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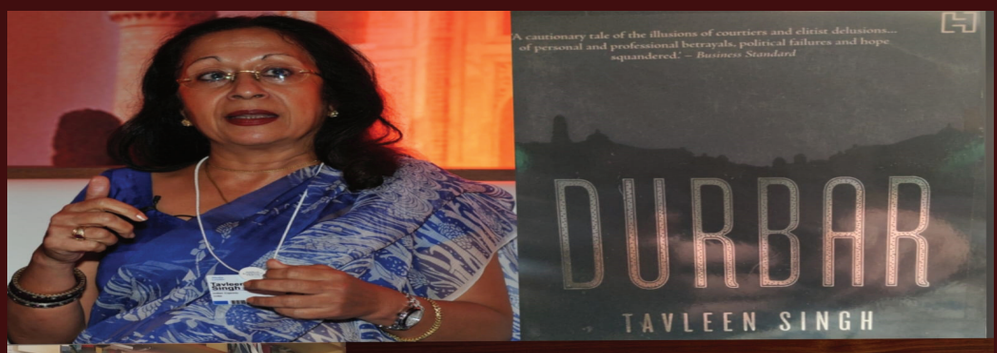

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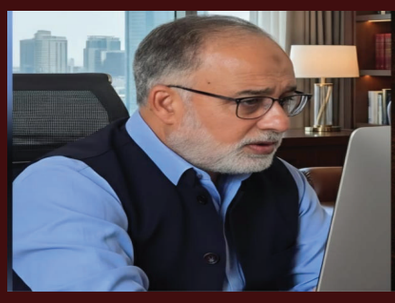

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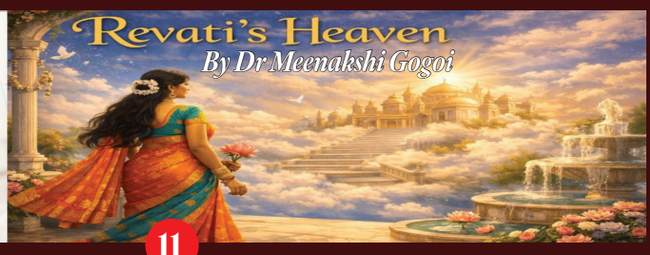

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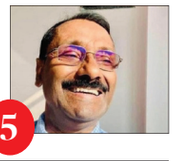

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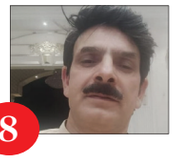

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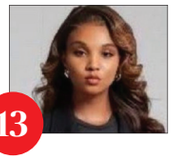

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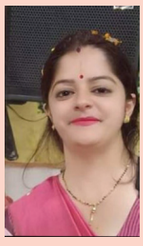

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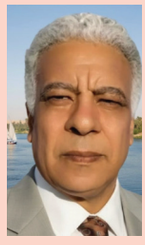

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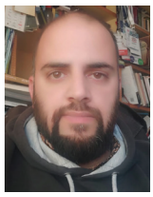

Mushtaq Ul Haq Ahmad Sikander

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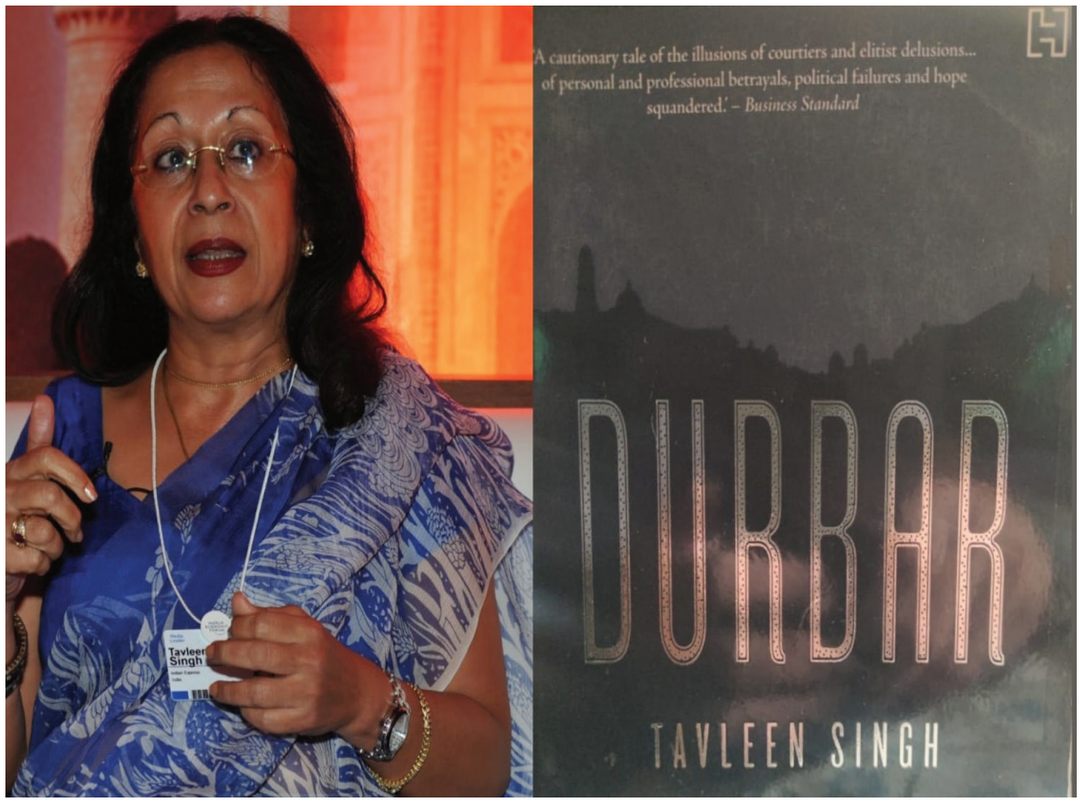

The story of India's journey after Independence is a tale of staggering potential and deep disappointment. The promise of democracy was quickly overshadowed by the slow entrenchment of dynasty, privilege, and detachment. The seeds of dynastic democracy were sown not merely through elections or political maneuvering but through a gradual normalization of inheritance in leadership, where power passed within a family as if by birthright. This transformation was not sudden—it grew quietly, nurtured by a ruling class that considered itself above the people it governed. As prominent journalist Tavleen Singh observes, "I believe that it is because India was let down by her ruling class that she failed to become the country she could have been... we brought up our children, as we had been, as foreigners in their own country. Fascinated by all things foreign and disdainful of all things India." (P-xii) These lines resonate as both a lament and a warning. The alienation of the elite from the Indian ethos—its languages, literature, and wisdom—created a leadership that looked outward for validation and inward only to preserve power.

The decades that followed Independence tested what democracy meant in a young republic. For women, particularly in journalism, the 1970s were a time of exclusion and persistence. Newsrooms were bastions of male dominance, and those few women who dared to enter had to wrest credibility from an establishment that believed they did not belong. Yet, even as a handful of women broke through the glass ceiling, while the political climate around them grew darker. By the summer of 1975, the mood in India was bleak. "Every economic indicator told a bad story. Literacy was less than 50 per cent, infant mortality higher than in almost any other country, GDP growth so slow that it was mocked as the Hindu rate of growth. The richest Indians did without clean water and regular electricity. In Mrs Gandhi's own neighborhood, long power cuts became the bane of burning hot summer nights." (P-45) These were not just statistics; they were symptoms of a tired, disillusioned nation.

That exhaustion set the stage for the most authoritarian chapter in independent India's history—the Emergency. When Indira Gandhi suspended civil liberties in 1975, it marked a moment when democracy's spirit was bent to serve one individual's survival. The press was silenced, opposition leaders imprisoned, and businessmen harassed through calculated tax raids meant to stifle funding for dissent. Fear became policy. The compulsory sterilization drive spearheaded by Sanjay Gandhi added a chilling dimension to this period. Under the guise of social reform, it turned into a campaign of coercion and humiliation. The poor, powerless to resist, bore the brunt of an experiment that stripped them of agency. Yet, despite these abuses, many continued to believe that Indira Gandhi could not be defeated. To most, the opposition seemed a disorganized amalgamation of political parties with no shared vision, united only by their opposition to her rule. The Emergency thus became a paradox—the consolidation of democratic institutions into dynastic control, enabled by public fear and political fragmentation.

When the Emergency finally ended, India emerged scarred but not yet healed. The years that followed saw new tensions rise, particularly in Punjab, where the state's alienation from its people deepened. The situation reached its tragic peak in 1984 with Operation Blue Star, when the army entered the Golden Temple to flush out militants. What was intended as a restoration of order became a wound in the nation's conscience. The fallout was swift and brutal: Indira Gandhi's assassination by her Sikh bodyguards and the horrifying anti-Sikh riots that followed.

Into this vortex stepped Rajiv Gandhi—a reluctant politician thrust into history's spotlight. His entry into politics after his brother's death and then his mother's reflected not ambition but inheritance. Yet neither Rajiv nor Sonia Gandhi had shown much interest in public life earlier. "It is true that none of the people in the circle in which the Gandhis moved had much interest in India's problems either but I expected, perhaps wrongly, that having spent all her time in India in the prime minister's home Sonia would have developed a deeper sense of social consciousness… But we failed and instead brought up our children, as we had been, as foreigners in their own country." (P-138-139) The detachment persisted across generations, culminating in Rajiv's administration—a curious mix of optimism and naivety.

Rajiv began his tenure as a symbol of modernity and change, promising efficiency and a break from the old order. Yet his tenure revealed the same distance from reality that had plagued his predecessors. Child starvation deaths during his period became grim reminders that beneath the rhetoric of modernization, poverty remained unaddressed. In international affairs, his inexperience often translated into puzzling decisions—one stark example being his recognition of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic. "By a funny twist of fate I happened to be in the remote city of Laayoune on the Atlantic coast of Morocco in March that year when I heard on the BBC that elections had been announced in Kashmir... what had brought me to Morocco was the decision by Rajiv's government to recognize the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic as a separate country.The country he recognized was what Morocco considers its southern provinces so King Hassan of Morocco was forced to break diplomatic relations with India." (P-243-244) The diplomatic fallout was swift, but the deeper issue was symbolic—it revealed a government that seemed to act on impulse rather than insight.

Rajiv's domestic missteps were equally consequential. His handling of communal tensions, his failure to read the growing undercurrents of nationalism, and his concessions to religious groups in the name of appeasement all left lasting scars. As the author reflects, "Rajiv's policies as prime minister unleashed demons that should have died after the country was partitioned. An ugly, new form of Hindutva that became resurgent then would one day propel the BJP to a position that would make it the only national party in India capable of taking on the Congress." (P-290) What had once been a party of national unity now found itself facing an ideological rival it had inadvertently empowered.

This narrative, ultimately, is not about individuals alone. It is about a system that allowed power to corrode institutions, about a society that too often mistook familiarity for reliability, and about the gradual erosion of accountability under the shadow of dynastic politics. The story told through these reflections is both intimate and national in scope—a reminder that leadership detached from heritage and empathy leads not to progress but to decline. India's failure, as the author suggests, was not inevitable; it was perpetual. Each generation of leaders repeated the errors of the one before, reaffirming the truth that democracy, without self-reflection, easily becomes dynasty in disguise.

(M.H.A.Sikander is Writer-Activist based in Srinagar, Kashmir and can be reached at sikandarmushtaq@gmail.com)

Mushtaque B. Barq

This was meant to be the happiest day of their lives. Yet happiness, after all, is only an orderly in the office of Time—brief in service and insignificant in stature. Ajaz stood waiting at Ghat 4 near Nehru Park, that floating island at the edge of the liquid heart of the city, Dal Lake. He had come early to receive his friend after nearly two decades of separation. In his hand was a carefully packed tiffin box. Ajaz knew his friend's fondness for dried brinjal cooked with dried tomatoes and gourds, a simple yet delightful dish they used to call Trukeit—three dried vegetables cooked together.

For poor men, celebration seldom involves restaurants or hotels. Their festivities are modest; wherever the day ends becomes their temporary home. Ajaz also knew that his friend would never arrive empty-handed. He was almost certain the man would bring a tiffin box filled with goat trotters, a dish Ajaz had not tasted since the day his friend's father, an employee in the Home Guard, had been transferred to a distant place. To eat that favourite dish without his companion would have felt like betrayal. The poor live not merely within limitations but also within their own unspoken codes of loyalty.

"Let that rascal come," Ajaz muttered to himself with a smile, "I will peel his skin off for being so casual." After all, when friends meet, who bothers about decorum?

The moon had risen over the river, dressed in its most radiant gown, casting a silver glow upon the waters. Years ago, before their separation, the two friends had left many dreams scattered in the dust as they pursued their separate destinies. A boat slowly approached the ghat, its arrival seeming to slow the march of time itself. The lake currents were gentle, almost sympathetic, allowing the ferryman a moment of ease.

From the boat stepped a man in his late forties. As he disembarked, he nearly stumbled, but a fellow passenger's shoulder steadied him. The moonlight had already traced pale streaks across his face, making it difficult to tell whether the lines along his jaw carried the glow of romance or the fatigue of life's long journey.

Ajaz recognised him instantly. Stepping forward, he embraced his friend warmly and lifted his own tiffin box with a playful grin.

"Guess what's inside," Ajaz said.

The man lowered his gaze, as though sensing what Ajaz had expected him to bring.

"It must be Trukeit," he replied quietly.

"But where is your tiffin box?" Ajaz asked.

"Oh come on, you fool," the man retorted lightly. "Can you think of nothing beyond your belly?"

For a moment Ajaz was taken aback. His friend had never disappointed him before. Yet he quickly realised that perhaps circumstances had not allowed him to bring anything. Placing a reassuring hand on his shoulder, Ajaz said softly, "Don't worry. Now that we have met, we can feast on buffalo trotters, let alone goat or lamb."

Under the silver canopy of the full moon, the two men walked along the banks of Dal Lake. They appeared almost like wandering spirits lost in a human labyrinth—one trying to pull the other away from unseen troubles, while the other seemed to sink deeper into an unnamed abyss.

"Time has been kind to you," the man remarked.

"I don't think Time spares anyone," Ajaz replied thoughtfully. "One simply learns to hold up a shield."

"A shield?" his friend asked.

Ajaz tried to avoid the subject, for he knew well that no shield had ever truly protected anyone from Time. His friend was not a naïve student who would accept every word unquestioningly; he knew how to probe deeper.

"What shield were you talking about?" the man insisted.

Ajaz straightened himself, brushed his hand through his hair, and lifted his head slightly, as though gathering authority from the moonlit sky. At last he replied, "Art can triumph over Time." It was a thought borrowed from the sonnets of the great Bard that had lingered in his memory.

The words seemed to falter in the air. His friend's lips trembled slightly, and silence hardened between them like blocks of ice. He lowered his head, searching perhaps through the ruins of his own thoughts for a response. Ajaz sensed his exhaustion and paused. They stood quietly on the edge of Dal Lake until the distant aroma of barbecue drifted through the air, bringing faint smiles to their faces.

Ajaz rose to invite his friend for their old favourite meal, but the man pulled him close. His eyes filled with tears. A sigh escaped him—followed by a faint smile, then a frown, and another sigh. Ajaz could not understand the message hidden within those gestures.

"You don't need to worry about the bill," Ajaz said cheerfully. "I'll pay."

The man covered his face. "Listen, Ajaz," he said anxiously, "don't waste your money. You may need it for something else. Wait."

Ajaz turned back and sat beside him. The man gently pulled him down, rested his head on Ajaz's thigh, and gazed silently at the sky.

"Ah," he murmured at last, "what a relief it is to breathe like this after so many years of suffering."

"Suffering? What suffering?" Ajaz asked.

But the Dal Lake had already begun to flow through his friend's eyes.

"No, let me weep," the man pleaded. "Don't stop me. Your lap is warm. Let me feel it for a while."

After a moment he spoke again. "Open your tiffin, Ajaz. I want to taste Trukeit."

Ajaz felt a strange unease he could not explain. "Are you alright, my friend? Tell me—why are you crying?"

"I will tell you," the man said, "but promise me you will not cry."

Then he leaned against Ajaz's shoulder. The quiet waters of Dal Lake reflected the moon, but Ajaz himself was already drenched in sorrow.

"Can you marry Jamela?" the man asked suddenly.

"Jamela? Who is she?" Ajaz replied, startled.

"The same girl… the one who was raped last year," the man said softly.

"Why are you pleading for her?" Ajaz asked.

The man covered his face again. "Because," he whispered, "I am her brother."

A faint smile crossed Ajaz's lips—one that rose against his will. At that moment the man sighed deeply. The invisible burden that had weighed upon his limbs seemed to shatter and fall away, and something within him grew suddenly light, as though reaching for the stars.

Just then a boatman called out from the shore, and the man rose quietly. Without another word, he stepped into the boat that would carry him to his final destination.

(Mushtaque B. Barq is a noted writer, translator and currently serves as an English Mentor at Cambridge School. A recipient of several honours, including the G.N. Firaq Memorial Award and the Kalidas Literary Award, he is known for his poetic finesse and for promoting Kashmiri literary heritage through his work.)

Black Wisdom

Mujtaba Farooq

Something beneath the bed was making a crackling sound, as if something very hungry was chewing ruthlessly. I was too tired to care. The purple outlines beneath my eyes did not allow me the strength to move and check. I pulled the blanket over my head and squeezed my ears between my forearms, annoyed, irritated, exhausted. But the sound did not stop. It continued until it forced my weak self to jump down and look beneath the bed. There was nothing, only emptiness, a hollow void covered in dust as if wind had never passed there. The wood holding the bed had grown dull, the nails in the corners rusty, yet none of it resembled the unpleasant sound I had heard, and strangely the sound itself had vanished.

There was silence, the kind where you can hear the thin frequency of the air itself and every tick of the wall clock becomes a declaration of time. I did not know what was happening and nothing in me had the strength to calculate reasons. I pulled the blanket again and slept on the floor, a merciful sleep of twenty minutes until the sound returned, but this time not beneath the bed but from the cupboard in the corner. I ignored it, I had to, for who could walk in such a weak state, yet the sound continued and with every second it grew louder.

I wanted to shout but that would only add more misery to the midnight, so I stood myself to life and walked to the cupboard. When I opened it the piled clothes fell over my feet, carrying an odor that smelled like memories, people, pleasures, some even like death. Perhaps I had worn them to funerals where I tried convincing the dead that they were in a better place, yet man is arrogant when alive, how could he not remain so when dead. Inside there was nothing, only hangers oscillating gently over the rod, and again the sound had disappeared.

In anger I slammed the cupboard shut and went to the other room, silent but cold. A man in youth carries fire within him, I

wish that worked in reality. My feet froze within ten minutes and soon my teeth began to shiver. Now I wished for death instead of sleep, the exhaustion had crossed a point where rest no longer seemed possible. I wrapped myself completely in the blanket, for a few minutes the trapped air felt warm until it became suffocating. I lifted my feet slightly to let air enter but only cold bursts struck my chest as if there was no heart inside. Cruel, perhaps the wind is slowly mutating, transforming into us.

There was a fireplace in the corner and some wood remained in the kitchen, I had no choice but to light a fire. How astonishing hunger is, it can turn an artist into the assassin of his own dreams. The fire warmed the room perfectly until the smoke began irritating my eyes. I wanted warmth but not in my eyes. That is how we want things, not everything, only what pleases us until it does not and suddenly everything becomes necessary, greed is immortal.

My eyes were bruised purple with fatigue as if someone had punched them brutally, perhaps my dreams had, but this was not philosophy, it was a real midnight crisis. I had nothing left to try except counting sheep, what a foolish ritual, yet a hungry man becomes blind in strange ways, he would sell his stomach just to fill it only to realize it was never enough.

Do men ever realize anything in life? They run endlessly in races of winning and dominating while a few less foolish ones try to learn from tragedy. Perhaps realization is a good poison only few could tolerate, or perhaps it is self abuse, I do not know where it comes from but realization is a bridge and through it a man can meet himself. All mirrors are fake except the lonely night, but a man will never look into that mirror, he will only wish to sleep while his heart keeps making noise, warning him until he destroys himself.

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"I Am a Woman... I Have Seen Relationships..."

Dr Pravita Tripathi

I am a woman…

I have seen the beginning of relationships—the kind of beginning when my feet were not even touching the ground. My heart was light, floating with happiness, and every relationship felt like a beautiful dream filled with trust and warmth.

And I have also seen the end of relationships—the moment when the ground beneath my feet slipped away. When trust suddenly shattered and silence replaced the warmth that once lived in my heart. Perhaps this is the journey of a woman's life—a long path filled with emotions, hopes, and struggles.

In my childhood, I was very simple and innocent. There was no deception in my heart for anyone. I saw people with the same honesty with which I saw myself. My mother often used to tell me, "Daughter, the thread of relationships is very delicate. It must be protected with love, patience, and understanding." Her words sank deep into my heart. I believed that if we stayed sincere in a relationship, it could never break.

Slowly, time passed and I grew older. New people entered my life. Some became friends, and some became very close to my heart. Relationships gradually became the most important part of my life. Caring for people made me happy. Bringing a smile to someone's face felt like the greatest reward.

Whenever someone entered my life and called me their own, my heart filled with joy. In those days it truly felt like my feet were not touching the ground. I tried to nurture every relationship with honesty and dedication. For me, relationships were not mere formalities—they were pieces of my heart.

But life does not always unfold the way we imagine. With time, I began to realize that not every relationship is as genuine as it appears in the beginning. Some people enter our lives only for their own benefit. Some never truly understand the trust we place in them.

There came a time when one of the most precious relationships in my life began to change. Where there was once warmth, distance slowly appeared. Where conversations once flowed endlessly, silence began to grow. At first, I ignored it. I thought perhaps it was just a phase. Maybe time had changed things, and everything would soon return to normal.

I tried my best to save the relationship. I softened my words and lowered my expectations. Many times, I suppressed my own feelings just to protect the bond. Because I was a woman… And I had always been taught that saving relationships is a woman's responsibility.

Many times I chose silence. Many times I hid my tears. At night, when everyone else was asleep, I quietly felt the weight of my pain. But every morning I wore the same smile again, as if nothing had happened.

People say women are very strong. Perhaps it is because they know how to carry their pain within themselves and still move forward. Gradually, I realized that the relationship I was trying so hard to protect was no longer the same. It no longer had the respect and understanding that form the foundation of any strong bond.

And one day, the truth finally stood clearly before me. That day it felt as if the ground beneath my feet had disappeared. I had given a large part of my life to that relationship. Suddenly, everything felt empty. Many questions filled my heart. Was my humility mistaken for weakness? Is it wrong to be sincere in this world?

But with time, I discovered a deeper truth. Being humble is not weakness. Loving someone sincerely is not a mistake. The only mistake is sometimes trusting the wrong people.

That day I made a promise to myself. I decided that I would never change the goodness of my heart. No matter how the world changes, I will not lose my sincerity and sensitivity. Because if I too become hard, where will kindness remain in this world?

Slowly, I began to gather myself again. I wiped my tears and tried to give my life a new direction. Today, when I look back at those moments, I feel not only pain but also pride—pride that I lived every relationship with honesty, pride that I did not let my pain turn into weakness.

I still believe in people. I still value relationships. But now I place my self-respect above everything else. Because I have understood that the strongest foundation of any relationship is respect. Where there is no respect, a relationship slowly becomes a burden.

I am a woman. My humility is my identity. My struggles are my strength. I have seen the beautiful beginnings of relationships and also the pain of their endings. But through all of this, I did not lose myself. Because no matter how many times a woman breaks, she always carries the strength to rise again.

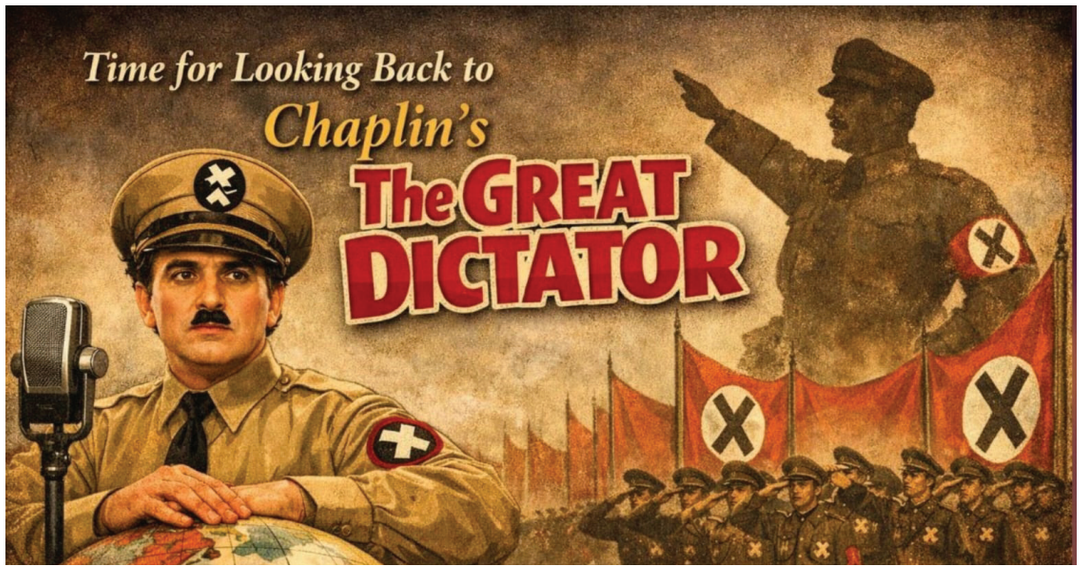
Within her lives an ocean of patience and a lamp of hope that never truly fades. And perhaps that is why a woman is called the most gentle and the strongest creation of life. Because even after pain, she does not stop loving. Even after darkness, she does not stop believing in hope.

And one day, the same woman who once felt the ground slip beneath her feet creates a strong ground again with her courage and self-confidence.

I am a woman… And my story is not over yet. Because with every new morning, a woman learns to live again, dream again, and once again tries to make her life beautiful.

(Dr Pravita Tripathi, Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, R.N.S. Degree College, Sarwa, affiliated with Lucknow University, Lucknow.)

Dr Ratan Bhattacharjee



Books on dictators occupy a significant place in political history and literature because they help readers understand how authoritarian power rises, operates, and eventually declines. Many writers, historians, and journalists have examined the lives and regimes of notorious rulers to reveal the psychological, social, and political forces behind dictatorship. One of the most controversial texts associated with dictatorship is Mein Kampf written by Adolf Hitler, which outlines the ideological foundations of Nazism and helps scholars study the mindset behind fascist rule. Another influential work is The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich by William L. Shirer, a detailed historical account of Nazi Germany and the rise of Hitler's regime.

Literature has also explored dictators through fiction and satire. The novel The Feast of the Goat by Mario Vargas Llosa portrays the brutal dictatorship of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic. Similarly, The Autumn of the Patriarch by Gabriel García Márquez presents a symbolic portrait of the loneliness and corruption of absolute power.

Such books remind readers that dictatorship is not only a political system but also a human tragedy affecting millions. By studying these works, readers gain insight into the dangers of unchecked authority and the importance of democratic values and human freedom. "The Great Dictator " remains one of the most remarkable examples of cinema's power to confront tyranny through satire, compassion, and moral courage. When Charlie Chaplin released the film in 1940, the world stood on the edge of a catastrophe. World War II had already begun, fascist regimes were spreading their shadow across Europe, and the brutality of dictatorship was becoming increasingly visible. In that tense historical moment Chaplin, primarily known as a silent comedian, dared to speak—literally and metaphorically—against tyranny. Rereading and rewatching this film today, in an era once again troubled by political polarization, authoritarian tendencies, and the manipulation of public sentiment, reveals how profoundly relevant Chaplin's work remains.

Chaplin's genius lay in his ability to combine humor with humanism. For decades audiences around the world had known him through the beloved character of The Tramp, a figure of poverty, innocence, and resilience. Yet in The Great Dictator Chaplin undertook a bold artistic and political experiment. He played two characters: a humble Jewish barber and the tyrannical dictator Adenoid Hynkel, a parody of Adolf Hitler. The resemblance between Chaplin's Tramp moustache and Hitler's own moustache had often been noted, but Chaplin transformed that visual coincidence into a powerful tool of satire. Through caricature and absurdity he stripped dictatorship of its aura of grandeur and exposed its underlying ridiculousness.

When the film premiered, mocking Hitler was neither common nor entirely safe. Many governments and studios feared provoking Nazi Germany. Yet Chaplin insisted that satire could become a weapon against tyranny. Hynkel's exaggerated speeches, delivered in a comically distorted pseudo-German language, reveal how authoritarian rhetoric often relies on spectacle rather than meaning. Chaplin shows the dictator ranting before adoring crowds, gesticulating wildly while uttering nonsense words that resemble aggressive propaganda. The audience laughs, but the laughter carries a deeper realization: the language of tyranny is often empty noise wrapped in theatrical performance.

One of the most memorable scenes of the film shows Hynkel dancing with an inflatable globe. In that haunting sequence the dictator tosses the balloon-like world into the air, embracing it with childlike delight, imagining his total control over the planet. The image is at once comic and disturbing. It symbolizes the narcissistic dream of absolute power that motivates dictators throughout history. The globe eventually bursts, leaving Hynkel stunned and humiliated. With a single visual metaphor Chaplin captures the fragility of imperial ambition and the absurdity of men who believe they can dominate the world.

Yet The Great Dictator is not merely a satire of political leaders. It is also a deeply compassionate story about ordinary people living under oppression. The Jewish barber represents the dignity and vulnerability of common humanity. Having lost his memory during the war, he returns to his neighborhood only to discover that persecution has intensified. The film portrays discrimination, violence, and fear in the Jewish ghetto, reminding viewers that authoritarian systems survive not only through charismatic leaders but also through the suffering they impose on marginalized communities. Chaplin's sympathy for the victims of prejudice was remarkable for its time, especially because the full horrors of the Holocaust had not yet become widely known.

In rereading this film in the twenty-first century, one cannot ignore the prescience of Chaplin's warnings. The world today faces many forms of authoritarian temptation. Political rhetoric in several countries increasingly relies on the demonization of minorities, the glorification of national identity, and the erosion of democratic institutions. While historical contexts differ, the psychological patterns remain strikingly similar. Chaplin recognized that dictators often cultivate a cult of personality, presenting themselves as saviors of the nation while suppressing dissenting voices. The exaggerated worship of Hynkel by his ministers and followers reflects a dynamic that still appears whenever power becomes concentrated in the hands of a single leader.

The film also examines the machinery of propaganda. In Hynkel's regime, banners, slogans, and mass rallies create an atmosphere of unquestioned loyalty. This theatrical display of power anticipates modern concerns about media manipulation and the manufacturing of public consent. In Chaplin's time propaganda relied on radio broadcasts, newspapers, and staged spectacles. Today it spreads through digital platforms, viral images, and algorithmic echo chambers. Yet the underlying principle remains unchanged: repetition and emotional appeal can transform ideology into a perceived truth. Chaplin's satire reminds us that critical thinking and humor can challenge such illusions.

Another aspect of The Great Dictator that resonates strongly today is its exploration of identity and humanity. The barber and Hynkel share the same face, played by the same actor, yet they represent radically different moral possibilities. One embodies empathy and humility; the other embodies cruelty and arrogance. This duality suggests that the capacity for both compassion and tyranny exists within human society. Chaplin seems to imply that civilization depends on our collective choice between these paths. By placing these two characters side by side, he invites the audience to reflect on the ethical responsibilities of individuals and communities.

Perhaps the most famous moment in the film is the final speech delivered by the barber, who is mistakenly identified as the dictator. Breaking away from the conventions of comedy, Chaplin addresses the audience directly with an impassioned plea for humanity. In that speech he rejects hatred, greed, and oppression, urging people to unite in kindness and solidarity. The words resonate with a sincerity that transcends the narrative of the film. Chaplin speaks not as a character but as a human being concerned about the future of civilization.

The speech contains a profound critique of modern society. Chaplin warns that technological progress without moral progress can lead to disaster. Machines have given humanity abundance, he says, but they have also created new forms of alienation and cruelty. This observation seems remarkably prophetic in the digital age. Technology today connects billions of people yet also spreads misinformation, surveillance, and polarization. Chaplin's message reminds us that ethical responsibility must accompany innovation if humanity is to benefit from its own inventions.

Rereading the film today also reveals its artistic daring. Chaplin had built his career in silent cinema, mastering the expressive language of gesture and movement. The Great Dictator was his first full talking picture, and he used dialogue strategically rather than excessively. Much of the film still relies on visual comedy and physical performance, preserving the charm of silent film traditions. At the same time the spoken words—especially in the final speech—carry enormous emotional weight. Chaplin's transition from silence to speech mirrors the transformation of the artist from entertainer to moral commentator.

The film's courage becomes even

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more apparent when we consider the historical context of 1940. The United States had not yet entered the war, and many people preferred isolationism. Public criticism of foreign leaders could be controversial. By openly parodying Hitler and fascism, Chaplin risked alienating audiences and political authorities. Some critics even accused him of being too political for a comedian. Yet Chaplin believed that artists could not remain neutral in the face of injustice. His film demonstrates how cinema can become a form of ethical engagement with the world.

In contemporary discussions of political satire, The Great Dictator often appears as a foundational example. Modern comedians and filmmakers frequently use humor to critique power structures, but Chaplin's work reminds us that satire carries both risks and responsibilities. Laughter can reveal truth, but it can also trivialize suffering if used carelessly. Chaplin balanced these possibilities by grounding his humor in empathy. The Jewish barber's vulnerability ensures that the film never loses sight of the human cost of dictatorship.

Another dimension of the film that invites reflection today is its portrayal of nationalism. Hynkel's regime glorifies the fictional nation of Tomainia with exaggerated pride and hostility toward outsiders. Flags, uniforms, and slogans create an atmosphere of aggressive patriotism. Chaplin suggests that nationalism becomes dangerous when it transforms love of country into hatred of others. In the modern world, where debates about national identity continue to shape politics, this warning remains strikingly relevant.

The film also highlights the role of ordinary citizens in resisting tyranny. Characters within the ghetto show courage, solidarity, and resilience despite their vulnerability. Their small acts of defiance demonstrate that moral resistance does not always require grand heroic gestures. Sometimes it appears in everyday kindness and mutual support. Chaplin emphasizes that dictatorship thrives when people become indifferent or fearful, but it weakens when individuals refuse to surrender their humanity.

Over the decades The Great Dictator has inspired countless scholars, filmmakers, and activists. Its legacy extends beyond cinema into political philosophy and cultural studies. The film invites viewers to consider the relationship between art and social responsibility. Can laughter challenge injustice? Can storytelling awaken moral awareness? Chaplin's work suggests that the answer is yes. By combining satire with compassion, he created a film that entertains while also provoking reflection.

In our own times, rereading The Great Dictator encourages us to examine the health of democratic values. Freedom of expression, tolerance, and respect for human dignity cannot be taken for granted. History shows that these ideals require constant vigilance. Chaplin's film serves as a reminder that authoritarianism often begins gradually, disguised as patriotism or security. The exaggerated world of Hynkel may appear comic, yet it reflects patterns that have repeatedly emerged in real history.

At the same time the film offers hope. Chaplin's final message celebrates the possibility of human unity. He calls upon soldiers not to fight for dictators but to fight for freedom and brotherhood. Though written during a moment of global crisis, the speech envisions a future in which science and progress serve the happiness of all people rather than the ambitions of a few. This vision continues to resonate with audiences who long for a more compassionate world.

Rereading Chaplin's masterpiece today therefore becomes more than an exercise in film appreciation. It becomes an act of historical reflection and moral imagination. The film reminds us that art can challenge power, that humor can expose hypocrisy, and that empathy can resist hatred. Chaplin transformed the tools of comedy into instruments of conscience, proving that laughter and seriousness need not be opposites.

More than eight decades after its release, The Great Dictator remains astonishingly fresh. The costumes and sets may belong to another era, but the themes of tyranny, propaganda, and human dignity remain timeless. As long as societies confront the temptation of authoritarian power, Chaplin's satire will retain its urgency. The film encourages viewers to question leaders who demand blind loyalty, to defend the rights of marginalized communities, and to recognize the shared humanity that transcends national or ideological boundaries.

In an age when political discourse often becomes harsh and polarized, Chaplin's voice sounds both gentle and firm. He reminds us that civilization depends not only on laws and institutions but also on compassion and imagination. The barber's final plea—though spoken within a fictional narrative—feels like a direct message to every generation. It urges us to remember that the world belongs not to dictators or empires but to ordinary people who seek dignity, freedom, and peace.

Thus rereading The Great Dictator in our times reveals the enduring power of Chaplin's vision. The film stands as a testament to the courage of an artist who refused silence when silence would have been easier. By transforming comedy into moral critique, Chaplin created a cinematic work that continues to challenge audiences to think, laugh, and hope. In doing so he reminds us that the struggle between tyranny and humanity is never fully resolved, but it is a struggle in which the voice of conscience—sometimes expressed through laughter—can still make a difference.

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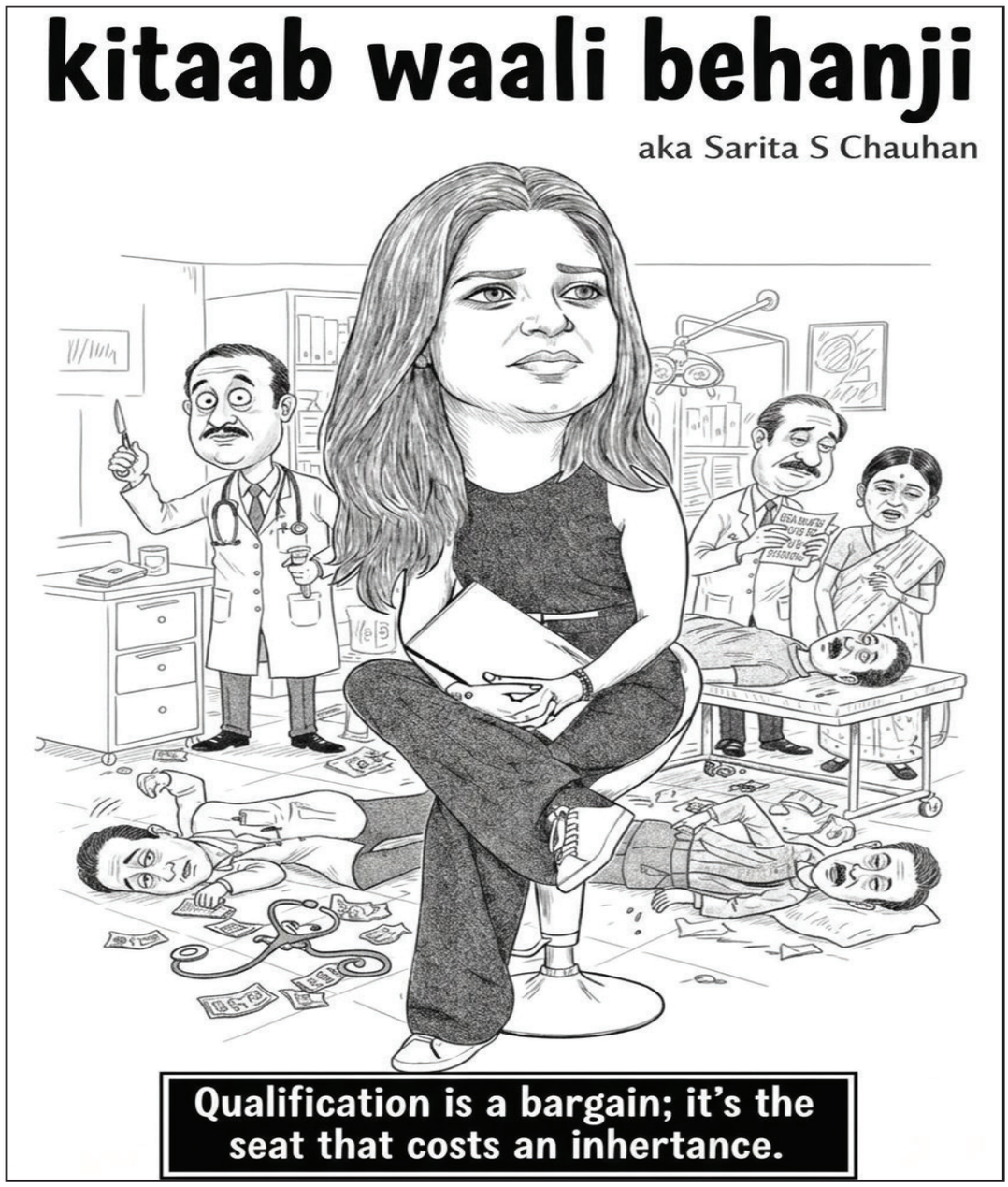
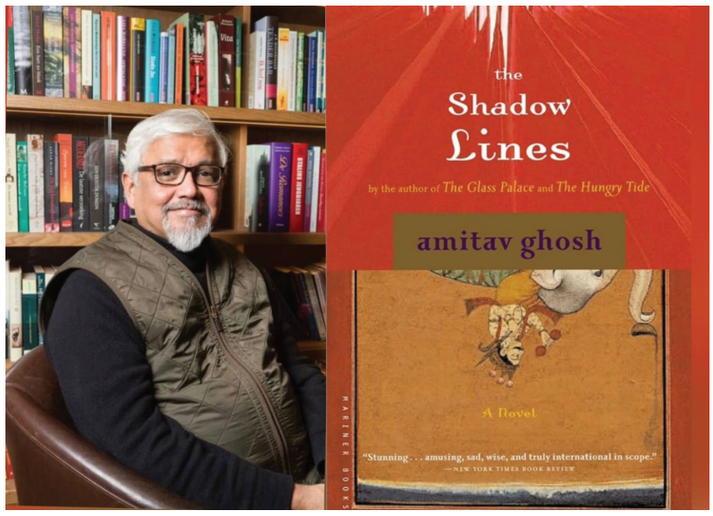


Amitav Ghosh's The Shadow Lines: Unfolding a Tapestry of Memories

Dr. Mousumi Mullick



Published in 1988, The Shadow Lines stands as one of the most intellectually profound and emotionally resonant novels in modern Indian English literature. Written by the acclaimed Indian author Amitav Ghosh, the novel transcends the conventional boundaries of narrative fiction and ventures into the realms of memory, identity, nationalism, and the fragile nature of political borders. Through a complex web of recollections, personal histories, and geopolitical events, Ghosh constructs a narrative that interrogates the very idea of nations and the invisible lines that divide humanity. Rather than presenting a straightforward chronological story, The Shadow Lines unfolds as a tapestry of memories narrated by an unnamed protagonist who reflects on his childhood and youth in Calcutta, his family's connections to Dhaka and London, and the political upheavals that shape their lives.

The novel moves fluidly between the past and the present, between cities and continents, demonstrating how memory collapses distances and defies the rigid boundaries imposed by maps. The title itself is deeply symbolic: "shadow lines" refers to the imaginary borders between nations, communities, and identities—lines that exist on paper but often dissolve in the lived experiences of individuals. Ghosh's narrative therefore becomes a powerful critique of nationalism and a meditation on how historical events are experienced at the level of ordinary lives.

The story is narrated by an unnamed protagonist who grows up in Calcutta during the 1960s and 1970s. His life is deeply influenced by the stories and memories of his extended family, particularly his cousin Tridib, whose imaginative storytelling shapes the narrator's understanding of the world. Tridib is an intellectual and dreamer who encourages the narrator to imagine distant places through stories rather than through direct experience. Through Tridib's vivid descriptions, the narrator forms mental images of London long before he actually visits it. Tridib's philosophy suggests that the world can be understood through imagination and empathy rather than through physical travel alone.

The narrative also revolves around the narrator's grandmother, Tha'mma, a fiercely patriotic woman who believes strongly in the idea of national identity and political borders. Her worldview contrasts sharply with Tridib's cosmopolitan perspective. Tha'mma grew up in Dhaka before the partition of India in 1947 and struggles to reconcile her memories of a united homeland with the reality of a divided subcontinent.

One of the central events in the novel occurs during the communal riots in Dhaka in 1964. The narrator's family attempts to bring back an elderly relative, Jethamoshai, who refuses to leave his ancestral home despite the rising violence. The journey to Dhaka culminates in tragedy when Tridib is killed during a mob attack while trying to protect others. This traumatic event becomes a defining moment for the narrator, forcing him to confront the harsh realities of political violence and the fragility of human connections. The narrative later follows the narrator's visit to London, where he reconnects with Ila, a cosmopolitan cousin whose life abroad symbolizes a different relationship with national identity. Through these intertwined stories, the novel gradually reveals how personal lives are shaped by historical forces and how memories blur the boundaries between places and times.

One of the most powerful themes of The Shadow Lines is the critique of national boundaries. Ghosh questions the legitimacy and permanence of borders, portraying them as artificial constructs rather than natural divisions. The title itself reflects this idea. Borders are "shadow lines" because they exist only as abstractions on maps, yet they have the power to incite violence and hatred. The novel repeatedly shows how people who share culture, language, and history can suddenly become enemies simply because of political divisions.

Tha'mma's confusion about borders illustrates this theme vividly. When she learns that a passport is required to travel to Dhaka, she is bewildered because she remembers a time when Dhaka was simply another city within the same country. Her struggle highlights the absurdity of borders that divide communities overnight. Through such moments, Ghosh reveals how nationalism can create illusions that distort human relationships.

Memory plays a central role in the narrative structure of the novel. The story unfolds not as a chronological sequence of events but as a series of recollections that overlap and intersect. The narrator reconstructs the past through fragments of stories told by family members, personal experiences, and historical records. In doing so, he demonstrates how memory is subjective and selective. Different characters remember the same events in different ways, creating multiple versions of reality.

Tridib's storytelling also emphasizes the power of imagination in shaping memory. His descriptions of London allow the narrator to experience the city mentally long before he physically visits it. This suggests that emotional and imaginative connections can transcend geographical boundaries. The novel therefore challenges the idea that reality is fixed or objective. Instead, it presents reality as something constructed through memory and narrative.

Another significant theme is the destructive impact of communal violence. The riots in Dhaka serve as a stark reminder of how quickly political tensions can escalate into brutality. Ghosh portrays violence not as an abstract historical phenomenon but as something that directly affects ordinary people. The death of Tridib is particularly tragic because it occurs during an attempt to save others from the mob. His death symbolizes the senselessness of communal hatred.

The novel also contrasts the violent riots in Dhaka with the narrator's childhood memory of riots in Calcutta, where the violence seemed distant and almost unreal. This comparison shows how people often perceive violence differently depending on their proximity to it. Through these depictions, Ghosh exposes the devastating consequences of ideological divisions.

The characters in The Shadow Lines represent different attitudes toward identity and belonging. Tha'mma embodies a strong sense of nationalism and cultural loyalty. She believes firmly in the idea of a unified national identity and struggles to understand those who do not share her convictions. In contrast, Ila represents a cosmopolitan worldview shaped by her upbringing in multiple countries. She rejects rigid cultural identities and embraces a more global sense of belonging. Tridib occupies a unique position between these perspectives. He values imagination and empathy as tools for understanding the world, suggesting that true connection lies beyond national boundaries. Through these contrasting characters, Ghosh explores the complexity of identity in a globalized world.

One of the most distinctive aspects of The Shadow Lines is its narrative technique. The novel does not follow a linear timeline; instead, it moves back and forth between different periods and locations. This fragmented structure mirrors the workings of memory, where past and present coexist simultaneously. Events are revealed gradually, allowing readers to piece together the story like a puzzle. Ghosh's prose is elegant, reflective, and richly descriptive. His writing blends philosophical insight with emotional depth, creating a narrative that is both intellectually stimulating and deeply moving.

The novel also incorporates elements of oral storytelling. Much of the narrator's knowledge comes from stories told by family members, emphasizing the importance of narrative traditions in shaping cultural memory. Ghosh's characters are carefully crafted and psychologically complex. Tridib emerges as one of the most memorable figures in the novel. His intellectual curiosity and imaginative storytelling inspire the narrator and challenge conventional ways of understanding the world. Tridib's tragic death adds emotional weight to the narrative and underscores the novel's critique of violence.

Tha'mma represents the older generation shaped by the historical trauma of partition. Her strong beliefs about nationalism reflect the anxieties and aspirations of people who lived through the creation of modern nation-states. Ila, on the other hand, embodies the experiences of a globalized generation. Her rejection of traditional cultural boundaries highlights the tension between rooted identity and cosmo-

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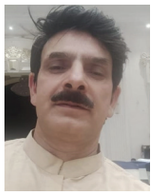
In a Hurry to Nowhere



Akram Siddiqui

"The two most powerful warriors are patience and time." — Leo Tolstoy

Ironically, in today's world the former often appears scarce, while the latter moves forward with relentless certainty. Recently, while standing in a modest queue outside an ATM near the reception area of the Sher-i-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) in Soura, I witnessed a brief incident that lingered in my mind far longer than the moment itself. It compelled me to reflect on a troubling question: if a well-dressed gentleman in formal attire could display such impatience, what might be expected from the ordinary crowd struggling with daily pressures?

Only two people were ahead of me in the queue—a lady waiting quietly for her turn and a man completing his transaction at the machine. The wait was hardly more than a minute. Suddenly, a sharply dressed man approached with visible urgency. Without hesitation, he gently nudged the lady aside and stepped directly to the ATM, breaking the queue without a word of apology or acknowledgement. The lady looked startled but stepped back silently. Those nearby exchanged brief glances, yet no one protested. Within seconds, the moment passed.

In isolation, it may appear trivial. Yet such small incidents increasingly reflect a broader transformation within contemporary Kashmiri society—the growing erosion of patience.

Scenes like this are no longer rare. They unfold in barber shops where customers attempt to skip their turn, in butcher shops during busy hours when raised voices compete with the clatter of knives, and in government offices, hospital counters, markets and traffic intersections. In almost every public space that requires shared discipline, small breaches of patience appear. Individually insignificant, these moments collectively point to a subtle shift in social temperament.

Impatience, of course, is not unique to Kashmir. Across the world, societies grappling with rapid technological change, urban congestion and economic competition display similar behavioural patterns. Yet in Kashmir, this phenomenon carries deeper psychological and historical dimensions.

For decades, the valley has lived through prolonged instability. Generations have grown up amid curfews, shutdowns, communication blackouts and recurring disruptions that interrupted the normal rhythm of life. In such an environment, waiting has become an almost permanent condition—waiting for stability, waiting for opportunity, waiting for answers that remain unresolved.

Over time, such prolonged uncertainty inevitably shapes collective psychology. When expectations are repeatedly deferred, patience begins to erode. A society conditioned by delay becomes unusually sensitive to waiting—even in trivial situations like a queue at an ATM.

Research conducted over the past decade provides sobering insight into this emotional landscape. A landmark 2016 survey by Doctors Without Borders revealed that nearly 45 percent of adults in the Kashmir Valley experienced some form of mental distress, including anxiety, depression and symptoms of post-traumatic stress. Subsequent studies suggested even higher levels of psychological strain, particularly among young people.

Youth in the valley appear especially vulnerable. Studies have shown that an overwhelming majority have been exposed to conflict-related events during their lives, with many reporting persistent psychological distress. Such emotional strain gradually lowers tolerance levels, making everyday inconveniences seem disproportionately frustrating.

Women often carry an even heavier burden. Research indicates that women in Kashmir report higher levels of anxiety and depression than men. In many households, they bear the responsibility of maintaining family stability while coping with economic pressure, loss and the lingering effects of prolonged uncertainty.

Psychologists studying conflict-affected societies often describe a phenomenon known as trauma-induced helplessness—where long-term exposure to instability erodes emotional resilience. In Kashmir, traces of this condition are visible in everyday behaviour.Traffic disputes escalate quickly, horns replace courteous signals, and queues—once accepted as routine—are increasingly treated as obstacles rather than shared civic arrangements.

Yet political history alone does not explain the rise of impatience. Another powerful influence is the rapid arrival of digital technology. Smartphones, social media and instant messaging have reshaped perceptions of time. Information travels instantly, responses are expected immediately, and delays that once seemed normal now feel intolerable.

Young Kashmiris, like their peers across the globe, inhabit a digital environment built on speed and immediacy. Online narratives often portray success as swift and dramatic, gradually fostering unrealistic expectations in education, careers and personal life. In such a culture, patience appears almost outdated.

The contrast between generations is striking. Older residents recall a slower social rhythm—village life shaped by community ties, long conversations and unhurried routines. Time moved gently, guided by seasons and traditions. Younger generations, however, navigate a far more accelerated world marked by competition, limited employment opportunities and constant exposure to global lifestyles through digital media.

This collision between inherited patience and modern urgency has created one of the defining tensions within contemporary Kashmiri society.

The psychological strain accompanying these changes is already visible in troubling ways. Experts report a worrying rise in substance abuse among sections of the valley's youth. Frustration, unemployment and uncertainty about the future often drive vulnerable individuals toward harmful coping mechanisms.

At the same time, the persistent stigma surrounding mental health discourages many people from seeking professional help. Instead, some turn to informal healers or spiritual remedies rather than trained counsellors or psychiatrists. Institutions such as SKIMS have expanded mental health services, yet the scale of emotional distress suggests that far greater efforts are needed.

Despite these challenges, Kashmir's cultural heritage still offers powerful resources for healing. For centuries, the valley's spiritual and literary traditions—from Sufi philosophy to classical poetry—have celebrated patience, humility and compassion.The teachings of saints and poets repeatedly remind society that endurance and empathy are essential virtues.

Patience, after all, is not merely the ability to wait. It is the ability to wait without losing dignity, kindness or respect for others.

The brief episode outside the ATM at SKIMS may appear insignificant in the grand narrative of Kashmir. Yet such moments often act as mirrors reflecting deeper social transformations. The hurried man who stepped ahead in the queue, the silent resignation of those behind him and the absence of protest all hinted at a society quietly negotiating new emotional realities.

Recognising these subtle changes is the first step toward addressing them. For beneath the visible impatience lies a deeper longing—a collective desire for stability, dignity and a gentler rhythm of life in a land that has waited far too long and continues to wait.

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politan freedom. Each character contributes to the novel's exploration of memory, belonging, and historical change.

Ghosh employs several powerful symbols throughout the novel. The shadow lines themselves symbolize the arbitrary borders between nations and communities. These lines are invisible yet deeply influential, shaping political realities and personal lives. The mirror-like relationship between cities—Calcutta, Dhaka, and London—symbolizes the interconnectedness of cultures and histories. Despite being geographically distant, these cities are linked through the experiences of the characters. The act of storytelling also functions as a symbol of cultural continuity. Stories preserve memories and connect generations across time and space.

The novel is set against the backdrop of major historical events, particularly the partition of India and the communal riots of the 1960s. By weaving personal narratives into historical contexts, Ghosh demonstrates how large-scale political decisions affect individual lives. The novel challenges the official narratives of history by focusing on the emotional and psychological experiences of ordinary people. This approach transforms historical events from distant abstractions into deeply human stories.

The Shadow Lines received widespread critical acclaim and won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1989. Critics praised the novel for its innovative narrative structure and its profound exploration of nationalism and memory. The book is now widely regarded as one of the most important works of postcolonial literature. It is frequently studied in universities around the world for its insights into identity, history, and cultural interconnectedness. Ghosh's ability to blend personal storytelling with political commentary has made the novel a lasting contribution to global literature.

The Shadow Lines is far more than a family story or historical narrative. It is a philosophical meditation on the nature of borders, memory, and human connection. Through its intricate narrative structure and richly developed characters, the novel challenges readers to question the assumptions that shape their understanding of nations and identities. By revealing how political borders can divide people who share common histories and cultures, Amitav Ghosh exposes the fragile foundations of nationalism. At the same time, he celebrates the power of imagination, memory, and empathy to transcend these divisions.

Ultimately, The Shadow Lines invites readers to reconsider the meaning of belonging in a world shaped by both separation and connection. Its enduring relevance lies in its reminder that the lines dividing humanity are often nothing more than shadows—ephemeral, shifting, and ultimately incapable of containing the vast complexity of human experience.

(Dr Mousumi Mullick, Assistant Professor of English, Fakir Mohan Autonomous College, Balasore, Odisha)

Raja Rao's Kanthapura: Blending Storytelling with Political Consciousness

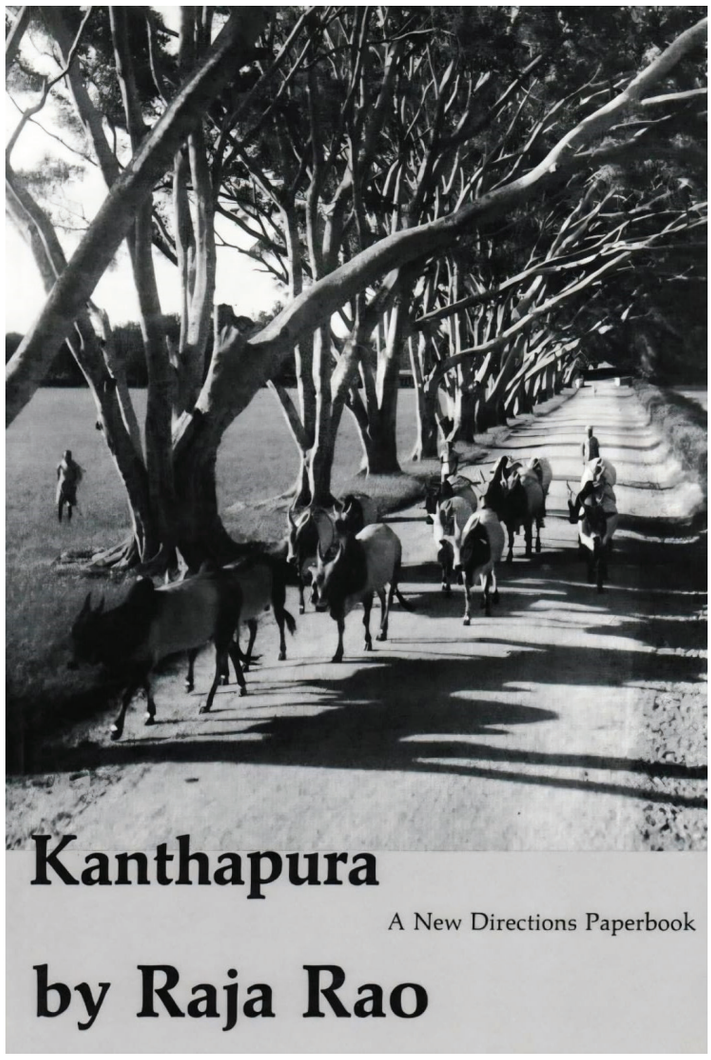
Dr. Kamal Sarkar

Kanthapura is one of the most significant and influential novels in Indian English literature. Written by the distinguished Indian writer and philosopher Raja Rao, the novel stands as a remarkable literary experiment that blends traditional Indian storytelling with modern political consciousness. It portrays the impact of the Indian freedom movement on a small South Indian village and demonstrates how national ideology penetrates even the most remote corners of society.

At its core, Kanthapura is not merely a political narrative but a deeply cultural and spiritual exploration of India during the era of anti-colonial resistance. The novel reflects the influence of the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, whose philosophy of non-violence and civil disobedience transformed Indian society during the struggle against British rule. Through the lens of a humble village community, Raja Rao illustrates how the Gandhian movement awakened political consciousness among ordinary people and redefined notions of justice, sacrifice, and collective identity.

What makes Kanthapura especially unique is its narrative technique. The story is told by an elderly village woman named Achakka, whose oral storytelling style resembles the traditional Indian Harikatha form. Through her voice, the reader encounters a living chronicle of village life—rich with myths, customs, rituals, and social hierarchies—while simultaneously witnessing the dramatic transformation brought about by the nationalist movement. Thus, Kanthapura becomes both a literary masterpiece and a historical document that captures the emotional and spiritual awakening of rural India during the independence struggle.

The novel is set in the fictional South Indian village of Kanthapura, nestled among hills and fields. The village is organized according to traditional caste structures and is dominated by religious beliefs and customs. At the heart of the village stands the temple of the goddess Kenchamma, whom the villagers regard as their protector and guardian. Life in Kanthapura initially appears peaceful and unchanging. The villagers engage in farming, rituals, and social gatherings, following traditions that have existed for generations. However, this seemingly static world begins to change with the arrival of nationalist ideas inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi.



The catalyst for this transformation is a young Brahmin named Moorthy. Educated and idealistic, Moorthy becomes deeply influenced by Gandhian philosophy and dedicates himself to spreading the message of non-violent resistance against British colonial rule. Moorthy begins organizing meetings, encouraging villagers to spin khadi cloth, boycott British goods, and reject social injustices such as caste discrimination. His activism gradually mobilizes the people of Kanthapura and instills a sense of collective purpose.

However, Moorthy's actions also provoke hostility from powerful local authorities, particularly the British-supported coffee plantation owner Bade Khan. The colonial administration perceives the Gandhian movement as a threat and responds with repression. As the movement intensifies, the villagers face arrests, violence, and social upheaval. Women play a crucial role in sustaining the resistance, led by the courageous Rangamma, who educates and inspires others about the nationalist cause.

Ultimately, the British authorities brutally suppress the movement. Many villagers are imprisoned, beaten, or forced to flee. The once-thriving village of Kanthapura is devastated, and its inhabitants are scattered. Despite this tragic ending, the spirit of resistance remains alive. The story concludes with the villagers continuing to hold faith in the ideals of freedom and justice.

One of the central themes of Kanthapura is the influence of Gandhian ideology on rural India. The teachings of Mahatma Gandhi—including non-violence, truth, self-reliance, and civil disobedience—serve as the moral foundation of the villagers' struggle. Moorthy becomes a devoted follower of Gandhi and attempts to implement Gandhian principles in the village. He promotes the spinning of khadi cloth as a symbol of economic independence and encourages villagers to reject British authority. The novel demonstrates how Gandhi's message reached even remote communities and inspired ordinary people to participate in the freedom movement. Through Moorthy's leadership, the villagers develop a sense of national identity that transcends local boundaries.

While the novel celebrates the awakening of political consciousness, it also explores the tension between tradition and change. Kanthapura is deeply rooted in ancient customs, particularly the caste system. Social hierarchy dictates interactions between different groups within the village. Moorthy challenges these norms by advocating equality and encouraging interaction between castes. This radical shift disrupts established social structures and provokes resistance from conservative villagers. Through this conflict, Raja Rao illustrates the difficulty of social reform in a society bound by centuries of tradition. Yet he also suggests that political liberation must be accompanied by social transformation.

One of the most striking aspects of Kanthapura is the significant role played by women. Characters like Rangamma and Ratna emerge as powerful figures within the nationalist movement. They organize protests, educate villagers, and demonstrate extraordinary courage in the face of colonial repression. Rangamma, in particular, acts as an intellectual leader who interprets Gandhian ideas for the villagers. Her speeches blend mythology with political ideology, making complex ideas accessible to ordinary people. The novel thus highlights how the independence movement empowered women and allowed them to participate actively in public life.

Raja Rao skillfully integrates Indian mythology into the narrative, creating a symbolic parallel between ancient legends and contemporary political struggles. The villagers frequently interpret the freedom movement through mythological frameworks. For example, the conflict between the villagers and colonial authorities is often compared to the battle between divine forces and demons in Hindu epics. The goddess Kenchamma serves as a spiritual symbol of protection and resistance. Her presence reinforces the idea that the struggle for independence is not merely political but also spiritual. Through these mythological references, Rao connects the modern nationalist movement with India's cultural heritage.

Another key theme of the novel is the brutality of colonial rule. The British authorities, represented by figures such as Bade Khan, respond to the villagers' resistance with harsh repression. Protesters are beaten, imprisoned, and humiliated. These scenes reveal the stark imbalance of power between colonial rulers and rural communities. Yet the villagers' willingness to endure

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THE TWO SIDES

Ambika Ananth

Sometime back I read about a desperate mother who lodged a complaint with the police that her five-month-old baby was abducted from a footpath she was living on. She was an alms seeker and had no place for the safekeeping of her baby. Despite being so helpless, so economically backward, she fought tooth and nail with the world — the world where traffickers abound, where babies are stolen and sold.

Thankfully, her DNA matched with the baby she claimed as her own among the four infants traced by the police. The blood samples were drawn in the presence of a magistrate and the DNA test was conducted.

This real life story proves that despite not being aware of any legal process or not being in a position to engage a lawyer, a mother, though she may just be an alms seeker, will not let go of her baby under any circumstances.

The motherly instinct and love for progeny is highly natural and universal; I saw an example recently in my own garden.

I have been seeing a sparrow build its nest in various places in our garden, only to find its eggs and tiny fledglings being stolen and eaten away by a crow. Every time seeing that happen, I used to feel helplessly frustrated at the mother-bird's plight and her screeches of anguish.

Then, one day, I saw the bird find a very secure place to build its nest and protect her babies — right behind Maa Durga's idol hung high up on the wall near our main door.

The crow tried desperately to reach the nest, but failed miserably. Now, I hear tiny voices chirping in the nest above and see the mother proudly flying in and out.

A mother's instincts are the strongest, and her love for her offspring, the greatest!

On the other side of the picture is the uncaring attitude of some children towards their mother. I remember the case of an aged mother who lost her eyesight due to neglected high blood glucose levels over a long time and how her children would lock her up in the house to go to work, only to return late in the evening or night. They wanted to get the good name that instead of keeping their mother in a facility or an old age home, they had kept her in their house.

Is this any better than being in an old age home, where probably better care could have been provided to that blind mother and some human contact and interaction could take place? Why do children feel burdened to take care of their ageing mothers or parents ?

It is said, "A mother/ father is a promise from God that you will have a friend forever," then why treat them like adversaries in their sunset years? Fie upon such children.

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suffering reflects the moral strength of their cause. The novel therefore portrays the freedom movement as both a political struggle and a moral battle against injustice.

One of the most distinctive features of Kanthapura is its narrative style. The story is told by Achakka, an elderly woman whose voice resembles the oral storytelling traditions of rural India. Achakka's narration is characterized by long, flowing sentences and vivid descriptions. Her storytelling often includes digressions, repetitions, and emotional expressions that reflect the rhythms of spoken language. Raja Rao deliberately adapts English to capture the essence of Indian speech patterns. In the novel's famous preface, he argues that English must be reshaped to express Indian sensibilities. As a result, the language of Kanthapura feels uniquely Indian despite being written in English. This stylistic innovation has had a lasting influence on Indian English literature.

The characters in Kanthapura represent different aspects of Indian society during the freedom struggle. Moorthy embodies the idealistic nationalist who dedicates himself entirely to Gandhian principles. His moral integrity and commitment inspire others, though his rigid adherence to ideology sometimes isolates him from traditional society. Rangamma represents intellectual leadership and courage. Her knowledge and determination make her a guiding force within the village.

Ratna symbolizes youthful rebellion and transformation. As a young widow, she challenges social restrictions and actively participates in political activism. Achakka, as the narrator, represents the collective memory of the village. Through her voice, the reader experiences the emotional and cultural richness of rural life. Together, these characters create a vivid portrait of a community undergoing profound change.

Raja Rao employs numerous symbols throughout the novel. The village of Kanthapura itself symbolizes India. Just as the village faces oppression and transformation, the entire nation is struggling for independence. The spinning wheel represents economic self-reliance and resistance to colonial exploitation. The river Himavathy symbolizes continuity and resilience, flowing steadily despite the upheavals around it. These symbols enrich the narrative and reinforce the novel's broader themes.

Kanthapura is deeply rooted in the historical context of the Indian independence movement. The events depicted in the novel reflect real political campaigns such as the Civil Disobedience Movement initiated by Mahatma Gandhi. During this period, Gandhi encouraged Indians to boycott British goods, refuse cooperation with colonial authorities, and adopt non-violent protest methods. By portraying these events within the microcosm of a village, Raja Rao demonstrates how national politics affected everyday life.

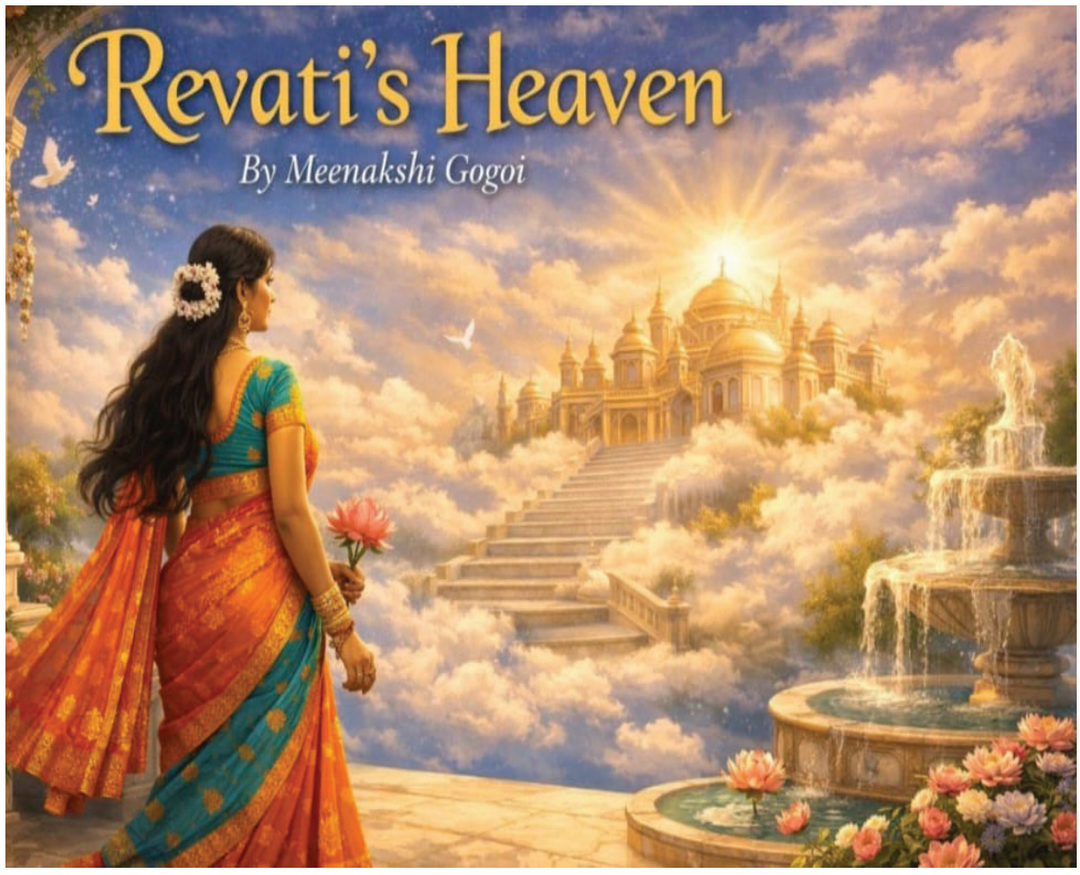
Kanthapura occupies a central place in the development of Indian English fiction. Alongside works by writers such as Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan, the novel helped establish Indian literature in English as a powerful medium for expressing national identity. Raja Rao's innovative narrative style and philosophical depth distinguish Kanthapura from many other political novels of its time. The novel continues to be widely studied for its exploration of nationalism, cultural identity, and narrative experimentation.

Kanthapura is far more than a simple story about a village involved in the freedom struggle. It is a profound literary work that captures the emotional, cultural, and spiritual dimensions of India's quest for independence. Through the voice of Achakka, Raja Rao transforms the history of a small community into a powerful epic of resistance and transformation. The novel portrays how ordinary villagers, inspired by the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi, found the courage to challenge colonial oppression and redefine their identities.

Raja Rao's blending of mythology, politics, and oral storytelling creates a narrative that is both culturally rooted and universally meaningful. The novel demonstrates that the struggle for freedom was not confined to political leaders or urban centers but was embraced by countless rural communities across India. Ultimately, Kanthapura celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the power of collective action. Even though the village is destroyed and its people scattered, the ideals of justice, equality, and independence endure. For readers and scholars alike, the novel remains a timeless reminder that the history of a nation is written not only by great leaders but also by the courage and sacrifices of ordinary people.

(Dr Kamal Sarkar, Assistant Professor and HOD, Department of English, Dum Dum Motijheel Rabindra Mahavidyalaya and Vice President, Kolkata Indian American Society)

Meenakshi Gogoi



The tall peach trees, covered with thick bunches of tiny pinkish blossoms, surrounding Revati's heaven, her 'home' on earth, adorned the beauty of her house in her village. Spring's arrival was a true blessing for her home, with blooming reddish-white petunias, the sweet fragrance of roses, gardenia, and marigolds, fluttering in gay and twisted blue-bell creepers crawling on the bamboo gate and the fences around. The tall, thick starfruit, mango, coconut and gooseberry trees, along with banana plants, looked like luscious green towers stationed at certain points in her abundant garden. Revati's small house would glimmer under the sunshine with a shining tin roof overhead. Her home was a peaceful abode where she had spent her childhood and adolescent days before marriage. After her broken marriage and being separated from her abusive spouse, Revati had been staying in her home past a few years. Married in her youthful 20s, Revati had experienced a troubled marital life in a span of five difficult years. Those terrible years of agony, anxiety, when she had been mentally and physically tortured by her spouse and in-laws, erased all her happiness and ruined her peace of mind. The constant bickering over not bearing an offspring to carry forward the Bhuyan family's name was hard-hitting for Revati.

One day, her father went to her in-laws' place and caught her being beaten by her spouse. Her father was horrified to find his delicate daughter in such a pitiable condition. Burst with angst, he slapped his son-in-law and forcibly snatched away Revati. To prevent the argument from escalating, Revati's mother-in-law angrily stood from her chair and said, "Good, you came. Your daughter is of no use to us. She could not bear a child in five years. Take her home." Her spouse, too, showed no interest in keeping her and left the house immediately, riding his motorbike. Revati could not utter anything and remained a silent spectator. She was devastated inside and painfully looked down with teary eyes. Her father stood stiff and had already decided to take her home. With a hoarse tone, he asked, "Revati, why didn't you tell me before about this monster? You can't live here anymore. Let's go."

Revati sobbed and somehow gained control. With her head bowed, biting an edge of the Chador, she went to her room and hurriedly packed her clothes. She took Maa Durga's framed photo, which she had brought with her on the wedding day, and soon they left the house.

Revati reached home and took a few weeks to come to terms with herself there. She knew she meant everything to her old parents and that she had to be strong to restart her life. Her mother broke down the day Revati returned home. She was at the gate when they arrived home that evening. Her mother could feel things weren't right with Revati, but waited for things to get sorted out. That evening, Revati tightly hugged her mother in pain with a breaking, sobbing voice. She poured her heart out, and her parents could only listen to their emotionally broken daughter. Her mother held back her tears and, softly putting her hand on Revati's head, she said, "Majoni, things happen for good. Your father has done the right thing. Forget your bad days now. Live your life forgetting the wounds." That was a long night. A terrible night to haunt the three of them all their lives.

A village High school teacher, Monalisha baideo, who was close to Revati's family, helped her through the divorce process. Within a year, Revati got divorced and was relieved from her abusive marriage. Her parents were her pillars of support who stayed with her through her testing times. The village women gossiped about her broken marriage and laughed at her stupidity for leaving her spouse's home and staying with her parents. One day, her school friend Purvasha met her, who was visiting her parent's home. Revati was happy to see her, but her happiness didn't last long when Purvasha, too, behaved like the other village women. Purvasha had envied Revati's good looks and polite mannerisms since childhood, who got a fine opportunity to laugh at Revati.

Purvasha said, "I am aware of your broken marriage. It is sad to see you living with your parents again. Village people are gossiping about you." Purvasha, showing off her new mekhela-chador and the pretty earrings, said, "You see, my husband gifted me all these. I am so happy and lucky. Aren't they beautiful?" Revati softly replied, "Yes, beautiful. Indeed, you are lucky. I am happy for you. I have to go now to our farm." And calmly, Revati walked to her farm at the back of her house. Purvasha, with a crooked smile, left Revati's house.

Time passed, and the behaviour of the village women and others changed, seeing Revati's determination to rebuild her life amid the stones that life had thrown at her. She worked to keep herself busy in her father's rice and vegetable fields. She would start her day early, working in the fields growing seasonal crops and veggies. In the evening, Revati would draw her mandala paintings taught by Monalisha baideo.

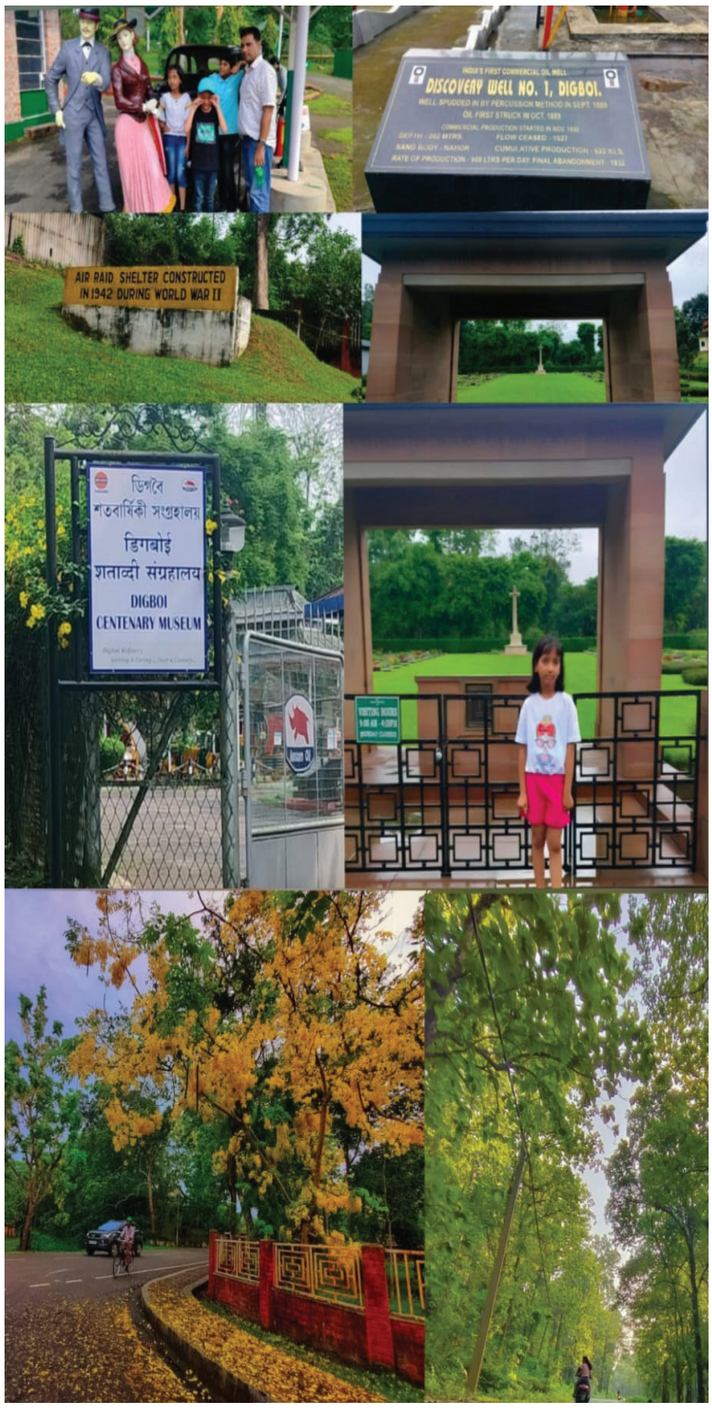
After dinner, at night, when the sky fell asleep and the sounds of crickets and foxes' cries from the woods, Revati would remain awake, thinking about what had happened to her so early in life. How a jovial, pretty, soft-spoken Revati turned into a woman of ridicule for others. She recalled how she loved her spouse, and everything was so lovely at the beginning of her married life. She remembered her spouse angrily stopped her from taking him to the hospital, as he was sure the problem of not having children was not with him, but with her. Revati could sense and observe the drastic changes in her spouse. He proved to be a typical conservative man, suspecting his childless wife of being the reason for everything wrong happening in his life. Revati's love and respect for her spouse diminished over time, and she wanted to end the marriage. But she was emotional and fearful of expressing her feelings about her failed marriage to her parents. Every night, she would chant Maa Durga's mantra to gain the strength to fight her grievances. It was destined that her father discovered her miserable condition, and she was saved. She promised herself to stay strong and earn her living growing and selling their farm produce.

One day, Monalisha baideo asked her to exhibit her mandala paintings during the children's day mela at school. She could earn from the sale of her paintings and become known for her craft. Revati happily consented to display her paintings. The children's day came, and Revati set up her small stall among other stalls in the school's compound. During the exhibition, a local NGO member, Mrinalini, spotted her collection and politely asked her to conduct workshops for women from nearby villages to help them earn a living. Revati agreed and went home with a joyful face. Her parents felt content. That night, Revati fell asleep peacefully in her heaven, her 'home,' thinking of a new life ahead.

(Meenakshi Gogoi writes short stories/fiction and loves to read non-fiction and biographies. Her Short Stories are published in The Hills Times, Muse India, Setu Magazine, The Mocking Owl Roost Magazine, The Wild Word Magazine, Prachya Review, Otherwise Engaged: The Literary and Arts Journal, Shiuli Magazine, Double Speak Magazine, Sunkissed Short Summer Romances: An Anthology by Red Polka Books, and Creatures of Habit: An Odd to Oddity (An Anthology published by the Culture Cult Magazine and Press). She is passionate about nature photography and gardening.

A Trip to Digboi, Asia's First Oil Township

Prarthana Gogoi



It was early June, the heavy monsoon rain washed off the dust particles layered on the zigzag road of Digboi. Gungun and Mayur are visiting this town for the second time, their mother said they visited Digboi earlier when Mayur was two years old and Gungun was five. So, Gungun had little memories of that visit, only they had some photographs of that tour. This time they were accompanied by Swapnali Jethai (aunt) and her family.

Gungun has read in her social science text that Digboi houses Asia's first oil refinery and the first commercial oil well. Her mother even now and then said to them that India, our country cannot boast of its oil heritage without Digboi. It has its world's oldest operated oil refinery. So, they had a dream to visit Digboi and explore the first oil township of Asia.

When they stepped into the oil town, they were mesmerised to see some yellow flowers blooming in abundance. This time Swapnali Jethai's husband, Jewel uncle is driving the car. Their younger son Krish is also with them. Gungun's mother said the yellow flowers are Sonnaru phool (Indian laburnum) that blooms post spring and it is one of the most beautiful seasonal flowers of Assam along with Azar, Nahar, Radhasura and Krishnachura.

They made their way through the shower of yellow petals of sonnaru scattered throughout the roads. Their hearts leapt with joy to see the pea-like yellow flowers bloom in long pendulous chains. The trees are also the haunts of the birds, their sharp chirpings are heard from a distance. They could hear the singing of cukoos too. Gungun's mother whispers–"oh! the soonaru phool. So resplendently colourful". When her mother praises the landscape, Gungun knows her mother sleeps in memories. When she spots any showers of seasonal flowers of Assam, she halts by them and clicks photographs.

After clicking some photographs of the laburnum, they moved towards the Digboi Centenary Oil Museum. This museum was set up as a part of the centenary celebration of the Refinery. It houses the artefacts, exhibits, souvenirs used by the Assam Oil Company and other memories related to the establishment of Asia's first refinery, Digboi in 1901. It preserves the oil heritage of Digboi through various displays, murals, photographs, and well-preserved genuine machinery used in oil drilling and refining.

The kids explored the real locomotive that was used to transport goods and people back in those times.They saw a life-size replica of an old petrol station and their mother introduced them to the vintage cars and Lambretta Scooters of the bygone era. They clicked photographs sitting and standing inside the locomotive train and standing at Asia's oldest oil well.

While exploring the inside of museum, Mayur asked her mother, "Assam is full of jungles then, how the British entered into dense forests." Their mother replied, "They were explorers and brave and courageous too." Krish also asked lots of questions to his parents. Swapnali Jethai told them that Assam's first rail line was Dibru Sadiya Railway (a 65 km metre gauge rail line from Dibrugarh to Margherita) constructed by the Assam Railways and Trading Company primarily to transport coal and tea.

Gungun's mother asked the kids–"Do you know how the British came to know that there was oil in Assam?" The children replied, "No, we don't." She continued that the discovery of crude oil in Assam was somewhat of an accident. It is said that oil was discovered while constructing a railway line by the Assam Railway and Trading Company. The elephant's feet were struck with oil that was used to carry the loads in the jungle. In the late 19th century crude oil was discovered and the first oil well of India was dug up in 1889. Some say Digboi gets its name from the command shouted by the British engineer W.L Lake to the workers to explore oil saying--"Dig boy Dig".

The best experience of the kids on the Digboi trip was that inside the campus of the museum they noticed a bunker used in the Second World War. People hid under it to save themselves from Japanese bombers. They were not allowed to go near it. The kids talked about bunkers, and they even heard their parents talking about it at the recent Indo Pak War after the Baisaran valley attack in Kashmir.

At noon, the sun is shining brightly. It is very common in Assam, the wet leaves of trees are welcomed by the sudden blaze of sun. They moved to a restaurant and had a lip smacking lunch savouring some local Assamese dishes--Masar tenga and aloo pitika. It is Gungun's favourite, but Mayur does not like it. He likes spicy chicken. Krish also likes local Assamese foods.

Their next destination is Digboi War Cemetery. It is located in a peaceful village in lush green surroundings. When they reached, the place was wet in the rain. The Indian and British soldiers who had lost their lives in the Second World War are buried there. The cemetery is well maintained. They explored the names of the soldiers, they could recognize the names of Indian soldiers and paid respect to all martyrs.

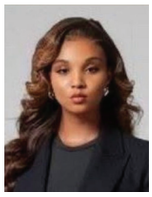
Gungun's mother said India took part in the Second World War as it was a British colony then and its soldiers and resources were used by the British Government then. The young soldiers lost their lives here far away from their home fighting against the Japanese soldiers. The kids could not smile, they felt sad for the soldiers. They hate war, they see lots of videos of war on mobile. Mayur never buys a toy gun and he hates guns. His mother told them that war not only kills people, it kills love and brotherhood.

At last, they moved towards Digboi Lake and Park. Jewel uncle gave them some tasty chocolates. They smiled in happiness when they saw the hilly slopes of the park. Monsoon flowers were blooming. For one hour they explored, sitting on the bench and running inside. At last they entered into the oil field granting permission from the authority. On reaching the Ridge point, they had a nice view of the entire Digboi town. The kids are told not to shout and to be cautious while standing on a hilly road.

In their Digboi tour they had missed only the Digboi Golf course, one of the finest and oldest golf courses of Assam. Before driving back to their home, they ate Rasmallai at a famous sweet selling restaurant in the heart of the town. On their way back home, they crossed the beautiful green tea gardens. Mayur only thought of the bunker and the colourful locomotive.

(Prarthana Gogoi is a teacher and popular writer in national dailies.)

Why We Call Them Roses



Dibang Mary

The path through the garden was narrow, worn by quiet footsteps and time. The morning air was cool, the kind that settles gently on your skin before the sun remembers its job. Dew clung to the leaves like tiny glass beads, trembling whenever a soft breeze passed through. It was the kind of morning most people rushed past without noticing.

But today, something made me stop.

A small rose bush leaned slightly over the path, its branches heavy with red blossoms. Not the perfect, polished roses you see in flower shops..these were a little wild. A few petals were torn. Some leaves had small holes. One flower drooped slightly as if it had grown tired of holding itself up.

Still, they were beautiful.

I bent closer and took a slow sniff at the roses. The scent was stronger than I expected, rich, deep, almost stubborn. It filled my chest and lingered there, like it had something to prove. For a moment, the world shrank down to just that breath.

It's strange how something so simple can interrupt everything.

Life rarely pauses. It pushes, pulls, demands attention. There are always things to do, messages to answer, problems waiting their turn. Even when you try to slow down, your mind keeps moving like a train that forgot where the brakes are.

But that single breath of roses forced the train to stop.

The scent carried something old with it, something familiar. Memories moved quietly through my mind, the way sunlight moves through tree branches slow and gentle.

I remembered a small garden behind my grandmother's house. It wasn't much. Just a few plants, a crooked wooden fence, and roses that grew wherever they wanted. She never seemed bothered by their stubbornness. If anything, she liked it.

"Flowers don't rush," she used to say while watering them in the early morning. "They grow when they're ready."

As a child, those words meant nothing to me. I was too busy chasing insects or climbing trees to care about the philosophy of roses.

But standing there now, years later, breathing in that scent, the words returned.

Flowers don't rush.

The world teaches the opposite. Move faster. Work harder. Do more. Be more. If you slow down, you fall behind. If you stop, even for a moment, someone else takes your place.

The pressure is constant, invisible but heavy. It sits on people's shoulders until they forget what quiet feels like.

Maybe that's why the roses felt so powerful.

They were growing exactly where they wanted, exactly how they wanted. No deadlines. No expectations. No race.

Just growth.

I watched the breeze move through the garden. Leaves shifted, branches swayed gently, and the roses nodded as if they were having their own silent conversation.

One petal loosened and drifted down, landing softly on the path.

Not dramatic. Not tragic.

Just part of the cycle.

It made me realize how much energy people spend fighting time. We fear losing things.youth, opportunities, moments. We hold tightly to everything as if life were something that could spill out of our hands.

But the roses weren't afraid of losing petals.

They bloomed fully anyway.

Another breath of the fragrance filled the air, softer this time. The scent was fading slightly, dissolving into the morning like a secret being gently carried away.

I straightened up and looked around the garden again.

Nothing extraordinary was happening. No grand moment. No sudden revelation that would change the world.

Just quiet life continuing.

A bird landed on a nearby branch, tilting its head curiously. Somewhere farther down the path, someone laughed. The sun climbed a little higher, warming the tops of the flowers.

Ordinary things.

Yet they felt strangely important.

It occurred to me that maybe life's strongest messages don't arrive loudly. They don't announce themselves with flashing signs or dramatic speeches. Instead, they appear in small moments..a scent, a breeze, a pause in the middle of a busy day.

A simple reminder hidden inside a flower.

Slow down.

Look around.

Breathe.

The rose bush rustled softly again, almost like it was satisfied with its work. Its message had been delivered, whether I liked it or not.

I took one last sniff at the roses. The fragrance was still there, though lighter now, fading into the warm air. It wasn't meant to last forever. That was part of what made it meaningful.

Some moments exist only briefly.

And maybe that's the point.

I stepped back onto the path and continued walking, the garden stretching quietly ahead of me. The world outside would still be loud. The rush, the noise, the endless list of things waiting to be done would still be there.

But something inside me had shifted, just slightly.

All because I stopped for a moment… and took a sniff at the roses.

And in that fragile, fleeting breath, I finally understood why we call them roses.

(Dibang Mary is a Multi -Awardee Nigerian writer of fiction and a poet. Her "The Children are Ours "was featured in Barcelona from Spain. She is internationally published)

Loyalty — The Greatest Virtue of The Human Heart

Gulhayio Xabibullo

In today's fast-paced and noisy world, people value many things: wealth, status, and comfort. However, there is a virtue that can neither be bought with money nor forced upon someone. That virtue is loyalty.

Loyalty is not only about remaining faithful to a person or a task. It is a feeling that comes from a person's inner world, upbringing, and the purity of the heart. A loyal person keeps their word in any situation, does not abandon a friend in difficult times, and fulfills their duties with honesty and responsibility.

If we look at history, one of the most important qualities that unites great people is loyalty. They remained in the pages of history because they were loyal to their people, their homeland, and their beliefs. A truly loyal person never places their own interests above the happiness and well-being of others.

Today, however, it sometimes seems that the value of loyalty is being forgotten. Some people quickly change their words and even their friends when personal interests appear. But we should never forget that where there is no loyalty, there can be no trust. And a society without trust cannot be strong or stable.

A loyal person is the pillar of society. Friends trust such a person, families rely on them, and society itself depends on people with such strong moral qualities. This is because a loyal person always lives with honesty, integrity, and conscience.

Therefore, loyalty is not just a simple word. It is a great virtue that determines a person's true value. If each of us preserves this virtue in our hearts, our society will become stronger, more united, and more trustworthy.

(Abduqahhorova Gulhayo Xabibullo qizi was born on July 8, 2006, in Shaxand village, To'raqo'rg'on district, Namangan region. She is currently a second-year student majoring in Uzbek Language Philology at the University of Business and Science in Namangan.)

APPEASE OR CEASE

Dr Jernail S Anand

The best writing is
That takes you round and round
Fills books after books
Stilll leaves you wondering
What it was all about.

The writer knows it for sure
That the more effort
You make
To gather bits from the scatter
The better it will be rated

I have seen writers
Lost in the maze of their words,
Come back to the point
At which they had started
Without saying anything tangible.

There is no sanctity of words
They are dicey like men
Start appeasing
Whosoever approaches them
With a sledge hammer.

(Dr Jernail Singh Anand, with an opus of nearly 200 books, is Laureate of the Seneca, Charter of Morava, Franz Kafka and Maxim Gorky awards. His name adorns the Poets' Rock in Serbia. Anand is a towering literary figure whose work embodies a rare fusion of creativity, intellect, and moral vision.)

Throbing Vibes

Dr Dipika Bhatt

Today I brushed the canvas of my love
With the bunch of red roses I welcome my dearest
Butterflies spray the fragrance of different flowers upon him
Clouds shot a sweet canopy for ours
Sky polished the earth blue in valentine months hue
Sun glitters on water and sprinkles smile upon our portrait
Trees with the flow of air sings a tunic lyric for us
Birds praying for true bond of soulmates
The moon is waiting for us to make our stars more bright and prosperous in it's milky aura

(Dr. Dipika Bhatt is working as Assistant Professor in Department of English, HVM (P.G.) College, Raisi, Laksar, Haridwar, Uttrakhand.

Dr. Dipika is a bi-lingual poet in English and Hindi, writer and academic with over presented papers in different National, International conferences and seminars in different universities.)

Once in Rain

Mustafa Abdulmalek Al-Sumaidi

My heart harbours a pulse
that had experienced joy before I did.
Once in rain, it wandered through a grove,
and forgot–unintentionally– how to return.

Whenever I think of reclaiming it,
a gentle breeze wafts to me
from the thick intertwined limbs,
telling me of a shade that had become
a tent of rest,
and of velvety wingbeats
of cooing doves filling the sky
in all mornings.

In my chest now, a hollow
runs unseen within the desolate part.
I place my hand upon my pocket,
groping for a cactus growing beneath–
though I find nothing
save stillness, asleep,
snoring in the deep recesses,
murmuring of rain
that has dried on high
for more than a season.

Perhaps the heart,
when it grows weary of verdancy,
returns–leaving space enough
for all this silence.

(Mustafa Abdulmalek Al-Sumaidi is a Yemen-based academic researcher, poet, haikuist, and literary translator. He has published numerous poems and translated Nature by Ralph Waldo Emerson into Arabic. He has also translated many Arabic literary poems both classical and modern into English and Mandarin, contributing significantly to cross-cultural literary exchange.)

HAPPY WOMEN'S DAY

Dr Perwaiz Shaharyar

Why only one Day is the International Women's Day
I think, everyday is the Universal Women's Day

The loves of a woman have made this world so beautiful
God has bestowed the power of creation, which sustains her always

A woman feeds her progeny even before the birth in her womb
Like God feeds all living beings whether a worm covered into a stone

God wants to protect her tender body by covering them in veil
Like God Almighty too, never comes out to show and reveal

Women's beauty lies in her compassionate service to humanity
That's why Teresa is considered as a great Mother of empathy

A woman is a woman because she sacrifices more than a deity
The world is the fruits of humanity and women are their roots

Love her, respect her and serve a woman as much as you can
If she dies, you cannot do anything good, except the repentance

Women are unique because of their services to humanity
We must protect them from the evil hands of devils and monsters

Every fraction of the time, women are facing heinous crimes
Today, make a pledge to save her modesty from further declines

(Dr Perwaiz Shaharyar is a distinguished multilingual poet, critic and short story writer and consultant editor NCERT, New Delhi, India)

A leaf that day....A leaf that night

Sonika Kaur

A leaf that day
Danced to the sound of the wing
In the golden shower
Washed in a new green dress
Silvering in the moonshine
A leaf that night.

A leaf that day,
Stepped into resilience to the traffic chaos
In the middle of the city
A little swing on the branch
Found peace in silence
A leaf that night.

A leaf that day
Dressed in dark green dews
Joyous on the clouds roaring
Still afresh when the fireball dipped
Remained loyal to the branch
A leaf that night

A leaf that day
Again, drenched in the music of rain
Soaked in the smell of the soil
Still to the branch
Pure as a night shine
A leaf that night

A leaf that day
Now wore a pale dress
Stiff to be crushed, hugged the loyal branch
Trying to sleep in the restless autumn
Dry and exhausted
A leaf that night

A leaf that day
Lifelessly lies beneath its loyal
Waiting to be swayed by the chilly wind
Transported to another world
Left space for a new green
A leaf that night

(Sonika Kaur is an author, poet who is passionate about exploring and studying subjects of language and literature. She contributes opinions and research through articles, blogs, case studies, and various other forms of literature representation. She designs content strategies for brands and businesses in both B2B and B2C categories, globally. She has over 14 years of experience in content development in the global digital market. Her research work strengthens her writings with diverse angles of approach.)

Separation

Dr Ruchida Barman

I separated from you-body, mind and soul
I separated from you complete and whole

It was inevitable, It was sure
It had to happen I was sure.
I had to do this to keep my self – respect
Or else there would be scar on my aspect
My inner self was hurt, I was choked.
I had to breathe, if I had to live.
When the point came to choose between living and suffocating,
I chose to live.
My decision was simple and clear,
You and I were never near

(Professor Ruchida Barman is Head Dept of English JECRC University Rajasthan and an eminent writer)

I Don't Know

Biswanath Kar

I do'nt know for whom I am writing poems
In the ink of the colours of different flowers.
I don't know for whom I'm in sleepless night,
Losing myself in myself in silvery moonlight.

I am designing a memorial pillar of my love,
Soaking all night in essence of spring to have
Your intimate smile of spring and its rhythms,
Drawing your loveable picture in my dry eyes.

I do'nt know who you are nesting in my sky
In the shy smiles of breeze of evening of thy,
Putting new dreams in my open eyes' port—
All the desires of flowers bloom in my heart.

Calling again and again to the twinkling stars
In the scatterd fragrance of their soft smiles,
I do'nt know whom am I for writing all night,
For whom creating good spaces in my heart.

(Biswanath Kar is a well know poet from Cuttack, Odisha, India)

Summer Rain

Khursheed Wani

I too dance in the summer rain
Beneath the starry night,
where a river of firebrands flows
Here and there,
And a whisper of cold breeze takes flight.

I too jump in the puddles,
Across the streets of light,
where a curtain hides a series of memories,
And a call echoes –
A distant sea's rumble.

(Khursheed Wani is a teacher, poet, and author from Kashmir, India. He is the author of 'The Seraphic Garland', has co-authored few poetry books, and his work has appeared in International magazines and Anthologies. He received the International Academic Award for Contemporary Literature Lucius Annaeus Seneca 'Prize De Merit' award for his creative poetry held at Bari in Italy. He holds PG in Pol. Science and BLit.)

MOON BE A WITNESS

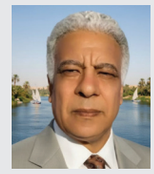
Maria Kolovou Roumelioti

My moon, who stands high and shines like a mirror,
all that I will tell you, bring down to earth:
My husband sent me wood to cut
and when I finish the work… stones to load!...
I could not turn back from the unfortunate conversation
the riddle of the night early to solve…
I take a scythe and a rope with me in the bag
and I set off towards the place that leads to the ravine.
I was moving forward and he was following me, behind…
but, with what he had in mind, I could not touch!…
and so like the lamb that goes to the slaughter and does not bleat,
so I also moved forward to the scythe of Charon!...
When I arrived at the grove and began to chop
he grabbed me by the neck to watch you!....
I was fighting in his hands lest I even breathe
and my unjust ruin, I am chatting with you .

Moon, be a witness and bear witness to him
my lifeless body, upright, stand up again!
I have left my child asleep in his cradle
I am soaked in my milk… He will be hungry!....

(Maria Kolovou Roumelioti is a Greek poet popular all over Europe and Asia . She is Multi Awardee poet and her poems are published in international magazines)

The Sea Does Not Nurse Its Children



Abdel Latif Moubarak

Your land cast you out,
So you settled on the wing of a poem.
Perhaps its letters won't mislead… the one who failed you.
A homeland at the gate of hell, even if it seemed so—
Abandon it, for it wasn't worthy.

The opposing trunk of the palm tree wasn't shaken
So that ripe promises, like dates, might fall into your hand,
for the waves of a sea
whose cruel desires perhaps
tempted it…
to kill you.

Your land cast you out.

The breast of Arabism was no longer enough
to nurse you
a dream, shadowed by darkness,
its modesty within the borders.

The lofty ones accepted exile
with a dawn of sorrow that neglected you.
And you, who
took from your priest's hand
the ember of preservation for the eternity that
will not betray you—

you believed those dwelling beside your soul,
and you were burned.

Destiny did not will it for you.

And it was as if they were the piece of candy, my child,
that fell from your mouth.

The sea does not nurse its children…

Sleep, my beloved.
It is a paradise for eternity, loftier
than a false nectar
we smell like a grave, its dwellers unconcerned.

And the lamb concealed in its lips
a song for the sorrow of your childhood.

Sleep, my beloved.

It is no longer from within history
that your innocence is condemned
or questioned.

This is its nature:
The sea does not nurse its children.

(Abdel Latif Moubarak Is an Egyptian poet who writes poetry using classical Arabic and Egyptian vernacular. He received a Bachelor of Law from Ain Shams University. He was one of the most important poets of the 1980s and won the shield of excellence and creativity from the East Academy 2021.He won the Sergio Camellini International Award in Italy in 2025. He won first place in the "Divinamente Donna" competition in Italy 2026 .Excellence and Creativity Shield from the East Academy (2021). * Sergio Camellini International Award in Italy (2025).He won first place in the "Divinamente Donna" competition in Italy (2026))

The setting Sun

Sushant Thapa

Come to take me away
Into the distant land
Of unreal eyes
Where I can learn to look,
And not just see.
I will keep the fire glowing.
The sun will set
With a glow,
We will celebrate
A day of togetherness
Before we depart.
It is not customary
To lose your soul
In a jingle of lies.
I can dance
To the joy of ceremony.
I will keep up the beats.
I was just roaming
And I learned from you
That love is not literal
For the smile,
But figurative for the fights.
We learn by quarrels
In love and by mistakes
In life.
Put on your attire,
The setting sun is your bindi.

(Sushant Thapa has published Nine books of English poetry and one short story collection. He is a lecturer of English by profession in Biratnagar, Nepal. He holds an M.A. in English from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.)

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