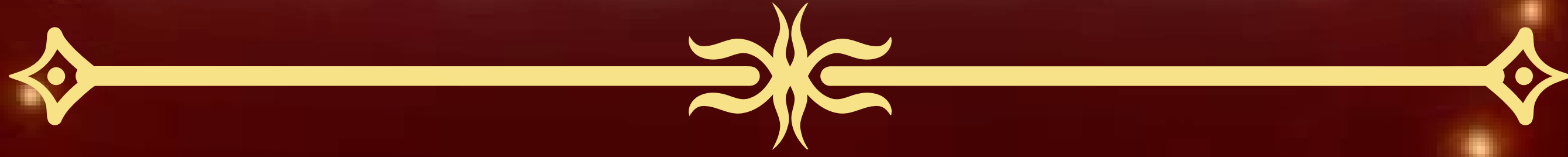


PHOENIX



VOLUME III

2024



E-MAGAZINE

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

VICTORIA INSTITUTION (COLLEGE)

Message from the DEPARTMENT



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The third volume of Phoenix-E-Magazine of the Department of English, Victoria Institution (College) is ready to be launched, thanks to the consistent effort of the students and teachers of the Department. The thrust area of the magazine this time is rather complex but very relevant for the given time. 'Superwoman' is a current sociological concept also finding its way into literature and other arenas. A superwoman is a multi tasking woman, playing multiple roles of a worker, a homemaker, a volunteer, a student or a single mother. As usual the voice of PHOENIX reverberates for radical feminism worshipping the concept of the superwoman who also has to fight against domestic abuse or sexual harassment. The contributions of the students show how a woman becomes a 'Superwoman' in today's difficult times as the voice of feminism again rises from the ashes.

Message from the

EDITORIAL TEAM



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Shruti Dutta

Esteemed Readers,

The transformation and compilation journey of Phoenix Vol 3 from ashes and dust to the jubilant stage through your enthusiastic and thoughtful contributions on the theme of the much celebrated concept of 'Superwoman' is finally here to make its mark. It has been a very creative and elating journey of sweet toils on our part as the Editorial Team, to sort and compile all your unique creations in this E-magazine. We whole heartedly cherish this experience as we hope so will you. Without much further ado, let's get started, Fasten your seatbelts and delve into the space to know what our beloved E-journal Phoenix has to say. And most importantly -Enjoy!

With warm regards,

Editorial Team {Semester 4}



CONTENTS



Articles.....6

Short stories.....14

Poetry.....28

Film & Book Review....40

Artworks.....48

Photography.....53





Article



DARLING OR VICTOR: MIGHTY MAIDEN

India, a nation known for its rich cultural diversity and democratic governance, has a complex history of gender equality. Despite constitutional provisions promoting equality, the political arena has traditionally been dominated by men. Let's delve into the struggle faced by women in Indian politics, examining both historical contexts and contemporary challenges.

The world's largest democracy has held rolling elections in recent weeks across four state assemblies and in one union territory. Yet women - who make up almost half of voters-only comprised of about one in ten of the candidates : 9% in Kerala, 7.8% in Assam and 11% in Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and West Bengal. Gender equality remains a distant dream.



Breaking the shackles of Patriarchal Indian politics are iconic figures like Jayaram Jayalitha aka "Tamizh Thai" (Tamil Mother) whose remarkable journey took her from the silver screen to chief minister's office leaving an indelible mark on Tamil Nadu's political landscape. India, as the world's largest democracy, has a complex history of gender inequality. Despite its progressive constitutional framework, the political arena has traditionally been dominated by men. Over the years, significant strides have been made to break down these barriers and encourage greater gender parity in politics.

Jayalitha lived a unique life marked by the deepest of tragedies and the greatest of successes. It is impossible to talk about her struggles achievements however, without the context of her gender in the patriarchal and sexist political sphere of Tamil Nadu. The Assembly attack in 1989 however was the worst instance of the misogyny that Jayalitha faced. An altercation between AIADMK and DMK members led to severe harassment including objects being flung at Jayalitha, and one DMK member attempting to pull of her saree. Jayalitha walked out of the Assembly Hall, disheveled, shaken, upset and wrathful. She swore that she would not step foot inside the Assembly until conditions were safe for women in the Assembly Hall, and she was chief minister. Two years later, she won the elections in a triumphing majority, and returned to the Assembly as a Chief Minister, after the assault in Tamil Nadu. This instance garnered widespread sympathy for Jayalitha which eventually aided her comeback to power in the subsequent Assembly election. She was an incredibly fortitudinous woman. Instead of being beaten down by these constant attacks, she battled against them.



The media has attacked her also for her lack of a husband, her potentially romantic relationship with MGR, an alleged lesbian relationship with her aide Sasikala, and all manner of personal issues that have no consequence on governance or policy-making in the state in her capacity as Chief Minister or Leader of the Opposition.

Jayalalithaa's life is testimony to the difficulty that women in politics might face...especially those that do not come from politically established families. Given the patriarchal structure of the family, women are expected to balance a home and work life; something that is difficult in a career in politics. In the Simi Garewal interview, Jayalalithaa mentions how being unencumbered by a family aided her complete immersion in a career.

Apart from entrance into politics, women politicians face constant belittlement and challenges to their authority by a country that finds it difficult to answer to a woman in power. In order to surpass these obstacles, women in power often need to internalize masculine norms whilst also conforming to feminine norms in order to gain acceptance. Hence the maxim, *"look like a woman, act like a man"*.

It is a towering testament to Jayalalithaa's immense force will and fortitude that she managed



not only to survive, but excel in this political climate that is so deeply unwelcoming towards women.

In the contemporary time of Indian politician Lathika Subhas smiled for the cameras last month and shaved the hair from her head. Subhas was making a personal protest after being left off Congress party ticket for state elections in the southern state of Kerala. But her intent was not only to draw attention to her own flagging fortunes. The much bigger problem she wanted to highlight was women's lack of representation in Indian politics. There is no dearth of women workers in India's major political parties, but they are regularly sidelined and denied a party ticket to contest elections. In Kerala, Subhas says she had sought at least 20% representation to women among the candidates.

Along with others Nusrat Aura was one of the prominent voices in the Shaheen Bhag protests that took place in Delhi from December 2019 to January 2020. These protests were sparked by the passages of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), which many saw as discriminatory against Muslims.

To address the gender gap, India introduced reservation quotas for women in local governance (Panchayat Raj Institutions) in the 1990s. This move significantly increased women's participation at the grassroots level, allowing them to hold leadership positions in village councils.



In summary, women in India continue to shape political discourse through their active participation in protests and movements, advocating for their rights and the betterment of society. Their voices and actions remain essential in driving social change and challenging discriminatory policies. In the drop

down we see how they rose from their ashes like a PHOENIX.

SUPERWOMAN: A MYTH OR REALITY

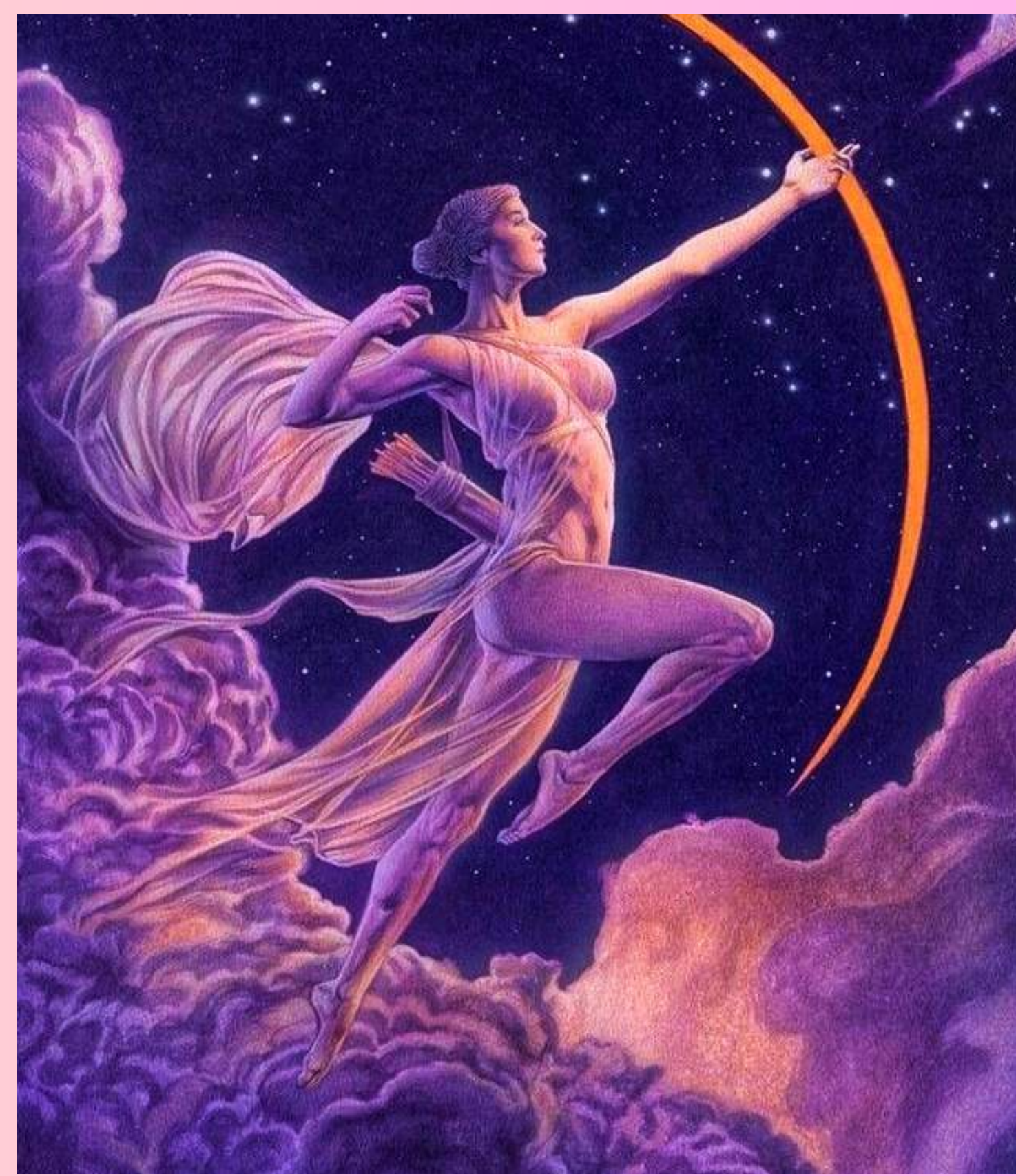
The concept of a "superwoman" evokes images of extraordinary strength, resilience and capability. From ancient mythology to modern examples, the idea of a superwoman has evolved, blending myth with reality in intriguing ways.

Mythological Origins

The notion of superwoman can be traced back to ancient myths and legends. In Greek mythology, figures like Athena, the goddess of wisdom and war, and Artemis,



Athena



Artemis

the huntress and protector of women, embody qualities of strength, intelligence and independence. Similarly, in Hindu mythology, goddesses like Durga and Kali represent powerful female figures capable of vanquishing evil and protecting the good. These deities symbolize not only physical power but also wisdom, compassion and strategic thinking.



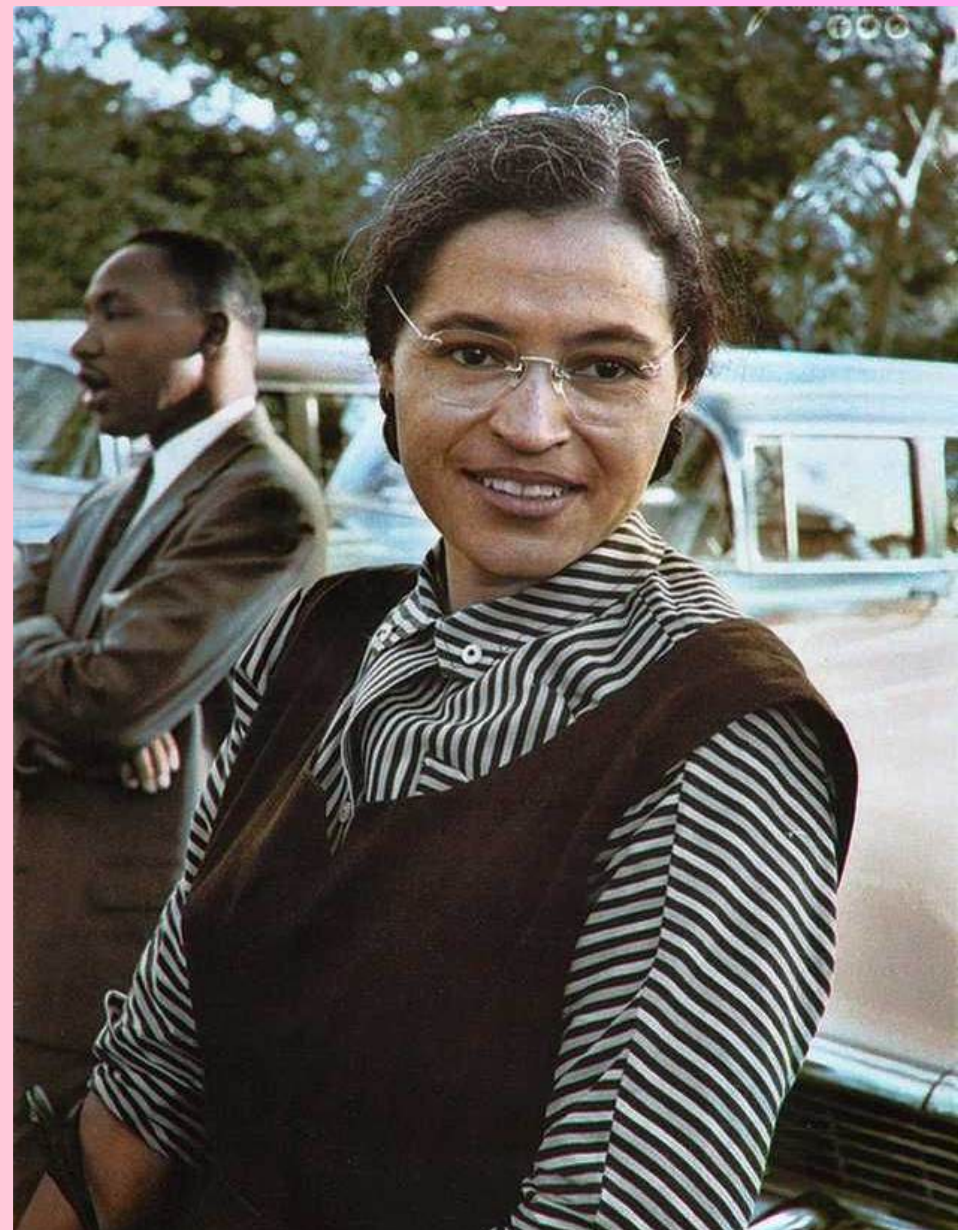
Historical Figures



Joan of Arc

Throughout history, real women have exhibited superwoman-like qualities, challenging societal norms and achieving greatness. Joan of Arc, the young French heroine who led her country to victories during the *Hundred Years' War*, is one such figure. Her courage and leadership in the face of overwhelming odds cemented her legacy as a real-life superwoman.

In more recent history, women like Marie Curie, the pioneering scientist who won two Nobel Prizes, and Rosa Parks, whose defiance sparked the Civil Rights Movement, showcase the superwoman archetype in their respective fields. These women demonstrated exceptional dedication, intelligence, and moral fortitude, inspiring generations.



Rosa Parks

Modern-day Superwomen

In today's world, the concept of a superwoman is more tangible than ever. Women across various fields are breaking barriers and achieving extraordinary feats. For instance, Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel Prize laureate, continues to champion girls' education globally despite facing life-threatening adversity. Similarly, Serena Williams, an unparalleled force in tennis, exemplifies physical prowess and resilience, balancing a demanding career and motherhood.



Jacinda Arden

Women in leadership roles are also embodying the superwoman spirit. Jacinda Arden, the Prime Minister of New Zealand has been lauded for her empathetic and effective leadership, especially during the crisis like the Christchurch mosque shootings and COVID-19 pandemic. Her ability to lead compassion and strength has set a new standard for modern leadership.

The Superwoman in Everyday Life



Beyond the high-profile examples, countless women around the world demonstrate superwoman qualities in their daily lives. Mothers, caregivers, professionals and community leaders often juggle multiple roles, displaying remarkable resilience and strength. COVID-19 pandemic has particularly highlighted the critical roles women play, from frontline healthcare workers to essential service providers and beyond.

The Myth and The Reality

While the superwoman archetype is inspiring, it's essential to acknowledge the pressures it can create. The expectation for women to excel in all areas-career, family, personal health, and social responsibilities-can be overwhelming and unrealistic. This "*superwoman syndrome*" can be lead to burnout and stress, highlighting the need for societal change in recognizing and and supporting the multifaceted roles women play.

Inference

The superwoman, as both myth and reality, represents the extraordinary potential within women. Historical and modern examples show that superwoman are not confined to the realm of mythology; they walk among us, achieving greatness in various forms. However, while celebrating these achievements, it is crucial to support and alleviate the burdens that come with these expectations, ensuring that the concept of a superwoman remains a source of inspiration rather than an unattainable ideal.



— DEBASMITA SAHA, SEMESTER VI

Smart Stories





A star: I choose to shine

“Thank you, Mrs. Dutta, for all the contributions to our company, but I am afraid to say that though I appreciate how you have been managing both your career and family, I think you can no longer do so. To the point, which option would you prefer: receiving a termination letter or submitting a resignation?”


Diya stood numb with the files clamped within her arms and sparkling eyes. She took a long breath and said – “Managing both household and workplace is not easy. However, I believe I can do this as I have been doing it for so long. It’s been six years; I have been working hard for this company. Considering all my regards towards the company, hereby I submit my resignation letter.”

Women are known for their instinct popularly known as ‘gut feelings’. Perhaps, with that magical power, Diya apprehended something like this to be attacking her soon. So, she was ready with her resignation letter at hand. Diya went to a café, namely Cafe Grill, her zone of zoning out. She put her bag on the opposite chair and ordered – “Get me a Latte, please”. She was sitting straight with a confident pair of eyes. In the small society of a big city, she was known for her tireless work ethic. Diya managed both her demanding job at a prestigious firm and her responsibilities at home with unwavering dedication. People often praised her, calling her the epitome of modern womanhood, balancing career and family seamlessly.

“Here it is ma’am”

- “Oh! Thank you, dear.”

She took a quick sip and she scalded her tongue. “*Mamma, you are my superwoman*”- she was preoccupied with the verbal hallucination.





“I could not be your superwoman, child”- she thought to herself and broke down. She quickly got up, took her bag, pulled the door rashly, and got on the bus immediately towards her home.

She took all her might, took a long breath, and pressed the doorbell. The door opened immediately; a little girl opened the door. She hugged her tightly – “Welcome home, mamma- I missed you a lot!”

-“I missed you too my angel, Oh Kaira” – Diya took her in her arms and closed her eyes, a drop of tear slipped down her cheeks.

“Aww- such a lovely moment.” Diya looked up and saw Tara was standing at the kitchen door. Tara and Diya have been best friends since college. Tara has come to surprise her.

“What a lovely surprise! Tara!”


“You should thank me, Diya”- Sadvi, her sister-in-law smiled and spoke. She continued – “It’s me who has called her – I was not feeling well”.

-“Thank you, Doctor Sengupta,” said Diya and her smile was bright.

Tara said- “I think I must spill the beans, Sadvi, shouldn’t I?”

She continued explaining - “Every morning, Sadvi woke up at 5 AM to prepare breakfast and pack lunches for her two children. She then hurried to get ready for work, often being the first to arrive at the office. At the firm, her workload was overwhelming, but Sadvi never backed down, fearing that any sign of weakness might jeopardize her hard-earned position.





After work, she rushed home to cook dinner, help with homework, and tidy up the house. By the time she finally settled into bed, it was well past midnight, leaving her with only a few precious hours of sleep.

The constant exhaustion began to take its toll. Sadvi's health deteriorated, and she started feeling trapped in her own life. Diganta Da encouraged her to maintain the same pace, often citing how society admired women like her. "You're a role model, Sadvi. Other women look up to you," he'd say, not realizing—or perhaps not wanting to realize—the price she was paying."


"I think I have said enough.

Let's catch up soon, Diya.

Bye, everybody, and you – Sadvi – dear superwoman, please take some rest". Tara departed saying everything aloud so boldly that the hue even splashed to some extent on Diya.

Two weeks have passed, and Diya is without a job. Sadvi has recovered only a little, as medicines did their job but her routine went on without any changes. Dev, Diya's husband is no longer called a fortunate husband. Perhaps, because Diya is no longer the CEO of the company but her house. After doing all her chores, finally, she managed to go to the café to meet Tara in the evening. She confided in her, how not only managing both, made her stressed but also how the gender politics at her office continued to stick with her and how all these resulted in her deteriorating performance.





Kaira would not call her superwoman anymore. In reality, only women like Sadvi deserve that. She was confessing everything and Tara was listening to her most intently.

Tara put her warm hand on her shoulder, smiled, and said - “Diu, you think, Sadvi is the one who benefits working this hard? Is it really her?”


Diya paused, reflecting on the question.

Tara had chosen a different path, focusing on a balanced life with clear boundaries between work and personal time.

Diya asked – “Was it easy Tara?”

“Not at all. Look at the stars Diu, they look so similar but they do shine separately. Look at the moon, it has its craters, and not even its light is its own, still, it shines among the stars, doesn't it? In the race to become a moon, I felt okay to be a star and still shine instead of being loved and bright like the moon.” Tara said it as calmly as the waves.

The truth began to dawn on her. Diya was returning home. The street lights were illuminating her path. Just after returning home, she went to the kitchen and brewed coffee for herself. She sat on the couch and then held the mug clasped within her palms and was feeling better with the warmth of it. She lounged lazily before turning her attention to the view outside the window. Lost in her thoughts, she leisurely savored her coffee, sipping it slowly as time slipped by. This time she did not burn her tongue. She smiled on her own. Finishing her coffee, she got up quickly and went to Sadvi's room.





She overheard her brother-in-law, Diganta.

“Didn’t you promise me, Sadvi, that you can do it all? What happened now? Where are your promises? Women are not weak, accept it. Now stop acting like you are dying and get up. You will not resign tomorrow and it’s an order. I have heard what Tara said. Why can’t you contribute too in the family?”

Diya could not bear it anymore; She pushed open the door and continued –

“No, Diganta, no. We women are human beings too. If we have to contribute to the family by working outside and at home as well, why don’t you try to be a Superman like us and do the same?”

Diganta stared at her. He stared at Sadvi and went out of the room in silence. Sadvi was standing silent. She realized that her relentless drive was not entirely her own but was deeply rooted in the societal expectations placed upon her. She had been idealized not for her own sake, but to perpetuate a system that benefited from her labor without offering real support. She felt a weight lift off her shoulders. For the first time, she saw the conspiracy clearly: the praise, the admiration, and the myth of the superwoman were all tools to keep her in line. She decided to take control of her life.

Diya came to her and said so softly that it faded into the air - “It’s a trap, Sadvi. The patriarchy disguises this burden as empowerment, but it’s just a way to keep you tied to endless work, at home and in the office. You don’t have to do it all to be valued.” Sadvi nodded lightly. The room was silent.





The next day, Sadvi talked to Diganta about sharing household duties and setting firm boundaries at work. She began delegating tasks and stopped striving for unattainable perfection. She went to the office and submitted her resignation letter. “Only a break can help me breathe again. Thank you, Sir.” She smiled and bade farewell.

Ten years passed, Diya had worked really hard on her skills and chose to live on her terms. “Don’t worry, Dia, everything will be fine, have this coffee now” said Sadvi.

“Oh! I am glad to have you in my life Sadvi. What about the book? Have you finished it writing? I am truly waiting for the fifth success!” laughed Diya. She added, “It doesn’t feel real sometimes, you know, I am the owner of my own company and you have embraced your passion. We have done it Sadvi, haven’t we?”

“Definitely we did. But why is Dev talking aloud?”

“Why don’t you become a doctor Kaira? Look at you aunt Tara. Don’t go for such passion. Aren’t you my superwoman?” yelled Dev at Tara.

“No Papa, I have decided. I have grown up watching my mother and aunt, and aunt Tara for sure. They are my role model. I have learnt from them to live, to breathe. I will choose my passion and I am determined. I love fashion, I love designs. I don’t want to be doctor like aunt Tara, Papa. I am leaving for Mumbai tomorrow and I will be happy, Papa” said Kaira in a single breath.





“Fine”, said Dev.

Sadvi and Diya hugged Kaira the next day. She was ready to leave.

“Mamma, you are my inspiration. I will not be a superwoman, it may happen, but I will definitely be a star. Bye Mamma, bye Aunt.”

“We will meet soon, dear!”

All the women had tears in their eyes. Time passed so rapidly. Suddenly, the phone rang.

“Hello, yes Sanskar, how is Tara? She can survive another dose of chemo, right?”

“No, Diya, Tara left us. May her soul rest”.

Diya hung up and broke into tears on Sadvi’s shoulders.

- Aryama Bhattacharya

Semester 4





Tales of The Rail Tracks: An Anecdote

It's been about two years since I have been a daily visitor to the railway station. Almost every morning, at sharp 9:30 am, I take the train to the *city of joy* to reach my beloved college. Life at college has proved to be a blessing for me, mainly because it is a women's college where I witness powerful, wise and brave women like my professors, impart their knowledge and wisdom among us everyday.

Within these two years, I have learned more about my gender and it's different dynamics, than I doubt I ever would have been taught, had I been in some other college. I have learned to identify, how the world isn't just black and white, but filled with grey cracks through which, women have continued to slip through, for ages. No matter our influence, no matter our social stature, patriarchy has constantly rammed down their lousy ideals down our tired throats; the most topical one being, the idea of a Superwoman.

On my day to day travels to college, I have observed several such women, who have either bested or succumbed to the burden of being a superwoman; trying to fit the bill, two of whom I recall in my story.

My journey to college is not always the smoothest. The poor, rusted doors of the train compartments agree with me when I say, it is no different from a battlefield.






However, we do not have the luxury to stand and contemplate whether to engage in that battlefield or wait for the next one to arrive.

Time and trains, wait for none.

With usually a dishevelled outfit and a broken rib or two, I make my way through the jam-packed compartment everyday, hoping to find two foot spans of space to stand in. One such day, after weathering the initial wave of passengers boarding the train, I found myself comfortably sandwiched in between the window and it's adjacent seating alley. Of course, none of the seats were empty, nor did the occupants look like they wanted to get off any time soon. Thus disappointed, but not surprised, I mentally convinced my legs that they can do their jobs for the next seventy five minutes easily.

Suddenly I felt something, or rather someone, *sniff* the back of my torso. A quick chill of fear and disgust ran throughout my body. I looked back apprehensively, only to find, an aged Spitz dog looking back at me with it's wet black nose up in the air. It's owner, a tiny grandma, smiled at me assuringly and pulled her pet closer to her lap, where it was sitting cozily. I was genuinely amused, for it was my first time seeing a dog riding the train, and so I took a discreet picture and sent it to my friends. Throughout the journey, I enjoyed hearing the grandma constantly talking to the dog, as if it were her own child. She even bought a pack of juice for it to drink, and cooed in its ears lovingly as a mother does to a child.






The dog had occupied a tiny bit of the seat whenever it wished to get off of the grandma's lap, hence there were four people and a dog sitting on the same seat. As expected, a cranky lady, who was sitting on the edge of the seat, exclaimed scornfully, "Why have you put the dog on the seat, huh? Don't you care about the fellow passengers sitting with you? See, I can barely sit." The Grandma remained silent and without so much as looking at the woman, she took out a pair of tickets and shoved them into the lady's hands. Before the lady could object any further, she got up and took out a basket from under the seat. She called out to her dog and the dog jumped into the basket obediently. When she was sure her child was safely secured, she went towards the doors and got off on the next station. I do not know if I agree with the Grandma about public transport etiquettes, but I sure realised the power of motherhood that day, that showers its uninhibited love on its child, regardless of it being human or not. Thinking about the incident later, made me chuckle how the Grandma was ready to defend her precious canine child with her handy tickets. Like a Superwoman, always on the look out for the well being of her child.

But not every day is the same, and nor every mother.

A few weeks after the aforementioned event, on a regular Tuesday, I, as usual, was wading through the viscous crowd, searching for a spot to stand. However, I got rather lucky and found a spot to sit instead. As soon as I sat down, I looked up to find the sweetest possible bundle of joy in front of me. A mother was sitting with her baby directly across me and by the looks of it, it was a baby girl, no more than six or seven months old.





The baby's gaze was absolutely fixated at me, perhaps, amused by the glint of my spectacles. Her big, curious and kohled eyes and her supple cheeks made it so hard for me to resist the urge to squeeze her in my arms. I observed her mother for a minute and realised, she had a rather stoic expression on her face. She had the *pallu* of her saree covering half her head and she looked outside the window with a certain pensiveness. She would only care to turn towards her daughter whenever she cooed for her attention and only then could one see, a hint of a smile etched across her face.

The usual crowd of the train seemed to thin out faster that day, as two women came and sat beside me, just two stops before my destination. These women were pleasantly chatty and immediately started showering the baby with affection. They started asking the mother various questions about the baby such as how old was she, what was her name, what did she feed her, etcetera. The mother smiled and answered all of their questions while the baby got excited due to the sudden influx of attention and high pitched voices of adoration. Her mother held her up in a sitting position and she smiled her angelic smile. I tried to gain her attention by taking off my *jhumka* and dangling it in front of her; the only tried and trusted trick in the book that always does the work. I was playing with the sweetheart while her mother chatted with the other ladies, when in a blink of an eye, the baby snatched away my *jhumka* and immediately put it in her mouth.





The mother was quick to react and pried it off of her mouth before anything terrible happened. Then she proceeded to do something that disturbed all of us and the onlookers.

She started thrashing her poor baby, not once but at least three to four times. The baby immediately started wailing and the two ladies became distraught. They stopped the woman's hands and calmed her down with their sad pleas. Before they could say anything more, the woman looked up at us with a perturbingly calm face and said, "Why are you stopping me? What difference does it make if I thrash her instead of someone else? This baby was damned to suffer the moment she was born, and so was I as her unfortunate mother."

The silence in the almost empty compartment grew palpable as she continued, "Do you people have any idea where we are going? We are going to her uncle's house, my brother. He knows a good orphanage where I can sell her for a good amount." The two women gasped audibly and immediately protested "But why? Why on earth, are you willing to sell your child for money?" Perhaps, for the first time in these sixty minutes, I saw a glimmer of emotion, a deep seated melancholy in the mother's eyes. She answered, "Her father, my husband, banished both her and me the moment he saw her face. He refused to believe she is his child because according to him, he could never have created a girl child. He threw me out of the house. Where do I go with her? Who will accept us and feed and clothe us? Hence, it's better if I cut all my motherly affections from her. I will thrash her as much as I want, if need be."

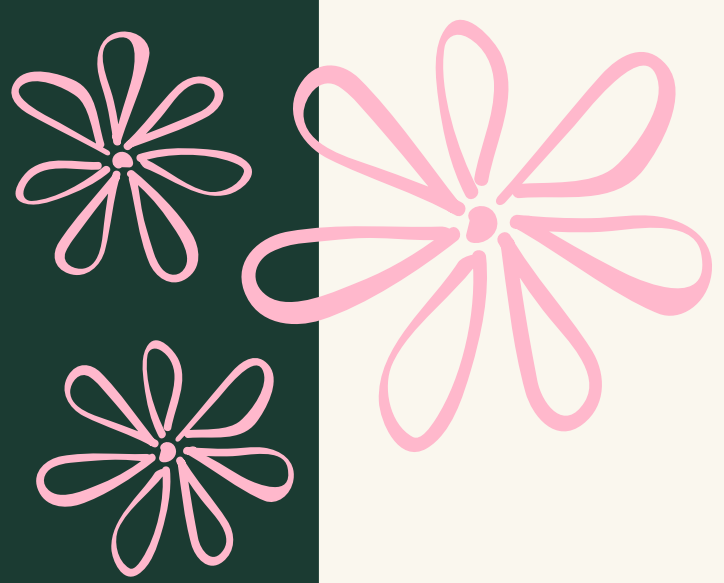
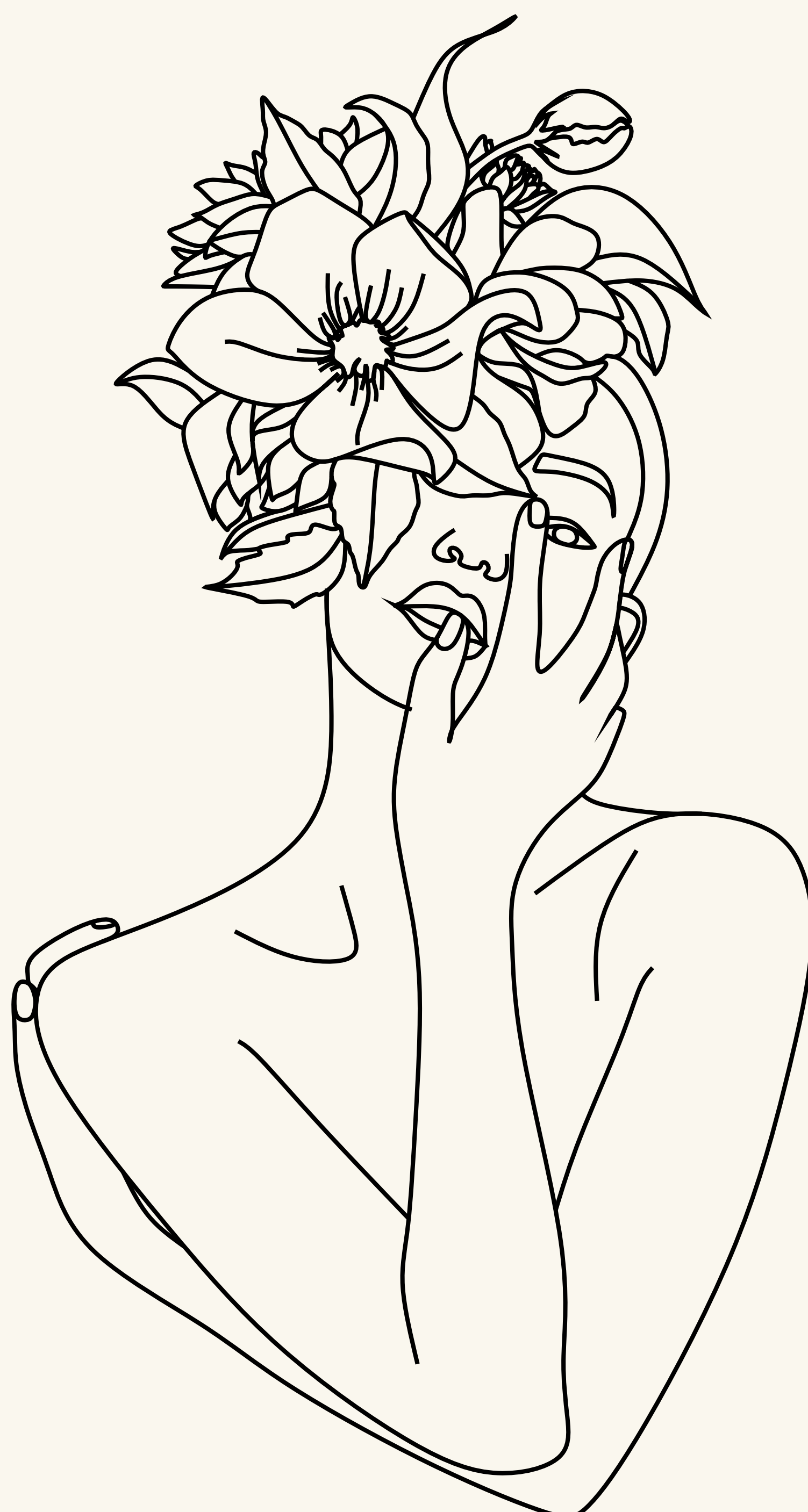




Saying so, she begrudgingly shoved her breast into the mouth of the baby, to stop her from crying, and slowly moved away to a farther seat.

That day I realised something else, a much harder truth of life. Not every superwoman is supposed to be strong and awe-inspiring. Some superwomen are vulnerable and helpless. Some superwomen fight for a child who is not even her own, and some get wounded themselves, in their attempt to accept their own blood and bones. What is the reality and what is the myth? Who would you truly call a Superwoman?

- *Abhilasha Parui*
Semester 4



A decorative border at the top of the page features a green leafy branch on the left and a cluster of blue flowers, including a large rose and a hydrangea, on the right. A butterfly with dark wings and white markings is positioned above the word 'Poetry'.

Poetry

“Poetry is when an emotion has found its
thought, and the thought has found words.”

– Robert Frost

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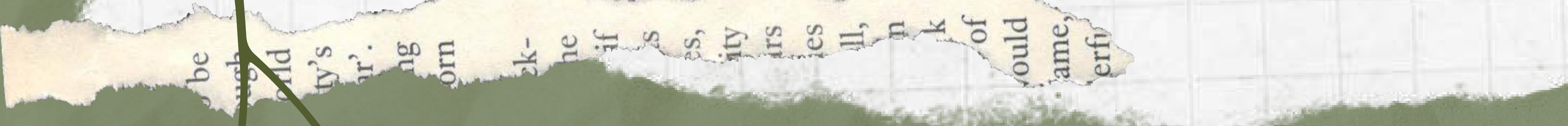


Superwoman? A Mother


In a world that seeks to hold her down,
A single mother rises with a crown,
She wears the weight of solo care,
A superwoman, with no one to share.
With every challenge she finds a way,
To provide, to protect, to pave the way,
She is a hero with a mother's might,
A superwoman, shining with all her light.
But is she a myth, a legend, a tale?
Or a reality, that patriarchy must veil?
A superwoman, who breaks the mould,
A single mother, who never grows old.
The answer lies, in her every stride,
In every step, she takes with pride,
She is a superwoman, in every way,
A reality, that's here to stay.

Antara Bose, Semester 6







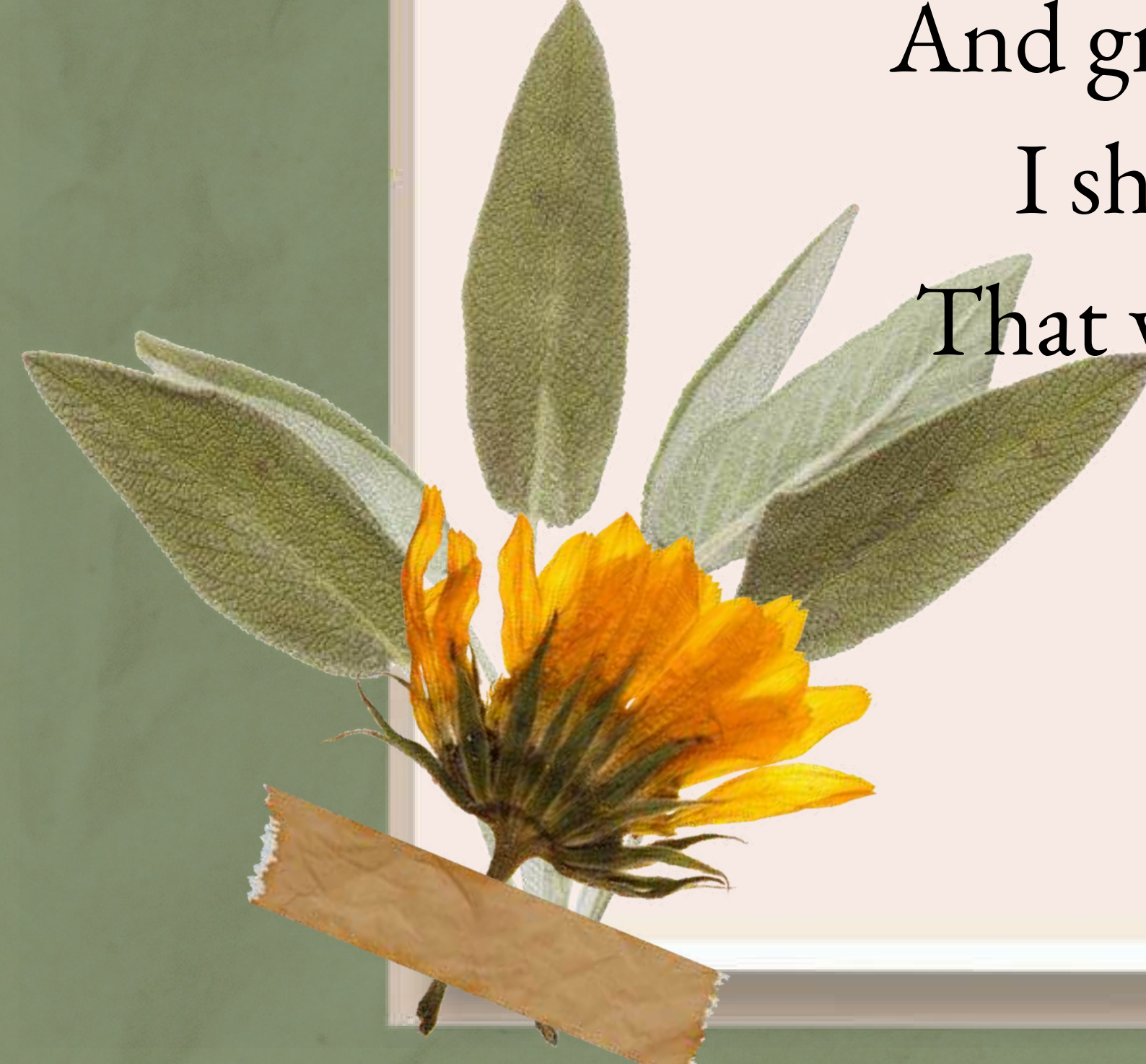
Silence! The Truth Is Being Buried


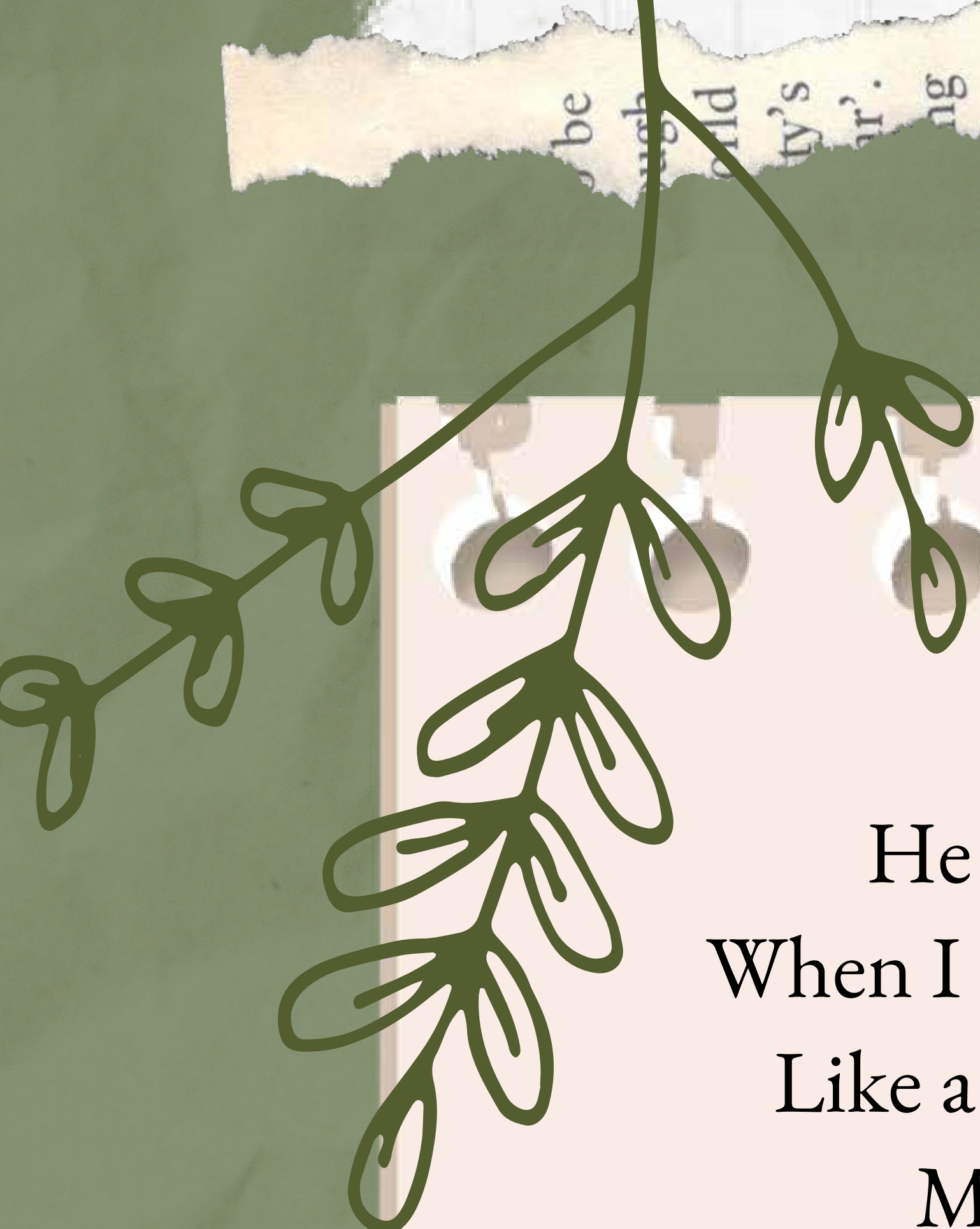


I heard a squeak in the middle of the night
Out of concern, I switched on the torchlight,
I crept carefully and tried to peep
That day was the first time I saw my mom weep
Food everywhere on the floor along with broken glass
Mom's face had a bloody cut open like a crevasse
I was eight but not too young to comprehend anything.
Mom always lied and said, "Might be a bee sting."




I remember it was my summer break
Dad brought home my favorite cake
Mom and Anthony were away for the weekend,
Uncle Max joined as Dad had a meeting to attend,
In my room, I was reading the Huckleberry Finn
I heard a familiar voice, and I gave a grin.
Uncle Max hugged me and started murmuring
And gradually the hug turned into grabbing,
I shouted and cried, not knowing why
That was the first time I wished I could die.






Clutching Dad, I cried for hours
He didn't know the reason behind my tears
When I described to him how I was being undressed,
Like a parrot, I told the way I was stripped naked
Mom and Dad both accused me of lying
That was the second time I thought of dying
Anthony defended me, for which he got slapped.
The truth turned to silence and was forever wrapped.



Wisely, Frost said however pathetic it is life goes on
Nothing changes if we cling to the past and mourn
I suppressed all of it with only one solace
But the news I heard today has left me breathless,
The body of a burnt woman was found beside a lake
Everybody claimed her short skirt was the mistake
Anthony was on the suspect list for the murder
His words were quoted as "It was a silly blunder."



Now raping has become just a silly blunder
Standing up for ourselves is stealing the thunder
We are judged by the amount of cloth covering us
A lady puffing smoke is a modern smartass,
Plague upon an unmarried woman who hooks up
Slut-Shrew-Whore is what we
earn as a trophy cup.



Shaoni Bhattacharjee, Semester 2








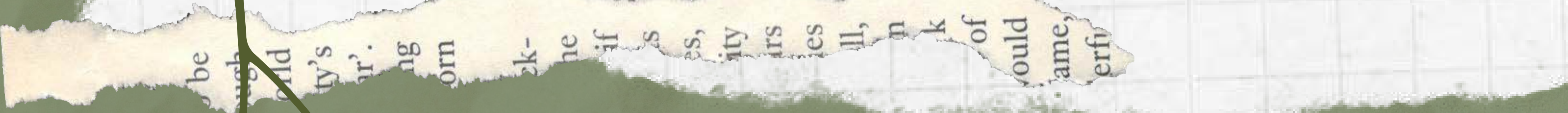
B(lame) Game

Prithee turn the leaves slow
Of her album apprised
Let the memories flow
Of times vaguely embedded
In undulating spots and blinds
Of memories enmeshed in recesses deep
Of her twisted weary soul.


Twisted but weary though!
For she wants to show the world
How she rows her own boat
When there's fellowmen besides,
Who contribute so less
-So she can boast of her labours later.

So she can boast of her labours later-
How she plucked the strings right,
Played the instrument well:
And dictating instructions ,
Instinctually directed the blind choir.





While directing the choir blind,
She had coded for them their ways
But behold the end of her good days
When tides turned and a cyclone emerged.



When tides turned and a cyclone emerged,
The mishap was blamed on account of hers,
For blind they were : in eyes and in ears .
Wounded, she took hold of her shield-
In its metallic canopy masking herself

In the veil of a lady supreme

A Superwoman She , She's me!

(And I seldom find myself trying to be ,
What people state I cannot be. .)

Aindrila Chakraborty , *Semester 4*





Unshackled

I tried to read a book
Then remembered how I used to tell you the stories.

Cause you never liked books..

I remember how I felt lost in my own bedroom

Crying and screaming in the very pillow

I once hugged imagining you.

I never knew you would leave me bare

Cold and shivering in the desert

You acted like everything was fine

And then you stopped acting..

I thought grief would be violent

But it was way too silent.

I felt like taking my heart out and

Squeezing all the blood in the wine

Warning my tolerance Every time

Blinded with a thousand question

Why would you do that to me

Was one of them.

Maybe I was the storm after all

No one found beauty in my darkness

They just enjoyed the cool breeze

Never cared for the forest I harness

I fell and bled like a river to the sea

No one saw my wounds

It's the pain in which there's peace

And the familiar sounds.


Pradipta Mallick, Semester 6







A Ballad For My Mum



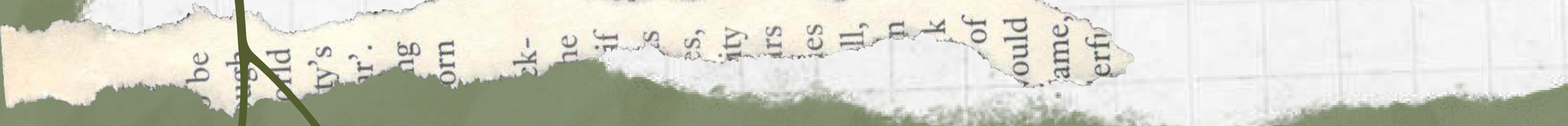
Hush hush, mumma's dying.
The one that she loves,
Is the reason she's crying.
He put three clots on her back.
She cannot lay straight no more,
Her bruises glow blue and black.




Hush hush, mumma's dying
And yet she's praying to me,
Stopping me from defying
The creatures who drove her to death,
Because she told me she loves them,
She will love them till her last breath.




Hush hush, my grandmother's dying
And before her death,
She's destroying the mother that's mine
Telling her daughter how to have a good life,
By being the best at chores
And being a good wife.



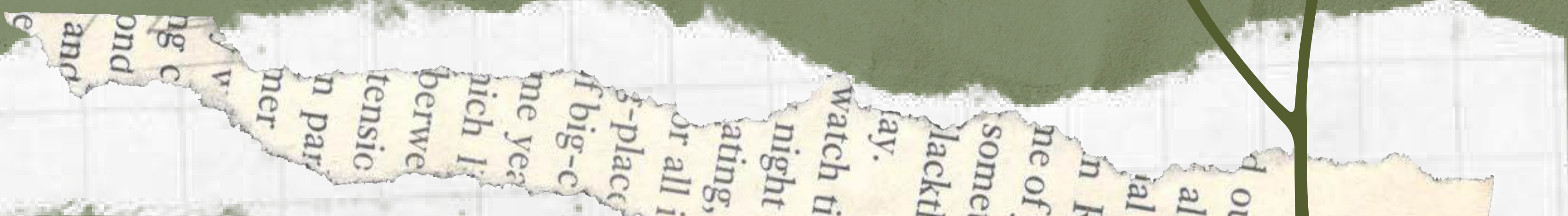
Hush hush, mumma's youth is dead.
She was taught to be a good girl,
A good girl doesn't have a boyfriend.
A good girl doesn't spend time with her lover,
She isn't allowed to express love like that,
She must address him with the respect of a father.




Hush hush, mumma's dying
Her older sister is hard at work,
Breaking, twisting and tying
The roots of mumma's very soul,
Turning her into a bonsai,
Stunting her growth to steal control.




Hush hush, mumma's dying.
Daddy isn't aware of it,
His ego is blissfully denying
All the blames and all the allegations.
"He is perfect oh my, how could he ever?"
A smooth escape of crimes,
Generations of patriarchal manipulation.





"Hush hush, don't talk like that,
Don't talk about your father like that.
He's a good man, he's such a good father,
He was only angry...
Other men would've taken it farther.
You see? I was the one being stupid,
He has never done it before
I'll apologize and love him some more"



Hush hush... mumma's dying...
And the dysfunctionality of it all,
Has sent her daughter flying.
She's trying her best to not spiral and fall,
She's bracing for impact,
Habituated to standing concrete tall.

Abhilasha Parui, Semester 4





Sunrise On A Dead Field



While sitting by the
Empty passenger seat
With the twilight rays
Of the sun...






My eyes shifted to my
Hands where the
Blood-stained burn
Are now overwritten with
Wires and Dead flowers.

An epiphany as a
Familiar shriek escaped
My throat..., I gulped
My heart down the throat.
His memories made my old
Faded gashes bleed alive.

The sleep deprived
Devastating nights, the bleeding dawn
and the

Aftermath of my torn,
Broken self. He enjoyed
Those days when his vigour





Ravaged my virginity and laughed
At my fallen shades.
He called her darling and
embraced her in her
Nakedness while smacked
My breasts with his feet...
His scars are still visible
But the stretchmarks of my
New life shines brighter...
I looked at the last dying
Ray of the sun with the castoff glimmering
Lights of the apartments
As a glitter fell on my cheek.
I smiled at the strong hands
On the steering wheel.
A New Life.
A Life curved and shaped
Inside my belly
A life of soft giggles and a younger Me.

Bidisha Chakraborty, Semester 6

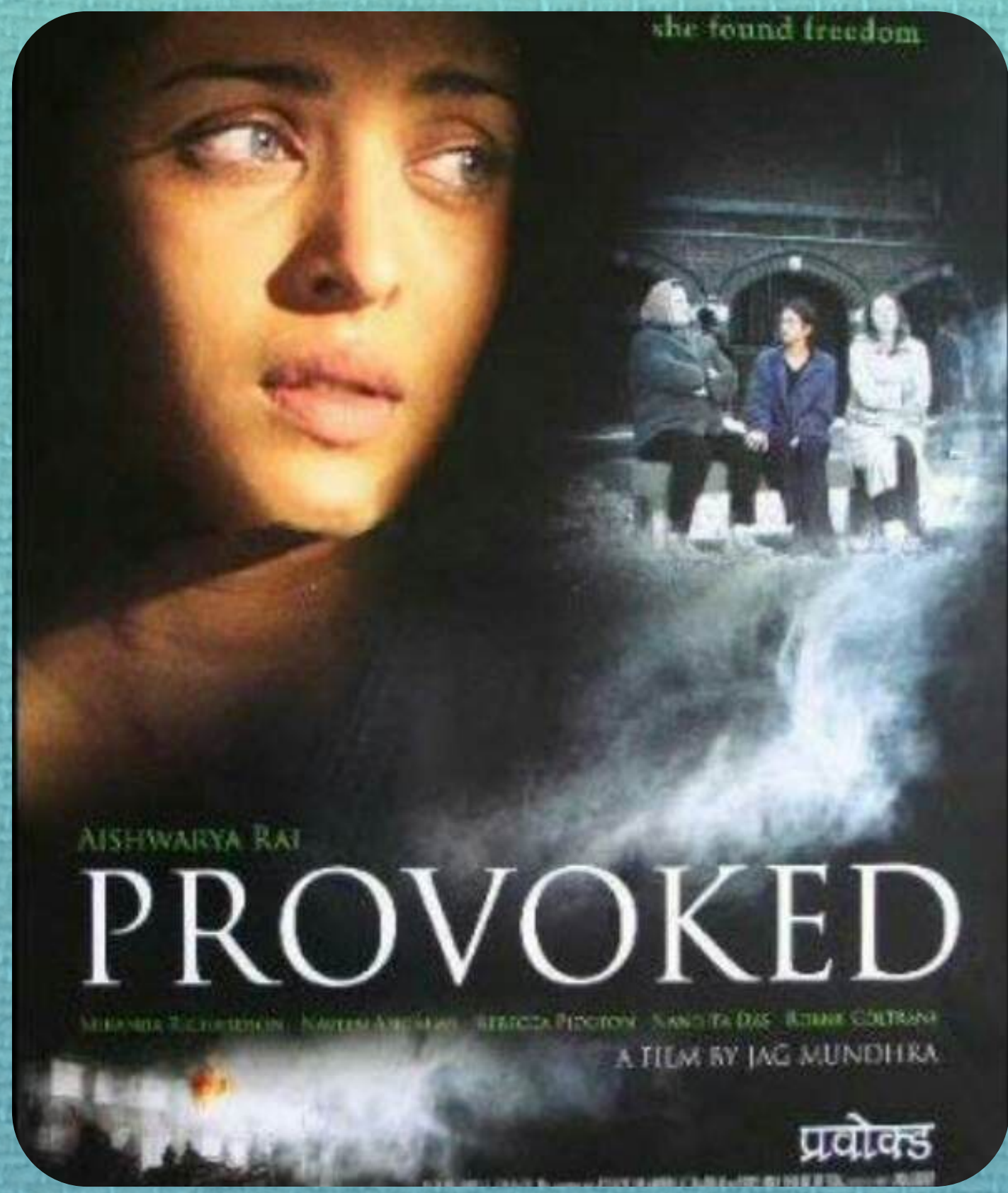




Film & Book Review

Reels, Books, Actions





Name of the film - *Provoked* .

Director - Jag Mundhra .

Cast - Aishwarya Rai Bachchan, Naveen Andrews, Miranda Richardson .

Date of Release - 6th April .

Year - 2007.

Time - 1hr 53mins.

Genre - Biography, Drama, Crime .



"I was Provoked. Its not an intentional act." Often we say that provocation can lead to various situations. Based on this above quotation, we are going to come across a film, dependent on true story named *Provoked* which highlights the true story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia.



Based on the true story of Kiranjit Ahluwalia this film shows a London housewife from Punjab who killed her sleeping husband in 1989 using a homemade cocktail of gasoline and caustic soda.

Holding fast to the movie -of - the - week formula perfected by Lifetime Television, the director, Jag Mundhra, leads us to the moments through her heroine's struggle, arrest , trials and subsequent sentence to life imprisonment. The audiences are given a flashback of a bride (Role played by Aishwarya Rai) and a groom (Role played by Naveen Andrews). Getting physically and mentally tortured by the groom, the bride decides to scare the husband and wanted to give him the taste of his own medicine and acts, but ends up killing her husband unintentionally.

As the woman was coined as "Fireball Mum" by the British tabloids, Mrs Rai makes a pretty but wispy screen presence, with moist eyes. " I sinned, I must pay," Kiranjit tells her lawyer while the soundtrack wails the music of sympathy.



Film Review



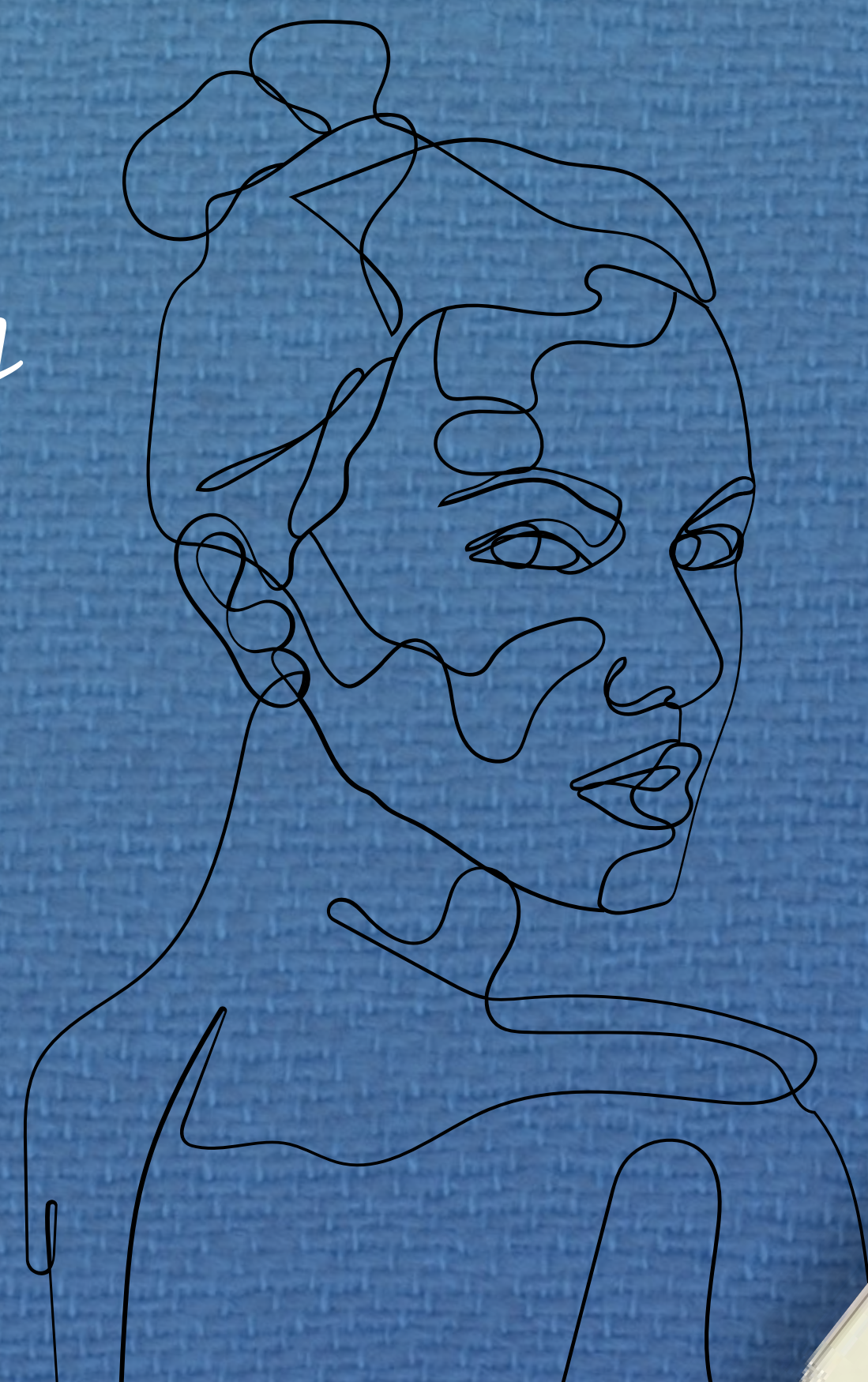
Luckily there's nothing like the disposing off of a husband to cement one's popularity in a women's penitentiary, and her trembling arrival at Mullwood Hall Prison is only the beginning of the journey of self-discovery.

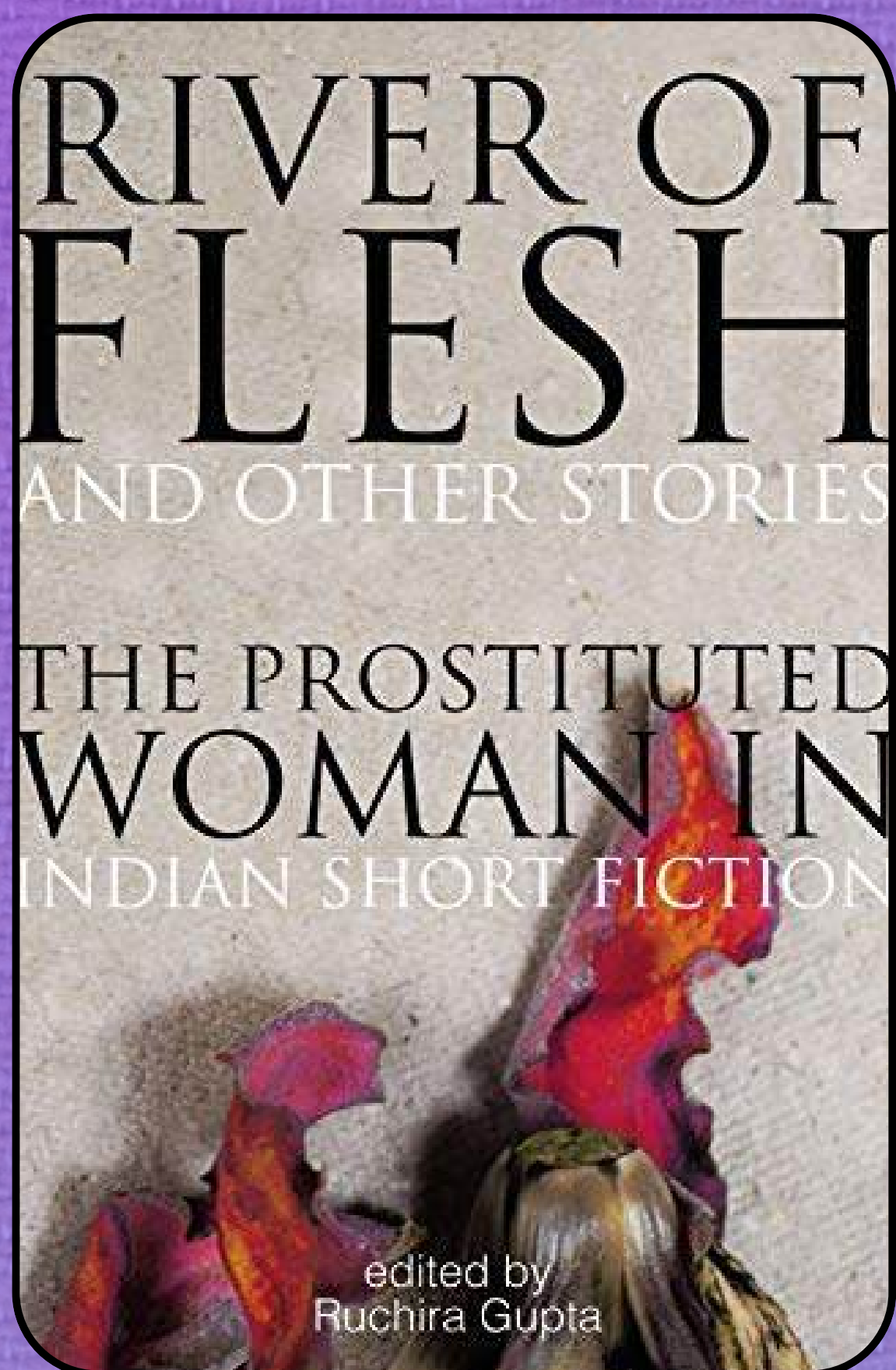
With the help of a soft-centered cellmate (Role played by Miranda Richardson) Kiranjit chops off her hair, dons a pantsuit and learns to say "bosoms" without blushing. Kiranjit delivers a public- service announcement on behalf of the battered women which moved everyone to cheer.

The film holds a landmark case in British Law, Ms Ahluwalia's successful appeal in 1992 helped widen the legal options available to victims of long-term abuse, yet "*Provoked*" could hardly be less provocative .

A real life incident shown as a film pays a huge tribute to the fact that women are actually not mere figures but they are true fighters who fight against social taboos and against all other daily situations. They are the "Emblem of the World". They are the ultimate "Shakti" which can control the whole Universe.

- *Sucharita Chowdhury*
Semester 4





RIVER OF FLESH

“River Of Flesh” a book that contains 21 stories by finest writers of undivided India. The book is all about prostitution and women’s inequality.

The selected stories in this book are “WOMEN OF THE STREET”-by Baburao Bagul, “THE HOUSEWIFE”-by Ismat Chughtai, “MARKET PRICE”-by Nabendu Ghosh, “PONNAGARAM”-by Puthumaippithan and more.

The stories are heart wrenching. Each story uncovers how violence against women has been normalized in the shade of a term ‘Sex Worker’. Women are forced to believe that being a prostitute is their fate. In the introduction, the editor Ruchira Gupta points out that prostitution is not just a function of women’s inequality, but it deepens women’s inequality. These stories can make one feel uneasy and that’s what makes it worth reading.

Throughout the book, each story uniquely maps how intersectional matrices of gender, caste hierarchy and poverty play out in the lives of the characters. In this anthology, there is a yearning for a doll by a child prostitute, caste hierarchy, complexities of sexuality and motherhood in sex work. The stories explore themes of rage, regret and even reformation.



Kamala Das's extremely moving tale, "A DOLL FOR THE CHILD PROSTITUTE" is the first of the collection, in which a girl is raped by her stepfather and forced into prostitution. This story features an inspector sahib who has had enough of women and demands a fresh child recruit, Rukmani.

"The inspector pulled her dress and transformed her into a prostitute without even considering her age" the sentence, which solely described the inspector's conduct was harsh. With this awful first encounter, Das creates a world of excessive indulgence, where innocence must perish. The novella emphasizes the issue of prostitution and how it affects women. The stories of individuals like Sita, Meera, Laxmibai, her son, Saraswati, Krishna are very well portrayed, and they are all captivating. Das regularly uses the dramatic approach and writes realistic stories. She primarily expresses herself artistically through discourse.

In Premchand's masterful "THE MURDER OF HONOUR", a wife turns into prostitute to defame her husband. Manto's powerful "THE HUNDRED-CANDLE-POWER BULB" has a protagonist who murders her pimp. It's a short story by Saadat Hasan Manto, a prominent South Asian writer known for his candid exploration of the human condition.





In this story, Manto delves into themes of social disparity and the stark contrasts between different strata of society. The narrative revolves around the protagonist's desire to possess a hundred-candled power bulb which he sees as a symbol of luxury and status.

This bulb is not just a source of light but represents a dream of affluence and social elevation. The story captures the protagonist's efforts to acquire this bulb, reflecting his aspirations to transcend his modest socio-economic status. Manto uses the bulb as a metaphor to comment on the broader societal issues of inequality. The story is poignant in its portrayal of the protagonist's struggle and the broader commentary on the human condition, making it a compelling read that resonates with Manto's signature themes of realism, societal critique, and the exploration of human desires and frustrations.

In “HEENG-KOCHURI”, Bibhutibhusan Bandyopadhyay narrates the bond of affection between a lower caste Prostitute woman, Kusum and a Brahmin boy who loves to eat the heeng flavoured kachoris.





In this story we can clearly see the caste hierarchy where Kusum struggles to explain to him why she adheres to the strict inter-caste dining customs which forbid her from giving him water or cooked food, as it's believed that doing so would contaminate him.



In Manish Kulshreshtha's "KALINDI" the son and mother are protagonists, both dealing with the dilemma of how to approach the subject of mother's occupation. In Baburao Bagul's "WOMEN OF THE STREET" protagonist Girija attempts to suppress her motherly concern for her sick son while soliciting for a customer and puts on a seductive appearance out of fear that the customers might abandon her, and ruin her chances of earning money to visit her son.

All the stories revolve around prostitution, the inequality, the prostituted women experience. But not all stories leave you sad, some give you hope, while some teach you life lessons.

Although the book is awakening and a must read, the harsh reality is that many readers would find it difficult to pick it for the theme of the stories lying within them.





This book review should clear the mind of the readers so that they may happily choose their books and read thoughtfully. This work is indicative of an insightful study for students of gender studies, womens' sexuality studies and literature.

**BY- Abantika Saha, Himadrija Rakshit,
Suchana Roy, Sneha Barman (Semester 2)**





Artwork



MAGIC OF ART

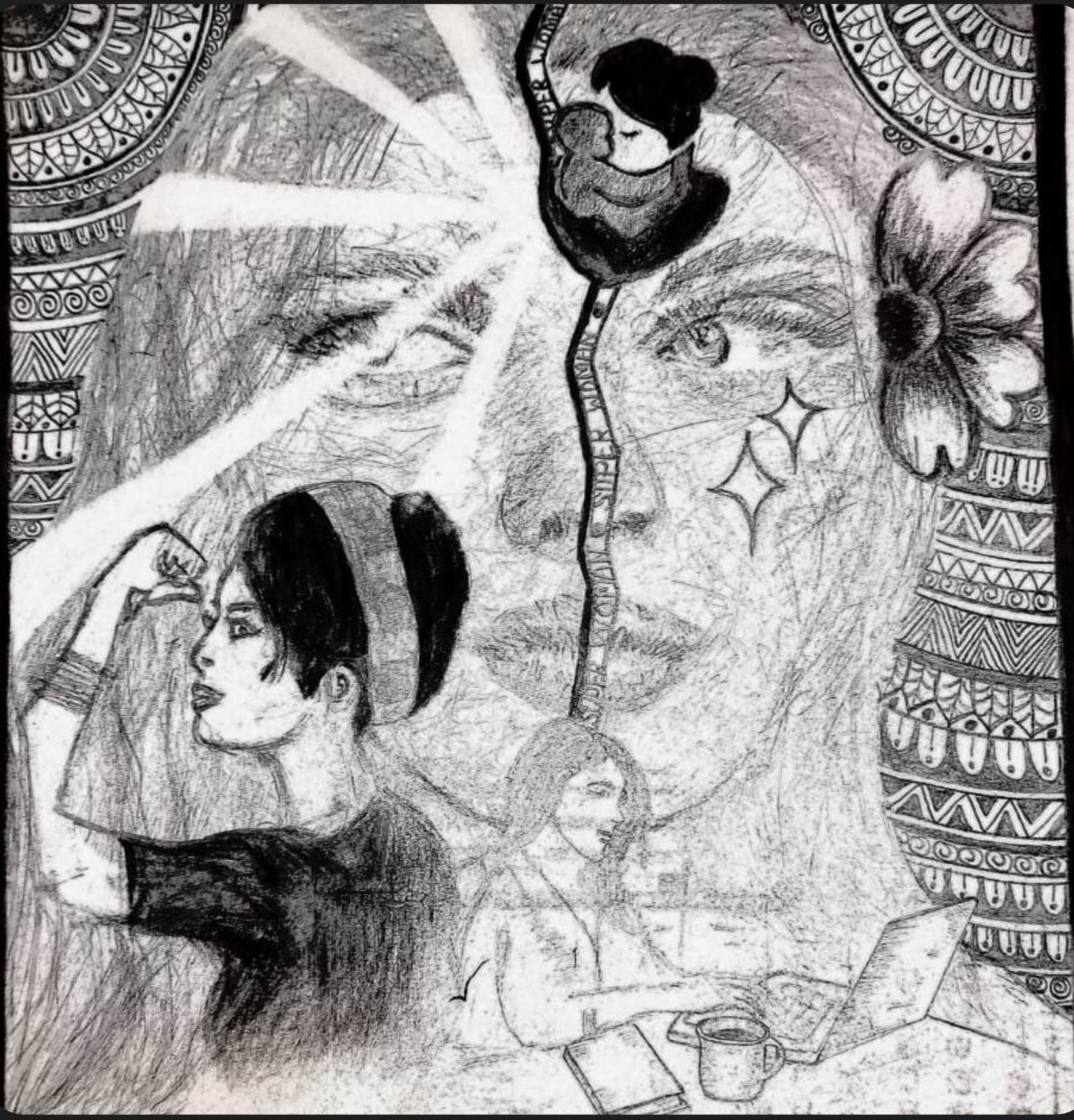


**DEBISHA NANDI
SEMESTER IV**



**SREYA DAS
SEMESTER IV**

"SHE OWNS THE MOMENT"



**PRIYA SARDAR
SEMESTER II**

**SUMI HALDER
SEMESTER IV**



"BLOOMS OVER GLOOM"



**SHRUTI DUTTA
SEMESTER IV**



**RITI BISWAS
SEMESTER VI**

**"NURTURING WINGS OF
EMPOWERMENT"**



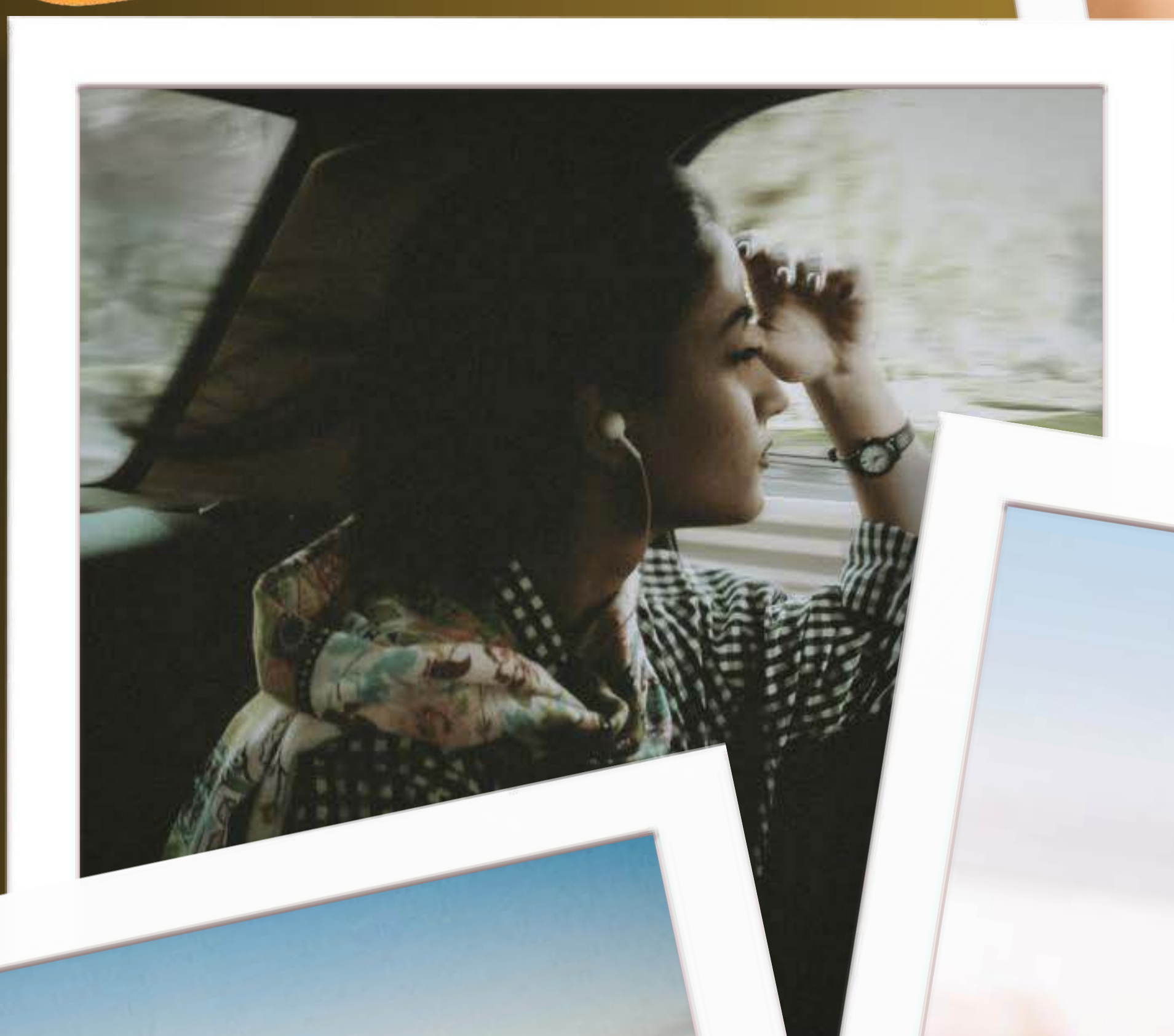
ANISHA GHOSH
SEMESTER VI





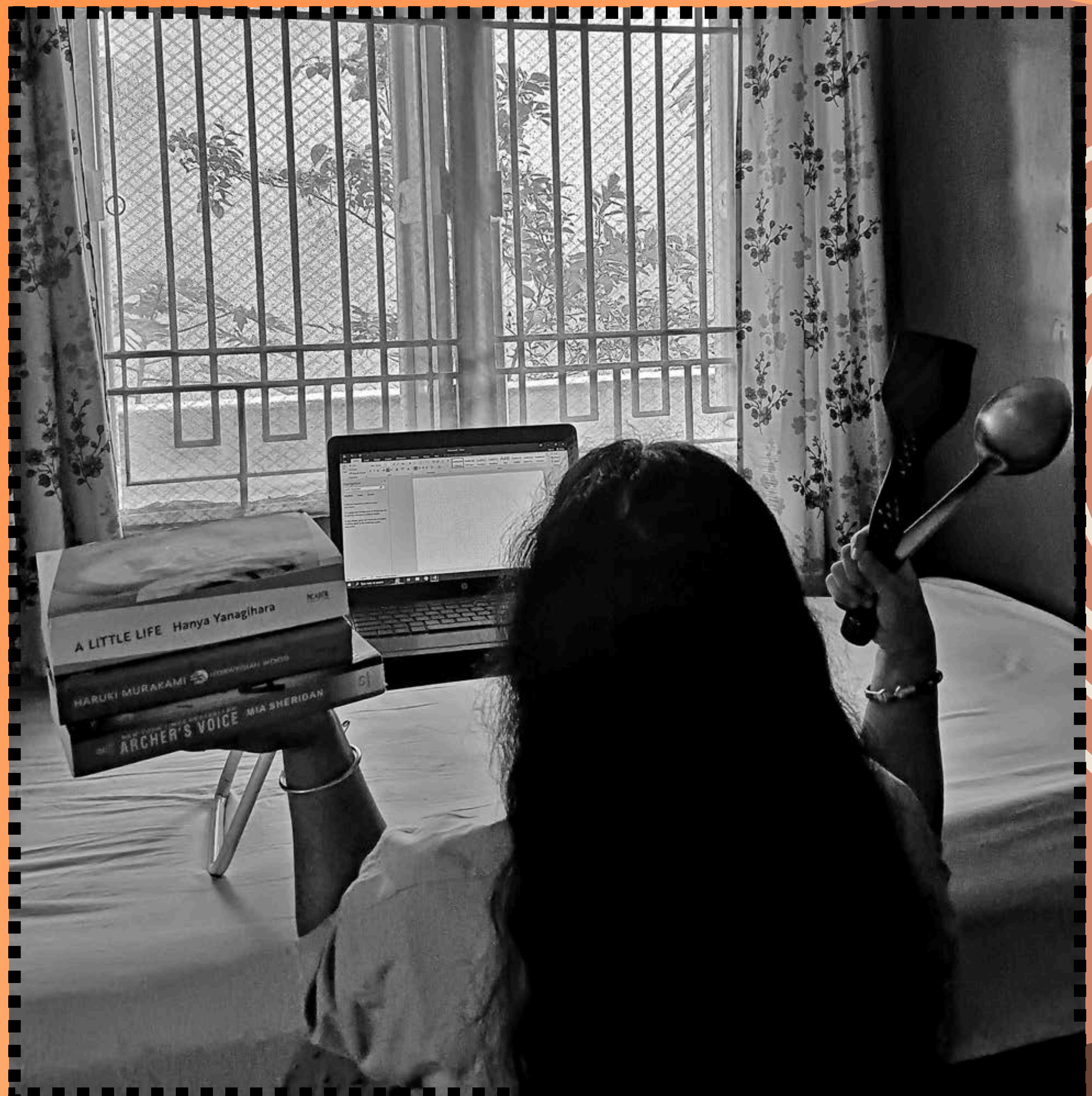
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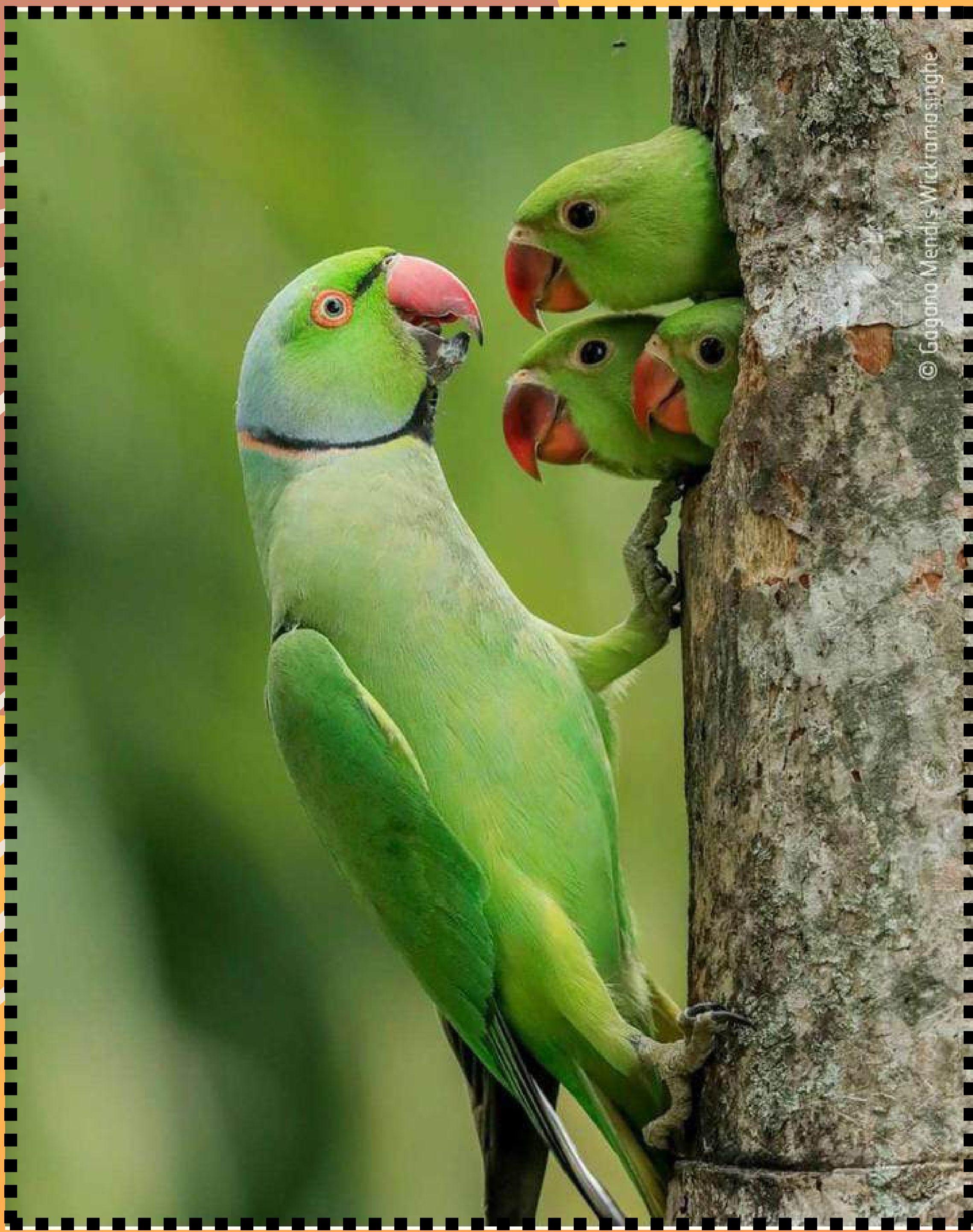
You are free to be
Different





Shruti Dutta
Semester 4





Credit: Gagan
Mendis
Wickramasinghe

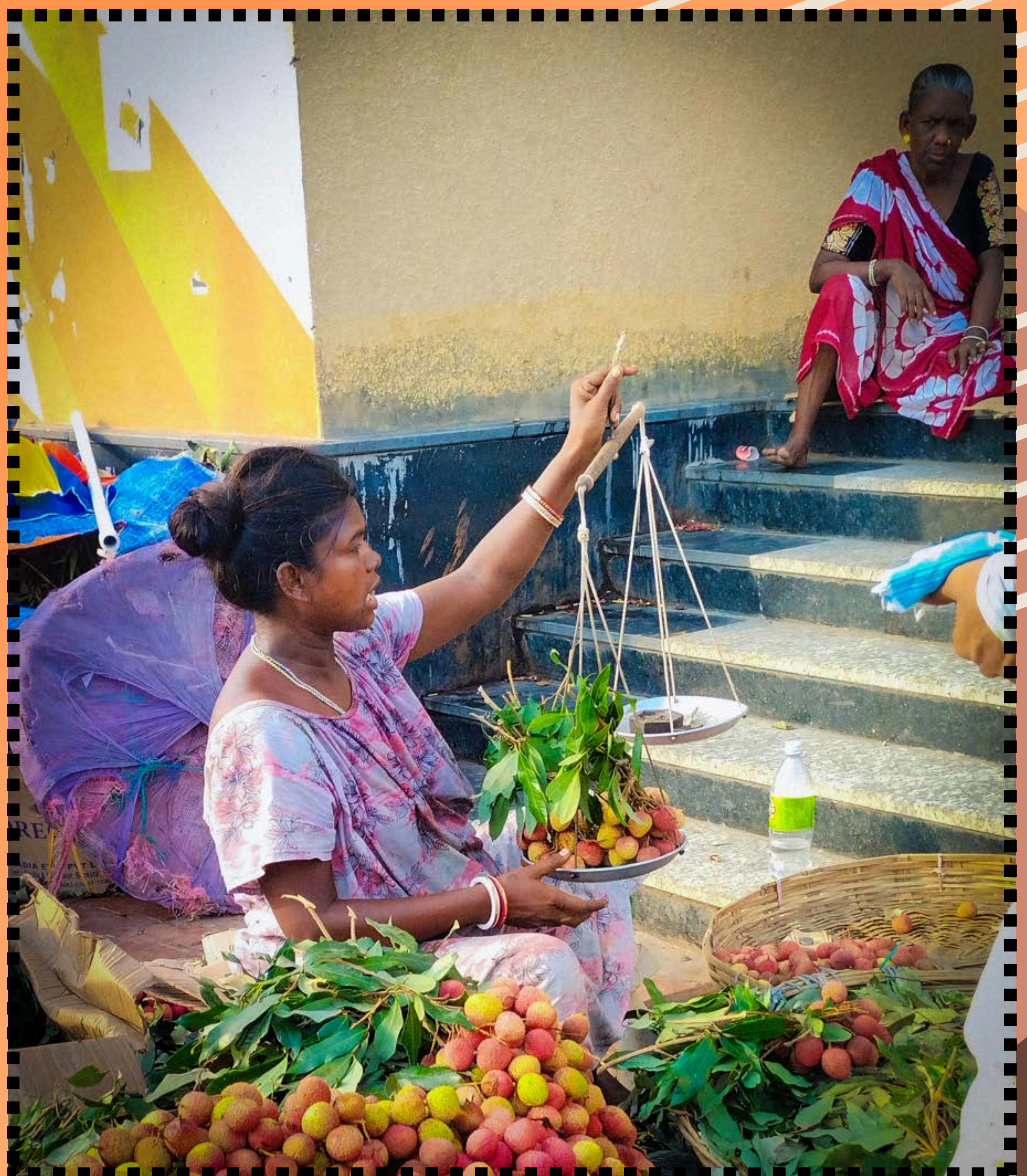


Credit: "The
Censational
Project"
by Bonnie Chiu





Ananya Naskar
Semester 4



THANK
YOU