

# Paper Castle

3rd edition

**- A DEPARTMENT OF  
ENGLISH INITIATIVE**





# Paper Castle

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Department of English  
Narasinha Dutt College, Howrah



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## ***FOREWORD***

Each passing year, we at the Dept of English, are blessed with a bunch of bright, enthusiastic students who spontaneously take part in several departmental ventures. Paper Castle 3rd edition is a result of such enthusiasm. Under the pressures of semester system of education, where time is a huge constraint, these students have meticulously put together their dreams, voices, imagination to build "castles" on these pages. We sincerely hope you as a reader have an enjoyable experience while going through the pages of our *Paper Castle*.

-Maumita Dhar (Dey)  
Associate professor, Dept of English  
21.08.2025

## ***Love All***

Maumita Dhar (Dey)

Associate professor, Dept of English

A game called war -

The sides involved are,

The people who die are,

The soldiers martyred are,

The resources destroyed are,

The maimed generations are,

The traumatized minds are,

The whispered tears are,

The sighs of love are,

- Expendable ?!.

## ***Drowning***

Debolina Chaulay  
(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)

I am drowning.

I need to breathe and I can feel  
the water filling every inch of my body  
and there's nothing I can do

except

pleading for air,

while my body reacts desperately.

Baby, you're both the water and the air.

## ***Do not Name Me!***

Antara Patro

(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)

Do not name me.

I am faceless, formless.

I am everywhere, yet nowhere.

Do not name me –

I am best forgotten, obliterated.

I linger in breaking news

I echo in sirens,

In prayers devoid of reliance.

I sit by the naked child

Robbed of warmth, dreams and love.

I smoke in the shadows of the cities

I wear a mask; I rot the roots –

I am a plaguing sickness.

Do not name me.

Hope has names; I have none.

Hope has feathers; I only burn.

Where you make, I unmake.

Where you sing, I mute strain.

## ***Memory***

Koyena Das  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG)

By looking at the rays,  
sitting on the grass beside the river,  
the stream being infatuated with my lover.

By singing and coming back,  
the fischer moves to the rhythm of nature,  
recalling thy words through earthly sound.

By welcoming the mysterious soft moon,  
the conch rises in the temple;  
the king of the river becomes soft light,  
rock, hill, and dune illuminate in the gentle night.

By feeling this supreme beauty,  
I go back to thy memories.

## **Choice**

**Koushik Mahajan**  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

Memories struck hard;  
new flowers bloomed.  
The soul found love again,  
the world's beauty seemed to groom.

Sweetness filled the heart again.  
Once more, the lovebirds seemed pretty;  
the softness of touch felt like blissful rain.  
Burning the memories seemed the new treaty.

Was this new love, or something else?  
Was he not reliving the memories again?  
Was he not finding the past in the present?  
Was he not faking his heart in vain?

Soon came the realisation of the truth,  
but trust bound his heart so tight.  
Ignorance or sacrifice became the choice:  
to leave, or to live his life right.

Old love knocked once more;  
feelings for someone new had grown sore.  
He had already started living the new lore;  
betrayal now would be a deadly gore.

But flowers do die and wither away,  
so do promises often break.  
Should he not go where his heart sways?  
But new love had him so softened.

He couldn't think; he panicked and lost his fame,  
lost like never before he was.

The choice had to be made now—  
the judgment day had come.

He chose his old sky,  
he chose his house of memories.  
He chose to fly,  
again to the same harmonies.

The new flower seemed to carry a new smell too;  
he still, in her, found the blue.  
But it was time to return home;  
the older trust matched the same hue.

She was his favourite word,  
but she wasn't his start and end.  
And the world seemed to care only for the phrase;  
the newer memories, to hell, were sent.

He was complete again,  
and the incompleteness that lay back  
was fully fulfilled once more,  
as the dream to live truth was sacked.

## ***LIFE***

Srinjoy Bhowmick  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

Life is like a brook;  
it is unknown.  
It starts in spring and ends in winter.

The brook faces harsh obstacles,  
but it does not stop.  
It keeps on dreaming,  
with death in its eyes.

The brook knows its ultimate truth,  
yet it never stops dreaming,  
Ultimately meeting a known stream.

## ***RISE AT LAST***

Raj pal  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

The darkness filled with stars,  
Where visible every scars,  
That gave the masculine,  
Showing power over feminine.  
In shadows deep where silence lay,  
A chorus whispers, "Break away!"  
With strength unbound, like rivers flow,  
Women rise, igniting glow.  
Not even the days are spared,  
Condition remained uncared,  
Laws that hoped to be strict,  
Are late to release their verdict.  
Voices of mothers, wise and strong,  
Weaving history, banishing the wrong,  
Their laughter dances on winds of change,  
In unity's song, they rearrange.  
No longer bound by fear's cruel hand,  
They stand as mountains, hold and grand,  
With wisdom deep as river's flow,  
They sow the seeds, let justice grow.  
In fields of gold, in halls of power,  
They bloom like lotus, hour by hour,  
Each story told, a battle won,  
The dawn of change has just begun.  
With every step, they shatter glass,  
The echoes of the past now pass,  
United in strength, a fierce brigade,

Their voices blend, a vibrant cascade.  
In the heart of battle, a phoenix soars,  
Rani Lakshmibai, with courage that roars,  
A warrior queen, fierce and grand,  
Defying the tides, she takes her stand.  
With unity strong, like Draupadi's might,  
She calls upon sisters to join in the fight,  
For justice and honour, their voices entwined,  
In the tapestry of strength, their fates aligned.  
Padmavati's grace, a symbol of pride,  
In the face of danger, she would not hide,  
With honour as armour, she challenged the dark,  
Her spirit igniting a revolutionary spark.  
Together they rise, through shadows and fear,  
Breaking the chains, their vision is clear,  
Cultural echoes of valour and fire,  
Inspiring hearts to reach ever higher.  
With ink and dreams, they pen their tale,  
Sisters and daughters, together prevail,  
Through struggles faced, they craft their fate,  
in every heartbeat, a force innate.  
Empowered spirits, unyielding and free,  
Guardians of future, as bright as can be,  
In the land of rivers, and skies so vast,  
Women of India, rise at last !

## ***The sea***

Rupal Maji

(6<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG)

The morning begins with the sun rising through you.  
You are like a mirror, because you hold transparency.  
Your depth is like a heart that has no end.  
My love is beyond that depth.

When water and sand meet, they tend to cling  
to each other again and again.  
But it is never possible—  
just like today's relationships,  
where faith disappears day by day,  
as if black shadows are pulling them apart.

I feel relief and peace when I go.  
My heart wants to reach its last horizon.

## ***Inevitable Adventure***

Sandhita Khanra  
(6<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG)

It is not a race ,  
It is just to face.

The everyday phenomenon,  
Like a burning sun.

It is unpredictable,  
Having different levels.

Some become noble,  
Some remain unable.

We are habituated to do our duty must,  
But everything will be returned to dust,  
Leaving their untold epitaph  
Where final destination will wrap.

## ***Love can be the thirst Love can be the worst***

Tanishka Chatterjee  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

Love can be the thirst,  
love can be the worst.

Love gives us the joy of everything,  
but it can also leave us with nothing, feeling petty.

It is not easy to love,  
because love is like a dove.  
It gives us independent wings,  
which cure all things.

Sometimes endless love does hurt;  
love is bitter, though made with sweetness—  
it is also made with dirt.

It is not easy to understand the language of love,  
because we can be someone's beloved  
without knowing someone's love.

Love can be smooth as a feather  
and also rough as stone;  
it is the immortal paper  
that cannot be torn.

Love from the right person  
can make us forget the past,  
but we always have to bear in mind that—  
love can be the thirst,  
love can be the worst.

## ***But It's All in My Head!***

Kamalika Pal

(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

It's all a mess.  
I don't even know what I am doing.  
It's horrible—more than horrible.  
I can't breathe. I can't feel. I can't think.

My mind is terrible. Everything feels like a burden.  
I'm trapped. I can't get out,  
nor can I let it out.  
The more I fight, the more it smashes me down.

I am losing hope. I am losing light.  
I am drifting away from the only light—my God.  
I don't know what to do. I don't know how to do it.

The once-comfort zone is choking me,  
stabbing me hard—really hard.  
And there's no one to blame,  
not even myself.

I didn't do it. I don't want it.  
But it's still there—  
haunting me, eating me alive.

I cry, but the tears don't solve it.  
It has no sympathy, no mercy.  
It's the devil.

I need help.  
I ask for help. I know there is help,  
but it doesn't let me find it.

I am clasped in its claws.  
It will chew me alive.  
I am done for.  
Or is there more?

It is there—  
beside me, over me, under me, all around me.  
But where? I can't see it.

It's me, after all.  
But it's not me.  
I haven't done anything.

Who do I blame?  
Who do I look for?  
Who do I fight?  
How do I get out of here?

They say, "Ignore it!"  
But I can't. How?

I'm literally running away—  
but where? Where to?

There's no escape.  
There's literally none.

But it's all in my head.  
Nothing's true. Nothing's real.

God trusts me.  
God loves me.  
God is beside me.

I am loved.  
I am protected.  
There is still hope.

I have never asked for harm.  
I have always tried,  
since I first saw the real world with my own eyes,  
to never judge,  
to never look down,  
to love.

To see beauty even in the dark,  
to hope, to feel, to think.

What does all this mean then?  
Nothing?

I have always wanted to be good,  
to be kind,  
to give the world what I always wanted.

I have always loved to think,  
to feel,  
to see through emotions.

I'm not perfect—  
but that's life.  
That's how life looks.  
It isn't perfect.

God created me with so much love,  
so much belief, so much trust.

I can't run away.  
I can't give up.  
I have to fight.

Everyone believes in me.  
I am still here.

I can think.  
I can understand.  
I can realize.

I understand.  
I am devastated.  
I laugh. I cry. I shout.  
I want to shout.  
I want to cry—  
cry for help, cry my lungs out and say:

“You stupid! You can never win—literally never.”

It's powerful, I agree.  
But still,  
I can fight.  
I can win.  
And I **will**.

## ***Why Do You Love Me?***

Trisha Mondal  
(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG)

Why do you love me?  
What a weird thing to ask.

I remain silent, thinking,  
“You stupid boy, can’t you see?”

Again, you said,  
“Did I give you a very hard task?”

How can a flower tell the butterfly  
why she loves it?  
For it can fly to places  
the flower has never seen.

Or is it that the flower loves  
the way the butterfly flits?  
Or does it simply love the fact  
that both are colorful, with a hint of sheen?

How can I explain that my love for the sky  
isn’t about the moon’s gentle glow,  
but the millions of stars  
that twinkle like diamonds in the night?

And do you know, my love,  
that among all these stars,  
you’re my favorite—  
for whom I,  
against the whole world,  
can always fight.

## ***Echoes of 11:59***

Sayan Sadhukhan

(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG)

I've smelt your breath in the moribund rose Soft and fading at the death's door;  
Seen the moss lay thick upon the fleeting cloud As the hair moves apart and whisper  
flows.

The tic-tac-toe on my bare beating breast Your each turn, a game I lost and won;  
A thread of dreams,we stitched ours pre-eminent Yet time unsutured it, a wound, to  
an open end.

The towel nears the college shirt Two worlds entwined in dwindle light;  
Love which stitched the seams of joy and hurt, Dreamt awake, burnt down from  
night.

When in turn to lament, Grief filled in blackened well;  
How to mourn to the orphan infant Left hand sewing right hands silence Fumbling  
dreams, threading hope through broken plastic.

How to wail to the hoary man, Auctioning labour in the scorching sun That never  
blinks an eye.

To the women,whose womb craddled a weight, A song off harmony, departed  
unnamed Cannot bleed my sorrow, tore paper instead;  
To crash the storm upon the page Words bled, the inkpot spun Like black planet,  
gravity of unspoken rhymes.

For poetry will craft the love eternal.

Whosoever draws breath through the broken lines, Will feel the pulse rekindled,the  
loss again shines;  
A body still reaching, burning once more through dust and time.  
As in living and unliving, poet sighs, For dying and undying, verses lie.

# **YOU**

**Kiranmay Sarkar**  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

Remember, when We, together, mapped the stars  
The stars now make farce The Infrastructure developed between You and....  
Was the promise of a soulmate

You make me aware of a modern concept, unforgettable  
Forgettable to You, Yes to You.

I know Souls are mates, It's universal, infinite..  
It is not only you, may be, but also I  
Who Dreamt False

False were The Promises  
False were Situations  
Thought to be immersed falsely.

Falsification became the Joy.

Yes, The Lips lied, only of yours! But maybe I was wrong, maybe I smelt an Indian  
hemlock next to You.  
But don't worry, worries don't worry me.

But please for God's sake try finding me closing your eyes.  
Yes, It is my last implore to You!  
To You! To You!

## ***Rain, Wood and Us***

Debsmita Bhattacharya

(4<sup>TH</sup> Semester, PG)

Those bubbles and the glow on the glass pane—  
I can see them clearly, even now.  
Though my bed smells of medicine,  
and this hospital cabin  
is the only room I left behind.

I remember—the woods outside my panes were green;  
they carried the smell of memories  
after every rain.

I remember when we were just eleven,  
playing in the courtyard.  
We fell from the swing—blood oozing out,  
and we cried.

I remember when we built a camp house together,  
gathering all the wood  
available in our little town.  
And it collapsed  
because of one small mismeasurement.  
We both cried again.

Do you remember?  
The base camp?  
The bonfire?  
The sudden fireflies?  
The sound of hill streams?  
That rainy night?  
When the realization hit us with  
the truth of the universe,  
the depth of the forest?  
Facing the fire-eyes of the predator?

We conquered our fear that night.  
Together.  
I still remember!

That day, rain and wood  
were the only things  
that helped us—  
just like today, helping me remember clearly!

But why am I feeling cold suddenly?  
Can you give me another quilt?  
Are you there?

It's raining again!  
But how is this possible?  
The woods are standing still  
outside this window...  
outside my medicine-smelly room!

Rain always finds us smiling in its cold breeze.  
I remember!

You remember?  
When we went to the highest summit?  
We were too cold to return,  
too cold to quit.  
But see—today we are here.  
Together.

Why aren't you laughing with me too?  
Can't you hear me?  
Listen, please.  
Can you hold my hand a bit tightly—  
just the way you held it twenty years back,  
when I was about to fall  
into that legendary,  
deep canyon?

We dodged that too.  
I remember!

But today, I don't feel like falling.  
I think I'm flying.  
I am becoming lighter.

Can you light the wood here?  
I'm really cold—

colder than I ever felt  
in snowfall.

You remember?  
We were about to capture ourselves  
in cinematic mode,  
without a jacket that day—in snow!  
just silly—us.

But I remember—we did.  
We made it happen.

What is happening to me now?  
Close the window—  
the heavy snowy wind is coming,  
already covering half of me.  
But why do I feel like flying?

I was in my cabin.  
I remember!

Thousands of fireflies  
are here today  
to capture this moment.  
I'm laughing.  
You're holding my hand.  
We're flying.  
We are together.

I remember— you said,  
how you will come to me again.  
It's time.

Another chance to win together.  
Another chance to play together.  
Another chance to conquer together.  
Another chance to fall together.  
Another chance to fly together.

From now on, we will stay together—  
forever, you said.  
I remember!

## ***The silent pressure of society***

Shrabani Bhattacharjee  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

What I require, nature can never provide.

What I desire, society can never offer.

What I've built, you will never accept.

Let me be proud of who I am.

Come again, if your heart feels free.

Sit again, if you find peace with me.

Stay again, if it's meant to be

Or if you want to be mine again.

Remember time moves on,

Remember life goes on,

But those things stay in our mind;

Sometimes, it too will be removed.

But I was there –

And I will be there for myself.

Maybe it all happened before

I made another choice.

So, what you or everyone truly

Believe -one day, all of this

Will be seen not as my choice but

The silent pressure of society.

## ***EXTINGUISHED***

**Sarmistha Chakraborty**

(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)

Few miles away from the jungle in a village cottage Sara was trying to give a suck to Pip. Since the day before the sky had been gloomy as if smoky. After a long time Pip had a sudden asthma attack. Sara held an inhaler before his mouth.

“ Dr. Sara, Dr. Sara, please open the door quickly”, cried old Nancy.

Sara was actually a doctor. On that very day she decided to live near Amazon when she got the medical report that her new-born baby had severe asthma problem. Many remarked it a stupid decision as the city had the best hospital infrastructure. But as a true doctor she felt that Pip needed the touch of Nature along with medicines.

Actually she herself was born and brought up near the Nature Mother and so she knew every remedy can be found in Her lap. So she left her spectacular greenless city, her bright career and even her husband behind only for the sake of Pip.

As she opened, Nancy anxiously said: “ Go back to your city immediately.” “ What happened? Any attack of beast? But...” “They all are frightened, coming to the locality” “But why?” “A monstrous fire in the jungle! They say that it has started

two or three days ago and it may reach here within one or two days.” “What! Have the fire engines come or police?” “ No. Some say they are not ready to listen.” “What!” Sara called fire brigade, police, government offices, rescue offices but everyone ignored.

“There are food and medicines. Take care of Pip. If urgent call me immediately” ,she said and went out.

When she reached the jungle the fire had already spread its wing far and touched the sky. Panic-stricken animals and birds were screaming and running here and there. Some were safe but exhausted, some were half-burnt and a large number of them were already dead. The beautiful Mother who once had given them so much love and nourishment was now as if begging for a drop of humanity. This miserable picture made Sara’s eyes hazy with tears.

Sara along with few villagers started to make a great effort to extinguish the fire and to rescue the poor creatures. She to and fro called for governmental help though in vain.

As the fire spread farther the folks insisted her to come to their village. The day passed. Nancy informed that Pip’s health condition was getting worse. So she should return soon. But when she looked at a half-burnt rabbit kid, she again began to work. Suddenly she got an idea. She uploaded the pictures of burning Amazon on the internet. Some others also started to upload. Soon the whole world came to know that the Earth’s Lung was burning.

On the very next day few reporters came to cover the news but as they went, no sound was heard any more.

Now many villagers started to escape but not Sara. Even she forgot to call Nancy for Pip. She rescued many animals and uploaded their wretched condition.

Now the pictures began to work. They stirred the whole world. Other countries started to criticize the government. A message came that perhaps the government would send helps very soon.

The next message showed: "Pip's health is in worst condition. He needs emergency treatment". There were also several missed calls.

Sara now rushed madly with her car. On the way she couldn't understand whether it was day or dusk.

When she arrived, Nancy opened the door with a stony face and asked: "Is the fire extinguished?" Sara leaned her head on Nancy's chest and replied with tears: "I don't know whether the fire will be extinguished or not but so many lives have been extinguished. But how is my Pip?" With a pale tongue Nancy said : " His fire too."

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## ***Success or Lack of Implementation: The Rights of Transgender Persons***

Osmita Mitra

(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

When Lord Rama was exiled from Ayodha and his entire kingdom began to follow him into the forest, he requested “ Men and women, please wipe your tears and go away”, so they left and some people waited in the forest for 14 years neither When they returned, they were men nor women. They were “Hijras” They waited for Lord Rama until he returned, which won them a special place in Hindu mythology. In India’s Muslim history as well, Hijras served as the sexless watchdogs of Mughal harems.

Today hijras, who include transgender and intersex people, are hard to miss. They dressed in glittering saris, faces filled with heavy makeup, knocking on the car windows or continuously asking for money in local trains, buses and offering blessings. Also used slang languages to the common people who are not able to give money without knowing their situations.

Many Indians believe hijras have the power to bless or curse and they literally afraid of them, whenever they are not able to help them. Before in April of 2014, when the Supreme Court of India formally recognized the existence of a third gender, they had been ostracized in different fields like educational opportunities, jobs and discriminated against in every area of their lives. Basically their families are forced to leave them their house after knowing of their biological identity. They have difficulties receiving access to basic medical care. The study highlighted the stories of Saikat and Anushri.

Saikat was a transgender patient who died from lack of treatment following a train accident. The reason is that doctors could not decide whether to admit her in male or female ward. Anushri was gangraped by several men, however doctors refused to treat her because she was transgender and even denied her access to anti-HIV medication. These two stories highlighted the dangerous impact that social stigmas have on our society.

It is very unfortunate that if a transgender baby was born in a family then his/her family members could not keep him/her in their house even if his/her parents wanted so. So, what’s the fault of the baby for being born transgender after all? Genetic factors and parental hormone exposure play a role in the development of transgender identities. So, it is totally wrong to do misbehaviour with them. Due to social unacceptability, the transgender baby had to abandon his/her parent’s house. They were not provided with means of education and employment. They were forced to live their lives by doing the job of a sex worker, begging, etc.

It is well known that cinema is a reflection of society. If we observe the display of transgender in Indian cinema, their role is majorly limited to act as a dancer, beggar or sex worker. We can see the portrayal in the movie like ‘Sadak’, ‘Amar Akbar Anthony’. Transgender is limited to extent of the portrayal of negative characters which shows the deteriorating condition of them.

It is true that they faced many difficulties over the years, however in the last few years there have been judgements by the honourable Indian courts that have increased their social acceptance. But the credit goes to some special organizations who fought for them. In the year 2014, the honourable Supreme Court of India delivered a judgement which helped million people of India to observe that transgender is different from male or female and they were referred to as the Third Gender. As we know the famous post-structuralist Judith Butler wrote in her best-known work 'Gender Trouble': "there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender", that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.

Now as far as we know, equal rights of transgenders are concerned, there was no such mention in Indian history but after the law passed, it became a little easier to prove their existence, identity in society. We can now see if someone applied for any job, not only the male or female would come in place of applicant's gender, rather the third option is also found in the application where "others" is also written. This results in fair treatment to transgender at working place, restoring their respect and also an inspiration to those transgenders who are actually wanted to move forward with their ambitions. Recently another petition has been filed in the honorable Supreme Court of India demanding that the transgender have the right to donate blood. We can expect that many more important decisions will come from the Hon'ble courts regarding the social acceptance of transgender.

Now we can hear much news through paper and TV channels that transgender is fighting for an election and elected also. We can see they are moving forward in the field of education, into jobs and many others. Changing times, they must come forward to fight for their own dignity. As the hon'ble courts are passing different laws for them, they also should co-operate with the court's decision. In the year 2019, The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha, which protects them from any kind of discrimination. This bill also criminalizes begging—actually no one opts for begging out of his/her own choice.

So, everything has an exception. There is also exception among this community. Let us talk about some of them from their community who are successful transgender people who broke the shackles of discrimination. We know their career path is not so linear and straight, they have to make extra efforts to be accepted in the world of 'commoners'. Sathyasri Sharmila, who became India's first transgender lawyer, Manabi Bandopadhyay who became India's first transgender college principal, Prithika Yashini, India's first police officer, Jiya Das, first transgender medical assistant, Sweta Sudhakar, a transwoman and the founder-director of Born 2 Win say something on her interview.

As we can see from an interview of Swetha Sudhakar, a transwoman, the founder-director of Born 2 Win Social Welfare Organisation. Born 2 Win is a trans-led organization. Everyone who works there is a trans-person. She said their mission is "Education! Employment!

Empowerment!" They celebrate April 15 as Transgenders Day. There is a Mother's Day and Father's Day also, as they wanted to live like the normal people according to the society. She has secured employment to over 100 transgender persons such that they

have been able to leave begging or sex work. She said, “We want to show that we are also happy in society, leading joyous lives, loving ourselves and we are not dependent on anyone.” She paid the university and school fees of many trans community members. Through the years too, she considers Born 2 Win as her baby. As transwomen can’t have their biological babies, so she considers the organization a baby through which she can help her other trans children.

Who doesn’t know about the charming Manabi Bandopadhyay, who became the first transgender principal of Krishnagar Women’s College on June 7, 2015. She also became the first transgender person in India who has completed PhD. She told in her interview that she doesn’t wish for much attention, as being a principal is just a regular job. Before her surgery she has worked for the society but nobody paid attention then. So, criticising doesn’t affect her as she developed her skills to accept criticism. This is a common human nature to criticise everything, rather everybody. She suggested women that they should marry only after they become self-dependent. She added, “You are what you believe you are.” She also faced ostracisation after her surgery from her colleagues. They used to tell her “hijra,” and she could describe as buddhijibider sharajatra. The saddest part is that most of her harassers belonged mostly to the educated, urban, middle class. Though she accepted her painful journey, she accepted the fact by saying “Aamar ei path chala te anondo.” She also said that people from her community are not responding as much they can do, they have to try.

But still in the year of 2025, we can easily see that they are begging in the local trains, buses, traffic red lights. We can easily assume that their primary occupation is begging. Why so? When they have the laws for them in the field of study, occupation, we easily say that 70% of transgender people are avoiding to fight for their own social acceptance. According to Freud, human life is caught in the tensions generated by two basic principles. The pleasure principle is one wherein all our acts are governed by the need to attain pleasure and avoid pain.

The reality principle enables us to understand that our pleasures cannot all be fulfilled the way we want them. It is not easy to take stand for own, and fight for it. So the majority of transgenders are begging or working as prostitutes. Yes, there are many of them who doesn’t have economical strength to fulfill their own desires — the rest? What are they doing? Asking for money in the train from everyone? Yes, who are supporting, they leave them by taking the money and those who are resisting, they behave like inhuman, cursing them, fighting with them. They also even ask for money from the school students, college students. They are also struggling from the very early age, where do they get money everyday to entertain them? I totally disagree with this kind of work — not work, I can say rather begging. Those who are disabled persons they also tried to do some works instead that they can earn little. But looking into those transgender people having all kind of ability avoiding to work by own. Everybody have to struggle to exist in this society. Why they should be exceptional? Many critics will say that they don’t have the equal opportunities of education and employment till now, but what they have now for them should accept that and keep trying to do something with that. Better late than never.

Like them, the rest members have to try for their own sake. They also faced humiliation earlier and also facing this after becoming successful. But the matter is this — have to

do for their own identity, not for what people are saying about them. Though we can say that what Freud distinguished — three components of the human psyche — is applicable here. The id, one of Freud's favourite territories, is the area of instincts, dreams, desires, and all of that. It doesn't come to the fore in our consciousness. The unconscious part, the part we are unaware of its existence. This id might be in their mind in which they think to change their lives in a better way by educating themselves or doing another job. The repressed thought is hiding away in their minds which already exists, is the one that creates a wall between their rational thinking and repressed thinking. The ego led them in the way of begging after having much facilities of laws.

We can't say the Rights of Transgender persons are leading a way towards good implementation. It is in the midway. They have to struggle much more to set their marks. Social co-operation is needed from both sides — from them as well as from the lawmakers. We are now looking forward when this things will become normalize. The lawmakers will pass more such bills where they don't have to complain anymore, and the community will change their mentality and will respond like the other members who have broken the path of discriminations.

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## ***A Close Encounter of the Fourth Kind***

Kamalika Pal

(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

“A small disk of light, like a saucer or something, can be seen way up in the sky, hovering around with great speed. What exactly is that? Oh no! It’s changing colors! And flying in a weird pattern in the dark, night sky. And suddenly, with an immense speed, it rushes out of sight and disappears! What was that? An UFO?” : This is something we get to hear a lot, if we listen a bit more carefully to the buzz around UFO encounters. Yes a lot of people has said to have encountered such thing. An Unidentified Flying Object, a flying object, which is not identified, has no known origin and is unknown to the planet Earth. Perhaps a vehicle from outer space, from a distant planet, where dwell extraterrestrial life forms, probably far more intelligent and advanced than us.

It is quite a common idea or concept, that extraterrestrial living beings or aliens often visit to our blue planet to search or to investigate. Exactly what is not know for sure, but they are said to come. Sometimes hover in their spacecrafts in the sky, sometimes even land down on the grounds of Earth, some are even said to have secret bases on or near our planet, from where they spy on us! More theories are coming up that aliens actually live among us and there is actually a good deal of the crowd, who claim to be aliens themselves from other planets. Although, no one knows (most probably), if these conspiracy theories are true or not, these kind of stories of alien or UFO encounters have fascinated Earthian human beings for ages. Scientists have been trying their level best to look for hints of life, beyond our tiny blue planet, beyond the Solar System.

While scientists bring us with exclusive reports and research works, common people all around the world are at no step back to provide with interesting stories of such experiences for decades. There are thousands of reports of people who have claimed to have encountered an UFO and sometimes a whole alien being itself, over the years. Ufologists, record these documents to study about UFOs and extraterrestrial life forms beyond Earth. Among these documents, there are certain stories which exceed the metres of interest and belief and has for decades stirred the solution of faith and logic, sometimes going as far as a close encounter of the fourth kind. With the mention of kind, it’s better to note that these experiences of UFO sightings has been divided into five kinds of close encounters. The first kind refers to UFO sightings, where someone claims to see flying saucers or that sort of things in the sky from a distance of at least 150 metres above the ground and that’s it. The second kind refers to encounters, where some sort of mark or proof is also present, for example burnt grasses, animals reacting weirdly or technical issues alongside just a sighting. The third kind comes to existence, when not only an UFO or a vehicle but also a presence of a living being, better to say an alien being is observed from a distance as well, like when some people have claimed of seeing living beings inside such UFOs or even some of them coming out of it from a distance.

Now, the next two kinds are of serious matter, as they are not about just observing but coming in direct contact to alien beings. The fourth kind refers to incidents, where one is said to have been abducted by extraterrestrial beings and are taken into their vehicles while the 5th kind straight out talks about direct communications being set up with aliens.

Of all these kinds stated before, there is no proof of the 5th kind of close encounter, unless one further enquires about more conspiracy theories, but the 4th kind of close encounter, has always been a hot topic among Ufologists and enthusiasts. A lot such cases of being abducted by aliens is out there, and some are really famous like the case of the Hill couple which was the inspiration of the TV drama, "The UFO Incident" (1975) directed by Richard A. Colla. And more such events has always given mankind certain turbulence of curiosity and fascination over this mysteriously captivating subject. Some are famous and some just doesn't see the light of recognition at all. One such underrated incident was the close encounter of Calvin Parker and Charles Hickson of the fourth kind.

It was 11th of October, 1973. Calvin Parker, a 19 years old boy, was fishing with his fishing buddy, 42 years old Charles Hickson. Parker was a hard working man working day and night to raise money. It was the North of Ingalls Shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi, where Parker and Hickson were fishing that night, safe to say, without any permission. It was a quiet afternoon and the two people had no other plans but to fish that night. The wind was chill and so were Parker and Hickson when suddenly, they noticed a beam of blue light coming from behind them and even reflecting on the water. Parker was confused and said that he was scared and thought it was a patrol car with police, who were there to arrest him for trespassing, and was pretty sure that he was going to jail. But fate had something

absolutely unimaginable destined for them. As right when they turned around to actually see what it was, Parker said, it was a very brightly lit blue coloured light which was blinding them, but once they could manage to see, what they saw had blew their mind away. Parker claimed to see three bulky looking beings were hovering above the ground over them. They were bulk and were said to have footballer like figures. Parker said, the beings were near about 4 to 5 feet tall and had claw like hands and were weirdly moving in a mechanical way. Beyond them there was a huge football like vehicle above the ground which was emitting the blue light. Before Parker or Hickson could do anything, the creatures caught hold of them and as Parker had said, all he could do was look as he felt, that all his energy has drained away from him and he was relaxed.

The next thing he could remember was an examination room, Parker claimed that the creature who had brought him there, made him lie down on an examination table, to examine him but backed away immediately after. Next he saw something like a deck of cards came out of the ceiling, hovered above him for some time and then started making clicking sounds as it went round his head examining him. The story gets wilder, as he said, that after all of this examination process, a more feminine looking creature came up to the front, to him. Parker said that this individual was much more feminine and different than the other three creatures, he had seen before, for she was not mechanical or robotic like them and had fingers instead of claws. The female

creature also started to examine him physically by running her finger down his throat and then started pushing through his nostrils. It was starting to hurt him badly when he claimed to hear something saying him not to worry for he would not be hurt, but that creature had not said anything directly.

Parker couldn't remember more but that, the next time he opened his eyes, he found himself back to the shipyard with Charles by him. He didn't know what to do for he couldn't believe his own memories of all those incidents he experienced a few minutes before. Although Parker was young and a little clueless, Hickson was a good guidance for him as they decided to inform all of these to the officials at Keesler Air Force Base. They rang there, and tried their best to explain everything, but was rather referred to a local, Jackson County Sheriffs office where Glenn Ryder was the officer.

Glenn Ryder also confirmed later that those two guys really came to him blabbering about being abducted and examined by extraterrestrial beings. Ryder claimed that though he initially didn't believe them, he couldn't deny that he didn't really think that they made all those up. Ryder said that after listening to their reports, he was determined to prove their falsity and asked them to wait in the investigation room, leaving them alone while secretly placing a tape recorder, hoping to expose them. But later when he heard the record, he said, he was shocked to hear that kind of traumatized voices and he believed that the kind of fear he witnessed, definitely didn't seem fake to him at all. Later, both Parker and Hickson took lie detector tests and hypnotism as well, but nothing could prove anything false, rather clarifying that they did experience something traumatic. Soon the story started to alarm the Ufologists and researchers as they flew in to interview them.

Before things could heat up, Parker said that he was too overwhelmed with all the media around him after that incident and absolutely zipped up about that mystery even moving away, while Hickson kept talking about it all his life before he died in 2011. He even wrote a book named "UFO Contact at Pascagoula" (1983) recording his encounter. Parker had remained silent since then and refused to open up, until he was severely sick with a stroke and two surgeries. He then publicly opened up about the incident and later documented the story in his book called

"Pascagoula – The Closest Encounter: My Story" (2018). Parker passed away on August 24, 2023 after a long battle with kidney cancer.

Stories are told like this all around the world but not all get to come out to see the light of recognition. We will never know if this fabulous story of Calvin Parker and Charles Hickson was in any way near reality but one thing is for sure, strangeness and weirdness are that, that makes life a little more tolerable in the struggles of our reality. If aliens are real or not, is not known but the idea of mystery, of discovering something beyond our knowledge makes the ways of exploration a lot more exciting. At least I think so... Don't you?

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## ***WITNESSING A STORM***

Sounak Saha

(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG)

The blinding purple hue of terror was striking through the dark gloominess of horror in the sky which was pitch black with some occasional but tremendous roars of thunders. It was the lull before the storm and by the time the cyclone hit, everything was pitch black like someone had made me blind by the darkness in their soul. The darkness was indeed inevitable that day.

The cables on the street lamps and electric poles — they were tearing apart due to the heavy storm and somehow it all made me think about all those broken bonds and all those people that I've lost over the years — my mother, my grandmother, some significant friendships, some long lost relationships, some relatives, etc. The hold of the cables becoming weaker with the passing storm was making me realize that maybe our hold weren't strong enough to hold us closer to each other and somehow an external factor just destroyed the hold, the bond between us.

The broken flower pots in my balcony were a really melancholic scene to watch as it just reminded me of my time at middle school. It pained me to think of how my flower pots would have felt like they were being bullied by the dangerous winds which eventually pushed them on the ground, just like the bullies back at my school did to me — how they must have thought that they were not strong enough to stand their ground and face those gusty wind bullies and go against them. It pained me to think that I was once a victim of bullying and now my flower pots went through that same excruciating pain.

## ***Book Review: Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'INDEPENDENCE'***

Arkamita Das

(6<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG)

The recent deliberate killing of Hindus by Islamic terrorists in Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir is a painful reminder of the horrors of the 1947 Partition, when communal riot took place leading widespread violence and targeted killing of individuals purely on the basis of their religious identity. This bloodiness of the year 1947 is starkly depicted in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's 'Independence' which powerfully embodies the 'ghosts' of Partition that haunt the subcontinent to the present day. The story explores the themes of sisterhood, the price of freedom, and the identity choices women make under the shadow of violence through the main female protagonists of the novel namely - Priya, Deepa and Jamini. Known for her heartfelt story telling through richly believable characters, Divakaruni once again delivers a tale that is both touching and filled with glimpses from horrific events from the past.

Raised in a loving family in Bengal, the sisters each have their own dreams, personalities and views on life. They take very different paths in their lives in the turbulent time of Indian politics as the country heads for independence. Against this tumultuous backdrop, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni shows how the lives of the Sisters reflect the world around them and how one must change in order to save themselves. The novel indulges the readers into thinking how the life choices of the characters can make or break the familial bonds, reinterpreting the notions of freedom.

'Independence' is special for how personal the history is there. Rather than centring on political leaders or grand events, Divakaruni offers the more intimate, everyday stories of everyday women caught up in the tumult. The emotional crosscurrents of the three sisters - dealing with love, betrayal and the world falling apart around them - imitate the uproar and unrest in the land. Their story is an example of how political problems infiltrate individuals' personal lives and relationships.

With strong, compelling characters and beautiful writing, Divakaruni immerses us in the darkly complex lives of her characters. Her poetic and colourful language, combined with thoroughly researched historical details, make the book an educational experience.

This book will be food for thought for someone interested in postcolonial literature, gender studies, and South Asian history. 'Independence' offers readers plenty to chew on. It is an affecting reminder of the human cost of political change, and it demonstrates the power of women confronting personal difficulties - and broader changes in society.

'Independence' is not just a historical novel - it's a powerful story of the enduring nature of the people who lived through and influenced history. A must - read for anyone looking for a profoundly emotional journey through India's volatile road to freedom and how India came into its own.

## ***The Solitude***

Trisha Mondal  
(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG)

Have you ever seen a single monkey?

No, I'm not talking about a mad one that doesn't stay with its troop. I'm talking about one perfectly sane monkey.

Have you ever wondered what it was doing, sitting at the top of a coconut tree in the luminous yet somber moment of twilight?

Was he banished from his troop because he couldn't meet their expectations?

Or was his troop living a fast-paced life that he couldn't keep up with?

Was he called "a loser" or "an absolute disappointment" too?

Did his close ones leave him as well?

I wondered what the reason for his solitude was.

I kept thinking about why he was alone on the coconut tree when nightfall was approaching, when it was time for him to return home—to his people.

Didn't he have a home where he was expected to return early?

Didn't he have a home where his family waited for him?

Didn't he have a home where he wasn't expected to achieve the impossible?

Did he really have a place he could call home?

I felt a profound curiosity about the reason behind his solitude.

Never in my life had I imagined that I would become so restless over a monkey's life.

That day, the monkey attracted me the way a magnet attracts ferromagnetic material.

But why was a single monkey drawing me in?

Was it because it was uncommon to see a lone monkey at twilight?

Or was it because of the atmosphere itself?

Was I being consumed by my own sorrow, like the faintest trace of light being swallowed by the darkness of nightfall?

Or was it the monkey's solitude that drew me the most—

a solitude that cuts us off from the whole world, and sometimes, from ourselves?

Some people like solitude; they love being alone.  
But is their solitude a choice, or are they forced into it?  
Or perhaps they have simply been left alone?

Have we ever wondered about them?

That day, in that particular moment, I saw a monkey in his solitude.  
But did he realize that he wasn't alone then?  
Someone like him was watching from afar.

Two solitary souls,  
sharing a moment of solitude.

# ***Becoming***

Sounak Saha

(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG)

They say I'm not normal — someone like me shouldn't exist. But look at me! No, really just take a look ... In a world where being different is often met with resistance, I was sculpted not by choice but by survival. I stand at the crossroads of man and woman, human and machine, pain and beauty, fragility and strength.

My skin splits in places — the scars and the patches — you think you can count them? No, they're uncountable. You see those deep brownish scars? The burn of their words etched in me. The orange and red around these patches — that's the rusting of humanity and the heat of humiliation. The aftermath of everytime they cornered me in school halls, stripped me of softness, told me I was 'too much' or 'too less' — too delicate, too wrong or too different.

My body is part human, part violated and entirely misunderstood. I didn't ask for this gruesome transformation. Every bruise under my cheek, every patch on my chest — it's survival. A forced adaptation because this world, this society, didn't have room for a boy who liked glitter, who flinched at violence, who felt things too deeply. They couldn't stand the way I blurred the lines. My gentle voice, my teenage gaze that lingered too long on boys' smiles, my open shirt revealing the bruised and scarred melanin-filled skin that I was never taught to love — all of it just made me a target. So they tried to unmake me.

See that scar near my lips? That is from the lover who left me for the diamonds which have become moissanites. The band-aids around my neck cover the bruises from the violations made by the assaulters when they saw me just as an object and not a human being.

The scars near my eyes are from the uncountable sleepless nights due to all the denials and insults from my own family and peers — for what? For just being myself, following my dreams because apparently choosing a subject of art as a career is not 'man' enough. The pain of rivers flowing down my eyes made my under-eyes swell.

The background behind me — those stars bursting inside a diamond — that's the universe I carry within, the truth I was told to hide....each dot is a part of me that I've reclaimed. See that band-aid on my nose? That covers the cut on my nose due to still being unemployed at this age which is again, apparently, not a very 'manly' thing to do. But what if I don't want a nine-to-five job? What if that isn't my dream, my ambition — did anyone ask a man if he doesn't want to always cater to the economy of a family? No! They just assume that men should get a job and work to their bones. I am doing what I can and the way I see it, it's going pretty well.

But I still hear them, "You're not a real man!", "You're a glitch", "You don't belong".

Well, maybe I don't — not in their version of the world — but I've built my own with heart and hurt. This is the self I've come to love now, I've come to terms with. Half hurt, half healed and still wholly human.

You call it broken? I call it Becoming...



## ***That Table of My Favourite Wood***

Sudoita Banerjee

(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG)

Thank God I didn't own a table of my favorite wood It would do no good! It would do no good!

It would burn along with All I had in store for food.

I think, only minutes it took to blur out the bricks that never shook Along with my favorite books that were about my favorite crooks About rivers and winter nights, about cakes and fairy lights About how Jill met Jack, about Christmas and about coming back.

My flowers rested dry in the clothbound house So so far away from the lizards and a mouse I think the lizard tried to run It was under that fridge just for fun I think it sensed the warmth that day And I hope to death that it ran away I hoped the ashes of my flowers were not all grey But I could not wrap the strings up after reading "8th May" Notebooks with strings are not so bad The strings I pulled were all I had All my pages slept fine and good All in the locker, not of my favorite wood.

I once wrote to a boy in sixteen letters About the color red but I was the one who held them better My locker had a picture drawn by someone's good son But my heart never raced so I used my gun He drew my baby hairs one by one He really looked at me and not just for fun But I couldn't take my eyes off of someone's brother So never have I ever met the good boy's mother.

Thank God I didn't own the last gift from Jude Would've spared only her pennies but she wasn't rude Used to fix my messy locks when she could She made sure my eyes and lips looked good She knew right when my pupils grew big She knew it. She never had to dig.

She wouldn't like it when in dreams I died So she used to leave her seat when he passed by I owned a napkin full of sweat and colors All the sweaty handprints who used to laugh at each other I owned some ribbons and bows and every sneaky note Promises, "Common room after this class.", I think we slept on the same boat I owned birthday notes, wishes from April third My tiny brother learned origami, you see ash, I see his bird!

That bird sat quiet I bet it couldn't sense the warmth But I hope the lizard did and now he watches what we've become 'What shade of yellow was it? Did the fire glow?' All shades of my locker, and it wouldn't go away with a blow.

You're alive! You're alive! Yes I breathe it good.

But thank God I didn't own, that table of my favorite wood.

## ***The Third Bell never Rang***

Debjyoti Karak  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

(1)

Despite the yellow table lamp, Rasika felt the room was strangely cold. The space seemed to expand before her eyes, distancing her from her husband.

"But we can't just vanish from here, can we? What about the show?" she asked.

"But if we don't do Mr. Sen's show, we'll miss out on a lot of future opportunities. I can't afford that..."

"I promised a lot of young dancers, Samya. How can I just disappear?"

"Can you imagine, in your fantastic world, how we'd pay all the school fees and bills and buy your majestic outfits?" Samya looked at his wife and soon understood the disbelief in her eyes.

"If you don't want to leave the place, it's okay, but that project could have helped us... you know."

(2)

"I saw a local here who was selling some colourful birds. They looked exotic," Samya mentioned while tying the ghungroo to

Rasika's left foot. "Once we go back, we'll buy one. What do you say?"

"Hmm... can you fix this gajra? See, it's stuck with a strand." Rasika furiously started smudging her kohl with a brush. "Look at my eyes. Are they even? Oh sorry, what did you say?"

"I said I want to pet a parrot."

"Okay... Please tell Mithi to buy the correct size of mukut next time. It's so loose... Where are the pins? I think someone's knocking on the door."

As Samya opened the door, an unknown face popped in, his glasses slipping from his nose.

Rasika took a good look at her new visitor and made a sound: "Hmm?"

"Umm... I... I can play the role of Prakriti. I saw the advertisement."

At this, Samya looked at his wife with a disappointed smile, and Rasika looked straight into his glasses.

"Do you think this is a great time to discuss it?"

She saw how his face gradually fell as he understood the situation.

"Meet me after the show. There's a ghat near Kala Bhavan—I hope you know it. Sharp at 10. I loathe people who disrespect punctuality. Samya, please close the door," she said sharply.

(3)

Agnish saw her—the dancer. He heard the rhythm of the ghungroo echoing from every strand of grass as she came down to him. For a moment, he felt he was close to something that could be called a wishlist. Her white mukut glowed as if demanding recognition, asserting her presence like the massive idols of Ma. She was saying something—her lip gloss reflecting the white light of the decorative lamps.

"What's your name?"

"Agnish."

"You don't know dance, do you?"

"I... I know Chandalika."

Rasika looked at him. He wasn't someone you'd mark as feminine-looking and he was extremely frail. She noticed a purple butterfly pea tucked behind his ear, previously unnoticed.

"Why do you want to dance if you haven't learned it?" she asked.

"Just because of that. I want to dance because I haven't learned it... I wish to learn it." Agnish kept his eyes on his feet.

"Childhood dream?"

"My grandmother passed away last week... my only audience. When I was little, she would give me all her sarees and I'd perform for her. After lunch, I'd lie on her lap and she'd read me those dance dramas, the poems. She would sing me songs..."

"You like dance dramas? What do you like about them?"

Agnish raised his head and looked at her. He glanced at her mukut.

"This... this white mukut. I like how you show the lotus. Yesterday, when you performed the conversation between Radha and her sakhis, I liked how you portrayed that the bee had stung you and how you meant it was Krishna who did it, but the sakhis didn't understand. I saw your performance at the international dance festival—it aired last month. I liked how you showed that the lover had caught the mermaid in a fishnet, and how beautifully the man threw it. I liked how you told Madana through your hand movements that you want to become a woman. And I liked how you could actually be both a masculine princess and Radha on the same night..."

"Do you want to be Radha?"

"I am Radha. I just want to prove that."

"Why?"

Agnish remained silent. He took the flower from his hair and looked at it. Then he broke the silence.

"Would you still be called a dancer if people forget you one day? Would you still be a wife if your husband forgets your existence?"

"I don't know, Agnish... if I'm a wife or not."

Rasika held Agnish's hand.

"Who do you want to become, Agnish?"

Agnish couldn't meet her eyes—not because he didn't have answers, but because he had too many. Choosing one felt like a detestable choice.

Rasika continued,

"You know... all this while, when you were talking about my performance, I felt like you want to become me."

Rasika began untying her ghungroo as Agnish fixed his gaze on Kala Bhavan. Another performance was going on. He heard a song—a faint song.

"নূতন প্রাণ দাও, প্রাণসখা, আজি সুপ্রভাতত."

"Give me a new life, soul-companion, on this very sacred dawn."

"Let me see your feet," Rasika said.

"What?"

"Don't talk."

Rasika knelt and tied the ghungroos to Agnish's feet.

"Come tomorrow morning. I'll teach you how to dance like me."

Agnish watched her walk away, her white mukut shining—but he couldn't hear the rhythm of the ghungroos.

So he started thumping his foot against the earth.

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The next day, when Agnish went to the guest house, he saw the letter. It was soaked with dew, the ink smeared. The lock on the door didn't shock him—but the letter grieved him. Because now he knew: Rasika would have expected him to read it.

## ***The Wickless Light We Dreamt Of.***

Sayandeep Modak.

(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

The horizon glistened in the distance. Occasional winds disturbed the meditating leaves and disappeared into the void. Lately, the weather thermometer had shown an unexpected rise—at least, that’s what the television news reported.

A black tyre pressed against the uneven ground and rolled towards the uplands. The track-cart path rarely saw visitors during late weekday afternoons. It was an infrequent guest on such quiet days, its worn gravel path barely acknowledging the presence of wheels.

The mechanical, unoled hinges creaked and groaned with each push of the pedal, ignoring the wild Breckland thyme and low-lying daisies, whose blooms seemed more depleted than they had been the previous year.

His T-shirt clung to him, drenched in sweat. The red cap, though offering shade from the sun, only intensified the sweat that gathered at his temple, eventually trickling down his brow and past his cheeks—where he wiped it away repeatedly with his arm.

“Ken should be there by now,” he muttered under his breath, his words strained, as though racing against time.

The Dene Convenience Store had been opened by Joseph Darvill of the Hook Saw Mill to serve the small rural community of Ropley. Since then, the shop had undergone significant changes—new owners, surviving two world wars—a miniature relic of Hampshire. The attached post office received letters, some from old soldiers who were now either alive or dead— some long returned , some long buried. Two chimney tops rested on the tiled terrace. The upper storey housed Ken’s home.

The spoked wheel of his bicycle halted at the entrance to the shop. The tables and chairs outside lay abandoned, the scorch of the sun having drained the life from the lawn. At some distance, a black vintage saloon car sat idle on the front lawn. The other shops in the neighbourhood were mostly quiet, their shutters down, save for a few in the distance where lights flickered dimly through cracked windows. The village was peaceful but somewhat worn, with its cobbled streets and stone buildings—each corner steeped in history.

Renard, soaked with sweat, flushed , resembled a panting dog, tongue out, exhausted from the heat. He pushed open the wooden half-lite door. The familiar savoury smell of porridge hit him, along with the comforting whiff of freshly

baked bread and the sweet tang of ripe olives. Ken was nowhere to be seen. Usually, he was behind the counter, either billing customers or stacking shelves. Renard’s impatience grew as he scanned the empty store, a sense of defeat creeping in after the long journey he had endured. He walked behind the counter, hoping to find Ken, but to his dismay the space was deserted. Turning, disheartened, he made his way toward the door.

But then, he remembered the post office room had missed his inspection.

With renewed hope, he took long strides toward the adjacent room. An old, stout man had fallen asleep in an armchair. His face was creased with age, his beard slightly unkempt, but there was a gentle stillness to him. By the looks of it, he had been sorting through letters and postcards but had succumbed to a nap in the process. A bundle of yellowed letters was pressed beneath his wrinkled hands, while a few had slipped to the ground. Renard bent down, picking up the fallen letters. He gently nudged the man's shoulder.

With half-awake eyes, Ken took a moment to recognise the young man. When he did, a large smile spread across his face, jovial despite the signs of weariness.

"Here," Renard said, handing the letters to him, "these mustn't be missed."

"Sorry, kid," Ken mumbled, rubbing the back of his head. "I didn't realise when I nodded off. Must be the age, or the time catching up with me."

"What can I help you with, then? Cornish pasties? Scones? Flapjacks? Bakewell tarts? Or maybe coconut macaroons?"

"Oh, not all of that," Renard replied, loosening his T-shirt and blowing air inside it. "I just came for one of those strawberry-frosted ice creams—or maybe an ice cream sandwich. The heat is nearly killing me."

Ken hunched his back and shuffled behind the counter. After a moment, he emerged with wrapped ice cream bars.

"Want to sit in the partico and have them?" he asked, his voice soft with the comfort of routine.

"Maybe later," Renard glanced at his watch. "Quarter to five. I need to head back before evening."

He unparked his bicycle and began to ride down towards the city, leaving Ken to wave a goodbye until Renard's silhouette disappeared at the horizon, against the red sinking sun.

Renard and his family usually did their shopping in the metropolitan area, but this journey was one he often made. Here, things had yet to face the full brunt of inflation. The unfinished railway track lay abandoned a few acres away from Ken's shop, its serpentine path zigzagging through the meadows. Now obsolete, nature had slowly reclaimed it, creating an ecosystem for little creatures—unheard and unseen.

Renard applied the brakes, stopping his bike, and looked back at the shop. After a moment, he turned away, a quiet hope that he'd return some other day again.

When darkness descended on the quiet east countryside of Hampshire, tired inn drinkers and late office returners often noticed the porch light outside Ken's house remained on throughout the night. All other shops darkened, but not his. Renard had heard about it from his father.

"Why do you keep the lights on till dawn?" Renard had once asked Ken.

“Clara,” Ken had replied softly.

“Clara who?”

“Clara—my wife,” Ken’s voice cracked. “She never liked darkness. Whenever we walked through a dark lane, she’d grab hold of my arm, like a child on their first day of school, refusing to let go of their mum or dad.”

Renard had seen Clara’s photograph on the mantelpiece, framed in a loving embrace. Ken had long been widowed, and all that remained was the memory of Clara and the shop—a place he called his eternal abode.

It was on a sunny weekend when there was a knock at the door. Ken opened it to find two men standing there, dressed in dark coats, their postures straight, expressions unreadable.

“Are you Mr Kenneth Hargrave?” one of the men asked.

“Yes, that’s me, but I’m afraid I open an hour later,” Ken said, motioning weakly to the chairs outside. “You can wait here.”

One of the officers, amused by Ken’s display of hospitality, remarked, “Mr Hargrave, we’re here with an official notice from the Department of Railway Transport. The government has decided to finish the construction of the railroad, which had been halted due to financial strain. Unfortunately, your house and shop lie in the way of this project.”

A gloom descended over Ken’s face, as though his worst nightmare had just materialised.

“Gentlemen,” Ken’s voice trembled, “this house is all that’s left to me. It’s ancestral. My great-grandfathers lived here, and the spring of my life—Clara—breathed and died here. I know what you’re suggesting, but I can’t comply.. Is there anything else you need from me?”

The officers had expected this initial resistance. Other shop owners had shown similar denial at first. Eventually, they’d been persuaded through methods known only to those involved.

“Sir, don’t worry about your residence. We’ve made arrangements to relocate you. Furthermore, we’re prepared to offer you seventy thousand pounds. I’m sure that’s more than enough for this...”

“Gentlemen,” Ken interrupted, his face turning a deep shade of red, “I’ve asked you to leave.”

The officer persisted. “Mr Hargrave, you can reconsider this offer. Surely, you don’t want to turn down such a large sum of money.”

Ken’s voice rose. “You’ve heard me, officers. Please leave. The door is that way.” His tone was now furious.

The officers, feeling insulted, turned and left. As they walked away, one of them called back, “You’ll face consequences for this, Mr Hargrave. You can’t stand in the way of this government project for the public good.”

Ken knew that resistance was futile. They would return, and when they did, they’d take what they wanted. He glanced at Clara’s photo, her face glowing in the frame. He wasn’t sure how long he could hold onto this place. His only family had been taken from him, and now his home too seemed doomed to follow.

Weeks later, Renard found himself cycling uphill once more. He enjoyed the old man’s company. As he pedalled, the scenery had changed dramatically. Manual labourers were hauling steel objects, and guardrails had been erected at the entrance.

“Move out of the way, boy!” one worker shouted as he struggled to carry a box of metals.

The once quiet place was now a churning factory of activity. The sounds of boots trampling over the flowers he had once seen while cycling past filled the air. In their place, boots crushed the ground, drills pierced the silence, and hammers rang out like war drums.

The hammering and drilling were relentless as the railway tracks were laid down.

Renard walked his bike down the path where he had once looked back at Ken’s house. The evening was settling in, and there was no light emanating from the porch anymore. Disheartened, he rode his bike towards the city.

At the traffic crossing, he asked the guard who was changing shifts, “Sir, have you heard any news about Mr Ken?”

“The man with the shop up the hill?” the guard asked, wiping his brow.

Renard nodded.

The guard paused, then replied, “Yes, as far as I know, some officials offered him relocation, but he refused. Then, one morning, the shop was found deserted. The only thing left was a letter on the counter. It read: ‘Going to the ancestor. Off to the village in search of home.’ It was in Ken’s handwriting—and nothing more.”

Renard, puzzled, turned his gaze back up the hill. It was now engulfed in pitch-black darkness. He muttered to himself, “I hope he took his light with him.”

With that, he pedalled towards home— his home.

## **METRO**

Shweta Yadav

(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)

It was Aniket's very first day in the bustling city of Kolkata. Just yesterday, he had arrived from his home in East Medinipur. Three days ago, he'd received a call for the final interview at a private firm, the reason behind this sudden journey. He was now staying at his aunt's place in Esplanade, about a fifteen-minute walk from the nearest metro station. His mother had shown a hint of hesitation about him moving so far, but in the end, Aniket had managed to break free from the emotional bonds of home.

He somehow managed to buy a ticket and board the metro. The heat was unbearable; without his umbrella, he'd surely have suffered a heatstroke. The metro was packed, faces around him bore the tiredness and monotony that urban life inevitably brings. Suddenly, something caught his eye. The train had just pulled into Park Street station. It looked like two seats across from him were empty. Before he could make sense of it, the metro arrived at Maidan, and in a rush, he pushed through the crowd and got off.

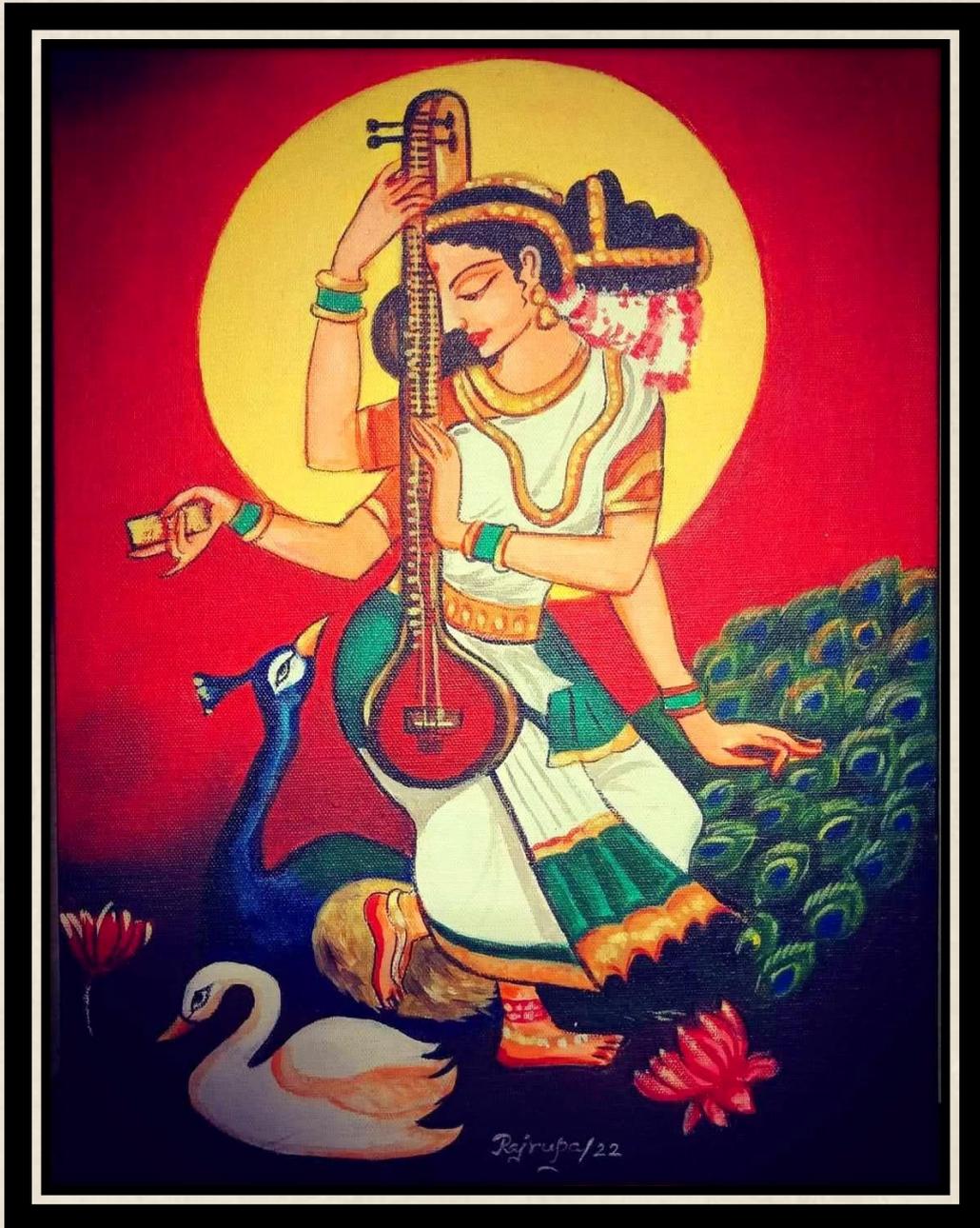
When Aniket stepped out of the high-rise corporate office later that day, a confirmation letter sat in his pocket. He called his mother, sharing the good news, and then started walking back toward the metro.

Despite the crowd, he managed to find a seat this time. Soon the train reached Park Street again. A senior gentleman stepped in, gave him a glance, and seemed to hesitate. After a moment, he walked up

slowly and said in a calm, measured tone, "This seat is reserved for seniors like me. Let age catch up with you — then you can sit." A wave of guilt swept over Aniket. The crowd around him thickened, and he realized Esplanade was the next stop. It was time to get off.

Finally stepping out onto the platform, Aniket was overwhelmed by the day's experiences. He booked a cab — the distance wasn't long, but he didn't feel like walking anymore. The cab arrived quickly, and as he got in, he realized he'd probably left his umbrella behind in the metro. To make things worse, the cab's power window wasn't working. His mood soured. The summer sun was still strong, casting a blood-red hue across the city in the late afternoon light. It stung his eyes. A thin tear rolled down his cheek as Aniket slowly closed his eyes.

## *Goddess Saraswati*



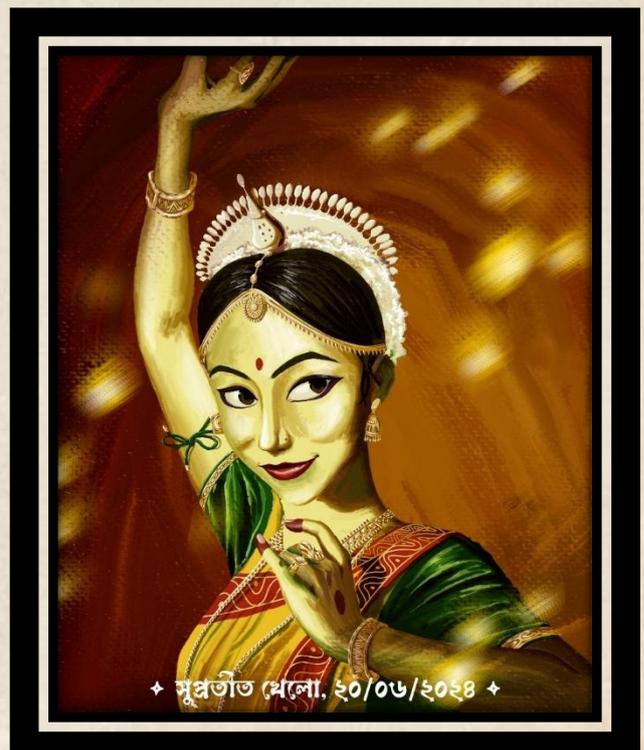
Rajrupa Mukherjee  
(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)

## *Abandonment*



Supratito Khelo  
(3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG)

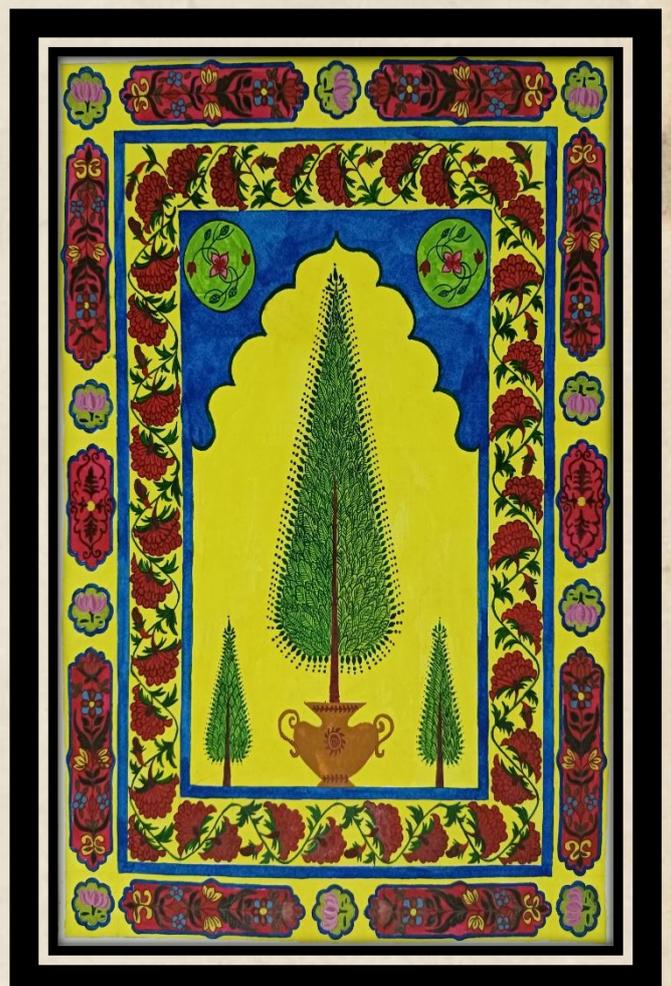
## *The Dancing Beauty*



***Miniature paintings:***

Hena De

(4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG)



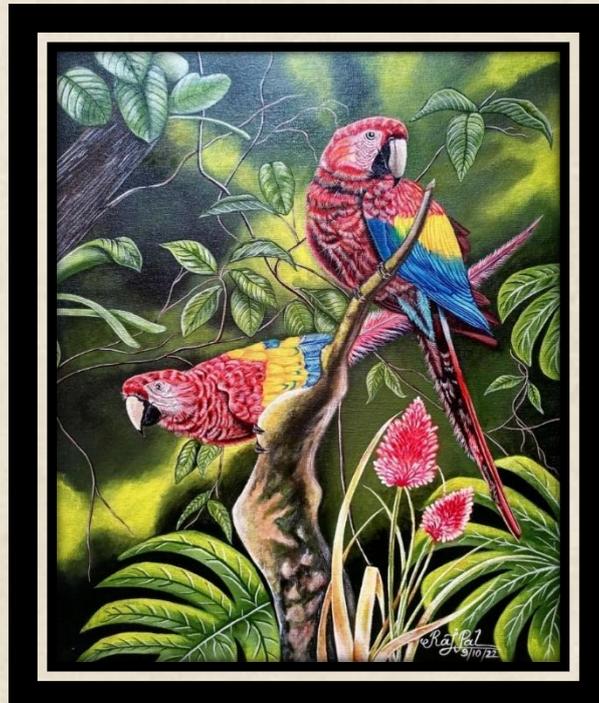
Raj Pal  
(2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG)



***Boro Maa***

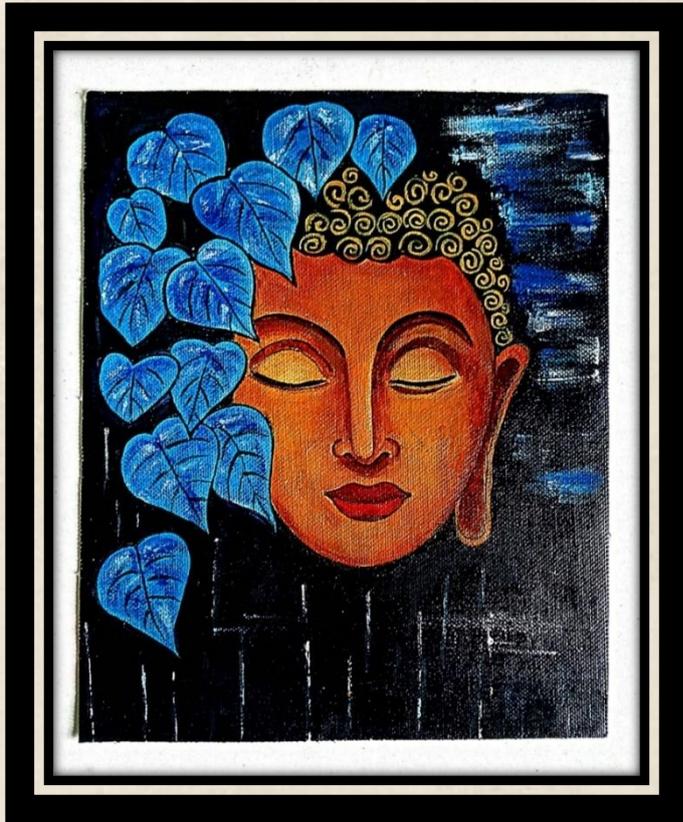


***Weaving Fingers***



***Nature in Romance***

*Shreya Bera, 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG  
Buddha: Symbol of Tranquility*

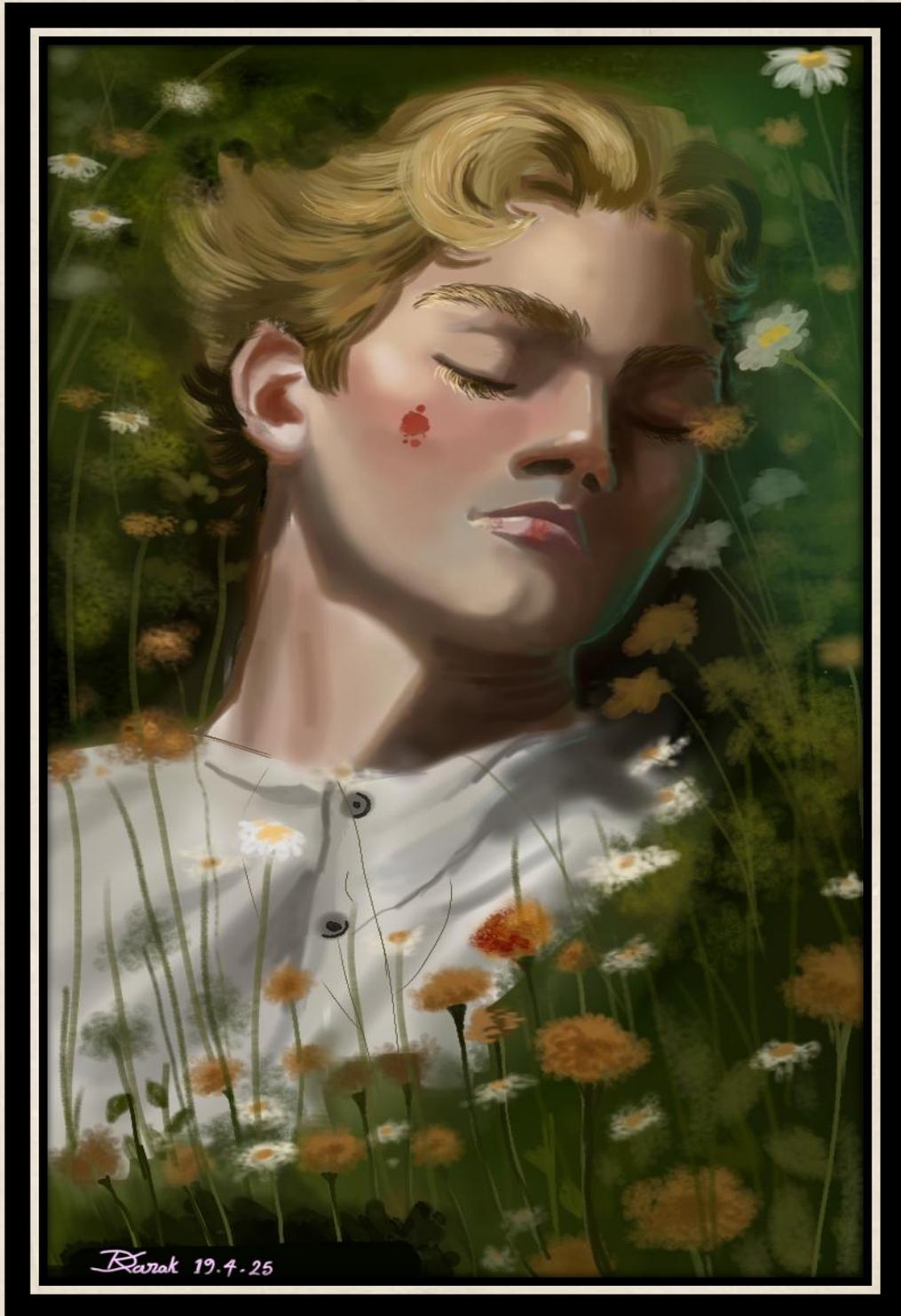


*Symphony of The Sea  
Sneha Das, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG*

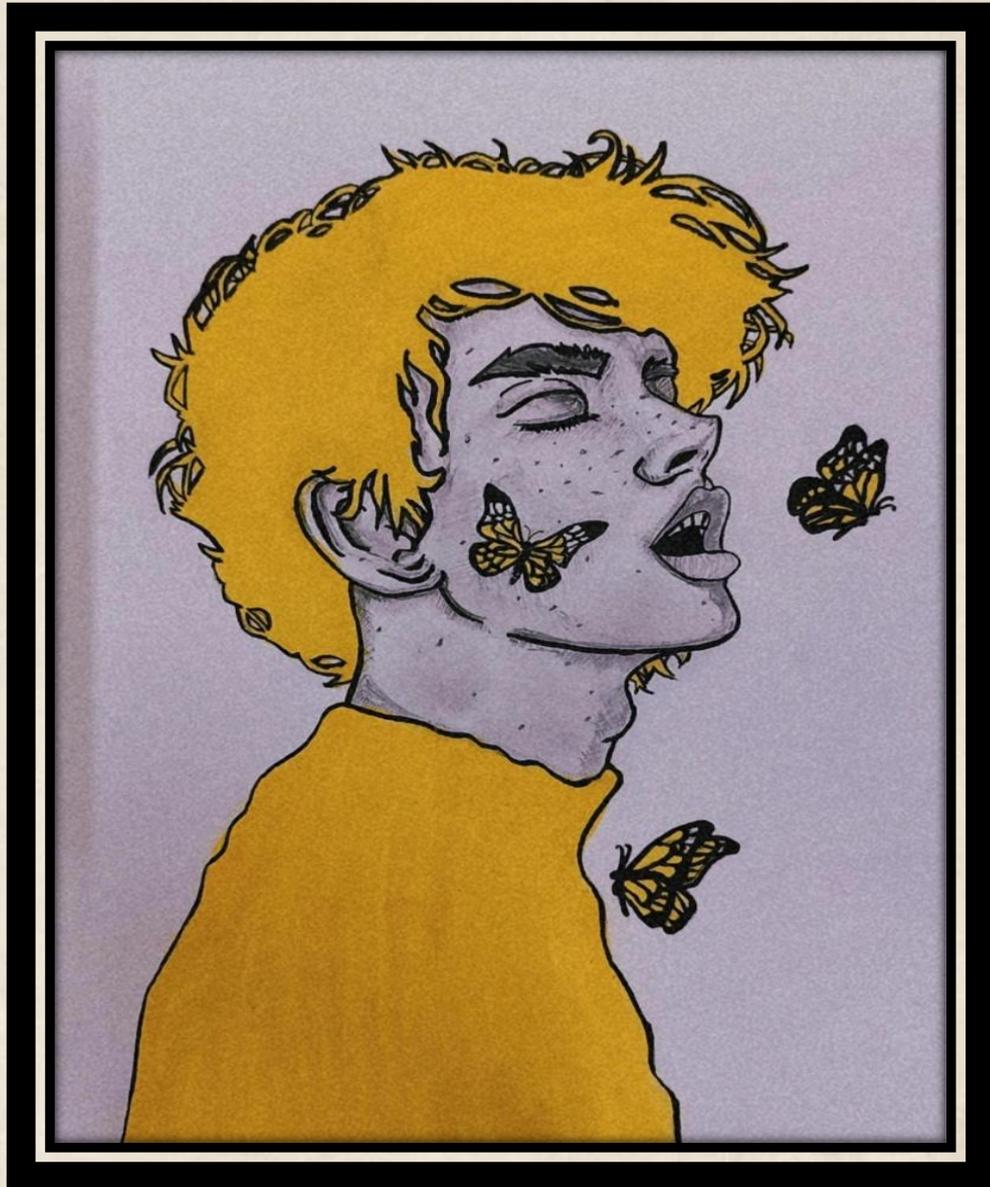


*Debjoyti Karak, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG*

*Asleep In The Valley*



*Sounak Saha, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG  
Trusting Those Butterflies.*



Prasmita Maji, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG



Sweta Yadav, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG  
Pure Motivation



Debsmita Bhattacharya, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG



*El Eco Del Lente*



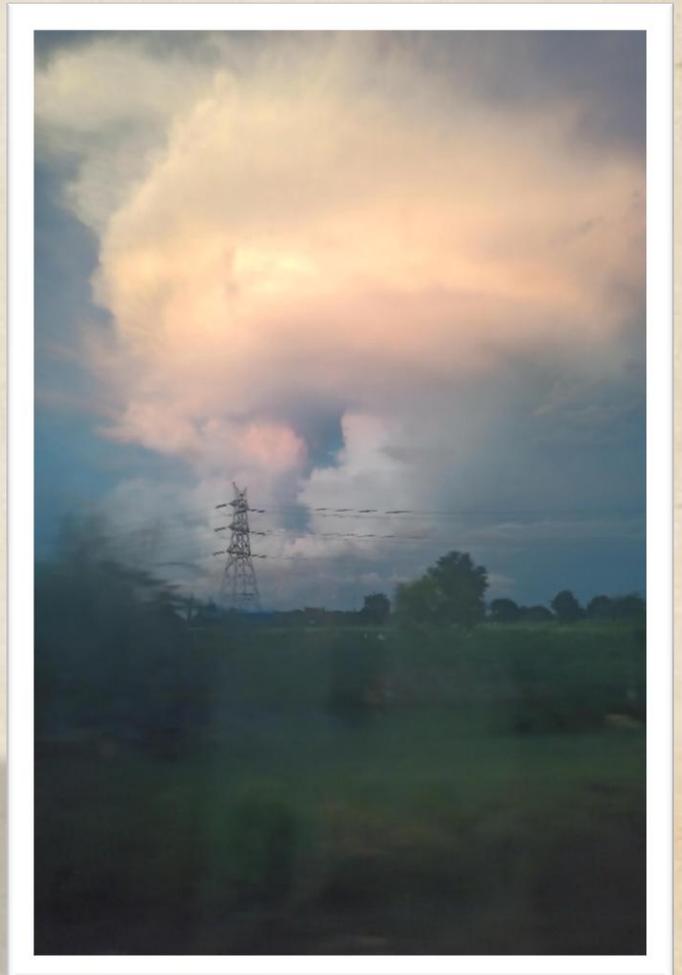
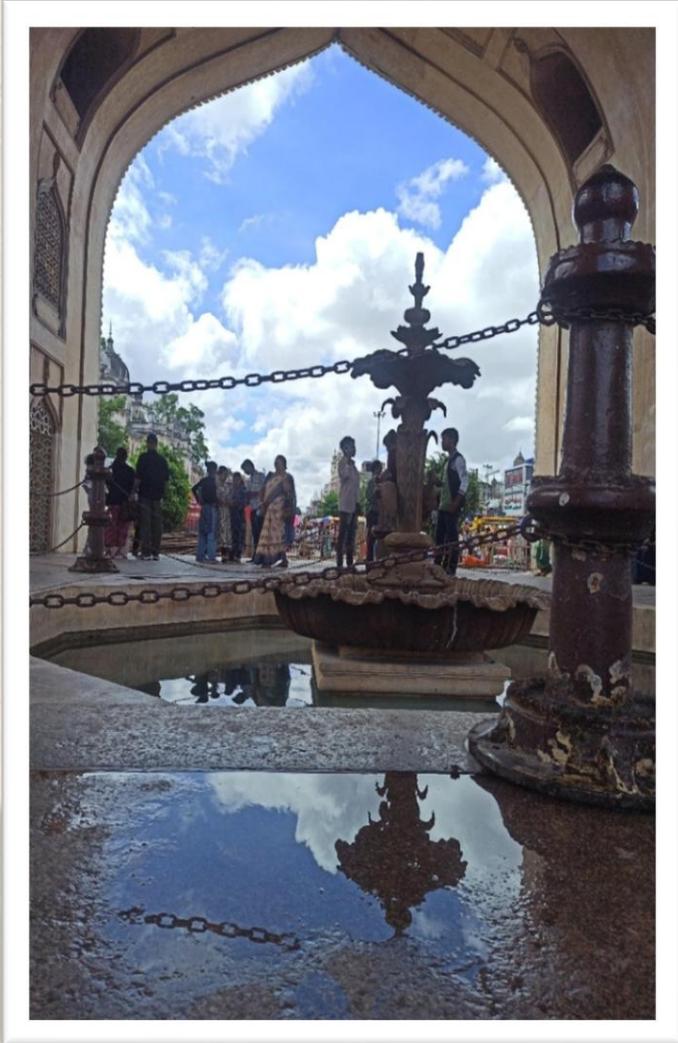
*Charlie Chaplin*

Ananya Debnath, 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG



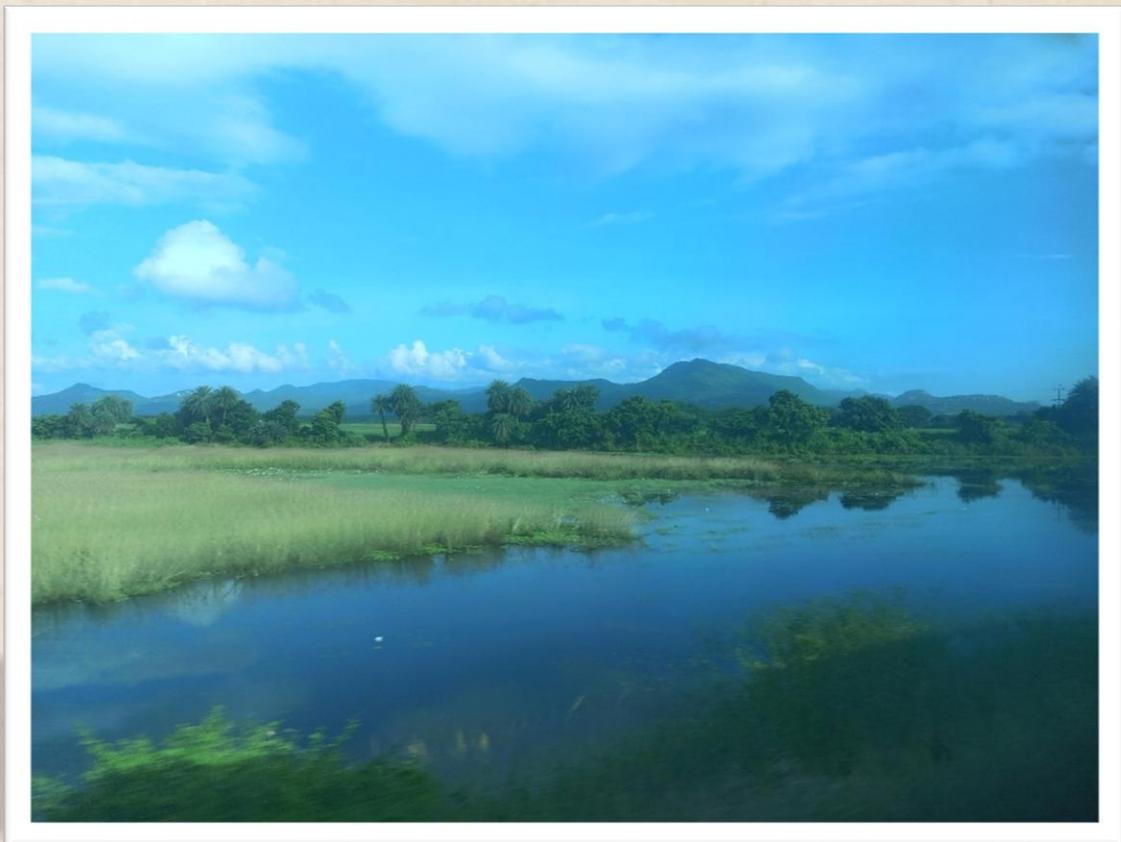
## *Where The Cloud Wander*

-Captured by **Debolina Chaulay**  
(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)



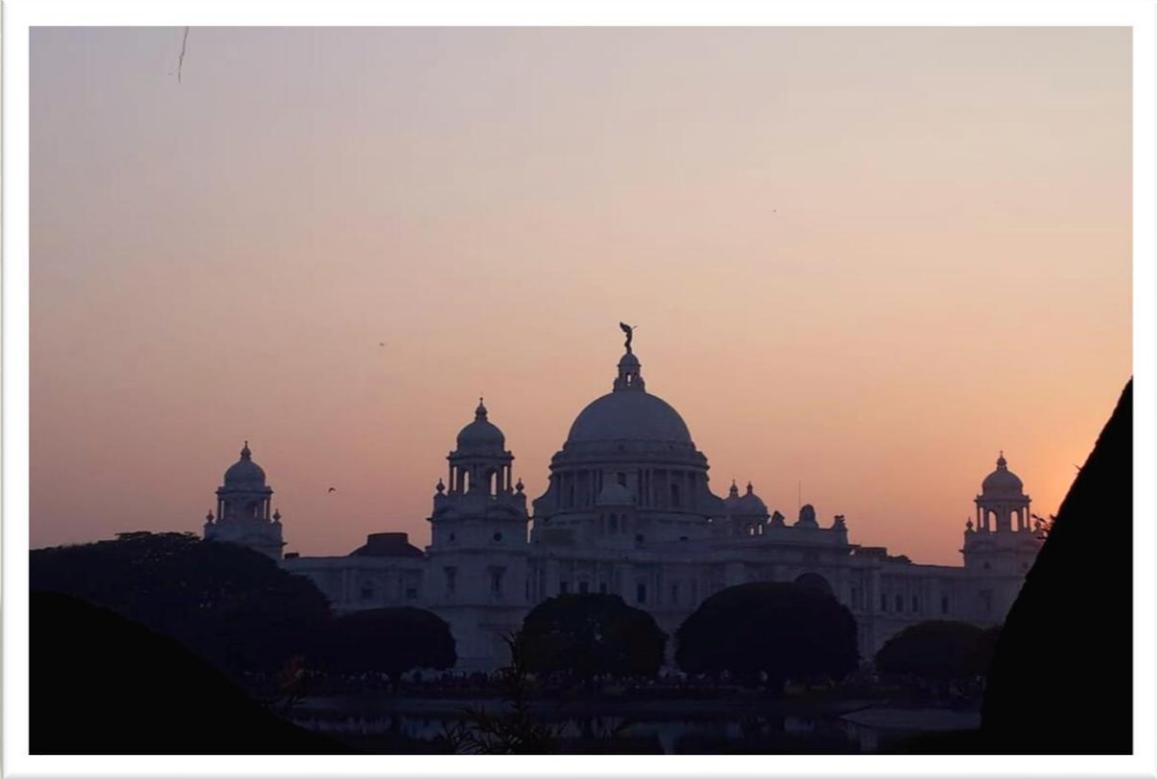


**-Captured by Debolina Chaulay**  
(Guest Lecturer, Dept. Of English)



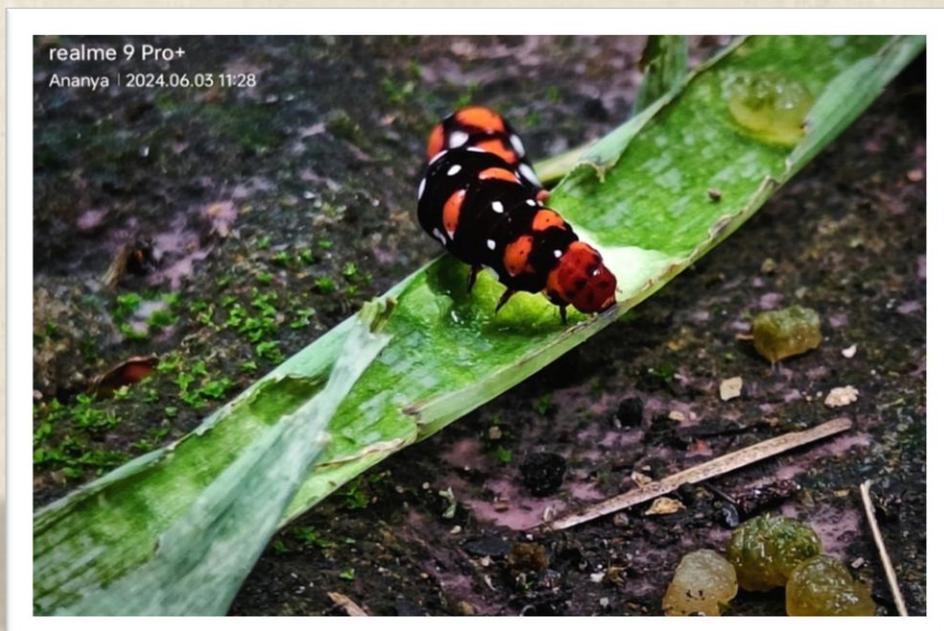
**-Captured by Dishari, 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG**

*The Anecdote Of Monument Victoria*



**-Captured by Ananya Debnath**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Semester, UG**



## *Monsoon Mood Of The Shore*



**-Captured by Debsmita Bhattacharya**

**4<sup>th</sup> Semester, PG**

# *Life*

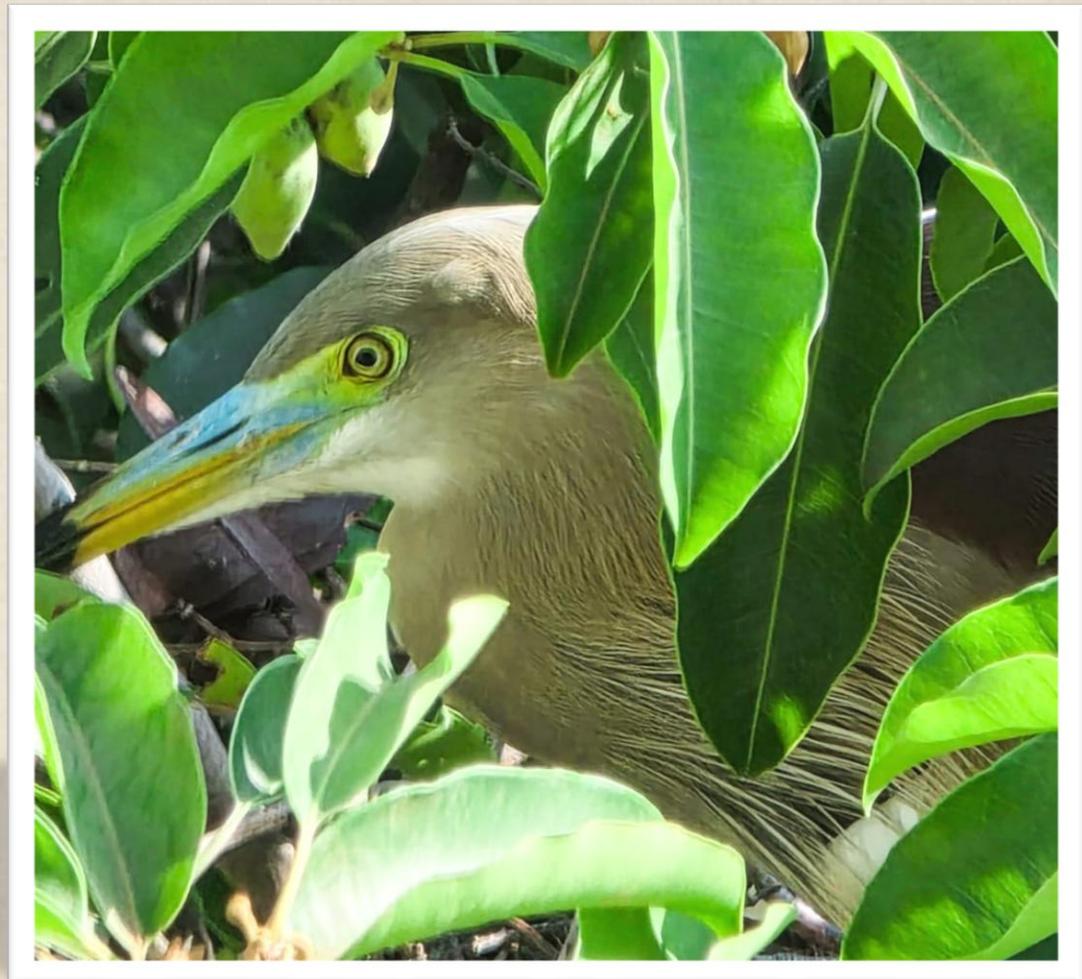
-Captured by Prasmita Maji, 4<sup>th</sup> Semester, UG

& Koushik Mahajan, 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester, PG

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# **NSS PROGRAMME**

## **(Department of ENGLISH)**

