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BANYAN MAGAZINE

SARGODHA

THIRD EDITION

University of Sargodha
Department of English Language & Literature

Meet

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Message from the HOD

Dear Readers,

It is a pleasure and an honour to present the third edition of Banyan Magazine Sargodha, brought together through the dedication, creativity and commitment of the Banyan Team from the Department of English Literature.

This edition reflects the diverse voices, ideas and talents of our student community. While our editorial team is rooted in the Department of English Literature, we are delighted to feature contributions from students across different departments, making this edition a broader celebration of creativity, expression and intellectual curiosity within our university.

I extend my sincere appreciation to all our contributors, advisors and supporters whose enthusiasm and dedication have helped bring this edition to life. I also commend the Banyan Team for their continued efforts in providing a platform where students can share their perspectives, imagination and literary talents.

May this edition inspire you to read, reflect, create and appreciate the many voices that make our student community vibrant and diverse.

Thank you for reading Banyan Magazine Sargodha.

Dr Zareena Qasim
Editor-in-Chief
Chairperson, Department of
English Language & Literature



Message from the Focal Person

Dear all,

I am so happy to present the 3rd edition of our Banyan magazine. It is everything that we asked for and even more, with contributions from all over Sargodha.

What you hold in your hands is not just pages, these are voices. Voices that questioned, that remembered, that dared to write even when unsure and that submitted even when doubts plagued their minds. This edition proves that literature is alive in our classrooms, not just in textbooks and this way it connects us all as James Baldwin famously observed that: “You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world but then you read.”

Thanks to every student (whether from our department or university) who contributed and our team who edited, proofread and stayed after hours to make this possible.

With mirth and glee,
Barirah Nazir

Dr Barirah Nazir
Focal Person, Department of
English Language & Literature



MESSAGE FROM THE **MANAGEMENT** HEAD

BANYAN MAGAZINE • THIRD EDITION



Management
Head

Aslam u Alaikum!

Our dear writers and readers, we hope you all are doing well. We have successfully published our 3rd edition of Banyan Magazine. Thanks to all the writers who submitted their precious work and thanks to our readers; both are playing their own part in the success of our magazine. Our team has enjoyed a lot while evaluating the submissions but observed an alarming situation, as most of the work contained a high percentage of plagiarism and AI-generated text. Our purpose for the creation of this magazine is to provide a platform to diligent writers for the submission and recognition of their precious work, but the overuse of AI is deflecting the purpose. Overuse of AI is a threat to creativity. In the future, we may read AI-generated literature instead of literature written by humans.

I hope you all cooperate, understand and play a role in responsible AI usage.

Stay blessed and enjoy reading our magazine.

Regards,

Head of Management,

Muhammad Mudasir



Team Banyan Magazine with Chairperson and Editor-in-Chief Dr Zareena Qasim, Associate Professor Dr Shahid Abbas, Focal Person Dr Barirah Nazir, CSA Naveed Yousaf

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ESSAYS



What Really Is Politics

Syed Abbas Ali Sherazi

May 28: Day of Takbir

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Reflection on Iqbal’s “In the Parliament of Devil” and Its Relevance Today

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What Really is Politics

Politics originated in the primitive and medieval periods with individuals. The core principle of politics was to attain and preserve power and authority while governing the masses. The idea of governing the public emerged with the aim of maintaining law and order as well as strengthening the rule of law.

Multiple philosophies, theories, ideas and visions also emerged from philosophers in the Western and Muslim worlds. For instance, Montesquieu states that politics is a division or separation of power. Machiavelli states that politics is a play between attaining power and ruling the masses, even without attaining the consent of the public.

Plato elaborates a different concept: politics and governance are concepts that circulate around state actors and there must be philosopher-kings. Meanwhile, Aristotle argues that politics is necessary in order to make people aware of their rights and duties and how to attain them. A Muslim philosopher also opined that politics should be pragmatically promoted in order to provide welfare to the public.

On the other hand, there is a draft known as the constitution of every state, which establishes barriers among the legislature and state authorities as well as the administrative structure to stop violations and permits the legislature, the executive, as well as the judiciary to maintain the rule of law.

In this essence, the state bodies as well as the public are ruled and governed by the constitution. Whereas in the contemporary world order, politics has changed its

principles and doctrine, especially from developed countries to developing regions.

In current times, the balance of power is shifting towards the newly soft power and hard power emerging states such as China, Russia and Iran. The re-emergence of the balance of power emerged due to the outbreak of war between three great powers, Iran, the USA and Israel.

Before this war, the great powers were promoting their influence across the globe, especially in underdeveloped countries in order to govern over the elite. In this wake, interest-based policies deployed their representatives and engaged the leadership with global institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and other organizations.

Meanwhile, interest-based policies and enforcing the decisions of a state, where intervention makes it easier to establish dependent policies, is what actually the politics is without engaging with the public and sidelining national interests. Oftentimes, national interests are also included in politics in order to protect the state's sovereignty.

A contemporary example is Iran, where the state bodies had declined to surrender and never gave up on their ideology as well as national interests. They even protected their national sovereignty by sacrificing the lives of their central leadership.

Another example from Bangladesh, the public and students had not tolerated the interventionist political tactics of India and sidelined the unfair leadership and reshaped democratic values through student-led political movements on national level. In consequence, former prime minister is living in exile in India.

Moreover, another example is of Nepal and Sri Lanka. The public overthrew the unfair leadership and paved the ways for contemporary political democracy.

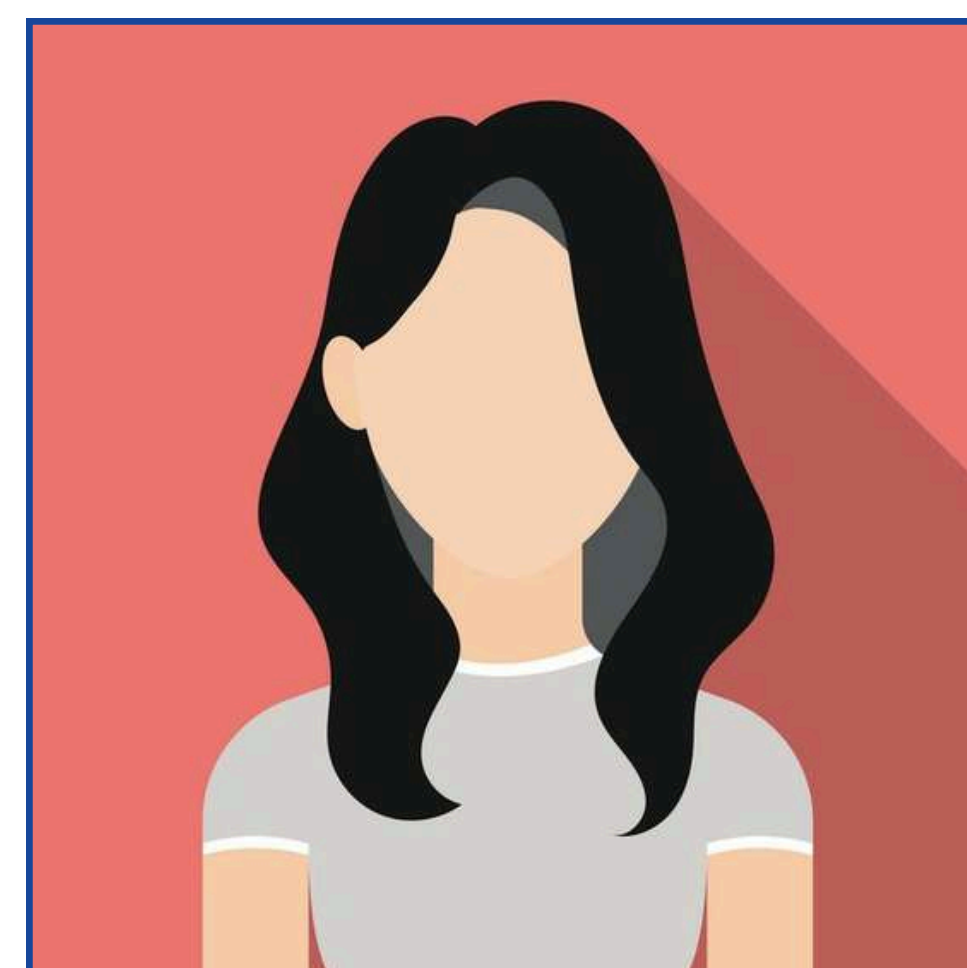
On the other hand, in the context of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the reshaping of different types of governments, such as democracy, aristocracy, dictatorship and parliamentary forms of government.

These are the best examples of political change with respect to the interests and political behavior of elite leadership. On the other hand, in previous eras, colonial forms of governments with the interference of great powers. For instance, the USA declined under British rule.

The sub-continent was largely governed under the colonial powers of the USA, Britain, etc. These examples reflect the vibrant politics on national and global spheres. Moreover, if we shed light on Islamic civilization during its medieval period. The power and authority were concentrated in the hands of kings, monarchs, and caliphs.

So, the power and political dynamics were centered around kings, caliphs, and other elite cadres. But the first and foremost vision in that era, before the advent of Islam, was to govern over the masses. After the advent of Islam, politics was limited only to public welfare. The concentration and center of power and politics were vested in the hands of the public. But Western political doctrine and the great powers had reshaped politics vis-à-vis power, authority, and outcome. This has created a conflict among theorists and politicians.

In current paradigm, the politics is merely a combination and collaboration of balancing human development and defense strategies in order to sustain the socio-political, economic, and diplomatic paradigm.



May 28: Day of Takbir

(Today, our dear homeland became a nuclear power)

The evening of May 28, 1998, is a memorable day in the history of Pakistan when the Chagai Mountains of Balochistan turned white and the sky echoed with the chants of "Allahu Akbar". On that day, Pakistan conducted five successful nuclear explosions, establishing itself as the first in the Muslim world and the seventh nuclear power on the global horizon. But behind this great success, more than any material power, was the power of knowledge, research and determination.

It was the power of knowledge that made the benefactor of Pakistan, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan, who rejected all the comforts and luxuries of abroad and chose the soil of his homeland. He made Pakistan's defense impregnable forever with his scientific abilities, tireless work and the power of his pen and knowledge. He proved that when a person dedicates his knowledge to the country and nation with sincerity of intention, he changes the course of history. As citizens of the country, we also have certain responsibilities.

Great heroes like Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan are a shining example for us. We have a great power besides nuclear power. We have the power of the religion of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the power of the word of Allah, the power of knowledge, pen and social media. But to use all of these correctly, we must have knowledge and awareness. Know yourself and use your abilities for the country and nation. If you have the power of knowledge, spread it; teach it to others.

If you have the power of the pen, then pick up your pen and write the truth.
If you can speak, raise your voice for the oppressed and for the truth.
If you know how to use social media well, use it to spread awareness instead of despair, shine a positive light on your country, and defeat the enemy on the ideological front. Apart from this, whatever skill or ability you have, use it for the welfare of the country and nation.

Our tragedy is that we go abroad after studying, earn and eat there. But what about this country? The one that gave us childhood, gave us knowledge, gave us land, gave us name and recognition; what have we done for it? What do we do? Our youth are often seen saying, "What is there in Pakistan?" But the truth is that whatever we are, it is because of Pakistan. This great country is what we are. Just ask those who do not have a blessing like a homeland; look at Gaza, look at Kashmir!

It is said that the homeland is the identity, the homeland is the roof and the homeland is our belief. Respect the homeland. Rather, I would say, have "practical love" for it. Now move forward from the phrase "I love my homeland" that has been memorized since childhood. Prove through your character that you truly love your beloved homeland.

Given the current situation, it is necessary that we spread awareness among the youth, among our children and on social media, not hatred; share hope, not despair. And do not just ask, "What has Pakistan given us?" but also think, "What have we given to Pakistan?"

Remember, nations are not strengthened by nuclear power alone, but rather by education, unity, character and the consciousness of their youth. God Almighty says

In the Holy Quran:

Indeed, Allah does not change what is in a people until they change what is in themselves.

Surah Ar-Ra'd(13:11)

Indeed, Allah does not change the condition of a people until they change themselves.

And how well the sage of the nation, Allama Iqbal, said it!

“God has not changed the condition of a nation
that does not wish to change its own condition.”

Let's make a sincere intention for the development of the country and nation from today itself. Remember, we do not need to wait for a big position or a miracle to change the country; we can start the change from where we are, in whatever situation we are in. If you are a student, acquire knowledge with honesty; if you are a businessman, make honesty your motto and if you are associated with any field, consider your work as worship and perform it with full sincerity. Our small intention and our small positive action together form the basis of a big revolution.

The creator of the path is going to decide after seeing your intention. Whatever we do from today, keep in mind that our identity, our words and our actions are benefiting or harming the country and the nation. Come out of your shell, defeat your selfishness here and now and become a strong pillar of the development of the country and the nation. Remember, if we do not change today, tomorrow will never come.



Reflection on Iqbal's "In the Parliament of Devil" and its Relevance Today

After reading Allama Muhammad Iqbal's poem, "In the Parliament of the Devil", its main themes and their correlation with present conditions become strikingly evident. Iqbal's vision and foresight regarding Muslim regimes were often dismissed as vague speculation due to a lack of critical thinking among some famous scholars of his time, such as Maulana Maududi. Western powers were primarily concerned with bringing Muslim countries under their grip, using financial and banking systems to maintain control. Meanwhile, Muslims were misled by Satanic deceptions, drifting away from any resolve or vision to lead the world through a principled Islamic system of governance.

Today, behind the scenes, Israel plays a central role, holding dominant control over global information technology systems. In contrast, many Muslim scholars and clerics remain immersed in the quagmire of sectarianism, divided over Sunni, Shia, and Ahle Hadees factions. They are so consumed by internal disputes that they build walls of division over minor ritualistic issues, such as whether raising hands during prayer (Raf-al-Yadayn) is permissible, or debating whether the Prophet (Peace Be Upon Him) was made of light (Noor) or human genetics. It is deeply discouraging to observe that we often react with raw emotion and heart rather than utilizing our intellect.

Western powers continue to devise schemes designed to keep Muslims bound and limited, forced to worry merely about their daily bread rather than thinking about of

Governance, let alone global influence. We are compelled to follow educational syllabi whose outlines are dictated by American institutions and organizations funded by them. They have conditioned our minds to memorize superficial lessons like parrots, training us only to secure a job and meet family expenses. If a student tries to think outside the box, they risk being thrown out of the classroom the very next day. They have directly and indirectly redefined "success" to mean nothing more than securing employment.

A major World War III will not be fought solely with armies and rockets like the first two world wars. Instead, it will be waged through social media, digital waves, cyber attacks, drone strikes, data manipulation, cybercrime and digital bullying. Yet, no one seems ready to pay attention to these strategies and deceptive tactics. Why do we extend our hands to them in friendship?

In Iqbal's poem, "In the Parliament of the Devil," it is clearly outlined how we are trapped in routine distraction while nations like China, Japan and the United States gain power through modern technology. They distribute funds to research Muslim nations, while we forget our own ancestors who governed vast territories, collected taxes and provided refuge. Historically, Muslims donated wealth to other nations because they adhered strictly to the teachings of Islam and obeyed the commands of Allah Almighty. The laws of the Quran were prioritized over worldly gains and all movements were directed toward righteousness.

On the other hand, today we engage in little practical action beyond endless chatter and useless talk shows. We no longer act decisively; our messages aim merely to appeal to emotions rather than drive real change. Consider Afghanistan and the

Incredible shift that occurred there just a few years ago. They did not care what advanced technology or weaponry their opponents possessed. They took action and entered the conflict with the spirit of faith, abandoned reliance on foreign dollars and introduced their own currency. They astonished the world by demonstrating how a small, determined group, equipped with minimal resources, could defeat a superpower like the USA. Their opponents were unaware of the true strength of Iman (faith). Ultimately, the ultimate reward in Jannah awaits those Muslims who sincerely strive to leave a mark on this world solely for the name of Allah.

Although a majority of Muslim countries labeled them as terrorists, those same countries fail to look inward. They are deeply drowned in compromises, presenting empty resolutions in national assemblies and senates to justify why they cannot resist foreign powers like America, yet failing to offer even a single practical step to break free from economic dependency or boycott foreign products.

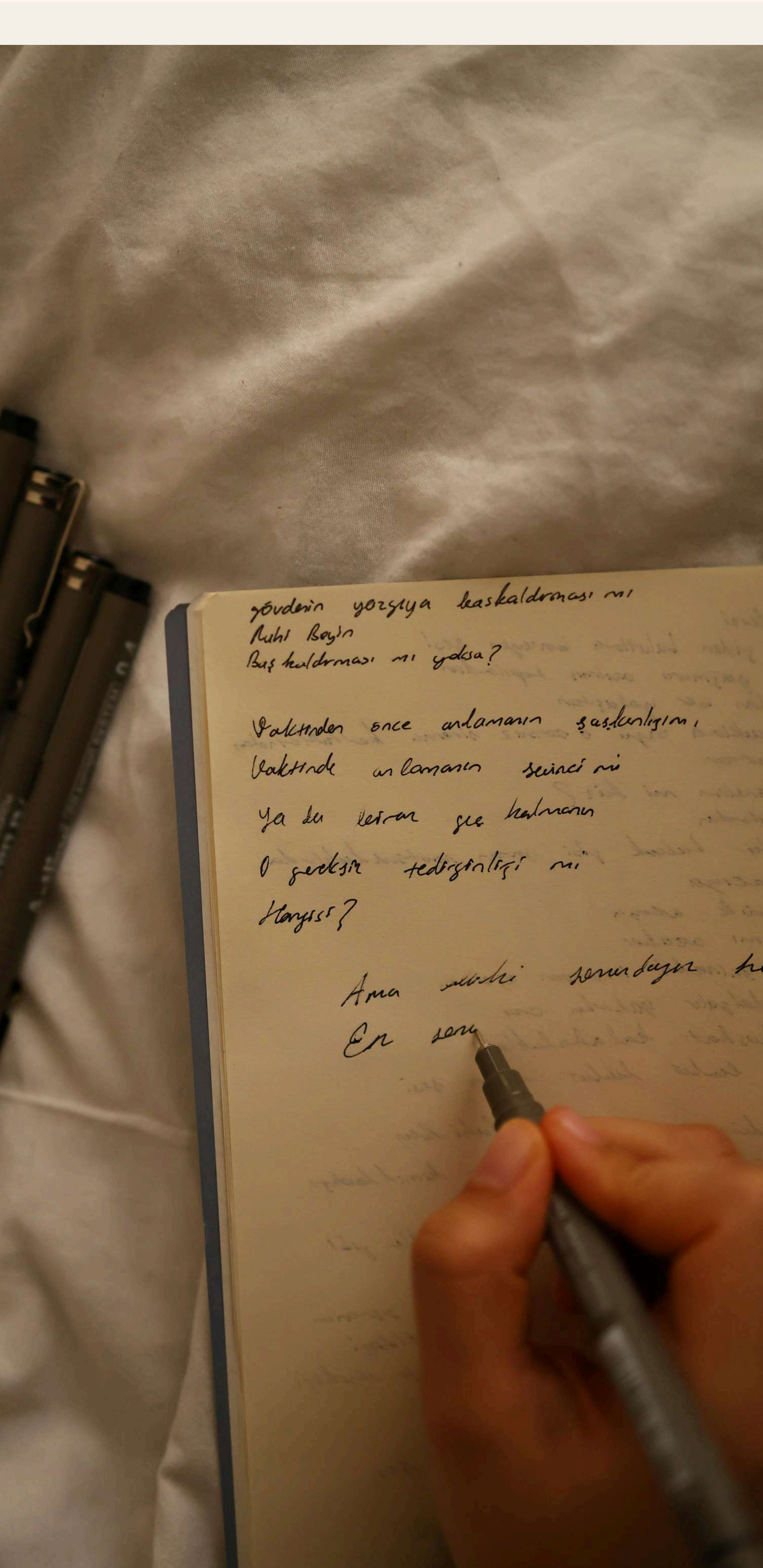
Why do our establishments and ruling elites rely entirely on IMF funds while singing their praises? They avoid self-reliance, passing burdens down the chain until the entire weight falls upon the common laborer. Bureaucracy has created a culture where everyone acts like an authority figure, unwilling to work with their own hands.

This systemic idleness has spread to the point where even basic public services function poorly without constant supervision. Just as a leech sucks the blood of living beings, corrupt elements in our administrative disciplines exploit the system. A common citizen lacks the resources or influence to bypass hurdles and must wait in long queues, while the child of an eccentric millionaire enters offices directly without ever taking a queue number. Whether standing in line at a bank, NADRA offices, or public distribution centers, people are forced to seek personal connections just to get

Basic service.

Corruption has reached a point that is both heartbreaking and absurd. Every new government or Prime Minister attempts to keep the public temporarily satisfied through short-term subsidies, interest-free loans, or relief schemes on bread, funded entirely by foreign debt and foreign entities. In reality, these measures trap us in a chronic threat, forcing us to remain beholden to our adversaries.

SHORT STORIES



Eclipse
Muhammad Yousaf

Influence
Zaima Rubbani

It Rains on Him After Midnight
Muhammad Fahad

Cage of Traditions
Alisha Zafar

The Mirror Beyond Worlds
Fatima Rasool



Eclipse

Some people hide their true nature from everyone. Some hide it from the people they care about. Sometimes the mask of jealousy is so good that nobody notices the person growing underneath. Haider and Haris were more than friends. They played cricket together as kids. They used to talk about their dreams late at night. Everyone in college loved their friendship. If you saw one, you already knew the other was nearby.

Zoya and Anmol were like two peas in a pod. They supported each other through thick and thin. For years, everything was fine. Then love came into the picture. It started with a group project. Haider and Zoya spent hours working. They talked about school and life. They fell in love without realizing it.

When they finally told each other how they felt, it was like the whole world had become brighter. Love brought two people together and slowly pushed two others into the darkness.

Haris felt left out. His friend now called Zoya often. That friend who once shared every secret now kept some from someone else. Anmol felt the pain as well. The girl who always made her the center of attention now had someone in her life.

Neither of them wanted to be outsiders. Least not at first. Jealousy doesn't usually start as hate. It starts as hurt. One afternoon, Haris sat alone in the college cafeteria when Anmol joined him. They didn't speak for minutes.

Finally, Haris spoke up. "Do you ever feel like they've forgotten us?" he asked.

Anmol looked away. That question was all it took. Their friendship slowly

turned into a partnership built on anger. At first, their plans seemed harmless. Anmol created a social media profile pretending to be a girl from another college. She started messaging Haider.

Haider replied politely, not knowing it was a trap. They edited screenshots and sent them to Zoya. The messages looked suspicious. Not enough to prove cheating yet, enough to create doubt. For the time being, Zoya questioned Haider. The argument lasted ten minutes. It planted a bad seed. Trust started to crack.

Meanwhile, Haris played his role perfectly. Whenever Haider looked upset, Haris acted concerned.

"Maybe Zoya doesn't trust you enough. "Maybe she's hiding something too". The poison had taken root slowly.

That was the beauty of their plan. Neither Haider nor Zoya realized that they were being tricked. Months passed. The conspiracies became more complex. Anmol secretly arranged for Zoya to meet a classmate regarding a presentation.

At the time, Haris told Haider that Zoya was meeting someone in secret. When Haider arrived, he saw part of the situation.

'Sometimes half the truth is more dangerous than a complete lie'. His doubts grew stronger.

Afterwards, another trap was set. This time, Haris edited the voice. Anonymous messages. Zoya had received evidence suggesting Haider was talking negatively about her.

Haider received evidence suggesting Zoya was losing interest in their relationship. Every argument pushed them apart. Every misunderstanding brought Haris and Anmol closer to their goal. Still, somehow love survived.

No matter how many lies they created, Haider and Zoya always found their way back to each other. That frustrated Haris. It frustrated Anmol more. If lies couldn't destroy the relationship, they needed something else. Something more lethal.

One evening, Haris and Anmol created their dangerous conspiracy. Using messages, photographs, and manipulated conversations, they built a fake story that suggested Zoya had only started dating Haider as part of a challenge among her friends. The evidence looked convincing. Too convincing.

When Haider saw it, his heart broke. Every happy memory suddenly felt fake. Every smile felt like a lie. Every promise felt meaningless. For a time, he refused to listen.

Zoya cried. She begged him to trust her. Pain had blinded him. The relationship ended just like that.

Months of love disappeared beneath a mountain of lies. At first, Haris felt victorious. He believed he had achieved his goal. Yet, victory came with an unexpected price. Haider changed. The cheerful, energetic boy everyone loved slowly disappeared. He stopped attending gatherings, stopped laughing. Stopped talking about his future.

Even his parents noticed something was wrong.

For the first time, Haris saw the consequences of his actions. Yet his pride refused to let him confess. Then fate intervened. One evening, Haris found an old box while cleaning his room. Inside were photographs from childhood, School certificates, birthday cards and a small piece of paper written by Haider years ago. "Brothers aren't connected by blood. They're connected by loyalty". Haris froze.

Memories flooded his mind. Haider helping him when he failed exams. Haider

defending him during fights. Haider standing beside him during his moments. Tears filled his eyes. Suddenly, victory felt disgusting. That night, Haris couldn't fall asleep. The next morning, he went looking for Haider. What he found broke him.

Haider was sitting alone near a lake outside the city. Silent, Broken, Lost. It was the first time Haris realized he had not destroyed a relationship. He had destroyed a person. Unable to bear the guilt longer, Haris confessed everything. Every fake screenshot, every rumor, every edited message, every lie and every betrayal.

Haider listened quietly. Not once did he interrupt. Not once did he shout. That frightened Haris more than anger ever could.

Afterward, Zoya learned the truth as well. She rushed to meet Haider. When their eyes met, months of pain exploded into tears. Everything finally made sense. Every argument, every misunderstanding, every sleepless night. All of it had been built upon deception. The three stood together beneath the rain.

Broken by the truth. Changed by regret. Haris fell to his knees. "I'm sorry " he whispered again. Some apologies can never erase the damage.

Haider looked at him for a moment. Then, despite everything, he smiled. A sad smile, a tired smile. The smile of someone who had suffered much.

"You were my friend," Haider said softly. "I never needed you to compete for my place in my life. There was always room for everyone". Those words shattered Haris completely. Years later, people forgot the rumors. They forgot the gossip. They forgot the drama. They never forgot Haider's lesson.

Because love was never the thing that destroyed them. Jealousy was. It wore the face of friendship. It spoke with the voice of loyalty. It hid behind smiles. It hid

Behind trust. It hid behind a mask. When that mask finally fell, it revealed a truth more painful than betrayal itself.

Sometimes the people closest to your heart have the greatest power to break it. Sometimes by the time the truth is revealed, the damage has already been done. That is what lies beyond the mask.



Influence

Mr. Humayun was a decent, humble and very down-to-earth person. He owned a small grocery shop in his village and provided helpful assistance to those in need. He had a very positive reputation and was respected throughout the village for his humble personality.

One day, he was on his way to his workplace when four to five luxury cars passed by him. He was stunned by the aura those cars projected. He stopped his vehicle and asked a passerby about the destination of those cars. The passerby told him that the cars belonged to a Colonel who was currently serving in the military and had just returned for vacation today. He also informed him that this gentleman would be meeting the villagers soon and would then proceed to his residence after meeting them.

Mr. Humayun was already in awe of the impact the cars had on him, as he had never seen anything carrying such dominance. He was also curious and wanted to meet that esteemed personality, whom the passerby had talked about. So he started his bike and went in the direction of that man. When he arrived at the doorstep, he was stopped by the guards. He was asked for the reason for his arrival and what purpose he had for coming here. He responded humbly that he wanted to meet the Colonel personally. The guards looked at him from head to toe and laughed loudly. Such a response was a direct humiliation of Mr. Humayun. Not only did they humiliate him with such gestures, but they were also being rude and mean at the same time. He explained that he only

Wanted to meet the gentleman inside and have a little chat about his achievements, as he was just curious about him. But those guards were not being so friendly and they told him that the gentleman inside was not someone anyone could meet as they wished. During the argument, one of the guards pushed Mr. Humayun so badly that he fell off his vehicle and one of his fingers broke at the spot.

With his hand bleeding and all the humiliation that he went through, in front of so many people, he got up and went silent, as if lost in deep thought. The guards again approached him, disrespecting him in every way possible. He was provoked and in a moment of despair, he swore that he would return and show them their place. The guards laughed louder than before; the crowd joined in as well. Some people were helping him, while some were blaming him for ruining such a grand occasion and destroying the beauty of this pleasant moment.

He was being blamed constantly; no one cared for his bleeding hand, so he left the sight in a moment of agony, being swayed by sorrow, humiliation, disrespect and a heavy heart.

After that day onward, he was never seen in the village again. The villagers thought maybe he left the village and went to a nearby village, as he had suffered enough from the incident. Common folks gossiped about him while some blamed him for being poor and having high aspirations. Some felt pity and showed sympathy towards him.

However, nothing lasts the same forever. That's the beauty of time. Time passed and soon the people forgot about him and got busy with their own lives.

Years went by and a time came when the tables were turned and history was rewritten.

One day, the villagers were busy with their daily routines, working on their farms and the day was as bright as it could ever be. The sky was partially filled with clouds. It seemed it would rain, but no one was certain, as the sun was shining so brightly. There was something different about the atmosphere, though. It seemed as if something was going to happen, but no one was certain about it.

Suddenly, several luxury cars were seen appearing from the nearby motorway. The villagers were stunned, astonished and lost in thought: “For whom could it be? This can’t be the Colonel, as he is already at his residence,” one of the villagers said while everyone was caught up in the moment. “Then who could it be? We don’t remember having any other esteemed personality except the Colonel, who needed this much protocol.” They were discussing among themselves as the convoy passed by them at full speed, taking their breath away. “One, two, three.” One of the villagers was busy counting the cars when someone screamed that they were heading towards the Colonel’s residence.

Everyone was confused because the cars were filled with guards, not random ones, fully armed ones loaded with guns. The convoy stopped at the entrance of the beautiful, big villa. The guards got down and took their positions. One of the guards went up to the car and opened the door. A man slightly older in age stepped down from one of the cars. All the people standing there had their jaws drop when their eyes fell on his face. Some of the people were part of the crowd that had witnessed that incident in the past with their own eyes. Seeing that man in person today in a different light, they were surely left startled. Mr. Colonel was informed upon the arrival of this esteemed guest and an unknown personality.

He looked around as his eyes fell on some similar faces. The gate was the route. The same place with similar faces, it reminded him of his past, that moment

When the urge to be powerful took birth in his heart. The urge to dominate had taken root in his mind. It reminded him of that day when he was left alone in pain, despair, agony, with sorrow and a bleeding hand. “This way, Sir, your presence is expected.” “So, none of you is going to stop me today, nor is anyone going to ask me the reason why I wish to have a meeting with him.” Isn’t it? He glanced at the faces of the guards standing in front of him, with their heads lowered and legs shivering. ‘I remember the place, the time and the promise I made to myself that day.’ He said rather loudly that the sound of glory could be felt through his victorious voice, causing an influence on many.

As he entered the gate, the clouds roared as if his victory was being celebrated in the sky as well. He was shown the way to a room. He walked straight towards the door and entered with his head held high. In front of him was the man he wished to meet so desperately some day in the past. He was overjoyed with emotions, proud of himself, yet overwhelmed with emotion. He couldn’t understand the sudden emergence of emotions, the flow of thoughts; everything seemed so unreal, so much like a dream come true. Mr. Humayun was lost in his thoughts when the person in front of him offered him a seat. He paused for a moment, then immediately sat down on the sofa.

“I was informed that you wished to meet me, gentleman. Is there anything I can help with?” “Nothing important, Sir. I just wanted to meet you. I came before as well. I wonder if you remember.”

“I don’t think I was informed of your arrival before today. It is my first time hearing about you, young man.”

“Not that young anymore.” Mr. Humayun replied with sorrow. “I wasn’t the

Influential man, I am today, when I first came to meet you. My social status, my clothes and my vehicle were so different. Looking back now, everything has changed a lot.” There was a glimpse of pain and sadness in his eyes.

“I guess you have a story that you wish to share. You must have been through a lot, as everything is so different as of today. Would you like to share with me because I am getting rather interested in you?”

“Curiosity was something that brought me to your doorstep in the past. I wished to meet you at that time as well, but I was stopped because of my social status, not-so-branded clothes and an old scooter. Sir, you may not know that when I came to your doorstep, I was so excited and overjoyed to meet you. I just wanted to ask you how it feels to be influential, to be respected and looked up to, but I was stopped at the doorstep. Not only did they not let me in, but they humiliated me in front of the whole village. When I left your doorstep, I lost something here. You know what it was? It was my dignity, my honor, my reputation that I had earned with hard work. I didn’t only lose these things; I also lost one of my fingers as well.”

He lifted his hand with the fourth finger missing.

“It must have been very difficult for you. How did you get yourself out of it and become who you are today?” The Colonel was drawn into his story; he was interested in him, even more interested in the person sitting in front of him. “Such a thing happened and I never knew. Strange.”

“They must have kept it hidden. It was the story of nobody no one would be interested in. The dreams, wishes and desires of men from humble backgrounds are often played with. They are not taken that seriously.” There was sorrow in Humayun’s voice.

“I know it is not my right to ask, but would you like to share your journey with me? If it doesn’t offend you, of course.” The Colonel asked in a friendly tone.

“I worked hard, very hard, for this day to come. The day I left your doorstep, I had promised myself that I would return one day and in a more influential way. I was too old for any armed services, so I put my efforts into my sons, which changed my destiny. I have four sons, sir. I provided basic education for them. I made efforts for them day and night. I trained them diligently and spent all I had on their education. Whenever I felt tired and wanted to give up, this hand was my inspiration.”

He raised his left hand and glanced at it with his shining eyes filled with tears. “I would get up and start working because I knew I couldn’t give in just yet. My journey still had a long way to go. Then my times changed. My sons, one by one they got enrolled in the military. And this is how I got where I am today.” He sighed, with tears falling from his eyes.

“You did well. Humayun. I don’t have words to say. I don’t know if I should feel guilty, inspired, or moved by you. I don’t have words to express it, but young man, you played well and you made it to the top. I never knew there was someone who was so inspired or driven by me. Or that I had such an influence on others.”

“I don’t know if I should be grateful that I didn’t meet you that day; otherwise, history wouldn’t have been made.” Suddenly, the rain showered; it seemed like the clouds couldn’t hold back any longer; they were weeping along as well.

“Stay for supper. Give me the honor and be my guest. Humayun. The time is worth it if spent with someone like you. Don’t refuse. Please do me the honor of making amends for the sorrowful past.”

“As you wish, sir.” Humayun replied with a pleasant smile on his face. His

Happiness was reflected in the glittery sparks shining in his eyes, sparkling as brightly as a light of happiness and delight. He had fulfilled his wish in the most unrealistic way that could ever exist. Indeed, this is what happens when we are influenced by the right things in the right ways and make the right choices to make the impossible possible.



It Rains on Him After Midnight

The first time people heard Noor crying was not in real life. It happened in one of his dreams where he was in his room, crowded with intense, harshly burning tube lights, while books from his bag lay open on the bed beside him. His father was disappointed. His mother, standing the furthest, looked worried. His cousins were silent. And he kept on saying the same thing over and over, “I tried, I really tried.”

But no one answered, so he started slapping himself hard and harder, repeating the same words, penetrating like broken glass across his vocal cords until his voice broke into something unrecognizable, a scream ugly enough to make people actually care for him. Then he woke up to his real family shaking him in the darkness.

“Noor... Noor... What happened, beta? Are you okay?”

He said yes because saying “no” would take so long. Noor lived most of his life in worlds nobody else could see. During his time at school and college, people thought he was quiet, funny sometimes and sometimes awkward, decent overall. He was the kind of person who could make the whole group laugh but was silent during the walk home.

But inside his head, there were entire kingdoms, armies and worlds open to conquest. His university became a fortress with tall walls, watchtowers and flowers on stone floors. Armies were waiting outside the gate. Sometimes Jon Snow stood there holding his sword. Sometimes Ertugrul Ghazi marched loudly with his soldiers. And in the middle of all that, Noor would worry whether his professor liked him enough to remember his name. That was a strange thing about him or his dreams, that even in war,

he searched for acceptance.

He fell in love once. Or maybe not once. Maybe continuously for years. Years were not simply words. And even the purest form of love could be tossed away. The girl never got to know about the storms she carried unknowingly inside another person. She never looked at him long enough in hallways.

But dreams were kind. In his dreams, she would sit beside him during weddings while Rahat Fateh Ali Khan sang somewhere in the background. She laughed at his stupid jokes and walked beside him through glowing malls with her glowing eyes while rumors spread of wars coming and destruction of the world happening, simply because he was happy.

In dreams, she listened when he spoke. And once, only once, he finally asked her, “Can you at least be my friend? I am a good person,” hesitantly, as if it was not a dream. She smiled. That smile alone kept him alive for weeks afterward. Reality slept when one kept his dreams alive.

The problem with Noor was not that he felt too little, but that he felt every little thing too much. He noticed things nobody else noticed. A gifted watch on his wrist meant more to him than expensive brands. A professor undermining him could ruin his entire night. A person walking past without seeing him could stay in his chest for months.

He watched people carefully: their hands, their eyes, their silences. He wanted to know what was behind everyone’s face. Maybe because he secretly hoped the same: that someone would try doing the same for him. To understand him and what else was needed.

In another of his dreams, a girl fell into dark water that was impossibly deep,

filled with shadows and ugly fish moving beneath the surface. Noor could not swim, afraid of the deep black water. But he still wanted to jump. That was who he was. Terrified of dying in dreams, between courage and cowardice, yet always leaning toward people in danger. In dreams he was constantly saving someone: a child falling, or a stranger in panic, a relationship from awkwardness. But not even in dreams, no one ever saved him.

One night after reading Kafka's *The Trial*, he saw officers coming for him. Intelligence agencies questioned him. They broke his phone, his alarm clock and treated him like a criminal. And throughout the entire dream, he kept explaining,

"I did not do anything wrong."

"I swear I am telling the truth."

The officers never fully believed him. May be because Noor feared people never truly would. His dreams became stranger after that. Sometimes trains ran through his university. Sometimes the brakes on his bike failed while he sped toward death. Sometimes weddings became battlefields. Sometimes a girl in silver clothes stood beneath moonlight while music echoed through impossible corridors. And always, always, there was this feeling:

That he was searching for a place where he could finally stop explaining himself. One evening in a dream, a girl came to his home. She entered shyly through the lawn and met Noor's Mother, while relatives whispered nearby.

"She is beautiful," Mother said.

"Just like my daughter."

Nothing dramatic happened afterward. No songs or wars. But the tragedy happened after he opened his eyes, and when it happened, tears stood quietly in

his eyes. Because for one brief moment, his heart had experienced something it almost never felt while awake:

Belonging.

Years later, people would still misunderstand him. Some would think he was too emotional. Others would think he was weak. And none would ever realize how many battles existed inside him. But if someone had truly entered his dreams and walked through the happy malls, the dark castles, the wedding halls, the military grounds, the moonlit university and the time when no one was allowed to roam in corridors except the ghosts and the unseen, they would have discovered the truth. Noor was not trying to be loved by the whole world. He was only searching for one thing, a place where he could finally be seen clearly, without having to prove that he was good.



Cage of Traditions

Huriya, wearing a grey gown, walks across the university cricket ground. She observes girls playing cricket there. Her eyes are brimming with tears. She moves toward the department for classes.

At that moment, a cluster of memories starts flowing through her mind. She recalls that one day she asked her mother for permission to play cricket and her mother responded angrily.

Her mother replied, “You want to play cricket now? Are you out of your mind? What will people say about us?”

Her father sighed heavily and said, “I always had one dream: to see you become a doctor, just like me. But you never listen. Do whatever you want, like always.”

Huriya notices the disappointment on Ahsan's face, her younger brother.

She thinks her brother would support her, but he shakes his head and says, “Mama is right. This society is full of people with a sick mentality. No one will allow you to fulfill your wish. You know nothing about this society.”

Later that same day, Huriya visits her Mamo to seek his help with the university admission process. Both settle down on the sofa and her Mamo takes out his phone to begin filling in the form. He asks Huriya to read out her CNIC number from the document in her hand. She anxiously scans the document and finally admits in a small voice, “Mamo, I don't know where the CNIC number is written.”

Mamo smiles and says, “Insane, you know nothing.”

A wave of embarrassment washes over her. In that moment, something stirs deep within her. She realizes that she is unaware of so many basic things about her own life and because of this ignorance, she has faced humiliation, been bullied and been ignored by friends and peers in countless situations since childhood. After this realization, she promises herself that she will no longer remain in the dark. She will become a girl who knows everything she needs to know and uses that knowledge to stand up not only for herself but for others as well. She turns to her Mamo and says, “Mamo, I want to study law. I want to become a lawyer.”

After one year, Huriya came home for summer break. One day, she is sitting in her bedroom. Suddenly, her mother says, “Huriya, look who has come to meet you.”

Huriya meets her childhood friend and neighbour, Aasiya, after a long time. Both sit in the bedroom. Huriya's facial expressions change when she looks at Aasiya. Then she asks, “Aasiya, why are you looking so worried today? What is the matter? Has something happened?”

Aasiya manages a weak smile and says, “You know I have never hidden anything from you.” Her eyes slowly fill with tears. She takes a shaky breath and whispers, “Huriya, I feel I am trapped inside a cage, a cage that is locked tight, with the keys in the hands of Bhai and Baba. I want to come out of the cage and fly.” Huriya gently takes her hand and says, “Tell me everything.”

“Fakhir is not allowing me to take admission in the university. I want to continue my studies, but he has gone to Baba and filled his ear with the idea that co-education is not good for girls. Boys manipulate them and education also makes girls rebellious and impudent. They start arguing with the elders and their teachings. Baba supports Fakhir; he told me that it is a sin for girls to sit and study alongside boys.

Islam asks us to fulfil our responsibilities towards girls by getting them married at the right time.”

She pauses and takes a deep breath.

“And so, they have fixed my marriage to Rahim, my cousin.”

A silence falls between the two girls.

Huriya wonders, looking at her in surprise. “But you never even liked him. Not once. He is ten years older than you. You know very well that he is involved in many criminal activities.”

Aasiya sobs and replies, “I said the same thing to my mother and she silenced me with her words.”

She wipes her tears while repeating her mother's argument:

“Tell me, do you like someone else? Is that it? Your father has always been right. Education is spoiling the young generation. Do you want to embarrass us in front of society? Beta, Rahim is a good person. He owns 25 acres of land, a bungalow and a car. What more could you want? Don't be foolish. Now our honour is in your hands. All we ask is that you protect our honour.”

Aasiya's voice breaks completely.

“After these words, I had nothing left to say. No argument. No choice.”

She looked up at Huriya and whispered, “I have come to see you one last time.”

Huriya gripped her hand tightly and said firmly, “Aasiya, women are not only born for marriage, but also made for a much bigger purpose than this.”

Aasiya simply shook her head

“Nothing can be done now. I should go. Baba was not at home the whole day.

He goes to the Madrassah and comes back late. If he arrives before me, he will scold my mother.

On Friday, the small Nikkah ceremony of Aasiya and Rahim takes place.

After a few days, Fakhir and Ahsan, who are good friends, meet at a friend's gathering. During their conversation, Fakhir says to Ahsan:

“You should not allow Huriya to go to university. You know what kind of environment there is. Girls should stay at home and look after the household. That is what they are meant for.”

Ahsan answers politely, “She wants to do something valuable and effective for herself and others as well. She has the right to fulfil her wishes.”

Fakhir responds sarcastically, “Alright, as you wish.”

Then he casually changes the topic and starts talking about his own plans.

“I want to marry a girl from my class. My parents already know about her, but they are pressuring me to marry someone from their own friends or relatives. I told them clearly, I will only marry her.”

The very next day, Fakhir's parents come to visit Huriya's house. They come for a special purpose. Mullah Muzafar and his wife arrive with the marriage proposal for Huriya.

Ahsan and his parents are completely shocked. Nobody expected this to happen. Ahsan speaks hesitantly, “Uncle, I know it is not my place to interfere in such discussions, but this is a matter of my sister's life. Fakhir is not interested in this proposal. In fact, he doesn't want to marry in his family. He wants to marry someone else. Huriya and Fakhir have completely different personalities and views about life.

Mullah Muzafar shook his head and said, “Ahsan, he is just being young and

foolish. Boys do such things before marriage; it is nothing serious. He will forget all of this once he settles down. My son is a good boy. He will keep Huriya very happy.”

Huriya's mother says softly, “We will think about it.”

Her father does not hesitate for a moment. He says firmly, “My daughter is still studying. She wants to be independent. I do not wish to get her married right now.”

Ten days later, Huriya's father hears from a neighbour that Fakhir has gotten married and not in the way anyone had expected. The girl elopes from her home to be with him. When Fakhir's parents resist, Fakhir threatens to take his own life. Frightened of losing their son, they accept the marriage.

Huriya's father decides to go and meet Mullah Muzafar in person.

Mullah Muzafar sits with a heavy expression and says, “What could we do? He is our son. We were scared we would lose him. So we accepted this girl only for his sake. Otherwise, a girl who runs away from her own home has no place in a decent society. Her own parents have cut all ties with her. They have made it clear that if she ever sets foot in their house again, they will not spare her and honestly, they are not wrong.”

Huriya's father listens quietly and then speaks in a calm but firm tone.

“Mullah Sahab, she is your daughter-in-law now. She is a part of your family. Whatever happened before, leave it behind. Open your heart and accept her.”

Mullah Muzafar says nothing in response.

Six months after Aasiya's marriage, she visits her parents.

The moment she walks in, it is clear that she is no longer the same girl. The spark in her eyes is gone. Gloominess sits heavily on her face.

Her parents look at her with concern and ask about her life with Rahim.

Aasiya looks down and says quietly, “Baba, he is demanding my share of the property. He has sent me here to talk to you about it.”

Mullah Muzafar's face turns red with anger. He raises his voice and says, “How dare he ask for property! This has never happened in our family. He already has everything he needs. And let me make one thing clear to both of you, this is not your home anymore. You have no right over anything here. Go back to your husband. His home is your home now. His property is yours.”

Aasiya's voice breaks as she speaks.

“Baba, I suffocate there. Rahim is not a good person. He humiliates me every single day and keeps pushing me to come here and beg. I cannot go back. I do not want to go back.”

Her mother shifts uncomfortably and says, “Aasiya, what will people say? Beta, respect your husband. Give him some time. He will change. Things will get better; you will see. Now go back to your home.”

Aasiya stares at her mother in silence. There is nothing left to say.

Somehow, Aasiya manages to call Huriya from Rahim's house.

Her voice is low and shaking. She tells Huriya everything.

Huriya listens and says firmly, “Aasiya, first of all, you have to be strong and self-reliant; no one is coming to save you from the thorns of this cruel world. Please gather your courage and stand up for yourself. The person who stays silent suffers the most. Leave this toxic relationship and move forward in your life.”

Aasiya replies in a broken voice, “Huriya, I am not as strong as you. And it is too late now. If I leave Rahim, nobody will accept me. Neither my parents nor this society. Nobody.”

Just then, Rahim walks in. Aasiya quickly ends the call.

Rahim looks at her suspiciously and asks, “Who were you talking to?”

“Just a friend,” Aasiya replies quietly.

Rahim's expression hardens. “You have nothing better to do?”

He then asks coldly about her father's response regarding the inheritance. Aasiya tells him everything.

Rahim's anger explodes. He beats Aasiya and orders her to get out of his house.

Aasiya looks at him with pain in her eyes and says, “I do not understand where my home actually is. Papa tells me to go to my husband and my husband tells me to go to my parents.”

Rahim walks out of the house.

Aasiya sits alone in the empty house. The silence around her is much heavier than her strength.

She thinks about Huriya's words: Be strong. Take a stand.

She thinks about her mother's words: “What will people say?”

She thinks about her father's words: “This is not your home anymore.”

She thinks about Rahim's words: “Get out.”

There is no anger left in her. No tears either. Just a deep and exhausting emptiness. She has been rejected by everyone, all at once. Now she has accepted her destiny. For the first time in her life, she makes her own decision.

She goes to the kitchen, picks up a knife and ends her life.

After the funeral, the courtyard is quiet. Aasiya's mother sits with hollow eyes and whispers, “What was written in my daughter's fate?”

Her father stares at the ground and says, “It was Allah's will. Her life was meant to be short.”

Rahim sits with them, consoles them and leaves.

Only Huriya sits in the corner, silent, with tears she cannot stop.

Huriya is deeply shaken after Aasiya's death. A storm of grief and anger rages inside her. She makes up her mind and says firmly, “I will fight for Aasiya. She was innocent. Her family members are her murderers.”

Her mother looks at her with worried eyes and says, “Huriya, you cannot fight these people. Her parents do not consider themselves responsible. Neither does Rahim. They have accepted it as her fate and moved on.”

But Huriya does not listen.

“I will fight for every innocent soul who became a victim and died inside the cage of tradition.”

She goes to court and files a case against Rahim and Mullah Muzafar. Huriya's father supports her. She fights with everything she has. But without strong evidence and support, she loses the case.

Rahim marries again. Fakhir and his family stand by Rahim's side. Life moves on for all of them as if Aasiya never existed.

But Huriya does not stop. She completes her education and becomes a lawyer. She builds a school in Aasiya's name. She fights for girls like Aasiya and establishes a welfare organization with the support of her brother, Ahsan.

She writes a book and dedicates every single word of it to Aasiya. She ends the book with these lines:

“Unfortunately, we are part of a society where people consider themselves the

authors of other people's destinies. Our religion is beautiful and vast. But here, the cage of tradition is stronger and more rigid than religion itself. People love to misuse religion and cling to traditions only to satisfy their false egos. But this cage will break. It will take time, but it will break.”



The Mirror Beyond Worlds

The same monotonous routine had bored Ilson. He was leading a pretty dull life. Then one day, out of boredom, he decided to go through the things his grandfather had left him. He found stamps, antique pieces and many other things, but one thing intrigued him the most: a mirror with skulls and strange patterns. He had never seen such a pretty yet creepy mirror. The handle had petrifying motifs carved on it. He tried to admire the mirror by touching it, but soon got dizzy. When he woke up, he found himself in the midst of a strange world. The dry sky, skulls and gloomy atmosphere sent chills down one's spine. There was no life at all. He wondered where he was. Suddenly, a haunted palace caught his attention. He was in deep thought when a creature appeared. It looked troubled. Ilson asked what this place was. The creature told him it was the world of spirits. Ilson became very fascinated. Then he asked him about the creature who lived in that house.

The spirit told him that, in that house, resides a very evil spirit who is making life terrible for all other good spirits. It was because of that spirit that everything had decayed and died. The spirit requested that the boy help the realm and fight the evil spirit. He told Ilson that only by killing that spirit could life be returned to that realm. Ilson hesitated for a bit but eventually agreed. The spirit also told the boy that there were four floors of the palace and there would be monsters and challenges on each floor. If he passed all challenges, he could reach the last floor where the evil spirit resided.

He had to kill that spirit to turn the whole world green and bring prosperity. It gave the boy was given a special sword and only with this sword could the monster be killed, so he agreed. He went into the haunted mansion, and on the first floor, he encountered a three-headed wolf-like beast. The beast growled at him and tried to kill him, but the boy somehow killed that ferocious monster.

On the next floor, he encountered a big dragon that breathed fire. He slayed the dragon and moved on to the next floor. There, he encountered a big snake-like entity. It had venomous fangs and purple blood. The boy fought it and won, but little did he know that the blood of the snake was poisonous and it had gotten inside his body through open wounds. Just when the boy thought he would die, a little cat came up to him and gave him a golden pill.

She was very thin, and her eyes seemed to be damaged. She told him it was made from the eye of that snake and that it would cure him. He took the pill and recovered. Then, he went on to the final floor where the evil spirit resided. He had no idea how the evil spirit would look. Little did he know, it was the scariest thing he had ever seen. Its torso looked human, but spider-like limbs hung from its body. He moved silently, like a hunter.

In one corner of the room was a web where countless human skeletons were suspended upside down, with dried blood on the floor beneath them. The spirit told the boy that it would be his biggest mistake if he tried to kill him. The boy asked why he was doing this and why he was tormenting the good spirits.

The spirit started hesitating and then started to tell him a story.

"Once, I lived in the realm of demons, where I had a loving family, or so I thought. One day, they brought me out into the wilderness and threw me into the

realm of spirits, where there was greenery, but nothing for me to eat. Still, I met a beautiful cat spirit who became my friend, and we lived happily, but my happiness was not long-lasting.

Soon, the spirit realm faced the consequences of my demon origins. The sky became dark, mist rolled in and every plant dried up. Some spirits mutated into ferocious monsters and everything was destroyed. My friend left me and people started to hunt me.

What would you do in a situation where everyone wanted to kill you? You'd try to survive, right? That's what I did. I killed every spirit trying to end me and found an old, lonely castle to spend my life in. Still, people wanting to kill me never stopped coming. Is it wrong that I just wanted to survive?"

Hearing this, the boy was hesitant to kill him.

He asked him, "Why can't you go to the demon realm again?"

The demon said, "I don't know. I tried but failed." He paused.

"Now, weren't you going to kill me, young warrior?"

"There's no need, for I have found a way to send you back. " A black and white cat entered the room. It was the same cat that had met the boy on the third floor.

"Furry, you, he paused. "Didn't you leave me?" the demon asked.

"I never left you. I just wanted to send you back, so I spent years searching for a method," the cat spoke softly.

"Wait, Furry, you're so skinny and what happened to your eyes?" asked the demon.

"Alas, I lost them accidentally while searching for a method. But fear not, for I will send you back home."

"And how will you do that? " asked the boy.

"Hmm, for that, I need the wolf's head, the other eye of that snake and the claw of the dragon you met on all three floors. Then I'll perform a ritual." The cat paused.

Can I ask for a few drops of blood from you, young man?" the cat pleaded. The warrior agreed and the cat started preparations for the ritual. She drew a magic circle and cast some spells." But how will you open the portal to the demon realm? I've tried similar things before but failed," said the demon.

The cat looked at him for a second. "You'll need to sacrifice your most precious thing," the cat said.

"I don't have anything except..." He paused. "...except you."

"Wait, are you going to sacrifice yourself?" the demon said in horror.

"I'm sorry, my friend. It was nice meeting you." The cat paused. "May you always be welcomed in the demon realm."

The cat spirit tore out her heart and put it in the middle of the symbols.

"You! Why did you do this?" asked the demon.

"Because you're my friend. Now don't cry. I didn't sacrifice myself for you to be unhappy."

The demon hesitated and then said, "Okay, I'll honor your sacrifice and live a great life."

"Don't forget me," the cat smiled.

"I'll never, " the demon cried.

"May we meet again, dear friend."

The cat said and disappeared.

"I'm sorry. I didn't know you had such a hard time," the warrior said, ashamed.

"You would still kill me if I wasn't going back, wouldn't you?" said the demon.

Ilson stayed quiet, then said, "It's not like that... Maybe I would've tried to search for a solution too, since you were forced to do this."

"Is that so..?" asked the demon.

"Yeah, you can consider me your friend," exclaimed Ilson.

"I— I can?" The demon didn't believe it.

"Yes," replied Ilson.

Then a loud sound was heard and a portal opened.

"I guess it's time for a goodbye then ... Hope we meet again, my dear friend," said the spider and disappeared.

The warrior, feeling empty inside, stayed there for a second and then returned.

When he got out, the atmosphere had changed completely.

Flowers and greenery were all around and happily smiling spirits.

The old spirit came to him and thanked him for killing that evil spirit.

The young boy accepted his thanks. He wanted to tell them the truth, but he had promised the demon that he would not tell anyone about his past or the reason for his being a villain. He was a bit sad that the demon was remembered as an evil person when all he did was protect himself.

He wandered for a bit and then returned to the place where he first stepped into the realm. The portal was still open, but it seemed to be gradually fading away. He sensed it was about to close. He glanced one last time at the realm and at the castle, then entered the portal.

He found himself inside his room again. He could smell the aroma of a freshly made meal. He was feeling quite hungry after such a big adventure, so he went downstairs to eat with his family.

ARTICLES



From Reason to Warfare
Ali Mustafa Khan

Nervousness: The Confidence
Killer
Arooj Iqbal

Loneliness Is Poison
Aqsa Sial

The Art of Language
Mahida Naeem



From Reason to Warfare

Muslims witnessed a glorious period of advancement in the fields of science, mathematics, arts, literature, and cartography. Baghdad, the city of modern-day Iraq, bore testimony to the Muslims' glorious past. The city produced scientific thinkers like Al-Khawarizmi, Al-Mawaridi, Al-Kindi, and Al-Jahiz among many others. They influenced society through their remarkable work in the field of mathematics, sociology, natural philosophy, literature, etc. Muslim society flourished in the era from 760–900 AD. These advancements also led to the expansion of the Muslim empire beyond its borders.

Apart from Iraq, Spain and Uzbekistan also became hubs of scientific advancements, literature, and poetry in the Muslim world. It helped the Muslims to develop a modern army second to none. The Islamic golden age is also known as the age of reason in the Muslim world.

In contrast to the Muslim golden age, Europe was in the dark ages. Countries were fighting wars with each other and there was devastating bloodshed across the continent. People were used to believing in superstitions, and women who behaved abnormally were considered witches and then burned at the stake so that society couldn't be affected by their curse.

However, with the advent of the printing press, this curse began to change. Many books were printed in the local languages of the country so that people could easily acquire knowledge. Moreover, the wave of the Renaissance in Europe started from Italy. They started to translate Muslim scientific research and literary works

into their own languages. This is how Muslim research and technological advancement spread across entire Europe, marking the beginning of an Enlightened Europe in the world.

This shift occurred during the late 16th and early 17th centuries and it revolutionized Europe. Thinkers like John Locke, Rousseau, Aquinas, Hobbes, Montesquieu, etc., developed the political and legal framework for the state and human rights by characterizing the duties of the state towards people and the duties of people towards the state. Their teachings also challenged the authority of the Church. People started to work against Church teachings, and many devoted themselves to the mechanical age, which marks the start of the Industrial Age in Europe.

The Industrial Revolution, which started in the 18th century, led to the birth of a new scientific wave across Europe. Thinkers and scientists like Michael Faraday, Nikola Tesla, Thomas Edison, Max Planck, Marie Curie, etc., changed the whole structure of science and society. Communication at long distances became easy with the discovery of the telegraph and later with the telephone developed by Graham Bell.

However, when Europe was witnessing the birth of a new scientific wave across its borders, the Muslim world was in decline. Fundamentalist and dogmatic thinkers limited human reason with irrational religious teachings. Moreover, many Muslim countries were colonized by the British, while those which were under the Ottoman Empire suffered from poverty and backwardness. Moreover, in many areas, including northern and some parts of southern Africa, Muslims were engaged in bloody civil wars.

In 1945, when the Second World War ended, many Muslim countries began to

decolonize and declared their independence from the British and French colonial empires. Some moved towards flawed democracies, including modern Türkiye, Bangladesh, Malaysia, etc., while some developed dictatorships, and the majority led into civil war and chaos, including many African and Middle Eastern countries. The major factor behind the social, economic, and political decline, apart from colonization, was dogmatic and fundamentalist teachings, which kept the Muslim world undeveloped.

The era of Iron warfare has diminished, and the world has entered into modern AI warfare, which is also known as 5th Generation Warfare (5GW). This warfare includes the use of artificial intelligence and modern robotics to fight modern wars. A country that dominates in AI will dominate the region. However, many Muslims still live in the past. As perfectly highlighted in the article, Fever between past and future, Iqbal Ahmed critically analyzed the situation of Muslims who are living a thousand years behind and still consider themselves as the rulers of the world; according to him, it has now become part of Muslim psychology that they could easily take over the world with swords.

This decline in rationality, with a lack of geopolitical knowledge and a sword mentality, put them in irreversible chaos. The political and military situation in many Muslim countries isn't good. For example, Libya has been in a civil war for more than a decade and thousands of people have been killed in this bloodshed. Somalia has become a hub of terrorist organizations, including Al-Qaeda, Daesh, etc. Thousands of people have been killed by these organizations. Sudan has also been in bloodshed for more than two decades and a power tussle is going on in the country, Whereas the people are paying the price for that tussle.

Similarly, the situation in Pakistan is also worsening. The terrorist attacks, elite capture of the economy, corrupt bureaucracy, inefficient judiciary, and weak political class have plunged the country into chaos. Inflation is on the surge while the living standard of the poor hasn't changed. Per capita income of the country is the lowest in the region, and the country faces external threats from its western and eastern neighbors. More than 40 million people don't have access to quality education in the country, according to a population survey by the World Population Fund (WPF). The IQ level of rural people living in Pakistan, when compared to those living in rural areas in developed countries, shows that people in developed countries are more intelligent and have better skills for future tasks.

These stats point toward a single major factor apart from other factors: the decline of rationality in the Muslim world has led them into such a situation. Those nations which have invested in the development of knowledge and wisdom of their people have prospered, while those which remain behind face chaos and instability.

Singapore, Finland, Denmark, Canada, and Switzerland are perfect examples highlighting the role of a people centered state which invests in the skills of its people and enables them to serve their country at their best. This approach develops these countries politically, economically, and socially. The model adopted by these states is the best model for underdeveloped nations to follow.

In conclusion, fundamentalist and dogmatic thinking led to the decline of Muslims both economically and politically and plunged the whole civilization into chaos. The perfect model to be followed is one based upon the people-centered approach and which invests in the rationality and intellect of the people. Only such an approach would be a panacea in chaos.



Nervousness: The Confidence Killer

I have been doing public speaking since I was in 3rd grade. It's one of my favorite hobbies. If you are interested in this topic, you have probably searched it dozens of times and watched many videos related to confidence, public speaking and communication skills. So, why should you bother reading another article on this topic? But stick with me! I will make it worth your time. Here, I am gonna share some of the tips and tricks I have learned in my past 10 years of public speaking that actually work.

Confidence is the eloquent delivery of the knowledge you possess. Your worst enemy is nervousness. Whenever anyone's public speech doesn't go as planned. On being asked what happened, we get a recurrent answer (yrr, mein nervous ho gayi thi/gaya tha): "*I got nervous*". No one can be confident if one is unable to control one's mind. To overcome nervousness is to exhibit confidence. Below are my favorite techniques to fight nervousness.

Step one is to know that you won't die because of it. No matter what you have got on hand: an interview, TED Talk, class presentation, or debate competition. You are overestimating the importance of that event. You are a human performing for other humans. Chill out! Your tiny mistake (that you are afraid you might make) won't cause the end of the world. No man has done any good under pressure. One just loses their individuality and charm this way. That is the last thing you would want to happen.

Once you have mastered this mindset, it's time to prepare better than everyone else. Focus on your research, what you will say and how, and particularly who is you

Target audience and what they want. This is the most crucial point, as nothing boosts confidence as knowing that you know your game, you deserve to be there, and are able enough to handle any situation through your knowledge and preparation.

Moreover, I can assure you it is a rare occurrence for me to not make a mistake on stage. Although it's even rarer for anyone to ever notice any one of them. Because no matter how well you are prepared, mistakes are bound to happen. As humans, we don't have any control over such things. Instead of getting rid of any chances of mistakes, try developing strategies to handle them as they happen.

Now the question arises: what to do after you have prepared well. Well, the answer is that there is nothing more you can do. Revising your speech, or what you have to present for the 70th time in your mind, would not make the situation any better. Distract your mind by indulging in a conversation with the person sitting next to you. It will help you calm your nerves.

If you can, then familiarize yourself with the stage where you are going to perform. Move around and get used to the surroundings. Stand in front of the mic, and look where the audience will soon be sitting. You will suddenly feel relaxed and a sense of belonging will overtake you.

Fear disappears as soon as you face it.

It might sound counterproductive, but imagine the worst. When you accept the worst, then you are prepared for the best. Imagine what the worst that can happen is. Accept it and realize that you will be fine even when it happens.

Additionally, understand that there is a strong connection between body and mind. Public speaking can be a nerve wrecking experience for most people. In such conditions, it is difficult for one to control their mind and nerves. However you can

Control your body. As a result, manipulating your mind. One way to do that is to form an open posture. Straighten your back, chin up, shoulders back, take up more space, and stand with your legs slightly apart. Secondly, put a smile on your beautiful face; do it as genuinely as possible. If you can't give a genuine smile, just fake it till you make it. No one doubts a person with a vibrant smile for lack of confidence. Get your breathing under control. Take a deep breath, in and out. Tell yourself you got this. Go through some positive affirmations. Practice eye contact. Good eye contact can prove to be a game changer. Lastly, use gestures to your advantage. Gestures should be open and bold. Own your presence. Don't hide your body.

Furthermore, looking good for yourself is just as important as looking good for others, if not more. Yes, your audience will make their first judgment about you as soon as you step on the stage. Make sure that before making an appearance in front of the audience, you look at yourself in the mirror and that's what is going to decide your confidence level. You have enough things to worry about on stage, such as your eye contact, gestures, opening line, when to start, and the last-minute changes you had to make to your speech. Do yourself a favor and give yourself one less thing to worry about. Make sure you are dressed the way you feel the most confident, yet comfortable.

The last tip from my side is: if you do end up making a mistake or mishap that is evident enough for everyone to notice, such as forgetting everything or falling on stage (Been there, done that). Laugh it off! That audience should laugh with you rather than at you. That's why having a good sense of humor is important. That will be embarrassing at that moment but will be an epic story to tell after a few years.

Public speaking is all about the effective and charismatic delivery of the

Knowledge you possess. It needs practice, like any other skill in this world. If you don't use it practically and consistently, I assure you, you won't be confident. Go out there and practice as much as you can. Your competition is with no one other than yourself.



Loneliness Is Poison

Loneliness is not just an emotion or a feeling, but a poison that slowly grows in the mind, heart, and body, deeply affecting the human body from within as well as the outer aspects of the body. In today's time, people are attached to technology like computers, cell phones, tabs, etc., but people feel lonely during family gatherings in the room because everyone uses a cell phone instead of talking with each other and sharing feelings. Psychologists say that loneliness is a serious problem because humans become disconnected from their surroundings, and it also affects the body to look physically weak. Loneliness is not felt only when someone is alone, but also felt in crowds where there are thousands and millions of people, but no one sees you or gives you attention. As ideas are different and minds are different from person to person, I feel loneliness in a deep way. Loneliness is like a poison; it does not affect you suddenly, but affects you very slowly and deeply. In my personal opinion, loneliness is more dangerous than death. Through death, a person dies once, but through loneliness, one dies every moment, again and again.

Studies show that loneliness weakens both emotional and physical health. In 2015, psychologist Julianne Holt-Lunstad published that long-term loneliness increases the rate of death by 26%, which is more harmful than smoking 15 cigarettes a day. This shows that loneliness is not just a feeling or emotion; it is a medical problem that causes serious symptoms.

Many poets and writers have described loneliness as something that affects the

Inner heart, not just physical body damage. The poem Emily Dickinson wrote in 1863, "The Loneliness One dare not sound...", shows how loneliness is a deep, unspeakable ache, deeper than anything else. Similarly, the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard explored the profound suffering that can arise from being confronted with one's own self. In *The Sickness Unto Death* (1849), he examines despair as an inner condition of the self, suggesting that suffering may arise not merely from physical isolation but from one's relationship with one's own thoughts and identity.

In modern society, loneliness is increasing day by day due to many reasons, like the generation gap where parents' mindsets are different from their children's. Both have their own feelings and thoughts, but failing to share and accept each other's feelings creates distance, and this distance causes many problems. According to a 2020 report by the American Psychological Association, young people are more disturbed than older generations, mostly experiencing loneliness between the ages of 18 and 25 due to the heavy use of technology. This proves that digital connections cannot fill the space of human connections. When conversations become messages and relationships become notifications, the heart starves silently.

Loneliness also affects mental health badly. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2023) states that people who experience long-term loneliness are far more likely to develop depression, anxiety, and stress disorders. When a person has no friends or family members to share problems and personal feelings with, these emotions can lead to regression and depression, and the person becomes unstable. This emotional poison weakens confidence, destroys self-worth, and creates a belief that one is "unseen" or "unloved".

The most painful form of loneliness is emotional loneliness—being surrounded by people yet feeling empty inside. Writers like Mary Shelley (1818)

explored in Frankenstein, showing that humans change due to loneliness, not inherent cruelty. Her famous line, "I am alone and miserable," reflects a truth many people feel today.

However, loneliness is not permanent; it changes according to time and situation, though due to long-term loneliness, some people attempt suicide. The poison becomes more dangerous as it seeps into the mind, making a person rude and angry. Small acts, like asking about someone's problems, giving them time to express their feelings, listening carefully, and appreciating their ideas, act like psychotherapy for a lonely person and can save many lives. Psychologist Brené Brown emphasizes that human beings are "wired for connection," meaning that life becomes more meaningful when we listen to others, give them importance, and value them. A person becomes active and focused on themselves due to your attention and motivates themselves for a better life and opportunities.

In the end, loneliness remains one of the most dangerous emotional states, affecting a person very badly, not only on the inner side but also the outer. All it takes is kindness, empathy, and the courage to reach out. Briefly adding some ideas according to my personal opinion: make friends physically instead of on social media, and spend time with family rather than wasting time on TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp. Share problems with parents and friends instead of posting on social media. Understand each other's aspects and respect other opinions, because God made every person unique and different from others. Instead of having fixed opinions for everyone, coexist with each other. Today, focus not only on yourself, but also on friends and family—ask about their problems, find solutions, and save many people from the poison of loneliness.



The Art of Language

Is knowing a language enough to be able to speak it? People have an understanding of vocabulary and grammar. They are able to read and write in that particular language, but when it comes to speaking, they get stuck; they feel hesitant, and in the back of their mind, they have the perception that they will never be able to speak. Knowing a language is not the same as being able to use it. Speaking is not just about knowing a language. It has multiple other factors involved with it. Like, one should have confidence; one must not be afraid of what other people think. Social pressure is another reason why people are reluctant to speak. Maybe the first thing that we can do to overcome this problem is to make ourselves comfortable with language. The best way to do so is to practice that language. The only way to improve speaking is to speak. Perhaps language is not truly ours until we feel free enough to make it ours. We often teach people how to form correct sentences, but we do not always teach them how to feel comfortable enough to speak those sentences. Another factor that makes people freeze when it comes to speaking a language, let's say English, is being asked to speak. They are not silent because they do not have anything to say. Rather, they are quiet because they fear how English will sound when they speak. When speaking, we are often stuck with a concept of perfect English. We have created an imaginary picture of good English and believe in order to speak, one must have a particular accent, pronounce each and every word perfectly, make no grammatical mistakes and be able to

Choose accurate vocabulary according to the context.

But when we stuck ourselves under these constraints, we are not just unable to speak, but also forget the real purpose of language. Language is meant to help people connect with each other. Why are we turning it into a trial of perfection? Maybe we do not need more rules or grammatical practice in order to make ourselves comfortable with language. We need more opportunities to use language without being afraid of being judged by other people. Creating opportunities is something we have in our hands. We should try to encourage our friends to speak. Maybe we can start with ourselves so people around us become comfortable. Teachers also play a crucial role in this scenario; they should encourage students to improve their speaking skills and make students comfortable with the language. In order to become comfortable with language, we have to make the language truly ours and push ourselves to a stage where we are no longer afraid to use our voices.

BOOK REVIEWS



A Thousand Splendid Suns

Ayesha Hayat

Conference of the Birds

Muhammad Maaz Hassan



A Thousand Splendid Suns

How much suffering can one endure and remain capable of love?

This question is explored throughout the novel *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, written by Khaled Hosseini. *A Thousand Splendid Suns* is not just a novel but a portrayal of human suffering, the destruction of war, the impact of patriarchy, and the ultimate power of love. The story follows two women, Mariam and Laila, who are victims of the same circumstances. This novel shows how patriarchy still snubs women and how illegitimacy is a curse and a shame only for women. Hosseini explores how war is destructive for common people while elites manage to flee. Mariam, a victim of illegitimacy/an illegitimate child, and a child abandoned by her father, continuously searches for love and support. She was a small girl who only wanted a full family but ended up marrying a man twice her age who also beats her to death because she was unable to bear him a child. Laila, who saw her parents blown up in front of her eyes, was unable to make a single decision about her life. Both women, married to a man who only loves physical relationships, endured pain, assault, and emotional instability without questioning. War made their lives even worse as they were supposed to go out outside with only a so-called "mehram". This shows how women in Afghanistan were treated more like objects than human beings, and this still resonates in the modern world because not a single thing has changed and people still see women as their property. That's why this novel still makes people question their prevailing systems and inequalities. As the writer says: "Like a compass needle that points north, a man's

accusing finger always finds a woman. Always." The writing itself is more emotional than overly literary, as Hosseini uses plain language to show that grief, guilt, and hope can only be felt and cannot be explained using literary tools. The only refuge both women have is love. Mariam found the purpose of her life by sacrificing herself for Laila and her daughter Aziza, as she says: "She is the noor of my eyes and the sultan of my heart". Laila, on the other hand, finds love by marrying Tariq. This novel shows women's rights under oppressive regimes, hope in the face of adversity, the importance of sacrifice, and the idea that family is defined by love and loyalty rather than blood. This novel answers the question that even though human life is full of suffering, we are still capable of loving because love is the only thing that keeps us moving in this terrible world. Through destruction and political turmoil, the novel concludes with the hopeful idea of healing, rebuilding, and carrying on the legacy of those who fought to survive.



Conference of the Birds

منطق الطير

Conference of the birds by shykh Fareed ud din Attar

هفت شهر عشق را عطار گشت
ماهنوز اندر خم یک کوچه ایم
رومی

(way beyond my limits is Attar, for he has surmounted the seven skies of ISHQ)

The East was not always silent; it had linguistic modalities, sublime experiences, and awesome literature. From Punjab's Mian Muhammad Buksh, a Punjabi laureate, to Attar of Nishapur, a Persian genius, the poetic expression, mastery of soulful rhythms, a series of layered and secret meanings which come upon a man vertically and horizontally as a pure personal manifestation and an intellectual feed; this is what was once being offered, all as a whole, not fragmented.

Fareed-ud-din Attar's Mathnawi, Mantiq-u-tair, discusses the meta-symbols of this tradition, such as the NAY of Molana Rum, the symbol of SEEMURGH. Seemurgh is a character in Pehlavi mythology. The wings of this bird touch the east and the other the west. This resident of the mountains has an address in this world, but one cannot find it. Attar transforms it from an icon into a symbol.

Attar means the seller of perfumes, even his name has an odour and words carry a taste, as Molana Rumi said:

عطار بود و سنائی دو چشم ما

(Attar was a guiding fragrance)

He belongs to the tradition of SHAIR-E-HIKMAT (wisdom poetry). One must know the symbolism of traditional themes: arifaana and ashikaana. Knowledge for the sake of one reality. There is a thematic continuation, but this continuation constantly invites multifaceted emotional conditions. Symbolism combines the height of perception and expression.

One of the influential figures for Attar was a woman named Rabiya Basriyah. This spiritual affiliation indicates the role of women in the Islamic mystical tradition and represents gender neutrality in the way of seeking oneness. Another influential genius for Attar is Hakeem Sinai. His famous book, Hadeeqat ul haqeeqah (garden of reality), and Attar's own book, Conference of Birds, suggest that the whole universe is a part of that unity indiscriminately (garden, birds).

This allegorical epic is the story of a quest, a quest we all contain innately as humans. Like the journey of life, these birds decide to search for the mysterious Simorgh, their king. The challenges that the birds face address the condition of every man. One can relate their fate to every line. Different lands, multiple characters, unforeseen hurdles, and perilous intimacies all deal with the big questions of humanity. Attar, through stories and exemplifications, tells what is required in this journey. So what is it all on? On nothing,

Nothing is nothing, and all of this is nothing but nothing.

In an era where species are becoming extinct, human feelings are also on the list. Attar's Masthnavi brings us to a station where we can rediscover them. This monotonous age needs to rediscover humanity's lost jewels. An eye that only knows how to see must know how not to see and how to see the un-see-able. In reality, a

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disciplined discourse is not merely a passion or an intellectual domain; reality, even with its transcendence, is about me.

MOVIE REVIEWS



The Truman Show

M. Ahmad Asif

A Separation

Eman Ijaz

Fr The Movie

Muhammed Faizan

The Lion King

Mahnoor Ijaz



The Truman Show

"We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented."

These words, spoken by the film's creator, Christof, echo like a philosophical charge, not just within the world of the film, but across the digital, performative frame of our own. The Truman Show, masterfully directed by Peter Weir, is not merely a satire; it is a sorrowful, emotional, and intellectual exploration of what it means to live under constant observation, and still dare to seek the truth.

The film opens with a disarming calm, talking-head interviews where supposed "real people" claim that Truman Burbank's life is "genuine," "not always Shakespeare, but real." A woman-later revealed as Truman's wife-adds, "There's nothing fake about Truman." But from the outset, the viewer senses something is deeply wrong, deeply serene. The story begins on "Day 10,909" of Truman's life, a precise number that suggests we are not watching a man, but a product.

As Truman moves through his idyllic morning- smiling neighbors, synchronized sprinklers, polite greetings- there's a quiet horror lurking beneath. His voice is cheerful, but the world around him behaves like a pre-planned dream. With every action he takes, he gets a Deja vu; he quietly moves but realizes that something is off. When he buys a women's fashion magazine "for the wife," it's laced with irony. His charm is authentic- but the world isn't. The cinematography amplifies this unease: shots from behind mirrors, hidden radios, even buttons. We see what Truman cannot: the lens that surveils his every breath, like a supernatural force watching him all the time.

Then the glitches begin. The utopia of illusions fails, and the victim of this system begins to wake. A stage light labeled "Sirius" falls from the sky. His car radio begins narrating his movements. A man he believes to be his father, long presumed dead, appears and starts talking to him hastily, like someone or something is chasing him. As soon as Carrey begins to understand what is happening, his father is abruptly dragged away by strangers in trench coats. These moments force Truman to begin to sense the bars of a prison he didn't know existed. The atmosphere is tight, claustrophobic, like a dream turning against itself. The moment is symbolic as it forces us to question whether we truly see what the truth is or just see something reality wants us to.

“One’s reality might be another’s illusion”

Truman's longing to escape, symbolized by his dream to reach Fiji, becomes a metaphor for human desires themselves, for freedom, for the unknown, for something real. And yet, every step he takes is hindered by artificial obstacles. From faked bus breakdowns to false nuclear accidents and staged weather disasters, every event was staged to stop him. This relentless sabotage reflects the world's resistance to change, and how society gaslights those who challenge comfort with truth. He tries his best to escape his surroundings, but the artificial gods stop him from doing so.

Emotionally, the film crescendos through betrayal. Truman's wife stages affection with ad slogans. Even his mother was a part of this setup. His best friend Marlon assures him of their bond while doing everything that Christof tells him to do. This is where it strikes deepest: the pain of scripted love and trust manipulated. This moment shows that even affection can be weaponized, and that betrayal does not always come with a knife-but sometimes with a smile.

What intensifies this tragedy is how ordinary people are complicit. Waitresses, police, strangers on the street-all uphold the illusion. During his journey towards the truth, he meets a girl and falls quietly in love with her. Soon he realises that she is reluctant, as something stops her. They become closer, and one night at a beach, when she tries to tell her the truth, her father labels her as mentally ill, takes her away, and she is exiled for attempting to speak the truth. This tension reaches its climax, a breathtaking moment of existential revolt: Truman, having outwitted the surveillance systems and survived a staged storm at sea, sails into the horizon-only to strike the very edge of the dome. He touches the sky. It bends. It breaks.

Here, Truman's escape becomes symbolic not just of physical freedom, but of spiritual awakening. He walks up the staircase, battered but smiling. Behind him is a world of comfort, lies, and control. Ahead is uncertainty, solitude, and truth.

Christof's line, "We accept the reality of the world with which we are presented," is both a warning and a mirror. The film connects directly to Plato's Allegory of the Cave, where prisoners mistake shadows for reality. It relates to Camus' existentialism, where meaning is not found but made. In Truman, we see a modern-day Sisyphus-but this one reaches the top of the hill and keeps walking.

In the end, as Truman faces the unknown, he delivers one final line with a smile:

"Good morning, and in case I don't see you: good afternoon, good evening, and good night."

It is farewell. It is rebellion. It is poetry.



A Separation

"What an emotionally powerful film, a masterclass in moral complexity, empathy, and cinematic realism."

Asghar Farhadi's "*A Separation*" is a deeply moving exploration of human morality, truth, and familial obligation. What affected me most deeply while watching was the plight of young Termeh. At an age when children should be enjoying life and focusing on their growth, she is instead forced to witness her parents' escalating conflicts, spending far more time navigating formal courtrooms than attending school. It is heartbreaking to see a child forced to carry such heavy emotional weight.

The film brilliantly demonstrates how profoundly adult decisions ripple outward to affect children. The consequences of those choices do not remain contained within marital disputes; they linger, shaping young lives and permanently altering their perceptions of truth and trust.

Equally tragic is the position of Somayeh, the maid's young daughter. Caught in circumstances far beyond her understanding or control, her innocent presence amidst class tensions and moral dilemmas makes her suffering just as poignant. Both children serve as silent witnesses to the unraveling lives of the adults around them.

Among the film's most striking moments is the devastating scene where Nader breaks down while bathing his elderly father, who suffers from Alzheimer's. It is a moment of raw, unvarnished vulnerability that lays bare the crushing emotional burden he carries under his stoic exterior. Ultimately, *A Separation* avoids easy answers or clear

villains. By portraying every character with profound empathy and nuance, it offers an unforgettable lesson on morality and empathy, demonstrating precisely why it earned its Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

A profound exploration of human choices, consequences, and emotional truth.



F1 The Movie

“Sometimes there's this moment in the car where everything goes quiet; my heartbeat slows, it's peaceful... and no one can touch me”

(Sonny Hayes)

Just when the world thought racing movies had lost their place in modern cinema, director Joseph Kosinski, best known for *Top Gun: Maverick*, delivered one of the biggest cinematic hits of 2025 with F1. F1 is a film that checks all the boxes for an exciting cinema experience, combining drama, speed, emotion, and spectacle.

The film begins with Sonny Hayes, an aging racer whose Formula One career was cut short after a near-fatal accident in the 1990s. Following the accident, Sonny retired from Formula One and spent years racing in different categories, living from paycheck to paycheck. Despite this, he never lost his passion for racing. Sonny found success in many formats, but what truly drove him was his love for pure racing, something that money could never replace.

Sonny is eventually approached by an old colleague who offers him a seat at the fictional APEX GP Formula One team. With the team already having a talented rookie driver, Joshua, it is believed that APEX requires Sonny's experience, unconventional mindset, and fearless approach to compete at the highest level.

The movie follows Sonny and Joshua as they navigate a reimagined version of the 2024 Formula One season, capturing all of its glamour, intensity, and high-speed action. One aspect that truly sets F1 apart is its cinematic scale. The filmmaking

technology and production value employed by Apple elevate the movie to another level, delivering some of the most immersive racing sequences ever shown on screen. Realism is further enhanced by the use of actual Formula One cars throughout filming, while the APEX GP team cars were based on modified Formula 2 chassis adapted specifically for the production.

The soundtrack is another major strength of the film. Legendary composer Hans Zimmer delivers one of the movie's standout elements with a powerful score that amplifies every racing moment. The accompanying album is packed with memorable tracks, including "Lose My Mind" by Don Toliver and Doja Cat, as well as "Just Keep Watching" and "Don't Let Me Drown," all of which perfectly match the energy and atmosphere of the film.

Another major highlight of F1 is the involvement of real Formula One personalities and drivers, which adds a level of authenticity rarely seen in sports films. The movie was filmed during actual Grand Prix weekends and features appearances from many famous drivers of the 2023–2024 Formula One grid, including Max Verstappen, Fernando Alonso, Charles Leclerc, Carlos Sainz Jr. and several others, with teams, paddocks and race environments recreated using the real Formula One atmosphere.

Perhaps the most important contribution came from seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who served as a producer and technical advisor for the film. Hamilton played a crucial role in shaping the story, improving racing realism, guiding the actors, and ensuring authenticity in everything from driving techniques to the emotions and mentality of Formula One drivers. The film is not directly based on Hamilton's life; however, many themes surrounding Sonny Hayes and Joshua reflect

experiences that Hamilton himself lived through, from entering Formula One as a rookie to becoming one of the sport's greatest champions, make his influence deeply embedded in the movie's identity.

There is honestly not much more I can say without spoiling the experience, because "F1" is a movie that deserves to be watched and felt in the cinema for yourself. It is an all-rounder in every sense, combining emotional storytelling, breathtaking racing sequences, outstanding cinematography, a realistic Formula One atmosphere, and an unforgettable soundtrack. The film's technical brilliance was even recognized at the 98th Academy Awards, where it won the Oscar for Best Sound, further proving the quality and effort behind its production.

Beyond awards, F1 achieved something even greater: it introduced Formula One to a whole new audience. Much like Drive to Survive expanded the sport's popularity, this movie created a new generation of Formula One fans by showing the passion, intensity, and beauty of racing. I can personally say that I became one of them as well. What started as watching a film turned into an appreciation for the sport itself, making F1 (2025) not just a movie, but an experience that leaves a lasting impact.



The Lion King

I have had some familiarity with Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales From Shakespeare since elementary school, and that is also about the same time I have known of Walt Disney's The Lion King (1994). I watched it a couple of times in school. For a long while, I remained under the impression that there surely must exist some palpable similitude between Lamb's rendition of Hamlet and this specimen of modern animated cinema: in both cases, the story revolves around a prince who is struggling to reclaim the throne of his dead father that has been unrightfully usurped by his wicked, murderous uncle. However, as a Gen Z child would have been wont to think then (and a hefty number do even now), a feature film, with its racy appeal to the visual and auditory senses, ever appeared to carry greater weight than some faint words attributed to a man called William Shakespeare.

But, illustrating the adage that only stones do not change, I journeyed way beyond elementary school, going down an academic roller coaster, leaving Lamb's Tales and Disney movies along with their associated premature aesthetic judgements far behind. Eventually, life was kind (or cruel) enough to make a literary graduate out of me, and kinder (or crueler) still to have driven me down the path of postgraduate specialization in literature. I have since begun to hold this belief more firmly than I have room to explain here that this degree, if pursued in the right spirit, can prove iconoclastic in several fundamental ways, one of which is the complete reformation of perspective with which one looks back upon the cultural productions in one's ken,

especially those of childhood. After all, literary criticism is a smarter way to talk about books and movies. So why not be a bit smarter?

With this newfound conviction rekindled in my mind, I played the film once again, this time on an LED, not a CRT, with the eye of a judge, not the wonder of a child. Because it is a film all too dearly cherished and known, I shall spare myself the pain of restating its plot and characters and the reader the displeasure of repetition, jumping straight to the point. Let us then first review some of the thematic aspects of the film.

The Lion King repeatedly refers to the motif of “the circle of life”, suggesting that the animal world exists in a harmonious, incontestable hierarchy, in which some animals must rule over others. Additionally, this circle, or cycle, is also seasonal: spring and summer correspond with the just and noble reign of Mufasa, while autumn and winter align with the wasteful and barren rule of Scar. For me now, to hear of any such circles or cycles immediately hurtles my thoughts to the medieval Great Chain of Being and Spengler’s theory of cyclical history. Good times lead to bad times, leading back to good times; great men come and go; tyrants rise and fall; and so the cycle continues.

Furthermore, due attention must also be accorded to the literary influences that went into the film’s characterisation. The protagonist Simba resembles Shakespeare’s Prince Hamlet insofar as both are beleaguered by self-doubt and inaction. However, these issues are caused and resolved rather differently in both cases. Hamlet’s uncertainty is deeply philosophical, and his indecision is primarily about revenge. Simba’s ordeal, meanwhile, is greatly simplified compared to that of the Prince of Denmark, centered mostly around the perceived guilt of being party to his father’s

death, which was actually orchestrated by Scar, his uncle. In this sense, the film borders on a coming-of-age story, because it depicts the maturation of Simba—his coming to terms with his past, supported by the positive influence of Timon, Pumbaa, and Nala. Whereas Hamlet primarily protracts the decision itself, a major part of the film deals with the dramatic tension of Simba being absolved of his misinformed remorse.

Scar is perhaps the most interesting character in the film: scathingly sarcastic, unapologetically vile, and extremely guileful. He partakes in Iago's jealousy, Claudius' ambition, and Cassius' intrigue. In many ways, he is the literary anchor of the film, being most explicitly Shakespearean (an impression hardened by the aristocratic voice Jeremy Irons gave him) and Machiavellian (preparing for "the coup of the century" as he calls it). Early on, capturing a mouse to eat, he addresses him thus: "life's not fair, is it?" The scene is a direct inversion of Robert Burns' celebrated "To a Mouse", in which the speaker sympathizes with a mouse's helplessness. A line from one of its stanzas, if read in tandem with the plot of the film, echoes Scar's eventual fate somewhat ironically: "The best laid schemes o' Mice an' Men / Gang aft agley." Another scene featuring Scar directly alludes to Hamlet, one in which he mockingly pretends to talk to the skull of an unnamed animal. It is an open imitation of Prince Hamlet's nostalgic address to the skull of Yorick, a king's jester with whom he used to be friends. Again, the reference is deliberately inverted to emphasize the uncle's twisted morality.

Despite its predominantly European motifs and influences, *The Lion King* is aesthetically African. This combination allows the film to appeal to the exotic fancy of Western and Western-oriented audiences, without scandalizing them. The film

opens with majestic shots of a splendid sunrise and natural landscapes that, to an older and more informed version of myself, appear unmistakably East African. A couple of clicks on the internet revealed that the famous Pride Rock indeed draws inspiration from a similar outcropping in Hell's Gate National Park in Kenya. Couple this with a lively Zulu chant that has since attracted more fame than the film itself: the words tell of the coming of a royal lion. Igonyama was, in fact, a royal title used by ancient Zulu monarchs. And how can one forget hakuna matata, the Swahili equivalent of the Latin *carpe diem*? Moreover, most of the characters derive their names from Swahili, the lingua franca of East Africa (Simba meaning "a courageous fighter" and Mufasa meaning "king"). All these elements infuse the diegesis of the film with an unconfoundably African mood. It has generated considerable debate concerning its postcolonial aspects.

To draw this review to a close, these were some of the critical points, obviously not all, that made it exciting for me to revisit *The Lion King*. The experience was both nostalgic and novel: nostalgic for its association with my childhood and novel for its appeal to my recently acquired interpretive skills. I do not wish to limit these rediscoveries to myself or just a single picture. *Aladdin* (1992) is also an instance of how the post-colonial exotic exists in our cultural space. So, this is an enterprise in which I encourage all my colleagues and fellow aspiring researchers to engage. Go watch good filmographies, be they animated or live-action. Discuss them smartly. Demonstrate the fact that great cinema is but a reflection of great literature.

POETRY



Scary Night
Awais Ilyas

A Friend Far Away
M. Ahmad Asif

Composure Written Over Chaos
Nayab Fatima

Language of Eyes
Maria

Peace
Fatima Mumtaz

A Portrayal
Abdullah Yousufzai



Scary Night

A lonely night beneath dark skies,
The wind pressing against my eyes,
Asked me, "What is the matter?"
Something has made you shatter.
I have never seen you in fright,
You seem to be in some plight.
There is something you need to proffer,
But in actuality, you have nothing to offer.
You have never been like you are now,
So silenced, plagued and so low.
It blew gently but was piercing my heart,
It was praiseworthy, the lesson it taught.
It said, "I can feel your pain,
For, like you, I'm alone in rain."
I told it, "I hate the norms,
And when you bring the deadly storms."
The storms of despotic unrest,
When agitation is at its best,

Hurricanes of imperious spells,
And the gales of savage hells.
This is how the life I spend,
Awaiting these storms to end !



A Friend Far Away

A friend far away;
Though close to heart, than the Lord Himself.
Distance is all but an illusion,
But your image is the only reality.
The falling leaves remind me,
Remind me of your picture.
Cool breeze whispers the name,
Your name gets slowly into the air.
The month of rose came but
My eyes do not see you.
Spring calls for you, my friend, but
You are now for my autumn.
I see all around and see none but you;
You are all that my sinful eyes see.
I hear nature call; it calls in my ear
Your name takes away my fear.
The beauty of your presence is heavenly,
It lies only in your absence.
My heart calls for you all along, my friend
But the dead do not return.



Composure Written Over Chaos

They See the Peace, Not the Price Paid for It
They see wisdom in me,
But they do not see the chaos I had to survive to earn it.
They hear the calmness in my voice,
But not the storms I endured before I could speak this gently.
They see someone who guides others through darkness,
Yet they do not see the life stitched together with patience, sacrifice,
And countless nights of silent endurance.
They call me kind without knowing
The cost this kindness demanded of me;
The moments I chose silence over self-defense;
The times I swallowed grief to keep others comfortable;
The wounds I carried quietly so no one else would have to.
They see composure,
But not the careful way I learned to hold myself together,
When everything inside me was falling apart.
What they mistake for softness
was forged in survival.

Because people are not born gentle after life has been cruel to them, They become
gentle only when they decide,

Their pain will not become another person's inheritance.

And perhaps the hardest part of becoming an adult
Is realizing that healing is not only about recovering from pain,
But also about unlearning everything pain taught you to become.

Some of us were raised to shrink ourselves for love,
To apologize for existing too loudly;
To confuse survival with living,
And silence with strength.

But growing older means standing before the ruins of your upbringing
And deciding, with trembling hands,
What deserves to be carried forward,
And what must finally be left behind?



Language of Eyes

I could recall all the times, dearest!
When my eyes have spoken to you
Not mere words or emotions,
But a language beyond words,
Beyond the comprehension of the mind;
Beyond the physical barriers of our bodies,
A language only we could hear.
You try to pretend it does not reach you,
And that your heart does not drop.
Every time we pass by each other,
You cover the eyes of your heart with both your hands,
But I know it echoes loud and clear within you,
I am certain that
Your heart swoons to the sound of it.
Do you recall, dearest!
All the times you have spoken to me,
Without a single word passing between us?



Peace

The Hard-Won word "Peace" for which everyone suffers,
A word for which all beings yearn,
A word of emotion, a word of joy.
The gloomy soul aches to feel it.
A heart wants to live within it;
A brain wants to rest inside it;
The pen is desperate to write it;
The young are eager to have it;
The old only wish to see it.
A long trial, a life of unrest, a plan of years,
No one wants to buy it with sorrow;
No one wants to be in solace with tears,
Yet it remains the word for which everyone suffers.

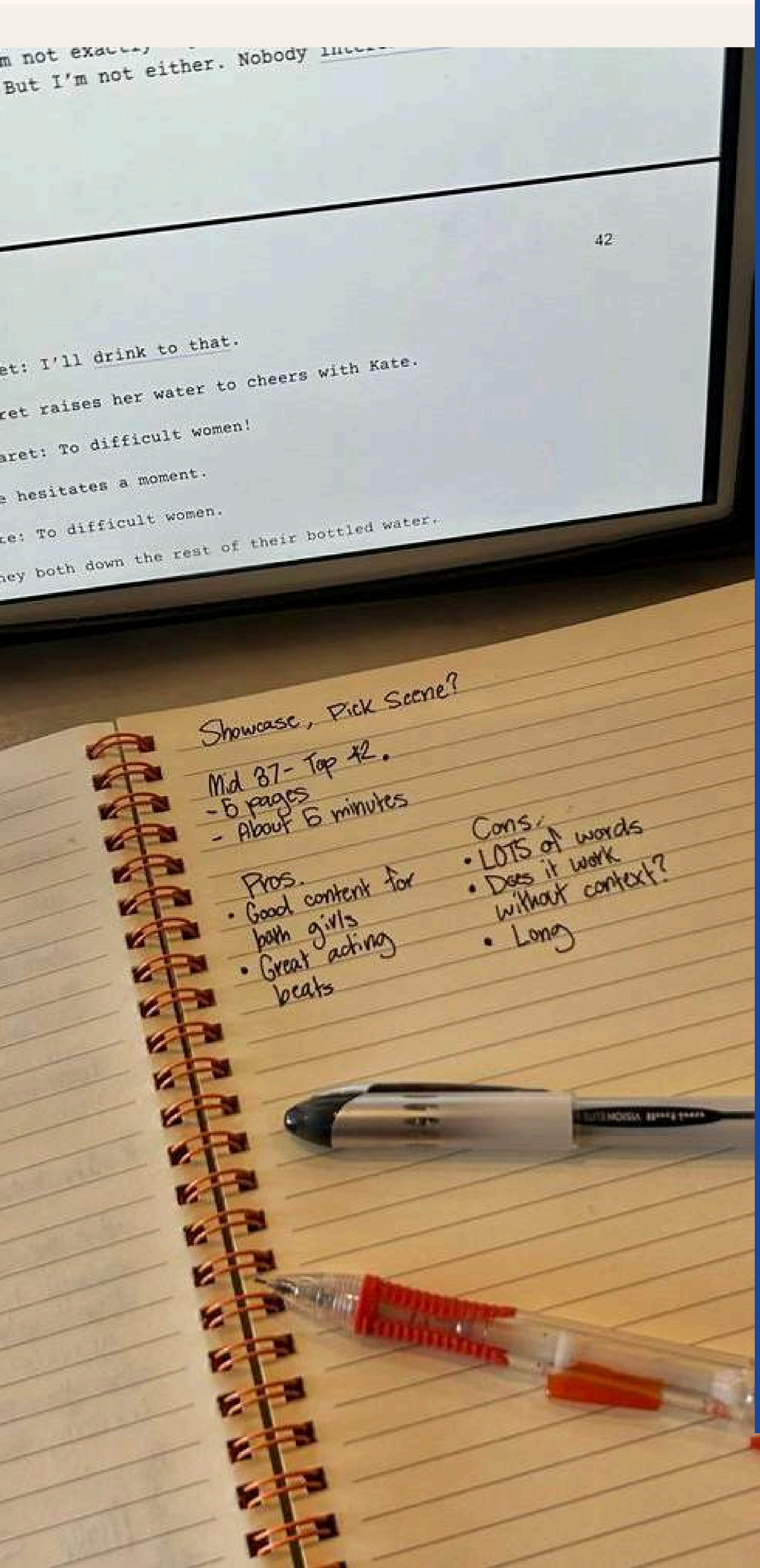


A Portrayal

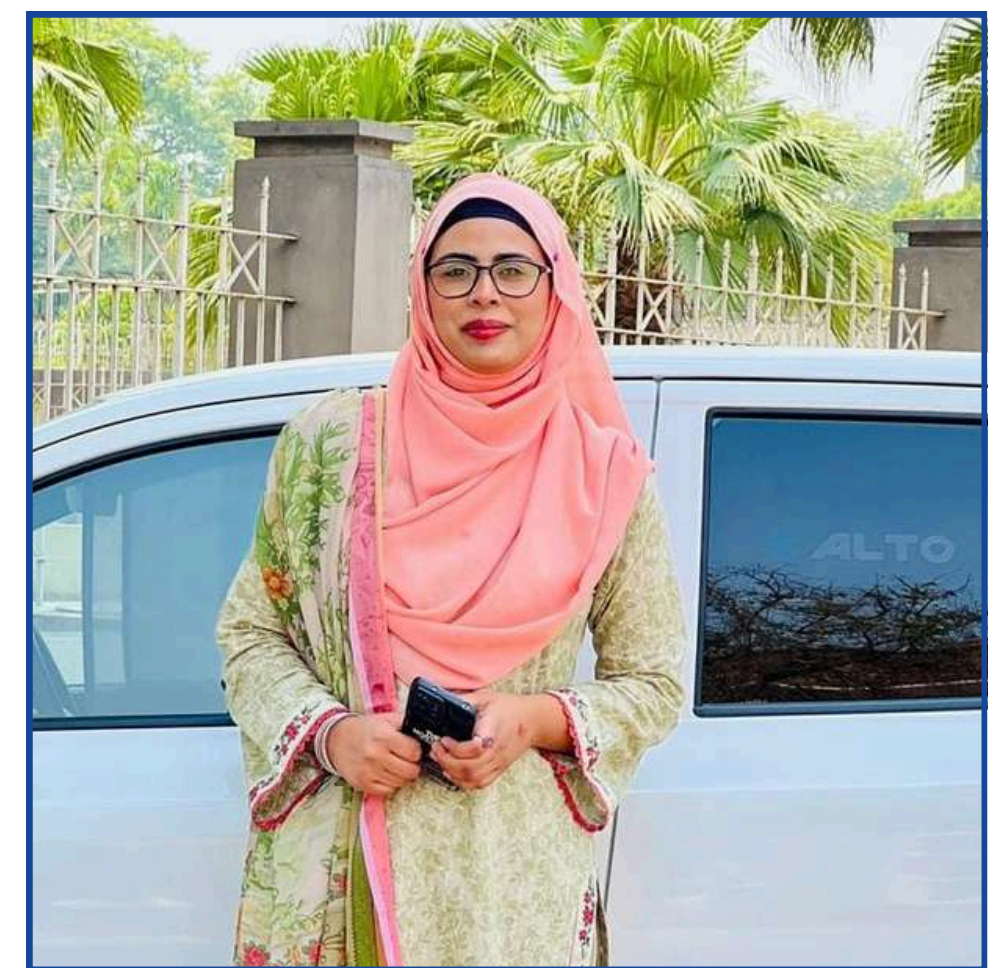
I don't mind being single, but
Sometimes I get this glimpse in my head.
One day, I will meet someone who is exactly as I portrayed,
Walking along the edge of the road on a rainy day;
Wearing an overcoat along with an umbrella and a laptop in her hand.
Braving all the chaos of the city's fray;
Stopping by a coffee shop, sitting at a table close to a quiet place to settle
and let her mind stray,
Lifting up the laptop lid as she is about to
Lose herself in work and keep the world at bay.
I watch her across the road, sitting on a bench;
Lighting a cigarette while she looks the other way,
Then a thought crosses my mind and I suddenly
Crush out the glow to hide the smoke away.
As she is going to look at me through the window, and I
Fear what her judging eyes might say,
I am lost in my thoughts while looking at her face,
Wishing for a moment that time would stay.

A metro bus passes by the road, breaking the thoughts in my head,
She disappears as if she were never there.
I don't mind being single, but
Sometimes I get this glimpse in my head.
One day, I will meet someone exactly as I portrayed.

PLAY



Animal Farm
Aaliya Raza



Animal Farm

Adaptation of George Orwell's Novel

SCENE 1: MANOR FARM

This is Manor Farm, owned by Mr. Jones. The animals do all the work, but Jones takes the eggs, the milk, and the produce. When the animals grow old and can no longer work, they receive very little in return.

SCENE: Dim lights. Boxer and Clover are working. Hens search for food. Mr. Jones enters, slightly drunk, carrying a stick.

JONES: Move! Come on! Back to work!

He pushes Boxer forward.

BOXER: We have worked since sunrise.

JONES: And you will work until I say you are finished.

(Jones exits.)

CLOVER: Boxer, how long can this continue?

BOXER: I don't know.

BENJAMIN: Things have always been this way.

HEN: But perhaps they don't always have to be.

(That night, the animals gathered secretly in the barn. Old Major, the oldest and most respected pig on the farm, had something important to tell them.)

Lights change.

SCENE 2: OLD MAJOR'S DREAM

Old Major stands above the others.

OLD MAJOR: Comrades, I will not be with you much longer, so I want to tell you what I have learned. Look at our lives. We are born, we are given just enough food to keep us alive, and those of us who are strong are forced to work until we have no strength left. And who takes the result of our labour? Man. The cow gives milk, but does she drink it?

COW: No.

OLD MAJOR: The hens lay eggs. Are those eggs allowed to become chickens?

HEN: Most of them are taken away.

OLD MAJOR: And Boxer, your strength could have given you comfort. Instead, it has made Jones richer.

BOXER: That's true.

OLD MAJOR: Then understand this: our misery does not come from nature. It comes from being ruled. Remove man, and the product of our labour becomes our own.

(Animals murmur.)

OLD MAJOR: But remember something even more important. If one day you defeat your masters, do not become like them. Do not live in their houses merely because you can. Do not adopt their habits. Do not allow one animal to become master over another.

Whatever happens

OLD MAJOR: "All animals are equal."

(Pause.)

SNOWBALL: Then we must change things.

NAPOLEON: We must be ready when the opportunity comes.

OLD MAJOR: Yes. Work for that day. But never forget why you began.

(Old Major slowly leaves or lies down.)

Old Major died three nights later. But his dream remained. And two pigs soon emerged as leaders of the new movement: Snowball and Napoleon. Snowball and Napoleon step forward from opposite sides.

SCENE 3: THE REBELLION

The rebellion came sooner than anyone expected. One evening, Jones became drunk and forgot to feed the animals.

HEN: We haven't eaten all day!

COW: The food is there. Why should we starve? Animals break into the food store.

Jones runs in.

JONES: Get back! Get out of there! (He raises his stick.)

SNOWBALL: No!

NAPOLEON: Everyone together!

(Animals advance.)

JONES: Stay back!

(They chase Jones around the stage and off.)

Silence.

CLOVER: He's gone.

BOXER: We've driven him out.

SNOWBALL: The farm belongs to us now!

(Cheering.)

Manor Farm was renamed Animal Farm. For the first time, the animals believed they were free.

SCENE 4: THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES

Snowball stands beside a large board.

SNOWBALL: Old Major taught us that freedom alone is not enough. If we are to remain free, we must have rules that no animal, not even a leader, can break.

NAPOLEON: Read them.

SNOWBALL: First: no animal should accept human beings as its natural masters.

Second: animals who walk on four legs or have wings belong to the same side.

Third: no animal should begin dressing like a human being.

Fourth: no animal should adopt the luxury of sleeping in human beds.

Fifth: no animal should become a drinker of alcohol.

Sixth: no animal should kill another animal.

And finally—

(Snowball turns to everybody.)

SNOWBALL: “All animals are equal.”

BOXER: Every one of us?

SNOWBALL: Every one.

CLOVER: Even the pigs?

SNOWBALL: Especially the pigs. A rule that binds only the weak is not equality.

(Napoleon steps forward.)

NAPOLEON: Snowball is correct. The rebellion was not fought so that Jones could simply be replaced by another master. These principles must guide Animal Farm.

SHEEP: Can we remember something simpler?

SNOWBALL: Then remember this:

SNOWBALL: “Four legs good, two legs bad.”

SHEEP: Four legs good, two legs bad!

OTHER ANIMALS: Four legs good, two legs bad!

(Napoleon looks at the chanting animals thoughtfully.)

SCENE 5: TWO LEADERS

At first, the animals worked together. The harvest was successful. But the pigs could read and write better than the others, and slowly they began making more and more decisions. Snowball believed the animals should learn. Napoleon believed something else mattered more.

(Snowball stands with books or papers.)

SNOWBALL: Clover, that letter is C.

CLOVER: C.

SNOWBALL: Good. If every animal can read, every animal can understand the laws of the farm.

(Napoleon enters with puppies.)

NAPOLEON: Education is important. But the education of the young is more important.

SNOWBALL: What are you doing with those puppies?

NAPOLEON: I shall take responsibility for them.

SNOWBALL: Why privately?

NAPOLEON: Because some things require discipline.

(Napoleon leads the puppies away.)

The puppies disappeared from public view. Meanwhile, Snowball developed another idea.

(Snowball reveals a drawing.)

SNOWBALL: A windmill.

BOXER: What would it do?

SNOWBALL: Generate power. Machines could eventually perform some of our hardest work.

We could have light. Heat. Perhaps even shorter working hours.

NAPOLEON: Nonsense.

SNOWBALL: Why?

NAPOLEON: Because animals need food now, not dreams about machines.

SNOWBALL: Then let everyone vote.

SCENE 6: SNOWBALL IS DRIVEN OUT

(Animals gather.)

SNOWBALL: Comrades, this isn't merely about a windmill. It is about the kind of farm we want.

A farm where everyone has a voice

NAPOLEON: Enough.

SNOWBALL: Let them decide.

(Napoleon gives a sharp whistle. Dogs enter aggressively.)

CLOVER: Those are the puppies!

BENJAMIN: Not puppies anymore.

(Dogs surround Snowball.)

SNOWBALL: Napoleon, call them off!

NAPOLEON: Remove him.

(Snowball runs. Dogs chase him offstage.)

BOXER: Where is Snowball going?

NAPOLEON: Snowball was never loyal to Animal Farm. From today, there will be no more debates. A committee of pigs will decide what must be done.

CLOVER: But we always voted.

NAPOLEON: Debate wastes time. What Animal Farm requires is leadership.

(Squealer steps forward).

SQUEALER: Surely none of you imagines that leadership is pleasant. Comrade Napoleon accepts this burden for your sake. Would any of you prefer Jones to return?

ANIMALS: No!

SQUEALER: Then trust Napoleon.

(Animals reluctantly agree.)

SCENE 7 : THE RULES BEGIN TO CHANGE

The windmill was built after all. Napoleon announced that it had always been his idea. The animals worked harder than before. The pigs, however, worked differently.

Pigs carry food toward the farmhouse.

CLOVER: Where are the apples going?

SQUEALER: To the pigs.

HEN: All of them?

SQUEALER: Thinking is exhausting work. Without the pigs, how could the farm

survive? Surely you don't want Jones back.

HEN: No...

(Soon the pigs moved into Jones's farmhouse.)

(Clover approaches the board.)

CLOVER: Benjamin, didn't one of our rules say animals should not sleep in beds?

BENJAMIN: It did.

SQUEALER: You're mistaken. The rule concerned the luxurious habits associated with human beds. There is nothing wrong with sleeping comfortably after a day of leadership.

CLOVER: I thought

SQUEALER: Memory can be unreliable.

(Napoleon enters.)

NAPOLEON: Production must increase.

BOXER: Then I will give more effort.

BENJAMIN: You already give everything you have.

BOXER: The farm needs me.

(Whenever something failed, Napoleon blamed Snowball.)

NAPOLEON: The windmill has been damaged! Snowball did this!

BENJAMIN: No one saw Snowball.

SQUEALER: That proves how secretly he operates.

NAPOLEON: There are traitors among us.

(Dogs bring forward frightened animals.)

NAPOLEON: Confess.

HEN: I.....I questioned an order.

NAPOLEON: And therefore helped Snowball.

(Dogs lead Hen away.)

CLOVER: Napoleon, stop! One of our principles says that no animal should kill another.

(Pause.)

SQUEALER: Does it? Perhaps you should read it more carefully.

(Clover looks confused.)

BENJAMIN: The words keep changing.

SQUEALER: The words don't change. Your memories do.

SCENE 8 : BOXER'S FATE

Boxer struggles with heavy work.

CLOVER: Boxer, stop. You're not young anymore.

BOXER: The windmill must be finished.

CLOVER: You've done enough.

BOXER: Just a little more.

(He collapses.)

CLOVER: Boxer!

(Animals gather.)

SQUEALER: Comrade Napoleon has arranged for Boxer to receive the finest medical attention.

BENJAMIN: How generous.

(Two characters carry Boxer away. Benjamin suddenly reads a sign attached to the cart.)

BENJAMIN: Wait. That vehicle doesn't belong to a veterinary hospital!

CLOVER: Stop them!

BOXER: Clover!

(He is taken away.)

CLOVER: Boxer!

(Silence.)

Boxer never came back. Squealer later claimed that Boxer had died peacefully under medical care. Soon afterwards, the pigs somehow obtained another case of whisky.

(Benjamin stares at Napoleon.)

SCENE 9: THE FINAL BETRAYAL

Years passed. Many animals who remembered the rebellion died. The farm became richer. But the ordinary animals did not. Then one evening, something extraordinary happened.

(Napoleon enters, walking on two legs. Other pigs follow. Animals gasp.)

CLOVER: Benjamin! Look!

SHEEP: Four legs—

(Sheep hesitate.)

(Squealer whispers to them.)

SHEEP: Four legs good...two legs... better!

(The animals stare.)

CLOVER: That's not what we were taught.

(Napoleon wears a coat or carries a whip.)

CLOVER: The clothes...The alcohol...The farmhouse...The executions...Everything Old Major warned us against.

BENJAMIN: Yes.

(Clover goes to the board.)

CLOVER: Where are the seven principles?

BENJAMIN: Gone.

CLOVER: All of them?

BENJAMIN: There is only one idea left.

Equality still appears on the wall, but it no longer means that everyone has the same rights.

It now means that those with power may claim greater privileges than everybody else.

(Napoleon enters the farmhouse area with the human farmer.)

MR PILKINGTON: Napoleon, I must congratulate you. Your animals work longer hours and receive less food than animals on many neighboring farms.

NAPOLEON: Efficiency requires discipline.

(They laugh.)

MR PILKINGTON: To prosperity!

NAPOLEON: To Animal Farm!

(They shake hands. Ordinary animals watch from outside.)

CLOVER: So this is what we fought for?

BENJAMIN: No. This is what was left after those in power changed the meaning of what we fought for.

The animals looked through the farmhouse window. Inside sat pigs and men, eating together, drinking together, arguing together. The rebellion had begun with a promise that no animal would ever again live under a master. But gradually, the pigs had taken the privileges, habits, and power of the humans they had overthrown. The farm had changed its rulers. It had not changed the condition of those being ruled.

(Napoleon and the human farmer laugh. Lights dim on the farmhouse. Spotlight remains on Clover, Benjamin and the other animals.)

CLOVER: Old Major told us never to become like them.

BENJAMIN: We remembered the revolution. We forgot to protect its principles.

(Blackout.)

URDU POETRY



بن برسے دسمبر جا رہا ہے

Subaika Akhtar

کٹھن ہے بہت یہ زندگی کا سفر

Yusra Shahbaz

عمر کٹ گئی ساری اندھیروں کے
جانے میں

Muhammad Fahad

ہم اس قدر درویش طبیعت ہیں کہ
انتقام کے بدلے میں دعا دیتے ہیں

Iram Rajput

اب اُس کی ذات میں کامل سکوت تھا

Subaika Akhtar

کم تھی

Muhammad Ahmed



بن بر سے دسمبر جا رہا ہے

بن بر سے دسمبر جا رہا ہے
خاموشی سے اپنا درد بتا رہا ہے

وہ دیکھو دورِ حدِ نظر تک صرف ویرانی ہے
خزاں کا گرتا ہوا پتا ہی تو میری کہانی ہے

یوں ہی بیٹھے بیٹھے سال کٹ گیا ہے
انتظار دیکھو، میرا سورج ڈھل گیا ہے

سوچ کے قیدیوں کو سزائے موت سنا دو
پھر یا انھیں تم اُن کے یوسف سے ملا دو

شبِ زوال بچھڑی ہوئی روحوں کو دکھا دو
یا کاتبِ تقدیر سے تم میری ملاقات کرا دو

ٹھٹھرتی اس رات میں کوئی سونہ جائے
تم پہلوئے انساں میں پھر آگ لگا دو

یہ کھونے کا ڈر ہے یا پھر وحشتِ موت
ہم اک بار جو ہنستے ہیں تو روتے ہیں بہت



کٹھن ہے بہت یہ زندگی کا سفر

کٹھن ہے بہت یہ زندگی کا سفر،
نہ کوئی راہ ہموار، نہ سایہ دار شجر

نہ رفیق ساتھ اپنے، نہ کوئی چارہ گر
نہ کسی کو کسی کی ذرا بھی فکر

آستین میں ہیں رقیب، چار سو پھیلا شر
اے خدا! تیرے بندے اب جائیں کدھر؟

ان حالاتِ حذر سے ہے نالاں بشر
الجھا ہے کشمکش میں، کوئی ادھر کوئی ادھر

مفاد سب کے اپنے ہیں، نہیں کوئی بے ضرر
اپنے انجام سے ہیں بے خوف و خطر

یہ دنیا نہیں کسی کا مستقل گھر
موت ہے سب کی منزل، نہیں کوئی امر

مزه تو تب ہے کہ روزِ حشر،
خدا بر ملا لے سب کی خبر

نہ چلے وہاں مکر، نہ ذرا بھی جبر،
رو برو ہو جائیں سب عُسر و یسر

پھر جوش میں آئے رحمتِ خدا اس پہر،
نہ ڈر کا سماں ہو، نہ ٹوٹے قہر

سب سہمے کھڑے ہوں، جھکائے اپنا سر
کہیں اجر کے ڈھیر ہوں، کہیں ندامت سے جھکے سر

ہو اعلانِ کرم، اس گھڑی، اس پہر
اے دنیا کے ماروں! ہے کس بات کا ڈر؟

وہ خالی نہ جائے جو آئے میرے در
جا میرے بندے! میری جنت ہے اب تیرا گھر



عمر کٹ گئی ساری اندھیروں کے جانے میں

عمر کٹ گئی ساری اندھیروں کے جانے میں
چاند نے کتنی دیر لگا دی ہے آنے میں

بھوک نے چھین لی آنکھوں کی چمک ورنہ
خواب ہی خواب تھے غریب کے خزانے میں

ایک خواہش ہے جسے میں کبھی پا نہیں سکتا
اور عمر گزارنی ہے میں نے اسی کو پانے میں

کروں گا میں کب تک غیروں سے شکوہ
میرے اپنے بھی شامل تھے مجھے گرانے میں

اور نہیں ضرورت چاند کی، فہد کے نگر میں
جہاں آنکھیں کافی ہوں رات کو چمکانے میں



ہم اس قدر درویش طبیعت ہیں کہ انتقام کے بدلے میں دعا دیتے ہیں

ہم اس قدر درویش طبیعت ہیں کہ انتقام کے بدلے میں دعا دیتے ہیں
جو آنکھ سے دل میں اترنے کا ہنر رکھتا ہو، اس کو فی الفور بھلا دیتے ہیں

ایسی چاہت بھری چٹھیاں جو محض سبز باغوں کی عکاسی کریں
ایسی چٹھیاں کھول کر نہیں دیکھتے، غیرت کے ایندھن میں جلا دیتے ہیں

سنو گڑیا! ایسی خواہشیں جو بزرگوں کی انا و عزت کو پامال کریں
ایسی خواہشوں کا گلا گھونٹتے ہیں اور ابدی نیند سلا دیتے ہیں

اب تمہارے ہاتھوں میں ہے، جیسے بھی ہو اپنی آبرو کی حفاظت کرو
یہاں بیٹوں کے قصور معاف ہوتے ہیں، بیٹیوں کو صلیبوں پہ لٹکا دیتے ہیں



اب اُس کی ذات میں کامل سکوت تھا

اب اُس کی ذات میں کامل سکوت تھا
رنگ، روپ، خوشی، سب قیدِ تابوت تھا

نہیں فرق پڑتا تھا کسی کے آنے جانے کا
شاید یہ آخری ہجر تھا بل کر منانے کا

کھڑے ہیں سوچوں کے آخری دہانے پر
کوئی ساتھ نہ چل سکا انجانی راہوں پر

زاوی، دو چار دن مگر گزرے بڑے چین سے
پھر خساروں نے آن کھیرا بڑی دیر سے

کچھ منظورِ نظر لوگ تھے، مگر اب نہیں رہے
خالی دل، خالی دماغ ہیں یعنی اب ہم نہیں رہے



کم تھی

اس کی یاد میں ڈوب گیا تو لگا جیسے تنہائی کم تھی
وہ رہتا تو کہیں دور تھا پر اس سے جدائی کم تھی

میں ڈھونڈتا رہا لامکاں میں مکاں کے ٹھکانے
جینے کا سلیقہ کیا آتا، جو خود سے آشنائی کم تھی

دل بنجر، آنکھ خنجر لیے پھرتے ہیں لوگ یہاں
میں ان سانہ بن سکا کہ مجھ میں روباہی کم تھی

جو تو ہوتا تو شاید تیرے سہارے بھی رو لیتے
رخسار پہ اپنے جو اشک گرے، کیا یہ تباہی کم تھی

جاتے جاتے وہ نقش چھوڑ گیا میرے دیوان پر
رنگ ان میں بھرنے کو بس کمبخت سیاہی کم تھی

کہنے کو تو کہہ دوں یہ مگر اب دل دکھتا ہے مرہم
وہ ہمسفر تو تھا، مگر اس سے ہم نوائی کم تھی

URDU TEHREER



سرگودھا یونیورسٹی کی کینٹین

Subhan-ur-Rehman



سرگودھا یونیورسٹی کی کینٹین

سرگودھا یونیورسٹی کی یہ کینٹین فقط چائے کا ڈھابہ نہ تھی، یہ ہماری عمر رواں کا مرکزِ ثقل تھی۔ برگد کے بوڑھے پیڑ کے پہلو میں، وہ چند میزیں اور کرسیاں نہیں تھیں وہ تختِ سلیمان تھے جہاں ہم فقیروں نے بادشاہی کی۔

یاد ہے وہ کڑک چائے؟

جس کی پیالی میں نمکین سے زیادہ شفا تھی۔ چائے، چائے نہیں، آبِ حیات تھا۔ جس کی ہر چسکی کے ساتھ فلسفہ جنم لیتا تھا۔ جس کے دھوئیں میں مستقبل کے خواب بنتے تھے اور جس کی تہہ میں گزرے گل کی تلخیاں بیٹھ جاتی تھیں۔ وہ چائے نہیں تھی، وہ تو ہماری ڈگری کا غیر نصابی پرچہ تھی۔ وہ بن کباب خدا گواہ ہے، پیرس کے ہوٹلوں کے کھانوں میں بھی وہ لذت نہ ملی جو اس کاغذ میں لپٹے بن کباب اور راتے میں تھی۔ ادھار کی پرچی پر ملنے والا وہ نوالہ، دوستی کی سب سے بڑی ضمانت تھا۔ "یار پیسے کل دے دوں گا" کا جملہ، یہاں سب سے معتبر کرنسی تھا۔ کینٹین کا ہر کونا ایک داستان تھا۔ وہ کونے والی میز جہاں ہم جیسے نوخیز شاعروں نے اپنی غزلیں پہلی بار سنائیں اور سامعین نے تالیوں سے سندِ قبولیت بخشی۔ وہ درمیانی میز جہاں سیاسی بحثیں عروج پر پہنچتی تھیں۔ جہاں انقلاب کے منصوبے بنتے تھے اور اگلے ہی لمحے امتحانات کی تیاری میں ختم ہو جاتے تھے اور وہ کیٹ کے پاس والی میز جہاں ہر نیا چہرہ پہلے دن گھیرایا ہوا بیٹھتا تھا، اور آخری دن تک، وہیں کا ہو کر رہ جاتا تھا۔

یہاں استاد اور شاگرد کا فرق مٹ جاتا تھا۔ ڈاکٹر صاحب بھی ہاتھ میں پیالی تھامے کھڑے ہوتے اور ہم بھی۔ یہاں سینئر اور جونیئر کا پردہ نہ تھا۔ ایک ہی بنچ پر اولڈ کمر بھی بیٹھا ہوتا اور نیو کمر بھی کیونکہ بھوک اور چائے، سب کو برابر کر دیتی ہے۔

امتحان کے دنوں میں یہی کینٹین دارالافتاء بن جاتی۔

"یار، وہ نوٹس دے دینا۔"

"فلاں سوال کا جواب کیا ہے؟"

"بس ایک چائے پلا دے، میں سارا سلیبس سمجھا دوں گا۔"

یہ سودے یہیں طے پاتے۔ یہیں راتوں کو جاگنے کا حوصلہ ملتا۔ یہیں "فیل ہو جائیں گے" کے خوف پر "پاس تو کرنا ہی ہے" کی امید غالب آجاتی۔

وہ بارش کے دن جب آسمان برستا اور ہم کینٹین کی چھت کے نیچے دبک جاتے۔ باہر کچڑ کی پتیوں پر گرتی بوندیں اور اندر دلوں پر گرتی یادیں۔ تب پتا چلتا کہ فائو سٹار کافی ہاؤسز میں بیٹھنے والے کیا جانیں کہ سچا کیف و سرور کیا ہوتا ہے۔

پھر ایک دن، الوداع کی گھنٹی بجی۔ آخری چائے کا آرڈر دیا۔ آخری بار اس بیچ پر بیٹھے۔ کینٹین والے چاچا نے پیسے لینے سے انکار کر دیا اور کہا: "پتر، جیوندے رہو۔ بس کدی مڑ کے آئیں تے مل جائیں۔"

اس دن سمجھ آیا کہ کچھ رشتے خون کے نہیں ہوتے، احساس و مروت کے بھی ہوتے ہیں۔

آج برسوں بعد فائو سٹار کے مہنگے کافی ہاؤس میں بیٹھ کر جب بل دیتا ہوں، تو دل کہتا ہے: "کاش وہ ادھار والی چائے کا ذائقہ لوٹ آئے۔"

"سچی دوستی کی ضمانت والی چائے مل جائے۔"

"کاش وہ بیچ، وہ یاریاں، وہ قہقہے لوٹ آئیں۔"

کیوں کہ سرگودھا یونیورسٹی کی کینٹین، کینٹین نہیں تھی وہ ہماری جوانی کا مزار تھی۔ وہ ہماری دوستی کا معبد تھی۔ وہ ہماری بھوک کا نہیں، روح کا کعبہ تھی۔ سو جو وہاں بیٹھا نہیں، وہ یونیورسٹی آف سرگودھا میں پڑھا نہیں کیوں کہ ڈگریاں کلاس روم دیتے ہیں، مگر زندگی کینٹین سکھاتی ہے۔

CALLIGRAPHY



Divine Sufficiency

Jabeen Zahra

Sacred Threshold

Arooj Tahir

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Existence, Begins the Sufi's
Journey Toward the One

Ayesha Hayat

Spiritual Ascent

Eman Ijaz

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Department of Biotechnology
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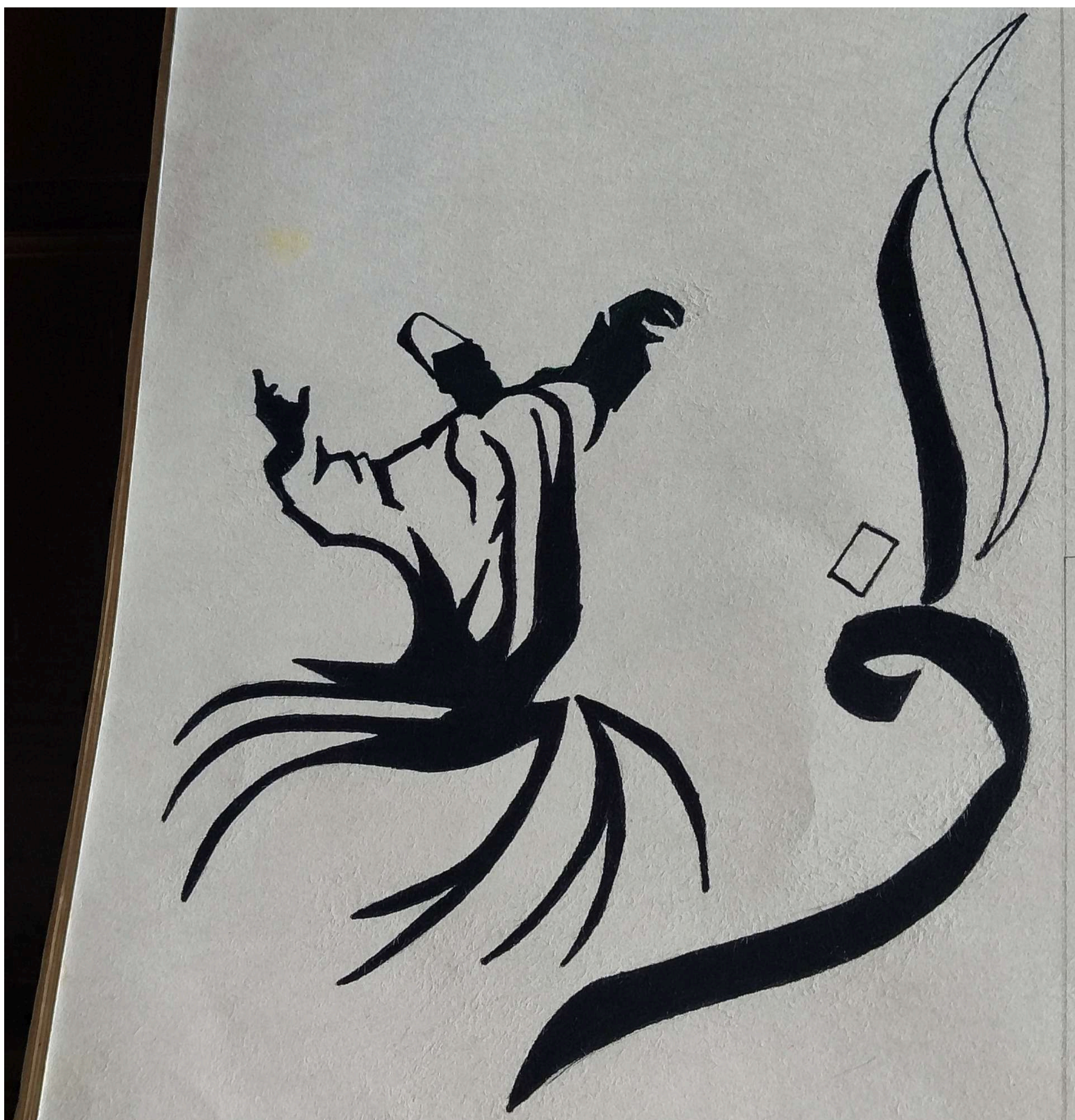


Sacred Threshold





From Alif, the First Stroke of Existence, Begins the Sufi's Journey Toward the One





Spiritual Ascent





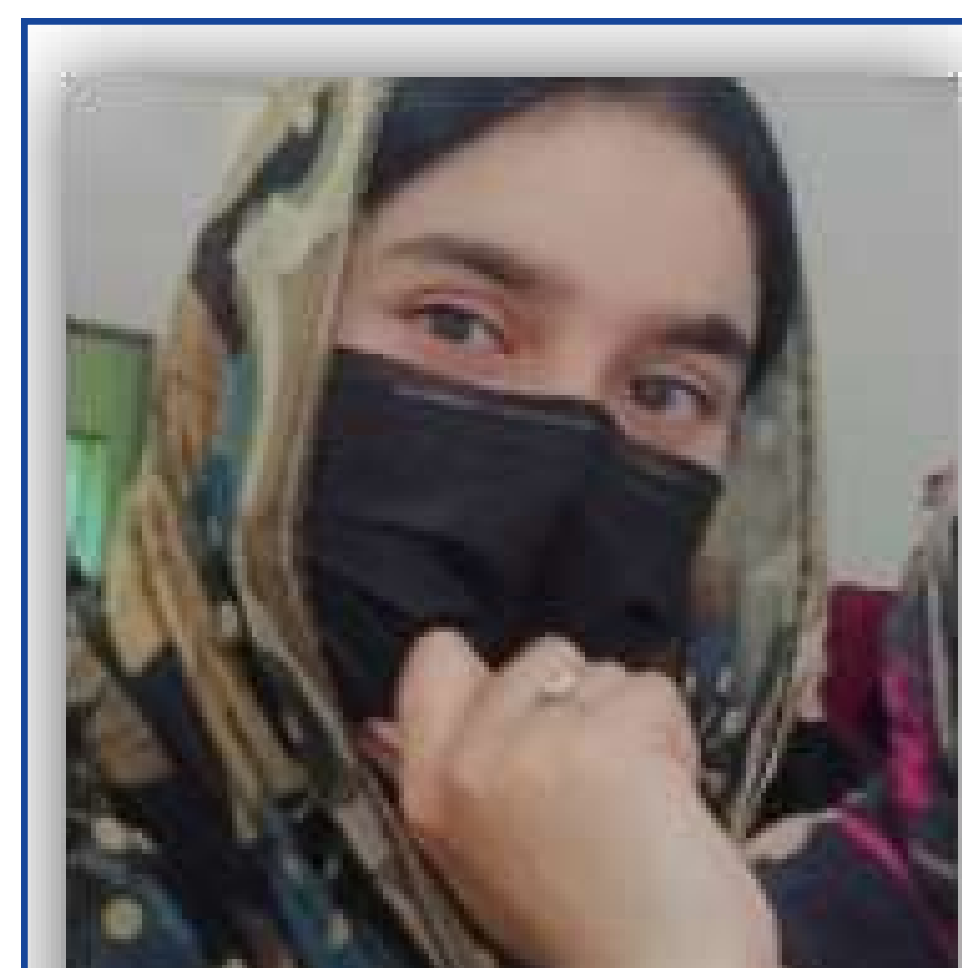
Seeking Divine Favor





The Eternal Light





The Prayer of Musa (AS)



VISUAL ART



Pieces of Becoming
Mahnoor Malik

The Silent Gaze
Muhammad Nishat Hassan

Golden Odyssey
Mahnoor Zia Lodhi

Fantasy
Nosheen Sarfraz

Lost in the Noise
Mahnoor Malik

Bloom Beyond Sight
Arooj Tahir

The Radioactive
Jabeen Zahra

VISUAL ART



Shattered, Not Broken
Shagufta Maryam

Emotional Spectrum
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Wings of Peace
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Too Late
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Aura Farming
Abdul Rauf

Magical Guitar
Yusra Zainab



Pieces of Becoming

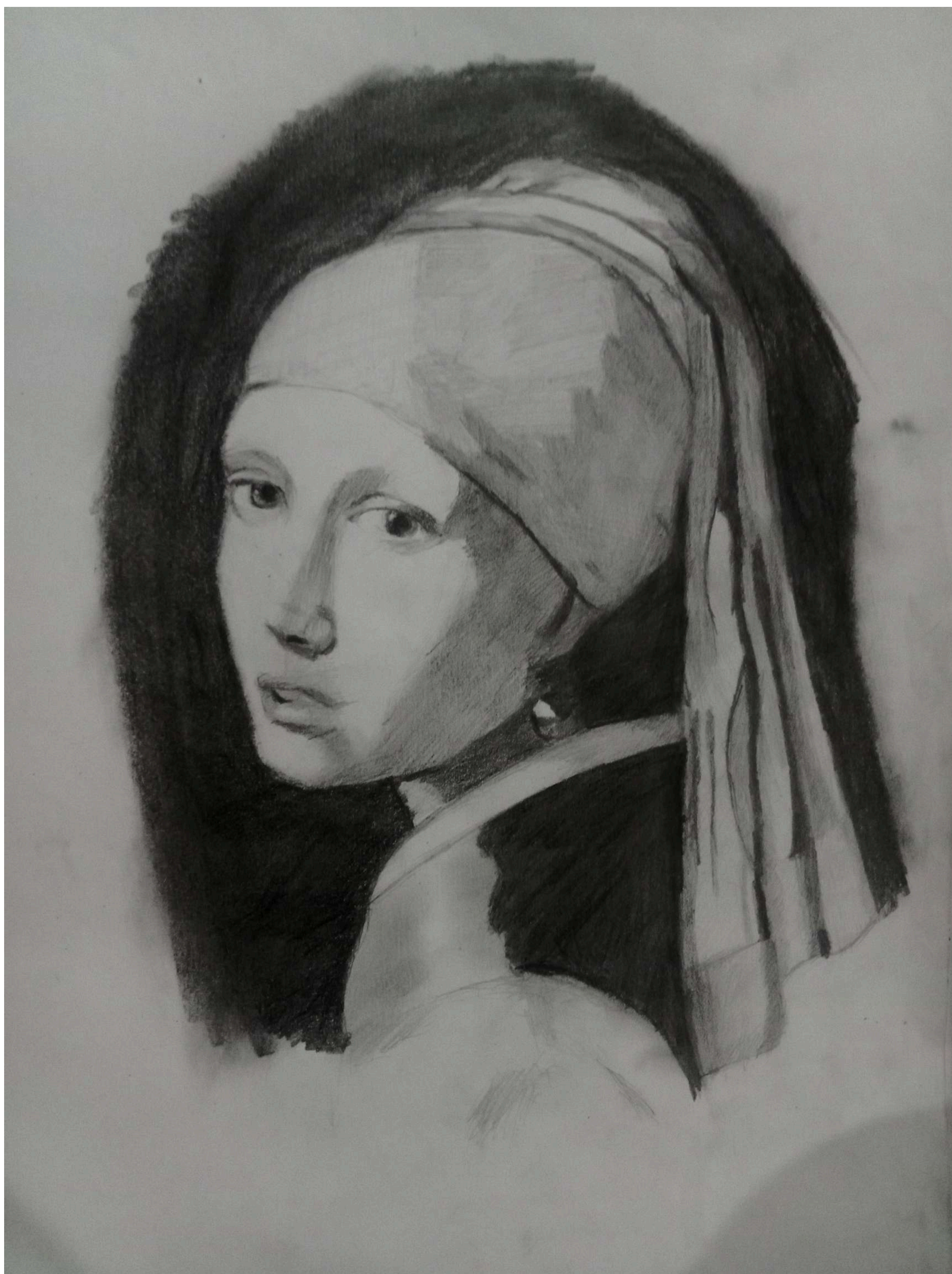


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The Silent Gaze





Golden Odyssey





Fantasy





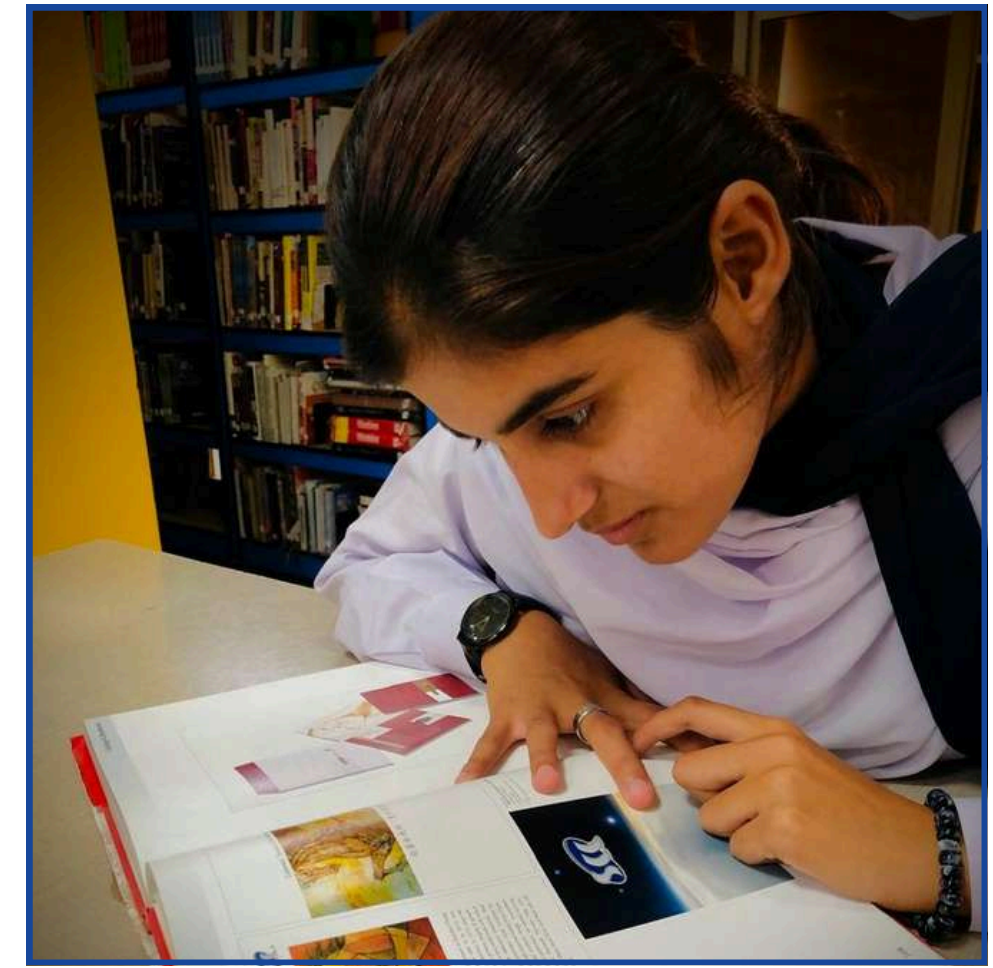
Lost in the Noise



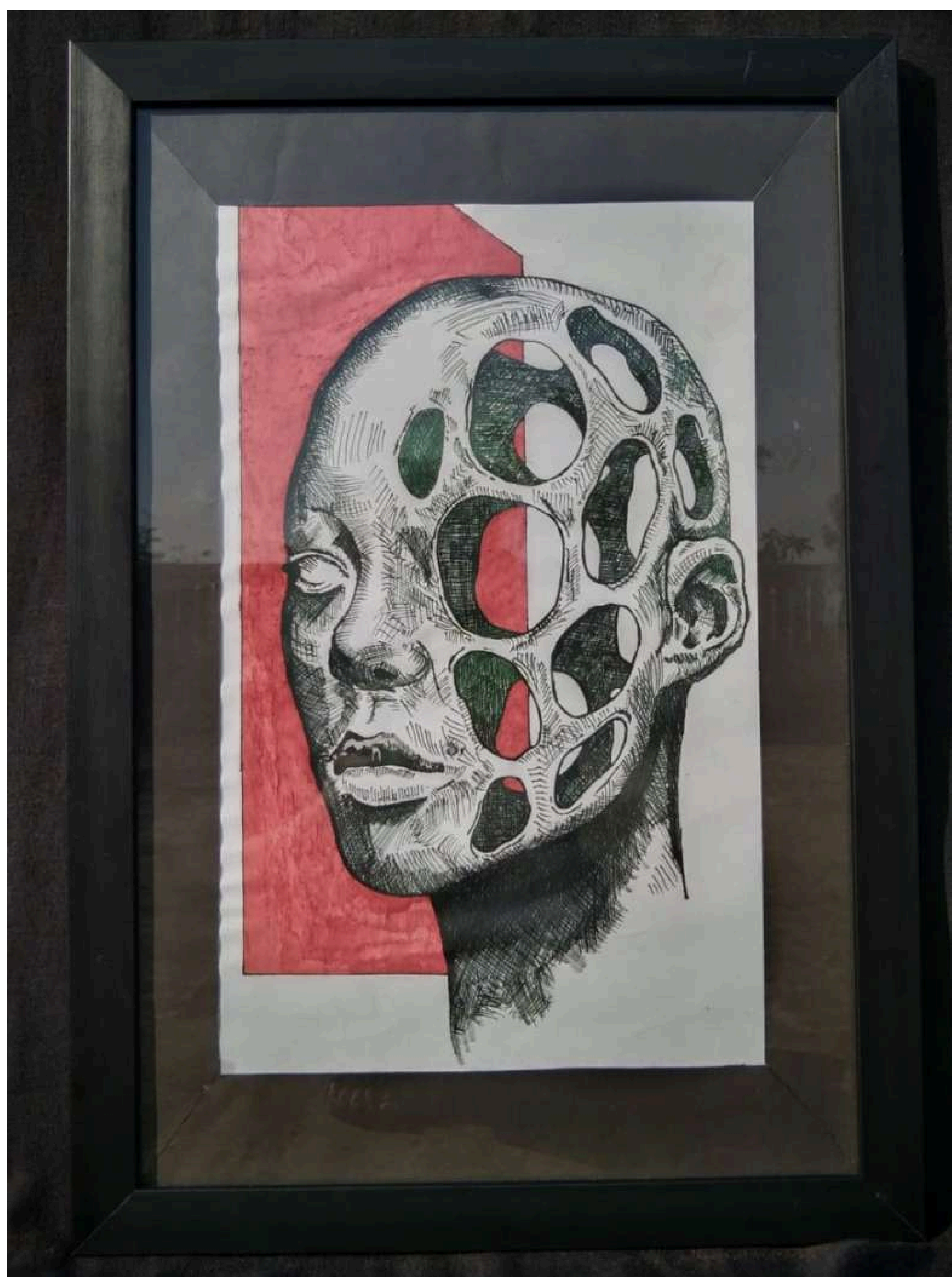


Bloom Beyond Sight





The Radioactive

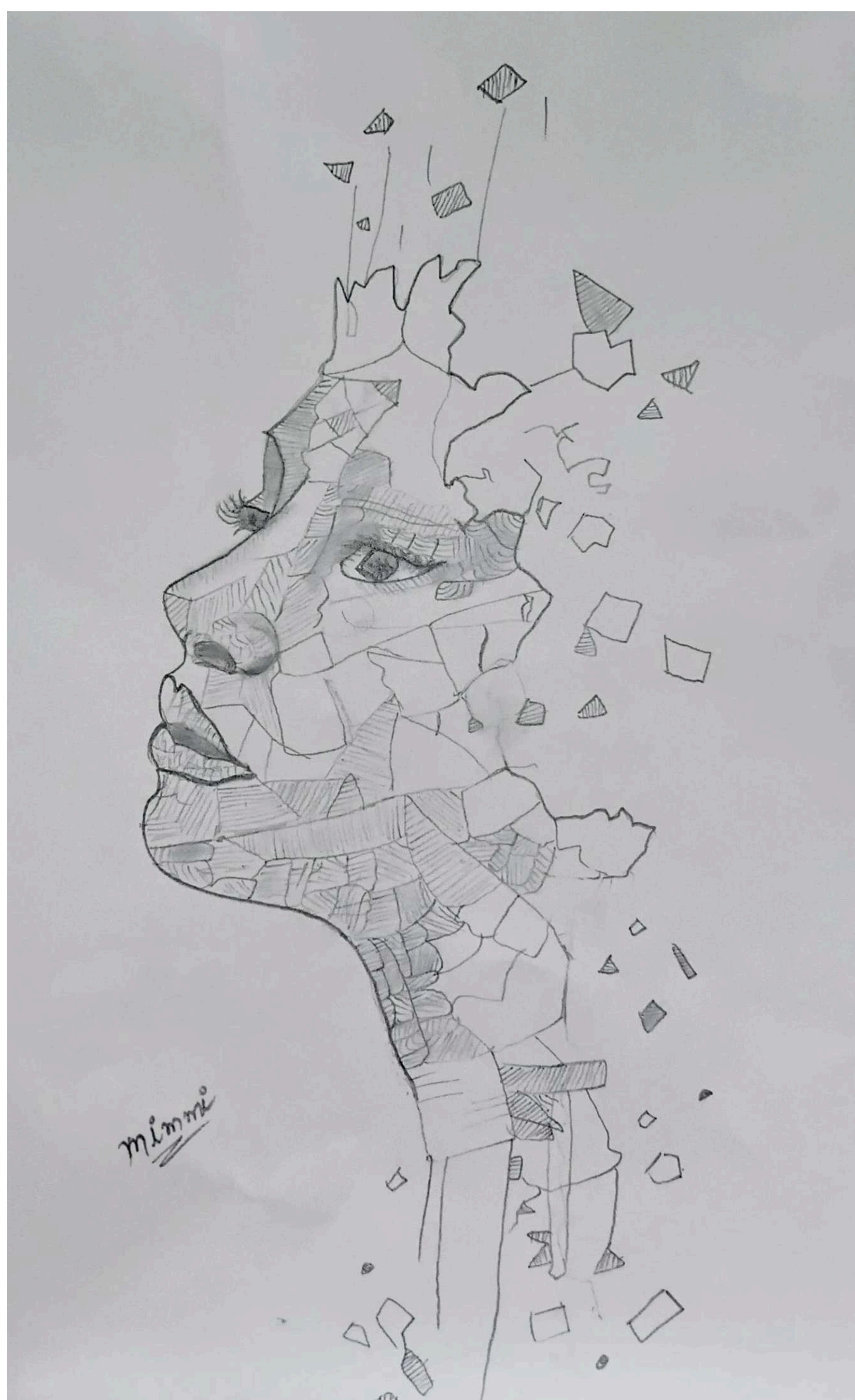


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Shattered, Not Broken





Emotional Spectrum





Wings of Peace





Too Late

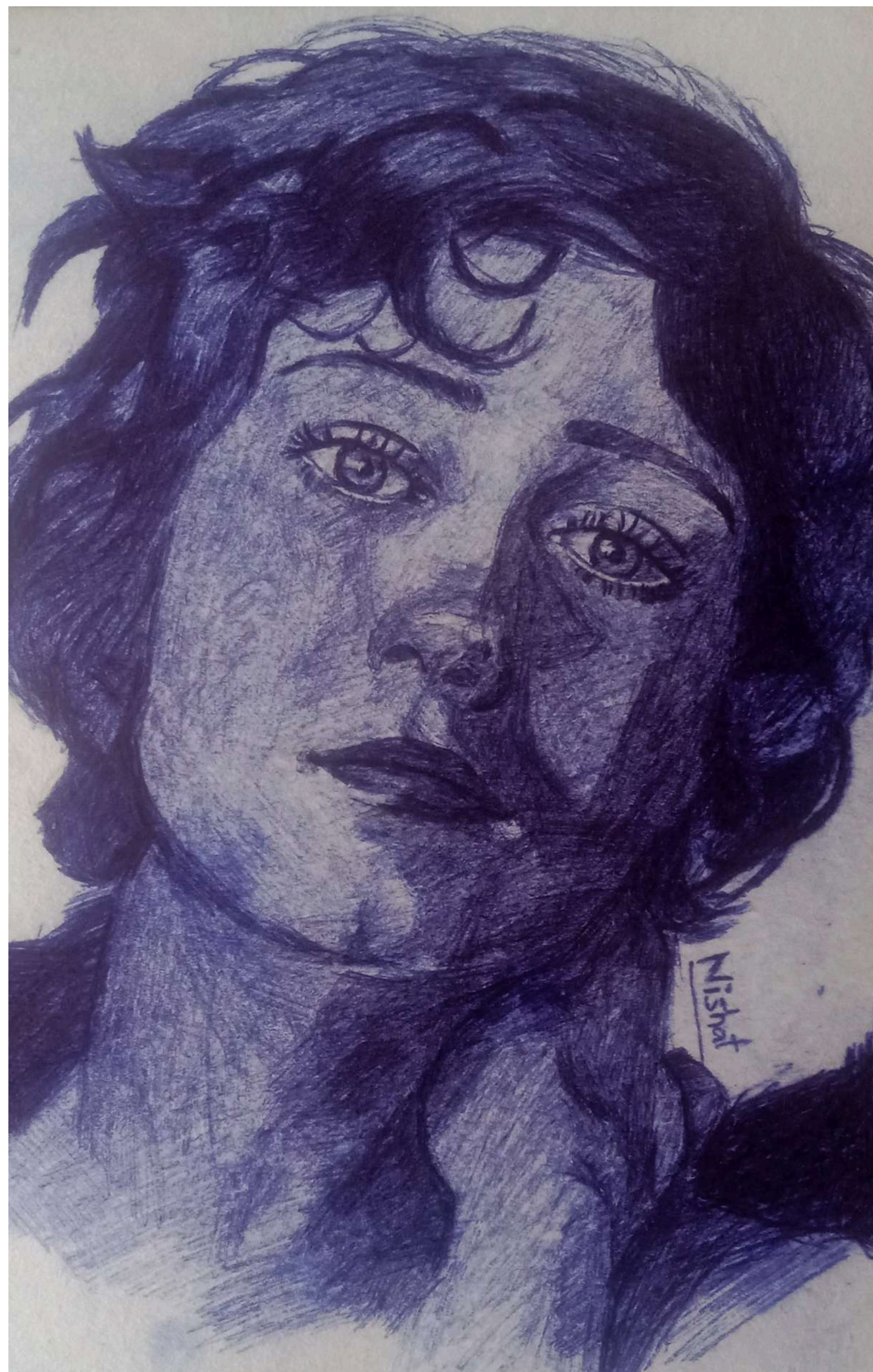


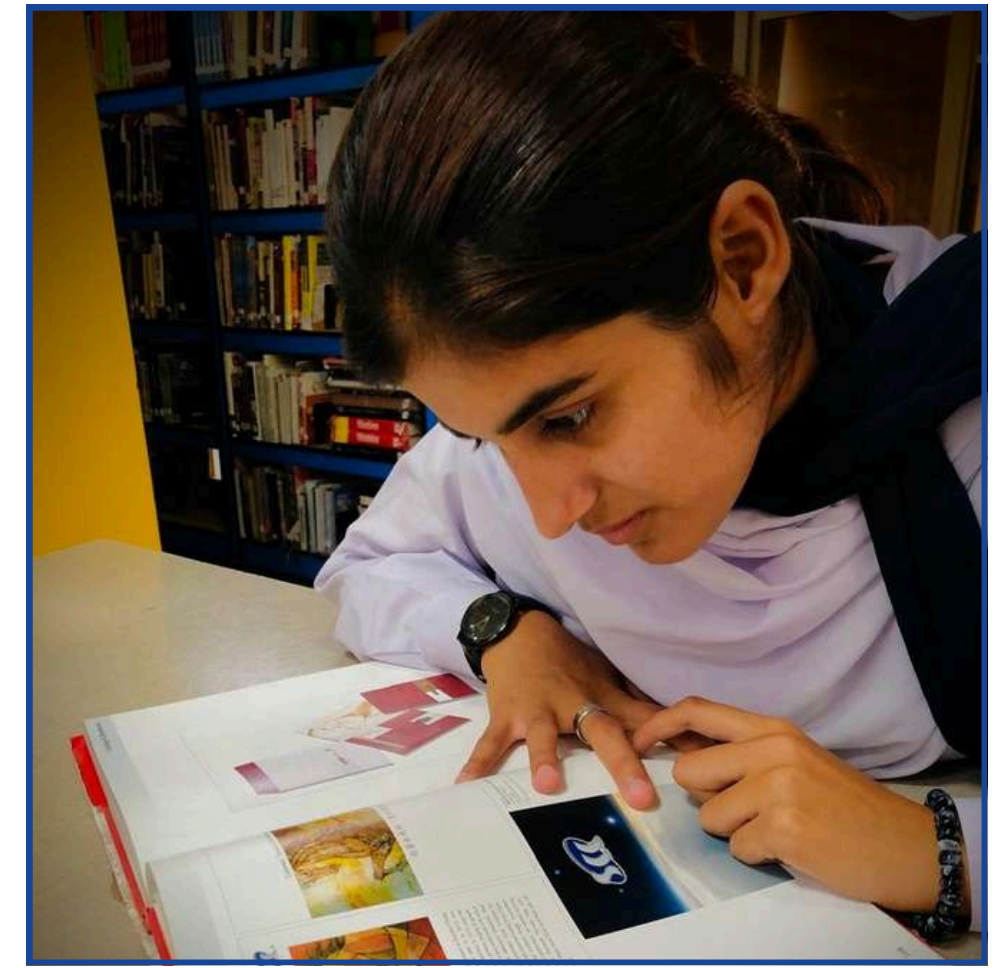
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Beauty of Simplicity





The Crimson Veil of Silence





Aura Farming





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Wheels of Wisdom

Yusra Zainab

The Crimson Visitor

Azka Waheed

Inferno

M. Abdullah Sajjad

Dusk: The Poet's Favorite Hours

Ayesha Sarfraz

Sun Silhouette: Radiant Ascent

Aima Asif

Chasing Light

Yusra Zainab

What Divisions

Tehreem Fatima

Whiskers in The Grass

Wajeaha Imran

Shelter Under the Banyan

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PHOTOGRAPHY



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Muhammed Faizan

Sun Silhouette: The Triumph of Light

Abdullah Afzaal

Sunset Reflections

Aisha Irshad

The Splashes

Saira Ashfaq

Echoes of Wonderland

Muskan Fatima

Fallen but Not Forgotten

Kissa Fatima

Whispers of Old Walls

Wajeaha Imran

Dawn of the Egret

Aitezaz Ahmed Umar



Wheels of Wisdom



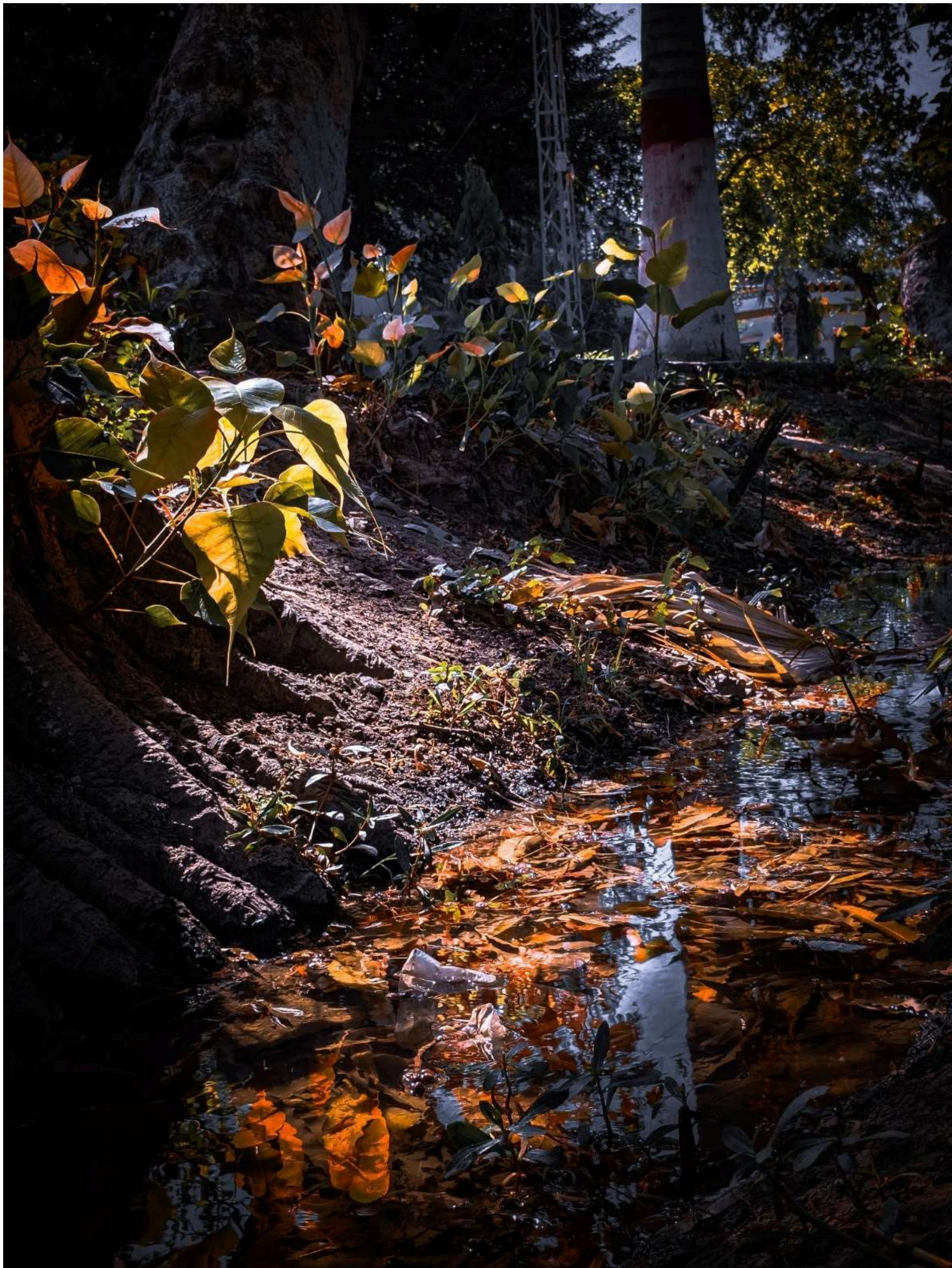


THE CRIMSON VISITOR



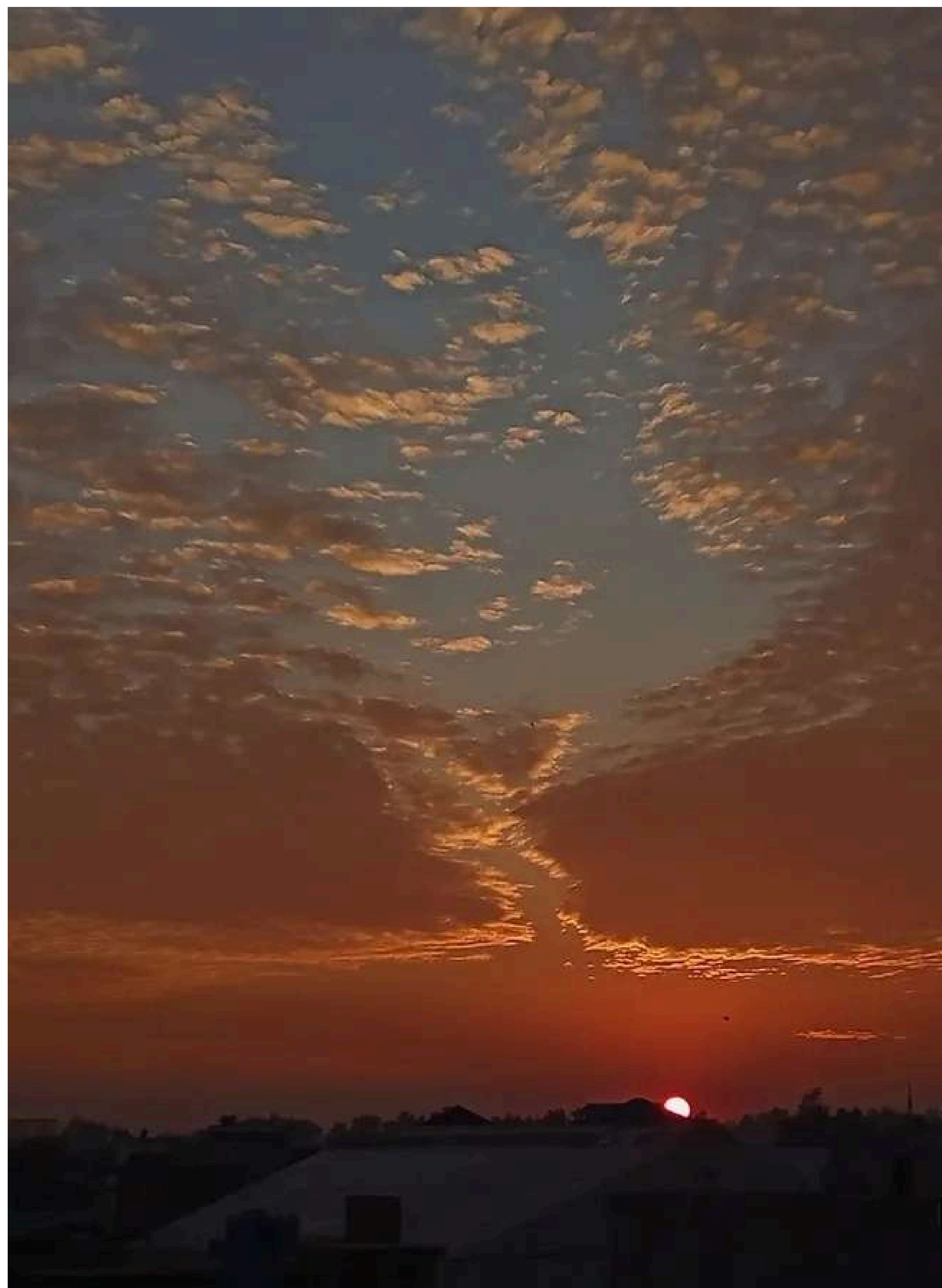


Inferno





Dusk: The Poet's Favorite Hours





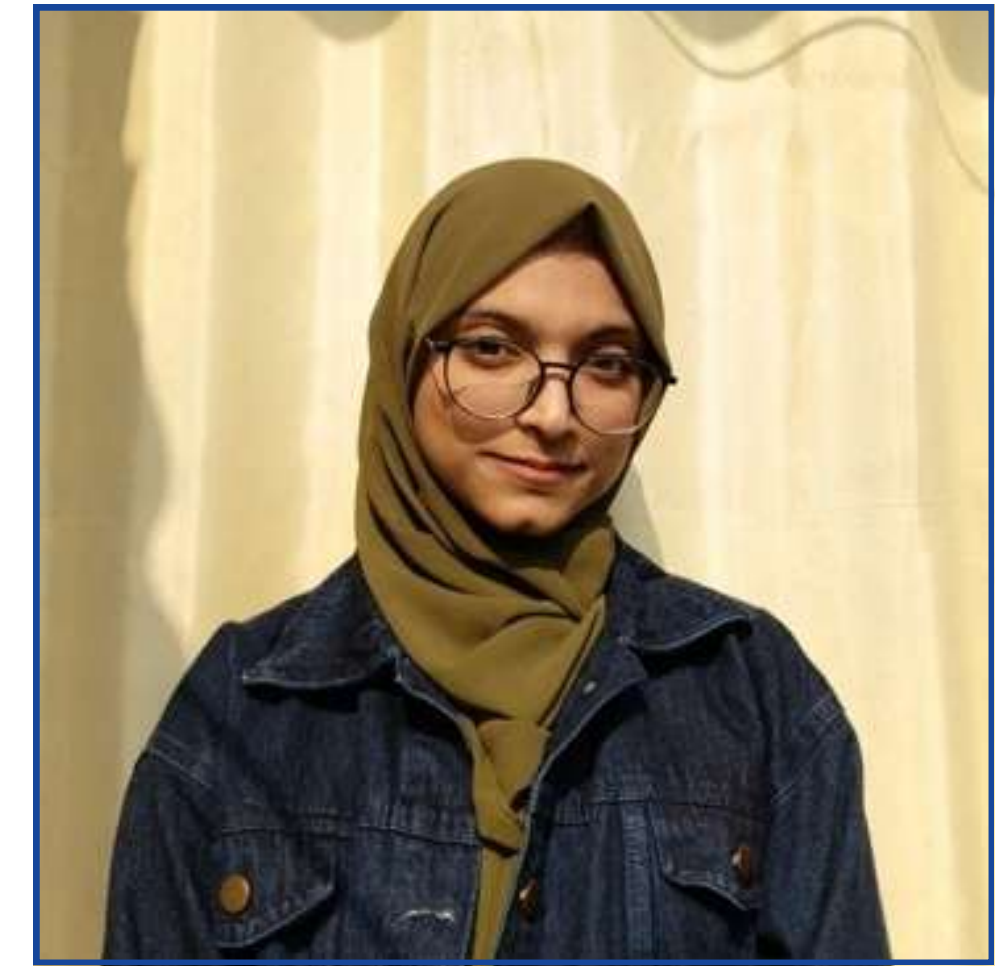
Sun Silhouette: Radiant Ascent





Chasing Light





What Divisions





Whiskers in The Grass



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Sun Silhouette: The Triumph of Light





Sunset Reflections



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MESSAGE FOR THE READERS

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**Asst. Management
Head**

Dear Reader

If you are reading this, then you are finally on the last page of Banyan Magazine. I invite you to pause here simply to feel and interpret the content. Every piece of content in this magazine holds different visions and perspectives. It may speak to you differently than it speaks to another reader. This is the peculiarity of art and literature.

Banyan Magazine is not just a collection of art and written pieces; it is a platform where talent speaks for itself. If you want your imagination, observation, ideology and creativity to be heard by others, come to Banyan Magazine. We will give your content a voice. So, when the next call for submissions arrives, do not just be a reader; become a part of Banyan Magazine.

Regards,

Kissa Fatima

Assist. Management Head

Banyan Magazine Sargodha



"THE WORLD IS FULL OF
MAGICAL THINGS,
PATIENTLY WAITING FOR
OUR SENSES TO GROW
SHARPER."

— W.B. YEATS

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