

# BANYAN MAGAZINE

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# MEET *The* TEAM



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### **How Do I Envision Pakistan By 2035**

As we stand today, Pakistan is at a key point, ready to embark on a transformative expedition towards gainful growth, social development, and technological advancement through our joint efforts as a nation. Visioning Pakistan in 2035 involves reporting a program that reflects current achievements, existing challenges, and embraces upcoming opportunities.

In the current year, under the supervision of the government, Pakistan has set ambitious profitable targets, aiming to become one of the world's top 25 economies by 2035, leading to upper-middle-income status. The “Pakistan Vision 2035” action plan outlines aim for adding the levy to the GDP rate from 9.8 % to 18% and boosting yearly Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from USD 600 million to over USD 15 billion. These aims are designed to stimulate sustained, indigenous, and inclusive growth, reducing poverty ranks by half and enhancing the overall economic terrain. In addition, to support these objectives, the World Bank has approved a \$20 billion lending package over the coming decade, targeting critical areas such as malnutrition, education, climate adaptation, and the energy sector. This long-term alliance frame aims to fence investments from political instability and encourage sustained reform efforts. The outcomes of these policies will become fruitful in 2035, and Pakistan will reach its golden era.

Moreover, designs like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is expected to be completed by 2030, has enhanced Pakistan’s infrastructure and regional connectivity, smoothed trade and attracted investment. The construction of the Gwadar International Airport and advancements in road and railway networks illustrate progress in this sector. There is no doubt that after completion, it would be a great wonder, and these developments not only bring employment chances but also enhance the overall quality of life by supplying better access to services. The outcomes of these policies will become fruitful in 2035, and Pakistan will reach its golden era.





As our country faces challenges due to reduced winter rainfall and the impacts of climate change, which affect farming and water availability, experts are alert to drought threats, rising temperatures, and food insecurity, especially in the current year. Pakistan's reservoirs face significant siltation challenges. The storage capacities of major reservoirs like Tarbela and Mangla have dropped by 32 and 20, respectively, due to ground deposits. By 2025, the storage capacity of dams is expected to be reduced further by 57%. To accommodate the anticipated demand of 165 billion cubic meters, storage capacity must be increased by 22 billion cubic meters by 2035. To address these issues, Pakistan has initiated the construction of new dams and reservoirs.

Such as Diamer- Bhasha Dam, which is expected to be completed in 2029, for instance, is hoped to create 4,500 megawatts of electricity and store an additional 8.1 million acre-feet of water upon completion. This will be necessary for managing floodwaters and reducing the hazards of future floods that have historically impacted agricultural and domestic areas. This step will decrease flood hazards and will provide much water for irrigation to overcome drought in the future; in this way, the year 2035 will bring prosperity for our nation.

Additionally, the Sindh Barrage design aims to prevent seawater intrusion into the Indus River and to rinse about 55,000 acres of land lost to desertification and soil salinity. The project includes the construction of channels to give irrigation and drinking water to coastal areas and Tharparkar. The projects and plans made by the government today are going to cost a lot for our nation in 2035. New reservoir construction projects started by the government will store much water to fulfill the country's needs. Furthermore, investments in education and healthcare are essential for human capital development. The government's plan to increase the literacy rate and enhance access to quality education will empower individuals and drive innovation.

Correspondingly, enhancing healthcare infrastructure and services will ensure a healthier population able to contribute effectively to the economy. The education programs made by the government, such as PEF, Madrasah reforms, digital learning, and FFLP, will produce a great



number of skillful graduates by 2035.

In the same way, embracing technology and fostering innovation are crucial for Pakistan's future. The aim of producing 75,000 IT graduates annually and increasing broadband subscriptions to 135 million by 2029 reflects a commitment to assembling a digital economy.

Pakistan's travel and tourism sector is poised for substantial growth. By 2025, the industry is expected to generate over 4 billion in revenue, with a projected yearly growth rate of 6.75% from 2025 to 2029, potentially reaching a market volume of 5.53 billion by the end of 2029, which means that by 2035, this revenue will be 8 times more. Factors similar to improved infrastructure, high disposable incomes, and a growing sense of national pride have encouraged more local travel. Furthermore, the rise of social media and online booking platforms has simplified travel planning, making it more convenient and accessible for the masses. Macroeconomic factors, such as government initiatives, infrastructure improvements, increased private sector investment in the hospitality industry, better visa facilitation, improved marketing and promotion in international markets, and the expansion of foreign flight routes, are also contributing to the rise of Pakistan's tourism industry. Enhanced security measures and improved direct flight connectivity can further boost the confidence of foreign visitors, making Pakistan a more attractive destination for both domestic and foreign tourists.

Observing current successes, Pakistan envisions a future by 2035 where terrorism is significantly decreased. Continued investment in education, healthcare, and infrastructure will give opportunities for communities vulnerable to radicalization, reducing the appeal of extremist ideologies. Strengthening democratic institutions and promoting the rule of law will further enhance governance and public trust.

Hence, after observing the plans and strategies for Pakistan's current and future challenges, we can envision a bright future for Pakistan by 2035, free from the darkness of terrorism, inflation, and poverty.

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### **Youth as a Catalyst for Peace, Cooperation and Sustainable Development in the CICA Region**

The Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia, CICA, is a multilateral platform established in 1992. This was initiated by the president of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev. This platform unites 28 diverse nations across Asia, such as Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, Iran, America, Israel, Palestine, China, Cambodia, and many more. This constitutes more than half of the world's population. Most importantly, this region is the heart of geopolitical complexities and variational challenges. So, this platform provides an avenue towards peace through direct interaction, dialogue, and cooperation. The collaborative initiatives in areas of military, geopolitical, socio-economic, and environmental protection, stability, and development pave a path of concord among the disputed states. But to catalyse the process, the active agents of each nation are required to take the lead, that is, the youth. Youth is the pinnacle of its age. It is brimming with energies, passions, physical vitalities, and mental agilities. As in the words of Paul K. Chappell: "To replace the old paradigm of war with a new paradigm of waging peace, we must be pioneers who can push the boundaries of human understanding. We must be doctors who can cure the virus of violence. We must be soldiers of peace who can do more than preach to the choir. And we must be artists who will make the world our masterpiece;" so, it is the youth that can think quickly, flexibly, and effectively, in response to new information, changing situations, and complex challenges. Therefore, it can act as a catalyst for peace, cooperation, and sustainable development in the CICA region.

As Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, a Kenyan peace activist, states: "The beauty of peace is in trying to find solutions together." From this, it can be implied that direct human interaction increases the horizons of comprehending others' perspectives. This reflects the Contact Hypothesis, a theory proposed by Gordon Allport. This theory suggests that the face-to-face interaction of members of distinct groups, in a conducive environment, leads to the contemplation of differences as a





segment of one unit rather than as a competition or a threat to the existence. So, instead of a continuation of the conventional perceptions of each other, the direct interaction challenges the stereotypes. Ultimately, this results in the reduction of prejudice and enhances tolerance. Therefore, the youth, the backbone of a nation, of the CICA region, must be provided with the opportunities of direct interaction in a conducive environment. Moreover, the strive to attain a common goal of peace in a people-to-people platform allows the members to have interaction in a setting of equality. For instance, when an American meets an Afghan during a cultural exchange program in China, this cross-cultural interaction will enable them to perform their common tasks free from political or regional bias. Such shared experiences not only humanize others but also foster empathy and dismantle preconceived notions. Thus, in this way, youth can act as a catalyst for peace, cooperation, and sustainable development in the CICA region.

There is a very famous saying of the 14th Dalai Lama: “Peace does not mean an absence of conflicts; differences will always be there. Peace means solving these differences through peaceful means, through dialogue, education, knowledge, and through humane ways.” This quote encapsulates the core of human survival. Variations are one of the universal truths, but their stemming from a common origin rejects the idea of the existence of an ultimate supreme among the creation. So, no human is the ultimate authority over the other humans. This realization is crucial for the youth in the CICA region, the arena of geopolitical disputes, socio-economic tensions, religious and cultural conflicts, and ethnic rivalries. Therefore, in young people, this realization must be actualised through action. Youth must be equipped with Conflict Resolution Skills, such as active listening, display of respectful demeanour, and restraint from violent communication. These skills can help them become peace builders not only in the physical communities but also in the online spaces. The Pahalgam terror attack is the best example in this regard. It escalated the already existing hostility between the Pakistanis and the Indians. Social media became flooded with hate speech and nationalistic rhetoric, and the country’s fragile



relationship was strained further. So, the absence of conflict resolution skills in the youth of both countries escalated the tension in the region. Therefore, it is essential to understand the opposing perspectives rather than amplifying the biased propaganda or nationalist agendas to catalyse peace, cooperation, and sustainable development in the CICA region.

The greatest challenges to the peace of the region can be attributed to the tussle among countries like the USA, China, and Russia over becoming superpowers. This tussle stems from a desire to possess ideological, economic, and military dominance. The USA wants to keep its status as the world's leading power and aims to impose its hegemony. But China aims to impose its own state-led model that challenges the USA's paradigm. Similarly, Russia seeks to regain its former eminence and joins the tussle of becoming a superpower. This competition often turns the other nations of the CICA region into strategic pawns. One of the current examples in this regard is Iran. The USA has historically used sanctions to pressure Iran over its nuclear program. This has compelled Iran to align its sovereign interests with the potential contenders of America, such as China. So, China has emerged as Iran's largest trading partner and a critical buyer of its oil, particularly at a steep discount that provides an indispensable benefit to Iran. This demonstrates how the superpower tussle dictates the actions of a regional power. For youth to become catalysts for peace and cooperation, they must embrace a distinct philosophy that is encapsulated by the words of JIMI HENDRIX: "When the power of love overcomes the love of power, the world will know peace." This sentiment is the core of the Conflict Transformation Theory by John Paul Lederach. The youth of the CICA region must not view the conflict just as a problem to be solved but as an opportunity to build more constructive relationships and social structures. For instance, youth from the rival nations in Central Asia can manage the shared water resources through collaborative projects to catalyse sustainable development in the region.

In conclusion, it can be established that through the opportunities of direct human interaction in a conducive environment, the youth of each nation can become active agents in breaking free



from the chains of conventional abomination. Moreover, as youth is the representative of the apex of energetic passions, it must realize that variations are the essence of life that add to the beauty of existence. As Russell warns in his “Philosophy and Politics”, we must not become so rigid in our own ideals that opposition to them creates a sense of threat. This threat ultimately pushes the members of the distinct groups to adopt certain ideologies, such as Hindutva in India, through harsh measures and through force. Similarly, the revocation of Article 370 and the opposition to it within Kashmir and across the region that questioned the legality and morality of this action were labelled as anti-national and even a traitorous act. So, the youth, instead of giving an intense backlash and repression, must exhibit conflict resolution skills. Moreover, the youth of a CICA region must adopt a philosophical shift of power of love rather than love of power. Instead of going for a tussle of becoming an ultimate supreme, the youth must work together towards a common goal, such as environmental protection. This will enable them to recognize each other as a constituting element of a single unit rather than a competitor who has to become fittest for survival. Thus, through all such measures, the youth can catalyse peace, cooperation, and sustainable development in the CICA region.



# ARTICLES

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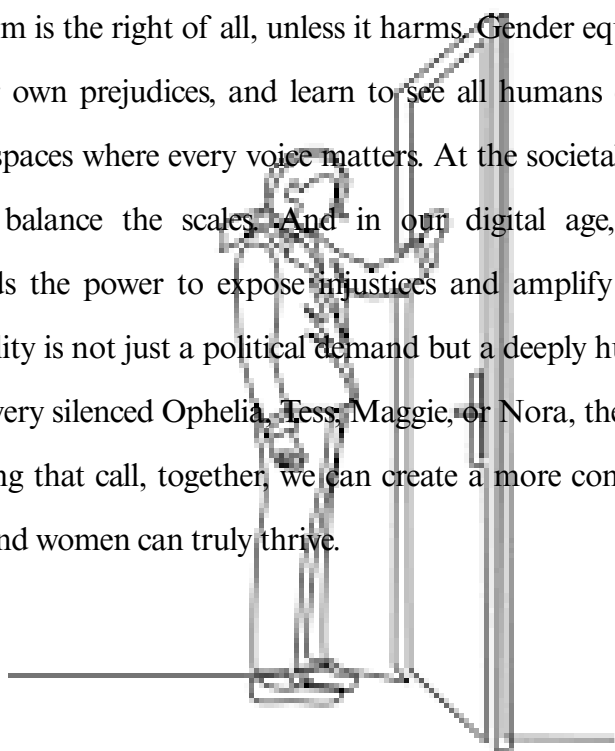
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### Breaking Free

“When Nora slammed the door shut in 1879, it reverberated across the roof of the world.” Michael Meyer remarked in response to Henrik Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House*, Nora’s final act was not just a stage direction but a symbolic awakening---what came later to be remembered as “the slam heard round the world”. Throughout history, men and women have been two wheels of society, and they both move the vehicle of humanity forward. Both are born with equal capacities, emotions, and creative strengths. Yet, through centuries, patriarchy was imposed: men were considered as protectors and providers, while women were resisted to be domestic caregiving roles. This division, while appearing orderly, became the root cause of inequalities that stripped women of freedom and dignity. Being a student of English Literature, I often felt the pain and mysteries of women silenced by history. In Ancient Greece (5th-4th century BCE), philosophers who shaped western thought also undermined women with disgusting remarks. Later, in Elizabethan era, the Shakespeare’s plays projected a world where women were denied their agency. In (1603-1605) Ophelia’s innocence is crushed under the control of her father and brother, while in *King Lear* (1608-1619), Cordelia’s honest love is misunderstood and rejected, showing how sincerity itself became a woman’s burden. *Hamlet*, of the Victorian Era, often celebrated for development and progress, too is embodiment of silent sufferings. In the *Mill on the Floss* (Eliot , 1860) , Maggie struggles for self-expression but is mashed by social judgement. Hardy’s *Tess of D’Urbervilles* (1891) present Tess, a symbol of purity, betrayed by a world that judges her harshly while excusing men. Reading these works, I could not help but imagine the suffocating lives women had to endure under patriarchal expectations. Then came Henrik Ibsen, whose *A Doll’s House* (1879) is significant as it is remembered as lament for women’s liberation. Ibsen projects Nora, a woman treated like a crippled doll, given no freedom thought or choice by her husband, Helmer. His disgusting words “my little squirrel” or “spendthrift” they hit deeper than insult;

they reveal a mindset that seeks to reduce women to ornaments. When Helmer insists she needs his guidance to live in society, it reflects a universal truth of that era: women were denied the right to be themselves. The play's ending, with Nora walking out, became more than drama; it became a symbol of awakening, a door opening towards freedom. In the UN Gender Snapshot report 2023, Maria-Francesca Spatolisano (Assistant Secretary-General, UN DESA) said things like: Gender equality is not just a goal within the 2030 Agenda. It is the very foundation of a fair society and a goal upon which all other goals must stand. This message is timeless. Ibsen's vision still speaks to us in 21st century, where disparities persist against all social and technological progress and growth. Women continue to face barriers. For instance, according to a report by the Pakistan Public Administration Research Centre (PPARC) under the Establishment Division, out of more than 1.2 million federal government employees and affiliated entities, only about 49,508 are women. Such numbers are not just statistics they represent voices unheard, talents wasted, and dreams unfulfilled. To move toward a more humane society, men and women must walk side by side, supporting each other's dignity. John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) offers wisdom through the "harm principle:" freedom is the right of all, unless it harms. Gender equality must start with self-reflection, challenge our own prejudices, and learn to see all humans equal. At the community level, we need to create spaces where every voice matters. At the societal level, strong policies and fair opportunities can balance the scales. And in our digital age, social media once just entertainment now holds the power to expose injustices and amplify the cries for equality. In conclusion, gender equality is not just a political demand but a deeply human necessity. Literature teaches us that behind every silenced Ophelia, Tess, Maggie, or Nora, there is a call for recognition and dignity. By answering that call, together, we can create a more compassionate and equitable world where both men and women can truly thrive.





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### **A Generation in Crisis**

Generation Z, also known as the “digital natives,” are individuals who were born between 1997 and 2012. This is the first generation that had a unique opportunity to grow up in this digital age with the internet, smartphones, and, most notably, social media. In the previous generations, the use of gadgets was limited to professionals, but with these rapid innovations, this ubiquitous nature of technology has contributed directly to mental health decline in Gen Z., They are captivated and addicted to their social media feeds. Reports suggest an average of 16 hours a day using a gadget. This increase in screen time not only disrupts the sleep cycle but also ultimately serves as a catalyst to a spectrum of mental health challenges, such as anxiety, depression, social comparison, and loneliness. The continuous scrolling is disrupting the psychological equilibrium, not only wasting their time but also instilling a pessimistic approach in their minds. The process, now duly termed as “Digital Overload,” is not only the concern of psychologists but is embedded deeply into the very fabric of harmony in our social lives.

The decline in mental health is manifesting in specific ways, and the prevalent issues are anxiety, depression, and ADHD. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2011, and the reports from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) in 2019, mental health disorders are becoming a significant global burden. A report by UNICEF in 2021 claimed that mental health disorders are affecting one in seven adolescents. According to a 2025 report by the American Psychological Association (APA), the probability of depressive symptoms can be increased by 40% by having too much digital interaction. Among Generation Z, almost 50% openly admit that social media is the cause of their psychological distress, a figure that has increased sharply in just two years. Users are experiencing a 35% decrease in their contentment as an result of their continuous doom-scrolling, in which they submerge themselves into an unbroken stream of distressing events. Excessive doom-scrolling also leads to an increase in cortisol and



adrenaline. The stress hormones eventually lead to physical fatigue and increased stress. According to the APA, a small amount of dopamine is triggered by doom-scrolling, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure that makes it a difficult habit to break. Hence, social media usage is directly linked to a rise in mental health disorders.

Anxiety, a condition characterized by the constant feeling of worry, fear, and dread for what is coming next, has deeply affected this generation. It has substantially increased over the past decade, and predominantly among adolescents. Social media has been considered responsible for an increase in anxiety as the younger generation is subjected to social comparisons and feels the pressure to present themselves in an idealized image. Ultimately, this constant exposure and the pressure to perform have led to heightened levels of anxiety in today's youth.

Depression is characterized by the persistent feeling of sadness and a loss of interest in routine activities. An estimate suggests that depression is present in every 8 out of 10 young adults who are diagnosed with a mental disorder; this alarmingly high ratio demands serious action. ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that results in impulsivity and hyperactivity. ADHD is increasing among the younger individuals, which not only impacts their social life but also leads to issues in their academic performance. Overall, this high rate calls for support systems and relevant action, and timely diagnosis to prevent further deterioration.

The human attention span has contracted to mere eight seconds in the current decade, once measured at twelve seconds at the dawn of the millennium —a reposition that is greatly responsible for learning, focus, and memory retention. The brain decreases its capacity for deep and reflective thinking when followed by a perpetual state of partial attention.

Trauma Dumping is one of the most controversial traits of Gen Z that has become a byproduct of an otherwise great initiative of mental health awareness. Generation Z is considered more comfortable in talking about the mental challenges they face as compared to the millennials, as the previous generations were asked to “just deal with it”.



However, Gen Z grew up in an era where seeking help is considered a strength rather than a weakness. As the individuals of this generation are called digital natives, they have grown up with unprecedented access to information through social media, and hence, they have a collective understanding of issues like anxiety and depression. However, this openness has negative aspects as well, as sharing of trauma can be burdensome to others. This complex dynamic highlights the challenge of coping with mental health issues in an unfiltered digital world.

The problematic trend of “trauma bragging” is undermining serious issues, as sharing details of a traumatic experience is becoming a competition. People now feel pressured to bring a more traumatic experience to the table. These individuals often use words like “trauma” very nonchalantly, trivializing their severity. This trend is evident in casual conversations like “This book traumatised fr (for real)” are some of the phrases used by Gen Z. Dr. Asha Imtiaz states, “The overuse of mental health terms makes it harder to identify real disorders.” The most devastating aspect is that those who are really suffering suffer in silence, and those who are merely seeking attention emerge victorious. Hence, the destigmatization of mental health issues has a downside to it as well.

What measures are to be taken to solve this wave of trauma-bargaining that is overshadowing real issues? Gen Z should be encouraged to limit screen time on social media apps, a “digital detox,” a movement marked not by the refusal of technology itself, but by the intentional reformation of sovereignty over one's time, focus, and mental space. 86% of young adults in Australia, according to the surveys of 2025, are deliberately minimizing their social media use, with more than one-fourth of them undertaking full detoxes. Among adolescents between twelve and fifteen, the number taking efforts to take a break from their devices has increased by 18% in just three years. The enticement of dissociation rests not merely in self-restraint but in the remodeling of a quieter, more intentional existence. Individuals immediately feel an increase of their emotional stability, heightened mindfulness and a tangible improvement in sleep quality even



when they undertake a short detox. It has become a prestige to be “offline” a badge among some circles, where it is more valued to be physically available rather than perpetual existence, and thus, has amplified this cultural shift. Yet, the detox culture still has its conflicts and contradictions. By offering a relief and sense of pleasure, it also criticizes the modern technology that made it necessary to be involved in the detox culture in the first place. It is disappointing, though, that technology has taken over so much of our lives that we have to schedule our break from it to find our true selves. To acquire true balance, therefore, it is necessary to not only have self-control but also a collective effort to examine the way technology is shaping our minds and thoughts.

Consumption of content should be meaningful, rather than aimless doom scrolling; they should follow pages that encourage meaningful engagement, and educational platforms should be taken into consideration, hence the algorithm would be set to fill the explore pages with meaningful posts. However, they must lessen their phone addiction and adopt hobbies that can help them throughout, such as book reading, painting, baking, journaling, and many more such activities, along with meditation.

Ultimately, scrolling into silence is more than a personal act of reluctance; it is a kind of cultural modification and adjustment. It is to have a sovereignty on your mind and to detach yourself from overbearing feeds; a reminder that in the era of perpetual connection, it is probably in intentional separation that the mind succeeds to discover its true entity, the heart its tranquility, and the self its oneness. While Gen Z's awareness and openness to discuss mental health problems have a positive side, it's not enough, as the rising rates in mental disorders demand more than just awareness. They require a balanced approach and promote mindful use of technology. They need proper self-care and professional help if needed to completely heal and thrive.



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### **The Flawed Democracy**

Democracy that was once acclaimed as the prime system of governance “of the people by the people for the people” and according to a report by Democracy Index, as of 2020, around 56% of the world's population lives in a democracy because it was insinuated to maintain the country's integrity and legitimacy is now dwindling in the world and especially in Pakistan. We are the beholders of the continuous abrasion of democracy in the recent times, and the root of this subject lies deep in the state. The major problem that democracy is facing is the military mediation between the governance of the people, and it has played a havoc with the people's interest in democracy and their trust in the system. It seems like democracy is a plaything in the hands of a few people and is morphing into autocracy.

The true essence of democracy lies in the principles of equality, freedom, and participation. It empowers the public to have a voice, make choices of their own interests, and hold their leaders accountable for their misdeeds and corruption. It ensures that decisions are made collectively, reflecting the will of the people. But do we see this true essence of the democratic system in our state? Unfortunately, NO. Here, the people are suffering at the hands of injustice, poverty, political instability, lack of rule of law, unemployment, corruption, mismanagement, etc. As Ashfaq Ahmed once said in his famous interview “Zaviah” that “QANOON is like a spider-web in our state where small insects get trapped in easily while big animals tear it apart and move away.”

Corruption and feudalism have been the worst issues of the state for the previous 75 years, and it seems like the elite class is ruling the state according to their whims and wishes, and if they want the court to take Suo motu, no one can even resist or speak against them. Similarly, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is in their hand to take action, the military is intervening in political affairs, and civilian governance. All these factors are making people reluctant to trust the democratic system of Pakistan and they believe that this system is unfair and a foe of their

interests. The state lacks a true democratic system, stimulating political instability, social injustice, and corruption. The bitter feuds between the political rivals and the lack of tolerance for the opposition have made it easier for the ubiquitous establishment to manipulate democratic rule. The post-2018 era of Pakistan is seen as the declining and backsliding phase of the democratic system because it comprises political unrest, defiance of the rule of law, and marginalization of parliament and stakeholders.

Also, instead of mitigating, the severity of these issues is elevating, and the question remains whether it will continue in the future or not. Those who have committed corruption of a million dollars move abroad, leaving their cases unturned, while those who steal wheat flour for the sake of their hunger and poverty are kept chained in front of the public. It must be kept in mind that mere slogans or manifestos on paper, speeches, or claims aren't enough to win the credibility and trust of the public. There should be a continuous pattern of action that can be visible to all.

All this is impacting the development and perpetuating the socio-economic disparities. To rectify this flawed system, we need to ensure rectification of our old mistakes, an active accountability system that must be unbiased and across the board, transparency in the functioning of institutions regardless of cast, creed, and nepotism, stand against establishment from political activities, and prioritize the interests of the country and its people. Only through these collective efforts can we strive for the betterment of our country and step back from this democratic decline.



# BOOK REVIEWS

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### **The Kite Runner by Khalid Hosseini**

Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is more than just a novel; it is a thrilling experience, a story that leaves behind a throbbing pain and a deep sense of beauty. This is by far the best book that I have read, which makes me emotional, angry, happy, sad, afraid, shocked, and every other emotion one can feel. Hosseini's emotional clarity makes this novel so powerful. The writing is fluid and honest because it captures not only the beauty and brutality of Afghanistan but also reveals the hidden, complicated truths inside human relationships and societal racism.

The heart of the novel is Amir, a character whose emotional journey is haunted by guilt; it does not control him, but also never lets him forget. He was raised with his father and their Hazara servant, Ali, along with Ali's son, Hassan. Although Hassan considers Amir his best friend, Amir always hesitates to call him a friend due to societal prejudices against Hazaras. On the day of the annual kite flying competition, Hassan chases a kite for Amir and is unfortunately assaulted by street ruffians, while Amir witnesses the whole incident, but he does not help Hassan and keeps this assault a secret. Eventually, when Hassan and Ali leave the house in the rain while Amir is watching from a window and his Baba is crying, it is one of the most overwhelming scenes. This event leaves a sense of burden and guilt on Amir's shoulders for his whole life. His emotional world reflects how the wounds of the past stay with us even as life continues. The bond between Amir and Hassan is depicted as a fragile beauty of youth. The simple yet profound line by Hassan, "For you, a thousand times over", becomes a symbol of redemption and of love regained. Later, when Russia invades Kabul, Amir and his father flee to Pakistan, facing a lot of obstacles. After his father's death, Amir finds that Hassan is his half-brother. This revelation propagates the desire inside Amir to compensate for his past mistakes by saving Hassan's son, Sohrab. This is also a reflection of the outcomes of the 1985 Russian invasion in the form of ethnic cleansing in Afghanistan.





This is not just a novel about guilt or war or betrayal of someone. It is about the mistakes that we regret later, the friendships we treasure, and the ways we try to make things right in our lives. The Kite Runner is a book that will stay with you for years. Read it not for the story, but for the life it gives you in return.

10<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY EDITION  
WITH A NEW FOREWORD BY THE AUTHOR

KHALED HOSSEINI

Author of A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS

# The Kite Runner

'Devastating'  
*Daily Telegraph*

'Unforgettable'

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### **White Nights by Fyodor Dostoevsky**

This book introduced me to Dostoevsky's plaintive world. I selected this book impulsively, but it transported me to another world of questions, like What is love? Is expressing yourself fruitful? Should a person behave like an open book? Does love exist? Is loneliness Worth it?

More primarily, this short story is about unnamed dreamer who roams the streets of St. Petersburg. He has no acquaintances, he just observes capricious people, buildings, and lives in the world of dreams. Loneliness is his companion.

One night, as usual, he is roaming in town. He finds a girl named Nastenka, weeping alone. The girl fascinates him. Out of curiosity, he reaches the girl and initiates a conversation. The girl agrees to talk with him with the promise that he will not fall in love with her. The deep insights of the dreamer attract the girl, and she agrees to meet him again.

They meet for four nights that lead towards horrible consequences. Mutually, they tell each other their history, which adds depth to the short story. Inculcation of Nastenka in a dreamer's life serves as a source of a never-ending stream of Eudaimonia in his life.

As the master of existentialism, Dostoevsky masterfully describes the inner dilemma of the dreamer between love and isolation through profound words.

The title "white night" metaphorically means "sleepless nights," which shows the inner turmoil of the dreamer.

While literally it refers to those nights that are not totally dark and have some luminosity in them.

In essence, I like this short story a lot and enjoyed the unique writing style. Despite this, the storyline near me is not unique, but the way it is expressed makes it different from other literature.

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### **It ends with us by Colleen Hoover**

This novel reflects the idea that love, by itself, is not enough for a relationship when you are being disrespected. Choosing yourself is not selfish; it's survival. It's not only about the endings of relationships but also about the power of new beginnings. It tells us that love is not what we do with others but what we carry within ourselves.

The story centers around Lily Bloom, a woman shaped by a painful past and an abusive life, the same pain her mother once endured. An ambitious woman trying to build and change her life Ryle Kincaid seems like a well-mannered neurosurgeon. The beginning of their relationship is perfect and passionate. But as their bond deepens, cracks begin to appear. Lily starts to see her mother's abusive past repeating itself in her own life.

Through flashbacks, we meet Atlas Corrigan, Lily's first love, a symbol of hope and a relationship built on mutual respect and emotional safety. His return forces Lily to make the hardest decision of her life. What sets this novel apart is its honesty and truth.

"Just because someone hurts you doesn't mean you can simply stop loving them."

Colleen Hoover doesn't hesitate to reflect the ugly realities of domestic abuse. The writing style is simple but there lies a deep reflection of abusive lives, which most women face and confront. With a single word like "patience" (sabar), she captures the emotional struggle. Maybe love will be better if it's honest and given freely. But true healing happens only when you start caring for and loving yourself, instead of always putting others first.

"It stops with me and you. It ends with us."

This is the best example of strength and sacrifice.

# MOVIE REVIEWS

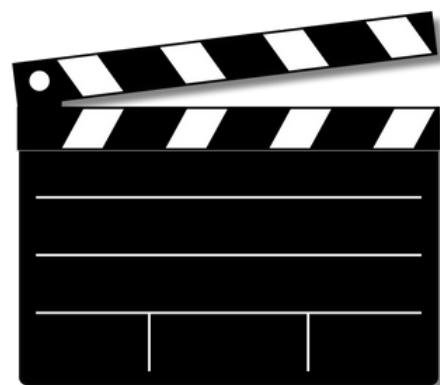
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**Dead Poets Society**  
Hira Javed

**20**

**Me Before You**  
Iman Ayesha

**25**





Hira Javed  
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ENGL52F22S017



### Dead Poet's Society

"Gather ye rose-buds while ye may." – Robert Herrick

Dead Poets Society (1989) is a coming-of-age film based on Nancy H. Kleinbaum's novel. It is set in Welton Academy, an all-boys prep school in Vermont, that prides itself on tradition, discipline, excellence, and honor. Todd Anderson is a newcomer at Welton and is a reserved and introverted fellow who finds it hard to express himself. In contrast, Neil Perry, who is Todd's roommate, is a confident and passionate boy who has a thirst for self-expression. The boys' first few days at Welton are tedious. Until the arrival of Mr. John Keating, whose unorthodox methods and radical philosophy of education not only captivate his students but also fascinate the audience.

Keating encourages his students to call him "O Captain! My Captain!", Whitman's label for Abraham Lincoln. This shows that he wants his students to regard him as their guide, showing them the right way, rather than a mere commander issuing orders. He introduced the concept of "Seize the day" while reading Herrick's line, "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may. The Latin term of that sentiment is 'Carpe Diem'. This is a call to live with a purpose, to suck out all the marrow of life, and to live deliberately, Thoreau remarks. He said, "Carpe diem. Seize the day, boys. Make your lives extraordinary."

Keating urged his students to abandon the traditional mode of learning as he ordered them to rip the pages out of their books. The whole classroom echoed with his voice, "Rip it out". He gathered the students around him and told them the true purpose of poetry. "We don't read and write poetry because it's cute. We read and write poetry because we are members of the human race. And the human race is filled with passion. Medicine, law, business, engineering, these are noble pursuits and necessary to sustain life. But poetry, beauty, romance, love, these are what we stay alive for." Poetry is not just a form of art; it is a vital force that preserves life. Neil found



Keating's Yearbook, and there they discovered a secret society he was a part of, the Dead Poets Society.

Curiously, they asked Keating about the club, and he explained that there he and his friends would read poems to each other. At first, the boys found the idea absurd, but Keating told them that there were some other benefits, which picked their attention. Todd was reluctant to join his friends; he was afraid that he might need to read some poems. However, Neil forced him to come. In the meeting, the boys took Keating's book and read poems to each other. Neil read some of the concluding verses from Tennyson's *Ulysses*, which resonated deeply with the central theme of the poem. The line "To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield" is allusive. Todd needs to strive to break free from his self-created phantoms, whereas Neil needs emancipation from his authoritative father. Similarly, all the boys have to seek and find their actual purpose in life. While Neil was reading the line, one can note how he pauses before saying "not to yield" and his voice trembles there; this subtle foreshadowing refers to the tragic end.

One of the most beautiful scenes in the movie is when Keating stood up on his desk and asked the class, "Why am I standing here?" and then he answered, "I stand upon my desk to remind myself that we must constantly look at things in a different way." He urges that they should look at things from various lenses, rather than just believing what is apparent. Whenever you think you know something, you must look at it in another way.

Neil gets really excited as he finds a role in "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*", Todd asks him whether his father knows or not, to which Neil answers "no", the only thing that mattered to him in that moment was that he found his purpose to live deliberately. Upon Todd's insistence that he should let his father know, he says: "For the first time in my whole life, I know what I wanna do. And for the first time, I'm gonna do it! Whether my father wants me to or not. *Carpe Diem*". Finally, he got the part and forged a letter from his father for permission. In his passion to live the fullest, he overlooks the consequences.



Keatings assigned the boys a task: to write a poem of their own and read it aloud in front of the class, and he knew very well how scared Todd was to do that. When the time comes, Todd is asked to read his poem, and he tells Keating that he couldn't write one. Upon hearing this, Keating writes on the board a line by Whitman, "I sound my barbaric YAWP over the roofs of the world." He asks Todd to sound his "yawp" over and over, to look at the picture of Whitman and use his imagination and tell what he sees, with struggle, finally, these words come out of Todd's mouth: "A sweaty-toothed madman with a stare that pounds my brain. His hands reach out and choke me, mumbling truth like a blanket that always leaves your feet cold" and here Keating says "there's a poet in you after all". This is Todd's transformation; his strive to break free from his insecurities reaches a culmination. He is finally finding his voice.

Charlie Dalton wrote in the school paper that girls should be admitted to the school, but he didn't stop there; he signed the piece as DPS, Dead Poets Society. As suspected, the administration of Welton was adamant to find the culprit. Charlie's prank escalated when he interrupted the school assembly with a ringing phone and said to the headmaster, "Mr. Nolan, it's for you. It's God. He says we should have girls at Welton." Charlie faced serious consequences and was given the choice that he would be forgiven if he disclosed everything about the club, but he chose not to. When Neil thanked him for that, Charlie said, "My name is Nuwanda." This is symbolic as he created a rebellious alter ego against the rigid conventions of Welton.

Keating was confronted by Headmaster Nolan regarding his unconventional teaching methods, so he had a word with Charlie. "Sucking the marrow out of bones doesn't mean to choke on the bones", he said. This point in the film is of utter importance; Charlie mistook Keating's philosophy of rebellion as provocation. Keating did urge his students to live a life with meaning, even if it challenges societal norms, but not the way Charlie did. This incident captures how different minds adapt the same philosophy in distinct ways. For Charlie, rebellion meant pulling pranks on his teachers, whereas for Neil, it meant breaking away from the shackles of his





father.

Neil's father pays him a visit, it is about his “absurd acting business” and orders Neil not to perform. A disturbed Neil goes to Keating, who asks Neil whether he told his father about his passion for acting, and the reply is “I can't”. According to Keating, he is acting in front of his father as well, acting like a dutiful son. Neil declares, “I am trapped,” to which Keating replies, “No, you are not”. Here, Keating's role as “O Captain, My Captain” is at its peak. He does not explicitly tell Neil what to do, but he shows him that the choice is in his own hands; he is just there to show him the way.

Neil's play begins, and in the middle, he notices that his father has entered. This is a very significant scene because here Neil exercises his liberty. Neil's monologue as Puck mirrors his real-life conflict with his father. While delivering the lines, he's looking at his father and says, “If we shadows have offended, Think but this, and all is mended: That you have but slumber'd here While these visions did appear.” Here, he is implicitly apologizing for his act of rebellion but simultaneously affirming its necessity. However, it all goes in vain as his father aggressively takes him home.

The final confrontation between the father and the son ended when Mr. Perry asked Neil, “Tell me what you want,” and his answer was “Nothing”. It is in this moment that Neil decides what his next step will be. Neil ended his life wearing Puck's crown made from flowers because only in that costume he feel most alive and most free. Back at Welton, Keating opened his book, and on the first page, a line by Thoreau was written: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately”. Every meeting of the Dead Poets Society began with this line.

Keating, upon reading it, started sobbing. Welton was mourning Neil, but at the same time, it had a reputation to maintain, so the administration started an inquiry into Keating. The boys were pressured by Headmaster Nolan to sign a statement against Keating's influence. Hence, Keating got fired for “corrupting” he students.



In the concluding scene, the classroom that once echoed “Carpe Diem” looks stale and is engaged by Nolan himself. Keating returns to collect his belongings, when a voice came, a voice that was once muffled by all the strong voices in its surroundings, the voice of Todd Anderson, who wanted to tell Keating that he was forced to sign the letter that resulted in Keating's dismissal, but Todd was forced by Nolan to sit down. Just when Keating is going towards the door to depart, Todd stands up on his desk and yells, “O Captain! My Captain!” followed by the rest of the class. Hence, despite a tragic end, Keating's struggle to inspire the boys to view life through a broader lens does not go in vain; it leaves a lasting impression on their consciousness.



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### **Me Before You**

Me Before You (2016), directed by Thea Sharrock and based on Jojo Moyes' bestselling novel that explores love, loss, and the delicate choices life presents, and makes you smile, cry, and think deeply about love and life. It ends in a way that is both heartbreaking and inspiring. The story follows Louisa Clark, a cheerful and quirky young woman, who becomes a caregiver for William Traynor, a wealthy, adventurous man left paralyzed after an accident; both change each other's lives in unanticipated ways.

The movie is more than just a love story; it is about finding joy in small moments. When William gives Louisa the bumblebee tights, it is more than just a sweet gesture; it reflects the deep bond growing between them. Lou realizes that Will sees her in a way no one else does, remembering the little details that matter to her heart. This simple gift becomes a symbol of their intense love and unspoken feelings, showing that their connection is built on care, understanding, and a love that goes beyond words. Louisa teaches Will to laugh again, and Will teaches Louisa to live boldly. One of the most moving lines is when Will tells her, "You only get one life. It is actually your duty to live it as fully as possible." The movie reminds us that love is not just about staying together; sometimes loving someone means letting them make their own choices, although it breaks your heart. Will's decision is painful for Lou, but he leaves her with the strength to live life fully. His words stay in her mind: "You only get one life. Live it well."

Overall, Me Before You is a bittersweet tale that will leave viewers teary-eyed, telling an emotional tale of mixed feelings. Love has an incredible impact on People's lives. In the last part of the movie, Lou reads Will's letter at a Paris café, where it says: "just live well, just live". This scene captures the true message of the movie, that life should be embraced no matter how hard it gets.

Me Before You portrays both heartwarming and heartbreaking moments that reveal how a short love story can profoundly alter our perspective on life.

# POETRY

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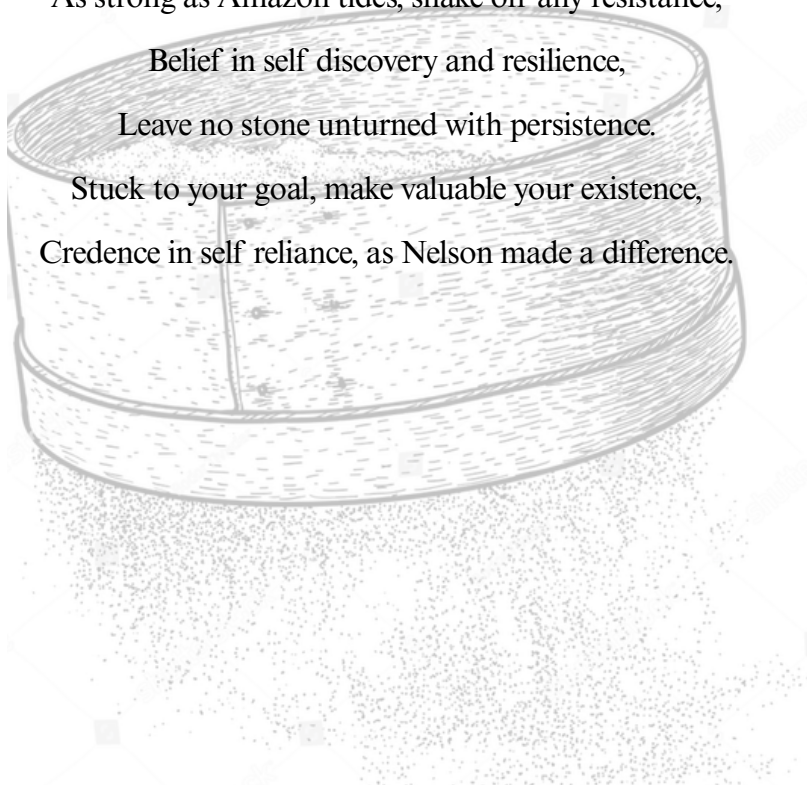


Kiran Mumtaz  
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### **To Please People is Like Filling a Sieve**

To please people is like filling a sieve  
To please people is like filling a sieve,  
Quite easy for them to deceive,  
While very harder for them to Forgive.  
It's vehement for them to succumb,  
As Submissiveness in them has never come.  
Thus, give up this ceaseless effort,  
Since it's impossible to see verdant in desert.  
Refine yourself as a pure gold;  
Keep trying every thread of knot to unfold,  
As strong as Amazon tides, shake off any resistance,  
Belief in self discovery and resilience,  
Leave no stone unturned with persistence.  
Stuck to your goal, make valuable your existence,  
Credence in self reliance, as Nelson made a difference.





Maseera Asghar  
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ENGL52F22S062



### **Why Am I So Unintelligible?**

Why am I so unintelligible?

Why am I so unintelligible ?

Hurricane of intricate thoughts explodes my mind.

Am I a queer person? May be.

I feel so disconnected from this world

Why am I so un intelligible?

The fear of being a transgressor is like termite which makes me hollow

Why am I so unintelligible?

Why no one sees my concern behind these water drops.

Why am I so unintelligible ?





Noor Ul Ain Latif  
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ENGL52F21S092RE



### **In the Intricate Mosaic of Human's Life**

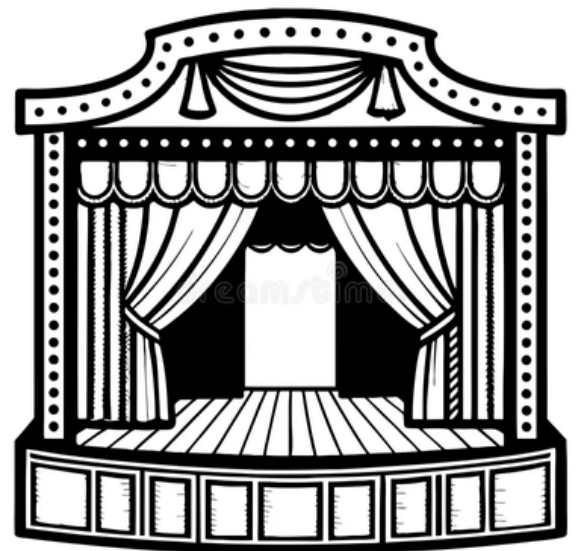
In the intricate mosaic of human's life,  
There's a story behind every stranger's line,  
When darker hours of long nights sweep, shadows get deep,  
When silence falls and our hearts then creep,  
Our mind unfolds the plethora of thoughts,  
Why are we not reaching out to hearts grown cold?  
The narrowed selves and sheepish vows we've made,  
Hold us back to memories that still aren't faded,  
The weight of time, the ache of love delayed,  
A longing for connection, a heart that's swayed...  
Let's not forget to check on those, who hide behind  
The mask of strength, with broken hearts, courage conveyed.



# PLAY

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## **Between the Lighthouse and the River 29** Aaliya Batool



Aaliya Batool  
M.Phil. Scholar  
ENGL71824W5003



## Between the Lighthouse and the River

### Act 1: Shadows of the Past

#### Scene 1: The Childhood Library

(The stage is warmly lit, evoking a comforting and nostalgic atmosphere. Shelves of books line the background, and a single reading desk sits center stage. Soft classical music plays faintly. Young Virginia Woolf, 10 years old, is perched on a small chair with a book in her lap, her hair slightly messy, her expression one of deep concentration. She reads aloud.)

Virginia:

(Reads from a book, her voice clear yet dreamy.)

“The sea is calm tonight, the tide is full, the moon lies fair...”

(She closes the book abruptly, staring out into the audience, as though the act of reading has stirred something inside her.)

Virginia (murmurs):

But why does the sea stay calm? It has all the power in the world to rage, to roar... (pauses, whispering) just like me.

(Her mother, Julia Stephen, enters gracefully, carrying a small vase of flowers. The music softens as Julia approaches.)

Julia: Virginia, dearest, still lost in your books?

Virginia: Always, Mother. (Holds up the book) Arnold’s words are like waves; they carry me to places I can’t quite touch but feel all the same.

Julia (smiling, placing the vase on the desk):

Words are powerful currents, my little philosopher. But remember, they are also anchors. They can hold you steady when the storms come.



Virginia: (Gazes at her mother intently, voice soft but probing.)

And when the anchor is gone, what happens to the ship?

(Julia falters slightly, the faintest shadow crossing her face, but she quickly recovers.)

Julia:

Then the ship learns to steer itself, Virginia. One day, you'll find your own course, no matter the tempests.

Virginia (thoughtfully):

Perhaps I'll write my own seas... something no one else can map.

(Julia leans down, tucking Virginia's hair behind her ear.)

Julia: And I have no doubt you will. But for now, a little girl's place is here, safe, under this roof, surrounded by these books.

(A faint shadow darkens the stage. The soft sounds of footsteps are heard in the background, almost imperceptible, growing louder. Julia stands, suddenly alert.)

Julia (turning, sharply):

George? What are you doing here?

(George Duckworth, Virginia's half-brother, steps into the light. His presence is imposing, his voice smooth but unsettling.)

George:

Only checking on my darling little sister. No harm in that, is there?

(Virginia instinctively pulls her book closer to her chest, her body shrinking slightly in her chair.

Julia steps protectively between them.)

Julia:

You've been warned, George. Leave her to her reading.

George (ignoring Julia, speaking directly to Virginia):

Aren't you going to say hello to your dear brother? Don't you trust me, Ginny?





(Virginia doesn't answer, her eyes fixed on the floor. The tension thickens as the soft classical music halts abruptly, leaving an eerie silence. Julia's voice hardens.)

Julia:

I said, Leave.

(George smirks but turns to go. His footsteps fade as the light around Virginia dims further. Julia kneels, taking Virginia's trembling hands in hers.)

Julia (softly):

You are safe here, Virginia. You have my word.

Virginia (barely audible):

But shadows don't go away when you shut the door.

(Julia pulls Virginia into an embrace, her own expression etched with worry. The warmth of the scene feels fragile, like it could shatter any moment.)

Virginia (whispering, from Julia's shoulder):

Do you think books can save me, Mother?

Julia (firmly):

Books, my darling, and the fire inside you.

(The lighting begins to dim as Julia strokes Virginia's hair. The narrator's voice—older Virginia Woolf—breaks in, reflective yet somber.)

Narrator (Virginia):

“Even as a child, I learned that the greatest truths hide in the smallest silences. My mother's arms could shield me from a world of storms, but not from the shadows that whispered within. These whispers... they stayed. They shaped me. And, in the end, they would consume me.”

(The stage goes dark, with only the faint sound of a turning page echoing before silence takes over.)



## Scene 2: Losses and Madness

(Virginia's father, mother, and sister died. The ghosts of her mother, Julia, and her half-sister, Stella, appear on stage.. They move toward Virginia, but their voices are distant, echoing.)

Julia (ghostly):

Virginia, dearest... come closer. You're too far away.

Stella:

Ginny, why won't you speak?

Virginia looks up, her face anguished, but she does not speak. The light around the ghostly figures begins to flicker, then fades. The stage darkens except for a spotlight on Virginia.)

(A funeral scene unfolds abruptly. The sound of a church bell tolling fills the space. Virginia now stands to the side, dressed in black. Figures of mourners pass by, faceless and blurred, murmuring indistinct phrases.)

Mourners (voices overlapping):

"Poor child, first her mother, then her sister...and now her father"

"She's far too sensitive. It'll break her."

"She's clever, yes, but what good is that if she's always on the verge of collapse?"

(Virginia clutches her arms tightly, her breathing quickens. She turns to the audience as though addressing them directly.)

Virginia:

They speak of me as if I were a fragile ornament, ready to shatter under the weight of grief. They whisper behind closed doors, but I hear them. I hear everything.

(The murmurs grow louder, distorting into an unintelligible cacophony. Virginia cries out.)

Virginia (screaming):

STOP!



(The stage falls silent. The spotlight shifts again, and now Virginia is in her home, kneeling on the floor. She clutches her head, rocking back and forth as voices—inner and outer—echo around her.)

Narrator (Virginia):

“I thought death would grow easier to bear with time, that loss would become a familiar companion. But no. Each departure left a sharper wound, carving away pieces of me until all that remained was hollow.”

(The stage darkens. When the light returns, Virginia is now in a small room, speaking with Vanessa Bell, her sister. Vanessa’s voice is calm and soothing, a contrast to Virginia’s turmoil.)

Vanessa:

Ginny, you must let yourself grieve.

Virginia:

Grieve? Grieving is just another word for drowning, Vanessa. And I’ve no room left for air.

Vanessa:

Then write, Ginny. Let it out on the page. If nothing else, let the words carry it away.

(Virginia looks at Vanessa, her expression a mixture of desperation and hope.)

Virginia: The words... they’re the only things left that make sense. But even they feel like a weight sometimes. What if they fail me? What if they vanish like everyone else?

(Vanessa takes her hands gently.)

Vanessa: Then we will find them again together. You are not alone. Not while I am here.

(The light softens as Vanessa embraces Virginia. For a brief moment, the stage feels warm again, but the shadows linger at the edges. The Narrator’s voice returns, solemn and knowing.)

Narrator (Virginia):

“Vanessa believed in the power of words to heal. And for a time, so did I. But grief is a tide, always waiting to pull you under. I could write, yes—but I could never write them back.”



(The stage fades to black, the sound of waves crashing echoing once more.)

**Act 2: A Room of Her Own**

**Scene 1: The Bloomsbury Group**

(The stage lights brighten to reveal a cozy yet chaotic living room setting, adorned with mismatched furniture, books scattered everywhere, and an air of intellectual fervor. This is the heart of the Bloomsbury Group. A lively debate is in progress, with voices overlapping in bursts of wit and argument. Virginia, now in her late 20s, sits poised but animated, her sharp eyes observing the room. Lytton Strachey reclines in a chair with a cigarette, Leonard Woolf stands near the bookshelf, and Vanessa Bell sketches quietly at the edge of the group. The energy is electric.)

Lytton Strachey:

Why should we bow to tradition, Virginia? Look at the poets—stale, overburdened with formality! Poetry needs a scalpel, not a quill.

Virginia (dryly):

And prose, Lytton? Should we perform surgery on that, too, or does it deserve to breathe its own air?

Lytton (smirking):

Prose can breathe, but not without lungs as sharp as yours. The question is, dear Virginia, what will you carve out next?

Virginia:

(Leaning forward, voice intense)

A new way of seeing. A prose that captures the flicker of thought, the shimmer of time. Not this rigid march of events we call a “story,” but the pulse of life itself.

Vanessa (without looking up from her sketch):

You speak as though it’s already written.



Virginia:

It's not written yet, but it's there. In the pauses between words, in the spaces no one dares to look.  
That's where truth lives.

Leonard Woolf (stepping forward, voice steady):

And what will this truth say to the world?

Virginia (turning to him, her voice soft but sharp):

That we are more than what we appear to be. That women, men, all of us—are oceans, not puddles. But no one sees the depth. They skim the surface and call it reality.

(The room falls silent for a moment. Lytton exhales a long plume of smoke, breaking the stillness.)

Lytton: And here I thought we'd just gather to gossip and drink tea. Instead, we're handed an existential manifesto. Bravo, Virginia.

(The group chuckles, but Virginia's expression remains focused. She stands, pacing slowly as she speaks.)

Virginia: Gossip and tea have their place, Lytton, but we're fools if we don't see the cracks in the world around us. Women locked in drawing rooms, men locked in wars.

And words—words are the only keys we have to free them

Leonard (with quiet admiration):

And you would be the one to make the keys.

Virginia (pausing, turning to him):

No, Leonard. I can only show them the lock. The rest is theirs to find.

(Vanessa puts down her sketch and looks at Virginia, her voice gentle but probing.)

Vanessa:

And what about you, Ginny? Who will find the key for you?

(Virginia falters for a brief moment, her confidence wavering. She turns away from the group, her back to them.)





Virginia:

(Softly)

I'm not sure there is one for me.

(Leonard steps forward, his tone firm but kind.)

Leonard:

You're wrong, Virginia. The key is in your words. It's in you.

(Virginia turns back, her expression a mixture of defiance and vulnerability.)

Narrator (Virginia):

"They called us dreamers, radicals, eccentrics. And perhaps we were. But in those rooms, with tea and wit and fire in our hearts, we imagined a new world. A world where voices like mine could be heard—not as whispers, but as thunder."

(The stage dims further, the faint sound of typewriter keys clicking echoing in the background.)

### Scene 2: Writing Mrs. Dalloway

(Virginia and Leonard are married now. The stage is dark except for a pool of light illuminating a cluttered desk. Sheets of paper lie scattered, some crumpled and tossed to the floor. A typewriter sits at the center. Virginia, now in her mid-40s, stands over the desk, her fingers trembling as she touches the typewriter keys. The sound of ticking clocks echoes faintly, joined by murmurs—voices of characters swirling in her mind. The lighting is fragmented, creating shadows that shift around her, as though the characters of Mrs. Dalloway are watching her work.)

Narrator (Virginia):

"To write is to wrestle with shadows. I gave them names—Clarissa, Septimus, Peter—but they were never mine to control. They whispered, demanded, lived, and died in the space between my thoughts and the page. And always, they reflected the darkest corners of myself."



(Virginia begins typing, her movements frantic, her breathing uneven. As she types, the voice of Septimus Warren Smith emerges from the shadows, haunting and urgent.)

Septimus (voice, offstage):

“The world is too much. Too loud, too bright. It tears at me—piece by piece—until there is nothing left but the silence I crave.”

(Virginia pauses, her hands hovering above the typewriter, her face etched with anguish.)

Virginia (whispering):

The silence... yes, the silence.

(Septimus’s voice grows louder, overlapping with her thoughts.

Septimus:

“They call it madness, but it is clarity. They call it weakness, but it is freedom. To escape is the only courage left.”

(Virginia pushes the typewriter away, clutching her head as if to drown out the voice. Leonard enters quietly, observing her from the doorway. His voice is soft but steady.)

Leonard Woolf:

Virginia.

(She looks up, startled, as though emerging from another world.)

Virginia:

Leonard... I didn’t hear you.

Leonard:

You’ve been here all day. Have you eaten?

Virginia (shaking her head):

I don’t need food. I need... (pauses, searching for the words) to finish this.

(Leonard moves closer, picking up one of the scattered pages. He reads silently for a moment before speaking.)



Leonard:

Clarissa Dalloway buys flowers... Septimus throws himself from a window. Two lives, side by side, yet they never touch.

Virginia:

(Interrupting, her voice sharp)

But they do. In the spaces between their lives, they touch. Don't you see? The same world that gives Clarissa her parties drives Septimus to his death.

Leonard (gently):

And where are you in all this, Virginia?

(Virginia hesitates, her expression guarded.)

Virginia:

(Quietly)

I am the witness. The one who watches.

Leonard:

(Looking directly at her)

Or the one who feels it all.

(Virginia turns away, walking toward the window. She stares out as the ticking clock grows louder.)

Virginia:

Septimus is the scream I keep inside. The terror that no one sees. And Clarissa... Clarissa is the mask I wear, the woman who carries on as if the world isn't falling apart.

(She turns back to Leonard, her voice trembling with emotion.)

Virginia:

Do you know what it feels like, Leonard? To be both of them at once? To want to live and to want to die, all in the same breath?

(Leonard crosses to her, placing a steadying hand on her shoulder.)



Leonard:

I don't know what it feels like, Virginia. But I know what it looks like. And I know what it takes from you.

(Virginia steps back, her voice softening.)

Virginia:

It takes everything.

(She returns to the desk, sitting down and running her hands over the typewriter keys. Her movements slow and deliberate, as though each keystroke is a battle.)

Virginia:

But it's the only way I can make sense of the chaos. The only way I can survive it.

(The voice of Clarissa Dalloway emerges from the shadows, calm and reflective, a contrast to Septimus's earlier torment.)

Clarissa (voice, offstage):

"I will not despair. I will buy the flowers myself. I will step into the day and let it carry me forward, even as the world crumbles behind me."

Virginia types furiously, her breath quickening. The voices of Clarissa and Septimus overlap, creating a rising cacophony.)

Septimus:

"Death is freedom!"

Clarissa:

"Life is choice!"

(Virginia slams the typewriter, silencing the voices. The stage falls quiet except for her ragged breathing. Leonard kneels beside her, his tone soft but insistent.)

Leonard:

Ginny, stop. Just for a moment.





(She looks at him, her eyes glassy.)

Virginia:

If I stop, Leonard, they'll consume me. The voices, the shadows, the madness, they'll take everything.

(Leonard takes her hands in his, steadying her.)

Leonard:

No. They won't. Not while I'm here.

(The light softens as Virginia leans into Leonard's touch, the tension easing slightly. The narrator's voice returns, reflective yet resolute.)

Narrator (Virginia):

"I wrote Mrs. Dalloway not to escape my madness, but to understand it. To give it shape, to give it words, to give it life. And in doing so, I learned this: Madness and genius are not opposites—they are threads of the same fabric. And I... I am the weaver."

(The stage dims to darkness, with the faint sound of typewriter keys clicking one last time.)

### **Act 3: Descent and Legacy**

#### **Scene 1: The River Ouse**

(The stage is cold and dimly lit, evoking an early morning by the River Ouse. The sound of gentle water flowing fills the silence, interspersed with the faint chirping of birds. The setting is sparse—a lone wooden bench and a few scattered stones near the riverbank. Virginia Woolf, now in her late 50s, stands at the edge of the stage, a heavy coat draped over her frail figure. Her hands clutch a small notebook and a pocket full of stones. Her breath is visible in the cold air, and her movements are slow and deliberate. The scene begins with her speaking softly, as though writing the suicide letter aloud to herself.)

Virginia Woolf (softly, as if writing):

"Dearest Leonard, I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those



terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So, I am doing what seems the best thing to do.

You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me, you could work. And you will know. You see, I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that — everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me, it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer. I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.”

(She steps closer to the riverbank, the sound of water growing louder. Virginia reaches into her pocket, pulling out a small stone. She gazes at it thoughtfully before letting it fall to the ground. The sound of the stone hitting the earth echoes unnaturally loud, followed by a heavy silence. She steps into the river slowly, the light around her dimming as the sound of water rises. The sound of waves fades, replaced by the quiet turning of a page. The spotlight dims.)

Important Note: On 28th March 1941, Virginia Woolf took her own life.

It was springtime in London. World War II was at its peak, pressing hard against Britain. Nazi Germany had already conquered much of Europe, and relentless bombing raids had killed or wounded tens of thousands in its homeland. A German invasion of southern England loomed as a real possibility. Before Hitler shifted focus to Russia and before the U.S. entered the war, Britain stood alone, its people gripped by the very real fear of defeat.

It was the backdrop of this bleak atmosphere that Virginia Woolf took her own life, though her reasons were deeply personal. Also, Lytton has died, who was Virginia's best friend and muse, and without him, she felt lost. In a way, her suicide could be perceived as an act of love. She wanted desperately to spare her husband and sister from the burden of her suffering. It speaks to the



profound agony of her mental illness that death seemed the only escape.

### **Scene 2: Media's Falsehoods and Truth Revealed**

(The stage transforms into a cold, stark newsroom. A large desk dominates the center, with newspapers scattered across it. The sound of typewriters clacking fills the air. Reporters and editors bustle about, speaking in sharp, rapid tones. Projected headlines flash across the backdrop: "Virginia Woolf: A Broken Genius," "Death by Madness," "A Suicide Note of Surrender." The light is harsh, clinical, reflecting the sterility of their judgment.)

Editor-in-Chief:

(Slamming a paper onto the desk)

"'I feel certain I am going mad again. I cannot fight it any longer.' This is gold! Tragic, dramatic, and exactly what they want to read.

She was brilliant, yes, but madness was her legacy. Run it on the front page! Double the circulation guaranteed.

Reporter 1:

(Leaning over, grinning)

It's a story that writes itself, really. The tortured artist who couldn't handle her own genius.

Reporter 2:

(Skeptically)

But have you read the whole note? She doesn't sound defeated. She sounds... deliberate.

Editor-in-Chief:

(Waving dismissively)

Deliberate? Don't romanticize it. She drowned herself, for God's sake. It's the ultimate act of surrender. That's all anyone will care about.

Narrator (Virginia):

"They dissected my words the way vultures pick apart a carcass. My note was no longer mine; it



became theirs—a canvas for their cruelty, their hunger for scandal. They did not see the truth. They did not wish to see. They reduced my life to a cautionary tale. A fragile genius. A woman who ‘couldn’t handle it.’ But I was never fragile. I was fierce. And my note was not a surrender—it was a reckoning. The water was not my defeat, but my truth? My note was not for anyone else. It was for him—for Leonard. For the one who understood that madness was not my shame, but my shadow. They could not own my story, though they tried. They could twist my words, print their lies, and sell their papers. But in the end, my truth remains. In the ink of my novels, in the ripples of the river, I am eternal.”

Virginia (to the audience):

“And to you—readers, dreamers, seekers of truth—know this: My story does not end at the river. It does not end in madness or silence. My story lives wherever a woman dares to claim a room of her own. Wherever a person dares to see the world not as it is, but as it could be. I was not a victim of my mind. I was a master of it. And though it broke me, it also made me. Do not pity me. Do not reduce me to the stones in my pockets or the water in my lungs. The river did not take me. It carried me. And it will carry my words, my legacy, to shores I will never see. Take this gift, this imperfect, beautiful life I’ve left behind. And write your own waves. Create your own light. The darkness will come, yes—but so will the dawn.”

(The stage fades to black, leaving only the sound of gentle waves and the faint turning of pages. A single spotlight illuminates Virginia’s final words, projected onto the backdrop.

# SHORT STORIES

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Nimra Sajid  
BS7 Eng (SS1)  
ENGL52F22S020



### **More than Enough! Her Battle Beyond The White Coat**

“It's about to be completed,” she said, gazing at the little details of the painting standing before her.

“Yes... Just the final strokes left,” he replied, and was holding a brush in his steady hand.

Then her eyes shifted from the canvas to the face of a young twenty-three-year-old boy who was lost entirely in his piece of art. A soft smile curved on her lips while noticing the subtle movement of his paintbrush in the air. Now, she moved slowly towards the chair in the garden and settled into it. After adjusting the shawl over her shoulders, she picked up the blue yarn from a basket and started working on the half-finished sweater.

Her thin and pale fingers were moving quickly. They were not just joining the yarn, but it seemed like she was stitching the wounds, one by one, and struggling to stop the bleeding from long-forgotten cuts. As she knitted, her gaze returned to the boy who was still undistracted by the world around him, trying to complete his work as quickly as she was trying to finish hers. An evening dinner was waiting for both of them.

Tilting her head a little, she whispered to herself, “Maybe it's better to focus on mine.”

Her mind grew busy like her hands. She drifted into thoughts of the upcoming dinner, a celebration for her friend's son, who had just graduated from medical college. “He must be so happy for the day”, she thought. In her heart, however, a familiar ache stirred as she contemplated the profession's gendered implications, especially in Pakistan. A crease formed on her forehead, deepening with the realization of her harsh journey. “Maybe, that's why it felt different for someone like me”. She said with a wounded smile.

It could have been easier if I had cracked the medical entrance exam on my first attempt. She thought, and a sigh escaped her lips.

I tried hard, but maybe something was still missing, except for the effort itself. That's the



very reason my father got mad at me. But where's the reason he gets mad? She tried to enquire about something.

“Does not being capable of passing a single test truly describe my worth?” Her fingers slowed down a little when old pain resurfaced. But it no longer matters now, as I cracked it the second time. She continued. But still... that delay changed everything. A new thought poked into her over-tangled mind. Because of that delay, Father had moved abroad a little later, but why had he returned earlier? She was battling again with the series of her thoughts. Perhaps he had returned to finish what he considered more important than my degree: Marriage!

Her brows furrowed deeper. But is marriage more important than the things I have been working on for a long time? So, it was a marriage that pulled the focus away from my final year in medical school. She made something out of the threads of her earlier thought. But suddenly, the voice of her husband echoed in her mind:

“It's your obsession with your career that ruined this home.”

Was I the one who turned our home into an emergency room? Or he died never knowing who I really was? Or maybe I never made enough effort to show him. Her fingers hesitated. The yarn slipped slightly.

“But I never wanted my life to rush like this,” she whispered. Is it all because of my rushing... that he's no longer alive? A heavy silence sat between her ribs. But she shook her head and resumed knitting. “I tried... I tried harder. I took care of him. I raised our son. I tried to hold everything together”. She was now reassuring herself with the things that she could use to defend herself every time.

“But maybe....Maybe I have never done enough for either world”. Her fingers were moving faster, and the skin around her nails was slowly turning red, but she didn't notice or didn't care. At least I am knitting.... This sweater for my son...the one who stayed. But am I



knitting for him or there's something else? She found herself entangled in a web of blurring colors inside her mind.

Knitting had never been her favorite thing. From where did I even learned it and why? She tried to resolve something.

Did I make time to learn it, or did I learn it just to create time? Her thoughts tangled like the yarn in her hands until a shadow fell across her lap.

She looked up slowly, and her large black eyes met his, gentle and knowing. For a moment, her face was blank, and then her eyes sparkled with a reassuring smile. The young man sat beside her and carefully took the sweater and yarn from her trembling hands. He noticed that the wrinkles were appearing more on her hands this time. After gently creasing the red skin around her fingers, he whispered, "Mom! You have done enough...actually more than enough". He paused and then spoke again in his gentle voice. "You don't need to keep trying so hard."

She looked at him, and tiny tears started gathering close to her lower lashes. Now, she is not the one that she wanted to be, but the one who carried it well. He had always been gentle, more so ever since she began knitting. But was he talking about the knitting... or everything she had held inside all these years? She wasn't sure.

But for the first time in a long while, she allowed herself to be unsure.

After some time, two shadows appeared, walking together into the house. One of them was full of the youthful spirit, holding the other weary soul, leaving behind an unfinished painting, an incomplete sweater, and a tangled yarn that perhaps didn't need to be finished after all. In that moment, she understood that sometimes, just being there is more than enough.

Atika Anwar  
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ENGL51F21R018



### The Last Page

The library wasn't just quiet, it was hollow. A silence that is touching and that is creeping into your skin, into your bones, and making you doubt whether the world still exists outside or no longer.

Claire rather favoured that mode.

The long arched windows were falling tapped by the rain, and the courtyard was blurred in a watery gray painting. In some remote corner of the edifice, some radiator rambled and banged like the weary old heart.

And she wandered up and down the aisles of the books--her hands flitting over broken leather backs, sending clouds of dust swirling up about her fingers. Woolf. Eliot. Beckett. Names she had mouthed when alone as a kind of windbreak seemed then to be memorials to the dead dreams of the last four years.

In her final year as an English major, she came to the university with her head full of poems and ideas to blow up the literary world. The world had never been aware of it.

Her email inbox was the testimonial, telling the story.

"We are seeking someone with more experience."

"Not quite what we want now."

One rejection would merge into another until the words made no sense and were just white noise on a screen.

She pressed into her accustomed corner seat before the window. The air reeked of aging paper and of slight mildew. And outward, the rain slanted in lopsided columns down the glass in an overwrought sort of way, as though the sky itself were crying and could not keep quite still.

Claire opened *Waiting for Godot*, and the soft, tattered pages had a familiar ease.

"We Wait. We are bored. No, don't protest. There is no denying the fact that we are bored to



death.”

Beckett in a storm?--Ah, asked a voice. That is risky.

She turned her head up.

A young man stood there, with a stack of books in his arms: Baldwin, Plath, and Achebe. His scarf was coming unfastened, rain dripping on his dark hair, then his collar. There was what she would have called the mischievous in his smile, as though he had a secret on her and the world both.

“What, dangerous?” She yawped.

“Beckett on a rainy day! It destroys you or cures you. No middle ground”

“Perhaps, I like the risk.”

“Or it is possible that you are trying to lose yourself.”

And before she could protest or make any reply, he pulled out the chair opposite to her and sat down.

“I’m Ethan.”

“Claire.”

There was a shifting in the silence of the library, folding into something warmer, like the hush before the melody begins.

They experienced a natural beat of rhythm.

Sometimes on afternoons, they would quarrel over poetry. Claire argued about the rawness of Plath, and Ethan argued about how detached Eliot was.

“Eliot distills emotion into essence.”

Ethan said one day, thumped *The Waste Land* like a holy book

“Or does not touch it at all,” Claire corrected him.

“Plath bleeds on the paper. That is straight.”

“You would rather burn than freeze?”





“Always.”

On other occasions, they would write in tandem together, scratching their pens on paper in a companionable silence.

Ethan was in the habit of scribbling lines down on whatever piece of scrap he happened to have at hand, like receipts and napkins and library due slips. One rainy evening, he gave her a wrinkled bus pass on which he had written words:

“The world isn’t kind to dreamers.

But dreamers are kind to the world.”

Tracing it, Claire smiled and put it carefully in between the pages of her journal, like it was a pressed flower.

“Do you really believe that”? she said.

“I have to,” he answered. Otherwise, what’s the point?”

At times, they talked of the dangerous things of fears and failures. She explained to him how she was rejected. He made her know about his.

“It’s like screaming into a void,” She slowly whispered one night.

“Perhaps”, he answered softly.

“But sometimes the void listens. You just have to keep screaming.”

One day, Ethan did not show up.

“Hold fast to dreams”

Her lips curled into a smile as she drew her chair nearer to her desk, opening a fresh notebook.

And there, say to them that we never halted in dreaming.

“And when you get there, tell them we never stopped dreaming”

A few weeks later, the magazine came in the post, slightly mildewed smelling with ink and rain.

Claire glanced at it for a long clairvoyant moment, then turned to the contents page.

“The Last Page” by Claire Matthews



And there below it, in smaller letters:

Editor: Ethan Carter

Her hands stood, her fingers stilled. The letters blurred, went out of focus—not because of rain this time, but of tears.

Tucked inside the magazine was a note in well-known handwriting: “I told you dreamers are kind to the world. Welcome to the world, Claire. Keep writing”

Claire clutched the note against her bosom and closed her eyes. The silence was not so heavy as it used to be a long time ago.



Usman Idrees  
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### Regret, Perhaps

There is still a long line remaining. How long have I been waiting? Two hours. Perhaps three. It seems that I am losing track of time, sitting here. I wonder what he would have done. How would he have handled this situation if he were in my place? I wonder...

My father was a medical officer. I never knew his exact designation, only that he was in the medical field. To be honest, I never really understood what he did, nor did I care much at the time. He was the sort of person who seemed different to everyone—intimidating yet caring. People revered and feared him at the same time. When I say intimidating, I do not exaggerate. Once, there was an issue in our family. A chubby-looking uncle of mine, who was 35 at the time, if I remember correctly, got into an accident. I never saw him in the hospital, but from the worried looks on family members' faces, it seemed serious.

There was a fuss in the room where relatives gathered—most of whom I did not recognize—about what to do with the uncle, or more bluntly, who should bear the cost of the operation. The room was a zoo of indistinguishable voices and chatter, as I watched from my mother's lap. But suddenly, the noise stopped. The murmurs subsided, and things fell into utter silence, as if a lion had entered the livestock cage. There was a pin drop silence the moment he walked in. That's what I mean when I say intimidating.

He was the center of his circle, a man with a golden arm, succeeding at everything he attempted. Not on the first try, of course—he was no genius—but he managed to pull off everything he started in a way that seemed effortless. He was, as I often heard growing up, a compatible individual. The alpha male of the tribe to whom everyone turned in times of need.

It was frustrating to grow up in the shadow of such a man. People knew me by his name, not mine. I suppose I was too young to understand the pressure that was created, but subconsciously, I felt it. I love my father—I still do.



That's certain. And strangely, that love is what pushed me away from him. I rarely asked him for help in my studies, even when I needed it badly. Of course, he fulfilled every need and desire of mine, almost like a telepath who could read my mind. I wonder how he always knew. But I refrained from asking—not because I didn't trust him, but because I was afraid. Afraid to disappoint him. Afraid he would think I was a failure. Afraid to embarrass him. And so, I distanced myself. I wonder if that was the right choice. My father, being a successful professional, wanted me to become one too. Sometimes he was pushy, other times, just hopeful. I remember when I started matriculation—he wanted me to take medical subjects. It annoyed me, but I went along with his choice, half-heartedly, as it was common for parents to choose their children's subjects back then. I was uncertain about what I truly wanted. He used to accompany me on result days.

I remember hoping that he would finally be proud of me if I got good grades. I once scored 95%, and I thought, this time, he'll say something like, "Good job, son." But instead, he smiled and said, "It's good, but it can be better."

At the time, those words felt like an irritating thorn stuck in my skin, pricking every time I touched the memory. I longed for a simple, "Well done, my son." Now that I'm in my twenties, I understand him a little better. Maybe he meant I should never settle for second best, never stop striving. That satisfaction dulls your spark. Perhaps that's what he was trying to say. I wonder why he said it that way.

Then the wheel of fortune—Fortuna, as Shakespeare calls it, turned. Things changed. Because nothing is permanent but change. And I believe that's true. Things fade. Things disappear—even the ones you think are constants. The people you believe will always be there—laughing, crying, shouting—can vanish in an instant, like sand slipping through your fingers. There is no guarantee in life, not even for the next breath.

It was a cozy morning in May when the birds were announcing the start of another routine



day—or so I thought. It was the last day before summer vacation, and I was fully bent on skipping school, so I woke up late. Everything seemed normal. Mom was up early, and after saying Fajr, she was already doing the chores. Or maybe it wasn't a normal morning, because Uncle Arif came to visit us. He's a noble soul and among the few relatives I actually liked.

Things were ordinary until I heard a shriek. The vision is blurry now, as a lot of time has passed, but I remember Mom running up to Father, who had turned to his left side. "What happened to your father?" she kept repeating. Hearing the noise, everyone rushed to him. His fists were clenched—too tightly. What I saw next is carved into my memory forever.

To be honest, I was terrified. The man who had always been the image of authority and dignity now lay in a state I could not understand. His eyes were dilated. He seemed unable to breathe—his tongue stuck between his jaws. Hesitantly, I touched him and was shocked to find my hand soaked in sweat. He was perspiring heavily. In a panic, everyone did what they could. Someone rushed to fetch Zamzam water, and others rubbed his palms. It was chaos. And then... silence. Everyone scattered, shoulders slumped, eyes shut, wet with tears. They were in shock. Only I stood there, staring at his calm, pale, sweaty face—the same face people revered and feared—now lifeless. The father I loved and dreaded to disappoint was gone. Slipped through our fingers like sand in a gust of death. He ceased to be.

Time heals, they say. But how much can it really heal? At first, I thought I'd eventually return to normal. I hoped. Life resumed its routine—but silence became a permanent resident. An oppressive quietness that stung like a bee, like a thorn lodged in my heart. People began to say I'd changed. That I'd become sensitive, irritable, withdrawn—even antisocial. Not to my face, of course—but I knew. So I isolated myself. Stayed home. Avoided people. Sank deeper into that silence.

Looking back, I wonder why. Why didn't I try to break through it? Why did I let it consume me? I think now that my father's death hit me harder than I admitted. After all, he was just a man.



Every father is, isn't he? Just... a man.

Time passed. College came and went. Then university. Then my first job. But something remained—a blank space. A gap never filled. I felt it at every major event. After matric, I didn't know what to do. My father wasn't there to guide me. He never forced me, only nudged me—always in the best direction he knew. I didn't like it then, but I miss it now. He was the lighthouse in my life, guiding my directionless vessel as best he could. And just to be clear—he pushed me, but never forced me. There's a difference. I don't know why I feel the need to clarify that, but I do.

And now, here I am, sitting in a hospital, waiting to buy a life-saving injection for a close relative. I wonder what he would have done in this situation. Would he have used every means necessary to get it faster? What kind of strength would he have shown?

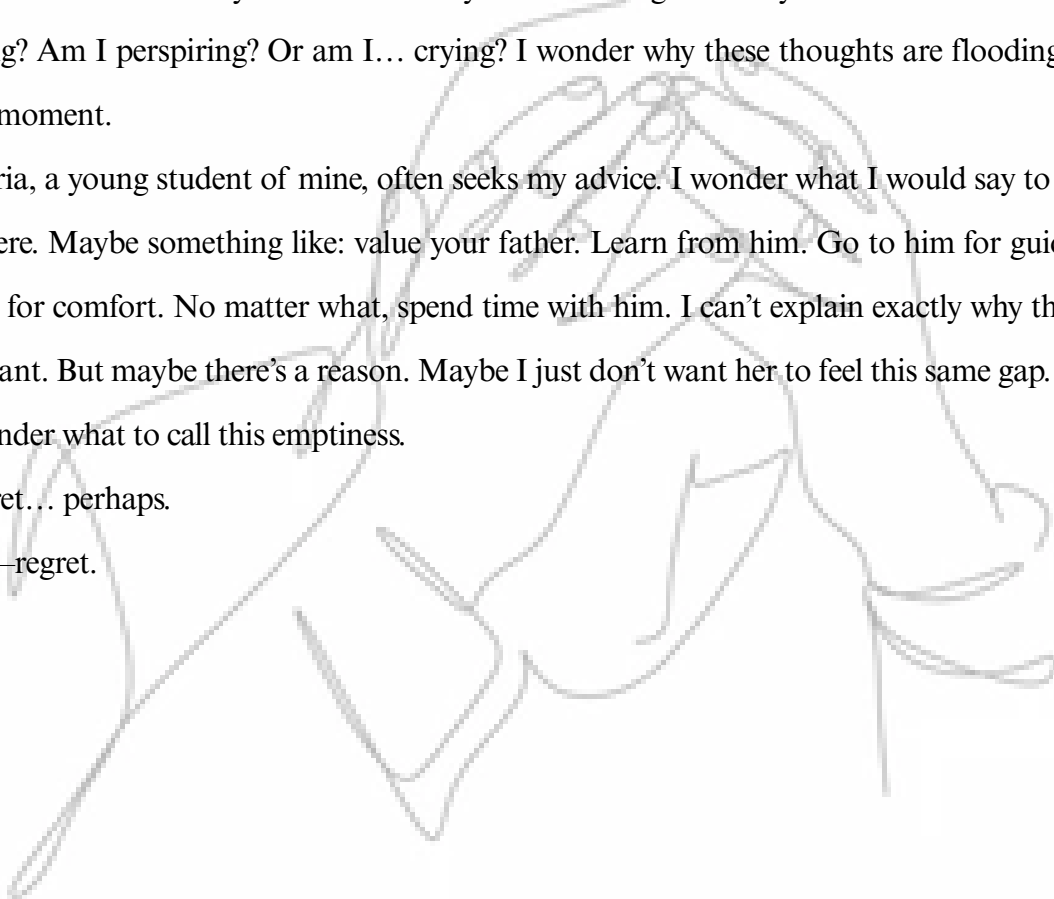
Wait—what's this on my face? Water. Why is it streaming down my cheeks? Has the A/C stopped working? Am I perspiring? Or am I... crying? I wonder why these thoughts are flooding me now, in this moment.

Javeria, a young student of mine, often seeks my advice. I wonder what I would say to her if she were here. Maybe something like: value your father. Learn from him. Go to him for guidance, for stories, for comfort. No matter what, spend time with him. I can't explain exactly why this feels so important. But maybe there's a reason. Maybe I just don't want her to feel this same gap.

I wonder what to call this emptiness.

Regret... perhaps.

Yes—regret.



Javeria Amjad  
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ENGL81F22S001



### On Boarding Mangoes

I was lying on a beach chair, wearing my favorite Tom Ford shades, enjoying the guest appearance of the sun on Brighton beach, when I extended my hand towards the left, where my wife was slacking too. She understood my signal and handed me a juicy Chaunsa (a type of mango famous for its aroma and taste). As soon as I grabbed it, I gladly pressed it to make it pulpy, removed the epicarp, and eagerly moved my hand towards my mouth, which I dropped immediately, due to what I witnessed.

A gigantic wave was rushing towards the shore at the speed of light, not giving us the chance to flee. In a flash, my eyes, ears, nose, and mouth, which I opened to shout, were stuffed with water; it was as if the universe had switched on to the slow-mo mode. I was slowly drowning with my mouth producing sounds, buaaw...aaa...aaaa...my ears ringing, eyes stinging... when all of a sudden, I opened my eyes with a lump in my throat, unable to speak, drenched in water. My beloved wife was chuckling and spraying water on me to show her ill-timed gesture of uncanny love, while I gazed at her with bloodshot eyes, gasping in utter despair, realizing it was again a dream about my unfulfilled desires. My sleep paralysis and hallucinations could be traced back to the misfortune that happened a month ago when I visited my father, who lives in Pakistan.

As a resident of the UK, my arrival in my native land is celebrated like I'm the last prince of the dying English monarchy. I won't say that I don't enjoy the protocol that my family gives me, still, at times, the over-hyped concern turns into a headache, like it happened when I returned to the UK.

My sister's husband owns factories where the seasonal fruits are packed and exported to many countries. Mango, not only rules summers in Pakistan, but it rules my heart too, so it was the time my sister decided to send 20 kg of mangoes with me. I was overjoyed and



ticklish at heart by the mere thought of eating those mangoes back in the UK to my fill, as they're really expensive there. But obviously, I hid my excitement and meagerly attempted to decline the offer to show some grace. "Oh, come on, baji (big sister), who carries mangoes these days on a flight, I don't think, that's a good idea!" I politely uttered, praying at heart that she might not listen. To my heart's comfort, she added, "Why not, you be quiet, I'll definitely send with you the best quality Chaunsa (a type of mango), you will remember us, while enjoying the taste and aroma of the fruit, so no more ifs and buts, you're carrying them with you." The day of my departure came, so came the enigmatic aroma of 20 kg Chaunsas, which filled half of the weight I could carry on the flight, but I had no regrets, as it was "CHAUNSA". I had to take the flight from Islamabad Airport; therefore, taking a deep breath and absorbing the scent of my home, I bid adieu to my family and embarked on my journey back to the UK.

By nature, I'm a very practical and calculated type of person. Still on my way to the airport, I was a little emotional, but again, the sweet scent of Chaunsa comforted my heart till I reached the airport.

The airport was busy as ever. I didn't want to wait during the boarding process (mangoes shouldn't wait), so my brother pulled some strings. He told me that a man named Mr. Munawar Farooq will help me board with ease. I was just thinking of reaching out to Mr. Munawar when a porter came by to carry my luggage, and I told him with a kind gesture, "Kindly leave it, Mr. Munawar Farooq is coming to help me out." "Why on earth would Mr. Munawar come to carry your luggage? He is the airport manager..." he sounded confused, raising his brows, and I started to stutter, losing all my confidence, "Ah...aaa...aa...I don't think so, he is a manager..." and my speech was cut off by a heavy voice. My eyes witnessed a man of muscular build rushing towards us, cutting through the crowd. He hastily said, "Stay away all, stay away please!" he nodded, looking towards the port, and turning to me, uttered,



“Come on, Sir, please come with me, I’ll escort you.” My heart raced, and Porter’s jaw dropped when Mr. Munawar held my luggage trolley and almost darted between the crowd with Herculean vigour. I rubbed my eyes, smirking, gave a winning glance to the porter who was ashen with astonishment, and rushed behind Mr. Munawar, praising my brother at heart for pulling such solid strings.

Finally, my boarding was faster than anyone at the airport, which blessed me with the gracious gait, having audacity like that of the first man who walked on the surface of Mars. People who witnessed the whole scene were mumbling about the unjust treatment of waiting in long queues, but who cared? My mangoes were safe, and so was my self-esteem. That day unlocked my robust sense of pride, which made me chuckle at heart to spot the people frowning and cross with me.

I had a connecting flight and had to wait at Dubai airport for a few hours. The celebrity feel I experienced at Islamabad airport hadn’t left my body, imparting me a divine light which only I could see. That aura was also imparting a mysterious impression to my personality, as I wasn’t carrying mangoes but diamonds. To the people, I might be a suspicious person or a crook due to my overboard consciousness, as I ignored a mother, sitting adjacent to me, advising her child to beware of weirdos, but all I cared about was the safety of my mangoes.

Finally, after a long flight, I reached the UK. My wife was there to receive me, and I was eager to receive my luggage at the airport. To my surprise, the strong fragrance of Chaunsa filled the luggage lounge, even before it reached me. That was definitely another proud moment when I heard many of the Englishmen recognizing the mouth-watering aroma of mangoes and chit-chatting about it. Again, that gracious gait adorned me, and my eyes weren’t able to see the ground ahead due to the artificially installed posture. My toe stuck into something, and my head bumped into a pillar besides, immediately, my inflated ego.

My inflated ego departed from my soul, and I scurried out of the airport with wide baby



eyes, an angelic face who knows nothing of the world around. I dared not look towards anyone, not even my wife, till I reached home.

First thing I did was to open up the packing of the mangoes to let them breathe, and after my dinner, I decided to devour one of the delectable mangoes. I cut open the bag delicately and my eyes widened till my eyelids disappeared, as what I saw was horrible...

Worms.

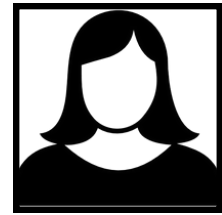
Floating in the pulp of my beloved chaunsa. With a sinking heart, I hurried towards the heap of mangoes and cut open another. Then another. And another.

Worms. Worms everywhere.

“Ahhh!” Mangoes were delicate enough not to sustain the high temperature of summer and an extended connecting flight. My wife was making fun of me, and I strode towards my bed, turning off the lights, with teary eyes, mumbling, “Even Mr. Munawar couldn’t save my beloved Chaunsa!”



Hafiza Zaib-un-Nisa  
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ENGL73S25S027



### **The Stardust**

Perhaps it is the only most conscious being in this vast, limitless universe. Made of star-stuff, and the eyes bestowed upon them the heavenly light. It's an elegant tapestry of neurons where thoughts, unbound by gravity, transcends beyond time and space. And all of these universal elements- the thought, the light and the stardust- culminate into an extraordinary cosmic miracle, the Human Being. He journeys into the unknown realms through his imagination and intellect and seeks depths and dimensions, and the farthest lengths of this terrifying and at the same time fascinating universe, without ever leaving his humble Blue Abode.

But the irony in the nature of this cosmic Human Being, his stardust potential seems to be fading where it matters the most.

He is unable to understand and cure the pain and suffering of his fellow beings who live in his vicinity. He is tarnishing the beauty of his Blue Abode while surprisingly looking for grandeur out in the space. His darkness is encroaching upon his humble Blue Abode's purple dawns, blue waters, and green lives. He conquers every rational battle, but crumbles inward. His cosmic spark has a dark spot in it.

The Stars, in awe of what they gave birth to.

Watching. In Silence. At this Paradox.

Deep in the sea  
All molecules repeat  
the patterns of one another  
till complex new ones are formed.  
they make others like themselves



and a new dance starts.  
Out of the cradle  
onto dry land  
Here it is  
standing:  
atoms with consciousness;  
matter with curiosity.  
(Richard Feynman)



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BS Eng 5th Intake  
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### Defiance of the Two

Exodus from the land of the Nile, the Israelis left Egypt, and in the years that followed, came the Aryans to the land of the seven rivers, later to be called Punjab.

Chenab was telling woefully the story he had entangled by witnessing a millennium.

Hassan, although a child, was keen on the tales of the ancients. Even though no one believed that this flowing river spoke to him, he never felt disappointed. That was a private secret now. These people came, praised our mightiness, and stayed on our edges. Before crossing us, the seven sisters, they called Saraswati “the most beautiful of all”. But these were old days. They moved and this time stretched on our cousin Ganges and Yamuna’s land. “How was it to be at the reception of these people?” Hassan asked. I like to serve people. Remember the story of a girl I once told you about, who used to cross me to meet her beloved. I always tried to push her towards the edges, but one night she came with a half-baked pitcher. I couldn’t help her, and she got lost in me, but I never let people forget her name. In death, she got immortality. “Not a bad deal,” Hassan twinkled. Chenab was always long-winded in terms of answers. River continued. But people who lived here squeezed me inch by inch. Deteriorated my rhythm.

“Oh, perhaps that’s the reason I always feel I am into you even if I am on the fringes of you”. The boy encouraged him to describe his realization. “And it is your shores where I find a refuge”, the boy added, relieved.

But some old people in my village have a fear of you, they say you are ravaging, calm just for a time. I just want to follow Hassan. That is my life. Immersed in my zone. Take what is of your need, but my journey is long; sometimes I am tired, but sometimes in fervour.

I am for all. You people have divided the lands. And one threatens the other by our power, which was to serve the land, not for a drought nor for a flood.

Hassan was in the middle of contemplation when his elder brother summoned him from behind. He saluted the river and hastened towards his brother.

“Amma will be waiting for you,” his brother said by raising his stick to align the cow that was going to enter a field on the banks of the river. When Hassan entered the home, the sun had disappeared.

Wood was burning under the clay pot, and food was almost ready. Hassan heard his brother telling his father about the discord over land between Chaudhary Sharafat and Haji Iqbal. The tensions were on the rise to claim the piece of land, and they almost quarreled over this.

Hassan’s father, without any mark of wonder on his face, heard this and said, “No one ceases to claim, land is a cursed belonging”.

Amma had served the dinner, and Hassan diverted his mouth to the meal.

It was the moon’s turn to hold the sky.

“Even his light is dimmer than the sun, but still, it takes his hold, every night.” Hassan introspected this and, calmly, as an everyday routine, turned the coverlet and spread his legs on charpai.

But not all were calm at that moment.

The sand beneath the Chenab’s water is expecting a massive burden. The layers of flow were covering every other layer from the moonlight. Leaves on both sides were merging as a part of it. Someone was going to declare his might.

The rooster crowed. And Haji Iqbal woke up to take his way towards the mosque.

“In the panchayat, the decision will be in my favour today. How can one vacate the place which belonged only to him?”, he idealized.

Wonderfully, or maybe not, the same was the Chenab’s sentiment today, but no approval was



needed.

As usual, when the sun was emerging, Chacha Akber was going to add his urine to water, but to his amazement, he saw that the river was roaring. Someone was going to knock on the door. He rushed to the village, and the news of water spread like fire.

Disturbed by turmoil, Hassan woke up and, in a clueless manner, ran to find his brother, who was at the edge of the river.

“Hassan! Don’t go near the river,” his mother shouted, but he escaped. His friend was not in the mood today.

Contrary to prior meetings, the river was shouting, and Hassan was unable to fathom what he was doing.

Everyone was rushing backwards to shift their livestock and belongings. Hassan ran too. When everyone is under threat, who can help others?

The things of daily comfort seemed a burden at this occasion. Hard to pick, hard to choose.

The disturbance equation was like “Those who owned less were panicked less,” Hassan noticed. Water was now entering the fields where freshly sown crops were trembling. Chaudary Sharafat’s farm was dealing with a mass of water. In air, there were sighs of children and fear of elders. Streets and lanes were gradually submerging in water. The sky was held in the grip of thunder and dark clouds. And the shedding of clouds burst on them like arrows of peril. The drums of banishment were getting louder. The road, which was an entrance to the home, was now a way out of danger, but the direction was rotated.

In this dismal darkness, humans were sightless. The river was dwelling in an antiquated space.

Ya Allah! Show us mercy! And the old lady cried painfully.

Where will we go now?

Oh! Demented friend, what happened to you! Hassan’s voice was unheard.





On the path out to their place, Hassan hesitantly saw by turning his neck to the place where the houses were half drowned. A newfangled scene for him.

In this state, they moved to another land to their kinsman. Chenab was a single settler of the land now. On the other hand, for Hassan, days passed in non-native plains. In the shadows of terror, on the verge of hope, and in the disturbance of waiting. These were extended days of suffering.

Elapsed time and the furious river were reducing. Moving onward.

Hassan asked his brother to carry him also while he was going to observe the situation back in town.

Through weeping, he got the denial approved.

“These roars always help to change their mind,” Hassan thought behind them.

They reached a place unrecognizable. There was a flat plain of saturated mud. No signs of living. He heard elders talking about the loss of crops and homes. Some people had lost their animals. In the next neighbouring village, two ladies and one child became the victims of the troubled course of water.

“Maybe he tried to push them out as he did with the girl with the pitcher, but fate intended otherwise.” This time Hassan had an uncertain attitude toward his old friend.

He attempted to find the spot where he used to sit, from a distance, but that felt like a totally new place.

People were turning back, maybe within a few days, they will be able to build again.

“Why did you come if you didn’t want to stay. I don’t know whether it was the people who exploited you or you who destroyed them,” Hassan murmured, but this time he was not trying to find a voice from there or to deliver his talk.

“People will remember this calamity until the next comes”.

63 میرے نہیں اب، مگر کبھی میرے بھی تھے  
Muhammad Fahad

64 شمار!  
Alina Alam



Muhammad Fahad  
BS6 Eng (Reg)  
ENGL51S23R029



میرے نہیں اب، مگر کبھی میرے بھی تھے

میرے نہیں اب، مگر کبھی میرے بھی تھے  
ہے رات ابھی، مگر کبھی سویرے بھی تھے۔

جلا دیا میرے باغ کو تم نے یہ دیکھے بغیر  
یہاں پرندوں کے نہ جانے کتنے بسیرے بھی تھے۔

جو آیا تھا اجالوں میں، جو لوٹ چکا اجالوں میں  
اسے کیا خبر یہاں کب سے اندھیرے بھی تھے۔

قافلہ کیسے پہنچتا منزل تک سلامت؟  
قافلے کے اندر موجود لوگ لٹیڑے بھی تھے۔

Alina Alam

BS7 Eng (SS1)

ENGL51F22S040



شمار!

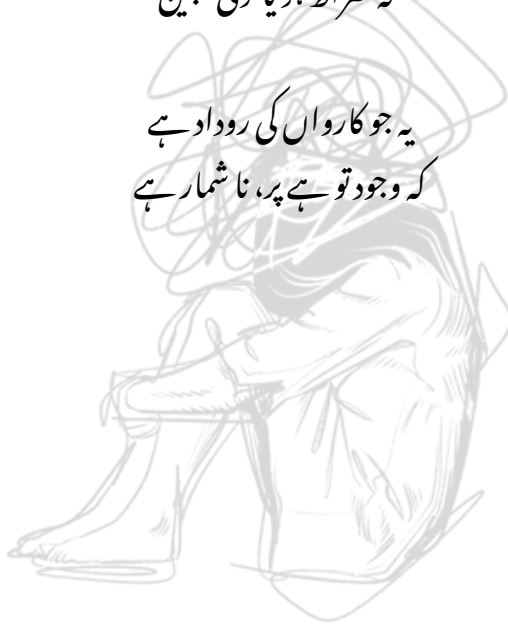
میری اجنبی ذات سے یہ جو واقفیت ہے  
میں خودی میں گم ہوں کہ یہی محویت ہے

میں وہ راز ہوں جو نہ فاش ہو سکے  
نہ وہ اجنبی ہوں جو انجان رہ سکے

میں نگاہِ عام میں ہوں کوی بشر  
ذرا لطف خاص ہو تو نہیں مگر!

اسی راستے کا ہوں ہمنشیں  
کہ صراط ہو یا کوئی جبین

یہ جو کارواں کی روداد ہے  
کہ وجود تو ہے پر، ناشمار ہے



# CALLIGRAPHY

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**Beneath the Throne**  
Arisha Shahid

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**Every Stroke a Prayer**  
Arisha Shahid

**66**





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**Beneath the Throne of the Most Merciful Lies the Verse That Guards the Soul**



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Every Stroke, A Prayer Upon the Beloved ﷺ.



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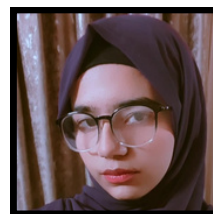
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Huda Aman  
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BS5 Eng (Reg)



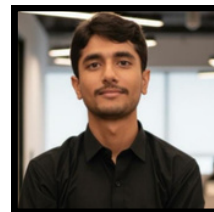
### A Smile Forged in the Abyss







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### A Stare Into the Abyss

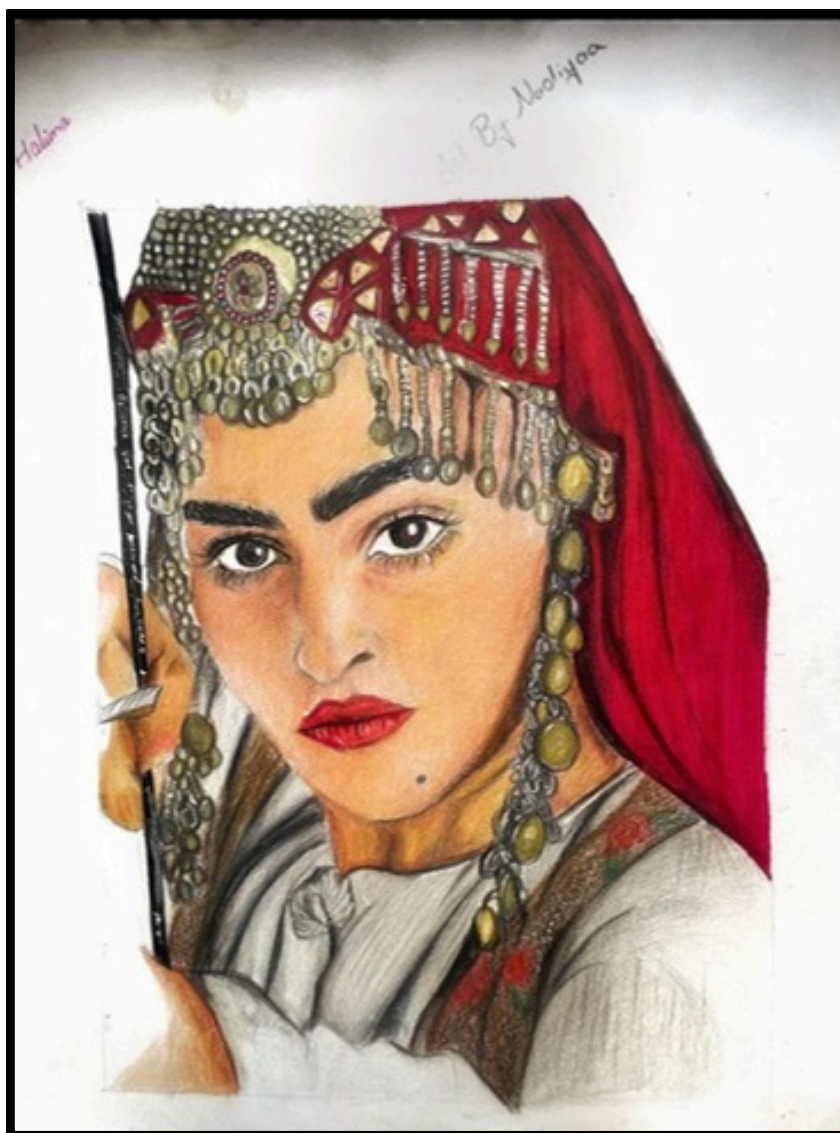




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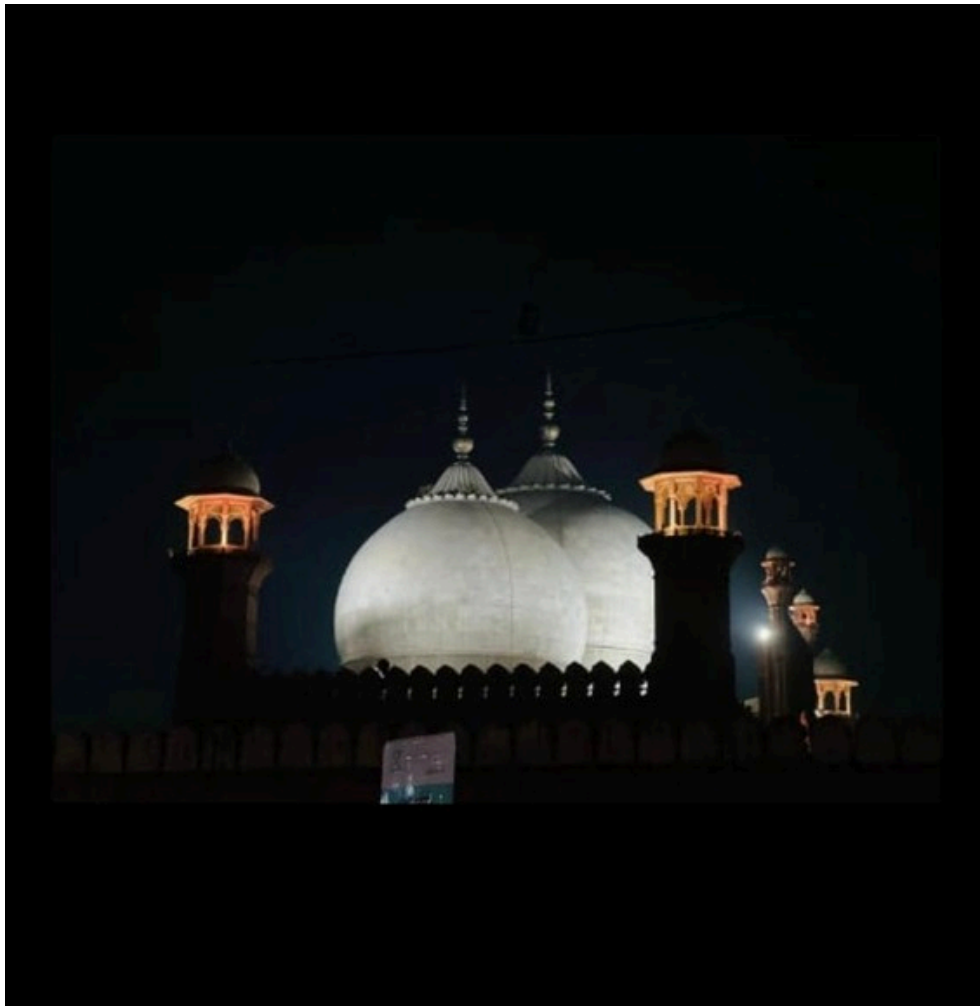
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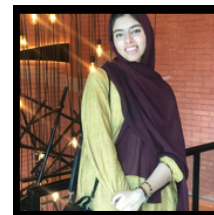


### Badshahi Mosque: A Living Legacy





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### Luminous Stillness

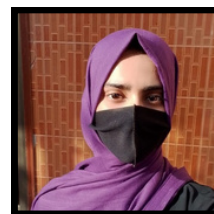




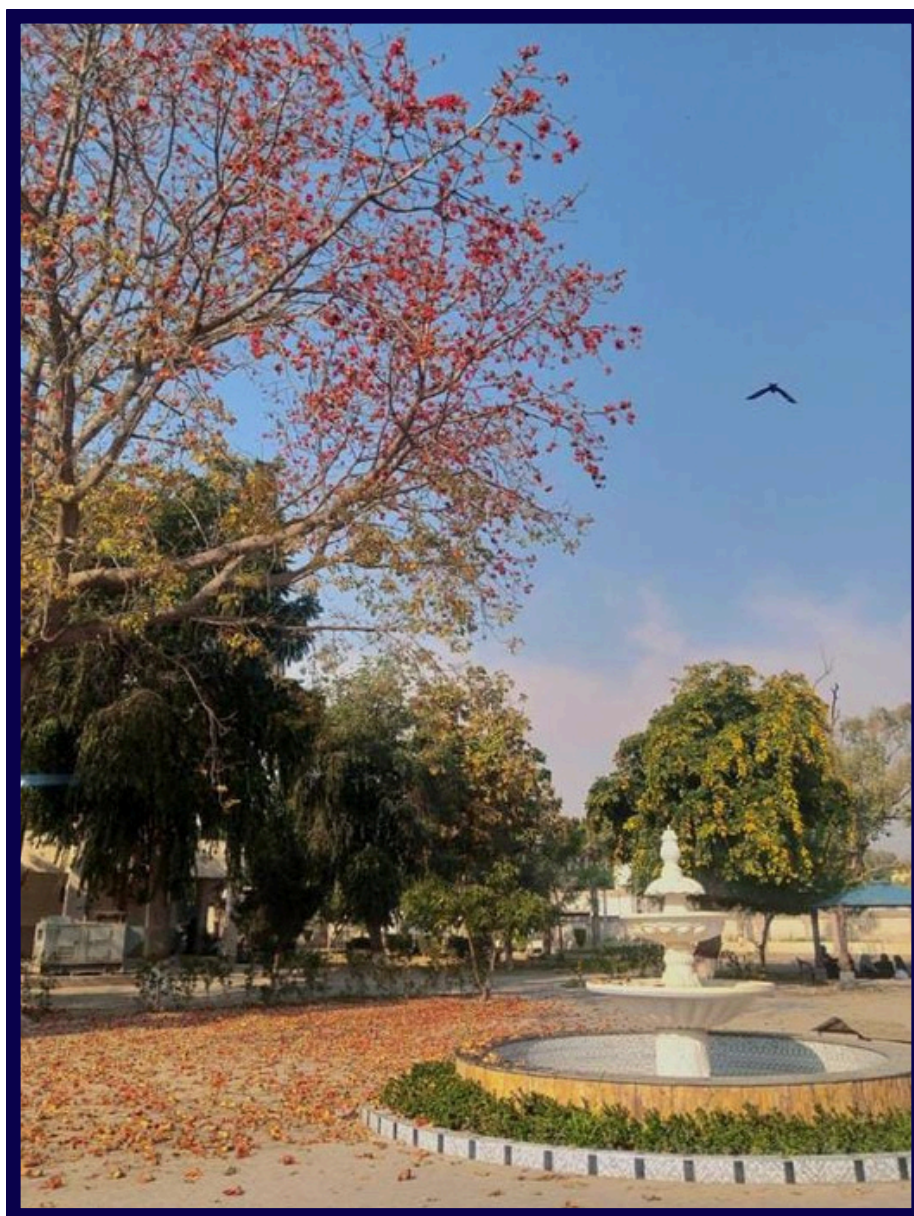
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ENGL51F22S032



### A Crimson Chorus in the Autumn Air





“ANYONE WHO HAS NEVER MADE A  
MISTAKE HAS NEVER TRIED  
ANYTHING NEW”

-Albert Einstein-

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