

O SANCTA SIMPLICITAS

— o holy simplicity —

SIZZLING SANDS '16- '17



The Annual Campus Magazine of BITS Pilani, K.K. Birla Goa Campus



DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

What does it mean to be a creative engineer or a scientist? Are we limited to be creative within the professional discipline we have chosen? Or un-shackle our mind and explore the unexplored?

BITS takes pride in enabling its students discover themselves and in the process create amazing things, be it art, music, drama, theater or literature. 'Sizzling Sands' gives a glimpse of their capabilities. Looking at the past issue, I am impressed.

I understand the next issue of 'Sizzling Sands' is ready for release. I am sure this issue will be another example of the creative talent of BITS Pilani Goa Campus, that will stimulate curiosity and imagination in us.

Congratulations to the Editorial team for their efforts. All the best.

Best Wishes
Prof. Raghurama G.
Director
BITS Pilani, K.K. Birla Goa Campus

Editorial

I sometimes wonder what humankind is doing on the planet. Is there such a thing as a preordained destiny? Perhaps our race was a clumsy mistake. Perhaps we may all be decimated because Earth is an unwanted blimp in what is otherwise a grand interstellar highway. Could it be that the theory of our souls being inextricably linked into a great consciousness is just baloney because we're all figments of someone's imagination and we flatter ourselves by believing we are independent free thinkers?

I am only sure of one thing - we weren't meant to wink into existence only to crumble to dust. Each one of us is meant to experience. We deserve to be moved by the poetry of the earth. We deserve to be held captive by some plane of higher emotion. We are sensitive beings - the lightheadedness of euphoria and the penetrating intensity of loneliness both have held sway over our minds. Turning over a smooth pebble between your palm and thumb, watching tendrils of a flame lick the air to send a smooth drop of wax into its descent, facing east at dawn in quiet anticipation, stars glittering through a half-open car window at midnight, wordless hours spent watching waves crash or memorizing a cracked ceiling - what keeps you up at night? What transfixes the words in your throat to render you motionless? What wrenches your heart open to make you sob in wild abandon?

Earlier this year, I came across a succinct yet meaningful line by Tagore - "The world knows that the few are more than the many." There are moments that stand out more clearly than others, which go on to define us. We cling to the feeling because it is so elusive. We gravitate towards the very power of their memory.

Our theme, 'O Sancta Simplicitas,' or 'O Holy Simplicity,' is an ideal, which we, as a team, have strived to uphold. We have placed clarity of expression on a pedestal to strike an impression at a level simpler yet far more intricate than language - that of wordlessness itself. Sizzling Sands is, very simply, a collection of stories. It is a recreation of experiences. Each contributor is a storyteller and we hope that you, reader, are moved by their memories, half-remembered dreams, and the fabric of their imagination.

Slow down, and take it in.

Veena Vijai
Co-Chief Editor



Words are an odd thing. If you were to read letters in capital, you presume they are being shouted out. Italics means emphasised, a smaller font means whispered, an exclamation mark lends excitement to the word, and a fullstop an air of solemn finality. Human beings are visual creatures, so each of these tiny, arbitrary squiggles create reactions that are marvellously unique, and they inevitably transform into an image.

Werner Herzog, a German filmmaker, popularised the concept of the 'ecstatic truth'. He said, "facts create norm, and truth illumination". I believe that this ecstatic truth exists in both words and images, and constantly flits between the two, but never resides purely in one at any given time.

O Sancta Simplicitas, literally meaning "Oh Holy Innocence", is generally used to mock the innocent of being guileless. It has been our sole mission to create a magazine where both the literal and the colloquial use of this phrase is encouraged. Parts of it are written simply, parts designed complexly, yet the overall arch of the narrative is an effort to find that illusive ecstatic truth.

Not every combination of words and images will have meaning to everyone. It might be that we haven't succeeded at all, and that no combination provokes a reaction that is truly ephemeral, but we have tried our hardest. I believe that it's very difficult to find the ephemeral, but now and again, one might be liable to stumble into it.

Happy stumbling.

Adheep Das
Co-Chief Editor

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05 HOPE

Hope is that voiceless truth
That, albeit dormant in a few
Is much sweeter than the dew
On the chilly dawn of forlorn youth.

Amongst the raving desperation
Amidst the flurry of ruthless fear
Where only the devil would cheer
She lies in this brutal nation.

Yet, as the eye of a storm is calm
So she too, feigning fear, holds dearly
Despite the violence, she sees clearly
And pities the fool taking weapons for alms.

Hope is all she has, barely enough
Yet strange is this hope
Which seeks truth in a mirage
Life in a mirror, peace in this war.

Ayush Anand

पैसा ही जीवन नहीं

पैसों से बने आशयिने
नहीं परेम से गुथे परविर
हो भले दुनिया से कनिरे
इनका अपना सुखी संसार।
पैसे दे महंगे गहने
नहीं प्राकृतिक नखिर
पहन पहनकर कतिने पहने
आडंबर आभूषण सब बेकार।
पैसों से बनती पहचान
कमशिनर इंसपेक्टर और दीवान
देते उन्हें घूस रूपी दान
दूषति कर पवतिर प्राण।
पैसे उड़ाने के बहाने
मदारी सेवन और धूम्रपान
पैसों से आदते बगिडे
न समाज सेवा न कल्याण।
पैसों से पकवान खावे
मलि जाए जतिने प्रकार
परम रहति रस वचति
केसे नगिले ? न आए डकार।

पैसों से बने खजाने
सोने चांदी की खदान
पर सुनेह सदा सरल हरदय मे
अनयिमति व्यय की खान।
पैसों से पहने अलंकार
सुसज्जति पर सुंदरता से मनुहार
रमणी तो वह कहलाए
जसिका सदा सरल व्यवहार।
पैसा ही दुरभाव की जननी
उननता करे जो दो से चार
इर्ष्या द्वेष की फसल
रहे उर मे सदा बहार।
पैसों से कांटो के कलि बने
आत्ममयता जसिसे फरार
पैसों से दंभ के दरवाजे खुले
हो गए अकेलेपन के शकिार।
पैसों से अमीर बने
पर क्या जीवन है सरस?
पैसा पाकर धनी वही
जो पार सुख संतोष अनवरत।

पूजा कंसल

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FIREFLIES
by Mahima Samant

You know
The fireflies spoke to me
They told me
You pillaged and plundered
Their teeny mud hole homes
Picked them bottoms up
Shoved into glass canisters
And at twilight lit up a starry world
For your queen
They glowed a fluorescent green
Reflected by the spectral bottle
And you danced and danced.

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At the birth of monsoon, Rain is a spoilt brat
She despises all that is hot and bright
She is helpful towards the warm and cosy and crisp and baked
And adores the damp and dark.

Humans, those self-satisfied creatures,
Inevitably forget the extent of her power
She doesn't mind reminding them for the countless-and-third time.
And, the faithful younger brother, snatches away dreams and umbrellas
He wraps worry and puts it down the ears of the wrinkly beings
The crying young ones, exchanging their outdoor games
For snuffles and shivering.

At last, she lets out a cackle of joy and claps wind on the back.
The trees, always green with envy, come crashing down.
Thunder, her best friend, bursts out in laughter
Her favourite uncle Winter looks on with pride and nods in approval.
Snow abounds and it's the start of a perfect night.

Sometimes, just sometimes, she is sensible.
When all is said and done she grudgingly, gracefully fades away before curfew
The start of a perfect morning
The sun hesitantly comes out with a nervous half smile
Embracing everyone warmly.
And (who is a good boy after all) lingers about
Giving a sigh of relief
And the humbled humans breathe it in deeply.



L I T E R A R Y
- e n g l i s h -

twonk | the wall | a reminiscent blip | selfie with the self
a night of blues | hope | incomplete | the death penalty paradox
entropic ambiguity | trust with death | postcard

At 12:17 in the morning,
I burn my tongue on some coffee and sit down to write.
With my clichéd poetic loneliness,
And my singular flickering lamplight.

At 1:24 in the morning,
I'm still hunting through the attic that is my mind.
Rummaging through its dusty drawers and shelves,
Looking for a 'deep' thought I can get behind.

At 2:38 in the morning,
I decide: chuck 'deep', I want to be funny.
Except – all my satire is really just veiled jabs at things I can't have,
And that mostly makes me feel stupidly self-pitying and sad.

At 3:49 in the morning,
I think it'd be easy to write about my life and my blues.
But then I can't decide if they're real or if I'm making them up in my head.
And so my vicious, parasitic self-doubt strikes that idea dead.

At 4:58 in the morning,
I attempt to think of something to write about love.
But I start getting so caught up in trying to spin something 'different',
I feel like the passion burns out in my excessive dissection of the sentiment.

At 5:47 in the morning,
I feel like writing about the orange hues of the sunrise as I see it begin.
But then the sun goes and hides behind grayscale buildings and smoky clouds,
And I'm throwing yet more crushed paper into my overflowing bin.

A slight glance out the window then, tells me my night has gone by.
Wasted on grandiose half-baked ideas, and disappointed sighs.

So of course, I sit there contemplating over the dissonance in my head,
Trying to think of something I learnt, that made the night worthwhile instead.

And I realise it's really nothing but the fact that I've been blind to all along
That I really need to stop being a pretentious little overthinking twonk.



THE WALL

The sound of his breath seemed unnaturally loud in the languid afternoon. Not much longer now, intervened a practiced voice. *Pull up and kick. Nothing has changed, nothing has changed, this is just like the games we played when we were ten. Of course,* agreed his rational side. *Only difference is, you have a bed of nails to cushion your fall. It's all fine, unless you lose balance and tumble into the embrace of vicious dogs with their vicious patrol guards. Precisely the same, except the machine guns that could blow you into pieces any second.* A depraved game. It wasn't called the death strip for nothing!

It had all been decided two days ago. At the market, his friend Peter had chanced to hear a conversation between two officials, one from West Berlin.

"Friedrichstrasse...yes, came through...engineers hired...new defenses...work immediately..." Raucous guffaws followed, epaulettes gleamed in the harsh light. Peter understood only too well. The man had come through Checkpoint Charlie with a special permit. So the murmurs were true - minefields and tripwire machine guns were to step up security, and the wall, the hateful concrete wall, would be made even higher.

As soon as Peter told him, they knew they had but one choice. Leave, or live indefinitely with burning resentment. When construction of the wall had begun the previous year, the sight of barbed wire had bowed down the heads of East Berliners in resigned acceptance of their fate. Those who tried to leave were killed without second thought and branded with the shameful title of Republikflüchtiger (Republic-deserter).

Even after the Allied powers had won, the war hadn't ended. The move to split Germany into capitalist and communist divisions had not gone down well with the people. It made sense to flee to West Germany - to leave behind a life of struggle under Soviet industries to move onward to a promising land with opportunities to flourish. Berlin did not escape this partition; it was decided that to avoid a tussle for power due to mass migration, a simple physical obstacle would be constructed.

The Berlin Wall.

He gasped for breath as his skin made contact with the wires. His teeth clenched with the sheer strain of climbing. Sweat rained down to sting his eyes and plastered his hair to his forehead. It wasn't getting any easier and he started becoming

conscious of exactly how much effort each movement was taking him. He didn't have enough energy. Not enough air was going into his lungs, and he paused in a dizzying moment of exhaustion and terror.

The moment extended as his world spun, and he was through! He had fallen hard, but the ground had never seemed quite so welcoming. He waited for Peter to join him. Any minute now. They would build their futures together and prove all their skeptics wrong. All it needed was a little courage. He began to laugh hysterically. Oh, the exhilaration of sweet -

Bratatat. Bratatat. Bratatatatatat. He froze, but time went on as mercilessly as it always had. The air convulsed, blistered, and exploded with the sound.

He turned away and started walking as his nails dug into his skin. He couldn't register what was happening. All he could do was walk. And so he walked, his eardrums bursting with the brutal sound. The gunshots rang for a full two minutes.

Oh, the exhilaration of sweet freedom.

Historical note: On November 9, 1989, it was announced that "permanent relocations" could be done through border checkpoints. The Wall, erected in 1961, was demolished, and Germany was unified in 1990. Peter Fechter was mourned as the 50th person to die attempting to cross the Wall. 2016 was the 27th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Veena Vijai

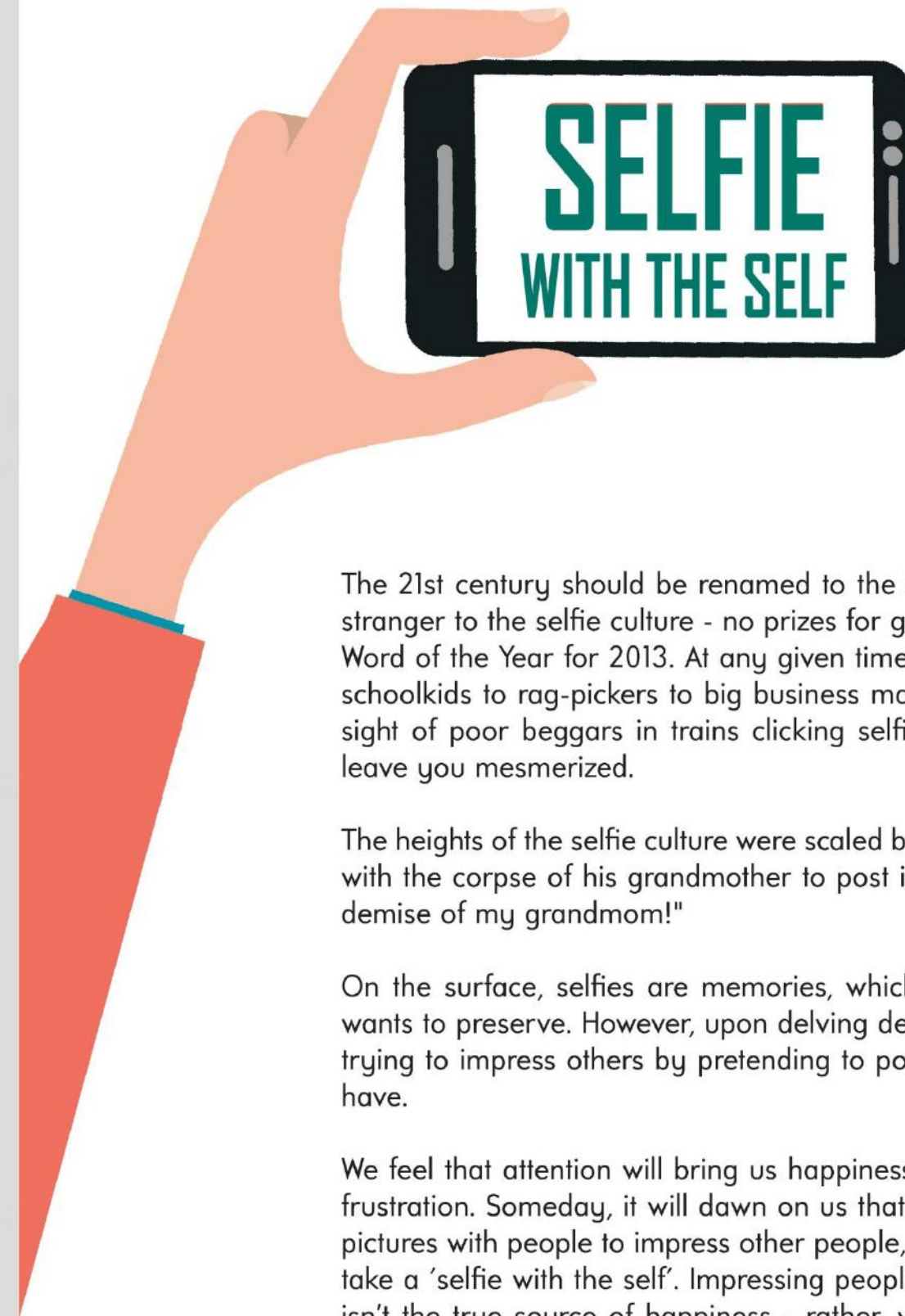
FREEDOM

A REMINISCENT BLIP

I've always been on the awkward side. However, we humans have a tendency of sailing through life laughing and grimacing at our churlish flaws. Awkwardness is a vestigial condition; it serves no purpose. It just is. Socially inept people, especially, have disturbing behavior up their sleeves. Unreactive robot for the rest of the world, a mad cow for the two ragtags they hang out with. BITS Goa though, has a way of churning you out. Oh! of course you'll have that internal monologue, "Wow such blue sky, green eggs and ham. Oh human, Look down! No, up! Human approaching, slant sideways, let incoming human pass. Oh Dog! Look down....". Some kindly mates later commented that they believed me to be an autistic uppity freak, with my droopy shoulders, lanky walk and spazoid stare.

I will not make this a Chicken Soup. I got used to talking to random aliens. Help the freaks. This was a reminiscent blip.

Anonymous



The 21st century should be renamed to the Selfie Century. No one is a stranger to the selfie culture - no prizes for guessing Oxford Dictionary's Word of the Year for 2013. At any given time, one can spot people from schoolkids to rag-pickers to big business managers clicking selfies. The sight of poor beggars in trains clicking selfies in their leisure time will leave you mesmerized.

The heights of the selfie culture were scaled by a boy who clicked a selfie with the corpse of his grandmother to post it on his timeline - "The sad demise of my grandmom!"

On the surface, selfies are memories, which quite naturally, everyone wants to preserve. However, upon delving deeper, we realize we are just trying to impress others by pretending to possess things that we do not have.

We feel that attention will bring us happiness but it will only leave us in frustration. Someday, it will dawn on us that instead of endlessly taking pictures with people to impress other people, it would be a better idea to take a 'selfie with the self'. Impressing people every second of our lives isn't the true source of happiness - rather, we ought to understand the needs of our body and soul. To introspect and relish the true source of joy will make us feel unrestricted and unpretentious. And that's only possible by taking some selfies with the self.

Kruthik S



A NIGHT OF BLUES

Smoke and vapour clouded my sight and stung my eyes. As I struggled to recognize the blurry shapes in my vision, I felt an unfamiliar hand clasp my arm. The intimate feel of her skin snapped me back to my senses and the fog that hung over my addled brain slowly dissipated. "Are you okay?" she whispered into my ear, which caused a terrible echoing that reverberated inside my skull. She ignored my mumbling and brought me back to my feet. As my eyes started adjusting, the world became clearer. Her face swam in and out of focus, and the more I tried to discern her features, the more obscure they seemed to be. There was music playing in the background - it could've been jazz or an Italian orchestra.

While I was occupied with this conundrum, she clasped my head in both her hands. "You might've hurt your head from that fall!" she said. After assuring her that I was still in my senses, she chastised me for not being more careful. "If you're fine, come dance with me," she said. I was about to make the case that I had just met her and I was not comfortable with returning to the throng of people milling around the dance floor, when she grabbed my hand and took me with her. As I staggered into people, I could hear her voice in my head which drowned out all my other thoughts. She swiveled around to face me and drew herself close enough for her fragrance to excite my nose. I tried to peer through the smoke and into her eyes but was unable to see them clearly. Sometimes they appeared crystal blue and at other times, black as coal. Her hair ranged between chestnut brown to vivid blonde. One feature remained constant which was a thin white lock of hair that swept across her forehead - almost reminiscent of a past tragedy which had imprinted itself on her soul. As we danced, the people around us seemed to recede into the background to remain silhouettes in a canvas we were painting together. I felt a bout of dizziness in my head and suddenly it seemed like I had fallen backwards into an abyss.

When I woke up again, I was outside and the smell of rain hung in the air. I stumbled back to my feet and memories of what had just happened earlier felt like a distant dream. As I blundered down the street, I knocked down what felt like a massive dog of some sort. I continued along my way, oblivious to the fact that I had in fact decked the the female companion of a particularly burly man. He grabbed me by the neck and was about to splatter my brain into the pavement when another person grabbed his shoulder. "He doesn't look very well. Just let him go," a voice said, and I nodded in the most convincing manner I could while being terrified for my life. He grunted something about ignorant teenagers before ambling back to his companion. "Are you okay?" asked the young man who had probably just prevented my premature funeral. I said that I was shaken but otherwise okay and then he helped me to my feet.

He dusted me off and I managed to get a clear look at him although he wore an obnoxiously large cap which hid his hair and cast deep shadows across the rest of his face. He gave me a wide smile which instilled some energy back into me and I weakly reciprocated his gesture. His voice was as smooth as silk as he asked me whether I wanted to return inside. I contemplated refusing but his words had an enticing quality which had me nodding my head reluctantly. He took my hand in his and guided me back in, my feet tripping over each other as I tried to gather my thoughts.

Inside, the melodic hum of the saxophones washed over me and sent me back into a trance. Our bodies started moving in unison and his cap fell from his head. A thick mop of hair fell over his forehead, concealing his face. But the feature that caught my eye was the pale white lock of hair which stood out from the rest of his hair. I was distracted, and I fell into a deep reverie with memories of a similar person coming back into focus. In my contemplation, I lost track of where I was and spun until I became dizzy.

I peered through the haze and I saw a face with strands of bright white hair falling across it. I chased that image through the crowd unsure of whom I was going to find. I was more unsure of whom I wanted to find. As I plowed through the crowd, the face turned and I was greeted by a huge grin. "You came back," she said, and hugged me. When she pulled away, I felt something different. I looked up and heard him say, "I thought I lost you for a bit." I took a step back, my mind pulling in two different directions at once. The music started to shift between jazz and blues. The face started in front of me started flickering - one moment it was hers and the next, it was his. As the music swelled to a crescendo, I made my decision.

I woke up the next morning with a throbbing headache and a vague recollection of the previous night. In fact, all that seemed to remain was the blues music stuck in my head and a white hair on my shoulder.

Sahith Dambekodi

HOPE

Hope is that voiceless truth
That, albeit dormant in a few
Is much sweeter than the dew
On the chilly dawn of forlorn youth.

Amongst the raving desperation
Amidst the flurry of ruthless fear
Where only the devil would cheer
She lies in this brutal nation.

Yet, as the eye of a storm is calm
So she too, feigning fear, holds dearly
Despite the violence, she sees clearly
And pities the fool taking weapons for alms.

Hope is all she has, barely enough
Yet strange is this hope
Which seeks truth in a mirage
Life in a mirror, peace in this war.

Ayush Anand



INCOMPLETE

What are those incomplete side-view glances?
These pictures that I see
or only seem to see

What are those half hearted adventures?
These things that you do
or only think about doing

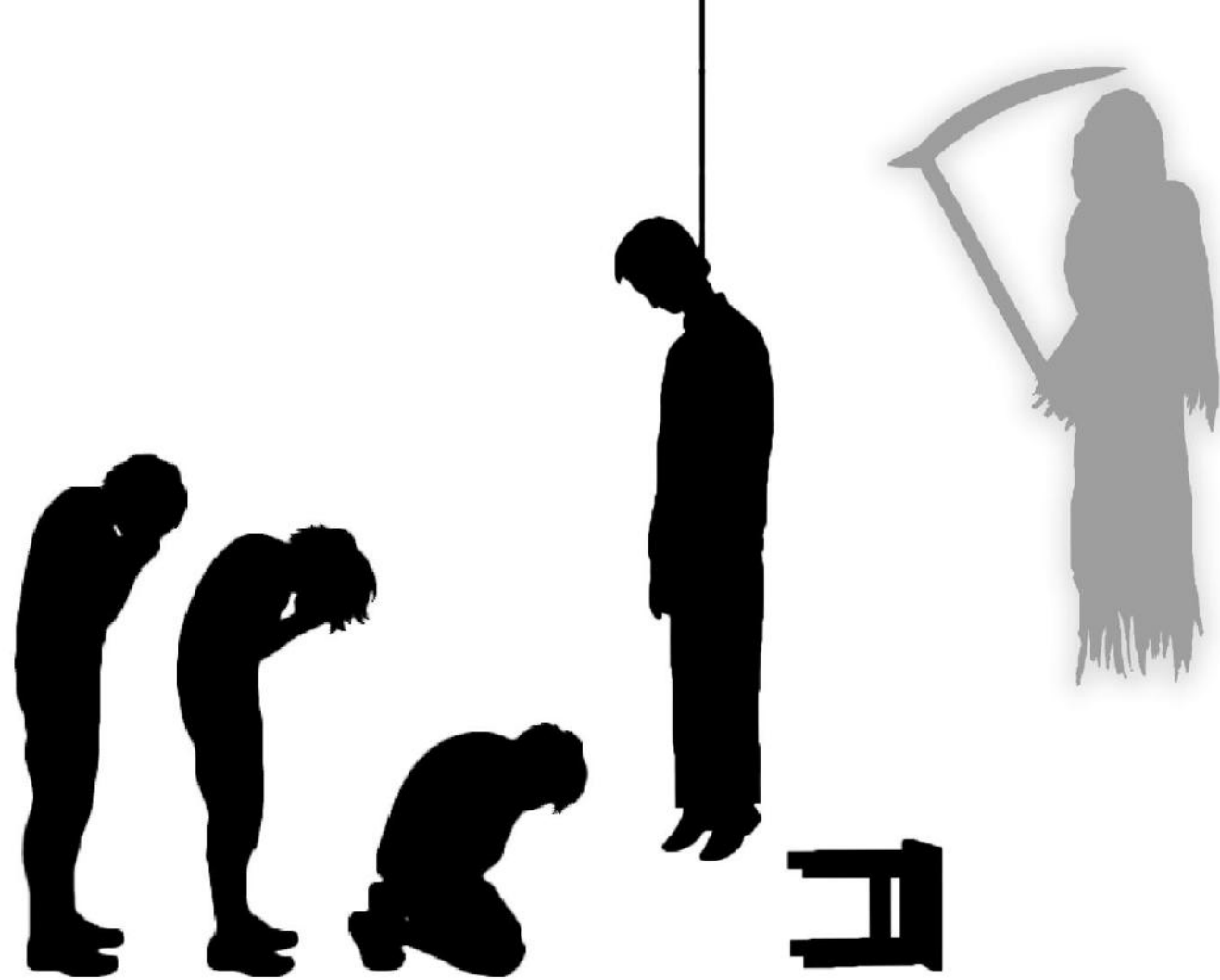
What are those unfinished thoughts?
The inspirations we reflect upon
or only try chasing with a beating heart and a breathless mind

What are those abridged dreams?
The things we wanted to do
or only things we mustered up wanting to do

What are those unacquainted friendships?
The mountains that we'd climb before sunset
or only the cliff that we're happy to look up to

What are these incomplete poems?

Sahir Gill



THE DEATH PENALTY PARADOX: SYMPTOM OF VIOLENCE OR A SOLUTION TO IT?

The dastardly attack on Army Public School, Peshawar, on December 16, 2014 carried out by the Taliban resulted in the death of 145 people – 132 of them being students. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif hastily lifted the moratorium on capital punishment in terror related cases in Pakistan. The executions of a couple of convicts followed shortly after.

Almost immediately, international human rights organisations and the United Nations condemned this move. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon spoke to Mr. Sharif and while recognising the difficult situation his country was in, exhorted him to rescind the decision taken by his government.

Capital Punishment has always been a contentious and emotive issue. The disparity between different nations on this very issue is quite remarkable. On one hand we have countries like Norway, with no death penalty for any crime whatsoever. On the other hand, we have countries like Saudi Arabia, where executions are banal and take place in open, public spaces. So killing 69 people will get you just a 21 year prison sentence if you are in Norway. But, get booked for smuggling or possessing drugs of any kind, and you may be facing a public beheading, or what's worse, a death by stoning in Saudi Arabia.

Over the past few years, more and more countries have joined the anti-death penalty bandwagon. A vote on the use of capital punishment has the unique ability to disrupt traditional voting blocs, and forge rather unconventional ones. UNGA resolution 62/149 saw the United States vote against it, while its principal ally, the United Kingdom and several other key NATO allies voted in favour of it. This resolution also managed to unite India and Pakistan, as both nations voted against this resolution which called for a moratorium on the death penalty.

As non-intuitive as it may sound, an overwhelming number of countries believe that no one- not even the slaughterers of scores of innocent children - deserve the gallows. They generally make the moral argument- taking someone's life is unacceptable, irrespective of their actions. Some have gone so far as to call capital punishment "the highest form of premeditated murder." Additionally they say that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that the death penalty has deterred people from committing crimes for which they may be executed. Amnesty says that the death penalty flagrantly violates numerous international laws. It contravenes one's Right to Life, as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is the ultimate cruel, inhuman and degrading punishment, whatever form it takes - beheading, shooting, gassing, electrocuting, hanging, beheading, shooting or injecting.

Whatever be the crime of the condemned, whether they are guilty or innocent, their lives are claimed by a system of justice that values retribution over rehabilitation.

One can argue that capital punishment for any crime is a huge problem solution mismatch. It is a result of an oversimplification of the complexity of the deep seated, systemic problems that our society has faced for centuries. To quote Amnesty, "it is a symptom of a culture of violence, not a solution to it." Some of its staunchest opponents would also argue that it compounds the problem. It provides a cosmetic fix to the agony of the victim's loved ones, whilst also extending the suffering to the family of the condemned convict. It provides governments with a convenient façade that they put up to represent their efforts to combat violent crime, without having to divert any resources to combat the underlying problems. Furthermore, it forges a largely divisive societal narrative that more often than not, further obfuscates the critical issues that need to be addressed.

As we strive to establish a more civilised and idealistic society, a society that punishes criminals while giving them a chance to reform themselves, a society that upholds the sanctity of life, we must take a moment and introspect - see where we are truly heading, try to understand the significance of Mahatma Gandhi's much talked about "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind," and only then attempt to solve this paradox that has confounded our society for decades.

Rohan Gajendragadkar

ENTROPIC AMBIGUITY

Random are the thoughts, of a person distraught
With agony beyond imagination
It pushes him into a surreal abyss, of erratic cerebral activity
The cusp of pain and pleasure.

And yet we say, like a scientific cliché
With adduce beyond reproach
That all bodies in this universe
Seek a state more random, a fact they say

There exists a Dichotomy, a logic anomaly
With evidence beyond description
Between this and the teachings
Plan and organise, the basis of progress, they claim

This is a seed illusion, for the tree of confusion
With a twinge beyond all contusions
For the savant to digest
And continue with a mortal life

There cannot be restitution, a mystic solution
With rationale beyond argument
For this colossal complication
It remains. An entropic ambiguity.
ETHYLENE!

Karthik Srinivasan

I was inspired by a summer spent at IISER. Entropy is a scientific term that describes states of disorder or randomness and it is claimed that the entropy of the universe is ever-increasing. This is in stark contrast to the ordered structure of life which the human species is constantly trying to achieve. Ethylene has been analysed as a quantum entropic ambiguity.

TRYST WITH DEATH

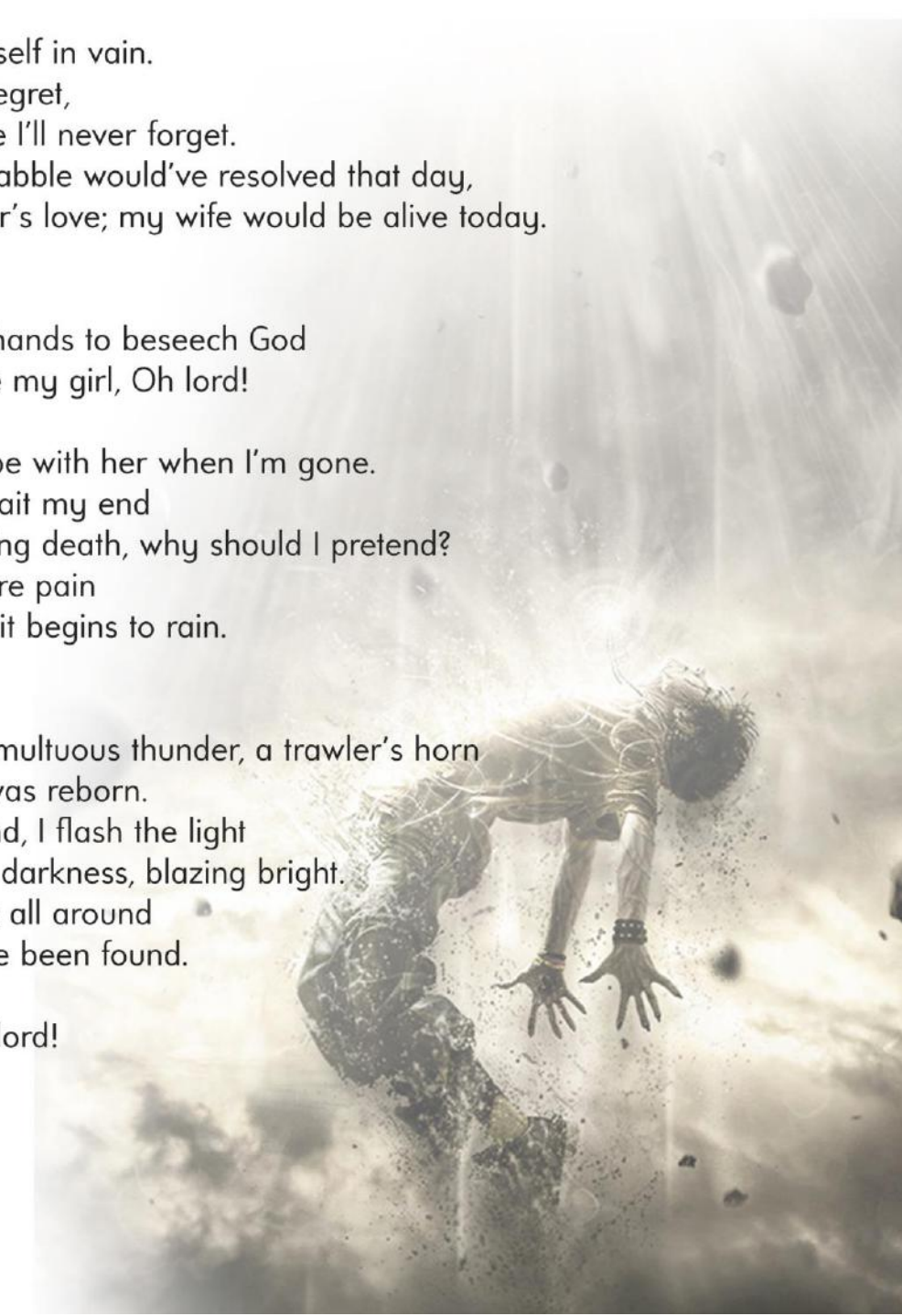
I open my eyes, it's an auburn haze
a petulant fly breaks my gaze.
Marooned on an island, debris all around
my corpse will rot here, never to be found.
Broken ribs, ruptured veins, clothes scarlet with gore
a fulfilling life I had just moments before.
Years of experience, yet the slightest of error;
a crashed plane, a sight of terror!

Logic dictates I can't survive.
A promise to my daughter keeps me alive.
My head stings in pain
I muster my strength to bestir myself in vain.
Stirring in the gut is my deepest regret,
a memory buried deep down, one I'll never forget.
Had I been more patient, that squabble would've resolved that day,
a daughter would've had a mother's love; my wife would be alive today.

For the first time in my life, I join hands to beseech God
Chastise me for my sins but spare my girl, Oh lord!
Keep her safe, build her strong.
I've raised her without a mother, be with her when I'm gone.
With that I close my eyes, and await my end
I have lived as someone else, facing death, why should I pretend?
I feel light-headed, there is no more pain
as if to mark the arrival of death, it begins to rain.

Filling the silences between the tumultuous thunder, a trawler's horn
Hope surges in my blood, as if I was reborn.
Spread-eagled, beacon in my hand, I flash the light
Thin, flickering, it cleaves through darkness, blazing bright.
Boat docks on the shore, men are all around
Against all my expectations, I have been found.
Closing my eyes, I thank God;
You let me keep my promise, Oh lord!

Animesh Okhade



POSTCARD

I don't see too much of the world. You could say I'm like a sea turtle. I sit around in the sand for what seems like an eternity before a mad dash to the safety and comfort of the seas. Chances are, I might get picked off during transit and become just another mark in the long, long list of could-have-beens. However, if I'm one of the lucky few who were lucky enough to evade the sight of a ravenous gull, the joys and wonders of the sea await me. Now you think to yourself, what does all this have to do with a postcard? Well you see, a postcard is but an inanimate sea turtle. I sit on the shelf for what seems like an eternity, until some kind soul thinks of a friend and purchases me. This is when I'm at my most panicky state. Who knows what's out there in the world? Not even the Three Fates can see the dangers and perils that await me. The hand that picks me off the shelf might belong to someone who just doesn't have it in them to write a message and stick a stamp on me. The mailman who picks me out from the red letter box might be a careless scoundrel and let me fall into the eternal abyss of the black tarred roads. Heck, I might suffer the worst misfortune of forever having to sit in the mailbox of the receiver after having been addressed to the wrong location.

The postcard isn't the story here though. This is the story of a chicken named Jack who thought he was a postcard. Every single day of his life seemed like a rerun of the previous. Nothing moved him out of his routine, nothing nudged him off the beaten path. Jack thought of himself as a postcard analogous to how I thought of myself as a sea turtle. Jack never felt time pass when he was asleep. This was only true until the rooster crowed. It was a noise he was all too familiar with - "Jack, rise and shine, it's a whole new world out there today!" Jack's only goal was to avoid becoming meat at a butcher's.

So you can see how Jack could equate his frame of mind to that of an inanimate postcard. I wouldn't dock points if, for a second there, you thought this was one of those tales where the minds of two things switch places. I was leading you on there, wasn't I? But come on, switching the minds of a postcard and a chicken? That's uncouth. The voice of common sense in your head tells you that a chicken's mind has so much more to offer and process than a postcard. The wind that sweeps my backside, the postcard's picturesque landscape, whistles, "A postcard can hold only three thoughts at a time, much fewer than the chicken."

Jack was just another ordinary chicken. Was there any way Jack could have survived the day with the mind of a postcard, a mind capable of holding nothing but three thoughts at a time? Which were the three most important thoughts? Food, Shelter, Clothing? Wasn't that what was thought in psychology to be the three important needs of a chicken? Could these three thoughts alone encompass his day? Me, on the other hand, I have a major problem. Practiced at holding just three ideas at a time, I was ecstatic and a bit perturbed at the challenge of managing a massive treasure trove. I tried, but I couldn't stop the thoughts from spilling. "I'm going to be an astronaut!" I exclaimed while simultaneously showcasing the vast natural beauty of the Himalayan countryside on the rectangular cardboard. He was one of the rare ones. I was a postcard with no markings on the ruled side. I was fresh, uninked, and had reason to be happy despite the recurrent exclaiming of my innermost thoughts. Others called it Tourette's syndrome, but I was happy that I had the opportunity to juggle more than three at a time.

Enough about myself, let's get back to Jack. Jack's day had not gotten any better. Although he seemed slow, he felt an uneasy clarity rising within himself. Being accustomed to thinking about many things simultaneously, the opportunity to deal with three thoughts at a time made a world of difference. For the first time in his seven month old life, he looked right, then looked left, and finally looked right again before crossing the road. No other thought distracted him as he did so. Three thoughts, and nothing but those three thoughts existed that day in Jack's head. And it was enough.



Why did Jack, the chicken, cross the road? Because he finally had the mind of a postcard and he finally could.

I said I was like a sea turtle. I might have been one of the few that made it, but this switching of brains with Jack made me, the postcard, realize something. It made me realize that the sacrifices of my fellow postcards, the ones that lay on the flat, black abysses that are the tarred roads have not gone in vain. Sometimes you need the crazy sea turtles to sing fifteen sea shanties at a time and draw attention to themselves, so that you can be the relatively inconspicuous one with only three sea shanties in your mind to pass unnoticed into the sea without the birds catching you.

Fill me up, but with three thoughts. No more.

I am transitory, and fleeting. Why burden me with more than I want to carry?

<Paid for by the Trump Tower Postcards Society of America and funded in part by Chicken for Hillary>



S P O R T S

badminton | basketball | cricket | football | squash
table tennis | tennis | ultimate frisbee | volleyball

KEY FOR THE SPORTS SECTION :

Spree - Sports fest, BITS Pilani, Goa

Arena - Sports fest, BITS Pilani, Hyderabad

BSF - BITS Sports Festival, BITS Pilani, Dubai

SKREAM - Sports fest, K J Somaiya, Mumbai

MUCT - Manipal University Cricket Tournament

Revels - Fest, Manipal University

Usha Mumbai Gheun Tak - Sports tournament, Mumbai

BADMINTON



BADMINTON

I never watched badminton. This isn't the tale of a child enthralled by how fast a shuttle could be hit, or how long someone could hang in the air in search of the perfect angle, or even the superhuman state someone achieves in the middle of a long rally. Midway through my life, I moved to Delhi. Living in a society with only a tiny central lawn and a single usable badminton court, football was hardly an option. Cue a brand new badminton racquet, a box of shuttles, and a love-affair with the sport.

The BITS Goa Badminton Team consists of people who are, amongst other things, fans of the sport. They train hard and play even harder, while simultaneously trying to maintain a healthy culture of badminton on campus. Under the captains for the years 2014 and 2015 - Malhar Patil and Siddharth Mohan - the team has gone from strength to strength. The team started to put in a considerable amount of time training on and off court. Nowadays, they regularly train a minimum of two hours a day, practising their shot selection and execution, as well as working on the chemistry between established doubles partners.

In the past few years, they have won Arena 2015, and reached the finals, and the semi-finals twice in Spree 2015, Zest 2016, and Spree 2016 respectively. They felt uplifted while representing the college in an intercollegiate scale, and want to venture out of college more often in the years to come.

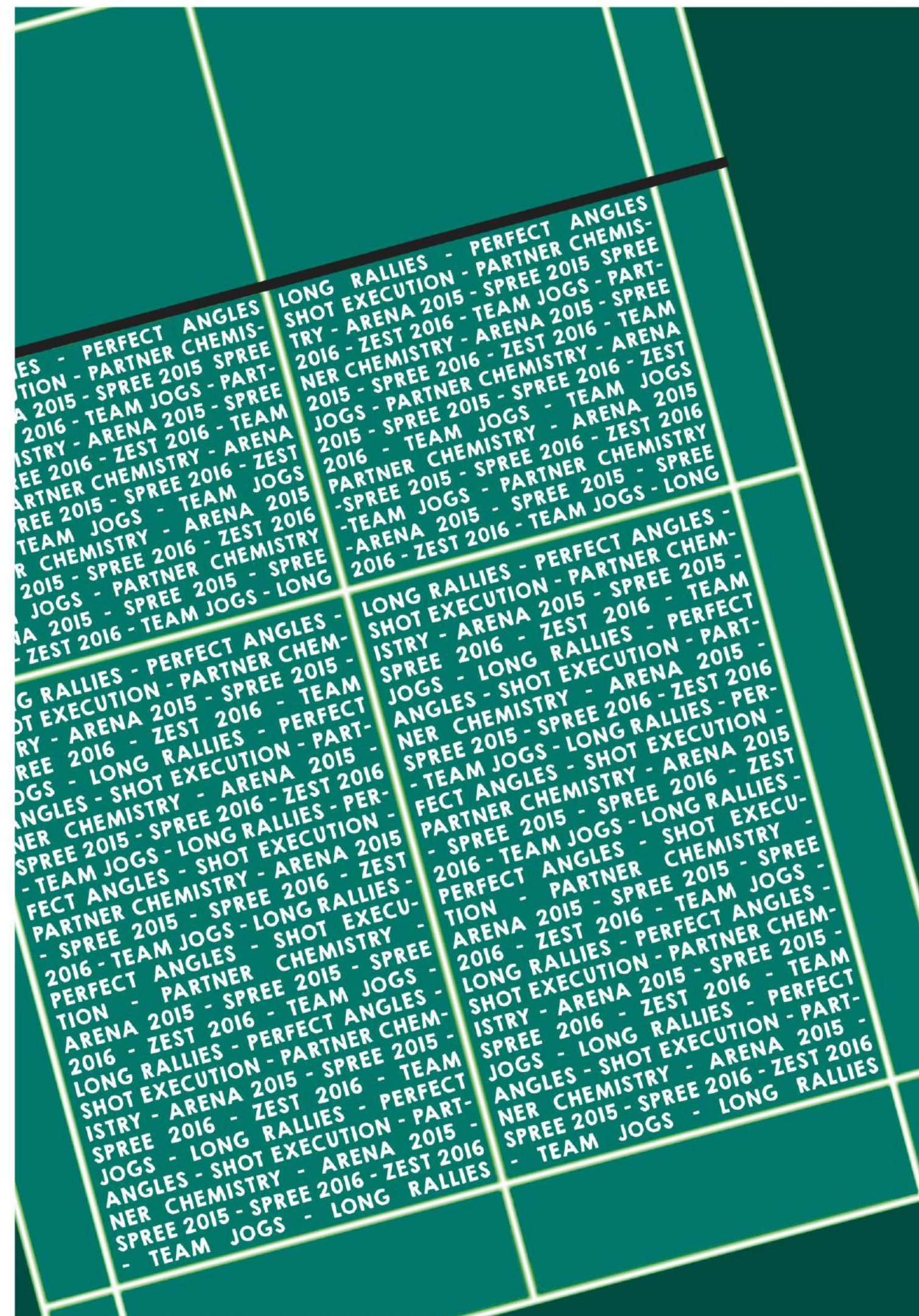
In the academic year 2016 - 2017, they plan to go to at least three sports college fests, as well as a number of individual state tournaments in Goa. This is with the aim of building team spirit which will allow them to become victors of Spree.

The badminton team is proud of how they look out for each other, and not just on the court. They routinely go out together, whether it is jogging to Jacinto, or a road trip to someplace north. All this has the subconscious effect of making them a better unit.

The badminton team participated in BSF 2016 and made jaws drop in wonder as they won match after match. The boys team emerged as the winners and the girls team came a close second in their category. Needless to say, the team is ecstatic upon receiving their trophy from the guest of honour, Diego Maradona, and is looking to continue their winning streak.

When you're soaring, with the racquet raised like a scythe waiting patiently to slice the flighty shuttle in half, you reach a high that you rarely reach in the life you live. It seems like it doesn't matter how you grow to love the sport, because once you're there, it's a lifelong affair.

-credits to Adheep Das



BASKETBALL



STEPHEN CURRY

BASKETBALL

Thirty, forty, fifty, sixty. The points kept pouring in as my pre-pubescent brain started to pour out of my ears. Kobe Bryant was seemingly an alien from another world who had come to our planet to show us primitive apes how a true God dominates a sport. As he finished with 81 points, I fished my jaw off the floor and scooped what was left of my brain back inside my head.

To many people, basketball seems mundane - flinging a ball upwards, praying that it finds its way into a small ring floating in the air, and repeating this process an infinite number of times. Only a few see past the illusion of this tedium, falling in love with the intricacies and nuances of the sport such that it becomes second nature to them, almost as natural as breathing. However, it is only those who have experienced both - the pure ecstasy of watching professionals play, and then attempting to emulate their moves on a cracked cement court - who feel themselves inexorably linked to the soul of the game.

The BITS basketball team came into being when a Masters student named Allen was dismayed by the complete lack of basketball culture on the campus. Being an ardent fan of the game, he took it upon himself to find and train a group of hopefuls with the goal of making a mark in that year's Spree. Unfortunately, they were terrible and were demolished in their very first match. This proved to be just be the initial growing pains that all new teams face. With a new perspective on the challenge that faced them, they trained zealously for a year and improved their standing in the following edition of Spree by reaching the quarters.

The team slowly became more and more competitive while their inductions became highly selective. From a ragtag group of people who were able to shoot a ball, the team morphed into a talented group of players who could play specialized roles with great effectiveness. Practice sessions became complex and more comprehensive, emphasizing fitness and more skill-specific drills.

As the team progressed, their results in tournaments gradually became more impressive and noteworthy. The highlight of 2015 was an unexpectedly deep run in Arena - the tournament of BITS Hyderabad. A tense semi-final against the home team was the biggest match that the team had faced till date and the encounter did not disappoint. Egged on by a feisty crowd, the Goa team was pushed further than it ever had been, culminating in a nail-biting finish in which the team held on by a single point. However, the exhaustion of this match took its toll on the players and they fell in the finals to VNR VJIET.

Under current captain Akhilesh Ram, the team is striving to go further and improve in Spree 2017. In 2015, the team came within touching distance of claiming the trophy, with their only loss in the tournament being in the finals against tournament victors Kirorimal College. In 2016, it was a loss to IMED in the semi-finals that derailed their campaign, after dominant showings in the preliminary rounds. Akhilesh feels that the team has the capability and the grit to make a deep run in more tournaments this year.

The girls basketball team has similarly seen a gradual growth over the years to morph into a team capable of winning games. They were near non-existent until around four years ago, and then were coached by Allen in their initial stage. Since then, they have gone on to becoming more organized and dedicated to improving themselves. The team went for the K J Somaiya tournament in February 2016 and triumphed in the finals. In Spree 2016, they reached the finals but were denied a win by Shree Venkateshwara Institute of Commerce. Under new captain Saachi Grover, they hope to progress further this year and to exceed the targets that they've set for themselves. Going for more tournaments this year to gain valuable experience is high on their priority list.

Both teams participated in their first tournament of the semester - BSF 2016. Their dedication in overcoming all logistical obstacles reflected in their grit on court as well. The boys team reached the semifinals and the girls team reached the finals. Their tight game and team spirit won them many admiring supporters. They returned not just with a trophy from Diego Maradona himself, but also with new pride, confidence, and determination.

On the surface, basketball may seem inaccessible with huge talent and athleticism being prerequisites for entry. However, the sheer joy of being able to boast to your friends that you can jump and touch the net for the very first time is one of life's underrated pleasures.

-credits to Sahith Dambekodi

CRICKET



RAHUL DRAVI

CRICKET

What does it mean to be a cricket fan? Isn't it to follow your team to glory, to defeat, in times of embarrassing losses, when they need you the most, isn't it being the twelfth man, isn't it going nuts on hearing that knock when the bat hits the ball and you know, you just know from the sound of that knock that this is going to be a six... In a country of over a billion people, it is not a very bad approximation to assume that there are a billion cricket fans that bleed blue. Most of us grew up playing gully cricket and watching the men in blue play.

When I was young, we used to play cricket in the streets. We didn't play as ourselves, we used to choose teams and represent them. For example, one of us would choose India, another Australia and so on. Now at that time India wasn't the dominating force in the sport. Australia and South Africa were the big guns. Almost all the finals at the time were played between them, Australia winning most of those and South Africa being the second best. The eldest player in our gully would pick Australia and I was left with South Africa. The sheer joy of playing, and playing for someone, someone who was the best at it, got me really interested in the team. I started watching them play. A sort of bonding happened and before I knew, I was in love with the team. I was a fan.

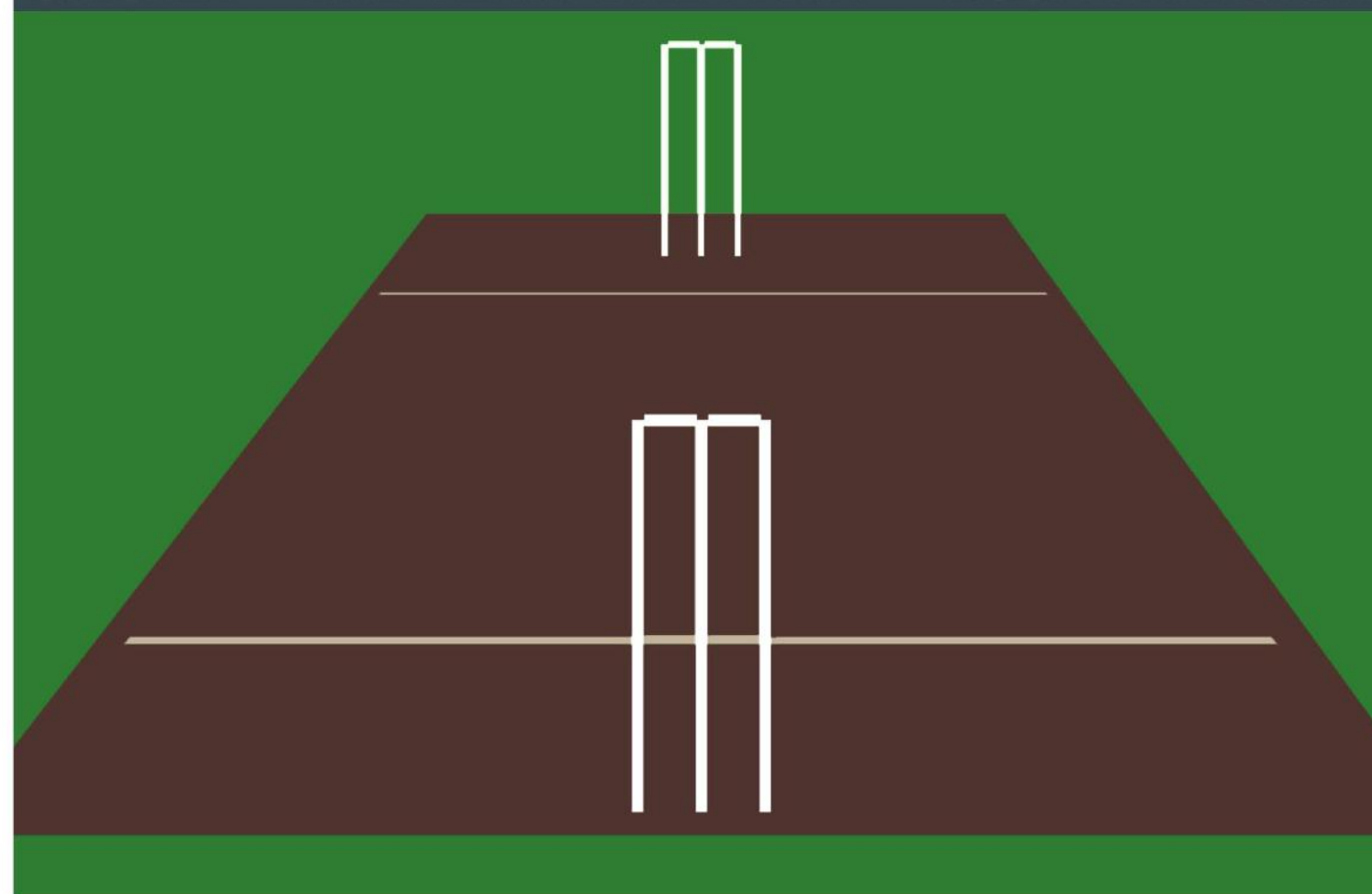
The BITS Goa cricket team, whose motto is 'One Team, One Fight' comprises individuals who are zealous cricket fans and it is this love for cricket that inspires them to practise hard everyday. The team won Spree 2014 due to brilliant teamwork and exceptional players. They also participated in BCCI A-Division matches and some of the team players went on to play state-level matches. Most of these remarkable players were in their fourth year - after their graduation, the remaining team felt orphaned and disconcerted. However, they mustered their courage, inducted fresh players and created a whole new team, ready to face the adversities of their sport. They managed to reach the Semifinals of Spree 2015 and the league stage in Spree 2016. They also participated in the Manipal University Cricket Tournament. What does it mean to be a fan? In the true sense, it means to follow your team with all your heart, beyond boundaries, always.

It has not been easy supporting a team that no one else around me follows. I tend to get into arguments, even at home with my dad. People don't understand and I don't expect them to. It's not like I don't like my country, it's just that I was in love with my team before I knew the concept of nationalism. When the Indian team wasn't successful in the last World Cup, I remember as the players were in tears, so was I.

The group is a close knit one, and apart from practice they spend time with each other watching matches, discussing academics, and exploring Goa. The team has high hopes for its performance in the coming years - having one of the best cricket grounds in Goa, several association players come to the ground and pass on invaluable knowledge to the team players. They are learning from their failures and hope to win the next Spree trophy and play in BCCI-A division matches again and continue their seniors' legacy.

-credits to Shubham Singla

MEN IN BLUE GULLY CRICKET ONE TEAM ONE FIGHT
BCCI A DIVISION SPREE 2015 2016 MANIPAL UNIVERSITY
CRICKET TOURNAMENT CLOSE KNIT MEN IN BLUE
GULLY CRICKET ONE TEAM ONE FIGHT BCCI A DIVISION
SPREE 2015 2016 MANIPAL UNIVERSITY CRICKET
TOURNAMENT CLOSE KNIT MEN IN BLUE GULLY
CRICKET ONE TEAM ONE FIGHT BCCI A DIVISION
SPREE 2015 2016 MANIPAL UNIVERSITY CRICKET
TOURNAMENT CLOSE KNIT MEN IN BLUE GULLY
CRICKET ONE TEAM ONE FIGHT BCCI A DIVISION
SPREE 2015 2016 MANIPAL UNIVERSITY CRICKET
TOURNAMENT CLOSE KNIT MEN IN BLUE GULLY
CRICKET ONE TEAM ONE FIGHT BCCI A DIVISION



FOOTBALL



CRISTIANO RONALDO

FOOTBALL

The making of a football is complex. An adhesive thermally bonds individual panels after they're all arranged together. It requires a lot of machinery to make a single football, and it is an altogether fascinating process. However, what is even more incredulous is seeing how a single football is connected to the collective hive minds of all the football fans in the world.

Back in 2002, my brain and my eyes were my own, and not part of any hive mind. Along came the World Cup with a certain Diego Forlan scoring an outrageous volley from so far out that my little brain ended up vomiting on itself. I'm not sure what the vomit had, but it must have changed some chemical connections within my head, because there on, I was inexorably linked to the world of football.

BITS-Pilani Football Club (BITSFC) was formed in 2010, and was the brainchild of Neeraj Kedar, the then captain of BITS-Pilani Goa Campus Football team. Staffed by the student part of that hive mind, BITSFC went from strength to strength, culminating in BITS Goa being the only college to have a team in the prestigious Goa Football League. Helping them were Dr. Bharat Deshpande, Dr. Raghu, and Mr. Chandu Lamani – all fans. The Salgaocar Football Club has lent their help to the BITSFC as well.

Winning and losing play a massive part of this footballing fandom – giving people the world over 'bragging rights' for the time being. Despite the happiness that is inherent when your team beats their derby rival, there is a certain ephemerality to this game. The gasp that accompanies a nutmeg, the wonder of a stunning team move, the relief after a brilliant save, the frown at a sickening tackle – all this combines to form a kind of joy that is so basal that it can't be found anywhere else. Of course, all this doesn't happen every game, or even every season – but the pursuit of perfection can never be the wrong kind of car chase.

Every year a highly dedicated group of 30 people are selected to be a part of this club. Every day of every year, these individuals give their mind and soul to the game they love the most. Let's not forget these individuals are students, burdened by the weight of their academics. Yet even this doesn't deter them. The goal isn't to win, but to compete. At the end of the day winning or losing doesn't matter. The only thing that matters is the courage and determination shown every second of every minute on that football field.

The team's motto "One Team" is, according to the current captain Parth Madan, representative of the fact that their strength lies in their togetherness. The Goa League tends to have individuals with greater talent than the team, but the fact is that they remain together, work as a unit, run for each other, and play for each other. It has led to them holding their own against relatively stronger oppositions due to organization as a unit.

The team is coming off a relatively difficult 2014 and 2015. 2014, in which they had to play Goa League during the Comprehensive exams, and slipped down to the Third Division, and 2015 – where administrative difficulties with the GFA plagued them all year long.

We played three tournaments 2015-16. The Herald – which is held in Goa, where we were unlucky to be knocked out by PCCE, a tournament in KJ Somaiya College, Mumbai where they reached the pre-quarter finals, and Spree 2016. Apart from that they played quite a few friendly matches against Goan opposition, with the highlight being a victory.

Parth thinks the margins in Spree '16 were closer than they have ever been. BITSFC drew 0-0 with SVC, Delhi in the semi-finals in normal time and excruciatingly lost to them on penalties. SVC then went on to beat Motilal Nehru, Delhi in the finals with the match again decided by penalties after it ended 0-0. This was probably the highest point of last year, and yet it felt to him that there could've been much more.

Parth desperately wants the BITSFC to win Spree this year – something the team has never done. Recently, the team was jubilant at the incredible news that BITSFC has been promoted to the Second Division under the Goa Football Association. He feels that things are looking up, with the team settling into a rhythm, and more importantly a formation that has been settled on. There also seems to be, according to him, an understanding within the team with regard to the brand of football they are trying to play.

The girls' football team or rather, WFC (Women's Football Club) has come a long way in just two years. Usually, practice sessions were held only during the even semester to prepare for Spree. However, in order to improve their game, the team has begun practising in both odd and even semesters. Spree '15 and Spree '16 saw the girls' team as the runners-up, and notably, the team participated in K J Somaiya's tournament in Mumbai in 2015.

The biggest hurdle faced by the team is mustering the willpower to wake up early to train. Getting people to wake up is a daunting but once the players are past the inertia, they enjoy themselves on the field. In 2015-16, WFC was coached by Nikhil Iyer and Prithiv Natarajan from BITSFC. The girls' team is all praise for their patience and dedication, as they showed up for every practice in the morning, in addition to their own practice in the evening. They imparted skills from the basics of ball control to team strategies over the course of one year.

The team is tightly knit, with team spirits always high, especially when the team has breakfast after a good long practice session. In fact, the girls try to coordinate which mess they choose to have fun post-practice banter. Everyone has fun on the field and has each other's back.

Nidhi Kadkol, the current captain, is very excited about what 2016-17 holds in store for the team. She hopes that there will be good talent in the 2016 batch and is looking to rope in many new people.

FOOTBALL

When asked about the team's motto, Nidhi along with the vice-captain, Aparajita Haldar, had the following exchange:

Nidhi: Roshan Nair wants to know WFC's team motto.

Quick, make one up.

"Rise and Shine"

"Else you're off the team"

Aparajita: "Please please just wake up"

Aparajita: "Shooting to achieve our goals"

Aparajita: I'm hilarious.

Nidhi: That was so bad that I'm actually impressed.

Aparajita: "The grass is greener on a football field"

Aparajita: Haha, I'm cracking myself up.

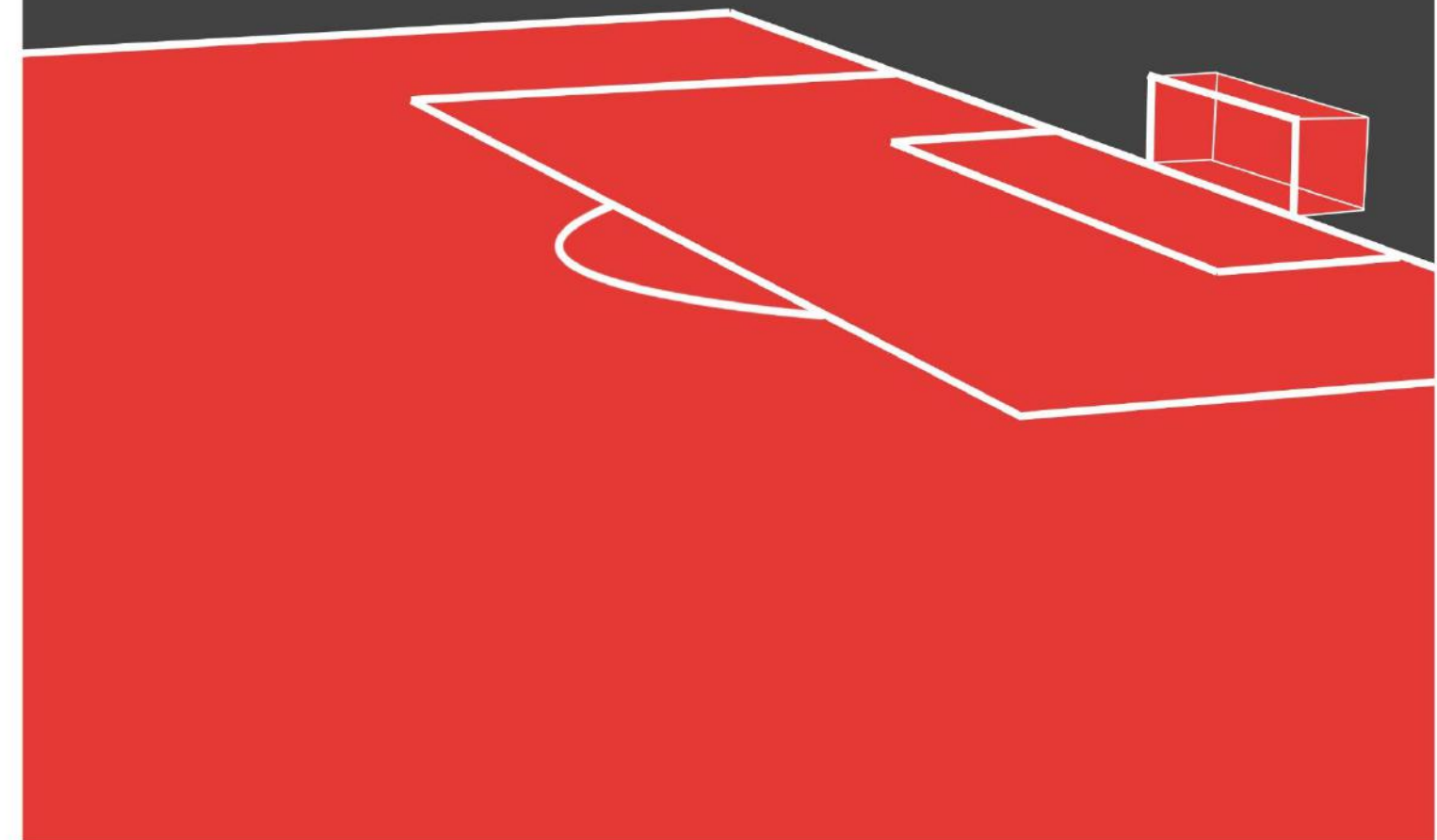
Aparajita: "What's a motto?"

Aparajita: "Nothing, what's a motto with you?"

Aparajita: LION KING REFERENCE BA DA DUMMM.

For most people, such a description of what is only a sport is way over the top, and perhaps it is. But if you really want to see football in its most pure, all you have to walk into a common room when a game is on TV. The sheer happiness when their team scores is almost sentient.

-credits to Adheep Das





SQUASH

SQUASH

One of the reasons why I started playing squash is because it isn't very popular in India. NSCI (National Sports Club of India) opened a few courts in Mumbai, I saw them and I thought that it looked like an interesting sport to pick up. So, I enrolled in coaching and started playing. I have been playing for about 7 or 8 years and I have loved it from Day 1.

The newest sport on campus, squash, started in full swing only in 2015 with the court being inaugurated in August 2015. A few enthusiasts decided to hold inductions and form a team. Despite a meagre turnout, a team of ten came together to create the first squash team of BITS Pilani, K.K. Birla Goa Campus.

When we used to walk out to play squash, people would ask if it was a tennis racquet. When I said it wasn't, they would inevitably say, "Oh, so you're going to play badminton!" That's when we realised that very few people know about about squash. Even the squash team on campus was sort of a composite of the badminton and tennis teams.

Since it is a fairly new sport, the team is trying to promote squash on campus and get more people playing. Squash has been attracting a lot of newbies and the team makes it a point to take time off rigorous training to interact with them and explain the fundamentals. Hence, many students who have never played the sport before have taken it up out of sheer interest and go regularly to play.

We can see the crowd growing slowly in the squash courts and we now have around 4 to 5 people who come regularly and around 8 players on the team. We don't have any fixed time for practice but are definitely planning to train regularly now. We are still a new team but we hope that within the next three to four years, we lay a good foundation and that the team by then would have gelled well together.

The team's enthusiasm and dedication came through for them as they successfully organised and participated in the first installment of Squash in Spree 2016. However, they realised that the road ahead is long in terms of developing both as individual and team players. The BITS B team comprising Abhinav Mittal, Bhavya Gujral, Pathikrit Ghosh, and Varun Chopra finished third in their group. The BITS A team, which had Siddharth Mohan, Akshay Ahuja, Yash Mehta, and Kabir Dhingra, made it to the semifinals to lose to the winning team (Manipal) due to an untimely stroke of bad luck in the form of an injury. The team took the Spree results in good stride and has been working hard since.

As ex-captain Siddharth Mohan says, "From people not being able to hit balls straight to continuing a rally well beyond 5 shots, we have come a long way." As for the future, Siddharth hopes that the team will grow further under the captaincy of Yash Mehta. "I would like to see more frequent practice and frequent friendly matches with players from other colleges to gain more experience."

We need to raise more awareness about squash. I was glad to see the overwhelming response we got for the squash camp - we had to close registration within 3 hours of the mail going out! All you need to start playing is a racquet, the right shoes, and a whole lot of enthusiasm.

-credits to Siddharth Mohan

TABLE TENNIS



S H A R A T H K A M A L

TABLE TENNIS

I was reluctant to even try playing table tennis, but my mom quite literally shoved a racquet into my hand and forced me to play. For the entire first week, I was asked to balance the ball on my racquet. It bored me terribly at first but then the sight of people hitting and spinning the ball with perfection caught my eye.

Table tennis shaped my childhood and helped me get through tough times. I remember when I was having a bad day at school, all my aggression would come out on the table and I'd make sure I won. Winning wasn't what made me happy though - playing an elegant and classy game did.

The Table Tennis Club has been in existence for several years and is mainly run by third year students. It has immensely dedicated members who practise for at least two hours everyday. From its humble beginnings, the team has grown in terms of both size and talent. Having been more of a hobby club, discussing gameplay and developing strategies aimed at winning is new to the club. The club feels that table tennis has immense potential to grow on campus.

India's best table tennis players, like Sharath Kamal and Soumyadeep Roy, play a brilliant all-round game, but are not elite when compared to the rest of the world. The reason for this can mainly be attributed to the fact that in India, investing time in sports is not seen as a wise idea. I believe that the change in mindset starts in colleges like ours.

Having been restricted by the hectic academic schedule in BITS, the team as a whole hasn't played in any major tournament apart from Spree. The BITS Table Tennis Mens Team reached the semifinals in 2015 and 2016, while the Womens team won Spree 2016. The team has bigger aims in the years to come - it plans to participate in the Goa State League apart from other inter-college tournaments. Of course, winning Spree is the number one priority.

The Table Tennis team goes by the unofficial motto "Just play along and have fun." The team finds happiness in playing a quality game rather than just winning. The team has developed over the past few years into a family where seniors provide experience and juniors learn from them to carry the club forward. Being a sport that needs cooperation to be played well, the team has worked hard to hit the right balance and has succeeded to do so over the years.

My team members have shown a great deal of understanding in all aspects. From deciding the practice schedule to the team structure and their game plan on match days, we've grown to become more than just teammates, and that's something worth cherishing!

-credits to Varad Joshi



TENNIS

A watercolor illustration of Roger Federer in a celebratory pose. He is wearing a blue and green patterned polo shirt and a black headband. His mouth is open in a shout, and his right hand is on his hip while his left hand holds a tennis racket. The background is a textured watercolor wash of green, blue, and brown tones.

ROGER FEDERER

TENNIS

Ever since my childhood, I have always been more fond of playing individual games. My dad would keep talking about rivalries between players. Once, someone told McEnroe that his six year-old could play better than him. Another story was that Lendl was sore because he had never won a Wimbledon and so he said, "Grass is for cows!"

Rachith Aiyappa, the captain for the year 2016-17, feels that "the best part about tennis is that it is an individual sport. Everything that you do on court is your own choice. However, having been part of the tennis team for the past two years, I have high regard for the different styles and techniques brought in by the members of the team."

The 2015 season, under the captaincy of Shreyansh Tyagi, provided much-needed exposure to the team. However, it was in the 2016 season that the team really soared to new heights, thanks to the effort put in by the team coach, Valentine D'Silva, the then captain Vatsal Tolasaria, and all the team members. The goals set for 2016 were collectively reached, and with their completion came newer dreams for 2017. Revels (Manipal Institute of Technology) finds itself on the list of tournaments targeted for the 2017 season, and the team is on the lookout for more.

The BITS Goa tennis team has displayed on-court dominance on several occasions. They opened the 2015 season with Arena, in which Vatsal, Rachith and Abhinav reached the quarter-finals. Following was the Cidade De Goa Open 2015, which took place on a beach resort in the scenic area of Dona-Paula, Goa. Haritha D and Rachith Aiyappa did the institution proud by reaching the semifinals in the women's singles and winning the men's singles respectively. The season ended with the most anticipated fest, namely BITS Goa's very own Spree 2015. The team lost in the semi-finals to the defending champions (who were the three time winners).

How do tennis players stay calm under circumstances which would send a regular person into a tizzy of panic? Rachith explains, "I've always been taught not to worry about the opponent's position in the game. It doesn't matter whether he is seeded, unseeded, a newbie, or even the best player on the planet." He cites an incident about Bjorn Borg - when asked why he quit professional tennis at a very young age, he said that in his final Wimbledon, he had not enjoyed every single point. "The duty of the sport is that I should play without having to think about my opponent. I do my part in the game, I do my best, and so far it's worked fine for me," smiles Rachith.

Does tennis transcend the status of a sport to mean something more? "It's something which has been part of my life for as long as I can remember. I do not remember a life without tennis because I've been playing it since UKG," Rachith reminisces.

No one can ever forget the 2008 Wimbledon finals, the one that ended at 4 in the morning. There are iconic moments that I remember - some of which are heartbreaking. I often go back to those moments.

Indeed, certain moments are etched into one's memory, and the tennis team's 2016 campaign has many such moments. Aditya Deuskar opened the eventful season with Zest 2016, where he reached the semifinals, but had to withdraw. Vibhu and Rachith both reached the quarter-finals of the Gasper Dias Open, but had to withdraw from the tournament. Vatsal, Rachith, Neil, and Vibhu finished as runners up in Arena 2016. The team played a grueling semifinal against CBIT-Hyderabad, and in the finals, they faced the same team to whom they had lost the previous year. Rachith's win against VNR powered the team onwards; however, the seasoned duo of VNR proved to be too strong. Next up was the 2016 edition of the Cidade De Goa Open. The tennis team's performance was stellar, with Neil reaching the quarterfinals, Vibhu reaching the semifinals, and Rachith emerging as the winner of both the men's singles and doubles events. The last tournament of the season, Spree 2016, had a surprising turn of events - the BITS A team finished as winners and the BITS B team were runners-up!

It is but a natural question to ask how one deals with failure. Rachith says with complete conviction, "Winning and losing is the same." He applies the same to other spheres of life. "Tennis has made me give more time to myself. I don't usually get frustrated if I don't succeed because tennis has always taught me to try again and again and again. Because of tennis, I give a lot of things another chance." Moreover, the attitude of several tennis players is a source of inspiration to their fans. "Federer is poetry. Everything falls into place when he plays," says Rachith with wonder and respect.

Federer has charisma and elegance, and a certain effortless - the way he carries himself on and off the court. I can never get bored of tennis, especially if Federer is playing. My dad and I draw parallels between present-day tennis with what was happening back in his day. The top players today are coached by the greats from his time. So, it's more competitive.

There has been a palpable change in tennis culture on campus as well - it has seen a major uplift over the past two years. The interest to play and learn the sport has increased amongst students. The tennis team looks forward to the 2016 batch of students and hopes that not only will there be new players joining the team, but also that the tennis culture on campus continues to grow.

-credits to Rohan Gajendragadkar

ULTIMATE FRISBEE



ULTIMATE FRISBEE

What drew me to the game initially was my interest in the physics of the frisbee. I really liked how it curved and changed direction based on the angle. The first time I ever played the game was in ninth standard, when I was tossing around a frisbee at home. It so happened that Learning to Fly, which turned out to be the first team I ever played for, had put a tiny advertisement in the newspaper. My mom told me about it, so I went around looking for them. It was quite a chance encounter.

In 2010, two students with a passion for the flying disc established the BITS Goa Ultimate Frisbee Club (BITS UFC). Kabir Loganey and Himanshu Gangal sparked the embers of a team that would falter in its initial steps but would grow and strengthen to the point where it would be given official status by the Council for Student Affairs (CSA) in the second semester of 2015-16.

Ultimate frisbee is a relatively new sport. It was only in 2015 that flying disc sports were officially recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). As reported by BBC, disc-based games are played in 58 countries around the world by thousands of athletes.

Around eight to ten years ago, frisbee in India began with just one or two teams with around five to ten players, and now there are over a thousand registered players in the country - that speaks volumes about how the sport has grown. Also, 30% of the people playing frisbee are from low-income backgrounds or are underprivileged. It's great to see radically different communities coming together to organize tournaments and enjoy the sport.

March 2014 saw BITS UFC making its presence felt in Mumbai, at the Usha Mumbai Gheun Tak 2014 tournament. It was an exciting experience, being the team's maiden tournament. BITS UFC plans to prepare for and participate in Gheun Tak every year. They also keep themselves sharp by playing around ten friendly matches per semester against other teams in Goa.

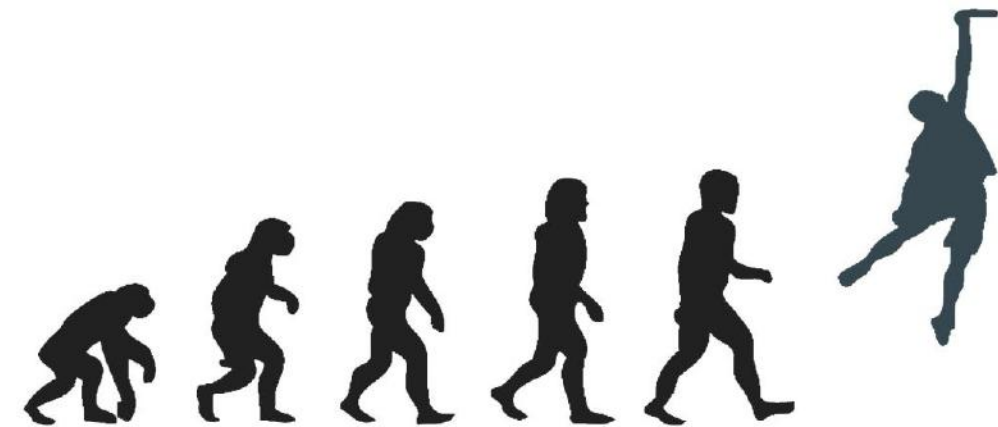
I couldn't believe I was selected to represent India as part of the mixed team - that itself was something crazy. The level on which other countries play is incredible. They are extremely organized, focussed, and calm. It's very professional. In a way, it gave me a sense of responsibility. I realized that not only do I need to come back with the experience, but I also need to give back what I've witnessed and learned to the Indian ultimate community.

Being a fairly new team, BITS UFC faces several challenges. A mixed team of 7 requires female participation (either 3 or 4 girls), and so the team is on the lookout for more female sports enthusiasts. They want to employ a coach to amp up their game, but are working out the logistics of such a move. In addition, BITS UFC is thinking about bidding to host India's first College Championship and are planning to pitch it to the administration this semester. The team is hopeful that Ultimate frisbee is added as an event in Spree 2017.

As part of the India mixed team, we had to work consciously to create a bond, but later it became very natural. It improved our game as well as the team chemistry. I currently play for the IISc (Indian Institute of Science) team. It's been a year now, and I feel like both are amazing teams in their own right. Also, Ultimate frisbee is self-refereed so there is a lot of emphasis on fair play. That's probably the reason behind the warmth and friendliness of the entire Ultimate community.

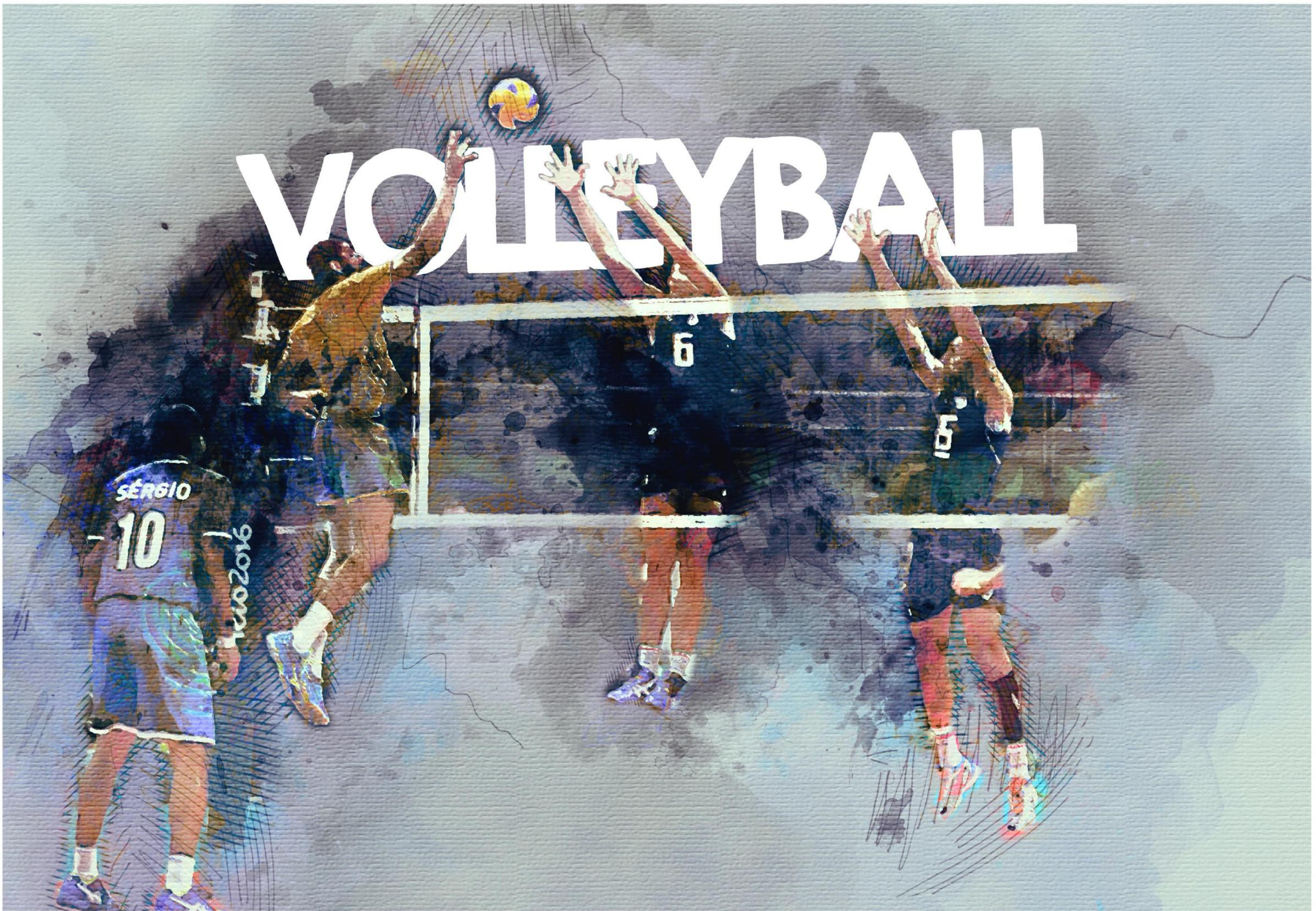
Along with taking their game to the next level, BITS UFC members have bonded to become closer than ever before. It is not uncommon to find players playing at any time of the day, be it 2 A.M or 6 P.M. Making covers of songs, having flash mobs, and being spontaneous ensure that there is never a dull moment. Hanging out on and off the field has made them so tightly knit that they all know embarrassing stories about each other and are ready to stand by any of their teammates for support. The cornerstone of the team is mutual respect and a readiness to work on shortcomings as a team. BITS UFC is a team, true to every sense of the word.

-credits to Ananth Narayan



THE ULTIMATE EVOLUTION

VOLLEYBALL



VOLLEYBALL

I started playing in 4th grade when my dad first introduced me to the sport. The fact that it is easy to play, and that it is a very popular sport got me interested in it and I've loved it ever since. My first inter-school tournament was in 6th grade. Since this was the first time most of us had played in a tournament, we got thrashed badly!

Our coach didn't give up on us and inspired us to work harder, and our efforts manifested into wins by the 8th and 9th grade. We became a team to be reckoned with. I joined a new school in grade 11, and the volleyball culture wasn't as strong, but we still got a team together and went for state tournaments. Finally, in grade 12, we won the Clusters tournament and were selected to represent our state - Karnataka. I'd say that the most satisfying experience for a sportsperson is to represent something he believes in and cares about.

The volleyball team is a fairly new addition to the melange of sports teams on campus. What they lack in pedigree, they compensate in terms of a bright future. The sport's awareness on campus had been on a long downward spiral for a couple of years, but 2016 saw a revival of volleyball when many juniors joined the team in preparation for Spree 2016. Their interest and dedication was remarkable and the club finally got the talent it much needed. The team trained hard to accommodate the new members and form a more balanced team. They have long hours of practice which start after dinner and often extend up to 2 AM.

Firstly, volleyball is a sport that you can play for hours without feeling too tired. That's why when we practice for Spree, we practice for 4 and a half hours at a go. I don't think I can say the same for any other sport. My friends and I took up volleyball at the same time, and we helped each other in growing as players. My coach was such an inspirational figure that the initial dedication he inspired in me has stayed on.

The team has been doing well in Spree- they finished in the semis in 2014 and quarter finals in 2016. 2015 saw a drop in performance as a result of many experienced seniors leaving, but they worked around that and are back on track and training to win tournaments now. They attended the Volleyball tournament in MIT but couldn't clear the group stage because the full team was unable to travel at the time.

The level and intensity of the game obviously increases. However, our college didn't have as much volleyball as I thought it would, especially because the facilities are really good. I think our generation is more into football now, but go back a while and volleyball was a really popular sport in colleges.

The team has come close together and is now more like a family. The aim for the coming year is to practise more and form a better balanced team. The possibility of a coach, however slim, still exists. The vision mainly is to reach the finals of Spree, play more tournaments and gain a better feel of how the sport exists outside campus. The Volleyball Team has a long way to go, and with the increasing talent pool, the sky is very literally the limit.

- credits to Wazeer Zulfikar

Credits to Aditya Shrivastava for editing the Hindi Literary Section



वर्षा | ज़रूरी है | एक बहती हवा | ममता | बहस
किसी योद्धा की प्रेम कविता | ईर्ष्या | पैसा ही जीवन नहीं | मनुष्य

एक बहती हवा

कोई बहती हवा तेरे होंठों से टकराकर, मेरे होंठों पे जा रुकती है,
कोई बहती हवा तेरे जुल्फों को लहराकर, मेरे जुल्फों से आ भिड़ती है,
ऐसी ही कोई मस्त हवा मेरे लव्जों को, तेरे कानों तक पहुँचाती है,
ऐसी ही कोई मस्त हवा तेरे धड़कन को, आ मुझे सुनाती है,
जी चाहता है उड़ चलूँ ,
इन फिजाओं में,
इन हवाओं में,
इन मस्त पवन के झोंकों में,
इन तरंग धाराओं में,
और पहुँचूँ वहाँ, जहाँ तू है,
मेरे सपनों की अमर कथाओं में,
मेरे मन की अंतरंग गलियों में,
मेरी कही अनकही बातों में,
मेरे दिन, मेरी रातों में,
निहारूँ तुझे, हँसाऊँ तुझे,
तू बैठी रहे, मैं सताऊँ तुझे,
तू रुठ जाये, फिर मैं मनाऊँ तुझे,
तू पूछे, और मैं बताऊँ तुझे,
की कितना बेचैन था मैं, कितना अधीर था मैं,
जिसका कोई लक्ष्य नहीं, ऐसा अंजान तीर था मैं,
और फिर तू आई,
किसी जुगनू जैसी – मेरी अँधेरी रातों में,
छा गयी जैसे चाँदनी – मेरे सूने आसमानों में,
करा गयी मझे अपने दीदार,
आखिर हो गया मुझे भी प्यार,
मानों कोई पारी आई हो, बैठकर,
इन बहती हवाओं में ।



ममता

माँ के लिए क्या लिखूँ
माँ ने खुद मुझे लिखा है!

मेरी हर कामयाबी

उसके त्याग का सिलसिला है ।

उसके आँचल की छाँव

उसकी हथेली का सहारा

उसने जन्म भी दिया है

और जीवन भी संवारा ।

पूत कपूत सुने हैं

पर माता सुनी न कुमाता

तेरी ममता से निर्मल

दूजा नहीं कोई नाता ।

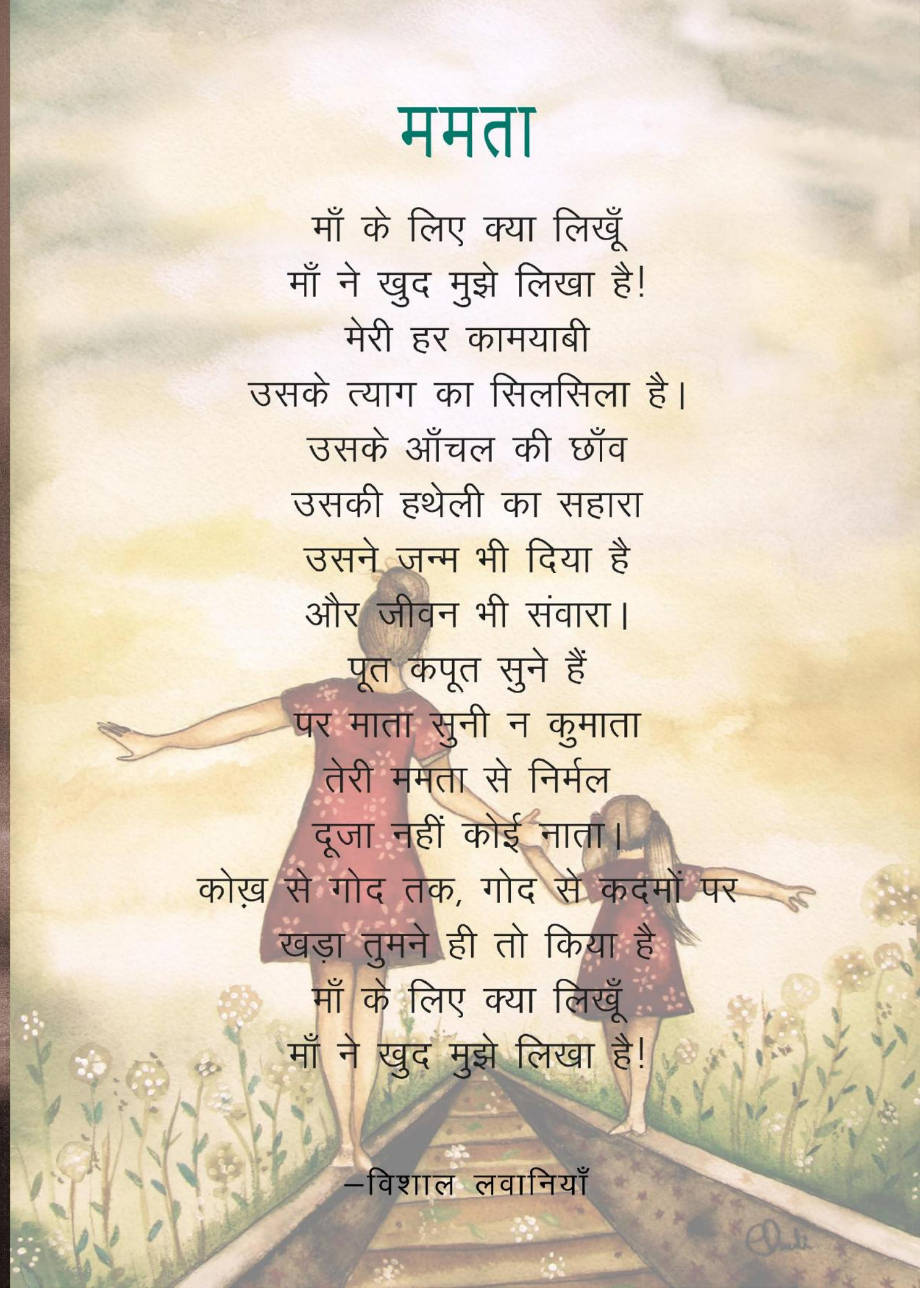
कोख से गोद तक, गोद से कदमों पर

खड़ा तुमने ही तो किया है

माँ के लिए क्या लिखूँ

माँ ने खुद मुझे लिखा है!

—विशाल लवानियाँ



बहस — ताहा फ़राज़

कौन हैं यह लोग अंग्रेजी वेष में
जो आग लगा रहे मेरे इस देश में?
कद काठी तगड़ी इनकी, सूट-टाई कड़क
निकट सारे सहमे हैं, कहीं वो न जाए भड़क।

घड़ी आई प्रसारण की, सब कैमरे उसकी ओर
अनुबोधक खड़ा है पीछे, लिए आरोपों की डोर।
शरीर तानके उठाई कलम, तीव्र धुन आरम्भ
“हैरतंगेज खबर है कि...” चीखा, हुआ प्राइमटाइम प्रारंभ।

इतनी हैरत न थी खबर में जितनी उसने दिखलाई
हैरत-हैरत में उचित संजीदगी उसने हाथ से गवाई।
और ऐसा क्यों न करे वो? जनता को सार्थक बहस से क्या...
विचार-विमर्श से ज्यादा हम कोलाहल में पाते हैं मजा।

विराजमान हैं दोनो पक्ष, एक से हुआ तीक्ष्ण सवाल
जवाब लुप्त हैं यहाँ, उत्तर में दिया आरोप उछाल।
प्रश्न प्रति-प्रश्न के लेन देन में ऐसे झगड़ा हुआ शुरू
हर रात की वही लड़ाई, चीखते राजनैतिक गुरु।

“ट्वीट्स अब भी कम, दर्शक को और कैसे भड़काऊँ?
गड़े मुर्दे उखाड़ूँ या झूठा विडियो चलाऊँ?
किस दिशा में बहस मोड़ूँ कि युद्ध हो प्रचंड?
राष्ट्रवाद, असहिष्णुता, या भारत माँ अखंड?”

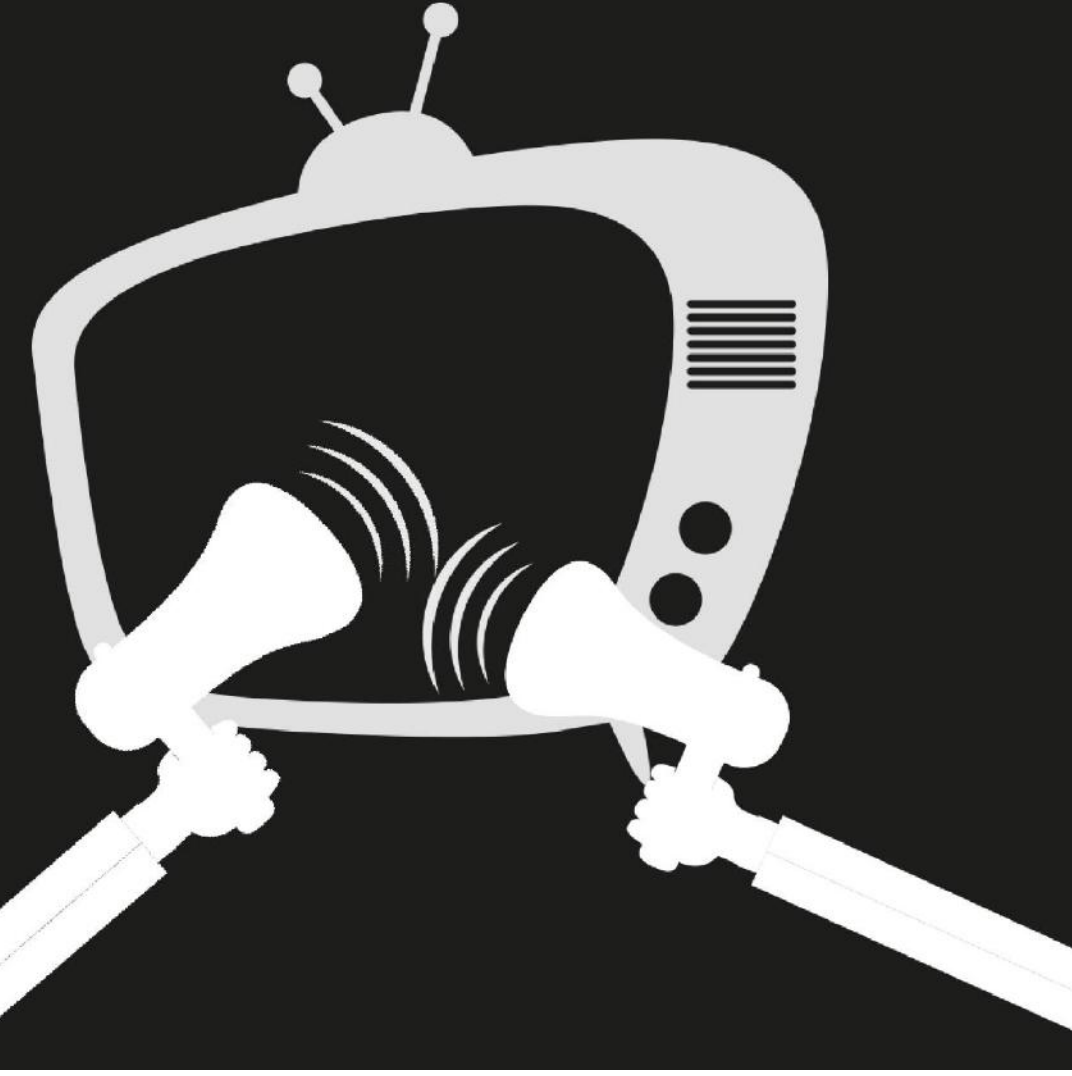
एंकर का पैंतरा हुआ सफल, दर्शक आए लाखों हजार
अच्छा मनोरंजन बिकता है, सस्ता है मुद्दे पर विचार।
चर्चा सुनने आये थे पर सुने नारे आशातीत
देखा पक्षों को चिन्हित होते, यही टीवी बहसों की रीत।

सरल लोग न समझे यह की वो प्रचार उपभोग में लिप्त
अदालतों से पहले टीवी के फैसलों से हो जाते तृप्त।
देखा झगड़ा, चुना पक्ष, बनी खून की प्यासी जनता
तनिक प्रयोग न हुआ मस्तिष्क, न हुई सत्य की चिंता।

स्टूडियो के अन्दर का माहौल दंगाई बाहर दोहराते,
अभिमानी टीवी एंकर अपना ‘असर’ इसे बताते।
निष्पक्ष सत्य प्रस्तुत करना हर अच्छे पत्रकार का सिद्धांत
पर उन बंधुओं को आज जगत से केवल प्राप्त एकांत।

जब हमारे पक्ष में बात हो तब मीडिया की जयजयकार
जब सामने वाला भारी पड़े तब मचता हाहाकार
रूठ गए तोह मीडिया से कुशल नहीं कोई भरने में घाव
चोट-मरहम के चक्र के सहारे अमर रखते वह तनाव।

कब बंद होगा यह कोलाहल? कब होगा सत्य-प्रचार?
कब बंद होंगी कर्कश बहसे और एकतर्फी रायों की बौछार?
क्यों पसंद हमें भेड़-चाल इतनी? क्यों दुर्लभ मूल विचार?
कब तक आनंद से सहें हम मृत पत्रकारिता के यह प्रहार?



खुद से मैं जो कह न सका
उसे शब्दों से समझाता हूँ,
बात लबों पे जो आ न सकी
उन्हें छंदों में समझाता हूँ ।
तेरी यादों में कवि हुआ,
मद्धिम सा जैसे रवि हुआ,
भरी जेठ की धुप में
अब सावन गीत मैं गाता हूँ ।

कभी वीर रस गाता था,
रण का निमंत्रण सुनाता था,
नित दिन जैसे रणभूमि में
युद्ध का पर्व मनाता था ।
पर अब ये तलवार, अब ये ढाल,
ये तरकश, धनुष और ये भाल,
सब खेल खिलौने लगते हैं,
तेरी याद में ओ प्रियतम
सब हँसी-ठिठोले लगते हैं ।
मैं खड़ा रण के बीच में,
अब तीर प्रेम के खाता हूँ,
इच्छा-मृत्यु का वर प्राप्त कर,
बस छलनी होता जाता ह ।

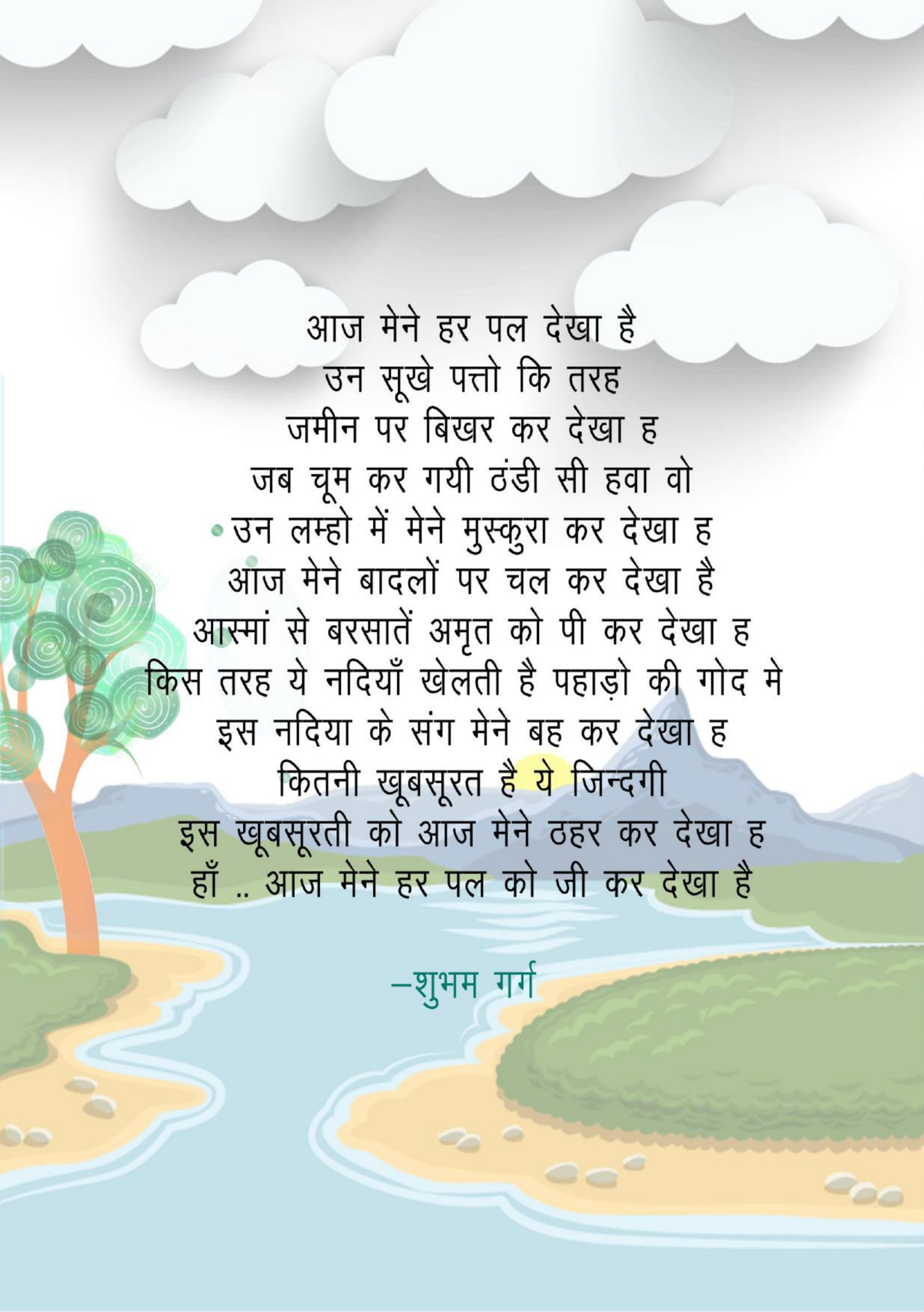
कभी मान से भरा हुआ मैं,
ये शिव-धनुष उठाता था
निज भुजाओं में बल कितना,
यह सबको दिखलाता था,
यह धनुष पर अब चीज ही क्या
कोई तुच्छ वस्तु सी लगती है,
मेरे हृदय की भाँति इस पर
अब बस प्रेम-प्रत्यंचा चढ़ती हूँ ।
किया नहीं जो कभी आज तक,
अब तेरे लिए वह करता हूँ,
किसी कर्ण सा कवच दान कर,
मैं खुद को तुझे सौंपता हूँ ।

कभी युद्ध की आस मुझे थी,
शोणित की अतृप्त प्यास मुझे थी,
समराग्नि में जल जाने की
किसी एक दिन आस मुझे थी,
पर यह रणभूमि ही अब
कोई आँगन सा लगता है,
कोई वाटिका, या कोई उपवन,
किसी मधुवन सा लगता है ।
भूल के सारे युद्ध गीत मैं,
तेरी गीता सुनता हूँ,
गांडीव छोड़ कर अब खुद को, मैं,
तुझको अर्पित करता हूँ ।

कभी पूतना, कभी कंस,
कभी कालिया का कोई डंस,
जीवन भर युद्ध लड़ा हूँ मैं
हूँ जैसे विधाता का कोई अंस,
पर अब यह विश्व, यह संसार,
कोई माया सी लगती है,
तुमसे ही यह रची हुई
किसी लीला सी लगती ह ।
तजकर अब यह चक्र सुदर्शन,
एक बंसी ही बस रखता हूँ,
जिसे बजाकर यमुना-तट पर,
बस राधा-राधा जपता हूँ ।



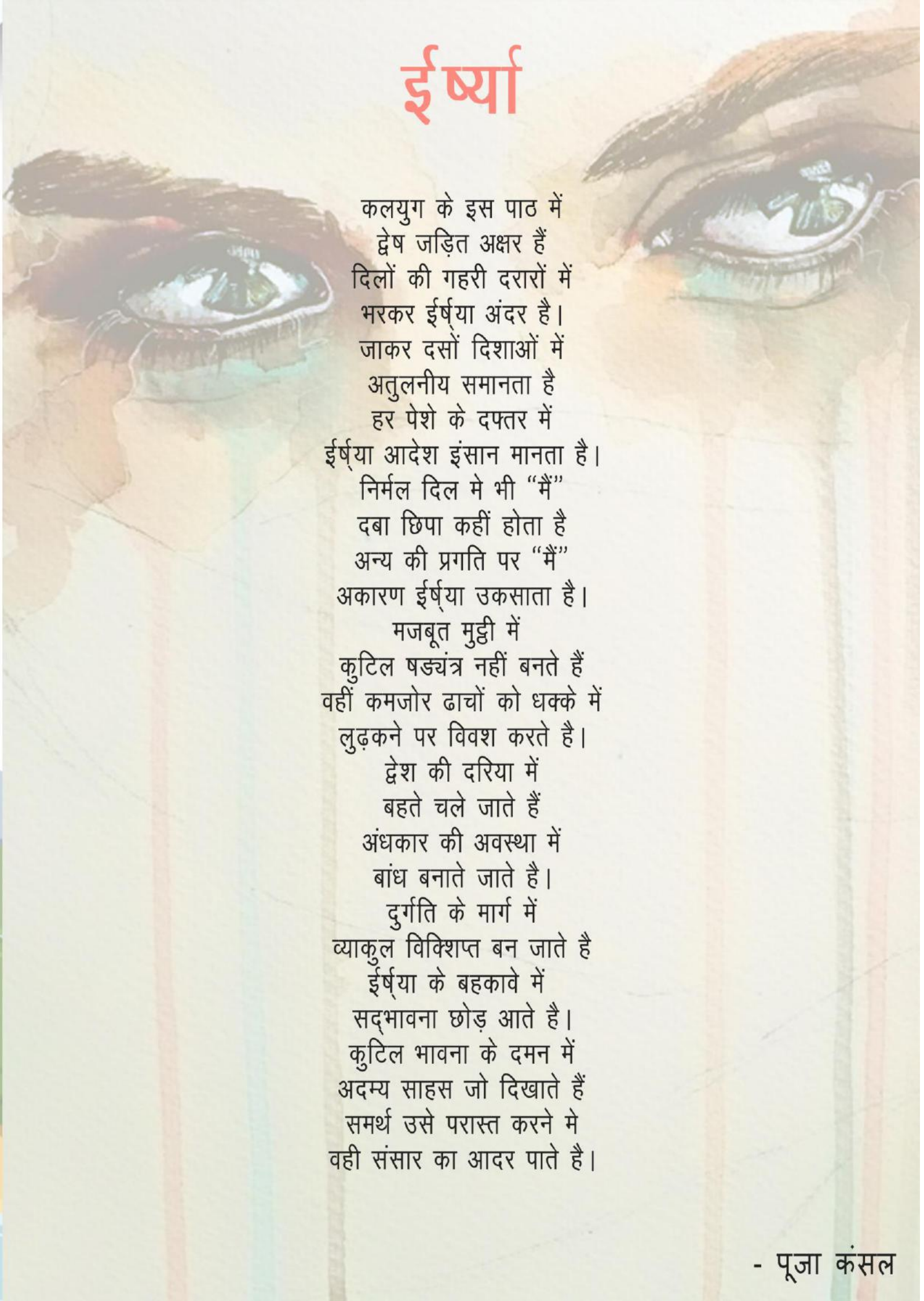
किसी योद्धा
की प्रेम
कविता



आज मेने हर पल देखा है
उन सूखे पत्तों की तरह
जमीन पर बिखर कर देखा ह
जब चूम कर गयी ठंडी सी हवा वो
• उन लम्हों में मेने मुस्कुरा कर देखा ह
आज मेने बादलों पर चल कर देखा है
आस्मां से बरसातें अमृत को पी कर देखा ह
किस तरह ये नदियाँ खेलती है पहाड़ों की गोद में
इस नदिया के संग मेने बह कर देखा ह
कितनी खूबसूरत है ये जिन्दगी
इस खूबसूरती को आज मेने ठहर कर देखा ह
हाँ .. आज मेने हर पल को जी कर देखा है

—शुभम गर्ग

ईर्ष्या



कलयुग के इस पाठ में
द्वेष जड़ित अक्षर हैं
दिलों की गहरी दरारों में
भरकर ईर्ष्या अंदर है।
जाकर दसों दिशाओं में
अतुलनीय समानता है
हर पेशे के दफ्तर में
ईर्ष्या आदेश इंसान मानता है।
निर्मल दिल में भी “मैं”
दबा छिपा कहीं होता है
अन्य की प्रगति पर “मैं”
अकारण ईर्ष्या उकसाता है।
मजबूत मुट्ठी में
कुटिल षड्यंत्र नहीं बनते हैं
वहीं कमजोर ढाचों को धक्के में
लुढ़कने पर विवश करते है।
द्वेष की दरिया में
बहते चले जाते हैं
अंधकार की अवस्था में
बांध बनाते जाते है।
दुर्गति के मार्ग में
व्याकुल विकिष्ट बन जाते है
ईर्ष्या के बहकावे में
सद्भावना छोड़ आते है।
कुटिल भावना के दमन में
अदम्य साहस जो दिखाते हैं
समर्थ उसे परास्त करने में
वही संसार का आदर पाते है।



प्यासा है चाँद बरसांत में भी
तनहा है चाँद सितारों के साथ में भी
पूरा है चाँद आज भी पर
पर न जाने फिर क्यों अधूरा है चाँद इस चांदनी रात में भी

तन्हाई भरी रातों में जागा भी है
अँधेरी अमावस में सहम सोया भी ह
जब बरसा फलक बेइन्तिहाँ जमीन पर तो पता चला
बादलों में चुप कर चाँद रोया भी है

—शुभम गर्ग

पैसा ही जीवन नहीं

पैसों से बने आशियाने
नहीं प्रेम से गुथे परिवार
हो भले दुनिया से किनारे
इनका अपना सुखी संसार ।
पैसे दे महंगे गहने
नहीं प्राकृतिक निखार
पहन पहनकर कितने पहने
आडंबर आभूषण सब बेकार ।
पैसों से बनती पहचान
कमिश्नर, इंस्पेक्टर और दीवान
देते उन्हें घूस रूपी दान
दूषित कर पवित्र प्राण ।
पैसे उड़ाने के बहाने
मदिरा सेवन और धूम्रपान
पैसों से आदतें बिगड़े
न समाज सेवा न कल्याण ।
पैसों से पकवान खावे
मिल जाए जितने प्रकार
प्रेम रहित रस वंचित
कैसे निगले ? न आए डकार ।

पैसों से बने खजाने
सोने चांदी की खदान
पर स्नेह सदा सरल हृदय में
अनियमित व्यय की खान ।
पैसों से पहने अलंकार
सुसज्जित पर सुंदरता से मनुहार ?
रमणी तो वह कहलाए
जिसका सदा सरल व्यवहार ।
पैसों ही दुर्भाव की जननी
उन्नति करे जो दो से चार
ईर्ष्या द्वेष की फसल
रहे उर में सदा बहार ।
पैसों से कांटों के किले बने
आत्मीयता जिससे फरार
पैसों से दंभ के दरवाजे खुले
हो गए अकेलेपन के शिकार ।
पैसों से अमीर बने
पर क्या जीवन हे सरस?
पैसों पाकर धनी वही
जो पार सुख संतोष अनवरत ।

- पूजा कंसल



मनुष्य

ऐसा है तू, आदमी तू नासमझ।
कहता है तू, मैं हूँ जो मैं नहीं।
सोचता है तू, मैं ही तो ईश हूँ।
करता है तू, अनेक अत्याचार॥

कभी न सोचा है तूने, कौन है तू, क्या है तू?
न सोचा है तूने, तुझे है क्या करना?
कभी न सोचा है तूने, है क्या दूसरे भी?
तू तो है बस बेकाबू अपने ही खातिर।
आदमी है तू, पर वो भी नासमझ।
ऐसा है तू, आदमी तू नासमझ॥

अपने ही अंदर थोड़ा तो झांक ले।
अंतर में जलती वो ज्योति परख ले।
खुद की पहचान थोड़ी-सी कर ले।
फिर न रहेगा तब, तू वही आदमी।
आ जाएगी तुझको खुदा की समझ।
वैसा था तू, आदमी तू नासमझ॥



L I T - A R T

rain | fireflies | when in bits goa | sunshafts
moth | utopia | umbrella | postcard | math



umbrella
n. Device used as
protection against rain



WE WERE INSPIRED BY AN IDEA FROM THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA) ABOUT MULTIPLE REPRESENTATIONS. TO QUOTE, EVERYONE HAS A DIFFERENT, THOUGH OFTEN RELATED, VISUAL ASSOCIATION WITH A WORD OR CONCEPT, EVEN WHEN WE SHARE A COMMON LANGUAGE. **SO HOW DO YOU DEFINE AN UMBRELLA?**

Muddy shoes, rainbows
Paper boats in puddles
Happiness is free



FIREFLIES

by Mahima Samant

You know
The fireflies spoke to me
They told me
You pillaged and plundered
Their teeny mud hole homes
Picked them bottoms up
Shoved into glass canisters
And at twilight lit up a starry world
For your queen
They glowed a fluorescent green
Reflected by the spectral bottle
And you danced and danced.



WHEN IN BITS GOA

When you turn up for a surprise quiz at 8 AM
and a dog walks into the lecture hall
and someone falls asleep in a lecture.

When the Ice 'n' Spice guy gives you back more money than you gave him
or Mango 'sakes' start selling at Food King in the even semester.

When there's unlimited french fries in the mess lunch
or the Borkars lady gives you change for a change
or Gaja uncle adds an extra bhajiya to your plate.

When you're sitting outside the library in the evening, watching the sunset
or it begins to pour in the middle of a game of football
or you get av in a test you thought you'd flunk.

a BITSGian smiles this wide.

Poem

Ashwini Patil

Photograph

Pratap Ingale



A black vacuum. Coarse, unyielding, tempestuous. My mind is at relative peace, yet it is attracted to this storm. Isn't human desire strange? You fear death but crave collapse in the face of adversity. You dread the unknown but are drawn towards it. This hole is a culmination of all that duality. Your dreams and nightmares compressed into one dark fractal.



I sit by the riverside and laugh
At the confused tangle of thoughts I used to be
Masquerading as a human with jelly-like legs
Tripping on flat surfaces - yes, that was me

And then you came along, you with your clarity and coherence
"Ordinary isn't your destiny!" - that got me reeling
You became to me what sunshafts are to water
A source of warmth, light, and a tingly feeling.

ADDITIONS

FOR

THE SWEETS THAT AROUND

A RUSTY TIN TOPPED SHOP

MOMENTS MEANDERING

IN THE CAFETERIA OF A PURPLE ROOM

THE FURNISH OF CREAKY CHAIRS

SCRIBBLES ON THE TABLE

SMOOTH PEBBLES

WITH THE CUTGLASS OF BEER BOTTLES

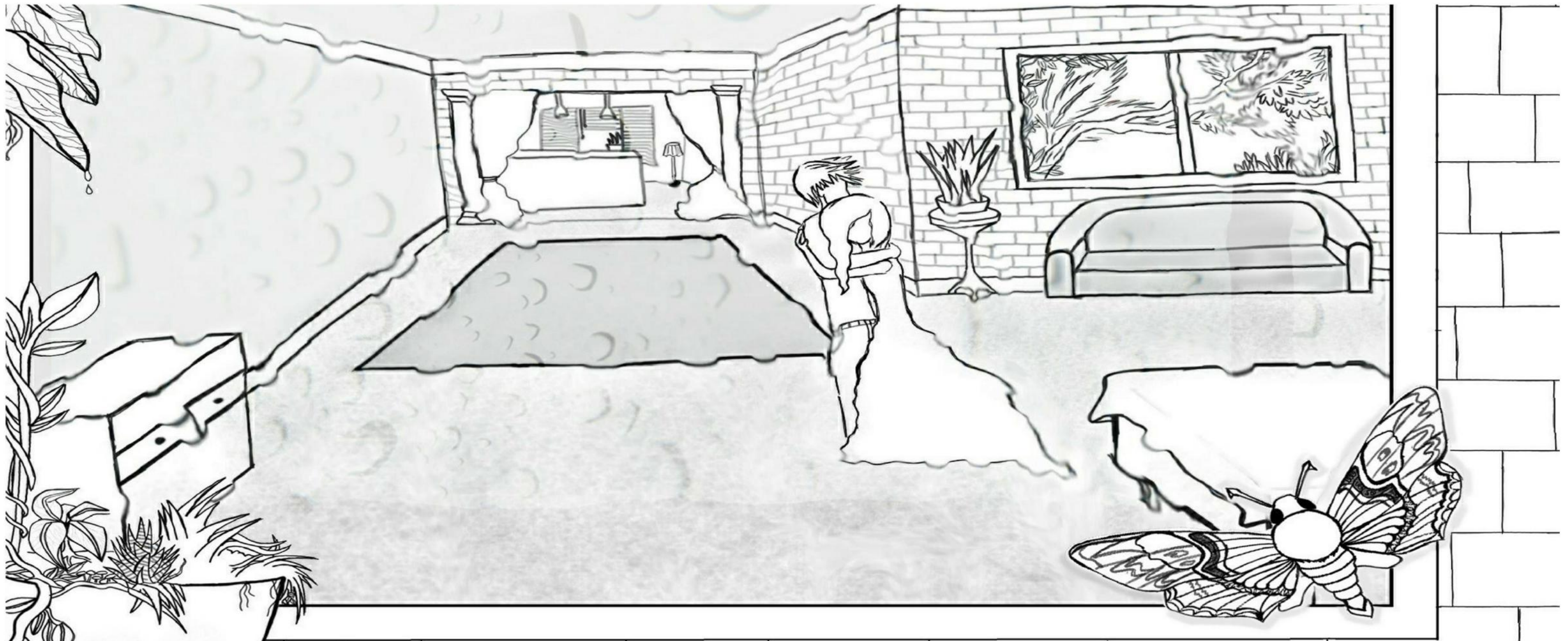
LINGERING LAUGHS

PASSING PAUSES

EVERYDAY SMALL TALK

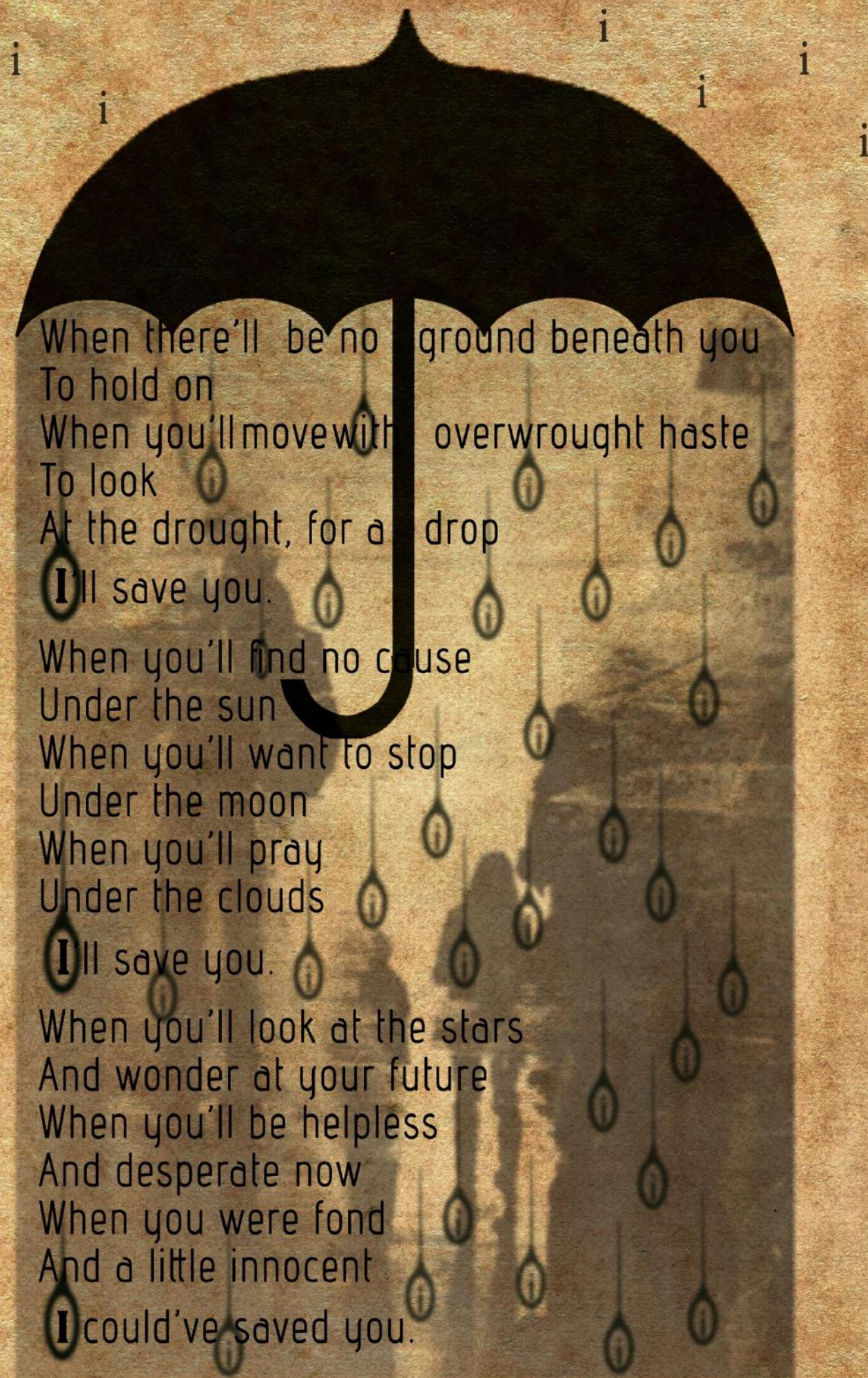
AND THE PROMISE OF

AN URBAN UTOPIA



I am nervous
Gushing
It doesn't matter how old I am
I wanted to take in the warmth of your laughter
I wanted to be the cause of it
I wanted to be the recipient of knowing looks and exaggerated sighs and secret handshakes
I wanted you to know me for who I am.

All these years later, it pricks to realize
I still need your acceptance
You have your ways of innocent cruelty
You jab and stab and tear and pull me apart
Leaving me to retreat
I can't hear you laughing any more.



When there'll be no ground beneath you
To hold on
When you'll move with overwrought haste
To look
At the drought, for a drop
Ill save you.

When you'll find no cause
Under the sun
When you'll want to stop
Under the moon
When you'll pray
Under the clouds
Ill save you.

When you'll look at the stars
And wonder at your future
When you'll be helpless
And desperate now
When you were fond
And a little innocent
I could've saved you.

**A postcard can say so much,
Not a thousand words, not one.
A whisper, a shriek, a hum.**

**A postcard can say so much,
With a squint and his monocle,
The blurred lines disappear.**

**A postcard can
say so much,
And though the focus
mars the image,
It portrays the
picture**

I am a postcard. Momentary.
Transitory. A few seconds of
fleeting joy. I trigger memo-
ries between the one who
filled me up with ink and
the one who sizes me
up with their eyes.



Fuzzy Patterns
Intersect and Flirt;
Fuse into A complex equation
Fumble about, You'll see the cohesion
Fundamental Binary Logic
Apo to marks on Butterfly wings, Flutter into Practical Application



T E C H N I C A L

association news | internships | thesis



ASSOCIATION NEWS

BIOLOGY

It is not uncommon to see Biology students emerge from the ground floor C wing labs at midnight, triumphant in the aftermath of performing all sorts of cool experiments. Their field trips are the stuff of legends - we all have that one friend in Biology who is ridiculously excited about every living species and can see wondrous things in the most mundane of sights. Oh, and did you know ants made nests in trees?

Urvashi Jain is probably that friend. She was voted the secretary of the Biology association with hardly any competition. She shares her contributions to the working of the Biology Academic Association.

Q. The Biology department is one of the smallest in the institution. Do you feel like that makes it more closely knit?

A. One of the primary goals of the department was to facilitate informal interaction among faculty, student and PhD scholars for a greater community participation. Yes, the department of Biological Sciences of our institute is one of the smallest in terms of the number of faculty and students. Better community participation can make our small strength into a great asset. We held an informal orientation session for all students in the beginning of the first semester. A dinner party at the Visitor Guest House for all faculty, Ph.D scholars and students was also held towards the end of the semester.

Q. What kind of events does the Biology academic association organize? What are your thoughts about student participation?

A. Other goals included encouraging students at BITS Goa to take part in Biological Sciences activities, especially in the inter-disciplinary sense. For this, the department held two events in the Department Week conducted by the CSA - a quiz and a debate on Bioethics. Both events witnessed good participation from students belonging to other branches, with over 45 students taking part in the quiz, and 20 students showing up for the debate.

Q. Do you feel like you, as a student representative, have facilitated better student-faculty interaction?

A. To help students choose projects and encourage them to undertake research in the department, we have circulated an exhaustive list of all projects being offered by the faculty to the students. We've seen increased flow of information among the students and faculty. We also plan to hold a series of talks by alumni centered on mentoring students to find the right internships, scholarships and thesis opportunities. A workshop on "How to read/ write and publish a research paper" will also be conducted.

Q. What can we expect from the Biology department in the coming academic year?

A. We plan to conduct activities that encourage students to undertake research in Biological Sciences, especially inter-disciplinary work. For first and second year students, an excursion to NIO (National Institute of Oceanographic Studies), NCAOR (National Center for Antarctic and Ocean Research) or ICAR will be organized. A short guided tour of the labs at BITS Goa campus will also be conducted for interested students.

The department will continue to organize its traditional events. Moreover, we plan to collaborate with the Quark team to hold an event exclusive to Biology along with Workshops and Guest Lectures.

CHEMICAL

Often mistaken for the practisers of Chemistry, it is almost certain that a Chemical Engineering student has had to explain how their branch is extremely different from those acid-toting maniacs. This is often accompanied with a sigh, and leads to a deeper understanding of the word 'misunderstood'.

Well, whatever the case might be, Akash Gandhi tells us about the Chemical Department.

plans for the coming year. Working with the PS Division to open more core PS stations and having a more interdisciplinary Department Day and Department Week are just a few of the many changes that we're looking to implement.

Q. What goals did you have for the department for the previous academic year and how did the department come across in achieving those?

A. My aim was to have an overall improvement in terms of relations with other universities and industries. Strengthening student-teacher relations was another item on my agenda. We succeeded in this aspect by having a VGH dinner after the formal inauguration ceremony of our IChE Goa Regional Chapter. We also had a very successful Department Week which included various events and talks.

Q. What changes have you brought in the department?

A. Starting an IChE Chapter in Goa was the start of the many changes this year had. We have also started collaborating with BITSAA and contacting various alumni to give talks on various subjects. The biggest change in terms of the department growing was the talk by the celebrated academician in Chemical engineering, Dr. M.M. Sharma.

Q. Can you throw some light on the workshops/any special talks that the department association conducted?

A. We witnessed a series of guest lectures from celebrated industrialists along with several academicians like Dr. Anirudh Pandit (Distinguished Professor, ICT), Mr. Ranjit Singh Chugh (CMO, Zuari industries), Dr. P. V. Pathak (Secretary, GSPCB), Dr. Satish Ramnath Shetye (VC, Goa University) and Mr. Hardev Singh (Head, Hindustan Unilever Ltd., Goa). We later invited Dr. Maruti Ram (Head, JSW steels) to give a talk on the research he has been doing in the Steel industry.

Q. What can we expect from the department in the coming academic year?

A. The Chemical Department is growing and is at a stage where it needs to continue its steady growth. Alchemista has been a major factor in the progress of the Department, and has many

CHEMISTRY

What is one thing every first year engineering and science student gets a kick out of? The general consensus is that one of the best cheap thrills there is, is when divine help descends upon your hand to make your solution flask turn the perfect pale pink.

Without doubt, the Chemistry department believes in hands-on experience. Mehul Kaushik elaborates on his role in giving students of his department more exposure through events and industry visits.

Q. What was on your agenda when you were voted the President of the Chemistry Association?

A. The most important agenda of my candidature was to increase the student-faculty interaction and to inform the students about the current trends in the Chemistry sector along with information about future prospects. We succeeded in achieving our goals for the academic year. Ever since the formation of the Student-Faculty counsel, most student body concerns have been dealt with.

Q. What progress did the Chemistry Association make with regard to making students more aware of opportunities and procedures?

A. I made sure that students had proper knowledge of how to apply for LOPs, how to organize their courses to accommodate electives, and any general information regarding the discipline. Approaching the faculty for SOPs and LORs has never been easier. We have been able to create a very open environment for any chemistry student to pursue his/her interests. I also planned to make sure that the junior batches were well informed about their curriculum.

Q. What kind of events has the department organized?

A. At the very beginning of the last academic year, we organized a Chemistry Orientation Dinner, where the junior batches got to know the faculty. This was a very successful event with almost a full attendance from the 2015 batch, which you don't see very often.

Q. Was anything done differently from the previous year?

A. To increase student understanding about the future prospects of Chemistry and in order to increase industry exposure, I with the help of Sarthak Singh conducted a first of its kind Industry

visit. We visited Syngenta, which is the world leader in the agrochemical industry. During the visit to Syngenta-Goa, we visited their processing plant as well as their research labs. This was enlightening - we got to understand how industries function.

Q. What is the Chemistry Association aiming at, for the coming academic year?

A. The aim of the department remains the same - to increase the student-faculty interaction and interest in the discipline. In the coming academic year, you can expect a slightly different approach to same goal. We'll be organizing talks, events during the department week and we'll also try to organize more of such industry/research lab visits.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

Bug-eyed, human fingers type faster than the speed of thought itself, as humans try to almost merge with the computers they type on. If the Matrix were ever to be created, it'd be because of one of these bug-eyed humans. Perhaps they've already created it, but refuse to tell the rest of us about it.

*Talking from within the Matrix (though he will deny it, of course) is
Akshay Damle.*

Q. What are your thoughts on the coding culture of this campus?

A. Every computer scientist must have a thorough understanding of algorithms and data structures. To test this during placements, companies judge candidates on the basis of their competitive programming skills. However, it has been seen over the years that there are very few people who are actively involved in competitive programming.

Q. What did you do to help the student community?

A. The problem we identified was that students lack software development skills. To remedy this, we organized a four hour hackathon during the Academic Department Week 2016 and offered cash prizes worth INR 6000 to the top three teams and pizza to all participants.

Another problem was that the previous years' question papers were not available. We collected the question papers of all CS courses from 2014 and 2015, and put them up on the ASCII Facebook group and the CSATimes website. The final problem was that a lot of first year CS students have never done programming before and have a tough time getting started with it. For this, classes on basic C programming and basic competitive programming were organized for first year students in the first semester of the academic year 2015-16.

Q. What changes have you brought about in the department?

A. The biggest change has been an increase in the number of students who are actively involved in competitive programming; over one hundred students participated in each of the contests we organized. A lot of students got exposed to competitive coding for the first time and have started doing it independently.

Q. What can we expect from the department in the coming academic year?

A. The department will continue to organize hackathons and competitive coding contests at an increased frequency. We have already conducted a contest this semester with participation from the three BITS campuses in India and we will be having more such BITS-wide contests. BITS Goa's Google Developer Group has also been revived. The first GDG session was conducted this semester and more sessions are being planned. The department will also continue to organize talks and events aimed at increasing participation in Google Summer of Code.

ECONOMICS

At first glance, Economics may seem like a distant cousin of every other degree BITS Goa has to offer. However, it demands razor-sharp logic and reasoning, and so Economics electives continue to retain their immense popularity.

Economics is known to mix well with any B.E. degree; and it is for this reason that Aditya Patil was successful in the introduction of the highly popular Finance Minor in BITS Goa. He speaks about his other contributions to the Economics Association.

Q. What was the purpose behind introducing the Finance Minor?

A. BITS Pilani offers a dual M.Sc. degree system which includes Economics. According to the University Grants Commission (UGC), a student should have completed 5 years of an Undergraduate and Postgraduate programme before they can apply for a Ph.D. in India. As BITS does not follow this criterion, BITSians are not eligible to enroll into Ph.D. programmes within India. I wanted to make sure that this system changes. And so I wanted to start a Minor Degree Programme in Finance.

Q. How has the Economics Association made life easier for students?

A. We made sure to organize an exam schedule such that Economics students were not debarred from enrolling in electives of their choice. We have also formed a student-faculty council to bridge the gap between the faculty and students. Students are now able to provide better feedback about courses. A Department Orientation was introduced to form a better student-faculty relationship. We had multiple talks with the faculty and organised an orientation in the VGH where all students and teachers of Economics were invited.

Q. Will we be seeing any noticeable changes in course structure or activities of the Economics Association?

A. We have been having discussions with the Economics HoD Dr. Debasis Patnaik, where we pushed for the program being lengthened to a full 5 years, as well as the addition of basic courses in first year. We were also in touch with a Wealth Management firm in Goa, which was willing to help students gather more exposure from an industrial point of view. Finally, I wanted to get industry experts to campus for interaction with students. This was for them to know what the various career options Economics could lead to.

EEE AND E&I

Almost synonymous with each other, it's no surprise that EEE and E&I students share most of their classes, not to mention sympathy from those who stand in awe of the notorious toughness of the discipline. Since their strength makes up two-fifth of the student population, one is always running into EEE&I students, who constantly alternate between a state of fervent positivity and bottomless despair.

Dishant Banwari and Swapnesh Kumar Sahoo answered this questionnaire together, and elaborate on the inner workings of the combined Association.

Q. What goals did you have for the department for the previous academic year and how did the department come across in achieving those?

A. The EEE&I department did not have a Department Week as such before. The introduction of such a thing was one of our goals. It was in association with the CSA that we ended up organising many different events, something we're proud of. Apart from this, we were successful in organising a multitude of workshops throughout the year, many of them being interdisciplinary.

Q. What changes have you brought in the department?

A. The introduction of events that appeals to a vast multitude of people is a change we helped in bringing about. We also encouraged students to participate in various tech fests and display their technical prowess. We ended up winning a few accolades along the way as well. There is still a long way to go with the tech culture on campus, but we're starting towards a more positive change.

Q. Can you throw some light on the workshops/any special talks that the department association conducted?

A. Digilogica was a logic design event based on Digital Design. We had a coding event based purely on Matlab called Matmania. We collaboratively had the Analog Quiz which was mainly based on Analog Electronics and had an event named Boolean Beatdown as well. Apart from these events we also had a Robotryst Quadcopter Championship and Workshop at which three students from the 2015 batch won the championship and brought glory to the Institute by winning National Quadcopter Championships conducted at Tryst'16, Technical festival of IIT Delhi (27-29 February 2016).

Q. What can we expect from the department in the coming academic year?

A. We plan to continue the tradition of conducting the Academic Department Week once per academic year and hope that with every upcoming edition, there is more to offer to the students as well as to the campus. Also, we plan to carry forward the tradition of the active participation of the Association coordinators in the SFC (Student Faculty Council) meetings which helps to bridge the gap between the student-faculty interactions. The association coordinators have also been working closely with the CSA, in the form of the CSA Senate, in order to plan and conduct new events and implement new ideas and projects on campus. We hope to carry forward this tradition in the upcoming academic years.

MATHS

One knows, that when one sees students sitting in pairs with their brows furrowed, with a deceptively small yellow book between them, that they are definitely Math students. Math is a tool for the other sciences and engineering subjects; however, to understand fundamentals with the rigour it demands, is no easy joke.

Jiten Ahuja led the Mathematics Association for the previous year. They have organized their flagship events and conducted new events with zeal, as he shares with us.

Q. What were the events conducted by the Mathematics Association this year? What was the student response like?

A. I wanted to increase the number of events in the first semester. We had 2 competitions - Math Ecstasy and Integration bee, and a workshop at the end of the semester. Math Ecstasy had over a hundred participants, almost all of them from first year. The second semester saw Department Week with competitions including Sudoku, Math.h, Integrals and Series and Math Quiz. Then we had the third edition of MathFest where we held several technical events. Schools from Goa also took part - more than 60 non-college students participated. During Mathfest, we released the third edition of the annual Math magazine, Convergence.

Q. As a coordinator, did you make any changes in the working of the Association?

A. One of my aims as the coordinator was to make sure that the winners of various competitions were awarded prize money. I ensured that the winners of Integration Bee and Math Ecstasy received their prize money.

Q. There was always publicity going on for math-related workshops. Could you tell us more about them?

A. I wanted a workshop to be held at the end of the first semester, and fortunately, Dr. Prabal Paul was keen on the idea. We held a workshop on number theory and cryptography, which saw off-campus participation as well. During Department Week, we had a few workshops conducted by students of the Math department. Rutuja Kshirsagar conducted a workshop on Additive Number Theory, Ahuja Jiten Amar on Analytic Number Theory, and Shourya Bose on LaTeX. There was also a session conducted by Ramchandran Muthukumar on Convex Optimization later on during the semester. Not to mention, Mathfest saw a few lectures as well. There was a lecture on implementation of graphs by Raghav Passi, and another by Harish C on the mathematics behind solving a Rubik's cube.

MECHANICAL

Innocent children become hardened veterans in the Mechanical department, constantly holding their own against an assault of weekly 'surprise' quizzes. It is said that a Mechanical student can always hear the echo of Workshop machinery if they listen carefully enough.

Shaikh Saif successfully led his troops to another year of successful battle, and here's what he has to say.

Q. What goals did you have for the department for the previous academic year and how did the department come across in achieving those?

A. My main goal as a coordinator was to make students of our department more knowledgeable about their discipline. This was achieved by regular guest lectures, workshops and events which gave them knowledge beyond their usual academics. They all helped students make better career choices, encouraged them to do projects and helped them in their placements as well. Another goal was to help students and student-teams working on various projects. I ensured student team projects like SAE and Robocon were funded through the Mechanical budget.

Q. What changes have you brought in the department?

A. A big change that I made was the start of the Department Day culture. We organized 5 events for students of all disciplines with various prizes to be given away. We also collaborated with CSA as a part of the Academic Department Week. I set up the protocol for efficient use of our Association budget, and deserving student projects were funded from within the Association budget.

Q. Can you throw some light on the workshops/any special talks that the department association conducted?

A. Here is the list of all the activities we organized for the academic year 2015-16.

- Fresher's Orientation session for 2015 batch students was organized.
- A workshop on PTC Creo (CAD Modelling Software) was organized for 2014 batch student under the guidance of Prof. P. L. Ramkumar Sir.
- A workshop on IC Engine Control systems was organized in association with SAE.
- Organized Department Week in Association with CSA
- Organized one day workshop on Pressure Vessel Design and ASME codes by Dr. Dipak K Chandiramani.

- Organized a one day workshop on Abaqus, FEA software.
- Organized an Invited talk by Mr. Shailesh M. Pathak, Assistant General Manager, Corporate Business Excellence, TATA Motors on "Campus to Corporate".

Q. What can we expect from the department in the coming academic year?

A. Since I am currently on campus, I expect to be in constant touch with the newly elected Coordinator and Secretary. We can expect more workshops on specific sectors like design, manufacturing technologies, and automobile engineering. By the end of my tenure, I confirmed an intensive full-fledged 8-day Automobile workshop for December, which I'm sure will be taken forward by the next coordinators. I expect them to establish a stronger bond between juniors and seniors, where a group of interested students can come up together and work on personal projects.

PHYSICS

There is a quiet but definite aura of intelligence and questioning about every Physics student. Their teacher-student bonding is of a completely different level, much to the envy of students of other branches. The sparkle in their eyes when they speak of physics and research reflects their passion for 'the study of everything.'

Shahnawaz Ahmed, the coordinator of the Physics Association, sheds some light on the working of the Association and how he has encouraged student participation during his tenure.

Q. What goals did you have for the department for the previous academic year and how did the department come across in achieving those?

A. I wanted more student-teacher interaction. That took a step in the right direction when we started organizing a yearly dinner party for all faculty members and students at VGH. This year I also tried to improve student participation in various projects, and we have collaborated with Celestia and Grease Monkeys to work on interdisciplinary projects. We also had the first ever Physics Department week.

Q. What changes have you brought in the department?

A. I have ensured that the department has regular sessions with faculty to discuss student issues. We wish to establish an e-library for books. I also have tried to enforce a set of duties for the next president - such as organising the orientation session, student faculty meetup, updating the Physics department website with a list of projects completed every semester and maintaining a list of alumni who are continuing further studies in Physics. Optional duties include inviting professors for talks and organising workshops.

Q. Can you throw some light on the workshops/any special talks that the department association conducted?

A. We had the Physics department week which saw a large number of teams participating with cash prizes for the top three teams. We had a visit by Prof. Dharamvir Ahluwalia who is a renowned physicist. Ashwin Krishnan, a Physics student, organized a semester long Quantum Mechanics lecture series which saw participation from students from all 4 years.

Q. What can we expect from the department in the coming academic year?

A. More talks on emerging topics in Physics by students and Professors, collaboration with Quark to make the Physics Dept week bigger and better, workshops for developing soft skills (LaTeX, writing a CV/Cover letter) and regular updates on internship opportunities for students.

Completing the e-library and encouraging small study groups for particular topics is also a major goal. We already have two groups to discuss Quantum Information. We want to encourage more students to form groups and use the labs after class hours to discuss, come up with new ideas, and learn from one another.



INTERNSHIPS

ADITYA CHINDHADE

BITSian at MIT: Aditya Chindhade interned at the MIT-Harvard Health Sciences and Technology Division during the summer under the Khorana scholarship program. Aditya's project of a 'theranostic nanoparticle' stands proud in the long list of the technological revolutions that have happened in Boston.

Q. How did you hear about the Khorana program?

A. A notification is circulated through the Head of each Department for the S.N. Bose and Khorana programs. Both of these programs are a part of the Indo-US Science and Technology forum (IUSSTF).

Q. How did you apply for the scholarship?

A. You apply through an online portal where you upload your statement of purpose, research experience and two letters of recommendation. Your application is reviewed and 30 Indian candidates are shortlisted. If shortlisted, you write to professors in the US and try to get acceptance from at least 3 professors in their labs, for which you will be interviewed. Once you have a mentor ready, you are officially 'in'.

Q. Which aspects of biology are you interested in?

A. I am interested in the application of Chemical Engineering/Chemistry to solve biological problems. I am specifically interested in the use of nanotechnology for cancer and tissue engineering research.

Q. Which university/lab are you interning at? On what basis did you make your choice?

A. I was interning at the MIT-Harvard Health Sciences and Technology (HST) division. I chose the lab because it was a smaller research group. Also, because it's MIT!

Q. What are you working on at MIT?

A. My main project was the development of a theranostic 'reporter' nanoparticle. Theranostics is a new term coined to describe the combined effect of therapeutics and diagnostics. In the current medical scenario, there is no way to test the efficacy of your treatment until 6 months have passed, so the treatment may be futile. My project was to develop a polymeric nanoparticle loaded with a drug and a probe molecule. The drug action kills the cells and generates a certain enzyme which then activates the probe to give an MRI signal, which can be detected. This evaluates the immediate activity of a drug, so that therapy can be changed if necessary.

Q. How has your overall experience been so far?

A. It was an amazing learning experience - not just about the academics, but also about how the country's economy works, the grant and funding system, the medical system etc. I also had fun visiting a few places in and around Boston.

Q. Would you recommend the Khorana program to students with any particular inclination?

A. I would like to point out that the Khorana program doesn't require you to have a Biology major. You just need to have an interest and inclination towards solving a biological problem.

Q. Do you think doing an internship abroad has certain advantages?

A. Yes definitely. It broadens your perspective about your field, you get to attend talks and conferences by some of the best people in your area of interest and also get to learn about the social structure of a different country. The opportunity of seeing places around the country is a major plus! P.S. The Khorana program provides \$2500 as stipend, arranges for flight tickets and insurance reimbursement.

Q. What is your advice to other aspirants, in terms of building an application?

A. Start writing to professors as soon as possible. Try checking for openings in multiple labs so that you can choose the lab suited best for you. Start working on projects - formal and informal, right from your second year. GPA is important. Period. Draft your statement of purpose in such a way that it is coherent with your research experience so far. Lastly, getting selected from a national level program involves a lot of luck. So, apply for multiple programs and see what clicks.

ADVAIT BALAJI

Advait Balaji did a summer internship at the Icahn School of Medicine, Mt. Sinai, NY, under the Khorana Program. The 2 months he spent there was a revelation in terms of the research-centric world that exists over and above what BITS provides.

Q. How did you hear about the Khorana program?

A. Prof. Srikanth Mutnuri, who is in-charge of the IPCD, sent us an email as soon as the program was announced. As I had already made up my mind to do a biology-oriented research internship after my third year, this seemed like the perfect opportunity.

Q. How did you apply for the scholarship?

A. The application process is completely online. Documents such as a statement of purpose, NOC, transcripts, and letters of recommendation need to be scanned and submitted online.

Q. Which aspects of biology are you interested in?

A. As a Biology and Computer Science dualite, my interest lies mainly in Computational Biology. That being said, I find all facets of biology interesting. Biology encompasses a myriad of interdisciplinary topics that offers an exciting and challenging environment to carry out research.

Q. Which university/lab are you interning at? On what basis did you make your choice?

A. I'm doing my internship under the Systems Biology Center New York (SBCNY) undergraduate program at the Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai, NY. SBCNY has been at the forefront in developing mathematical modeling techniques and computational methods to better study biological networks. As my research at BITS was focused on these topics, SBCNY was the best fit.

Q. What are you working on at the Icahn School of Medicine?

A. I'm working on modelling complex biological networks using computational logic. This involves modeling of novel pathways through which cell signaling systems interact.

Q. How has your overall experience been so far?

A. It's been an enriching experience in terms of getting exposure to quality research. The facilities and techniques present here offer a learning experience that goes beyond the usual classroom

atmosphere. In such an environment you are encouraged to push the boundaries of science further, try to ask unconventional questions, and develop techniques to unearth answers.

Q. Would you recommend the Khorana program to students with any particular inclination?

A. The Khorana program is aimed at Biology/Biotech undergrads/grads, so it is paramount to be interested in the subject and be excited by the prospect of research in Biology. The selection committee is a joint Indo-US board of professors who go through each application. They see right through applicants who apply only for the sake of doing an internship.

Q. Do you think doing an internship abroad has certain advantages?

A. It certainly has its advantages. Firstly, it shows the ability to adapt and work with people of different cultural and academic backgrounds. Collaboration of ideas is very essential, irrespective of the field. It also gives you the opportunity to gain new perspective into your field which may not be prevalent in your country. In India especially, research is not a very popular career option and is still in its nascent stages. Internships abroad equip you with the technological know-how to contribute to the growth of research at a faster pace.

Q. What is your advice to other aspirants, in terms of building an application?

A. You need to be very clear about what you want to apply for and what interests you. Ideally, you should have adequate knowledge and projects which go a long way in helping you strengthen your application. Your application should show enough evidence that you have a research-oriented mindset and a profound interest in biology. Your SOP(Statement of Purpose) and letters of recommendation matter a lot. Your second year courses and PS (if you get to do it in biology) should give you an idea if research in biological sciences appeals to you, if it does, you should definitely apply for it.

ANANYA SHIVADITYA TANUJA SAWANT

The Monsoon School is an annual ten-day program conducted by the Simon's Centre for Living Machines, a part of NCBS (National Centre for Biological Sciences), Bangalore. Ananya and Tanuja chit chat about their experience in delving into both research problems and dosas alike. Incidentally, they share a common love of skateboarding as well and can often be seen whizzing down the roads of BITS Goa.

Q. How did you find out about the Monsoon School?

A. Ananya: *I found out about NCBS when a friend asked for biological details of the energy cycle in a living cell, to include in its application essay. The essay topic was to question whether living cells could be considered machines. I applied in May.*

Tanuja: *A friend suggested it to me*

Q. On what basis did you decide to spend part of your summer at NCBS?

A. Ananya: *Curiosity is, and always will be, my favourite teacher. I really wanted to explore the world of research, but I also wanted to get rich, fast. NCBS is amongst the top research institutes in India, and attracts students and scientists from varied academic backgrounds, and so I knew it would introduce me to the methodology and opportunities in the field of research, not necessarily limited to biology.*

Tanuja: *NCBS is known to be a school where interdisciplinary work is nurtured and the lecturers are amazing. I also looked forward to interacting with students of varied backgrounds.*

Q. How is the working culture at NCBS?

A. Ananya: *It demands long hours of pondering conversations that tickle your thoughts long after you've left the discussion. The unsaid hierarchy of Pls, Postdocs, Ph.D students to the ones writing their undergraduate thesis, took us lowly interns very long to identify, mostly because it didn't really exist. Professors tested their own ability to think by engaging their students in scientific debates over lunch and dinner. A Rubik's cube with two faces of the same colour was solved and solved again to exhaustive analysis, on the table next to a game of Jenga, where every block still in place was load bearing. 'Cutting-edge science' was just a fancy phrase before I went to NCBS.*

Tanuja: *It's chilled out. They have a working place where we hung out - Simon's Centre. It had some professors' chambers which were open 24/7. It didn't feel like a working place at all - rather it was an integrated mix of work and play. The place had its own library, board games, kitchen, lounges, etc. It was an open environment where professors dined with students and indulged in an exchange of ideas. It is natural for a prof to be playing in your frisbee team in the evening.*

Q. Describe your project, if possible.

A. Ananya: *The Monsoon School included a series of lectures which introduced us to various tools and techniques for analysis, like Markov Chains, Machine Learning and Reaction Networks to name a few. At the end, we presented a topic we'd researched - mapping the flow of information in a given social circle, giving attributes such as loudness and intelligence to people as nodes in a graph. We studied Percolation Theory, and how the entire group moved towards a given 'idea'. We even implemented strategies that a person with comparatively less intelligence could use to influence the ideas in circulation in the circle. I worked on an individual project to suggest a fitness function for mating in a given biological population using the Stable Matching Problem. I created a simulation where genes were used as the identity, as 64 bit length binary strings.*

Tanuja: *I worked on Synthetic Biology. We pondered the question - what if, instead of the 3x4 codons set, life forms had nxn codon sets?*

I discovered that it's okay to thoroughly dislike a subdiscipline. It's Synthetic Biology for me. All the profs there had something they didn't like to work on, and they openly shared it with us.

Q. How has your overall experience been so far? What draws you to the field of Biology?

A. Ananya: *Being formally trained in biology, it was exciting to discover new ways to look at biological problems, from different points of view of perhaps a physicist or a computer scientist. The School also included research talks from eminent researchers. These collectively served to introduce us to a whole range of real world problems that have scope for further research. The program helped train our instincts to ask the right type of questions, and to come up with a good research topic to dig deep into.*

Tanuja: *It has been extremely inspiring and has made me more open minded towards research. The field of Biology has more open problems than that of Physics, I would say. Everything that can be learnt draws me in.*

Q. Whom would you recommend applying here? Any cons that you might think of?

A. Ananya: *For all those who wish to make a career in research, NCBS has a plethora of avenues where they could use students from varied academic backgrounds, even including engineering streams. The Monsoon School is particularly aimed at interdisciplinary*

participation. I also recommend students who simply want to get a glimpse of what a life in research could be like, to apply to this institute.

Tanuja: I would recommend dualites to apply here, or anyone interested in interdisciplinary research. Apply when in third year. We had people from all branches there, literally.

Q. Do you have any advice for applicants?

A. Ananya: The essay is probably the most important part of the application, and will require some research to substantiate the arguments made. This summer, BITS Goa surprised the organisers of the Monsoon School by being one of the largest group of students there. If you're applying, show them all the intelligence you can muster up, and the best ideas that strike you as and when they do.

Tanuja: Answer the biology question well. Dive into the learning process.

Q. Is there anything else about your experience you'd like to share with us?

A. Tanuja: They provided us with insanely great facilities: free food, accommodation and travel. Those ten days were the best part of summer. We learnt a lot, about a lot. More importantly, we had a lot to learn at the end of ten days. They equipped us with the basics required to start research in almost every field, especially Biology. One important concept behind the project was to enable the candidate to come up with a research problem. That was an interesting assignment.

Ananya: Apart from the academics, NCBS is a beautiful place to be. Here are some things you can do besides sit on the outdoor benches in the breeze as you work.

- Take joyous buggy rides till the Mandara hostel
- Eat big dosas that are for Rs 12.
- Play squash and foosball and swim and cycle till you're good and lost in the Krishi Vigyaan Kendra
- Marvel at how big the grapes are
- Visit IISc, Bangalore and play frisbee

I'm quite certain I'll have to go back there to experience it all again.

ANMOL PANDA

Anmol Panda once took a week-long tour to the Arctic Circle, and spent his New Year's eve gazing up at the aurora borealis, all while simultaneously pursuing his romance with cloud based academia. His semester abroad reads like the opening chapter to a life-changing experience, something he'd no doubt agree this was.

Q. How did you find out about this programme? How helpful was the BITS administration and ARC while dealing with the logistics?

A. I got an email from Dr. Srikant Mutnuri (Dean IPCD), which had been forwarded from a senior who had received a similar scholarship. Since my exchange semester was the first such case on this campus, BITS had to set up new rules and procedures. Dr. Srikant Mutnuri, Dr. Neena Goveas, and Dr. Bharat Deshpande were instrumental in setting this programme up.

Q. Which university did you go to? On what basis did you make your choice?

A. I went to Uppsala University, Sweden with a scholarship from the Erasmus Mundus NAMASTE programme for exchange studies in a European university. Among the few available choices, UU offered courses in CS, and was a good fit.

Q. How would you advise interested students to apply for a sem abroad? When do you think is the right time for them? Please describe the process.

A. It would be great for students to study at least one semester in a foreign university as it not only exposes them to the standards of a reputed international institute, but also enables them to adapt to a new culture, live independently, manage finances and become self-sufficient. It is also a good practice session for those who wish to pursue a Master's degree in a foreign university. Applications may begin at most a year and at least a sem in advance.

Q. Which semester is most suitable?

A. While most students wish to pursue a thesis in a foreign exchange trip, I would encourage them to take normal courses instead. This gives them a greater opportunity to interact with local students during classroom sessions and project work as opposed to a thesis in which students are mostly restricted to a lab.

In my opinion, the best semester for exchange studies will be one or both of the last two semesters for students. In this case, students have few or no restrictions on the courses that can be chosen. Therefore, the process of course mapping between the host university and the home university (BITS) would be much simpler.

Q. What is the process to apply to do a semester abroad

A. That is indeed a good question. There is no single process. I visited UU as a grant holder under the Erasmus Mundus programme. There are many such programmes that are offering mobilities between Indian and European universities. Apart from this, BITS has MOUs with hundreds of universities and they may be offering such mobilities too. You should look for emails from the Dean, IPCD for such opportunities.

I would highly encourage students to write mails to exchange coordinators and the international office of these universities to enquire about any potential opportunities. You may even end up creating one for yourself.

Q. Any monetary/visa issues that students face abroad?

A. The visa fee was waived by the Swedish embassy, although this is not the norm for all countries. After receiving the acceptance letter, you should write an email to the concerned embassy to ask if visa fees can be waived, unless it is reimbursed as a part of the scholarship. Universities generally ensure that the monthly stipend is sufficient. Students should not spend too much in the early weeks as there may be higher expenses in later months (such as buying winter clothes or an optional tour to some place in the holidays). They should contact their mobility supervisor in the host university to find out what amount of money they must carry for the first few days, until the scholarship amount is credited to their accounts.

Q. Does CGPA play a huge role?

A. CGPA does play a role but most programmes do not have a CGPA cut-off. Sometimes, if the offer is from an individual university, they may insist on a minimum CGPA to limit the number of applications.

Q. How different is the Swedish working culture from India?

A. Sweden is very different from India. The most striking difference is in punctuality. Everything in Sweden happens spot on time. Swedish people are very polite and helpful, although also a bit introverted.

Q. How was your overall experience ?

A. I had the best experience of my life. I learnt to live independently. I also met people from across the world. Sweden received a large number of international students. I wish to visit Europe again, possibly for education.

Q. Any cons that you might think of?

A. Sweden is very sparsely populated. If you don't make friends or take part in social events like parties or local festivals, it can get a little lonely.

Q. Did Sweden keep you busy throughout the semester or did you have time to unwind?

A. There was ample time to unwind on weekends and during the winter holidays. I went for a week long tour of the Arctic Circle and the Northern Lights on New Year's eve.

Q. Apart from the sem abroad, what is the exact area you're working on and what are your research interests? Describe your projects if possible.

A. My area of interest within the field of Computer Science is in High Performance Computing. I am currently working as Sr. Project Assistant at IIT-Delhi on a Cloud Computing project.

Q. What are your future career plans?

A. I am applying for Masters for the Fall 2017 semester.

HARSHITA MANGAL

Harshita Mangal's love affair with Signals and Systems led her to spend the clear summer days in Victoria, Canada through the MITACS Globalink Research Internship programme. She moved to other areas of signal processing later and is currently pursuing her Master's degree at University of California San Diego in the field of Signal and Image processing.

Q. How did you find out about MITACS? How helpful was the BITS administration while dealing with the logistics?

A. I found out about the internship via BITS Mail. The administration had sent a number of reminders regarding the same. In my view, students are not aware that at BITS, semester exchange programs are available. Since many students don't regularly check their mail, they miss a lot of opportunities. I think more awareness can be spread regarding these.

Q. In which university did you do your summer internship? On what basis did you make your choice?

A. I worked as a Research Assistant at University of Victoria on the topic Coding in Smart Grid. I chose the topic since I thought Smart Grid is an emerging technology and I was primarily interested in Signals and Systems at that time.

Q. How did you fare in contacting professors for your internship? What advice would you give to students while crafting their email and in other application requirements?

A. I did not contact the professor. Based on our preference, we were matched with professors. While writing to a professor, keep in mind that he is probably very busy, so make it precise and formal. You can start by greeting him as Dear <designation> <name> and also attach a resume at the end.

Q. How different is the Canadian working culture from India?

A. My professor was extremely friendly and sweet. He was willing to share any amount of knowledge. He was more concerned about the amount I learned rather than my project, which I took to be a good thing. I could meet him at any time and any number of times a week to get my doubts cleared. It might not be quite so informal in other places though.

Q. What is the exact area you're working on and what are your research interests?

A. I am working in Computer Vision image processing which includes Machine Learning and Biomedical Image Processing. This is different from what I did at MITACS.

Q. Any cons that you might think of?

A. Possible cons could be that the process of matching students and professors seemed random. We did not understand how we were allotted and how a few others were not allotted a specific project. In addition to this, a few projects were canceled.

Q. How would you say your overall experience has been?

A. My experience at Canada was amazing. The place is extremely beautiful and it became all the more pleasant because the guide I was working under was extremely good.

KARTIK SATHYANARAYANAN

A summer spent in France, performing cutting-edge research while being paid for it? Kartik Sathyanarayanan lived the dream in INRIA-Rennes. He was one of the 25 students from all over India to be selected for the prestigious Charpak Research Internship Programme which is offered by the French Government every year. He learned to cook and fend for himself, and discovered that Goa is more famous than he'd thought.

Q. Which university/lab are you interning at? What did you work on, and on what basis did you make your choice?

A. I am a summer intern at INRIA, which is a research organization based in France. I had come across my supervisor's profile on Google Scholar and was fascinated by her group's publications on cloud computing, and that's how it unfolded. There was a European Union project for the navy to efficiently process the incoming data in real-time. I had to do a performance evaluation on stream data processing engines on the cloud.

Q. How did you look up universities and labs in France?

A. You have to know what your interests are before applying. Google Scholar has a 'feature' search option where you can look up researchers with expertise in a particular domain from around the world.

Q. How did you fare in finding a host professor? What advice would you give to students while crafting their email and in other application requirements?

A. I started sending out mails in the first week of September. This is an apt time if you wish to apply for the DAAD WISE scholarship as well. In the first paragraph, you should briefly introduce yourself. In the second paragraph, write about why you applied to their research group. After that, briefly describe your previous work (PS-1 and any relevant projects). Make sure you attach your resume and transcripts on Google Drive. Some professors will request a Skype interview - this is your chance to negotiate funds for your travel and stay.

Q. How different is French working culture from that of India's?

A. French law dictates that you must work for only 35 hours per week. Extra working hours will

entitle you to take paid holidays. However, people make full use of their working hours. They're committed. Their lunch breaks last for 2 hours. Overall, it's a stress-free atmosphere at work, but at the same time, they make sure that the project deadlines are met.

Q. How has your overall experience been so far? Are you looking to pursue research later on?

A. My supervisor was the team lead. Although she was busy, she always managed to find time to meet me. She was encouraging and she ensured that I received help when I was stuck. Being at INRIA taught me how to live independently outside India. It was the first time I cooked, and it was fun. They provide 310€ stipend per month, which includes accommodation and social security. I learned to be cautious in spending money. I feel like my internship experience has given me a great head start.

Q. What are your future career plans?

A. I am planning to work for a few years in the IT industry and then go for higher studies in the States.

Q. Whom would you recommend applying here? Any cons you can think of?

A. I would recommend people who have interest in pursuing research or higher studies to apply to INRIA institutions in France. Start sending mails to the team leads in January. The only con in France is that it's pretty difficult to manage without knowing a little bit of French.

Q. Any other advice for aspirants?

A. Don't get discouraged by rejections or no replies from professors. Keep trying and hope for the best! Be precise and to the point in your emails and also in your resume. Subscribe to Eduinfo to get weekly alerts and apply to all the internship programs mentioned on it. Also, if you get selected, it is not advisable to take too many holidays to roam around Europe.

Q. Any personal experience that you would like to share with us?

A. A surprising thing was that almost every person in INRIA has been to Goa during the summers in the past few years! They are highly praiseworthy of the place. I even met a person who praised the rising Indian economy. It is then I realized that the world is actually watching us and learning a lot from us.

Q. Did this project keep you busy throughout the summer or did you have time to unwind as well?

A. The internship kept me busy during the weekdays. I was free during weekends. I visited Belgium, Amsterdam, Paris and Rome along with a friend from Pilani, and we stayed at Airbnb listings. You really get to mingle with natives there and it turned out to be a great cultural exchange.

MRIDUL SETH

Mridul believes he was extremely lucky to have been selected to intern at LIP6 as it took him just a single email to receive a positive reply, something that is a rarity. During his time in Paris, the use of an azerty keyboard instead of a qwerty keyboard shocked him immensely.

Q. How did you find out about this internship? How helpful was the BITS administration while dealing with the logistics?

A. I was looking for research labs working on complex networks and found a team in LIP6. I found the work really interesting and hence mailed the lab regarding possible summer research internships. BITS administration didn't really have much to do, but sadly even for that I had to run around for a couple of weeks.

Q. Which university/lab are you interning at? On what basis did you make your choice?

A. I interned at LIP6, Paris with the complex networks team. I really liked their work and it aligned with my future goals.

Q. How did you fare in contacting professors for your internship? What advice would you give to students while crafting their email and in other application requirements?

A. I got really lucky. I sent out only one email and got a positive reply. Apparently this is not a usual occurrence. People usually end up sending emails to 20-100 professors. Regarding crafting emails, I would say - be as concise as possible, although many will say otherwise. Also, please don't spam professors. Anyone can tell if it is a generic mail with just the professor's name and university name changed. Write a couple of lines about how you found out the lab and what you found interesting, then write a couple of lines about relevant previous experience: interns, projects, courses and end the email with the logistics about your intern, etc.

Q. How different is the French working culture from India?

A. My lab was pretty laid back but the work was efficient. I had a couple of meetings every week where we discussed the progress.

Q. Are there any cons you can think of?

A. Yes! Well, it would really help if you learned French. You would think that Paris is a big city, and so people will definitely speak English but they don't, and sometimes it is deliberate.

Q. What is your advice to aspirants?

A. Don't apply to labs and professors randomly. Apply only if you are genuinely interested..

Q. What are your future career plans?

A. I plan on pursuing research and possibly doing a Ph.D later.

Q. Did you experience any sort of culture shock?

A. The most unexpected cultural shock: an azerty keyboard instead of qwerty keyboard.

PRITHIV NATARAJAN

Prithiv Natarajan did his third year summer internship in Gurgaon, taking head-on amongst other things - the change of the city's name, the overload in pollution, and the simple tragedy of living half an inch outside Delhi, all in the name of Chemical Engineering.

Q. How did you find out about this internship? How helpful was the BITS administration while dealing with the logistics?

A. Thanks to the placement unit of our university, my batch was given the opportunity to apply for their (Honeywell UOP) internship as well as their full time job program. The placement unit was very helpful in updating us with the test schedules, constant reminders, application procedures/formalities, and other necessary information on the shortlisting process and the organization.

Q. On what basis did you choose to intern at Honeywell?

A. Honeywell UOP was the only company that came with an internship offer that year, so most of the students were looking forward to it.

Q. How is the working culture there?

A. I think the word 'corporate' would be the correct description of the working environment. You are one in over a lakh, working on similar objectives, leading ultimately to the company's market/customer satisfaction, and eventually the organization's reach in the business. You are that tiny drop. Nevertheless that's what helps in filling the bucket.

Q. What is the exact area you're working on and what are your research interests? Describe your project if possible.

A. My area of work was in the Field Operating Services (FOS) along the Aromatics Technology. Honeywell UOP is proud of its methods, and there's certainly a reason for it. The Extractive Distillation (ED) principles using a different compound named Sulfolane, gives nearly absolute purity of aromatic compounds, and that's what FOS strives for. My project was based on the ED Sulfolane Technology - analyzing the process variables associated with it, updating the obsolete data, and chalking out the problems that arise in the column.

Q. How has your overall experience been so far?

A. Chaotically maturing. Once you're out of school, the freedom you receive at college gets out of control and of course, gradually we get a grip on ourselves. Now I would say that the freedom we had then is not as much as these organizations give us. One learns to be responsible - sticking to deadlines without reminders, as well as adjusting to euphemisms about your work ethic. The main difference is colleges try hard not to kick you out, while organizations don't really care.

Q. Whom would you recommend applying here? Any cons that you might think of?

A. Someone who is driven to learn, and leaves no present day's assignments for home or the next day. I wouldn't call the following a con but it is something one should look out for. UOP provides a placement offer with a bond for five years. The initial training period is 18 - 20 months, something that isn't my cup of tea. If you think you would be comfortable in a research environment, then I would not recommend this. But if you are looking for industrial experience, this is one of the best opportunities to explore the core field from an organization's point of view. Moreover, your CV looks more attractive by the end of it.

Q. How do you see future prospects in the core branches (your branch, maybe)?

A. Chemical Engineering is gradual, and is definitely worth the wait. Opportunities are endless. With respect to the Oil and Gas industry, it's a cyclic market - it will come up one day. When it comes to Honeywell, it's a mixed bag. The current market will not affect the newly recruited employees as much as it'd affect the upstream companies which are at the face of it. There is a reason why Chemical Engineering is considered to be one of the core fields in Engineering. It's difficult to explain its 'benefits' or 'scope', until you are in the waters and experiencing the currents yourself.

Q. Any other advice for aspirants?

A. Test rounds, group discussions (be informed about the oil and gas industry), and the final interview. It's all about your fundamentals in the subjects. Don't have expectations and learn things as they come by.

Q. What are your future career plans?

A. Presently, I am engaged in a thesis at TU - Braunschweig, Germany. Simultaneously, I am exploring the research environment. When asked about future career plans, I would say building and working more on my knowledge in the field by gaining industrial experience.

Q. Did this project keep you busy throughout the summer or did you have time to unwind as well?

A. The project kept me busy for the day, and I was repeatedly advised by my mentor not to take my work home. Post work, I had the time to go around the city, hobnobbing or gallivanting. I was very in touch with sports and music - specifically football.

Q. Is there anything else about your internship you'd like to share with us?

A. It is important to remember that you are pitched against other Engineering colleges across the country. In my case it was JU (Kolkata) and VIT. Learning about the quirks in their education system is definitely amusing. And of course, the mentors, and other full-time employees - some of them being BITS alumni - share how they made a choice when they were at the crossroads. And I can't talk enough about Gurgaon. You learn, you harden, you

RAGHAV PASSI

Raghav Passi initially answered this questionnaire in code. After repeated requests, he translated it into a language us mere mortals can understand. Apart from ingesting code, he occasionally defeats giant aliens from outer space in his free-time.

Q. How did you find out about this internship? How helpful was the BITS administration while dealing with the logistics?

A. I found about this internship from a friend of mine, Kailash, who was a year ahead of me at BITS Goa. He interned at Google last year. This was an off-campus offer so the institute was not a part of the process.

Q. What was the selection process? What advice would you give to other aspirants regarding preparation?

A. The initial selection was on the basis of Google's 2016 APAC Coding contest. I had a rank of 33 in Round A of the competition and got a mail from Google to submit my resume and other basic information. Based on that I had two interviews over the phone, where I had to write code in a shared document. The entire process pretty much revolved around problem solving and implementation abilities. Doing algorithmic challenges regularly is the best advice I can give. The focus is on your ability to understand a problem, your approach to solve it, and your ability to convert your ideas into usable code.

Q. How long was your internship? What is the exact area you're working on and what are your interests?

A. 11 weeks. I worked with the Google Springboard team, improving the search quality of their enterprise search system. My interests revolve around advanced DSA, AI and Machine Learning.

Q. What's the Google work environment like?

A. In one word: Heaven. You get total independence and freedom to pursue your work as you wish, with some of the smartest people in the country right next to you, should you require any help. I cannot say this enough - the people over there are insanely good at what they do. You are also exposed to some of the most advanced tools and technologies that exist today, not only the ability to use them but also go behind the scenes and understand what went into building them. Also, the company takes care of basically everything from stay to food, and really really good food at that. In the future, I would want to work in an environment that constantly challenges me intellectually. Google seems to be able to do that and more.

RAMCHANDRAN MUTHUKUMAR

Ramchandran Muthukumar was one of the exceptional students to be offered the opportunity that was Google Summer of Code 2016. The icing on the cake for him was his experience at MIT where he actually delivered a talk at JuliaCon - a conference for developers of the Julia language.

Q. What is the motivation behind JuliaCon?

A. JuliaCon is a yearly event, which aims at promoting Julia (the language) and provides a platform to people who use it in different ways to showcase their work. The developers get a sense of the requirements and applications and the users get a sense of how to better exploit the language's features. That being said, the difference between developers and users is blurred in the Julia community as everyone contributes based on their personal work needs.

Q. Could you tell us a little about Julia? How does it compare with other programming languages?

A. Julia is a high-level, high-performance dynamic programming language for technical computing, with syntax similar to languages like Python. To quote, it provides a sophisticated compiler, distributed parallel execution, numerical accuracy, and an extensive mathematical function library. Julia's Base library, largely written in Julia itself, also integrates mature, best-of-breed open source C and Fortran libraries for linear algebra, random number generation, signal processing, and string processing. Julia code written in the right way is much faster than Python, R, Java, and Matlab for most tasks and even achieves speeds similar to C.

Q. How did you get the opportunity to speak at JuliaCon 2016?

A. My proposal to implement presolve algorithms for Convex.jl (a Julia package that solves convex optimization problems) was selected to be a part of GSOC 2016 under the organisation Numfocus (sub-org Julia-opt). I was invited to JuliaCon to speak about my project over the summer and to interact with the Julia community.

Q. What is your GSoC project about?

A. Mathematically, optimization is a question of minimizing a function subject to constraints. There are already reliable solvers such as SCS, MOSEK, etc. to implement algorithms. My project was to implement pre-processing algorithms to the input data before it was fed into a solver. My objective is to find redundancies and only pass relevant information into the solver. To this end, I am implementing techniques mentioned in two research papers.

Q. How did it feel to give a talk at an institution as prestigious as MIT?

A. It felt amazing. The aura around the MIT campus cannot be overstated and the Julia Community was fantastic and very friendly. A great experience.

Q. What was your general impression about MIT?

A. There is an air of quiet seriousness and friendly social behavior which was very attractive. Cambridge was primarily a student town with both Harvard and MIT in it. It was fantastic exploring the campus and looking at its rich history of alumni who are household names for doing wonderful research.

Q. What did you learn from your experience at the conference?

A. My take-away is that research can be quite collaborative. Almost everyone present at the conference was doing work of the highest quality and literally pushing past existing barriers of knowledge. Some were coming up with new ideas to make the compiler faster. Some are coming up with new parallel programming frameworks. These two things are entirely different from my interest in Julia but I still found it exciting. I think any bit of scientific or engineering work would be extremely appealing if it is presented by people of a certain calibre.

SANATH KESHAV

One of the things that truly makes BITS unique is the inculcation of the importance of inter-disciplinary education. Sanath Keshav is an exemplar of this teaching - being from a purely engineering background, he did his research internship at TIFR's Centre for Applicable Mathematics (CAM). He performed revolutionary work on object reconstruction using non-linear partial differential equations and speaks with genuine excitement at the prospect of research.

Q. How did you find out about the internship? Did you have to go out of your way to prepare for it?

A. I found out about the Visiting Student Research Programme 2016 programme when the Dean of TIFR-CAM had visited Goa for a guest lecture series on hyperbolic conservation laws. I had to prepare differently because I only had an engineering background and it was a dedicated institute for applied mathematics. A lot of credit has to be given to the mathematics department, especially Dr. P Dhanumjaya, for grooming me and making my stay at TIFR-CAM as productive as possible.

Q. On what basis did you decide to work on mathematical research?

A. My strong interest towards numerical methods was probably the most prominent thing to influence my choice. Moreover, the quality of the research happening at the institute is world-renowned - TIFR has acclaimed international collaboration. It is one of the only centres in India dedicated to research on partial differential equations.

Q. How did you fare in contacting professors for your internship? What advice would you give to students while crafting their email and in other application requirements?

A. It was a very interesting, bittersweet experience. Mailing professors is a very time-consuming and technically demanding task as contrary to popular belief. There were times when I was disappointed and there were times when I was overjoyed. Keep the mail as crisp as possible. I would highly recommend going through their research in detail and understanding it. Please refrain from sending generic emails - this creates a bad impression about not only yourself but also the college, and even the country. Mailing professors is like impressing a girl - you don't want to look narcissistic. Speak about their work and what you understood from their work. Be as professional as you can. Attach your latest CV with all your data, and include hyperlinks to your reports and code repositories. The most important thing is not to get demotivated when you don't get a reply. Even if you are rejected, there is a bright side - you learnt something new when you read their work. I learnt a lot at the end of it. Do the best you can and hope for the best.

Q. How different is the working culture at TIFR?

A. The institute picks only a handful of the finest candidates to pursue their Masters or Ph.D degree. The whole institute has less than 30 students and only around 15 faculty members. TIFR provided outstanding accommodation. It had a very conducive and comfortable atmosphere for research. There is no notion of working hours. You could always see students brainstorming, sharing ideas or progress over a cup of coffee or having a meal with faculty. The faculty is particularly very friendly and there were even instances when students and faculty could be seen discussing things ranging from world peace to Pokemon Go.

Q. Describe your project at TIFR.

A. I was working on Shape from Shading (SFS) and granular matter theory. The idea of SFS is to reconstruct an object from a 2D image using Hamilton Jacobi equations. SFS is a simple yet powerful tool for object reconstruction as it requires minimal inputs to reconstruct the original scenario. We developed an immersed boundary solver for solving eikonal type equations on non-convex domains and numerical schemes for perspective and orthographic models. We worked on designing a robust numerical scheme which could handle discontinuous input intensities and discontinuous solutions. The applications I worked on included medical imaging, face reconstruction, and satellite terrain reconstruction, amongst other things, and we got some outstanding results.

Q. How has your overall experience with research been? What do you like about research?

A. My experience with research so far has been very rewarding. I had interned at the turbomachinery lab at IISc last summer. I have met a lot of people with similar interests now. These experiences have helped me converge on to what I think I want to do in future. Sometimes, I'd find myself pointlessly staring at one particular thing, wondering what was going wrong - it can get agitating at times. However, the result, the culmination of the problem when it's solved - that overshadows everything else. That is the stuff that keeps you going. I am looking to pursue research in the future.



THESIS

MEET ^{THE} THESIS COTERIE

Vedika Agarwal (EEE)

“Multi-Prior Shape Segmentation for 3D Cardiac Imagery”

Georgia Institute of Technology, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

Shivesh Anand (Chem + EEE)

“Engineered Premature Heart Model Using 4D Bioprinting”

Harvard-MIT Health Sciences & Technology, USA

USA

Aditi Kulkarni (EEE)

“Human-Robot Interaction for assisting the Blind”

Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

Sanjukta Krishnagopal (Phy + Mech)

“Partial Synchronization Patterns in Hierarchical Networks
(Non-Linear Dynamics and Neural Networks)”

Technische Universität Berlin, Berlin, Germany

EUROPE

Manasi Kane (Bio + E&I)

“Developing a Computational Model for
Electrical Epidural Cervical Spinal Cord Stimulation”

École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland

Raj Sinai Kunkolienkar (Phy)

“Conformal Symmetries & the EFT of Inflation”

Harish-Chandra Research Institute, Allahabad, UP, India

Mihika Himanshu Dave (EEE)

“Extreme Learning Machines (ELM)-Based Multi-Label Classifiers”

Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Anshu Aviral (Phy + CS)

“Real Time Declarative Language for Distributed Multi-Robots”

Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

ASIA

Siddharth Jadhav (Chemical)

“Airfoil Morphing Using MFC Actuators”

National University of Singapore, Singapore

G Amit Jamadagni (Math + EEE)

“Boundary Conditions of Levin-Wen Type Models”

Fudan University, Shanghai, China

***coterie** - a small group of people with shared interests or tastes, especially one that is exclusive of other people.*

“

HOW DID YOU CHOOSE WHERE YOU WANTED TO DO YOUR THESIS? WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE TO YOUR FIELD OF INTEREST?

”

I was interested in Computer Vision and Image Processing. So, a confirmation from Lab of Computational Computer Vision, Georgia Tech seemed an appropriate choice. The lab uses highly advanced mathematics to address various computer vision problems, so it really was a good learning experience for me; playing around with the different techniques in the area.

-Vedika

I narrowed down on my thesis institute since it was the best institute in India for theoretical high energy physics. My thesis guide was one of the only academicians in the country working on the topic of my interest, which is inflationary cosmology and high energy physics.

-Raj

I applied to all the places relevant to my area of interest which is Embedded Systems and Robotics. I was fortunate to get an internship at CMU which has the world's finest robotics lab.

-Aditi

Owing to a few extra-curricular projects like computational physics with CERN, mobile computing at MIT Media Lab workshops or robotic programming in a competition by IIT Bombay, I had experience in multiple fields of Computer Science. I was ready to take up new and challenging areas.

-Anshu

TU Berlin has a great research group working on neural networks. I narrowed it down to a few people I was interested in and then I applied. Europe was a personal location preference, and then within Europe, I started looking for professors who did good work in what I wanted to do.

-Sanjukta

I chose EPFL as I wanted an interdisciplinary project which used both biology and E&I.

-Manasi

I opted for Biomedical engineering as my research specialization to make the most of both my disciplines: Chemistry and Electrical engineering. I knew that Tissue engineering is a field where I wanted to build my career, so I contacted professors accordingly. I was extremely lucky to be accepted by one of the most renowned professors working in this area.

-Shivesh

Your best bet is to shortlist research groups which appeal to your interests from all over the world through some intense Googling. I read as many publications as I could. It's a matter of being at the right place at the right time, but the harder you try, the luckier you get.

-Siddharth

I wanted to pursue my thesis in a reputed institute, and not in the US (to avoid the J1 two-year clause), and work with a professor on Robotics and Machine Learning. That made it flexible for me to choose from a variety of topics.

-Mihika

“**WHEN DID YOU APPLY AND GET A CONFIRMATION?**”

I started applying in February 2015. I first got a confirmation from IIT, Delhi. I continued applying because my parents were skeptical about sending me to Delhi, and I was interested in doing work beyond implementation and testing.

-Aditi

I applied in September 2014 and I got an interview call by October and a confirmation by December.

-Manasi

I applied in Jan, and I guess got the confirmation after 15 days.

-Vedika

I still remember it like it was yesterday. I volunteered for a conference held in our campus in Jan 2015 - International Conference on Distributed Computing and Networking (ICDCN). During lunch, I spoke to a keynote speaker about the BITS curriculum and the dual degree system. When we reached the thesis chapter, he showed real excitement at the prospect of mentoring me for 6 months. I wrote him a formal mail asking him for the same, to which he replied, as I distinctly remember, "Happy to." It was due to a blend of persistence and luck that I landed this opportunity.

-Anshu

I applied in February, and it took a week to sort out the kinks.

-Sanjukta

I applied in Sept 2014, and got acceptance by Dec 2014.

-Raj

I started applying by the end of August, for my thesis semesters beginning in January. It took almost three weeks to successfully complete the application formalities, which included submitting three letters of recommendation and a Skype interview.

-Shivesh

I began sending emails in early November. Initially, I didn't have much luck, but I got a positive lead in mid-March.

-Siddharth

I applied in February, and got the official confirmation in March.

-Mihika

“ WAS WRITING A THESIS HELPFUL IN DECIDING IF YOU WERE INTERESTED IN PURSUING RESEARCH? ”

Definitely. The thesis was my first experience with robotics, staying abroad and working with a professional team. After the internship, I was in a position to narrow down on my interest areas and identify areas for improvement. While it's very difficult to have a perfect thesis experience, it will definitely help you build your network and could open better possibilities in the future.

-Aditi

I don't think so, I didn't enjoy writing the thesis. It was rather the process: learning new things, working on it to get results, reading papers, implementing various algos and most importantly the lab culture: the team you work with.

-Vedika

Definitely. All the experience gained while working on the thesis reinforced my decision to pursue research.

-Manasi

A semester of thesis work certainly gives you a taste of how your life is going to be if you decide to pursue research. There wasn't a single day when I woke up and didn't feel an urgency to go to the university, interact with my professor and work. Working in the industry for over 3 months after graduation further cemented my belief of pursuing research.

-Anshu

It was useful. The whole experience resembled the natural research environment very closely compared to the experience of doing coursework and projects in BITS. This gives you a real glimpse of how things will be during your student years.

-Sanjukta

I was strongly inclined towards pursuing research during my undergraduate days, and my thesis experience only went on to strengthen that interest.

-Raj

Certainly. A thesis is your best opportunity to find out if you want to delve deeper into research. I was lucky to get a holistic experience as my work involved all fundamental elements of research: literature review, design, fabrication, experimentation, analysis and technical writing. As I duly enjoyed every part, I was convinced of making a career in research.

-Siddharth

Even though I've been quite certain about a career in academia, the exposure I am receiving while writing my thesis has strengthened my resolution. I strongly recommend opting for a thesis, even if you have the slightest inclination towards research.

-Shivesh

Yes, it helps. It also gives you hands-on experience if you are publishing research papers.

-Mihika

“
WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS AFTER GRADUATION?
”

My plans were to do a PhD in Robotics. However, I couldn't get an admit this year for some reason. So I am working at KPMG, India as an Analyst in the Digital Strategy team.

-Aditi

After my thesis semester, I spent a semester at CFP, University of Porto (Portugal) as a researcher. Following that, I am on a year long sabbatical working on research. I will be applying for a PhD for the Fall '17 entry.

-Raj

I shall be continuing as a Research Assistant to work on 3D bioprinting for its application in regenerative medicine. I look forward to applying for a PhD position in the coming years.

-Shivesh

I want to work for a year or two as a research assistant and probably then apply for a PhD.

-Vedika

I am pursuing my MS with Thesis in Computer Science at UIUC (University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign).

-Mihika

I wish to pursue higher studies so as to stay involved in research. Ideally, I would like to go for a Ph.D.

-Siddharth

I plan to apply for my PhD in Neuroengineering.

-Manasi

I am now doing my PhD in Physics at the University of Maryland, College Park.

-Sanjukta

I'll go for higher studies as and when I get an opportunity.

-Anshu

“
FOR THOSE WHO SAT FOR PLACEMENTS - DID YOUR THESIS
EXPERIENCE HELP YOU IN PLACEMENT INTERVIEWS? IF YES, HOW?
”

I opted out of campus placements, but the thesis helped me to apply for a research position in different groups, where I plan to continue my research after graduation.

-Shivesh

I didn't sit for placements. However, I feel like it makes you able to answer questions on certain topics with a great level of detail which is appreciated not only in academia but also in a working environment.

-Sanjukta

I sat for placements just a few weeks after coming from Hong Kong. The thesis was definitely a starting point of a conversation at several of my interviews. Some interviewers would follow up on it and some wouldn't. More often than not, they do. And when they do, we get to show our command over the subject. A thesis in no way sends a negative signal to the interviewer. Just remember to show that it is the work that gets you excited and not the idea of doing research!

-Anshu

Not really. It helped to some extent with preparing for my interviews, but it didn't really give me an edge during the rest of the placement process.

-Aditi

Not really. It indicates to the recruiters that you want to pursue higher studies.

-Mihika

“

DOES DOING AN OFF-CAMPUS THESIS GIVE YOU AN EDGE OVER AN ON-CAMPUS THESIS TO PURSUE HIGHER STUDIES?

”

I believe that it does. Research is not just limited to experiments, results, and laboratory skills - it's also about developing the right approach, which can happen only with proper exposure and interaction with like-minded researchers. We should consider ourselves really lucky that BITS Pilani gives us the opportunity to pursue our research interests at leading world universities.

-Shivesh

Good grades, GRE and relevant coursework will open the first few doors for you. Then, substantiated research experience would definitely give you the edge. I am of the opinion that your thesis advisor is more important than the institute itself.

-Siddharth

Yes, you get more exposure.

-Mihika

Getting into a good university requires a strong recommendation. Some would say it is easier to build a rapport with a known professor who is on campus. An off-campus thesis has the advantage of international exposure but at the end of the day, questions about your commitment, quality of your research, and whether it could be published in a renowned conference, matter. I have friends who have got into top universities without even taking up a single thesis semester.

-Anshu

Our campus has good research, but it is still growing. If you have a niche interest and the campus does not support it, then you should head out. It helps to get exposure and a different perspective. Being in a different place and interacting with different people will help you make a decision.

-Sanjukta

Not so much if you are planning to do a Masters. It's more about the work that you do and the kind of recommendation you get from your mentor. However, an off-campus thesis may help with PhD admissions. Either way, an off-campus thesis abroad cannot assure you an admit.

-Aditi

In a very utilitarian way, yes. You do get an additional reference for grad school application. More holistically, you get to see the working and the culture of other institutes, especially research institutes.

-Raj

Yes, doing a thesis from a good institute is very helpful for a higher studies application. Also any research experience gained is useful when you work on your own projects eventually.

-Manasi

“WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF YOUR THESIS EXPERIENCE?”

I got the opportunity to work on a project which promises to completely revolutionize today's medical technology. I consider myself extremely fortunate to be a part of such a dynamic research group, while working with the brightest minds coming from all over the globe.

-Shivesh

The best part of my thesis experience was learning how to effectively communicate my thinking in terms of mathematical language, and also learning more discipline to problem solving.

-Amit

I had the opportunity to attend a neuroscience Summer school in Zermatt, where I met many researchers in the field.

-Manasi

The ability to be working on one idea for four months at a stretch.

-Raj

My biggest takeaway from my thesis experience is neither the paper I published, nor the thesis I wrote. Rather, it was all about the journey. Cutting-edge research isn't all rainbows and unicorns. It's difficult to implement something new when there isn't a manual. However, that is where the fun part lies - brainstorming with your professor and trying to conquer a summit you haven't yet scaled. In this process lies all that the thesis teaches you. It was a roller-coaster ride, and I will cherish it forever.

-Anshu

I liked being a student while not having to go to classes. I had the freedom to carry out research the way I wanted to - I was groping in the dark and that was what was expected of me. When you figure out new stuff on your own, it's like your brainchild, and it's really quite motivating. I got to travel quite a bit and learned more approaches to science.

-Sanjukta

A thesis in another country educates you in a two-pronged manner. Apart from the academics, it also educates you about the local culture and you get to travel. Singapore is a fabulous city to be in. To have learnt so much about research while having fun at the same time was fulfilling.

-Siddharth

The part that I liked best were the weekly discussions with the whole team where ideas. Besides work, Pittsburgh is a great place and the snowfall during my last week there made it pristine!

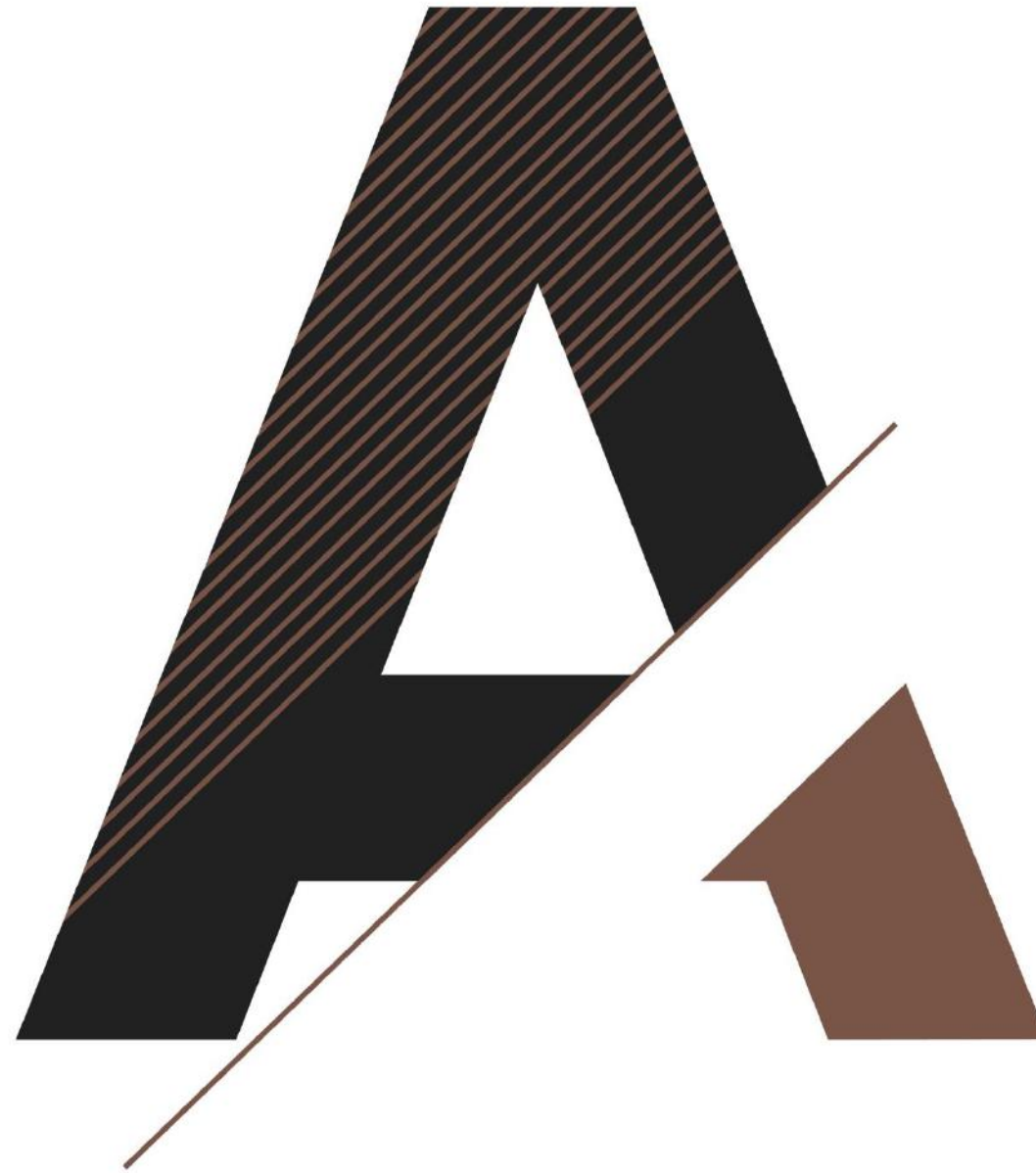
-Aditi

Working with a multi-cultural group, collaborating results, exploring the avenues along with the place.

-Mihika

Working with passionate researchers all day long to nail a given problem.

-Vedika



A L U M N I

monsoon | mediocrity | lebron james | what are you made of
room for thoughts | sugar with sanjana | poet | stranger | campus

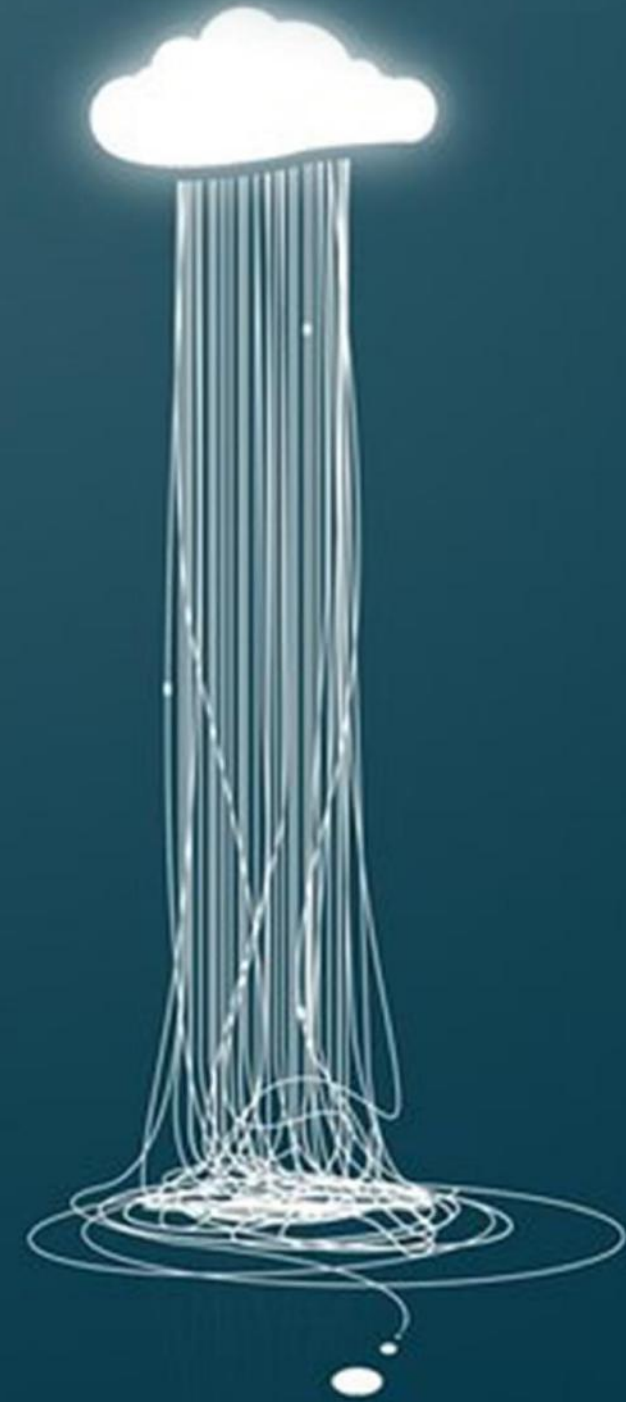
MONSOON

First born of monsoon, Rain is a spoilt brat.
She despises all that is hot and bright
spiteful towards the warm and cosy and crisp and baked
And adores the damp and dark.

Humans, those self-satisfied creatures,
conveniently forget the extent of her power
she doesn't mind reminding them for the countless-and-third time.
Wind, the faithful younger brother, snatches away dreams and umbrellas
Gift wraps worry and puts it down the ears of the wrinkly beings
Terrifying young ones, exchanging their outdoor games
For sniffles and shivering.
Rain, she lets out a cackle of joy and claps wind on the back.
Trees, always green with envy, come crashing down.
Thunder, her best friend, bursts out in laughter
Her favourite uncle Winter looks on with pride and nods in approval.
Chaos abounds and it's the start of a perfect night.

Sometimes, just sometimes, she is sensible.
When all is said and done she grudgingly, gracefully fades away before curfew
The start of a perfect morning.
The sun hesitantly comes out with a nervous half smile
Embracing everyone warmly.
Wind (who is a good boy after all) lingers about
Heaving a sigh of relief
And the humbled humans breathe it in deeply.

Nidhi Kadkol





You never know when you find mediocrity.
It might snuggle up to you
Like a cat under the covers
When the storm rages on outside.

In a dead, cold universe
Warmth comes in small defeats

You can't build a house in a day
But the corner stones are laid.
When the weeds clear someday
You will have paid
A premium
In pain.

Why invest in pain?
Mediocrity is free.



WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF?

“Noise.”

“?”

“Just...noise. You know? The cautious rustle of confidential documents, carefully enunciated document numbers over phone calls, the softest of creaks from an unseen swivel chair, and the urgent tread of someone late for a meeting. You know?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m lucky to be in a conversation where a question mark can pass for dialogue.”

“Yeah, a little bit like what Mia talks about, you know—”

“Yeah.”

Silence ensued – the kind Mia would’ve approved of.

“What are you made of?” he asked, eventually.

“Go on,” was the reply.

Some questions aren’t.

“I met a guy once. He was made of sand. Not the cool, finely ground sand of the beach, but the scorching, coarse sand of the desert. He was as violently volatile as the ever-shifting dunes, but always with a mirage of an oasis – right at the limit of vision. He had a way of getting under every fold of your skin, every crevice under your dirty nails and every unreachable corner of your pockets. You could never really rid yourself of the granules he left on your persona. Between your toes, at the base of your neck, in the rolls of your belly fat – traces, particles, crystals. Unseen. Unmistakable. Never truly gone.”

“You should write this down somewhere.”

“Come to think of it, there was another guy – also made of sand. He was the other kind of sand I mentioned. Pleasant and cool. Only glimpsed him briefly though. He was just passing by. The passing was as quick as it was nonchalant. Equally enduring, though. He was shaped not into dunes, by hot, arid gusts, but into flat, inviting shores by the incessant crashing of the oceans over the centuries. Flat, inviting, and yet inaccessible shores.

“The sand of the sea always decides to do too many things at once. For lazy vacationers, it caresses sinking ankles and coats lazy thighs. It holds smelly boats and tangled fishing nets in its palm and it stretches out a long, long way to reach a very rocky and steep cliff. It does it all without being told to – it does everything because it must. It is what it does. It does, therefore it is.

“It’s all too much, but the sand of the sea has all the time in the world. It never rushes. It’s always holding a coconut shell containing more than just water, and it never hurries. Yet, it never stops. Waves must be greeted, and rocks must be touched. Without those things, it will never be what it is.”

“Tell me more about the people you’ve met. They sound...interesting.”

“I met a girl once. I knew her briefly, or so it felt. She was a rock.”

“The kind that doesn’t grow moss?”

“No idea, I never understood that metaphor,” he admitted.

“Oh God, me neither! Is growing moss a good thing or a bad thing?”

“Exactly! Should the rock roll or not? I wish my school-teacher hadn’t been so vague when I raised the point. Anyway—”

“Yeah, anyway—”

“She was immovable when she needed to be, and unstoppable when she wanted to be. There was a certain permanence about her too, but it could be the kind that you hold onto in a sea-storm, or the kind that crushes your chest. She was a primitive dagger, a shelter against gales, an instrument of fire, and the terminus of every unfortunate climber whose foothold wasn’t quite strong enough. She knew blood and bone just as well as the rain and the sun. And I never saw her flinch – not once.”

It had grown dark since the conversation began, and the few lamps inside the place had gone a long time without being cleaned. He stared hard at the grey silhouette in front of him. He saw other lumps of darkness seated at other tables, and heard the clinking of glasses and the murmur of secrets.

“I want to know what you’re made of,” his listener demanded.

“Me? I’m made of steel, love.”

“And why is that?”

“I have been scraped out from dirt, thrown in a pit, ground to dust, and set on fire. I feasted on darkness without knowing it would make me unbreakable. Because that’s what I am, love – unbreakable. The flames ate me up and spat me out raw and filthy and when I cooled I found I couldn’t even move!”

His hands were gripping the edge of the table with an unusual amount of force. When he stopped talking he realized he was breathing heavily. He picked up the glass of water, and, realizing it was empty, slammed it down.

Two chairs scraped against the floor. It made for a brief but jarring departure from the mellow rumble created by intimate conversation and waves crashing on a beach somewhere nearby, just out of sight.

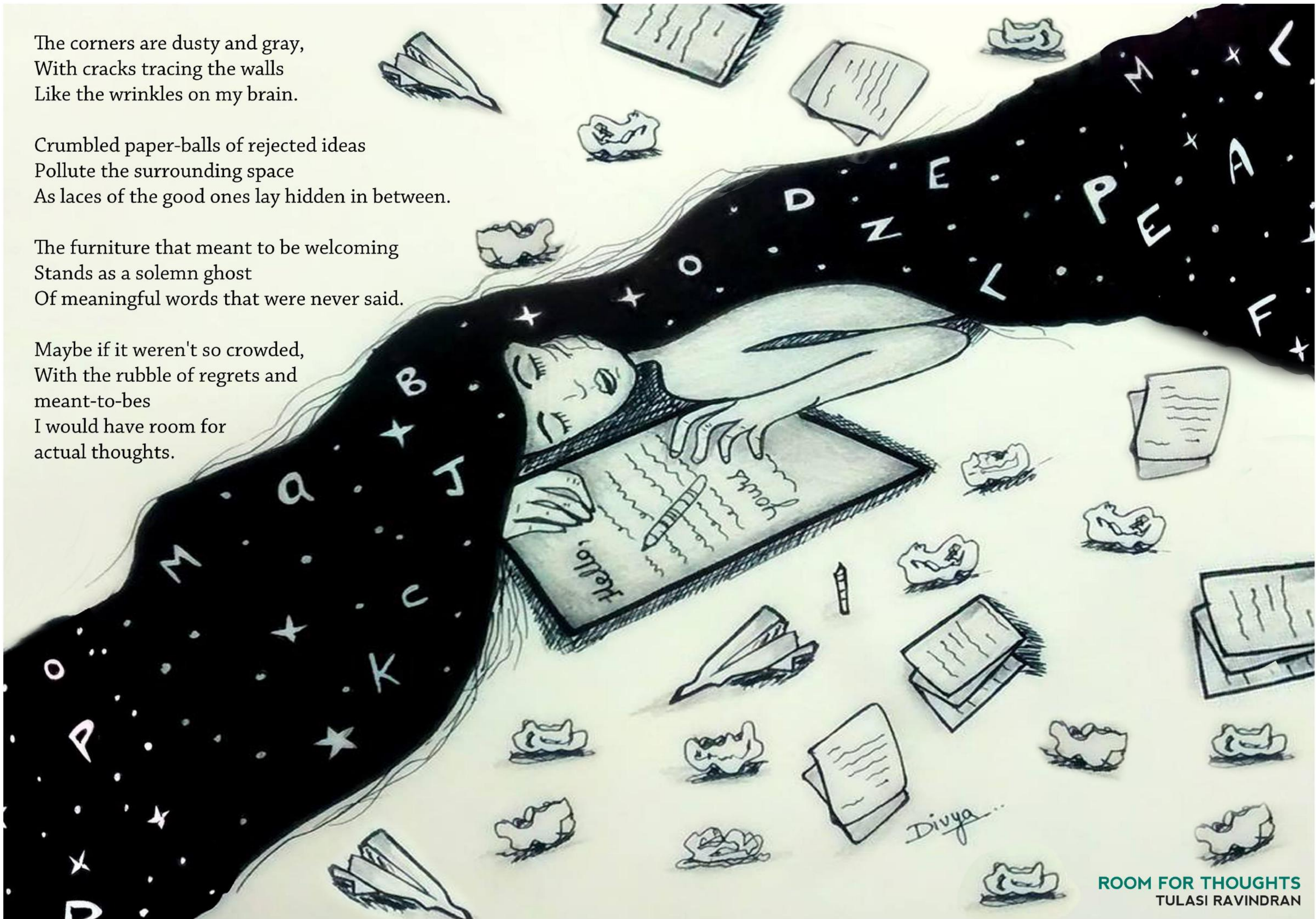
Kshitij Bedekar

The corners are dusty and gray,
With cracks tracing the walls
Like the wrinkles on my brain.

Crumbled paper-balls of rejected ideas
Pollute the surrounding space
As laces of the good ones lay hidden in between.

The furniture that meant to be welcoming
Stands as a solemn ghost
Of meaningful words that were never said.

Maybe if it weren't so crowded,
With the rubble of regrets and
meant-to-bes
I would have room for
actual thoughts.



CAMPUS

Intellectuality
Is hard to come by
In a breeding ground of intellect
Where germ-lines of thought
Arise from the Artificial Selection of examinations;
Survival of the conformists,

Where Social Conscience
Is drowned out
By the cacophonous entropy
Of Geekspeak.

The Phenotype of rationality,
Weeded out so thoroughly,
Cannot contaminate the sterile biome
Of pure Science, sterilized
From the infectious Free Will of Society.

Nissim Gore-Datar



SUGAR WITH SANJANA



It is a matter of a few months ago. I was told by one Ms. Veena Vijai, the sprightly 'co-Chief-Editor' of this year's edition of Sizzling Sands, that the entire Alumni section of the magazine depended on me – my immediate reaction was to helpfully suggest that, in that case, they rename it to the Alumnus Section.

I believed it to be an innocent and polite request. Having once been the Editor-in-Chief, as we called it back in 2013, I thought the young 'uns must feel obliged to ask me, perhaps out of some diminishing sense of respect and nostalgia, for my contribution. I let her know I was touched by the thought, that I'd submit something soon, and that I was grateful for having been approached. That, I thought, would also be the end of it.

As readers, you've probably learnt to expect that it is hardly the end of things in the third paragraph of anything. For several reasons, however, it is necessary that we switch, jarringly and unnecessarily, from a narrative article to a different format totally. These reasons will become clear with patience and time, the former of which is a virtue and the latter of which is money.

Interviewer: Truer words were never spoken, and we thank you for them. Before we get to the heart of the tale, however, could you tell us more about why we switched to an interview over a narration?

Sanjana: It's simple, really. When I was the Editor-in-Chief of Sizzling Sands, my team and I had planned an Alumni section too. We wanted the primary readership of our magazine, of course then still in college, to get a taste of what the future would be like, from people who'd taken various and astoundingly unexpected paths after college. However, because such stories can be different for everyone and are personal journeys more than magazine articles, we decided we'd interview chosen alumni so as to get the most relevant answers from them. We also valued their time and were mindful to not exert undue pressure on them to churn out an article on a theme we'd chosen; it's even more unfair to give them total leeway and tell them to 'write about anything under the sun', whatever they felt like. That sort of thing just exploits the author's deepest insecurity about even being creative enough to come up with an engaging subject.

I: You sound like that's what happened to you.

S: What? No. Absolutely not! I could write about anything under the sun, just ask anyone. The truth is... I had a lot of pressure on me. As I was saying, my interaction with Veena, from Drama Club junior to occasional email-buddy outside of college, didn't end as organically as I'd expected it to. When I told her I'd write something for the magazine, I didn't expect her to really follow up – I have to commend her gumption. She was consistent, ruthless, and unabashed. Often I woke up to teary pleas from her at 4 a.m., emotionally wringing messages urging me to do something about the article, texts as concise and impactful as 'Sanjana. Please.' Her reach was widespread, far more potent than I'd ever imagined. Just when I thought she'd forgotten about me, I'd log into my Facebook and see another reminder there, a small little warning about the approaching due date. Then I'd see an email with the subject BITSAM...

And I'd know. I'd just know. I soon found myself looking over my shoulder. The smallest of noises made me jump, and my once familiar WhatsApp notifications made my hair stand up. I know for a fact that my mother was really worried about me for a while.

I: But that's all behind you now, isn't it? Soon, you'll have something to send to her...

S: Yes.

I: Will you be satisfied with it, though? I mean, this sort of thing isn't new to you, is it? You famously wrote an article about yourself in 2012, once you found that no one else would.

S: I'm not ashamed of anything. I'll be happy to talk about it. What happened in 2012, - and I'm not saying I'm the same person I was then, - was that a dear friend of mine was covered by an online, college-oriented journalistic force called CoolAge. You know, how YourStory is with Indian startups, CoolAge was with engineering colleges. I read that article and I thought, you know, I could be this person. I have nothing to say about the merit of those CoolAge did cover, on their own, - another one, another good friend of mine, was featured because he got a prime number of likes on Facebook, and he's never been happier - but, you know, people are always telling you that you need to decide what it is that you want, and go after it. I'm not saying anything about anyone, this is about me. And once I realized that, I went after it. I've never looked back. Sometimes you have to do what you have to do. You know, real completeness comes from embracing the truth about yourself and the reality around you.

I: Truer words were never spoken, and I thank you for that... but you haven't really answered the question about how self-referential articles such as these must really frustrate you as an artist, as a writer, simply because you've done similar things so many times. Isn't it true that in the 2013 edition of Sizzling Sands, when your team worked on it, Ashwin Krishnan interviewed himself for a section?

S: I have nothing to hide: It's true that Ashwin interviewed himself for the magazine, - and so what? Look, it's a dog-eat-dog world and someone had to do the dirty work. The boy had just made the profoundly questionable decision of dropping his engineering degree in favour of another pure science one, and you just don't see that sort of bold, refreshing naïveté anymore. Who better to talk about it with him than himself? People wanted to hear about his decision, his thought process, his worldview – who am I to stand in the way? Who is he to stand in the way?

I: You give us a lot to think about –

S: Thank you.

I: But given the current political and emotional climate around the world, do you not think an Open Letter to yourself would've been the way to go?

S: [Laughs] You're right, there are several of those doing the rounds – Aaron Sorkin to his daughter, Slack to Microsoft, Leslie Knope to America – you name it. I think Mark Zuckerberg writes one to his daughter every day.

And I won't lie, I did consider it. But the problem with such letters, or anything generally addressed to one or two persons but meant for widespread publication, is how it must make the actual addressee feel. Think about it. Aaron Sorkin's daughter has been told by him there is a time for foul language, and that 'it is now'. Even if he later clarified to her that he didn't really mean it, not literally at any rate, how must it feel for a celebrity's daughter to be used merely as a placeholder to convey her father's political opinion to the rest of the world? Poor Roxy. That's why I didn't do it - that's just not who I am.

I: What do you think of the theme for this year's Sizzling Sands?

S: 'O Sancta Simplicitas'? I had to Google it. In theory, it's used to mock someone's naïveté. I know this because Veena told me. She said to me, "It's actually used to mock someone's naïveté." She continued relentlessly, "So, we are going to put it across as this - the editors believe that beauty lies in simplicity and so we focus on making content simple, clear, and readable. Meanwhile, the design team mocks our worldview by showing us that intricacy and detail can be beautiful too." And I think that's just amazing, it's quite a wonderful idea. I've always been one for a juicy, moral dichotomy, two sides of a coin coming together ironically, and, if executed well, I think the result could be impeccable.

I: Really?

S: Certainly. It excites me that people are still trying to be creative, even if it's in the smallest of ways. This isn't small, to be sure, but if there's one thing you learn from being outside college - and I mean this in two ways, outside college and outside of college, and they're different - it's that the time for experimentation is nearly over. I say 'nearly' only as a sort of consolation to myself, because in an unfortunate way, I realize gradually yet daily that the real world has very little room for aimless, spirited maneuvering. You're going to find yourself bound to some or the other cause that you don't care for entirely (if you don't, that's great, but you'll probably be poor), but find yourself working towards anyway. Undergrad is the only time, and college the only place, that allows one to explore infinitely, but not indefinitely. It is a period where reckless, unpopular ideas have the scope to become sophisticated individual futures, only if nurtured tirelessly and doubtlessly.

I: Have you ever seen a reckless idea through for the better?

S: Of course not. Surely the point of this interview is for me to impart preachy advice, too risky for me to follow, while enabling myself to live vicariously through my juniors?

I: What do you miss most about college and how do you feel about Trump's presidency?

S: It appears to me that we are pressed for time, since you're clubbing two very different questions together. I'll try to address both with one answer: It's definitely a very exciting time. Definitely. You feel like each day is different, like something momentous is just around the corner. You're unsure of what the future holds: It scares you. It makes you very, very nervous. But you walk into it headfirst nonetheless, and at the end of it, you find with pleasant surprise, that it wasn't as bad as you thought it will be [sic].

I: That's beautiful, it really is. Thank you for those words -

S: You're welcome. I have several more of them, actually: nincompoop, discombobulated, blandishment, disenfranchisement, mollusk, frabjous, mother, Jabberwocky, gallantry, dysentery,

I: That's all very well, yes, but we're really out of time. Do you have any last words?

S: ecdysiast, blet, sheeple, phenomenon, clairaudience, anesthetist, maudlin, syphilis, cat, complot, stridulous, lascivious, phoenix, stenographer, obambulate, porcupine,

I: What about names?

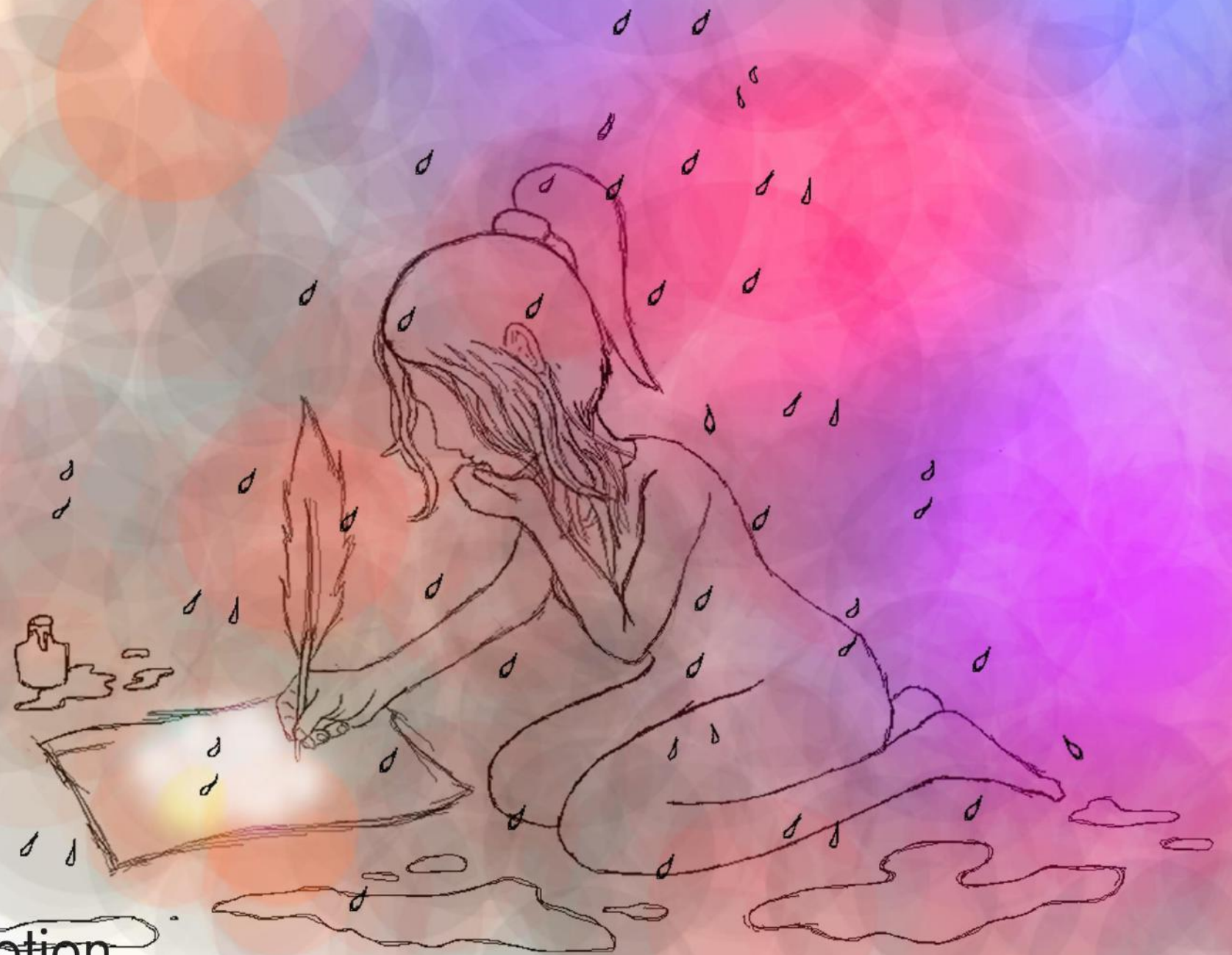
S: Travis, Sylvia, Benedict, Cynthia, Babita, Ivory, Somerset, Baconson, Patrick, Buffy, O'Henry, Bill, Waterson, Nooper, Steffie, George, Georgia, Victor, and lastly, Jordan. -

Sanjana Ramachandran

do you ever listen
to the sound of the rain
and wonder

“what would I write?
if I was a poet
how would this rain make me feel?”

and then you realise
you’ve got it all **backwards**
it’s not the poet that brings out the emotion
it’s emotion that brings out the poet



how does it happen that someone
stops being a stranger
and suddenly
you do not hesitate
to complete their sentences
and laugh at the same jokes
and to let them know that you're
human and you cry yourself to sleep
sometimes
when just a week ago
you struggled through a thirty-second
exchange about the weather

now we sit together
we try to make sense of human
nature
we drink bad coffee just because we
crave conversations
we dance
we smile
we look at strangers and then at
each other
and slowly, slowly, we coalesce

I've been asked before what my greatest doubt regarding my education is, both that which I have completed, and that which I may never complete. I wouldn't know the answer to that question if you narrowed it down to two extremely specific options, wrote them on a piece of paper, blindfolded me, and asked me to point at one with a chopstick. I have had days where I wonder if my degree is worth the (rather expensive-looking) paper it is printed on. I have had days when I think my college lends me pedigree, and scoff at NITians. There are days when I wonder why those NITians know so much more than me. There are days when I wonder where my degree is, panic, and call my mother. She has it, it's safe.

I could start small and work my way up. My first question about the result of my UG years is this: when people outside college ask me which batch I belong to, what do I tell them? I have grown used to thinking of myself as the '2011 batch', but saying so has evoked curious inquiries about my marital status. They think I mean I graduated in 2011. I did no such thing. So I began to say that I belonged to the batch of 2015. That went fine, until one girl asked me how on earth I was still working at the company, wasn't PS-1 over? You see, she was from Pilani. She thought I meant I joined in 2015. I did no such thing. The 'Class of Year X' tag must mean something, but it doesn't mean the year in which we were finally industry-ready. That year is still far away, though most people I've worked for do not know this, and hopefully never will. I have learnt to rudely counter-question with "wait, but which college are you from?" before giving my own answer. It has produced good results, but seems a largely inefficient process. I am seldom interested in knowing more about the person I am talking to than I absolutely need to.

This too has led to awkward situations. This year, on BITSian's Day, various social media posts convinced me to organize a BITSian lunch at my own workplace and send in a picture. I was fairly certain that I was the only BITSian in my tiny company, so I bought myself a mint chocolate pastry and resolved to tweet a selfie of me eating it. Before I could get to doing so, I was joined by a middle-aged man who turned out to be a Pilani alumnus. He had come over to say hi and ask how Goa was these days. Okay, I said. Weather is quite terrible this time of the year, but the beer is still cheap, so there's that. I didn't know you drink beer, he said. I don't, I replied, but I know what Pilani people expect to hear when they ask about Goa, and who am I to deny them that. He laughed, and asked me who the HoD of Computer Science was in Goa. I told him. "What? That clown! Haha! Who made him the HoD?"

This was crossing a line. I'm fond of our HoD, and the greatest insult I can think of for him is to call him the world's slowest corrector of answer sheets. And I will not have you call him a clown to my face. I said as much.

Venkat, visibly impressed by my strong reaction, backed down. "Hey, sorry man, I knew the man a long time ago. I'm sure a lot has changed since then." He's right. The people you see around you are growing and everyone's going to be in a better place in ten years. This is a truism about everyone else, and it better be a truism about me.

Aditya Kandaswamy (I'd tell you who he was if it made a difference) asked me whether CS grads do freelance web development to make some money on the side. It seemed easy, and

surely this was what we all did. It was a candid moment, so I bared my soul and told him more than he was ready to hear. I told him it would not be a very great overstatement to say I had graduated from college having learnt absolutely nothing of practical use in my field, and the jobs I've picked are those that taught me as much as possible. I'm a goddamned fraud. I spent my four years quizzing and debating and writing and having a really great time, and I do not regret one second of it. I'd have to be a fool not to admit that since college, I've had to start from scratch, and I suspect a lot of others have too.

Kandaswamy had stopped listening a while ago, but that's okay, because most of those thoughts were in my head. I wouldn't say these things out loud.

In 1944, during the weeks leading up to D-Day, a series of crossword puzzles featured in the Daily Telegraph, all authored by one Leonard Dawe. The crossword clues referred to highly classified operations being planned by the British military. Two weeks before the operation on Omaha beach, Dawe clued 'Red Indian on the Missouri'. A week before Operation Neptune was deployed, Dawe clued 'Britannia and he hold to the same thing'. It happened with such striking frequency that Dawe was arrested on suspicion of espionage. It later emerged that Dawe, a school headmaster, was in the habit of asking students to fill blanks with words to make clues for them later. It so happened that the school was close to an army camp - the words used by US soldiers were picked up by students, and ended up being printed in a national newspaper.

I was deeply impressed by this story the first time I read it. I didn't read a story of coincidences so much as I read a story of a huge number of people across all ages - schoolboys and soldiers, puzzle-makers and publishers - all acting to the best of their intentions and oblivious that they were involved in something bigger. It was a story of the significance of an event being discovered in hindsight, a significance born purely of happenstance and luck. The boys who left Prof. Dawe's study having filled in O __ H A with a word they had just learnt the previous day could not possibly have known what they were getting involved in, and how great it could be, and how terrible it could be, and which of the two it would be.

I believe the grand majority of us young alumni are hoping we are involved in something bigger than ourselves, but are skeptical of our chances. I think we're all looking for ways to feel important again. Half of us are bankers, half of us are studying for CAT, and half of us are wondering how to ask our old professors for recommendations. Half of us are dreaming about halting it all and opening a pub, and half of us think sports analytics is it, because we like sports and engineers can do analytics, and what could possibly go wrong?

Some of us are writing for an old college magazine. Anything to feel important.

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SIZZLING SANDS *2016-2017*

BITS Goa's Annual Magazine



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