

The Ornate Circle

Issue No. 1, Year: 2022-23



Department of English
Central University of Punjab
Presents

The Inaugural Issue of



The Ornate Circle



An annual creative magazine




Foreword

It gives me immense pleasure to know that the Department of English is publishing the inaugural issue of *The Ornate Circle*. As creativity and artistry is not limited to any single discipline, I hope this magazine will help all our students to share their creative works with the world. This magazine answers the university's need for a platform where we can share our thoughts and visions with others in an artistic manner.

I congratulate the editorial team and the English Department for their hard work in starting *The Ornate Circle* and extend my wishes for the future endeavours.

Prof. Raghavendra P. Tiwari
Vice- Chancellor
Central University of Punjab






Foreword

The inaugural issue of the magazine, *The Ornate Circle* marks the beginning of a new chapter for the Department of English, Central University of Punjab. The involvement of students of the department as a team to start the magazine consisting of poems, prose and images of artworks contributed by students from different disciplines is exemplary. I sincerely hope that *The Ornate Circle* will serve not only as an outlet for the creative endeavours of students but also encourage students of other departments of the University to come up with innovative ideas.

Prof. Ramakrishna Wusirika
Dean-In-Charge, Academics
Central University of Punjab






Foreword

A language and literature department is the natural home to creative writing and the arts. In this, endeavours, the release of the inaugural issue of the Ornate Circle is a momentous occasion for the Department of English at the Central University of Punjab. The issue comprises pieces of creative writing and art by students from different departments of the university and promises a pleasurable opportunity for the rest of us to feast on their creative outpourings.

The editorial team has worked admirably well in making this seemingly difficult task a reality. My Congratulations and best wishes to them!

Happy Reading!

Dr. Shahila Zafar
Associate Professor and Head
Department of English
Central University of Punjab





Acknowledgements

The inaugural issue of *The Ornate Circle* would not have been possible without the constant support of the community of faculties, students and non-teaching staff of the University. The editorial team and the Department of English are greatly indebted to the Vice-Chancellor of the University, Prof. Raghavendra P. Tiwari, for his encouragement of this creative endeavour. We are grateful to the Dean- in- Charge, Academics, Prof. Ramakrishna Wusirika, for taking an interest in the magazine and motivating the editorial team. We are also grateful to the Head of the Department of English, Dr. Shahila Zafar, as well as the other faculties of the department; Dr. Alpna Saini, Dr. Vipin Pal Singh, Dr. Dinesh Babu, Dr. Prithvi Raj and Dr. Rohit Yadav for their valuable inputs in the development of the magazine. We are thankful for the assistance that we received from Aman Sharma, staff member, Department of English. Lastly, we express our gratitude towards the students who took an interest in this creative endeavour and contributed to the magazine.

Let this be the start of something special!

The Editorial Team
The Ornate Circle



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Little Sapling

- Divya Chaudhari

M.Ed. (2021-2023)

O little sapling!

You have to grow some more,

you have to add some substance to your
core.

O little sapling!

You have to spread your fragrance far
and wide,

you have to go full force without
taking any respite.

O little sapling!

You have to hold the soil hard with your roots,
you have to touch the sky with your shoots.

O little sapling!

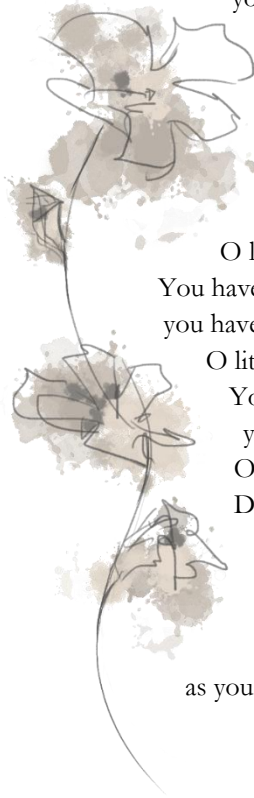
You have to provide sustenance and shade,
you have to stay away from doubt and hate.

O little sapling!

Don't be swayed by the changing times,
as you are just being tested like others
many a times.

O little sapling!

Don't be under any pressure,
as you are our treasure.



As I Could Hold You

- Satyananda Maharana

M.Phil-Ph.D Comparative Literature (2013)

1

Two intertwined petals-
your faint-red-lips only,
one eternal gasp of your wet-voice,
and again, I find me nowhere
between the desires.
The passage to salvation.
Does it lead through
between your autumnal deny
and my indomitable longing for you?

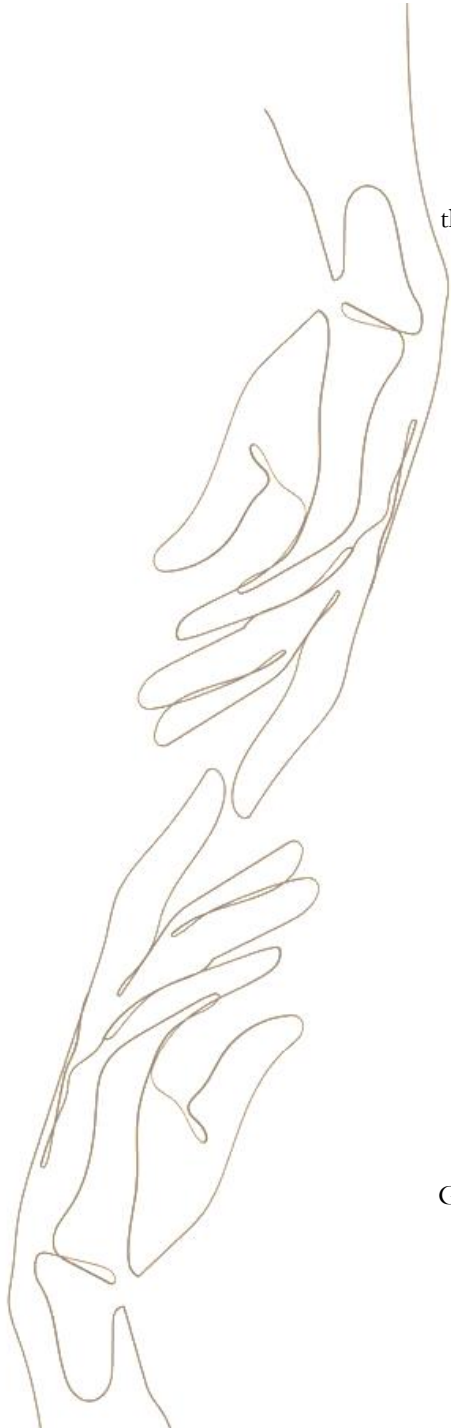
2

With each remove
Desires
I find under these stones
Crumbled and crushed
And with each gust of air
I can hear them
Coming again.

The tides come
And ebb out all my desires.
Lifeless
Here I lay
Uprooted and unmoved
Eagerly waiting
To be swept into the sea



2



3

Many sleepless nights,
I have them all consumed.
There is always a light
that flickers on the corner of my eyes.

If I could count on the roars
these relentless waves make
If I could count on
the silence thereafter
If only I could
to bring you back there
Into my age-old despair
to begin again
and to end again.
Hope is but the swale mist.

There is always an in-between
which to hope make hope
and to moments relive.
So,
the horizon is not so far again
Where we used to go
Running, hand in hand
Kissing, under its fade-crimson
And parting to meet again.

4

The last crimson starts vanishing
On the farthest end of the sky
The window shutters
Make their last sound of the day
Today I hear no bird
Gossip about their long-flown stories,
There is still no light.
As I prepare to whisk off

my day's long waiting
I see the crescent moon
Rising
To finish its orbital move

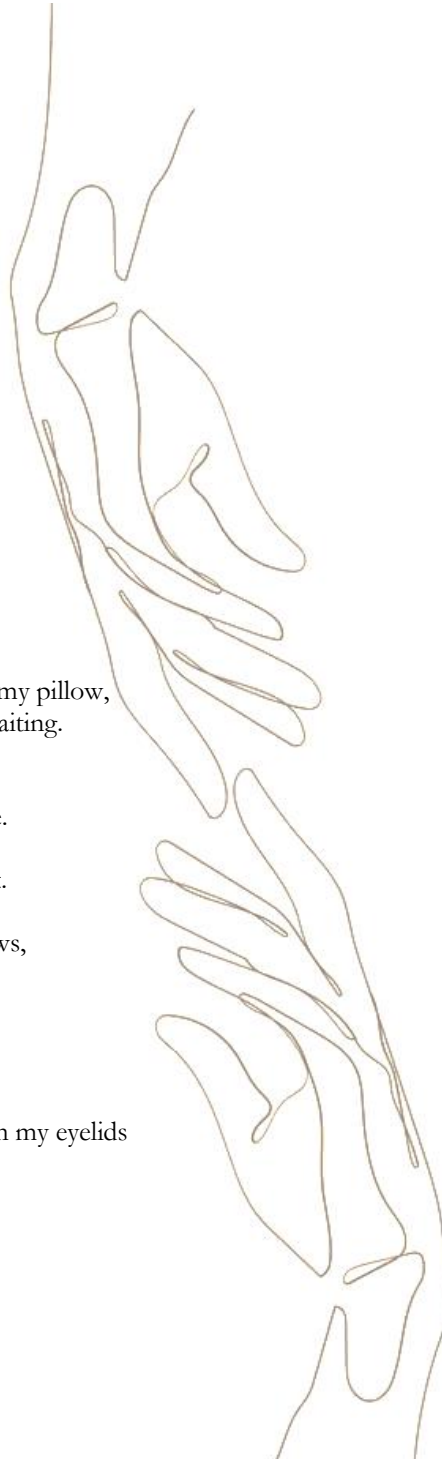
5

Each destined night pass here
With its lumbering move
And I am here
With these lily hopes
Waiting for yet another
Many a destined night
Of that exiled moon,
Of my another desperation,
And of yet another
Fated longing for loneliness.

6

I must hold my desires for now under my pillow,
And bid farewell to all my failures in waiting.
The end is near though,
I must keep my hopes hidden
behind the black cloud tonight for sure.
And my longings for you,
I must tuck it under my shivering heart.
I know,
Tomorrow will be like earlier tomorrows,
I will start afresh as promised,
with the same fresh desires,
The same fading hopes,
and the same intermittent longings.
And I know I am fated to be so.
So, let the dark night descend slowly on my eyelids
So that even with the little light
I can dream of us tonight again
to consume our unrequited love.

4



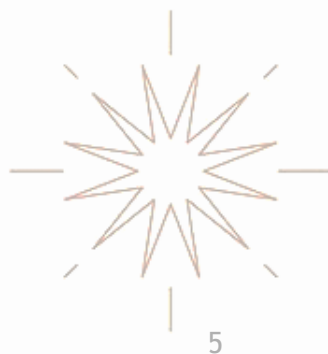
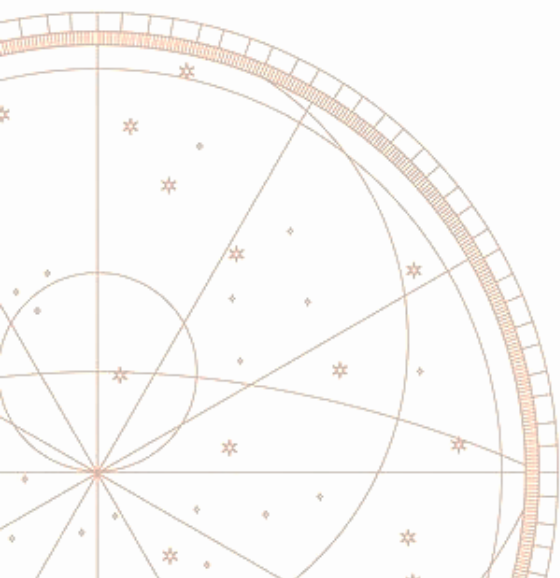


What is Life?!

- Rupesh Bharadwaj

M.Sc. Botany (2021-2023)

Morphologically a four-letter word,
Anatomically the whole world.
Life is to live.
Some try to take; some try to give.
Some say life is practical,
Yet they try to be rational.
The way you live defines it,
therefore, it is a subject of lit.(literature)
Some say life is theory,
Yet they become teary and cheery.
Life is all about experiences,
Rather about one's perspectives.
No one can ever define life.
It varies, therefore, is subject to strife.
Life is known rather than unknown
You will reap what you have sown.



I Hope I'll Love YOU!

-Vishnu Vijayan

M.A. English (2021-23)

At the end of the day,
When my arms tire
And my legs lump of the walk dire,
And yet I see emptiness ahead,
I hope I'll love you.

When in darkness
With my skin wrinkled
And my back stooping
I embrace my loneliness,
I hope I'll love you.

When time flies as my youth
And my dears turn into dust
And I await death with you yet afar,
I hope I'll love you.

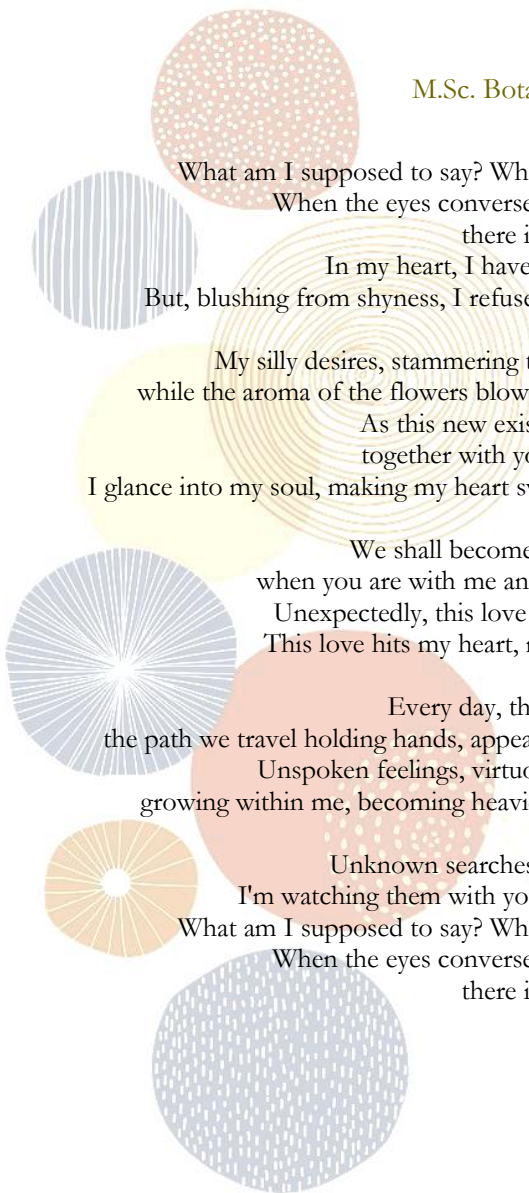
But now, when teardrops wet
This paper, without fret
I say- My love, for sure,
I LOVE YOU!



Little Wishes

- Manisa Jena

M.Sc. Botany (2020-2022)



What am I supposed to say? What else can I say?
When the eyes converse with one other,
there is nothing to say.
In my heart, I have so much to say.
But, blushing from shyness, I refuse to say any of it.

My silly desires, stammering to communicate,
while the aroma of the flowers blows in the tempest.
As this new existence brings me
together with you like a miracle,
I glance into my soul, making my heart sweat with pearls.

We shall become one, ultimately
when you are with me and I am with you.
Unexpectedly, this love enters my heart,
This love hits my heart, making me gasp.


Every day, the route we walk,
the path we travel holding hands, appears in my mirage.
Unspoken feelings, virtuous devotedness,
growing within me, becoming heavier at every stage.

Unknown searches, unseen events,
I'm watching them with you as time passes.
What am I supposed to say? What else can I say?
When the eyes converse with one other,
there is nothing to say.

Reflections

- Abhinandana Sahu

M.Sc. Zoology (2021-2023)



Lately, I've been remembering
and dreaming about what could have been
I'm sure I look as crazy as I feel
But sometimes, I get lost inside
The fantasies that rule my mind
The realities that haunt my soul
Beneath the lid, my passion brews
Looking for a chance to flourish

In this life that I built myself
I've made choices
Some good, some bad
Some make me smile, some make me sad
Some were innocent, some were dark
I Lived, laughed, cried, smiled, loved & lied
Got people I can't live without
Lost people once I thought I can't live without

Sometimes, I wonder how I ended up here
I Look in the mirror
"What do I see?"
The obvious unseen
I gaze into the eyes
With realization
That future will happen, regardless.

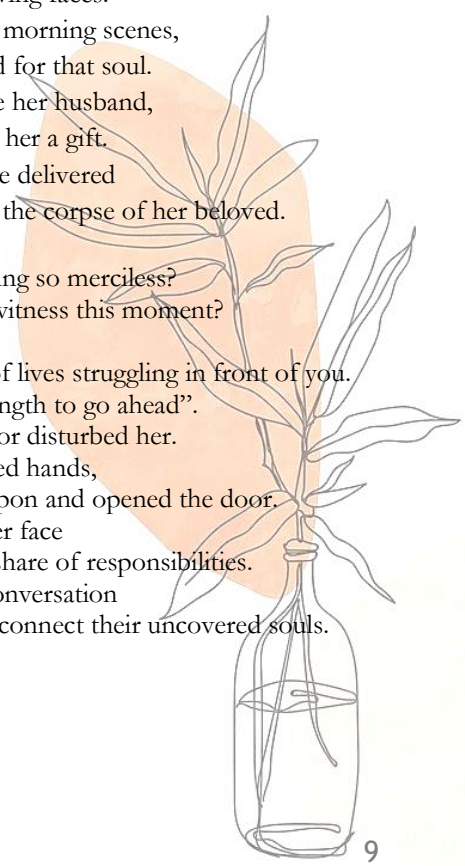
Uncovered Souls

- Aardra Chandran

M.A. English (2022-24)

There she stands, looking through the window
Water drops kissed her cheeks and faded away.
Far from her view but close to her heart
she sees those beautiful, loving faces.
Overwhelmed by the scary morning scenes,
she cried deeply and prayed for that soul.
No more could that girl see her husband,
who passed away by giving her a gift.
It was a baby girl whom she delivered
just before she went to see the corpse of her beloved.

“Oh God! Why are you being so merciless?
Why did you select me to witness this moment?
No! I can't bear this pain.
Hundreds and thousands of lives struggling in front of you.
Oh Lord! Give me the strength to go ahead”.
A sudden knock on the door disturbed her.
Wiping her tears with gloved hands,
she took her powerful weapon and opened the door.
There she could see another face
pretty tired from her own share of responsibilities.
Something forbade their conversation
but thoughts continued to connect their uncovered souls.



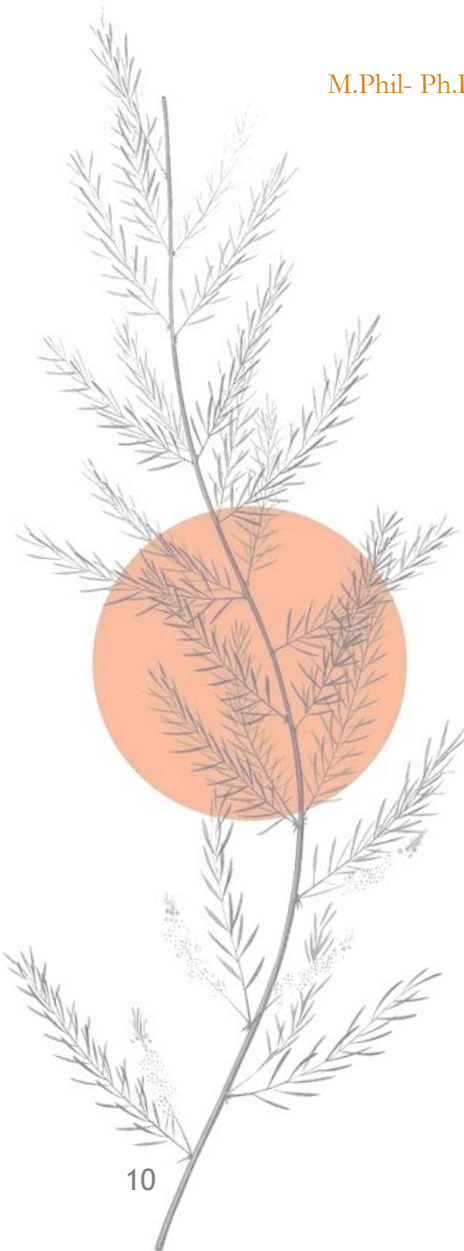
Song of Life

- Smriti Thakur

M.Phil- Ph.D Comparative Literature (2013)

Why travel? When heart is to fly
 Feel the water in the air
 And choose not to dry
You are here only for once
 So hold your cups high
 Not to spill the music
 Lingers on the curtains of life
Why travel? When heart is to fly
 We are here for once
 Why not to try.

So, get up!
Wear your desires on the sleeves
 And play with dirt
As Universe is open for the one
 Who dares to suck the drops
Blossoming on the lips of desert
 So let your cup straight
 And choose not to dry
 We are here for once
 Why not to try.





Squeal of Intuition

- Ipsita Kar

M.Sc. Biochemistry (2020-22)

Dark hours penetrated the dazzle of nil;
Blue pearls bluffed the luster of the primordial essence.
Thee clutched the sense of deluging instinct;
Chilling thy spine from the abyss of agony.
Isn't it a blind allay? When you have the ace with, thou.

Black musk purveying aroma in every foliate in the wood;
The deer galloped every corner discerning it out.
Allured with the scent that was unfurling her senses;
She trudged every dawn, every dusk and every night.
Are not they all futile? The subconscious strives;
Seeking for the ultimate burning in her eyes.

Glancing at the starry sky, rest thine eyes;
What is that dingy sense when the lids fall tight?
The macrocosm thee regards as thy senses perceive it.
The time thou decease, at the edge of that sensibility;
Brink of that totality, at the rim of that infinity.

Thou peeped at the infinitude beyond blood and flesh;
It went all unheard, the squeal of thine instinct.
Thou the universe, thy song it plays;
Thou the eternity, not just blood and flesh.



Coffee

- Ayushi Dash

M.A. English (2021-2023)

Ellie felt the panic in the back of her throat when the waitress asked her for the third time, with a hint of irritation in her voice, what she would like to have. Her forehead felt damp, her face hot, her hands trembled, and she could taste the bile in the back of her throat. Ellie tried to speak, but her voice betrayed her.

“She will get right back to you with it,” said a voice next to her. Ellie looked up. It was a woman who appeared to be in her late fifties. She had a kind smile and laugh lines around her eyes. “Come on,” she said to Ellie and steered her toward the tables without actually touching her, for which Ellie was grateful.

The woman led Ellie to a table by the window. Ellie could see her old green Camaro parked a little distance away; it was her first car. In the world’s eyes, Ellie had owned many

expensive and fancy cars that had been the envy of the entire neighbourhood. But she could not bring herself to take any of them. They were not hers. She had not bought them with her own money. She had not saved penny after penny for years for those cars. He had bought them for her. Gifts, he liked to call them. But none of those cars could have given her the courage and determination to get away from him like her green Camaro had.

Ellie had met him when she was 22, barely out of college and ready to take on the world with an energy that only young graduates seem to have- the ones who know they will make it on their own and are not afraid to get their hands dirty. She stared down at her hands folded on her lap – perfectly manicured, but sickly pale and bony. Ellie always looked presentable; he had always made sure of that.


Nothing about her appearance betrayed anything or raised any suspicions. Ten years of marriage may have made her body weak with wounds and her skin full of scars, but he made sure none of them ever showed. Make-up, concealer, full sleeves, whatever it took.

Her finger traced the edge of her sleeve; one gentle tug back, and her whole history would come unraveling with the huge scar that ran from her wrist to her elbow, courtesy of when she had declined to go to one of his business parties because of a headache.

Domestic abuse was not for those with a weak minds; it was for the bravehearts. It takes courage to watch someone destroy you physically, mentally, emotionally; a little bit every day, until you are an empty soul with no idea whatsoever why you exist anymore. When you give your heart over to someone, and they crush it under their foot right in front of your eyes, it takes a while before you recover from the shock and decide you need to leave. That is exactly what had happened with Ellie. Today

was the day she had recovered and decided to leave. No arguments, no demands- nothing. Just her and her old rusty car, which had been her only companion when she had moved in with him.

For six hours, Ellie had driven restlessly with no destination in mind. Just one goal- to get as far away from him as she could. Five hours later, here she was, at the cafe- her first stop after a long drive to get some coffee. Ellie had walked into the cafe feeling far more confident than she did five hours ago. But then the waitress asked her what she wanted, and that was it. Ellie had frozen head to toe, with no idea what she wanted. He had always ordered her coffee – a soy latte, because that was what everyone else in their circle drank- all those phoney trophy wives with no sense of their identity, whose entire lives revolved around cocktail parties and yoga classes while they put on more and more make up in hopes of being good enough. Until five hours ago, Ellie had been the same, and until five hours ago, Ellie knew that she drank soy lattes.



But now, here she was, this whole chalkboard wall full of options for her to choose from and with no idea what she wanted. She liked something ten years ago. Her coffee had been important to her, her kick-start of the day. But she could not remember it anymore. Slowly the thoughts washed over her one by one, each filling her with more despair than the last until just one question remained that the waitress repeated with impatience, “What do you want?”

The woman had rescued Ellie from there. As they sat at the table, she offered her some water. Ellie took it with trembling hands, and the woman patiently waited for her to finish. “You don’t have to decide right away,” she said, “take your time and think about your options carefully.”

The kindness in her voice soothed Ellie. “I don’t know,” she said, her voice barely a whisper, “I cannot remember what I like. I just...”

“It’s alright,” she said, taking Ellie’s hands in her own, “it’s alright if you don’t know. You can always start again. Try

everything until you find out what you like.”

Ellie stared at her in amazement. The woman just smiled and continued, “So today, try the espresso and the cappuccino. Pick out what feels better.” She waited for her response. Ellie nodded slowly and the woman squeezed her hand and left to place the order.

They sat in silence until the coffee arrived. Ellie took a sip of each and decided she liked the espresso better. She felt much calmer. The woman sensed this and smiled at her, “It is not going to be easy, but the worst is over. You have it in you and you can do this. He can’t reach you and he will never again make you feel that way again.”

“But...,” began Ellie, still amazed, “how did you know?”

The woman was smiling but there was a haunting sadness in her eyes. She did not reply just simply placed her hand on the table and pulled her sleeve back. Her white forearm showed a scar, running from her wrist to her elbow, mirroring the one on Ellie’s forearm.



Perfection

- Abhinandana Sahu

M.Sc. Zoology (2021-2023)

Once you start something new, there will be two conflicting voices in your head- To do it for doing sake or to do it perfectly. Most of us submit to the former because it is easy. But something at the back of your head tells you not to. You have to listen to it.

Anyway, You begin.....

You picture all the possible variations in your head and take action to materialize the intangible idea into a tangible product. In the final steps, your hand might tremble, your heart might race, and your brain might shout. However, at this moment, all the choices have been made, and decisions have already been made. The products are mere inevitabilities. In the end, you must come to terms with the original idea. Precisely because it is unattainable, perfection is a necessary goal. If you do not aim for perfection, you cannot make anything great. And yet, true perfection is impossible. So, in the end, you must reconcile yourself to failure.

It's not perfect. It's never going to be perfect. You have to make your peace with that. It's a mirage that you must chase. But why? Because it's the pursuit of perfection that brings excellence and this is the true essence of the process.



Things Lost in Translation

- Rinsha Raveendran

MA English (2021-2023)

It all started with a point. A point of decision. A point of beginning. From that point on, life begins and moves to the next point. My story begins with one such point that happened to my great-grandfather. Or maybe even before. Pardon me, I don't remember that much.

I only know about this one particular story. My great-grandfather left his home at the age of fifteen, along with his wife and child. They left not because of any disagreement, rather, it was mutually agreed that members of the family would live apart from then on since their father was tired. Being the head of a family is exhausting. And it was getting to him slowly. So, they left. My father used to say that they suffered a lot; to have a job, to have a place to call home, to have a

meal. I guess it was too much for their child, who passed away after one year. After that, they had another child, and another, and another. I don't remember how many. I told you I don't remember much. My grandfather was the third child. He lacked the aggression of his father. He was easily deceivable. Even his brother deceived him. But he never learned. And whenever my grandmother brought it up, he refused to believe her. When my father went abroad and started earning, he relaxed in the living room. My father bought a television at that time. It was one of the first in that area. People would come and watch it in groups. They sat for Sunday special movies in Doordarshan, waiting in anticipation. The children meanwhile wondered about the place from where such small-sized people came.

Some brave ones even dared to check the backside, which my grandfather disapproved of. He feared it would damage the television. He sat through most of the program in an easy chair, commenting. He would switch off the television when he felt like it had worked long enough. This he did only when there were other people to watch. While he exerted power over others on what to watch, my grandmother watched over the family. It was nothing new as she had been doing it since the beginning. My father's sisters never went to school, neither did their parents, and the list goes on... My father's sisters were married off once they hit puberty. After their marriage, they became part of another family. There were occasional visits, or when they came back home during their pregnancy. The child is to be born in their mother's house and brought up in their father's- that is the custom. After each birth, the mother gets distanced from her family, and she begins to understand her mother more.

Their world was small. So small that it felt like they were never part of it. The huge

outer world revolved around them, but they were isolated from it. When I was reading my history texts, I often wondered about their whereabouts. Where were they in history? Were they watching things happen? Did they know what it was? Did they comment on whatever happened around them? Or just let everything happen passively? I never knew.

Truth be told, I was a bit disappointed knowing how insignificant we are. So small that it didn't matter. And how it is the same throughout. My grandfather from my mother's side was someone who had nothing to say about the emergency period when I asked. For him, the sun rose, the shop opened, and he repaired watches just like the day before. He ate, and he slept. How normal. People did disappear. But it was natural, right? People often disappear from our reality like they never existed. They either fall into the hands of death or into the depths of forgetfulness, so much so that it was normal not to remember. He is so forgetful that he didn't even notice his neighbour was missing. Bless him. To me,

forgetting someone is the hardest thing. I envy him. To live like that, as if nothing happened. Being forgotten by people I know, is my deepest fear. I believe it's worse than death. Not existing in people's thoughts is worrisome. But my grandfather never understood that. He continued doing his job. He stopped time, and moved it forward, or backward. He controlled it but never got involved. And with time, he forgot people.

We are insignificant beings in the vast expanse of time and space. To be remembered is the hardest thing. We were easily forgotten and we easily forget, just like everyone forgot the fact that my grandmother worked for one of my friend's families. A few years ago, my family didn't dare to go against them. But now, I quarreled with her, I talked to her, I ate with her, I did things they never imagined would happen. Everyone forgot that the past did exist. But it's natural. We were never part of the past, we never owned the present. And the future? What a joke.

To remember things is a curse. And my father was a cursed one. He remembered his old house, his school, and how he went to his mother after his school. She might be waiting for him and his brother with whatever she got that afternoon. He remembered how it was never enough for them, or how their mother looked at them covered in sweat. He remembered why he had to drop out of school and do his job. He remembered the heat of the fire; how it ignited the thirst to escape. He remembered things, so he tried escaping from them. He went abroad. Ironically, memories followed him. They got mixed up in his present, holding him prisoner. They reminded him of his insecurities, what he lacked. He furiously bought everything. To erase the memory of him being on the receiving end of things, he started giving out things. But his memories withheld love from him in return. He gave everything except affection and believed that it was love. He was absent from our present. He was absent from our good memories. He was absent even while being

present. For a person who remembered everything, he became someone who we never really remembered in good times. He was needed, but not actually. He got stuck in the past while the present passed by. He was someone with no future. That's the price he had to pay for remembering things.

We, the women, were excused from the burden of memories. We remembered things without anything holding us back. My grandmother remembered how much she had to work for a grain of rice, so she scolded us for wasting food. She remembered how she never got a rest, and continued. She remembered how her husband was while watching television, so she started compensating by giving commentary along with him, though he was never there. My grandfather died before I was born. And I remembered him on every anniversary for the sake of it. My mom taught me how to miss someone who was never present. We remember things that never actually happened and believed that they happened. Maybe we

remembered things because no one believed us.

My father married my mother when she was eighteen. Her father married her mother before she hit puberty. She was someone who never actually remembered anything- my grandmother. Her past and present changed with time. And she raised my mom as someone who remembers selectively. For instance, my mother forgot that guy who waited for her at the bus stop- how her friends teased her, the stolen glances- everything. After her marriage, she became someone with no memories. She never had anything worth remembering. Her past was always a mystery to me and my sister. And we let that be so. Because we were also burdened with memories.

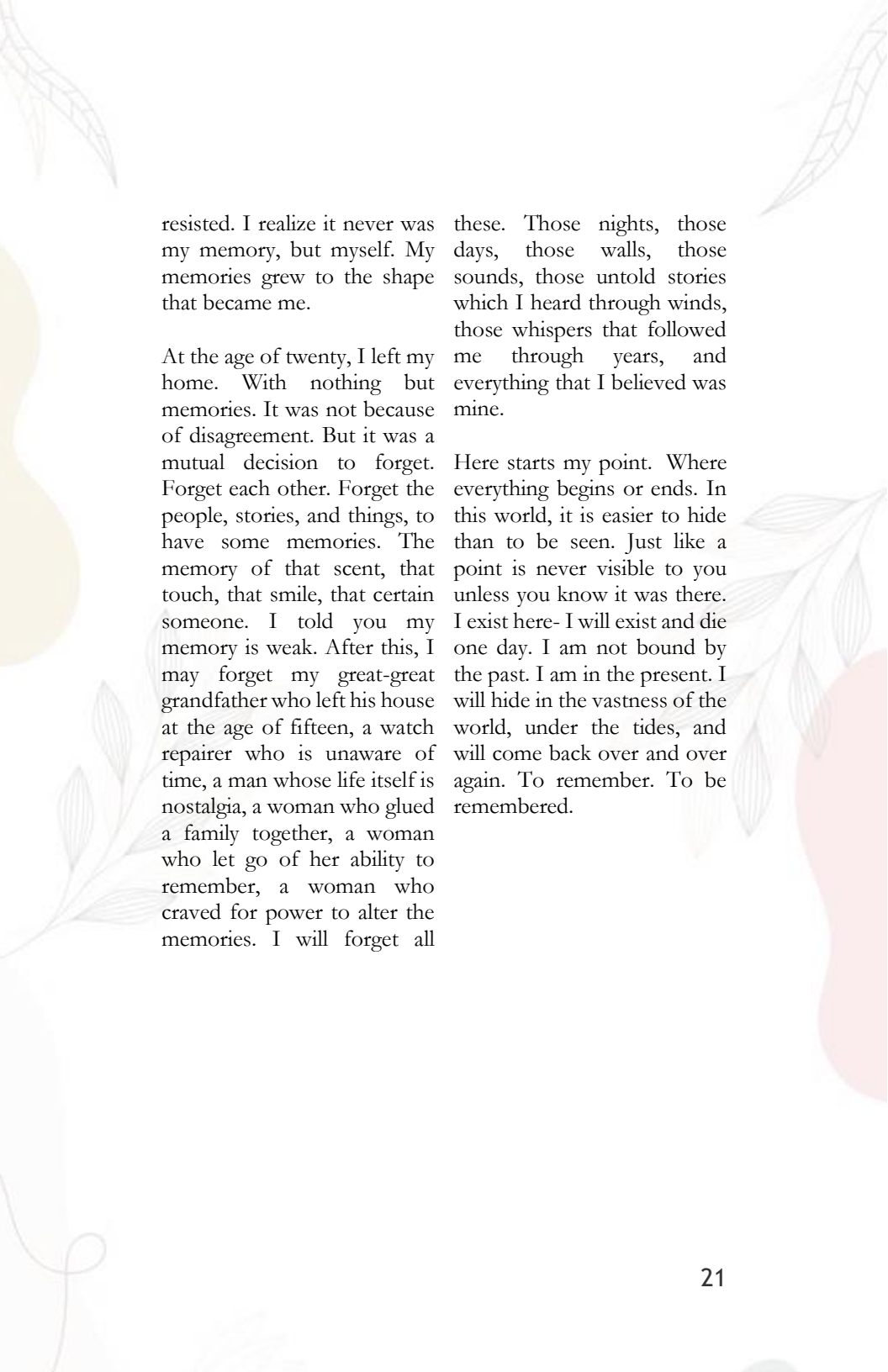
But we never actually had memories. Our memories were the leftovers of others. They were told, retold, recollected, and edited by everyone. And we were left with something worth forgetting. My sister knew languages and played with them. She went on to work as a translator. She used to say

that she loved doing this job. Because it always gave her choice. A choice of which word to choose, a choice to omit, or a choice to add. And this choice never cost her, and having a choice which never costs is what most women crave. She also talked about other things. She told me about Indian history. She told me that we never bothered about history. It was the British who insisted on written history. They dug up past wounds, selected a few, translated what they understood, and taught us our own past. We were happy with myths and stories, but they introduced facts. We insisted that a master is required for people who were unaware of where they came from. And we had British masters, who decided about our lives. She craved such power. And I wondered whether the stories she had told me about my childhood were actually true.

I don't remember my childhood or adulthood. But when a stream of blood stained my skirt in the evening, and I cried, I started having memories. Maybe I always had that feeling, but I

never bothered to find out. Those memories came to my senses. My senses became sharp whenever I saw her- the woman. When I started searching for the memory of womanhood, I discovered that women do have a distinct scent. That enchanted me, those soft lips, those eyes which feared something, that smile that held a thousand emotions, those ears which were alerted to every sound, those curves which showed me what life is, everything related to that certain someone.

Having memories is dangerous. I knew that. But hiding them was even more difficult. They tried to erase my memories. But they stuck with me like the sins of my previous births. When my mom knew, she looked at me like I betrayed her. My father treated me like I didn't exist. And others.. Does that matter to me? Everyone tried. My parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and many others whom I don't remember. They were never part of me. But they wanted to be. And every attempt made it clearer. The urge to forget was stronger, but my memory



resisted. I realize it never was my memory, but myself. My memories grew to the shape that became me.

At the age of twenty, I left my home. With nothing but memories. It was not because of disagreement. But it was a mutual decision to forget. Forget each other. Forget the people, stories, and things, to have some memories. The memory of that scent, that touch, that smile, that certain someone. I told you my memory is weak. After this, I may forget my great-great grandfather who left his house at the age of fifteen, a watch repairer who is unaware of time, a man whose life itself is nostalgia, a woman who glued a family together, a woman who let go of her ability to remember, a woman who craved for power to alter the memories. I will forget all

these. Those nights, those days, those walls, those sounds, those untold stories which I heard through winds, those whispers that followed me through years, and everything that I believed was mine.

Here starts my point. Where everything begins or ends. In this world, it is easier to hide than to be seen. Just like a point is never visible to you unless you know it was there. I exist here- I will exist and die one day. I am not bound by the past. I am in the present. I will hide in the vastness of the world, under the tides, and will come back over and over again. To remember. To be remembered.

Through the Pandemic

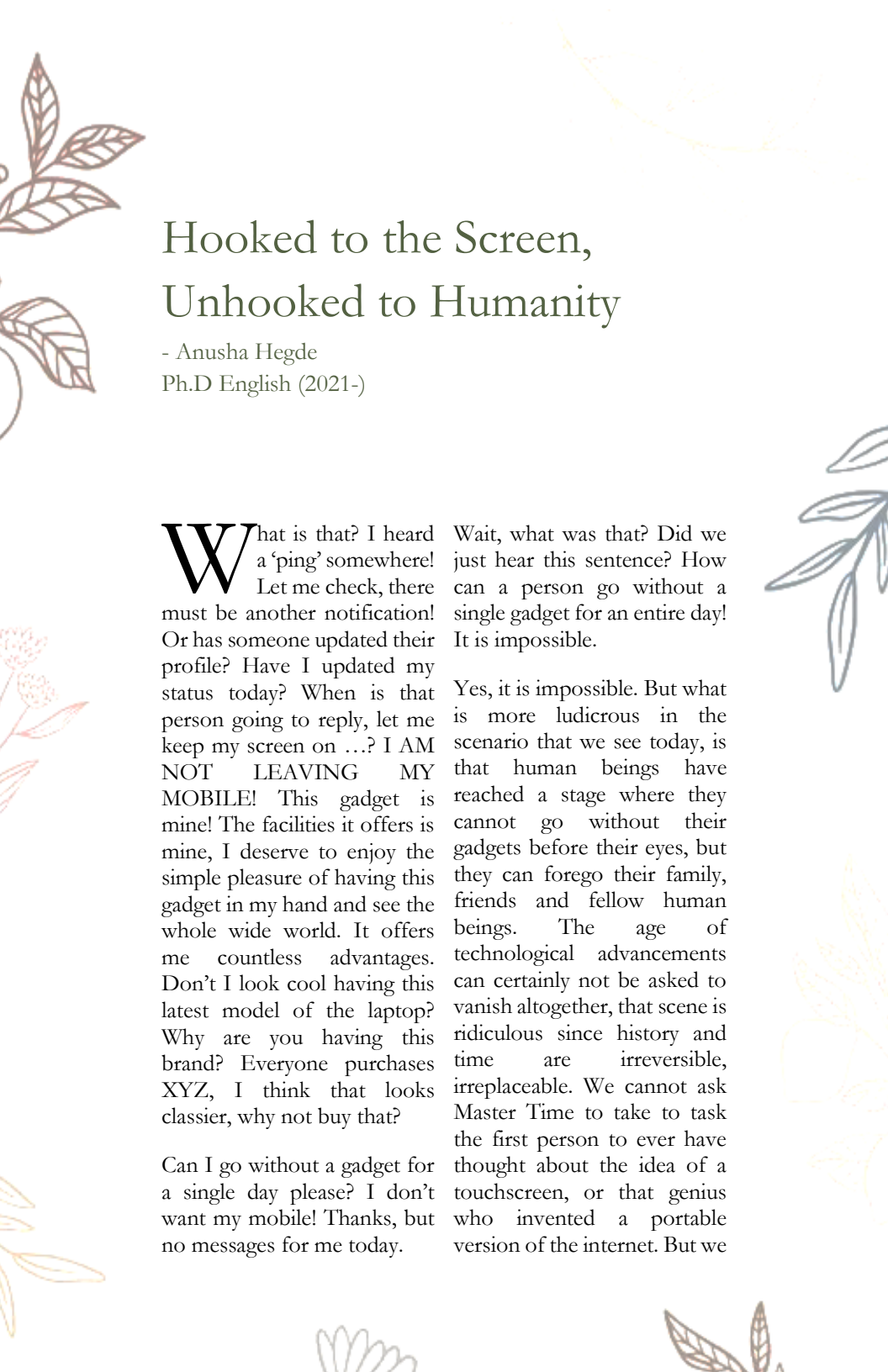
- Anantharaman R S

M.A. Mass Communication and Journalism (2021-2023)

It's been two years since all of our lives took a turn. The Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on all of humanity. This can be viewed from different perspectives. One could say that the pandemic brought us closer to ourselves, giving us time for introspection. Another way of viewing this is as an obstacle to our social lives. For me, I would say that it has been both. On the one hand, I had a lot of time to do things I always wanted to do. On the other hand, I grew apart from things and people whom I had thought to be important for myself, as an individual. Amidst the pandemic, I started watching and appreciating a lot more movies and series. I wouldn't have had the time if it was the time as it was before the pandemic.

However, I lost communication with a lot of people who were otherwise a constant part of my life, even after having a lot of time on my hand. This made me wonder if it was a conscious

choice that I made or whether we grow apart naturally over time. I was a different person than I am today in 2019. Quantitatively the extent of change is huge when compared to the fewer number of events that influenced me. If this pandemic and social isolation did not happen, then the course of our lives would have been very different. I cannot help but wonder how things would have turned out differently. Everyone around me must have gone through all these emotions at some point. One thing I am positive about, is that this made me stronger as a person, as a human being. This time period made me feel vulnerable but also gave me hope to move forward even when everything in front of me is unclear, like a foggy sky. The value of time is reinstated in my mind because when I look back on the first day of lockdown and where I stand today, it seems like all this time of two years passed like one long day.



Hooked to the Screen, Unhooked to Humanity

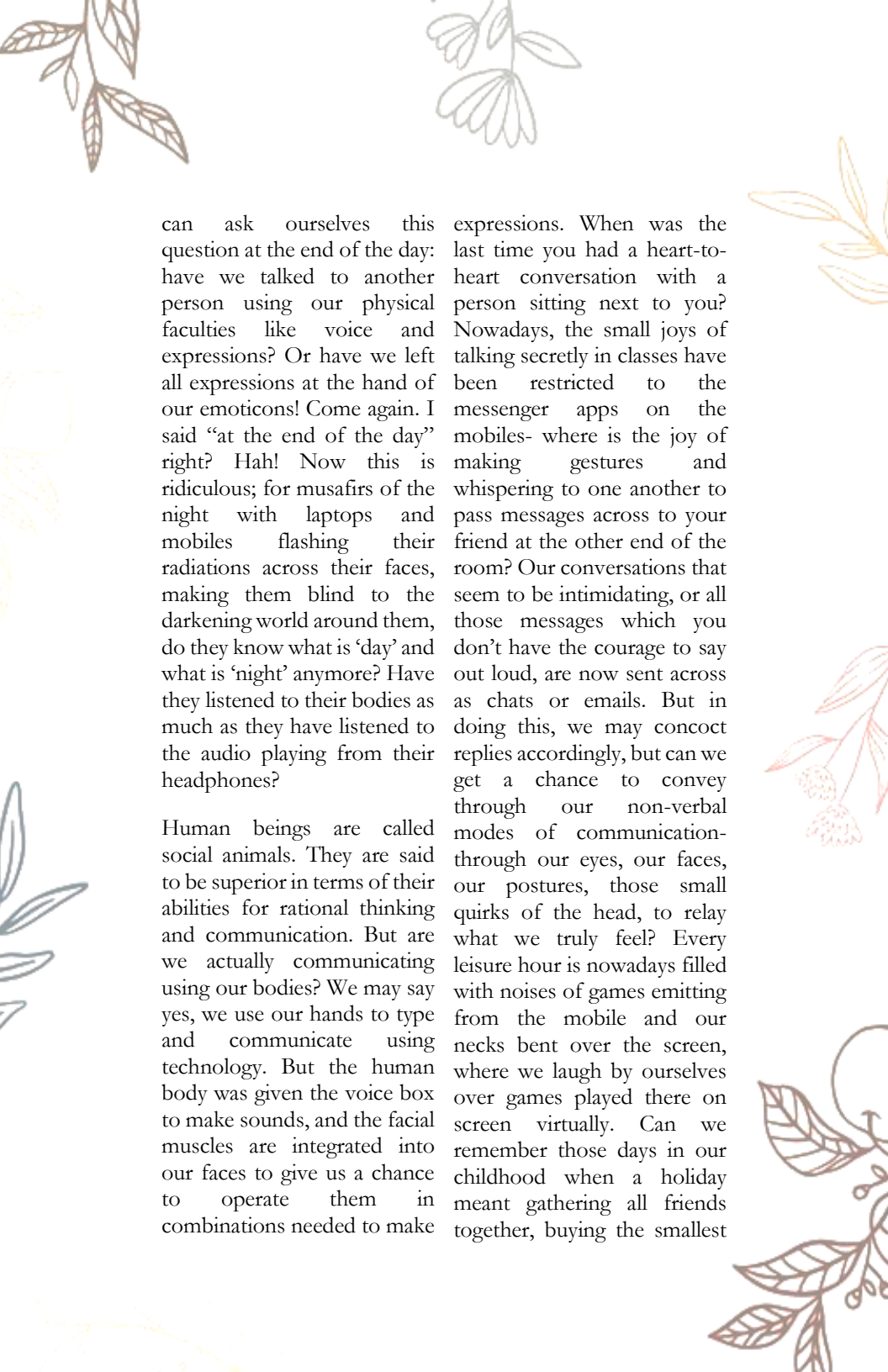
- Anusha Hegde
Ph.D English (2021-)

What is that? I heard a 'ping' somewhere! Let me check, there must be another notification! Or has someone updated their profile? Have I updated my status today? When is that person going to reply, let me keep my screen on ...? I AM NOT LEAVING MY MOBILE! This gadget is mine! The facilities it offers is mine, I deserve to enjoy the simple pleasure of having this gadget in my hand and see the whole wide world. It offers me countless advantages. Don't I look cool having this latest model of the laptop? Why are you having this brand? Everyone purchases XYZ, I think that looks classier, why not buy that?

Can I go without a gadget for a single day please? I don't want my mobile! Thanks, but no messages for me today.

Wait, what was that? Did we just hear this sentence? How can a person go without a single gadget for an entire day! It is impossible.


Yes, it is impossible. But what is more ludicrous in the scenario that we see today, is that human beings have reached a stage where they cannot go without their gadgets before their eyes, but they can forego their family, friends and fellow human beings. The age of technological advancements can certainly not be asked to vanish altogether, that scene is ridiculous since history and time are irreversible, irreplaceable. We cannot ask Master Time to take to task the first person to ever have thought about the idea of a touchscreen, or that genius who invented a portable version of the internet. But we



can ask ourselves this question at the end of the day: have we talked to another person using our physical faculties like voice and expressions? Or have we left all expressions at the hand of our emoticons! Come again. I said “at the end of the day” right? Hah! Now this is ridiculous; for musafirs of the night with laptops and mobiles flashing their radiations across their faces, making them blind to the darkening world around them, do they know what is ‘day’ and what is ‘night’ anymore? Have they listened to their bodies as much as they have listened to the audio playing from their headphones?

Human beings are called social animals. They are said to be superior in terms of their abilities for rational thinking and communication. But are we actually communicating using our bodies? We may say yes, we use our hands to type and communicate using technology. But the human body was given the voice box to make sounds, and the facial muscles are integrated into our faces to give us a chance to operate them in combinations needed to make

expressions. When was the last time you had a heart-to-heart conversation with a person sitting next to you? Nowadays, the small joys of talking secretly in classes have been restricted to the messenger apps on the mobiles- where is the joy of making gestures and whispering to one another to pass messages across to your friend at the other end of the room? Our conversations that seem to be intimidating, or all those messages which you don't have the courage to say out loud, are now sent across as chats or emails. But in doing this, we may concoct replies accordingly, but can we get a chance to convey through our non-verbal modes of communication- through our eyes, our faces, our postures, those small quirks of the head, to relay what we truly feel? Every leisure hour is nowadays filled with noises of games emitting from the mobile and our necks bent over the screen, where we laugh by ourselves over games played there on screen virtually. Can we remember those days in our childhood when a holiday meant gathering all friends together, buying the smallest



of the small titbits using our pocket money and laughing at one another over the way we played Snakes and Ladders, Ludo? True that these games were transferred over technology and have been showing some of their own benefits, but what of us? Are we maintaining a balance between the virtuality of our existence and our real-time existence as human beings in a community?

And now, can we sit back, leave everything aside, and talk to our own voice in the head? Can we feel it talking back to us- about our thoughts, feelings, desires, and apprehensions? Or are we going to resort to surfing in order to forget our own selves? How long can we run away from our realities and our social relationships? Can technology ever give you that feeling of belongingness that you get when you see your friends laughing alongside you, crying on your shoulders woefully, or your parents sitting beside you as your pillars of strength? Even if we all sit together and be quiet, we will not feel as desolate as we do when we look up from

that screen, come out of that reality and take a look around to see that we are alone, on our own, and that we purged out emotions before a screen that can never take the place of all those people in your life who are your outlets of emotions. We may get hooked to the screen, but why should we forget that our primary hooks are placed firmly with the people around us? Technologies grow old and are constantly upgraded. But can we change the colour of that memory forever? Each emotion of the human being, each thought and each experience has its unique individuality that never changes. All those experiences that designate us as human beings are those strongholds in life that bring us to a standstill in the forever-shifting sails of life. We must hook ourselves on a need-only basis with the shifting reality of technology, whereas we must anchor ourselves permanently with the port of human interaction that gives our existence its essential meaning.

Art



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From the Editor's Desk

T*he Ornate Circle* invites submissions to its second annual issue for the academic year 2023-2024. The magazine accepts all kinds of creative pieces that include but are not limited to poems, short stories, essays, short plays, monographs, original illustrations, paintings etc. The magazine is open for submissions all year round and creative works can be sent to the mail id ornatecircle@cup.edu.in in .docx format along with a cover letter declaring the originality of the work. Plagiarism is strictly not entertained and the Editorial team reserves the right to reject entries if they are found unsuitable for the magazine.



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