



THE ORACLE

Editorial Letter

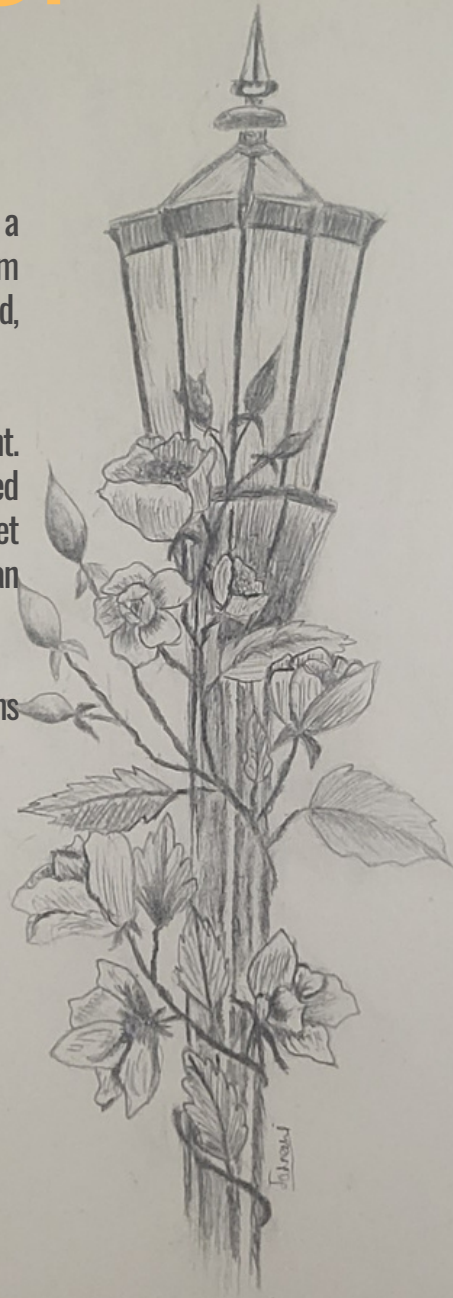
Greetings!

This magazine for Classes IX to XII began as all good ideas do- with a secret hope that someone was brave enough to chase. From discussing it tentatively to finalizing submissions- what a wild, beautiful journey it has been!

For this edition, we honour all those who helped us get to this moment. We take a moment to pause and gaze back at the path we stumbled and bled and eventually learnt to run over. This edition is a secret dream we share with the world- words to illuminate who we are, an ode to who we were and a melody of who we wish to be.

So gather around and dance along to this symphony of life and dreams and hope. In its pages, maybe you will find yourself like we did.

Thank you,
The Editorial Team



JAHANVI SHARMA (IX)



shikshantar

a place where I can be 'me'

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THE WORKS



MIRROR

Mirror mirror on the wall,
Am I too short, am I too tall?
Am I too fat, am I too thin?
What more can I do to fit in?
She is funnier, she is smarter
I want to be more like her,
Everybody wants to be her friend
Everything I do is all pretend!
She has those jeans, she has that top
She has everything I'll ever want.

Mirror mirror on the wall
If I wear makeup will it hide it all?
She has clear skin with shiny hair
Does it all depend on what I wear?
In every subject her grades are better
I try so hard but I just don't matter,
She's a thousand times better than I am
She can do everything better than I can,
I know I'm special, I know I have friends
But my comparison with her never seems
to end.

BY- ANANYA AND SUBAINA (IX)

THE 9PM DRIVE

The flickering of street lights right up, on ahead,
sights of the destitute families making their bed .
the vendors of the area locking up their shops,
the merchants removing the signs of price drops .
I roll down the windows and in comes the air,
The cool, brisk breeze flows right by my hair .
the honking of cars as the drivers become
impatient,
the loud siren as the train reaches its destination .
the moon and stars shining so mighty bright,
the 9 pm drive my friend, is a wonderful sight.

BY- ATHARV MEHTA (XI)



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INDIA: “A GROWTH ECONOMY AND THE DIVERSIFYING CARRER CHOICES OF ITS YOUTH”

Nelson Mandela once said “Sometimes, it falls upon a generation to be great. You can be that great generation. Let your greatness blossom.” A fifth of the world's youth reside in India, which currently has a rapidly expanding economy. Half of its population of 1.4 billion is below the age of 25, and a quarter is below the age of 14. India's primary asset is its youthful population. India benefits from a distinct demographic edge as a result.

The youth of India find themselves less impacted by family and peers while making professional and educational decisions. Increasing numbers of young individuals are looking for rewarding employment options and career routes that align with their unique goals. As per a leading survey, a majority of around 50% cite interest in their subject of study as the main factor in their decision, and 19% say their families had an impact on their decisions. In addition, a third are interested in establishing their own enterprise and 63% are interested in using gig labour to supplement their income. This demonstrates some receptivity to alternate career opportunities. There are over 250 career options available for practicing in a diverse nation like India. As industries develop to reflect changes in market dynamics or the world broadly, fresh career possibilities emerge. The current employment alternatives might change into new roles in the future, opening up further opportunities. The most crucial stage in identifying the best career prospects for us is the 12-year period we spend in school. You may not be aware of it, but over these 12 years, we discover a lot of our skills and qualities. For instance, young people who enjoy English might go into teaching, editing, writing, or brand strategy. Forensic scientists, surgeons, actuaries and other professions are open to those who appreciate math and science. The days of yore when there were just a few limited career possibilities accessible in India that every person dreamt of and advised others to pursue are long gone.

However with the arrival of the 21st century and the development of modern technologies, young people in India of the new generation are searching for more exciting career options where they can use their creativity and originality to make a livelihood and get paid well. India's workforce is undergoing a rapid shift with a number of new career paths emerging to meet the interests and qualifications of young professionals.

There are a number of exciting and lucrative job venues that students may investigate from renewable energy and cybersecurity to digital marketing and data analytics. thus the career choices of our nations are diversifying. India's youth is the country's greatest asset, thus it is critical that they have their desires directed in the appropriate directions to help them pursue the careers of their interest and for their own benefit. This does not only align their passion & interest to make a right career choice but benefits the nation too with greater focus on research & development, services & plethora of unicorns shaping up !!

BY- AANYA BHARDWAJ (X)

YELLOW

Oh the colour yellow, ever so surreal,
It's a shame you haven't seen it,
Felt the things it makes my heart feel,
Different perceptions, opposing views,
Dedicated to the same colour,
In all its shades and hues.

The midday sun commands attention,
Proud in the sky,
Like a large flower up above,
Whose ray like petals spread far and wide;

What's visible within those rays,
Bouncing off every nook and cranny,
The embrace of yellow,
Its arms extending vastly.

The seas of sand,
Go onward for miles,
Isolated and unseen,
Within every speck of dust,
Yellow's never-ending beauty.

A part of the serene seven,
The formation of a curve of colours,
High up in the heavens,
Smiling downward,
Blessing all our endeavors.

Now yellow, my friend,
Is rather unique,
Perhaps a peculiar sight,
For it is quite possible,
Even if unbelievable,
To tell what the colour sounds like!

The crinkle of parchment,
Torn and old,
The jingling of bangles, new,
With colours bold,
The chanting of prayers,
Slow and soulful,
When stumbling upon a holy sight.

A tense silence before a moment of surprise,
The crunching of leaves,
As they fall and die,
Laughter echoing across walls and down
hallways,
Symbolise yellow in my mind.
If yellow was an object,
A thing,
A place?

It would perhaps be much easier,
But as one visualises in their head,
What the smell of such a colour could be,
Whether far or near!

The aroma of an afternoon meal,
Cooked and roasted,
Served with glee,
Patches of grass in need of irrigation,
Snacks and tea for when one stops at the station,
Distinguishably dry,
With a hint of particularly strong spice,
Musty to some, delicious to many,
Is how the colour yellow would be,

The thing about yellow,
In all its charms,
Are the threads of thought that divide it throughout,
To each, a different perspective of yellow,
A different understanding, a different doubt.

Unfiltered joy,
The kind that bursts forth,
Seeping through one's nerves,
Dance and song,
Festivity and platonic love,
While stuffy boredom for others.

A representation of emotions,
Which may be poles apart,
But that's what's alluring about yellow,
It's never been nailed down to playact,
A particular part.

The colour of spices,
The colour of joy,
The colour of sunflower petals,
From specks of sand to the gigantic sun.
In everything we see go past.

The charisma of yellow could never be discussed,
In a limited number of verses,
For each of nature's paintings,
Is incomplete without yellow being on the palate.

BY PRISHA MISHRA (X)



MY HEART IN A NUTSHELL

In another life, I want to be pretty. I want to be stunning, gorgeous, beautiful, charming, and every other word associated with beauty. I want to fit in with the beauty standards of the world, I want people to tell me that I am the most beautiful girl they have ever seen, rather than get glares or looks of disgust for any flaw I might have, and I want to get treated equally just like the rest of my friends, not just get ignored or refused because the people that surrounded me are more interesting. I want to be like all those other girls, so loved and charming and full of life, so that I can look at them and join them, not tear away at myself for not being them. I want to be pretty, so I will not have to go home every day, rip my clothes off and cry in front of the mirror wishing to have a second chance at life to be how society wants me to be.

Beauty exists in the eye of the beholder, but how come everyone tells me the same thing? Lose weight, be more feminine, show off your skin, hide your skin, lose your body hair, lose your nails, lose your fat, lose yourself. Every day, it is like a broken record that repeats the same song over and over again, and it is painful, hard to hear, scratchy and irritating until you switch it off. But you would go mad without music in a few days and you would turn it on to listen to the same horrors and the cycle repeats.

Why can not we just judge people based on their character, their personality, their behaviour? What if I am funny? What if I am smart? What if I am loving and caring? Does it not account for as much as you see of me? A beautiful person outside is more appreciated than a beautiful person inside. It is a strange concept but it is the reality we live in. It is as if your physical self defines who you are. Why am I not considered equal? Why is he not considered equals with him?

A pretty but cruel girl is always favoured more than a stereotypically ugly but kind girl, just because one is more pleasing to look at. Even if she tries to satisfy everyone, she will always be overshadowed by the pretty girl, who is loved and thought highly of even if she is horrible and ruined people's lives. Why? Because she is beautiful! Why else?

The world has conditioned us to believe that certain people are higher than the others, as if they have something so special that they are gold to others' rust. They have told us that our looks determine our entire life, rather than our personality, our inner being and us inside. It is disgusting what we have been taught since we were children, innocent young children. It is disheartening to watch bright, lovely people fall prey to this toxicity, myself included. In another life, I want to be physically pretty, because even though I hate the beauty standards, I was brought up surrounded and encased by them. I try my best to shake these thoughts day by day, but it is a tough battle and a treacherous journey to embark on. Maybe in another life, I will be pretty to the eye, but in this life, I will be pretty to the heart. With that, I will spend this life helping myself and others know that beauty within, and nobody can decide your worth before seeing inside of you. And to be honest, we are all pretty, it is the society that is not.

BY MAIRAH KHAN (IX)



THE ENDLESS WAR

It is unbelievable but true that all things come to an end. The best of times can end all too quickly and the worst of times can feel like they last forever. It was such a time in the little town of Hampford.

It had been just 2 years since the time everyone in the town had danced and drunk together rejoicing the end of the war and now half the houses were empty. Those with people still inside were dark and dreary, the blinds never opened and the lights never came on.

Everyone had only just started celebrating, when the bells had suddenly rung announcing an air strike. The people, confused and worried, started running to the shelters they thought they would never see again. Doors flew open, people screamed and children cried. Eventually when most people were inside, bombs started falling. The sound of the explosions was deafening. The people clung to each other, trying to find some peace and calm. Every explosion meant more of their precious, comforting town, their home, was destroyed.

Now that the strikes came less often, the town was mostly in ruins and it would be a folly to waste precious ammunition on something so small and insignificant. The town's subtle beauty always remained despite it being in ruins.

One day there was an announcement. Troops would need to be sent to fight in this war to end it. All households were required to send at least one person above the age of eighteen. Mothers wept for their children, barely adults who were sent to partake in a gruesome war. Outside one house an old woman was crying. She screamed at the officers, "You cannot take my grandson. Please, he's all I have". She wiped the tears from her face as her voice trembled saying the last word, "Please". The grandson who was trying to be brave was barely twenty one years old. His eyes welled with tears as he looked at his grandmother. "I will come back", he said wiping away the tears from her face, "I promise".

Many families were broken apart. Those who left were terrified at what the future would hold, and those left behind were petrified that a part of them was forever gone.

In the trenches troops huddled together, their only comfort was the strangers around them, all completely different people yet exactly the same. The war was extremely slow. Time passed so slowly it felt like it was going fast.

Then one day the war was over. It ended just as suddenly as it had started. The opposing side had abandoned their fallen troops who were lying on the battlefield. Slowly, while the people collected their own departed, they saw the 'enemy'. From their pockets fell out photos of their families, beautiful babies who waved at the camera and smiled, family portraits in which old couples stood straight with children in their arms. They're just like us, thought the soldiers with tears in their eyes, "We're all the same!"

BY- DEVYANI NOREEN SHARMA (X)



THINGS LEFT UNSAID

The air was full of thoughts and things to say but I stood there with a permanent frown that had been etched into my forehead, and simply stared at them.

From the moment I had entered the room, Dad's outburst would not stop, and all the shouts and angry hand gestures kept escalating. But the moment I told them about my whereabouts, the room and its people went eerily silent. It felt silly to me like everything felt silly to me nowadays- so I tried to remember why this was happening. Then it struck me- I was all they had left, and they cared about me. Though, God knows why, I couldn't reciprocate even an ounce of those feelings for them. "You what?" Mom finally whisper-shouted after being silent for the whole episode. Honestly, I never knew she had the ability to remain silent for such a long time; no one I've ever known is as talkative as Mom- except Sid.

"I know you heard me the first time, Mom, so please stop asking me again and again about why I did it. I know that you need to be dramatic in every situation-" I was cut short with an unexpected but deserved scolding.

"Dramatic? Indira! How can you be so insensitive? After all that has happened in this house, you dare make a joke about it?!" Mom was breathless by the end of her outburst and stared at me with eyes that resembled the vengeful eyes of a goddess.

"Mom, it's just that you both seem to be overreacting. All I did was burn Sid's clothes and then dispersed the remnants in the Narmada- why are you getting so riled up about it?" I replied. "The sheer fact that you are asking this question signifies how not okay and unhinged you are! Do you even know- oh wait, did you even dare ask us before doing that? Or did you think it was good and just went ahead with it? Indira, those clothes meant something to me and your Mom!" Dad shouts hysterically. I wanted to say so many things; I had so many replies to those accusations, but I had no energy to keep this façade going. I stayed silent and listened to them say things I knew they didn't mean to say, knew they were saying them only in anger.

"Insensitive...unbothered...does not care...does not deserve anything...does not care for Sid...Sid...Siddarth, my boy...oh if he were here..."

That was it for me. I fell down to my knees and silently, without any sound, tears came out of my eyes. Tears for Sid, for Mom and Dad, for me and lastly, for all the things I wanted to say to my Chotu, for all the things I wanted to say to my parents.

Mom and Dad went silent and sat down with me. I sat silently, thinking of how it was my duty to fulfil Sid's last wish, a wish he made having no idea it was his last. It was an unusual one, just like him. He wanted me to pack all his clothes and wanted to wear each of them in all the sightseeing areas of our city. I took all clothes and thought to myself of how tiny they seemed in front of me; a six year old boy's clothes in front of a nineteen year old. It took me all day to pick out an outfit for a dead six year old by and take the clothes with me instead of to the person responsible for sightseeing in the city. It took every ounce of self-control I had to not explode into tears in public. So after his wish was fulfilled and I was left as a hollow shell of a person, I went to the backwaters of the Narmada, burned the clothes at the bank and dispersed the remnants in the river. As the fire of the burning clothes raged, I thought of the time when Mom and Dad announced mom's pregnancy to me. I had been scandalized. After being a single child for 12 years I could not bear to have a sibling. But as soon as I saw little Sid's tiny face, I knew I would die for him.

I remembered his smile, that devil laugh of his when he knew he had done something he shouldn't have, those priceless tears when I scolded him and the warmth I felt when I hugged him. Even a year after his death, my insides churned when I remembered him and threatened to burst out of me. I tried to find solace in the fire that devoured his clothes but all I could grasp was unbearable heat that made the pain in my chest a little bearable.

The reason I burnt his clothes was to finally let go. I didn't want to see Mom cry every night holding his clothes. I didn't want to see Dad standing there with silent tears rolling down his face as he stared at the place where Sid's uniform hung in his cupboard. I couldn't bear the weight of the ghost that was in our home. So I burned the clothes to let go. But I realised one couldn't let go of their heart, one would only die if the heart did. Which is why right here, sitting with Mom and Dad, I decided to let my love and compassion die as Sid had. So there I was again, with so much to say, so much to feel but I could only breathe in the air that was full of thoughts and things to say.

BY- IRA MISRA (XII)



BUTTERFLIES

In another life I would like to be a butterfly. I would like to flop my colorful wings and fly in the sky. I would like not to worry about materialistic things, like how I don't have that pair of jeans or those earrings. I want to be free from all the obligations I find myself tied to. I would like to be able to let go of those unwanted people and pull my loved ones closer. I would like not to worry about my grades or what to wear. I would like to stop worrying about what people think of me, how I am perceived or if I am liked.

I want the eternal beauty and grace of a fluttering butterfly. I want to be admired, to be chosen, to be desired. I want to flit amongst the flowers and frolic in the blue sky. I want little kids to gasp with delight when they catch sight of me, marvelling in my simple beauty and timeless grace. I wish to be a symbol of hope, a sign to many. A token of happiness and freedom. I wish to bring a smile on someone's face. Land on a finger and make someone's day. How can I float through the endless blue or spend an idle minute on a sweet smelling flower as me? My imagination is vast but there is only so much I can physically do.

I cannot fly to far away places and explore the whole world as I wish I could. I cannot watch people go about their life from a corner unnoticed. My life is longer than a butterfly's but will it really be happier? Butterflies may not feel complex emotions or think the thoughts that we humans do, but they must be happy. When life is short, you end up making the most of it. I think I would be happier without all the confusing emotions. Exchange all the sadness, jealousy, anger and pity for a simple numbness. A numbness that would not feel numb because without the knowledge of it, we don't know what we are missing out on. We live with so many regrets and mistakes. A butterfly is free of all social constructs and compound emotions.

I want to be a butterfly so I can enjoy all the simple, delicate, beautiful things life has to offer. I want to see the nature all poets speak so highly of. The lush green, endless blue, deep purple, bright yellow, peaceful orange and all the underappreciated hues and shades. I want to watch the water ripple and the clouds drift for hours together. I want the rain to hit my wings with a delicate splash and the early morning dew to dampen my feet. Who would not want to rid themselves of all things that weigh them down, escape it all and just be a butterfly? Flutter around and gaze at everything. Fly to new heights in the sky or among the multi-hued petals. Sip sweet nectar and explore this world. No obligations, emotions or material possessions to worry about just a short but sweet life.

However, all my buckets of love and care for the few I love so dearly will not matter. I will never suffer the pain of a broken heart as a butterfly but neither would I feel the joy of a mended one. I would not be able to hug my family or joke around with my friends. No more silly little crushes or stupid fights with anyone. I suppose I focus on all the negative things in my life but I keep forgetting about the sweet and lovely things.

I should take happiness in the small things and love all the people I have. Why dream and wish to be a butterfly in another life when I can be one in this life itself?

BY- ANANYA JHA (IX)



IF YOU DIE, I WILL BE FINE

If you die I will be fine,
I'll learn to find you in the rays escaping through branches and leaves,
I'll find you in the painting I have to pause and ponder upon,
In the cool breeze that lifts an eyelash off my cheek while a wish gets fulfilled,
One which I didn't even make,
I'll find you as the sunlight dances in the ocean waves,
I'll find you in every full moon,
in the warmth of the winter sun,
in every flower that has petals so light you can see their delicate intricacy,
I'll find you in every film I see,
I'll find you in every right melody,
I'll find you in my own pain,
And I promise I'll find you in my writing again and again,
I'll find you in every love song unheard,
I'll find you in every letter unread,
In the feeling of something left unfinished
Unbeknownst,
To replace you would never be my plea,
But we are all made of star dust both you and me,
We have been here since the beginning of time and we will stay till the end,
Just because you have escaped one form of yourself,
Doesn't mean I can't see you everywhere else.

BY- SARA PANT (XI)



OUTSIDE THE TRAIN WINDOW

From a far off distance, you hear a whistle. It sounds like a train whistle, similar to those you hear in movies from the nineteenth century. The release of the engine, the steam and the smoke pouring out in plumes of white and grey. You look around to find yourself seated on a cozy-looking coach with plush cushioned seats and a few passengers seated at odd places, but none together.

A second whistle is heard. Sharper and louder than the first as if it were much closer than the last one, and the train starts to move. You blink a few times, trying to recollect how you got here in the first place and more importantly what the view outside the window looked like when the train was at the station. But this struggle bears you no fruit as the smoke from earlier seems to be shrouding that part of your memory.

In a panicked frenzy you look around the coach to find every other passenger's eyes fixated on the windows adjacent to their seats. Precisely what is it that they find so fascinating about the view? Getting up a bit shakily, you make your way towards a girl with long ebony hair and olive skin.

"What are you looking at outside the window?" You ask amiably.

She turns to look at you with a start, her big eyes widened even further. "Me?" She asks, pointing to herself. With a confused look on her face she describes the view to you. "The wheat seems to be growing well in this region. And the skies! Oh, aren't they beautiful- azure and cloudless! Not a soul in sight but do you see the hills in the distance? This place reminds me of the view I used to see from my grandmother's backyard whenever we used to visit her." The look in her eyes, filled with an unidentifiable emotion compels you to ask her if she does not visit her grandmother's place anymore. She looks away as she says, "Oh, we stopped visiting her years ago, when she passed away."

Realizing the conversation has ended there, you leave the girl with her long ebony hair and go sit next to an aged man staring out the window with a soft, thoughtful smile on her face.

"The fields really make one feel alive, don't they?" you ask.

The old man blinks at you and asks in a deep, raspy voice. "What fields?" Confused yourself, you point towards the window at which the old man takes a deep breath and says, "You can call the sea a field, I suppose. A field of ships, of shoals of fish, of corals and anemone- the sea is indeed like a field."

"The sea?" Ah yes of course..." you start to worry about the old man's condition but still decide to entertain what you believe are his delusions. After all you had done the same with the girl earlier.

"Do describe it to me, Sir," You ask politely, fearing annoying the man.

"When I was a Colonel, my wife and I used to live in a bungalow at the top of an island. From there we could see far into the sea and sometimes when the tide was cool, a few crabs and turtles would scuttle around. See the lighthouse over there?" He points in a direction, and you obligingly look to where he is pointing and nod. He continues. "My daughter's friends and she would often ride their bicycles to that lighthouse for picnics and silly expeditions." A nostalgic smile creeps across his lips and he looks away, dazed.

Worried, you look for another person seemingly saner than the two people you have spoken to since you found yourself on the train. A middle aged man with a chestnut hair and silver-green bangs waves their hand as if asking you to join them to enjoy the sight. When you walk over, they give you a warm smile and shake your hand. "I never thought I would see so many stars again," they say.

Your head starts to spin as you try to process your last few encounters. Field? The sea? Stars? Precisely what type of mess have you found yourself in? Tired of playing along and acting like you know what is happening you ask the person what they see outside the window and the fact that the old man saw the sea while the young girl saw fields in the day time. Which one of them was right?

They tilt their head at you and reply, "There seems to be a misunderstanding here. Maybe you heard them wrong. There are no wheat fields or seas in sight outside. Don't you see the meadows filled with heather and that oh-so-gorgeous night sky? The city can never present you with such wonders, my friend." They sigh wistfully, lost in their own world, unaware of the turmoil inside your head.

Slightly concerned as they see your troubled countenance, the person with their silver-green bangs asks you, "Outside the window, what do you see?"

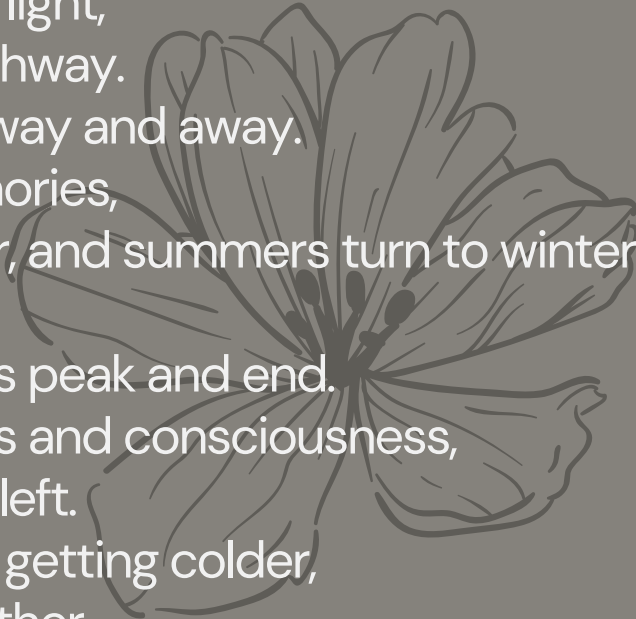
BY- MANNAT SINGH (XI)



THE AWAY OF SEPTEMBER



The memories drive further,
As the bumps in the road;
Crash me into them again,
As the laughs fade higher.
At every stop light,
I turn to look back and smile.
Every green light,
Seems a highway.
Way way, away and away.
As the memories,
Drive further, and summers turn to winter.
As it all,
Comes to its peak and end.
Photographs and consciousness,
It's all I have left.
Because it's getting colder,
It's going further.
And the memories,
Drive away.
Slowly away from me,
With bumps and dirt roads.
The memories,
Are turning to cold now.
The memories, are turning cold,
Now.



BY- NASSIA POPLI (XI)



shikshantar

a place where I can be 'me'

IN ANOTHER LIFE

Oh, how I wish I could live once more,
A yearning engraved in my very core.
I have so much left to do,
And plentiful times to do so too.
Alas, even in the end,
Some things I wouldn't have experienced and some I'd want to again!
Oh perhaps in another life.

Many's desires would be pleased,
But one life for me would just be a tease.
I'd brave my screaming fears again,
I would smile through fire and rain.
I would not be deterred from the most donating tasks,
My own doubts my confidence shall mask.
oh, I would risk my soul and my mind,
for a chance to live a different kind.
I would not repeat, instead make new mistakes,
Because they have as many lessons as cream in a birthday cake.
Life is just too much to live only once,
I just want to have another chance.
Hopefully in another life.

I want to try every game and even more,
I would not stop until I bore.
There must be a sport I shall love,
Which I would connect with like singing for a dove.
Sure, I would probably look funny,
but I will not stop trying till I win.

This plant is massive and nature is beautiful,
I yearn to travel farther and see its glory full.
Be it the highest peak or the lowest depth,
Or lands of beauty between valleys kept.
The loveliest morning and most cruel night,
Even the brightest nights and darkest days.
Oh there are just so many ways,
This planet continues to enchant me.
I wish to explore,
Oh, maybe in another life.

It is not just nature I want to see,
But the animals and people are most lovely.
I want to meet, and I desire to laugh,
With people of places I go to.
I want to share their joys and burdens,
Because we are all flowers of the same garden.
I will love them and they will love me,
For the best times are found in unity.
Hopefully in another life.

Oh how can I not mention,
The chance to live and love again.
To share my own joys and my own pain,
To be there for someone in their time of need.
Someone with whom my life I can lead,
Oh love provides this miraculous pleasure,
Truly one of life's greatest treasure.

Not a single day goes by,
Do I not think of knowledge kept in amounts high.
Think of the mind blowing conversations,
Occurring in lectures and elite stations.
Amongst the most intellectual minds,
Packing knowledge and wisdom that binds,
How they will live for the rest of their lives.
To be apart of these speeches,
Consuming knowledge from one other like leeches,
Would be a very enlightening experience,
Hopefully in another life.

So now you see all these aspects,
that make living once more a beautiful prospect.
To play, to win, to lose and more,
Are what stop life from being a bore.
To feel, to love, and to have fun,
Are the happiest things life can give us.
The sights, the phenomena, and the knowledge,
Shall enchant your heart and brain.

There is just too much for one life to hold,
There is not enough time to learn to be bold.
There is always something left to do,
And I want to leave nothing undone.
So please, please, please,
Just one more life.

BY- ROHAN SAXENA (X)



CALLING OUT TO MY HUMANITY

On either side of the river lies a grey, granular substance, so large in quantity that I can see it from several metres away. I need not think more than a moment as to what it may be.

Once I approach the banks of the river, I scoop up a handful of the powder that are, ashes; grey remains of the soldiers I fought side-by-side with, or perhaps against, scattered hastily on the side or the river. I expected myself to feel something, guilt, horror, or at least unsettledness- instead, I just feel numb. I have become indifferent to the death and destruction that has surrounded me for the past few years.

I think around four years have passed since the war begun. Or five. Several more may have passed, but I would not know, I stopped counting the days and refrained from hoping for an escape a long time back. I release the ashes into the river and begin taking off my armour.

There is a war raging between the kingdom I belong to and an enemy kingdom. Both sides have been fighting as if they will never stop, but if I could, I would surrender right now. How many more times must I fight for a kingdom that paid no heed to me? How many more times must I forget my morals, erase all human instinct, and charge? I do not have a choice, I never had one. I was dragged into the war before I even turned eighteen. I have seen hundreds and thousands of soldiers die at my hands; their weakened, crumpling expression, the blood pouring out of their mouths- it all comes back to haunt me when I sleep. I still hear their screams of pain, the anguished cries of people at their funerals but I cannot let it control me. I must forget it and move on. I must continue to fight. I am expected to continue to fight. In times like this, I often think to myself, do these people forget that we are also human?

At last, I free my head of my helmet. I set it against a rock and make my way into the fast-flowing water of the Ganges. I face the flow of the water and close my eyes.

"God, free me of my sins."

BY- NAISHA KHANNA (IX)



A COLOUR

Karo was a town I had never heard of. I lived in the city where people were active, buzzing around in the streets. There was the concept of traveling, photographs, paintings, pictures, thoughts, and exploration.

Not in Karo.

When Suki was found by my mother in the town of Karo, in southern Africa, she was brought to our shelter with a blindfold. I went to meet her after she had recovered from the trauma of the tragic massacre that took place in her town. The blindfold was a tradition she refused to give up, one that was tied to the depths of her heart.

She was a frail and unstable child. However, she yearned to know about the works of the city. One day I sat next to her with a colouring book. She asked me in her heavy African accent and broken English about what colours are! I simply told her that they are a variety of shades that bring life to a thing. "There's a red, a yellow, a green, a blue, a pink and many others." I said. Suki asked me what my favourite colour was. Even though I never saw what was behind her blindfold, her expressions were more than clear. Her keen interest in the topic made her lean forward, her head resting on her knuckles and mouth slightly open. Eagerly waiting for my answer.

I began, "My favourite colour is dark blue. You see, there are shades of each colour, that make new colours. The possibilities are endless. Dark blue reminds me of the night, of calmness, of the ripple in the water created by the slightest vibration. It reminds me of sleep and the relaxation it comes with. It is what makes me comfortable and happy.

I saw the slightest smile on her face and wonder in the tilt of head. "What does it smell like?" she asked. I was intrigued by the question. "Colours do not have their own smell. They have smells associated with them. For example, the colour dark blue to me smells like mud, the ocean, my favourite blue drink, a humid sky at night, blueberries and blue flowers. The thought of dark blue makes me want to dance in the night in the rain, just like the majestic peacock, which is a bird with shining blue feathers." I responded. I saw a tear roll down from her eyes. She wanted so desperately to be able to see colours. I was trying to cheer her up, when I had an idea!

I asked her to come and stand in front of the sun. She flinched from the sudden dull brightness passing through her black blindfold. I said, "What you can see now is black, but it is not the same as before, it has yellow in it, because of the sun. Now, go back and tightly close your eyes. What do you see?" With a grimace Suki said, "Spots."

"Do they look the same, all of them."

"No." She replied.

"Well, what is the difference?" I urged.

"I do not know. They are different."

"The difference is colours."

"Colours!" She said in wonder. "I saw colours! I saw dark blue. Saw it when I go out in the night like you said. I smelled it like you said, at night when the storm had come. I saw the colour! I saw when the... the sun went down in the evening. It was the same as when I got cut falling down in Karo, when I tripped."

"That colour is called red."

"Red is my favourite colour." Suki smiled.

"Your colour is fire and my colour is the dark underwater seas. The colour of mystery and mischief. The colour of the beach, the plums, and the ink I use in school. Suki looked like the happiest person I had ever seen. She danced and jumped, knowing she now understands colours. I never knew how much I loved the colour dark blue. After that it was my light.



A Murder in the Night

I.

"I do not wish for a betrothal." Marvel firmly said, straining to keep her voice calm and her rage controlled. "You do not have a choice!" Her father snapped. "What good are you if you cannot bring wealth in this house, and I daresay that marriage is the only way a woman brings affluence." Marvel took a deep breath, relaxing her growing temper and steadily suggested, "Let me run the Company." Their gaze met. Father's eyes were shining with revelation. He laughed humorlessly. This was it; Marvel could not let her dignity be damaged further. She donned her stygian cloak and pulled her hood up, striding into the tyrannical frosty wind.

II.

The night was harsh. Diesel drew his coat around him tighter, leaning against the church's back wall. The moon shone triumphantly, lighting the mysterious alleys. Mr. Thorn Nyx would arrive any minute and he wanted to be done with his dirty work, get his cash and leave. Diesel waited a long while for his master, before deciding to cross a few streets and wait closer to Thorn's luxurious mansion. On his way, he saw a cloaked man walking swiftly ahead, his back to him. "Mr. Nyx?" He called, but the man marched onward and turned into an alley. Diesel pursued him till the turn. That street was dead empty. He heard a thud and spun in a fright to see Thorn Nyx's corpse at his feet. He jumped back and held his scream safely in his throat.

III.

The news spread like wildfire. Thorn Nyx was dead. His family grieved while his competitors consoled. With the heir to the throne of a colossal business empire expired, who was next in line? Where would all their fortune travel?

Diesel cached himself in his small home, wishing he had not witnessed the corpse. He wanted to be far away from the investigators so as to conceal his secrets. The doorbell rang and Diesel jumped. He cautiously went to open it, a knife slipped in his sleeve. Nothing but an envelope on the doormat. He brought it inside and slit it open, finding a thick bundle of crisp dollars inside. It was signed 'Nyx'. Honestly, Diesel did not want to accept the money. Mr. Thorn was coming to pay him when he was murdered. He has blamed himself since that night. He had frantically attempted to erase all his connections with Thorn. Hidden all the dangerous weapons in his possession, burned business papers and moved back to his own house from Thorn's congenial mansion at the rim of the sea.

Diesel stared at the fine notes with doubt.

IV.

Friends and family came to console the Nyx ménage. A grand funeral was held for their wealthy prince. The king of the flourishing trade empire had aged a couple years in days, his queen unable to hold back her sorrow, her eyes red and swollen. The princess seemed better, still as polished as ever. She was the one thanking everyone for the condolences and assuring the business men that this would not affect their trade.



Amelia Jade, Thorn Nyx's pretty little friend was seated in the corner of the room, crying and weakly dabbing at tears. Amelia did not say, but inwardly she felt as if she murdered Thorn. They had been close, yes, but it was her who had planted the seed of untrust in Thorn's thoughts. "I suggest you start your own business, Thorn." she had whispered to him in the café.

"You never know when your clever father decides to sell everything and leave you nothing to inherit." She had smiled coyly at him, her words sinking deeper than she expected.

Thorn had started his own business. He first invested in weapons, but sadly that went underwater and got him in trouble with some dealers. "Miss?" A gentleman in a sharp officer's uniform asked. "We need to ask you a few questions."

Amelia's heart expedited its speed.

V.

Diesel was interrogated. Luckily, they did not find anything, yet. He came home stressed, and immediately began stuffing his belongings into suitcases. There was a loud bang and the thudding of footsteps up the stairs. Officers! He thought with fear. There was another loud bang as a strong man kicked his bedroom door down, the wood thudding onto the dirty floor, but Diesel was already on the move, knowing he had to escape what awaited him, leaping out of the window and landing onto the dying grass bordering his house. He got up to run, but was surrounded by multiple officers, all pointing their guns at him.

"Diesel Maxence, you are under arrest for dealing in illegal weaponry."

VI.

"Father, please calm down." His pacing continued. "All my life's work will be destroyed. No one is worthy enough to buy the company! I have no heir..." His daughter stood up in a flash and walked to her father, taking both of his hands in hers. "Father, you have an heir. I can run your Company. A woman can do everything a man can, if not more." Marvel said, a challenge in her tone. She knew how he would react, but it was time that things changed. That he changed. "No." Her father spoke. She couldn't take it any longer. "Do not force me to kill you too." Marvel's fierce voice shook the room. Her father stared at her, wave after wave of emotions crashing in his unfeeling gaze. Was it pain, or betrayal, she could not tell. "You would not hand me over to the Officers, no. Then your empire will actually go down in flames." Marvel said with a laugh. "But that witness said he saw a man." Her father said, taking a step back. Marvel shook her head; she would not hire a man to do something this vital. "He assumed it was a man." All of it fell in place. Marvel had stabbed Thorn, gotten that useless kid to follow her and then pushed Thorn's body at his feet from behind. "It's yours." He breathed defeatedly, retreating until he stumbled into a sofa. Marvel smiled to herself. Even though she killed her own brother for this, she couldn't help but feel proud. It was a giant step up for the lives of women.

You must sacrifice something if it means the better for your surroundings. So, Marvel sacrificed her brother for equality within humanity.

BY- GAURIKA MEDIRATTA (XI)



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