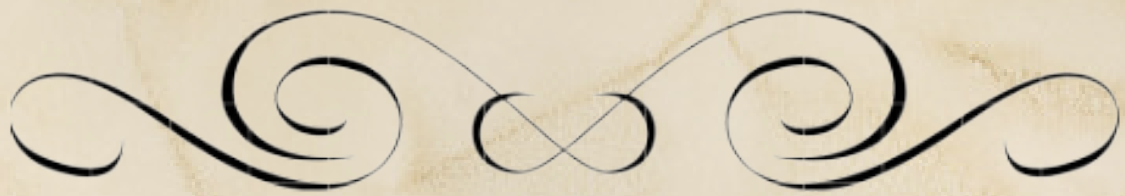


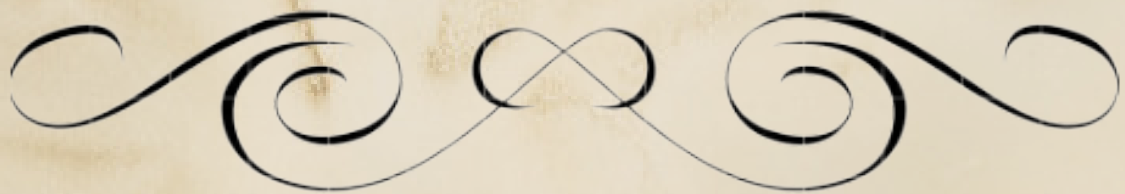
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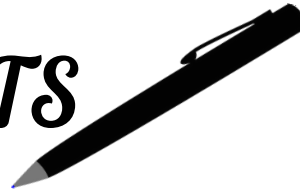




*Words hold a magic
That transcends the ravages of time.
The embers of the past
That still glow under layers of prose,
A voice of the future,
Calling out to us through the gales of poetry.*



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मेरी पहली किताब

- Anjali Jangid

मेरी पहली किताब भी तू, और मेरी पहली लिखी हुई कविता भी तू,
जज्बातों को शब्दों में पिरोने की, इस कला की मेरी शिक्षिका भी तू।

प्रेमचंद, अमृता प्रीतम और शरद चन्द्र
ऐसे हजारों लेखकों की आवाज है तू।
सूर्यकांत त्रिपाठी, कबीर और गुलज़ार
ऐसे कई कवियों के दिल का दर्द है तू।

लिख दू चाहे लाखों नगमे मैं किसी भी और भाषा में
पर दिल में जो आए कोई ख्याल, मेरे उस हर ख्याल की आवाज भी तू।
मेरी पहली किताब भी तू, और मेरी पहली लिखी हुई कविता भी तू।

लता जी, मोहम्मद रफी और जगजीत
इन सबके गीतों का संगीत है तू।
देवानंद, राजेश और जितेंद्र
इन सबके किरदारों का आधार है तू।
यूं तो सुने है लाखों गीत मैंने

पर लबों पे आए जो कोई गीत, मेरे उस हर गीत का पहला राग भी तू।
मेरी पहली किताब भी तू, और मेरी पहली लिखी हुई कविता भी तू।

बचपन में मुंह से जो निकला,
मेरा वो पहला शब्द है तू।
सुनी थी जो कहानियां रातों में,
उस हर कहानी की मीठी याद है तू।
हजारों भाषाएं हो बस्ते में भले आज मेरे,

पर पूछे जो कोई नाम मेरा, तो इस नाम को मिला भावार्थ भी तू।
मेरी पहली किताब भी तू, और मेरी पहली लिखी हुई कविता भी तू।

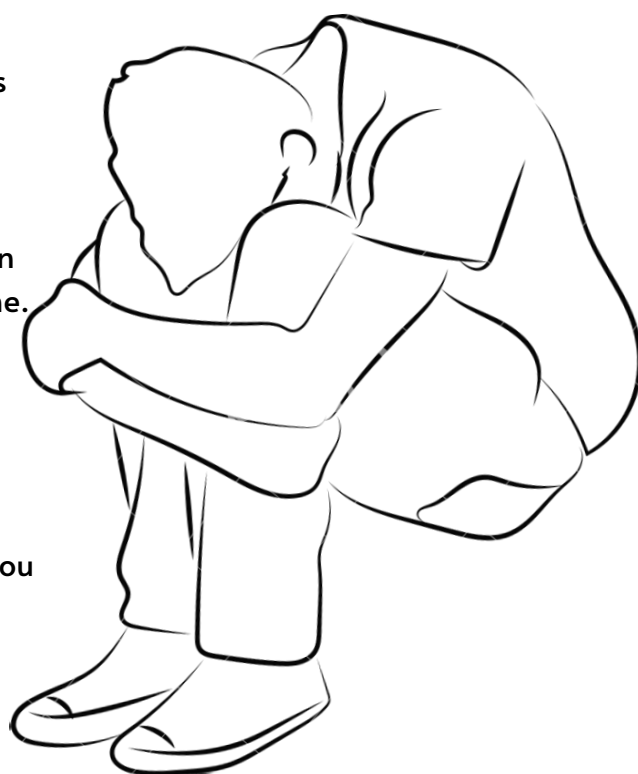
When you do not know what to do

- Arjun Sahdev

Everybody encounters this situation many times in their lifetime. The feeling that you have no goal, that all you have till now is pointless. It is as though you are falling into a bottomless pit. I have experienced it myself. Be it due to rejection, failure and sometimes getting all your desires fulfilled, this predicament is one of the worst feelings one can ever experience. So yeah, if you ever faced the same despair in your life, you are reading the right article.

We are all humans. We dream, we set goals and then expect desirable results. All of humanity's problems are because we desire, we expect things. We think about the results and outcomes way too much that we do the task for achieving the result, rather than for the joy of doing the task. And when we do not get what we expected, we feel that our actions were worthless.

This is the point at which our subconscious triggers to defend us. We try to explain to ourselves why we lost and that there is no point living in the past and all that stuff that we read over the internet. The problem here is that sometimes we are too attached to someone or something that we make it the sole reason for our happiness. It can be anything like a bad rank in some exam, a crush who rejected you or the loss of a loved one. The result of all this fighting within yourself never actually draws out. Because even if we do get an outcome which is logically correct, we ignore it. It is because we are so terribly attached to it that we do not want to lose it, we want to keep pursuing it. We make it our only goal. Well, some things are just not meant to be, so when you drop the ball, it feels as if you have dropped your sole reason to be alive. You do not know what to do, you do not know where to go or what would your next goal be. All this time, forgetting that we ourselves are our only goal. And it is an everlasting fall.



And it hurts really bad. All you want to do then is stay in your bed and sleep the whole day. Then depression strikes, you feel hopeless and sad almost all the time. And to battle this, some do drugs, drink alcohol and worsen their own life, while others start to discover themselves and learn new skills and hobbies such as writing, music or dancing.

Another problem with humans is that we tend to forget our mistakes. So, even after recovering from the worst emotional state anyone can experience, we fall for it again. And then we recover again and fall again. It is tough to accept but we do it again and again. As we never learnt the lesson that as long as we desire things, we will get hurt.

Now that we know the reason for our despair, we can find ways to cope with it. We have to follow the principle listed in the Gita - "Keep working, do not desire for its fruit".

But our original problem was to know what to do when we do not know what to do. So what then? There is no solution to it. You have to bear the pain for some while. Find ways for yourself to let go and then let it go. The hardest thing to do in life is to let go. So let it go and learn from it. Do not attach yourself to anything again.

Something for Chester

- Manish Bisht

Will the stars shine for me?
Will the glory be mine?
Everyone singing my name
Will they stand one last time?

Smile, shine, days are bright
Eyes teary, yet a smile.
The end is near, the breath...dying.
To die in the brilliance of shining light
The chance to become someone's pride
Will they stand one last time?

To bow to me
And to make me a god
When I win the war
I was born to fight
Deprived of it every time
Will the glory finally be mine?

What is life if you don't have to fight?
What is bliss without the fiery night?
A grave fall, trails a heroic rise
Weaker the hero, grander the demise
A charming heartbreak, a tempting dive
Will the glory finally be mine?

The grief, the wonder, the sorrow, the splendour,
In an endless sea of pain and pleasure,
Is better than ecstasy shielded from ether,
Or eternal youth in a world of slumber,
Sing my songs in praise and scorn,
Make me stellar by the dying light,
Deprived of it every time,
Will the glory finally be mine?

A ride on my Daddy's Scooter

- Merlin Sundar

I am waiting for my husband to arrive, we are getting late, but, of course I am not anxious. I am just relaxing until he arrives. He normally calls me as soon as he reaches the parking lot and then I will go running downstairs, because today, I am going home to meet my parents. I am excited, for after all, its Chandigarh. Chandigarh has my heart. As I sit waiting patiently on my favourite Papasan chair, I think to myself if I am carrying everything I need. Toiletries – check, PJ's – check, mum would anyway have one for me, or maybe I can wear one of hers. Home is the only place where I can find things for me, just there for me. A relief floods my heart. Oh! While I wait, maybe I could re-apply my eyeliner. I get up and go to the mirror and pick up my eyeliner. As I darken my already applied eyeliner, I hear a buzz on my phone. Its mum, she reminds me again about the things I should get. She just knew, that I must have forgotten my towel like every time. Obviously NO MA!! I tell her, but sneakily, I fold my towel and shove it into the bag, while clearly defending my lie. I look at the bag that I have so lousily packed. If I keep the zip open, maybe my husband would repack it. He always does. He organizes everything so beautifully, he is gifted. I have accepted it by now, after having tried my hand at organizing. As she ends her call with me, I see missed calls from my husband. Oops! He must be reaching. I peer through our bedroom window. I can now hear him honk too, but I am not sure if its our cars. Ahhh! Well! I call him back and he is already on his way up. That is surprising!! I do not know our car's honk? We have had this car for over an year now....

20 years ago

I was waiting impatiently for daddy to arrive. Our monthly escape to go shopping! Shopkeeper uncle always finds it amusing that I could fluently talk in Hindi, Punjabi, Tamil and English and he seemed to enjoy talking to me. The new chocolates, chips and wafers spread at his front table are always a delight. Maybe today if I behave extra nice, Daddy may buy me the new Kurkure packet my classmate

was so chatty about all day yesterday. I wonder now, if its blue in color or orange or maybe red, my favourite color. The aunties seem to be fond of shopkeeper uncle too. They all let their kids stay in the walker or with their husbands while they chat away with shopkeeper uncle. I find it so interesting that shopkeeper uncle could just calculate such big numbers so quickly and tell my Daddy the grand total. My daddy takes so much time recalculating and checking the items, but at the end, he always agrees saying, "Aap toh sahi ho Maharaaj". My daddy always calls these shopkeepers Maharaaj and then bargains, I think everyone does that. ...Maybe.

Peee! Pee!! Pee Pee Pee...

I can hear my Daddy's scooter honking in the corner of the street.



I stop fidgeting with my nails and go running to the balcony. I can see him in the distance, wearing his favourite, brown shirt and brown trousers. My mom is not very fond of those clothes, she teases him often but he wears it nonetheless.

"Mommy, Mommy, daddy is here... daddyyyyyy is here," I yell as I rush downstairs.

Before he enters the house, I immediately open the big gates and stand there at the gates, ready to jump on his scooter, to not waste time. But, he however insists that he needs to drink his tea. I sadly go in and offer to pick up his office bag. It does not fit my shoulders and keeps slipping. I pretend its not heavy and take it, practically drag it upstairs now. I can see my mom preparing the pot with milk and water. She asks me to give him water, while he is washing his face.

Oh God! All this is making us so late. I had to go to the shop. What if all the packets of Kurkure are sold?? Shopkeeper uncle would keep some extra maybe for linguistic customers like me?? Dad has his tea and picks up the shopping bag and hands it to me. I rush before him, pick up the scooter keys and stand near the vehicle now, while he gathers the list of items to procure from mum...I walk back and forth, praying mum gives him a short list. He finally appears. He looks unhappy. Perhaps, mum did not give him a short list. I can't see how long the list is, because I can't see much, even when standing on my toes, but that wasn't the case earlier. I could barely see dad's pockets until a few months back. Now I can almost see the top when I'm this close.

Daddy, gets the scooter out and I am ready to jump on, but he has to shake it, like mom shakes my syrup sometimes. Otherwise, the scooter won't start. He does it religiously and as though the scooter knows, the kick starts the scooter right away after two shaky shakies. I am seated, daddy reminds me to hold him tight from the back. I hold the rod of his seat. But he makes me hug him instead, saying this is safer. And I don't disagree. It's much more comfortable this way. With my arms safely locking my daddy's back, this way I could catch him too, if he falls asleep. I peer from between his torso and arm sometimes, to catch a glimpse of our street. Robbin is playing cricket, and his not very sweet bhaiya too. The aunties are out eating something ...oh God I hope that's not Kurkure.

The streets have now joined a wider road. Daddy says this is the highway. It's cooler now, and windier. My two pony tails are slowly slapping my cheeks. I want to scratch my face, because it almost itches. But I can't let daddy be unsafe, so I hold him tighter and don't let go. We stop at the traffic signal. I can see two people standing with us in the traffic. They are on a bike. They look at me and smile. But I look away. I act busy watching the other side now. The side with plants. So many flowers. Teacher was saying it's spring season. I have to do my homework. I almost forgot to do it. Mommy will be angry when I get back home. Perhaps, I could eat my Kurkure on my way home, so that Mommy does not take it away.



The shop isn't coming yet. I ask daddy, "Daddy, how much longer?". And he patiently replies, "Beta five more minutes, we are near."

I can see huge hotels and huge markets cross us by. All seem lively and abuzz. And then we reach the shop finally. It's a colorful affair. With packets of lays, Cheetos and their tazos, and my favourite boomer with pink flexible gum on it. I get stickers to play with every time I buy a boomer. They are my favourite and daddy always buys me one during these visits. I see shopkeeper uncle busily chatting with a small boy who helps him with arranging his shop. Maybe that's his son? Uncle sees us and immediately calls me near his chair. I happily go and smile. He says "Vanakkam" and smiles back. That's when I see the new packet. Actually a series of them sitting on a corner next to him. He can see me looking at them, but doesn't tell me what it is, yet. I smile and leave and drag my daddy over the counter asking him what that is.



And behold!
It was the famous Kurkure packet.

That's all I wanted to know. It was all I had dreamed about and maybe much more shinier. Who could have thought, they could make sticks like that too? And then my mouth jets out, "Does it have tazos??" Uncle replies, "No beta." And I continue on, "Does it have WWE players cards?" He again replies "No", I still don't give up and ask, "Does it come with stickers?" and he again says, "No". I sadly look up to him and wonder why this buzz?

Daddy is still telling the small boy his list. As my attention goes directly to the shop next to this one, where they sell cakes. They had pink ones, white ones, even blue ones. I slowly walk up to the counter where I could lean on and stare into their glass counter. Behind this, the shopkeeper was sitting, but I could not see his face clearly from this height. And I could hardly care. I was so busy looking at the petals on the cake and the fancy candles. I wanted to taste them all. Why could mom not make this daily?? I could eat this even at school. But instead she sends me bhindi. That's when I feel a tap on my shoulders, it's daddy. He scolds me for drifting away into another shop. As I was getting scolded, I see it one last time and keep walking. He gives me a packet to hold and again shakes his scooter. As expected, it starts exactly after two shaky shakies. And I sit right up. He again asks me to hug him. But all I want to do is cry. I wanted my cake piece but daddy scolded me.

It just feels too much and I sleep off while hugging him. As we reach home, daddy shakes me slightly and I get down. I feel fresh and offer to pick up a small bag and go upstairs to mom. Again, dragging it on the floor. Our garden had some lovely orange flowers. I wonder what they're called.

As I walk up, mom is waiting, and she hugs me and asks me all about my short trip to the shop. I tell her everything like I tell her my alphabets and numbers and rhymes and she starts walking to the kitchen. And then I remember, the cake. I become sad one more time. She sits me up on the granite slab of the kitchen and gives me chilled Rasna. And says, "We will get you a cake on your birthday, sweetie", and kisses me. That is when Dad walks in and looks up at me.

Suddenly, I remember my forgotten homework and now I am scared. That's when he brings his arm from his back and shows me the packet he is holding.

A very familiar one.

Kurkure!!

I yelp and jump off and go hug daddy. He hands it over to me and opens it up in a second, knowing I would not be able to strip it open with my set of teeth.

And the first bite, aaaah so worth it!

My bags are packed and my husband starts the car, we are all set for travel.
.....Oh how I miss those rides on my Daddy's scooter....





हिमाचल

- Akanksha Singh

कोई मुझसे पूछे, हिमाचल को खूबसूरत क्या बनाता है?
वो बादलों से लिपटे पहाड़ ,
जो आसमान दूर न होने का अंदेशा दे देते हैं ।
उन पहाड़ों पर लगे बिजली के टॉवर,
जो प्रकृति और तकनीक का अजीब संगम दिखाते हैं।
वो सन सन चलती ठंडी हवा,
जो ऐसे छूती है जैसे माँ का आँचल।
वो पारद सा बहता पानी,
जो सारी थकान समा लेने की क्षमता रखता है।
वो घने फैले जंगल,
जो इस देश को चाहने का एक और कारण दे जाते हैं।
वो बिन मौसम हो जाने वाली बारिश,
फिर बच्चा बन उसमें भीगने की चाह जगा देती है ।
वो ऊंचाई पर एकांत में बसा एक घर,
जो मुकम्मल होने वाले एक सपने की आहट दे देता है।
वो कोसों दूर स्थित स्कूल को जाते बच्चे ,
उनकी वो मुस्कुराहट , जैसे कुछ अलग सी कहानी कह जाती हो।
वो बस में बजने वाला नाटी,
जो इस देश में विभिन्नता की खुशबू देता है ।
वहां बसने वाले वो लोग,
जो सिर्फ तन से नहीं, मन से भी साफ हैं ।
वो किसी भी पैदल राहगीर को लिफ्ट दे देने वाली गाड़ियाँ ,
जो इस कलयुग में भरोसे का सबूत देती हैं ।
कोई तुम से पूछे हिमाचल कैसा दिखता है,
तो बस देव भूमि कहकर मुस्कुरा देना!

Gandhi can be doubted, disturbed, even killed BUT GANDHI CAN'T BE DEFEATED

- Sahil Garg

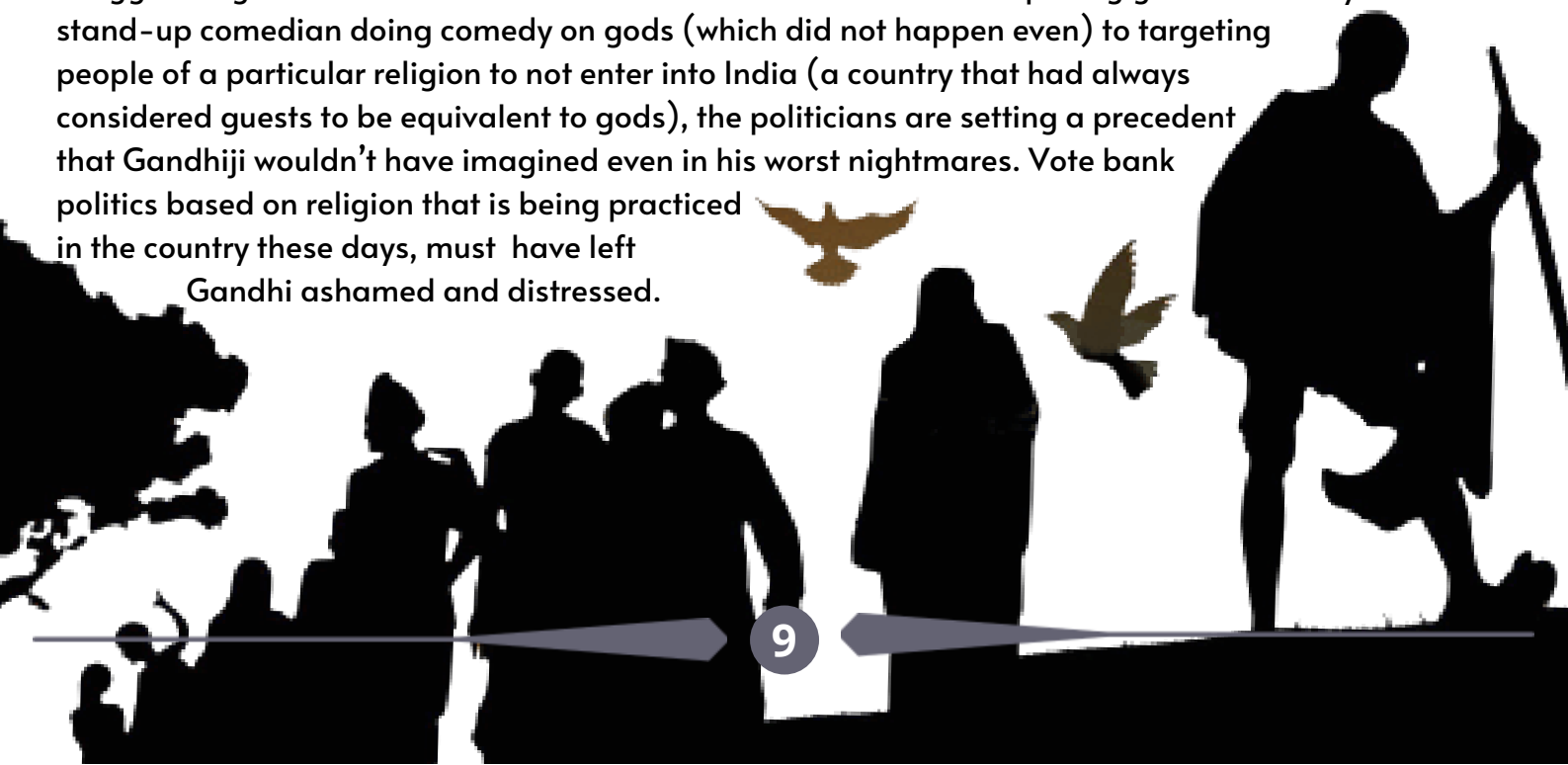
On January 30, 1948, when Godse killed Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, no one in the country (or even the whole world) would have imagined that there could be a day in India when Godse would be praised for such a heinous act.

At the time of Gandhi's death, India was just months old. A nation-in-the-making. Though Bapu was no more with us but his values were; inculcated in every Indian, playing a vital role in reshaping the years old conservative Indian territory and gluing the diverse people of varied religions, cultures, linguistics and castes as a single identity, an identity that of an Indian.

Bapu had the courage to shake the foundations of the mighty British Empire even in the most adverse of times in pre-independent India when justice, liberty, freedom were all a distant dream to many people. His ideology which was based on truth, non-violence, ethics and religious tolerance not only pioneered the Indians but shepherded a way forward for generations to come. The very idea of Satyagraha that he envisaged forced even the most ruthless and powerful British Empire to quit India.

However, the country, where he had spent more than half of his life, promoting Hindu-Muslim unity, stands divided nowadays. His concept of religious tolerance has undergone constant confrontation in the past few years. The way political parties are using religion as a means to achieve power in the country, depicts how low people have stooped after the rise of the sun in independent India. Politics, where he always considered ethics to be the utmost principle, has deteriorated itself to that level where every Indian can say, 'Politics and ethics are opposites of each other'. The lesson of tolerance, unity and fraternity that he once taught us is being challenged in every sphere of life. From exaggerating even the minutest of issues like that of a web series depicting gods differently or a stand-up comedian doing comedy on gods (which did not happen even) to targeting people of a particular religion to not enter into India (a country that had always considered guests to be equivalent to gods), the politicians are setting a precedent that Gandhiji wouldn't have imagined even in his worst nightmares. Vote bank politics based on religion that is being practiced in the country these days, must have left

Gandhi ashamed and distressed.



His idea of truth, that he considered as one of the bases for his most powerful weapon, Satyagraha, seems blunt in the present times. The truth that he had considered as one of the bases for anyone's life has been buried somewhere deep in this present era of science and technology. With social and television media being used as a medium to spread misguided and often irrelevant information to serve for the purpose of propaganda by some political parties, the Gandhian idea of truth stands unguarded today. Gandhiji once predicted in his book, 'My Experiments with Truth', that 'the newspaper press is a great power, but just as an unchained torrent of water submerges whole countrysides and devastates crops, an uncontrolled pen serves but to destroy'. Although his words were for newspaper media in the 1920s, when he might not have been able to predict the emergence of television and social media, yet these words find complete vindication in the current scenarios of modern media. The way certain programs are run on news channels nowadays and how the significant news is being veiled down substantiates the premonition of the Great Father of the Nation.

Non-violence, which he always considered as a weapon of courageous ones, finds no valiant soul nowadays. Though protests like that of Shaheen Bagh and farmers' protest in Delhi before Republic Day tried to showcase a glimpse of the Gandhian method of Satyagraha but even these railings fail to depict the complete version of Gandhian non-violence. Non-violence, according to Bapu, is not merely abstention from violence but it is the power of an intrepid human to love not only those who love him but also those who hate him. His idea of harmony and fraternity appears to become obscure in the current scenarios, when even the kisan and the jawan of this desh wrestle with each other on the auspicious 72nd Republic Day of India. Bapu's path of non-violence and truth that he had constructed long ago looks fractured and fragmented in these onerous times for the Indian democracy.

With the advent of communalism and a narrow form of nationalism emerging in the world, the version of Gandhi's God seems waylaid in the contemporary era. With buildings being built around the country while many people are dying out of hunger and poverty, the concept of Gandhi's way of worshipping God, as he wrote in Harijan (1939) —

'I recognize no God except the God that is to be found in the hearts of the dumb millions. They do not recognize His presence; I do. And I worship the God that is Truth or Truth which is God, through service of these millions', appears obscure today.

Although Bapu has died, his preachings and practices have not. Maybe in the tiniest of forms, the values of Gandhism are still present inside many of the Indians and the people of this world. Even in the rarest sights of protesters presenting flowers to the ones who try to suppress them keeps Gandhi and his antifragile principles undefeated.

Though many may have started idolizing Godse; many may trend him on social media platforms, yet the ideas of Gandhi will continue to remain as an epitome of spirituality for many of us. From the use of Gandhism as a means of struggle against apartheid by Nelson Mandela to becoming a 'guiding light' for Martin Luther King Jr., Gandhi has ceaselessly pioneered the world against the wrong.

Gandhi is not a person, he is an ideology; a theory that will always guide this young democracy of India, a nation where Justice, Liberty, Equality, Fraternity and Secularism are supposed to be the foremost commitment of the government and the people of India.

Daring the Archetypal

- Dr Manas Thakur

Saddened am I
By the dull busy world
Where gates close before they open
And where speaking rhymes with outspoken
Do you dare to sit for a cup of coffee?

Saddened am I
By the dull busy world
Where happiness has to be hard
And where struggle has to be your face card
Would you really care for a cup of coffee?

Saddened am I
By the dull busy world
Where your course is already set
And where what next is a lost bet
Do you even like your cup of coffee?

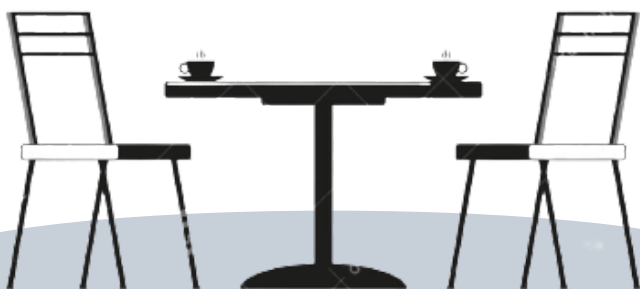
Saddened am I
By the dull busy world
Where to complain is to weep
And where one wakes up to sleep
Are you brewing fresh for a cup of coffee?

But..
Ready am I
To chart my own path
Where up is not necessarily high
And where money may not let you buy
Will you come down for a cup of coffee?

Ready am I
To chart my own path
Where fame isn't what you must seek
And where silence does not make you weak
Are you strong enough to drink a cup of coffee?

Ready am I
To chart my own path
Where recognition doesn't make you dear
And where carrying could be higher than career
Would you mind if tea gets served in your cup of coffee?

Ready am I
To chart my own path
Where dawn may not be better than dusk
And where people are valued more than work
I would love it if you join me for a cup of coffee.



A Trek To Kheerganga

- Ishaan Dahiya



A wise man once said, “Every travel plan starts with a cancellation”.

One day, I was sitting in the classroom daydreaming, trying to figure out how to pass the upcoming quizzes. A beautiful thing about exams is that they eventually end, and boom comes the idea of a trek after quizzes. We all need some kind of escape to get over with that exhaustion and monotony, for reality is often disappointing.

Now what's the most common thing we do after having a plan? We simply procrastinate with our friends and then follow a proper phase of rejections and cancellations. I'll refrain from going in depth because I'm sure we all have had our experiences.

We finally had a name, Kheerganga it was. Customarily a hard task, we gathered people sharing the same zest within. An effort to create a WhatsApp group brimmed with procrastination and false beliefs to ensnare the crowd, but then there are always some people who try to dissuade others. Get rid of them as soon as possible!

We were all set, dates decided, bookings made. But wait, all our pro-ness takes a toll if we haven't consulted the Hiking and Trekking Club and seniors. Bleh, we were asked to drop the plan with an inundation of advice. But, we were hell bent! Mustering the courage, we left the campus with the very first ray of sun with half of the food supplies of CV and excitement in our eyes, which soon got converted into sleepiness.

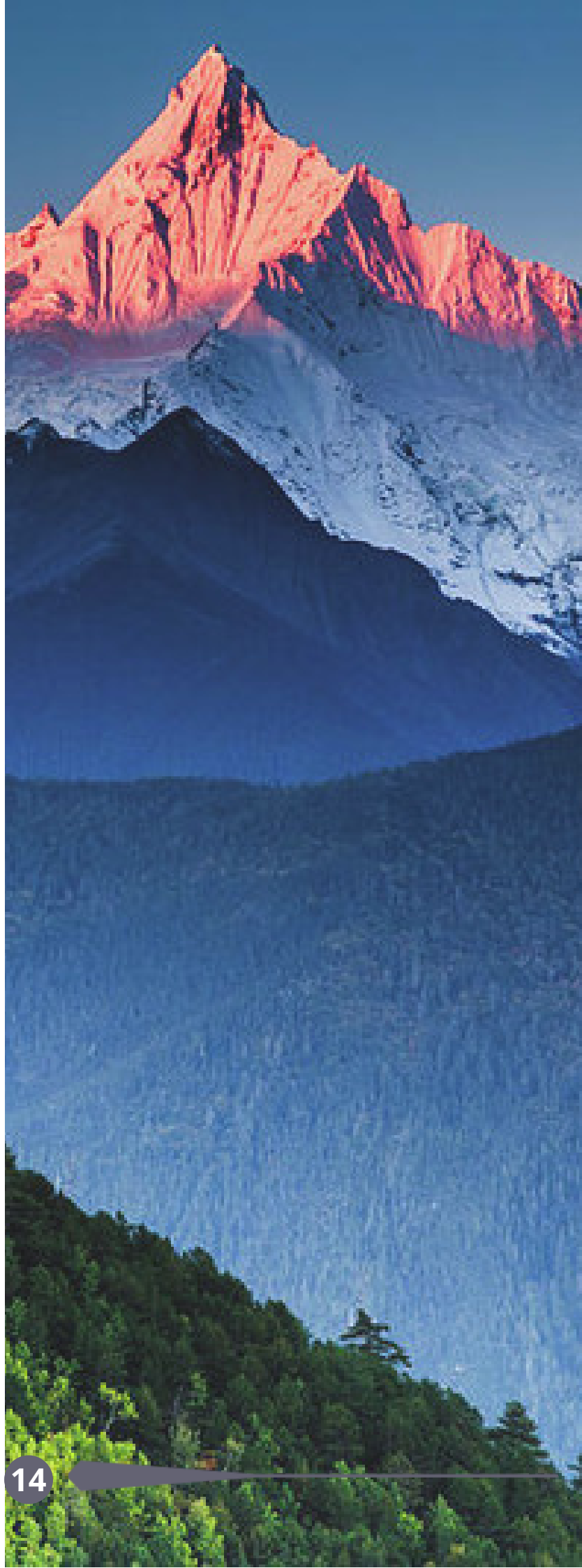
We were 12 and our sex ratio was way better than all the IITs (1:1 for the record). It's roughly a 8.9 mile trek from Kalga village to Kheerganga with moderate difficulty, some breath-taking views, a few waterfalls and some slippery rocks (sounds easy enough). We started off on a high note but soon realised the hardness of the climb (don't worry it gets easy as you go ahead) but we got portable speakers to boost us up (Hey google!! play Kar Har Maidan Fateh). The importance of pep talks becomes evident as you near the end of the climb, with people at the front screaming just 10 minutes more, though it's still nowhere near it. Then comes the moment when you reach the top, a feeling so awesome with nothing to compare (an O in thermo could be close enough). All you want to do is just lie down and gaze at the sky as you celebrate your accomplishment.

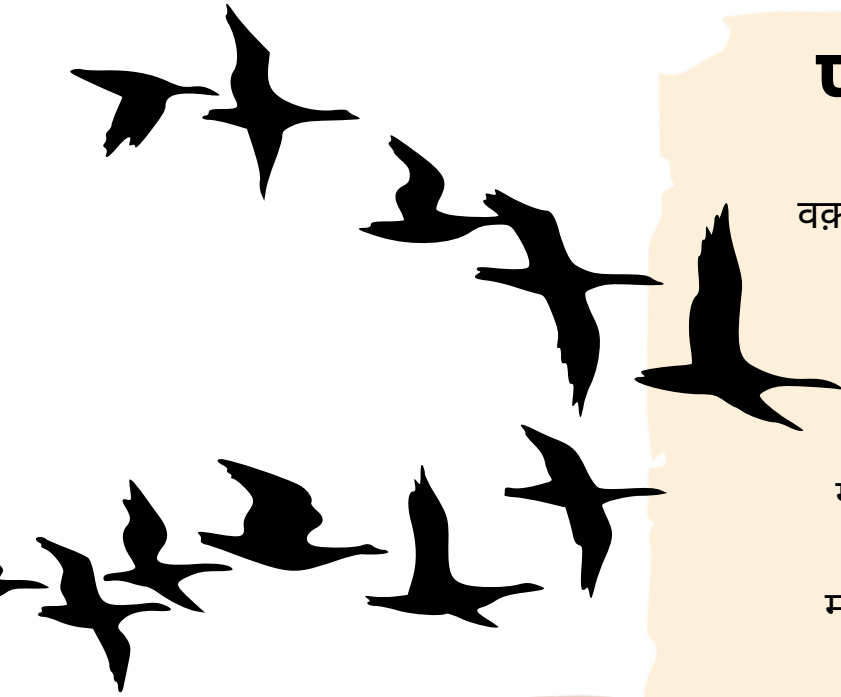
With time, even these hard to reach places have become a hub for tourism and business. It was quite surprising to see the number of people and camps up on the top, but the locals really deserve an applause as they are working hard to make our stay comfortable and trying to provide all the basic necessities even at 3000m above sea level. We had already booked our tents and were now sitting at one of the small open-air cafes, hunger dripping through our eyes. And finally, a wave of relief hit us when we got to lay down in our tents and sleep like there's no tomorrow (sleep is the best drug you will ever find, trust me). The irony about weather forecast in our country is that they are right when you want them to be wrong. As we are sitting for a cup of tea after that short nap, enjoying the sun setting down amidst those far away ranges, suddenly a flash of thunder shines and guess what? It starts raining heavily (fortunately the tents were waterproof). At night, the sky looks insanely beautiful with all those stars smiling at you (STAC members can relate).

The hills have their own secrets and stories, while eating dinner I was able to eavesdrop on the conversation of two people, probably locals. They were talking about drug deals and how and where these things are sold or purchased. Kasol is not only famous for its beauty but there are other things too (bad things). The most typical thing about camping is a bonfire and we had it (keep your shoes and other beloved things away from fire, it can cause a lot of damage). Sleep becomes the last priority when you have awesome friends, a bonfire, and a sky so beautiful that it's almost impossible to look away from it. I had always loved the combo of horror and comedy and it was the perfect scenario to have some talks on it (don't be afraid, you will see more horrifying things in your college life). The noise of wind gushing through the tents didn't let me sleep all night, it was very frightening, and it made me feel weak. Mornings were always beautiful, but the sun rising through the snow-covered peaks and a cup of hot tea just made it more awesome. The time to leave this abode had come and it was hard to leave such a beautiful place, but you need to leave so that you can return again.

I am writing this because I want to convey to the reader that it's important to have some breaks and do things like these (to escape the ordinary and experience the unordinary), it may help you to get closer to your inner self and have a better bonding with yourself. Some moments are just a one time treasure, don't miss them out!

We try to get ahead of time or some of us are running behind it....
But the wise always try to stay parallel with it.





परिंदो की दास्तान

- Debanshu Shrivastava

वक्रत के परिंदो की दास्तान भी अजीब होती है
उड़ते है आसमान छूने को
और समंदर के नीर की तलाश होती है
एक और परिंदा उड़ चला है
ख्वाब कुछ उचे वो ले उड़ा है
गहराइयां जमीन की अब वो छोर चला है
सोचा था अब नहीं लौटेगा
मगर रह रह कर दिल उसी ओर मुड़ रहा है
समझा रहा है
चीख रहा है
गुस्सा कर रहा है
मगर कोई सुन ही नहीं रहा है
अब वो आंखे मूंद कर आगे चला है
मगर वो आवाज जो कानों तक कहीं से,
किसी से आ रही है
उन आवाजों को अपनी मुस्कान से दबाता हुआ आगे बढ़ रहा है
आज एक और परिंदा उड़ चला है।

मुसाफिर

- Adarsh

मैं कहता हूं मैं हूं एक मुसाफिर,
पर क्या खाक मुसाफिर!

दूसरों के बनाए राह पर चले,
मंजिलें तो पाइ पर ठिकाना ना पा सके।
हम भागते रहे उस राह पर यह सोच कर कि
हम हैं बहुत आगे,

पर आगे गए तो मालूम हुआ हम थे किसी भीड़ के पीछे।
वह भीड़ जो खुद भी नहीं जानती वह थी कितना पीछे,
पर फिर भी कभी मुड़ के ना चाहा देखना पीछे।।

फिर क्या खाक मुसाफिर!!

हम तो बस उस राह के राही थे,
असली मुसाफिर उस राह पर सबसे आगे थे।
जिन्होंने शायद सफलता तो नहीं पाई,
पर इस दुनिया को उसने राह पर चलाई,
जिस पर आगे बढ़कर हमने सफलता है पाई।
क्या अब भी हम मुसाफिर है??





Pondering upon Love

- Madhumita

The soft caress of a gentle hand,
The warm hand that holds yours.
Unconditional and unfathomable,
Is that the nature of love?

A heart that connects with yours,
An ear that listens to your silence.
Compassionate and empathic,
Is that the nature of love?

A person who longs for your presence,
A joy born out of ephemeral adoration.
Transient and passionate,
Is that the nature of love?

An embrace that erases your pain,
A warmth that becomes your haven.
Protective and homely,
Is that the nature of love?

A ray of sunshine on a winter morn,
The shade of a tree that shelters you.
Innate and inherent,
Is that the nature of love?

A soul that cares for all there is,
A heart that doesn't beat for itself.
Unyielding and selfless,
Is that the nature of love?

An unfound and incessant peace,
A bliss that knows no reason.
Eternal and unbound,
Is that the nature of love?





Fluxion

- Aniruddha Prakash

There's a subtle difference between utter genius and madness beyond comprehension. Usually, the dissimilarity is not for the person of interest to contest; their fate is decided by those who have a natural propensity for redundancy. A case of considerable interest fleetingly crosses my mind, so much so that I'll callously invest a moment or two of your time to paint you a picture prettier than the one inside my head.

He was one of my only friends, so let's hide his identity behind his favorite song: Mr. Crowley. You see, Mr. Crowley had developed a most curious habit. Every morning at 9, the 74-year-old would crawl into my sanctuary and try to leak a conspiracy for a New World Order. Now, I was as sane back then as I appear to you at the moment so the first time my secretary had let him in, I did think of ringing up the local hospital and have him registered for a mild case of very serious brain damage. However, I took a moment to think of the sorry man, him having fathered no children, a wife taken by a mysterious illness right after marriage, and me, his last hope to cling to sanity.

What he spoke of thereafter was stranger than lead floating on water. As his gesticulations grew wilder, I became surer of a rare case of genius. He claimed to have built a machine that would allow me to communicate with my Great Aunt in New York, from right here in Lancashire! A device that could tell me the 42 times 98 without me having to draw out tables! He spoke of the People Watching Us and why his was the only way out. I admit it, my fellows, curiosity got the best of me and I forsook all the half-hearted oaths my mother made me take as a young lad and went to his house with him.

Rather a tumultuous journey it was too. Scurrying about like a rat, he watched where he came from more often than where he was going. "They must not see us, good sir," he rasped, "We must stay close." Fortunately, Loki could perhaps sense we were up to no good; lending us every possible cover to hide from drunk soldiers looking to arrest anyone for glancing in their direction. I was yet unsure of how such an unusual device had decided to come under Mr. Crowley's possession, and my footsteps were egged on by my curiosity.

We reached his home before sundown, rather a decrepit old shack it was. Mr. Crowley cranked open the loose door and ushered me in with a furtive glance outside.

I half-expected him to lead me to a large room with curtains hiding his machine and all sorts of mechanics at work. I must say, I was taken aback when he sat on the lone armchair in the hall while gesturing to me that I take a seat on the shag carpet beside him. "Are you ready, sir?" he asked. I nodded my assent.

And lo! He dug around in the labyrinths of his trench coat, producing a black mirror not larger than the palm of my hand. I managed an expert imitation of appearing bewildered while trying to hide the fact that I had just walked over 10 miles for a contraption that was greeted by my face every morning at six. "Why, Mr. Crowley," I remarked, "it's a mirror! Rather a plain one at that."

"A mirror that glows, when I press this peculiar button on its side."

And as he performed the action, I saw the truth in his words. Some digits appeared on its surface in a presentation that appeared to me as if they were telling the time. I glanced at my watch to double-check the fact that the time proclaimed by the glowing mirror was not untrue; I had just wound my watch this morning.

"Touch it, sir.", instructed Mr. Crowley.

As sort of moths are drawn towards lamps, I placed a careful finger on the glowing mirror. It changed! The time-telling was suddenly replaced by at least a dozen small squares.

"Touching this square allows me to contact the Outside," he said, gesturing to a dumbbell-like shape. "And this one does 42 times 98 faster than you can say the sum," he spoke further, pointing to a square which looked like my nephew's school slate. He took the care to demonstrate this ability. Quite simply put, I was awe-struck. I had not even finished writing the digits on the back of my palm when the numbers 4116 appeared: written pristine on the black mirror.

"Why have you brought me here? What is this Outside you keep speaking of?" I asked, finally coming to my senses.

"Because you're the only one who actually listened, sir. You're not like the other hacks in this town, practicing foolery in the name of medicine," Mr. Crowley spoke. He paused a while to slip the mirror back into his coat.

"You are inside an experiment. Been running for almost 1700 years now. I wasn't even supposed to engage any subject, yet here we are. You see, my device has stopped functioning: something blatantly unheard of in any of the places the Experiment is being run. I cannot contact the Outside. As such, I can only return back permanently, but momentarily choose to be alongside the folk here."

"Stuck? Folks? Go back where? Are you not from around here? Ah, yes," I said with an inkling of distant memory, "I thought I placed an American accent on you."

Mr. Crowley turned his lips upward in a seemingly benevolent smile.

“I am afraid I find myself unable to answer some of your interrogations. I must leave for the other places with the Experiment. I say some, because I’ll be leaving you this device,” spoke Mr. Crowley, gesturing towards the mysterious mirror, “may it be even more fruitful for you than it was for da Vinci.”

“You mean Leonardo-?”, I was interrupted by the glow of a shimmering light surrounding Mr. Crowley.

“There will be an Albert some 200 years from now, with a mind to rival yours. You must arrange to pass it on,” came his voice, muffled behind the light.

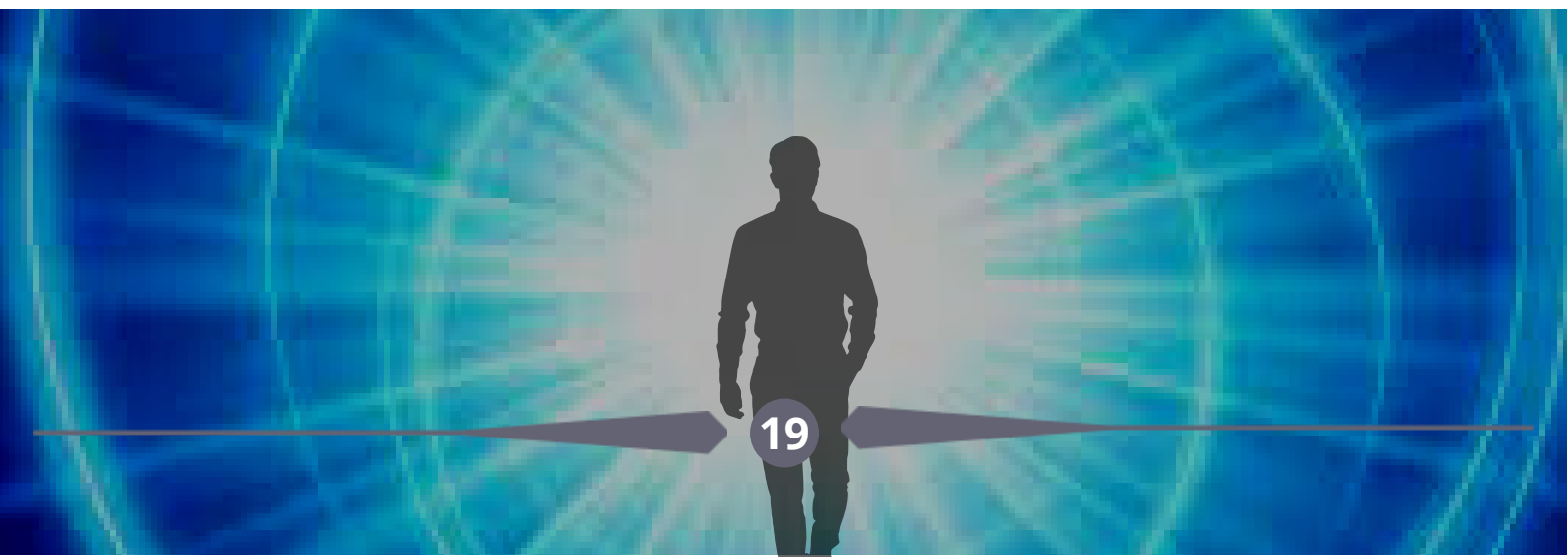
Looking at the space occupied by Mr. Crowley just a few moments ago, I instinctively realized that would be the last I would ever see and hear of him or his squashy armchair.

There was of course a long dialogue between us where Mr. Crowley spoke further of the device’s unnatural capabilities. But this is a short manuscript, and I’d rather not bore you with that.

It was stark midnight when I walked out of Mr. Crowley’s residence. Not a soul in sight except for those drunkards on the 4th boulevard. Engrossed in the recent happenings, I failed to realize I had arrived home until it manifested itself in the form of my old aunt screeching at me, questioning my late-night adventures. I shook her off and made my way atop the barn at the back: my pristine study. Taking a seat behind my table, I musingly played around with the mirror Mr. Crowley had left me. Unbeknownst, my hand worked its way towards the button on its side.

Picking at the apple that had fallen on me this morning, I opened the device Mr. Crowley had left me. Did Leonardo da Vinci really have this too? Why did he leave me with a device that was centuries ahead of my time? How would I send this to some German Albert I had no acquaintance of? Who could I trust to pass it down the ages?

I opened up a square on the device that Mr. Crowley said would greatly help me with my fluxions. Playing around with some of the mathematics I knew could explain everything the fools on the street refer to as deeds of God, I thought to myself, “Had it been the Supreme Intelligence I had been talking with?”



तेरा ज़िक्र

बादलों में छुपा हुआ, महताब देखा।
आज फिर हमने, तेरा ख्वाब देखा।

सारे नज़ारे, नज़रों ने नज़रअंदाज़ किए।
जब से हमने, सनम तेरा शबाब देखा।

गुलाब के फूल तो, बहुत देखे बागों में।
पहली दफ़ा, जिस्मानी गुलाब देखा।

जिस जमीं पर, कदम ना रखा कभी।
तेरे बहाने हमने, सारा पंजाब देखा।

कई दिनों से, रात जैसे काले थे दिन।
तू आई तो, सुबह का आफ़ताब देखा।

उसने जब बात की, ऊँची आवाज़ में।
शहद से होंठों का, कड़वा जवाब देखा।

वो भी बड़ी हैरान हो गई थी उस पल।
मेरे अरमानों का, उसने जब हिसाब देखा।

Ghazals

- Aman Rohilla

बेबसी

प्यार करती हैं आँखें, आँखें ही तड़पती हैं।
मगर क्यूँ चोट, दिल को भी खानी पड़ती है।

सिर्फ़ राख हो जाने के लिए हर ज़िन्दगी।
ज़िन्दगी भर ज़िन्दगी से ही झगड़ती है।

क्या मजबूरी है, जो प्यार कर लेते हैं लोग।
पता है कि प्यार में ज़िन्दगियाँ उजड़ती हैं।

ऐसा क्या माँग लिया मैंने, जो मिलता नहीं।
सालों से मेरी दुआएँ, दीवारों से ही लड़ती हैं।

उसके जाने का मुझे, गम है इतना गहरा।
अब तो हर पल मेरी, साँस भी उखड़ती है।

कब से छोड़ना चाहता हूँ शायरी लिखना।
शायर हूँ, इसलिए शायरी करनी पड़ती है।

A Horror Story - Aashima

With a backpack and her most loved ruby locket, Jane set to sail on yet another voyage. This time to a little island with antiquated puzzles. The ocean was quiet and the night, chilly and foggy. The island was brilliantly lit by a full moon. As she reached the island, it was all dim and overcast all of a sudden. She rushed to the place she was supposed to stay at. The colossal manor was stunning and so were its owners, the Smiths. The old couple were medical practitioners. In spite of their own sick wellbeing, they cared for Jane like their daughter.

The island was home to ancient caves, sculptures, beautiful manors and a lot more. Even the homes were old fashioned. It was like she had made a trip to the seventeenth century. The place was magical. But, the residents were a bit odd. They were all old, all day droning sacred charms and prayers. Amidst the ominous silence, their uncanny gazes terrified Jane and she always felt as if somebody was following her. Be it thunder or rain, wind or storm, the elders every night offered their prayers at the forbidden cave on the hilltop. Surrounded by pitch darkness, it was guarded by huge statues of their deity. She really wanted to go up there but only the older folks were permitted.

The following day, as Jane was gearing up to leave, she saw people getting ready for their religious festival. The auspicious day came once in 51 years. It was a very special day and the Smiths too were out of the house. The manor was intriguing; Jane chose to take a tour. It was so calm that she could hear herself breathe. She entered a secluded passage and at the end was a huge door, engraved with religious illustrations and sayings. The lock laid on the floor, the couple had forgotten to bolt it. There was something mysterious about that door. The next moment, Jane was standing inside the room. It was full of drawers, bottles, equipment and chests. Possibly, it was the medical research room. As she was leaving, she stepped on a pearl. It had tumbled off a chest. Maybe it belonged to the golden chest lying in the corner. Jane wiped off the dust and opened it. It didn't contain treasure yet a journal and some adornments, each with a name. "Anne, 18" and "Martha, 22" read the ring and the bangle. Astounded and inquisitive, she picked up the journal. "1206" read its cover. She flipped through the pages. "Immortal", "charms", "soul", "youthful lives", "ritual", "sacrifice", "blood", "silver". Frightened, she shut the journal and began to pack the chest. She had never been fond of religious writings and stories. The main door creaked. The Smiths were back. Her heart was pounding fast and she cleared out the room hastily. The journal fell off but there was no time to put it back. She took the journal and ran towards her room. Finding no other place, she hid it in her bag. The footsteps were approaching closer, louder, faster and *knock knock*. Jane's heart was hustling, she wiped her face and opened the door acting calm. The Smiths had come to invite her for the special ritual, a bonfire outside the forbidden cave. How could she miss this opportunity, she accepted the proposal and dressed up for the evening. She was so excited that she totally forgot about the journal. All the way up, she kept thinking about how she would tease her friends with her experiences. She was super excited. Indeed, she was taken aback when she reached the cave. She stood there numb watching her photograph burn in the flames. All the chest contents and the journal lay on the ground and the Smiths were preparing their silver equipment. The elders encircled her, chanting charms in unison and worshipping her. She was standing in the center of a big circular map. Her vision blurred out but her mind was clear, clear about everything, clear about what the journal meant. But it was too late.

Half an year since then, the police are still searching for Jane, unknown that her ruby locket lies as a memento, hidden in the couple's manor.

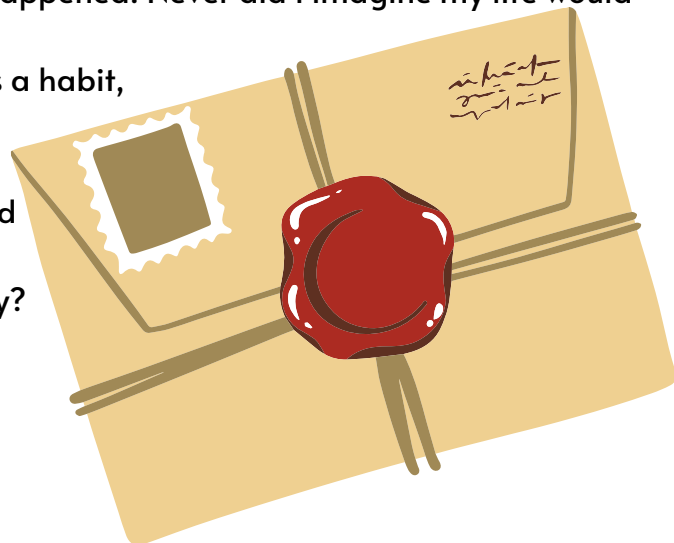
A Weird Day

- Ekansh Sharma

My last weekend was the craziest one ever, so much has happened. Never did I imagine my life would change to this extent. Let me fill you in-

It was Friday and I just returned from my part time job. As a habit, I opened my mailbox on my way in and found a nameless envelope inside. Opening it, I found an invitation to some science convention. It looked lame. I finally had a weekend to myself, I wouldn't want to waste it on some stupid con. I've never bothered myself with all this nerdy bullshit. Why? Because I know the difference between knowing your shit and knowing you're shit. I failed third grade.

Science was never my thing. But I got an urge to go there anyway.



I don't know what came to my mind the but the next day, I was standing in front the building. Entering in, I asked the receptionist which floor the con was being held on to which she replied floor 51. I went into the elevator, clicked the button and started contemplating on my life and how I needed more excitement. Now that I think about it, that was the last normal thought I had in a while. The elevator door opened and I found myself in a situation completely different from what I imagined. I was either dreaming or I was looking at alien kids eating otherworldly ice-cream and watching an alien putting a few drops of some liquid into an insect and turning it into an insect with 4 legs. Before some alien threw reverse liquid and turned me into a kamodo, I pressed a button on the elevator. The door was stopped by someone, that someone was a human. I thought maybe someone was in a similar situation as me and wanted to get out of here. But he didn't step inside. He looked at me with stone cold eyes and said "Welcome, Mr. Marley, to the 2nd science convention hosted for intergalactic peace." Well that sure sounded shady, I don't remember telling anyone my name. "Hey! How the hell do you know my name! Who are you? And what in the name of LeBron James is this place?". "Let's not take much time introducing ourselves, we're already late on our schedule. I'm Dr. Vladimir Zdorovetskiy. I am one of the scientists hosting this convention. I will be your guide for the night." "A scientist being my personal guide? I don't know what made me this important?" "Let's leave those things for later Mr. Marley, we don't have much time." He started moving before I could ask what all the hurry was about.

After moving around a bit, he took me to this room filled with people, and they were all looking towards me for some reason. Did I forget to wipe the ketchup off my face? Well, the reason was a bit different than what I expected. "Ladies and gentlemen, the wait is over. We will now begin the tour to the living city!" Living city! Sounds quite cool, guess these guys were waiting for us to come over so they could begin. Or at least I thought so. "Mr. Marley, we have something to tell you. An year ago we needed a human to start our micro constructions and we chose you." "Chose me? What are you talking about?!" "It's complicated to get, for a non-enlightened like you. Under the intergalactic peace treaty signed by the 23 galaxies, we can choose a non-enlightened for experiments that may bring peace to all of us" "I wasn't even told about this! I need to get out of here."

I started going towards the elevator, but was stopped by some alien soldiers. “Stay calm, please turn back. Do not make any decision that may harm you!” “You’re gonna send aliens to a city inside my gut which even I didn’t know about and you tell me to stay calm? I’m no monk, you idiots.”

The scientist who escorted me shouted, “Careful, these primitive beings are very tough! Do not try to engage, detain him.” All I heard was that I’m tough. I walked towards one of the guards and punched him. Nothing happened. He didn’t even move an inch. I remember being punched back a few times and losing consciousness.

I woke up the next day. Dr. Vladimir was standing next to me. “We simply asked you not to take any rash decisions. Now now, listen carefully and get it into your primitive head. We have put up a new test where we colonize the insides of living organisms and have chosen human beings to test its working, with our advanced technology we can now shrink and manipulate time to a certain extent.

Congratulations Mr. Marley, for you might eventually save many galaxies from the intergalactic resource depletion problem. Your insides will produce enough resources for many civilizations to thrive. Do not worry, the depletion in your body’s resources will be much lesser than the regeneration rate.”

“I didn’t sign up for this. Why me?”

“You ask too many questions, Mr. Marley.

Now, remember this, you are no longer a single organism, thus we have fitted in some ‘powers’ to protect you, they will activate themselves in times of danger and of course you can trigger them at will, as a gift for being part of our project.”

And he just walked out. I fell back asleep.



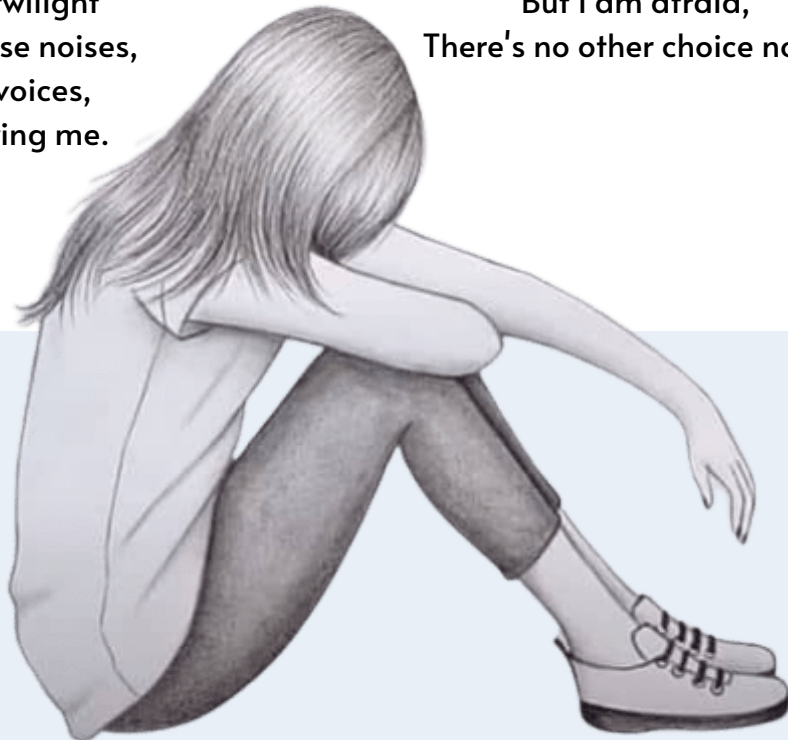
I woke up, it was 8:00 am. That was the weirdest dream I’ve ever had. I got an urge to write it down. I wrote a book and it got famous. A week later, I’m a New York Times best seller and living in a penthouse apartment. Only thing was, it wasn’t a dream. I’d occasionally hear some voices inside my head asking me to eat some ice-cream.

I'm Afraid

- Arya Priya

I hear noises
When it's dark and lonely.
I fear voices
When it's tender and quiet.
I see you there, waiting for me
At the break of the day,
Watching over me,
Through the little voids, faraway.
I hear noises
When you approach me,
I fear voices
When you whisper to me.
I see you there, walking beside me,
When I step on the tightrope.
Gnashing at me, when I lose all hope.
I hear noises
When you discuss my life,
I fear voices
When you plan to give advice.
I see you there, when I look in the mirror,
Mocking me, for the decisions I made.
Judging me, for the realities I couldn't change.
But sometimes at twilight
When I approach those noises,
Those infuriating voices,
I see you there, pitying me.

I see fear in your eyes,
The way I have known it all this while.
You fear your laugh won't last,
You fear your mask will tear apart.
Like me, you too are a little girl inside
Oblivious to the ways of the world this side.
You know, I tried to put up with it,
Unlike you, I couldn't resist.
I couldn't find another escape.
Perhaps I will have to quit.
There's nothing left for me to stick.
You are not with me anymore,
Just a mockingbird at the end of the tomb.
I can't confide in you any longer,
You live in the mirror,
snickering at me.
Not a single ear is left,
To hear my tale,
The story of the place I most detest.
I've begun to fear my noise, now
I've begun to fear my voice, now
I want it to cease
But I am afraid,
There's no other choice now...



यादों में आशिकी

- Ankit Karan

दर्द कागज़ पर, मेरा बिखरता रहा,
मैं बैचैन था, रात भर लिखता रहा.....
छू रहे थे सब बुलंदियाँ आसमानों की,
मैं सितारों के बीच, चाँद की तरह छिपता रहा.....
अकड़ होती तो, कब का टूट गया होता,
मैं था नाजुक डाली, जो उसके सामने झुकता रहा....
उस दिन मैं थोड़ा घबरा रहा था,
क्योंकि मैं अंततः उसे अपने दिल की बात बोलने वाला था
जब वो आई तो मैंने उससे कहा :-
काफ़िरों सी थी जिंदगानी मेरी,
ठिकाना तुझमें ही पाया हूँ |
कैसे बयाँ करूँ तेरी मोहब्बत को,
देख खुद को तेरे सजदे में लाया हूँ!!
तब उसने कहा कि सब यहां आशिक ही है , तो मैंने बोला :-
ये इश्क हर किसी के बस की बात नहीं है,
कई ख़्वाब अधूरे रह जाते हैं
कुछ दर्द दिलों में गहराते हैं |
कई अपने पराए हो जाते हैं,
फिर भी हंसते हंसते जो हर दर्द सह ले
वही तो आशिक कहलाते हैं |
मैंने उसे काफी मनाने की कोशिश की मगर उसने मेरे प्यार
को ठुकरा दिया और जाने लगी , तभी मैंने उसे रोक के कहा
तुम्हारी हर शर्तों में मंजूरी है मेरी ,
पता नहीं कैसे पर यही मजबूरी है मेरी
तुम्हें उदास देखने की हिम्मत नहीं मुझमें
शायद इस लिए अधूरी कहानी है मेरी
मगर उसने कुछ जवाब नहीं दिया, और वहाँ से चली गई
मैं आज भी ये सोचता हूँ ,
उसकी यादें तो हर पल है
पर वो क्यूँ नहीं मेरी तक्रदीर में ,
बेपनाह ये दिल ढूँढ रहा उसकी मौजूदगी उसकी तस्वीर में |

Omnibulls - Creating Warriors of Wealth across India

Attend college, get your MBA, get 5 degrees printed on high-quality paper. And when you arrive at the gates of the real world, you see that all your learnings are useless. The world isn't the ideal place you thought it would be.

Omnibulls teaches you what is useful in real life.

Omnibulls Pvt Ltd was started as a way of spreading the wisdom of investing among the youth of India. In stock-terms, "bulls" are the aggressive winners who keep investing and expect the price to go up.

"Omni" = Going up in all spheres of life. Thus the name, Omnibulls, the ones who ensure that you win in all aspects.

My first brush with the stock market happened in the 11th grade. At that time, I used to go to my school chemistry teacher's house to study for the exams. He used to watch CNBC while teaching me. One day, I asked him what this market is all about.

He said, "This is where money makes money". His words gave the stock market a near magical perspective in my head.



I continued to wonder about this magical world, where money shuffles among the many unknown hands in a matter of seconds. After clearing JEE, I took up my interest in stocks and recalled my teacher's words. I scoured the Internet, read various books, even tried investing in some stocks to see how things really work and how people make real money from something that felt like a game!

I studied and researched for about two years, and this led me to realize that not all the "tips" and "tricks" work. And India being India, every random guy walking by gives you tips. I saw that most people are completely oblivious to the potential of the stock market! So many people who are interested end up as victims of Ponzi schemes and never touch investing again!

Also, I learnt it the hard way not to buy stocks based on whims and emotions. It's nothing more than gambling. People who advice to stay away from the markets are the ones who have either lost money themselves or whose relatives or close friends have. Either way, I am pretty sure not much homework was done by them while investing and it was pure speculation. And hence, their advice!

This was the time when I decided that there should be a genuine company that provides education about the stock market. A company that tells you what actually works in real life. I needed to do this for the young minds of the nation who could easily earn a decent side income by investing in the markets independently! Omnibulls has the power of making millions of people financially independent!

I believe that information is power. But for such investing, you need to be willing. You need to be bold. You need to be ready to take some risks. You need to always be ready for a challenge. Only then can you make money.

Of course, not everyone is built for investing, not everyone has the time, the judgement, the luck needed. Thus, Omnibulls has also decided to start offering mutual funds very soon according to people's investment potential, risk appetite and returns expected, where people with funds but not time can invest safely and expect decent returns.

Man fears the unknown. Omnibulls strives to clear the air of mystery that surrounds the stock market for people and prepare them to create wealth while pursuing their dream job.

**- HARDEEP MALIK,
Director - Omnibulls Pvt Ltd**



Technological Condition and Humanities

- Dr Gokul Somasekharan

Indeed, if there really is someday discovered a formula for all our desires and caprices—that is, an explanation of what they depend upon, by what laws they arise, how they develop, what they are aiming at in one case and in another and so on, that is a real mathematical formula—then, most likely, man will at once cease to feel desire, indeed, he will be certain to. For who would want to choose by rule? Besides, he will at once be transformed from a human being into an organ-stop or something of the sort; for what is a man without desires, without free will and without choice, if not a stop in an organ?



.....And as all choice and reasoning can be really calculated—because there will someday be discovered the laws of our so-called free will—so, joking apart, there may one day be something like a table constructed of them, so that we really shall choose in accordance with it. If, for instance, some day they calculate and prove to me that I made a long nose at someone because I could not help making a long nose at him and that I had to do it in that particular way, what FREEDOM is left me, especially if I am a learned man and have taken my degree somewhere? Then I should be able to calculate my whole life for thirty years beforehand. In short, if this could be arranged there would be nothing left for us to do; anyway, we should have to understand that.

These ruminations, almost bordering on a feeling of exasperation, are not by any protagonist in a recent high flying fantasy film, terrified of the prospect of being caught in the cobweb of technological determinism and panting for some fresh air of freedom just to feel alive. Rather these are revelatory reflections from Notes from the Underground, published in 1864, by Dostoevsky, a master psychologist, who could penetrate into the deepest recesses of human soul and expose all its demonic drives, fragilities, desperations and helplessness.

It won't be wrong hence to surmise from the passage above that Dostoevsky had good insights into possibilities of the emergence of a data science of very scary proportions that could read perfectly the human subconscious. He had this intuitive sense at least 75 years before even the rudimentary models of computers came into existence. But, this is what is expected of arts and literature: to be hyper sensitive to the condition of being human and hold a critical mirror to its subconscious instincts and the possible directions our collective existence could take in future, even before our collective rationality or our scientific minds become conscious of it. Humanities, being the systematic study of human condition and its multifarious aspects, that is to say the disciplines of arts, literature and philosophy form hence the core of what we humans make of our own existence, collective and individual, in its cultural, social, political, economic and most importantly in the last two centuries, technological embedding. In the following, I will stress, drawing upon a couple of instances, upon the growing need for an active interface between humanities and technology, especially in the context of institutional technological learning and teaching.

Human condition over the last two centuries, since the invention of steam power that triggered the industrial revolution in England has been increasingly technological and in the last three or four decades, with the onset of digital paradigm has been opening up technology in unforeseen empowering ways across the population. Thus, technology or technics has had consequences not just with regard to the production and distribution of resources, but also has had far reaching implications for our psychological well-being, our belief in free will and agency and above all the ways we govern ourselves politically.

Humanities, directly or indirectly, in the last two centuries-, at least in the western context where the notion of humanities itself emerged and is being nurtured and practiced with great respect and diligence,- has been engaging essentially with this increasingly complex technological condition of humanity. Life, individual and collective, unwillingly has come to be constituted by its technological essence, which is determined from time to time in varying unforeseen ways. It is thus quite natural that disciplines of humanities that systematically reflect upon human condition in general, have been continuously trying, again directly and indirectly, to comprehend, analyze and critically evaluate the technological texture of our lives and what it has done to our experience of life in general.

A classic example of one such above mentioned trend in humanities is romanticism: the literary and philosophical movement that originated in the late 18th century in England and later in Germany and other European contexts. The core concern of romanticism was an individual's relationship with nature, his/her own emotional self, and how they came to be alienated from their original source, i.e., nature, and suppressed by growing industrialization, urbanization and the accompanying change in social formations. Romanticism was in that sense a reactionary engagement in literature, painting and philosophy with growing technologization and rationalization of human life in revolutionary ways. The thrust of romanticism remained in restoring an individual's unity with nature, getting back in touch with his/her feelings, sentiments and emotions and their expression, his/her flight from smothering rationalization and regimentation of life by encouraging the irrational urges of mind, i.e. phantasies, myths, love, dreams etc.

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe

So sang William Blake in 1794 in London seeing the plight of the city of London as well as its inhabitants in the early phase of industrialization. Romanticism in its various versions has ever since remained at the centre of discourses in humanities. It has re-appeared in various avatars with each major phase of technologization and industrialization/capitalism as a sort of an attempt by an individual to release himself/herself from the unrelenting and insane economic and social pressures of ceaseless productivity, to give free rein to his/her imagination and re-kindle his/her sensitivity to his/her roots in nature. In fact, it is almost impossible to think of all the recent popular discourses on environmentalism, ecologism and even veganism- that border on fundamentalism- without recognizing the basic romanticist impulses inherent in all of them.

If we look at philosophical and literary discourses in the last two centuries, the two essential themes that have occupied romanticist and neo-romanticist trends in various manifestations till the second half of twentieth century are “alienation” and “angst”. Alienation of individuals from each other, from work as well as their own nature, and the resulting angst or anxiety and their multifarious expressions, were identified as the basic existential features of our modern technological condition. By the turn of the 20th century, romanticism is long tired of being romantic about nature or anything exotic, rather it has grown beyond it into a bleak worldview of “modernism” in literature and philosophy, wherein expression and portrayal of the human subconscious or rather the conflict between the conscious and the subconscious mind in the wake of mechanization of monstrous scale of our ways of life and the accompanying suppressing urban conditions take the centre stage. If romanticism had a rural and pastoral flavor to it, rooted in its longing for nature and individual expression, modernism had a very urban setting and highlighted the increasing alienation of man caused by the growing urbanization, and technology driven mass production. Man is turned into a machine, a cog in the wheel of a giant system of large scale production and consumption. Man is forced to assume a very mechanical exterior in his/her very urban, industrial, work routine, and thereby suppress his subconscious instincts and drives. This has huge ramifications for his/her psychological well-being. Man realizes that the individual mind is not a whole, but rather a divided house, where he (the conscious mind) is no more the master. Modernism stems from this realization and responds to this technological condition of man.

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky,
Like a patient etherized upon a table;

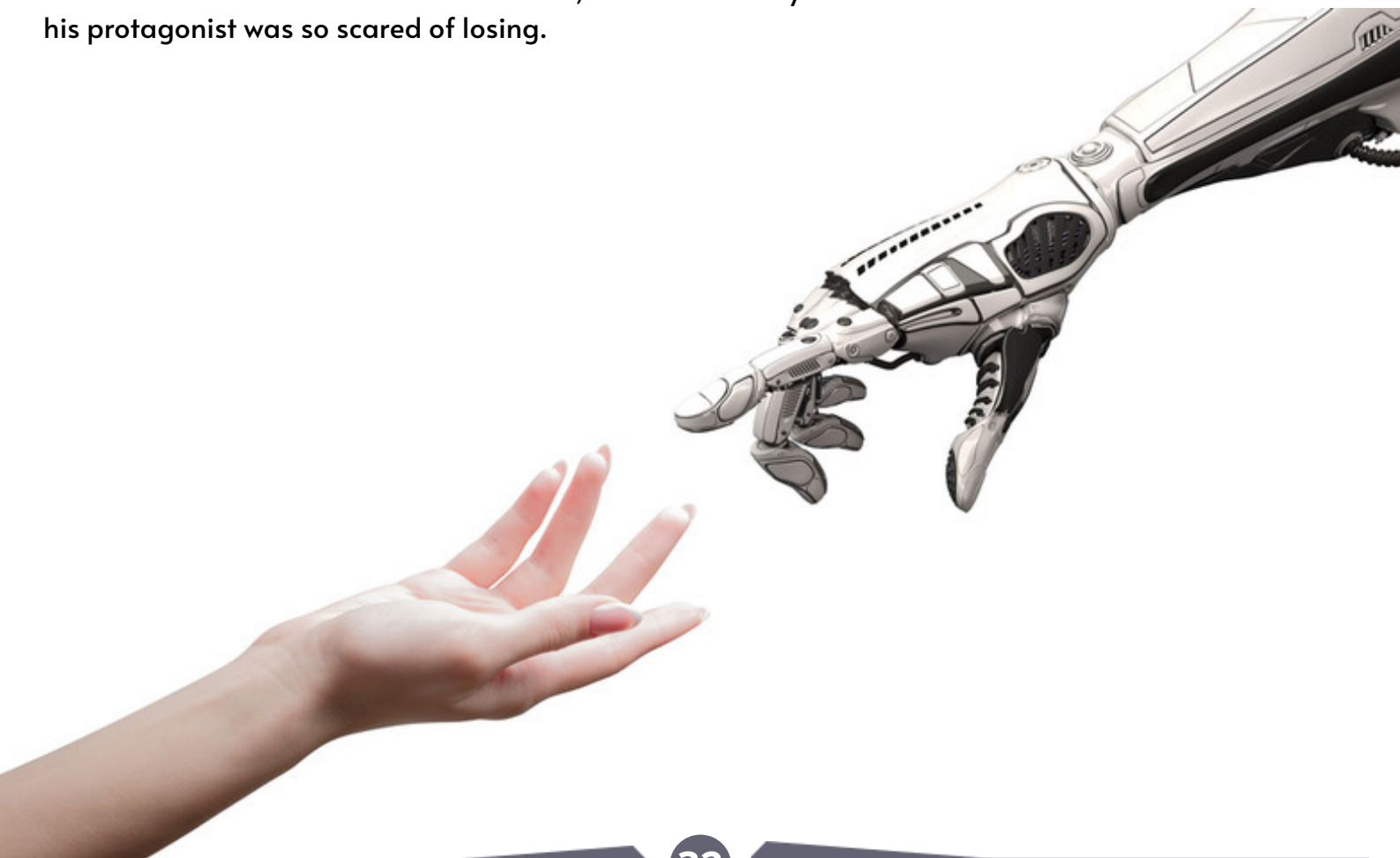
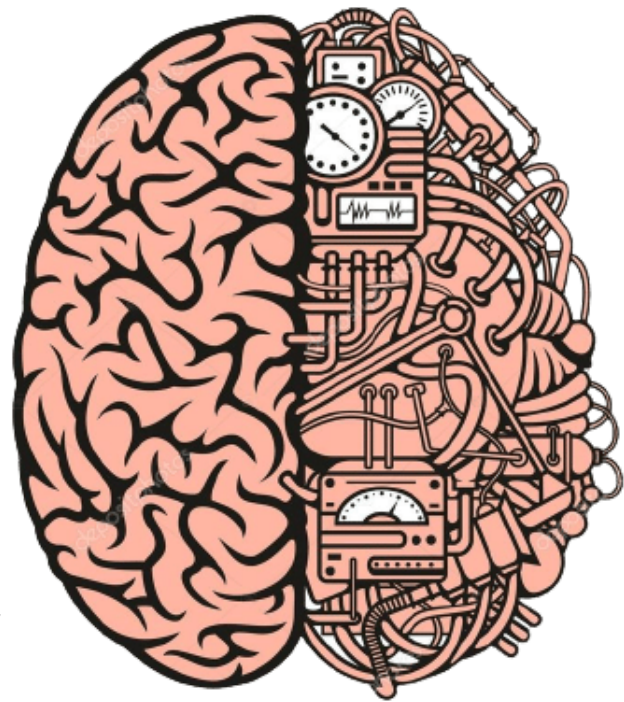
These opening lines from T.S Eliot's The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1915)- that is said to have marked the beginning of modernism in literature- certainly doesn't hint at a love song of any traditionally romanticist kind. The simile “like a patient etherized upon a table” employed to portray the evening sky, far from being romanticist, invokes a scary image of a sick and alienated condition that the life of modern man had come to be.

In another modernist novella, *The Metamorphosis* (1915) by Franz Kafka, the protagonist Gregor Samsa wakes up one morning to realize he has turned into a bug and for the rest of the story contemplates on his state of alienation from his surroundings and dear ones. The genre of painting also doesn't fail in contributing its share and sheds enough light on the modern existential condition of man caused by an economic system driven by ambitious technologization and mechanization. The iconic painting *The Scream* (1893) by the Norwegian painter Edvard Munch is one such kind. Munch himself called the image of a screaming face in his painting, skeletal in appearance, screaming from the top of a bridge, the scream of nature. Moving on to films, who wouldn't have just laughed, but also been deeply touched, while watching Chaplin's *Modern Times* (1936), by the loving gestures of a man who is almost turned into a machine and a psychological wreck, by the machines surrounding him, but who still hasn't forgot to fall in love, romanticize, hope and endure the sweet suffering it ensues. Or for that matter, though on a serious and macabre note, Fritz Lang's German classic *Metropolis* (1927), portrays in a sci-fi setting the urban, technological condition of modern man, who finds himself divided into different classes of an urban, extremely hierarchical society governed by technological regimentation.

From the perspective of humanities, the technological condition of man in the modern age can be divided into roughly three phases. The first technological condition that lasted well into the first half of 20th century, the phase of hyper industrialization, was that of *homo faber* (man as manufacturer or manufacturing man). Man's alienation from technology itself was its defining feature. The individual was intimidated by technology, because technologization meant large-scale mechanization or the use of gigantic machines in expansive industrial settings. The second phase begins with the recent digital paradigm, where the individual slowly overcomes the intimidation enforced by technology, his/her alienation, and starts feeling empowered. The individual becomes playful (*homo ludens*, the playful man) with technology and with the spread of digital interface technologies like computers, mobile phones and other toys like digital gadgets. The third phase is the present emerging phase of *homo deus* (man as God), where man aspires to control, create and manipulate the entire natural system and thereby becomes God. Unbridled and reckless expansion of technologies like AI, bio-engineering and advanced data engineering, accompanied by the absence of serious philosophical reflection on their implications, all signal towards that trend and could well end up turning man into a devil or *homo diabolis* instead of God.

To conclude, one of the recent project statements made by entrepreneur and technologist Elon Musk declaring his wish that humans should start thinking about colonizing Mars, pretty much points to what technology or a technologist should not be aiming and how an increased interface between technology and humanities can make science and technology put its feet back on the ground of humanism. The declared intention to colonize Mars sounds absolutely like a throw-back to 15th and 16th century, when the reigning Monarchs of Europe were contemplating sending trade, exploratory and religious missions to other continents with the intention of not just quenching the scientific curiosity, but also of imperial expansion and appropriation of natural resources. Like Marx said, history repeats itself, first as tragedy and second as farce. One can only wish certainly that Elon Musk had a more historical and philosophical *Weltanschauung* than a naïve and simplistic black and white view of the human complexity, so that humanity prevents itself from making a farce of realizing its own potential.

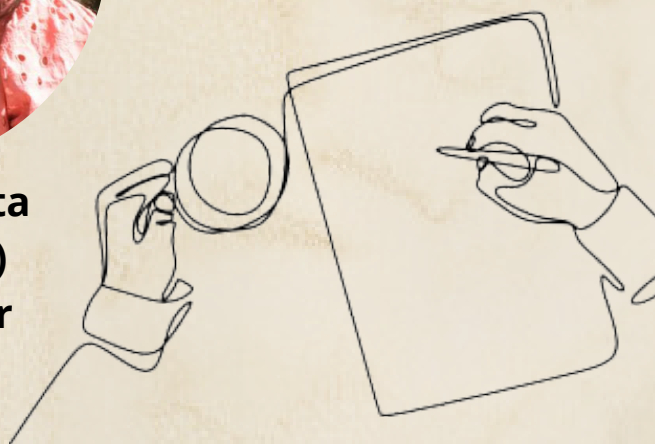
In general, it is very important to walk the middle line between technophobia and overdriven techno-optimism that borders on hubris, since man is ultimately a technological being. If humanities can complement the gigantic and infinite potential of technological and scientific community, it is by constantly serving them the reminder that the mission of science and technology is not to make man into God or a perfectionistic monster, but to foreground his humaneness. And the essence of human life lies in its failure, its incompleteness, its fragility, its constant striving despite constant failures and the ceaseless love for one's own life and the surrounding life-forms that stem from it. It sounds a little tragic, but it is this tragic dignity that provides human life its worth. It is this inner fragility and tragic bearing that we, in the midst of all our technological and scientific accomplishments, have to learn to recognize instantly every time we encounter a human face, be it of a total stranger or a dear one. It is this freedom, our freedom to desire, to be foolish, to fail completely on our own, and start striving again and not to be determined and programmed by ultra-sophisticated algorithms, that read our unconscious impulses and make us behave like an automaton, that Dostoevsky or his protagonist was so scared of losing.



MEET THE TEAM



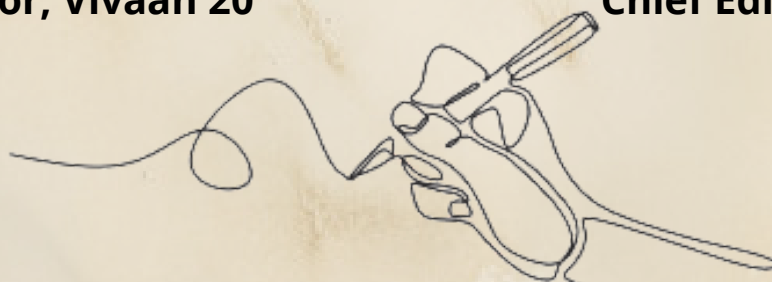
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