things we like and the things we don't like. But where we place our attention, is where the energy goes. And things that are fuelled by energy multiply. As our brain constantly points us in the direction of what doesn't work, make a list of everything, that works and read it in desperate times:

I am grateful, that my organs work perfectly together, that I have 2 legs, which enable me to walk through my life. I am grateful that I can move my hands, that my heart beats 100.000 times a day, and I don't even have to think about it. It even beats when I am asleep, to keep me alive! I am grateful that I can taste different flavors, so I can taste amazing food. I am grateful that I have ears to hear my favourite music, that YouTube is for free and I can just

access any song at anytime. I am grateful that my brain is so creative and I can imagine the coolest pictures and visions, that I can mentally travel anywhere I want, without even leaving the room. I am grateful, that billions of cells in my body work together in harmony and actually know what to do – because honestly, if they asked me what they have to do, I wouldn't even know. I am grateful, that I am allowed to take this masterpiece of complexity called my body, through my life.

5. Replace fear and anger with curiosity. Ask the right questions. Imagine you are in a situation, you really don't want to be in. Instead of reacting with your usual pattern (eg. being annoyed, justify yourself, leaving, being sad, being afraid, having the feeling of not being good enough...) Or you can ask questions to your google brain: What is good about that? What can I learn from this situation? What else is possible right now? What am I waiting for? Where do I want to go? How do I get there? How do I want it? How can this have another outcome? How can I do it differently? And what if it's easy? What's the first step to the solution? In what way might this be perfect? What if it's all changeable and what if it's all a choice?

An example: One day my colleague said to me, that he thinks I am quite arrogant. Of course I could have reacted with anger, denial, justify myself or tell him, that I find HIM bloody arrogant. But I replaced fear and anger with curiosity and I asked him instead: "What exactly did I do, that you think that?" After that we became good friends!

Last but not least I want to invite you to do a challenge:

Seeing beauty. This is your scale, to check your self-love-level. When you see another person and the first thing you notice: too fat, nose too big, eyes too narrow, too many freckles, hair too thin, too much make up, too, too, too... critic critic critic... faaaar from love, faaaar from self-love. Change! Do this challenge and find something beautiful in every person you meet. Honestly and authentically. Don't say "I like your hair" if you don't. Find the thing, that is beautiful. And trust me, there is something beautiful in everyone. Remember to find it in yourself also. You are beautiful.

Stefanie Fasora is a Mindset Mentor from Germany. She is an expert in Latte Art as well. You can catch her on YouTube in the channel -Steffi Fasora, she also communicates through her Instagram account – insightout2020.

3.5 *When to stop worrying:* Shefali Chowdhary

Till the date I became a mother I did not understand the true meaning of worry. Yes worrying for an assignment not completed, exam preparation not being there etc but worrying about another being??

Nobody tells you that once a mother always a worrier! No it is not a typo, I do mean worrier and not warrior though we are that too protecting our kids from any harm.

And as they are growing up you keep waiting for the years when you can stop being apprehensive for them and now at my age with very grown children I realise that I may have left my youth and smooth forehead behind but what I am still carrying with me is the concern and worry for my child.

A constant anguish for the well being of your children. Are they happy? Are they coping financially? Is their choice of the way they live ok? If unconventional will it bring them peace? What will people say? Why are they not sharing their problems?

I am a mother and I should know your problems, right? And the reply comes 'you will needlessly worry' Really!! When am I not worrying? When I am guessing that something is gnawing at you, when I can hear you talk incessantly on the phone walking up and down the passage, I already worry. So sharing will help me focus on a possible solution but why do they not get this. I know my ma would have worried also but then we were living a life similar to hers with no ground breaking (at least for us) new fundas.

And so, this is the thing then. We mothers need to understand that we have given birth to these little beings and tried to instil a value system and way of living, yet they are individuals of their own. They will not live like our photocopy (not that I think all of it is worth duplicating). And so they view the world through a different lens. Their coping mechanism is different and they react and then act differently than how we may have done. Their value system and their scale of judgement is their own.

And this is where we mothers need to develop an understanding that though you are their mother and want to hold them safe but they have to learn and get up on their own when they fall. They will find a way to dust their knee and move on and cope in a way which may be different but will work for them (you hope!). Their sensibilities are different and it may not match your core belief and make you sad and remorseful but you have lived your life with your share of ups and downs and so will they ride their own crests and troughs. They now live in a society where they have more like them and hence they will emulate those beliefs and behaviour acceptances rather than yours. And though you do realise that they are more

practical and pragmatic (well sometimes!) but yet you want the things to be as they were and as per your beliefs but it does not happen and then comes your feeling of being overlooked, uncared for and hence dejection.

Acceptance I believe is the way to go about it. And it does not come easy to a mother so I have to at this age train and teach myself that I will have to accept their way of life and be happy for their happiness even if it is not the way you want to write the script. Accepting that even with unconventional (as per yours) way they will find a way to exist peacefully and flourish and you just have to go with the wind of the new times because for mothers of any generation the next one does have a different way. And then there is what is called destiny. We may birth our babies but we don't write their destiny nor their path of the journey . But yes be happy that should they need you, you are there.

Shefali Chowdhary is a physics teacher by profession and an avid art enthusiast. She loves to doodle in Madhubani paintings and organising various types of events. She also takes immense pride in her unmatched sense of humour.

4 Translation

4.1 *Translation of Shakti Chattopadhyay's poem: Fear not sorrow* (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta

দুঃখকে তোমার
- শক্তি চট্টোপাধ্যায়

দুঃখকে তোমার কোনো ভয় নেই, সেও ভালোবাসে

ভালোবাসা থেকে তুমি ভয় পাও? সুখ থেকে পাও?
উল্লেখযোগ্যতা যদি নিয়ে যায় সমুদ্রের তীরে
সেখানে তোমার ভয় আছে নাকি? আনন্দও আছে?
তীরে সারবন্দী গাছ, সেখানে ভূমিষ্ঠ ছায়াতলে
যদি তুমি একবার গিয়ে বসো পাথরের মতো
তবেও তোমার ভয়? ভয় সবখানে!
তোমার অবোধ ভয় থেকে আমি পাই অন্য মানে।
দুঃখকে তোমার কোন ভয় নেই, সেও ভালোবাসে

কাব্যগ্রন্থ --
আমি চলে যেতে পারি

Fear Not Sorrow

Fear not sorrow
Sorrow loves too

Do you fear love? Or joy?
And if an allusion hauls you
To the coasts
Will you tremble there?
Even with joy?
Tall trees line those shores, and in
That sheltered calm
Would you fear to rest like a rock?
Ubiquitous fear!
From your naïve fear I make meaning.
Fear not sorrow,
For sorrow loves too.

4.2 Translation of Shakti Chattopadhyay's poem: *Hurt if you can* (Bengali to English): Supurna Dasgupta

যদি পারো দুঃখ দাও (কবিতার শেষ স্তবক)
শক্তি চট্টোপাধ্যায়

যদি পারো দুঃখ দাও,

আমি দুঃখ পেতে ভালবাসি
দাও দুঃখ দুঃখ দাও

আমি দুঃখ পেতে ভালবাসি ।
ভালবাসি ফুলে কাঁটা,

ভালবাসি ভুলে মনস্তাপ-
ভালবাসি শুধু কূলে বসে থাকা পাথরের মতো
নদীতে অনেক জল, ভালবাসা,

নম্র নীল জল-ভয় করে ।।

Hurt if you can (Last stanza)

Hurt
I love welcoming heartache...
Hurt me, if you are able, I love
Welcoming heartache.
Hurt me, wound me, I love
Welcoming heartache.
Thorns in flowers, I love. Regret
In mistakes, I love—
Sitting like a shoreline rock,
I love.
The river is too deep. Love,
Soft, warm azure water—
I fear.

Supurna 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 her own poem: *Why is life disenchanted with me* (Bengali to English): Shefali Chowdhary

ज़िन्दगी आजकल मुझसे नाराज़ क्यों है , हरपल कुछ छूट जाने का एहसास सा क्यों है
ज्योंही लगता है की अब सब हाथों में है ,अगले ही पल बिखर जाने का एहसास सा क्यों है।

ज़िन्दगी उस उपन्यास सी हो गयी है जिसके आखरी पन्ने फट से गए हों ,
एक ऐसी अधबुनि जर्सी जिसके सिरे कुछ टूट कर उलझ से गए हों
आगे अब क्या होगा ,मन में एक अनजाना ख़ौफ़ सा क्यों है
ज़िन्दगी आजकल मुझसे नाराज़ सी क्यों है।

जब भी हम किसी मुकाम पर पहुँच कर इत्मीनान की सांस लेती हैं ,
ज़िन्दगी बरबस हमारे पैरों तले की पुरख़ता ज़मीन खींच लेती है ,
गिर कर फिर उठ पाएंगे , नहीं यह खुद पर यकीन क्यों है
ज़िन्दगी आजकल मुझसे नाराज़ क्यों है

जब मांगी थी खुशी तो पता नहीं था कि मिलेगा बराबर में तौल कर अशक भी,
जब आँगन में आया धुप का एक टुकड़ा तो संग आये अवसाद के बादल भी
डूब कर दुःख के सैलाब में उबर पाऊंगी मैं ,नहीं यह ऐतबार क्यों है
ज़िन्दगी आजकल मुझसे नाराज़ सी क्यों है ।

Why is life disenchanted with me

Why is life disenchanted with me, why is there a feeling of something left behind

The moment I think I am in control, why is everything so chaotic and undefined

Life has become like that novel whose last pages have been torn and scattered
Like the that half knit jersey whose ends have become entwined and entangled
Now what will happen next , why do I have in my mind this fear?
Why is life disenchanted with me?

Whenever I reach a milestone in my journey and give a sigh of relief
Life suddenly snatches the solid ground from underneath me
That I will be able to stand up again , why don't I have this belief in self?
Why is life disenchanted with me?

When I asked Him for happiness I did not know I will get in equal measure the tears
When I get the burst of sunshine in my yard ,the clouds of despair will also be near
That I shall overcome and survive my misery , why don't I have this faith in myself?
Why is life disenchanted with me?

Shefali Chowdhary is a physics teacher by profession and an avid art enthusiast. She loves to doodle in Madhubani paintings and organising various types of events. She also takes immense pride in her unmatched sense of humour.

4.4 Translation of Amir Khusro's two riddles: (Hindustani to English): Akhil Katyal

एक गुनी ने ये गुन कीना,
हरियल पिंजरे में दे दीना।
देखो जादूगर का कमाल,
डारे हरा निकाले लाल॥

A trickster did a trick so cool
Put a parrot in a cage, now you'll
See how fleek his magic's been
He pulls out red what went in green.

उत्तर—पान

Answer – Paan

एक थाल मोती से भरा।
सबके सिर पर औँधा धरा।
चारों ओर वह थाली फिरे।
मोती उससे एक न गिरे॥

A plate filled with pearls
Lies flipped on every head
North south east & west it swirls
But doesn't drop the pearls

उत्तर – आकाश

Answer – Sky

Akhil Katyal is a professor of English literature, a poet and a translator who works out of Delhi.

5 Photography

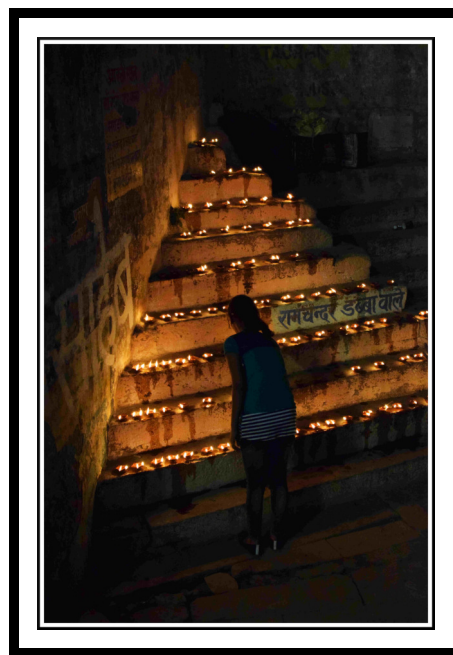
5.1 *The Great Night*: Saurabh Agarwal

Street photography has 2 categories mainly, 'Art style' and 'Documentary style.' The photographer was always more towards the art side of the style. This mini album is one of his initial attempts in documentary style street photography.

Note from the photographer: I was there in the city of Varanasi, in the northern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, on Mahashivaratri this year. Since it is widely known that Lord Shiva resides in his most exalted form as a Jyotirlingam named Kashi Vishwanath in Varanasi, Mahashivaratri festival holds immense importance here. There were visitors from almost all over India, so many cultures gathering in a place to celebrate this festival. It was so chaotic and energetic. And, I was fascinated to see the variety of activities happening around the Kashi Vishwanath Temple. I tried to capture that chaos and energy in these few pictures.



Allure



Her little corner



Rendition



Staging



Stare



Succession

***Saurabh** is a graduate in Architecture. He got interested in photography during his graduation days in course of doing a lot of architectural photography. Over time he got really interested in street photography. Since then he has moved into film-making in the last couple of years and made a short documentary recently. He is currently working as a freelance graphic designer and video editor. He likes to make posters in free time while dabbling in screenwriting as well.*

5.2 *From Bed to Road:*Jalan J S



The wake up call



Emptiness and space



Height



Reposing

The journey from the lazy love of the bed to a space of reflection and repose is what the photographer wishes to convey through this album. There is a space that can never be filled and can be seen from different angles, heights or even in different light. At the end it is the corner of repose that stays with a traveller in anticipation of the next journey.

Jalan is a Geology graduate from Trivandrum, Kerala. He loves unplanned trips, listening to music, usually hip-hop and watching basketball games. He is also a big fan of anime.

6 Photo-stories

6.1 *The palaces: history, decadence, and modern celebrations:* Rit-uparna Datta

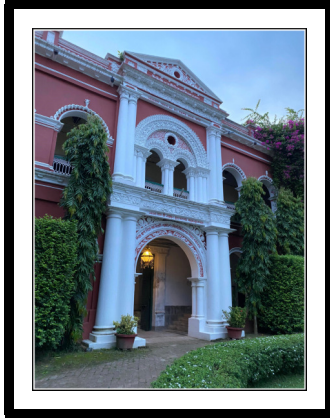
This photo-story is an abstract take on the idea of renovating the old palaces and slipping them into the hospitality industry. The photographer captures some frames and interprets them from a unique perspective.



The past hides behind some of those pillars, beneath the cornices of memories, or they are juxtaposed to the consumer's enthusiasm as a commodity. What remains at the end are some containers, half-filled, or half-empty – that we might we never know.



How much does it take to preserve or even attempt to stop a decadence? How much does it take to see the powerful past slowly sublimate into the ether of time, may be through a window of unwanted diffidence.



You walk in through the carefully remastered door, in anticipation of reliving a past of glory and you meet with the silence of maquillage – one that learns to live with a new skin.



The corridors that held the carefully or hastily taken steps, the couches where abundance was taken for granted are waiting now behind the pillars, concealing the lost stories behind the renovated pillars. Can we dig them out or they are to be left to themselves?

Rituparna is a corporate business consultant and engagement manager, whose passion lies in travelling. Marathon, hiking, long drive trips – she has done it all.

7 Collaborative Works

7.1 *Dear Time*: Joy Banerjee and Rirupa Datta

Editor's note: Joy felt the need to speak to time, as if it has been a dear friend to him since long. Words did come out in the form of a letter and yet it found a complementary gift in Riturupa's illustration. Thus a collaboration happened to add some flesh and blood to an abstract expression.

Dear time,

Writing to you as I will never have the courage to confront you. It's been a while, I am seeing someone else. No, you can't hold me alone responsible for this. Yes, I am responsible for the strain in our relationship by not valuing you enough in the last 16 months but you too have earned a reputation of being bad to worse during the same period. You are being blamed by everyone for all the suffering the world is witnessing now. Many are hoping you will turn good and bring brighter days but many, including me feel, you are only making the rich richer and the poor suffer more. I believe 'inventions' such as various new vehicles for commercial space voyage are amazing but right now 'the necessity' is to save the world from sinking under the filth of suffering and political injustice.

Even the omnipotent and omnipresent social media is blaming you for everything. No, I am not a social media fan but you are also responsible for this new era of social media expressing and also impacting every human mind. I can go on and on with the list of complaints against you to justify my decision of leaving you. As an irony, it's easy to play the victim card with support from everyone whom/ that you created.

As for my confession, I have fallen in love with someone else – it's 'hope'. No, it wasn't love at first sight. Hope was always there for me but I loved holding your hand and walk miles and grow old together. Now, I am madly in love with 'hope', who, as a true lover will always be there for me, no matter whether I chose a good or bad time.



***Riturupa** did Masters in Economics, currently working with PepsiCo as a part of their Data Analytics and Machine Learning team. Hobbies include Painting, cooking, singing and Travelling.*

***Joy** is an investment portfolio analyst, who could have been a star cricketer. He sings, plays the guitar, drives cross country and manages to be there for friends, somehow always.*

8 Letters

8.1 *After reading Debbie Ghosh's poem: Soumen Mandal*

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on your wonderful magazine DoubleSpeak. I find the name of the magazine quite hilarious. If you google (apparently this is a verb now) the word "doublespeak" and ask for an example this comes up. "Doublespeak is the complete opposite of plain and simple truth. ... For example, if a pharmaceutical company said something like, "There are some minor side effects," when they should clearly be stating, "This drug may cause a heart attack," they're using doublespeak and communicating in a deceptive manner." While I do not appreciate the doublespeak from a pharma company, doublespeaking in poetry is an entirely different matter. The purpose of my letter is to pen (in this case type) a line or two about the poem "The Road" by Debbie Ghosh.

Life is journey that we all go through without realizing it or appreciating it. We may have also written countless essays to get good marks in school or college etc. But how many times does it happen that we sit down and think about it and may be pen a thought and above all draw inspiration from what we see and feel to describe life – as it is. Debbie Ghosh's poem The Road exactly does that. Those 24 lines sums up what life is even though we do not realize it.

In this modern world who has time for living, we just survive. Maybe, if we stop for minute and put our thoughts like Debbie, we may learn to live.

With Regards

Soumen Mandal

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.