



The gender question and why it spells crisis for Indian democracy

Shruti Gupta

The recent Gujarat elections beyond the verdict also has the dubious distinction of having the lowest percentage of female legislators with

13 female MLAs or a measly 7.14% of the assembly representing nearly 48% of the voters. This severe lack of representation comes forth in a state where ex CM Anandi-ben Patel had the highest margin of victory in the last assembly elections and Smriti Irani's candidature as a CM is being talked about. Despite their demographic strength, commendable statesmanship and political skill exhibited time and again, women's representation by the two biggest political parties was only 1.19% in the home turf of PM Modi who has proclaimed his commitment towards the upliftment of women repeatedly and Ms. Sonia Gandhi was the

President of INC. This gives a vacuous aura to the claims of women empowerment or advancement towards equality being forwarded across the political spectrum and a restrictively tokenistic value to the limited representation of women at the upper echelons. Moreover, it remains a crucial issue within the complex web of Indian political

history in light of the stagnancy of women in politics when our democracy is seen as a "global icon" for the growth and perceived deepening of democracy with representation of all other "disadvantaged communities" increasing manifold. The first Gujarat Assembly elections in 1962, for example, had 7.14% female MLAs which is the same in 2017 despite the increase in the number of female voters and their visibility in all spheres.

This is also not a problem endemic to Gujarat with women comprising only about 11% of the Parliament against the global average of 21.3%.

Neighboring nations, Pakistan and Bangladesh which are considered to be far more patriarchal in their social structure too significantly outshine India in this parameter with about 20% of their parliament being comprised of women. While our Constituent Assembly has often been critiqued for having only 9 women out of 299 members,

the lack of any growth for women in politics is a far more worrying trend having derogatory impacts on our political and electoral health.

The architect of our constitution, Dr. BR Ambedkar had famously said, "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved". When a sex ratio has often been understood as a parameter to gauge social health, shouldn't the ratio of female to male legislators also be considered a parameter to measure democratic health?



Source: AP Photo

Amidst discussions and debates on Women's Reservation in the Parliament and several Legislative Assemblies, it is also important to take note of the 33% of reservations given to women in Local Self Governments which is seen as the biggest solution to "the Women's Question". While these have had an undeniably positive impact by bringing in more women into politics, it has also created proxy representatives on a large scale. It shows the inadequacy of legal measures alone to tackle a social issue which necessitates the use of a multifaceted and targeted approach.

In light of the unrepresentative democracy we have come to espouse, a question of disillusionment also arises. Gujarat elec-

tions in a contrarian instance saw a decrease in the voter turnout which was particularly enhanced among women whose vote share was 8% lesser than their male counterparts.

The absence of women and therefore a lot of their issues could be a possible reason for this where the dismal sex ratio, gendered division in literacy or employment avenues for women in Gujarat seldom become politically prominent questions. Is this the "Gujarat Model" we want to base our nation on, perpetuating patriarchy?

Another important electoral trend observed was the steep rise in the push for NOTA which captured 2% of total votes, crossing the victory margin in more than 25 constituencies. This is a warning bell from the electorate about discontentment from all political alternatives in other communities, especially the youth. A democracy is as strong as people's participation and belief in it. At a time when both seem challenged, it is perhaps time to reevaluate the working of our democracy and attempt to administer adequate reforms at all possible levels and spheres.

(Published in DNA India)

Muskan Aggarwal

"At the stroke of midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom". After 70 years of independence, each year, these famous words of Jawaharlal Nehru, spoken on the fateful day when India found its true self, still constantly make us ponder whether the world's largest democracy has finally given voice to each person in the country. The Kalbeliya community of Rajasthan puts an end to this thought. The nomadic tribe is famous for its unique dancing style, compelling dresses, street acrobatics, performing with animals and most prominently, snake charming. Classified as a 'denotified tribe', these tribes were listed as 'born criminals' during the colonial regime under the Criminals Tribes Act of 1871.



Source: Phangan calendar

With the coming up of industrialisation and urbanisation, these nomadic tribes lost their means of livelihood and they were assumed to be indulging in criminal activity in order to survive.

After independence, the Act was repealed but it has left indelible marks on their lives. The community is still seen with suspicious eyes

ASPHYXIATED LIVES

and is the first to be inspected when any crime occurs. At times, they are forced to accept a crime they haven't committed or beaten to death in a third-degree torture. Due to the stigma surrounding them, they are callously treated. Denial of basic facilities like access to water, or degrading to the level of having their heads shaved; faces blackened and even forced to drink someone's urine by the villagers, are now quotidian practices. These people are also outcasted by other backward classes and hence, are at the lowest level of the social structure. What makes the violence against Kalbeliyas different from that against other communities is the heart-wrenching fact that the State of India does not recognise these people as its citizens because of lack of residential proof. As a result, they do not have a caste certificate, ration cards or BPL cards in spite of being drenched under poverty which keeps them from availing any of the affirmation schemes of the government. Despite constant advice by the National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNST), constituted in 2005, the government maintains a colonial attitude and not much has been done for them.

The combined age-long violation of their entire beings, both by the State and its people, the criminalization of their means of livelihood by the government and their highly penurious conditions have provoked them to choose even prostitution and bonded labour as viable job options. Their identity as Kalbeliyas follows them to their deathbed too. Denied land for burial, they've been forced to bury the dead bodies of their family members in the backyards of their houses. Constituting much of the fame of Rajasthan, with the observance of passive resistance in the recent years, this tribe has been struggling to keep their culture alive. With few members who were blessed with the opportunity of schooling, however bleak, a hope lives. Much still needs to be done for these people to breathe freely in its true sense.



THE DISGRACEFUL RESONANCE OF BODY SHAMING

Shambhavi Shukla

Mainstream media's problematic obsession with 'ideal' body types rarely fails to reach ludicrous standards. Mass media as the primary source that individuals usually look to for social comparison has mastered the art of rationalizing the unattainable into the palatable, especially for women. Women are usually at the receiving end of un-warranted flak for being 'too skinny', 'too fat', 'too muscular', 'looking like a man', 'wearing too much makeup', 'ugly without make-up'; there has never been a seemingly 'ap-proved' standard of appearance for women.

able pinnacle of feminine beauty. The powerful influence of related images and representations not only constitutes internalization of unrealistic idealizations but also goes on to become the precursor of disordered eating, health issues.

Bodies of exemplary athletes including tennis icons Serena Williams, Martina Navratilova and WNBA player Brittney Griner among others have frequently been scathingly scrutinized for being 'too masculine' or 'unlady-like'. J.K. Rowling rose to the defence of Serena Williams

certain body types under the tag of 'ideal' or perfect when in reality most people acknowledge that perfection is a construct in all other contexts. The idiotic implicit impositions set off by equally idiotic advertisements, or people stand in the way of encouraging body positivity and confidence among women. In a bid to wean off body dissatisfaction among females, London mayor Sadiq Khan announced recently that ads that create body confidence issues will be banned from London underground. The move



Photograph: Catherine Wylie/PA

The sheer amount of tabloid coverage that discusses the physical appearances of renowned women is surprisingly high. Among innumerable headlines ranging from a variety of "How-to's" to "Who Wore It Better?" the rampant body dissatisfaction that is consequently triggered has only become more prominent in this day and age. Women are pitted against each other; their bodies are a subject of public discussion for no concrete reason. Eminent female figures have a large following, especially among young adolescent females and such appropriations only perpetuate the unachiev

when a twitter user made a disgraceful remark about her body, last year. Such ridiculous attacks on women's appearances only reinforce the deprecating reception of society towards women choosing to reclaim their bodies. Weighing in on how women should or should not look should not be anyone's business other than their own. Hollywood actors like Keira Knightley, Angelina Jolie and Nicole Richie have repeatedly been placed under the radar for being 'too thin' and even accused of having eating disorders. It is particularly absurd to attach implications to

follows a contentious "Are you beach body ready?" ad campaign, which caused widespread outrage from body positive advocates in the U.K. last year. It is imperative that women feel comfortable in embodying what they wish to stand for as opposed to falling prey to the comparative and degrading idolization perpetuated by the media. Fostering confidence and striving to deconstruct the edifice of socially constructed beauty characteristics should form an integral part of our increasingly globalised culture.

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The scope of subjectivity

Prakriti Bakshi

In India, broadly speaking, political thought is trisected into three odd categories: The Right, the Left, and the Disenchanted. Hurling in the gaps of these three narrow minded lanes are words thrown in copious quantities. The updated censored list of such includes, but is in no way limited to 'anti-national', 'AAP-tard', 'sanghi', 'Pakistani', 'presstitute' and the likes. Many marinate in the echo chambers of their own opinions which are persistently fortified by media outfits sitting on the same slant. Party hardliners thicken the same brewing insecurities and in turn create an army of defensive citizens that have perfected the art of justifying the actions of leaders at family gatherings to the one odd black sheep who 'god forbid' has a different opinion. The leader in turn thanks them by ignoring them till the next inevitable election season. This state of affairs is a perennial, cyclic, and unchanging arrangement that we've all settled into. The problem arises when matters exacerbate to the level of hate; when those in power target the minority and violence ensues. Treating the minority as a vote bank and otherwise systematically ignoring them isn't a recent trend as the opposition would like us to believe.

However, the increase in undaunted violence against the minority in the name of hyped obscurities cannot be shrouded by the majority either. Politics isn't black or white; violence however indubitably is. In the wake of such incidents, it is imperative that political dissent is peacefully and consistently voiced in support of the trampled sections of society.

In light of the recent Koregaon clash in Maharashtra between right-wing Marathas and Dalits, followed by the Mumbai-Pune 'bandh' due to Dalit protests, certain observations can be made: Firstly, the incident brings to the fore the dormant rift between the Marathas and the Dalits. The event cannot be seen in isolation to the communal tension in the atmosphere. Secondly, an event in history can be seen through different perspectives and can hold a different meaning to certain sections of society. While some right-wing organizations saw the bicentenary Bhima-Koregaon war celebrations as 'anti-national' for the Peshwas lost to the East India Company. Dalits see the event as a symbol of their self-respect and victory over injustice inflicted by the Peshwas, for it was the Mahar community's contribu-



Source:DNA India

tion in the army that led to this outcome. Thirdly, a majority of the media reported the Dalit protest as an inconvenience to busy daily life, failing to capture the gravity of their concerns. Lastly, violence broke out in both successive instances and in either case, should not be tolerated. If injustice the loss of human life under whatever pretext angers you, you must raise your voice; especially for those whose throats have gone hoarse dissenting to deaf ears. The problem is we forget as quickly as we get angry. Our ritual of oblivescence commences, until of course another soul bites the dust.



Defence and Women's Empowerment

Shruti Gupta

The advent of the auspicious Navaratri festival marks, the worship of Goddess Durga which is a symbol of strength and empowerment of women. Former PM Atal Bihari Bajpayee called the then PM Indira Gandhi “durga” after the 1971 Bangladesh War in high praise even as an opposition leader. However, that has been followed only by a tokenistic representation of women in

politics and thus, the recent appointment of Nirmala Sitharaman as the Defence Minister of India and a member of the crucial CCS, CCEA alongside the CCAP in an unprecedented move was touted as a positive one.

In a political and social climate where nepotism and dynastic politics are ingrained and systematically promoted, this is also symbolic of the true deepening of our democracy where a woman from a small town can rise to the top only on the basis of her merit and hard work despite a relatively nascent career in politics.

Her first steps as India's first full time female Defence Minister included speaking about increasing women's role in armed forces alongside their induction in greater numbers which is a motivation for the young women of our nation to break free of stereotypes. She also facilitated other key schemes including the Swachha Bharat Abhiyan by giving Open Defecation Free Certificates to various Cantonments and also aimed to clear trash from high altitude area.



Today, we face numerous challenges to our national security and integrity, in our confrontations and conflicts with China and Pakistan, to newer global issues like that of the displaced Rohingya Community and non-conventional alternate issues of cyber war and security. There is also a pressing need to focus on reform in defence and military due to the continued criticism of the “opaque” and “secretive” means of operation alongside the numerous scams and cases of kickback emerging forth while also serving as cause for worry with recent CAG reports stating that we may exhaust our ammunition in only 10 days of war indicative of a severe paucity of funds. Ms. Sitharaman despite her work experience in corporations abroad can effectively work to promote the Make in India Campaign in defence. While her appointment has been historical, it is hoped that her term too will be and her work and emergence will perhaps no longer necessitate the installation of a tank in her alma mater JNU.

Sexuality, Consent, and Heteronormative Relationships

Shreya Bansal

A woman publicly known as Grace, in an interview with babe.net magazine recited the events that unfolded on her date with actor/comedian Aziz Ansari and the story thereupon shed light on the sexual behavior and conduct expected out of men and women particularly in heteronormative relationships. As Grace and Ansari got back to his apartment, Ansari kept trying to initiate sex despite Grace's clear verbal and physical indications that she wasn't interested and did not want to feel forced, she told the magazine. She further added that while “he initially responded well”, later he still kept forcing her to indulge in sex until she felt that the situation was out of her hand and left his house feeling helpless and violated.

As the story went viral it not only initiated discourse on how socially enforced gender roles have problematically structured a sexual code to be practiced by men and women in heterosexual relationships but more importantly, it put emphasis on the concept of consent and its dynamics at different stages of a heteronormative relationship. Grace's story also came out at a time when we as a society were still absorbing the realities of a woman's freedom in a man's world through the repercussions of the “me too”

campaign. The series of events thus landed in the centre of the argument around sexual harassment and ‘miss’ conduct.

Even though Aziz's story falls out of the framework of sexual harassment and abuse, it

nevertheless exemplifies the convenient sexual dominance of men over women to the point where women are helplessly subject to a scenario that is violative of their sexual Consent. Men are expected to demand sex from a woman at all times as they're sexuality becomes symbolically significant to their masculinity and while women on one hand are conditioned to never refuse men, on the other hand, are also expected to never initiate sex or openly portray signs of sexual interest as a sign of their inherent femininity. These coherent yet absurd ideas about how heterosexual men and women should function lead men to believe that their sexual obligation over a woman is indeed justified as women would cater to their coerciveness and they would do so willingly. The Consent of a woman in such a case holds no meaning as the man thinks and decides for her. Years of popular culture have only further strengthened these socially constructed ideas of masculinity and femininity in heteronormative relationships.

A framework like this not only drastically brings down the number of safe spaces for women and puts them in a vulnerable position at all times but it also humiliates and insults men by reducing them down to sheer sexual predators.

With the idea that all heterosexual women are a potential subject for the hetero-sexual male gaze, the problematic idea that men are sex starved individuals incapable of understanding consent is also imposed. Such ideologies can be witnessed in reactions and ar-

guments that call out Grace for having gone to Ansari's house or not getting out of their early. We've come to terms with the idea that women should know better than to expect anything out of men other than plain sexual favors and thus we've appropriated a man's sexual dominance over a woman and the in turn validated a wom-an's duty to abide by it.

The story as told by Grace revolves around a liberated, educated and aware man like Ansari. This is someone who's been in limelight for respecting women, countering sexism and also talking about modern dating as it exists in the chauvinistic contemporary scenario and still his ideas about consent are drastical-ly different from the women around him. This isn't legally defined rape, abuse or assault but it is sexual misconduct by a man who's well aware of the intensity of the consequenc-es of his actions. The situation is proof to how deeply embedded are our ideas regard-ing male and female sexuality even amongst a more supposedly egalitarian audience.

This is also only one of the many instances where women have felt uncomfortable in a man's presence, unable to clearly voice their Consent. These everyday instances are not met with any real action and thus do not make it to the limelight but they do say a lot about the het-erosexual code and its implication on gendered roles and therefore there's a greater need for us to recognize this issue of lack of recognition of a woman's consent.

Me, She, and Her Too ♀

Shreya Bansal

Allegations of sexual assault against Harvey Weinstein by actress Alyssa Milano led to the rise of “MeToo”; a hashtag that flooded our social media profiles, and took the form of a campaign wherein she encouraged women to use the hashtag if they’ve ever been subject to sexual harassment. The phrase long coined by social activist Tarana Burke is popularly used now and saw the participation of women from all over the world.

While some women, through the hashtag, declared that they had been victims of sexual harassment, others described their horrific incident(s) as they recalled the details of their assault, clearly embedded in their memory like fresh wounds. In no time two simple words went ‘trending’ on Facebook, Twitter or any other platform possibly used by women. From celebrities to famous personalities, women from different fields and age groups had an account on sexual assault to share. The realisation that the practise went viral within hours as more and more women took to their computer screens to painfully recall and recount all the times they’ve felt violated in a man’s company, infuriated women from all parts of the world.

With every new story or claim that was put up by a woman, every other woman revoked her own story, and while fighting her own battles,

resorted to the task of comforting all the other women who had a story to tell.

While women accepted each and every story of sexual assault as their own, the rest of the world had the generalized reaction of shock- the shock of seeing every other woman on their profiles claiming **#MeToo** “metoo”, loud and clear. This gave rise to a paradoxical scenario wherein all the women had felt sexually threatened by men at some **#MeToo** point of time but all the men were relatively unconscious of what the women they knew

had been a subject to. This ignorance on the part of men is a privilege they are so accustomed to that **#MeToo** they could afford to sideline the realities amongst which women across the world or even the ones they were close to were living in.

#MeToo To be cautious and alert every second at their workplace, to be frightened before entering into a fairly crowded place, to contemplate the length of their clothes every time one steps out of their house are realities about a woman’s social existence that men aren’t unaware of yet their unwillingness to act against these realities can be masked and pass off as ignorance.

As the campaign caught fire, women found a new tool in publicly humiliating and accusing harassers by putting forth their names out in open for everybody to read. The process was significantly guided by a list that was brought out

by Raya Sarkar, a law student at the University of California, that included the names on male academics who allegedly harassed or assaulted women mostly referring to first person accounts from women. It seemed that women who had lost faith in legal and social structures had finally taken to achieve their own egalitarianism. Thus, the campaign also struck an attack on the existing “masculine” power structures.

Men wouldn’t harass women who could fire them or cost them their jobs and livelihood similarly a powerful, influential woman would have more rights representation in the court of law. The lack of social stature, economic independence and more importantly an audience to their voice, forces women to accept men as sexual predators, and alter and condition their lives to deal with harassment and abuse in silence.

Subject to contradictory viewpoints and opinions, one thing that definitely the “me too” campaign did for women was that it made their stories of sexual assault real and added gravitas to them, forcing the world to listen and understand the magnitude of the problem. It also unapologetically threatened men, making them realise that they were, if not solely the problem, a huge part of it. It helped women collectively find strength in their personal struggles and struggles of the women around them.

How Rape Jokes Trivialize Sexual Violence

Shambhavi Shukla

Amidst many jokes, memes and tweets following the Indian cricket team’s win against Pakistan in their recent match lay the featured tweet. The caption reads “Indian conquers Paki-stan”. This image was widely shared on Twitter with various captions, mostly about ‘conquering’ Pakistan. Such tweets are marked by tones of casual sexism. Social media was abuzz with a number of jokes about India having ‘raped’ Pakistan with its game. The usage of the term ‘rape’ in mundane and misplaced contexts has become more common in recent times. Many people are quick to make inappropriate and dehumanizing equivalences of rape with completely unrelated situations.

Following Brazil’s loss to Germany in FIFA, 2014, the hashtag **#GermanyRapedBrazil** was doing the rounds on Twitter. This represents a recurring theme in the tradition of addressing rivalry between sports teams or generally, instances of alluding damage to someone or something. The ambit of sports has conventionally been regarded as masculine. Using the term ‘rape’ as an analogy to describe defeat also reiterates the brazen reality of how sportsmen are viewed. It encapsulates the intersection of male authority with the commandment of respect using the same. The correlation is degrading, at the very least and humiliates victims of rape.

What this also represents is the toxicity of a culture that is oblivious and utterly insensitive towards acts of sexual violence. In a society where men operate on an inherent belief of being superior to women, the subjugation of women; both

implicit and explicit, comes rather easy.



People often make attempts to dispel any critique of rape jokes by calling it the ‘lack of a sense of humour’. The manner of equating damage with rape, in jest, is underlined by a skewed understanding of both- rape and humour. Humour cannot and should not be used as a vehicle to delegitimize the painful experiences of women. American comedian Daniel Tosh had made a “rape joke” when an audience member allegedly “heckled” him, according to a report by The Huffington Post. He said: “Wouldn’t it be funny if that girl [referring to an audience member who “heckled” him about rape jokes not being funny earlier in his set] got raped by, like, five guys right now? Like right now?” Tosh’s insin-

cere response came via Twitter: “the point i was making before i was heckled is there are awful things in the world but you can still make jokes about them.”

Rape jokes are not just a prevalent practice on social media, but are reflective of a deeper sense of association of women with weak objects unworthy of respect. These jokes are mostly made by men who usually stick up for each other in the interest of having a good laugh, but really only for guarding the so-called ‘bro code’ They characterize a symbolic expression of toxic masculinity and contribute to conflating the disregard for bodily autonomy. One must not let colloquial mentions of rape slide. There is nothing funny or edgy about glorifying harassment while simultaneously trivializing its consequences.

Moreover, we seem to be moving towards a culture where rape no longer constitutes a heinous act of oppression, but has become a frequently used tool for mudslinging. This speaks volumes about the treatment of women and bodily concerns in society. Downplaying the effects of sexual violence using false equivalence only perpetuates rape culture and encourages the oppression of women.

There is an urgent need of reevaluating what qualifies as funny and downright offensive, particularly in the context of women’s rights because they are not up for debate.

(Published in The Quint)



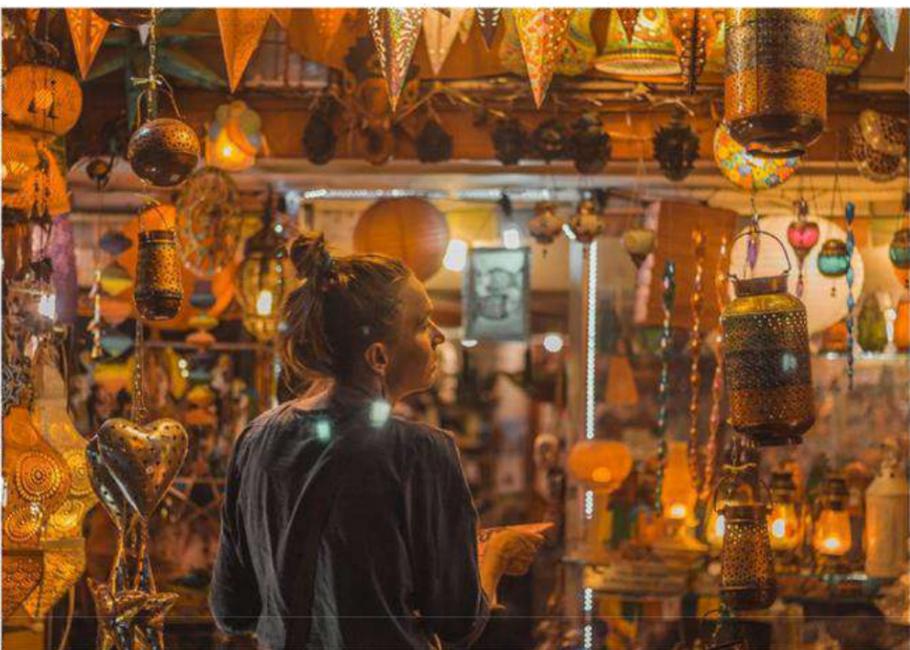
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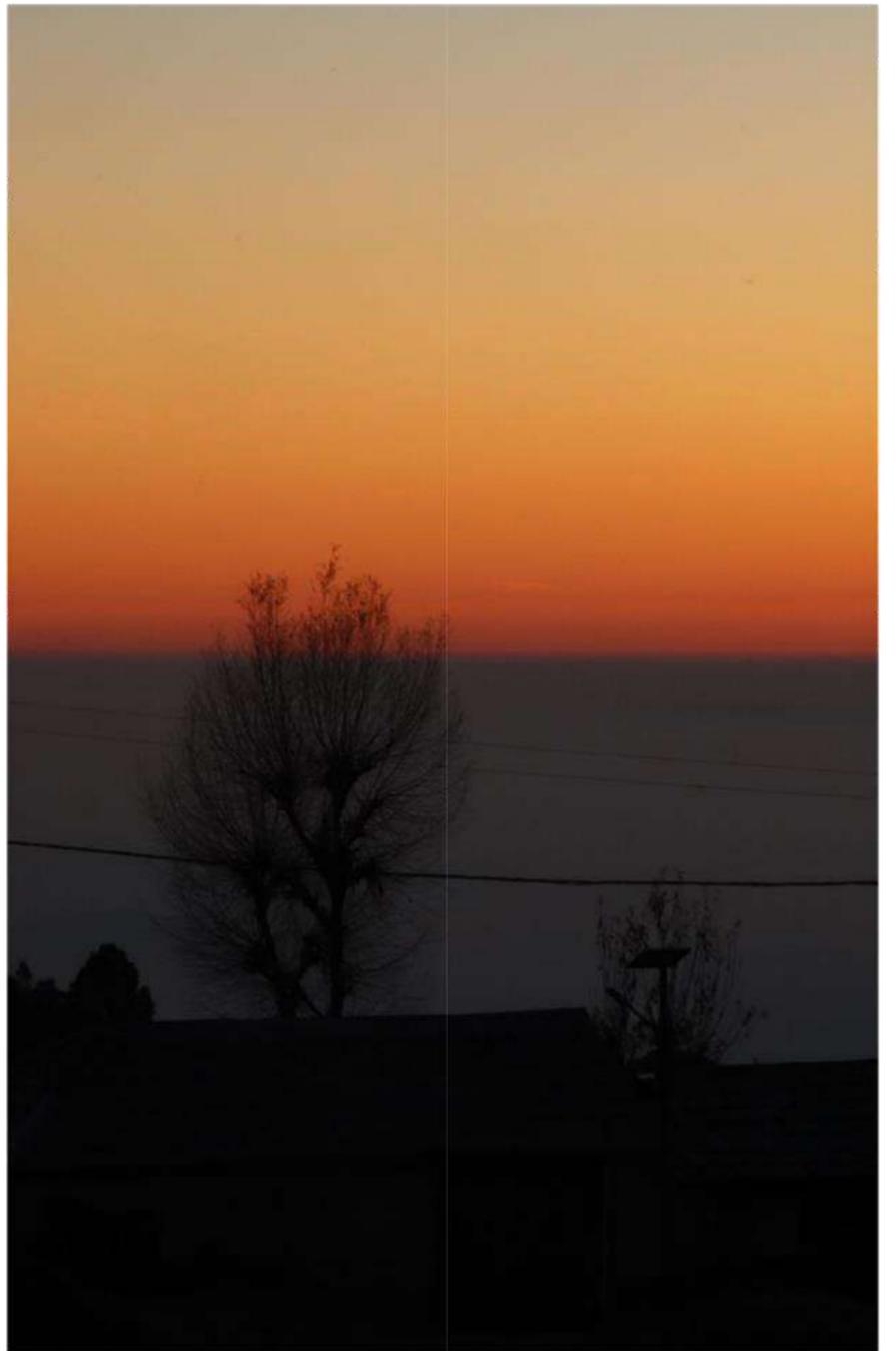
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Kopal Goel



Ishita Mishra



Aditi Doneria



Comphrending the Critic



Ishita Mishra

"A critic at a performance is like a eunuch at a harem. He sees it done nightly, but is unable to perform it himself." – Brendan Behan.

A 'film critic' or better a 'critic' is most commonly misunderstood as a person who criticizes, a person who gets paid to find faults and present them in a bitter, nasty and negative light. He is a disparager who does not have the ability to create and thus devours every morsel of negative commentary that he pens down about someone else's creation.

For as long as visual art has existed, film critics have been dispraised for being responsible for poor box office figures. It is not strange to find a filmmaker having completed his film with tremendous hard work, express his hysteria against a critic who demeans his effort to a few stars on the Tomatometer. The question then arises as to who is the film critic to give his opinion on a film? What gives him and all others the right to express their opinion on a film? As

Baradwaj Ranjan, a film critic explains, the answer is fairly simple. He says, we invest not only our money but an equally important commodity, our time to watch a film.

The time which could have been spent cleaning our homes, watering the plants, visiting the museum or making love is instead being used to watch the work of the filmmaker. In watching the film, we compensate to the creator the units of our time that we confer on his creation and in giving the time of our lives that will never come back, we purchase the right to an opinion.

Critics and people like you and me review films not only because we possess the power to do so but because reviews help audiences decipher better meanings and discourses out of the films they have watched. Although intended mostly to define a person's film consumption decision, the words of a film critic are not a permanent stamp of how good or bad a film is, but are just an account of the experience the critic had while watching the film. A good critic does not make you understand things but widens the horizons for your understanding of the film through his own opinions. Their comments or the more

contemporary star-ratings, do not completely define the box office revenues. Author Alonso Duralde puts it right –

"If film critics could destroy a movie, Michael Bay and Adam Sandler would be working at Starbucks. If film critics could make a movie a hit, the Dardenne brothers would be courted by every studio in town."

With digital technology and omnipresent online film commentary, almost every person is a critic today.

From a review as a facebook post to a review on a film blog, we find a thumbs up or a thumbs down everywhere but what differentiates those from that of a critic's work is the latter's understanding of the

film form. A critique of the characterization, cinematography, music, choreography, costume, lighting by a critic is what sets the understanding of the film apart from the layman's review of merely the plot and

storyline. In explaining to the reader how the content of the film has been expressed through its form, the critic provides a better comprehension to the reader. No matter how much criticism the profession of the film critic faces and

no matter how many people take to film commentary, the profession of the film critic will still remain an important one.



Credits : Ishita Mishra

Denotations of the deprived, Connotations of Cinema

Jasmine Kaur

"Trauma is personal. It does not disappear if it is not validated. When it is ignored or invalidated the silent screams continue internally heard only by the one held captive. When someone enters the pain and hears the screams healing can begin."

- Danielle Bernock, *Emerging with Wings: A True Story of Lies, Pain, and the Love That Heals*

Suffering. Pain. Atrocities. These aren't just regular words of English language. These are a phenomenon with huge connotations. And representation of such processes isn't a matter of black and white, particularly in the field of cinema. For a layman, any Bollywood movie is viewed in simple terms: storyline, music and costumes. It appears to be a commercially driven project that revolves around a heroic protagonist and a damsel in distress, waiting to be rescued. But is that all our society consists of?

The hierarchial nature of our society cannot be understood in such simplistic terms. But often we tend to ignore the politics at play here. Initially, the debate of the representation of the marginalised in Indian cinema focussed on their lack or negligible presence on screen. With the efforts of certain directors, films like *Acchut Kanya* (1936) brought the long-standing social evils like untouchability to the fore. *Sujata* (1959), till date, remains one of the great-est works of Bimal Roy and has been accorded the status of being a classic.

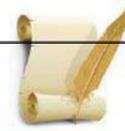
Scholarly discourse has received a new direction with a media scholar at the Birmingham City University pioneering a study on the representation of marginalised in Indian cinema. "Most worrying is the stereotypical portrayal of Dalit people? When they do appear? As intellectual inferior and only able to survive on the goodwill of upper caste peoples? The Indian film industry has helped create an untrue perception of an entire community," he states.

Marginalized, particularly the Dalits, came into the limelight with many such films, but what continues to be an issue to this day is the form or kind of representation Dalits are given in the Indian cinema. The root of the problem lies in the acceptance of such atrocities as completely normal. The casualty and normalcy attached to these phenomena leads the audience to perceive them as those who deserve suffering. Although films like *Court* and *Massan* have tried to create a niche in the Bollywood world but nonetheless, the notion of typeage or category comes into play.

Literally, typeage refers to the selection of actors on the basis that their facial or bodily features readily convey the truth of the character the actor plays. At the outset, it seems to give a voice to those underrepresented communities but in reality, it tends to reinforce the stereotypes associated with them by making use of stereotypical notions in communicating the essential qualities of a character. A case in point could be the closing sequence of *Court*, which is about a Dalit singer who has been accused of inciting the suicide of a sewage cleaner. Here, the last sequence shows the judge enjoying family vacation after dismissing the case of the Dalit singer while he still remains in jail. A closer look would make us realise that it is a satirical comment on the Indian judicial system and the ordinariness attached to the case. What seems like uncomplicated, straightforward Indian cinema showcasing luxurious lifestyles on one hand and harsh realities on the other has many other implications on the perceptions as well as the real lives of the oppressed and marginalized.



Source : Pinterest



Tough People Do

Nakshatra Shah

I know that your heart incinerates,
That your story's got dust on every page. I see your scars and I know they bleed, A little time is all you need. There are days when blood and alcohol run at equal pace, And you want a way out of this menace. Sometimes you feel, you're without a care. And your skies become grey out of nowhere. Almost forgot what destination is all about, There are some chapters you won't read aloud. You've lost your smile and exhibit a frown, Your issues press and weigh you down.

And at times you won't mind losing sleep, A little faith is all you got to keep. All you need to learn, is to dance in the rain, Wear tragedies as armour and do away with the pain. In the years to come you'll look and laugh, You've just been a well timed photo-graph. Your only choice is to stay strong, Gather your broken self and prove them wrong.

Don't wait for this hurricane to pass, find your way through, Tough times never last, but tough people do.



That The Eyes Cannot See

Jasmine Kaur

Caressing her soft strands
Her sparkling eyes glitter
Entangled and clattered strands
A blossoming flower begins to wither.

Standing tall, head held high
Determination, fierce and strong
Leaning onto a pillar, a pale face lies
Who once lived someone's song.

Laden with pearls and jewels
Dressed with satin like feathers
A sad and heavy heart weeps
Over its ripped wings by the gold cage.

As sun rests in peace
The shimmering moon lighten the path
The sweet lullaby that beckons your sleep
Somewhere is unable to lull the pain and the wrath.

to grow up

Prakriti Bakshi

Have we all become
Thick skinned thieves
Uncaring, slow to believe
Snatching hope with ignorant words
Insensitive deeds of misled herd

That's what it means to grow up,
Not to feel, and give up

Girl
I'd rather fight a losing war
Then stay silent and afar

silenced

Aditi Doneria

The sky was a darker blue that day,
Or evening it was, Who cares about time, What happened meant so much more.

All her life she talked, wrote and fought,
And not once did she stop. Who knew that her journey, Would come to an unsched-uled stop.

The stop was permanent, irrevocable, eternal,
It was absolute in every sense of the word. She never got the chance to call for help,

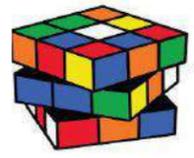
Even if she had, who would've heard?
She left the same old way, like great men do,
Three bullets to the chest, collapsed on the floor.
Blood and cameras all over, Some mourning her death, some celebrating the doom.

And now that she has left, her body rests in an urn,
While her killers still on the run.

Her fight still goes on, At least for this night,
Who knows if it will see the dawn.

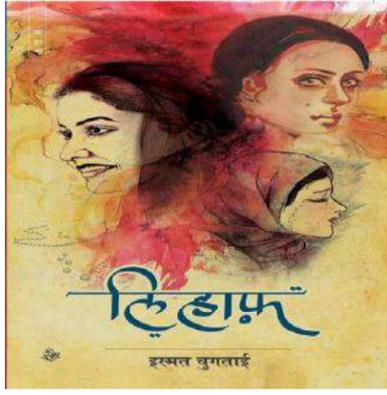


Source: DNA India



Lifting The Veil

Shreya Bansal



Source: Ramkamalprakashan

Ismat Chughtai is considered to be one of the most controversial and radical writers of her time. In an era when stories of women by women were rare, her work significantly revolved around the everyday accounts and ambitions of women and touched upon topics that were tabooed and dissed in the society.

Amongst her many works, one of the most popular is the 1942 short story 'Lihaaf' or 'The Quilt'. Chughtai narrates the story from the perspective of a young girl who is sent to live with her mother's best friend Begum Jaan, who has been recently married to Nawab sahab, a teacher. During her stay the girl's introduction to homosexuality is twofold, one with the attraction of Nawab sahab with 'young and slim waisted

boys' and the other with the relationship between Begum Jaan and the house maid, Rabbo. While Nawab Sahab always keeps Begum Jaan inside the house and fails to show any interest in her. Begum jaan is dissatisfied with her husband's lack of interest in her and finally finds peace with Rabbo. The young girl notes the growing relationship between the two in various instances and finds herself feeling that Rabbo isn't worthy of Begum jaan's beauty and status. In the absence of Rabbo begum jaan also finds her interests creeping out towards the young girl and tries to use her with clothes and luxuries. The quilt has been described as a white elephant in the story and metaphorically describes begum jaan's desires, distant from the eyes of the society but not too far from the little girl's realisation. Thus young girl therefore becomes the window to a house that has many mysteries revolving around it's various individuals but one seems "normal" from the outside. The story is way ahead of its time because primarily it talks about a tabooed subject like homosexuality in its revelation of Nawab Sahab and his interest towards young boys rather than

his wife, a woman considered to be magnificent by the community that he lives in. The author has tried to not only provide references to homosexuality in India, half a century ago. Secondly the narrative gives a bold account of female sexuality and desires. In a first, lihaaf is a story through the perspective of a woman, shedding light on the desires and needs of another woman. Historically, all accounts on women that are not narrated by them or are not from their perspective present them in the light of just being victims of sexual violence. They're portrayed as commodities and it is for the men to either protect them from sexual assault or impose sexual assault upon them. For women to indulge in sexual activity through choice is a concept still alien in narrations that give us an account of history without the perspective of women. Here, by talking about Begum Jaan's explicit sexual desires, Chughtai gives us an alternative historical portrayal of women, that is above them just being the silent victims of a situation. Begum Jaan's character is as strong and controversial as any, something that is rare in accounts that are missing out on a woman's perspective.

A Traumatic Life: Joothan

Niharika Dabral



Source: Blogspot.com

Often times we see that the screen or stage adaptations of classic novels do not do justice to the nuances of the written text, however, director Ish-war Shunya's "Joothan" based on Omprakash Valmiki's autobiographical book of the same name recreates the monumental story with equal effect. Joothan (leftover food from one's plate that was traditional-ly eaten by low caste people after they collected the plates of the up-per caste folks) chronicles the life and struggles of Omprakash, a "low-caste" boy living in an Uttar Pradesh village during the 1950s. From early on, the play illustrates the social standing of Churas, a low caste community whose job is to clean toilets, work as labor, tan leather from dead cattle, etc, and establishes how economic deprivation of the untouch-ables is a result of the caste system. There are numerous moments in the 1 hour 45-minute long drama when the performances will give you goose bumps and the overwhelming feelings of anger, triumph, sadness, and hope.

One of the most powerful scenes in the play is when Omprakash's mother throws dirty pattals (leaf plates) at a dominant caste pa-triarch when he humiliates her. Though the play is littered with tragedy, there is a segment which depicts a policeman sodomis-ing a Dalit youth with an iron rod. The vividity of the scene is triggering and particularly disturbing. I almost wished the audience was warned about it.

The dialogues are honest and hard-hitting, with a liberal dose of crass expletives. While the casteist terms such as Chura, Chamaar, and Bhangi were used to portray the bra-zen abuse of Dalits, a section of the audience laughed each time these terms were uttered. The fact that the audience was seeking comedy in the humiliation of marginalized folks showed insensitivity of urban crowd. The acting is on point by a superb cast. Abhijeet Singh plays the antagonist Chaudhary and Daroga very convincingly. Rohit Kumar enacts the innocence of young Omprakash with perfection that makes the viewer root for him. Anas Khan personates the adult Omprakash and arrests the attention of everyone. The live music by Prason Narayan, Sachin, Prashant Misra and Raj Kishor made the production stellar. Kabir bhajans such as 'Ud Ja Hans Akela' along-side old Bollywood melodies like 'Pal Pal Dil ke Pass' serenaded the audience. Lightning by Sachin Kumar and Badal Singh complimented the impec-cable set that was designed by Kanchan Ujjal Singh. There were at least five to six different backdrops and the transition from one background to an-other was perfectly handled by Tanvi Goel and Manish Kumar. The collec-tive efforts of the cast and crew encapsulated in a long, standing ovation. Go and watch this LGT Auditorium Repertory production whenever you get a chance, because it will be totally worth it.

Concoction

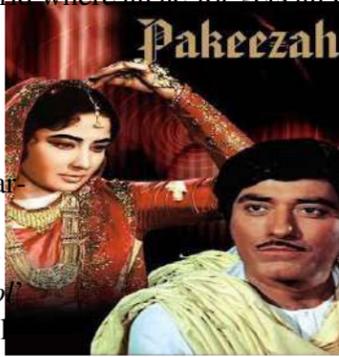
ARCHIVING FILMS

Prakriti Bakshi

Today, being a cinephile has been relegated to having watched 'The Breakfast Club', 'Sholay' and one's favourite movie, more times than you can remember. Although flaunting 'film buff' looks fancy on an Insta bio, binging on half-witted rom-coms all night doesn't exactly teach you much about the art of cinema. However, in a world where an actor gets an Oscar for playing the direc-

tor, actor and screenwriter of the 'worst' movie ever made, who am I to judge?

Ridiculously generalizing the demographic of the Indian millennial for the sake of this article, one can observe that we're characterised by copious amounts of content consumption. However, iconic Indian cinema such as Guru Dutt's 'Kaagaz ke Phool' and Kamal Amrohi's 'Pakeezah' don't fall into this ambit and are names we've only heard of in reminisced anecdotes. The only source of our



Source: Youtube

skewed intake of cinematic history being 'Bollywood Existentialist Me-mes'; the only reason we'd watch such movies, to understand their spoof. One of the first Hindi classic movies I remember watching was Kundan Shah's 1983 cult comedy 'JaaneBhi Do Yaaron'. It was still the age before Netflix and my father had rented a pirated disk from the local DVD lend-er to enlighten his children. The film was able to sear through my initial teenagerly scepticism and strike a chord even 25 years after it was made. The beauty in the art of cinema is not lost to us, but with a plethora of new content and a growing number of resources to access them, old Indian cinema is fading into obscurity for the generations to come. The culture of film watching is evolving, the taste, broadly, is not. Even if one is inter-ested in watching these films the extent of our effort is limited to going to the DVD section of the college library only to find that students are barred from issuing them. It's rhetorical to ask why we'd rather Netflix. Not many have heard of the man who initiated the archiving of Indi-an cinematic material. Mr. P K Nair. The celluloid man of India. He founded the National Film Archives of India, located in Pune which houses a vast collection of reels, movie posters, still photographs, and song sheets in an attempt to preserve the bygone years of cine-ma. This month the institution completes 55 years since its founda-tion and I reckon it needs a shift in its approach. There is a treasure trove of archival material shielded away from the digital world and thus the world in general. Although attempts are being made to restore and digitalize, they exist with reports of material being lost. Accord-ing to an FIR accessed by 'The Indian Express' more than 1,100 films, contained in 14,950 reels, including rare and precious pieces of Indi-an and international cinema, are rotting inside 1,202 gunny bags on the second and third floors of a building inside NFAI's Pune campus. Typical of the classics, a hopeful ending is imperative to this con-cern. Of all the things millennials are accused of killing, this won't be one.



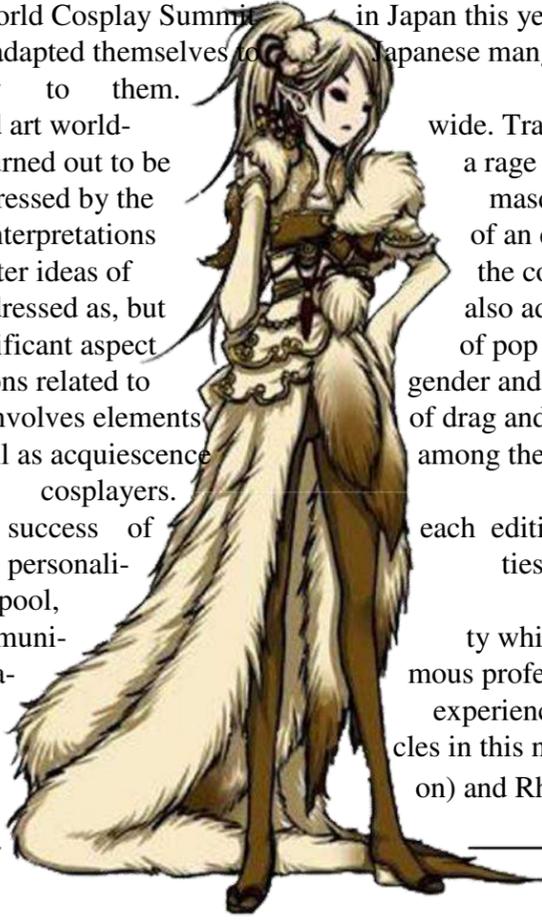
FINDING SPACE FOR THE MASQUERADE

Jasmine Kaur

Putting on their lacey shirts, high waisted skirts paired with strappy red heels and pink-headed wigs, Akanksha Sachan and Arion Shariyari make heads turn as they gear up to walk for the World Cosplay Summit in Japan this year. What initially started as a hobby transformed into a full-time profession for these Delhi girls as they adapted themselves to Japanese manga characters, Homura Akemi and Madoka Kaname. But the road to cosplaying didn't come easy to them.

Cosplay is now a widely accepted art world-costume playing or cosplay has turned out to be covered the concept in 1984, impressed by the expression in society. Dramatic interpretations video game, or an original character ideas of cosplaying. Fans often, not only dressed as, but ties. It started to emerge as a significant aspect. However, certain traditional notions related to often borrows heavily from and involves elements society. Lack of awareness as well as acquiescence expression of the cosplayers.

Over the years, with the success of playing a spectrum of personali-marvel characters like Dead pool, Conversely, this small communi-even more daunting. One of the fa-have faced a no. of intimidating places several hurdles and obsta-Guardians (Akanksha and Ari-



wide. Tracing its origins to fan costuming at Science fiction and fan conventions, a rage with a whole new cosplay industry at work today. When Takakashi dis-masquerade shows in Japan, who had thought it would be an artistic form of of an entity, be it a fictional character from your favourite Tv series, movie or the cosplayer, which once were a fun activity, now encompass the practise of also adopted the mannerisms, body language and behaviour of their personali-of pop culture, inspired by Japanese anime and video game frenzy at that time. gender and dressing in India condescend this rapidly growing art form. Cosplaying of drag and genderbending which are deemed as unsuitable or inappropriate by the among the people has generated stereotypical notions about this creative ex-

each edition of Comic Con in India, the vibrant-spirited cosplayers, dis-ties, ranging from Ginny Weasley from the Harry Potter franchise to DC & seemed to have blown the winds of change in the minds of the people.

ty which is trying to create its niche in India, the idea of a woman cosplayer is mous professionals include Rhea, or Reality Lapse as she is popularly known, who experiences. Though the overly conservative Indian culture raises objections and cles in this newly emerging path, nevertheless, the passion of cosplayer like the Star on) and Rhea continue to strengthen with each tiny step they take in this direction.

Acronyming the self

Aditi Doneria

How do you come to know if a person is an introvert or extrovert? No, extensive trait and personality tests is not the right answer. Paradoxically, an introvert is most likely to tell you themselves about their disposition, I can see all you active Netizens nodding a bit. On the surface, it seems rather positive that the people who are intrinsically not motivated to interact openly with people can through the platform of web express their disposition, but does this mean that the web which seems to be a harmless platform is altering our basic social attitudes? It is not uncommon to see social Media profiles where people describe themselves as Sapio sexual, hot as fire, cold as ice, their zodiac sign their cast, dreamer, wanderlust and other trendy buzz words. There's nothing wrong with people trying to describe themselves in a line or two, in fact there are deeper meaning or myths attached to these words, to borrow Roland Barthes concept of denotations and connotation. People are constantly carrying more of themselves on their sleeve, at least those traits of themselves that they perceive and want other to perceive too, they possess. A little complicated, isn't it? Well that is exactly the point. More and more people every day are reducing their complex self, their dynamic being to a couple of lines or mere words. Does this mean that individuals around us are reduced from elaborate, poetic ballads to catchy, simple worded jingles? Even if it is so, then weighing one artistic expression against other and judging which is 'high' and 'low' on the cultural ladder is deeply problematic as Raymond

Williams has rightly taught us.

If all our assessments, judgments and remarks are directly subject to market risks of being politically correct or not. The whole point of this discussion is to learn that it is not possible to arrive at conclusions always. All debates need not have a winner. The validity of a Question doesn't nullify if there is no one right Answer to it. We have been conditioned since a very small age to believe that we must always give right answers to prove ourselves, secure a respectable position in a constructed hierarchy, prove our worthiness to others. This early programming of our mind constructs



Source: lifehacker.com

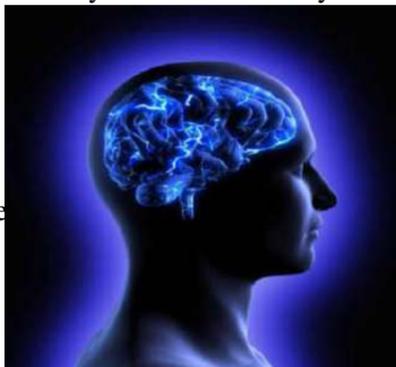
the illusion that to be Correct, you must always answer correctly, it is because of this if-else loop coded in our mind, that any question or debate that doesn't end conforming to the binary of right or wrong is dismissed as it is deemed unimportant. The conditioning of our minds has resulted in making us focus only on the end result, the outcome or the Event and neglect the entire narrative of negotiation the very process that leads to the Event. What must be ensured is that the culture of negotiation of arguments, mediation and contestations of opinions doesn't lose out while we are busy in reducing the reality of our lives to mere words or sentences. Reducing data into binary codes to allow processing is the central function of machines, let complexity and layers of opinions thoughts and meanings prevail let the basic point of differentiation between humans and machines prevail.

The mind wants what it wants. Does it?

Jasmine Kaur

Find the soul that searches for itself because others are just searching for something more. The statement may seem too philosophical at first. But have a closer look, does it? It's simply what we try to do each day of our lives but our caught up in dilemma the between two souls. Let's look at simple things: Don't you always get lured with a Sale sign at your favourite store, tantalized by the brownie that you saw passing by at bakery or praying for

a huge waiver or promotion at work? It may seem a pretty normal phenomenon to you. And the normalcy of this leads to constant desires and dissatisfactions and before we know, we've drowned really deep into the mire of "The Wanting Mind" or as Buddha calls it, "The Hungry Ghost". Yes, that's a thing.



Source: Scienceday.com

Research and observations of patients suffering from depression

has led various psychologists to this psychological state of mind where unhappiness and dissatisfaction can be cured only through more fame, recognition, money or power. This creates a loop within a loop and thus, the person tends to lose their inner self and personal freedom. What controls our actions thereon isn't our mind but the desire realm. This realm consists of a chain of desires that arise from every desire that remains unsatisfied. The mind is no mathematical formula or theorem, it grows and evolves with our actions and reactions. So what's the solution? How do we end this vicious cycle? The answer is mindfulness. Being consciously aware of your actions and the reasons for undertaking them help us to make intelligent decisions and better choices in life. Your repressed feelings tend to erupt at this time in the form of desires, cravings or wants and hinder one's ability to explore their true potential. Often, a simple jealousy may end up becoming a feeling of hatred due to the "wanting mind" Letting the negative and unwholesome feelings out of our systems heals the mind and soul, cleansing our palette and providing a sort of catharsis for our thought processes. This also helps to shatter the long-drawn belief that happiness can only be found outside of ourselves. As the external nature is broken down, we try to find happiness within ourselves, within what we have i.e. contentment and inner peace. "If I survive this life without dying, I'll be surprised"- Mulla Nas-rudin

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

Jasmine Kaur

*“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.”*

“**W**hen I start to think about Communiqué, these few lines by Robert Frost always ring a bell in my head. With my third year into working for our annual department newsletter, I can assure you we've lost none of the enthusiasm to discover the unusual and rediscover the familiar and express what each one of us feels and believes. Carving out a niche in this world full of ideas, concepts and judgements is what Communiqué is all about. Working on a newsletter from the scratch isn't a piece of cake but when your team becomes your friend, working doesn't feel the same. What you see as the end result is the sole reflection of our passion and dedication towards something really close to our hearts. The process is a complex one, with hustle bustle on one end and the anxiousness to meet the deadline on the other. But leaving behind all apprehensions, we begin with pitching ideas and writing features on a string of issues relating to culture, politics, gender, art etc. And just like any other newsroom, ours is filled with chattering, quarrels, arguments and finally, consensus. The stage of layout and designing arrives with its own set of differences on petty things like the appropriate colour or font. So as I trace the entire course of its development, it comes to me as a realisation that whatever might be our differences of opinion and clashes, the intent of each one is to strive for perfection. And that's how the Communiqué grows and evolves; with new members giving it a different shape and identity while some others leaving their marks on it for a long time. However, when these glossy sheets get imprinted with our hard work this year, it would be a mixed bag of emotions for me – the satisfaction of another year of successful endeavours and the sorrow of experiencing this feeling for the last time.

”

CONFESSIONS OF A CUB REPORTER: PART 4

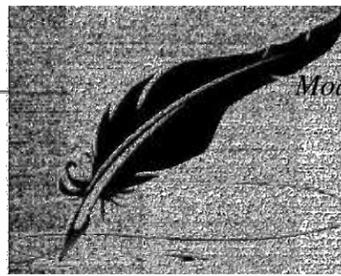
Shreya Bansal

Every year with a quirky new theme The Communiqué becomes a platform that incorporates and becomes a voice to different opinions and genres and gives way to budding writers who aim to reflect change, create an impact or just simply love to express through words.

Behind every Poem, article, rant or photograph are individuals who have tried to use their form of expression to convey themes they are passionate about and put forward opinions they strongly believe in.

Creating a newsletter that evolves as a product of a hardworking team that aims to bring out the best, comes with its own complexities. While some people struggled with dates and deadlines others struggled with color schemes and peculiarities. There were writers who believed less is more and then there were those who's words met no limits. The spirit of the newsroom was on some days taxing, on others amusing but mostly one of determination and professionalism. The Communiqué is the after math of all this and much more.

After many coffees, plenty of debates, few edits and fewer conflicts a group of aspiring, nerdy journalists present to you, Communiqué 2018.



TEAM COMMUNIQUÉ



“When it rains, look for rainbows. When it's dark, look for stars.”

Oscar Wilde

“No matter what people tell you, words and ideas can change the world.”

Robin Williams



Ishita Mishra
Design & Layout



Shreya Bansal
Editor

“I am no bird and no net ensnares me; I'm a free human being with an independent will”

Jane Eyre



Sayani Rakshit
Sub-Editor



Prakriti Bakshi

“I put my heart and soul into my work, and have lost my mind in the process”.

Vincent Van Gogh

“For most of history, Anonymous was a woman.”

Virginia Woolf



Shambhavi Shukla

“To climb steep hills requires slow pace at first”.

William Shakespeare



Neelam Kumari

